

Braj Bhoomi Mohini



-Bhakti Vijay M.A.

Braj Bhoomi Mohini



ब्रज बीथिन्ह जब सांवरो
चलै सुचाल मतंग ।
छिन-छिनमेंछविकीकरी
होत चलत इक संग ॥

Bhakti Vijay M.A.

Braj Bhoomi Mohini

(English Edition)

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Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji

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Dedication

The Two Whose causeless mercy made me the recipient of grace and mercy of their intimate devotees, the Two Who graced me by giving me a permanent residence in Shri Dhām, to that very same Rasa Swaroop Yugalārādhyā.

And

The Noble one who after nourishing my body, mind and every single pore handed me to the Rasa Bhoomi to get enriched with the *Shree* of *Shri* Dhām, to that very venerable and worshipable Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji who is continuously immersed in the ocean of rasa.

**Desirous of Grace
Bhakti Vijay M.A.**

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Shri Harih

Publisher's Note

'Braj Bhoomi Mohini' is the very first publication of 'Braj Nidhi Prakashan.' The credit for its publication goes to devout Vijay Bābā who was dear to our Bhaktimati Ushā Behenji, the unprecedented gem of Braj's wealth of saints. In his short life, he composed many literary works related to his revered Behenji. Amongst all those books, the usefulness and popularity of Braj Bhoomi Mohini has by far been proved the most. And that is why since 1985, three editions have been published. The fourth edition in the form of its translation in English is getting published. Actually it was Vijay Bābā's ardent wish that this book gets translated in English. He continuously strived for the same but it could not be accomplished in his lifetime. Now his very wish is getting fulfilled.

This book with its descriptions of the greatness of Braj, of the favourite Leelā sites of Braj Bihāri Yugal, of their pastimes and sports, of the *Rasikas* of these pastimes, of the environment and the Nature of Braj is an unprecedented guide in our spiritual journey.

In this book, contextual corroborations from many Sanskrit, Hindi, Braj bhāshā and Bengālī books have been included. This composition has proved to be extremely useful in the circumambulation of Braj.

The author composed this extremely useful book after travelling to many of the sites, by asking and inquiring, by taking proofs from the books, by collecting material certified by the saints and the great ones.

For the ease of the readers, the book has been divided into several chapters so that a thorough knowledge of the sites of Braj can be had. These chapters are Mathurā, Gokul, Girirāj, Kāmvan, Barsānā, Nandgāon and Shri Vrindāvan Dham.

The language of this book is as per its colourful and rasaful subject "Braj".

Thākurji, Who continuously and constantly carries out every single thing that is in our welfare, made such a beautiful and unprecedented opportunity available that we became successful.

The resident of Nepal Shri Jai Prakash Agrawal accepted the challenge of fulfilling the wish of Vijay Bābā. How do I describe his tireless efforts and continuous absorption. The wonder is that the translation was completed in very short time.

To what extent should I praise his incredible endeavour, I lack words of praise.

Susheelā Sharmā M.A.

Foreword

‘Braj Bhoomi Mohini’ composed by revered Vijay Bābā is an unprecedented book. This book is based on evidence. It is not only authentic but also authoritative and that is why this book has become a reference book. Three editions of this book have been published in Hindi. In the preface of the first edition Vijay Bābā has talked about the history of the book and its form. English translation of that preface has been included in this book without which this foreword would have been incomplete.

Many revered saints and scholars gave their views and opinions regarding the Hindi edition. The English translation of these opinions that establish the superiority and uniqueness of the book have been included in this book. The comments of extremely Revered Bhaktimati Ushā Behenji and Rādhā Bābā authenticate the greatness of the book and the greatness of Revered Vijay Bābā.

The popularity of the book is another indicator of its greatness. If such books are translated in other languages, then the book becomes useful even for those who do not understand the original language. English is one language which is spoken and understood by a lot of people all over the world including India. Keeping this fact in mind, this translation has been done. In any translation due to cultural differences, there is a deficiency of words and expressions. And this is quite evident in this English translation. To overcome this deficiency to some extent, some Hindi words have been used as it is, and their meanings have been provided in a glossary that has been included in the appendix.

I always had an apprehension regarding the grammar and the composition which might constraint some readers at few places where the impression of Hindi has become evident.

For this I sincerely tried to get help from three persons. I pursued them for more than six months. Despite their good intentions literally nothing was done. This for me, in fact is a sign from the Providence that the readers should have the book as it is and try to pass on the Rasa and joy of Hindi book of Bābā irrespective of the perfection of the language.

The distinguishing feature of “Braj Bhoomi Mohini” is its incidental authentication. It took Bābā many years to gather the proofs. He collected these proofs from more than a hundred books and compositions and verified the facts. Apart from this, using the personal experiences of many Rasikas, he made the description not only truthful and enlightening but also delightful and savory. He himself had experiences by living at many sites for long periods. His perseverance speaks from each and every word of the book.

In the English translation, these proofs in the form of quotations have been included in Devanāgarī script as it is, as they are proofs.

The inspiration of this translation is Revered Susheelā Behenji. Under her very own guidance and because of the efforts of Nishā behenji, Deepā didi and other sisters, the desired refinement in the book has been accomplished. Because of the grace of Revered Behenji and her direct involvement, the book has attained completeness.

In spite of this, any mistakes and shortcomings that have remained in this translation are only due to our ignorance and for that we ask for forgiveness. Despite these shortcomings, our ardent wish is that the readers get to read something new about Braj. Only then the fruit borne by the hard work of Bābā will become even sweeter.

Jaiprakash Agrawal

ShriHarih

Param Poojaneeyā Bhaktimati Shri Ushā Behen ji

The *vihār* of this *Nitya Leelā* Vihāri is eternal, it is everlasting, beginning less and endless. This Braj Bhoomi is the eternal *rasa* filled site of His *Leelā vihār*. Nityavihāri Yugal appear in this rasaful land and perform various pastimes to give bliss and joy to their dear and intimate ones. This earth of Braj steeped in *rasa* with the *rasa* of His touch is bewitching. The forests, gardens, *kunja-nikunja*, Shri Yamunā, Shri Girirāj all are alluring. The *Leelā mādhuri* is sporting in the laps of all the sites. The holy sites relating the tales of many pastimes create an impatience and restlessness in the hearts of the *Rasikas* to taste this very *Leelā rasa*. Even today the Yugal Who are the lovers of *vihār* do various *Leelās* here. This *Leelā- vilās* is going on even today in the *kunja-nikunja*, at the banks of Shri Yamunā, in the alleys of the forests. Even today this fortunate land is resonant with the tinkling of their anklets....the sweet sound of His sweet flute is resounding even today... our eyes alone are clouded, our ears are filled with the noise of the world..... and that is why we are not able to experience them. Many sentimental devotees have received *Leelā darshan* here and have experienced the *Leelā* and are experiencing it.

In this book you will experience the allurements of the bewitching Braj Bhoomi, you will get the joyful rasaful glimpses of *Leelā- vihār* and *Keli* sports. According to my opinion this book will be extremely helpful in filling the hearts of the *Rasikas* with more *rasa*.... in arousing a yearning in them for the taste of that *rasa* and in creating more and more desire to get submerged in that *keli rasa*.

I hope this book will remain free of the sectarian narrowness and will prove to be the one capable of giving bliss to all equally.

588, Bānkebihāri Colony,
Shri Dhām, Vrindāvan,
Akshaya Tritiyā, 2043

Nandini Ushā

Param Poojaneeya Shri Shri Bālkrishnadās ji Mahārāj

Where the supreme fervour of great rejoicing and celebrations of unlimited bliss and auspiciousness is pervasive in the nature, in the space, everywhere, that very same land of *rasa ranga*, of extreme elation, of *mahābhāv* and of *mahārās* is the indescribable land of Braj vana.

This entire rasaful forest region itself, imprinted with the beautiful lotus like feet of Shri Rādhā and Her innumerable followers, the kishori *vrinda*, is the *darshan* of new *Leelās* and it awakens from the heart, the *mādhurya* state (loving Shri Krishna with tender sentiments of a *gopi*) of a deserving one who is a complete follower.

The heart and Braj are not two but one, and this is the experienced, unfailing supreme word of the countless great ones. Their word is *Leelā* itself, most intimate and secret full of mysteries.

Only due to the causeless grace and motivated by the inspiration one receives the great fortune of wandering in the *Nitya Leelā* sites in absorption and entrancement. By going beyond the sentiment of unlimited grossness of the manifest, going beyond the dejection of perceiving many, possessed with an infinite *mādhurya bhāv* and getting blissfully absorbed in the most intimate and private *madhur Leelās* only should one wander in these enchanting forests sites. 'Braj Bhoomi Mohini ' predominant with *Leelās*, composed by Shri Vijay Kaushal ji by the grace of Shreeji has made my heart extremely happy.

I believe that all the rasik readers will also enjoy the *rasa* from their hearts.

Venu Vinod Kunja
Akshaya Tritiyā 2042



श्री लक्ष्मी:

श्री विष्णुदेव माय
 मया मया मया
 (शुभं किं गच्छति) अ
 एतन्मयी आनन्द-शक्ति
 सुगुणान् भोक्ति अ
 उरुभिः अति सुन्दर सुन्दर

श्रीमत् श्रीमत् श्रीमत्:

(शक्ति) अ मया सुन्दर
 किं सुन्दर किं सुन्दर
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Revered Shri Rādhā Bābā

Gorakhpur

"I received the fortune to visit many sites of Braj Bhoomi like Shri Nandagāon, Prem sarowar, Barsānā, Gowardhan and others with the editor of Kalyān, Shri Poddār ji Mahārāj. I also got the opportunity to see and hear about many books and volumes determining and defining the significance of the Leelā sites of Braj, but Braj Bhoomi Mohini is a unique book of its kind..... ShriVrishbhānunandini filled with *Mahābhāv* and Rasarāj Shri Nandanandan has gracefully sent my thing to me."

Revered Pāndit Gayā Prasād ji Mahārāj

Baisākh Shuklā,
Dashami 2042
Dān Ghāti, Gowardhan

'Braj Bhoomi Mohini ' has turned out to be a great book. One by one all sites have been described thoroughly. All are supported with proof and are beautiful. I received a lot of joy upon hearing.

With blessings and good wishes,

Revered Shri Ānandadās Bābā ji Mahārāj

Sitā Navami 2042
Dusāyat, Vrindāvan

Braj Bhoomi is the eternal abode of Shyām Sundar, it is His own Dhām. It is a *nitya siddha* site and is fully capable of providing the causeless grace of Priyā-Priyatam. The Leelā based experience of the sites verily is the enchantment of Braj Bhoomi which is the subject of this book.

On hearing 'Braj Bhoomi Mohini ' my mind and speech became entranced because in it all the subjects are suffused with the rasa of devotion.

Shri VrindāBihārīne Namah

Poojaneeya Santa Shri Prabhudatta Brahmachāri ji Mahārāj

I saw the book 'Braj Bhoomi Mohini' written by Shri Vijay ji from here and there. No I didn't see it, I smelt it. Those who are writers, they do not read, just by smelling they take out the essence. I found this book very beautiful. I have seen many books on the subject of Braj. But the way Vijay ji has written this in such details, it is unlikely that anyone else has written it in similar manner. Wherein he has evaluated and examined all the famous sites of Braj according to the scriptures. He has remained neutral towards the subjects and issues of debate. The description of the sites of Braj, of the *rasikas* of Braj and of the saints and the great ones of Braj even if brief, has been written beautifully. I congratulate the writer for writing such a beautiful book.

At the feet of Brajendranandan I pray that Vijay ji keeps writing many such books.

Sankeertan Bhawan, Vanshivata, Vrindāvan
Adhik Shrāwan Shukla Saptami Sam. 2043 Vi.

Prabhudatta Brahmachāri

After reading the enchanting description of Braj *Vasundharā*, the *Nitya Leelā* Bhoomi of Vishwa Vimohan Lord Brajendranandan, in 'Braj Bhoomi Mohini,' whose mind (if not the body) will not start wandering in the bewitching alleys of Braj. Those who have not even seen Braj, even if they become keenly desirous for Braj *darshan* after reading this book, it will not be surprising. According to my opinion even those, who have already received the fortune of getting the darshan or of staying in Braj, will once again become yearful to take the tour of Braj.

A few years ago I had a chance of *darshan*, travel of Kāshipuri, the eternal abode of Lord Vishwanāth. There on the wall of a dilapidated house, it was written,

प्रेम नगर ब्रज भूमि है, जहाँ न जावै कोय ।
जावै तो जीवै नहीं, जियै तो बौरा होय ॥

Maybe I am not ready to die or become crazy yet, therefore I will suggest that you also take a step in that direction only after careful consideration.

Akshaya Tritiyā 2042, Shri Vrindāvan Dhām

Bihāridās 'Vrindāvani'

Two words

Many have described Braj Bhoomi but a complete and thorough introduction is not found in them. That's why the author has on the basis of Purānas and books written by other great ones and on the basis of the spoken words of many reliable saints, protecting the sentiments of all, criticizing none, written and compiled this book.

Some five thousand five hundred years ago at the end of *Dwāpar*, Shri Krishna Leelā incarnated in a manifest form in this Braj mandal. This is the very same Girirāj Gowardhan that had been held by Shri Krishna on His little finger for seven continuous days. This is the very same Yamunā ji which has become blue by the touch of Shri Krishna, who preserving the infinite pastimes of water sports in herself is capable of giving the direct *darshan* to intimate devotees. This is the very same Braj *raja*, touched by the feet of Shri Krishna, for which Uddhav ji had begged tearfully. The only difference between now and then is that at that time the *Prakat Leelā* could be seen by all effortlessly, that *Leelā* is still going on continuously here. The secret of this can be known by you by reading the dialogue of Vajranābha ji and Shāndilya rishi in the Purān.

Love incarnate Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu brought these sites of Braj to light again by sending his intimate devotees to Braj as these had almost disappeared in the course of time. Even Shriman Chaitanya Mahāprabhu came for the *darshan* of Braj himself and brought the extremely rasaful site Shri Rādhā Kund to light. The writer has quoted him at many places. Shri Vallabhāchārya ji came to Braj Bhoomi and by travelling here and there revealed the significance of Braj. He started the tradition of eighty four *kosa* long circumambulation of Braj which is still continuing.

The effort of the writer is to take you very close to the rasafullness of these sites so that you can understand and assimilate the importance of the site thoroughly and gain the benefit of life. For the *sādhakas* of Braj *rasa* this is an invaluable treasure. In my opinion this book has proved out to be very interesting, very touching and a guide for the path.

By reading this unparalleled book, by contemplating and reflecting on it everyone is going to gain self benefits.

Preface of the First Edition

Inspiration

After coming to Shri Dhām permanently I received the opportunity to wander in the sites of Braj. During this period I also received a chance to stay at Shri Rādhā Kund. There the curiosity to know about these sites grew. Bābā Shri Manohardās ji gave information about a few related books. I found those books easily in Shri Rādhā Kund. I started collecting the details of the sites related with Shri Krishna Leelā from them. By wandering in these sites the actual experience should have happened and to drown in them was something that was desirable but this so called compilation started looking for an opportunity to get published.

The bringing forth of this book had commenced in samvat 2032 itself. When a new press was installed at the place of Pāgal Bābā, then the question of publication of this book was discussed and everything was settled. I gave some hand written material for printing. At that time Late Shri Ravi Pandit, an aged scholar and knower of Gaudiya books used to help in the management of the publication department of Bābā. Looking at the subject matter of the book despite his keen desire to publish the book, he asked me to leave a few incidents because of some reasons. Due to the absence of any proofs, I could not accept those changes for which I am sorry and that part of the book was returned to me after about a month.

All my guardians were keen for the publication of this book. Attempts were made but the issue of money was complicated and remained so. Suddenly an opportunity was created.

Attempts

This book is not mine, it is yours or it is of those *Āchāryas*, *Rasikas* and the great devotees who helped me in writing this book or whose books, words and experiences were used in composing it. In this neither is there any effort of mine nor my contribution. I have taken no liberties in describing the incidents in the book. All the *Āchāryas* and the *Rasikas* making the principles of path of devotion easy to comprehend, offering the material for the *sādhakas* have made

their paths stronger. It has of course been a childish attempt on my part to include the *Leelās*, by expanding a little on those very same thought processes, the emotions and the sentiments included in them.

मुनिन्ह प्रथम हरि कीरति गाइ ।
 तेहि मग चलत सुभग मोहि भाई ॥
 अति अपार जे सरित वर जो नृप सेतु कराहिं ।
 चढ़े पिपीलिकऊ परम लघु बिनु श्रम पारहि जाहिं ॥

Just how everybody including the ants cross easily from the bridge made by the great men, in the same way using the medium of the experiences of the *rasikas* I have made this attempt.

If anything is found interesting in this book, the credit for that completely goes to my extremely revered Behen and Guru Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji, who taught me how to walk and how to speak, soaked me with her motherly love. Raised under whose rasaful atmosphere, the opportunity to come to Shri Vrindāvan was created easily. For all the errors that are seen I request the readers to consider them as my ignorance and forgive me.

About the Book

In the path of devotion, all the *Āchāryas* have unanimously accepted that the *nām* (name of the Lord) is nondifferent from the *Nāmi* (Lord). Along with the name, importance is given to the contemplation of *Leelā*. The way the *Nāmi* is nondifferent from *nām*, in the same way these *Yugal Rasa Vighraha Priyā-Priyatam* and their bodily personifications, these Braj maidens are present within the *Leelā* and embedded in them. The *Leelās* are connected with the *Leelā* sites and these sites give unprecedented help in giving the *darshan* of *Priyā-Priyatam*. In fact the significance of the *Leelā* sites is because of *Jeewan Sarvaswa Shyām Sundar*, His *Āhlādini* energy *Shri Rādhā* and their bodily manifestations the Braj maidens. And in these *Leelā* sites all that which we can see and experience is present and ingrained. And that which is to be imbibed, that which is to be desired, is easily achieved by the grace of these *Leelā* sites.

The subject matter of this book is the description of the sites connected with the *Leelās*.

The book is mainly divided in two parts. In the first part there

is a brief description of Braj Bhoomi, origin of the word Braj, Braj in Purānas, the boundaries of Braj, the nature of the circumambulation and the contribution of the Leelā sites in the lives of the *sādhakas*.

The second part is divided into seven segments or chapters. First one is 'Mathurā', in which the birthday celebrations of Shri Krishna and other Leelās have been described. After that the description of the Leelā sites neighbouring Mathurā has been presented briefly.

In the second chapter there is the description of the arrival of Shri Krishna to 'Gokul ' (Mahāvan). At the palace of Shri Nandarai ji Vasudev nandan Shri Krishna merges in His other body of Nanda nandan and starts enjoying the Braj Leelās, Shri Krishna's pastimes related to this are described in this chapter. Mainly this site is the revered holy site of the Vaishnavas of the Pushti sect.

In the third chapter the appearance of Shri Girirāj, incarnation on the earth, arrival in Braj, the appearance of Shri Rādhā kund and Shri Krishna kund - Shri Rādhā kund, revelation by Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji and rehabilitation by Shri Dās Goswāmi, and the other sacred sites of Shri Girirāj ji have been described in detail supported by proofs. The neighbouring sites have also been described.

The fourth chapter is 'Kām van.' The site that fulfills the desire of the *gopikās* of attaining Shri Krishna is famous as Kām van. Where all the work (Kām) of Shri Krishna are accomplished (ban na) that has been called Kām ban or van.

The fifth chapter is 'Shri Vrishbhānupur.' The story of how Brahmā ji is *virājmān* in Braj to enjoy the pastimes of Priyā-Priyatam, rasaful description of Adolescent Leelās and Child Leelās of child Shri Rādhā and along with the description of other Leelā sites, the description of the surrounding villages of eight *sakhis* and the Leelās related to Prema sarowar and Sankeita etc have been described in this chapter.

The sixth chapter is our village 'Shri Nanda gāon'. The arrival of the cowherds to Vrindāvan because of the fear of the atrocities of Kansa, despite this the continuing worries of mother Yashodā about the safety of her son, the thought of migrating to a new safe place (Nandagāon), the cow grazing Leelā of Shri Krishna, other *Leelās* with the *sakhās* of His age and at times after deceiving the *sakhās*, the romp and revelry created by Shyam Sundar amongst the *sakhis*, the conversations of Akroor ji and Uddhava ji with the Braj maidens etc

are described.

The neighbouring site of playing ball game, going inside the *nikunjas* at the bank of Shri Yamunā, the description of Kokila van, Chameili van and the union of Shri Rādhā-Krishna in Bhāndeer van, marriage conducted by Brahmā ji and many other incidents have been described in details.

The seventh and the last chapter of this book is 'Shri Vrindāvan Dhām.' The site of the *madhur* Leelās of Priyā- Priyatam, Shri Vrindāvan is the life-force of this book. Starting from Kāliya mardan up to Cheera haran, Shringār vata, Keishi mardan, Dheera-Sameera ghāt, and Rās Leelā at Vanshi vata all are described in this chapter. Apart from these, pastimes of self manifest Thākur Idols and other *rasikas* have also been described. It's quite possible that the description of a few sites may have been left out. That has been done in order to keep the size of the book within the limit of the resources. Readers will forgive for that.

Gratitude expression

In the compilation of this book the help of many books has been taken. How difficult it is to collect the reference books, those readers who have had an opportunity like this, would know it. Nonetheless Shri Harivallabh ji Sharmā, Jatipurā, Shri Haridās bābā ji, Shri Rādhākunda and Shri Rākesh bhāi, Vrindāvan by making the references available in time made my work very light. I am extremely grateful to them.

In the end I am grateful to all those *Āchāryas*, the great one and the *Rasikas* from my heart, taking inspiration from whose invaluable books and experiences and making their words the base, the subject matter of the book could be written.

In writing this book my view was to give equal respect to all the sects and give a neutral and an authentic account of the sites. I have tried to ensure that the description is according to the dignity of the sect or the great one, despite that if the language did not express accordingly, I request the readers to please give me an indication and oblige me, it will make me really happy.

विनय करूँ कर जोर, रसिक जनन के चरन में ।
'नारायण' चितडोर लगी रहे नित युगल पद ॥

Remarks

स्नेहाच्च बहुमानाच्च स्मारये त्वां, न शिक्षये

Krishnadatta Vājpeiyee

F. N. I.

15, Padmākar nagar

Makaronia, Sāgar (M.P.) 47004

Date 11-8-1991

Many books have been written on the glory of Braj Bhoomi in the modern era. The writer of "Braj Bhoomi Mohini" Shri Vijay Kaushal is a person dedicated to Braj Bhoomi. He has acquired a thorough experience of the religious and rasaful atmosphere of this place. With a lot of effort he has presented an authentic account of various sites of Braj in this book.

The writer Shri Vijay Kaushal deserves to be applauded.

-Krishnadatta Vājpayi

Braj or in the broad sense of the word, the eighty four *kosa* soaked in *mādhurya rasa*.

Braj is a *darshan* of Self that is self evident, beyond the need of proofs, is universal, eternal and which establishes one on the ground suffused with all emotions. In other words Braj is a state of emotion. It is an internal great journey in which there are no stops.

In this book within these contexts a chapter wise description of the tour of the Braj region has been made that is beyond any debate or controversy and which is personal, direct and simple and easy to connect with. The method of discussion of this book confirms the familiar saying -

ब्रज समुद्र मथुरा कमल, वृन्दावन मकरन्द ।

ब्रज वनिता सब पुष्प हैं मधुकर गोकुलचन्द ॥

It is a matter of great happiness that the writer is free from all prejudices.

He has devout faith in 'Main Kahatā Ānkhin ki Deikhi' meaning I say what I see. This is why he touches the heart again and again at various places. For years he has travelled throughout Braj several times on foot. He has made a true and genuine effort to recognize the essential nature of a site by staying there for long period.

By mentioning many unknown sites, kund, gardens or forest land and villages, he has made this book worth collecting. He has given the original name of each site along with the present name in use, and its etymological explanation. This will have to be called a very commendable attempt, which has increased the usefulness of the book to a great degree. Instead of remaining a book of introduction, it has become a book of reference.

In this book there is of course the private labour of the writer but the glimpse of his emotion filled heart can also be had clearly at many places. Therefore from the viewpoint of worship, the vast peripheries that the various dimensions of writing touch, on the straightforwardness of its language, Vrindāvaneeya *chintan* must give their attention, this is the necessity of the time.

Krishna Chaitanya Bhatta

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Snān Yātrā, Jyeshtha Shukla 15, 2042 Mi.



Revered Bābā Bhakti Vijay



The composer of 'Braj Bhoomi Mohini' and of the biography of Saint Ushāji 'Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorwa Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behenji' Revered Bābā was born on 19-12-1938.

As per the instructions of Revered Ushā Behenji, Bābā lived at almost all the Leelā sites and coming in contact with the many saints received the desired material required for the book. Nandgāon always remained his own gāon. He enjoyed a deep intimacy with the innocent villagers of Nandgāon. At the command of Revered Ushā Behenji, he composed the very first book 'Braj Bhoomi Mohini' and dedicated this unequalled gift to his guru, mother and ishta Ushā Behenji and her Thākurji. After the Golokgaman of Revered Behenji, he published many books from 'Braj Nidhi Prakāshan'.

On 24th May 2008, at the age of about 70 years he left his body and went near his guru and ishta forever and ever.

Description Of Braj

पुण्या वत ब्रजभुवो यदयं नृलिङ्ग-
 गूढः पुराणपुरुषो वनचित्रमाल्यः ।
 गाः पालयन् सहबलः क्वणश्च वेणुं
 विक्रीडयाञ्चति गिरित्रमार्चिताग्निः ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत, 10/44/13)

The site of signals, gestures and messages is ‘Braj’.

The divine play “The Braj Leelā” commences with the signal of the Beloved in the form of the alluring music flowing from the flute. This message is heard and understood only by the maidens of the Braj. They welcome and honour this message with different signs and messages of their own, worshipping that ‘Message Sender’ they become lost and absorbed in the unlimited ocean of bliss. These messages flow in the form of sharp arrow like sidelong glances, sometimes in the form of soft silky curly hair with its bumblebee-like strands, sometimes they flow from the silky smooth rays of His moon like face, not only this, sometimes flowing through the countless sweet and charming rays of His smile, they fill the maidens with new breaths of life. These signals and messages then striking a friendship with each other become steeped in the blissfulness of the Braj Bhoomi, become absorbed, become intoxicated. Collecting these very same *rasa* particles, this Braj Bhoomi becomes blessed and content.

A *rasik* saint once said, “Neither is there an abode like Braj nor its characteristic festivity, romp and revelry readily available anywhere else. The noise of the material world is not heard in the romp and revelry of Braj. The ears remain filled with the sounds but not of the world or its sensory subjects but with the sounds of the chirping of the birds, with the sweet soft sound of the gentle flow of Yamunā, with the tinkling, chiming anklets of the Braj maidens

1. Sakhi! If you ask me the truth, Braj Bhoomi alone is most sacred and blessed because Shri Purushottam Himself lives here in disguise of a human being. The One Whose feet are worshipped by Lord Shankar and Laxmi ji, that very Prabhu, wearing a garland of colourful forest flowers, playing His flute along with Balarām ji, grazing the cows and engaged in various games wanders here joyfully.

laughing at the banks of Yamunā, with the intoxicating sound of their jokes and laughter engrossed in conversations about the beloved, with the sweet sound of the playing of the cowherd children, with the intoxicating laughter of the Prince of Braj Shri Krishna surrounded by his cowherd friends, with the sound of the flute soaked with the sweet nectar of Brajrāj Kishore standing under a Kadamba tree on the banks of Yamunā, with the sound of the bangles, the anklets and the other ornaments of the Braj maidens running mesmerised towards Him spellbound by the sound of this flute, all these sounds and then the sound of that *rasa vilās*..... of which the aforementioned sounds are only a delectable prelude.....the sound of the *rasa* waves surging and erupting in the ocean of divine ecstasy.

Not only this, the fortune of the beautiful *nikunjas* of Braj is beyond words. Every sand particle is the introducer of a new *Leelā*. The trees, the creepers here are swaying drunk with ecstasy even today. The *Leelā vihār* here is eternal and perpetual. Even today the *Leelā vihār* in the very same unobstructed way and the humour, amusement and the *rasa rās* are flowing in the alleys, in the *nikunjas* and the gardens of Braj. Only the willingness to collect and treasure it is absent. The Rasikas are experiencing those *Leelās* even today.

In the life of Bhaktimati Shri Ushā Behen ji one such divine sequence of events unfolded by the wish of Priyā-Priyatam (Shri Rādhā Krishna) which was extraordinarily incredible. Shyāmā Shyām sent one of the sakhis of their very own *parikar* to behen ji to reveal the transcendental *Leelās* taking place in the present. Now I wish to present a few pictures of those divine *Leelās* to the readers and introduce them to such an environment which will be called impossible in today's age and time.

One

"*Sakhi!* You had said that after collecting the bounty of *rasa* yesterday, the maddened swings are waiting for us even today, the trees and the vines are looking out on the path waiting for our arrival. The cloud and the lightning are waiting for us but that supremely intelligent Shri Krishna has not arrived up till now. Look! The clouds are thundering, the lightning is flashing, and the peacocks are dancing. The trees and the vines filled with a blissful frenzy are swaying eagerly waiting for the beloved", Kishori Rādhikā said putting Her lotus like hand on the shoulder of Lalitā who was standing nearby.

Second

"The trees soaked in the rains swayed and shook the vines. The intoxicated sashaying of the trees and the vines rocked by that swaying filled the hearts of the Braj maidens with sweet intoxicating convulsions. Getting a powerful inspiration from the Nature to unite with the Priyatam they became restless..... The excitement in the heart of the Priyatam translating into naughty playfulness in every part of His body was provoking and inciting Him again and again. The sweet turmoil in the heart of Priyā ji filling Her whole body with powerful shivers was making Her thrilled. Peeping from the window of the flower mansion they saw the grey light of the early morning, and then exchanging glances..."

Another one

"Rasik Shekhar drew strange pictures today. On the smooth forehead, soft cheeks..., beautifully shaped round arms above the elbows....of the *rasa* soaked Kishori. The *rasa ranga* filled love marks of the night *vilās* were concealed by those drawings of flowers and leaves..... Priyā ji, drowned in god knows which emotions, filled with which sweet intoxicating feelings, feeling shy because of which naughty plays, was sitting motionless against a huge tree with Her lotus like eyes shut and with one feet on top of the other....and ..."

Another one

"Through the window one more gust of cool breeze entered inside. In order to make themselves warm, it made the *rasa* crazy Yugal more and more....., in the colourful pushing and shoving of the union of the auspicious bodies..... lost..... and intoxicated those Yugal..... plunging in the depth of the ocean of intoxicant and sinking more and more those Yugal coloured in *rasa*..... who knows how they were delivering each other and taking care of each other. That *vilās* of the intoxication of those moments, oh!...."

Yes! So this land of Braj is endowed with the *Leelās* of Priyā-Priyatam.

The meaning of the word 'Braj' has to do with all pervasiveness.

गुणातीतं परं ब्रह्म व्यापकं ब्रज उच्यते ।

सदानन्दं परं ज्योति मुक्तानां पदव्ययम् ॥

(स्क० पु०)

The Para Brahma, that is beyond the three qualities of satva (purity, goodness), raja (activity, passion) and tama (darkness, ignorance), that

alone is all pervasive. That itself is called 'Braj'. It is of the form of truth, consciousness and bliss, supremely radiant and indestructible and only those free from the bondage of action live in it.

The very form of the Supreme Being, the Braj Dhām is the eternal abode of Shri Krishna. He is Ātmārām and Āpta Kām. He is *satchidānandamaya* and becomes effortlessly attainable by the devotees here.

The *Āhlāḍini Shakti* of Shri Krishna is Shri Rādhā. Shri Krishna manifested Her from the left side of His body to fulfill His desire of *raman*. Because of His *raman* with the personification of “unlimited beauty, sweetness and love” i.e. Shri Rādhā, Shyām Sundar is called Ātmārām. The word 'Kām' resonates desires. The things desired by Shri Krishna are the cows, the cowherd boys, gopis and *Leelā vihār* with them. These are always and perpetually available in Braj, because of this Shri Krishna is called Āpta Kām.

Every particle of the earth of Braj is imprinted with the feet of Shri Yugal, it is soaked in their *rasa-mādhuri* and remains blissful in their *keli vilās*. The quarrel that breaks out at the river banks or in *kunjas-nikunjas* transforms into a prelude of some blissful give and take of *rasa*. Any season, any time, the rasaful environment appears on its own as per the wishes of Priyā-Priyatam. How is this *rasa vihār* that is pervading the land of Braj?

“The nature changed its curtain in Braj. The cool breeze of the spring carrying the warmth of the summer started blowing softly. But this warmth was not intense. The admission of fierceness and cruelty is forbidden in Braj. Even in that warmth there was a message of new *vihār*. Though the bodies did not become hot but the hearts were filled with the heat of Madan (Cupid). God knows which coolness, this heat started wishing for. Begging for which blissfulness it arrived here. The *rasa* generous Yugal Priyatam did its worship and set the playful endeavours of the spring sports free in the coolness of water sports. That sport completely and fully entering in the clean water of the lakes, in the beautiful blue nectarean waters of Shri Yamunā started generating waves of new and novel pastimes.”

(With gratitude from the scripture Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorva Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji)

In the *Leelā* of the Lord there is no admission of the gross Nature. The *Leelā* of Shri Krishna is divine. Gracing His intimate devotees Himself, He makes them taste it. This *Leelā* has been shown to be of two types called “Nitya (perpetual) and Prakat (manifest)”. Nitya *Leelā* due to being related to His own *parikar*, is available to

and can be enjoyed only by the *rasikas* and the intimate devotees of the Lord. The Leelā that takes place before all living beings is 'Prakat Leelā'. As the *parikar* of *Nitya* and *Prakat Leelā* are the same, the *Nitya* and *Prakat Leelā* in spite of seeming different are in principal and form one and the same like the shadow of each other.

The area around or near Mathurā has been given the name 'Braj'. In that very place the *Nitya Leelā* of the Lord is always in motion. The intimate devotees and the *rasikas* experience it and are experiencing it. At the end of the twenty eighth Dwāpar when those empowered and entitled to see and experience the *Nitya Leelā* and *Rahasya* (secret and mysterious) *Leelā* assemble here, at that time the Lord incarnates with His intimate devotees in Braj and provides *rasa* to them with His blissful *Leelās*. While established in His uninterrupted and indestructible blissful form, the Lord with His power of supernatural and divine faculties alone can create and destroy effortlessly. But the main objective of the incarnation of the Lord is to suffuse His intimate devotees with the sweet ambrosial *rasa*.

The Lord has three *Shaktis* or powers. They are *Āhlādini*, *Sandhini* and *Samvit*. *Vrindāvan* and *Braj* are the *vilās* of His *Sandhini Shakti*.

Vrindāvan is the main site of *Braj*. At some places *Braj* has also been called *Vrindāvan*. Here the enchanting banks of *Shri Yamunā*, the beautiful foothills of *Gowardhan* and the eighty four *kosa* land is perceptible to the physical eyes even today.

The word *Braj* has been used in the *Vedas* also.

'ब्रजन्ति गावो यस्मिन्नति ब्रजः' i.e. the place where cows wander or graze is called *Braj*.

In *Harivansha Purān* the word '*Braj*' has been used for the area around *Mathurā*. That place is now famous as '*Gokul*'.

In *Shrimad Bhāgwat* the names *Gokul*, *Braj*, *Goshtha* and *Nandagrām* have been used for almost the same site, where the cows live and which is the place of residence of *Shri Nandarai ji*.

In *Garga Samhitā* when Lord *Shri Krishna* spoke about His incarnation to *Shri Rādhā*, She said that She will not be happy at any place where there is no *Shri Yamunā*, *Shri Girirāj* and *Shri Vrindāvan*. Hearing this the Lord sent the three to the earth.

वेद नाग क्रोश भूमि स्वधाम्नः श्रीहरिः स्वयम् ।
गोवर्द्धनं च यमुनां, प्रेषयामास भू परि ॥

In the Purānas also 'Mathurā Mandal' or 'Braj Mandal' has only been used mostly for Braj.

In the Ashtachhāp literature the word 'Braj' has been used for the place of grazing, raising of the cows and for the place of vihār of the cows and the cowherds. In Ashtachhāp, by calling Shri Akroor ji and Uddhav ji 'Madhuvaniya' i.e. the resident of Madhuvana, Braj has been kept separate from Mathurā.

The modern form of Braj was ascertained only in the fifteenth century and even to this day the eighty four kosa land that is around Mathurā and which is related to Shri Krishna Leelā - that very same area has continued to be called 'Braj'.

Shri Bhatt ji Mahāraj has expressed his feelings by calling 'Braj Bhoomi' mohini i.e. magical-

ब्रज भूमि मोहिनी मैं जानी ।
मोहिनी कुञ्ज, मोहन श्रीवृन्दावन मोहन जमना पानी ॥
मोहिनी नारि सकल गोकुल की बोलति मोहनि बानी ।
'श्री भट्ट' के प्रभु मोहन नागर मोहिनी राधा रानी ॥

Shri Hari Vyās ji Devāchārya ji Mahāraj has accepted the significance of Vrindāvan and Braj by saying

“यही है, यही है, भूलि भरमो न कोउ,
भूलि भरमे ते भव भटकि मरिहौ ॥

(सि० सु०)

and

‘श्रीहरिप्रिया प्रकट पुहुमी पर कहत होत होत मति पंग’

(उ० सु०)

Shri Vithaleisha Prabhu of Vallabha sect, worshipping the Braj Bhoomi said that Braj Bhoomi is auspicious and only auspicious.

‘मंगलं मंगलं ब्रज भुवि मंगलं’

And how is this Braj Bhoomi, where Shri Nandanandan is increasing the joy and delight of Shri Nandarai ji and mother Yashodā, where the darshan of the pinnacle of the love with the Braj beauties is being had, where the *Rās rasa* is flowing. This Braj Bhoomi is auspicious and worshipable.

Before the eyes of Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji, who was alive with the *rasa* abundance of Braj Bhoomi and absorbed in the *rasa* of Vrindāvan, the blue and yellow Sweetness Incarnates filled with the *rasa* intoxication manifested at the bank of Shri Yamunā-

सुरभित शीतल श्यामला कालिन्दी के कूल ।
 श्रीवन कुञ्ज-निकुञ्ज मँह विहँसि रहे दो फूल ॥
 विचरहिं कुञ्ज-निकुञ्ज में किये नवल श्रृंगार ।
 सखिजन मण्डित युगलवर, करहिं वसन्त विहार ॥
 कबहुँ करहिं परिहास कछु, कबहुँ करहिं कल गान ।
 कबहुँ पुष्प बरसावहीं, प्रणय विदग्ध सुजान ॥

Wandering in these *kunja-nikunja* of Braj Bhoomi engrossed in *vihār* even today, Priyā-Priyatam are making their intimate devotees more and more blissful.

Shri Roop Goswāmipād has described the four abodes of Shri Krishna in 'Laghu Bhāgwatamrita'. In that 'Gokul' and 'Shri Vrindāvan' have been shown as the other names of 'Braj'. Shri Shri Jeevagoswāmipād has called 'Shri Vrindāvan', 'Gokul' and 'Braj' synonyms of the same abode.

Saying in Shri Shri Chaitanya Charitāmrita-

सर्वोपरि श्रीगोकुल, ब्रज लोक धाम ।
 श्रीगोलोक, श्वेत-द्वीप, वृन्दावन नाम ॥

Therefore 'Gokul', 'Braj', 'Goloka' and 'Vrindāvan' are accepted as synonyms.

The region of Vrindāvan and the area around it related to Shri Krishna Leelā (except Mathurā) has been accepted as Braj by all the great ones.



Boundaries of Braj and its Geography

इत बरहद इत सोनहद, उत सूरसेन को गांव ।
ब्रज चौरासी कोस है, मथुरा मण्डल मांह ॥

From the above couplet it is evident that the boundary of Braj comprises of Bara sthān on one side, Sonhada on the other, Bateishwar, the village of Shoorsein on the third. Mr. Growse has given the description of this very couplet in his book 'Mathurā Memoir'. From this it is evident that the area between Bara sthān of Aligarh district, Saunda (Sonhada) of Gurgaon district and Bateishwar village of Shoorsein in Bāha sub district is Braj.

According to Brahmānda Purān, the Hāsyavana is considered to be in the east, Janhu vana in the south, Parwat vana in the west and Suryapatan Vana in the north.¹

Therefore in the east Hasangarh of Āgrā district is famous as Hāsyavana, in the west the hilly village near Kāmvana (Parwatvana) of Rājasthān is famous as Parwatvana, in the south Jājau village of Dhaulpur sub district is famous as Janhu vana and in the North Suryapatan vana is considered to be the area near Jeiwar village of Aligarh district.

Many scholars have explained their view by showing Braj Mandal as being round like a circle. Based on the word 'Braj Mandal' it is natural to accept the shape as being round but at the same time it does not seem natural that this roundness is of the form of a perfect circle.

The famous poet of Pushti sect, the eminent devotee Soordās ji in his scripture Soor Sārāvali considering the borders of Braj stretched up to eighty four kosa has said in the following pada

-
1. चतुर्दिक्षु प्रमाणेन पूर्वादिक्रमतोगणत् ।
पूर्वभागे स्थितं कोणं वनं हास्यभिधानकं ॥
भागे च दक्षिणे कोणं शुभं जन्धुवनं स्थितं ।
भागे च पश्चिमे कोणे पर्वताख्यवनं स्थितं ॥
भागे ह्युत्तरकोणस्यं सूर्यं पतनं संज्ञकं ।
इत्येता ब्रज मर्यादा चतुष्कोणाभिधायिनी ॥

यहि विधि क्रीडत गोकुल में हरि निज वृन्दावन धाम ।
 मधुवन और कुमुद वन सुन्दर बहुला वन अभिराम ॥
 नन्दगाँव, संकेत, खिदिरवन, और कामवन धाम ।
 लोहवन, मांट, बेलवन, सुन्दर भद्रवृहद्वन गाम ॥
 चौरासी ब्रज कोस निरन्तर खेलत हैं बल मोहन ।
 सामवेद, ऋग्वेद, यजुर में कहेउ चरित ब्रज मोहन ॥

In Garga Samhitā while proceeding to Vrindāvan from Gokul Shri Sanand ji replying to the question of Shri Nandarai ji said-

प्रागुदीच्यां बहिर्षदो दक्षिणस्यां यदोः पुरात् ।
 पश्चिमायां शोणितपुरान्माथुरं मण्डलं विदुः ॥

(ग० सं० खं० २)

The scholars have called the eighty four *kosa* land that is to the east of Varhishada (Barahada), to the south of Yadupur (Bateishwar, the village of Shoorsein) and to the west of Shonitapur (Sonhada) 'Braj 'or 'Mathurā Mandal'.

Thus all have accepted the area falling within the borders of Bara, Bateishwar and Sonhada as Braj.



The Circumambulation of Braj

The custom of taking the tour of Braj has continued to exist in our scriptures since a long time. Akroor ji and Uddhav ji came to Braj. The arrival of Shri Balrāma ji Mahārāj in Braj and his *vihār* are also famous. But for the purpose of manifesting the sites of *Leelā*, the tour of Braj taken by Vajranābha ji with the help of great sage Shri Shāndilya is important.

It seems the form of the circumambulation of Braj was ascertained in the fifteenth century. In those very days the incidents of Braj travel done by Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj, Shri Mādhawendra Puri ji Mahārāj and Shri Chaturā Nāgā ji are found. In addition to these the tour of the Braj sites and the salvage of the sites by Lokanāth Goswāmi, Bhugarbha Goswāmi, Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji, Shri Goswāmi Vithalnāth ji Mahārāj, Swāmi Shri Haridās ji Mahārāj and Shri Hita Harivansha ji Mahārāj is connected to the history like a jewel with the string.

In Braj mainly two methods of circumambulation are popular. The route of the followers of Pushti sect starts from Mathurā, Vishrām Ghāt and the route of the other Vaishnava sects starts from Vrindāvan itself. The sequence of the tour and the resting points after that are almost the same for both the routes.

First Rest Point

The first rest point after starting from Mathurā is Madhuvana for a day. After visiting the neighbouring sites like Tāl vana, Kumud vana the tour takes its second rest at Shāntanu Kund. After visiting the sites here (after two days) the third rest point of circumambulation is at Bahulā vana (described in Mathurā section). After staying here for two days and seeing the sites here the tour makes the fourth stop at Shri Rādhā kund or Kusum sarowar for one day. After visiting the sites here the fifth stop is made at Gowardhan or Chandra sarowar. Here the rest is for two days. The sixth stop of the tour is at Jatipurā (See Girirāj section). The Vaishnavas of the Pushti sect stay here longer. The seventh stop of the tour is made at Deega where the stay

is for two days.

Ghātā is the eighth stop of the Braj tour. The ninth stop is at Kāmvana where three days are taken to visit all the sites (See Kāmvana). The tenth stop is Barsānā. After that Sankeit (see Vrishbhānupur) is the eleventh and Shri Nandagāon is the twelfth stop. After staying in Nanda gāon for three days, the thirteenth stop is made at Badi Baithan. Kotavana is the fourteenth stop of the tour. Fifteenth stop is Kosi. Paigām is the sixteenth and Sheirgarh is the seventeenth stop of the tour. Cheer ghāt is the eighteenth stop and Bachhavana (See Shri Nandagāon) is the nineteenth stop.

The twentieth stop of Braj tour is Vrindāvan. Here the tour stays for three days (see Vrindāvan). Next the twenty first stop is at Lohavana and Baladev is the twenty second stop of the tour.

The twenty third stop is Gokul (See Gokul mahāvana). After visiting the sites of Gokul and the neighbouring area, the tour comes back to Vishrām ghāt in Mathurā. After the worship of Shri Yamunā the tour comes to a complete stop.

Besides this sometimes certain changes are made in this sequence or order as per the convenience.



Leelā Sites, The Contribution of Nature And Bhoomi in Braj

The intimate devotees of Braj, the sentimental devotees and the eminent rasikas have seen Braj as something more than the definitions of the grammarians and the scholars of the scriptures and therefore they have expressed their feelings accordingly.

Braj, this very earthly Vrindāvan or Braj, which as the shadow of the Goloka Dhām is being easily perceived by the physical eyes, is looking gross or physical only because of the limitation of the eyes. For the divine eyes there is no limitation of grossness. There the *Leelā vihār* of Priyā-Priyatam is always in motion and that very same eternal vihār is being enjoyed in this eighty four *kosa* land every moment.

In the words of Shripād Jeeva Goswāmi, Braj has been called superior than Goloka because this earthly Vrindāvan or Braj is capable of providing the darshan and attainment of Goloka Dhām to its residents.

The site of signals and messages has been called Braj. The site of the *Leelā vihār* of Rasik Pranayi Priyā-Priyatam and the embodiments of love these Braj maidens has been called Braj, the entire nature, living beings and the nonliving insentient world steeped in the trance of love has been called Braj. The endless unfathomable beauty that is getting scattered every moment and the Leelā sites savouring that beauty has been termed as Braj. Not only this, where the *rasa vihār-vilās* of Priyā-Priyatam with these Braj maidens who are Priyā-Priyatam's own forms is always in motion, where there is neither a beginning nor an end, where love and only love is scattered everywhere, where the *rasa* of love is always surging in that ocean of love, where the Rasik Yugal and their beloveds Braj damsels drown and float in the whirlpool of *rasa* and god knows what else-that very place is Braj. Where there is *rasa* and *rasa* only and the ones empowered and entitled to enjoy that *rasa* are the Braj damsels, the intimate devotees of the Yugal and other emotional devotees who are absorbed in them.

The Leelās of Priyā-Priyatam always remain in motion. Those very same sites have been gracing all the living beings, are gracing even now and are getting restless to grace more. From where do we get those ears empty of the noise of the world which can enjoy that divine sweet rasa, those eyes which only see the Leelā vihār of Priyā-Priyatam pervading the eighty four *kosa* land, above all that heart empty of all worldly desires that can collect that sweetness and taste those showering rasa drops.

The Leelā sites of the time of Shri Krishna had almost disappeared in the course of time and due to other various reasons.

These almost lost and disappearing sites were salvaged by Shri Vajranābha ji, the great grandson of Lord Shri Krishna in the guidance of great sage Shri Shāndilya. The work of the salvage of many Leelā sites remained undone and as time passed only the ruins and remains were left of them.

Shri Shri Ramānujāchārya ji Mahārāj and Shri Shri Nimbārkaachārya ji Mahārāj had already made their contribution. Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj made special contribution for the protection of *dharma*. He toured India several times and propagated the recitation of Shrimad Bhāgwat and the worship of child Krishna. He lived in Braj. His son Gosāin Shri Vithalnāth ji also remained dedicated to the propagation and promotion of the *dharma*. Many goswāmis and āchāryas including Shri Gokulnāth ji salvaged and rehabilitated the almost disappearing sites of Braj.

In Bengal Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu flowed the river of devotion. He sent Shri Bhugarbha Goswāmi, Shri Lokanāth ji, Shri Roop ji and Sanātan ji to Braj to manifest the sites of pilgrimage. They came to Braj and seeing the sites almost disappearing became anguished. Based on the indications received in the moments of anguish they went to those sites and lamented poignantly and prayed, "O Leelā sites! Please manifest and give *darshan* to us so that the living beings of Kaliyuga can be delivered." The same happened. Many *tirthas* and sites of Leelā appeared before the devotees and gave darshan to them. Those sites by the name of *tirthas* connected to the Leelās have appeared for our physical eyes even today. These are the very same sites of Nitya Leelā which are connected to one or the other Leelā of Shri Krishna. They organize Leelās as per the wish and interest of Shri Krishna even today. Here even the Nature is conscious and eternal.

How is this Braj and the form of *Leelās* constantly in motion here. Given below are some emotions and indications of feelings described in the episodes of *Leelās* seen and experienced by a divine saint-

"Come friends! Let us hide in the vines and bushes in the alleys of the Kadamba vana and see the novel ways of the new *keli mādhuri* of rasa clever Yugal and then catching those Experts of keli and generating new waves in the rasa ocean of humour..... organize some other new keli."

An active energy spread amongst the friends. Shaking the hand of Shri Lalitā they said, "Sakhi! How did you take our side today? By accepting the challenge of revealing the private *keli mādhuri* of *keli* adepts Kishore Kishori, you have amazed and astounded us today."

Episode One

"Let us go Kishori! There is no point in delaying now. The cool white moonlight coming down from the sky is radiating in the *kunja-nikunja*. The winter breeze feeling lazy has gone to sleep, god knows where. Who knows when she might get up stretching herself and then shaking the vines and the trees, stirring the waters of Shri Yamunā start blowing as if intoxicated. Let us go! I have taken your soft shawl as well." Priyā ji smiled. She got up from the bed. Taking the shawl from the *sakhi*, She put it on Her shoulder and holding the *sakhi*'s arm directed her to move.

(With gratitude from the scripture Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorva Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji)

The Nature of Braj is not inert, it is conscious. *Leelā* of Shri Krishna is always in motion in Braj. The devotees are savouring it even today. The desired way to experience these sites is by contemplating the *Leelās*. Who can say when this contemplation providing the direct vision of Shri Krishna and His beloved *sakhis* will make us experience their *Leelās* directly?

The Nature of Braj, its trees, its enchanting *nikunjās*, the banks of Shri Yamunā, all these are connected with the delightful *Leelās* of Shri Krishna. These sites are gracefully eager even today to give us the taste of those *Leelās* - for that an intense desire and continuous asking are necessary.

Braj Bhoomi is divine, it is transcendental. The Nature here is not just Nature alone. It is the *Leelā parikar* which not only assuming

forms as per the wish of Shyām Sundar becomes an assistant in the *keli* of Shyām Sundar but is also a flourishing, blooming instrument for the completion of the Leelā. This Nature of Braj, a *Leelā parikar* is capable of providing the darshan of Shri Krishna to the ones who are its devotees. Many delightful experiences of many great ones are connected to these blissful *nikunjas*, trees and vines, the banks of Shri Yamunā and many sites of Braj. Shri Jagannath Prasād Bhaktamāli ji Mahārāj often used to say, 'The trees and the vines are capable of giving the darshan of the *Leelā* of Shri Krishna and are capable of giving complete grace positively.' There is a possibility of contrary happening in the case of being in the shelter of someone (in a human body) but on taking the shelter of Shri Krishna *Leelā parikar*, the Nature of Braj and on praying sincerely, even these trees and vines are capable of providing the *darshan* of Shri Krishna. 'Jān' and 'Ajān' trees in the foot hills of Shri Girirāj are the visible proof. Even today many such examples can be seen. As proofs, many saints of experience *virājmān* in their physical body are guiding our paths even today. While visiting a certain Leelā site if our heart and mind become absorbed and experience blissfulness, it is proof in itself. Do we need more concrete proof?

The sites here sweep their thorny paths, clean them for the *vihār* of Priyā-Priyatam and make them useful for Leelā. Braj Bhoomi dissolves the thorns, pebbles and stones in itself, makes the site suitable for *vihār* and considers itself blessed and content.

The foothill of Shri Girirāj has given and is giving a form and shape to the experiences of many great saints. When revered pandit Gayāprasādji, a saint of the highest order, *virājmān* in Dān ghāti was asked, 'Mahārāj! It is the opinion of the experienced people that those who come in the refuge of Shri Girirāj ji certainly get the experience of his causeless mercy and grace. You have been *virājmān* here for long. You must have experienced it.' Whatever was said by him, I will try to write the same as it is. His small serious words were, "Rasikan nei sānchi kahee hai. Mero kahā hai, main to peta bharabei kee tāin paryo hun" i.e. "The *Rasikas* have spoken the truth. As far as I am concerned, I live here only to fill my stomach." You will be able to infer what is evident from this humble saying.

Shri Priyāsharan ji Mahārāj was deeply dedicated to Braj and the sites of Braj. He often used to say, "Brother! To take the name of Shyām Sundar is beyond your capacity. Even to make attempts for

His attainment is not within your control. Therefore somehow keep living in the refuge of these Leelā sites, they will give you the love for Priyā-Priyatam themselves." One mahātmā Shri Madanmohandas Bābā ji Mahārāj of Nandagāon had deep dedication for the Leelā sites of Braj, for its *raja*, trees and the abode. He used to say, "Brother! if the site did not appear for you and did not give you the transcendental *darshan* then what is the point." He had firm belief that these sites gave shelter to the *sādhakas* and were capable of providing the love of Priyā-Priyatam to them.

In Sankeit village for the safety of a tree a wall was made around it by Shri Rādhā Mādhav Sansthān, Gorakhpur. That Peepal tree was there for all to see until three years ago. Last year it was cut once it dried. That tree was connected to the Leelā experiences of many great saints. Many of those who saw the strange incident of the three trees in the fields in front of Imalitalā about fifteen- twenty years ago are still present in Shri Vrindāvan. When a branch of the tree was cut many had seen the blood drops falling. The Neem tree in the garden of Dāu ji which used to make its joy and elation felt during the singing of the names of the Lord by Ramdās Bābā ji is still there and is attracting a lot of sentimental devotees by waving its flag of loftiness.

Nature and Leelā are not separate. Nature assists in different ways in the *keli* of Priyā-Priyatam by arranging the instruments of Leelā, since being a *Leelā parikar* it is alive and assuming a form useful for Leelā, looking beautiful in the blissful *keli* of Yugal as a *Leelā* instrument, it is extremely fortunate.

The restlessness to meet the Priyatam that is permeating the exuberant and blissful crowd going towards Nanda Palace, the delectable sweetness of the beauty of the Priyatam, the Leelā arrangement of a Braj maiden who is setting up a prelude to some Leelā, the morning languor on the sweet face beautified by the smooth curly hair are inviting signals, enough to make anyone emotionally helpless and powerless.

Who wouldn't get intoxicated by the ambrosial sweetness of Shyām Sundar going through the grazing alleys following the cows and calling Hee-O, Hee-O, giving *rasa* invitations by means of sidelong glances or by the resonance of His sweet laughter or by means of arranging the *pitāmbar* and sometimes by means of saying amusing things to the sakhās, giving the address of kunjja- nikonja to His beloveds. O friend ! Today we will not go to the delightful nikonja

near the 'Bahak vana' of Nandagrām, because although the water there is cool but the water for the cows to drink is a little far from there. Giving the addresses of the sites of Leelā to the sakhis by speaking in such a way Nandanandan is giving joy to all.

Who wouldn't get yearnful for the rasaful noose of Shyām Sundar Who, seeing the crowd of sakhis going in the forest alleys to sell milk and yogurt, starts blowing His flute from a distance, mesmerising them, gives rasaful invitations and creates a prelude to *rasa vihār* in various *kunjas*.

On the pretext of filling the pots at the *panaghat* (river bank where water is drawn) these Braj maidens, with their hearts and minds (also called *ghat*) filled with love, are not going there just to fill water in the pots. "Panaghat Jān Dai Ree, Panaghat Jāt Hain" meaning O friend! Let me go to the river bank otherwise my vow (*pana*) of meeting the Priyatam will diminish (*ghat*). To protect this promise or vow the blissful crowd of the Braj maidens goes to the river bank with the pots. Savouring the ambrosial glances of Priyatam as they put their pots in the water to fill them, the blissful flute starts resonating. Who knows if after that the Braj maidens come back with filled pots or empty pots. O Sakhi! All this is the revelation of that river bank only.

Sometimes He causes these damsels who are selling the milk and yogurt to say, "Govind Leihu, Leihu Koi Govind" meaning buy Govind somebody buy Govind.

Who will not become absorbed in *rasa* after experiencing the delectable teasing, quarreling and arguing, twisting and turning in pride and ego, the sweet talks and sweet glances in the deserted alleys, in the *nikunjas* at the banks of Yamunā and after savouring the water sports.

The crowd of *sakhās* that arrived on the pretext of grazing, suddenly stopped the Braj maidens coming down the narrow pathways by appearing as if from everywhere and then this Pranayi Rijhawār, asking for special *rasa* on the pretext of asking for milk, sometimes gets absorbed in the rasaful planning of *Dān-Mān* and sometimes soaking these maidens in *rasa*, gets submerged in the *rasa* Himself. O Shri Girirāj! All this is becoming possible only because of your grace .

In the afternoon at Shri Rādhā Kund and Shyām Kund after being in the Lalitā-Nandadā *nikunja* Priyatam Shyām Sundar is *virājmān* in Madan-Sukhadā-*nikunja* suffusing Shri Vishākā ji in *rasa* and providing bliss to all.

These solitary and private caves of Girirāj converting into

Leelās of *rasa vihār* remain soaked with the blissful glimpse of *Shayan keli* (pastime of sleeping) and this delectable hustle bustle of the milk maids merges quietly in the many blissful Leelās of *dān*.

When the narrow alley of ‘Sānkhari Khor’ the blissful site in Gahawar vana, converting into *Dān keli* that aggravated due to the rebuking, reproving and forbidding of *mān*, gets converted into divine *rasa vilās* in Vilas Gadhi then these sites fill themselves with the spillovers of those rasadrops.

What is this if not the beautiful grace of the sites of Leelā themselves who becoming soaked and nourished in the blissful solitary Leelās of *Priyā-Priyatam*, carefully preserving that very atmosphere in their bosoms and distributing the same to us today are making those Leelās visible for us and are becoming restless to make us taste those Leelās.



Braj Bhoomi Mohini

MATHURĀ



Chapter One

देवक्या पालितो गर्भे लालितोऽङ्ग यशोदया ।
यशोदयायुतो बालो गोपालो रमतां हृदि ॥

THE OTHER NEIGHBOURING SITES

1. Ambikāvan
2. Kumudvan
3. Ganesharā (Gandheshwar Tirtha)
4. Tālvan (Tārasigrām)
5. Datiyā
6. Madhuvan (Māholigrām)
7. Mādhuri Kund
8. Bahulāvan (Vāti grām)
9. Satohā (Shāntanu Kund)

“भूगोल चक्रे सप्तपुर्यो भवन्ति तासां मध्ये साक्षात्
ब्रह्म गोपालपुरीरिति चक्रेण रक्षिता हि वै मथुरेति” ॥

(श्रीगोपाल तापनी)

Almighty Lord Shri Krishna's birth place Mathurā is transcendental and beyond Māyā. Amongst the seven cities of Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Māyā, Kānchi, Kāshi, Avanti and Dwārāvati on this earth, Mathurā is *satchidānandmayi*. No kind of catastrophe can befall on the divine city as it is protected by Sudarshan Chakra (discus of the Lord). The place where Lord Krishna himself manifested how can any inauspiciousness ever occur there. In fact Mathurā is more praiseworthy than Vaikuntha.

It is a very ancient city. There are proofs of its existence even in Vedic times. Killing of Lavanāsura, son of king Madhu by Shatrughna ji in Tretā yuga is a well known story. Since it was the birth place of Lord Krishna in Dwāpar yuga, its importance increased many fold. The relation of Shri Krishna Dwaipāyan Vyās ji with Mathurā (Braj) is also well known. According to Vārāha Purān Shri Krishna Gangā Tirtha located between Soma and Vaikuntha Tirthas in Mathurā has the honour of being the place of penance of Vyās ji. This place exists even today.

Even today in the rainy season or during floods one can see in many places, various water streams flowing towards Yamunā ji or merging with her. In the past when the water flow used to be high, perhaps this high flow of water was permanently present in Saraswati Tirtha, Krishna Gangā and Dhārāpatan. Till date the importance of these places is well known everywhere.

In the course of time many ups and downs came, the ancient sites of the Mathurā city were mostly destroyed but the great city itself situated at the bank of Shri Yamunā continued to exist as it is.

The grand houses and sky high lofts of the palatial buildings, the banks of Yamunā ji adorned with gems and jewels, the beautiful roads and pathways, the palaces of the rich, the beautiful gardens and the assembly halls and the houses of common citizens are adding to the magnificence and the opulence of the city.

Even today Mathurā city associated with many divine *Leelās* of Lord Krishna, imbued with the experiences of many *Rasikas*, steeped

in the divine miracles of many Thākur deities and preserving the sweet memories of many saints and devotees in its womb, is attracting all *Vaishnavas*.

This is the same city where the Lord of the universe Shri Krishna appeared in the prison with His bedazzling beauty, glorifying the face of the earth. Shri Krishna and Balrāma always wander in its alleys, its gardens and the market places. The women folk of Mathurā fully acquainted with the enchanting and the bewitching beauty of the two brothers, have been drinking the same impatiently and restlessly.

On learning that Shri Krishna was arriving in Mathurā these womenfolk filled with delirium left behind all the household work as it is and doing senseless makeup in a dazed stupor ran to their balconies to get His *darshan*. Beholding the dark beauty of the Lord which brings joy even to Shri Laxmi ji and drinking His furtive playful glances and the sweetness of His smile, the women of Mathurā overpowered by their feelings of love for the Lord received Him in their hearts by way of their eyes and embraced Him in their hearts again and again to quench their thirst from times unknown.

Not just this, every place here is imprinted with His foot prints, osculated with His various sports and steeped in His various divine *Leelās*.

The city of Mathurā is not merely a physical place as perceived by the physical eyes, it has in fact an eternal and perpetual relation with the divine and transcendental *Leelās* of the Lord. All the places here are divine, the river Yamunā is divine, her banks and *ghāts* are divine, the sand particles are divine, the houses and palaces are divine. The markets, the gardens and the people of Mathurā are all divine as they are Shri Krishna's intimate devotees. Therefore Mathurā and its divinity can be perceived only by the divine eyes.

Many *Leelā* sites associated originally with some or the other *Leelā* of the Lord can be seen by the common people even today. The construction at the place of birth of Shri Krishna was first done by the great grandson of the Lord, Shri Vajranābha ji. The city was first attacked by Mahmood Gajanavi and he destroyed many places of *Leelā*. Meer Munshi Ali Utvi writing about the grandeur and beauty of the temple of Lord Vāsudev ji said that it cannot be described in words or in pictures. Writing about the grandeur of the same temple Sultān Mahmood said that if anyone wanted to build it today, it would require at least 10 crore dinars and 200 years.

Gradually as peace was established, this temple was rebuilt in *samvat* 1207 by the king Vijay Chandra of Kannauj. Again the temple

was destroyed by Sikandar Lodi in *samvat* 1573. And thereafter built again. The French and Italian visitors described its artwork and beauty in 1669 AD. King Aurangzeb destroyed this temple in 1669 AD and built the mosque instead. In 1815 King Patnimal of Banaras bought the entire Katarā Keshav Dev area for the construction of the temple. With the inspiration of extremely revered Shri Hanuman Prasād Poddār ji, the editor of the magazine Kalyān and with the financial help of many devotional devotees from all over India, this temple that was in ruins, was built once again in a grand manner and now has the proud privilege of being called Krishna Janmasthan.

The ruins of the fort of Kansa are making a declaration about its historic antiquity.

How can one even begin to say anything in regard to the city of Mathurā. It is the central site of Braj and the birth place of the Lord Himself, therefore it deserves to be worshipped.

Form of Mathurā

इदं पदमं महाभागे सर्वेषां मुक्तिदायकम् ।
कर्णिकायां स्थितो देवः केशवः क्लेषनाशनः ॥

(आ० वा०)

Purānas describe Mathurā as being lotus shaped. Shri Keshavdev ji is seated on the central pericarp, Shri Hardev ji in Shri Girirāj ji is *virājmān* on the western petal, to the north Shri Govindadev ji is *virājmān* in Vrindāvan. The *darshan* of Shri Govindadev ji can release one from the cycle of death and birth. Seated on the petal in the east is Lord Vishrānti and on the southern petal is Vārāha dev ji who is the provider of all boons and fulfiller of all the wishes.

Importance

In the universe, India is supreme and in India the importance of Mathurā is unparalleled.

त्रिंशद् वर्षं सहस्राणि त्रिंशद् वर्षं शतानि च ।
यत्फलं भारते वर्षे तत्फलं मथुरा-स्मरन् ॥

(स्क० पु०)

The merit that is accrued by living in India for many years can be achieved by just remembering Mathurā city once. All the sins of a person are destroyed by bathing at different places in Mathurā and he earns the merit of performing Ashwamedh yagya at every step.

Lord Himself says –

न विद्यते च पाताले नान्तरीक्षे न मानुषे ।
समस्त मथुरायां हि प्रियं मम वसुन्धरे ॥

(आ० बा० पु०)

O Vasundharei ! No other place on this earth or the netherworld or anywhere in the universe is dearer to me than the city of Mathurā.

हरौ येषां स्थिरा भक्तिर्भूयसी येषु तत्कृपा ।
तेषामेवहि धन्यानां मथुरायां भवेद्रति ॥

(प० पु०)

Only those people develop attachment to the city of Mathurā who have steady and unshakable devotion at the feet of Shri Krishna and who are eligible for His abundant grace.

Again the Lord says, “O Vasundharei ! While I sleep, until then all the *tirthas* of the earth assemble and remain in Mathurā.”

जपोपवासो निरतो मथुरायां षडानन ।
जन्मस्थानं समासाद्य सर्वं पापैः प्रमुच्यते ॥

(स्क० पु०)

People who repeat or chant the names of the Lord or keep fasts in Mathurā Dhām earn the merit equal to that of doing the *darshan* of Lord’s birth place and are freed from all the sins.

By doing the circumambulation of Mathurā one can free oneself of the sins that are committed by drinking alcohol, killing of a Brahmin or a cow or breaking the vows of celibacy.

Even the heavenly abodes are freed of all the sins just by having the *darshan* of the people who coming from distant places circumambulate Mathurā city.

Moreover, by merely making a resolution that “I will live in Mathurā” one is freed from all kinds of bondage.

न दृष्ट्वो मथुरा येन दिदृक्ष्वा यस्य जायते ।
यत्र यत्र गतस्यास्य माथुरे जन्म जायते ॥

(प० पु०)

If anyone with a wish to do the *darshan* of Mathurā dies before his wish is fulfilled, he will certainly be reborn in Mathurā. There is no doubt about that.

मकारे च थु कारे च , र कारे चान्त संस्थिते ।
 निष्पन्नो मथुरा शब्द ॐकारस्य ततः समः ॥
 महारुद्रो मकारः स्यात् थुकारो विष्णु संज्ञकः ।
 र कारोऽन्तस्थो ब्रह्मस्यात् त्रिशब्दं माथुरं भवेत् ॥
 अतः श्रेष्ठतमं क्षेत्रं सत्यमेव भवत्युत ।
 सत्रिदेव मयि मूर्तिर्मथुरा तिष्ठते सदा ॥

The word Mathurā is formed with the letter ‘Ma’ in the beginning, ‘Thu’ in the middle and ‘Rā’ in the end. That is why Mathurā is like OM. ‘Ma’ represents Shri Mahā Rudra, ‘Thu’ represents Shri Vishnu and ‘Rā’ represents Shri Brahmā and together they constitute the word Mathurā. Mathurā is a superior abode because it exists in the form of the Trinity of God.

अहो मधुपरी धन्या वैकुण्ठाच्च गरीयसी ।
 दिनमैकं निवासेन हरौ भक्ति प्रजायते ॥
 त्रिरात्रमपि ये तत्र वसन्ति मनुजा मुने ।
 हरिदृश्यति सुखं तेषां मुक्तानापि दुर्लभम् ॥

Aho! How blessed is Mathurā Dhām greater than Nārāyana Dhām Vaikuntha, where just by staying for a single day devotion to Hari is attained. And on staying for three nights, Shri Hari provides exclusive and intense love and attachment to Him which is a rare blessing even for those desirous of liberation.

तत्र मध्ये तु यत्स्थानमर्धचन्द्रं व्यवस्थितम् ।
 तत्रैव वासिनो लोका मुक्ति यान्ति न संशयः ॥
 अर्धचन्द्रे तु यः स्नानं कारितो नियताशनः ।
 तेनैव चाक्षया लोकाः प्राप्ता एव न संशयः ॥
 अर्धचन्द्रे मता देवि मम लोकं ब्रजन्ति ते,
 अन्यत्र तु मृता देवि अर्धचन्द्रे कृत क्रियाः ।
 तेऽपि मुक्ति गमिष्यन्ति दाहदिकर नैविसा ॥

(आ० वा०)

The pious place, having the shape of a half moon, in the centre of Mathurā, has a special significance. People who live here attain liberation. Those who die here attain Goloka Dhām, the Lords own Dhām effortlessly. Even those whose last rituals are performed here get liberated.

मथुरावासिनां ये तु दोषं पश्यन्ति पामराः ।
ते स्वदोषं न पश्यन्ति जन्म मृत्यु सहस्रदम् ॥

(प० पु०)

Residents of Mathurā are Lord Krishna's intimate devotees. One should not notice their faults and criticize. One who will find faults with them will never awaken to or become aware of his own weaknesses and shortcomings.

The greatness of Mathurā is beyond description. The eminent devotee Bilwamangal ji saw the son of Nanda and the daughter of Vrishbhānu smiling and wandering like an intoxicated elephant, helpless in love in the alleys of Mathurā and he suddenly broke into a song-

मौलिश्चन्द्रक भूषणे मरकत स्तम्भाभि रामं वपु-
र्वक्त्रं चित्र विमुग्ध हास मधुरे बाले विलोले दृशौ ।
वाचः शैशव शीतला मदगजश्लाघ्या विलासस्थिति-
र्मन्दमन्दमये क एष मथुरावीथीं मिथो गाहते ॥

(श्रीकृष्णकर्णामृत)

Shri Bilwamangal ji Mahārāj became emotionally powerless and helpless looking at the *vilāsmayi* state of Shri Priyā-Priyatam and at their furtive and restless glances. Savouring the rasaful efforts and endeavors of Shri Priyā-Priyatam, he is going in a trance. Beholding Shri Priyā-Priyatam, wandering in the alleys of Mathurā, he is experiencing ecstatic joy.

The sweetness of the smile of Shyām Sundar crowned with peacock feathers cast a spell on him. He had barely recovered from it, when the arrow like furtive glance pierced his heart and he sank into raptures. His heart started aching. After tasting that state of *vilās*, he became intoxicated and lost consciousness. He whispered softly, “Aha! The two oceans of sweetness, beauty and grace are wandering in the alleys of Mathurā radiating the splendour and the effulgence of their beauty.”

Mathurā has primarily remained the principal center of propagation and promotion of Shri Nimbārī sect in the past. In early days many teachers of different sects chose Mathurā for the development and promotion of dharma.

Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj came to Mathurā and saw the exceptional and unique Braj Bhoomi that was giving joy to the eyes and the mind with its forests, rows of trees, lakes, rivers and gardens.

Shrimadāchārya ji offered prayers in the temple of Keshavdev ji. He also had the *darshan* of Bhuteshwar, Mathurā Devi and Lord Vārāha and performed the week long recitation of Shrimad Bhāgwat.

Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji became overwhelmed with love upon arriving in Mathurā and started dancing in joy losing all consciousness of the outer world. The author of Bhakti Ratnākār has painted a vivid picture of the rapturous state of the Prabhu.

अहे श्रीनिवास ! कर केशव दर्शन ।
 एथा श्रीचैतन्य केला अद्भुत नर्तन ॥
 भासिल सकल लोक प्रेमेर वन्याय ।
 सबे कहे इहो एई श्रीकेशव राय ॥
 केशवेर माहात्म्य कहिते साध्य कार ।
 सप्तद्वीप प्रदक्षिणा प्रदक्षिणे जार ॥
 केशव कीर्तन सर्व पाप जाय क्षय ।
 कालविषे जे जे फल अन्त नाहि हय ॥

O! Shrinivās, Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu started dancing after the *darshan* of Lord Keshav overwhelmed with feelings of love. Who can describe the significance and the greatness of Lord Keshav, one circumambulation of whose is equal to the circumambulation of seven continents.

Even today the divinity and transcendence of Mathurā influences and inspires the hearts of many devotees.

We are now giving below a sixty year old strange story told by Rāi Sāhib Shri Mathurā dās ji as it is -

Rāi Sāhib was a senior officer of British government and was travelling in the first class of a train. A Muslim gentleman was sitting on the seat opposite him. After sometime when the train was about to start that gentleman took out a silver box from his pocket and took a pinch from it and put it in his mouth. Rāi Sāhib wondered if it was some expensive tobacco. Shortly, out of curiosity he asked the gentleman about the contents of the box. The gentle man said, “Sir! This is a very strange story. This box has the sand particles from the bank of Yamunā ji in Mathurā.”

He further said, “I am a Muslim, have some belief in God even and I live in Delhi. I like to stroll around alone in nights. One night I wandered off to the cremation ground and was surprised to see a few people singing and making merry at that hour. Coincidentally when I went to the same place the following night, I found all of them crying.

Surprised I asked them, “Brother! You seemed very happy yesterday, why are you so sad today?” They said, “We are all ghosts.” I was frightened on hearing this but stood my ground. They said further, “Yesterday a man was supposed to die and join us but a bull at the bank of Yamunā ji killed him with its horns. The horns were smeared with the sand particles of Mathurā. Hence the sand particles were transferred to his stomach. So he was liberated and did not join our team. This is why we are sad.” I was really surprised to hear this and developed a lot of faith and reverence. Since that day I carry the sand of Mathurā with me all the time.” Rāi Sahib said, “This experience of the Muslim gentleman influenced me greatly.”

Many such incidents occur from time to time in Mathurā and in Braj.

Holy and Sacred Sites of Mathurā

When Lord Shri Krishna incarnated in Braj His *parikar* appeared with Him. In their memory many places in Mathurā are worshipped as *tirthas*. We are now presenting below a short description of the main holy sites of Mathurā.

Shri Krishna Janmasthan

वसुदेव सुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनं ।
 देवकी परमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥¹
 मञ्जीर नूपुर रणन्नव रत्न काञ्ची-
 श्रीहार केसरि नख प्रति यन्त्र सङ्घम् ।
 दृष्ट्यार्ति हारि मसि बिन्दु विराजमानं
 वन्दे कलिन्द तनुजा तट बालकेलिम् ॥²

It is very difficult to know the objective behind the incarnation of the Lord. Only the Lord knows the real reason but it seems that the main objectives are to manifest His own Leelā form of condensed bliss and rasa, to destroy the wicked and to provide happiness to His devotees. In Shrimad Bhagwad Geetā the Lord proclaims.

1. I bow to Shri Krishna, son of Shri Vasudev, provider of bliss to mātā Devaki through vātsalya prem, killer of Kansa, Chānoor and others, worshipped deity of all the demigods and the guru of the whole world.
2. That child Krishna, who is absorbed in His child like efforts at the bank of Kālindi, with the sweet chiming sound of the anklets and the ornamental belt around His waist, radiating the infinite beauty, wearing an amulet of lion's nail, with a black dot on the forehead to protect Him from the evil eye, I pray to Him.

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दृष्टृताम् ।
धर्म संस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे-युगे ॥

To protect the righteous, to destroy the wicked and to establish and restore the *dharma*, I reveal myself age after age.

Mathurā received the honour of being the birth place of the Lord where He appeared at the end of Dwāpar of the twenty eighth *chātur yuga* of the Vaivaswat manvantar (the age of present Manu called Vaivaswat), on the eighth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhādra (Aug-Sep) i.e. the Krishnāshtami.

At that time, the atrocities were on the rise everywhere. The practice of *dharma* was but a facade. All the demigods were being tormented. Even the Mother Earth lost her patience therefore all of them went to Brahmā ji. Brahmā ji while praying to the Lord at the shore of *Ksheer sāgar*, the ocean of milk went into *samādhi*. He heard a divine voice based on which he gave assurances of the Lord's incarnation to the Mother Earth, Shankar ji and other demigods and told them that the Lord was going to appear in Braj at the house of Shri Vasudev ji and therefore they should all incarnate to serve Him.

To serve the Lord and His beloved Rādhā ji many *gopis* will also appear in Braj.

Hence, in the prison Vasudevji saw a child with four arms and with the mark of *shrivatsa* on the chest. He had the conch, the disc, the mace and the lotus in His hands and was wearing the necklace of *Kaustubha mani*. His complexion was of the hue of the blue clouds laden with water. On realising that the Lord Himself has appeared, Vasudevji was delighted and making many resolves in his mind paid his obeisance at the feet of the Lord and prayed. Devki ji also had the magnificent *darshan* of the Lord and prayed.

Salutations to the All Blissful Lord Shri Krishnachandra.

Even today that prison of Mathurā is famous as “Shri Krishna Janmasthan”. It is located on the north side of Potarā Kund. It seems the place has been newly constructed but the idols of Vasudev ji and Devki ji are grand and ancient.

King Aurangzeb, who was hostile and opposed to the Hindu dharma, destroyed the site of the birth of Shri Krishna and built a mosque in its place. Even today one can clearly notice that the lower part of the mosque is a temple and an attempt has been made to give the upper part the shape of a mosque. In the museum of Mathurā many such articles exist in the form of evidence that shed light on the importance of this place.

Even today this place is subtly distributing and transmitting its divinity. It was reconstructed as a grand temple on the inspiration of Shri Hanuman Prasād Poddār ji, the editor of Kalyān and is a great site to visit.

Shri Keshav Devji

प्रदक्षिणी कृता तेन सप्तद्वीपा वसुन्धरा ।
 प्रदक्षिणी कृता येन मथुरायान्तु केशवः ॥
 इह जनौ कृतं पापमन्य जन्म कृतं च यत् ।
 तत् सर्वं नश्यति शीघ्रं केशवस्य च कीर्तने ॥

(आ० वा० पु०)

The person, who has circumambulated Shri Keshavdevji *virājmān* in Mathurā, has actually circumambulated seven continents. All the sins of this and the previous births are destroyed immediately by singing the names of Keshavdevji.

This temple was constructed by Shri Vajranābhaji. After being destroyed several times, the present temple is not very old.

The Thākur idol currently resides at Rasdhan village of Auraiyā sub district in Kānpur district.

When Shriman Mahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji and Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu arrived here they were entranced by the enthralling beauty of the Lord.

Vishrām Ghāt

ततो विश्रान्ति तीर्थाख्यं तीर्थमंहो विनाशनम् ।
 संसारमरु संचार क्लेश विश्रान्तिदं नृणाम् ॥

(सौर पुराण)

Here is located a place called Vishrām tirtha which provides rest, even from the distresses and afflictions caused by wandering in the next world and arid deserts. Those who take a holy dip here go to Vaikuntha.

Ādi Vārāha Purān enunciates the special importance of Vishrām tirtha at the time of sunrise -

At sunrise in Vishrām tirtha, at midnoon in Deergha Vishnu and in the evening in Keshavdev ji the brilliance of Lord Vishnu is especially present. There is a hearsay that Lord Krishna sat under the shade of Girirāj ji and rested (*vishrām*) at this place after killing Kansa and since then this place is famous as Vishrām ghāt or Vishrām sthali.

Vishrām sthali has been an important place since a very long

time. In the 15th century even this place suffered from the injustices and discrimination against the Hindus brought on by the various decrees issued by Sikandar Lodi. After the crematory rites no Hindu could follow the rules and customs laid down in the scriptures. The *Yavans* had forbidden even bathing and offering libations of water to the deceased ancestors at this place.

When Hindus were under great distress due to the opposition of Sikandar Lodi, Āchārya Keshav Bhatt Kashmiri of Nimbārī sect and Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj had the restrictions at Vishrām Ghāt removed by the power of their will and their devotion.

Shri Vallabhāchārya ji's Assembly Site for Recitation

When Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj arrived here, this place had been reduced to being only the cremation ground of the Hindus. Sikandar Lodi had issued orders prohibiting the Hindus from bathing and performing any rites so that they could not complete their religious duties after the cremation.

Apart from this the barbers were also ordered not to shave the beards of the Hindus. The barbers were generally not available and the purpose behind this was to make the unshaven Hindus look like Muslims and be called Muslims. When Mahāprabhu ji arrived here he took a bath in Yamunā ji and then sent two of his attendants to Sikandar Lodi asking him to revoke his orders. It is said that Sikandar Lodi was very impressed by the unnatural courage of Mahāprabhu ji and took his orders back. The name and fame of Mahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji spread all around. Mahāprabhu ji did the week long recitation of Shrimad Bhāgwat here and made the atmosphere of this place holier.

When Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji came to Braj, he stayed at Vishrām Ghāt.

Gatashramadev

सर्व तीर्थेषु यत्स्नानैः सर्व तीर्थेषु यत्फलम् ।
तत् फलं लभते देवि दृष्ट्वा देवं गतश्रमम् ॥

(आ० बा० पु०)

O Devi! The merits accrued by bathing at all the *tirthas* are easily achieved by just having the *darshan* of Gatashramadev ji at Vishrām tirtha. Located at the Vishrām Ghāt, it is the place of Shri Rāmānuja sect.

Bhuteshwar Mahādev

मथुरायाञ्च देवत्वं क्षेत्रपालो भविष्यसि ।
त्वयि दृष्टे महादेव मम क्षेत्र फलं लभेत् ॥

(आ० वा०)

(Shri Krishna said) Dev! You will be the guardian of Mathurā region. After having your *darshan*, O Mahādev! People will attain my divine abode.

Based on this name of Shiva, city of Mathurā is called Bhuteshwar. The idol of Mahādev ji is very ancient. He is considered to be the guardian of the west direction. When Lord Shankar came for darshan of Lord Krishna in Braj, he resided at four different places, at Bhuteshwar in Mathurā, at Gopeshwar in Vrindāvan, at Nandishwar in Nand grām and at Chakreishwar in Girirāj.

Potarā Kund

Adorned with beautiful stairs this square pond, canopied by huge dense trees holding the memories of Shri Krishna's child Leelā is making us familiar with that divinity even today. It is located near Shri Krishna Janmasthan. It is believed that after the birth of the Lord, His clothes were washed and cleaned in this kund.

Shri Yamunā ji

अनन्त गुण भूषिते शिवविरञ्चि देवस्तुते ।
घनाघननिभे सदा ध्रुवपराशरभीष्टदे ॥
विशुद्ध मथुरा तटे सकल गोप गोपी वृते ।
कृपा जलधि संश्रिते मम मनः सुखं भावये ॥

(श्रीयमुनाष्टक श्रीमद्वल्लभाचार्यजी)

The one who is the ocean of virtues and qualities, who is revered by Shiva, Brahmā and other demigods, who is constantly shining like a cluster of solemn cloud, who is the fulfiller of the wishes of Dhruv and Parāshar ji, at whose banks is situated the holy and pious city of Mathurā and the one who lives in the refuge of the Lord of Braj Who is the ocean of mercy and Who is surrounded by the cowherds and the gopis, O! That Shri Yamune please give happiness to our hearts and minds.

About Shri Yamunā, the saying Yam-Nā meaning No Yama is very famous in Braj. She destroys all the sins of her devotees and provides them with exclusive and intense love and attachment to Shri Krishna.

On one hand while Yamunā ji is perceptible to the physical eyes as a flowing water mass, on the other hand she is a Shri Krishna Leelā *parikar* and is always *virājmān* as *sakhi* Kālindi.

While all the sects have unequivocally accepted that there is no other like her, the Pushti sect believes her to be the one who gets the *brahma- sambandha* done and who can get the grace of Shri Krishna easily.

Goswāmi Vithaldās ji in Yamunā Shatpadi has referred to Yamunā ji as the bearer of the intimate Krishna devotees whose hearts are always adorned with the Lord.

The devotees of Lord Krishna hold her in a very high esteem. After bath and āchaman (sipping water from the palm of the right hand as a ritual purification) they pray for the attainment of Lord Krishna. Being in contact with the devotees who are always absorbed in the dark and beautiful Lord, Yamunā ji has become dark coloured herself.

Sri Yamunā ji is to be served by everyone. Love personified gopis have become dearer to Shri Krishna by serving Yamunā ji. By her grace Yamunā ji breaks all the illusions of her devotees and provides devotion to Krishna, we bow to her.

जय यमुने जय भीति निवारिणी संकट नाशिनी पावयमाम् ।

O Shri Yamune! Victory unto you, you are capable of destroying all the fears and the perils. Please accept me.

Significance of Yama Dwiteeyā

Shri Yudhishthir ji once asked a question to Shri Krishna who was *virājmān* in Dwārakā. “O Dwārakādheesh! The destroyer of all sufferings, Shri Krishna! I want to know the significance of the word Yama Dwiteeyā. Please be merciful and shed some light on its importance. O Vishwātman! Kindly explain in detail the origin of the word and rules and restraints to be followed on this day and please shed some light on the viability and the usefulness of this festival.”

Shri Krishna said, “O Yudhishthir! Yamunā ji had invited her brother Yamarāj on this day for a meal. Satisfied and happy with the food Yamarāj granted Yamunā ji her wish that was for the welfare of the mankind. Since then this day is famously called Yama Dwiteeyā or Bhrātri Dwiteeyā.”

On this day bathing in Yamunā ji is considered to be especially significant. If a brother and a sister take a bath together at Vishrānt tirtha in Mathurā, they have no fear left of Yamarāj. What to speak of the greatness of the remembrance of Sri Yamunā ji when even Mathurā city situated at its bank is capable of cutting all worldly

bondages. Even today lacs of brothers and sisters take bath in Yamunā ji on Bhrātri Dwiteeyā day and gain the many benefits.

Avimukta Tirtha

अविमुक्ते नरःस्नातो मुक्तिं प्राप्नोत्य संशयम् ॥
तत्राथ मुञ्चते प्राणान् मम लोकं स गच्छति ॥

(आ० वा०)

The person who bathes at Avimukta Tirtha is liberated without any doubt and the one who breathes his last here certainly goes to Shri Krishna's divine abode.

‘ऐई अविमुक्ति तीर्थे स्नाने मुक्ति हय ।

(भ० र०)

Guhya Tirtha

अस्ति चान्यतरद् गुह्यं सर्वं संसार मोक्षणम् ।
तस्मिन् स्नातो नरो देवि ! मम लोके महीयते ॥

O Devi! (*Vasundharei*) there is one Guhya tirtha which gives liberation from all material bondages and the one who bathes there is revered even in Vaikuntha.

Surya Tirtha

ततः परं सूर्यं तीर्थं सर्वं पाप प्रमोचनम् ।
वैरोचनेन बलिना सूर्यं स्त्वाराधितोः पुरा ॥
आदित्येऽहनि संक्रांतौ ग्रहणे चन्द्र सूर्ययोः ।
तस्मिन् स्नातो नरो देवि राजसूय फलं लभेत् ॥

(आ० वा०)

Here is Surya tirtha where Bāli the son of Virochan worshipped the Sun God. It is capable of dissolving all sins. O Devi! The one who takes bath here on a Sunday or on the day of *samkrānti* or during the solar or the lunar eclipse gets the same merit that is acquired on performing a *Rājasuya yagya*.

The other sites close by are **Bata Swāmi Tirtha, Prayāg Tirtha, Kankhal Tirtha and Tinduk Tirtha.**

Dhruv Tirtha

यत्र ध्रुवेण सन्तप्तमिच्छया परमं तपः ।
तत्रैव स्नान मात्रेण ध्रुवलोके महीयते ॥

ध्रुवतीर्थे तु वसुधे यः श्राद्धं कुरुते नरः ।
पितृन् संतारयेत् सर्वान् पितृपक्षे विशेषतः ॥¹

(आ० बा० पु०)

After being reproached by stepmother Suruchi and inspired by his mother Suniti, child Dhruv came to Madhuvan and started doing penance for the attainment of the Lord.

The whole universe was shaken by his resolute endurance and steadfast love for God. When the child meditated on the Lord withholding his breath with feelings of devotion even the demigods were agitated. Dhruvji was so absorbed in his meditation that even when Lord Nārāyana appeared he remained oblivious. When Lord Nārāyana concealed His form from Dhruvji's heart, only then Dhruvji was startled and came out of *samādhi*.

The young and innocent Dhruv could not even sing any hymns or prayers to the Lord. After he was touched by the conch of the Lord, Dhruvji asked from Him the company of the saints which is very rare to find so that as taught by them, singing and meditating on the glories of His names and His Leelās, detaching himself from the material world, his love for the Lord keeps growing.

The omniscient Lord was aware of Dhruvji's resolve. He blessed Dhruv and gave him the *Dhruv pada* (permanent status). Dhruvji returned home. His father Uttānpād was very happy to have his son back and delegated all the responsibilities of the kingdom to him.

The place where Dhruvji did his penance and worship has become famous as Dhruv Teelā and even today the atmosphere of this place carries a certain divinity.

Shri Hari Vyāsdev ji after getting initiation from Shri Bhatt ji started living here. He was a great devotee and the story of his remarkable contribution towards the propagation and promotion of Nimbārk sect has been narrated in Bhaktamāl by Shri Nābhādās ji –

‘हरिव्यास तेज हरि भजनबल, देवी को दीक्षा दई ।’

Shri Nimbārkāchārya ji, Keshav Bhatt Kashmiri, Shri Bhatt ji and Shri Vyās ji used to live here. The *samādhis* of the three āchāryas except that of Shri Nimbārkāchārya ji are made on Shri Nārad Teelā. This is an ancient place of Shri Nimbārk sect.

Towards the south of Dhruv Tirtha is Rishi Tirtha. To the south of Rishi Tirtha are Moksha Tirtha and Koti Tirtha where if cakes or

1. Here Dhruv ji had practiced austerities. Just by bathing in this tirtha one becomes venerable in Dhruv loka. Those who offer food to their ancestors in pitri paksha in Dhruv tirtha, they liberate all their ancestors.

balls of rice or flour are offered to the spirits of the ancestors, then the abode of the deceased ancestors is definitely attained. Further ahead of these are Bodhi Tirtha and Asi Kund and further north Nav Tirtha is located.

Sanyaman Tirtha

ततः संयमनं नाम तीर्थं त्रैलोक्य विश्रुतम् ।
तत्र स्नातो नरो देवि मम लोकं हि गच्छति ॥

(आ० वा०)

Next to this is the Sanyaman Tirtha acclaimed in the three worlds. Those who bathe here certainly go to my divine abode.

It is believed that Lord Krishna took a bath here after killing Kansa, thus the importance of this place has become unparalleled.

Dhārā Patan and Ghantā Bharnak Tirtha

By bathing at Dhārā Patan tirtha one achieves the happiness of heavens and the one who dies here attains the Abode of the Lord.

Ghantā Bharnak Tirtha destroys all the sins and the one who bathes here is worshipped in Surya Lok. Nāg Tirtha and Brahma Tirtha are close by.

Soma Tirtha (Gau Ghāt), Vaikuntha Ghāt, Krishna Gangā Ghāt

सोमवैकुण्ठयोर्मध्ये कृष्ण गंगेति कथ्यते ।
तथा तप्यत्तपो व्यासो मथुरायां स्थितोऽमलः ॥

(वा० पु०)

Between the Soma Tirtha and Vaikuntha Tirtha is Krishna Gangā Tirtha. Shri Vyās ji had done his penance here.

By bathing in Soma Tirtha all kinds of happiness is attained. Those bathing in Vaikuntha Tirtha are freed from all sins and go to Vishnu Lok.

Bathing in Krishna Gangā is ten times more meritorious than bathing in Naimishāranya, Prayāg, Pushkar and other Tirthas.

Chakra Tirtha

चक्र तीर्थन्तु विख्यातं माथुरे मम मण्डले ।
यस्तत्र कुरुते स्नानं त्रिरात्रौ पोषितो नरः ॥
स्नान मात्रेण मनुजो मुच्यते ब्रह्म हत्यया ।

In Mathurā Chakra Tirtha is very famous. One who takes a bath here after fasting for three nights is freed from the sin of killing a Brahmin.

Nearby is Saraswati Patan Tirtha where river Saraswati meets Shri Yamunā ji.

Dashāshwamedh Tirtha

दशाश्वमेधमृषिभिः पूजितं सर्वदा पुरा ।
तत्र ये स्नान्ति नियतास्तेषां स्वर्गो न दुर्लभः ॥

(आ० वा०)

Worshipped by the sages in ancient times, this is Dashāshwamedh Tirtha. For someone who lives here and bathes in this tirtha, heaven is easily attained.

It is believed that Nāg kings performed many *Ashwamedh yagyas* here.

Gokarn Tirtha

ततो गोकर्णतीर्थाख्यं तीर्थं भुवनविश्रुतम् ।
विद्यते विश्वनाथस्य विष्णोरत्यन्तवल्लभम् ॥

(सौ० पु०)

After this there is Gokarn Tirtha of Lord Vishwanāth, which is very dear to Lord Vishnu. Located at the very end of Dhoorkot considered to be the ancient border of Mathurā this Mahādev idol is believed to be the guardian of the north direction.

Asi Kund Tirtha

एका वराहसंज्ञा च तया नारायणी परा ।
वामना च तृतीया वै चतुर्थी लांगली शुभा ॥
एताश्चतस्रो यः पश्येत् स्नात्वा कृण्डेऽसिसंज्ञके
चतुःसागरपर्यन्ता क्रान्ता तेन धरा ध्रुवम् ।
तीर्थानां माथुराणाञ्च सर्वेषां फलमश्नुते ॥

(वा० पु० मथुरा महात्म्य)

One who takes bath at Asi Kund Tirtha after doing *darshan* of Lord Vārāha, Lord Nārāyana, Lord Shri Vāman and auspicious Lāngali, he is considered to have done the circumambulation of the earth surrounded by four oceans and gets the fruit of having visited all tirthas.

Shri Dwāarakādheesh ji

Lord Dwāarakādheesh is worshipped with lot of love and reverence as per the customs of Pushti sect. He is the centre of attraction for lacs of devotees and pilgrims. For pilgrims coming to Mathurā from far and wide the biggest attraction is Shri Dwāarakādheesh ji.

This temple in the middle of Asikund bāzār is famous as Seth ji's temple or temple of Rājādhirāj.

Shri Gokuldās Pārikh the accountant of the Gwālior state, got this temple constructed in samvat 1871 to fulfill his brother's wish and gifted it to the *goswāmis* of Vallabha sect.

In the month of Shrāwan or the rainy season the festival of swings here and the clouds with various hues and colours are particularly worth seeing.

Kansa Kilā

The fort almost in ruins, at the banks of river Yamunā is known as Kansa Kilā. One learns from the statues found here that this place was once the palace of Kansa.

On the basis of the research done recently it has been proved that in the square there used to be a temple in the place of present Jāmā masjid.

Shri Ambareesh Teelā

Serving as the reminder of Shri Ambareeshji's exclusive devotion and attesting to the Lord's vow of bearing the *yogakshema* (making available and then maintaining that which is in the best interest) of His devotees, this Ambareesh Teelā is guiding our way.

Shri Ganesh Ghāt

On the way from Chāmundā Devi to Gokarn Mahādev this place visible from a distance towards the north is on a height and is called Ganesh Teelā. Here Lord Ganesh is present in a very attractive form.

It is believed that this idol of Lord Vighnahara is very ancient. Shri Bāji Rāo Peshwā, the prime minister of Shivā ji, after defeating the mughals and winning the independence of Mathurā, had worshipped this Ganesh idol. During the same time he appointed the fore fathers of present priests Pt Deenānāth ji and Kālicharan ji for the worship of

Lord Ganesh. As per that order they have been doing the worship and service till date.

Many miracles continue to occur at *siddha* Ganesh and one such incident is being narrated below.

Vaidya Shri Vināyak Dutta Sharmā of Amritsar was ordered by this Ganeshji in a dream to get the mask (which had formed due to constant application of vermilion to his body by the devotees) enveloping His idol removed. Shri Vaidya ji consulted with his family members and after coming to Mathurā, proceeded to Vrindāvan. Here he consulted with many noted and renowned personalities and with the help of a priest of Vrindāvan, called Pt. Deenānāth ji and Kālicharan ji to Vrindāvan and told them the whole story. In the beginning both of them refused to remove the mask fearing that some untoward incident may come to pass but eventually agreed and proceeded to Mathurā with many devotees and priests. The first attempt to remove the mask failed and all present were stunned. Shri Vaidya ji requested Panditji to try again and this time when Pt. Deenānāth ji tried to remove the mask while praying to Ganeshji, it came out easily and the shining Ganesh form was revealed for all to see. When this vermilion mask was weighed later, it was found to be fifteen kgs.

Afterwards the religious ablutions and the worship of Lord Ganesh in sixteen ways were carried out traditionally.

This incident of 1980 was reported in details in a magazine called 'Ishwar Prāpti'.

Malhapurā

The area between Potarā Kund and Keshavdev ji is famous as Malhapurā. It is believed that the wrestlers of Kansa used to live here.

Durwāsā Muni Āshram

This ancient place is situated in the front of Vishrām Ghāt across Yamunā ji.

Shri Dāu ji Madan Mohan ji

Near Rām Ghāt on the bank of Yamunā ji the temples of Vallabha sect are located. The seats of the sixth house of Pushti sect is here.

Rang Bhoomi

Rang Bhoomi was constructed by Kansa to show *rangotsava* to Lord Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji.

Rangshālā

ततः पौरान् पृच्छमानो धनुषः स्थानमच्युतः ।
तस्मिन् प्रविष्टो ददृशे धनुरैन्द्रमिवाद्भुतम् ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/42/15)

After receiving the invitation of Bhojrāj Kansa, Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji along with the Brajwāsīs entered Mathurā. They kept wandering through the various marketplaces of Mathurā with certain inquisitiveness. The women of Mathurā were stunned by their beauty. They carried these beautiful forms into their hearts through their eyes and pacified their eternal thirst and became absorbed in bliss.

On the way, the two brothers liberated the washer man and gratified Kubjā (hunch backed woman) and then came into the rangshālā. They became happy looking at its beauty.

After that Shri Krishna asked the residents the way to the place of *Dhanush yagya*. On reaching the site He saw an astounding bow which was like a rainbow. Kansa had only malice for Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna had already killed many of his close aides. Kansa had gotten the Rangshālā constructed deceptively. Beautifully decorated on all sides Rangshālā had flowers on all the walls and festoons tied everywhere. There were separate places assigned for the seating of renowned and valiant warriors and noblemen. Rangshālā made like a theatre, resplendent with the presence of Lord Krishna and Balrāma ji was attracting all.

As soon as Shri Krishna entered He lifted the bow radiant like a rainbow with His left hand, put the string on it and broke it in seconds. Even the army sent by Kansa could not stop the brothers.

Kansa was getting increasingly worried. Consumed with the fear he started thinking of Lord Krishna day and night while dreaming or awake.

Shri Krishna killed the elephant Kunalayapeed and took out both his tusks. With these tusks He killed many wicked men and some of them fled fearing death. Chānoor and Mushtik challenged the two brothers for wrestling.

The Knower of morals and ethics, Shri Krishna told them that the two brothers (Krishna and Balrāma) were very young for wrestling but Chānoor and Mushtik reminded Him of His many *Leelās* establishing His bravery and became ready for a fight. Shri Krishna wanted the same anyway. Chānoor started fighting with the Lord and Mushtik with Balrāma ji.

1. After this Lord Shri Krishna asking about the place of Dhanush Yagya from the residents came to the Rangashālā. There He saw an extraordinary bow looking like a rainbow.

All those who were present became sad and anxious at this unfair and unjust fight. The women of Mathurā started leaving the site while talking amongst themselves, "Oh! Brajbhoomi alone is holy and blessed where the Lord lives Himself disguised as a human. The Lord who is worshipped by Lord Shiva and Laxmi ji, the same Lord wearing beautiful flower garlands and playing the flute goes for cow grazing with Balrāma ji in the forests of Braj and engages in many sports wandering around happily. Only the fortunate residents of Braj and gopis get to enjoy the beauty and sweetness of the Lord." While they were talking as such, both Chānoor and Mushtik were killed and liberated by Shri Krishna and Balarāmji respectively. Koot, Shal and Toshal were also killed.

On seeing his wrestlers and warriors being killed one after the other, Kansa became very angry and ordered his aides to arrest Lord Krishna, Balarāmji and other cowherds. With people looking at Him, Shri Krishna took a few leaps and climbed onto the stage. Kansa seeing Shri Krishna in front of him tried to attack with his sword but just as the eagle grabs the snake, Shri Krishna caught hold of Kansa and killed him.

As Kansa had been consumed with fear he had started thinking of Shri Krishna all the time and had started seeing the Lord everywhere therefore as a result of constant meditation he was liberated and attained *sārūpya mukti* which is rarely attained even by the great saints and yogis. After this Kansa and Nyagrudh Kansa's eight brothers tried to take revenge but were killed by Shri Krishna and Balarāmji easily.

Rangshālā is connected with an important incident. Though this structure is almost in ruins, still it is relating the story of the bravery and the valour of Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji. It is famous as Rangshālā even today.

Shri Rangeshwar Mahādev

Out of the four guardians of Mathurā, Shri Rangeshwar Mahādev is the guardian of south.

Sapta Samudri Koop

In ancient times the traders after returning from foreign lands used to donate gold here in order to free themselves of the offence made due to association with foreigners. There is an old well here. During the rule of Nagās it is said that the snake god was worshipped here. The newlywed women of Mathurā come here on Nāga Panchami to worship even today.

Lotus Shaped Mathurā City

The shape of Mathurā as described in Ādi Vārāha Purān is lotus shaped. In the central pericarp Shri Keshavdev ji is *virājmān*, Shri Hardev ji of Govardhan is *virājmān* on the western petal, Shri Govindadev ji on the northern petal and Shri Vārāhadev ji is *virājmān* on the southern petal.

The Present Route of Circumambulation and Places of Importance

The route of circumambulation is as follows : Vishnu Ghāt, Pippaleshwar Mahādev, Batuk Bhairav, Veni Mādhav ji, Rāmeshwar ji, Madan Mohan ji, Tinduk Tirtha, Surya Ghāt, Surya Tirtha, Dhruv Ghāt, Atal Gopāl, Rishi Tirtha, Bāli Teelā, Vāman Dev ji, Hanumānji in Kaliyugi Teelā, Ranga Bhoomi, Rangeshwar Mahādev. Towards the north : Kansa Teelā, Kansa Ka Akhādā, Kansa Vadha sthal, Ugrasen Mahārāj, Shivatāl, Kankāli Devi, Uddhav ji, Gopikā Sthal Balbhadra Kund, Brahmadev Ji , Shri Narsinhdev ji, Badrināth Ji, Bhuteshwar Mahādev, Pātāl Devi, Potarā Kund, Shri Keshavdev ji, Shri Krishna Janma Bhoomi, Mahā Vidyā Devi, Saraswati Kund, Saraswati Devi, Chāmundā Devi, Rajak Vadha Sthān, Gokarn ji, Ambareesh Teelā, Chakra Tirtha, Soma Tirtha, Ghantā Bharan, Dhārāpatan, Vaikuntha Ghāt, Vārāha Kshetra, Nāg Kshetra, Mahāveer ji, Ganesh ji, Lord Narsinha, Manikarnikā and Avimukta Tirtha etc.

To the west of Mathurā Bhuteshwar, in the east Pippaleshwar, in the south Rangeshwar and in the north Gokarn Mahādev ji are situated. Bhuteshwar Mahādev is located towards Girirāj ji. On the left Pātāl Devi resides. From here after darshan and worship, the tour of Braj starts. Nearby is the temple of Kankāli Devi. The girl child whom Kansa tried to kill but who slipped from his hands and went in the sky is known as Kankāli Devi.

Further ahead to the south on this route is Balbhadra Kund. In the north of Bhuteshwar Mahādev there is Keshavdev ji. To the south of Janma Sthān is Potarā Kund. Nearby in a temple there are idols of Vasudev ji and Devaki ji. This place is called Kārāgrīha (prison). The old Gangā temple is also here. A little ahead is Gyān Bādi. To the west of Mathurā is the temple of Mahā Vidyā Devi. This is situated on a teelā. Below it is a beautiful kund where there is a temple of Pashupati Mahādev. Further ahead is Saraswati Nālā and then Saraswati Kund and Saraswati Temple. To the south of Mathurā on the road to Delhi is the temple of Chāmundā Devi. On the way from Masāni to Deega Gate there is Kubjā Koop. Walking from Ganesh Teelā towards the Yamunā bank is Koti Tirtha. Out of the total twenty four Tirthas, twelve tirthas of the north start from here. On Ganesh Teelā there is a

temple of Ganesh ji. Gokarn Mahādev ji is located in the north at the bank of Yamunā ji. Saraswati Sangam is located opposite the garden of Neelkanth Mahādev. Nearby is the Dashāshwamedh Ghāt. Ambareesh Teelā is near the bus stand of Vrindāvan. Chakra Tirtha is at the banks of Yamunā ji. At Krishna Gangā there are temples of Kālinjar Mahādev ji, Gangā ji and Dāu ji. Near Gau Ghāt are Ghantākarna and Mukti Tirtha. Brahma Ghāt, Vaikuntha Ghāt and Dhārāpatan are near Vasudev Ghāt. Asi Kund is also nearby. In Mānik chowk there is a temple of Lord Vārāha. Manikarnikā Ghāt is near Vishrānt Ghāt. Shri Vallabhāchārya ji's Baithak is also here. To the south of Vishrām Ghāt is the temple of Gatashramadev ji. Ahead of Vishrām Ghāt are the temples of Charchikā Devi and Pippaleshwar Mahādev ji. Kankhal and Tinduk Tirthas are on Bengālī ghāt. Surya Ghāt is near the dharmashālā (a house for pilgrims) of Mahārāja of Avāgarh. Further down are Dhruv Ghāt, Dhruv Teelā where there is a temple of Dhruvji. Ahead is the place of Saptarishi. Kansa Vadha Sthān is near Rang Bhoomi. Close by is the Sapta Sāmudrik Koop. Shiva Tāl is under the bridge on the junction road. Here there is a Shiva temple. The way to Madhuvan is from here.

Naveen Sthalis (New sites)

Some of the new sites are Shri Dwārakādheeshji, Shri Govinddevji's temple, Goverdhannāthji, Shri Bihāriji, Madanmohanji, Shri Rādheshyāmji, Shri Mathurānāthji, Shri Rādhā Krishnaji, Shri Dāu ji, Shri Rāmji, Swāmi Keelji Ki Guphā, Tulsi Chautarā, Shrināthji Ki Baithak.

There is no place in Braj where Priyā and Priyatam do not engage in new keli. "Look! Look that young beautiful maiden after adjusting her sari and pushing back the hair lock that came over her face had just put her pot in the water to fill it when the mischievous Krishna started singing some love song, flooding her with divine love so passionate that she dropped the pot from her hand." "It is the pleasant time of early morning, the Braj maidens are churning butter in their houses producing a sweet and delightful sound. All of them are singing songs glorifying the names, the pastimes, the beauty and the fame of their beloved, the Prince of Braj. The sound of the churning awakens the blissfully asleep *Sānwar* Kishore. After all it is the time to get up. He certainly went to sleep very late at night."

"Aha! This sweetness of love on the beautiful face adorned with the look of drowsiness, seems to be etching the sweet story of love....."

(Gratefully from "Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorva Shri Bhaktimati Ushā ji")

This is the same Braj where many acts and deeds of Shri Krishna are revealed, where many Leelās are adding richness to the opulence and wealth of Braj. The Āchāryas and the devotees nourished by these *Leelās* are continually absorbed in savouring them and are making their lives worthwhile. All the great ones have lauded the blissful Braj and have made their wish of continuously living in Braj come true.

“O! Providence I beg of you by spreading the border of my sari ...” Sri Chheetwāmi wished to remain absorbed in these Braj Leelās.

In spite of being two different words, Braj and Vrindāvan are spreading that same sweetness where Kanhaiyā, the life of all Brajwāsīs, with His *Leelā* has made the opulence of Braj venerable to all.

We have described in short, the main sites of Mathurā. Now we are going to give a description of the neighboring sites of Mathurā.

Madhuvan (Māholi Grām)

रम्यं मधुवनं नाम विष्णुस्थानमनुत्तमम् ।
 यद् दृष्ट्वा मनुजो देवि ! सर्वान् कामानवाप्नुयात् ॥
 तत्र कुण्डं स्वच्छजलं नीलोत्पलविभूषितं ।
 तत्र स्नानेन दानेन वाञ्छितं फलमाप्नुयात् ॥

(आ० बा० पु०)

O Devi! Madhuvan, the abode of Lord Vishnu is very beautiful and supreme. By just doing the *darshan*, a man enjoys all the desired fruit. In the same place there is a *kund* full of clean water. By bathing in this *kund* and doing charity here, all desires are fulfilled.

Lord Vishnu killed the demons Madhu and Kaitabh here. The child Dhruv had done his penance with much fortitude here. Shatrughna ji in Tretā yuga had killed Lavan the son of demon Madhu here. This is the grazing ground of the most dearest and the most benevolent Lord Krishna.

Kanhaiyā along with his friends is following the cows calling out their names Dhauri, Dhumari, Bhuhari etc and making the sounds hee- ho, hee-ho. On His shoulder the pot of buttermilk tied to His stick is slinging and with one hand resting on a friend’s shoulder He is coming walking like a drunk elephant. Teasing and making fun of someone, jerking someone’s hand, He moves on. Oh! This Braj Bhoomi is blessed and blessed are the cowherd boys who always remain blissful and happy enjoying the wonderful plays and sports of their beloved friend Kanhaiyā. During grazing while the friends are busy in sweet revelry and merrymaking the clever Krishna tricking

His friends disappears to meet His beloved *gopis* who are anxiously waiting for Him rewarding them with love and His divine company and returns to join His group of friends. This joy is beyond description.

Shri Shrimahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji also came here. He performed a week long Shrimad Bhāgwat recitation under the Kadamba tree. It is said that the Lord in the form of *Madhuvaniyā* (resident of Madhuvan or Mathurā) used to come to this recitation every day.

Tālvan (Tārasi Grām)

अहो तालवनं पुण्यं यत्र तालैर्हतो सुरः ।
हिताय यादवानाञ्च आत्मक्रीडनकाय च ॥

(स्क० पु०)

Oh! This is the same holy Tālvan where in the interests of *Yādavas*, Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji killed Dhenukāsūr. This place is at a distance of about two and a half miles to the south west of Madhuvan. There is the temple of Dāu ji and Balbhadra kund.

एवं सुहृद्वचः श्रुत्वा सुहृत्प्रियचिकीर्षया ।
प्रहस्य जग्मतुर्गोपैर्वृतौ तालवनं प्रभू ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/15/27)

Once while grazing the cows Balrāma ji, Shri Krishna and their friends went far away. Everybody was hungry. Many times the smell of the fruit of Tāl trees had tempted them but due to the fear of demons they were not able to eat and taste them. They did not like troubling Shri Krishna but today everybody became a little restless with hunger. A few of them prayed and said to the two brothers, “O! Brothers all Brajwāsīs are aware of your might and valour. We like the sweet smell of ripe Tāl fruits and feel like eating them but are fearful of Dhenukāsūr.” On hearing this and in order to fulfill their desire the two brothers arrived in Tālvan with the friends. Upon reaching there they started shaking the Tāl trees. The noise brought Dhenukāsūr and he attacked them. Balrāma ji caught his hind legs and hurled him. Crashing several trees to the ground with the weight of his massive body the demon fell down and died. Two brothers killed many other small demons as well.

The happiness of the friends knew no bounds. They started eating the Tāl fruits and satisfied their hunger. This place is famous as Tālvan.

1. Hearing these words of the cowherd boys, Shri Krishna and Balrāma laughed and to please them started walking towards Tāl van along with them.

Kumudvan

कुमुदवनमेतञ्च तृतीयवनमुत्तमम् ।
यत्र गत्वा नरो देवि ! मम लोके महीयते ॥¹

(आ० बा० पु०)

This place is the *vihār* site of Shri Krishna. There is a Kumud kund filled with countless Kumud flowers here.

Shri Krishna, Balrāma ji and cowherds of same age group come here for grazing the cattle. While the calves rest under the shade of huge dense trees the cowherd boys take their lunches out and start having them. Implored by Subal and Stoke Krishna, Shyām Sundar starts distributing yogurt to everyone in leaf cups. Everybody wants to eat before the others so they are plundering and snatching from the hands of beloved Kanhaiyā. Extremely sweet *rasa* is spilling over and flowing. Paramānand dās ji witnessed this stupendous sweetness and was mesmerized. He wrote his experience down spontaneously and started singing in a daze-

आज दधि मीठी मदन गोपाल ।
भावत मोहि तिहारौ भूठो चंचल नयन विसाल ॥
आन पात बनाये दौना दिये सबन को बाँट ।
जिन्ह नहीं पायौ सुनौ मेरे भैय्या मेरी हथेली चाट ॥
बहुत दिना हम बसे कुमुद वन कृष्ण तिहारे साथ ।
ऐसौ स्वाद हम कबहु ना चाख्यौ सुन गोकुल के नाथ ॥
खावत आप खवावत ग्वालन मानुष लीला रूप ।
परमानन्द प्रभु हम सब जानत तुम त्रिभुवन के भूप ॥

Parmānand ji has definitely recognized that Lord of the Universe. He has come to know about His whereabouts but these cowherd boys are feeling grateful and satisfied just by licking the *uchchhishta* of their sakhā Shri Krishna.

Shri Krishna engages in water sports with his friends here. Once suddenly remembering their cows, the friends left to herd them back. The all pleasing Nandanandan started playing his wonderful flute. Attracted by it and following the sweet sound, Braj maidens reached this place. Undescribable *rasa keli* flowed in Kumud kund afterwards. This special crowd of Braj damsels drowned in that nectar.

Relating the story of those very sweet memories, this place is famous as Kumud van.

1. O Devi! This very forest is the third best forest called Kumud van, just by going where one becomes worshipable even in my Dhām.

Ambikā Van

एकदा देवयात्रायां गोपाला जातकौतुकाः ।

अनोभिरनडुच्चुक्तैः प्रययुस्तेऽम्बिकावनम् ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/34/1)

Shri Nandarai ji came to Ambikā Van once with the other cowherds. After bathing in river Saraswati, they worshipped Lord Shiva here. Like other tirthas, Saraswati ji also resides in Braj to serve Lord Krishna. Shri Nandarai ji and other cowherds had kept a fast, so they decided to rest at the bank of Saraswati. A python used to live in that forest. As destiny would have it that python happened to be passing by the same place where they were resting. It caught Shri Nandarai ji. Shri Nandarai ji started shouting for help. Despite being hit with sticks by many cowherds the python did not let go of Shri Nandarai ji. Then Lord Krishna went and touched the python with His foot nail. Letting Shri Nandarai ji go, the python turned into a shining celestial being. That *Vidyādhara* (a demigod) whose name was Sudarshan sang hymns praising the Lord and related how he had been disregarding and disrespectful to the sage Angirā and the other sages out of sheer arrogance because of his divine good looks and therefore as a consequence attained the birth of a python.

There are temples dedicated to Shri Ambikā Devi and Gokarn Mahādev located in the east of Mathurā.

Datiyā

This place is about six miles away from Mathurā. Nearby are Āyore and Gorwai.

Ganesharā (Gandheishwar Tirtha)

This place is about a mile away from Shāntanu kund. In the past there used to be plenty of fragrant flowers here, which were used by Shri Krishna and His friends. Therefore this place became famous as Gandheishwar tirtha. There is a Gandharwa kund here and close by is the village of Putanā, known as Kheichari.

Satohā (Shāntanu Kund)

देखई सतोआ ग्राम कुण्ड सुनिर्मल ।

शान्तनु मुनीर एई तपस्यार-स्थल ॥

(भक्ति रत्नाकर)

1. Once Shri Nandarai ji along with other cowherds on the occasion of Shivrātri filled with joy, curiosity and eagerness travelled to Ambikā van on the bullock carts.

Here Mahārāj Shāntanu had worshipped the Sun God for a son and his wish had been granted. Since then this place is called Shāntanu kund. Even today many Brajwāsīs come to this place in the month of Bhādra with a wish to get a son.

There are temples of Shri Girdhar ji and Baldev ji and Baithak of Shri Vithalnāth ji. The Girdharpur village is nearby.

Bāti Grām (Bahulāvan)

पञ्चमं बहुलं नाम वनानां वनमुत्तमम् ।
तत्र गतो नरो देवि ! अग्निस्थानं स गच्छति ॥

(आ० वा० पु०)

There is a fifth forest named Bahulāvan. Anyone who bathes here attains Agni loka (abode of fire) easily.

बहुला श्रीहरेः पत्नी तत्र तिष्ठति सर्वदा ।
तस्मिन् पद्मवने राजन् ! बहु पुण्यफलानि च ॥

(स्क० पु०)

Wife of Shri Hari called Bahulā always resides here. The one who bathes in and drinks from the Padmavan located in the kund of Bahulāvan receives a lot of merit because Lord Vishnu lives here with Laxmi ji.

The Baithak of Shriman Mahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji is here.

It is said that once a lion confronted a cow called Bahulā at this place. When the lion was about to kill the cow, she asked for the permission to go and feed her calf and promised to return immediately afterwards. Believing her the lion allowed her to go. When the cow actually returned later, the lion was so impressed by her adherence to the truth that he left her unhurt.

Here there are two large lakes famous as Balrāma kund and Mān Sarowar.

An ancient temple of Bahulā Bihāri ji is here. There is *darshan* of Bahulā cow and the lion. This is why the place is famous as Bahulāvan.

Mādhuri Kund

Mādhuri kund is about two miles from Adig village in south-eastern direction. This is the place of Mādhuri ji, the *sakhi* of Shri Rādhā ji. This is a Leelā site very dear to Lord Krishna. Shri Mādhuri dās ji also stayed here for some time.

Braj Bhoomi Mohini

MAHĀVAN-GOKUL



Chapter Two

दधि मथननिनादैस्त्यक्तनिद्रः प्रभाते ।
निभृतपदमगारं वल्लवीनां प्रविष्टः ॥
मुख कमलसमीरैराशु निर्वाप्यदीपान् ।
कवलितनवनीतः पातु गोपालबालः ॥

THE OTHER NEIGHBOURING SITES

1. Ānandi - Bandi
2. Karnāval
3. Devanagar
4. Rāwal grām
5. Lohavan
6. ShriDāuji

ततो भाद्रपदे मासि दशम्यां शुक्ल पक्षे ।
 गोकुले वन यात्रा च गोलोक समता फले ॥
 वैकुण्ठं द्वितीयं रम्यं जन्मना विष्णुनिर्मितं ।
 मथुरा नगरी रम्या केवलोत्पत्ति हेतवे ॥

(वा० पु० ब्रजभक्ति विलास)

If one visits or journeys through the forests of Gokul on the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Bhādra (Aug-Sep), the merit equal to visiting Goloka is attained. By incarnating here as Shri Krishna, Lord Vishnu has made Gokul the second Vaikuntha. Mathurā is enchanting only because of the birth of the Lord.

Gokul and Mahāvan are synonyms. The Purānas actually speak of “Brihadavan”, the same has also been referred to as “Mahāvan”. The word “Gokul” has also been used now and then in Purānas and scriptures. But the Gokul of today is considered to be a separate town under Mahāvan where Yamunā ji flows. The place where the *Āchāryas* of Pushti sect lived and had experiences has come to be known as Gokul. In reality Gokul and Mahāvan are next to each other and are one and the same.

How can the good fortune of “Mahāvan” be described?

As soon as Shri Krishna incarnated, He made Gokul his home. Shri Nandarai ji found Gokul favourable for living after surveying its beauty, the private solitary forests and pastures suitable for raising the cattle. The charm of Gokul drew the Lord to this place immediately after His appearance. The site here is the very same site that is related with the *Prakat Leelā* of the Lord. The atmosphere of this place, giving *darshan* of those very *Leelās* is submerging everyone with *rasa*.

Even Maharshi Veda Vyās ji while enjoying the *pratyaksha Leelā* here said

कालेन ब्रजताल्पेन गोकुले रामकेशवौ ।
 जानुभ्यां सह पाणिभ्यां रिङ्गमाणौ विजहर्तुः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत् 10/8/21)

In a few days Lord Shyām and Balrāma started crawling around and playing in Gokul.

Sri Krishna is crawling. Sometimes He tries to move quickly and sometimes He sits down and then tries to get up. On seeing the rows of cranes flying away in the distance, He beckons at them.

Sometimes He goes near a peacock and puts His hand on it and tries to embrace it. Blessed by the divine touch and the company of the Lord, the peacock forgets everything. Sometimes He pleads stubbornly with mother to give Him butter and sugar candy. And while attempting to eat with His own hands, smears the butter all over the face thrilling Brajwāsīs and giving them goose bumps. Mother Yashodā picks up her Lālā Kanhaiyā smeared with yogurt and butter and hugs Him to her heart. Beholding the same beautiful form, the eminent devotee Soordās ji sang-

‘घुटुरुन चलत रेणु तन मण्डित मुख दधि लेप किये ।’

Not only this, taking the butter in his hands, He is feeding his friends and dropping some on the floor here and there.

Kanhaiyā ornamented and dressed stunningly, carrying in His hands the bejhar chapati with butter on it, sometimes taking a bite from it, is tottering in the courtyard of Shri Nandarāi ji’s palace. His eyes carrying a look of amazement are displaying not only the childlike innocence but also seriousness. He is searching for some one. Wearing a yellow lower garment He is wandering quickly sometimes and sometimes slowly. Kāgbhushundi ji perched on the loft is watching Rām Lalā (in *Tretā Yuga*) who now in Dwāpar is sporting as Nand’s Lālā, smeared all over with dust and running around the courtyard wearing anklets that are producing a sweet sound and is experiencing a joy that is beyond words. He is absorbed in enjoying this child Leelā. Suddenly a thought crosses his mind, that in *Tretā* he had been blessed by the graceful Lord but why is he being ignored today. Reading his devotee’s mind Lālā Kanhaiyā gestures at him to come and snatch the chapati away from His hand. Kāgbhushundi ji comes and snatches the *uchchhishta* morsel. When Raskhān ji saw this, he was entranced. Thrilled at his fortune- he depicted this beautiful form in the following words.

धूरि भरे अति शोभित श्याम जु, तैसी बनी सिर सुन्दर चोटी ।
खेलत खात फिरै अँगना, पग पैजनि बाजत पीरी कछोट्टी ॥
या छवि को रसखानि विलोकत, वारत काम कला निधिकोटी ।
काग कौ भाग कहा बरनौ, हरि हाथ सौं लै गयो माखन रोटी ॥

Now Kanhaiyā has become a little older. Looking at the moon in the sky, He is asking *maiya* Yashodā to bring it for Him. *Maiya* tries to make Him understand in different ways but finally failing to convince Him, promises to get Him a bride as beautiful as the moon. Hearing this Kanhaiyā becomes adamant that they should both leave right away to get the moon like bride for Him.

“मैं तो अबहिं ब्याहन जैहौ ।”

Kanhaiyā has now grown a little more. He has started going to the houses of the neighbours and has started stealing yogurt and milk from there. One milkmaid has come to maiyā to complain. Seeing her He runs to maiyā, hugs her and defends himself by saying that He is a little child with little hands too small to reach the butter pots kept on high slings. His friends have forcibly rubbed the butter on His face out of spite. Maiyā is taken in by Kanhaiyā’s charm and believes His words and even the milkmaid goes back content and filled with divine joy.

While this milkmaid left after making her complaint, another showed up. When Lālā sees her He becomes apprehensive. Somehow He had gotten rid of the first one but this time if He is caught, mother is certainly going to scold Him. The milkmaid tells Yashodā ji to rein in her Lālā. Kanhaiyā gets frightened and starts praying to God for help. But when maiyā asks the milkmaid about the problem without getting serious, He is relieved. Today maiyā was on His side. After some contemplation, maiyā said, “You and all the milkmaids come back with a scale and after measuring, take the same amount of butter and yogurt that Lālā has eaten at your house. I am going to put all the butter out in the courtyard for you.” Soordās ji who was standing nearby saw this beautiful form and his heart was filled with happiness-

गारी मत दीजौ, मो गरीबनी को जायौ है ।
जाकौ जैतो जान लियौ, सौ तो मौते आन कहौ ॥
मैंने काहु भाति यह नहिं तरसायौ है ।
दधि की मथानी सब अंगना में लाय धरी ॥
तौल तौल लीजो भटु जेतो जाकौ खायौ है ।
सूर श्याम प्रभु प्यारे नैनन सौ न होय न्यारे ॥
कानूड़ा सो पुत्र मैंने भाग्यन सौं पायौ है ॥

Wow! The residents of Gokul, we envy your fortune as you are always engrossed in enjoying the child *Leelās* of Shyām Sundar.

Mahāvan, witness to all these child *Leelās* of the Lord is blessed. Kanhaiyā is eating mud, maiyā stops him. Kanhaiyā opens His mouth and says, “See maiyā there is no mud in my mouth”. Maiyā looks and is astonished to see the entire universe (brahmānda) inside Lālā’s mouth. This place has become famous as Brahmānda Ghāt.

The memories of child Leelā with *sakhās* are connected with Gokul. Oh! The silent sites here, who can speak about them and

say what. The Muslim devotees like Raskhān, Tāj and Alikhān etc have seen their precious beloved Shyām Sundar performing different Leelās here.

Moreover, Gokul worshipped by Shri Shriman Mahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji, Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji, Shri Vithalnāth ji, Shri Sanātan ji and many other *Āchāryas* and devotees is attracting all even today.

Shri Nāgaridās ji describing the romp and revelry of the Holi celebrations in Gokul has said beautifully-

लाय रहे इक घूँघट की दिस, लोभ की आँखिन नंद दुलारो ।
जात छली मुख सों मुख छ्वाय, उड़ाय गुलाल कैँ कैँ अधियारो ॥
हारन सौँ उरभाय दै हार री, होत है 'नागर' न्यारो अबारो ।
औरहु गांव सखी बहुतैँ, पर गोकुल गांव को पैडो ही न्यारो ॥

Isn't the romp and revelry of Braj unique? Kanhaiyā's holi is steeped in *rasa*. Actually the road to Gokul itself is unique.

These *Leelā* sites of Gokul are related to the *Prakat-Kāl Leelās* (*Leelās* during the time of incarnation of the Lord). Cowherds, *sakhās*, Brajwāsis are all His intimate devotees, His *parikar*. The Braj maidens are His sole and exclusive beloveds who are always ready to share with us the *rasa* of the *Leelās* of Shri Shyām Sundar. Bhakta Raskhān has asked to be reborn amongst the rustic *sakhās* of Gokul to enjoy Shri Krishna *Leelā*.

‘मानुष हौँ तो वही रसखान, बसौँ नित गोकुल गांव के ग्वारन ॥’

When Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji arrived in Braj for the first time on the banks of Yamunā, a very beautiful and divine looking woman appeared who told him that this place was Govind Ghāt and Gokul and that he should stay here. This woman was Yamunā ji herself.

Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu upon reaching Mahāvan and after having *darshan* of Shri Krishna Janmotsawa Sthān and Shri Madan Mohan ji started dancing overcome with love for the Lord. Tears of love started streaming from the eyes. We are describing that incident in the words of the author of Bhakti Ratnākār below-

अहे श्रीनिवास ! कृष्ण चैतन्य एथाय ।
जन्मोत्सव स्थान देखि उल्लास हियाय ॥
भावावेशे प्रभु नृत्य, गीते मग्न हैला ।
कृपा करि सर्व चित्त आकर्षण कैला ॥

Mahāvan (Gokul) is ready and willing to share its divine atmosphere even today but to see the same one needs divine eyes. If only the Lord showers His grace then even with these physical eyes all that can be witnessed. Gosāin Shri Vithalnāth ji has considered Shri Gokul to be everything and worthy of absolute and total service. According to him Gokul has the Lord Himself dwelling in it-

श्रीमद् गोकुल सर्वस्वं, श्रीमद् गोकुल मण्डनम् ।
श्रीमद् गोकुल वक्तारं, श्रीमद् गोकुल जीवनम् ॥ ¹

All the *Āchāryas* saints and great ones have agreed on the superiority of Gokul or Mahāvan. Let us now tour the main sites of Gokul and experience the divinity permeating them.

Sites

In Brahmānda Purān the depiction of the sites of Brihadavan is as under-

एकविंशति तीर्थानां युक्तं भूरिगुणान्वितम् ।
यमलार्जुन पुण्यात्मानम्, नंदकूपं तथैव च ॥
चिन्ताहरणं ब्रह्माण्ड कुण्डं सारस्वतं तथा ।
सरस्वतीशिलातत्र, विष्णुकुण्डं समन्वितम् ॥
कर्णकूपं, कृष्णकुण्डं गोपकूपं तथैव च ।
रमणं रमणस्थानं नारदस्थानं एव च ॥
पूतनापातनस्थानं तृणावर्ताख्यपातनम् ।
नंदहर्म्यं नंदगोहं घाटं रमणसंज्ञकम् ॥
मथुरानाथोद्भवं क्षेत्रं पुण्यं पापप्रणाशनम् ।
जन्म-स्थानं तु शेषस्य जन्म योगमायया ॥

(ब्रह्माण्ड पुराण)

Shri Rohini Temple and Shri Baldev Janma Sthān

अथ ब्रजे पंच दिनेषु भाद्रे स्वातौ च षष्ठ्यं च सिते बुधे च ।
उच्चैर्ग्रहैः पंचभिरावृते च लगनेतुलाख्ये दिनमध्यदेशे ॥
सुरेषु वर्षत्सु सुपुष्पवर्ष घनेषु मुंचत्सु च वारिविन्दून् ।
बभूव देवो वसुदेवपत्न्यां विभास यन्नंदगृहं स्वभासा ॥

(श्रीगर्ग संहिता 1/10/27-28)

After this on Wednesday, on the sixth day of the bright fortnight in the month of Bhādra in the constellation called Swāti, five auspicious

1. Obeisance to Shri Krishna, Who is the be all and the end all of Gokul, Who is its ornament, Who is the describer of its greatness and Who is the life of Gokul.

stars came together. In Tula Lagna (when sun entered Libra) at noon time the demi-gods started showering the flowers. The rain started drizzling. At such a time Baldev ji took birth from the womb of Shri Rohiniji the wife of Vasudevji and started illuminating the house of Shri Nandarai ji.

While escorting Devaki ji on the chariot, when Kansa heard a voice from the heaven and learnt about the possible birth of Devaki's child destined to kill him, he imprisoned Vasudev ji and Devaki ji. One by one he killed the six newborn babies of Devaki ji. While waiting for the seventh child, Kansa started losing sleep in anxiety. Lord's partial manifestation Sheish ji descended in the womb in the seventh pregnancy.

Lord instructed Yogamāyā-

देवक्या जठरे गर्भं शेषाख्यं धाम मामकम् ।
तत् संनिवृष्य रोहिण्या उदरे संनिवेशय ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत् 10/2/8)

At present a part of Me known as Sheish is placed in the womb of Devaki ji. Take him from there and plant him in the womb of Shri Rohini ji.

This is how Lord Sankarshan appeared from the womb of Shri Rohini ji. As he was pulled out (karshan) from the womb of Devaki ji, he is called Sankarshan and for delighting the world (lokaranja) he is known as Rām and for being supreme amongst the strong and powerful, he is known as Balbhadra. As soon as the Lord Sankarshan appeared, the demi-gods showered flowers and a wave of bliss swept everywhere.

This place of appearance of the Lord Sankarshan is known as Shri Rohini Temple.

Shri Nandarai ji Temple

नन्दधाम्ने नमस्तुभ्यं त्रैलोक्यपददायिने ।
कृष्ण-वात्सल्य-पुत्राय परमोत्सवहेतवे ॥

(बा० पु०)

O! The holy abode of Shri Nandarai ji ! Obeisance to you. You are capable of giving even the position of *triloki* (the three worlds) easily. You have appeared only for the sake of *vātsalya sukha* (the bliss resulting from parental love) and for the supreme celebration.

This is the residence of Shri Nandarai ji. The eighty four pillars can be seen even today.

Shri Yashodā Shayan Sthal

यशोदा शयनायैव समस्त सुखदायिने ।
पुत्रसौभाग्यलाभाय नमस्ते शुभदो भव ॥

(मत्स्य पुराण)

O! Yashodā- shayansthal (the place where Yashodāji sleeps)! Capable of giving all delights, joys and bliss. You have appeared for the benefit of having the son, we bow to you.

With hundreds of gopis Yashodā ji used to sleep here.

Kole Ghāt

कोऽपि गृह्वातु सुतं मे वसुदेवोऽत्राह सरित्चलन् ।
अनांसात् निमग्नस्तेनासौ कोपिलाद्गोपः ॥

(श्रीवल्लभदिग्विजय)

At midnight on his way to Gokul, Shri Vasudev ji entered the over flowing waters of Yamunā ji with child Krishna. Yamunā ji is attached to Shri Krishna. In order to touch the feet of the Lord she started surging her waves higher and higher. The force of the current made Shri Vasudevji worried. Helplessly he started crying, “Koi le, Koi le, Mere Lālā ko Koi le”, i.e. “Somebody please take my son”. Noticing the labour of Vasudev ji, Shri Krishna moved His leg a little and touched the waters of Yamunāji. The touch of her beloved Shyām Sundar, made Yamunāji happy and she was pacified. Vasudevji then entered Gokul with Shri Krishna.

This place recounting the memory of the sweetness of its Leelā is famous as Kole Ghāt or Kole grām.

Shri Krishna Janmotsawa Sthal

नन्दस्त्वात्मज उत्पन्ने जाताह्लादो महामनाः ।
आहूय विप्रान् वेदज्ञान् स्नातः शुचिरलंकृतः ॥ ¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/5/1)

Slowly the news of the birth of Lālā at Shri Nandarai ji’s home spread all over Gokul. Cowherds, their women folk and children all started dancing with joy and delight. The streets and the crossings were decorated. The festoons made of flowers and leaves were put up. All the Brahmins, bards, minstrels and other learned men came rejoicing to Shri Nandarai ji’s house.

1. There was no limit to the good fortune of Shri Nanda bābā. On learning that a son has been born he became very joyful. After bathing etc he called the Brahmins and satisfied them by donating grains, cows and gold to them.

Women started singing songs of congratulations. There was glee, delight and joy everywhere.

Braj maidens heard this sweet news. They were elated. Bedecking themselves and taking gifts and presents they arrived at the house of Shri Nand ji to sing songs of congratulations and auspiciousness. Oh! This colourful crowd in Braj, it seems as though the enthusiasm and fervour has personified and is flowing in the streets and alleys.

The vine of the hope of Braj gopis bore fruits. Every part of their body was pulsating with excitement. One gopi looking at the beautifully painted and decorated streets and alleys and the Nanda palace asked the other gopi,

गोकुल है दूल्हा सौ सज्यौ, बिधना कछु ठाठ विचित्र बनायौ ।
चंद्र मुखी गजगामिनी ने नंदद्वार पै आयकै गायौ बधायौ ॥
कीन्ह अयाचक याचक हू, धन एतौ नंद बाबा ने लुटायौ ।
श्याम सखी यह मोय बता, केहि कारण नंद के आनन्द छायौ ॥

Each and every limb of the second gopi started dancing. Not only were her feet dancing, even her voice started dancing, her eyes became filled with playfulness. Lifting one hand and resting the other on the waist, and jerking her hip sideways she said, "O mad woman what will you know, if you haven't understood even now"-

पूरन ब्रह्म भयौ मथुरा चल गोकुल में सुत नंद कहायौ ।
ध्यान धरै शिव से जिनकौ और शारद शेषहू पार न पायौ ॥
सोच भयौ अति कंस हिये और देवन के मन आनन्द छायौ ।
सोई कृष्ण भये नंद के गृह में जा कारण नंद के आनन्द छायौ ॥

In Gokul Lālā has appeared. All are delighted and euphoric. In colourful dresses all the gopis are rushing to congratulate. Everything that is auspicious and favourable has aggregated in Braj. Gopis are blessing Lālā and praying for His welfare.

Holding Kanhaiyā in their laps, they are becoming lost in bliss. Kanhaiyā sometimes breaks into a smile upon listening to the sweet conversations of Braj maidens. At times He raises His eyes to look at someone and at other times He covers His face with the border of the sārī suffusing everybody with boundless bliss. Waves are erupting in the ocean of *rasa*. Kanhaiyā raising His small dark hands is calling. See! He is becoming restless to come to your lap. Let us also go to the courtyard of Nanda palace and join this colourful crowd by flowing in the waves of divine emotions of Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji-

उमगि चली ब्रजनारि नन्द घर ।
 रंग-बिरंगी पहर चूनरी मंगल द्रव्य लिए निज-निज कर ॥
 सब शुभ आनि जुरे या ब्रज में जब ते प्रगट भये ब्रजसुन्दर ।
 अति प्रमुदित सब देत बधाई गावत गीत रसाल मधुर स्वर ॥
 देत असीस अंक भरि भेंटत लेत बलैया फेरत आंचर ।
 चिरजीवो यशुदा को बारो ब्रज जन जीवन नंद कुंवर वर ॥
 सुनि सुनि मधुर बैन बनितन के मृदु मुस्कावत मोहन मनहर ।
 चितवन रिभ्रवत हँसत हरत मन शोभा सींव रूप रस निर्भर ॥

Shri Parmānand dās ji saw this *Janmotsawa* (birth celebration) Leelā with his divine eyes and started singing with ecstasy.

प्रकट भये हरि श्रीगोकुल में ।
 नाचत गोपी गोप परस्पर आनन्द प्रेम भरे है मन में ॥
 गृह गृह ते गोपी सब निकरीं कंचन थार धरे हाथन में ।
 परमानन्द दास को ठाकुर प्रकटे नन्द यसोदा गृह में ॥ ¹

This same place is getting impatient to tell us its pious story and is famous as Shri Krishna Janmotsawa Sthal.

Putanā Uddhār Sthali

पूतना-लोक बालघ्नी - राक्षसी रुधिराशना ।
 जिघांसयापि हरये स्तनं दत्त्वाऽऽप सद्गतिम् ॥ ¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/6/35)

Shri Krishna is all auspicious. While the root cause of the incarnation has always been to make His devotees experience divine love, at the same time He also killed many demons for the welfare of His devotees. The providence of Shri Krishna, His every action and plan is all auspicious. In reality the demons that were killed by His hands were liberated on receiving His touch. The deaths of the demons turned out to be a boon for them.

There was a very cruel demon by the name of Putanā. She would go to the towns, villages and habitats of cowherds and kill the little children mercilessly. One day she came to Gokul. Using *māyā* she turned into a beautiful woman. With Yashodāji and Rohiniji looking, she entered the house of Nandarai ji and lifting Shri Krishna

1. Pootanā was a demon. Her work was to kill the children and drink their blood. She had fed her breast to the Lord also only to kill Him. Nonetheless she attained the supreme position which is attained only by the righteous.

in her arms, she started acting loving and affectionate. She had applied deadly poison to her breasts. Kansa had sent her to kill Shri Krishna.

The great saints have concluded that those who have the four kinds of purities, they become capable of meeting the Lord. These four purities are that of name, actions, species and food. Her name Put-nā meant sacred-not, she would take the Brajwāsi infants away from their mothers on the pretext of feeding them milk and would feed them poison instead. Her actions comprised of killing innocent babies. She belonged to the demon species and her food consisted of drinking blood. She was full of intense vices. In spite of this Nandanandan by the virtue of His grace gave her the status of mother and set a high moral example. He granted the same place to Putanā which was reserved for mother Yashodā. Wishing for the same grace of the Lord, Shri Uddhav ji is saying to Shri Vidur ji –

अहो बकीयं स्तन काल कूटं, जिघांसया पाययदप्यसाध्वी ।
लेभे गतिं धान्त्र्युचितां ततोऽन्ये, कं वा दयालुं शरणं ब्रजेम ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 3/2/23)

As soon as Shri Krishna saw Putanā, He understood her intention but pretended to be unaware. Despite knowing the motives of the demon, Shri Krishna started sucking on her breasts. Along with the milk, the Lord angrily started sucking the life force out of Putanā. Putanā started crying because of the unbearable pain. Her eyes rolled out. Loudly wailing “O Krishna! Leave me, please leave me”, she ran out and assuming her original demon form fell down. While falling she sent many trees of a wide area crashing to the ground.

Shri Yashodāji and other gopis saw child Krishna playing on the breasts of Putanā. Maiyā ran and picked Him up. She started kissing His face again and again with love and affection. Performing various rites, she started praying for the well being and safety of Kanhaiyā.

When Shri Nandarai ji returned from Mathurā and learnt about the incident, he started praising Vasudevji’s prophecy in his mind. He became very happy to see Kanhaiyā safe and unharmed from the cruel plans of Putanā.

The cowherd boys cut the giant dead body of Putanā into pieces and burnt them in a remote place. While her body was burning, it kept emitting a divine smell. All her sins perished at the touch of the Lord. She attained a divine body.

That same place is still famous as Putanā Moksha Sthali.

1. The sinner Pootanā had applied poison to her breasts and fed Shri Krishna with the intention to kill Him. Even to her the Lord gave the same position that a foster mother gets. Besides Lord Shri Krishna who else is as merciful whose refuge we can take.

Shakat Bhanjan Sthal

अधः शयानस्य शिशोरनोऽल्पक प्रवालमृद्वङ्घ्रिहतं व्यवर्तत ।

विध्वस्तनानारसकुप्यभाजनं, व्यत्यस्तचक्राक्षविभिन्नकूबरम् ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/7/7)

Child Shri Krishna has grown older. He can now turn to His side by himself. He is now able to raise His hands and silently beckon at maiyā. Braj is the land of festivals and the people of Braj always find some or the other pretext involving Kanhaiyā to celebrate. When Kanhaiyā turned to his side, maiyā sent this news to the neighbours. People started singing songs. In the auspicious time for charities and offerings, all the bards and the minstrels came making preparations to dance. Brahmins recited *swasti vāchan* (well wishes in mantras) and prayed for the well being of the Lord.

All *gopis* assembled at the house. That day's ruling constellation was the same as the birth constellation. Yashodā ji performed the religious ablutions of her Lālā and made offerings to the Brahmins. After giving a bath to child Krishna, maiyā noticed that He was sleepy. She put Him under a *shakat* (cart) to sleep and became occupied with welcoming and serving the guests. Krishna woke up in some time. He was hungry so He started crying and flailing His arms and legs around. As maiyā was busy she did not notice anything. When maiyā had put Kanhaiyā under the cart to sleep, a demon² had come and entered it. He was sent by Kansa to kill Kanhaiyā. Kanhaiyā was aware of it.

When maiyā did not pay attention to Lālā for a long time, He kicked His foot forcefully and hit the cart. The cart broke and all the things kept on it scattered to the ground. Many pots filled with *rasa* broke to pieces. The yoke of the cart split and the wheels went awry.

All Brajwāsīs who had come to attend the celebrations were astounded by this. Brahmins prayed for the wellbeing of Kanhaiyā.

1. Child Shri Krishna was sleeping under a cart. His feet were very tender and small like tiny red buds. But with the touch of the small feet the huge cart turned over. There were many pots and pitchers filled with milk kept on that cart. All of them broke. The wheels and the axle came apart and even the yoke of the cart split.

2. Utkacha was the son of Hiranyāksha. Once he trampled the trees of the āshram of sage Lomasha. Becoming angry the sage cursed, "O the wicked one, go and become bodiless. Immediately his body started falling like a slough of a snake. He fell in the feet of the sage and started asking for forgiveness. Getting pleased Lomasha rishi said, "In Vaivasvata manvantara you will be liberated by the touch of the feet of Shri Krishna." That very demon had come and sat in the cart and had gotten liberated by the touch of the feet of Lord Shri Krishna.

As the words of Brahmins who always speak the truth, never fail, therefore Lālā was saved.

This place in Gokul still relating the story of Kanhaiyā's might is known as Shakat Bhanjan Sthal (the site of the breaking of the cart).

Trināvarta Uddhār

दैत्यो नाम्ना तृणावर्तः कंसभृत्यः प्रणोदितः ।¹

चक्रवातस्वरूपेण जहारासीनमर्भकम् ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/7/20)

One day Shri Yashodā ji was feeding her beloved Lālā. Suddenly she was unable to bear His weight so she put Him on the ground. Shakatāsūr had already been killed. Kansa sent his aide Trināvarta to Braj. He arrived in the form of a tornado and shrouded Braj with dust storms blinding everyone with the dust. When Yashodā ji went to check on Shri Krishna and could not find him where she had left Him, she was aghast. She panicked and started looking for Him frantically. Once the tornado calmed down, the other gopikas heard Yashodā ji crying. When they found out that Shyām Sundar was missing, they were all devastated. All were deeply anguished.

In the meantime Trināvarta carried the Lord to the sky. Lord increased His weight and grasped his neck tightly. Trināvarta became unconscious and fell down in Braj with a loud explosion and died. When the women went closer, they found the child Shri Krishna playing normally on his body.

Finding Shri Krishna safe, Shri Yashodā ji, gopis and Nandarai ji were overjoyed and felt proud of their good fortune. Even today this place reminds visitors of the child *Leelās* of Shri Krishna and is famous as Trināvarta Uddhār Sthal (site of the liberation of Trināvarta).

Gaushālā Nāmkan-Sthal

एवं सम्प्रार्थितो विप्रः स्वचिकीर्षितमेव तत् ।

चकार नामकरणं गूढो रहसि बालयोः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/8/11)

Shri Gargāchārya ji was an eminent scholar. He was the family priest of Shri Nandarai ji. One day he came to Gokul. Shri Nandarai

1. There was a demon by the name of Trināvarta. He was a personal servant of Kansa. By the inspiration of Kansa he came to Gokul in the form of a tornado and took the sitting child Krishna in the sky with him.

ji welcomed him and honoured him graciously and then said to him humbly, “What else could be the reason of your visit but to secure our well being?”

Shri Gargāchārya ji is capable of knowing the past and the future. So when he arrived unexpectedly, Shri Nandarai ji requested the *Āchārya* to perform the naming (nāmkarana) rites of both the children.

Shri Gargāchārya ji knew everything. He told Nandarai ji that it would be his great fortune to perform the ritual, but it was known by all that he was the priest of Yaduvanshis (descendants of Yadu race). Because of the words of Yogamāyā, Kansa was already suspicious. If Kansa found out, he will deem Lālā to be the son of Vasudev ji, which will only cause trouble.

Shri Nandarai ji said imploringly, “Please perform the rites in the gaushālā (cow barn) privately. I will make sure that no one finds out anything about it.”

Shri Gargāchārya ji himself was very keen to perform the naming ceremony. All preparations were done. A few close relatives also assembled. Pointing towards the elder Lālā, Shri Gargāchārya ji said, “Since he is the son of Rohini ji, he will be called Rohinaiya. As he will bring pleasure to his friends and relatives because of his virtues, he will also be known as Rām. Because he will be mighty and powerful, he will also be called Bala. As he will remove differences amongst people and establish friendships, he will be called Sankarshan as well.

This little dark Lālā incarnates in every yuga. In the past yugas He had taken the white, red and yellow complexions respectively. Now He has taken *krishna* complexion hence he will be known as Krishna. Those who know that He was born in the house of Vasudev ji will call Him Vāsudev. This son of yours has many other names and virtues.

Those who feel love for this dark child of yours, such people are very fortunate. Actually this son of yours is equal to Lord Nārāyana in terms of fame, influence, virtues and wealth. He will be dear to Brajwāsis, cows and everybody. He will protect them all. All types of sins and afflictions will disappear from Braj.”

‘य एतस्मिन् महाभागा प्रीतिं कुर्वन्ति मानवाः ।’

This cow barn where the naming ceremony took place reiterating its unprecedented history is worshipped by all *Vaishnavas* and is famous as Nāmkarana Sthal.

Ukhal –Bandhan- Sthal

न चान्तर्न बहिर्यस्य न पूर्वं नापि चापरम् ।
 पूर्वापरं बहिश्चान्तर्जगतो यो जगच्चयः ॥
 तं मत्वाऽऽत्मजमव्यक्तं मर्त्यीलिंगमधोक्षजम् ।
 गोपिकोलूखले दाम्ना बबन्ध प्राकृतं यथा ॥ ¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/9/13-14)

Kanhaiyā is growing up every day in the house of Nandarai ji. Every day new festivals are being celebrated. Now Kanhaiyā gives joy to maiyā sometimes by teasing her and sometimes by pleasing her. Sometimes His ways of pleasing and teasing astound maiyā. Maiyā gives butter to Kanhaiyā in breakfast every day. Now Kanhaiyā has started crossing over the threshold. Sometimes He runs with the little children and sometimes He embraces them tightly. Unique is this manner of love.

One day Shri Yashodā ji assigned different duties to the maids and started churning the yogurt for Kanhaiyā herself. Shri Krishna was hungry. While playing He went to maiyā. She held Him tight and kissed Him and after expressing her love in various ways, started breastfeeding Him. On the other side in the kitchen the milk was boiling. Suddenly remembering that, maiyā ran towards the kitchen leaving Kanhaiyā behind. He did not like this and became angry. His red lips started quivering. Kanhaiyā picked up a piece of stone lying nearby and broke the milk pot and ran off from there. When maiyā returned and found the pot broken to pieces, she was stunned. She started looking for Kanhaiyā.

Kanhaiyā Himself was eating the butter and was also distributing it generously to the monkeys. Maiyā chased Him with a stick in her hand and caught Him. She started scolding Him. Kanhaiyā started crying. He started rubbing His eyes with His little hands. The black ink of kohl mixed with tears spread on His face. Yashodā ji realized that the Lālā has become very frightened. She threw the stick away and decided to tie Him with a rope.

The One Who is the ruler of the universe, Who is omnipresent, Who is the eternal and the fortuitous cause of the world, Yashodāji can

1. In whom there is no inside and no outside, no beginning and no end, who existed before the creation and will exist afterwards as well; Who is not only inside this world, but also in its external forms; in fact it is He Himself in the forms of the world; not only this, the one who is beyond all senses and who is infinite; considering that same Lord because of his human form to be her son, Shri Yashodā Rāni ties Him to the mortar with a rope as though He is an ordinary child.

tie that Shri Krishna only with the cord of love.

When maiyā tried to bind Him with the rope it fell short by two fingers. Maiyā tied another piece of rope to the old one to make it longer but it fell short again by two fingers. Despite tying several ropes together, maiyā was unable to bind Lālā. She started perspiring all over. When Shri Krishna saw how tired maiyā was, mercifully He let Himself be tied.

‘दृष्ट्वा परिश्रमं कृष्ण कृपयाऽऽसीत् स्वबन्धने ।’

Shri Krishna Who is supremely independent, subdued by the love and affection of maiyā let Himself be tied. Gopikānandan Lord Shri Krishna is easily attainable by the devotees whereas He is very difficult to attain for the yogis, sages and ascetics.

This place where the Lord was tied to the mortar (ukhal) is known as Ukhal Bandhan Sthal.

Deliverance of Yamalārjun

बालेन निष्कर्षयतान्वगुलूखलं तद्
 दामोदरेण तरसोत्कलिताङ्घ्रिबन्धौ ।
 निष्पेततुः परमविक्रमितातिवेप-
 स्कन्धप्रवालविटपौ कृतचण्डशब्दौ ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/10/27)

Shri Kuber ji had two sons, Nalkubar and Manigreeva. One day both of them were wandering intoxicated at the banks of river Mandākini in a beautiful garden of Mount Kailāsh and were engaged in vihar with women while naked, blinded with lust. Nārad ji came over there suddenly. Afraid of being cursed the women put on their clothes, but the two of them drunk and blinded by lust did not even look at Nārad ji and continued to remain naked.

Nārad ji thought that indulgence in sensory pleasures has degenerated their minds and intellect. They have been blinded by the pride of wealth and affluence and they are drowning deep in sensual enjoyments. Therefore their arrogance should be destroyed.

1. On the waist of Damodar Lord Shri Krishna a rope had been tied. As soon as He pulled the mortar that was rolling behind him with a little force, the trees were uprooted. With a little force of ‘the center of all the power and might’ the Lord, the trunk, the branches and all the leaves shook up and both the trees fell on the ground with a loud bang.

Nārād ji looking at their behavior that was contrary to the scriptures, for the sake of their welfare, cursed the sons of the demigod and said, “Go attain the birth of an insentient being as it is”. Even a curse given by a saint in the end proves to be a boon. Therefore showing mercy and being graceful he also said that they will attain the proximity of Lord Krishna in that birth. In truth this was actually a boon.

Both of them became famous as Yamalārjun in the birth of Arjun trees.

Shri Krishna was aware of all this. Bound to the mortar because of the love of maiyā, child Krishna dragged the mortar to these two trees and started passing between the two. As the mortar was aslant it got stuck between the trees. All this was only Shri Krishna’s Leelā. Just as the Lord tugged the rope a little with force, the two trees were uprooted and crashed to the ground, shaking the branches and the leaves. From the trees appeared two effulgent beings that started praying to the Lord. They were Nalkubar and Manigreeva.

Even today two Arjun trees stand as symbols at the gate of Nanda Palace in Mahāvan.

Mallāmalla Tirtha

यत्रैव सखिभिः सार्द्धं रामकृष्णौ बलोद्धतौ ।
मल्लमल्लाख्यं तीर्थाख्यं संजातं पृथ्वी तले ॥

(विष्णु यामल)

Here Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji engaged in various wrestling sports with their friends therefore it is famous as Mallāmalla (wrestling) Tirtha.

Gopeshwar Mahādev ji established by demigods is *virājman* in Mahāvan.

Tapta Sāmudrik Koop

भ्रूण हत्यादि पापानां कृमिकीट विघ्नयिनाम् ।
विनाशाय समाचक्रुस्तप्तसामुद्रकूपकम् ॥

(भविष्य पुराण)

To dissolve the sin related to abortions or killing of fetus (*bhruna hatyā*) and the sin related to playing with insects and worms, this Tapta Sāmudrik Koop had appeared for *Yādavas* and the demigods. It

can pacify cold and *vāta* (rheumatism, gout). By bathing here hundred times one certainly gets liberated.

Doing charity here has a special significance.

Yamalārjun Kund

Built in the memory of the salvation of Yamalārjun trees, these two kunds are making the victory declaration of the unlimited and causeless mercy of Shri Krishna.

Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji in Mahāvan

When Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhuji arrived in Mahāvan and did the *darshan* of Shri Krishnajanmotsawa Sthān and Shri Madan Mohan ji, he started dancing in ecstasy overwhelmed with love for the Lord. Tears started flowing from his eyes.

अहे श्रीनिवास ! कृष्ण चैतन्य एथाय ।
जन्मोत्सव स्थान देखि उल्लास हियाय ॥
भावावेशे प्रभु नृत्य, गीते मग्न हैला ।
कृपा करि सर्व चित्त आकर्षण कैला ॥

(भक्ति रत्नाकर)

Shri Sanātan ji

सनातन मदनगोपाल दर्शने ।
महासुख पाईया रहे महावने ॥

(भ० र०)

Shri Sanātan Goswāmi ji, the follower of Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji is well known by all *Vaishnavas*. He was the embodiment of fortitude. He constantly experienced the grace of Shri Rādhā and Krishna.

One day Shri Sanātan ji seeing an extraordinary child playing on the beautiful sandy beach of Shri Yamunā ji was enthralled and mesmerized. He also started playing with the child. His mind was spontaneously getting attracted to the child again and again. After the game was over, he started following the child. When he reached inside the temple he could not see the child anymore. Shri Sanātan ji became overwhelmed with love.

Shri Madan Gopāl ji Himself had come to give *darshan* to Shri Sanātan ji in the form of a child.

Brahmānda Ghāt

कस्मान्मृदमदान्तात्मन् भवान् भक्षितवान् रहः ।

वदन्ति तावका ह्येते कुमारास्तेऽग्रजोऽप्ययम् ॥ ¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/8/34)

All cowherd boys were once occupied in playing. Tied to the cord of love of many *gopis*, Shri Krishna in the form of child became intoxicated with love. Bound within the limits of '*Tatsukhe sukhītvam*' i.e. in your happiness lies my happiness, the Lord who is the supreme lover-beloved always remains under the subjugation of the Braj maidens. Today He is getting restless to have the dust of the feet of these *gopis* so He starts eating and enjoying the same secretly in solitude.

‘कस्मान्मृदमदान्तात्मन् भवान् भक्षितवान् रहः’

Lālā Kanhaiyā has eaten mud. When maiyā asked Him, He denied it. Maiyā was stunned and said it is your elder brother who is saying so. When Kanhaiyā heard Baldāu ji saying that He has eaten the mud, He felt a little disheartened and spoke, convulsing maiyā’s feelings to the core.

‘मैया मोय दाऊ बहुत खिभायौ’

मोसों कहत मोल को लीन्हों, तू जसुमति कब जायौ ॥

O! My maiyā ! All the cowherd boys snap their fingers and laugh at me. They say that both you and bābā are fair but they call me dark. Please you tell me, maiyā ! Am I dark? I am also fair, isn’t it! Please say yes maiyā. They ask me again and again who my mother is and who my father is and maiyā you also harass me with or without any reason. Sometimes even I become doubtful.

Maiyā could not hear more. She ran and took her darling Kanhaiyā in her arms and embraced him tightly. Lālā is also hugging her tighter and tighter. He is not getting satisfied and wants to hear again and again from maiyā, ‘I am your mother and you are my son.’

Shri Krishna had eaten the mud but when asked by maiyā He denied it. Maiyā asked Him to open His mouth and show her.

1. ‘Why O naughty, you have become very stubborn. Why did You eat the mud? See what your friends are saying. Your elder brother Baladāu is also testifying from their side.’

Kanhaiyā opened His mouth and asked maiyā to see for herself. Maiyā was stunned. She saw many universes in His mouth. After seeing all sentient and insentient beings in the mouth of Kanhaiyā, she became doubtful. She started wondering if she was scolding the Lord of the whole universe considering Him to be her son. Kanhaiyā realizing that she was getting overpowered by His magnificent grandeur concealed His *māyā* immediately. Maiyā was taken aback. Slowly, she forgot everything and picked up Lālā. The fountain of her motherly love swelled forth.

Maiyā had become astounded upon seeing the universe in the mouth of Kanhaiyā. She told Nand bābā, “Mahar, today I saw colossal mountains, rivers, the earth, the whole universe in the mouth of your Lālā.” Bābā was listening without reaction and replied when asked, “When one grows old, such delusions occur.” Maiyā fell silent. Bābā used to perform the ceremonial bath of Shāligrām ji every day. One day when he was meditating after the ceremonial bath, Lālā picked up Shāligrām ji and put it in His mouth. When Bābā opened his eyes, he found Shāligrām ji missing. When he asked Lālā about it, Lālā said He didn’t know. Bābā asked Kanhaiyā to open His mouth and show. Seeing the whole universe in the mouth, Bābā was amazed. He went running to Yashodā ji and told her that he just had the strangest *darshan* in the mouth of Lālā. He saw all the rivers, mountains, sun, moon etc inside His mouth. Maiyā repeated what bābā had said to her about old age and delusions. Bābā started smiling. In such a way our Lord through many child Leelās provided bliss and delight to maiyā, bābā and all other Brajwāsīs.

Because of giving the darshan of the universe (brahmānda) in the mouth after eating the mud, this place became famous as Brahmānda Ghāt. It is repeating the story of Shri Krishna’s godhood even today.

This place is especially enchanting during rainy season.

Chintāharan Ghāt

चिन्ताहरणसमाख्याता घट्टं ततो गुरः ।
यत्र चिन्तां हरणं समभूद् ब्रजवासीनां स्नानात् ॥

(श्रीवल्लभ दिग्विजय)

This is a bathing place of Brajwāsīs. It removes all worries. There is a temple of Mahādev ji here.

Gokul

Gokul and Mahāvan are basically the same place. The place of residence of Shri Nandarai ji has been given the name Gokul. At some places even Nandagrām has been referred to as Gokul by some devotees. Gokul of today is a settlement under Vrihadvan. Amongst the many *Leelā* sites of Shri Krishna, the place held by Gokul is unequalled. Immediately after His birth the Lord Himself inspired Vasudev ji to move to Gokul. This is enough to prove how dear Gokul is to the Lord. Many *Leelās* of Shri Krishna are associated with Gokul.

The main credit of bringing the present day Gokul to light goes to Shriman Mahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji. This city with natural scenic beauty at the banks of Yamunā ji, many significant ancient sites and related to many sweet experiences of *Āchāryas* and devotees is famous as Gokul today.

This place is especially significant to the followers of Pushti sect. Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj stayed in Vrihadvan during his first visit to Braj. While he had just begun surveying a *Leelā* site, Yamunā ji appeared as a beautiful woman and told Mahāprabhu ji that the place was Thakurāni ghāt. Shri Vallabhāchārya ji after experiencing the site likewise, rested here and performed the recitation of Shrimad Bhāgwat.

In the same place, for the deliverance of living beings of Kaliyuga, the Lord instructed the *Āchārya* to promote devotion and grant *bramha-sambandh*. The ocean of compassion Shri Krishna assured Mahāprabhu ji that for the welfare of the world, He will accept anyone who will be brought before Him by *Āchāryashri*.

The very first time Mahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji initiated Dāmodardās Harsāni at this place.

The present day Gokul was settled by Goswāmi Vithalnāth ji. In samvat 1627 securing a benefit from Emperor Akbar he got sufficient land earmarked for building a temple. The following year the construction of the grand temple of Shri Navneet Priyā Shri Thākur ji and many other mansions was completed. Since then Shri Vithalnāth ji with many relatives, disciples and attendants started living here. The management of the temple and the mansions of the Pushti sect was done by Shri Champā bhāi and Shankar bhāi Kothāri.

Since this was the main site of Pushti sect, all the seven idols bestowed by Shri Vallabhāchārya ji for service remained here only. In due course of time because of various reasons they were moved out of Gokul.

Even today, the matchless grandeur of Shri Gokulnāthji, the longing of *Vaishnava* devotees for His *darshan*, the peaceful *ghāts* of Yamunā ji and the deserted forests becoming vocal are soaking us with their ambience.

Actually the settlement of the cowherds has been given the name Gokul. The exact location of Gokul at the time of Shri Krishna may be unclear for the intellectuals of today, but so much is certain that Gokul at the time of Shri Krishna was a forest division within Vrihadvan situated at the bank of Yamunā. In the present, the surrounding and the neighboring area from Mahāvan to Gokul, has been referred to as Gokul by *Āchāryas*, devotees and *Rasikas* based on their experiences.

The site famous as Gokul has continued to remain the principal center of Vallabha sect. Shri Vallabhāchārya ji, Gosāin Vithalnāth ji are the founders of Pushti sect. They were the scholars and the devotees of the highest order. They would frequently visit Gokul and stay here.

Shri Shri Vallabhāchārya ji

Shri Lakshaman ji Bhatt and mother Ilammāgāru stayed in Kāshi for a few days during their pilgrimage. They were proceeding to the south from there. On the way, in the region of Champāranya, a son was born to them under a lupine tree. From the time of its birth, the child was still and unconscious. The mother considering the newborn to be dead, wrapped him in a piece of cloth and left him under the same tree. They then rested at Chaurānagar for the night. In the morning when the fear of *Yavans* subsided, they came back to the same tree and found their son alive. That same child Vallabha Bhatt later became the propagator of the principle of Shuddhādvaita and the founder of Pushti sect. His name was Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji.

Later Shri Vallabhāchārya ji became the Āchārya of Vishnu Swāmi Sect. He travelled extensively for the propagation and promotion of *dharma*. During his travel of Jhārkhanda, propelled by some unknown inspiration he arrived in Braj. It was about samvat 1550. When he arrived, he sat down on his grass mat in a solitary place at the bank of Yamunā ji absorbed in deep thoughts. It is said that a beautiful woman came there and reading his thoughts, pointed at a place and said that- this is Gokul and the ancient Govind ghāt. This woman was Yamunā ji herself. At this very place Lord Shri Krishna instructed him to grant brahma-sambandha for the liberation of human beings. Shri Dāmodardās Harsāni was the first blessed one

to get initiated by Shri Mahāprabhu. Shriman Mahāprabhu went on several long tours and met many learned scholars. He defeated many of them in scriptural debates and propagated *Vaishnava dharma*.

He returned to Braj again and stayed in Gokul and established Pushti sect at Govind Ghāt. Many Brajwāsīs expressing their gratitude took initiation from him. The appearance of Shrināthji in Gowardhan, the construction of the temple, the revelation of the service, all of this became available to the common people due to Āchāryashri's grace.

The propagation of the worship of child Krishna was also mainly done by Shri Vallabhāchārya ji. Although His personal form of worship was principally that of *mādhurya*, as evident from the scriptures written by him. Even today the kind of service, worship, relationship and profound feelings towards Thākurji that is seen in Pushti Sect Vaishnavas, such adoration and indulgence is rarely found anywhere else.

Āchāryapād went to many places and performed the recitation of Shrimad Bhāgwat and propagated devotion to Shri Krishna.

Shri Gosāin Vithalnāth ji

Goswāmi Vithalnāth ji Mahārāj is considered the pillar of 'Vallabha sect.' He was born near Kāshi. He completed his studies at a very young age and became qualified.

After the death of his elder brother Shri Gopināth ji, he came over to Braj. A family dispute regarding who should be given the seat of Āchārya involving Gopināthjis's son Purushottamji was ensuing. Based on the qualifications, Shri Vithalnāth ji was most deserving but the conflict increased to such proportions that due to the influence of Shri Krishna Dās Adhikāri, Shri Vithalnāth ji was barred from having the *darshan* of Shrināth ji. During that time Shri Vithalnāth ji lived in Pārāsauli grām (Chandra Sarowar). During those unbearable six months he wrote 'Nava Vigyaptiyān'. It seems as though they are the very expressions of the fire that blazed in his heart.

The place Gokul near Mathurā had become the pious and merit giving place of the Pushti sect at the time of Shri Vallabhāchārya ji itself. The new community of Gokul was built by Shri Vithalnāth ji Mahārāj. He used to live mostly in Gokul. The construction of the temple of Sri Navneet Priyā ji was done here for the very first time.

It is said that Shri Vishnudās ji, the doorkeeper of Shri Vithalnāth ji was very learned. Anybody who used to come for a debate with Gosāin ji, he would be rendered speechless by Vishnudās ji and sent back from outside itself.

On assuming the responsibility of the sect, he expanded upon the service and worship of Shrināth ji and the other Thākur deities. The service sequence of *shringār*, offering of food and the singing of padas that is being followed currently, was started by him.

The *Ashtachhāp* was also constituted by him. Shri Chheet Swāmi had come to Gokul to get initiation from Gosāin ji.

Therefore Gokul remains the principal place of veneration for the *Vaishnavas* of Vallabha sect even today.

Thākur Shri Gokulnāth ji

This is the main temple of Gokul. In the beginning the worship of this Thākur deity was being carried out by the in-laws of Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji. Later Gosāin ji entrusted this service to Shri Gokulnāth ji. Two *Swāminis* are *virājmān* with Shri Thākur ji. On one side Shri Priyā ji and on the other side Shri Chandrāwali ji are *virājmān*.

The sandals, the rosary, the upper garment and the signatures of Shri Āchārya Mahāprabhu and Shri Vithalnāth ji are kept here.

Goswāmi Harirāi ji

निवेदनं तु स्मर्तव्यं सर्वथा तादृशैर्जनैः ।¹

(श्रीवल्लभाचार्यजी)

Āchāryaprabhu has spoken about the great significance of the *satsang* (associating with that which is pure and virtuous). The *satsang* can be attained in the company of the saints and by following their words. The life of Shri Harirāi ji was steeped in the two.

He was the son of Shri Govindrāi ji, second son of Shri Vithalnāth ji. He was born in Gokul. He got the initiation of *brahma-sambandha* from Shri Gokulnāth ji and in his company he studied the scriptures and acquired the knowledge of the principles of Pushti sect. He became famous at a very young age. In his sect he is known as Prabhu Charan.

He led a disciplined and regulated life. He had even ordered his followers to shun the company of those *Vaishnavas* who were slack in following discipline. He had devout faith in his guru. Only after Shri Gokulnāth ji had taken his *prasād*, would Harirāi ji take his *prasādi*.

1. The self surrender that a person has done at the feet of Prabhu that becomes fruitful only by remembering the *satsang* (association of good and pious) of similar people.

If during his travel, a Thākur ji bestowed for service by Shri Vallabhāchārya ji or Shri Vithalnāth ji used to be in the vicinity of two miles from the place where Shri Harirāi ji was staying, he would not partake anything until he had had the *darshan*. He was deeply anguished after the *mahāprayān* (death) of Shri Gokulnāth ji. In that very state, he was instructed to do the japa (chant the name) of Sarvottam ji. He started doing the *japa* resolutely. Shri Vallabhāchārya ji gave him *darshan* after three days and blessed him with the bliss of the Self.

He has written many scriptures in Sanskrit. In ‘Shikshā Patra’ which are only forty one in number, he has described the difficulties and poignant incidents of the life of *sādhakas* and also given the solutions to their problems in a beautiful way, which are serving as an ideal for all the *Vaishnavas*.

Goswāmi Gokulnāth ji

Goswāmi Gokulnāth ji was the fourth son of Shri Gosāin ji and remained a guiding light for the followers of Pushti sect. He was a great scholar, with deep knowledge of the core principles of the sect, famous and kind hearted. In the life time of Shri Gosāin ji itself, his fame spread far and wide. After Shri Gosāin ji left for the heavenly abode his importance multiplied. All the members of the seven families considered him the foremost regarding any family matter.

Shri Girdhar ji in spite of being elder used to act only as per the instructions of Shri Gokulnāth ji. He is famous as ‘Prabhu Charan’ in Pushti sect.

The ‘*Mālā prasang*’ or the rosary incident of his life is incredible and famous. During the time of Mogul emperor Jahāngir the *Vaishnavas* living in Braj were forbidden by the law from putting *tilak* and wearing bead necklace. All *Vaishnavas* were upset because of this order. But the Muslim rulers were fanatically obsessed with opposing the Hindu dharma. The state employees used to break the bead necklace and wipe off the *tilak*. Injustice prevailed everywhere.

The people were very unhappy with the behaviour of the state employees. It is said that when Jahāngir was in Kashmir, Goswāmi Gokulnāth ji travelled all the way to Kashmir on foot and citing proofs from Vedas and other scriptures, gave him the knowledge of *dharmā*. Jahāngir was very impressed with the knowledge and personality of Goswāmi ji. After returning from Kashmir Jahāngir revoked this order. This incident is described in detail in the scripture named ‘*Māloddhār*’ written by Shri Gopāldās ji.

Up until today his descendants are doing the service in the temple of ‘ Shri Gokulnāth ji’.

Shri Shri Rājā Thākur

The main deity of Gokul is Shri Navaneetlāl ji. In the past, the Gokul village was the estate of Shri Rājā Thākur. The taxes, rent, lease, custom duty were all collected in the name of Shri Rājā Thākur and for Rājā Thākur.

After Gokul became a municipality, this system was done away with.

Shri Gopāl lāl ji, More wālā temple, Katarā wālā temple, Dāu ji’s temple, Brajeshwar ji’s temple, Gangā beti ji’s temple, Shri Mathuresh ji, Shri Nāthu ji, Shri Pārwati bahu ji, and Bhāmini bahu ji’s temple, Shri Vallabha lāl ji, Kām van wālā temple etc are famous sites worth seeing.

Shri Thakurāni Ghāt

This is the main ghāt of Gokul. Shri Yamunā ji manifested here before Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj and showed him the divine transcendental Thakurāni Ghāt. Shri Mahāprabhu ji gave the very first initiation of *brahma sambandha* here, thereby blessing this place. Therefore this place is especially important to the *Vaishnavas* of Vallabha sect.

Even today the beauty of the ghāts of Yamunā ji here is enchanting.

Govind Ghāt

During his first tour when Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji was in Jhārkhand for the propagation and promotion of *dharma*, suddenly experiencing Lord’s grace he proceeded to Braj. Once he arrived at the beautiful banks of Yamunā ji, he started inquiring about Leelā sites from the locals. The elders based on what they had heard from their ancestors, pointed at a certain place and said that it was famous as the cow barn of Nand Bābā and the place located to the right of Gosāin ji was known as Govind Ghāt. Āchārya Prabhu became *virājmān* there and performed a week long Shrimad Bhāgwat recitation under the lupine tree.

After seating his Thākur deity, Mahāprabhu ji started worshipping and praying to the Lord. When the Lord did not appear

even after the first three hours of the night had passed, he became tired and sad. The Lord could not bear to see him like that. In the midnight He appeared. Wearing *pitāmbar* and glittering earrings with flute in His hand and *Vaijayantimāl* on his chest, with dense curly hair and peacock feather, spreading the effulgence of his radiant blue form He appeared and touched Mahāprabhu ji with the edge of His *pitāmbar* moistened with love, giving him a new lease of life. He ordered the Āchārya Prabhu to grant *brahma sambandha* for the salvation of worldly beings and then became invisible.

Āchārya Mahāprabhu ji and his attendants Dāmodar Harsāni and others were very happy. Mahāprabhu ji asked Damalā whether he also heard and saw the Lord. Respecting elders and also wishing to hear from the mouth of Mahāprabhu ji, Dāmodardās ji said that he heard some and saw some but did not understand it. Mahāprabhu ji recounted the whole incident in detail at this place. After that he initiated Damalā on Pavitra Ekādashi (eleventh day of the bright half of the month of Shrāwan). He wrote the scripture ‘Siddhānta Rahasya’ that brought this incident to light.

श्रावणास्याऽमले पक्षे एकादश्यां महानिशि ।
 साक्षाद्भगवता प्रोक्तं तदक्षरश उच्यते ॥
 ब्रह्म सम्बन्ध-करणात् सर्वेषां देहजीवयोः ।
 सर्वदोष निवृत्तिर्हि दोषाः पंचविधा स्मृता ॥

(सिद्धान्त रहस्य 1-2)

Shri Yamunā ji

We have already mentioned that Gokul has continued to remain the place of reverence and worship for the followers of Pushti sect. Shri Yamunā ji was the first to give information to Shrimanmahāprabhu ji about the sites by appearing to him in person.

Although Yamunā ji is revered in all the sects, but in Pushti sect she is more than just an ordinary body of water. Her importance lies in her capability to provide the *darshan* of Shri Krishna to the devotees. Āchārya Mahāprabhu has said in the first *shloka* of Shri Yamunāshataka-

नमामि यमुनामहं सकल सिद्धि हेतुं मुदा ।
 मुरारि पदपङ्कजस्फुरदमद रेणूत्कटां ॥

तटस्थ नवकानन प्रकट मोद पुष्पाम्बुना ।
सुरासुर सुपूजित स्मरपितुः श्रियं विभ्रतीम् ॥ ¹

Yamunā ji is called ‘*Sakala Siddhi Hetu*’, meaning the one who can fulfill all kinds of wishes. These wishes or *siddhis* are not the petty worldly *siddhis* but such *siddhis* that help in attaining a divine body that is useful for service and necessary for the attainment of Shri Krishna, *siddhis* that help in perceiving the *Leelās* of the Lord, in experiencing and tasting the *rasa* thereby nourishing and sustaining the *sādhaka*. *Siddhis* that let us drink the nectar flowing from the lotus feet of Shri Krishna, that flood us with its sweetness and give us absorption. They enable us to taste and perceive the *Leelās* taking place in the forest groves at her banks between Priyā Shri Rādhā and Her bodily manifestations, the gopis and Priyatam Shyām Sundar and even enable us to gain admission in those *Leelās*.

Yamunāji in Pushti sect is the deity to be served, as the chief queen of Shri Krishna and as Pushti Shakti, she is venerable and worshippable by all.

She is considered as “*Krishna Turya Priyā*”. She is *virājmān* as the fourth chief queen in Dwārakā and even in Braj bhāv she is accepted as the fourth mistress amongst the beloveds of Shri Krishna because He sports at her beautiful banks and immerses in her waters. To propitiate Shyām Sundar she assumes His beautiful form. Shyām Sundar said to Priyāji once, “Darling! Whenever you assume *mān* and sulk, it takes a lot of effort to appease you.” Priyāji said naturally, “Beloved you assume *mān* and I will appease you. I want to experience the bliss of doing so.” Shyām Sundar assumed *mān* and went and sat in a *nikunja*. Shri Rādhā tried all Her means to appease and mollify Him but to no avail. Even Shri Lalitā, Vishākhā and other sakhis tried but weren’t successful. When Shri Yamunāji assumed the form of Shyām Sundar and went before Him, He broke into laughter and was placated. Priyāji embraced Shri Yamunāji and gave her the boon that henceforth she will be worshipped in this form and for this reason. Therefore Yamunāji is *virājmān* in this form and guides the *sādhakas* of Pushti sect even today.

Govind ghāt is next to Thakurāni ghāt.

1. (Body useful for the service of the Lord) The cause of all the *siddhis*, filled with the continuous dropping of the nectar like bright sand particles from the lotus feet of Murāri (Shri Krishna), with the water and the manifest joy of the green forests at its bank in the form of flowers, and having the beauty of Shri Krishna, the father of Kāmdev (Pradyumna) who is worshipped by all Sura-Asura, I joyfully bow to that Yamunā.

Assembly Sites for Recitation Or Baithaks

The oldest baithak of Shri Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj is located under a *Chhonkar* tree at Govind Ghāt up until today. The very first credit of the salvation of the worldly beings by Mahāprabhu ji goes to this place. Here Mahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji gave the very first initiation to Shri Dāmodardās Harsāni.

Apart from this there are Shaiyyā Baithak and Sandhyā Vandan Baithak in Dwārakādheesh temple.

Three baithaks of Goswāmi Shri Vithalnāthji and one baithak each of Shri Giridharji, Gokulnāthji, Raghunāthji and Goverdhannāthji are worth seeing.

Raskhān Teelā

या लकुटी अरु कामरिया पर राज तिहुँ पुर को तजि डारौ ।
 आठहु सिद्धि नवों निधि को सुख नन्द की गाय चराय बिसारौ ॥
 रसखान सदा इन नयननि सों ब्रज के वन बाग तड़ाग निहारौ ।
 कोटिन्ह हू कलधौत के धाम करील की कुञ्जन ऊपर वारौ ॥

The eminent devotee Raskhān's detachment from the world and his love and attachment for Braj, its forests, his deep adoration even for the Kareel (a thorny bush) kunjās of Braj, the luster of Krishna's beautiful form, the enchanting form of Krishna returning from cow grazing with His friends, all these scenes of Leelās have cast a spell over him and made him crazy about Kanhaiyā.

After looking at a picture of Shri Krishna and hearing about Him, Raskhān came over to Braj. From the rugged forests, the grazing grounds, blissful *nikunjas*, the banks of Yamunāji, under the refuge of dark Tamāl tree, from the vine and creepers soaked in blissfulness, in remote herds of cows, in the sweetness of the sound of cuckoos, in the sound '*pee kahan*' of *papihā* bird and from the Braj damsels, he started asking the whereabouts of the *Rasik Rijhawār*, aching and yearning for His *darshan*. After attaining His *darshan* he was aptly called Ras Ki Khān or the mine of rasa. Hankering after Him, wandering in the *nikunjas* of Braj he started singing, 'Lādilo Chhaila Wahi Tā Aheer Ko Peer Hamāre Hiye Ki Haraigo' i.e. my adorable and dashing beloved, only He can take away the pain of this cowherd heart of mine.

The faith that the remover of his pain Shri Krishna will appear before him in His sweet form spreading His effulgent beauty was enough reason to sustain him. The faith was ultimately victorious. The God of his love appeared before him in person. Raskhān became overwhelmed and started singing ecstatically-

‘देख्यो दुर्यो वह कुञ्ज कुटीर में बैठयो पलोटत राधिका पायन’

Shri Krishna can be attained only by the grace of great saints. Taking refuge of Shri Vithalnāth ji he surrendered his life to Shri Krishna. The Braj damsels gave him the whereabouts of the Lord and Raskhān entered the nikunja with a divine body. There he saw the splendid form of his beloved Shri Krishna steeped in love.

The beauty of Priyā and Priyatam adorned with a mesmerised lazy look at the gate of the nikunja maddened Raskhān who was in the body of a *sakhi*. The crazy bewildered woman forgot her way, lost awareness of her body, did not even realize when the pot on her head fell down. She didn't care about any shame or modesty. The modesty and social decorum flowed away on its own in the waves of love of Shyām Sundar. *Sakhi bhāv bhāvit* Raskhān started singing with abandon-

रसखान लखे मग छूटि गयो डग, भूल गई तन की सुधि सातो ।
फूटि गयो सिर को दधि भाजन, टूटिगो नैननि लाज को नातो ॥

Even *Rās* became effortless for Raskhān. He sang beautiful songs of the sweetness of Shri Krishna and His Leelās with abandon. Entering *Rās* in the body of a *sakhi* Raskhān made his eternal desire come true and felt blessed-

आज भटू सुन री बरु के तर, नंद के साँवरे रास रच्यो री ।
नैननि सैननि बैननि में नहिं कोऊ मनोहर भाव बच्यो री ॥
जद्यपि राखन को कुलकानि, सबै ब्रजबालन प्रान तच्यौ री ।
तद्यपि वा रसखानि के हाथ बिकान औ अन्त लच्यो पै लच्यौ री ॥

Treasuring the love songs of Raskhān in their womb, the sites and alleys of Gokul are making his presence feel so real. This site is famous as Raskhān Teelā and worth a visit.

Ali Khān Pathān

In spite of being the governor of Braj Bhoomi as appointed by Emperor Akbar, Ali Khān became the follower of Shri Vithalnāth ji. He developed love for Shri Krishna and used to come to Gosāin ji's recitation every day.

Once by being especially graceful to him Shri Vithalnāth ji made him eligible and deserving of Bhagwad *darshan*.

A dilapidated site near Vallabha Ghāt is famous after his name.

Tāj Ki Chhatari

“इन मुसलमान हरिजनन पै कोटिक हिन्दु वारिये”

Devotion is the subject matter of heart. Though community and caste are important, yet devotion cannot be bound by such limitations. Many Muslims and *sādhakas* of other castes have more than proved themselves in the test of devotion. History is a witness to this fact. Whoever has the emotion, the attachment of the heart and the deep love for the beloved naturally, they have been called the intimate devotees of the Lord.

The two sisters Hameedā-Haseenā, Raskhān, Ali Khān and Bhaktimati Tāj in spite of being Muslims remained absorbed in loving Sri Krishna intensely, exclusively and relished the sweet nectar of His Leelās.

Bhaktimati Tāj belonged to the Mogul royal family, this fact is indisputable. One day she asked the Muslim religious heads and priests, “Is it possible to see God?” After getting a reply in affirmative, she started for ‘Kābā Shareef’. On the way they camped at Mathurā. On hearing the sound of the bells and the loud sounds of chanting of the names of the Lord, she asked the people who were accompanying her what that was. The court minister told her that the smaller god of Hindus lived there and they were praying to Him. Tāj decided to proceed only after seeing the smaller god. The Muslim priest tried to desist her from doing so, but she remained resolute.

Just as she was about to step in the temple for the *darshan* of the Lord, the Hindu priest forbade her from entering saying that she was not a Hindu. The yearning borne out of love is not subject to any confinement. Reciprocating her intense desire for His *darshan*, Shri Thākur ji also became impatient to meet His devotee.

Becoming restless and impatient, Tāj started singing -

सुनो दिलजानी, मेरे दिल की कहानी तुम,
हुस्न की बिकानी, बदनामी भी सहुँगी मैं ।
देवपूजा ठानी, मैं निमाज हूँ भुलानी,
तजे कलमाकुरान, तेरे गुनन गहुँगी मैं ।

Unable to withstand the intensely poignant call of her love, attracted by her total surrender and moved by the intense pangs felt by her, Nandanandan without delaying any further went over to Tāj. She was captivated by the beautiful form of the Lord, her voice resonated-

सांवरा सलौना सरताज सर कुल्हेदार,
तेरे नेह दाघ में निदाघ ह्वै रहुँगी मैं ।
नन्द के फरजन्द कुर्बान ताणी सूरत पै,
हूँ तो मुगलानी हिन्दवानी ह्वै रहुँगी मैं ।

Shri Krishna gave *darshan* to Tāj and she felt blessed. She gave up her religion and became a Hindu deciding to stay in Braj to serve Shri Krishna. She was embraced by the Lord. Tāj became immortal forever. She wandered in the streets of Gokul absorbed in the blissful beauty of Shri Krishna.

This site called Tāj Ki Chhatari (umbrella) surrounded by small trees near Raskhān Teelā is giving the whereabouts of that very love story.

There are a few who believe that the raised platform where Tāj used to do her prayers is in Jatipurā.

Ramanreti

This is the principal center of recluse Kārshni Panthi saints of Udāseen sect.

Shri Gopāldās ji and Shri Harnāmdās ji have been the saints of high order in this sect. Both of them preached detachment. Even today many recluse ascetics live here and remain engaged in the service of saints.

Other Nearby Sites

Until now we had been enjoying the *Leelā* sites of Gokul and Mahāvan related to the child *Leelās* of Shri Krishna. Let us now tour the other *Leelā* sites located nearby and sing the glories of Shri Krishna.

Lohavan

लोहजघडवनं नाम लोहजघडेन रक्षितम् ।
नवमन्तु वनं देवि सर्व पातकनाशनम् ॥

(आ० वा० पु०)

O Devi! (Prithivi), the ninth forest called Lohajangh guarded by Lohajanghāsūr is capable of destroying all kinds of sins.

This is Shri Krishna's cattle grazing site. Shri Krishna and Balrāma bantering and joking with their cowherd friends and grazing

their cattle come over to this secluded place. In the hot summer afternoon, the cowherd children receive immense pleasure in enjoying the shade of the dense trees.

The cave of Lohāsūr and Gopināth ji are worth visiting.

Ānandi Bandi

वन्दित्यानन्दिन्यौ तत्र च देव्यौ विराजते ।

ये नन्दालयगौमयसञ्चयकर्तरिगणाध्यक्षे ॥

(श्रीवल्लभ दिग्विजय)

Two women named Bandi and Ānandi are *virājmān* here as Devis. They were the heads of the women who collected cow dung in Nanda Palace.

The norm of love is strange. The vine of love nourished and nurtured within the bounds of '*Tatsukhesukhittvam*' is the embodiment of true love. The shining example of this are the damsels of Braj who surrendered everything that belonged to them for the happiness of their beloved Shri Krishna. Uddhav ji yearned to be born as a leaf or a vine in Braj just to receive the dust particles of the feet of these damsels. The eminent devotee Raskhān ji bound by the cord of love became ready to be born as a stone in Braj, even lower than a blade of grass. When such was their feeling, then who can describe the greatness of these love intoxicated Braj damsels. Telling Uddhav ji about their devout exclusive faith in the Lord the Braj maidens said -

चेरी हैं न ऊधो ! कहूँ ब्रह्म के बबा की हम ।

सूधो कहि देत एक कान्ह की कमेरी हैं ॥

At one place overpowered by love they spoke with resoluteness and firm conviction-

वे तो हैं, हमारे ही, हमारे ही, हमारे ही ।

हम उनही की, उनही की, उनही की हैं ॥

Bound by such steadfast love and unflinching conviction, Nandanandan has become indebted to them for a handful of buttermilk.

The *gopis*, who are the rasa waves of the ocean of love that is Shri Krishna, are the personifications of love. They are happy in the happiness of the Lord. They have no hesitation in doing any kind of service of the beloved. Service to them is service, in that there is no awareness of small or big. Embracing the total and complete service,

they have shown us the pinnacle of love. They are also the beloveds of Shri Krishna. In the eternal sport of rasa, they are the *sakhis* who are emotionally identical to Shri Krishna, having deep insight of rasa. They happily accept any task in Nanda Palace to get an opportunity to enjoy the sweetness of the Lord every second.

This place is famous after the names of those Braj maidens. Two kunds in the name of Bandi and Ānandi are also here.

Dāu ji (Baldev)

रेवतीरमणायैव गोपानां वरदायिने ।
अन्योन्य सन्मुखालोक प्रीयते च नमस्तु ते ॥

(आदि पु०)

O! Revatiraman! O! The granter of the boons to the cowherds! You both are keenly eager to look at each other. Our obeisance to the both of you.

The Importance of the Origin of the Site

The spontaneous love found in Braj is difficult to find anywhere else. A special kind of love and intimacy is scattered everywhere in Braj and why not since Brajwāsīs are Shri Krishna's intimate devotees. They are Shri Hari's adornment, 'Brajwāsi Te Hari Ki Shobhā'. Bound by their true love and affection Shri Krishna is readily and easily available to them. The feeling of a natural intimacy for Shri Krishna is filled in them. They have the great fortune of being Shri Krishna's life and soul, His everything and they are proud of this fact.

Shri Nandarai ji invited the Yādavas once. He collected the milk of one hundred thousand cows here. Variety of sweets and delicacies made of sugar, milk, clarified butter and honey were prepared for Baldev ji. Since Baldev ji came here and was welcomed here, this place has become famous as Baldev or Dāu ji.

Dugdha Kund

सुधामयपयस्तुभ्यम् हलायुधवरोद्भव ।
चिरायुर्वरदायैव दुग्धकुण्ड नमस्तु ते ॥

(पद्म पुराण)

O! The kund of nectarean milk ! O! The kund produced by the blessings of Haladhar ji ! Giver of long life! Obeisance to you.

This is the place where the milk was collected and stored and is known as Dugdha Kund.

Baldev Bhojan Sthal

सकलेष्ट प्रदायव हलिनो भोजनस्थल ।
देवषिमनुजानाञ्च हितार्थ सिद्धये नमः ॥

(आ० पु०)

O the fulfiller of all wishes! O the site of the eating of food of Haldhar ji! You are for the welfare of demi-gods and human beings, obeisance to you.

Baldev ji along with the other invited Yādavas had food here satisfyingly. This is why the place is called Baldev Bhojan Sthal.

Trikone Temple

नन्द-गोप कृतार्थाय त्रिकोणरमणस्थल ।
गोपकामप्रपूर्णाय प्रदक्षिणपदे नमः ॥

O Trikone Raman Sthal! You are for the fulfillment of the wishes of the cowherds. You are here for blessing Shri Nandarai ji and other cowherds. Circumambulating you I pay my obeisance to you.

Dāu Ji's Temple

The deity of Baldev ji here is black in colour and is very pleasing and attractive. In front of him Revati ji is seated with her eyes lowered down, respecting decorum. Both of them are looking at each other lovingly. Even the Yavan King was impressed by the miracles of this place. Like many other Thākur deities Dāu ji remained here even during the attacks of the Yavans.

One miraculous incident given below will help in understanding the specialness of Dāu ji-

It is said that Aurangzeb destroying many other temples was on his way looking for the temple of Dāu ji. His whole army kept looking for it the whole night but could not find it. After getting tired and frustrated he returned to his camp with the army. This was Dāu ji's miracle only.

It is said that Dāu ji appeared from a *kund* during the rule of Akbar. Goswāmi Shri Gokulnāth ji had delegated the responsibilities of service and worship to Shri Kalyān ji. Until today, the service is

being done by the descendants of Shri Kalyān ji.

Shri Dāu ji is revered by all Brajwāsīs. For any auspicious wish they offer butter and sugar candy here famously known as Dāu ji kā handā and pray for its fulfillment.

Sankarshan Kund

Nearby is Ksheer Sāgar (Sankarshan Kund) and closer is Hathourā grām considered to be the baithak of Shri Nandarai ji.

Devanagar

The place of Divaspati cowherd is ten miles to the north of Baldev grām. Rām sāgar and Gowardhan hill are here. Divaspati cowherd had done the worship of Gowardhan here only.

Karnāval

Karnāval village is near “Koi lo” village. It is said that the ears of Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji were pierced here. The idol of Thākur Shri Mathuresh ji is believed to have manifested from here.

The Karna Bhedya Koop, Ratan Chowk, Shri Mathuresh ji Ki Baithak and temples of Shri Madanmohanji and Mādhavrāi ji are here.

Rāwal

रासे सम्भूय गोलोके सा दधार हरेः पुरः ।
तेन राधा समाख्याता पुराविद्भिर्द्विजोत्तम ॥

(ब्रह्मवैवर्त पुराण त्र० ख०)

Shri Krishna and Shri Rādhā are essentially one and the same. Shri Krishna Himself appeared as Shri Rādhā in order to experience His mādhurya or sweetness. In order to explain the subject more clearly, we are sharing the experience of the great saint Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji below which will shed some light on the cause of the appearance of Priyā ji.

Priyatam’s desire for *rasa* manifested itself in the form of Priyā ji. Shri Shyām Sundar remains continuously absorbed in savouring this ambrosial sweetness. Priyatam treasures the embodiment of this ambrosial sweetness in His eyes, mind and heart tenderly and lovingly with utmost care. The shyness and the *rasa* testiness that appear in this “golden vine embellished with a yellow tinge” seem to increase the new and novel *keli* of dark Tamāl. Both are getting suffused with love

but are not getting satisfied. These blue and yellow bodied incarnates of love are forever absorbed in the desire for more and more.

धर प्रिया का रूप प्रकटी पीय की रस लालसा ही ।
 रात दिन इस लालसा से हैं विभूषित रस प्रवाही ॥
 रस मधुरिमा से सुनिर्मित मूरति यह चित्त चाही ।
 पीय ने रखी सँजोकर नैन मन अरु प्राण मांही ॥
 हेम लतिका में सुकुच श्री और जो रस तुनक आही ।
 नित्य नव नव केलि हित है नील तरु की कामना ही ॥
 प्यार में दोनों पगे हैं प्यार ही छिन छिन सुहाही ।
 प्यार ही साकार है यह खेल है सब प्यार का ही ॥

Manifesting from the left part of Shri Krishna, His *Āhlādini Shakti*, in the form of Shri Rādhā, is venerated and worshipped by all Vaishnavas and is their heart and soul. Shyām Sundar and Shri Rādhā are two bodies and one soul. Priyatam Shyām Sundar cannot stay without Shri Rādhā and Kishori Shri Rādhā cannot stay without Shri Shyām Sundar. They are always united but insatiability always remains.

‘मिलेई रहत मनु कबहुँ मिले ना’

This insatiability alone is Love. Subjugated by this very love the *rasa* crazy Yugal become two *chakor* (Indian partridge who is enamoured of the moon) and two *chandramā* (moon). It is difficult to say whose beauty is more luminous. Both drink the sweetness of the beauty of each other continually, but their thirst is never quenched.

From times unknown the lofty tides of sweetness rise in the two oceans of love, Shri Shyām Sundar and Kishori Rādhā and they both remain continuously absorbed in enjoying them.

‘आदि न अन्त विहार करै दोऊ-
 प्रिया प्रियतम में भई न चिन्हारी ।’

From the beginning of the creation this aggregate mass of sweet *rasa* is flowing. Steeped in its colour, the Yugal intoxicated and unconscious in its absorption are engaged in drinking this *rasa*.

Those Who are forever united, do not separate even for a second and Those Who remain immersed in the river of their inherent sweetness, where is the question of their manifestation? However they still manifest and incarnate to give their devotees a taste of the

extreme bliss resulting from love. Describing this utmost principle, Soordās ji says-

राधा माधव दोय नहीं ।
 प्रकृति पुरुष न्यारे नहिं कबहूँ वेद पुरान कहत सबही ॥
 देह भेद सों भेद जानके मत भ्रम भूले लोय ।
 ब्रह्मा के थावर चर मोही प्रकृति पुरुष रहे गोय ॥
 भक्त हेतु अवतार धर्यो ब्रज पूरन पुरुष प्रमान ।
 सूरदास राधा-माधव को तनु द्वै एकहि प्राण ॥

Shri Rādhā ji is Shri Krishna's *Āhlāadini* Shakti. She is also His primordial Shakti. In fact Shri Krishna Himself has assumed the form of Shri Rādhā and is performing the divine *Leelā* of love for His devotees. The One who has surrendered Her all for the Beloved, She is the reflection of the feelings, indications and signals of Shri Krishna. Her happiness lies in the happiness of the Beloved. Nārād Bhakti Sutra describing that Love devoid of any self-gratification that is found in these Love-Incarnate Braj damsels as 'yatha Brajgopikānām' (like that of the gopis), has unreservedly declared it as being supreme. Shri Rādhā, the friend and the mistress of these maidens is the personification of that glorious Love.

She concurs and contributes in every wish of the Priyatam Shri Krishna. She is always engaged in arranging means that will bring happiness to Him and thus make her happy.

Subjugated by this love, Shri Krishna says -

न पारयेऽहं निरवच्च संयुजां, स्वसाधु कृत्यं विवुधायुषापि वः ।
 या मा भजन् दुर्जर्गेह श्रृङ्खलाः, संवृश्च्य तद् वः प्रतियातु साधुना ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/32/22)

Therefore He cannot free Himself of the debt of the love of the gopis. Such is the nature of Shri Krishna, the Emperor of Love and the embodiment of Mahābhāv Shri Rādhā, who lives only for the happiness of the Priyatam.

The memory of the twenty eight chāturyugi of Shweta Vārāha Kalpa is before Shri Krishna. Shri Rādhā willingly concurs and assuming any reason, a prelude to manifest on the earth, is set up. Shri Krishna, His *parikar*, Kishori Rādhā with sakhis incarnate in Braj to give bliss and delight of Leelās to their devotees.

King Suchandra after receiving a boon from Brahmā ji appeared as Vrishbhānu cowherd in Braj and his wife Kalāvati appeared as

Kirtidā milkmaid with him in Vrishbhānupur. Supremely fortunate Kirtidā Rāni received the supreme fortune of being the mother of Shri Rādhā.

It was the *brahma muhurta* (the time three hours prior to sunrise). In a divinely intoxicating atmosphere in a *nikunja* at the banks of Shri Yamunā ji Kishori Shri Rādhā took incarnation. Bliss and happiness flowed everywhere. The happiness of the cowherds and the gopis knew no bounds. The residents of Vrishbhānupur ran to each other in elation to share this happy news. The auspicious instruments began playing everywhere and

महारास पूरन प्रकट्यो अनि ।

अति फूली घर-घर ब्रज नारी राधा प्रकटी जानी ॥

Aha! On hearing that Shri Rādhā has appeared, the maidens of Braj were swept with exhilaration and started shouting victory slogans.

आज रावल में जय-जयकार ।

प्रकट भई वृषभानु गोप के श्रीराधा अवतार ॥

गृह गृह ते सब चलीं वेग दै गावत मंगलचार ।

प्रकट भई त्रिभुवन की सीमा रूप राशि सुख सार ॥

निरतत गावत करत बधाई, भीर भई अति, द्वार ।

परमानन्द वृषभानु नन्दिनी जोरी नन्द-दुलार ॥

The site of the appearance of Shri Rādhā is famous as Rāwal. Even today a temple at the banks of Yamunā ji is flying the flag of its history. Shri Rādhā appeared in the home of her maternal grandparents and then She arrived in Vrishbhānupur.

One more story related to the appearance of Shri Shri Vrishbhānunandini based on the experiences of many Vaishnava saints and goswāmīs is famous. In the palace of Shriji in Vrishbhānupur, appearance day is celebrated according to this tradition.

Shri Vrishbhānu ji arrived at the Vrishbhānu sarowar on the eighth day of the month of Bhādra, just like he used to every day. There he saw a girl child floating in the lake on a lotus flower near a drooping tree of a dense *nikunja*. She was Shri Vrishbhānunandini Shri Rādhā.

There is no doubt about the truth of this as well, due to the difference of *kalpānta* (end of a kalpa or an aeon equal to 1000 yugas).

Braj Bhoomi Mohini

SHRI GIRIRĀJ



Chapter Three

एकेनैव चिराय कृष्ण ! भवता गोवर्धनोऽयं धृतः
श्रान्तोऽसि क्षणमास्वसाम्प्रतममी सर्वे वयं दध्महे ।
इल्युल्लासितदोष्णि गोपनिवहे किञ्चिद्भुजाकुंचन-
न्यञ्चच्छैलभरार्दिते विरुवति स्मेरा हरिः पातु वः ॥

(श्रीशरणस्य)

THE OTHER NEIGHBOURING SITES

1. Sakarāyā
2. Neemagāon
3. Konai grām
4. Kunjerā grām
5. Surya Kund
6. Jasondi (Jasomati)
7. Basonti (Basati)
8. Mukharāi
9. Tosha grām
10. Jakhin gāon
11. Adeeng gāon
12. Painthā
13. Bachchha gāon
14. Gāntholi
15. Toad Ko Ghanon

The sites other than the ones mentioned above like Rādhā kund, Govardhan, Pārāsauli, Yamunāvato, Ānyora, Punchhari, Shyām Dhāk, Jatipurā and Sakhi-sthala grām have already come in the description of Shri Girirāj ji and therefore not covered seperately.

दूरं दृष्टिपथात्तिरोभव हरेर्गोवर्द्धनं बिभ्रत-
 स्त्वय्यासक्तदृशः कृशोदरि ! करस्रस्तोऽस्य मा भूदयम् ।
 गोपीनामिति जल्पितं कलयतो राघानिरोधाश्रयं,
 श्वासाः शैलभरश्रमभ्रमकराः कसद्विषः पातु वः ॥¹

(श्रीशुभाङ्ग)

Oh! This sweet noise of festivities, the startling sound of exhilarated cheers in between, the sound of loud victory slogans sometimes, the feet of devotees dancing in exuberance and exultation, all these are indicating to the presence of a very special place. Lo! The collective mass of smooth, shining dark and pale boulders, Shri Girirāj ji is before us. The thick dense trees surrounding the fourteen miles long boundary of Shri Girirāj ji can be seen. He is full of trees surrounded by vines and climbers and inhabited by wild animals. Somewhere the herds of deer with a look of yearning are wandering here and there. Wonder what the gaze of the cows and the calves doused in love, are searching for? Somewhere there is a crazed peacock standing on his tiptoes, wonder who he is looking for?

Yes-yes! Everybody is getting stirred by a wave of sweet sound coming from their precious darling Giriwardhāri. See, the cuckoo just cooed and the *papihā* has started repeating “Pee kahān.” From the branches of the Kadamba tree, sounds of the chirping of the birds were heard. Nearby a herd of wild deer in the grove of dark Tamāl trees are looking innocently with wide opened eyes. Far away somewhere, the flute has resounded. Lo! The dense alley nearby has started resonating with the tinkling sound of the anklets. On receiving the invitation of their beloved, these Braj damsels in colourful ornaments and dresses have arrived at the secluded blissful foothills of Shri Girirāj ji. The chiming sound of their anklets while they are searching for

1.O slim waisted Rādhei! Move away from the eyes of Shri Krishna who is holding Shri Gowardhan as this Gowardhan can fall down from His hand because He is attached to your face. May the sound of long deep breaths, on listening to these words of the gopis preventing Shri Rādihā, released by Shri Krishna indicative of the labour of holding the mountain, protect you. This means just as a weak person after a little labour starts taking deep breaths, similarly as soon as Āhlādinī Shakti Shri Rādihā moved away from His sight, Shri Krishna also started taking deep breaths.

Him is resonating from many solitary thickets of Shri Girirāj ji. In these moments of search, noticing His sakhis unbearably restless and impatient, from a nearby dense grove, a laughter reproaching a thousand *veenās* was heard. Following this sound of laughter in the same dense grove, the bells of the anklets fell silent.

Shri Krishna with His beloved Shri Rādhā and His own forms, the Braj maidens come to the foot hills of Girirāj ji every day. Shri Girirāj ji is the witness to the solitary and secluded sports and pastimes of Braj maidens. He is not only the witness but also the creator of it. He is the chief amongst the devotees of Shri Hari. Shri Krishna is saying Himself-

कृष्णस्त्वन्यतमं रूपं गोपविश्रम्भणंगतः ।
शैलोऽस्मीति बुबन् भूरि बलिमादद् वृहद्वपुः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/24/35)

The Lord has revealed this mammoth form in order to inspire faith in His intimate devotees. By saying 'I am myself Girirāj,' and taking the responsibility of protecting His intimate devotees Himself, He is strengthening their dependence and reliance on Him.

Shri Krishna comes here with His sakhās every day to graze the cattle. They get absorbed in various games and the cows graze nearby. Deceiving His sakhās, sometimes Kanhaiyā, adept at loving, leaves from there unnoticed and goes over to where the Braj maidens are waiting for Him anxiously and creates a romp and revelry of *rasa-ranga*.

The dark and pale boulders here, the water falls, the silence of the dense caves and the rocks covered with new grass, blissful *nikunjas* decorated with colourful flowers and surrounded by beautiful creepers. Oh! Every *Leelā* site is alive. All the six seasons reside here. According to the wishes of the Priyatam, Vrindādevi gathers all the equipments and as per the requirement of the *Leelā*, a delectable environment gets created by itself. The intimately private site of divine sports and enjoyment becomes blissful with *rasa-ranga*.

Shri Chaturbhujdās ji saw this form of the *Leelā* site. He became overwhelmed with bliss, his happiness started swelling. He saw the devotional and the divine form of these smooth and silky rocks and he sang-

ललित ब्रजदेश गिरिराज राजै ।

घोष सीमंतनी संग गिरिवर धरन करत नितकेलि तहाँ काम लाजै ॥

त्रिविध पौन संचरै, विविध भरना भरै ललित सौरभ सरस मधुप गाजै ।

ललित तरु फूल फल फलित षट ऋतु सदा चतुर्भुज गिरिधरन समाजै ॥

The *rasa* flows during the cattle grazing with the *sakhās* in the daytime and during solitary *vihār* with the *sakhis* at nights and during group *rasa vilās*. Soaked in these *rasa* particles, these caves receive unreserved happiness. Looking at the unparalleled splendour and beauty here, even the Kāmdev and Rati feel embarrassed and ashamed. The beauty permeating the entire nature becomes blessed by absorbing the *rasa* particles of this very place. And why shouldn't it be? This place is becoming beautiful with the lustre of the divine bodies of Shri Krishna, Shri Rādhā and their *sakhis*.

The foot hills of Shri Girirāj ji has been the main place of *sādhanā* of the *Ashtachhāp* poets. Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchāryaji and Goswāmi Vithalnāth ji blessed this place by staying here. The poignant and *rasa* filled account of the experiences of the *Ashtachhāp* poets is a subject matter of practical experience only.

Nandanandan has come to Shri Girirāj ji for grazing. On the top of the mountain while the cows are grazing, the Lord is engaged in playing various games with His *sakhās*. After playing so much, the tender bodied Kanhaiyā has become hungry. He is calling out to His *sakhās* to come nearer. "O! Brother Subal, Shridāmā, please come and bring the cows also, they can rest here a little bit. O! Friends, you all come here now. O! Brothers, it is getting late, we should have our meals now as we haven't had much to eat except a little yogurt since morning." Shri Krishna sits on a rock and starts eating with His friends. Sometimes the Lord snatching a bite from Shridāmā's food, starts eating it and then gives the leftover to Shridāmā in his mouth to eat. He picks up a few sweets and offers them to Madhumangal and once he eats them, the Lord snatches the leftovers and starts eating Himself. The sound 'Give me, give me' for butter and yogurt is reverberating everywhere. Witnessing this pastime of merrymaking and amusement Parmānand dās ji started singing-

गिरि पर चढ़ि गिरवरधर टेरे ।

अहो भैया सुबल अहो श्रीदामा लावहु गाँई खिरक के नेरें ॥

खाएँ छ्त्रक अब बार भई है कछु करि घैया पिबहि सवेरे ।

परमानन्द प्रभु बैठि सिलनि पर भोजन करत चहुँ दिसि फेरें ॥

On one hand the *sakhās* becoming intoxicated with joy in the company of their Kanhaiyā started dancing, on the other hand, Shyām Sundar appeared in His eternal adolescent form before the Braj damsels and started asking for butter and yogurt. Declaring Shri Girirāj ji as His property, He is demanding toll in the form of

butter and yogurt. Sometimes these Braj maidens readily agree to His demand and drown in bliss by doing so. Sometimes the demand turns into a quarrel steeped in love, creating a prelude for far sweeter *rasa*. One such milkmaid upon being asked for toll gathers her courage and reprimanding the Lord says, “You consider Girirāj ji as your property Kanhaiyā and that is why you always ask for toll from us. You say that you belong to an eminent family, but wandering in the forests grazing the cows is not something done by the people of eminence. You do not have any ornaments on you, so on what basis you want to be called noble.” And after rebuking with the words, ‘सूर कान्ध कामरी हू जानति हाथ लकुटिया कर को’ as she raised her eyes and looked at Shri Krishna, she became His forever and ever. She became lost in some sweet wave of *rasa* of her beloved.

By presenting a delightful depiction to the readers, from the many experiences of the great saint Shri Bhaktimati Ushā ji, I would like to make their faith steady-

“Priyā and Priyatam are standing atop Girirāj ji in a special stance and looking at something. They are slowly getting absorbed while looking. The wind flirting with the clothes of the motionless Yugal Shri is feeling proud at its fortune. In an effort to conceal Herself from the teasing looks of the Priyatam, Shri Kishori ji is pulling the blue border of Her sari in order to form a veil. Priyatam has understood. He is humming sweetly and softly and bending Himself a little He looks at Priyā ji. Priyā ji pulls Her blue sari even more. Priyatam also bends further to look at her. Priyāji keeps pulling the border of the sari until it completely slips over. The ocean of beauty gets revealed. The two moons rising together started enhancing the beauty of that place.”

(Gratefully from Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorva Shri Bhaktimati Ushā ji)

Memories of many *Leelās*, sweet tales of *rasa vilās*, complaints steeped in that *rasa* and the solutions to those complaints and the various ways of solving them are resonating in every site of Shri Girirāj ji.

Shri Gowardhan hill, the crest jewel of Shri Vrindāvan is not different from Shri Krishna. Braj Bhoomi, Shri Girirāj ji and Yamunā ji soaked and nourished by the divine touch of the Lord, have maintained their existence like before even today.

Shri Girirāj ji is that very same Girirāj where the *keli vilās* and the *rasa vihār* of Priyā-Priyatam, Shyāmā-Shyām has been flowing on one pretext or the other-it is flowing even today. There is no beginning and no end to this flow. This *vihār* is visible and manifest.

The experiences of many great ones have become the cause of the direct vision of the Lord .

“It is beyond the capacity of words (written or spoken) to describe the love steeped glory of Shri Girirāj ji, the beautiful and enchanting place of divine pastimes. This is the same sacred site where Shyām Sundar engages in various sports with His beloved Priyatamā. This is the same pious site revered by the sages where drunk with love, amongst His beloveds, the Madan Vilāsi, Manmohan Chitchor, Chatur Shiromani.....”

*

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This Girirāj, who was held by Shri Krishna on His little finger for seven days to protect the Brajwāsis, is extremely fortunate. The embodiment of love, *Shringār Rasa Rāj* Shri Krishna is extremely delicate. He is getting bent due to the weight of His flute. That same Shri Krishna in order to protect His intimate devotees held Shri Girirāj ji and made him worshipable.

जे वंशी के भार सों झुके जात सुकुंवार ।
 तिन प्रिय ब्रजजन के लियै, कर पर धर्यो पहार ॥
 गये तिमिर ऊपर जहाँ, बरसत हैं घन जोर ।
 गिरितर चंद उदै भयौ भामिनी भई चकोर ॥
 ‘नागरि’ सों ललिता कहत सब ब्रज गिरि की छांह ।
 तुम चितवत पिय ओर उत त्यों-त्यों कपै बांह ॥

As described in the Purānas, Shri Girirāj ji is diminishing little by little every day. Despite this, fourteen miles long in the present, Girirāj ji is worshipable and venerable to all the devotees. The blue and bright rocks, surrounding dense trees, many *kunds* and lakes are attracting devotees even today. Such blue and bright colour, such smoothness and softness like that of the rocks of Girirāj ji are rare to find in any other mountain rocks. There are many caves in Girirāj ji. In various places the foot prints of Shri Krishna from the time of His incarnation are present.

Shri Girirāj ji is Brajwāsi’s own deity. He fulfills their wishes easily. Many devoted bhaktas regularly circumambulate Shri Girirāj ji on every full moon day and no moon day. In the foothills many saints and *sādhakas* are engaged in worship and penance.

Significance

Shri Girirāj ji is blessed as Shri Krishna continuously lives here.

नित्यं विहरति यस्य कुञ्जेषु राधया हरिः ।
किमलभ्यं प्रसादात् दर्शनात् सेवनान्नुष्णाम् ॥

In the *nikunjas* of Girirāj ji Shri Krishna engages in vihar with Shri Rādhikā everyday. By doing the *darshan* of and devotedly serving such Girirāj ji and upon His happiness nothing remains unattainable.

गोवर्द्धनश्च भगवान् यत्र गोवर्द्धनो धृतः ।
रक्षिता यादवाः सर्वे इन्द्रवृष्टि-निवारणात् ॥

(स्क० पु०)

Lord Shri Krishna in the form of Shri Gowardhan, lifted Gowardhan hill at this place and protected the Brajwāsīs from the catastrophic rains sent by the furious Indra, the king of demigods.

श्री राधाधर सीधु नेत्रचषकैः पीत्वा गमन्मत्ततां
कृष्णः काम कला विलास निपुणो यत्कन्दरामन्दिरे ।
न सस्मार दिवानिशं च ललितादत्तैस्तु कालोचितै-
र्भोगैरेष विराजते मणिधरो गोवर्द्धनः क्षमाधरः ॥

(गो० श०)

In the caves of that Girirāj ji, where the skillful Shri Krishna drank the nectar of the lips of Shri Vrishbhānu Nandini with the cups of His eyes and despite being offered food etc appropriate to the time by Shri Lalitā sakhi, did not even notice the passing of many days and nights, that same Shri Gowardhan ji adorned with jewels is looking radiant and splendid even today.

गेहात्कन्दुकमानय प्रिय सखे त्वं देवप्रस्थ प्रियां
वंशीं पुष्प सरोवरात् सुबल हे, श्रीरोहिणेयं वनात् ।
तानेवं बहुवञ्चयन् गिरिमगात्तत्केलिलिप्सुर्हरिः
तद्गधामिलनस्थली विजयते गोवर्द्धनः शैलराट् ॥

(गो० श०)

O! Dear friend! I forgot my ball at home, please get it and O! Devprastha can you please get my dear flute from the Pushpa sarowar and O Subal! Can you go to the forest to get Balrāma ji. Deceiving His friends in this manner, the hill that Shri Krishna goes to, in order to meet His beloved Shri Rādhikā ji, let that same meeting place (Shri Girirāj ji) attain victory.

Just the touch of Shri Girirāj ji is enough to destroy the sins of many births. Even if a *brahma rākshas* (Brahmin who becomes a demon after death) touches Girirāj ji suddenly and involuntarily,

he gets liberated and attains a divine body. As Shri Girirāj ji is Shri Krishna Himself, the merit that is received by touching the Lord Himself or by having His *darshan* is gained by touching Shri Girirāj ji or having his *darshan*.

स्पृश्यति यदि कदाच्छिद्धया हेलया वा ।
 सकृदपि गिरिराजस्यैक मूर्तिं क्वचिद् यः ॥
 द्विज सुर नरघाती तस्करोवान्तकाले ।
 ब्रजति स हरिलोकं स्वेष्टदासत्वमाप्य ॥

(आ० वा० पु०)

If a person in spite of being a killer of a deva (respectable person), Brahmin or a man or in spite of being a smuggler, touches the idol of Girirāj ji anywhere with or without reverence even once, he attains his *ishta* and goes to Vaikuntha loka at his death.

The One who is wearing *pitāmbar* on His waist which is putting the lustre of lightening to shame, the One who is wearing necklaces of jewels and pearls and the garland of five different coloured flowers on the chest and the One who is beautifully bent at three places and is playing the sweet flute held in His hand, Behold! That Shri Krishna, the beloved of Shri Rādhikā, on top of Shri Gowardhan hill looking beautiful and resplendent.

It is impossible to describe completely, even in thousands of yugas, the greatness of the caves of Shri Gowardhan, where the Abode of *keli vilās vaibhav*, the Ocean of nectar of sweetness Shri Rādhā-Mādhav, being served by their *sakhis*, becoming rasa intoxicated in the dance of *Rās* are receiving joy and delight in a special way.

राधा स्कन्धे वामबाहुप्रकोष्ठं धृत्वा कृष्णः मन्दमन्दविहस्य ।
 पश्यन् प्राचीं पाटलां सुप्रभाते हास्यं लेभे यत्र तन्मेनिजेषुः ॥

(गोवर्द्धन शतक)

In the early hours of the morning, on top of Shri Gowardhan, where Shri Krishnachandra smiling faintly with His left arm around the shoulder of Shri Rādhikā and looking at the red colour of the east, starts smiling again, such Shri Girirāj ji is my *ishta*.

Appearance

सर्वतीर्थमयः श्यामो घनश्यामः सुरप्रियः ॥
 भारतात्पश्चिमदिशि शाल्मली द्वीप मध्यतः ।

गोवर्द्धनो जन्मलेभे पत्न्यां द्रोणाचलस्य च ॥
 पुलस्त्येन समानीतो भारते ब्रज मण्डले ।
 वैदेह तस्यागमनं मया तुभ्यं पुरोदितम् ॥¹

(गर्ग संहिता 3/9/43-45)

After he heard about the greatness of Shri Girirāj from Shri Nārād ji, King Bahulāshwa expressed his curiosity to hear about the incident of the appearance of Girirāj ji. Shri Nārād ji who is called, the heart of Lord Krishna, said that first of all, the gigantic Shri Sheish Nāg ji appeared. In his lap appeared, the most revered Supreme Loka Goloka, after attaining which the devotees do not return to this material world. Similarly as per the wish of the Lord, from the left part of His body appeared His own *Āhlāḍini* Shakti incarnate Shri Rādhā ji. From the two arms of Shri Rādhā ji appeared Shri Lalitā and Vishākhā and from every pore of Her body manifested many *sakhis and sahacharis*. There itself, Shri Krishna entered the *Rās mandal* with His beloved Shri Rādhā and Her bodily manifestations, the *sakhis*.

The sweet sound of the anklets was resonating there. The courtyard was resplendent with beautiful gemstones. Because of the shower of nectar, the beauty and splendour had multiplied. The breeze rich with the fragrance of *mālātī*, *juhi* and other flowers was blowing. In such an atmosphere Shri Rādhā filled with tender thoughts spoke solemnly to *Manoj Mohan* (the one who allures Cupid) Shri Krishna, “Please manifest a private and beautiful place suitable for Rās adjacent to a divine *nikunja*, at the banks of Yamunā in Vrindāvan, O! My beloved, this alone is my wish.”

Shri Nārād ji says, the Lord said ‘so be it’ and while meditating on a solitary place suitable for Leelā, He looked at His heart with His lotus eyes. A condensed brilliant light, like the personification of love in the form of a sprout, appeared from His heart in the presence of *gopis*. Falling in the land of *rasa* it grew in the shape of a mountain. The entire divine mountain was full of jewels and minerals. The beautiful waterfalls and the caves were adding to its beauty. Birds were chirping on the *Kadamba*, *Bakul*, *Mandār*, *Kunda* and other trees that were growing abundantly on that exquisite mountain. The learned

1. (This *sākshāt giriwara* has been brought to the Braj Mandal by Shri Krishna.) This superior mountain having a *shyām* lustre due to the vines and *kunjas* growing on it, is *shyām* like the clouds and very dear to the demigods. Shri Gowardhan took birth from the womb of the wife of *Dronāchal* in the middle of *Shālmali* Island situated in the west of India. Maharshi *Pulastya* brought it to the Braj Mandal. *Videharāj!* I have already told you about the arrival of *Gowardhan*.

scholars have called this very mountain, Shata Shringi Parwat.

In this way, this Girirāj ji has come to Braj mandal inspired by Lord Krishna. Girirāj ji contains all the tirthas. Surrounded by groves of creepers and beautiful with dark rocks, Shri Girirāj ji is dear even to demigods.

Shri Girirāj ji has come to Braj only for the devotees. Shri Hari Himself is present in the form of Shri Girirāj ji Mahārāj.

Shri Soordās ji is saying -

आदिलोक बैकुण्ठ में ब्रज परिपूरन सोय ।
ब्रजवासी हितकारने आयौ हरि गिरि होय ॥

Arrival in Braj

दानलीलां मानलीलां हरिरत्रकरिष्यति ।
तस्मान्मया न गन्तव्यं भूमिश्चेयं कलिन्दजा ॥
गोलोकाद्वाधया सार्द्धं श्रीकृष्णोऽत्रागमिष्यति ।
कृतकृत्यो भविष्यामि कृत्वातद्दर्शनं परम् ॥
इतिविचार्य मनसा भूरिभारं ददौ करे ।
तदा मुनिश्च श्रान्तोऽभूद्भूत पूर्वगतस्मृतिः ॥
करादुत्तार्य तं शैलं निधाय ब्रजमण्डले ।
लघुशंकांकर्तुमसौ गतोऽभूद्भार पीडितः ॥¹

(ग-सं० 2/2/38-41)

Once sage Pulastya ji while travelling came to Shālmali island and was very happy to have *darshan* of Shri Girirāj, son of Dronāchala. Dronāchala ji after respectfully welcoming Shri Pulastya ji asked him about the purpose of his visit. Shri Pulastya ji said, 'O Drona! You are great amongst the mountains and worshipped by all demigods. You have different kinds of divine medicines growing on you. I have come to you with a request from Kāshi where I live. Please give me your son Gowardhan. The city of Vishveshwar, Kāshi has a great significance. Even if a sinner dies there, he gets liberated. Shri

1. Lord Shri Hari is going to perform the Dān Leela and Mān Leela here, therefore I should not go anywhere from here, as this land is holy, sacred Shri Yamuna is here. Lord Shri Krishna along with Shri Rādhikā will incarnate right here from Goloka. I will become blessed by their great darshan. Thinking in such a way, Shri Gowardhan increased his weight on the palm of the sage. The sage became tired. As he did not remember the vow of Shri Gowardhan, He put the mountain down on the ground in Braj Mandal.

Vishveshwar himself is *virājmān* there. Kāshi has no mountain. I want to install Gowardhan there.’

Although the thought of separation from his son saddened Drona ji, but out of respect for the guest, he told sage Pulastya that he will convey the sage’s intent to Gowardhan.

After hearing the complete account from Drona ji, Shri Girirāj ji asked sage Shri Pulastya that since he is eight *yojan* long, five *yojan* wide and two *yojan* high, how was the sage going to carry him.

Upon hearing this and then thinking about his yogic powers, Shri Pulastya ji spoke delightedly, “O son! Please become *virājmān* on my palm and come happily with me.”

Gowardhan ji said, “Alright but if you put me down on the ground anywhere because of my weight then I shall not go further from there. This is my vow.”

Shri Pulastya ji agreed and started for the great city Kāshi after seating Shri Gowardhan ji on his palm with the help of his yogic power. Eventually they arrived in Braj.

Shri Gowardhan, thinking about the incarnation of Lord Shri Krishna and His Leelās of Dān, Mān with gopis and His sports with his friends, made a resolve that he will never leave the Braj Bhoomi situated at the banks of Yamunāji, so he gradually started increasing his weight. Sage Shri Pulastya got tired and placed Shri Girirāj ji on the ground in Braj. After finishing his daily rites, when he decided to proceed from there, he tried to lift Shri Girirāj ji with the power of his yoga, but he couldn’t. The sage prayed to Shri Gowardhan ji to find out the reason. Shri Gowardhan ji reminded the sage about his vow and then paid obeisance to him. Remembering this, the sage was stunned. His lips started quivering in anger and cursing Shri Gowardhan ji¹ he said, “You have created an obstacle in the fulfillment of my wish, therefore from today you will start diminishing little by little every day.” After that the sage left for Kāshi.

Thenceforth, Shri Gowardhan ji is diminishing every day. The form of Shri Girirāj ji that is visible today is different from what it was fifty or hundred years ago.

Note – 1. Bhārat is a country predominated by Dharma. Here gods and goddesses are worshipped on all the occasions. Our Shri Ganga- Yamuna are present in the form of rivers and also *virājmān* as personified goddesses. Where Shri Tulsi mahārāni is seen as a plant, she is also a goddess with a body dressed in white clothes. The incident of Himāchal parwat and Mainā ji is famous in the world. Therefore the incident of the birth of Shri Gowardhan as the son of Dronāchal is completely logical.

Apart from this, there is another incident that is famous based on the Ādi Vārāha Purān. This is related to Shri Rāmāwatār in Tretā yuga. We are presenting it below.

During the time of *setubandha*, on the orders of Shri Rām ji, Hanumān ji was bringing Shri Girirāj ji by carrying him on his shoulder. When he was flying over Braj, Hanumān ji heard the voice from the heaven, “Setubandha has been completed.”

Upon hearing this, Shri Hanumān ji put Shri Gowardhan ji down right then and there.

Shri Girirāj ji said to Hanumān ji, “You have deprived me from getting the dust particles of the feet of the Lord which is not befitting of you at all.”

Hanumān ji asked for forgiveness and then said to Shri Gowardhan ji, “When Shri Krishna will repudiate the worship of Devarāj Indra, Indra will get infuriated and will send devastating rains on Braj. Lord Krishna will lift you on His little finger and hold you for a week to protect the Brajwāsi. So please wait for such a time.”

Understanding the disappointment of Giriwar who was brought for service, Shri Rāmchandra ji reassured him and said, “All mountains brought for *setubandha* have been liberated by the touch of My feet. Since Gowardhan hill has been deprived this time, I will make him the best amongst the devotees of Hari by giving him the touch of all the parts of my body during various Leelā *vilās*, cow grazing and exclusive *Rās vilās* with the gopis in Dwāpar.”

And that’s what happened. During Krishna incarnation, Shri Girirāj ji was called ‘Shri Haridās *varya*’ (best amongst the devotees of Shri Hari). Even today, like Shri Krishna, he also is the goal of the devotees. In Kaliyuga Shri Girirāj ji is the fulfiller of all the wishes like a *Kalpa vriksha*. Shri Krishna accepting him as His other form has called Girirāj ji ‘*Vrihadvapuh*’ (huge or a large body).

Tirtha Sites

Let us now enjoy the significance of the various tirtha sites of Girirāj ji-

Shri Shri Rādhā Kund (Ārita Grām)

सर्वपापहरस्तीर्थं नमस्ते हरिमुक्तिदः ।
नमः कैवल्यनाथाय राधाकृष्णाभिधायिने ॥

(बाराह पु०)

O! Shri Rādhā and Shri Krishna kunds, the two of you are capable of destroying all kinds of sins and of giving liberation in the form of attainment of Shri Hari. Obeisance to you.

The greatness of these two kunds is described in Purānas. The great ones, who presented the tradition of the knowledge of the sages and saints before us in a new form, have been Shriman Nimbārkāchārya ji, Shri Rāmānujāchārya ji, Shri Vishnu Swāmi and Shri Mādhawāchārya ji. Their thoughts and feelings were simplified and made intelligible and presented before us by Shri Hariivyāsadevāchārya ji, Shri Rāmānand Ji, Shri Vallabhāchārya ji and Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji.

The two kunds have been revealing and making their *nitya* (eternal) and *prakat* (manifest) forms known to the *Āchāryas* and the devotees. Those that are *nitya* have remained imperceptible to the common people, but they have always remained manifest to the great saints and the devotees and have remained the cause of *Leelā* enjoyment.

Shri Nimbārkāchārya ji made his disciple Shri Niwāsāchārya ji aware of the greatness of this kund and instructed him to recite a particular *stotra* (hymn) regularly at the bank of Shri Rādhā kund which would gain him the total grace of Shri Rādhā- Krishna. And this happened as well. We are giving a part of the *stotra* below-

सदा राधिका नाम जिह्वाग्रतः स्यात् ।
 सदा राधिकारूपमक्षयग्र आस्ताम् ॥
 श्रुतौ राधिकाकीर्तिरन्तः स्वभावे ।
 गुणौ राधिकायाः श्रिया एतदीहे ॥

Let the name of Shri Rādhikā be at the tip of my tongue, the form of Shri Rādhā before my eyes, the glory of Shri Rādhikā in my ears and let Her emotion and virtues flash in my heart.

Those devotees who steep their daily lives in contemplation of the *Leelā* routine of Priyā-Priyatam, how can they remain deprived of it.

Greatness and the Significance of the Two Kunds

यथा राधा प्रिया विष्णोः तस्याः कृण्डं प्रियं तथा ।
 सर्वगोपीषु सेवैका विष्णोरत्यन्तवल्लभा ॥

(पद्म पुराण)

The way Shri Rādhā ji is most dear to Shri Krishna amongst all the *gopis* so is the dear kund of Shri Rādhā ji extremely dear to Him.

अरिष्टराधाकुण्डाभ्यां स्नानात्फलमवाप्यते ।
राजसूयाश्वमेधाभ्यां नात्र कार्या विचारणा ॥

(आ० वा० पु०)

The merit that is gained on performing a *Rājasuya* or *Ashwamedh Yagya*, is gained simply by bathing in Arista Kund (Shri Krishna Kund) and Shri Rādhā Kund. There should be no debate about it.

गोवर्धनगिरौ रम्ये राधाकुण्डं प्रियं हरेः ।
कार्तिके बहुलाष्टम्यां तत्र स्नात्वा हरेः प्रियः ॥
नरो भक्तो भवेद्विप्रतत्स्थितस्य प्रतोषणम् ॥

(पद्म पुराण)

Shri Hari's favourite, the beautiful Rādhā Kund, is located in the foothills of Gowardhan hill. Those devotees who bathe here on the eighth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Kārtika (oct-nov) attain the devotion of Shri Rādhākundvihāri Shri Hari.

दीपोत्सवे कार्तिके च राधाकुण्डे युधिष्ठिर ।
दृश्यते सकलं विश्वं भृत्यैर्विष्णुपरायणैः ॥

(पद्म पुराण)

On the day of Kārtika Deepāwali all universes are seen in Shri Rādhā kund by the *Vaishnavas* who are devoted to Vishnu.

बहुविधिमणिरत्नैश्चित्रितोदारतीर्थे ।
सुमधुरजलपूर्णे कुण्डयुग्मे चकास्तः ॥
विकसितकमलान्तर्निर्गते खञ्जनात्या ।
प्रशमित भवतापः स्नान-वासादिभिः स्यात् ॥

Shri Rādhā kund and Shri Shyām kund filled with beautiful water and surrounded on four sides with excellent ghāts drawn with pictures made of gems and jewels are looking extremely beautiful. The flock of khanjan birds is dancing on the lotus flowers in the kunds. By bathing in these kunds and by staying near their banks and by performing charities here, all worldly sufferings are destroyed.

The Appearance of the Two Kunds

There are proofs in Purānas regarding the appearance of the two kunds. Shri Jeeva Goswāmipād has given the following account related to the killing of Aristāsura and appearance of the kunds in Gopālchampu.

After many of his demons were killed, Kansa grew more worried. He called his trusted aides Aristāsura and Keshi demon and

once again made an unsuccessful attempt to kill Shri Krishna.

Aristāsūr entered Gokul in the form of a bull. He looked like a giant mountain on the move. Lord Krishna uprooted his horns and killed him.

‘ततस्तु राधिकात्यक्तो ललितामोहनस्तदा ।
अस्माकं नैव संसर्गो वृषहत्यासमन्वितः ॥’

(ब्रज भक्ति विलास)

When Aristāsūr died, many cowherds accused Shri Krishna of killing a bull due to which even Shri Rādhā and the sakhis had to stay away from the Lord.

When the demigods could not even see the swiftness of the speed with which Shri Krishna killed Vrishāsūr who had come during the spring time Rās Leelā, then how could they fathom the exertion involved in killing him. Aristāsūr who had come as an obstacle was killed by Shri Krishna. The force of the Lord had not subsided. Shri Krishna struck the ground with his heel splitting it as a result. This site became a tirtha capable of giving righteousness, desires and liberation and became famous as Shri Shyām kund or Shri Krishna kund.

Shri Krishna took a bath with *sakhās* in this and gave a lot of donations afterwards which made the Brajwāsi Brahmins very happy.

There a site appropriate for Rās was already ready. During the time of union, the rows of Braj maidens in colourful flowing clothes were looking beautiful. It seemed as though they were the victory flags of Kāmdev.

Shri Krishna after calming down a little, pointed at the Shyām kund created by Him and said to Priyā ji jokingly, “Dear! This lake of mine called Shyām kund like an ocean uniting with Shri Girirāj ji, is producing a variety of lotus flowers. The way I am the destroyer of the sinner Aristāsūr, similarly this kund also is the destroyer of extreme sins and sufferings. Thus by doing a virtuous act of creating this lake, I have attained the satisfaction but dear! You have not done any such skillful act of merit then how will you be counted amongst the people of virtues.”

The *sakhis* laughed and taking the side of Kishori ji said, “The sin of killing the bull was incurred by you. So if you made the atonement for it that is only fair.”

Shri Krishna spoke jokingly, “The bull was against righteousness and the cows. Since Priyā ji always favours righteousness, this sin applies to Her. Any sin committed by the subject is incurred by the ruler. Your Kishori ji is the ruler of Vrindāvan and I am Her subject.”

In the following morning of that night of spring *Rās Vilās*, Shri Rādhā ji who was worshipped by countless sakhis, who are nourished

and sustained by Her, created a kund with Her bangle. With every one looking, it became filled with water.

The giver of devotion and all kinds of happiness, this enchanting Shri Rādhā kund became joyful with the fragrance of the extreme happiness of Priyā and Priyatam.

All the tirthas manifested and entered Shri Krishna kund in person. Since the water of Shri Krishna kund flowed into Shri Rādhā kund, it brought all the tirthas with it and now they reside in Shri Rādhā kund also.

Shri Rādhā and Shri Krishna Kund in Goloka Dhām

Eternally manifest Shri Krishna and Shri Rādhā kund are the tirthas of not just the *Prakat Leelā*, they on the contrary are related to the *Nitya Leelā*. In fact the place of manifestation of these two kunds is Goloka Dhām, the eternal abode of Priyā and Priyatam.

Priyā-Priyatam are *virājmān* with their dear sakhis in the beautiful *nikunja* of Goloka Dhām. The pleasant breeze carrying the soft fragrance of mālati, ketaki, juhi, mallika, kunda, mandār and other flowers is blowing gently. The parrots, mynahs, peacocks and other birds are making the atmosphere blissful with their sweet sounds. The flocks of black bees following the fragrant breeze, looking bewildered can be seen here and there. The foothills of Shatashringa hill and the proximity of Virajā, it is beauty beyond imagination.

Shri Rādhā- Krishna are seated. Some sakhis are fanning them, some are waving the *chamvar* (a whisk made of the tail of Yāk which is waved over the head of a deity). The atmosphere is resonating with the sounds of various musical instruments. Suddenly, Shri Krishna becoming Shri Rādhā *bhāv bhāvit* starts thinking of Himself as Shri Rādhā.

Controlled by the accomplishment of Her intents and wills, Shri Rādhā also becomes Shri Krishna *bhāv bhāvit*. Tears start flowing from Her eyes incessantly.

Seeing the state of mind of their beloved mistress, the attentive and alert sakhis tried their best to console Shri Rādhā. Gaining some consciousness Shri Rādhikā started saying “Oh! Shri Krishna is always treacherous like this. He has probably gone to the *nikunja* of Virajā but I cannot stay alive without Him.”

Seeing the state of Shri Rādhā one sakhi went to Shri Krishna and said, “O Priyatam! In your separation our Mistress and friend Shri Rādhā is becoming extremely distraught. The only way to console her is by having You go near Her.”

In the meantime a voice from the heaven was heard.

“O Krishna! You are grieving in vain. Repeat the nine lettered mantra of Shri Rādhā. Bound by the mantra She will come to you Herself.”

That is what happened. Shri Rādhā came over to Shri Krishna with Her sakhis. Despite going near Shri Krishna, Shri Rādhā kept Her eyes lowered due to *mān*. Shri Krishna said,

“O Darling! I am your offender. I am your servant. You can punish me if you want. I have caused you pain which was definitely not right. O Beloved! Even I felt very distressed. In this state of separation, these two kunds made from your tears and my tears can be seen. O! Mānini! The kund filled with your tears will be known as Shri Rādhā kund and the one filled with my tears will be famous as Shri Krishna kund. We will engage in water sports here.”

गलदश्रुप्रवाहोघैरगाधं कुण्डमुत्थितम् ।
 मन्नामाकितमेतद्धि कृष्णकुण्डं भविष्यति ॥
 तवापि नेत्रसलिलैरंजनच्छुरितैर्बहु ।
 जातं कुण्डं च त्वन्नाम्ना राधाकुण्डं भविष्यति ॥
 जलक्रीडा विधानानि भविष्यन्त्यावयोरिह ।
 सिद्धिरूपासि चाराध्या राधिका जीवनं मम ॥

(पुराण संहिता 6/34-36)

On being made to understand by the sakhi, Shri Rādhā forego Her *mān* but the state of being absorbed in each other's mood remained.

In this way Priyā and Priyatam with their sakhis came to Shri Rādhā kund for a bath. There the Yugal took bath first in Shri Rādhā kund filled with the tears of Rādhā ji and then again in Shri Krishna kund filled with the tears of Shri Krishna. After that Shri Krishna absorbed in the mood of Rādhā attained His own form and Shri Rādhā absorbed in the mood of Shri Krishna attained Her form. All the sakhis witnessed this spectacle.

कृष्णकुण्डे ततः स्नातुं ययौ चोत्कण्ठ्यऽऽकुलः ।
 राधाश्रुपूरजनिते कुण्डे क्रीडां विधाय च ॥
 कृष्णकुण्डावगाहेन स्मृतिमाप्तौ पुनश्च तौ ।
 राधारूपतिरोधानात्पुनः कृष्णत्वमागतः ॥
 कृष्णरूपतिरोधानाद्राधा राधत्वमाययौ ।
 सख्यः कुतूहलाक्रान्तास्तयो रूपविपर्ययात् ॥

(पुराण संहिता 7/57-59)

These two kunds of Goloka Dhām incarnated in Vrindāvan during the *Prakat Leelā*.

Revelation By Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu

एई मत महाप्रभु नाचिते-नाचिते ।
 आरिट ग्रामे आसि बाह्य हैल आचम्बते ॥
 आरिटे राधाकुण्ड वार्ता पूछेलोक स्थाने ।
 केहो नहिं कहे संगेर ब्राह्मण न जाने ॥

(श्रीचैतन्य चरितामृत)

During his tour of Braj, singing and dancing, Shri Shri Mahāprabhu gained consciousness upon reaching Ārita Grām. There he inquired about Shri Rādhā Kund from the locals. Nobody could tell anything. Even the accompanying Brahmins who were guiding His way were unaware of it.

Mahāprabhu experienced it and looked at the two paddy fields nearby. He took *āchaman* (sipping water from palm of the right hand as a ritual purification) from there and put the dust particles of that place on his head.

From the story above, one thing is clear that Ārita Grām was already famous from before. After killing Aristāsura, the kund that was created by Shri Krishna was also called Arista kund. The description of Arista kund has been there from before. The common people definitely remained unaware of it but for the *Āchāryas*, the always manifest Leelā site has remained a medium of Leelā experience from before.

The two kunds that incarnated in *Prakat Leelā* had almost disappeared with time. Shri Vajranābha ji with the help of great sage Shāndilya established these tirthas in the form of kunds but they were lost again with time. They were then revealed by Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji.

The question arises that on the instructions of Chaitanya Mahāprabhuji, Shri Bhugarbha Goswāmi and other goswāmis had identified and manifested many lost tirthas of Braj, then what was the reason that only this site remained unmanifest. There is only one answer to this, that since the site is extremely profound in *rasa* and extremely intimate and private, it remained hidden from the accessibility of their minds. When Chaitanya Mahāprabhu came to Braj himself, intoxicated in the love of the Lord, only then these kunds were revealed.

Prayer To Shri Raghunāth Dās ji

वन्दे श्रीरघुनाथदासचरणं नित्यं समाधिस्थितम् ।
 यः श्री कुण्डतटोत्तरे त्रिपलकंतक्रञ्च पीत्वाऽभजत् ॥
 यस्याभीष्टलवेन कुण्डयुगलं संस्कारितं दैवतः ।
 प्राच्यां श्यामसरस्तटे त्वखनयद्यो गोपकूपादिकम् ॥

The one who is always established in *samādhi* on the north side of Shri Rādhā kund, the one who engages in worship and prayers taking only about 156 gms of butter milk in the entire day, due to whose wish alone inspired by a divine incident, Shri Rādhā and Shri Krishna kund were restored, the one who had the Gopa well constructed on the east side of Shri Krishna kund, to that Sri Raghunāth ji I pay my obeisance again and again.

Goswāmi Raghunāthdās ji's Acceptance to Start Living in a Hut

Shri Raghunāthdās ji used to live under the trees in the forest. He used to be in a trance twenty four hours. Shri Sanātan Goswāmi ji came to Shri Rādhā kund once. He went to the Mānas Pāwan Ghāt for a bath. There from far he saw that Shri Raghunāth ji was absorbed in meditation and a tiger had come close to drink the water. After drinking the water, the tiger went past Shri Raghunāth ji.

When Shri Dās Goswāmi came back to consciousness, he saw Shri Sanātan ji standing before him so he bowed to him effacingly. Shri Sanātan ji narrated the entire incident to him and insisted that he live in a hut in future.

अन्य हित हेतु रघुनाथ सेइ है ते ।
 रहिलेन कुटीरे गोस्वामीर आज्ञा मते ॥

(५० २०)

Shri Raghunāth ji agreed to live in a hut as per the order of Shri Sanātan ji for the benefit of the other *sādhakas*.

The Improvement and Restoration of the Two Kunds

Shri Raghunāth ji, disciple of Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji, used to live near Ārita Grām, at the bank of Shri Rādhā kund which was revealed by Mahāprabhu ji. Shri Rādhā and Shri Krishna kund had almost disappeared and turned into two paddy fields known as Kāri and Peeri in the local vernacular. They contained some water. But there was no well containing sweet water in the neighbourhood.

Shri Raghunāth ji would use the water of these fields for bathing etc. One day while doing worship and prayers, a thought came to his mind, “If these kunds remained filled with water, how nice would it be.” Later when he remembered his wish, he felt repentant.

An incident took place as destiny would have it. A rich person went to Shri Badrinārāyana ji for *darshan*. He offered a lot of gold coins there. The Lord graced the devoted rich person that night in the dream and ordered him to take the money that he had offered to His devotee Shri Raghunāth ji who lived in Ārita village near Gowardhan Hill and said that if Raghunāthji refuses to accept the money, then remind him about his wish and tell him the whole story.

That devoted rich merchant came to Ārita grām and narrated the whole incident to Shri Raghunāth dās ji who was stunned. Realizing that it was the wish of the Lord, he praised the merchant generously and said that he had Lord’s special grace. Instructions were given to dig the two kunds.

Shri Rādhā kund was dug. When Shri Krishna kund was being dug, there were five Pipal trees on its northern side. It was decided to cut them the next morning. That night in the dream Shri Yudhishtir ji appeared and said to Shripād Raghunāth ji, “We five Pāndavas are living in the form of these five trees and doing penance to receive the Braj *raja* (dust particles). Please don’t cut us. In due course of time we will dry up ourselves.”

In the morning Shri Raghunāth ji went to the site and saw the five trees just like in the dream. He was awestruck by the trueness of the dream and ordered not to cut the trees. The work of digging was completed. Even today one can see that Shri Krishna kund is not square in shape like Shri Rādhā kund. The north side of Shri Krishna kund is not even straight.

Kund Dwaya (The Two Kunds) Leelā site

अनुदिनमतिरङ्गैः प्रेममत्तालिसङ्घै-
र्वरसरसिजगन्धैर्हारि-वारि प्रपूर्णे ।
विहरत इह यस्मिन् दम्पती तौ प्रमत्तौ
तदति सुरभि राधाकुण्डमेवाश्रयो मे ॥¹

(श्री राधाकुण्ड स्तव)

1. That Shri Rādhā Kund which is filled with enchanting water fragrant with the fragrance of lotus, where the Yugal Shri Rādhā-Krishna along with the love filled sakhis, always engage in rasa ranga vihār intoxicated in love, let that enchanting Shri Rādhā-kund be my shelter.

The Rādhā kund extremely dear to Priyā and Priyatam is filled with divine *rasa*. The water of the kund is getting fragrant with the fragrance of the lotus. Or maybe the *keli* of the Yugal itself has transformed into this kund. The kund is fragrant with the fragrance of the bodies of Priyā and Priyatam. With their sole beloved sakhis, Shri Rādhā Krishna are always absorbed in *vihār vilās* here.

The composer of Vrindāvan Mahimāmrita says that Shri Rādhā kund assists and contributes in the divine *rasa* filled *keli* of Shri Yugal. During the water sports it is getting fragrant with the smells of sandalwood, saffron, musk that is applied on their bodies and also getting coloured with the colours of pictures painted on their bodies.

अनन्त-हरि-राधिका-मधुरकेलिवृन्दैः सदा,
महाद्भुतमहो महारस-चमत्कृतीनां निधिम् ।
महोज्ज्वलं महासुसौरभतमं च वृन्दावने-
स्मरोन्मद-तदीश्वरीदयित-दिव्यकुण्डं नमः ॥¹

(श्रीवृन्दावन महिमामृत 5/11)

Ah how divine! How sweet! How beautiful is this Shri Rādhā kund. Its stairs are adorned with gems and jewels. Its ghāts are decorated with drawings and paintings. Seated here Priyatam plays the flute, His eternal companion, calling upon the Braj maidens and gets absorbed in various sports with them.

श्रीगोवर्द्धन-मौलि-मण्डन-महा रत्नोत्तमं राधिका-
कुण्डं मोहनपुण्डरीकनयनप्राणेश्वरीवल्लभम् ।
घूर्णन्मौलि विलोल कुण्डलवरं तुण्डेन्दु बिम्बोल्लसद्-
वंशशंसति यत्र मादक गुणान् रोमाञ्चितो माधवः ॥

(वृ० म० 5/13)

Ah! The crest jewel of Shri Girirāj ji, its greatest gem, is this very Shri Rādhā kund. Look! Look its sides are shining with the light of the glittering earrings that began swaying when the thrilled Man Mohan moved His head in a fit of rapture. Worshipped by the rays of light, how enchanting is the beauty of this divine kund. Sitting at its bank, the beautiful Kishore taking the sweet flute in His hand and transmitting the sweet nectar of His lips to it, extols its supremely intoxicating qualities. The kund that is extremely dear to that very Mādhav Whose body is thrilled, Whose eyes are like lotus, Who is the

1. I bow to that divine Rādhā Kund which is becoming extremely wonderful getting endowed with the infinite madhur keli skills of Shri Rādhikā. Aho! Which is very bright, extremely fragrant and is very dear to the Vrindāvanadheeshwari Shri Radhikā who is intoxicated with madhur keli, yes, I bow to that very divine Rādhā Kund.

beloved of the beloved Shri Rādhā, this is that very Shri Rādhā kund .

Ah! How amazing is the form of Rādhā Sarowar? Has the beauty of Shri Krishna, the bewitcher of the three worlds, taken the form of the kund or has the love of Shri Rādhā personified in the form of the kund or is their divine sport becoming victorious. In this way remaining uncertain and receiving immense happiness, the love filled sakhis of Shri Rādhā keep wandering here and there. Obeisance to that Shri Rādhā and Shri Krishna kunds that are venerable to all.

यत्कुञ्जेषु सुनन्दितौ परिलसद् वृन्दादिकालीगणौ ।
 राधागोकुलनागरौ गलगतोद्बाहू मुदा क्रीडतः ॥
 तद् वृन्दावनधाम वाम मनिशंसौपानकैर्मण्डितं ।
 यूनो केलिचमैरलंकृतमलं कुण्डं सदा मे गतिः ॥

The kund in whose kunjās, surrounded by Vrindā and other sakhis, happy Shri Rādhā and Gokul Nāgar Shri Krishna with their hands around each other's neck, keep sporting, the kund located in Shri Vrindāvan adorned with enchanting stairs and ornamented with the Yugal keli, let that Shri kund be my *gati* (shelter, recourse, fate) always.

Tirtha Description

Shri Krishna Kund, Mānas Pāwan Ghāt

वायोर्दिश्यस्ति सुबलानन्ददा कुञ्जशालिका ।
 राधयाङ्गीकृता यस्यास्तीर्थ मानस पावनम् ॥¹

(गो० ली० 7/114)

Shri Rādhā bathes at this ghāt everyday. Shri Priyā ji has a special fondness for this *kunja*. Just like Shri Krishna this *kunja* is very dear to Shri Rādhā ji.

In the north of Shri Rādhā kund there is a *kunja* called Madhumangalānandadā which has been adopted by Shri Lalitā ji. Different kind of paintings has been drawn in it. In the north east quarter is the Ujjwalānandadā *kunja* of Ujjwal sakhā. This has been adopted by Shri Vishākhā ji. Likewise there are kunjās of Arjun and other sakhās.

Jihwā Temple

Nearby a rock is worshipped, venerated as the tongue of Shri Girirāj ji. It is famous as Jihwā Temple.

1. In the northwest corner of Shri Shyām Kund the Subalānandadā *kunja* of Subal sakhā is virājman. Shri Rādhā considers it as Her own. The tirtha virājman here is called Mānas Pāwan.

Shri Rādhāvallabha Ghāt

After arriving in Vrindāvan Shri Hitharivansh ji Mahārāj did not go anywhere else. The attraction of Shri Rādhā kund brought him to the kund site. When he came here, he seated himself at this ghāt only. Nowadays in Shri Rādhāvallabha temple here, the idols of Shri Priyā-Priyatam are *virājmān*.

Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji's Baithak

श्रीकृष्णचैतन्य वन भ्रमण करिया ।
एई तमालेर तले वसिल आसिया ॥

(भ० २०)

There is a Tamāl tree on the right side of the path of circumambulation. When Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu came to Braj, he stayed and rested here. How Shri Rādhā kund was revealed by him has already been narrated.

Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya's Baithak

On the Vallabha ghāt under a Brahmachhoker tree there is a baithak of Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji. Āchārya pād stayed here for a month and performed a week long recitation of Shrimad Bhāgwat.

Nearby is the baithak of Gosāin Shri Vithalnāth ji.

Vajra Kund

पितुरङ्गे यथापुत्रस्तत् सुखाय चकास्ति वै ।
तथाङ्गे श्यामकुण्डस्य कुण्डं वज्रेण निर्मितं ॥

The way the sitting of the son in the lap of his father is joyful, similarly Shri Vajra kund built by Shri Vajranābha in the lap of Shri Shyām kund ji is looking beautiful.

There are many temples around Shyām kund. Shri Bānkebihāri ji, Shri Madanmohanji, Shri Rādhāmādhav ji, Shri Sitānāth ji etc are worth seeing.

Shri Lalitā Kund

उदीच्यां श्यामकुण्डस्य विस्तृतमास्ति भक्तिदम् ।
पापघ्नं ललिताकुण्डं ललितेव हरेः प्रियम् ॥

On the left side of the path of circumambulation of Shri Shyām kund there is a huge kund of Shri Lalitā ji. The way Shri Lalitā ji is very dear to Shri Shyām Sundar, the same way this kund is dear to Him.

Just by touching the water of this kund, all sins are destroyed and exclusive and intense love and attachment at the feet of Priyā-Priyatam is attained.

This is the place of penance of Shri Shri Niwāsāchārya ji, the principal disciple of Shri Shri Nimbārkāchārya ji. This is where Shri Niwāsāchārya ji composed ‘Vedānta Kaustubhabhāsyā,’ ‘Laghustavarāj’ and other scriptures.

Shri Lalitā Vihāri ji

This temple is situated above the kund and is the place of Nimbārkees.

Shri Shri Rādhā Kund

तत्र राधा समाश्लिष्य कृष्णमक्लिष्टकारिणम् ।
 स्वनाम्ना विदितं कुण्डं कृतं तीर्थमदूरतः ॥
 राधाकुण्डमितिख्यातं सर्वपापहरं शुभम् ।
 अरिष्टराधाकुण्डाभ्यांस्नानात्फलमवाप्नुयात् ।
 राजसूयाश्वमेधानां नात्र कार्या विचारणा ।
 गो नर ब्रह्म हत्यायाः पापं क्षिप्रं विनश्यति ॥

(वा० पु०)

Near Shri Krishna kund, Shri Rādhikā ji suddenly embracing Shri Krishna, the doer of all actions, created this kund having Her name.

Destroyer of all sins this tirtha is famous as Shri Rādhā kund. By bathing in Arista kund i.e. Shri Krishna kund and Shri Rādhā kund, the sins of killing a cow, a man or a Brahmin are all destroyed quickly and the person without doubt gains the merit of *Ashwamedh* and *Rājasuya yagya*.

Ashta Sakhi Kunja

स्वसदृक्तीरनीरेण कृष्णपादाब्जजन्मना ।
 निजपाश्वोपविष्टेनारिष्टकुण्डेन सङ्गतम् ॥
 तीरे कुञ्जा यस्य भान्त्यष्टदिक्षु-

प्रेष्ठीलीनां स्वस्वनाम्ना प्रसिद्धाः ॥
 ताभिः प्रेम्णा स्वीयहस्तेन यत्नात्
 क्रीडातुष्ट्यै प्रेष्ठयैः संस्कृता ये ॥¹

(गो० ली० 7/26-27)

The beauty of these *kunjas* is infinite. Different kinds of fragrant lotus flowers grow in them. Attracted by the enchanting natural beauty all around, Priyā-Priyatam engage in blissful *keli* continuously. The resplendence of these *kunjas* can only be experienced.

The main amongst these *kunjas* are the *kunja* of Shri Lalitā ji called Shri Lalitadā and the *kunja* of Shri Vishākhā ji called Madan-Sukhad. The beauty of these *kunjas* is unparalleled. There are pillars studded with gems and jewels, stairs adorned with gems and jewels. Many beautiful and fragrant flowers are blooming. The three fold breeze is always blowing here. The Nature here is conscious. The sweet sound of the birds is making the solitary secluded place more enchanting and intoxicating. Sometimes Priyatam visits the *nikunja* of Shri Lalitā ji and gives bliss to all with His *rasa keli* and *rasa kautukas*. Sometimes He rewards Shri Vishākhā ji by going to her *nikunja*. Under the leadership of Vrindā devi, in all the *nikunjas* the atmosphere favourable to the Leelā enters spontaneously and becomes pervasive.

In whichever *nikunja* the Priyatam enters, all the six seasons arrive and become present there. The flowers making the already blissful atmosphere more and more intoxicating with their fragrance, bloom spontaneously. The chirping of the birds, the resonating sounds of parrots and mynahs, the whole environment favourable to the Leelā becomes pervasive.

Sometimes in the swing festival, the Pranayi Rijhawār becoming the garland himself (by putting His arms around the sakhis), sometimes the Yugal inventing many new sports to pick flowers, at the time of ball game strike each other lovingly with flower balls, somewhere in the dance, in the sound of the anklets, they sing in different notes and become mesmerised with *rasa* and get engaged in *vihār* with their beloved sakhis.

1. Surrounding the Rādhā Kund and the Shyām Kund (connected with each other) born from the lotus feet of Shri Krishna, from the north corner to the northwest corner there are eight *kunjas* of Shri Lalitā, Vishākhā, Chitrā, Indulekhā, Champaklatā, Rangadevi, Sudevi and Tungavidyā. In these Priyā-Priyatam are always engaged in vilās vihār. All the sakhis keep them in order.

तत्स्पर्शतः फुल्ल-सरोज-नेत्रा कृष्णाङ्ग-संस्पर्शमिवानुभूय ।
कम्पाकुला कण्टकिताङ्ग यष्टिरुत्कापि गन्तुं स्थगितातदासीत् ॥

(गो० ली० 8/11)

The radiant lotus eyed Shri Rādhā at the mere touch of the garland and the champak flower drowned in the rasa of nearness of beloved. Finding beloved so close to Her, She shivered and became thrilled and kept sitting there motionless. Was this emotionally helpless state of rasa due to overwhelming love or was Shri Rādhā convulsed by the waves of rasa, drowned in it and lost all consciousness. Who can say for how long this rasa absorption kept stirring Her rasa pining heart. All Her sakhis looking at this rasa state of Shri Rādhā fell silent, everybody was absorbed in the unconsciousness of a rasaful trance.

In the east side of Shri Rādhā kund is the kunjā called Chitrādā. There are beautiful swings decorated in this kunjā. In the south eastern quarter the kunjā of Shri Indulekha ji called Purnendu Kunjā is located. On the day of full moon Priyā-Priyatam become *virājmān* here dressed in white clothes. Hema Kunjā of Shri Champaklatā ji is in the south. Proficient in cooking Shri Champaklatā ji has set up a kitchen here where Priyā and Priyatam have meals together.

In the south west quarter, the dark black kunjā of Shri Rangadevi ji called Manohar Kunjā is located. In the west the Arun kunjā of Shri Tungavidyā ji is located. In the north-west quarter, the Harikunjā of Shri Sudevi ji is famous for dice game.

Lagamohan Sthān

तस्याल्पदूरे हि चकास्ति पूर्वे स्थानश्च कुण्डं लगमोहनाख्यम् ।
नीपैर्वृतं यत्र च चारयन् गाः कृष्णः प्रियायाः सह संयुतोऽभूत् ॥

(गि० मा० 3/21)

In the east side of Shri Rādhā kund a little further away is Lagamohan Sthān and kund covered with Kadamba trees. During cattle grazing Shri Krishna comes here frequently to meet Priyā ji.

Ratna Vedi Peetha (Shri Rādhā Kund Sangam Sthal)

पश्यन्ति कुण्डद्वयसङ्गमेव ये राधिकामाधवपाद्पीठम् ।
स्नानञ्च कुर्वन्ति धनादिदानं ते स्वेशयोर्दास्यसुखं लभन्ते ॥

(गि० मा० 3/22)

Those who do *darshan* of Shri Ratna Vedi Pādpeetha, the meeting place of Shri Shri Rādhā Mādhav at the confluence of Shri

Rādhā and Shri Shyām Kund and give donations after bathing in both the kunds they certainly attain the love of the Yugal.

Shri Rādhā Krishna Temple

स्नात्वा कुण्डयुगे भक्त्या दृष्ट्वा कुण्डेश्वरं शिवम् ।
राधाकृष्णौ च सम्पूज्य विन्देत् सर्वेप्सितं नरः ॥

(आ० वा० पु०)

After bathing in Shri Rādhā and Shri Krishna kund and having darshan of Shri Kundeshwar Mahādev and thereafter worshipping Shri Rādhā and Krishna, all the wishes of the person are fulfilled.

It is said that the same idol of Yugal is *virājmān* here nowadays whose service had been entrusted to Bābā Gopāldās Jatādhāri by Goswāmi Shri Vithalnāth ji. The local Goswāmis are continuing the service even today.

Other Places

The temple and *ghāt* of Jānhavi devi, wife of Shriman Nityānand ji, the samādhi of Shri Krishnadās Kavirāj Goswāmi, temple of Shriman Nityānand ji, temple of Mahāprabhu ji, Shri Vrishbhānu kund (where Vrishbhānu ji stayed during the Girirāj worship) are worth seeing.

Mālyahāri Kund

This kund is situated in the west of Shri Rādhā kund. While sitting in the Mādhavi kunjā Shri Rādhā Rāni had braided a necklace of pearls. The delightful experience of Shri Raghunāth Goswānipād related to this wonderful Leelā is as follows.

All Brajwāsis gathered at Shri Gowardhan ji to celebrate the festival of Deepāwali. They were dressed and ornamented in various ways. The Braj maidens dressed in colourful dresses and ornaments sat on a platform near the Mālyahāri kund and started stringing a pearl necklace for Kishori Shri Rādhā. Shri Krishna's dear parrot Vichakshan went and told Him everything. Shri Krishna became restless to savour the sweetness of the beauty of Shri Rādhikā. Shri Krishna went there and asked for some pearls from the sakhis.

Adept at making ever new rasa plans, Shri Kishori and Her Sakhis refused to give the pearls.

Shri Krishna pleaded again for the pearls for His swan and the two cows. When He was refused several times for the sake of a

rasaful pastime, Shri Krishna went to Shri Yashodā maiyā and got some pearls from her. He then planted the pearls in Yamunā ji. Soon they germinated and grew into pearl vines with beautiful pearls all over them.

Everybody was astonished. Shri Krishna showed this miracle to maiyā Yashodā.

Slowly this news spread everywhere. When the gopis heard this, they were astounded and asked Shri Krishna for some pearls. At first Shri Krishna refused but after several requests He agreed to give the pearls on one condition. The eminent devotee Soordās ji has spoken about that condition in a delightful way-

लै हौ दान अंग-अंग को ।

गोरेभाल लाल सैन्दुर छवि मुक्तावर सिर सुभग मंग को ॥

नकबेसरि कुटिला तरि बन को गर हमेल कुच जुग उतंग को ।

कंठ श्रीदुलरी तिलरी उर माणिक मोती हार अति रंग को ॥

बहु नग लगे जराऊ की अँगिया भुज बाहूबन्द बहुरंग को ।

दानन लैहौ तरुणि रीभूत मन कहा बहु अंग अनंग को ॥

जो हरि पग जकरेऊ गाढ़े मनो मन्द-मन्द गति यह मतंग को ।

जोबन रूप अंग पाटम्बर सुनहु सूर सब यह प्रसंग को ॥

Shri Rādhakānta Temple (Kusum Sarowar)

On the way back from Shri Rādhā kund this temple adorned with grand lofts is built by Shri Balwant Rao Maiyā Sāhib. The idol of Shri Rādhakānta Thākur ji is enchanting.

This has been a home to many dispassionate ascetics since a long time. The neighbouring deserted area is the *vihār* site of Priyā-Priyatam.

Kusum Sarowar (Darshan of Uddhav ji)

गोवर्द्धनाद दूरेण वृन्दारण्ये सखीस्थले ।

प्रवृत्तः कुसुमाम्भोधौ कृष्णसङ्कीर्तनोत्सवः ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत माहात्म्य 2/30)

Beautiful buildings peeping through the dense trees, the dense

1. The collective chanting of the names of Shri Krishna has started at Kusum Sarowar located near Shri Gowardhan within the border of Shri Vrindāvan, which is the site of *vihār* of the sakhis.

foliage in their courtyards are giving an impression of some divine place and ambience. Lo! A large kund in the front adorned with beautiful stairs is suffusing all with its secluded and rasaful ambience. Uddhav ji always remains *virājmān* here in the form of a leaf or a vine. The great grandson of Shri Krishna, Shri Vajranābha ji, after receiving the direct grace of Shri Uddhav ji in person, organised a month long Shrimad Bhāgwat recitation and made the queens of Dwārakā achieve the *darshan* of Shri Krishnachandra.

This is Kusum vana. After picking various flowers from here the sakhis with Shri Rādhā ji go to Surya kund to worship the Sun.

Just by bathing here Shri Nārad ji had attained the body of a gopi.

Context

यथा वयं कृष्णपत्न्यस्तथा त्वमपि शोभने ।

वयं विरह-दुःखार्तास्त्वं न कालिन्दि तद् वद ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत महात्म्य 2/9)

After Shri Krishna concealed His *Prakat Leelā*, the queens of Dwārakā were deeply distraught by the separation of the Lord and came to Braj. They told about their state of mind to Shri Kālindi ji. In reply Shri Kālindi ji said, “I have the entitlement to being the servant of Shri Rādhā so the separation of Shri Krishna does not touch me. You also do the same. When Shri Krishna went away to Mathurā with Akroor ji, all the gopis were distressed. Shri Uddhav ji had given them the solution. He alone will give you yours. Shri Uddhav lives near the Gowardhan hill with a desire to receive the dust particles of the feet of the gopis. Go there with Shri Vajranābha ji and sing the names of the Lord. Uddhav ji will appear and give you the solution.”

The queens of Dwārakā did as they were told. Shri Uddhav appeared from the cluster of creepers and shrubs. Everywhere the euphoric sounds of ‘Gopijana Vallabha’ started resonating. After regaining some consciousness, everybody welcomed Shri Uddhav ji.

He told them that they were blessed and were full of love and devotion to Shri Krishna. That is why the Lord instructed Shri Arjun to ask them to come and live in Braj. You are sixteen thousand queens. The total brilliance of Shri Krishna itself has divided into one thousand

1. Sister Kālindi! The way we all are the wives of Shri Krishna, His beloveds, so are you. We are burning in the fire of His separation. Our hearts are distraught with the pain of separation. But you are not feeling any such dearth. What is the reason for this? Kalyāni! Please tell us something.

parts. That is why the division of sixteen parts has taken place.

‘The place of Shri Vajranābha ji is at the feet of Shri Krishna. As you have forgotten your own nature because of Yogamāyā, you are experiencing grief and pain. This pain cannot be relieved without the revelation of Shri Krishna.

In the final part of Dwāpar yuga of twenty eighth *chātur yuga* of Vaivaswat manvantar, when the Lord will remove His māyā Himself, it will be possible to have His darshan but this will happen after some time. The other way is ‘Shri Shrimad Bhāgwat’ which is the *Vāngamaya Shrivigraha Swaroop* (word form) of Shri Krishna. I also live here only because of the grace of the Lord.

Addressing Shri Parikshit ji and others, Shri Uddhav ji recited Shri Shrimad Bhāgwat and said that only Parikshit ji will be able to restrain Kali.

Replying to the query of Shri Parikshit ji, Shri Uddhav ji said that Shri Shukadev ji will recite the whole Shrimad Bhāgwat for him and after that he will attain the eternal abode of Shri Krishna.

Shri Parikshit ji went away for the conquest of the world and Shri Vajranābha ji along with his mothers stayed back at Kusum Sarowar and listened to Shrimad Bhāgwat for a month.

They started seeing some light of Shri Krishna. Lo! The Lord has appeared. Shri Vajranābha ji clearly saw his place at the feet of the Lord. The mothers were also delighted to see their respective positions.

All of them entered the *Nitya Leelā*. After attaining the *nitya siddha deha* they entered the *nikunjās* of Shri Girirāj ji and Shri Vrindāvan.

At the bank of Kusum Sarowar there is a bush of Ashoka vine where Priyā-Priyatam engage in *vihār* in the middle of the night. This whole area is called Kusum vana.

Shri Vrishbhānunandini Shri Rādhā comes here daily to pick flowers and gets blissfully absorbed in *vihār* with Shri Krishna.

Many saints live here amongst the leaves and vines in sanctified bodies. On the western side of the kund is the *samādhi* of Shri Nārāyana Swāmi.

Shri Nārāyana Swāmi

Swāmi ji was born in Rawalpindi. Since childhood he had faith in devout people. After hearing about the greatness of Vrindāvan, he came here. He started living a detached life full of austerity and forbearance. His deep and intense love at the feet of Shri Rādhā

Mādhav kept growing. He used to say openly with unflinching conviction that for a *sādhaka* it is possible to meditate on the *Akhanda Brahmajyoti* (God in the form of light), only until he has not had a glimpse of the sweet form of Nandanandan. Once he beholds the form of Shyām Sundar, he becomes His and only His.

The world of the lovers is strange. Whereas on one hand they are absorbed in the thought of beloved's happiness, on the other hand due to excess love and humility, they are also forced to make love filled accusations. Shri Nārāyana Swāmi once said very naturally in the moments of separation.

सांवरे क्यों मोसों रिस मानी ।
 तेरे काज घर-बार त्यागि कै गलियन फिरत दिवानी ॥
 लोक-लाज, कुल-रीति प्रीति जग इनहूँ कौ दयौ पानी ।
 नारायण अब तो हँसि चितवौ ऐ, रे रूप गुमानी ॥

He used to wander in a state of ecstasy. He had devout faith in Rās, Rās Vihāri Vihārini. It is said that when his daughter used to perform Rās, Shri Krishna used to appear Himself and engage in *vihār* with her.

He entered the Nitya Leelā in samvat 1957 at Kusum Sarowar.

Right here behind Kusum Sarowar is Shri Uddhav kund and nearby Shri Uddhav ji lives amongst creepers and leaves.

Shri Nārad Kund

In front of the Kusum Sarowar across the road, canopied by dense trees, a beautiful secluded place is famous as Shri Nārad kund. Shri Nārad ji did his penance here and attained the *siddha gopi deha* here.

Context

The experience of *Nitya* and *Prakat Leelā* of Shri Krishna is not easily available to everybody. The darshan of *Rās* and *vihār* with His own forms, the Braj maidens is possible only for those devotees who are absorbed in the *bhāv* of a sakhi. Shri Krishna is the only man there and the rest are all His beloved Braj maidens. Shri Nārad ji who is called the heart of Shri Krishna, even he was able to see the Rās only after attaining the *gopi deha*. In the same way Lord Shiva assuming the form of a gopi lives in Vrindāvan as Gopeshwar even today.

When Nārad ji asked Shri Mahādevji the way to attain the *gopi*

deha, expressing His inability he told Shri Nārad ji to find out from Shri Vrindā Devi as without her grace nobody can become entitled to Rās.

In between Shri Gowardhan and Shri Rādhā Kund, in a place near Kusum Sarowar Shri Nārad ji started his penance with the Gopāl mantra that he received from Shri Brahmā ji to attain *rāga mārg gopi bhāv*. As the result of the penance, an extremely strong desire for the darshan of *madhur* Leelā of Shri Krishna with gopis arose in him.

He prayed to Vanadevi. Vanadevi told him since he was a sage, his admission in the Leelā was not going to be easy. For that a *gopi deha* is required. Saying this Vanadevi left the desire of Leelā *darshan* of Shri Nārad ji unfulfilled.

When asked for the way to attain *gopi bhāv*, Shri Kusumādevi told Nārad ji to take a bath in Kusum Sarowar.

As soon as Shri Nārad ji took a dip in Kusum Sarowar with the desire for *gopi deha*, he attained a beautiful *gopi deha*. Shri Vanadevi gave him admission in the Leelā of Shri Rādhā Govind. After receiving this great fortune, Shri Nārad ji became content and blessed. His place of penance is famous as Shri Nārad kund even today.

Shyām Kuti

Shyām Kuti is in the midst of dense trees near Kusum Sarowar. The surrounding dense trees and quiet atmosphere convulses the mind with the memories of Shri Krishna Leelā. Here when Shri Krishna entered the *nikunja* in *shyām* (dark) clothes, *shyām* ornaments and *shyām* coloured musk anointment even the sakhis could not recognise Him.

There is also a kund here called Ratna kund. There is a rock called *Vādini Shilā*, beating which a melodious sound is produced. Nearby are the foot prints of Shri Krishna.

Ratnasinhāsan

The Rās *vilās* is always in motion in the foothills of Shri Girirāj ji. During the days of spring season Priyā-Priyatam come and become *virājmān* here. This place is near Shyām Kuti.

Shri Gopāl Kund (Gwāl Pokharā)

On the way to Gowardhan ji from Kusum Sarowar, Shri Gopāl kund is situated on the right side amidst thick dense trees. The solitude and the silence of this place is worth experiencing.

During cow grazing, Shri Krishna comes here at noon to rest.

Giving a shape to the interesting experiences of many saints, repeating the story of mutual snatching and grabbing of Shri Krishna and His sakhās this Gopāl kund is famous as Gwāl Pokharā.

Shri Krishna came here with Subal, Madhumangal and other sakhās once. Mutual joking and bantering kept taking place.

Noticing something tied in a piece of cloth that was with Madhumangal, Shri Balrāma ji asked him, “Madhumangal what is this?” Madhumangal said embarrassingly that it was something that he had received from the Brajwāsis at Suryakund. Shri Balrāma ji said, “Why don’t you distribute it amongst the sakhās.” The group of sakhās was waiting for just this. In spite of being forbidden by Madhumangal, on getting the signal from Shri Balrāma ji, they snatched the little bag from Madhumangal and started eating from it. Meanwhile the clothes of Madhumangal became disheveled.

He became annoyed but being the devout sakhā of Shri Krishna he calmed down immediately after being consoled by the Lord.

Holding such *rasa* filled stories in its womb, this site continues to feel proud even today.

Sant Niwās

On the way to Gowardhan ji from Kusum Sarowar, this place of Shree sect is on the right side. This is an excellent place for the service of saints, sages, guests and those who circumambulate Girirāj ji. Everybody is provided with food and facilities as needed without any discrimination.

Shri K. P. Rāmānujadās ji, the founder of this place is very generous and devoted to the ascetics.

Shri Hari Gokul Tirtha

This place is near Gwāl Pokharā. Shri Nandarāi ji had stayed here along with his aides.

Kilol Kund

Kilol kund is situated to the east of Shri Hari Gokul Tirtha. Just like its name, this kund is the witness and the creator of the various kelis of Priyā-Priyatam and a symbol of pampering and indulgence. Even today the chirping sound of the birds at this kund situated amidst the thick Kadamba trees is very pleasing to the ears.

There is *darshan* of Shri Kilol Bihārji. It is a place of Nimbārks.

Gowardhan Grām

This is situated at about thirteen miles from Mathurā. Nowadays it has become a famous and a prime place of interest. There are several tirthas in its vicinity.

Gowardhan is a very ancient religious site of Braj. Here the main attraction is Shri Girirāj hill which is venerable from the time of Shri Krishna. Previously a stream of Shri Yamunā ji used to flow through the foothills of Shri Girirāj ji. That stream can be seen many times during the rainy season.

Equally attractive and venerable to all the sects, this place is of great significance even today.

Mānasi Gangā

स्नात्वा मानसगङ्गायां दृष्ट्वा गोवर्द्धने हरिम् ।
अन्नकूटं परिक्रम्य किं जनः परितप्यते ॥

(आ० वा०)

After bathing in Mānasi Gangā in Shri Gowardhan and having *darshan* of Shri Haridev ji and after circumambulating the Annakoot Kshetra, which sin of a person will remain?

The Context of Manifestation

After killing Vrishabhāsūr when Shri Krishna met Shri Kishori ji and other Braj maidens then for the sake of a pastime and for the manifestation of the *tirtha* they said, “O Shyām Sundar ! The penance for the sin is compulsory for you”. To absolve Himself of the sin of killing a bull the Lord manifested Mānasi Gangā from His mind (mānas) which is full of milk, pious and capable of destroying all sins.

In a different incident, once all cowherds began preparations to go for a holy dip in Gangā. They rested at this very place, for the night. Showing that all the tirthas live in Braj, Shri Krishna said to Shri Nandarai ji and other cowherds, “When all the tirthas live in Braj, why are you thinking of going out of Braj to bathe.” They did not pay attention to Him thinking He was just a child.

With all the relatives looking, Kanhaiyā summoned Shri Gangā ji in His mind. Shri Gangāji the destroyer of all sins manifested in person before all of them. Everybody took a bath. It was the day of Deepāwali. Everybody offered lighted lamps. In the form of the eyes of Shri Girirāj ji, this Mānasi Gangā, is the destroyer of all sins and sufferings. Offering of lighted lamps is especially significant here.

Even today, sometimes many miraculous incidents occur at Shri Mānāsī Gangā. Many old aged Vaishnavas who have witnessed them are still alive. During the days of *Annakoot* a stream of milk comes out of the crown every year and flows through the middle of Mānāsī Gangā till the very end which is perceptible even to the common man for many hours. This year also many devotees saw this stream of milk.

Naukā Leelā in Mānāsī Gangā

One day Shri Krishna and His beloved Kishori Shri Rādhā became eager to engage in water sport. The ways of the *rasa keli* of these infatuated lovers fond of constant novelty are always new. Naukā (boat) vihār started.

यस्यां माधवनाविको रसवतीमाधाय राधां तरौ ।
 मध्ये चंचलके निपातवलनात्रासैः स्तवत्यास्ततः ॥
 स्वाभीष्टं पनमादधे वहति सा यस्मिन् मनोजाह्नवी ।
 कस्तं तन्नवदम्पतिप्रतिभुव गोवर्द्धनं नाश्रयेत ! ॥¹

(स्तवावलि)

Shri Krishna becoming a boatman is rowing the boat. Looking at the constantly renewing and refreshing beauty of Shri Rādhā, Shri Krishna jokingly started rowing the boat faster and faster. Priyā ji became frightened. She was sitting a little far earlier but now She came closer and sat down next to Priyatam. Priyatam very cleverly made the boat rock. Getting extremely terrified Priyā ji clung to Her Priyatam who is the remover of all fears. Priyatam had already been floating in the waves of the ocean of love and *rasa*. Who can describe that *rasa keli*. Those who beheld that form full of *rasa*, they also drowned in *rasa*.

Shri Gangāji, the eternal witness to the exclusive moments of this *rasa dān-pān* (give and take of *rasa*) is the destroyer of all the defects of the heart and the giver of devotion to Shri Krishna.

Shri Hardev ji

करोद्धृतनगेन्द्राय गोपानां रक्षकायते ।
 सप्ताब्दरूपिणे तुभ्यं हरिदेवाय ते नमः ॥

(स्क० पु०)

1. The mischievous boatman, Shri Mādhav, after making *rasa* abounding Shri Rādhā sit in the boat, took it in the middle of the water that was surging with lofty waves. Frightened Shri Rādhā started begging and pleading in various ways and paid Her desired rent. The place where that very Mānāsī Gangā as the second form of the New Couple is flowing, who will not take the shelter of such Shri Girirāj?

O Hardev ji *virājmān* in the form of seven years old! You are holding Sri Girirāj ji and you are the protector of all cowherds, obeisance to you.

The Gowardhandhāri form of Shri Krishna is *virājmān* here as Hardev ji.

Even during the attacks of *Yavans*, this idol remained here. The idol of Shri Hardev ji appeared from Bilchhu Kund. It is said that a saint called Shri Keshavāchārya used to live in Gowardhan. In a dream he was told to reveal the idol of the Lord from a particular place. Next day Shri Āchārya ji went to Bilchhu Kund with many Brajwāsīs. Once the idol appeared, nobody was able to move it. After getting a signal from the idol itself, Shri Āchārya ji carried it and installed it in the temple. Until today the service of Shri Haridev ji is being carried out by the descendants of Āchārya ji.

Brahma Kund

ब्रह्मादिनिर्मितस्तीर्थं शुद्धकृष्णाभिषेचन ।
नमः कैवल्यनाथाय देवानां मुक्तिकारक ॥

(कूर्म० पु०)

O Tirtha created by Brahmāji and others! O pure and the site of the religious ablutions of Shri Krishna! O Kaiwalyanātha! You are the giver of liberation even to the demigods.

Here Brahmā ji and other demigods had presented themselves before Shri Krishna. Brahmā ji had performed the religious ablutions of Shri Krishna as per the rules of Sām Veda for the fulfillment of all objectives. The place where the water of religious ablutions was collected came to be known as Brahma Kund.

Any virtue done here, even mentally, bears fruit.

Manasā Devi

मनसा कामदायैव मनसायै नमो नमः ।
नमः देव्यै महादेव्यै धन धान्य फलप्रदे ॥

(वा० पु०)

O Manasā Devi! Fulfiller of wishes, obeisance to you. O Devi! O Mahā Devi! Giver of prosperity and fruit, obeisance to you.

On the southern bank of Mānasi Gangā, the temple of goddess is located. Very ancient regional goddess of Braj is *virājmān* here.

Chakra Tirtha

चक्र तीर्थं नमस्तुभ्यं कृष्णचक्रेण लाञ्छितं ।
सर्व पापच्छिदे तस्मै कृष्ण निर्मल निर्मितम् ॥

(वा० पु०)

O Chakra Tirtha obeisance to you! You are marked with the chakra (disc) of Shri Krishna. O destroyer of all sins! O the site created by Shri Krishna, obeisance to you.

Shri Chakreishwar Mahādev

चक्रेश्वराय रूद्राय पञ्चास्यशिव मूर्तये ।
ब्रजमण्डलरक्षाय नमस्ते भव मूर्तये ॥

(रूद्रयामल)

O Chakreishwar Rudra! Obeisance to you. You have five faces. You are an idol of auspiciousness. You are for the protection of Braj Mandal. O the personified festivity of the cowherds, obeisance to you.

Here the demigods established Shri Chakreishwar Mahādev, who is capable of fulfilling all wishes.

The *darshan* of Shri Chakreishwar Mahādev is at the northern bank of Mānasi Gangā. There is a famous hearsay -

When the king of demigods Indra was flooding Braj with devastating torrential rains, all Brajwāsis with their cows and other belongings seeking refuge of Shri Krishna went under Shri Girirāj ji safely. At that time the chakra or the discus of the Lord kept hovering over Shri Girirāj ji and kept absorbing the rain water with its fiercely intense heat. Since then, this place became famous as Shri Chakreishwar Tirtha.

In Braj there are four famous idols of Mahādev ji. In Gowardhan ji he is *virājmān* as Chakreishwar Mahādev. On the night of Shiva chaturdashi, the festival here is worth experiencing.

Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchāryaji's Baithak

Shrimadāchārya stayed here for a week and performed the recitation of Shrimad Bhāgwat. It is believed that Mahādev ji used to listen to the recitation in his divine form.

(84 Baithakan Ko Charitra)

The eminent devotee Nandadās ji is called the chief of the seventh entrance (near Mānasi Gangā) of Shri Girirāj ji.

(84 Vaishnava Ki Vārtā- Bhāv Prakāsh)

Shri Sanātan Goswāmi's Prayer and Meditation Hut

Shri Sanātan ji used to do the worship and prayers at a deserted place near Shri Chakreishwar Mahādev. The place was infected with mosquitoes which started disturbing his prayer and meditation. Feeling helpless he thought of leaving this place. Mahādev ji who gets easily pleased with His devotee came in the form of a Brahmin and gave *darshan* to Shri Sanātan ji. He asked Sanātan ji not to leave the place and assured him that the mosquitoes will not harass him anymore in future. And that's what happened. Even today this miracle can be seen here. There might be lots of mosquitoes all around but Shri Chakreishwar is usually free of them.

Shri Sanātan ji used to live here with forbearance. He used to circumambulate Shri Girirāj ji as a rule every day. Even after getting old he followed his practice of doing the fourteen miles long circumambulation although it was getting difficult. One day a supremely beautiful child came and said to him, "Bābā! Now you are old. Stop going for circumambulation and just do your prayer and meditation here." Shri Sanātan ji was committed to his practice so he continued circumambulating.

One day that child came again and gave a rock of Shri Girirāj ji marked with His footprint to Shri Sanatanji and said, "Bābā! Henceforth just circumambulate this rock, you will get the same merit of circumambulating Shri Girirāj ji." When Kanhaiyā revealed His form and made Sanātan ji aware of all this, Shri Sanātan ji was overwhelmed. His voice choked, eyes brimming with tears remained wide opened. He could not speak. Seeing the state of Sanatan ji the Lord made him aware of Himself-

शिला समर्पिया कृष्ण हैला अदर्शन ।
 बालक न देखि व्यग्र हैला सनातन ॥
 सनातन व्याकुल देखिया अदृश्येते ।
 निज परिचय दिला विह्वल स्नेहेते ॥

(भ० र०)

The *darshan* of this rock marked with the footprints of Shri Krishna can be done in Shri Rādhā Dāmodar temple in Shri Vrindāvan even today.

The *samādhi* of Siddha Shri Krishnadās Bābā is nearby.

Siddha Shri Krishnadās Bābā

The early life of Siddha Bābā who got the people acquainted

with the method of contemplation on the Leelās of the gaudiya saints and *sādhakas* was spent in Jaipur and Nanda grām. There after experiencing the grace of Shri Rādhā Rāni, he came to Chakreishwar and started living there. The keen desire to study the scriptures shook him. Realising his inability, he found his life hopeless.

In such strange circumstances, the experience of Shri Sanātan Goswāmi and Shri Lalitā ji gave him the support and removed all the obstacles. The scriptures and the Vaishnava literary works and books started flashing in his mind instinctively.

Along with the *Ashtakāleen* Leelā in the honour of the scriptures of the sect, he defined the *Ashtakāleen Leelā Smaran Paddhati* (the method of twenty four contemplation and remembrance) of Priyā-Priyatam and made it prevalent in the form of a '*gutikā*' (manual or handbook).

Many of his experiences of the grace of Priyā-Priyatam have become a pillar of light for the *sādhakas*.

Shri Laxminārāyana Temple

लक्ष्मीनारायणायैव गोवर्द्धनसुखायते ।
नमस्ते गोपवृन्दानां परिपूर्णब्रजोत्सवा ॥

(रूद्रयामल)

O Laxminārāyana! Obeisance to you. You are *virājmān* in Gowardhan in order to give happiness and bliss. O the personified festivity and celebration of the cowherds, obeisance to you.

The seat of Shree sect is *virājmān* near Shri Girirāj ji since the sixteenth century. The first Āchārya of the seat was saint Shri Shathakopa. He composed 'Sahasra Geeti Sāra' in which the rasaful depiction of Shri Girirāj ji has been made.

Saint Shri Shathakopa

Most of the Āchāryas of Shri Rāmānuja sect have been from South India and they continued living in that region only. In spite of this they had great attachment and love for Vrindāvan and Shri Vrindāvanvihari.

Saint Shri Shathakopa has been an especially renowned Āchārya of this sect. He used to live in Shri Girirāj ji. In his scripture 'Sahasra Geeti Sāra' he has portrayed the Vrindāvan Leelā of Shri Krishna in details. At one place he has clearly mentioned that the result or the

fruit of remembering the name 'Shrimannārāyana' is the causeless mercy of Shri Krishna, the admission in His Leelā and the attainment of the Lord Himself.

कृष्णपादाम्बुजद्वन्द्वं प्राप्तुं कुतुकिनान्तु वः ।
चिन्तनीयं सदा नाम नारायण इति ध्रुवम् ॥¹

(सहस्र गीति सार 10/5/1)

Profound love for Shri Krishna has remained one part of the life of the Āchāryas. Despite being the worshipper of Shri Laxminārāyana, saint Shri Shathakopa remained extremely dedicated to Shri Krishna.

Indradhwaja Vedi

इन्द्रध्वजवेदी एई नन्दराय ।
करितेन इन्द्रपूजा सर्वलोके गाय ॥

(भ० २०)

This is located to the east of Gowardhan village. Shri Nandarāi ji used to worship Indra at this place. Every year on the day of Indra dwādashi (twelfth day) in the month of Bhādra this worship is done. Later Shri Krishna arranged for the worship of Shri Gowardhan in place of the worship of Indra which will be narrated later in the topic of Govind Kund.

Rinamochan and Pāpamochan Kunds

These two kunds have almost disappeared. The condition of one of them is very miserable. The other has been filled and an office of electricity has been constructed on it. Close to these another kund called Dharma Rochana kund has also disappeared completely. Only a memorial stone is there in its place.

Dān Ghāti

On the path of circumambulation from Gowardhan to Ānyaur grām, this place is in the beginning itself. Even today this site is resonant with many rasaful conversations of Shri Krishna that took place on the pretext of *dān*. The enchanting rows of trees looking beautiful are repeating the stories of the past.

When Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhuji arrived for the circumambulation of Shri Girirāj ji, he inquired about the context of *dān* etc.

1. By continuously remembering Lord Shri Nārāyan, the love and devotion at the lotus feet of Shri Krishna happens easily and effortlessly, this is an absolute truth.

अहे ! श्रीनिवास एई दान घाटी स्थान ।
 रसिकेन्द्र कृष्ण एथा साधे गव्यदान ॥
 एई खाने श्रीचैतन्य संगेर विप्रेरे ।
 जिज्ञासेन दान प्रसङ्गादि धीरे-धीरे ॥¹

(भ० र०)

Nandanandan is best amongst the takers of *dān*. To fulfill the wish of the Braj maidens who are on their way to sell milk and yogurt, Nandanandan asks them for *dān*.

To honour and to caress the feelings of these Braj maidens, he reviles and chides them in order to increase the rasa more and more. And these Braj maidens on the pretext of saying no actually wish to say only yes. How this delectable helplessness steeped in the *dān* of milk and yogurt transforms into colourful pastime and the madhur rasa gets flowing, it cannot be described in words.

घट्टक्रीड़ाकुतुकितमनानागरेन्द्रो नवीनो,
 दानी भूत्वा मदननृपतेर्गव्यदानच्छलेन ।
 यत्र प्रातः सखिभिरभितो वेष्टितः संरुोध,
 श्रीगान्धर्वा निजगणव्रतां नौमितां कृष्णवेदीम् ॥²

(स्तवावलि)

The custom of selling milk and curd has been prevalent in Braj since always. But one excuse of these Braj maidens to sell the milk and yogurt is to savour the sweetness of the beauty of Shyām Sundar, to savour the nectarful conversations with Him and to enjoy His nearness filled with colourful memories. Although they go out to sell milk and curd but their eyes in the search of Shri Krishna always remain restless. Enchanted by the spell of that Magician they return home many times with all the milk and yogurt as it is. The exclusive beloveds of that Magician of Love perform all actions only to give happiness to Him.

They walk on the trails between the rows of dense trees of Shri Girirāj ji, in colourful dresses, with pots on their heads resonating the

1. O Shrinivās! Here is the site called Dān ghāti. Shri Krishna had demanded dān or toll from the gopikās here. At this very site Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu during his visit of Braj had asked the Brahmīns accompanying him about the incidents of dān etc.

2. At this very site Naveen Nāgarāj Shri Krishna restless with curiosity because of the pastime of taking Dān, disguised as a toll collector surrounded by sakhās goes and stops Shri Rādhā surrounded by sakhīs, on the pretence of taking milk etc for Madan mahipati, I pray to that Shri Krishna Vēdi (Dān Ghāti).

paths and the alleys with the sounds of their ornaments. And these caves of Girirāj ji bide their time to be rewarded for their auspicious fortune. Upon hearing the tinkling sounds of the anklets how and when the *Pranayi Rijhawār Rasikeindra Dānveera* jumping from the nearby rocks, blocks their way and starts demanding the *dān*, nobody comes to know. So yes these maidens go out to sell milk and yogurt but instead, as the pots from the heads fall down, a slush of milk and yogurt is created. And in their way comes Nandanandan.

देही पाग बनाइ कै, दान कहति हैं लैन ।
ललित त्रिभंग ठाड़े भये, ग्वालन दै-दै सैन ॥

Just as the prelude for taking the *dān* was setup, the milkmaid started walking

पीठ मोरि आगै चली ऊतर नारि बनाय ।
सारी झलके वदन पै, सोभा बरनि न जाय ॥

This site suffused with the *rasa* flowing in the mysteries of *dān* and *mān* and proud at its fortune is beautiful and blissful.

अति सुख पायौ सुन्दरी, वृन्दाविपिन विलास ।
गोविन्द-प्रभु स्यामहि मिलि, पूजी मन की आस ॥

Blessed are these Braj damsels and their Jeewan Sarvaswa Lord Shyām Sundar.

Shyām Sundar comes and stands in their way sometimes and when this crowd carrying the milk and the yogurt comes through the narrow alleys of Girirāj then-

अहो नागरी ! गोवर्द्धन गिरि की-
बिनु लाहैं क्यों उतरैगी घाटी ।

He does not allow them to pass without giving the *dān*. Resonating with the fights of yes and no, the unusual ways of settling *dān* and clever utterances, the solitary sites and the dense alleys of Girirāj ji blessed with these incidents, are feeling proud at their fortune.

This site of blissful *keli* mysteries is famous as Dān Ghāti.

Hāthras Wālā Laxminārāyana Temple

The Lord Vishnu and Laxmi ji are *virājmān* here. In its courtyard one devotee of God, extremely dispassionate saint called Revered Pandit ji Mahārāj remained engaged in worship and *Leelā* contemplation.

Respected Pandit Gayā Prasād Ji

It will not be an exaggeration to consider Pandit Gayā Prasād ji the foremost amongst those great ones who were completely detached from the world but at the same time completely attached to Priyā-Priyatam. The form of supreme desirelessness and dispassion that remained the ornament of the life of Revered Pandit ji was unequalled. Such desirelessness, vigilance, idealism and affection will have to be called rare.

Mahārāj ji was born on 15.11.1893 in Kalyānpur village of Khāgā revenue district in Fatahapur district. From there due to some reason his father migrated to Hāthras. The early life of Mahārāj ji was spent there. He got married. A son and a daughter of Mahārāj ji are still making this earth proud. He did service with honesty. When the owner of the factory moved the factory to Punjāb, he asked Panditji to come with him but Pandit ji refused. He started teaching Shrimad Bhāgwat. With meager means, he continued to raise his family in an ideal way.

The renunciation and dispassion of Revered Shri Udiyā Bābā became his ideal. Living in the same way, he became engaged in the adoration and the remembrance of the Lord. Pandit ji Mahārāj used to love Rās. Once he was absorbed in Rās. Shri Thākur Swaroop of the Karahalā troupe gave him a signal by throwing a flower at him. Leaving young children at the mercy of God, he came to Vrindāvan on foot. Standing on the other side of the Pānighāt just when he was thinking about entering Vrindāvan, Shri Shyām Sundar enticed him with His alluring exquisite bent form. Pandit ji spent the rest of his life in Vrindāvan.

He lived in Shri Laxmi Nārāyana temple until the very last days of his life. He kept following the rules of circumambulation and *madhukari* till he was able to. He used to go to Vrindāvan on foot. After doing *darshan* of Shri Guru Mahārāj and Shri Bihāri ji he used to come back.

Once the *Rās Swaroopas* put on their crowns, he would consider them same as the Lord. He would make them sit in his lap and treat them like children with love and affection. He would feed them and feel very happy.

Vātsalya remained his primary *bhāv*. He would usually not discuss the Braj maidens and the *sakhis*. Bhaktimati Ushā behen ji, whose rule was to go to Barsānā on Rādhāshtami day (birthday of Shri Rādhā) via Girirāj ji, would definitely go for his *darshan*. On one such visit, in some context while describing the incarnation of

Kishori ji, incarnations of ashta sakhis and other gopis and the nature and the form of the service of Shri Lalitā, Vishākḥā etc in the *vihār* of the Yugal, Pandit ji became choked with emotions. When many people came to know about this, they were stunned. It was actually very strange. He had a feeling of great intimacy with revered Behen ji and her meeting with him was also a special coincidence.¹ Prompted by it this discussion sprang forth without his awareness.

He would strongly emphasize to the *sādhakas* to remain vigilant about - obedience to *sadguru*, refuge of the great ones, being careful of the women, collecting or storing only the bare necessities, deep faith in the name of the Lord, self examination, silence, self restraint etc. He himself used to follow them very strictly and vigilantly.

After the *sākhshātkār* of Shri Krishna he remained *virājmān* in the foothills of Girirāj ji engrossed and absorbed. Revered Ushā Behen ji asked him once, “Mahārāj ji according to the scriptures and also endorsed by the saints it is said that those who take the refuge of Shri Girirāj ji, for them it becomes very easy to get the *sākshāt darshan* of Shri Krishna. You have been living here for many years.” Revered Pandit ji gave a very precise and controlled reply self effacingly, “The saints have spoken the truth.” Humility and modesty had become his nature.

He used to lay a lot of emphasis on total surrender and on the name of the Lord. He used to definitely give the following example on the subject of devoutness. There was a slave system earlier. Slaves used to be sold. Once someone bought a slave and brought him home. He asked the slave, “What is your name.” The slave replied, “Whatever you decide to keep.” He asked again, “What work will you do?” The slave said, “Whatever you say.” Mahārāj ji used to say that this should be the form of surrender.

In this way he continued leading his life totally absorbed in the Leelā of Shyām Sundar. On the fourth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhādra, samvat 2051, he joined the Nitya Leelā.

Yamunāvato

This place is about one and a half mile away from Gowardhan. At some time, Yamunā ji used to flow here. This is why it is called Yamunāvato. During floods even today a stream of Yamunā ji flows

1. Please see the page 461 of the book, Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorwa Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji.

from here. This is the birth place of Shri Kumbhandās ji and Shri Chaturbhujdās ji. They used to live here.

‘Kumbhan talāi’ and ‘Shyāmā Gāya Ki Baithak’ are the main attractions of this place. It is said that a Pipal tree under which Kumbhandās ji and Shrināthji used to meet often is still here.

Pārāsauli (Chandra Sarowar)

This place is about one and a half miles away from Gowardhan grām. In the Gowardhan region the description of this very place in the form of Rās site is found. According to the Vaishnava scriptures this site has also been accepted as the site of Mahārās of the Sāraswata *kalpa*. Shri Vallabhāchārya had done *pratyaksha darshan* of Rās Leelā here. Shri Gopāldās ji accepting the entire area near Chandra Sarowar to be the Rās site has addressed it as Ādi Vrindāvan. Describing the beauty of this place in a *pada* he is saying-

‘All around there are dense *nikunjas*, where the vines and creepers offering the flowers as gifts and making the site fragrant have made the site fit for Rās. The bees are buzzing on the flowers. The golden vines taking the support of Tamāl trees are looking beautiful. The sweet sound of many instruments is resonating listening to which the peacocks have gone crazy. In these rasa steeped *nikunjas*, Priyā-Priyatam with their own forms the *sakhis* are drowning in Rās vilās.’

कुञ्ज सदन सुहामणा शोभा तणों नहीं पार ।
विविध रास मण्डल रची खेलें श्रीनन्दकुमार ॥

The eminent devotee Soordās ji describing Ādi Vrindāvan in his scripture ‘Soor Sārāvali’ says.

जहाँ वृन्दावन आदि अजर जहाँ कुञ्ज लता विस्तार ।
तहाँ विहरत प्रिया-प्रियतम दोऊ निगम भृङ्ग गुञ्जार ॥

Every site of Braj is related to one or the other Leelā of Shri Krishna. On one hand where Shri Girirāj ji is extremely suitable for cattle grazing on the other hand its caves are most befitting for solitary Rās vilās with Braj maidens. Pārāsauli, Chandra Sarowar gives all help in the creation of private rasa steeped Leelās of Shri Krishna. Nearby is the baithak of Shri Vallabhāchārya ji.

रासे श्रीशतवन्द्य सुन्दर सखी वृन्दाञ्चिता सौरभ-
भ्राजत कृष्णरसाल बाहु विलसत कण्ठी मधौ माधवी ।
राधा नृत्यति यत्र चारु वलते रासस्थली सा परा ।

यस्मिन् कः सुकृति तमुन्नतमये गोवर्द्धनं नाश्रयेत् ॥

(स्तवावलि)

Pārāsauli has been the Rās site in the foothills of Shri Girirāj ji. The Rās that happens here in the spring has especially been described.

The intoxication of the spring season has filled the whole Nature. Everywhere the bees crazed by the fragrance of flowers have started flying. It seems the exuberance of the trees has burst forth in the form of buds and blooms. The cuckoo cooed and the breeze aiming the five arrows started sashaying filled with intoxication. It started swelling the impatience of the Braj damsels to meet Shyām Sundar and started making them emotionally powerless and helpless. At such a time, the flute the constant companion of Shyām Sundar began playing.

All the crazy Braj maidens restless to meet Priyatam Shyām came near Him with alacrity. This rasa keli merged in the rasafal waves of the sounds of anklets and the bangles.

Some Fortunate One's Rasa Filled Experience Seven Years Ago

“Sakhi let us go to the beautiful bank of Chandra Sarowar and get the *darshan* of Shyām Sundar. I have heard that the handsome and charming ruler of the land of love, the Prince Shri Krishna is *virājmān* in a *nikunja* at the bank of Chandra Sarowar because of some special event. Priyā ji and other sakhis are also with Him. Come let us also go.”

Aha! Aha! They saw in front of them, “He is wearing a crown of precious gems and a peacock feathered head ornament on His blessed head. The bangles on His smooth hands emitting a sweet sound are giving a signal for Rās. The golden *kardhani* (jeweled chain) around the waist is looking beautiful. *Kardhani* is making a sound. With the flute tucked in the waist, this fathomless accumulation of beauty adorned with all kinds of ornaments is looking resplendent. Not just this, He is creating a romp and revelry at the strand of the lake. At times He jumps into the water and at times He throws the water out of the lake. At times exchanging rasa with His beloveds through the movements of His eyebrows, he is being naughty and playful. Nectar is flowing from the eyes of Shyām Sundar. The hearts of the beloveds are getting soaked with this stream of nectar. The Shyāmalendu Neelghan is caressing their love steeped feelings.”

(Gratefully from Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorva Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji)

This Rās vilās with the sakhis! What can the pen say.... The flawless beauty Shri Rādhā, worshipped by Shri Laxmi ji filled with

intoxicated expressions and gestures of love is feeling content upon getting Shri Krishna's shelter. The longing for those very rasa particles filled the crazy lovers with rasa intoxication, some of which fell and got scattered, which were collected by this site in the foothills of Shri Girirāj ji.

Mahāprabhu Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Ki Baithak

The Baithak of Shrimadāchārya is under a Chhonkar tree near the sarowar.

One day one Vaishnava expressed his desire to Shrimadāchārya to have *pratyaksha darshan* of Shrināthji. Mahāprabhu was sitting in some contemplation, he simply said, "If you circumambulate Shri Girirāj ji thrice without stopping, you will get the *sākshāt darshan* of the Lord." The Vaishnava started the circumambulation earnestly with faith and dedication. During the circumambulation he first saw a white snake. The Vaishnava considering it to be a bad omen stopped suddenly. When he moved further towards Punchhari he met a cowherd who said that there was a lion standing ahead and that he should not proceed further. The frightened Vaishnava remembered Mahāprabhu ji. When he went further he met a cow. After completing the circumambulation he came back to Mahāprabhu ji and expressed his disappointment.

After listening to the whole story he said, "You did have the *darshan* of the Lord, but without His wish one does not get the knowledge of it, so you could not experience." Mahāprabhu ji then by his mercy gave him the darshan.

Shri Goswāmi Vithalnāth ji Ki Baithak

Shri Gosāin ji is considered the pillar of Pushti sect. He was a great scholar and also very sensitive and reflective. A family dispute involving the position of *Āchārya* was going on. Though he was the best choice but a few Vaishnavas wanted Shri Purushottamji, son of Shri Gopināth ji, to be given the seat. Shri Krishnadās ji was the in charge of the temple of Shrināth ji. He was quite influential and inclined towards Shri Purushottamji. Because of the dispute he had the doors of Shrināthji closed to Shri Gosāin ji. During that period Gosāin ji lived at Chandra Sarowar.

Without the *darshan* of Shrināthji he became extremely restless. Deeply anguished, his heart overflowed. In those very days he composed 'Nava Vigyaptiyān' addressing Shrināthji. It seems as though his anguished heart has entered the writing itself. Rājā Birbal

was the follower of Shri Gosāin ji. When he came to know about the prohibition on Gosāin ji to visit Shrināthji, he proposed to punish Shri Krishnadās ji but Gosāinji stopped him from doing so.

Shri Soordās ji

This is the place of worship and adoration of the ship of Pushti sect, Shri Soordās ji. Soor's hut and Soor samādhi are both within the compound of the baithak of Shri Vallabhāchārya ji. The state government has reconstructed them.

Shrināthji was totally visible and manifest to Soordāsji. He continued living at this place. He would write his experiences down in the form of padas and sing them. All these padas are available in the form of a collection called Soor Sāgar. Shri Soordās ji used to go for the daily service of Shrināthji from here only.

His love and attachment for Shri Krishna was firm and resolute. His longing for darshan kept growing more and more intense and he kept sinking deeper and deeper in the love of Shri Krishna. Soordās ji saw his beloved in the guise of a cowherd clinging to His stick. His sweet gaze, faint smile abducted the heart and the mind of Soor. The dangling of the crown cast a spell on him. The sweet voice of the Priyatam reproaching hundreds of *veenās* entered his ears. It is beyond the capacity of the pen to describe the sweetness of the beautiful form of such a Tribhang Sundar.

In the following pada he is describing the state of the mind of a gopi-

अब तो प्रकट भई जग जानी ।
 वा मोहन सौ प्रीति निरन्तर क्यों निबहेगी छानी ।
 कहा कहौ सुन्दर मूरति इन नयनन मांझ समानी ।
 निकसत नाहिं बहुत पचिहारी रोम-रोम अरुभानी ।
 अब कैसे निरवारि जात है मिल्यौ दूध ज्यौ पानी ।
 सूरदास प्रभु अन्तरजामी ग्वालिनी मन की जानी ।

Look at the state of the mind of the poor innocent gopi. The limitless ocean of beauty and sweetness penetrated her eyes. In spite of trying very hard, she is unable to take the beautiful form out. That *akhanda jyoti* (God), which the yogis and the ascetics are unable to attain even after trying for several yugas, attaining that very sweet and beautiful form effortlessly the milkmaid is trying to remove it from her heart but is getting more and more entangled. Oh! how was this

state of her mind going to remain hidden from Sānwar Kishore. He came to her and filled her life with more blissfulness.

Humility and modesty were Soordās ji's wealth. Shri Chaturbhujdās ji said to Soordās ji once that he has sung a lot about the glory of the Lord but has hardly said anything about the glory of Shri Āchārya Mahāprabhu. Soordās ji replied, "I have only sung the glory of the feet of the Āchārya. If I had seen any difference in them, I would have sung separately for him, but before you I say"-

भरोसो दृढ़ इन चरणन केरो ।
 श्रीवल्लभ नख चन्द्र छटा बिन सब जग मांभ्रअन्धेरो ।
 साधन और नाहि या कलि में जासों होत निबेरो ।
 'सूर' कहा कहूँ द्विविध आंधरो बिना मोल को चरो ।

One day, knowing that his last time has come, Soordās ji came back to Pārāsauli grām after the *mangalā ārati*. Gosāin ji came to know of everything. He told his followers and attendants, "Today the ship of Pushti sect is about to depart, whoever wants to take whatever should take it."

As per the order of Gosāin ji everybody went to Shri Soordās ji. After the rāj bhoga (food that is offered to a deity at noon time) Shri Gosāin ji also arrived. Soor absorbed in Leelā contemplation at that time was looking unconscious. Gosāin ji holding the hand of Soordās ji asked, "Soordās ji! What is the matter?" Soordās ji opened his eyes and bowed to Gosāin ji and singing the following pada entered the Nitya Leelā-

खंजन नैन रूपरस माते ।
 अतिशय चारु चपल अनियारे पल पिंजरा न समाते ।
 चलि चलि जात निकट श्रवननि के उलटि पलटि ताटक फंदाते ।
 सूरदास अञ्जन गुण अटके न तर अब उड़ जाते ॥

Many incidents of his life are famous.

There are temples of Shri Chandra Bihāri and Dāu ji. Nearby is the Gandharwa kund.

Ānyaur

About two miles away from Chandra Sarowar this village is in the foothills of Shri Girirāj ji. Shri Shrināthji had appeared here from underneath a rock of Girirāj ji.

Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji Ki Baithak

This baithak is in the house of a Vaishnava called Shri Saddu Pāndey. His family members do the worship and service here. The Pāndey family always had the grace of the Lord. The character of Shrimati Bhawāni, daughter Naro and Shri Saddu Pāndey are extremely righteous, devout and astonishing. The main credit of the appearance of Shrināthji goes to this family only.

(84 Baithakan ko Charitra)

The Story of The Appearance of Shrināthji

Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj was travelling for the propagation of *dharma*. He arrived in the Jhārkhand region. There Shri Gowardhannāth ji gave him darshan and said, “Go and reveal me from a certain place and bring the service to light.”

Shrimadāchārya ji came to Braj after some time for this purpose. Based on the indications received earlier, he stayed at the house of Shri Saddu Pāndey in Ānyaur grām. They started discussing about surrender to the Lord. Shri Gowardhannāth ji came in the form of child to the house of Shri Saddu Pāndey and started asking for milk from his daughter Naro. Naro asked the child to wait for sometime as she was busy serving the guests. But why would Shri Gowardhannāth ji tolerate any kind of delay. Naro gave him milk. When the child returned after drinking the milk Mahāprabhuji asked Naro who the child was. Naro gave an innocent reply that he was the mountain god, Deva Damana.

Shrimanmahāprabhu was reminded of the entire incident of Jhārkhand. He became overwhelmed with emotions. All *sātvika bhāv* appeared in his body. He drank the leftover *uchchhishta* milk from the pot immediately.

Next day Mahāprabhuji said, ‘You all are Brajwāsis. As the love that you have for ‘Deva Damana’ is intensely profound, there are no restrictions of actions and thoughts for you. Tell me in details the story of the manifestation of Deva Damana’.

The story told by Shri Saddu Pāndey is as follows-

There was a cowherd. He used to graze the cows. Amongst the many cows that He used to take for grazing there was one which had plenty of milk. Once, after not getting any milk from that cow in the evenings for several days, the owner of that cow, a Brahmin, inquired from the cowherd about it.

The cowherd replied, “I don’t milk the cow however this cow goes alone to a site in Girirāj ji every day. There the milk of the cow flows out by itself.” When all villagers in their curiosity went to find

out the truth the next day, they found that the cowherd was right. When the rock from that place was removed, a Thākur idol manifested from there. That idol became famous as Shrināthji. Beholding that beautiful enchanting form, all of them were astounded. Everybody felt thrills and shivers running through them.

All those Vaishnavas went to that place again with Shrimanmahāprabhu ji. Mahāprabhu ji had already been instructed to bring the service to light. He got a small temple built and started the service. Later the responsibility of service was taken over by Shri Krishnadās Adhikāri.

(84 Vaishnava Vārtā)

Another rasaful story about the appearance of Shrināthji is famous amongst the Vaishnavas. The story is as follows-

Shripād Mādhavendrapuri ji Mahārāj came one day during his travel and stayed near Govind kund in Girirāj ji. Since he used to lead his life without begging for anything, he kept lying in the afternoon under a tree hungry. In the evening a Brajwāsi child came to him with a cup of milk and said, “Bābā! My mother has sent some milk for you. Please have it.”

Puri Mahārāj became a little lost looking at the exquisitely beautiful radiant blue form of the child. After drinking the milk, as told by the child he began waiting for Him to give the empty cup back. The child did not return for a long time. Mahārāj Shri fell asleep.

In the dream the child after giving His introduction, gave him the darshan of the idol of Shri Gopāl ji and revealed the secret. He also said that due to the fear of Yavans the priests had left after burying Him under a rock. You make arrangements for my service. Shripuri Mahārāj started the service. It is said that the same Gopāl ji was the idol of Shrināthji only.

(Shri Chaitanya Charitāmrita)

From the above two stories at least this much is evident that Shrināthji is a self manifest Thākur. He manifested from Shri Girirāj ji, even this is indisputable. Shri Shrināthji is *Leelā kautuki*. Many of His Leelās becoming *pratyaksha* experiences of the devotees are guiding us even today. The *kautuka* of his manifestation is also a matter of His hands. That the manifestation remains a riddle, this is also His *kautuka*. He is not bound by any rules. It is also possible that Shri Shrināthji gave the darshan separately and at different times to both Shrimanmahāprabhu ji and Shri Mādhavendrapuri ji Mahārāj. Shri Vishwanāth Chakrawartipāda singing praises about both of them has said -

अधिधरमनुरागं माधवेन्द्रस्य तन्वंस्तदमल,
हृदयोत्थां प्रेम सेवां विवृण्वन् ।
प्रकटितनिजशक्त्या वल्लभाचार्यभक्त्या,
स्फुरतु हृदि स एव श्रीलगोपालदेवः ॥

(गोपाल देवाष्टक)

Come let us leave the history of manifestation here and savour and sing the divine acts and deeds of Shrināthji. Shrināthji is yours, mine and everybody's.

Sankarshan Kund

This kund attached to the Ānyaur grām is on the right side of the circumambulation route. On the northern bank is the temple of Lord Sankarshan. The eminent devotee Shri Kumbhandās ji had a special relationship with this place. Rājā Mānsingh had come here to have *darshan* of Shri Kumbhandās ji. The *samādhi* of Shri Kumbhandās ji is also here.

Nearby there is the 'Bājani Shilā' on Girirāj ji. On beating this rock, a sweet sound is produced. To the west of Govind kund on a Girirāj boulder, there is the print of the signature of Shri Krishna and the print of His stick. In the middle of Ānyaur and Jatipurā on top of Shri Girirāj ji is the Sindoori Shilā.

Gauri Tirtha

This tirtha is located on the left side of the path of circumambulation a little ahead of Ānyaur. Shri Chandrāwali ji comes here to meet Shri Krishna on the pretext of worshipping Devi Gauri. She is the exclusive and devout beloved of Shri Krishna.

Canopied by Neepa (kadamba) trees this place is extremely beautiful.

Annakoot Sthal

कृष्णस्त्वन्यतमं रूपं गोपविश्रम्भणं गतः ।
शैलोऽस्मीति ब्रुवन् भूरिबलिमादद् वृहद्वपुः ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/24/35)

1. In order to convince the gopas, Lord Shri Krishna assuming another huge body, appeared on top of Shri Girirāj ji, and saying, "I am Girirāj" started eating all the items that were offered.

At the inspiration of Shri Krishna, Shri Nandarai ji and the other cowherds offered all the items prepared for the Indra worship to Shri Girirāj ji. Brahmins performed the yagya and did swasti vāchan (to read out well wishes in mantras).

Afterwards all the Brajwāsīs went for the circumambulation of Shri Girirāj ji. The joy of the Brajwāsīs knew no bounds. They saw that their sakhā *virājmān* in the form of the Deva was eating all their offerings with relish. The place where Shri Krishna accepted the offerings of Annakoot is famous as Annakoot sthal. The same tradition of worship is continuing here even today.

Nearby is the house of Shri Saddu Pāndey. The place of manifestation of Shrināthji is near Shri Girirāj ji.

Govind Kund

अन्नकूटस्य सान्निध्ये तीर्थं शक्रविनिर्मितं ।
तस्मिन् स्नाने तर्पणे च शतक्रतुफलं लभेत् ॥¹

(आ० वा०)

Seeing the enthusiastic preparations of Indra worship in every house of Braj, the child Kanhaiyā was very surprised. Preparing many dishes and delicacies, the Brajwāsīs are going to worship Indra leaving behind the deity at home. This did not look very becoming of Brajwāsīs. Seeing the simple hearted Brajwāsi ready to worship Indra, Shri Krishna asked Nanda bābā, “Bābā! What big task is before you, which festival has arrived? What is the fruit of this? With what intent, which people and by which means is this yagya performed? Please make me understand in details.”

What could Shri Nandarai ji say to the innocent queries of Kanhaiyā, he just said, ‘Son! Indra is the master of the clouds responsible for rains. Clouds are his own form and when they rain, only then the lives of the living beings are protected on this earth. Whatever is left from the yagya, we use that for the accomplishment of three goals of life: righteousness, riches, desires. This has been continuing as our family tradition.’

Lord Krishna said, “Bābā! A human being takes birth and dies according to his actions. He is under the control of his nature. There are four means of subsistence for Vaishyas but we have only been

1. The tirtha called Govinda Kund that was revealed by Devarāj Indra is near the site of Annakoot. By bathing and offering libations to the ancestors here the fruit and merit of performing hundred yagyas is achieved.

raising cows. Bābā! We do not have a big kingdom to afford this yagya. We dwell in forests and mountains are our home. That's why my advice is that with the items prepared for Indra yagya, we should worship Shri Girirāj ji, cows and Brahmins.” Nanda bābā and other cowherds accepted the suggestion of Kanhaiyā happily because they were already familiar with His incredible acts and deeds. Therefore all the items collected and prepared for Indra worship were offered to Shri Girirāj ji with love and devotion.

After taking the blessings of the Brahmins, the cowherds and the gopis wore different clothes and ornaments and became eager to do the circumambulation of Shri Girirāj ji.

Shri Krishna assuming a giant form on top of Shri Girirāj ji ate all the items that were offered. Everybody was convinced that the Deva had manifested himself and was accepting the offerings.

When Indra came to know about this, he was very furious and ordered the clouds called Samvartaka to rain over Braj severely. The torrential rains came down heavily on Braj. There was no place left for the Brajwāsis and their cattle to be. They started shivering with cold. They told Shri Krishna about their suffering.

They said, ‘Dear Krishna you are very capable. We can be saved only with your fortune. You are the sole master and the protector of the whole Gokul.’

Shri Krishna had to crush the pride of Indra in any case.

इत्युक्त्वैकेन हस्तेन कृत्वा गोवर्द्धनाचलम् ।
दधार लीलया कृष्णश्छत्राकमिव बालकः ॥

(भागवत 10/25/19)

Lord Krishna casually uprooted Shri Girirāj ji with one hand and held it on his hand the way the children uproot mushrooms and put them on their palms.

The Lord asked all the Brajwāsis to come under Shri Girirāj ji. He held Shri Girirāj ji on his little finger for seven days. Even Indra was stunned to see the might of Yogamāyā.

Some *vātsalya bhāv bhāvit* cowherds and the mother Yashodā addressing the sakhās said, ‘O boys! Can you not see that Kanhaiyā is holding Shri Girirāj Gowardhan on His little finger. Don't you feel anything.’ The sakhās said, ‘Maiyā! You are always naive. Can't you see that we all are holding Shri Girirāj ji with our sticks. There is not even the slightest weight of it on Kanhaiyā's hand.’ Hearing this Shri Krishna started smiling.

Once the rain stopped, Shri Krishna asked all the cowherds to come out with their cows and other belongings and before everyone's eyes established Girirāj ji just like before.

The hearts of the Brajwāsis filled with love. They came running to their Kanhaiyā and embraced Him. With love and delight they worshipped Shri Krishna with yogurt and rice. The demigods started blowing conch. Celestial musicians etc showered flowers.

Devarāj Indra did the religious ablutions of the Lord and sang hymns of praise. The place where the water of the religious ablutions got collected, it came to be known as Shri Govind kund. This kund is capable of giving deep love for Shri Krishna even today.

There are Baithaks of Shri Mādhavendrapuri ji, Shri Vallabhāchārya ji and Shri Vithalnāth ji. There are *darshans* of Shri Govind ji and Shri Shrināthji. Many dispassionate ascetics engage in prayer and remembrance of the Lord at the bank of the kund.

Dhokā Dāuji

A little ahead of Shri Govind kund in a temple atop Shri Girirāj ji, Shri Dāuji is *virājmān*.

Nāgā ji's Samādhi

This is the *samādhi* of Shri Chaturānan Nāgā. Shri Nāgā ji breathed his last here. This place is a little ahead of Govind kund.

Punchhari

The back part of Shri Girirāj ji is called Punchhari. The shape of Shri Girirāj ji is believed to be in the form of a cow. Shri Rādhā kund and Shri Krishna kund are supposed to be the eyes and the tail of Shri Girirāj ji is considered to be in Punchhari village. Just as the tail is important to the cow, so is the importance of this tirtha.

Nearby are Narsinha Teelā, Nawal kund, Apsarā kund where Apsarā Bihāri Thākur ji is *virājmān*.

Punchhari Kā Lauthā

The idol in the shape of a wrestler in the temple outside Punchhari village is famous as Punchhari Kā Lauthā. He is believed to be a *sakhā* of Shri Krishna.

Shri Rāghav Pandit's Guphā or Cave

Living in the foothills of Shri Girirāj ji, Shri Rāghav Pandit used to engage in the prayer and the remembrance of the Lord here. At present the entrance to the cave is closed.

Shri Ramdās ji's Guphā or Cave

Shri Ramdās ji a great devotee of Vallabha sect used to engage in the prayer and meditation near Apsarā kund.

Surabhi and Airāwat Kund

एवं कृष्णमुपामन्त्रय सुरभिः पयसाऽऽत्मनः ।
जलैराकाशगङ्गाया ऐरावतकरोद्धृतैः ॥
इन्द्रः सुरर्षिभिः साके नोदितो देवमातृभिः ।
अभ्यषिञ्चत दाशार्हं गोविन्द इति चाभ्यधात् ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/27/22-23)

Indra felt ashamed upon seeing the Godhood of Shri Krishna. He performed the religious ablutions of the Lord in different ways. All those places of religious ablutions became famous kunds. Surabhi kund and Airāwat kund are two of them.

Nearby is the place where the meal consisting of fifty six items is prepared and the place where that food is offered to Shri Girirāj ji. This is where Shri Paramānand dās ji used to sit and do service of Shrināthji.

Kadamba Khandi

यत्र कृष्णस्तु गोपीनां मनोस्याह्लादनं करोत् ।
कदम्बोपरिः संविष्टो मुरलीवादनं शुभम् ॥
गोप्योऽधःस्थल-संस्थास्ता रासक्रीडनतत्पराः ।
यतो कदम्बखण्डाख्यं वनं जातं महद्भुतम् ॥²

(भविष्य पुराण)

1. Parikshita! Saying this to Lord Shri Krishna, Kāmdhenu with her milk, Devarāj Indra on the inspiration of the Deva mothers along with the sages did the ablutions of Yadunāth Shri Krishna with the water of Ākāsh Gangā brought by Airāwat in his trunk and then addressed Him as Govind.

2. This is that very enchanting site of dense Kadamba trees. Shri Krishna engaged in raman with the gopikās in many rasa rās Leela-vihār here. Hearing the sound of the flute, His eternal companion, entranced Braj maidens receiving the special invitation, get absorbed in rasa.

The foothill of Shri Girirāj ji, its caves, and its solitary private nikunjas are touched, soaked and nourished by the vihar vilās of Priyā-Priyatam. Intoxicated by the fragrance of Kadamba flowers, these *rasa* crazy Yugal have nourished every site of Braj with their sweet *rasa*.

The attendant and the friend of Shrināthji, the eminent devotee Shri Govindswāmi used to live here. At the fourth entrance of Shri Girirāj ji, Govindswāmi ji sits in service. (84 Vaishnava Vārtā)

Rudra Kund

This is a solitary and uninhabited place. Shri Mahādev ji became *virājmān* here for the darshan of Shri Krishna. This is why the place became famous as Rudra Kund.

Nearby is 'Harji Ki Pokhar' It is a beautiful place. There is darshan of 'Budhe Bābu Mahādev ji'.

The fifth entrance of Shri Girirāj ji is near Rudra Kund where Bhakta Shri Chaturbhujdās ji is engaged in the service.

(84 Vaishnava Vārtā)

Shyām Dhāk

श्याम ढाक के दौना, जा में खावै श्याम सलौना ।

This saying is very famous in Braj. This site covered with many clusters and thickets of black Palāsha trees is famous as Shyām Dhāk. It is about one and a half mile away from Punchhari village. Even today in the rainy season the bee like mind becomes crazy by the fragrance of Kadamba flowers. Many memories become alive in the atmosphere of blissfulness and endearment. This solitary and deserted place is soaked and nourished with Shri Krishna's cattle grazing Leelās.

It is said that once while having His meal, Shri Krishna felt the need of a *daunā* (leaf cup). He plucked a leaf from a Kadamba tree nearby. It was in the shape of a cup. The proof of that leaf cup that acquired its shape at the wish of Almighty Shri Krishna can be seen here even today.

Shrināthji used to come here quite often to play. He came here with Shri Govindswāmi once. Shrināthji started playing the flute sitting on a tree. They were delayed a little. In the temple, it was time to awaken the Lord. Shri Gosāin ji arrived at the temple. Shrināthji

jumped from the tree in haste. His pitāambar got entangled in a branch and tore. The torn end remained on the tree and Shrināthji managed to reach the temple in time. Gosāin ji was astonished to see the torn pitāambar. Later Govindswāmi ji came and told the whole story and took everybody to show the torn piece on the tree.

The *bhāv* of Shri Govindswāmi ji was *siddha*. Shrināthji had come to Shyām Dhāk to play with Govind ji.

There are Gopi Talaiyā, Gopa Sāgar, Jalagharā and baithak of Shri Vithalnāth ji.

Jatipurā (Gopālpur)

Every rock of Shri Girirāj ji has been osculated by the touch of Shri Krishna and His Leelā. On one hand where Ānyaur village has been blessed with many Leelās, on the other hand the place called Jatipurā treasuring many delightful memories of Shrināthji in its atmosphere is extremely venerable to the Vaishnavas even today.

This is one of the special sites amongst the principal places of Vallabha sect. Shrināthji who is known as ‘Deva Daman’ and ‘Gopāl ji’ used to be *virājīt* here. Although due to the fear of the Yavans, Shrināthji was taken to Shri Nāthadwārā, nevertheless His old temple in the form of a symbol, is making the ancient memories come alive for all of us even today.

Braj has continued to be blessed by the novel pastimes of Shrināthji, who is fond of sports. Shrināthji thought of a new play. Shrināthji said to Shri Āchārya ji, “Cows are very dear to me. Get cows for me.” Āchārya Mahāprabhu said alright and related this to Shri Saddu Pāndey. After hearing it, Shri Pāndey ji said, “Āchārya pād! All these cows belong to Shrināthji only but in spite of this if it is His wish to have more cows, they will certainly come.” It is said that since then everybody started calling Shrināthji ‘Gopāl’. Considering all this Gosāin Vithalnāth ji later renamed this place Gopālpur.

About five hundred years ago the river of devotion was flowing. Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchāryaji, Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Goswāmi Shri Vithalnāth ji, Shriman Nityānand ji, and the eight devotee poets of Ashtachhāp, the six Goswāmis, Mira Bai, Kabir, Tulsi and others appeared on the earth and doused everybody with the spring of devotion. The rasa particles scattered from those very waves of the age of devotion are guiding us even today.

Shrināthji

Shrināthji radiating the splendour of His all enchanting form has been and is attracting millions of devotees with His beauty, darshan in person and Leelā mādhuri. The service of Shrināthji that is being done dotingly and indulgently is worth experiencing and savouring.

It is an indisputable fact that Shrināthji manifested from a cave of Shri Girirāj ji. After installing Him in a temple, Mahāprabhu ji started the service. (This ancient site is still present in Jatipurā.)

Due to the hostile and anti Hindu views of Aurangzeb, Shrināthji like many other idols, went away by His own will.

The places where Shrināthji became *virājmān* during the period of His service, His *charan chaukis* are marked there. In Jatipurā and ‘Satgharā’ (Mathurā) the *charan chaukis* are *virājmān*. The baithaks of Shrināthji in Shyām Dhāk, Gulāl Kund, Toad Ko Ghano and Pārāsauli grām are venerated until today.

Shrināthji is charmingly sweet and beautiful. The various marks and ornaments on His body are made on their own. On His back there are marks of a parrot, a ram, the sun and the cow. This is mentioned in the Vārtā Sāhitya.

The acts and deeds of Shrināthji are incredulous and filled with intimacy. He would talk to His intimate devotees in person, play with them and express His wish and will.

By giving *darshan* in person to many of His devotees He has made them the subjects of His causeless mercy. Whereas on one hand He ordered Shri Mahāprabhu ji to bring His service to light, on the other hand the causelessly merciful Shrināthji came down from the top of the hill to receive Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and gave darshan to him. Shri Mādhavendrapuri ji Mahārāj, Goswāmi Vithalnāth ji, Shri Soordās ji, Shri Kumbhandās ji, Shri Govindswāmi ji and other great saints received *darshan* of Shrināthji in person.

When Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu came here while touring Braj, he did not go atop Shri Girirāj ji, considering his body to be non-different from Shri Krishna. But his desire for darshan was intense. That very day somebody came and gave the information that there was a fear of an attack by the *Yavans* and advised them to move Shri Gopāl ji to some other place. (It is said that Shri Gopāl had come in the form of the messenger himself.) The people in charge did accordingly. The omniscient Shrināthji had to fulfill the desire of Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Shri Mahāprabhu ji says-

गोवर्द्धन ऊपरे आमि कभू ना चढ़िव ।
 गोपाल रायेर दर्शन केमने पाईव ॥
 एक जन आसि रात्रये ग्रामी के बलिल ।
 तोमार ग्राम मारिते तुरुकधारी साजिल ॥
 शुनिया ग्रामेर लौक चिन्तित हईल ।
 प्रथमे गोपाल लईया गांठुलि ग्रामे थुईल ॥
 सेई ग्रामे गया कैल गोपाल दर्शन ।
 प्रेमावेशे प्रभु करे कीर्तन नर्तन ॥¹

(श्री चैतन्य चरितामृत)

Second Context

Shri Rāmānand ji was a disciple of Shri Vallabhāchārya ji. He was a great scholar and very learned. Shri Rāmānand ji very reverentially requested Shri Vallabhāchārya ji once to come to his place, Thānesar. Shri Mahāprabhu ji arrived at his place.

One day early in the morning Shri Rāmānand ji told his wife to collect the cow dung quickly otherwise the Vaishnava will take it after getting up. Shri Vallabhāchārya ji was really hurt upon hearing this. Knowing this to be a Vaishnava offence, he disowned Rāmānand ji to teach him a lesson.

The level of the mind of Shri Rāmānand ji fell but his faith in Shrināthji remained the same. Before eating anything he would unfailingly offer the food to Shrināthji first. One day he was going somewhere. On the way he saw someone making *jalebis* (A kind of sweet meat). He could not control himself. He bought the *jalebi* and offered it to Shrināthji. Shrināthji accepted it.

When Shri Mahāprabhu ji came to Shrināthji, seeing the *jalebi* he asked, “Lālā! Where did you get this from.” Shrināthji said, “Shri Rāmānand ji offered it so I ate it.” Āchārya Shri said, “Lālā! You don’t know that I have disowned him.” Shrināthji replied, “That maybe so. But you have disowned him, I haven’t. I am bound by my words that whosoever will be brought before me by you after granting him the *brahma sambandha*, I shall not leave him. I have kept the honour of my word.”

1. I will never climb on Shri Gowardhan but then how will I receive the darshan of Shri Gopāl ji. That same day in the night a messenger came and informed that the Yavans are going to attack the village. The villagers became worried. They went to Gānthauli grām with Shrināth ji. Mahāprabhu ji went there and had the darshan and started dancing and doing keertan.

Such have been the acts and deeds of Shrināthji. Shrināthji and Govindswāmi were intimate friends. They used to eat, play and wander together. One day Shri Govindswāmi told the incharge of the kitchen, “Give me food before it is offered to Shrināthji.” The incharge did not like the feeling of disrespect towards Thākur Shrināthji. He went and told Gosāin ji, “Mahārāj! Govind has gone crazy. He is asking me to give him food before Shrināthji.” Gosāin ji understood the mystery. In order to reveal the truth before everyone, he called Shri Govindswāmi and asked him the reason for this. Govindswāmi ji said, “If the food is offered to Shrināthji first, He eats it quickly and comes to me and asks me to hurry up and go with Him to play. If I don’t get up He pinches me. I have to leave my food half way.”

Many such acts and deeds of Shrināthji are famous.

Shrināthji’s Kirtaniyās

The service of Shrināthji started but many other arrangements had to be made. Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji left for the propagation of *dharma*. Shri Gosāin Vithalnāth ji appointed four disciples of Mahāprabhu ji and four of his disciples for the *ashta prahar* service (the twenty four hours service) of Shrināthji. Whichever Leelā they savoured everyday, they would write it down and then sing it to Shrināthji in the temple. It is no secret that Shrināthji used to manifest in person and talk to them. They used to live in the neighbouring areas and be present in the service of Shrināthji turn by turn. Not only would these *kirtaniyās* (singer of devotional hymns and couplets) get happiness by singing *padas* to Shrināth ji but also Shrināthji would remain eager to listen to their *padas*. In fact without listening to the *padas* Shrināthji would not eat or sleep. By providing bliss to his devotees, Shrināthji has also been getting happiness.

Shri Kumbhandās ji

Gosāin ji was leaving for a tour once. He asked Kumbhandās ji if he would like to accompany him. Kumbhandās ji did not like this. He used to be so vigilant in the service of Shrināthji that to get deprived of it was not something he liked. As it was the command of the guru he could not refuse. He said, “Master! If I am ordered, I will certainly go.” The thought of separation from Shrināthji started pricking him. He became sad. He started singing in front of Shrināthji engrossed in emotion.

किते दिन ह्वै जु गए बिन देखे ।
 तरुन किशोर रसिक नन्द नन्दन कछुक उठत मुख रेखे ॥
 वह शोभा वह कान्ति वदन की कोटिक चन्द विशेखे ।
 वह चितवन वह हास मनोहर वह नटवर वपु भेखे ॥
 स्यामसुन्दर संग मिलि खेलन की आवत जिय अपेखें ।
 'कुंभनदास' लाल गिरधर बिन जीवन जन्म अलेखें ॥

He could not get a handle on himself. The separation from Shrināthji even for a moment was not bearable to him. He did not want to stay without drinking His beauty. Noticing the state of mind of Kumbhandās ji, Gosāin ji told him not to come with him. Shrināthji heard his heart's plea and mercifully kept him in His service. Kumbhandās ji unable to handle the countless waves of the beauty of His form started singing-

‘छिन -छिन बानिक औरहि और’

He saw the beauty full of newness. Savouring the sweetness of the beauty that was changing every second, he did not know which one to describe. Mesmerised by one single wave of beauty itself, he went into a trance and after gaining some consciousness, when he beheld His form again, then the sweetness was something else. He could only say, “Aura, aura, aura...” meaning something else, something else, something else. Shyām Sundar is not ‘dine-dine navam-navam’ but He is ‘Kshane- kshane navam-navam’ meaning He is not new everyday but He is new every moment.

In this way serving Shrināthji, one day under a Pipal tree, near the Sankarshan Kund in Ānyaur grām Shri Kumbhandās ji attained the eternal service of Shrināthji forever.

Shri Soordās ji

‘बाल्मीक तुलसी भए उद्धव सूर शरीर’

Shri Soordās ji is considered to be the incarnation of Shri Uddhav ji. To consider him blind is to mean that such a person has no knowledge of the spiritual world. Soordās ji possessed eyes that most of us do not have. With our eyes we see what is not worth seeing. Shri Soordās ji saw the divine and transcendental Leelā of Shrināthji and was blessed. Like a brilliant sun, he became a pillar of light to us.

Soor Sāgar, the collection of ever new padas of Soordās ji is actually the collection of the experiences that he had. Shri

Vallabhāchāryaji showered grace on him and gave him the ability to sing the praises of the Lord. The vivid way in which Soordās ji has portrayed *vātsalya*, *sakhya* and *mādhurya*, such depiction is rare to find. He served Shrināthji. He had many blissful experiences with Him. These experiences were composed in the form of padas by him and accepted by Shrināthji.

After getting the *darshan* of Shrināthji in person he said-

देख री नवल नन्द किशोर ।

लकुट सों लपटाय ठाड़े युवति जन मन चोर ॥

चारु लोचन हँसि विलोकनि देखि के चित चोर ।

मोहनि मोहन लगावत लटकि मुकुट भुकोर ॥

स्रवन धुनि सुनि नाद मोहत करत हिरदै फोर ।

सूर अङ्ग त्रिभङ्ग सुन्दर छवि निरखि तृण तोर ॥

The sweet form, embracing His stick, playful eyes, cheerful smiles, the dangle of the crown, all of them abducted the heart and the mind of Soordāsji.

Soordās ji used to sing what he used to see. This daily routine used to go on. Everybody used to get astonished at the description of Shrināthji's beauty in his padas. Once out of curiosity, a question arose whether Soor was singing the padas after experiencing them or was someone describing the *shringār* to him which was then being composed as padas by him. The priest dressed up Shrināthji lightly with only flowers. When Soordās ji came for *darshan*, only then the doors for *darshan* were opened. After the *darshan* Soor remained standing. The priest asked, "How is the *shringār* today?" At first Soordās ji kept quiet then he laughed loudly and sang-

‘आज भए हरि नंगम नंगा ।’

All Vaishnavas were stunned on hearing the pada. Shri Soordās ji had surrendered everything of his in the service of Shrināthji. Till his last days he continued living in Pārāsauli. His prayer and meditation hut and *samādhi* are still there.

At the time of his death, Shri Gosāin ji asked, "Where is your mind?" Soordās ji sang-

‘खंजन नैन रूप रस माते ।’

अतिशय चारु चपल अनियारे पल पिंजरा न समाते ।

Gosāin ji said, "Oh! The ship of Pushti sect has departed."

Shri Parmānand Dās ji

He was from a Brahmin family of Kannouj. Once he went to Prayāg. One of the disciples of Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji took him to Shri Mahāprabhu ji. Āchārya ji kindly asked him to describe some Leelā. Parmānand ji said that he did not understand these things. Mahāprabhu ji initiated him and read the index of Shrimad Bhāgwat. Power was transmitted to him and he joined the service of Shrināthji.

After having darshan of Shrināthji he sang-

लाल नेंक टेकहु मेरी बहियाँ ।
 औघट घाट चढ़यो नहिं जाई, रपटति हों कालिन्दी महियाँ ॥
 सुन्दर श्याम कमल दल लोचन देखि रूप ग्वालिनी अरुभानी ।
 उपजी प्रीति काम अंतर गति तब नागर, नागरि पहचानी ॥
 हँसि ब्रज नाथ गट्यो कर पल्लव जल भरी गगरी गिरन न पावै ।
 परमानन्द ग्वालिनी सयानी कमलनयन तन परस्यो भावै ॥

‘Parmānand ji in the body of a man in this world was *sakhā bhāvit* and with the *siddha deha* becoming gopi bhāv bhāvit savoured the gopi prem. How will the milkmaid climb the stairs of the *ghāt* with the pot filled with water until Shyām Sundar gives her the support of His arm. Laughingly Priyatam held her hand and the ocean of rasa overflowed. Filled with rasa that milkmaid intoxicated in love, looking forgetful and lost drowned in the *rasa*.’

What do we say about the splendid beauty and sweetness of Shri Krishna? Shri Krishna who churns the mind and the heart of Cupid himself, was robbed by the love of gopi. Seeing this Parmānand dās ji sang-

कौन रस गोपी लीनों घूट ।
 मदन गोपाल निकट कर पाये प्रेम काम की लूट ॥
 निरख स्वरूप नन्दनन्दन को लोक लाज गई छूट ।
 परमानन्द वेद सागर की मर्यादा गई टूट ॥

The boundaries and the restraints of the ocean of Veda flowed away in the river of love of the gopis.

Not only this, immersing in the ocean of Rās rasa he collected many jewels. His life was only to please Shrināthji.

It is said that once after listening to his pada, ‘Hari Teri Leelā Ki Sudhi Āve’, Mahāprabhu ji remained entranced for three days.

In this way while pleasing Shrināthji he entered the Nitya Leelā at the bank of Surabhi Kund.

Shri Krishnadās ji

Shri Vallabhāchārya ji was sitting at Vishrām Ghāt. Shri Krishnadās ji came there while wandering. Mahāprabhu ji called him and after learning everything, initiated him. Krishnadās ji recollected Shri Krishna Leelā and joined the service of Shrināthji.

Shrināthji was so pleased with the service of Shri Krishnadāsji that once when he sang -

‘श्रीवृषभानु नन्दिनी नाचत गिरधर संग ।’

Shrināthji and Swāminiji started dancing.

Soordās ji used to always say to Shri Krishnadās ji that “Your padas have my mark and impression. Compose one such pada that is absolutely new and original.” In solitude Shri Krishnadās ji composed three lines of the pada but could not compose further. Leaving the composition half way he went to have *prasād*. Shrināthji came and completed the pada Himself. Shri Krishnadās ji sang this pada before Soordās ji-

आवत बने कान्ह गोप बालकन संग नेचुकी खुर रेणु छुरित अलकावली ।
भौह मन्मथ चाप वक्र लोचन बान सीस सोभित मत्त मयूर चन्द्रावली ।
उदित उडुराज सुन्दर सिरोमणि वदन निरखि फूलो नवल जुवती कुमुदावली ।
अरुण सकुच अधर बिम्बफल हंसति कहति कछुक प्रकटित होत कुंददसनावली ।
श्रवण कुण्डल भाल तिलक बेसर नाक कण्ठ कौस्तुभ मणि सुभग त्रिवलावली ।
रतन हाटक खचित पुरसि पदिकनि पाँति बीच राजत सुभ पुलक मुक्तावली ॥

Up until this line Soordās ji remained quiet but when Shri Krishnadās ji sang the next few lines he understood everything.

वलय कंकण बाजूबंद शोभित, आजानु भुज मुद्रिका कर दल विराजत नखावली ।
करतल मुरलिका मोहित अखिल विश्व गोपिका जन मसि ग्रसित प्रेमावली ।
हृदय कृष्णदास गिरिवरधरणलाल की चरण नख चन्द्रिका हरति तिमिरावली ॥

Soordās ji said, “My deal was with you and not with your patron.”

In this way Shrināthji would manifest in person and do many Leelās with Shri Krishnadās ji.

Shri Krishnadās ji went to Āgrā once for some work. There he saw a dancer singing sweetly. He stopped and went to her. He said to

her, “My Shyām is a great rasik of music. Will you come to please Him?” She agreed. Shri Krishnadās ji brought her with him and took her before Shrināthji and said, “O Nawal Rasik! Who gets pleased by leaves, flowers and fruit. Please accept this living gift.” The dancer sang-

मो मन गिरधर छवि पर अटक्यो ।
ललित त्रिभंगी अंगनि पर चलि गयो तहाँई ठटक्यो ॥
सजल श्याम घन चरण लीन ह्वै फिर चित अनत न भटक्यो ।
कृष्णदास कियो प्राण निछावर यह तन जग सिर पटक्यो ॥

Why wouldn't Shrināthji accept a gift brought by His devotee. He was pleased and accepted her. As soon as the dancer raised her head after singing the pada, she went to Shrināthji for ever.

For his whole life Shri Krishnadās ji remained engaged in the service of the Lord. Once he was getting a well constructed in the foothills of Shri Girirāj ji. He started peeping into it and fell in it and entered the Nitya Leelā. He used to live in Bilchhu vana. One raised platform is made there in his memory.

Shri Nandadās ji

Nandadās ji had left from his house to get the darshan of Shri Ranachhora ji but arrived in Gokul instead. Gosāin ji sent for him. He came and surrendered himself to Gosāin ji. After the darshan of Shri Navneet Priyā ji he joined the service of Shrināthji at Gowardhan and started living at the bank of Mānasi Gangā.

Once Tulsidās ji came to meet him and said, “Brother! if you like mountains you can live in Chitrakoot, if you like a village then in Ayodhyā, if a city then Kāshi and if a forest then Dandkāranya, there are many holy abodes of Shri Rām. Come with me.”

Shri Nandadās ji spoke about his faith and said-

जो गिरि रुचे बसो गोवर्द्धन, ग्राम रुचे तो बसो नन्दग्राम ।
नगर रुचे तो बसो श्रीमधुपुरी, सोभा सागर अति अभिराम ॥
सरिता रुचे तो बसो यमुना तट, सकल मनोरथ पूरन काम ।
नन्ददास कानन रुचे तो बसो भूमि वृन्दावन धाम ॥

Such was his deep faith in name, form, abode and Ishta.

He used to always savour the beauty of Shri Krishna and sing padas in the service of Shrināthji. Once after tasting a sweet *Leelā* he sang-

मेरी री बगर में आवत छवि सों कमल फिरावत ।
 औरन सौ बतरावत मो तन चितवत चतुर परोसन देख-देख मुस्कावत ॥
 नयनन मनुहार करत बैनन समुभावत नेह जनावत भौह चढ़ावत ।
 नन्ददास प्रभु सौ स्नेह लोक लाज बाढ़ी कैसे के धीरज आवत ॥

Intoxicated by the luster of the beauty of this Leelā Vihāri, how could the milkmaid remain calm? He was talking to someone else, but looking at her. Neighbours started talking about it. By sending signals from the eyes, with His sweet talks, the Pranayi Rijhawār submerged her in His Leelā mādhuri. Intoxicated with His beauty, she couldn't care less for modesty.

Shrināthji was his *Ishta*. He surrendered his whole life in His service. He presented many Leelā pictures by experiencing them. At one place he is saying-

है काहू को ढोटा स्याम सलone गात ।
 आई हूँ देख खिरक ठाड़ो न कछुक कहन की बात ॥
 कमल फिरावत नैन नचावत मोतन मुरि मुस्कात ।
 छवि के बल जग जीत गर्व भर्यो मैन मान्यौ इतरात ॥
 नखसिख रूप अनूप छवि कवि पै वरन्यो न जात ।
 नन्ददास चातक की चोंच पुट सब घन कैसे समात ॥

Recently I saw my Priyatam standing in the cow barn. With lotus in His hand, He looked at me with playful and naughty eyes. Oh! Looking at this beautiful form it seems as if the Kāmdev himself has become playful. After savouring such beauty, what could anyone say? And how much would somebody be able to say?

Roop Manjari was an intimate friend of Nandadās ji. She was a servant in the court of Akbar. It is said even Akbar came for his darshan after listening to the line of his pada, 'नन्ददास गावे तहाँ निपट निकट देखो'

He used to live under a Pipal tree near the temple of Manasā devi. There itself singing the following couplet he entered the Nitya Leelā forever.

मोहन प्रिय की मुसकनि, ढुलकनि मोर मुकुट की ।
 सदा बसौ मन मेरे फरकनि पियरे पट की ॥

Shri Chaturbhujdās ji

Shri Chaturbhujdās ji was the son of Shri Kumbhandās ji. The day Shrināthji gave darshan to Shri Kumbhandās ji in four armed form

(chaturbhuj), the same day he was born in Jamanāvato village. He was raised in an atmosphere of devotion from his childhood. Kumbhandās ji got him initiated in *brahma sambandha* by Shri Gosāin ji in his childhood itself.

Once he grew up, he joined the service of Shrināthji. Shri Kumbhandās ji and Chaturbhujdās ji were both sitting together once in the house in their village. The light of the lamp of the temple of Shrināthji was getting filtered through the window. Engrossed in the Leelā rasa and looking at the rays of the lamp Shri Kumbhandās ji sang-

“वह देखो बरत भरोखन दीपक-
हरि पौढ़े ऊँची चित्र सारी ।”

Shri Chaturbhujdās ji sang in the next line -

“सुन्दर वदन निहारन कारन, राखे हैं बहुत जतन कर प्यारी”

Hearing this, Shri Kumbhandās ji felt very satisfied and got an idea of the depth of his son’s devotion.

His devotion and love was that of a friend. Shrināthji and he had a deep friendship.

One day Shrināthji took him to the house of one Brajwāsi to steal butter. Shrināthji ate a lot of butter. In the mean time the mistress of the house came. She only saw Shri Chaturbhujdās ji. Shrināthji ran away. Chaturbhujdās ji was caught and beaten by the gopi. Chaturbhujdās ji later complained to Shrināth ji, “You got me beaten.” Shrināthji replied, “If you had the capacity you should have run.”

Savouring the perpetually new beauty of Shrināthji he says-

आज और काल्ह और दिन दिन प्रति और,
और देखिये रसिक गिरिराज धरन ।
छिन प्रति छिन नव छवि वरनै सो
कौन कवि नित श्रृंगार बागे बरन बरन ॥
शोभा सिंधु अंग-अंग मोहन कोटि अनंग
छविकी उठत तरंग बिस्व को मनहरन ।
चतुर्भुज प्रभु गिरधर को स्वरूप सुधा
पान कीजे रहिये सदा ही सरन ॥

After hearing this, one Vaishnava asked Shri Gosāin ji, “Mahārāj! The Lord’s Leelā is eternal and everywhere. Then why did Chaturbhuj ji sing, something else, something new”

Gosāin ji replied, “This is the incredibility of the Lord’s Leelā that in spite of being eternal, it seems new every moment and creates new interest and desire.”

Getting a glimpse of *shayan* (sleep), Chaturbhuj ji was stunned and he sang to Shrināthji-

रजनी राज लियो निकुञ्ज नगर की रानी ।
मदन महीपति जीति महारण श्रम जल सहित जँभानी ॥
परम सूर सौन्दर्य भ्रुकुटी धनु अनियारे नयन बान संधानी ।
दास चतुर्भुज प्रभु गिरधर रस संपति विलसी ज्यों मन मानी ॥

The sweat drops started glistening on the face of Kishori Shri Rādhā due to the exhaustion caused in the nights filled with vilās. The eyes were getting closed. Not only this, the delicate and tender body had become loose due to the drowsiness caused by intoxication. The flirtatiousness and playfulness must have reached their peak and then slackened. How complete and vivid are the padas of Shri Chaturbhujdās ji.

Gosāin ji went out on a tour once. His son Girdhar ji brought Shrināthji to his residence in Mathurā. Chaturbhujdās ji would sing padas of separation losing consciousness of himself and the world. Shrināthji would also come to Girirāj ji everyday to give him darshan. One day he was singing very restlessly.

‘गोवर्द्धन वासी सांवरे लाल तुम, बिन रह्यो न जाय हो ।’

Shrināthji also could not bear to see his state. He inspired Shri Girdhar ji to start for Shri Girirāj ji immediately. After Shringār bhoga (offering of food after shringār) in Mathurā they came to Shri Gowardhan ji for noontime food offering. The amount of grace of Shrināthji that Shri Chaturbhujdās ji had cannot be described.

He was in his house at Yamunāvato. He was distraught by the news of the passing away of Shri Gosāin ji. He came to Shrināthji and started singing hymns of praise of Gosāin ji. Singing the padas he left his body under a tamarind tree at Rudra kund and entered the Nitya Leelā forever.

Shri Chheetwāmi

Chheetwāmi of Mathurā was naughty since birth. He came to test Shri Gosāin ji but he himself was tricked. The fame of the miraculous acts and deeds of Gosāin ji was spreading far and wide. Shri Chheetu choubey heard, “Everybody falls under the spell of

Gosāin ji.” With a fake coin and a dry coconut he came to Gosāin ji. Gosāin ji asked him to break the coconut. When it was broken there was kernel in it and even the false coin made a tinkling sound.

भई अब गिरधर सों पहचान ।
 कपट रूप धरि छलबे आये, पुरुषोत्तम नहिं जान ॥
 छोटो बड़ो कछु नाहिं जान्यो, छात्र रथ्यो अग्यान ।
 छीत स्वामी देखत अपनायो विट्ठल कृपा निधान ॥

After sometime he came over to Gowardhan permanently. He started living under a black Tamāl tree in Punchhari. He used to go to sing padas to Shrināthji every day.

Chheetswāmi was extremely dispassionate and desireless. Being the family priest of Rājā Birbal, he used to get a fixed pension from the Rājā to support his family. Once when he went to collect the pension, Rājā Birbal used some inappropriate words for Shri Gosāin ji. Chheetswāmi used to consider Gosāin ji as the manifest form of the Lord. He stopped taking the pension from Birbal for the rest of his life.

The dedication of Chheetswāmi to his guru was admirable. Birbal was also a follower of Shri Gosāin ji. So when called by him, Chheetswāmi went to Āgrā once and sang the following pada-

जे वसुदेव किये पूरन तप, तेई फल फलित श्रीवल्लभदेह ।
 जे गोपल हुते गोकुल में, तेई अब आनि बसे घर गेह ॥
 तै वे गोप वधू हुती ब्रज में, जे अब वेद रिचा भई एह ।
 छीतस्वामी गिरधरन श्रीविठ्ठल वेई एई, एई वेई, कछु न संदेह ॥

Birbal reacted, “Is it necessary to be so effusive about Gosāin ji?” Chheet Swāmi was hurt and he distributed the money that he had received from Birbal amongst the dancers and the prostitutes saying that it did not deserve to be used for Vaishnava service as Birbal’s faith lacked conviction.

Poetic talent was natural to him. He had deep faith in Shrināthji. He composed many of his Leelā experiences in delightful padas. Once he saw Shyām Sundar with Priyā ji in a dense *nikunja*. It was early morning. Savouring the beauty he became intoxicated. ‘The turban is loose, the garland is getting loose, looking at the broken garland and the staggering steps it seems that the rasa crazy Yugal engrossed in night-vihār had been resting in the lap of sleep in some *nikunja*.’ Seeing this he sang-

भोर भए नव कुञ्ज सदन ते आवत लाल गोवर्द्धन धारी ।
 लटपटी पाग मरगजी माला सिथिल अङ्ग डगमग गति न्यारी ॥
 बिनु गुन माल विराजत उर पर नख छत द्वैज चन्द अनुहारी ।
 छीत-स्वामी जब चितये मो तन तब हौं निरखि गयो बलिहारी ॥

For Braj he had deep faith. Living here wishing for Dān keli, Mān keli, cattle grazing, panaghat and Rās vilās with Priyā ji, he experienced them. He depicted those very experiences and made our path stronger. At one place he writes -

अहो विघ्नना तो पे अचरा पसार मांगों ,
 जनम जनत दीजो याही ब्रज बसिबो ।
 अहीर की जाति समीप नन्द घर,
 घरी घरी घनश्याम मुख हेरि हेरि हँसिबो ।
 दधि के दान मिस ब्रज की बीथिन्ह माहि
 भ्रकभोरन अंग अंग को परसिबो ।
 छीत स्वामी गिरिघरण श्रीविट्ठल,
 शरद रैन रस रास को विलसिबो ॥

Losing consciousness and knowledge of the outside world and himself, he used to wander in the nikanjas of Shri Girirāj ji. In Punchhari near Apsarā Kund under a Tamāl tree in the foothills of Shri Girirāj ji he entered the Nitya Leelā.

Shri Govindswāmi

Govindswāmi was already acquainted with Shri Gosāin ji's divine acts and deeds and knew of his attainment of the Lord. When he came to Gokul for the darshan of Gosāin ji, he saw that Shri Gosāin ji was performing the daily prayers at the bank of Yamunā ji. Shri Govind ji was amazed and said, "You are displaying a deceptive form. In spite of being the Supreme Being, you are performing *tarpan* (offering of libations of water to the deceased ancestors) etc as per the Vedas. The common people will only get confused by this."

Shri Gosāin ji replied, "Brother! The path of devotion is a tree of flowers and the path of action is the fence of thorns. Without the fence of the path of action, the flowers of the path of devotion cannot be protected."

He had already surrendered his mind to Shri Gosāin ji. He surrendered his body as well. On the orders of Shri Gosāin ji he joined the service of Shrināthji and started living in Shri Girirāj ji.

Even Tānsen used to praise his pada singing. It is said that Tānsen had taken music lessons from him. There was a deep friendship between Shrināthji and Shri Govindswāmi. They used to talk and play together.

It is said that once Govindswāmi went to Vrindāvan to have darshan of Shri Haridās ji. Shri Haridās ji was not only a great adept of music but also a devout *rasik* and foremost amongst the devotees. Haridās ji had already heard praises of the singing of Shri Govindji. He asked Govindji to sing. Swāmi Haridās ji was immensely pleased to hear the pada sung by Shri Govind ji and asked him, “Govind! Does Shri Krishna only listen to your pada or does He sing as well.” Govindswāmi replied, “Prabho! Shri Krishna sings the pada also.” (meaning Govindswāmi had heard Shri Krishna sing) On the request of Govindswāmi, Shri Krishna sang a pada. Hearing which Swāmi Haridās ji was entranced. He asked again, “Brother! Have you ever heard the singing of Shree ji?” Govind sakhā said that he hasn’t and requested Haridās ji, “Prabhu pād! If you consider me worthy, please oblige and gratify me by making me hear.” It is said that upholding the wish of Swāmiji, in some context Shri Priyā ji sang the prelude of a song sweetly. On hearing that nectarean voice reproaching hundreds and hundreds of Veenās, Shri Govindswāmi fainted and went into a trance.

Some other great ones have told this story differently. We are giving their version below. It is also possible that these are two separate incidents.

‘The friendship of Shrināthji and Govindswāmi was not hidden from anyone. Gosāin Shri Vithalnāth ji also knew about it. One day Shri Krishna was singing. In between Priyā ji sang. Hearing that melodious voice Govindswāmi was astounded. Gosāin ji understood everything. In some specific context, Gosāin ji asked, “Govind! How does Shrināthji sing?” Govindji went into a trance. After regaining some consciousness he said, “Prabho! You know everything already. What am I? It seems that Shrināthji sings very melodiously but when Priyāji sings, the singing becomes much sweeter.”

At one place describing the beauty of Shri Krishna, Govindswāmi is saying-

अबही ते ढौटा चित चोरत आगे आगे कहा जु करैगो ।
नेक बड़ौ होय हौँ बलि जाऊँ सकल ब्रज युवतिन के मन जु हरैगो ॥
देखन के बहाने से उदर में सप्तद्वीप नवखंड,

रानी जसुदा कों दिखायो सोई सांची अनुसरैगो ।

गोविन्द प्रभु के नैन बैन रस सींचत मेरे जाने मन्मथ जु लरैगो ॥

The Lāl of Shri Nandarai ji is a child, only in the laps of Shri Nandarai ji and maiyā Yashodā. The Braj maidens have seen Shri Krishna in the adolescent form from day one. Lo! Today itself in the very early morning in the dense nikunjās of Shri Girirāj ji He begged for dān from His beloved.

महादानी वृषभानु कुमारी , कृपा अवलोकनि दान दै री ।

सब विध सुघर सुजान सुन्दरि, सुनि विनति तू कान दे री ।

गोविन्द प्रभु प्रिय चरण परसि कहत्यो जाचक को तू मान दै री ॥

Shri Govindswāmi had many such experiences and he pleased Shrināthji by singing them to Him.

In the end he also entered the cave of Shri Girirāj ji with Shri Vithalnāth ji. That cave entrance repeating the story of his faith full of devotion is guiding our ways even today. Until today this place in Jatipurā is worth a visit.

Shri Shri Vallabhāchārya ji's Baithak

दूराद्वीक्ष्यकदम्बानां खण्डकन्दरां च गिरेः ।

गोवर्द्धनार्चनस्थलमेतद् दृष्ट्वा स्थितस्तत्र ॥

क्षेमं करतरु निकटे पारायणमत्र विहितं तै ।

दीपोत्सवमिह विहितं महोत्सवं चान्नकूटस्य ॥

(श्रीवल्लभ दिग्विजय)

Shriman Mahāprabhu ji came here. Kadamba Khandi is here only. There is a cave of Shri Girirāj ji and the place to worship Shri Girirāj ji. After looking at all these sites Shrimanmahāprabhu ji performed the week long recitation of Shrimad Bhāgwat under a Chhonker tree. He also celebrated Annakoot and Deepāwali here.

When Shri Mahāprabhu ji was doing the *shringār* of Shri Shyām Sundar, all of a sudden he heard the sound of the anklets. When he looked up, he saw Priyā ji standing with the *shringār* items. It is said that Shri Mahāprabhu ji did the *shringār* of Shyām Sundar all over again with the items brought by Priyā ji.

The darshan of all the seven idols of Vallabha lineage was here. Many times all of them used to be *virājmān* together in the temple of Shri Mathurānāthji. In the course of time due to some reasons, all of them separated and went out.

Dandauti Shilā

Here there is the *darshan* of Dandauti Shilā. All the Vaishnavas prostrate on the ground (*dandauta*) to Shri Girirāj ji here before going for the darshan of Shrināthji. For the cleansing of the sin that occurs due to climbing Shri Girirāj ji, this practice was adopted. Nearby is Sundari Shilā.

Entering of Shri Vithalnāth ji in Nitya Leelā

The devotion of Goswāmi Shri Vithalnāth ji is famous worldwide. He remained *virājmān* in the foothills of Girirāj ji in the service of Shrināthji. All the devotees of Ashtachhāp have sung his glory. While experiencing a Leelā he stood up and entered the cave of Shri Girirāj ji. Shri Chaturbhujdās ji was present there (in his subtle body) at that time. He sang poignantly -

श्रीविठ्ठलनाथ से प्रभु भये, न हवै हैं ।
पाछे सुने न देखे आगे, वह संग फिर न बनै हैं ॥
श्री वल्लभ सुत दरसन कारन अब सब कोऊ पछितै हैं ।
चतुर्भुजदास आस इतनी जो सुमिरन जनमु सिरै हैं ॥

It is said that Shri Chaturbhujdās ji requested Gosāin ji, “Prabho! Please take me along with you as well.” He also entered the cave and joined the service of Shrināthji forever.

This place is worth a visit even today. Stirring the emotional devotees with its poignant context, it is worth seeing in (Jatipurā) Gopālpur.

Bilchhu Kund

This is on the left side of the circumambulation route about one mile away from Jatipurā. This is the place of residence of Shri Krishnadās Adhikāri. Here Shri Krishna used to play the ball game.

Kishori Rādhā was wandering in the garden here with her sakhis once. She would pick the flowers sometimes, make garlands and keep them aside carefully and sometimes hit the sakhis with the flowers. She was so submerged in the memory of the beloved that She had no consciousness of the external world.

Priyatam standing atop Girirāj ji saw the sakhis from a distance. He went over to that place with sakhās and started playing with the ball nearby. Sometimes He would throw and catch the ball Himself. And sometimes He would ask the sakhās to catch. Once He deliberately

threw the ball in such a way that it went into the garden. He started imploring the sakhās to get the ball back but they did not show any enthusiasm. Finally He went inside the garden Himself where Priyā ji was and started looking for the ball.

The bichhuā or the toe ring of Vrishbhānu Dulāri was lost. Sakhis were already looking for it but were not able to find it. While searching for it, a few sakhis came over to where Shyām Sundar was. They asked Him if He had seen the bichhuā of Kishori ji. Without looking at them He replied, “Bichhuā, what do I know about bichhuā. I am looking for my ball.” Then looking at them He said, “It seems you have hidden my ball. If that is not so then let me search you.” Poor Lalitā and Vishākhā were embarrassed by this false accusation and agreed to be searched.

Priyatam searched them but could not find the ball. He said, “It seems you have hidden the ball with your mistress. That is why you are wandering here fearlessly and on top of it you are accusing me that Kishori’s bichhuā has gotten lost.” Shri Shyām Sundar had already tied the bichhuā to the end of His pitāambar. The sakhās went away to herd the cows and Shri Nandanandan went over to Shri Rādhā with the sakhis on the pretext of looking for the ball.

The rasa filled touch of Priyatam shook Kishori Rādhā from the depths of some blissful memory. Who knows afterwards if they looked for the ball even. Reminding about the bichhuā, Priyatam said, “Darling, if I find your lost bichhuā, what will you give me as a reward?” Kishori Rādhā agreed to give Him anything that He asked for. Priyatam immediately took out the bichhuā from his pitāambar and slipped it on Shri Rādhā’s toe and then said, “*Rain niwās.*” Priyā ji blushed. Taking advantage of the shyness of Priyā ji, the Pranayi Priyatam became absorbed. That delectable rush and overflow of emotions of Priyā ji and Pranayi Priyatam’s rasaful efforts! The madhur keli of *rasa vilās* continued incessantly. In the dense caves of Shri Girirāj the Yugal Sundar and their own forms, the Braj maidens became absorbed in rasa.

Reiterating those conversations of rasa, this place is famous as Bilchhu vana. Shri Hardev ji manifested from here.

Jān Ajān

गोपीभियौ पृष्टौ कृष्ण ज्ञातो च अज्ञातः ।
वृक्षौ तन्नाम्नाख्यातौ चाख्याय तौ दृष्टौ ॥

(श्रीवल्लभदिविजय)

When Shri Krishna hid Himself, the gopis asked the trees, “Where has Shri Krishna gone”. One tree said, “Hum Jāne” i.e. “We know.” Another said, “Hum na jāne” i.e. “We don’t know.” Therefore these two trees of the same species became famous as ‘Jān’ and ‘Ajān.’

Many devotees have had the darshan of the hide and seek Leelā of Shri Krishna here.

Sakhi Sthali

अहे श्रीनिवास ! एई सखी स्थली ग्राम ।
चन्द्रावली स्थिति एथे-सखी-धरा नाम ॥

(भ० र०)

In the present this place is famous as Sakhi-Tharā. It is situated to the north of Mānasi Gangā and to the north west of Shri Gowardhan.

This is the favourite place of Chandrāwali ji, a beloved sakhi of Shri Krishna. Sakhi Van is nearby. A site in Sakhi Van is famous as Sakhi sthal.

Sakhi Kund is here.

Sakarāyā

It is one and half miles away from Gowardhan grām in the west. It is said that when Devrāj Indra came for the religious ablutions of Lord Shri Govind, he had descended at this place only.

“Shakra āyā” (Shakra or Indra has come) became famous as Sakarāyā in the rural language.

Neema Grām

Shri Niyamānand ji was born in Vaiduryapattan at the bank of Godāwari in south India. There is no proof available regarding how and when he came to Braj. He came to Braj and started living at Neema grām near Girirāj ji. It is said that Shri Nārad ji initiated Shri Niyamānand ji himself with the Gopāl mantra.

When Sri Niyamānand ji was in Neema grām, one day an ascetic came to him to discuss dharma. It was a union of two devotees. They were so engrossed in the discussion that they did not realise that dusk had fallen. Shri Niyamānand ji requested the ascetic to eat but as the sun had set, he refused to partake anything. The thought of sending the guest away hungry pained Shri Niyamānand ji. At that very moment, light was seen behind a Neem tree and the Sun god appeared. Looking at this the ascetic had his *prasād*. It is said that the light was from the *chakra* of the Lord. After this incident Shri Niyamānand ji became

famous as Nimbāditya or Nimbārka. All this was the revelation of the divine power of Lord Nimbārka. He is considered as the incarnation of the Sudarshan Chakra (discus) of the Lord.

He expounded the Dwaitādwaita Siddhānta. He composed ‘Vedānta-Pārijāt Saurabh’, ‘Vedānta Kāmdhenu’, ‘Rahasya Shodashi’, ‘Prapanna Kalpavalli’, ‘Shri Krishna Stotra’ and others.

The greatness of Shri Rādhā ji is same as Shri Krishna’s was first of all accepted in the Nimbārka sect, and the credit for this goes mainly to Shri Nimbārkačhārya ji as it is evident from the following Shloka of the Dash Shloki.

अंगे तु वामे वृषभानुजां मुदा, विराजमानामनुरूपसौभगाम् ।
सखीसहस्रैः परिसेवितांसदा, स्मरेम देवीं सकलेष्टकामदाम् ॥¹

According to Shri Nimbārkačhārya ji if a sādha adorned with the virtues of humility and meekness contemplates on Priyā-Priyatam in the manner given above, he attains their causeless devotion.

A few of the main disciples of Shri Nimbārkačhārya ji were Shri Niwāsāchārya, Shri Audumbarāchārya and Shri Gauramukhāchārya. Shri Audumbarāchārya ji had the darshan of Shri Nimbārkačhārya ji in the form of Shri Rangadevi in the close company of Priyā-Priyatam.

He continued living mainly in Neem grām. There is a temple of Shri Sudarshan ji and Sudarshan Kund here.

Konayi Grām

कै ना आई दूती रे श्रीकृष्ण पूछ्य ।
ए हेतु ‘क्यों नाई’ अब कोनई कहे ॥

(भ० २०)

Once Shri Krishna in a particular Leelā became a little restless waiting for His beloved Kishori Shri Rādhā. Shri Rādhā ji did not come even then. He sent a sakhi to find out the reason. When the sakhi returned and as soon as she took the name of Kishori Rādhā, then without even waiting to listen further, Shyām Sundar started asking again and again, ‘Kyon na āyi, kyon na āyi?’ (‘Why didn’t She come, why didn’t She come). That is why this place became known as Konayi.

This is about three and half miles away from Shri Rādhā kund. There is an ancient temple of a Devi and Gwāl kund here

1. Shri Rādhā is always virājmān on the left side of Shri Krishna. She is served by thousands and thousands of sakhis possessing beauty and virtues similar to Her. I remember that Devi Shri Rādhā fulfiller of all desires.

Kunjerā

अबे लोग कहे कुंजेरा नामे ग्राम ।
ऐथा राधा कृष्णेरे विलास अनुपम ॥

(भ० २०)

Thoughts of new games always occur to these Maddened Lovers who always love newness. In many different *nikunjas* savouring new and novel *rasa*, *Naveen Keli Priya* (one who loves new keli) Shyām Sundar gets intoxicated. In certain secluded and more private *nikunjas*, this *rasa keli* flows with some special *rasa*. Amongst those *keli* mysteries, the Rās Vilās of *mahā mātang* (a great elephant) Shyām Sundar with *karini swaropā* (she-elephants) *sakhis* is the one that is capable of entrancing everyone. Whoever saw it was filled with divine intoxication. Hiding the secrets of that *rasa* in its womb, this site became famous as *Kunjerā*.

It is about two miles away from Shri Rādhā kund. A picture of the *Leelā* of this place (*matta mātang* and *karini swaropā sakhis*) is in the temple. It is said that the *nikunjas* of Shri Rādhā Kund begin from here.

Surya Kund (Chhotā Bharanā)

यमुनाजनकं सूर्य सर्वरोगापहारकम् ।
मङ्गलालयरूपं तं वन्दे कृष्णरतिप्रदम् ॥¹

Upon hearing about the manifestation of Shri Krishna in Braj, all demigods, sages, Brahmā, Shankar and others came for His darshan. Looking at the devotion of his daughter Yamunā ji even the Sun god came to Braj to get blessed. Always respecting the feelings of His intimate devotees, the Lord with Shri Rādhā ji and other *Sakhis* gave darshan to the Sun and obliged him.

Shri Rādhā ji comes here every day to worship the Sun and this Skillful Trickster comes here disguised as a priest to conduct the worship. This site of 'playful union' becomes a prelude to some other kind of *rasa* worship.

This is about five miles away from Shri Rādhā kund. There is a temple of Sun god here. *Surya kund* is here. The prayer and the meditation site of *Siddha Bābā* is here.

1. The father of Shri Yamuna ji, destroyer of all diseases, provider of devotion at the feet of Shri Krishna, the one who is auspicious, I pray to that Suryadev.

It is said that Shri Madhusudandās Bābāji Mahārāj used to do prayer and meditation here. Once in a dream Shri Kishori ji told him, “My chandrikā (head ornament) has fallen into the kund. You go and take it out from a certain place in the kund.” Bābā went there first thing in the morning and took it out. Even today a rock in the form of a chandrikā is carefully kept with the local saints, the darshan of which can be had by everybody.

Jasondee (Jasumati)

Jasondee is about three miles from Shri Rādhā kund on the way to Vrindāvan. This is the village of Jasumati sakhi of Shri Krishna. Surya kund is worth seeing here.

Basonti (Basati)

Basonti is about two miles from Shri Rādhā kund on the way to Vrindāvan. This is the place of residence of Basumati sakhi.

Main attractions are Vasanta kund and Rāj Kadamba.

Mukharāi

This place is about one and a quarter mile to the south of Shri Rādhā kund. Mukharādevi, the maternal grandmother of Shri Rādhā ji used to live here. She used to feel very happy to see the sudden union of Shri Rādhā and Shri Krishna.

Tosha grām

This village is about two and a half miles away from the Bahulā van (vāti) in south west quarter. There was a dear *sakhā* of Shri Krishna named Tosha. This is his village. He was proficient in the art of dancing. It is said that Shri Krishna had taken dancing lessons from him as well.

Tosha kund, the sites of Gopāl ji and Rādhāraman ji are especially worth seeing.

Jakhin Gāon

This place is about four miles away from Tosha grām in the west south direction. There is Rohini kund and a temple of Shri Baladev ji here. Nearby is Balbhadra Kund.

Adeenga

This place is about three miles away from Gowardhan on the way to Mathurā. This is the place of Shri Baladev ji. It is believed that after the death of Kansa his eight brothers had fled to this place. Balrāma ji killed all of them.

In the south-eastern quarter of the kund, there is the temple of Shri Kilol Bihāri.

The gopis used to go from this way to sell their milk and yogurt. Shri Krishna would not let them pass without taking the *dān* (toll) of milk and yogurt. The Braj maidens were going once with pots of milk on their heads. In spite of being asked for *dān* by Shri Krishna they disregarded it. Shri Krishna also put his foot down (*ada gaye*). Stopping someone by extending His arm, forcibly spilling somebody's pot, pulling the end of someone's sari, forcibly stopping someone by standing in her way, He started soaking all of them in *rasa* in various ways. This place of taking the *dān* obstinately i.e. *ada ada kara* became famous as Adeenga.

Painthā

This place is about one and half miles away from Pārāsauli grām. There is a hearsay that the sakhās wanted to test Shri Krishna before He lifted Shri Girirāj ji. They told their beloved sakhā, “Kanhaiyā! If you uproot this Kadamba tree then we will be convinced that you can lift Shri Girirāj ji.” As soon as Shri Krishna tried to uproot the Kadamba tree, the sakhās showing their confidence in their beloved sakhā Shyām said, “Brother! You are right, you can lift Shri Girirāj ji.” That tree reminding of its memory is worth seeing even today.

There is the darshan of the four armed form of the Lord here. Ksheer sāgar, Nārāyana Sara, Balbhadra kund and Laxmi koop are worth a visit.

Bachha Gāon

Bachha gāon is about three miles to the south of Painthā. Kanaka Sāgar, Sahasra Kund, Rām Kund, Rāwari kund, Mākhan Chor Thākur and Vatsa Bihāri Thākur the protector of his calves are worth seeing here.

Gānthauli

एथा होलि खेलि दौहे वैसे सिंहासने ।
सखी दुहू वस्त्रे गांठि दिला संगोपने ॥

(भ० र०)

The romp and revelry of Holi in Braj fills everyone with intoxication. Children, young boys, old people, young girls filled with renewed enthusiasm become ecstatic and elated. The wave of love and passion of Holi spread in the whole Nature becomes crazy

by absorbing within itself some rasa wave of these crazy rasikas. Someone has said-

सुन री ढफ बाजन लगे, सिर पर आयो फाग ।
अब कैसे दबिहै दई ! अन्तर को अनुराग ॥

Drums started playing. Shyām Sundar came over with the colour filled *pichakāri* (a syringe or squirt filled with colored water) drenching the hearts of the Braj maidens with rasa. Getting the darshan of this wonderful scene, Bhaktimati Ushā behen ji expressed-

मुस्कनि में मोहन मन्त्र भरे
चितवन में शत शत तीर लिए ।
अंगनि में रंग अनंग भरे
पिचकारिन रंग सुनीर लिए ॥
अति मौज भरे कछु गावत हैं,
वे संग सखिन की भीर लिये ।
उठ देख सखी इत आवत हैं,
नन्दलाल गुलाल अबीर लिए ॥

Shyām Sundar came over with the sakhis. Euphoric with the exuberant waves of Holi the Braj maidens with these two crazy Rasik started swaying. The rasa crazy Yugal coloured with red and pink powder became new and different. Knowing that the tender and delicate Kishori was fatigued Priyatam calmed down for a while. A pause was seen in that romp and revelry of colours. Priyā ji came and sat down on a rock. The wave of exuberance in Priyatam was still active. Being emotionally helpless in rasa, He also came and sat next to Her. Sakhis thought of a game. Quietly they tied a knot in their clothes and kept savouring that sweetness. When both of them tried to get up, noticing the knot and understanding the play of marriage celebration, both were filled with the colour of love. The love of the heart erupted. Shri Rādhā lowered Her eyes in embarrassment. Because of the *gāntha* (knot) that was tied in the clothes, this place came to be known as *Gānthauli*.

The devotee of Shrināthji, 'Pātho Gujari' was from here. The fields of this milkmaid were in the foothills of Shri Girirāj ji. When she used to go to her fields, Shrināthji would steal her bread and eat. She was the recipient of Shrināthji's grace.

'Jahān Ashtachhāp Gāwe, Tahān Lalitā Been Tathā Shyām Pakhāwaj Bajāwe' As per this saying *pakhāwaji* (drummer) Shri

Shyām ji and his daughter Lalitā both of them used to play their instruments during the padagān of Shrināthji. It is said that Shrināthji used to come to Gānthauli to listen to Shyām pakhāwaji and to the lute of Lalitā.

Nearby is the Gulāl kund.

Gulāl Kund

ए हेतु गांठोली- ए गुलाल कुण्ड जले ।

एबे फाग देखे लोक वसन्तेर काले ॥

(भ० र०)

The festival of Holi causes the emotions to swell and overflow. It intoxicates the Rasik Shekhar, His beloved Shri Rādhā and Her bodily manifestations, these Braj maidens with the colour of intense love and passion. The intoxicated stupor caused by the colour of intense love and passion became more and more radiant after getting soaked with the colour of rasa. The sky was covered with the clouds of red and pink powder. The mind, body and clothes were drenched in them. Sakhis invited their beloved Shri Rādhā for Holi.

‘अरी चल वेगि छबीली, हरि सौं खेलें फाग ।

With water syringes filled with colored water and pink powder (gulāl) in hand, filled with renewed exuberance and with an intense yearning to meet their Beloved, these maidens dressed themselves up. Colours of Holi began colouring them. They moved on.

भरि-भरि रंग पिचकारिन छवि सों छिरकत हरि तन तीय ।

कुटिल कटाक्ष प्रेम रंग भरि-भरि भरति पीय को हीय ॥’

As the syringes started spraying the colours, the hearts of the maidens started overflowing. Filled with a novel rasa upon getting the closeness of the Priyatam, their hearts began wishing to loose themselves in it. Filling their hearts with the nectarful exuberance dripping from the wicked sidelong glances of their beloved, they are etching it there.

दुरि मुरि भरन बचावनि छवि सों बाढ्यो है रंग अपार ।

मैन मुनि सी बोलत डोलत पग नूपुर भंकार ॥

In the game of Holi these damsels are looking intoxicated, drunk and their love intoxicated Rasik Shekhar, in the mood of Holi, restless to unite with His beloveds is gushing and erupting. Looking

at such colour soaked Yugal and the Braj maidens, Shri Nandadās ji said-

‘नन्ददास अपने ठाकुर की दौरि बलैया लेय ।’

These playful players entered the water to take a bath. That romp and revelry of Holi did not get restrained even now. Due to the continuous spraying of water, stained by the colour of their blessed bodies, this kund became coloured with the colour of *gulāl*. Since then it is called Gulāl kund.

Even today during Holi, the intense love and passion scattered here soaks the devotees with rasa.

Toad Ki Ghano

This is a dense forest. Due to the fear of the attacks of the Yavans, many times Shrināthji was brought and hidden here.

Ridiculing sweetly for going to this thorny forest Shri Kumbhandās ji complained to Shrināthji

भावति तोहि टोड़ को घनो ।

काँटा लगे गोखरू टूटे, फाट्यो है सब तन्यौ ॥

सिंहहि कहा लोमड़ी को डर यह कहा बानिक बन्यौ ।

कुंभनदास तुम गोवर्द्धन धर वह तो नीच डेढ़नी जन्यौ ॥

Due to being a dense forest, this place is called Toad Ki Ghano. This place was very dear to Shrināthji.



Braj Bhoomi Mohini

KĀMVAN



Chapter Four

तत्र कामवने रम्ये दिव्य मन्दिर संयुते ।
क्रीडन्त्यः कन्दुकैः सर्वास्तस्थुः कृष्णप्रियाः शुभाः ॥

THE OTHER NEIGHBOURING SITES

1. Dyoserasa (Deva sheersha sthān)
2. Sāmarikherā
3. Paramdarā
4. Ādi Badri
5. Navaneeta parwat
6. Godrishti van (Guhānā)
7. Budhei Badri
8. Kanwāro

चतुर्थं काम्यकवनं वनानां वनमुत्तमम् ।
तत्र गत्वा नरो देवि ! मम लोके महीयते ॥¹

(आ० वा० पु०)

Describing love in Bhakti Sutra, Shri Nārad Ji has shown the highest form by saying ‘Yathā Braj Gopikānām’ i.e. like that of Braj damsels. Gopis are the embodiments of love. Their love is selfless love. Their love has become refined and pure only for the happiness and pleasure of Shri Krishna. “प्रेमैव गोपरामाणां काम इत्यगमत् प्रथाम्” The Love of Gopis that has blossomed and become nourished within the boundaries of ‘Tatsukhe Sukhitvam’ (in your happiness lies my happiness) has been called Kām. This word Kām is neither worldly nor produced by passion or desire. Kām had already been burnt to ashes by Lord Shankar. Shri Krishna has in fact given him a new lease of life. Hundreds and hundreds of Kāmdev start rolling on the ground just at the *darshan* of Shri Krishna. This ‘Kām’ is extremely pious and pure. Shri Krishna Leelā can be experienced only by the *sādhakas* of *siddhāwasthā*. Love exists where there is no trace of worldliness, no entry of selfishness, no desire for self happiness and where there is surrender and only surrender for the beloved. After becoming surrendered to Shri Krishna completely and totally, that love only has been expressed as “Kām” in the worldly language.

One saint from Shri Krishna’s Leelā *parikar* showing the glory of Shri Krishna love has said, ‘Only and only he, who has renounced all the worldly desires, can be the enjoyer of Shri Krishna Kām.’ He further says-

“This Kām is beyond description. There is no trace of worldly desire or passion in this. The entire chastity and the purity of the world roll at the feet of this Kām. Even the yogis beg for this Kām which is rare even for the demigods. Upon getting even a single drop of this, a being becomes content and satisfied. The One who grants ‘Kām’ (desire) even to ‘Kām’(Cupid) is only *Mādhurya Rasa Sāgar Ānanda Kanda* (an ocean of the rasa of sweetness and the source of bliss) Nandanandan. Countless worlds are created and destroyed by

1. The fourth vana called Kām van is best amongst all vanas. O Devi! The one who goes in this van is venerated in My Dhām.

the movement of His eye brows. That Rasik Shiromani Nandanandan remains engaged in *vihār* with these milkmaids intoxicated with *rasa*. The fulfiller of the Kām of these *Kāminis* (beautiful women) is this *Kamneeya* (desirable and beautiful) Krishna alone. The worldly intellect has no access there. There is only the divine group of *Kāminis*, divine Kām Kishore and the flow of divine Kām. It is an unailing weapon to destroy the material *Kām*.”

This Kām grows constantly because the nature of love also is to grow constantly. To imagine the presence of even a trace of any kind of material Kām in Braj damsels is profoundly sinful and will cause one’s downfall. There is no selfish interest in these Braj maidens. All the actions that they perform are for Shri Krishna alone. They dress and adorn themselves only with the intention to please Shri Krishna. They store milk, yogurt and butter carefully, only because Shri Krishna will savour them. The purpose of going to the *ghāts*, to the pathways, to the banks of Yamunā or to Vanshibata is only to give happiness to Shri Krishna. They are Krishnamayi, ‘Jit dekho Tit Shyāmmayi Hai’ i.e. anywhere they see, they only see Shri Krishna, they are so fully immersed in Him. They live and breathe only for Shri Krishna. In one voice it will have to be said that any emotion that naturally aids in leading towards Shri Krishna, only that is love or the purest Kām, everything else besides that is impersonation and is worth renouncing.

Shri Krishnadās Kavirāj Goswāmi says-

आत्मेन्द्रिय प्रीति इच्छा तार काम नाम ।
 श्रीकृष्णेर प्रीति इच्छा तार प्रेम नाम ॥
 अतएव काम प्रेमे बहुत अन्तर ।
 काम अंधतम प्रेम निर्मल भास्कर ॥
 अतएव गोपीगण न करें विचार ।
 कृष्ण सुख हेतु करें सङ्गम विहार ॥

(चैतन्य चरितामृत)

The selfless *kāmanā* (desire) of these Braj gopis falls within the pure Kām because their main objective is only to give happiness to their beloved.

In their Love, there is not even a trace of the desire of satisfying their own senses. Therefore showing their pure love as the total and absolute surrender of the feelings of their hearts, it has been expressed as ‘Kām’. The Kām of the *gopis* is the pleasing desire to attain Shri Krishna. At one place Shri Vallabha Rasik ji is saying, “Kām roop bin

prema na hoyi. Kāmroop jahān prema na soyi.” i.e. until and unless all the desires of a *sādhaka* get focused at one place, how can that be love. And without Kām there can be no love. When Love happened, then the desire for self satisfaction and self pleasure dissolved, at that time the question of Kām itself did not remain. Therefore the love can last only on the foundation of ‘*Tatsukhei sukhitwam*’. The shining examples of this are the Braj maidens.

This is the place where the Kām or the desires of the Braj gopis are born and the place where those desires are pacified by Shri Krishna in various ways, therefore it is called Kāmvan.

Where the desires or the Kām of Braj maidens and others bear fruit that is Kāmvan.

This is one of the main *Leelā* sites of Braj. ‘Kāmvan’ has also been called the Ādi Vrindāvan. Vrindādevi resides here. The boundaries of Shri Vrindāvan are stretched far and wide. Shri Girirāj ji, Barsānā, Nanda grām are considered within the boundaries of Shri Vrindāvan. All the sites of Braj connected with one or the other *Leelā* are related to Shri Krishna.

The Kāmvan described in the Mahābhārat is also believed to be this one. The Pāndavas had stayed here during the *agyātwās* (residence at an unknown or a secret place which no one can discover). Many such sites can be seen in the present Kāmvan that prove their connection with Mahābhārat. The statues of five Pāndavas are here.

Dharma Koop and Dharma Kund named after Dharmarāj Yudhishtir are famous. This place seems to be connected with the Pāndavas.

This is also believed to be the site of the *siddhi* of King Kāmsen.

There are many *tirthas*, lakes, and *kunds* here. The temples of Shri Gopināth ji, Gokul Chandramā ji, Madan Mohan ji are worth seeing.

The Lord of Kāmvan is Shri Gopināth ji.

Significance

ततः काम्यवनं राजन् ! यत्र बाल्ये स्थितो भवान् ।
स्नानमात्रेण सर्वेषां सर्वकामफलप्रदम् ॥

(स्क० पु०)

O Mahārāj ! After that there is Kāmyavan, where you had arrived in your childhood. Just by bathing in this vana all desires are fulfilled.

Where all the desires are fulfilled easily, that alone is Kāmvan.

As per Vishnu Purān there are countless tirthas here. Eighty four tirthas, eighty four temples and eighty four pillars built by king Kāmsen are here. It is also believed that the demigods and the demons had built the one hundred and sixty eight pillars together.

Vimal Kund

विमलस्य च कुण्डे च सर्वपापप्रमुच्यते ।
यस्तत्र मुञ्चति प्राणान् मम लोकं स गच्छति ॥¹

(आ० वा०)

यत्तत्र विमल कुण्डं सर्वतीर्थोत्तमोत्तमम् ।
तत्र स्नातो नरो भद्रे वैष्णवं लभते पदम् ॥²

(वृ० ना० पु०)

दत्त्वामुक्तिं नृपतये श्रीकृष्णो भगवान्स्वयम् ।
तत्सुताः सुन्दरीर्नीत्वा ब्रजमण्डलमाययौ ॥³

(गर्ग सहिता 4/7/25)

The name of the king of Champak city in Sindhu kingdom was Vimal. He had no child. By the grace of Shri Yāgyavalkya ji, the six thousand queens of the king gave birth to many girls. All these girls were the women residents of Ayodhyā during Shri Rāmāwatār who had been reassured by the Lord. On the suggestion of Shri Yāgyavalkya ji King Vimal sent his emissary in search of the suitable groom (Shri Krishna) for his beautiful daughters. The emissary came to Mathurā city.

Everybody lived in terror in Mathurā because of the fear of Bhojrāj Kansa. Secretly that emissary learnt out about the killing of the six sons of Vasudev ji and the going of the seventh daughter in the sky.

Bhisma ji arrived there suddenly and revealed the entire incident. The emissary then went and had the *darshan* of Shri Krishna at the bank of Yamunā ji in Vrindāvan and felt blessed.

1. Vimal Kund is the destroyer of all sins. The one who dies at this Kund certainly attains my Dhām.

2. All tirthas live in Braj. In Kāmyavan the very best Vimal Kund is there, by bathing in which one attains the Vaishnava pada. Therefore Vimal kund is endowed with qualities as per its name.

3. In this way liberating the king Lord Shri Krishna Himself came to Braj mandal along with the king's daughters.

Upon getting the invitation of King Vimal, Shri Krishna reached Champak city and taking the daughters of the King with Him came back to Braj mandal. All these girls became engaged in playing the ball game with Lord Krishna in this beautiful Kāmyavan. After that Shri Krishna assumed as many number of forms as there were the daughters and performed Rās with them.

In that Rās mandal, this kund filled with the tears of joy of these Vimal daughters became famous as Vimal kund.

All the sins of a person is destroyed by having *darshan* of, by worshipping and by drinking from the Vimal kund.

Besides this there is another famous hearsay about the appearance of Vimal kund.

During *chāturmas* (the four months of rainy season) all tirthas live in Braj. Once when Pushkar ji didn't come, Shri Krishna remembered Yogamāyā. It is said that, at once water appeared in the earth and one beautiful woman appeared from that water. This beautiful woman was vimal i.e. pure and free from any kind of blemish or flaw (mal). Therefore Shri Krishna gave her a boon, "You will be worshipped as Vimalā devi from today and this place taking the shape of a kund will become famous by your name. Whosoever will bathe in this *kund* will become free from all the sins and his mind and intellect will become pure. He will receive the fruit of bathing in Pushkar seven times." Since then this kund has become famous as Vimal kund.

This is in the south west quarter of the village. The sight is beautiful. Around the kund are the temples of Dāu ji, Suryadev, Neel Kantheswar Mahādev ji, Shri Gowardhannāth ji, Shri Madangopāl ji, Shri Kāmvan Bihāri, Shri Vimalā devi, Shri Muralimanohar, Shri Gangā ji and Shri Gopāl ji.

Shri Jaikrishnadās Bābā (Vimal kund)

He was a devotee of the highest order. He used to live at Vimal kund and lead his life on *madhukari*. His mental service had become *siddha*. Once he was engaged in his service. Suddenly he became restless. He came out of his hut. He saw cows and cowherds all around the kund. He was stunned to see such an enchanting sight. Shri Krishna, Balrāma and the other cowherd boys insistently asked for water from him and drank it. He went back inside the hut. Once inside, the intense desire to see that sight again started making him restless.

When he came out to see them again, there were no cows or the cowherds. He felt distraught and sad. While he was dwelling in

these thoughts, he had a feeling that Shri Krishna is saying, “I will come to you tomorrow.” That is what happened. An old lady came with an idol of Gopāl next day and expressing her inability, entrusted it to Bābā. That idol of Shri Gopāl continued to gratify him forever. His worship of *mādhurya rasa* had become siddha. It is said that when he entered the eternal abode, his last words were, “Where is my long skirt, my *phariyā* (short shirt worn by the girls)?”

Charan Kund

Shri Shyām Sundar and Shri Shri Rādhā Rāni, who are the embodiment of the essence of *shringār* rasa, once suddenly during a Leelā came and sat down here and started throwing the water out of the kund with their legs and kept playing games. After washing the legs they became engrossed in rasa, steeped in some blissful memories.

Since then this place anointed and besprinkled with the dust of the feet of both Yugal is famous as Charan kund.

Nearby are Vaidyanāth Mahādev ji, Vishnu Sinhāsan, Garud ji, Chandra Bhāsā Kund, Chandreshwar Mahādev, Vārāha Koop, Vārāha Kund, Yagya Kund and Dharma Kund.

Dharma Kund

एई धर्म कुण्ड धर्म रूपे नारायण ।
एथा विलसये शोभा ना हय वर्णन ॥

(भ० २०)

Here Lord Nārāyana is *virājmān* in the form of dharma and expounds on dharma. This beautiful tirtha is very famous. Bathing here on the eighth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhādra is particularly significant.

Nearby are Nārāyana Kund, Panchapāndav, Neel Vārāha, Shri Hanumān ji and Panchapāndav Kund.

Manikarnikā

The power and influence of Vishwanāth Lord Shankar at Manikarnikā is known to all.

Shri Yashodā Kund

मधुसूदनस्य कुण्डं ददृशुः कुण्डं यशोदायाः ।
यस्य यशोदातनययशोधरस्यात्र धामासीत् ॥

(श्रीवल्लभ दिग्विजय)

Shri Vallabhāchārya ji saw Shri Madhusudan and Shri Yashodā kund. Shri Krishna, the son of Shri Yashodā ji used to come here from Nanda grām.

देखई यशोदा कुण्ड परम निर्मल ।
एथा गोचारणे कृष्ण हईया विह्वल ॥

(भ० २०)

In Prakat Leelā, cattle grazing is a daily practice of Shri Krishna. To go for grazing is not necessary for Brajrāj, but it is of course an excuse. Once one sakhi describing her mental state said to another-

याते माई ! भवन छाँड़ि वन जईयतु, ।
अंखरस, कनरस, बतरस, सबरस नन्दनन्दन मँह पईयतु ॥

Shri Krishna goes for grazing to acknowledge and caress the feelings of His beloveds and to provide happiness to them. And these maidens come to the forest *nikunja* making various excuses to savour the beauty of their *Jeewan Sarvaswa*, sometimes on the pretext of selling the yogurt and milk, sometimes on the pretext of fetching the water from the river bank. And then this Braj Jana Manranjan (One who delights the mind of Brajwāsi) Shri Shyām Sundar drowns himself and drowns them in the sweet waves of rasa.

After getting up in the morning, Shri Krishna gets engaged in the preparations of cattle grazing. The cows, cowherds, cowherd children, everybody's eyes remain restless to savour the beauty of their *Jeewan Sarvaswa* Krishna. How can the *maiyā* full of love bear His absence for so long? She sends the meal with one or the other *sakhā* or *sakhi* and sometimes she herself comes to see *Kanhaiyā* in order to quench the thirst of her eyes. The love of the mother forcibly attracts Shri Krishna and from where ever He is, He comes to *Maiyā*. He blesses her restless waiting by running and clinging to her. Fostering this very *vātsalya* rasa of *maiyā*, this place of union of Shri Yashodā and *Kanhaiyā* is famous as *Yashodā Kund*.

By bathing here the love for Shri Krishna increases.

Shri Nārad Kund

देखई नारद कुण्ड नारद एई खाने ।
हैल महा अधैर्य कृष्णेर लीला गाने ॥

(भ० २०)

Shri Nārad ji is called the heart of the Lord. His *veenā* remains resonant with the songs of Leelā of Shri Krishna. In its every sound only Shri Krishna name is heard. Shri Nārad ji after coming to Braj and after drinking the sweetness of Shri Krishna's beauty, became entranced. The eight *sātvika bhāv* appeared in his body. He became restless for Shri Krishna darshan. Always honouring every call of His intimate devotees, Nandanandan blessed him by giving him His *darshan*.

Setubandha Kund

लङ्काकुण्डं याता हरिणा सेतुर्निबद्धाऽत्र ।
रामावतारलीला स्वेभ्यः संदर्शिता योगात् ॥

(श्री वल्लभ दिग्विजय)

Everyone was engaged in the amusements, the enjoyments and merry making. Brajwāsīs expressed their desire of doing the darshan of the Leelās of the Tretā Yuga to Shri Krishna. It is said that Shri Krishna playing all those Leelās, granted *Brajwāsīs* the power to perceive all of them.

That very site is famous as Setubandha Kund.

Luka Luka Kund

समपश्यन् पद्माख्यं निलयनाख्यं च कुण्डवरम् ॥

(श्रीवल्लभ दिग्विजय)

Āchārya ji came to Luka Luka kund after having the darshan of Padma tirtha. Shri Krishna had performed the 'hide and seek' Leelā here.

यत्र निलायनरमणं गुहात्र कृष्णस्तत्राम् ।
तस्यां लीनो हित्वैनां गवागोवर्द्धनं वेणुरवं चक्रुः ॥

(श्रीवल्लभ दिग्विजय)

Luka Luka cave is here where Shri Krishna hid Himself and then appeared on the mountain and played His flute.

Pranayi Braj Kishore, His beloved Shri Rādhā and the Braj maidens always remain engrossed in rasa with the help of novel rasa events and arrangements. These rasa events are organized and arranged by the rasa adepts Braj maidens.

Today the hide and seek Leelā was organised. The location was determined. With all her sakhis Rāseshwari Shri Rādhā ji came to this

secluded and deserted place. Priyatam also arrived in this dense forest area. First turn was to be given by Priyatam. Sakhis went into hiding. Shri Krishna started searching. Shri Rādhā went and hid in a *nikunja* with her intimate sakhis Shri Lalitā and Vishākhā. While searching Priyatam also came up to that *nikunja* and kept pretending to search on one side. When it was quite late, Lalitā and Vishākhā came out of the *nikunja* to look for the Priyatam and continued walking ahead. Rasiyā Nāgar saw them and guessing that Priyā ji is in that *nikunja* He went inside and touched Kishori ji who was absorbed in thoughts. Kishori ji Who had been waiting and was engrossed startled by the touch. Both of them drowned in the special eruption of rasa. This place was blessed and preserving the sweet memories of this Leelā in its atmosphere, it is distributing that rasa with abandon even today.

Nearby is Kamalākār Sarowar. Next to that is Jal kridā kund. There are Dhyān kund and Tapta kund. All the sins of the Vaishnavas who bathe here are destroyed. Here Shri Krishna had become overwhelmed in the meditation (dhyān) of Shri Rādhā.

Charan Pahādi

ठाड़े री मोहन चरण पहाड़ी ।
 पीताम्बर फहरात पवन बस मुकुट लटक छवि न्यारी ॥
 पुनि कीरति की लली भली छवि ता ग्रीवा भुजडारी ।
 जाके रूप रंग रस बस ह्वै वन-वन नचत बिहारी ॥
 उन्मद मदन रहत निसिवासर संग ललित ललनारी ।
 वृन्दावन हित विमल कुण्ड तट केलि विमल विस्तारी ॥

While engaged in amusements, enjoyment and merry making with sakhās during cattle grazing, how and when Shyām Sundar left and went to Charan Pahādi, they did not come to know. Sakhās started looking for their cows and Nandanandan Shyām Sundar came to Charan Pahādi to honour the love steeped feelings of Braj maidens who were restlessly and impatiently waiting for Him.

The breeze started playing with His *pitāambar*. The fluttering yellow *pitāambar* came within the sight of the sakhis from far. Finding their *Jeewan Sarvaswa* alone and understanding the fluttering of *pitāambar* to be His rasa invitation, they all came there. Making their eternal friend and Mistress Sri Rādhā sit next to Priyatam they began drinking their exquisite beauty.

Sometimes they would admire the dangling of Shyām Sundar's crown and sometimes they would sing praises of the head ornament

of Priyā ji. They started extolling the blue sari of Priyā ji that was enhancing the beauty of the *pitāambar* of the Priyatam. They started singing the praises of their rasaful eyes. They started discussing the sweetness of their beautiful form. They started speaking about the beauty of His garland and Priyā ji's bead necklace. Not only this, while talking about the beauty, they became absorbed in it themselves. The rasa crazy Yugal drowned in their own rasaful memories.

Up until when this rasaful *keli* of the sweetness of beauty kept flowing and when the crazy Yugal and their sakhis, unconscious of the world and themselves returned to their homes, nobody came to know. The rock of this hill, feeling excessive love upon hearing those praises, melted and imprinted the foot prints of the beloved on its heart. That rasaful Leelā site called Charan Pahādi is *virājmān* even today in the form of the meeting place of Shyām Sundar and the Braj maidens.

Vihaval Kund

देखई विह्वलकुण्ड राई एई खाने ।
हईला विह्वल कृष्ण मुरलीर गाने ॥

(भ० २०)

The sound of the flute forcibly attracts the hearts and the minds. How is it possible for these maidens to remain at home, when Priyatam is calling them giving rasa invitation by means of the sweet songs. The sound of the flute not only transmits rasa in their souls but also makes them forget themselves. Once they hear the sound of the flute, the minds and the hearts of these maidens start squirming to unite with the beloved and they become impatient and restless to meet with Him.

Priyā ji heard the sweet melodious sound of the flute. Startled and enchanted She followed the sound and reached a *nikunja*. The desire for the nearness of Priyatam was growing every moment. She became restless and overwhelmed (*vihaval*). Attracted by Priyā ji's overwhelmed state, this Charming Lover kept looking at the waves of love dancing on Her face. Even He could not bear to wait any longer and came near Her. Who could say anything about that extremely blissful proximity. Only these two know about it or we can ask this secluded place which has carefully preserved those rasa drops of love as legacy.

Since then the place is called Vihaval kund. Nearby are Shyām Kund, Lalitā Kund, Vishākhā Kund, Mān Kund, Mohini Kund and Balbhadra Kund.

Pichhalini Shilā

चन्द्रसेन पर्वत ए पिच्छलिनी शिला ।
एथा सखा सह कृष्ण करे एई खेला ॥

(भ० २०)

To get a glimpse of Shri Krishna, the Lord of the universe, Who is the condensed form of bliss, the yogis and the ascetics do penance for years and are still not able to attain Him, that very Supreme being, the One whose all desires are fulfilled, is insisting with maiyā with tear filled eyes to help Him cross the threshold of the door of Nanda bābā's house. Isn't the love strange? Subjugated by this love Nandanandan dances, just for a cup of butter milk, giving divine bliss to the gopis. Today that friend Kanhaiyā with His devout *sakhās* is taking pleasure by sliding again and again (fisalan) on this smooth and slippery rock.

This 'Fisalini shilā', witness to His sakhya Leelā blessed by the touch of the Lord, is giving divine happiness to us even today.

Kām Sarowar

तत्र कामसरो राजन् ! गोपिकारमनं सरः ।
तत्र तीर्थसहस्राणि सरांसि च पृथक्-पृथक् ॥

(स्क० पु०)

The Gopikāraman Sarowar is present in the Kāmvan. In the same Kāmyavan separate lakes of the each of the thousands of the *tirthas* are present.

Who can give the account of the good fortune of these eternally pure bodied Braj maidens? Every moment of theirs is dedicated to the happiness of Shri Krishna. They churn the yogurt only with the thought that Shri Krishna will have it. In the house, markets or the streets they wait for Him devotedly. Subjugated by the love of His beloveds Nandanandan accepts, honours and lovingly fondles each and every single feeling of their hearts. Their desires involve only Shri Krishna and are only for Shri Krishna, they live only on this hope and faith.

Shri Krishna is their very own and they are always His.

Kām of these *gopis* is the pure *Kām*, the eternally pure Love. Since there is not even a trace of self enjoyment or self gratification, it is pure uncontaminated Love. In their love there is no foul smell of worldliness and not even a trace of physical attachment. All their desires involve only divine and pure love. Therefore they are the embodiments of love itself.

The mutual *vihār* and *rasa vilās* of the Braj maidens is for the happiness and pleasure of Priyatam. Bound by this Shri Krishna Himself praises this love.

The love which Shri Nandanandan Himself is calling the purest, the place of that pure Kām, this site has become famous as Kām van. By bathing in this Sarowar all desires are fulfilled.

Surabhi Kund (Baithak of Shri Vallabhāchārya ji)

The baithak of Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu ji is under the shami (lupine) tree near Shri Nanda Koop where the atmosphere of Shrimad Bhāgwat is protecting the divinity of the site even today.

Shrimadāchārya came to Surabhi kund and was thinking of spending the night there when the priest said, ‘Mahārāj! This place is not good. One ghost lives here. This ghost kills anybody who stays here.’ After hearing this Āchārya Prabhu remained quiet. In the morning when one devotee went to the kund to wash the clothes of Mahāprabhu, he saw the ghost. He screamed. Mahāprabhu ji related the tale of his previous birth-

“This Brahmin used to live in Braj with opulence. He had taken back the land that he had donated. Because of this evil deed, he attained this ghost body.” After this, that Brahmin got liberated by the grace of Mahāprabhu ji.

By bathing here, everybody’s desire is fulfilled.

Nearby is **Bhojanthāli** (There is a hearsay that Shri Shankarāchārya ji had the darshan of the assembly of the cowherd friends of Shri Krishna here. Mutually having butter milk, putting morsels of food into each other’s mouth and snatching and grabbing from each other, immersed in bliss, the cowherd boys were having their meals with Sri Krishna here) where Shri Krishna had eaten food with the sakhās.

Bājani shilā, the place of Parashurām ji, Shāntanu kund, Veda kund, Dāmodar kund, Gandharwa kund and Prithudak kund are here. Ayodhyā kund, Shri Narsinha kund, Arghya kund, Madhusudan kund, Shri Rohini kund, Gopāl kund, Godāwari kund, Shri Devaki kund are all related to Shri Krishna Leelā.

Vyomāsūr Guphā

Shri Krishna is the embodiment of sweetness. He is sweet, He is the ocean of the essence of sweetness, the height of *chāpalya* (flirtatiousness) and is experienced by the *chāpalās* (Braj maidens). He is Braj maidens' very own, very very own *Jeewan Sarvaswa*. Shri Krishna is tenderer than tender who becomes bent just by the weight of the flute. But that very Shri Krishna on the other hand kills many great demons as well with His supernatural and divine powers.

After killing Keshi, Shri Krishna became busy again in merrymaking and amusements with His sakhās and the cowherd boys. They started playing hide and seek. Some of the sakhās would pose as thieves and others would seek them. When they were fully engrossed in their game, one demon named Vyomāsūr sent by Kansa entered their group disguised as a cowherd. Lord Shri Krishna understood everything. That demon would mostly become the thief in the game and then catch the sakhās turn by turn and take them to a cave and imprison them there. Gradually when only four-five sakhās were left outside, Shri Krishna recognised and caught him. Vyomāsūr, the son of Mayāsūr displayed his actual form. Lord Krishna killed him and released His sakhās from the cave of the mountain.

This place where Vyomāsūr was liberated is famous as Vyomāsūr Guphā.

Nearby are Laxmi kund and Prahlād kund.

Ratikeli Kund

रतिकेलिसखी यत्र स्नानं प्रतिदिनमकरोत् ।
रतिकेलिकृतं कुण्डं सर्वसौभाग्यवर्धनम् ॥

(वा० पु०)

Very beloved *sakhi* of Shri Krishna, Ratikeli bathes here daily. This kund created for her is capable of multiplying the fortune of all.

Shri Kāmeshwar Mahādev

कामेश्वराय देवाय कामनार्थप्रदायिने ।
महादेवाय तुभ्यं नमस्ते मुक्तिदोद्भव ॥

O Kāmeshwar Mahādev! You are the fulfiller of desires and giver of riches. O Mahādev! You are the giver of liberation. Obeisance to you.

Kāmeshwar Mahādev is the fulfiller of all desires. What else can be the desire other than the desire for the love of Shri Krishna? Lord Mahādev is the giver of the pure *kām* for Shri Krishna after destroying all worldly desires.

He is *virājmān* in the north east quarter of the village in the form of a guardian.

Gokul Chandramā ji (Shri Thākur Swaroop)

Gracing a woman of a Kshatriya caste of Mahāvan, this idol was found by her at the Brahmānda ghāt from the sand of Shri Yamunā ji. That kshatrāni surrendered it to Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji. Āchārya Prabhu entrusted the service to Shri Nārāyandās Brahmachāri. After Shri Brahmachāri ji attained the Goloka Dhām, Shri Gokul Chandramā ji came to Shri Vithalnāth ji for service. Later He was with Shri Raghunāth ji, the fifth son of Shri Vithalnāth ji.

The descendants of Shri Raghunāth ji took the deity to Jaipur first and then to Bikāner because of the fear of the Yavans.

Now a days Shri Gokul Chandramā ji has become an attraction for all the Vaishnavas at Kāmyavan.

On the invitation of Shri Gokulnāth ji during Annakoot, Shri Thākur ji stays at Jatipurā for some time.

Shri Madanmohan Ji

Goswāmi Shri Vithalnāth ji had entrusted the service of this Thākur idol to his seventh son Shri Ghanshyām ji. The descendants of Shri Ghanshyām ji took the deity to Jaipur to save Him from the atrocities of Yavans and later to Bikāner due to the lack of proper arrangements.

When Shri Gokul Chandramā ji came to Kāmvan, Shri Madanmohan ji also came to Kāmvan. Up until now He is *virājmān* here only.

We have read the significance of the main sites of Kāmvan, now let us enjoy the Leelās related to the sites in the vicinity.

Dyauseirasa (Devashirsha Sthān)

आर एई लीला स्थली अति तेजोमय ।
देख 'देवशीर्ष' स्थान कुण्ड सुशोभय ॥

With His sakhās Sridāmā, Subal, Madhumangal and others Shri Krishna comes here every day for cattle grazing. The demigods once wished to have the darshan of Shri Krishna and His cowherd friends. As it couldn't be had in the Devalok they all came down to Braj. They were astounded to see the ocean of the essence of beauty and sweetness Shri Krishna resplendent amongst the cowherd boys. The Lord of the universe in the guise of an ordinary cowherd was wandering in the forests of Braj behind the cows calling 'Heeho, Heeho.'

This place becoming famous as Devashirsha Sthān is repeating the past history even today. This is about five miles to the north of Lāthāvan. Muda seiras (Muni shirsha sthān) is also nearby, about four miles from Lāthāvan.

Sāmari Kherā (Sāmihi Khera, Suryapatan van)

श्रावणकृष्णद्वादश्यामागतो ब्रजयात्रया ।
त्रेतायुगे समायाते सूर्यो यत्र पपात ह ॥
रावणस्य भयं लब्ध्वा श्रीरामशरणागतः ।
यती सूर्यप्रपाताख्यं वनं यत्र प्रजायते ॥

(आदित्य पु०)

Please come here for a visit on the twelfth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Shrāwan (July-Aug). In the Tretā yuga due to the fear of Rāvan, Surya Nārāyana descended here and took the refuge of Shri Rām ji. That is why this place is called Suryaprapāt van.

According to a hearsay, Shri Krishna's dear sakhi Sāmari sakhi was also related to this village.

There are Gopāl kund, Gopāl Temple, Surya kund and the darshan of Bihāri ji.

Paramdarā (Pramodanā)

परमदरापावनाय श्रीदाम्नः सख्युरिहधाम ।
तत्र सरः कृष्णस्य राघाराघेशयोर्वेदी ॥

(श्रीवल्लभ दिग्विजय)

Who can describe the ever new keli of Shyām Sundar, who is always fond of novelty and newness. The rasikas have tried to express their feelings a little by saying 'Kshanei-kshanei navam-navam' i.e. with every moment the beauty and the Leelā is new. The waves of pleasure and enjoyment overflow from every part of the body of Shri Krishna. If the hearts of the devotees drown in sweetness just by

speaking or listening to the Leelā story, then it is not unnatural to get maddened by drinking the beauty in person. Kanhaiyā on one hand is being stubborn with maiyā for butter and sugar candy and on the other hand He is eating butter from the pot and distributing it generously. At times He is wandering in the courtyard of Shri Nandarai ji creating beautiful sound with his anklets. This fortune of maiyā Yashodā is eternal. This Rasiyā Nāgar engaging in various games with His dear sakhās keeps drenching the Brajwāsīs in bliss. It seems as though the very stream of mutual banter, laughter and jokes is swelling and gushing forth.

The Braj maidens witness to each of His Leelā are His eternal companions. Their discussion of madhur rasa is unique. This sweet discussion, becoming profound, submerges them in the *rasa* of love. These maidens are nourished by and soaked in those very rasaful waves even today.

This place which gives bliss to them by *āmod pramod* i.e. ecstatic delight and amusement is famous as Pramodanā or Paramdarā.

This is the place of Shridāmā sakhā. Krishna sarowar and Priyā-Priyatam Ke Baithne Ki Sthali are worth visiting. To the east of the village is Charan Kund.

Ādi Badri

आदिबद्रीकोवनं नारायणो यत्रतपोलीला ।

यत्रादर्शि प्रियाभ्यः कृष्णेनैताः सोऽत्रतयोः ॥

(श्रीवल्लभ दिग्विजय)

This is said to be the place of penance of Shri Badrinārāyan ji. Only Shri Krishna's intimate devotees have the right to enjoy the *madhur* Leelās of the Lord. All the other demigods do not get the darshan even after engaging in many austerities and penance unless graced by Shri Krishna Himself.

Covered with trees and mountain ranges on all sides, the sight of this extremely beautiful secluded place is enchanting. Looking at the beauty and the reality of this place one is reminded of the Badri Dhām.

Shri Krishna manifested many tirthas in Braj for His intimate devotees and enhanced the pride and honour of Braj.

Once all the Brajwāsīs wished to have the darshan of Lord Badrinārāyan. When Shri Krishna came to know about this He told

Nandarai ji, “Bābā! Shri Badrinārāyan ji is *virājmān* in Braj itself.” Shri Krishna brought Shri Nandarai ji and other Brajwāsīs to this place and gave them the darshan of Shri Badrinārāyan ji.

This place is famous as Ādi Badri. Alaknandā is also flowing here. Nearby is Seo grām and Saugandhi shilā.

Navneet Parwat (Kadamba Kānan)

एई आगे देख शूद्ध कदम्ब कानन ।
एथा सुखे मग्न राधाकृष्ण सखीगन ॥

(भ० २०)

The sweet scent of Kadamba trees, their uniqueness, their denseness, is famous at many places in Braj. Who can speak of the fortune of Kadamba tree? Kadamba, by becoming a part of the *shringār* of Shri Krishna, Shri Rādhā and the sakhis, has become blessed. Under these dense Kadamba trees Priyā-Priyatam with their sakhis remain engrossed in rasa *vihār* and *vilās*. The Kadamba trees are also very useful to these maidens during the festival of swings. In the festival of swings prelude to many many rasa episodes get created.

Nearby is **Dhaval Parwat** also known as **Navneet Parwat**. Neel Parwat is also nearby. Reminding us of the dark and pale complexioned Priyā and Priyatam both of them are located close to each other.

Nearby on the way to Kāmvan from Paramdarā, the Indraulī grām is situated. It is said that Devarāj Indra had felt content and satisfied by meditating on Shri Krishna here.

Guhānā (Godrishti van)

Shri Krishna along with His sakhās remains engrossed in various amusements here during cattle grazing. Somewhere Shyām Sundar is getting absorbed discussing various tricks and maneuvers with Subal sakhā and somewhere the assembly of cowherd boys gets engrossed in making delightful plans to loot milk and yogurt.

In such a case, it is not unnatural for the cows to wander off to a distance while grazing. At this very place the cowherds are herding them back by calling out their names. By evening the group of cowherds comes back to Nandagāon with their cows.

This place is famous as Godrishti van. There are **Shyām kund** and **Gopāl kund** here.

Budhei Badri

A little ahead of Ādi Badri in the middle of the mountain range and the dense forest Budhei Badrinārāyan is *virājmān*. This mountain range has also been called Gandha Mādan Parwat Khand. Haridwār, Lachhaman jhulā, Kankhal, Rishikesh etc tirthas are here.

Kanavāro

अहे श्रीनिवास ई देख सन्निधान ।
‘कनोयारो’ ग्राम कण्व मुनि तपः स्थान ॥

(५० २०)

Where do the other demigods and ascetics stand a chance, when it is not easy even for Devarāj Indra who is worshipped by demigods, to have darshan of Shri Krishna Leelās? Once sage Kanva desiring to have the darshan of Shri Krishna came to Braj because the Lord of the whole universe Shri Krishna was wandering in the forests of Braj with His sakhās and cows. Sage Kanva did penance due to which he attained the divine sight and had the darshan of Lord Shyām Sundar.

Here, there are sage Kanva, Panihāri Kund and Shri Krishna Kund. Khoha, Kamarakha, Alipur, Keshar Parwat, Shankhakot Parwat, Mālādevi Temple, Gauri Kund etc are other nearby places of interest.



Braj Bhoomi Mohini

SHRI VRISHBHĀNUPUR



Chapter Five

वैदग्ध्यसिन्धुरनुराग रसैकसिन्धु-
र्वात्सल्यसिन्धुरतिसान्द्रकृपैकसिन्धुः ।
लावण्यसिन्धुरमृतच्छ्रविरूपसिन्धुः
श्रीराधिका स्फुरतु मे हृदि केलिसिन्धुः ॥

THE OTHER NEIGHBOURING SITES

1. Chakasauli
2. Sunaharā grām
3. Unchā grām
4. Reethaurā
5. Dabhāro
6. Kāmai
7. Karhalā
8. Pisāyo (Pipāsā van)
9. Sāhār (Sārikā van)
10. Ājnauka (Anjan van)
11. Prem Sarowar
12. Vihwal van
13. Sankeit

यस्याः कदापिवसनाञ्चल खेलनोत्थ
 धन्यातिधन्यपवनेनकृतार्थमानी ।
 यो गीन्द्र दुर्ग मगतिर्मधुसूदनोऽपि,
 तस्या नमोस्तु वृषभानुभवो दिशेऽपि ॥

(राधा सुधानिधि)

The weather is extremely pleasant. The dark clouds thronging and swarming from all around have overcast the entire sky. Nature is radiating the splendour of its beauty far and wide. Nearby, the place is resonating with the joyous sound of a peacock. Even the *papihā* expressing its glee, has become active. The cooing of the cuckoo has thrilled the entire site. Filled with certain rasaful memories Kishori Shri Rādhā coming out of her house started gazing at this sight from the terrace. The threefold breeze started playing with her clothes. Absorbing the sandal, kumkum and other fragrances anointed on her body, filled with intoxication, it became a little insane and then asking for the whereabouts of Nanda gāon started searching for Shyām Sundar. The touch of this intoxicated breeze osculated by the body of His beloved Shri Rādhā shook the Priyatam out of His trance and made Him restless. He knew that “This intoxicating breeze is certainly blowing from Vrishbhānupur that is why I... a certain rasafulness has made Me helpless.” Priyatam Shyām Sundar felt proud of His fortune. Not only proud He began considering himself blessed. Obeisance to the direction of that very Shri Vrishbhānunandini.

Vrishbhānupur, the Leelā site of Shri Rādhā, the beloved of Shri Krishna carrying the memories of many Leelās, blissful *keli* secrets, feelings and desires of the Yugal in its womb, is extremely venerable to the Vaishnavas. The earth, the lakes and the gardens here, Gahvar Van, Dāngarh, Māngarh, Sānkhari Khor and all the other sites here are the knower of the rasaful mysteries of *keli*. Not only the knower, these living and conscious sites of Nature are the instruments of the Leelā of Priyā jī. The blissful *rasa vihār* of the Yugal always remains in motion here. In fact, Nandanandan Shri Krishna always remains *virājmān* near his beloved Shri Rādhā. The assistants in their rasaful *keli*, the sakhis upon getting their rasa signal, appear instantly, as though they were hiding right there.

अंगे तु वामे वृषभानुजां मुदा,
विराजमानामनुरूप-सौभगाम् ।
सखीसहस्रैः परिसेवितां सदा,
स्मरेम देवीं सकलेष्टाकामदाम् ॥¹

(श्रीमन्निम्बार्काचार्य)

Without the merciful glance of Kishori Shri Rādhā, the sweet *rasa* cannot be experienced. Shri Krishna Himself remains intoxicated in Her love and yearns for the dust of Her feet. In fact Shri Rādhā and Shri Krishna are two grand jewels of the same ocean of *rasa*. For the purpose of experiencing bliss, assuming two bodies they are savouring the *mādhurya*.

Each and every site of Braj is related to one or the other Leelā of the Yugal.

ब्रज चौरासी कोस में चार गाँव निज धाम ।
वृन्दावन और मधुपुरी, बरसानो, नन्दगाम ॥

These four places are the personal and very own abodes of Priyā-Priyatam. Mathurā has the credit of being the birth place of Shri Krishna where as Vrindāvan is famous for the *mādhurya* filled Rās vihār of the Yugal. The same importance is given to Shri Nanda Gāon and Barsānā also.

Giving happiness to Shri Vrishbhānu bābā and Kirtidā ji with her sweet prattle, child Shri Rādhā blesses every place of Vrishbhānupur with the touch of Her feet.

The delicate and tender darling of Shri Vrishbhānu bābā, is pulling Shri Kirtidā ji's sari to awaken her and is asking-

मैया उठि भोर भयौ दधि बिलोई री ।
बीते सब जाम रात पीरी यह होति जाति,
वदन खोल देख लेहि अब न सोई री ।
बार-बार कहति तोहि माखन दै काढ़ मोहि
सुनत नहि रानी नींद भोई री ।

(चाचा वृन्दावनदास)

Child Shri Rādhā has awakened before maiyā and is asking her for butter. The sun is getting intense. Maiyā is still resting but Shri

1. Shri Rādhā is always virājmān on the left side of Shri Krishna. She is served by thousands and thousands of sakhis possessing beauty and virtues similar to Her. I remember that Devi Shri Rādhā fulfiller of all desires.

Rādhā is hungry. Therefore She is asking for butter. How incredible is this strangeness of love .

While on one hand the *vātsalyamayi maiyā* and *bābā* savouring the childhood pastimes of Shri Rādhā, are drowning in bliss, on the other hand the ocean of the essence of *mādhurya rasa*, ever adolescent Shri Rādhā in spite of being an adept at sixty-four arts, is extremely innocent. On one hand with Her childish gestures Kirtikumāri, making tinkling sound in the courtyard of Vrishbhānu bābā is delighting everyone, on the other hand the mother of the universe Shri Rādhā is ever adolescent. Her *Jeewan Sarvaswa* Nandanandan is ever adolescent. This secret is known only by their devout sakhis or known a little by the devotee practitioners of *madhur bhāv*.

Shri Vrishbhānunandini is wandering sometimes slowly and sometimes quickly in the squares and the courtyards of the palace, reverberating them with the sweet melodious sound of Her anklets. At times the sweet sound of the bangles competing with the sound of the anklets can be heard. The movement of the garland seemingly following these sweet sounds is looking attractive. Many times in between She interacts with Her sakhis and at times She bursts into laughter. At times She waves the end of Her sārī and at times she gets delighted looking at Her long skirt embroidered with glittering gems.

Child Shri Rādhā looks resplendent in the laps of maiyā or bābā. Sometimes She covers Her face with maiyā's sari and sometimes She removes it. The *Jeewan Sarvaswa* of the Brajwāsis Shri Rādhā is their priceless treasure.

करत छमाछम डोलै राधे करत छमा छम डोलै री ।
 पग पैजनियां कर मँह कङ्कण उर मणिमाल विलौलै री ।
 सखिन्ह संग हँसि हँसि बतरावत स्रवननि मँह मधु घोलै री ।
 कबहुँक नैन मूंद थिर बैठति अधरनि मँह कछु बोलै री ।
 मां, बाबा के अंक बैठिकै ढाँपि ढाँपि मुख खोलै री ।
 ब्रज वासिन की प्राण जीवनी प्रीति रत्न अनमोलै री ।

(भक्तिमती ऊषा बहन जी)

Shri Krishna comes to Vrishbhānupur from Nandagāon. Shri Kirtidā ji indulges Him. After that the two eternal companions become absorbed in various games. All the Brajwāsis savouring their childhood pastimes feel proud of their blessed fortune.

Vrishbhānupur on one hand becomes resonant with the innocent prattle of child Shri Rādhā, on the other hand ever adolescent darling

of Brajrāj Vrishbhānu drowning in rasa with Her Priyatam Brajrāj Nandanandan in Gahvar vana, Sānkhari khor, Vilāsgarh, Māngarh, Dāngarh and the other sites of sports and pastimes becomes absorbed in bliss.

Surrounding closely are the villages of the eight sakhis, Shri Lalitā, Vishākhā, Chitrā, Indulekhā, Champaklatā, Rangadevi, Tungavidyā and Sudevi.

Origin

पुराकृतयुगस्यान्ते ब्रह्मणा प्रार्थितो हरिः ।
ममोपरि सदा त्वं हि रासक्रीडां करिष्यसि ॥
सर्वाभिर्ब्रज गोपीभिः प्रावृट् काले कृतार्थकृत् ॥

(पद्म पुराण)

The Lord said-

ततो ब्रह्मन् ! ब्रजं गत्वा वृषभानुपुरङ्गतः ।
पर्वतो भवसि त्वं हि मम क्रीडां च पश्यसि ॥
यस्माद् ब्रह्मा पर्वतोऽभूद् वृषभानुपुरे स्थितः ॥

Shri Brahmā ji prayed to Shri Hari at the end of Satyuga to see His *mādhurya* abounding Leelās and divine *Rās vilās* with the Braj maidens. Shri Hari ordered Shri Brahmā ji to go to Vrishbhānupur and reside there in the form of a mountain. “With that form you will be able to see all the Leelās. You will be able to especially savour the rasa of Holi and rainy season.” And that is what happened. Brahmā ji came to Braj and fulfilled his eternal desire in the form of a mountain.

The mountain range famous as Brahmagiri is that same mountain where Shree ji lives even today and is blessing it by the dust of Her feet.

Tirtha Darshan

विष्णुब्रह्माख्ययनामानौ पर्वतौ द्वौ परस्परौ । दक्षिणपार्श्वे ब्रह्म नाम पर्वतः वामपार्श्वे विष्णुनामपर्वतः । ब्रह्मपर्वतोपरि श्री राधा कृष्णमन्दिरम् । श्रीराधाकृष्णदर्शनम् । तदधोभागे श्रीवृषभानु मन्दिरम् । वृषभानुकीर्तिदा श्रीदाम्नां त्रयाणां दर्शनम् । तत्पार्श्वे ललितासखीनां प्रियासहितानां मन्दिरम् । राधादिनवसखीनां दर्शनम् । ब्रह्मपर्वतोपरि दानमन्दिरम् । हिण्डोलस्थलं । मयूर कुटी स्थलम् । रासमण्डलम् । विष्णुब्रह्मनाम्नोरूभयोः पर्वतयोः सांकरीखोरि स्थलम् । ब्रह्मपर्वतोपरि श्रीराधामन्दिरम् । अग्रे लीलानृत्य मन्दिरम् । तत्पार्श्वे

विलासमन्दिरम् । तत्पाशर्वे गह्वरवनं । तद्घोस्थले रास -मण्डलम् । राधासरो
वरः । तत्पाशर्वे दोहनीकुण्डम् । तत्पाशर्वे चित्रलेख्याकृतं मयूरसरः । तत्रैव
भानुसरोवरः । तत्पाशर्वे ब्रजेश्वराख्यमहारुद्रमूर्तिः । तद्वाम भागे कीर्तिसरः । तत्रै
व युगलदर्शनं भवति ।

(पद्म पुराण)

The mountains named Shri Vishnu and Shri Brahmā are *virājmān* opposite each other. On the right side is Brahmā and on the left side is Vishnu Parwat. On the Brahmā Parwat there is the temple of Shri Rādhā Krishna. Below is the temple of Vrishbhānu ji. In that there is darshan of Shri Vrishbhānu bābā, Shri Kirtidā ji and Shridāmā. Nearby is the temple of Priyā ji with Shri Lalitā ji. Shri Rādhā etc nine sakhis are *virājmān* in that temple.

On Brahma Parwat there are Dān Temple, Hindolā Sthān, Mayur Kutī and Rāsmandal. In the middle of the two mountains is the place called Sānkari Khor. On the Brahma Parwat ahead of Shri Rādhā Temple is Leelā Nrityamandal Sthali. Nearby is Vilās Temple. Next to that is Gahvar Vana. In the area below are Rās mandal, Shri Rādhā Sarowar and Dohini Kund. Near that is Mayur Sarowar made by Shri Chitralkhā ji. Bhānu Sarowar, Mahā Rudra Murti called Brajeishwari are there. On the left side is Kirti sarowar. The darshan of Yugal is there.

The current name is Barsānā. To the east of the village is Shri Bhānusara, in the west north quarter is Kirtidā Kund and in the west south quarter is Vihār Kund (Tilak kund). Chaksauli grām and other tirthas are near Sānkari Khor.

Shri Rādhā Krishna Darshan

ततो राधा प्रियकृष्णं वाक्यमूचे कृतार्थकृत् ।
मम पितृपुरे त्वं हि मया सह प्रतिष्ठतु ॥

(प० पुराण)

The Love of Shri Rādhā and Shri Krishna is renowned in the world. Shri Vrishbhānu bābā, Shri Kirtidā ji, Shri Nanda bābā and Shri Yashodā ji are always aware of this cord of love. This is an established relation in the play of Leelā. Who has the capacity to describe the Ones who are eternal and immortal. Although the Rasikas have attempted to express their feelings a little by saying 'Eka prān dwaya dehi' meaning two bodies one soul, 'Milei rahata māno kabhun milei na' i.e. they always keep meeting each other as if they have never

met before, as if it's the first time and 'Dou chakor dou chandramā' meaning both of them are chakor (the Indian red legged partridge which is enamoured of the moon) and both of them are moon. Those who are eternal, intoxicated and submerged in enjoying the bliss of union, they are seen meeting each other constantly for the pastime of Leelā. The darling of Vrishbhānu bābā Kishori comes over to Nanda gāon sometimes and the adornment of Braj Shri Krishna keeps coming and going from Nandagāon to Vrishbhānupur regularly. When the relation of love is intensely deep and profound, even a moment's separation seems unbearable.

Once in a mood of amusement, stirred by some intoxicated wave steeped in love, innocent Kishori shyly said to Priyatam, "Priyatam! Please always remain *virājmān* with me in the city of my father, such is my earnest request to you, due to which my place will become dearer." How could Shri Krishna refuse the request of His beloved Kishori Shri Rādhā. He accepted with delight.

There are divine darshan of Priyā-Priyatam in the temple. Nearby is another temple of Shri Rādhā-Krishna constructed by the king of Jaipur.

Gahvar Van

गह्वराख्याय रम्याय कृष्णलीलाविधायिने ।

गोपीरमणसौख्याय वनाय च नमो नमः ॥ ¹

(बृहन्नारदीय पुराण)

Gahvar van as per its name is a dense forest and is the secluded *vihār* site of madhur Leelās of Priyā ji.

This place is touched, nurtured and nourished by the divine vilās of Priyā-Priyatam, by the madhur solitary rasa vihār, by the waves of rasa of the sakhis that overflow due to the surge of divine passion and by their blissful rasa keli.

Gahvar van, the dense forest has its own beauty. It is very dear to Kishori Shri Rādhā. When the chirping crowd of the sakhis wearing colourful dresses and ornaments come here through the dense rows of trees and dense alleys making the tinkling sound, the whole forest area starts resonating. This beautiful resonance converting into a special rasa becomes a prelude to the endless bliss of the sakhis. Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji kept wandering in that rasaful *vihār* site. In her words -

1. O the beautiful site, creator of the pastime of Shri Krishna called Gahwar! Obeisance to you. You are for the happiness of Gopiraman Shri Krishna.

देख सखी ! गह्वरवन को सुख ।
 प्रीतम प्रिया विहार करत जहँ ॥
 लुक छिप खेलैं दुरिमुरि भांकैं ।
 हँसि हँसि मिलैं डारि भुज भुज महँ ॥
 कबहुँ रसावेश वश मनहर करि ।
 अटपट उमगात कुँवरि कहँ ॥
 तब भरि मद मरोर सों श्यामा ।
 रस मनुहार करावति पिय पहँ ॥
 हँसि हँसि मिलैं डारि भुज भुज महँ ॥
 छम छम करि जब भजति छबीली ।
 पकरि जकरि नागर अति सुख लहँ ॥
 मिलत खिलत रस रंग उँडेलत ।
 राग रसाम्बुधि उमगि परत तहँ ॥
 हँसि हँसि मिलैं जोरि भुज भुज महँ ॥

The eminent devotee Shri Hita Harivansh ji Mahārāj experienced this very divine rasa keli. One sakhi saw the rasa crazy Yugal in some dense alley of Gahvar van, with their arms around each other engaged in vihār. Addressing another sakhi she said-

देख सखि राधा पिय केलि ।
 ये दोऊ खोरि, खिरक, गिरि, गह्वर,
 विहरत कुँवर कण्ठ भुज मेलि ॥

Oh! How was that accumulation of beauty and sweetness ! A golden vine supported by a Tamāl tree was looking resplendent. Or both of them trying to contain the intense forceful flow of love were looking emotionally helpless. This was not the site to remain careful, to control oneself and remain controlled. Both of them swaying in intoxication, started floating in the high waves of the ocean of rasa. When and how, these rasa waves taking them to the bottom of the ocean and setting up a prelude to the sport of love, drowned them even they did not come to know. The sakhis asking about the blissful account of those moments, became absorbed and lost.

Even today this divine keli vilās is flowing in Gahvar van. Priyā ji along with Her sakhis is always engaged in vihār here even today. The experiences of fortunate devotees as the witness to it, are the proofs. We should contemplate on them and wait for our turn.

Shri Kishori Ali

This is only a few years old incident. One Punjābi gentleman was wandering in Gahvar vana anguished and distraught calling out the name of his dead wife Kishori, “Kishori ! Kishori.....”. Priyā ji came over with Her sakhis. She was startled to hear the sound. She asked Shri Lalitā ji, “Lalitei ! Who is this person who is calling out my name with so much anguish.” Sakhi tried to convince Her, “Kishori ! He is not calling you. He is getting so anguished at the death of his wife Kishori.” Causelessly merciful Kishori Shri Rādhā said with affection, “O sakhi! In this Gahvar vana this person is taking my name only. Bring him to me.” Priyā ji graced that person. Later that person became a devotee by the name of Kishori Ali and steeped in the unparalleled grace and affection of Priyā ji attained a divine body and entered the Leelā.

Amidst the vines and leaves near Shri Krishna Kund, in the west, is his samādhi. It is a source of inspiration for the devotees even today.

Baithak of Shri Vallabhāchārya ji

Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji came here and did a week long recitation of Shrimad Bhāgwat. A python used to live in Gahvar vana. Seeing him harassed and troubled by the ants, Shrimanmahāprabhu ji related the tale of his past birth. This Vaishnava mahanta of Shri Vrindāvan used to collect a lot of money in the name of Vaishnava service but instead of spending it for the right purpose he would spend it on himself. After his death he was born as a python and his servants in the form of ants started harassing him.

Shrimanmahāprabhu ji gave him the *charanodaka* (the water in which the feet of an idol has been washed) and the prasād of Priyā-Priyatam. He was freed from the birth of python.

Shri Krishna Kund

Covered with trees enfolded with vines this lake is the beauty of Gahvar vana and a place of reverence for the Vaishnavas.

This lake is present for the purpose of water sports in the rasaful keli site of Priyā-Priyatam,.

Mayur Kuti

किरीटिने नमस्तुभ्यं मयूरप्रियवल्लभ !
सुरम्यायै महाकुट्ट्यै शिखण्डिपदवेशमने ॥¹

(ब्राह्मै)

1. O the crown wearing, peacock loving Shri Krishna! Obeisance to you. O enchanting Mahākuti called Mayur kuti! Obeisance to you.

Mayur Kuti is situated on the upper part of Brahmāchal mountain in an extremely beautiful and secluded spot. This is a Rās site. This site is the witness to the incessant source of *mādhurya rasa*, the rasa abounding *vilās* of Priyā-Priyatam and to many many such Leelās.

Oh! The enchanting beauty of this place can be experienced only by seeing it.

Union and separation are two integral parts of *mādhurya rasa*. To increase the bliss of union, the contribution of *mān* (pride) becoming an unparalleled prelude, causes more and more ripples of rasa in the ocean of sweetness. For those Who always dwell in the same rasa, in the same emotion and Who are one mind and one soul, how can one even imagine any separation between Them. Still for the sake of the play of Leelā, Priyā ji assumes *mān* and the ocean of the essence of sweetness, Priyatam using all His skills tries to placate and mollify Her.

Once Shri Rādhā assumed *mān*. On the other side, the unrestrained waves of rasa started making Priyatam more and more helpless and powerless. Even after trying a lot when Priyatam could not please the sulking Priyā ji, extremely proficient Priyatam Shyām Sundar did a new act. Priyatam disguised as a peacock started dancing in front of Priyā ji. He was displaying the postures of the dance so skillfully that even Priyā ji could not find out. While dancing sometimes He would go close to Priyā ji and sometimes He kept pleasing Her from a distance with facial expressions. Seeing this amazing dance Priyā ji forgot about Her *mān*. Delighted she said, “More, more...” (In Braj Language the word more means peacock as well as ‘mine’.) Hearing this Priyatam came near Her and removing His disguise said, “Darling! I am always only yours.”

Because of a little interception, the waves of the ocean of rasa erupted. How the two faced and handled these high tides, only they know.

Preserving that divine rasa in its atmosphere this place is famous as Mayur Kuti.

Dān Garh

दानवेषधरायेव दध्युपास्याभिलाषिणे ।
राधानिर्भत्सितायैव कृष्णाय सततं नमः ॥ ¹

(ब्राह्मै)

1. O the One disguised as toll collector! O the One desirous of yogurt and milk! O Shri Krishna reproached by Shri Rādhā! Obeisance to you.

The custom of selling yogurt and milk has been prevalent in Braj since always. This is a daily routine of the Braj maidens. Who knows if it is just an excuse for *nitya siddha deha* Braj maidens, the very own forms of Priyā-Priyatam, to meet Shri Krishna. That is why one damsel said-

‘या ते माई भवन छाड़ि वन जईयतु ।

अँखरस, कनरस, बतरस, सबरस, नन्दनन्दन मँह पईयतु ।’

They go out in Braj to sell milk and yogurt and on the way the darling of Nanda bābā *Rasik Chhaila* appears from somewhere suddenly in order to fulfill the desires of these Braj maidens. These crazy damsels repeating ‘Govind Leihu, Govind Leihu’ (take Govind take Govind instead of take yogurt) call out in the forest alleys. Oh! Blessed is their deep absorption. On one such day, the Braj maidens were going through this way with milk pots on their heads. The intense eagerness to meet the Priyatam was resonating in the sound of their anklets. When the sakhis were about to cross this secret and private *nikunja*, they became crazy drinking the rasa nectar filled in the eyes of Shyām Sundar, the radiant blue moon full of ambrosial rasa. The tinkling sound of their anklets became subdued, the eyes became motionless. These staggering maidens looking at the moon like face surrounded with dense thick hair lost consciousness of themselves. Oh! He came close and coming even closer, drenching them more and more in the waves of rasa of love said, “Who are you that always pass through these forest alleys without paying the toll. *Kandarparāj* (King Cupid) has appointed me to collect toll at this place.”

Gaining some consciousness and becoming a little alert, these maidens said, “Oh! This is the domain of our infinitely and extraordinarily beautiful Kishori. How is even the entry of that Kandarpar (Cupid) possible here, who is unable to withstand even one glance of Her.” Saying this, the instant they started moving keeping Shri Rādhā in front of them, the extremely charitable Shri Krishna stood in their way blocking them. The eminent devotee Soordās ji depicted this scene as-

लै हों दान अंग अंग को ।

गोरे भाल लाल सैदूर छवि मुक्ता, वश शिर सुभग मंग को ॥

नकबेसर खुटिला तरिवन को गहर मेल कुच युग उतंग को ।

कण्ठ सिरी दुलरी तिलरी उर माणिक मोतीहार रंग को ॥

बहु नग लगे जराव की अंगिया भुजा बहूटनि वलय संग को ।

कटि किंकिणी को दान जु लैहौ तिय रीभूत मन अनंग को ॥
 जेहरि पग पकरचो गाढ़े मनु मंद-मंद गति यह मतंग को ।
 जोबन रूप अंग पाटम्बर सुनुहु सूर सब यह प्रसंग को ॥

Afterwards how this rasa routine was put to action, the tale of that has been preserved and concealed in its atmosphere by this site.

Since then this site became famous as Dān garh. It is a deserted and beautiful place. It is situated on the Brahmāchal Parwat. This is mainly the place of Rājdān Leelā and Leelās of disguise.

Mān Garh

देवगन्धर्वरम्याय राधामानविधायिने ।
 मानमन्दिरसंज्ञाय नमस्ते रत्नभूमये ॥¹

The pinnacle of Love can be seen naturally in these naïve and innocent maidens and in their friend, companion and mistress Shri Rādhā. Where there is pure love, only there the pinnacle of Love is possible. Union and separation are the two integral aspects of love. In the experience of Love, in order to taste the height of it, the actions of *mān* take place. Here the *mān* is also assumed only to make the bliss experienced by Priyatam more and more rasaful. These gopis who are steeped in the feeling of 'Tatsukhei Sukhitwam', how can they assume *mān* for their own gratification?

Those who always plan for the happiness of Priyatam, for His happiness they assume *mān* also.

Once when Shri Krishna could not come despite His assurance, Priyā ji assumed *mān*. When Rasa proficient Priyatam came and called Priyā ji, She turned her face away rebuking and chiding Him. Priyatam, expert at placating and pleasing failed this time. Sakhis also tried their best to make Kishori Shri Rādhā give up Her *mān*. Shri Krishna pleaded-

तू रिस छाँड़ री राधे राधे ।
 ज्यौ-ज्यौ तोकौ गहरु, त्यौ-त्यौ मोकौ बिथा री साधे साधे ॥
 प्रानन को पोषत है री सुनियत तेरे वचन आधे आधे ।
 श्रीहरिदास के स्वामी स्यामा कुञ्जबिहारी तेरी प्रीति बांधे बांधे ॥

Even after this when She did not give up, Priyatam started getting more and more impatient. Then on the advice of the sakhis He

1. O jewel adorned site called Mān mandir, enchanting to the demi-gods, the gandharvas and others and creator of the *mān* of Shri Rādhā! O Mān mandir! Obeisance to you.

went to Priyā ji in a disguise. Seeing a new sakhi Priyāji was attracted to her and She started asking various questions. The instant She learnt about the sakhi's proficiency in music etc Priyā ji embraced her. At the touch of the sakhi, Priyā ji understood that she was Priyatam in disguise. Priyatam blessed that fortunate place in various ways. The *mān* of Priyā ji dissolved.

This place, the witness of these pastimes of *rasa keli* became famous as Māngarh.

This place in a secluded spot on Brahmāchal is extremely beautiful. During the rainy season especially the sights are really enthralling. Nearby are Hindolā, Rāsmandal and Ratnākar Sarowar.

Sānkari Khor

घेर लई आय नन्दराय के कुमर कान्ह,
 मारत मधुर मुस्काई नेह कांकरी ।
 मुरि मुख आंचर दै रसिक-रसीली राधे,
 ठाड़ी छवि धाम हेरै चितवन बांकुरी ॥
 रोके राह ठाड़ो मनमोहन मुकुन्द प्यारौ,
 भ्रमकि भ्ररोकन ते देखे सखी भांकरी ।
 नैनन की कोर चितचोर बरजत जात,
 सांकरी गली में प्यारी 'हा'करी न 'ना' करी ॥

In between the dark and pale rocks, the narrow path used for coming and going is famous as Sānkari Khor. This secluded site is the witness to many pastimes soaked in *rasa*.

Braj maidens go through this way to sell their milk and yogurt. Intensely eager to meet the Priyatam these damsels searching for Him with a look of surprise and confusion in their eyes are glancing here and there through their unsteady veils. At such a time, Shyām Sundar arrived and blocked their way. By the arrows of His eyes He pierced their souls. Grasping the hand, oh! He himself adorned with a certain look of laziness, sat down on a nearby rock. Suddenly when I looked up I saw far in the distance, a damsel peeping through her window. What happened afterwards, what could that maiden soaked in the colour of love say.

'Only this isn't it! That one day the darling of Nandarāi ji met me here in this Sānkari Gali. In the alleys of this high and low valley He broke my pot forcibly and spilt the entire milk and yogurt. Even I gathered my courage and ridiculing His riches, spoke about my

expensive *induri* (circular fold of cloth put on head to carry a burden). Not only this sakhi! Speaking about my dance proficiency, I said again that the sound of my anklets is far superior than the sound of your flute. And sakhi! When He came closer and held my hand....Oh! How was that Magician of beautiful looks, I was lost in this helplessness of love, Ah! Ah...! Perhaps this is the norm of love, I kept singing, 'I met the Sānwariā with peacock feathered crown at Sānkari khor.'

Treasuring these sweet memories in its womb, this site is making the devotees experience these delightful Leelā even today.

The wonderful experience of one unknown great person connected to this site is making us acquainted with the greatness of this place.

“Sakhi! See! Shyām Sundar Nava Kishore is standing before us on the shining smooth rocks of Sānkari Khor. Are you looking or not ! Looking towards us in a special way He is saying something and smiling and gesturing at us only.

A golden yellow bud in His curly hair is looking beautiful and a curled lock of hair is falling over the forehead as if a young bee coming on the lotus face is imploring for the nectar from the buds of lips. His yellow pitāambar waving in the gusts of wind is awakening desires in the Braj maidens. Sakhi! How fortunate is this pitāambar, waving and enfolding the auspicious body it is drinking the rasa and awakening desires in us.”

(With gratitude from the scripture Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorva Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji)

This is an incident about fifty years old. One milkmaid steeped in the feeling of Krishna with pot on her head was going out to sell yogurt. Her heart was pining and her eyes were getting restless. Just as she was crossing Sānkari Khor intoxicated in the feeling of Krishna, Nandanandan jumped from the top and snatching the yogurt from the pot and giving her a taste of His beauty, went away deceiving her. That damsel entranced in that intoxication for many years wandered everywhere saying, “Lai gayau, Lai gayau” i.e. He took it away, He took it away.

In the end she entered the eternal abode in that very trance.

Kirtidā Kund

नमः कीर्तिर्महाभागे सर्वेषां गोब्रजौकसां ।
सर्वसौभाग्यदे तीर्थे सुकीर्तिसरसे नमः ॥

(‘वृहत्पाराशर’ ब्रज भक्ति विलास)

O Supremely fortunate Shri Kirtidā ! O Kirti Sarowar! The giver of luck to Shri Vrishbhānu bābā and other Brajwāsīs, obeisance to you.

The lake where Shri Kirtidā ji used to bathe daily is known as Kirti Sarowar. This is situated in the north western quarter of Bhānu sarowar.

Shri Rādhā Sarowar

देवकृतार्थरूपाय श्री राधासरसे नमः ।
त्रैलोक्यपदमोक्षाय रम्यतीर्थाय ते नमः ॥

(बृहन्नारदीय पुराण)

O Rādhikā Sarowar! The one who gratifies the demigods! Obeisance to you. You are the giver of liberation in all the three worlds and an enchanting tirtha.

Here Kishori Shri Rādhikā with her intimate sakhis used to engage in water sports. That is why it became famous as Shri Rādhā Sarowar.

Brajeishwar Mahādev

ब्रजेश्वराय ते तुभ्यं महारुद्राय ते नमः ।
ब्रजौकसां शिवार्थाय नमस्ते शिवरूपिणे ॥

(गौरी तन्त्र)

O Brajeishwar! O the mighty Rudra! Obeisance to you. You are for the welfare of the Brajwāsīs! O the form of Shiva obeisance to you.

This Shiva idol established near Bhānu sarowar, by Shri Vrishbhānu Bābā and other cowherds for the attainment of Ishta is for the welfare of all Brajwāsīs.

There is a famous hearsay regarding this Shiva idol. It is said that some Brajwāsīs tried to move the idol to some other place. As the digging continued, the hugeness of the idol became evident to them. At last they dropped the idea and prayed to Mahādev ji and considered it better to leave the idol *virājīt* at its original site.

Shoor Sarowar

कृतार्थरूपिणे तुभ्यं शूरस्य सरसे नमः ।
धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणां वैकुण्ठपददायिने ॥

(ब्रज भक्ति विलास से उद्धृत)

O Shoor Sarowar! The form of blessings! Obeisance to you. You are the giver of duty, riches, desires, liberation and the position of Vaikuntha spontaneously.

Vilās Garh

विलासरूपिणे तुभ्यं नमः कृष्णाय ते नमः ।
सखीवर्गसुखाप्ताय क्रीडाविमलदर्शिने ॥

(आ० बा० पु०)

O the spotless site of pastime of Shri Krishna! You are the giver of bliss and happiness to sakhis.

You are the embodiment of *vilās*. Obeisance to you and to Shri Krishna.

Fond of perpetual keli, Yugal always remain drowned in rasa. The paraphernalia of these keli secrets are arranged by the innocent damsels of Braj. At times this group rasa *vilās* flows in the secluded *nikunja* in order to reveal the supreme secrets and mysteries of rasa.

‘Milei rahat mānaun kabahun milei nā’, the Yugal meet every day but they remain insatiated. In fact in love there is insatiability and insatiability only. The desire to drink more and more rasa remains forever. And this stream of love remains flowing always. Once shaken by some forceful wave of love, the Yugal came to a dense *nikunja* suddenly. Both were completely unaware of the state of the other. The mutual scent of the body brought some consciousness back. Overpowered by the rasa steeped *keli*, by the *rasaful* desire, by the desire of drinking *rasa* both of them convulsed by *rasa* came closer. Up until when, the sweet confluence of insatiability and savouring the pleasant *keli of rasa vilās*, continued flowing, who could say? Up until when these love crazy Yugal awakening from this sport of *rasa* and divine love, repeating their love story, kept teaching and learning the lesson of love, who knows? Drinking this *vilās mādhuri* of theirs their very own forms the Braj damsels came there intoxicated after tasting the remnants of *rasa*. They saw their disheveled looks, loose garlands, disarrayed clothes, disheveled hair and various marks of *rasa* on the body and their faces adorned with lazy looks. They could only say-

‘परमानन्द प्रभु सुरत समै रस मदन नृपति की सेना लूटी’

Nourished by the *rasa* residue of the *rasa* steeped *keli* of *Priyā-Priyatam*, this site is reiterating the tale of *vilās* of the Yugal even today. It is situated on top of Vishnu parwat.

Vrishbhānu Sarowar

निर्धूतकिल्बिषायैव गोपराजकृताय ते ।
वृषभानुमहाराजकृताय सरसे नमः ॥

(‘विष्णु धर्मोत्तरे’ ब्रज भक्ति विलास)

O the washer of sins and stains! O Bhānu Sarowar made by Vrishbhānu the king of the cowherds! Obeisance to you.

This sarowar is very dear to both Shri Vrishbhānu Nandini Shri Rādhā and Nandanandan Shri Krishna. Both have sported in water sports here in various ways. During water sports it is difficult to say when the attraction of the mutual beauty will shake their hearts. And when these Yugal Rasik Nava Kishore will become engrossed in the rasa steeped pastime of *sthal* (land) sports in the water sports itself. If you really want to know then sit at some secluded site of Bhānu sarowar and experience your thoughts directly and become blessed.

Hiding all the secrets of water and land sports in its bed this beautiful sarowar remains a special attraction for many devotees even today.

This sarowar is situated in the east of Barsānā Grām. According to one hearsay when Vrishbhānu bābā came here like everyday on the eighth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Bhādra, he saw a girl child floating on a flower in this sarowar. Bābā brought that girl to his palace. She was the mother of the universe, Shri Rādhā herself.

Peeli Pokhar

एई पिलूखोर एथा पीलूफल छके ।
सखीसह राईकानूक्रीड़ा कुतूहले ॥

(भ० २०)

Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj came to this Peeli Pokhar. Here Shri Swāminiji had taken bath after applying a paste made of meal, turmeric, oil, perfume.

This sarowar surrounded by Peelu trees is the private place of water sports of Priyā ji. Because of the colour of the paste applied on the body of Priyāji, the colour of the water of this kund became yellow. That is why this kund became famous as Peeli Pokhar. This is an extremely beautiful site.

The Dongi Leelā (boat race) that takes place on the day of ShriVāman *dwādashī* (twelfth day) is especially worth seeing.

Till now we were enjoying the Leelā sites of Vrishbhānupur, let us now enjoy the other sites in the vicinity.

Chaksauli

चिकसौली ग्राम पूर्वे ई चित्रशाली ।
एथा राई विचित्र वेशेते दक्ष आली ॥

(भ० २०)

The sakhis experts at doing *shringār* took Shri Rādhā to a nikonja for a Leelā after doing special *shringār* of Her here.

This is the village of Chitrā sakhi. It is adjacent to Sānkari Khor.

Once during cattle grazing Shri Krishna came to a field here along with His sakhās to steal green grams. They plucked several plants of grams. When the caretaker came to know she ran after them. It was not easy to catch Kanhaiyā. Holding the green grams under His arm He ran and stopped only after coming to Gahvar vana. Other sakhās were waiting there. They prepared roasted green gram and ate. That milkmaid also reached there. Drinking the beauty of Shri Krishna she forgot about her anger and steeped in motherly love became mesmerised. She herself started peeling and feeding them green grams. Shri Nāgaridās ji has given a delectable description of that Leelā.

Gram and items made of gram are liked by Priyā and Priyatam both. That pada of Shri Nāgaridās ji is given below.

चकसौली के चना चुराये ।
गारी दै दौरी रखवारिन गवारिन सहित गुपाल भजाये ॥
हरे बूट दावे बगलनि में स्वास भरे वन गह्वर आये ।
कहत आतुरे बोल लोल दृग हँसत-हँसत सब बरन चढ़ाये ॥
हरे चबात, कोऊ होरा करि, वन की लीला लाल लुभाये ।
नागरिया बैठी छकि हारी छील-छील नँदलालहिं ख्वाये ॥

Dohani Kund

रक्तनीलसिताधूम्रापीतागोदोहनप्रद ।
वृषभानुकृतस्तीर्थ नमस्तुभ्यं प्रसीद मे ॥

(वृहन्नारदीय पुराण)

By milking the red, blue, white, black, yellow cows Shri Vrishbhānu bābā has made this site a tirtha in itself. O (Dohani Kund) sthal! Obeisance to you. Please become happy with me and shower grace on me.

Mayur Sarowar

मयुरक्रीडिने तुभ्यं चित्रलेखे नमोऽस्तु ते ।
त्रैलोक्यपदमोक्षाय मयूरसरसे नमः ॥

(वृहन्नारदीय पुराण)

Fond of sporting with peacocks! O Chitraleikhei! Obeisance to you. Giver of the pada of all three worlds and the giver of liberation, O Mayur sarowar! Obeisance to you.

Mayur Kridā (sporting with peacocks) is especially dear to Shri Chitrā ji. She comes here every day. Herds and herds of peacocks spontaneously assemble here. Shri Chitrā ji feeds them. At times the peacocks encircle her. At such times Priyā-Priyatam also arrive there swaying and sashaying. The peacocks welcome them expressing their emotions by making sounds of joy. Absorbed in dance they come close to Priyā ji some times and sometimes getting the proximity of Priyatam, they become overjoyed and elated and become engrossed in dancing. Shri Chitrā ji also becomes ecstatic and thrilled at her fortune. She gets suffused with rasa beholding the beautiful form of Priyatam surrounded by peacocks. And the rasa crazy Yugal seeing the dance of the peacocks, make this site more and more beautiful with their own rasaful endeavors. Knower of the secrets of all these keli, this site receiving these Leelās as gift has preserved them in order to distribute them amongst the devotees.

Mayur sarowar is near Deha Kund.

Muktā Kund

देख मुक्ता कुण्ड एथा राधिका सुन्दरी ।
मुक्ता खेत केला कृष्ण सह वाद करी ॥

(भ० २०)

Once a jestful argument broke out between Shri Krishna and Shri Rādhā. Whereas Shri Krishna is the Lord of the whole universe, His beloved Shri Rādhā is the embodiment of Shakti. His desire for love has personified as Shri Rādhā. In this competition Shri Rādhā sowed pearls in a field and grew them. Both Priyā and Priyatam did their Shringār with those pearls. Since then this area became famous as Muktā kund.

Sunaharā Grām (Swarnahār) and Kadambakhandi

देखई कदम्बखण्डि स्वर्णहारग्राम ।
रत्नकुण्ड चतुर्मुख स्थान अनुपम ॥

स्वर्णहार स्थानेते विलास अतिशय ।
‘सोनआर’ सोनहेरा नाम अबे कय ॥

(भ० २०)

Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj also came to Swarnaprastha Parwat and Kadambakhandi of Sunaharā where there is a site of Rās, the place for swings and *Jal shaiyyā* (water bed).

This site of private Rās vilās is located in the middle of Kadamba trees. Even the sweltering heat of the summer loses its effect in the fragrance of Kadamba flowers. The atmosphere of this place always remains cool. The fragrance of Kadamba flowers bathed in the rain makes the mind be more and more intoxicated. This fragrance of Kadamba after touching a rasa particle of the ocean of ambrosia Shri Krishna is sashaying crazily. This fortunate site remains intoxicated by that fragrance, by the foot prints of Priyā-Priyatam and by collecting the rasa drops of every rasa steeped *keli* of theirs. This cool and dense site of Kadamba trees, private vihar site of the pastime of Rās is osculated with divine and sweet rasa.

Nearby is the Ratna kund.

Sunaharā grām is the birth place of both Sudevi and Rangadevi sakhis. Shri Rangadevi ji is an expert at putting red paint on the feet of Priyā ji where as Sudevi ji is very skillful in braiding the hair of Priyā ji and in training parrot and mynah.

Shri Nāgāji (Chatura Chintāmani)

He was born at Payagaon in Braj. Since the beginning he was a great recluse. He started living in Kadambakhandi near the village with renunciation.

He was extremely fond of touring Braj. He used to visit any place he liked and stay there. Staying at Kadambakhandi of Sunaharā grām he began living intoxicated in the happiness of Priyā-Priyatam.

Once he was travelling. He had very long matted hair. The hair got stuck in a bush of Heensa. Overwhelmed and absorbed in Leelā he remained standing there. He stood there in a trance as it is for three days. Shri Krishna came Himself and started untangling the hair. Nāgāji asked, ‘Who are you?’ (He had deep faith in Kishori Shri Rādhā. He used to lead his life reliant on Her grace.) Shyām Sundar looks resplendent and beautiful only with Priyā ji. Kishori Shri Rādhā manifested right there. Drinking the beauty of Shri Rādhā-Krishna he became content. Later he came to Vrindāvan and started living at Vihar Ghāt.

Unchā Grām

यत्र गोपसुताः सर्वा ललितादिप्रभृतः ।
 क्रीडाश्चक्रुःसमासेनश्रीकृष्ण-गुणमोदिताः॥
 यस्मात्सखी गिरिर्नाम बभूव ब्रजमण्डले ॥

(विष्णु रहस्यं)

Shri Lalitā ji is chief amongst the eight main sakhis. She has entry even in the most intimate and private *vilāsmayi Leelās* of Priyā-Priyatam. Unchā grām is the birth place of Shri Lalitā ji. Endowed with qualities just like her name, Shri Lalitā ji is extremely tender and delicate. The temple of Lalitā ji is worth seeing. Her love for Priyā-Priyatam, her role in organising new Leelās, her site of sporting and pastime are extremely dear even to Madan Mohan. Some rasik saint by describing the mutual relationship of Shri Lalitā ji and Priyā-Priyatam has offered his homage moistened with his sentiments.

Shri Lalitā ji is the giver of unlimited delight to Shri Rādhā ji and she has uninterrupted entry in the extremely secret and profound *keli* of Priyā-Priyatam. Subjugated by her selfless love the Yugal Rihawār always keep her with them. He says-

ललिता ललित रूप मन-मीठी, ललित त्रिभंगी मोहे ।
 श्रीराधा रस वर्धन कारिणी, संग विशाखा सोहे ॥
 सखिन मध्य महामणि चमकै, अतिशय हास स्वभाव ।
 नित्य नई लीला के सर्जन, करति रहति मृदुचाव ॥
 नव-नव लाड़ प्यार सों पोषै, सबहिं भाँति हित मानै ।
 युगल लाड़िले संग लिये, नित नव रस कौतुक ठानै ।
 जब-जब रूठै प्रिया मानिनी, मानें नहीं हठीली ।
 तब-तब रसिकराय हित ललिता कहि-कहि बात रसीली ॥
 मान मनावै, अति दुलरावै, करि-करि कै नव साज ।
 या भाँति बिलसत मन हुलसत रस रानी, रस राज ॥

Shri Lalitā ji does the service of giving beetle leaves to Priyā-Priyatam. She has sharp wit and intellect. She aids in enhancing the joy of Priyā-Priyatam and skillfully organizes every event. She is also an expert of magic.

To the east from here is Shri Baladev temple and in the south west there is the samādhi of Nārāyana Bhatt ji.

Shri Nārāyana Bhatt ji

Shri Bhatt Bhāskar, father of Shri Nārāyana Bhatt ji was renowned in the tradition of Tailanga Brahmin in Madhurapattan Pradesh of South India. Sometimes in samvat 1602 he came to Braj at the age of fourteen.

In samvat 1626 on the day of the second day of the bright fortnight of the month of Ashādh (jun-july) showering grace on him, the present day idol of Shree ji in Vrishbhānupur, manifested for him.

He had deep dedication for Braj. He was a great scholar. He composed many scriptures. He described about many tirthas and the circumambulation of Braj. He has done a great favour to the Vaishnavas by composing Braj Bhakti Vilās.

Sakhigiri

Here enchanted by the beauty and qualities of Shri Krishna, Lalitā ji and the other gopis sported in all kinds of ways, therefore this site is famous as Sakhigiri in Braj mandal.

The magic of the beauty of Shri Krishna entered and spread in the whole Nature. The hearts of these damsels filled with exuberance. They started wandering in the blissful search of a certain Magician of beauty in the nikunjas, at the ghāts and alleys, at the river bank, here and there everywhere. Subjugated by this love, their very own *Jeewan Sarvaswa* this dark Kishore always remains yearful for *rasa keli*. These supremely fortunate gopikas have also surrendered everything they have including their lives to their *Jeewan Sarvaswa Priyā-Priyatam*.

Every site of Braj is the knower of the secrets of the art of Shri Krishna *keli*.

This Sakhigiri Parwat is the creator and the witness of many *Leelās*. It remains intoxicated and absorbed in the *rasaful keli* of love crazy Yugal. What has not been done by the sakhis here? That *rasa steeped keli* is flowing here even today. The caves of this mountain have carefully and with endeavour preserved the legacy of Brajwāsīs in their hearts. This is the private *vihār* site of *Priyā-Priyatam*. Saturated with the *rasaful* feelings of Shri Lalitā ji and other sakhis, this site is famous as Sakhigiri.

Fisalini Shilā

This is a beautiful site on top of Sakhigiri. Here sakhis have done various kinds of *Leelās*.

Chitra Vichitra Shilā

This shilā is near the Faisalini Shilā. The excellent work of painting done by the sakhis is worth looking at even today. This painting made on rocks in various colours is a sample in itself. There has been no effect of the sun, the rain and winter on it. For years it has remained as it is.

When sakhis did the *shringār* of Priyā-Priyatam and organised the marriage of Shri Lalitā ji with Shyām Sundar, they rested her henna coloured hands on this rock. Not knowing when it will receive this fortune again, in its impatience, the eager rock imprinted the marks of rasa rang soaked in love on its heart. Proud of those marks, it seems to be prancing even today.

Shri Lalitā Vivāha Sthal/ Site of the Marriage of Shri Lalitā

ब्रजोत्सवाय कृष्णाय ब्रजराजाय शोभिने ।
ललितायै नमस्तुभ्यं ब्रजकेल्यै नमो नमः ॥

(ब्र० भ० वि०)

O the personified festivity of Braj! O Shri Krishna! O Brajrāj! O the form of Beauty ! Obeisance to you. O Lalitei! Votary of the pastimes of Braj! Obeisance to you.

Shri Krishna fulfilling the wish of Shri Lalitā ji married her at the age of seven. Even today at this site after Shri Rādhāshṭami on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Bhādra, the romp and revelry of marriage celebration starts resounding.

This is an extremely beautiful and secluded site.

Triveni Tirtha

कृष्णाज्ञासंप्रवर्तिन्यै त्रिवेण्यै सततं नमः ।
परं मोक्षपदं देहि धनधान्यप्रवर्द्धिनी ॥

(ब्र० भ० वि०)

O Triveni (confluence of three rivers Gangā, Yamunā and Saraswati) that originated at the command of Shri Krishna! Obeisance to you. Please give the superior salvation and also increase the wealth, prosperity and happiness.

By putting the dust of this site on forehead, the merit of bathing at the confluence of Triveni is attained.

Sakhi Koop

कृतार्थोऽसि सखीकूप देवानां मुक्तिहेतवे ।
ललितायाः स्वपानाय सखीकूप नमोऽस्तुते ॥

(ब्र० भ० वि०)

Sakhi koop is near the mountain. After getting the assurance from Shri Krishna, sakhis kept waiting for the arrival of Kishori ji. After the arrival of Shri Kishori, Leelā was organised. Then the sakhis constructed a well and gave water to everyone to drink and drank some themselves.

Since then this well has become famous as Sakhi koop.

Shri Baladev Sthal

रेवतीरमणायैव नमस्ते मुसलायुध ।
लाङ्गिलेय समंताय हलायुध नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

(प० पु०)

O Revatiraman! Musalāyudhdhara! Obeisance to you. O Halāyudh Lādileiya! Obeisance to you.

This is the place of Baldev ji. It is believed that the idol *virājmān* here appeared for Shri Nārāyana Bhatt ji from a thicket of trees. A magnificent temple of Baldev ji is present in the thicket of trees even today.

Gopi Pushkarini

पुष्करिण्यै नमस्तुभ्यं मुक्तिदायै नमो नमः ।
साफल्यपदप्राप्त्यै सर्वकल्मषनाशये ॥¹

(प० पु०)

Sakhigiri Parwat is the site of Leelās of the sakhis. Sakhis took a bath here. This lake is situated on top of this mountain. This deserted site is marked with the child foot prints of the sakhis. When looked attentively these foot prints can be seen even today.

This Pushkarini is the fulfiller of all wishes and the destroyer of all sins, giver of devotion and salvation easily.

Deha Kund

There is a hearsay that Priyā-Priyatam took a bath in this kund on some special festival. The site was resonating with the sweet songs,

1. O Gopi Pushkarini! Obeisance to you. You are the giver of salvation. For attaining success and for destroying all sins obeisance to you.

laughter and banter and splashing of water at each other. One poor Brahmin came there and requested for some money. Shyām Sundar who always gives respect to His beloved, fulfilled the wish of that Brahmin by giving him gold equal to the weight of Priyā ji.

Giver of devotion to Shri Krishna , this Deha Kund is revealing its glory even today.

Veni Shankar Mahādev

वेणीशङ्कररुद्राय नमस्ते शिवरूपिणे ।
गोपकुलशिवाथाय नमस्ते भवमूर्तये ॥

(अग्नि पुराण)

One who is the idol of auspiciousness for the welfare of the lineage of the cowherds , just by having darshan of which the merit of bathing in Triveni is gained, such Veni Shankar Mahādev is *virājmān* at the bank of Deha kund.

This Mahādev idol was established by the gopis.

Reethaurā (Chandrāwali Vana)

कृष्णसौख्य-महोत्साह ! गुणरूपकलानिधे ।
चन्द्रावलि-निवासाय नमस्ते कृष्ण वल्लभ ॥¹

(ब्र० भ० वि०)

Shri Chandrāwali ji is Shri Krishna's devout beloved. Shri Krishna also has especial love for her.

सौन्दर्योत्सवकेलिपौरुषरसं गायिन्त ताः सुस्वरं ।
वीणावेणुमृदङ्गतालमहतीं संवादयन्त्योऽपि च ॥
राधानृत्यति दक्षिणे रसवती चन्द्रावली वामतः ।
मध्ये श्यामलसुन्दरो रसकलामुद्दीपयन्नुत्तमाम् ॥

(श्रीराधारस मञ्जरी-28)

From the above shloka not only is the love that Shri Krishna has for Shri Chandrāwali ji becoming evident but also the mysteriousness of rasa flowing in their keli becoming apparent. The musical instruments assisting in that secret keli are resounding accordingly. Shri Rādhā ji on the right, Shri Chandrāwali ji on the left and Shri Krishna in the middle inflaming the rasa are absorbed in dancing. How is this amazing rasa keli? It is only worth seeing and worth savouring.

Shri Chandrāwali ji is equally dear to Shri Krishna as Priyā

1. O the heap of comfort, happiness, festivity, virtues and skills of Shri Krishna! O the abode of Chandrāwali! Dear to Shri Krishna! Obeisance to you.

ji. She is a leader of a yutha or a group of sakhis. Priyatam Shyām Sundar has special feelings for her.

Chandrāwali Sarowar and Baithak of Vithalnāth ji are here.

Dabhāro

डभरारो ग्राम ऐई कृष्ण ऐइ खाने ।
भरिल नयने अश्रु राधिका दर्शने ॥

(भ० र०)

The custom of Love is strange. Although the separation from the beloved is extremely painful, nevertheless it keeps convulsing the mind with a wave of blissfulness. Some rasik has said-

हौं जानत प्रिय मिलन ते, विरह अधिक सुख होय ।
मिलते मिलिये एक सौं, बिछुरे सब ठां सोय ॥

Because of the intensity of love even during the times of union and nearness, the forgetfulness of the self creates a feeling of separation and then everything becomes unbearable. Always immersed in the whirlpools of union and separation of His beloved Kishori Shri Rādhā, the eyes of Priyatam filled with tears of joy and delight upon seeing her today. Wonder it was due to the rasaful signal of which sidelong glance? When everything is favourable then it is natural for the waves of love to erupt. Therefore the success and accomplishment of the prelude of rasa is within the capacity of only these rasa crazy lovers.

Kāmeiyee (Kāmanā Vana)

कामाई ग्रामे ते विशाखार जन्म हय ।

(भ० र०)

The place of Shri Vishākhā ji amongst the main eight sakhis of Shri Krishna is unparalleled. This village is her birth place.

Her service is to apply camphor etc fragrant objects on the bodies of Priyā-Priyatam. She is an expert at doing embroidery in the clothes of Yugal. She is a great scholar.

Karahalā

Shri Lalitā ji had stayed here. This is said to be the site of dadhi dān Leelā of Lord Shri Krishna.

Jalagharā Kund and Baithak of Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj are here. The scripture called “Rās

Panchādhyāyee Par Tippāni” was composed here by Shri Gosāin Vithalnāthji.

It is believed that the Rās Leelā in Braj was started here by Shri Ghamandi dev ji. This is considered to be the navel of Braj.

Shri Uddhav ji (Ghamandi)

घमण्डी रस में घुमड़ि रह्यो वृन्दावन निज धाम ।
बंशीवट तट वास कियो गायो श्यामा श्याम ॥

(श्रीघुवदासजी)

Shri Ghamandi ji was born in Rājasthān. He had deep faith in the saints. After getting initiation from Shri Haridev ji at a young age, he came to Braj and started living there. He had unflinching faith and trust in his adored deity. Reliant on this very power of grace he always remained filled with pride. For this reason he became famous as Ghamandi (Proud) in the community.

Most of the time he used to wander in different sites of Braj. Once he came to Karahalā grām and started living there. He was a great saint. Priyā-Priyatam appeared and ordered him, “Enacting Rās with the Brahmin children bring our Leelā to light.” Thākur ji gave him His crown and Priyā ji Her head ornament. He started Rās Leelā with Brahmin children of Mathurā. It is said that all those Swaroopas (children who played the various parts in the enactment of Rās) disappeared from there and joined the parikar of Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna made him realise that He only had accepted those Swaroopas and then asked him to propagate Rās Leelā with the Brahmin children of Karahalā.

He organised the Rās Leelā again. The credit of starting the tradition of Rās Leelā goes to him¹. That tradition of Rās as Rās poornimā festival is celebrated up until now.

Later on he started living in Vrindāvan.

A pada related to *Rāsanukaran* (imitation of Rās) and to the appearance which will further clarify this subject is being given below.

रास बिहारी लाल दृगन ते दूर भयो जब ।
तिमिर ग्रसित भौ भाव नहीं जाने कोऊ तब ॥
श्रीस्वामी हरिदास खास ललिता वपु तिनकौ ।

1. A few people are of the view that this Ghamand dev ji living in Karahalā was some other Brahmin, who was basically a resident of Karahalā only and he started the Rās Leelā.

प्रकट करन भई रास महल ते आज्ञा जिनकौ ॥
 नाम घमंड सनकादि सम्प्रदा रसमय जिनकौ ।
 अधिकारी रसमयी समुभि निरमल बुधि तिनकौ ॥
 श्री मधुपुरी समीप घाट विश्रांत नाम तहँ ।
 श्री आचारज विष्णु स्वामी मत पोषक है जहँ ॥
 कहीं चलौ नित आस पास मेरी वे पुजवें ।
 सेवा रीत अलौकिक प्रगटी है जिन ब्रज में ॥
 तिन ढिग स्वामी गये कुशल पूछी बैठारे ।
 कहो प्रिये सखि कवन हेतु यहाँ चरण पधारे ॥
 तब स्वामी हरिदास कट्यौ प्रभु अन्तरजामी ।
 तुमते कछु नहिं छिपौ कहा पूछत जग स्वामी ॥
 ऐसौ करो उपाय रास रस प्रगटै जन में ।
 जो कछु इच्छा रही कहो तुम आगे मन में ॥
 कोई पर्व निमित्त रहे तहँ वामन राजा ।
 श्रीगोस्वामी कट्यौ लेहु कुछ इनसों काजा ॥
 प्राणायाम चढ़ाय रोकि दसहू इन्द्री तब ।
 कछु दिन पीछें कट्यौ सुनो मेरे तुम जन अब ॥
 नभ ते उतरत मुकुट सबै विश्वास दृढ़ावन ।
 सप्तताल विस्तरित जगमगत अति नग वर गन ॥
 सबको दरसन भयौ मुकुट जब भूपर आयो ।
 धूप-दीप नैवेद्य सबन लै ताहि चढ़ायो ॥
 सबरे भूपन प्रस्न कियौ ताही छिन प्रभु सौं ।
 किहि कारण आगमन भयो सो कहो किन हमसौं ॥
 रास क्रीड़ा करौ कही यह बात जतावन ।
 नहिं यामें कछु दोस यही है हमरी कामन ॥
 ताम्र पत्र में मुहर करा सबरे तुमहूँ किन ।
 कै कछु शङ्का होय करौ मेटूँ याहि छिन ॥
 अपनी-अपनी मुहर सबी कर गये देस कूं ।
 मानत रहैं सदा मोक्षदाता है हमकूं ॥
 सबही देखत गुप्त मुकुट भौ ताही अरसा ।
 जै-जै नभ धुनि भई सुरन करी पुष्पन बरसा ॥

तब स्वामी हरिदास कही अब देर करत कित ।
 छिन पल हमकों कोटि-कल्प सम बीतत है इत ॥
 माथुर भक्ति परायण तिनकों निकट बुलाये ।
 परम मतो हम देऊ अष्ट बालक मन भाये ॥
 ताही छिन ते गये धाये बालक लै आये ।
 को कहैं तिनकी महिमा जो श्रीप्रभु ने बुलाये ॥
 श्रीस्वामी हरिदास कियौ सिंगार प्रिया को ।
 श्रीआचारज देव कियो मोहन रसिया को ॥
 पुनि वृन्दावन आय रास मण्डल निरमान्यौ ।
 वेद पुराण शास्त्र तंत्रन जा रीत बखान्यौ ॥
 ता मधि जुगल किसोर थापि पुनि सखि पधराई ।
 आपुन कियो समाज कृष्ण लीला तब गाई ॥
 महारास तब कियो लाल भये अंतरध्याना ।
 बन-बन ढूढ़त फिरै सखी कर-कर गुन गाना ॥
 सुखिया सखी जु संग ताहि पिय छोड़ गये जब ।
 जो-जो जहँ की तहाँ रही पाई नांही तब ॥
 रसिक जनन के हृदय भयो अति ही दुख दावन ।
 प्रथम ग्रास में भयो मक्षिका को यह पातन ॥
 माथुर अपने पुत्रन कों मांगन जब आये ।
 तब उनसों यह कह्यौ नहीं हमकूं कहूँ पाये ॥
 अति भृगरौ तिन कियो तबै यह करी वारता ।
 तुम्हरे पुत्रन को जू भई है तदाकारता ॥
 हमको निश्चै होय करो सोई कृत्य गुसाँई ।
 तब उनके सब पुत्र लाल ढिंग दिये दिखाई ॥
 अपने-अपने घरन माथुरन किये पलायन ।
 “घमंड देव” सो कह्यौ सुनों गुरुभक्ति परायन ॥
 तुम ब्रज के बासीन मौहि कीजै शिष शाखा ।
 तिनसों यह मारग जु चलाओ सुनि मम भाखा ॥
 ऐसैं आज्ञा दई गये अपने-अपने थल ।
 घमंड देव पुनि गये ग्राम ललिता जहँ करहल ॥
 उदयकरण अरु खेमकरण द्वै भ्राता द्विजवर ।
 तिनही सों यह रास प्रथा चली सुनौ रसिकवर ॥

Pisayi Grām (Pipāsā Van)

‘गाय चराव हरि कट्यौ, भयो पियासौ ठाँउ ।
ता दिन तें सुखरासि यह भयौ पिसायौ गाँउ ॥’

(जगतनन्द)

Grazing is special amongst the daily activities of Shri Krishna. Awaking early in the morning, filled with enthusiasm, Kanhaiyā gets busy with the preparations for grazing.

Maiyā made Kanhaiyā have breakfast. After that Kanhaiyā went to the forest. He carried the lunch with Him. It was almost noon time when He finished herding the cows. He was hungry. He started having His food. There was no water nearby. Dāu ji went running and brought some water and gave it to Kanhaiyā to drink. Thus this site came to be called as Piyāso (thirst) or Pisayi or Pisāyau grām.

Kishori Kund, Shyām Talāi and secret swinging site of Swāminiji (Shri Rādhā) are here.

Sāhār (Sārikā Van)

सारिकाह्लादसौख्याय नानाश्रुतसुखप्रद ।
युगलाय नमस्तुभ्यं रमारमणनामतः ॥¹

(भविष्योत्तरे)

The delicate darling of Shri Nandarai ji Shri Krishna and the darling of Shri Vrishbhānu bābā Kishori Shri Rādhā along with their extremely dear sakhis always remain absorbed in rasa.

Their absorption is the very pinnacle of love. Vines, trees, birds animals and every site of Braj, assists in this. Even the Nature assists in Braj Leelā. Nature here is not insentient. The Nature that assists in the rasaful keli of Priyā-Priyatam is the instrument of the Leelā itself.

Shuka (parrot) and sārikā (mynah) are the message bearers of Priyā-Priyatam. They are very astute and skillful in carrying the signals and the messages to each other. Braj bhoomi is the land of signals and messages. At times Priyā-Priyatam play with these shuka and sārikā and at times shower their love on them. In fact it is the group of sakhis that manifest, assuming the form of shuka and sārikā to enjoy the rasa keli and Yugal vihār.

Once taking one sārikā in His hand Priyatam caressing it with love and affection said ‘ Say Shri Rādhā’. That sārikā started

1. O Ramā Raman! You are the subject matter of happiness and joy of Sārikā and giver of various joy and delight to them.

repeating ‘Shri Rādhā, Shri Rādhā.’ At the same time Priyā ji asked the same sārīkā to repeat ‘ Shri Krishna, Shri Krishna.’ That sārīkā started repeating ‘Shri Krishna, Shri Krishna.....’. In the middle Shri Krishna asked again, ‘ Say Shri Rādhā’ and Shri Kishori asked, ‘Say Shri Krishna’. Before the sārīkā could say anything clearly, a pair of sārīkās perched on the branch of the Kadamba tree opposite them started saying loudly, ‘Shri Rādhā Krishna, Shri Rādhā Krishna.....’. Priyā-Priyatam looked at them startled. Receiving the love of Priyā-Priyatam, both of them resounded the forest area with the sweet sound of ‘Shri Rādhā Krishna, Shri Rādhā Krishna...’ This sweet sound permeated the whole environment of the Nature. Pouring their unlimited love and affection on the birds, the Yugal themselves became absorbed in rasa.

This site (Sārīkā van) became famous by the name of Sāhār. It is impacting everyone with the same sweetness even today.

There is Mān Sarowar here.

There is the residence of Shri Upananda ji. He had a son named Samudra who was married to Shri Kundalatā ji. Shri Kundalatā ji is a devout *sakhi* of Shri Rādhā.

Ānjanauk (Anjan Van)

देवगन्धर्वलोकानां रम्यवैहार-रूपिणे।

वैचित्रमूर्तये तुभ्यमंजनपुःवनाहव्य ॥¹

(कौर्म्ये त्र० भ० वि०)

Even the way of appreciation of Rasik Rījhawār Shyām Sundar is unique. Engaged in nitya-vihār Shyām Sundar always remains absorbed in the longing for rasa. His ways of savouring and giving rasa are also unique. The norm of love itself is strange. It cannot be bound by the limits of principles.

One day ever adolescent Shri Rādhā sitting in Her room was doing Her *shringār*. A parrot named Vichakshan went and related the entire conversation of Priyā ji to Priyatam. Wonder knows what occurred to Manahar (one who captivates the heart) Priyatam today that He took out the flute from the side and started playing it. Kishori Shri Rādhā and other sakhis heard this sound of call. Following that sweet sound Kishori Shri Rādhā along with her sakhis arrived in this forest. Priyatam made Priyā ji sit on a rock in front of Him and started savouring Her beauty. Noticing that there was no kohl in the eyes of

1. O Beautiful vihār sthal of Demigods, Gandharwas and human beings! Strange Anjan van! Obeisance to you.

Priyāji, Priyatam applied kohl in Her eyes. Deliberately, He smeared the kohl on her cheeks and asked Priyā ji to look in the mirror. Without waiting for the reply of Priyā ji, Priyatam started rubbing the kohl in order to rectify His mistake. Priyatam Shyām Sundar holding the hands of Priyā ji in one hand rubbed the entire kohl with His other hand. He started applying the kohl again and then started correcting the same mistake again. In the repetitions of this sequence a new event of vihar itself got created and now that line of kohl...

प्रिय पौँछत पट पीत सौँ प्रिया कपोलन पीक ।
प्यारी पौँछत प्रिय के अधरन अञ्जन लीक ॥

Sakhis deciding to adorn the love crazy Yugal with flowers, left to collect the flowers. These damsels returned after picking the flowers and saw their rasa steeped condition.

Beholding this rasa steeped state, they became absorbed in the divine joy. This keli of rasa vihar ended early today. Sakhis did the shringār of Priyā-Priyatam with the flowers and those fortunate sakhis filled with elation drowned in rasa.

That site becoming famous as Ānjanauk or Anjan van is giving the details of those very rasa steeped pursuits.

Kishori Kund

किशोरीस्नानरम्याय पीतरक्तजलाप्नुतः ।
तीर्थराज नमस्तुभ्यं कृष्णक्रीड़ाविधायिने ॥¹

(कूर्म पुराण ब्र० भ० वि०)

This Kishori Kund is the creator as well as the witness of many delectable Leelās of Shri Rādhā Krishna. When Priyā-Priyatam absorbed in sthal (land) keli, entered into the water, the colour of the water became yellow and red. This kund witness of extremely private and secret rasa-vihar vilās is extremely venerable. It is the giver of the love of Shri Krishna.

Shri Kishori Darshan

यशोदानन्दकृष्णाय प्रियायै सततं नमः ।
किशोररूपिणे तुभ्यं वल्लभायै नमोस्तुते ।

कूर्म पु० (ब्र० भ० वि०)

1. O Kishori Kunda filled with red and yellow colours and enchanting by the bathing of Kishori! O Tirtharāj the arranger of the sport of Shri Krishna! Obeisance to you.

Priyā ji is *virājmān* with Shri Krishna. O Shri Krishna, the provider of joy to Shri Yashodā ji! O Shri Kishori Priyā ji! Kishore Swaroop, obeisance to both of you.

Prema Sarowar

ललिताप्रेमसंभूते प्रेमाख्य सरसे नमः ।

प्रेमप्रदाय तीर्थाय कौटिल्यपद नाशक ! ॥¹

‘ब्रह्मयामल’ (ब्र० भ० वि०)

प्रेम सरोवर प्रेम की भरी रहे दिन रैन ।

जहाँ जहाँ प्यारी पग धरत श्याम धरत तहाँ नैन ॥

Oh! The pinnacle of love is found in the kingdom of these lovers. The word prema (love) is in fact a thing of the land of the Yugal lovers Brajrāj Kunvar and His beloved Kishori Rādhā only. Not only this, whatever Priyatam does, it is liked by Priyā ji and whatever Priyā ji likes, Priyatam does only that. By saying this Shrimanmahāprabhu Hita Harivansh ji Mahārāj has spoken about the highest form of love. Prema (love) bound within the limit of the happiness of the beloved, such a *prema* alone deserves to be called *prema*. In fact only this pure relationship will have to be called *prema*. This is the same Prema Sarowar where Priyā-Priyatam along with their bodily manifestations the Braj maidens, have brought many beautiful pastimes of love to life.

Here intoxicated by the fragrance of Kadamba trees, sometimes the Pranayi Rijhawār becomes engaged in rasa conversations with Priyāji. They soak each other with the showers of love. Sometimes during the rainy season this site becomes resonant with the romp and revelry of swings and sometimes it becomes resonant with the sound of the anklets.

It has to be said that the particles of the rasa vihar of these very love intoxicated maidens are scattered here. Collecting those particles, preserving them in its heart, this site feeling thrilled is famous as Prema sarowar or Prema sarasi.

Shri Lalitāmohan Sthal

प्रेमप्लुताय कृष्णाय ललितामोहनाय ते ।

सदा प्रेमस्वरूपाय नमस्ते मोक्षदायिने ॥

‘ब्रह्मयामल’ (ब्र० भ० वि०)

1. O Sarowar born from the love of Lalitā ji! O Tirtharāj the giver of love! Obeisance to you. You are the destroyer of crookedness and deviousness.

O Shri Krishna steeped in love! O Lalitā Mohan! The provider of love always! Obeisance to you.

Rās Mandal

रासक्रीडोत्सवायैव ललितायुगलोत्सव !
नमस्ते रासगोष्ठाय मण्डलाय वरप्रद !

‘ब्रह्मयामल’ (ब्र० भ० वि०)

O Rās assembly! O Rās Mandal! O the form of celebration for both Shri Lalitā and Mohan! Obeisance to you. You are for the celebration of the sport of Rās.

Who is capable of describing the fortune of this eternally rasa steeped Braj Bhoomi! Whose every site is osculated with the dust particles of the feet of Shi Krishna. It has become worshipable even for the demigods and the sages because of the touch of the feet of Shri Rādhā and her sakhis. These secluded sites of Rās have their own significance.

This fortunate Rās site, having arranged the many private rasa steeped Leelās, has become famous as Rās Mandal.

Hindolā Sthal

कृष्णवैमल्यदोलाय हिण्डोलसुखवर्धन ! ।
नमः कलामयतुभ्यं श्रावणोत्सवसंभवः ॥

‘ब्रह्मयामल’ ब्र० भ० वि०)

O Hindolā (swinging) sthal! You are for the enchanting swinging of Shri Krishna, obeisance to you. You are the enhancer of happiness and are all auspicious, you are born from the festival of Shrāwan (month of rains).

The festival of swing in Shrāwan is the beauty of Braj. The fervour and excitement all around, the swaying vines enfolding the trees, the delighted joy of the peacocks, the intoxicated cooing of the cuckoos, the greenery that can be seen far and wide, the rasa waves rising in the lakes filled with water, the fragrance of Kadamba trees, the resonance of songs from within the crowd gathered near some trees, everyone enjoying the rasa endeavours of Priya-Priyatam remain engrossed in happiness. The entire nature remains intoxicated by the rasa waves of these Braj maidens and their Pranayi Rasa Rijhawār Yugal.

One experience of swinging of Bhaktimati Usha Behen ji is being quoted in her words-

भूलन में फूलन की वर्षा कर सखियां हरषाई ।
 सहज सरस अखियां दोउन की और और सरसाई ॥
 दुहुँ जन हँसि निरख्यो सखियन तन चितवन अति सुखदाई ।
 तन पुलकित उत्फुल्ल वदन मन दृगन छई अरुणाई ॥
 हँसत करत परिहास परस्पर नेह मेह भर लाई ।
 प्रीतम हँसि बोले कछु अटपट सुनि श्यामा मुस्काई ॥
 निरखि प्रिया तन निरखींसखिजन सहज उठे कछु गाई ।
 भौंटे की रमकन के सँग सँग हीय उठे लहराई ॥

Priyā ji came to Prem Sarowar once for swinging. Sakhis also came with her. One sakhi with a dark complexion was already *virājmān* there. They kept talking with each other. Looking at Priyā ji that dark complexioned sakhi became filled with joy. The swinging was also going on. The swaying of the swing and the joy leaping in the heart were competing with each other. Priyā ji became a little suspicious. But talking with this dark complexioned sakhi who was skilled in speech, Priyā ji could not find out anything.

Requesting the new sakhi to sit on the swing, Priyā ji is also sat with her on her request. They started swinging. Priyā ji would keep getting suspicious but continued pretending to be unaware. Sakhis started pushing the swing. Suddenly in the rocking of the swing the border of the sari of the new sakhi slipped. Priyā ji was stunned to see the beauty, luster and splendour of the body of that sakhi. ‘Diyo chhadma dikhāyi ri’ meaning that the disguise became apparent. That impersonating sakhi was no other than Priyatam Shyām Sundar Himself. That site became resonant with the sound of the laughter.

All started singing-

भूलन लडैती राधा प्रेम सर आई री ।
 सांवरी सहेली इक बैठी तहाँ पाई री ॥

That festival of swing getting adorned with the festival of Shrāwan (rainy month corresponding to july-august) and festival of love converted into rasa keli. Who could say up until when this swinging festival continued? There is no end in the kingdom of love.

This site preserving those rasa filled memories in its atmosphere, soaked in love, is bathing in it.

Vihaval Vana

कदम्बलतिकाकीर्णवरविह्वलदायिने ।
विह्वलाख्याय रम्याय वनाय च नमो नमः ॥¹

(देवी पुराण ब्र० भ० वि०)

Vihaval kund is here.

Vihaval Kund

Braj Dhām is the place of many many rasa games. It is extremely beautiful. Many sites of Leelās steeped in emotions, suffusing us with their atmosphere, drench us with rasa even today.

The nature of love is very strange. Sometimes in the state of profound absorption, one experiences separation even while together and united. This has been termed as ‘Prema Vaichitraya’ (i.e. the strangeness of love) in the scripture of rasa. Once sitting in a garden near this kund Priyatam was waiting for Priyā ji. One mynah started singing the praises of Priyā ji. Hearing it Priyatam became more and more restless. He could not keep the patience any more. His heart started pining for the closeness of Priyā ji. He started floating in the whirlpool of doubts and uncertainty. When His dear sakhā Subal came to know about it, he thought of some way to make Him meet Priyāji.

Just then! Priyā ji moving the door made of vines and creepers that was in the front, arrived with her sakhis. Priyatam finding Priyā ji near Him filling with joy became absorbed in rasa. There was no end to His insatiability, His unquenchability. Despite being very near He was not aware of Her nearness due to the deep absorption of thoughts. He was getting *vihaval* (overwhelmed). Giving us the clue to the rasa steeped tale of this *vihaval* state, this site became famous as Vihaval Kund.

Nearby is the darshan of Vihaval Bihāri. This is located in the south-eastern quarter of Sankeit Grām.

Sankeit

युगलागमवेषाय राधायै नन्दसूनवे ।
संकेतवनरम्याय नमस्तुभ्यं प्रसीद मे ॥²

(कूर्म पुराण)

1. O overwhelming and enchanting vana full of vines of Kadamba! Obeisance to you.
2. This is the place of union of Shri Rādhā and Shri Krishna. This very site is called Sankeit sthal. This place of mutual meeting and place of sending signals is famous as Sankeit vata.

Acting as the prelude to the secret rasa mysteries and rasa cleverness and wit of Shyām Sundar present in many signals and gestures of His, this site is famous by the name of Sankeit vata.

The rasa filled atmosphere of Braj is making the entire site of Sankeit blissful, endearing and enchanting. At such a time, these love crazy Yugal left the house as planned earlier. Priyatam taking His eternal companion the flute in His hand and then putting it on the lips started blowing the message of love. Spellbound by that sound, all love crazy Braj maidens arrived there. Priyatam gave a signal through a smiling glance. Again pretending to fix His hair, He gave some signal (sankeit) titillating these maidens. By momentarily raising His tender arm and again bringing it down, He provoked them more and more with another rasa filled signal. On the pretext of fixing His garland, taking it in His hand and caressing it, He drenched these maidens in some intoxicated rasa filled signal. Look! The three fold breeze shook the yellow pitāambar which then fluttered and slipped a bit from the shoulder of Priyatam. Who knows if this also was an intoxicating love signal or if it was a message? Whatever might be the case, this signal becoming a message succeeded in carrying the feelings of their hearts to each other resulting in the experience of rasa. Actually the very name of the site of the signals and the messages is Vrindāvan or Braj. In the rasa filled signals of Braj, Priyatam Himself is present.

The battle field of Cupid only is famous as Sankeit. Here only it has a role to play and only it can get success and accomplishment.

One day Kanhaiyā got up early in the morning. Maiyā asked, “Lālā how did you get up so early today.” Lālā replied, “Maiyā! It’s nothing.” Maiyā gave water from the water pot and made Him wash the face and the mouth. Kishori Shri Rādhā also got up early in the morning.

ग्रीवा सों मोती लर तोरी ।
आँचर बाँध मात की चोरी ॥

Kirtidā Maiyā asked Shri Rādhā the reason of awakening early. Shri Rādhā replied, “Maiyā! Yesterday when I went to Shri Yamunā ji to bathe along with Lalitā and other sakhis, I left my pearl necklace behind at the bank. Maiyā! I did not tell you out of fear.” Maiyā felt bad about the loss of the necklace. She started inquiring for more information and said, “Go, Lāli ! go immediately and come back quickly after finding your necklace.” Kishori Shri Rādhā left-

निधरक चली सदन ते प्यारी ।
मन अटक्यो वन कुंजविहारी ॥

Kishori Shri Rādhā reached the pre decided site of Sankeit.

Over here Nandanandan became restless. He told maiyā He is hungry. Maiyā arranged for everything. Kanhaiyā started eating along with sakhās. But all of a sudden-

बिन जेंये मोहन उठे, कर ते कौर गिराय ।
जेंवत ही छाँड़े सखा, चले बनहिं अकुलाय ॥

When everyone asked the cause for this, Kanhaiyā said, “The cowherd had told me yesterday that my favourite cow is going to give birth today. I just remembered it therefore I am going.” Saying this Shyām Sundar left for the pre decided site.

Shri Rādhā was already *virājmān* there.

मिले धाय गहि अंकम माला ।
कनक बेलि जनु लगी तमाला ॥

And after that this Sankeit Site, in the accomplishment of its signs and signals, became steeped in some divine rasa.

नवल कुञ्ज नव नागरी नव नागर नवचन्द ।
प्रेमसिन्धु मर्याद तजि मिले उमगि आनन्द ॥

Who would relate the tale of this divine rasa? The one who saw became intoxicated and then became lost in this very delectable blissfulness.

In between Shri Nanda gāon and Barsānā this site is recounting its tale of union even today. Here there is darshan of Sankeit devi and Sankeit Bihāri.

There are baithaks of Shri Gosāin Vithalnāth ji and Shri Gopālbhatt ji. Shri Gopālbhatt ji has the credit of making Shri Rādhāraman ji manifest.

Shri Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Ki Baithak

Shrimadāchārya ji performed a week long recitation of Shrimad Bhāgwat here. By the grace of Shri Mahāprabhu ji the Vaishnavas had the direct vision of Sankeit devi .



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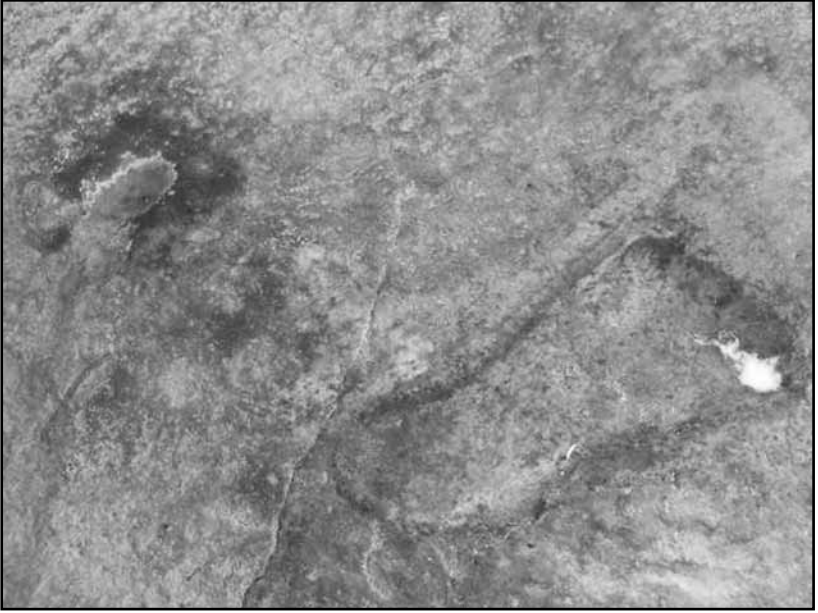
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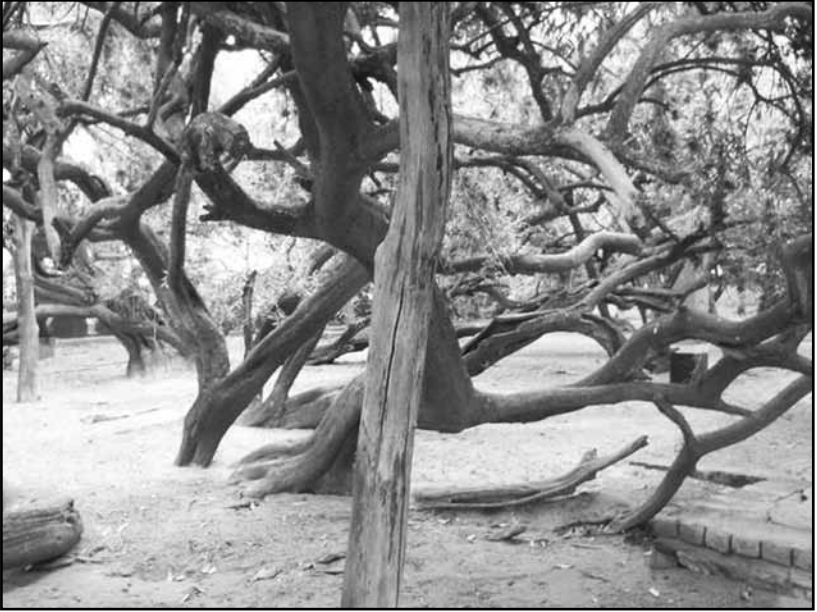
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Braj Bhoomi Mohini

SHRI NANDAGĀON



Chapter Six

नन्दग्रामसुसंस्थाता यशोदानन्दवर्धनः ।
कीर्तिवृषभानुवपुः दर्शी सुसूक्ष्मदृष्टिकृत् ॥

नैमिषखण्ड में वर्णित-‘सहस्रनामावली’

THE OTHER NEIGHBOURING SITES

1. Maharanā (Mohini Van)
2. Jāvavata (Jāva grām)
3. Kokilāvan
4. Bijwāri
5. Sānkhi
6. Chhātā (Chhatra van)
7. Umarāo
8. Kosi (Kusha sthali)
9. Nariseimari
10. Ranbādi
11. Khāyaro (Khidir Van)
12. Baktharā
13. Bhadāwar(Bhāndāgor)
14. Bathain(Chhoti, Badi)
15. Bhadokhar
16. Hāroyāl-grām
17. Pāi-Grām
18. Kāmar
19. Bichhor(Vismaran Van)
20. Shringārvata
21. Vāsoli
22. Paya-grām
23. Kotavan
24. Chameili van
25. Rāsauli
26. Dadhigrām
27. Sheishsāyi
28. Khāmi and Banchāri grām
29. Kharota
30. Ujāni grām
31. Fālein

संमुष्णन्नवनीतमन्तिकमणि स्तम्भे स्वबिम्बोद्भवम् ।
 दृष्ट्वा मुग्धतया कुमारमपरं सञ्चिन्तयन् शङ्कया ॥
 मन्मित्रं हि भवान् मयात्र भवतो भागः समः कल्पितो ।
 मा मां सूचय सूचयेत्यनुनयन् बालो हरिः पातुवः ॥¹

(केषांचित्)

सखी ! यह धन्य नन्दजी को गाँव-
 जहाँ नित मिलिहैं सांवरिया ।

(भक्तिमती ऊषाजी)

Nanda grām, the village of Nanda ji, the place of his residence is venerable to and is to be served by all *Vaiśnavas*. The magic of the beauty of Shyām Sundar forcibly abducts the hearts and the minds. That magic oozing from the ambrosial sweetness of His beauty, oozing from the sweet smiles, from the sweet talks, from the smooth silky hair and from the sidelong glances, is filled in each and every particle of Nanda grām. Nandanandan is 'Madhurātipateirakhilam Madhuram' meaning everything about the Lord of the sweetness is extremely sweet. Shri Bilwamangal ji Mahārāj has said-

मधुरं मधुरं वपुरस्य विभो-
 र्मधुरं मधुरं वदनं मधुरं ।
 मधुगन्धि मृदुस्मित मेतद्दो-
 मधुरं मधुरं मधुरं मधुरं ॥

(श्रीकृष्णकर्णामृत)

His tender body is sweet, His beautiful lotus face is sweet, from every part of His body the fountains of fragrance are flowing, His smile is sweet and what else can anybody say? He is sweet, sweet, sweet and sweet. Where can one get the words to express, after savouring His beauty?

The magic of the sweetness of Shyām Sundar happens to be such. Surrendering everything themselves, these Braj maidens or the

1. Shri Krishna while stealing the butter saw His own reflection in the jeweled pillar nearby and because of child like mesmerism, getting doubtful and thinking His own reflection to be another child, said, ' Brother! you are my old friend. I have already kept your half share aside. Take and eat it quietly. Friend! Do not complain to maiyā, otherwise she will beat me.' May that child Lord who is requesting again and again in this way, always protect you.

sakhi *bhāv bhāvit* devotees, spell bound by the mantra of captivation and subjugation, get attracted to that very path, they wander in that very rasa filled alley. In the city endowed with that very sweetness, they find some excuse or the other to go on the *rājapath* (main road or street). That is why yes, yes, that is why one damsel calling her sakhi and urging her said, “Come sakhi! You come at least.” Taking her sakhi’s hand in her own, that damsel looking astonished and astounded, imploring and urging her friend took her forcibly with her and started walking towards that very *rājapath*. On the way another sakhi tried to stop them but they were all insane about His beauty. The third sakhi also joined them and now this group of sakhis with a yearning to meet their *Jeewan Sarvaswa* started walking in that same alley of Nanda gāon. Look! The bewitching Shyām Sundar is already waiting under the dark tree. The yellow pitāambar hanging from His left shoulder, touching His feet was lying on the ground. With the flute in His hand, the crown of peacock feathers on the head and His neck slightly bent He was smiling. Sakhi! How was that smile? Through His smiling lips, the rows of teeth were dazzling like a lightning. The light that was getting diffused from the rays of His smile was ensnaring millions of Braj damsels with its charm. Not only this, in between the sweet chiming of His anklets, the sweet sound of the bangles, together all these were abducting the heart and the mind. Let us go to float in that very ocean of rasa with Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji, taking with us the grace of her overflowing feelings, let us go to Nanda gāon, our own gāon-

चल री चल नन्दगाँव चलें ।
 जहाँ मनहर नन्दलाल मिलें ॥
 वे तरुतर ठाड़े मग जोहत,
 अँसनि पै पियरो पट सोहत,
 वे हास विलासनि मन मोहत,
 उन तन निहार, मन प्राण खिलें ।
 नन्दगाँव चलें, चल री चल ।
 शिखिपिच्छ, चन्द्रिका सीस धरे,
 पहिरे वैजन्ती माल गरे,
 मृदु चितवन बरबस चित्त हरे,
 उन तन निहार मन प्राण खिलें ।
 नन्दगाँवचलें.....।

सवननि कनेर कुण्डल राजत,
 दुहुँ कर मणिमय कङ्कण भ्राजत,
 भ्रूभंगि निरखि मन्मथ लाजत,
 उन तन निहार मन प्राण खिलें
 नन्दगाँव चलें, नन्द गाँव चलें ।
 जहँ मन हर नन्द लाल मिलें ।

This Nandagāon has been the place of residence of Shri Nandarai ji. The fore fathers of Shri Nandarai ji were the residents of Nanda grām only. Later due to some reason, they went to Gokul, Mahāvan and settled there. Shri Nandarai ji was *virājmān* in Gokul at the time of appearance of Shri Krishna. Shri Nandarai ji afraid of the trouble being caused by the demons, moved with child Kanhaiyā, cowherds and their cows to Vrindāvan situated at the enchanting banks of Yamunā ji. Vrindāvan was ideal for grazing. There were many trees laden with fruit for the cowherds. In spite of moving here, the demons motivated by Kansa, kept coming. After some time, it was only natural to think of moving to some other safe place.

Afraid of the trouble being caused by the demons, maiyā Yashodā called all the elderly cowherds and started consultations with them. She always worried about the well being and the safety of Lālā. Shri Nandarai ji tried to assuage the fears of maiyā by reminding her of the words of Shri Gargāchārya ji Mahārāj. But how could the heart of maiyā overwhelmed with the love of a parent get pacified with all this. The continuous presence of doubt and apprehension is the indicator of extreme love.

Shri Nandagrām, Braj, Gokul and Goshtha have been used in the Vedas and Purānas with a slight difference to denote the same site, Shri Nandagāon. The place where Shri Nandarai ji lived has been called Nandagāon. In Vedas the word 'Braj' has been used for the land used for cow grazing. In the following shloka of Riga Veda the word 'Vraja' has been used for the grazing fields-

ते ते धामान्युश्मसि गमध्ये गावो यत्र भूरि श्रृंगा अयासः ।
 अत्राह तदुरुगायस्य विष्णोः परमं पदमवभाति भूरेः ॥

(तैत्तरीय संहिता 1/3/6)

The abode of the Lord, where the cows and the other animals live, has been given the name Gokul. The place where the cows live is Gokul.

The cows were the main means of livelihood of Shri Nandarai ji and other cowherds. Agriculture and raising cows were both very dear to the cowherds. Therefore using the name of his dear and primary profession, Shri Nandarai ji glorified the place of his residence by giving it the name Gokul. Shri Nandarai ji was the leader of all cowherds therefore his place of residence is also called Nanda grām, after his name.

In Shrimad Bhāgwat, Gokul and Braj has been used for the same site, the residence of Shri Nandarai ji i.e. Shri Nandagāon-

इति सञ्चिन्तयन् कृष्णं श्वफल्क तनयोऽध्वनि ।

रथेन गोकुलं प्राप्तः सूर्यश्चास्तगिरिं नृप ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/38/24)

ददर्श कृष्णं रामं च ब्रजे गोदोहनं गतौ ।

पीतनीलाम्बरधरौ शरदम्बुरुहेक्षणौ ॥²

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/38/28)

Apart from this Gokul and Goshtha have also been used to denote Nanda grām at some places.

In Harivansha Purān the goshtha (cowpen) of Shri Nandarai ji has been called Braj.

Therefore the words Braj, Gokul, Goshtha, Nanda grām etc have been used at different places for Shri Nandarai ji's residence.

In Shrimad Bhāgwat, primarily two main divisions of Braj can be seen. One is Vrihadvan and the other is Vrindāvan. Within the boundaries of Vrihadvan: Bhadravan, Madhuvan, Tālvān, Kamodvan etc have been included whereas Shri Girirāj ji, Vrishbhānupur, Shri Nandagrām etc far flung sites have been included within Vrindāvan. Therefore, even Nandagrām is considered to be a part of Vrindāvan.

Nandagrām is the residence of Shri Nandarai ji. Beautiful sites, dense rows of trees, enchanting kunds and grazing fields are attracting the hearts and minds of all naturally.

1. Shri Shukadev ji says- "King Parikshita! Akroor ji the son of Shwafalka, thinking like this on the way, reached Gokul on the chariot and the sun moved toward the western mountain i.e. it set.

2. On arriving in Braj Akroor ji found both the brothers Shri Krishna and Balaram ji virājman at the place where the cows are milked. Shyām Sundar Shri Krishna was wearing pitāambar where as the fair beautiful Balrāma was wearing neelāambar. Their eyes were radiant like the blooming lotus of autumn.

यत्र नन्दोपनन्दास्ते प्रति नन्दाधिनन्दनाः ।
चक्रुर्वासं सुखस्थानं यतो नन्दाभिधानकम् ॥¹

(आदि पुराण)

“The high imposing mansions gleaming in the far distance, the settlement of the inhabitants all around, the residence of Shri Nandarai ji on top of the hill in the centre, the beauty of the forests at the foothills, the gardens full of flowers, the clean and sparkling lakes that are surrounded by trees laden with Kadamba flowers, by black Tamāl trees enfolded by tender vines and by the dense nikunja at the strands, converting them into secluded and private *vihār* sites. From these, yes, yes, from these very bunches of trees the resonance of peacocks, the sweet sound of *papiha*’s ‘*pee kahān*’, the cooing of the cuckoos and the chirping of the small colourful birds.....Ah! Touched by such an intoxicating atmosphere which peacock like mind will be able to keep itself from dancing. The herds of deer, the agility and the restlessness of the rabbits, the dark green land lush with grass, look so enchanting and captivating.

The herds of cows engaged in looking for grass all around, are wandering here and there vigilantly in order to drink the beauty and listen to the voice of their Jeewan Sarvaswa Nandanandan. The herds of calves jumping and hopping, restless and agitated, to receive love and affection from their dear Kanhaiyā are attracting everybody.

Yes this is where Nanda palace is. Adorned with the sweetness of the childhood Leelā of Shri Krishna, this is Nanda grām. The village dear to His heart, His very own village, yes- yes this is that very Nanda grām. The blissful *keli* of Kanhaiyā is flowing here. Soaked in that, the hearts and the souls of the devotees, the Brajwāsīs and the Braj maidens filled with blissfulness are getting drowned, intoxicated and elated. Whereas on one hand the darling son of Nanda *bābā* is suffusing *bābā* and *mai*yā with infinite joy with His child *keli*, at the same time on the other hand in the form of Ever new Adolescent, He has been honouring and rewarding the love steeped feelings and the desires of the Braj maidens.

श्रुतिमपरे स्मृतिमितरे भारतमन्ये भजन्तु भवभीताः ।
अहमिह नन्दं वन्दे यस्यालिन्दे परं ब्रह्म क्रीडति ॥²

(श्रीरघुपति उपाध्याय)

1. Shri Nandarai ji, Upananda, Pratinanda, Abhinanda and Sunanda have lived here, therefore this place called Nandagrām is a place of happiness.

2. Fearful of the death and rebirth in this world, some take the shelter of hearsays; others take the shelter of Smritis and many others of Mahābhārata. Let them do so, I only worship that Shri Nandarai ji in whose courtyard Para Brahma is playing as a child.

After killing many powerful demons and defeating Devrāj Indra, Kanhaiyā is now increasing the bliss of bābā and maiyā and the other cowherds and gopis with his many charmingly sweet *Leelās* in the palace of Shri Nandarai ji. He goes to the forests to graze the cows and gives joy to the *sakhās*. During grazing He gives happiness to His extremely dear cows. At times deceiving His *sakhās*, He leaves unnoticed and soaks His exclusive beloveds, the Braj maidens, in infinite bliss. While returning from the forest with the cows, He organises many delightful *Leelās* by sending signals of *rasa* to His beloveds who have been waiting for Him restlessly overwhelmed with love. Kanhaiyā in the form of a little child is not just a child in disguise, in fact the gopis have seen Him in the form of an adolescent from day one.

Nandanandan is Shobhā Vihāri. He sports in shobhā i.e. beauty, plays games with beauty, makes beauty dance. After getting pleased He has given it a place in every part of His body, in His clothes and ornaments, in His gestures and actions, in His naughty pursuits, in the smiles and laughter, in the movements of eye brows and glances, in the waving of the garland, in every part of His body, in His proximity everywhere. Magnificent beauty and splendour sport lavishly in every single pore of His, in His generous laughter, in His soft, gentle *rasa* drenched conversations and jokes, in His signs and signals, in His sitting down and getting up, in His walking and wandering.....

“Oh look! The full moon night has spread its laughter like radiance everywhere. The laughter of the full moon has illuminated the earth. The cool gusts of the breeze are making the kunjās and the nikunjas thrilled. Yes in such an enchanting night, no in the evening itself, the all beautiful Madan Manohar Priyatam peered through His window. Aha! The garland of the moon rays have bedecked Him. Stunned for a while He stood there enjoying the beauty of the moon. Without delaying much, immediately taking His flute, His messenger of love, in His hand, He started walking like an intoxicated elephant towards..... Shrivān....”

(With gratitude from the scripture Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorva Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji)

One devotee is saying-

ब्रूमस्त्वच्चरितं तवामि जननीं छद्मातिबालाकृते ।
 त्वम् यादृग्गिरिकन्दरेषु नयनानन्दः कुरङ्गीदृशाम् ॥
 इत्युक्तः परिलेहनच्छलतया न्यस्तांगुलिः स्वानने ।
 गोपीभिः पुरतः पुनातु जगतीमुत्तानसुप्तो हरिः ॥

(श्रीवनमालिनः पद्यावलि 136)

“O Shri Krishna! On the outside, you are sitting disguised in the form of a child, but in the caves of Gowardhan hill you keep giving delight to the deer eyed *gopis*. If we tell your mother the tale of this deceit and deception of yours, then you will forget everything.” When the milkmaids spoke like this, He put His finger in His mouth on the pretext of sucking it and spreading His legs upwards, lying flat on His back, fell asleep in the cradle. Let that Shri Hari make this world pure and holy.

Brajrāj Shyām Sundar is the support and base of different *dharmas* at the same time.

Kanhaiyā has grown further. He has entered the age between boyhood and youth. Shri Bilwamangal ji Mahārāj has called this age, “Tārunya Samwalita Sheeta Kishore Veisham.” Where there is a confluence of the innocence of the childhood, astonishment of the youth and the alertness of the boyhood.

Shri Kumbhandās ji has given some indication about that age by saying, ‘Kachhuka uthata mukha reikhei’ meaning some lines have started appearing on the face.

Now Kanhaiyā has started going to the neighbouring houses to steal butter. He is stealing butter somewhere and somewhere in the alleys of the forest He is quarreling for the *dān* of yogurt.

He saw one Braj maiden far in the distance going through a secluded alley with a pot on her head. By taking a short cut He reached quickly and stood in her way. He said, “Milkmaid! Give me a little butter and yogurt to eat.” This milkmaid filled with a little pride and ego tried to walk away by going past Him. He stopped her by grabbing her arm and broke her necklace. How could she go now from there without her necklace.

हार तोरि बिथुराय दयौ ।

मैया पे तुम कहन चली कत दधि माखन सब छीन लयौ ॥

रिस करी धाय कंचुकी फारी अब तो मेरो नाम भयौ ।

कालि नहीं यह मारग ऐहौं ऐसे मोसौं बैरु ठयौ ॥

भली बात घर जाउ आजु तुम माँगत जोवन दान नयौ ।

सूरदास मुख ही रिस युवतिन उर उर अंतर काम जयौ ॥

First He broke only her necklace. Now look at the insolence of Kanhaiyā. He tore the clothes even. Now nobody will come from this way. This quarrel is not a quarrel. It is a blissful wave of some blissful eruption of love. That is why the Kām was aroused in the heart of the maiden, despite the anger on her face.

In the forest Kanhaiyā by organising different games along with His sakhās is providing them supreme bliss. At times He is calling His cows by their names and those cows are running to their dear Kanhaiyā and clinging to Him and He is caressing them by His hand with all His love.

It is now time to return from the forest. He is returning with the cows. His dark body is smeared with the dust flying from the hooves of the cows. Carrying the dust of His cows on His head, He is returning drenched in love. He breaks into laughter after joking with the sakhās. Dressed like an expert dancer-actor He is coming, walking like an elephant with staggering steps. They have come close to the settlement. The veils of these damsels who were waiting in their lofts and terrace started moving. These maidens with their eyes fixed on the path way became impatient to welcome their beloved Kanhaiyā. Kanhaiyā is titillating someone by signaling from His eyes. Looking at someone with a soft gentle smile He is honouring her feelings. He is soaking someone in rasa by throwing a bunch of flowers at her. Meanwhile, how He went near some damsel and after titillating her and drenching her in rasa came down on the path way again, nobody came to know. He moved ahead. Taking a flower in His hand, and pouring love on it and soaking it with sweet rasa, He threw it at someone in such a way that it touched her restlessly pining heart and then landed in her lap. Oh! This Height of cleverness, the Ocean of the essence of sweetness, the *Pranayi Rijhawār* is soaking His beloveds in rasa in various ways and these damsels ‘Nayanan saun bhari ankawār’ embracing Him with their eyes, getting the proximity of the Priyatam become lost in their intoxicated rasa feelings.

Maiyā is waiting with lighted lamps. After refreshing her darling son she is asking Him to have supper. This is how Shyām Sundar increasing the joy of His intimate devotees sometimes goes to the cow barn to milk the cows and at times making some excuse after honouring the motherly love of maiyā, goes to His beloved Priyā Kishori Shri Rādhā and gets engaged in blissful *keli vihār* along with Lalitā-Vishākhā and other sakhis.

One Who is rarely attained by the sages, Who is imperceptible to the yogis, that Lord of the whole universe, Prince of Braj is wandering in the courtyard of Shri Nandarāi ji and is suffusing everybody at the same time with total bliss. Some devotee after experiencing this very bliss of rasa and beholding the radiant blue form said-

श्रृणु सखि ! कौतुकमेकम्, नन्दनिकेतनाङ्गने मयादृष्टम् ।
गोधूलिधूसरिताङ्गो नृत्यति, वेदान्त सिद्धान्तः ॥¹

Sites

ग्रामस्य पश्चिम भागे मधुसूदन कुण्डं । तत्रैव मधुसूदन मूर्तिः । श्रीयशोदा कुण्डं । पाषाणस्वरूपका कृष्णदर्शकाः हावकानां मूर्तयः । ललिता कुण्डं । तत्पाश्र्वे मोहन कुण्डं । दोहिनीकुण्डं । दुग्ध कुण्डं । कृष्ण दधिभाण्ड-भञ्जनात् प्रपूरितं दधिकुण्डं । ग्रामादग्रतः पावनाख्य सरोवरम् । तन्मध्ये यशोदा कूपम् । तत्पाश्र्वे कदम्ब-खण्डाख्य वनम् ग्रामाभ्यन्तरेयशोदा दधि-मन्थनस्थानम् । तत्पाश्र्वे नन्दीश्वराख्य महारुद्र मूर्तिः । रुद्र पर्वतो-परि नन्दराय-मन्दिरम् । तत्र नन्दरायशोदाकृष्णबलभद्रदर्शनम् । तत्पाश्र्वेयशोदा-नन्दनयुगलमूर्तिः ।
(वाराह पुराण)

In the back side of the village there is Madhusudan kund. There is an idol of Madhusudan ji. Near Yashodā kund there is a black coloured stone idol of Hāwakon and Lalitā kund. Nearby are Mohan kund, Dohani kund, Dugdha kund and Dadhi kund. In the front part of the village, there is Pāwan Sarowar. In the centre there is Shri Yashodā Koop. Close to that is the forest area called Kadamba Khandi. In the centre of the village is Shri Yashodā Dadhi Manthan Sthān. Close to that is the idol of Mahā Rudra called Shri Nandishwar. On the top of Shri Rudra hill is the temple and mansion of Shri Nandarai ji. There are darshans of Shri Nandarai ji, Shri Yashodā ji, Shri Krishna and Shri Balbhadra ji here. Nearby is the Yugalmoorti of Shri Yashodānandan.

Truth is that Braj Bhoomi itself is supremely holy and blessed because the Almighty Lord lives here in the disguise of a human being. The Lord whose feet are worshipped by Lord Shiva and Laxmi ji, that same Lord wearing garlands of colourful wild flowers, along with Shri Balrāma ji, playing His flute, grazing the cows and playing various games wanders here with joy and happiness.

Shri Nanda, Yashodā, Balrāma, and Shri Rādhā Krishna Darshan

नन्दधातु नमस्तुभ्यं यशोदायै नमो नमः ।

नमः कृष्णाय बालाय बलभद्राय नमो नमः ॥

(ब्रह्मवैवर्त पुराण)

1. Ah! Ah! What a wonder is this. I have seen the principle of all the Vedanta, Nandanandan smeared all over with dust, engaged in dancing in the courtyard of Shri Nandarai ji.

O Nanda Dhātri! Obeisance to you. O Yashodei! Obeisance to you. O child Krishna and Baladev! Obeisance to both of you.

Shri Nandishwar is *virājmān* in the form of mountain in Nanda grām to have darshan of Shri Krishna and to savour His Leelās. Shri Nandarai ji, maiyā Yashodā and both the brothers Shri Krishna and Baldev ji are *virājmān* on that Nandishwar hill. (A few years ago the idol of Priyāji has also become *virājmān* here.) This is the palace of Shri Nandarai ji, the memory of which is being brought to life by these idols of brothers, maiyā and bābā who are venerable to the Vaishnava world even today. Kanhaiyā gives delight and joy to the sakhās by various games where as forever *virājmān* in the form of Kishore in the group of Braj maidens He engages in many madhur Leelās. Simultaneously He is making everybody experience different rasa.

There is a delightful story that is famous regarding the appearance of the idols of Shri Krishna and Baldev which is being given below-

The ancestors of the serving goswāmis of today were the residents of Khārot village. They used to graze cows and do farming. Once the father of Shri Ānandaghan ji (the ancestor of the goswāmis), was grazing the cows near this place. One cow went up the hill and flowed her milk out in a cave. When he came to know about this, he started digging the bush of Heensa nearby. It is said that Shri Krishna and Baladev idols appeared from that site. These self manifest idols are the ones *virājmān* in the temple.

When Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji came here along with his disciples, he became overwhelmed at the darshan.

“Along with his disciples Shrimadāchārya came to Nandagāon where Nandishwar is *virājmān* in the Linga form.”

(Shri Vallabha Digvijaya)

When Shri Chaitanyamahāprabhu came to Nandagrām, he became overwhelmed with love. The vivid depiction of his ecstatic mood has been made by the author of Bhakti Ratnākār which is being given below-

अहे श्रीनिवास ! एथा श्रीचैतन्यराय ।
करिते दर्शन गया प्रवेशे गोफाय ॥
श्रीनन्द यशोदा दुई दिके दुई जन ।
मध्ये कृष्णचन्द्र देखि प्रफुल्ल नयन ॥

प्रेमेर आवेशे नृत्य गीत आरम्भिल ।
देखिया सकल लोक विस्मय हईल ॥

(भ० रत्नाकर)

O Shrinivās! Shri Chaitanyamahāprabhu ji went inside the cave and after looking at Shri Krishna Baladev *virājmān* between Shri Nandarai ji and Yashodā ji, became ecstatic and started singing and dancing. Looking at him, everybody was astonished and mesmerised.

This site of unprecedented beauty is famous as Shri Nanda Bhawan.

Pāwan Sarowar

पावने सरसि स्नात्वा कृष्ण नन्दीश्वरे गिरौ ।
दृष्ट्वा नन्द यशोदां च सर्वाभीष्टमवाप्नुयात् ॥¹

(मथुरा माहात्म्य)

The innocent Brajwāsīs of Nandagrām describe the significance of Pāwan Sarowar by singing the following couplet-

सिंह पौर को बैठनो, पावन को अस्नान ।
भांकी बाबा नन्द की, सहज मिलें भगवान ॥

Pāwan Sarowar having qualities just like its name is very dear to Shri Krishna. He comes here with His sakhās. After bathing here He gives delight to His intimate devotees for hours with different sports. At the bank, sometimes the game of chakadoree, sometimes chakari pareitā and sometimes wrestling are organised and then the group of sakhās start providing joy to the Brajwāsīs by creating a romp and revelry in the Pāwan Sarowar. At times the sakhās swim in the water and at times play the game of touching each other. At times they throw the ball far away and then try to race by being the first one to pick it up. And the Brajwāsīs enjoying these enchanting sports of theirs become absorbed. At such times even the Braj maidens come over to quench the thirst of their hearts by beholding the bewitching beauty of their Jeewan sarvaswa Shyām Sundar and understanding the rasa hints and signals of this Trickster from far itself, drown in bliss.

The Brajwāsīs are really blessed as Nandanandan bound and subjugated by their love, always keeps increasing their happiness.

The witness of the childhood sports of Shri Krishna with His sakhās, this Pāwan Sarowar, is an extremely venerable tirtha for all even today.

1. By having darshan of Shri Krishna, Shri Nandarai ji and Shri Yashodā ji after bathing in Pāwan Sarowar in Shri Nandagrām fruit of all the desires is attained.

नमः पावन रूपायदेवानां कल्मषापहम् ।
नन्दादिपावनायैव तीर्थराज नमोऽस्तु ते ॥¹

(ब्र० भ० वि०)

Shri Sanātan ji's Prayer and the Meditation Site

Amongst the followers of Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji Shri Sanātan ji is known by all the Vaishnavas. He used to live here at the Pāwan Sarowar. Except the chanting of the name of Shri Krishna and His Leelā contemplation, he used to not be concerned about anything else including his food. Once Shri Krishna Himself brought some milk and left after giving it to him. He was entranced by the beauty of the child and came to his awareness only after the child had left. He was ecstatic and remembering the causeless mercy and the compassion of Shri Krishna, He became overwhelmed. He became restless because of love. Tears fell from his eyes.

अलक्षित प्रभु सनातने प्रबोधिला ।
ब्रजवासी द्वारे एक कुटीर कराईला ॥

(भ० र०)

Indirectly and imperceptibly Shri Krishna made Shri Sanātan ji aware of Himself and got a hut built by the Brajwāsīs for him.

The character of Shri Sanātan ji is incredulous. His life was so absorbed in the Leelā mādhuri of Priyā-Priyatam that he used to have very little outward awareness.

In the middle of the sarowar is Yashodā Koop. On drinking the water of this well one gets a son like Shri Krishna.

Nearby is Kadamba Khandi.

Kadamba Khandi

कदम्बानां ब्रातैर्मधुपकुलभङ्गारललितैः ।
परीते यत्रैव प्रिय सलिललीलाहृतिमिषैः ॥
मुहुर्गोपेन्द्रस्यात्मजमभिसरन्त्यम्बुजदृशो ।
विनोदेन प्रीत्या तदिदमवतात् पावनसरः ॥²

(स्तवावलि ब्रज विलास)

1. O Pāwan roop! O destroyer of the sins of the Demigods! Obeisance to you. O tirtharāj! Obeisance to you. You are capable of purifying even Nandarai ji and others.
2. Let that Pāwan sarowar protect me, which is resonant with the buzzing of bees, covered with enchanting Kadamba trees and where the lotus eyed gopivrinda meet and unite again and again restless in love, in order to provide joy and delight to Shri Krishna through their dear jala keli, chaurya keli and splashing of water and many other acts.

The beauty of the group of Kadamba trees at the bank of Pāwan Sarowar is matchless. Not only is Pāwan sarowar soaked in the sports of Shri Krishna with His sakhās but at the same time the tale of many blissful memories of the beloveds of Shri Krishna who are emotionally identical to Him, is also sporting in the atmosphere of Pāwan sarowar.

The fragrance of the Kadamba flowers is titillating the hearts of these damsels by touching and teasing them. Invited by some rasaful signal of their Jeewan sarvaswa these maidens came into this garden with their beloved Kishori Shri Rādhā. Kanhaiyā saw His beloveds. Talking sweetly with His sakhās and giving joy to them with His skillful speech, how and when He left and reached amidst His beloveds in this Kadamba forest, nobody came to know. Sakhās looking for their dear Kanhaiyā went away to Nanda palace.

The fortune of the Kadamba flower is unique. By becoming the *shringār* of the crown of Priyatam, by becoming the earrings of His ears and receiving the touch of the cheeks it gets entranced in rasa. At times strung in His garland, surrounding His neck and becoming the *shringār* of His chest, it flaunts itself. When this Kadamba flower looking beautiful in the garland, soaked by the drops of rasa adorns the neck of Priyā ji, then pointing at it, Priyatam says filled with some rasa steeped emotion, "I envy this flower." This makes Priyāji emotionally helpless and powerless. And that helplessness receiving the support of some strong and dependable loving embrace gets filled with bliss. At that time this Kadamba flower receiving love from the body parts of both Priyā and Priyatam, makes the sakhis aware of the tale of the Yugal rasa *vilās*. Seeing the loose garlands, the fallen and crushed Kadamba flowers, teasing the two when the sakhis question them, then the rasa steeped Yugal coming out of their trance a little, get absorbed in water sports in Pāwan Sarowar with these maidens. At such a time, this Kadamba flower with its sweet and moist fragrance makes this water sport more and more delectable.

This Pāwan Sarowar with Kadamba Khandi at its bank, the site of the many many blissful experiences of the rasikas is venerable to all vaishnavas.

Tadāga Tirtha

पर्जन्येन पितामहेन नितरामाराध्य नारायणं-
त्यक्त्वाहारमभूतपुत्रक इह स्वीयात्मजे गोष्ठये ।

यत्रावापि सुरारिहा गिरिवरः पौत्रौ गुनैकाकरः
क्षुण्णहारतया प्रसिद्धमवनौ तन्मे तद्गङ्गं गतिः ॥

(स्तवावलि)

There was a sage called Devameedha. He had two wives. From the first Kshatriya wife he had a son called Shoor and from the other Vaishya wife a son called Shri Parjanya cowherd. Shoor begot Shri Vasudev and other Kshatriya sons. Shri Parjanya had no children. He did farming and raised cows. Once while travelling Shri Nārad ji arrived in Nandishwar and on the request of Shri Parjanya cowherd told him the way to beget a son and gave him Shri Laxminārāyana mantra. Shri Parjanya cowherd started chanting the mantra given by the guru at the site called Tadāga Tirtha. After sometime that mantra became accomplished. A voice from the heaven was heard, “O Parjanya! You are extremely fortunate. You have done the penance with a pure mind. You will have five sons who will have all the virtues and the qualities. The name of the third son will be Shri Nandarai ji. Shri Hari Himself will incarnate as his son in his house to provide happiness to all Brajwāsīs.”

Shri Parjanya cowherd became elated. He continued living in Nandishwar. Later due to some reason he moved to Gokul, Mahāvana where the Lord appeared as Nandanandan.

Even today this site glorious with that same glory of its, is famous as Tadāga Tirtha. It is the giver of the desired fruit to everybody.

Nearby is Kshunnāhār sarowar.

Nandishwar Mahādev

नन्दीश्वराय देवायाभीरोत्पत्तिहिताय च ।
यशोदा सुखदायैव महादेवाय ते नमः ॥

(स्कन्द पुराण)

O Nandishwar! O Deva! O the provider of happiness to the cowherds and O Deva! Who is manifest only for them, O the giver of delight to Yashodā ji! O the God of the Gods Mahādev! Obeisance to you.

On the request of Shri Yashodā ji Shri Nandishwar became *virājmān* in Braj in the *linga* form. Shri Rudra delightfully gave a boon to Shri Yashodā ji and in order to get blessed Himself requested her, “I am *virājī*t here in the form of a hill. You, Shri Nandarai ji along with Shri Krishna and Baldev ji please reside on my back and accept me by the touch of your feet.” And so it happened. Shri Yashodā ji

with Shri Krishna, Baldev ji and Nanda bābā are virājmān here. In the past in the main temple the bathing water of Shri Krishna used to go over Nandishwar Mahādev but now because of the new system it has changed.

Dhoyani Kund

धोयनि कुण्ड एई नन्दीश्वरेर ईशाने ।
दधिपात्र चोत जल रहे एई खाने ॥

(भक्ति रत्नाकर)

The kund made from the water that kept getting collected, after it was discarded on one side after washing the pots of yogurt became famous as Dhoyani Kund.

It is situated in the north east quarter of Nandagrām.

Shri Krishna Kund (Kadamba Khandi)

एई कृष्ण कुण्डे देख कदम्बेर वन ।
एथा विहरये रंगे ब्रजेन्द्रनन्दन ॥

(भक्ति रत्नाकर)

Kadamba tree is extremely dear to Shri Krishna. Wonder, what penance was done by this species of Kadamba because of which, becoming a part of the *shringār* of Shyām Sundar it receives the total joy of each and every secret keli of His effortlessly. The Nature of Braj is not insentient. It assists in the Leelās of Shri Krishna. And it is also an instrument of the Leelā. Intoxicated by the fragrance of those very Kadamba trees these crazy maidens, asking about the whereabouts of their Jeewan Sarvaswa arrive here .

“Look there! Wearing a garland of Kadamba flowers, wearing earrings of Kadamba flowers in His ears, with Kadamba flowers fixed in the hair here and there, walking like an intoxicated elephant Shyām Sundar is coming from the alley of the Kadamba forest.” Saying this, the group of sakhis entered into the dense darkness of Kadamba trees and became absorbed in the infinite, boundless experience of rasa.

This Shri Krishna kund is a very dear kund of Shyām Sundar. It is doused with the rasa marks of His Leelā.

Kadamba Teira

Standing under the Teira (to call) Kadamba, Shri Krishna used to call His cows. That is why this site is famous as Kadamba teira. Even today on Gopāshtami day, the goswāmīs of Nandagāon celebrate this festival in the traditional way.

The Prayer and the Meditation Site of Shri Roop Goswāmi

Shri Roop Goswāmi was the younger brother of Shri Sanātan ji. On the instructions of Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji he came to Braj and started doing his worship and contemplation in Nandishwar grām near Kadamba Teira. Day and night he would remain engaged in the contemplation of the name and Leelā. One day he came to Pāwan sarowar to have darshan of his elder brother Shri Sanātan ji. A desire arose in his mind to make kheer (dessert made with rice milk and sugar) for Shri Sanātan ji. Next moment he was embarrassed because of his wish. It is said that a flawlessly beautiful damsel came with rice and ghee and said to Shri Roop ji, “Take this and make kheer and after offering it, give it to Sanātan ji to eat.” Shri Roop ji did accordingly. When Shri Sanātan ji ate the *prasād* he felt extremely happy. Sanātan ji said, “Brother! Today’s prasād has an unprecedented taste. How and from where did you get the ingredients?” Shri Roop ji told him the whole story. Later Kishori Shri Rādhā Rāni made him aware of Herself in a dream. He was anguished by the trouble taken by Priyā ji but at the same time he was mesmerised by Her grace as well.

Once remembering an instance of separation of Shri Rādhā-Krishna, Shri Roop ji felt extremely distraught. When his breath touched some person, he got boils all over his body. Nobody can fathom and describe the burning state of the mind of Shri Roop ji caused by separation.

Shri Lalitā Kund

यतस्तु ललिताकुण्डमभिधानमनोहरं ।
महातीर्थं समाख्यातं देवानामपि दुर्लभम् ॥

(आदि पुराण)

O the enchanting kund made by Shri Lalitā! The Great Mahātirtha difficult to attain even by the demigods! Obeisance to you.

Shri Lalitā is emotionally identical to Shri Krishna. She is the chief amongst the eight *sakhis*. Although all the sakhis are vigilant and alert towards arranging the mutual meetings of Priyā-Priyatam for their happiness but Shri Lalitā is extremely tender and very clever. Shri Lalitā ji has entry in each and every keli of Priyā-Priyatam. Understanding each and every signal of Priyatam she always remains vigilant about executing it. She is extremely proficient at arranging meetings with Priyāji at the slightest indication of Priyatam.

Shri Lalitā ji looking at the enchanting beauty of trees at this

kund and knowing the desire of Priyatam who was virājmān there, brought Priyā ji to Him. Their desire for union was fulfilled. Both the rasa crazy Yugal making Shri Lalitā drink the *madhur rasa* became absorbed in bliss.

The crowd of sakhis also arrived there. That solitary and private rasa, steeped in its very same profoundness, now started dancing and flowing in the group of sakhis. Everybody felt blessed.

Witnessing that very rasa vihār, this site became content, satisfied and obliged. This site is steeped in and soaked with those very rasa drops even today. The beauty here is worth enjoying.

This kund is situated to the east of Nanda grām. Nearby is Surya kund where the Sun god upon getting the darshan of Shri Krishna became absorbed in bliss.

Shri Vishākhā Kund

ई जे विशाखा कुण्ड करई दर्शन ।
राधा महारंगे राई-कानूर मिलन ॥

(भ० र०)

Amongst the main eight sakhis of Shri Krishna, Shri Vishākhā ji is extremely learned. She is extremely skillful in giving suggestions about organising various kelis. Her advice is always successful. This is why she is so dear to Shri Krishna. She is very clever at taking Priyā ji to the site of the meeting upon getting the signal of Shri Krishna.

The rasa abounding vihār of the rasa crazy Yugal itself is the reward of these sakhis.

This site is adorned with the blissful tale of such rasa secrets and is famous as Shri Vishākhā kund.

It is located in the south-eastern quarter of the Lalitā kund.

Poornamāsi Kund

गूढ तत् सुविदग्धतार्चित सखिद्वारोन्नयन्ती तयोः
प्रेम्ना सुष्ठु विदग्धयोरनुदिनं मानाभिसारोत्सवम् ।
राधामाधवयोः सुखामृतरसं यैवोपभुङ्क्ते मुहु-
र्गोष्ठै भव्यविधायिनीं भगवतीं तां पौर्णमासीं भजे ॥¹

1. That Poornamāsi ji who is venerable to all for being an expert at arranging the meetings of Shri Rādhā Krishna, who by arranging the festival of mān and abhisār through the sakhis secretly, skillfully and with love, keeps drinking the nectarean bliss of Shri Rādhā-Krishna again and again. The Bhagawati who is the arranger and the creator of welfare and auspiciousness, I remember that very Shri Poornamāsi.

Poornamāsi is reverent to all in Braj. All Brajwāsīs consult with her from time to time. She is the incarnation of the Goddess Leelā Shakti Yogamāyā. Shri Nārad ji obliged and graced her by giving her the initiation. She lives as an ascetic. She lives in Braj from the time of appearance of Shri Krishna. She goes to Nanda palace everyday and after darshan of Shri Krishna blesses Him in different ways. She also assists in the rasa filled keli of Priyā-Priyatam.

Nāndimukhi Sthal

अवन्तीतः कीर्तेः श्रवणभरतो मुग्धहृदया,
 प्रगाढोत्कण्ठाभिर्ब्रजभुवमुरीकृत्य किल या ।
 मुदा राधाकृष्णोज्ज्वलरससुखं वर्द्धयति तां,
 मुखीं नान्दीपूर्वां सततमभिवन्दे प्रणयतः ॥

(स्तवावली)

That Nāndimukhi who after hearing the stories of the glory of Shri Rādhā-Mādhav, getting fascinated, overpowered by an intense desire, renouncing Avantipuri came to Braj and who lives here drowned in bliss and increases the madhur rasa bliss of Shri Rādhā-Krishna, I worship that Nāndimukhi with devotion always and with all feelings.

Shri Yashodā Kund

यशोदाकुरुते स्नानं नित्यमेव दिनं प्रति ।
 यतो संजायते कुण्डं यशोदा संज्ञकं शुभम् ॥¹

(आदि पुराण ब्र० भ० वि०)

Maiyā comes here for her bath. Both the brothers also come here along with the sakhās. Sometimes enjoying the sweet moist smell of Kadamba trees they get absorbed in bliss and at times plucking these flowers and placing them here and there in their *shringār*, they show it to maiyā. The unique crowd of the other sakhās becomes absorbed in the play of climbing the trees and catching each other. In this way by these various games they fill more blissfulness in the heart of maiyā overflowing with motherly love. When maiyā returns after her bath, the two brothers accompany her to the Nanda palace.

Convulsed with such memories of Leelās, this Yashodā kund is radiating its delectable atmosphere even today.

1. Shri Yashodā ji bathes here daily, that is why this kund named as Yashodā kunda is as auspicious and benevolent as her.

Anyone who bathes here becomes prosperous and ultimately attains Vaikuntha.

Hāu-Vilāu

नमः कृष्णोक्षकास्तुभ्यं धर्मकामार्थ मोक्षिणः ।

पाषाणरूपिणो देवाः यशोदाशीषसंस्थिताः ॥¹

(आदि पुराण ब्र० भ० वि०)

From Whom the entire nature has originated, with the mere desire of Whose in a split second this world is created and destroyed, Whose praise even Brahmā is incapable of singing, the Godhood of that very Shri Krishna is not accepted by the heart of maiyā Yashodā steeped in motherly love. He might be a God to the demigods, to Brahmā, to the yogis and the sages, but for maiyā He is the same little Kanhaiyā, taking whose misfortunes on herself, she never tires. At times she is filled with joy at seeing Him with butter in His hand, at times ‘Sikhawati chalan Yashodā maiyā’ she teaches Him how to walk, and the heart of maiyā becomes overjoyed at seeing Kānhā taking a step or two. She is always absorbed in enjoying the child Leelā of Kanhaiyā.

Now Kanhaiyā is able to walk a little, He goes away a little far to play, so maiyā gets nervous. Maiyā still remembers how Lord Nārāyana had protected her son from the demons in Gokul and Vrindāvan. Kanhaiyā is requesting her again and again to be allowed to go out. In order to frighten Kanhaiyā maiyā says, “Do not go very far to play, the Hāu comes in the forest.” Kanhaiyā gets frightened on hearing this and covering His face with the border of maiyā’s sari, clings to her tightly. The love of the mother floods breaking all the bounds -

‘अंचरा तर लै ढाँकि ‘सूर’ के प्रभु को दूध पियावति ।’

This site is near Shri Yashodā kund. Nearby is Kāraharo forest. There is Kāraharo kund. From here Shri Krishna used to look at the beauty of the forest. Very very old foot prints of Shri Krishna are imprinted on the mountain block nearby.

Cave near the Yashodā Kund

Near the kund there is a very ancient cave. In that cave many saints have practiced austerities and attained the Lord.

1. O the doer of the darshan of Shri Krishna! Provider of Dharma, Artha, Kām and Moksha! O the one in the form of rocks! O the one growing with the blessings of Shri Yashodā ji, obeisance to you.

Some time ago a great saint was *virājmān* here. He used to contemplate Leelā the whole day. He used to go for *madhukari* only in the evening. Every evening one black dog used to come to him. He used to give him the leftovers of the *madhukari*.

All of a sudden, once that saint had to go to Shri Rādhā kund. When he returned after three- four days, that black dog came and spoke to him like a human being.

Seeing him talk like a human, the saint wanted to know all about him. The dog said, “I am a ghost. Dependant on your mercy, I live here. Whatever you give, I take that and remain content.” The saint asked, “Tell me despite having access or reach everywhere why are you deprived like this?” The ghost replied, “We do know about all of this, we can see as well but cannot experience it.” The saint asked him whether he could tell him the whereabouts of Shri Krishna. The dog told the saint everything. He put his *madhukari* before the dog and immediately went to the place told by the dog. Absorbed in the desire of having darshan of Shri Krishna he started waiting there. His yearning was beyond words. The night passed and even the next day passed, the sun was about to set again. His eyes were fixed on the road waiting for the cows to return after grazing. And so the time for the cows to return was here. The cowherds also returned behind the cows. In the end one cowherd in dirty clothes and strange guise was coming. The saint caught hold of him and started asking questions to him. The cowherd tried to hide himself through different ways but the Lord can never slip away from his devotee, nor does He want to slip. Attracted by the restless yearning of the devotees, He gets tied by the cord of love easily.

Almost the entire midnight was spent in making excuses. But that saint was not satisfied in any way. At last the Lord had to appear. In front of the saint a divine light spread. Shyām Sundar appeared radiating His all enticing resplendence. The saint was blessed.

Some fifty year ago another saint came to Nandagrām with a wish to live there. Sitting at Pāwan sarowar He was thinking about a proper site to engage in prayer and the meditation. Just then a *siddha* saint appeared before him. He had a large body and a white beard and a moustache and the hair on his head were also white. He started gesturing. That saint stood up and following the gestures started walking. He stopped near the cave close to the `Yashodā kund. That saint looked all around and found himself getting attracted to that

cave. He felt that the siddha saint was directing him to this cave only.

That saint started doing his prayer and meditation in this cave and became blessed after getting the darshan of Shri Krishna. The old siddha saint that had appeared before him had done his prayer and meditation in that cave in the past.

This site of the prayer and meditation of many siddha saints is convulsing the practitioners up until today.

Nearby is Rās mandal and a well. Atmosphere of this place is worth experiencing.

Dadhi Bhājan Sthal (Māta Bilo)

Two very big pots used by Shri Yashodā ji for churning the yogurt are worth seeing even today. It is said that these two earthen pots used to be kept in the front of Nanda palace.

Shri Nanda-Baithak

Nanda baithak is near the Yashodā kund. It is believed that when Shri Krishna and Balrāma come to the forest for grazing, the place where they sit has become famous as Shri Nanda baithak.

This is a beautiful site. It is connected with the wonderful memories of many saints and is soaking all with its atmosphere even today.

Kāraharo

Near the Yashodā kund is Kāraharo vana. There is a *samādhi* of Shri Nityānandadās ji, a famous saint of recent past. Shri Nityānandadās ji Mahārāj was a great rasik. He used to be engrossed in the Leelā of Priyā and Priyatam. He had great devotion for the Brajwāsis. He had devout faith in madhukari.

He used to say to the Brajwāsis, “Please perform my last rites while abusing me.” Coincidentally, when he entered the Nitya Leelā a big crowd assembled and the Brajwāsis could not even reach near his pyre. From a distance abusing him sweetly they threw their dry cow dung cakes in the pyre.

Madhusudan Kund

एइ मधुसूदन कुण्ड पुष्प वनान्तरे ।
कृष्ण महाहर्ष एथा भ्रमर गुञ्जरे ॥

Famous by the 'Madhusudan' name of Shri Krishna, this Madhusudan kund, the garden of flowers is making the site fragrant with its moist fragrance. The bees buzzing all around are singing the songs of that fragrance even today. The Yugal transmitting the fragrance of their rasa to these flowers become absorbed in their rasa filled pursuits.

This site is resonating with the sounds of those very rasa secrets even today.

Panihāri Kund

देख पनिहारि कुण्ड परम निर्मल ।
भोजनेर काले कृष्ण पिए एई जल ॥

(भक्ति रत्नाकर)

Shri Krishna goes for grazing every day. Taking their lunches with them, all the sakhās come here and have their meals. Maiyā Yashodā prepares various delicacies and gives it to them. After having their meal they like drinking the water of this place.

Shri Vrindā Devi in order to make Priyāji meet with Priyatam, brings Her here on some pretext or the other. Taking His beloved Shri Rādhā with Him, Priyatam comes to a nearby dense nikunja. The group of sakhis eager to savour the beauty of Yugal suddenly arriving near this nikunja and then beholding the beauty of the rasa vihār, rasa vilās become filled with bliss. This site of afternoon rest becomes blessed with the whirlpools of some rasaful labour and rest.

The beauty of the site and the enchanting kund covered by the trees are worth seeing. Nearby is the kund of Vrindā Devi.

Vrindā Devi

प्रति नव-नव कुंजं प्रेमपूरेण पूर्णा ।
प्रचुर सुरभि पुष्पैः भूषयित्वा क्रमेण ॥
प्रणयति वत वृन्दा तत्र लीलोत्सवं या ।
प्रियगणवृतराधाकृष्णयोस्तां प्रपद्ये ॥

(स्तवावलि ब्रज विलास)

Oh! The one who becoming absorbed in rasa of love, decorating every new kunja one by one with fragrant flowers, expands the Leelā of the Yugal surrounded by the sakhis, I pray to that Vrindā devi.

There is kund of Shri Vrindā devi here.

Gochāran Gaman Veethi

There! It is time for grazing. Shri Nandanandan dressed as an expert dancer-actor, has started walking from Nandagāon towards the forest to some secluded site on the banks of Yamunā where there is green grass, pure water and where the rasaful chirping of birds in the dense trees is resonating. Revered Behen ji saw it and became absorbed-

सिर मोर पखा कर लकूट लिये
 नन्द लाल चले गोचारण को ।
 आगे गउएँ, ग्वाले पाछे,
 आवत है संग सम्हारन को ।
 हँसि हँसि इत उत अवलोकत है
 नव केलि कला विस्तारन को ।
 सखि सरबस हार चुकी पहले
 अब और शेष का हारन को ।

(भक्तिमती ऊषा जी)

Every day both the brothers, Shri Krishna and Balrāma surrounded by the cowherd boys take the cows for grazing from gochāran gaman veethi (way to grazing ground). Everyday Maiyā puts different clothes and ornaments on them and packs their lunches. The heart of maiyā becomes restless at the thought of the day long separation. All the Brajwāsis gather here to see Kanhaiyā and savour His beauty. Some times maiyā also comes with them. Dressed like a cowherd, Kanhaiyā, carrying the flute in one hand and the stick in the other, starts walking like an intoxicated elephant.

Due to the gusts of the wind, when the strands of His hair come over the face then He looks so beautiful trying to fix them with His bluish hands. Even the cows impatient to see the exquisite beauty of their dear Kanhaiyā turn back again and again. All this sight is enthralling.

At times the naughty Shri Krishna looks here and there from the corners of His eyes. At times on the pretext of arranging His pitāambar, He sends some signal and moves on. In this way drenching all Brajwāsis in bliss by various signals, Kanhaiyā proceeds for grazing. Even today this site is giving the darshan of the Leelās related to 'van gaman' (going to forest).

Nearby is Dadhi Manthan Sthal and Sāhasi kund where Shri Krishna swings with the sakhis.

Kadamba Vana

एई देख कदम्ब कानन शोभामय ।
एथा बलराम नाना रंगे विलसय ॥

(भ० र०)

There is no dearth of wealth and prosperity in the palace of Shri Nandarai ji where Shyām Sundar is wandering. His fame is spread everywhere. Both the brothers have separate gardens. Often they go to each other's garden. Today Kanhaiyā along with His sakhās has come to the garden of elder brother Shri Balrāma ji. Filled with infinite cleverness Kanhaiyā along with His sakhās tricked and cheated Balrāma ji many times. Balrāma ji started displaying some anger but after looking at the sweet smile of Shri Krishna he forgot all about it. Balrāma ji laid down to get some rest. Kanhaiyā came running and taking the two feet of Balrāma ji in His lap started massaging them. Balrāma ji fell asleep. Now Kanhaiyā could do as He pleased.

Leaving the elder brother sleeping, Kanhaiyā reached where His beloved Kishori Shri Rādhā was and started giving bliss to the sakhis with words and speech laden with wit and humor.

Muktā Kund

एई मुक्ता कुण्ड एथा नन्देर कुमार ।
मुक्ता क्षेत्र कैला हैल कौतुक अपार ॥

(भक्ति रत्नाकर)

Braj Dhām is the site of delightful amusements and games. Here the amusements are also for the sake of the Leelā. They are part of the Leelā only. If there is any mutual discussion taking place, it is only about the beauty of Nandanandan, His rasa filled conversations and the *keli kautukas* that took place with Him. Sakhis in the shelter of their Kishori with Priyatam Shyām Sundar remain absorbed in bliss always.

The innocent and naive cowherd boys were feeling proud once describing the mighty deeds of their Kanhaiyā. On the other hand the sakhis overwhelmed by the magnificent grandeur of their beloved sakhi Shri Rādhā were also feeling elated. They were mutually talking in this way. Sakhās requested Kanhaiyā to sow pearls. Respecting His sakhās, Kanhaiyā sowed the pearls while everyone was looking. Heaps of pearls got collected in front of them. If the sakhis had wanted even they could have asked Shri Rādhā to sow the pearls but the path of love is different. The natural thing here is to respect the beloved.

Sakhās became busy with collecting the pearls, Kanhaiyā with His beloveds went over to the other side to create a prelude to some new rasa. The unrestrained keli of rasa flowed there.

Submerging all in bliss through those delightful rasa endeavours, how many pearls were collected by Kanhaiyā and from where? What were the ways in which they were collected? All this is known to them only.

Giving the account of those blissful rasa efforts this site is famous as Mukṭā Kund even today.

Shri Krishna Pada Chinha Sthal

इति सञ्चिन्तयन्कृष्णं श्वफल्कतनयोऽध्वनि ।
रथेन गोकुलं प्राप्तः सूर्यश्चास्तगिरिं नृप ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/38/24)

पदानि तस्याखिललोकपाल-
किरीटजुष्टामलपादरेणोः ।
ददर्श गोष्ठे क्षिति कौतुकानि
विलक्षितान्यब्जयवांकुशाद्यैः ॥²

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/38/25)

The entire Braj having kissed the foot prints of Brajendra Nandan Shri Krishna is blessed amongst the blessed. Nandanandan Shyām Sundar along with the cowherd boys has been playing many games here. He has been increasing the beauty of the forests by wandering in them following the cows while they graze. He has been distributing rasa by organising many delightful Leelās and engaging in vihār with the Braj maidens in the nikonjas. The village of Nandarai ji is blessed. These cowherd boys are blessed. The trees and vines are blessed who offer gifts of flowers only for Shri Krishna. The sides of the lakes are blessed, where the quarrels are always taking place and where Shri Krishna engages in rasa steeped sports. Every site, the forests, the gardens, the ghāts and the paths, the kunja-nikonjas, the alleys, all marked with the foot prints of Shri Krishna are convulsing everyone with the blissful memories of His. Even today many great

1. O King! Contemplating on Shri Krishna, Akroor ji the son of Shwafalka, mounting his chariot arrived in Gokul and the sun moved toward the western mountain.

2. There Shri Akroor ji saw, the pure raja of the feet that is applied on the head by all lokapāls, those holy footprints of Shri Krishna which are the enhancer of the beauty of the earth, having the signs of Lotus, barleycorn, goad and others.

ones tasting the delightful Leelās of Shyām Sundar are guiding our paths. It is Shri Krishna's vow to always provide the touch of His feet to the entire rasaful earth of Braj. On the mountain rocks, in the forest alleys, in the Nanda palace, every where the foot prints of Shri Krishna can be seen. Shri Krishna has definitely left His foot prints by wandering here, who can say if Shri Krishna came to this particular site to quench the thirst of its heart. This site filled with excess rasa, receiving the touch of the feet, quenched its own thirst, and the foot prints became imprinted as it melted in bliss. Even this cannot be said that where ever the auspicious feet, filled with excess rasa, helpless due to a certain surge of rasa stepped, that site was unable to collect the continual flow of the rasa of love thoroughly. These marks of rasa visible even today are reiterating the memory of those rasa excesses.

Looking at these foot prints Shri Akroor ji became overwhelmed. At times he started putting the dust on his forehead and at times becoming impatient and restless to surrender everything of his to these foot prints, he became delusional.

Located in the east of the village, this site is glorifying itself with its memory.

Gidiya (Geindukhara)

Shyām Sundar, fond of constant newness, always remains absorbed in new sports. He plays different games with the sakhās and respects and honours their feelings of friendship.

Today playing with the ball, He is enhancing the joy of the sakhās. This site is always conversant with the joy and delight received and the sweet accusations made during the ball game.

This site where Shri Krishna and the sakhās play ball (geinda) is famous as Giddoya. This is in the north western quarter of Nandagrām. In the west of it is the Gupta kund and in north east quarter is the Geinda kund.

Do Mila Vana

One dense forest area near the Poornamāsi cave is known as Do Mil Vana. The vines growing in the shelter of nearby trees and enfolding them can be seen here and there. The site seen in this form of trees and vines symbolic of the mutual love of the sakhis and Shyām Sundar, gives a signal or a clue of their union. Even today the profoundness of the memory of sentimental devotees acting as the prelude to Leelā darshan has come into the experience of many Vaishnavas.

This site is full of miracles. Till date many attempts were made by the government for the development of this site, but because of one reason or the other they had to be abandoned. This has been the place for grazing and the government has also left it as grazing ground.

Shri Krishnadās Siddha Bābā after taking the *prasād* that was offered to Govindadev ji (that resulted in his mind becoming scattered and perplexed) went to Shri Jaikrishnadās Bābā. After getting the solution to the problem came and started living at Do mil vana. He experienced the grace of Shri Rādhārāni here for the first time. Later he went to Chakaleishwar.

This is a beautiful site.

Yogiyā Sthān

प्राप्तो नन्दब्रजं श्रीमान् निम्लोचति विभावसो ।

छन्नयानः प्रविशतां पशूनां खुररेणुभिः ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/46/8)

After liberating many demons Shri Krishna started ruling Mathurā. He remembered Braj constantly. Day and night He used to remember his cows, His parents, His sakhās and His beloved Braj maidens. Bound by the exclusive and intense love and attachment of His intimate devotees, He remains *virājmān* near them forever so the question of absence does not arise. But the nature of love is of “more and more.” Even after meeting, there prevails a feeling of not having met and therefore the rasaful peaking of love exists only in the desire for more and more.

Shri Krishna once sent His dear sakhā Uddhav ji with a message to the village of Shri Nandarai ji. Shri Uddhav ji came to Nandagrām. Shri Nandarai ji welcomed and honoured him. Discussion related to Shri Krishna is the life of the Brajwāsīs. His sweet Leelās are their breath and life. Absorbed in talking about the Leelā, the virtues and the sweetness of their *Jeewan Sarvaswa* the intimate devotees of Shri Krishna forgot themselves. Shri Uddhav ji also becoming absorbed in enjoying the sweetness of Braj, the blissfulness of the gardens, the quiet and profound flow of Yamunā ji and the enchanting sites on the bank, started living in Braj for some time.

1. At the time of dusk Shri Uddhav ji reached the Braj of Shri Nandarai ji or Nandagrām. At that time the cows were returning from the forests after grazing. From the trampling of their hooves so much dust was flying that his chariot became covered with it.

When Shri Nandarai ji asked him about Shri Krishna, Shri Uddhav ji told him about the infinite love and respect that Shri Krishna has for all of them and about His blissful memories of the Brajwāsīs. After assuring them in every way, he expressed the feelings of Shri Krishna before them. Brajwāsīs were already living absorbed in the constant company of Shri Krishna by contemplating on the many blissful Leelās of grazing, vanshivādan (flute playing), Shri Girirāj dhāran (holding of Girirāj ji) and others.

This site absorbed in such conversations about Shri Krishna, connected with the discussion of knowledge by Shri Uddhav ji but totally unimpressed and uninfluenced by it, became famous as Yogyiāsthān.

Uddhav Kyāree

तं प्रश्रयेणावनताः सुसत्कृतं सब्रीडहासेक्षणसूनृतादिभिः ।
रहस्यपृच्छन्नुपविष्टमासने विज्ञाय सन्देशहरं रमापतेः ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/47/3)

To give assurance to His intimate devotees, Shri Krishna sent His minister Shri Uddhav ji to Braj. Talking with love to Shri Nanda bābā and other cowherds he gave them the message and the assurance of Shri Krishna.

Gopīs were extremely distraught and anguished after Shri Krishna left for Mathurā. Though absorbed in and intoxicated by the discussion of Shri Krishna Leelā they always felt the presence of Priyatam close by but upon the arrival of Shri Uddhav ji due to the state of mind they were in, they started complaining and made loving accusations unburdening their hearts thus. Gopīs are the ideal of love. Within the boundaries of the happiness of Priyatam they only made conversations filled with love.

On getting the assurances related to yoga from Uddhav ji, they could not control themselves. They had no experience of any absence or dearth. They felt the presence of Shri Krishna every moment constantly. With this feeling they said.

‘योग कहाँ रखें यहाँ रोम-रोम श्याम हैं ।’

1. When they learnt that he has come with a message from Ramā raman Lord Shri Krishna, then they paid him respect by bowing humbly, smiling shyly and with sweet glances and voice and after making him sit on an āsan in private, they started speaking like this.

Where the sweet beautiful form of Shyām Sundar pervades every pore of the body, how can there be any room left for yoga. “Udho mana na bhayei das beesa” there are no ten or twenty minds there is only one, where Shyām Sundar is already seated. Except Him they do not want to see anything else.

Speaking such, they said to Uddhav ji

कौन ब्रह्म की जोति ज्ञान कासों कहै ऊधौ ।
हमरे सुन्दर स्याम प्रेम को मारग सूधौ ॥
नैन, बैन श्रुति नासिका मोहन रूप लखाइ ।
सुधि बुधि सब मुरली हरी प्रेम ठगौरी लाइ ॥
सखा सुन स्याम के ।

They were not concerned with the light or the knowledge of Brahma. For them the fact that the Shyām Sundar is their very own, that He is the base of their lives, is enough. Spellbound by the sound of His flute they are getting drenched in love.

Again accusing Him with love they said-

अहो ! नाथ रमानाथ और जदुनाथ गुसाँई ।
नन्दनंदन विडराति फिरत तुम बिनु, बन गाई ॥
काहे न फिरे कृपालु त्वै गौ, ग्वालन सुधि लेहु ।
दुख जलनिधि हम बूढ़हीं कर अवलम्ब न देहु ॥
निठुर त्वै कहां रहे ।

O Jeewan Sarvaswa ! Why are you not taking any notice of your cows, cowherds, *sakhās* and us the powerless maidens and giving us your recourse and support. Without you the whole world looks empty.

Looking at the state of the Braj maidens, Uddhav ji forgot all about preaching yoga. Looking at the love for Shri Krishna in every pore of their bodies, their constant experience of the nearness of Priyatam, their day and night contemplation, their profound love for Shri Krishna, Uddhav ji was bewildered. Longing for those drops of love he started saying-

जे ऐसी मरजाद मेटि मोहन को ध्यावें ।
काहे न परमानन्द प्रेम पदवी को पावें ॥
ज्ञान जोग सब कर्म तें परे प्रेम की सांच ।
हौ या पटतर देत हौ हीरा आगे कांच ॥
विषमता बुद्धि की ।

Shri Uddhav ji while expounding yoga started eulogizing the dignity of the love of the gopis. Speaking about the height of their love and believing in the presence of Shri Krishna near them, he started expounding that love is beyond knowledge, yoga and action. Love is like a diamond and yoga and knowledge are like glass compared to it. This is only a cognitive dissonance.

Shri Uddhav ji after learning the lesson of love and doing *darshan* of the love of gopis returned to Shri Krishna. He started describing the love of the gopis to Him and became desirous of living in Braj longing for the dust of the feet of these gopis. After hearing the complete description, Shri Krishna said-

ह्वै सुचेत कहि भले सखा पठये सुधि लावन ।
 औगुन हमरे आनि तहाँ ते लगे दिखावन ॥
 उनमें मो में हे सखा छिनभरि अंतर नाहिं ।
 ज्यों देख्यौ मो माँहि वे,हौं हूँ उनहीं माहिं ॥
 तरङ्गिनी वारि ज्यौं ।

O Uddhav ji! I had sent you to get some news about Braj, you have returned so impressed from there. In fact there is no difference between me and the gopis. We are always one like the waves and the water.

This site of Shri Uddhav ji's conversation about knowledge, of the loving accusations of the gopis, of Shri Uddhav ji's acceptance of the supremacy of love and his expression of gratitude towards gopis became famous as Uddhav kyāree and is saturated with the same rasa filled atmosphere even today.

Many saints have received the darshan of Shri Krishna here. About fifty years ago Shri Krishna gave His darshan to one extremely dear and intimate devotee of His under a Kadamba tree, that is in the east of Rās site near the baithak of Uddhav ji and made her experience His causeless mercy.

Till now we have read about the Leelā sites of Nandagrām, let us now enjoy wandering in the neighbouring Leelā sites.

Maharānā (Mohini Vana)

मोहिनीवेषधृक् विष्णूद्भव नैमित्तिहेतवे ।
 त्रैलोक्य मोहरूपाय नमस्ते मोहिनी वन ॥

(सम्मोहन तन्त्र, ब्र० भ० वि०)

O Mohini Vana created by Lord Vishnu disguised as Mohini!
Enchanter of the three worlds! Obeisance to you.

This is the site of the cow barn of Shri Abhinanda cowherd.
This is the place of the maternal grandparents of Shri Krishna.

After finishing her work in the house, maiyā laid down to put Kanhaiyā to sleep. All necessary items are kept near Kanhaiyā. Kanhaiyā was not feeling sleepy. Embracing and hugging maiyā, honouring her motherly love, Kanhaiyā spoke in a sweet lispng voice, “Maiyā! Maiyā! Tell me a story.” Maiyā was feeling a little sleepy but alert Kanhaiyā started insisting for a story. Finally Maiyā holding Him tight said, “You want to listen to a story.” He said yes. Maiyā said-

In Tretā yuga there was a king who was very valiant. He was the knower of dharma and the follower of truth. His fame was renowned all around. His name was Dasharath. Shri Ayodhyā was his capital. The name of his eldest son was Shri Rām. Because of the order of His mother Kaikeyi and His father king Dasharath He agreed to reside in the forests and left for the forests. His faithful and devoted wife Shri Sita ji also accompanied Him.

Kanhaiyā was listening attentively. As maiyā became silent Kanhaiyā asked enthusiastically, “What happened afterwards?” After a while maiyā said, “Demon king Rāvan abducted Sita by deception.” Listening to this Kanhaiyā stood up and said, “Lakshaman! Lakshaman! Get my bow, I will kill the wicked Rāvan right now.” Maiyā got frightened and in fear embraced Kanhaiyā more tightly. After some time Kanhaiyā pacified maiyā who had become frightened by His memory of the past. The eminent devotee Shri Soordās ji has portrayed this Leelā very poignantly-

पहली कथा पुरातन सुन-सुन जननी के मुख वाणी ।

लक्ष्मण, धनुष-धनुष कहि टेरत यशुमत सूर डरानी ॥

Kanhaiyā is *virājmān* here in the form of Shri Rām with maiyā Yashodā.

In the south of the village is the temple of Lord Narsinha. To its east, there is a mark of a cow hoof. Mayur Kutī is in the north eastern quarter. There are marks of Shri Krishna’s playing in the east.

The celebrations of Holi and Shri Krishna Janmāshtami are specially worth seeing.

Jāwata (Yāva grām)

Shri Shri Rādhā is the *Āhlādīni Shakti* of Shri Krishna. She is the eternal companion of Priyatam and Priyatam is also always *virājmān*

with Her. Even a moment's separation is unbearable to them. They are always united with each other. What can anyone say about the Nitya Leelā? The ever renewing beauty of the Priyatam, the ripples of the rasa waves of the ocean of sweetness, the rays of His sweet smiles, the spring of rasa flowing from the rasa saturated eyes filling the entire nature with sweetness created a romp and revelry of rasa. If such was the case of Nature then who can even begin to say anything about these naive innocent Braj maidens. Their matter is their own.

Yes! Every moment they are engaged in rasa filled conversations of Priyatam. They are absorbed in rasa filled signals and remain lost in His humour and jest. The presiding Goddess of those very Braj maidens, the friend and the companion of those very gopis, Shri Rādhā always remains Shri Krishna *bhāv- bhāvit*. Soaked, steeped and nourished by the sweetness of the smiles of Shri Krishna which belittles the lustre of hundreds and hundreds of moons, Shri Rādhā is always *virājmān* near Him and bound by the sidelong glance of Priyāji, Priyatam also remains *virājmān* near Her. Ah! These two are the two embodiments of love. *Pranayi* Shri Rādhā and *Pranayi* Rijhawār Shri Krishna are '*Dou chakor dou chandramā*' i.e. they both are the chakor and both are the moons. The pinnacle of love itself is filled in this saying.

These two moon incarnate of rasa along with their countless stars always remain *virājmān* together. They appear separate from each other, only for the purpose of the peaking of rasa, for increasing of rasa, for the purpose of organising a particular Leelā. The story of Jāwata grām is connected with this very purpose.

ततो याव वटम् । रास मण्डलम् । तदुपरिस्थानि द्वादशाब्दावस्थं ।
राघादि दशसखी नामा रक्तानि पादक्षेपनेषु पादचिह्नानि...।

(स्कन्द पुराण)

After that there is Yāva Vata, Rās Mandal. Above that are the foot prints of twelve years old ten sakhis including that of Shri Rādhā.

The Context Of Origin

राधापादतलाच्चत्र जावकः स्वलतोऽभवत् ।
यस्माज्जाव वटं नाम विख्यातं पृथ्वीतले ॥

(बृहद् गौतमीय तन्त्र)

'रूप को सार सिंगार बखान्यो-
सिंगार को सार किशोर किशोरी ।'

Nandanandan Shri Krishna and His beloved Shri Rādhā are the incarnates of *shringār*. The essence of *shringār*, Priyā Shri Rādhā endowed with ever new beauty, adorned with ever new *shringār* remains steeped in the love of Her *Jeewan Sarvaswa* or it can be said that the complete *shringār* itself, upon receiving Her touch and proximity becomes blessed. She styles Her hair, adorns Herself with flowers, puts kohl in Her rasa filled eyes and makes various drawings with sandal and kumkum on Her body. She puts red paint on Her feet. The exquisite beauty of Priyā ji decorated with the *shringār*... Oh! The beauty and the sweetness get aggregated here. Beholding the beauty, splendor, luster, glory of Priyā ji, even Kām and Rati lower their heads in shame.

This Pranayi Kishore Shri Nandanandan is the actual enjoyer of the *shringār*. Looking at the arrangement of rasa filled keli, Priyatam floating in the fluid waves of the ocean of rasa, blesses and gratifies the *shringār*. In some such blissful moment, Priyā ji adorned with *shringār* entered the *nikunja* for *rasa vihār* along with the sakhis. Looking for His beloved Shri Rādhā, all of a sudden Priyatam also came to the same *nikunja*. On the pretext of doing *shringār* of the two crazy lovers with flowers, the sakhis left to pick flowers from the nearby garden. Priyā-Priyatam kept admiring each other's *shringār*. The sweetness of the bashfulness of Priyā ji, expressed at times through a gentle smile and at times through yes or no, kept enhancing the *rasa keli*. In the spurt of the rasa of love both of them became absorbed in some profound rasa. Oh! Who can depict this tale of the Yugal sheltered in the lap of the sport of love. Receiving the touch of the body of Priyā ji, this rasa clever site carefully imprinted the red paint or the jāwak of the feet of Priyā ji on its heart. Who can say if the extremely generous Shri Rādhā fulfilled the wish of this site Herself. Since then this site became famous as Jāv-vat. The vata having jāv is Jāv-vata. Even today it is famous by the same name.

This is the place of Abhimanyu cowherd. According to the difference of the *kalpa* Shri Rādhā is believed to be married to him. Kutilā was the sister of Abhimanyu and Jatilā their mother. Shri Vrishbhānu cowherd had organized this marriage on the advice of Poornamāsi, the wife of the priest. Due to the power of Yogamāyā Shri Abhimanyu cowherd would not even touch the shadow of Shri Rādhā. Due to shyness he always remained occupied in the cow barn and with other cowherds of his age. Jatilā and Kutilā remained busy with the household work. On the other hand the sakhis would cleverly

arrange the meetings of Shri Krishna with Shri Rādhā. The rasikas have accepted the state of *parkiyā bhāv* only for the culmination of rasa, otherwise Shri Rādhā is the exclusive and devout beloved of Shri Krishna, She is His *Āhlādinī Shakti*. His eternal beloved.

Leelā Sites (Rādhā Kund)

राधायै सततं तुभ्यं ललितायै नमो नमः ।

कृष्णेन सह क्रीडायै राधाकण्डाय ते नमः ॥

(बृहद् गौतमीय तन्त्र)

O Shri Rādhikā Swaroop! O Shri Lalitā Swaroop! O Shri Rādhā Kund for the sport of Shri Krishna! Obeisance to you.

The ways of these two rasa crazy Yugal itself are unique. The nature of love is strange. It renews and increases every moment. Who can find the bounds of the ever renewing waves, rising in the ocean of beauty? These rasa crazy lovers of perpetual keli always remain absorbed in new and novel *keli*. The rasa erupts in joking and jesting with the sakhis. At times the rasa spills in the pleadings and the entreaties of *dān* and *mān*. In the rasa filled teasing and flirting, Priyatam swaying in the alleys of rasa with the sakhis, somehow finds the opportunity to be alone with Priyāji. The rush of rasa in solitude, the blissful desires for rasa eruption, at times merge in the organisation of the water sports and at times taking the support of the vines of some dense nikunja, Rasik Rijhawār becomes absorbed in rasa. This rasa keli acts as the prelude to the water sports. In order to make the sakhis savour the infinite rasa Priyatam Shyām Sundar, drowning in rasa in the nikunja at the strand of Shri Rādhā kund, enters into the water. This kund gets soaked with the sandal, saffron, red powder and the other cosmetics anointed on the bodies of the sakhis.

This rasa filled kund familiarizing us with many such secrets of water sports is getting impatient to give the direct vision of its Leelā even today.

Rās Mandal

यत्र राधाकरोद्वासं कृष्णेन सह विह्वला ।

सप्तवर्षस्वरूपेण सखिभिर्बहुधा सुखमा॥

(ब्र० भ० वि०)

Fully absorbed and engrossed Shri Rādhā along with the sakhis did many Rās Leelās here with seven years old Shri Krishna.

While doing the *Prakat* Leelā, Kanhaiyā is in the form of a

seven years old child, but in Leelās with gopis of His age, He is always an adolescent. Kanhaiyā engrossed in the rasa endeavours of adolescence has done many Leelās here. Blessed with the secrets of giving and receiving rasa in these Leelās, this site is soaking the devotees with rasa even today.

Padmāvati Vivāh Sthal

पद्मावत्सास्तु सख्यास्तु विवाहं सा समाचरेत् ।
गानं वैवाहिकोत्साहं सर्वमाङ्गल्यपूरितम् ॥

(ब्र० भ० वि०)

These two rasa embodiments continually showering the streams of rasa nectar constantly remain absorbed in rasa. The Pranayi Nandanandan gives solitary and private pleasure to Shri Rādhā, but even Her bodily manifestations the Braj maidens keep getting soaked in the shower of that same rasa. The whole nature is spell bound by His beauty. When even the birds and animals become crazy drinking the potion of that beauty, then who can say anything about the fortune of these Braj maidens? Ever adolescent Nandanandan is extremely generous and so is His beloved Kishori Shri Rādhā. The rasa, receiving which She becomes blessed and gratified Herself, She gives inspiration to distribute that same rasa to the Braj damsels, who are the direct manifestations of Her body. The desires of the Braj maidens forever steeped in the boundary of 'Tatsukhei sukhitam' and expounding this very principle are no secret to the extremely generous Kishori Shri Rādhā. Therefore inspiring Her sakhis Herself, She creates opportunities for them to taste that same rasa. The uninterrupted eternal bliss that belongs to Priyā jī, by Her wish, is also received by the sakhis. It was received by the rasa steeped sakhis simultaneously in the Rās as they are emotionally identical. They have many bodies but their minds are one. The sakhis receiving the proximity of the Priyatam became engrossed in the conversations about Him. Rewarding the eternal desire of Padmāvati sakhi, the rasa filled Kishore became absorbed in rasa. Sakhis did the entire decorations. The heart of the sakhi Padmāvati started pulsating. Bashfully she lowered her eyes. After some time upon receiving the nearness of her mistress Shri Rādhā, she became conscious. Shri Rādhā holding her hand and talking sweetly, made that maiden sit on the predetermined decorated place. Priyatam was already *virājmān* there. Tying the end of the pitāambar of Shri Krishna with the end of the sari of this maiden,

Shri Rādhā started looking at her face. Oh! Who can describe the current state of the mind? And how.... ? Feeling extremely shy, this maiden.....

Sakhis sang songs of auspiciousness and this maiden feeling bashful.....became absorbed in some unprecedented rasa. And this fortunate site, became suffused with that blissful atmosphere.

Hiding those joyful memories in its womb this site is transmitting that rasa even today.

This auspicious and benevolent site is the giver of the love of Shri Krishna.

Shri Rādhikā Gamanā-gaman Veethikā

The Idol of all the living beings, the Lord of the entire universe, the Almighty Shri Krishna performs all human like Leelās during His incarnation. His beloved Kishori Shri Rādhā also gives respect to Sun god and worships him. She goes for the worship of Sun god through this path.

Kanhaiyā, intoxicated by the fragrance of Kadamba forest, is already aware of these events. Therefore hiding behind these very Kadamba trees, He is becoming more and more intoxicated looking at the expressions of Priyā ji. At times He is looking at Her posture of picking the flowers. At times looking at Her disentangling the clothes or the ornaments entangled in the branch of some tree, He is getting absorbed in the rasa. Adjusting the sari's border, Priyā ji adjusted the scattered hair with Her left hand and bending the branch tried to pluck the flower but the flower creeper slipped and went up. To grasp the creeper again, Priyā ji stood on the tips of Her toes and lifting herself again and again tried to grab the vine but Her hand could not reach it. Somehow Priyā ji caught hold of one vine and bending it plucked one bunch of flowers. She had just put the bunch in the sari's border, when the vine escaped again. Beholding this sight, subjugated by love, Priyatam Shyām Sundar started laughing. Hearing the sound of the laughter Priyā ji was startled. She raised her eyes. In the mean time, the sakhis that were around also started laughing.

Priyā ji filled with shyness said, "O Priyatam! Finding me helpless do not harass me. O the naughty one! Please let go of my sari ! I have to go for the worship of Sun god now. O Gokul veer! Do not cause delay. Chandra Vadan! Looking at your furtive, playful eyes I am getting frightened." In this way forbidding Him, Priyāji started pleading and making entreaties.

Filled with those lofty waves of rasa, elated and stirred by the hints and signals pleasing to His mind Priyatam became playful filled with more and more rasa at that very site.

Even today soaked by those rasa drops, this site is making the sentimental devotees taste the rasa.

Shri Krishna Kund

एई कृष्ण कुण्ड वट वृक्षादि वेष्टित ।
एथा श्रीकृष्णेर अति सुललित ॥

(भ० २०)

This site surrounded by thick dense trees is famous as Shri Krishna kund and is the creator of many Leelās. This Krishna kund is the witness to almost all the Leelās of Priyā-Priyatam.

Once amidst these very banyan trees Priyatam arrived with Priyā ji to swing. Sakhis also arrived after some time. The rasa adept Priyatam thought of a new game. He said, “Today I will make the preparations for the swing with my hands.” Without waiting He became engaged in the work. Putting up an extremely beautiful swing He said to Priyā ji, “Swāminiji! Please come.” Priyā ji tried to sit but as it was a little high she could not sit on it. Priyatam Shyām Sundar taking Her in His arms lifted Her and on the pretext of seating Her on the swing embraced Her. Even before the swing festival, Priyā-Priyatam started swaying in the waves of rasa.

From the courtyard in the back, sakhis entered the nikunja laughing. That private blissful swinging converting into a group festival of swinging became soaked with the showers of rasa. The rest of the sakhis also became drenched in the special rasa.

Soaked and steeped in such blissful Leelās, this site is convulsing all by its atmosphere even today.

This kund is situated in the south of the village. Nearby is Mukṭā Kund where the sakhis had done the shringār of Priyā-Priyatam with the pearls.

Nearby is Pāwan Kund. It is situated amidst the Kadamba trees in the north western quarter of the village.

Lādali Kund

Shri Lalitā ji arranges the meeting of Priyā-Priyatam at this site. Therefore this has become famous as Lādali Kund.

It is situated to the west of Pāwan kund.

Vara-Prāpti Sthal

Shri Rādhā once suddenly came over to this site. She met Devarshi Nārad ji suddenly. Honouring him fully, Shri Rādhā bowed to him. Devarshi getting pleased gave Her the blessing of being ‘Amrita hastā.’¹

Priyā ji is an adept at all arts, yet she gives full respect to Her own devotees.

Shri Rādhakānta temple is in the west of the village. In the north eastern quarter there is Kishore kund and in the south-eastern quarter there is Siddha kund. In the south of the village is Kuntal kund also known as Neepa kund. Other nearby sites worth visiting are Dahara vana, Vihaval kund, Panihāri kund, Pāral Gangā etc.

There is a tree here famous as Pārijāt tree. This tree flowers in the month of Baisākh. It is believed that Shri Rādhā Herself had planted this tree with Her hands and it continues to exist in the form of the direct descendant of that tree since then.

Kokilā Vana

देवर्षिकिन्नराकीर्ण कोकिला निर्मिताय च ।
वनायाह्लाद पूर्णाय नमस्ते सुस्वरप्रद ! ॥

(नारद पाञ्चरात्र)

O the forest inhabited by divine sages and celestial beings! O Kokilā van full of bliss built by the cuckoo! Giver of the sweet sound! Obeisance to you.

The pilgrimage done in Swāti asterism, on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Bhādra (aug-sep) is believed to have special significance.

Appearance

Priyatam Shyām Sundar goes for grazing every day. After giving joy to the sakhās, at times leaving the cows grazing in the forests and the sakhās behind to take care of them, He goes to fulfill the desires of His beloveds waiting for Him. Today He came to this very forest in the morning itself with a desire to meet His beloved Shri Rādhā. His ever new ideas and forever new ways are famous everywhere.

1. All items made by Amrit hastā and task done by her are tasty and provide happiness to all. The one who has them lives long and becomes the cause of joy and delight of all.

He merged His voice with the sound of the cuckoo and resonated the whole forest. Shri Rādhā recognised Her beloved's voice. But how could She go alone so far in the forest. Shri Vishākhā ji thought of a way out. After taking the permission of all in the house she came with Shri Rādhā to this forest. On the other side, without knowing, the other sakhis also arrived searching for their Jeewan sarvaswa. The feet of these damsels steeped in love never go astray, in fact they reach the meeting point instinctively. This secluded site of rasa became blessed with the divine keli vilās.

कोकिलेर शब्द कृष्ण मिले राधिकारे ।
ए हेतु कोकिला वन कहये इहारे ॥

(भ० र०)

As the prelude to the union of Shri Rādhā Krishna was filled with the cooing sound of the cuckoo or Kokilā, this site became famous as Kokilā vana.

Ratnākar Kund

सख्याः क्षीरसमुद्रभूत रत्नाकर सरोवरे ।
नाना प्रकाररत्नानामुद्भवे वरदे नमः ॥

(नारद पाञ्चरात्र)

Born from the milk brought by the sakhis O Ratnākar Sarowar! The source of various types of jewels! O provider of the boons! Obeisance to you.

Destroyer of all the sins and giver of the wealth and prosperity this lake is also the giver of the causeless devotion of Priyā-Priyatam to the devotees.

Rās Mandal

रासक्रीडाप्रदीप्ताय गोपी रमण सुन्दर !
नमः सुखमनोरम्यस्थलाय सिद्धिरूपिणे ॥

(नारद पाञ्चरात्र)

O enchanting Rās Mandal illuminated by the sport of Rās! O Siddha Roop, made beautiful by the amorous dallying of the gopis! Obeisance to you.

Baithak of Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji

The baithak of Shrimanmahāprabhu ji is under the lupine tree

at the strand of Shri Krishna kund. Here he performed the recitation of Shrimad Bhāgwat and granted the brahma sambandha to the Vaishnavas.

Bijawāri

बिजुरिर पुञ्ज ज्ञान हईल सवार ।
एई हेतु 'विजुआरि' नाम से इहार ॥

(भ० र०)

Shri Akroor ji sent by Kansa came to Braj to take Nandanandan and Balrāma ji to Mathurā. Both the brothers boarded the chariot and started moving. The Brajwāsis did not have the courage and strength to bear the separation of their Kanhaiyā. They all stood before the chariot. This moment was very painful and agonising for the Braj maidens. The lotus like hearts of all the Brajwāsis withered at the thought of separation with their *Jeewan Sarvaswa*.

Though Shri Krishna is always *virājmān* with His intimate devotees but in the play of *Prakat Leelā*, His departure to Mathurā was painful¹ and distraughtful for all the Brajwāsis. It seemed as though the lightning had struck them.

Gopis started crying. One by one all of them stood before the chariot. The earth became soaked with the incessant flow of their tears. Oh! They started cursing the Providence. How will they stay alive separated from Priya? Lamenting thus they started losing their consciousness.

Just about then, understanding the wish of Shri Krishna, by the power of Yogamāyā, everybody felt that a steady mass of lightning had fallen on the earth from the sky. All the Brajwāsis were frightened and dispersed here and there. This place where the mass of lightning fell, has been given the name Bijuāri or Bijawāri.

This is about one and half mile from Nandagrām.

1. The rasikas of Braj believe, regarding the appearance of Shri Krishna, that He manifested as the son of Shri Vasudev ji (the opulent and majestic form) and at Shri Yashodā ji's as Nandanandan (form of love and sweetness) along with a girl. When Vasudev ji arrived in Gokul with his son at Nandarai ji's home, that Opulent form merged in the form of Love and sweetness. He stayed in Braj for eleven years and fifty two days and gave joy and delight to His intimate devotees. At the time when Akroor ji was taking Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji to Mathura, the four armed form that was seen by him at Akroor ghat was the Opulent form of Nandanandan. To complete His future Leela with that very Majestic form, Lord Devakinandan went to Mathura and in the form of Nandanandan remained in Braj to give happiness to intimate devotees. His vow is-

‘वृन्दावनं परित्यज्य नैव गच्छाम्यहं क्वचित् ।’ (पद्म पुराण)

Sānkhi

एई सांखि नामे ग्राम देख एई खाने ।
दुष्ट शंखचूड़े कृष्ण बधिला आपने ॥¹

(भ० र०)

Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji were once engaged in *vihār* at night with the sakhis of their respective groups. The night was adorned with the white moonlight. All around the fragrant breeze was blowing. The flowers were blooming. In such an enchanting night Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji were absorbed in dancing with the gopis of their respective groups. The maidens intoxicated in divine bliss had no awareness of their clothes even. One servant of Kuber named Shankhachuda came there and abducting a few gopis started running away. When this came to the notice of Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji, they ran after him. Seeing his death approaching him, Shankhachuda ran to save his life leaving gopis behind. Leaving Balrāma ji near the Braj maidens Shri Krishna ran after him. Soon He caught him and with just one punch severed his head from his trunk. Shri Krishna returned with the jewel of Shankhachuda. He gave that jewel to his elder brother Shri Balrāma ji with joy. As Balrāma ji was there at that time, this place is also called Rām talā.

It is about two miles from Sāhār.

Chhatravan (Chhātā)

गोपिकान्वितकृष्णाय नमस्ते छत्र धारिणे ।
इन्द्रादिदेवताभ्यस्तु वरदाय नमो नमः ॥²

(कूर्म पुराण)

Who can give the account of the rasa steeped sports of Kandarprāj Shri Krishna!

Shri Krishna is the deliverer of the pride of Manoj (Cupid). He is the one who crushes his arrogance for good.

Where Cupid gets defeated and falls to the ground, from there the pure rasa steeped Leelās of Shri Krishna begin. Only the relinquisher of all the worldly desires can become the enjoyer of Shri Krishna Kām. The Kām of Shri Krishna is Love itself. This is love in the purest form which is contained and permeated in the feeling of “*Tatsukhei sukhitwam*” of the gopis.

1.This is the village called Sānkhi where Shri Krishna had killed the wicked Shankhachooda with His own hands.

2. O Gopikāmaya Shri Krishna! Chhatradhāri obeisance to you. You are the giver of boons even to Indra and other demigods.

Kandarp Rasarāj Shri Krishna, His beloved Kishori Shri Rādhā and Her bodily manifestations the Braj maidens, are all engrossed in the divine *rasa vilās*. This group of sakhis is highly proficient in organising these rasaful Leelās.

Once nourishing His sakhās with rasa Kanhaiyā told Madhu-Mangal and other sakhās to go and announce, “Who is this person that is stealing the flowers from our garden and also damaging the trees etc.” It was a novel way of *rasa keli*. It was the *rasa* steeped appreciation of love. The beauty of all these *rasa* endeavours lies only with the Brajrāj Nandanandan and the emotionally identical Braj maidens. Whereas on one hand His sweeter than sweet form gets revealed before us, on the other His supernatural acts and deeds become our ideals. Shri Krishna does Leelā only to provide joy and delight to His intimate devotees. Madhu Mangal and the other sakhās took over the new responsibility from that day and made this announcement.

‘महाराज छत्रपति नन्देर कुमार ।’

(भ० २०)

Since then this site became famous as Chhatra vana. Another name is Chhātā. In the north east quarter is Surya Kund and in the south west is Chandra kund. Nearby is Umarāo grām.

Umarāo

उमरा-उ योग्य सिंहासने बसि राई ।
सखीगन प्रति कहे चतुर्दिके चाई ॥

(भ० २०)

The news of Nandanandan Shri Krishna being the chieftain was delivered to all in the Braj mandal by the sakhās. This news reached the sakhis also. Shri Lalitā and other sakhis heard this with astonishment and said, “No, no, this cannot be. This garden is under the domain of our infinitely beautiful Mistress Vrishbhānu Nandini. In the world of Kandarp (cupid) She is totally capable of seizing everybody’s calm and patience. Where is the question of Cupid, when even the remover of the pride of Cupid, Shri Krishna pierced by one glance of Priyā ji bound by the cord of love, takes Her refuge. Therefore the Mistress of this garden of Cupid is only Kishori Shri Rādhā, so who is this other shareholder in Her majestic grandeur for which the announcement is being made. Go sakhis apprehend him and produce him before the only presiding deity of the garden of Cupid, our Mistress Shri Rādhā.”

That is what happened. Sakhis tying Madhumangal with a cord of flowers brought him there. He was told the punishment. Madhumangal said jestfully, it is all right to give me punishment but first feed me tummy full of *laddoos* (a kind of sweet). Kishori Shri Rādhā said- this is some Brahmin boy so let him go.

Madhumangal went and gave this news to his friend Kanhaiyā. On hearing this Shyām Sundar became impatient and walked hurriedly towards the nikunja. Seeing Her beloved Shyām Sundar with Madhumangal Kishori Shri Rādhā felt shy. Just then Madhumangal made Shri Krishna sit on the throne to the right side of Kishori Shri Rādhā. All started drinking the sweetness of the infinite beauty of the Yugal. Upon this, addressing Shri Rādhikā Madhumangal said-

राधिकार प्रति मधु कहे बार बार ।
 अबे कृष्ण, लह राज्य कर अधिकार ॥
 कृष्ण जे दिबेन एक आलिंगन रत्न ।
 'से तोमार भेंट-ता' लइबे करि यत्न ॥

(भ० र०)

O Shri Rādhē now bringing Shri Krishna near you, assume lordship over Him. If He gives you the pleasure of nearness even once, then considering it as your property, accept it diligently.

Hearing all this Kishori Shri Rādhā became overwhelmed with emotions. Her cheeks became red. Eyes became shut. The neck bent a little. Love personified and permeated Her body. Sakhis saw this unique state of love, feeling happy within, they became absorbed in rasa. Madhumangal also left after receiving what he desired. The two remained in the Kandarp vātikā deciding who the ruler is. Who knows if the decision was reached after the victory or the defeat of the battle of Cupid or if the heroes of the love decided on their win or loss spontaneously. Searching for the flowers stolen from the garden of the Chieftain Nanda Kumār, who knows what decisions were taken by Him on how and where to search, from which places He found the fragrance of the stolen flowers and when reconciling the two became one, the answers to these only they know. 'Vividha kautukei sakhi shrama doora kailā' meaning the sakhis removed their tiredness by organizing various events.

Since the prelude to these events of rasa was Shri Rādhā's acting as the Umarāo i.e. the prince, the name of this village became Umarāo.

Kishori kund is here. There is the prayer and meditation hut of Lokanāth Goswāmi. Shri Rādhā Vinod Thākur which is currently

virājmān in Jaipur appeared from here. At this very kund under a tree Shri Lokanāth Goswāmi lived a life full of renunciation and devotion. Nearby is Dhanshingā grām of Dhanishthā sakhi.

Kosi (Kusha- Sthali)

पुण्याय पुण्यरूपाय पावनाय नमो नमः
अक्षयफलदायैव नमः कुशवनायते ॥

(ब्र० पु०)

O the form of virtue! O the form of holiness! O Kusha vana giver of everlasting merit! Obeisance to you.

Present name is Kosi. Shri Krishna gave the darshan of Vaikuntha to Nanda bābā here. This is the treasury of Shri Nandarai ji. This is treated as Dwārakāpuri of Braj-mandal. There are Ratnākar Sāgar, Māyā kund and Vishākhā kund here. In the west of the village is Gomati kund.

Nari- Seimari

नारायणसुखावास परमात्मस्वरूपिणे ।
नमो नारायणाख्याय वनाय सुखदायिने ॥

(आदित्य पु०)

O Pleasurable home of Nārāyana! O the form of the Supreme soul! Pleasurable forest called Nārāyana! Obeisance to you.

Believing it to be the symbol of Nari- Nārāyana it has been addressed as Nārāyana vana.

Mān or pride has its own place in the rasa steeped sports of love. After the separation, the union has its own bliss. Only the lovers know its significance. To increase the joy of Priyatam, Priyāji at times assumes mān also.

Shri Rādhā assumed mān once. All the efforts made by Priyatam Who is supremely skillful at placating Her failed today. He went to the sakhis. Shri Lalitā suggested that He should go to her in the guise of a sakhi and play some music to Her. Shyām Sundar did just that. Taking veenā in hand, disguised as Shyāmala sakhi, he went to Priyāji and started playing the veenā. Listening to the sweet sound of veenā Priyā ji was startled. She called the sakhi to her and asked her, “Sakhi where have you learnt the music? You sing very sweetly.” Shyām Sundar disguised as sakhi replied, “I am a celestial singer of the heaven. My teacher sings even better than me. Her voice is sweeter than mine.” The mutual friendship soon became intimate.

Getting pleased, Priyāji tried to give that dark complexioned sakhi Her jeweled necklace. Sakhi pretending to be shy said, “Swāmini ji, instead of this jeweled necklace please give me the jewel of mān.” Shri Rādhā was already doubtful and now she understood completely and Her mān disappeared. It is difficult to say how this sweet union commenced and ended.

Both these sakhis are worshipped in the form of Braj devi. Sankarshan kund and Kishori kund are there. There is darshan of Baladev ji.

Ranabādi

The norm of love crazy Yugal itself is unique. The One Who is the personification of love, the source of sweetness, the height of beauty and Who churns the heart of Cupid himself, He, in order to seize the pride of Cupid, sets the prelude of the battle of love and challenges him. He gives life back to him and defeating him in the war, gives him the service of His feet for good. That very Shri Krishna Whose all desires are fulfilled is getting absorbed in rasa through various keli with His beloved Shri Rādhā.

This site of that battle of cupid is famous as Ranabādi.

Some one hundred twenty five years ago one Shri Krishna Prasād Chattopādhyāya came here from east Bengal. Later he became famous as Shri Krishnadās Bābā.

He used to live in Ranabādi grām. He left his house in his childhood and came to Braj. He was perfect in his prayer and meditation. Once he had a strong desire to travel and do pilgrimage. Suddenly he decided to visit Dwārakā. In the night Priyā ji gave darshan and told him not to go to Dwārakā. He was so impatient because of his resolve that he dismissed Priyā ji's command as his own delusion and went to Dwārakā. Once he got there he became attracted to Dwārakā. He even got the stamp of *tapta mudrā* (a seal) on his body.¹ By now the desire to travel had subsided. He returned from the middle of the journey.

The day Bābā reached Braj, that same night Shri Rādhārāni appeared in a dream again and said, “By going to Dwārakā and getting *tapta mudrā* you have become the follower of Satyabhāmā ji. Now you are not fit for Braj, therefore you should go to Dwārakā and live there.

1. People of all the sects go to Dwārakā and get a hot seal stamped on their body but no such rule is there for the Rāgānurāgi devotees. Therefore for the devotees of Braj bhāv the following of Shri Kishori ji is accepted as the principal thing whereas the Aishwarya predominant sādhakas do worship with Dwārikā bhāv.

You should attain Shri Krishna by doing worship with that feeling.”

The dream this time seemed real to him which caused him extreme pain. After that he went to the Siddha Bābā Shri Krishnadās ji of Gowardhan and told him all about the incident. Even he was stunned and did not even touch him.¹

He consulted many saints in Braj. All advised him to follow the order of Priyā ji. Hopeless, he came back to Ranabādi.

Because of the fire of separation from Priyā ji and his own resolve he felt deep anguish. His body started burning. This state remained almost for three months. The fire broke out within him and starting from the toe of the Bābā sitting in siddhāsan (yogic posture) reached up to his head. Within three days his body was charred to ashes. It is said that when the ashes cooled down his guru brother Shri Premadās ji offered a piece of wood to the ashes, which also started burning.

Even today the no moon day of Paush (dec-jan), the day on which Bābā became unmanifest is celebrated with enthusiasm by the Brajwāsis every year.

Shri Jagannāthdās, Shri Bihāridās and many Brajwāsis were present at the time when his body burned with the fire of the yoga.

Khāyaro (Khadira Vana)

नमः खद्रवनायैव नाना रम्य विभूतये ।
देव गन्धर्व लोकानां वरदाय नमोऽस्तु ते ॥²

(आदि वा०)

सप्तमन्तु वनं भूमौ खदिरं लोक विश्रुतम् ।
तत्र गत्वा नरो भद्रे मम लोकं सगच्छति ॥

(आ० वा०)

The famous Khadira vana is the seventh famous forest in the world. O Bhadrei! Just by wandering here a person attains my eternal abode.

1. For the devotees of Braj bhāv living in Braj is necessary. Along with that, the bhāv should remain that of Braj only. It seems that Shri Krishnadās baba not only took the mudra but probably there was also a change in his bhāv. Otherwise to imagine such harshness in supremely tender hearted Kishori Shri Rādhā will be a big mistake. The One Who is the embodiment of love and affection naturally- She can indeed nourish the bhāvas of Her janas but to impose any unbearable condition on them is totally against Her nature.

2. O Vibhooti Swaroop of various types! O Khadira van giver of boons to the demigods, gandharwas and the human beings! Obeisance to you.

This is a grazing ground. Shri Krishna comes here for grazing. Sometimes He gives joy to the sakhās by climbing up and down the trees. And sometimes He enhances the happiness of sakhās by bathing in water. He eats His food with the sakhās in the forest. Maiyā Yashodā sends food for her sons. They distribute it amongst all and then have it. This place where they eat their food is famous as “Neio chhāk”.

‘Khāyarei tei āvego, kurtā topi lāvego.’ meaning that someone will come from Khāyaro and will bring the shirt and the cap. As Shri Krishna was born to parents in old age, He was made to wear clothes taken from others. Even today this pada is sung by the assembly of goswāmis of Nandagāon.

Sangam Kund

Nearby is a dense garden of Kadamba trees. Sangam kund is there. The Brajwāsīs are always impatient to see their Jeewan Sarvaswa. The cowherd boys are with Kanhaiyā during grazing but the Braj maidens some times on the pretext of selling milk or on the pretext of collecting water come here. All of a sudden they meet Kanhaiyā and Kanhaiyā fulfills their desires in various ways.

This site of mutual meeting, hiding tales of many blissful Leelās in its lap is famous as Sangam kund.

Bakatharā

बकथरा ग्राम ए जावट सन्निधाने ।
बकासुरे कृष्ण बधिलेन एई खाने ॥¹

(भ० २०)

Shri Krishna was grazing the calves with His elder brother Balrāma ji and other cowherd boys. Seeing that the calves are thirsty He took them to drink water. He also drank water. Everybody saw a big bird nearby that looked like a crane. All were frightened. That friend of Kansa, Bakāsūr in the disguise of a crane had come there to harm Shri Krishna. Seeing Shri Krishna he dived and grabbing Him with his beak swallowed Him. Seeing this Balrāma ji and the other children fainted. Shri Krishna is The Supreme Being. He is almighty. Possible, impossible and otherwise possible acts, He is capable of all the three. This was only His Leelā. Bakāsūr started feeling extreme heat in the stomach. His breath stopped. Immediately he took Shri Krishna out

1. Bakatharā village is near Jāwavata where Shri Krishna had killed Bakāsūr.

of his stomach and started attacking Him with his sharp beak. With everyone looking, Shri Krishna grabbing him by its beak tore him in two from the middle within seconds. All the cowherd children were jubilant. Exhailing with relief, they all went and embraced Kanhaiyā and said, “Kanhaiyā ! You killed such a huge crane. It is true. Bābā used to say, Lord Nārāyana enters you from time to time.” After the killing of Bakāsura, demigods started showering flowers.

When the sakhās returned home after grazing, they shared the tale of the might and the valour of Kanhaiyā with the elderly cowherds. Hearing which they remembered what Shri Gargāchārya ji had said and started expressing their gratitude towards him.

The site of the killing of Bakāsura is known as Bakatharā.

Bhadāwali (Bhāndāgor)

भाण्डागोरमितिख्यातं गुह्यमस्ति ततो ममम् ।
लभन्ते मनुजा भूमिसिद्धिं तत्र न संशयः ॥

(आ० वा०)

There is a secret place of mine called Bhāndāgor. Just by going there one accomplishes siddhi.

There is a kund covered by clumps and vines. Anybody who after fasting at night and chanting the mantra etc bathes in this kund in the morning, he goes to the abode of Vidyādhara (a demigod) and enjoys all comforts and pleasures. This is the absolute truth. There is a special significance of the twenty fourth Ekādashi of the year.

Bathain Chhoti and Badi

गोप गन वैसे - एई हेतु ए बैठान ।
अवे लोक कहे 'छोट' 'बड़' दुई नाम ॥

(भ० र०)

The place of the mutual discussions and the deliberations of the cowherds became famous as Bathain. Sitting here the cowherd boys used to contemplate on the subject of grazing. The places of the sitting of the cowherd boys and the cowherds are famous as 'Chhoti' and 'Badi' bathain respectively.

In the dense forest of Tāl trees Balrāma ji had already killed Dhenukāsur with his valour and might. Along with that Shri Krishna liberated many other demons with His strength and valour. Cowherd boys tasted the sweet fragrant fruit and returned to Braj.

Hearts of Yashodā maiyā and Rohini ji became overwhelmed with motherly love. They fed Shri Krishna and Balrāma delicacies of their choice which they had prepared beforehand. When both the brothers finished resting a little, then the mischievous smile and bashful eyes of Kanhaiyā increased the curiosity of maiyā even further. When maiyā asked, Kanhaiyā replied, “O maiyā! What do I tell you, today brother Dāu did a very strange thing. Maiyā you cannot even imagine. Dāu ji is very valiant. There is no limit to his bravery.” The curiosity of maiyā was growing. She told Lālā, “Why don’t you say what Balrāma has done.” Laughing a little, Lālā said, “Maiya today brother Dāu killed a donkey.” Hurt by the sarcasm in the smile of Shri Krishna, Balrāma ji said getting irritated a little, “ Kanhaiyā! You should speak carefully. Maiyā! See the language of Kanhaiyā.” Interceding maiyā calmed him down but hurt Balrāma ji could not conceal his annoyance. Calm prevailed only after it was decided that both of them will take their cows for grazing separately. Next day the group of Dāu ji took their cows to a different place where as Shri Krishna and His sakhās took them to Chhoti Bathain. Since then the two places became famous as Badi Bathain and Chhoti Bathain.

There was one more reason hidden behind the sarcasm of Kanhaiyā. Kanhaiyā had to do the Kāliyāmardan (crushing of the pride of snake Kāliya) Leelā the next day. As Balrāma ji is the incarnation of Lord Sheish, it would not be possible to do it in his presence. Therefore before the Leelā itself Kanhaiyā formed an excuse to send him to another place.

Shri Sanātan Goswāmi lived here. His renunciation and the life full of devotion is famous in the Vaishnava world.

The eminent devotee Paramānandadās ji giving his sentimental tribute to the Bathain site said-

बसत बठैन सबै सुख माई ।
एक कठिन दुख दूर कन्हाई ॥

Despite getting all the comforts and the pleasures at this Bathain, the most difficult grief, that is totally unbearable, is that the proximity of Kanhaiyā is not being received. To live without Kanhaiyā anywhere is not acceptable to him. Therefore fulfilling his desire who can say when Kanhaiyā filled rasa in his life?

Krishna Kund

In the south-eastern quarter of Bathain is Krishna kund. Neep Vana is an enchanting site. The fragrance of this site makes the

surrounding atmosphere more and more blissful. In the middle of this is Krishna kund, very dear to Shri Krishna. This site with bending trees all around is always resonating with the chirping of the birds on the branches of the trees enfolded by vines. The cleverness of the trickster Nāgar Shri Krishna has been revealed here. In such secluded sites many rasa plans of *dān* and *mān* are made. The knower of those rasa steeped keli and the secrets of rasa, this site is attracting all by its enchanting beauty.

Kuntal Kund

The Braj maidens become restless after drinking the beauty of Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna comes out of the Nanda palace decorated with *shringār*. Because of the toil of grazing His hair becomes disheveled. Here Shri Krishna fixed His hair and the sakhis took flowers from Priyā ji and placed them in His beautiful hair. Therefore this site became famous as Kuntal kund.

Charan Pahādi

श्रीकृष्णेर पाद पद्मचिह्न ए रहिल ।
एई हेतु चरन पहाड़ि नाम हईल ॥¹

Shri Krishna came here once along with the sakhās for grazing. The cows and the calves were grazing at some distance. Shri Krishna thought of a kautuka. He stood on Charan Pahādi in *tribhāngi* posture and started playing Barbari tune on His flute. Listening to that sound the whole nature was enraptured and the mountain melted. All the cowherd boys and cows came running to Shri Krishna and their footprints were imprinted on the melted mountain. At that moment He stopped playing His flute. Those foot prints are still present on this hill and can be seen if looked carefully.

One question is very natural which can arise after seeing the foot prints. The footprints are only in one direction that of going up and not of coming down. The rasikas have found the answer to this. When Shri Krishna was playing the flute the hill melted and at that time whoever was climbing up their footprints were imprinted. Just about then Shri Krishna had stopped playing and the hill assumed its original form. So when the cowherd boys and the cows etc returned their foot prints did not get imprinted.

1. The foot prints of Shri Krishna are imprinted here that is why it is called Charan pahādi.

Bhadokhara

एई बेड़ौ खोर कुञ्ज भवन मभार ।
विलसये दोहे बद्ध करि कुञ्ज द्वार ॥

(भ० २०)

This vilās site is near Bathain. Priyatam became absorbed in love after giving joy to the sakhis in Kunja palace. Due to the haste for more and more rasa, the laziness tried to find shelter in His rasaful body. Looking at the rasa steeped state of the Priyatam, even Kishori Shri Rādhā drowned in rasa. The strange thing that happened today was that the rasa profoundness of the Priyatam and the rasa impatience of Priyā ji started competing with each other. Filled with some special exuberance Priyatam became a little conscious. Looking at the intoxicated state of the two, even the sakhis drowned in rasa. They became absorbed in the *rasa* sweetness of the Yugal. Aha! This *nikunja* decorated with the flowers kept honouring the rasa endeavours of Priyā-Priyatam. This private *rasa vilās* started convulsing the ocean of rasa with its lofty waves. The *Pranayi* Yugal, intoxicated by the gusts of love, floating in the beautiful steady waves of the ocean of rasa began blessing this site. Who could say, up until when this flow of rasa continued?

The knower of those very secrets of rasa, this site became famous as Bhadokhara.

Hāroyāla Grām

ललिता कहे-राई ! पाशाक क्रीड़ाते ।
अनायासे तुमि हाराईला प्राननाथे ॥

(भ० २०)

All the rasa steeped pastimes that assist in the sport of Cupid are dear to the *Rasik* Yugal. At times Priyā-Priyatam engaged in vihar in kunja and nikunja derive joy by playing ball game with the sakhis. At times they plead for milk and yogurt from the Braj maidens going out to sell their milk and yogurt. Getting absorbed in various *keli-kautukas* they provide happiness to their own devotees.

The unique flow of rasa of today commenced with the game of dice. The two rasa crazy Yugal are the experts at the game of dice. Today nothing was going right for the Priyatam. Priyatam wagered His pitāambar, flute, stick one by one and kept loosing. When He had nothing left to put on stake He started looking here and there. He said

to Shri Lalitā ji, “I have already lost everything of mine. Now I am putting myself on stake. This time my win is certain.”

कहा भयो बाजी एक हारी अब के जीत हमारी हो ।

हँसि पासे डारे सुकुमारी पुनि चौपर विस्तारी हो ॥

Priyatam drinking the beauty of Priyā ji started throwing the dice. But!

दाईन चलति करत कोलाहल लाल रचत छल भारी हो ।

Despite many cheatings and deceiving, Priyatam seems to be loosing again. Lalitā ji said, “You have already cheated plenty of times. This time also it is evident. Despite this O Priyatam! Your defeat is certain. Can you see? Our Swāmini is innocent and naive and You in spite of being an expert have lost again and Priyā ji has triumphed.”

ललिता कहति रौटि करि बाजी दीखत अबहु हारी हो ।

अति भोरी स्वामिनी जु हमारी तुम कोविद जु बिहारी हो ॥

In spite of loosing, Shyām Sundar started walking along with Priyā ji. Despite winning, the victory belonged to both and despite loosing, Priyatam did not loose. Even in this rasa event, the victory was Priyatam’s only and Priyā ji filled with some rasa profoundness, getting Priyatam’s nearness drowned in the rasa.

The account of the rasa steeped conversation of the victory and the defeat is etched on this site even today and this site is famous as Hāroyāla grām.

Pāyi Grām

देख पाई-ग्राम, राई सखी गन सने ।

कृष्णेर अन्वेषण करि पाई एखाने ॥

(भ० २०)

‘Braj Bhoomi Mohini Main Jāni’ meaning I have come to know that Braj Bhoomi is magical or bewitching. The land of Braj is always full of spectacular new pastimes. The personified festivity of Braj, this Rasik Nāgar and His beloved Shri Rādhā and Her bodily manifestations the Braj maidens are always engaged in making rasa plans for new festivals.

Even today giving a signal of a new site to the Braj maidens Priyatam along with His sakhās went away for grazing. The extremely clever Kanhaiyā giving a riddle to the sakhās to solve and thus occupying them came to the pre determined nikunja that was

decorated with the flowers and situated amidst the dense trees. Sakhis had not arrived yet. Listening to the sweet sound of the cuckoo from the nearby nikonja Priyatam hid in that nikonja for the sake of a pastime.

The whole forest became resonant with the chiming sound of the anklets. Kishori Shri Rādhā along with Her sakhis reached there. Noticing the decorations etc She understood that the Priyatam has arrived but was stunned at not finding Him there. Sakhis started searching for Priyatam all around. One mynah sitting on a branch in the nearby clump said. “O Swāmini! Shyām Sundar is *virājmān* in the nearby nikonja.” Looking at the mynah with love and affection, Priyāji went to the pre decided nikonja. Looking at Priyatam sitting concealed behind a tree on the soft green grass, She slowly went close to Him. Putting Her hand on His shoulder She said, “You! You have....” Making Priyā ji sit near him, Priyatam started laughing. Sakhis also arrived there looking for the two. The site started resonating once again with the sound of the laughter. Sakhis said to the Priyatam, “In order to get blessed by the rasa event of today the flower bed is waiting for you.” Priyā ji had searched for the Priyatam and now Priyatam Shyām Sundar became engrossed in some blissful search. Savouring the ambrosial stream of signals and messages flowing in that *nikunja* even the sakhis drowned in the sea of happiness.

This beautiful site of Priyā ji’s search for Priyatam became famous as Pāyi grām. The rock decorated with the flowers on which the Yugal sat, that ‘Chalan Shilā’ also became blessed.

Kāmar

देखइ कामरि ग्राम कृष्ण एई खाने ।
कामे व्यस्त हैया चाहे राई पथ पाने ॥

(भ० २०)

Shyām Sundar once became extremely impatient here to meet with Priyā ji. He waited for Her with His eyes fixed on the path. The nature of love is strange. This wireless wire started convulsing Priyā ji. And lo! Priyatam took the flute in His hand and started calling out the name of Priyā ji. Deeply unconscious of the external world, led by Her single consciousness of the Priyatam, Priyā ji along with Lalitā and Vishākhā, reached there unknowingly. Priyatam sitting there absorbed in rasa was startled. Priyā-Priyatam along with the sakhis

drowned in bliss. Absorbed in many rasa conversations, this *Rasik* Rihhawār became intoxicated with infinite bliss. Sakhis thought of a play. They quietly took the black *kāmar* (blanket) which He had received from Barsānā and hid it. Shri Krishna started looking for His *kāmar*. The eminent devotee Soordās ji has depicted this scene rasafully. Kanhaiyā is saying to maiyā-

मैया मेरी कामर चोर लई ।
 मैं बन जात चरावन गैया सूनी देख लई ॥
 एक कहे कान्हा तेरी कामर जमुना जात बही ।
 एक कहे कान्हा तेरी कामर सुरभी खाय गई ॥
 एक कहे नाचो मेरे आगे लै देहुँ जु नई ।
 सूरदास जसुमति के आगे अंसुवन धार बही ॥

Maiyā! I had gone to the forest to herd the cows. The cows went away very far. I also went after them. Maiya, one sakhi quietly stole my *kāmar*. When I asked, someone said, “I have seen your *kāmar* flowing away in Yamunā.” Another one said that the Surabhi cow has eaten it. “You tell me maiyā how can a cow eat my *kāmar*. Another one said that if I dance before her, she will get a new one for me. You tell me will it look nice if I danced before her. Maiyā you get my *kāmar* back. The milkmaids of the village are teasing me by saying different things. You do know maiyā! This *kāmar* is very dear to me.” While saying this the eyes of Kanhaiyā became tearful. Maiyā took Lālā in her arms and embraced Him.

By saying *kāmar- kāmar* again and again this village became famous by the name of *Kāmar*.

Mohan kund, Durwāsā kund, Kumāri kund and Kadamba Chowk are here. The other sites of interest are Swāmini ji Ki baithak, Gopi kund etc.

Vishveshwar Kund

विश्वेश्वरहरिस्नान तीर्थ संज्ञाय ते नमः ।
 त्रैलोक्यवरदायैवाखण्ड सौख्य प्रदायिने ॥

(कूर्म पु० ब्र० भ० वि०)

O Vishveshwar! Created from the bath of Shri Hari, O Kund called Vishveshwar! Obeisance to you. You are the giver of boons to the three worlds and the provider of uninterrupted happiness.

Vichhora (Vismarana Vana)

गोपिकादर्शनान्वेषवनाय च नमोऽस्तु ते ।
केशवाह्लाद संजात धूम्र वर्णाय ते नमः ॥

(मत्स्य पु०)

O the forest for the search of gopis! O black coloured idol, black due to the joy of Keshava! Obeisance to you.

The hide and seek of union and separation of these rasa crazy Yugal is only a play. This separation is not the difficult or tough separation rather it is for the sake of increasing the impatience and eagerness to meet and to increase the bliss of union. The mutual separation is just a formality. 'Milei rahat māno kabahun milei nā' meaning they keep meeting as if they have never met before. By saying so the devotees have expressed the feelings of their hearts here and there. Even upon meeting, they keep feeling as if they have not met still. This is the nature of love where insatiability is its ornament and to grow constantly is its motion.

These rasa crazy Yugal, cannot even imagine the thought of separation but at times to enhance the rasa in Leelā they do the act of separating. Even while acting they are so absorbed, so concentrated and united that they do not feel the separation. In the Nitya Leelā these crazy lovers remain intoxicated in that uninterrupted stream of rasa, but even in the Prakat Leelā the same circumstance exists eternally. The river of love is ever flowing and the rasa crazy Yugal remain drowned in it. To bring more and more newness in that incessant stream of rasa they separate with each other. The desire to stay together is not allowing them to separate. They are walking together in the same alley. Arms around the neck of each other, one hand of Priyatam has enfolded the lower back of Priyā ji and Priyā ji has enfolded Priyatam with Her left hand. See! They separated for a moment and then went close again and again. This rasa steeped staggering state seems to be giving a clue to some sport that took place at night.

The silence of the night was over. The nature has become resonant. The birds have started chirping. The first ray of the sun bathed the Yugal. They started walking separately looking forgetful and lost in some blissful memories. Both convulsed by the memories of each other, went to their respective homes, for the rest of the day. This site of the mutual separation named Vichhora started repeating this blissful tale.

क्रीड़ावसानेते दोंहे चले निजालय ।
विच्छेद-प्रयुक्त ए 'विछोर' नाम हय ॥

(भ० २०)

This site is about ten miles from Kosi in the west south quarter.

Shringār Vata

ततः शृङ्गार वटम् । द्वौ मन्दिरौ । दक्षिण भागे शृङ्गार मन्दिरं ।
वाम भागे शय्या मन्दिरं ॥

(स्क० पु०)

After that there is Shringār Vata. There are two temples there. In the right there is Shringār temple and in the left there is the Shaiyyā temple.

एई जे शृङ्गार वट कृष्ण एई खाने ।
राधिकार वेष कैल विविध विधाने ॥

Planning a new *rasa keli*, Priyatam Shyām Sundar decided to decorate Priyā ji with flowers today. He arranged the tiny tender flowers of chameli, belā, mālati, mallikā, juhi and others. Though He had already hinted to Priyā ji about this, yet She came adorned with *shringār*. The romp and revelry of *rasa* continued flowing for long. Suddenly Priyatam stood up and taking the hand of Priyā ji in His hand said, “Darling! Your beauty is unparalleled. I envy the *sakhis*. They remain proud of their fortune of being able to do your *shringār* always. I have only savoured the *shringār*. I also wish to be counted amongst the fortunate ones by contributing a little in your unlimited beauty and sweetness.” After saying so He started doing the *shringār* of Priyā ji. He garlanded Her and stopped short suddenly. If the beginning itself is such then..... He put the flower bracelets on Her hands. Fixing flowers in Her hair He started gazing at Her and went on gazing. Then He put the flower waistband and flower anklets. In the ears He put flower earrings. Taking one bunch of flower in His hand He started thinking and went on thinking. Looking at the enchanting beauty of Priyā ji again and again, He was left standing in thoughts. Slowly placing that bunch, in the sky coloured blouse of Priyā ji He said, “Obtaining entry in the boundless ocean of *rasa*, the fortune of the flower has multiplied infinitely.” Suddenly picking it back and showering all of His love on it He placed it back again.

Colouring Priyāji with kumkum, sandal and the pollens of

flowers, Priyatam became filled with intoxication and at what point became Her shringār Himself, who can say? Sakhis taking both of them to the nearby *nikunja*, seated them on the soft bed. Oh! These two rasa filled moons of beauty, two rasa embodiments of *shringār rasa*, everything was divine. Everybody became absorbed in rasa.

Etching all those tales of rasa on its heart, this site is increasing our happiness.

It is about six miles from Kosi.

Vāsoli (Vāssosi)

एई जे वासोली ग्राम कृष्णांग सुवासे ।
भ्रमर मातिव कि जगत धैर्य नाशे ॥

(भ० र०)

The nectar of rasa exuding from the body of Shri Krishna, its sweet fragrance, the fathomless accumulation of extreme beauty, elegance, grace and sweetness and His sweet sentences are bound to make anybody insane with intoxication. The ambrosial sweetness dripping continuously from His auspicious body, Aha! As if the rasa itself is showering. The deer intoxicated by the fragrance of the body became surprised and bewildered. The row of bees following the sweet fragrance became crazy. Following this same fragrance of rasa, this crowd of Braj maidens is wandering in the forest pathways, at Vanshivata, at the banks of Yamunā, in dense kunja, in forest *nikunja*. Oh! Looking at this colourful crowd, it seems as if a flood has come in the rasa pining hearts.

The auspicious body is fragrant by itself and on top of that it is smeared with sandal. It is anointed with scents and perfumed oil and coloured with the drawings of kumkum and flower pollen.

The red and pink powdered colours, sandal, choba scattered during Holi after touching every part of the auspicious body, clinging and sticking to it become fragrant. That very sweet fragrance has soaked and nourished this site or it can be said that the auspicious body has put the love offerings made by the Braj maidens on itself in the form of a thin cloud of pink powder. This site kept those drops of rasa hidden in its heart, and upon finding the right opportunity scattered them. Intoxicated by that very fragrance of the auspicious body, this site is famous as Vāsoli (fragrance).

Paya Grām

उहे देख पय ग्राम श्रीकृष्ण ए खाने ।
पय पान केला सर्व सखागन सने ॥

(भ० २०)

Shri Krishna comes here with the sakhās for grazing every day. Maiyā packs the lunch for them for the day. All of them eat it with love. Today they have become hungry out of turn once again. Sakhās asked Kanhaiyā to get milk for drinking. He milked many cows and gave milk to His sakhās and delighted them.

Paya (milk) sarowar, symbol of this, is worth visiting.

Shri Nāgā ji (Chatur Chintāmani)

He was born in a Gaud Brahmin family of Paya grām. Coming events cast their shadows before. He was inclined towards detachment and dispassion from the young age. He started living away from home, in the village in a place surrounded by dense Kadamba trees.

He wanted to travel and tour Braj. He used to circumambulate Braj regularly.

He is counted amongst the highest category of saints of Braj. He had total grace of Priyā-Priyatam.

It is said that once Shri Krishna Himself told him, “There is no dearth of milk and yogurt in Braj. You at least have milk.” Nāgā ji was so dispassionate that thinking that the milk was dear to the Brajwāsīs, he would not drink it. Shri Krishna had insisted and ordered His devotee to have milk.

The Thākur idol of Shri Nāgā ji is presently *virājmān* in the fort of Bharatpur. That temple was constructed by the king of Bharatpur. His bundle of tattered rags and rosary are kept there safely till date.

In his last days he remained *virājmān* in Vihār Ghāt in Shri Vrindāvan.

Kotavana (Kotar Vana)

ए ‘कोटर वन’ कोटवन सबे कय ।
एथा सखा सह कृष्ण सुखे विलसय ॥

(भ० २०)

Kanhaiyā comes here for grazing with sakhās and amuses them with various Leelās. By playing hide and seek with the sakhās who are hiding in the dense vines and bowers, Kanhaiyā gives them joy and wanders here grazing the cows.

The baithak of Gosāin Shri Vithalnāth ji and Sheetal kund are here.

Chameli Vana

Aha! Aha! The denseness of tall trees in the far distance, the intoxicating fragrance of the Kadamba trees, the unique charm of the rasa filled Nature, this chamber decorated with green grass, it seems as if the *kunja* and the *nikunja* have created this soft decoration, waiting for the arrival of Priyā and Priyatam. As per its name this dense forest convulsing all with its sweet fragrance and special rasa is famous as Chameli vana.

Once convulsed by the rasaful gusts of Nature Priyatam was startled. Priyā ji also came out of the house with Her heart especially overflowing. She met Lalitā and Vishākhā outside. Taking Priyā ji between them, absorbed in talking about the arrival of Priyatam in Chameli vana, they started walking together. After fixing His scattered hair, Priyatam had already reached there.

Yes! Seeing the other sakhis over there, they knew about the delightful plan. They took Priyā-Priyatam in the centre and the site became resonant with their jokes and laughter. All the sakhis drenched in happiness brought flowers for doing the *shringār* of the two. Shyām Sundar started doing the *shringār* of Priyā ji with those very flowers. Picking fragrant small flowers He fixed them in Priyā ji's hair. He put kohl in Her eyes. Making flower garlands He put them on Her hands and tied Her hair with it. Not only this, by putting garlands of fragrant flowers around Her neck, Shyām Sundar became proud of His fortune.

The sakhis had already made several ornaments of flowers. Using them Priyā ji also did *shringār* of Priyatam in various ways. Placing the crown of flowers on His head, She fixed tender blooms in it here and there. She put earrings of tender leaves and flowers in the ears. After putting the garland of beautiful fragrant flowers, bracelets and other *shringār* She became absorbed, caught in the beauty. By the time sakhis came near. They seated both of them on a bed of tender green grass in the *nikunja* and started drinking the sweetness of their beauty.

The waves of the incessantly flowing stream of beauty and rasa soaked every one and this site became famous as Chameli vana.

Located a little before Vanachāri this secluded site is freely and abundantly distributing its sweet fragrance even today. During rainy season the beauty of this site becomes even more enchanting.

Rāsauli

‘अबहूँ ते ढोटा चित चोरत आगे-आगे कहा जु करैगो ।’

Listening to the taunting complaints about Kanhaiyā's constant

new mischiefs, maiyā gets irritated many times. Until now, only the acts of stealing yogurt and milk were famous everywhere but after listening to the accusation of today she was astonished. Some other kinds of discussions regarding the little Kanhaiyā had started doing the rounds. Some would say that He quarrels with the cowherd girls, He teases them and jokes with them. Touching and teasing some of them He makes strange remarks. The innocent heart of maiyā listening to all this did not take any of it seriously. Her heart overflowing with motherly love was not ready to accept her little son as anything else. At times Kanhaiyā goes in the lap of maiyā and clings to her and pleads to her for butter-sugarcandy and maiyā becomes absorbed savouring such child Leelās. He may be Brahma for the intellects and the learned with religious wisdom, He may have killed many big demons, He may be an adolescent, Maiyā has nothing to do with these things nor does she believe any of them. Although sometimes she does remember what Gargāchārya ji Mahārāj had said.

Maiyā once insisted with Kanhaiyā to show Rās. Kanhaiyā agreed and brought her to this very site. Climbing a Kadamba tree taking out His flute He called all the gopis. All the maidens came over there. Kanhaiyā became absorbed in Rās with them. Maiyā seeing all of this became entranced.

On listening to that sound of the flute all the animals and the birds fall silent, the she-deer with their husbands come near Nandanandan. The consorts of the demigods of the heaven become absorbed in the resonance of the flute of Shri Krishna. Sitting in their aerial vehicles, they become so engrossed, that they do not even come to know when the flowers from their hair fall down. If such is their case, then the case of these Braj maidens is something else. Their desires and the feelings are always steeped in the sweetness of Shri Krishna-

कृष्णं निरीक्ष्य वनितोत्सवरूपशीलं
श्रुत्वा च तत्क्वणितवेणुविचित्रगीतम् ।
देव्यो विमानगतयः स्मरनुन्नसारा
भ्रश्यत्प्रसूनकबरा मुमुहुर्विनीव्यः ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/21/12)

1. O sakhi! What is the big deal about the she-deer when even the demigoddesses of the heaven upon looking at Shri Krishna the giver of joy to the damsels and listening to His flute, its variegated sound, lose all consciousness and faint. When an intense desire to meet Shyām Sundar arises in their hearts, then they lose their patience and their wits, they don't even come to know when the flowers strung in their hair fall down. And remain oblivious of their saris slipping from their waist.

Dadhi Grām

एई दधि ग्रामे कृष्ण दधि लूट कैल
गोपाङ्गना सह महा कौतुक बाढिल ॥

(भ० २०)

This is the very site where Shri Krishna had carried out the plunder of milk and yogurt. These Braj maidens restless for this looting and grabbing, perpetually remain eager for it. At times they reach the Nanda palace in the early morning and say to maiyā, “ O Maiyā, yesterday when I went to sell yogurt after looking at the face of Kanhaiyā, all the yogurt got sold immediately and I made more profit than usual.” Innocent maiyā believed it as true. Getting a sign from some sidelong glance of Shyām Sundar who is lying in the bed, she went away feeling blessed. Over here Kanhaiyā got up quickly. Somehow getting Himself excused from maiyā He also reached the same pathway of the forest. That damsel saw the bewitching smile of the enchanting Priyatam and started repeating, “Gobind lehu-lehu koyi Gobind.” This is the strange state of love. What else can the mind steeped in the beauty of Shyām Sundar say. This Rasik robber, became impatient to loot the yogurt. Setting the prelude to “Dadhi dān mis anga-anga ko parasibo” meaning touching of all parts of the body on the pretext of the dān of yogurt, He became absorbed in rasa. That damsel steeped in some blissful loot of milk and yogurt became absorbed in savouring and offering rasa.

The many such memories of loot and dān of yogurt are connected with this site. Therefore this site became famous as Dadhi grām.

There are Dadhi kund, Dadhihāri devi and Braj bhushan temple, and a tree with the marks of the crown.

Sheshashāyi

कमलासुखरम्याय शेषशयनहेतवे ।
नमः कमलकिञ्जल्कवाससे हरये नमः ॥

(कूर्म पुराण)

O the one beautiful with the happiness of Kamalā! O forest called Sheish for the sleeping of Lord Sheish! Obeisance to you.

Shri Vallabhāchārya ji Mahārāj came to Sheishashāyi tirtha. Here Shri Krishna had performed the pastime of lying on the bed of thousand hooded snake at the request of the Brajwāsīs. In the ocean of milk Shri Baldev ji became Lord Sheish and Shri Krishna became *virājmān* on him in the form of Nārāyana. Here He gave darshan of a

lotus growing from His navel and of Shri Brahmā ji seated on that lotus.

Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu came here and getting intoxicated started dancing. Incessant tears started flowing from his eyes. The composer of Bhakti Ratnākār has portrayed his state vividly.

करिया दर्शन महाकौतुक बाढ़िल ।
से प्रेम आवेशे प्रभु अधैर्य हईल ॥
प्रभु तेज देखि भाग्यवन्त लोक गन ।
आनन्द उन्मत्ते नेत्र धारा अनुक्षण ॥¹

(भ० २०)

Darshan of Paudhe Laxminārāyan ji

शयनस्थाय देवाय लक्ष्मीसेवापराय च ।
नमो प्रौढ स्वरूपाय लक्ष्मीनारायणाय ते ॥²

(कूर्म पुराण)

यस्य श्रीमच्चरणकमलेकोमले कोमलापि ।
श्रीराघोच्चैर्निजसुखकृते सन्नयन्ति कुचाग्रे ॥
भीतापराधादथ नहि दधात्यस्य कार्कश्यदोशात् ।
स श्रीगोष्ठे प्रथयतु सदा शेषशायी स्थितिं नः ॥³

(स्तवावली)

Once for the sake of a pastime Shri Krishna became *virājmān* on the bed of Sheish in Vishnu form. Shri Balrāma ji was *virājmān* here in Ksheer sāgar in Sheish form with thousand hoods.

When Shri Rādhā arrived here the four armed form disappeared immediately and She saw Shri Krishna in His two armed form only.

The magnificent and majestic form of Shri Krishna cannot last before Kishori Rādhā.

Shri Krishna called all the tirthas to Braj. Sheishashāyi tirtha also appeared and increased the pride of Braj.

1. Upon the darshan of Lord Sheishashāyee, Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji was wonderstruck. Getting restless in that very efflux of love and filling with bliss he became intoxicated. Tears started flowing from his eyes. The fortunate ones had the darshan of his love steeped form.

2. O Shri Narayandev in the sleeping posture! O the one served by Laxmi ji! O the adult form Laxmi Nārāyan obeisance to you.

3. Shri Rādhā does not place the tender and enchanting feet of Shri Krishna on Her heart afraid of its hardness i.e. She places them very carefully, may that very Sheishashāyi Shri Krishna in this enchanting condition grace me.

Mahodadhi Kund

पञ्चामृतसमुत्पन्न पञ्चामृतमयाय ते ।
लक्ष्मीकृताय तीर्थाय नमो मुक्ति महोदधे ॥

(कूर्म पुराण)

O Panchāmrita Mukti Mahodadhi kund born from the panchāmrita (mixture of milk, curd, sugar, ghee, honey)! Obeisance to you. You are manifest in the form of tirtha for the sake of Shri Laxmi ji alone.

Those who take a bath here attain liberation and devotion.

Khāmi and Banachāri Grām

एई ब्रज सीमा खम्बहरे खामी ग्राम ।
ऐथा गोचारये रङ्गे कृष्ण बलराम ॥
बनचारी आदि ग्रामे अद्भुते विलास ।
ए सब ब्रजेर सीमा अहे श्रीनिवास ॥

(भ० र०)

Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji come to Khāmi grām for grazing always. Banachāri grām is also nearby. Here the two brothers Shri Krishna and Balrāma through various rasa steeped deeds gave happiness to their sakhās.

As per the hearsay, Shri Vajranābha ji had erected the pillars in Khāmi grām to outline the borders of Braj. These pillars can be seen even today.

Khārauta

यमुना निकट ग्राम खरेरो-एखाने ।
बलराम मङ्गल जिज्ञासे सखा गने ॥

(भ० र०)

Khārauta grām is near Yamunā ji. Here Shri Balrāma ji had inquired about the well being of the sakhās and made them happy with his greetings of love. This is a site of grazing.

The gosāins serving in the main temple of Shri Nandagāon are originally from this village. Their ancestor Shri Ghanānanda ji Mahārāj had started doing the service in Shri Nanda gāon. Later his descendants started living in Shri Nanda grām itself.

Oojāni Grām

देखई ऊजानि स्थान यमुना ए खाने ।
बहये उजान श्रीकृष्णेर वंशी गाने ॥

(भ० र०)

The sweet resonance of the flute of Shri Krishna made the Braj maidens crazy. Even while doing the household work, with their hearts and minds they started living in the company of Shri Krishna every moment. They constantly remained steeped in savouring His beauty and His sweet Leelās. The entire Nature, the animals, the deer etc and all the non living and living things melted and became insane upon hearing the sound of His flute. The trees kept showering the flowers. The animals and the birds became astonished and bewildered on hearing this sweet sound. Shri Yamunā ji who is an intimate sakhi of Shri Krishna on one hand and on the other in the form of river receiving total happiness remains absorbed, upon hearing the sound of the flute started flowing in breaks in the form of whirlpools. It seemed that the beautiful waves of Shri Yamunā stunned at the sound of the flute were becoming motionless.

A message of love flowed from the flute and Shri Yamunā ji started flowing at this site like Ajān i.e. lifeless. Since then this site became famous as Oojāni grām.

It is located in the north-east quarter of Paya grām about four miles away.

Fāleina (Fāreina)

This village is extremely famous for the Holi festival. Here one member of a particular family lives a life of celibacy. At the time of the burning of Holikā, when the fire starts burning completely, that member a Brahmin after bathing in the kund slowly crosses the burning fire from one end to the other. The fire does not burn him. It is said that bowing to Prahlād ji and absorbed in his mood or attitude, he crosses the fire in the presence of thousands of spectators.



Braj Bhoomi Mohini

SHRI NANDAGĀON



Sub Chapter

मणिनूपुरवाचालं वन्दे तच्चरणं विभोः ।
ललितानि यदीयानि लक्ष्माणि ब्रजवीथिषु ॥

THE OTHER NEIGHBOURING SITES

1. Sheirgarh
2. Kheilanvan
3. Shri Rāmghāt
4. Bhushanvan
5. Gunjāvan
6. Brahmaghāt
7. Vihārvan
8. Bhāndeervan
9. Munjātavi
10. Gopighāt And Tapovan
11. Cheerghāt
12. Shri Nandghāt
13. Bhaya-Gāon
14. Basai Gāon
15. Parakham
16. Chaumunhā
17. Pasauli-Sānpoli, Aghavan, Sarpa-sthali
18. Jainta
19. Tamālkānan
20. Ātas
21. Varāhar
22. Bhadravan
23. Bhāndeervan
24. Chhānhari (Bijauli)

Sheir Garh

“आगे शेखर गोप का गाँव है; जिसे शेरगढ़ कहते है । यहाँ गोपिकाओं ने श्रीकृष्ण की वेणी गूँथी थी ।”

(श्रीवल्लभ दिग्विजय)

The love laden feelings of these loving Braj maidens and Kishori Shri Rādhā endowed with the emotion of *madhur rasa*, involve only their own, their very own Pranayi Priyatam Shyām Sundar. Shyām Sundar has also become eternally indebted to them. This Pranayi Rijhawār, the aggregation of hope and faith of these Braj maidens is their very very own-

“वे तो हैं हमारे ही, हमारे ही, हमारे ही ।
हम उन ही की, उन ही की, उन ही की हैं ॥”

If the purest form of Love has aggregated anywhere it is only in these Braj maidens. The Lord of the universe omnipresent Shri Krishna dances before them for a cup of butter milk. At times making love accusations and teasing them, He gives them happiness and bliss. At times these Braj maidens becoming a source of His joy and delight through different keli sports, stay near Nandanandan Shyām Sundar.

Today all the sakhis decided to disguise Priyatam Shyām Sundar as a woman. They had come prepared for it from before. Looking at the arrangements of the Braj gopis, to honour their hopes and desires, to provide happiness to them, Kanhaiyā filled with exuberance came and became *virājmān* amongst them. When someone sang, ‘Rasiyā ko nār banāo ree’ i.e. let us make the Rasiyā a woman, the others started putting *shringār* on Him. One braided the hair. One put the kohl in the eyes. Putting a bindi on the fore head they all drowned in the sweetness of His beauty. After dressing Him up as a woman, they made Him sit on one side. When Priyāji arrived there with Lalitā and Vishākhā, She could not recognise Him. So She sat down next to this disguised new sakhi. This disguise could not last for long. Within a few minutes this site became resonant with jokes and laughter.

The spurts of the fountains of the river of love abounding in *rasa* are scattered here, there, everywhere.

Khelan Vana

इसके आगे खेलन वन है, जहाँ श्रीकृष्ण ने ब्रूत-क्रीड़ा की है तथा गोपिकाओं को जीता है ।

(श्रीवल्लभ दिग्विजय)

‘Victory and defeat’ is the unique norm of love. Both are the integral parts of love. For a lover, there is defeat in victory and victory in defeat. This sequence of loss and win is not bound by any rules. Where ever a prelude of rasa event is created, there the loss and win are present as bubbles in water. All these are integral parts of love. They are the rasa steeped parts, the joy giving parts.

Many Leelās of Shri Krishna were performed here with these feelings, in which Priyatam lost and beloved Shri Rādhā won and sometimes the Pranayi Kishore won. Engrossed in all these Leelās Priyā-Priyatam and their bodily manifestations these Braj maidens, have remained absorbed in many rasa kelis.

Some rasikas have considered Khelan vana and Sheirgarh as one. In fact the two sites are next to each other.

Shri Rām Ghāt

द्वौ मासौ तत्र चावात्सीन्मधुं माधवमेव च ।
रामः क्षपासु भगवान् गोपीनां रतिमावहन् ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/65/17)

Lord Balrāma ji increasing the love of the gopis in the night, remained here this way for the two months of Chaitra (march-april) and Baisākh (april-may).

Shri Krishna and Balrāma had spent many days living in Shri Dwārakā. The very thought of Braj would make them eagerly desirous. The memories of maiyā Yashodā, Shri Nanda bābā and emotionally identical gopis would make them impatient.

Once Shri Krishna asked Shri Balrāma ji to go to Braj and get the news of the well being of maiyā, bābā and His beloveds. Shri Balrāma ji came to Nandagrām. All the sakhās embraced him. Maiyā, bābā and other cowherds showered love and affection on him. He started giving the news of Shri Krishna to the gopis. These maidens asked many questions. Balarāmji kept giving replies to them but these damsels burning in the fire of separation of Shri Krishna got no satisfaction. They became overwhelmed upon finding the nearness of Priyatam in the depth of their memories.

Balrāma ji came and saw the beautiful site bathed in moon light at the bank of Yamunā ji. He saw the eager desire of the rasa absorbed Braj damsels of his group. The Kumud flowers were blooming all around. The breeze filled with fragrance was blowing slowly. Just then Vārūni devi sent by the demigod Varuna flowed from the hollow

of a tree in the form of stream of nectar and filled the whole forest with its fragrance. Shri Balrāma ji along with the gopis of his group drank vārūni (wine) there.

ततश्च पश्यात्र वसन्तवेषौ श्रीरामकृष्णौ ब्रजसुन्दरीभिः ।
चिक्रीडतुः स्व स्व यूथेश्वरीभिः समं रसज्ञौ कल धौति मण्डितौ ॥
नृत्यन्तौ गोपिभिः सार्द्धं गायन्तौ रसभावितौ ।
गायन्तीभिश्च रामाभिर्नृत्यन्तीभिश्च शोभितौ ॥¹

(श्रीमुरारि गुप्त कृत 'श्रीकृष्ण चैतन्यचरित')

The eyes of Shri Balrāma ji became intoxicated. He had a garland around his neck and earring only in one ear. He was getting intoxicated naturally. He was wearing knee long Vaijayanti garland. His smiling face was adorned with the drops of sweat. Intoxicated with bliss, hearing the songs of his glory, he was wandering in the forest with the Braj maidens.

At that moment all capable Shri Balrāma ji called Shri Yamunā ji but Yamunā ji beloved of Shri Krishna did not come. Angry Balrāma ji dragged Shri Yamunā ji with the tip of his plough to his site of vihār. Even today Shri Yamunā flows away from its natural course at Shri Rām Ghāt.

Being the site of Rās of Shri Balrāma ji, it is famous as Shri Rām ghāt.

Shriman Nityānanda ji's Emotional Efflux

During his travel of Braj when Shriman Nityānanda ji Mahārāj came to Rām ghāt, filled with the efflux of emotions, he became overwhelmed with love and started dancing. Tears started flowing incessantly from his eyes. He sang hymns of praise to Shri Yamunā ji.

Bhushan Vana

Sakhās made many kinds of flower ornaments and decorated Shri Krishna with them and filled with love became absorbed in bliss. This is why this site became famous as Bhushan (ornaments) vana.

Being also the place where the shringār put by the sakhās was taken off, this place is also known as Nivāran vana.

1. At this very place in the guise suitable for Vasanta, Rasika Shri Rām and Krishna adorned with gold ornaments became absorbed in keli with the Braj damsels of their respective groups. Submerged in that very rasa they started giving joy and delight to their beloveds, adepts at singing and dancing.

Gunjāvana

Gunjā vana is extremely dear to Shri Krishna. He is attached to every object of this site. This vana serves as the means of His subsistence as well as His amusement. The grass for his cows is also available here. They rest in the shadows of the trees. Nandanandan wanders here. He does His *shringār* with the flowers found here. The fruit of gunjā is also very dear to Him. He wears the garland of gunjā over His heart.

Because of having a lot of bushes of gunjā, this site is very dear to Shri Krishna and is famous as Gunjā vana.

Brahma Ghāt

Is Shri Krishna Who is wandering in the forest following the cows calling Heeo, heeo, the Supreme Being? Brahmā ji was taken over by delusion. When his delusion was broken, he felt repentant for his act. As a result he did penance at this ghāt and prayed to dissolve the offence.

This site is famous as Brahma ghāt.

Vihār Vana

गोपिकानिर्मितायैव नन्दसूनुविहारिणे ।
देवर्षिदुर्लभ श्रेष्ठ वनराज नमोऽस्तु ते ॥¹

(ब्रह्माण्ड पुराण)

Shri Krishna is the Supreme Being, the Almighty, He is the Lord of the whole universe. He does what is possible to do. He also does that which is impossible to do and apart from the two He also does that which is otherwise possible to do.

The solitary and private *Rās vilāsmayi* Leelās of Shri Krishna are extremely holy and sacred. They can subdue crores and crores of Kāma. That solitary and private rasa abounding *vilās* in spite of being solitary and private is collective. When many bodies becoming one mind engage in a divine sport that only has been called solitary sport. The rasa abounding *vihār* of Shri Krishna with many gopis having the same emotion, in which the waves of dance, song etc were rising, remained in motion at this very site.

This site became famous as Vihār vana.

1. O Vanarāj made by gopikās for the vihār of Nandanandan! Obeisance to you. You are difficult to attain even by the Devarshi.

Shata Koti Gopikā Rās Mandal

गोपिभ्यो शतकोटीभ्यो स कृष्णाभ्यो नमोस्तु ते ।
देवादिपरमोत्साह रासगोष्ठि नमोस्तु ते ॥

(ब्रह्माण्ड पुराण)

O hundred crores gopis with Shri Krishna! Obeisance to you all. O the site of Rās assembly, provider of supreme bliss even to the demigods etc! Obeisance to you.

Bhāndeera Vata (Akshaya Vata)

वहन्तो वाह्यमानाश्च चारयन्तश्च गोधनम् ।
भाण्डीरकं नाम वटं जग्मुः कृष्ण पुरोगमाः ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/18/22)

Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji with their sakhās come here every day for grazing. Playing various games they become absorbed in merrymaking and amusements. The cows keep grazing here. Today while wandering they came to this grazing field, Bhāndeera Vata at the bank of Yamunā.

Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji along with the sakhās remained absorbed in the game. At that time a demon named Pralambāsura entered the group of cowherd boys. Shri Krishna and Balrāma ji were leading two different groups. As per the rule of the game the sakhās of the defeated side had to carry the sakhās of the victorious side on their back to an assigned spot. At times one side was winning while at other times the other side was winning. The sakhās of the defeated side would carry the sakhās of the victorious side on their back to the predetermined spot. Pralambāsura in the disguise of a sakhā joined the defeated side. He carried Balrāma ji on his back and started taking him beyond the decided spot but he could not get very far. He manifested his actual form. At first seeing his horrifying form Balrāma ji was frightened but the next moment, remembering his strength he killed Pralambāsura.

All cowherds exclaimed and started expressing wonder. The demigods showered flowers with joy.

This site became famous as Bhāndeera Vata (Akshaya Vata)

1. In this way climbing each other's back Shri Krishna and the cowherd boys grazing the cows reached near a Vata called Bhāndeera.

Munjātavi (Ārā, Eishikātavi or Bhāndeera Vana)

मुञ्जाटव्यां भ्रष्टमार्गं क्रन्दमानं स्वगोधनम् ।
सम्प्राप्य तृषिताः श्रान्तास्ततस्ते संन्यवर्तयन् ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/19/15)

Shri Krishna and Balrāma became engrossed in the game with the cowherd boys. While grazing the cows went far away. After getting tired when the sakhās started taking some rest then they remembered the cows. Suddenly not finding the cows they became distraught. Following the marks of the hooves and recognizing the grass eaten by the cows they reached inside the dense forest. There they heard the bellowing of the cows that had lost their way. Shri Krishna started calling the cows one by one by their names. The cows distressed with thirst started running to Him.

Just about then they saw that the fire had broken out in that forest of reeds. Seeing the fire all the cowherd boys became extremely frightened. They started calling their dear Kanhaiyā, “O dear Krishna! Balrāma! We are in your refuge. Protect us. Our cows are getting perished in this fire. Please protect us from it.” Hearing the poignant call of the cowherd boys Shri Krishna replied, “Brothers do not worry. Just close your eyes.” At that very instant the Lord of yoga Shri Krishna drank up that fire. When the sakhās opened their eyes they found themselves near Bhāndeera Vata. Looking at this yogic power of Shri Krishna and the effect of Yogamāyā the Sakhās felt that He was some demigod.

Because of the drinking of the forest fire this place is famous as Munjātavi. This is the site of grazing of Shri Krishna.

Gopi Ghāt and Tapovana

तद् ब्रजस्त्रिय आश्रुत्य वेणुगीतं स्मरोदयम् ।
काश्चित्परोक्षं कृष्णस्य स्वसखीभ्योऽन्ववर्णयन् ॥²

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/21/3)

Who can describe Braj? Here the *nikunjas* resonate with the buzzing sound of the bees. The forest animals remain absorbed in

1. At last they saw that their cows were bellowing in Munjātavi after losing their way. After finding them the sakhās started making an effort to bring them back. By that time they had become tired and were feeling very thirsty. Because of this they were getting distressed.

2. That sound of the flute of Shri Krishna was capable of arousing the bhāv of love for the Lord, and longing to meet Him. (Listening to that the hearts of the gopis filled with love.) They started describing His beauty, qualities and the effect of the sound of the flute to their sakhās in private.

dancing blissfully. The sweet chirping of the birds keeps making the site enchanting. In such a place Shri Krishna filling His flute with a sweet sound, transmitted the blissful *kām* (desire) in the nature.

Listening to this sound of the flute which is capable of arousing the Kāmdev (Cupid), the gopis became restless to go to their beloved. They started thinking of ways of finding their *Jeewan sarvaswa*.

The sweetness of the face of Shyām Sundar adorned with flowers, the restless gaze, the sidelong glance, the enchanting walk, the waving of the yellow *pitāmbar* everything captivates the mind and on top of that, this beautiful atmosphere increases the desire for the company of Shri Krishna. At times they get lost in the beauty of that atmosphere, at times they long to have the fortune of the animals, at times they compete with the fortune of the rocks of Shri Girirāj. At times they admire the tender feeling of the tribal women. They always think of the ways to increase the love for Shri Krishna more and more and to attain Him in the form of husband. At last in the first month of Hemant ritu (winter season), the girls of Nandrai ji's Braj took the vow of worshipping Kātyāyani devi by partaking only the havishyāna (food taken at the time of sacrifice).

They would come here every day at the time of sunrise and after bathing in Yamunā ji, they would make an idol of Kātyāyani devi with the sand and then worship it. After offering fragrant incense, oblations, they would pray to Kātyāyani devi-

कात्यायनि महामाये महायोगिन्यध्रीश्वरि ।
नन्दगोपसुतं देवि पतिं मे कुरुते नमः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/22/4)

O Kātyāyani! O Mahāmāyei! O Mahāyoginee! O Adhishwari! Please give us the blessing to attain the son of Nandarai ji in the form of a husband. We bow to you.

They used to repeat this mantra (japa) and do their worship. These damsels did the japa and kept a fast this way following the rules and restraints for one whole month.

The sites where these gopis did the *japa*, worship etc became known as Tapovana. The site where they took bath in Yamunā ji became famous as Gopighāt.¹

1. Regarding this subject, the experiences of some great ones are related to Cheer ghat and nearby sites in Shri Vrindāvan. The description of Kātyāyini peetha is also found in Vrindāvan. Shri Krishna Leelā is eternal. The experiences of the rasikas from time to time, achieving the darshan of the Shri Krishna Leela has been helpful in revealing the significance of the sites. This Leelasthali (Gopi ghat) can be accepted here as well there (Shri Vrindāvan) at both the places because of the difference of Kalpānta.

Cheer Ghāt

एवं मासं व्रतं चेरुः कुमार्यः कृष्णचेतसः ।
भद्रकालीं समानर्चुर्भूयान्नन्द सुतः पतिः ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/22/5)

The Braj maidens had kept fasts and practiced austerities here observing the restraints regularly with a wish to attain Shri Krishna as husband. Because of which, they received the assurance of *vihār-vilās* with Shri Krishna during the nights of *Rās*.

Surrendering totally to Shri Krishna, these damsels did not give importance even to their body consciousness in front of the omnipresent Lord Krishna.

This site of cheer haran (abduction of clothes) became famous as Cheer ghāt.*

Shri Nanda Ghāt

एकादश्यां निराहारः समभ्यर्च्य जनार्दनम् ।
स्नातुं नन्दस्तु कालिन्द्या द्वादश्यां जलमाविशत् ॥²

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/28/1)

Shri Nandarai ji once fasted to attain profound love for Shri Krishna. At the beginning of *dwādashi* (twelfth) day, in the night itself, he went to *Yamunā ji* to bathe. This was the time of the demons. The emissaries of *Varun* caught him and took him to their master.

When the news of the disappearance of *Nandarai ji* reached the *Brajwāsis*, they became very sad. They requested *Shri Krishna* and *Balrāma ji* for some solution. *Shri Krishna* could not bear the lamentation of *Brajwāsis*. He went to *Varun* and asked him to return His father.

Varundev sang hymns of praise to *Shri Krishna* in various ways and apologized on behalf of his emissaries.

1. In this way those damsels, whose hearts and souls had already been surrendered to *Shri Krishna*, worshipped *Bhadra Kālī* for a month with this resolve that, “*May Nandanandan be our husband.*”

**Note:* The description of *Cheerghāt* has also been made in *Vrindāvan* at the bank of *Shri Yamuna ji*. Many great ones have had wonderful experiences of *Leelā* there. Therefore as per the difference of *Kalpa* that site can also be considered to be related to the *Leela* of *Cheerghāt*.

2. (*Parikshita*) *Nanda Baba* kept a fast on *Kārtika Shuklā Ekādashi* and worshipped the Lord. And on that very day in the night with the commencement of *Dwādashi* he entered the waters of *Shri Yamuna* for a bath.

When Shri Krishna came back to Braj with Shri Nandarai ji, all the cowherds were really surprised.

This site became famous as Nanda ghāt.

Shri Jeeva Goswāmi also lived here. His extreme dispassion and devout love for Shri Krishna are famous in the Vaishnava world.

Nearby is Hājarā grām, Where Brahmā ji presented the abducted calves to Shri Krishna. At a distance of one mile from here, there is Varārā grām where Brahmā ji had abducted the calves.

Bhaya-Gāon

अहे श्रीनिवास ऐथा नन्द भय पाईला ।

तेई 'भय' नामे ग्राम वज्र बसाईला ॥

(भ० २०)

Nearby is a village called Bhaya. When the emissaries caught Shri Nandarai ji and started taking him with them, he became very frightened (*bhayabheet*). All Brajwāsis became distraught and started calling Shri Krishna.

This site became famous as Bhaya gāon. According to the hearsay Shri Vajranābha ji had given this name to the site.

Basai Grām (Bachchhavana)

एवमेतेषु भेदेषु चिरंयात्वा स आत्मभूः ।

सत्याः के कतरे नेति ज्ञातुं नेष्टे कथंचन ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/13/43)

Along with the cowherd boys once Nandanandan Shyām Sundar was grazing the calves at the beautiful banks of Yamunā ji. Those calves while grazing reached this forest. Shri Krishna playing various games in the soft sand of Yamunā ji started giving bliss to the sakhās. After the game they had a feast. They started snatching each other's meals and eating it. Kanhaiyā started eating the half eaten morsel of His sakhās. Sometimes He would snatch the food from their hands and sometimes the sakhās would get thrills and shivers of raptures by eating the half eaten morsel of their dear Kanhaiyā.

The calves tempted by green grass went far away. Not seeing the calves, Shri Krishna left to look for them leaving behind the sakhās eating their food. After searching everywhere He could not find them.

1. Brahmā ji saw both of them at both the places and by meditating for a long time tried to unfold the mystery with his vision of knowledge. But amongst them who are the original cowherd boys and who are the ones made later, amongst them who are real and who are false, he could not figure this out in any way.

Brahmā ji becoming doubtful of the Leelās of Para Brahma Lord Shri Krishna with His sakhās abducted the calves and hid them in a cave far away. Lord of the whole universe, omnipresent Shri Krishna understood this and thinking about the delusion of Brahmā ji came back. When He returned, He did not find the sakhās even and understood that Brahmā ji had hidden the sakhās also. Brahmā ji was thinking that Shri Krishna steals butter with the cowherd boys every day, He plays with them, even eats their half eaten food. Is He really the Brahma or an ordinary human being?

When Shri Krishna became ready to go back to Braj He started thinking about the missing cowherd boys and the calves. In a moment He manifested Himself in many forms. He became the cowherd boys as well the calves. When these manifested cowherd boys and the calves returned, their mothers felt special love and affection surging in their hearts for them as they were all Shri Krishna Himself. The mothers took their sons in their laps and the cows also nurtured their calves with affection.

This routine continued for a year. But nobody came to know. One human year is equivalent to a day of Brahmā ji. After passing of his one day when Brahmā ji came to Braj and saw the calves grazing there like before and the cowherd boys absorbed in bliss just like before, he was stunned.

Understanding the whole course of the events, Brahmā ji felt extremely ashamed. After the Purushottam Lord removed the curtain of Māyā, Brahmāji awakened from the delusion. He started seeing the whole world including himself full of Krishna. He prostrated and sang hymns to the Lord.

तोमीड्य तेऽभ्रवपुषे तडिदम्बराय
गुञ्जावतंसपरिपिच्छलसन्मुखाय ।
वन्यस्रजे कवलवेत्रविषाणवेणु
लक्ष्मश्रिये मृदुपदे पशुपाङ्गजाय ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/14/1)

1. Prabho! You alone are worth praying to. I bow at your feet. This body of yours is dark as the cloud of the rainy season, on which the glittering pitāambar looking like still lightning looks beautiful. There is a garland of berries around your neck, earring of the shape of makar in your ears and a peacock crown on the head. Because of all these a unique beauty is radiating from your face. The garland hanging on the chest and a morsel of rice and yogurt in your hand, the cane and the horn on the side and your flute in the waistband are all looking resplendent. Your feet tender and delicate like a lotus and this sweet guise of cowherd boy. (I sacrifice myself over these very feet). I bow to such Gopāl nandan.

Brahmā ji became restless to take birth in Gokul and impatient to put its dust on his head as Lord of the universe Himself was sporting there as Nandakumār.

Brahmā ji brought back the calves and the cowherd boys and left them there. Though they had remained separated from Shri Krishna for a year but they had no knowledge of it. Laughing, the cowherd boys returned back to Braj with their sakhā as if they had just woken up from sleep.

This site is famous as Bachchha vana. Vatsa Bihāri temple, Gwāl kund, Gwāl mandali, Hari Bola tirtha and Baithak of Shri Vallabhāchārya ji are here.

Parkham

Brahmā ji tested (parikshā) Shri Krishna to find out whether He was the Almighty Supreme Being, the liberator of Aghāsūr or an ordinary human being Nandanandan Shyām Sundar. Looking at Him eating the half eaten food of the sakhās, Brahmā ji had been taken over by delusion and had felt the curiosity to take the test.

Therefore this site became famous as 'Parkham.' Nearby is Seiya grām.

Chaumuhān

चौमुंहा ग्रामे ब्रह्मा असि कृष्ण पाशे ।
करिल कृष्णे र स्तुति अशेष विशेषे ॥

(भ० र०)

Brahmā ji had sung hymns of praise to Shri Krishna here.

अथैव त्वदृतेऽस्य किं मम न ते मायात्वमादर्शित-
मेकोऽसि प्रथमं ततो ब्रजसुहृद् वत्साः समस्ता अपि ।

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/14/18)

This time too did you not show me the illusion and the attachment of the whole world except yourself? At first you were alone, later you became all the cowherd boys and the calves. After that I saw all those forms of you as the four armed form of Yours being served by all the elements including myself. Then I saw that you have assumed the form of that many numbers of universes separately. And now in the end again with your infinite, *adweeteeya* i.e. without a second, Brahma form only you remain.

In this way Brahmā ji sang hymns of praise to the Lord and this place became popular as Chaumuhān.

Pasauli- Sapauli, Aghavana-Sarpasthali

एतत् कौमारजं कर्म हरेरात्माहिमोक्षणम् ।
मृत्योः पौगण्डके बाला दृष्ट्वोचुर्विस्मिता ब्रजे ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/12/37)

Shri Krishna once left early to graze the calves with the cowherd boys. Wishing to have the breakfast in the forest, they got it packed with them. On the way making sweet sounds of the flute and trumpet etc and enjoying various games, joyful and elated they reached the forest. At times they would snatch someone's basket of food hanging on the stick or run after touching someone. This way they were absorbed in bliss. Aghāsūr, the brother of Putanā could not tolerate this. Deciding to take the revenge for the killings of his relatives, assuming the form of a giant deformed python he laid down on the way.

The cowherd boys saw him and started wondering whether he was a demon or some instrument for playing. His head was touching the sky. His tongue looked like a road and his mouth like a cave. That demon was lying there in the form of a huge python. Playing, the cowherd boys entered his mouth but that demon did not shut his mouth. Thinking to take revenge from Shri Krishna he started waiting for Him. Shri Krishna read the thought in his mind. He started thinking of the way to protect His sakhās.

Shri Krishna entered the mouth of Aghāsūr. When that demon tried to close his mouth, Shri Krishna increased His size and blocked the throat of Aghāsūr. His breathing stopped. He started dying. Within a short period one radiant blue light came out splitting the top of its skull and became situated in the sky.

After giving life to the fainted boys by looking at them with His ambrosial looks, when Shri Krishna came out, that blue bright light entered Shri Krishna Himself. The demigods, celestial damsels, celestial musicians and others sang hymns to Shri Krishna.

After liberating Aghāsūr Shri Krishna along with the cowherd boys returned to Vrindāvan. That python remained an instrument of play for the children for many days.

That site is famous as Sarpa sthali, or Pasauli or Sapauli or Aghavana.

1. The Lord had saved His cowherd friends from death and liberated Aghāsūr. This Leelā was performed by the Lord at the age of five in Kumār age. The cowherd boys had witnessed this at that very time but they described about this with astonishment in Braj only at pauganda age that is in the sixth year.

Jainta

ततोऽतिहृष्टाः स्वकृतार्हणं
 पुष्पैः सुरा अप्सरसश्च नर्तनैः ।
 गीतैः सुगा वाद्यधराश्च वाद्यकैः
 स्तवैश्च विप्रा जयतिः स्वनैर्गणाः ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/12/34)

All the demigods resonated the whole Braj with the sounds of “Jai ho, Jai ho” i.e. victory to Shri Krishna, victory to Shri Krishna. Sakhās also merging their chants of ‘Jai ho’ in that chorus expressed their joy.

Singing the song of victory of Shri Krishna over Aghāsūr this site became famous as ‘Jainta’.

There is an idol of a snake in the pond here. It has been made so skillfully that despite the level of water increasing in the pond to any height, that snake idol is always seen above the water level. Now only the ruins of that idol are left.

Tamāl Kānan and Shri Kund Teelā

अहे देख तमाल कानन ए खाने ।
 बाढ़े महारङ्ग राधा कृष्णोर मिलने ।

(भ० २०)

Braj is pervaded with unique charming Nature everywhere. The Goddess Nature intoxicated and radiant in her youth remains absorbed in restless waiting, with the carpet spread out, to welcome its Jeewan sarvaswa Yugal Priyā-Priyatam. At some place there is a dense shade of Kadamba forest and its intoxicating fragrance is flowing and at some place the Nature is waiting for its *Jeewan Sarvaswa* by laying the bed of extremely tender green grass. This Nature is not insentient, rather it is conscious and living. It assists in the Yugal keli. Savouring the rasa keli and distributing and sharing its radiant joy abundantly, it gives happiness to the Yugal in all kinds of ways. Somewhere the golden vines in the shelter of Tamāl trees become radiantly joyful. Shaken by the gusts of wind these vines sometimes filling with new

1. At that time the demigods by showering flowers, celestial dancers by dancing, Gandharwa by singing, vidyādhara by playing instruments, Brahmins by reciting prayers and the pārshads by shouting victory slogans praised and applauded Lord Shri Krishna as the Lord had killed Aghāsūr.

love start shivering. Priyā-Priyatam become pleased and delighted looking at the unique charm of this nature.

Once in a nearby *nikunja* pointing at a vine near a Tamāl tree, Priyatam asked Priyā ji softly, “What is this vine saying to the Tamāl tree?” Priyā ji remained silent and after thinking said in a low voice, “The shivering and quivering of the vine is expressing its state of love. It is not its fault. Some messenger of Kām (Cupid) in the form of a gust of the wind, has shaken it to its core, despite that, look at the patience of this tree.” While this discussion was going on, the living Shyām Tamāl (Shri Krishna) became a little impatient. Did this impatience getting the shelter of the patience of some strong support (Shri Rādhā) remain impatient still or was it subjugated by the patience, how do we say? Who would count the waves of rasa at the bottom of some ocean of sweetness?

Sakhis saw all this and they also became absorbed. Steeped in the enjoyment of bliss, they remained absorbed. Shaken by the blissful gusts of the ocean of intoxication, only a little conscious Yugal filled with an impatient and restless yearning for rasa were still absorbed. Startled on the arrival of their own forms the *sakhis*, they became a little more alert. That solitary rasavihār converting into a collective rasa keli started drowning all in rasa.

Krishna kund Teelā and Tamāl Kānan became famous because of these blissful memories of theirs.

Ātasa

ए आटस ग्राम महाकौतुक हईल ।
अष्ट वक्रमुनि एथा तपस्या करिल ॥

(भ० २०)

Brajwāsis are naturally deserving of and entitled to seeing and enjoying the madhur Leelās of Shri Krishna but the solitary and private *mādhurya rasa* filled Leelās can be enjoyed only by the naive and the innocent Braj maidens. When even Devarshi Nārad and Lord Shankar could enjoy Shri Krishna Leelā only with the grace of these Braj maidens, then the question of other demigods, sages, ascetics does not even arise.

Saint Shri Ashtāvakra hearing about the incarnation of Shri Krishna and filled with the desire to have His darshan lived here. Since then this site became known as Ātas.

Varāhara

एई वराहर ग्रामे वराह रूपे ते ।
खेलाईला कृष्ण प्रिय सखार सहिते ॥

(भ० २०)

Seeing many supernatural Leelās of Sri Krishna, strange discussion ensued amongst the sakhās. Someone started talking about the killing of Putanā, Shakatāsūr etc, someone repeated the incident of lifting of Shri Girirāj. Other sakhās also described many other important Leelās. While talking thus, the topic of Lord Vārāha was brought up. It is said that Shri Krishna remembered His Vārāha form and He started behaving according.

Frightened sakhās started shouting, Kanhaiyā, Kanhaiyā loudly. The descent of Lord Vārāha subsided and Shri Krishna full of love started giving joy and bliss to the sakhās again.

Thus the site became famous by the name of Varāhara.

Bhadra van

भद्राय भद्ररूपाय सदा कल्याणवर्द्धने ।
अमङ्गलच्छिदे तस्मै नमो भद्रवनाय च ॥¹

(भविष्योत्तरे)

During grazing absorbed in merrymaking and amusements with the sakhās, honouring their feelings of love for him, following the cows Shri Krishna would wander off far. Sometimes looking at the beautiful grass in the pastures at the bank of Yamunā, He would take the cows there and at times He would take them across Yamunā for grazing. The bliss would keep showering in the romp and revelry of jokes and humour.

This site marked with the foot prints of Shri Krishna following the cows is famous as Bhadravan.

Bhadra Sarowar

यज्ञस्नानस्वरूपाय राज्याखण्डपदप्रद ।
तीर्थराज नमस्तुभ्यं भद्राख्य-सरसे नमः ॥

(भविष्योत्तर)

O Sarowar called Bhadra! O Tirtharāj! Obeisance to you. You

1.O Bhadra swaroop Bhadravana! You are the giver of total well being and the destroyer of inauspiciousness, obeisance to you.

are the form of the yagya place and the giver of the uninterrupted royal or kingly position.

A person who bathes here gets infinite wealth and also the wealth desired by the devotees i.e. devotion.

Bhāndeera Vana

भाण्डीरं समनुप्राप्य वनानां वनमुत्तमम् ।
वासुदेवं ततो दृष्ट्वा पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥¹

(आदि वाराह)

Shri Rādhā- Krishnachandra Milan

Shri Nandarai ji along with his dear son Kanhaiyā once came to Bhāndeer vana for grazing. There was a clean lake here. The cows drank water from it. The forest surrounded by the trees and the vines was full of tender grass for grazing. All around fragrant breeze was blowing. The chirping of the birds was captivating the mind forcibly. Nandarai ji was absorbed in guarding the cows. Yogamāyā, the Shakti of Shri Krishna, suddenly created darkness all around. Fierce storm started blowing. Dark dense clouds appeared. Seeing the conditions of rain Nandarai ji became frightened. Kanhaiyā sitting in the lap of His bābā, got frightened and embraced Him tightly.

At that time the exquisitely beautiful Shri Rādhā adorned with ornaments from head to toe walked in like an intoxicated elephant. Her anklets were chiming sweetly.

Shri Nandarai ji was astounded to see the matchlessly beautiful Sri Rādhā, who was putting the luster of crores of moons to shame, in that deserted forest. He bowed down to Shri Rādhā ji and said, “Devi! Shri Gargāchārya ji had told me all about you. You are the exclusive beloved of Shri Krishna. Take Him where ever you like. After fulfilling your aim, bring Him back.”

Saying so Shri Nanda bābā handed over the child Shri Krishna to Shri Rādhā. Taking Him She was filled with bliss and forbidding Shri Nandarai ji from telling this secret to anyone She said, “Brajeishwar! Whatever you have in your mind ask from me.” Shri Nandarai ji asked for the devotion in the feet of Shri Rādhā- Krishna.

Taking Shri Krishna with Her joyfully, She went far away. Embracing Him again and again She started pacifying Her thirst of

1. By travelling to Bhāndeer vana, superior amongst all vanas and having darshan of Shri Vāsudev ji there, the being is freed from the cycles of births and rebirths.

many yugas. Suddenly She remembered the Rās mandal. Immediately the child form disappeared from Her lap.

Suddenly She saw Kishore Shri Krishna lying on the flower bed in the nearby *nikunja* in a fragrant divine atmosphere. She was amazed. She started savouring the sweetness of the beauty of the radiant blue form with delight.

The unprecedented union of Shri Krishna and Shri Rādhā took place. All the memories of Goloka appeared on the canvas of their minds. Upon getting the closeness of Her beloved, Shri Rādhā became submerged in the *mādhurya rasa*. Shri Krishna savoured the sweetest Leelās in the company of His beloved.

Brahmā ji appeared right there. Collecting all the necessary materials and arranging the decorations, he performed their marriage. Shri Rādhā put a knee long garland around the neck of Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna put one garland around the neck of Shri Rādhā. Both of them became tied with the cord of love once again.

Looking at all this, the demigods showered flowers. The whole site became resonant with sweet sounds of musical instruments. Waves of bliss spread in the entire nature. Priyā- Priyatam ate beetle leaf chewed by each other. Mādhav forcibly snatched the jewel adorned mirror from the hand of Shri Rādhā and She snatched the flute of Shri Krishna. Both were filled with the bliss of this sport of love.

As Shri Rādhā was about to decorate Shri Krishna, She was amazed to find Him in the form of child. She started looking all around for the adolescent Shri Krishna. Child Krishna seemed hungry. At that time a voice from the heaven was heard, “Rādhe! Why are you dejected. Meditate on the feet of Shri Krishna. Until the time Rās mandal is organised you will keep coming here every day. Let go of your worries and go taking this child Shri Krishna.”

After getting the assurance, Shri Rādhā came to Braj and handed over the child Shri Krishna to mother Yashodā. She said, “Maiyā! Bābā had requested me to take child Krishna home. He is hungry. Please feed Him.” Shri Rādhā engaged in Her daily household duties on the outside, kept sporting with Shri Hari in many rasa steeped Leelās by going to Shri Vrindāvan at nights.

Therefore this site of union of Priyā-Priyatam became famous as Bhāndeer vana.

Asibhānda tirtha fulfiller of all wishes, Matsya Koop, Ashoka destroyer of all kinds of grief and Ashoka Mālini latā fulfiller of all kind of desires are here.

Chhanhari (Bijauli)

सखा सह श्रीकृष्ण भाण्डीरे खेलाईया ।
 भुञ्जे नाना सामग्री ए छयाये वसिया ॥
 ए हेतु 'छाहेरी' नाम ग्राम एई हय ।
 यमुना निकट ग्राम देख शोभा-मय ॥

(भ० र०)

By playing various games with sakhās and giving them happiness by various endeavours, Nandanandan at times engages in wrestling and at times engaging in the pursuit of touching each other remains absorbed in various amusements. This solitary site at the bank of Yamunā starts resonating with the sound of sweet laughter.

Kanhaiyā giving variety of delicious delicacies to His emotionally identical sakhā pleases them in various ways. As the assembly of cowherds takes rest here during grazing, this site has become divine.

Sitting in the shade absorbed in bliss the Rasikeindra Mauli has made this site steeped in Leelā. This site is famous as Chhanhari or Bijauli.



Braj Bhoomi Mohini

SHRI VRINDĀVAN



Chapter Seven

राधाकरावचित पल्लव वल्लरीके
राधापदाङ्ग विलसन्मधुरस्थलीके ।
राधायशो मुखरमत्तखगावलीके ।
राधा विहारविपिने रमतां मनो मे ॥

THE OTHER NEIGHBOURING SITES

1. Mānta-grām
2. Bilwavan
3. Mānsarowar
4. Pāni-gāon
5. Akroora-ghāt
6. Yagya-sthal
7. Chhatikarā (Garuda Govind)

वृन्दावनकलानायौ, हृदयानन्दवर्द्धनौ ।
सुखदौ राधिकाकृष्णौ, भजेऽहं कुञ्जगामिनौ ॥¹

(महावाणी)

बर्हापीडं नटवरवपुः कर्णयोः कर्णिकारं-
विभ्रद्वासः कनक कपिशं वैजयन्तीं च मालाम् ।
रन्धान् वेणोरधर सुधया पूरयन् गोपवृन्दै-
र्वृन्दारण्यं स्वपदरमणं प्राविशद् गीतकीर्तिः ॥²

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/21/5)

Saw a damsel going somewhere hastily looking surprised and astonished. The tinkling sound of the anklets, the freely waving hair, the intoxicated swaying of the trees, the clothes tickled by the blissful breeze, somewhere at the enchanting banks of Yamunā ji the crowd of the sakhis, on the pretext of filling the water pots these Braj maidens full of love, the colourful hustle bustle, the sweet sound in the dense *nikunja* that is reproaching hundreds of *veenās*; it seems, the ocean of laughter and smile is swelling and coming towards us. Pleasant weather, beautiful atmosphere, the carefree *vihār* of the deer, this sweet resonance of the flute, sakhi! Where is this coming from.

Oh..... who would say? Who had the time to listen? Who had to ask? Priyatam called them taking their names and these love incarnate damsels ran spontaneously. The feet moved and they reached near that very flutist. The birds chirped and made this delectable site more and more blissful. The cuckoos cooed and peacocks started dancing. The moon became blessed by transmitting its cool rays. The vines and the trees offered intoxicating flowers as gifts. The breeze maddened by the touch of these flowers started sashaying. The trees swayed and the vines became restless and impatient. Everything was

1. I pray to the Yugal Chandra who are wandering in the kunja of Vrindāvan, who are the giver of happiness and the enhancer of the bliss of the heart.

2. Wearing peacock feather on the head, yellow Kaneira flowers in the ears, golden pitāambar on the shoulder, the garland of five flowers around the neck, filling the flute with the nectar of His lips and the One whose glory is being sung by the cowherd boys, such Shri Krishna in the guise of an expert actor-dancer is entering Shri Vrindāvan, beautifying it with His foot prints.

blissful. Kishori Shri Rādhā and Her bodily manifestations these Braj maidens joined them.

The Lord of Rasikas Shri Krishna smiling sweetly, adjusted His hair with his fingers and greeted them with His sweet voice. Lord Shri Krishna's solitary and private *rasa vilās* flowed and remained in motion. Even today, the Lord of the universe with His bewitching form and that very same *rasa* sweetness is *virājmān* in Vrindāvan in the form of Shri Krishna.

Oh! How wonderful is this Vrindāvan. Its various sites, its permanent atmosphere- we have an eternal and everlasting relation with this very Vrindāvan. This alone is the desire of our life. Yes! As is the site so is the relation, a cooling and soothing ointment for the mind and the soul. We have a permanent relation with the blissful land of Vrindāvan. Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji making a sādha understand his relationship with that same cooling land of Braj is saying: This is for everybody.

“If the cool gusts of three fold breeze seem to you as the touch of some loving Kishore then understand that you have a relationship with Vrindāvan. If this intoxication of the spring makes you aware even a little of the swaying of the intoxicated Yugal then you have a relationship with Vrindāvan. If the chirping song of the birds seems to you to be a song of love of some Rasa Rangi, then you have a relationship with this rasaful Vrindāvan. If the pure blueness of the clear sky gives you the impression of the radiance of the body of some tender dark Kishore then you have a relationship with Vrindāvan. If looking at the swaying branches of the swaying trees, the waving *pitāambar* and *neelāambar* shake your heart to the core then definitely you have a relationship with this Vrindāvan. If the dense clouds gathering in the blue sky give you the glimpse of the waving hair of some Pranayi Kishore, then you have a relationship with Vrindāvan. If the wave of lightning flashing within the clouds makes you remember the enthralling beauty of Kishori Rādhikā endowed with the yellow reddish luster, then you have a relationship with Vrindāvan. How can there be any doubt about your relationship with Vrindāvan if the showering rain gives you the intimation of the showers of love. If the cool atmosphere seems to be giving an introduction to the playful sport of the *Jeewan Sarvaswa* Yugal then you have a relationship with Vrindāvan definitely. If this delightful dark dawn, the black radiant evening, the silent night disturb the mind and the soul by giving the

message of some Sujān Sundar (wise and beautiful Shri Krishna) then certainly you have a relationship with the rasa abode Vrindāvan.

(With gratitude from the book Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorva Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji)

The Vrindāvan of today is that very same Vrindāvan. Shri Yamunā ji of today is also the very same Yamunā ji and these sites of Leelās are those very same sites of Leelās. The permanent atmosphere here is that very same atmosphere- that has been preserved carefully in the form of legacy by these Leelā sites. These sites of Leelās remain eager and impatient even today to give us the *darshan* of that very same treasure of theirs. In fact many sādhakas have attained the Lord because of the grace of these very sites. These sites, the birds and animals here, the trees and the vines are all Shri Krishna's own parikar, the instruments of His Leelā.

This rasa steeped site, Shri Vrindāvan is the exact shadow of the Divine Abode of the eternal *vihār* of Priyā- Priyatam, Shri Goloka Dhām. It is eternal and it is manifest. During the period of incarnation the Divine Abode merges in this manifest Vrindāvan. In fact as soon as the Abode appears, Priyā-Priyatam come and become virājmān there with their divine and rasa filled atmosphere and their beloved sakhis.

It is said in Yāmal scripture

‘वृन्दावनं परित्यज्य पादमेकं न गच्छति ।’

Looking at the desire of His devotees, to honour and to caress their feelings when Shri Krishna who was engaged in *vihār* in Goloka told Priyā ji about incarnating on the earth, then Priyā ji said restlessly-

यत्र वृन्दावनं नास्ति यत्र नो यमुना नदी ।

यत्र गोवर्द्धनो नास्ति तत्र मे न मनः सुखम् ॥

(गर्ग संहिता गो० सं० 3/32)

Where there is no Vrindāvan, no Shri Yamunā and no Shri Gowardhan, I will not be happy there.

Shri Nārad ji says that Lord Shri Hari sent eighty four *kosa* land, Shri Gowardhan and Shri Yamunā ji to the earth from Goloka.

वेदनाग क्रोश भूमिं स्वधाम्नः श्रीहरिः स्वयम् ।

गोवर्द्धनं च यमुनां प्रेषयामास भू परि ॥

(गर्ग संहिता गो० सं० 3/33)

Shri Vrindāvan, Vrindāvan Vihāri and the subject of Vrindāvan are *pratyaksha* experiences of the devotees, the actual accomplishments of their lives. For the future sādhakas, they are the guides and the directors of the path. Without the refuge and support of the great ones,

it is impossible to get the knowledge of the subject matter.

Preserving in its womb many sports of Shri Krishna that are performed in Goshtha Leelā, this site has been guiding the path of the intellectuals like us, since eternity.

The Purānas, many Sanskrit scriptures and the *Rasikas* have accepted the significance of Shri Vrindāvan in one voice. There was a flood of rasikas in the middle age. The Muslim devotees like Raskhān and Tāj became crazy about Braj. In spite of Emperor Akbar being a Muslim, the history is repeating the tale of his great fortune even today.

The description of the divine and transcendental Vrindāvan can only be experienced. Here Priyā-Priyatam engage in eternal *vihār* with the sakhis. To what extent can a pen write about it?

Great, wise and learned Shri Uddhav ji yearning for a drop of love of Vrindāvan said, “Oh! Wish I could become the grass or the bush or the vine or any herb of Vrindāvan which has received the fortune of the touch of the dust of the feet of the gopis, the beloveds of the Lord.”

आसामहो चरण रेणुषामहं स्यां-
वृन्दावने किमपि गुल्मलतौषधीनाम् ।

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/47/61)

Yogis gave up yoga. Sages and saints were astounded and amazed on hearing about the description of the sweetness of Vrindāvan. If such was their case, then one can imagine how special the intimate devotees are.

Even Shri Shankarāchārya ji Mahārāj, the propounder of the Nirvisheisha philosophy and Adwaitamat, could not quench the thirst of his eyes. Brajendra Nandan abducted his heart. Admonishing his eyes he said

कन्दर्पकोटिसुभगं वाञ्छितफलदं दयार्णवम् ।
श्रीकृष्णं त्यक्त्वा कमन्यविषयं नेत्रयुगमं दृष्टुमुत्सहे ॥

(प्रबोध रत्नाकर)

Why are you getting tempted by these fleeting temptations? If you cannot live without seeing beautiful forms, then look at Shri Krishna at least once. He is more beautiful than crores and crores of Kāmdevas. He is generous and a treasure house of kindness. Leaving such Shri Krishna what else do you want to see?

Shri Shankarāchārya ji Mahārāj has depicted many of his experiences of Shri Krishna's Leelā beautifully. Describing the pastime of eating of food he says, “ The One Who is seated with one leg on top of the other under a Kalpa vriksha in some garden of

Vrindāvan situated at the bank of Yamunā ji, Whose complexion is blue like that of the clouds, Who is illuminating the whole world with His brilliance, Who is wearing a beautiful *pitāmbar* and is anointed with sandal mixed with camphor, Who has big eyes up to His ears, has earrings looking resplendent in the ears, has beautiful smooth hair and is having His food with the cowherd boys inside a *nikunja*, always contemplate on that Shri Hari.”

यमुनातटनिकटस्थितवृन्दाकानने महारम्ये ।
 कल्पद्रुमतलभूमौ चरणंचरणोपरिस्थाप्य ॥
 तिष्ठन्तं घननीलं स्वतेजसा भासयन्तमिहविश्वम् ।
 पीताम्बर परिधानं चन्दन कर्पूर लिप्त सर्वाङ्गम् ॥

(प्रबोध सुधाकर)

The main region of Shri Rāmānuja sect has been the south of India. Saint Shri Shathakopa has been the famous āchārya of this sect. Braj Bihāri Shri Krishna stole his mind suddenly. Although Lord Shri Laxminārāyana is another form of Shri Krishna only, yet the attraction of Shri Krishna captivated saint Shathakopa who was the worshipper of Shri Laxminārāyana. Describing the bond of love between Shri Krishna and the gopis he said-

The gopis had bound Gopāl Whose body has the lustre of a jewel. The ignorants may think of Him as bound, but the beauty of that very same Shri Krishna has cut my bondage of illusion to shreds.

गोपाल बालमयि गोपवशं निबद्धम्
 माणिक्यभासमिह मयिसुधारसं मे ।
 आपीय सन्ततमहं हतवान् प्रमोहं
 मायाभवं प्रकृतिजं ममदुःसहं तम् ।

(सहस्र गीतिसार 1/7/3)

At one place Shri Kuresha Swāmi writes, ‘We were not able to take birth in Shri Vrindāvan in any form as sentient or insentient, as insects or even grass, is this our misfortune or the collection of our sins. We have become deprived in all ways. How can we sinners get the dust particles of the feet of Shri Vrindāvan Bihāri’

वृन्दावने स्थिरचरात्मककीटदूर्वा-
 पर्युन्तजन्तु निययेवत ये तदानीम् ।
 नैवालभामहि जनिं हतकास्त येते
 पापाःपदं तव कदा पुनराश्रयामः ॥

(पञ्चस्तवी)

Shri Rāmānand ji Mahārāj was the worshipper of Lord Shri Rāghawendra. He visited many places. He had deep dedication for Shri Vrindāvan.

Rasa steeped *keli* and *vilās mādhuri* of Shri Rādhā-Krishna always keeps flowing incessantly in their abode Shri Vrindāvan. Shriman Nimbārkāchārya ji earned glory by propagating and promoting this rasa-keli. Experiencing many kelis of Priyā ji in Vrindāvan, he described many of these Leelās. At one place he says, ‘The place that keeps getting besprinkled with the rasa of love of Shri Nandanandan and Shri Vrishbhānu Nandini, the place that is beautiful, where even the trees give desired fruit, the place that is generous, which is covered with the flow of sacred Yamunā, where every living being is blessed with the dust particles of the feet of Shri Brajrāj and Kishori, I remember that Vrindāvan the illuminator of its divine virtues.’

प्रातः स्मरामि युगकेलि रसाभिषिक्तं
वृन्दावनं सुरमणीयमुदार वृक्षम् ।
सौरी प्रवाह वृत्तात्म गुण प्रकाशं
युग्माधिरेणु कणिकांचित सर्व सत्वम् ॥

Describing the form of Vrindāvan in ‘Shri Krishna Stawarāj’ he says-

पार शून्य परधाम तमद्भुतं
चिद्घनं जयति लोक मूर्द्धनि ।
व्यापकं च परिखा सरिद्वश-
ऽचिन्त्य शक्ति नव मंगल ध्वनि ॥

That which is beyond *shoonya* (void, vacuum, outer space) or *para vyoma* (beyond the sky or space) and beyond Mahā Vaikuntha etc, which is astonishing, *chidaghan* (compact with pure intelligence, an attribute of transcendental Vrindāvan), omnipresent and is virājmān as supreme amongst all the cosmological regions. Which is surrounded by Yamunā ji on all four sides, whose power is beyond contemplation, where auspicious sound is resonating, victory to that Vrindāvan.

Even in Mahāvāni, the description of the sacred banks of Yamunā ji in Vrindāvan has been given. The exuberant waves of *Yugal keli vihar* are in motion, which are giving joy and delight mutually.

वहति विमल कलकेलि रूपिनी श्रीयमुना कमना चहुँ कोद ।
अति रस रंग-तरंग उमंगन अंग अंगनि प्रति बढुवनि मोद ॥

Shri Lalitkishori Dev ji has shown the superiority of Vrindāvan over Goloka.

नित श्रीराधा-कृष्ण हैं नित्य सुविपिन विलास ।
कोटि-कोटि गोलोक लौ एक पत्र परकास ॥

Cranes, swans, chakors, peacocks and cuckoos keep showering rasa in the kunjās and *nikunjas* with their sweet sounds. Where all the six seasons remain present always, that very same Vrindāvan is the site of *keli-vihār* of Priyā-Priyatam.

Shri Shri Vallabhāchārya ji has been deeply dedicated to Shri Vrindāvan-

उद्धवागमने जात उत्सवः सुमहान्यथा ।
वृन्दावने गोकुले वा तथा मे मनसि क्वचित् ॥

(निरोध लक्षण 3)

Great celebration had manifested on the arrival of Uddhav ji in Braj, similarly may my mind remain enthusiastic in Gokul and Vrindāvan.

The great men of ‘Vallabha Sampradāya’ have had profound dedication towards Braj. Shri Shrināthji has been their adored Thākūr. He has remained happy with their service. He used to be *virājmān* in Shri Girirāj ji. These great devotees have given an extremely delightful depiction of Braj, Vrindāvan. The eminent devotee Shri Soordās ji describing the greatness of Vrindāvan is saying-

ब्रह्मादिक सनकादि महामुनि कलपत दोऊ कर जोर ।
वृन्दावन के तृन न भये हम लगत चरण के छोर ॥

This Vrindāvan is the site of solitary and private *vihār* of extremely sweet *rasa keli vilās* and Shri Krishna’s cow grazing and of various sports with His sakhās.

Shripād Jeeva Goswāmi has called the physical or gross Shri Vrindāvan a manifestation of the Leelās of the unmanifest Shri Vrindāvan i.e. the divine Goloka.

‘ श्रीवृन्दावनस्य अप्रकट लीलानुगत प्रकाश एव गोलोक इति । ’

(श्रीकृष्ण सन्दर्भ)

Shri Sanātan Goswāmi believes that the eternal divine abode Vrindāvan has entered and merged with the earthly Braj and there is no difference between the two but Shripād Jeeva Goswāmi calling Goloka and Vrindāvan separate has considered Vrindāvan superior than Goloka.

Shripād Prabodhānanda Saraswati experienced the divine and transcendental Vrindāvan sitting in the manifest Vrindāvan itself. Although the form of this Vrindāvan and the divine Vrindāvan is same, yet the difference has been shown due to the difference of perception or due to this being imperceptible to the physical eyes. Prakat or manifest Vrindāvan is the one that can give the darshan of divine Vrindāvan therefore Prakat Vrindāvan has been called superior.

अनन्तैश्चिज्योत्सना रस जलधिपूरैस्तत इतो
वहदिभर्गोलोकावधि सकल संप्लावन करम् ।
अहो सर्वस्यो पर्यति विमल विस्तीर्ण मधुर-
स्फुरच्चन्द्र प्रायं स्फुरतिमय वृन्दावनमिदम् ॥

(वृन्दावन श० 4/83)

The beauty of Vrindāvan renews every moment. Where the waves of sweetness are surging, the river of love is flowing, the love of Priyā-Priyatam is spurting that very place will have to be called Vrindāvan. The natural form of love is Vrindāvan.

The earth of this place is conscious. The sand is shining like the powdered pearls. The *nikunjas* are divine. Rasa filled pollen is getting scattered in them. ‘Kām and Rati’ taking the broom in their hands, collecting these pollen and putting them at the right places are increasing the beauty more and more. The rasa filled vihār of Priyā-Priyatam is in motion here . Shri Dhruwadās ji says, “Nāyaka tahān na nāyikā rasa karvāwat keli.” the rasa keli alone is making Priyā-Priyatam emotionally helpless. This Vrindāvan is that same Eternal Vrindāvan where the rasa filled keli of the Yugal is in motion always and every moment.

Kāmdev and Rati in the hope of getting the dust particles of the feet of Priyā-Priyatam keep rolling in the dust in the kunjas and *nikunjas*.

अति कमनीय विराजत मन्दिर नवल निकुञ्ज ।
सेवत सगन प्रीति जुत दिन मीन ध्वज पुञ्ज ॥

(हित चौरासी 57)

Even the love maddened Mirā ji could not let go of the attraction of Vrindāvan. Although she lived in Dwārakā most of the time yet getting permeated with the blissful, sacred and Leelāful atmosphere of Vrindāvan she started singing-

माई म्हाने लागे वृन्दावन नीको ।

Over here getting enriched with the wealth of rasa of Vrindāvan,

the rasa longing of Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji gets drenched in this madhur rasa again and again and she starts singing-

वृन्दावन के नाम सों, पुलकि उठत सब अंग ।
जिहि थल श्यामा-श्याम नित करत रहत रस रंग ॥
वृन्दावन को आसरो वृन्दावन की आस ।
छिन भरको छूटै नहीं, वृन्दावन को वास ॥

Therefore the Āchāryas, Rasikas and the devotees experiencing the blissful solitary and private love of Priyā-Priyatam, have tried to say a little about Vrindāvan in their padas and shlokas. And all that is very necessary for the sake of the guidance of the sādhakas.

नागरिया जो पै श्रीराधे जू प्रकट न होतीं तो,
स्याम पर काम ही के बिपती कहावते ।
छाय जाती जड़ता बिलाय जाते कवि सब
जरि जातौ रस तो रसिक कहा गावते ॥

Naming

Shri Vrindāvan, Vrindā-Kānan or Shri Vana is the indicator of 'like name like qualities and form'. There are many rasa filled stories famous about this.

Shri Nārād ji once expressed his curiosity to Lord Nārāyana to know about the history related to the name of Shri Vrindāvan. What the Lord said to Shri Nārād ji is being given below-

Lord Nārāyana said that King Kedār was the ruler of the seven islands in Satyuga. He was very religious. The name of his daughter was Vrindā who was the partial manifestation of Shri Laxmi ji. She was a *yogini* (female ascetic). She showed no interest in married life and after getting Shri Hari Mantra from sage Shri Durwāsā did penance for sixty thousand years. Lord Shri Krishna became pleased. Shri Krishna appeared, radiating His extraordinary beauty. The splendour and beauty of His age that was embarrassing crores of Kāmdevas, His curly hair, the sidelong glance, the sweet smile and who knows what else. Vrindā was enraptured by all of this. Her eyes drooped with the weight of love. Shy and bashful Vrindā said, "Please accept me as the maid of your feet." Shri Krishna smiled and proceeded to Goloka with Vrindā. There she became a fortunate gopi like Shri Rādhā.

Another holy story is, 'King Kushādhwaja had two daughters. Both were adept in the knowledge of the scriptures of *dharma*.

Their names were Tulsi and Vedavati. They were disinterested and indifferent to the material world. Vedavati attained the supreme being Nārāyana by doing penance. She is also famous as Sita, the daughter of King Janak. Tulsi also did penance to get Shri Krishna as husband but because of the curse of sage Durwāsā, married Shankhachuda. How could Lord Shri Krishna bear this? Those who make efforts for Him, He accepts them Himself. The same happened. Lord became Shri Shāligrām and Tulsi manifesting as a plant started living in His proximity.’

Since she is the sole beloved of Shāligrām ji, therefore this eternal and sacred relationship has formed. 'बिन तुलसी हरि एक न मानी ।' meaning without Tulsi, Shri Hari does not accept any offering.

The third and the highest reason is that amongst the first sixteen names of Shri Rādhā, Vrindā is one of them, which has been heard in the Shrutis. This is the forest of sporting and pastime of that very same Vrindā named Shri Rādhā. It is very beautiful and enchanting. The moist fragrance of Tulsi is pervasive all around. That is why this place is famous as Vrindāvan. For the very first time Shri Krishna had created Vrindāvan in Goloka Dhām only for the happiness of Shri Rādhā. This forest manifested on the earth for the sake of the happiness and pastime of Shri Rādhā and was called Vrindāvan because of that very same ancient name.

अस्ति वृन्दावनं यस्यास्तेन वृन्दावनी स्मृता ।
वृन्दावनस्याधि देवी तेनेवायं प्रकीर्तिता ॥

(ब्र० वै० पु०)

Where the life is only about devotion to Shri Krishna, where the people remain engrossed in the memories of Shri Krishna and absorbed in His Leelās, where even the animals and birds listening to the sweet sound of His flute are left standing still and gazing with stunned eyes. Where the entire nature filling with some intoxication, comes alive and becomes animated. Where everything is to please Priyā-Priyatam, where everything is soaked, touched and sprinkled with and suffused by the waves of their *rasa* - yesyes, that very place, that very same place is Vrindāvan.

Description of the Form

सहस्रदल पद्मस्य वृन्दारण्यं वराटकम् ।
यस्य स्मरण मात्रेण पृथ्वी धन्या जगत्त्रये ॥

(पद्म पुराण)

Shri Vrindāvan is like the central bud of the thousand petalled lotus. Just by the touch of Vrindāvan, this earth has become blessed in the three worlds.

On the top of all the universes is Goloka Dhām which is famous by the name of Shri Vrindāvan. The divine sport of love is always in motion here. Here the birds and animals, the trees and vines, the entire nature is alive and resonant, not only this, they are the personal Leelā *parikar* of Shri Krishna. Vrindā Devi is the presiding deity of this place who is also a natural assistant in the *keli* of Priyā-Priyatam.

All the six seasons and the threefold breeze enter and pervade the atmosphere according to the wishes of Priyā-Priyatam.

How is the beauty of Shri Vrindāvan?

देख सखी शोभा श्री वन की !
 कुंज कुंज प्रति सघन श्यामता
 सुषमा वृक्ष लतन की ॥ देख ..
 पवन भ्रकोरें, जमुन हिलोरें
 भूम भुकनि तरु वन की ॥
 हरित भूमि कलरव पछिन्ह को
 क्रीड़ा दामिनी घन की ॥
 यमुना पुलिन ललित बन बीथिन्ह
 पुष्पित कुंज सदन की ।
 केलि विलास सुहास सुपूरित,
 गौर सुनील वदन की ॥
 प्रणय वीचि सी सहज तरंगित
 मञ्जुल छवि सखियन की
 पाई लाड़िले युगल विजन की,
 मृदुता हिय उमगन की ॥
 देख सखी शोभा श्रीवन की ... ।

(भक्तिमती ऊषा बहिनजी)

The beautiful bank of Shri Yamunā, the glittering sand, the dense *kunja- nikunja*, the breeze fragrant with the moist fragrance of various flowers and the intoxicated swaying of the trees - vines, all these are Vrindāvan itself. Priyā-Priyatam engage in sports here with their beloved sakhis. Seeing the appropriateness, even the birds fill the atmosphere with rasa with their sweet chirping sounds. Love itself personifies and merges in the aggregated beauty. Everything remains engaged in the service of Yugal.

‘Goshtha Vrindāvan’ or ‘the place of the pastime of the gopis ‘Vrindāvan’ or Shri Rādhā’s ‘Nikunja Vrindāvan’, are merely different names, like the shadow of that very Eternal Vrindāvan.

Every *nikunja* is ready with the preliminary preparations of a novel rasa event, who knows when Priyā-Priyatam might thrill it with their touch. Sakhis steeped in the emotion of ‘*Tatsukhei Sukhitwam*’ constantly keep moving here and there filled with the love of Shri Krishna.

It is the essence of Vaikuntha, full of radiance. Only the eternally emancipated ones live here. Nitya Leelā is always in motion here. This eternal divine abode Shri Vrindāvan is full of trees of Mandār, Maulashri etc and permeated with the intoxicating rasa and the fragrance of Kadamba flowers.

Significance

Shri Vrindāvan is the very own abode of the Lord. In relation to this a sweet incident has been revealed in the Purānas, which is being given below-

Shri Nārad ji playing his veenā and singing about the virtues of Shri Hari came to Tirtharāj Prayāgrāj once. Tirtharāj greeted him and related to him the entire incident about his being the king of tirthas. Shri Nārad ji asked, “Does Shri Vrindāvan also come to pay tax to you like the other tirthas.” Tirtharāj replied in negative. Nārad ji asked, “Then how can you claim to be the Tirtharāj.” The remark pinched Tirtharāj. He went to the Lord.

Seeing Tirtharāj, the Lord got up from His jeweled throne and asked him the reason for his coming. Tirtharāj narrated the whole incident and requested, “My Lord! You have made me the king of tirthas but Vrindāvan does not come to pay the tax to me. I cannot understand the reason for this. If there is even one tirtha that does not accept my subjugation, then it is not right for me to be the Tirtharāj.”

After listening to Prayāgrāj, Lord fell silent. Tears fell from His eyes. He was reminded of Braj. His beloved Kishori Shri Rādhā, the Braj maidens, the fights with them, the rasa filled keli and the humourous conversations with the sakhās; Oh! Slowly one by one, the many scenes started coming before His eyes. He became overwhelmed by them. After recovering a little, He started saying, “Tirtharāj! I have made you the king of the tirthas but not of my abode Vrindāvan. Shri Vrindāvan Dhām is my very own abode. Not just the abode, it is the most beloved site of *vihār* of my beloved Shri Rādhārāni. She alone is the ruler of Vrindāvan. I always live there. Therefore that Dhām is free from all this.”

Not only this, Shri Nārad ji explaining the significance of Shri Vrindāvan to Bhakti in the chapter 'Shri Shrimad Bhāgwat Mahātmya' in Padma Purān has said-

वृन्दावनस्य संयोगात्पुनस्त्वं तरुणी नवा ।

धन्यं वृन्दावनं तेन भक्तिर्नृत्यति यत्र च ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत माहात्म्य 1/61)

Because you have come in the contact of Vrindāvan you have become young again. Therefore this abode of Vrindāvan is blessed where Bhakti is dancing everywhere.

The eminent saint Shripād bābā, explaining the principle of the worship of Vrindāvan has said-

“Shri Rādhā became the base or the support of the rasa worship of Vrindāvan as guru essence and Rasik Shekhar Rasarāj Shri Krishna became the One Who is based or supported. The worship of Vrindāvan begins from here. The revelations of the different dimensions, the various rasa methods of the āchāryas and the knowledge of the relationship have been getting expressed in different forms. The knowledge and the experience of this occurs only by the grace of Shri Rādhā and Shri guru and due to the intense desire of the sādḥaka.”

“This Love essence is Vrindāvan whose first conception was treasured and beautified by Shri Bhakti mahārāni. Mahāprabhu Hita Hariवंशा leaving his family came here in his youth and remained here.” ‘हित हरिवंश अनत सचु नाँही बिनु या रज ही लिये’ meaning that there is no joy elsewhere, without taking this dust of Vrindāvan. This call was heard by Rasikvar Shri Harirām Vyās, the guru of the King of Orchhā and upon coming here he said with extreme delight-

‘अब मैं श्री वृन्दावन रस पायौ’

‘श्रीराधाचरन सरन मन दीनौ मोहन लाल रिझायौ ।’

(ब्रज विभव की अपूर्व श्री भक्तिमती ऊषावहन जी ग्रन्थ से साभार)

Revealing their respective emotions about Shri Vrindāvan, everybody has expressed in infinite ways. In this very context, Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji says-

मम प्रियतम के पद पंकज की सुरभित रज से,

प्रतिक्षण पावन-जय वृन्दावन ।

मम प्रियतम के मधुरानन से है प्रतिबिम्बित तेरा आनन

जय वृन्दावन ।

मम प्रियतम की मधु मुरली से, गुंजित तेरा वन वन उपवन ।

जय वृन्दावन ।

मम प्रियतम की मधु चितवन से विकसित तेरेतरुपात सुमन ।
जय वृन्दावन ।
मम प्रियतम की प्रिय रवि तनया करतीं शोभित तेरा आंगन ।
जय वृन्दावन ।

Oh! How is this rasa filled Vrindāvan?

वृन्दावनं द्वादशकं वृन्दया परिरक्षितम् ।
मम चैव प्रियं भूमे सर्वपातक नाशनम् ॥
तत्राहं क्रीडयिष्यामि गोपी गोपालकैः सह ।
सुरभ्यं सुप्रतीतंच देव दानव दुर्लभम् ॥

(आ० बा० पु०)

O Prithivi! This twelve forested, Vrindāvan protected by Vrindādevi is the destroyer of all sins and certainly very dear to me. I perform Leelā with the cowherds and the gopis here. It is very beautiful and very difficult to attain by the demigods and the demons.

Shri Prabodhānand ji composer of Vrindāvan Shatak considers Shri Vrindāvan to be the one who assists in the rasa filled *keli* of Priyā-Priyatam. To such an extent that understanding the wish of Priyā-Priyatam, Shri Vrindāvan creates and presents the mood provoking rasaful atmosphere accordingly and inspires the Yugal for rasa very cleverly.

अहो पतितमुत्तरोत्तर विवर्धमानभ्रमौ,
महारस महोज्ज्वल प्रणयवाहिनी स्रोतसि ।
किशोर मिथुनं मिथोऽवश विचित्र कामेहितं,
करोत्यहह विस्मय स्थगितमेव वृन्दावनम् ।

(वृ० श० 2/88)

In the forest called Vrindāvan there are many lush green forests. Here there is a very sacred mountain on which there are lush green vines and plants. It is extremely useful for our animals. Not only is it convenient for the cows, cowherds and the gopis but also worthy of being lived in.

One gopi addressing another is saying-

वृन्दावनं सखि भुवोवितनोति कीर्ति,
यद्देवकीसुत पदाम्बुज लब्ध लक्ष्मि ।
गोविन्दवेणुमनु मत्तमयूरनृत्यं,
प्रेक्ष्याद्रिसान्वपरतान्यसमस्तसत्वम् ॥

(भा० 10/21/10)

O Sakhi! This Vrindāvan is spreading the glory of the earth up to Vaikuntha Loka because it is getting imprinted by the feet of Shri Krishna. Sakhi! When Shri Krishna plays His flute that bewitches the sages, then peacocks start dancing to its beat. Even the animals and birds wandering on top of the mountain become quiet.

Not only are these flower vines useful in serving Kishori Rādhā but She also nourishes them with Her touch and serves them. Every site of Shri Vrindāvan is touched by the foot prints of Shri Rādhā. The birds chirping on the trees in these *nikunja* are enhancing the beauty of this very Vrindāvan. In such a Vrindāvan whose mind will not want to sport-

राधाकरावचित पल्लव वल्लरीके,
राधापदांक विलसन्मधुरस्थलीके ।
राधा यशो मुखरमत्तखगावलीके,
राधा विहारविपिने रमतां मनो मे ॥

(रा० सु० नि० 13)

Drowning further and further in the rasa profoundness, in the source of the rapidly flowing supremely pure river of the rasa, the Yugal becoming emotionally helpless with rasa are absorbed in strange rasa endeavours. Ah Shri Vrindāvan is enrapturing them.

Even Priyā-Priyatam are grateful to this very Vrindāvan. At one place they are saying that their mutual love is growing more and more only because of Vrindāvan, the mine of rasa-

श्रीराधाया मम च यदहो केलि चातुर्यधारा ।
यच्चात्युच्चैर्निरवधि वरो वृद्धयते कामतृष्णा ॥
गाढं गाढं यदति बलते कोऽपि नौ प्रेमबन्धः ।
सर्व वृन्दावन रसखनैः भक्ति विस्फूर्जितं ते ॥

(वृ० म० 11/30)

The skillful keli flow that is mine and Shri Rādhā's, and the extremely elevated rasa desire in us for each other that keeps growing, and the profoundness in our bond of love that keeps deepening, O Vrindāvan the mine of rasa ! It is because of your power only.

The feelings of the sādha after falling in love with Vrindāvan and Vrindāvan Bihārī do not remain bound. Rather nourished by the grace of Shri Krishna his mental tendencies become all pervasive. He develops equanimity and a same feeling towards all. Then even the attachment of the family does not remain the cause of the bondage.

Shri Roop Goswāmipād explaining to such a *sādhaka* is saying-

स्मेरां भङ्गित्रय परिचितां साचिविस्तीर्ण दृष्टिं
वंशीन्यस्ताधर किसलयामुज्ज्वलां चन्द्रकेन ।
गोविन्दाख्यां हरितनुमितः केशितीर्थोपकण्ठे ।
मा प्रेक्षिष्ठास्तव यदि सखे बन्धुसङ्घेऽस्ति रङ्गः ॥

(भक्ति रसामृत सिन्धु)

O friend! If you have even the slightest desire for the company of your relatives then do not have the darshan of Shri Krishna famous as Govind near the Keshi tirtha Who's wearing a peacock feathered crown, is smiling slightly in a posture bent at three places, looking resplendent with a sidelong glance and with the flute.

If only this Vrindāvan bestows its grace, then we can reject the salvation even, what then is the big deal about the pleasures of the Vaikuntha. Not just this with that grace we can attain the unlimited *mādhurya rasa* or gopi love even.

Shobhā (beauty)

वनं वृन्दावनं नाम पशव्यं नव काननम् ।
गोप गोपी गवां सेव्यं पुण्याद्रि तृणवीरुधम् ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/11/28)

O! The One Who is always filled with ever new love, the One Who is bewildering Braj Manilāl with Her furtive glances, the One Who is effulgent like crores and crores of lightning, that crown jewel of the group of maidens is entering in the *nikunja* area of Shri Vrindāvan-

कृष्णचन्द्र दृक् चकोर पेय वक्त्र चन्द्रिका
राधिकानुराग मूर्तिरुन्मद स्मराधिका ।
दिव्यहेम चम्पकालि कम्पकालि मण्डली
चित्र-चित्र कान्तिरन्तराधि शान्तिरस्तु मे ॥

(वृ० म० 13/74)

The moonlight of Whose moon like face is drunk by the *chakor* like eyes of Shri Krishna, Who is the manifest form of love, Who is intoxicated because of excessive *rasa*, Whose *sakhis* also appear like the divine golden coloured *champā* flower, because of which the group of bees keep flying behind them, in this way Shri Rādhā possessing multi coloured lustre is looking resplendent.

संयोगावेशतोऽन्तर्निजदयिततमां सन्निवेशयातिहर्षोत्,
 कर्षोत्फुल्लखिलांगो विविधवरशुभैर्गुम्फिता मन्दकेशः ।
 काश्मीरालेप पत्रावलि वर तिलकादिन्य पूर्वानि कृत्वा,
 देशे-देशे विमृग्यन् हरिरवतु वनस्यालि पुंजे निकुंजे ॥

(वृ० म० 15/70)

Sakhis took their beloved Shri Rādhā inside Who was absorbed in the emotional efflux of the union of love. They did Her hair beautifully, thrilling many auspicious marks (that were put on Her) by the touch of Her body, anointed Her with kumkum and drew rows of leaves in a matchless way. May that Shri Hari Who is searching for Shri Rādhā in the *nikunjās* of Vrindāvan adorned with the sakhis, protect us.

The composer of Shri Rādhā Sudhānidhi, the founder of *Nikunja bhāvanā* and the one whose mind kept wandering mainly in the *nikunja* Leelā is saying in one of his shlokas-

किं वा नस्तैः सुशास्त्रैः किमथ त दुदितैर्वर्त्मभिः सद्गृहीते
 र्यत्रास्ति प्रेम-मूर्तेर्नहि महिमसुधा नापि भावस्तदीयः ।
 किं वा वैकुण्ठ लक्ष्याप्यहह परमया यत्र मे नाऽस्ति राधा
 किंत्वाशाप्यस्तु वृन्दावनभुवि मधुरा कोटि जन्मान्तरेऽपि ॥

(रा० सु० नि० 216)

What is our concern with these great scriptures or the paths promoted by them or accepted by good people, in which neither is there the nectar of the greatness of Shri Rādhā the embodiment of love nor any emotion of Hers. Similarly what are we going to do with the Laxmi of supreme Vaikuntha where there is no Shri Rādhā of ours. We desire that even in the crores and crores of births and rebirths, our sweet hope stays pinned only to the land of Vrindāvan (where all this is available).

The vihar vilās of the Yugal with their beloved sakhis is always in motion in the enchanting Vrindāvan. Converting into its climax it flows in the form of a deep ocean of rasa. Regarding this Bhaktimati Ushā behen ji says at one place-

“This Brajendra Sundar has imprinted this Vrindāvan generously with His wandering feet. Not just the ears, even the heart heard the heart wrenching sound of the tinkling of the intoxicated anklets enfolding His feet. Aha! What an ear pleasing sound of the feet has, this Vrindāvan become resonant with. Churning the hearts and the

souls of the Braj maidens with their sweet tinkling sound, startling their eyes, bewildering their minds with the incantations that bring distraction, these naughty beautiful feet are strutting and generously marking their prints on the fortunate earth of Vrindāvan. Look at the strangeness, the feet have become coloured with the worship of rasa. In the worship, the utility of all the materials has been used fully. The feet have become smeared with kumkum. The prayer, the worship, the colouring, the objects offered for enjoyment....”

Oh ... this beautiful Vrindāvan, the site of vihār of Priyā-Priyatam, this rasa filled site encircled by Shri Yamunā ji like a half moon, the dense *nikunjas* here, the keli vihār taking place in them, the quarrels and fights in them, the exuberance of the Braj maidens that is increasing every second - Oh ! Everything is divine, permeated with bliss. Come let us also get lost enjoying the rasa of these sites of Leelās and taking a particle of that rasa become overwhelmed and blessed. That rasa is scattered in these Leelā sites, in the particles of sand, in the trees and vines, in the entire nature- it is pervaded everywhere.

Leelā Sites

Shri Yamunā ji

Shri Yamunā ji who is of the form of Shri Krishna and who is the assistant in His keli, remains virājmān in the Leelās in person. By creating enchanting *nikunjas* on its beautiful banks, she contributes in every keli of Priyatam. The crowd of the sakhis that have come to fetch water, the arrival of Nandanandan from a nearby dense alley, His going inside the *nikunja* at the bank, the look of amazement on the face of some damsel, who was bending to fill her water pot on hearing the sound of the flute, at times the arrival of Priyatam at the bank engrossed in teasing conversations and His sitting down on a rock. At times dangling His legs in the water He takes out water with His hands and at times throws water with His flute. Yes yes sakhi! At that time it is this Kālindi only that remains witness to all those Leelā plays of the *Jeewan Sarvaswa*. Whether the pots get emptied or filled there... it is very difficult to say.

Bedecked with divine jeweled ghāts, adorned with bunches of flowers and biggest of all wonders is that the lotuses have never been seen in flowing water but in this Leelā parikar of Priyatam, Shri

Yamunā there are many lotus forests where Priyā-Priyatam along with their sakhis, immerse and engage in water sports and *Naukā vihār*. In fact by attaining the complete happiness of Priyatam, Sri Yamunā has become supremely blessed.

Sakhi! Yamunā ji is Krishna (black) coloured. It seems that when Priyatam comes over to immerse in Krishnā (another name of Yamunā ji), she abducts His very colour or in some solitary rasa vilās by getting the closeness of Priyatam she has become Krishna coloured. She is clever. In the hope of getting a reward from the Priyatam, this river of love in order to trick Priyā ji for the sake of a pastime concealed Priyatam and merged her colour with His. She is a beloved of Krishna. Therefore being of black colour is not unnatural. Once like always the gopis came to Shri Yamunā for a bath. Shri Krishna was already virājmān there. Shri Krishna hid in the water while playing. Kishori Shri Rādhā along with other sakhis started looking for Him. Shri Yamunā mahārāni concealed Him by changing her colour to that of His. Despite trying for long the sakhis could not find Shyām Sundar. At last when Shyām Sundar appeared Himself, sakhis became happy. It seems, as a reward Priyatam imparted His colour to Shri Yamunā Mahārāni forever. ‘No, no it is the supremely pure and stainless love of Priyā-Priyatam that has melted and is flowing in the form of nectarful water or blessed with the multi coloured kasturi, kumkum applied on the rasaful bodies of Yugal, this Shri Yamunā attached to Shri Krishna destroying our illusions of many many births is providing the love of Priyā-Priyatam.’

ब्रजेन्द्र सूनु राधिका हृदि प्रपूर्यमाणयो-
 र्महा रसाब्धि पूरयोरिवारि तीब्र वेगतः ।
 वहिः समुच्छ्रवलन्नव प्रवाह रूपिणीमहं
 भजे कलिन्दनन्दिनीं दुरन्त मोह भञ्जनीम् ॥

What is this flow of Kalindanandini? It is as though the hearts of Brajendranandan Shri Krishna and Vrishbhānu Nandini Shri Rādhikā in the form of a ocean filled with supreme *rasa* (love) leaping out and assuming a form of new flow, has started flowing very rapidly. Aho! I pray to Kalinda Nandini in the form of flowing *rasa* who can destroy the difficult attachments of everyone.

As Shri Yamunā ji is the provider of love of Priyā-Priyatam to her own devotees, she is extremely venerable to all Vaishnavas.

Kālidaha

तच्चित्र ताण्डव विरुग्ण फणातपत्रो
 रक्तं मुखैरुरु वमन् नृप भग्नगात्रः ।
 स्मृत्वा चराचरगुरुं पुरुषं पुराणं
 नारायणं तमरणं मनसा जगाम ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/16/30)

Shri Krishna is the Almighty Supreme Being. Whereas on one hand His sweetness is resplendent in Braj everywhere, on the other hand the flag of His divine and supernatural faculties is also waving freely. His main objective in killing so many demons is the welfare of the Brajwāsis, His intimate devotees. Brajwāsis say many times, ‘In their well wishing sakhā Shri Krishna, Who is the support of vātsalya, sakhya and madhur rasa, sometimes Lord Nārāyana enters and exhibits His powers.’

There was a *kund* in Shri Yamunā ji. There used to live a very poisonous serpent in it. Because of the heat of the poison, the water of Yamunā used to keep boiling. If any bird or animal used to get touched by this poisonous air, it used to die. The Almighty Shri Krishna saw that the wicked serpent was contaminating His site of pastime.

On the pretext of playing the ball He came over there. The ball fell in the kund and in order to get the ball out of the kund He jumped into it and started splashing water with both hands. The Kāliya Nāga became very angry at this. He saw a small dark complexioned beautiful child standing before him. He kept staring at the tender child with complexion like that of the cloud of the rainy season. There was a golden line on the chest of that child. That child in *pitāmbar* was bewitching him with His sweet smile. The sweet smile that had captivated the hearts of the devotees and made these crazy Braj maidens His slaves, looking at that very faint sweet smile, the poisonous snake became even more furious and started wondering how was that child standing there so fearlessly? Filled with anger the snake tied Shri Krishna with his body. Shri Krishna became a little motionless. All this was very painful to the sakhās and the Brajwāsis.

1. The umbrella of hoods of Kāliya was cut to pieces by the amazing Tāndav dance of the Lord. Each and every part of his body was crushed and he started vomiting blood. Now he remembered the primordial teacher, Purān Purush Lord Nārāyan. Silently he went in the refuge of the Lord.

Shri Krishna could not bear the frightened state of His sakhās, Shri Nanda-Yashodā and His beloved gopis for long. He remained tied like this for a moment and then He swelled His body causing the body parts of that poisonous snake to become loose. Spitting venom that snake started becoming motionless. Letting go off the Lord he stood on one side and started attacking from a distance.

For a while Shri Krishna kept playing with him. Afterwards finding the opportunity He jumped on his hoods and started dancing. The lives of Brajwāsīs as though returned and they drowned in bliss. Looking at the desire of Shri Krishna to dance, the demigods, celestial musicians started playing the drums and other instruments. Unable to bear the blows of the feet of Shri Krishna, the hoods of Kāliya nāg started bleeding. The blood drops on the feet of Shri Krishna seemed as if they had been sprinkled with red flowers.

Seeing this sorry plight of their husband, the snake wives felt distraught. They came in the refuge of Shri Krishna and started praying-

“Lord! This king of serpents has been born in a *tamoguni* (characterized by darkness and ignorance) birth and is very hot tempered. Still he has received the most sacred dust of your feet, which is very difficult for others to attain and just by wishing to receive which, the living beings in this world get liberation even, then what is the big deal about worldly wealth and prosperity.”¹

Kāliya serpent was liberated at this site. Since then this site is famous as Kālidaha.

There is an ancient Kadamba tree here called Keli Kadamba which is beautifying this site. Many people believe that this tree exists from the time of Shri Krishna in the form of its descendant.

At the time when Shri Garuda ji was carrying the pot of nectar he had rested on this very tree. Besprinkled with that very nectar, this Kadamba tree became immortal.

Kāliya Mardan Temple

In front of the Kāliyadaha on a high mound there is very ancient and grand temple of Kāliya Mardan.

1. तदेष नाथाय दुरापमन्वैस्तमोजनिः क्रोधवशोऽप्यहीशः ।
संसार चक्रे भ्रमतः शरीरिणो यदिच्छतः स्याद् विभक्त समक्षः ॥

Dwādashāditya Teelā

द्वादशादित्यतीर्थाख्यं तीर्थं तदनुपावनम् ।
तस्य दर्शन मात्रेण नृणामघो विनश्यति ॥¹

(सौर पुराण)

Leelā of Shri Krishna is infinite. Whereas on one hand expanding His divine and supernatural powers He killed many strong demons, on the other hand assuming a human body He kept performing all Leelās natural to human beings.

He gets hungry, thirsty and experiences heat and cold as well. He is a lover, He is blissful.

He is the shelter of different dharmas at the same time. That Almighty Lord does not get satisfied only with its formless form. To give joy and delight to His own devotees, assuming a form just like them, He provides them bliss.

Subjugated by love, becoming restlessly hungry Nandanandan asks maiyā for butter-sugarcandy and milk.

After liberating Kāliya Nāga, the Lord had rested at this site. The Lord had caught a cold as He had stayed in the water for too long. Noticing this, the Sun god presented himself in the service and served the Lord by giving heat to Him. Who knows if looking at the desire of the Sun god to have Shri Krishna's darshan, He gave him this opportunity to gratify and bless him. There is a Surya temple here.

Nearby is the Venu koop (well). According to the hearsay Lord had created this site by playing His flute and had given water to the gopis to drink.

The Prayer and Meditation Site of Shri Sanātan Goswāmi

Amongst the chief six followers of Shrimanmahāprabhu Chaitanyadev, the name of Shri Sanātan ji is famous. On the command of Mahāprabhu ji he came to Braj and after building a hut at the enchanting bank of Yamunā near the Dwādashāditya Teelā he started living here.

Embodiment of dispassion and detachment and steeped in the love of Shri Krishna Shri Sanātan ji used to live right here. Once he became a little dejected. He could not bear Shri Krishna's separation anymore. It is said that Mahāprabhu ji graced him in a dream because

1. After that there is a tirtha called Dwādashāditya. All the sins of a man are destroyed just by having darshan of it.

of which he started staying happy and his love for Shri Rādhā-Krishna started becoming deeper.¹

Shri Madanmohan ji

Shri Madan Mohan ji was the adored Thākur of Shri Sanātan ji. He had affection for Shri Sanātan ji. Shri Sanātan ji used to live in total dispassion. How Madan Mohan ji suffused him with His mercy, that instance is being given below-

Shri Sanātan ji used to live at the bank of Yamunā in Shri Vrindāvan on *madhukari*. For *madhukari* he used to go to Mathurā because in those days there was not much settlement in Vrindāvan.

Shri Sanātan ji once went to the house of Shri Parashurām Choubey for *madhukari*. The Thākur idol in the house of Shri Choubey ji used to manifest and play with the sakhās in person. He spell bound Shri Sanātan ji with His bewitching beautiful form. His crooked hair, sweet talks, sidelong glance, playful pace penetrated the heart of Shri Sanātan ji. He came back to Shri Vrindāvan. Over there in Mathurā the manifest playing Thākur ji went back into the idol.

Somehow the night arrived. Eagerly waiting for the morning Shri Sanātan ji somehow fell asleep.

The same idol of Shri Choubey ji coming in the dream in the manifest form said to Shri Sanātan ji. ‘Bābā! I will come with you.’

Next day Shri Sanātan ji got up early in the morning. He went to Mathurā and told the whole story to Shri Choubey ji. At last getting pleased with Shri Sanātan ji and accepting his service Shri Thākur ji came to Shri Vrindāvan. Whatever Shri Sanātan ji used to get in *madhukari*, he would offer it to Shri Thākur ji and then have His prasādi. One day a strange incident took place. As soon as Shri Sanātan ji offered food to Shri Madan Mohan ji, Shri Thākur ji said, ‘Bābā ! will you not give me some salt ?’ Sanātan ji became a little quiet. Rebuking Him lovingly he said, “See! I lead my life somehow with dispassion. Today you are asking for salt, tomorrow you will ask for clarified butter and the day after for something else. If that is so then make your own arrangements. How and from where will I do all this?”

As the providence would have it, one incident occurred. Just at that very time one person came to Shri Sanātan ji and said, “We are

1. सनातन उद्विग्न देखिया गौर हरि ।
स्वप्न छल एथा देखा दिला कृपा करि ॥

traders. A little far from here near the bank our boat is stuck. Despite trying hard we are not able to get it out. When we were trying- one child came and said that the boat would come out immediately if we ask you for help. Therefore we have come to you. Please help us. Whatever profit we make in this trade we will offer it in the service of Shri Thākūr ji.

Sanātan ji knowing this to be a play of naughty Gopāl ji, remained quiet. He said, “Please go and ask that child only. Only He can take your boat across.”

Anyway after some time the boat came out. In this trade, that trader Shri Kapoor made four times more profit. With that money he came to Shri Sanātan ji and with his permission got the temple constructed. Waving the flag of its loftiness even today, this temple is inspiring the common man with the conversation of Shri Madan Mohan ji, the worshipful Thākūr of Shri Sanātan ji.

Hearing about the appearance of Shri Madan Mohan ji King Pratāp Rudra sent two idols from Shri Jagannāthpuri to Vrindāvan. Instructing the priest in the dream Shri Madan Mohan ji said, “Of the two idols received from Jagannāthpuri, the bigger one is Shri Lalitā ji and the smaller one is Shri Rādhā. You bring them at the earliest and make sure that the smaller one is installed on my left.” Since then the service of Priyā-Priyatam is continuing here.

Because of the attacks of the Yavans, Shri Madan Mohan ji was taken to Jaipur for His safety. From there He went to Karauli and since then is virājmān in Karauli upto this date.

In the new temple nearby another idol is virājmān by the name of Madan Mohan ji only.

Samādhi of Soordās Madanmohan ji

‘सन्तन की पनही को चाकर ।’

Those who have heard the name of Soordās Madanmohan ji, they would certainly be aware of his dedication to the ascetics, of his faith in Braj and of his humility. He was the tax collector of Sandealā village. He used to collect the taxes and send it to the king. A group of ascetics once came to his village. He didn’t have any money of his own. He spent the tax money on those ascetics and sent a letter to the king.

तेरह लाख संडीले उपजे, सब साधुन मिल गटके ।
सूरदास मदनमोहन वृन्दावन को सटके ॥

He had the rule of visiting Madan Mohan ji. Somebody once asked him his name. He replied, ‘Santan Kee Panahi Ko chākar’ meaning the menial attendant of the footwear of the saints. One ascetic listening to this started resenting him. That ascetic in order to test him, once left his footwear in his care and said, “Look after them, I am just coming.” Saying this that ascetic left and came back only the next day. He found Soordās Madanmohan ji standing and guarding his footwear without having eaten anything. Only after the ascetic returned could he go for the darshan of Shri Madan Mohan ji and eat anything after that. Seeing him thirsty and hungry that ascetic felt really ashamed.

His samādhi is near Shri Madan Mohan ji in a corner.

Praskand Kshetra Tirtha

पुनरन्यत् प्रवक्ष्यामि तच्छृणुत्वं वसुन्धरे ।
क्षे प्रस्कन्दनं नाम सर्वपापहरं शुभम् ॥

(आदि वाराह पुराण)

O Vasundharei! Now I will tell you the story of other tirthas, you listen to me. There is an auspicious area called Praskandan which gives liberation from all sins.

This site is considered to be near the Dwādashāditya teelā. Nowadays this site has almost disappeared.

Adwaita Vata

एई वट वृक्ष तले कृष्ण आराधय ।
कि बूभिते पारे तार दुर्गम आशय ॥

(भ० २०)

Shri Adwaitāchārya ji Mahārāj, intimate parikar of Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is known to all Vaishnavas. When Shri Adwaitāchārya ji Mahārāj came to Vrindāvan during his pilgrimage, he stayed under this Vata tree. He used to worship Lord Shri Krishna living here. His adored Thākur was Shri Madan Gopāl ji. When he was leaving for Bengāl, he gave this idol to Choubey ji of Mathurā.

It is said that the very same Thākur by the name of Gopāl ji came to Shri Sanātan ji for service.

Ashta Sakhi Temple

Ashta sakhi Temple is situated on the right side on the way from Shri Madan Mohan ji to Shri Bānkei Bihāri ji. Shri Rādhā

Rāsvihāri are virājmān here and with them the ashta (eight) sakhis are also virājmān. In 1889 the king of Hetampur Mahārāj Rāmaranjana Chakrawarti had built this temple. In 1928 after the construction of the new temple, the ashta sakhis were also installed.

Shri Shri Bānkei Bihāri

‘Yathā nām tathā guna’ meaning like name like virtue. Totally making this saying come true the handsome form of Shri Bānkei Bihāri ji has captivated lacs of devotees with His enticing form, cutting eyes and bewitching smiles. Even today a great number of devotees are impressed with His miracles. Appearing *pratyaksha* even to these physical eyes, Shri Bihāri ji carries a very lifelike attraction.

Shri Bihāriji was the venerated deity of Shri Swāmi Haridās ji. In order to gratify him with His Service, He graced him.

Swāmi Shri Haridās ji used to prostrate in a particular *kunja* of creepers in Nidhivana every day. His devoted disciples once wanted to know the mystery behind it. Vithalvipul ji asked, “Gurudev ! The entire Vrindāvan being the vihār site of Priyā-Priyatam deserves to be bowed to, then why do you prostrate at this particular place every day ?”

Swāmi ji signaled to his own devotees to see. All of them saw a divine light there. They also saw the *ranga mahal* of Priyā-Priyatam. Drinking the divine form of the Yugal, everybody became intoxicated. From that very site Shri Bihāri ji appeared suffusing all with bliss. The appearance of Shri Bihāri ji Mahārāj took place on the auspicious fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Mārgasheersha (nov-dec), which is famous as Vihār Panchami.

The *rasikatā* (the quality of getting attracted or drawn to or appreciating rasa) of Shri Bihāri is famous everywhere. One devotee once came for His darshan. He kept gazing at him without blinking his eyes. Rasik Rijhawār Bihāri ji became pleased with him. When that devotee started leaving, Shri Bihāri ji followed him. It is said that the Gosāin ji after pleading with Him a lot, requested Him to come back to His own temple. Since then the custom of drawing the curtain after every few minutes during the darshan of Bihāri ji started.

The most unusual thing in the service of Shri Bihāri ji is that His Mangalā ārati is not performed. There is a very tender feeling of the Gosāins behind this. They say that Bihāriji goes to sleep only in the early hours of the morning after performing Rās in the night. It will not be appropriate to wake Him only in two hours. Time to time Shri Bihāri ji Mahārāj keeps making His intimate devotees have such experiences.

Initially Shri Bihāriji Mahārāj used to be virājmān in Nidhivana itself. In Samvat 1921 this temple was reconstructed and Shri Bihāriji became virājmān in this present temple, since then He has remained the attraction for all.

Along with Shri Bānkei Bihāri ji Shri Kishori ji is believed to be present in the form of a seat, on the left side of Shri Bihāri ji.

It will not be exaggeration to say that Shri Bihāri ji is the most recognized and revered Thākur in Shri Vrindāvan.

Only once in a year on the third day of the month of Baisākh (apr-may) called Akshaya Tritiyā, the darshan of the feet of Shri Bihāri ji Mahārāj can be had.

Swāmi Haridās ji Mahārāj

He was born in samvat 1537 in Rājāpur village near Vrindāvan. Happiness spread all around.

He had no attraction for any physical or material thing since his childhood. The signs of dispassion were evident in the childhood itself.

He started living in Nidhivana.

Shri Swāmi ji Mahārāj is supposed to be the founder of *Nikunja Bhāvanā*. Remaining submerged every single moment in the solitary and private rasa-keli of Priyā-Priyatam Who are always engaged in vihār, whatever Swāmi ji experienced, to some extent he expressed all that in his padas. Those padas are available today in the form of a collection called Keli Māl. He initiated Vaishnavas by the name of ‘Sakhi’ sect or ‘Shri Haridāsi’ sect within the bounds of some rules and restraints etc.

At one place Shripād Bābā Mahārāj, the founder of Braj Academy, describing the eternal vihār and the *nikunja* Leelā has said-

“This rasa is that very thing, attaining which the direct experience of the actual ānanda swaroop rasa is had without any doubt. The knowledge merges in the rasa and rasa is established in the Leelā. These Leelās become Braj Leelā and Nikunja Leelā. Nikunja Leelā i.e. the filtered purest rasa that has been assimilated in the rasa adroit speeches of the devout rasikas of Vrindāvan in which there is neither the bark of knowledge nor the seeds of action. Swāmi Shri Lalitkishori dev ji explaining its specialness has said-

“नहिं बकुला नहिं बीज है, अद्भुत रस यह आही ।
पावेगो सोई भैया, देहि हरिदासी जाहि ॥”

The supreme Āchārya and the bestower of this rasa is believed to be Lalitā sakhi. This is accepted in almost all the rasa worshipping sects. In regard to Shri Haridās ji, the incarnation of Lalitā ji it has been said up to this extent even that-

कूची नित्य विहार की श्रीहरिदासी हाथ ।
सेवक साधक सिद्ध सब जाँचत नावत माथ ॥”

(With gratitude from the scripture Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorva Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji)

The deeds and acts of Shri Swāmi Mahārāj are transcendental. His dedication and devoutness remained intact every moment. One devotee Pt. Shri Jagannāth once gave him a bottle of perfume for the service of Shri Bihāri ji. While sitting at the bank of Yamunā, Shri Swāmi ji emptied the bottle in the sand. That devotee was really hurt. Swāmi Mahārāj came to know of this and requested the devotee to go and have the darshan of Shri Bihāri ji. When Pt. Jagannāth went to the temple he found the whole temple fragrant with that very perfume. He was stunned. Such was the extraordinary rasa steeped service of Swāmi ji.

In music Swāmi ji was an undisputed leader. Famous singers Tānsen and Baiju Bāwarā were his disciples. Not only this, even Emperor Akbar impressed with his singing presented himself in his service in disguise. When Akbar impressed by the personality of Swāmi ji requested several times to grant him an opportunity to serve, Swāmi ji Mahārāj making him have the darshan of divine and transcendental Yamunā ghāt asked Akbar, “One corner of the stairs of our ghāt has broken, get that repaired.”

Seeing that sight Emperor Akbar was stunned. Realising that all his wealth was trivial in comparison, he lowered his head in the feet of Swāmi ji Mahārāj.

Shri Prakāshānanda Yogi had attained many *siddhis* living in the Himālayas. The fame of Swāmi ji Mahārāj was already spread everywhere. Yogi ji came to Vrindāvan and saw him distributing the *prasād* to the peacocks. Yogi ji turned himself into a peacock and started having the prasād. Swāmi ji immediately recognised him and said, “Prakāshānanda it is your great fortune that you have reached Vrindāvan. You have the grace of Shri Dhām.” Yogi ji was stunned.

The rasa filled depiction of the rasa keli of the Yugal in Swāmi ji’s padas is steeped in his experiences.

प्यारी जैसो तेरो आखिन में मैं हौं अपनपौं देखत ।
 तैसो तुम देखति हो किधौं नाहिं ।
 हौं तोसौं कहौं प्यारे, आंखि मूदि रहौं,
 लाल निकसि कहूँ जाहिं ॥

(श्रीकेलिमाल)

Shri Krishna is fond of nitya keli. Priyatam engaged in some rasa filled keli said to Priyā ji jestingly, “O beloved! The way I see my form in your eyes, do you also see in the same way or not ?” Listening to this remark ‘Expert in sixty-four arts yet extremely naive’, Kishori replied filled with the profoundness of rasa, “O Priyatam! I tell you the truth. I close my eyes only so that your enchanting form does not slip out of my eyes.”

It is mentioned in the Upānishads¹ that in order to enjoy the rasa, The Supreme Being manifests Himself in two forms and engaging in sports with Himself and in Himself, attains bliss. The Krishna worshipping Vaishnava sects accept that dual form of the *Parātpara* element (the Supreme spirit) as the base of bhakti or devotion in the form of Shri Rādhā- Krishna and have given it the name Nitya Nikunja Leelā. This has also been called Nitya vihār. Accepting the very same Nitya vihār to be an integral part of his life Shri Swāmi ji Mahārāj endorsed the same viewpoint.

Shri Shri Rādhāvallabha ji and Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Hita Harivansha ji Mahārāj

“Shri Rādhāvallabha darshan durlabha”, i.e. the darshan of Shri Rādhāvallabha is very difficult. This saying itself is enough to give the knowledge of the indulgent and pampered service of Shri Rādhāvallabha ji. The feeling and tenderness with which His service is conducted is worth seeing.

Bent form, eyes rolling with intoxication, mischievous smile, unrestrained darshan of the beautiful form, everything abducts the mind forcibly.

Shrimanmahāprabhu Hita-Harivansha ji was born in Bād village. Later his parents started living in Devavana. At the instruction of Shri Rādhā ji he left for Vrindāvan.

His father had already left his body. When he reached Charthāwal village, Shree ji instructed him again that in the village one Brahmin

1. Vrihadāranyakopaniṣad.

will give him two daughters and that he should marry them as per the rules and customs. That same Brahmin has idols of the Yugal and that he should go to Shri Vrindāvan with those idols. With Shri Thākur ji and the two girls Harivansh ji Mahārāj came to Vrindāvan.

Looking at a high place on the bank of Yamunā ji, near Madan Teira, he laid his grass mat. The Brajwāsis helped Shri Harivansh ji who had come to live in Vrindāvan in every way. They were very impressed with his divine personality. One person called Narawāhan asked him to shoot an arrow. A vow was made that the land up to the point where the arrow shall land will be given away to Harivansh ji. It is said that the arrow landed near Cheer ghāt of today. Shri Harivansh ji had the experience of Rāsmandal there and revealed Rāsmandal at that very site.

When Shri Harivansh ji Mahārāj was only six months old, the shlokas of Shri Rādhā Sudhānidhī appeared from his mouth continuously. It is said that Shri Narasinhāshram ji was present there at that time, who wrote it down in the form of a scripture.

Shri Shri Rādhā alone was his guru. This has been accepted by most of the scholars.

On the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kārtika (oct-nov), Shri Harivansh ji Mahārāj celebrated the festival of the beginning of the service of Shri Rādhāvallabh ji and started the five āratīs and seven offerings of food in service. Shri Rādhāvallabha ji initially used to be virājmān in Madan Teira. Later He moved to Sewa Kunja. Afterwards when this temple was constructed by some devotee He became virājmān here ever since. Along with Him on the throne, a seat has been installed representing the presence of Shree ji.

Like Swāmi Shri Haridās ji He also remained engrossed in *Nikunjopāsanā* always. He is considered to be the incarnation of Shri Krishna's flute as Shri Haridāsji is the incarnation of Lalitā ji.

The rasa filled depiction of *nikunja* Leelā that has been made by Shri Harivansh ji can only be experienced. The solitary and private rasa vihār, in that the extremely secret rahasi-keli, the rasa marks on the bodies of the two, loose crushed garlands, the rasa steeped state of the Yugal overpowered by the lofty waves of love, Oh! All these were seen by the eyes of Shri Harivansh ji-

आज प्रभात लता मन्दिर में,
सुख बरसत अति हरषि जुगलवर ।

गौर स्याम अभिराम रङ्ग भरे,
लटकि-लटकि पग धरत अवनि पर ॥

It is only within the power of Shri Harivansh ji to make the synthesized rasa filled depiction of the union and the separation.

At one place one s̄aras (a type of crane which cannot bear the separation of its mate and starves itself to death) addressing a *chātak* (a kind of cuckoo which waits for a drop of water of the *Swāti Nakhshatra* to quench its thirst) said, “What do you know about the nature of love- your patience is blessed. In the absence of Priyatam, to remain alive still, how is this love?” The *chātak* replied, “Separation and union are the two integral parts of love. You have no knowledge of the bliss of separation. Therefore you are not able to experience fully.”

Shri Harivansh ji Mahārāj giving importance to both and praising the love of both has shown the synthesis.

Shri Rādhā Ānanda Vallabha

The worshipped deity of Bhaktimati Ānandi Bāi, the idol of love and affection, Shri Rādhā Ānanda Vallabha ji has been virājmān in Braj for almost hundred years. This Thākur is nourished with the love of Shri Ānandi Bāi. It is said that for Ānandi Bāi He was totally manifest in person. Shri Kishori ji used to sit on one of her knees and Shri Shyām Sundar on the other knee. They would play with her, they would get stubborn with her and do other child Leelās. Manifesting everyday they used to do new Leelās and quarrel in love.

Shri Ānandi Bāi's manner of offering the food and doing the service of the ascetics was divine and transcendental.

Sewā Kunja

This site planning and organizing the kelis of signals, of words, of eyes and of night is famous for *Shayan keli* (pastime of sleeping). Shri Yugal Sarkār rest here after the night of vihār. Who knows if sleep itself is also an excuse for the union of Braj Rasarāj and His beloveds?

Someone said in a faint voice, “Sakhi! Shayan keli!” The parrot and mynah sitting on a dense vine nearby spoke, “Yes we know about shayan keli. What is this if not an excuse? Priyā-Priyatam come over here, become intoxicated in various Rās-vilās and get absorbed in many rasa endeavours.”

Every night Priyā-Priyatam come here. Engrossed in humour and banter, the tired Yugal take rest in the nearby *nikunja*. The sloth entered the bodies of the Yugal, the eyes became half closed. They started yawning in between. The sakhis saw the beauty of the faces adorned with drowsiness, they started singing-

लड़ैती जु के नैनन नींद घुरी ।
 आलस बस, जोबन बस, मद बस, प्रिय के अंस दुरी ॥
 पियकर चिबुक परसिबो चाहत बांकी भौह भुरी ।
 बावरी सखी श्रीव्यास सुवन बस देखत लतन दुरी ॥

Adorned with the beauty and splendor of youth, resplendent with the beauty of laziness, Priyā ji getting the support of the shoulder of Priyatam started resting in the lap of the sleep. After some time Priyatam opened his eyes to see. Absent mindedly Priyā ji also opened her eyes. Suddenly the eyes met with each other. Both smiled and started resting in the lap of the sleep again.

Describing a similar rasaful state a sakhi said, “Massaging extremely tenderly the feet of the Yugal, Who are the condensed form of the nectar of love, Who are full of bliss and intoxication and Who are asleep on the kunja bed, will I be overpowered by sleep, near the bed?”¹

This *kunja* hut, this *kunja* bed is located in the dense kunja alleys of Shri Vrindāvan. Sewā Kunja is full of such keli mysteries. The dense kunja of this site is very enchanting.

परिरंभण विपरित रति वितरित सरससुरत निजकेलि ।
 इन्द्रनील मणिमय तरु मानौ लसत कनक की बेलि ॥

(हि० च०)

The whole life of Shri Harivansh ji was spent in the ordinary and the extraordinary keli secrets of Shri Shri Rādhā-Krishna. The Sewā Kunja was also established by him. He installed Shri Rādhikā ji there. One picture of Yugal is virājmān in this yoga peetha in which Shri Lāl ji is massaging the feet of Shri Priyāji. It is difficult to say if the following verse of devotee Raskhān is relating the tale of this very same rasa filled picture-

1. सान्द्रानन्दोमद रसधन प्रेम पीयूष मूर्तेः
 श्रीराधाया अथ मधुपतेः सुप्तयोः कुञ्जतल्पे
 कुर्वाणाहं मृदु-मृदु पदाम्भोज साम्वाहनानि,
 शय्यान्ते किं किमपि पतिता प्राप्त तंद्रा भवेयम् ॥

देख्यो दुर्यो वह कुञ्ज कुटीर में,
बैद्यो पलोटत राधिका पायन ।

Shri Rādhāvallabha ji remained virājmān in Sewā Kunja for almost fifty years. After the construction of the temple they are virājmān in it ever since.

Nearby is the Calcutta Wālā temple.

Shri Rasika Vihāri ji

Shri Rasikadev ji Mahārāj was a famous saint of Braj. He was related to Dungarpur in Rājasthān. Shri Rasika Vihāri ji Mahārāj was the served deity of his ancestors.

Shri Rasika Vihāri ji Mahārāj gave darshan to Shri Rasikadev ji in a dream and said, “The adored deity of your ancestors, I am in Dungarpur. Send your disciples and bring me to Vrindāvan and arrange for my service.” Shri Rasikadev ji sent two of his disciples, Shri Sudāmādās ji and Shri Nāgaridās ji to bring Shri Rasika Vihāri ji to Shri Vrindāvan. Similar order was also received in a dream by the king of Dungarpur. The king made proper arrangements for bringing Shri Rasika Vihāri ji to Vrindāvan.

Shri Rasika Vihāri ji came to Vrindāvan with pomp and show. First He was virājmān at Kālidaha for some time. Later after the construction of the temple He became virājmān in the present Shri Rasika Vihāri ji temple.

The extraordinary acts and deeds of Shri Rasika Vihāri are famous worldwide. He used to talk in person with Rasikadev ji.

Once the *shringāri* of Shri Rasika Vihāri ji was making flower garlands for Him. It was afternoon. Shri Thākura assuming the form of a child said to that *shringāri*, “Bābā! Give me the gajarā.” The *shringāri* without looking up said, “Gajarā is not ready yet.” The child said, “Why are you lying bābā, you have made and kept the garlands aside.” All the doors were closed. Thinking about the request for gajarā that was made in such an enchanting voice within the closed doors, the *shringāri* got up to look for the child but he could not find him. Later he realised that the child was Shri Rasika Vihāri ji himself.

The period of the coming of Shri Rasika Vihāri ji to Vrindāvan is about samvat 1758.

Shri Rasikadev ji

Shri Rasikadev ji was the disciple of Shri Naraharidev ji Mahārāj. He had devout faith in his guru. There was a special grace of

Priyā-Priyatam on him. Therefore guruji was also very fond of him.

Shri Keshavadās ji was his guru brother. He could not tolerate the deep affection that Shri Guru Mahārāj had for Rasikadev ji. He used to regularly complain to him about Shri Rasikadev ji. To end this fight Shri Guru Mahārāj ordered Shri Rasikadev ji to go out of Vrindāvan. He wanted to show the service excellence of Shri Rasikadev ji. Shri Rasikadev ji came to Mathurā. Even from there he kept serving Shri Guru ji by collecting alms for him. Later when this news spread, Shri Guru ji had this service stopped as well.

Shri Chhangā Sunār was another guru brother of Shri Rasikadev ji. He used to bring the *gāti* and the loincloth of guru ji at home to wash. Devoted to guru service Shri Rasikadev ji would feel content washing the clothes of Guru ji.

One day Swāmi Naraharidev ji's head was injured, Shri Rasikadev ji clasped his head at his place in Mathurā. When people asked he replied, "Shri Gurudev has been injured on the head." When it was enquired later, it turned out to be true.

Shri Bihāri ji Himself had told Shri Naraharidev ji once to accept Shri Rasikadev ji.

Shri Rasikadev ji remained virājmān on the seat of the guru from vikram samvat 1741 to 1758. He has the honour of being the guru of Shri Lalitkishoridev ji, the founder of Tatiyā sthān.

Kishore Vana

Shri Harirām ji Vyās

‘कथनी करनी करि गयौ एक व्यास इहि काल ।’

(ध्रुवदासजी)

Shri Harirām ji Vyās was the resident of Orchhā. King of Orchhā Madhukar Shāh was his follower. He completed his education in his childhood itself. He came to Kāshi for a scriptural debate. There Lord Vishwanāth gave him instructions in a dream. After that he came to Vrindāvan. Shri Priyādās ji has narrated this incident as follows-

आये गृह त्यागि वृन्दावन अनुराग करि,
गयो हिय पागि होय न्यारौ तासौ खीजिये ।
राजा लेन आयो ऐ पै जाईबो न भायो,
श्रीकिशोर उरभायो मन सेवामति भीजिये ॥

King of Orchhā requested Shri Vyās ji to come back to Orchhā

but the mind of Shri Vyās ji Mahārāj had become attached to Vrindāvan.

He had deep faith in *prasād*. Once he was going for the darshan of Shri Govindadev ji. He came to know that the food offered at noon was already over. One sweeper was bringing the prasādi kadhi. He took the prasād from that itself. Without considering high and low, he used to have great reverence for prasād. A lot of debate took place regarding this matter but Shri Vyās ji said-

व्यासहिं ब्राह्मण मति गनौ हरि भक्तन को दास ।
वृन्दावन के स्वपच की जूठनि खहिये माँगि ॥

He had high respect not only for Vrindāvan but for everything belonging to Vrindāvan like Brajwāsis, trees-vines, ponds, birds-animals even the pigs and dogs of Vrindāvan. Humbleness was filled in him to his core. He used to consider himself worthless and insignificant, smaller than the smallest.

He revered all the āchāryas and gave full respect to them. Once the king of Orchhā sent his minister to bring him back but Shri Vyās ji refused to go. The minister went to Shri Hit-Harivansh ji and requested him to ask Shri Vyās ji to go with him. Shri Hit Harivansh ji agreed to tell him to go. When Shri Vyās ji came to know about it, he did not meet with Mahāprabhu Hit Harivansh ji for three days. When he was found, he was coming on a donkey after bathing in Shri Yamunā and with his face smeared black. When asked for the reason for this Shri Vyās ji said, “If I were worthy of living in Shri Dhām, wouldn’t Guru Mahārāj keep me right here.” It is said that Shri Harivansh ji became very happy and did not ask Shri Vyās ji to leave Vrindāvan.

The officers of the king became ready to take him forcibly once. Shri Vyās ji told those officers, “At least let me meet my family and relatives.” He got down from the palanquin and kept embracing each tree for hours and shedding floods of tears. By this the heart of the king melted and he fell at his feet asking for his forgiveness.

The love and faith of Shri Vyās ji for Vrindāvan, its trees and sites is very difficult and rare to find.

He used to live in Kishore vana. Yugal Kishore Thākur was his adored deity. He had complete grace of His. Once he was doing the shringār of the Yugal. The turban was slipping again and again. Filling with the emotional efflux of love, with loving irritation he went outside. Shri Thākur ji was fully acquainted with his irritation. After sometime when he went inside the temple to do the shringār again, he found that Shri Thākur ji had worn that turban on His own. Such grace of Priyā-Priyatam he had.

Once the dance of Priyā-Priyatam was going on in Rās. Shri Vyās ji Mahārāj was also present in divine form. The anklet of Priyāji broke. Shri Vyās ji breaking his sacred thread immediately tied the anklet properly. He had total grace of Priyā-Priyatam.

He divided his wealth into three parts. In the first was all his money, in the second part were Shri Yugal Kishore Thākur and in the third part were his bead necklace, sectarian mark for the forehead, sectarian imprint etc. He told his three sons to ask for any part they desired. Shri Kishoredās ji accepted the necklace, the sectarian mark and the sectarian imprint which made Shri Vyās ji very happy. He took Shri Kishoredās ji to Swāmi Haridās ji for initiation.

Somewhere around samvat 1655 he came to Shri Vrindāvan for good to serve his Priyā-Priyatam.

Imalitalā

When Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Chaitanya came to Braj he stayed at Akroor ghāt. From there he used to come to Shri Vrindāvan every day.

He had rested under an *imali* (tamarind) tree and had sung the names of the Lord. Sreela Krishnadās kavirāj goswāmi has described his arrival in Braj in very touching words-

प्राते वृन्दावन केला चीर घाटे स्नान ।
 तैतुली तला ते आसि करिल विश्राम ॥
 कृष्ण लीला कालेर वृक्ष पुरातन ।
 तार तले पिंडि बाँधा परम चिक्कण ॥
 निकटे यमुना बहे शीतल समीर ।
 वृन्दावन शोभा देखे यमुना तीर ॥
 तैतुल तले वसि करे नाम सङ्कीर्तन ।
 मध्याह्न करि आसि करे अक्रूरे भोजन ॥

(‘चैतन्य चरितामृत’ मध्य लीला)

Next morning Shrimahāprabhu ji came to Shri Vrindāvan. He took bath at Cheer ghāt. He sat down under the Imali tree and rested. That Imali tree is an ancient tree from the time of Shri Krishna Leelā. Shri Yamunā was flowing nearby. Cool breeze was blowing. After doing darshan of Shri Yamunā and Shri Vrindāvan, Mahāprabhu ji started singing the names of the Lord sitting there. He had his meal at noon at Akroor ghāt.

This site famous as Imalitalā is suffused with that same feeling even today and this Imali tree from the times of Shri Krishna exists even today in the form of its descendant.

Shringār Vata

अत्रावरोपिता कान्ता पुष्पहेतोर्महात्मना ।
 अत्र प्रसूनावचयः प्रियार्थे प्रेयसा कृतः ।
 प्रपदाक्रमणे एते पश्यता सकले पदे ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/30/33)

The loving assurance to join the Rās that was given by Shri Krishna earlier to the gopis, the time for that had come. Looking at the suitable environment Shri Krishna took his flute out from his side.

On hearing the sound of the flute the Braj maidens came running to the bank of Shri Yamunā. Priyatam Shyām Sundar welcomed them with rasa filled greetings. These Braj maidens, supreme forms of love in all the worlds became thrilled with their fortune. To nourish the love of these Braj maidens more and more and to honour and to caress their feelings Shyām Sundar along with His beloved Shri Rādhā came to this site.

Here Priyatam picked various flowers. Picking fragrant flowers from all the sides, Shri Krishna would sometimes bend the flower branch with one hand and start plucking the flowers from the other hand. Priyā ji also started plucking flowers with both Her hands from the same bent branch. Suddenly Priyatam left that branch. That fragrant flower was left in the hand of Priyā ji. The rows of bees maddened by that fragrance..... the entire garden became endearing with the blissful atmosphere of the Yugal. The animals and the birds that were sitting here and there or wandering became intoxicated drinking the rasa sweetness.

Sitting on a nearby high rock Shyām Sundar started adorning (shringār) Priyā ji with the flowers. He braided the hair and fixed flowers in it here and there and then started savouring that beautiful form. He fixed flowers with small leaves in Her ears. Fixing flowers in Her clothes and ornaments also, Priyatam became absorbed in rasa.

This site nourished and soaked with those rasa drops became famous as Shringār Vata.

1. Look! Here the supreme lover Brajvallabha has put the beloved down in order to pick the flowers and here the supreme Priyatam has picked the flowers for His beloved. Since He picked the flowers lifting Himself up on His tiptoes, here the earth seems pressed down with the front part of His feet, there are no marks of the heels.

Shriman Nityānanda ji Mahārāj

Shri Shri Nityānanda Prabhu and Shri Mādhavendrapuri Mahārāj had met here. Shri Nityānanda ji considered Puri Mahārāj as his guru.

नित्यानन्दे बन्धु ज्ञान करे माधवेन्द्र ।
माधवेन्द्रे गुरु बुद्धि करे नित्यानन्द ॥

(भ० २०)

Shri Nityānanda ji kept savouring the acts and deeds of Shri Balrāma ji here.

Jhādu Mandal

The place of Shri Balarāmdās Bābā ji next to Shringār Vata is famous by the name of Jhādu Mandal. Bābā was a great saint. Knowledge and emotion both qualities were present in him in equal measure.

Once he was narrating Shrimad Bhāgwat. Many emotional listeners were virājmān. Suddenly Bābā stopped the recitation and decided to leave his body by jumping in Shri Yamunā. When asked by everyone, Bābā told them without any embarrassment about the arousal of lust in his mind. There was neither a blemish nor a fault in his character nor was there any possibility of lust in him.

Probably this happened due to some harm caused by having unholy food. Considering this when it was inquired in the temple of Shri Govind dev ji, it was revealed that, that day the prasād had been arranged by a prostitute of Calcutta.

One question that can come to the minds of intellectuals naturally is that why was there no effect on the others who had consumed the same prasād. The answer for this can be that the heart and the mind of Bābā ji were extremely pure therefore even a reaction to the subtlest thought would occur in his mind. The minds of the other Vaishnavas could not catch such subtlety.

A maiyā lived nearby. She had Shri Gopāl ji for service. She was very hard working. At any time during the night when she would awaken she would start grinding the wheat. This used to create obstruction in the prayer and meditation of Bābā ji. Even the sleep of her Gopāl ji would get disturbed. Gopāl ji would request her not to grind at odd times. This would disturb the mind of Bābā ji also.

One day maiyā got up in midnight and started preparations

for grinding. Her Gopāl ji appeared and threw the upper part of the grinder far away and stood on the lower part.

Maiyā upon getting the darshan of Shri Gopāl ji became blessed and content.

The foot prints on the lower part of the grinder can be seen even today. Nearby is the samādhi of Shri Balarāmdās Bābā ji.

Matawāli Mirā

The love intoxicated songs of Shri Mirāji, the princess of Mewār, has been guiding the paths of the sādhakas for long. Her pure habits and mode of life have become a source of inspiration. She had an unbreakable affinity to Shri Vrindāvan. Mirā the singer of the love of Shri Krishna left her home with the attachment for Vrindāvan. Shri Krishna was her beloved, her everything. She had deep faith in Vrindāvan and Braj. At one place she says-

‘माई म्हाने लागे वृन्दावन नीको’

Not only this, where the fragrance of Tulsi worship taking place in each and every house is pervasive, attracted by the pollen of which, the bee Shri Krishna lives in Vrindāvan always. Attached to the exquisite beauty of that same Vrindāvan, to get touched by its unique divine nature and to get blessed by getting besprinkled with the dust particles of the feet of Shri Krishna, Krishna crazy Meera came to Vrindāvan.

The padas of Mirā ji are the expressions of her heart, her experiences. Whatever she sang intoxicated in the feelings of Shri Krishna that is available to us in the form of her padas. In the separation of Shri Krishna in her padas like ‘Daras Bina Dukhan Lāgei Nain,’ ‘Main To Shyām Binā Na Jeeunri Māee’ she has expressed the feelings of her heart, in ‘Māee ri Mainnei Govind Leenhon Moal’, ‘Meri Unaki Preeta Purāni.’ ‘Mhāro Janam-Maran Ro Sāthi,’ she has given an introduction to her eternal and everlasting relation.

She had unyielding and resolute love for Shri Krishna. Except Shri Krishna she did not see anyone in the form of a man. When she came to Vrindāvan, one gaudiya Vaishnava by the name of Shri Jeeva Swāmi was living there engaged in prayers and worship. On hearing about him she went to meet him. Shri Jeevaji refused to meet her saying that he did not look at women. Expounding her devout

faith Mirā ji said, “I had heard that Shri Krishna alone is the man in Vrindāvan, besides Him who is this other man, the lessee of His residing here.” The messenger conveyed this to Shri Jeeva Swāmi. After listening to this Shri Jeeva Swāmi came running to Mirā ji and fell at her feet asking to be forgiven.

In the end Shri Mirā ji went to Dwārakā and entered the idol of Shri Ranachhoda ji. When the priest entered the temple, only the end of her sari was outside, rest of her had already merged in the idol of Shri Ranachhoda ji. Such was the matchless faith of Shri Mirā ji.

The temple of Mirā ji near Nidhivana is illuminating its bright glory even today.

Cheer Ghāt

तासां वासांस्त्युपादाय नीपमारुह्य सत्वरः ।

हसद्भिप्रहसन्बालैः परिहासमुवाच ह ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/22/9)

Shri Krishna is of the form of love. “Nitya Vardhamānam” i.e. ‘always growing’ is the symptom of love. For the purpose of tasting rasa the Pranayi Rijhawār pleases his beloveds and devotees through various endeavours. Which heart of a maiden has not been attracted by His enchanting form? The whole Nature living and nonliving has become crazy after drinking His sweetness.

The naive and innocent damsels saw this sweet form, His inclined sidelong glance, the beauty of the sweet smiles and blissful conversations filled with teasing and joking. Unknown to these damsels who were entering their adolescence, a blissful attraction started tugging at their heart. They accepted Shri Krishna as their beloved in their hearts. (He is of course the eternal beloved.) For attaining the beloved whatever penance and the mantra repetition was required they started doing that.

They started observing Kātyāyani fast. Every day they would go to Yamunā ji to bathe. There they would worship Goddess Kātyāyani and recite the mantra-

“कात्यायनि महामाये महायोगिन्यधीश्वरी ।

नन्दगोपसुतं देवि पतिं मे कुरुते नमः ॥

This did not remain a secret to Shri Krishna Who is extremely eager to fulfill the desires of His intimate devotees easily and immediately.

‘ये यथा माम् प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।’

To accept the service of those damsels and to give them joy and delight Shri Krishna came over to where those gopis were bathing. Shri Krishna climbed a Kadamba tree nearby with their clothes. Jokingly He started saying to the gopis.

अत्रागत्यावलाःकामं स्वं-स्वंवासः प्रगृह्यताम्।

सत्यं ब्रवाणि नो नर्म यद् यूयं व्रतकर्षिताः ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/22/10)

Seeing Lord Krishna joking like this they were all captivated. They had already accepted Him as their husband, in spite of that standing in the water up to their neck in embarrassment, they started requesting, “O beloved! You are the darling of Nanda ji. You are our very own. Please return our clothes.

Which place is such where Shri Krishna is not? He is omnipresent. He has accessibility to every place. Thinking this way, bowing to the Sun god they all came out of the water and taking their clothes put them on. After getting the assurance from Shri Krishna regarding the fruitfulness of their fast and of union in Rās, those damsels went back to their homes happily.

This site of Cheer haran i.e. the abduction of the clothes of gopis is famous as Cheer haran ghāt or Cheer ghāt. It is repeating its past story even today.

Shri Shri Rādhā Dāmodar ji

The installation of Shri Shri Rādhā Dāmodar ji was done by Shri Roop Goswāmipād in samvat 1599. Because of the fear of the Yavans this Thākur ji was taken to Jaipur for safety reasons. Shri Thākur ji is virājmān there till date.

The prayer and meditation hut and *samādhi* of Shri Roop Goswāmi is here. To the right side of the temple, the *samādhis* of Jeeva Goswāmi and Shri Krishnadās Kavirāj Goswāmi are there.

Shri Gopāl Krishna Himself had given a rock marked with His foot prints to Shri Sanātan ji at Chakaleishwar (Gowardhan). This shilā is worth seeing even today.

The darshan of the shilā is possible for the general public on Shri Krishna Janmāshtami day.

1. O girls come here and take your respective clothes. I tell you the truth, I am not joking because you have become very frail and thin by keeping the fasts etc.

Rās Mandal

गोपिका शतकोटिभिः कृष्णरासोत्सवाय च ।
नमस्ते रासगोष्ठाय वैमल्य वरदायिने ॥¹

(पद्म पुराण)

The enchanting nights of autumn bathed in the moon light have their own beauty. The solitude, the silence, the wind blowing with the fragrance of flowers, moon light scattered in the dense *nikunja*, the resonance of the flute and the gopis that gather upon hearing that sweet sound, everything is full of *rasa*, beautiful and enchanting. Priyatam Shri Krishna with His beloved Kishori Shri Rādhā and crores of gopis at the enchanting bank of Yamunā ji looking at the suitable site for Rās in the dense *nikunja* formed a circle. Shri Krishna could be seen between every two gopis. Somewhere the divine atmosphere of pada singing became pervasive and somewhere in some *nikunja* the sound of dancing became resonant, at some place the conversations filled with laughter was outpouring and at some place Priyatam with His sakhis became absorbed and intoxicated in *rasa rahasi keli*. The *rasa's* unrestrained *keli* started flowing there.

पादन्यासैर्भुजविधुतिभिः सस्मितैर्भ्रूविलासै-
र्भज्यन्मध्यैश्चल कुचपटै कुण्डलैर्गण्डलोलैः ।
स्विद्यन्मुख्यः कबर रशनाग्रन्थयः कृष्णवध्वो
गायन्त्यस्तं तडित इव ता मेघचक्रे विरेजुः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/33/8)

These maidens absorbed in Rās *rasa* became lost in the unconsciousness of intense love. During the dance they would step the foot forward, at times put the feet down slowly, and at times look at the Priyatam with mischievous smiles. Priyatam would answer by welcoming them smilingly. The sound of bangles, swaying ear rings, furtive eyebrow movements, loosening clothes and the borders of the saris, dancing feet and the beats of the restive hearts, Oh! The whole site became intoxicated with all this ambrosial atmosphere. Beholding that beauty even Kām and Rati were ashamed. Priyatam suffused all in divine *rasa* by His *rasa* filled endeavours.

This *rasa* site famous as Rās mandal is conversant with all those *keli* secrets. This site was revealed by Shri Harivansh ji Mahārāj. Shri Dhruvadās ji had merged in the leaves and the vines here along with his body.

1.O Rās site where Shri Krishna is virājmān with hundred crores gopikās! O Rās goshtī site, giver of pure boons! Obeisance to you.

Shri Sewak ji (Dāmodardās ji)

There is a village called Gadā grām near Jabalpur. Shri Dāmodardās ji was born here. Shri Chaturbhujdās ji was his friend. Both of them used to enjoy talking about the Lord's Leelā.

A few Rasikas came to the village once. Chaturbhujdās ji and Dāmodardās ji hearing about Vrindāvan and Priyā-Priyatam from those rasikas, drowned in bliss.

Due to some reasons both of them could not come to Vrindāvan early. During that period Shri Hita- Harivansh ji Mahārāj entered the *nikunja* and his elder son Shri Vanachandra ji became *virājmān* on his seat. Shri Chaturbhujdās ji came to Vrindāvan and took initiation from Shri Vanachandra ji but Shri Dāmodardās ji remained firm about his decision to take the initiation from Shri Hita-Harivansh ji.

Shri Sewak ji Mahārāj sat under a Pipal tree in the village and started remembering Shri Hita Harivansh ji. Suddenly Shri Vrindāvan Dhām appeared right there. He had the *darshan* of the Leelā of Priyā-Priyatam. Shri Shri Harivansh ji accepted Shri Sewak ji. He put his hand on the head of Sewak ji and gave him a mantra.

When Shri Chaturbhuj ji returned to the village, he was stunned to see Shri Sewak ji. Shri Vanachandra ji called Sewak ji to Vrindāvan. When he came, Shri Vanachandraji distributed all his wealth filled with joy. The collection of Sewak ji's padas is accepted as the supplement to Shri Hita Chaturāsī.

Shri Sewak ji entered and merged in a Vata tree near the Rās mandal in Vrindāvan.

Shri Dhruvadās Ji

Shri Vithaldās ji was the disciple of Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Hita-Harivansh ji Mahārāj. When Harivansh ji entered the *nikunja* he left his body in separation. Shri Dhruvadās ji was his great grandson. The traits of his great grandfather appeared in him in his early childhood. At the age of five, strong dispassion arose in him. As child Dhruva had had the darshan of the Lord at the age of five, seeing his resolute dispassion people started calling him Dhruvadās.

He was initiated by Shri Gopināth ji the third son of Shri Hita-Harivansh ji Mahārāj.

Once near Rās mandal he became determined to receive the orders from Priyā-Priyatam to sing their Leelā. Priyā-Priyatam appeared and signaled at him to sing the Leelā songs. He had special grace of Priyā-Priyatam. After getting the darshan of Yugal

he composed many padas which were collected under the name of 'Bayālees Leelā' and became easily available to all.

Shri Dhruvadās ji was a solitude loving humble rasik saint. Close to the samādhi of Shri Harivansh ji near Rās mandal he entered a Tamāl tree along with his body.

Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji

This site of *rasa rās* is famous for Mahā Rās. Priyā-Priyatam along with their bodily personifications, the crores of Braj maidens intoxicated in love and engaged in finding the bounds of the rasa ocean of extreme beauty, grace and sweetness have been getting absorbed while finding the depths and more depths of it. The spurt of those rasa drops taking a permanent form has been and is suffusing many such majestic personalities who becoming our ideal are guiding our paths even today. The names of Shri Dhruvadās ji, Shri Sewak ji, Shri Naravāhanji are connected to this place but in the context of present times, one such great personality who connected herself to this place and getting intoxicated in continuous rasa vilās became of this place forever, she was the Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorva Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji.

The story is not very old. Many great saints in spite of understanding her exemplary character remained untouched by the depths of it because saints have their own personalities. They do not want to reveal themselves. Names of many such saints are written in the list of high category of saints who remain connected with that uninterrupted sweetness everyday and at the same time their external or outer lives remain engaged in noble activities, which is considered necessary also. But a few such great saints also appear in Braj bhoomi, who for the desire of their lives came in the refuge of Braj bhoomi and became absorbed in its every particle. Any other external worldly affair did not even cross their minds and nor did they concern themselves with it. Of course such saints are very few and can be counted on fingers. These great personalities worth remembering in the morning are endowed with the capability of cleansing and purifying the sādhakas with their spiritual environment. Amongst such rare saints the personality of Bhaktimati Ushā behen ji had remained endowed with a special ideal, steeped in dedication for the service of Shri Thākur ji, soaked and steeped in a rasa sweetness, had established such an ideal of leading a dispassionate life that releases

one from rebirth. Above all diving in the great depths of the sweetness of that rasa, the experience of which radiated from her body suffusing many great persons with it. That recourse is available to them in the form of panacea.

“The feeling of ‘*Tatsukhei sukhitvam*’ in the worship of Braj establishes the ideal of taking one to that very pinnacle of love. Where ever and in whichever way the devotion, rasa and separation appears, all that becomes the pulsation and the penetration of Braj. These were not just the incidents in the life of Bhaktimati Ushā behen ji but an inner upsurge of emotions which was continuously taking place in her. It was only unveiled during the series of incidents.”

(Bābā Shri Pād ji Mahārāj)

During the time of teaching itself, the incredible love and affection with which she nurtured her students, acquainted them with the rasa treasure of Shyāmā-Shyām and left them in the ocean of rasa, this was only within her power. Whosoever got connected with her in any way, rather came in her contact even a little, who received the touch of the breeze blowing at the strand of that lake of rasa- he drowned in the depths of rasa. Just by licking the dew thirst cannot be quenched and if it is quenched, then it will have to be called just a delusion. The rasa sweetness of love is the demand of the heart absorbed in the emotion or attitude of a sakhi. The fulfillment of this desire lies at the bottom of the beautiful waves of the ocean of rasa.

Poojaneeyā Behen ji was born in Ambālā on 30th July, 1925. While living there every moment of her life was connected with the rasa filled atmosphere of Vrindāvan. While fulfilling all her responsibilities skillfully and perfectly, she remained connected with Priyā-Priyatam, Braj and Vrindāvan. Rather her life was steeped in them. Despite being ill she writes at one place herself, “I still remember that scene like real, Her smiling moon like face, hundreds of rays of love, compassion and intimacy exuding from the two big eyes. Yes! This body sick and weak was lying here but god knows due to which strong inspiration, with the divine body I reached under the Kadamba tree at the bank of Yamunā ji, Priyā ji came and...” Such an unprecedented circumstance, such a divine experience - such capable and powerful character cannot be called ordinary. I want to shed light on such an extraordinary personality for those intellectuals who get confused and deluded by the supernatural incidents of the past in the tradition of the yugas. The heights of spirituality, effortless proximity to Priyā-Priyatam, the eruption in rasa profoundness and the ideal of

vigilance in this world will have to be called an incredible union of morning and evening, of east and west.

In the rasaful atmosphere of Vrindāvan where the last half of her life was blissfully spent, in the service of Shri Thākura, in the secret sports of Priyā-Priyatam, diving in the ocean of mādhyura rasa and wandering in various sites of Braj. Today she has withdrawn herself from all of these, only continuous contemplation of Leelā with deep absorption and an indifferent same feeling towards everything external became her nature. This 'Shree' of Braj Vibhav merged in the 'Shree' of Shri Vrindāvan. Alas! Such amazing ceremony of union, wish everybody had a chance to see. She became unmanifest from the physical body but the eternal Leelā bliss with which she united, the state of that is indestructible and endless. Wherever Priyā-Priyatam are engaged in either Prakat Leelā or Nitya Leelā, she is there with them experiencing it, she is pratyaksha or based on ones faith and dedication she is manifest.

She had come to know beforehand of the time to end her worldly Leelā. The drastic change in her behavior, the service of Thākura ji which she carried throughout her life, where there was no trace of disinterestedness, insistence to move to some other place before time are all indications of foreknowledge. And then staying alert and happy up to last breath, the movement of the eye balls from left to right two times are indicative of that foreknowledge which is getting more clear from one verse written by her during those days-

प्रिया-लाङ्गिले श्याम घन, लाल लङ्गैती बाल ।
हंसत हंसत आवत चले, मन्द मनोहर चाल ॥

On 20th February, 1992 she went back to Priyā-Priyatam for good from where she had come.

Nidhivana

Nidhivana, dear to the two oceans of rasa the Yugal, is the witness to many Leelās of love. The secret keli of Priyā-Priyatam at solitary sites expresses the story of love. The rasaful vilās of Priyā-Priyatam where even the sakhis filled with absorption become unconscious, they drown in that very rasa again and again. This Nidhivana is permeated with those very rasaful tales of love.

Everyday Priyā-Priyatam come here. They get absorbed in rasa keli. Beholding such a rasa steeped state one sakhi addressing the other said, "O friend! Saw the rasa vilās of Priyā- Priyatam, the blue

and bright radiance of the dark and pale luster, hundreds of waves of Cupid erupting in that radiance, the sweetness flowing from the half closed eyes, the helpless, restless exuberant waves of the rasaful heart, the reddish lips making a faint sound, Sakhi! I did not see just a stunned and still ocean of rasa, rather saw this Height of restlessness and agility i.e. Shri Krishna bound in the love of *chopalās* (lightning) i.e. the Braj maidens.”

Priyā-Priyatam remove their tiredness in this *nikunja* palace. They quench the thirst of their eyes by opening them in between and drinking each other's beauty. Not only this sakhi! Knowing them to be tired, when the goddess of sleep becomes alert to give them rest in her lap then They both start resting on the soft beds. Priyatam is manogya talpashāyi i.e. the One Who sleeps on beautiful sofa like bed. Who can say in which ways He quenches the restless rasa yearning of His beloveds stirred by the waves of emotion steeped in love?

When the birds start chirping in the rasa filled morning, the peacocks inform of the arrival of the sun, when the alleys of the *nikunja* start resonating with the sweet sound of anklets and bracelets, then with a lazy helplessness Priyā ji asks-

नींद विवश पूछति है प्यारी सांभ्र भई कै प्रात ।
कहन चहत है भोर सांवरो मुख सों निकसत रात ॥

This is the sweet subject of this place, engrossed in which this Yugal, bless these *nikunjās* with their rasa filled pursuits.

Complete rasa flows in the keli of rasa vihār and engrossed and soaked in this rasa the crazy Yugal becoming overwhelmed become absorbed.

संश्लिष्ट सर्वांगुलिबाहु युग्म मन्मथ्य देहं परिमोदयन्तीम् ।
उद्बुद्ध जृम्भास्फुटदन्तकान्तिमालोक्य कान्तामुमुहेमुकुन्दः ॥¹

(गोविन्द लीलामृत 1/53)

Looking at the tired Sri Rādhā, with face adorned with tiredness and laziness after meeting with Shri Krishna, still and motionless in the lap of black coloured Tamāl tree (i.e. Shri Krishna) it seems as if the lightning has become still in the newly formed cloud.

हेमाब्जांग्या प्रबल सुरतायास जातालसायाः,
कान्तस्याङ्गे निहित-वपुषःस्निग्धतापिच्छ कान्तेः ।

1. The one who is stretching Herself by crossing the fingers of the two hands and raising both the arms and whose teeth are looking beautiful at the time of yawning, looking at such Shri Rādhā Priyatam is getting delighted.

शम्पाकम्पा नवजलधरे स्थास्नुतां चेदधास्यत्,
श्रीराधायाः स्फुटमिह तदासाम्यकक्षाम वाप्स्यत् ॥

(गो० लीलामृत 1/55)

Not only this, the sakhi drowned in the ocean of keli of the Yugal, savouring their vilās mādhuri, filled with absorption she forgot her home even.

Looking at the yellow tinged beauty of Priyā ji in the proximity of Shyām Sundar looking like a Tamāl tree it seems as if a lightning has flashed in the newly formed clouds. Aha! The flow of the rasa of the beauty keeps suffusing all sakhis drinking which they are getting absorbed.

इत्थमिथः प्रेम-सुखाब्धि मग्नयोः
प्रगेतनीं विभ्रममाधुरी तयोः ।
निपीय सख्यः प्रमदोन्मदास्तदा
तदात्वयोग्याचरणं विसस्मरुः ॥

(गो० लीलामृत 1/71)

This is the rasa filled keli conversation of Nidhivana where there is absorption and only absorption, where there is the acme of love.

This is the place of appearance of Shri Shri Bānkei Bihāri ji. Swāmi Shri Haridās ji Mahārāj used to come here every day. His samādhi is also here. Samādhi of Shri Jagannāth ji is also here. Ranga-mahal and Lalitā kund are here.

Swāmi Shri Haridās ji Mahārāj

This topic has already been covered in the topic of Shri Bihāri ji. Shri Shri Vithal Vipuldev ji and Shri Vihārindev ji Mahārāj also used to live here.

Sri Vithal Vipuldev ji

He was born in Rājpur village situated near the route of circumambulation. He was dispassionate since childhood.

He had deep dedication towards Swāmi Shri Haridās ji Mahārāj. Swāmi ji had showered his grace on him by making him have the darshan of Priyā-Priyatam in Shri Nidhivana.

He had true love for Shri Haridās ji Mahārāj. After Swāmi ji entered the *nikunja* Leelā he was so distraught that he put a band over his eyes. Many Rasikāchāryas arranged for Rās together. As planned

during Rās Priyā ji came near him and holding his hand asked him to remove the band. As soon as he opened the band, he left his body and merged in Priyāji. Priyādās ji Mahārāj has described this episode in the following words-

रास के समाज में विराजे सब भक्तराज
बोल के पठाये आए आज्ञा बड़ौ भार है ।
मिलि गए वाही ठौर पायौ भाव तन और,
कहै 'रस-सागर' ताकौ यों विचार है ॥

His Samādhi is in Nidhivana.

Shri Vihārindev ji

He was born with the auspicious blessing of Swāmi Haridās ji Mahārāj.

He was a staunch supporter of Nitya vihār. After Shri Vithal Vipul ji entered the *nikunja* he became virājmān in his place. He used to do the service of Shri Bihāri ji very endearingly.

Once he was going to Shri Yamunā for a bath. The *dāntun* (tree branch to clean the teeth) was in his mouth. He remained standing on the road for three days, singing the line below.

‘विहरत लाल –विहारिन दोऊ, श्रीयमुना के तीरे-तीरे ।’

When Shri Sanātan ji heard about this from one of his disciples, he sent the prasād of Madanmohan ji to him saying that it was the prasād of Shri Bihāri ji. Only then he gained some consciousness of the outer world.

Shri Vihārindev ji is considered the pillar of the Nikunjopāsānā of Swāmi Shri Haridās ji. Actually he alone was the proper knower of Nitya vihār.

गुह्यरीति हरिदास की, विरला कोई बूझ ।
पूछ विहारीदास को जिन समुभायो मूझ ॥

(स्वामी श्रीललितकिशोरीदेवजी)

Absorbed in the *nikunja* Leelā of Priyā-Priyatam he left to be in their service for ever at the age of ninety-eight.

Dān-Mān And Kunjagali

Shri Vrindāvan Dhām is the site of dense kunjās. These dense kunjās can be seen even today at Nidhivana and Sewākunja. From these solitary deserted alleys the sakhis go sometimes to sell milk and yogurt and sometimes to fetch water.

All these are probably only excuses. 'Going through the kunjā pathways and solitary alleys to meet the Priyatam, how and when Nandanandan arrives and blocks these Braj maidens, they never come to know.' He comes and makes various conversations and gets playful with them as He is the height of flirtatiousness and playfulness. Sometimes He talks about tasting the milk and yogurt and sometimes forcibly on the pretext of buttermilk He wants god knows what not. When these Braj maidens assume *mān* at His teasing and bantering, then the rasik Rījhawār placates and mollifies them. Their *mān* is also for the happiness of Shyām Sundar. 'Jinaki Binā Mola Ki Cheiri Hai.' i.e. whose servants they are for free, they are showing *mān* to Him. But their *mān* is not difficult. Therefore creating a new prelude to providing rasa in *mān*, this naughty Priyatam becomes the cause of joy to these maidens.

One sakhi explaining to the other said

‘मै तोसों केतिक बार कह्यो ।

इति मारग इक सुन्दर ढोटा बरबस लेत दह्यो ।

इत-उत सघन कुञ्ज गह्वर तकि, मारग रोकि रह्यो ।

अति कमनीय अंग छवि निरखत, नेक न परत रह्यो ।

लोचन सफल होत पल निरखत, विरह न जात सह्यो ।

परमानन्द प्रभु सहज माधुरी मन्मथ मान ढह्यो ॥

O sister! I have tried to make you understand so many times, that do not go from this way. On this way One beautiful presumptuous child loots the milk and yogurt forcibly. In the dense kunjās, by showing up at deserted areas, He blocks our way. The lustre of His body is enchanting. The eyes cannot tolerate even a moment's obstruction of not being able to see Him. Beholding His beauty when even the pride of Cupid is destroyed then where do we, the weak maidens, stand any chance?

Hiding the tales of Dān and Mān Leelās of these dense *nikunja* in its womb, this site is famous by the name of Dān gali and Mān gali. This is near Sewākunja.

Samādhi of Shri Nāgaridās ji

The name of Shri Sāmantsingh (Nāgaridās) son of King Rajsingh of Kishan garh, Rājasthān is known to all Vaishnavas. He had deep faith in Vrindāvan. Experiencing the madhur Leelās of

Priyā-Priyatam he described them in a matchless way. Even today the samādhi of Nāgaridās ji in a deserted site covered with Tamāl trees in Nāgari kunja, is waving its flag and is attracting countless Rasikas.

Who can say anything about the devotion of Shri Nāgaridās ji? Relinquishing the state of Kishan Garh he started living permanently in Vrindāvan. He himself was a great devotee but inspired by him, his mother, sister and the maid also came to live in Vrindāvan and became famous as great devotees later.

Nāgaridās ji experienced the divine Leelās of Priyā-Priyatam very deeply. In reality he had infinite grace of Priyā-Priyatam and had become one of their intimate devotee. The scenes of his experiences are so alive and vivid that they can only be experienced. Describing a gopi full of rasa and beauty, he is saying-

लहरि-लहरि जौबन करै, थहर-थहर करै देह ।
 अरग थरग सिर गागरी, नए रसिक सों नेह ॥
 हरि मूरति चित में चुभी, नैननि पुलकत नीर ।
 सीस गगरिया गिरत सी, जकि रही जमुना तीर ॥
 घैरु होत जान्यो न, उर उड़त न जान्यौ चीर ।
 गिरत न जानी गगरिया, रहत न छ्त्रांनी पीर ॥
 हरी-हरी कहि लेहु री बिसरी दधि कौ नांव ।
 कृष्ण मई ग्वारिन भई, कौतग लाग्यो गांव ॥
 महा रूप मदिरा छकी, चलत डगमगत पाय ।
 जो देखत ग्वारनि छकि, तिन्है छकनि चढ़ि जाय ॥
 गिरै न ग्वारनि धुकि उठै, घायल मन रिभवार ।
 नागरिया रन सुभट ज्यौ, रहत सम्हारि सम्हार ॥

The beauty of the milkmaid coming with a pot on her head is beyond words. She is coming filled with exuberance and new love for *Rasik Rijhawār*. In her absorption she did not even come to know when the border of her sari slipped away in the gust of the wind. Oh! That love filled helplessness of the heart. The beautiful form of Shyām Sundar entered her eyes and she kept repeating, 'Hari Hari Kahu Leihu Ree Bisari Dadhi Ko Nām.' i.e. in her absorption she forgot the word 'yogurt' so started asking people to buy 'Hari'. Filled with the tender emotion of intense and exclusive love she has become so intoxicated that whoever looks at her sweetness, he also gets drunk with the intoxication of beauty. Oh! The whole Nature became filled with intoxication.

He is saying in one place about the scene of a morning-

आनन सौ आनन छियै, पानन रचे कपोल ।
लखि रीभे छवि आरसी, विहसै लोचन लोल ॥
पिय पौछत पटपीत सौ, प्रिया कपोलन पीक ।
नागरि पौछत लाल के अधरन अञ्जन लीक ॥

Looking at the beauty, the mind became addicted. It did not remain in its control and therefore the milkmaid said-

अरी छैल इह गैल ह्वै अबहि निकस्यो आय ।
नैननि नैन मिलाय कै लै गयो मन बहराय ॥

At one place talking about attachment Nāgaridās is saying

नागर सैननि सैन मिलि बनी न नैननि नैन ।
बनत बनत ऐसी बनी कहत बनै नहि बैन ॥

Therefore supreme devotee Nāgaridās ji, glittering amongst the jewels of devotees of Shri Vrindāvan is guiding the *sādhakas* even today.

Kunja of Shree ji

Because of this being the biggest temple in the name of Jagadguru Shri Nimbārkāchārya ji Mahārāj, it is called Shriji Ki Kunja or the temple of Shree ji. This was reconstructed and restored by Bhatiyāni mahārāni, the mother of the king of Jaipur and by Ānanda Kunwariji in 1926 AD.

Here there is darshan of Shri Ānanda Manohar Vrindāvanchandra ji. People take the prasādi water of this place to faraway places and use it as a medicine for their sick children.

Shāhji's Temple (Lalit Kunja)

Shri Lalitkishori and Lalitmādhuri descendants of Shāh Bihārīlāl of Lucknow are well known to all Vaishnavas. They were very emotional. They had devout faith in Shri Vrindāvan.

After coming to Shri Vrindāvan they never used footwear again. They always considered the dust of Shri Vrindāvan as the greatest wealth.

Shri Rādhāraman Thākur is virājmān in this beautiful temple of marble.

Their grandfather Shri Bihārīlāl ji had gotten the temple of his venerated deity Shri Rādhāraman constructed.

Shri Lalitkishori ji

Shāh Kundanlāl ji who later became known as Lalitkishori was a resident of Lucknow. He had acquired abundant knowledge of Urdu, Fārsi in his childhood. When he came to Shri Vrindāvan for the first time to see the temple built by his grandfather, he felt a strong yearning to live there permanently. Soon his parents died. After dividing the wealth quickly, he came to Shri Vrindāvan.

After coming here he lived with extreme dispassion. He gave up using footwear. He had staunch faith in Braj *raja* (dust particles).

One group of robbers led by Thākur Heerā singh came to Vrindāvan in samvat 1915 during the revolt. They could not create any trouble in front of him. He made arrangements for shelter and food for them. When the British rulers came to know about this, he was charged with helping the revoltors against the rule. But because of the grace of Shri Krishna, the magistrate became impressed with his fearlessness.

He has made vivid descriptions of Leelā mādhuri of Priyā-Priyatam in his *padas*.

On the second day of the bright fortnight of the month of Kārtika of samvat 1930 he brought the sand of Shri Yamunā himself and made a platform and became virājmān on that. The singing of the names of the Lord was going on one side. He merged his voice in it and repeating 'Rādhe-Shyām, Rādhe- Shyām' entered the Nitya Leelā forever.

Shri Lalit Mādhuri ji

Shāh Fundanlāl ji always followed his elder brother.

He always used to take the words of the elder brother as final. Once when he had fever, he drank cold water. Lalitkishori ji told him that it was not good to have water in fever. He left drinking the water itself and only after the elder brother gave permission, did he have water after fourteen hours.

His acts and deeds were also very extraordinary. He always had faith in the grace of Shri Krishna. The Rās troupe was once going for water sports in Shri Yamunā. On the way two bulls were fighting. Fearlessly he went near them and put his hand on their heads with affection. Both the bulls calmed down immediately.

Like his brother, Shri Lalitmādhuri ji also entered Nitya Leelā while singing the names of the Lord sitting on the platform made of the sand of Shri Yamunā.

Shri Rādhāraman ji

It is believed that Shri Rādhāraman ji appeared in samvat 1591. Most of the self manifest Thākur idols were taken to Rājasthān by the goswāmis for their safety because of the fear of Yavans but Shri Rādhāraman ji remained in Vrindāvan. The Lord accepting the service of His devotees has remained in their debt for ever. A very interesting incident regarding His appearance is famous. We are narrating it in brief below.

Shri Shri Gopālbhatt ji Mahārāj was doing the service of Shri Shāligrām ji with all sincerity. A rich merchant came to Vrindāvan once. He offered gold ornaments to many Thākur idols. Shri Gopāl Bhatt ji felt a strong desire that, “If the feet, hand and other body parts of my Shāligrām ji could be seen, then even I could bedeck Him with ornaments.” This is the glory of Shri Thākur ji. ‘Yei Yathāmām Prapadyantei Tāmstathaiva Bhajāmyaham’ (whoever desirous of resorting to Me, in whatever manner they think of Me according to their inclinations, I favour them in the same manner as desired by them, I reveal Myself to them). This is what happened. Shri Shāligrām ji showed his Leelā. Next day when Shri Gopāl Bhatt ji went for the daily service he had the darshan of the feet, hands and face of Shri Shāligrām ji. In the back Shri Shāligrām ji was just like before. There was no end to the joy of Shri Gopāl Bhatt ji. He dressed his Thākur ji with clothes and ornaments. That very Shri Shāligrām ji in the form of Shri Rādhāraman ji is *virājmān* radiating His divine beauty.

This temple was constructed in samvat 1645. Nearby is the samādhi of Shri Gopālbhatt ji.

Shri Shri Gopālbhatt Goswāmi ji

Shri Venkatbhatt ji a Brahmin from the southern India has the honour of being the father of Shri Gopāl Bhatt ji. During his tour of south India when Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu ji came here, at that time Gopāl Bhatt ji was only eight or nine years old but he was greatly impressed by Mahāprabhuji. Mahāprabhu ji asked his father to educate Gopālbhatt.

After sometime when the father passed away, Gopālbhatt ji came to Vrindāvan. Shri Roop ji, Shri Sanātan ji were *virājmān* in Shri Dhām, Vrindāvan. He studied scriptures related to devotion from Shri Sanātan ji.

Mahāprabhu ji sent a hand written letter, a rope to draw water, a loincloth and one meditation mat for Shri Gopālbhatt ji.

In samvat 1638 he entered the *nitya* Leelā. His disciples Shri Gopināth ji and Shri Dāmodardās ji took over the service of Shri Rādhāraman ji. The present service is being done by the descendants of Shri Dāmodardās ji.

Shri Shri Gopināth ji

Shri Shri Gopināth ji is virājmān near the temple of Shri Rādhāraman ji. Shri Shri Gopināth ji appeared for Shri Paramānand Bhattāchāryaji. Later Shri Bhattāchārya ji gave the responsibility of service to Shri Madhu pandit.

When the wife of Shriman Nityānanda Prabhu, Shri Shri Mā Jānhavi came to Shri Vrindāvan, she went for the darshan of Shri Shri Gopināth ji. While having darshan one thought arose in her mind that if the height of Shri Rādhā ji were slightly more then She would have looked more beautiful. In the dream that night Shri Gopināth ji told her, “Compared to my height the height of Priyā ji is short, therefore arrange for a deity whose height is equal to mine.” Shri Rādhā also gave similar orders. It is said that Shri Mā Jānhavi at the time of the Leelā of her unmanifestation, revealed an idol herself and entered in it. She instructed her devotees to place this idol next to Shri Thākur ji. The priest and the other attendants did not agree initially but when Shri Gopināth ji himself gave them the indication to put the new deity on his left side and the older deity of Priyā ji on the right, then the arrangements were made accordingly.

Since then Shri Shri Gopināth ji is in the middle, Shri Shri Mā Jānhavi on the left side with Goddess Vishweishwari next to her and on the right side are Shri Rādhā ji and Shri Lalitā. They are spreading their beauty for Vaishnavas and the devotees till date.

The old deities went away to Jaipur, in their place new deities are virājmān here.

Shri Shri Rādhāvinod ji and Shri Gokulānand Thākur

It is believed that Shri Lokanāth Goswāmi got Shri Shri Rādhāvinod Thākur from the Kishori kund in Umarāo grām. Shri Lokanāth ji started the service there itself. When Shri Roop ji, Shri Sanātan ji and Shri Raghunāth Bhatt ji came to know about this, they all requested him to bring the deity to Shri Vrindāvan.

Since then the deity of Shri Rādhāvinod Thākur is virājmān in Shri Vrindāvan at a new site near Shri Rādhāraman temple.

Fearful of the attacks of the *Yavans*, this Thākur ji was also taken to Jaipur and is virājmān there up until today.

The Thākur deity that was being served by Shri Yuta Vishwanāth Chakrawarti pād in Rādhā kund, they are also virājmān in this very temple.

The Gowardhan shilā given to Shri Raghunāthdās Goswāmi by Shri Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is also here and worth seeing.

Nearby are the samādhis of Shri Lokanāth Swāmi, Shri Narottam Thākur and Shri Vishwanāth Chakrawarti pād.

Lālā bābu Temple

Shri Lālā bābu was a great Vaishnava. Shri Thākur “Shri Krishna Chandra ji” served by him is virājmān till date in the temple. During the ceremony of infusing life (the *prān pratishthā*) in the idol of Shri Thākur ji one very interesting and sweet incident occurred which is being given below.

When the *prān pratishthā* of this Shri Thākur ji was being done, many great learned Brahmins and scholars were present. The ceremony of infusing life in the idol of Shri Thākur ji had been organised very attentively through the recitation of the mantras. When the ceremony was over, Shri Lālā bābu asked the Brahmins, “Has the *prān pratishthā* been done?” The priests replied, “You check for yourself.” There was causeless grace of the Lord on Lālā bābu. He put his hand on the heart of Shri Thākur ji but he could not feel the pulse.

Shri Lālā bābu requested all the Brahmins to perform the *prān pratishthā* again. The whole ceremony was performed again. After which when Lālā bābu kept his hand over the heart of Shri Thākur ji he could clearly feel the blood pressure.

Once again taking a cotton swab near the nose and seeing it move, it was established that Shri Thākur has appeared.

Two big trees in front of the jagamohan of Shri Thākur ji are worth seeing till date. Once it was decided to cut them. The son of Lālā bābu had a dream. Two ascetics told him, “We are engaged in penance in the form of trees. Please do not cut us. We will dry down ourselves in due course of time.” The very next day one telegram with the instructions to stop the cutting of the trees was received in Shri Vrindāvan. Those two Maulashri trees are there till date in the courtyard of the temple.

This temple was constructed in samvat 1867.

Shri Lālābābu

Shri Lālābābu (Krishna dās) was a great Vaishnava. He was born in a respected family of Calcutta. He used to go for walks on the bank of Gangā every day. Once when he was walking he heard a boatman saying, “O brother! Dina gelo pārei chala.” meaning that the day has passed, let’s go to the other side. He became very thoughtful. Contemplating, he came back to his house. On some other day when he was walking on the bank of Gangā, he heard a washer man telling his wife, ‘Dina gelo vāsanāya āgun dāu’ meaning that the day is getting over, set fire to the *vāsanā* quickly. (*Vāsanā* is an alkaline used for washing, made by burning the banana tree etc, *vāsanā* also means desires)

These words of the washer man overturned the life of Lālābābu. He thought to himself that without burning the worldly desires nothing can be achieved. He returned and giving up all hesitations and doubts he went to Vrindāvan.

One day on getting instructions from Shri Krishna in a dream, he started living at Goverdhan. There when he was going for the circumambulation of Shri Girirāj ji, the priest requested him to accept the prasād of Shri Thākūr ji that day. He agreed. That day because of heavy rains and storm the priest could not come with prasād on time. Later when the rain stopped, the priest went to the temple and was stunned to see the plate of the prasād gone. He collected the left over prasād and some fruit and went to Lālābābu. When he reached there he was astounded to see the plate of the temple kept there already. Later it was concluded that Thākūr ji had definitely come to serve the prasād to his devotee.

While having the darshan of the Leelā of the Yugal at the bank of Yamunā ji he entered the Nitya Leelā.

Shri Shri Bilwamangal ji Mahārāj

The father of Shri Bilwamangal ji, Shri Rāmdās used to live at the bank of river Krishnavenā in a village in south India. The mind of Shri Bilwamangal ji used to always search for beauty in the world.

He became attracted to a prostitute called Chintāmani. He was so infatuated with her that even on the day of shrāddha of his father he went to her house. In the absence of a boat, using a corpse to cross the flooded river and a black snake in place of a rope he reached her place.

When Chintāmani condemned and deplored him strongly for his infatuation he felt extreme dispassion and left the house.

When he found that his infatuation for beauty is attracting him towards the world again, he blinded himself by pricking his eyes with thorns and became detached from the attractions of the external world. Now he was left all alone.

Shri Krishna came to him as a child and asked, “Bābā! Will you come to Vrindāvan.” The heart of Shri Bilwamangal ji was filled with joy but he knew about his hindrance and helplessness. He told everything clearly to that child. Holding the stick, the child guided him. After some time the child said, “Bābā! We have reached Vrindāvan.” Now Shri Bilwamangal was not blind as his divine eyes had been opened because of the touch of Shri Krishna. He caught the hand of the child. Shri Krishna gave a jerk and got His hand released. Bilwamangal ji recognised that the child was no one else but the form of condensed bliss Shyām Sundar Himself Who has maddened Bilwamangal ji with His enticing beauty. Bilwamangal ji said

हस्तमुत्क्षिप्य यातोऽसि बलात्कृष्ण किमद्भुतम् ।
हृदयाद् यदि निर्यासि पौरुषं गणयामि ते ॥

Shri Krishna became tied with the cord of love. He made Bilwamangal ji His own forever and ever.

The beauty of Shri Krishna became etched in the heart of Shri Bilwamangal ji. He became crazy beholding the auspicious face surrounded with dense curly hair. The playful flirtatious eyes of Shri Krishna wounded him and the smile made him crazy about Him. Shri Bilwamangal ji started floating on the waves of the radiant blue ocean of the beauty of exotic smile, of extreme beauty, grace and sweetness. That exquisite beauty aggregated and appeared right before him. He started singing-

हे देव ! हे दयित ! हे भुवनैकबन्धो !
हे कृष्ण ! हे चपल ! हे करुणैकसिन्धो !
हे नाथ ! हे रमण ! हे नयनाभिराम !
हा, हा, कदानुभवितासि पदं दृशोर्मे ॥

O Deva! O ocean of compassion and mercy! You are naughty which is ok, along with that you are also the giver of joy to the eyes. O Lord! When will you oblige me by giving me the darshan of your sweet beautiful form?

This sweet form, Aha! Praying to the auspicious feet of the Lord wandering in the alleys of Braj making sweet sounds with the jeweled anklets, Shri Bilwamangal ji started saying.

मणिनूपुर वाचालं, वन्दे तच्चरणं विभोः ।
ललितानि यदीयानि लक्ष्माणि ब्रज वीथिषु ॥

That radiant blue beauty, quenching the thirst of the earth of Braj for love, offering His foot prints as gift is wandering in the alleys of Braj everywhere.

This ever adolescent Shyām Sundar is entering inside my heart with His faint smile, with sweet talks and god knows how else. How is this form of His? Is He Cupid himself or is He the moon, full of sweet lustre or has the sweetness aggregated and personified, He is the nectar itself to my mind and the eyes or is He the hair dresser of the Braj maidens, some *Jeewan Sarvaswa* of mine.

मारः स्वयं नु मधुरञ्चति मण्डलं नु,
माधुर्यं मेव नु मनोनयनामृतं नु,
वेणीमृजो नु, मम जीवित वल्लभो नु,
बालोऽयमभ्युदयते मम लोचनाय ॥

This form is appearing before my eyes. How is this form? Madhuram, madhuram, madhuram. Sweet, sweet, sweet.

Bilwamangal ji Mahārāj steeped in the longing of the darshan of Shyām Sundar Who is the height of the fortune of the Braj maidens, the height of mādhurya, the height of fragrance, is saying

यतो यतः प्रसरति मे विलोचनं,
ततस्ततः स्फुरतु तवैव वैभवम् ।

At every site may I get His darshan only that is all I plead for.

The experiences of Shri Bilwamangal ji were not ordinary. He savoured many rasaful sights and glimpses of Shri Krishna that he depicted in shlokas which is available for all of us as ‘Shri Krishna Karnāmrita.’

The samādhi of Shri Bilwamangal ji under the Khirani tree in Gopināth bāzār is making the declarations about the many pictures of Shri Krishna Leelā.

Brahma Kund

One deep kund next to the Shri Rangamannāra temple is famous by the name of Brahma Kund. Shri Krishna, His sakhās and Brahmā ji are virājmān here.

The acts and deeds of Shri Krishna are infinite. The One Whose limits cannot be found even by Brahma and Mahesh, that Shri Krishna

wanders everywhere in the forest sites of Braj with the cowherd boys grazing the cows. With His friends He plays different games, when hungry eats with them. In *chhāk* (lunch eating) Leelā, the romp and revelry of jokes and laughter breaks out.

Shri Krishna came here with His most intimate friends, Madhumangal, Shridāmā, Tosha and others. Brahmā ji overpowered by illusion was feeling ashamed. It is said that Brahmā ji appeared and sang hymns to Lord Shri Krishna and prayed to receive the rasa bliss enjoyed by the Brajwāsīs. Brahmā ji said

“Lord! In any forest of Braj bhoomi, specially in Gokul if I am born in any class of births, that will be my greatest fortune because if I am born here then the dust of the feet of one of your intimate devotee is bound to fall on me. Lord! The lives of Brajwāsīs are entirely your life alone. You are their everything. According to my faith getting the dust of their feet is the same as getting the dust of your feet. Even the Shrutis wish for the dust particles of Your feet up until today.”¹

Connected with the name of Brahmā ji this site is famous as Brahma Kund.

Karmaiti Bāi Ki Chhatari

The daughter of Parashurām ji, the family priest of Khandela state within Jaipur, is famous as Karmaiti Bāi. Her heart was steeped in the love of Shri Krishna because of the impressions of the past. She had no interest in marriage. Yet the family members considering her fit for marriage, married her. When people came to take her to the house of her in-laws, all family members became busy in preparations but the heart of Karmaiti started hankering for Vrindāvan. All of a sudden a thought flashed in her mind and in the silence of the midnight she left for her destination. She had never gone out of her house before this. Though she was going alone, but the eternal friend of his devotees, Nandanandan was with her. How far along did she travel during the night, nobody knows.

Morning came. Bhaktimati Karmaiti became apprehensive. At home everybody was distraught to find Karmaiti gone. They were

-
1. तद्भूरि भाग्यमिहजन्म किमप्यटाव्यां
यद गोकुलेऽपि कत माङ्घ्रिरजोभिषेकम् ।
यज्जीवितं तु निखिलं भगवान् मुकुन्द-
स्त्वद्यापि तत्पदरजः श्रुतिमृग्यमेव ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत रा० सु० नि० 10/14/34)

aware of the love of Karmaiti for the Lord. Parashurām ji went to the king and told him the complete story. The king sent horse riders in all directions.

Karmaiti was running when she heard the sound of the hooves of the horses. She became frightened and started looking for some place to hide. Nearby was a dead camel. The jackals and the vultures had eaten its flesh. The love intoxicated Karmaiti did not notice any foul smell coming from it. Absorbed in the colour of Shyām she hid inside the skin of that dead camel. By the grace of the Lord the foul smell felt like the fragrance of sandalwood instead. The horse riders did not even look that side. After completing their search they went back. Karmaiti coming out of the skin on the fourth day proceeded to Vrindāvan.

She arrived at Vrindāvan via Haridwār. At that time only true dispassionate devotees used to live in Vrindāvan.

After reaching Vrindāvan she started living at Brahma kund. Father Parashurām ji came to Vrindāvan looking for her. He could not find Karmaiti. One day climbing a tree the father saw Karmaiti as an ascetic absorbed in meditation. He went there. After he called out to her for a long time she gained some outer consciousness. The father requested her to return but she did not agree instead she started asking her father to worship and meditate on Shri Krishna.

When all this came to the knowledge of the king, he also came to have the darshan of Karmaiti. Looking at the love steeped condition of Karmaiti he requested her to allow him to get a hut built for her. True in the love of Shri Krishna Karmaiti had no need of any worldly comfort. It is said that the king built an umbrella at the place where she used to sit so that she could be sheltered from the rain and the sun.

In one corner of the Brahma kund the ruins of that *chhatari* (umbrella or canopy) is a burning example of the love of Karmaiti for Shri Krishna and her forbearance even today.

Shri Shri Ranga ji

Shri Niwāsāchārya ji used to live in Arahana nagar in south India. It is said that Shri Rāmānujāchārya ji himself came in the form of Rangadeishika to the house of Shrimati Ranga Laxmidevi, wife of Shri Niwāsāchārya ji.

One seat of Shri sect was present near Shri Gowardhan since the sixteenth century. The first Āchārya of that seat was saint Shri

Shathakopa. When Shri Rangadeishika ji came to Braj, he stayed with Shri Shri Niwāsāchārya ji who was virājmān on the seat at that time. Shri Āchāryashri made arrangements for his studies.

One rich merchant Shri Rādhākṛishna of a jain family from Mathurā wished to take the shelter of Shree sect. He was initiated as per the custom. When this news came to light, the family members objected initially but later they asked Swāmi ji to forgive them. His younger brother Shri Govindadās ji got himself initiated by Shri Rādhākṛishna ji.

Shri Godāmbā has described three wishes in the Ālawāra scriptures. First wish is that Shri Brajendra Nandan marry her, which was fulfilled by Shri Ranganāth ji. Second was to offer thousand pitchers of rice pudding to Shri Ranganāth ji which was fulfilled by Shri Ramānujāchārya ji. Her most important wish was to be virājmān with Shri Rangamannāra in Shri Vrindāvan which was fulfilled by Shri Rangadeishika ji.

Shri Rangadeishika Swāmi ji and Rādhākṛishna ji travelled to south for pilgrimage. Swāmiji went to Shri Rangam and prayed to Shri Ranganāth ji to fulfill the third wish of Shri Godāmbā ji. It is said that he got an indication of receiving the permission. Then the arrangement for idol etc were finalised. The decision of bringing Shri Ranga ji to Vrindāvan had already been made. With his father in law he went to Bhootapuri and completed the ceremony of infusing life in the idol. After making all arrangements and worshipping as per the customs he brought the idol of Shri Ranga ji to Vrindāvan. First Shri Thākur ji became virājmān in the Bhataroad Wāli Bagichi. Later after the installation in Laxmi Nārāyana temple, He remained there. Later, after the construction of present temple by Laxmichandra jain He has been virājmān there till date.

The madhur worship of Shri Godāmbā in the famous Ālawāra saints of south is commendable. In south in Shrirangam Shri Ranganāth ji used to wear the garland already worn by Shri Godāmbā. Her father used to look after the flower service of Shri Ranganāth ji. Shri Godāmbā used to help her father in picking the flowers and in making the garlands. She would wear the garlands first to check if they would look nice on Shri Ranganāth ji. Once when the flowers and garlands were offered, the priest found a long human hair in the garland. He was very angry. The father of Shri Godāmbā was called

and questioned. As he was also unaware, he asked his daughter about it. He reproached her and took over the task of flower collection and garland making from her. This made Shri Godāmbā extremely distraught. Next day when the garlands were offered to Shri Ranganāth ji He did not accept them and said He liked those garlands which His dear Godāmbā offers by wearing them first. The Āchārya and the servants were stunned. Later Shri Ranganāth ji married her Himself. That very Shri Godāmbā ji along with Shri Ranganāth ji is virājmān in this temple.

One night when Shri Rangadeishika Swāmi was sleeping in Vrindāvan, then Shri Rangamannāra giving darshan in the form of a young boy and a girl said, “Father! You did not arrange *laddoos* (kind of sweet) for us today.” Next morning when he inquired with the priest, really there were no laddoos with him.

Shri Godā Rangamannāra (Shrirangaji) spreading their Vaikuntha like grandeur even today are virājmān in Shri Vrindāvan.

Shri Govindadev ji

The name of Shri Roop Goswāmi Mahārāj, the disciple of Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Chaitanya is famous everywhere. Shri Govindadev ji had appeared in person and accepted his service and devotion.

One night Shri Govindadev ji said to Shri Roop Goswāmi in a dream, “I live in Gomā Teelā khirak (cow barn). One cow nurtures me by sprinkling me with her milk every day. Locate that place and take me out of there and arrange for my service.” Shri Roop ji got up early and he saw that a cow was offering her milk at a place on its own. After the cow left he took out the idol of Shri Govindadev ji from the ground. Doing the darshan of the deity full of beauty and sweetness Shri Roop ji felt very happy. King Mānsingh of Jaipur got the temple constructed for Shri Govindadev ji and made arrangements for service. That temple by the name of Govind temple is an attraction for countless people even today.

Shri Roop ji once became astounded and captivated by the beauty and sweetness of Shri Govindadev ji. He said-

O friend! If you have even a little attachment to your family and home then do not have the darshan of Shri Govindadev ji near Keshighāt Who is smiling a little, is beautifully bent at three places

with sweet sidelong glance and flute on the two lips and Who is radiating infinite beauty in all direction with His peacock feather, otherwise you will become detached from your home and family.¹

The goswāmis took Shri Govindadev ji to Jaipur because of the fear of the Yavans. Even today Shri Govindadev ji is attracting the hearts of millions of devotees with His enticing beautiful form.

Shri Roop Goswāmi ji Mahārāj

He was the younger brother of Shri Sanātan ji. Knowledge and devotion were his ornaments. The credit of the appearance of Shri Govindadev ji goes to him. He composed many scriptures. At one place he compared the braid of Priyāji with a snake. Reading this simile Shri Sanātan ji felt very sorry. He returned with this matter on his mind. Sanātan ji in his contemplation once was going inside Nitya Vilās Kunja after doing the darshan of Shri Rādhā kund. On the branch of a mango tree he saw Priyā ji swinging. Her waving braid was actually looking like a snake, seeing this Shri Sanātan ji felt very happy and satisfied. He started praising the special grace of Priyā ji on Shri Roop ji.

He did a great favour to all Vaishnavas by composing Scriptures like Ujjwala Neelamani and Bhakti Rasāmrita Sindhu.

Keshi Ghāt

समेधमानेन स कृष्णबाहुना
निरुद्धवायुश्चरणाश्च विक्षिपन् ।
प्रस्विन्नगात्रः परिवृत्तलोचनः
पपातलेण्डं विसृजन क्षितौव्यसुः ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/37/8)

Seeing all his efforts fail, the fear of Shri Krishna started making Kansa restless. Solitude used to prick him. He used to be obsessed

1. स्मेरां भङ्गीत्रयपरिचितां साच्चिविस्तीर्णदृष्टिं
वशीन्यस्ताधरकिशलयामुज्वलां चन्द्रकेण ।
गोविन्दाख्यां हरितनुमितः केशितीर्थोपकण्ठे
मा प्रेक्षिष्ठास्तव यदि सखे ! बन्धुसङ्गेस्ति रङ्गः ॥

(श्रीभक्ति रसामृतसिन्धु 1/2/239)

2. The hand of the inconceivable Shakti Lord Shri Krishna grew inside the mouth of Keshi to such an extent that his breathing stopped. Because of suffocation he started thrashing his feet. His body became soaked with sweat. The pupil of the eyes turned over. After some time his body becoming motionless fell down and he died.

only with the thought of killing Shri Krishna. But to cause any harm to the Lord of the entire universe, Almighty Shri Krishna was not within the power of Kansa.

Kansa called his intimate friend Keshi and explained everything to him. Demon Keshi was already looking for an opportunity to help his friend Kansa. Who knows if his death itself was inspiring him? He assumed the form of an ordinary horse and entered Gokul. Digging the ground with his hooves he started walking. Due to his movement, the wind felt like a storm. His body was so big that it seemed as though the black clouds had gathered.

Lord Krishna noticed that the Brajwāsīs were getting afraid by his neighing. The demon was looking only for Shri Krishna to fight. The Lord stood before him. Seeing this, the demon Keshi became angry and tried to attack but the Lord saved Himself. The One who is beyond senses and organs, that Lord Shri Krishna in a moment's time grabbing his hind legs and rotating him threw him far away. He pounced at Shri Krishna again but the Lord inserted His hand in his mouth. As the breathing was obstructed, Keshi died immediately.

This place of the killing of Keshi is famous as Keshi ghāt. The Lord liberated Keshi demon by His touch.

In Ādi Vārāha Purān shedding light on the significance of Keshi tirtha the Lord addressing the earth is saying-

गङ्गाशतगुणं पुण्यं यत्र केशी निपातितः
तत्रापि च विशेषोस्ति केशीतीर्थे वसुन्धरे ।
तस्मिन् पिण्डप्रदानेन गयापिण्डफलं लभेत् ॥

(आ० बा० पु०)

The place where Shri Krishna killed demon Keshi, it is hundred times more merit giving than Gangāji. O Vasundharei! It is the specialty of Keshi tirtha that doing pinda dān here gives the merit equal to that of doing pinda dān at Gayā ji.

Dheera-Sameera Ghāt

Most of the people are aware of Shri Jaidev ji, the composer of Geet Govind. He lost his father Bhojdev and mother Vāmādevi at a young age. He completed his studies in his childhood. He had special grace of the Lord. He was married to a virtuous girl named Padmāvati. His father had to return some money to a person called Niranjan. With an ill intention to grab Jaidev ji's house this person got his signature

on the papers. As soon as Niranjan got the signature by deceit, his daughter came to give him the news that his house had caught fire. Shree Jaidev ji went running and as soon as he entered Niranjan's house the fire extinguished on its own.

One day Jaidev ji was writing a poem. After writing half of the pada, he left to take a bath. The pada was

‘स्मर गरल खण्डनं मम शिरसि मण्डनम्’-

Shri Krishna assuming the form of Jaidev ji came and wrote further-

‘देहि मे पद पल्लवमुदारम्’

After writing the line He had prasād and laid down for rest. When Jaidev ji returned from Gangā ji after his bath he was stunned to see Padmāvati having prasād. Later learning everything he became happy to know that Shri Krishna took part in this composition Himself but at the same time was extremely grieved that Shri Krishna had to take the trouble.

Geet-Govind is steeped in the blissful and madhur pictures of Shri Krishna Leelā. It is said that when Jaidev ji came to Vrindāvan he became absorbed in the experiences of Shri Krishna Leelā. The depiction of his experiences is available as Geet-Govind. At one place describing the Leelā at Dheera- Sameera ghāt he is saying -

धीरसमीरे यमुनातीरे वसति वने वनमाली ।

गोपीपीनपयोधरमर्दन चञ्चलकरयुगशाली ॥

(श्रीगीत गोविन्द)

The enchanting bank of Shri Yamunā and the dense kunjās situated near it are the introducers of the madhur keli of Yugal. They come to these forest-*nikunja* everyday and get intoxicated. It is very difficult to describe these secret *nikunjas*. The seasons pervade as per the wish of the Yugal in these *nikunjas*. As per the requirement of the keli the pleasant weather appears, and accordingly the trees, vines and flowers appear making the beauty more and more blissful. All this happens at the indications of Vrindādevi. The Priyā-Priyatam engrossed in rasa along with the Braj maidens become intoxicated in *rasa-vihār*, *ranga vihār* and *ananga vihār*.

Even the breeze (*sameera*) became a little tired in the profoundness of such *nibhrīta* (secret and private) *nikunja keli*. It became slow (*dheera*) and sluggish due to carrying the weight of the particles of the rasa keli steeped in rasa of Priyatam. Therefore this site became famous as Dheera-Sameera ghāt.

Vanshi Vata

दशाब्दकृष्णपादांकलाच्छिताय नमो नमः ।
वंशीरवसमाकीर्ण वंशीवट नमोऽस्तुते ॥¹

(पद्म पुराण)

The eternally awaited nights of Rās commenced. The maidens waiting for them wistfully started counting every second. The dilemma of the heart, the restlessness of the mind and the heart beats gave some assurance and hope. And the desired night of autumn began.

The moon arose in the sky fully. Everywhere the cool moon light became dispersed. Suffusing the whole nature with their radiance, the rays of the moon bathed the banks of Yamunā. Accepting the hospitality of the Nature, the moon rays stopped short suddenly. It seemed as though a white sheet had been spread everywhere. In such an atmosphere, Priyatam came and became virājmān under the Vanshi vata. Taking His eternal companion the flute out He blew the mantra of love in it. That mantra of love became resonant in the whole Nature. The whole Nature was as though startled. This mantra was some kind of spell. It was the reflection of the yearful, hankering hearts of the crazy Braj maidens. Sweet sound was flowing from the flute-

चलहि राधिके सुजान तेरे हित गुण निधान,
रास रच्यो कुंवर कान्ह तट कलिन्द नन्दिनी ।
निर्तत युवति समूह राग रंग अतिकुतूह,
बाजत रस मूल मुरलिका आनन्दिनी ।
वंशीवट निकट जहाँ परम रम्य भूमि तहाँ,
सकल सुखद मलय बहे वायु मन्दिनी ॥

This love song attracted the gopis forcibly. Kishori Shri Rādhā and the sakhis heard that enchanting sound. On hearing it they became emotionally helpless and powerless-

निशम्य गीतं तदनङ्गवर्धनम्
ब्रजस्त्रियः कृष्णगृहीतमानसाः ।
आजग्मु रन्यो न्यमलक्षितो च मा
स यत्र कान्तो जवलोल कुण्डलाः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/29/4)

1. O site marked with the foot prints of ten years old Shri Krishna! Obeisance to you. O Vanshivata pervasive with the sound of the flute! Obeisance to you.

They forgot the household tasks and duties. They ran. Who had the memory to do shringār. They could not say anything to anybody. This passion enhancing song, the sound that tinkled the heart, the sound of the flute created eager restlessness for love, created a desire of the union with beloved. This sound clawing at the heart, making it restive and impatient, swaying and convulsing it started making them helpless and powerless.

They were not even aware of where they were going. Wearing long skirts of yellow, green, red, saffron and pink colours, they were running. The borders of their saris were waving. The earrings in the ears were swaying. The tinkling anklets were indicating their impatience for love. They felt blessed to find their *Jeewan Sarvaswa* before them.

These maidens looked at the beauty of Braj. Varieties of flowers were blooming there. The threefold breeze fragrant with the sweet moist smell of Juhi, Chameli, Ketaki, Kunda, Mandār and other flowers was blowing. The whole atmosphere was intoxicating. This bank of Yamunā started resonating with the tinkling sound of their anklets. The beautiful waves of Shri Yamunā gave an indication of their desire to touch Priyatam by swelling themselves. Oh! That night bathed in moon light, Priyatam Shyām Sundar with maidens intoxicated with love, everything was beautiful and blissful. Beholding this splendour of beauty, even the Cupid became bewildered and crazy and just stood there. Priyatam spoke-

दृष्टं वनं कुसुमितं राकेश कर रञ्जितम् ।

यमुनानिल लीलैःजत्तरुपल्लव शोभितम् ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/29/21)

You have already seen the beauty of the forest. You have also seen the beauty of Shri Vrindāvan filled with the fragrance of flowers of different colours, bathed by the rays of full moon and adorned by the trees that are being swayed by the blowing wind carrying the touch of Yamunā water. Therefore now go back to your respective homes. But after drinking the exquisite beauty of Shri Krishna, His beautiful lotus like face surrounded with silky smooth hair, the beauty of His sweet radiant cheeks, these damsels attached to the sweet smiles unable to follow even Shri Krishna's preaching on righteousness, could not go back.

Surrounded by Braj damsels who are the forms of love, Shri Krishna was looking resplendent as the Moon. He kept providing pleasure to the Braj damsels through different rasa endeavours. This vihār- vilās of Shri Krishna with the gopis was divine and transcendental. Oh how was that resplendence-

उपगीयमान उद्गायन् वनिताशतयूथपः ।
मालां विभ्रद् वैजयन्तीं व्यचरन्मण्डयन् वनम् ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/29/44)

The romp and revelry of Rās rasa broke out at the enchanting banks of Shri Yamunā. Those great ones who saw, felt defeated trying to describe it. Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji gave her contribution in it-

रास रस उल्लास थिरक्यो,
तरणि तनया के पुलिन पै ।
हास की छवि वदन पै ज्यों,
चन्द्रिका छिटकी नलिन पै ॥ रास रस... ।
युग युगों का प्यार मानों
मूर्त हो थिरका विपिन में ।
राग रंग अभंग अनुपम
नृत्य बन ठुमका विजन में ॥ युग युगों ..
कामिनी हरि संग शोभित
दामिनी ज्यों नील घन में,
देखिकै फूले लता द्रुम
चन्द्रमा विहँसा गगन में । कामिनी हरि संग ।
राग बन अनुराग छलका,
नूपुरों की छम छनन में ।
हाव भाव विलास वैभव
बह चला उन्मद हँसन में ॥ राग बन ... ।

(ब्रज विभव की अपूर्व श्री भक्तिमती ऊषा बहन जी ग्रन्थ से साभार)

Looking at the beautiful bank of Shri Yamunā those damsels

नद्याः पुलिनमाविश्य गोपीभिर्हिम बालुकम् ।

रेमे तत्तरलानन्दकुमुदामोद वायुना ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/29/45)

After that Shri Krishna and the gopis came to the bank of Shri Yamunā. That bank was becoming cool with the touch of the waves of Shri Yamunā ji. It was being served by the gentle breeze carrying the sweet fragrance of Kumidini. It was lit by the cool and white moonlight. At such an enchanting bank the Lord started sporting with His own forms the gopis.

This site collecting all the endeavours of Rās rasa, the arts of keli and the rasa drops that were scattered in those nights desired by these maidens who attained divine and transcendental bliss, is getting blessed even today.

Vanshivata Bihāri Thākur is virājmān here. The pictures of the Āchāryas of all the four sects are etched here. Under this Vata (banyan) tree the Vanshi (flute) was played therefore this site came to be known as Vanshi vata.

Shri Gopeshwar Mahādev

तथाऽस्तु चोक्त्वा भगवान वृन्दारण्ये मनोहरे ।
 कालिन्दी निकटे राजनूरासमण्डल मण्डिते ॥
 निकुञ्ज पार्श्व पुलिने वंशीवट समीपतः ।
 शिवोऽपि चासुरि मुनिर्नित्यं वासं चकार ह ॥

(श्रीगर्ग सहिता 2/26/31-32)

Lord Shiva was absorbed in the meditation of Shri Krishna at Kailāsh. The night of Mahā Rās had arrived. Shankar ji came to Vrindāvan with a wish to have darshan of the Rās Leelā of his ishta Shri Krishna, Mistress Shri Rādhā, their bodily manifestation the Braj maidens. Extremely beautiful Kishories of Goloka who were guarding the gates of Rās mandal stopped Shri Shankar (the foremost amongst the Vaishnavas) from entering, saying, “In this solitary and private Rās mandal Shri Krishna alone is the man.” They said that if his desire to do the darshan of Shri Krishna is intense then he should bathe in Mānsarovar due to which he will attain the form of a gopi quickly and then he will become entitled to enter the Rās mandal.

So it happened. After bathing in Mānsarovar, Pashupatināth the Ādi Guru Shri Shankar ji came to Rās mandal. He felt blessed after getting the darshan of Priyatam Shyām Sundar, His beloved Shri Rādhā and their own forms these Braj maidens virājmān in the Rās mandal bathed in the cool rays of crores of moons, divinely intoxicated with the threefold breeze that was fragrant with the blooming vines and trees.

Shri Shankar ji sang hymns and prayed that he gets to live forever near the feet of Shri Krishna in Vrindāvan. Lord Shri Krishna agreed.

Since then Lord Shiva lives in the *nikunja* at the bank of Shri Yamunā near Vanshi vata. He is virājmān in this form as one of the four main *rasik* Mahādevs of Braj.

Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji Ki Baithak

There is a baithak of Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji. Here he gave the divine darshan of Braj. Once when a Vaishnava refused to take prasād without taking a bath first, Mahāprabhuji explained to him the significance of the prasād and told him to partake it without considering purity and impurity. He also explained to him the significance of Vrindāvan.

Gyān Gudari

This site of the discussion of knowledge of the gopis with Uddhavji is famous as Gyān Gudari.

Shri Jagannāth Prasād ji Bhaktamāli

Shri Shri Bhaktamāli ji was born in Chāchorā village within Gunā district of Madhyapradesh on the tenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Māgh (jan-feb) in samvat 1955. He completed his studies there itself and started teaching. He came to Shri Vrindāvan and after having the darshan of Bābā Rāmkrishnadās ji felt gratified and blessed. On Bābā's inspiration he got himself initiated by the mahanta of Tatiyā sthān Shri Bhagawāndās ji.

There is a delightful story behind his being called the 'Bhaktamāli'. The story heard from his mouth directly is being given below-

A great ascetic sister once very affectionately and respectfully requested him, "Bābā! Please tell us one of your personal intimate experience. I have heard that Shri Lakshaman ji, Rām ji and Sitā ji have given you darshan. Please tell us about that incident."

In his innocent language, after being requested a lot, Shri Bhaktamāli ji said in small and incomplete sentences, "Once in a dream Shri Rām ji, Sitā ji and Lakshaman ji were sitting in one place. Shri Rām ji was lying with his head in the lap of Shri Lakshaman ji. Hearing the footsteps from somewhere far, raising his head Shri Rām asked Lakshaman ji, "Who is it?" Shri Lakshaman ji replied, "That same naïve and innocent, our Bhaktamāli." This happened when he was half asleep. Shri Jagannāth Prasād ji used to go to Shri Hari Bābā sometimes for recitation. He thought to himself that if some saint addressed him as Bhaktamāli that day, only then will he consider the dream true. In the morning he received the invitation of Shri Haribābā to recite Bhaktamāl. When he arrived there for the recitation then Shri

Hari Bābā addressed him as Bhaktamāli for the very first time. Since then he became known as Bhaktamāli in the Vaishnava world.

The innocence of Shri Bhaktamāli ji had to be seen. He was so naïve that his conduct remained pure and popular. A few ascetics once came to him. He requested them to take prasād. He himself was going somewhere to do the recitation. Requesting the ascetics to go to his house he went away for the recitation and to arrange other materials. The ascetics proceeded towards his house. When he was returning to his house from the market with the materials, on the way he met the ascetics again. He asked, “Where are you going Mahārāj? You must go only after having the prasād.” The nature of the wife of Shri Bhaktamāliji was harsh. When the ascetics went to the house and spoke about having prasād, maiyā said in anger, “Pandit to gaya chulhei mein, tum jāo bhād mein.” meaning that panditji i.e. Bhaktamāliji has gone to the cooking stove and you can go to the oven. The sādhus told him the same thing and started moving. Panditji said, “Mahārāj! She has said the truth. Since the time I invited you I kept thinking about taking this and that for making prasād. Mahārāj she knows everything. Please do not get upset and come with me.”

He never used to loose his temper. Placating them anyhow he brought the ascetics home. Prasād was prepared. The food was offered to the Lord and the ascetics sat down for taking prasād. When Panditji went to the well to fetch water, his wife came to the ascetics and said, “Jo Yahān Baitha kar Khāi, ‘Gāi’ Khāi.” Meaning the one who sits here and eats, eats gāi (gāi means cow and to sing). Now the ascetics lost their patience completely. They stood up to go. Panditji also came back just then. He was stunned to see this scene. On hearing everything from the ascetics, Pandit ji said, “Brothers! She is very intelligent. What she has said is befitting of a Vaishnava. Before having the prasād there should be chanting and the singing of the names of the Lord. She meant when you have prasād here, have only after singing. So please have prasād after some singing.” On hearing all this, his wife melted and her nature changed.

Shri Bhaktamāli ji was very popular as well. All the Vaishnava sects used to respect him. Priyā-Priyatam were manifest to him. He was a saint of a high order. The scene of his death, his extraordinary character is shining in the Vaishnava world as a constellation.

No such incident has been sighted even in the scriptures and Purānas where the bath water of the dead body was drunk by the people. The bath water of the body of Shri Bhaktamāli ji and the clothes worn by the body were taken by many devotees as *prasādi* with reverence. What more can be a better example of his popularity?

After attaining the Lord he got admission in the service of Priyā-Priyatam on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Bhādra (aug-sep) of samvat 2041 for good.

Jagannāth Ghāt

This is a two hundred year old story. On the bank of Shri Yamunā in Shri Vrindāvan there used to live a Ramānandi saint by the name of Shri Haridās ji.

He used to call the name of his *Ishta dev* humbly day and night with a desire to have the darshan of the Lord. Suddenly one day seeing a shyām coloured delicate child with curly hair, sweet smiles, jewel adorned divine crown, glittering earrings, he felt delighted. That bluish dark child requested Shri Haridās ji to go to Jagannāthpuri and get the idol of Lord Shri Jagannāth from there. Shri Haridās ji went to Puri. He narrated the whole incident to the priests. He told the story to the king also. The king did not like the idea of breaking the ancient tradition but this was already ordained by the god. Shri Jagannāth ji clearly told the king in the dream about his wish to go to Vrindāvan. The king started asking for forgiveness from Shri Haridās ji.

After the religious ablutions, Shri Jagannāth ji, Shri Baldāu ji and Shri Subhadrā ji were seated and with full arrangements Shri Haridās ji was sent off to Vrindāvan. Those idols virājmān in Puri came to Vrindāvan and are virājmān till date in the Jagannāth Temple.

Many incredible and astounding acts and deeds of His are famous.

This is a story about twenty five years old. One maiyā was offering tulsi to Shri Jagannāth ji. Shri Jagannāth ji appeared. His face became brilliant. Experiencing His breath, she fainted. After a long time she became conscious.

Once in the temple, one stick was found. It was very shiny. It looked divine. They started worshipping it. From the day the stick was located, the opulence of Shri Jagannāth ji started growing. One day mātā ji worshipped the stick at the bank of Yamunā ji in sixteen ways. After the worship the stick started walking and vanished in Shri Yamunā.

Many other similar miraculous incidents about Shri Jagannāth are famous.

Tātiā Sthān

Which Vaishnava is unaware of the conduct of Shri Rasikadev ji, who was devoutly dedicated to guru. His disciple Shri Lalitkishoridev ji started the service in Tātiā sthān.

Shri Gangārām born in Māthur caste at the bank of river Chāmila in Bhadāwar Pradesh was overwhelmed and entranced when he heard the discourse of Swāmi Haridās ji in Jagannāthpuri. Upon arriving in Vrindāvan he kept looking for someone who could talk about the same rasa. His curiosity kept increasing. At last he became the disciple of Shri Rasikadev ji and became known by the name of Shri Lalitkishori dev ji. Gurudev gave spiritual instructions on Braj rasa but his internal demand was for something else. He prayed, “Gurudev! Because of your grace I received the grace of Braj rasa effortlessly. Please give me all that which was sung by Swāmi ji Mahārāj with abandon.” It is said that Shri Lalitkishori dev ji started weeping embracing the leaves and vines of Nidhi vana. When Shri Rasikadev ji came to know about this he called his disciple and explained the complete secrets of his worship and said-

षट् आचारज तिनकी वाणी, राखी हुती छिपाय ।
दई निकसि रासि निजघन की मनकी बात बताय ॥

After getting the form of worship, mantra, earthen pot and a bundle of tattered rags from Swāmi ji Mahārāj, at first he kept wandering in Vrindāvan. Later he came to the bank of Shri Yamunā and started living there. The servants and the disciples made that place safer by putting up a bamboo framework (Tāt).

Once someone went and complained to King Jaisingh that Shri Rasikadev ji is not particular about his thoughts and actions and does not observe a fast on Ekādashi. To inquire the King sent his messenger. There was a celebration on that day. One Brahmin came and offered a pot full of sweets. After some time another Brajwāsi came and offered a dry chapati. Swāmi ji distributed the sweets and happily had the chapati himself.

Shri Goswāmi Chandālāl ji shedding light on the life of Shri Lalitkishori dev ji in one of his poems has made a beautiful depiction of the *nikunja rasopāsanā* of Shri Lalitkishori dev ji. That verse is being given below-

गङ्गाराम की बात मोपै कैसे कहिजात,
रसिक अनन्य प्यारे अति ही अमाने हैं ।
स्वामी हरिदास जू की आस बनवास,
श्रीविहारिन विहारीजू के रूप में समाने हैं ।
काहू सौ न कहैं सुनें रहनि अनूठी रहें,
नित सुख लहें प्रेम बानि रस साने हैं ।

कृष्ण सो न सूधे भये तिन्हें इन खेंचि लये,
रस में छक्काय दये जानै सोई जानै हैं ॥

(वृन्दावन प्रकाशमाला)

Shri Lalitkishori dev ji remained engrossed in his unique lifestyle steeped in the beauty of Priyā-Priyatam day and night.

The deity Shri Mohini Bihāri Thākur attracting thousands of emotional devotees with His bewitching form is also a self manifest Thākur. It is said that this Thākur deity appeared during digging in Deega and is virājmān here by its own wish.

At this site the deities Shri Rasik Vihāri ji, Dāu ji, Prānvallabha ji, Dampati Kishore ji, Shri Thākur are virājmān.

The enchanting Nature, silent and secluded site, resonant with the chirping of the birds and calls of peacocks, spreading its blissfulness is attracting everybody.

Raman Reti

These Braj maidens intoxicated in vihār and vilās with Lord Shri Krishna became a little proud of their good fortune. Even the pride of these damsels, the embodiments of 'Tatsukhei Sukhitwam', was only to give happiness to the Priyatam. Therefore-

तासां तत्सौभगमदं वीक्ष्य मानं च केशवः ।
प्रशमाय प्रसादाय तत्रैवान्तरधीयत ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/29/48)

These milkmaids are always the bought servants of Shri Krishna. They sulk and assume pride only to give happiness to Him. To bear the separation of Priyatam Shri Krishna became difficult for these Braj maidens. Asking His whereabouts from the trees and the vines and enjoying His Leelā, they started looking for Him. Shri Krishna did not tolerate the pride of love of His beloved Shri Shri Rādhā even and leaving Her became unmanifest.

All cowherd damsels engrossed in the past memories and thoughts of Shyām Sundar became restless and impatient. Priyatam also could not bear their restlessness for long.

तासामाविरभूच्छ्रैरिः स्मयमान मुखाम्बुजः ।
पीताम्बरधरः स्रग्वी साक्षान्मन्मथमन्मथः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/32/2)

1. Shri Krishna disappeared from the middle of those damsels to destroy their pride and vanity of love that surfaced in them suddenly and also to give them more joy and bliss.

At that moment Shri Shyām Sundar appeared from the middle of those Braj maidens. Wearing garland and *pitāmbar* He was smiling. That beauty of His was capable of churning the heart of the Kāmdev even. Seeing Him these Braj maidens became elated and immediately came to Him. The nature of love is strange. Someone quenched her eternal thirst by touching His arm, another took His *pitāmbar* in her hand and became lost in some blissful memory, someone expressed her restlessness of love a little by taking His lotus like hand in her hand and someone started drinking His exquisite beauty without blinking her eyes and became absorbed in bliss. These love crazy damsels spread their shawls and Shyām Sundar became *virājmān* on them and started giving joy to the damsels.

By having the dust particles of Whose feet, all the desires of the devotees become fulfilled, by merging the mind alone with Whom, the bondages of the actions of the yogis are broken, That Krishna only...

अनुग्रहाय भूतानां मानुषं देहमास्थितः ।
भजते तादृशीः क्रीडा या श्रुत्वा तत्परो भवेत् ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/33/37)

No doubts should be had about this that in order to grace the living beings, the Lord manifests in a human body and does *Leelās* accordingly so that on hearing those *Leelās* the human beings become attracted and devoted towards Him. Deluded by *Yogamāyā* no one except these *gopis* could comprehend this secret. In the morning these damsels, realising the wish of the Lord, left for their respective homes,

विक्रीडितं ब्रजवधूभिरिदं च विष्णोः
श्रद्धान्वितोऽनुश्रुणुयादथ वर्णयेच्च ।
भक्तिं परां भगवति प्रतिलभ्य कामं
हृद्रोगमाश्वपहिनोत्यचिरेण धीरः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/33/40)

Just by listening with faith and devotion about the highest *rasa* filled efforts of love and this secret *keli* of *Priyā-Priyatam* and their very own forms these damsels, all the sins die and the ailments of the heart are destroyed easily. This purest *Kām* causes detachment from the world.

This site of *Rās-Raman* became famous by the name of *Raman Reti*.

Dāwānal Kund

Shri Krishna came to the banks of Shri *Yamunā* to graze the cows. The cows entered deep into the dense forest while grazing. The cowherds went far into *Munjātavi* looking for the cows. Looking at

the forest fire all around, the frightened sakhās started praying to Shri Krishna to protect them and their cows.

Shri Krishna asked all of them to close their eyes and then drank the forest fire. This place where the forest fire was drunk became famous as Dāwānal (forest conflagration) kund. It is possible that Munjātavi extended up to the Dāwānal kund. Even today this kund is singing the songs of the possible, impossible and otherwise possible acts and deeds of Shri Krishna for saving His own devotees and for drinking the fire.

It is also believed that Kanhaiyā along with His sakhās and the cows started returning to Braj. On the way they saw a lake. Kanhaiyā said to His sakhās, “Brothers, look at this lake at the bank of Shri Yamunā surrounded by dense trees. Its water is clean and pure. Let us first bathe here and then proceed to Braj.” The temperature of the body of Shri Krishna had also risen due to drinking of fire. Therefore He bathed in that lake with His sakhās. This place of bathing after the drinking of the forest fire became famous by the name of Dāwānal kund.

Topi Wāli Kunja

Shri Mukunda ji was the last of the twelve main disciples of Shri Harivyās Devāchārya ji. He was staunchly dedicated to Shri Harivyās dev ji since his childhood.

The seventh mahanta of this seat was Shri Rāmdās ji. He used to wear a cap or topi because of which this site became popular as Topi kunja.

There has been a great saint from here by the name of Shri Mādhavdās ji. He used to recite Bhaktamāl. Many great souls including Shri Jagannāth Prasād Bhaktamāli had studied Bhaktamāl from him.

There is an old Rās mandal here where Rās is organised by all Rās troupes turn by turn every day.

Mādhav Vilās

This temple was constructed by Shri Mādhav Singh ji, the king of Jaipur on the instruction of his guru in samvat 1981. This is a place of Nimbārka sect. There are three darshans here. They are of Thākurshri Nritya Gopāl, Shri Rādhā Gopāl and the Āchārya Panchak. This place is unique in itself.

On the grand building there is an excellent sample of craftsmanship.

Shri Shri Pād Bābā Mahārāj

It will not be an exaggeration to call the revered Bābā the patron and nurturer of the culture and the geography of Vrindāvan in the current times. Except Pujya Bābā no one else had the capacity to take the responsibility of these two burning subjects. Pujya Bābā was capable of showing direction to the *sādhakas* wandering here and there in search of exalted states of spirituality. If he could not quench the spiritual thirst of any *sādhaka* then who could? There has been the contributions of many great saints in bringing the *nikunja* worship and Nitya vihār in the fore front of spirituality but his contribution while completely respecting the beliefs of the Rasikatrayee (the three Rasikas: Swāmi Haridāsji, Mahāprabhu Harivansha ji and Harirām Vyāsji Mahārāj) in informing the Indians and outsiders about this subject and impressing them is equally great. The work done by Bābā, which is a unique confluence of action and devotion and polished with knowledge, will have to be kept engraved on our hearts for ages and ages.

The questions regarding his past life, the place he was related to, where his parents lived, place of his guru are based on wild guesses. But one thing is commonly accepted that he was certainly related to the royal family of Panna. In my very long acquaintance with him I don't remember him talking about his previous āshram. He was a true sanyāsi who never turned back after taking sanyās. A rare saint bound within the conventions of the scriptures he was like gold purified in fire. This was always evident from his personality.

He had accepted Brajeishwari Shri Rādhārāni as his guru. What can I say about his deep penetration and absorption in the mādhyurya worship and Leelā? While respecting all the sects-

नहिं बकुला नहीं बीज है, अद्भुत रस यह आई ।
पावेगो सोई भैया, देहि हरिदासी जाहि ॥

Shri Haridās ji Mahārāj is believed to be the incarnation of Shri Lalitā ji. Despite Bābā's acceptance of a synthesized view of the sensibilities of the *Āchāryas* of Nitya Vihār (Swāmi Shri Haridās ji, Mahāprabhu Harivansh and Harirām Vyās ji), he did not allow the stream of his emotion to be bound by these limitations. Seeing the generous and magnanimous views of Bhaktimati Ushā Behen ji he had said, "Many of my thoughts and beliefs are same as that of Behen ji." About her renunciation and detachment he used to say, "Despite achieving any level of wealth and opulence, the worldly people are

naturally inclined and attracted to the renunciate, and this is how one should live in Braj.” At one place he says, “The lineage or the tradition of any sage that received great honour and respect in life, commenced with renunciation and concluded into completeness.”

Following the path of knowledge he constantly dived into meditation yoga and Leelā contemplation. The action also became established in him with that same completeness. He dedicated himself to the protection of the culture of Braj, its environment, the illegal digging of the ancient sites with a feeling of serving the Lord. What do I say looking at him absorbed in Leelā contemplation with the continuous flow of rasa of devotion from his eyes. Engrossed in hearing about such incidents again and again from him and seeing him in the state of samādhi many time with these physical eyes of mine, what do I write. Where ever he was, he seemed complete. He was such a tall personality that after saying a lot about him still that much more remains to be told.

He remained dedicated to the culture of India and Braj. It was his wish to promote and propagate this culture in the world. For the upliftment and development of this he was inspired toward the project of Shāshwata Bhārati Vishwa Vidyālaya. His attention went to the necessity of protecting the beloved cows of Nandanandan. And the thought of the protection of the culture of this place arose in him.

Now every pore of his body remained ready to enter the Nitya Leelā. He told many times about leaving the body but the heart did not want to separate from his people. Therefore it was difficult to believe his indifference towards medicines, for which he told one sister, “Now it is time to go. What is the point in nourishing this body now?”

Always active towards giving a form to his intentions and resolves, revered Bābā broke his attachments to these also at the time of ending his worldly Leelā and on 31st December 1996 bowing to Lord Sun, he disappeared from these physical eyes.

Chhaliyā Thākur (Shri Shri Ānandamayī Mā)

The followers of Ānandamayī Mā decided to buy the land on which nowadays Shri Ramakrishna Sewāshram hospital is situated. They took Mā to show that land. Mā said, “Brother! This is not the land that I saw in the dream. In that land there was a temple in front of a particular tree.”

The plot in front of this land where nowadays Mā’s āshram is situated had already been bought by Sri Ramakrishna Sewāshram. However they did not find the plot suitable for their proposed hospital. They requested Mā that if she didn’t have any objection, they could

take the plot selected by her followers and she could have the one bought by them. The plot that Mā had seen in her dream was the one bought by the Sewāshram. The tree and the temple were there. So the land plots were exchanged.

A grand temple was constructed. The question of the installation of the idols came up. They asked Mā. She told them about installing a Shri Krishna deity in a particular posture as seen by her in the dream. In her mind one line started flashing on its own-

‘छलिया, छलियो ना’ (O trickster do not trick me)

One day the queen mother Vijayārāje Sindhiyā came to her. During the conversation she told Mā, “I had gotten a grand temple built in Gwālior. I asked for a beautiful idol of Shri Krishna for installation. But the idol that arrived is not in tribhangi posture instead with one leg ahead of the other it looks as if it is ready to walk. What should be done?”

Mā replied immediately, “Send Him to me.” Seeing the idol Mā said that the Thākur had given her darshan in this very posture in the dream.

By chhal i.e. by tricking the queen mother this Thākur deity started residing here and thus became popular as Chhaliyā Thākur.

Mā was already singing, ‘Chhaliyā, Chhaliyo Nā.’

Shri Shri Rādhāvinod Thākur- (Tarās Wālā Temple)

The story of the appearance of Shri Shri Rādhāvinod Thākur is very sweet and delightful. We are giving it below-

Shri Bānchhārām ji was the officer of Tarās state. He was very devoted. Every day he used to bathe in the river. One day when he was bathing in river Kārtoyā, he clearly heard, ‘Take me out of the water and take me home.’ But nothing was seen. Next day the same thing happened. The third day he felt something touching him in the water. When he picked it up, it was an idol which later became famous as Vinod Thākur.

From there Shri Thākur ji came to the house of Shri Vanamālirāi ji by His own will. There He bewitched the only daughter of Rāi Sāhib with His sweet smile. Her name was Rādhā. Vinod Thākurji would manifest and perform Leelā with her in person. One day holding the border of her sari He asked her to marry Him. Meanwhile Rādhā became ill. Thākur Vinod ji said to her mother in a dream, “Rādhā will not survive. There is a dry Deodār tree in your garden. From the wood of that tree, get an idol made and marry her with me.” As soon as the idol became ready, Rādhā left her body. Here on one hand Rādhā was

cremated and on the other hand that idol was installed with Shri Thākur ji. Vinod Bihāri Thākur now became Shri Rādhā Vinod Bihāri Thākur.

This is an incident of 1892 AD. Shri Thākur ji asked the priest while he was half asleep to get hookah. When Shri Vanamālirāi ji came for darshan, the priest told him everything. He arranged for the hookah but one doubt still remained.

One day when Shri Jagadbandhu ji came there he made Vanmāli ji hear the gad- gad sound of the hookah. Vanamāli ji clearly heard the sound and his faith in Shri Vinod Thākur became even more steadfast.

After a few days Shri Vanamāli ji came to Braj with the same Shri Thākur Deity. He would live at Shri Rādhā-kund for some time and in Vrindāvan for some time.

Child Devotee Omprakāsh

He was born in Tonka village near Jaipur in 1926 AD. He was highly devoted to the Lord since his childhood. He passed his high school examination. His feeling for Vrindāvan started becoming more and more intense. At last he came to Vrindāvan.

With love for Shri Krishna, dispassion and detachment from the rest of the world, he started chanting the name day and night.

One day with a firm resolution to have darshan of Shri Krishna he started a fast. Such circumstances prevailed that his fast kept continuing. Despite being told not to continue by many saints including Shri Hari Bābā, he remained resolute.

Omprakāsh ji considered Shri Nārāyana Swāmi as his guru. He was going to come to give him milk to drink. Omprakāsh ji had also agreed that if Swāmi ji will order him to drink he will certainly take it.

Today was the 69th day of the fast of Omprakāsh ji. Hearing that Shri Nārāyan Swāmi will give milk to Omprakāsh ji many devotees of Vrindāvan assembled at the bank of Yamunā for his darshan where he was virājmān.

By the time everybody could assemble, the worldly Leelā of Omprakāsh ji had come to an end. Certainly after getting the darshan of Shri Krishna, he had become overwhelmed. The premi devotees could not appreciate his stubbornness. In Braj Bhāv, the transaction or the trade is that of love, in which you have to give and only give.

Kāthiyā Bābā Āshram

The place of Shri Kāthiyā Bābā is on the Gurukul road in front of the Munger wālā temple. Many great saints have been from here.

Kātyāyani Peetha

This site is near the garden of Shri Ranga ji. The darshan of goddess Shri Kātyāyani is here.

Recently attracting many devotees with his miracles, Siddha Ganesh ji is virājmān in a grand form by his own will here.

In Vrindāvan the following sites are also worth visiting.

Shri Roopmanohar ji, Vardhamān kunjja, Barasāniyān kunjja, Faujdār kunjja, Jeewāram kunjja, Mahottarā wāli kunjja, Kānpur wāli Kunja, Khāka chauka, Tikāri ghāt, Madanmohan kunjja, Temple of Shri Haridev ji, Brahmachāri temple, Rādhā Bāg, Temple of Shri Sādhu Mā, Rādhā niwās, Munger temple, Atal vana, Keiwār vana, Udiyā bābā āshram, Shri Haribābā āshram, Shri Jugal Bihāri temple, Jugal ghāt, Temple of Shri Yashodānanda ji, Bhramar ghāt, Vihār ghāt, Govind ghāt etc.

Alaukik Nām Temple

Near Kātyāyani peetha at the back of Chār Sampradāya there is Alaukik Nām Temple. The specialty of this place is that on the bodies of Shri Thākur deities the names are etched. Continuous nonstop singing of the names is the beauty of this temple. It is said that the founder of this temple mahanta Shri Rāmeshwarānanda ji got an inspiration to establish this temple.

The consecration of the idol in this temple was done by Bābā Shripād. Due to the kind of service done by the first priest and the love and affection showered by him on Shri Thākur, a remarkability has come in the Idols. Priest Tulasidās was an udiā saint. He was very loving and caring to all. This nature of his was god gifted because of which he was very popular. As such people are needed by god also, last year at a young age he left this world leaving his memories in the minds of many.

Madan Mohan ji

Shri Gadādhār Bhatt ji was the disciple of Shri Raghunāth Bhatt Goswāmipād. He started the service of Shri Madan Mohan ji here. Shri Gowardhan Bhatt ji was a great scholar from his tradition.

The service of Thākur ji and Vasanta and Holi celebrations are worth seeing.

New Sites Worth Seeing

Gambheerā (Bhramar Ghāt), Vaijayanti (Gyān Gudari), Godāvihār, Sudāmā Kutī, Gore Dāu jī, Shri Krishna- Balrāma temple, Nrityagopāl temple, Pāgal bābā temple, Chār Sampradāya Āshram, Chaitanya Kutī, Chhattisgarh Kunja.

Till now you were reading about the Leelā sites of Vrindāvan, now let us enjoy the sites that are nearby.

Mānta Gāon

मृत्तिका निर्मित बृहत् पात्र 'मांट' नाम ।
माटोत्पत्ति प्रशस्त-ए हेतु माट ग्राम ॥

(भ० २०)

The earthen pot that is used for filling water and for churning the curd is called Mānta. Even today Mānta pots are used in big quantities in Braj. In ancient times very big sized Mānta pots were used for milk and yogurt. It is believed that they used to be made here. Since then this village is known for its Mānta.

This is about two miles from Bhāndeera vana in the south and about five miles from Vrindāvan.

Many great saints have been from Mānta grām. The life of Bairu bābā was full of miracles. For the safety of the villagers he used to appear unexpectedly.

Shri Sneihiram jī is famous for his rasiyās (padas of holi). He used to have prasād only after having darshan of Shri Bihāri jī. His mental service was siddha. It is said that once his sister in law was bringing food. Fearing that his brother will have the food before it was offered to the Lord, he offered the food mentally. His elder brother became angry and started cursing him. He ran with a stick to beat Shri Sneihī jī. The food that Shri Sneihiram jī was offering spread in the field. Even the pot on the head of his sister in law was found empty. Shri Sneihiram jī was a devotee of a very high order.

Bilwavana

तपः सिद्धि प्रदायैव नमो बिल्ववनाय च ।
जनार्दन नमस्तुभ्यं बिल्वेशाय नमोस्तु ते ॥

(भविष्योत्तर पुराण)

O Bilwavana, giver of the accomplishment of austerities! Obeisance to you.

Afflicted by constant trouble and turmoil in Gokul Nanda Bābā, Upananda ji and other cowherds came to Shri Vrindāvan and started living here. Shri Krishna and Balrāma used to go for grazing from here with their sakhās. In the dense shade of these very trees Kanhaiyā used to rest with his sakhās and the cows. They used to eat the fruits of these trees. The group of the sakhās used to remain absorbed in amusements. This site of the dense forests of Bilwa became famous as Bilwa vana.

The Penance Site of Shri Laxmi ji

There is a temple of Shri Laxmi ji here. It is believed that Shri Laxmi ji felt a strong desire to see the Rās Leelā of Lord Shri Krishna. She left for Braj. The darshan of Rās Leelā is possible only by the grace of the Braj maidens, the embodiments of devout love. Therefore Shri Laxmi ji could not get entry into the Rās. Only after a lot of pleading was she allowed to stay in Braj. Shri Laxmi ji in order to get blessed by doing penance is living in Braj even today.

कस्यानुभावोऽस्य न देव विद्महे
तवाङ्घ्रि रेणु स्पर्शाधिकारः ।
यद्वाञ्छया श्रीर्ललनाऽऽचरत्तपो
विहाय कामान् सुचिरं धृतव्रता ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत)

This forest is in the north western quarter of Shri Vrindāvan across Shri Yamunā.

There is a baithak of Gosāin Shri Vithalnāth ji.

Krishna Kund

बिल्ववने कृष्णकुण्डे जे करे स्नान ।
सर्व पापे मुक्त से परम भाग्यवान् ॥

(भ० २०)

Nearby is Krishna Kund. As per its name and quality, it is the granter of the devotion at the feet of Beloved Shri Krishna to the devotees bathing here.

It is about one mile from Bilwa vana.

1. The Nāga wives singing hymns of praise to Lord Shri Krishna said ----- Lord! We are unable to understand because of which penance Kāliya nāg has become worthy of receiving the dust of your feet. Your charan raja is so rare and difficult to achieve that even your wife Shri Laxmi ji had to do penance for many days following rules and regulations renouncing all material enjoyments.

Mān Sarowar

छॉड़ि दै मानिनी मान मन धरिबौ ।
 प्रणत सुन्दर सुघर, प्राणवल्लभ नवल,
 वचन अधीन सों इतौ कत करिवो ।
 जपत हरि विवस तव नाम प्रति पद विमल,
 मनसि तव ध्यान ते निमिष नहिं टरिबो ॥

(हि० चौ 83)

Fond of perpetual rasa keli, Shri Krishna and His beloved Shri Rādhā along with their own forms, the Braj maidens constantly remain engaged in planning ever new rasa events. All the preliminaries that increase the rasa manifest according to the time. Whereas on one hand being united with the beloved is always joyful, on the other hand the *mān* (proud sulking) is also an integral part of love for the enhancement of the rasa. Tough *mān* is not liked by these Braj beauties, the purpose of their *mān* is only to give joy and delight to the Priyatam.

This site marked with the rasa steeped memories is relating the tales of its rasaful endeavours even today.

Near the sarowar are the baithaks of Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya ji and Gosāin Shri Vithalnāth ji.

Shri Hita-Harivansha ji also had special attachment to this site. In fact this spot became renowned only because of his grace.

It is about two miles away across Shri Yamunā. This has been the site of prayer and penance of Shri Harivansh ji. Nowadays the chanting of the names of Shri Rādhā and the Rās mandal are worth seeing. In the memory of the arrival of Shri Hita Prabhu to Vrindāvan, a festival is celebrated on the eleventh day of the dark fortnight of the month of Fālgun (feb-mar) ever year.

Pāni Gāon

This is situated two miles to the south of Mān Sarowar. The hermitage of sage Durwāsā is here. At the time of Prakat Leelā of Shri Krishna, gopis had served food to sage Shri Durwāsā and had prayed to him for deepening and intensifying their love at the feet of Shri Krishna. When the gopis made the preparations for the food, at that time Shri Yamunā was full with water. It became very difficult to cross Shri Yamunā. Gopis asked Shri Krishna for a way out. Shri Krishna said, “Meditating on your *ishta* you tell Shri Yamunā that

if Shri Krishna is an Akhanda Brahmachāri (perfect observer of celibacy) then give us a safe passage.” When gopis reached at the bank of Shri Yamunā they repeated the same thing and Shri Yamunā parted her water and the gopis went across. On the other side they made many delicacies and offered them to sage Durwāsā. The sage accepted those delicious items with joy. ‘May you have profound and deep love at the feet of Shri Krishna.’ After getting such blessing from sage Durwāsā and propitiating him they came back to the bank of Shri Yamunā to return. Yamunā ji was swelling with high waves. They prayed to sage Durwāsā to tell them the way to cross. Shri Durwāsā ji said you go and tell Shri Yamunā if sage Durwāsā has not eaten anything till now then give us a passage. They were astounded to hear this but as they had to go back they went to Shri Yamunā and told her exactly the same. On hearing that Shri Yamunā gave the way immediately. The gopis returned to their homes.

They were astonished by these two incidents and requested Shri Krishna to tell them the mystery behind these. Shri Krishna said, “My dear gopis! You are too naive. You have intense love for me. Living with you day and night I am an Akhanda Brahmachāri, because anything that is taken is considered taken only if it is taken with the mind and I am Jeeteindriya (the one who has conquered his senses). Therefore without my wish my mind does not touch anything and that is why I am called Akhanda Brahmachāri. Same is known for sage Durwāsā. He eats food without the taste because of that his mind does not get attached to it. This is why he remains free from the *sparsha dosha* (the offence caused at mentally touching or accepting something) even after consuming it.”

Repeating these memories this site is guiding us even today.

Akroor Ghāt

अक्रूरस्तावुपामन्त्रय निवेश्य च रथोपरि ।
 कालिन्ध्या हृदमागत्य स्नानं विधिवदाचरत् ॥
 निमज्ज्य तस्मिन् सलिले जपन् ब्रह्मसनातनम् ।
 तावेव ददृशेऽक्रूरो रामकृष्णौ समन्वितौ ॥¹

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/39/40-41)

1. Akroor ji after seating both the brothers on the chariot took permission and came to the Brahmahrida Kunda of Yamuna ji and took a bath according to the rules. After bathing when he started chanting Gāyatri mantra, he saw both the brothers Shri Krishna and Balrāma, inside the water.

Even after the killing of Arishtāsura the Kansa's fear of death did not subside. He started seeing his death before him day and night. He made a new plan to call Shri Krishna-Balrāma ji, Nanda ji and other cowherds to Mathurā by sending Akroor ji. Akroor ji reached the palace of Shri Nanda ji. The apprehensions of maiyā Yashodā and Shri Nanda bābā grew. They became distressed. After learning this news the Brajwāsīs became almost like dead. Still they had some consolation. Kanhaiyā is very mighty. He will finish his work quickly.

Who can describe the agony of the naive Braj maidens? Unable to withstand this heart ripping news, they fainted. Only a true lover can understand and experience this. Ask the *chātak* who waits for a drop of water of the *Swāti* asterism and is not willing to drink the water of Ganges even. Ask the *chakor* who drinks up the embers thinking them to be the parts of the moon or ask the *sāras* (crane) which cannot bear the separation of its beloved even for a moment or ask the *chakawā* who in spite of burning continuously in the fire of separation, remains alive in the hope of a golden morning of union.

There was no limit to the agony of the gopis. Some of them fainted and others forsaking the dignity, laid down before the chariot.

The chariot left with Nandanandan the life of everybody in Braj. Everybody kept looking at that chariot without blinking their eyes. Slowly the chariot went out of sight. Even the dust could not be seen.

Shri Krishna and Balrāma riding that chariot having the speed of the wind reached the bank of Shri Yamunā, the destroyer of all sins. Akroor ji bathed and performed all his daily rites. When he took a plunge in the water he saw both Shri Krishna and Balrāma inside the water. Thinking it to be an illusion when he took his face out, he saw both of them sitting on the chariot. He was astonished to see this. Perhaps what he saw in the water was his imagination, thinking this way when he dived in the water again he was stunned. This time Akroor ji saw that Anantdev Sheish ji is virājman in the water. He has thousand mouths. There on the bed of the coils of Sheish ji, dark Shyām like the dark clouds is virājman. Beautiful eyebrows, beautiful nose, red cheeks everything was radiating an unparalleled splendence.¹

Akroorji offered prayers to the Lord-

नमस्ते वासुदेवाय नमः सङ्घर्षणाय च ।
प्रद्युम्नायानिरुद्धाय सात्वतां पतये नमः ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/40/21)

1. The rasikas have not accepted the going of Nandanandan (with His form of Love and Sweetness) out of Braj.

You have assumed the four forms of Shri Vāsudev, Sankarshan, Pradyumna and Aniruddha only to nurture and nourish the Vaishnavas and the Yaduvanshis (descendants of Yadu race). I pay my obeisance to you again and again.

This site became famous as Akroor ghāt. When Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Chaitanya dev ji came for Braj darshan he stayed here. He used to collect his alms from the nearby village. Nearby is the Yagya sthal.

Yagya Sthal

प्रयात देवयजनं ब्राह्मणा ब्रह्मवादिनः ।
सत्रमाङ्गिरसं नामह्यासते स्वर्गकाम्यया ॥

(श्रीमद्भागवत 10/23/3)

The cowherd boys who had come to graze the cows started praising the valour of their dear Kanhaiyā and Balrāma ji. They felt hungry. In order to grace the wives of the Brahmins Shri Krishna told the sakhās to go to the Brahmins who were performing Āngirasa Yagya nearby and get something to eat from them by taking Shri Krishna's name. The cowherd boys did accordingly. Those Brahmins occupied by the desire of attaining heaven, took Shri Krishna to be a common man and did not pay attention to their request. The cowherd boys returned and told the whole story to Shri Krishna.

Explaining to his dear friends Shri Krishna asked them to go to the Brahmin wives this time. Sakhās went and said everything to the wives just like before and asked for food. The wives of the Brahmin hearing about the sweet Leelās of Shri Krishna and extolling the sweetness of His body had already surrendered their minds and hearts to Him. Therefore those women despite the opposition of their husbands and relatives decorated many plates of delicious and beautiful items themselves and left for the service of Shri Krishna.

The Brahmin wives saw Shri Krishna, Balrāma ji and the cowherd boys in the Ashoka vana at the bank of Shri Yamunā. The dark coloured body of Shri Krishna was looking more and more enchanting due to the lustre of the yellow pitāambar. The peacock feather in the crown on his head was waving its victory flag. Beautiful drawings were made on His body. With one hand on the shoulder of a sakhā, He was looking bewitching. That form of His was abducting the hearts effortlessly. The rays of faint smile on the face were working as the noose of love.

Shri Krishna, seeing the exclusive and intense love and attachment of the Brahmin wives, said to them respectfully, “You have matchless love for me. This is why without caring for your near and dear ones you have come to me. You have pure and virtuous love for me. You have had the desire for my darshan for a long time which has been fulfilled today. Now you go back and help in completing the yagya of your husbands.”

The Brahmin wives had come to the refuge of Shri Krishna completely. They requested to be allowed to stay in the company of Shri Krishna because now their husbands will not accept them. Therefore they had no other way. “O Lord! Now you alone are our recourse. Please keep us in your shelter.”

Shri Krishna replied, “Your husbands, father and other relatives, no one will condemn you because you have become mine. Ladies! In this world my proximity alone is not the cause of love. Surrendered and devoted to me you go back to your homes.” All the Brahmin wives returned to the Yagyashālā. The Brahmins did not get any doubts.

Later the Brahmins felt very repentant for what they had done earlier. Shri Krishna had the food with the cowherd children.

That very site, the Yagya sthali, the place of food is known by the name Bhataroad and is repeating those tales even today.

Chhatikarā (Garuda Govind)

शकटारोहनं नाम तस्मिन् क्षेत्रं परं मम ।
मथुरा पश्चिमे भागे अदूरादर्घ्ययोजने ।

(आ० व०)

This site is in the west of Mathurā.

When Shri Nandarai ji came from Gokul to Vrindāvan he stayed at this place also. He had parked his carts here. Shri Garuda Govind temple built on one side of Govind kund is a place of reverence for the Brajwāsis even today. A saying is famous for this temple-

‘Ātha Hātha Ko Mandir Aur Bāraha Hāth Ko Thākur.’ meaning the size of the temple is eight hand long (almost twelve feet) where as the Thākur deity has twelve hands.

The twelve handed idol of Lord Govind is worth seeing. This is an ancient and *siddha* idol.

This village is some five miles away from Shri Vrindāvan.

Appendix-1 Glossary of Hindi Words

Āchārya	A spiritual preceptor, a founder or a leader of a sect, religious instructor
Āhlādini Shakti	Power or energy of bliss or delight
Ārati	Ceremony performed in worshipping by moving lighted lamp circulating round the idol
Annakoot	A festival celebrated on the day following Diwāli by placing of food items in front of an idol of Lord Krishna
Ashwamedh Yagya	A Vedic horse sacrifice performed by the kings
Ashta Chhāp	The eight poets: Soordāsji, Kumbhandāsji, Parmānand dāsji, Chaturbhujdāsji, Krishnadāsji, Nandadāsji, Chheet Swāmi, Govindaswāmi
Ashta sakhi	Eight friends of Shri Rādhā: Lalitā, Vishākhā, Sudevi, Tungvidyā, Indulekhā, Rangadevi, Champaklatā, Chitrā
Baithak	An assembly site for recitation by a great Ācharya
Bhāv	Emotions, Sentiment, feeling, mood, attitude
Bhāvit	Engrossed in an emotion and full of emotions
Bhaktimati	Devotee, devout
Bhoomi	Land, earth, region, place, site, area
Brahma Sambandha	Link with Almighty
Brajawāsi	Residents of Braj
Chakawā	An ostrich bird representing pangs of separation
Chakor	A bird said to be in love with the moon
Charan Chauki	Square slab for feet placement, foot rest
Chātūr yuga	Four ages i.e. Sata , Tretā , Dwāpar and Kali yuga
Dān	Toll, tax, the act of giving alms, charity, donation
Darshan	Seeing, sight, having sight of, visit of a sacred shrine
Deepāwali/Diwāli	Festival of lights
Deha	Body
Devi	Demigoddess, consort of a god, a lady
Dhām	Abode, Eternal and divine abode
Dhanusha yagya	A sacrifice in which a bow was worshipped and the art of archery displayed
Dharma	Righteousness, duty, morality, virtue, right action, religion
Dwāpar Yuga	Name of the third of the four ages, Era of Lord Krishna

Ghāt	A landing place, a flight of steps to water, the bathing place at the bank of a river
Goloka dhām	Divine abode of Lord Krishna
Gopi/Gopis	Young cowherd ladies having immense and exclusive love for Krishna
Gopi bhāv	The emotions of a gopi comprising of tender sentiments and immense love for Shri Krishna, of total unconditional surrender with the single desire of making Him happy.
Gopi deha	Incorporeal body constructed of tender emotions
Holi	Festival of colours
Ishta	The adored or revered one, most beloved or dear
Ishta siddhi	Fulfillment, accomplishment or attainment of Ishta, Perception of the revered one
Jana	Person, follower, people, group, folk, masses
Jeewan Sarvaswa	One who is the life and whole of one's possessions, Vital treasure, essence of life
Kālindi	Another name of Yamunā
Kām	Desire, passion, Cupid, work
Kali yuga	Iron age symbolic of strifes and battles
Kalpa Vriksha	Desire fulfilling tree
Kandarparāj	The god of love, Cupid; Also used for Shri Krishna
Kautuka	Pastime, play, trick, marvel, fun and frolic, wonder, spectacle, eager curiosity
Kautuki	Sportive, playful, contributing to diversion by several tricks, mischievous
Keli	Pastime, sport, play, frolic
Keli vihār	Dalliance, sport
Keli vilās	Sport, enjoyment, merriment
Keli vilās vaibhava	Magnificent frolic
Kishore	Juvenile Adolescent, A boy aged between eleven and fifteen years
Kishori	A girl aged between eleven and fifteen years
Kosa	A distance of two miles (3520 yards)
Ksheera sāgar	The ocean of milk where Lord Vishnu abodes
Kumkum	A red powder
Kunja	Grove, bower, arbour, alcove, clump, pergola

Kund/Kunda	Pond, tank, pool
Lālā	A term of affectionate address to a boy child, dear son
Lālee	A term of affectionate address to a girl child
Leelā	Sport, play, pastime, divine act
Linga	An idol of Shiva
Mādhuri	Ambrosial sweetness, charm, beauty, grace
Mādhurya	Sweetness, gracefulness
Mādhurya Rasa	Worshipping with tender sentiments of a gopi or Gopi bhāv Upāsana
Mān	Pride, Sulking, Indignance towards the beloved
Māyā	Illusion, ignorance, delusion, fascination, unreality, everything except the Lord, the world as perceived by the senses (considered as illusory)
Madhukari	Alms consisting of cooked food collected from door to door
Madhur	Sweet, rich, melodious, mellifluous, pleasant
Mahā	Great, mighty, large, most excellent, extremely
Mahabhāv	Exalted state
Mahārāj	A great king or a ruler, a term of respect for Brahmins or preceptors, sire, majesty, Highness, Excellency
Maiyā	Mother
Mandal	Disc, circle, ring, circumference, zone, society, multitude, a group
Mangalāārati	First prayer ceremony of the day
Nandini	Daughter
Nava	New
Neelāambar	Blue garment
Nikunja	Bower, arbour
Nikunja bhāvana	A system of worship
Nitya	Perpetual, eternal, constant, daily, always or for ever
Nitya dhām	The eternal abode, divine Golok dhām
Nitya Leelā	The eternal evergoing Leelā in the divine Goloka
Pātra	Character, actor, recipient, deserving or suitable, worthiness
Pada	Hymn/ verse of devotional poetry, status, position
Padagān	Singing of hymns or verses
Papihā	Large hawk cuckoo

Parkiyā	Pertaining to another woman
Parikar	Exclusive group of devotees and dependants
Parwat	Mount, mountain, hill
Pitāambar	Yellow silk garment
Prakat Leelā	Leelās that could be seen and experienced by all during Shri Krishna's incarnation
Pranayi	Full of love
Pranayi Rihhawār	A lover who gets pleased or delighted, appreciator
Prasād	Food offered to an idol, the remnants of such food, boon, blessing
Prasādi	Something that has been offered to a deity, blessings
Pratyaksha	Cognizable by sight, perceivable through senses, visible, before the eyes
Priyā-Priyatam	Shri Rādhā and Shri Krishna as beloveds of each other
Purān	A class of voluminous work in Sanskrit dealing with aspects of ancient Indian history, legend mythology—eighteen in number
Pushti mārga	Philosophical devotional system of Vallabhāchārya
Rāga mārga	Path of intense and exclusive love and attachment to Shri Krishna
Rājasuya Yagya	Sacrifice which only a universal monarch was entitled to perform
Rās	The circular dance performed by Shri Krishna and the cowherd girls, amorous pastime
Rās mandal	A site of the enactment of the round dance of Shri Krishna
Rās Swaroop	A person who acts in Rāsleelā
Raman	Amorously dallying and sporting, enjoyment
Rang	Colour/hue, singing, dancing, merrymaking, enjoyment
Rang mahal	An apartment in a palace set apart for enjoyment and festivities
Rangotsava	Festival of colours or happiness with pomp and show
Rangshālā	A stage or theatre for dance and drama or any show
Rasa	Divine nectar or ambrosial or ecstatic mellow quality that is all blissfull
Rasa Ranga	Enjoyment, pleasure, love, compassion

Rasa Rangotsava	Festival of rasa and rang , enjoyment, merriment
Rasa shāstra	The scripture of rasa, the art of rasa
Rasa vihār	Pleasure or recreation or dalliance or amusement of rasa
Rasa vilās	The pleasure, lavishness, opulence, sport, merriment, play, enjoyment, delight of rasa
Rasika/ Rasik	The one who understands and savours rasa, a person moved by passionate religious devotion for Shri Krishna, a man of feeling and passion
Rijhawār	One who is pleased, a lover, an appreciator
Sādhaka	A practitioner, a devotee, one who does sādhnā
Sādhanā	Devoted labour or striving towards any aim, to practise, to engage in contemplation and meditation of name, form of a deity
Sākshāt	Direct, in the presence of, within sight of, before, visibly, manifestly
Sākshātkār :	Direct vision, face to face meeting, realization
Sākshātkāri :	One who has experienced sākshātkār
Sārūpya mukti	Of the four types of liberation, this is one in which the person attains the same form as that of Lord.
Sātvika Bhāv	Spiritual ecstatic changes in body like perspiration, faltering of voice, horripilation etc
Sahachari	A female companion
Sakhā	Friend (male)
Sakhā bhāvit	Absorbed in the mood, bhāv or the attitude of a friend of Shri Krishna
Sakhi	Friend (Female)
Sakhi bhāv bhāvita	Absorbed in the mood or the attitude of a girl friend of Shri Krishna, devotional attitude in which the devotee regards him/ herself as the sakhi
Samādhi	Meditative trance or absorption, place of cremation, burial or entombment
Samkrānti	A union, a planet's passage from one sign of the zodiac to another
Sakhya	Feeling of friendship, intimacy, attitude of devotion in which the devotee imagines himself as the companion or friend of Shri Krishna
Samvat	The year of Vikram era
Sarowar	A large lake or pond

Satchidānandamaya	Composed of truth or existence, consciousness and absolute bliss, the three attributes of the Almighty
Setubandha	The bridge of rocks built between India and Ceylon as in Rāmāyan
Shakti	Primordial power, energy
Sheish	Thousand headed snake on which Lord Vishnu rests
Shilā	A rock, A large piece of flat stone
Shloka	A sanskrita couplet or stanza, invocation
Shree	A title of Shri Rādhā or Laxmi ji, fortune, wealth, prosperity, fame, splendour, glory, auspicious
Shri	A title used before the name of deities or revered persons
Shringār	The sentiment of love, ornament, makeup, dress, adornment
Siddha	Accomplished, perfected or sanctified (as by penance), an ascetic of great powers and saintliness, endowed with supernatural powers, saint
Siddhāwasthā	State of accomplishment, attainment, acquisition of supernatural powers
Siddha gopi deha	The body which has achieved the Lord or can achieve the Lord
Siddhi	Accomplishment or attainment of spiritual goals, acquisition of supernatural powers
Sthal	Site
Swāmini	The mistress, a title of Shri Rādhā
Swaroop	Own form or shape, essential properties, form assumed by a deity or by the ultimate being, image, idol, of the same nature and character
Tatsukhei Sukhitwam	In your happiness lies my happiness, for the happiness of the adored one
Teelā	A hillock, mound, ridge
Thākur	Lord, master, chief, an idol of the Lord or the supreme deity
Tilak	Sectarian mark made with sandal and saffron on the forehead
Tirtha	A sacred place, a shrine, a place of pilgrimage
Tretā Yuga	The second of the four ages

Tribhang Mudrā	Krishna's standing posture having three angles or bends (bent legs, hips and neck)
Uchchhishta	Left over food, remains of food
Vātsalya	Parental love
Vātsalya bhāva	Sentiment of love of parents towards the children
Vātsalyamayi	Full of or abounding in Vātsalya
Vaidya	Ayurvedic physician
Vaijayantimāl	A garland of five colours
Vaikuntha	Abode of Lord Vishnu
Vaishnav	A devotee of Lord Vishnu, pertaining to Lord Vishnu
Vara	Best, great, superior (suffixed to words like muni/giri/rishi etc)
Vasundharei	The earth
Veenā	Indian lute
Vihār	Wandering, roaming or recreation, pleasure, sporting, pastime
Vihāri	The one who wanders, enjoys or sports for pleasure, an epithet of Lord Krishna
Vihār sthal	Place of vihār
Vilās	The pleasure, lavishness, opulence, sport, merriment, play, enjoyment, delight amorous playfulness
Vilāsmayi	Composed of, consisting of or abounding in vilās
Virājit	Assuming an air of splendour (as when occupying a seat of honour), seated
Virājman	Seated splendidly, ensconced (as on a throne)
Yādav	A descendent of Yadu
Yagya	A religious sacrifice, An oblation
Yama	The god of death
Yavana	A resident of Greece or East Europe, a mohammedan
Yogamāyā	The creative power of the supreme spirit personified, form of a deity, the illusionary power which yogis are supposed to possess
Yojan	A measure of distance equal to four, eight or sixteen miles according to different calculations
Yuga	A period, an era, an age, one of the four ages
Yugal	A pair, a couple

Appendix 2 - List of Reference Books

Sanskrit

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Agni Purān | 22. Naimishkhand Mei | 41. Vallabha Digvijay |
| 2. Āditya Purān | Varnit Sahasra Nāmāvali | 42. Vallabhāchāryaji's Books |
| 3. Ādi Vārāh Purān | 23. Panchastavi | 43. Vāyu Purān |
| 4. Kurma Purān | 24. Padma Purān | 44. Vishnuyāmal |
| 5. Krishna Karnāmrit | 25. Padyāwali | 45. Vishnu Dharmottare |
| 6. Krishna Stavraj | 26. Purān Sanhitā | 46. Vrindāvan Mahimāmrit |
| 7. Garga Sanhitā | 27. Prabodh Sudhākar | 47. Vrihannāradiya Purān |
| 8. Girirāj Māhātmya | 28. Brajbhakti Vilās | 48. Vrihatpārāshar |
| 9. Geeta Govind | 29. Brahmānda Purān | 49. Vrihatgautamiya Tantra |
| 10. Gopāl Tāpini | 30. Brahmavaivarta Purān | 50. Sahasra Geetisār |
| 11. Gopāl Champu | 31. Brahmayāmal | 51. Sammohan Tantra |
| 12. Gopāl Devāshtak | 32. Bhakti Rasāmrit Sindhu | 52. Stavāvali |
| 13. Govind Lilāmrit | 33. Bhavishya Purān | 53. Skanda Purān |
| 14. Govardhan Shatak | 34. Matsya Purān | 54. Saura Purān |
| 15. Gauri Tantra | 35. Mathurā Māhātmya | 55. Yamunā Stuti
(Shri Shankarāchāryaji) |
| 16. Taittiriya Sanhitā | 36. Mukta Charitra | 56. Yamunāstak
(Harivanshaji) |
| 17. Devi Purān | 37. Murāridas Krita | 57. Yamunāstak
(Vallabhāchāryaji) |
| 18. Nava Vīgyapti | Chaitanya Charitāmrit | |
| 19. Nārad Pānchātra | 38. Rādhāsudhā Nidhi | |
| 20. Nimbārka Stotra Sangraha | 39. Rādhā-Rasa Manjari | |
| 21. Nirodh Lakshanam | 40. Rudrayāmal | 58. Bhakti Sutra |

Hindi

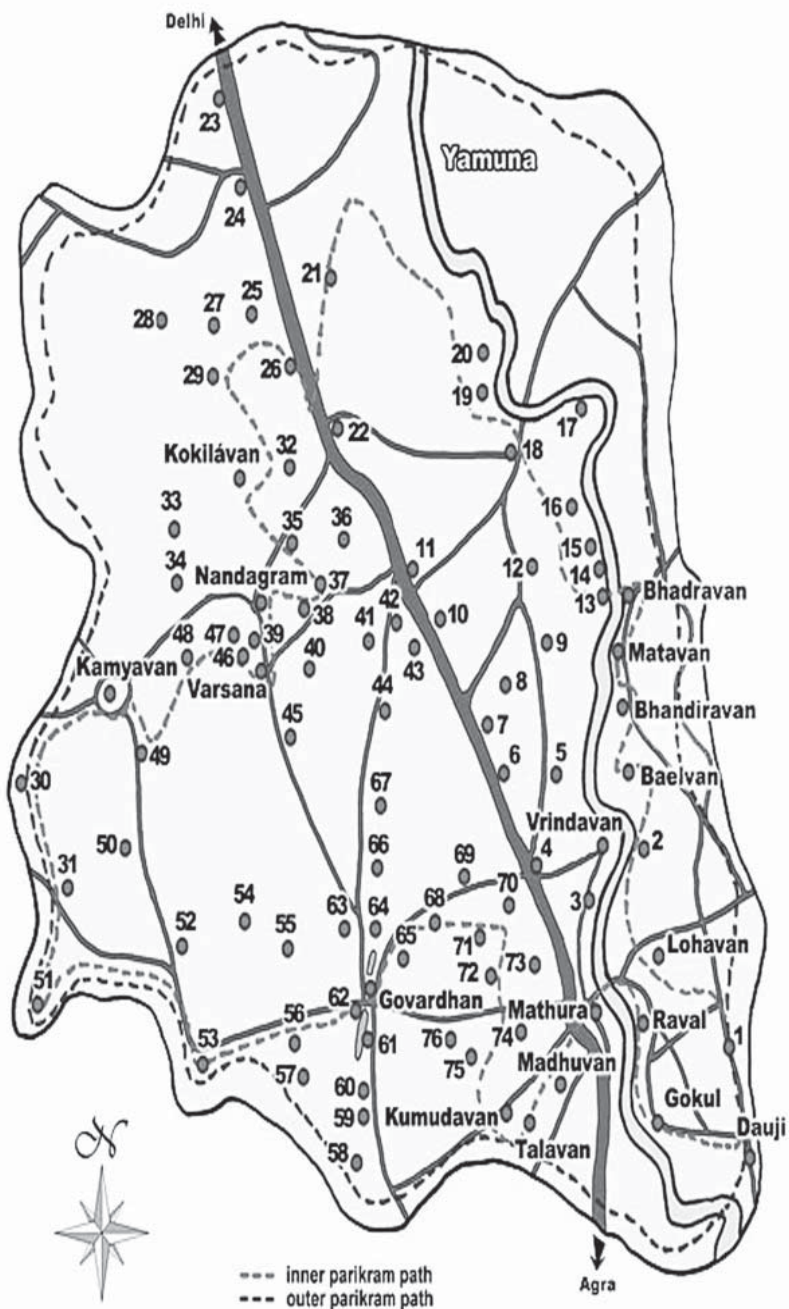
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|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Ashtachhāp Parichaya | 9. Nandadās Granthāwali | 16. Brajastha Vallabha
Sampradāya Kā Itihās |
| 2. Ashtasakhā Bhaktamāl | 10. Nimbārka Mādhuri Sār | 17. Braj Parichaya |
| 3. Krishnadāsji Kā Charitra | 11. Parmānand Sāgar | 18. Braj Parikramā |
| 4. Kumbhandāsji Kā Charitra | 12. Pushtimārgiya Sudhā (Patrikā) | 19. Shrināthji Prākatiya |
| 5. Gokuldasji Ki Nij Vārtā | 13. Brajmandal Darshan | 20. Braj Vibhav Ki Apoorwa
Shri Bhaktimati Ushā
Behenji |
| 6. Govindaswāmi Padāwali | 14. Braj Ke Bhakta | |
| 7. Chaturbhujdās Charitra | 15. Braj Ke Dharma
Sampradāya | |
| 8. Chheetswāmi Charitra | | |

Braj Bhāshā

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Ek Mahātmā Ki Vāni | 7. Braj Varnan | 15. Lalit Mādhuri Pada Sangrah |
| 2. Kelimāl | 8. Bayālis Leelā | 16. Lalit Kishoridevji Ki Jeewani |
| 3. Chourāsī Vaishnav Vārtā | 9. Braj Vilās | 17. Loka Geeta |
| 4. Do Sau Bāvan Vaishnav
Vārtā | 10. Bāvari Sakhi Ke Pada | 18. Vridāvandās (Chāchā) Ke
Pada |
| 5. Nāgaridāsji Ki Vāni | 11. Bhramar Geeta | 19. Soordās Madan Mohan ji
Ki Vāni |
| 6. Nārāyan Swāmi Pada
Sangraha | 12. Mahāvāni | 20. Hita Chaurāsī |
| | 13. Raskhān Ke Padā | |
| | 14. Rasikadevji Kā Charitra | |

Banglā

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|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Bhakti Ratnākar | 2. Chaitanya Charitāmrit |
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Sri Vraja-mandala

1. Bandi
2. Pani-gāon
3. Akroora-ghāt
4. Chhatikarā
5. Ātasa
6. Jainta
7. Chaumunhā
8. Pasauli
9. Sei
10. Syāmati
11. Chhātā
12. Agiyara
13. Nanda-ghāt
14. Cheer-ghāt
15. Tapovan
16. Akshayavat
17. Rām-ghāt
18. Khelanvan
19. Ojāni
20. Rāmpur
21. Seshashāyi
22. Kosi
23. Vanchāri
24. Hodal
25. Charan-pahādi
26. Kotavan
27. Lālpur
28. Bichhor
29. Kāmar
30. Kedārnāth
31. Pasapa
32. Baithan
33. Sancauli
34. Meheran
35. Jāvat
36. Dhanasinga
37. Khāyaro
38. Bijāvāri
39. Sankeit
40. Karahalā
41. Umrāo
42. Ranabādi
43. Nari
44. Sahāra
45. Kamai
46. Unchāgāon
47. Rithaurā
48. Sunaharā
49. Indraulī
50. Seu
51. Ādi-badri
52. Paramdarā
53. Deeg
54. Munisirsa
55. Devasirsa
56. Gāntholi
57. Punchhari
58. Bachehhgāon
59. Paithā
60. Pārāsaulī
61. Anjoror
62. Jatipurā
63. Neemgāon
64. Rādhā-kund
65. Mukhara
66. Kunjerā
67. Surya-kund
68. Basauti
69. Ral
70. Bahulāvan
71. Tosa
72. Datiyā
73. Ganesharā
74. Shāntanu-kund
75. Mādhuri-kund
76. Adeenga

Other Publications of Brajanidhi Prakāshan

1. Braj Vibhav ki Apoorwa Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behenji- Brihachcharitra
2. Bhagwān Nimbārka Praneeta - Prātahtawa, Madhur Rasochchhalan
3. Braj Bhoomi Mohini
4. Leelā Rasa Mādhuri (ShriRadha Krishna Kripākatksha)
5. Braj Vibhav ki Apoorwa Shri Bhaktimati Ushā Behenji-Sankshipta Parichaya
6. Madhu Rasa Nirjhar (First Part)
7. Madhu Rasa Nirjhar (Second Part)
8. Madhu Rasa Nirjhar (Third Part)
9. Shri Rādhā Sudhā Nidhi
10. Splendour Of Vrindāvan
11. Vedavāni
12. Jeevan Tathya
13. Leelā Rasa Tarangini (First Part)
14. Leelā Rasa Tarangini (Second Part)
15. Leelā Rasa Tarangini (Third Part)
16. Leelā Rasa Tarangini (Fourth Part)
17. Leelā Rasa Tarangini (Fifth Part)
18. Prem Piyush Dhārā
19. Prem Sudhā Dhārā
20. Shri Krishna Ālok
21. Shri Krishna Karnāmritam-Shri-ShriBilwamangalkrit
22. Sādhanā Aur Siddhi

Shri Shrimanmahāprabhu Vallabhāchārya Vanshajā
Shri Go. Indirā Beti ji

॥ श्रीबालकृष्णो विजयतेत्ताम् ॥
॥ श्रीहरिदासवर्य गिरिराज गोवर्धनाय नमः ॥

❀ श्री कृष्णः शरणं मम ❀
वृन्दावनं परित्यज्य पादमेकं न गच्छति ।
ब्रज तज अनत न जैहों मोहे नन्दबाबा की आन ।

Braj Bhoomi is the *Nitya vihār* site of Rāseshtar Lord Shri Shyām Sundar. Here every particle is suffused with *Leelā rasa*. Shri Vijay ji (Bābā) coming here became a Brajwāsi himself. At the holy signal of Shri Priyā-Priyatam, to reveal the magic, the enchantment i.e. the mohini of Braj he has composed this rasaful book.

To give darshan of the Leelā sites, this book has been divided into seven chapters---Mathurā, Mahāvan-Gokul, Shri Girirāj, Kāmvana, Barsānā, Nandagaon and Vrindāvan. In these segments it has been ascertained with authentication which Leelā was performed where by Brajendranandan. In the writing of the author an auspicious confluence of Saraswati (knowledge) and Bhakti (devotion) has taken place.

I had been feeling the need of such a book for many years for those devotees who are strongly devoted to the Leelā of Shri Priyā-Priyatam and attached to Braj mandal. When I read some portions of this book, I was really delighted.

The special topics of all the sects connected to Braj Bhoomi have been covered in it.

Shri Vijay ji has done a great service to the intimate devotees of Krishna by giving such a unique darshan of Braj bhoomi.

I pray at the feet of the Lord that this book continues blooming the lotus hearts of the sentimental devotees.

Shri Girirāj Bhawan

Desai Shori, Gadiyāli Pol
Vadodara-390001

Go. Indirā

