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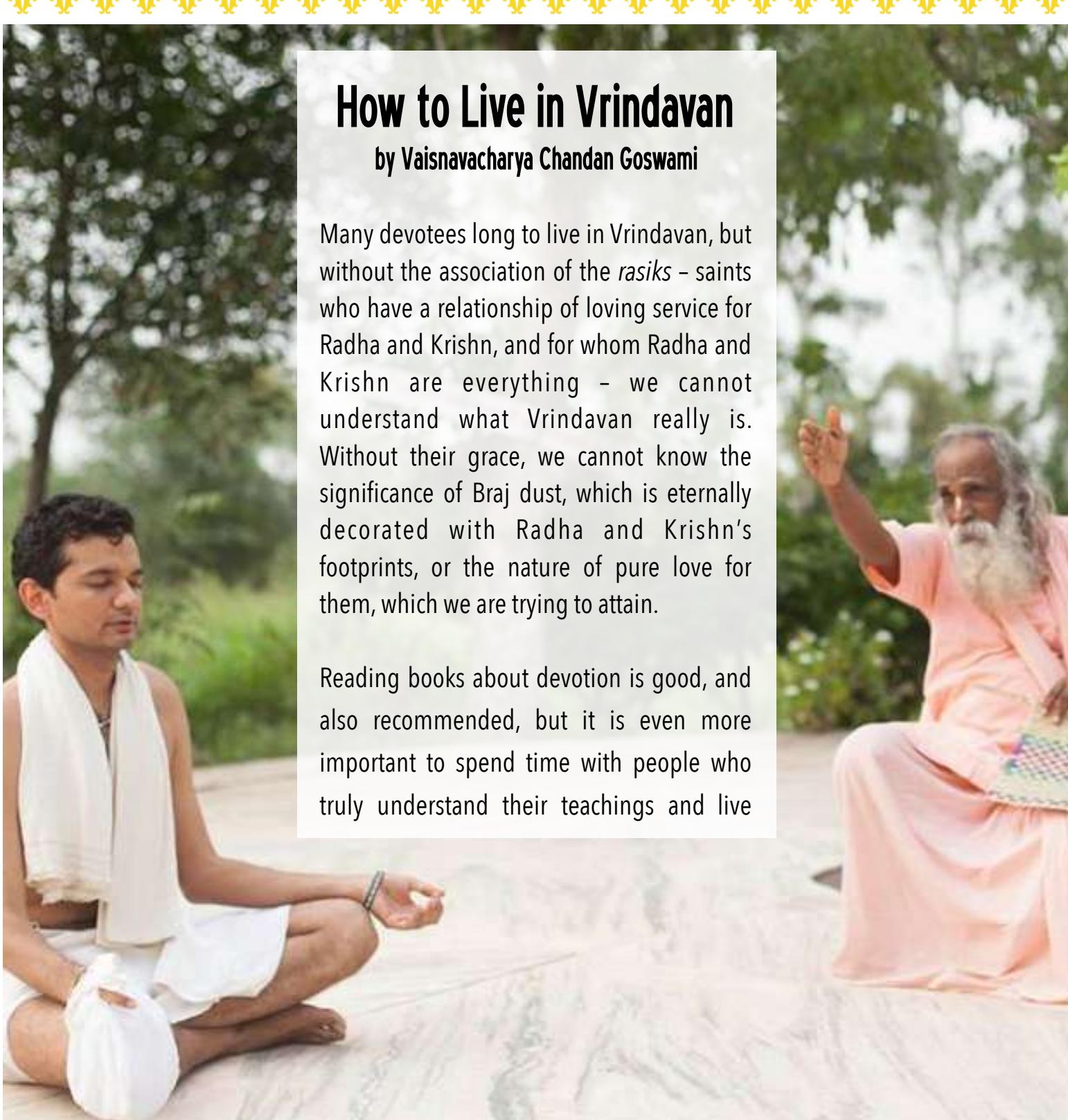
Monthly Newsletter
2020 January
Issue No: 25

How to Live in Vrindavan

by Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami

Many devotees long to live in Vrindavan, but without the association of the *rasiks* – saints who have a relationship of loving service for Radha and Krishn, and for whom Radha and Krishn are everything – we cannot understand what Vrindavan really is. Without their grace, we cannot know the significance of Braj dust, which is eternally decorated with Radha and Krishn's footprints, or the nature of pure love for them, which we are trying to attain.

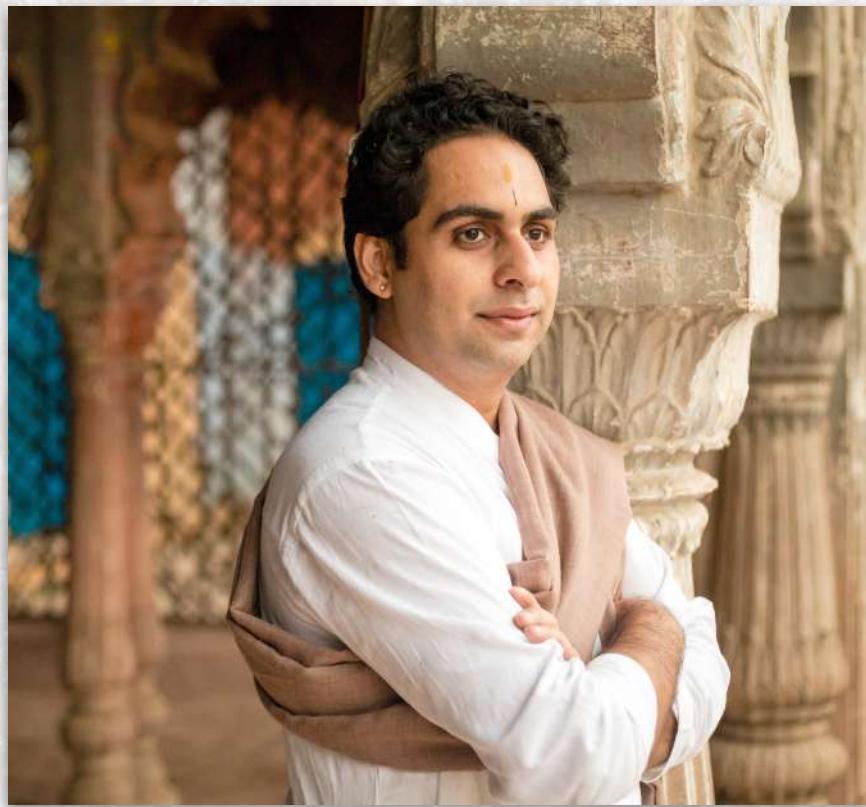
Reading books about devotion is good, and also recommended, but it is even more important to spend time with people who truly understand their teachings and live



their lives by them. Without such association, the devotional practice of living in Vrindavan is very difficult. We may think we can attain our spiritual goals by sitting alone and immersing ourselves in chanting and meditation, but this is not practical for many people. In the *Shrimad Bhagwatam*, Bharat Muni also worshipped in isolation, and for a long time, he progressed very well. He even reached a high level of devotion called *bhav bhakti*.

Bharat Muni's devotional ecstasy was so deep that he was able to serve Krishn all the time. But one day, he found a baby deer that had lost its mother. As he started taking care of the deer, his mind was diverted, and the deer slowly replaced Krishn in his heart.

Why did this happen when Bharat Muni was such an accomplished devotee? It happened because he did not have the association of *rasik* saints, nor did he have a guru in his life. If he did, his guru could have told him, "Bharat, your care for the baby deer is commendable, but don't let this situation distract you from your goal of one-pointed and loving service for Krishn." Without association, there was no one to correct him, and he had to take two more births before attaining his Beloved.



We are not nearly as advanced as Bharat was, so to think we can live without association is a great mistake. Further, *Shodash Granth* says that performing devotion in isolation can lead to pride. If we forget that the ability to perform worship is itself a gift of divine grace, we may start to feel self-satisfied, thinking, I serve so many saints, I chant so many Holy Names, and so forth. In contrast, good association keeps us humble and focussed. The *Chaitanya Charitamrit* (2.22.54) says that even a moment of

association with *rasik* saints can grant all perfection: in other words, the ultimate goal of *prem* (sacred love) for Radha and Krishn. If we keep good association, one day, Radha and Krishn will give us eternal association by allowing us to serve them in eternal Vrindavan, under the guidance of the greatest of all devotees, the *gopis*.



Shrinivas Acharya, Part 2 of 12: His Early Years



In the previous issue, we narrated the story of the birth of Shrinivas Acharya, the combined incarnation of Mahaprabhu's love and Radharani's maid servant, Mani Manjari. In this issue, we continue by exploring his childhood pastimes.

Shrinivas Acharya's parents had longed to have a child for quite some time. Thus, when Shrinivasji was born, they held a grand festival where thousands of guests sang *kirtan* and danced to the sweet rhythm of clay drums.

The *Prem Vilas* (2.15) says that Shrinivas's father, Chaitanya Dasji, loved his son so much that he did not leave the house for six months after his birth. In fact, everyone who visited wished they could stay with little Shrinivas forever, and they found every excuse to go to Chaitanya Dasji's home. People would always say, "You should name this child Shrinivas," not knowing that Mahaprabhu had already given him this name before his birth.

Shrinivasji's Divine Beauty

Day by day, Shrinivas's sweetness grew, like the moon revealing its full form. His beauty was not ordinary; the nectar of Mahaprabhu's love had taken the form of his body. In fact, with his large lotus-petal eyes, beautiful curly

hair and golden skin tone, Shrinivas looked a lot like Mahaprabhu himself.



Shri Krishn Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Everyone loved talking about Shrinivas. Some would say things like, "I would happily die, if I could just take all Shrinivas's pain upon myself." Others questioned, "Without seeing Shrinivas all the time, how am I still able to live?" Still others said, "This world is full of sorrow; yet whenever I see Shrinivas, I am filled with joy." Longing to make Shrinivas their own family member, those who had daughters thought up various ways to convince Chaitanya Dasji to arrange his marriage early.

Shrinivas's Extraordinary Mind

When Shrinivas began his education, it became obvious that he was very gifted. He could remember anything just by hearing or reading it once; thus, he quickly absorbed the details of grammar, poetic style and literature. The *Anuraag Valli* (2.23) says: अति अनिर्वचनीय मेधार माधुरी - *ati anirvacanīya medhār mādhuri*, meaning that even his intellect was a form of divine nectar that cannot be described.

As Shrinivas grew, he quickly lost interest in studying, preferring to chant the Holy Name all the time. His teacher was concerned that by focusing on Harinaam so much, Shrinivas was wasting his chance to become great scholar. But when he was unable to convince Shrinivas to study, the teacher finally stopped coming to his house.



Saraswati appears in Shrinivas's dream

Embarrassed to have disappointed his teacher so much, one day, Shrinivas went to his house to apologise. But when he arrived, the teacher said, "Shrinivas, who are you really? You are a mystery to me. I feel like you have stolen all my knowledge, and I remain as just an empty shell. Goddess Saraswati must be unhappy with me."

Suddenly, both of them heard a voice saying, "I am Saraswati. By the order of Mahaprabhu, I come, through the illusion of a dream, to teach Shrinivas myself. Every kind of knowledge shall be revealed to him by the direct blessings of the gods and goddesses. Open your eyes and see that Shrinivas is not an ordinary human being."

Shrinivas Meets Mahaprabhu's Associates

As he got older, Shrinivas would often visit Mahaprabhu's associates who lived nearby, such as Govind Ghosh, Narahari Sarkar and Raghunandan Thakur. After Mahaprabhu moved to Puri, his associates who remained in Bengal missed him terribly. But Shrinivas's presence gave them relief from the burning pain of separation.

देखिला अपूर्व रूप कनक वरण ।
प्रभुर चरण स्मरण आचम्बिते हइलो
हेन बुझि शेइ मूर्ति साक्षात् पाइलो ॥

*dekhilaa apoorva roop kanak varan
prabhur charan smaran aachambite hoilo
heno bujhi shei murti saakshaat paailo*

"Seeing Shrinivas's unmatched beauty, Mahaprabhu's image suddenly appeared in his associate's heart, and it felt just like being with Mahaprabhu once more." (*Prem Vilas*, 4.3-4)

कहिते कि जानि सबे जे आनन्द पाय
सबाकार इच्छा भरि राखये हियाय ।
तिले तिले अदभुत स्नेहेर प्रकाश
सबे कहे गौर प्रेम मूर्ति श्रीनिवास ॥

*kahite ki jaani sabe je aananda paay
sabaakaar ichhaa bhari raakhaye hiyaay
tile tile adabhuta sneher prakaash
sabe kahe gaur prem murti shrinivaas*

"How can I describe the sheer delight Mahaprabhu's associates felt in Shrinivas's presence, and how tenderly they kept him in their hearts? Moment by moment, the intensity of their love for him grew stronger, and they all said, 'Surely, Shrinivas is the incarnation of Mahaprabhu's love.'" (*Bhakti Ratnakar*, 2.119-120)

But while everyone enjoyed Mahaprabhu's presence through him, Shrinivas himself was filled with separation. Ever since hearing the stories of Mahaprabhu's life from his father and Mahaprabhu's other associates, Shrinivas was absolutely consumed by the thought of him.



Shrinivas pines for Mahaprabhu

Shrinivas always dreamed of going to Puri. He wondered what would happen if he went there. Would Mahaprabhu grant him his eternal shelter? Would he get a chance to serve him? Would he ever meet Gadadhar Pandit? Would it be possible to learn *Shrimad Bhagwatam* from him? These longings filled Shrinivas's heart.

Finally, when Shrinivas was about fifteen years old, his parents agreed to let him go to meet Mahaprabhu. Thus, on Magh Shukla Panchami of the year 1533 C.E., Shrinivas began the journey on foot.

To Be Continued...

References

- Anuraag Valli* by Manohar Das
Bhakti Ratnakar by Narahari Chakravarti
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Prem Vilas by Nityanand Das
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by Ramdas Babaji Maharaj



श्री वृन्दावनाष्टकम् Shri Vrindavanashikam



from *Stavamrit Lahari* by Shri Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur

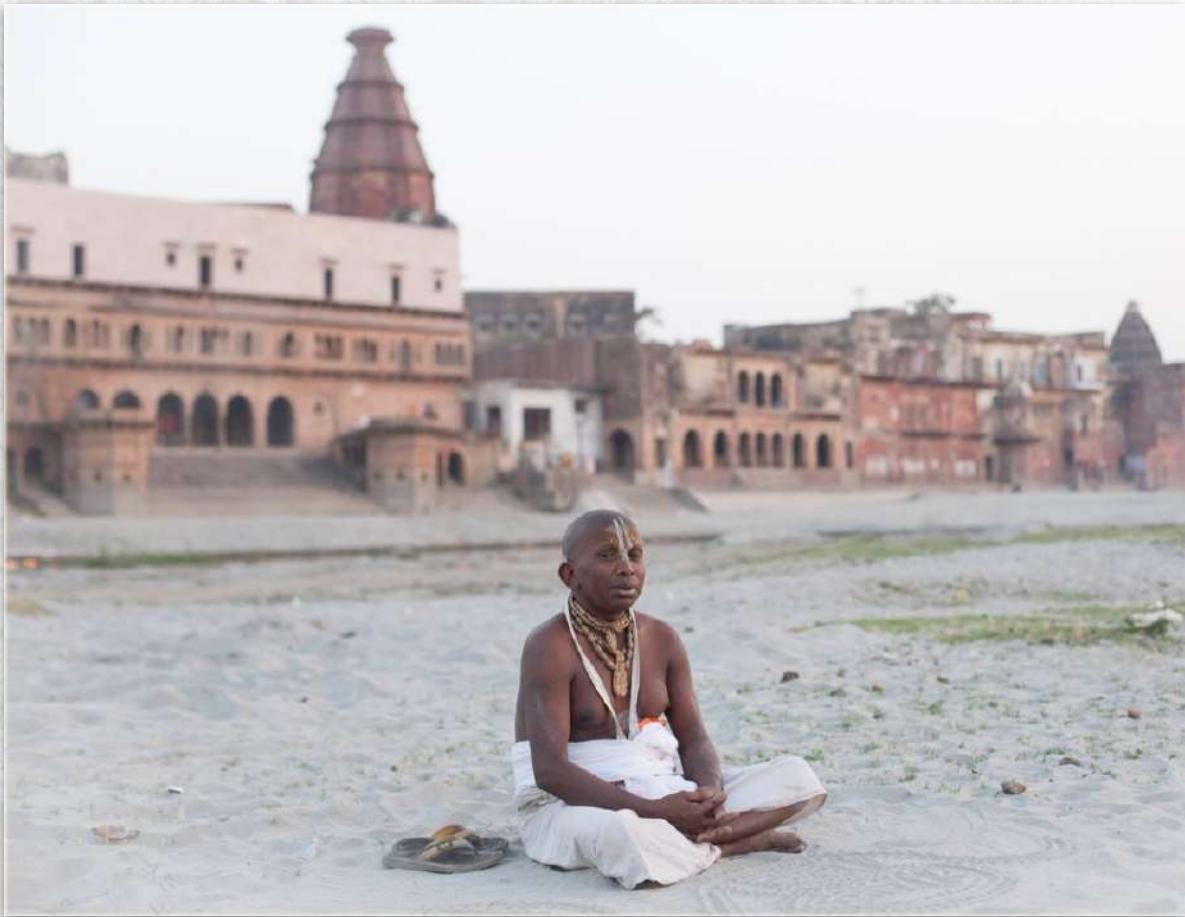
न योगसिद्धिर्न ममास्तु मोक्षो
वैकुण्ठलोकेऽपि न पार्षदत्वम् ।
प्रेमापि न स्याद् इति चेत् तरां तु
ममास्तु वृन्दावन एव वासः ॥

*na yoga-siddhir na mamāstu mokṣo
vaikuṇṭha-loke 'pi na pārṣadatvam
premāpi na syād iti cet tarāṁ tu
mamāstu vṛṇḍāvana eva vāsaḥ*

I don't want supernatural powers, nor liberation from this material world. I don't want to go to Vaikunth and become a associate of Narayan there, even if I could have pure love for him. I only desire to live in Vrindavan forever.

तार्णं जनुर्यत्र विधिर्याचे
सद्भक्तचूडामणिरुद्धवोऽपि ।
वीक्ष्यैव माधुर्यधूरां तदस्मिन्
ममास्तु वृन्दावन एव वासः ॥

*tārṇam janur yatra vidhir yayāce
sad-bhakta-cūḍāmaṇir uddhavo'pi
vīkṣyaiva mādhurya-dhūrāṁ tad asmin
mamāstu vṛṇḍāvana eva vāsaḥ*



I only desire to live in Vrindavan, whose sweetness overwhelms Uddhav and other great devotees, and they yearn to be born here, even as a blade of grass.

किं ते कृतं हन्त तपः क्षितीति
गोप्योऽपि भूमेः स्तुवते स्म कीर्तिम् ।
येनैव कृष्णाङ्गिपदाङ्कितेऽस्मिन्
ममास्तु वृन्दावन एव वासः ॥

*kim te kṛtam hanta tapaḥ kṣitīti
gopyo'pi bhūmeh stuvate sma kīrtim
yenaiva krṣṇāṅghri-padāṅkite 'smi
mamāstu vṛndāvana eva vāsaḥ*

Here, the *gopis* prayed, "O Mother Earth! What difficult practices have you performed to receive the prints of Krishn's feet all over your body?" I only desire to live in Vrindavan forever.

गोपाङ्गालम्पटतैव यत्र
यस्यां रसः पूर्णतमत्वम् आप ।
यतो रसो वै स इति श्रुतिस् तन्
ममास्तु वृन्दावन एव वासः ॥

*gopāṅganā-lampaṭa-taiva yatra
yasyāṁ rasaḥ pūrṇatamatvam āpa
yato raso vai sa iti śrutis tan
mamāstu vṛndāvana eva vāsaḥ*

I only desire to live in Vrindavan, where the highest bliss is revealed in the form of Radha and Krishn's love, thus inspiring the *shrutis* to declare रसो वै सः - *raso vai sah*, "the Supreme is ras."

भान्डीरगोवर्धनरासपीठैस्
त्रीसीमके योजनपञ्चकेन ।
मिते विभुत्वाद् अमितेऽपि चास्मिन्
ममास्तु वृन्दावन एव वासः ॥

*bhāndīra-govardhana-rāsa-pīṭhais
trī-sīmake yojana-pañcakena
mite vibhutvād amite 'pi cāsmi
mamāstu vṛndāvana eva vāsaḥ*

Even though Vrindavan seems to be five *yojans* around, bordered on three sides by Bhandirvan, Govardhan Hill and the Raas Mandal, it is actually infinite. I only desire to live in Vrindavan forever.

यत्राधिपत्यं वृषभानुपुत्रा
येनोदयेत् प्रेमसुखं जनानाम् ।
यस्मिन् ममाशा बलवत्यतोऽस्मिन्
ममास्तु वृन्दावन एव वासः ॥

*yatrādhipatyam vṛṣabhānu-putryā
yenodayet prema-sukham janānām
yasmin mamāśā balavatyato'smin
mamāstu vṛndāvana eva vāsaḥ*

My desire to live in Vrindavan is so very strong, for here, Radha is the only Queen, and because of her, every resident of this place is filled with sacred love.

यस्मिन् महारासविलासलीला
न प्राप यां श्रीरपि सा तपोमि: ।

तत्रोल्लसन्मञ्जुनिकुञ्जपुञ्जे
ममास्तु वृन्दावन एव वासः ॥

*yasmin mahā-rāsa-vilāsa-līlā
na prāpa yāṁ śrīrapi sā tapobhiḥ
tatrollasan-mañju-nikuñja-puñje
mamāstu vṛndāvana eva vāsaḥ*

Goddess Lakshmi longed to attain this land, which is decorated with such precious secret groves (*kunjs*). But after so many austerities, she could never attain Vrindavan, or the blissful Raas Lila that is performed here. I only desire to live in Vrindavan forever.

सदा रुरुन्यङ्कमुखा विशङ्कं
खेलन्ति कूजन्ति पिकालिकीराः ।
शिखण्डिनो यत्र नटन्ति तस्मिन्
ममास्तु वृन्दावन एव वासः ॥

*sadā ruru-nyañku-mukhā viśaṅkam
khelanti kūjanti pikāli-kīrāḥ
śikhaṇḍino yatra naṭanti tasmin
mamāstu vṛndāvana eva vāsaḥ*

Here the deer and antelopes play freely, and the peacocks dance to the songs of the cuckoos and parrots. I only desire to live in Vrindavan forever.

वृन्दावनस्याष्टकम् एतदुच्चैः
पठन्ति ये निश्चलबुद्धयस् ते ।
वृन्दावनेशाङ्गिसरोजसेवां
साक्षाल्लभन्ते जनुषोऽन्त एव ॥

*vṛndāvanasyāṣṭakam etad-uccaiḥ
paṭhanti ye niścala-buddhayas te
vṛndāvaneśāṅghri-saroja-sevāṁ
sākṣāl labhante januṣo'nta eva*

One who chants this Vrindavanash takam with complete faith and dedication will attain the direct seva of Shri Krishn's lotus feet at the end of this very lifetime.



Upcoming Events: December 2019 - January 2020



Shri Radha Ras Katha (Radha Ras Sudhanidhi)

Friday, December 27th - Thursday, January 2nd

Shri Vaishnavacharya Chandan Goswami will share the nectar of *Radha Ras Sudhanidhi* from 2-5pm daily at Bhagwat Niwas, Ramamreti, Vrindavan. Special *bhajan sandhya* and *phool holi* will take place on December 31st from 9pm until Hari *iccha*.

॥ श्रीराधारमणो जयति ॥
जय गौर

श्रीराधा रस कथा

(राधा रस सुधानिधि)

दिनांक : 27 दिस. 2019 से 2 जन. 2020 तक
समय : दोप. 2 से सायं 5 तक
स्थान : भागवत निवास, रमणरेती, वृन्दावन

श्री चन्दन गोस्तुमा
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विशेष :
भजन संध्या एवं
फूल होली
31 दिस. 2019
सायं 9 बजे से
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Gopinath Das Goswami's Mahotsav

Thursday, January 9th - Friday, January 10th

Gopinath Das Goswami was Gopal Bhatt Goswami's first disciple. He is also the elder brother of Damodar Das Goswami, the ancestor of all Radharamanji's Goswamis. On his disappearance day, there is a celebration which begins with an *adivas kirtan* (congregational singing in preparation for the festival) followed by 24 hours of Harinaam Sankirtan. The following day, *puja* of Shri Gopinath Das Goswami is performed at his site of private worship (*bhajan sthali*) at the Raas Mandal in front of the main gate of the Shri Radharaman Temple compound. A biographical song (*suchak kirtan*) about Shri Gopinath Goswami is sung. Brahmins from Mathura, followed by the other devotees, partake in the *prasad* feast.

Gopal Bhatt Goswami's Appearance Day

Monday, January 13th

On this day, a special *puja* is performed for Shri Gopal Bhatt Goswami at his *samadhi*.

Vasant Panchami

Thursday, January 30th

Vasant Panchami marks the beginning of Holi in Braj. On this day, Shriji wears a greenish-yellow (*vasanti*) coloured dress. From this day until the last day of Holi, brightly-coloured powder is offered to Radharamanji after Rajbhog Aarti along with Holi songs accompanied by *dhap vadan* (a tambourine without bells). In the evening, Radharamanji sits on a golden throne. Special *bhog* of saffron-accented fudge (*barfi*) and clay pot sweets (*kuliya*) is offered. A special Utsav Aarti takes place in the evening.

