

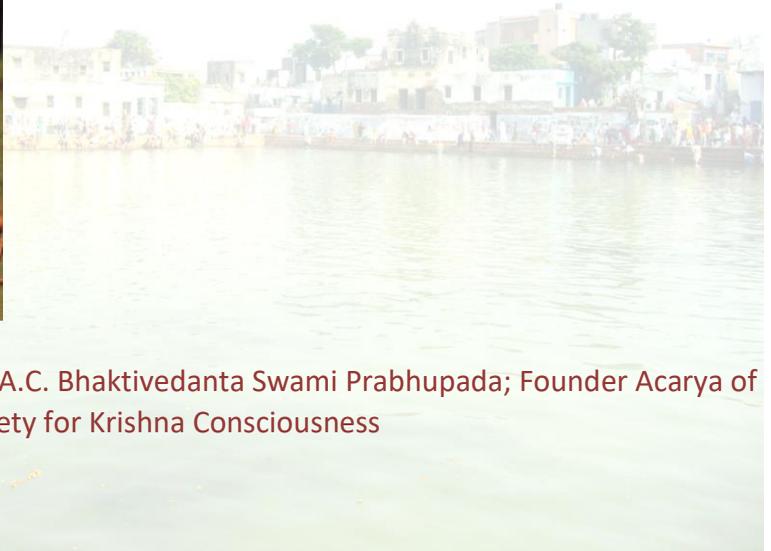
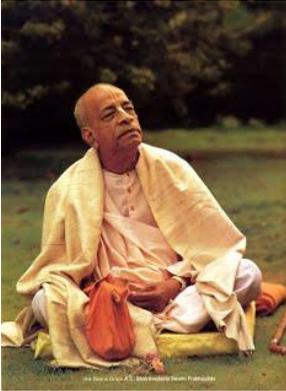
A Journey to the Holy Dham



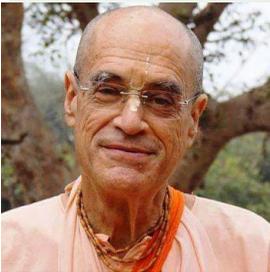
Nityananda Das

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to His Divine Grace Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada; Founder Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness who brought the true light of the Holy Dham's of India, to the rest of the world and spread the Holy Names in every nook and corner of the world as predicted by Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and to my dearest Spiritual Master His Holiness Srila Bir Krishna Das Goswami Maharaja who encouraged me to read ISKCON books, from where I got the inspiration to write, as I was deeply immersed in the darkness of ignorance.



His Divine Grace Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada; Founder Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



His Holiness Srila Bir Krishna Das Goswami Maharaja

Introduction

India is a land of God and Demigods, religious believers' and spirituality since the pre-historic days. Santana Dharma or Jaiva Dharma being the oldest religion of the world germinated on this land, and the followers worship numerous forms of Krishna, The Supreme Personality of Godhead and the Demigods.

When the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Sri Krishna descends to earth for performing His transcendental pastimes, He brings with Him His own eternal abode known as Goloka Vrindavan, along with His most intimate associates, friends, servants, and various other transcendental paraphernalia. The Lord's transcendental abode which is also known as the dham, is non-different from the Lord's eternal abode in the spiritual world, in fact it is an exact replica. By mundane material vision the dham may appear like any other place on earth, but to the pure devotees and perfect yogis, the dham is a completely spiritual abode saturated with its own transcendently surcharged atmosphere.

It is not only that God and Demigods are predominant in this land, but even the human beings who have attained spirituality to a level. The call of spirituality has attracted many saints, scholars, philosophers, students and other various types of seekers to this glorious land.

I first visited India in 2007 together with several other devotees from Fiji Islands. Though I was immature in Krishna Consciousness at that time since I had only joined a year and half before and did not have much knowledge, yet I got the golden opportunity to visit this glorious land by the Mercy of Guru and Gauranga.

By Krishna's grace, I got the opportunity again to visit India in 2016 and have been continuously visiting till 2019 as I sincerely prayed to Their Lordships at Sridham Mayapur and Vrindavan for Their mercy in order to be able to visit again and to have Their darshan.

Due to Covid-19, I could not visit India in 2020 and as a result I was feeling very dejected and pained from the feelings of separation from the Holy Dham and Their Lordships.

Feelings of separation are more painful than death itself as was experienced by the Gopis when their beloved Lord Sri Krishna disappeared from their sight in the midst of the rasa dance. They experienced the similar pains when Lord Krishna left Vrindavan and went to Mathura with Akrura.

Though, I am in no comparison to even the dust of the servants of the servants of the Gopis, yet my mind had been perturbed due to the failure of not being able to visit India in 2020.

Boredom had become a part of life and all the enthusiasm was gone and so I engaged myself in readings of more spiritual books as per directions received from my dearest Spiritual Master His Holiness Srila Bir Krishna Das Goswami Maharaja.

I downloaded all the books from ISKCON Desire Tree available under the title “Lives of the Acarya’s” in order to regain my enthusiasm as I had always loved and enjoyed reading biographies of our spiritual preceptors as they give me inner peace and enlightenment. The Acarya’s have experienced so much love for Krishna and showed us the real meaning of life by their practical examples and have demonstrated how to live in separation from Krishna, the Vaishnava’s and the Holy Dham through their pastimes which are not to be imitated.

After reading several books, to name a few like; A Ray of Vishnu, Abhirama Goswami, Babaji Maharaja, Bhakti Ratnakara, Gaudiya Vaishnava Nectar and Vamsidasa Babaji, I started reading Narottama Vilasa. When I came to The Sixth Vilasa reading about the tours of Sri Iswari who is none other than Jahnava Mata, the eternal consort of Lord Nityananda, I got inspiration from within to write about my experiences during the tours I had with a group of devotees who travelled with me in December of 2019 to the Holy Dham.

Though there are many books available on the topics of the Holy Dham by stalwart devotees, I am writing this book for my own personal purification out of love for the Holy Dham, feelings of separation and at the same time trying to make an attempt to attract the readers to at least make an effort to visit India for once in their life time to taste the nectar of Krishna Consciousness which many devotees from all over the world have tasted which includes this insignificant soul.

Our Founder Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness; His Divine Grace Srila A.C. Bhaktivendanta Swami Prabhupada instructed all His disciples to visit India, namely Sridham Mayapur and Sridham Vrindavan at least once a year to revive their Krishna Consciousness so that when they go back to their respective countries, they could execute the preaching programs and other services more valiantly.

My heartfelt gratitude to my dear friend Jayadeva Goswami Das for assisting me with the proof reading, editing and providing with all the beautiful pictures that he took which you will see in the pages of this book from our "Journey to the Holy Dham".

Following in the line of our preceptors, praying at the lotus feet of Sri Guru and Sri Gauranga to guide me and bless me with this humble attempt for the pleasure of the devotees and Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Madhava, Sri Panchatattva, Sri Krishna Balarama, Sri Sri Radha Shyama Sundara and Lord Sri Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra Devi.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Nityananda Das

ISKCON, Fiji Islands

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In front of Govardhan – my eternal home

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1. Preparation for the Journey

During a conversation with my friend Jayadeva Goswami Das in March of 2019, he expressed his desire to visit India but since it was going to be his first time, he did not know what to do and wanted to travel with someone who already had some experience.

So I told him, why not join me in my upcoming trip that December as I have been travelling for the last 3 years continuously during my two weeks' work holidays for my medical and had gained a little experience and made good contacts in various places with devotees, temples, taxi companies, tour guides etc. and knew the processes involved. To this he agreed and became very enthusiastic. He asked me so many questions about the costs involved, visa requirements, travel itinerary, food, shopping, prices etc.

Looking at his enthusiasm, I thought maybe I should take a tour group of at least 8-10 people which would be easy to handle to start off with and then make it an annual event as a service to the devotees wanting to visit India. We had a great experience when we travelled in 2007 under the supervision of Ramanuja Das from Australia and together with our Guru Maharaja for six weeks and everything was like still fresh in the mind.

I advertised on my Facebook page and on Sri Sri Radha Golokabihari temple Satsang viber group as well. Several enquiries came and in no time four more devotees agreed to travel with us and my wife and son also agreed to come since they last went was in 2016.

Now we were a group of 8 enthusiastic people as follows ready for "A Journey to the Holy Dham" which included me as well.

- I. Nityananda Das
- II. Nartaki Devi Dasi (my wife)

- III. Raghunath Gopal Das (my 8-year-old son)
- IV. Jayadeva Goswami Das
- V. Jagadishwara Das
- VI. Krishneel Kishan Ram (Jagadishwara's son)
- VII. Maharani Devi Dasi
- VIII. Divya Devi Dasi

With the numbers fixed and dates confirmed, I started liaising with the travel agents for estimate international fares, checked online for domestic fares within India. Started writing to ISKCON temples for daily accommodation, meals costs, taxi rates and availability during our time of travels. Made arrangements with tour guide in Vrindavan whom I had been hiring during my trips to arrange a Vraja Mandal Parikrama. He offered me a package deal which included transportation and 3 course meals at an affordable price.

Made arrangements with ISKCON Mayapur Tourism for transportation to and from airport, Navadwip parikrama and Ekachakra visit. Also liaised with ISKCON Bhubaneshwar temple for transportation, accommodation and Jagannath Puri parikrama. Last day we kept free for shopping in Delhi and darshan at ISKCON Delhi temple.

After everything was finalized, worked out the costs per person and informed the devotees so they could start planning their budgets and intervals in which they had to make payments as they requested me to organize everything, they were to pay me and I would pay on the other side for everyone which included travel, accommodation and meals. It was a great task and I loved every moment of it as costing, planning and organizing has always been my skills.

Came September, applied for everyone's visas to India. Managed to get 5 years' multiple visa for everyone. We purchased our airline tickets for both international and domestic flights. Finalized bookings with MVT in Vrindavan and ISKCON Bhubaneshwar temple for our accommodation, taxi and tour guides as

per our itinerary. For ISKCON Mayapur, we finalized the bookings in October as per their requirements for our stay at the Ishodyan Bhavan which is my favorite due to its beautiful views, gardens and modern facilities.

Made a list of items each one had to carry with them which included warm clothing's, personal medication, dried cooked food to take on flight and other essentials as it happens to be really cold during December in India and chances of people getting sick during parikrama.

Educated them on how we need to be careful of thugs, pickpockets' and monkeys. Even though India is rich in its spirituality, there are some bad elements as well like any other place in the world.

We called our group "Gopal's India Tours" under my son's name. Designed and arranged a souvenir badge for each person as you can see in the picture below.



Also delegated some of the responsibilities to others as follows:

Person Responsible

Role to play

Nityananda Das

Tour Leader

Nartaki Devi Dasi

Pujari for Laddu Gopal

Jayadeva Goswami Das

Photographer

Maharani Devi Dasi

Photographer

Divya Devi Dasi

Photographer

Krishneel Kishen Ram

First Aider

We were now all set to travel for a great experience awaiting ahead.



INDIA YATRA ITINERARY - 21/12/19 to 06/01/20



GOPAL'S INDIA TOURS

Date	Places to travel	Travel by	Time Start	Time Finish	Places to Visit in details
21/12/2019	Arrive @ Nadi Airport	Taxi	-	6:00am	
	Nadi to Hong Kong	Flight	9:20am	2:50pm	Flight: FJ391
	Hong Kong to Kolkatta	Flight	9:05pm	11:15pm	Flight: KA168
	Kolkatta to Mayapur - ISODHYAN Bhavan	Taxi	12:15am	5:00am	
22/12/2019	Mayapur Parikrama - ISKCON Mayapur/Simanta Dvlp	Rikshaw & on foot	10:00am	5:00pm	TOVP, Prabhupada Puspa Samadhi Mandir, Goshala, Sanyas's Samadhi, Bhajan Kurir, Ganga Snaan, Jagannath Temple, Birth Place of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Srivas Anghan, Caitanya Math, Chand Kazi Samadhi
23/12/2019	Mayapur to Ekchakra/Katwa	Taxi	6:00am	11:00am	Lord Nityananda Birth Place, Katwa
	Ekchakra to Mayapur	Taxi	2:00pm	7:00pm	
24/12/2019	Mayapur Parikrama - Godrum Dvlp/Ritu Dvlp/Mumgasi	Rikshaw, Boat & on foot	9:00am	6:00pm	Suvams Bihar, Suravi Kunj, Bhaktivind Thakur's Bhajan Kurir & Samadhi, Aam Ghata, Nrisimha Palli, Harihar Khetra, Champahati, Vidya Nagar, Saranga Murari House, Vrindavan Das Thakur House, Ucha Hatta
	Mayapur ISODHYAN Bhavan to Kolkatta Airport	Taxi	1:00pm	5:00pm	
25/12/2019	Kolkatta to Bhubaneswar	Flight	7:45pm	8:50pm	Flight: 6E-6869
	Bhubaneswar Airport to ISKCON Temple Guesthouse	Taxi	9:20pm	10:00pm	
26/12/2019	Bhubaneswar/Jagannath Puri Parikrama	Taxi	8:00am	5:00pm	ISKCON Bhubaneswar Temple, ISKCON Puri Temple, Sakshi Gopal Temple, Gundica Temple, Jagannath Puri Temple
	ISKCON Temple Guesthouse to Bhubaneswar Airport	Taxi	6:00am	6:30am	
27/12/2019	Bhubaneswar to Delhi	Flight	9:10am	11:40am	Flight: 6E-2256
	Delhi to Vrindavana MVT	Taxi	12:00pm	4:00pm	
28/12/2019	Vraj Mandal Parikrama - Day 1	Taxi, on foot	7:00am	7:00pm	Vrindavana - 7 Goswami Temples, Kaliya Dah, Keshi Ghat, Nidhi Van, Gopishwar Mahadev, Vanshivat, Imlit tala, Govardhan - Mansi Ganga, Chakleshwar Mahadev, Govinda Kund, Radha Kund, Shyam Kund, Kusum Sarovar
29/12/2019	Vraj Mandal Parikrama - Day 2	Taxi, on foot	7:00am	7:00pm	Mathura - Vishram Ghat, Dwanika Dheesh, Sweta Varah, Adi Varah, Janam Bhoomi, Buteshwar Mahadev, Madhuvan, Talvan, Kumudvan, Bahulavan
30/12/2019	Vraj Mandal Parikrama - Day 3	Taxi, on foot	7:00am	7:00pm	Khadir Van, Barsana - Sankri Khor, Mata Ji Goshala, Mor Kuti, Maan Mandir, Daan Bhari, Kushal Bihar, Shree Ji Mandir, Pili Pokhar, Prem Sarovar, Saket, Nandgaon - Pavan Sarovar, Ter Kadam, Aaseshwar Mahadev, Nand Bhavan, Vrinda Kund, Kokila Van, Javat
31/12/2019	Vraj Mandal Parikrama - Day 4	Taxi, on foot	7:00am	7:00pm	Akrur Ghat, Bhatrol, Garud Govind, Chaumauha, Bathain - Charan Pahari, Sheshashayi, Ram Ghat - Encha Dauli, Bihar Van, Akshyavat, Tapovan, Cheer Ghat, Nana Ghat
01/01/2020	Vraj Mandal Parikrama - Day 5	Taxi, on foot	7:00am	7:00pm	Kadam Khandi, Kamyavan - Govind Dev & Vrinda Devi, Bhojan Thali, Vyomasur Cave, Phisalini Shila, Balram Foot Print, Kameshwar Mahadev, 4-Yug 4 Shiv Ji, Gangotri, Yamunotry, Haridwar
02/01/2020	Vraj Mandal Parikrama - Day 6	Taxi, on foot	7:00am	7:00pm	Lohevan, Revul, Maharan - Gokul, Dauli, Brahmand Ghat, ukhal Bandhan, S4 Khamba, Raman Reti, Bhandirvan, Bhadra Van, Belvan, Man Sarovar, Mathura-Vishram Ghat
03/01/2020	MVT Vrindavana to Delhi Hotel - Fabhotel Cosy Plaza	Taxi	11:00am	3:00pm	
04/01/2020	Delhi ISKCON temple, Shopping	Taxi	9:00am	2:00pm	Delhi ISKCON temple
	Fabhotel Cosy Plaza Hotel to Delhi Airport	Taxi	7:00pm	7:30pm	
04/01/2020 to 05-01-20	Delhi to Hong Kong	Flight	11:05pm	6:50am	Flight: FJ350
05/01/2020 to 06-01-20	Hong Kong to Nadi	Flight	4:55pm	8:10am	Flight: FJ392
06/01/2020	Nadi to Suva	Taxi	9:30am	12:30pm	



Travellers
Nityananda Das
Nartaki Devi Dasi
Raghunath Gopal Das
Jayadeva Goswami Das
Maharani Devi Dasi
Divya Devi Dasi
Jagat Ishwar Das
Krishneel Kishen Ram

Role
Tour Leader

Photographer
Photographer
Photographer

First Aider



2. Travelling from Fiji to India

The time had finally come that we were all desperately waiting for. Except for Jagadishwar Das, every one of us were on the same flight as he got delayed in getting his passport renewed so was coming the day after.

We met at the Nadi International Airport at 6:00am on the 21st of December 2019 for our flight to Hong Kong as per flight number FJ391 at 9:20am. All of us checked in and our luggage went through while we waited for the calling for customs clearance and heading towards the gates. However, we encountered some difficulties at the airport which is a norm at times.

I was carrying the first aid kit in my bag and after my luggage had been checked in, I was told no liquid is to be carried in the hand baggage so had to get rid of the Iodine and Scissors in the kit. I took out the Iodine and Scissors and gave to Jagadishwar to take back home who came to drop of his son Krishneel who was travelling in our flight.

Next we went through customs and my son was told he cannot take his toy gun on the flight in his hand carry bag. After several minutes of arguments, we just gave in and called Jagadiswar on his mobile to come and take the toy gun with him instead of giving it to the customs officer.

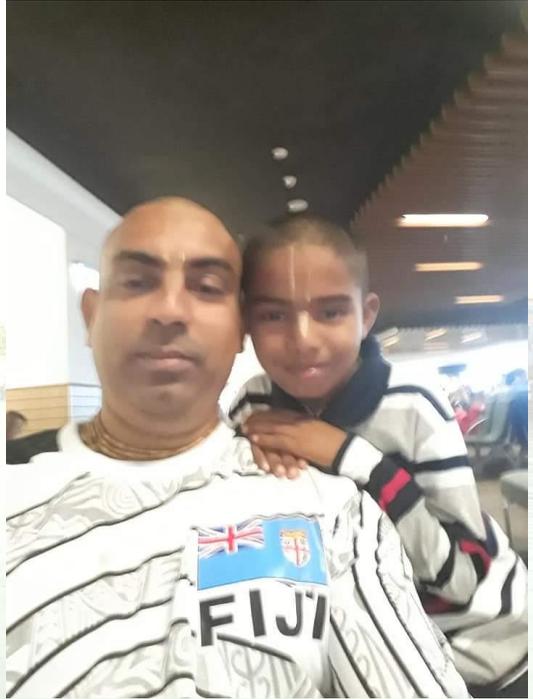
Than Krishneel was stopped from taking paneer curry for his lunch on the flight due to liquid in it. My wife stepped in and asked the customs officer, what if we mix it with the rice, would we still be allowed to take it as Krishneel will not have anything to eat since we only ordered fruit platter on the flight due to being Hare Krishna's. To this the customs officer agreed and Krishneel mixed the paneer curry with the rice.

After all the declarations was over, we sat in the waiting area for our boarding call. There were so many people travelling to Hong Kong and other places so we

just hung around in a corner and stayed together relaxing and chilling out. Everyone made quick calls to their relatives and friends to bid goodbye, charged their phones in the power point available, had a little snacks and refreshed themselves. Maharani was very cheerful as you can see in the photo in the next page as a long awaited dream was coming true.



Nartaki relaxing



Myself and Gopal



Jayadeva (snack time) & Gopal



From left to right: Maharani (the cheerful one), Divya & Krishneel (discussing science)

Divya and Krishneel became a team as Divya is a High School Year 13 Bio-Chem Science Teacher and Krishneel a Medical Student doing MBBS. So they always had their corner.

We were finally called in for boarding. Once all the passengers had settled in, the flight attendants did the final checks, the usual safety presentations and after the final announcements were made by the Pilot, the flight took off and we were up in the sky in no time flying smoothly. It was going to be a long flight so everyone engaged themselves in various activities. Some passengers were reading, some watched movies, devotees were chanting, Gopal watched cartoons which is his favorite part when on the flight, relaxing on his seat while others took to a power nap before breakfast was being served as everyone were up so early in order to make to the airport on time.



Gopal relaxing and watching cartoon

After breakfast was served, everyone just continued doing whatever they were and finally we arrived in Hong Kong at 2:50pm HK time. Everyone departed the aircraft for their respective exits. Some were returning home, some staying in Hong Kong for holidays while others continuing with the journey to other places.

Our next flight was at 9.05pm from Hong Kong to Kolkata. We went through customs and I took everyone to my favorite spot which was close to the restrooms and other facilities for phone charging, flight detail screens and mountain views outside etc.

Since it was a long waiting time before our connecting flight to Kolkata, we just relaxed after the tiring flight, had our lunch, did window shopping, completed our chanting, took a nap, refreshed ourselves and just hung around. People were just rushing from here to there trying to catch their flights, looking for their gates, children playing, shopping etc.



At Hong Kong Airport

Three hours before our flight, we came to know of our gate so we got ready and headed towards it. Went down the escalator, then by train and bus and finally got to our gate. Waited there before our boarding call was made. We headed towards the aircraft and the flight took off for Kolkata. By this time, we were really exhausted so everyone went to sleep after dinner.

We arrived in Kolkata Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport at 11:15pm Indian time. It was a great relief and everyone was in ecstasy as we finally stepped the Holy land of India. We went through customs, got our luggage and came out of the airport. We were welcomed by the cool breeze of Kolkata. Our driver was waiting outside with a plaque of my name. We greeted each other with a Hare Krishna and he went off to get the transport. I had arranged for a 11 seater Travellers bus so everyone could fit in comfortably and put their luggage properly as well.



Outside Kolkata Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International airport



Indian Truck

We arrived in Sridham Mayapur at around 5:00am in the morning on the 22nd December 2019 and the day was Ekadasi. We went straight to Ishodyan Bhavan where we were meant to be staying. The night shift devotees and securities were all wearing winter clothes, sweaters with 2-3 beanies as it was freezing cold in the morning hours. We off loaded our things and stacked at the waiting area. Unfortunately, our rooms were not going to be ready till 9:00am in the morning as that was the usual check-in time.

We were all chilling in the cold and so my wife requested the reception to at least give us one room even if not yet ready so we could put our things and get refreshed. They checked with the devotees in charge at Gada Bhavan and allowed us to put our things in one of the rooms. One after another we took our shower and got ready. My wife took our little deity Laddu Gopal / Bal Mukunda out of the bag as well, whom we take everywhere we go and did some offering of whatever we had available. (continued on page 22)



Bal Mukunda in Mayapur



Ishodyan Bhavan – our residence in Mayapur

3. Sridham Mayapur

Mayapur, previously known as Miyapur is a neighborhood of Bamanpukur area, situated adjacent to Navadwip, at the confluence of the two rivers, where the waters of the river Jalangi mix with Ganga and is one of the main of the nine islands of the Caitanya Mahaprabhu's land Navadwip. It is located 130km north of Kolkata within Nadia district, West Bengal and well connected by roads and rail network.

The holiest of all places in entire India, Mayapur Chandrodaya Temple of ISKCON is the major reason why devotees all over the world come to this sacred land. Inside the temple you can see the magnificent deities of Panchatattva, Lord Nrsingha Dev, Srila Prabhupada and Radha Madhava with the Gopis. This is a place flowing with devotion like no other place on earth and soon in the year 2023 by the mercy of Lord Gauranga, the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium will officially open and the devotees from all over the world will visit Sridham Mayapur to witness this grand inauguration.

The religious ambience and the serene natural beauty of the place brings peace to our troubled minds. The basic calm aura of the place will fill us up with happiness. And in such a place if we spend one or two days attending the temple aartis and taking a campus tour with Ganga bath and Navadwip parikrama then we are just released of all our miseries.

Lord Sri Krishna appeared on this land some 500 years ago in the mood of Srimati Radharani as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu together with His eternal associates to flood the world with Hari Naam Sankirtan and distributed Krishna prema to the most fallen souls of this age.

You can read about His pastimes in books such as Sri Caitanya Caritamrta, Caitanya Mangal, Caitanya Bhagavat, Sri Krishna Caitanya, Nectar of Devotion and many others.

4. Antardwip & Simanta Dwip Parikrama

After settling down we went for darshan at the Chandrodaya temple. First we got the darshan of His Divine Grace Srila A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, then we took darshan of Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Madhava with the Gopis, then we took darshan of Lord Sri Narasinghadeva and finally we took darshan of Sri Panchatattva. The temple room was full with so many devotees from all over the world and the devotees were engaged in chanting and dancing. Wild kirtan's were going on. We participated for a while, did parikrama of the deities and then went for breakfast as we were going to have a lot of places to visit during the day.



Srila Prabhupada



Sri Nrsimha Deva



Sri Sri Radha Madhava and Ashtasakhi



Sri Panchatattva – from left to right; Sri Advaita Acarya, Lord Nityananda, Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Sri Gadadhara Pundit, Sri Srinivas Acarya

I went to buy prasadam for all the devotees as I was handling the meals since everyone had paid me in advance. We went to Govindas Restaurant which had a big queue at the serving counter. I saw so many varieties of prasadam and didn't know what to buy as it was Ekadasi and could not figure out which one was Ekadasi prasadam and which not. I enquired for each item from the devotee at the counter if it was Ekadasi prasadam and a lady from the back said "Prabhuji, it is all Ekadasi prasadam". I was really surprised as had never seen such a wide range. In any case, made a purchase of 7 serves of prasadam of different dishes for us all and we enjoyed the breakfast together.

Thereafter, we went back to Ishodyan Bhavan to check if the rooms were ready. We got keys for 3 rooms and 1 room was to be ready by the afternoon so we moved our things to the second floor where our rooms were. Myself, Nartaki and Gopal stayed together, Maharani and Divya shared one room, Krishneel and his father got one room, while Jayadeva kept his things in Krishneel's room till his room was made available.

While devotees were settling in their rooms, I went to make payments for the accommodation, taxi services, and check on the rest of the parikrama arrangements with Mayapur Tourism for Navadwip, TOVP parikrama and the tour guide plus taxi for Jagadishwar Das who was coming at night.

Today, as per our Itinerary, we were going to visit the following places: Temple of the Vedic Planetarium, Srila Prabhupada Puspa Samadhi Mandir, ISKCON Sanyasi's Samadhi, Bhajan Kutir, Goshala, Yogapeeth – The Birth place of Lord Caitanya, Srinivas Angan, Chand Kazi Samadhi and Sri Jagannath Mandir.

➤ Temple of the Vedic Planetarium

We went to visit the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium with another group of devotees and a tour guide from the TOVP office.

While we were visiting each level of the gigantic building, the tour guide told us different stories and how the whole project was a dream of Srila Prabhupada, vision of Srila Bhaktivinod Thakura and prediction of Lord Nityananda.

Srila Prabhupada was a true visionary. He always had very big ideas for the spreading of Krishna consciousness and the ideal Vedic culture.

One of Srila Prabhupada's many gifts to his followers, and the entire world, was his detailed vision for the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium.

Srila Prabhupada had a clear vision for the temple, and he expressed it on many occasions. He wanted a unique Vedic Planetarium to present the Vedic perspective of life, including a gigantic display of the material and spiritual worlds, which could be viewed by pilgrims on different levels as they traveled through the Planetarium.

As in everything he did, Srila Prabhupada was acting in fulfillment of the desires of the previous Acaryas, or spiritual preceptors. A grand temple for Mayapur was predicted by none other than Lord Nityananda, the most intimate associate of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, some five hundred years ago.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, the father of the modern day Krishna Consciousness movement, narrates a description of the future development of Mayapur given by Sri Nityananda Prabhu to Srila Jiva Goswami:

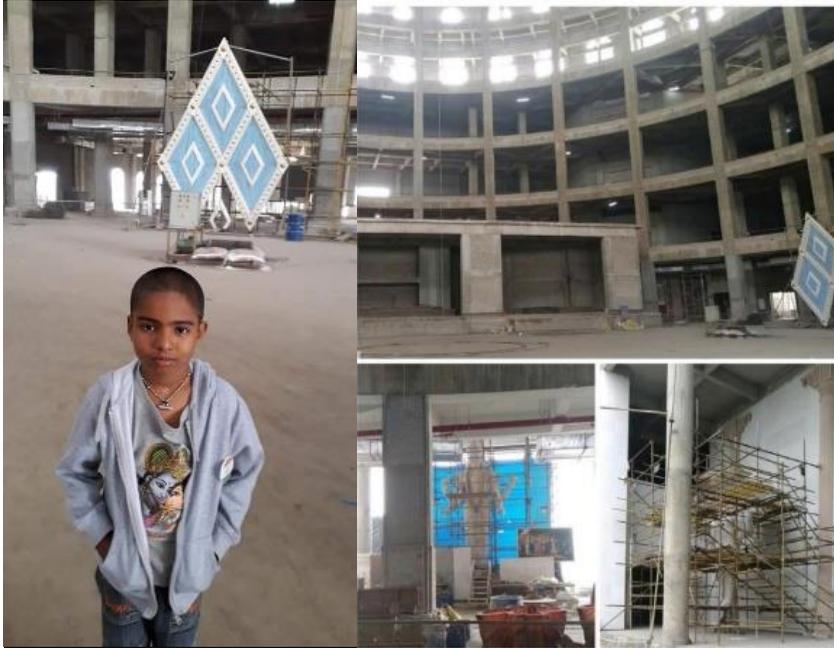
When our Lord Caitanya disappears, by His desire, the Ganges will swell. The Ganges water will almost cover Mayapur for a hundred years, and then the water will again recede. For some time only the place will remain, devoid of

houses. Then again, by the Lord's desire, this place will again be manifest, and the devotees will build temples of the Lord. One exceedingly wonderful temple (adbhuta-mandira) will appear from which Gauranga's eternal service will be preached everywhere.

We went to the Brahamacari ashram, kitchen for their Lordships and saw where each of the deities were going to be installed, deities dressing room for storing all their clothes and jewelries.



Inside Temple of the Vedic Planetarium



Inside Temple of the Vedic Planetarium

➤ **Srila Prabhupada Puspa Samadhi Mandir**

Next we visited Srila Prabhupada Puspa Samadhi Mandir, we left our shoes at the shoe stand and went through security check. The security asked if we have camera's or mobile phones, since these were not allowed. Every one of us had our mobile phones, so I stayed back holding on to their things while the others went in since I had already visited previously.

Puspa Samadhi mandir story:

The garland which adorned His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada while placing him in Samadhi was been brought and laid down in His Pushpa Samadhi Mandir at Mayapur. A larger than life size brass murti of Srila Prabhupada was been installed and is being worshipped there.

ISKCON devotees worship Srila Prabhupada for He is one of the most confidential servitors of Lord Krishna who has tirelessly spread Krishna consciousness throughout the world. Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura says in Sri Sri Gurvastakam prayers, "yasya prasada bhagavat-prasado" meaning "By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Krishna".

There were a lot of different diorama's inside the temple showing different pastimes of Srila Prabhupada from his childhood till he left this planet. Also there were a display of his books in the gift shop with various other items and also prasadam stalls. There are life size murti's of Ararya's as well.

The mandir also has big diorama's of Krishna's pastimes and that of Lord Ramachandra outside on the walls of the mandir. Srila Prabhupada's car is also parked outside and there is a beautiful fountain and pool on the opposite side with beautiful gardens in the compound and sitting places for devotees and other pilgrims as you can see in the picture below.

There are several halls as well where they do seminars and other activities.



Srila Prabhupada Puspa Samadhi Mandir

➤ Bhajan Kutir

From there we went to the Bhajan Kutir. The Bhajan Kutir is on the immediate left when you walk in through the main gate, which is the straw hut where Srila Prabhupada stayed from 1972 to 1976 while the first main building (the Lotus Building) was built. A 24 hour kirtana takes place here following Srila Prabhupada's instruction that there be continuous chanting of the holy name in the dham. On the left side is Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara, large neemwood Deities who traveled throughout India on Pada-yatra. These Deities also come out in procession on a chariot every Saturday after Sandhya-arati during winter from the beginning of the Kartika (Damodara) month till Gaura-purnima.

Srila Prabhupada first lived in a small hut near the campus's main gate. That was the first structure built in ISKCON Sridhama Mayapur. It is still being maintained today according to Srila Prabhupada's desire. He instructed devotees to perform Harinama Kirtana 24 hours a day throughout the year in Sridhama Mayapur. Srila Prabhupada's hut became the place of nonstop Harinama Kirtana in 1990 during Gaura Purnima. Since then the singing of Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare has continued unremittingly despite huge floods during the years 1999, 2000 and 2006.

In this service take part 16 devotees. There are 8 shifts of 3 hours each. 4 groups of 3 devotees each take part in each shift, once during the day and once at night. The department is determined to continue this 24 hour Harinaam Kirtana eternally and please Srila Prabhupada by this service.

We took a quick darshan and moved on towards the ISKCON Sanyasi's Samadhi.



Bhajan Kutir

➤ ISKCON Sanyasi's Samadhi

From the Bhajan Kutir we went to ISKCON Sanyasi's Samadhi and offered our obeisance's in front of each Samadhi. There were samadhi's of His Holiness Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami Maharaja, His Holiness Srila Bhakti Tirtha Swami Maharaja and their other God brothers.



ISKCON Sanyasi's Samadhi

➤ Goshala

From there we went to the Goshala in a bullock cart. It was a great ride as it was a first time experience for us all.

Srila Prabhupada, in his teachings, had often emphasized cow care, teaching us that the society will flourish if cows and brahmanas are taken care of properly. ISKCON's goshala at Mayapur is a happy home for many cows, bulls and calves. They grow up in a natural and peaceful atmosphere and are maintained nicely by a dedicated team of devotees.

There are several cows being milked presently, which yields hundreds of liters of milk daily. Milk is sold to the residents of Mayapur, and also used in the Deity and devotee kitchens. There are few pairs of oxen that pull various carts from Deities, to visitors, to garbage pick-up. These oxen have been trained up to plow the fields as well. There are several workers at the goshala and a veterinarian.

They have a shop there in the goshala selling various products made purely from cow dung, cow urine and milk.

Maharani and I purchased cow urine from there for our health issues but unfortunately these were taken away on our way back by the Fiji Customs who have no understanding of the importance of cows in our lives and the health benefits the cow urine has.

From the Goshala we went to have lunch and a little break as we had now completed all the darshan within the complex and after lunch we were to go and have darshan's of Yogapeeth, Srinivas Angan, Chand Kazi Samadhi, Sri Jagannath Mandir and Ballal Dhipi. Ballal Dhipi was not in our itinerary but the rickshaw wala took us there as we had spare time left.



On our way to the Goshala



On our way to the Goshala



On our way to the Goshala



At the Goshala



At the Goshala



➤ **Yogapeeth – The Birth Place of Lord Caitanya**

After lunch we took a rickshaw and went to Yogapeeth which is the birth place of Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Unfortunately, photos were not allowed here so we took whatever we could as quickly as possible. Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in the year 1482. He performed His pastimes of boyhood and youth here until He took the renounced order of sannyasa when He was 24 years old.

Yogapeeth is on the banks of the holy Ganga and was discovered in 1887 by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura which was confirmed by Srila Jagannath Das Babaji Maharaja. The Thakura built a beautiful temple here with the Deities of Mahaprabhu and His consorts Visnupriya and Laksmipriya, and Radha-Madhava.

There is also a neem tree in the courtyard that is the exact spot where Lord Caitanya was born. There are also Deities of Mahaprabhu as a child along with His parents, Saci-devi and Jagannatha Misra.

While digging the foundation for this temple a deity of Adhoksaja Visnu was unearthed which is believed to have been the household Deity of Jagannatha Misra. The Yogapeeth temple also houses the Deities of Sri Sri Laksmi-Nrsimha and Sri Sri Gaura-Gadadhara.

Down the road from Yogapeeth is also Sri Caitanya Matha, the original headquarters of the Gaudiya Matha founded by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura.

Srila Sarasvati Thakura's samadhi is situated here as well as the Samadhi-mandira of Srila Gaura Kisora Das Babaji Maharaja, the guru of Srila Sarasvati Thakura.

After taking darshan here, we went to Srivas Angan which was just next door.



At the Yogapeeth – Birthplace of Lord Caitanya

➤ Srinivas Angan

This is a small temple where the house of Srivas Thakura was once located. On his left altar there are Deities of Sri Sri Radha-Krishna and Lord Caitanya.

The central altar is dedicated to Maha-prakasha-lila, a lila in which Lord Caitanya revealed to the devotees His Divine nature (this happened at this very place). Lord Caitanya is sitting on a throne, Gadadhara Pandita is fanning him with a chamara, and Lord Nityananda holds an umbrella over His head.

Gaura Nitai leading kirtan are installed on the right altar. This altar is dedicated to the procession to the house of Kazi, which was headed by Lord Caitanya and Nityananda.

At Srivas Thakur's house there is a place known as Khol-banga-danga, "the place where the drums were broken." The altar here reminds devotees of how the Muslim Kazi soldiers tried to stop the sankirtan in Navadvipa, which served as the impetus for the beginning of the civil disobedience movement organized by Lord Caitanya.

Srivas Thakur was a close friend of Sri Gadadhara Pandita and was highly respected by all Vaishnavas of Navadvipa. He was an incarnation of Narada Muni, and, like him, with great pleasure chanted the holy name.

Although Srivas was married, Vaishnavas still worship him as brahmachari, because Narada Muni maintains eternal celibacy. He really often wore saffron clothes and shaved his head, although sometimes he grew his hair and wore white clothes. To this day, Srivas is called "adi," the perfect servant of the Lord.

Srivas's wife, Malini, who came to the house of Sacimata and took care of little Gauranga with motherly love, was a nurse of Krishna in Vrindavan in her previous life, and her name was Ambika. Srivas's niece, Narayani, was her sister. Parvata Muni, a great friend of Narada, became the brother of Srivas named Sri

Rama Pandita. When Lord Caitanya accepted sannyasa and left Navadvipa, Srivas, feeling separation from the Lord, moved to another place.



At Srinivas Angan

➤ Chand Kazi Samadhi

Next we stopped at Chand Kazi Samadhi.

It is described in Navadvipa, Sri Navadvipa Dham Mahatmya (By Bhaktivinoda Thakura), when Nityananda Prabhu with Jiva Goswami entered to Chand Kazi's village. He said, "O Jiva, hear My words. The Chand Kazi's village is none other than Mathura. After performing kirtana, Gauranga gave love of God to the Kazi and liberated him. Mathura's King Kamsa of Krishna-lila became Chand Kazi in Gaura-lila. For that reason, Gauranga addressed the Kazi as His maternal uncle, and out of fear the Kazi took shelter of Gauranga's lotus feet.

Under orders from Hussain Shah, who was the king of the Bengal Empire and Jarasandha in Krishna-lila, the Kazi caused disturbance during kirtana performance by breaking the mrdangas. The Lord, appearing in the form of Nrsimha put fear in the Kazi's heart. Like Kamsa, the Kazi cowered in fear. Sri Caitanya, however, gave him prema and thus made the Kazi a great devotee.



Chand Kazi Samadhi

➤ Sri Jagannath Mandir

After Chand Kazi Samadhi, we went to Sri Jagannath Mandir and got darshan of Their Lordships Sri Jagannatha, Sri Baladeva and Subhadra Devi. There are different pastimes of Lord Krishna done with diorama's, how Krishna was taken to Gokul from Mathura by His father Vasudeva. How Lord Krishna stole the Gopis clothes and several other pastimes. There is a beautiful garden as well and a big pond at the back of the temple. We participated in the afternoon aarti, heard some pastimes of Lord Jagannath as well.

During the time of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, there was a devotee by the name of Jagadish. He used to always travel to Jagannath Puri to get the darshan of Lord Caitanya and Lord Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra. However, due to old age, he lost his eye sight and yet wanted to go. So once when he was prepared to go, he had a dream where Lord Jagannath instructed him to go to the Ganges and he will find a log from which he can request a leper from the village to carve the deities. This story is quite similar to the King Indradyumna story of Jagannath Puri.

There is a whole exhibition of how these deities appeared as you enter the gates of the temple and find it on the left.

Different diorama's can be seen in the show glass with the story written on it.

Unfortunately, I am unable to tell the whole story here as it will turn out to be a book of its own. Such is the glories of Lord Jagannath as it cannot be explained in one page, hence I encourage the readers to read Srila Prabhupada's books which is full of nectar.



Sri Jagannath Mandir

➤ Ballal Dhipi

On our way back to the ISKCON temple, we stopped at Ballal Dhipi. I have not heard much about it, but all I know is that it is an ancient mound named locally after Ballala Sena of the Sena dynasty. No spiritual stories probably connected to the place so we just took photos and then headed back.



At Ballal Dhipi

Back at Ishodyan Bhavan, we had our shower, did laundry and went for evening darshan and Sandhya aarti, did a little bit of shopping, had our dinner and then called it a night since next day we were to go for more parikrama with a tour guide this time to Godrum Dwip, Ritu Dwip and Mumgasi.



Evening Darshan at Sri Chandrodaya Mandir

5. Godrum Dwip, Ritu Dwip, Mumgasi Parikrama

Next morning 23rd December 2019, we all met at the Ishodyan Bhavan reception at 4:00am. It was so freezing outside and all foggy. While on our way to Chandrodaya temple, we met Jagadishwar Das who had just arrived from Fiji Islands. Unfortunately, the driver had dropped him opposite the Govindas Restaurant and he did not know where to go. We greeted him and asked Krishneel to show his father to their room so he could freshen up and if willing than can come for mangal aarti.

The temple hall was filled with devotees and so many buses full of the Bengali's also came from different places. Everyone was busy with their chanting so we took darshan of Srila Prabhupada and joined in the chanting.

Soon the conch shells were blown and the darshan's opened. Their Lordships looked so beautiful in their night dressing and very jubilant. The Bengali's made their auspicious sounds and a devotee started leading the Sri Sri Guru-ashtaka. Everyone joined with the chorus and soon we were all dancing on the chant.

Next was aarti of Lord Narsingadeva and then Tulasi aarti. It was a feeling from out of this world for participating with so many hundreds of devotees.



Mangal aarti at Sri Chandrodaya Mandir



Mangal aarti at Sri Chandrodaya Mandir

After the aarti was over, we went back to our rooms to get ready for the day's tour and completed our chanting. We came back for morning darshans and Srila Prabhupada's Guru Puja, before going for breakfast as soon after that we were to leave for the parikrama. It was a very beautiful darshan that we had and every moment spent was like full of nectar and transcendental bliss.



Morning Darshan at Sri Chandrodaya Mandir



Lord Narsimha Deva darshan at Sri Chandrodaya Mandir

After breakfast, we went back to Ishodyan Bhavan and waited for our transport and the tour guide who were running late. I called them several times to check and then they finally came. Our tour guides name was Suvarna Gour Das, a young lad in his early 20's. Suvarna Gour Das turned out to be a very talented young man and very well versed with the scriptures and fluent in English which we later discovered during the visits to various places.

The Lords pastimes is unlimited and His spiritual abode is so gigantic that even a million lifetimes is not enough to visit all the holy places of Navadwip. However, we somehow managed to visit some of the prominent places due to the limited stay we had. We visited Suvarna Bihar, Suravi Kunj, Bhaktivinod Thakur's Bhajan

Kutir & Samadhi, Aam Ghata, Nrisimha Palli, Harihar Kshetra, Champahati, Vidya Nagar, Saranga Murari House, Vrindavan Das Thakur's House and Ucha Hatta to name a few as you can see in the pictures below. Unfortunately, I am not qualified enough to talk about the Lord's different pastimes that took place in these holy places and encourage readers to read books by the Acarya's on the subject of interest.

A lot of time we had spent at Srila Bhaktivinod Thakur's house as this is from where He had the vision of the adbhuta-mandira of the Vedic Planetarium. We could clearly see from here the TOVP and Srila Prabhupada's Puspa Samadhi Mandir which were across the Ganges.

At Gour Gadadhara temple we got the Garland prasadam of the Lord. We also visited an ISKCON temple where we got the maha prasadam of the Lord as His remnants of food stuffs that were offered just before we arrived.

We all shared a morsel from one plate which reminded us of how Lord Shiva became so ecstatic after honoring the Maha Prasadam of Lord Vishnu.

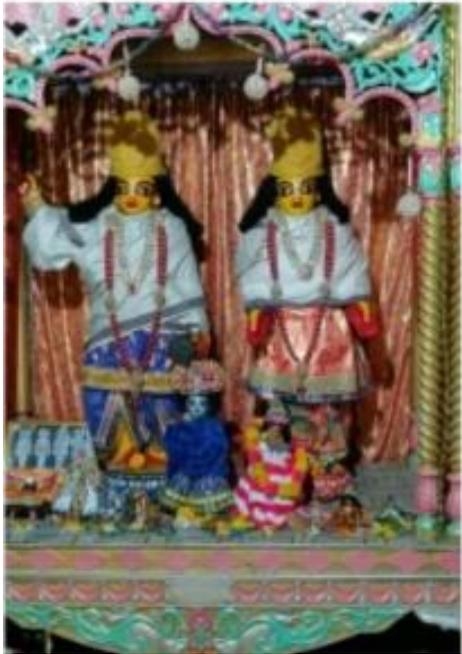
There are so many nice devotees doing great service to the Lord who were very welcoming and shared the different pastimes of the Lord with us.

We experienced so much love, care and affection by these great devotees who only have one purpose in life, that is to serve wholeheartedly.











Sri Gour Gadadhar



Srila Bhakti Vinod Thakur House



Old Temple of Sri Gour Gadadhar







After visiting all the holy places, we headed back to Sridham Mayapur. By the time we reached, it was 5:30pm and dark already which is the case during cold seasons here.

We then went for Ganga Snan at the ghat. We took darshan of Ganga Devi at the new temple that has been built by the ghat and with facilities upgraded. We offered our prayers to Mother Ganga and lamps. There are facilities now for men/women to change which is a good thing.

Few people were already there taking dips in the Ganges though it was dark so we decided to go in as well. First we offered our obeisance's and then Myself, Jagadiswar, Krishneel, Maharani, Divya and even my little boy Gopal also took a dip in the Ganges. The water was extremely cold but we really loved it. I did my Gayatri mantra as well in the Ganges water and changed my Brahmin thread.

My wife and Jayadeva waited outside and looked after our belongings but they took a drop of water on their heads.

We saw some group of people also taking someone's corpse for cremation which was a bit scary but then we realized the person departed must have been liberated due to leaving his body in the Holy Dham so nothing to be scared of.

After Ganga snan, we went back to our rooms to change and then went for Sandhya Aarti. We also visited the exhibition in the Sri Sri Radha Madhava temple hall which is next to Srila Prabhupada's vyasa asan.

Everything has been so beautifully done, we also made some purchases from the gift shop in there.

After that we had our dinner and myself and Gopal called it a night as next day we were going to Ekachakra while my wife took the others outside the temple gates for shopping as the ladies wanted to buy Gopisuits and the men dhoti's and kurtas as there were a lots of cheaper options available.

Next morning 24th December 2019, we all met again at the Ishodyan Bhavan reception and went for mangal aarti. After mangal aarti we left straight away for Ekachakra as it was a long drive and we wanted to arrive by 9:00am so could make the most out of the day, by visiting all the important places before coming back.

We took bottled water, fruits and some light snacks to have on the way as breakfast and lunch arrangements were made at Ekachakra by Suvarna Gour Das to help us out as we did not know anyone there. He also made arrangements for a tour guide and gave details of the contact person to meet at the temple office.

We really looked forward for the day's event which would definitely be filled with joy, adventures and of course Krishna Consciousness. Last I came here was in 2007 so expected a lot of changes since that time the main temple had just started to be built.

6. Ekachakra

Ekachakra is the birth place of Lord Sri Nityananda Prabhu who is the personification of the love that originated in Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He was born to a pious brahmana family and His father's name was Hadai Ojha and mothers name was Padmavati.

We first came to the Ekachakra ISKCON temple and took darshan of their Lordships Sri Sri Gaura Nitai. It is a nice beautiful temple with exhibitions and prasadam hall building opposite it, ashram for the residence devotees, offices, and farms.

Met with the contact person and went to have our breakfast after taking darshan. Thereafter, we met with the tour guide and started our pada-yatra of the Ekchakra dham. Unfortunately, I cannot recall the exact sequence in which we visited the rest of the places so please excuse my mistakes.



Ekacharka ISKCON temple



Ekachakra ISKCON temple



Breakfast in Ekachakra



Sutika Mandir - Lord Nityananda Birthplace



We went to Sutika Mandir which is the exact spot where Lord Nityananda appeared. In the main altar of the Temple is a deity of Lord Nityananda. There is a deity of Mahaprabhu to His left and also a deity of Advaita Acarya to his right.

We went to Sahsthi Tala, Hadai Pandit Bhavan, Bishwarup Tala, Sri Mandir, Sarva tirtha kund where Lord Nityananda brought sacred waters from all holy places to this kund to save the local residents from traveling to the Ganges to take a sacred bath.

It is named Hantugada as Lord Nityananda Prabhu used to carry out the Dadhi-chida festival of giving chipped rice with yogurt prasadam here and He would take the prasadam kneeling down. At the centre of the pond is a submerged temple.

Next to the Sarva tirtha kund is Nari pota where the umbilical cord of Nityananda prabhu was placed by His parents Hadai Pandita & Padmavati Devi. We offered our obeisance's to both the holy places.

I saw one western devotee girl there and got really inspired by her and thought how fortunate she is that she got the opportunity to come and chant in such a glorious place and have become a devotee and yet we though from Indian origin are still engaged in material activities and despite having money are so unfortunate to not being able to visit the Holy Dham's regularly.

I really appreciated Srila Prabhupada's contribution at this place as how He has brought us fallen souls at the feet's of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Lord Nityananda. Without Srila Prabhupada, we would still be stuck in conditioned way life of meat eating, gambling, illicit sex life and taking intoxication.

“Thank you Srila Prabhupada for everything you have done for us with all my heart”.



Umbilical cord inside the tomb



Sarva tirtha kund

We also went to Pandavatala where the Pandavas lived with their mother Kunti, when they were exiled to the forest. This area is bordered by several Keli-kadamba trees. At Pandavatala, there is a deity of Sri Sri Radha Krishna which is looked after by ISKCON devotees. Bhim also killed the demon named Baka who used to eat human flesh in Ekachakra and his bone is also found in one of the village to date. Unfortunately, we could not go there due to time constraints as it was a bit too far.



This is where the Pandava's stayed



Marks the place where Queen Kunti cooked

We went to Kadam Khandi. Kadam means clay and khandi means ghata. Kadam Khandi marks the spot where Lord Nityananda recovered the Bankim Raya deity from the Yamuna river. There's a small temple here with Deities of Sri Gaur Nityananda, Krishna Balarama and Sadbhujja Gauranga.

We were told that Lord Nityananda left this planet by entering into the deity of Bankim Raya. This is also the place where Lord Nityananda used to play.



Lord Nityananda left this planet by entering into the Deity of Bankim Raya



Deities of Sri Gaur Nityananda, Krishna Balarama and Sadbhuj Gauranga

We visited Kundalal tala. This is the place where Lord Nityananda used his earring to block a hole, thereby preventing a snake which lived in it from coming out and troubling the residents of this area.

We also visited Mouresvara Shiva temple where Sri Hadai Pandita performed worship on the appearance of Lord Nityananda in Ekachakra, this deity roared and Advaita Acarya and other devotees could hear and understand the roar's meaning at their residences in Mayapur and Santipur that an Avadhuta had appeared on Earth.

On our way back to the temple, we bought more bottled water for the devotees and a souvenir toy for Gopal and peacock feather. Maharani also bought peacock feathers from here. Back at the temple we had our lunch. We sponsored for the Raja Bhoga so we got the opportunity to honor prasadam that was offered directly to their Lordships.



Rajabhoga Special Lunch at Ekachakra

After lunch, we went to see the exhibition. It had dioramas of different pastimes of Lord Nityananda as you can see in the pictures below and on following pages.



Exhibition at Ekachakra



Exhibition at Ekachakra



Exhibition at Ekachakra

Bidding farewell to our tour guide and other devotees and with a desire for returning again in the near future, we headed back to Sridham Mayapur.



Leaving Ekachakra

By the time we arrived in Sridham Mayapur, it was evening. We had our shower, had dinner and then took darshan of their Lordships. There was Gita Mela festival going on and I suppose only Jayadeva went to see as the others called it a night since the next day we were flying off to Bhubaneshwar, our next stop.



Gita Mela in Mayapur

perfect with the Supreme Perfect in the center. After mangal aarti we packed up our things and were all set for the ride back to Kolkata for our flight to Bhubaneswar.



Morning Darshan at Chandrodaya Mandir



Final darshan of Lord Sri Radha Madhava

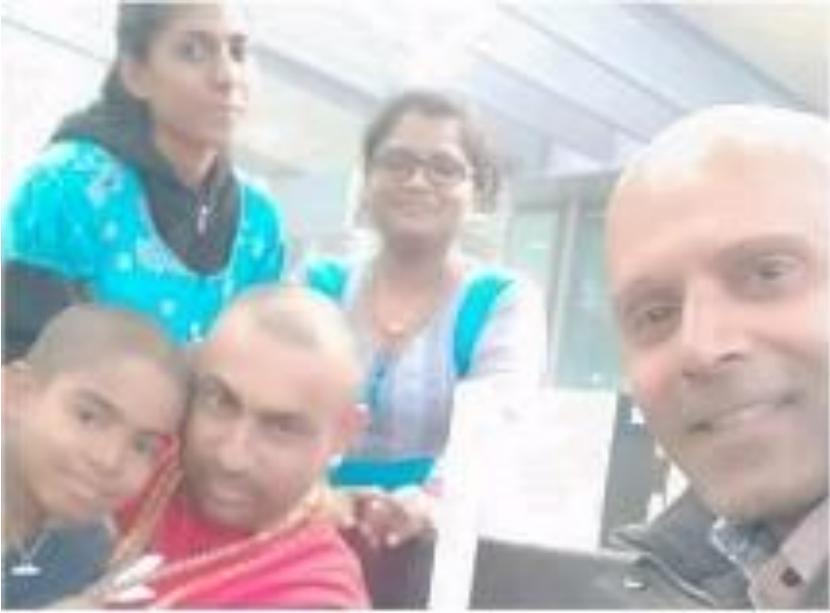
After packing our things, while we were waiting for the transport to come, everyone went for final morning darshans and I went to arrange breakfast and lunch to have on the way and on the flight. We offered our last prayers to Sri Panchatattva, Sri Sri Radha Madhava, Lord Sri Narsinghadeva and Srila Prabhupada. Everyone captured the beautiful forms of Sri Sri Radha Madhava within the core of their hearts and a desire to return again.

Our flight was in the evening at 7:45pm, however we had decided to leave early to avoid getting stuck in traffic due to fog or any major accidents which is a norm for the roads of Kolkata. The flight was good and we arrived on time in

Bhubaneshwar. Maharani and Divya had excess luggage so they were asked to pay extra as they did so much shopping in Mayapur out of excitement as this was their first trip and did not realize that the limit on domestic flight was different to international flight.



At Kolkata Airport



At Kolkata airport



At Kolkata airport



7. ISKCON Bhubaneshwar

After we came out of the airport, to our surprise there was no one to pick us up. We waited for a while but still no one came. Tried to somehow connect to the internet using available Wi-Fi and called the taxi owner as none of us had a local sim. We were told the transport was already at the airport but we could not find anyone.

After an hour had passed, everyone started becoming uncomfortable so we got two Innova taxis from the airport to ISKCON Bhubaneshwar temple. By the time we reached it was almost 11:00pm. We took our things by hand since the gates were closed and the vehicles could not go in.

One devotee came, whom we asked for the contact person but he had gone home already, however had left our room keys with the Temple Commander. Our rooms were on the third floor and there were no lifts in the property so we had to carry everything up the stairs.

We only got three rooms so requested Jayadeva to share with Jagadishwar and Krishneel.

After everyone settled in, we had our shower and met for dinner in Maharani and Divya's room as I had already arranged for it with my contact person whose name was Suvarna Das. I also arranged milk and fruits with him for offering to our Laddu Gopal which my wife did. She had been making arrangements for Laddu Gopal's bhoga offering every day in Mayapur.

Since there were no hand basins in the rooms, we had to fill drinking water from one standard hand basin on our floor for everyone to share and distilled water from downstairs near the canteens.

After dinner we all took rest. The next morning 26th December 2019, we were to go to Jagannath Puri for parikrama. I was the first one to wake up in the whole temple and then another resident devotee. I got ready and went to the car park and did my chanting while the others got up one after another and gradually came to the temple for mangal aarti.

First the aarti was performed in the outside small temple before the main temple opened. Following the mangal aarti there was Guru Puja for Srila Prabhupada and His Holiness Srila Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja in the Samadhi Mandir simultaneously.

After aarti was over the temples were closed due to a solar eclipse that very same day and we were also informed by our contact that we can only go to Jagannath Puri after midday since every temple is currently closed.

The restaurant was also closed, so our breakfast was arranged together with the resident devotees by Suvarna Das for both the days we were staying there. I also requested him to give bhoga for our Laddu Gopal and He arranged from the main kitchen after the bhoga for temple deities had gone.

He was a very helpful devotee in every way. He arranged a separate room for Jayadeva as per our initial arrangement and also gave Wi-Fi from his phone since temple Wi-Fi was down due to internet problems as there was some disturbance in India by the terrorists due to which the Prime Minister had put up some control measures in the country to stop the means of communication between the terrorists.

I also made arrangements with another company for transportation since the first one did not turn up at the airport and we did not want to take any chances. By midday the solar eclipse was over and we were now ready for the trip to Jagannath Puri. The bus was here and I arranged for lunch and bottled water for everyone to take on the bus while we waited for the tour guide to come. The

same bus we arranged for us to be taken to Bhubaneswar airport the next day as it was very spacious and affordable as well at the same time.



Dinner in the room at Bhubaneswar Guest house



Mangal aarti at Bhubaneswar temple



Mangal aarti at Bhubaneshwar temple



Guru Puja at Samadhi Mandir



Morning darshan at Bhubaneswar temple



You can see both my children in above photo, Raghunath Gopal Das holding Laddu Gopal / Bal Mukunda at Bhubaneshwar temple Guest house

8. Jagannath Puri

After the tour guide came who was a brahmachari from the temple, we left for Jagannath Puri. It was almost an hour and a half drive from Bhubaneshwar.

Our first stop was Sakshi Gopal temple. Unfortunately, camera's and mobile phones were not allowed, so we only took few photos from the outside. Same was the situation with Jagannath temple and other places we visited in Puri.

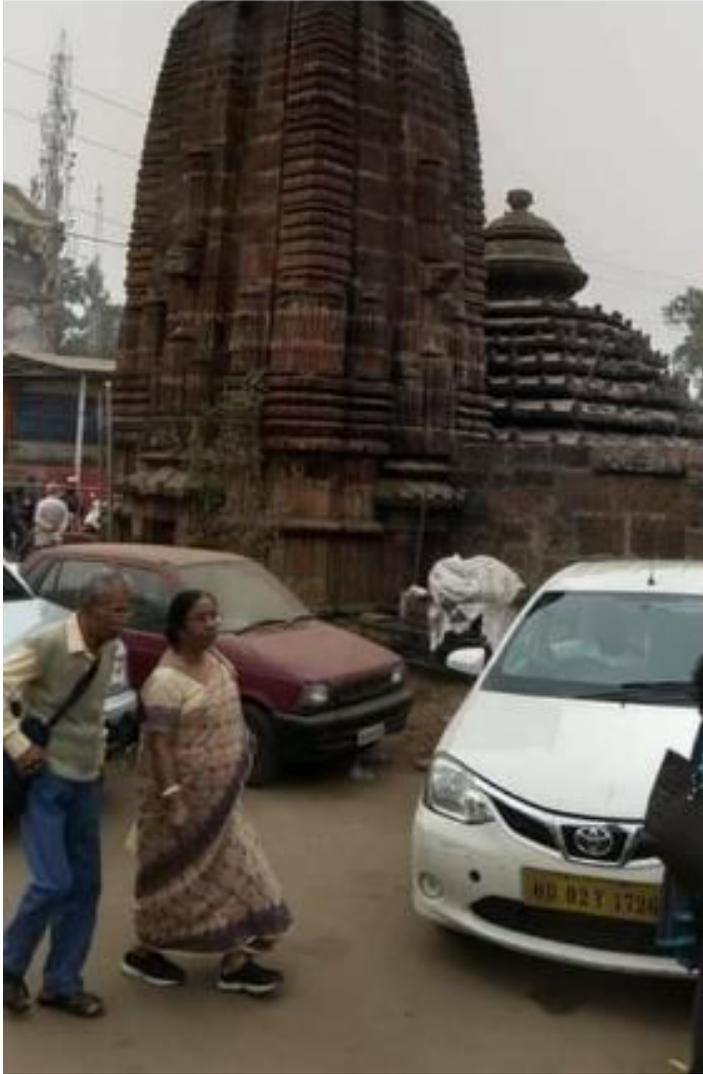
The Pandas at the Sakshi Gopal temple wanted us to buy tickets for going inside the temple, but since our tour guide knew all the rules and was a tough person, he took us straight in. One has to be really careful of the Pandas in the holy places.

We took darshan of Sakshi Gopal deity. It was a life size deity and blackish in color. The deity was so beautiful and attractive. I managed to touch the feet while offering a donation. We gave some good donations to the pundits, so managed to get a lot of maha prasadam as they were really pleased with us.

We went and sat behind the temple in the courtyard to take the prasadam which was made of puffed rice and heard the stories from the tour guide.

He told us that there were a few legends about how it became a revered shrine for Lord Krishna. One is about the Lord coming to bear witness to a village wedding for His young and poor brahman devotee. Another is that the temple is one of the 16 shrines of King Vajra, the grandson of Lord Krishna built for the Lord.

Nevertheless, the temple also acts as a marking gateway for those who arrive to the holy city of Puri and should first take darshan of Sakshi Gopal before taking darshan of Lord Jagannath. We enjoyed coconut water as well which was being sold outside the temple under a tree.



Outside Sakshi Gopal Temple



Outside Sakshi Gopal Temple

Next we went to Jagannath temple which was a long walk due to pilgrims coming in thousands, the vehicles could not go. We walked bare foot all the way including Gopal. It was great austerity for him but he loved it.

Due to the temple being closed for half day, there was long queues of people wanting to go in and take darshan. Every ten minutes there were offerings done to Lord Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra as they had not eaten anything since morning due to the solar eclipse.

First we decided to visit all the small temples there and look at the great architecture. Nartaki got left behind which made us really worried so myself and the tour guide went looking for her and finally found her.

After taking darshan of small temples we joined in the queue to go inside the main temple. The tour guide told us that these temples were constructed almost a millennium ago. Jagannath Puri temple holds a great religious value amongst the Hindus as a part of the sacred Char Dham pilgrimage sites. Built on a high pedestal, the richly carved temple structure stands protected with four majestic gates.

The architectural wonder is also home to many scientifically unexplained miracles. Respecting the ancient Indian belief of never sending a visitor back with an empty stomach, prasadam is prepared with centuries old, preserved recipes and the food here is never wasted. The annual Rathayatra draws in millions of devotees who travel miles to see the deities roam around the temple surroundings in Chariots.

The pundits were changing the flags of Lord Jagannath's temple and were distributing at a donation, so we got some for ourselves as well. That was a great blessing from Lord Jagannath upon us all.

I got Gopal to sit on my shoulders while going inside the temple as there was pushing and rushing going on and children could easily get hurt or lost. Due to such a large number of people I only got a glimpse of Lord Jagannath but believe even that is enough for me. Few of the group members managed to get a good darshan as they gave donations to the pundits instead of putting in the hundi

available. Getting the darshan of the temple chakra is also as good as getting the darshan of the Lord.



Jagannath Temple Chakra & Flag darshan

After darshan we got little prasadam and went to some village where we saw many memorabilia of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda. Unfortunately, I am unable to recall the exact place. It's just sometimes so happens that the Lord does not want us to remember certain things so it is deleted from memory, however I do remember seeing old writings, Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda's shoes which were kept nicely in the show glass.

From here we headed back to the bus as it was dark already and we could not visit other places due to short of time caused by the solar eclipse. Sometimes the Lord does not disclose His Holy Dham completely to the devotees so that they come back again and again to get more darshan.

Back at the ISKCON Bhubaneshwar temple, there were lots of people coming to take darshan's as well and it was like a big festival going on. Food stalls, Information Stalls, Book stalls and many other stalls were setup in the courtyard of the temple. After taking darshan we called it a night as nobody was hungry as the next day we were off to Delhi and then to VRINDAVAN, my eternal home.

In the pictures below, you can see us wearing the flag remnants from the temple of Lord Jagannath which we took at the Bhubaneshwar airport the next day.



Bhubaneshwar Airport

9. Vrindavan

On the morning of 27th December 2019, we attended mangal aarti at the temple and left for Bhubaneswar Airport at 6:00am for our flight at 9:05am to Delhi.

In the flight we met with an adorable and playful little girl probably 3-5 years' old, who became friends with us as she was sitting with her mother in the front seats of ours. The whole flight she was standing on the seat and talking to us and played with Gopal. All the children on the flight received an Indigo Airline passport diary and she given it to us and tells her mother so sweetly "Maa dekho isne mera passport leliya".

We arrived in Delhi at 11:40am and when we came out our transport was already there, so we loaded our things and headed off for Vrindavan.

On the way, we were stopped by the Police. They asked the driver to show all the papers for the vehicle and where we were from. When they came to know that we were foreigners, they let us go.

We reached Vrindavan at around 4:00pm in the afternoon and were going to stay at the MVT. We checked in and after all the formalities were done, we went to our rooms. After settling down, we went to the temple for Darshan. It was a feeling of being at home and I thanked Their Lordships for having me again.

Vrindavan is one of the oldest cities on the banks of Yamuna in Vraja. Vrindavan is considered to be one of the most important places of pilgrimage for the devotees of Lord Sri Krishna. Lord Krishna had spent His childhood pastimes here. The name Vrindavan means Vrinda for "Tulasi" and Van for "Forest".

During the time of Lord Caitanya, everything was lost so on His instructions the Six Goswami's looked for all the Holy places where Lord Krishna had His pastimes, which were hidden to our material eyes.

There are more than 5000 temples in Vrindavan of which the most prominent temples are of the Goswami's namely Sri Govinda, Gopinatha, Madanamohana, Radha Damodara, Sri Radharamana, Sri Radha Vinoda and ISKCON temple. The vibrant surroundings perfectly depict the playful and benevolent nature of Lord Krishna. You can read of Lord Krishna's pastimes in the Srimad Bhagavatam and the Krishna book translated by our Srila Prabhupada.

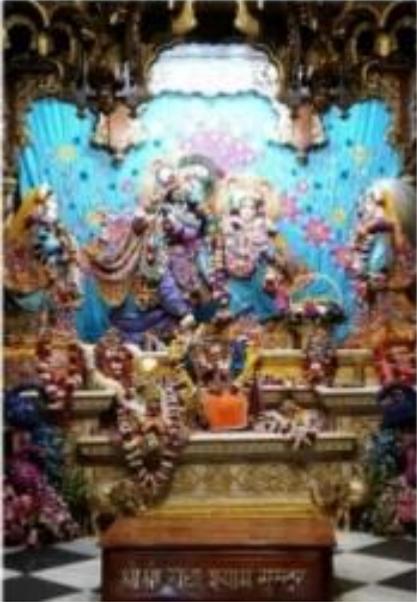
It is said that one can only enter Vraja by the mercy of Srimati Radharani. All the trees in Vraja are said to be kalpa vriksha's and can grant any boon, however the devotees of Lord Krishna only ask for pure devotional service.

First, I took everyone for Srila Prabhupada's darshan at the Samadhi temple and then the deities of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, Sri Sri Krishna Balarama and Sri Sri Radha Shyamasundara.

After darshan, we went to Govindas restaurant for dinner as everyone was very hungry. While they were waiting, I went to meet my Ayurvedic Doctor –Dr. Manoj since I had to give him a parcel sent by a devotee from Fiji Islands. After dinner, I called our tour guide and discussed about the daily parikrama program.

Bal Mukunda in Vrindavan





Evening darshan at Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Darshan Vrindavan



Srila Prabhupada Original Samadhi Mandir in Vrindavan



Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Temple in Vrindavan



Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Temple in Vrindavan

The next morning 28th December 2019, we woke up, had our shower and went for mangal aarti. First the aarti was at Srila Prabhupada's Samadhi mandir and then we went into the main temple. A devotee lead Vibhavari Sesa kirtan first and then Narsinga prayer. We then participated in Tulasi aarti.

There were four sets of aarti groups formed. Two sets for ladies and two sets for men. After mangal aarti, we went for Vrindavan Parikrama. It was freezing and the tar-sealed road was very cold as well so I requested everyone to wear socks and come as the previous year when I came with my mother, the soles of my feet had bust and I also got blisters. I asked everyone to offer their obeisance's at the starting point and then started walking as is the custom of doing parikrama. The parikrama usually takes 2 hours on foot. On the way, we chanted

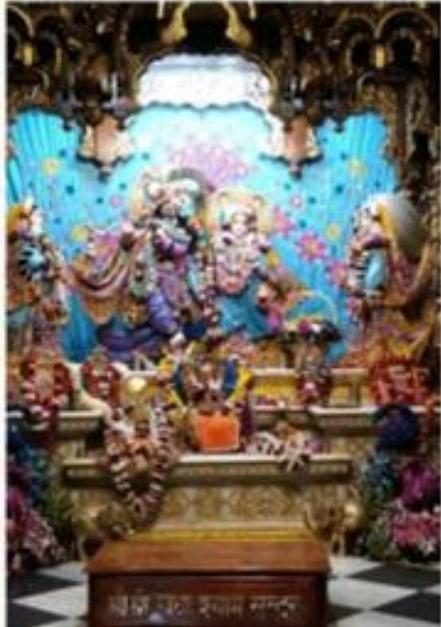
and I showed them all the places as we went past. First came the Bhaktivedanta Hospice, then Bhaktivedanta Goshala. We went past the Madana Ter, then came Kailya Ghat and then the Madana Mohana Temple.

As we kept walking, we went past Imli Tala, Sringara Vat and then Keshi Ghata on the bank of the Yamuna. We offered our obeisance's at the Yamuna temple and took darshan of Yamuna Devi. Gopal and Nartaki did parikrama in a rickshaw.

This way we completed our Vrindavan parikrama and came back to MVT. By then it was morning. We took darshan at the temple and the tour guide Jay Keshava Das brought our breakfast. We offered it to our Laddu Gopal and then honored the prasadam while he followed up on the transport to come and take us for Govardhan parikrama.



At MVT Vrindavan



Sri Sri Krishna Balarama Temple Vrindavan

10. Vraja Mandal Parikrama – Day 1

Vraja Mandal Parikrama is a Spiritual Journey on earth as one's way to Salvation which was first started by Lord Brahma Himself. It is an 84 kos parikrama equivalent to 252 kilometers that comprises of 12 vanas (forests), 24 upvanas (groves), the sacred hill Govardhan, the divine river Yamuna and numerous holy places along its banks. Some of the places are in remote areas and require several hours of driving deep into the interiors.

We got the opportunity to have prasadam in Vrajavasi's house with special chapatti made on cow dung cake (Kandi) on some days during the parikrama. It was an awesome and enjoyable feel of Vraja. We covered most of the places of darshan where Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu visited Himself 500 years ago.

When I came with my mother in 2017, we also did madhukari, that is begging for prasadam from the Vrajavasi's homes after Thakuraji had eaten.

To describe the glories of Vraja Mandal, one needs supernatural powers, which is the grace and mercy of the Lord. Hence, I leave the glorification of each dham in Vraja with our esteemed masters who have already written vast literatures on the subject.

We arrived at Radha Kund from where we were to start our parikrama. Govardhan parikrama normally takes 5-8 hours on foot. We offered our obeisance's at the starting point and also hired a tuktuk for keeping our shoes and other belongings and for devotees to travel in, if anyone gets tired especially Gopal and Jagadishwar due to their age.

Our first stop was at Kusuma-sarovara. We offered our obeisance and sprinkled the water on our heads. Then we were told about the pastime of Kusuma-sarovara. It is said that saint Ashtavakra performed his penance here at this Kund while waiting for the divine appearance of Sri Sri Radha and Krishna. After taking bath at this kund, the muni attained the body of a Gopi with the blessings of Yogamaya Devi. Lord Caitanya also bathed in this kund.



Story time at Kusuma-sarovara





Darshan of Manasi Ganga



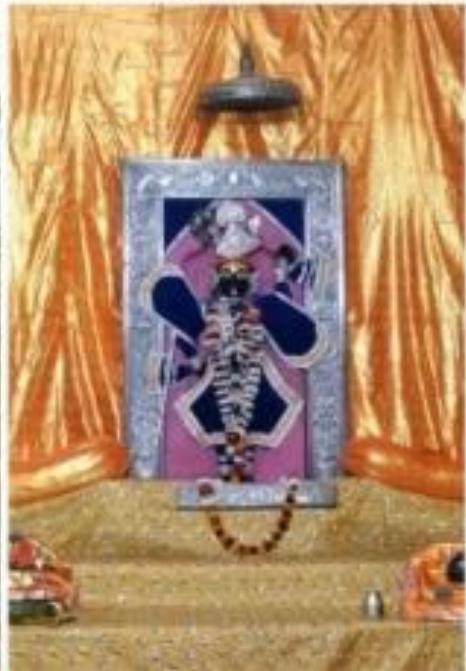
We got the beautiful darshan of Sri Sri Radha Banabihari Ji. This temple is run by ISKCON devotees. There is a beautiful story that once Krishna was combing the hair of Sri Radha and Radharani was looking at Krishna from her mirror that she was holding in her hand.

We visited the Mansi Ganga. It was manifested by the will of Lord Krishna. One who bathes in the Ganges is freed from all sins, but one who takes bath in the Mansi Ganga also attains pure devotional service. There is a place outside the Mansi Devi temple where you can take shower from the waters of Mansi Ganga without having to entering the kund. You can also get Govardhan darshan in the middle of Mansi Ganga.

We also stopped at Sri Hari Dev Ji Maharaj Mandir. Since Govardhan has more than 70 holy places to visit, it was not practical for stopping at all the places since we only had one day parikrama allocated for Govardhan so the tour guide chose some specific places for stopping and shared the pastimes.

This temple is said to belong to the time of Lord Krishna. Radharani and her friend along with some cowherds had to meet Krishna on the banks of Mansi Ganga, however since Krishna was late, they got worried and started calling Haridev! Haridev! And so Krishna appeared in the deity form as Haridev.

This temple was established by King Vajranabh, the great grandson of Lord Krishna.





Sri Sri Laxmi Narayan Mandir

We also got the beautiful darshan of Laxmi Narayan at the Laxmi Narayan Mandir. Unfortunately, we were not told of any stories here by the tour guide due to overcrowding, so we offered our obeisance's and moved on.

At the village of Aniyor Mukharbind, we got darshan of Sri Govindaji as shown in picture below. The name Aniyor came from the famous ceremony of Annakuta of feeding Govardhan Hill. When Krishna, in the huge form of Govardhan was eating all the wonderful preparations brought by the Vrajavasis, He began snapping his fingers saying, "Aniyor", "Aniyor" meaning "Bring More", "Bring More".



Darshan of Annakuta

Thereafter, we got darshan of Govinda Kund, which is my second most favorite places in Govardhan as Radha Kund and Shyama Kund are my most favorite of places in Vraja.

At Govinda Kund, we sprinkled the water on our heads and offered obeisance's. We also fed the monkeys here with banana's. They were just going crazy when we were feeding them and started climbing on us and snatching the bananas from our hands. Lord Krishna used to come here and take His afternoon nap as a child after grazing the cows. His friends would set up a bed of flowers and leaves for His comfort and would massage His feet.

There are also various Govardhan Sila's here with foot print of Krishna, calf foot print, flute marks etc.



Govinda Kund



Govardhan Sila's here with foot print of Krishna, calf foot print, flute marks etc



Feeding the monkeys at Govinda Kund



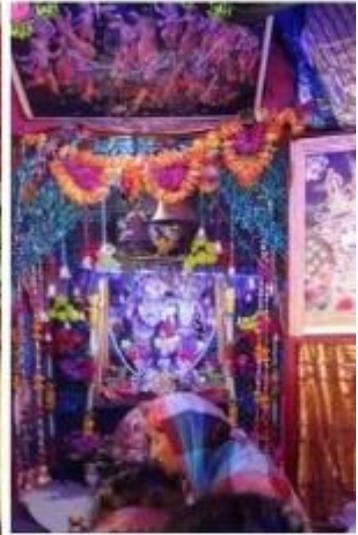
Feeding the monkeys at Govinda Kund

From here we went to Puchri ka lota baba mandir and then to Sri Nath Ji mandir and took darshan. On the way we took several other darshans as well and some photo shoots.

Puchri ka lota is the tail of Govardhan, which is in the shape of a peacock from the top. There was a cowherd boy named Lota. When Akrura was taking Krishna and Balarama on a chariot to Mathura, Lota ran out to Krishna and asked “Where are you going? I have prepared prasadam for you”. Krishna said “I am going to Mathura and will come day after tomorrow to take prasadam”.

Lota baba is still waiting here for Krishna to return and he himself has not eaten or slept for the last 5000 years. Unfortunately, we are unable to see him with our material eyes.

We also visited Sri Nathji Maharaj temple. Srinathji is a form of Krishna, manifested as a seven-year-old child who lifted Govardhan Hill to overpower Indira.



Puchri ka Lota Mandir Govardhan



Sri Nath Ji Maharaj Mandir Govardhan



Govardhan Parikrama marg

Jaydeva and myself also made our eternal homes from the sila's available at the Tail of Govardhan while others were still trying to catch up on us. We also had our lunch break at one of the restaurants organized by Jay Keshava Das.



My Eternal home in Govardhan



Jayadeva's Eternal home in Govardhan

From here, my wife, Gopal and Jagadiswar together with the tour guide took to the tuktuk and went straight to Radha Kund while the rest of us kept walking.

The two ladies Maharani and Divya were a bit slow compared to us, however when we reached the junction, we waited for them. After waiting for some time and seeing they have not arrived, I hired a Rickshaw and went back to check on them but could not find.

So we just decided to go to Radha Kund and wait for them there and to our surprise, they had reached before us. Perhaps we took different routes that's why did not meet at the junction.

In any case, we took darshan of Radha Kund and Shyama Kund, sprinkled water on our heads and then left for where the vehicle was parked and headed back to Vrindavan.

I prayed to Radha Kund and Shyama Kund for pure devotional service and expressed my desire to return. I don't think we need to talk about the story of Radha Kund and Shyama Kund as it is, everyone is already aware of it.



Govardhan Hill Parikrama - Shyama Kund



Govardhan Hill Parikrama - Radha Kund



11. Vraja Mandal Parikrama – Day 2

After arriving at MVT, we had our shower and went for evening darshan at the temple, then dinner and retired to bed as the next day awaited with more spiritual adventures.

The next day 29th December 2019, we attended mangal aarti, got darshans of their Lordships, had breakfast and left for Mathura. Today we were going to visit Yam & Yami temple, Dwarkadhish temple, Sweta Varah temple, Adi Varah temple, Janma Bhoomi (Lord Krishna's Birth Place), Keshav Dev temple, Dauji Mandir, Bhuteswar Mahadev temple, Madhuvan, Talvan, Kumudhvan and Bahulavan.

We had great darshans at all the places except at Lord Krishna's birthplace, Nartaki was not allowed in as she was carrying a small knife with her car keys in the purse, so the rest of us went for darshan only while she waited outside.

At Yam & Yami temple, we got darshan of Yamraja and Yamuna Devi as they are brother and sister. We also got darsan at Kupja mandir which had beautiful deities.



Yam & Yami temple



Kupja Mandir

At Dwarkadhish temple, photos were not allowed, but Jayadeva was able to get a snap as you can see in picture below. The Dwarkadish temple, touted as one of the holiest temples in Mathura for it's elaborate architecture and paintings. The deity is made of black marble. The ceilings of the temple showcase various aspects of the Lords pastimes and it looks magnanimous.

We also got beautiful darshans of Adi Varahadeva and Swetha Varadeva. Adi Varahadeva temple is located near to the Dwarkadish temple, which has a red color deity of Varahadeva. It is small in size but big in stature. Lord Adi Varah has a glorious legacy beginning with Satyuga when sage Kapil muni was His ardent devotee. Indra sought the deity of Adi Varah from him as Kapil muni was pleased with him. After defeating Indra in a mighty battle, Ravana brought the wonderful deity to his kingdom of Lanka. Having killed the notorious Ravana, Lord Sri Rama established the same pious deity of Adi Varah in His palace at Ayodhya. Shatrughna, the younger brother of Lord Rama, brought this deity with him to Mathura while coming on a mission to kill Lavanasur and established it in the Adi Varah temple.

The Swetha Varadeva is kept at the house of one villager who normally doesn't allow everyone for darshan, however we were fortunate enough to get the darshan and do parikrama. One who does parikrama of Lord Varahdeva, has already done parikrama of entire earth since Lord Varaha is holding Bhudevi on his tusks. We did three parikrama of Adi Varahdeva and three of Swetha Varadeva.

In Madhuvan, it is said that Lord Krishna appeared here in all four yugas. In Satyuga, He killed the demon named Madhu. Dhruva Maharaj also performed severe austerities in Madhuvan on the consent of Sri Narada Muni and so Lord Vishnu appeared here to grant him a boon. We visited the Dhruva Narayan temple here as well.

In Talvan, Lord Balarama killed the demon named Dhenukasura. In Bahulavan, once Srimati Radharani was in Her sulky mood. She hid herself in a kunjra here. In separation from her, Krishna became completely distressed. With the help of the

sakhis, He was able to find Srimati Radharani and with great difficulty He pacified Her mood. It is believed that any desire of a person will be fulfilled who takes bath here in Bahul kund. You can see in the coming pages, picture of Bahul Kund and Bahul mandir with the deities of Sri Krishna, a tiger, a cow, its calf and a brahmana.

A cow named Bahula was once drinking water and a tiger attacked her. She told the tiger to allow her to first go and give milk to her newly born calf and once she is done will come back to be eaten by the tiger.

The tiger agreed. The cow when coming back was overheard by a brahmana on what had happened and was followed by the calf and the brahmana to the tigers cave.

While the tiger was still undecided on whom to eat, the cow, the brahmana or the calf, Lord Krishna appeared on the scene and saved them while giving education on moral values to the tiger.

Lord Caitanya, also once came to Bhaula Van and got absorbed in Krishna Prema. All the beautiful sounds and the cool breezes were enchanting. He saw two parrots sitting on a tree and discussing pastimes of Lord Krishna and Srimati Radharani.

The parrots names were Suka and Suri.

At Dauji Mandir, one can see the largest and most famous deity of Lord Balarama in the whole of Vraja. Dauji, means Krishna's elder brother. The Deity is almost seven feet tall and was installed by Vrajnabha Maharaj. Lord Balarama at this place showed His original form as the Supreme Personality of Godhead to the cowherd boys once while herding the cows.



Darshan at Dwarkadhish temple



Darshan of Adi Varahadeva



Darshan of Sweta Varahadeva



Darshan of Sri Laxmi Narayan, Sri Dhruva Narayana and Sri Giriraja



Darshan at Sri Bihari Mandir in Madhuvan



Lunch at Yamuna Ghat. A little picnic for us all.





Darshan at Sri Dauji Mandir of Mata Varuni, Mata Revati and Sri Balaramaji



Darshan of Sri Dhruva Narayan Mandir

It was a great experience visiting such beautiful holy places and I can't find words to fully describe the happiness we were experiencing.



Darshan of Bahul Kund at Bahulavan



Darshan at Bahul Gai Mandir



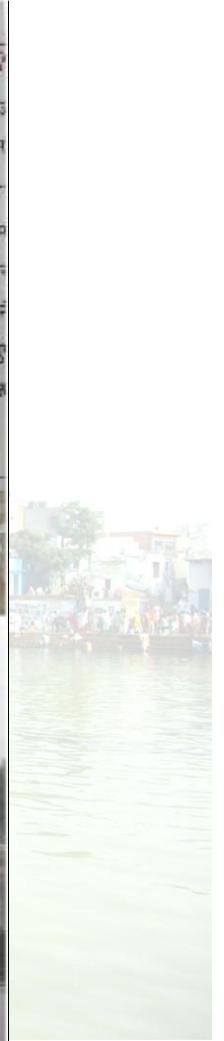
मन्दिर श्री
कुमुद बिहारी
जी



Darshan at Kumudhvan of Kumudh Bihariji and Kapil Dev



Darshan of Kumudh Kund

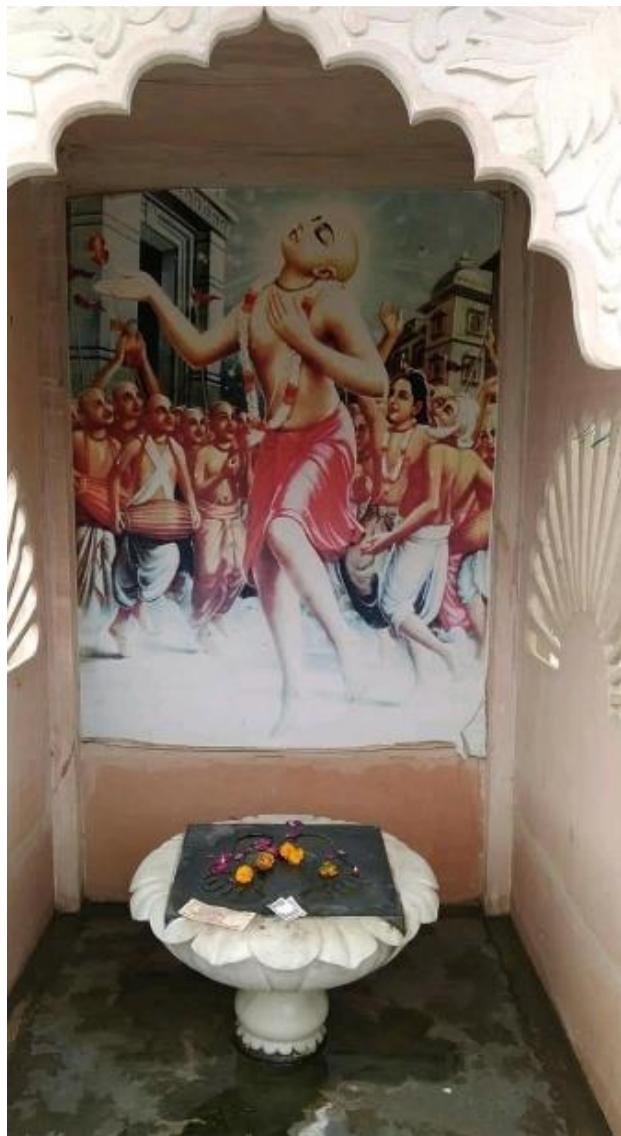


Darshan of Kumudh Kund



Charanchin temple of Lord Sri Caitanya

We got blessed by visiting the Charanchin temple of Lord Sri Caitanya as well when He came to Kumudhavan



Charanchin temple of Lord Sri Caitanya

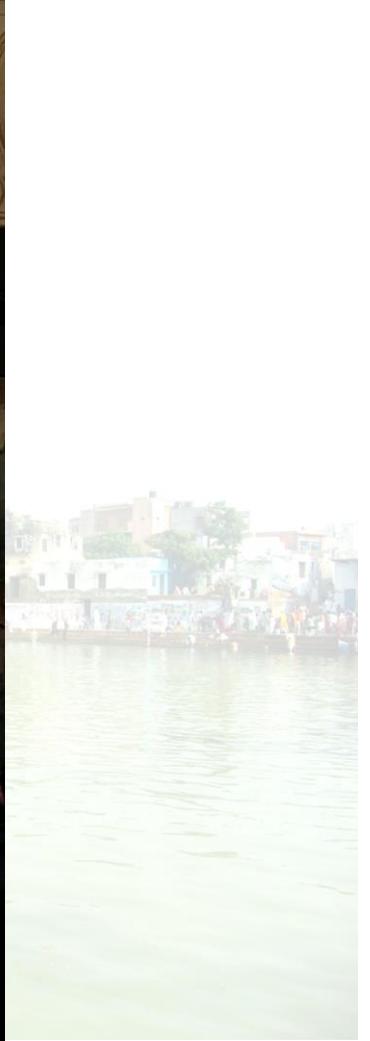


Charanchin of Lord Sri Caitanya

After completing all the darshans of the day, we returned to Vrindavan and got evening darshans at Sri Sri Krishna Balarama temple.



Evening darshan at Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Temple



Evening darshan at Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Temple



Some Russia devotees were doing Harinaam around Sri Sri Krishna Balarama temple with ecstatic kirtans and dancing. Some of us participated in it as well.



Some devotees also went to Srila Prabhupada's museum and took darshan, which had various exhibitions.



Srila Prabhupada's museum



Srila Prabhupada's museum

12. Vraja Mandal Parikrama – Day 3

On 30th December 2019 after mangal aarti and morning darshan, we visited Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kamyavan, Govinda Deva temple, Vrinda Devi temple, Bhojan Thali, Vyomasur Cave, Phisalisila, Balrama foot print, Kameshwar Mahadev, 4 Yuga's Shivji, Dharma Kund, Vimal Kund, Gaya Kund and Charan Pahari.

We had a good climb of Badrinath and Kedarnath and the scenery from the top of the mountains were so beautiful. At Vrinda Devi temple, I just could not get my eyes off the deity as she was so beautiful. Due to the tracks not very good, we did not go to Vyomasur Cave but took darshan from Balaram foot print village. When Vyomasur and Krishna were fighting, the whole earth started to tremble. To stabilize the earth, Lord Balarama pushed her with His toe and that footprint is seen on the rock.

We had lunch at Gaya Kund and also myself and Jagadishwar offered obligations to our ancestors. Nanda Maharaja also offered oblations to his forefathers here.

We really enjoyed our time at Phisalisila and all of us also played in the slide. It was great fun. We also made friends with the Vrajavasi's living there. Lord Krishna and the cowherd boys also played sliding downhill here.

Kamyavan is a very beautiful attraction in Vraja. It is the largest of all the forests. Lord Krishna had many wonderful pastimes here as it is adorned with attractive ponds, wells, lakes, flowers etc. Kamyavan is dedicated to Vrinda Devi who is an expansion of Srimatri Radharani. Kameshwar Mahadeva is also situated here which was installed by King Vajranabh, the great grandson of Lord Krishna. There is the beautiful Vrinda Devi temple.

At Charan Pahari, the foot prints of Lord Krishna are found. Once Krishna and the cowherd boys were grazing cows and calves here and all got scattered so Krishna closed His eyes and played on His flute in sweet melody to call them. The sheer

ecstasy of the flute music melted the stones and thus impressions of His lotus feet were casted on the rocks.



Morning darshan at Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Temple



Morning darshan at Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Temple



Adi Badrinath darshan of Ganesh Ji and Nara Narayan Rsi.



At Adi Badrinath Temple



श्री गंगोत्री जी

श्री यमुनोत्री जी

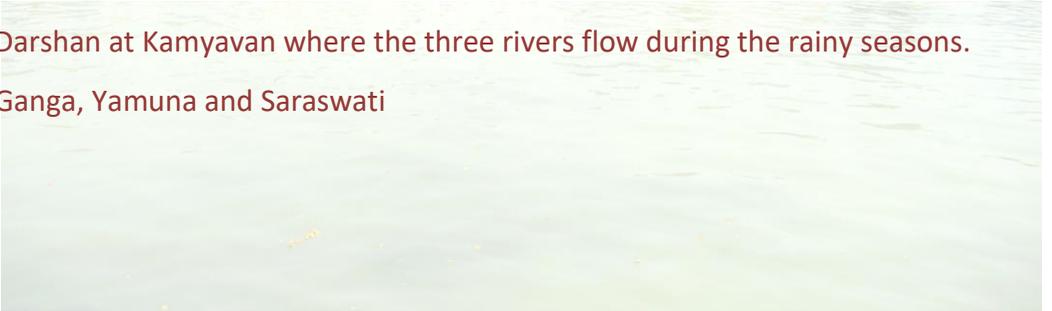
Darshan of Sri Gangotri Ji and Sri Yamunotri Ji

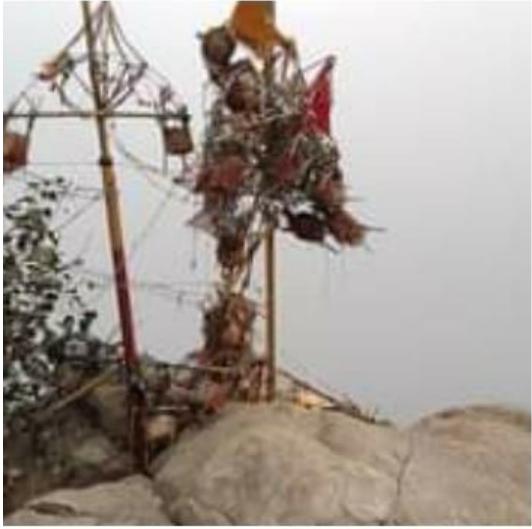


Darshan of Neelkhand Mahadeva



Darshan at Kamyavan where the three rivers flow during the rainy seasons.
Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati





Darshan at Adi Kedarnath



Darshan at Charan Pahari, lotus feet of Lord Sri Krishna



Play time at Phisalisila and photo with Vrajavasi Grandmother



Play time at Phisalisila and photo with Vrajavasi Grandmother



Bhojan Thali Mandir, where the rocks melted into plates and cups. Krishna and Balarama used to eat here with the cowherd boys and have lots of fun



Darshan of Vimal Kund



Darshan at Kameshwar Mahadeva Temple



Darshan of the Five Pandava's with Mata Kunti and Draupadi. Also darshan of Varah Dev



Darshan of Sri Vrinda Devi, together with Sri Govinda Ji and Lord Jagannath

13. Vraja Mandal Parikrama – Day 4

After this, we returned back to Vrindvan and did the usual activities.

Next day was New Year's Eve that is 31st December 2019 and we went to Khadirvan, Barshana, Sankhari khor, Mataji Goshala, Mor Kutir, Maan Mandir, Daan Bihari, Kushal Bihari, Shriji main Radharani Mandir, Pili Pokhar, Prem Sarovar, Saket, Nandgaon, Pawan Sarovar, Ter Kadam, Aasheshwar Mahadev, Nand Bhawan, Vrinda Kund, Kokilavan and Javat after taking part in mangal aarti and having morning darshan.

In Khadirvan, Lord Krishna and Lord Balarama used to come with the cowherd boys to herd their cows and perform playful pastimes. This is where Lord Krishna also killed the demon named Bakasura.

In Barsana, Srimati Radharani enjoyed her transcendental youth pastimes along with her friends and her parents. Here in Barsana, during Holi festival, the Gopas try to throw color on the Gopis and they chase them with lathi (wooden staff). Once my Guru Maharaja was also chased by the Vrajavasi's staying here to throw colors on him.

In Mor Kutir, Lord Krishna performed a peacock dance to please Radharani and broke her maan (mood). The Maan mandir is just opposite of Mor Kutir.

Daan Bihari is the place where Lord Krishna demands milk and curd from Radharani and the Gopis by blocking their way through a narrow passage between two lanes and broke their pots when they did not provide.

Radharani used to visit the Kushal Bihari with the friends to simply relax here. In Pili Pokhar, there is a kund by the name Priya or Radha Kund of the color yellow where Srimati Radharani washed her hands which was coated with turmeric paste.

Once, Krishna and Radharani were sitting together and a bee zoomed near Radharani menacingly. Krishna asked a Gopa friend to chase it away and the Gopa said Madhu is gone. Radharani thought he was referring to Krishna and not

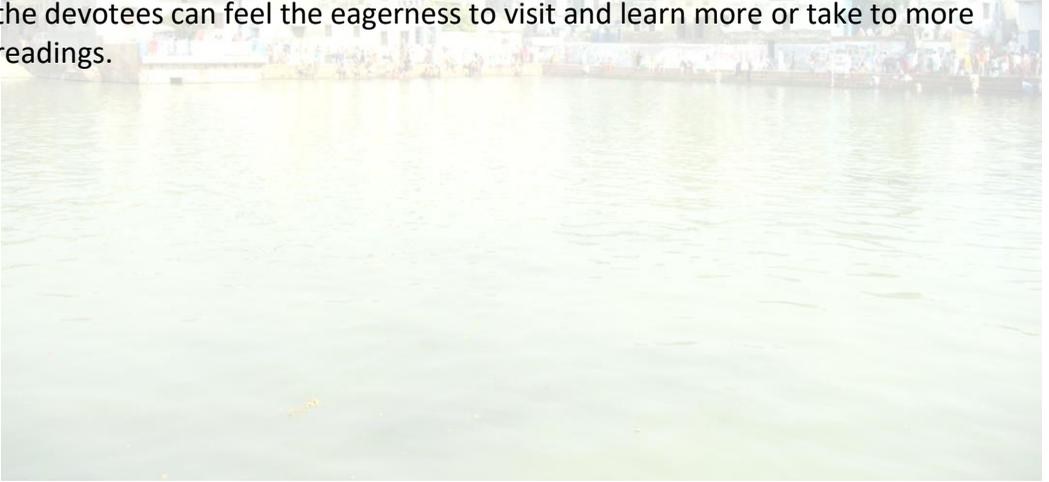
knowing, He was still there she started crying. Looking at Radharani, Krishna also started crying and so the Prema Sarovar was formed with their tears.

At Pawan Sarovar, anyone who takes a bath is relieved from all his sins as Lord Krishna used to bring His cows here while returning from the pastures in the evening. The cows used to drink the cooling water to quench their thirst.

In Ter Kadam, Radha and Krishna had many amazing exploits. Lord Krishna also used to climb and sit on the Kadam trees while the cows grazed. When we came here they were hundreds of devotees participating in the pravachan that was going on.

In Javat village, Lord Balarama had His rasalila sport with His Gopis.

By the mercy of Radharani, I am trying my best to give a glimpse on the eternal pastimes that took place here in these holy places, however leaving at this, so the devotees can feel the eagerness to visit and learn more or take to more readings.





Darshan of Prema Sarovara





New Year's Eve Morning Darshan at Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Temple



At Mataji Goshala, we sponsored for Jaggery and all of us fed the cows with our hands. There are more than 50,000 cows living here and about 1000 people employed to look after them. I really love the smell of cows as they give me transcendental bliss. We really enjoyed the beautiful weather of Vraja as it was nice and cool.



Darshan at Sri Sri Radha Rasa Mandir, which had such beautiful deities



Darshan of Sri Radha Sarovar, this is where Srimati Radharani washed her hands



Darshan of Panchatattva, Sri Gaura Nitai, Sri Radha Rasabihari and Sri Gopinath



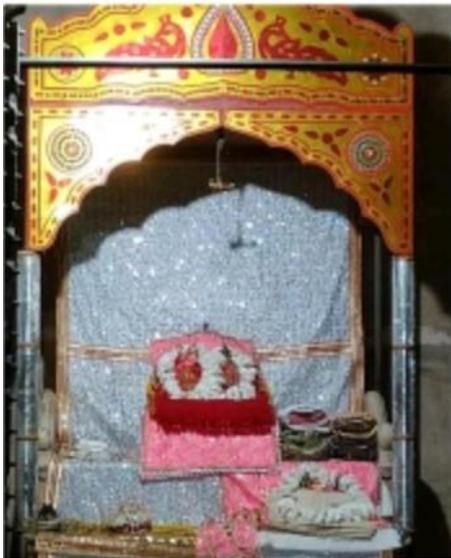
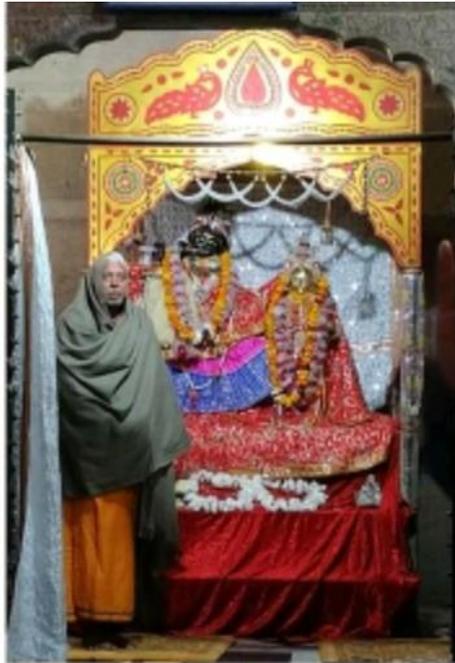
Darshan of Sri Radha Krishna, Lalita and Vishaka at Sri Ji Mandir in Barsana



In Barsana



Jhulan of Srimati Radharani in Barsana



Darshan of Sri Khushal Bihari Ji, Sri Gopal Ji, Sri Hans Gopal Ji in Barsana



Darshan of Moor Bihari Ji at Moor Kuti in Barsana



At Sankhari Khor, where the Gopis used to walk through this alley to serve Srimati Radharani in Barsana



Darshan of Philikotiri Kund and Priya Kund in Barsana



In Sanket Van, in Parkiya Bhava, the meeting place of Sri Krishna and Sri Radhika at Milan Jhula, Barsana



Darshan of Krishna and Balaram at Ter Kadam



Darshan of Vrinda Devi at Vrinda Kund



Relishing Sugarcane Juice in Nand Gaon

After completing the day's parikrama, we returned back to Vrindavan and participated in the evening darshan and kirtan's at Sri Sri Krishna Balaram temple for New Year's Eve celebration.

14. Vraja Mandal Parikrama – Day 5

On New Year's day 1st January 2020 we went to Akrura Ghat, Bhatrol, Garuda Govind, Chaumuha, Charan Pahari Bathain, Sheshashayi, Ram Ghat, Encha Dauji, Bihar Van, Akshayavat, Chir Ghat, Nand Ghat and Tapovan. It was an ecstatic experience. After coming back to Vrindavan we went for The Goswami temple darshans namely Sri Govinda, Gopinatha, Madanamohana, Radha Damodara, Sri Radharamana, Sri Radha Vinoda and Nidhivan. Unfortunately, photos were not allowed at the Goswami temples.

At Banke Bihari temple, there were thousands of pilgrims and no space to move. After darshan, when we came back to the main road, Maharani was missing. So Jayadeva and myself went looking for her but no sign.

After one hour of search and helpless, we went back to MVT. Everyone had gone to their rooms but I stood waiting for her till she came after 30 minutes. Luckily, Nartaki and Gopal did not go with us as they both were sick.

I also went to meet my sponsored child Divya at Sandipani Muni school who happens to be from an underprivileged family as it was her birthday. Her father is a farmer and only earns US\$85.00 a month and has eight of them in the family with Divya being the second youngest child. Also met with Divya's mother and Shyama Sharan Dasi who is my contact person at FFLV. I am humbly requesting our readers to please if possible to help serve the Vrajavasi's through Free Food of Life Vrindavan (FFLV) in Vraja.

It was also Krishneel's birthday so he arranged cake for us all from MVT restaurant during dinner.

It is said that one has to remember the form of Krishna at the moment of leaving the body so can go back home back to Godhead, hence it is very important to know of the different pastimes of the Lord so that you can continuously meditate on it.

Just by looking at the deity in the temple is not sufficient, hence visiting the holy places of pastimes gives the picture of the form in the mind more life. Even the deities don't like standing in one place whole day. Just like Gaura-Nitai came down from the alter and started dancing with the devotees at one time.

Moving on, Akrura Ghat is the place where Akrura took a bath and had darshan of Krishna and Balarama as Vishnu reclining on Ananta Shesha. This is also the place where the residents of Vrindavan saw the Vaikuntha planets in the water of the Yamuna.

Bhatrol is the place where Krishna and Balarama were fed by the brahmana's wife. They brought various deliciously cooked grains and other foodstuffs. Garuda Govind is one of the oldest temples of Vraja. This is where Lord Krishna's Chati puja (6th day after birth) took place when He was an infant and also he played with His Gopa friends here and one of them pretended to be Garuda.

Brahma Vimohan leela took place in Chaumuha where he stole Krishna's calves and cowherds. Lord Krishna expanded into the same number of calves and cowherds and life remained undisturbed in Vraja for one year till Brahman realized his mistake and did penance at this place.

Charan Pahari Bathain, there are imprints of Krishna's feet and some cow's feet on the rocks here.

There is a famous deity of Lord Sheshashayi Vishnu that is said to have been originally established by Vajranabha Maharaj, Krishna's great grandson almost five thousand years ago. When Lord Caitanya came here and saw the deity, He could not contain Himself and became overwhelmed with ecstatic love.

Chir Ghat is one of the holy ghats on the banks of the river Yamuna. This is the place where the famous pastimes of Krishna stealing the clothes of the young Gopis of Vrindavan took place.

Tapovan is the forest where the young Gopi girls of Vrindavan performed austerities to get Lord Krishna as their husband. In that small, but idyllic set of woods, they ate simply for one month, bathed daily in the cold waters of the

Yamuna and prayed continuously to the Goddess Katyayani. At the end of the month, they went to Chir Ghat where Krishna fulfilled their deep spiritual desires.



Darshan of Lord Brahma and Brahma Kund at Chaumuha



Darshan of Sri Dauji



Darshan at Sri Nikunj Biharine Mandir



Darshan at Bihar Kund



Darshan at Akshayvat of Sri Sri Sita, Rama and Lakshman



Darshan of Kadam Vriksha, where Lord Krishna stole the Gopis clothes



Darshan of Chir Ghat and the bank of the Yamuna River



Darshan at Sri Sri Radha Damodar Temple

Though, photos are not allowed, Jayadeva managed to get a click



Darshan at Sri Sri Radha Govinda Temple. Original Govindaji was reinstated in Jaipur during the Muslim attacks by Aurangzeb. The deities on the altar in this temple are Govindaji in the middle and to His left is Lord Caitanya and to His right is Lord Nityananda, whereas below are small deities of Radha and Krishna.



Darshan at Sri Sri Radha Shyama Sunderarji



Darshan of Nidhivan. One of the most famous spots and intriguing draws of the town is Nidhivan, a small shrubby place where Lord Krishna performed the Rasa dance with the Gopis. When you give donations here, in return the pujari's give sindur and bangles from Radharani as a blessing. Since, Nartaki did not come due to being sick, I gave donations and got the sindoor and bangles for her.



Meeting with Divya, her mother and Shyama Sharan at Sandipani Muni School

15. Vraja Mandal Parikrama – Day 6

Next day on 2nd January 2020 we visited Bhadra Van, Bhandir Van, Vansivat, Bel Van, Maan Sarovar, Gokul, Chintaharan Mahadev, Bramhand Ghat, Ukhal Bandhan, Chaurasi Khambha, Ramanreti, Mahavan, Raval and Lohavan.

At Raval, we got such beautiful darshan of Sri Radhika in her infant form which is Her birth place. When Radharani was born she did not open her eyes nor made any sound. Sri Narada Muni came to Raval to have the pious darshan of Her, the perfect manifestation of love and devotion. On Narada Muni's advice Sri Vrishabhanu organized a grand ceremony, when Lord Krishna also came. Krishna crawled to the cradle of Srimati Radharani and put His lotus face before Her. Noticing the face of Her beloved, Radharani opened her eyes.

At Ramanreti, I told everyone that they should roll on the ground as Krishna used to play there with the Gopas and so they all did and took the dust on their bodies. There was also an elephant performing aarti outside the temple in Ramanreti.

In Bhadra Van, Lord Krishna and Balarama used to herd their cows whereas in Bhandir Van, Lord Krishna killed the demon named Pralambhasura, who tried to kidnap some of Krishna's friends. It was here also the marriage ceremony of Krishna and Radha was performed by Brahma as priest.

During Krishna's manifest pastimes, there was an abundance of bel trees in Bel Van from which the name came. While grazing the cows in the most captivating and pleasant forest, Lord Krishna and His sakhas would play different kinds of sports and relish the ripe bel fruits.

Maan Sarovar possesses the power to enhance people a feeling of enlightenment, legend hides the beauty of this place, as Sri Radha had once got annoyed from Sri Krishna and came to this place. It was here where Sri Krishna had pleased Her.

Chintaharan Mahadev is the place where mother Yashoda went after she saw the entire universe in the small mouth of her dear son Krishna and became too worried. She was asked to visit the saint living on the bank of river Yamuna. The saint was none other than Lord Shiva, who was denied darshan of Krishna at one time and so came here to meditate. Lord Shiva then told mother Yashoda that her son was the Supreme Personality of Godhead and all her worries then went away.

Bramhand Ghat is the place where Lord Krishna performed the pastime of showing the whole universe inside His mouth to mother Yashoda as above described.

Ukhal Bandhan is the place where the Lord Krishna performed His pastimes of Damodara, where Lord Krishna was tied by mother Yashoda and where Manigriva and Nalakuvara were liberated from the curse of Narada Muni.

The Chaurasi Khambha was the abode of the Pandavas during their 14-years exile. The debate between Yaksha and Yudhishtra occurred when they were staying here at a nearby pond named Dharam Kund.

Lord Krishna spent his childhood in Mahavan which was found by Nanda Maharaj before Krishna's birth and was ruled by the Yadavas and finally the forest of Lohavan which is decorated with all varieties of trees and flowers and is one of the places where Krishna pastures His cows. Lord Krishna killed the demon named Lohjanganhasur here while grazing cows.

Thereafter, we returned back to Vrindavan. Upon returning, we all went for a boat ride in the Yamuna. It was awesome. I allowed rest of the day to them for shopping as the next day we were leaving for Delhi and then back to Fiji Islands after staying there for a night.

In Vrindavan, we also took turns to visit Srila Prabhupada's quarters and saw all his paraphernalia nicely kept and his room well maintained. There were many devotees sitting and silently chanting.

I also had an appointment with my Ayurvedic Doctor, Dr. Manoj, for my medical review and he also saw Maharani for her health issues. He visited us at MVT and saw my wife as well since she had been sick.



Srila Prabhupada Guru Puja at Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Temple



Morning darshan at Sri Sri Krishna Balaram Temple, Vrindavan



Beautiful sun rise in Vrindavan, glimpse from MVT



Darshan at Sri Laadli Radharani Birth place in Raval



Darshan of Sri Radhika in her childhood form, crawling in Raval

Also is darshan of two trees on the rooftop of the temple which represents Sri Krishna and Sri Radharani since one tree is black and the other is golden.



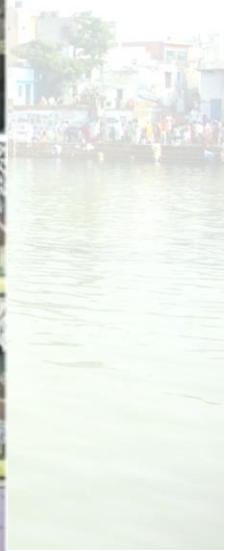
Darshan of Nand Maharaj in Chaurasi Khamb. This is where Lord Krishna performed most of His childhood pastimes, most prominently the Damodar Lila



At Brahmmand Ghat



At Sri Dauji and Revatiji Mandir



Darshan of Lord Brahma at Brahmmand Bihari Mandir



Darshan of Sri Krishna and Balaram in Raman Reti



Elephant offering prayers at Raman Reti





Boat ride in the Yamuna and heard stories from the boatman of how Yamuna is an eternal consort of Krishna

THE HOME OF
HIS DIVINE GRACE
A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA
SWAMI PRABHUPADA
FOUNDER-ACARYA
INTERNATIONAL



Srila Prabhupada's belongings in His room at Sri Krishna Balarama temple



Srila Prabhupada's bed in His room at Sri Krishna Balarama temple



Miscellaneous items belonging to Srila Prabhupada, very neatly kept in His room at Sri Krishna Balarama temple



Miscellaneous items belonging to Sri Prabhupada, very neatly kept in His room at Sri Krishna Balarama temple



Miscellaneous items belonging to Srila Prabhupada, very neatly kept in His room at Sri Krishna Balarama temple



Miscellaneous items belonging to Srila Prabhupada, very neatly kept in His room at Sri Krishna Balarama temple

After the day well spent and being our last day in Vrindavan, we all went for final shopping at the world famous Loi Bazaar. I took them to my favorite shops namely Vrinda, Anuradha, Gangotri etc. Jagadiswar also got his eye glasses made in Loi Bazaar. I made arrangements for the Travellers Bus to be at MVT on time so we could spend some valuable time in Delhi as well plus we all exchanged our currency as well.

16. Delhi

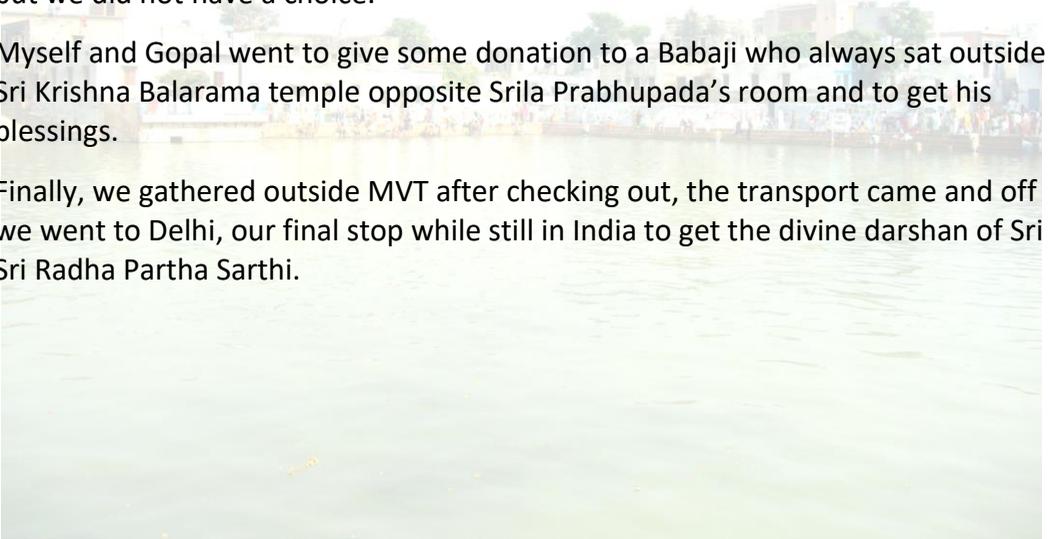
Next day 3rd January 2020, after attending mangal aarti and final darshan of Their Lordships we headed for Delhi. Jayadeva was also fortunate enough to meet and take photo with His Holiness Srila Lokanath Swami Maharaja who was also visiting Vrindavan.

I did my usual prayers to Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, Sri Sri Krishna Balarama and Sri Sri Radha Shyamasundar and at Srila Prabhupada's Samadhi Mandir with the desire of returning again in a years' time to get the divine darshan but who knew fate has something else in store for everyone in the world due to Coronavirus.

Everyone had tears in their eyes as it was very painful for us to leave Vrindavan but we did not have a choice.

Myself and Gopal went to give some donation to a Babaji who always sat outside Sri Krishna Balarama temple opposite Srila Prabhupada's room and to get his blessings.

Finally, we gathered outside MVT after checking out, the transport came and off we went to Delhi, our final stop while still in India to get the divine darshan of Sri Sri Radha Partha Sarthi.



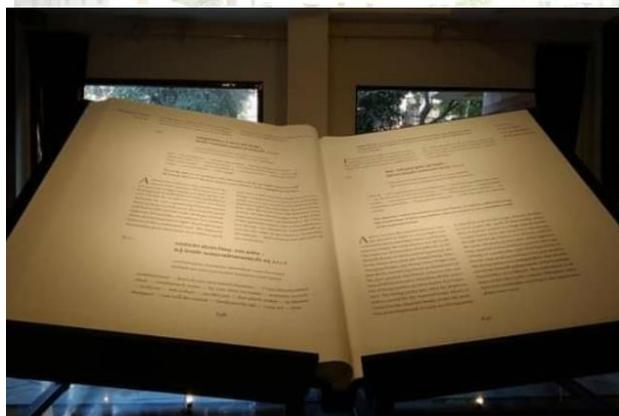


Final darshan of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, Sri Sri Krishna Balarama and Sri Sri Radha Shyamasundar at Sri Krishna Balarama temple in Vrindavan

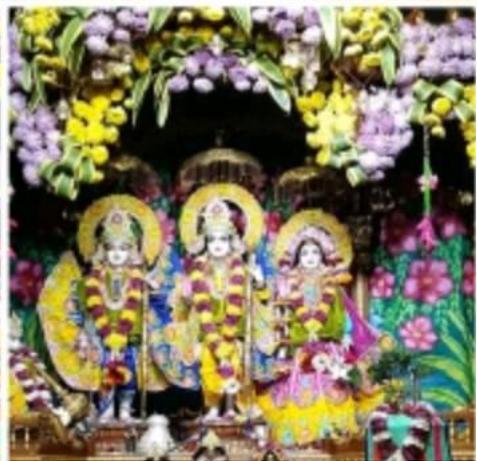
We arrived in Delhi at around 3:00pm and went straight to our hotel which was 10 minutes' walk from the temple. The hotel name was Fabhotel Cosy Plaza. We offloaded our things and checked in. We were going to spend one night in Delhi as the next night was our flight back to Fiji.

After settling in, we went straight to Sri Sri Radha Partha Sarthi temple for darshan and dinner. I had been here last in 2007, so nothing much was changed since then.

After darshan we went for dinner at the restaurant but they had buffet which was INR500 per person and seemed too much to me so we just took takeaways from the restaurant upstairs. Unfortunately, there was no place to sit and eat so we just kept standing and had our dinner and also got some takeaways for breakfast the next day.



We saw the Bhagavad Gita, which has the Certificate from World Book of Records for being the largest book.



Sri Sri Radha Partha Saarthi, Sri Sri Gaura Nitai and Sri Sri Sita, Rama, Lakshman and Hanuman at Partha Saarthi temple in Delhi

The next morning 04th January 2020, we visited the temple again after breakfast and toured the campus, took photos, visited the Vedic exhibition and also had lunch at the Govinda's Restaurant as there was no buffet today and the meals were at reasonable price as we had in other places.

After lunch, myself, Gopal and Jagadiswar came back to the hotel to take rest and prepare for the flight as it was late at night and we were exhausted from all the travels while the others went shopping at one of the prominent bazaar's nearby in Delhi, however they were told to be careful and not to go to far as there were riots going on in some places.



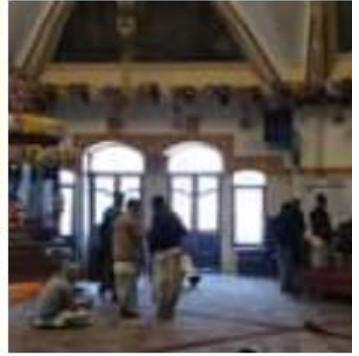
Sri Sri Radha Partha Saarthi Temple, Delhi



Vedic Exhibition



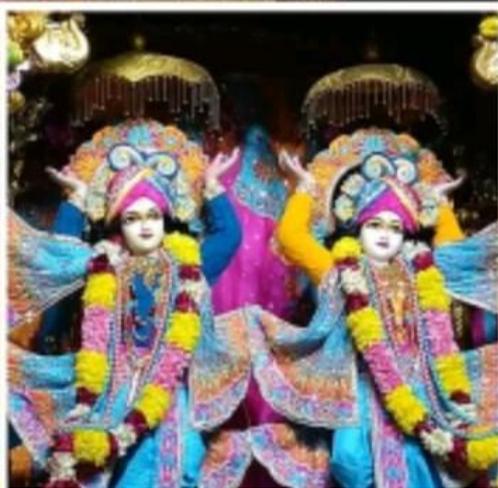
Very huge Dioramas of Lord Brahma and Lord Laxmi Narayan. Laxmi Narayan looked so real.



Various photos from inside the temple hall



Lunch at Govindas Restaurant and more photos outside the temple entrance



Final darshan at Sri Sri Radha Partha Saarthi temple in Delhi

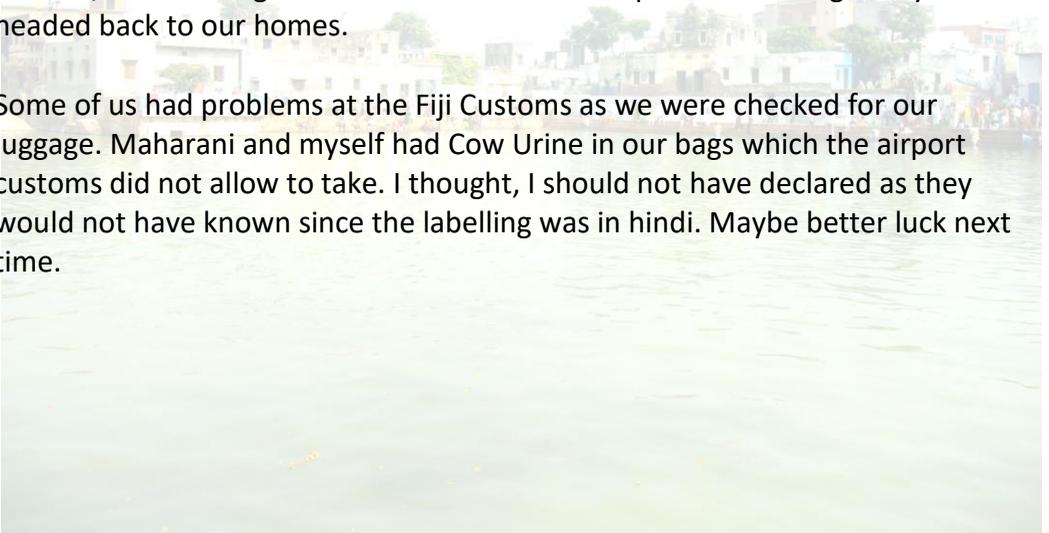
We left the hotel at 7:00pm since our flight was at 11:00pm from Delhi to Hong Kong. We checked in and took to our flight. Everyone was quiet due to feelings of separation from the holy dham.

In Hong Kong, Jagadiswar was randomly checked by airport officials, as by then the virus had already started in China but they were not sure of the cause as it was the early stages.

He was asked to take medication from the Chemist and wear a face mask at the airport and all the way to Fiji due to having a fever.

We arrived in Fiji at the Nadi International Airport on 6th January 2020 at 8:10am, went through customs and out of the airport with little goodbyes and headed back to our homes.

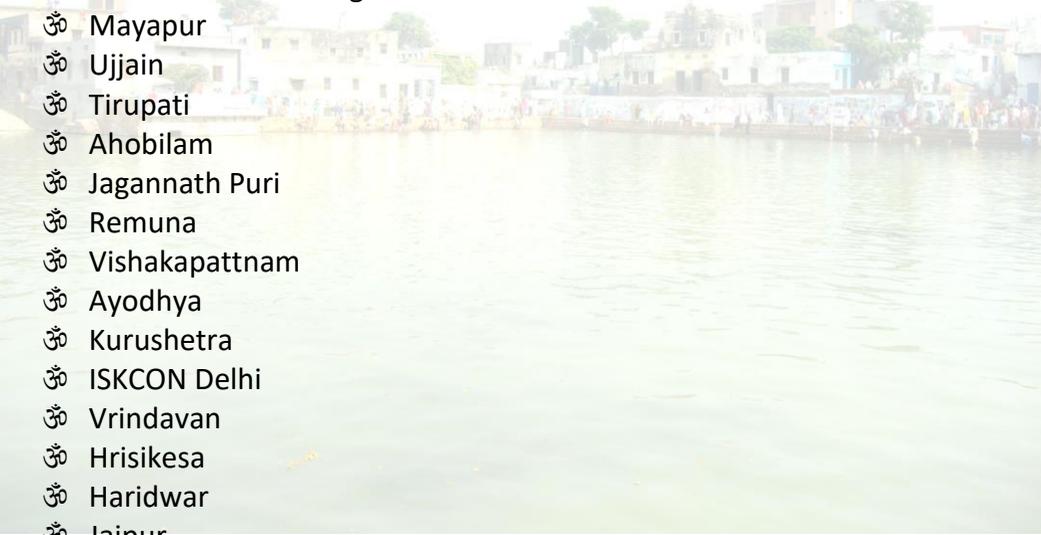
Some of us had problems at the Fiji Customs as we were checked for our luggage. Maharani and myself had Cow Urine in our bags which the airport customs did not allow to take. I thought, I should not have declared as they would not have known since the labelling was in hindi. Maybe better luck next time.



17. Future Tours

Once the Coronavirus is over, I intend to take more tours of devotees willing to visit India and taste the nectar we had tasted and experience the blissful life of the Holy Dham. A stay for a day in a Holy place is more important and precious than staying a lifetime in any other place in the world.

Just to outline, we desire to visit the following holy places in the near future and I also have a desire to do 108 parikrama's of my favorite Govardhan in this very lifetime. Places to visit in the near future:

- 
- ॐ ISKCON Mumbai
 - ॐ Govardhan Eco Village
 - ॐ Mayapur
 - ॐ Ujjain
 - ॐ Tirupati
 - ॐ Ahobilam
 - ॐ Jagannath Puri
 - ॐ Remuna
 - ॐ Vishakapattnam
 - ॐ Ayodhya
 - ॐ Kurushetra
 - ॐ ISKCON Delhi
 - ॐ Vrindavan
 - ॐ Hrisikesa
 - ॐ Haridwar
 - ॐ Jaipur

Though, all the places may not be practical to be visited in a two weeks' tour, however, we can over multiple of tours and if Krishna willing than we could go for a few months' tour as well.

18. Conclusion

Many people condemned that two weeks will not be sufficient for a tour to India and visiting so many places as discussed in this book will not be practical. They also said it will not be fruitful as we will not get enough time and space to hear about the different pastimes and get proper darshan's. However, by the grace of Lord Gauranga, a two weeks' journey to the Glorious India has manifested into such a wonderful book subsisting of 236 pages which is just a drop of the nectar and a brief summary as our experiences were much more than explained in this book. Such is the mercy of Lord Caitanya.

I felt great ecstasy and enthusiasm while doing this book and now realized how Srila Prabhupada and other devotees may have been feeling while writing so many volumes of books on the subject of Krishna Consciousness and glorifying the Holy Dham which is beyond explanation.

My contribution is nothing compared to the others as my knowledge and experience is limited, though tried my utmost best to share whatever I could absorb in the 2 weeks of the journey as even Ananta Shesha is unable to fully glorify the Holy Dham and pastimes of Lord Krishna.

Hope my attempt is successful in making the readers to see the nectar of visiting India through this book and a desire being born within the core of their hearts to make a pledge to visit the Holy Dham someday or join me in one of my tours.

I have just gloried the pastimes in a minute way and given a glimpse of the Holy Dham in order to plant the "Bhakti-lata-bija" that is the seed of devotional service in the hearts of the readers so they can sow and water this seed in their hearts to sprout. Being afraid of my book becoming too voluminous, I have left some places without vivid descriptions to awaken the desire in the heart of the reader to find out more about the places and pastimes themselves.

Readers may have noticed that I have added Sri Radha Kund watermark on every page of this book so that it could continuously remind me of its exalted position as Radha Kund is the topmost of the holiest of places in this world and my favorite.

I pray to Sri Radha Kund to please be merciful on this fallen soul and engage me in Lord Krishna's service for eternity.

I also pray to the readers and all the Vaishnava's for their blessings so that I can one day reside eternally in my most beloved Govandhan and get daily darshans of Sri Radha Kund, Sri Shyama Kund and be able to complete my vow of doing 108 parikrama's of Govardhan in this very lifetime.

Om Tat Sat!!!





Memorable moments of Nartaki



Memorable moments of Gopal

19. Realizations by Jayadeva Goswami Das

On the final day of our stay in Vrindavan, the mellow and soothing afternoon breeze on the banks of River Yamuna among loud echoing speakers and distant sounds with the backdrop of the sunset, I realized how fortunate people are to be in the midst of the Holy Dhams. Our journey was finally coming to an end but the idea of always returning back to Dham will never fade away.

India, to describe it in a single word will be unjust. Various places, many faces, the melting pot of religious diversity and in the heart of it all are the Holy Dhams. Mayapur, the birthplace of Sankirtana, through the mercy of Lord Caitanya is in fact only getting better and in time, it will be the epicenter of sankirtana. The amazing vision of Srila Bhaktivinod Thakur and the courageous steps taken by Srila Prabhupada in making Mayapur a future city is indeed a blessing.

The prominent aspect of Krishna Consciousness is to always be engaged in the service of the lord and this was very strongly visible among devotees and non-devotees alike. The real thirst of devotion, darshan and association truly exist only in Dhams.

Standing at the edge of the terrace at Barsana, the palace of Srimati Radha Rani, a magnificent view awaits overlooking the mesmerizing landscape of Barsana City. Vrindavan in itself is breathtaking, through the beauty of its forests, its many temples, the winding alleyways, the banks of River Yamuna, a serene and ever so youthful presence like the Supreme Lord.

*kṛṣṇaṁ smaran janam cāsyā, preṣṭhaṁ nija-samīhitam
tat-tat-kathā-rataś cāsau, kuryād vāsam vraje sadā*

“A devotee should always reside in the transcendental realm of Vraja and always engage in *kṛṣṇaṁ smaran janam cāsyā preṣṭham*, the remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His beloved associates. By following in the footsteps of such associates and

by entering under their eternal guidance, one can acquire an intense desire to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.294):

Although one life time is not enough, still may we someday again go back the holy realm of the Lord and experience the nectar. May the Divine Couple bestow their mercy upon us, may we one day become Brajvasis.

All glories to Jagat Guru, Srila Prabhupada



Memorable moment of Jayadeva

20. Realizations by Maharani Devi Dasi

Before sharing my consciousness about 2019 Dham Yatra, I would like to thank my beloved Spiritual Master, His Holiness Srila Bir Krishna Das Goswami Maharaja for His blessing, His Divine Grace Srila A.C Bhaktivendanta Swami Prabhupada for His guidance towards this beautiful nirvana which we refer as Dham Yatra and The Supreme personality of Godhead, My Krishna Kanhaiya and Radharani whose love cord kept pulling me towards Dham and not forgetting Nityananda Das prabhu for making this Yatra easy as possible, successful and memorable for a life time.

During my childhood, I used to hear a lot of stories about Lord Sri Krishna & Srimati Radharani which always got stuck in my heart & mind, be it my grandma narrating or during the festival celebrations in community temple or school. As I grew, I had an opportunity to dance in Krishna songs and do drama in Krishna Leela's in school which doubled my love for Radha Krishna. I used to wonder how beautiful Vrindavan, Dwarka, Mathura & Barsana would be. I always wished if I could visit once before I leave this earth. When I got connected to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Suva in 2016, I was speechless by seeing the beauty of the deities.

It was like a treasure box opened and all the treasure was shining in front of me and my greedy eyes was gathering it. Seeing my reactions one of my temple friends, whom I used to go to temple with, showed me the deities of Mayapur temple, Vrindavan temple & Lord Jaganath deities. The rate of my heart beat was very high every time I see it and the rhythm of the beat would be "when will I see it with my own eyes". Every time anybody would show me pictures or share their Dham yatra experience or reading the books, my heart beats the same rhythm "when will I see it", my eyes become thirsty as if it's been in desert desiring for a drop of Nectar of Dham and my mind gets so hungry to get food for Dham Memories.

One day Nartaki Mataji & Nityananda prabhu said, Maharani we are planning to go to Mayapur & Vrindavan, you always wanted to feel how being in Dham is, let's not miss this opportunity. I felt like Srimati Radharani heard my prayers and without losing a second I said yes, as I didn't want to miss this opportunity. I didn't know how to manage the travel cost while having so much on my plate, but Lord Sri Krishna arranged everything smoothly. Everything was being arranged as if the doors of heaven was opening for me. I was super excited when I finally manage to pay everything and prepare for the yatra. It was a great icing on the cake when in last minute Nityananda prabhu managed to add Bhubaneshwar, Odisha in the plan.

With Lord Sri Krishna's great blessings and Srimati Radharani's miracle breakthrough every obstacle was turned into a pathway towards Dham yatra. Few months of waiting and preparing the things to take with me made me so excited. Our gatherings with Nartaki mataji made me so impatient to fly to Dham, she used to tell us stories about her experience when she first went to Dham. With a blink of an eye the date was 21st December 2019, 6:00 am at Nadi International Airport.

Yes, My Lord, I am coming to realize and feel, how wonderful that soil is where you played with your barefoot. Divya & I had no limits to happiness, a heart full of happiness never like before. We settled in our seats in the plane, we prayed to Lord Narshinga while holding back our tears of excitement. We did our rounds, watched the movies and relaxed. We barely could sleep but was lying down as the flight was long and sitting was hard. After the long flying, change of two flights and bit of foggy sleepy drive we managed to put our foot in the Holy land of India, Sri Dham Mayapur.

Early cold morning, all foggy roads, it was like a dream come true. We were waiting for the fogs to clear and the door to heaven opens up just exactly like it happens in movies. I was so passionate about everything around us because I could feel the presence of positive energy, first time feeling everything so pure,

each and every place we visited at Sri Dham Mayapur was a soul awakening experience.

Every morning we used to wake up and be ready for Mangal Aarti no matter how cold it was at 3:00 am. Normally when I wake up early to have shower, I have a very bad sinus but in Dham despite cold as 7 degrees, I didn't have any sinus issue or fever at any point in time, this was a real blessing. Super fervent to be standing in front of the deities of Mayapur temple, the hairs of my hands would stand to end and heart would have its own rate every time I came in front of the deities. I felt like the Panchatattva deities are going to walk towards me, the presence was really felt to my heart. With the crowd we used to walk around towards Sri Sri Radha Madhava & Ashta Sakhi Deities, it was so beautiful they were smiling and standing as if they were going to start the Rasa Dance. This was one of the treasured days of my life. Seeing Lord Narshinga Dev made me feel like there is nothing in the world I could fear about as He is always with me. I was holding back my tears seeing each and every Darshans because one of my friends had told me we shouldn't cry in front of the deities.

Being in Mayapur everyday was exciting, we went to each place as stated in this book and was very attractive. I felt the presence of purity as something was present which had unique sensation. We visited the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium which was an amazing site. I wonder how beautiful this would be once the project is completed. The Ekachakra Dham felt like a smooth flowing ocean of pure love, humbleness & gentleness. We shall keep flowing and flowing with it towards pure Bhakti, the Ekachakra Dham was very beautiful. By the time we reached for Ganga Snaan in Mayapur it was dark after 6 or 7 pm, this really felt like a test for me as it was very cold, the water was so cold I did not know if I could do it but we prayed and we all were able to do it. We held each other's hands and managed to take the very very cold snaan. I was scared of falling sick but with mercy of Lord we were all in good condition as I felt my sinus problem was already gone and this became a finest memory of cleansing myself. I also met a very humble prabhuji, I couldn't dare to ask his name as he was very

senior in all aspects and age but he told me, he was originally from Italy and now he is in Mayapur distributing books. I used to greet him every time I went to the temple, I felt he was unique in the crowd. He told me about the places, how much he loves being in Mayapur and he gave me a book about Mayapur. The most heartfelt memory about him was he arranged Lord Narshinga Pavitra for me on the very last morning we were leaving Mayapur. Though the sizes of Pavitra was too big for me but I had taken two out of four he got for me as I believed it was Lord's way of saying I am with you and I thought to share second one with my friend who showed me ways to Krishna Consciousness. I had acquired a lot of virtue and knowledge by being in Mayapur.

Now going to the next holiest place, Sri Jaganath Puri Dham, I feel like I was one of those very luckiest persons in that very huge crowd to take Darshan of Lord Jaganatha, Baladeva & Subhadra Devi. Flowing with such a large crowd, bumped from all sides, we managed to jump and jump high as possible to get the Darshan. This was a very unique experience for me. As all we know the flag in the temple has the most auspicious signs, which is changed every single day so we managed to get each for ourselves and I was so happy having the flag dated for the day I visited. We had amazingly beautiful darshans of Sakshi Gopal. While listening to the Brahmachari narrating the Katha's about the temples, we had honoured prasadam at the same premises. I enjoyed prasadam which was uniquely made from rice bubble, it was sweet and gave a very sweet memory for life time. The most heart touching Darshan I saw for the first time was the Darshan of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu sitting and a very bright Diya lit in front of Him. This vision took my heart away as I got frozen for a minute. His Mrdanga was still there too. My eyes were purified and mind was cleansed after every Darshan I saw.

The most awaited and dream come true moment of my life, being in Vrindavan. As I reached Vrindavan I was just thanking Srimati Radharani for allowing me to be here. It was only possible with Her mercy upon this fallen soul. I didn't know

what to do, jump up high with great happiness or cry out loud with heartfelt gratitude for being in Vrindavan Dham.

We were in Vrindavan for 6 days and visited many places as stated in this book and each place had its own tasteful nectar. The slow soothing winds in Vrindavan felt as if it was being blown out of Lord Sri Krishna's own flute and we were bathing in it to get ourselves cleansed in that soothing wind. I fell in love with everything my eyes could see, my heart could feel, my hands could touch and all of that which my mind could store about Vraja Mandal parikrama for the whole six-days. For the first time in my life, I had known what falling in love with most beautiful thing in this whole world is like, I felt I had pleasure of the whole world. Temperatures in Vrindavan was very low, sometimes low as 3 degrees but this never stopped us from getting up at 3 am to go for Mangal aarti.

Vrindavan Dham has its own beauty, if our eye of the heart is wide open, we can feel. My heart skipped a beat when we visited most holy places in Vrindavan as mentioned in itinerary. I am now out of words to describe the feeling. While doing Govardhan parikrama, I had tears of love & joy then and even right now as am writing this. We were barefoot, very cold day, I think low as 3 degrees and distance was very long. While doing the parikrama Divya & I got lost from our group, we were slow, our legs were swollen but what guided us was "Radhe Radhe" on each wall & every tree along the marg until we found the sign along the roads for parikrama marg.

This was again a wonderful memory for life time as we both enjoyed each second of the parikrama at our speed. At the end, all the three groups met at the Radha Kund & Shayam Kund. After completing the Govardhan parikrama we couldn't hold back our tears, a deep awakening of our soul and deep purifications of our heart. We had created memory everywhere we visited in Vrindavan for e.g., eating Dhayi (Yogurt) & Jalebi (sweet) at the banks of Yamuna, we visited places where Lord Sri Krishna & Radharani had performed our favourite Leela's like Kunj Bihari, Birth Place of Lord Sri Krishna, Mahavan,

Mor kutir, Nand Gaon, Damodar Leela place and many more. Each and Every place we visited was a very beautiful, soul touching and pleasurable memory. I feel the Vrajavasi's were so caring and loving, reason being, I saw them putting clothes on the cows, calf & also the Tulasi plants. Despite visiting many places, we still have many more Dhams to take darshan of to purify ourselves. I really pray to visit again & again with mercy of Srimati Radharani as I still haven't got enough of the Vrindavan Dham.

A Pilgrimage is a journey in search of the Divine inside and outside us, it occurs in one's mind and consciousness as described in blog by a Maharaja. It is a deep purification of the heart, of the intellect, of the memory and us as a whole. I can keep writing explaining my feelings and memory about each place we visited but I get out of word to describe the exact emotions, heart gets frozen and I hold my tears back as am writing this, it stills feels like it was yesterday. Everything was like a journey between the earth and the sky. I still remember I was crying on the last day in Vrindavan at Mangal aarti and Final Darshan as my heart was sinking as it was time to return back and I was praying I want come again. Not making this longer any more I would like to say, I wish to go for Dham yatras again and again and again.



Memorable moments of Maharani

21. Realizations by Divya Devi Dasi

As a child, my parent's used to read bedtime stories about the incarnation of the Lord and His pastimes to me. Most of the time the favorite stories used to be about Prahalad Maharaj and Dhruv Maharaj and how the supreme Lord would always take care for his devotees. However, the best story was about Govardhan.

As I grew older, I always wanted to visit Govardhan. My desire was fulfilled when I was asked to join for the Gopal's India Tour 2019 together with other devotee friends. After taking permission from my dear Gurudeva, we made our trip to the Holy land of India.

We reached Sridham Mayapur on Ekadasi. It was the first time for me to experience such cold temperature. In spite of that, we rushed out just to pay our obeisance to the holy dham. After deluging, we all went to have our first darshan. I remember watching the video of Sridham and was eagerly waiting just to gaze upon the beautiful and graceful PANCHATATTVA.

When I entered the spacious temple I saw the huge golden Panchatattva deities, I couldn't imagine ever having to leave Mayapur. The devotees' graceful dancing and the beautiful kirtan enchanted me. When I looked to the right, I was stunned on seeing the huge and extremely beautiful deities of Radha-Madhava, with four sakhis on each side gazing at the perfect beauty of Lord Madhava and Srimati Radharani and very eager to serve Them.

The temple was full of devotees. The pujaris were offering ghee lamps, an act that symbolizes how our heart burns in separation from Krishna. And before I could recover, I was in front of the deity of Nrisimhadeva. Dressed in silver and gold, He looked like fire. He was so ferocious, and yet so assuring. I don't remember how many times I offered obeisance's to Him.

Every morning, despite of the cold weather, we attended the mangala aarti and every day we tried to make our way through the crowd just to be in front. Most of the day we succeeded and other times we were chased by the security guards since they were working very hard to manage the crowd of devotees. Everyone had the same desire. To see the Lordship closely, because one never knows when would be the next time to visit Mayapur.

From Mayapur, we went to Jagannath Dham, which is one of the prominent Char Dham pilgrimage sites. Seeing the Chakra from the distance, we all paid obeisance. Whether it be Sakshi Gopal temple or the Jagannath Puri temple, it was swarming by soul searching devotees from so many places with one resolution, just to get a glimpse of the Absolute.

Though, I got to see the majestic Lord in a flash, I was shivering with excitement afterwards. There were some places that left prints in my heart just like a tattoo.

Firstly, Vrindavan, whose glories can't be described by top exalted saints, leave apart me. It was pouring ecstasy in Vrindavan. Every gust of wind, the surrounding, Radhe Radhe written on trees and every walls, monkeys and Vrajavasis, everything here has love of Srimati Radharani and Sri Shyam Sundar. Every activity done here or every sight would bring an individual nearer to the everlasting individual relationship with the Divine Couple.

My innermost desire was fulfilled when we went to circumambulate the great Govardhan in 2⁰ Celsius. It was and it will remain the most precious day of my life. This was because on Govardhan, interesting lilas were performed by Lord Krishna in His childhood and youth and also the presence of Sri Radha Kund, which is the most holy place on earth.

Despite of the cold and weary, we managed to finish our parikrama in approximately six hours. This was only possible through loudly, greedily, and

desperately chanting the names of Lord on every step taken Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

The holy name has got so much power that it provided us with the strength to do Vrindavan parikrama as well as Govardhan parikrama in a single day. There were so many places that we went to visit during our visit. And Even today, the forested area of Nidhivan, amongst all other forests carried the essence of this sacred name in its lush green foliage.

Thank you, Srila Prabhupada. Even though you were satisfied with whatever Krishna provided to you, you undertook great hardships to create such a beautiful place and a real society of devotees so that people like me would be attracted to spiritual life.

Back in Fiji, I realized that Mayapur and Vrindavan is an example of how one can live a completely spiritual life right here in the material world. "O Lord!" I prayed. "When can I return to Mayapur?" "When can I return to Vrindavan?"



Memorable moment of Divya

“Thank you” for an Incredible Journey, a Memorable Experience, an Outstanding Travels across 3 Dhams: Sri Mayapur Dham, Sri Jagannath Puri Dham and Sri Vrindavan Dham. Journey made possible by Nityananda Das. Journey with immense blessing from Srimati Radharani and Divine Mercy of Lord Sri Krishna. Till we travel again “Joy”.

Jai Srila Prabhupada!!!!

Appreciation by Jayadeva Goswami Das

