



SHARING RĀDHĀ-KUNḌA SECRETS

*An Offering to the Divine Lotus Hands of Śrī
Caitanya Mahāprabhu in Celebration of
Śrī Rādhā-kunḍa Bahulāṣṭamī Festival*

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SEVEN QUESTIONS.....

Question One: Why is Rādhā-kuṇḍa as Dear to Kṛṣṇa as Śrī Rādhā Herself?

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SEVEN ANSWERS.....

Question One

Why Is Rādhā-kuṇḍa as Dear to Kṛṣṇa As Śrī Rādhā Herself?

Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us that Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is described by great sages as the lake that is as dear to Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā Herself. (NOI 11p)

Why is that? Let's hear a little of what “the great sages” have to say.

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī tells us,

O restless-eyed girl, Your lake is the eternal home of You and Your beloved. My residence is here. Here I stay.¹ This lake is my eternal home. It is everything for Rādhā's friends. **It is filled with the glory of Rādhā's love for Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa loves it as much as He loves Rādhā.** I pray that at this lake Lalitā's friend Rādhā may eternally enjoy pastimes before my eyes.²

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī is intimating here that Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is so dear to Kṛṣṇa because it is filled with the glories of Rādhā's love for Him.

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī gives a different perspective. His understanding is that Rādhā-kuṇḍa is as dear to Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā Herself because it continually fills Kṛṣṇa's mind and heart with remembrance of Rādhā. He says in *Śrī Govinda-līlamṛta*, Chapter 7,

Rādhā-kuṇḍa was as dear to Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā Herself. Mādhava, the full moon of Vraja, was conquered by endless qualities of Rādhā-kuṇḍa as He continuously sported there with Radhika in deep love.

Rādhā-kuṇḍa filled the heart of Kṛṣṇa, the guru of all gallant men, with joy because its different qualities reminded Him of Radhika. However, this increased Kṛṣṇa's intense feelings of separation from Rādhā and made Him extremely eager to meet Her.

Kṛṣṇa felt overwhelmed in separation from Rādhā. While gazing at the beautiful Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Kṛṣṇa saw His sweetheart in the various features of the kunda.....The waves in Rādhā-kuṇḍa were just like the waves of Radhika's sweet affection in madhura-rasa. The lotus flowers resembled Kiśorī's lovely lotus face.

The bees buzzing above the lotuses appeared like Rādhā's elegant curly locks hanging over Her forehead. The darting humming birds (khañjana) resembled Rādhā's restless blue eyes. The sweet chortling of the swans (hamsa) echoed the pleasant jingling of Rādhā's hamsaka foot ornaments. Thus, Kṛṣṇa saw His beloved Rādhā in Her kuṇḍa. The unlimited qualities of Rādhā-kuṇḍa continually filled Kṛṣṇa's mind and heart with remembrance of Rādhā's wonderful form, attributes and sweet dealings.

¹ Śrī Vilāpa-kusumāñjali, Text 97

² Śrī Abhiṣṭa-prārthanāṣṭaka, Text 8

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura speaks not only of Rādhā-kunḍa, but of Rādhā-kunḍa and Śyāma-kunḍa. He explains that by approaching these lakes one directly approaches Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

*yayor vilokena tayoh pratītis
tayor iva syād anubhūti-bhūtiḥ
sākṣād-avāptiś ca tathānavādyā
sadyo bhavaty eva vadanti vidyāḥ*

By seeing these two lakes, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa believe They are present in them. It is as if They directly see each other there. The wise say that by approaching these lakes one directly approaches Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

*dvayoh sudurlabhyatayā yadi syāt
parasparotkanṭhita-bhūri-bhārāḥ
dvāv eva yad dvandva-samāśrayātau
paraspara-prāpti-rasāti-siktau*

Longing to meet, but forced to remain separate, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa assumed the forms of Rādhā-kunḍa and Śyāma-kunḍa. In this way They become splashed with the nectar of meeting each other.

*kāruṇya-mātrātīśayāj janeṣu
svākīya-mādhurya-bharānubhūtyai
tau sto dravantau sarasī bhavantau
majjanti santas tad ihollasantah*

Out of great kindness to the people, so they could directly taste Their sweetness, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa have become these two lakes. Shining with happiness, the devotees bathe in these two lakes.

— *Śrī Vraja-rīti-cintāmaṇi, 32-33, 35*

If Rādhā-kunḍa is Rādhā, if They are non-different, obviously Rādhā-kunḍa will be as dear to Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā. (This understanding also offers a very sweet and confidential understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement that Kṛṣṇa’s love for Rādhā-kunḍa and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the same in all respects. NOI 11p)

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura offers another beautiful explanation. He tells us,

*rādhaiva kunḍaṁ dravatām gatābhūt
kṛṣṇekṣaṇānanda-bhareṇa manye
kṛṣṇo ‘pi rādhekṣaṇa-moda-bhārāt
tenaiva tan-nāma-guṇād dvi-kunḍī*

I think that when Rādhā saw Kṛṣṇa She melted with ecstasy and thus assumed the liquid state of the waters of Rādhā-kunḍa, and in the same way when Kṛṣṇa saw Rādhā He

also melted in ecstasy and became the waters of Śyāma-kuṇḍa. In this way these two lakes bear the names and qualities of the divine couple.

*premaiva tad yugma-varasya yugmaṁ
kuṇḍasya manye tad ihāsu dhanyāḥ
majjanti tan majjana-mātram eva
premnīti nāmnāpi tayor dvi-kuṇḍī*

I think these two lakes are the divine couple's love. They who are fortune bathe there. Because bathing there is like bathing in Their transcendental love, these two lakes bear the names of the divine couple.

— Śrī Vraja-rīti-cintāmaṇi, 32-33, 35

Śrīla Prabhupāda encapsulates what these great souls have shared with us in a very succinct yet sweet way which leaves no doubt about why Rādhā-kuṇḍa is as dear to Kṛṣṇa as Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī Herself. He says, *There is no difference between Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Rādhārāṇī.....Rādhā-kuṇḍa should be respected as Rādhārāṇī Herself. That is Rādhā-kuṇḍa consciousness. Highest Rādhā-kuṇḍa consciousness.*

— Room conversation, Vṛndāvana, 5th Sept 1976



Evening Diwali Festival at Rādhā-kuṇḍa

Question Two

Is the Rādhā-kuṇḍa Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa See the Same as the One We See?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura tells us that Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is always invisible to mortal eyes. And Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī in his *Śrī Govinda-līlāmṛta* (Ch. 7) tells us that only those on the threshold of *bhāva* and who have the appropriate *bhāva* can see Rādhā-kuṇḍa As It Is, others see it as an ordinary place.

So let's do a private Reality Check to ascertain how close we are to being "on the threshold of *bhāva*" and hence able to factually see Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī describes the characteristics of a person who has actually developed his *bhāva* (ecstatic love) for Kṛṣṇa. The characteristics are as follows:

1. He is always anxious to utilize his time in the devotional service of the Lord. He does not like to be idle. He wants service always, twenty-four hours a day, without deviation
2. He is always reserved and perseverant.
3. He is always detached from all material attraction.
4. He does not long for any material respect in return for his activities.
5. He is always certain that Kṛṣṇa will bestow His mercy upon him.
6. He is always very eager to serve the Lord faithfully.
7. He is very much attached to the chanting of the Holy Names of the Lord.
8. He is always eager to describe the transcendental qualities of the Lord.
9. He is very pleased to live in a place where the Lord's pastimes are performed, e.g. Mathurā, Vṛndāvana or Dvārakā.

— NOD, Ch. 18

Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us of two kinds of perception. Let's hear what he has to say.

There are two conceptions of presence — the physical conception and the vibrational conception. The physical conception is temporary, whereas the vibrational conception is eternal. When we enjoy or relish the vibration of Kṛṣṇa's teachings in Bhagavad-gītā, or when we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, we should know that by those vibrations He is immediately present. He is absolute, and because of this His vibration is just as important as His physical presence. When we feel separation from Kṛṣṇa or the spiritual master, we should just try to remember their words of instructions, and we will no longer feel that separation. Such association with Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master should be association by vibration, not physical presence. That is real association. We put so much stress on seeing, but when Kṛṣṇa was present on this earth, so many people saw Him and did not realize that He is God; so what is the advantage of seeing? By seeing Kṛṣṇa, we will not understand Him, but by listening carefully to His teachings, we can come to the platform of understanding.

*We can touch Kṛṣṇa immediately by sound vibration; therefore we should give more stress to the sound vibration.*³

— Elevation to Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

The physical conception, what we see with our mundane eyes, is not only temporary but it will bind us to the temporary. If we become attached to the Rādhā-kuṇḍa we presently see, and build mental *saṁskāras* of it, that will bring us back again to this realm — and our form may not even be human!

So what does this mean for us, practically speaking? In his NOI Text 8 purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's explanation of how we progress from *śravaṇa-dāśa* (hearing about Kṛṣṇa and His world) to *sampatti-dāśa* (the perfection of re-establishing our eternal identity and our loving relationship of service with Kṛṣṇa). So much depends on the quality of our hearing and our attachment for hearing about Kṛṣṇa and His world.

Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, and the *Dhāma* in general, is a wonderful source of mercy and stimulus for remembering Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa and Their world. But we should be very careful not to develop attachment for how it manifests to our conditioned vision. Best to hear from our *ācāryas*, rather than just see — for as Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us, the vibrational conception is eternal and will take us to the eternal!



³ In both his books and lectures Śrīla Prabhupāda uses different terminology to say the same thing. Here he is comparing vibrational conception/physical conception. Sometimes he uses *śabda* / *pratyakṣa* or *śāstra-caṅkṣu* / sensory perception, but he means the same thing.

Question Three

What Does Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's Rādhā-kuṇḍa Look Like?

Our *ācāryas* have written extensively and in great detail about Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Let's take a glimpse of something Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī shares with us in his *Śrī Govinda-līlāmṛta*, Chapter 7.

Description of Lalitānanda Kuñja

The huge, lightning colored kuñja of Lalitā-sakhī, located on the north side of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, had eight sub kuñjas resembling an eight-petaled lotus flower. An astonishing courtyard named Anaṅga-raṅgāmbuja (the lotus of loving pastimes) was situated in the middle of all the kuñjas. The courtyard was shaped like a thousand-petaled lotus whose lovely whorl was a glittering golden platform, which could expand or contract depending on the pastime. The pleasing opulence of all six seasons was always present here to increase the happiness of Rādhā-Mādhava.

Kalāvati, Lalitā's disciple, carefully cleaned and maintained the area, the abode of sweet pastimes. Lalitānanda-da Kuñja (the kuñja which gives bliss to Lalitā) was like a splendid royal pavilion for Rādhā-Mādhava, and Their beloved sakhīs. From the air, Lalitānanda-da Kuñja appeared like a huge lotus with a nucleus of pure gold from which expanded filaments made of jewels. Each petal seemed to be made of different colored gemstones. Surrounding the nucleus, the petals were uniform in size and shape. But the number and size of the petals increased with each successive circle.

A golden lotus temple, which could satisfy the senses with its cooling radiance, sat in the center of the nucleus. Outside there were five successive circles of wonderful platforms. The first circle of platforms was made of gold, the second — cat's eye gems, the third — blue sapphires, the fourth — crystals and the fifth — rubies. The domes above the platforms contained jeweled pictures of mating deer, birds, humans and demigods to arouse amorous love.

Desire trees with green, yellow, white, red and blue leaves and flowers surrounded the golden lotus temple. The branches of the trees met overhead to form natural canopies. The inside dome of the temple was carved in the shape of a thousand-petaled lotus. The jeweled platform under the dome was two feet high.

In the northeast sector of Lalitānanda-da Kuñja was a sub kuñja named Vasanta-sukhadā-kuñja (gives the joy of spring). The beautiful bower had eight sections resembling an eight-petaled lotus flower. Aśoka trees having intertwining branches full of beautiful white, green, blue, yellow and crimson flowers covered the entire area. Buzzing bees and cooing cuckoos surcharged the atmosphere.

The Padma-mandira, the lotus temple made of unlimited types of rare gems, stood in the southwest corner of Lalitānanda-da Kuñja. It had doors and windows on all four sides and jewel-studded paintings of Kṛṣṇa's rāsa-līlā, pūrva-rāga and nikuñja-keli pastimes

on its inside walls. Colorful painting of Kṛṣṇa killing the demons from Pūtanā to Ariṣṭāsura lined the outside walls. Lalitā-sakhī painted and hung the pictures.

The jeweled center of the lotus temple emanated brilliant effulgence. Sixteen rooms shaped like lotus petals adjoined the center. These rooms also had sixteen sub-chambers. The second floor design was the same. The third floor was a wall-less room topped by a great-jeweled dome supported by coral pillars on crystal bases. Jugs, flags and cakras ornamented the dome. Rādhā-Śyāma enjoyed the spectacular panorama of Rādhā-kunḍa from this high open-air room.

The ground floor contained many enchanting pictures finely crafted from precious jewels. Gem-studded staircases connected the rooms and sub rooms. Trees full of fruits and flowers flanked the stairways. Rādhā-Mādhava relished many intimate loving pastimes in this lotus temple.

Just a little bit different than the Rādhā-kunḍa that comes to mind when we presently think of the place, isn't it?!

But its' best that our ācāryas' presentation of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's Rādhā-kunḍa be our conception and our memory of this sacred place.

Something to work on, isn't it?!



Question Four

What Does It Mean to Bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa?

Before we begin exploring this topic, it would seem appropriate to elaborate on two related points Śrīla Prabhupāda makes in his NOI 11 purport.

Point One

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes that even great sages and great devotees like Nārada and Sanaka do not get an opportunity to come to Rādhā-kuṇḍa to take their baths. what, then, to speak of ordinary devotees?

Why is that? It's because their *sthāyi-bhāva* (permanent *rasa* of relationship with Kṛṣṇa) is not *mādhurya-rasa*.⁴

And as Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura tells us in Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport,

Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the most select place for those interested in advancing their devotional service in the wake of the lady friends (sakhīs) and confidential serving maids (mañjarīs) of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

This raises an interesting point. Yes, Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the topmost place, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's the best place for us. It all depends on the nature of our attraction for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Point Two

* Śrīla Prabhupāda also tells us in his purport that: *If, by great fortune, one gets opportunity to come to Rādhā-kuṇḍa and bathe even once, he can develop his transcendental love for Kṛṣṇa, exactly as the gopīs did.*

* So what is this "great fortune"? It's the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrīla Prabhupāda. **Their** mercy is our great fortune. **Their** mercy is giving us access to Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Her mercy. This is very, very important to remember.

In text 11 Rūpa Gosvāmī tells us: *Undoubtedly Rādhā-kuṇḍa is very rarely attained even by the great devotees; therefore it is even more difficult for ordinary devotees to attain.*

But in 1974 in Māyāpura, Śrīla Prabhupāda said: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is *mahā-vadānyāvatāra*, because He is teaching about the love of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and teaching everyone *kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāyate*, real destination of life, how to achieve *kṛṣṇa-prema*, and He's personally teaching. (CC Ādi 7.1 Lecture)

And Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī tells (Ādi 14.1) "Things that are very difficult to do become easy to execute if one somehow or other simply remembers Lord

⁴ Nārada Muni's *rasa* is a mix of *sakhya* and *dāsya*, Sanaka's *rasa* is *sānta*.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu. But if one does not remember Him even easy things become very difficult. To this Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu I offer my respectful obeisances.”

It is so very important to remember that we are mercy cases when we enter this most sacred realm called Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Our only *adhikāra* for approaching Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the mercy and potency of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates. This should be our conscious and honest mood.

Okay, so now let’s move on to our primary question:

What does it mean to bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa?

Let’s begin by taking a look at Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport:

It is stated that a devotee will at once develop pure love of Kṛṣṇa in the wake of the gopīs if he once takes a bath in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī recommends that even if one cannot live permanently on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, he should at least take a bath in the lake as many times as possible. This is a most important item in the execution of devotional service.

Obviously, we are not talking only of purification here, but more importantly of a transformation of heart.

Let’s do a quick Reality Check on this one!

- (a) Please raise your hand if you have ever bathed in Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
- (b) Please raise your hand if you have very often bathed in Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
- (c) Please raise your hand if the result was that your pure love for Kṛṣṇa was fully aroused.

If you haven’t gained the promised result of bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa by taking bath there, what does that mean?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has some very illuminating insights to share about his. Let’s take a look at what he has to say.

Bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa

(Lecture at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, 16th October, 1932 by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura)

Only by Śrī Rādhā’s mercy can one reside eternally on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, the superlative place in the entire creation. Therefore, in his ultimate instruction Śrī Rūpa Prabhu mentions bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa:

*kṛṣṇasyoccaiḥ praṇaya-vasatiḥ preyasībhyo ‘pi rādhā
kuṇḍam cāsyā munibhir abhitas tādr̥g eva vyadhāyi
yat preṣṭhair apy alam asulabham kiṁ punar bhakti-bhājām
tat premedam sakṛd api saraḥ snātur āviṣkaroti*

Of the many objects of favored delight and of all the lovable damsels of Vrajabhūmi, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is certainly the most treasured object of Kṛṣṇa’s love. And, in every

respect, Her divine kuṇḍa is described by great sages as similarly dear to Him. Undoubtedly Rādhā-kuṇḍa is very rarely attained even by the great devotees; therefore it is even more difficult for ordinary devotees to attain. If one simply bathes once within those holy waters, one's pure love of Kṛṣṇa is fully aroused.

— *Upadeśāmṛta* 11

Therefore, Śrīla [Raghunātha] dāsa Gosvāmī wrote in his *Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍāṣṭaka* (2):

*vraja-bhuvi mura-śatroḥ preyasīnām nikāmair
asulabham api tūrṇam prema-kalpa-drumam tam
janayati hr̥di bhūmau snātur uccaiḥ priyam yat
tad ati-surabhi rādhā-kuṇḍam evāśrayo me*

May very dear and fragrant Rādhā-kuṇḍa, which for one who bathes therein immediately creates in the land of the heart a desire tree of pure love rarely found even among the *gopī* beloveds of Lord Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, be my shelter.



**Yes, Rādhā-kuṇḍa is very, very merciful, but
Please Be Very, Very Careful!**

(Lecture at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, 16th October, 1932)

“I have taken bath in Rādhā-kuṇḍa,” “I took a dip in Rādhā-kuṇḍa,” “I am a lump of flesh and blood,” “I am my wife's maintainer,” “I am a *sannyāsī*,” “I am a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, or *sūdra*” – thinking in any of these ways disqualifies one to bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. What to speak of such materialistic conceptions, if we are filled with the attitude of awe and reverence we also cannot bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. We have to tread the path of Śrī Rādhā's maidservants without imitating them.



By regarding ordinary water as sacred and the gross material body as the self, one can neither see nor bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa.



Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is always invisible to mortal eyes; nor can any mortal ever bathe in the same.

— **This is from an article entitled ‘Circumambulation of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma,’
Harmonist, February 1932**



If one's consciousness is covered by *upādhis* when he bathes in Rādhā-kuṇḍa, he might as well bathe a bag of bones.

— **A famous statement, date unreferenced**



Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura's statements are not intended to quell our enthusiasm for bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. He is simply reminding us not to approach Rādhā-kuṇḍa mindlessly or whimsically. And he's encouraging us to intelligently and kindly make the most of the mercy Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Rādhā-kuṇḍa are offering us. Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the fundamental principle for understanding how to do that in his purport. He says, *one should bathe there regularly and give up all material conceptions, taking shelter of Śrī Rādhā and Her assistant gopīs.*

Obviously, it's best to work out the details of how to do this with our spiritual guides if we sincerely and seriously want the promised existential transformation of heart!



What About Midnight Bathing on Śrī Bahulāṣṭamī?

This is not mentioned in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava śāstra. In *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 16.207, 210 the following is quoted from *Padma-Purāṇa*:

*govardhana-girau ramye
rādhā-kuṇḍam priyam hareḥ
kārttike bahulāṣṭamyām
tatra snātvā hareḥ priyaḥ
naro bhakto bhaved viprās
tad dhi tasya pratoṣaṇam*

Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, which is very dear to Lord Hari, is situated at the foot of Govardhana Hill, which is a most enchanting place and a foremost devotee of Lord Hari. Rādhā-kuṇḍa manifested at midnight on the eight day of the waning moon in the month of Kārttika. By bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa, one becomes a dear devotee of Lord Hari. O *brāhmaṇas*, bathing at Rādhā-kuṇḍa is very pleasing to Lord Hari.

*tat-kuṇḍe kārttikāṣṭamyām
snātvā pūjyo janārdanaḥ
subodhanyām yathā prītis
tathā prītis tato bhavet*

It is the duty of everyone to bathe at Rādhā-kuṇḍa on Bahulāṣṭamī and worship Lord Kṛṣṇa. As Kṛṣṇa becomes pleased by the observance of Uthana-ekādaśī, He is very pleased with a person who bathes at Rādhā-kuṇḍa on Bahulāṣṭamī.

It is very clear that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is pleased by devotees bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa on Bahulāṣṭamī, but to our knowledge no particular time is specified in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava śāstra.

Question Five

What does it mean to live on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa?

Rādhā-kuṇḍa is within Vraja, so let's first take a look at what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has to say about *vraja-vāsa* — living in Vraja.

We cannot attain vraja-vāsa without the mercy of the vraja-vāsīs. But why should they speak to us? How will we see them with material eyes? Because we are covered with pride and envy, they will not listen to what we say. Because we have no attachment for them, they do not speak to us. Why would the vraja-vāsīs engaged in eternal spiritual pastimes speak to us? They say, “You are searching for material pleasure. Has Kṛṣṇa become a material object for your pleasure?” One cannot know about Vraja except through subservience to Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī and Śrī Rati Mañjarī. When we receive the mercy of Prabhu Nityānanda, on that very day we will understand the mercy of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī and Śrī Rati Mañjarī; otherwise:

***prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate***

The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature. (Bg 3.27)

— *To Be a Vraja-vāsī*, October 8 lecture, 1932 in Mathurā
by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura

Living at Rādhā-kuṇḍa

Lecture at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, 16th October, 1932
by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura

Only the most fortunate live with pure hearts in the most sanctified place, Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, and worship Kṛṣṇa twenty four hours a day. Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the highest section of Goloka, the most confidential place in the spiritual sky, and the only shelter for devotees on the platform of mādhyura-rasa.

The point is that one must forsake materialistic conceptions. After attaining the aprākṛta body of the gopīs, aprākṛta living entities render aprākṛta service to aprākṛta Śrī Rādhā in aprākṛta Vraja as the aprākṛta maidservants of Śrī Rādhā in the transcendental groves on the bank of aprākṛta Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

It's very clear from all this that we are talking not so much about just physical residence on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. We are talking about a very high level of consciousness and state of heart. In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us that “Vṛndāvana is revealed in the heart of the sincere devotee. In reality, it is not on any map, nor is it part of any country.”

— Vṛndāvana Days, p55

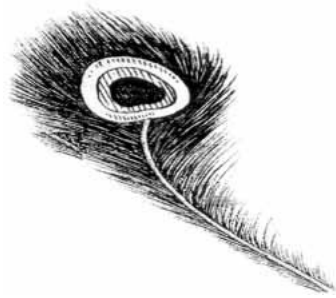
Keeping all of this in mind, let's now take a look at Śrīla Prabhupāda's NOI Text 11 purport.

- 1) *Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes in this connection that Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the most select place for those interested in advancing their devotional service in the wake of the lady friends (sakhīs) and confidential serving maids (mañjarīs) of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Living entities who are eager to return home to the transcendental kingdom of God, Goloka Vṛndāvana, by means of attaining their spiritual bodies (siddha-deha) should live at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, take shelter of the confidential serving maids of Śrī Rādhā and under their direction engage constantly in Her service.*
- 2) *It is also recommended that one should live on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and should be absorbed in the loving service of the Lord.*
- 3) *If one is thus constantly engaged during his lifetime, after giving up the body he will return back to Godhead to serve Śrī Rādhā in the same way as he contemplated during his life on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. The conclusion is that to live on the banks of the Rādhā-kuṇḍa and to bathe there daily constitute the highest perfection of devotional service.*

It is worth taking a look at Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's concluding words in Text 10 to help place what Śrīla Prabhupāda has said in clear perspective. He says, "Who, then, will not reside at Rādhā-kuṇḍa and, in a spiritual body surcharged with ecstatic devotional feelings [*aprākṛtabhāva*], render loving service to the divine couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, who perform Their *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*, Their eternal eightfold daily pastimes?"

This clearly indicates that one not only knows his *svarūpa* but has entered Śrī Śrī Rādhā Govinda's pastimes to perform *nitya-sevā*. Clearly we are talking spiritual residence, not just physical residence at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. One may also be physically residing on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, but the core-essence is one's qualification to live there spiritually. As Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has explained previously, we are talking of "*aprākṛta* service to *aprākṛta* Śrī Rādhā in *aprākṛta* Vraja as the *aprākṛta* maidservants of Śrī Rādhā in the transcendental groves on the bank of *aprākṛta* Rādhā-kuṇḍa."

Not such a cheap thing to live on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, is it?



Question Six

What does it mean to take shelter of, and serve under the direction of, “the confidential serving maids (*mañjarīs*) of Śrī Rādhā”?

This is a very deep, confidential and big topic and so for now we’ll just touch on the essence of it.

So what’s so special about Śrī Rādhā’s mañjarīs?

It’s their mood. And, if we want entrance into the realm of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī’s shelter and service, we need to imbibe that mood and cherish it as our own.

So what is that mood?

Only by the mercy of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura can we answer this question. Let’s explore a *bhajana* from his *Siddhi-lālasā* (*Gītamālā*, Chapter Five) to gain some insight into the essence of the mood of the *mañjarī*.....

*rohibo ami prayasi
vṛṣabhānu-sutā-carāṇa-sevāne
hoibo je pālya-dāsī
śrī-rādhāra sukha satata sādhana*

For serving the lotus feet of the charming daughter of King Vṛṣabhānu, I will become a sheltered maidservant of Her maidservant. Indeed, I will live only for the happiness of Śrī Rādhā, and I will always endeavor to increase Her joy.

*śrī-rādhāra sukhe kṛṣṇera je sukha
jānibo manete āmi
rādhā-pada chāḍi’ śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅgame
kabhu nā hoibo kāmī*

I will understand within my heart that Kṛṣṇa feels happiness only when Rādhā is happy. Therefore I will never, ever covet being with Kṛṣṇa myself, thereby abandoning Rādhikā’s lotus feet.

*sakhī-gaṇa mama parama-suhṛt
jugala-premera guru
tad-anuga ho’ye sevibo rādhāra
carāṇa-kalapa-taru*

All my associate *sakhīs* are my supreme well-wishers, they are my best friends, and they are the teachers of my lessons in conjugal love. By following them loyally, I will serve the lotus feet of Rādhā, which are just like desire-fulfilling trees.

*rādhā-pakṣa chāḍi' je-jana se-jana
je bhabe se bhabe thāke
āmi to' rādhikā-pakṣa-pātī sadhā
kabhu nāhi heri tā'ke*

I am forever given to remaining in the group devoted to Śrī Rādhikā. I will never even look upon those persons who have abandoned Her entourage, whoever they may be and whatever mood they entertain.

— Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura's *Gītamālā*

Very, very high, isn't it?!

Let's ground ourselves a little by hearing a few encouraging down-to-earth words from Śrīla Prabhupada.

Be serious. Don't be misled by the allurements of *māyā*. Remain strong. And then, in this life, you'll be able to become fit candidate to go back to home, back to Godhead. *Dīvyad-ṛndāranya-kalpa-drumādhah*. You'll also be one of the associates of Kṛṣṇa, as you desire. Kṛṣṇa will give you the opportunity to serve Him as you desire. If you want to serve Him as a *gopī*, you'll get that position. If you want to serve Him as cowherd's boyfriend, you'll get that opportunity. If you want to serve Kṛṣṇa following the footsteps of Mother Yaśodā, accepting Kṛṣṇa as your son, you'll get it. Accepting Kṛṣṇa as your son, Nanda Mahārāja following... We have to follow their principle, not that "I shall become Nanda Mahārāja" or "I shall become Yaśodā," "I shall..." No, that is *Māyāvāda*. You have to follow how they are loving Kṛṣṇa. You have to learn that. Then you'll get the chance of Kṛṣṇa's association.

— CC Lecture, *Ādi-līlā 1.16*, Māyāpura, April 9, 1975



Gopīs, they are not conditioned souls. They are liberated spirits. So first of all you have to come out from this conditioned life. Then the question of serving *gopī* will come. Don't be at the present moment, very eager to serve *gopī*. Just try to get out of your conditional life. Then time will come when you'll be able to serve *gopī*. In this conditional stage we cannot serve anything.

But Kṛṣṇa gives us opportunities.....*Gopīs* means who are always, constantly engaged in the service of the Lord. So that eternal relationship will be revealed. So we have to

wait for that. Immediately we cannot imitate serving *gopīs*. That's a good idea that you shall serve *gopī*, but it will take time. Not immediately.

— Lecture on Bg 2.8.12, Los Angeles, November 27, 1968

Please Don't Overlook the Mercy of Śrī Nityānanda Rāma

Nityānanda does not directly instruct in the confidential service of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the Guru of the inner circle of the servants of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīmatī, however, accepts the offer of service of only those souls who are especially favoured by Nityānanda and are deemed by Him to be fit for Her service. There is, therefore, a most intimate relationship between the function of Nityānanda and that of Śrīmatī.

— “Associates of Śrī Caitanya”, *Harmonist*, Feb 1932



Question Seven

What Does It Mean to Serve Rādhā-kuṇḍa?

Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us at the end of his text NOI Text 11p that “*By serving Rādhā-kuṇḍa, one can get an opportunity to become an assistant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī under the eternal guidance of the gopīs.*”

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī gives some insight into this statement in Text 5 of his *Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍāṣṭaka*, “The mercy obtained by serving Rādhā-kuṇḍa makes the celestial vine of pure love for the prince of Vraja sprout. Such love is famous for bearing the flower of service to my Queen. May that very fragrant Rādhā-kuṇḍa be my shelter.”

So what does it mean to factually serve Rādhā-kuṇḍa?

Let’s answer this question by taking a glimpse of the mood, mindset and activities of two of Rādhā-kuṇḍa’s best servitors.

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

Without a doubt, the most renowned of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa’s servants was Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. He not only excavated both Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma Kuṇḍa to make Them more accessible to we fallen souls, he also gave the most perfect example of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s teachings in *Śrī Upadesāmṛta* — especially Texts 8-11.

How did Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī spend his time?

As a daily duty, he regularly offered one thousand obeisances to the Lord, chanted at least one hundred thousand holy names and offered obeisances to two thousand Vaiṣṇavas. Day and night he rendered service within his mind to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and for three hours a day he discoursed about the character of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī took three baths daily in the Rādhā-kuṇḍa lake. As soon as he found a Vaiṣṇava residing in Vṛndāvana, he would embrace him and give him all respect. He engaged himself in devotional service for more than twenty-two and a half hours a day, and for less than two hours he slept, although on some days that also was not possible.

— CC Ādi 10.99-102

What was his mood?

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī’s mood was one of intense separation — not only from Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Her service, but also from his dear mentors and associates who left this material world before him.

*devi duḥkha-kula-sāgarodare
dūyamānam ati-durgataṁ janam
tvaṁ kṛpā-prabala-naukayādbhutaṁ
prāpaya sva-pada-paṅkajālayam*

O Queen, please rescue this unfortunate person drowning in an ocean of pain. Place him on the strong boat of Your mercy and carry him to the wonderful realm of Your lotus feet.

*tvad-alokana-kālāhi-
daṁśair eva mṛtaṁ janam
tvat-padābja-milal-lakṣa-
bheṣajair devi jīvaya*

O Queen, with the medicine of the red lac from Your lotus feet, please bring back to life this person now dead from the bite of the black snake called separation from You.

— *Śrī Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*

When will I serve Śrī Rādhā, who is dearer to Lord Kṛṣṇa than His own life, who considers the dust of Lord Kṛṣṇa's feet millions of times more dear than Her own life, who is supremely fortunate, whose fame shines in the three worlds, and who is the jewel crown of Lord Kṛṣṇa's *gopī* beloveds? Oh, when will I serve Śrī Rādhā?!

— *Śrī Utkanṭhā-daśaka*



*apūrva-premābdheḥ parimala-payah-phena-nivahaiḥ
sadā yo jīvātur yam iha kṛpayāsiñcad atulam
idānīm durdaivāt pratipada-vipad-dāva-valito
nirālambaḥ so 'yam kam iha tam ṛte yātu śaraṇam*

He was my life and soul. Again and again he kindly splashed me with the fragrant waters of shoreless ocean of limitless love. Now misfortune forces me to become swallowed by the forest fires of material calamities. I have no shelter. Except for him, of whom can I take shelter?

*śūnyāyate mahā-goṣṭham
girīndro 'jagarāyate
vyāghra-tuṅḍāyate kuṇḍam
jīvātu-rahitasya me*

Now that I no longer have the sustainer of my life, the land of Vraja has become empty and desolate, Govardhana Hill has become like a great python, and Rādhā-kuṇḍa has become like the gaping mouth of a ferocious tiger.*

* In both verses he is speaking of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī

— *Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrī Prārthanāśraya-caturdaśaka, Texts 10-11*

What was his mindset?

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī kindly gave us three treasures:

- 1) *Stavāvalī*
- 2) *Muktā-carita*
- 3) *Śrī Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi* (*Śrī Dāna-carita*)

The *Stavāvalī* in particular gives us a great deal of insight into his mindset. And a lot of it comes in the form of very valuable instruction concerning the appropriate mindset for an aspiring servant of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Let's take a look at four verses from his very famous “*Manah-śikṣā*” (Instructions to the Mind) to get some idea:

*gurau goṣṭhe goṣṭhālayiṣu sujane bhūsuragaṇe
sva-mantre śrī-nāmnī vraja-nava-yuva-dvandva-śaraṇe
sadā dambhaṁ hitvā kuru ratim apūrvām atitarām
aye svāntar-bhrātās caṭubhir abhiyāce dhrta-padaḥ*

O mind, I grasp your feet and beg you with sweet words: Please cast away all hypocrisy and pride and develop intense, unprecedented love for my spiritual master, Vrajabhūmi, the people of Vraja, the Vaiṣṇavas, the *brāhmaṇas*, the *gāyatrī mantra*, the holy name, and the transcendental shelter that is the fresh young couple of Vraja, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. (1)

*yathā duṣṭatvaṁ me darayati śaṭhasyāpi kṛpayā
yathā mahyaṁ premāmṛtam api dadāty ujjvalam asau
yathā śrī-gāndharvā-bhajana-vidhaye prerayati mām
tathā goṣṭhe kākvā giridharam iha tvaṁ bhaja manah*

So that He will mercifully smash my wickedness (even though I am a great rascal), so that He will give me the splendid nectar of transcendental love, and so that He will engage me in Śrī Rādhā's service, please, O mind, with words choked with emotion, worship Lord Giridhārī here in Vraja. (8)

*ratim gaurī-līle api tapati saundarya-kiraṇaiḥ
śacī-lakṣmī-satyāḥ paribhavati saubhāgya-balanaiḥ
vaśī-kāraiś candrāvali-mukha-navīna-vraja-satīḥ
kṣipaty ārād yā tām hari-dayita-rādhām bhaja manah*

O mind, please worship Lord Hari's beloved Rādhā, with the splendor of Her beauty She makes Rati, Gaurī, and Līlā burn with envy, with the power of Her good fortune She defeats Śacī, Lakṣmī, and Satyabhāmā, and with Her ability to control Kṛṣṇa She completely eclipses Candrāvali and the other pious young girls of Vraja. (10)

*samaṁ śrī-rūpeṇa smara-vivaśa-rādhā-giribhṛtor
vraje sākṣāt-sevā-labhana-vidhaye tad-gaṇa-yujoh
tad-ijyākhyā-dhyāna-śravaṇa-nati-pañcāmṛtam idaṁ
dhayan nityaṁ govardhanam anudinaṁ tvaṁ bhaja manah*

O mind, in order to attain the direct service of the two divine lovers, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Giridhārī, in the company of Their friends, every day you must constantly drink with Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, the five nectars of worshipping Them, chanting Their names, meditating on Them, hearing about Them, and bowing down before Them, and every day you must worship Govardhana Hill. (11)

Something to work on, isn't it?!



Śrīla Prabhupāda

Now, let's move on to catch a glimpse of Śrīla Prabhupāda's unique position as an ideal servitor of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Let's begin by reading from *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*:

The banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa were overhung with bright green foliage growing from the gnarled branches of ancient tamarind, tamāla, and nim trees. In the shallows of the water, cranes stood on stiltlike legs, while river terns skimmed across the lake, sometimes abruptly diving for fish. Sometimes a tortoise would poke its nose up from the water's depth, or a fish would jump. Green parrots, usually in pairs, flew in and out of the green trees, and sparrows chirped and hopped from place to place. Peacocks were also there, mostly in nearby gardens, as were occasional rabbits and even deer.

Already on this visit Abhay had had occasion to be alone with his spiritual master, who had remembered Abhay's son and presented him with a small *bandhī* (jacket). And now, as they walked together alone on the bank of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta turned and spoke confidentially to Abhay. There had been some quarreling amongst his leading disciples in Calcutta, he said, and this distressed him very much. Even now, in Vṛndāvana, it weighed heavily on his mind..... Abhay felt his spiritual master speaking to him in urgency, as if asking him for help or warning him to avert a disaster. But what could he do?

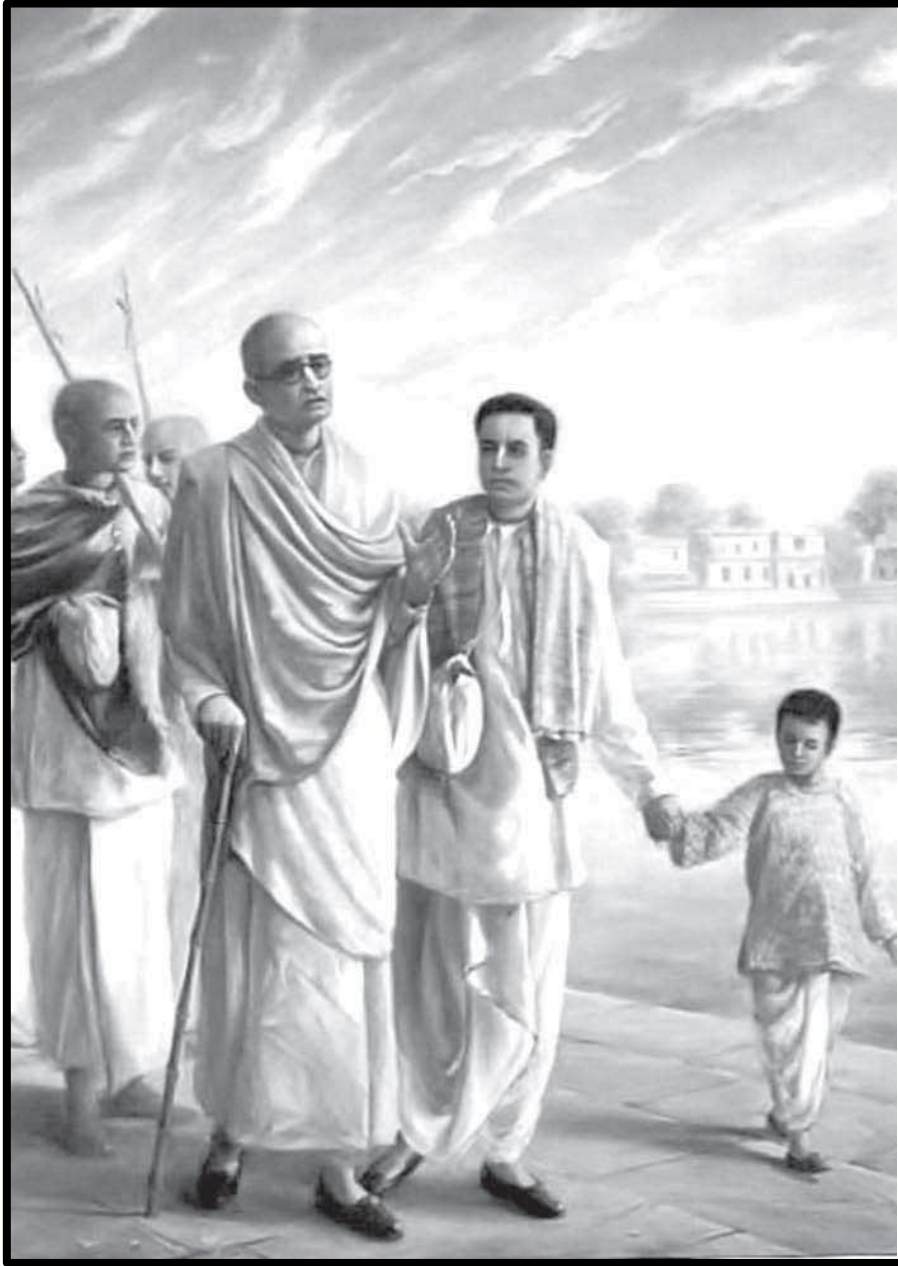
Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta then said directly to Abhay, “*Āmār icchā chila kichu bai karānā*”: “I had a desire to print some books. If you ever get money, print books.” Standing by Rādhā-kuṇḍa and beholding his spiritual master, Abhay felt the words deeply enter his own life — “If you ever get money, print books.”

— *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, **A Lifetime in Preparation — How Shall I Serve you?**

- * It is now 2019, 84 years have passed by. The BBT Book Distribution Newsletter tells us that official book distribution scores have now well exceeded 150 million.
- * Over 150 million As-it-is books purely presenting the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu have been distributed to date on this planet!

* And it all began with Śrīla Prabhupāda taking to heart 7 words he heard from his beloved Gurudeva at Rādhā-kuṇḍa in 1935: "If you ever get money, print books".

How many 100's of 1,000's of people from all nationalities and walks of life have learnt of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and come to Her banks to bathe and beg for Her mercy because of Śrīla Prabhupāda's extraordinary vision and inconceivable mercy? His position as Rādhā-kuṇḍa's servitor is quite unique, isn't it?



*(jaya) śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda
śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*

*Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare*