

All glories to Śrī Gaura Govinda, the Lord of all! All glories to Lord Nityānanda, Haladhara! All glories to Śrī Advaita Prabhu, the foremost distributor of devotion! All glories to Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita, the reservoir of love! All glories to Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, the friend of the poor! All glories to Sanātana and Rūpa Gosvāmī, who are oceans of mercy! All glories to the merciful devotees of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu! Have mercy on us, as we are completely dependent on your grace. All glories to the listeners of *Bhakti-ratnākara*, who possess all devotional qualities! Kindly hear my story.

I have been discussing the affectionate behavior of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī toward Śrīnivāsa Ācārya and Narottama Mahāśaya. One day Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī decided to send Śrīnivāsa and Narottama to tour all of the holy places of Vraja. As he wondered who should guide them, Rāghava Gosvāmī arrived from Govardhana. Śrī Jīva was very glad to see him and, after seating him, inquired about his well being. Rāghava told Śrī Jīva, “I have decided to tour Vraja, and for that purpose I will very soon leave.” Śrī Jīva was quite happy to hear that and asked Rāghava to take Śrīnivāsa and Narottama along with him. Rāghava was pleased with the idea.

Meanwhile, Śrīnivāsa and Narottama arrived there and bowed at the feet of Śrī Jīva and Rāghava. Rāghava embraced Śrīnivāsa and Narottama very affectionately, making them ecstatic. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī informed them about the tour of the holy places in Vraja. Overwhelmed with joy, they asked permission to leave immediately. In great satisfaction Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī then bid farewell to Śrīnivāsa and Narottama.

Śrīnivāsa and Narottama Tour Vṛndāvana With Rāghava Paṇḍita

Śrī Rāghava happily led Śrīnivāsa and Narottama to Mathurā. They first went to the temple of Śrī Keśavadeva where Subuddhi Rāya had once stayed. They glorified the qualities of Śrī Subuddhi Rāya and in the evening they began *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. Rāghava Gosvāmī was always intoxicated in ecstatic love. There is no end to the descriptions of his character.

The Glories of Śrī Rāghava Gosvāmī

Who can describe the activities of such an exalted Vaiṣṇava as Śrī Rāghava Paṇḍita? He belonged to a Kulina *brāhmaṇa* family of South India, and he always showed extreme favor to the poor. He has written various books like *Bhakti-ratna-prakāśa*. Rāghava Gosvāmī was an authority in all *śāstras*. He always lived at Govardhana, the place which was all and all for him.

It is stated in *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*: “That person who was Sakhī Campakalatā, the life of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in Vraja, has appeared as Śrī Rāghava Gosvāmī, the resident of Govardhana, in *gaura-līlā*. He has written a book called *Bhakti-ratna-prakāśa*.”

From time to time Rāghava Paṇḍita would visit the various places in Vṛndāvana, and at other times he stayed with Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī [Raghunātha dāsa]. Sometimes both of them would come to Vṛndāvana to meet the other devotees. Rāghava always chanted the glories of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya Mahāprabhu and floated in his own tears. He used to roll in the dust of Vṛndāvana, and he never felt the urge of hunger. Who can understand the depths of his detachment from worldly pleasures? Śrī Rāghava knew that Śrīnivāsa and Narottama were of the

same mentality—full of love and devotion—and therefore he loved them intensely.

At dawn, in a solitary place, Śrī Rāghava began to describe the innumerable pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Mathurā-maṇḍala. King Vajranābha of Mathurā-maṇḍala established many villages which he named after Kṛṣṇa's various pastimes. By installing many Deities of Kṛṣṇa and revealing many *kuṇḍas*, King Vajranābha satisfied his own long-cherished desires. [Vajranābha was the great grandson of Kṛṣṇa. He was the son of Aniruddha, the son of Pradyumna.] After some time, however, the locations of those holy places were almost lost. No one cared to discuss or remember those holy places or the Lord's pastimes there.

Much later, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Vrajendra-kumāra Himself, came to Mathurā and indicated the locations of those lost holy places. He described everything about those places to Sanātana and Rūpa. Although Rūpa and Sanātana were familiar with the places and their importance, nevertheless they sought evidence from the scriptures. After collecting scriptural references, they traveled to each of the holy places in Vraja. With utmost care they reestablished many of the lost holy places. They also revealed the glories of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the essence of Their divine love. Rūpa and Sanātana were very dear to Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Because of their sincere endeavor to reveal the holy places, people can now know the glories of Mathurā.

Rāghava Paṇḍita Describes the Glories of Mathurā

Mathurā-maṇḍala covers twenty *yojanas* [160 miles] of land. One who bathes anywhere in Mathurā is freed from his sins. *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* confirms this in the following statement: “As darkness is vanquished by the sunrise, as mountains tremble in fear of thunder, as snakes fear Garuḍa, as clouds are removed by the blowing wind, as miseries are destroyed through the cultivation of knowledge, and as deer tremble in fear of lions, so are sins destroyed by the sight of Mathurā.”

In the conversation of Hara-Gaurī in the *Padma Purāṇa*, *Pātāla-khaṇḍa*, the same information has been given: “As heaps of grass are burnt by fire, so all the greatest sins of men can be destroyed by seeing all the places of Mathurā.”

In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “Every step taken within the twenty *yojanas* of Mathurā gives the same virtuous results as an *aśvamedha-yajña*. If anyone commits a sin—either intentionally or unintentionally—he can be freed from that sin by visiting any place within Mathurā.”

According to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*: “Any sin committed in Mathurā is destroyed in Mathurā itself. By living in Mathurā one can attain the four goals of human life namely; *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* [religiosity, wealth, sense gratification, and salvation].”

The *Padma Purāṇa*, *Pātāla-khaṇḍa*, also states: “O Mahādevī, the result of whatever sin forces a man to suffer for ten years outside of Mathurā can be destroyed within ten days by living in Mathurā.”

In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*, Lord Varāha narrates the glories of Mathurā to the deity of the earth: “Hey Vasundhare! In the three worlds there is no place more dear to Me than Mathurā.”

Nārada Muni speaks the following words in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Mathurā-khaṇḍa*: “The results one gets by living in Bhārata-varṣa [India] for thirty-three thousand years are easily attained simply by remembering the glories of Mathurā.”

In *Padma Purāṇa*, *Pātāla-khaṇḍa*, it is stated: “If someone cherishes the hope of visiting Mathurā, but never gets the opportunity; or if someone dies outside Mathurā cherishing that hope of visiting Mathurā, he will attain a birth in Mathurā.”

Mathurā is the best of all *tīrthas* and shelter of many holy sites, the number of which can not be counted.

In *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “Hey Vasundhare! I have indicated 660 billion holy places in Mathurā-maṇḍala.” From the *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Mathurā-khaṇḍa*, it is stated: “O King, in the course of time it may be possible to count the particles of dust on the earth, but the number of holy places in Mathurā cannot be counted.”

Then in the *Pātāla-khaṇḍa* of *Skanda Purāṇa*: “Dear man, just live in Mathurā Purī where Govinda, the creator of the three worlds, and His

gopīs reside eternally. O lovers of worldly affairs, do take a lesson. If you want to get eternal happiness, simply live in Mathurā!”

Another quote from *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* says: “The person who rejects Mathurā and lives in any other holy place or even expresses his love for living outside of Mathurā is a foolish person. By My illusory potency that man will pass life after life within this material world.” A similar verse is found in the *Skanda Purāṇa*.

The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* also says: “Madhu-purī is the refuge of those who have been rejected by friends and family and have no other shelter. Mathurā is the essence and most secret of all holy *tīrthas* and the ultimate goal of all those who are searching for the Absolute Truth.” Again in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “O Devī, within the three worlds there is certainly no place superior to Mathurā. I live there throughout the ages.”

In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (4.8.42), Nārada says to Dhruva: “My dear boy, I therefore wish all good fortune for you. You should go to the bank of the Yamunā, where there is a virtuous forest named Madhuvana, and there be purified. Just by going there, one draws nearer the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who always lives there.”

A verse in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* says: “Śatrugṇa founded Mathurā after killing the powerful demon Lavana, the son of Madhu. Mathurā is the abode of Mahādeva, the deity of all deities and great devotee of Hari. Mahādeva executed his austerities in Mathurā, the place which can destroy all sins.”

In *Vāyu Purāṇa* there is a verse: “Mathurā may be extended up to forty *yojanas* [320 miles]. Lord Hari Himself remains there eternally.”

It is stated by Lord Varāha in the *Ādi Purāṇa*: “The opportunity to live in Mathurā cannot be gained by different types of pious activities, different types of charities, austerities, chanting of *mantras* or various sacrifices, but can only be attained by My mercy. Living in Mathurā is made possible by the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and without that grace one cannot remain in Mathurā for even a second.”

In the *Padma Purāṇa, Uttara-khaṇḍa*, there is the statement:

“Attachment for Mathurā is aroused only in those fortunate persons who have firm devotion to Śrī Hari and have achieved His grace.”

Again in the *Padma Purāṇa, Nirvāṇa-khaṇḍa*: “O best of the *brāhmaṇas*,

when a person becomes purified through meditation, pious activities, and austerities, only then can he attain the *darśana* of My auspicious Mathurā Purī. Others cannot see Mathurā in thousands of *kalpas*.” It is well known and confirmed in the *Purāṇas*, Mathurā is the bestower of liberation in every respect.

The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* further states: “The ultimate goal of one who practices yoga, one who knows Brahma, or one who is a thoughtful philosopher is easily attained by one who dies in Mathurā. O Devī, any person who dies in any place within Mathurā—a holy place, a home, or even a courtyard—certainly attains salvation. In this world Mathurā is the best of all holy places beginning with Kāśī. Whoever sincerely maintains *brahmācārya*, dies, and is cremated there will attain the four types of salvation. That same salvation is awarded to worms, insects, birds, and other creatures who die there or even trees which fall on the bank of Yamunā.”

Another verse in the *Padma Purāṇa*, *Pātāla-khaṇḍa*, states: “If the ceremony of Piṇḍadāna [offering homage to dead souls] is performed for low-caste people like *caṇḍālas*, *śudras*, women, and animal killers in Mathurā, those people will be relieved of repeated birth. O Devī, if any being dies in a drain, on bricks, in the crematorium, in the sky, or on any platform of any house in Mathurā, he can surely attain salvation.”

A verse in the *Saura Purāṇa* states: “Here is the place named Mathurā, famous in the three worlds. Its pathways are purified by the dust from the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Simply by its touch people can attain salvation from the miseries and bondage of the material world.”

In *Mathurā-khaṇḍa* it is stated: “Thoughts such as ‘I shall live in Mathurā’ or ‘I shall go to Mathurā’ are also sufficient to guarantee liberation from the material world.”

A verse in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* states: “Those who get the *darśana* of Acyuta, the son of Devakī, can attain Viṣṇuloka and never fall back to the material world. A person who celebrates the festivals of Lord Kṛṣṇa with full faith becomes free of all sins and goes to Viṣṇuloka.”

Another verse in the *Padma Purāṇa*, *Pātāla-khaṇḍa*, says: “Women, untouchables, *śudras*, animals, birds, deer, etc. can attain salvation if they die in Mathurā. Those who die in Mathurā by snake bite, by the attack of wild animals, from fire, water, or any other sort of unnatural

death are transferred to *Vaikuṅṭhaloka*, the abode of Hari.”

A verse in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* says: “O great sage, I promise you that there is no other place in this world like Mathurā. It can fulfill all the desires of all living beings.”

In the *Skanda Purāṇa, Mathurā-khaṇḍa*, it is said: “Is there any type of result which cannot be attained in Mathurā, where Kṣetrapāla Mahādeva exists eternally and where there are holy places like Viśrāmaghāṭa? Mathurā gives the three goals of human life [religion, wealth, and sense gratification] to those who wish to enjoy sensual and earthly pleasures. It grants salvation to those who seek it and bestows devotional qualities on the devotees. Wise men should take shelter of Mathurā.”

The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* states: “As even the Lord Himself cannot describe all the spiritual qualities of Mathurā, Mathurā must be a special creation of Providence.”

The *Mathurā-khaṇḍa* states: “O King, this eternal place, Mathurā, is shaped like a lotus situated on the *cakra* of Viṣṇu, and it shall never perish.”

The *Padma Purāṇa, Pātāla-khaṇḍa*, again states: “The name Mathurā is equal to the sound of *aum* [*oṅkāra*]. As Mathurā contains the letters Ma, u, and a, so does the word *aum*. These three syllables make up the name of Mathurā. Ma represents Mahārudra Śiva; tu represents Viṣṇu; and ra represents Brahmā. In this way Mathurā is the topmost abode. Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva always reside in Mathurā in the form of deities.”

The fact that devotion to Viṣṇu can be obtained in Mathurā is explained in different ways in various *Purāṇas*. In the *Padma Purāṇa, Pātāla-khaṇḍa*, it is stated: “Liberation is the wonderful result obtainable by those who visit other holy places. However, devotion to Hari, which even liberated souls desire, can be obtained in Mathurā. O great sage, if anyone spends even three days in Mathurā, Hari grants that which even the liberated souls cannot attain.”

From the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* there is the following verse: “The precious attainment of ecstatic love, which is rarely obtained by serving all the holy places of the three worlds, can easily be attained simply by touching the dust of Mathurā.”

The *Skanda Purāṇa, Mathurā-khaṇḍa*, states: “O King, those who constantly remember Mathurā and the King of Mathurā [Kṛṣṇa] attain

devotional service at the feet of Lord Hari, which is the result of visiting all the holy places.”

In the *Padma Purāṇa*, *Pātāla-khaṇḍa*, it states: “Mathurā is more glorious than the Vaikuṅṭha-dhāma of Nārāyaṇa. Anyone who spends even one day in Mathurā will become devoted to the lotus feet of Śrī Hari.”

A verse in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* says: “If anyone desires freedom from material bondage and attainment of love of God, he should glorify Mathurā with his body, mind, and words.”

The enchanting abode of Kṛṣṇa, Mathurā-maṇḍala, the topmost abode, covers twenty *yojanas* [160 miles].

According to the scriptures, the boundary of Mathurā-maṇḍala extends from Yāyāvara to Śaukarī Vaṭeśvara. The name Yāyāvara comes from the name of a *brāhmaṇa*, and Śaukarī comes from Ādi Śūkara [Varāha]. Vaṭeśvara Śiva is worshiped by everyone, and the kingdom of Śrī Sūrasena is known to all. People call this place Varāhadāsana-hrada. Yāyāvara and Saukarī are famous in the *Purāṇas*.

The *Padma Purāṇa*, *Yamunā Mahātmya*, states: “Long ago in this beautiful place of the Apsarās, there lived an ascetic *brāhmaṇa* named Yāyāvara. Becoming overwhelmed by sensual pleasures that *brāhmaṇa* offended Lord Indra and was thus cursed. After suffering a long time from the fire of Indra's curse, in spite of performing severe austerities to get relief, he eventually got freed from his sin simply by touching a drop of water here. That *brāhmaṇa* then traveled east till he reached Śaukara-purī where Lord Varāhadeva had previously manifest Himself to rescue the earth when it had sunk in the ocean of universal devastation.”

Just as the boundary of Mathurā-maṇḍala extends from Yāyāvara to Śaukarī, in this way all the directions are extended upto twenty *yojanas*. There are many holy places within Mathurā-maṇḍalas twenty *yojanas*. The *Purāṇas* classified these holy places within Mathurā-maṇḍala where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma used to play, stating that these holy places covered twelve *yojanas*. This is also confirmed in the *Mathurā-khaṇḍa*.

A verse in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* states: “Mathurā-maṇḍala extends throughout twenty-four *kroṣas* and is decorated with *dvādaśavanas* [twelve forests] where Mathurādevī, the bestower of all accomplishments, resides. Hey Vasundhare! The lotuslike Mathurā is the giver of salvation to all. Within the seed-pod of Mathurā exists Ādi

Keśavadeva, man's deliverer from the miseries and agonies of life. Those who die within this seed-pod as well as those who die on its petals can attain salvation.”

Again from the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* comes: “O mind, why do you lament after seeing Harideva, the worshipable Lord of Mahādeva, the Deity of Deities who is seated on the western petal of this lotus? If anyone gets the *darśana* of Govindadeva, seated on the northern petal, he will not fall again into the material world upto the time of the universal devastation. Lord Viśrānti is situated on the eastern petal. By seeing Him, one is liberated from this miserable world, of this there is no doubt. On the southern petal, Śrī Varāhadeva is situated. By His mercy, man achieves all perfection. By seeing Him, one becomes worshipable on Brahmaloaka.”

Also: “After controlling his senses and taking bath at Mathurā, one who has *darśana* of Keśavadeva on the twelfth day of the waxing moon in the month of Jaiṣṭha will obtain the supreme destination. Hey Vasundhare! When I lie down, all the holy places, oceans, and *kuṇḍas* of the world come to Mathurā.” In the same way the *Purāṇas* state that Janmāṣṭami in the month of Bhadra is also most glorious.

The *Skanda Purāṇa* states: “Originally Mathurā Purī was the forest of the demon Madhu who was slain by the almighty Śrī Hari. O King, nothing is impossible within this Madhuvana of Śrī Hari. I am not capable of naming all the holy places situated here.”

Explaining the glories of Mathurā through these references from the *Purāṇas*, Rāghava Paṇḍita was overwhelmed by jubilation and could not remain patient. After finishing the required morning duties, Rāghava Paṇḍita with Śrīnivāsa Ācārya and Narottama began their tour of Mathurā. They went first to the house of the Sanośiyā *brāhmaṇa* where Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya used to beg alms. The *brāhmaṇa* was a disciple of Mādhavendra Purī Gosvāmī and had witnessed Lord Caitanya's transcendental pastimes.

Śrī Rāghava Paṇḍita said to Śrīnivāsa, “Gauracandra used to dance here in ecstasy. Many people came to see His dancing, and they all became intoxicated by *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana*. They cried as they realized Mahāprabhu was Vrajendra-nandana Himself. They would not leave His association for even a moment and swam in an ocean of love. Those

were the wonderful pastimes of Mahāprabhu here.”

Rāghava Paṇḍita sighed deeply while remembering the pastimes of Gauracandra, while Narottama and Śrīnivāsa cried in ecstasy. They rolled on the ground as they cried, and their bodies became covered with dust. After a long time, they regained control of themselves.

Rāghava Paṇḍita continued, “A wise person once told me that Advaita Gosvāmī stayed in Mathurā during His pilgrimage because of the beauty here. At that time there was a worthless *brāhmaṇa* in Mathurā who invariably spoke ill of the Vaiṣṇavas. That was his worst habit. He was a proud scholar and a wicked man, so the inhabitants of Mathurā feared him.

“Once he spoke harshly about the Vaiṣṇavas in front of Śrī Advaita Prabhu. Advaita became so furious that His lips began to tremble and His eyes grew red. He shouted at the *brāhmaṇa*, ‘O wicked man, today you will not escape from Me. I shall sever your head from your body with this *cakra*.’ Advaita assumed a four-armed figure, and the *brāhmaṇa* began to tremble in fear. He folded his hands and tried to pacify Advaita by saying, ‘O Lord, punish me as You like. Unfortunately, I have lost my good intelligence, and not understanding *vaiṣṇava-tattva*, I have committed unlimited sins. Please be kind to me and save me from these sins.’

“The *brāhmaṇa* began to cry helplessly, and Advaita concealed his four-armed form. Seeing the wretched condition of the *brāhmaṇa*, Advaita felt pity for him and decided to bless him. Advaita spoke in sweet words, ‘The sins which you have committed will send you to hell, but I will tell you what you must do now. Admit your guilty mentality, give up all pleasures, and engage yourself in *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. Serve the Vaiṣṇavas with your heart and soul and be very cautious in your dealings with them. Engage yourself in worship according to the standards of pure devotion and do not tell anyone what you have seen today.’

“After advising the *brāhmaṇa*, Advaita Prabhu left on pilgrimage. The *brāhmaṇa* absorbed himself in *nāma-saṅkīrtana* and proved himself humble by visiting every house in Mathurā with tears in his eyes. Seeing his sincere efforts, the Vaiṣṇavas became satisfied and wished him well. The Vaiṣṇavas wondered what had caused the change in his behavior. One man knew the reason. ‘A *brāhmaṇa* once came to Mathurā whose

effulgence was as bright as the sun. Most likely He was the Lord in a human form. He has changed the *brāhmaṇa*!

“O Śrīnivāsa, see how beautifully situated this place is! The glories of a bath at this half moon-shaped section of the Yamunā are well known.” In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* this area is glorified in these words: “Those who live in this half moon-shaped place undoubtedly attain liberation. One who controls his eating and baths here achieves the imperishable abode. Of this there is no doubt. Hey Devi! Those who leave their body at this crescent moon-shaped region reach My abode, Vaikuṅṭha. Those who take bath or perform other pious activity here, even if they die at another place without proper funeral ceremony, still they are eligible for liberation. One who dies here, although sinful, is worshipable in Brahmaloḳa for as long as his bones remain at this place.”

After narrating these descriptions Rāghava held Śrīnivāsa's hand and, with a blissful heart, slowly began speaking again. “Within Madhuvana, Mathurā is gloriously situated. By performing *parikramā* at special times one achieves extraordinary fruits.”

Again in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “If the killer of a *brāhmaṇa*, a drunkard, a killer of cows, or any person who violates *brahmācārya* circumambulates Mathurā, he will be freed from the results of his sins. A pilgrim who comes from a far away country and circumambulates Mathurā purifies whoever sees him and relieves them of their sins.”

“This is the room of Devakī and Vasudeva where Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, took His birth. According to the *Skanda Purāṇa*, a person who fasts, chants *japa*, and then takes *darśana* of this birthplace of Kṛṣṇa is freed from all sins and is liberated. Also in the *Padma Purāṇa* it is stated that anyone who once enters the *janma-gṛha* [birthplace] of Keśava during the month of Kārtika achieves the eternal Absolute Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

“O Śrīnivāsa, look at Keśavadeva. In this place Śrī Caitanya once danced in ecstasy. Those who saw Him dance thought that He was Śrī Keśava Rāya Himself. Who can describe Keśavadeva's glories? Whoever circumambulates Keśava in Mathurā attains the virtue of circumambulating the earth with its seven islands. Singing Keśava Rāya's glories will destroy sins committed in this age and in ages to come.”

In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated, “Look at beautiful Mathurā, where the Deities of Dīrgha Viṣṇu, Padmanābha, and Svāyambhuva are situated. The *darśana* of these Deities fulfills the desires of all mankind.” “O Śrīnivāsa, taking *darśana* of the relatives of Kṛṣṇa such as Ekānamśādevī [Yogamāyā], Yaśodādevī, Devakīdevī, and Mahāvidyeśvarī can save a person from the sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa*. This is described in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*.

“In Mathurā lives the supremely merciful deity of Bhūteśvara. Taking *darśana* of Kṣetrapala Mahādeva will help one reach the abode of Kṛṣṇa. In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* Lord Varāha says: ‘Lord Bhūteśvara, who grants liberation even to the sinful, resides in Mathurā. He is very dear to Me. If anyone does not care for the worship of Śiva, My topmost devotee, how can that sinner attain devotion to Me? Only those who are the lowest of men and whose intelligence is bewildered will not offer obeisances and remember Bhūteśvara.’”

The Holy Places of Mathurā

“See this great holy place named Śrī Viśrānti. It was here that Kṛṣṇa took rest after killing Kaṇṣa. O Śrīnivāsa, the jewel amongst *sannyāsīs*, Śrī Caitanya, also performed many transcendental activities here. All types of people—women, men, aged, youths, and even children—gathered to see the Lord. Hundreds of thousands came and everyone acknowledged that the best of all *sannyāsīs* had come to Mathurā. Raising their arms in the air and crying, they shouted the name of Hari. Gauracandra's beauty charmed the entire world, and people were unable to take their eyes off Him. The Lord fulfilled everyone's desires, and in this way He performed amazing pastimes at Viśrānti. The glories of Viśrānti-tīrtha are famous in the world. One can achieve the most rare perfection by the grace of Viśrānti.”

In the *Skanda Purāṇa, Mathurā-khaṇḍa*, it is stated: “The world-famous holy place, Śrī Viśrānti, is situated in Mathurā. By visiting this place a traveller attains eternal rest. By bathing here and worshiping Acyuta,

one attains immortality and is automatically freed from the miseries and agonies of the material world.”

In the *Saura Purāṇa* it is said: “The holy Viśrānti-tīrtha destroys sins and gives relief to one who is suffering from wandering in the desertlike material existence of birth and death. A person who bathes here and worships Acyuta becomes free from the suffering of repeated birth and death and qualified for liberation.”

The *Padma Purāṇa*, *Yamunā Mahātmya*, states: “The Kālindī flows from the mountain Kalinda and flows through Mathurā. The Ganges at Śūkaratala flows westwards. The confluence of the Yamunā and Bhagirathi is known as the *sañgaṇ*. By bathing at any of these places one achieves highly pious results. But by taking bath in the Yamunā one can achieve a hundred times these results and, according to scholars, Śrī Viśrānti-tīrtha can bestow millions of times these results on people.”

Also in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “Hey Devī! Viśrānti-tīrtha is renowned throughout the three worlds. A person becomes worshipable in Vaikuṅṭha-dhāma if he takes bath here. Lord Gataśrama is situated here at this beautiful place. By His *darśana* one achieves the results attained from visiting and taking bath at all other holy places.”

The Twenty-four Tīrthas along Yamunā at Mathurā

“O Śrīnivāsa, in this crescent moon-shaped place there are twenty-four *tīrthas* along Śrī Yamunā. This first one is called Avimukta-tīrtha. In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated that one who bathes here is liberated, and one who dies here without a doubt goes to Viṣṇuloka.

“This next place is called Guhya-tīrtha. Again in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is said: ‘One who bathes at this place attains liberation from this material world and goes to Viṣṇuloka.’ According to the *Saura Purāṇa*, this next place, known as Prayāga-tīrtha, is rarely attained even by the demigods. By bathing here one gets the same result as by the performance of an *agnistoma-yajña*. This holy place is called Kanakhala-tīrtha. The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* says that by bathing here one attains

supreme opulence and heavenly happiness. By bathing at this next place, called Tinduka-tīrtha, one is promoted to Viṣṇuloka.

“This place called Sūrya-tīrtha destroys all sins. It was here that Bali, the son of Virochana, performed his austerities. Bathing here during the lunar or solar eclipse, on Sañkrānti, or on Sunday will give one the same benefit as by performing the *rājasūya-yajña*. These statements are confirmed in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*.

“In the *Saura Purāṇa* it is stated: ‘This supreme place is called Vaṭasvāmī-tīrtha. Vaṭasvāmī Sūrya has become famous here. Whoever serves this place with devotion on a Sunday will recover from disease, gain wealth in his life, and attain the ultimate goal after death.’

“This place is called Dhruva-tīrtha. It was here that Dhruva did *tapasya*. The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* says that by bathing here one is certainly promoted to Dhruvaloka. Whoever performs the *śrāddha* ceremony here, especially during the *pitṛpakṣa*, will guarantee liberation for the ancestors on his father's side. [*Pitṛpakṣa* is the dark fortnight of the month of Āśvina, mid-September to mid-October.] Then the *Skanda Purāṇa* states, ‘Offering oblations to the forefathers at Dhruva-tīrtha gives one a hundred times the results obtained by performing the same ceremony at Gayā. Whoever performs *japa*, *homa*, *tapasya*, *dāna*, or *pūjā* here also attains one hundred times greater results as by performing the same activities in any other holy place.’

“This place south of Dhruva-tīrtha called Ṛṣi-tīrtha is very dear to Kṛṣṇa. By bathing here one attains Viṣṇuloka and also *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, devotional service to the Lord. This is confirmed in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* and in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Mathurā-khaṇḍa*.”

The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* gives the following descriptions:

“South of Ṛṣi-tīrtha is Mokṣa-tīrtha. A bath here guarantees liberation. Next comes Koṭi-tīrtha, a place which is rarely attained even the by demigods. By bathing here and giving in charity here one becomes worshipable in Viṣṇuloka.

“By offering oblations at Bodhi-tīrtha, which is rarely attained by the demigods, one attains Pitṛloka. This Dvādaśa-tīrtha, south of Viśrānti-tīrtha, is seldom attained even by the demigods. Simply by remembering this place, people are freed from all types of sins. This supreme place called Nava-tīrtha is north of Asi-kunḍa. Neither now nor in the future

will there ever be a *tīrtha* in the world like Nava-tīrtha.

“By bathing at the next place, called Samyamana-tīrtha, one attains Viṣṇuloka. This place is called Dhārāpatana-tīrtha. By bathing here one attains happiness unavailable even in heaven, and by dying here one attains Viṣṇuloka.

“This exalted place is called Nāga-tīrtha, and it is the best of all holy *tīrthas*. By bathing here one attains Svargaloka, and by dying here one is freed from rebirth.

“This place is called Ghaṇṭābharana-tīrtha. By bathing here one's sins are destroyed and he is worshiped on Sūryaloka.

“This place, called Brahma-tīrtha, is very famous. Whoever takes bath here, drinks the water, and sits here undisturbed with restrained senses, by the permission of Brahmā, he will attain the abode of Viṣṇu.

“This holy place is called Soma-tīrtha. If one who is properly situated in his *varna* and *aśrama* bathes here in the pure water of the Yamunā, he attains the happiness of Somaloka without doubt.

“This place is known as Sarasvati-patana-tīrtha. By bathing here a person attains the qualities of a *sannyāsī*, although he may have no right to be a *sannyāsī* by the rules of *varnāśrama*. After fasting for three days, one who bathes here, at Cakra-tīrtha, becomes free from the sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa* and what to speak of other fruits.

“The place called Daśāśvamedha-tīrtha was formerly worshiped by the sages. If one bathes here in a contented mood, he easily obtains heaven.

“This place is known as Vighnarāja-tīrtha. One who takes bath here attains all auspiciousness as well as freedom from sins and miseries.

“This place is called Koṭi-tīrtha and it is always supremely pure and auspicious. One bath in this holy place delivers the same result as ten million baths in the Ganges.”

Then from the *Mathurā-khaṇḍa* it is stated: “Hey Yudhiṣṭhira! On the northern and southern side of Śrī Viśrānti there are twenty-four *tīrthas*. The twelve on the north extend up to Daśāśvamedha and the twelve on the south extend to Mokṣa-tīrtha.”

Other Tīrthas of Mathurā

“O Śrīnivāsa, Caitanya Mahāprabhu happily bathed in all twenty-four *ghāṭas* of the Yamunā. To describe the pastimes which He performed at even one *ghāṭa* is possible only for Ananta Śeṣa. Hundreds of thousands of people took their baths with the Lord and floated in the waves of love. All the demigods used to mingle with the common people to see the pastimes of Mahāprabhu. They all sang the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. In this way He performed the most wonderful pastimes here in Mathurā. Now, Śrīnivāsa, we will see some of these other holy places.” In the *Saura Purāṇa* it is stated: “This place of Viśvanātha [Mahādeva] is known as Gokarṇa-tīrtha. It is famous throughout the worlds and is very dear to Viṣṇu.

“This place is known as Kṛṣṇa-gaṅgā. The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* states that whatever result one obtains by taking his bath in the five *tīrthas*—Viśrānti, Saukara, Naimiṣa, Prayāga, and Puṣkara—one achieves ten times greater results every day by bathing at this Kṛṣṇa-gaṅgā.

“This holy place is called Vaikuṅṭha-tīrtha. By taking bath here one receives wonderful results, being freed from all sinful reactions. A bath here promotes one to Viṣṇuloka.

“O Śrīnivāsa, this holy place is called Asi-kuṅḍa. One who takes bath here gets many benefits as confirmed in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*.”

“If anyone after taking a bath at this place takes *darśana* of the four deities, namely, Varāha, Nārāyaṇī, Vāmana, and the auspicious Lāṅgali [Balarāma], then he gets the same result as obtained by circumambulating the earth with its four oceans. He attains the auspicious results of visiting all the holy places of Mathurā.”

“This is a well named Catuī-sānudrika. By bathing here one enjoys pleasures with the demigods.

“O Śrīnivāsa, who can describe the numerous glories of Śrī Yamunā? Bathing in the Yamunā at Mathurā gives one a hundred times superior results to those obtained from bathing in the Gaṅga.

This is confirmed in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* as follows: “Within My

Mathurā-maṇḍala the famous Yamunā is one hundred times superior to the Gaṅga. One should not argue about this. O sinless goddess, I have many confidential sacred places along the Yamunā. Whoever takes bath there becomes worshipable in My abode.”

In the *Matsya Purāṇa*, in a conversation between Yudhiṣṭhira and Nārada, it is stated: “O Yudhiṣṭhira, a man becomes virtuous if he takes a bath in the Yamunā, drinks the pure water and sings her glories. Even the *darśana* of Yamunā gives auspicious results. One who takes bath in the Yamunā or drinks her water guarantees auspiciousness for seven generations of his family. Whoever dies on the bank of the Yamunā attains the eternal abode.”

In the *Viṣṇu Dharmottara* it is stated: “O King, whoever performs the *śrāddha* ceremony on the bank of the Yamunā attains immortal results and becomes happy in heaven.”

The *Padma Purāṇa*, *Pātāla-khaṇḍa*, while describing the creation of Prajāpati Marīci states: “He who is the support of all existence, the cause of all causes, the eternal, omniscient blissful Lord, glorified as Brahma by the *Upaniṣads*, that Supreme Lord, the embodiment of transcendental mellows, Kṛṣṇa, exists in the form of Yamunā.”

“According to the *Purāṇas*, one achieves superior fruits by taking bath in Yamunā at special times. O Śrīnivāsa, it is commonly known that by the mercy of Yamunā one can easily fulfill his desires. As iron becomes gold by the touch of the touchstone, so a sinful person become virtuous by the touch of the waters of the Yamunā.”

The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* states: “If there are two *brāhmaṇas*—one living in Mathurā with no knowledge of the *Vedas* and the other a scholar in all four *Vedas* who lives outside Mathurā—you should abandon the scholar to feed the ignorant Mathurā *brāhmaṇa*. Although a farmer of Mathurā may be wicked and irreligious, nevertheless he is respectable to Me because a Mathurā-vāsī is always the extension of My form. Hey Vasundhare! All the residents of Mathurā are personifications of Me. If you feed one *brāhmaṇa* of Mathurā, you earn the same virtue of feeding millions of other *brāhmaṇas*. The Mathurā-vāsīs are certainly worshiped by Me as they are very dear to Me. When a resident of Mathurā feels satisfied, then I also feel satisfied. There is no doubt of this. The places where they reside are certainly holy places, and their houses are full of

auspiciousness.”

“O Śrīnivāsa, the glories of the residents of Mathurā are described in many places in the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas*. In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: ‘The residents of Mathurā attain the supreme destination by My mercy. Of this there is no doubt. In Mathurā, the insects, worms, birds, animals, and other living beings are all eligible for liberation. Men who are unable to control their senses and who lust after other women are all demigods in the form of human beings.’

In the *Padma Purāṇa, Nirvāṇa-khaṇḍa* it is said: “Those sinful persons who find faults in the inhabitants of Mathurā, are unable to detect their own faults which cause them to take thousands and thousands of births and deaths.”

“O Śrīnivāsa, just see the city of Mathurā where Kṛṣṇa enacted many pastimes. This is the house of the gardener, Sudāmā, who is very dear to Kṛṣṇa. His activities are well known to all. Kṛṣṇa killed Kaṇsa's washerman at this place, then Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys dressed themselves attractively in his clothes. This is the road by which Kṛṣṇa went to meet Kaṇsa while the residents of Mathurā watched, overwhelmed by His beauty. Then Kṛṣṇa broke the sacrificial bow in great sport. He and His friends moved about Mathurā in a magnificent way. The elephant Kuvalayāpīśa blocked Kṛṣṇa's path here. Kṛṣṇa killed him easily and then took his tusk.

“See this arena where the wrestling match took place. This is the raised platform where Kaṇsa sat. And here is where the cowherd men headed by Nanda sat watching Kṛṣṇa's wrestling. In great fun Kṛṣṇa took Kaṇsa's life here, therefore this place is known as Kaṇsa-khāli, the place where Kaṇsa was delivered.

“The house of Kubjā used to be at this place. See this Kubjā-kūpa, which is known to all. The wonderful pastimes of Kṛṣṇa with Kubjā are known throughout the three worlds. These next two places, Baladeva-kunḍa and Kṛṣṇa-kūpa, are the places where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma sported with Their friends. O Śrīnivāsa and Narottama, the bliss they experienced here is beyond description!

“It was here that Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanyacandra sat surrounded by people after His tour of Mathurā. People were struck with wonder seeing the ecstatic condition of Mahāprabhu. The *brāhmaṇa* residents of Mathurā

spoke to one another, ‘This so-called *sannyāsī* must certainly be Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. This is extraordinary! Who can understand His transcendental activities? He has concealed His real identity by accepting this golden form.’ Someone said, ‘We are all very fortunate to see the Lord's visit to Mathurā.’”

After speaking in this way, they all floated in waves of ecstasy gazing on the beautiful form of the Lord. While describing these pastimes Rāghava Paṇḍita became so overwhelmed remembering the glories of Śrī Caitanya that he could not control himself. Śrīnivāsa and Narottama, also greatly agitated, fell on the ground calling the name of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. After sometime they pacified themselves, and Rāghava led them on to other holy places of Mathurā.

Rāghava Paṇḍita spoke in sweet words to Śrīnivāsa, “This is the place where Gopāla stayed for one month. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī and his associates came here and were overwhelmed in ecstasy having *darśana* of Śrī Gopāla. Seeing the Gosvāmīs in their midst, the inhabitants of Mathurā were so absorbed that they were unable to know night from day.

“Look Śrīnivāsa, this is the old tree under which the son of Rohinī, Balarāma, used to play. During His pilgrimage, Nityānanda Prabhu, the same Lord, also came to Mathurā and stayed here for sometime. He became filled with ecstasy seeing the land where He had previously appeared, and He roamed here and there in that state. The residents of Mathurā forgot all their miseries and lamentation by seeing Avadhūtacandra. By taking *darśana* of this place, one's distress will vanish and his devotion to the feet of Nityānanda will increase. Those who hear this description will easily fulfill their desires.”

The Twelve Forests of Mathurā-maṇḍala

Rāghava Paṇḍita, feeling excessive joy, spoke softly to Śrīnivāsa, “This Mathurā Purī is surrounded by twelve sacred forests which deliver one from sins. Keśava's beautiful *dvādaśavanas* are auspicious and bestow

virtues.”

On the western side of the Yamunā are: Madhu, Tāla, Kumuda, Bahulā, Kāmya, Khadirā, and Vṛndāvana. On the eastern side of the Yamunā are: Bhadra, Bhāṇḍīra, Bilva, or Śrī, Lauha, and Mahāvana (*Padma Purāṇa* and *Skanda Purāṇa*)

Madhuvana

“O Śrīnivāsa, this is Madhuvana. Its *darśana* will satisfy all desires. In this forest there is a *kuṇḍa* full of transparent water and blue lotuses. If anyone bathes in that water and gives in charity he will achieve the fulfillment of his desires.”

Tālavana

It is stated in the *Skanda Purāṇa*: “For the benefit of the Yadavas and for His own pleasure Kṛṣṇa killed the demon who was the protector of the *tāla* fruit.”

Kumudavana

In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “Hey Devī, this third forest, Kumudavana, is supreme. One who visits this place becomes worshipable in My abode.”

“O Śrīnivāsa, see this place on the west of Mathurā where Kṛṣṇa killed Dantavakra. Vajranābha named this place Datihā. In the *Padma Purāṇa* it is known as Dati-upavana. I will tell you now one story related with Dantavakra. Hearing this narration frees one from all miseries.

“Once, the residents of Vṛndāvana headed by Nanda Mahārāja went to see Kṛṣṇa at Kurukṣetra. Kṛṣṇa met them and satisfied each person in every way. Kṛṣṇa assured them that He would meet them in Vṛndāvana in a very short time. Fully satisfied hearing Kṛṣṇa's nectarean words, they left there and came to the bank of the Yamunā waiting for His arrival. Everyone thought they would take Kṛṣṇa home when He arrived.

“After seeing off the Vraja-vāsīs from Kurukṣetra, Kṛṣṇa felt great eagerness to return to Vṛndāvana. He went to Dvārakā to kill Śīsupāla and then went to Mathurā on the pretext of killing Dantavakra. After that work was completed, He crossed the Yamunā River and quickly

went to meet Nanda Mahārāja and the others. On seeing Kṛṣṇa, the cowherds ran forward shouting, 'Welcome! Welcome!' Kṛṣṇa returned to His own house in Vraja and enjoyed Himself with the *gopīs* and *gopas* as He always had before. Because the villagers shouted, 'Āyore! Āyore!' [Welcome!, Welcome!], the village is now known as Ayore."

There is another village called Gauravāi and Śrī Rāghava also told the story of that village. "There was a large village called Śhānā wherein lived a distinguished Zamindara [landowner] who had a good friendship with Śrī Nanda Mahārāja. When Nanda returned from Kurukṣetra, the Zamindara welcomed him in great joy. There was no limit to the honor, or *gaurav*, given by that landowner to Nanda as he arranged his stay. Therefore this village was named Gauravāi, but presently it is known as Gaurāi. It is nearby the villages of Śhānā and Ayore."

In *Gopāla-campu* the story is told in this way: "Coming from Syamanta-*pañcaka* in Kurukṣetra, Vrajeśvara Śrī Nanda and the cowherd men were returning to their houses in Gokula. When they arrived in Mathurā, they felt no desire to return to their homes. They crossed the Yamunā and came to this famous place named Gaurāi some distance from Gokula. That place, called 'Gokulapati' in Sanskrit, is traditionally known as Gaurava, however the local people called it Gaurai. Just as the abode of Puruṣottama has become famous by the name Puruṣottama, so also the place of Gokulapati was named Gokulapati."

"All these villages where Kṛṣṇa performed His transcendental pastimes are seen in ecstasy by those people who are fortunate." After narrating these topics, Rāghava happily continued along the *parikramā* path as they wandered through Vraja. Rāghava explained that the path they would follow was not exactly as prescribed in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*. For some time they followed the *parikramā* route, then Rāghava decided to see the place named Śaṣṭhīkarāṭavī. They left the *parikramā* path for another path and Rāghava told Śrīnivāsa, "We have entered the place called Śaṣṭhīkarā. Although previously this was known as Śaṣṭhīkarāṭavī, presently people call it by the name Śaṣṭhīgharā."

"See here Śrīnivāsa, the place called Śakata Rohaṇa. It is a beautiful pleasant place and very dear to Kṛṣṇa. Bumblebees are always humming in the forest of flowers. By bathing in this *kuṇḍa* one will get supreme bliss."

Śakata Rohaṇa is described in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* thus: “One half *yojana* [four miles] on the west side of Mathurā is My supreme abode named Śakata Rohaṇa. Many thousands of bumblebees live there. Whoever fasts for one night and then takes bath there is certain to attain the happiness of Vidyādhara-loka.”

Rāghava also pointed out a place known as Garuḍa-Govinda. Once, just in play, Śrīdhama transformed himself into Garuḍa, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa as four-armed Govinda mounted the shoulders of His bird-carrier. This place was thus named Garuḍa-Govinda after this most beautiful pastime. The same story is also given in *Śrī Laghu Bhāgavatāmṛta*.

As Rāghava continued to describe the holy places, they returned to the *parikramā* path and walked until they reached a place called Gandheśvara-sthāna. At this place Kṛṣṇa applied scented oil, therefore this name was given. [*gandha* means scent or aroma]

Sātoṣā-grāma is where Śāntanu Muni performed austerity. The *kuṇḍa* here is full of clear water. As they left Sātoṇā, Rāghava led Śrīnivāsa and Narottama on to various other beautiful places.

Bahulāvana

When they arrived in Bahulāvana, Rāghava Paṇḍita told them that Śrī Caitanya had come here absorbed in transcendental love while on pilgrimage of the Vṛndāvana forests. Seeing Him, millions of cows surrounded Him and looked at Him lovingly. Then Gaura touched each one of them as He had touched them when He was in Vṛndāvana as Kṛṣṇa. Various animals such as deer, peacocks, and cuckoos expressed their joy by flying over His head and running around Him. People were overwhelmed to see that even the trees showered flowers on Śrī Mahāprabhu's head. All of them said, “He must be Śrī Kṛṣṇa assuming this form of a *sannyāsī*. He has covered His beautiful dark complexion with a golden one in order to deceive people.” People spoke with agitated hearts while Gaura Rāya fulfilled everyone's desires.

The Paṇḍita then showed Śrīnivāsa and Narottama a beautiful lotus-filled pond named Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa and one lake known as Mānasarasi. According to the *Purāṇas*, seeing and bathing in these places gives many fruits such as the *darśana* of Lakṣmī with Kṛṣṇa.

According to the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*, Bahulā is the best of all forests.

Whoever enters this forest attains Agniloka after death. In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Mathurā-khaṇḍa*, it is also stated, “Bahulā, the wife of Śrī Hari always lives in this holy forest. O king, this place is auspicious because Śrī Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī reside here always. In Bahulāvana there is Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa and Māna-sarovara. By seeing the forest of lotuses here one obtains pious results. Whoever takes a bath here in the month of Caitra [March-April] is able to have *darśana* of Śrī Hari with Lakṣmī.” The next place they visited was Mayura-grāma where Kṛṣṇa watched the dancing of the peacocks with His beloveds. It was an amazing sight to see thousands and thousands of dancing peacocks expand their plumage for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. What wonderful happiness arose when Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa also began dancing with the peacocks. The *sakhīs* stood all around and clapped as they watched the wonderful scene which enchanted the world.

Rāghava Paṇḍita pointed out to Narottama and Śrīnivāsa the place called Dakṣiṇa-grāma. Throughout this whole area Kṛṣṇa enjoyed His amorous sports. In Dakṣiṇa-grāma the mood of a *dakṣiṇā nāyikā* is very prominently manifest. [*dakṣiṇā nāyikā* is described in the *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* as follows: “A *gopī* who cannot tolerate womanly anger, who speaks suitable words to the hero and who is satisfied by His sweet words is called a *dakṣiṇā*, or right-wing *gopī*.”

There is another village called Vasati where King Vṛṣabhānu had once lived. Mahārāja Nanda stayed up to the limits of Ṣaṣṭhīghara and Rāola. Presently Rāola is called Rāl. Thus, in great satisfaction near the town of Vasati, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma passed Their lives in joyful play with Their friends.

Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa

See ahead the village named Āriṭa. The pastime Kṛṣṇa performed here is an enchanting story. Once Kṛṣṇa killed a demon in the form of a bull [Ariṣṭāsura]. Afterwards when He wanted to touch Rādhārāṇī She smilingly told Him, “Even though he was a demon, he had assumed the form of a bull, by killing him You have become very contaminated. If You take bath at all the holy places, then You will be relieved of the offense of killing him.”

Kṛṣṇa very sweetly replied, “I shall bathe in the water of all the holy

places by calling them all here.”

Speaking these words, He then stomped on the earth and created a depression which immediately filled up with the water of all the holy places. The personification of each holy place also appeared before Kṛṣṇa, introduced himself, and offered prayers. In front of Rādhā and the *gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa then took a bath in the water, uttering the name of each holy place as He did. He finished His bath sometime before midnight. Even now people follow the same system of bathing in the holy *kuṇḍa*. Hearing Kṛṣṇa speak some boastful words, Rādhā with the help of Her *sakhīs* quickly dug Her own *kuṇḍa*. The *kuṇḍa* dug by Rādhārāṇī was most beautiful and the sight of it made Kṛṣṇa feel very pleased. Rādhārāṇī thought that She would fill Her *kuṇḍa* with the waters of the Mānasa-gaṅgā, which is the essence of all holy places. Understanding Rādhā's desire, Kṛṣṇa gave His order and the holy *tīrthas* entered Rādhā's *kuṇḍa* from Śyāma-*kuṇḍa*. The personified holy places then glorified Rādhārāṇī with many prayers and, considering themselves fortunate, they became very pleased. From that time on these two *kuṇḍas*, which are surrounded by beautiful trees and plants, became the site of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's wonderful amorous sports.

In *Stavāvalī*, *Vraja-vilāsa*, there is the following description: “I take shelter of the meeting place of Rādhā Mādhava's beloved Rādhā-*kuṇḍa* and Śyāma-*kuṇḍa*, the site of Their amorous sports. It is most charming, being surrounded by *kadamba*, *campaka*, beautiful young *aśoka*, mango, *punnāga* [white lotus], and *bakula* trees, as well as *lavaṅga* and *vāsanti* creepers.”

Rādhā-*kuṇḍa* is most beautifully surrounded by the *kuñjās* of the eight *sakhīs* beginning with Lalitā's. Śyāma-*kuṇḍa* is surrounded by the *kuṇḍas* of the eight *sakhās* beginning with Subala's. They are most beautiful and pleasant to see.

The following song describes the beauty of Rādhā-*kuṇḍa*: “Kṛṣṇa is enjoying the beauty of Rādhā-*kuṇḍa*. The *kuṇḍa* is full of pure water and lotuses. The bumblebees hum amongst the lotuses, and the gentle wind causes small ripples in the water. Aquatics move pleasurably through the water. The banks of the *kuṇḍa* are decorated with different kinds of gems. The covered terrace on the bank is decorated with painted pictures. The abode of Cupid bows its head feeling inferior. The birds

and peacocks sing and dance as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa swing on a golden gem-studded swing hanging from the tree.”

The Glories of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa

Śyāma-kuṇḍa is also known as Ariṣṭa-kuṇḍa. Whoever bathes in Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa gets the same results one achieves by the performance of a *rājasūya* and *aśvamedha-yajña*. This is confirmed in *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*.

Rāghava Paṇḍita said that according to the *Purāṇas* there is no limit to the glories of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*, *Mathurā-khaṇḍa*, it is stated that if a devotee of Viṣṇu offers a lamp to Rādhā-kuṇḍa during the month of Kārtika, he will be able to see the entire universe.

In *Padma Purāṇa*, *Kārtika Māhātmya*, it is stated: “Rādhā-kuṇḍa is very dear to Śrī Hari and is situated near Govardhana Hill. By taking bath in Rādhā-kuṇḍa on the eighth day of the waning moon in the month of Kārtika [Bahulāṣṭamī], one can greatly please Lord Hari, who enjoys His pastimes there. This *kuṇḍa* is as dear to Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā Herself.

Amongst all the *gopīs*, She is the most dear to Kṛṣṇa. It is the duty of the devotees to bathe in the Rādhā-kuṇḍa during the month of Kārtika and thereafter worship Lord Janardana. This simple worship pleases Kṛṣṇa as much as one does by worshipping Janardana on the day of Uthana-ekādaśī.”

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Discovers Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa

“See these two *kuṇḍas*, Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, which are surrounded by beautiful forests and which enchant the sages and demigods. After visiting the other forests of Vṛndāvana, Caitanya

Mahāprabhu came here and sat under this *tamāla* tree. He asked the residents of Ariṣṭa-grāma where the two *kuṇḍas* were, but no one could answer. The *brāhmaṇa* accompanying Him from Mathurā also did not know.

“Being the omniscient Personality of Godhead, Lord Caitanya, carefully searched and discovered the two *kuṇḍas* in two paddy fields. He joyfully took a bath in whatever little water was there and glorified the *kuṇḍas* in various ways. Then He marked His forehead with mud from the *kuṇḍas*.

“The villagers were greatly startled by His behavior. One of them inquired, ‘From where has this *sannyāsī* suddenly come?’ Someone said, ‘O brother, by seeing Him I cannot understand what is happening in my body.’ Another person said, ‘He cannot be a mortal *sannyāsī*. Seeing Him I cannot explain what is happening in my mind.’

“Someone else said, ‘Who says He is a *sannyāsī*? He is Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing in this dress and form. Just see the proof. Different birds are all coming for His *darśana*. The cuckoos and parrots are happily addressing Him as Kṛṣṇa, and the peacocks are dancing in jubilation. The different sounds of the birds is very pleasing to the ears. And see the wonderful blooming of the trees! O brother, just see the creepers showering flowers on this person, who is disguised as a *sannyāsī*. The deer are coming near Him and staring undivertedly towards His face. All the cows are coming running from all sides with raised tails, and they also look at His face. By the tears of ecstasy falling from the eyes of these creatures we can understand that they are meeting Him after a long period of time.’

“O brother, I repeatedly glorify the good fortune of these creatures, who are seeing Kṛṣṇa in this form and dress. Dear brothers, let us offer obeisances unto the feet of the Lord, who has incarnated to distribute knowledge to the people. By His mercy we can now understand that these two paddy fields known as Kālī and Gaurī are actually holy *kuṇḍas*.’ Speaking like this amongst themselves, they all became maddened by the nectarean sight of Mahāprabhu at this most holy site. Even Lord Brahmā cannot describe a fragment of Mahāprabhu's ecstatic expression when He discovered these *kuṇḍas*.”

The Fulfillment of Śrīla Dāsa Gosvāmī's Desire

“O Śrīnivāsa, presently these paddy fields are seen as two *kuṇḍas* full of water. Please listen while I briefly describe the transformation of the two paddy fields into beautiful *kuṇḍas*.

“One day Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī suddenly considered to himself that if these *kuṇḍas* were filled with water it would be very good. Considering that for this purpose money would be needed, Raghunātha dāsa remained silent. He scolded himself again and again, thinking why he had desired such a thing. Solacing himself, he decided to stay alone and behave cautiously for sometime. However, when a devotee desires something, that cannot be denied, for Kṛṣṇa always fulfills His devotees' desires.

“Meanwhile, one rich person had gone to Badarikāśrama to get the Lord's *darśana*. He offered Lord Nārāyaṇa a large sum of money. That night in a dream the Lord ordered the man, “Take this money to Āriṭa-grāma in Vraja. There you will find the best of the Vaiṣṇavas, Raghunātha dāsa. Give the money to him in My name. If Raghunātha does not agree to take the money, you should remind him about his desire to clean the two *kuṇḍas* for bathing and drinking water.’

“Speaking these words, the Lord disappeared, and that sincere devotee happily came here to Āriṭa-grāma. Going before Raghunātha dāsa he fell to the ground, offered his obeisances, and then gave the money to Raghunātha. He explained the instruction given to him by the Lord in his dream. Raghunātha became stunned for some time. After some time he repeatedly praised his fortune and requested the rich man to excavate the two *kuṇḍas* without delay. Hearing this, that fortunate man was filled with ecstasy and proceeded to engage many people for the work. Very soon the *kuṇḍas* were dug out. Now hear why Śyāma-kuṇḍa was dug in an irregular shape.

“Everyone decided that the following day a few old trees on the bank of Śyāma-kuṇḍa should be cut. That night Raghunātha had a dream in which King Yudhiṣṭhira told him, ‘My brothers and I are living within

those trees. Tomorrow morning go to Mānasa-pāvana-ghāṭa, identify those five trees, and protect them from being cut.' After the dream, Raghunātha went early the next morning to identify the trees and order the people not to cut them. For that reason they could not make Śyāma-kuṇḍa square. The two *kuṇḍas* were then filled with clear water and Śrī Raghunātha became very satisfied.

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Accepts a Bhajana Kuṭira

“Day and night Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī would live under a tree. He had no desire for a *kuṭira*. One day Sanātana Gosvāmī came here from Vṛndāvana to visit Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's residence. Going to take bath in the Mānasa-pāvana-ghāṭa, he saw a tiger coming to the *ghāṭa* for drinking water. As the tiger was returning to the forest, it passed very close to Śrī Raghunātha, who was sitting in meditation. After some time, when Raghunātha finished his meditation, he looked around and saw that Sanātana had come for bath.

“Raghunātha fell to the ground and paid his obeisances to Sanātana, who affectionately embraced him. In loving words Sanātana asked Raghunātha to give up living under the tree and live in a *kuṭira*. After specifically instructing Raghunātha on this point, Sanātana went for his bath. From that very day work on Raghunātha's *kuṭira* was begun. From then on, for the benefit of others, Raghunātha lived in a *kuṭira* in obedience to the order of Sanātana Gosvāmī. O Śrīnivāsa, with one mouth how can I describe the activities of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī? “Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī had special affection for one Vraja-vāsī named Dāsa. One day this Dāsa went to Sakhīsthali village and got a large leaf of a *palāśa* tree. He was thinking how Dāsa Gosvāmī would not eat grains due to intense feelings of separation. Because Raghunātha's practice was to take only one leaf cup of buttermilk in a day, Dāsa thought that with a bigger cup he would then have a little more. Considering this, Dāsa went to his home, made a cup from this leaf, and brought the buttermilk to Raghunātha.

“On seeing the new leaf cup, the Gosvāmī inquired where the large leaf cup had come from. Dāsa replied that he had gone herding cows at Sakhīsthalī, where he found the nice leaves which he brought back. Hearing the name ‘Sakhīsthalī’ Raghunātha became full of anger and threw the cup along with the buttermilk far away. After some time when he became calm, Raghunātha ordered Dāsa never to go again to Sakhīsthalī as it was the residence of Candrāvalī. Hearing this, Dāsa could then understand the spiritual activities of the pure devotees. They always remain fixed in their eternal spiritual form. Whoever doubts this is the most sinful man in the world.

“One day in his mind Raghunātha ate rice *prasāda* with milk and afterwards felt very heavy with indigestion. No one was able to determine the reason for this. Hearing of his condition, Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha brought two doctors from Śrī Vallabhapura. After taking his pulse, the doctor said again and again that the heaviness was caused by taking milk with rice. Astonished, Śrī Viṭṭhalanātha said that couldn't be possible as Raghunātha never takes milk and rice. Raghunātha replied saying, ‘That is certainly true, but in my mind I had eaten the milk and rice.’ Hearing this everyone was struck with wonder. Such are the activities of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. What more can be said?”

Living in Rādhā-kuṇḍa Only by the Grace of Śrīla Dāsa Gosvāmī

“O Śrīnivāsa, know for certain that only by the grace of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī can one live at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Raghunātha's service to Rādhā-kuṇḍa, the *govardhana-śilā*, and the *guñjā-mālā* is very famous. [One may refer to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya-līlā* 6.287-307. *Guñjā* is a small bright red and black seed of the *guñjā* creeper found in Vraja.] “See the trees and creepers surrounding the most enchanting Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa which are connected together. O Śrīnivāsa, at Mālyahāri-kuṇḍa wonderful pastimes took place connected with a pearl

necklace. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has very mercifully described this incident in his book *Śrī Mukṭā Caritra*. See here the two *kuṇḍas*, Śivakhora and Bhānu-khora.” Saying this, Rāghava Paṇḍita became ecstatic. After showing Śrīnivāsa and Narottama various other *kuṇḍas* and pastime places, he then took them to meet Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī. Śrī Rāghava Paṇḍita offered an account of all their activities to Dāsa Gosvāmī, who felt delighted in his heart. With great respect Śrīnivāsa and Narottama both fell down on the ground and offered obeisances to Dāsa Gosvāmī's feet. Dāsa Gosvāmī was delighted to meet Śrīnivāsa and Narottama. Although he was weak with old age, he stood up to embrace them. He also spoke something very softly to Śrīnivāsa.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja also came there. Śrīnivāsa and Narottama offered their obeisances to him, and he reciprocated accordingly. Because of Śrīnivāsa's wonderful activities, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja loved him as his very life. Dāsa, the Vraja-vāsī who was very dear to Dāsa Gosvāmī, quickly came there to meet them. All the other Vaiṣṇavas who lived on the banks of the *kuṇḍas* also came forward to meet Śrīnivāsa and Narottama. They all happily gave them permission to take bath and then quickly arranged various foodstuffs to be brought for them. Śrīnivāsa and Narottama went directly for their bath and their eyes were filled with the beauty of the *kuṇḍa*.

The *kuñja* of Subala is on the north side of Śyāma-kuṇḍa where Mānasa-pāvana-ghāṭa is situated. This place, where the five Pandavas live in the form of trees, is very dear to Rādhikā. Śrīnivāsa and Narottama bathed there in ecstatic love and then returned to Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's *kuṭīra* and took *mahā-prasāda*. They spent that day in great ecstasy and then continued their tour the next morning.

Rāghava Paṇḍita then took them to see Mukharāi, a village to the south of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Everyone knows this as the place where Rādhā's grandmother Mukharā lived. It was very amusing when Mukharā herself took pleasure arranging the meetings of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

The Places of Kṛṣṇa's Līlā Surrounding Govardhana

Śrī Rāghava took Śrīnivāsa and Narottama to see the places near Govardhana where Kṛṣṇa had performed His pastimes, and he described them all one by one. The place known as Kusuma-sarovara is a famous pastime place of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. In another place called Nārada-kuṇḍa, Nārada Muni fulfilled his desires by performing *tapasya*. In the *Purāṇas* it is written that Nārada performed *tapasya* here on Vṛndā's order. At a place called Ratna-simhāsana, Rādhā would sit on a throne. Also, the reason behind Kṛṣṇa's killing Śaṅkhacūṣa took place here. That story has been described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

Pāli is a beautiful garden where Pālītā-yūtheśvarī used to stay. Śrī Kṛṣṇa also enjoyed Himself with His friends in the holy place called Atagrāma. In the place Indra-dhvaja-bedi, Nandarāja used to worship Indra. It was there that Śrī Kṛṣṇa used to tend His cows and call each one near by the sound of His flute.

āṅmochana, also known as Pāpamochana, is famous for its sanctity. If a person bathes here he will be freed from all vices. This is Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa. Whoever wants to fulfill his desires should take a bath here. In Parāsauli-grāma Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enacted Their *rāsa-yatra* during the season of Vasanta. At Candra-sarovara, Śrī Kṛṣṇa took rest in His *rāsa* dress. Now, just see the beautiful Gandharva-kuṇḍa, where the Gandharvas became overwhelmed by Kṛṣṇa's beautiful songs. No one can describe all of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes during the Vasanta *rāsa* at Govardhana.

In the *Stavāvalī*, *Govardhana-āśrayadaśaka*, this description is given: “This is Rāsa-sthalī, where during the month of Vasanta, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who is known as Mādhava-priyā, danced with Kṛṣṇa. She was surrounded by beautiful *sakhīs*, each worshiped by hundreds of Lakṣmīs, and Her neck was decorated by the sweetly fragrant hands of Kṛṣṇa. Which fortunate person will not take shelter of this exalted Govardhana Rāsa-sthalī?”

There is another village called Paitha where Kṛṣṇa once hid Himself from the *gopīs*, who began searching here and there for Him. Kṛṣṇa appeared before the *gopīs* in His four-handed Viṣṇu form, but upon the arrival of Rādhārāṇī, two of His hands disappeared. Rādhārāṇī's love was so strong, that Kṛṣṇa could not retain His four-armed form. This has been described in the *Ujvala-nīlamanī*, *Nāyikā Prakāra*.

After showing all these enchanting places beginning with Paitha, Śrī Rāghava returned to Gaurī-tīrtha with Śrīnivāsa and Narottama. “This place is called Nīpa-kuṇḍa because it is surrounded by beautiful *nīpa*, or *kadamba*, trees. Another holy place is called Aniyora. It was here that on Kṛṣṇa's order, Nanda and the other *gopas* stopped their worship of Indra and started the worship of Govardhana by offering various kinds of foods. The voice of Govardhana resounded in the sky, ‘*Āni aur! āni aur!*’ [Bring Me more! Bring Me more!]. For that reason this place is called Āniyora. By visiting Annakūṭa-sthāna all desires will be fulfilled.” In *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* it is written: “When the best of the cowherds, Nanda Mahārāja, offered a large quantity of food to Govardhana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the killer of Agha, transformed Himself into a huge form, proclaiming that He Himself was Govardhana. Deceiving even Rādhārāṇī, He ate all the offered food. Let me take shelter of this place known as Annakūṭa-sthāna.”

The place named Govinda-kuṇḍa has many glories because it was here that Indra performed the *abhiṣeka* of Kṛṣṇa. Again in the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* it is said: “Out of fear of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Indra, along with Surabhi, performed the *abhiṣeka* ceremony of Kṛṣṇa by bringing the holy water of Mandākinī. May Govinda-kuṇḍa, which was created from the water of this *abhiṣeka* be always manifest before my eyes.”

In *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is said: “By bathing or performing austerity at Govinda-kuṇḍa one attains liberation on the virtues of performing one hundred *yajñas*.”

“See this dense forest near Govinda-kuṇḍa. It was here that Gopāla hid. Here is the very confidential place known as Dāna-nivartana-kuṇḍa. Besides the devotees, others cannot know this place.”

It is stated in *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*: “The place known as Dāna-nivartana-kuṇḍa is named after the *dāna-keli* pastime which Kṛṣṇa enjoyed there. This place is unknown to those persons who are averse to the mellows of devotional service, only those who are qualified in devotion can know it. I pray that I may reside at this *kuṇḍa* and also enjoy giving *dāna* [*dāna* in this pastime means taxes].”

“Mādhavendra Purī stayed here under a tree, and Gopāla gave *darśana* to him on the pretext of bringing him milk. Later, Gopāla lived on the mountain and sometimes visited Gāṅṭhuli. On the end of Govardhana is

Apsarā-kuṇḍa. People who take bath here are very fortunate. See here the old *palāśa* trees. People call this very secluded place Śyāma-śhāka.” After describing all these places, Śrī Rāghava Paṇḍita took his two followers to his own cave. He told them while he stayed here he felt great pleasure seeing always the enchanting Govardhana Hill. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa would always enjoy here.

As stated in *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*: “Kṛṣṇa and His affectionate friends, decorated with the colorful mineral pigments found there, enjoy pastimes at Govardhana Hill with a great festival of joking words. In the caves of this same hill, Kṛṣṇa also enjoys many pastimes with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Let me worship this best of hills.”

Rāghava continued, “Just see here the footprint of Airavata. After being defeated, Indra described the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa's mercy here. This is Surabhi-kuṇḍa, which has unlimited glories. Who can possibly describe the various sports that took place here? In this beautiful secluded forest is Rudra-kuṇḍa, where Mahādeva sat in meditation on Kṛṣṇa. In Kadamba-khaṇḍi, Śrī Kṛṣṇa watched the path which Rādhā traveled. In Dāna-ghāṛi, the King of *rasa*, Lord Kṛṣṇa, took a share of the milk products from Rādhā while His friends blocked Her way.

“When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu visited here He inquired about this place from the Sanoṣiyā *brāhmaṇa*. As He heard the description of the *dāna* pastimes, He slightly smiled in delight. As Lord Caitanya had *darśana* of Harideva, He danced wonderfully in ecstatic love. As everyone watched Gaurahari, they became filled with love and their eyes filled with tears of ecstasy. Some of the people who saw Him dance said He must be an incarnation of Harideva. Who can describe the pastimes the Lord performed at Govardhana?

“This secluded place is Dāna-ghāṛa, also known by some people as Kṛṣṇa-bedi. In *Vraja-vilāsa* a description is given as follows. ‘One day Lord Kṛṣṇa, the youthful king of amorous heroes, became eager at heart to enjoy the *dāna-keli* pastime. Blocking the path, He forbade Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī to pass, proclaiming Himself a toll collector appointed by the king of love and demanding that She pay a toll of the milk products She was carrying. I sing the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa-bedi, the place where the Lord enjoyed these pastimes.’

“This unique *dāna-līlā* is described by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in his book

Dāna-keli-kaumudi.

“Brahma-kuṇḍa is also situated at Govardhana and is described in the *Mathurā-khaṇḍa*: ‘After bathing here, Brahmā satisfied Lord Hari. Indra and the other planetary rulers created other lakes nearby.’

“Also in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*: ‘O auspicious one, that lake is surrounded by groves of trees and vines as well as fourteen auspicious holy places. On the eastern side is Indra-tīrtha, on the south is Yama-tīrtha, on the west is Varuṇa-tīrtha, and on the north is Kuvera-tīrtha. In these places I will enjoy pastimes as I wish.’”

Rāghava then pointed out Mānasa-gaṅgā. At this place Śrī Kṛṣṇa enjoyed ecstatic boat pastimes. There is a description of Mānasa-gaṅgā in the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*: “The waves of Mānasa-gaṅgā on the side of Govardhana Hill push the splendid rocks lining its shores. I pray that the Mānasa-gaṅgā, where Śrī Śrī Gandharvikā-Murāri enjoy jubilant boating pastimes, may give me shelter.”

“The waters of Mānasa-gaṅgā are supremely pure. Who can describe the wonderful results one achieves by bathing there.”

After glorifying Mānasa-gaṅgā, Rāghava Paṇḍita led them on for *darśana* of Harideva. In great happiness he then glorified Govardhana Hill as being full of transcendental bliss. Situated eight *kroṣa* [sixteen miles] west of Mathurā, just the sight of Govardhana Hill relieves one of the miseries of material life. Anyone who bathes in Mānasa-gaṅgā, takes *darśana* of Harideva, and then circumambulates Govardhana Hill, no longer lives in the material world.

Govardhana Hill gives unlimited pleasure to Kṛṣṇa, who lifted the hill with His left hand to curb the pride of Indra and protect the Vraja-vāsīs. In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “Two *yojanas* [sixteen miles], west of Mathurā, is the very rare place named Govardhana. A person who circumambulates this place named Annakūṭa-tīrtha does not return to this world. O goddess. I will now tell you everything about it. After bathing in the Mānasa-gaṅgā, seeing the Deity of Harideva on Govardhana Hill, and circumambulating Annakūṭa-tīrtha, what heart can remain unhappy? To protect the cows distressed by Indra's torrential rains, I lifted Govardhana Hill.”

In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Mathurā-khaṇḍa*, it is said: “Govardhana Hill is an incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When the Lord

lifted the hill, all the people of Vraja were saved from Indra's rains. Lord Viṣṇu stays eternally on Govardhana Hill. Brahmā, Śiva, and Lakṣmī also reside there. There is no doubt about this.”

Again from the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*: “After seeing the Deity of Harideva and circumambulating Govardhana Hill, one attains the result of having performed a *rājasūya* and *aśvamedha-yajña*. Of this there is no doubt.”

The Good Fortune of the Brāhmaṇa Devotee of Baladeva Who Lived at Govardhana

“O Śrīnivāsa, there was a rich *brāhmaṇa* everyone knew who lived near Govardhana. He was always overwhelmed in love for Balarāma, and his mind was always absorbed in thoughts of His character. He was certain that one day Baladeva would kindly grant him *darśana*, and for that reason he always wandered around Govardhana. One cannot describe the fortune of that *brāhmaṇa* who one day received information that Baladeva would grant him *darśana*. In order to fulfill this devotee's desire, Nityānanda Rāma at that time went to Govardhana on pilgrimage. Nityānanda remained in a lonely place, but whoever saw Him was bewildered by His celestial body, which bewilders even Cupid. “When that *brāhmaṇa* saw Nityānanda Prabhu in the distance, he wondered where this *avadhūta* had come from. Seeing the Lord's effulgence, he could understand that the Lord was not an ordinary person. The *brāhmaṇa* brought various items like yogurt, milk, cheese, and butter. He came before Nityānanda, offered obeisances, and said, ‘O Avadhūta, please accept these gifts. I pray that you please show Your mercy to me so I may have *darśana* of Rohinī-nandana.’

“Hearing these words, Nityānanda smiled and in great fun accepted the offerings made by the *brāhmaṇa*. The *brāhmaṇa* then received the Lord's remnants and returned to his own place, where he honored the *mahā-prasāda* and became agitated in love.

“The *brāhmaṇa* was unable to return to meet Nityānanda, and as evening arrived he fell asleep. At night, Lord Nityānanda appeared to

that fortunate *brāhmaṇa* in a dream. Seeing Nityānanda, the *brāhmaṇa* was very pleased. The next moment Nityānanda revealed His form as Baladeva, and the *brāhmaṇa* fell at His feet.

“What a wonderful form Baladeva exhibited—enchanting to the entire world! His limbs were glittering, being decorated with various ornaments. After blessing the *brāhmaṇa*, the Lord disappeared. On the Lord's disappearance, the *brāhmaṇa*'s sleep broke. He became restless and started to return to where he had met Nityānanda Prabhu. At that moment he heard a voice telling him to remain patient and wait till the morning. He considered that his desire was at last fulfilled. ‘Now I have achieved the Lord, I will not leave Him. I will fall down and surrender everything at His feet. When the night is over I will have a goldsmith make ornaments to offer to the Lord.’ As he thought in this way sleep again came.

“Again in the *brāhmaṇa*'s dream Nityānanda appeared to him. Seeing the Lord decorated in wonderful ornaments, that best of the *brāhmaṇas* offered many prayers. As before, upon the disappearance of the Lord, the *brāhmaṇa*'s sleep broke.

Morning soon came and the *brāhmaṇa* came before Nityānanda Prabhu and explained the previous night's dream. The Lord smiled slightly and holding the *brāhmaṇa*'s hand instructed the *brāhmaṇa* in all truths. The *brāhmaṇa* inquired from the Lord, ‘Who has made those ornaments I saw in my dream?’ The Lord, who is controlled by His devotees' desires, replied, ‘One day I will be decorated as you have seen. For now take this *govardhana-śilā* and cover it in gold. I will then wear it on My neck.’

“The *brāhmaṇa* executed the order as given by the Lord. The best of the *avadhūtas* then took the *śilā* and wore it on His neck. Even for Lord Brahmā, such pastimes are very rare. Nityānanda forbid the *brāhmaṇa* to disclose this incident to anyone. However, out of His affection to His devotee, the Lord remained there for some days. This rare affection can be had by simply seeing this place.”

Sanātana Gosvāmī's Residence at Cakra-tīrtha

“O Śrīnivāsa, see Cakra-tīrtha, which can fulfill one's desires. In Govardhana, Cakra-tīrtha is very famous. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa performed Their swing pastimes here.”

In the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* it is described: “Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa, Brahma-kuṇḍa, Kadamba-khaṇḍi, Kusuma-sarovara, Rudra-kuṇḍa, Apsarā-kuṇḍa, Gaurī-tīrtha, Candra-sarovara, the two āṅpāpa-mocana-kuṇḍas, Mālyahāra-kuṇḍa, Ariṣṭa-kuṇḍa, and Indra-dhvaja-bedi are splendidly manifested along with many other famous holy sites such as Cakra-tīrtha, Govardhana Hill, and Ratna-simhāsana. Let me offer my obeisances to these places.

“During the spring season the *gopīs* move Śrī Śrī Gāndharvā-Giridhari on a swing. The faces of the divine couple blossom with happiness by tasting the nectar of these swing pastimes. I worship Govinda-sthala, the famous place where the divine couple enjoys these pastimes.”

“O Śrīnivāsa, by the order of Cakra-tīrtha, Sanātana Gosvāmī resided at this place. See his cottage in the forest. Everyday with determination he would perform the twelve *kroṣa* [twenty-four mile] *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill.

“Seeing the difficulty taken by Sanātana in his old age, Gopīnātha appeared before him in the form of a cowherd boy. Sanātana, with tearful eyes, tried to conceal his fatigued condition from the boy. Gopīnātha sweetly spoke to Sanātana, ‘In this old age you should not take so much endeavor. Dear Svāmījī, please follow My advice.’ Sanātana replied, ‘Whatever You say I will certainly follow.’ Then the cowherd boy climbed Govardhana and brought one *śilā* marked with His own footprint. In sweet words He requested Sanātana to accept the *govardhana-śilā* marked with the footprint of Lord Kṛṣṇa. ‘From today just circumambulate this *śilā* and thus your vow of daily *parikramā* will be fulfilled.’ Saying this He gave the *śilā* to Sanātana in his cottage and disappeared.

“Sanātana became very anxious on not seeing the boy. Seeing Sanātana's condition Gopīnātha affectionately revealed His identity. Wet with his own tears, Sanātana then repented why he did not recognize his Lord. In this way Sanātana remained under the influence of intense love for Śrī Vrajendra-kumāra, who sports in the flower groves of the Vṛndāvana forest.

“Also at this place Śrīmatī Rādhikā along with Her *sakhīs* came and, taking the boat, She crossed Mānasa-gaṅgā from this *ghāṭa*. In this way the desires of all the *gopīs* headed by Lalitā were satisfied by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.”

It is stated in *Śrī Stavāvalī*, *Śrī Govardhana-āśrayadaśaka*: “Who will not take shelter of Govardhana Hill, where the divine couple enjoy Their boating pastimes in the Mānasa-gaṅgā? In the Mānasa-gaṅgā, Mādhava, taking the role of a boatman, took the sweetly beautiful Rādhā on His boat. At that time, Rādhā became frightened by a great storm and prayed to Kṛṣṇa to rescue Her, to which Kṛṣṇa agreed, only after claiming the fee of the fulfillment of His amorous desires.”

“This is Soṅkrāi-grāma, a most fascinating village where the *sakhīs* made Kṛṣṇa take a vow. After taking the vow, Kṛṣṇa told again and again that without Śrīmatī Rādhikā He didn't know anything. And this, O Śrīnivāsa, is Sakhīsthalī-grāma where Candrāvalī stays. It is also called Sakhīkharā. Uddhava sat at this place and told the *gopīs* about Kṛṣṇa's activities in Dvārakā. At this place near Govardhana Hill, Kṛṣṇa in great fun played different pastimes with the cowherd boys. Just see, the two brothers Rāma and Kṛṣṇa sat here surrounded by Their friends.” After speaking these words, Rāghava Paṇḍita, in a jubilant state of mind, took Śrīnivāsa and Narottama with him to the bank of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. After taking bath, Rāghava declared that Govinda-ghāṭa is very dear to Lord Govinda.

The Amazing Vision of Sanātana Gosvāmī at Govinda-ghāṭa

“O Śrīnivāsa, now I will narrate the wonderful pastime that took place under this tree. One day Sanātana Gosvāmī came here from Govardhana to see Rūpa and Raghunātha Gosvāmīs. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī was composing a verse comparing the braided hair of Rādhārāṇī to the hood of a black snake. When Sanātana Gosvāmī read his composition he inquired whether the comparison was proper or not.

After expressing his doubt like this, he went for bath in the *kuṇḍa*. At that time Sanātana saw some girls playing under a tree nearby. Seeing the hair of one girl, he thought it was a snake climbing her back. In astonishment he cried out and tried to warn the unsuspecting girl. The girls, on seeing Sanātana's anxiety, smiled and then disappeared. Sanātana was overwhelmed from the incident. When he regained his composure he returned to Rūpa Gosvāmī and exclaimed, 'Whatever you have written is perfectly correct!' In this way Rūpa Gosvāmī understood the heart of Sanātana. Feeling great ecstasy in his mind, Sanātana then returned to Govardhana.”

The Purpose of Rūpa Gosvāmī's Visit to Rādhā-kuṇḍa

Rāghava continued narrating, “Rūpa Gosvāmī was staying at Vṛndāvana, but he came here for a reason I will now explain. “One time Rūpa Gosvāmī had given *Lalitā-Mādhava* to Raghunātha. This book describes the intense feelings of love in separation. After reading the book, Raghunātha cried day and night in agitation and became mad in distress. Sometimes he went far off to stay, leaving the book, and sometimes he fell to the ground keeping the book to his chest. People who saw the various states of Raghunātha's ecstasy as he lost consciousness became worried and struck with wonder. Thinking of a cure for Raghunātha's condition, Rūpa Gosvāmī quickly finished writing *Dāna-keli-kaumudī*. Śrī Rūpa then gave Raghunātha the new book and requested him to taste its contents and return *Lalitā-Mādhava* for editing. Although Raghunātha was reluctant to give up *Lalitā-Mādhava*, when he heard that Rūpa wanted to edit it, he relented. Taking and reading *Dāna-keli-kaumudī*, he tasted different ecstasies and thus merged in an ocean of happiness. O Śrīnivāsa, what can I say about the activities of Sanātana, Rūpa, and Raghunātha?”

After finishing this narration, Rāghava Paṇḍita, feeling jubilation in his mind, led them on. Within a short time they visited all the places near Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Rāghava Paṇḍita then showed Śrīnivāsa and Narottama

the place known as Nima-grāma. Then, after leaving Govardhana, they all worshiped Lord Kṛṣṇa, who they considered more dear than their own life.

In the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* it is stated: “Considering Him more dear than their own lives, out of intense parental love, the elderly *gopīs* worship even a drop of perspiration from Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, and for a long time they kiss His head, decorated with handsome locks of hair. I worship the dust of these *gopīs* feet.”

“This is Pāṭal-grāma. In sport Rādhā and Her *sakhīs* picked pinkish roses [*pāṭal* means pink] at this place. Here is Derāvali-grāma. Coming from Ṣaṣṭhīghara, Nanda stayed here on his way to Nandīśvara. See in front, this *kuñja* called Navā-grāma. It is situated on the border of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. People presently call it Kuñjarā, and it is the site of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's unparalleled pastimes. Here is Sūrya-kuṇḍa-grāma. Just see the deity of Sūryadeva situated in the Sūrya-mandira within this forest. In great happiness Rādhārāṇī with Her *sakhīs* came here to worship Sūryadeva. Kṛṣṇa Himself became the priest and enjoyed performing the *pūjā*. This deity of Sūryadeva is very merciful and gives love of Kṛṣṇa. Who can describe his glories and who will not worship him?

“I worship Sūryadeva, who is the father of Yamunā and the destroyer of all diseases. He bestows attachment to the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, therefore he is the basis of all auspiciousness.

“See in front the town called Keṣṇāi where Ghanaśyāma felt very impatient in Rādhā's absence. Kṛṣṇa asked Rādhā's servant why She had not come [*keṣṇā āi*], therefore this place was called Keṣṇāi and later it became known as Konāi. See here Bhadāyara-grāma, where Bhadrā-yūtheśvarī performed her pastimes. This is Magaherā-grāma. Here everyone sees the road Kṛṣṇa travels by. These people were so intensely eager for His *darśana* it cannot be described. Presently it is known as Magherā.”

In this way, after visiting various other pastime places of the Lord, they returned to Rādhā-kuṇḍa in a joyful state. Whoever takes interest in hearing about or visiting these places is easily freed from any distressed condition. Rāghava Paṇḍita along with Śrīnivāsa and Narottama thus spent the night on the shores of Rādhā-kuṇḍa discussing *Kṛṣṇa-kathā* till morning arrived.

The Source of Gāṅṭhuli-grāma's Name

As they continued *parikramā* of Govardhana they came to Gāṅṭhuli-grāma in a joyful mood. Rāghava in loving words began to explain to Śrīnivāsa how Gāṅṭhuli-grāma was named. While playing Holi, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were seated on a *śimhāsana*. The *sakhīs* took the opportunity to secretly tie the divine couple's cloth together. When Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa stood, They found Their cloth was tied together and felt embarrassed as all the *sakhīs* smiled in great fun. After throwing colored dyes [playing Holi], the *sakhīs* untied Their clothing. For this reason the town is named Gāṅṭhuli. This red color is seen by the people in Vasant [springtime] in the water of Gulāla-kuṇḍa. After Rāghava narrated these stories, they went for *darśana* of Gopāla. Upon seeing the form of Gopāla, the devotees became impatient in ecstatic love.

The Appointment of Viṭṭhala as Gopāla's Servant

The worshipable Lord served by Viṭṭhala is the same Gopāla Deity Caitanya Mahāprabhu was eager to see [see Cc. 2.18.23-43]. Viṭṭhalanātha was the son of Vallabha Bhaṭṭa. His loving sentiments were beyond description. Sometimes Gopāla lived at Gāṅṭhuli-grāma and in this way Gopāla fulfilled the devotees desires. The crest jewel of *sannyāsīs*, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, glorified this earth by His pilgrimage to the holy places. Fortunate indeed are those who witnessed His pastimes as He visited all the *tīrthas* of Mathurā, Vṛndāvana, Govardhana, and Rādhā-kuṇḍa. The Lord had a great desire for the *darśana* of Gopāla, however, in the mood of a devotee He felt He could not climb Govardhana. At that time on some pretext Gopāla came to the village of Gāṅṭhuli. Taking the opportunity to have Gopāla's *darśana*, the Lord fully immersed Himself in ecstatic chanting and dancing. By seeing the Lord's wonderful manifestation of love, everyone

lost their composure.

At that time Gopāla's service was in the care of two *brāhmaṇa* disciples of Mādhavendra Purī. Having received the mercy of Mādhavendra Purī, these *gaudiya brāhmaṇas* were fully renounced and always absorbed in love of Godhead. What can be said? After not seeing them for some days people wondered which fortunate person could perform their service to Gopāla.

Consulting with Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī and others, Śrī Viṭṭhala was given the charge to serve Gopāla. After the demise of his father Śrī Vallabha Bhaṭṭa, Viṭṭhala had spent some days in Mathurā living in solitude. Overwhelmed by the pastimes of Gauracandra, he always carefully engaged in serving Gopāla. Rāghava Paṇḍita thus described the qualities of Gopāla and they cheerfully continued on from Gāṇṭhuli.

Going further, Rāghava told Śrīnivāsa, “Here is the town of Reheja. At this place Indra felt great remorse after his offence and along with Surabhi approached Kṛṣṇa. Another very potent pastime place named Devaśirṣa-sthāna-kuṇḍa is beautifully situated here. The *devatās* joyfully offered their prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa here as He herded the cows with His friends. See here the most pleasant Muniśirṣa-sthāna-kuṇḍa where the *munis* achieved Kṛṣṇa by performing austerities. At these sites Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma performed various pastimes with Their friends as They tended their cows.

“This is Pramodanā-grāma where Kṛṣṇa sportingly gave pleasure [*pramoda*] to the ladies of Vraja. For this reason the village was known as Pramodanā, although people now call it Paramādanā. This is Setukandarā, a most enchanting place. See here the most merciful Ādi Badri-Nārāyaṇa. He is served in a most unique way by fragrant stones on this enchanting mountain within the forest. Kṛṣṇa removed the lamentation of Nanda Mahārāja and the other cowherd men by bringing them here for *darśana* of Nārāyaṇa.

“See ahead the sacred Kadamba-kānana where Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa happily enjoyed Their many different pastimes with the *sakhīs*. During the month of Śrāvaṇa They enjoyed Their swing pastimes here.

“This town is called Indroli. At this place Indra engaged in meditation on Lord Kṛṣṇa. O Śrīnivāsa, see Kanoyāro-grāma where Kanva Muni performed austerities. See now the best of all forests known as

Kāmyavana. One who goes there is worshiped in Viṣṇuloka.”

Kāmyavana

In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “The fourth forest is Kāmyavana, the best of all. O goddess, a person who goes there is glorified in My abode.”

Kāmyavana fulfills all desires. By bathing here one is freed from all distress.

In the *Skanda Purāṇa, Mathurā-khaṇḍa* it is said: “O king, next is Kāmyavana, where Lord Hari stayed in His childhood. Simply by bathing here, any person will attain all his desires.”

“Kṛṣṇa performed many wonderful pastimes here. Just see all the many *kuṇḍas*. O Śrīnivāsa, see Viṣṇu-simhāsana and Śrī Caraṇa-kuṇḍa where Kṛṣṇa washed His feet. How can I describe the glories of these places when even Lord Brahmā cannot understand their unlimited glories.

“See the most powerful Śiva known as Kameśvara and the most beautiful sitting place of Garuḍa. This is Dharma-kuṇḍa where Nārāyaṇa in the form of Dharma performs indescribable pastimes. Just see here this platform known as Viśokā. And see here is Pañca-pāṇḍava-kuṇḍa.

“Everyone calls this place Maṇi-karṇika, as Viśvanātha [Lord Śiva] has invested this place with his many various potencies. Look at Vimala-kuṇḍa. By taking bath here all one's sins are destroyed. One who leaves his body here goes to Viṣṇuloka.”

In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “Bathing in Vimala-kuṇḍa, one becomes free from all sins and, leaving one's body here, he attains My abode.”

“The topics of Vimala-kuṇḍa cannot be described. Vimalādevī always resides here.

“Here is the supremely pure Yaśodā-kuṇḍa where Kṛṣṇa, in jubilation, herded His cows. See this Nārada-kuṇḍa, where Nārada Muni lost his patience while singing the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This Kāmanā-kuṇḍa is known by everyone and it fulfills all the desires in one's mind. Here is

Setubandha-kuṇḍa, described in many ways, where Kṛṣṇa enacted His pastime of bridging the ocean [as Lord Rāmacandra].

“This place is called Luklukāna-micalī where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa performed many pastimes. Micalī means closed eyes. As They would play hide and seek at this place Their happiness increased. Here the beautiful Luklukāni-micalī-kuṇḍa is situated within this very dense dark forest. See the secluded and beautifully situated Kāśī-kuṇḍa, Gayā, Prayāga, Puṣkara, Gomatī and Dvārakā-kuṇḍa. At Tapa-kuṇḍa, *munis* performed their *tapasya*. At Dhyāna-kuṇḍa, Kṛṣṇa meditated on Rādhā. Also there is Śrī Caraṇa-cinḥa on top of the mountain. Here at Kṛīḍā-kuṇḍa, Kṛṣṇa played games [*krīḍā*] in the water.

“Here are the five beautiful Gopa-kuṇḍas beginning with Śrīdama's. See also this very beautiful Ghoṣarāni-kuṇḍa. Ghoṣarāni is the daughter of Yaśodara, a king of the cowherds. He arranged the marriage of his daughter here. Look at Vihvala-kuṇḍa, where Rādhā was overwhelmed hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute. At Śyāma-kuṇḍa Śyāmasundara, the reservoir of pleasure, watched the path traveled by Rādhārāṇī. Here is Lalitā-kuṇḍa and Viśākhā-kuṇḍa, where Lalitā and Viśākhā fully satisfied Kṛṣṇa's desires. See here Māna-kuṇḍa. Kṛṣṇa broke Rādhā's anger at this place with His joking words. Here is Mohinī-kuṇḍa, where Kṛṣṇa displayed the same form of Mohinī as He had previously while distributing nectar to the *devatās*. See also this Mohinī-kuṇḍa godohana-sthāna [the place of milking the cows] and Balabhadra-kuṇḍa, which was created by Lord Brahmā. See Sūrya-kuṇḍa near Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa. Staying at this place Sūryadeva offered his prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

“On Candrasena-parvata is Pichalinī-śilā. At this place Kṛṣṇa plays along with His friends. Sitting in a bending form they slid down the rock again and again. See Gopikāramaṇa Kāma-sarovara. Who can describe this enchanting place of pastimes?”

“According to the *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Mathurā-khaṇḍa*: ‘In that place [Kāmyavana] is Gopikāramaṇa-sarovara, known as Kāma-sarovara, as well as many other lakes and thousands of holy places.’

“Just see Surabhi-kuṇḍa where Kṛṣṇa, along with His friends and cows, enjoyed pastimes. Here is Caturbhujā-kuṇḍa and see Bhojana-sthalī where the Lord ate along with the cowherd boys. See the stone called Bājana-śilā which when hit produces various sounds which everyone

enjoys. This is the place of Paraśurāma where Nārāyaṇa sits on a *simhāsana*. Here is Santana-kuṇḍa, Veda-kuṇḍa, Dāmodara-kuṇḍa, Gandharva-kuṇḍa, Pṛthudaka-kuṇḍa and Ayodhyā. Also here is Śrī Nṛsimha-kuṇḍa, Arghya-kuṇḍa and the glorious Madhusudana-kuṇḍa. See also Rohini-kuṇḍa, Gopāla-kuṇḍa, Godhāvāri and the sweet Devakī-kuṇḍa. Caurṣyakhelā is the mountain where Vyomāsura hid the cowherd boys and was then killed by Kṛṣṇa. See Prahlāda-kuṇḍa and Lakṣmī-kuṇḍa. In Kāmyavana there are so many holy places it is not possible to mention them all. The top of this mountain is the place of Kṛṣṇa's sports. The view on all sides captivates one's mind.

“O Śrīnivāsa, see Dhūlāuḍa-grāma where the sky became filled with the dust raised by the cows [*dhulā* means dust and *uḍā* means flying]. This next village is called Udhā-grāma by everyone. Uddhava stayed here on his way to the house of Nanda Mahārāja. This beautiful village Āṭora-grāma is very peaceful and secluded. Kṛṣṇa became absorbed in play here for *āṭa praharas* [eight *praharas*, or twenty-four hours]. See Kadambakhaṇḍī, Svarṇahāra-grāma, Ratna-kuṇḍa and Caturmukha the most excellent of places. Kṛṣṇa had many pastimes at Svarṇahāra, which is also known both as Son ār and Sonherā. The happiness enjoyed by Kṛṣṇa as He used to herd His cows around this mountain is impossible to describe.

“Here is Vṛṣabhānu-pura, also known as Barṣāṇa. Near this mountain is the residence of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja. On this exotic mountain Vrajendra-kumāra performs the *dāna-līlā* hidden from the view of others. Here Rādhārāṇī's feigned anger was broken, and here Kṛṣṇa became intoxicated by performing His various pastimes. The enjoyment They had on this narrow path between the two mountains is indescribable. This place is called Sāṅkari-khora by all.

“Here you will find the three mountains, Dāna, Māna, and Vilāsa-parvata. O Śrīnivāsa, absorbed in Her childhood pastimes, Rādhārāṇī played various games with Her *sakhīs* here. She delighted in playing with Her friends here as She passed from childhood to adolescence.”

Rāghava continued, “What can I say about this *tamāla-kuñja*. The *sakhīs* arranged the meeting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa here. This village, previously called Citraśāli-grāma, is now known as Cikasauli [adjacent to Barṣāṇa on the Barṣāṇa *parikramā* path]. Rādhārāṇī expertly dressed Herself here

in a wonderful way. See the dense forest on the mountain. It is justly known as Gahvaravana. Here is Śītalā-kuṇḍa surrounded by many trees. At Dohani-kuṇḍa, the cows were milked. Dabharāro-grāma is where Kṛṣṇa's eyes filled with tears at the sight of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Dabharāro means eyes filled with tears. Now the village is famous as Dabharo. See, here is Mukta-kuṇḍa, where Rādhikā Sundari planted Her pearls after quarrelling with Kṛṣṇa.

“Situated on the eastern side of Vṛṣabhānu-pura is Bhānu-khora, which is filled with cool refreshing water. On the north side is Piṅgala-sarovara where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa performed various sports. At this place the divine couple along with Their associates became happy seeing the *jiyāla* forest. This is Pilu-khora, where Rāi and Kānu [Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa] with the *sakhīs* enjoyed sports picking the *pilu* fruits. Previously Bhānu-khora and Pilu-khora were known as Bhānu-sarovara and Pilu-sarovara.

“Near Barṣāṇa is the river Triveni where Kṛṣṇa performed many pastimes that I can't describe. Just see the many beautiful places where Kṛṣṇa performed His pastimes. Vajra established villages at the various places, however some are now forgotten.

“This is Prema-sarovara. O Śrīnivāsa, at this place *prema-vaicitṭya-bhava* was manifested. [*Prema-vaicitṭya* is a word used to indicate an abundance of love that brings about grief from fear of separation, although the lover is present.] See here Vihvala-kuṇḍa, where Kṛṣṇa became overwhelmed by hearing Rādhā's name. This is Saṅketa-kuñja, where the *gopīs* brought Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa together using signals. At an auspicious time, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa secretly met here for a brief time in the state of *pūrvā-rāga*. Previously They developed attachment for each other by hearing about each other. This is called *pūrvā-rāga* and it is described in the *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* as follows:

“When attachment produced in both the lover and beloved before their meeting by seeing, hearing, and so on becomes very palatable by the mixture of four ingredients such as *vibhava* and *anubhava*, this is called *pūrvā-rāga*.”

“See here enchanting Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa. Here in Saṅketa innumerable pastimes were performed that no one could understand. The people of Nanda-grāma and Barṣāṇa would pass by this road. This same road was used by Rādhārāṇī to go to Her father-in-laws house at Yāvaṭ. This

forest is very pleasant and always pleasantly shaded. The various songs of the birds along with the humming sounds of the bumblebees can be heard here.

“O Śrīnivāsa, see the home of Nanda Mahārāja called Nandīśvara. Disguised as human beings, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa enjoyed Their pastimes here.”

In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.44.13) it is stated: “How pious are the tracts of land in Vraja, for there the primeval Personality of Godhead, disguising Himself with human traits, wanders about, enacting His many pastimes! Adorned with wonderfully variegated forest garlands, He whose feet are worshiped by Lord Śiva and goddess Ramā vibrates His flute as He tends the cows in the company of Balarāma.”

“See here the boundary of Nanda Mahārāja's residence. To the east of Nanda Bhavan is a wonderful garden. Coming from Yāvaṭ, Rādhārāṇī would come here along with Her friends. O Śrīnivāsa, a person who bathes in Pāvana-sarovara and sees the deities of Kṛṣṇa, Nanda, and Yaśodā on Nandīśvara Hill attains all his desires at that moment.”

In the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* it is stated: “On the pretext of going to fetch clear water, the lotus-eyed *gopīs* again and again meet Kṛṣṇa with great happiness and love at Pāvana-sarovara. They delighted Kṛṣṇa by various water sports in Pāvana-sarovara, which is surrounded by many *kadamba* trees filled with the pleasant sound of many humming bees. May this Pāvana-sarovara protect us.”

“Just see Nandīśvara! In a cave on top of the mountain see Śrī Nanda Mahārāja and Yaśodādevī with their child Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya Mahāprabhu came here and entered the cave for *darśana*. With bright eyes He saw Nanda Mahārāja and Yaśodā Mayī with Kṛṣṇacandra between them. He offered prayers at the feet of Nanda and Yaśodā and in ecstasy touched the limbs of Kṛṣṇa. Then He began to dance and chant in ecstatic love. When people saw the ecstatic manifestations of Lord Caitanya they were struck with wonder. Someone said, ‘He cannot be an ordinary man. How could such a display be possible for a human being?’ Someone said, ‘He must be Nārāyaṇa come from Vaikuṅṭha to wander in Vraja in a human form.’ Someone else said, ‘In my mind it appears He is the son of Nanda again manifest, otherwise how could He have such devotion for Nanda and Yaśodā? Tears are flowing constantly from His lotus eyes. I

cannot know what He is saying softly to Nanda and Yaśodā with folded hands. What more can I say my dear brother, by seeing Him I am convinced He must be Kṛṣṇa.' Speaking these words and chanting 'Hari bol!' they all started dancing with the Lord and floated in the waves of *Kṛṣṇa-prema*.

"Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the jewel of all *sannyāsīs*. I cannot describe the manifestation of His love at this place.

"Look here at Taḍāga-tīrtha, known to all. It is surrounded by beautiful trees and creepers. O Śrīnivāsa, I will say a little more about this place. The son of Devamīśha, Parjanya, lived here. Nārada Muni came to Nandīśvara and bestowed his mercy by giving Parjanya the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa *mantra*. Parjanya then performed austerities here at Taḍāga-tīrtha and his desire was fulfilled as he had five sons known as Upananda, Abhinanda, Nanda, Sananda, and Nandana. See that same place, Taḍāga-tīrtha, which is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa and which the devotees always pray they can serve."

It is stated in the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*: "Going to the shore of a certain lake, Parjanya Mahārāja fasted, performed austerities, and worshiped Lord Nārāyaṇa in order to obtain a worthy grandson. Partly for this reason Giridhari, the reservoir of all good qualities and the enemy of the demons, appeared as the son of Nanda, the King of Vraja and grandson of Parjanya Mahārāja. The place where Parjanya Mahārāja fasted is famous in this world as Kṣuṇṇāhāra-sarovara [the lake of fasting]. I pray that I may take shelter of this sacred place."

"O Śrīnivāsa, what can I say? Here at Kṣuṇṇāhāra-kuṇḍa Kṛṣṇa performed His sports. Dhoyāni-kuṇḍa is situated on the north-east side of Nandīśvara. This is where the yogurt pots were washed. See Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa and Kadambavana where Vrajendra-nandana enjoyed His pastimes. At Lalitā-kuṇḍa, Lalitā by some trick brought Rādhārāṇī to meet Kṛṣṇa. At the most wonderful Sūrya-kuṇḍa, Sūryadeva became agitated in love by Kṛṣṇa's *darśana*.

"Here is Viśākhā-kuṇḍa where Rāi and Kānu met in great joy. Just see here in this very secluded place is Paurṇamāsī-kuṇḍa. Paurṇamāsī stays here in a hut thatched with tree leaves. She feels great happiness when Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoy Their pastimes together. Who has the strength to understand her activities?"

From the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* comes: “I worship the most fortunate Paurṇamāsī, who bestows all auspiciousness. She very expertly arranges the meetings of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and therefore she is worshipable by all. She repeatedly enjoys nectarean bliss by organizing the separation and reunion pastimes of Rādhā Mādhava.”

“Here is the beautiful residence of Nāndīmukhī, where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa always remain happy. The characteristics of Nāndīmukhī have previously been carefully described by the *mahā-bhāgavatas*.”

She is described in the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* as follows: “Nāndīmukhīdevī always feels enchanted within by repeatedly hearing the glories of the divine couple and longing to meet Them. She left Avantī [Ujjain] and went to Vraja where she blissfully increases the happiness of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's loving pastimes. I eternally offer my respectful obeisances to Nāndīmukhīdevī.”

“See these transcendental *kuñjas* here and there. There is no end to Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in these places. Look here is Yaśodā-kuṇḍa where mother Yaśodā watched Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma play with Their cowherd boy friends. O Śrīnivāsa, Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of transcendental bliss. He enjoys various pastimes here in His different ages.”

In the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* Kṛṣṇa's different ages are described, “Kṛṣṇa's age is considered in three periods: from His appearance day to the end of His fifth year is called *kaumāra*; from the beginning of the sixth year up to the end of the tenth year is called *paugaṇḍa*; and from the eleventh to the end of the fifteenth year is called *kaiśora*; after the beginning of the sixteenth year, Kṛṣṇa is called a *yauvana* or a youth, and this continues with no change.

“As far as Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes are concerned, they are mostly executed during the *kaumāra*, *paugaṇḍa*, and *kaiśora* periods. His affectionate pastimes with His parents are executed during His *kaumāra* age. His friendship with the cowherd boys is exhibited during the *paugaṇḍa* period. And His friendship with the *gopīs* is exhibited during the age of *kaiśora*. Kṛṣṇa's pastimes at Vṛndāvana are finished by the end of His fifteenth year, and then He is transferred to Mathurā and Dvārakā, where all other pastimes are performed.”

“See Karela-kuṇḍa in the forest of *karela*. Kṛṣṇa used to stay here observing the beauty of this place. On Nandīśvara Hill is a footprint of

Lord Kṛṣṇa. People have seen the great influence of this place since a very long time. At Madhusudana-kuṇḍa in this forest of flowers, Kṛṣṇa became greatly pleased hearing the humming of the bumblebees. See the most pure Pānihari-kuṇḍa. Kṛṣṇa would drink its water while eating. “O Śrīnivāsa, see here the *randhanāgāra* [kitchen] where Rādhārāṇī would cook in great happiness with mother Rohinī. At this place Kṛṣṇa with His friends would eat and then take rest one hundred steps from here. Śrī Rādhikā would then take Kṛṣṇa's remnants and, going inside the house, She would sit comfortably. Secretly one *sakhī* would bring Kṛṣṇa to meet Rādhā. There is no end to the fun of Their pastimes! Here mother Yaśodā would decorate Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, and her heart was pierced as she sent Them to the forest. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma with the cowherd boys would go to tend cows by this path. What can the beauty of this scene be compared to?

“At this place, mother Yaśodā, after taking Rādhā on her lap would tearfully send Her back to Yāvaṭ. Who can describe with one mouth the affection of mother Yaśodā towards the *sakhīs* headed by Lalitā? Yaśodā and Rohinī could not remain patient after sending off Rādhārāṇī and Her *sakhīs*.

“See here the place called Dadhi-mantana [place of churning yogurt]. Also see this deity of Devī, who has great influence. Paurṇamāsī would come, and after speaking to Yaśodā, would return to her house on this path.

“A little distance from this place, in a secluded spot, Vṛndādevī would consider in her mind how to arrange the meeting of the divine couple. After arranging Their meeting, she would float in happiness. Who would not glorify the qualities of Vṛndādevī?”

In the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* it is stated: “Filled with a great flood of love, Vṛndādevī creates a festive atmosphere for Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to enjoy transcendental pastimes with Their dear friends by decorating the ever-blossoming groves of Vṛndāvana with many fragrant flowers. Let me surrender unto Vṛndādevī.”

“This is Sāhasi-kuṇḍa. At this place the *sakhīs* bravely arranged the meeting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. [Sāhasi means brave or bold.] At this tree the *sakhīs* made a wonderful swing and fully enjoyed the swing pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This is Mukta-kuṇḍa where the son of Nanda

Mahārāja in great sport planted a pearl garden.

“O Śrīnivāsa, this is the place of Akrūra. Akrūra was sent by Kaṇṣa from Mathurā to bring Kṛṣṇa back with him. He felt somewhat anxious in his mind because he was sent to bring Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to Mathurā so Kaṇṣa could try to kill them. Seeing the lotus footprints of Kṛṣṇa at this place, Akrūra became overwhelmed in ecstatic love. This place, called Akrūra-sthāna, is known by people as Krura [cruel].

“See here Yogiya-sthāna, where Uddhava explained the various yoga precepts. At Udho-kriya-sthāna Uddhava felt fortunate to see the activities of the *gopīs*. Uddhava, who came here to give consolation to the cowherds headed by Nanda, felt restless by seeing the wonderful display of their loving sentiments. By seeing this place one will achieve perfection in all his activities.

In the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* it is stated: “Leaving behind Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, which are millions of times more dear to him than his own life's breath, Uddhava, who is always filled with the nectar of pure devotional love, happily stayed in Vraja for ten months. Moment by moment he brought the residents of Vṛndāvana back to life by describing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. He said to them, ‘Look! Kṛṣṇa has returned!’ I carry Uddhava's feet upon my head.”

“O Śrīnivāsa, Kṛṣṇa used to herd His cows along with His friends here at Gośālā-sthāna. His mind filled with joy, Kṛṣṇa looked very beautiful as He proceeded along the path in the company of Subala and others on their way to the forest.

“See the stakes where Kṛṣṇa tied the calves. They are worshiped to this day by the ladies of Vraja. In Nandīśvara there are many places where Kṛṣṇa performed His pastimes. Who has the ability to describe them all? On the left and right sides of this *parikramā* path there are innumerable places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. After visiting the various places around Nanda-grāma we will return to this path again.”

Speaking these words they departed from Nanda-grāma and their happiness increased as they looked around. Śrīnivāsa exclaimed that he had never seen such a beautiful place.

“Here in the north-west corner of Nandīśvara is Gedukhora. Here Rāma and Kṛṣṇa enjoyed playing ball with Their friends. Here see the beautiful Kadamba-kānana where Balarāma engages in various sports.

When Balarāma laid down here, Kṛṣṇa massaged His feet.”

In the words of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.15.14): “When His elder brother, fatigued from playing, would lie down with His head upon the lap of a cowherd boy, Lord Kṛṣṇa would help Him relax by personally massaging His feet and offering other services.”

“This is Gupta-kuṇḍa [situated adjacent to Vṛndā-kuṇḍa on land entrusted to ISKCON], where Kṛṣṇa and His friends headed by Subala secretly played various games as they wandered through the forest. Next see Meherāna-grāma where the cowherd Abhinanda had his *gośālā*.

“O Śrīnivāsa, see this enchanting Yāo-grāma known as Yāvaṭ, where many pastimes were performed. This is the residence of Abhimanyu where Rādhārāṇī enjoyed sports with Her friends.

“By the influence of Yogamāyā, what to speak of Rādhārāṇī Herself, Abhimanyu is not even able to touch the shadow of Rādhārāṇī. He remains in the association of the cowherd men while Jaṭilā and Kuṭilā are always engaged in household work. The *gopīs* cleverly bring Kṛṣṇa here, and their hearts fill with joy as they see the divine couple's pastimes. After Jaṭilā, Kuṭilā, and Abhimanyu have been deceived, Kṛṣṇa eagerly comes here to enjoy amorous sports with Rādhā. When Mukharā sees Rādhā, her grand-daughter, in happiness she whispers many confidential things to Jaṭilā. Here also Kuṭilā takes great pleasure finding faults with Rādhā's behavior. Rādhā goes on this path to worship Suryadeva, and She waits in this forest of *kadamba* trees to catch a glimpse of Her beloved, Kṛṣṇa. As Kṛṣṇa approaches He catches hold of Her cloth, and in this way They both enjoy great fun.

“Here is Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa, surrounded by many *vaṭa* [banyan] trees. Kṛṣṇa's pastimes here are especially sweet. In the summer, the *sakhīs* decorate Rādhārāṇī with pearl ornaments here at Mukta-kuṇḍa. At Pibana-kuṇḍa, within the forest of *kadamba* trees, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa play in the company of Their *sakhīs*. Taking a hint from the *sakhīs*, the eager Kṛṣṇa becomes intoxicated by drinking the nectar of Rādhā's lips. Here is Lāṣilī-kuṇḍa where Lalitā secretly arranges the meeting of Rāi and Kānu.

“O Śrīnivāsa, just see Nārada-kuṇḍa. By taking bath here all one's desires are fulfilled. At this place one *muni* benedicted Śrīmatī Rādhikā that whatever She cooked would become nectar. Everyone came to

know of this. Rādhā stands here in the company of Her *sakhīs* and watches Kṛṣṇa as He goes to herd the cows. Enjoying great fun in the company of His friends, Kṛṣṇa plays the flute as He walks along this path. While proceeding along with the cowherd boys, Kṛṣṇa, who enchants the worlds, stealthily exchanges glances with Rādhārāṇī. “O Śrīnivāsa, this is the village of Yāvaṭ where Kṛṣṇa meets with Rādhārāṇī to enjoy amusement. Her sister-in-law, Kuṭilā, and mother-in-law, Jaṭilā, are not able to see Kṛṣṇa, who is extremely clever. There is no limit to the happiness of their pastimes! Those who are greatly fortunate relish these pastimes in various ways.

“O Śrīnivāsa and Narottama, what can I say? The enchanting pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are rare for even Lord Brahmā. Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of *rasa*, who can speak in all languages very expertly made the sound of the *kokila* bird as a signal to His beloved. But one day, by divine arrangement, He was unable to meet Her.”

From the *Padyāvalī* comes this description: “When Kṛṣṇa arrived in Rādhā's courtyard for Their rendezvous, His tinkling ornaments sounded as the cooing of cuckoos and other birds. He suddenly heard the door open, and He also heard the continual jingling sounds of conchshell bracelets. When He heard the arrogant Jaṭilā call out, ‘Who's there? Who's there?’ He became pained at heart. He spent that entire night hiding in a tree in a corner of the courtyard.”

“To the west of Yāvaṭ is a forest where one may hear hundreds of thousands of *kokilas* sing. One day Kṛṣṇa entered this forest and happily made a sound just like the *kokila* birds. In response all the birds began singing so loudly that the sound was heard in Yāvaṭ. Hearing the sound of the *kokilas*, Jaṭilā told Viśākhā that she had previously never heard such songs from the *kokilas*. Viśākhā replied that if Jaṭilā would give permission they would go to see the *kokilas* in the forest. Jaṭilā told them to go and listen to the birds and thus Rādhārāṇī with Her *sakhīs* entered the forest. In unlimited happiness they all came and thus Rādhā was able to meet Kṛṣṇa, who was engaged in making sounds of the *kokila* bird. For this reason this forest is known as Kokilavana.

“O Śrīnivāsa, see here the village Āñjanaka where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa performed Their pastimes. One time Rādhā was dressing Herself in a secluded place. She decorated Herself with various jewels, tied Her hair,

and as She was applying *añjana* [collyrium, an eye-salve] to Her eyes, suddenly the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute entered Her ears. Immediately Rādhārāṇī left and came here along with Her *sakhīs* to meet Kṛṣṇa. As Rādhā came before Kṛṣṇa, He became overwhelmed. He made Rādhā sit on a flower-bedecked *āsana* arranged by Vṛndādevī. Looking at the beauty of Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa noticed that Her eyes were not decorated with *añjana*. When He inquired about the reason for this, the *sakhīs* explained everything. Enjoying the opportunity, Kṛṣṇa brought *añjana* and applied it to Rādhā's eyes in great happiness. For this reason this place is called Āñjanaka.

“This is Vidyudvāri-grāma also called Vijo-āri. Whose heart will not melt by hearing the description of this place? When Akrūra came to Vraja the word spread around that he came to take away Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. In ecstatic love he spent the night in the house of Nanda Mahārāja. The next morning, Akrūra along with Nanda and the others set out for Mathurā and Vraja became void due to the departure of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.

“What can I say? Only those who saw the scene can understand. All the damsels of Vraja came running to see Kṛṣṇa with tears flowing like rivers from their eyes. Seeing that scene even wood and stone melted. No one could describe this even with millions of mouths.

“As Kṛṣṇa sat on the chariot, His beloved *gopīs* were overwhelmed and surrounded the chariot. They surrendered their eyes to the lotus face of Kṛṣṇa and, as they cried out, ‘O Lord of my life!’ they fell unconscious. Just as lightening bolts strike the ground, so the *gopīs* similarly fell to the ground. Everyone then came to know how the bolt of lightening [*vijuri*] hits the ground, therefore this place is known as Vijo-āri.

“See here is Paraśo-grāma. As Kṛṣṇa rode in the chariot to Mathurā, He became disturbed seeing the condition of the *gopīs*. In order to pacify them He said, ‘Tomorrow or the day after [*paraśu* means the day after tomorrow] I will return and meet you.’ For this reason the town is called Paraśo. Nearby Paraśo is a town called Śī-grāma. Let me describe briefly how it was named. Kṛṣṇa became impatient here seeing the condition of the *gopīs* and He told them again and again that He would return quickly [Śī comes from *śīghra* which means quickly] from Mathurā.

“Kṛṣṇacandra then left for Mathurā in the chariot, while the *gopīs*,

without Kṛṣṇa, were left as if dead. The tears of innumerable *gopīs* mixed with the *añjana* from their eyes and flowed down their chests to the ground. The combined tears formed a river which everyone said looked just like the Yamunā. This is the place where the *gopīs* cried in ecstatic love. Only the most fortunate persons see this place.

“See here the two villages Kāmāi and Karālā. In Kāmāi, Viśākhā was born and Karālā is Lalitā's town. Ludhaunī-grāma is the residence of various other Vraja-vāsīs and here at Karālā-grāma, Candrāvalī stays with her husband Govardhana, the resident of Karālā. Her father is Candrabhānu, her mother is Indumatī and her elder sister is Rādhārāṇī [It is still current practice to call one's cousin as sister or brother]. The father of Candrāvalī is one of five brothers. The eldest of the five is King Vṛṣabhānu. There is also Candrabhānu, Ratnabhānu, Subhānu and Śrībhānu. Their bodily effulgence is equal to the sun. Along with Govardhana Malla, Candrāvalī sometimes stays at Sakhīsthalī and sometimes at Karālā. The *yūtheśvarīs* headed by Padmā stay at this place. There is no end to their enjoyment as they meet Kṛṣṇa.

“See here is Piyāso-grāma where Kṛṣṇa became very thirsty. Baladeva brought water here and gave to Kṛṣṇa for drinking [*piyāsa* means to thirst].”

Nanda's Friend and Minister Upananda

“This Sāhāra-grāma is the residence of Upananda. He was very elderly and expert in giving guidance.”

Upananda is described in the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* in these words: “His face handsome with a white beard and his complexion dark, pious Upananda is expert in giving council to the Vraja-vāsīs. He is always situated in the council chambers of the King of Vraja. Considering Him millions of times more dear than his own life, Upananda delights his nephew Kṛṣṇa. I pray that Upananda, the resident of Sāhāra-grāma, may always protect the land of Vraja.”

“The affectionate dealings of Upananda are wonderful. His son,

Subhadra, is the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa. No one can describe the qualities of Subhadra, who was dear to Nanda, a learned scholar and very affectionate to Kṛṣṇa. He is described in the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*: “Upananda's son, Subhadra, is dark complexioned, youthful, handsome, and intelligent. He is the best of astrologers. With his vast scholarship he has defeated even Bṛhaspati. He stays at the left hand of the King of Vraja. With good advice he protects Kṛṣṇa, who is millions of times more dear to him than his own life. With great pleasure let us glorify and offer our respectful obeisances to Subhadra.”

“Kṛṣṇa is the life and soul of Kuṇḍalatā, the wife of Subhadra. She is also one of Rādhārāṇī's associates.”

Again from *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*: “Bringing Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī to cook by the order of the Queen of Vraja, charming Kuṇḍalatādevī is filled with happiness as she pleases Rādhā by affectionately and continually narrating the latest news of Lord Kṛṣṇa as they walk together on the path. I worship Kuṇḍalatādevī.”

“Who can describe the unlimited ecstasy, day and night, in this Sāhāra-grāma.

“See here is Sāñkhi-grāma, where Kṛṣṇa killed the demon Śāñkhacūśa. Kṛṣṇa took the jewel from the head of Śāñkhacūśa and happily gave it to Balarāma. Balarāma was staying at Rāma talao which was previously known as Rāma-kuṇḍa. It is situated very near to this place. In great pleasure, Baladeva gave the jewel to Rādhārāṇī through Madhumaṅgala. O Śrīnivāsa and Narottama, in this place Rādhārāṇī became overwhelmed in joy with Her *sakhīs*.”

Pastimes at Chatravana and Umrāo

“At Chatravana, Kṛṣṇa took the role of a king with his friends taking His orders and establishing His rule throughout the area. From one forest to the next the *sakhās* headed by Madhumaṅgala boldly called for support of Kṛṣṇa's rule. ‘Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja, is the king of this land. In this kingdom no one else has authority. Anyone picking

flowers in His kingdom will be brought before the king and punished.' "Lalitā and the *sakhīs* repeatedly replied in anger, 'Who is it that dares claim authority in Rādhārāṇī's kingdom?' Speaking in this way, Lalitā and the *sakhīs* at that moment established Rādhārāṇī as *umarāha* [*umarāha* means a rich man or prince]. Sitting on a throne fit for a prince, Rādhārāṇī then told Her *sakhīs*, 'That person who claims authority in My kingdom should be defeated and brought here immediately!' Hearing the instruction, the *sakhīs* prepared for battle taking flower sticks made by Vṛndā.

"From a distance, Subala and the other *sakhās* saw thousands and thousands of *sakhīs* coming at them from all directions. As Madhumaṅgala was trying to escape he was captured by one of the *sakhīs* who tied his hands with a flower garland. He was quickly brought before Rādhārāṇī. Seeing Madhumaṅgala, Rādhārāṇī repeatedly asked him, 'Who has the authority to rule this kingdom? That ruler will punish all of you so that you will never again act in such a way.'

Hearing this, Madhumaṅgala bent his head down and replied, 'Give me such punishment that my belly will be filled.' Rādhārāṇī replied, 'Release this *brāhmaṇa* who is simply interested in filling his stomach. Let him go to his king.' The *sakhīs* released Madhumaṅgala, who ran off, hands still bound.

"Kṛṣṇa, who was arrogantly sitting on the throne as king, inquired from Madhumaṅgala, 'Why have you come in such a condition?'

"In distress, Madhumaṅgala repeatedly replied, 'This is the result I got by declaring You king. Rādhārāṇī is the prince with unlimited power. What can You do against Her authority? The same Cupid who steals the composure of the world trembles at the movement of Her eyes. My advice to You is that You should recognize Her authority, surrender Yourself, and take Her shelter.'

"Kṛṣṇa said, 'Whatever you say is all right Madhu, but I cannot bear to see you bound like this.'

"Madhu replied, 'I'm not distressed even if I am insulted. I only care for Your well-being.' Speaking like this, he then took the hand of Kṛṣṇa and led Him to the place where Rādhā was.

"Seeing Her beloved coming, Rādhā, in happiness, became restless and unlimitedly embarrassed. Rādhārāṇī wanted to give up the dress of a

prince, however Her *sakhī* told Her, 'Stay here in this dress.'

"Seeing from a distance Rādhikā in that dress, Kṛṣṇa became unsteady and could not remain patient. Madhumaṅgala felt jubilant at heart to see Kṛṣṇa in that condition, and he quickly brought Him close to Rādhā. He made Kṛṣṇa sit on the right with Rādhārāṇī on Kṛṣṇa's left. What a wonderfully beautiful scene!

"Madhumaṅgala spoke again and again to Rādhārāṇī, 'Now take Kṛṣṇa and show Your authority. Kṛṣṇa will give You a gift of a jewel-like embrace. Please accept it with care.'

"Hearing these sweet words, Lalitā happily smiled and put one sweet in the mouth of Madhumaṅgala. Madhu said, 'You did something wrong in binding me. If you feed me a hundred thousand *laśśus* you can be freed from this offense.' Having said this and looking on the magnificent beauty of the divine couple surrounded by the *sakhīs*, Madhumaṅgala made a funny posture while enjoying the *laśśu*. After enjoying the *laśśu*, Madhu said in the most sweet words, 'I have a lot to do,' and happily departed.

"The Prince and King then both joyfully entered the forest abode, and, as They became fatigued in Their conjugal affairs, the *sakhīs* relieved Them in various ways.

"O Śrīnivāsa, what more can I say of these pastimes? For this reason this town is named Umarāo."

The Renunciation and Service of Lokanātha Gosvāmī at Kīśorī-kuṇḍa

"This beautiful Kīśorī-kuṇḍa is very dear to Kīśorī, the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu. Seeing this wonderful place, Lokanātha Gosvāmī felt great pleasure within and resided here. There is no end to speaking of his renunciation. Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda bestowed Their mercy on him here. Whenever he got fruits, roots, sak, or rice, Lokanātha Gosvāmī would offer it to Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda with great devotion. During the rainy and winter seasons Lokanātha stayed under this tree with only an old quilt

and very old outer cloth. During the rains, Lokanātha would keep his Lord within the hollow of a tree and he would remain outside getting wet. At other times, he would happily keep Rādhā-Vinoda in an old bag hanging on his chest. Remembering the pastimes of Śrī Gauracandra, he would become overwhelmed and cry at this place.”

After describing these topics Rāghava became impatient and swam in his own tears. Śrīnivāsa and Narottama fell to ground and rolled in the dust. They sighed deeply and swam in their tears of ecstatic love. After some time Rāghava Paṇḍita regained his composure and, taking Śrīnivāsa and Narottama along, they continued on their way.

Rāghava Paṇḍita said, “This town is Narīsemarī, previously known as Śyāmarī-Kinnarī. Seeing no way to break Rādhā's angry mood, Kṛṣṇa took the form of a *sakhī*, Śyāmāsakhī, here.

“While playing *vīṇā*, Kṛṣṇa as Śyāmāsakhī arrived here before Rādhārāṇī, who exclaimed, ‘In every way she seems to be a Kinnarī.’ Hearing the sound of the *vīṇā*, Rādhā became overwhelmed and put Her jeweled necklace on the neck of Śyāmāsakhī. The Kinnarī said, ‘Give Me the jewel of Your anger and accept Me as Your own.’

“Hearing these words, Rādhā gave up Her angry mood and slowly smiled as She became overwhelmed in delight. In this way the two towns are named. The influence of Devī at this place is very intense.

“O Śrīnivāsa, see in front is Chatravana. At this place the son of Nanda became king. A few days after Kṛṣṇa became king, Paurṇamāsī, floating in happiness, crowned Rādhārāṇī the Queen of Vṛndāvana. Who can possibly describe the pastime of Rādhārāṇī's *abhiṣeka* as the Queen of Vṛndāvana that was performed here at Rādhā-sthalī?”

In the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* it is stated: “Ordered by Brahmā, who spoke from the sky, Paurṇamāsīdevī crowned Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī Queen of the beautiful forest of Vṛndāvana by jubilantly sprinkling the waters of the Mānasa-gaṅgā and other sacred rivers upon Her head in the company of Savitridevī and other delighted demigoddesses. I pray that the sacred place, known as Unmatta-Rādhā-sthalī [the place where Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī became overwhelmed with happiness], may sprinkle some transcendental happiness upon me.”

Khadiravana

The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* gives the following description: “The seventh forest is famous on the earth as Khadiravana. O auspicious one, any person who goes there will go to My abode.”

“O Śrīnivāsa, see this place where Kṛṣṇa with His friends played many games as they tended the cows. See here is a most enchanting place called Saṅgama-kuṇḍa [*saṅgama* means union] where Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* happily met together. Being an especially secluded place, Lokanātha occasionally stayed here in great happiness with Bhugarbha Gosvāmī.

This is Kadamba-khaṇḍi, situated so beautifully. The son of Nanda performed amazing pastimes here.

“Near Yāvaṭ is Bakatharā, where Kṛṣṇa killed Bakāsura. O Śrīnivāsa, this place is called Neochāka-sthāna. Kṛṣṇa performed pastimes of eating here. In Vraja-dhāma eatables are known as *chāka*. When Kṛṣṇa wants to eat, mother Yaśodā sends the eatables. The other cowherd boys are also sent food by their mothers at this forest.

“See here is Bhāṇḍagora-grāma. O Śrīnivāsa, Kṛṣṇa performed wonderful pastimes here. People now call this town Bhadali. One who takes bath here achieves all perfection.

In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated, “Hey Bhūmi! The place known as Bhāṇḍagora-tīrtha is My confidential abode. People may without doubt attain perfection in Bhāṇḍagora-tīrtha. O auspicious one, that lake is surrounded by groves of trees and vines. A person who fasts for a day and night and bathes there goes to Vidyādhara-loka, where he enjoys great happiness. Hey Bhūmi! I shall now tell you a wonderful secret. At this place, on Dvādaśī, My devotees stay awake to the middle of the night hearing songs about Me which bring pleasure to the ears.”

Speaking in this way, they continued visiting various other places and then returned to Nandīśvara [Nanda-grāma] in a blissful state.

Glorifying the character of Nanda Mahārāja and the other Vraja-vāsīs, they came to the shores of Pāvana-sarovara.

Sanātana Gosvāmī's Stay at Pāvana-sarovara

Just by seeing the *bhajana kuṭira* of Sanātana Gosvāmī, they all became agitated in love and tears flowed from their eyes. Rāghava Paṇḍita spoke to Śrīnivāsa. “Let me describe something now about the stay of Sanātana Gosvāmī at this place. Coming from Vṛndāvana to this secluded forest, he was overwhelmed in ecstatic love from always worshiping Lord Kṛṣṇa. Sanātana lived as a recluse, making no endeavor for his food. No one knew that he was staying at this place. Kṛṣṇa in the guise of a cowherd boy came happily before Sanātana with a pot of milk. Dressed as a cowherd boy with a turban on His head and the pot of milk in His hand, He spoke to Sanātana. ‘You live in this secluded place with no one knowing you are here. While I was tending the cows I happened to see you. Please listen to Me, drink this milk without hesitation. Leave the empty pot and I will return for it. If you stay here in a *kuṭira*, we will all be very happy, but the Vraja-vāsīs will be distressed seeing you stay like this.’

“Speaking these words, Gopāla left and the enchanted Sanātana drank the milk. Immediately after drinking the milk he became agitated in ecstasy. Wet with his tears, he lamented. The unseen Lord solaced Sanātana by having the Vraja-vāsīs build him a *bhajana-kuṭira*. Like this, the *kuṭira* of Sanātana Gosvāmī was built. Rūpa Gosvāmī would also stay here from time to time.

“One day Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī was thinking he would like to offer some sweet rice to Sanātana Gosvāmī. Thinking like this he immediately hesitated, but Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī understood his mind. In the guise of a cowherd girl, She came there in a joyful mood with ghee, milk, sugar, etc. She said to Rūpa Gosvāmī, ‘Please accept these items and cook an offering for Lord Kṛṣṇa after which you should accept the *prasāda*. My mother asked Me to tell you this, so please don't feel embarrassed in your mind.’ Speaking in this way, Rādhārāṇī left in amusement.

“Rūpa Gosvāmī then immediately started cooking. After making the offering to Kṛṣṇa, in great ecstasy Rūpa served Sanātana Gosvāmī some

of the *prasāda*. Sanātana could not understand how he felt so much happiness in his heart just by smelling the fragrance of that *prasāda*. After taking one or two morsels of the *prasāda*, Sanātana became agitated and could not check his tears. Sanātana Gosvāmī then inquired from Rūpa about the ingredients for the *prasāda*, to which Rūpa Gosvāmī narrated the whole incident. Hearing the story, Sanātana forbade him to endeavor for such things in the future. After speaking thus, he accepted the *prasāda*. Rūpa Gosvāmī, however, was regretful. “Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī appeared to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in a dream and solaced him. Sanātana also came to know this. O Śrīnivāsa, in this way the wonderful qualities of Rūpa Gosvāmī were made known to the Vaiṣṇava community.

“One day while discussing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in separation, all the Vaiṣṇavas cried and fell to the ground unconscious. The heart of Rūpa Gosvāmī was burning like a large fire, yet he did not disclose this fact. As Rūpa Gosvāmī exhaled, his breath touched one devotee who was burned by the heat, and blisters formed on his body. Seeing this, everyone became astonished. Such are the activities of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. What more can I say? The unlimited happiness at Nandīśvara is difficult to describe.”

After finishing this narration, they proceeded to Sanātana Gosvāmī's *bhajana kuṭīra*. At that place was the son of Sanātana Gosvāmī's priest named Gopāla Miśra, who had all good qualities. He was the disciple of Sanātana Gosvāmī and was most handsome. Seeing him everyone became filled with joy. Śrī Uddhava dāsa, Mādhava dāsa and others who were there all experienced great ecstasy meeting each other.

Immediately all the Vraja-vāsīs happily brought varieties of foodstuffs for them. That day the devotees had a grand festival. They spent the whole night chanting the holy name. Whoever hears of these wonderful pastimes very soon attains *Kṛṣṇa-prema*. Śrī Gopāla dāsa and all other learned personalities all became joyful at heart. In the morning, with Śrī Rāghava Paṇḍita leading Śrīnivāsa and Narottama, they continued on the *parikramā* path.

Rāghava Paṇḍita spoke to Śrīnivāsa and Narottama. “See this village named Baiṭhāna. When the cowherd men had a conference, everyone came to this place and sat. Because they sat here, this place is known as

Baiṭhāna. [*Baiṭhāka* means a conference or sitting place.] Now people call the place Choṭa [small] and Baśa [big]. Being bound by the Vraja-vāsīs' affection, Sanātana Gosvāmī happily stayed here. Let me describe for everyone's purification a little about the wonderful character of Sanātana Gosvāmī, who always considered the Vraja-vāsīs more dear than his own life. As Sanātana Gosvāmī performed Vraja *parikramā* he would stay in town after town and there was no limit to his happiness.”

The Vraja-vāsīs Behavior Towards Sanātana Gosvāmī From Town to Town

“After staying in one town, when Sanātana would go to another town, the people would follow behind him. Whether a young boy or old man, whoever it was, all would lose their patience and cry as the Gosvāmī would leave. Sanātana Gosvāmī himself would shed tears as he solaced them and sent them back to their own homes. Only after they all stopped crying and returned to their houses would Sanātana leave for the next village. As Sanātana approached the next village, the people would watch him coming from a distance. Whether young or old, man or women, everyone would say, ‘Here is Rūpa, Sanātana.’ The Vraja-vāsīs displayed wonderful affection.

“The villagers could not sit in one place, but went to welcome Sanātana. Just as a poor man experiences unlimited happiness if he suddenly obtains a valuable jewel, so the Vraja-vāsīs felt unlimited happiness by seeing Sanātana.

“The old and very old men and women, all treated Sanātana as their own son. Someone said, ‘My dear son, how did you pass so many days forgetting us? Thinking about you we were almost dead.’ Speaking these words they all looked on the face of Sanātana Gosvāmī. Seeing the wonderful arrangements for his welcome, Sanātana was greatly pleased. The men, women, and youths who were born in that village all had brotherly affection for Sanātana. Someone said, ‘My dear brother, how are you? You must have forgotten us completely. Why have you become

so cruel?' In this way they spoke with tears in their eyes. All the boys and girls came to touch the feet of Sanātana. Although he tried, he was unable to restrain them. Standing at a distant place out of shyness, the married ladies would take *darśana* of Sanātana.

“O Śrīnivāsa, just by seeing Sanātana Gosvāmī everyone forgot even to offer obeisances, etc. Whoever came rushing to welcome him would embrace him, take his hand, and lead him along. The villagers would jubilantly have him sit under a sacred tree, and everyone would sit around him. They would all bring yogurt, butter, and milk from their homes for Sanātana. After he finished eating, they would all sit happily with him.

“Sanātana affectionately inquired from each person about their well-being. He inquired about how many children—daughters and sons—they had, whether they were married, where they were married, what were their names, and what was their education. He asked how many cows and bulls one had, how their agriculture was, how much grains they produced, and what was their daily routine. He also asked them how their health was and what was their state of mind.

“Hearing these inquiries, everyone felt happy. Gradually each one of them answered his questions. When Sanātana heard someone's distress, he also felt distressed. By Sanātana's solace they felt relief from their distressed condition. In this way they passed the whole night.

“Early in the morning, as soon as Sanātana Gosvāmī had finished his bath and other duties, everyone would come to see him. They would bring milk and yogurt and request Sanātana to accept it. After feeding others, Sanātana would also eat. By seeing others happy, Sanātana would also become happy. As described previously, when he would leave the village everyone would cry in agitation. Who can describe the affectionate dealings of Sanātana Gosvāmī? He would solace everyone in various ways. The people would follow Sanātana Gosvāmī for some distance until he would give his own vow to make them return to their homes.

“Sanātana would wander from town to town until he arrived at Baiṭhāna-grāma. Seeing Sanātana, all the villagers felt so much joy it cannot be described. Sanātana Gosvāmī inquired about everyone's welfare and thus joyfully passed the day and night. Everyone knew that

Sanātana would stay in a place for only one night, so they spoke to him in distress, 'If you remain for a few days here it would be auspicious for everyone. Therefore please accept our plea and don't be cruel to us. Please give up your habit of leaving in the early morning and thus save our lives.' Speaking in this way all the villagers cried. In order to please everyone, Sanātana Gosvāmī agreed to stay. Thus the people of Baiṭhāna and the surrounding villages were always absorbed in his wonderful qualities.

“O Śrīnivāsa, see this Nīpa-vana, the beauty of which enchants all. Here at Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa they enjoyed unending fun. At Kuṇḍala-kuṇḍa, Kṛṣṇa used to decorate His hair. In Beśokhora-kuñja, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa performed pastimes within the closed room of the *kuñja*.

“At Caraṇa-pāhāśi Kṛṣṇa joyfully performed different pastimes. Once Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd boyfriends climbed this hill simply to see the beauty of the grazing cows. Dressed in attractive clothing, Kṛṣṇa stood beneath a tree while playing His flute, standing in His threefold bending form. As soon as the sound of His flute was heard, people from all directions gathered near Him and stood motionless as they heard the sweet music. Within this earth is there any comparison to that heavenly music? Even the mountains melted at the sound of His flute. The footprints of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as well as those who came to hear His flute, are on that mountain and therefore it is called Caraṇa-pāhāśi [*caraṇa* means foot and *pāhāśi* means hill or mountain].

“See here is Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa at Hāroyāla-grāma, where Rāi and Ghanaśyāma enjoyed Their pastimes. Being defeated here in a dice game with Rādhikā, Kṛṣṇa became greatly shamed. [Hāroyāla comes from *hārā*, meaning defeat.] Lalitā said to Rādhikā, 'You have easily defeated the master of Your soul in this dice game and in every other way, but we shall see who wins in the game of love.' The friends of Rādhā then escorted the divine couple to the *nikuñja-mandira* and secretly watched Them. Seeing this divine loving relationship between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the *sakhīs* felt themselves to be most fortunate.

“In Sātoṣā-grāma Śrī Śāntanu Muni worshiped Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa used to roam freely at Sūrya-kuṇḍa, Nandana-kūpa and Vādya-śilā. It was in Pāi-grāma [*pāi* means to obtain] where Śrī Rādhikā and Her *sakhīs* caught hold of Kṛṣṇa after searching for Him. In this place called

Calana-śilā [*calana* means motion], Kṛṣṇa sat down being unable to move out of a mood of love.

“In Kāmari-grāma [*kāma* means lust or desire] Kṛṣṇa passionately waited for Rādhā. In Vichora-grāma Candramukhī and Her friends met Kṛṣṇa. [Vichora comes from *viccheda* which means separation.] After They sported, They returned to Their own homes feeling separation from each other. Therefore this village is called Vichora.

“In Tiloyāra-grāma Kṛṣṇa would play without taking a moments rest [Tiloyāra comes from *tila* meaning even one moment]. See this Śṛṅgāra-vaṭa where Kṛṣṇa decorated Rādhikā in different ways. Then see this beautiful place of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. People presently call this place Lalāpura. Here is Vāsosī-grāma, which is perfumed by the scent of Kṛṣṇa's body. [This name comes from *vāsa* meaning fragrance.] What to speak of maddening the bumblebees, the composure of the entire world is destroyed by that scent. It was here that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa played Holi with Their dear friends. In Paya-grāma, Kṛṣṇa drank *payāi* [milk] with His friends, and He snatched yogurt from the *gopīs* in Dadhi-grāma. He passed His time in merriment in Kotaravana which is now called Kotavana.”

Śrī Mahāprabhu Visits Śeṣaśāyī at the Border of Vraja

“Once Kṛṣṇa laid down on Ananta Śeṣa at Śeṣaśāyī, Kṣīra-samudra, and Śrī Rādhikā massaged His lotus feet. Their divine beauty cannot be described. The *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* describes: ‘While Kṛṣṇa was lying down on Ananta Śeṣa, Rādhikā wanted to hold His soft lotus feet on Her chest, but considering that Her hard breasts might hurt His soft feet She restrained Herself. I pray to that Śeṣaśāyī Kṛṣṇa to grant me a residence in this beautiful land of Vraja.’”

Rāghava explained that Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanyacandra came here for *darśana* of Śeṣaśāyī. Seeing the beauty of Śeṣaśāyī, His ecstasy increased and in that state of love He became overwhelmed. Those fortunate persons who saw the effulgence of the Lord also became maddened in

ecstasy and tears flowed from their eyes. They concluded that He could not be an ordinary human being, but must be Śeṣaśāyī Bhagavān Himself in the dress of a *sannyāsī*. While speaking, they looked continually at the moonlike face of Caitanya.

“O Śrīnivāsa,” said Śrī Rāghava, “the character of Mahāprabhu is unfathomable, and only by His mercy is one able to understand Him.” Rāghava then pointed to a *kadamba* tree garden where Kṛṣṇa used to roam. Then there was Khāni-grāma in Khambahara, where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma grazed their cattle. Khāni-grāma is on one boundary of Vraja and on another boundary there is Vanacārī, which is also famous for the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. In Khararo, Balarāma inquired about the well-being of His cowherd boyfriends. In Ujāni, [*ujāna* means an upstream course] the Yamunā changed her course and flowed upstream while listening to the sweet music of Kṛṣṇa's flute. In Khelanavana, now called Khelā-tīrtha, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma played continually, forgetting even Their food until Their mothers came to feed Them.

Balarāma's Rāsa-līlā at Rāma-ghāṭa

“O Śrīnivāsa, this is Rāma-ghāṭa. Balarāma, the son of Rohinī, performed His *rāsa-līlā* here. This place is situated quite a distance from where Kṛṣṇa had His *rāsa-līlā*.

“Balarāma is the second body of Kṛṣṇa Himself—supremely gentle and forbearing. The depth of His real self is like that of ten million oceans. Anxious to meet the residents of Vṛndāvana, He came to Vraja from Dvārakā and stayed during the months of Caitra and Vaiśākha [mid-March to mid-May] to console Śrī Nanda, Yaśodā, and the others. By His loving submissive dealings, the son of Rohinī satisfied His friends in various ways.

“Here also, Balarāma gave solace to all of Kṛṣṇa's beloved *gopī* friends and charmed His own dear and loving *gopīs* with whom He had previously sported during spring. Who can possibly describe the great fun they enjoyed as they performed their pastimes. At that time Kṛṣṇa

killed Saṣkhachuśa. Then Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma both increased the *rañga* [*rañga* means fun and also color] with Their own beloveds by celebrating a festival of Holi [throwing colored dyes on one another]. The learned devotees have described the beauty of these pastimes.

“In *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Carita*, Murāri Gupta says: ‘Just see! At this place Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, decorated with gold and jeweled ornaments and suitably dressed for spring, engaged in amorous pastimes in a merry mood each with His own beautiful *gopīs*. They are overflowing with ecstatic mellows as They joined Their lovely *gopī* friends in dancing and singing.’

“The sporting activities of Lord Balarāma are most wonderful and abounding with transcendental mellows. There is no limit to His dear beloveds. He increased the loving attachment of those *gopīs* who were not fortunate enough due to their young age to associate with Kṛṣṇa when He performed His *rāsa-līlā*. How Balarāma engaged in this pastime is beyond description.”

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.65.17), it is stated: “Lord Balarāma, the Personality of Godhead, resided there for the two months of Madhu and Mādhava, and during the nights He gave His cowherd girlfriends conjugal pleasure.”

Śrī Rāghava continued to describe the beauty of Balarāma at the time of His *rāsa-līlā*. “O Śrīnivāsa, knowing that He would perform His *rāsa-līlā* with His dear lovers, Balarāma happily came to this place. This pleasant spot, situated near the Yamunā River, was always filled with scented air. The flowers of the gardens were in full bloom and the sky was bright from the full moon. The humming of bumblebees and the sweet singing of various birds surcharged the atmosphere. Millions of male and female peacocks danced and many deer played in the garden. As Balarāma relaxed beneath a tree, the gods in heaven sang the glories of Rohinī-nandana whose beauty and posture fascinate the world.

“O Śrīnivāsa, who can keep his composure seeing the splendor of Baladeva? It was here that Rāma sat on a jewelled throne in a festive dress. The beauty of Baladeva conquers that of millions of Kāmadevas and every movement of His charms the *munis* and Indras. The glory of His body which brightens the three worlds can defeat the pride of a million moons. The silky black curly hair covering His head is decorated

with a jewel-set crown and He wears a flower garland. His lips are as red as *bimba* fruit and His teeth sparkle like pearls. A garland of Vaijayanti dangles from His powerful neck.

“All glories to the powerful hero, Rohinī-nandana. The white conch, *kuṇḍa* flowers, camphor, and the silver-white mountain, all bow down to Balarāma's bright white complexion. The wavy locks of His lustrous hair, curling around His forehead and His bright *tilaka* steals the young maidens' hearts. His lotus eyes are restless and His eyebrows dance like black bumblebees near His bright earrings. With a pointed nose that defeats the beauty of Garuṣa's beak and His face which conquers the splendor of the moon, it appears as though nectar pours from His body. His arms are decorated with bangles, and jewelled necklaces adorn His strong chest. His thin waist breaks the lion's pride. He is wearing an exquisite blue dress and His well-shaped knees are very pleasing to all who see Him.

“The reddish color of the souls of His feet defeat the sun and the brightness of His nails conquers the darkness. I am unable to describe the beauty of Baladeva as there is no comparison to Him in this world. In this way the *Purāṇas* give Baladeva's descriptions which the fortunate must always see.

“In this place Rohinī-nandana, Balarāma, stood in a threefold bending form and blew joyfully on His horn, the sound of which moved the heart of Brahmā and others. O Śrīnivāsa, with only one mouth how can I describe the beauty of Balai's pastimes? Here in this moon-lit Yamunā-upavana, Balarāma engaged in pastimes surrounded by millions of *gopīs*.” This is described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.65.18-20) as follows: “In the company of numerous women, Lord Balarāma enjoyed in a garden by the Yamunā River. This garden was bathed in the rays of the full moon and caressed by breezes bearing the fragrance of night-blooming lotuses. “Sent by the demigod Varuṇa, the divine Vāruṇī liquor flowed from a tree hollow and made the entire forest even more fragrant with its sweet aroma. The wind carried to Balarāma the fragrance of that flood of sweet liquor, and when He smelled it He went [to the tree]. There He and His female companions drank.”

Rāghava continued his story. “After drinking the liquor, Rohinī-nandana became maddened as He began His *rāsa* dance with His *gopīs*.

Some of the *gopīs* played *mṛdaṅga*, *pināka*, *vīṇā*, and other instruments, while other *gopīs* sang Balarāma's glories in melodious songs based on rhythmic tunes and beats. Lord Brahmā and others were moved by the music. Śrī Balarāma Himself became overwhelmed by the dancing, singing, and music, and soon the *rāsa-mandira* was filled with unlimited happiness. To enjoy water sports with His lovers, Balarāma brought the Yamunā near by pulling her with His plough and then sported in her water. After bathing, Balarāma changed His dress, drank honey and liquor and spent the night with His associates. In the early morning the *gopīs* could not bear their separation from Balarāma and did not want to return to their homes. Balarāma consoled them in many ways and sent them to their houses. Out of fear of Balarāma, the Yamunā offered Him prayers and, folding her hands, she threw herself at His feet.”

This description is found in the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*: “When by her own quiet nature, the Yamunā was flowing to the south ocean, she did not respond to the order of Balarāma and thus He pulled her with His plough. In this place the Yamunā can be seen as she is. I sing the glories of this place with my devoted heart.”

Śrī Rāghava told his followers that Balarāma's Rāsa-sthalī is famous throughout the world and devotees always offer their prayers at this beautiful place named Rāma-ghāṭa.

Nityānanda Prabhu's Līlā at Rāma-ghāṭa

“Whoever hears the glories of Rāma-ghāṭa can be easily freed from worldly life.

“During His pilgrimages, Śrī Rāsa-vilāsī Rāma, Nityānanda Rāya, passed some days here. He played with the cowherd boys and ate curd, milk, roots, and fruits whenever He felt hungry. He was perplexed, trying unsuccessfully to conceal His identity as Baladeva. The local people said, ‘This must be Rohinī-nandana travelling in Vraja as an *avadhūta*.’

Seeing Nityānanda's divine performance, all people—young, old, and youths—were bewildered.”

Rāghava showed the *śākaṭa* tree whose wood Nityānanda used to clean His teeth. At Rāma-ghāṭa there was a *brāhmaṇa* who could not live for a moment without the thought of Baladeva. To satisfy His devotee, Nityānanda gave him *darśana* as Baladeva. Here also Kāḷindī prayed to Nityānanda, Śrī Rāsa-vilāsī Balarāma. Even the demigods could not restrain their tears of ecstasy as they watched Nityānanda sporting at this place.

“When Nityānanda slept on a bed of dust beneath the trees He would call out again and again in His dream, ‘When will the emancipation of these wretched souls take place? When will the Lord of Navadvīpa advent Himself? I will go and see Him with My own eyes.’ No one could understand the meaning of His words.

“Kacchavana is a place near Rāma-ghāṭa where the children used to play as *kacchapa* [turtles]. In Bhuṣanavana, the *sakhās* dressed Kṛṣṇa in flower ornaments. All these places are famous for Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Seeing these places relieves one from the blazing fire of material existence.”

While describing these holy places Śrī Rāghava and his followers passed through a forest whose beauty created restlessness within their minds. Travelling on the path to Bhāṇḍīra they felt great happiness within. Presently people call this the place of the Akṣaya-vaṭa [a banyan tree]. Speaking in very sweet words Rāghava told Śrīnivāsa, “Look at this beautiful place called Bhāṇḍīra-vaṭa. At this place Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa enjoyed Their sports. As They played games with Their *sakhās*, Pralambhāsura in disguise also joined them. Balarāma in fun killed Pralambha and in this way enjoyed Kṛṣṇa's various pastimes with the *sakhās* here in Bhāṇḍīra.

“One day as Kṛṣṇa sat beneath a tree in Bhāṇḍīra, He played His flute in such an enchanting tone that it could drive the whole world mad. When Rādhā heard the sound of the flute She became agitated and ran to meet Kṛṣṇa along with Her friends. In great ecstasy They enjoyed various sporting pastimes here along with the *sakhīs*.”

The Wrestling Sport of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa

“Rādhā asked Kṛṣṇa in Her soft voice, ‘How do You play with Your friends at this place?’ Kṛṣṇa answered, ‘I dress as a wrestler and I wrestle with My friends. No one knows wrestling like Me and I win very easily.’ Lalitā smiled and requested Kṛṣṇa again and again to show them His wrestling in His wrestler's dress. They all then changed into wrestler's costumes, but Kṛṣṇa was very proud of His dress. Rādhā smiled sweetly when She saw Kṛṣṇa's wrestling costume, and They both entered the wrestling arena. There was no question of winning or losing in that wrestling match and Kandarpa, the god of love, was satisfied to watch the game.

“This pastime is described in *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* as follows: ‘I sing the glory of Bhāṇḍīra, where charming Śrī Rādhā, being eager to wrestle with Kṛṣṇa, dressed Herself and Her *sakhīs* in wrestling costumes. For the pleasure of Madana, She then cheerfully wrestled with Bakāri, the enemy of Bakāsura, who was also dressed as a wrestler.’

“In this way, various wonderful pastimes were performed in Bhāṇḍīravana. Who can describe them all?

“Just see Ārā-grāma and Muñjāṭavī near Bhāṇḍīra, where Kṛṣṇa swallowed the forest fire to rescue the cows and cowherd boys. Bhāṇḍārī-grāma is on the other side of the Yamunā. In Tapovana the daughters of the cowherd men performed *tapasya*. At Gopī-ghāṭa they bathed in the Yamunā. The *gopīs* joyfully worshiped Kātyāyanīdevī at Cīra-ghāṭa. They put their clothes here on the bank of the Yamunā as they entered the water for bath. Kṛṣṇa secretly stole their clothes and climbed into a *kadamba* tree to see the fun. When the *gopīs* realized they had no clothes, they were greatly ashamed and bade Kṛṣṇa to return their clothes while remaining in the water. After revealing His mind, Kṛṣṇa jubilantly returned their clothes. The *gopīs* then dressed themselves, but only after they had dedicated themselves to Kṛṣṇa.

Here at Nanda-ghāṭa Nanda and the other cowherd men took their bath in the Yamunā River. After fasting on the Ekādaśī, Nanda was entering the Kālindī to take his bath on the Dvādaśī. While bathing, a servant of Varuṇa abducted Nanda, but Kṛṣṇa easily rescued him. As Nanda had become afraid in this place, Kṛṣṇa's great grandson, Vajra, the son of Aniruddha, named this place Bhaya. Leaving Bhaya behind, Śrī Rāghava continued his tour of the holy places around Mathurā.

“See here Vatsavana where Brahmā stole the calves. The *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* gives this description: ‘I sing the glories of Vatsa-harana-sthalī where Brahmā, being inquisitive about the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa, stole the calves and cowherd boys. To satisfy the long cherished desire of the mothers of the calves and cowherd boys, Kṛṣṇa then manifested Himself as calves and cowherd boys to eat the food given by their mothers.’

“In Unāi, Kṛṣṇa and His boyfriends ate all sorts of food. In Bālahārā, Brahmā felt delighted as he stole all the cowherd boys. [Bālahārā comes from: *bāla*, meaning boys and *hārā*, meaning stolen]. In Parikhama, Brahmā wanted to test [*parikṣā*] the power of Kṛṣṇa. At this place, Sei [*sei* means that] which is known by all, Brahmā was bewildered by Kṛṣṇa's *māyā*. After stealing the cowherd boys and calves, Brahmā kept them hidden. But when he returned to Kṛṣṇa, he saw those same boys and calves. Being overwhelmed he repeatedly said, ‘Those are these, or these are those!’ That is why the name of this place is Sei. In Comuhāgrāma Brahmā approached Kṛṣṇa and, repenting his audacity, offered prayers to the Lord.”

The *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* describes: “I sing the glories of the place called Bhīrucaturmukha. It was here that Brahmā repented for his offense of stealing the cows and cowherd boys and fell on the ground at the feet of Mukunda, the gently smiling son of Mahārāja Nanda. With his eyes filled with tears, he sang the glories of the Lord.”

“In Aghavana Kṛṣṇa killed Aghāsura, but people now call the place Sapaulī [Sapaulī means the place of snakes].”

In the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* it is stated: “May Sarpa-sthalī be my protector, for it was here that the powerful Murāri watched as His friends entered into the burning, poisonous stomach of the sinful Aghāsura. He followed His friends, who are more dear to Him than His own life, and being angry at the demon, killed the giant snake in order to rescue them.”

“In Jayeta-grāma the demigods glorified Kṛṣṇa, ‘Jaya! Jaya! All glories to the Supreme Personality of Godhead!’ and then showered Him with flowers. Kṛṣṇa killed Aghāsura in a clever [*siyāna*] way, therefore this village was given the name Soyāno or sometimes Sehonā. See the two villages Tarolī and Varolī which were named by the *gopas*.”

Then Rāghava took Narottama and Śrīnivāsa up a small hill called Kṛṣṇa-kunḍa ṛīla and as they looked in all directions they felt intense

pleasure. Rāghava showed them Magherā village, which was previously called Maghaherā and the *tamāla* forest where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa used to meet.

“In Āṭasu-grāma, the saint Aṣṭavakra performed austerities. Śakrasthāna was later named Śakaroyā. This place is famous because it was here that Śakra [Indra] became afraid after causing the terrible rain in Vraja. In Varāhara village Kṛṣṇa played with His friends by assuming the form of Varāha. See Harāsālī-grāma where Kṛṣṇa performed His *rāsa*.”

From *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* comes this description: “May that Rāsa-sthalī, which is the precious gem of the three worlds, be our protector. While dancing with the radiantly beautiful wives of the cowherd men, Kṛṣṇa left them and went with Rādhā to a solitary place to decorate Her with flower ornaments and engage in divine loving play with Her.”

After describing the various holy places, Śrī Rāghava returned to Nanda-ghāṭa with Śrīnivāsa and Narottama.

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's Residence at Nanda-ghāṭa

Śrī Rāghava said that in a lonely place at Nanda-ghāṭa, Jīva Gosvāmī lived in seclusion for sometime.

Once Śrī Rūpa was writing a book in a quiet place in Vṛndāvana. It was a hot day, and to dry the sweat from Rūpa's body Śrī Jīva would stand nearby fanning him. The beauty of both Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Jīva was effulgent. At that time Śrī Vallabha came to visit Rūpa. When he saw the *maṅgalācaraṇa* [introductory prayers] of Rūpa's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, he told Rūpa, “I shall edit it.” When he went to bathe in the Yamunā, Śrī Jīva followed on the pretext of taking water from the Yamunā.

Although he did not know Śrī Vallabha personally, Jīva asked him, “What is the flaw in the *maṅgalācaraṇa*?”

As Vallabha mentioned each point he felt required correction, Jīva refuted the point by his knowledge of the scriptures. Unable to defeat Śrī Jīva in a discussion, Vallabha went to Śrī Rūpa to inquire about the

identity of Jīva. Rūpa told Vallabha that the young Vaiṣṇava was his nephew, and that he had arrived from his village only a few days before. Vallabha Bhaṭṭa praised Jīva Gosvāmī and told Rūpa the details of their discussion on the book. Then Vallabha left that place.

When Śrī Jīva returned from the river, Śrī Rūpa scolded him in a very quiet voice, “It was very kind of Bhaṭṭa to visit me, and for my own benefit he wanted to edit my book. This much you could not tolerate by your Vaiṣṇava grace? Go back to your home and return to Vṛndāvana when you will be able to be patient.”

At once Śrī Jīva left the place and headed east towards his home. When his mind became peaceful, he decided to remain in a solitary place in the forest as he did not have permission to return to the association of Rūpa Gosvāmī. He lived here in a hut made of leaves; sometimes he ate a little and sometimes he ate nothing while he passed his time in great distress and lamentation. He thought that if he gave up his life he would be able to obtain the lotus feet of his Lord.

In the course of his travels, Sanātana Gosvāmī came to that village. The villagers came forward to welcome him and ask about his well being. They informed him that one beautiful young *sannyāsī* had been living in the forest for a long time, eating only a small quantity of fruits or roots or drinking water mixed with *atta* [flour].

Knowing that this *sannyāsī* must be Śrī Jīva, Sanātana went to see him in great affection. Seeing Sanātana within his patched hut, Śrī Jīva could not control himself and fell flat on the ground at Sanātana's feet. The villagers were quite astonished. Sanātana asked Śrī Jīva to explain his difficulty and Jīva very lovingly explained everything. After consoling the villagers, Sanātana left Śrī Jīva in his hut and went to see Rūpa in Vṛndāvana.

Hearing of Śrī Sanātana's arrival in Vṛndāvana, Śrī Rūpa went out to meet him. Sanātana asked about the book *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and Rūpa said that he had finished writing the book but the editing was incomplete because of Śrī Jīva's absence.

Sanātana explained the situation to Śrī Rūpa, “Jīva is alive, but he is so weak that even the breeze can rock his body.” At once Śrī Rūpa brought Jīva back to Vṛndāvana and nursed him affectionately. Everyone was happy with Śrī Jīva's recovery and Rūpa-Sanātana bestowed all

responsibility on him. By their mercy the greatness of Śrī Jīva's knowledge spread throughout the world.

A Digvijayī [world conquering scholar] once came to Vṛndāvana and challenged Jīva, “If you will not compete with me in debate, then sign my *jayapatrī* [a written paper acknowledging defeat].” Śrī Jīva sent him back the *jayapatrī*, but the Digvijayī accepted defeat after reading it. The glories of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī are beyond description. Śrī Rāghava then showed them Jīva Gosvāmī's hut.

After that, they crossed the Yamunā River and passed the night in Surukhuru village. Narottama and Śrīnivāsa learned that Kṛṣṇa was pleased with the demigods at this place. From here Rāghava pointed out some far away villages and briefly explained the pastimes that were performed in those places.

Bhadravana

Bhadravana

Leaving Surukhuru in the morning, they came to Bhadravana. In *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is written that whoever goes to Bhadravana, the sixth forest, becomes a single-minded devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. By the grace of this forest he goes to the heaven planets.

Bhāṇḍīravana

Bhāṇḍīravana

It was here that Rāma and Kṛṣṇa used to play various games with Their friends.

In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “The eleventh forest is Bhāṇḍīravana. It is a beautiful place which is dear to the yogis. Simply glancing at the forest saves one from taking another birth. Getting *darśana* of Vāsudeva in this forest, the best forest of all, also saves one from another birth. Any person who takes bath here, fasts and controls his senses becomes freed from all sins and goes to Indraloka.”

In Bhāṇḍīravana, Kṛṣṇa and His friends, after playing, enjoyed various foods while sitting in the shade. This town is therefore named Chāherī after this pastime of the Lord. [The name comes from *chāyā* meaning shade].

In Māṭha-grāma, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa used to play with Their friends. The huge earthen vessel of the name ‘Māṭha,’ which the Vraja-vāsīs used to make *māṛhā* [buttermilk] from curd, is the source of the name of this

holy place, Māṭha.

Bilvavana

Bilvavana

“It was here that Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa ate ripe *bael* fruits [*bilva* is another name for *bael*].

“According to the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*, this forest, *Bilvavana*, is worshiped by all the demigods and whoever visits it will also be worshiped in Brahmaloḥa.

“In *Bilvavana* a man can be freed from his vices by bathing in Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa. Previously the Yamunā flowed in a single course and Mānasa-sarovara was on the other side of the river. Now the Yamunā has divided herself into two and meets again at another point to create a circle around Mānasa-sarovara. All of these places are sites of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.” [*Bilvavana* is also known as Śrīvana, as Lakṣmī performed austerities here.]

Lohavana

Lohavana

At *Lohavana*, Lord Kṛṣṇa used to tend the cows. The demon named *Lohajaṅgha* was killed at this place. The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* says that this ninth forest, *Lohavana*, which was protected by the demon *Lohajaṅgha*, is the destroyer of all vices.

Rāghava showed his followers the pleasant places where Nanda-kumāra had roamed. After seeing the Deities of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, Nṛsimha and others, Rāghava took them near the Yamunā where Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's *nauka* [boat] pastime was performed.

“Once Rādhā and Her friends came here to cross the Yamunā with their milk vessels. Their beauty overwhelmed Kṛṣṇa, who had been waiting for them with a broken boat to help them cross the river. When Rādhā saw Kṛṣṇa, who was pretending to be asleep, She called again and again to have Him take them to the other side of the river. After some time Kṛṣṇa took them in His boat and went a short distance with great ecstasy in His heart. The fun which ensued is not possible for me to describe, but it has been described beautifully by the poets in their writings.”

The following description is from *Padyāvalī*: “Rādhā anxiously told Kṛṣṇa, ‘This boat is broken and the river is very deep here. We are only

young girls and this situation is not in our favor. The only way we will be saved is with You as our boatman. O Yadu-nandana, on Your suggestion I have thrown away My milk vessels, My necklace, and also My scarf, yet the other bank is not even in sight. This boat is filling with water and at any moment it will sink, being caught by a storming whirlpool. Alas, what an unforeseen calamity! Despite this, Kṛṣṇa, You are clapping joyfully. My hands cannot stop bailing out water from the boat and You cannot stop making jokes. O Kṛṣṇa, if I save Myself this time, I will never again set foot in Your boat.”

Mahāvana

Mahāvana

Upon arriving in Mahāvana, Śrī Rāghava Paṇḍita in great ecstasy spoke sweetly to Śrīnivāsa and Narottama. “See the house of Nanda and Yaśodā! Who can describe the glories of this place? See the birthplace of Lord Kṛṣṇa! Seeing the face of his son, Nanda and others became overwhelmed with joy. The cowherd men and women also came to see Him and Nanda celebrated the birth of his son by distributing many things to the people. At that time the whole world was filled with the most wonderful happiness.”

In *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* the following description is found: “I offer my obeisances to Mahāvana, where Vrajarāja Nanda celebrated the birth of Kṛṣṇa by distributing eighteen *lakha* cows, each wearing a large pearl necklace and golden ornaments. He also gave the *brāhmaṇas* a tremendous quantity of jewelry and grains.”

In the first song of Nandotsava in the *Stava-mālā*, *Gītāvalī*, it is written; “Yaśodā gave birth to a beautiful son, so the *gopas* were overwhelmed with joy. Some cowherd men presented gifts, others danced continuously, while others sang sweet songs. Some of them distributed yogurt and butter, some satisfied the desires of others and some simply took *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa's eternal transcendental form.”

In another song from the same *Gītāvalī*, it is said: “The *brāhmaṇas* have been fully satisfied by gifts of cows. O Vrajeśvara, please quickly satisfy the singers. O Nandarāja, you have got a beautiful son, so please satisfy the requests of the cowherds with suitable gifts for your celebration. My heart is filled with joy seeing the face of your son and it desires something which no one else has got. Let me be absorbed in your son

who is like a sporting black swan in the reservoir of Śrī Sanātana's mind.”

Śrī Rāghava continued his description of the holy places. “It was here that Nanda performed all the rituals to celebrate the birth of Kṛṣṇa. In a *gośālā*, Nanda divulged his mind to Gargācārya and admitted his fear of Kaṇṣa. Garga performed the name giving ceremony of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa very secretly in a *gośālā*.

“Vrajendra-kumāra Kṛṣṇa killed Pūtanā and the cremation was done here. Kṛṣṇa once broke a chariot here while lying on the ground.

“In *Padyāvalī* there is the following description of Kṛṣṇa's childhood: ‘See the glory of that baby, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who has bright red palms and feet and is decorated with beautiful *gorocanā tilaka*. While lying on His back, He broke the chariot.’

“Here Kṛṣṇa used to lie in His mother's lap to suck her breast milk. Being overwhelmed by the beauty of her son's face, Yaśodā happily fed Him. Again from *Padyāvalī*: ‘Lying in His mother's lap with half-closed eyes, Kṛṣṇa is sucking one breast and caressing the other which is also filled with milk. His mother also caresses Him with her fingers. Kṛṣṇa smiles continually showing His bright teeth which are whitened by the milk. May all of these teeth protect you.’”

Rāghava pointed out the place where Kṛṣṇa used to give pleasure to Yaśodā by crawling. This is described in the following verses from *Padyāvalī*. “Attentive to the worries of Vrajeśvarī, Kṛṣṇa, with restless eyes, would crawl across the ground showing His sweet lips in a nectarean smile. His glittering complexion was like a dark *tamāla* leaf. I pray to this boy.

“When the *gopīs* would ask Kṛṣṇa to find His eyes, ears, nose, face, and tuft of hair, the Lord would point with His little finger and give them great pleasure. It was here that Kṛṣṇa would smear dust on His body.

Mother Yaśodā would then admonish Him, ‘I have just bathed and perfumed You, and You have immediately covered Yourself with dust!’” It was here that beautiful Kṛṣṇa used to turn to His mother for milk.

Once Tṛṇavarta carried Kṛṣṇa high in the sky where Kṛṣṇa enjoyed the view. Then He killed Tṛṇavarta here within Kaṇṣa's kingdom. Kṛṣṇa once ate earth and showed Vrajeśvarī the whole *brahmāṇḍa* within His mouth. Therefore this place is called Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa. It was here that

Yaśodā and the other *gopīs* enjoyed the beauty of her son as they sat in the compound of the house.

The following descriptions are also taken from *Padyāvalī*: “When Nanda-nandana was five years old, He was very restless as He played in the compound of Nanda. His eyes were covered by tufts of curly hair, and He was decorated with bangles, *nūpura* [ankle bells], and necklaces. “The *gopīs* would try to stop His crying by kissing His lips, pressing their necks on His, looking into His beautiful eyes, touching their foreheads to His, and then eagerly holding Him to their breasts for a long time. May that Lord Kṛṣṇa, who in this situation was absorbed in the mood of Cupid, His body motionless, covered with goosebumps, and decorated with a gentle smile, be our protector.

“Vanamali Kṛṣṇa used to give pleasure to the newly wedded *gopīs* while playing on His father's lap. When Yaśodā asked Him, ‘How much fresh butter have You taken today?’ Kṛṣṇa held the breast of Dhaniṣṭha while saying, ‘This much!’ May that Kṛṣṇa be our protector.

“‘Hey *cauri* [thief]! Where are you going? We can easily see what an ecstatic mood you are in. You are trying to take away My ball by hiding it in your blouse. Come on, give it back!’ Saying this He would forcefully massage the breasts of the newly married *gopī* girls. That Lord Keśava, whose body looks very charming decorated with His hairs standing on end, is conquering Gokula in this way.

“I sing the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes. While crawling toward a vessel full of cream, He continually turned His face looking here and there, fearful of being caught by His mother.

“During His sleep Kṛṣṇa used to call the demigods which made Yaśodā very anxious. ‘O Śiva, welcome! Please sit down here. O Brahmā, please sit on My left side. O Kārtikeya, are you well? O Indra, are you happy? Where have you been Kuvera? I have not seen you here.’ When mother Yaśodā heard her child speaking like this in His sleep she said, ‘My dear child, why are You saying all these unearthly things?’ Then to free Him from evil spirits, she put saliva on the child.

“It was here that Yaśodā used to tell the story of Rāma to Kṛṣṇa while she put Him to sleep. Yaśodā said, ‘There was a king named Rāma.’ ‘Yes,’ said Kṛṣṇa eagerly. ‘The name of His wife was Sītā,’ Mother Yaśodā continued. ‘When He went to the forest of Panchvati on His father's

order, Rāvaṇa kidnapped His wife.'

"Hearing the stories of His previous pastimes, Kṛṣṇa became restless and said, 'O Lakṣmaṇa, where are My bow and arrows?' May these excited words of Kṛṣṇa protect you.

"When Kṛṣṇa was still awake, mother Yaśodā said, 'The evening is coming to an end now dear. Why are You not sleeping?' 'O mother, I cannot sleep,' replied Kṛṣṇa. 'All right dear, listen to another wonderful story which will make You sleep,' said Yaśodā. 'Yes, please tell Me,' answered Kṛṣṇa.

"Yaśodā continued, '...then Nṛsimhadeva appeared from a pillar to kill the demon Hiranyakasipu.' When He heard this wonderful story Devakī-nandana's face brightened with a sweet smile."

"Here mother Yaśodā tied Kṛṣṇa to a grinding mortar which He accepted as great fun. This sacred place is called Yamalārjuna-bhañjana-tīrtha. The wonderful *kuṇḍa* situated here has very pure water. By fasting and taking bath in this *kuṇḍa* one accrues unlimited fruits and becomes worshipable on Indraloka. This is the temple of Gopīśvara whose *darśana* will destroy the most heinous types of sins. This Mahāvana is very dear to Kṛṣṇa, who performed many pastimes here. See here the Sapta-samudra-kūpas. In the *Purāṇas* it is described that the performance of *piṇḍa* here gives one his desired results."

In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: "The eighth forest, Mahāvana, is always My favorite. A man who visits here can be worshiped in the abode of Indra. Yamalārjuna-tīrtha and *kuṇḍa* are in Mahāvana. At this holy *tīrtha*, Kṛṣṇa, as a little boy, toppled a cart, breaking the vessels of milk and curd. Fasting and bathing here gives unlimited results. Gopīśvara Mahādeva, the destroyer of all sins, resides here in Mahāvana."

Śrī Śrī Mahāprabhu in Mahāvana

Śrī Rāghava said, "O Śrīnivāsa, it was here that Śrī Caitanya became overwhelmed in ecstatic joy upon seeing the place of Kṛṣṇa's birth

festival. In great love the Lord became absorbed in dancing and singing. And by distributing His mercy, He captivated the hearts of all. People came from all directions and chanted the name of Hari in ecstasy upon seeing Mahāprabhu. Everyone's eyes shed tears as they exclaimed that this man was not a *sannyāsī*, but Kṛṣṇa Himself. By the influence of the Lord's love, people became mad and fell to the ground in ecstasy. Who has the power to understand the activities of Śrī Gauracandra? Mahāvana thus became a vast ocean of bliss. Śrī Caitanya remained here agitated in love while seeing the Deity of Madana-gopāla. Who can describe the supernatural and divine pastimes of Mahāprabhu?"

Śrī Sanātana's Darśana of Madana-gopāla's Pastimes in Mahāvana

Then Rāghava took his two followers to the holy place where Sanātana Gosvāmī had once stayed. The residents of Mahāvana felt very fortunate to have Sanātana amongst them. While Sanātana stayed at Mahāvana he obtained great happiness from the daily *darśana* of Madana-gopāla. Madana-gopāla used to play in Ramaṇaka, the sandy beach of the Yamunā. One day Madana-gopāla came to play just like a cowherd boy with the other boys of Mahāvana. As Sanātana watched the boys play various games, he thought that this cowherd boy could not be an ordinary child. When the boys finished playing, Sanātana followed that boy home. He saw the boy enter the temple, but by the time Sanātana entered he saw only the Madana-mohana Deity, instead of the cowherd boy. Sanātana bowed before the Deity and returned to his own place without speaking to anyone. This Madana-gopāla was completely controlled by the devotional love of Sanātana.

“See this well which everyone calls Gopa-kūpa. This place, Śrī Gokula, and Mahāvana are one and the same. The beauty of this place is so enchanting that gradually Upananda and other cowherd men settled here. The many childhood pastimes Kṛṣṇa performed here gladdened the hearts of the cowherd men and women. O Śrīnivāsa, see this old tree,

the beauty of which is beyond description.”

Mahāprabhu's Arrival in Gokula

“The inhabitants of Gokula would relieve their fatigue under this tree. Lord Gaurāṅga also sat here. Who can describe in detail the arrival of Lord Caitanya at this place. Mahāprabhu came to Agravana [known as Agra] from Prayāga and then went to see the *āśrama* of Jamadagni Muni. The Lord visited Reṇukā-grāma which was named after Jamadagni's wife, Reṇukā. It is the birthplace of Paraśurāma. Mahāprabhu came to Gokula from Reṇukā via Rāja-grāma and sat under this tree.

“The arrival of Lord Caitanya in Gokula is described in the *Caitanya-carita* as follows: ‘Mahāprabhu had *darśana* of Śrī Mādhavadeva in Prayāga and then danced with His followers in ecstatic devotional love. After taking *darśana* of Akṣaya-vaṭa, He bathed in the Triveni like a mad elephant. His eyes filled with tears of love, the hairs of His body stood on end and He gravely shouted in ecstasy as He moved from there. In due course, He crossed the River Yamunā and came to Agravana, where Reṇukā-grāma, the birthplace of the great warrior Paraśurāma, is situated. After taking *darśana* of the Yamunā, which always flows towards Vṛndāvana, Mahāprabhu went to Rāja-grāma. At last Mahāprabhu entered Gokula and became overwhelmed with ecstatic love.’

“Arriving here, Lord Caitanya became maddened with ecstatic love while performing *saṅkīrtana*. As He went to see Kṛṣṇa's birthplace, large crowds followed Him. O Śrīnivāsa, this place, where Kṛṣṇa's birth ceremony was performed according to tradition, is the abode of the greatest happiness. All the elderly *gopīs* would sing auspicious songs in great happiness here for the well-being of Kṛṣṇa. Nanda Mahārāja and other cowherd men would sit here and discuss various topics. After numerous disturbances occurred here, however, they all decided to shift to Vṛndāvana.”

Rāghava then pointed out the path by which the cowherd men from

Gokula and Rāvala used to go to Vṛndāvana. During their journey they had great fun crossing the Yamunā near Bhāṇḍīravana. In Sakaraulī-grāma they collected the cows and calves and brought them together. “O Śrīnivāsa see Rāvala, the village where Vṛṣabhānu used to live happily. Śrī Rādhikā appeared here, and by Her auspicious appearance the whole world was filled with joy.”

In the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* there is the following prayer: “May I be filled with love for Rāvala in Vṛṣabhānupura. The precious gem, Śrī Rādhā, appeared there in the mine of Kīrtidā's womb, which is praised by the demigods, ṛṣis, and human beings.”

“Who can understand the great joy in Vṛṣabhānu's house when Rādhikā appeared from the womb of Kīrtidā. Śrī Rādhā's effulgent form illuminated the ten directions. Whoever sees Rādhā once is freed from the threefold miseries. Her body is extremely soft and Her complexion is like molten gold. Alas! How is it possible to describe the exquisite movements of Her limbs? Seeing Her beauty Her parents could not control their excitement and repeatedly looked at Her moonlike face. All the elderly *gopīs* sang auspicious songs, and the entire universe was filled with the sound of ‘Jaya! Jaya!’ The sounds of various instruments enchanted all, and they began dancing as they exclaimed, ‘Very good!’ Tumeric, yogurt, and milk was scattered in the courtyard for the occasion, and the cowherd men laughed and made others laugh with their gestures. The *brāhmaṇas* and the singers were offered valuable gifts and Ghanaśyāma [another name of Narahari Cakravartī who has written this song], although seeing this scene is unable to relish its happiness.”

“Seeing Rādhā's beauty on the occasion of Her appearance, Her parents became agitated in love and were unable to take their minds away from Her. They gave various gifts in charity for the auspiciousness of their daughter. Who can describe that scene? Only the fortunate souls can see this. Śrī Rādhā would wander around with many other girls, and Her mother felt joyful watching Her. Vṛṣabhānu with his associates would sit at one place and, like this, there is no limit to the fun in Rāvala.

“O Śrīnivāsa, after coming from Gokula, Gauracandra and His associates stayed here for sometime. He became overwhelmed with ecstatic love when He saw Rāvala. What to speak of others, even Ananta Śeṣa cannot

describe His feelings of love. People came running from all directions chanting the name of Hari and exclaiming, 'O brother, see this jewel amongst *sannyāsīs*!' Everyone became maddened drinking the nectar of the Lord's moonlike face. Being greatly happy, they spoke to one another, 'I have concluded that He is definitely Kṛṣṇa. By His own will He is wandering throughout Vraja in this form.' Someone else said, 'By seeing this golden complexioned form of the Lord, I am unable to speak although I wish to.'

“After speaking in this way, by Lord Caitanya's mercy the people became agitated in love and tears flowed from their eyes. After manifesting His transcendental pastimes here, the Lord along with the *Sanoṣiyā brāhmaṇa* went on to Mathurā. O Śrīnivāsa, this place, where Rādhikā performed Her enchanting childhood pastimes, is most secluded.”

Discussing in this way they passed the night in Rāvala enjoying the nectarean glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Who can describe the ecstatic feelings of love Śrī Rāghava Paṇḍita, Śrīnivāsa, and Narottama experienced? Whoever hears this story attentively will attain the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya.

In the morning they crossed the Yamunā River and entered Mathurā. There they saw the residence of Vasudeva, Ugrasena, and Kaṇṣa, where Kaṇṣa had snatched the daughter of Yaśodā. He had attempted to kill the daughter in the prison cell where Vasudeva had been imprisoned. They saw a place where Vasudeva had passed urine on a stone, the path by which Vasudeva carried Kṛṣṇa towards Gokula, and the way he had returned after keeping Kṛṣṇa safely in Gokula. After showing Śrīnivāsa and Narottama these different places, Rāghava explained them in detail.

Sudarśana-Vidyādhara at Ambikā-kānana

After bathing in Viśrāma-tīrtha, they joyfully came to Ambikā-kānana on the bank of the Kṛṣṇa-gaṅgā. Seeing Śrī Ambikādevī and Gokarṇākhya Śiva, Śrīnivāsa and Narottama became filled with ecstasy. Rāghava Paṇḍita spoke softly and pointed out a beautiful place on the

bank of the River Kṛṣṇa-gaṅgā. “It was here that Nanda and other cowherd men came nicely dressed on pilgrimage to have *darśana* of the deities. Nanda and the other cowherds offered various kinds of worship to Gokarṇākhya Mahādeva and Ambikā. Nanda Mahārāja was taking rest at this beautiful place when suddenly a large black snake began to swallow him. Seeing His father being swallowed by the snake, Kṛṣṇa slightly smiled and touched the snake with His foot. By the touch of Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus foot, the body of the snake vanished and a divine form appeared in its place. That person explained to the Lord that previously he was a Vidyādhara named Sudarśana but he was cursed by a *brāhmaṇa* to become a snake. Sudarśana then offered prayers at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and returned to his own abode. The cowherd men headed by Nanda became overwhelmed in great affection for Kṛṣṇa and, along with the *sakhās*, they brought Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to their home.”

“O Śrīnivāsa, see the best of all holy places, Śrī Akrūra-tīrtha. This well known place is very dear to Kṛṣṇa. By taking bath here on *pūrṇima*, especially during Kārtika, one is liberated from this material world. Whatever result one can achieve by bathing in all the holy places can be attained by taking bath here. Whoever takes bath at this place on the day of a solar eclipse gets the benefit of performing a *rājasūya* or *aśvamedha-yajña*. These statements are confirmed in the *Saura* and *Ādivarāha Purāṇas*.”

Kṛṣṇa Begs Food in Akrūra-grāma

“O Śrīnivāsa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya came to stay in a solitary place here in Akrūra-grāma. In order to avoid the crowds in Vṛndāvana He would come here to eat. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is the deliverer of the whole world, who can understand His mentality?

“See this enchanting place Śrīnivāsa, where the *munis* headed by Aṅgirā were performing a sacrifice. Kṛṣṇa sent His *sakhās* here for food, but the *brāhmaṇas* became angry by the boy's requests. When the boys returned to Kṛṣṇa and explained what had happened, Kṛṣṇa sent them to the

wives of those *munis*. Happy for the opportunity, the wives brought food to this place and offered it to Kṛṣṇa and His friends. Kṛṣṇa and His friends then ate here and enjoyed unending bliss in this pastime. Everyone felt greatly satisfied in their hearts, and therefore this place became known as Bhojana-sthala.”

From the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* comes this description: “This is the place where the beautiful wives of the *yajñic brāhmaṇas* fed various types of fine food to Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma with great love and devotion. I sing the glories of this place and those *brāhmaṇas'* wives.”

Śrī Vṛndāvana

Śrī Rāghava described the glories of Vṛndāvana to Śrīnivāsa and Narottama. In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “O Pṛthivī, this twelfth forest, Vṛndāvana, is the destroyer of all vices and is protected by Vṛndādevī. It is certainly My favorite place. Here I will perform pastimes with My *gopas* and *gopīs* in the famous beautiful places which are beyond the attainment of the demigods.”

Vṛndāvana is described in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Mathurā-khaṇḍa*, as follows: “Vṛndāvana is completely under Vṛndādevī's grace. Śrī Hari Himself lives in this splendid, incomprehensible place, which is served by the demigods headed by Brahmā and Śiva. Extending over a wide area, Vṛndāvana is decorated with forests of *tulasī* and the *āśramas* of saints. Vṛndāvana is as dear to Govinda as Lakṣmī is to Viṣṇu. Surrounded by His cowherd boys and cows, Mādhava sports in Vṛndāvana with Balarāma. O what a beautiful place is Vṛndāvana where Govardhana mountain along with many other holy places created by Lord Viṣṇu are situated.”

Then in the *Padma Purāṇa* it is stated: “Vṛndāvana is filled with transcendental bliss. It destroys the greatest sins and miseries. Simply by living there one is awarded liberation.”

Vṛndāvana is also described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.11.28) in the following words: “Between Nandeśvara and Mahāvana is a place named

Vṛndāvana. This place is very suitable because it is lush with grass, plants, and creepers for the cows and other animals. It has nice gardens and tall mountains and is full of facilities for the happiness of all the *gopas* and *gopīs* and our animals.”

There is another verse in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.21.10) in which one *gopī* says: “O friend, Vṛndāvana is spreading the glory of the earth, having obtained the treasure of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī. The peacocks dance madly when they hear Govinda's flute, and when other creatures see them from the hilltops, they all become stunned.”

Rāghava then told his followers a passage from the *Gautamīya-tantra* where Kṛṣṇa says to Nārada: “Every part of this beautiful Vṛndāvana is My abode. Every creature or demigod who lives in this place will attain Goloka-dhāma after death. The cowherd girls who live in My abode are yoginis. The five *yojanas* of Vṛndāvana forest are like My body and the spinal cord of the body is the Kālindī River, which flows with nectarean water. Deities and other spirits live here in invisible bodies. And I, living within every being, never leave this place. My appearance and disappearance has been enacted in every age. The divine and glorious illumination of this place is beyond worldly vision. The glories of Vṛndāvana are beyond anyone's calculation. People say Vṛndāvana covers sixteen *kroṣa*, and in the *śāstra* it is said Vṛndāvana extends five *yojanas*. Whoever has *darśana* of Govinda in Vṛndāvana never goes to Yamālaya, but attains the destination of pious persons. The temple of Śrī Govindadeva is situated in Vṛndāvana and is surrounded by devotees. A fortunate person can have His *darśana*.”

In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, Nārada Muni says, “In Vṛndāvana the temple of Govindadeva is surrounded by devoted worshipers. I prefer to live there. O king, in this world Vṛndāvana is the Vaikuṅṭha of Govinda. Vṛndā and other female devotees of Kṛṣṇa also remain there. O Mahāpala, those great souls who get *darśana* of Govinda in Vṛndāvana are the most glorified persons in this world.”

Śrī Govindadeva and His Worship

Vrajendra's son Himself, in the form of the Deity, Śrī Govindadeva, performed His pastimes in various ways according to His own desires. Worldly persons see Him as an idol, but His devotees see Him as Govinda Himself. Although as a Deity He has accepted silence, He nevertheless bestows waves of transcendental mellows upon His associates. In Vṛndāvana He enjoys Himself with His beloved *gopīs* within the *karnīkā* of an eight-petaled lotus. [*karnīkā* means the seed-pod of the lotus].

In the *Atharva Veda*, *Gopāla-tāpanī* Govinda is described: “The dark complexioned, yellow-robed, two-armed Govindadeva, His head adorned with a peacock comb, holds a flute and stick in His hands. He is *nirguṇa* [without material attributes], but simultaneously *saguṇa* [endowed with transcendental attributes]. He is *nirākāra* [without material form], but simultaneously *sākāra* [possessing a spiritual form of eternity, bliss, and knowledge]. He is *nirīha* [without material activities], but simultaneously *saceṣṭa* [engaged in transcendental pastimes]. In Gokula, within Mathurā-maṇḍala, is Vṛndāvana, where Govinda stands in the center of a thousand-petaled lotus, which has sixteen clustered petals around Him with eight clustered *kesara* [pollen tube]. On either side stands Rādhā and Candrāvalī.”

The *Sanmohana Tantravakya* states: “I eternally bow to the feet of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the Goddess of the Yogapīṭha, who with Her wonderful gestures and postures stands alongside Govinda.”

The Yogapīṭha in Vṛndāvana is supremely wonderful. Govinda's beauty is astonishing at this place.

In the *Padma Purāṇa*, *Vṛndāvana Mahātmya*, Pārvatī asks Lord Śiva, “O ocean of mercy, please describe the extraordinary nectarean beauty of Govinda. I want to hear of it.”

Lord Mahādeva answers, “There is a place in the center of Vṛndāvana which is decorated with *mandāra* trees. The branches and leaves of those trees cover one *yojana*. This place is the abode of happiness. Bumblebees

hum there being maddened by the sweet scent of the flowers. The eternal place of Govinda is that Siddhapīṛha, which is covered by seven veils. It is glorified eternally by the *śrutis*, the personified *Vedas*. At that place is a jewel-studded golden pavilion. Within the center of the golden pavilion, the bright and beautiful Yogapīṛha is situated. This octagonal *pīṛha* is lustrous and enchanting. A golden throne bedecked with bright jewels is situated there. On the throne is an eight-petaled lotus. The middle of this lotus is the favorite place of Śrī Govindadeva. How can I sufficiently glorify this place? I pray to Govinda, who remains within the center of that lotus, who is always served by the *gopīs*, and is very sweet due to His blooming youth. He is the Lord of Vṛndāvana, Gokulapati, and He expands His opulence unlimitedly. Lord Govinda is young and beautiful, the dearmost associate of the maidens of Vraja.”

The Lord of Vṛndāvana, Śrī Govindadeva, who is the abode of transcendental love, eternally enjoys with Rādhārāṇī on that *simhāsana*. The eight-sided Yogapīṛha is surrounded by natural beauty, and the jeweled *simhāsana* situated there is beyond compare.

“Within the *karṇikā* [seed-pod] of the lotus, Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs His *mahā-līlā*. What can be said about the *mahā-līlā*? Kṛṣṇa, the eternal master of Vṛndāvana assumed His form as a cowherd on that mountain of *mahā-līlā-rāsa*. The charming third petal of the lotus is the brightest and best amongst all desirable objects.

In the *Varāha-tantra* it is said: “That *karṇikā* is the favorite place of Lord Govindadeva. What can I say of its glories? I offer my obeisances to Govindadeva, who is very dear to the *gopīs* and who is splendidly beautiful with His youthful age and charming gait. He always increases the love of the *gopīs* and although He is the Lord of Gokula, He carefully hides His Lordly opulences there.”

Also in the *Varāha-tantra*, Pṛthivi inquires about the real identity of Kṛṣṇa who is the cause of all causes, the absolute entity, the everlasting master of Vṛndāvana, and the source of *nirguṇa* Brahma. He is known as Govinda.

Lord Varāha replied, “I offer My obeisances to Govinda, who sits on a golden throne with Rādhā and is most beautifully bedecked in divine ornaments. He is very soft and is the cynosure of the *gopīs*' eyes as He stands in His threefold bending posture. Within this Yogapīṛha with its

golden throne, reside Lord Kṛṣṇa's divinely dressed beloveds such as His main *prakṛtis* headed by Lalitā and His original *prakṛti*, Śrī Rādhikā. Lalitādevī is in front, Śyāmalā is positioned in the northwest, Śrī Madhumatī in the north, Dhanyā in the northeast, Kṛṣṇa's beloved Viśākhā in the east, Śaibyā in the southeast, Padmā in the south, and Bhadrā in the southwest. In the corner stands the beautiful Candrāvalī. These eight main *prakṛtis* are the dearest of Kṛṣṇa, but Rādhā is the Supreme Goddess, the sum *prakṛti* of Kṛṣṇa. Citraveśā, Vṛndā, Candrā, Madana Sundarī, Supriyā, Madhumatī, Śaśirekhā, and Hari Priyā are also there, surrounding the Yogapīṭha. Vṛndāvaneśvarī, Rādhā, is the head of all sixteen *prakṛtis*. Lalitā is also as dear to Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā.” In the *Gautamīya-tantra* a devotee prays: “I offer my prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa, who sits on a jeweled *simhāsana* on top of a golden pavilion surrounded by *kalpa-vṛkṣas* [desire trees].”

Śrī Rāghava Paṇḍita said the whole world becomes mad by the beauty of Govindadeva. Whoever sees Him even once becomes stunned and forgets everything else.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*: “My dear friends, if you still have any desire to enjoy the company of your friends within this material world, then don't look upon the form of Kṛṣṇa, who is standing on the bank of Keśi-ghāṭa. He is known as Govinda, and His eyes are very enchanting. He is playing upon His flute, and on His head there is a peacock feather. And His whole body is illuminated by the moonlight in the sky.”

Śrī Govindadeva has an eternal form of full knowledge and bliss. His form with two arms is so enchanting that everyones' heart is attracted. In the *Gopāla-tāpanī* it is stated: “A man can free himself from worldly entanglement if he meditates on Kṛṣṇa within his heart. Kṛṣṇa is worshiped by the sweet cool breezes created by the waves of the Yamunā. He is situated in the center of a jewelled lotus and is adorned with divine ornaments as He stands at the base of a *kalpa-vṛkṣa* surrounded by cows and *gopīs*. Dressed in clothes as bright as lightning, the two-armed Vanamali [one who wears a garland of forest flowers], who has beautiful lotus eyes and complexion like a dark rain cloud, is the master of everything.”

“O Śrīnivāsa, who would not offer respects at the feet of Śrī Govinda,

Gopīnātha, and Madana-mohana in Vṛndāvana? The lotus feet of these three Deities are the life and soul of everyone in Vṛndāvana. Madana-gopāla has become famous in this world as Madana-mohana.”

Śrī Pārvatī asked Mahādeva to explain the glories and transcendental nature of Govindadeva. Śrī Mahādeva said, “Gopāla Himself is Govinda, and He eternally performs *prakāṣa* [manifest] and *aprakāṣa* [unmanifest] pastimes. He exists eternally at Yogapīṭha in Vṛndāvana and is the only Lord of Vṛndāvana throughout the four *yugas*. He is worshiped by Nanda and the cowherd men in *vatsalya-rasa*. Even Kṛṣṇa Himself is overwhelmed by attraction and glorifies His own sweet form as Govinda. He stole the garments of the *gopīs* and thus fulfilled the goal of their vows. He is the abode of spiritual bliss, and He always resides in Vṛndāvana in the form of a blooming youth. He is the life and soul of Śrī Rādhikā. His mouth is reddened by betel leaf.”

There is a *kuṇḍa* called Brahmā-kuṇḍa which is full of swans and lotuses and adorned on all sides by jewels. On the south there is a jewelled pavilion surrounded by *mandāra* trees. That topmost place, Yogapīṭha, is situated in the center of that pavilion. In that place Kṛṣṇa is fully enchanted by the love of the proudly smiling Śrī Rādhikā, Vṛndāvaneśvarī, and is completely under Her control.

Śrī Vṛndādevī is the embodiment of Kṛṣṇa's beauty. She is a great heroine and is expert in making arrangements to please Kṛṣṇa. She is known as Līlāvatī and remains forever on the east of Yogapīṭha. On the south stays Kṛṣṇa-keli-vinodini, Śyāmā, [she who relishes the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa]. On the west and north, Baginīdevī and Siddheśidevī are respectively situated. Also on the east is the five-headed Lord [Śiva]; on the south, Saṅkarṣaṇa, who incarnates in ten forms; on the west, the four-faced Brahmā; and on the north the thousand-headed Lord Anantadeva.

Rādhikā's dear friend, Madana-unmadinī, who always carries a golden stick and expertly manages affairs, takes Kṛṣṇa, who is overwhelmed in love, under the *kalpataru*. Madana-unmadinī, who increases the loving feelings of Cupid, builds a love mansion, the pride of Cupid, with the bright blue effulgence of Lord Hari. That effulgence, similar to that of the blue sapphire, increases the lust of Madana, the god of love.

The *dvādasākṣara-mantra* [twelve-syllable *mantra*] of Śrī Govinda in the

course of time bestows the greatest feeling of love. The first two syllables are the *kāma-bīja* and then *śrī-kṛsnāya*. Next comes *govindāya* and then last, *svāhā*. Gradually by chanting this great *dvādasākṣara-mantra* one will achieve realization of love of God. Then I will describe the *yugalātmaka-govinda-mantra*. First of all comes the *lakṣmī-bīja*, then *kāma-bīja*, and then *rādhā govindābhyāṅ namaī*. By the knowledge of this *yugala-mantra* one can please Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The six elements of these two *mantras* are: the *ṛṣi*—Kāmadeva; the *chanda* [poetical metre]—*virāta*; the *devatā*—Govinda and Rādhā-Govinda; the *śakti*—Rādhā, the Goddess of Yogapīṭha; and *kāma-bīja*.

Meditation on Govinda is as follows: “Glories to Govinda, who is as beautiful as a new flower, the performer of immortal pastimes who wears the dress of a wrestler. Glories to Govinda who holds the flute in one hand and a jewelled stick in the other. His beautiful and broad shoulders are covered by a pure bright piece of yellow silk and He charms the world. He places His left leg over His right leg while standing in His threefold bending posture.”

Having finished this silent meditation one should recite the name of Hari four *lakha* times. Then after performing *ājyahoma* obligations [fire sacrifice] with *tila* [sesame seeds], one should offer flowers like *campaka*, *aśoka*, *tulasī*, *kahlāra*, and lotus in worship to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. By these practices one will get the *darśana* of Rādhā-Govinda.

Śrīman Madana-gopāla also exists within Vṛndāvana. Gopāla exists eternally as a boy and Govindadeva exists as a matured youth. In comparison to these two Deities, Gopīnātha is the most beautiful. Gopāla is a *dhīroddhata* hero [“A person who is very envious, proud, easily angered, restless, and complacent...”]; Govinda is a *dhīrodātta* hero [“...naturally very grave, gentle, forgiving, merciful, determined, humble, highly qualified, chivalrous, and bodily attractive.”] and Gopīnātha is a *dhīra-lalita* hero [“...naturally very funny, always in full youthfulness, expert in joking, and free from all anxieties.”]. Gopāla is lion-necked, while Govinda stands in a threefold posture, and Gopīnātha is a debauchee with a broad chest. Gopīnātha, who is just emerging from childhood and decorated with flowers, resides in a cave at the border of Govardhana Hill where He sports during the three periods of the evening. After that, Śrī Govinda, who was matured and had been struck

by Madana, enjoyed the pleasure of this splendidly decorated Yogapīṭha. The virtues achieved after many years in different *pīṛhas* can be attained at Yogapīṭha in Vṛndāvana in one day.

Yogapīṭha looks like the rising sun in the morning while during the next three *muhurtas* it shines bright white. At noon it is like the dazzling midday sun, in the afternoon it resembles the leaf of a lotus, and in the evening it appears like the reddish glow of heaps of *sindhūra* [vermilion]. On the full moon night Yogapīṭha looks like the cool full moon, and in the dark moon night it glows blackish like the dark blue sapphire. In the rainy season it looks like green grass glowing like a jewel, in the autumn it resembles the glow of ruby, and in the winter like the glow of a diamond. In the spring it sparkles like new leaves and in the summer like the flow of nectar. In all seasons Yogapīṭha is filled with unlimited sweetness. It is surrounded by *aśoka* and other trees and decorated by various types of beautiful jewels.

In the *Ūrdhvāmnāya-tantra* it is stated: “Hey Pārvatī! These are the eight names of the Yogapīṭha: Candrāvalī-durādhārṣa, Rādhā-saubhāgya-mandira, Śrī Ratna Maṇḍapa, Sṛngāra Maṇḍapa, Saubhāgya Maṇḍapa, Mahā-madhurya Maṇḍapa, Sāmrajya Maṇḍapa, and Surata Maṇḍapa. Whoever recites the *Nāmāṣṭaka* of the Yogapīṭha in the morning will attract Govindadeva and attain love of Kṛṣṇa.”

After discussing these intimate topics, Śrī Paṇḍita joyfully took Śrīnivāsa and Narottama gradually on to other holy places, leaving Bhojana-ṭila behind. He pointed out the place called Sanorakha where Saubhari Muni performed austerities. Coming to Kāliya hrada, Śrī Rāghava told Śrīnivāsa that Kṛṣṇa had performed one of His wonderful pastimes in that place. Climbing up a *kadamba* tree, He dove into the water of the Kālindī and defeated the serpent Kāliya. Everyone enjoyed Kṛṣṇa's dance on the expanded hoods of Kāliya after which Kṛṣṇa bestowed His mercy on the serpent and sent him to Ramaṇaka island. Whoever bathes in this lake can be freed from all vices and will attain the abode of Viṣṇuloka if he dies there. That is confirmed in *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*.

In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 10.16.62 it is stated: “If one bathes in this place of My pastimes and offers the water of this lake to the demigods and other worshipable personalities, or if one observes a fast and duly

worships and remembers Me, he is sure to become free from sinful reactions.”

The beauty of the *kadamba* tree from which Kṛṣṇa dove into the lake is described in scriptures such as the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* wherein it is said: “O Viśālākṣi, the *paṇḍitas* have visualized many transcendental things in this place. That *kadamba* tree which is situated on the eastern side of the Kāliya Lake has many scented branches. O Viśālākṣi, this charming and auspicious tree blooms throughout the twelve months of the year and brightens the whole world.”

And the *Saura Purāṇa* says: “This sin destroying holy place named Kāliya-tīrtha is where Kṛṣṇa danced on Kāliya's heads. Whoever takes a bath and worships Vāsudeva in this holy place achieves the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which is completely unobtainable by vile persons.”

Rāghava then pointed out Dvādaśāditya-tīrtha, which according to the *Purāṇas* fulfills the desires of all men. In the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* it is stated: “Hey Vasundhare! Whoever takes a bath at Sūrya-tīrtha gets the *darśana* of Āditya and goes to Sūryaloka having had all his desires fulfilled. There is no doubt, whoever takes a bath in this holy place on a Sunday, which is the last day of the month, gets the satisfaction of having his desires fulfilled.”

Pointing out one hill, Śrī Rāghava told Śrīnivāsa that after chastising Kāliya in the Kāliya Lake, Kṛṣṇa came to that place. When the sun-gods understood that Kṛṣṇa was very cold they increased their heat to warm the Lord.

“The *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* describes this pastime in these words: ‘I eternally take shelter of this holy place, Dvādaśasūrya, where magnanimous Murāri was stricken with cold. He who is always engaged in wonderful pastimes, surrounded by affectionate men, women, and lowing cows, was then served by twelve suns, who with great devotional love and ecstasy gave intense heat to warm the Lord.’”

Sanātana Gosvāmī Receives Lord Caitanya's Mercy in a Dream

“O Śrīnivāsa, by the order of Mahāprabhu, Sanātana Gosvāmī came here to Vṛndāvana to stay. When Sanātana heard that Lord Caitanya would come, he arranged a secluded place for the Lord to stay. Understanding Sanātana Gosvāmī's anxiety, Gaurahari appeared to him in a dream at this place. Lord Caitanya was sitting on a wonderful *āsana*. Seeing the Lord, Sanātana fell at His feet. The Lord then tightly embraced Sanātana and after comforting him in every way, He disappeared. Who can understand the Lord's wonderful pastimes? By His own will He always enjoys in Vṛndāvana.

“See here is Praskandana-kṣetra. By taking bath here one is freed of his sins, and by giving up one's life here he attains Viṣṇuloka.”

The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* says: “O Vasundhare! Please hear about another holy place. There is an auspicious abode named Praskandana-kṣetra, which is the destroyer of all sins. Whoever takes bath there is delivered from all sins, and whoever leaves his body there surely attains My abode.”

“O Śrīnivāsa, due to the heat from twelve suns, the Lord's cold body became warm and began to perspire. The perspiration entered the Yamunā River and therefore this place is called Praskandana-tīrtha.”

The *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* gives this description: “This great *tīrtha* was born from the perspiration of Govinda's body due to the excess heat of the twelve suns. I offer my respectful prayers unto Praskandana-kṣetra, which is filled with the fragrant water that emanated from the soft beautiful body of the Lord.”

After showing this Praskandana-tīrtha to Śrīnivāsa, Rāghava Paṇḍita continued to speak very sweetly.

Śrīla Advaita Prabhu's Appearance and Activities

“Śrīla Advaita Prabhu, who is nondifferent from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, stayed here in this forest for some days. He used to worship Lord Kṛṣṇa under this *vaṭa* tree. Who can understand His inner desire? Please listen and I will describe briefly the appearance and activities of

Śrīla Advaita Prabhu.

“Mādhavendra Purī, Ísvāra Purī, Śācīmātā, and Jagannātha Mísra appeared along with Advaita Ācārya. Śrīla Advaita Prabhu is unlimitedly merciful to the living entities. The whole of Bengal was glorified by His appearance there.

“In Bengal there is a village near Śrīhatta named Nava-grāma where Kuvera Paṇḍita, the son of Nṛsimha lived. Kuvera Paṇḍita was exalted on the path of devotion. He knew nothing except the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. On the same standard of devotion was his chaste wife Nābhadevī, the mother of Advaita, who was worshipable by all. They settled in Śāntipura near the Ganges and were always absorbed in discussing *Kṛṣṇa-kathā*.

“One day Śrī Kuvera Paṇḍita and his wife wanted to die after hearing Vaiṣṇava blasphemy. Seeing their state, one fortunate soul pacified them by the desire of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Even though they were still unhappy, they both fell asleep. After a short time, they both had a wonderful dream. A beautiful effulgent person, whose bodily luster defeated the beauty of a mountain of molten gold, appeared before them. This person was holding the hand of another exceedingly beautiful person and in sweet words said to Him: ‘You should quickly incarnate to relieve the unhappiness of the living entities who are suffering under the onslaughts of Kali-yuga. By Your loving invitation, I will be unable to remain here. I will quickly appear along with My elder brother.’

“Hearing these words, the second person became very happy and at an auspicious moment He entered the womb of Nābhadevī. Seeing this, Kuvera Paṇḍita became very blissful and, as he awoke, his heart became overwhelmed.

“Kuvera Paṇḍita, who was a learned scholar in all the *śāstras*, considered in his mind that the Supreme Lord would appear in Kali-yuga in the form of guru. Thinking this way along with his wife, he again became overwhelmed and could not check his tears.

“From that day on, Nābhadevī manifested signs of pregnancy and she therefore returned to Nava-grāma. Soon the whole world became joyful as Advaita Prabhu appeared in the village of Nava-grāma.

“Suddenly a voice arose from Him, ‘Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya will appear in this world along with Śrī Nityānanda Rāma. Together with Their

associates, They will enjoy wonderful pastimes. They will distribute loving devotional service in each and every house, thereby destroying the unhappiness and lamentation of the living entities. The ocean of bliss arising from the *sañkīrtana* movement will overflow and inundate everyone without exception. This Kali-yuga is so glorious!

“Hearing this voice, everyone became joyful. The house of Kuvera Paṇḍita became filled with auspiciousness. Fortunate people who witnessed Advaita Ācārya grow day by day were filled with jubilation. Advaita would sometimes hide Himself, and only by the will of Śrī Caitanya was He found. Having Advaita in their village, the residents of Nava-grāma floated in bliss forgetting all unhappiness and lamentation. Although the Lord had two names—Kamalākṣa and Advaita, everyone called Him Advaita. The childhood pastimes of Advaita were very wonderful, only fortunate persons were able to witness them. Who has the power to describe them? Śrī Advaita Prabhu was like the pupil of everyone's eyes. They glorified Him in lying down and in their dreams. Again and again I say that all His associates were glorious as is the land of Bengal by the Lord's incarnation there.

“Śrī Kuvera Paṇḍita, who was most sober and full of loving devotion told everyone, ‘We will move to the banks of the Ganges.’ Then along with his friends and other villagers, they all came to Śāntipura from Nava-grāma. Staying with a happy heart in Śāntipura, sometimes he would go to Navadvīpa to meet his friends. Kuvera Paṇḍita carefully arranged for the Lord to study the *śāstras*. Within a short time the Lord, the deliverer of the fallen, also became known as a *paṇḍita* for His learning.

“Although the mother and father of Advaita knew the truth about Him, still they forgot everything due to their parental affection. All the learned people of Śāntipura were astonished seeing the activities of Advaita. Someone said, ‘Advaita Ācārya could not be a human for, how could a human being attract the heart of everyone the way He does? Kuvera Paṇḍita is a glorious personality because he had such a son by whom everyone is benefited.’

“In this way the people spoke as Advaita became the life and soul of everyone. Who can understand the desire of Advaita Prabhu, who gave His parents so much happiness in various ways?

“After some time the Lord's mother and father disappeared and Advaita

went to Gayā to offer *śrāddha*. Taking the opportunity He visited all the holy places along the way. At that time He took *mantra dikṣa* from Mādhavendra Purī. Who has the power to understand the activities of Advaita, who travelled always filled with ecstatic love of God?

“While traveling thus, Advaita Prabhu arrived at Mathurā-maṇḍala. Seeing the beauty of Vraja, He became overwhelmed in ecstasy. After seeing all the places, He came to Vṛndāvana, whereupon all the Vraja-vāsīs carefully arranged His stay. Eating only some fruits, roots, and milk, people were astonished seeing His luster. Mad in ecstatic love, the Lord roared and cried out, ‘Will I see Kṛṣṇa?’

“In this way Advaita Ācārya would feel various ecstatic moods at different times. The Lord would worship Kṛṣṇa near the Yamunā. Then, knowing that the time had come for the appearance of Lord Caitanya, He left Vṛndāvana and returned to Bengal. The pastimes of Advaita Ācārya are like nectar, but only the fortunate can taste them.

“O Śrīnivāsa, the tree under which Advaita Ācārya used to stay became well known as Advaita-vaṭa. Just by seeing this Advaita-vaṭa one's sinful reactions are mitigated and the very rare gift of devotional love is obtained.

“See the plants and creepers on the bank of Kālindī which are always fresh and beautiful. This is the very old *tintidi* tree [tamarind tree known as Āmli-talā] where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoyed Their pastimes with Their associates. Remembering His previous activities, Lord Caitanya came here and sat in unlimited happiness.”

The Glories of Śrī Gaurasundara

Overwhelmed in ecstatic love, Rāghava Paṇḍita began to narrate the characteristics of Lord Caitanya to Śrīnivāsa: “Lord Caitanya is the eternal Supreme Personality of Godhead, *param brahma*. He is the Lord of Navadvīpa, and He is Vrajendra-nandana, the son of Nanda Mahārāja. He appeared in Navadvīpa in the house of Śacī and Jagannātha Miśra due to the loud calling of Advaita Ācārya. The

wonderful pastimes of Lord Gaurāṅga cannot be described even by Ananta-Śeṣa with His thousand mouths.

“A few days after the disappearance of His father, the Lord went to Gayā to perform *śrāddha*. At that time the most fortunate Íśvara Purī regained his life by seeing Gauracandra. Gaurasundara is the life of the devotees, thus He offered the greatest affection to Íśvara Purī. Lord Caitanya spoke His initiation *mantra* in Íśvara Purī's ear and then, receiving the *mantra* back from Íśvara Purī, He fell on the ground offering His obeisances. After accepting Íśvara Purī as His guru, Lord Caitanya always floated in His own tears. And Íśvara Purī became mad with ecstasy after accepting the deliverer of the universe, Lord Viśvambhara, as his disciple.

“You may say that Lord Caitanya is the guru of the entire universe—yet He accepted a guru. This is certainly puzzling. Therefore I say that to instruct the people in general the Lord established the principles of religion by His own example. Who can understand this transcendental pastime of the Lord? He Himself thus glorified the Madhva-sampradāya. “By accepting *mantra* from a bona fide *sampradāya* one becomes successful. If one receives *mantra* from an unauthorized source that will certainly be fruitless. In Kali-yuga there are four authorized *sampradāyas* mentioned as: Śrī, Brahmā, Rudra, and Sanaka [Kumāra]. This is all elaborately described in the *Purāṇas*.”

The Origin of the Sampradāya's Names

“These four *sampradāyas* are the authorities on the science of *bhakti*. I will now describe briefly how the *sampradāyas* were named.

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is like a desire tree, and in the form of Nārāyaṇa, He is the original guru of the four *sampradāyas*. Śrī is the beloved of Nārāyaṇa. She is His disciple as well. Her wonderful activities are elaborately described in all the *śāstras*. Śrī is another name of Lakṣmī. Her disciplic succession has unlimited branches and sub-branches. Who can write them all? In Her *sampradāya*, Rāmānuja became the *ācārya*

and from His time the *sampradāya* was called the Rāmānuja-sampradāya. Previously He was known as Lakṣmanācārya, then later everyone called Him Rāmānujācārya. He is the author of the Rāmānuja-bhasya. The branches and sub-branches of His disciplic succession filled the whole world.

“O Śrīnivāsa, please hear now about the Madhva-sampradāya. The merciful Lord Brahmā was the disciple of Lord Nārāyaṇa. His disciples and grand-disciples spread throughout the world. In his *sampradāya*, Śrī Madhva became a disciple. His first work was to write a commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, and for this reason he was known as Madhvācārya and the *sampradāya* became known as the Madhvācārya-sampradāya. Lord Nārāyaṇa also has the merciful Rudra as His disciple. There is no end to his disciples and grand-disciples. Viṣṇusvāmī became a disciple in this line and he became mad in ecstatic devotional love along with his disciple. Viṣṇusvāmī was very influential and a learned scholar of all the scriptures. From him the disciplic succession was known as the Viṣṇusvāmī-sampradāya.

“Hear now Śrīnivāsa, about the Sanaka-sampradāya. From Nārāyaṇa appeared the Haṅsa-avatāra. His disciples were the four Kumāras headed by Sanaka Kumāra. Their disciples and grand-disciples cannot be counted. In this line Nimbāditya became a disciple. From him it is known as the Nimbāditya-sampradāya [known also as Nimbarka-sampradāya]. The influence of Nimbarka was very wonderful. His disciples and grand-disciples filled the world.

“The Śrī, Brahmā, Rudra, and Sanaka *sampradāyas* spread their influence by dividing into other *sampradāyas*. In the Rāmānuja-sampradāya, Śrī Rāmānandācārya was highly respected. He had many disciples and grand-disciples. Therefore his branch of the disciplic succession is known as the Rāmānanda-sampradāya. Similarly Śrī Vallabhācārya appeared in the Viṣṇusvāmī-sampradāya. He wrote a commentary named *Anubhasya*, which is highly respected. His disciplic succession is known as the Vallabhi-sampradāya. What can I say about the other *sampradāyas* and their activities?”

The Madhvācārya Sampradāya

“Lord Caitanya made the Madhva-sampradāya glorious in this Kali-yuga. I will now narrate to you the names of the gurus and *ācāryas* in this line. “In the very beginning there was Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of the spiritual world. His disciple was Brahmā, the lord of Brahmāloka. Brahmā's disciple was Nārada, who is always full of love of God. The spiritual master of Śukadeva, Vyāsa, became the disciple of Nārada and the magnanimous Madhvācārya became the disciple of Vyāsa. He wrote the glorious commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras* named after himself. From him the *sampradāya* was called the Madhvācārya-sampradāya. “Madhvācārya's disciple was Śrī Padmanābhācārya, whose disciple was Narahari. Narahari's disciple was Śrī Mādhava, whose disciple was the celebrated Akṣobhya. Akṣobhya's disciple was Jayatīrtha, whose disciple was Jñānasindhu. The disciple of Jñānasindhu was Mahānidhi, the friend of the poor. He had a disciple named Vidyānidhi. Vidyānidhi's disciple was Rājendra, whose disciple was Jayadharma Muni, who had wonderful characteristics. Among Jayadharma's disciples was Śrīman Viṣṇu Purī, the famous author of the book *Bhakti-ratnāvalī*. Another disciple of Jayadharma was Brāhmaṇa Puruṣottama, whose disciple was the greatly learned Vyāsatīrtha, who wrote the famous book *Śrī Viṣṇu-saṅhitā*. “The disciple of Vyāsatīrtha, Śrīman Lakṣmīpati, was like a great storehouse of transcendental qualities. Lakṣmīpati's disciple was Mādhavendra Purī, a rising moon of devotional service. Mādhavendra Purī's disciple was Śrī Ívara Purī, the ocean of mercy. Ívara Purī's disciple was Śrī Gauracandra, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. “Lord Gaura Rāya became the disciple of Śrī Ívara Purī. With His own mouth the Lord glorified Ívara Purī. Who can understand the wonderful love displayed by the Lord? From Him the *sampradāya* was called the Nimānanda-sampradāya [known also as the Gaudiya-sampradāya]. Nimāi Paṇḍita is the principal name of the Lord, this name is also very dear to Nityānanda. Seeing the Vaiṣṇava devotees of Lord Caitanya in Bengal, people used to say they were from the Nimāi-

sampradāya. Because Nimāi distributed *ananda* throughout the world, His *sampradāya* was known as Nimānanda. As I described previously about how the other *sampradāyas* became famous, similarly the Lord Himself glorified the Madhva-sampradāya.

“O Śrīnivāsa, after bestowing His mercy on Śrī Iśvara Purī, Gaurahari departed from Gayā. Previously the Lord used to hide from the devotees in Navadvīpa, however, when He returned from Gayā He was unable to hide from them, although He wanted to. After a few days, upon returning to Nadiyā, Gauracandra manifested Himself by the desire of the devotees. All the devotees, headed by Advaita, felt most cheerful within. By meeting Nityānanda that happiness increased. Who can describe it even with millions of mouths?

“Lord Caitanya along with Nityānanda and Advaita were always immersed in *sañkīrtana* in Nadiyā. Performing the most wonderful activities day after day, the Lord then decided to leave home. The Lord and enchanter of the universe, Gaurāñga, took to the renounced order of life in order to bestow mercy upon all living entities. After taking *sannyāsa*, the Lord became overwhelmed. Lord Nityānanda therefore took the Lord to the house of Advaita.

“Unable to remain tranquil, people came rushing from all directions to see that jewel amongst *sannyāsīs*, Lord Gauracandra. Demigods along with human beings, together in the millions, they came to see the Lord at Advaita Prabhu's house. The residents of the upper, middle, and lower planets became astonished as everyone chanted, ‘Hari, Hari!’ The jewel of the renounced order, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, made everyone glorious by giving them His *darśana*.

“His sweet limbs decorated with sandalwood, Gaurahari danced in the *sañkīrtana*. All the devotees performed the most pleasing *kīrtana* on all sides of the Lord. Nityānanda, Advaita, Śrīvāsa, and Gadādhara, felt delighted within and were unable to leave the side of the Lord. Raising His arms, the Lord chanted loudly, ‘Hari, Hari!’ as He floated in His tears during the ecstatic *kīrtana*.

“The people were overwhelmed and forgot themselves by seeing the Lord in this state. In a secluded place someone said, ‘The Lord's incarnation in the form of a *brāhmaṇa* has been ascertained in the *Vedas*.’

It is stated in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* of the *Atharva Veda*: “When the *sādhaka* [worshiper] sees that the Supreme Controller, the sovereign Lord of all potencies and cause of Brahmā, in His golden form as the topmost Supreme Being is the cause of all good fortune, then, becoming fully realized he casts far off the reactions to his past pious and sinful activities. Free from all designations, he then attains to the stage of equal vision.”

“Someone else remarked, ‘Miśra Viśvambhara in the form of a devotee is endowed with all auspicious signs. No one is equal to Him or greater.’”

After the section dealing with Brahma in the third chapter of the *Upaniṣad* within the branch of the *Atharva Veda* it is stated: “I am the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Being summoned by the incarnation of Mahā-Viṣṇu, Advaita Ācārya, I will descend from Goloka-dhāma and appear on the earth planet during the first *sandhya* of Kali-yuga—after four thousand and before five thousand years have passed—in Navadvīpa, Māyāpura-dhāma on the banks of the Ganges. I will appear in the form of a *brāhmaṇa* with a large golden complexioned body measuring four hands, endowed with the thirty-two signs of a *mahā-puruṣa*, and bearing the title Miśra. Then, decorated with all of the auspicious qualities of a *mahā-bhāgavat*, endowed with renunciation, devoid of worldly desires, and learned in the science of pure devotional service, I will accept *sannyāsa*, as a devotee relishing the mellows of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa.”

“Someone said, ‘See His very smooth, golden limbs! O, what excellent sandal decorations!’”

In the *Mahābhārata* it is said, “In His early pastimes He appears as a householder with a golden complexion. His limbs are beautiful, and His body, smeared with the pulp of sandalwood, seems like molten gold.”

“Someone said, ‘This golden Lord steals the hearts of all. The three worlds become astounded by His character. Taking this yellow complexion in Kali-yuga, He has previously taken white, red, and black color in Satya, Tretā, and Dvāpara *yugas*.’”

From the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.8.13) comes the statement, “This boy [Kṛṣṇa] has three other colors—white, red and yellow—as He appears in different ages. Now He has appeared in a transcendental blackish color.”

“Someone said, ‘Internally He is blackish and externally He exhibits an

enchanting golden complexion. He performs His pastimes along with Nityānanda, Advaita, and others. He can be attained by the performance of *sañkīrtana*.”

As also stated in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (11.5.32): “In the age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the name of Kṛṣṇa. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons, and confidential companions.”

“Someone said, ‘This Lord is the deliverer of all. There will never by one more merciful than Him. The *yuga-dharma* for this age is the congregational chanting of the holy names. By His incarnation, He has happily established this principle of religion.’”

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.8), Kṛṣṇa declares, “To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium.”

“Someone said, ‘Who can describe the pastimes of the Lord? By accepting *sannyāsa*, He has glorified this age of Kali.’”

From the *Mahābhārata* comes: “In His later pastimes He accepts the *sannyāsa* order, and He is equipoised and peaceful. He is the highest abode of peace and devotion, for He silences the impersonalist nondevotees.”

“Someone said, ‘The people of Kali-yuga are very fortunate, for the Lord, by taking the renounced order of life, has destroyed their ignorance.’”

In the *Upa-Purāṇas* it is stated: “O learned *brāhmaṇa*, sometimes I accept the renounced order of life to induce the fallen people of the age of Kali to accept devotional service to the Lord.”

“Someone said, ‘By distributing the *mahā-mantra* the terrible miseries of the conditioned souls are automatically vanquished.’”

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

“Someone then said, ‘The names; Hari, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma have wonderful meanings which are relished by the learned devotees.’”

Śrī Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī has given the following description: “The Supreme Personality of Godhead is eternal, full of knowledge, and bliss. He teaches the truth to the living entities thereby destroying their

nescience along with their sinful reactions, therefore He is known as 'Hari'. The personification of the *hlādinī* potency [pleasure potency] of Kṛṣṇa, attracts the mind of Kṛṣṇa, therefore She is known as 'Harā,' who is none other than Śrī Rādhā. The name 'Kṛṣṇa' indicates the Lord of all transcendental mellows, who has *śyāma varṇa* [blackish complexion] and lotus eyes, who is the Lord of the bliss of Gokula and the son of Nanda Mahārāja. He who is the embodiment of transcendental mellows, the primary cause of all pastime manifestations, who enjoys eternally with Śrī Rādhikā [as Rādhikārāmaṇa] is known as 'Rāma.'”

“After discussing these topics, everyone surrendered at the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya.

“The jewel of the *sannyāsa* order, Lord Gauracandra, thus spent His days happily at the house of Advaita Ācārya. The Lord satisfied in various ways the desires of everyone who came to Śāntipura from Navadvīpa. After solacing Śacīmātā in many ways, the Lord took the dust of her feet on His head. Śacīmātā became overwhelmed with affection and instructed the Lord to stay at Nīlācala [Jagannātha Purī]. Thus by the order of His mother, the Lord went to Purī. Who can describe the condition of the devotees thereafter?

“After wandering throughout India, the Lord entered Mathurā-maṇḍala in the guise of a *sannyāsī*. Taking the Sanoṣiyā *brāhmaṇa* of Mathurā along with Him, the Lord wandered in the form of a devotee throughout Mathurā-maṇḍala in great sport. The Lord inquired from the people about whatever pastimes He Himself performed in His previous incarnation as if it were unknown to Him. Hearing about those pastimes from the people exceedingly delighted the Lord. In this way the son of Śacī enjoyed His pastimes.

“Gradually after visiting the forests and sub-forests of Vraja-maṇḍala He arrived at Vṛndāvana via Mathurā. I could not describe the Lord's ecstatic feelings as He travelled the bank of the Yamunā even if I had a million mouths. Innumerable people came from all sides and became mad in love by seeing and glorifying the Lord. Disturbed by the large crowds, the Lord went to the secluded Akrūra-ghāṭa for His meals. Sometimes He would sit under the *tintidi* tree [Āmli-talā] and float in His tears of ecstasy. A place of transcendental bliss, this Āmli-talā is where the Lord bestowed His mercy on Kṛṣṇadāsa Rājputa.

O Śrīnivāsa, from here the Lord departed for Nīlācala to satisfy the devotees desire. Anyone who takes *darśana* of this Āmli-talā certainly has his aspirations fulfilled.”

Lord Nityānanda's Pastimes at Śṛṅgāra-vaṭa

“Look at this wonderful *vaṭa* tree on the bank of the Yamunā. Everyone calls it Śṛṅgāra-vaṭa. At this place Lord Kṛṣṇa would enjoy Himself by dressing in various ways for the pleasure of Subala and the others. Some other people call this place Nityānanda-vaṭa. This is also correct. Please listen while I explain briefly how Lord Nityānanda came to this place. “Nityānanda Ram and Lord Caitanya are one and the same body. Lord Nityānanda was born in Rāśha-deśa in the village of Ekacakrā-grāma. His father's name was Hāśāi Paṇḍita and mother's was Padmāvati. To describe their affection for their son is beyond the power of my words. The son of Padmāvati, who is always filled with the greatest ecstasy, manifested various pastimes at Ekacakrā. He displayed for everyone the pastimes of the various incarnations in Their different moods. The residents of Ekacakrā were most fortunate as they accepted Nityānandacandra as their life and soul.

“Lord Nityānanda remained at home for twelve years, during which everyone's affection for Him increased. However, who can understand the mind of Nityānanda? He could not remain peaceful without Lord Caitanya.

“One day He considered in His mind, ‘It is not proper for Me to go to Navadvīpa just now. Lord Caitanya has appeared there and presently is hiding Himself as a child. When He discloses His identity to His devotees, then I will go to meet Him. At present I will go on pilgrimage.’ Thinking like this, Nityānanda Prabhu smiled to Himself.

“At that time one *sannyāsī* came to the village. He inquired from the people about where Hāśāi Paṇḍita lives. On understanding the location of Hāśāi Paṇḍita's house, the *sannyāsī* went there. Seeing the *sannyāsī*, Hāśāi Paṇḍita became very happy. He immediately brought many

eatables and offered them to the *sannyāsī*. The *sannyāsī* however said, 'I have one request from you. If you accept my request then only I will eat.' Hāsāi Paṇḍita vowed to accept the *sannyāsī*'s request and proceeded to feed him. As the *sannyāsī* was about to leave he asked for Nityānanda to accompany him. Nityānanda, remaining peaceful at heart, solaced His parents and left with the *sannyāsī*. In this way He was able to leave His home. Who can understand His wonderful pastimes?

“Whoever sees the youthful Nityānanda, whose beauty attracts the whole world, feels his eyes coolly refreshed. Wherever Lord Nityānanda went people came rushing to see Him with agitated hearts. Majestically walking like the best of elephants, Nityānanda distributed the Lord's mercy to everyone. Just as He travelled in Dvāpara-yuga in the form of Baladeva, now He travelled in the same way to all the holy *tīrthas*.

“While travelling to the south, He went to Pāṇḍrapura where He saw the Deity of Viṭṭhalanātha. In that village lived one sober *brāhmaṇa* who was a Godbrother of Mādhavendra Purī. That *brāhmaṇa* took Lord Nityānanda to his house and offered Him fruits and milk. The people of Pāṇḍrapura were greatly fortunate. By seeing Nityānanda, their lives became successful. Who can understand the Lord's mind? Seeing Viṭṭhalanātha, Nitai remained there in seclusion.

“Then one day by the invitation of the *brāhmaṇa*, his guru, Lakṣmīpati, came there from a distant place. Lakṣmīpati was expert in all the *śāstras* and he had many disciples with him. Who can describe the loving affection he had for his disciples, just as parents have for their child. Performing the most ancient rituals which cannot be described in words, he was a well known saint in the devotional path. Who can describe the glories of Lakṣmīpati, whose disciple was Mādhavendra Purī?

“Mādhavendra Purī was full of ecstatic loving devotion. Whoever remembers his name achieves all success. Ívara Purī, Raṅga Purī, and many others were his disciples. All of the disciples of Mādhavendra Purī in Bengal and Orissa were devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, attached in pure love. Mādhavendra was well known in the Madhva-sampradāya. He was an ocean of transcendental qualities, being very dear to Lakṣmīpati.

“This Lakṣmīpati stayed at the house of his *brāhmaṇa* disciple and, accepting his food there, he passed his time in *Kṛṣṇa-kathā*. Repeatedly Lakṣmīpati told his disciple, ‘There is some special auspiciousness in your

house. I have come many times to your house, but I have never felt such happiness in my mind. I think there is some great devotee here.' The *brāhmaṇa* replied, 'Your mercy is very strong.' By the desire of the Lord, the *brāhmaṇa* did not reveal His presence. In this way they spent the day in different topics.

"In the evening, while sitting in a secluded place, Lakṣmīpati sang the glories of Lord Balarāma. With unflinching devotion he prayed to Baladeva with tears in his eyes, 'O Lord, I am the lowest, sinful person. Please be merciful to me. By so doing, Your fame will spread throughout the universe.' After he offered these prayers, he fell to the ground, tears streaming from his eyes. The state of Lakṣmīpati cannot be properly described. He was very old, and in intense lamentation he fell unconscious. He was unable to remain steady due to his profound loving ecstasy.

"Suddenly, by the will of the Lord, he fell asleep. Lord Nityānanda, in the form of Balarāma, appeared in a dream before the *sannyāsī*. What wonderful beauty, defeating that of Cupid! His limbs defeated the beauty of a mountain of silver. His arms extended to His knees, His chest was broad and His lotus eyes extended to His ears. His earrings attracted the minds of the whole universe and at the left side of His waist He kept a beautiful buffalo horn. His body was decorated with various ornaments. Indeed, nothing within the universe can be compared to His beauty. His face defeats the beauty of the full moon. While speaking, unlimited nectar flowed from His mouth.

"Speaking slowly He said, 'My dear Lakṣmīpati, My heart breaks hearing your lamentation. O Lakṣmīpati, Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of My life and you are His servant life after life.'

Lakṣmīpati, holding the lotus feet of Baladeva replied, 'I pray that I will not have any differentiation like this in my mind.'

Hearing these words of Lakṣmīpati, Lord Balarāma smiled and said, 'In this village one *brāhmaṇa*'s son has come in the dress of an *avadhūta*. He will become your disciple. With this *mantra* you initiate Him as your disciple.' Lord Balarāma then uttered the *mantra* in the ear of Lakṣmīpati who, on receiving that *mantra*, became ecstatic. After thus bestowing His mercy, Lord Balarāma disappeared.

"After rising in the morning, as the *sannyāsī* was remembering the

dream, Nityānanda Prabhu appeared before him. Seeing the luster of Nityānanda, Lakṣmīpati considered, 'What a wonderful bodily effulgence! He cannot be a human being!' Thinking like this, the learned *sannyāsī* looked on Lord Nityānanda's beautiful face with unblinking eyes.

"Falling on the ground, Nityānanda offered His obeisances to the *sannyāsī*, who quickly picked up the Lord and took Him on his lap. Nityānanda said to Lakṣmīpati again and again, 'Please initiate Me and deliver Me.'

"Hearing Nityānanda's sweet words, the *sannyāsī* was agitated and began to float in his own tears. Unable to disobey the order of Lord Balarāma, Lakṣmīpati on that very day gave initiation to Lord Nityānanda. After giving Him the *mantra*, the *sannyāsī* took the Lord on his lap and, becoming overwhelmed, his body trembled in ecstasy.

"The most merciful Lord Nityānanda is very dear to Lakṣmīpati. What is there He cannot do? He is Himself the fully independent Supreme Lord. In this way, Lord Nityānanda, the reservoir of love and well-wisher of the devotees, increased the ecstasy of the whole Madhva-sampradāya. By becoming a disciple of Śrī Lakṣmīpati, Lord Nityānanda increased the ecstasy of His guru.

"Very soon after this, Lord Nityānanda went to another place. Others are unable to understand the Lord's pastimes. Being bereft of Nityānanda's association, that *sannyāsī* became greatly agitated. Without speaking to anyone, he thought deeply to himself.

"As night was ending Lakṣmīpati fell asleep. In a dream, Lord Nityānanda appeared before him. Seeing the Lord, the most sober Lakṣmīpati could not check his tears. Then Nityānanda manifested His form of Lord Balarāma before Lakṣmīpati. Seeing this, the *sannyāsī* fell at His feet. Wet with his tears, the *sannyāsī* said again and again, 'You have incarnated just to bewilder me. Lord Brahmā does not know You, others cannot know You, only those whom You desire can know You. Why are You tricking me? I am a most insignificant insect, a fool. Please show mercy on me for I am surrendered to You.'

"Hearing the words of Śrī Lakṣmīpati, the Lord again appeared as Lord Nityānanda. The form of the Lord was more enchanting than a flashing bolt of lightning. Seeing such beauty, Lakṣmīpati became agitated in

love. Lord Nityānanda then bestowed His mercy and fulfilled Śrī Lakṣmīpati's desire. The Lord forbade Lakṣmīpati to disclose this incident, and after solacing him, He disappeared.

“Lakṣmīpati became greatly distressed upon losing the Lord's *darśana*. He woke from his sleep and saw that night had passed. He was unable to speak to anyone and could not remain patient. From that day his condition was wonderful. Seeing his state all his disciples became worried. Then suddenly Lakṣmīpati left their association [went back to Godhead].

“What do I know of the character of Śrī Lakṣmīpati? He is very dear to Lord Nityānanda and is well known in the world.

The devotion of the residents of Pāṇḍrapura cannot be described. Even today they have very strong devotion by the mercy of Lord Nityānanda.

“According to His own desires, the Lord then travelled to different holy places in great joy. After some days He met Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī near Praticī-tīrtha. Who can describe the manifestation of love when they met? Only one who has seen can know. Mādhavendra Purī accepted Nityānanda as his friend, but Nityānanda accepted Mādhavendra Purī as His guru.

“In the *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, Mādhavendra Purī states: ‘Because Lord Kṛṣṇa has special love for me, therefore I have obtained a friend such as Nityānanda.’

“Īśvara Purī and others were all astonished seeing their relationship and they all developed deep love for Nityānanda. Nityānanda and Mādhavendra drowned in the nectar of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and for some time they discussed both day and night together.

“Lord Nityānanda took leave of Mādhavendra Purī and went to Setubandha [Rāmeśvara] for *darśana*. Śrī Mādhavendra Purī took his disciples headed by Īśvara Purī and went to Sarayu-tīrtha. Both Lord Nityānanda and Mādhavendra Purī nearly died feeling separation for each other, but due to their love for Kṛṣṇa, they somehow survived.

Although Lord Nityānanda is most sober, still He travelled everywhere.

“In a few days Lord Nityānanda reached Mathurā and enjoyed sporting in the mood of a child with the young boys there. Whoever saw Lord Nityānanda just once could not leave His association for a moment.

Lord Nityānanda is the supreme personification of sweetness.

Innumerable people came to see Him. Lord Nityānanda, however, did not remain in one place, but wandered throughout Vraja in great ecstasy. Sometimes He would go to Gokula in Mahāvana and see Madana-gopāla and stay there for some time. When He saw the house of Nanda Mahārāja, He would shed tears as He remembered His previous pastimes. He then departed for further pilgrimage.

The Lord offered obeisances to Madana-gopāla and departed for Hastināpura, where the Pāndavas once resided. He then returned to the forests of Vraja and performed amazing pastimes on the bank of the Yamunā. Sometimes He would sit under this beautiful *vaṭa* tree and sometimes He would roll in the dust. Sometimes He would decorate Himself with various flowers and sometimes He would call out, 'Where is Kanai, the Lord of My life?' Filled with ecstatic feelings, the body of Lord Nityānanda would tremble and His long lotus eyes would fill with tears. Thus the Lord enjoyed His pastimes in Vṛndāvana. Who has the power to understand His activities?

“Lord Nityānanda could understand that Lord Caitanya was secretly enjoying His pastimes at Navadvīpa. Lord Nityānanda, the wielder of the plow, smiled and in ecstasy the hairs of His body constantly stood on end. The Lord thus became impatient due to attraction to Lord Caitanya and He departed for Navadvīpa from here.

“For twenty years Lord Nityānanda travelled to the holy places. Who can describe all the pastimes He performed during that time? This is the pastime place of Lord Nityānanda. Whoever sees this place is most fortunate.

“O Śrīnivāsa, this is Cīra-ghāṭa, also called Cayana-ghāṭa by some people. One day after performing *rāsa-līlā*, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa along with the *sakhīs* came to take bath at this place.

“Keeping their clothes and ornaments under this *nīpa* tree, they entered the waters of the Yamunā wearing only their undergarments. They had become tired due to their various sporting activities, but by the touch of the waters of the Yamunā their fatigue vanquished and they became refreshed. Enjoying great fun from their water sports, they entered a cluster of lotuses. Then Kṛṣṇa, unnoticed by the *gopīs*, returned to the shore, hid the *gopī*'s clothes, and returned to the water. After finishing their water sports they returned to shore and became worried on not

seeing their clothes. At that time, Kṛṣṇa seeing the wonderfully beautiful scene, returned the *gopī*'s clothes after joking with them. "At this place Kṛṣṇa stole the *gopī*'s dresses, relieved His fatigue, and enjoyed many other pastimes. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa along with the *gopīs* enjoyed various pastimes here at Nidhuvana.

"See here is Keśī-tīrtha. The glories of this place are described in the *Purāṇas*. The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* says: 'Keśī-tīrtha, the place where Keśī died, is a hundred times more sacred than the Ganges. By offering *piṇḍa* in Keśī-tīrtha, one attains the result of offering *piṇḍa* in Gayā.'

And in the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* it is stated: "With his mad neighing Keśī made the three worlds tremble, and with the wild rolling of his eyes he set the entire universe in flames. Kṛṣṇa killed this demon as easily as one splits a blade of grass and then washed the blood from His hands at a place now known as Keśī-tīrtha. I worship that sacred place."

"O Śrīnivāsa, at this place, Dhīra-samīra, Kṛṣṇa performed endless pastimes in the forest groves. The wonderful meeting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa at this place is relished by Their dear associates.

"O Śrīnivāsa, see here is Maṅikarṇikā. In this forest Kṛṣṇa had many pastimes. At this place Kṛṣṇa pacified Rādhārāṇī when She was in an angry mood.

"Please see now this wonderfully beautiful Vamśī-vaṭa on the bank of the Yamunā. The shade of the Vamśī-vaṭa tree removes the distress of the world. Lord Gopīnātha eternally enjoys His pastimes here. His attractive dress enchants the world and His movements are flawless as the sound of His flute attracts the *gopīs*."

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it is stated: "Śrī Śrīla Gopīnātha, who originated the transcendental mellow of the *rāsa* dance, stands on the shore in Vamśī-vaṭa and attracts the attention of the cowherd damsels with the sound of His celebrated flute. May they all confer upon us their benediction."

"This place, Vamśī-vaṭa, was flooded and disappeared in the waters of the Yamunā. The Gosvāmī collected one branch from the original tree and replanted that branch next to the original place. O Śrīnivāsa, this place is supremely enchanting and cool breezes slowly blow here.

"After leaving behind everything, in great agitation from the sound of the flute, the *gopīs* came here to meet Lord Kṛṣṇa. They swam in the

ocean of Kṛṣṇa's beauty, and Kṛṣṇa, seeing their love, could not remain steady. Who can understand how Kṛṣṇa calmly inquired about the *gopīs'* welfare in a happy mood? In this way, Kṛṣṇa tested the love of the *gopīs* at this place, as He instructed them in various ways to return to their homes.

“As the *rāsa* dance began, Kṛṣṇa observed the different grades of *gopīs* and decided to leave them, taking Rādhārāṇī alone with Him. Hiding at this place, Kṛṣṇa happily heard the *gopīs'* lamentation. Left alone by Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs* inquired from the trees and creepers about His whereabouts. The *gopīs* began imitating Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, and they glorified Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's fortunate position.

“After fulfilling the desires of Rādhārāṇī, Kṛṣṇa left Her also at this place. Seeing Rādhārāṇī in this state, the other *gopīs*, agitated at heart, tried to pacify Her in many ways. They all assembled together, eagerly desirous to see Kṛṣṇa, they began to endlessly glorify His transcendental qualities.

“At this place [known as Govinda-ghāṭa], Kṛṣṇa reappeared before the *gopīs* and they became absorbed in transcendental bliss. The *gopīs* carefully sat Kṛṣṇa at this place and they discussed at great length amongst themselves.

“O Śrīnivāsa, see the bank of the Yamunā here. At this place Lord Kṛṣṇa began His *mahā-rāsa*. Surrounded by millions of *gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa eagerly enjoyed His pastimes of *rāsa* dance. As they enjoyed the *rāsa* dance, the whole night expanded to one *kalpa*. This has been vividly described by Vyāsa and other poets. Surrounded by the jewels amongst women, the topmost expert at transcendental mellows, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who attracts the minds of everyone, expertly enjoyed the *rāsa* dance.”

The following verses describing the *rāsa* dance are from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.33.2-9). “There on the Yamunā's banks Lord Govinda then began the pastime of the *rāsa* dance in the company of those jewels among women, the faithful *gopīs*, who joyfully linked their arms together.

“The festive *rāsa* dance commenced with the *gopīs* arrayed in a circle. Lord Kṛṣṇa expanded Himself and entered between each pair of *gopīs*, and as that master of mystic power placed His arms around their necks, each girl thought He was standing next to her alone. The demigods and

their wives were overwhelmed with eagerness to witness the *rāsa* dance, and they soon crowded the sky with their hundreds of celestial airplanes. “Kettledrums then resounded in the sky while flowers rained down and the chief Gandharvas and their wives sang Lord Kṛṣṇa's spotless glories. “A tumultuous sound arose from the armlets, ankle bells and waist bells of the *gopīs* as they sported with their beloved Kṛṣṇa in the circle of the *rāsa* dance.

“In the midst of the dancing *gopīs*, Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared most brilliant, like an exquisite sapphire in the midst of golden ornaments.

“As the *gopīs* sang in praise of Kṛṣṇa, their feet moved charmingly as they danced, their arms swayed gracefully, and their eyebrows moved as they smiled playfully. Their hair loosened and as they bent, their waists appeared ready to break. As their faces perspired, the garments on their breasts moved this way and that, and their earrings swung across their cheeks, Lord Kṛṣṇa's young consorts shone like streaks of lightning in a mass of clouds.

“Eager to enjoy conjugal love, their throats colored with various pigments, the *gopīs* sang loudly and danced. They were overjoyed by Kṛṣṇa's touch, and they sang songs that filled the entire universe.

“One *gopī*, joining Lord Mukunda in His singing, sang pure melodious tones that rose harmoniously above His. Kṛṣṇa was pleased and showed great appreciation for her performance, saying ‘Excellent! Excellent!’ Then another *gopī* repeated the same melody, but in a special metrical pattern, and Kṛṣṇa praised her also.”

“Śrī Vrajendra-kumāra fulfilled all the desires of the *gopīs* by performing the *rāsa* dance. The *rāsa-līlā* pastimes are the abode of great happiness, just hearing about these pastimes will fulfill one's desires.

“O Śrīnivāsa, Kṛṣṇa is the enchanter of the whole world, the life and soul of Śrī Rādhikā and the enjoyer of the *rāsa* dance. Śrī Rādhikā is the enchantress of the whole world, the life and soul of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the jewel amongst the *gopīs*. Her only engagement is to give pleasure to Kṛṣṇa, nothing else. Rādhārāṇī along with the *sakhīs* are always overwhelmed enjoying the *rāsa* dance in Vṛndāvana.

“One day at this place some wonderful pastimes took place which I am eager to describe. Vṛndādevī thought how she would somehow or other like to see the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Thinking in this way,

Vṛndādevī along with her followers began to make arrangements for the *rāsa* dance. The wonderful arrangements they made are unknown even to the *Nāṛya-śāstras*.

“The dance arena was made extremely enchanting, effulgent as the bright moonshine. The surrounding gardens were also further beautified by the rays of the moon. Many sitting places, decorated with white flowers, were situated in the four directions and in the middle a white *simhāsana* was carefully arranged. Pān, betel, and other spices kept on a jeweled tray attracted everyone's mind by the wonderful fragrance. The fragrance of the various flower decorations, sandalwood, and other items cannot be described.

“They kept there millions of *cāmarās*, which attracted the mind. *Mṛdaṅgas* and other musical instruments were kept in orderly rows. Parrots and *kokilas* were instructed to sing the glories of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Peacocks were instructed to dance and bumblebees to hum.

“At that time one of Vṛndādevī's followers softly spoke to her, ‘Following your instructions I have gone to see why Their Lordships were delayed. Paurṇamāsī had instructed Kṛṣṇa to wait for Rādhā at Puṣpavana. Śrī Rādhikā, coming from Her home along with Her *sakhīs* then met Kṛṣṇa at that place. Paurṇamāsī became pleased seeing Their meeting and informed Them about your arrangements. Upon hearing from Paurṇamāsī, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa left there on Their way here.’

“How attractive was the poise of Their lotus feet as They placed Their arms on each other's shoulders and proceeded along. They gazed at each other filled with intense feelings of love. There was no limit to the beauty of that enchanting scene. Seeing it caused one's eyelids to resist blinking.

“Kṛṣṇa resembled the rain-filled monsoon cloud, and Rādhā resembled a flashing bolt of lightning. The brightness of Their beauty illuminated the three worlds. They were surrounded by Lalitā and the *sakhīs* and the combined bodily radiance of all present was indeed enchanting. With wonderful poses They thus entered the forest grove with the sound of the ankle bells continually tinkling.

“Seeing the arrangements made by Vṛndādevī, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, along with the *sakhīs* became overjoyed. Sitting on that excellent *simhāsana* in the middle of the arena, They remained smiling in great satisfaction. All

around the *sakhīs* forgot themselves in great happiness.

“Millions of maidservants fanned Their Lordships with the *cāmarās*. The parrots and *kokilas* sang Their glories, bumblebees sweetly hummed, and the peacocks danced. They all performed their respective services according to Vṛndādevī's instructions, and in this way Vṛndādevī disclosed her heart's desire. Kṛṣṇa, the personification of ecstatic love, smilingly cast a sidelong glance and spoke something to Vṛndā.

“Who can describe the ever increasing joy felt by Vṛndādevī while offering flowers and sandalwood pulp to Kṛṣṇa? Lalitā took the tray of pān spices and happily placed it in the hand of Rādhārāṇī, who took the pān, and in great pleasure, placed it in Kṛṣṇa's mouth. Manifesting His pastimes, Kṛṣṇa slowly smiled while chewing the pān, His heart agitated in love. Thinking to enjoy *rāsa* dance He lovingly gazed into the face of Rādhārāṇī.

“Lord Kṛṣṇa is the personification of bliss and the abode of spiritual mellows. Millions of Cupids are conquered by Him. With His flute to His lips, wearing an enchanting dress and decorated with a peacock's feather, His beauty increased unlimitedly. Thereafter, to fulfill the desires of Vṛndādevī, Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed His pastimes of *rāsa* dance at this place.

“Amongst innumerable *gopīs*, Śrī Rādhikā is the topmost. She alone can fulfill all of Lord Kṛṣṇa's desires. Who can describe the beauty of Her decorations? The beauty of the other *gopīs*, headed by Lalitā, is similarly incomparable. There is no end to the associates of Śrī Rādhikā and similarly the associates of Lalitā and the associates of Viśākhā are also countless.

“Surrounded by millions of *gopīs*, Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoys placing His hands on the shoulder of Rādhā. The beauty of the *rāsa-līlā* expands and fills the entire world as everyone became fully absorbed in the musical vibrations. What can I say about that enchanting music which steals the hearts of all?

“All the various musical instruments were greatly fortunate to be engaged in the *rāsa* dance. O Śrīnivāsa, what a wonderful arrangement! Various musical instruments were played in the *rāsa-līlā* which attract all living entities beginning with Lord Brahmā.

“Always surrounded by loving associates, the son of Mahārāja Nanda

attracts millions of Cupids. He is the most expert in playing all kinds of musical instruments. In the three worlds there is no comparison to the enchanting way in which He plays the flute. Hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute, Lord Śiva becomes overwhelmed.

“The personification of transcendental mellows, the enchanter of Govinda, Śrī Rādhikā perfectly plays the instrument known as *alāvani* [similar to the *tambūrā*]. She vibrates both vocally and instrumentally the three meters; *saśja*, *madhyama*, and *gāndhāra* [see *Bhāg.* 1.6.32].

“Śrī Lalitā very expertly plays the *brahma vīṇā*, beginning with the sounds of the *śrutis* [22 different tones]. The beautiful Viśākhā plays the *kacchapī vīṇā* in various sweet ways. The *rudra vīṇā* is played by the beautiful Sucitra, who is expert in manifesting the difference in *svara*, *jāti*, and *prabheda* [varieties of melodies]. Campakalatā plays the *vipani* [a type of *vīṇā*] in different *murchanās* and *tālās* [modulations and rhythms]. Raṅgadevī plays the *vilāsa* [also a *vīṇā*] manifesting different *gamaka* [vibrating notes]. Beautiful Sudevī plays the *sarangi* in different *ragas*. Tungavidya playing the *kinnari vīṇā* showers nectar on the *rāsa-maṇḍala*. Indulekha plays the *svara-maṇḍala* [similar to the *santoor*] and easily manifests the different *svaras*.

“The *sakhīs* of Rādhikā and their followers engage in this way playing various musical instruments. Someone plays *mardala* [a type of drum] and someone the *mṛdaṅga*, which produces wonderful *tālās* [rhythms] not heard in this world. Someone plays the *muraja* [resembling a large flute] and someone the *upaṅga* [percussion instrument], hearing which one loses his composure. Someone expertly plays the *damaru*, which is very dear to Lord Śiva. Others play various instruments beginning with *karatalas* and in this way the *rāsa-maṇḍala* is filled with the sounds of various musical instruments. Who can properly describe the exquisite sounds of the musical instruments played by Śrī Rādhikā and Her *sakhīs*?

“The sounds of the various musical instruments blend together and appear to shower nectar within the *rāsa-maṇḍala*. Vṛndādevī introduces wonderful musical instruments unknown to the *śāstras*. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, being completely absorbed in the mellows produced by the music, joyfully begin dancing. Similarly, the *sakhīs* headed by Lalitā, feeling great jubilation also join in the dance.

“O Śrīnivāsa, Rādhārāṇī with Her associates, enters the forest cottage by

this path. There is no end to the followers of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Amongst Her associates, headed by Lalitā, Rādhā looks wonderfully beautiful. Lalitā-sakhī is filled with all transcendental qualities. She is surrounded by eight intimate followers headed by Ratnaprabhā. They are described along with the followers of the other *sakhīs* in the *Bṛhat-Kṛṣṇa-ganoddeśa-dīpikā* as follows: 'Ratnaprabhā, Ratikalā, Subhadrā, Bhadrarekhikā, Sumukhī, Dhaniṣṭhā, Kalahaṅsī, and Kalāpinī are the eight followers of Lalitā.'

"There is no comparison to the beauty of Viśākhā, surrounded by her eight intimate followers headed by Mādhavī. 'Mādhavī, Mālatī, Candrarekhikā, Kuñjarī, Hariṇī, Capalā, Surabhī, and Subhānanā are the eight followers of Viśākhā.'

"Sucitrā is very expert in all respects. She has good character and is surrounded by eight intimate followers. 'Kuraṅgākṣī, Sucaritā, Maṅḍalī, Maṅikuṅḍalā, Candrikā, Candralatikā, Kundakākṣī, and Sumandirā are the eight followers of Sucitrā.'

"The loving affairs of Campakalatā are wonderful. She is surrounded by eight followers: 'Rasālikā, Tilakinī, Saurasenī, Sugandhikā, Rāminī, Kāmanagarī, Nāgarī, and Nāgareṇikā are the eight followers of Campakalatā.'

"Who can remain patient seeing the beautiful form of Raṅgadevī? Her eight followers headed by Mañjumedha steal the hearts of all. 'Mañjumedhā, Sumadhurā, Sumadhyā, Madhurekṣaṇā, Tanumadhyā, Madhusāndrā, Guṇacuśā, and Varāṅgadā are the eight followers of Raṅgadevī.'

"Sudevī is always joyful due to her love for Rādhikā. Her eight followers are well known. 'Tuṅgabhadrā, Rasottuṅgā, Raṅgavāṇī, Susaṅgatā, Citralekhā, Vicitrāṅgī, Medinī, and Madanālasā are the eight followers of Sudevī.'

"Tuṅgavidyā is most beautiful. Her eight followers are headed by Kalakaṅṭhī. 'Kalakaṅṭhī, Śaśikalā, Kamalā, Madhurā, Indirā, Kandarpa Sundarī, Kāmalatikā, and Prema-mañjarī are the eight followers of Tuṅgavidyā.'

"Indulekhā expertly attracts the hearts of all. Her eight followers are headed by Kāverī. 'Kāverī, Cārukavarā, Sukeśī, Mañjukesīkā, Hārahīrā, Mahāhīrā, Hārakaṅṭhī, and Manoharā are the eight followers of

Indulekhā.'

“O Śrīnivāsa, as Lalitā-sakhī along with the other *sakhīs* and their associates watch the meeting of the divine couple in this *kuñja*, their happiness increases at every moment. The activities of the *sakhīs* headed by Lalitā are most wonderful.

“The activities performed by the *sakhīs* for the service of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are described in the *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* as follows: ‘(1) Glorify the transcendental love and qualities of the Hero to the Heroine and vice versa. (2) Increase the attachment of one for the other. (3) Arranging the meeting at the previously appointed time [at some distant place]. (4) Engage the other *sakhīs* in service. (5) Joke or ridicule (6) Solace one lover or the other. (7) Dressing the Heroine and Hero. (8) Expertly helping fulfill Their inner desires. (9) Hiding the Heroine's doṣa [offense, crime, flaw]. (10) Cheating the husbands in order to meet Kṛṣṇa. (11) Give instructions. (12) Bring Them together at the proper time [when They are willing]. (13) Offer service with *cāmarā* etc. (14/15) Chastise Hero or Heroine according to time and situation. (16) Relay messages. (17) Protect the life of the Heroine. These are the seventeen different services performed by the *sakhīs*.’

“O Śrīnivāsa, I find no means to possibly describe the flower house made here for the pleasure of Lord Kṛṣṇa. See how very attractive this forest is! Here is situated Gopīśvara Mahādeva, who is transcendental to the modes of nature. By worshiping Lord Sadāśiva, who maintains all the residents of Vṛndāvana, one becomes successful in all his activities. All the *gopīs* always worship him with various articles to obtain the association of Kṛṣṇa. I cannot describe the unlimited glories of Gopīśvara. He is worshiped by the *gopīs*, therefore he is known as Gopīśvara. He is always offered prayers by the demigods, headed by Indra, for by his mercy one's love for Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana is increased. “I worship Gopīśvara Mahādeva, who is most merciful. He takes away everyone's miseries and awards attachment to Kṛṣṇa.

“See this Brahma-kuṇḍa, which is very secluded and beautified by many creepers and plants. The glories of Brahma-kuṇḍa are described in the *Purāṇas*.”

The *Varāha Purāṇa* says: “A person who fasts thru the night and bathes in beautiful Brahma-kuṇḍa, which is surrounded by many trees and

vines, enjoys pastimes with the Gandharvas and Apsaras. Leaving ones body here, he goes to My abode. North of this place is a white *aśoka* tree that in the month of Vaiśākha [April-May], on the śukla Dvādaśī, at noon, suddenly bursts into full bloom. Except My pure devotee, no one can understand how this happens.”

“At this place, Vṛndādevī disclosed her mind and fulfilled the desires of Nārada Muni. O Śrīnivāsa, this is Venu-kūpa. Lord Kṛṣṇacandra had so much fun at this place. Knowing that His friends were thirsty, Kṛṣṇa looked at the ground and took His flute in hand. Upon playing on His flute, the sound entered Pātālaloka and suddenly there manifested a well filled with water. Kṛṣṇa's friends all drank that water and then praised Him. Therefore this place is famous in the world as Venu-kūpa.

“O Śrīnivāsa, the same day after chastizing Kāliya, Kṛṣṇa swallowed the forest fire here. Whoever sees this place, known as Davanala-kuṇḍa, is relieved from the fire of material life.”

It is stated in the *Saura Purāṇa*: “See this Govinda-svami-tīrtha, the best of all holy places. The wonderful beauty of this place has no comparison. By taking bath at this place, all one's desires are fulfilled. Govindadeva performs His pastimes here.”

The following statements are from the *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*: “Neither Brahmā, Nārada, Śiva, or the great devotees filled with pure love of Kṛṣṇa are able to properly or completely understand the sweetness of the land of Vraja. Only Lord Balarāma and His mother Rohinī, both filled with transcendental love, are able to understand the land of Vraja. How is it possible for me to describe the land of Vraja?

“Filled with many large lakes, hills, and rivers, with many desire trees and desire creepers, and with many flowers invaded by a large army of bumblebees intoxicated by the sweet aroma, the twelve forests of Vṛndāvana are splendidly beautiful. I bow down to offer my respects at every moment to these twelve forests, which are very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

“Even if I am able to bathe in the nectarean ocean of pure love of Kṛṣṇa, and even if I have the pure devotees of the infallible Supreme Personality of Godhead as my associates, I will not consent to live even for a moment in any sacred place other than Vrajabhumi. Even if the residents of Vraja appear to be ordinary, and even if they fill my ears

with useless gossip, I pray that I remain among them, eternally residing here in Vraja.”

“With great humility let me offer my respectful obeisances to the supremely pious dear devotees of the Lord who reside in Vraja. Even though Lord Brahmā is a great demigod entrusted with many weighty duties, he sincerely yearns to take birth among the bushes and blades of grass in Vraja.

“The grass, bushes, insects, and other creatures in Vraja are all very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. They assist the Lord in His pastimes. They are full of transcendental bliss. Again and again the scriptures recount the earnest request of Brahmā and others to reside in Vraja. For these reasons I bow down to offer my respects to all the creatures who reside in Vraja.

“Aimlessly wandering around Govardhana Hill, madly calling again and again, ‘Hey Rādhē! Hey Kṛṣṇa!’ and stumbling as I walk, when will I sprinkle the places of the Lord's pastimes with tears from my eyes?”

“O Śrīnivāsa, I desire to always fill my eyes with the sweetness of Vṛndāvana. Taking you both on tour of Vraja has been very ecstatic. I think this will not be possible again. Birth after birth you two are servants of the Lord.”

Saying this, Rāghava Paṇḍita became agitated. Narottama and Śrīnivāsa Ācārya also floated in their tears and lost their composure. They fell at Rāghava's feet, and he soaked them in his tears as he took them on his lap. They all forgot themselves as they became absorbed in chanting the glories of Lord Caitanya and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Then they repeatedly offered obeisances to the land of Vṛndāvana and offered prayers as could not be described.

In this way the three sat in a secluded place and gradually became pacified. Then they all went to see Śrī Govindadeva whose beauty, sweetness, etc. are described by the learned.

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (1.8.50/1), Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has given this description: ‘In Vṛndāvana, in a great place of pilgrimage underneath the desire trees, is a golden throne bedecked with jewels. On that throne sits the son of Nanda Mahārāja, Śrī Govindadeva, the transcendental Cupid.’

Those who sit in *padmāsana* meditate on Govinda and worship Him by chanting the eighteen syllable *mantra*. There is no doubt—Govinda is

directly the son of Mahārāja Nanda. Whoever considers Him a statue is a fool. Such a person is never delivered from such an offense. He falls into a horrible hell. What more can I say?

In the *Brahma-vaivarta* it is stated: “After attaining the rare body of a human being, which is desired by the demigods, if one does not take shelter of Govinda, he is certainly deceiving himself. Those who are averse to the lotus feet of Śrī Govinda are the lowest in the three worlds, and one should not see or talk with such a person.”

And again: “Whoever sees Govinda on His swing (during Jhula-yatra), whoever sees Madhusudana on the *dola* platform (during Holi festival), and whoever sees Vāmana on His *ratha* will never take another birth.” After taking *darśana* of Śrī Govinda, the three devotees became filled with ecstasy and their eyes and minds were fully satiated. On seeing the three devotees, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Paṇḍita became jubilant. He gave them garlands and *prasāda* and inquired about their well-being. In ecstasy, Śrī Rāghava Paṇḍita gradually explained everything about their *darśana* of the sites of Vraja. They then hurried to the residence of Śrī Jiva Gosvāmī and found him there in great ecstasy. Rāghava Paṇḍita then narrated their experiences to Jiva Gosvāmī who was very pleased hearing the description. After staying for a day or two in Vṛndāvana, Rāghava Paṇḍita then promptly returned to Govardhana.

O listeners, I have thus briefly described the wonderful glories of Mathurā-maṇḍala *parikramā*. Whoever carefully reads or hears these glories achieves the supreme destination and delivers his forefathers. This is confirmed in the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa*, where it is said: “O fortunate one, those who read or hear of the glories of Mathurā go to the supreme destination. By hearing the glories of Mathurā, the listeners liberate two hundred relatives on both sides of their families. Of this there is no doubt.”

The unlimited happiness of Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* can only be known, however, by one who is devoted to the holy *dhāma*. Therefore, please chant the glories of the pastime places of Vraja-dhāma and all your desires will be easily fulfilled.

Relish these pastimes in the association of devotees and by their mercy you will achieve pure devotional service. While associating with the devotees, always be careful and never create any ill feelings in their

hearts. By creating ill feelings with the devotees one will experience only impediments on his path. In this regard I will describe one incident. One day in Vṛndāvana, as Rūpa Gosvāmī was thinking in a happy mood, he saw Rādhārāṇī being dressed by Her *sakhīs*. At that time Kṛṣṇa was hiding behind Rādhārāṇī watching. Although Rādhārāṇī was unaware of Kṛṣṇa's presence, the *sakhīs* knew and were very eager to disclose the fact to Her. After finishing decorating Rādhā's hair very nicely, they held a mirror in front of Her. As Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī looked upon the beauty of Her face, She also saw the moonlike face of Kṛṣṇa in the mirror.

Rādhārāṇī, feeling embarrassed and somewhat perplexed, immediately covered Herself with Her cloth. All the *sakhīs* began laughing, and Rūpa Gosvāmī also joined them in laughter.

At that time one Vaiṣṇava arrived there in great eagerness to see Rūpa Gosvāmī. Seeing Rūpa Gosvāmī laugh broke the Vaiṣṇava's heart, so without speaking, he went to see Sanātana. That Vaiṣṇava said to Sanātana, "When I went to see Rūpa Gosvāmī, he started laughing upon seeing me. Being distressed in my mind, I did not say anything, but came to inquire from you."

Sanātana explained to the Vaiṣṇava the reason behind Rūpa Gosvāmī's laughter, and the Vaiṣṇava felt repentant on hearing the explanation. He lamented, "Why I have gone at that time? Without knowing Rūpa Gosvāmī's mind, I have offended him." Thinking in this way, that Vaiṣṇava was disturbed. Sanātana Gosvāmī, however, pacified him. Meanwhile, Rūpa Gosvāmī, who was absorbed in those pastimes, suddenly lost his feelings of ecstasy. Being very disturbed, Rūpa Gosvāmī looked around understanding that someone had come there. "I have committed an offense by not showing someone proper respect."

Thinking like this, he went to see Sanātana Gosvāmī.

Seeing Rūpa Gosvāmī coming, that Vaiṣṇava went ahead to greet him and offered his obeisances by falling on the ground. With great humility, he said to Rūpa Gosvāmī, "I have committed an offense, therefore please forgive me. A short time ago I came to see you, and without understanding your actions some doubts came in my mind. Therefore I came here to Sanātana Gosvāmī who mercifully cleared my doubts. Now if you kindly show your mercy on me then my mind will be pacified."

Hearing these words, Rūpa Gosvāmī felt grief stricken and with folded hands fell to the ground offering obeisances. “I cannot describe how much I have offended you. Please forgive me.” In this way with humility and devotion they forgave each other and thus felt pacified. Returning to Sanātana they absorbed themselves in topics of Kṛṣṇa for a long time. When everyone heard about this incident of Rūpa Gosvāmī, they were struck with wonder.

My dear brothers, be very careful with the Vaiṣṇavas. Beg their forgiveness from any offense with your heart and soul. Be careful not to find faults in the Vaiṣṇavas and always chant their glories. All the previous *ācāryas* say that even a learned person cannot understand the behaviour of a Vaiṣṇava. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has instructed these things through His dear devotees. Holding the lotus feet of the devotees on your head always drown yourself in the ocean of devotional mellows. Remembering the lotus feet of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, Narahari dāsa thus describes this *Bhakti-ratnākara*.