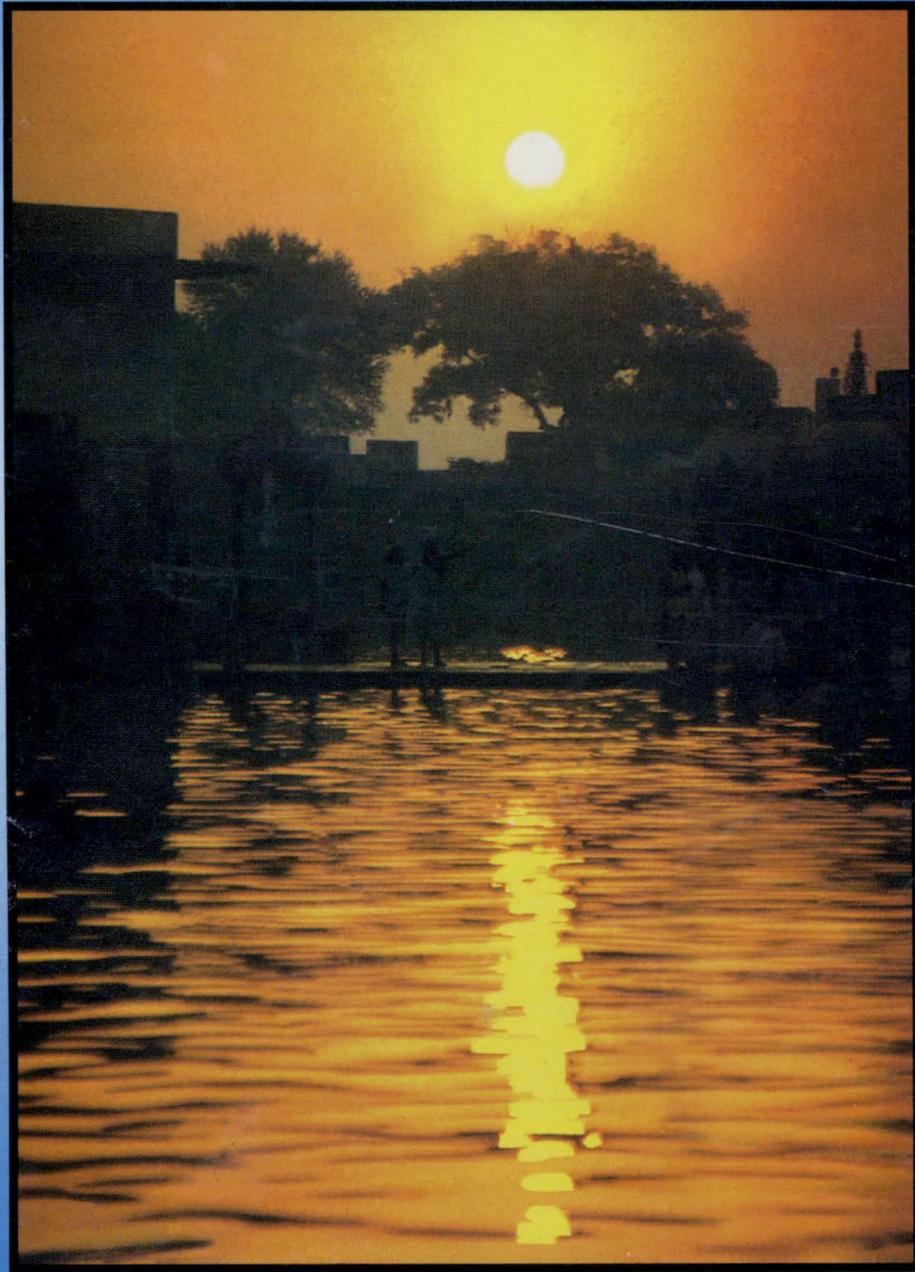


THE COLOR GUIDE TO
RĀDHĀ KUNḌA
THE HOLIEST OF ALL HOLY PLACES



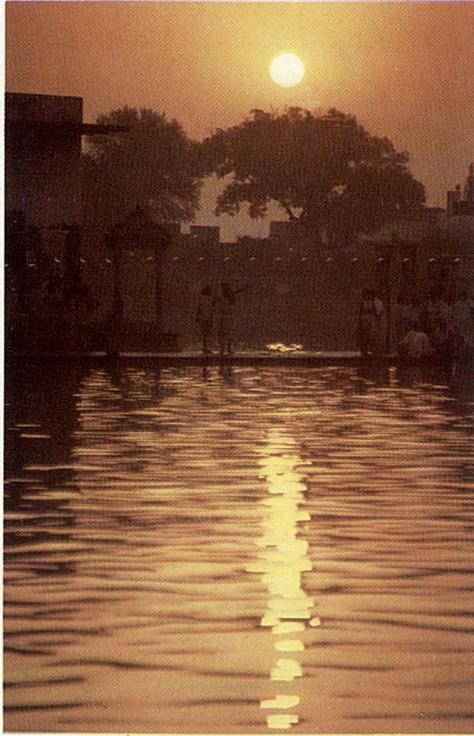
Rājaśekhara dāsa Brahmācārī





THE COLOUR GUIDE TO
RĀDHĀ-KUNḌA

THE HOLIEST OF ALL HOLY PLACES



WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED
BY
Rājaśekhara dāsa Brahmācārī

VEDANTA VISION PUBLICATIONS



His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

FOUNDER-ACARYA

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

*This book is dedicated to
the sacred memory of our beloved spiritual master*

*His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda*

*who revealed the holiest of all holy places...
Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa – before the whole world*

**Readers interested in the subject
matter of this book are invited to
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PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

The italicized Sanskrit words that appear throughout this book are spelled in a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word.

Pronounce short a like the u in but, long ā like the a in far (and held twice as long as the short a). Pronounce e like the a in evade, long ī like the i in pique. Pronounce the vowel ṛ like the ri in rim, and c like the ch in chair. Pronounce consonants like ch, jh, and dh as in staunch-heart, hedge-hog, and red-hot. Pronounce ś and ṣ like sh. So for Kṛṣṇa say KRISHNA, for Caitanya say CHAITANYA.

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Inside cover: *Dawn at Rādhā-kunḍa*

Back cover: *Rādhā-kunḍa view (top) – Bathing at the Sarigam (bottom)*

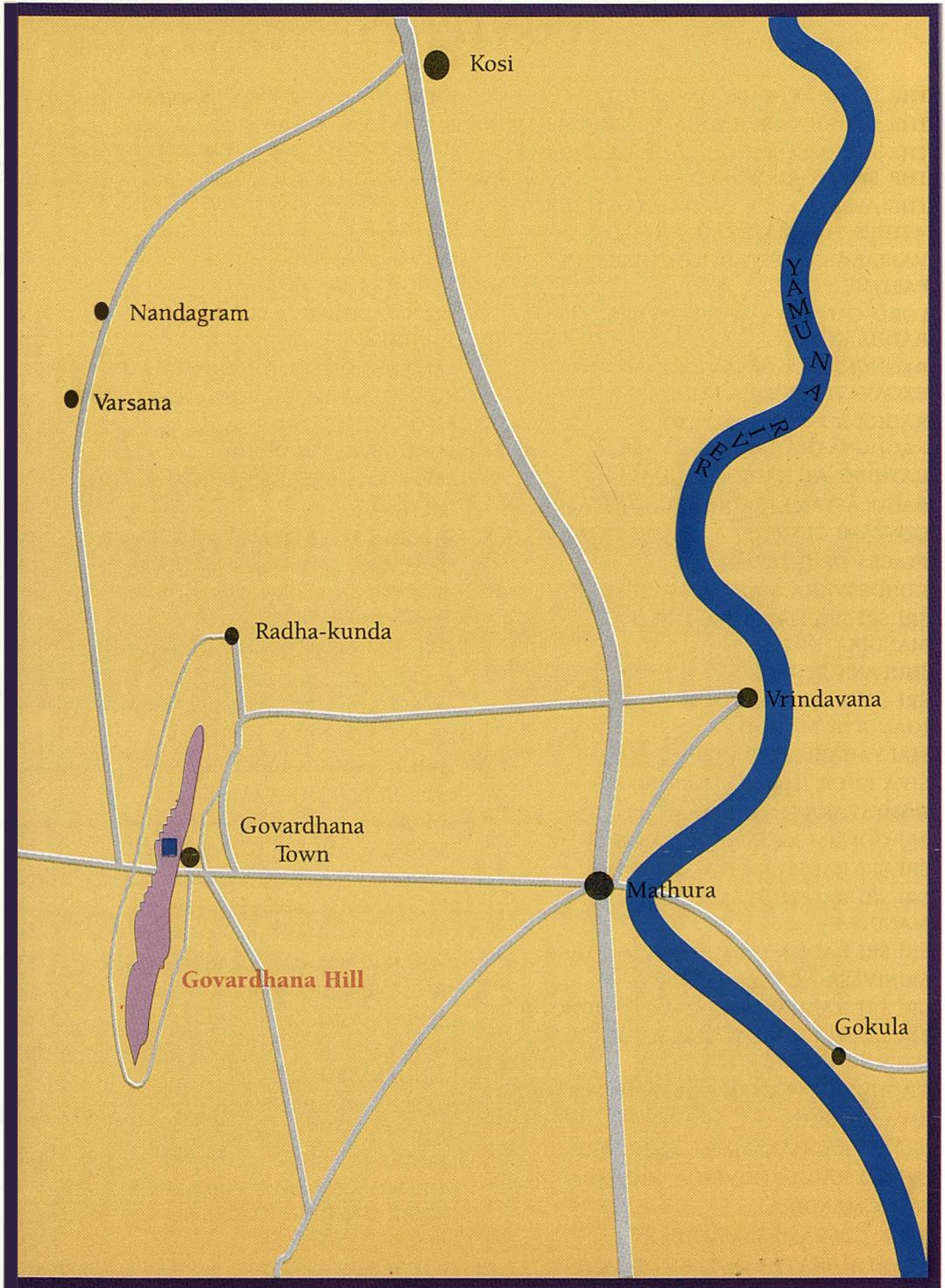
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INTRODUCTION

I first visited the sacred lake of Rādhā-kuṇḍa in 1975, just a month or so after I had first arrived in the Indian sub-continent. Like so many of the Hare Krishna devotees at that time, I was very eager to see all the holy places situated around Vraja. I can still remember those first impressions of Rādhā-kuṇḍa; the narrow lanes, the humble dwellings, the sadhus chanting on beads, the continuous sounds of *nāma-kīrtan*, as well as the very austere environment — but most of all the sublime beauty and tranquility of the sacred lakes.

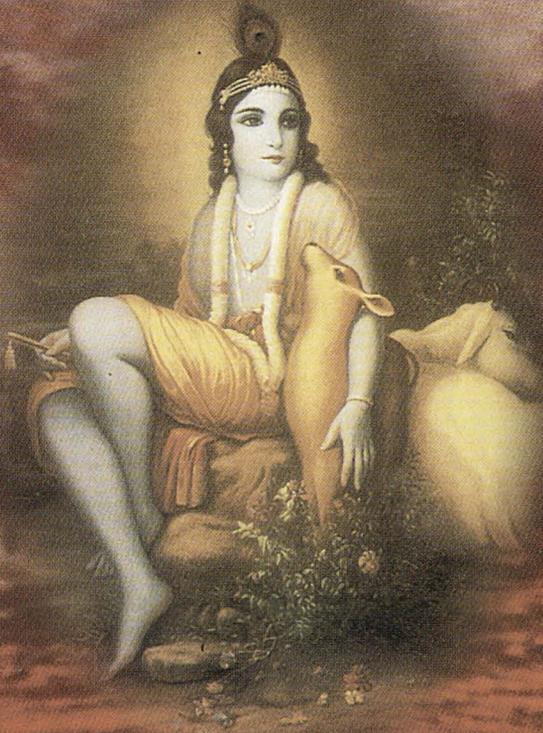
In those early days we didn't know so much about this most sacred of all sacred *ūrthas*, except that it was Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's very own personal bathing place. As time went by, Śrīla Prabhupāda gradually revealed more and more through his books, as well as his lectures, about this most extraordinary of all transcendental lakes. We pray that by his divine mercy, those transcendental revelations will forever remain fixed within our hearts.

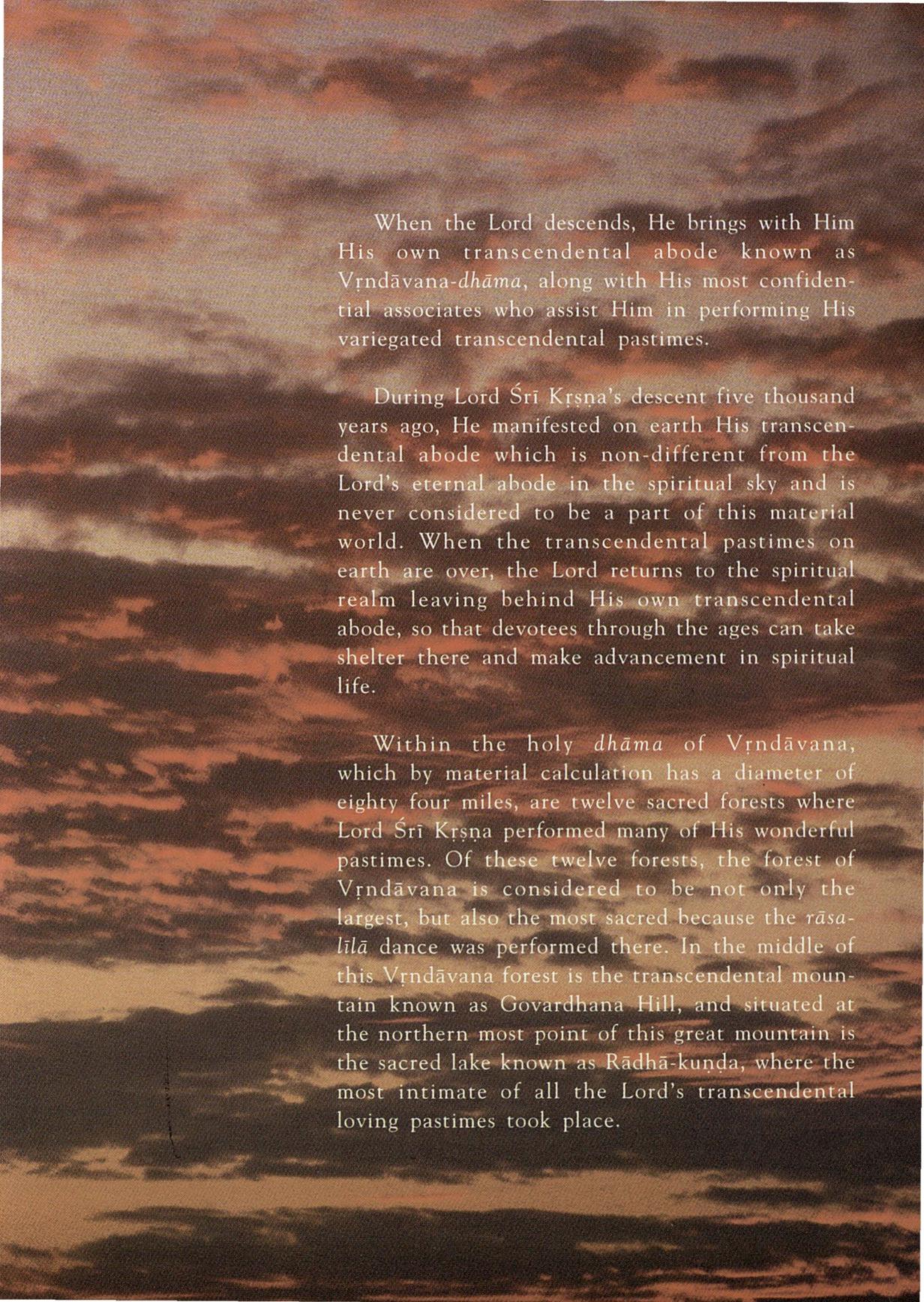
It is certainly not an easy task to actually comprehend the extreme sanctity of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's sacred *kuṇḍa*, which the scriptures say, is even more dear to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa than His very own life. I sincerely hope that through this book, readers may be able to catch a glimpse of the spiritual beauty and transcendently exalted nature of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, the holiest of all the holy places within the three worlds.

Rājasekhara dāsa Brahmācārī

THE LORD APPEARS ON EARTH

In order to attract the fallen conditioned souls to return back home to the eternal spiritual realm of Vaikuṅṭha, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, periodically descends to the earthly plane and reveals before the vision of the world His most attractive transcendental loving pastimes.





When the Lord descends, He brings with Him His own transcendental abode known as Vṛndāvana-*dhāma*, along with His most confidential associates who assist Him in performing His variegated transcendental pastimes.

During Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's descent five thousand years ago, He manifested on earth His transcendental abode which is non-different from the Lord's eternal abode in the spiritual sky and is never considered to be a part of this material world. When the transcendental pastimes on earth are over, the Lord returns to the spiritual realm leaving behind His own transcendental abode, so that devotees through the ages can take shelter there and make advancement in spiritual life.

Within the holy *dhāma* of Vṛndāvana, which by material calculation has a diameter of eighty four miles, are twelve sacred forests where Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed many of His wonderful pastimes. Of these twelve forests, the forest of Vṛndāvana is considered to be not only the largest, but also the most sacred because the *rāsa-līlā* dance was performed there. In the middle of this Vṛndāvana forest is the transcendental mountain known as Govardhana Hill, and situated at the northern most point of this great mountain is the sacred lake known as Rādhā-kuṇḍa, where the most intimate of all the Lord's transcendental loving pastimes took place.

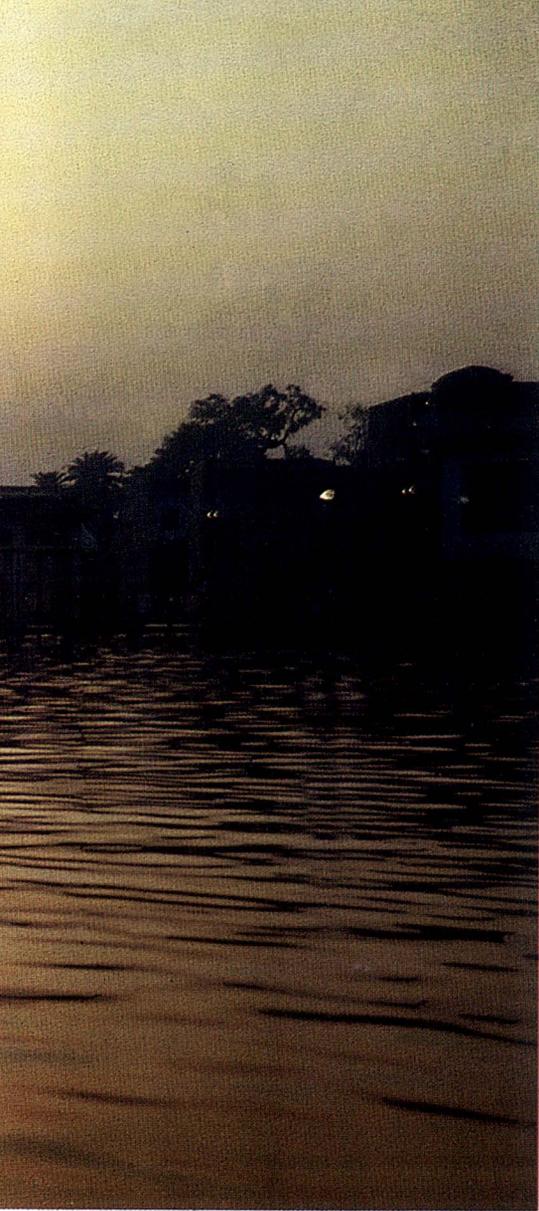
THE GLORIES OF RĀDHĀ-KUNḌA

“The holy place known as Mathurā is spiritually superior to Vaikuṅṭha, the transcendental world, because the Lord appeared there, Superior to Mathurāpurī is the transcendental forest of Vṛndāvana because of Kṛṣṇa’s *rāsa-līlā* pastimes.



And superior to the forest of Vṛndāvana is Govardhana Hill, for it was raised by the divine hand of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and was the site of His various loving pastimes. And, above all, the super-excellent Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa stands supreme, for it is overflooded with the ambrosial nectarean *prema* of the Lord of Gokula, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Where, then, is that intelligent person who is unwilling to serve this divine Rādhā-kuṇḍa, which is situated at the foot of Govardhana Hill?"

Śrī Upadeśāmṛta of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī



Situated at the northern most point of Govardhana Hill are the sacred lakes of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, which are considered to be the metaphorical eyes of the peacock shaped Govardhana Hill. Within all the three worlds and beyond to the spiritual realm of Vaikuṇṭha, there is no place more sacred and holy as the transcendental lake of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. This has been confirmed in all the ancient Vedic literatures such as the *Purāṇas* and *Itihāsas* as well as by all the great sages and *ṛṣis* of yore. Five hundred years ago the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana namely; Śrīla Rūpa, Sanātana, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Raghunātha dāsa and Jīva, also revealed through their teachings, that of all the holy places within the Universe, Rādhā-kuṇḍa should be considered to be the holiest of them all.

The reason that Rādhā-kuṇḍa is considered to be the most holy place is because it is the personal bathing place of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who comes here daily to refresh Herself in the sacred waters of this transcendental lake. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the direct



At the break of dawn, devotees from Mañipura offer worship to Rādhā-kuṇḍa

manifestation of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's internal potency known as hlādinī-śakti. When the Supreme Lord desires to enjoy transcendental mellows of divine love, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī manifests from the Lord's internal potency to perfectly reciprocate those loving feelings. At Rādhā-kuṇḍa, some of the most intimate exchanges of transcendental love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa took place, and for this reason, Rādhā-kuṇḍa is very dear to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and is Her favorite spot in the whole of Vraja.

It is also stated in the *Śrī Upadeśāmṛta* of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī:

“Of the many objects of favored delight of all the lovable damsels of Vrajabhūmī, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is certainly the most treasured object of Kṛṣṇa's love. And in every respect, Her divine kuṇḍa is very rarely attained even by the great devotees; therefore, it is even more difficult for ordinary devotees to attain. If one simply bathes once within these holy waters, one's pure love of Kṛṣṇa is fully aroused.”

Commenting on this verse in his purports to *Śrī Upadeśāmṛta*, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivendanta Swami Prabhupāda says, “Why is Rādhā-kuṇḍa so exalted? The lake is so exalted because it belongs to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who is the

most beloved object of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Among all the *gopīs*, she is the most beloved. Similarly, Her lake, Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa, is also described by great sages as the lake that is as dear to Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā Herself. Indeed, Kṛṣṇa's love for Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the same in all respects. Rādhā-kuṇḍa is very rarely attained even by great personalities fully engaged in devotional service, not to speak of ordinary devotees who are only engaged in the practice of *vaidhī-bhakti*."

Many great devotees in the past have taken shelter of Rādhā-kuṇḍa in order to achieve the mercy of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has revealed in his book *Gītāvalī*, that the only means of attaining pure unalloyed love of God is to take complete shelter at the lotus feet of Rādhārāṇī.

“Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the teacher of the mellows of conjugal love. The pure love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is meant to be discussed and contemplated. He who cherishes the lotus feet of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī with great care obtains the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, which are like priceless jewels. One can never meet Kṛṣṇa without taking shelter of the lotus feet of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.”

Divine love which is known as *prema*, should never be acquainted with the so-called mundane love of this material world. The divine loving exchanges between



As the sun rises, devotees perform kirtana at the Saṅgam



Early dawn at Rādhā-kuṇḍa

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are completely free from all mundane lust, greed and selfishness. In fact, the so-called love (*kāma*) of this material world is but a perverted reflection of the original divine love (*prema*) of the spiritual world.

According to the great Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, the loving pastimes between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are still being enacted here at Rādhā-kuṇḍa on the transcendental spiritual plane (*aprakāṣa-lilā*). It is said that everyday between the hours of 10-48 a.m. and 3-36 p.m., Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa meet at Rādhā-kuṇḍa and enjoy ecstatic transcendental pastimes. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī says in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, that Rādhārāṇī comes daily at noon to Śyāma-kuṇḍa and bathes at Mānasa-pāvana-ghāṭa along with Her many girlfriends.

The Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana have also confirmed that the pastimes between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are still going on even today, but only the pure devotees of the Lord, who have attained the highest spiritual platform of pure unalloyed love (*prema-bhakti*) are able to witness them.

One of the great authorities on Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, has said that the sacred lake at Rādhā-kuṇḍa is non-different from Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī Herself. Rādhā-kuṇḍa is known as Rādhārāṇī's *prema-svarūpa*, or ecstatic form of divine love. One can just imagine the good fortune of those purified souls

who offenselessly bathe in Her secret waters and reside on Her sacred banks. It has been confirmed by Śrīla Cakravartīpāda, who spent many years residing there, that just as Rādhā-kuṇḍa is non-different from Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Śyāma-kuṇḍa is also non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Cakravartīpāda has stated in his writings, that due to intense feelings of ecstatic love, when Rādhārāṇī saw Her beloved Kṛṣṇa. She melted and assumed a liquid form that became the sacred waters of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Similarly when Śrī Kṛṣṇa saw Rādhārāṇī, due to ecstatic feelings of divine love, He also melted and became the liquid waters of Śyāma-kuṇḍa. Always longing to meet but forced to remain apart, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa have assumed the liquid forms of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, and are now forever immersed in the ambrosial nectar of eternal union. At the *saṅgam*, or meeting place of the two sacred *kuṇḍas*, the waters of Rādhā-kuṇḍa flow into the waters of Śyāma-kuṇḍa, where they embrace one another eternally.

Whenever Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī sees Śyāma-kuṇḍa, She directly sees Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and similarly whenever Śrī Kṛṣṇa sees Rādhā-kuṇḍa, He directly sees Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Therefore, to approach these two sacred *kuṇḍas* is the same as directly approaching Their Divine Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.



Pilgrims from Bengal offer flowers and prayers to Rādhā-kuṇḍa

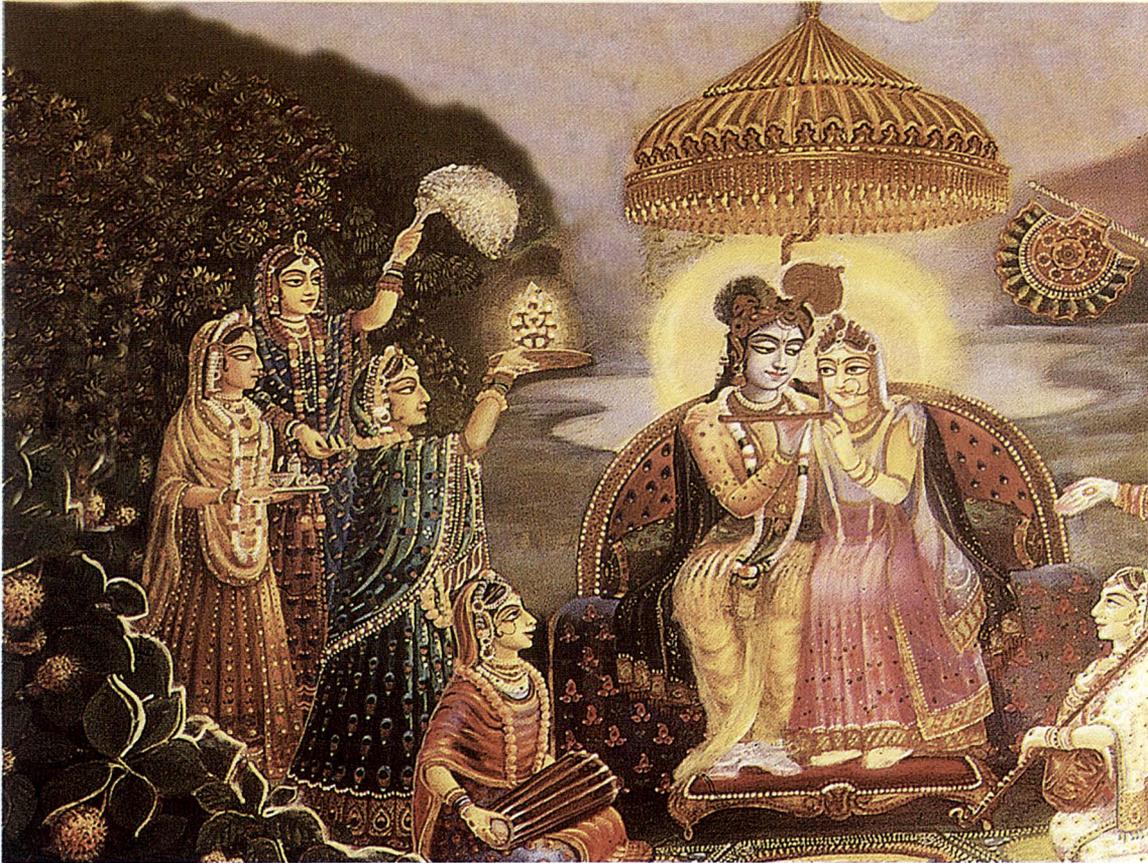
A view of Rādhā-kuṇḍa from Jhulana-ghāṭa





THE APPEARANCE OF RĀDHĀ-KUṆḌA IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

It is related in the *Ādi-Purāna* how Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa first appeared in the spiritual world. One day in Goloka Vṛndāvana, Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were sitting in a forest *kuñja* on a jeweled throne attended by the *gopīs*. Deeply absorbed in the pleasure of Rādhārāṇī's company, Kṛṣṇa suddenly began to manifest symptoms of intense love. So intense were Kṛṣṇa's feelings, that He began to take on the mood of Rādhārāṇī. As that mood increased even further, Kṛṣṇa took on Rādhā's very own form. In that form and mood, The Lord began shedding tears and calling out the name of Kṛṣṇa again and again; then out of desperation, ran into the nearby forest in search of Himself.



Seeing Kṛṣṇa in Her own form and mood, disappear into the nearby forest, Rādhārāṇī also entered into a mood of intense love. So intense were Her feelings that She took on the mood and form of Kṛṣṇa. Shedding torrents of tears, She began crying out the name of Rādhā over and over again. Observing Rādhārāṇī's sudden change of form and intense mood, the *gopīs* tried to pacify Her in various ways, but to no avail. Some of the *gopīs* then decided to enter the forest and try to find Kṛṣṇa. After searching for sometime, the *gopīs* managed to find Kṛṣṇa and after pacifying Him to some extent, informed Him of Rādhārāṇī's pitiful condition. When Kṛṣṇa understood the situation, He immediately wanted to go to Rādhārāṇī. Suddenly a celestial voice from the sky announced that simply by chanting the *Navakshara mantra* of Rādhārāṇī, She would immediately come.

Kṛṣṇa who was still in the form and mood of Rādhārāṇī, then chanted the *Navakshara mantra* and Rādhārāṇī immediately came there and stood before Him. With Her head bent slightly and Her eyes staring at the ground in shyness, Rādhārāṇī listened as Kṛṣṇa began to address Her in sweet words.

“My dear Rādhā, I am your eternal servant. Please give me punishment in any way You think fit. My dearly beloved Rādhā, I made You cry in separation and caused You pain. I also cried and suffered unlimitedly. Just see, the flood of our tears has created two *kuṇḍas*. The *kuṇḍa* made from Your tears will be known as Rādhā-*kuṇḍa* and the *kuṇḍa* made from My tears will be known as Śyāma-*kuṇḍa*.”

The *gopīs* became englanded to see that after hearing from Kṛṣṇa, Rādhārāṇī became pacified and gave up Her distress. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa then went to take bath in the two newly formed *kuṇḍas*. When Rādhārāṇī dipped into the tear filled Rādhā-*kuṇḍa* She immediately regained Her original form, much to the delight of all the *gopīs*. Kṛṣṇa then dipped into the tear filled Śyāma-*kuṇḍa* and immediately regained His original form.



THE APPEARANCE OF RĀDHĀ-KUNḌA WITHIN THE MATERIAL WORLD

According to the ancient Vedic scriptures, the Supreme Personality of Godhead appears on earth in each and every millennium, accompanied by His most confidential associates from the spiritual world. One of the reasons for the Lord's appearance on earth, besides exhibiting His transcendental pastimes, is to destroy the demon's and re-establish the eternal principles of religion. Whenever



A view of Rādhā-kunḍa from Jhulana-ghāṭa

the earth becomes overburdened by sinful and irreligious rulers, the Lord descends to annihilate them and save the devotees from persecution.

Five thousand years ago, just prior to the beginning of *Kali-yuga*, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the world had become overburdened with irreligious and demoniac kings, who simply ignored the real interests of their citizens while pursuing a sinful life of immoral pleasures. Not caring to uphold the principles of religion, these demoniac kings often persecuted the pious devotees of the Lord in an attempt to wipe out all traces of religious practice. One such demoniac king, the evil son of Ugrasena, was known by the name of Kāṁsa.

The evil hearted Kāṁsa had overthrown his own father and usurped the throne of Mathurā. One day at the wedding ceremony of his sister Devakī, Kāṁsa heard a celestial voice from the sky proclaim that the eighth child of his sister was going to kill him. From that moment onwards, Kāṁsa became stricken with fear that he was destined to meet his doom at the hands of his own sister's eighth child.

Cruel Kāṁsa immediately imprisoned his newly wedded sister and her husband Vasudeva, and murdered one after another, all her new born children. The eighth child, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who was a direct incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was miraculously smuggled out of the prison before Kāṁsa could attempt to kill Him. He was then taken to Gokula where He was left in the custody of mother Yaśodā and Nanda Mahārāja, king and queen of the cowherd men.

Having come to understand that Devakī's eighth child had escaped, Kāṁsa let loose a reign of terror throughout the kingdom and ordered the slaughter of all



new born babies. As destiny willed, Kamsa's agents failed to find baby Kṛṣṇa, who was peacefully living in the safety of His foster parents home in the village of Gokula.

In the ensuing days and months Kamsa sent a number of powerful demons, each possessing great mystic powers, in search of baby Kṛṣṇa, but alas, one by one, they all met their doom at the hands of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who was enjoying His transcendental pastimes as a baby in the village of Gokula. As the years passed by and Kṛṣṇa started to grow, mother Yaśodā and Nanda



Mahārāja decided to move their home to the village of Nandagrama on the other side of Govardhana Hill, due to the continual threat posed by the demons sent by king Kamsa.

In Mathurā, king Kamsa continued to live in fear of Kṛṣṇa and could not give up his desire of wanting to kill the Lord. Periodically Kamsa would receive news of Kṛṣṇa's whereabouts and send one of his demon friends to finish Kṛṣṇa off. Unfortunately for Kamsa, one by one, the Lord dispatched all these envious demons to the kingdom of death from where they would never return.

During the period of Kṛṣṇa's stay at Nandagrama, He grew into the most handsome youth in creation. It was at this time that Kṛṣṇa began to exhibit His loving pastimes with the beautiful cowherd damsels of Vṛndāvana, and in particular Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the incarnation of divine love, and the most beautiful female within the Universe. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī being an expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa's internal potency (*hlāḍini-śakti*), accompanies the Lord whenever He descends to the material world, to take part in His most intimate transcendental pastimes.

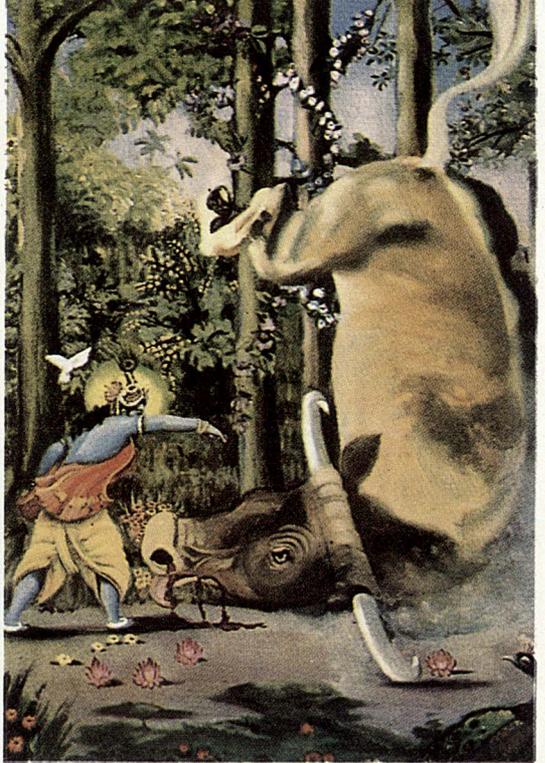
One day, during the month of Kārtika, King Kamsa received news that Kṛṣṇa had been seen herding cows somewhere near Govardhana Hill. Kamsa

immediately called Ariṣṭāsura, one of his most powerful demon friends who could change his form at will, and ordered him to proceed towards Govardhana Hill.... find Kṛṣṇa and kill Him immediately.

Having heard that the evil Ariṣṭāsura demon had entered Vṛndāvana forest and was terrorising the inhabitants, Lord Kṛṣṇa decided that the time had come to rid the world of yet another envious demon. This Ariṣṭāsura by dint of his mystic powers, had assumed the form of a gigantic bull and was lurking near Govardhana Hill. Understanding the bull demon's evil intentions, Kṛṣṇa gathered all His cowherd boyfriends and along with the cows, proceeded towards the spot near Govardhana Hill where the demon was waiting.

Having reached Govardhana Hill, Kṛṣṇa assured all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana that they need not be afraid. Then, in a very loud voice, began to rebuke the Ariṣṭāsura demon with sharp words, for daring to challenge His authority. Having been pierced by Kṛṣṇa's sharp words, the bull demon suddenly appeared before the Lord in a very angry mood.

Ariṣṭāsura was so huge that he looked just like a mountain and his tail appeared to touch the clouds. Kṛṣṇa, resting His arm on one of His cowherd boyfriends' shoulders, challenged the bull demon to fight. With a



tumultuous roaring sound the furious demon suddenly charged towards Kṛṣṇa, shaking the earth as he moved. When the demon came close enough, Kṛṣṇa caught him by the horns and threw him with such a force, that the demon lost consciousness.

After a few moments, the demon regained his senses, sweating profusely, he again charged towards Kṛṣṇa, but this time with double the force. Again Kṛṣṇa caught the bull demon by the horns and picked him up just as a child might pick

a flower. Twirling him over His head, Kṛṣṇa threw the demon down with such a force that the demon's eyes bulged from their sockets. Shaking his legs uncontrollably, and passing stool and urine simultaneously, the bull demon gave up his life air and departed for the kingdom of death.

When the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana heard that Kṛṣṇa had killed the terrible Ariṣṭāsura demon, they all rushed to the spot in a jubilant mood. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Her girlfriends also arrived at the scene and upon hearing that Kṛṣṇa had killed a male cow, became very upset and refused to associate with Him. Kṛṣṇa pleaded with Rādhārāṇī that since Ariṣṭāsura was actually a demon in the disguise of a bull, there was no sin in killing him. Rādhārāṇī informed Her beloved



A view from Mānasa-pāvana-ghāṭa of the sunrise at Śyāma-kunḍa

Śyāmasundara that in order to purify Himself from cow-killing, He would have to take His bath in all the holy places of the Universe and then only would She associate with Him again. Kṛṣṇa agreed to Rādhārāṇī's proposal, but instead of taking the trouble of travelling to all the holy places in the Universe to take bath, Kṛṣṇa informed Her that He would instead call all the holy places in the Universe to come to Vṛndāvana.

Striking His heel into the ground, Kṛṣṇa made a very deep impression in the ground and then called all the holy places of the Universe to pour their waters into the newly-made *kuṇḍa*. One by one, all the holy places arrived in their personified forms, after first offering their prayers to Kṛṣṇa, they all poured their waters into the *kuṇḍa* and filled it up. Just to please Rādhārāṇī, Kṛṣṇa took His bath in the newly formed *kuṇḍa* which then became celebrated as Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

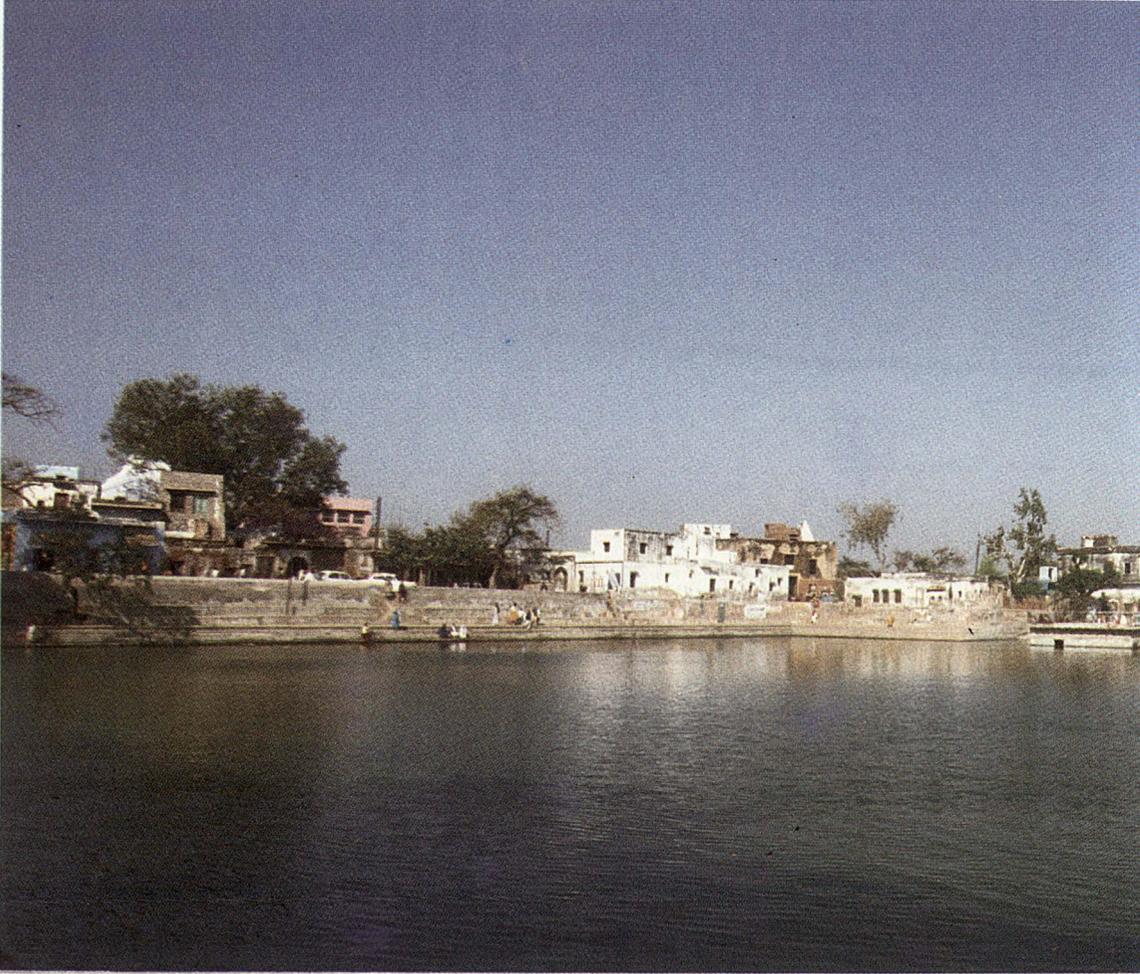
Exhibiting transcendental arrogance in having created such a beautiful *kuṇḍa*, filled with the sacred waters of all the holy places in the Universe, Kṛṣṇa began teasing Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs*, saying that because they were only simple village girls, they must never have performed any religious duties in this world for the pleasure of the demigods. Kṛṣṇa also informed them that because they sided with the demon Ariṣṭāsura, in the form of a bull, they would have to share the sin of cow-killing, and must also take bath to purify themselves.

Feeling the pinch of Kṛṣṇa's joking words, Rādhārāṇī suddenly exhibited Her transcendental anger



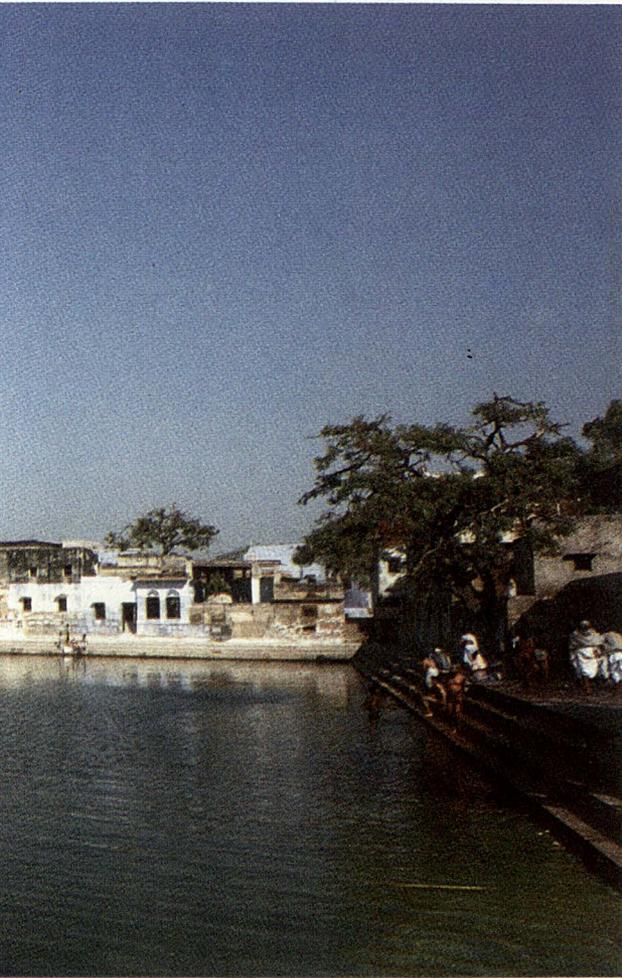
(*māna*). Seeing a deep impression of Ariṣṭāsura’s hoof print nearby, She broke one of Her bangles and using it as a digging instrument, started to dig in the soft earth. Upon seeing this, the *gopīs* also broke their bangles and started digging... within a short time a large *kuṇḍa* had been created right next to Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

Kṛṣṇa was amazed to see the large *kuṇḍa* that Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* had created. He then made the offer to Rādhārāṇī that the sacred waters from His *kuṇḍa* could also fill Hers. Rādhārāṇī flatly refused Kṛṣṇa’s offer, saying that the waters of Śyāma-kuṇḍa were now contaminated due to the sin of cow-killing. She further said that with the help of Her many girlfriends, they would form a line and bring the pure waters of Mānasī-gaṅgā in golden pots to fill Her *kuṇḍa*.



A view of Rādhā-kuṇḍa from Rasavari-ghāṭa

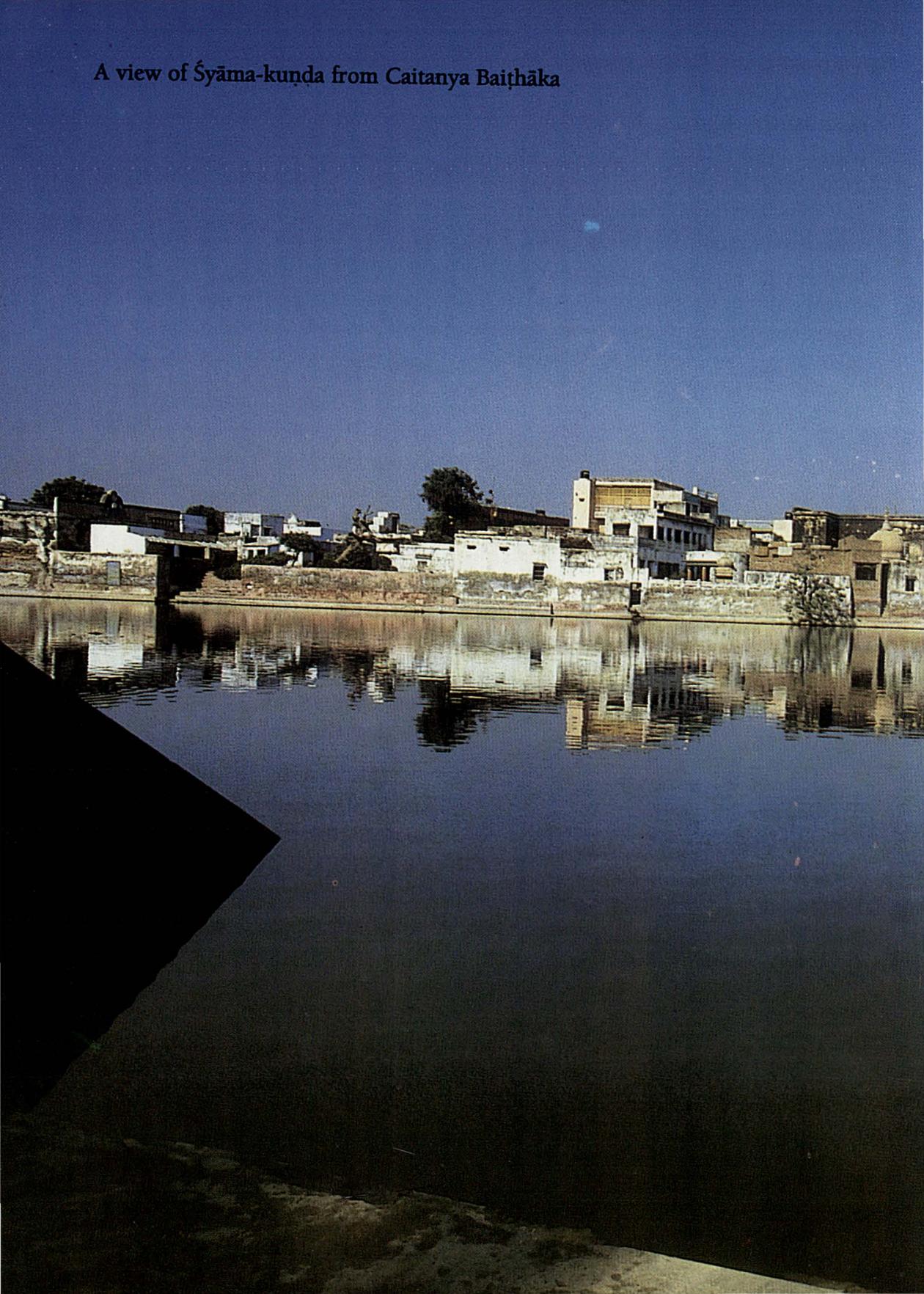
Upon hearing the words of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the holy places personified immediately approached Her with folded hands, and while chanting beautiful prayers in glorification, humbly asked Her to grant them a boon. Rādhārāṇī enquired what kind of boon they desired. The holy places personified informed Her that their lives could only be successful, if they were allowed to pour their sacred waters into Her *kuṇḍa* also. Being ever compassionate to all those who take shelter of Her, Rādhārāṇī, while glancing at Śyāmasundara through the corners of Her eyes, happily agreed to their proposal. In a joyous mood the holy places personified, forcibly broke through the banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa and poured their sacred waters into Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

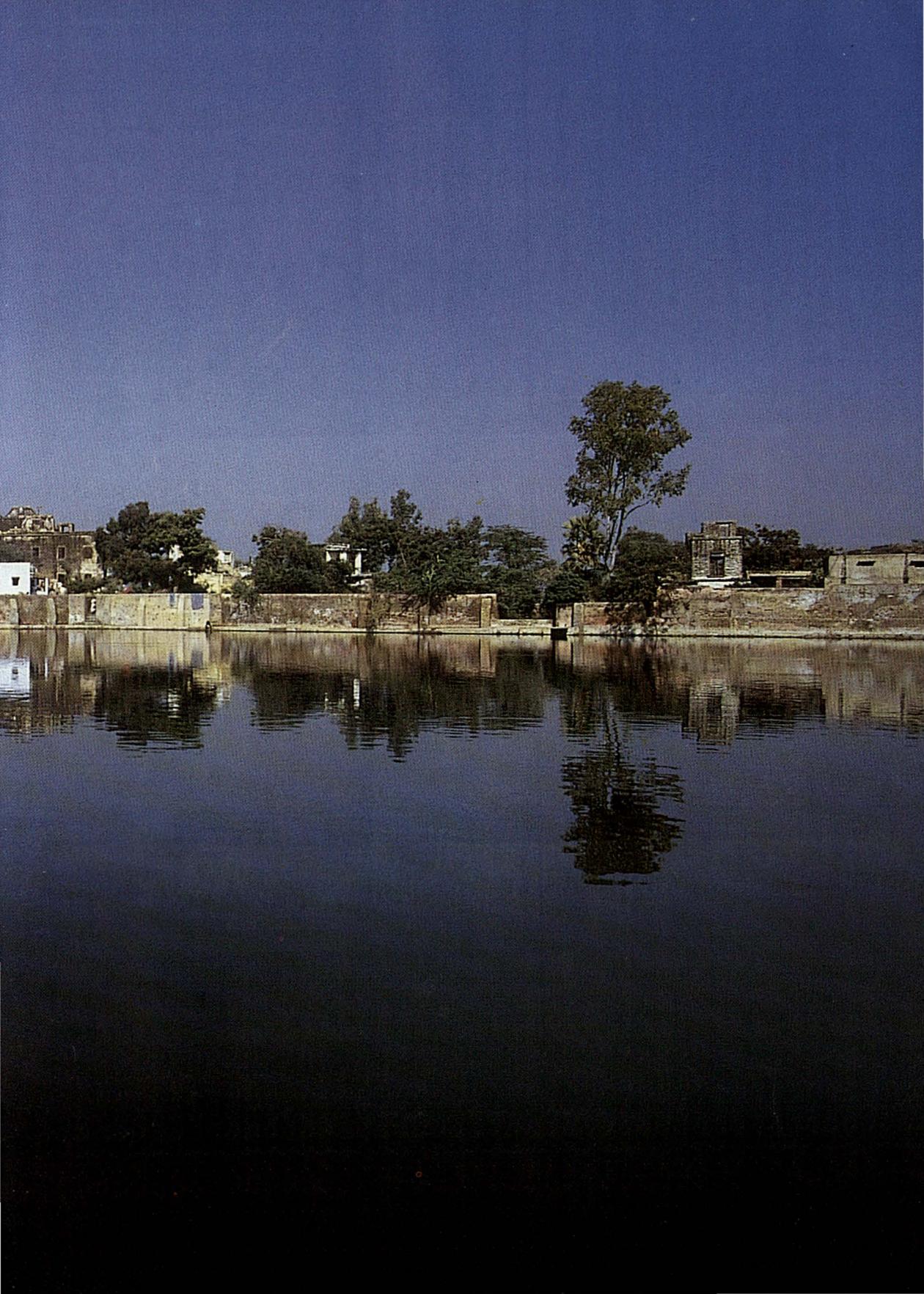


Kṛṣṇa then immediately took bath in Rādhā-kuṇḍa and declared that henceforth, anyone who with firm faith, took their bath on that particular day, would achieve the same ecstatic love that Rādhārāṇī had for Him. Rādhārāṇī and Her girlfriends then took bath in Śyāma-kuṇḍa. Rādhārāṇī then declared that anyone who takes bath in Śyāma-kuṇḍa, will achieve the same ecstatic love that Kṛṣṇa has for Her.

This pastime occurred at 11:45 p.m. on the eighth day of the waning moon in the auspicious month of Kārtika. Each year on this day, thousands of devotees flock to Rādhā-kuṇḍa for the *ardha-ratri-snāna* (midnight bath), first bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa, then in Śyāma-kuṇḍa and then again in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. This festival, held on the appearance day of Rādhā-kuṇḍa is known as Bahulāṣṭami. Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the only place in the world where a holy bath is taken at midnight.

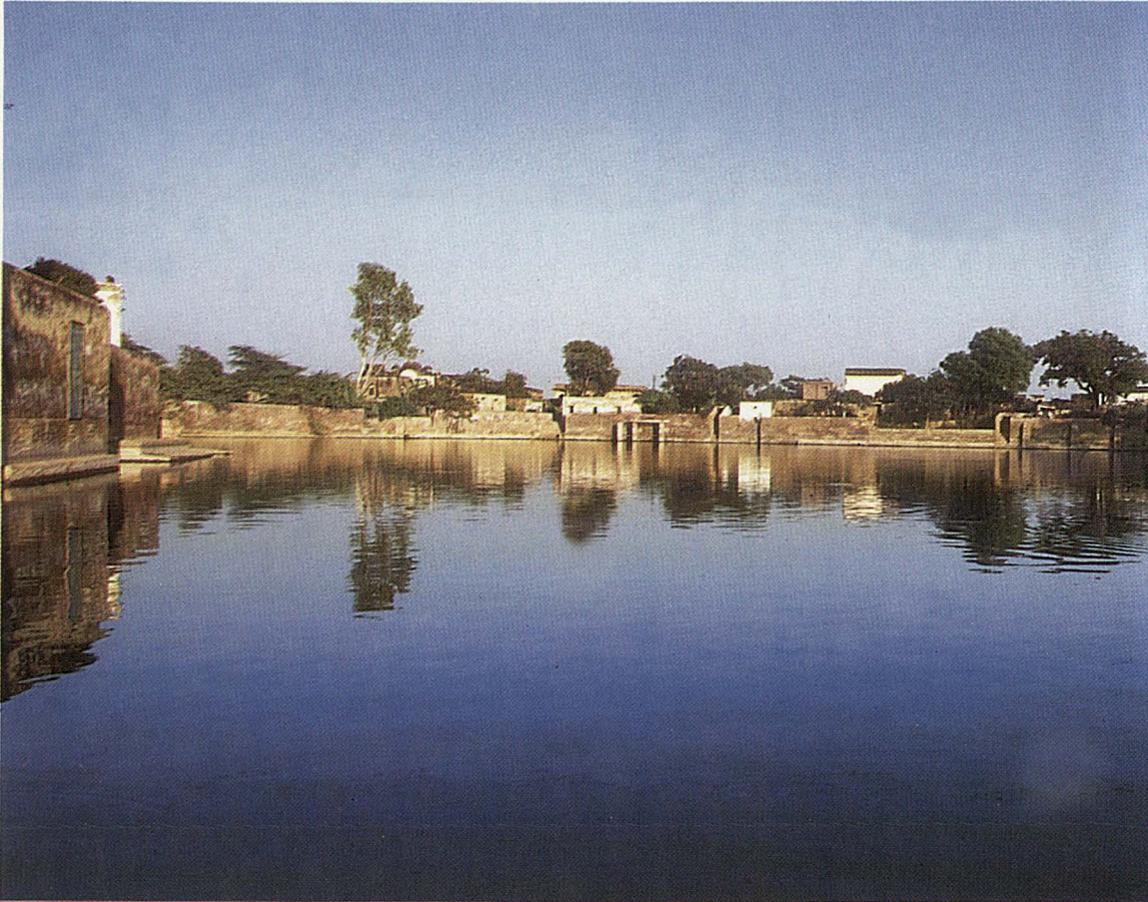
A view of Śyāma-kuṇḍa from Caitanya Baiṭhāka





VAJSPANĀBHA ESTABLISHES KRṢṢA'S PASTIME PLACES

After the disappearance of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the whole world was feeling the pangs of separation from the Lord's association. The Pandava princes headed by King Yudhishthira, felt it was the opportune time to retire from all royal duties and take refuge in the Himalayas. Yudhishthira therefore decided to enthrone Arjuna's grandson Parikṣit, as the king of Hastinapura, and Lord Kṛṣṇa's great grandson Vajranābha, as the king of Mathurā.



A view of Śyāma-kunḍa from the Saṅgam

Once enthroned as the king of Mathurā, innumerable devotees of the Lord approached king Vajranābha and pleaded with him to establish shrines and install Deities at all the places where Kṛṣṇa had performed His transcendental pastimes. Feeling divine inspiration, King Vajranābha installed many important Deities including Madana-mohana, Govindaji, Gopinātha, Saksi-Gopāla, Vṛndā Devī and Gopīśvara-Mahādeva in Vṛndāvana; Harideva and Gopāla Rāya (Śrī Nāthaji) at Govardhana; Kesava, Dirga-Visnu and Bhutesvara-Mahādeva in Mathurā; Dauji at Mahavana and a host of other Deities all over Vraja. After a lapse of almost five thousand years, many of these Deities were re-discovered by the Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana and their followers.

When King Vajranābha arrived at the sacred lakes of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, it is said he named the small hamlet there as Ariṣṭagrām, after

Kṛṣṇa's pastime of killing the Ariṣṭāsura demon there. During excavation the king discovered the original *kuṇḍa* dug by Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* known as Kancana-kuṇḍa, as well as the original *kuṇḍa* created by Kṛṣṇa's right heel, which is now known as Vajra-kuṇḍa.

There are a number of opinions on how the original *kuṇḍa*, created by Kṛṣṇa, got the name Vajra-kuṇḍa. Some local sadhus say it was named after Vajranābha, while others say it was named after Lord Indra's Vajra (thunderbolt) weapon, when Indra threw his weapon down at this place to help Kṛṣṇa create Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

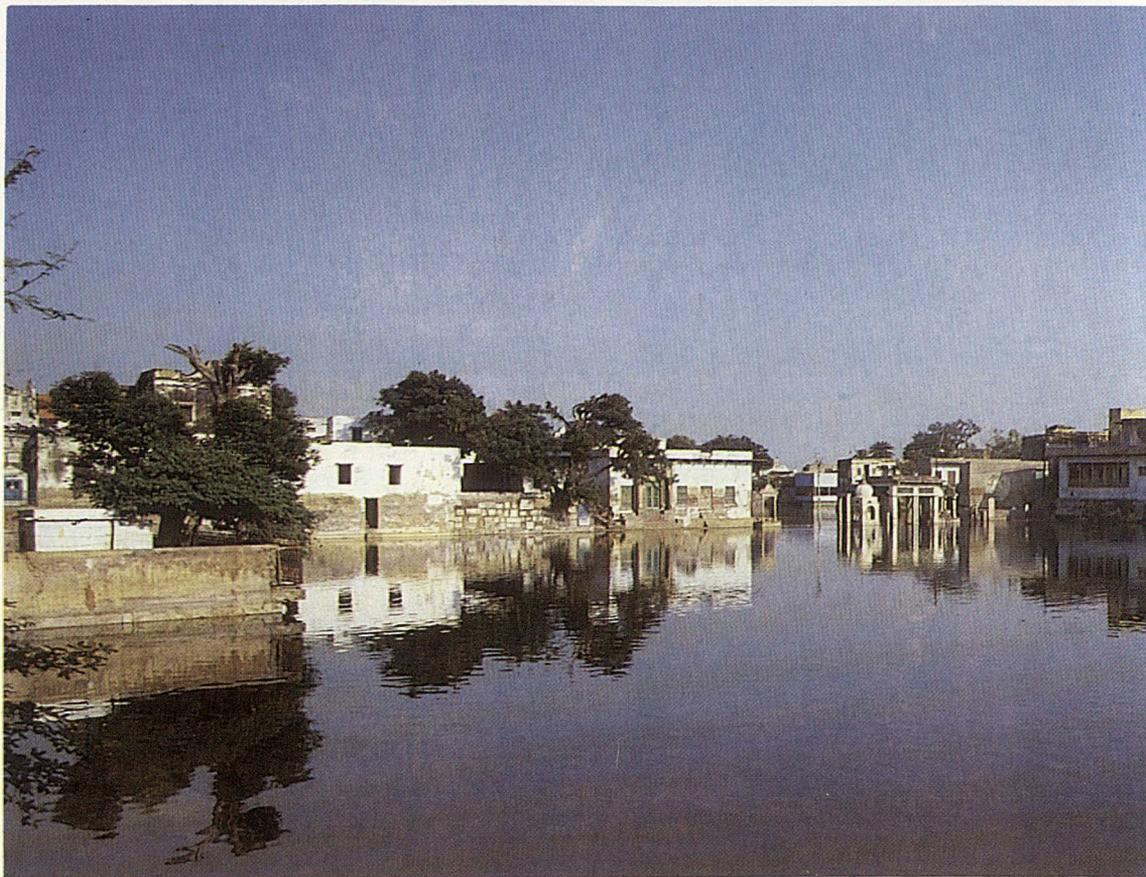
After excavating Śyāma-kuṇḍa, it is said king Vajranābha constructed an eight foot high and sixty foot square sandstone boundary wall around the original *kuṇḍa*, wide enough for people to walk along. When Śyāma-kuṇḍa is periodically emptied for cleaning, or sometimes during the hot summer months when the water level goes down, this sandstone structure can be clearly seen.



LORD CAITANYA REDISCOVERS RĀDHĀ-KUNḌA

After having displayed His transcendental pastimes on earth for one hundred and twenty five years, Kṛṣṇa returned to the spiritual world bringing the *Dvāpara-yuga* to an end. The dark age of *Kali-yuga* then began and after a period of almost fifty centuries, Kṛṣṇa again appeared on earth, but this time in the form of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, also known as the Golden *Avatār* due to His golden-like complexion.

During Kṛṣṇa's appearance, He spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā* on the battlefield



A view of Rādhā-kunḍa from Rādhā Kānta Maṇḍira

of Kurukṣetra, but as time went by, no-one could properly understand or even follow Kṛṣṇa's instructions. Therefore the Lord came again as Śrī Caitanya to show the world how to perfectly follow those instructions. The Lord appeared this time as a *sannyāsī* in the renounced order of spiritual life. One of the reasons for His coming was to introduce the *yuga-dharma*, or religious practice for this present age of Kali, the congregational chanting of the Lords holy names also known as the *mahā-mantra*, or the great chant of deliverance.

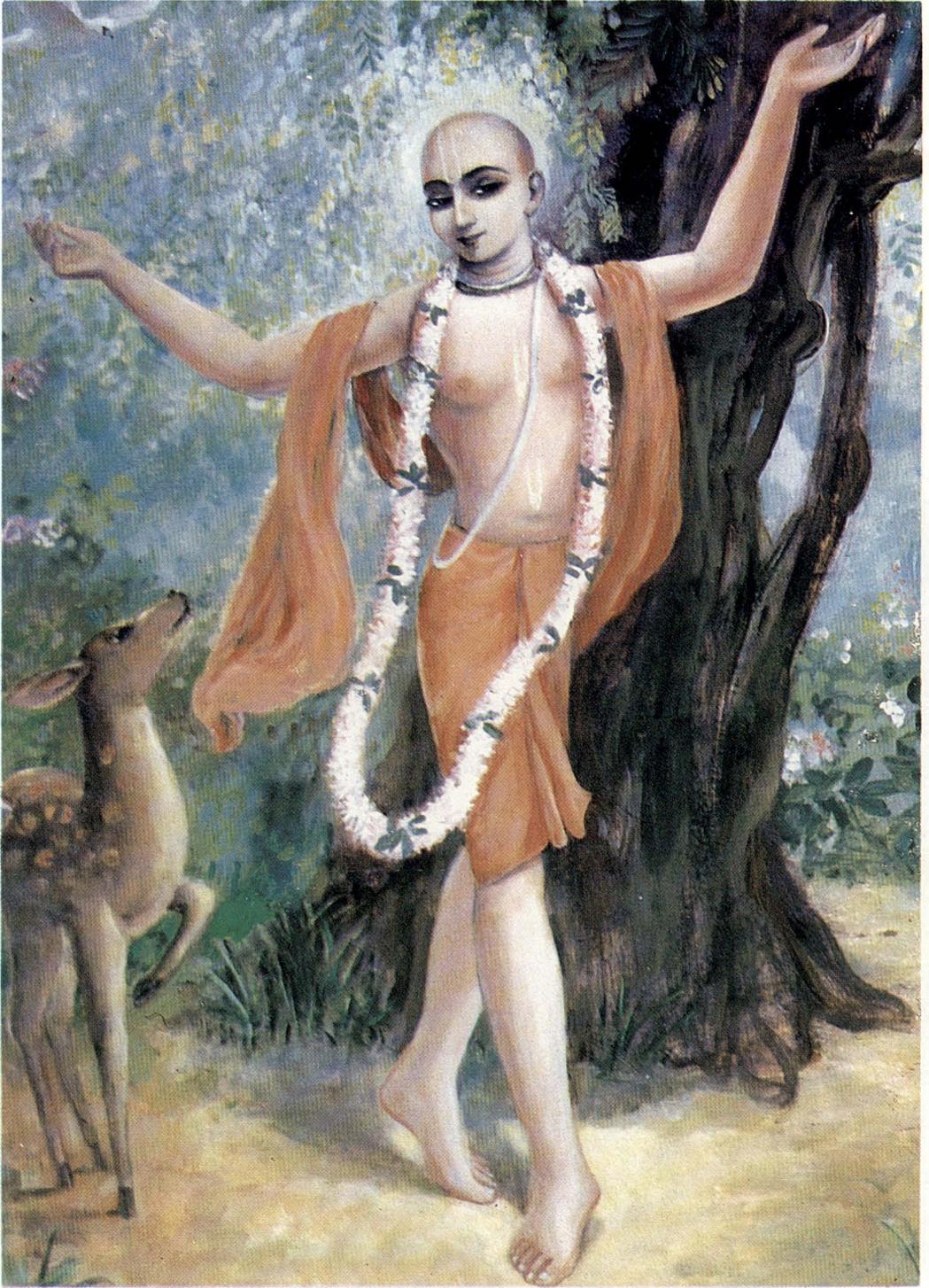
HARE KṚṢṆA HARE KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA HARE RĀMA RĀMA RĀMA HARE HARE

Another reason for Lord Caitanya's appearance, was to re-discover the lost holy places in Vṛndāvana, where Lord Kṛṣṇa had performed His transcendental pastimes five thousand years earlier. In the year 1515, on the auspicious occasion of Kārtika *Purnima*, Lord Caitanya arrived on pilgrimage in the holy land of Vṛndāvana. Accompanied by His companions, Balabhadra and the Sanodiyā *brāhmaṇa*, the Lord visited all the sacred forests connected with Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.



One day, while on *parikramā* around Govardhana Hill, Lord Caitanya arrived at a small hamlet then known as Ariṣṭagrām. The Lord inquired from the local people where the sacred lakes of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa were situated, but no-one knew. Over the many centuries the two sacred *kuṇḍas* were practically forgotten and somehow had become renamed as 'gauri' meaning golden (the complexion of Rādhārāṇī), and 'kari' meaning blackish (the complexion of Kṛṣṇa). These two *kuṇḍas* were being used as paddy fields by the local farmers.

On the outskirts of the village, Lord Caitanya sat in deep contemplation



Lord Caitanya dances in ecstasy through the sacred forests of Vraja

underneath a beautiful *tamāla* tree. As the Lord sat there, His glance fell across two nearby paddy fields that were fed by underground springs. By His divine spiritual power, the Lord could understand that these two paddy fields were non-other than Rādhā-kunḍa and Śyāma-kunḍa. In great ecstasy the Lord suddenly ran into the middle of the paddy fields and in whatever water was available there, took His bath, much to the astonishment of the onlooking villagers. Lord Caitanya then took clay from the sacred *kunḍas* and applied Vaiṣṇava *tilaka* marks to His transcendental body. The Lord also took some of the clay to take back with Him to Purī. The Lord then danced in great ecstasy around the two *kunḍas* while chanting the holy names of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. After fully satisfying Himself, Lord Caitanya offered His obeisances to the sacred *kunḍas* and continued on His *parikramā* of the holy land of Vṛndāvana.

After completing His pilgrimage to Vṛndāvana, where He re-discovered many important holy places, Lord Caitanya began His return journey to Purī. On the way, the Lord stopped at Allahabad, where he met Rūpa Gosvāmī and instructed him in the science of devotional services for ten consecutive days. The Lord then ordered Rūpa Gosvāmī to proceed to Vṛndāvana and excavate all the lost holy places, as well as write books on the science of devotional service (*bhakti-yoga*). Some years later Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote one of his most famous books, *Śrī Upadeśāmṛta*, which mentions the unprecedented glories of Rādhā-kunḍa

After leaving Allahabad, Lord Caitanya next visited Vārāṇasī (Kāśī), where He met Rūpa's elder brother Sanātana Gosvāmī. The Lord also gave detailed instructions on the science of devotion to Sanātana. The Lord then ordered him to join his brother Rūpa in Vṛndāvana, where they should both write books elaborating on the Lord's instructions, excavate the lost holy places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, and establish Deity worship.



Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī

RAGHUNĀTHA DĀSA GOSVĀMĪ

EXCAVATES RĀDHĀ-KUNḌA

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu sent many of His seniormost followers to the transcendental land of Vṛndāvana, for the purpose of excavating the lost holy sites of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, establish Deity worship and also write books on devotional service. Prominent amongst them were the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, namely the two brothers Rūpa and Sanātana, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Jīva and Raghunātha dāsa.



The structure (right) jutting into Syāma-kunḍa is believed to be the wall built by Vajranabha around Vajra-kunḍa

Having spent eight long years serving Lord Caitanya at Purī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī arrived in Vṛndāvana just after the Lord's disappearance, which occurred in the year 1534. Feeling intense separation from Lord Caitanya, Raghunātha dāsa had decided to end his life by throwing himself down from the top of Govardhana Hill. But first he desired to have *darśana* of both Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī in Vṛndāvana. Seeing Raghunātha's sorrowful condition, Rūpa and Sanātana consoled him and accepting him as their third brother, requested him to spend the rest of his life performing *bhajana* at Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Rūpa and Sanātana had reasoned that since Lord Caitanya had personally given His own Govardhana-silā to Raghunātha, along with His own set of *guñjā-mālā*, sacred to Rādhārāṇī, this was surely a sign that the Lord desired Raghunātha to live near Govardhana Hill and worship Rādhā-kuṇḍa. The Gosvāmīs decided to appoint Raghunātha as the custodian of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and *ācārya* for all those who wish to reside on her sacred banks.

Following the advice of Rūpa and Sanātana, Raghunātha went to live near the sacred lakes and regularly circumambulated Govardhana Hill. Some years later while performing his *bhajana* on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, the idea of enlarging the *kuṇḍas* and building steps around them entered Raghunātha's mind. At that time, the two sacred *kuṇḍas* were just muddy pools of water about twelve feet in diameter, in the middle of two paddy fields. Devotees wishing to take a holy dip, had to wade through ankle deep mud to get there. Raghunātha visualized that in the future, thousands of pilgrims would flock to Rādhā-kuṇḍa to take a holy bath and therefore, to enlarge the *kuṇḍas* seemed a good idea. Raghunātha then considered how much money he would require for excavation of the *kuṇḍas*, but then suddenly condemned himself for allowing such thoughts about money to enter



his mind and distract his *bhajana*. With increased determination, he again absorbed himself in meditation on the lotus feet of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

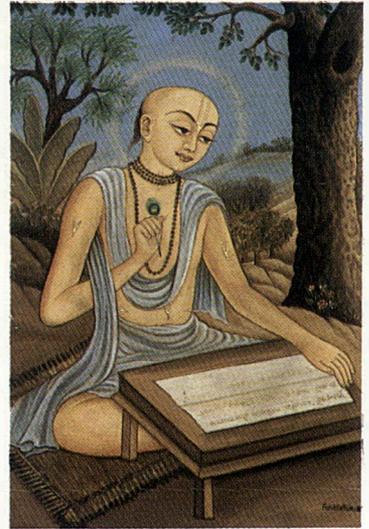


Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

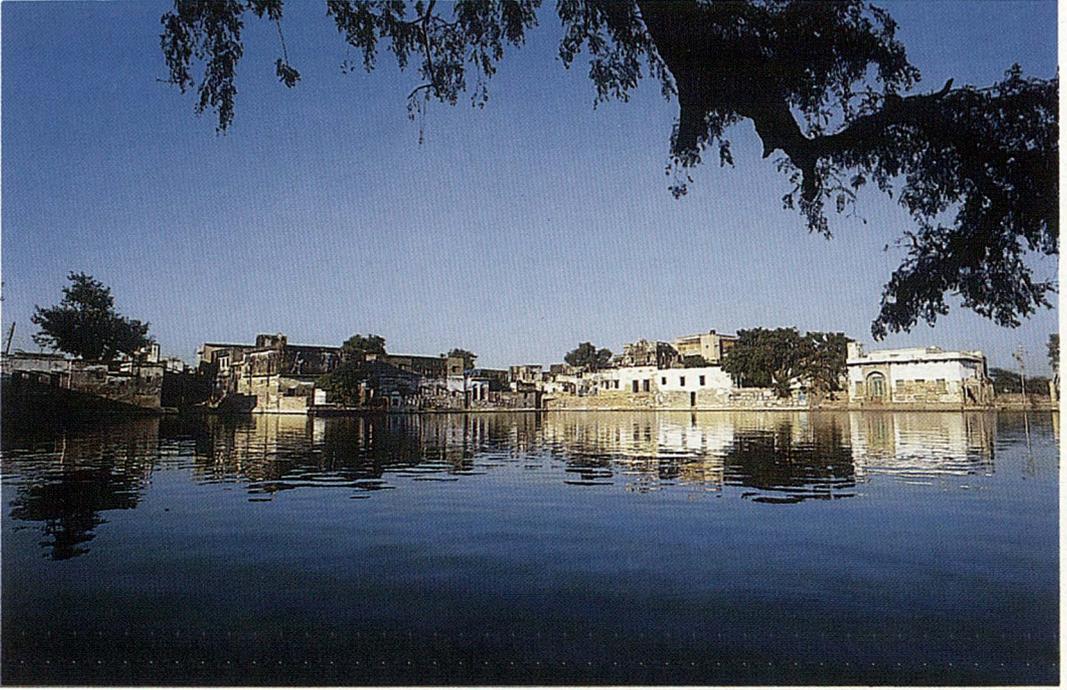
That very same day over one thousand miles away at Badrikāśrama in the Himalayas, a wealthy merchant named Samarpaṇ (some say Samarpaṇ was a King), was on his way to give a large donation to the Deity of Lord Badri-Nārāyaṇa. That night in a dream, Lord Badri-Nārāyaṇa came before the merchant and ordered him to give the donation to a devotee living at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, of the name Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, saying that the donation should be used as Raghunātha so desired.

Early next morning, the merchant awoke in an ecstatic mood having had *darśana* of Lord Badri-Nārāyaṇa in his dream and immediately started for Vṛndāvana. On reaching the holy land, Samarpaṇ soon located Raghunātha dāsa, who was sitting on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa absorbed in his *bhajana*. After offering his respects, Samarpaṇ handed the large donation of money to Raghunātha dāsa, who at first flatly refused to accept it. After hearing the merchant's story, completely astonished at the ways of the Lord, Raghunātha relented and accepted the donation with humble gratitude.

Raghunātha dāsa immediately called for Jīva Gosvāmī to come from Vṛndāvana and asked him to purchase the two paddy fields where Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa were situated. On arriving at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Jīva Gosvāmī purchased the two paddy fields in the name of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. This event occurred in the year 1545. Work then started on the excavation of Rādhā-kuṇḍa under the personal supervision of both Raghunātha and Jīva. During the digging, Raghunātha dāsa discovered beautiful Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa buried in the mud. Raghunātha handed the Deities over to a local *brāhmaṇa* to worship and a temple was soon constructed on the western



Jīva Gosvāmī



A view of Rādhā-kunḍa from Jhulan-ghāṭa

bank of Rādhā-kunḍa. These were the first Deities to be installed at Rādhā-kunḍa and the temple became known as the Purāṇa (meaning old) Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Maṇḍira.

Further excavation revealed the original *kunḍa* known as Kañcana-kunḍa, created by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs*. The Bengali word *kañcana*, or *kañkan* in Hindi, means bangle, which was used by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī to dig Rādhā-kunḍa. Around this original *kunḍa* Raghunātha dāsa had steps built on all four sides. Some years later in 1591, the king of Jaipur, Rājā Mānsīṅgh, after completing the construction of the Govindajī Maṇḍira in Vṛndāvana, came to Rādhā-kunḍa and constructed more steps above the one's built by Raghunātha dāsa. Rājā Mānsīṅgh also built a canal linking Śyāma-kunḍa with Lalitā-kunḍa, for the purpose of maintaining the water level of the *kunḍas*. Then in the year 1817, a wealthy landlord from Calcutta, Lāl Bābu, who later entered the renounced order, constructed even more stone steps around the *kunḍas*. When Rādhā-kunḍa is periodically emptied for cleaning, Kañcana-kunḍa, created by Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* can be clearly seen, as well as the steps around the *kunḍas* that were constructed by Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.

As recently as 1941 when Rādhā-kunḍa was completely emptied for cleaning, natural springs were seen bubbling water from beneath the ground. It is said that these springs are in fact the holy places called by Kṛṣṇa to fill the *kunḍas*, and that these holy places have now taken the form of natural springs, in order to continue their service to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Devotees also saw some springs emitting a thick milky white substance which is believed to be Kṛṣṇa-sāgara, the milk ocean, who also appeared here by the order of Kṛṣṇa and helped fill the *kunḍas*. It is said that one devotee collected some of this milky substance in a bottle and by the next day it had turned to yogurt. On some days, one can clearly see milky white patches within the sacred waters of Rādhā-kunḍa. Some devotees say that on rare occasions, the waters of Rādhā-kunḍa appear almost completely white, due to large volumes of milk being released by the springs below.

After completing the excavation of Rādhā-kunḍa, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī turned his attention to Śyāma-kunḍa, with the idea of making it in the same square shape as Rādhā-kunḍa. This could not be done unless a number of trees were cut down and it was decided to start the work the very next day. That night in a dream, the five Pāṇḍavas headed by king Yudhiṣṭhira, came before Raghunātha and requested that he not allow the trees near Śyāma-kunḍa to be cut down. Yudhiṣṭhira explained, that he and the other Pāṇḍavas were living in those trees and performing *bhajana* on the banks of Śyāma-kunḍa. The next morning before work began, Raghunātha instructed the workers that no trees should be cut down and only the vacant area should be used to dig the *kunḍa*. This accounts for the unusual triangular shape of Śyāma-kunḍa. During the excavation of Śyāma-kunḍa, the original *kunḍa* created by Kṛṣṇa's right heel was discovered. Encircling this original *kunḍa*, were seen the stone steps built almost five thousand years earlier by King Vajranābha, and known as Vajra-kunḍa.

After the excavation work was completed in the year 1554, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī continued to perform his *bhajana* on the banks of the sacred *kunḍas*, right up until his disappearance in the year 1583. Raghunātha dāsa personally set the highest example of renunciation expected for all those who wish to reside on the banks of Rādhā-kunḍa

On the *Vijayā-daśamī* day in the year 1576, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī handed over charge of Rādhā-kunḍa to Jīva Gosvāmī, who became the next *mahānta*. Kṛṣṇa dāsa Brahmācārī, a disciple of Jīva Gosvāmī, became the next

mahānta after the disappearance of Jīva in 1608. The line of *mahāntas* of Rādhākuṇḍa is still continuing even up to the present day. The original land deed and letter of appointment given to Jīva by Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, is still existing.



Sadhus bathing in Syāma-kuṇḍa

RĀDHĀ-KUNḌAṢṬĀKAM

by

RAGHUNĀTHA DĀSA GOSVĀMĪ

1. Appearing after the Divine Couple's joking quarrel about Kṛṣṇa's violating the principles of piety by killing a bull (the demon Ariṣṭāsura), Rādhā-kunḍa was joyfully excavated by the beautiful hands of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the Queen of Vṛndāvana, and Her own girlfriends. Let this beautiful and enchanting Rādhā-kunḍa be my only shelter.

2. The seed of the desire tree of *prema* is sown in the heart of anyone who bathes here, although Kṛṣṇa's dear girlfriends in Vrajabhūmi rarely attain it. Let this beautiful and enchanting Rādhā-kunḍa be my only shelter.

3. Kṛṣṇa Himself, the enemy of Aghāsura, carefully takes shelter of Rādhā-kunḍa. Hoping to attain the merciful sidelong glance of Śrī Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa eagerly bathes in and worships Rādhā-kunḍa. Let this beautiful and enchanting Rādhā-kunḍa be my only shelter.

4. Rādhā-kunḍa is the abode of love for Kṛṣṇa, the moon of Vraja. Because Rādhikā is the crown jewel of all the sweet youthful *gopīs* of Vraja, She is Kṛṣṇa's most beloved. Rādhā-kunḍa is equally as dear to Kṛṣṇa as Śrī Rādhā Herself. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa has named it after Rādhā. Let this beautiful and enchanting Rādhā-kunḍa be my only shelter.

5. By the mercy of Rādhā-kunḍa, anyone who performs devotional service here will awaken the desire to be Rādhā's maidservant. This is the blooming flower on the desire vine of Kṛṣṇa *prema*. Let this beautiful and enchanting Rādhā-kunḍa be my only shelter.



6. On the banks surrounding Rādhā-kuṇḍa are sweet and delightful *nikuñjās* (forest groves) full of buzzing bees that awaken the desire for amorous pleasure. These *kuñjas* are personally arranged and named after each of Rādhārāṇī's *aṣṭā-sakhīs*. Let this beautiful and enchanting Rādhā-kuṇḍa be my only shelter.

7. On the bank of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Śrīmatī Rādhikā sits on an excellent jeweled platform with Her dearest girlfriends. Along with different gestures, they make very sweet and pleasant jokes about Kṛṣṇa, the moon over Vraja. Let this beautiful and enchanting Rādhā-kuṇḍa be my only shelter.

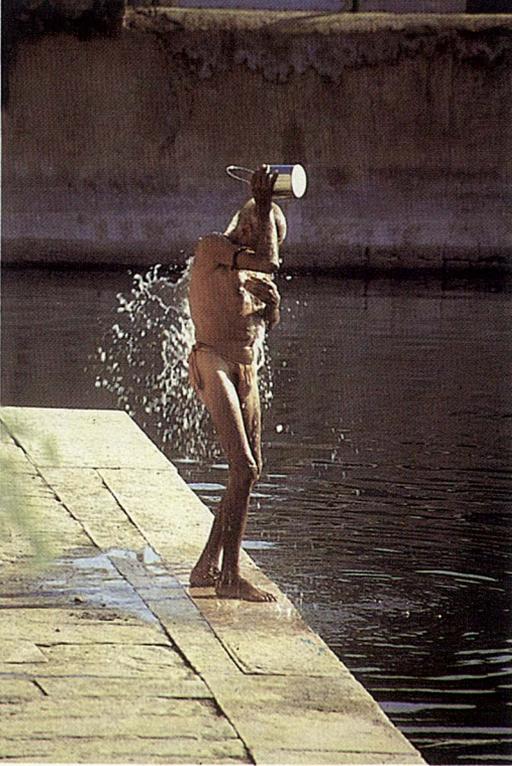
8. Maddened with love, Rādhā-Mādhava, and the *gopīs* come here every day and happily play in Rādhā-kuṇḍa which is full of colorful lotus flowers, sweetening the air with their charming aroma. Let this beautiful and enchanting Rādhā-kuṇḍa be my only shelter.

Benediction: Anyone who with a peaceful mind recites this Rādhā-kuṇḍaṣṭākam, while offering himself for Rādhā's blissful service, will quickly attain the darśana of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa happily embracing.

BATHING AT RĀDHĀ-KUNḌA

Śrīla Prabhupāda has said in his purport to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Upadeśamṛta*, verse eleven, "A devotee will at once develop pure love of Kṛṣṇa in the wake of the *gopīs*, if he once takes bath in Rādhā-kunḍa." In his *Rādhā-kunḍaṣṭākam*, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī also says that "One can immediately attain pure love of God by once bathing in Rādhā-kunḍa." And in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja also says

that "Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives ecstatic love like that of Rādhārāṇī to whoever bathes in Rādhā-kunḍa."



We can therefore understand from these references, the great spiritual fortune of one who offenselessly and with full faith in the lotus feet of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, bathes in the sacred waters of Rādhā-kunḍa. Nevertheless, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave adequate warning about committing offenses at Rādhā-kunḍa. Once in 1976, when some devotees were reported to have been swimming and sporting frivolously in Rādhā-kunḍa, Śrīla Prabhupāda became very grave and informed all the devotees gathered for the Gaura-Purnima festival, that from now on, no one should take

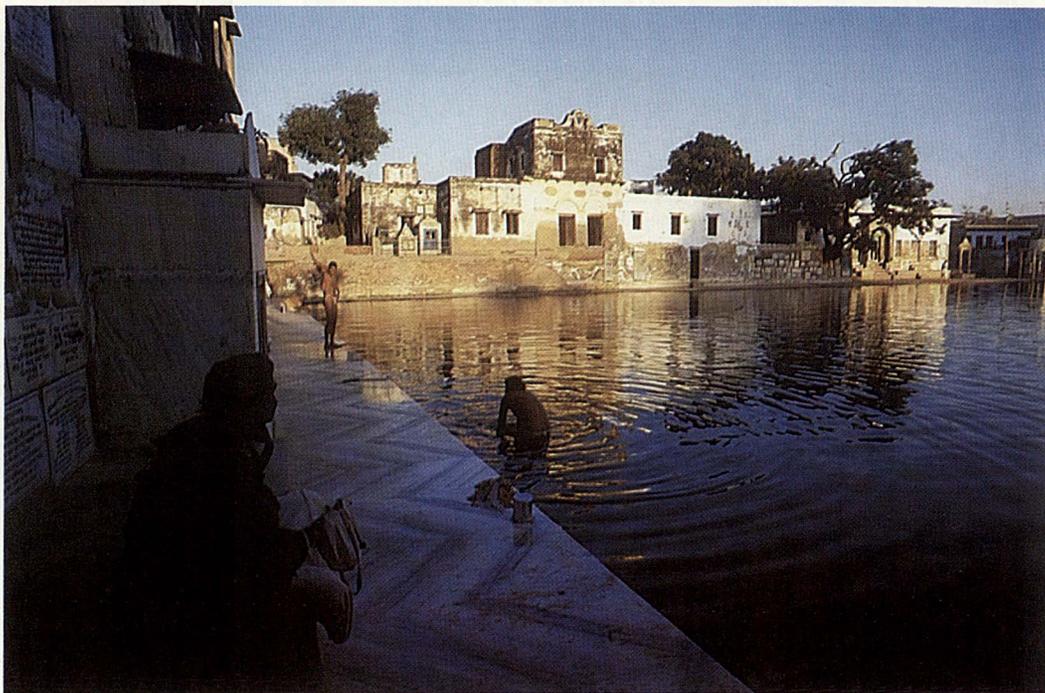
bath in Rādhā-kunḍa. Rather, the devotees should simply sprinkle three drops of water on their heads, as this would have the same benefit as bathing, but at the same time help one to avoid offenses to Rādhā-kunḍa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda further said, "There is no difference between Rādhā-kunḍa and Rādhārāṇī. So how can you jump over Rādhārāṇī? How can you enjoy Rādhā-kunḍa by swimming? You cannot touch your feet even to Rādhā-kunḍa. You can take a little water on your head. This is respectful to Rādhā-kunḍa."

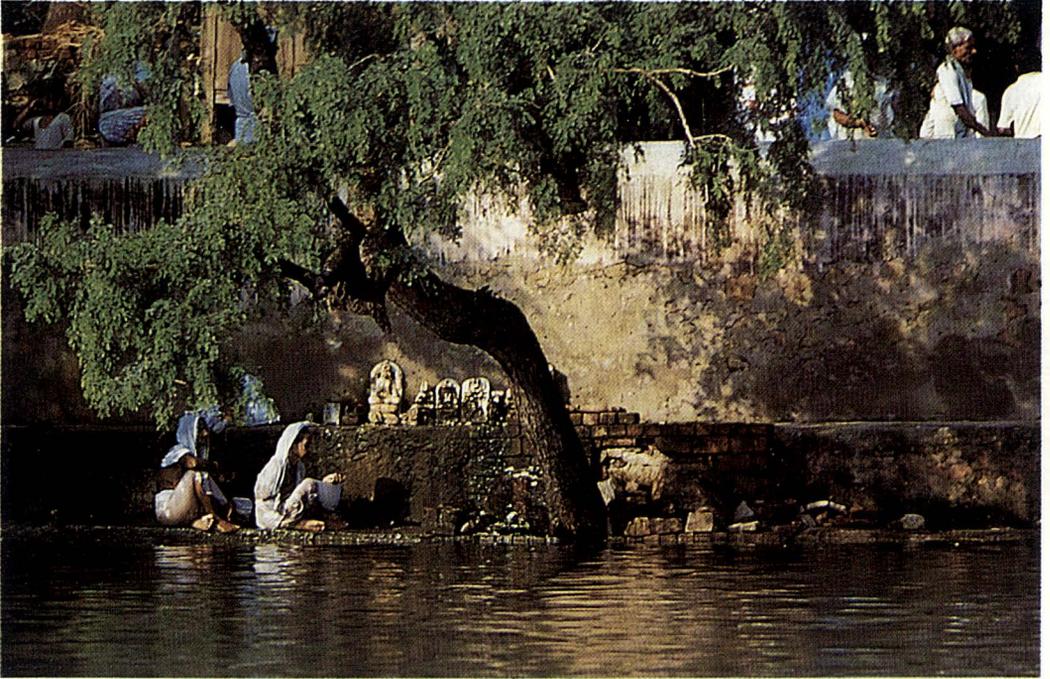
This is the special benediction of the bona-fide spiritual master, that simply by sprinkling three drops of water on one's head, the same effect will be achieved without any offence to Rādhā-kuṇḍa. There is no doubt whatsoever, that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī will fulfill such a benediction given by Her pure devotee.

In 1935 when Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī performed the Vraja-maṇḍala parikṛamā with thousands of his followers, out of reverence for the extreme sanctity of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, they did not enter the waters, but instead sprinkled three drops on their heads out of respect. Committing offences at Rādhā-kuṇḍa is certainly the fastest way of going to hell.

It can be easily understood, that even if one lives on the sacred banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and takes bath regularly, if one commits offences one can very easily glide down to hell. Śrīla Prabhupāda once said, "Don't go to Rādhā-kuṇḍa simply to become monkey in your next life." Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī has also said that many so-called bābājīs come to Rādhā-kuṇḍa to live, but in fact, because of their grievous offences, they are not living at Rādhā-kuṇḍa at all, but actually at Nāraka-kuṇḍa (hell).



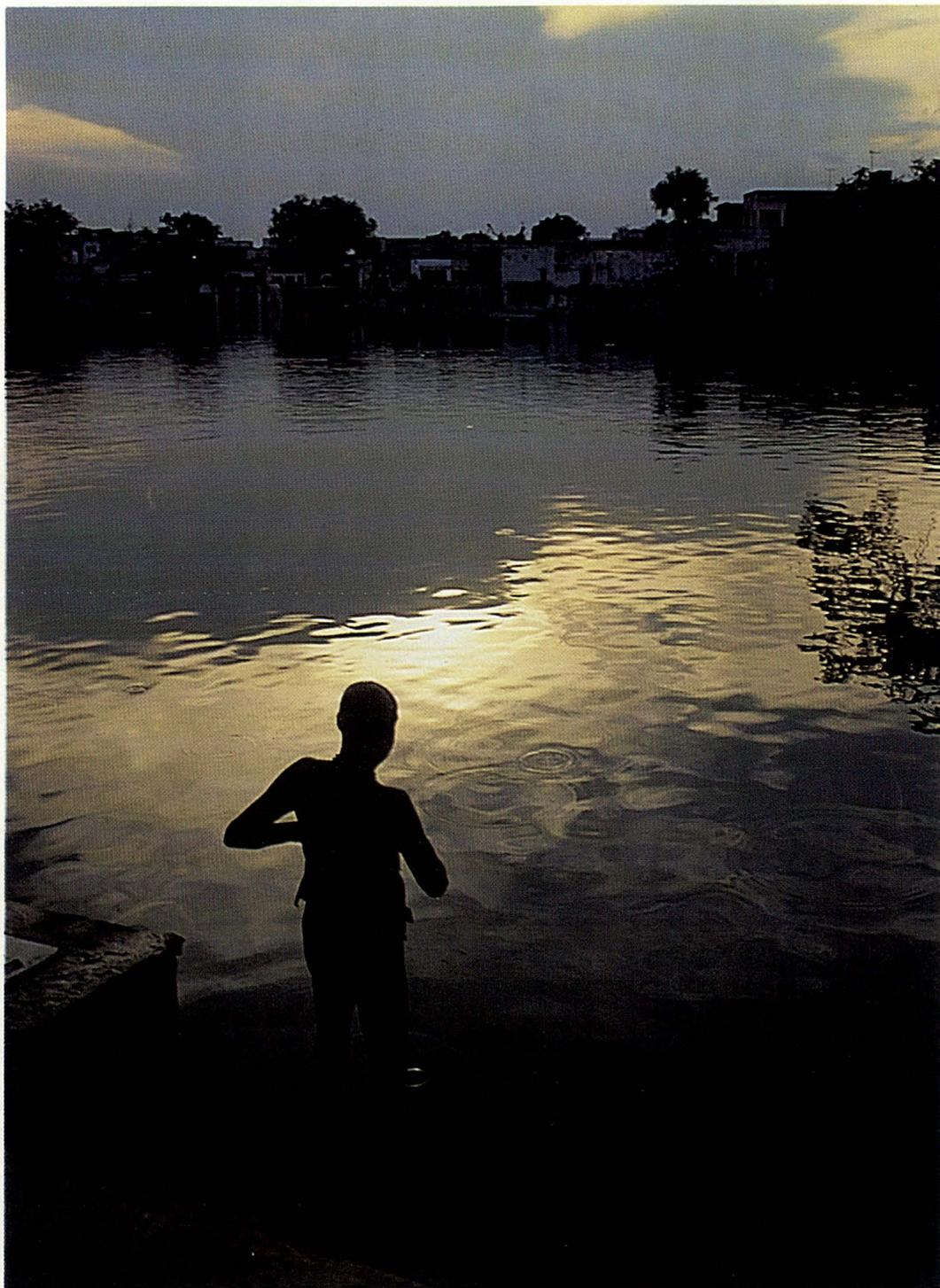
Sadhus bathing at Dāsa Gosvāmī-ghāta



Bengali matajīs offer prayers after bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa

Living on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and regularly bathing in Her sacred waters, is meant for the most advanced devotees like Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, who are completely beyond the bodily concept of life. Not the neophytes who are only practicing devotional service (*vaidhī-bhakti*), and who are still struggling to control their mind and senses.

To be able to reside on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and bathe in the sacred waters of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's own personal bathing place, are not ordinary activities. Even Nārada, Sanaka Ṛṣi, Lord Brahmā, Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Lord Śiva, do not get this chance. This is because they are in the consciousness of being male devotees. In order to actually enter into Rādhā-kuṇḍa, one must be above the bodily concept and completely free from all offences. Many of the local Vaiṣnavas show great caution when bathing in the sacred *kuṇḍas*, they can be seen standing on the side of the *ghātas*, dipping their *kamaṇḍalas* into the water and pouring water over their heads, not daring to touch their feet to Rādhā-kuṇḍa. While visiting Rādhā-kuṇḍa, devotees should carefully take shelter of the bona-fide spiritual master's instructions, strictly avoid committing offences and remember, "fools rush in where wise men fear to tread."



At the break of dawn, a sadhu takes bath at Syāma-kuṇḍa

BAHULĀṢṬAMI

(RĀDHĀ-KUNḌĀṢṬAMI)

On the eighth day of the waning moon in the sacred month of *Kārtika* (October-November), a big festival is held to celebrate the appearance day of Rādhā-kunḍa. Thousands flock from all over India to bathe in the sacred *kunḍa* at the point of midnight, the exact time when Rādhā-kunḍa appeared in this world. Rādhā-kunḍa is the only place on earth where a sacred bath *ardha-rātri-snāna* is taken at midnight.



Large crowds gather at Rādhā-kunḍa for a sacred midnight bath on the occasion of Bahulāṣṭami

It is mentioned in many of the *Purāṇas*, that to take bath in Rādhā-kunḍa during the month of *Kārtika* is most auspicious. It has also been stated in *Bhakti-ratnākara*:

“On this day (Bahulāṣṭami) Kṛṣṇa made Śyāma-kunḍa, called all the sacred places and bathed while chanting the name of each holy place. Kṛṣṇa finished His bath sometime before midnight. Even now people follow the same system of bathing in the holy kunḍa. By bathing in Rādhā-kunḍa on the day of Bahulāṣṭami one pleases Lord Hari.”

It has been estimated that over one hundred thousand people attend this midnight festival. The *ghāṭas* around the *kunḍa* become choked with pilgrims all trying to reach the waters edge for a holy dip. Many Gauḍīya Vaiṣnavas feel that in more recent times, most of those who throng the Bahulāṣṭami festival are

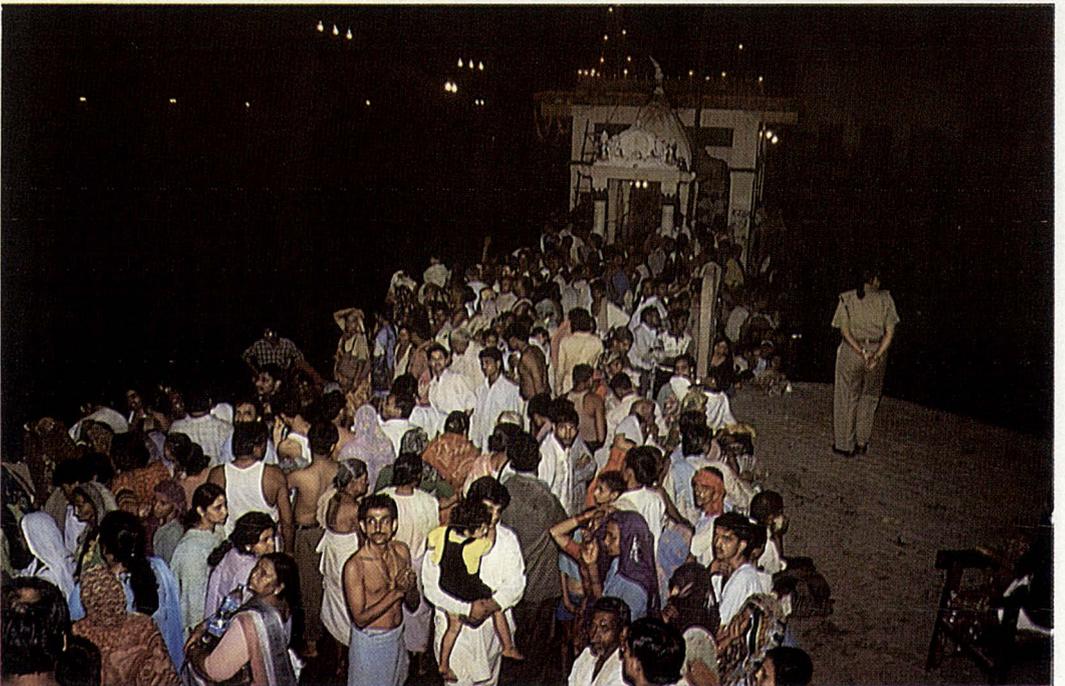
seeking material benedictions. Married couples can be seen in droves offering pumpkins along with various *pujas* to the sacred *kunḍa*, in the hope of getting a male child. In the morning thousands of pumpkins can be seen floating in the waters of Rādhā-kunḍa. No doubt, in many of the *Purāṇas* the great sanctity and benefits of bathing in Rādhā-kunḍa, especially during *Kārtika*, have been enumerated, giving rise to the notion that by bathing in this most sacred of all sacred bathing places, all one’s desires, either material or spiritual will be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa have given their benediction that anyone who, with firm faith, bathes in the sacred *kunḍas* on this day, will achieve divine love equal to Theirs. Many devotees believe that this is not only the best day to bathe in the sacred *kunḍas*, but the only day; because Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa have given Their divine approval.

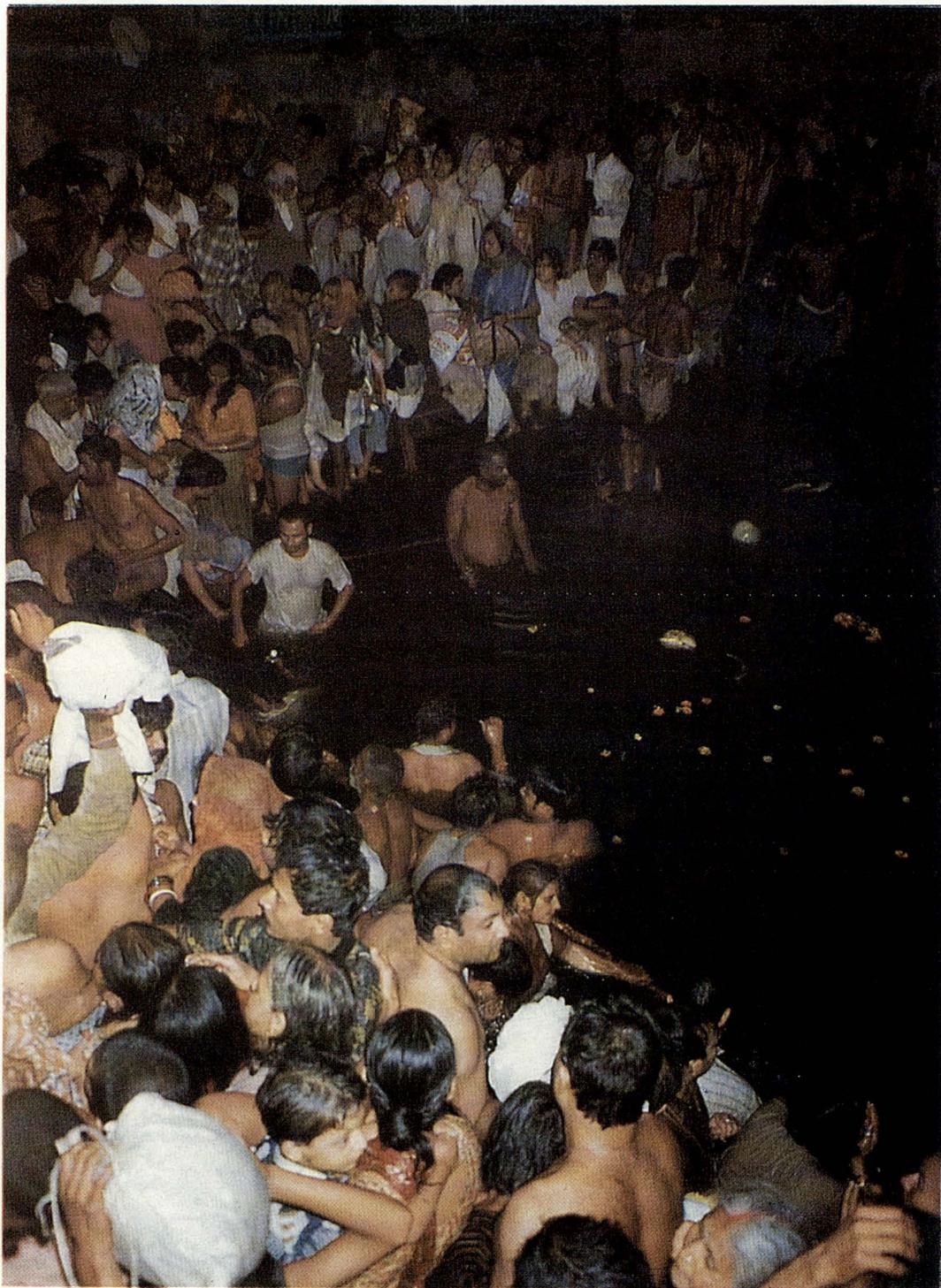




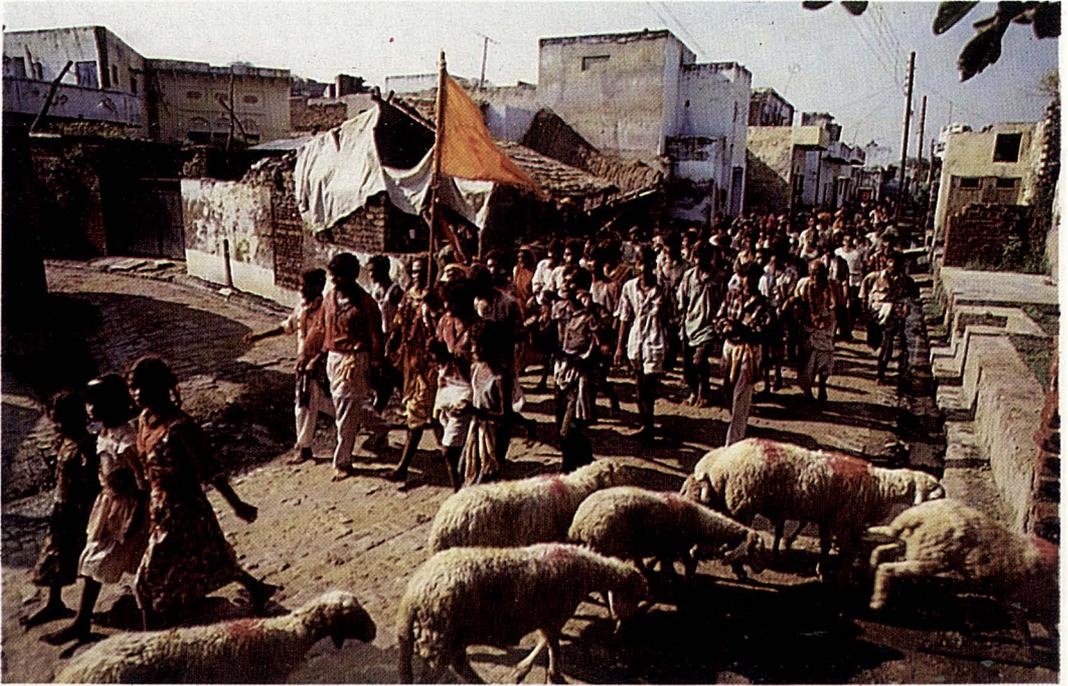
Pilgrims anxiously waiting for the stroke of midnight to take a holy dip



Pilgrims crowd the ghāṭas around Rādhā-kuṇḍa waiting their turn to take bath



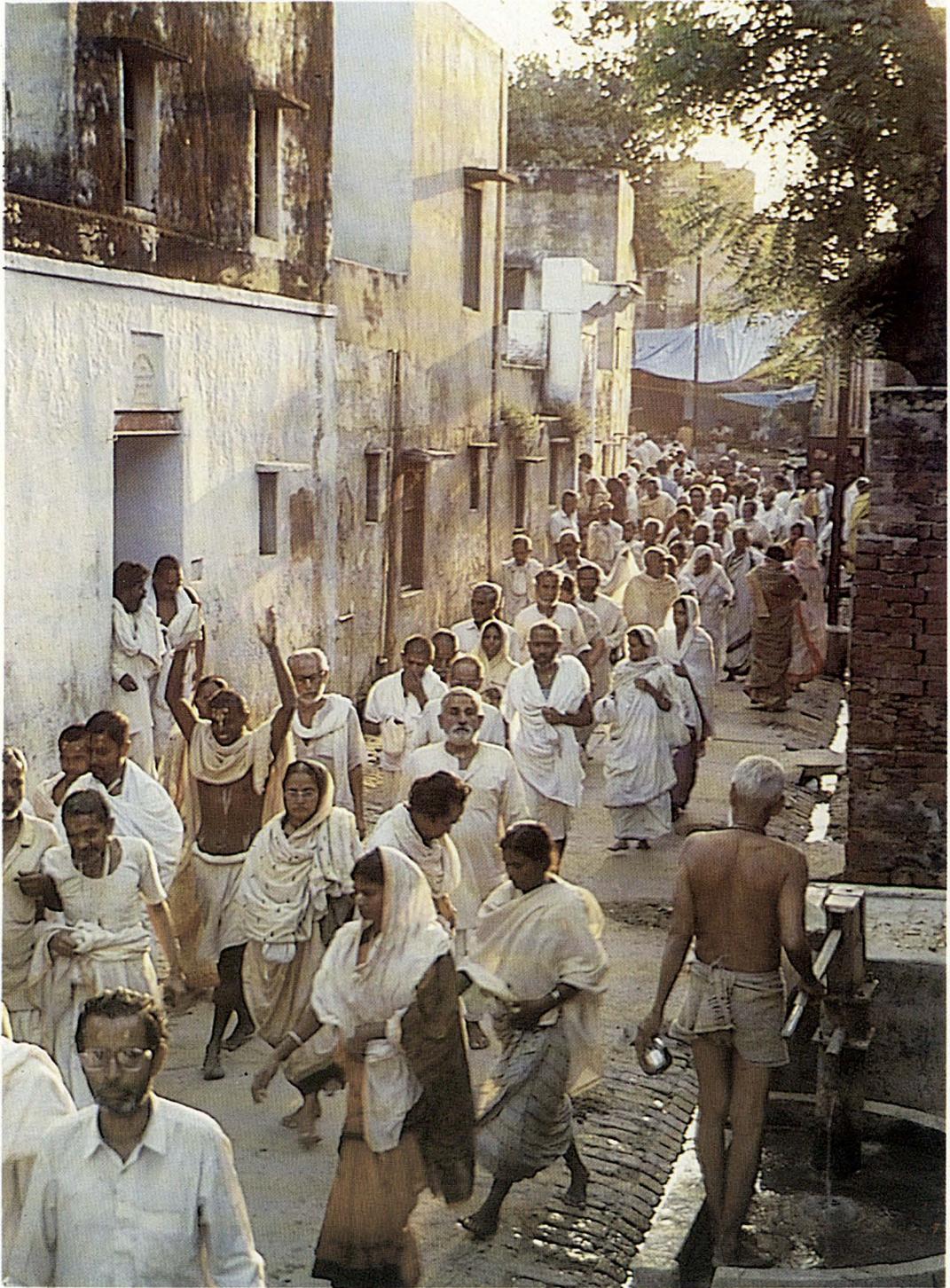
Pilgrims taking a midnight bath at Rādhā-kuṇḍa on the occasion of Bahulāṣṭami



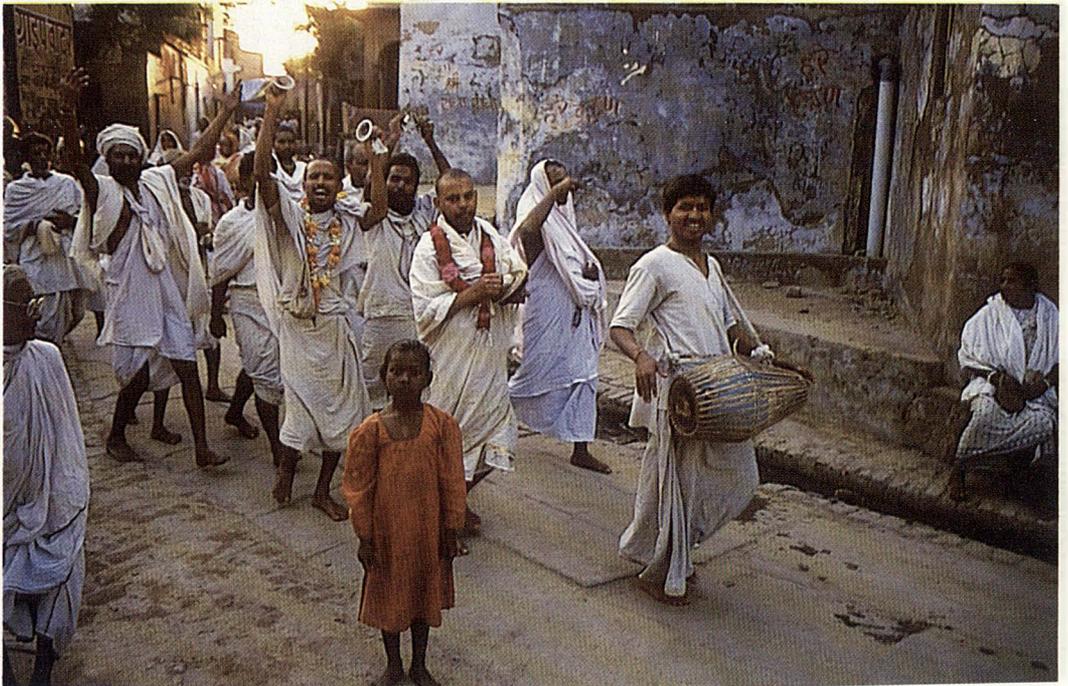
A group of pilgrims performing Govardhana parikramā enter the narrow streets of Rādhā-kuṇḍa



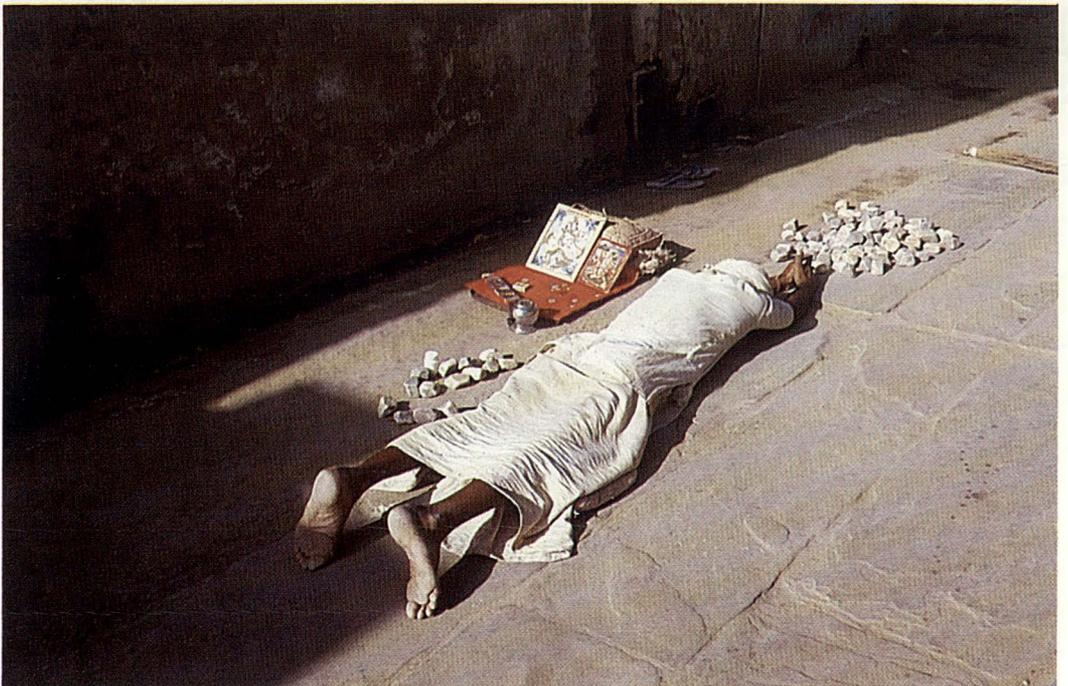
Kīrtana groups circumambulate the two sacred kuṇḍas every evening during Kārtika



During Kārtika, large crowds of devotees can be seen performing parikramā



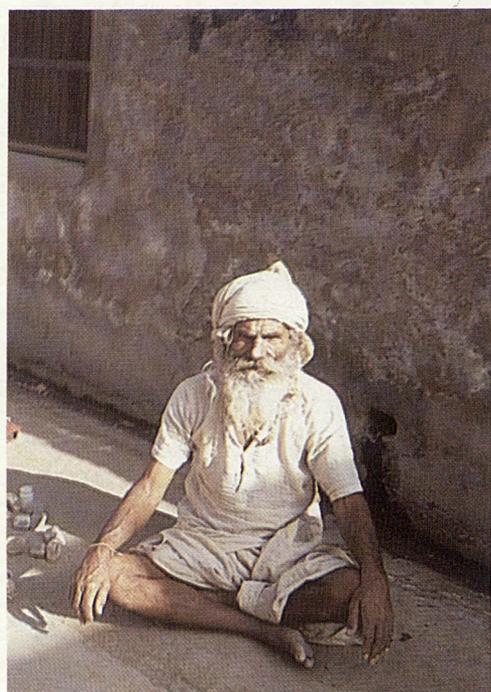
In the evening, kirtana groups visit all the important temples around Rādhā-kuṇḍa



A sadhu performs daṇḍavata parikramā of Rādhā-kuṇḍa



Many large turtles can be seen swimming in Rādhā-kuṇḍa



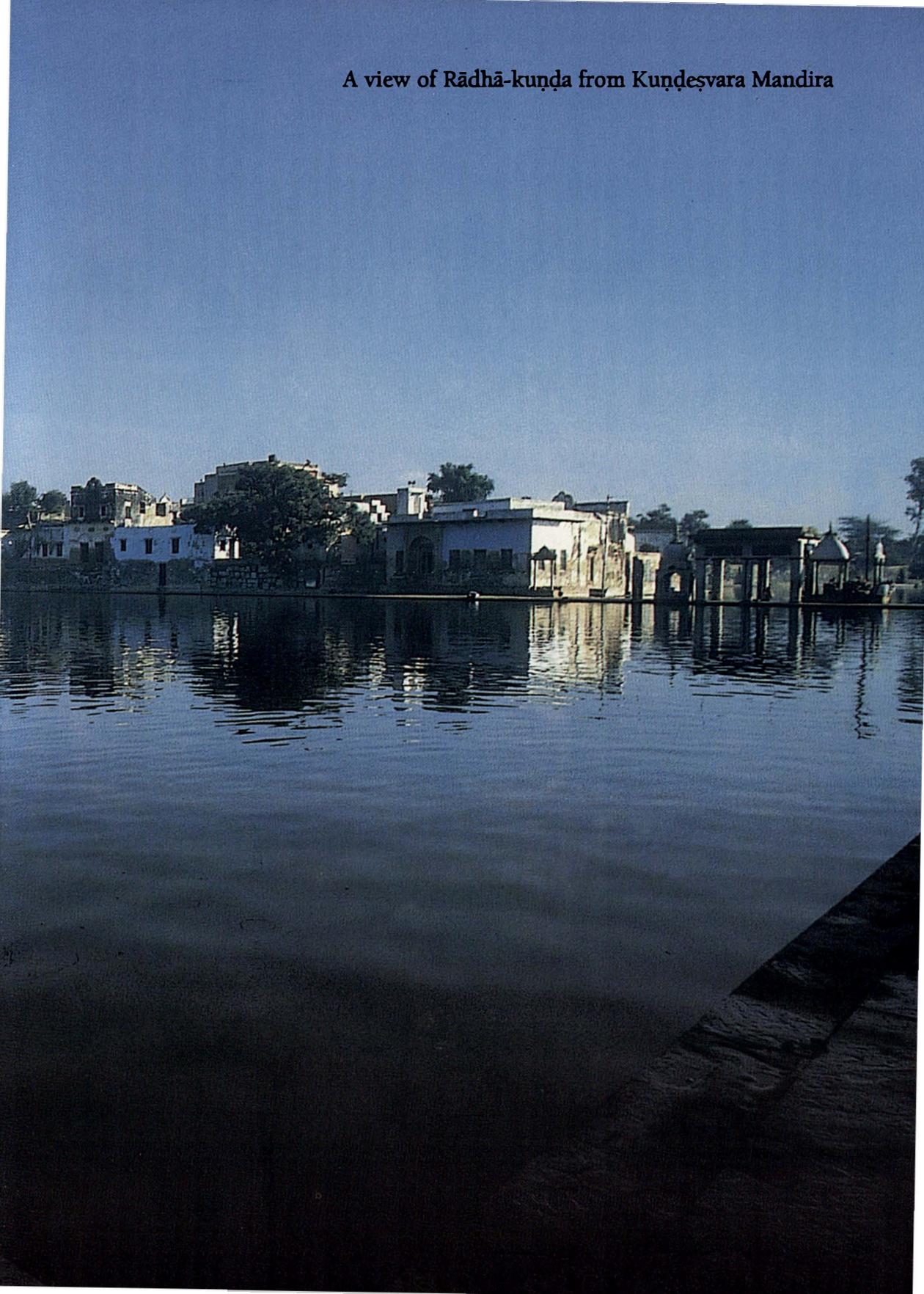
A sadhu poses for a photograph



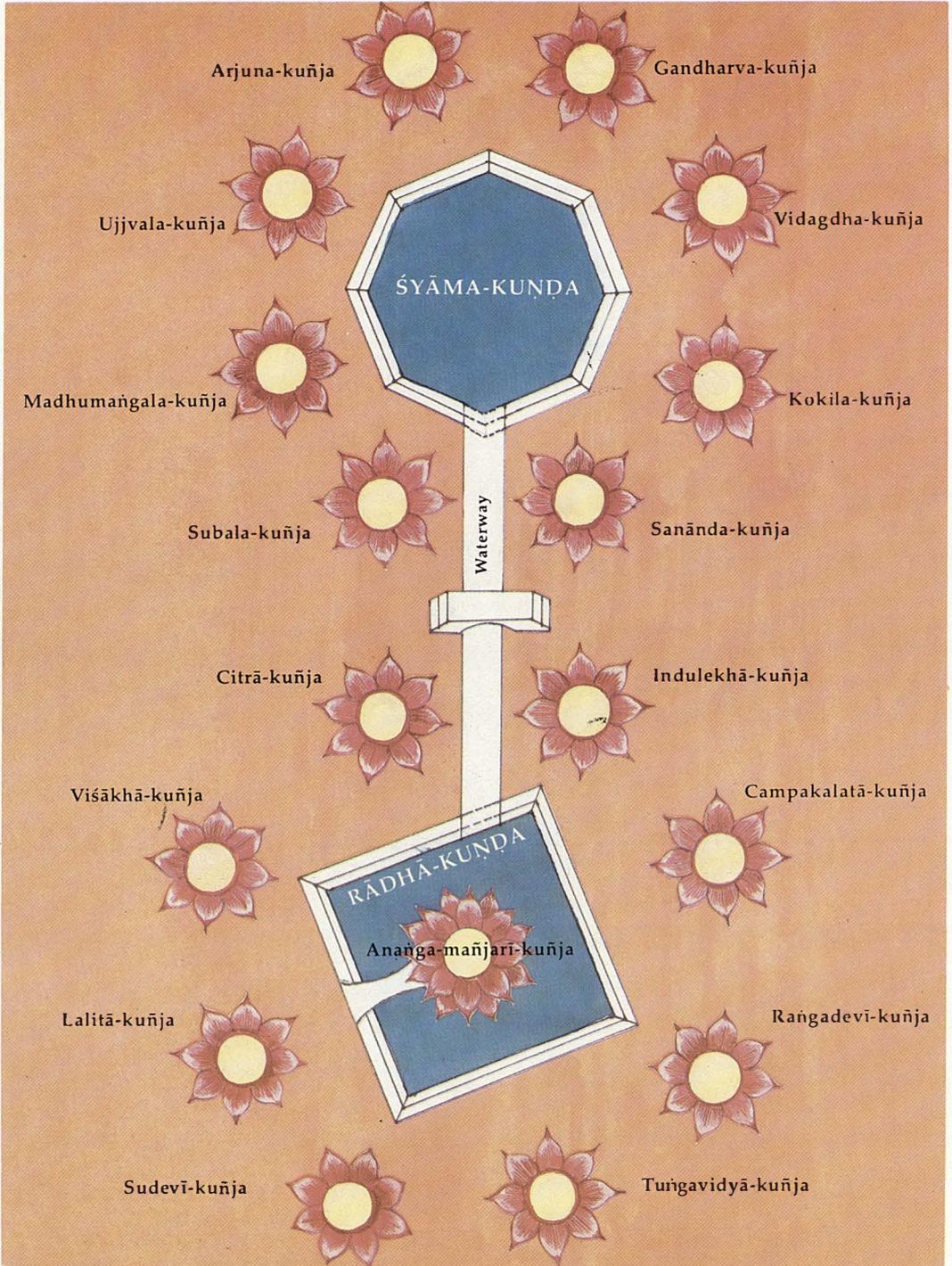
A close up of a turtle



A view of Rādhā-kuṇḍa from Kuṇḍeṣvara Mandira



THE KUÑJAS OF THE AṢṬA-SAKHĪS AND AṢṬA-SAKHĀS



In aprakata-līlā, surrounding both Rādhā-kunḍa and Śyāma-kunḍa, are the Kuñjas (groves) of the aṣṭa-sakhīs – the eight principle girlfriends of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and the aṣṭa-sakhās – the eight principle boyfriends of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa

GOSVĀMĪ TEMPLES AT RĀDHĀ-KUṆḌA

At Rādhā-kuṇḍa can be found replicas of all the Gosvāmī temples of Vṛndāvana. In the year 1670, when the soldiers of the Muslim zealot Emperor Aurangzeb, attacked Vṛndāvana, all the important Deities of the Gosvāmīs were secretly taken by bullock cart to Rādhā-kuṇḍa for safe keeping. It is said that for some time the Deities were actually submerged in Rādhā-kuṇḍa until the fear that they may be destroyed by Aurangzeb's soldiers had passed. It had been decided that the Deities would be taken to Rājāsthān, which was still under the control of hindu kings who were all staunch devotees of Kṛṣṇa. The rulers of Jaipur, the state capital of Rājāsthān, were only too happy to accommodate the Deities of the Gosvāmī's. Even today, most of these Deities are still being worshipped in Jaipur.

Before the Deities were taken to Rājāsthān, replicas of them were carved and later installed in temples situated around Rādhā-kuṇḍa. These replicas of the Deities are considered to be non-different from the original and are called the *pratibhū* expansions, which means the representative of the original Deity, having the same spiritual potency. The Vrajavāsīs say that the Gosvāmī temples were built here, so that the local residents and devotees do not have to leave Rādhā-kuṇḍa to have *darśana* of the Gosvāmī's Deities.

LIST OF PRATIBHŪ DEITIES AT RĀDHĀ-KUṆḌA AND WHO ESTABLISHED THE ORIGINAL DEITY

<i>Name of Deity</i>	<i>Established By</i>
Rādhā Kānta	Vakreśvara Paṇḍita Gosvāmī
Rādhā Śyāmsundara	Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita Gosvāmī
Rādhā Dāmodara	Jīva Gosvāmī
Rādhāramaṇa	Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī
Rādhā Govinda	Rūpa Gosvāmī
Rādhā Vinoda	Lokanātha Gosvāmī
Rādhā Mādhava	Jayadeva Gosvāmī
Rādhā Madana-mohana	Sanātana Gosvāmī
Rādhā Gopinātha	Madhu Paṇḍita Gosvāmī
Rādhā Gokulānanda	Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura



The Deity of Kuṇḍeśvara Mahādeva decorated on the occasion of Bahulāṣṭami

PLACES OF INTEREST

1 KUṆḌEŚVARA MAHĀDEVA TEMPLE

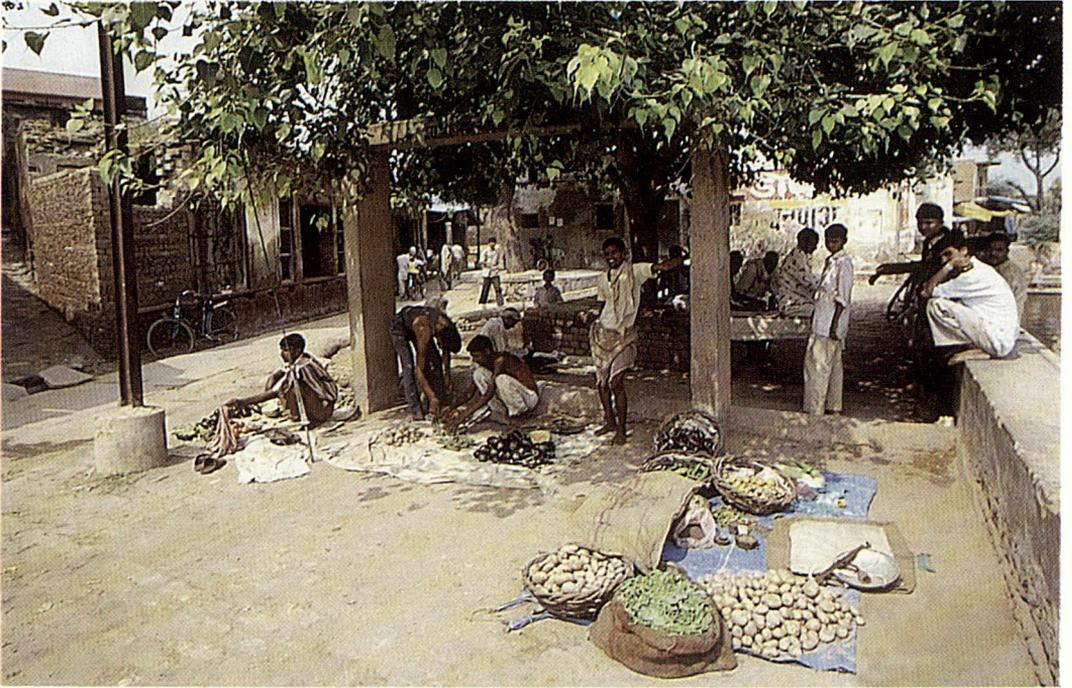
This is the temple of Lord Śiva who is the protector of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. There are four important temples of Lord Śiva at Rādhā-kuṇḍa guarding the four directions. It was Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself who appointed Śiva as the protector of the holy *Dhāma* and consequently there are five important Deities of Lord Śiva in Vraja namely; Gopīśvara in Vṛndāvana, Bhūteśvara in Mathurā, Nandiśvara at Nandagrāma, Kāmeśvara at Kāmyavana, and Cakaleśvara at Govardhana. It is a custom to offer prayers to Lord Kuṇḍeśvara Mahādeva before starting *parikramā* of the sacred *kuṇḍas*.

2 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ-KṚṢṆA PURĀNA MAṆḌIRA

The Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were discovered by Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī when he was excavating Rādhā-kuṇḍa. These Deities are considered to



The Deities at Rādhā Kṛṣṇa Purāna Maṇḍira



Jhulana Sthali where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoy Their swing pastimes

be the presiding Deities of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. This was the first temple established here after Raghunātha dāsa entrusted the worship of the Deities to a local *brāhmaṇa*, who built the temple and whose descendents are still maintaining the worship. Unfortunately the original Deities have now disappeared and Their replica expansions are now being worshipped here.

In the courtyard of this ancient temple, one can see a banyan tree and a neem tree entwined together. In Vraja, the local people worship such trees as a manifestation of Lakṣmī-Nārāyana, but here at Rādhā-kuṇḍa they are worshipped as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

3 JHULANA STHALI

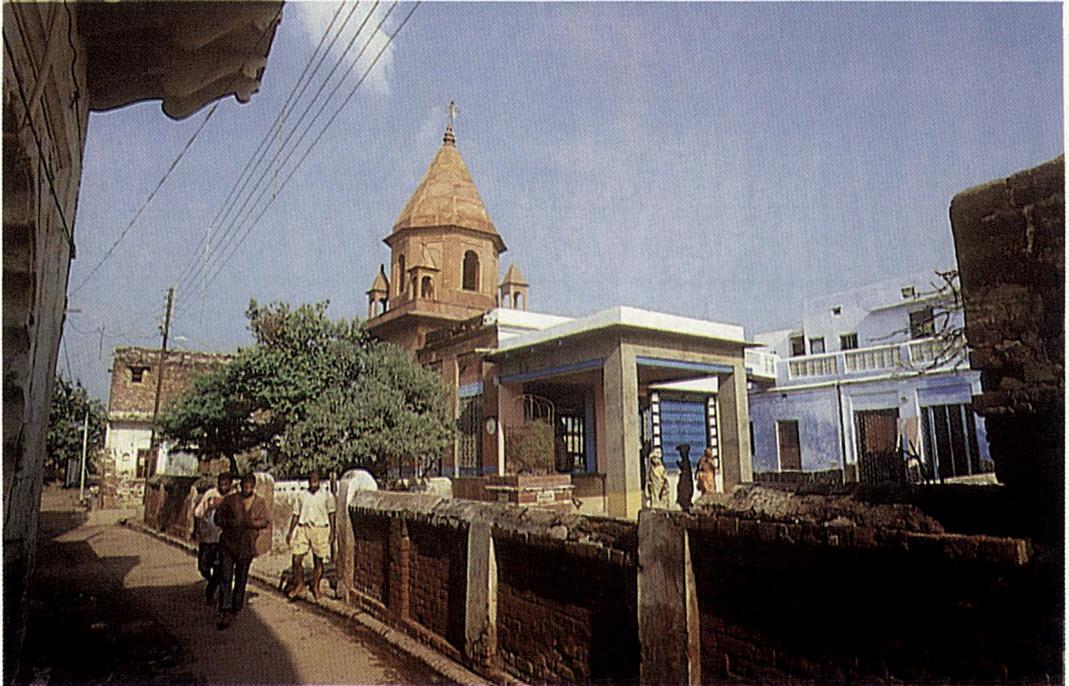
This stone structure shaped like an upside-down ‘U’ marks the place where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoyed Their swing pastimes (*jhulana-līlā*) on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. In the *aprakāṣa-līlā*, or unmanifest pastimes, hanging from the branch of a banyan tree at this spot, is an amazing swing created by Vṛndā Devī and shaped like a sixteen petaled lotus flower. The divine couple Rādhā and

Kṛṣṇa sit in the middle of the lotus shaped swing, the *aṣṭa-sakhīs* and *aṣṭa-mañjarīs* also sit on the swing in a circle facing Them. It appears to the *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs*, that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are directly facing each of them simultaneously. The lotus swing is then pushed by another group of *sakhīs* who also witness this astonishing miracle.

The swing pastimes at this place are still being enacted on the spiritual plane as confirmed by all the *ācāryas*. Five thousand years ago, King Vajranābha planted a banyan tree here but only the stump now remains, another banyan tree is now growing in it's place. The *ghāṭa* on this side of Rādhā-kuṇḍa is known as *Jhulana-ghāṭa*, after the pastimes that took place here.

4 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ KUṆJA-BIHĀRĪ MAṆḌIRA (GAUḌĪYA MATHA)

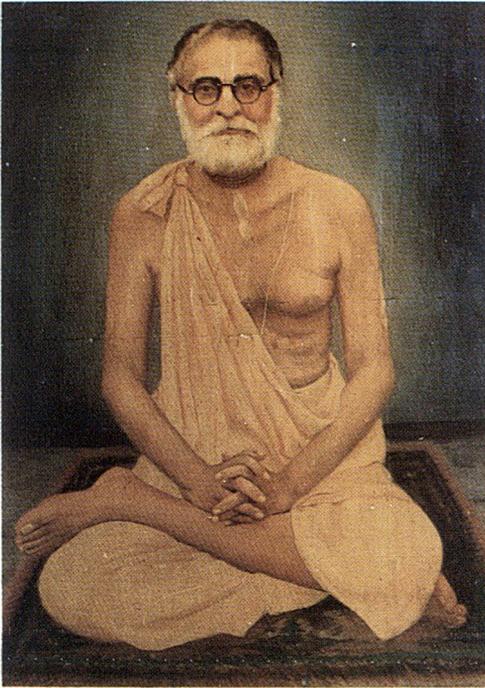
These beautiful Deities of Rādhā Kuṅja-Bihārī were established here at Rādhā-kuṇḍa by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī Gosvāmī in the year 1935. The Deity of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu was also installed on the left side of the Deities. To the right of the Deity room is the *puṣpa-samādhī* of Śrīla Gaurakiśora



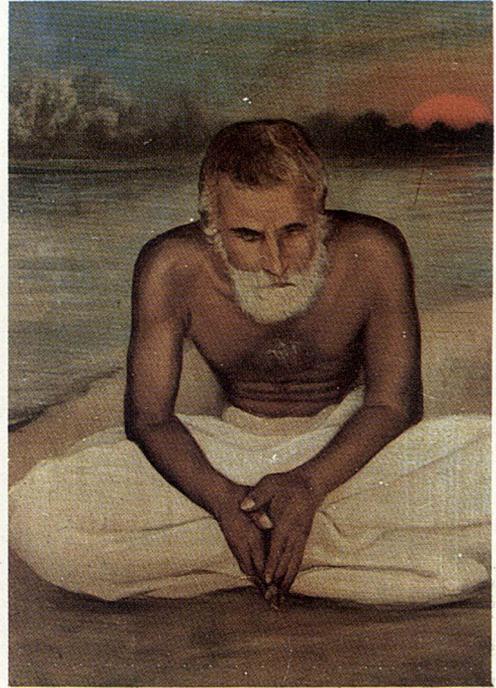
The Gaudiya Matha Mandira at Rādhā-kuṇḍa



The beautiful Deities of Sri Sri Rādhā-Kuñja-Bihārī

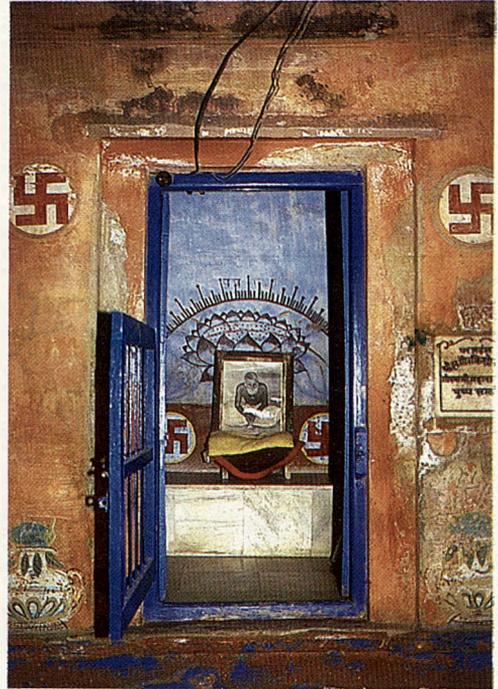


Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī



Śrīla Gaurakīṣora dāsa Bābājī

dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja who disappeared from the world in 1915. He was the spiritual master of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, who in turn was the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Pilgrims performing *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill, go around this temple and offer their respects to the Deities before continuing their *parikramā*. This is the only Gauḍīya Matha temple established at Rādhākuṇḍa and it is a very important place for all Gauḍīya Vaiṣnavas.



Puspa samādhi of Śrīla Gaurakīṣora dāsa Bābājī



The beautiful Mālyahāri-kunḍa where the pearl pastime took place

5 MĀLYAHĀRI-KUNḌA

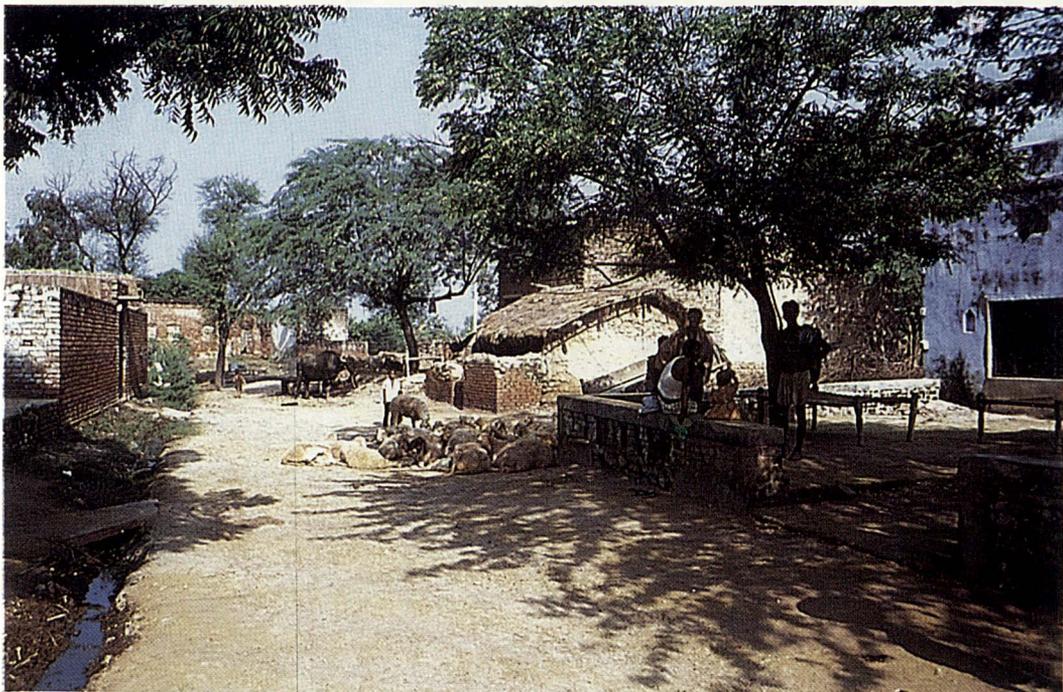
A very wonderful pastime took place on the banks of this beautiful lake that has been revealed by Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī in his book *Muktā-carita*. Once on the occasion of *Diwali*, Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* came and sat here at Mālyahāri-kunḍa and began to string necklaces made from pearls, so they could decorate their cows. On hearing about this, Kṛṣṇa also came there and on seeing the wonderful pearls, asked the *gopīs* for a few in order to decorate His favorite cows named Harina and Hasini.

Even though Kṛṣṇa repeatedly asked the *gopīs* for some pearls, they ignored Him. Finally, Lalitā told Kṛṣṇa that she could find only one broken pearl for Him and that this was the perfect pearl to decorate His cows. Feeling upset at the *gopīs* behaviour, Kṛṣṇa told Lalitā that He would grow His own pearls and in an angry mood ran off to find mother Yaśodā. Kṛṣṇa asked mother Yaśodā to give Him some pearls so He could plant them in a garden. Mother Yaśodā laughed at Kṛṣṇa's request and informed Him that pearls do not grow in gardens,

but come from oysters that live in the sea. Not caring for Mother Yaśodā's words, Kṛṣṇa demanded that she give Him some pearls.

Mother Yaśodā found some pearls for Kṛṣṇa and He immediately went and planted them near the bank of the river Yamunā. Kṛṣṇa then sent His friend Madhumaṅgala to beg some milk from the *gopīs* so He could water His pearl garden. On hearing Madhumaṅgala's request, the *gopīs* started laughing at the idea. Mother Yaśodā eventually arranged some milk and Kṛṣṇa went and watered His pearl garden. Within a few days, small green shoots began to appear and when Kṛṣṇa told the *gopīs* about it, they simply laughed, saying that they were only shoots of thorn bushes. After a few more days, the shoots became creepers covered with beautiful multi-colored pearls, emitting the most sweet aroma throughout the land of Vṛndāvana.

Kṛṣṇa then began to tease the *gopīs*, that His pearls were much bigger and brighter than their pearls. The *gopīs* then wanted some of Kṛṣṇa's beautiful pearls, but Kṛṣṇa refused. The *gopīs* then decided to grow their own pearl garden. They collected all the pearls from their houses as well as the ones decorating



Rādhā-kuṇḍa is still very much a village – the road to Mālyahāri-kuṇḍa

their *bodies* and planted them all in a garden. Three times a day, the *gopīs* watered their pearl garden with large quantities of milk, ghee and butter, thinking that they would grow much better pearls than Kṛṣṇa.

Unfortunately, no pearls grew and only thorn bushes appeared in the *gopīs*' garden. Kṛṣṇa came there with His cowherd boyfriends and started laughing at the *gopīs*. Just to tease the *gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa began to decorate all the cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep, with the most beautiful and exquisite pearl necklaces. Even the monkeys received wonderful pearl necklaces. However, Kṛṣṇa gave not a single pearl to the *gopīs*. The *gopīs* could not produce any pearls in their garden and became full of anxiety, thinking their elders would punish them for taking all the pearls from their homes and burying them in the ground.

The *gopīs* decided to send Candramukhi and Kañchanalata with a large quantity of gold to purchase pearls from Kṛṣṇa. However, Kṛṣṇa refused and informed them that each *gopī* should come individually to barter for the pearls. All the *gopīs* decided to go to Kṛṣṇa except Rādhārāṇī, who hid nearby. The *gopīs* were very eager to buy all the pearls, but Kṛṣṇa gave only the very smallest pearl to Viśākhā for Rādhārāṇī, and told her that if she did not pay immediately, she would be arrested and locked up in Kṛṣṇa's private garden. Kṛṣṇa's friend Subala, who was acting as mediator, requested Kṛṣṇa to give a fair price for the pearls, and opening the box showed all the beautiful pearls to the *gopīs*. The *gopīs* then started to haggle with Kṛṣṇa over the price of the pearls, but not being able to reach any agreement, left with Rādhārāṇī for Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Then in great ecstasy, Kṛṣṇa began to string all the pearls into beautiful necklaces with His own hands. He then selected the most exquisite of all the necklaces and placed it into a golden box. On the top of the box He engraved the name of Rādhārāṇī. Kṛṣṇa prepared similar boxes for all the *gopīs* and sent them as gifts. Rādhārāṇī was overjoyed to receive the fabulous gift of pearls. She immediately sent Kṛṣṇa some delicious preparations of foodstuffs that She had personally cooked, along with *betel* nuts and scented garlands. Having received Kṛṣṇa's gift, the *gopīs* returned to their homes in great happiness wearing the necklaces of exquisite pearls. The elders were greatly surprised to see them return home adorned with so many fabulous and costly pearls.



When entering Rādhā-kunḍa on Govardhana parikramā, Śiva Khor can be seen on the right

6 ŚIVA KHOR (ŚIVA PUṢKARIṆĪ)

Śiva Puṣkariṇī literally means 'lake of Śiva'. Śiva can also mean jackal. Besides being an important Śiva temple, this place is also the cremation ground for those who die at Rādhā-kunḍa. There is an interesting story in the *Padma Purāna (Vṛndāvana Māhātmya)* concerning this *kunḍa*. Once a female jackal came out of the jungle to drink water from Śiva Khor. Some children playing nearby saw the jackal and chased her into a nearby fox hole. They then lit a fire outside the hole in the hope of catching the jackal, which began crying in piteous tones.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who after bathing at Rādhā-kunḍa was passing nearby, heard the piteous cries of the jackal. She immediately asked one of Her girlfriends to go and see what was wrong, saying that no one should be in distress in Her favourite place of Rādhā-kunḍa. On reaching the spot, Rādhārāṇī's girl-friends chastised the naughty children and after sending them away, brought the frightened female jackal to Rādhārāṇī. The jackal immediately fell down on the ground crying before Rādhārāṇī, who patted the jackal and blessed her that she would one day attain Her personal service.



A view of Rādhā-kunḍa during the monsoon season



7 RĀMEŚVARA MAṆDIRA

Just next to the Śiva Puṣkariṇī lake is a small roadside temple containing the Deity (*linga*) of Lord Śiva known as Rāmeśvara Mahadeva, the protector of the western side of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.



Rāmeśvara Maṇḍira

8 ŚRĪ GOPĀLA MAṆIPURA MAṆDIRA

This beautiful sandstone temple has now been donated to ISKCON, and is managed by ISKCON's Maṇipura branch. There is a very nice story concerning the Deity of Lord Gopāla. This Deity was originally being worshipped in the house of a *brāhmaṇa*. About one hundred years ago, the king of Maṇipura, Mahārāja Churachand, had a dream in which the Deity of Gopāla appeared and ordered the king to build a temple for Him at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Lord Gopāla informed



The Gopāla Maṇipura Maṇḍira at Rādhā-kuṇḍa



Lord Gopāla – presiding Deity of the Gopāla Maṇḍira

the king to build the temple at such a spot, that the Lord could gaze at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, as well as give *darśana* to Sūrya, the sun-God.

The king built a nice temple for Lord Gopāla, located at the exact spot where the first rays of the rising sun appear over Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Visitors in the early morning can witness the rays of the rising sun fall directly on the lotus feet of Lord Gopāla.

9 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ-KĀNTA MAṆDIRA

Just opposite the Gopāla Maṇipura Maṇḍira is the temple of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kānta. Besides the *pratibhū* Deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kānta, there is the *puṣpa-samādhī* and *mūrti* of Vakreśvara Paṇḍita, who was a close associate of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Vakreśvara established the original Deities of Rādhā-Kānta in Jagannātha Purī just next to the famous Gambhīrā, the room where Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu lived.

Vakreśvara Paṇḍita is believed to be the sakhī Tuṅgavidyā in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. This temple is situated at the very spot next to Rādhā-kuṇḍa where Tuṅgavidyā's *kuñja* is located in the *aprakāṣa-līlā*.



Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kānta along with Lalitā-Sakhī (left) and Lord Caitanya (extreme left)



The murti of Vakreśvara Paṇāita



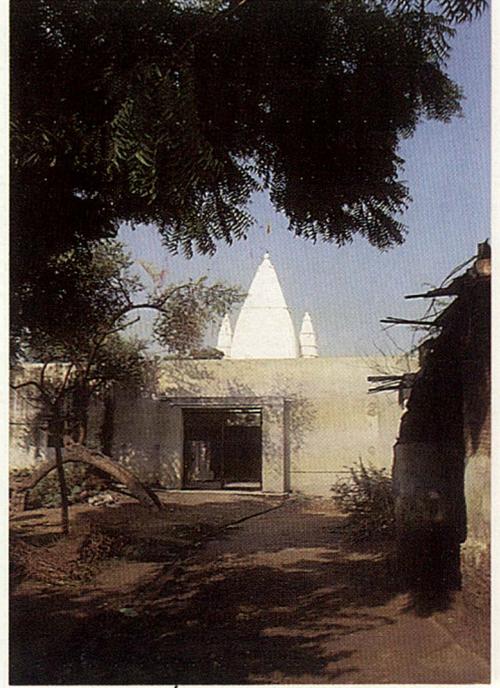
A close-up of beautiful Kṛṣṇa



A painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa with the gopīs on the wall of the Rādhā-Kānta Maṇḍira



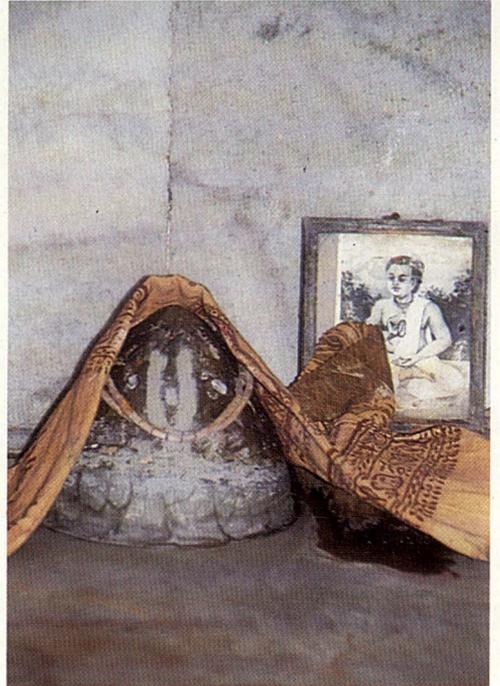
Parrots sharing food



Rādhā Śyāmasundara Maṇḍira

10. ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ ŚYĀMASUNDARA MAṆḌIRA

Here can be seen the beautiful *pratibhū mūrtis* of Their Lordship Śrī Śrī Rādhā Śyāmasundara. The original temple of Rādhā Śyāmasundara in Vṛndāvana was established by Syāmānanda Paṇḍita Gosvāmī. Here we can also see the *puṣpa-samādhī* of Syāmānanda Paṇḍita, which is situated next to the Deity room.



Puṣpa samādhī of Śyāmananda Paṇḍita



The beautiful Deities of the Rādhā Śyāmasundara



The beautiful Deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Dāmodara – along with Lalitā Sakhī (left)



The spotted deer named Rādhārāṇī

11 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ DĀMODARA MĀNDIRA

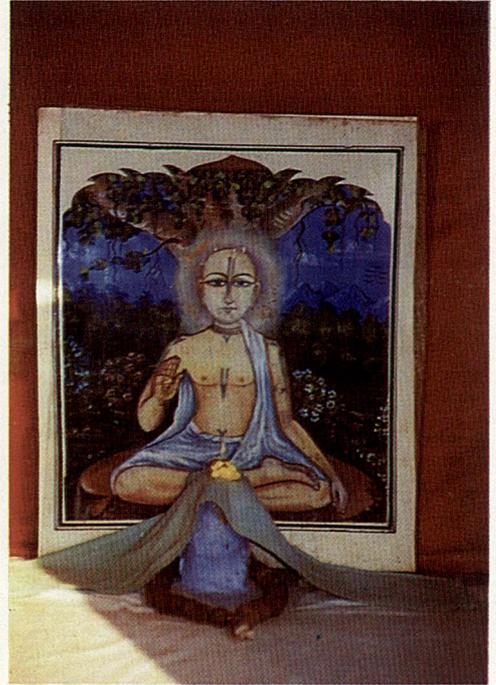
In this small temple can be seen the beautiful *pratibhū mūrtis* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Dāmodara. The original Rādhā Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana was established by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. In the temple courtyard is a small *gośāla* with some beautiful cows that supply milk to the Deities. There is also a very beautiful deer named Rādhārāṇī, kept as a pet by the priest. This temple is under the ownership of the gosains of the Rādhā Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana.



Śrīnivāsa Ācārya Kuñja

12 ŚRĪNIVĀSA ĀCĀRYA KUÑJA

This is the spot where Śrīnivāsa Ācārya stayed when he visited Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī had three brilliant disciples, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita and Śrīnivāsa Ācārya. These three disciples started the first ever book distribution *saṅkīrtana* party when they took the sacred books of the Gosvāmīs to Bengal for distribution. According to *Bhakti-ratnākara*, Raghava Paṇḍita Gosvāmī (whose cave is near Apsāra-kuṇḍa), personally took Śrīnivāsa and Narottama on Vraja Maṇḍala parikramā. In this *kuñja* there is a temple where the Deities named Rādhā-Mādhava are being worshipped.



The sitting place of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya



The beautiful Deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Gopīnātha with Anaṅga Mañjarī on the left

13 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ-GOPĪNĀTHA MANDIRA

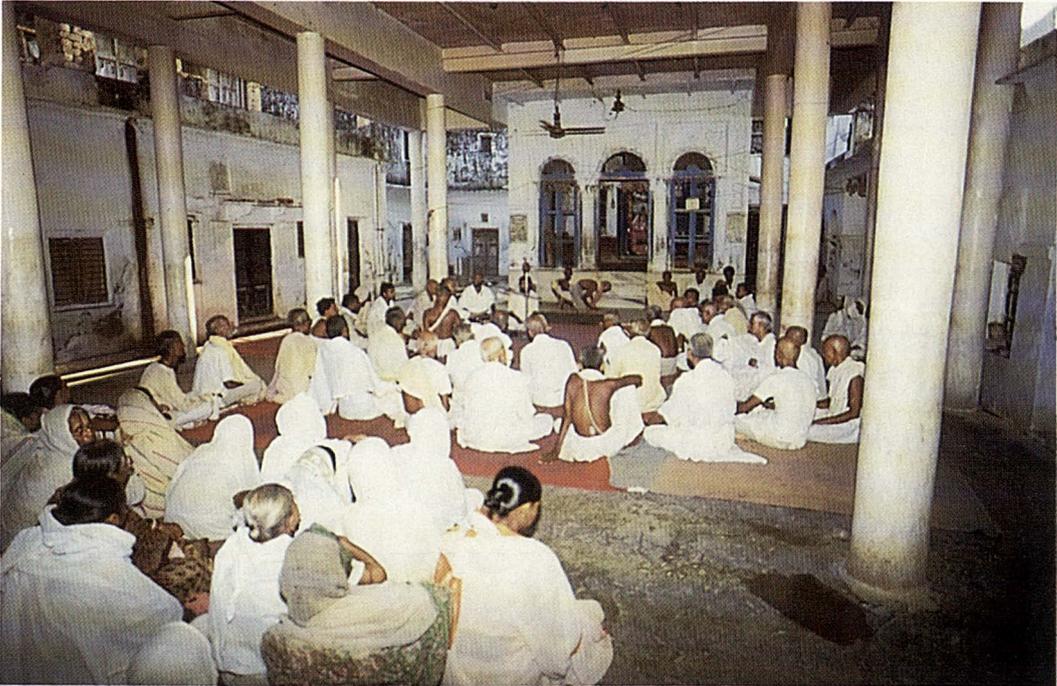
This temple was established after the visit to Rādhā-kuṇḍa of Mā Jāhnavā, the eternal consort of Lord Nityānanda. One day, while she was sitting in meditation on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa near this place, she heard the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute. Looking up, she had a wonderful vision of Lord Gopīnātha standing under a *tamāla* tree, accompanied by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs*. To commemorate this wonderful vision, the Deity of Lord Gopīnātha was installed here next to Mā Jāhnavā's sitting place.

On the altar in this temple can be seen (from left to right), the Deity of Rādhārāṇī's younger sister, Anaṅga Mañjarī, Lord Gopīnātha and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. It is said that in Caitanya *līlā*, Rādhārāṇī's younger sister, Anaṅga Mañjarī, appeared as none other than Jāhnavā Mātā, Lord Nityānanda's beloved wife. The Deity of Anaṅga Mañjarī can also be seen at the Rādhā Gopīnātha maṇḍira in Vṛndāvana, but standing on the right side of Lord Gopīnātha with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī standing on the left, in Her traditional position.

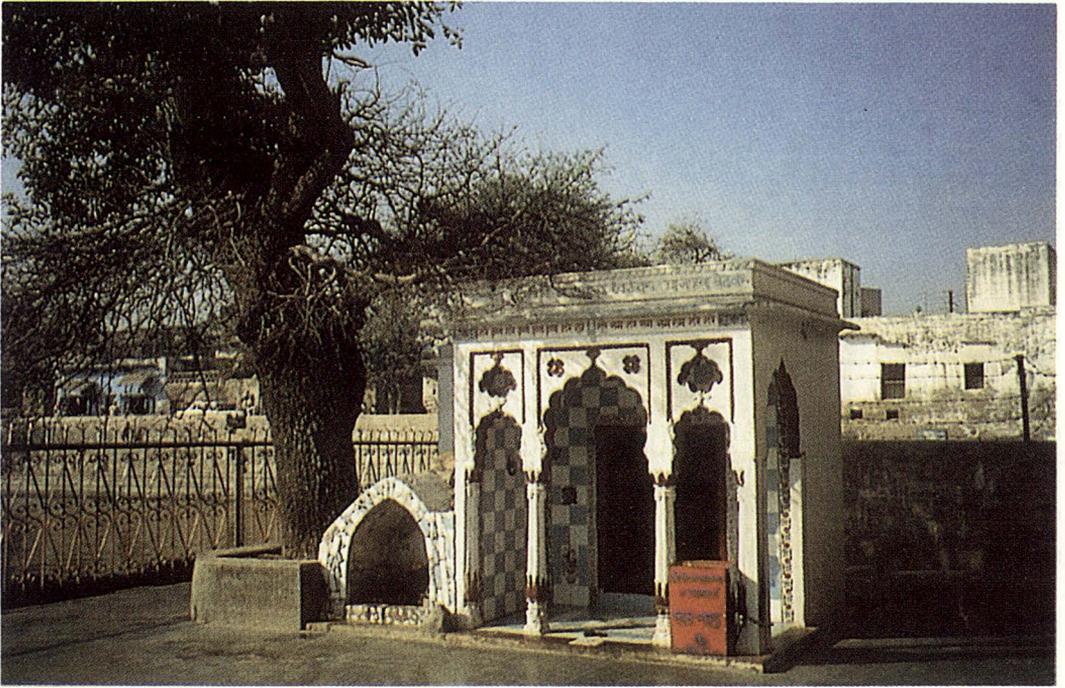
There are many versions of the story concerning how the deity of Anaṅga

Mañjarī appeared on the altar of Vṛndāvana's Gopīnātha Maṇḍira. The real fact is, that when Jāhnavā Mātā visited the Gopīnātha temple in Vṛndāvana, she felt that the Deity of Rādhārāṇī was too small. When she returned to Bengal, she had a new Deity of Rādhārāṇī carved and sent it to Vṛndāvana. This Deity was then installed to the right side of Gopīnātha and the old Deity of Rādhārāṇī was moved to the left of Gopīnātha. Later, all the devotees thought that this new Deity looked more like Mā Jāhnavā instead of Rādhārāṇī. This happened because the Deity maker was a disciple of Mā Jāhnavā and made the Deity in her likeness. Anyway, it so happened that the Deity to the right of Gopīnātha became accepted by all the devotees as Anaṅga Mañjarī, and the Deity to the left is the original Deity of Rādhārāṇī, that was moved to make way for the new Deity. Devotees believe that Anaṅga Mañjarī had her own transcendental way of appearing on the altar to the right of Lord Gopīnātha, in the spot where Rādhārāṇī normally stands.

Another very interesting fact is that when Lord Balarāma, who appeared as Lord Nityānanda in Caitanya-*līlā*, desired to render service and take part in Kṛṣṇa's conjugal pastimes, He expanded Himself and appeared as Anaṅga Mañjarī, Rādhārāṇī's younger sister.



Devotees listening to kīrtana at the Rādhā Gopīnātha Maṇḍira



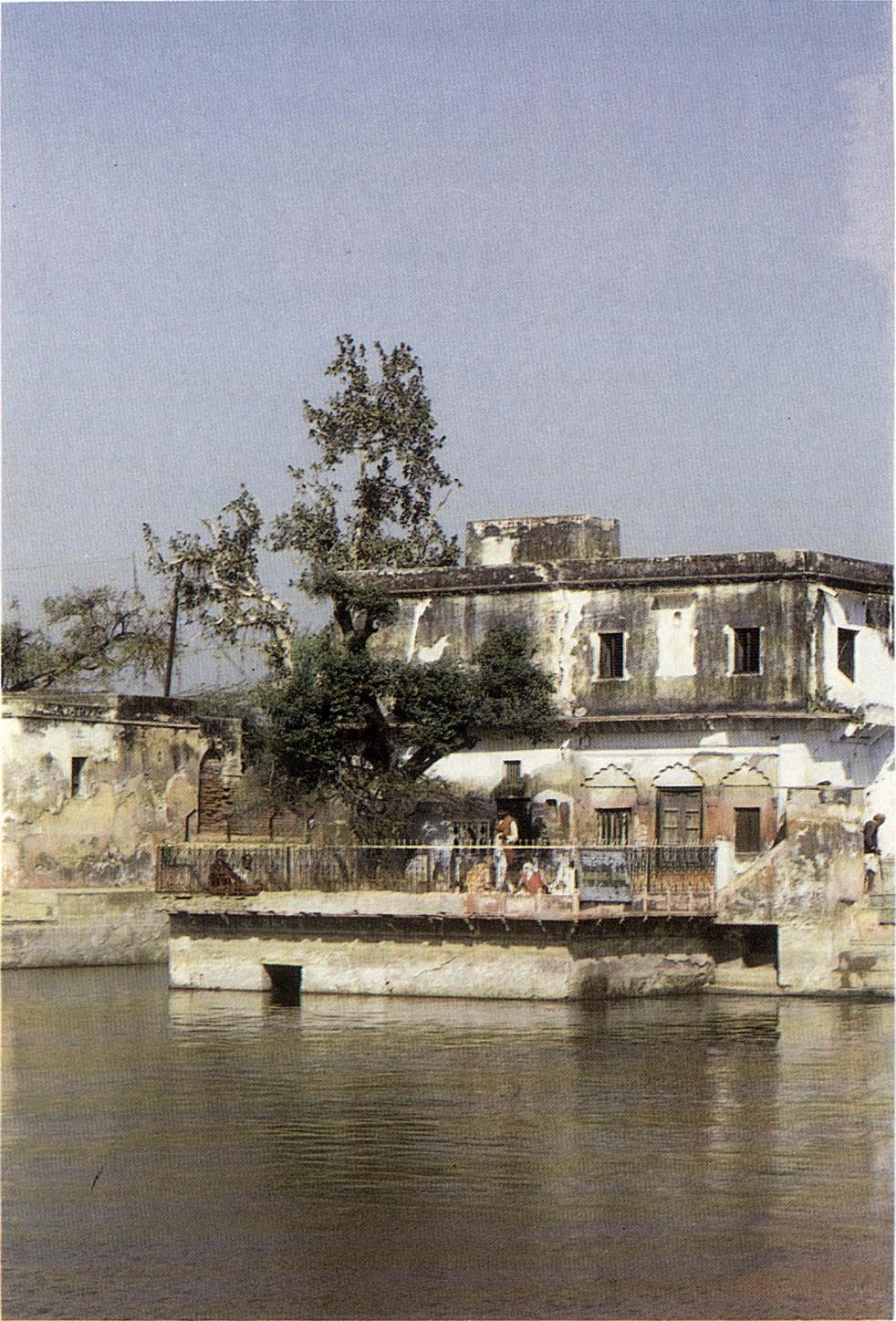
Mā Jāhnavā's sitting place on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa

14 MĀ JĀHNAVĀ BAITHĀKA (SITTING PLACE)

This was the sitting place of Mā Jāhnavā, the consort of Lord Nityānanda, who visited Rādhā-kuṇḍa probably somewhere around 1582, spending four days here during her tour of Vṛndāvana dhama. During her visit to Vṛndāvana she met Jīva Gosvāmī, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.

On arriving from Bengal, Mā Jāhnavā spent some days in Vṛndāvana. At that time Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī who was living at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, was in a very pitiable condition, due to intense feelings of separation after the disappearance of both Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī requested Mā Jāhnavā to go to Rādhā-kuṇḍa and give her *darśana* to Raghunātha dāsa, as this would certainly inspire him to go on living. This meeting has been recorded in *Bhakti-ratnākara* as follows.

“That illustrious personality, Mā Jāhnavā, glowed with a golden effulgence more brilliant than the sun. When Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī saw her coming, he went mad in ecstatic love. He cried so much that he lost sight of her.



Mā Jāhnavā Baiṭhāka seen from across the sacred kuṇḍa

Mā Jāhnavā could understand by her spiritual vision, the inner heart of Raghunātha dāsa. Tears of divine love rushed out of both their eyes just like well springs. Raghunātha dāsa did not know what to say, or how to please Mā Jāhnavā, whose heart was burning like smoldering embers, in separation from her beloved consort, Lord Nityānanda”.

Mā Jāhnavā, while sitting here on the banks of Rādhā-kunḍa, had a wonderful vision of Lord Gopīnātha standing under a *tamāla* tree playing on His flute. To commemorate this wonderful vision, the Deity of Lord Gopīnātha was installed here next to Mā Jāhnavā's *baiṭhāka*. In *Vṛndāvana līlā*, Mā Jāhnavā is none other than Anaṅga Mañjarī, the younger sister of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

Another interesting fact is that the very spot where Jāhnavā mātā sat, is the place where in *aprakāṣa-līlā*, a footbridge made of pure crystal extends out into the middle of Rādhā-kunḍā, where the *kuñja* (grove) of Anaṅga Mañjarī is situated. This *kuñja* appears like a large lotus flower floating in the middle of Rādhā-kunḍa. Near Mā Jāhnavā's sitting place there are some steps leading down to the water. This place is known as Mā Jāhnavā-ghāṭa and it was the private bathing place of Mā Jāhnavā.

15 RAGHUNĀTHA DĀSA GOŚVĀMĪ SAMĀDHĪ

Here is the *samādhī* of Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gośvāmī who was affectionately known to all the Gauḍīya Vaiṣnavas as Dāsa Gośvāmī, he was one of the most intimate, as well as important followers of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Raghunātha dāsa was born in Bengal in the year 1494, as the son of a very wealthy landowner. During his youth, he heard about the glories of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his only desire was to join the Lord and serve His lotus feet.

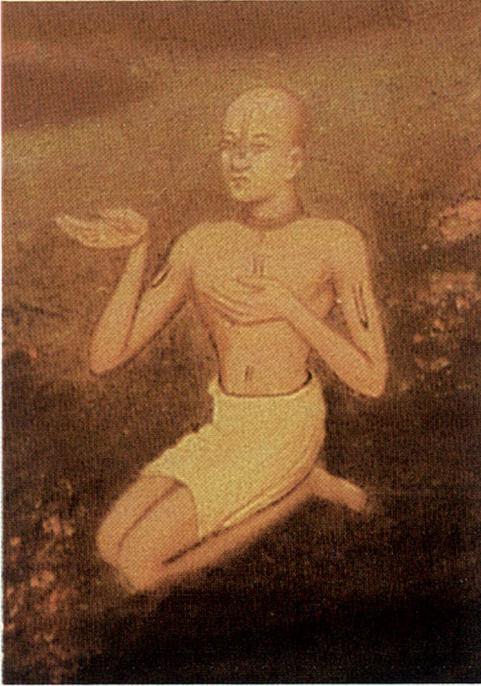
On one occasion Raghunātha dāsa met Lord Nityānanda at Pānihāṭi. The Lord ordered him to organize a big festival where various preparations of *ciḍa-dadhi* (flat rice and yogurt) were distributed to thousands of devotees. Lord Nityānanda blessed Raghunātha that in the future he would get the mercy of Lord Caitanya.

Even though Raghunātha dāsa came from a very wealthy family, he had absolutely no interest in material affairs. On a number of occasions, much to the consternation of his loving parents, Raghunātha dāsa tried to run away from home and join Lord Caitanya at Jagannātha Purī.

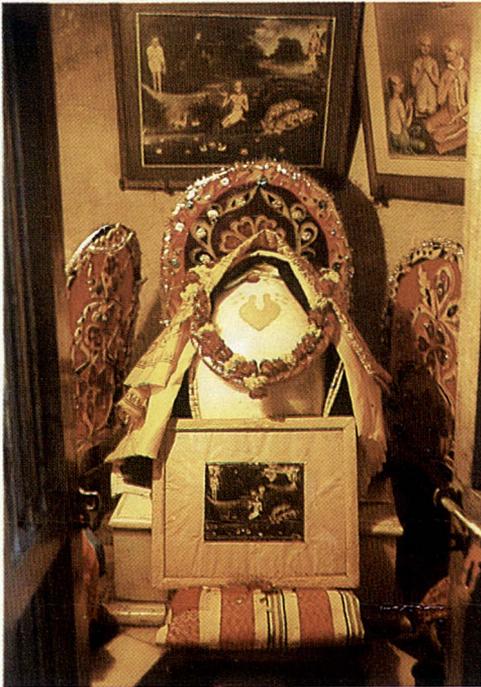
Feeling disturbed by their son's behavior, Raghunātha's parents arranged his



The samādhi of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī



Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī



Dāsa Gosvāmī's samādhi Maṇḍira

marriage to a very beautiful girl in the hope that it would help him settle down, but Raghunātha had absolutely no interest in family life and at the age of nineteen, managed to escape from home and made his way to Jagannātha Purī, where he took complete shelter of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

At Jagannātha Purī, Lord Caitanya placed Raghunātha under the care of Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, the Lord's principle secretary. Raghunātha dāsa was the embodiment of renunciation and only ate enough to keep his body and soul together. It is said that his strict regulative principles were exactly like lines etched in stone, as such lines can never be erased. Raghunātha dāsa continued to render confidential service to Lord Caitanya until the end of the Lord's manifest pastimes on earth, in the year 1534.

After the disappearance of Lord Caitanya, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī journeyed to Vṛndāvana to meet Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs. Raghunātha who was feeling great separation from Lord Caitanya, had decided to end his life by jumping down from Govardhana Hill. Rūpa and Sanātana convinced him not to end his life and kept him in their company, accepting him as their younger brother.

Lord Caitanya had presented Raghunātha dāsa with His own Govardhana-silā to worship, as well as a *guñja-mālā*, sacred to Rādhārāṇī. Rūpa and Sanātana took this as a sign that Raghunātha should take shelter of Govardhana Hill and reside on the banks of Radhā-kuṇḍa. On their advice, Raghunātha spent the rest of his life at Radhā-kuṇḍa.

In the year 1583, after almost forty eight years of performing *bhajana* on the banks of the sacred *kuṇḍa*, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī finally entered *samādhi*. In those days of the repressive Mogul rule, it was decided to burn the sacred body of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, so that the muslim fanatics could not at some time in the future, dig up his body and desecrate it. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī personally performed the last rites and had the sacred ashes of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī placed in *samādhi* at this very spot, on the banks of Radhā-kuṇḍa where he sat engaged in his *bhajana*.

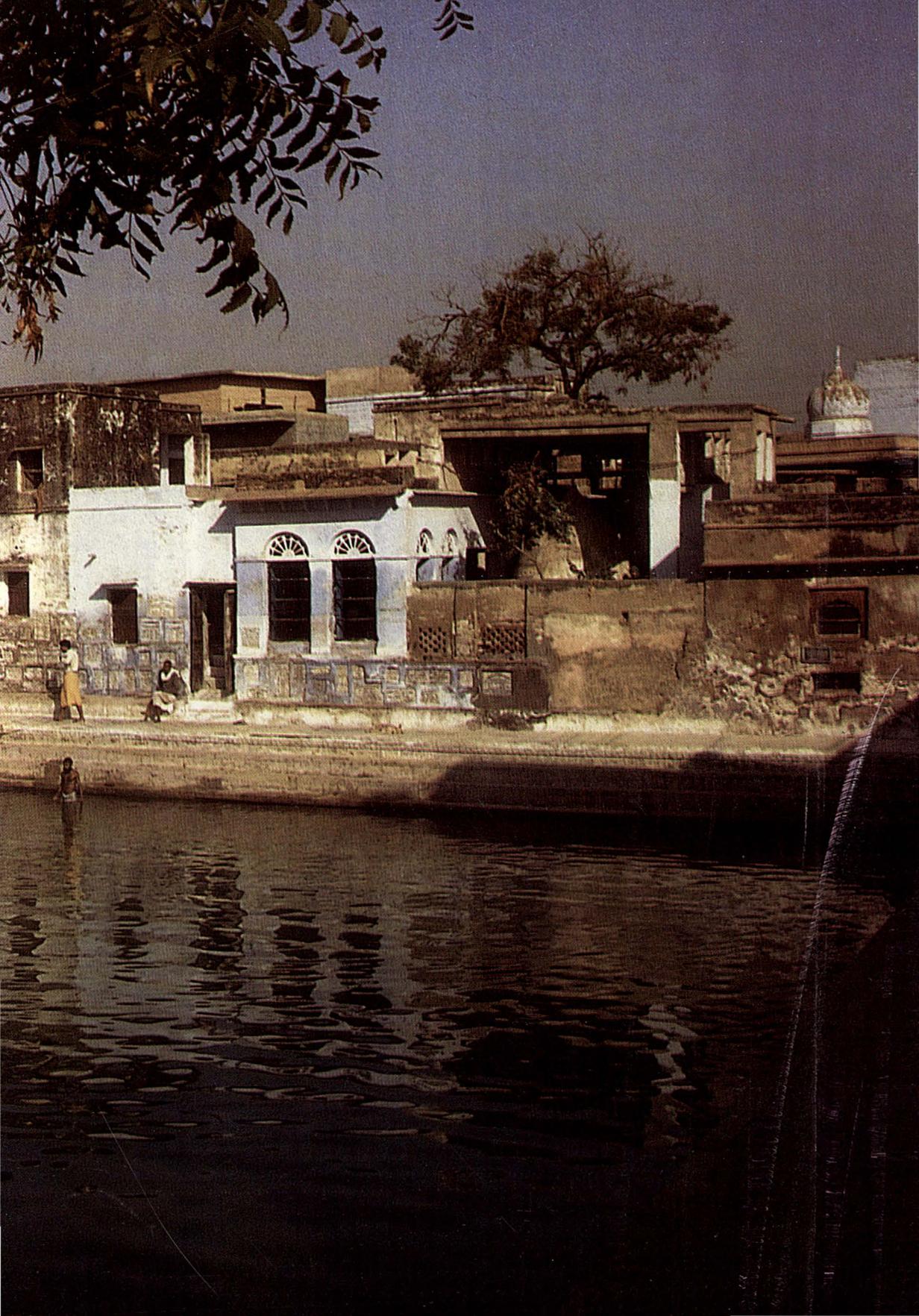
The *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* says that Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was Rāsa-Mañjarī in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Sometimes it is said he was Rati-mañjarī. In the sacred memory of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, a twenty four hour *akhand-kīrtana* is being performed next to his *samādhi*.

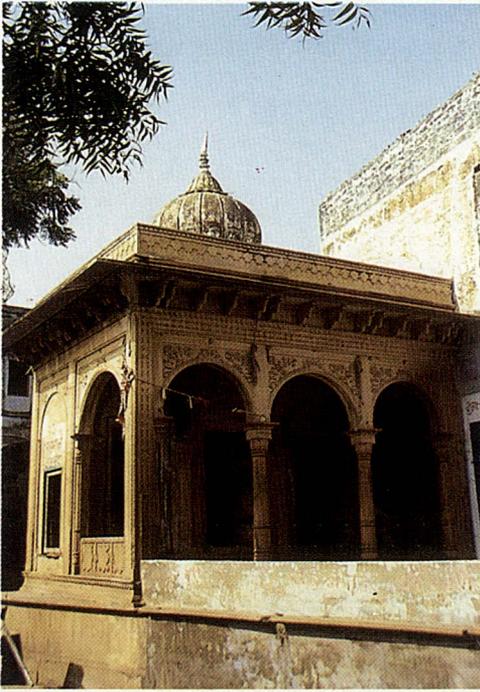


A 24 hour akhand-kīrtana has been going on next to Dāsa Gosvāmī's samādhi for many decades



Rādhā-kuṇḍa—a view of Dāsa Gosvāmī-ghāṭa





Śiva Temple

16 ŚIVA TEMPLE

Just next to the Rādhāramaṇa temple is this very old and well known temple of Lord Mahādeva (Śiva). This is the Deity of Mahādeva who protects the northern side of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

17 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀRAMAṆA MAṆDIRA

In this temple can be seen the *pratibhū mūrtis* of Śrī Śrī Rādhāramaṇa. The original Rādhāramaṇa temple in Vṛndāvana was established by Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. Also seen on the altar are the Deities of Revaṭi-Balarāma. It is said that when all the

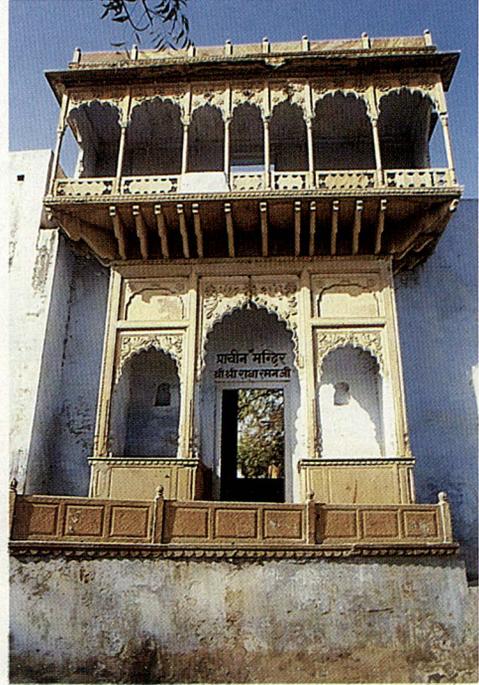


The beautiful Deities of Rādhāramaṇa (left), and Revaṭi Balarāma (right)

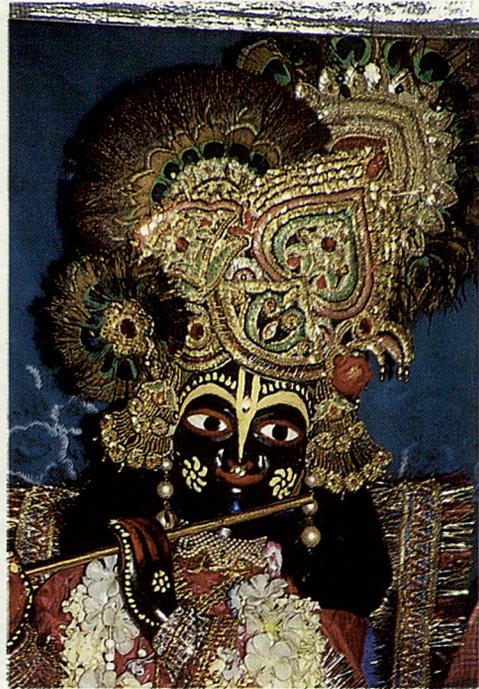
Gosvāmī Deities were moved to Rādhā-kuṇḍa during the Mohammedans attack on Vṛndāvana in 1670, the Deity of Rādhāramaṇa stayed behind and was hidden in Nidhuvana until the danger had passed, Nevertheless, by the desire of all the devotees, the *pratibhū mūrti* of Rādhāramaṇa was installed in a temple at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Śrīla Prabhupāda visited this temple in November 1973, while on a visit with his disciples to Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

18 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ GOVINDA MAṄDIRA

Here are the beautiful *pratibhū mūrtis* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. The original Deity of Govindajī was established in Vṛndavana by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. This is one of the most popular temples in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. The *candana* (sandalwood paste) decorations painted on the Deities face and hands are very beautiful and famous throughout Rādhā-kuṇḍa. In the hot summer months, Lord Govindajī wears only a *kaupīna* during the *maṅgala-ārati darsana*, and one can see the full beauty of the Lord's transcendental body. It is said that this is one of the oldest temples at Rādhā-kuṇḍa and was built by the king of Jaipura, Rājā Man Singh in 1591, just one year after he completed building the Govindajī Maṅdira in Vṛndāvana.



Rādhāramaṇa Maṅdira



The beautiful face of Govindajī

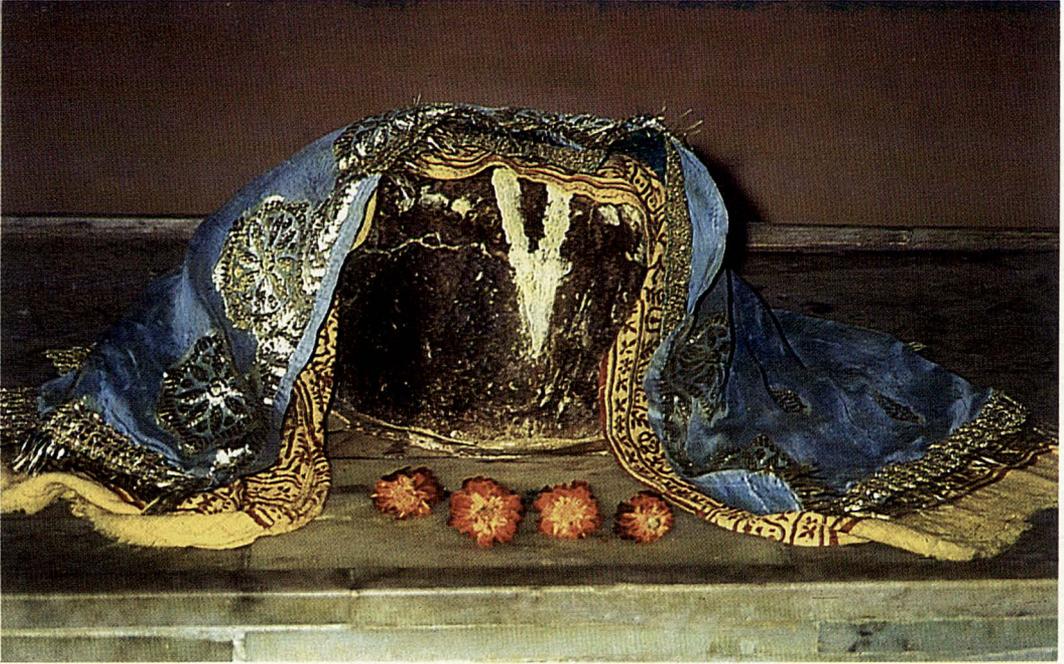


The beautiful Deities of Rādhā Govinda

19 JIHVĀ MAṆDIRA (TONGUE OF GOVARDHANA)

The word *Jihvā* in Sanskrit, or *Jihbyā* in Bengali, means tongue and in this small temple can be seen the tongue of Govardhana. After Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī had excavated both Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, he decided to dig a separate well so that local residents would not have to use the sacred waters of Rādhā-kuṇḍa for washing clothes or cleaning cooking utensils.

A group of workers started digging a well just opposite Mādhavendra Purī's *baiṭhāka*. During the course of the digging, the workers struck a rock which immediately started bleeding profusely. Horrified, the workers stopped digging and ran to Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī to inform him of the incident. Raghunātha dāsa immediately told the workers to stop work as some offence may have been committed. That same night, Raghunātha had a dream in which Lord Giri-Govardhana appeared before him saying that the rock that had been struck and started to bleed, was the Lord's own tongue. Lord Giri-Govardhana then asked Raghunātha to remove the rock from the well and worship it daily with *tulasī* leaves and water from Rādhā-kuṇḍa. One who circumambulates this tongue of Govardhana seven times, receives the same benefit as circumambulating the whole of Govardhana Hill.



The sacred tongue of Govardhana



The samādhi maṇḍira of three Gosvāmīs

20 TEEN GOSVĀMĪ SAMĀDHĪ

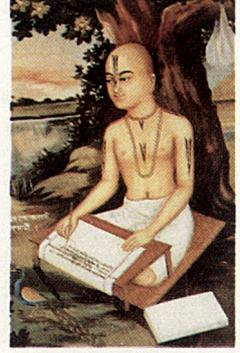
It is believed that this is the actual cremation place of three Gosvāmīs; namely Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. During their stay at Rādhā-kunḍa all three entered *samādhi* on the same date, *Āśvina-śukla dvādaśī* in the month of Dāmodara, but in different years: 1579, 1582 and 1583 respectively.

In those days it was feared that the Moslem fanatics might find out the tombs of Vaiṣṇava saints and desecrate them. Therefore, to protect the sanctity of such great devotees, their bodies were cremated at this spot under the guidance of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. A portion of the ashes were kept here at the Teen Gosvāmī Samādhi, while another portion of the ashes were entombed at different places. The ashes of Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī were placed in *samādhi* inside the garden of the 64 *samādhīs* near Rādhā-Govinda Maṇḍira in Vṛndāvana. It is said that the ashes of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja were placed in *samādhi* at the Rādhā Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana, while the ashes of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

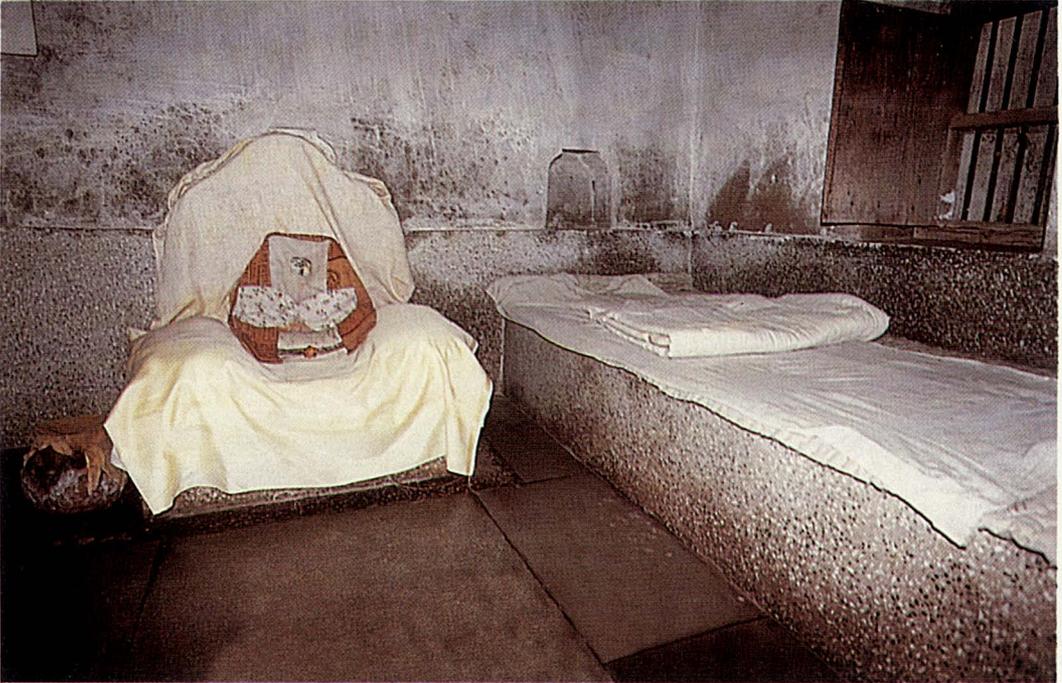
were placed in *samādhi* on the banks of Rādhā-kunḍa. Inside this shrine can be seen three small marble platforms marking the *samādhis* of Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa (left), Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja (center) and Raghunātha dāsa (right).

21 GOPĀLA BHAṬṬA GOŚVĀMĪ BHĀJANA KUṬĪRA

This is the place overlooking Govinda-ghāṭa where Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gośvāmī used to sit and perform his *bhajana*, on the banks of Rādhā-kunḍa. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa established the Śrī Śrī Rādhāramaṇa temple in Vṛndāvana. He spent much of his time at Rādhā-kunḍa in the association of Raghunātha dāsa Gośvāmī and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, whose *bhajana kuṭīras* were nearby. Being a humble Vaiṣṇava, he requested Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja not to mention his name in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta. His *samādhi* is situated in the Rādhāramaṇa temple compound in Vṛndāvana. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gośvāmī is believed to have been Rādhārāṇī's intimate maidservant Guna Mañjari in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.



Gopāla Bhaṭṭa



The bhajana kuṭīra of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gośvāmī

22 KṚṢṆADĀSA KAVIRĀJA GOSVĀMĪ BHAJANA KUṬIRA

At this place Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī wrote the great Vaiṣṇava classic *Śrī Caitanya-critāmṛta*, a biography on the life and precepts of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This work was finished in 1581, and just one year later in 1582, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī entered *samādhi*. He is also the author of the highly acclaimed *Govinda-līlāmṛta*, which describes the daily pastimes (*aṣṭakala-līlā*) of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, as well as a commentary on Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura's *Kṛṣṇa-karnāmṛta*, known as *Sāraṅga-raṅgāda*.

He came to Vṛndāvana on the orders of Lord Nityānanda, who appeared to him in a dream. On his arrival at Radhā-kuṇḍa, he took shelter of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī whom he accepted as his guru. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is based largely on the accounts of Lord Caitanya's pastimes at Purī, as described by Raghunātha dāsa, who personally witnessed them. Raghunātha would speak for about three hours on Lord Caitanya's pastimes every afternoon before an assembly of devotees, Kavirāja Gosvāmī took notes on everything that Raghunātha spoke.



The bhajana kuṭira of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī



A painting of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī writing the Vaiṣṇava classic – Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta



The bhajana kuṭira of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

23 RAGHUNĀTHA DĀSA GOSVĀMĪ BHĀJANA KUṬIRA

According to certain historical records, it is believed that Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī spent forty eight years living on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, performing his *bhajana* and worshipping Govardhana Hill. In the first few years, he lived out in the open and wore only a loin cloth, as well as a patchwork quilt. He chanted on his beads sixty four rounds everyday, offered one thousand obeisances to Lord Kṛṣṇa and two thousand obeisances to Vaiṣnavas. He would embrace each and every Vaiṣnava he met. Raghunātha dāsa also bathed at least three times a day in the sacred waters of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda once said “Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī showed us how to deal with Rādhā-kuṇḍa. ‘*Saṅkhyā pūrvaka nāma gāna-natibhiḥ*. He was circumambulating Rādhā-kuṇḍa falling down making obeisances, that is Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Not only he counted the holy name, but he offered obeisances so many hundreds of times daily while going around.”

In the later years of his life, Raghunātha took only one leaf-cup of buttermilk daily and slept for just ninety minutes at night. Sometimes even this was not

possible, as he was so much absorbed in rendering service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. It is said that after the disappearance of Lord Caitanya, Raghunātha subsisted on only fruit and milk. After the disappearance of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Raghunātha took only a leaf cup of buttermilk once a day, and after the disappearance of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Raghunātha gave up eating all together.

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was known as the *tyagi-vairāgya-prakaṭa mūrti*, or the emblem of renunciation, because of the austere life that he led. He practically gave up eating and sleeping altogether in order to fully dedicate himself to the service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī set the highest standard of pure devotional service that the world has ever seen and is a shining beacon for all aspiring Vaiṣnavas to follow.

There are many wonderful pastimes in the life of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. Once when Raghunātha dāsa was sitting on the bank of Śyāma-kunḍa performing his *bhajana*, two tigers appeared out of the jungle and came to drink water from the *kunḍa*. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was so absorbed in chanting that he did not notice the tigers nearby.

Lord Kṛṣṇa suddenly appeared there and stood at some distance, just to make sure that no harm came to Raghunātha. At that same time, Sanātana



A painting of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī absorbed in bhajana on the banks of Rādhā-kunḍa

Gosvāmī arrived on a visit to Rādhā-kuṇḍa and was amazed to see the Lord standing guard over Raghunātha dāsa. As the tigers finished drinking and left the *kuṇḍa*, Lord Kṛṣṇa turned and smiled at Sanātana Gosvāmī and then disappeared. Shocked at what he had just witnessed, Sanātana went over to Raghunātha and admonished him for his negligence asking what kind of *bhajana* he was doing that the Supreme Lord had to come and protect him from wild animals. Sanātana suggested that Raghunātha build a *kuṭira* and perform his *bhajana* inside.

On another day, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was sitting in the sunshine on



Rādhārāṇī shielding Raghunātha dāsa

the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, lamenting in separation from Rādhārāṇī. As the day wore on, the sun became unbearably hot and Raghunātha started perspiring profusely. Torrents of tears were also flowing from his eyes and making the ground very muddy. Unable to bear the scene any longer, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī suddenly came there and holding Her veil over Raghunātha's head, shielded him from the scorching sun. Bearing the full force of the scorching sun, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī also started to perspire profusely causing Her clothing to become wet and making the ground even more muddy.

It so happened that Sanātana Gosvāmī once again arrived there on a visit. He got a shock when he saw Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī protecting

Raghunātha from the scorching midday sun. Rādhārāṇī glanced at Sanātana, smiled, and suddenly disappeared. Sanātana then went over to Raghunātha and disturbed his meditation, admonishing him again, this time for taking service from Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, He then described to him all that he had witnessed. Raghunātha, in disbelief, turned around and to his amuzement saw the lotus footprints of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in the soft muddy earth. Raghunātha started crying piteously just like a child and falling down, he began madly rolling back and forth on the muddy ground.

Sanātana Gosvāmī was eventually able to console Raghunātha, and with the help of some devotees, made a small thatched cottage so that Raghunātha could perform his *bhajana* inside. Since that time the *bhajana-kuṭira* system started amongst the Gauḍīya Vaiṣnavas.

Rūpa Gosvāmī once wrote a very wonderful book called *Lalitā-Mādhava*, which was full of descriptions about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's feelings of intense love in separation. Rūpa Gosvāmī gave this book as a gift to Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, who upon reading it, dived deeply in the mellows of separation. As the days passed by, Raghunātha became almost mad, continuously crying in piteous tones. Sometimes he neglected the book and at other times he was seen rolling on the ground clutching the book to his chest.

Understanding the deep effect the book was having on the life of Raghunātha dāsa, Rūpa Gosvāmī decided to write another book in order to alleviate the distress that Raghunātha was feeling. This new book was called *Dāna-keli-kamudī*, and describes all the joyous meetings and joking words between the divine lovers, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Rūpa took back *Lalitā-Mādhava* on the plea of editing it, then gave this new book to Raghunātha dāsa. Immediately there was a pleasing transformation in the mood and behavior of Raghunātha dāsa, as he tasted the sweet transcendental mellows of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's meeting and joking together.



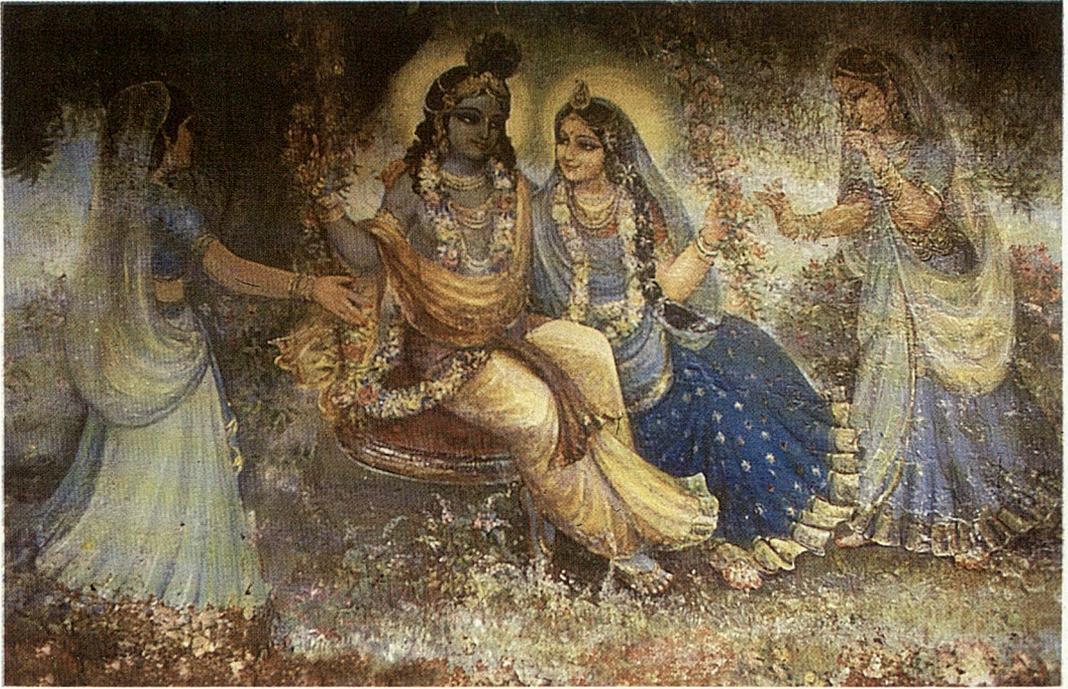
A view of Śyāma-kuṇḍa from Rādhā-Vinoda-ghāṭa



A view of Pañca Pandava-ghāṭa, Jiva Gosvāmī-ghāṭa and Rādhā-Vinoda-ghāṭa

On another occasion, a devotee brought some buttermilk in a leaf cup for Raghunātha dāsa. Seeing that the leaf cup was unusually large, Raghunātha inquired from which tree and from which village this leaf had come. When the devotee said that it came from the village of Sakhīsthālī, which is the residence of Candrāvalī. Rādhārāṇī's rival, Raghunātha became furious and immediately threw the leaf cup and its contents far away, much to the great surprise of the devotee. Raghunātha dāsa in his spiritual form is one of Rādhā's intimate maidservants, known as Rati Mañjarī, who could not tolerate anything related to Candrāvalī, Rādhārāṇī's main rival in attracting the loving attention of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This episode adequately illustrates how deeply absorbed Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was in his service to Rādhārāṇī in his eternal spiritual identity as Rati Mañjarī.

On another occasion Raghunātha dāsa went into a deep trance. In that state he began meditating on cooking a wonderful preparation of sweet rice for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. With great pleasure and satisfaction, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa accepted the sweet rice and after eating a portion, distributed the remnants to the *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs*. Raghunātha also got some of the *mahā-prasāda* sweet rice and feeling intense ecstasy, because he had pleased Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, ate far much more



A painting of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on the wall at Rasavari-ghāṭa

than usual. As the late afternoon approached, Raghunātha dāsa was supposed to give his daily discourse on the pastimes of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. All the devotees assembled outside Raghunātha's *bhajana kuṭira*, but after a long wait, Raghunātha did not appear. In great anxiety, the devotees came to the door of the *kuṭira* and inquired if everything was all right. From inside the *kuṭira*, Raghunātha replied that unfortunately his body was not feeling well.

One of the devotees, Viṭṭhalanātha, the son of Vallabhācārya, who had been appointed as the *pūjārī* of Lord Gopāla Rāya (Śrī Nāthajī) by Raghunātha dāsa, brought two doctors who made a thorough examination of Raghunātha. The doctors proclaimed that the patient was feeling heavy due to overeating a combination of rice and milk. All the devotees were astonished to hear the diagnosis of the doctors, because everyone knew that Raghunātha took only a few drops of buttermilk daily. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī then revealed to the devotees, that while serving Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in meditation, in his ecstasy of savoring Their sweet rice remnants, he had eaten a little too much and this was the reason for his being indisposed. The devotees were both amazed and relieved to hear Raghunātha's incredible explanation.

Everyday, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī would spend about three hours in the late afternoon, discussing the transcendental pastimes of Lord Caitanya while sitting on the banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa, surrounded by all the devotees. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja was also there listening in rapt attention. Everything he heard from Raghunātha dāsa about the pastimes of Lord Caitanya, he recorded in the 'Antya-līlā' of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

Raghunātha dāsa wrote only three books; *Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi*, *Muktā-carita* and *Stavāvalī*, which is a collection of poems including *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* and the famous *Manah-sikṣā*, which should be read by all the aspiring Vaiṣnavas.

There is some disagreement over the date that Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī disappeared. Some scholars have given the date of 1571, while others have suggested 1583. According to ancient documents relating to the transfer of Rādhā-kuṇḍa to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, which took place in the year 1576, and are now kept by the Panch committee in-charge of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's estate, it seems quite possible that Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī may well have entered *Samādhi* in the year 1583. The *samādhi* of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī is situated in the compound of the Rādhā-Gopīnātha Maṇḍira on the sacred banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, where a twenty-four hour *akhand-kīrtana* is going on in his honor.

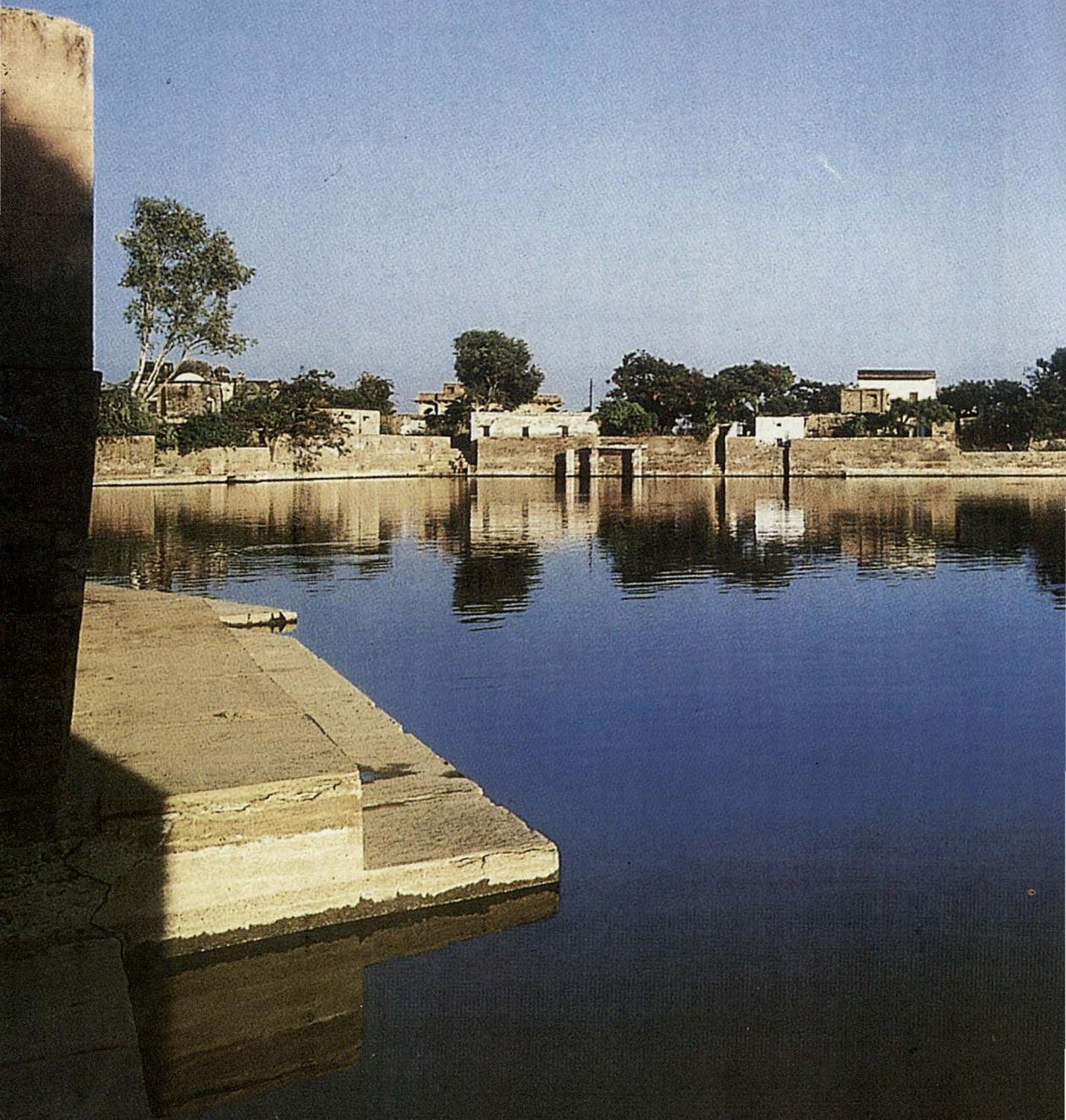


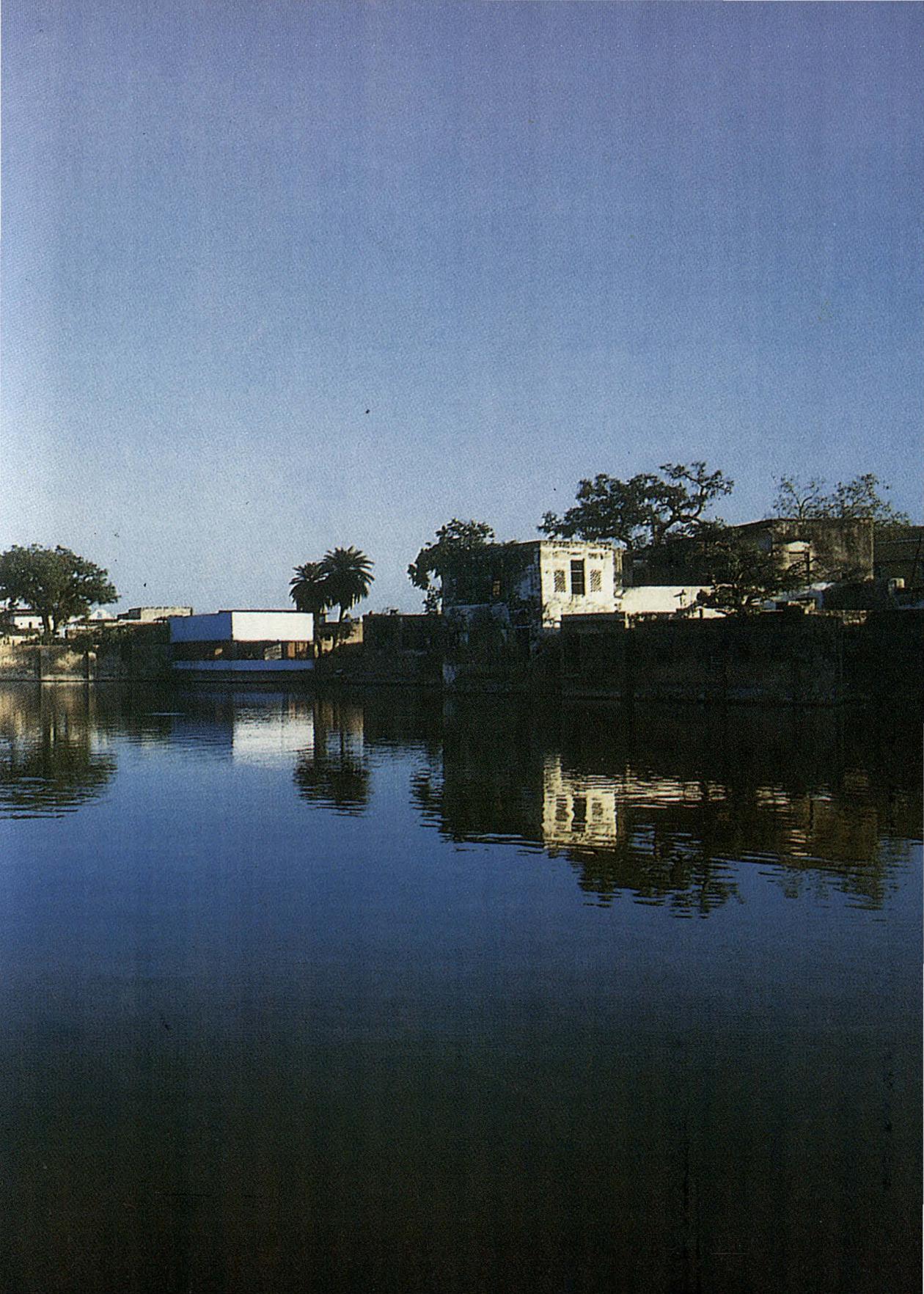
Rādhā-kuṇḍa — a view of Rasavari-ghāṭa

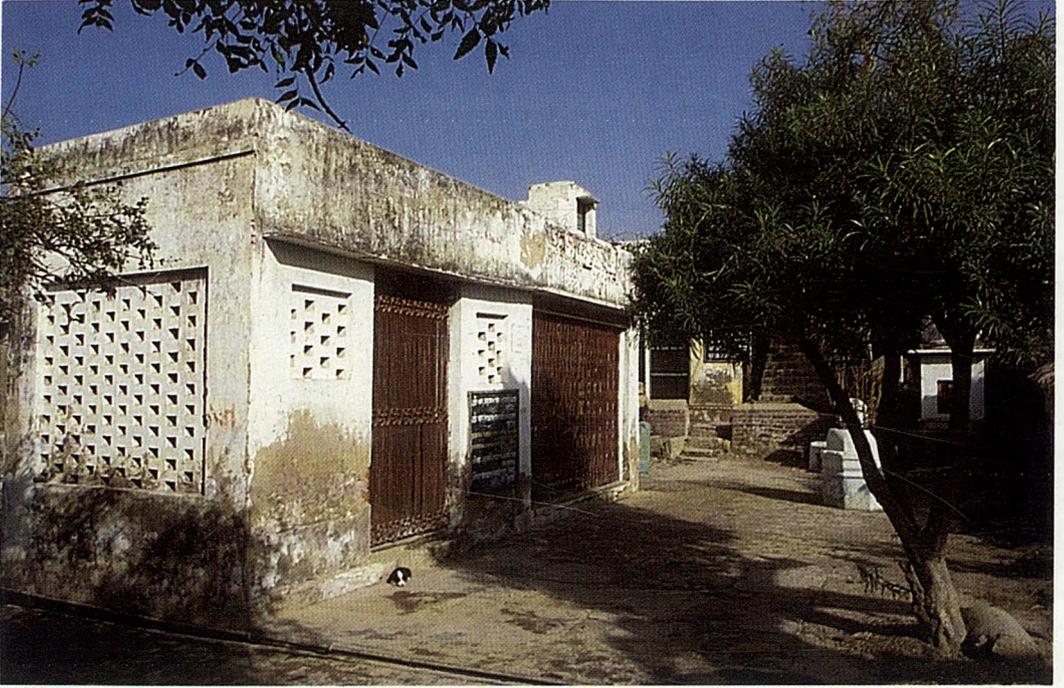


Flocks of parrots can be seen in great abundance around the sacred kuṇḍas

Śyāma-kuṇḍa—a view from Manasa Pavana-ghāṭa







Bhajana kuṭira of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura (left) and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī (right)

24 VIŚVANĀTHA CAKRAVARTĪ ṬHĀKURA BHAJANA KUṬIRA

Situated right next to the *bhajana kuṭira* of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī is the *bhajana kuṭira* of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, who came to Rādhā-kuṇḍa about seventy-five years after the disappearance of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. Born in Bengal in the year 1638, Viśvanātha spent a large part of his life at Rādhā-kuṇḍa performing his *bhajana* and writing over forty important books including; *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhāvanāmṛta*, *Camatkāra-candrikā*, *Vraja-riti-cintāmaṇi*, *Mādhurya-kādambini*, *Sarikalpa-kalpa-druma*, as well as his very famous commentary on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Śrīla Prabhupāda extensively used the *Bhāgavatam* commentary of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura when he compiled his own purports to the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. It is said that Cakravartīpada was a plenary part of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, who appeared to simplify the most difficult truths of Rūpa's writings.

When Viśvanātha first arrived here, he stayed in the *bhajana kuṭira* of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and took shelter of Mukuṇḍa dāsa, a disciple of Kavirāja

Gosvāmī, who was taking care of the *kuṭira*. After a short stay, Viśvanātha went back to Bengal. On his return to Rādhā-kuṇḍa, he stayed in his own *bhajana kuṭira* just next to the *bhajana kuṭira* of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.

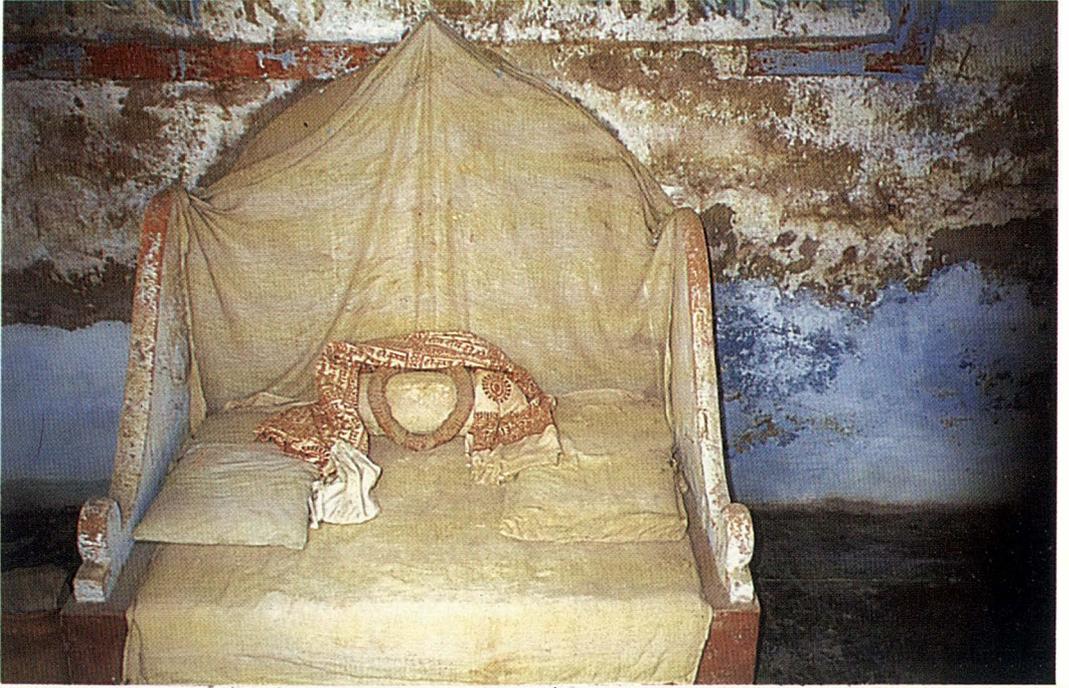
After the disappearance of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in 1608, much confusion and conflict had arisen amongst the followers of Lord Caitanya until Viśvanātha appeared on the scene. He soundly defeated all the deviant so-called scholars and reestablished the Gauḍīya Vaiśnava siddhānta and became the undisputed leader of all Vaiśnavas in the world.

Viśvanātha worshipped a small deity of Lord Gokulānanda and later installed Him in the temple of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda which was established by Lokanātha Gosvāmī in Vṛndāvana. Viśvanātha also worshipped the Govardhana-silā of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. This *silā* is presently being worshipped at the *Bhāgavata-nivas* near the Kṛṣṇa Balarāma Maṇḍira in Raman Reti. The *pratibhū mūrti* of this *silā* is being worshipped at the Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda Maṇḍira in Vṛndāvana.

Just near to Viśvanātha's *bhajana kuṭira* at *Mānasa-pāvana-ghāṭa*, one can see a *pilu* bush, which is the green leafed creeper at the top of the *ghāṭa* steps.



At the top of the ghāṭa steps stands the pilu bush, just next to Viśvanātha's kuṭira



Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura's bhajana kuṭira

This *pilu* bush was in a former life a *brāhmaṇa* who resided in Kāśī (Varanasi). Because of his intense desire to serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, he was blessed to take birth as this *pilu* bush on the banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa. This was all revealed to Viśvanātha by the personality of the *pilu* bush himself. Viśvanātha often discussed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* with this *brāhmaṇa* devotee who had taken the form of the *pilu* bush. It is also said that when Kṛṣṇa planted His pearl garden near the Yamunā during the Mukta-carita pastime, it was *pilu* bushes that grew and provided Kṛṣṇa with so many wonderful pearls. Local Vaiṣnavas say that in *aprakaṣa-līlā*, *pilu* bushes are covered with precious pearls instead of flowers.

During the writing of his book *Mantrārtha Dipikā*, which was an explanation of the *Kāma Gāyatrī mantra*, Viśvanātha became suddenly perplexed. After completing extensive research and studying all the known literatures, Viśvanātha concluded that there were twenty five full syllables contained in the *Kāma Gāyatrī mantra*. This greatly disturbed him because Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī had stated in his *Śrī Caitanya-caritamṛta*, that there were only twenty-four and a half syllables.

Viśvanātha began to wonder how on earth such an exalted Vaiṣṇava as Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja could possibly commit such an error, when all the known scriptures have concluded that there are twenty-five full syllables contained in the *Kāma-Gāyatrī mantra*. Immediately condemning himself for having such offensive thoughts, that a great Vaiṣṇava like Kṛṣṇadāsa could have made a mistake, Viśvanātha, feeling extremely disturbed within his mind, concluded it was better to give up his life rather than become an offender at the lotus feet of Kavirāja Gosvāmī.

Having decided to fast unto death, Viśvanātha stayed awake the whole night feeling great lamentation and sorrow at his misfortune. As dawn approached, Viśvanātha momentarily fell to sleep and experienced a wonderful dream in which Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī suddenly appeared before him.

Smiling benevolently and speaking in a sweet voice, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī told Viśvanātha, “Oh Viśvanātha! Please don’t lament anymore. What Kṛṣṇadāsa wrote is true, he is also my confidential maidservant and thus he knows everything about my innermost moods. The *Kāma Gāyatrī* is the *mantra* for worshipping Me. Indeed, I am revealed by the syllables of this *mantra*. Without my mercy, no one can understand the mystery of this *mantra*. Look at the book entitled *Varnāgama-bhasvadī* to find the solution to the half syllable. Kṛṣṇadāsa read this book and then wrote as he did. The letter *ya* which is followed by the letter *vi*, as in the words *kāma devāya vidmāhe*, is considered to be a half syllable. This falls on Kṛṣṇa’s forehead because His forehead is shaped like the halo of a half moon. All other letters of the *mantra* are full syllables and therefore full moons. Now wake up, read the book and compile the evidence for everyone’s benefit.”

Immediately waking up, Viśvanātha experienced ecstatic symptoms throughout his body and felt himself blessed to have had the *darśana* of the most worshipable Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Searching out the book *Varnāgama-bhasvādī*, and reading it thoroughly, Viśvanātha joyfully completed the writing of his book *Mantrārtha Dīpikā*, explaining the most confidential meanings of the *Kāma Gāyatrī mantra*.

It is said that in Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī is Vinodavallārī Mañjarī, one of Rādhārāṇī’s intimate maidservants. The *samādhi* of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī can be found at the Śrī Śrī Rādhā Gokulānanda Maṇḍira in Vṛndāvana.



Mānasa-pāvana-ghāṭa where Rādhārāṇī and the gopīs bathe at noon

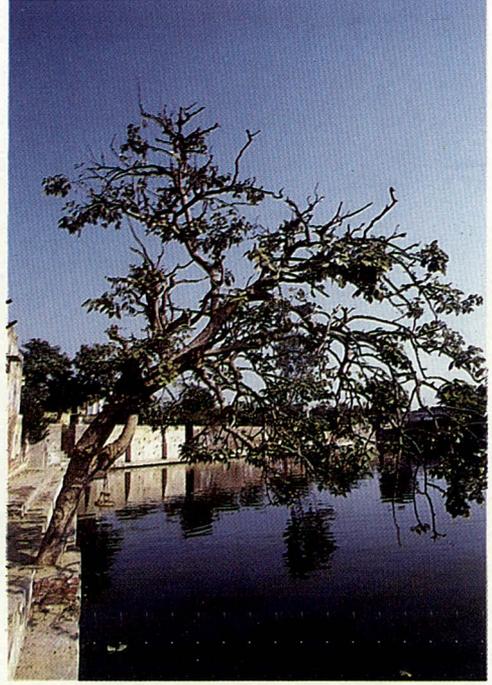
25 MANSA-PĀVANA-GHĀṬA

This is the celebrated *ghāṭa* on the banks of Śyāma-kunḍa where according to Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and her girlfriends bathe everyday at noon. This *ghāṭa* is one of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's favorite places and she has said that anyone who bathes at this *ghāṭa*, will be blessed by Her to achieve the same level of love that She Herself has for Kṛṣṇa.

At the top of the steps of Mānasa-pāvana-ghāṭa is a *pilu* bush, where it is said that the *gopīs* hang their clothing whilst taking bath in the *kunḍa*. This *pilu* bush was formerly a *brāhmaṇa* from Kāśī (Varanasi), whose only desire was to render service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. He received this benediction and took the form of a *pilu* bush on the banks of Śyāma-kunḍa.

26 PAÑCA-PĀNÐAVA-GHĀTA

Formerly standing here on the banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa were five trees, said to be the five Pāṇḍavas, who took the bodies of trees in order to meditate here on the banks of this sacred *kuṇḍa*. When Raghunātha dāsa was excavating Śyāma-kuṇḍa, in order to make it the same shape as Radhā-kuṇḍa, these five trees were scheduled to be cut down. In a dream, the five Pāṇḍavas headed by Yudhiṣṭhira, came before Raghunātha dāsa and asked him not to cut down the five trees, as they were residing in them and performing *bhajana* on



A tree believed to be Arjuna



The Pañca-Pāṇḍava-ghāta



The dead tree-trunk believed to have been the Pāṇḍava Bhīma

the sacred banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa. On awaking the next morning, Raghunātha dāsa ordered that no trees should be cut down and only the vacant area should be used for digging the *kuṇḍa*. This accounts for the unusual shape of Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

Unfortunately today, only one tree remains alive, which is believed by local *sadhus* to be the Pāṇḍava Arjuna. This tree can be seen just a few metres down from Pāṇḍava Ghāṭa, jutting out from the *ghāṭa* steps. The locals say this ancient *Kalpavrikṣa* tree has not changed in many decades and always appears the same. Another tree believed to have been the Pāṇḍava Bhīma, stands in front of the *bhajana kuṭīra* of Viṣvānātha Cakravartī. This tree died about ten years ago and now only the trunk remains.

27 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ CAITANYA GADĀDHARA MAṆDIRA

In this temple are the Deities of (from left to right); Lord Nityānanda, Lord Caitanya and Gadādhara Paṇḍita. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī took part in Lord Caitanya's



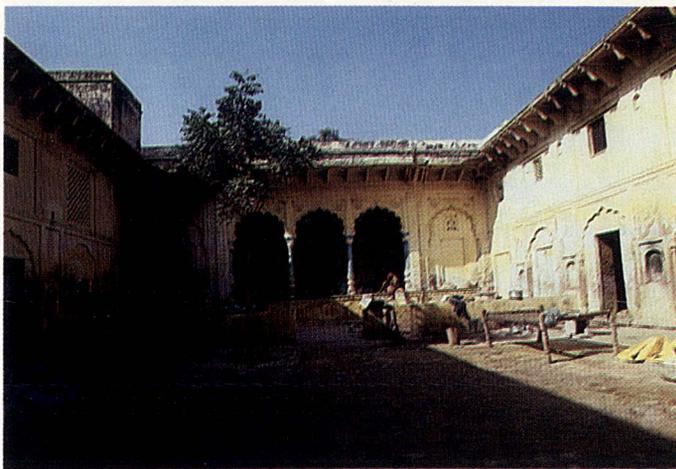
The Deities of Śrī Śrī Caitanya – Gadādhara along with Lord Nityānanda on Their left

pastimes as Gadādhara Paṇḍita. Lord Caitanya and Gadādhara Paṇḍita were practically inseparable from childhood. When Lord Caitanya took *sannyāsa* and moved to Purī, Gadādhara Paṇḍita also took *sannyāsa* and followed the Lord to Purī. It is said that They who were Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana *līlā*, appeared as Gaura-Gadādhara in Caitanya *līlā*. In this temple, the famous female saints Gaṅgā-mātā Gosvāmīnī and Lakṣmīpriyā, lived and performed their *bhajana*. They were both disciples of Haridāsa Paṇḍita Gosvāmī, who was himself a disciple of Gadādhara Paṇḍita. Lakṣmīpriyā used to worship and take personal care of the Deities of Śrī Śrī Gaura-Gadādhara.

Gaṅgā-mātā Gosvāmīnī was born into a royal family and on the death of her father, she became queen. But after just a few year's, renounced the world and travelled to Vṛndāvana, where she slept on the banks of the Yamunā and daily swept the Govindajī temple. Her *guru* Haridāsa Paṇḍita sent her to Rādhā-kuṇḍa to stay with Lakṣmīpriyā, who daily chanted three hundred thousand names of God. After the disappearance of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, his Govardhana *śilā* was given to Lakṣmīpriyā to worship. After Lakṣmīpriyā disappeared, the *śilā* was worshipped by Kṛṣṇapriyā Ṭhākuraṇī, and then finally given to Śrīlā Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura to worship.

28 SAMĀDHĪ OF ŚRĪLĀ NARAHARI SARKĀRA

Śrīlā Narahari Sarkāra Ṭhākura was one of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's most confidential associates. He was born in Bengal in the year 1480 and later



The spot where the samādhi formerly stood

became famous as a great *kīrtana* singer, as well as poet. He also wrote a number of books of which *Śrī Bhajanāmṛta* and *Pāda-kalpa-taru* are the most prominent. In the later years of his life, Narahari Sarkāra moved to Rādhā-kuṇḍa and performed his *bhajana* on the banks of the sacred *kuṇḍa*, where he finally



Dholi-kuñja where the samādhi of Narahari Sarkāra was situated

gave up his body in the year 1540.

Śrīla Narahari Sarkāra's *samādhi maṇḍira* was formerly situated in the courtyard of the Bengali king Mahārāja Kumāra's palatial residence, known as Dholi-kuñja. There was also a small temple at the far end of the courtyard facing Narahari Sarkāra's *samādhi*, where the Deities of Śrī Telimohana were worshipped (some say the name of the Deity was Rādhā-Śyāmasundara).

About fifteen years ago, the Mahārāja sold Dholi-kuñja to a local Vṛajavāsī farmer who knocked down the *samādhi maṇḍira* and sold off the Deities to a family of *brāhmaṇas* from Badri. Now only a vacant plot measuring ten square feet bears testimony that a great saintly person lies buried at this spot. The temple room is also lying vacant and is now used by the farmers family. One may still enter the courtyard of Dholi-kuñja and offer obeisances at the spot where the *samādhi* once stood. In *Vṛndāvana līlā*, Śrīla Narahari Sarkāra Ṭhākura was the confidential maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī known as Madhumatī Mañjarī.



Vraja-Swānanda-Sukhada-kuñja – the bhajana kuṭira of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

29 BHAKTIVINODA ṬHĀKURA BHAJANA KUṬIRA

This is the *bhajana kuṭira* of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (1838-1914) as well as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī Gosvāmī (1874-1936), and is known as the Vraja-Swānanda-Sukhada-kuñja, or the grove that gives one happiness and bliss. The *kuṭira* was constructed in about 1900 and was regularly used by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura until his disappearance in 1914. At that time, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī started using it as his *bhajana kuṭira*.

Situated in this *kuṭira* is the *puṣpa-samādhi* of both Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī. In another room can be seen the bed used by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī, as well as his walking stick and wooden shoes.

It was here at Rādhā-kuṇḍa in 1935, that His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda visited his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī Gosvāmī, and accompanied him on morning walks around the sacred *kuṇḍas*. It was at this historic meeting that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī Gosvāmī confided in Śrīla Prabhupāda and told him, that if he ever got money, he should

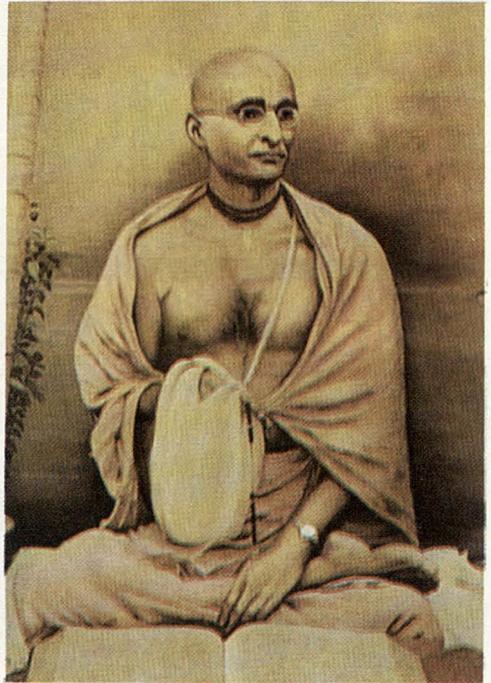
print books. Śrīla Prabhupāda taking this instruction as his life's mission, went on to become the world's most prolific author in the field of Vedic philosophy, religion and culture, having published and distributed over one hundred million books in forty different languages, all within a period of just thirteen short years.

In 1930 Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī had the *kuṭīra* renovated and to everyone's amazement, installed a modern toilet, which had never been seen in this part of India before. He was also the first *sadhu* to use a motor car for going to preaching engagements, demonstrating that everything, including modern inventions, could be used for spreading Kṛṣṇa Consciousness.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī Gosvāmī was one of the greatest revolutionary preachers in Indian history, and once visited Vṛndāvana accompanied by a number of disciples dressed in western suits. The reason for doing this, was to expose all the false renunciates dressed in the garb of *bābājīs*, but who secretly associate with women and indulge in illicit sex, smoke *bidi's*, and beg as a means of livelihood. There was tremendous opposition to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī from the local *bābājī* community, as well as the so-called caste *brāhmaṇas* and caste *gosvāmīs* (those who claim the title of *gosvāmī* or *brāhmaṇa* simply by



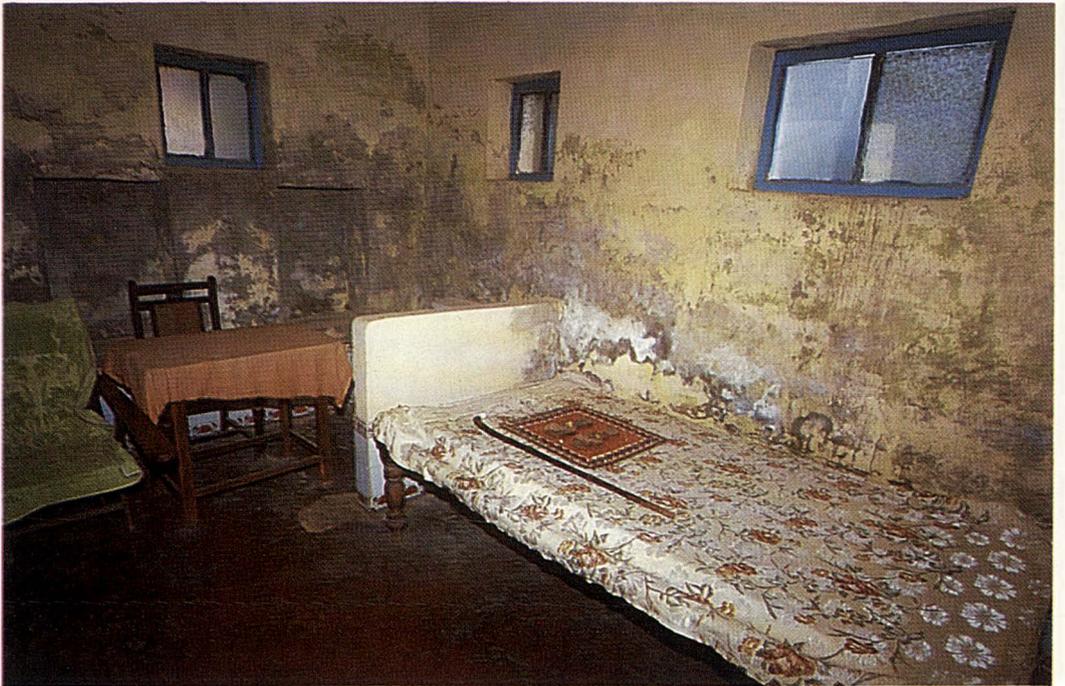
Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura



Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī



The puspa-samādhis of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī



The room along with the bed used by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī

birthright) Regardless of their stiff opposition, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī continued to preach fearlessly in spreading Lord Caitanya’s movement and was known as the ‘Lion Guru’. His giving the sacred thread to those not born in *brāhmaṇa* families created a storm of protest. On one occasion, as the thousand strong *Vraja-maṇḍala-parikṛamā* party led by the ‘Lion Guru’, arrived in the town of Vṛndāvana, stones were thrown at them and all the *jati-gosai* (caste gosvāmīs), out of protest, closed the doors of their temples. Only the *gosains* of the Rādhāramaṇa temple, kept their doors open, and, being true followers of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, enthusiastically welcomed the *Vraja-maṇḍala-parikṛamā*. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī’s struggle to establish the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness movement is unparalleled in the history of world Vaiṣṇavism, and his contribution will be remembered by generations of Kṛṣṇa devotees the world over.



The wooden shoes and walking stick used by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī

During his lifetime, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī Gosvāmī established sixty four Gauḍīya Māths (Monastries) all over India. He sent preaching parties to England, Germany, Burma and Bangladesh, as well as established a number of printing presses for printing books, magazines, and a daily newspaper, all for the purpose of spreading the divine teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraśvatī Gosvāmī disappeared from the world in the year 1936, and his *samādhi maṇḍira* is situated at Śrīdhāma Māyāpur, West Bengal. His *puṣpa-samādhi* can also be seen at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana.



30 JAGANNĀTHA MANDIRA

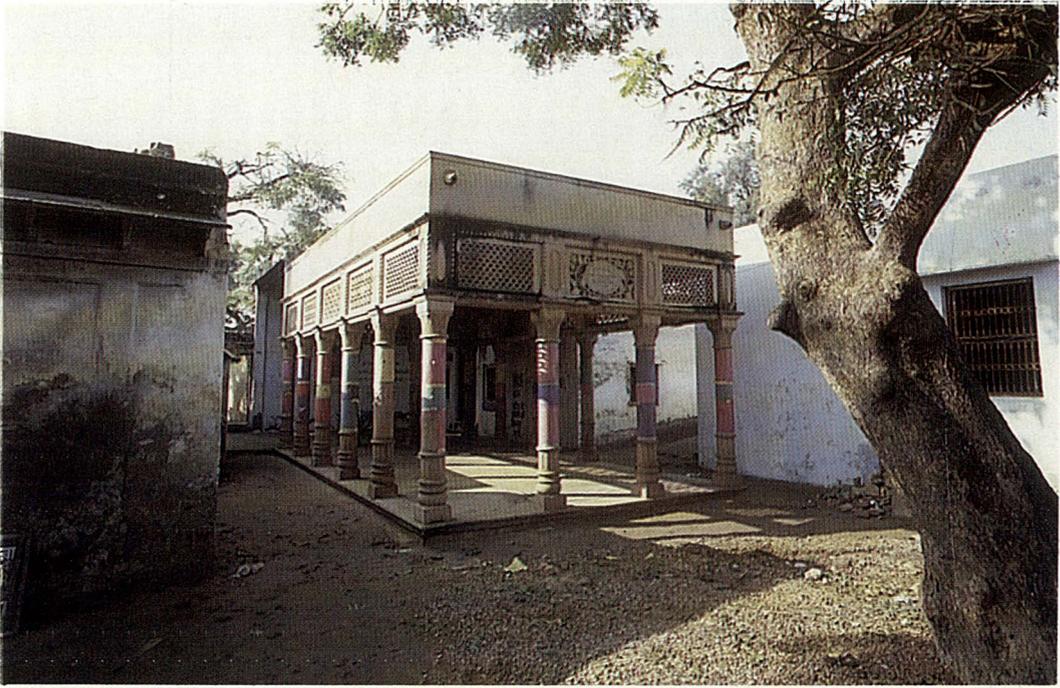
In this small temple can be found the Deities of Lord Jagannātha, Subhadrā and Balarāma. It has become a common practice for all those performing *parikṛamā* of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, as well as Govardhana *parikṛamā*, to stop here and take *darśana* of the Deities before proceeding. Each year these Deities are taken out on procession during the annual Ratha-yātrā, parade and circumambulate both Śyāma-kuṇḍa and Rādhā-kuṇḍa before returning in the evening.

31 ŚRĪLA JĪVA GOSVĀMĪ BHĀJANA KUTĪRA

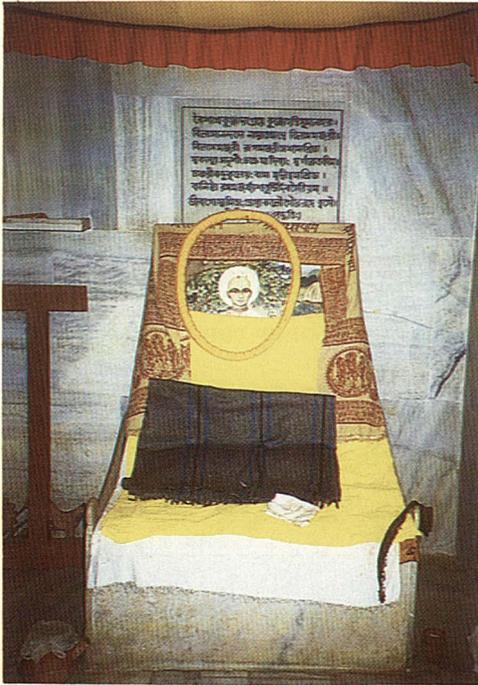
This is the place where Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī stayed and performed his *bhājana* when living at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Even though Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was the inspiration and spiritual force behind the excavation of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, it was Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī who actually purchased the land, oversaw the excavation and managed all the affairs. He also made sure that Raghunātha dāsa was properly taken care of because, being so deeply absorbed in the feelings of separation from Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Raghunātha had practically no perception of worldly affairs.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī arrived in Vṛndāvana in the year 1535 and took shelter at the lotus feet of his two uncles, Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī. Under their expert guidance he became a brilliant scholar, compiling a staggering four hundred thousand Sanskrit verses delineating the teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Jīva Gosvāmī is known as India's greatest ever philosopher and his most famous work, the *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhas*, are considered to be the penultimate in all philosophical understanding.

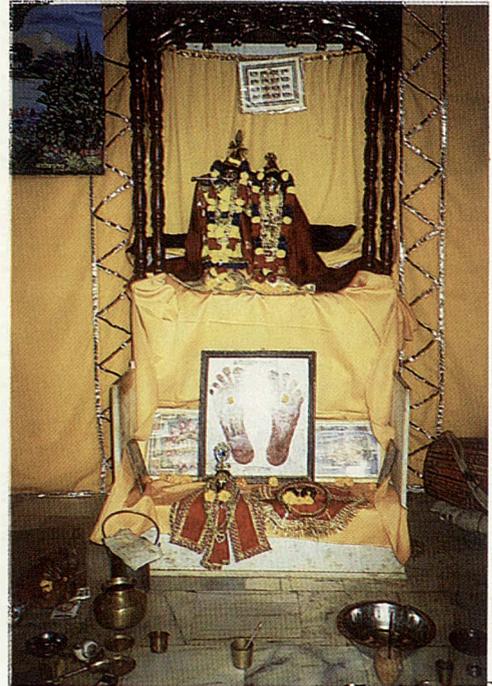
Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī established the Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara temple at Seva Kuñja in Vṛndāvana in 1542. In the year 1608, he disappeared from this world and his *samādhī* is situated within the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple complex. It is said that in Vṛndāvana *līlā*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī is one of the *āṣṭa-maṅjarīs* of the name Vilāsa Maṅjari.



The mandapa containing the bhajana kuṭira of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī



Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī bhajana kuṭira



The small shrine of Rādhā-Dāmodara



The beautiful Lalitā-kunḍa

32 LALITĀ-KUNḌA

This is the sacred *kunḍa* of Lalitā Sakhī, the most intimate of all Rādhārāṇī's girlfriends. Out of the eight most confidential maidservants (*āṣṭa-sakhīs*) of Rādhārāṇī, Lalitā is the foremost because of Her proximity to Rādhārāṇī. She is known for Her contradictory nature and hot temper, as well as her unswerving love for the divine couple. Before approaching Rādhārāṇī, one must seek the blessings of Lalitā Devī, and if she is pleased, then only can one approach Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

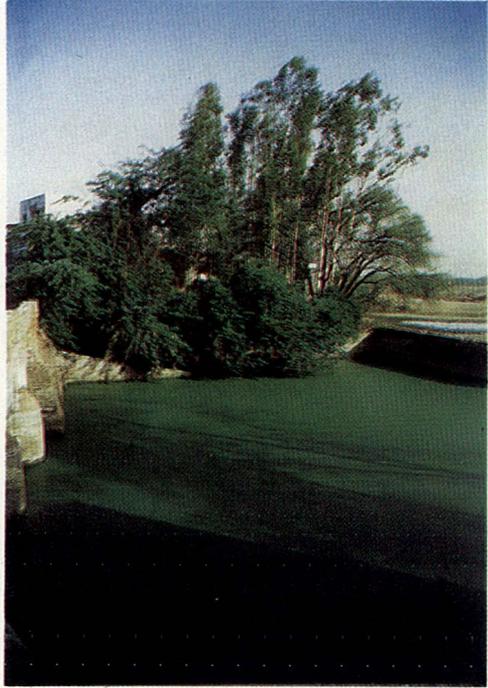
Lalitā Devī's personal assistant is Rūpa Mañjarī, who appeared in Caitanya *līlā* as Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Gauḍīya Vaiṣnavas are known as Rūpānugas, or followers of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, and should aspire through the medium of the disciplic succession, to assist Rūpa Mañjarī in her service to Lalitā Devī, who in turn is directly rendering intimate service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. On the altar of many Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temples, Lalitā Devī can be found standing next to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, always ready to offer service to the divine couple.

It is said that each of the *āṣṭa-sakhīs* have their *kunḍas* situated around

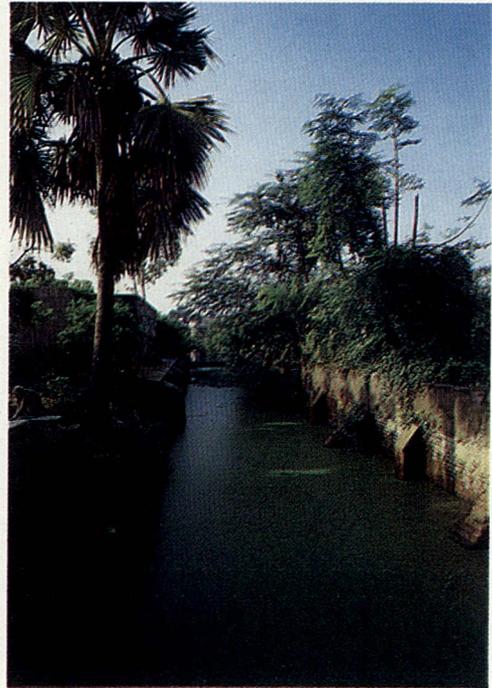
Rādhā-kunḍa, but except for the monsoon season, only Lalitā's *kunḍa* is visible. It is also said that Lalitā-kunḍa, along with Mohan-kunḍa, manifested before both Śyāma-kunḍa and Rādhā-kunḍa, in preparation for Their appearance. The legend goes that Lalitā, who along with Kṛṣṇa (Mohan), called eighty four holy places to appear and create a *kunḍa* where the sins of six kinds of murders could be washed off. The six types are: killing a *brāhmaṇa*, a cow, a baby (abortion), suicide, killing a man or woman, and killing insects or worms.

Lalitā Devī appeared in the Caitanya-*līlā* as Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, the Lord's personal assistant. No one could approach Lord Caitanya, or present anything to Him without first going to Svarūpa Dāmodara and getting his permission. Lalitā Devī and her assistants like Rūpa Mañjari, incarnate on earth from time to time in order to propagate the topmost mood of serving Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, namely to become one of Their intimate maidservants.

Lalitā-kunḍa is full of many large turtles and in winter time, many water birds appear there from as far away as Siberia. Local devōtees say after the monsoon, a large area outside Lalitā-kunḍa is covered with water and at that time one can clearly see the *kunḍas* of the *āṣṭa-sakhīs*, as well as Mohana-kunḍa, Balarāma-kunḍa and Vṛṣabhānu-kunḍa (Bhānu Khor).



Another view of Lalitā-kunḍa



The canal from Śyāma-kunḍa



Vaiṣṇava samādhis near Lalitā-kuṇḍa



One of the many large turtles that live in Lalitā-kuṇḍa

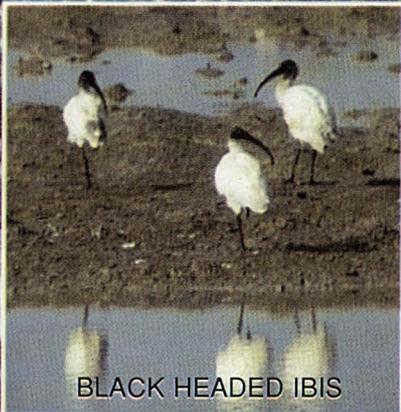
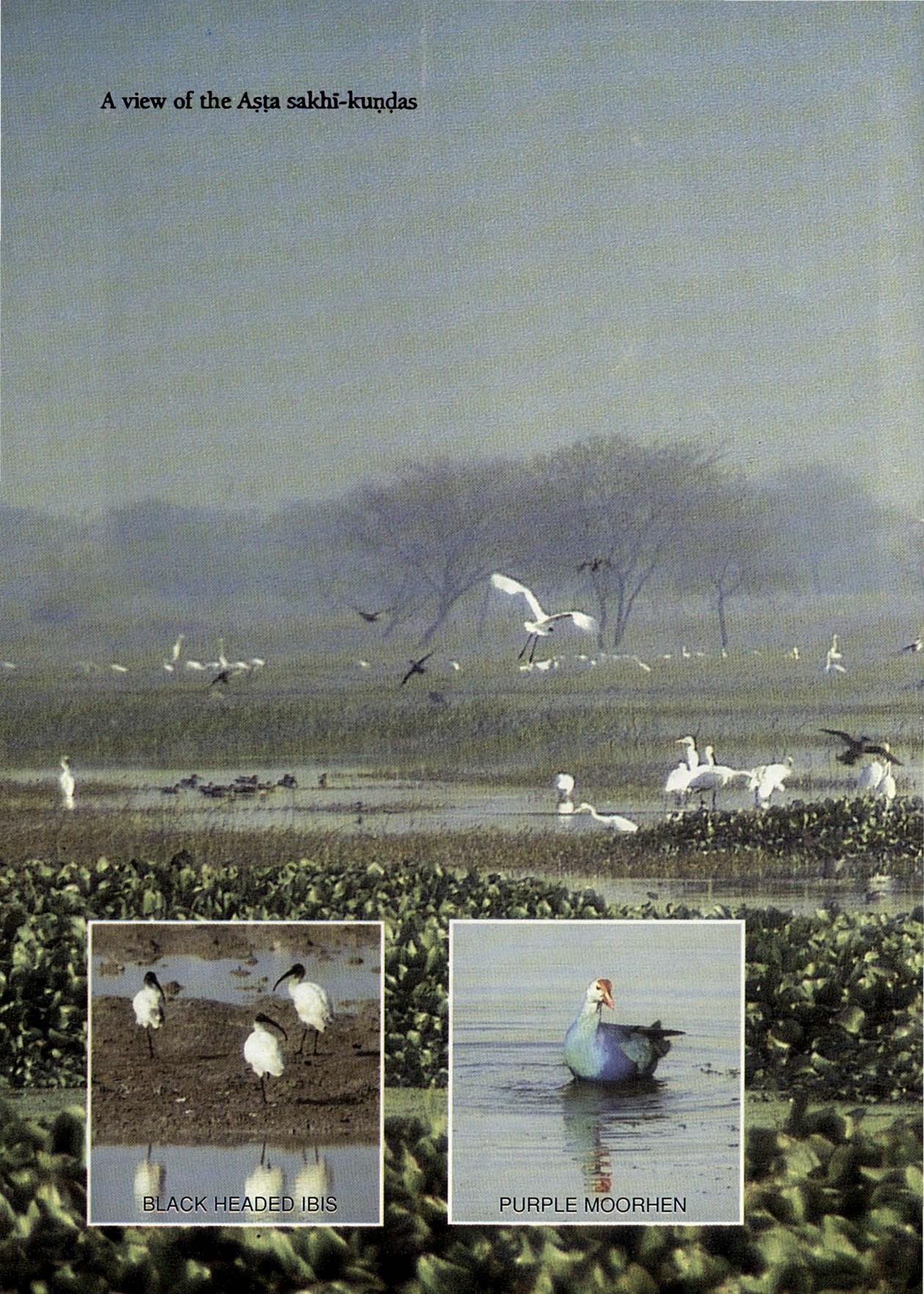


Just next to Lalitā-kunḍa is Mohana-kunḍa

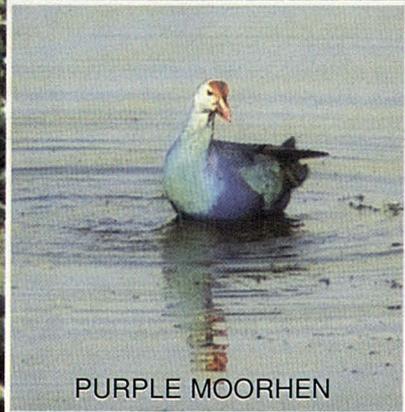


Pelicans swimming in Mohana-kunḍa

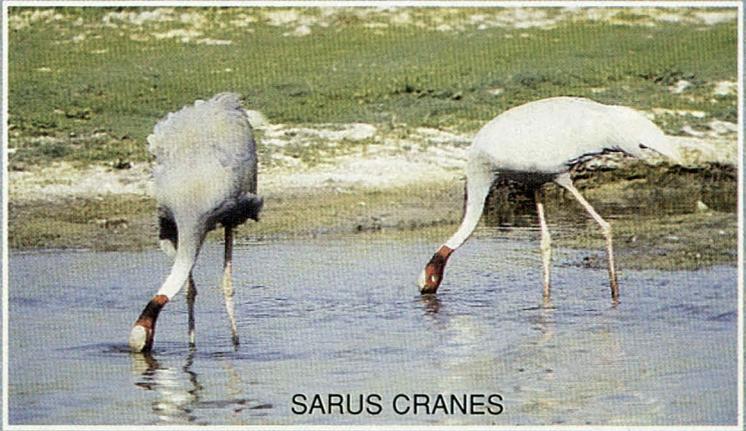
A view of the Aṣṭa sakhi-kunḍas



BLACK HEADED IBIS



PURPLE MOORHEN



SARUS CRANES



WATER FOUL



In the rainy season, Balarāma-kunḍa can be clearly seen



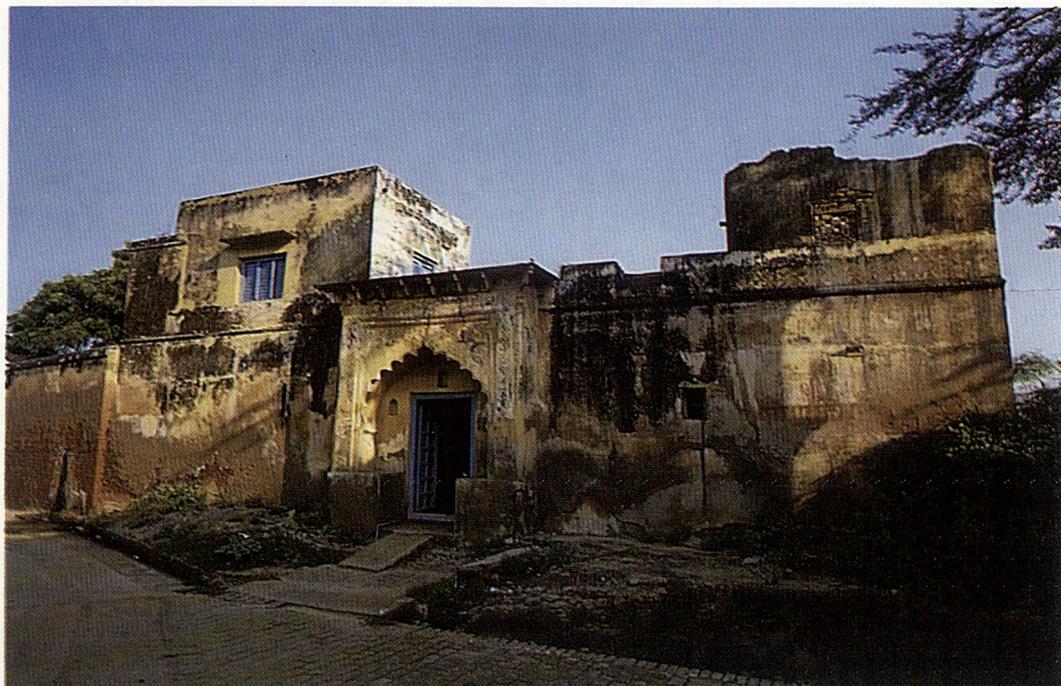
A flock of pelicans enjoying the early morning sun



Painted storks can be found in flocks all around Rādhā-kuṇḍa



Bhānu Khor – also known as Vṛṣabhānu-kuṇḍa



Just past Lalitā-kuṇḍa is the Lalitā-Bihārī Mandira



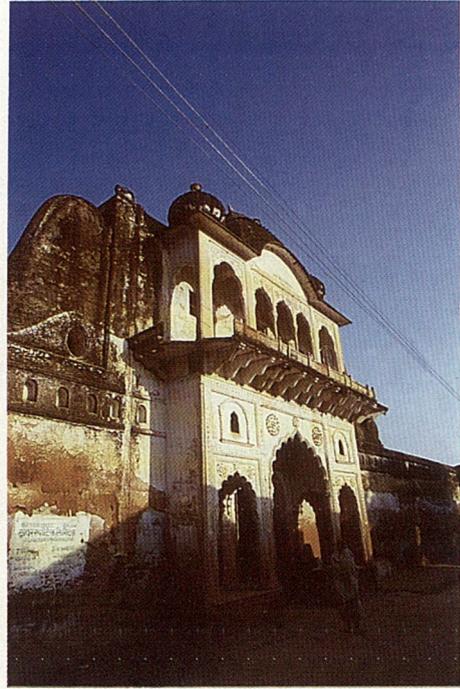
The tiny Deities of Lalitā-Bihārī

33 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ LALITĀ BIHĀRĪ MANDIRA

This temple is also known as the Lalitā-Mohana Maṇḍira and is dedicated to the transcendental loving pastimes enacted here between Lalitā Devī and Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (Mohana). 'Bihārī' means the Supreme Enjoyer, or in other words, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, the enjoyer of Lalitā. This temple is located just next to Lalitā-kuṇḍa and Mohana-kuṇḍa, and is managed by Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Nimbārka-sampradāya.

34 MANIPURA MAHĀRĀJA MAṆDIRA (Rādhā Govinda Temple)

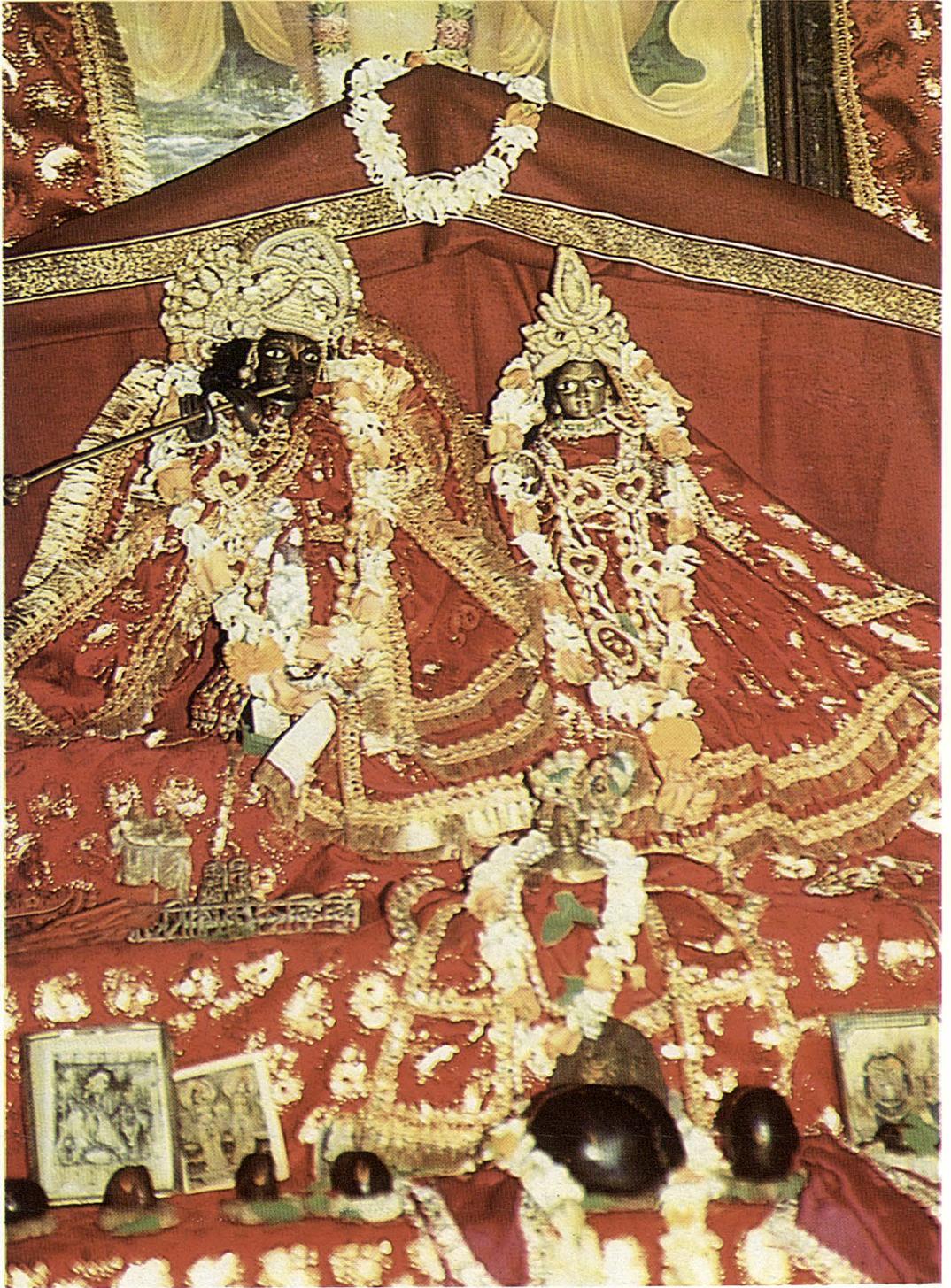
This temple came into being in the 19th century when the British forces annexed the state of Maṇipura and sent into exile the king of Maṇipura, Mahārāja Gambhīra Singh, The Maṇipurīs, besides being devout Vaiṣnavas, were fierce fighters and repulsed many attempts by the British to capture the state. Finally the British played a trick by keeping a large herd of cows, sacred to the Maṇipurīs, in front of advancing troops. Upon seeing the cows in front of the advancing enemy, the Maṇipurīs could not open fire due to fear of killing the sacred cows. The British



Manipura Mahārāja Maṇdira



The Deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Govinda at the Manipura Mahārāja Maṇdira



The beautiful Deities of Rādhā Vinoda

were able to overrun the Maṇipurī defenses and eventually seize control of the state. The king of Maṇipura was then sent into exile by the British and he chose to come and live at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, where he built this beautiful temple of Rādhā-Govinda. The grandson of Mahārāja Gambhīra Singh is now looking after the worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Govinda.

35 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ VINODA MAṆDIRA

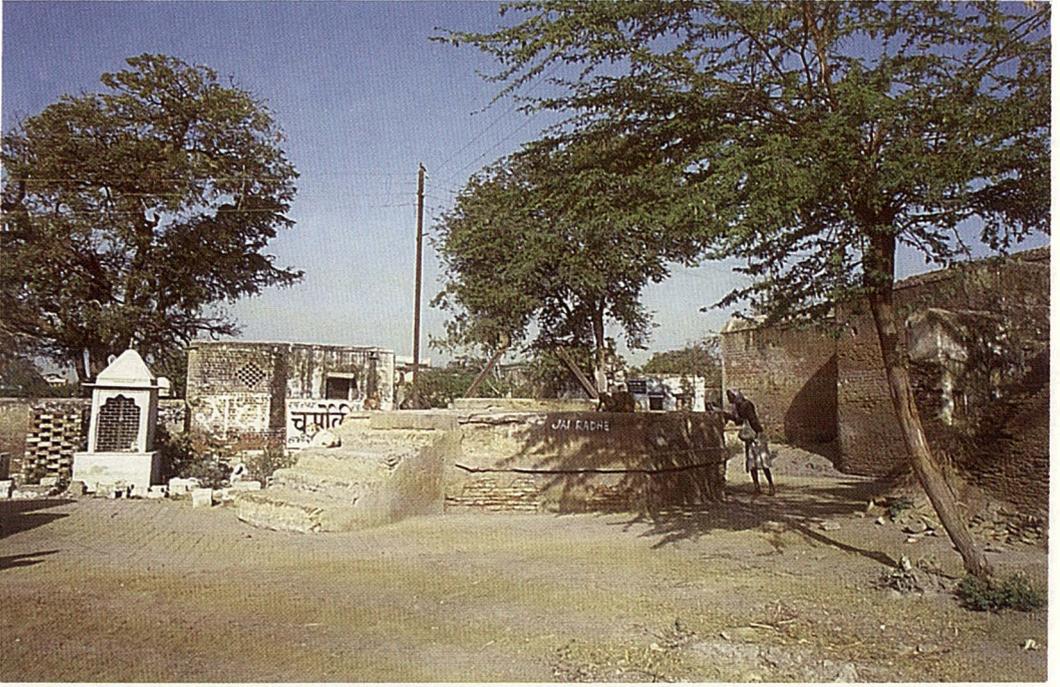
In this small roadside temple can be seen the most beautiful *pratibhū mūrti* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda. The original Deities of Rādhā-Vinoda were worshipped by Lokanātha Gosvāmī, who established the temple of Rādhā-Gokulānanda in Vṛndāvana. The original Deities of Rādhā-Vinoda are now in Jaipur. The *puṣpa-samādhī* of Lokanātha Gosvāmī, as well as the underground *gufā* (cave) where he used to stay at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, can be seen at the Rādhā-Gokulānanda Maṇḍira in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. The full *samādhī* of Lokanātha Gosvāmī is in the grounds of Vṛndāvana's Rādhā-Gokulānanda Maṇḍira near Keśī-ghāṭa.

36 GOPĪ-KŪPA

Gopī-kūpa means the well (*kūpa*) used by the *gopīs*. During Kṛṣṇa's pastimes five thousand years ago, the *gopīs* used to fetch water from this well. Kṛṣṇa also used to come here and the *gopīs* would give Him water to quench His thirst.

The same well was later excavated by Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī to provide water for washing clothes, so that the local inhabitants need not use the sacred waters of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. During the digging, the workmen struck a rock that started to bleed profusely and they immediately ran to Raghunātha dāsa to inform him of the incident.

Fearing that some offence may have been committed, Raghunātha immediately halted the digging. That night in a dream, Lord Gīri-Govardhana appeared before Raghunātha and informed him that the rock that began bleeding, was in fact the tongue of Govardhana. Lord Gīri-Govardhana then instructed Raghunātha to install the tongue of Govardhana in a shrine and to worship with *tulasī* leaves and water from Rādhā-kuṇḍa. This shrine is known as the Jihvā Maṇḍira (Jihvā means tongue). Pilgrims performing *parīkṛamā* of both Rādhā-kuṇḍa as well as Govardhana, offer their respects here at Gopī-kūpa before continuing their *parīkṛamā*.

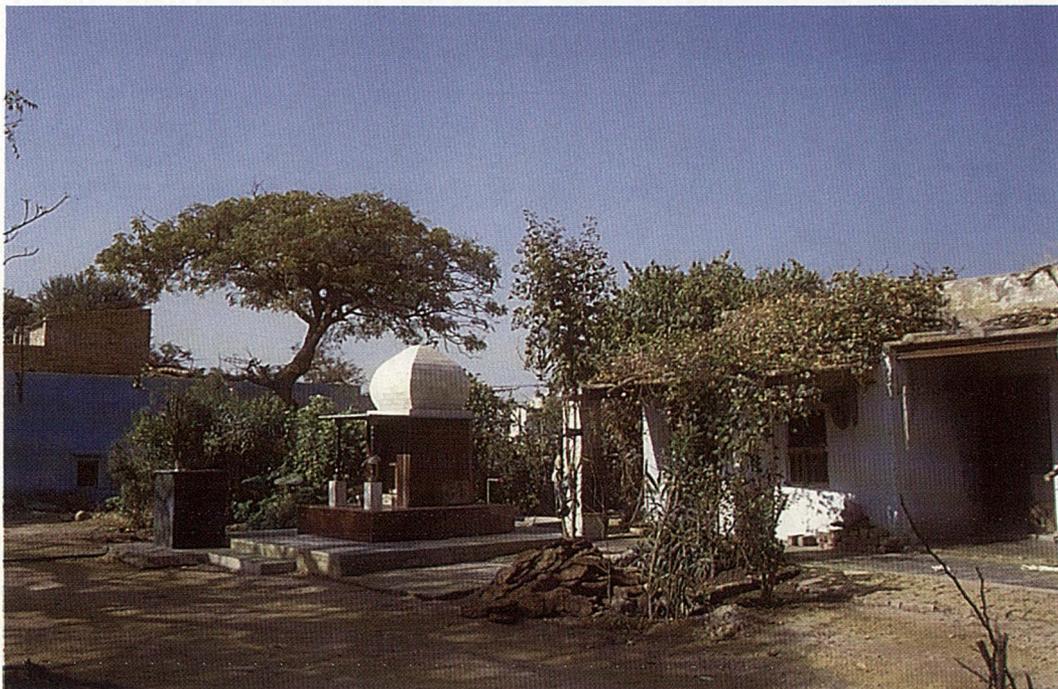


The sacred well known as Gopī-kūpa

37 MĀDHAVENDRA PURĪ'S BAITHĀKA

This is the place on the banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa where Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī Gosvāmī sat down and rested during his famous *parikramā* around Govardhana Hill. Mādhavendra Purī was the spiritual master of Īśvara Purī, who later became the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya. When Mādhavendra Purī came here, Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa had not yet been discovered. By the will of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Mādhavendra Purī decided to stop at this spot next to the two paddy fields, that were some years later, revealed by Lord Caitanya to be Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

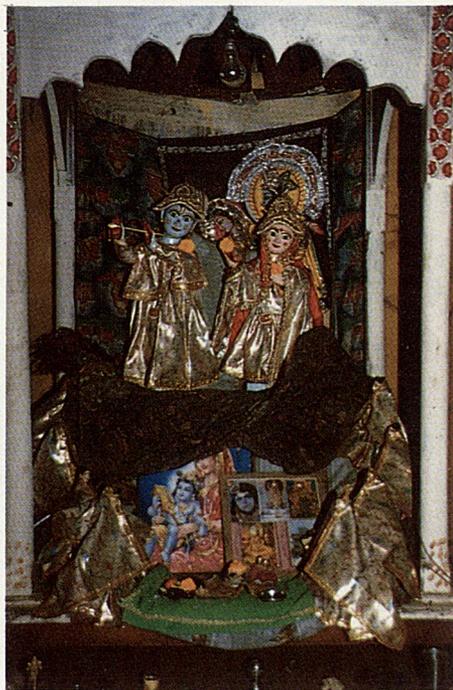
Mādhavendra Purī discovered the Gopāla Deity, also known as Śrī Nāthajī, near Govinda-kuṇḍa and installed Him on Govardhana Hill. Śrī Nāthajī was later moved due to the fear of Muslim zealots, to a small town called Nāthadwara in Rājāsthān. Besides initiating Īśvara Purī, Mādhavendra Purī Gosvāmī also accepted Advaita Ācārya and Lord Nityānanda as his disciples. Mādhavendra Purī became celebrated as the devotee for whom the Deity named Gopinātha, at Remuṇā in Orissa, stole a pot *kṣīra* (condensed milk).



The dome shaped baithaka of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī

38 ĀṢṬA SAKHĪ MANDIRA

In this temple are the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa accompanied by Their eight confidential assistants known as the āṣṭa-sakhīs, The names of the āṣṭa-sakhīs are Lalitā, Viśākhā, Citrā, Campakalatā, Tuṅgavidyā, Indulekhā, Raṅgadevī and Sudevī. This temple was built by the Mahārāja of Bharatpura and is the only āṣṭa-sakhī temple in the whole of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.



Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the āṣṭa-sakhīs

A view of Śyāma-kuṇḍa from Gaya-ghāṭa







The Deities of Śrī Śrī Gaura Nītāi with Advaita Ācārya (right)

39 NITĀI-GAURA SĪTĀNĀTHA MANDIRA

This temple is managed by Vaiṣṇavas from Maṇipura and contains the Deities of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda, accompanied by Śrī Advaita Ācārya who is also known as Sītānātha, meaning the husband of Sītā Mā, who it is said, was herself an expansion of Paurṇamāsī.

40 RĀDHĀ MĀDHAVA MANDIRA

The Deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Mādhava in this Maṇḍira, are the *pratibhū mūrtis* of Jayadeva Gosvāmī's original Deities which are now being worshipped in Jaipur. Jayadeva Gosvāmī was the author of the highly acclaimed *Gītā-govinda*, which was read by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu every day while living at Jagannātha Purī in Orissa. Jayadeva Gosvāmī who appeared some years before Lord Caitanya, is also famous as a singer and composer of Vaiṣṇava *bhajan*s. In the temple compound here can be seen the *puṣpa-samādhī* of Jayadeva Gosvāmī. This temple is presently being managed by Maṇipura Vaiṣṇavas.



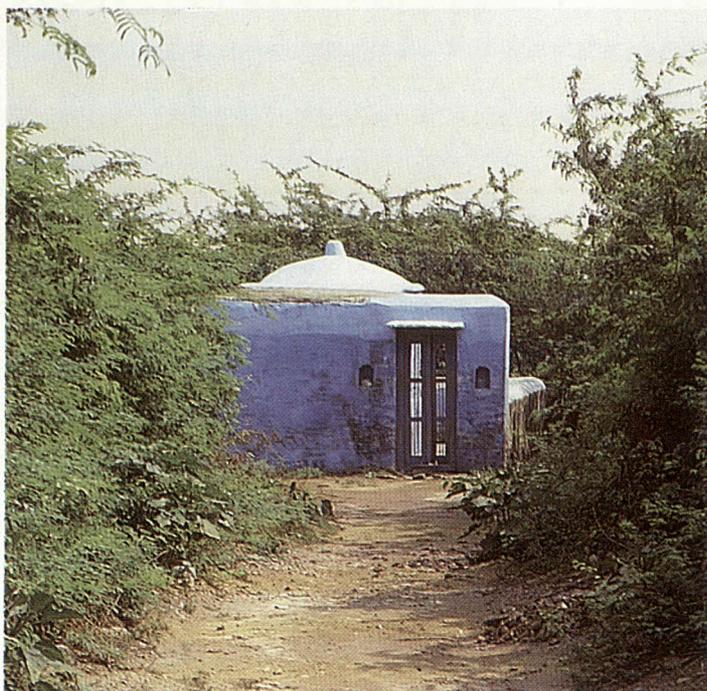
The Deities of Rādhā Mādhava with Lord Caitanya on the left



The puṣpa-samādhi of Jayadeva Gosvāmī



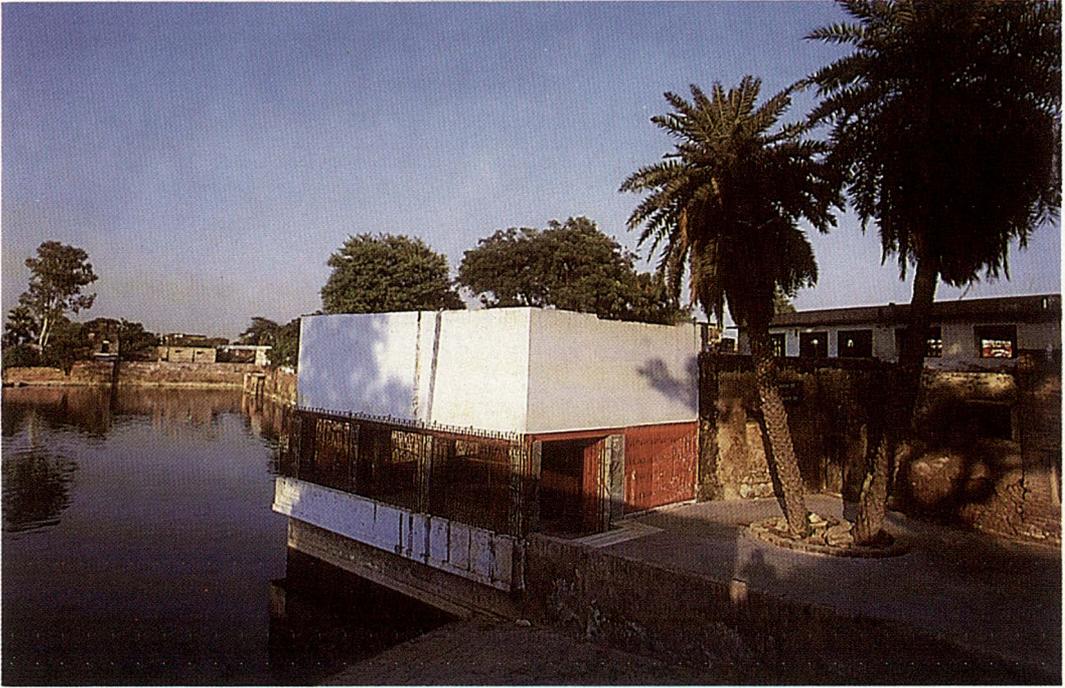
The Deity (linga) of Ban-Khaṇḍī Mahādeva



Ban-Khaṇḍī Mahādeva Mandira

41 BAN-KHAṆḌĪ MAHĀDEVA MANDIRA

Guarding the Eastern side of Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the famous temple of Lord Śiva known as Ban-Khaṇḍī Mahādeva. There used to be a very large and beautiful *kadamba* forest surrounding this temple, which has now completely disappeared.

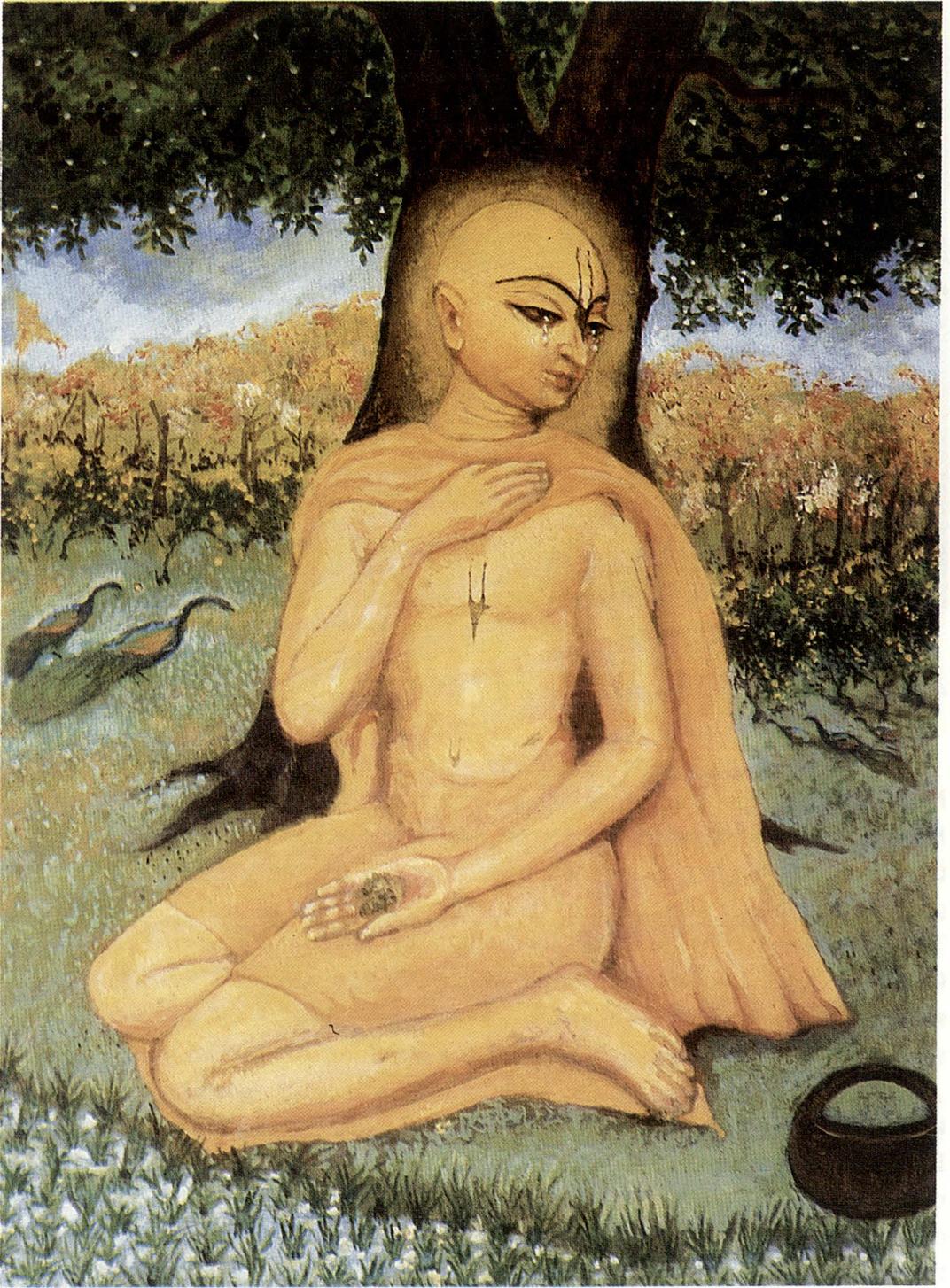


The sitting place of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu on the banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa

42 MAHĀPRABHU'S BAITHĀKA

This is the spot on the sacred banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa, where Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu sat in contemplation under a *tamāla* tree, just before discovering Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa. This place is also known as Tamāla-tala, after the sacred *tamāla* tree that grows here. The present tree is an offshoot of the original one under which Lord Caitanya sat. The *ghāṭa* nearby is known as Tamāla-tala-ghāṭa. Within the newly built shrine is the impression of Lord Caitanya's lotus footprints, believed to have been established by Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī. We can understand why the Lord chose this spot as His sitting place, because of the wonderful view it affords of the two sacred *kuṇḍas*.

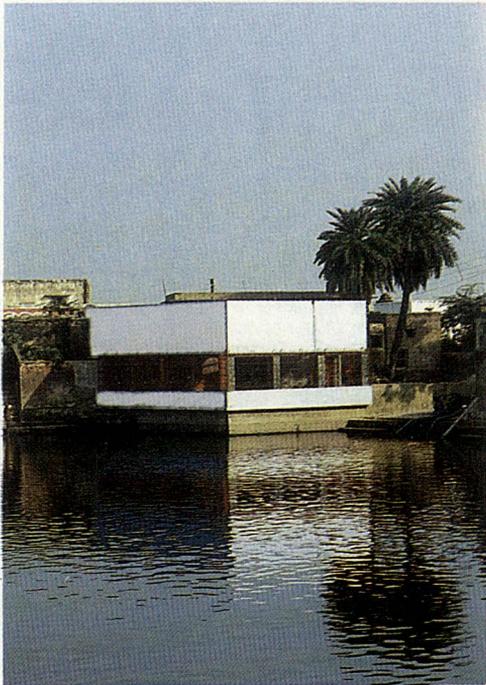
It is not surprising that the Vedic scriptures declare that Lord Caitanya is the most munificent incarnation of God. By revealing the hidden location of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, the Lord has given the world a unique gift, the most sacred of all the sacred *tīrthas* within creation. Generation after generation of Vaiṣnavas the world-over, can come to Rādhā-kuṇḍa and simply by anointing their heads with the sacred waters of these transcendental lakes, can achieve the greatest benediction of divine love, equal to that of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.



A painting of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu sitting under the famous tamāla tree



The shrine around Lord Caitanya's Baiṭhāka

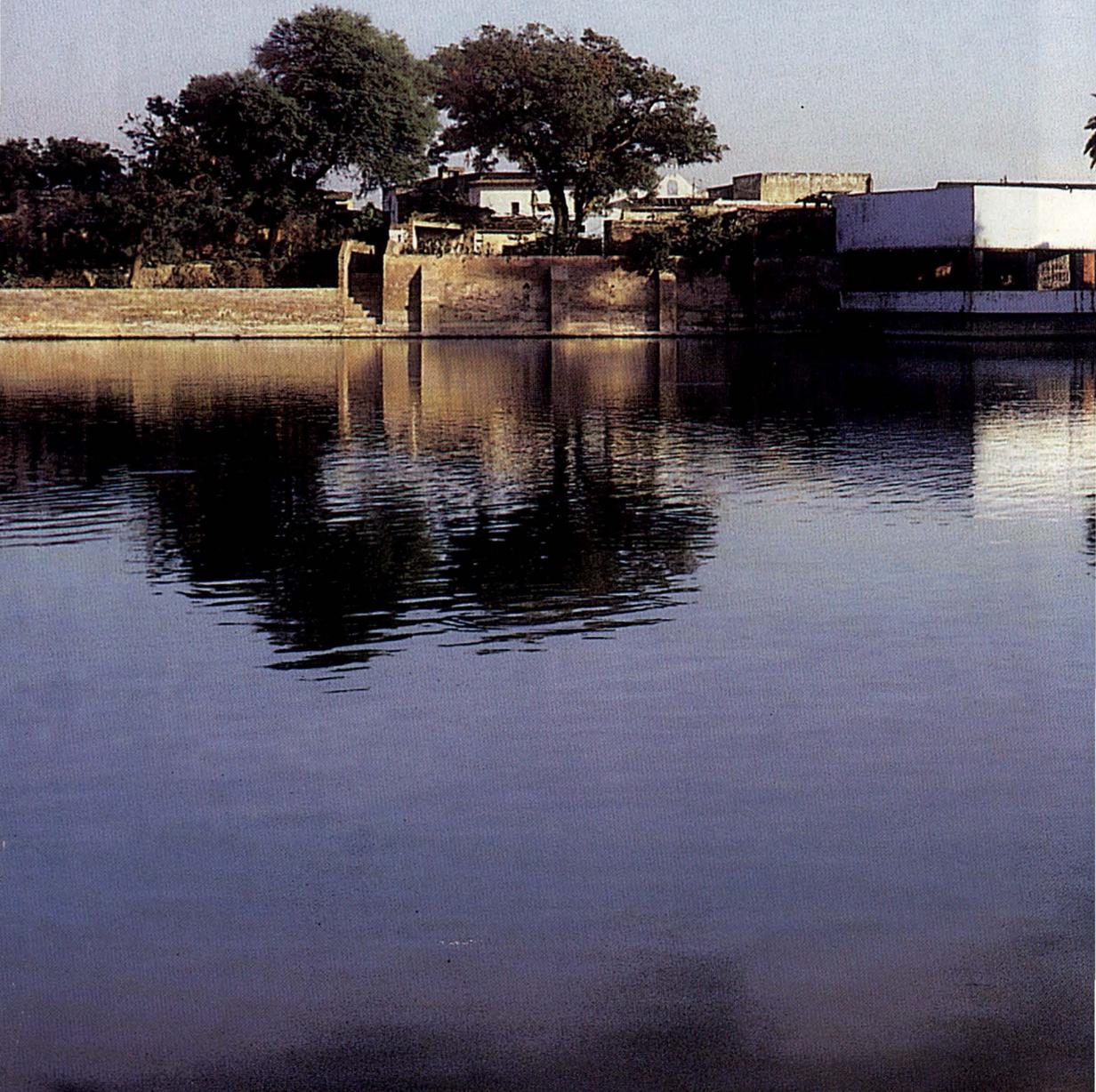


Caitanya Baiṭhāka



The lotus feet of Lord Caitanya

Śyāma-kunḍa— a view of Tamāl-tala ghāṭa and Caitanya Baiṭhāka



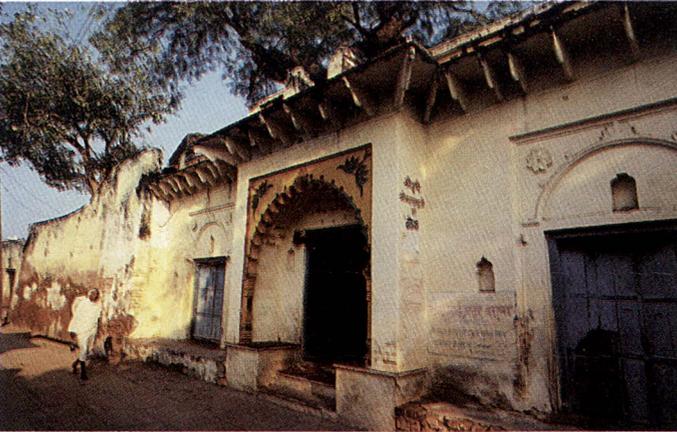




A view of Pāsa-khela-ghāṭa

43 Pāsa-KHELA GHĀṬA (VALLABHĀCĀRYA BAĪṬHĀKA)

At this celebrated *ghāṭa* on the banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoy the pastimes of *pāsa-khela*, which is a board game played with dice. This wonderful *pāsa-khela* pastimes has been described by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī



The gateway of Pāsa-khela ghāṭa and Vallabhā Baiṭhāka

Ṭhākura as follows:

“Once upon a time, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī told Lalitā Devī that Kṛṣṇa, being very strong, had powerfully defeated the *gopīs* in various fun games like honey-wine drinking, water sports and swimming. Now they should diminish His pride



A painting of Kṛṣṇa splashing Rādhārāṇī with water

by challenging Him to a game that requires some brains.

Rādhārāṇī then challenged Kṛṣṇa to a game of *pāśa*. Nāṇḍīmukhī sat on Kṛṣṇa's side as a witness and Vṛṇḍā Devī sat on Rādhārāṇī's side. Kuṇḍalatā was the game board supervisor. Madhumaṅgala kept score for Kṛṣṇa and Lalitā for Rādhārāṇī. Picking up the stone dice, Rādhārāṇī very cleverly rolled a pair of tens and twelves. First Kṛṣṇa lost His precious *Kaustubha* gem to Rādhārāṇī and then Kṛṣṇa cheated on the next throw and took the prize of Rādhārāṇī's embrace. Rādhārāṇī then won the wager of kisses. Smiling, Kṛṣṇa placed His cheek near Rādhārāṇī's lips and said, "Sakhī, I admit defeat in this public assembly, now collect your prize." Rādhārāṇī and all Her girlfriends laughed at Kṛṣṇa's joke while covering their faces with their veils.

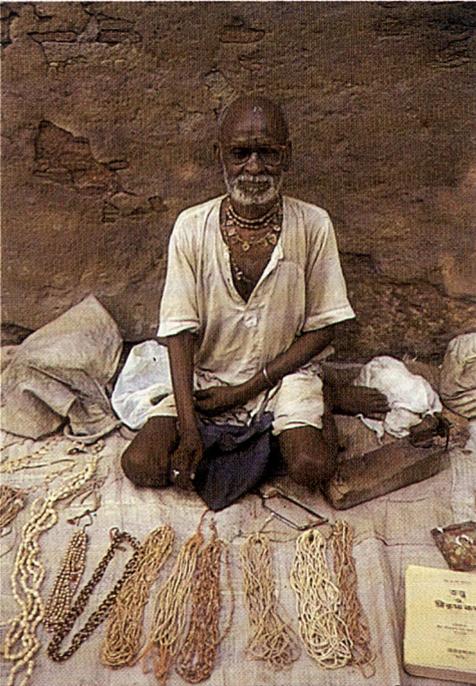
Also at this *ghāṭa* is the sitting place of Vallabhācārya, who was a contemporary of Lord Caitanya and is mentioned in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta. There is also a small temple here run by the Vallabha-sampradāya.



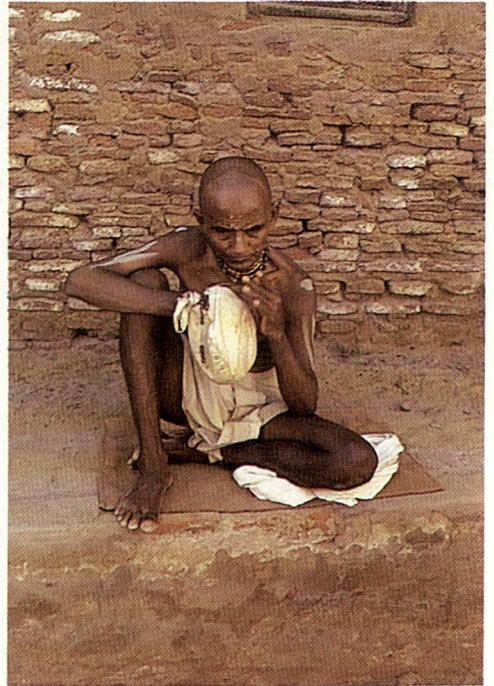
Vallabhā baithāka



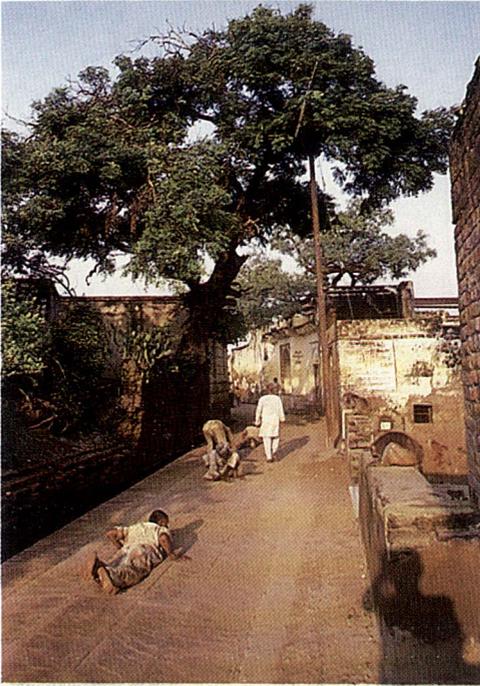
Local residents making Tulsi beads



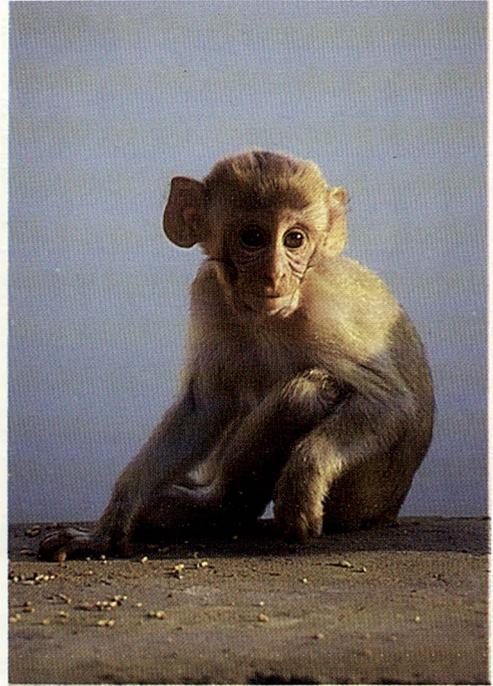
A local resident selling Tulsi beads



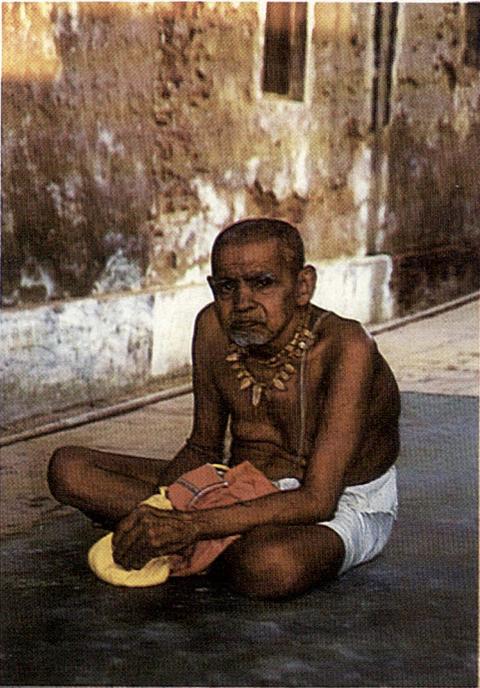
A sadhu chanting on beads



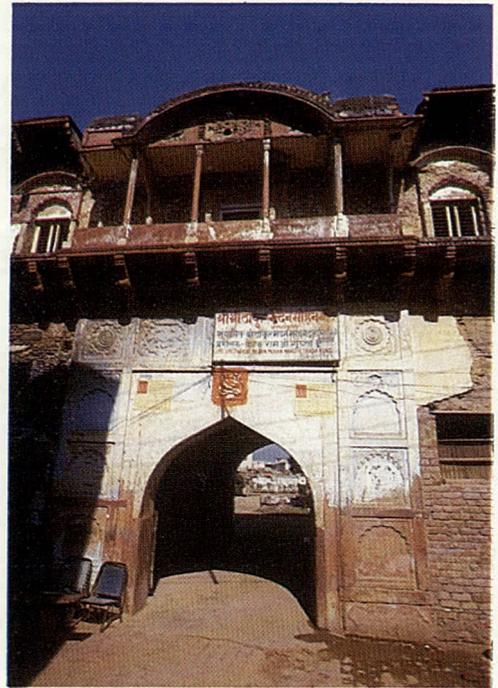
Pilgrims performing daṇḍavata parikramā



A monkey at Rādhā-kuṇḍa



A sādhu enjoying the cooling shade



The gateway to Madana-mohana Maṇḍira



The beautiful Deities of Rādhā Madana-Mohana with Lalitā Sakhī on the left

44 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ MADANA-MOHANA MAṄDIRA

In this temple can be seen the beautiful *pratibhū mūrtis* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Madana-Mohana. The original Deity of Madana-Mohana was established in Vṛndāvana by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī. The original Deity is now being worshipped at Karoli in Rājāsthan.

Also in this temple can be seen (to the left of the Deity room), the sitting place (baiṭhāka) of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, who was a regular visitor to Rādhā-



The sitting place of Sanātana Gosvāmī

kuṇḍa and sat at this spot when performing his *bhajana*. For this reason, a temple was later built at the very same place. This temple also has its own *ghāṭa* on the bank of Śyāma-kuṇḍa known as Madana-Mohana ghāṭa.

45 ŚRĪ MAHĀPRABHU MAṄDIRA

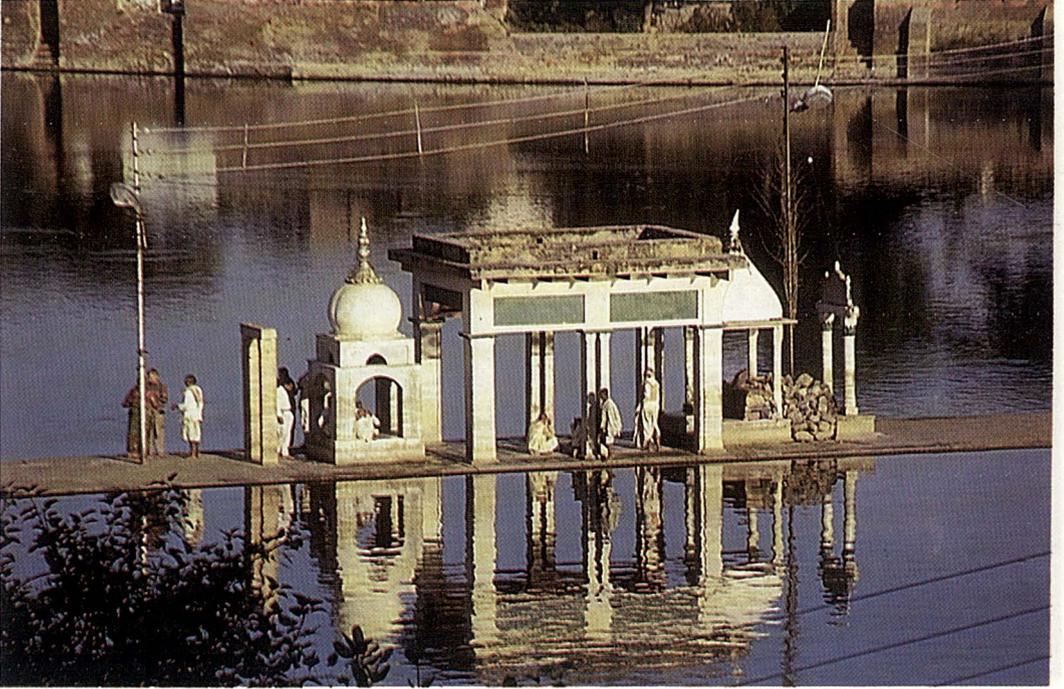
The beautiful Deities of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda were brought from Bengal over fifty years ago and worshipped here by an old Bengali widow. After her demise, two old *Bābājīs* continued to perform the worship of the Deities. About thirty years ago, the Panch committee in-charge of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's estate, arranged for the construction of the present temple. This temple holds a very wonderful swing festival (*Jhulana-yātrā*) every year, which is very popular with the local people and especially with the children of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.



The Deities of Gaura-Nitai



Rājāsthani devotees dance to the beat of kīrtana at the Mahāprabhu Maṅdira



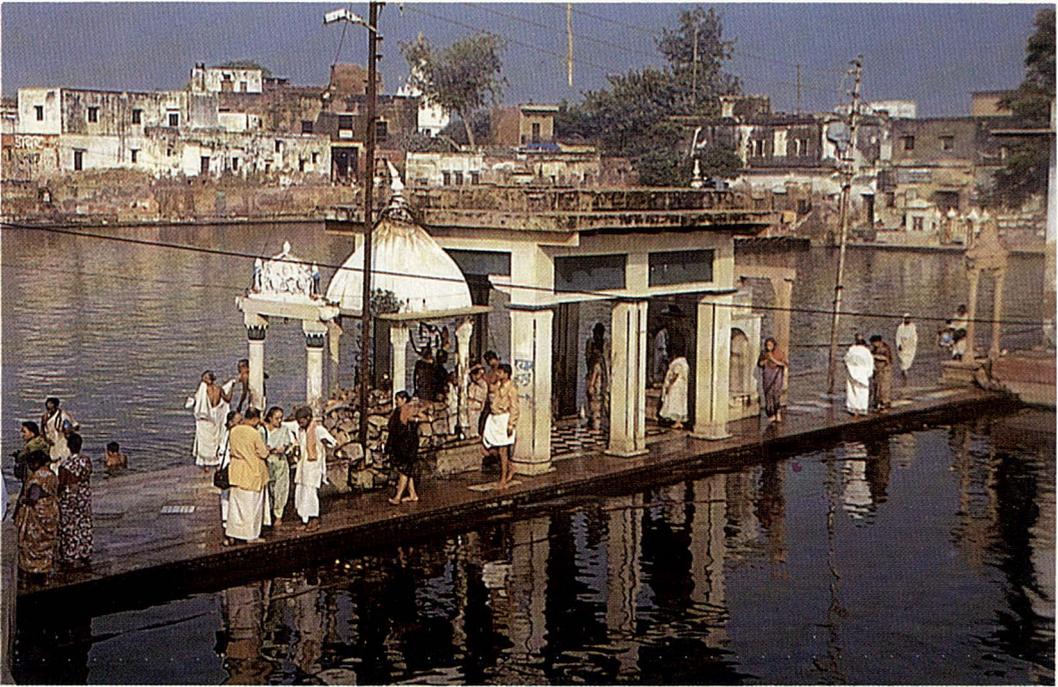
The white marble shrine known as Ratna-vedi where the sacred kuṇḍas meet one another

46 THE SAṄGAM (MEETING PLACE)

This is the meeting place (*saṅgam*) of the two sacred *kuṇḍas* where the divine lovers Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, in Their liquid forms, embrace one another eternally, without fear of ever being separated.

The meeting place of the two *kuṇḍas* is also known as Ratna-vedi, which means jeweled altar. On the spiritual plane, this Ratna-vedi appears as a gem studded bridge across the *saṅgam*. As Rādhā-kuṇḍa is considered the most sacred of all sacred places, this spot known as Ratna-vedi is considered the epitome of all sacredness, and is therefore also known as the Rādhā-kuṇḍa Yogapītha.

The bathing *ghāṭas* on both sides of Ratna-vedi are known as the Yugala-saṅgam-ghāṭa. If one looks closely, one can see small slits in the stone steps below Caraṇa-cinha, that allows the waters of the two sacred *kuṇḍas* to flow into one another. This is also one of the most popular places for pilgrims to take bath, by first dipping in Rādhā-kuṇḍa, then Śyāma-kuṇḍa and then in Rādhā-kuṇḍa again.



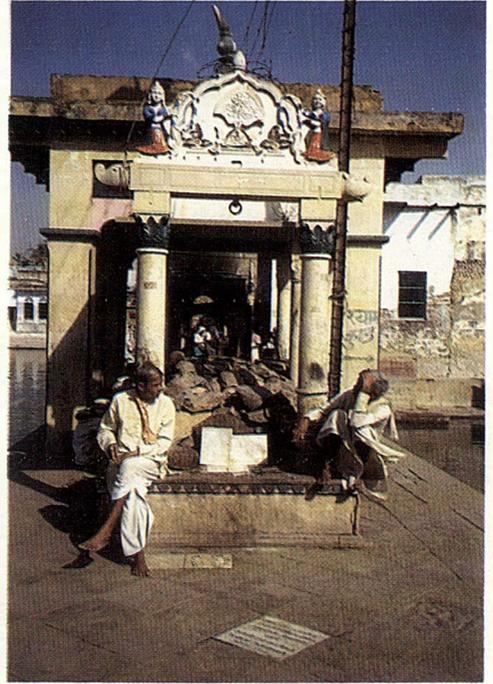
A view of the saṅgam with Rādhā-kuṇḍa in the background



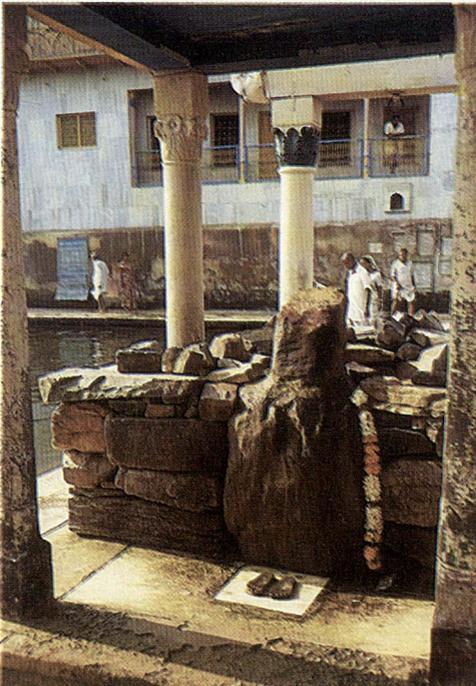
The saṅgam is the most popular place for pilgrims to take a sacred bath

47 GIRIRĀJA MAHĀRĀJA MANDIRA

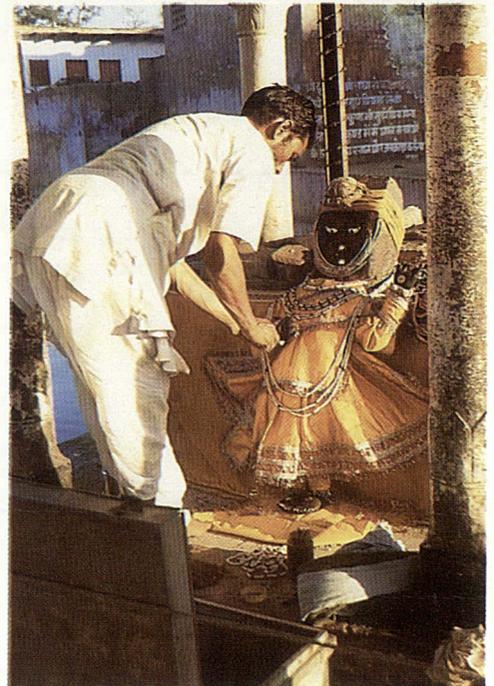
At the *saṅgam* of the two sacred *kundas* which is known as Ratna-vedi, there is a shrine where a large number of Govardhana-*śilās* have been piled up one on top of another, just like a mini Govardhana Hill. Every evening around sunset, one of the Govardhana-*śilās* is decorated with beautiful garments, jewelry and a crown, just like a regular Deity. The *darśana* of this Govardhana-*śilā* is extremely beautiful to behold.



The shrine of Girirāja Mahārāja



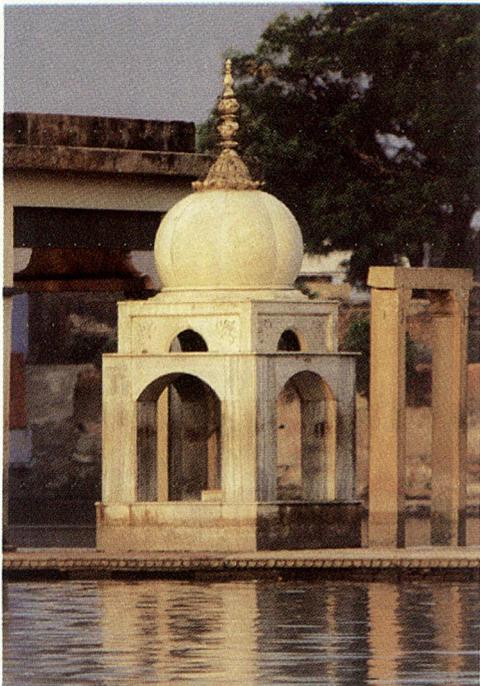
*The mini-mountain of Govardhana-*śilās**



A pūjārī dresses Girirāja



The beautiful Deity of Girirāja Mahārāja at the saṅgam shrine



The shrine of Carana-cinha

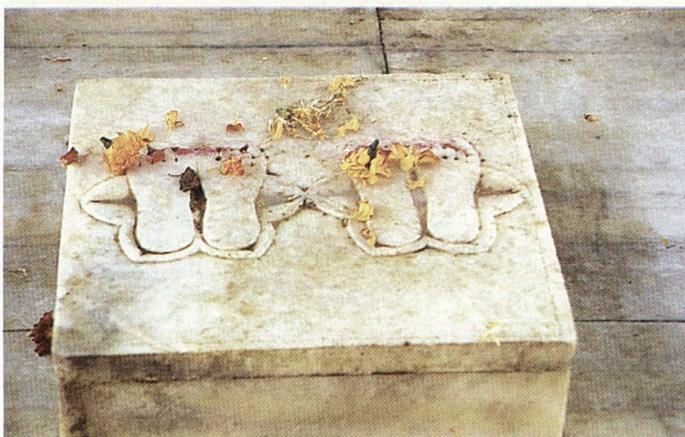
48 CARANA-CINHA (LOTUS FOOTPRINTS)

Carana-cinha literally means footprints, and within this shrine at Ratna-vedi can be seen the impression of the lotus footprints of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Devotees offer flowers, incense, *tulasī* leaves and water from the sacred *kuṇḍas* to the caran-cinha, while remembering the transcendental loving pastimes enacted here by the divine couple.

49 ŚRĪ BĀNKE-BIHĀRĪ MAṆDIRA

Between the *saṅgam* and Govinda-ghāṭa is the temple of Śrī Bānke-Bihārī. *Bānke* means the Supreme Enjoyer, and *Bihārī* is a name of Kṛṣṇa. The original Deity of Bānke-Bihārī was discovered at Nidhuvana in Vṛndāvana by Swami Haridāsa, a follower of the Nimbārka-sampradāya, and a contemporary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. Swāmī Haridāsa was famous for his singing and composing Vaiṣṇava *bhajanās*. To the right of the alter is a room where the *baiṭhaka* (sitting

place) of Swāmī Haridāsa is believed to have been situated, due to this reason, this temple of Bānke-Bihārī was built at this spot. There are three very rare Govardhana śilās kept on the altar at this temple and the *pūjārī* will be happy to explain to visitors the story behind them.



The lotus footprints of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa



The Deity of Bāṅke-Bihārī – the rare Govardhana-sīlas can also be seen on the altar



50 GOVINDA-GHĀṬA

At this *ghāṭa* on the eastern bank of Rādhā-kunḍa, where a large *neem* tree hangs over the waters edge, the divine lovers Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa sometimes enjoyed swing (*jhulan*) pastimes. Once Sanātana Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī, and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī were sitting here discussing the ambrosial pastimes of the divine lovers, when Sanātana Gosvāmī suddenly expressed a doubt about the verse from Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Cāṭu Puspāñjali*, where Rūpa had compared the braid in Rādhārāṇī's hair to a serpent's black hood.

“O Rādhārāṇī, O Queen, as golden as fresh gorocanā, O Queen who's beautiful clothes are as splendid as a blue lotus, O Queen who's braid, decorated with jewels and flowers, is glistening like the hood of a serpent.”

At noon later the same day, Sanātana Gosvāmī came to Govinda-ghāṭa to bathe in the sacred *kunḍa*. Some girls were playing on a swing under a nearby tree. Sanātana suddenly noticed the hair braid of one of the girls and mistaking it for a snake, shouted to the girl to warn her about the deadly serpent crawling

up her back. Upon hearing Sanātana's warning call, the girl suddenly turned around and smiling beautifully at Sanātana, suddenly vanished. Stunned by the extraordinary vision and feeling ecstatic symptoms all over his body, Sanātana, with tears welling up in his eyes, immediately ran to find Rūpa Gosvāmī and congratulate him, that the poetic metaphor used in his verse, was absolutely wonderful and perfectly correct.

51 IMLĪ-TALA

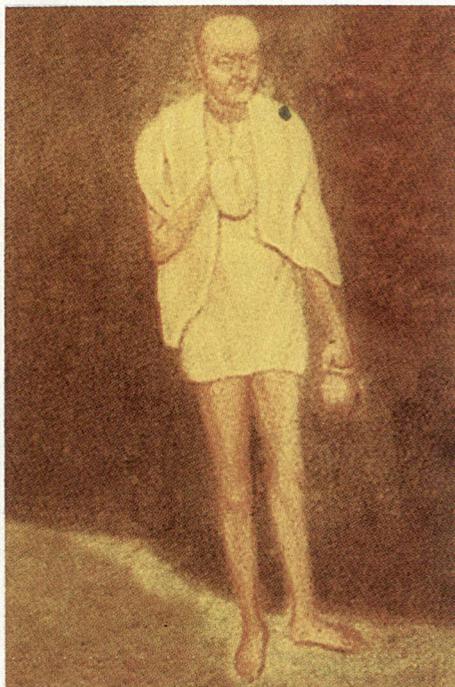
A short distance after the Mahāprabhu Maṇḍira is the Vraja-

Mohana temple. In the courtyard of this temple used to stand a large tamarind tree (*Imlī-tala*). The tree has in the course of time disappeared, but a very wonderful pastime was enacted here by Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa that was directly witnessed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

One day, Rūpa Gosvāmī came here and sat down near a large tamarind tree to perform his *bhajana*. After some time, he happened to glance up at the tree and saw a most beautiful swing hanging down from one of the branches. The swing was designed in such a way that two persons were able to sit facing one another.

Within a few moments, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa suddenly arrived on the spot along with all Their *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs*. Kṛṣṇa then climbed on to the swing and invited Rādhārāṇī to join Him. Rādhārāṇī at first refused to join Kṛṣṇa on the swing, because He always made the swing go too high, which frightened Her. Kṛṣṇa again asked Rādhārāṇī to sit down on the swing but again She refused.

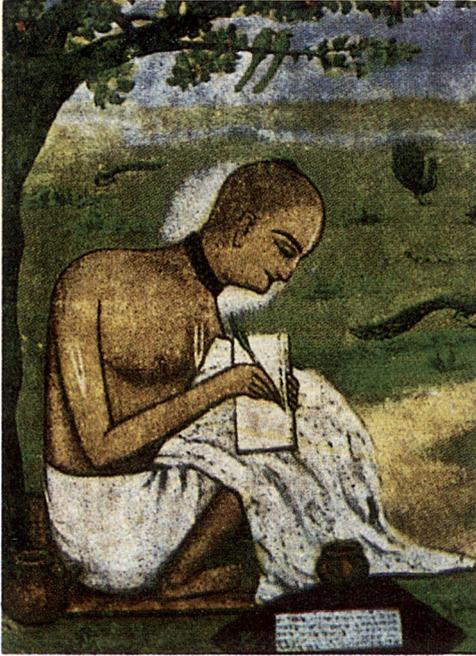
Kṛṣṇa pleaded with Rādhārāṇī and this time promised not to make the swing go too high. The *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs* also requested Rādhārāṇī to take Her seat on the swing, promising that they would make sure the swing did not



Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

go very high, by pushing it themselves. Having been requested by all of them, Rādhārāṇī finally relented and joined Kṛṣṇa on the swing. The *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs* then started to gently push the swing to and fro and Rādhārāṇī immediately began enjoying the pleasant and soothing atmosphere of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. When Kṛṣṇa saw that Rādhārāṇī was feeling in a relaxed mood, He very cunningly started moving His legs to make the swing gradually go a little bit higher.

Before the *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs* could realize what was happening, the swing was suddenly going so high, that it was way above their heads. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī became extremely frightened when she saw the swing was going so high and



Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī

pleaded with Kṛṣṇa to stop the swing and let Her get down. Kṛṣṇa simply laughed at Rādhārāṇī's request and made the swing go even higher. The swing eventually went so high that it appeared that it would go right over the top. Feeling very frightened that she might fall down, Rādhārāṇī loudly screamed and leapt into Kṛṣṇa's arms, holding on to Him for dear life.

Kṛṣṇa felt very happy to have Rādhārāṇī embracing Him so tightly, and being in such an ecstatic mood, made the swing go so high, that it went right over the top and came down on the other side, completing a full circle, much to the amazement of all the *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs*, who spontaneously clapped their hands and started singing the glories

of the divine lovers Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

After witnessing the enactment of this wonderful pastime, Sanātana Gosvāmī, out of intense ecstasy, fell to the ground unconscious. When he eventually regained his senses, he saw that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa had gone, but the swing was still there hanging in the tree. To his amazement, he saw that the trees branches had been completely twisted around due to the force of the swinging. Even until recent times, pilgrims used to flock to this spot to have *darśana* of the twisted branches of the tamarind tree.



The beautiful Deities of Rādhā Gopīnātha surrounded by Their sakhīs

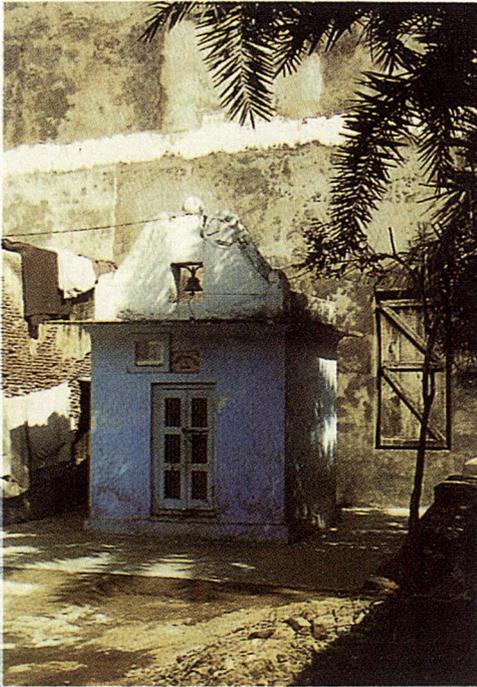
52 RĀDHĀ GOPĪNĀTHA MAṄDIRA

These are the *pratibhū mūrtīs* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha. The original Deities of Rādhā-Gopīnātha were discovered at Vamśī Vat and later established by Madhu Paṇḍita Gosvāmī at this spot. Madhu Paṇḍita was an associate of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his *samādhī* is situated next to the Rādhā-Gopīnātha Maṅḍira in Vṛndāvana. The original Deities were moved from Vrindavana due to fear of Aurangzeb's soldiers and are now being worshipped in Jaipur.

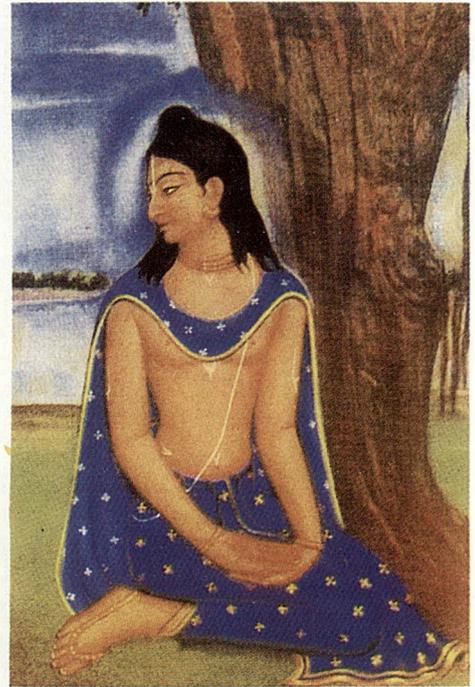
53 NITYĀNANDA BAIṬHĀKA (SITTING PLACE)

Situated in the courtyard of the Rādhā-Gopīnātha Maṅḍira is the sitting place (*baiṭhāka*) of Lord Nityānanda. Affectionately known as Nitāi, Lord Nityānanda was a direct expansion of Lord Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa's elder brother, and appeared on earth to assist Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu in spreading the *saṅkīrtan* movement.

While travelling on pilgrimage all over India, Lord Nityānanda, in the mood

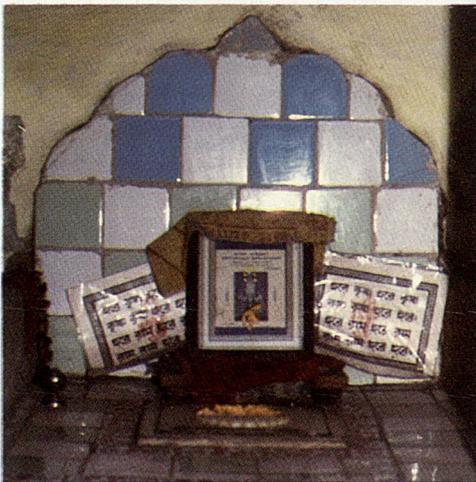


Lord Nityānanda baiṭhāka



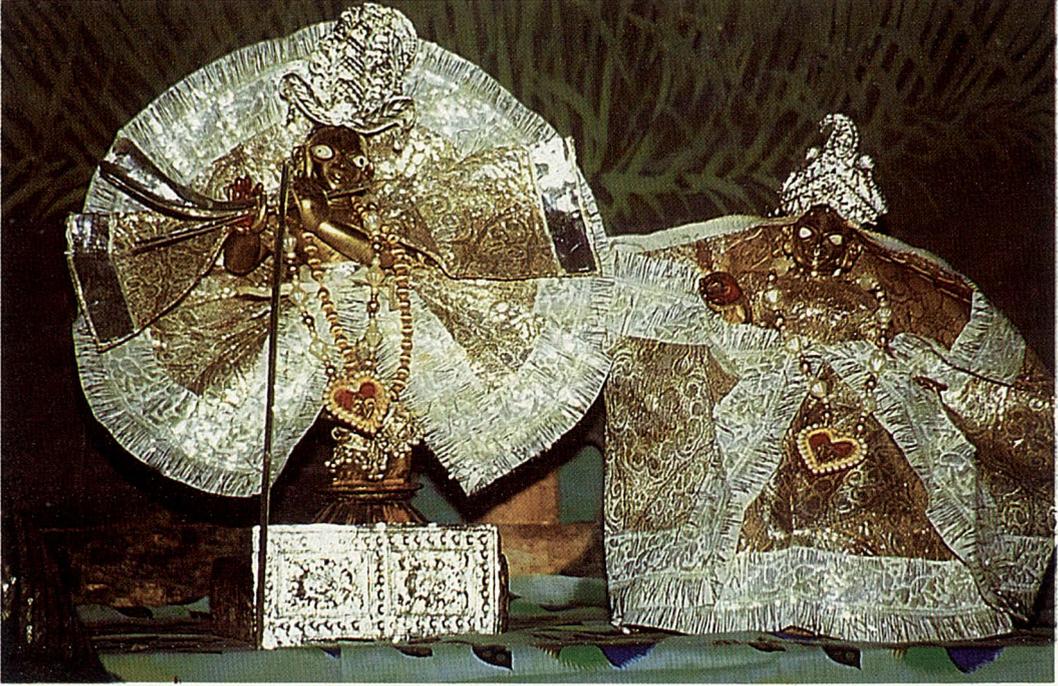
Lord Nityānanda

of Lord Balarāma, came to Vraja and in an ecstatic searched all over for His little brother Kanhaiya (Kṛṣṇa). Wandering around Govardhana Hill and calling out the name of Kanhaiya, Lord Nityānanda fell at the feet of the Vrajavasis, begging them to inform Him of the whereabouts of His younger brother. Everyone thought that this wandering mendicant (*avadhūta*) must had gone completely mad.



The lotus feet of Lord Nityānanda

In utter desperation, Lord Nityānanda came to this place near the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and sat down while crying uncontrollably at the thought of separation from Kṛṣṇa. Suddenly a celestial voice from the sky announced that His younger brother Kanhaiya, had now appeared in Navadvīpa. Lord Nityānanda got up and immediately left for Bengal where He eventually met Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu for the first time at the house of Nandana Ācārya.

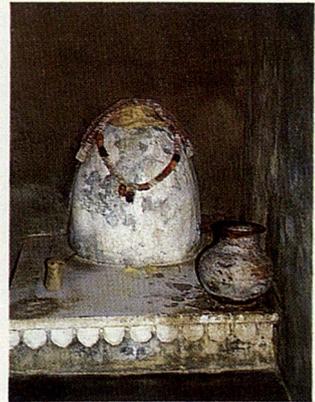


The beautiful Deities of Rādhā Gokulānanda

54 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ GOKULĀNANDA MAṄDIRA

Here are the *pratibhu mūrtis* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda. The temple of Rādhā-Gokulānanda was established by Lokanātha Gosvāmī, whose personal Deities were Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda. The Deity of Gokulānanda was originally worshipped by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhakura, who installed Him in the Gokulānanda temple in Vṛndāvana. The original Deity of Lord Gokulānanda can still be seen at the Rādhā-Gokulānanda Maṅḍira in Vṛndāvana, where the *samādhis* of both Lokanātha Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī are situated.

At the Rādhā-Gokulānanda Maṅḍira in Rādhākuṇḍa can be seen the *puspa-samādhi* of Lokanātha Gosvāmī, as well as a *gufā* (cave), where Lokanātha used to perform his *bhajana*. In Kṛṣṇa-līlā, Lokanātha Gosvāmī was Mañjulāli Mañjarī, one of Rādhārāṇī's intimate maidservants.



Lokanātha's *puspa samādhi*





CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE GAUDĪYA VAIṢṆAVA SAMPRADAYA

- 1473 Appearance of Lord Nityānanda.
- 1479 Mādhavendra Purī visits Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Govardhana Hill.
- 1479 Mādhavendra Purī establishes worship of Śrī Gopāla Rāya (Nathajī)
- 1482 Advaita Ācārya takes *dikṣa* in Vṛndāvana from Mādhavendra Purī.
- 1483 Appearance of Lokanātha Gosvāmī.
- 1486 Appearance of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- 1487 Appearance of Gadādhara Paṇḍita.
- 1488 Appearance of Sanātana Gosvāmī.
- 1489 Appearance of Rūpa Gosvāmī.
- 1491 Disappearance of Mādhavendra Purī.
- 1491 Viśvarūpa (Lord Caitanya's brother) takes *sannyāsa*.
- 1494 Appearance of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.
- 1496 Appearance of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī.
- 1503 Appearance of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.
- 1505 Appearance of Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.
- 1509 Lokanātha Gosvāmī and Bhugarbha Gosvāmī come to Vṛndāvana.
- 1510 Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu takes *sannyāsa*.
- 1513 Appearance of Jiva Gosvāmī.

- 1515 Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu visits Vṛndāvana.
- 1516 Rūpa and Sanātana come to Vṛndāvana.
- 1516 Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī Gosvāmī comes to Vṛndāvana.
- 1534 Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's disappearance.
- 1534 Appearance of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.
- 1535 Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī comes to Vṛndāvana.
- 1535 Jīva Gosvāmī comes to Vṛndāvana.
- 1541 Disappearance of Lord Nityānanda.
- 1541 Completion of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* by Rūpa Gosvāmī.
- 1542 Installation of Rādhā-Dāmodara in Vṛndāvana.
- 1542 Installation of Rādhāramaṇa in Vṛndāvana.
- 1545 Jīva Gosvāmī purchases the land at Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
- 1545 Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī starts excavation of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
- 1550 Disappearance of Advaita Ācārya.
- 1554 Completion of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa.
- 1558 Disappearance of Sanātana Gosvāmī.
- 1564 Disappearance of Rūpa Gosvāmī.
- 1570 Emperor Akbar meets Jīva Gosvāmī in Vṛndāvana.
- 1571 Disappearance of Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.
- 1575 Completion of *Caitanya-bhāgavata* by Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura.
- 1576 Jīva Gosvāmī appointed *Mahānta* of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
- 1578 Disappearance of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.
- 1580 Temple of Madana-mohana opens at Vṛndāvana.

- 1581 Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī completes *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.
- 1582 Disappearance of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī.
- 1583 Disappearance of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.
- 1585 Disappearance of Lokanātha Gosvāmī.
- 1590 Govindaji Mandira opens in Vṛndāvana.
- 1608 Disappearance of Jīva Gosvāmī.
- 1611 Disappearance of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.
- 1630 Disappearance of Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita Gosvāmī
- 1638 Appearance of Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura.
- 1670 Emperor Aurangzeb attacks Vṛndāvana.
- 1708 Disappearance of Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura.
- 1838 Appearance of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.
- 1874 Appearance of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvati Gosvāmī.
- 1896 Appearance of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda.
- 1914 Disappearance of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.
- 1915 Disappearance of Gaura Kishore dāsa Babaji Mahārāja.
- 1933 Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda initiated by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī at Allahabad.
- 1935 Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda meets Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī at Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
- 1936 Disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvati Gosvāmī.
- 1954 Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda takes *vānaprastha*.
- 1956 Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda arrives in Vṛndāvana.
- 1959 Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda takes *sannyāsa*.

- 1965 Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda sails to America.
- 1966 Incorporation of ISKCON in New York, U.S.A.
- 1975 Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira opens in Vṛndāvana.
- 1977 Disappearance of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda.

GLOSSARY

Ācārya	One who teaches by example.
Aprakaṭa-lilā	Unmanifest pastimes.
Aṣṭa	Eight (referring to the eight principle girlfriends of Rādhārāṇī.
Avadhūta	Wandering mendicant devoid of bodily concept.
Baiṭhāka	Sitting place.
Balarāma	Elder brother of Kṛṣṇa.
Bhajana	Meditational practices especially hearing and chanting.
Bhajana-kuṭīra	Small cottage used for meditation.
Brāhmaṇa	Wise and cultured person well-versed in Vedic knowledge.
Daṇḍavata	To offer obeisances by lying flat like a stick on the ground.
Darśana	To see the form of the Lord or His pure devotee.
Dvāpara-Yūga	The previous age lasting 864,000 years.
Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava	Follower of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
Ghāṭas	Steps leading down to a river or lake used for bathing.
Gopīs	The beautiful milkmaids of Vṛndāvana.
Gosvāmī	One who strictly controls the senses.
Kāma	Material lust.
Kali-Yūga	The present age lasting 432,000 years.
Kirtana	Group chanting accompanied by drums and cymbals.
Kuṇḍa	A sacred lake or bathing tank.
Kuñja	A forest grove.
Mandīra	Temple of the Lord.
Mañjarī	Intimate maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.
Mūrti	The Deity form of the Lord.
Paṇḍita	A learned <i>brāhmaṇa</i> .
Parikramā	Circumambulation of a holy place or temple.

Parvata	A hill or mountain.
Pratibhu-mūrti	Replica of the original Deity having the same potency.
Prema	Divine spiritual love.
Pūjārī	A <i>brāhmaṇa</i> priest serving the temple Deity.
Purāna	Supplementary Vedic histories
Pūrnimā	The full moon day.
Puṣkarinī	A lake or pond.
Sakhīs	The girlfriends of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.
Samādhī	The tomb of a saint.
Saṅgam	The confluence of two bodies of water.
Sannyāsi	A monk in the renounced order of spiritual life.
Śrīngara	Decoration of the Deities.
Sthali	A sacred place where pastimes were performed.
Tilak	The twelve symbols of Viṣṇu applied on the body.
Vaiṣṇava	Devotees of the Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.
Vaikuṅṭha	The spiritual world.
Vraja	The entire area of Vṛndāvana <i>Dhāma</i> .
Vrajavāsī	An inhabitant of Vraja or Vṛndāvana <i>Dhāma</i> .
Yūga Dharma	The religious practice of the age.

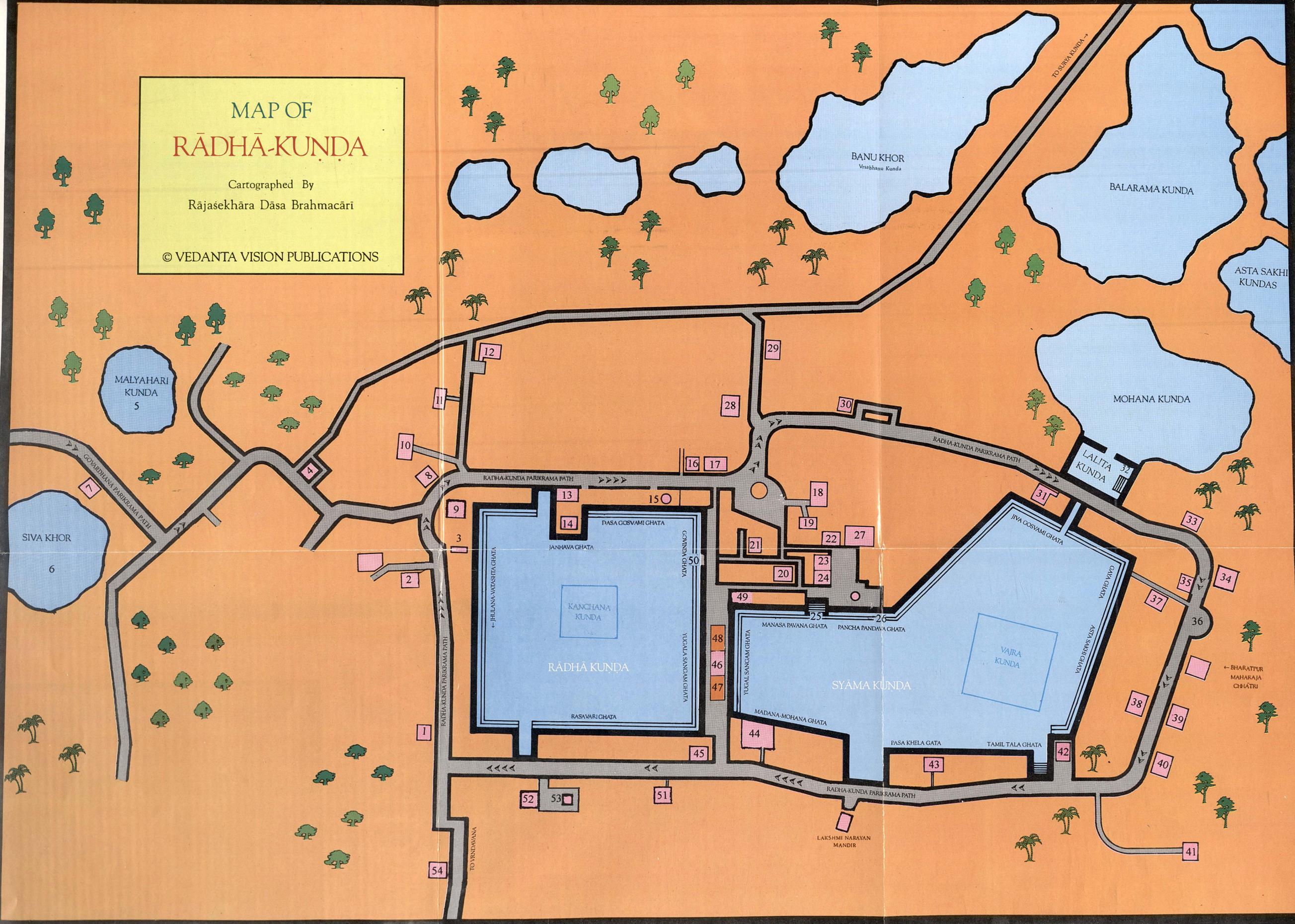
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Dāna-keli-kaumudī
Gaura-gonadeṣa-dipikā
Gitavalī
Gopāla-campu
Govinda-līlāmṛta
Hari-Bhakti-vilās
Kṛṣṇa Book
Mādhuryā Dhāma
Mukta-carita
Nectar of Instruction
Padma-Purāṇa
Radha-kuṇḍa Mahimā Mādhūrī
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta
Stavā-māla
Stavāvalī
Vraja Mandala Dashana
Vraja-rīti-cintāmaṇī
Vraja-vilāsa-stava
Vṛndāvan-mahimāmṛta

MAP OF RĀDHĀ-KUNḌA

Cartographed By
Rājaśekhāra Dāsa Brahmācārī

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- 1 KUṆḌEŚVARA MAHĀDEVA TEMPLE
- 2 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ-KRṢṆA PURĀṆA MANDIRA
- 3 JHULANA STHALI
- 4 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ KUṆJA-BIHARI MANDIRA (GAUḌĪYA MATHA)
- 5 MĀLYAHĀRI-KUNḌA
- 6 ŚIVA KHOR (ŚIVA PUṢKARINĪ)
- 7 RĀMEŚVARA MANDIRA
- 8 ŚRĪ GOPĀLA MANIPURA MANDIRA
- 9 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ-KĀNTA MANDIRA
- 10 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ ŚYĀMASUNDARA MANDIRA
- 11 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ DĀMODARA MANDIRA
- 12 ŚRĪNIVĀSA ĀCĀRYA KUṆJA
- 13 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ-GOPĪNĀTHA MANDIRA
- 14 MĀ JĀHNAVĀ BAIṬHĀKA (Sitting place)

- 15 RAGHUNĀTHA DĀSA GOSVĀMĪ SAMĀDHI
- 16 ŚIVA TEMPLE
- 17 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀRAMAṆA MANDIRA
- 18 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ GOVINDA MANDIRA
- 19 JIHVĀ MANDIRA (Tongue of Govardhana)
- 20 TEEN GOSVĀMĪ SAMĀDHI
- 21 BHAJANA KUṬĪRA OF GOPĀLA BHĀṬṬA GOSVĀMĪ
- 22 KRṢṆADĀSA KAVIRĀJA GOSVĀMĪ BHAJANA KUṬĪRA
- 23 RAGHUNĀTHA DĀSA GOSVĀMĪ BHAJANA KUṬĪRA
- 24 VIŚVANĀTHA CAKRĀVARTĪ ṬHĀKURA BHĀJANA KUṬĪRA
- 25 MĀNĀSA-PĀVANA-GHĀṬA
- 26 PANCA PĀṆḌAVA GHĀṬA
- 27 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ CAITANYA GADĀDHARA MANDIRA
- 28 SAMĀDHI OF ŚRĪLA NARAHARI SARKAR

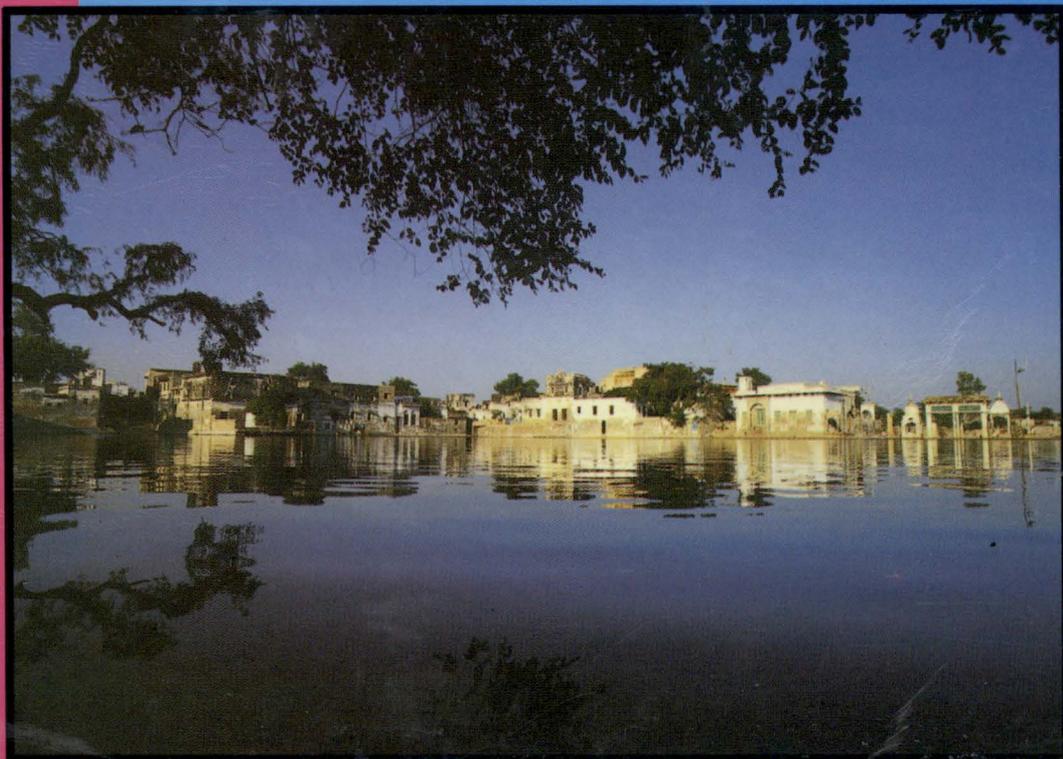
- 29 BHAKTIVINODA ṬHĀKURA BHĀJANA KUṬĪRA
- 30 JAGANNĀTHA MANDIRA
- 31 ŚRĪLA JĪVA GOSVĀMĪ BHĀJANA KUṬĪRA
- 32 LALITĀ-KUNḌA
- 33 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ LALITĀ BIHARI MANDIRA
- 34 MANIPURA MAHARĀJA MANDIRA (Rādhā Govinda Temple)
- 35 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ VINODA MANDIRA
- 36 GOPĪ-KŪPA
- 37 MĀDHAVENDRA PURĪ'S BAIṬHĀKA
- 38 AṢṬA SAKHĪ MANDIRA
- 39 NITAI-GAURA SITANĀTHA MANDIRA
- 40 RĀDHĀ MĀDHAVA MANDIRA
- 41 BAN KHANDI MAHĀDEVA MANDIRA
- 42 MAHĀPRABHU'S BAIṬHĀKA

- 43 PĀSA-KHELA GHĀṬA (Vallabhācārya Baiṭhaka)
- 44 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ MADANA-MOHANA MANDIRA
- 45 ŚRĪ MAHĀPRABHU MANDIRA
- 46 THE SANGAM (Meeting Place)
- 47 GIRIRĀJA MAHARĀJA
- 48 CARAN CINHA (Lotus Footprints)
- 49 ŚRĪ BANKE BIHARI MANDIRA
- 50 GOVINDA-GHĀṬA
- 51 IMLI-TALA
- 52 RĀDHĀ GOPĪNĀTHA MANDIRA
- 53 NITYĀNANDA BAIṬHĀKA (Sitting place)
- 54 ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ GOKULĀNANDA MANDIRA



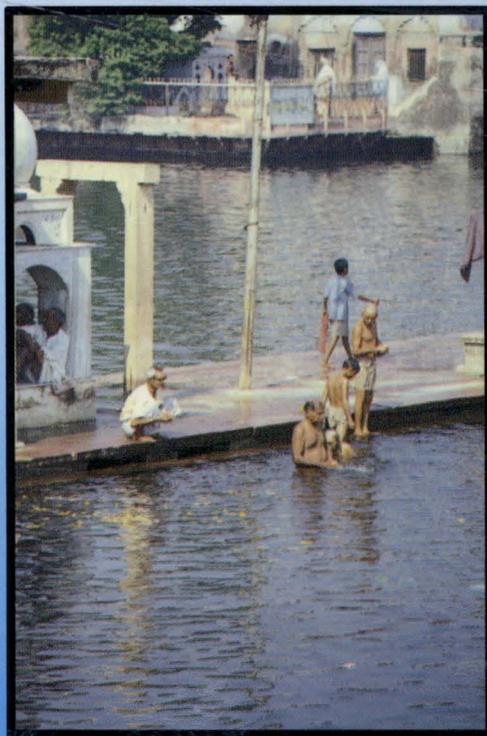


With Over 50 Places Of Interest And More Than 180 Full Color Plates



The transcendental lake of Rādhā Kuṇḍa, the most secret meeting place where Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoyed intimate pastimes of divine love. Lost to the world for almost fifty centuries until the year 1516, when Lord Caitanya Māhaprabhu on His pilgrimage to Vraja, re-discovered this most sacred of all Kuṇḍas.

Revered as the holiest of all holy places within the three worlds, anyone who with firm faith simply sprinkles three drops of water from Rādhā-Kuṇḍa upon their heads, will achieve the highest level of divine love, equal to that which Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī has for Her beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa.



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