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2001 Nov 12 - Govardhana – The first two days at Govardhana

[Dear Maharaja's, Prabhus, and Didis,

Dandavat pranams. Jaya Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga.

On the 12th of November the devotees left Sri Rupa-Sanatana Gaudiya Matha in Sri Vrndavana and went to Sri Govardhana, where they stayed for six days of hari-katha, parikramas, and festivals. On the way to Govardhana they stopped at Paitha and had darsana of the beautiful presiding Deity of 4-armed Krsna. After that they went to Candra Sarovara and the sitting place of Vallabhacarya, and then they proceeded to Govardhana. The next day, after the morning class, Srila Maharaja took the pilgrims to Dana Ghati, Manasi Ganga, Harideva temple, Brahma-kunda, and many other places. The following are excerpts from the recently published Vraja Mandala Parikrama book describing those places. Srila Maharaja explained that the process of reading this, or any bhakti book, is to pray that, as the pure devotee and the pastime places are present when one is in their physical presence, may they please come in our hearts while we read about them, and may they take away all our anarthas so that we can serve them.

Your aspiring servants, Radhika dasi and Syamarani dasi]

PAITHA GRAMA

This village is situated two miles south of Parasauli. When Krsna disappeared from the rasa-sthali during vasanti-rasa, the grief-stricken gopis began searching for Him everywhere. Krsna assumed a four-handed form at this place, and when the gopis saw this form they offered pranama and continued on their way. Srimati arrived a little later, searching for Krsna in separation. Upon seeing Her, Krsna could no longer maintain His four-handed form. Two hands entered (paitha gaye) His svarupa. He met Srimati in His form as an ever-fresh, youthful cowherd boy and expert dancer holding a flute in His hand. Thus They both met, and Krsna begged forgiveness from Srimati.

He said, "Priye! When I suddenly did not see You in the rasa, I became aggrieved in separation from You and began searching for You. This rasa is only for You. You should never again go into mana and leave Me."

Thus, vasanti rasa has its own speciality, in which Srimati Radhika's superiority over the other gopis is established. The poet Sri Jayadeva Gosvami has described vasanti-rasa in his Gita-Govinda. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu gives vasanti-rasa as the proof of the superiority of Srimati Radhika. This subject has been described very sweetly in Sri Caitanya-caritamrita, in the conversation between Sri Raya Ramananda and Mahaprabhu (Raya-Ramananda Samvad).

This place has a very special significance for the Gaudiya Vaisnavas. Krsna has many beloveds, but Srimati Radhika is the crown-jewel of them all, because She is the

embodiment of mahabhava and the possessor of all good qualities. This is why Krsna was able to maintain His four-handed form before the other sakhis, but could not maintain His bhava upon seeing Srimati. His two extra arms entered (paitha gaye) into His body. This is the special glory of Radha.

Places that may be seen in Paitha are Narayana Sarovara, Ainth Kadamba, Khira Sagara, Balabhadra Kunda and others.

PARASAULI

This village lies about one and a quarter miles south-east of the town of Govardhana, in the lowlands of Govardhana. During the Mughal reign, the Muslims changed the name of the village to Mahammadpura. This is where the vasanti rasa-lila of Krsna and His beloved gopis took place. This rasa continued for an entire night of Brahma, but it seemed that it was over in only a few moments. The moon in the sky had become stunned upon seeing this rasa-lila, and was unable to move the whole night. Because this rasa-lila took place in the light of a brilliant full moon, this place is also called Candra Sarovara, or 'the lake of the moon'.

In the south-western corner of the sarovara is Sringara Mandira, where Krsna personally decorated Srimati. Near the sarovara, under a chonkara tree, is the baithaka of Sri Vallabhacarya. Suradasa's kuti (Sura-kuti) and his samadhi (Sura-samadhi) are also situated within this area. Suradasa was a natural poet. His collection of poems is famous as Sura-sagara or Sura-padavali. Suradasa was blind, yet he used to compose poems of the different sringaras, or decorations, of Sri Nathaji, and these descriptions were very sweet and beautiful.

One day, the pujariji did not dress Sri Nathaji, who remained completely naked. He opened the doors of the altar and asked Suradasa to compose a poem describing His sringara. Suradasa remained silent for a few moments, but the pujari insisted. Suradasa laughed loudly and proceeded to sing, Aj bhaye hari nangama nanga. ("Today, Hari is undressed and naked.") Everyone became stunned upon hearing his song.

Suradasa spent his last days in Parasauli. One day, Sri Gosvami asked him, "Sura! What are you thinking about?" Suradasa then composed his last song: Khanjana naina rupa rasa mate / atisaya caru capala aniyare pala pinjara na samate. ("Krsna's beautiful eyes are like khanjana birds, full of rasa, very restless, and slightly reddened due to intoxication. My life cannot remain in the cage of this body any longer.") He then left his body. With tear-filled eyes, Gosvami said, "The boat of pusti-marga has departed today."

DANA GHATI

This place is situated in the middle of Govardhana on the present-day road between Mathura and Kamyavana. Even today, a toll must be paid to cross this area. At the time

of Krsna-lila, Krsna became a toll collector (dani) and performed dana-lila with the gopis through loving quarrels (prema-kalaha) and sarcastic remarks. This lila has been beautifully described in Dana-keli-kaumudi, Dana-keli-cintamani and the other books of the Gaudiya Gosvamis.

Once, on the bank of Govinda Kunda, Sri Bhaguri Rsi was performing a yajna for the pleasure of Bhagavan. The gopas and gopis were bringing ingredients for the yajna from distant places. From the other side of Dana Ghati, Srimati Radhika and Her sakhis were also bringing yoghurt, milk, butter and many kinds of sweets made from milk, like rabari. Krsna, along with Subala, Madhumangala and other sakhas, obstructed the path and forcibly demanded dana (toll), and the sakhas and gopis began to taunt each other with sarcastic remarks.

Standing in His tribhanga-lalita, Sri Krsna asked mischievously, "What are you carrying?"

"Milk, yoghurt and butter for the yajna of Bhaguri Rsi," the gopis replied.

Hearing the word 'butter', Madhumangala's mouth started to water. He promptly said, "Quickly pay the dana required and then proceed onward."

Lalita, filled with sarcasm, asked, "What dana? We have never paid any dana before."

Krsna was insistent: "You can pass only after paying dana."

Srimati asked Him, "Since when have You become the dani (toll collector) of this place? Have You inherited it from your father?"

"Don't be so insolent!" He replied. "I am Vrndavanesvara, the ruler of the kingdom of Vrndavana."

"How is that?"

"Vrnda is My wedded wife," Krsna asserted. "The property of the wife is also the property of the husband. Vrndavana is the kingdom of Vrnda-devi, and therefore it is My kingdom."

"Accha?" Lalita answered haughtily. "We have never heard anything about this. Let us inquire from Vrndaji about this right now." At once, she turned towards Vrnda and smilingly asked, "Vrnde! Is this 'black one' your husband?"

Vrnda flared up in feigned disgust: "Never! We have no relation with this lying debauchee. Yes, this was my kingdom, but I have handed it over to Vrndavanesvari Srimati Radhika." All the sakhis burst out laughing and Krsna became a little embarrassed, but He was nonetheless determined to take dana. After this prema-kalaha, or love-quarrel, the gopis exchanged the dana of prema at Dana Nivartana Kunda, some

distance from Dana Ghati. To find out more about this lila, you can consult Dana-keli-kaumudi and Dana-keli-cintamani.

MANASI GANGA

Krsna created Manasi Ganga by His mind, because the gopis wanted Him to atone for the sin of killing a bull (Vrsabhasura). He became pure by taking bath in its waters. According to a second story, Sri Nanda Maharaja, Sri Yasoda and the other gopas and gopis once took Krsna and Balarama with them and went on a pilgrimage to the Ganga to take bath. At night, they rested near Govardhana. Krsna wondered why they should all travel so far when all the tirthas in fact reside in Vraja itself. In His mind, He summoned Ganga-devi, and at once Bhagavati Bhagirathi Ganga's strong current reached this spot, making a sweet sound. Sri Ganga-devi was mounted on an alligator, and Nanda, Yasoda, and the gopas, gopis and other Vrajavasis became astonished to have her darsana.

Krsna said, "All the tirthas exist in Vraja. You all wanted to bathe in the Ganga, and thus Ganga-devi has personally appeared before you today. Don't delay; take bath in her waters now!"

Ganga-devi appeared here on the Amavasya of Kartika on the day of Dipavali. Large numbers of faithful people therefore bathe here on the day of Dipavali and take darsana of Sri Haridevaji. They also offer ghee lamps from all sides of Manasi Ganga and near Sri Giriraja Govardhana.

According to a third story, Krsna used to sport in the Yamuna, sometimes with His sakhas and sometimes with His beloved gopis. Beholding this great fortune of her younger sister Yamuna, Bhagavati Ganga became overwhelmed by a strong desire to also serve Sri Radha-Krsna Yugala. She expressed her heart's desire to her younger sister Yamuna and requested her help. Krsnapriya Sri Yamunaji then entreated her beloved Krsna to bestow His mercy on her elder sister, Ganga-devi. Thus, at an appropriate time, Sri Krsna summoned Gangaji to Vraja and blessed her by sporting in her waters with the gopis.

Raja Bhagavan Dasa, the father of Manasingh, the king of Jaipura, built the ghats of Manasi Ganga with stones.

MANASA DEVI

This temple is situated on the southern bank of Manasi Ganga, above Brahma Kunda. Manasa Devi is nobody else but Maya Devi (Yogamaya) herself. One receives the qualification to serve Radha-Krsna Yugala only by the mercy of Yogamaya Purnamasiji. Some Vaisnavas also address Manasi Ganga Devi simply as Manasa Devi.

CAKRA TIRTHA

This place is situated north of Manasi Ganga. Cakresvara Mahadeva, currently known as Cakalesvara, resides here. When Indra poured torrential rains over Vraja, Mahadeva (who is Sadasiva, and therefore visnu-tattva) served Giriraja and the Vrajavis by holding his trident up like a cakra and protecting them. (Some devotees declare that it was on Mahadevaji's request that Sudarsana Cakra protected Giriraja Govardhana and Vraja, and that hence Mahadeva's name is Cakresvara Mahadeva.)

The ghata on which Cakresvaraji presides is also called Paranga Ghata. The gopis used to cross Manasi Ganga from here. Sri Krsna would play the part of a boatman and perform boating-pastimes (nauka-vilasa) and other lilas while ferrying the gopis across Bhagavati Manasi Ganga. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has given a very touching description of this nauka-vilasa-lila in his prayer Sri Govardhanastakam (text 7): yatraiva gangam anu navi radhamarohya madhye tu nimagna-naukahkrisno hi radhanugalo babhau sagovardhano me disatam abhistam "In the middle of Manasi Ganga, Srimati Radhika was sitting in Krsna's boat. Krsna, dressed like the boatman, tried to sink the boat, and the terrified Radhika caught Sri Krsna in Her embrace. May that Sri Govardhana fulfill all my desires."

SRI SANATANA GOSVAMI'S BHAJANA-KUTIR

At Cakra Tirtha, opposite Cakalesvara Mahadeva, is Sri Sanatana Gosvami's bhajana-kuti. Sanatana Gosvami sometimes resided here to perform bhajana, but being disturbed by its menacing mosquitoes, he considered moving elsewhere. At that time, Cakalesvara Mahadeva arrived there in the guise of a brahmana and requested him, "Babaji, please do not move elsewhere. Stay here and freely perform your bhajana. From today, the mosquitoes will no longer trouble you." Mosquitoes have not caused a disturbance here since. Sanatana Gosvami remained here for some time, and was able to perform his bhajana untroubled.

Sri Sanatana Gosvami used to perform parikrama of Govardhana every day, even in his old age. Once he was doing parikrama in the heat of summer and the soil under his feet was burning hot. Weary and drenched with sweat, Gosvamiji sat down, but there was not even any shade about. Suddenly, a cowherd boy came and held a yellow shawl over Sanatana to give him shade, and with the other corner of the shawl, He started fanning Sanatana Gosvami's face. Sanatana Gosvami's whole body became cool and calm by the touch of that boy. The boy said in a very sweet voice, "Baba! In this old age there is no need to perform parikrama of Govardhana and undergo so much hardship. I am giving you a sila of Girirajaji that is marked with the stick and lotus feet of Sri Krsna. Perform parikrama of this sila every day and you will receive the same benefit as doing Govardhana parikrama."

Saying this, the boy gave the sila to Sanatana Gosvami and disappeared. This boy was none other than Giridhari, the lifter of Giriraja. This sila used to reside in the temple of Sri Radha-Damodara in Vrindavana, but nowadays it is in the temple of Sri Radha-Damodara in Jaipura. The pratibhu-vigraha of this sila is present in the Sri Radha-

Damodara Mandira in Vrindavana. One easily receives the result of performing parikrama of Giriraja Govardhana by circumambulating Sri Radha-Damodara Mandira four times.

There is a temple of Sri Gaura-Nityananda Prabhu opposite the temple of Cakalesvara. While performing parikrama of Govardhana, Sri Nityananda Prabhu and later Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu had darsana of Sri Caklesvara Mahadeva and Paranga Ghata at Manasi Ganga. They also took rest here.

MUKHARAVINDA

On the northern bank of Manasi Ganga is the mukharavinda (lotus face) of Sri Govardhanaji. Govardhana's form is that of a sitting cow. His hind part is Puchari or Punchari. He has turned his neck to place his lotus face near his stomach, which is the town of Govardhana. His two eyes are Radha Kunda and Syama Kunda. There is a beautiful temple here with a sila of Giriraja's mukharavinda. He is given abhiseka, puja and offerings of bhoga every day, and festivals are also organised on Annakuta and Dipavali.

SRI HARIDEVA

Sri Haridevaji is present on the southern bank of Manasi Ganga, and is the presiding deity of Giriraja Govardhana. Sri Krsna took one form as Giridhari and held His second form, Girirajaji, on His palm. The lila of lifting Govardhana (Govardhana-dharana) will be described later, when we come to Anyora Gaon.

BRAHMA KUNDA

Seeing that Krsna was in a good mood, Brahmaji came to this place to seek forgiveness for his aparadha of stealing away the calves and cowherd boys. He performed abhiseka of Sri Krsna here and glorified Him with mantras from the Sama Veda. The holy water from the abhiseka was called Brahma Kunda, and Brahmaji took bath in it along with the demigods.