

## Living with a Sadhu in Vraja dhama



For the time from December the 26th until January the 6th Govinda priya dd and me had the fantastic opportunity to visit the Holy Land of Vrindavana, where the Divine Couple eternally plays Their amorous pastimes.

But not only that, we had been very fortunate to be able to live with Sripad Sadhu Maharaja in his beautiful temple, called Mungir Mandir.

We already talked on the phone so many times and obviously we have been very eager to go there.

Maharaja told us that our rooms are already booked and so the journey was about to begin...we counted the days, the hours, the minutes...

Two friends of us also decided to come with us to Vrindavana: Premavati dd (a wonderful disciple of Sripad Sadhu Maharaja) and Diana.

So on December 25th, we all four met in the train to Frankfurt airport and everyone was VERY excited!!!

After a long journey with a stop-over in Bahrain, we safely arrived in Delhi on December 26th. There, we were greeted warmly by a Vrajavasi-taxi-driver with a sign that read: "Sadhu Maharaja welcomes you!" Yeah!

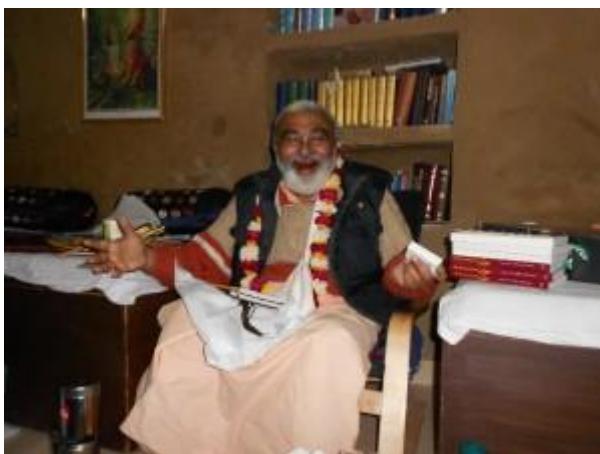
Monday, December 26th

Three and a half hour in the taxi, between being half-asleep and half-awake we slowly came nearer to the area of Vrindavana. Everyone knows, when you make the last turn in the left direction, Vrindavan is no more far away! And yes, soon enough we parked in front of the wonderful gate of the most beautiful Mungir Mandir.



After unloading our stuff and a short darshan of the wonderful Divine Couple, Sri Sri Radha Mohan, we went to the room of Sripad Sadhu Mahara, which is situated right under the altar of Sri Sri Radha Mohan in a cave-like room, very big in size.

And there was our beloved Sripad Sadhu Maharaja, in the midst of his beloved followers and some more, sitting relaxed and very fresh looking in his chair to the left side when you enter. What a wonderful “meet and greet”...immediately we made full danavat-pranams (respectful obeisances) and immediately after getting up he was also standing, hugging everybody full of love and very tightly. It is a truly wonderful thing to come to Vrindavana, but it is truly more wonderful to do so in the association of a sadhu and under his loving guidance. What a nice “meeting-again” after the wonderful US-tour. He looked so relaxed and young and full of energy and he welcomed us all in a very loving manner.



Arriving shortly before us were Paramahamsa das and Hansaduta priya dd and with them were two couples, one with two young children. Mohan das and Kishori dd and Arjuna das and Yashoda dd with their kids Viola and Hannes.

So we hugged each other and came to know them by name and it would not be long, and a nice friendship would develop.

After some time, we went back to our room unpacking and settling in, resting for some hours.

Sripad Sadhu Maharaja recommended to make a trip to the Yamuna and take part in the evening arati-ceremony there, where local devotees offer lights and flowers at Keshi Gata to the wonderful river called Yamuna (where Krishna wanders at night on the banks with the gopis).



Two people would especially grow heart-close to us: our brothers Raseshvara das and Kanhai das, the fullsurrendereddisciples of Maharaja who take care of, well, EVERYTHING happening at Mungir Mandir, 24/7, all day they are truly most beloved friends and absolutely wonderful human beings. No money in the world can come close to the value of what they both did for us Westerners there at Mungir Mandir, ALL THE TIME. Unbelievable. We are eternally thankful for their warm-hearted support.

So, at something like 1500h, we went by rikshaws to Kesi Ghata and there we walked around until we arrived at the place, where the local devotees already prepared a wonderful “sit-in” on the banks of the Yamuna. We chanted a little while and talked and relaxed, gazing at the mystically shining river in front of us, the beautiful Yamuna!



Shortly after, the local devotees started to chant mantras and the priests began offering various prayers to the Yamuna. Some of us were invited to sit with them and each of us got a plate with flower petals to be thrown into the Yamuna at their “command”: svaha! So we did exactly that. And how nice it was.



When the ceremony was over, some of us returned to Mungir Mandir and some went to some temples in Vrindavana. We went back to Mungir Mandir, ate some delicious prasadam and spent the evening in the association of Sripad Sadhu Maharaja and our wonderful friends, some old, some new.

We also met Shyamali dd from Switzerland and Gopalsundara das from Germany, both we already know for quite some time.

Gopalsundara das does a wonderful job as temple-gardener there and Shyamali dd is on her semester as a foreign exchange student (music and singing arts). Both are jewels and grew close to us in love.

The next day, the group with Paramahamsa das and Hamsaduta priya dd were planning a trip to Agra to see the famous Taj Mahal.

With a full heart and a relaxed mind by sadhu-sanga, we went to sleep our first sleep in Vrindavan.

By the way, even sleeping in Vrindavana is considered devotional service, since it counts as "paying obeisances permanently".

Tuesday, December 26th

The group left early with lunch-parcels to Agra and we slept a little longer to be now FULLY refreshed and relaxed for our stay here.

After a hearty breakfast, we gave Sripad Sadhu Maharaja our Christmas presents, consisting of a lot of "fresh air" (wonderful Italian ground coffee) and some diabetes cookies from a good health-food store in Germany. Of course Maharaja was VERY happy and I was ordered to bring in some fresh Italian air immediately. And so I did.

Soon after that pleasing exchange we went to Loi Bazaar to get some devotional clothes and paraphernalia. Govinda priya needed some women-clothes, Premavati dd and Diana too and I bought also some dhotis and a chaddar (shawl).

And dumb as I am, I forgot to take off my glasses and shortly after getting of our rikshaw, a monkey stole them off my head, climbed onto a very high roof and chilled there. We tried to get them back with some bananas for him. He was not very eager to return the glasses and more so, he broke off one length-side of the frame and then threw the glasses on the roof below him. A local Vrajavasi went on that roof and brought the remains of the glasses back. The lenses still were fine, but the frame was utterly useless.

Then, back to Mungir Mandir, back to the association of Sripad Sadhu Maharaja.

One thing immediately we realized: How incredibly merciful Maharaja offers his time.

The door to his cave-like room (with attached sleeping chamber and bathroom) is always open. Only a few times he put up the sign on the door, reading "REST". Not very often during our stay...

He always loves to receive guests and we tried to have his association as often as possible. Sripad Sadhu Maharaja just received a most wonderful book from the devotees of Sripad BV Narayana Maharaja, called “The hidden path of devotion” where Sripad BV Narayana Maharaja comments on Srila Vishvanatha Chakravartipad’s book “Raga-vartma-chandrika”. Sripad Sadhu Maharaja is extremely happy about this book, because he thinks that it conveys the true essence of Sriman Mahaprabhu’s gift to the human race: Prema-bhakti in the mood of a maidservant of Srimati Radhika.

Maharaja is of the opinion that this book should be read by any sincere follower of raganuga-bhakti.

So, together we checked some parts of this marvelous book and he told me that he wants to speak on this book for the next days. Awesome!

Wednesday, December 28th

Today Maharaja had me read after breakfast from the book “The hidden path of devotion”. He chose the part where Srila Narayana Maharaja discusses the verse 157 from Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya-lila, chapter 22)

‘mane’ nija-siddha-deha kariyā bhāvana  
rātri-dine kare vraje kṛṣṇera sevana

“With one’s spiritual body (siddha-deha), revealed by the mercy of Sri Guru, one serves Sri Sri Radha-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana twenty-four hours a day, all day and night.”

Maharaja strongly spoke about the necessity of coming to know one’s spiritual identity with the help of one’s Sri Gurudeva. Without knowing our own identity, how is it possible to really know Krishna?

Also, Maharaja had me explain the two ways of bhakti: vaidhi-bhakti and raganuga-bhakti. In the comments by Srila Narayana Maharaja, he gives an example of this verse from the book “Jaiva-dharma”, where the two main characters receive their spiritual identity from their, and this is really VERY interesting, siksha-guru. Srila Naryana Maharaja clearly states that the siddha-deha can also be revealed by a bona-fide siksha-guru, in that stressing the importance not only on the diksha-guru, but also on the siksha-guru.

Sripad Sadhu Maharaja told us that we who received diksha all just started our class, just like a student starts his school-training. When diksha is fully realized, the spiritual identity will be revealed.

He told us how he entered his “classroom-training” and how he himself received diksha and the full mercy thereupon from his own Sri Gurudeva.

What a nectar discourse, what amazing insights provided by Srila BV Sadhu Maharaja. Everyone present could feel the blessings we all just received.

In the afternoon, our wonderful friend Svarnalata dd, the wife of Prema Prayojana das, came for a visit. They live now in a colony called “Ananda dhama” and she readily agreed to come by. We brought her some nice German and Swiss chocolate and she better appreciated the gift (smile). So she came and we had a wonderful time with her together with Maharaja and a good dose of Italian fresh air!

Then something extraordinary happened: Maharaja said he would PERSONALLY drive Svarnalata dd home and we all four should visit Prema Prayojana's new ashrama. So at about 1700h, Kanhai das prepared Maharaja's new car and the four of us drove to Anand Dham. Let me tell you this: this is how a gentleman drives. Absolutely perfect and very safe!

We arrived there and sat in a class given by Prema Prayojana das. After the class, he invited us with Maharaja to his apartment and we had darshan of their beautiful deities. Maharaja and Prema exchanged some philosophical issues and we gladly listened humbly. Then Srila Maharaja drove us back again.

For the next days, this wonderful schedule was prepared in unison:

- Thursday, December 29th: bus-tour with Srila Sadhu Maharaja (Raman Reti, Govardhan, Radhakunda, Vrindavana)
- Friday, December 30th: marriage of Govinda priya dd and my humble self
- Saturday, December 31th: two marriages on one day (Arjuna and Yashoda, Mohan and Kishori)
- Sunday, January 1st: starting the new spiritual year with puspanjali and a promise in front of Sri Sri Radha Mohan
- Monday, January 2nd: group relaxing...;-D

Thursday, December 29th

Wow ... today the tour was planned. Maharaja organized a bus for us (20 seats) and we all drove off early in the morning.

First stop:

RAMAN RETI

"While staying in Chatikara it is said that Krishna and Balarama would come with the cowherd boys to Raman Reti daily to play. It is also said that Krishna and Radharani would meet here every night, before going to Vrindavana to enjoy Their pastimes. This area is located a few km from the main downtown area. The Krishna Balarama Temple is located in Raman Reti."

This place was totally NOT from this world. We entered a beautiful gate and everybody had to take off their shoes. The whole spiritual area is based on sand. So, we walked barefoot through the most amazing sand of Raman Reti, where Radhika and Syam meet every night...

Many of us felt that this place was utterly peaceful and the cleanliness was marvelous to behold. It was like a temple with attached huts where the sadhus lived. Everything was so neat and truly beautiful. A real place for meditation. When we arrived, a ceremony was going on for the beautiful deities of Radha and Krishna, so we entered the temple and watched in amazement.



After the ceremony, we wandered around a bit, spiritually “inhaling” the nectarean atmosphere. Then we all sat down on one spot in the sand and Maharaja began a most excellent bhajan and we all sang along.



Next stop: Breakfast on the road.

After Raman Reti, we headed off in the direction of Govardhan (Govinda Kund). On the road, Maharaja found a restaurant with enough tables, talked with the owner and soon we all sat there, enjoying OUR food we brought along with us and sipping THEIR Indian chai. Funny. Next stop: Govardhana, better yet, Govinda Kunda, at the feet of Giriraja Govardhana.



During the drive, Maharaja had me explain to the guests, who are not that much experienced in bhakti-yoga, the importance and the significance of Krishna's beloved mountain, Sri Govardhana.

I told them the story about Indra, wanting to destroy the town of Vrindavana and the inhabitants with torrents of rain, because they disobeyed him and followed Krishna's advice. Out of sheer pride, Indra assembled large thunderclouds and started to let down rivers of rainfall. But Krishna was so eager to protect the Vrajavasis and so He put the mountain Govardhana on his little pinkie of his right hand and he stood there seven days and seven nights to protect them all.

Indra saw this extraordinary thing done by Krishna and immediately felt remorse and came to apologize thereafter.

I also told the guests the REAL reason why Krishna stood there holding Govardhana for seven days and seven days: To gaze upon the beauty of Radhika and so that Radhika could do the same, unhindered, no obstacles.

When we arrived there, Maharaja begged us to go sit at Sri Govinda Kund, sing some bhajan and I should explain something more to the guests.

He wanted to rest a little.

So we went around the beautiful lake, sat very near to Govardhan hill and sang "Jaya Radhe, Jaya Krishna, Jaya Vrindavana..."

I tried to explained the contents of the song. Then we sang the "Govardhanastakam" and read the translation.

Arjuna das wanted a stone to worship Govardhana Hill and so he tried to get onesila (stone) from the base of the mountain. Finally, he found one. I thought: "Oh my, usually the devotee is not allowed to pick HIMSELF the stone..."

When we wanted to go back to the bus, the local residents and protectors of Sri Govardhana freaked out and Arjuna das had to give them the stone back.

Arriving at the bus, we told Maharaja of the pastime we experienced. He didn't say much, but just said, that all will be fine, we shouldn't worry...



Next stop: Kusuma Sarovara

On the way, Maharaja suddenly told the driver to stop. We all went outside and then we walked to a wonderful sitting place near Sri Govardhan. There, a local priest welcomed us and we sang some songs and Maharaja told us some nice stories about Sri Giriraja and the importance of worshipping the stone from Giriraja as Krishna Himself.

Let us just say that Srila Sadhu Maharaja performed a very tricky miracle here and somehow, a wonderful stone came to Arjuna das from the priest's hands over Maharaja's hands and inside the bus. Everybody cheered and was very happy for Arjuna.  
Shortly after that, we arrived at beautiful Kusuma Sarovara.

Kusuma-sarovara is on the right of the parikrama path, about one-and-a-half miles southwest of Radha-Kunda. A forest of flowers (kusuma) was here full of varieties of trees, creepers and flowers like bell, cameli, juhi, yuthi, mallika and campaka. Radhika used to come here on the pretext of picking flowers with her sakhis, but Her real intent was to meet rasika Shri Krishna, with whom She would have love-quarrels and sarcastic exchanges full of rasa.

Krishna-bhavanamrta describes how one day Radhika ji was picking flowers here with her sakhis when Krishna arrived, and the following exchange took place:

Krishna: Who is there?

Radha: Nobody.

Krishna: Tell Me honestly, who are You?

Radha: Nobody.

Krishna: You are speaking in a very crooked way.

Radha: And You speak in a very straight way, don't You? Krishna: I am asking You who You are.

Radha: Don't You know?

Krishna: What are You doing?

Radha: Picking flowers to worship the Sungod.

Krishna: Have You received permission from anyone to do so?

Radha: There is no need of anyone's permission.

Krishna: Aha, I have caught a thief today. I wondered who was stealing flowers every day and ruining this garden. Now I have caught You, and will punish You straight away.

Radha: Since when have You become the master of this flower garden? Have You ever planted a single flower here Have You ever even watered one? On the contrary, You ruin this flower garden with Your hundreds and thousands of cows and Your boisterous, brazen friends. Indeed, since when have You become the protector of this garden?

Krishna: Do not defame a pious, righteous person like Me. Now I shall teach You a good lesson.

Radha (smiling): Aha-ha, You are a highly pious and righteous person, are You? You killed a woman right after Your birth; You lied to Your mother even in childhood; You stole butter from the houses of the neighbouring gopis; and when You became a little older, You stole the clothes of the young gopis. Only a few days ago You killed a calf. This is the extent of Your pious, saintly conduct.

Hearing the retort, Krishna scratched His head and looked towards clever Madhumarigala, who advised Him, "One's wellbeing lies in remaining quiet."

At this point, all the sakhis surrounded Shyamasundara and began to clap.

Everybody wandered around this Holy Place and at the end, we all gathered around Maharaja and he told some wonderful pastimes which happened here, similar to the one above.

With our hearts already full of joy and bliss the next stop would be the most Holy Lake of the world: Sri Radhakunda.

My Sri Gurudeva, Sri Srimat Ananta das Babaji Maharaja resides there as the Mahanta (spiritual mayor) of the town Radhakund.

On the phone inside the bus, I called my godbrother there and asked if it would be possible to have a group-audience with my Sri Gurudeva. Everybody was very inspired and my godbrother told me that around 1500h would be a very good time.

And, no wonder, we arrived at Sri Radhakund at exactly some minutes before 1500h.



Entering Sri Radhakunda is a very intimate thing: It is here, where Radha and Krishna perform Their most intimate pastimes and meet every day for water-plays.

Shrila Vishvanath Chakravarti Thakur wrote his commentary on Srimad Bhagavatam in Radhakund. When he commented on the killing of the bull demon Aristasura by Sri Krishna in this village, he collected about 20 texts from the Varaha-, Brahma Vaivarta- and Padma Purana , as well as the Harivamsha on which he based his narration. The story runs as follows : Once Sri Krishna, knowing Aristasura's intention to kill him, came here to graze His cows. Seeing that his victim had come so close, Aristasura thought to assume the form of a bull and finish Him off, and so he did. On his first charge, Sri Krishna simply caught hold of his horns and pushed him back with such a force that Aristasura lost consciousness. On regaining his senses, he charged again, but this time with double force. Seeing this, Sri Krishna, the origin of Mahavishnu, simply caught hold of his horns again and picked him up like a toy, whirled him over His head and threw him away with such a force, that the demon lost his life-airs. Later, according to previous arrangements, Srimati Radharani came there with Her friends to meet Sri Krishna. When She heard that Sri Krishna had killed a bull, She refused to associate with Him unless He purified Himself from the sin of bull-killing by bathing in all the holy rivers of the universe. Sri Krishna pleaded that since the bull was Aristasura in disguise, this was not necessary. But Srimati Radharani said that She heard from Madhumangal's grandmother Paurnamasi that even Indra the king of the material heavens, had to atone for the sin of killing Vritasura, who was a brahmin by birth. Sri Krishna then asked Srimati Radharani if She would be pleased if He called all the sacred rivers of the three worlds to come here. Srimati Radharani replied :"We are simple cowherd-village-girls. How could we know?". Sri Krishna then replied :"I will convince You" . He then struck His right heel into the ground and created a large hollow (Vajrakund). Then He called all the sacred rivers who came in personified forms and offered their obeissances to Him. They identified themselves as Sri Godavari, Kaveri, Brahmaputra, Sindhu, Krishna, Gandaki, Yamuna...ect, and offered prayers to Sri Krishna to become waters to fill Syamakund. After doing this they left and Sri Krishna relieved Himself from the sin of killing a bull to Srimati Radharani's satisfaction by bathing in the water. He then started joking with Her:"Just see

what I have done. Everyone will praise Me in the future, but what have you girls done except selling yoghurt and clarified butter in the streets?". Srimati exhibited her transcendental anger (Mana) and seeing a big hoofprint of the Aristasura demon on the western side of Sri Syamakund, She broke one of Her bangles and started digging there. With the help of thousands of her girl-friends (sakhies) and assistants (manjaries) a large depression in the earth was created. When it was finished, there was no water, so Sri Krishna told Srimati Radharani to take water from His kund to fill it, but She refused, considering that water polluted by the sin of Krishna's bull-killing. She then made arrangements to bring water from Manasi-Ganga, nearly 5 kilometers away. (previously Nanda Maharaja and all the cowherdmen, had once desired to go on pilgrimage to take a bath in the Ganges some 100 kilometer away from Vrindavan. Knowing this, Sri Krishna called for the Ganges personified to appear at Govardhan, which became and what is now known as Manasi-Ganga. In a similar manner, wherever His father wanted to go to some place of pilgrimage, Krishna would request that tirtha to come to Vrajamandal. Thus, all the places of pilgrimage can be found within the 168 miles parikrama of Vrajamandal). Seeing this quarrel between Radha and Krishna, the personified sacred waters appeared again and requested Krishna to be allowed to fill the Radhakund. Shri Krishna told them to do that, but they should take permission first from Srimati Radharani Herself. All the personified rivers then began offering nice prayers to Srimati Radharani, Who being kindness personified, hinted through eye-movements to Srimati Lalita, the chief of the sakhies, to have this done. So at 11.45 P.M. on the eighth day of the waning moon in karttik (Damodar, October-November) the rivers personified broke the walls of Syamakund and entered to fill Radhakund. Sri Krishna then took bath in Radhakund and announced that to whomever takes bath in Radhakund on this day of the year or any day in future, the seed of intense love (Prema-Bhakti) which Srimati Radharani has for Him would be given. Similarly, Srimati Radharani took bath in Syamakund and announced that to anyone who takes bath in Syamakund, She would also give the seed of love that Sri Krishna has for Her. Presently, thousands of pilgrims desiring love for Sri Sri Radha-Krishna come to this holy spot on the occasion of Ardha-Ratri-Snan (Midnight bath) to take bath in a reverential mood, bathing first in Sri Radhakund, then in Sri Syamakund, and then again in Sri Radhakund. This is the only place of pilgrimage where an auspicious bath is taken at midnight.

([http://www.radhakunda.com/the\\_glories\\_of\\_radhakund/index.html](http://www.radhakunda.com/the_glories_of_radhakund/index.html))

From the bus-parking-place outside the little town, we slowly went in the direction of the town's heart, the two beautiful lakes Sri Radhakunda and Sri Syamakunda. On first sight of Sri Radhakunda tears welled up in my eyes since I received here everything from my beloved Srila Gurudeva in 2004 and my Sri Giriraja-stone in 2007. Everyone was overwhelmed and bowed down happily. To be here with my beloved siksha-guru Sripad BV Sadhu Maharaja was more than wonderful. His presence lets you experience the mercy of Sri Radhakunda times a million.

After a short little parikrama, we arrived at my Sri Gurudeva's ashram. We all entered with Maharaja and we were warmly welcomed by the senior disciples of my Sri Gurudeva. We were given carpets to sit on and were told, that a group-audience could indeed be arranged in a few minutes. My Gurudeva was about to come out for a walk and he would be happy to bless us.



We all sat down. Maharaja told me and Govinda priya dd to sit next to him and the others were seated a bit more to the left of Maharaja.

In great anticipation I sat there, silently crying tears of thankfulness. Looking toward my wife, she also cried like a child.

Then it was about time. The door opened and my Gurudeva came down and into the yard, cane in hands slowly walking towards us. Everybody bowed down (including Maharaja) and then Maharaja introduced me to my Gurudeva in Hindi and My Gurudeva warmly recognized me and we had nice short conversation. Then he and Srila Sadhu Maharaja talked for a little while and it was fascinating and utterly wonderful to behold the view of such elevated souls standing next to each other. Manjari to Manjari, so to say...

After that group-audience my Gurudeva went for a walk and we proceeded on our parikrama path around the lakes.

Soon we arrived at the samadhi of Srila Raghunatha das Goswami.

We entered, went to the marbled dome, bowed down and exited the door down to the left for entering the banks of Sri Radhakunda.

This is located at the Sri Sri Radha Gopinath and Ma Jahnava (wife of Lord Nityananda) mandir.

Srila Raghunatha Das Goswami renounced house-hold life at the age of 19 and spent the next 16 years in Puri, performing confidential services to Lord Chaitanya mahaprabhu under the guidance of Sri Svarupa Damodar Goswami until the disappearance of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Shortly afterwards Svarupa Damodar also disappeared, and following Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's previous instructions he came to Vraja.

Due to feelings of love in separation he desired to end his life by jumping from Govardhan hill, but was dissuaded by Srila Rupa and Sanatana Goswamis. Lord Chaitanya had previously given to Raghunatha Das His small Giriraj Shila and a white Gunjamala. Srila Rupa and Sanatana interpreted these to mean that Raghunatha Das should go to Radhakund and do bhajan there. There he remained absorbed in love-in-separation for the next 41 years, until he entered nitya-lila (eternal pastimes) in 1582. According to local custom his body was cremated , which was done under the direction of Srila Jiva Goswami and due to his intense attachment to Srimati Radharani his remains were interred in this samadhi on the northern bank of Sri Radhakund under the Madhavi-grove, which is still there. Dandavats (flat obeisances) are offered, keeping the samadhi on the left after circumambulating at least 4 times, keeping the samadhi on the right.

([http://www.radhakunda.com/the\\_glories\\_of\\_radhakund/index.html](http://www.radhakunda.com/the_glories_of_radhakund/index.html))

Everyone placed three drops of the Holy Lakewater on their head and we walked over to the sitting place of the wife of Sri Nityananda, Srimati Jahnava.

In 1582 Ma Jahnava, after the disappearance of Lord Nityananda, desired to perform circumambulation of the 12 forests of Vrindavana. She came to Radhakund with Shrila Jiva Goswami where she experienced Gopinathji playing on His flute beneath the Bokul and Tamal-trees, and due to great ecstasy she sat down there. Ma Jahnava met Shrila Jiva Goswami in Vrindavan who informed Her of the precarious condition of Shrila Raghunatha Das Goswami, who felt intense love-in-separation from the elder goswamis Sri Rupa, Sri Sanatana and Sri Gopal Bhatta, who had already left the planet. Shrila Jiva Goswami brought Shrila Raghunatha Das Goswami from his bhajan-kutir.

It is Ma Jahnava who is the head of both our diksha-lines, the lines of Srila Sadhu Maharaja and my Sri Gurudeva. Srila Sadhu Maharaja assembled all of us around the Samadhi of Ma Jahnava and he strongly spoke about the concepts of diksha-guru and siksha-guru.

He also explained who is qualified to be such a guru. It was an outerwordly experience and many of us were blown away by the spur of the moment and by the eloquence of Maharaja's explanations.

He clearly made the point that actually a true sad-guru only feels like an instrument. He never thinks of doing anything himself. Everything he does is out of the mercy of his own Sri Gurudeva.



When we left the samadhi of Srila Raghunatha das Goswami, Govinda priya dd came to me and said: "Look over there, your Gurudeva is coming." And true it was: he came walking along with his cane, right in our direction and Maharaja allowed me to fall back to be some more time with him.

I fell on the ground and paid my obeisances and getting up, my Gurudeva said to me in a very loving, childlike-funny-way: "Come with me!" I felt like a little manjari, being called by her guru-manjari ... wonderful!

So I went after him on the inner path around the samadhi of Srila Raghunatha das Goswami. It was pure ecstasy. I then said goodbye and I told him that we will come back next week. He smiled and waved his blessings.

Back at the bus, Maharaja and the others were waiting already for some few minutes. Then someone called Maharaja on the phone. A lady who works for his Mungir Mandir wanted to invite the whole group for prasadam in her house. Right now. So Maharaja told

us, that how could he say “no” to an offer made out of love? He had to go. What a great soul he is. So we all waited for her to show up and when she did, we walked together to her home, somewhere at Sri Radhakund. It was already nighttime and boy was it mystical or what?

After something like 20 minutes, we arrived at her house where she offered all of us a nice little meal with crackers, pakoras and a milk dessert. How loving she cared for Srila Maharaja.

Then it was time to get back to the bus and finally back to Sri Vrindavana, to our home, Sri Mungir Mandir. We safely arrived at about 2040h, fully in bliss, but also tired and ready for bed.

What a most wonderful day.

All glories to my Srila Gurudeva, to Srila Sadhu Maharaja and to the Holy Places we visited. Sadhu-sanga rocks!

Friday, December 30th

Today would be the day Govinda priya and I decided to marry in front of Sri Sri Radha Mohan and in the presence of Srila Sadhu Maharaja. He agreed to this day and I invited everyone to join the festivities. Maharaja planned a huge prasadam feast and he asked me to cook pasta in the evening. Days before, Kanhai das and I went to the ISKCON shop to buy the Italian penne noodles, Mozarella cheese, Olive oil and the tomato sauce.

I also invited Prema Prayojana das and his wife Svarnalata dd and told them to bring with them whoever wants to come.

The dressing of the bride started at about 1300h and would not be completed before 1615h. I too had to dress nicely and I was “forced” by a certain female to wear an Indian turban. So to please Maharaja I agreed to wear such a thing. To my surprise, I looked great!

For the huge lunch prasadam-feast, Prema came with his followers and it was a very nice occasion. Everyone was fed sumptuous prasadam and everyone was excited about our wedding.

After lunch, Prema Prayojana das and Srila Maharaja sat together with the devotees in Maharaja's room and he told Prema to lead bhajan and explain something. Then, like mentioned, the dressing of the bride...

The Brahmin-priest arrived at 1430h to prepare the fire-yajna-place and all that is needed. At about 1600h I arrived in the temple fully dressed and the temple was decorated so wonderfully and the altar including Sri Sri Radha Mohan looked extremely beautiful! When Govinda priya dd arrived, I couldn't believe my eyes...What a transformation!

Shyamali dd offered to decorate Govinda priya's face with sweet make-up and really, Govinda looked like a manjari, straight out of spiritual Vraja...I was pleasantly shocked, but shocked nonetheless. She looked so beautiful, but also different.

Soon the priest started the ceremony and we were into the marriage-zone. So many loving faces around us and Maharaja watching from the temple-courtyard like a loving father. At the end, the husband must give 7 promises to the bride and the bride has to give 4 promises to the husband. The priest was not able to convey the meaning of the promises in English, so he called Maharaja for help and mercifully, Srila Sadhu Maharaja sat next to us and explained all 11 promises to us, sometimes laughing out very loudly. This was truly a wonderful experience to have him sit next to you while giving the promises. Boy oh boy, did we laugh hard. Mainly Maharaja, actually.

Then our garments had been knotted and the ceremony was over, ending in a rousing kirtan in front of Sri Sri Radha Mohan.

During the kirtan I had to sneak out to cook the Italian pasta together with Raseshvara das and Kanhai das. And I think we did a wonderful job, according to the amount of pasta-prasadam the people were devouring!

After evening arati, there was a little evening feast, with aforementioned REAL pasta. Everyone freaked out about the pasta. Even Maharaja said he happily overate!



What a spectacular day! What a great blessing from Sri Sri Radha Mohan and Srila Sadhu Maharaja. Unbelievably happy we went to bed that night, for quite some time not able to find some sleep.

Unfortunately Premavati, our dear sister, had to leave during nighttime for her next stop Sri Lanka. With tears and a heavy heart we saw her leave and we know at the same time that she had a truly wonderful first time in Vrindavana. She already told Gurudeva and us that she will for sure come back again.

Saturday, December 31st

Today was the day of the other two couples. Every one of the family-members was very excited!

Again, the brides took their time in being made beautiful, but again, it was well worth it. At about 1700h, the ceremony started and again it was a wonderful event to behold. The couples were very happy and Srila Sadhu Maharaja again led through the promises and so the marriages were sealed with his last words. Very auspicious!

The brides looked so wonderful and the husbands were in complete bliss.

The lunch and dinner prasadam was again absolutely wonderful and Srila Maharaja and the devotees ate with a full heart!

In the evening we were sitting in Maharaja's room, talking about very important issues of our siddhanta (philosophy).

At the end, after wishing a happy new year, Govinda priya dd and I were alone with our beloved Srila Maharaja and these are the hours you treasure so much! It was a very peaceful ending of a long day (actually a two-day marriage marathon) and it was just very very blissful to sit with Maharaja and chant, relax and occasionally talk.

But this night, we talked about very intimate and personal things and we both left utterly stunned and completely overwhelmed with the mercy and the love Maharaja had just showered upon us.

But unfortunately this night would end kind of dramatically for Govinda priya dd. Late at night, short before morning time, she woke me up after having been severely tortured by stomach cramps and horrible pain in the digestive tract. I could only help by giving her heavy painkillers and holding her hand through the last half hour.

But like all great souls, she saw everything in the right light: pain in Vrindavan means ultra-purification and she was glad that she endured the night.

In the morning Maharaja confirmed her theory and told her: "Very good. Very old stuff is now out of you. You look very clean!"

She slept half of the next day and like a miracle, she got up in the afternoon, back in very good shape, ready to dive into the ocean of seva again.

Sunday, January 1st New Year's day

Today morning, after breakfast, we had a wonderful puspanjali (flower-throwing)-ceremony to Sri Sri Radha Mohan. Whoever felt like taking part joined the offering of prayers and flowers, first to Sri Gurudeva, then to Sri Sri Gaur-Nitai and finally to Sri Sri Radha Mohan.

The ceremony ended by everyone making a promise to Their Lordships for the next year coming up.

It was thought out by Syamali dd and performed by Sriman Narottama das, the head-pujari. Otherwise, the New Year's day went very peacefully. For lunch, some very nice Colombian devotees prepared a huge amount of pizza and everybody loved it.

Monday, January 2nd and Tuesday, January 3rd

Not much was on the agenda for these days, except, of course, SADHU-SANGA par excellence!

Every morning and evening we had bhajans and beautiful harikatha.

Srila Sadhu Maharaja encouraged everyone to come forward on both these days with questions.

Especially Hansaduta priya dd was very well prepared, using every moment to clarify issues and philosophical points.

- The true meaning of sannyas

Bhagavad-gita 18.2:

"The giving up of activities that are based on material desire is what great learned men call the renounced order of life [sannyasa]. And giving up the results of all activities is what the wise call renunciation [tyaga]."

Maharaja very nicely explained that true sannyas (renunciation) can only happen when there is enough positive attachment to Krishna. Without love for Radha and Krishna, the devotee only renounces artificially and it will not last.

- The different types of Sri Gurudeva
  - diksha-guru
  - siksha-guru
  - caitya-guru
- How to proceed in bhakti

Srila Sadhu Maharaja explained the famous verse from Srila Rupa Goswami:

adau sraddha tatah sadhu-  
sango 'tha bhajana-kriya  
tato 'nartha-nivrttih syat  
tato nintha rucis tatah  
athasaktis tato bhavas  
tatah premabhyudancati  
sadhakanam ayam premnah  
pradurbhave bhavet kramah

"In the beginning one must have a preliminary desire for self-realization. This will bring one to the stage of trying to associate with persons who are spiritually elevated. In the next stage one becomes initiated by an elevated spiritual master, and under his instruction the neophyte devotee begins the process of devotional service. By execution of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one becomes free from all material attachment, attains steadiness in self-realization, and acquires a taste for hearing about the Absolute Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna. This taste leads one further forward to attachment for Krishna consciousness, which is matured in bhava, or the preliminary stage of transcendental love of God. Real love for God is called prema, the highest perfectional stage of life."

(From BG 4.10 ppt)

There are 9 stages:

1. Sraddha — faith
2. Sadhu-sanga — association with devotees
3. Bhajana-kriya — trying to seriously take up the process of devotional service
4. Anartha-nivrtti — becoming free of all unwanted things
5. Nistha — steadiness in Krsna consciousness
6. Ruci — a deep taste for Krsna consciousness
7. Asakti — attachment for Krsna
8. Bhava — ecstasy, the first rays of the sun of love for Krsna
9. Prema — pure love for Krsna

In a most beautiful way, Maharaja explains those essential stages and everybody loved every word. It is not very easy to understand these concepts, but he truly mastered the art of making everybody understand them. We were so fortunate!

Wednesday, January 4th

Today we planned to plunder the MVT restaurant: Kanhai das, Rasesvara das, Diana, Govinda priya dd and I were very eager to accept the delicious prasadam in the famous ISKCON restaurant. Maharaja gave us his blessing under one condition: We have to bring him two slices of fine pizza. No problem with that!

So at about 1330h we took a motor-rikshaw and drove to the fine restaurant where we accepted very good prasadam, including cakes for dessert. Yummy! Of course we took with us two very nice slices of fresh pizza for our beloved Maharaja. On the way home they dropped me off at Ananda Dhama where I wanted to say good-bye to Prema Prayojana das and Svarnalata dd.

I met them on the balcony of their apartment complex and there I had a very long and intense talk with Prema.

Sometimes I watch myself getting very angry or even aggressive with people who seem to be mentally disturbed. I really try to love everybody, but sometimes I wholeheartedly fail, even if I do not intend to act that way.

To me, Srila Sadhu Maharaja is the perfect example: He loves every soul who comes near to him, sane or insane, friendly or challenging. I for my part can easily love those whom I find "nice" and "cool", but those who do not match my criteria I treat sometimes very bad. Prema Prayojana das told me that in these critical moments I should be very strict with myself, even criticizing myself for being "not nice" to the challenging persons. He told me that the fault lies in me. The world is like a mirror. I have to always see my Ishta-deva, Sri Sri Radha Mohan, in all souls and treat them very nicely. He said that especially in these circumstances I will grow the most spiritually if I succeed. Just try and do it. It will work. And he was right. We have to see Krishna in all who approach us. Love them, no conditions! High task, but worth doing it properly.

After something like 90 minutes, we bade farewell and Svarna walked me to the rikshaw-vallas. What wonderful friends! Thank you for being so kind with me.

In the evening Srila Sadhu Maharaja blessed us to go to Sri Radhakunda tomorrow to have another darshan with my beloved Srila Gurudeva, Sri Ananta das Babaji Maharaja. Kanhai das, Raseshvara das, Gopalshakti dd, Govinda priya dd and I were very happy having received the blessings of a sadhu to visit another sadhu. Maharaja loves my Gurudeva and it shows how openhearted Maharaja is in these times of narrow-mindedness. How awesome!

This evening, again the three of us (Maharaja, my wife and I) spoke about many different things and we enjoyed the solitude after these hectic days.

Thursday, January 5th

This morning I was alone with Srila Sadhu Maharaja and he told me many helpful things for further enhancement of my spiritual life.

The taxi arrived short before 0800h. Darshan-time was 0900h – 1000h, so we prayed to arrive at Sri Radhakunda in time.

After a nice drive to the most Holy Lake, we were on our way to my Gurudeva's ashram. Paying full stretched obeisances to Sri Radhakunda on our left side, we proceeded until we reached my Gurudeva's place.

There I met with my wonderful godbrother Yugal Kishor das and he wonderfully arranged a group-darshan for us all. I was so happy! My Gurudeva let us in after some time and it just was mind-blowing to be in one room with him. All devotees were thunderstruck and mesmerized by his radiating spirituality and we clearly felt Srila Sadhu Maharaja's blessings on our "back" to be in the presence of my Gurudeva so intimately.



He recognized me immediately and he smiled at me gently asking: "Tarun Govinda, how are you?" My heart melted and I was not this body anymore.

Yugal told me before that if you look upon Babaji Maharaja as an old man, he will reciprocate the same way. As his aspiring disciple, you should look upon him as a beautiful manjari. This I tried to do. I was here 2004 and 2007, but I never felt such a deep connection with my Gurudeva.

I asked him some question about the worship of Sri Giriraja as a stone and he clearly told me that we worship the Giriraj-stone as Krishna Himself, praying to Him for manjari-bhava. I was overwhelmed. But not only by his answer. This was on the superficial level. I am a very needy person. I NEED to know if someone loves me because I think I am not worth to be loved. I always thought: "Yes, Srila Gurudeva is very very nice and sweet and a perfected soul, but does he really know me and thus loves me?"

A very stupid and kind of offensive question, I know. But that is me, sorry.

This time, by looking him straight into his loving eyes, he told me with a voice from his heart into my heart: "Yes, I love you." My heart nearly exploded. I cannot really really explain what I felt, but it was pure ecstasy. His eyes spoke to my heart! I couldn't look away. After this, I floated above the earth and it was a confirmation of such a sweet nature. Of course it wasn't necessary, but still my humble self needed it and my Gurudeva blessed me with this darshan. Everybody in the room was shot full of spiritual energy and we all bowed down in respect. Everybody felt deeply the love he radiates and everybody bathed in it.

After the darshan, we all bought some books of Babaji Maharaja and then we left with a deep spiritual richness.

Deep in my selfish heart I clearly realized the mercy of Srila Sadhu Maharaja. He "formed" me in all the days before to be able to have such a deep encounter with my Gurudeva. Without Srila Sadhu Maharaja's blessing, such a darshan would not have been possible. How can I ever thank him?

In the evening I told everything to Maharaja and he was very happy for me and for us. Later that evening I was alone with him and I told him that I never met with my Gurudeva in such a way. Maharaja smiled sweetly and said sheepishly: "That is because you are with me." We laughed very hard and then we decided to go to sleep.

Friday, January 6th

Day of departure. After such intense days, it was not very easy to go away from our beloved Srila Sadhu Maharaja and his nectar-devotees. But it had to be done and we did it with some tears and a heavy, but immensely happy heart.

We promised to come back next Christmas and we already booked room 101. It was the very best days in our little spiritual life and words escape me AGAIN to describe my deep love and thankfulness for my most beloved siksha-guru, HG Srila BV Sadhu Maharaja. We were very fortunate to have been living with a sadhu of such a high caliber this time not in frivolous America, but in Radha's realm, Sri Vrindavana.

We are eternally indebted to him.

To the devotees there and last, but NEVER least to Sri Sri Radha Mohan, Who let us live in Their most wonderful temple.

Watching Them on the altar was like gazing into the spiritual world. You could not NOT be drawn into Their loving embrace!

Jay Sri Sri Radha Mohan!

Jay Srila Sadhu Maharaja!

Jay Vrindavana-dhama!

And to end this journal I want to try to show the glories of a true sadhu, Srila BV Sadhu Maharaja:

(1)

sri-guru-carana-padma, kevala-bhakati-sadma,  
bando mui savadhana mate  
jahara prasade bhai, e bhava toriya jai,  
krsna-prapti hoy jaha ha'te

***(1) The lotus feet of the spiritual master are the abode of pure devotional service. I bow down to those lotus feet with great care and attention. My dear brother (my dear mind)! It is through the grace of the spiritual master that we cross over this material existence and obtain Krsna.***

Sitting at the lotus feet of Srila Sadhu Maharaja, you have to feel relief from the material burning existence. To be in his presence, all is well. The soul feels home and the winds blow favourably. Srila Sadhu Maharaja truly is the abode of pure bhakti, bhakti for his beloved Ishta-deva, Sri Sri Radha Mohan. He sees Them in every soul and he is a master in bringing everybody close to Them. For me, there is no doubt. I lived with him now two times 2 weeks 24/7 and everyone of us who did this and some did more can testify! Maharaja lives and breathes pure Radha-Mohan-bhakti.

(2)

guru-mukha-padma-vakya, cittete koriya aikya,  
ar na koriho mane asa  
sri-guru-carane-rati, ei se uttama-gati,  
je prasade pure sarva asa

***(2) Make the teachings from the lotus mouth of the spiritual master one with your heart, and do not desire anything else. Attachment to the lotus feet of the spiritual master is the best means of spiritual advancement. By his mercy all desires for spiritual perfection are fulfilled.***

Yep. Whatever leaves his lotus mouth has deep meaning. No syllable goes in vain. This I realized many times. But you need to listen CAREFULLY and very CONSCIOUSLY. Whatever he teaches you, embrace it in your heart and it will NEVER leave you. Look at me, I know what I am talking about. I am a true mercy-case. As my siksha-guru, he taught me so many things...I can never repay him. I desired to have a wonderful darshan of my Gurudeva and Maharaja's blessing granted fulfillment.

(3)

cakhu-dan dilo jei, janme janme prabhu sei  
divya-jnan hrde prokasito  
prema-bhakti jaha hoite, avidya vinasa jate,  
vede gay jahara carito

***(3) He who has given me the gift of transcendental vision is my lord, birth after birth. By his mercy divine knowledge is revealed within the heart, bestowing prema-bhakti and destroying ignorance. The Vedic scriptures sing of his character.***

Srila Sadhu Maharaja often speaks about transcendental vision. By his everyday-dealings with the most variety of people, I can only testify that he has this vision. He sees his Ishta-deva in all souls. He treats EVERYONE with utmost respect and everybody feels loved by him. Many times during these long days I witnessed this extraordinary thing.

Divine knowledge is revealed to him through his Sri Gurudeva, Srila Govinda das Babaji Maharaja. So Srila Sadhu Maharaja's true glory lies in his humility. He only sees himself as an instrument of his Gurudeva. This makes him a real guru! This real humility makes him so wonderful. His real love for all jivas enables him to bestow Radha-Mohan-prema. In his presence, ignorance is miles and miles away.

(4)

sri-guru karuna-sindhu, adhama janara bandhu  
lokanath lokera jivana  
(srila prabhupada lokera jivana!)  
ha ha prabhu kora doya, deho more pada chaya  
ebe jasa ghusuk tribhuvana  
(prabhupada patita pavana!)

***(4) O spiritual master, ocean of mercy, and friend of the fallen souls, you are the teacher of everyone and the life of all people. O master! Be merciful unto me, and give me the shade of your lotus feet. May your glories now be proclaimed throughout the three worlds.***

Srila Sadhu Maharaja is truly an ocean of mercy. And this on many levels. Our friends Diana and Premavati were very fearful and anxious to be the first time in Vrindavana. You should have seen how Maharaja made them feel home and LOVED! To both he said: "I love you. You are my daughter." Both left happy as they can be and during their stay felt like in the home of a really caring and loving father.

What to speak of Govinda priya dd and my lowly self...

I also could see how he tirelessly cares for all devotees living there in the Mungir Mandir. And I mean ALL. Not a single devotee he lets “out of sight”. When Gopal Shakti dd was sick, Maharaja felt it and ordered us to check on her. Unbelievable. Friend of the fallen souls. He considers me as his friend and I am fallen enough, that says it all. He truly is a friend of the fallen. He teaches by his shining example minute by minute, second by second, always putting him last. He is not a friend of wise and highly educated words, he teaches by love-in-action, bhakti. Watch and learn, brothers and sisters!

Dear Srila Sadhu Maharaja, please always give me the shade of your lotus feet. I love you with all my heart and soul and I can never repay you my debts. Your love and patience helped me to become a better person and your spiritual guidance of love-in-action helped me to see and realize what it takes to become a devotee.

In deep affection  
Tarun Govinda das