

Śrī-Śrī Rādhākuṇḍāṣṭakam

Eight prayers to Śrī Rādhākuṇḍa



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Śrī-Śrī Rādhākunḍāṣṭakam

Eight prayers to Śrī Rādhākunḍa

VERSE 1:

*vṛṣabha-danuja-nāśān narma-dharmokti-raṅgair
 nikhila-nija-sakhībhir yat sva-hastena pūrṇam
 prakaṭitam api vṛṇdāraṇya-rājñā pramodaiḥ
 tad ati-surabhi rādhā-kuṇḍam evāśrayo me*

vṛṣabha - bull; *danuja* - demon; *nāśāt* - from destruction; *narma* - joke; *dharma* - religious; *uktī* - words; *raṅgaiḥ* - with pastimes; *nikhila* - complete; *nija* - own; *sakhībhiḥ* - with girlfriends; *yat* - what; *sva* - own; *hastena* - with the hand; *pūrṇam* - filled; *prakaṭitam* - revealed; *api* - even; *vṛṇdāraṇya* - of Vṛṇḍāvana; *rājñā* - by the king; *pramodaiḥ* - with pleasures; *tad* - that; *ati* - very; *surabhi* - fragrant or beautiful; *rādhākuṇḍam* - Rādhākunḍa; *eva* - certainly; *āśrayaiḥ* - shelter; *me* - my.

That very dear, beautiful and fragrant Rādhākunḍa, which appeared after a joking quarrel about piety between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa after the killing of the Ariṣṭa bull demon, and which was joyfully revealed and filled up by Śrī Rādhā's own hand with the assistance of Her girlfriends —this Rādhākunḍa is my only shelter!

Stavāṁṛta Kaṇā Vyākhyā: In the preceding ‘Śrī Govardhanāśraya-daśakam’ Śrīpāda Raghunātha discussed the importance of taking shelter of Govardhana and in his ‘Śrī Govardhana-vāsa-Prārthanā-daśakam’ he prayed for living at the base of Govardhana.

Although there are many holy lakes and ponds around Govardhana Hill, Śrī Dāsa Gosvāmī is mostly attached to Śrī Rādhākunḍa, because Rādhākunḍa’s glories equal Śrī Rādhā’s glories. *kuṇḍera mahimā yeno rādhāra mahimā* (C.C.).

Particularly the desire to serve Śrī Rādhā awoke within the heart of Śrī Raghunātha when he first saw the *kuṇḍa*. In Vilāpa Kusumāñjali (15) he has written:

*yadā tava sarovaram sarasa bhṛngasaṅghollasat
saroruhakulojvalam madhura vāri sampūritam
sphuṭat sarasijākṣi he nayana yugma sākṣād vabhai
tadaiva mama lālasājani tavaiva dāsye rase*

"O Blooming lotus-eyed girl (Rādhe)! When my eyes directly saw Your pond (Rādhākunḍa), which is filled with sweet water and lotus flowers surrounded by blissfully humming bees, then I really got the desire to taste the nectar of Your service!"²³

Hence Śrī Raghunātha glorifies Śrī Rādhākunḍa in this Rādhākunḍāṣṭakam because he desires to live on its banks. In this verse he describes the appearance of Śrī Rādhākunda, which is also praised as *vraja-mukuta-maṇi*, the crown jewel of all holy places of Vraja.

Although Śrī Rādhākunḍa and Śyāmakuṇḍa are manifest from beginningless time during Kṛṣṇa’s manifest pastimes on

²³ See the Parimala Kaṇā-comment on Vilāpa Kusumāñjali, verse 15, by Śrīla Ananta dāsa Bābājī.

earth, Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava and Their *sakhīs* used a humorous pastime to reveal the *kuṇḍas*. In the Ādi-Varāha-Purāṇa, Govardhana-Parikramā-Prasaṅga, it is thus described:

*gaṅgāyāś cottaram gatvā devasya cakriṇah;
ariṣṭena samāṇ yatra mahad yuddhaṁ pravartitam
ghātayitvā tatas tasminnariṣṭam vṛṣarūpiṇam;
kopena pāṛṣṇi-ghātēna mahyāś tīrtham prakalpitam
vṛṣabhbhasya vadho jñeyā ātmanah śuddhim icchatā;
snātas tatra tadā kṛṣṇo vṛṣaiṇ hatvā sagopakah
vipāpmā rādhām provāca katham bhadre bhaviṣyasi;
vṛṣa hato mayā cāyam arīṣṭah pāpa sūcakah
tatra rādhā samāśliṣya kṛṣṇam akliṣṭa kāriṇam;
sva nāmnā viditam kuṇḍam kṛtaṁ tīrtham adūrataḥ
rādhākunḍam iti khyātam sarva pāpaharam śubham*

"On the northern side of Mānasa Gaṅgā, the God of Gods Who carries a disc (Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa) began a fierce fight with Ariṣṭasura. Then, to atone for the sin of killing a bull, the Lord angrily struck the ground with His left heel and revealed a great holy tank (Śyāmākunḍa) in which He bathed for purification along with His cowherd boyfriends. (According to the Hari Vaiṁśa, Kṛṣṇa then entered the *goṣṭha* (meadows) with His friends for an hour or so, after which He called Śrī Rādhā and the *gopīs* for a Rāsa-dance with His all-attractive flute playing)

Then He said: "Bhadre! (beautiful, auspicious Rādhe) Now I am purified from the sin of killing a bull, how will You get purified now (the whole area is, after all, polluted by the sin I committed and everyone must share my *karma* for it!)?

Then Rādhā embraced Kṛṣṇa, the remover of all distress Who can easily perform difficult tasks like destroying demons, and made a lake which was named after Her on the west of

Śyāma's *kuṇḍa*. This auspicious lake destroying all sins, is known as **Śrī Rādhākuṇḍa**."

How Śrī Rādhākuṇḍa appeared is also elaborately described by *parama-surasika-kavi* Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda in his Sārārtha Darsinī-commentary on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, verse 10.36.15, 'evam kakudminam'.

Here he quotes twenty verses from the Purāṇas describing the humorous pastimes surrounding the advent of Śrī Rādhākuṇḍa and Śrī Śyāmakuṇḍa. The essence of this story is written down here.²⁴

After Kṛṣṇa had killed the demon named Ariṣṭāsura, who had assumed the form of a bull, Śrī Rādhārāṇī and Her girlfriends blamed Him for killing a bull and told Him that He could only get purified from this sin by bathing in all the holy waters if He ever wanted to gain qualification to touch the *gopīs* again!

Hearing their words Kṛṣṇa forcefully struck the ground with His left heel and thus made the water of the Bhogavatī Gaṅgā appear from the Pātāla-region. Like this Kṛṣṇa invoked all the holy waters and thus revealed **Śrī Śyāmakuṇḍa**.

He bathed in the water of this *kuṇḍa* and then told all the holy waters of the world to appear within it. The *gopīs* did not believe Him, though and therefore by Kṛṣṇa's wish, all the holy waters assumed visible forms and thus introduced themselves.

Kṛṣṇa then jokingly told the *gopīs* that He had revealed such an enormous holy place, but that they were bereft of all religiosity and pious merit. Hearing these joking challenges of Kṛṣṇa Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī wanted to reveal another beautiful *kuṇḍa*, and, seeing a huge cavity created by the hooves of the bull on the western side of Śyāmakuṇḍa, She began to dig out

²⁴ The original verses with their comments can be read in Śrīla Ananta dāsa Bābājī's booklet 'Śrī-Śrī Rādhākuṇḍera Mahimā O Aitihya'.

the earth there with Her own hands assisted by Her girlfriends.

Within 48 minutes She had dug out a beautiful lake of Her own. In this way **Śrī Rādhākunḍa** advented itself. Then Kṛṣṇa wanted to fill up Rādhākunḍa with all the holy waters which had filled up Śyāmakuṇḍa, but Rādhārāṇī refused, saying that the water of Śyāmakuṇḍa, in which Śyāmasundara had bathed, was now stained by His sin of killing a bull and that Her creation of Rādhākunḍa would thus become useless.

So She went with Her *sakhīs* to the pure Mānasa-Gaṅgā lake and filled up Her own *kunḍa* with its water. Then, on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's indication, all the holy waters of Śyāmakuṇḍa arose and offered choice praises and obeisances unto Śrī Rādhikā. Being satisfied with these praises Rādhārāṇī gave them permission to enter into Her *kunḍa*, so they broke the dam which existed between the *kunḍas* and forcefully entered into Śrī Rādhākunḍa, thereby filling it up.

In this *kunḍa* Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa eternally play Their watersports. Śrī Rādhākunḍa is even more glorious than Śyāmakuṇḍa and in this lake Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa always play Their midday-pastimes.

Hearing about the appearance of Rādhākunḍa, Bhagavatī (the holy mother) Paurṇamāśī ecstatically called Vṛndādevī (the presiding goddess of the Vraja-forests) and told her to plant various trees and vines on all four banks of the *kunḍas*. According to her own wish, Vṛndādevī also had different jewelled and pearly *ghāṭas* (bathing places) built which were suitable for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, with stairs leading down to the *kunḍa*.

She arranged for beautiful *kuñjas* to be laid out with different kinds of trees, vines and flowers. On both sides of the Ghāṭa she had charming, wish-yielding *kalpavṛkṣa*-trees planted. Singing male and female parrots, pigeons, cuckoos and peacocks are

always sitting on the branches of these trees and the *kuñjas* are filled with golden, yellow, green, red, blue and white lotus flowers.

On all four sides of the *kuñda* are the enchanting arbours of Lalitā, Viśākhā and the other *sakhīs*. This Śrī Rādhākunḍa is the place where Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava have Their most confidential, eternal midday-pastimes.

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī says: "May this very fragrant and beautiful Rādhākunḍa be my only shelter."

śrī nandanandana saha māti raṅga rase;
 rādhā nija kuṇḍavara karilā prakāše
 vṛṣasura vināśante pariḥāsa chale;
 sakhi saha rādhā khanana kori nija kare
 prakaṭita koriyāche yei sarovara;
 atiśaya ramaṇīya mano mugdhakara
 sei rādhākunḍa mora ekānta āśraya;
 hauk ei prārthanā koriye niścoya

"May that Rādhākunḍa, where Śrī Nanda-Nandana blissfully revealed the greatest of holy tanks with Rādhā, joking with Her after killing the Ariṣṭāsura, which was dug out by hand by Rādhā and Her *sakhīs* and which is the most mind-enchanting place in existence, be my only shelter. Therein lies my ardent prayer!"

VERSE 2:

vraja-bhuvi mura-śatroḥ preyasīnāṁ nikāmair
 asulabham api tūrṇāṁ prema-kalpa-drumāṁ tam
 janayati hṛdi bhūmau snātūr uccair priyāṁ yat
 tad ati-surabhi rādhā-kuṇḍam evāśrayo me

vrajabhuvi - Vraja; *muraśatroḥ* - of Kṛṣṇa; *preyasiṇāṁ* - of the dear girls; *nikāmaīḥ* - by desires; *asulabham* - hard to obtain; *api* - even; *tūrṇāṁ* - swiftly; *prema* - of love of God; *kalpadrumāṁ* - desire tree; *tvam* - you; *janayati* - generates; *hṛdi* - heart; *bhūmau* - in the ground; *snātuḥ* - of a bather; *uccaiḥ* - greatly; *priyāṁ* - dear; *yat* - which; *tat* - that; *ati* - very; *surabhi* - fragrant, beautiful; *rādhākuṇḍam* - Rādhākuṇḍa; *eva* - only; *āśrayaḥ* - shelter; *me* - my.

That very fragrant, dear and beautiful Rādhākuṇḍa, which instantly makes a desire tree of *prema* (love of God) sprout in the heart-land of anyone who bathes there, although this is very difficult to attain even for Kṛṣṇa's beloveds in Vrajabhumi - this Rādhākuṇḍa is my only shelter!

Stavāṁṛta Kaṇā Vyākhyā: In this verse Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī explains more confidential truths about Śrī Rādhākuṇḍa, saying: "The desire tree of *prema* of anyone who bathes there grows here".

One may ask here: "How can that supreme goal which is only attained after a long time of devotional practice be suddenly attained just by bathing in Rādhākuṇḍa?" The answer is: Rādhākuṇḍa's glories are said to be equal to Rādhārāṇī's glories. That love which is normally only attained after a long time of practice (*sādhyā vastu sādhana vinā keho nāhi pāy*, no one can attain the goal without practicing, C.C.) is attained simply by seeing Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, even without performing any *sādhanā*. This is the special feature of Rādhārāṇī which even *Svayam Bhagavān* Śrī Vrajendra-Nandana (Kṛṣṇa) does not have!

Śrīmat Sanātana Gosvāmī has written in his Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmrta (2.5.233) *sā rādhikā bhagavatī kvacid iksyate cet premā tad anubhavam ṛcchati mūrtimān saḥ*

"Anyone who somehow sees the supreme Goddess Rādhikā will experience *prema* in its real form". Therefore it is no wonder that a single bath in Rādhākunḍa causes the tree of *prema* to sprout in the field of one's heart.

One may now ask: "But I see thousands of men and women taking bath in Rādhākunḍa every year! Why don't I see at least one of them getting *prema* at once then? How can I establish my faith in these statements of the great self-realized souls?"

To this the answer of the Mahājanas will be: "Wherever the scriptures and the saints proclaim such miraculous and inconceivable results, it must be understood to refer to offenseless practitioners. Only an offenseless soul who bathes in Rādhākunḍa will attain love of God, otherwise this would actually be visible on anyone who bathes there."

Such offenseless persons are very rare and the fruits of such a benediction are not visible to our eyes so soon. There is no reason to doubt these glorifications. But even an offensive person who bathes in Rādhākunḍa can get rid of his offensive attitude and attain this supreme goal by patiently bathing in Rādhākunḍa again and again. This is the realized conclusion of the scriptures and the great saints."

Someone may also think: "The whole of Vraja-maṇḍala has the power to give love of God to its pilgrims for the Padma Purāna states 'dinam ekam nivāsena harau bhaktir prajāyate'

"Simply by staying in the Mathurā-district for one day one will attain devotion to Lord Hari." What is then so special about bathing in Rādhākunḍa?

The answer to this is: "Love for Kṛṣṇa is greater than love for any other form of God, because Kṛṣṇa is the Original

Personality of Godhead. The pure and intimate love of the *rāgātmikā-vrajavāsīs* is far greater than the reverential devotion of the inhabitants of Dvārakā and Mathurā. to Lord Hari

On top of that, as the text says, the *prema-kalpadruma* (desire tree of love) attained by bathing in Rādhākuṇḍa is not only unattainable by *aiśvarya* devotees or by those who worship Kṛṣṇa in the mood of a servant, friend, or parent, but it is even hard to attain by Kṛṣṇa's own *madhura-bhāvamayī* girlfriends.

It is well known that the amorous mellow is superior to the fraternal and servitude-mellow.

*dāsyā sakhyā, vātsalyā, āra śringāra;
cāri bhāvera caturvidha bhaktai ādhāra
nija nija bhāva sabe śreṣṭha kori māne;
nija bhāve kore kṛṣṇa sukha āsvādane
taṭastha hoiyā mone vicāra yadi kori;
saba rasa hoite śringāra adhika mādhuri*

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Ādi 4)

"There are four kinds of feelings devotees can have for the Lord: servitude, fraternal love, parental love and amorous love. Everyone considers his own feeling to be the best and most fulfilling and through these feelings he makes Kṛṣṇa relish happiness according to the quantity and quality of his love. But if a *rasika* considers things from a neutral point of view, considering the superiority and inferiority of the different ingredients of relish, such as *vibhāvas*²⁵, *anubhāvas*²⁶, *sāttvika*

²⁵ Cause of an emotion.

²⁶ Consequent emotion.

*bhāvas*²⁷ and *vyabhicāri-bhāvas*²⁸, then we will see that the amorous love has the sweetest taste and it is the most astonishing."

The crown jewel of all these *madhura-rasa-nāyikās*, (*gopīs*) is Vṛśabhānu's princess Śrī Rādhārāṇī. Her astonishing *mādana-rasa* gives the greatest and indeed complete relish to Kṛṣṇa and She has mercifully infused this sweet *rasa* in Her surrendered girlfriends and maidservants too.

Therefore in the kingdom of ecstatic love the relish of the *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs* reigns supreme. Still, the maidservants taste even more *rasa* than the *sakhīs*. It is their *prema* which is hard to attain even for Kṛṣṇa's beloveds (the *sakhīs*), but which is sown in the heart of someone who faithfully and offenselessly bathes in Śrī Rādhākunḍa!

Śrīpāda Raghunātha says: "May my dear most and most desired Śrī Rādhākunḍa be my shelter!"

*nitya snāna kore yihoni śrī rādhākuṇḍete;
kṛṣṇa prema kalpaṛkṣa tāra hrdayete
prādurbhūta hoy śīghra kuṇḍera prabhāve;
vraje vraja rāmādera-o yāhā to durlabhe
yei rādhākuṇḍa hoy atīsaya priya;
sei sarovara mora ekānta āśraya*

"The wish-yielding tree of love for Kṛṣṇa swiftly grows in the heart of anyone who always bathes in Śrī Rādhākunḍa. Such is the prowess of the *kuṇḍa*! That dear most Rādhākunḍa which is hard to attain even by the Vraja-*gopīs*, is my only shelter!"

²⁷ Existential ecstasies, like goose pimples, tears, shivering and inertia.

²⁸ Adulterated ecstasies.

VERSE 3:

*agha-ripur api yatnād atra devyāḥ prasāda-
prasara-kṛta-katākṣa-prāpti-kāmaḥ prakāmam
anusarati yad ucaaiḥ snāna-sevānubandhais
tat ati-surabhi rādhā-kuṇḍam evāśrayo me*

aghariṇi - Kṛṣṇa; api - even; yatnāt - carefully; yatra - where; devyāḥ - of a goddess; prasāda - mercy; prasara - manifestation; kṛta - done; katākṣa - glance; prāpti - attainment; kāmaḥ - desire; prakāmam - voluntary; anusarati - follows; yad - which; uccaiḥ - greatly; snāna - bathing; sevā - service; anubandhais - expert; tat - that; ati - very; surabhi - fragrant, beautiful; rādhākuṇḍam - Rādhākunḍa; eva - only; āśrayah - shelter; me - my.

That very dear, beautiful and fragrant Rādhākuṇḍa, where even Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Aghasura, eagerly and carefully bathes and renders submissive and expert devotional service, thereby desiring to obtain the merciful glance of goddess Rādhikā - this Rādhākuṇḍa is my only shelter!

Stavāṁṛta Kanā Vyākhyā: Śrīla Dāsa Gosvāmī is the embodiment of Śrī Rādhākuṇḍa's mercy and therefore he is always aware of the *kuṇḍa*'s glories. For the sake of all the devotees who take shelter of Rādhārāṇī's lotus feet he reveals all the confidential truths about Rādhākuṇḍa in this Rādhākuṇḍāṣṭakam.

In the previous verse it was explained that the wish yielding tree of *mañjari-bhāva* sprouts in the hearts of those who simply bathe in Rādhākuṇḍa. In this verse it is shown that not only the neophyte-devotees but even Vrajendra-Nandana, the original

Personality of Godhead, has His greatest desires fulfilled here by Śrī Rādhā's grace.

This verse describes the sweet memory of a vision attained one day. Once Śrīpāda Raghunātha falls on the bank of Rādhākuṇḍa, weeping out of separation from Śrī Rādhārāṇī. His life-airs reach up to his throat due to his strong feelings of love-in-separation. Suddenly he sees a sweet pastime before him. Absorbed in his *mañjari-svarūpa* he sees the sweet meeting of Śrī-Śrī-Rādhā-Mādhava on the bank of the *kuṇḍa*. The Śrī Yugala sits down in a beautiful *kuñja* on a jewelled throne faced by Their girlfriends like Lalitā and Viśākhā, illuminating the bower house with Their blue and golden auras. Many wave-like jokes well up in the ocean of Their conversation and maid-servants are around everywhere, absorbed in their service.

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa, in his transcendental identity as Tulasī Mañjari, serves the Divine Couple by fanning Them. Everyone is immersed in boundless bliss. Then one very amazing wave wells up in this ocean of divine ecstasy: Śrīmatī sees Her own golden lustre reflected in Śyāma's shining emerald-coloured bluish chest and She becomes angry with Him, taking this lustre to be one of Her rival *gopīs*.

*rasavatī rāi rasikavara thāma;
 śyāma tanu mukure herai anupāma
 nija pratibimba śyāma aṅge heri;
 rokhe kohoto dhanī ānana pheri
 nāgara eto kiye cañcala bheli;
 hāmāri samukhe koru āna saṅe keli
 eto kohi rāi korolo tahi māna;
 āna thāme cololi upekhiyā kāna*

*sahacarīgāṇa taba kotoye bujhāya;
uddhava dāsa minati koru pāy*

(Pada Kalpataru)

"Rasavatī Rāī looked in the peerless mirror of the body of Śyāma, the greatest Rasika. Seeing Her own reflection there Dhani²⁹ became angry and turned Her face away from Him, saying: 'Nāgara'³⁰ You've become so naughty that You're enjoying with another girl right in front of us!' Seeing that Rāī was angry Kṛṣṇa went somewhere else, thus leaving and ignoring Her. Now the *sakhīs* have quite some explaining to do to Rāī! Uddhava dāsa thus humbly prays at Śrī Rādhā's lotus feet."

Before coming to Rādhākunḍa, Rādhā had heard that Candrāvalī's girlfriend Śyāmalā had met Śyāmasundara on the bank of Kusuma-Sarovara (close to Rādhākunḍa) and had told Him where He could meet Candrāvalī, and now, seeing Her own reflection in His body, Rādhikā anxiously presumed that Kṛṣṇa had actually met her. "Oh! Śyāma is playing with Candrāvalī on His lap right before Me! Who can tolerate that?"

She went to another cottage near Rādhākunḍa, covered Her head with Her veil and proudly turned Her back on Kṛṣṇa! Her girlfriends tried to convince Her of Kṛṣṇa's innocence, but in vain!

*sundari! jānalum̄ tuyā dūra bhāṇa
hari ura mukure, heri nija cāhari,
tāhe sautinī kori māna*

²⁹ Fortunate Rādhā.

³⁰ Lover, lit. 'man about town'.

"O Beautiful girl! We know that You are mistaking! You've seen Your own reflection in Hari's mirror-like chest and You take it to be one of Your rivals!"

*kānana kuñje, kusuma śara jarajara,
vayāna heri puna tori.
bhāgye milalo puna, tohe kamala mukhi,
rokhe cololi mukha modi*

"We see Your face now in this *kuñja*-forest tormented by Cupid's floral arrows! O lotus faced girl! Fortunately You have met Him again, but now You are angrily turning Your face away from Him!"

*koto koto mugadhi, aiche bhelo vañchita,
hari puna tāhe nā lāgi.
tuhum puñavatī tohe, yohi mānāoto,
ki kohobo tohāri sohāgi.*

"How many young girls aren't there, all deprived of Hari's love! He doesn't care about them! But You are such a fortunate girl! Who can describe Your fortune in love?"

*to vinu śutalo, śitala bhūtale,
dūratara viraha hutāśe
tuyā koro sarasa, paraśe rijhāoha
tohe koho govinda dāsa*

"When He is deprived of Your love He sleeps on the cold floor, but He doesn't feel cold at all for He's burning in the fire of separation from You! Please soothe Him once more with Your blessed touch, Govinda Dāsa says to You!"

But Śrīmatī's *māna* did not subside because of the *sakhīs'* canvassing words. When She heard their words She thought that they were all engaged by Kṛṣṇa in pacifying Her with false and crooked words.

As a princess, She gave up Her honour, Her family reputation and Her shame and She went through different kinds of bodily suffering to come out of Her house to see this boy, and now He enjoys with one of Her rivals on His lap right before Her? This agony is intolerable!

When the *sakhīs* saw that Śrīmatī could not be pacified, they went to Kṛṣṇa and urged Him to personally apologize to Her lotus feet. He went to Her and tried His best:

*yāhāṁ sakhiṣaṇa, saba rāi bujhāyato,
turite ālo tāhā kāna.
heraite kamala vayānī, dhanī mānī
avanata korolo vayāna*

"The *sakhīs* all tried to explain to Rāī the truth of the matter when Kṛṣṇa quickly arrived there. Seeing Him, lotus faced Dhanī-Mānī lowered Her face."

*heraite nāgara, gadagada antara,
mana māhā bhelo bahu bhīte.
gale pītāmbara, caraṇa yugala dhara,
kohotohi gadagada cite*

"Seeing this Nāgara became very much afraid at heart and spoke with faltering voice, keeping His Pītāmbara at His neck and clasping both Her lotus feet."

*sundari! michāi koroho mujhe māna.
nirahetu hetu, jāni tuhu rokhali.
pratibimba heri koho āna.*

"O beautiful girl! You are wrongly proud at Me for no reason!
You mistook Your own reflection to be some other girl!"

*tuyā vine nayane, āna nāhi heriye,
nā kohiye āna saie bāta.
tohāri sakhinī vine, bāta nā puchiye,
nā bosiyē kāhuka sātha*

"My eyes don't see anyone else but You. I don't speak with anyone else. I don't inquire from anyone else but from Your girlfriends or maidservants and I don't sit with anyone else either!"

*tab tuhumān kāhe, māna mujhe korotahi,
nā bujhiye tuyā manakāje
uddhava dāsa minati, kori kohotohi
heraho nāgara rāja*

"But still You maintain this unreasonable huff against Me; I don't understand what's on Your mind! Uddhava dāsa humbly prays to You: Look at Your king of lovers!"

Despite Nāgara's endeavours Śrīmatī's *māna* was not broken. She just stubbornly sat there, covering Her head with Her veil. The rejected Nāgara thought of different means to break Śrīmatī's *māna*. Suddenly He thought: "Aho! I'm standing on the bank of Rādhākunḍa! By the grace of the *kunḍa* I will also be showered by the grace of Śrī Kuṇḍeśvarī!

After all, the Mahājanas have written:

śrī kṛṣṇa yokhon rādhā daraśana lāgi utkaṇṭhita hoy;
 sakala upāya viphala hoiyā rādhākuṇḍāśraya loy
 tat kāle rādhāra pāya daraśana emati kuṇḍa prabhāva;
 rādhāra-o temati śyāmakuṇḍāśraye kṛṣṇa saṅga hoy lābha

"When Kṛṣṇa becomes eager to see Rādhā, and all His endeavours fail, He takes shelter of Rādhākunḍa. At that moment He gets the audience of Rādhā on the strength of the *kuṇḍa*. In the same way Rādhā also takes shelter of Śyāmakuṇḍa and thus attains the company of Śrī Kṛṣṇa."

In this way some hope illuminated Nāgara's desperate heart. He bathed in Śrī Rādhākunḍa, picked flowers from the trees and vines on its banks and sat down on His knees on the jewelled steps leading down to the *kuṇḍa*, moistening the flowers with His tears of love before throwing them into the *kuṇḍa* as a devotional offering. He offered prostrated obeisances to the *kuṇḍa* while praying: "O Śrī Rādhākunḍa! May I get the merciful glance of your Īśvarī (presiding goddess) by your grace!"

One *sakhī* who witnessed Nāgara's activities ran to Śrīmatī's *kuṇḍa* and told Kuṇḍeśvarī of Kṛṣṇa's devotional service to Her *kuṇḍa*, making tears of compassion trickle from Her lotus like eyes. The *sakhīs* understood that Śrīmatī was pleased with Kṛṣṇa again, so they quickly brought Him to Her.

Kuṇḍeśvarī, being pleased with this servant of the *kuṇḍa*, **cast a merciful glance at Him, filled with the *rasa* of love.** Nāgara, understanding that His service of the *kuṇḍa* was successful, considered Himself blessed and the *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs* were also blessed by seeing the sweet meeting of the Yugala. Remembering his vision of this pastime Śrī Raghunātha said:

*anyera kā kathā svayam̄ vrajendranandana;
 rādhikāra praṇaya kaṭakṣa korite darśana
 rādhā-priya rādhākuṇḍe avagāhana kore;
 sevā pāripāṭye koto bhāse aśru-nīre
 atiśaya kamaniya rādhākuṇḍa nāma;
 satata āśraya hok prema pariṇāma*

"What to speak of others, even Vrajendra-Nandana Himself, in order to receive Rādhikā's loving glance, bathes in Rādhā's dear lake Rādhākuṇḍa! Floating on His own tears, He shows His dexterity in devotional service. May the most enchanting and lovely name of Rādhākuṇḍa always be my shelter, culminating in *prema*!"

VERSE 4:

*vraja-bhuvana-sudhāṁśoḥ prema-bhūmir nikāmam̄
 vraja-madhura-kiśorī-mauli-ratna-priyeva
 paricitam̄ api nāmnā yā ca tenaiva tasyās
 tad ati-surabhi rādhā-kuṇḍam evāśrayo me*

vraja bhuvana - the land of Vraja; *sudhāṁśoḥ* - of the moon; *prema* - love; *bhūmīḥ* - abode; *nikāmam̄* - very much; *vraja* - of Vraja; *madhura* - sweet; *kiśorī* - adolescent girl; *mauli* - crown; *ratna* - jewel; *priya* - dear; *iva* - just like; *paricitam̄* - known; *api* - even; *nāmnā* - by name; *yat* - what; *ca* - and; *tena* - by him; *eva* - certainly; *tasyāḥ* - his; *tad* - that; *ati* - very; *surabhi* - fragrant, beautiful; *rādhākuṇḍam* - Rādhākuṇḍa; *eva* - only; *āśrayah* - shelter; *me* - my.

That very dear, beautiful and fragrant Rādhākuṇḍa, which is the abode of love for the moon of Vraja (Kṛṣṇa),

which is as dear to Him as the crown jewel of sweet adolescent girls of Vraja (Śrī Rādhikā) Herself and which was called after Her by Kṛṣṇa - this Rādhākunḍa is my only shelter!

Stavāmrta Kanā Vyākhyā: How many self manifested, transcendental realizations of the glories of Rādhākunḍa are coming to Śrī Raghunātha, who is the greatest object of mercy of Rādhākunḍa, the lake of which he has taken shelter!

In the previous verse Śrī Raghunātha explained how even Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Who is the universal object of worship, must worship Rādhākunḍa in order to attain the mercy of *mānī* Rādhā and get His desires fulfilled. One may now ask: "Did Śrī Kṛṣṇa worship Rādhākunḍa to have His own desires fulfilled or simply because the place is so dear to Him? After all, there is no glory in motivated service (*sakāma sevā*), because when the *sevyā* (object of service) does not fulfill the worshiper's desires such a 'devotee' will give up his worship. Service becomes eternal and earnest when the *sevyā* is dear to the devotee and to answer such questions this verse has been written.

It has been said that Śrī Rādhākunḍa is as dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa the moon of Vraja as is Śrī Rādhā, the crown jewel of adolescent girls of Vraja.

*yathā rādhā priyā viṣṇos tasyā kūḍāni priyam tathā
sarva gopīṣu saivaika viṣṇor atyanta vallabhā*

"Just as Rādhā is dear to Lord Viṣṇu, so is Her lake. Of all the *gopīs* She is Lord Viṣṇu's most beloved One."

This verse from the Padma-Purāṇa proves that it is simply out of love that Kṛṣṇa worships Rādhākunḍa as described in the previous verse and not just for the fulfillment of His own

desires. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the emperor of the fullest *rasa* and Śrī Rādhā is the empress of the fullest *bhāva*. When we study *rasa* and *bhāva* we find that *bhāva* is the worshipper and *rasa* is the worshipped. Within this worshipped/worshipper relationship Śrī Rādhā is the crown jewel of all Vraja's *mahābhāvavatī-madhura-kisorīs*³¹, because She can fulfill all of Kṛṣṇa's desires.

kṛṣṇa vāñchā-pūrti-rūpa kore ārādhane; ataeva 'rādhikā' nāma purāṇe vākhāne (C.C.) "She worships Kṛṣṇa by satisfying all of His senses, hence the Purāṇas call Her 'Rādhikā'."

Śrīpāda Śuka Muni describes how the *gopīs* reveal the extraordinary status of Śrī Rādhā's worship of Kṛṣṇa:

*anayārādhito nūnam bhagavān harir iśvarah
yanno vihāya govinda prīto yām anayad rahāḥ*

(Bhāgavata 10.30.28)

" Lord Hari Who destroys the misery of His devotees and Who fulfills their desires must certainly have been worshipped by this girl because Govinda was so much in love with Her that He left us all behind and took Her along to another place."

From this statement we can understand what is the distinction between the worship of Rādhā and the worship of all the other *mahābhāvavatī-gopasundarīs*. The verbal root *rādh* means 'to worship' and She who worships is therefore named Rādhā, the greatest of all the milkmaids of Vraja to worship Kṛṣṇa. No other *gopī* in Vraja has such a significant name.

³¹ There is nothing in the world as sweet as *mahābhāva*, both for the object and the subject.

For instance, anything which contains water can be called *jaladhi* but pools, ponds and rivers are never called *jaladhi* by anyone. When one says *jaladhi* everyone will understand that one means the ocean. That is so because the ocean is the root-reservoir of all the water in the world.

In the same way all the *gopīs* and indeed all the loving devotees may worship Kṛṣṇa according to their own love for Him, but no one else but Vṛṣabhānu-Nandinī can be called Rādhā. Vṛṣabhānu-Nandinī is the root reservoir of all Kṛṣṇa-worship.

Again, according to the quality and the quantity of their love all the different devotees may be dear to Kṛṣṇa, but Mahā-Premavatī Rādhā is Kṛṣṇa's dear most beloved for Her love is the greatest, both in quantity and in quality. Therefore Her sounds, touch and so on are the cause of the greatest relish to Kṛṣṇa, although He is the embodiment of full transcendental bliss. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

koṭi kāma jini rūpa yadyapi āmāra;
 asamordhva mādhurya - sāmya nāhi yāra
 mora rūpa āpyāyita hoy tribhuvana;
 rādhāra darśane mora jūḍāya nayana
 mora van̄śi gīte ākarṣaye tribhuvana;
 rādhāra vacane hare āmāra śravaṇa
 yadyapi āmāra gandhe jagata sugandha;
 mora citta prāṇa hare rādhā aṅga gandha
 yadyapi āmāra rase jagata surasa;
 rādhāra adhara rasa āmā kore vaśa
 yadyapi āmāra sparśa koṭīndu śītala;
 rādhikāra sparše āmā kore suśītala

*eimata jagatera sukhe āmi hetu;
rādhikāra rūpa guṇa āmāra jīvātu*

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Ādi 4)

"Although My form defeats that of millions of Cupids and is unrivalled in its sweetness, soothing the three worlds, but the sight of Rādhā soothes My eyes. The song of My flute attracts the three worlds but Rādhā's words soothe My ears. Although My fragrance scents the whole world, My heart is stolen by Rādhā's bodily fragrance. Although the whole world is juiced up by My flavour, the flavour of Rādhā's lips subdues Me. Although My touch is cooler than that of millions of moons, Rādhikā's touch cools off even Me! In this way, although I am the cause of all the pleasure of the world, Rādhikā's form and qualities are My very life!"

Śrī Rādhākunḍa pleases all of Kṛṣṇa's five transcendental senses just as Śrī Rādhā Herself does:

Kṛṣṇa's eyes enjoy seeing it, His nose enjoys the smell of its water and the lotus flowers floating in it, His skin enjoys the touch of this cool water, His ears enjoy the sounds of its chirping birds and humming bumblebees and His tongue enjoys the taste of its ambrosial water. Although Kṛṣṇa is called *vraja-bhuvana-sudhāṁśu*, the moon Who pleases the whole circle of Vraja, in this verse it is declared that Rādhākunḍa pleases even His senses!

Then Śrī Raghunātha says:

*paricitam api nāmnā yac ca tenaiva tasyāḥ. tenaiva vraja
bhuvana sudhāṁśunā tasyā śrī rādhāyā nāmnā eva paricitam
saṅketitam api³²*

³² Sanskrit commentary by Baṅgeśvara Vidyābhūṣaṇa.

"The *kuṇḍa* has been named after Rādhā by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself."

When Rādhākunḍa advented itself Kṛṣṇa personally gave it that name, as Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī has stated:

proce hariḥ priyatame tava kuṇḍam etat

Because Śrī Rādhā is non different from Her name Śrī Kṛṣṇa is seen to be most attached to Her name as well. In the stage of *pūrva rāga*³³ we can read:

sakhi! rādhā-nāma ki kohile!;
śuni kāna mana juḍāile
koto nāma āchaye gokule;
heno hiyā nā kore ākule
ei nāme āche ki mādhuri;
śravane rahalo sudhā bhari
cite niti murati vikāśa;
amiyā sāyare yeno bāsa
āṅkhite dekhite kore sādha;
e yadunandana mana kāñda

(Pada Kalpataru)

"Sakhi! Who has pronounced this name 'Rādhā'? When I hear this My mind and ears are soothed! How many names are there in Gokula? None of them has agitated My heart as much (as this one)! How much sweetness is there in this name? It fills My ears with nectar! Her form becomes clearly manifest in My mind and it is as if I float in an ocean of nectar! I will be fulfilled if I can see Her with My own eyes!" Thus Yadunandana's mind weeps.

³³ Beginnings of love.

When He first hears the name of Rādhā the ears and mind of Śyāma, the embodiment of bliss, are soothed, His heart becomes agitated, His ears are showered by a stream of nectar, and the name has given to the bearer of that name a clear shape within His mind. When He hears this name He becomes very eager to meet the named One too - **the name of Rādhā** is filled with sweet honey.

Not only that, simply by hearing that Rādhā-*nāma* the transcendental youthful Cupid of Vṛndāvana Śyāmasundara feels the agitation of lust within His heart, which means that He's actually very eager to relish the flavours of Her *mādana-prema*. His mind is absorbed in Śrī Rādhā and He thinks: 'If this girl's name is so sweet, then what must Her form be like?'

Thinking like this, He becomes very eager to see Her and He impatiently asks one *sakhī* to describe Her form to Him:

rādhā-nāma ki kohile āge;
śunaite manamatha jāge
sakhi! kāhe koholi uha nāma;
mana māhā nāhi lāge āna
koho tachu anupama rūpa;
bujhlam amiyā svarūpa
heraite āñkhi kore āśa;
koho rādhā mohana dāsa

"Who has pronounced the name Rādhā just now? After I heard it Cupid awakened! Sakhi! Tell Me, who has such a name? My mind can't think of anyone else anymore! Describe Her unrivalled form to Me; I understand that it must be pure nectar! My eyes yearn to see Her!" Thus spoke Rādhā Mohana dāsa.

When Śyāma hears even a single syllable of Rādhā's Holy Name He eagerly wants to run up to the person who pronounced it and when He hears the second syllable He immediately runs anxiously up to that person.

The Purāṇas say:

*rā-sabdoċċāraṇād eva sphito bhavati mādhavaḥ
dhā ūabdoċċārata paścād dhāvaty eva sasambhramah*

"When Mādhava hears the syllable 'rā' He becomes very happy, and when He hears the syllable 'dhā' after it, He eagerly runs (after Rādhā)."

That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave the name **Rādhākunḍa** to the lake of His ***priyājī*** Rādhā, because Her name is as dear to Him as She is.

Śrī Raghunātha says: "May that most lovely Śrī Rādhākunḍa be my sanctuary."

*vraja madhura kiśorī vrajāṅganāgana;
tāhādera śiroratna rādhārāṇī hon
vrndāvana candra yini vrajendra nandana;
kuṇḍa tāra rādhā sama premāspada hon
rādhā nāma dvārā śrī kuṇḍera paricaya;
rādhā sama rādhākuṇḍa priyatama hoy
sei rādhākuṇḍa hoy ati manorama;
āmāra āśraya hon ei mora mana*

"Rādhārāṇī is the crown jewel of all the sweet adolescent girls of Vraja and Her *kuṇḍa* is as dear to Vrajendra-Nandana, the moon of Vṛndāvana as She is. You become acquainted to the *kuṇḍa* through the name Rādhā and nothing is as dear to Kṛṣṇa

as Rādhākunḍa, just as Rādhā Herself is. May that most enchanting Rādhākunḍa be the shelter of my mind!"

VERSE 5:

*api jana iha kaścid yasya sevā-prasādaiḥ
praṇaya-sura-latā syāt tasya goṣṭhendra-sūnoḥ
sapadi kila mad-īśā-dāsy-a-puṣpa-praśasyā
tat ati-surabhi rādhā-kunḍam evāśrayo me*

api - even; *jana* - people; *iha* - here; *kaścit* - one; *yasya* - whose; *sevā* - service; *prasādaiḥ* - by mercy; *praṇaya* - love; *suralatā* - desire vine; *syāt* - may be; *tasya* - His; *goṣṭha* - of Vraja; *indra* - king; *sūnoḥ* - of the son; *sapadi* - suddenly; *kila* - certainly; *mad* - my; *īśā* - mistress; *dāsy-a* - service; *puṣpa* - flower; *praśasyāḥ* - celebrated; *tat* - that; *ati* - very; *surabhi* - fragrant, beautiful; *rādhākunḍam* - Rādhākunḍa; *eva* - only; *āśraya* - shelter; *me* - my.

That very beautiful and fragrant Rādhākunḍa, by whose mercy the desire vine of love for Kṛṣṇa, which bears the flowers of service for my queen Śrī Rādhā, instantly sprouts in the heart of anyone who performs devotional service there - this Rādhākunḍa is my only shelter!

Stavāṁṛta Kaṇā Vyākhyā: Śrī Kuṇḍāśrayī³⁴ Śrīpāda Raghunātha has attained the greatest fixation in the *kuṇḍa* of his Prāṇeśvarī. In his heart pervaded by *mahābhāva*, he

³⁴ Someone who has taken shelter of the *kuṇḍa*.

perceives the glorious sweetness of the *Kuṇḍa*, which is as glorious as Rādhārāṇī Herself hundreds of times over.

In the previous two verses Śrī Raghunātha described how Śrī Govinda took shelter of the *kuṇḍa* in order to please Śrī Rādhā and how glorious the *kuṇḍa* is because its service is dear even to Kṛṣṇa. Hearing this, someone may ask:

"Śrīpāda! Śrī Kṛṣṇa may attain Rādhārāṇī by serving Her *kuṇḍa*, the *kuṇḍa* may be as dear to Him as She is, and the *kuṇḍa* may be the supreme attainment for great saints like yourself who can sit there and get such sublime visions, but please tell me something about the *kuṇḍa*'s mercy upon persons like me, who are attached to materialistic life and who are fallen and blinded by ignorance! Although you have already said something about this before (in verse 2), still I would like to hear such kind of aspirations once more from your blessed mouth!"

To answer such people, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa speaks this verse:

api jana iha kaścid yasya sevā prasādaiḥ pranaya suralatā syāt tasya gosthendra sūnoḥ

"By the *kuṇḍa*'s mercy the desire vine of love for Kṛṣṇa in the heart of any unscrupulous, unqualified person (*kaścit*) who serves it by living on its banks, bathing there, performing some worship there, seeing or touching the water or circumambulating the *kuṇḍas*, will swiftly sprout and grow."

Love for Kṛṣṇa is the crown jewel of all human pursuits, the great treasure of the spirit soul and the highest result of any human activity. It is the only thing which can cause one to relish Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweetness.

Prema makes the otherwise supremely independent Kṛṣṇa completely submissive to His surrendered devotee and *prema* can forever bless all the living entities, who are constitutionally

Kṛṣṇa's eternal servants, by bestowing the bliss of devotional service on them.

*pañcama puruṣārtha sei prema mahādhana;
kṛṣṇera mādhurya rasa korāya āsvādana
premā hoite hoy kṛṣṇa nija bhakta vaśa;
premā hoite pāi kṛṣṇa sevā sukha rasa*

(*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, Ādi 7)

"The great treasure of *prema* is the fifth goal of human life (beyond religiosity, economic development, sense gratification and liberation) and it makes one relish the sweet Kṛṣṇa-flavours. Through *prema* Kṛṣṇa becomes controlled by His devotees and through *prema* the devotees attain the blissful mellites of Kṛṣṇa's devotional service."

Devotion is a rarely attained thing. Śrīmad Bhāgavata states: *bhagavān mukundo muktiṁ dadāti karhicit sma na bhakti yogam*

"Lord Mukuṇḍa may grant liberation to some, but He does not give *bhakti yoga* so easily!"

*akaitava kṛṣṇa-prema,
yeno jāmbūnada hema,
sei premā nr̄-loke nā hoy.*
(C.C.)

"Earnest love for Kṛṣṇa is as pure as the gold from the Jāmbū-river. Such love can't be found in the human world."

In all these statements the rarity of *prema* is declared. After realizing how rarely attained *prema* is, Śrīmat Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote,:

*yasya sphurtilavāṅkureṇa laghunāpy antar munīnāṁ manah
spr̥taṁ mokṣa sukhād virajyati jhaṭity āsvādyamānād api
premṇas tasya mukunda sāhasitayā śaknotu kah prārthane
bhūyāj janmani janmani pracayinī kintu spṛhāpy atra me*

(*Stavamālā*)

"O Mukunda! Who dares to pray for that *prema*, even the slightest relish of which causes the *munis* to give up the bliss of liberation? May my desire for *prema* simply increase birth after birth!"

Again, love of God, *prema*, the ultimate result of *bhakti*, is the highest aspiration for a living entity and is most rarely attained. It is the Lord's *svarūpa-śakti*, or innate potency, being a combination of the essence of the *hlādini-śakti*³⁵ and the *sandhini-śakti*³⁶. A fortunate soul who attains the grace of a great saint can enter into the workings of this innate potency of the Lord through the process of hearing, chanting and remembering the glories of the Lord.

In this way the material dullness will disappear from the heart of the neophyte and everything will culminate in *prema*. *Prema* is the culmination of a whole sequence of spiritual advancement:

association with the saints, hearing and remembering the glories of the Lord, faith in the scriptures, obtaining the association of a qualified *guru*, taking initiation and instructions from him, surrendering and serving the *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas, serving the deity, aspiring for *bhajana*, earnestly practicing

³⁵ Pleasure-potency.

³⁶ Existence-potency.

bhajana, having taste for *bhajana*, becoming attached to the Lord, *bhāva* and *rati*.

This is attained by two kinds of fortunate souls: those who attain it on the strength of their own *bhajana* and those who attain it by the grace of Kṛṣṇa or His devotees.

Everywhere it is seen that *prema* is attained through *sādhana* while the attainment of *prema* through grace is rare.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī teaches us (in Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.3.6):

*sādhanābhinitiveśena kṛṣṇa tad bhaktayos tathā
prasādenati dhanyānāṁ bhāvo dvedhabhijāyate
adyas tu prāyikas tatra dvitiyo viralodayaḥ*

"Love of God is attained either by absorption in devotional practice or by the grace of Kṛṣṇa and/or His devotees. The former occurs usually often, the latter rarely."

This very rarely attained desire vine of love for Kṛṣṇa, which is attained by grace, suddenly grows in the soil of the heart of any person (either qualified or unqualified) who serves Śrī Rādhākunḍa by bathing in the *kuṇḍa*, seeing it, touching it, living in the Rādhākunḍa-village or worshipping it, by the inconceivable potency and grace of the *kuṇḍa*.

Śrī Raghunātha says: "And this is also not just *dāsyā* or *sakhyā-bhāva*, but *mad iśā dāsyā puṣpa praśasyā*;

"The desire-vine of love becomes manifest, beautified by the flowers of service to my Īśvarī Śrī Rādhā."

By the grace of the the service to the *kuṇḍa* the highest goal ever to be achieved by any *sādhaka*, *mañjari-bhāva* or the loving devotional service to Śrī Rādhā, grows up. No higher stage than this can be achieved for a person who treads the path of loving devotion.

Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī says:

*rādhā nāgara keli sāgara nimagnāli drśāṁ yat sukham
no tal leśa lavāyate bhagavataḥ sarvo’pi sukhyotsavaḥ*

(*Vṛndāvana Mahimāmṛta* 1.54)

"All the bliss enjoyed in connection with the Lord can't be compared to even a drop of the transcendental bliss the *gopīs* experience when they are absorbed in witnessing the ocean of pastimes of Rādhā's lover!"

The maidservants of Śrī Rādhā swim in an ocean of indescribable bliss when they relish the mellow of these devotional services.

*rati-raṇe śramayuta, nāgarī nāgara
mukha bhari tāmbūla yogāya
malaya-ja kuṇkuma, mṛga-mada karpūra,
militahi gata lāgāya
aparūpa priya sakhi prema!
nija prāṇa koṭi, dei niramañchai,
naha tula lākho bāṇa hema*

"How wonderful is the love of the *priya sakhīs*! They serve Nāgarī (heroine Rādhikā) and Nāgara (hero Kṛṣṇa) with millions of lives when They are tired of love making, by filling Their mouths with betel leaves and by anointing Their bodies with sandalwood paste, vermillion, musk and camphor. Their love is so pure that it can't even be compared to gold molten a hundred thousand times over!"

*manorama mālyā, duhu gole arpai,
vijai śīta mṛdu bāta*

*sugandhī śitala, koru jala arpaṇa,
yaiche hota duhu śānta*

"They offer enchanting garlands to Their necks, give Them a cool breeze by fanning Them and relieve Them from Their heated affliction by offering Them cool and fragrant water."

*duhuka caraṇa puna, mr̄du saṁvāhana,
kori śrama korolohi dūra
iṅgite śayana, korolo duhu sakhi-gaṇa
abahu manoratha pūra*

"These *sakhīs* again softly massage Their feet and thus remove Their fatigue. On Their indication they put the Divine Pair to rest and fulfill any of Their other desires."

*kusuma śeje duhu, nidrita herai,
sevana parāyaṇa sukha.
rādhā mohana dāsa, kiye herabo,
metabo sab mano-duṅkha*

"These girls, being totally dedicated to their devotional service, then put the Divine Pair to sleep on a bed of flowers. All the mental distress of Rādhā Mohana dāsa is mitigated when he sees this."

The practicing devotee is blessed if he attains this wealth of service and supreme love by the grace of serving the *kuṇḍa*.

Śrī Raghunātha said: "May that most glorious Śrī Rādhākunḍa be my sanctuary!"

*ei saṁsāre vivekādi śūnya kon jana;
śrī rādhākuṇḍera yadi koroye sevana
kuṇḍera prasāde sei bhāgyavanta jana;*

*kṛṣṇa premakalpalatā peye dhanya hon
 śrī rādhāra dāsyā rūpa vicitra puṣpete;
 kalpalatā suśobhita hoy trijagate
 ei rūpa guṇānvita ati manorame;
 rādhākuṇḍa āśraya mora jīvane maraṇe*

"Even if any dullwitted person in this world would serve Śrī Rādhākunḍa, then by the grace of the *kuṇḍa* such a fortunate person would be blessed to attain the wish-yielding vine of love for Kṛṣṇa. This wish-yielding vine beautifies the three worlds with the wonderful flowers of Śrī Rādhā's service. The shelter of such a qualified and utterly enchanting Rādhākunḍa is my shelter, in life or in death!"

VERSE 6:

*taṭa-madhura-nikuñjāḥ klpta-nāmāna uccair
 nija-parijana-vargaiḥ samvibhajyāśritas taiḥ
 madhukara-ruta-ramyā yasya rājanti kāmyās
 tad ati-surabhi rādhā-kuṇḍam evāśrayo me*

taṭa - on the shore; *madhura* - sweet; *nikuñjāḥ* - groves; *klpta* - made; *nāmāna* - by name; *uccaiḥ* - greatly; *nija* - own; *parijana* - friends; *vargaiḥ* - by the groups; *saṁvibhājya* - having divided; *āśritah* - sheltered; *taiḥ* - by them; *madhukara* - bees; *ruta* - sounds; *ramyā* - beautiful; *yasya* - whose; *rājanti* - shine; *kāmyāḥ* - delightful; *tat* - that; *ati* - very; *surabhi* - fragrant, beautiful; *rādhākuṇḍam* - Rādhākunḍa; *eva* - only; *āśrayaḥ* - shelter; *me* - my.

That very beautiful and fragrant Rādhākunḍa, whose shores are divided among Śrī Rādhikā's girlfriends who

all have their own sweet *nikuñjas* (groves) there being named after them, and where the bees are buzzing sweetly - this Rādhākunḍa is my only shelter!

Stavāṁṛta Kaṇā Vyākhyā: Śrī Rādhākunḍa's heart has melted from the deep anguish of Śrī Raghunātha's prayers and so the *kunḍa* now showers him with the *rasa* of grace, through which he can now perceive the transcendental form of the water and the bank of the *kunḍa*.

Here the actual transcendental form (*svarūpa*) and sweetness of the *kunḍa*'s banks are described. The bank of this beautiful lake of Śrī Rādhārāṇī has been divided by the *kuñjas* of Lalitā, Viśākhā and the other *sakhīs* and they have become known under the names of these *sakhīs*. The eight corners of Śrī Rādhākunḍa thus shelter eight *kuñjas*: one for each of the eight *sakhīs*, starting with Lalitā.³⁷

In the north is the *kuñja* named **Lalitānandada**, which has a regal courtyard named *Anaṅga-raṅgāmbuja*, the lotus for Cupid's pastimes, which is nicely maintained by Lalitā's *sakhī* Kalāvalī. This Lalitānandada-*kuñja* is shaped like an eight-petalled lotus flower, and each petal contains a *kuñja*.

In the north is *Sitāmbuja* (white lotus), in the north-west *Vasanta-Sukhada* (delighter of spring), in the west *Hemāmbuja* (golden lotus), in the south-west Śrī *Padma-mandira* (the beautiful lotus temple), in the south is *Aruṇāmbuja*, in the south-east is *Madanāndolana* (Cupid's swing), in the east is *Asitāmbuja* (the dark lotus) and in the north-east is a wonderful,

³⁷ In Śrī Govinda Lilāṁṛta a charming description can be found of these *kuñjas*. In my book 'Śrī Śrī Rādhākunḍāśṭakam Mahimā O Aitihya' the original verses describing these *kuñjas* can be relished with their commentaries.

variegated *kuñja* named Mādhavānandada (the delighter of Mādhava). The Rasika Mithuna (relishing Couple) Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa always plays various pastimes in this king of *kuñjas* which is filled with a very wonderful natural beauty and which is studded with various jewels.

In the north-eastern corner of Śrī Rādhākunḍa is the four-coloured **Viśākhānandada-kuñja**, or Madana-Sukhadā. Viśākhā's very expert and artistic disciple named Mañjumukhī is maintaining this *kuñja*. The Madana-Sukhadā-*kuñja* resembles a large royal palace which is always inundated by the *rasika* flood of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and always gives great joy to the eyes.

In the east is **Citrānandada-kuñja**, where there are trees, vines, animals and birds of various³⁸ colours. Here Citrā-sakhī blissfully serves Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Their friends in various ways. In the south-eastern corner is the white *kuñja* called **Indulekhā-sukhada**.

The trees, vines, animals and birds are all white here. If Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Their *sakhīs* come here on the full moon night and sport here dressed in white no one will immediately recognize Them. Here Indulekhā-sakhī lovingly serves Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Their *sakhīs*.

In the south of Rādhākunḍa is the golden *kuñja* named **Campakalatānandada**. Here all the trees, vines, animals and birds are golden. If Rādhā enters this *kuñja* dressed and ornamented in yellow Śrī Kṛṣṇa will not recognize Her. Here is Campakalatā's famous kitchen, where the expert teacher of cooking, Campakalatā, prepares feasts for Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and pleases the Yugala with various other services.

³⁸ The word *citra* means 'variety' and 'wonderful'. These meanings are both applicable here.

In the south-western corner of Śrī Rādhākuṇḍa is the all-Syāma-coloured *kuñja* named **Rāngadevī-sukhada**.

If Mukharā or other elders are coming here while Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are enjoying Themselves here they will only see Śrī Rādhā, not Kṛṣṇa.

In the western corner of Śrī Rādhākuṇḍa is the red *kuñja* called **Tuṅgavidyānandada**. Here everything is red. This is wished for by Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

In the north-western corner is the green *kuñja* called **Sudevī-sukhada**. Here everything is green and here Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa play Their *rasika* game of dice.

Apart from that there is also a *kuñja* in the middle of the *kuṇḍa* named **Śrī Anaṅga-Mañjarī-sukhada**. This ruby, moonstone and emerald-studded *kuñja* appears to the viewers to be radiant as water and is shaped like a 16-petalled lotus flower and it is connected with the northern bank of the *kunda* by a bridge. Here the different articles required for the Śrī Yugala's service are stored and here Anaṅga Mañjarī and her group are engaged in this service. Because it is floating on the water like a lotus flower it is called **salila-kamala**.

All these *kuñjas* are beautified by different trees and vines, singing birds and cuckoos, humming honeybees, different fragrant flowers, freely playing deer, rabbits and dancing peacocks that all arouse erotic feelings in the hearts of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. This greatly delights the eyes of anyone who sees it.

But only if the mind, the senses and the heart of the neophyte become immersed in *viśuddha-sattva*, pure goodness, this place can be seen in its real *svarūpa* (transcendental form). Ordinary eyes see it just as a material place.

*cintāmaṇi bhūmi, kalpavṛkṣamaya vana;
carma cakṣe dekhe tāre prapañcera sama
prema netre dekhe tāra svarūpa prakāśa
gopā gopī saṅge yāhā kṛṣṇera vilāsa*

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Ādi 5)

"The ground is made of thought-stones and the forests are full of desire-trees, but the physical eye sees it just as a material forest. A loving eye can see this realm, where Kṛṣṇa plays with the cowherd boys and girls in its real, transcendental form."

*līlānukūlesu janeṣu citteṣv utpanna bhāveṣu ca sādhakānāṁ
evaṁ vidhān sarvam idāṁ cakāsti svarūpataḥ prākṛtavat pareṣu*

(Govinda Līlāmṛta 7,119)

"Those *nitya siddhas* who are favorable to these pastimes and the practitioners in whose hearts these transcendental emotions have appeared, can see the holy realm in its real form, but others (non-devotees) see it just as a material place."

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī is an eternal associate of the Lord, so the endless wealth of Śrī Rādhākunḍā's sweetness is naturally manifest to his love-saturated eyes. Therefore Śrī Raghunātha says: "May that most enchanting Rādhākunḍā be my sanctuary!"

*śrī rādhākuṇḍera tire sakhiyūtha vāsa;
sakhī nāme kuñjanāma korilā prakāśa
uttare lalitānanda kuñjavana nāme;
viśākhā-sukhada kuñja śobhita iśāne
pūrva-taṭe nāma hoy citrā-sukhada;*

*agnikoṇe indulekhā nāma manomada
 dakṣiṇe campakalatā nairṛte raṅgadevī;
 paścimete tuṅgavidyā vāyute sudevī
 prati kuñja ramaṇīya bhramara guñjita;
 śrīṅgāra rasakeli kore uddipita
 surabhi se rādhākuṇḍa āmāra āśraya;
 snāna pāna tīre vāsa e lālasā hoy*

"On the banks of Śrī Rādhākuṇḍa all groups of *sakhīs* reside and each *kuñja* is named after one of them. In the north is a forest named Lalitānandada-*kuñja*, in the north-east is the beautiful Viśākhā-sukhada-*kuñja*, on the eastern bank is the Citrā-sukhada-*kuñja*, in the south-eastern corner is the inebriating *kuñja* named after Indulekhā, in the south is Campakalatā, in the southwest Raṅgadevī, in the west Tuṅgavidyā and in the northwest Sudevī.

Each *kuñja* is laden with buzzing bumblebees inciting lusty feelings. That fragrant, beautiful Rādhākuṇḍa is my sanctuary and I desire to drink its water, bathe in it and reside on its banks!"

VERSE 7:

*tāṭa-bhuvi vara-vedyāṁ yasya narmāti-hṛdyāṁ
 madhura-madhura-vārtāṁ goṣṭha-candrasya bhaṅgyā
 prathayati mitha īśā prāṇa-sakhyālibhiḥ sā
 tad ati-surabhi rādhā-kuṇḍam evāśrayo me*

tāṭabhuvi - on the shore; *vara* - excellent; *vedyāṁ* - on the platform; *yasya* - whose; *narma* - by joking; *ati* - very; *hṛdyāṁ* - pleasant;

madhura madhura - ever-so-sweet; *vārtām* - words; *goṣṭha candraśya* - of the moon of Vraja; *bhaṅgīā* - with gestures; *prathayati* - manifests; *mīha* -mutually; *īśā* - the queen; *prāṇa sakhi* - heart's friend ; *ālibhiḥ* - with girlfriends; *sā* - She; *tat* - that; *ati* - very; *surabhi* - fragrant, beautiful; *rādhākunḍam* - Rādhākuṇḍa; *eva* - only; *āśrayah* -shelter; *me* - my.

That very beautiful and fragrant Rādhākuṇḍa, where my mistress Śrī Rādhikā makes ever-so-sweet and pleasant jokes about Kṛṣṇa, the moon of Vraja, with Her dearest girlfriends on a nice platform on the shore - this Rādhākuṇḍa is my only shelter!

Stavāṁṛta Kanā Vyākhyā: Śrī Raghunātha's consciousness is immersed in the sweetness of the *kunḍa*. He is the eternally perfect maidservant of Śrī Rādhārāṇī and his life-airs are offered to Śrī Rādhā's lotus feet.

The bank of the *kunḍa* is dearer to him than millions of life-airs, because this is the peerless abode of Rasika Mithuna Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava's greatly intoxicated erotic pastimes.

On the bank of this *kunḍa* the *priya-kiñkarīs* of Śrī Rādhā are always absorbed in the transcendently blissful devotional service of the Yugala and in the concomitant relish of Their sweet intimate love-pastimes.

The *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs* are like fishes blissfully swimming in the billowing waves of the *rasika* pastimes of the ocean of *rasa*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and the ocean of *prema*, Śrī Rādhā.

These things can't be understood as long as we are materially conditioned. One must awaken the consciousness of 'I am Śrī Rādhikā's maidservant' in order to enter into this.

Śrī Raghunātha is a *nitya-siddha-kiñkari*³⁹ of Vraja and the transcendental *saṁskāra*⁴⁰ of the Yugala-rasa is his innate wealth. Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura Mahāśaya called Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī ‘*yugala ujjvalamaya tanu*’ (the embodiments of the erotic flavours of the Divine Pair):

jaya sanātana rūpa, premabhakti rasakūpa, yugala ujjvalamaya tanu (Prema Bhakti Candrikā).

By their grace Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was emancipated with them;

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has written:

*yan mitram raghunātha dāsa iti vikhyātah kṣitau rādhikā-
krṣṇa prema mahārnavormi nivahe ghr̄ṇan sadā divyati
dṛṣṭānta prakara prabhābharam atityaivānayor bhr̄ājator
yas tulyatva padam matas tribhuvane sāscaryam āryottamaih*

"Raghunātha Dāsa has become world famous for being the friend of Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana. He always swims in the waves of the great ocean of love for Rādhikā and Kṛṣṇa. The greatest saints say that no one in the world can be compared to Rūpa and Sanātana, but amazingly enough Raghunātha Dāsa has attained a position equal to theirs!"

Therefore Śrī Raghunātha always perceives the self-manifested sweetness of the *kunḍa* as well as the sweet pastimes which are performed there in his consciousness that is fixed on Śrī Rādhā.

In this verse a sweet pastime is described which was perceived one day. On Jāṭilā's order Śrī Rādhārāṇī leaves Her village Yāvaṭa to go and worship the sungod with Her

³⁹ Eternally perfected maidservant.

⁴⁰ Innate culture and/or knowledge.

girlfriends, but instead She goes to Rādhākuṇḍa to meet Kṛṣṇa there. With Her left hand She holds the hand of Her friend Kundalatā and with Her right hand She twirls around Her playlotus.

In this way the Rādhā-Surataraṅgī (Ganges-river) runs towards the Śyāma-ocean. Dhaniṣṭhā and Tulasī walk ahead of Her. Lalitā and Viśākhā walk on either one of Her sides and Her maidservants, headed by Śrī Rūpa Mañjari follow Her carrying the paraphernalia for the Sūrya-pūjā and other ingredients for their upcoming devotional service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa with them.

bhāva-kusuma (flowers of ecstatic love) like goose pimples, tears of love and paralysis are blossoming on Śrīmatī's vine-like body when She thinks of Her upcoming meeting with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. How beautiful is *abhisārikā*⁴¹ Śrī Rādhā!

taruṇāruṇa carana yugala mañjari tāhe śobhe;
bhr̥ngāvali puṇja puṇja guṇjare madhulobhe
kumbhi kumbha jini nitamba keśari khina mājhe;
lilāñcita paṭṭāmbara kiñkiṇi tahi bāje
bāhu yugala thira vijuri kari śāvaka śuṇde;
hemāñgada maṇi kañkāṇa nakhare śaśikhaṇde
hemācalā kucamaṇḍala kāñcali tahi mājhe;
candrakānta dhvānta damana kañthe karṇe sāje
jāmbūnada hema yoto mukutāphala pāñti;
phaṇi maṇi yuta dāma śobhita dāminī sama bhāñti
bimbaphala nindi adhara dāḍima bija daśane;
besara tahi nolake jhalake manda manda hasane

⁴¹ Girl on a love-journey.

*nāsā tila phula tula bāndhe kabarī chānde
madana mohana mana mohinī calali tahi rādhe*

(Pada Kalpataru)

"Her reddish, youthful lotus feet are beautiful like shoots attracting hosts of buzzing bumblebees who are greedy for their honey. Her buttocks defeat the trunks of elephants and Her waist is as thin as that of a lion. Waist bells are jingling on Her playfully flapping silken *sāri* and Her arms resemble the trunks of baby-elephants or a steady lightning streak.

She wears golden armlets and jewelled bangles and Her nails resemble moons. Her breasts resemble golden mountains which are covered by a blouse and the ornaments on Her ears and Her neck destroy the shining of the moonlight. She shines like a lightning-streak with Her golden ornaments. Her pearls and Her lips defeat the red splendour of Bimba-cherries and Her teeth shine more brightly than pomegranate-seeds.

Her nose pearl shimmers and oscillates on Her sesame flower-like nose when She slightly smiles and Her hair is nicely braided. Thus Rādhā moves on, enchanting the mind of the enchanter of Cupid (Kṛṣṇa)."

Keeping the paraphernalia for her *pūjā* at the Sūrya-mandira in Sūryakuṇḍa Śrīmatī proceeds to Rādhākuṇḍa, accompanied by Her *sakhīs*, thereby floating on waves of ecstatic love. Goṣṭhacandra⁴² Śrī Kṛṣṇa meanwhile hands the responsibility for His herd of cows over to Baladeva and His friends at Govardhana and then also comes to the bank of Rādhākuṇḍa on the pretext of admiring the beauty of the forest there.

⁴² The moon of the meadows.

Here He sits down, endlessly waiting for Premamayī⁴³, eagerly desiring to see Her. Then They see Each other from close by through the vines. Endless waves of *bhāva* well up from the ocean of *rasa* (Kṛṣṇa) and the ocean of *prema* (Rādhā) when They thus meet Each other.

duhuṇ mukha heraite duhuṇ bhelo dhanda;
rāi kohe tamāla mādhava kohe canda
cita putalī janu rahu duhuṇ deha;
nā jāniye prema kemona achu leho
e sakhi! dekho dekhi duhuṇka vicāra;
thāmahi koi lakhai nāhi pāra
dhanī kohe kānanamaya dekhi śyāma;
so kiye guṇabo majhu pariṇāma
camaki camaki dekhi nāgara kāna;
prati tarutale dekhi rāi samāna
doinhe doinhe yabahu nicaya kori jāno;
duhuṇka hṛdaye paīthala premabāna
daraśane nayane nayane bohe lora;
āpāda mastaka duhuṇ pulake āgora
sajani hero dekho prema taraṅga;
koto bhāve thakito bhelo aṅga
duhuṇkara dehe ghāma bohi yāto;
gada gada kāhuka nā nikasaye bāta
duhuṇ jana kampana heri lāge dhanda;
rādhā mohana heri parama ānanda

(*Pada Kalpataru*)

"When They saw Each other's faces They became doubtful. Rāi said 'This (Kṛṣṇa) is a Tamāla-tree!' and Mādhava said 'This (Rādhā) is the moon!'

⁴³Rādhā, who is full of love for Kṛṣṇa.

I don't know how love dwells within their bodies and within their doll-like hearts! O *sakhi*! Just behold Their doubts! They can't distinguish between anything of Each other! Fortunate Dhanī Rādhā says 'I see Śyāma all throughout the forest! How will I distinguish Him from all?"

Nāgara Kāna⁴⁴ is astonished as He sees Rāi at the base of each and every tree. And then, when They clearly have recognized Each other, Cupid's arrows enter into Their hearts! As They look at Each other tears stream from Their eyes and Their bodies are covered from tip to toe with goose pimples.

O *sakhi*! Look at these waves of love! How many ecstatic symptoms are visible on Their limbs! Their bodies are studded with sweat drops and They can't utter a word because Their voices are faltering. They see Each other shivering and when Rādhā Mohana dāsa sees this he is most ecstatic."

After this the Divine Pair and Their *sakhīs* have a lot of *rasika* fun over flower picking, the theft of Kṛṣṇa's flute and so on. While Kṛṣṇa quarrels with the *sakhīs* over His stolen flute Śrī Rādhā catches the opportunity to hide Herself in a secret *kuñja*.

Finally, after a long search for Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa gets a hint from Kundalatā that She's hiding in that *kuñja* so He enters it and becomes absorbed in a highly astonishing love game there with Śrī Rādhā.

After this *vilāsa* the Yugala comes out of the *kuñja* and sits on a jewelled platform on the bank of Rādhākuṇḍa.

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa, in his *kiṅkari svarūpa*, then becomes absorbed in fanning the Twin Divinities along with other maidservants. Lalitā, Viśākhā and other *sakhīs* all giggle and come to sit around the jewelled platform where the Śrī Yugala

⁴⁴ The amorous hero Kṛṣṇa.

is seated, releasing a stream of *parihāsa-rasa*⁴⁵ by telling Śrī Rādhā:

"O *sakhi*! where have You gone, leaving us all behind? We looked for You everywhere, but could not find You! Where did You meet this shameless guy? Anyway, fortunately You were not defeated by that cheater. This is very good news!"

When Śrī Rādhā heard these joking, crooked words from Her *sakhīs* and saw the naughty insinuating gestures they made about the signs of Her love making with Kṛṣṇa, She became both shy and malicious. She frowned Her vine like eyebrows, waved Her index finger and chastised Her Kānta⁴⁶ with trembling lips and a faltering voice, telling Her friends:

"*Sakhīs*! I was on My way home when You tugged at My garment and then brought Kṛṣṇa Who was in hiding to Me! In this way I had to suffer even while you were here with Me! Tell Me, why should I still stay with you?"

In this way Śrī Rādhā and Her *sakhīs* engage in so many hundreds of *rasika* discussions. Nothing can be compared to these ever-so-sweet discussions between Śrīmatī and Her *prāṇa-sakhīs*!

While the maidservants are absorbed in their ecstatic devotional services they float on the waves of sweet Kṛṣṇa-*kathā* created by their Īśvarī and Her *sakhīs*.

Remembering these most lovely pastimes Śrī Raghunātha says: "May Śrī Rādhākunḍa, where all these *rasika* pastimes are performed, be my sanctuary! If I take shelter of this place then I can be blessed with the ever-so-sweet relish of Kṛṣṇa-*kathā*!"

*yei rādhākuṇḍa-tīre ratana vedite;
bosi rādhārāṇī sab sakhīra sahite*

⁴⁵ The flavour of transcendental joking and laughter.

⁴⁶ Lover.

*prāṇa koṭi nirmañchana govinda prasaṅga;
bhaṅgikori bole sumadhura rasaraṅga
sarva jana manohara rādhākuṇḍa nāma;
āmāra āśraya hauk nayanābhīrāma*

"May that eye-enchanting Rādhākunḍa, on whose bank Rādhārāṇī sits on a jewelled platform with Her *sakhīs*, speaking so sweetly about Govinda, who is dearer to Her than millions of life-airs, and that enchants everyone, be my shelter!"

VERSE 8:

*anudinam ati-raṅgaiḥ prema-mattāli-saṅghair
vara-sarasija-gandhair hāri-vāri-prapūrṇe
viharata iha yasmin dam-patī tau pramattau
tad ati-surabhi rādhā-kuṇḍam evāśrayo me*

anudinam - every day; *ati* - very; *raṅgaiḥ* - happy; *prema* - with love; *matta* - intoxicated; *ali* - girlfriends; *saṅghaiḥ* - with groups; *vara* - excellent; *sarasija* - lotus flowers; *gandhaiḥ* - with scents; *hāri* - charming; *vāri* - water; *prapūrṇe* - filled; *viharata* - enjoying; *iha* - here; *yasmin* - in which; *dampati* - loving couple; *tau* - both; *pramattau* - intoxicated; *tad* - that; *ati* - very; *surabhi* -fragrant, beautiful; *rādhākuṇḍam* - Rādhākunḍa; *eva* - only; *āśrayaḥ* - shelter; *me* - my.

That very beautiful and fragrant Rādhākunḍa, in whose water filled with nicely smelling lotus flowers, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa daily sport in loving intoxication along with Their girlfriends, who are in a similar loving frenzy - this Rādhākunḍa is my only shelter!

Stavāṁṛta Kanā Vyākhyā: By the grace of Śrī Kuṇḍeśvarī, Kuṇḍāśrayī Śrīpāda Raghunātha perceives the water sports of the Twin Divinities in Rādhākunḍa and he describes them here in this final verse of the Rādhākunḍāṣṭakam.

yei kuṇḍe nitya kṛṣṇa rādhikāra saṅge;

jale jalakeli kore - tīre rāsa raṅge

(C.C.)

"In the water of this (Rādhā)kuṇḍa Kṛṣṇa eternally performs water sports with Rādhikā or dances the Rāsa on its banks."

*śrī rādhēva hares tadiya sarasī presthādbhutaiḥ svair guṇair
yasyānī śrī yukta mādhavendur aniśānī prītyā tayā kriḍati*

(Govinda Līlāṁṛta 7,102)

"Because of its own qualities this lake is as dear to Hari as Śrī Rādhā Herself is. Here the beautiful moon-like Mādhava always lovingly plays with Her."

In this transcendental vision Śrī Raghunātha sees that Rādhā and Mādhava have become tired of Their midday-sports such as touring the forest, drinking honey wine and making love. Thus they enter into the water of Śrī Rādhākunḍa to play there with their girlfriends like a king of elephants with its she-elephants.

When Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* enter into the water, holding hands, they look like a golden net (the *gopīs*) radiating moonbeams (their radiant smiles) surrounding a monsoon cloud (Kṛṣṇa). The most amazing thing is though that the raincloud itself is sprinkled by the golden net (with

Rādhākuṇḍa-water) although a cloud usually sprinkles water itself.

The *gopīs* gently sprinkle Kṛṣṇa with small handfuls of water and Kṛṣṇa blissfully protects His eyes with His hands.

Then, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa forcefully splashes the beautiful *gopīs* in return they all become physically agitated. Only their moon like faces do not wilt because of their great ecstasy.

Now Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa begin to play in the water. The loser of this water splashing-game must give a prize to the winner. Kundalatā is the referee. Śrī Rādhā first splashes Kṛṣṇa. How sweetly Her jewelled bangles jingle around Her lotus whorl-like hands! It is as if Cupid wants to defeat Kṛṣṇa with His water missile! It has become intolerable for Kṛṣṇa! How beautiful Śrīmatī looks when She throws the water! Śyāma and the *sakhīs* swim in this ocean of beauty. The water Śrīmatī throws at Her Prāṇānātha brightly shimmers on His chest. His garland of divine forest flowers loosens and His big vine like necklace falls off. Only the powerful Kaustubha-gem is able to tolerate this stream of water without agitation and it remains on Priyatama's body. After this Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

"Priyatame! Now You tolerate this!" He blissfully starts splashing Preyasī's lotus like face with enchanting streams of water. Tulasī watches on the bank of the *kuṇḍa* how Rādhā and Śyāma are having a huge fight in the water. Tender hearted Svāminī thinks that Her Prāṇānātha, Who is dearer to Her than millions of Her life-airs, will suffer too much if She splashes in His eyes, so She doesn't do that, but Śyāma, desiring victory, does splash Śrīmatī's eyes again and again.

The *premavatī-sakhīs* forbid Śyāma again and again to throw water at Her eyes, but Śyāma does not listen. Svāminī becomes mad from His expert splashing, although She is normally so grave and She backs away. Śyāma loudly laughs, claps His hands

and says: "You're defeated! You're vanquished! Give Me My prize! I'm the victor!"

How beautiful are Svāminī's eyes and face when Śyāma holds Her around the neck! How many hundreds of waves of ecstatic love are there in this ocean of beauty! The fish like eyes of Śyāmasundara, the *sakhīs* and the *mañjarīs* are swimming in this ocean of beauty!

Then, when Śyāma has collected His prize, Svāminī dives under water and swims to a patch of golden lotus flowers, feeling ashamed before Her girlfriends. Her lotus like face on Her *deha-mṛṇāla*, lotus stem-like body, mixes with the golden lotus flowers (in the *kundā*).

The *sakhīs* tell Śyāma:

"What have You done to our *sakhī*? Quickly go and look for Her!", but Śyāmasundara can't find Śrīmatī anywhere. Finally He notices many bees becoming attracted to the extraordinary fragrance of Īśvari's face. They abandon a cluster of lotus flowers and they are madly flying towards the cluster of golden lotus flowers where She's hiding, so He goes there and catches Śrīmatī. The *sakhīs* go there too.

Then Madhusūdana forcibly begins to drink the honey from the lotus like mouths of Śrī Rādhā-*padmini*⁴⁷ and Her *sakhīs*, Who are maddened by *prema* in the lotus scented water.

Of some *sakhīs* He removes the jewelled ornaments. Soon some *sakhīs* loudly exclaim 'My necklace is gone!'; some say 'My locket is gone!' and some cry out 'Where have my waistbells gone?' Kṛṣṇa then removes the veils and blouses of some of the *sakhīs* in order to behold their indescribable sweetness.

Seeing the different erotic watersports of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava, Who are maddened by Their own pastimes, Tulasī

⁴⁷ The Rādhā-lotus.

Mañjarī and the other *kiñkarīs* are beside themselves in transcendental bliss.

After the watersports the *Navīna-Yugala*⁴⁸ comes back to the shore with Their *sakhīs* and there the *kiñkarīs* anoint and massage Them with oil, bathe Them once more and dress them in the *nikuñja-mandira*⁴⁹ with a variety of wonderful garments and ornaments.

After remembering his vision of this pastime Śrī Raghunātha ends this *Kunḍāṣṭakam* by saying:

*padma-gandhe suvāsita rādhākuṇḍa jale;
vihare pramatta hoiyā dampati yugale
prema mattā sakhibigaṇa yugalera saṅge;
sarovare kore keli nava rasa raṅge
manojña se rādhākuṇḍe ekānta prārthanā;
āmāra āśraya hon kori e kāmanā*

"The loving Couple madly plays ever-fresh watersports in the lotus-scented water of Rādhākuṇḍa with their equally love-intoxicated *sakhīs*. My sole prayer to this beautiful Rādhākuṇḍa is: May it be my sanctuary! This is my desire!"

BENEDICTION:

*avikalam ati devyāś cāru kuṇḍāṣṭakam yah
paripāṭhati tadiyollāsi-dāsyārpitātmā
aciram iha śarīre darśayaty eva tasmai
madhu-ripur ati-modaiḥ śliṣyamāṇāṁ priyāṁ tām*

⁴⁸ The fresh, youthful Couple.

⁴⁹ Arbour temple (pastoral palace).

avikala - fixed, unagitated; *mati* - intelligence; *devyāḥ* - of a goddess; *cāru* - beautiful; *kuṇḍa* - of the lake; *aṣṭakam* - eight prayers; *yāḥ* - whoever; *paripāṭhati* - recites; *tadiya* - his; *ullāsi* - splendid; *dāsyā* - servanthood; *arpita* - offered; *ātmā* - oneself; *aciram* - soon; *iha* - here; *śarīre* - in the body; *darśayati* - shows; *eva* - surely; *tasmai* - unto him; *madhuripuḥ* - Kṛṣṇa; *ati* - very; *modaiḥ* - gladly; *śliṣyamāṇāṁ* - being embraced; *priyāṁ* - dear; *tām* - him.

Anyone who recites this beautiful Rādhākunḍāṣṭakam for goddess Rādhā with an unagitated mind and a fixed intelligence and who submits him/her-self to Her blissful service will soon see Madhuripu (Kṛṣṇa) in Her delightful embrace, even while being in this (material) body!

Stavāmrta Kanā Vyākhyā: In this verse Śrīpāda Dāsa Gosvāmīcaraṇa describes the *phalaśruti* (benediction on the reciters) of Śrī Rādhākunḍāṣṭakam.

Can there be any doubt that there must be an extraordinary, indescribable fruit (result) from reciting this Śrī Kunḍāṣṭakam, which is filled with the glorification of Śrī Rādhākunḍa?

This lake, which is most dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, just like *sākṣat mādanākhyā mahābhāvavatī kṛṣṇapriyā siromāṇi* Śrī Rādhārāṇī, which bestows a love for Kṛṣṇa just like Śrī Rādhā's on anyone who simply bathes there once, and which blesses anyone who serves it by seeing it or touching it with the greatest love, culminating in the personal service of Śrī Rādhā?

Śrī Raghunātha says:

"Anyone who has dedicated himself to the service of Śrī Rādhā in topmost bliss and who recites this Rādhākunḍāṣṭakam

with a steady intelligence is qualified to receive the above-mentioned boon."

The word **avikalamati** then means that there must be no doubt at all in the intelligence of the reciter about the glories of Rādhākuṇḍa being described in these eight verses.

Unswerving faith in the words of the saints, the spiritual master and the scriptures is called *śraddhā*.

This *śraddhā* qualifies the devotee to commence *bhajana* or devotional practice.

A person who doubts the words of the saints, the spiritual master or the scriptures can't experience anything tangible as a result from his devotional practice, therefore the saints and the scriptures have advised us to do *bhajana*, consisting of hearing and chanting, while keeping unswerving faith in the scriptures and in the *guru*.

The word *avikalamati* can also mean 'niścayātmikā buddhi', the fixed intelligence described in Bhagavad Gītā (2.41).

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda comments as follows on this verse and thereby gives the following definition of *niścayātmikā buddhi*:

mama gurūpadīṣṭam bhagavat kīrtana smaraṇa caraṇa paricaraṇādikam etad eva mama sādhanam etad eva mama sādhyam etad eva mama jīvātuḥ sādhana sādhyā daśayos tyaktum aśakyam etad eva me kāmyam etad eva me kāryam etad anyam na me kāryam nāpy abhilaṣaṇīyam svapne'pi ty atra sukham astu duḥkham vāstu saṁsāra naśyatu vā na naśyatu tatra mama kvāpi kṣatir ity evam niścayātmikā buddhiḥ—

"The devotional service my Guru has given me, consisting of hearing, chanting, remembering and serving the lotus feet of my beloved deity is my practice, my goal and my very life.

Neither in the stage of *sādhana*, nor in the state of perfection will I be able to give up this order. This is what I desire, this is my duty and I don't want to do anything else, not even in dreams!

It may make me happy, it may make me miserable, it may liberate me from material life, it may not liberate me from material life, all this doesn't matter to me! This attitude is called *niścayātmika buddhi*."

This is also the kind of determination of a person who is dedicated to the service of Śrī Rādhā, which is the most blissful and most delicious thing existing in the kingdom of devotion:

"The service of Śrī Rādhā is my goal, it is my practice, it is my very life, I am absolutely unable to give up the service of Śrī Rādhā. It may make me happy, it may make me unhappy, I may take birth in any kind of womb, I may go either to heaven or hell as a result of my activities - let my only duty and activity be the practice of *rādhā-dāsyā*, consisting of hearing, chanting, remembering or serving the deity of Śrī Rādhā!

If an *avikalāmati*-person, who is thus exclusively fixed in the service of Śrī Rādhā, recites this Rādhākunḍāṣṭakam, he then will swiftly be able to see Śrī Rādhārāṇī in the embrace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is the highest perfection for the Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavas, for their only desire is:

ballabī bhujalatābaddhe brahmaṇi mano me ramate

"May the supreme *brahman* delight my mind as He is bound by the vine like arms of the *gopīs*!"

*rādhāpade kori yihōṇ ātma-samarpaṇa;
rādhā pada-dāsī nāma koreche dhārana
śrī rādhāra manohara ei kuṇḍāṣṭaka;*

*nitya pāṭha kore yiho loṭāye mastaka
 kṛṣṇa-candra tāra prati hon suprasanna;
 yugala darśana bhāgye hoy upasanna
 rādhālīṅgita kṛṣṇe sādhaka śarīre;
 śrī kuṇḍa dekhāye dena rādhākuṇḍa-tire
 kuṇḍa-taṭe vāsa kori raghunātha dāsa;
 bhajanaa sampaṭa korilā prakāśa*

"Kṛṣṇa-candra will be very satisfied with anyone who surrenders unto Rādhā's lotus feet, who bears a name thus marking her as a maidservant of Rādhā's lotus feet and who always recites this enchanting Rādhākunḍāṣṭakam, rolling with his head (at the feet of this *āṣṭakam*) and He will bestow the audience of the Yugala-Kiśora to such a fortunate soul.

Such a devotee will be able to see Śrī Rādhā wrapped in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's embrace on the bank of Rādhākuṇḍa.

In this way Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, who lives on the bank of Rādhākuṇḍa, opens the basket of his *bhajana* and shows us its contents."

Thus ends Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī's
 'Rādhākunḍāṣṭakam'

Translated 1988 - 1996 by Advaita Dāsa.