

Shree Peetha Nilaya

SERVE A DEITY NEWSLETTER

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BhaktiMarga
JUST LOVE

JAI GURUDEV

This is the second of the new series
of Serve a Deity newsletters aiming to
connect you deeper with Radha-Krishna.

Enjoy!

Shree
Peetha Nilaya



RADHA-KRISHNA PUJARI TEAM FOREWORD



Jai Gurudev Everyone,

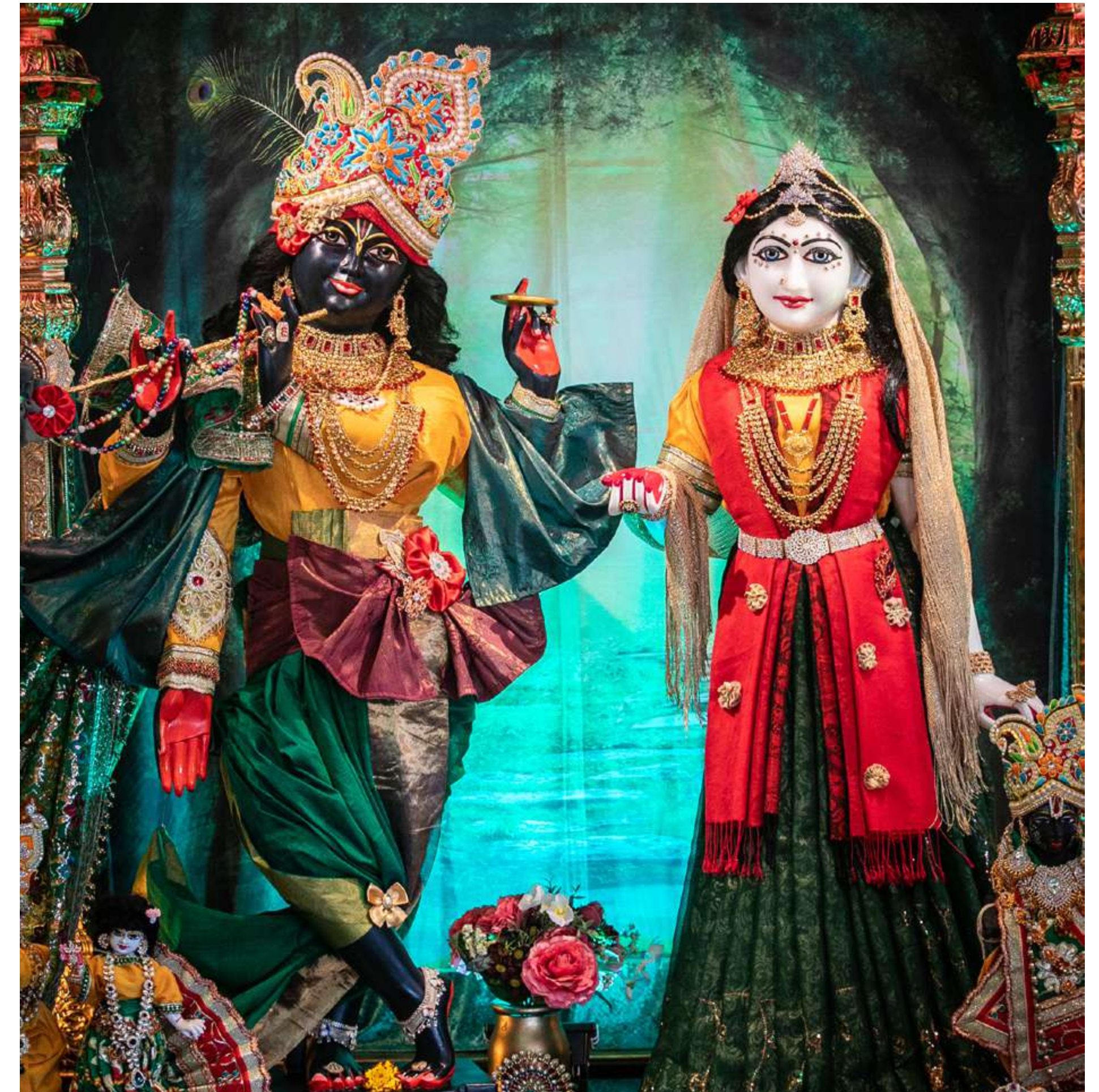
'Radha-Krishna: the most famous couple you've never heard of', could be the title of an article written for the majority of the western population of the world. Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that amongst thousands, few strive to know Him truly. But amongst billions, few even know that He exists at all! Therefore, to know about Him, to hear His Divine Names, to be able to worship Him in this life is simply put: a gift. The only reason you're even reading this now is because of His grace and His own desire to have a relationship with you.

The Radha and Krishna in the Bhutabhrteshwarnath Mandir at Shree Peetha Nilaya were given the name *Kripanidhe* by Guruji. Meaning, 'the ones who are full of mercy and grace'. If you look closely at the position of their hands you will see that neither of them has their hands in the more common 'blessing position' (fingers pointing up). They're not saying 'be patient', no; they're reaching out and asking us to take their hands. They're longing for us. This is why they were given the name *Kripanidhe* because they are the most merciful ones. They are saying 'You don't have to be patient, you don't have to worry. I'm offering you my hand. Take it and I will take care of the rest.'

Radha and Krishna together represent the ultimate state of perfection. A state that can only be attained by the *bhakta* who has single-pointed, unwavering devotion and love towards the Supreme Lord.

Their relationship is not one that can be understood in normal terms. It transcends time, space, and the limitations of the mind. That said, Radha's relationship with the Supreme Lord is not something complicated, or something that requires great knowledge and training to achieve. In fact, it's quite the opposite. Even though She is the personification of complete devotion, *para bhakti*, She is also considered Vrindavaneshwari, the Queen of Sri Vrindavan, the embodiment of spontaneous love and the personification of *mahabhava*. Despite all these grand titles, Her love for Krishna is simple and pure. She's not some great scholarly person who's acquired some secret knowledge; She's not some unapproachable and unattainable empress or prominent leader. She's a milkmaid. She does not sit on a material throne, but rather on a throne of devotion and humility, a throne that resides in the heart of Sri Krishna Himself.

Radha's love for Krishna is the longing of the *atma* for the *paramatma*. And Krishna's love for Radha is the *paramatma* longing for the *atma*. Their relationship is not just something on the outside, it's not just in the *lilas* we hear, or remember once while standing in front of the altar. No. Their relationship is YOUR relationship. It's not something far away, and it's not something complicated. It's the closest and most intimate experience you can have. Kripanidhe is not only reaching their hands out to you in the Bhutabhrteshwarnath Mandir, they're also reaching out to you in the *mandir* of your own heart.



DEITY IN THE SPOTLIGHT: RADHA-KRISHNA

Krishna is worshipped as the eighth avatar of Lord Vishnu, and also as the Supreme Lord in His own right. He is the god of compassion, tenderness, love and is one of the most popular and most widely revered amongst all the Indian deities.

Krishna was born to Devaki and her husband, Vasudeva, of the Yadava clan in Mathura. Devaki's brother was a tyrant named Kamsa. At Devaki's wedding, according to Puranic legends, Kamsa was told by a voice from heaven, *akashvani*, that a child of Devaki would kill him. Kamsa then arranged to kill all of Devaki's children. When Krishna is born, Vasudeva secretly carries the infant Krishna away across the Yamuna river and exchanges Him with another child. When Kamsa tries to kill this exchanged baby girl, She flies up and shows Herself to be Devi (in some versions Durga or Maya), warning him that his death has already arrived in his kingdom. And then She disappears.

Krishna grows up with Nanda and Nanda's wife, Yashoda, near modern-day Mathura. The day of Krishna's birth is celebrated as Krishna Janmashtami.

Birthplace: Mathura

Parents: Devaki (mother) and Vasudeva (father); Yashoda (foster mother) and Nanda (foster father)

Siblings: Balarama (brother), Subhadra (sister), Vindhyavasini (sister)

Consorts: Radha; Rukmini; Satyabhama, Jambavati, Kalindi, Mitravinda, Lakshmana, Satya, Bhadra, Nagnajiti and 16,000-16,100 other junior queens

Dynasty: Yaduvanshi



THE BLUE COLOUR OF THE LORD AND HIS YELLOW CLOTHES

Sri Krishna is often depicted as blue or the colour of rain-laden clouds. This colour is representative of the universe or the ether. The yellow colour stands for the Earth. The combination of the blue body and yellow clothes shows us that the Lord is everything: the vast universe and our Earth itself. His omnipresence can also be interpreted in this explanation.

The story of Lord Krishna tells us that Kamsa killed six of Krishna's brothers who were born prior to His birth. There is symbolism here, too. It is said that Devaki once asked Krishna to bring her dead children back just so that she could see them. They were named Smara, Udgitha, Parisvanga, Patanga, Ksudrabhrt and Ghrni. They stand for the various senses of a human being. Smara is memory, Udgitha is speech, Parisvanga is hearing and so on. After they were killed, Krishna was born. This represents Him being born once all the senses are gone or, in other words, conquered.



WHAT HE HOLDS

Shankh (Conch): Stands for the five elements and eternity. These elements are Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Ether. Lord Vishnu issued the Omkara, or the primordial sound Aum, through His conch.

Sudarshana-chakra: A wheel or force field. It is also the symbol of the mind. It was made by Lord Shiva and gifted to Lord Vishnu as a token of love. The story of Lord Vishnu's most excellent devotion to Lord Shiva is relayed in a story where Lord Vishnu offered a thousand lotuses to Lord Shiva every day. One day in order to test the sincerity of Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva hid one of the lotuses. When Lord Vishnu discovered that He was one lotus short, in order to complete His vrata, He plucked one of His eyes out and offered it to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva was very pleased and gifted *Sudarshana-chakra* to Lord Vishnu.

Kaumodaki Gada (Mace): The gada - a symbol of strength - was a common weapon for hand-to-hand combat and was regarded as the most powerful of weapons. Thus, it is a known symbol for the strengths of Lord Vishnu.

Kamal (Lotus): The symbol of the cosmos. It is also the symbol of purity and transcendence. A lotus rests on water but it does not touch it.

Murali (Flute): It symbolizes divine music. It is the call from the Lord, inviting every creature to His abode. Lord Krishna is the ideal of Divine Love, the God of Love. The flute also symbolizes a human heart, which is made hollow (i.e., free from worldly thoughts). Only such a heart qualifies to become a flute for the God of Love to play upon. When the heart is not empty, i.e., it is occupied with thoughts pertaining to worldly pains and pleasures, there is no room for Divine Love.

Mor Pankh (Peacock feathers): A symbol of beauty and knowledge. Krishna had a physical appearance that attracted everyone, and the advanced spiritual knowledge of Krishna is seen throughout His life.



OUR DEITIES ON THE ALTAR OF KRIPANIDHE RADHA-KRISHNA

CHATURBUJA KRISHNA (photo 1)

In Guruji's own words He says: 'Very often people ask about this, particularly about our Krishna, because our Krishna is not like other Krishnas. Even in South India, when we say Chaturbuja Krishna, He has *Shankha* in one hand, *Chakra* in one hand and with the other hands He is holding the flute. But this Krishna is particular, because the first time He came to me, I had the vision of Lord Krishna in that *swarupa*, in that form. But His hand was not down like that, it was like this, up. But how to explain that to the person who was carving? He did it down, so, that is what it is! He is calling everybody, 'Come to Me!'

'It's true. Often you will see all the deities having a hand like this: palm out, fingers up. Saying, 'Wait, be patient. I'm hearing your prayer, but you have to be patient.' But this one says, 'No, you do not need to be patient, come to Me. I'll sort everything out for you.'

LADOO GOPAL (photo 2) - In 2008, Guruji was eating dinner at some followers' house in Mumbai when he spotted a statue that was in a bin to be thrown away. Guruji realized that it was not just a statue but was in fact a *murti* of Ladoo Gopal! The hosts had no idea that it was actually a statue of Lord Krishna and so when Guruji asked if He could take Him, they happily obliged. He's been with Guruji and has been served every day since.

DVARAVATI SHILAS OR DWARKA SHILAS (photo 3) - There is a small Shila on the altar that almost nobody is aware of! The reason being that he is very small and is almost always at the feet of Ladoo Gopal. Dwarka Shilas are a type of Shila or coral stone obtained from the Gomati river (Gomti River) in Dwaraka. These Shilas are actually a coral (often very small) and have distinguishing

chakra-like markings.

SHILAS (photo 4) - Most of the Shilas in the Bhutabhrteshwarnath Mandir come from trips Guruji took to India around 2006 - 2008 and are mostly from Govardhan Hill itself.

However, there are two smaller Shilas that are a much more recent addition to the altar, which have an interesting story. In December 2018, a devotee brought two small Shilas to Guruji during *Darshan* to bless. Guruji saw them and asked, 'Where did you get these?' to which the Mataji replied 'Govardhan Hill, in India'. Guruji was a bit surprised but proceeded to explain that one cannot simply take Shilas from that place without being gifted it by a local. Otherwise, it is very inauspicious and bad luck. Guruji, of course, being the protector and well-wisher of His devotees promptly took these Shilas from her and gave them to the temple, therefore balancing or neutralizing the karmic consequences (or perhaps taking it upon Himself).



THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF KRISHNA

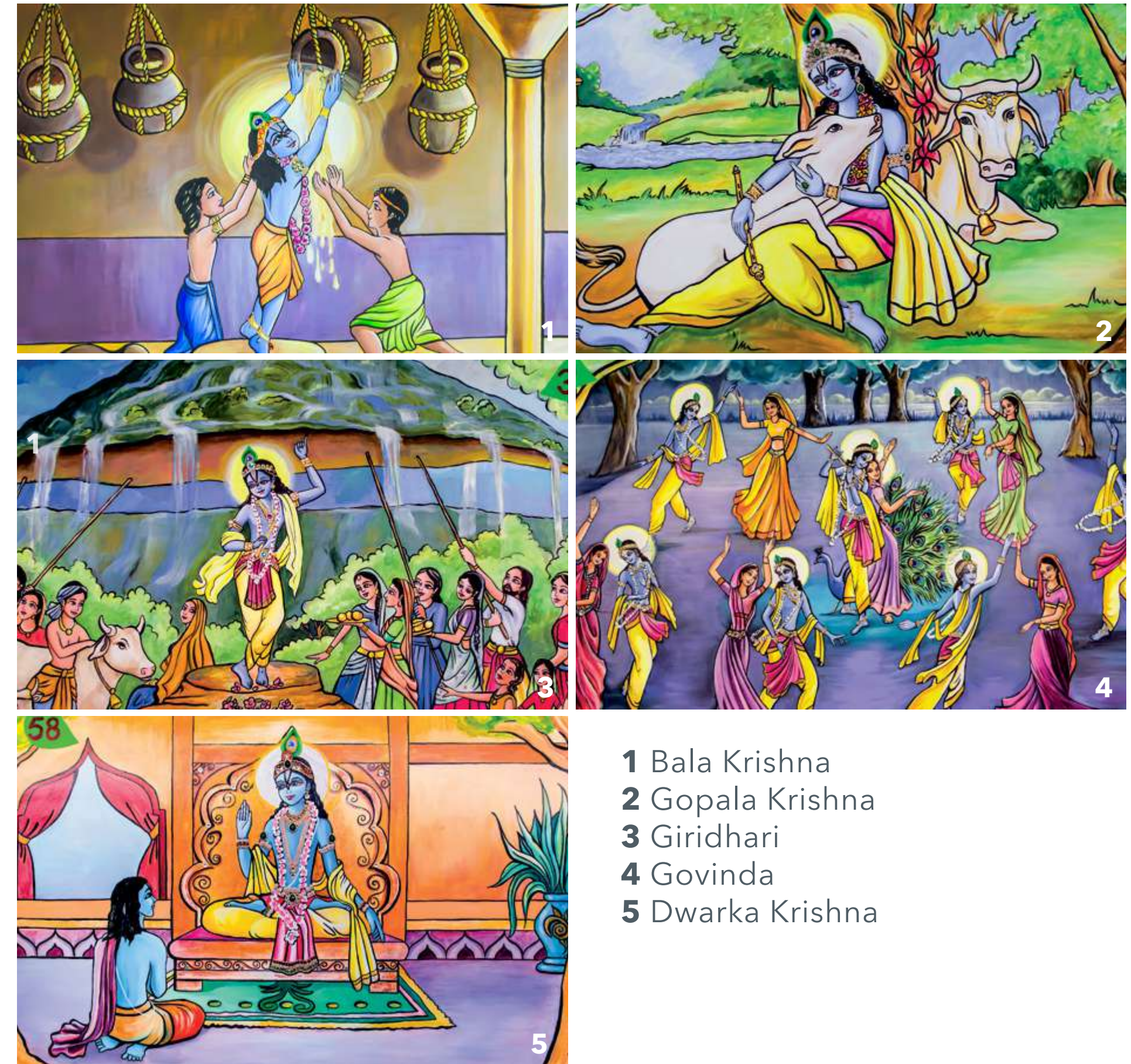
BALA KRISHNA: Krishna as a baby (Balakrishna). Usually shown crawling on His hands and knees or dancing with joy, He often has a ball of butter in His hands. Even as a baby, Krishna in this form was known for His pranks stealing butter. At this age, He is also known for the one who killed the demons Putana and Trinavarta.

GOPALA: Gopala is Krishna as a young boy who tends the cows and yet He is the Supreme Lord who protects the cows. Gopal means 'one who plays with the cowherds'. In Vrindavan, the cowherd boys are called *gopas*, who were Krishna's friends.

GIRIDHARI: Lord Krishna, the one who holds the mountain. This is one of many names of Lord Krishna signifying Him as the one who lifted a mountain. The term Giridhar, Giri - hill and Dhar - one who holds or carries, means the one who lifted or carried a mountain or hill. The term reminds us of the divine play that Krishna unfolded as a young boy in the foothills of Govardhan.

GOVINDA: A name for the youthful Krishna. Literally, the lord of the cows. In the early stage of His life, Sri Krishna is also often playing the flute for His beloved *gopis* - female devotees. Of these, Radha was the greatest one. After the Govardan *lila*, according to Indra, Krishna was not only the protector of the cows, but of all living beings on earth. Thus, He came to be known as Govinda, the ruler of the souls of all living beings.

DWARKA KRISHNA: In later life, Sri Krishna retired to Dwarka where He lived and ruled the kingdom for many years.



- 1 Bala Krishna
- 2 Gopala Krishna
- 3 Giridhari
- 4 Govinda
- 5 Dwarka Krishna

RADHA REPRESENTS THE SINGLE- POINTED BHAKTI



Radha also called Radhika, Keshavi, Madhavi, Brajeshwari, Radharani and many other. She is the eternal consort of Lord Krishna.

The Sanskrit term Radha means 'prosperity, success'. She is the personification of *para-bhakti*, complete devotion.

Every year we celebrate Her birthday on 26 August, better known as Radhashtami. Radha's favourite colour is a 'Krishna-blue', like a blue cloud, matched with pink.

Srimati Radharani is the longing aspect which is hidden deep inside your heart.

She also represents a single-pointed mind.

Quote from Guruji: **'Hold onto the feet of Radha. She is the single-pointed bhakti Herself and She is the only one who can easily give that grace to attain pure Love, devotion and surrender to the feet of Giridhari.'**

Guruji said that Radha's name is the secret of opening the heart. When you chant the Name of Radha it opens the heart, and that love inside of you starts to awaken.

QUALITIES THAT RADHA- KRISHNA REPRESENT



The love of Radha and Krishna is symbolic of the eternal love affair between the devoted mortal and the Divine. Radha represents the devotee, both male and female, and Krishna represents the Divine. Radha's intense love for Krishna symbolises each devotee's passionate longing for ultimate unification with God.

In relation to God, it is said that we are all women. Radha's yearning for union with Her beloved Krishna is the soul's longing to be united with the one Source of peace and bliss from which it has become separated. This long-forgotten pain of separation is the root cause of all suffering. To rediscover our oneness is the source of all happiness and fulfilment. In this sense, Krishna is the fulfilment of all desires.

RADHA- KRISHNA QUOTES FROM GURUJI

'We can call Her Radha, we can call Her Lakshmi, we can call Her whatever... She is that universal Shakti, power, you know, that the Lord - hold everything. When we long for something, you know, that longing is also called Radha.'

Satsang, SPN, 04.12.19

'Krishna is with you, you know. And He loves you. Whether people love you or they don't love, who cares about it... if you learn to accept yourself, you will see that He is always with you, strengthening you.'

Satsang, SPN, 29.12.19

'Lord Krishna is present in everybody's heart... but in the heart of a devotee He is dancing, He is playing, He is alive'

Satsang, 28.11.19

'And Bhagavan Krishna, Radha Krishna there is Kripeshwarnath, the Lord which gives mercy. This Krishna is different... He has four hands. This Krishna is the first ever time I had - the first time when I had the vision of Lord Krishna, He was in that form.'

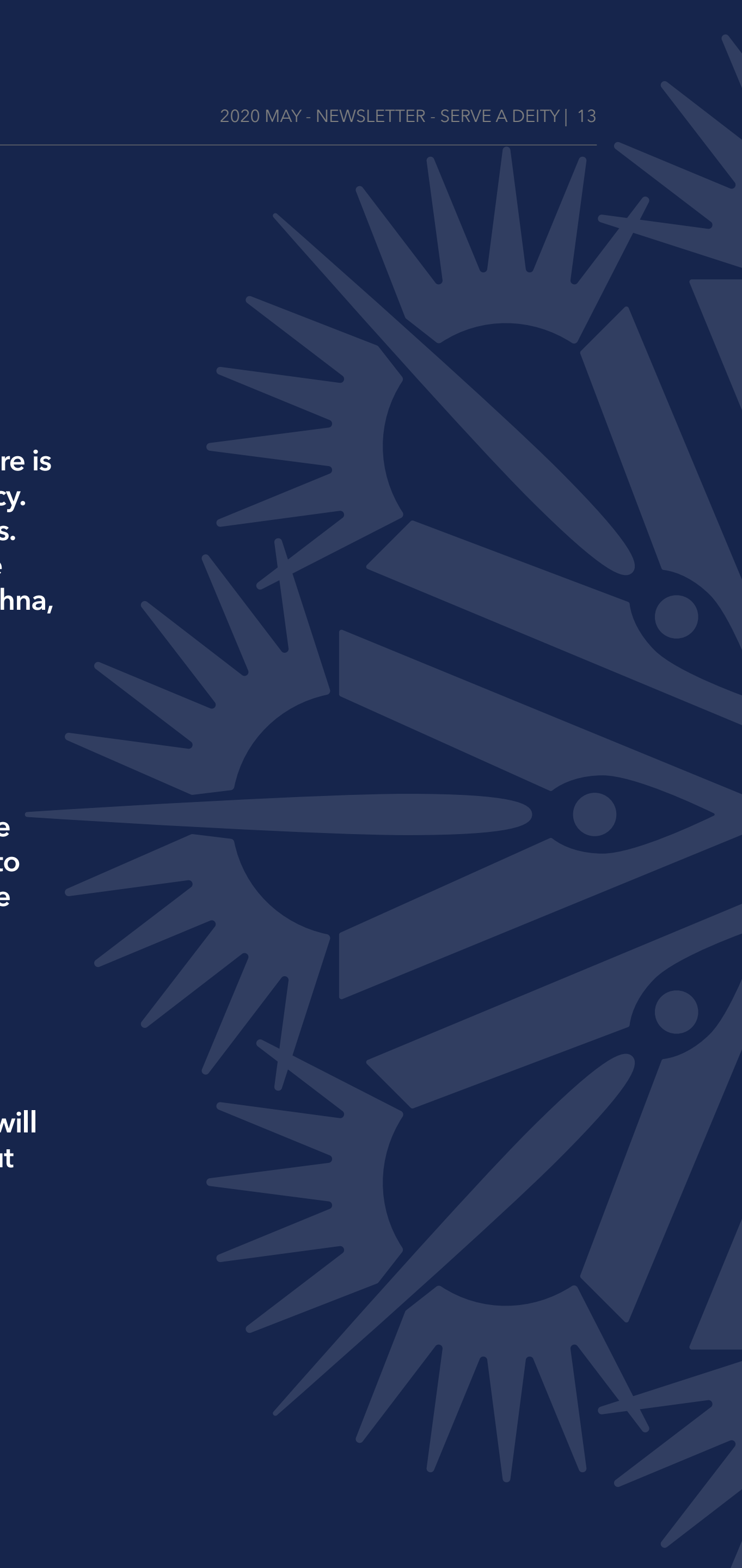
SPN Mandir Inauguration, 07.06.18

'This attachment to Giridhari creates this affinity and closeness between the devotee and the Lord Himself... so, this attachment to Giridhariji awakens something inside of the devotee which is called *samadhi*.'

Navaratri, Kalaratri Day, 05.10.20

'Without the grace of Giridhariji nothing is possible, you know. You will not be here, I will not be here, nobody would be here without His grace. It is only Him that is the doer of everything, you know.'

Satsang, SPN, 29.12.19



PUJARIS EXPERIENCES OF SERVICE TO RADHA-KRISHNA

A Visit from Krishna - Mukundananda

Before Katyayani day of Navaratri, I happened to be reading a chapter about the *Rasa-lila* and about the penance and the prayers the *gopis* did to Katyayani Ma so She could bring Krishna to them. I was really inspired by *gopis*, as this is also my deep romantic desire, but what could I possibly do as a penance to obtain such blessing? The next day, on Katyayani day, Swami Keshava's *satsang* in morning prayers about the *gopis* and about their prayers was really inspiring for me and made me decide right away to fast on that day. I had never fasted before and I had no intentions of ever fasting in my life, so I did it for Her and I did it for Krishna.

At night, I went to the tent to receive *darshan* of Katyayani and I offered my fasting to Her and asked Her to fulfil my desire, to reveal Krishna to me. That was all I wanted.

The night finished and the following day I often thought to myself that maybe my prayer was not truthful and maybe my fast was not good enough or not done in a proper way. The next morning, Krishna's feet appeared in front of our eyes! These were clear footprints in the *puja* towel I was using right there in the Bhutabhrteshwarnath Mandir, and I immediately associated it with my prayer to Ma, but of course, without Guruji's confirmation, I would not make any further conclusions.

When Guruji said the feet were not from Ma but from Krishna, I told Him about my prayer to Ma and He told me that yes, Ma Katyayani had answered my prayer and revealed Krishna! It is beautiful what our love for them can do, the barriers it can break. Ma is ever so merciful and does answer all our prayers. I hope this experience inspires everyone as my Love for Krishna inspires me to pray for Him.



SAINTS WHO WORSHIPPED RADHA-KRISHNA

RAJARSHI SRI BANAMALI RAJABAHADURA

Born in 1863, Rajarshi Sri Banamali Rajabahadura (photo 1) became the landlord of Tanasa in East Bengal's Pabana district. He was given the title of Raja by the British Government.

The story of his life is mainly connected with the story of his family deity: Sri Radha Vinoda. He got so absorbed in the service of Sri Radha Vinoda that it became impossible for him to do anything else. Fortunately, he had a very capable and trustworthy manager to whom he entrusted the entire management of the estate so that he could devote all his time to the loving service of Radha Vinoda.

After some time, he went to Vrindavan and constructed two buildings, one in Vrindavan and the other in Radhakunda. These are now known as Tanasa Mandira and Rajabani. He lived with Radha Vinoda sometimes in Vrindavan and sometimes in Radhakunda.

MIRABAI

Mirabai (photo 2) was a great saint and devotee of Sri Krishna. Despite facing criticism and hostility from her own family, she lived an exemplary saintly life and composed many devotional *bhajans*. Historical information about the life of Mirabai is a matter of some scholarly debate.

When Mirabai was only three years old, a wandering *sadhu* came to her family's home and gave a doll of Sri Krishna to her father. Her father saw this as a special blessing but was initially unwilling to give it to his daughter, because he felt she would not appreciate it. However, Mira had, at first sight, become deeply enamoured with this depiction of Lord Krishna. She refused to eat until the doll of Sri Krishna was given to her. To Mira, this figure of Sri Krishna embodied His living presence. She resolved to make Krishna her lifelong friend, lover, and husband. Throughout her turbulent

life, she never wavered from her youthful commitment.

Much of what we know about Mirabai comes from her poetry. Her poetry expresses the longing and seeking of her soul for union with Sri Krishna. At times, she expresses the pain of separation and at other times the ecstasy of divine union. Her devotional poems were designed to be sung as *bhajans*, and many are still sung today.

Mirabai showed how a seeker could attain union with God through love. Her only message was that Krishna was her all.



PILGRIMAGE PLACES OF RADHA-KRISHNA VISITED BY GURUJI



THE BRIJ RAJ BIHARI TEMPLE

Inside Nurpur city is an amazing temple (photo 1). Here, Lord Krishna and Mirabai are shown with a marble statue. Along with this, the Raja also brought a maulsari plant, which developed into a gigantic tree. These trees are now known as India's sacred garland trees. Many people come here and worship Lord Krishna and pray for blessings and happiness.

Located around 66 Km from Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh, Nurpur Fort was constructed by Maharaja Basu in the 16th century. One of the Krishna *murtis*, made with black stone, prayed to by Mirabai, was taken to Nurpur by King Raja Basu. Raja Basu built a beautiful temple for this deity, known as Brij Raj Bihari Temple.

The temple is now ruined, along with the fort, but still has some impressive carved stone relief work. The antique *murti* of Lord

Krishna is still preserved in Brij Raj Temple and worshipped by pilgrims. The lifelike *murti* of Lord Krishna playing His flute is matchless in its beauty.

VRINDAVAN

Vrindavan (photo 2) is considered one of the most important places of pilgrimage for the devotees of Krishna. Lord Krishna spent His childhood in Vrindavan. It is said that Krishna is still alive in Vrindavan, and even that He is Vrindavan Himself, so there is no difference. It was in Vrindavan where Krishna played many *lilas*. Among them the famous *Rasa-lila*, when the young Krishna danced the whole night with the *gopis*.





I Met Krishna in Vrindavan - Rishika Abirami

Jai Gurudev,

I would like to share one of my very first experiences of Krishna being very real in Vrindavan and His relation to me.

It happened in Spring 2014, when I came to Vrindavan for the second time in my life. I had come for the Holi pilgrimage with Guruji in March, and after that stayed in Vrindavan for another two months as He blessed me to be in India for three months in total.

It is rather strange, but Krishna was not the closest deity for me. Even during the Holi pilgrimage, I remember us meditating on Him and listening to Guruji's endless stories, but I used to pray to Narasimha instead. I could not connect to Radha-Krishna, and their *lilas* felt like unreal fairy tales for me. Then, Guruji left for Germany, and I stayed in Vrindavan.

I stayed at the Jiva Institute, studying Ayurveda and Shreemad Bhagavatham with Satyanarayan Das Babaji (by the way, an interesting 'coincidence' was that we studied the 7th Canto, Lord Narasimha's story). I was not a fan of going

outside of the Jiva Institute too much, as I was alone and did not feel very confident in exploring Vrindavan by myself. After one month of being there, I also started to miss Guruji a lot, and was a bit depressed, as I did not know when I would see Him again. It was at that very moment that Krishna stepped forward to meet me, and it really was Him doing it, since it was not coming from my side.

In the beginning of May, one of my friends in Vrindavan came to Jiva and told me: 'Today I am going to take you to Radha Raman temple, and you cannot refuse; you are just going to go with me'. I remember feeling a bit down, but he was very demanding, so I agreed. We went and the first thing we met on the Loi Bazar was a big procession with a Banke Bihari picture and *kirtan*. The moment I saw Banke Bihari, I knew that He had come out to show Himself to me and make me aware that He had been waiting for me to come to see Him all this time since Guruji left and even since March, when I had seen Him the last time. I thought, 'Ok, I must see Him today as well, right after Radha Raman.' (Later on, Guruji would tell us that we have to see Banke Bihari regularly if we stay in Vrindavan.)

When we reached the Radha Raman Mandir and went inside, I was surprised to see Him out close to the devotees, dressed extremely beautifully and His entire temple decorated with jasmine garlands. It happened to be His birthday, and they had just finished *abhishekam* on Him and were singing songs and dancing in the temple. My friend told me that he did not know that it was Radha Ramanji's appearance day, but he had a strong feeling that he had to bring me there today. I stood close to Him and looked at Him, and what I saw was His smile. Have you ever seen Radha Ramanji's smile? It is very, very soft, gentle, tender, loving and amazingly beautiful.

So, I saw His smile and I felt that He had been waiting for me. I felt it, but I was still not sure if my feeling was real. I thought that maybe I was making it up. The moment I thought it, my friend approached me and gave me a piece of the *abhishekam* clothes of Radha Ramanji. It is a very rare thing to receive from Him, especially on His birthday, so my friend told me that the *pujari* has given it for me. So, I kept it close to my heart and I knew He was sending a message to me: a message of His love.

We also went to Banke Bihariji and received *darshan* and a garland there, and my mood changed. I could see the people of Vrindavan as if they were parts of Radharani Herself. Suddenly I started to meet the people I knew and saw how Radharani organises everybody to do what they need to do in the seeming chaos of life on the streets of Vrindavan. I saw the *sadhus* and simple people and their devotion, how people come to see Banke Bihariji every day because they cannot live without their Lord, how they worship and feed their small Krishnas in their homes and worship Tulasi, and how they believe that Radha-Krishna are their close friends.

I was told once that nobody goes hungry in Vrindavan, because Radharani provides and organises food for everybody, and there are always *ashrams* that distribute food for free. I remember later, when we had built Guruji's *ashram* and temple in Vrindavan, I had this experience of Radharani making enough *prasad* and arranging people to come for it as well: it was the day of Radhashtami and we decided to cook *malpua*. The only person who knew how to prepare them was Sandeep, so he started to make the dough. Normally we don't make so much *prasad* as we don't have that many people in the *ashram*, and not so many people

come to the temple for prayers. So, Sandeep started to prepare, and suddenly he realized that he was making too much. He came to me and said: 'Abirami, I made far too much dough, what should I do? Maybe we keep it for tomorrow, and I do not use all of it? We are not going to be able to eat all of it and it's going to get spoiled.' I thought for a minute and had a strong feeling that Radharani was doing something, so I told him to prepare all of it, as it might be that She had some plan.

What happened was amazing: the whole day he was frying *malpuas*, and in the evening we suddenly had a temple filled with local people, and all the *malpuas* were distributed! The same night, during the prayer, we saw a butterfly in the temple, which is a miracle - a big multi-colour butterfly at night, when the moon was shining. The butterfly kept flying around Giridhariji trying to sit on Him, then flying again. So we all felt that Radharani had come and blessed us, and as Guruji is always saying: 'It is only by Radharani's permission and grace that you can stay in Vrindavan', so She is the one who takes care of us here. Guruji also once said that it is Radharani who removes the veil of *maya*, when the *guru* asks Her for the devotee.

But coming back to my story of my first stay in Vrindavan, after seeing Radha Ramanji and Banke Bihariji, I knew now what I had to do. Guruji was coming to India for the 9 Goddesses pilgrimage and I decided to ask Him if I could come to see Him on one of the days. Guruji said yes, and I went, and I also invited my friend, who had never met Guruji, to come with me. We went by Indian train, and oh, you can imagine! In May, in the general coach class, no air conditioning, fully packed with people. Goodness, the moment I entered I started to feel suffocated and dizzy and was about to faint when I started fervently praying to Guruji: 'Please, if you want me to reach you alive, do something, help me!' You won't believe: literally ten minutes after that, the sky (which had been with no clouds at all and full sunshine) became super cloudy with dark clouds. A terrible wind came, and it started storming and raining. The wind and rain blew inside the open windows of the train, it immediately cooled down, and we were travelling in coolness until the end. When we reached Chandigarh where we were supposed to meet Guruji, the first thing I told Him was: 'Thank you', as I knew that it was Him that helped us to reach Him safely. And Guruji was very happy. He called me to sit next to Him during dinner, and this was the day He told me that He wanted me to come and stay in Vrindavan.





The next day, we were driving in the bus to a Devi temple. Guruji took me with Him and decided to sit in the back of the bus, and I was also sitting in the back, so I could see Him all the time. When it became evening and was dark inside the bus, He laid down on the back seats to sleep. He had a marigold garland from Devi on Him, and He laid His head on the lap of one of the prabhus, in such a way that I could easily see His face all the time. He slept and He smiled the whole time in His sleep. As I was looking at His smile, suddenly I had a déjà vu feeling. I knew I had seen this very tender, gentle, and stunning smile before. The more I looked, the more I could see Guruji's face becoming Radha Raman: He had the same face shape, the same eye shape and the love that was emanating from Him filled me completely. I saw Radha Raman sleeping with that smile, and for a long time I could not take my eyes off Him. Then I asked Him inside to give me a sign, if what I saw was true. At that moment, Guruji woke up, opened His eyes, stood up, took His garland from His neck and gave it to me. The garland smelled like Him and even had a few of His hairs on it. (I keep this garland as a treasured relic.)

I thought in my mind that maybe I should give Guruji the relic I received from Radha Ramanji - His bathing cloth. I took it out and offered it to Him. And Guruji just smiled again and said: 'No,

it was for you.' And at that point, I knew what He had told me: 'I am all the deities in Vrindavan, and you are meant to be there with Me.'

After participating for a few more days in that pilgrimage with Guruji, I came back to Vrindavan to pick up my belongings. My three months in India were coming to an end and I was going home. Yes, I knew that Guruji wanted me to come back to Vrindavan, but I did not yet know when and how. So, I packed my things for Moscow, but before I left, I went to see Krishna in the temples.

It was in the ISKCON temple when I first heard Krishna talking to me. (Do not take me wrong, it's not that I normally hear deities talking, but it was like words in my mind or rather, heart, that were definitely not coming from me.) I stood in front of the deities and I told Radha and Krishna: 'So, goodbye, I am going now'. And I heard Krishna answering: 'Why are you saying goodbye? You are not going anywhere from Me'. I thought: 'Hmmm? What does He mean?'

In the airport, when checked in for the flight to Moscow and went to Passport Control, the policeman who was checking my passport suddenly looked at me and said out of blue: 'Radhe Radhe! Where are you going? Please, do not leave for long. Come back to India as soon

as you can!' Just imagine a policeman saying something like this to you from Passport Control, and you will understand my shock. Guruji and Radha-Krishna were really making sure that I got their message, and that I would come back soon and stay in Vrindavan.

I came back the same year on November 24th, and this is how the story of the Shree Giridhar Dham Ashram started for me. Later on, there would be many miraculous stories, how Giridhari and Govardhan Giriraj came to us, how the *ashram* happened and how we became a family here.

Now I know, not only for me, but for everyone who comes to Vrindavan, that they start to live with, and for, Krishna every day. That is simply how Vrindavan is.

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH OUR DEITIES

More than Just Bananas - Aditya

One day, I was doing *puja* to Hanuman in the afternoon and after I finished, I brought *prasad* to Guruji who was sitting just 40 meters away, watching the sunset.

When I offered the plate full of bananas and other fruits, Guruji said, 'Do you think Hanuman likes only bananas because he is like a monkey? Eh?! YOU are a monkey! Go away!' Guruji took some nuts as *prasad* and sent me away.

At first, I felt really bad because of this comment from Guruji, but then I tried to go beyond the drama and said to myself, 'Let's prepare a very tasty sandwich for Hanuman because I just gave him a plate full of bananas!'

So, I rushed and prepared two of my favorite sandwiches, came back, purified them, and offered to Hanuman.

From behind me, far away, I heard Guruji saying to someone, 'What is he doing?'

I started laughing inside but kept doing my offering. Guruji then called:

'Aditya... what are you doing?!'

And I answered:

'I'm offering a very tasty sandwich, Guruji!'

He called me afterwards and He ate both sandwiches and offered them to people around Him, so we watched the sunset all together, enjoying Hanumanji *prasad*!

What can we get from this experience?

This story is not only about what we offer the deities in our service to them. It is a lesson in listening to the *guru*. One could easily have remained feeling dejected by the comments, but it was in listening and responding to those comments that a higher reward was received.





Shirdi and the *Sadhana* He Gave - Sudhamayi, Gurupurnima 2020

A resident of The Ashram, Sudhamayi, was preparing the new flowers for Shirdi Sai Baba's Temple but the temple was locked. However, she opened the temple for an Indian couple who had come all the way from Frankfurt just to visit Shirdi for Gurupurnima, because Shirdi was their *guru*. They were so happy to see Shirdi. They did *parikrama*, and listened to Cristiano, who, while he was visiting Shree Peetha Nilaya, had been reciting the *Sri-Vishnusahasranama* every day in front of the Panduranga Mandir. They said: 'We like to hear Cristiano, because he has a nice Sanskrit pronunciation and he chants slow, so that we can follow better. In India, the *pandits* sometimes recite the *Sri-Vishnusahasranama* very fast.'

Marina, Cristiano's wife, one day asked Guruji: 'Why do spiritual organizations fall apart when the *guru* leaves his body?' Guruji replied: 'It is because their *guru* didn't give them a *sadhana* to practise.' The *sadhana* that Shirdi gave to His devotees was to recite the *Sri-Vishnusahasranama*.



A Living Fairy Tale - Lakshmiramandasnananda

'Fable'... every time I am in front of Her, this word comes out of my mouth... 'fable'. Because just the sight of Her transports me to the sweetest, most romantic fable there is.

And like all fables begin: 'Once upon a time, locked under a spell in a golden palace, there was a beautiful princess, the most beautiful and the sweet of all, whose name was Tulsi. Although the pretty palace was hidden in a magical forest, even more shiny and precious than the palace was the princess Herself, the real diamond hidden inside a golden chest. What spell had struck Her? That rare, unknown, mysterious spell called devotion. In fact, She was the princess that embodied pure devotion. Her delicate body radiated such a shine that it lit up not only that palace, not only that forest, but the whole world of Love for the Lord.'

Like any respectable fable, the figure of the prince is essential. But where is he...and above all, who is he? The answer is in the eyes of the sweet princess.

Every time I do *arati* to Her, I look into Her eyes and try to hold back childish tears. I admire Her deep and sacred gaze and remember that long night when Guruji

Himself painted Her eyes. He had asked the *pujaris*, 'What colour do we paint Her eyes?' as if we could know the mysterious face of the princess hidden in that palace.

After giving Her a long, deep look, Guruji replied to Himself, 'I will paint Her eyes blue because, for Her eyes, there is only Krishna.' And so, the Divine gave life to the Divine. Her look changed and, with it, Her face, Her little ears, Her shy nose, Her plump cheeks, Her elegant neck, Her soft hands... Her entire divine body changed.

Guruji granted us this priceless grace: He made it possible for all of us to know that mysterious look previously known only to Krishna. We, Her children, can now look at Her, straight in the eyes and feel that Love... that devotion... that princess... the Mother.

Where do Her eyes look? Where does this divine gaze land? Look at Her carefully. If you follow Her gaze, you will discover that prince for whom She has granted all of Herself in a state of pure devotion.

Guruji, through Tulsi, through Her divine gaze, is revealing to us that rare and mysterious spell called devotion. Be like Her, have Her eyes, because 'in Her eyes is only Krishna.'



FEEDING RADHA-KRISHNA THEIR FAVOURITE FOODS

BUNDI LADDUS

The quintessential *laddu* to offer whenever one thinks of Krishna. This is the one that He is so often pictured with. They are sweet, sticky, and soft - and are just a delicious mouthful that Krishna and everyone always loves!

Ingredients (for 6 cups)

For the sugar syrup

- 1.5 cups sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water

For the batter

- 1.5 cups besan (gram flour or chickpea flour)
- 1 cup + 1 tablespoon water or add as required - the amount of water to be added depends on the quality of besan
- 2 pinch of crushed saffron or saffron powder
- 6 green cardamoms crushed to powder in a mortar-pestle - about $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cardamom powder

- 1 tablespoon melon seeds (magaz)
- 2 black cardamoms - seeds kept and the husks discarded
- 1 pinch edible camphor (optional)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoon ghee to be added or ghee for applying on your palms for shaping the *laddus*
- oil for deep frying the *bundis*

Preparation

Making the syrup

1. Mix sugar and water in a pot. Keep the sugar solution on stovetop on a low heat.
2. Cook the sugar syrup, till you get a one thread consistency. Switch off the flame. Keep the sugar solution aside.
3. The sugar syrup should be hot when you add the *bundis*, so make sure to warm it if necessary.



Making the *bundis*

1. Take all the dry ingredients for the *bundi* batter in a mixing bowl - besan/gram flour & saffron powder.
2. Add water to make a smooth batter. The consistency of the batter is important. (You'll check to see if the consistency is right, by frying a few *bundis*.)
3. Tap the wired whisk or the handle of a spoon which has a bit of batter on it into the hot oil. The *bundis* should have a round shape.
4. If they become flat, the batter is thin and if they get tail ends, the batter is thick. If thin, then add a bit of gram flour and check by frying a few more. If thick, then add a bit of water and do the same test. Once you get the correct consistency, proceed with the next step of frying the *bundis*.
5. Take a dry perforated ladle and place it above the hot oil. Don't hold it too high, because if the batter falls from too high a place, it won't give it a round shape.
6. With a spoon, add some batter to the perforated spoon ladle.
7. Spread the batter lightly with a spoon. Finish up the batter on the perforated spoon ladle this way.

8. Fry the *bundis* till they are cooked. Don't make them crisp or overdo the frying. When the oil stops sizzling, remove the *bundis*. (This step is important because if *bundis* becomes crisp, the *bundi laddu* won't be soft enough to absorb the sugar syrup.)

9. After each batch, wipe the perforated ladle with a clean piece of paper towel from both sides.

Forming the *bundi laddus*

1. Add the fried *bundi* to the hot sugar syrup. Add the cardamom powder, ghee and edible camphor (if using that).
2. Ghee helps in binding the *bundi laddus* but is not absolutely necessary.
3. Mix well and shape the *bundis* mixture into the size of *laddus* you want.
4. Feel free to garnish each *laddu* with pistachio slivers or almonds or cashews.

The *bundis laddu* is now ready to be offered to Radha-Krishna or any other deity you choose!



UPCOMING DEITY JOURNEYS



We are quite happy with the Deity Journeys that are planned this year. Due to the Covid19 situation The Ashram is still partly closed.

We have scheduled the following journeys Online:

- Journey with the Divine Mother on **2 September**
- Journey with Sriman Narayana on **13 November**
- Journey with Tulsi-devi on **24 November**

For further information and if you would like to sign up, please go to the BM Event calendar and register on the event.

If you are registered, you will receive an e-mail with further instruction on how to download the material for these three Deity Journeys the day before the Online event.

[Journey with the Divine Mother](https://bhaktimarga.org/events/event/online-journey-divine-mother)

bhaktimarga.org/events/event/online-journey-divine-mother

[Journey with Sriman Narayana](https://bhaktimarga.org/events/event/online-journey-sriman-narayana)

bhaktimarga.org/events/event/online-journey-sriman-narayana

[Journey with Tulsi-devi](https://bhaktimarga.org/events/event/online-journey-tulsi-devi)

bhaktimarga.org/events/event/online-journey-tulsi-devi

We still hope that we can offer the Journey with Sriman Narayana also as a 2,5 day event in SPN.

UPCOMING SPN EVENTS



Krishna Janmashtami will take place on **12 August**. The event will run from Wednesday 12 August 11.00 till Thursday 13 August 12:30. There will also be Bhakti TV livestreamed for all to view.

For more information go to:
bhaktimarga.org/events/event/krishna-janmashtami-2020-choose-how-celebrate

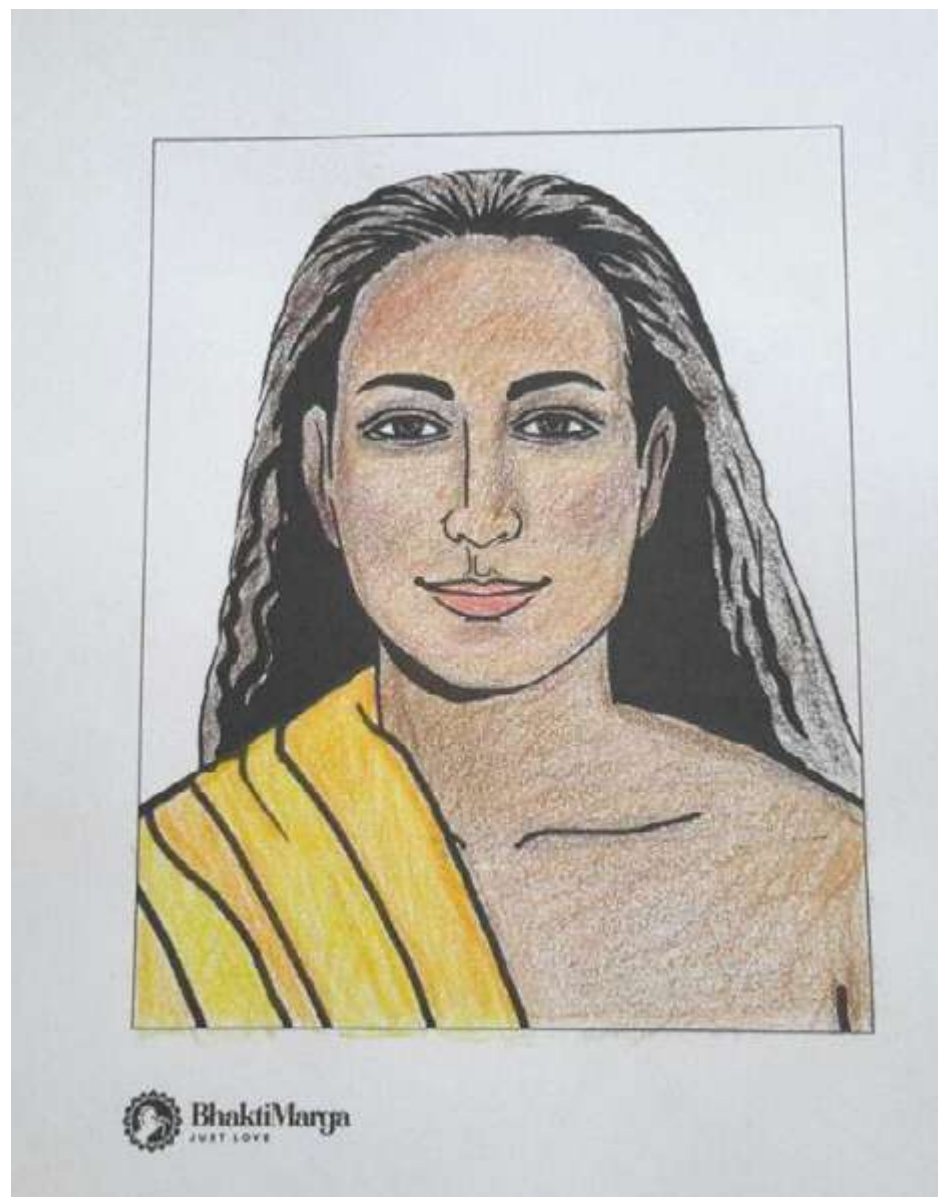


The **Just Love Festival** will take place over the weekend **4 to 6 September**.

For more information go to:
justlovesfestival.org



PREVIOUS DEITY JOURNEY PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK



Some Feedback from the Online Journey with the Gurus, Painting Meditation

'It was such fun and joy that I did Babaji painting meditation today. One is calm and balanced afterwards.'

'Thank you very much for this very nice painting meditation of yours!'

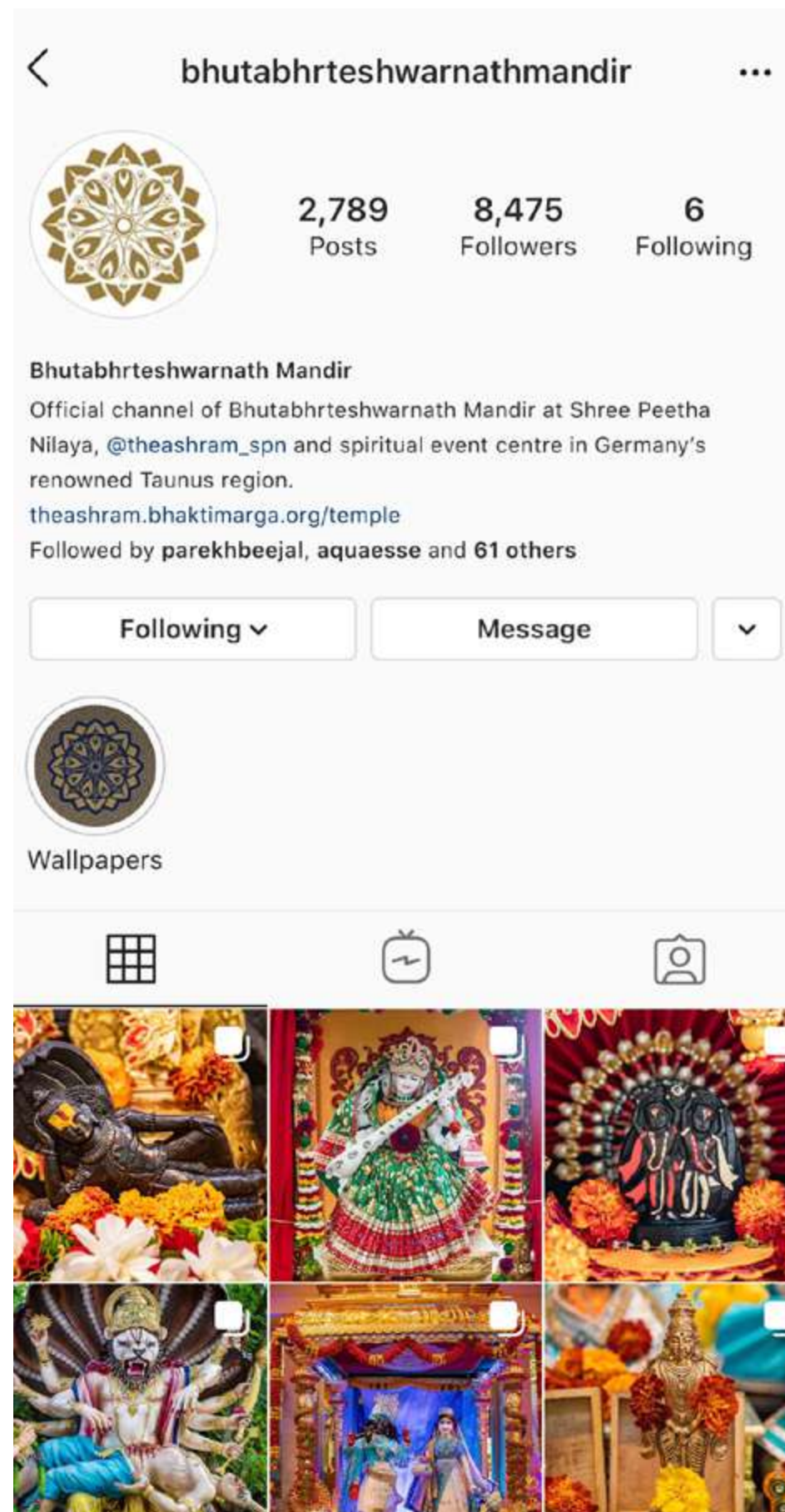
'It was such a wonderful experience and I so much enjoyed and appreciated it.'

'Thank you very much for your guidance online for the painting journey.'

'Thank you very much for the beautiful video, that inspired me a lot!'



STAY CONNECTED



We are so happy that you are part of our service to God in the home of Guruji. We invite you to continue to be a part of it and to stay in touch with us daily, weekly and for special events. Here's how:

Connect Every Day

Feel like you are part of our morning prayers and evening *arati* with our livestream.

theashram.bhaktimarga.org

We post 30 stunning photos daily to give you the opportunity to receive *darshan* wherever you are.

[instagram.com/bhutabhrteshwarnathmandir](https://www.instagram.com/bhutabhrteshwarnathmandir)

Connect During the Week

You can also stay connected with our Telegram channel for the Temple Satsangs: morning *Srimad Bhagavatam* and evening *Divya Prabandham* satsangs given in the temple by Swamis and members of the Bhakti Marga Academy. Just sign up here:

https://t.me/SPN_Temple_Satsangs

Note: To connect this way, you will need Telegram downloaded on either your phone or laptop.

We hope that you enjoyed reading this new style of newsletter. Our next Serve a Deity newsletter will be centered around Sriman Narayana and Tulsi-devi and should be coming out beginning of November.

Much Love

Radha-Krishna Pujari Team:
Rishi Sambhavananda, Mukundananda
Viksharananda and Anantajitadasananda
and all contributors of this newsletter.

**MAY THE LOVE
THAT RADHA HAS
FOR KRISHNA
AWAKEN IN ALL
OF YOU**

