


Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

Sri Sri Radha



Dedicated to
His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thākura said, *Kṛṣṇera saṁsāra kara chādi'* anicāra: "If you want to enter into this association of spiritual kingdom, then practice here the family of Kṛṣṇa... Just like in ordinary family the head man is there, and he is the chief man, and all other —his wife, children, servants, and other friends, associates, even animals, cats, dogs, cows —everyone is serving the center point, master. Similarly, our Kṛṣṇa family means Kṛṣṇa is the master, and He is the supreme enjoyer. "Bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasāṁ sarva-loka-maheśvaram [Bg. 5.29]. And if we understand this point, that Kṛṣṇa is the center, He is the enjoyer, and we are meant for serving Him for His enjoyment, that is Kṛṣṇa family. So we have to, according to the śāstric injunction, according to the spiritual master instruction, everywhere we have to organize this Kṛṣṇa family.

[Lecture: Māyāpura, April 9, 1975]

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Hare ¹Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Banabihari Temple

250
ANNIVERSARY
1767-2017



Dear Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji,
we, the insignificant servants of Your servants—Your family of devotees, offer You this publication in celebration of the 250th year of Your temple at Kusum Sarovara.

Forward

The manifestation of this publication may be compared to the appearance of Govardhana Hill. In the *Garga-sambhita* Narada Muni tells how Sri Giriraja originally appeared as a tiny entity and then expanded into a gigantic variegated form. Initially we envisioned a black and white magazine comprising of simple appreciations of Sri Sri Radha Banabihari, but, inspired by the enthusiasm of the devotees, the enterprise grew and grew into a multicolor volume of testimonies and photographs—amounting to a documentation of the temple's heritage, and an illuminating account of how a pastime place in Vraja became a home to Srila Prabhupāda's international family of Vaisnavas. Our heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to this 250th anniversary offering. All glories Sri Sri Radha Banabihari, Their family, and Their wonderful pastime temple.

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Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare ²Hare



Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Introduction

A Celebration of Service

O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji—all glories to You!

In Your eternal forest of flowers You meet before noon and enjoy flower picking love quarrels. The cynosure of this forest is Kusum Sarovara whom You summoned on the day of the dark moon in the month of Asvina to cleanse the flowers for Your enchanting hair-braiding pastime.

O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji—all glories to You!

A *District Memoir* (1874 A.D.) by F.S. Growse reports that Jawahir Singh, the king of Bharatpur, constructed Kusum Sarovara's monument and ghats as a memorial to his father Suraj Mal (1707-63). According to local Vrajavasis he also established the temple of Your hair-braiding pastime. The guidebook *Brāja Maṇḍal Parikrama* by His Holiness Bhaktivedanta Swami Narayana Maharaja states that Jawahir Singh looted the treasury of Delhi in 1767 A.D. and with that money funded the building work. Jawahir Singh expired in 1768. In this way 2017 A.D. may be observed as the 250th year of Your temple.

O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji—all glories to You!

The kings of Bharatpur remained the patrons of Kusum Sarovara until Indian independence when their sovereignty was abolished, leaving Kusum Sarovara in the care of Your devout Pujari Babulal Sharma (Sri Rama-sevaka Baba) sustained by Your Grace—the instruction of his spiritual master.

O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji—all glories to You!

In 1965 His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, fulfilling the instruction of his spiritual master, travelled to America to establish Krishna families around the world. One of these families is Your family who serve You and adore You in Your hair-braiding pastime at Kusum Sarovara—the family of Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji—devotees linked to You through service to Your beloved servitors Pujariji Babulal Sharma and his wife Santi-devi whom we affectionately know as "Ma".

O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji—all glories to You!

Left, Sri Krishna Janmastami darshan, 25th August 2016. Over the page, Rahul Prabhu, Janardana Prana Prabhu, and Mrs Parmar distribute Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji stickers and pastimes leaflets to the pilgrims (Kartika 2015).

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

Since 1999 ISKCON devotees have been fully engaged in Your Temple, serving in a harmony of three Vaisnava disciplic successions—serving Your devotees and the mission of Srila Prabhupada who said, "One who is living in Vṛndāvana must be very anxious how to spread the glories of Vṛndāvana-candra all over the world. That is wanted." (*Srimad Bhagavatam Lecture* 1.7.19, Vṛndāvana 16-9-1976). By the mercy of our spiritual masters Your holy name, Your pastime, Your photographs, and Your prasadam has been generously and lovingly given to whomsoever visits Your temple, consequently the number of your devotees and visitors steadily increases season by season, and temple services have expanded and developed through the assistance of your growing family.

O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji—all glories to You!

In the autumn white lilly buds appear in the monsoon flooded fields adjacent to Kusum Sarovara. Just as the rays of the moon causes them to open and bloom into the most beautiful flower (featured on the front cover), so fallen conditioned souls awaken and bloom into full consciousness in the glory of Your devotional service, beginning with the chanting of Your holy names and the association of devotees—*sri-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*. O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji, although it is indeed glorious for us to be engaged in Your service, we are simply the servants of Your servants, the instruments of Your pure devotees—our beloved spiritual masters. Ultimately all the glory is Yours and we are insignificantly Yours.

O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji—all glories to You!

Sangam means a meeting point of two or more streams, rivers or lakes. Each and every member of Your family is a recipient of a stream of Your grace, and this publication is a *sangam* of those streams—a meeting of Your family through humble appreciations, prayers, realizations, memoirs, and pastimes exemplifying the flow of Your mercy upon us. Here is a celebration of Your devotional service presented with deep gratitude at Your lotus feet to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Your temple. Verily it is a fruit of the congregational chanting of Your holy names—the mercy of Sri Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu and Sri Nityānanda Prabhu who are magnanimously giving even the most fallen of souls the opportunity to enter Your ocean of bhakti.

O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji—all glories to You!

O Sri Banabihariji, O Sri Radhe, O respected Vaisnavas and wellwishers of the temple, please bless this humble endeavor. May it inspire appreciation of the glories of devotional service in the heart of whomsoever receives it.

All glories to You Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji! All glories to Your temple!

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare



Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare The Path of Grace

O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji, respected Vaisnavas and wellwishers,
please now hear a brief history of the founding members of Sri Sri Radha Banabihari's family.

Babul was born in 1914 to the pujari of Lanka Hanuman near Setubandha Sarovara, Kama (30 km from Govardhana). When Babul was six years old his father died and he inherited Lanka Hanuman and other property in Kama which received income from tenants. Babul was raised in Deeg and completed his schooling at the age of fourteen. In the absence of a male guardian he was alone in life's duties of seeking an occupation, marriage, and responsibilities as a son and only child in the house. In that loneliness his natural inclination was to take shelter of the Lord. Each morning he walked to a Hanuman temple outside the village and there he would recite the Ramayana day after day.

The young heir to the Bharatpur throne Prince Brajendra Singh, frequently travelled along that road and he observed Babul's steady devotion. One day the royal car stopped and the prince approached Babul, "Will you be pujari at Kusum Sarovara?", he asked. Having consulted his mother, Babul accepted the opportunity. Then he was asked—"Do you have a spiritual master?" "I have no spiritual understanding," he replied. The prince arranged for Babul's initiation into his own Vallabha-sampradaya at Kama; then with the blessings of Sri Guru and the King, he was engaged in a lifetime of devotional service at Kusum Sarovara.

Babul was appointed the pujari of Sri Gopalaji, a golden Deity in the Queen's Chatri to the south of Kusum Sarovara, and he was also to oversee the other pujaris, gardeners, and security men.

Mathura Das & Braja Kishor

Braja Kisor was the pujari of Uddhava-baitthaka and a Vrajavasi of the Ramanuja-sampradaya. He became Babul's close associate and being twice the age of Babul their relationship was like that of father and son. Braja Kisor's father, Damodara

Pandit, had been requested by the king to maintain Uddhava-baitthaka. He was assisted by a brahmachari who asked to be his disciple. Damodara Pandit gave him initiation and the name Mathura Das. Upon initiation it is a custom to offer to the spiritual master a token gift of gratitude known as *daksina*. "What will you give me as guru-daksina?" asked Damodara Pandit.

"What should I give?" Mathura Das replied. "Promise me not to go anywhere else. You can go home, but you must come back. This temple, loneliness his natural inclination was to take shelter of the Lord. Each morning he walked to a Hanuman temple outside the village and there he would recite the Ramayana day after day.

"The nearest place for such treatment is a village called Rewarie, towards Delhi," he said, "Go to this village. It will take you three days. Go via Varsana. There is no solid road, only a dirt track. You can go by camel cart." Mathura Das left, but returned the next morning. In great anxiety Braja Kisor inquired as to why he was here.

"I fell asleep in the camel cart," Mathura Das explained, "and Damodara Pandit came to me in a dream. He asked me where I was going, and told me there is no cure for a person in the last stages of mad dog disease! Then he reminded me of his guru-daksina.

"You gave me your word that you would never leave Uddhava, and now you are leaving. There is no treatment for your disease, so go back! Thus, I have come back," said Mathura Das, "I am not leaving here." Afflicted by the mad-dog disease, Mathura Das took shelter of the holy name, and within a few days left his body in the association >

Left: Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji, Their Temple room, and Their Servitors (1999).
(Please note, the date on the photographs are incorrect.)

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare



Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

of devotees engaged in Krishna kirtana.

After the departure of Mathura Das, Braja Kisor inherited the servitorship of Uddhava-baitthaka. Braja Kisor sewed to earn a meagre existence and whatever donations or rations came to the temple were utilized in the temple service. He was very poor, but many people respected him. He was a man of honour and integrity. Daily he would recite the Ramayana in the morning and the Bhagavatam in the evening. He worshipped three deities, Sri Sat-Narayana, Uddhavaji, and Sri Giriraja.

Braja Kisor forbade the act of spitting and the passing of urine in the vicinity of the temple. Once a new sadhu occupied a room at Uddhava-baitthaka and a snake entered and would not leave. "You must have committed an offense." Braja Kisor told the sadhu. Braja Kisor looked inside the room. "Just see, you have spat there!" The sadhu denied it. "You are a sadhu! Why do you lie?" said Braja Kisor. The sadhu accused Braja Kisor of setting up the whole drama and spoke many bad things against him. Very disturbed, Braja Kisor opened his Ramayana and read a specific part. Slowly the sadhu's mind and body were besieged with the agonies of encroaching death. Aghast, and realizing his folly, the sadhu dragged himself afore the offended Vaisnava and beseeched for his mercy. Braja Kisor prayed for him and he soon recovered.

Braja Kisor's daughter, Santi-devi, was born in

1938. She followed the strict dharmic path of her father and was entrusted with the temple puja from an early age.

Santi-devi's Childhood

In the mid 1940's a Bengali by the name of Abhay Caranaravinda Das visited Braja Kisor. They had been comrades in Gandhi's movement in the 1920's, now they associated as Vaisnavas. Babul and Santi-devi were part of that sangam. Santi-devi, about seven years of age, knew him as the 'Bengali Baba', and he would affectionately place his hand on her head. He would stay at the nearby Gvalior Mandir, just north of Kusum Sarovara. Santi-devi observed with curiosity how the Gaudiya Vaisnavas from that temple entered the jungle behind her residence each morning. Once she followed them and watched as they performed kirtana and puja to a certain Govardhana-sila behind the Queen's Chatri. For several years she dare not visit that place for she feared the ferocious beasts such as the wild boars and the tiger that roam there. Then one day whilst herding the cows she remembered that Giriraja-sila and went to take darshan. There she discovered a smaller sila of a golden complexion like Radharani's. She lovingly took that sila to worship for the rest of her life.

When Santi-devi was fourteen years old her father fell critically ill. Convinced he was about to leave his body he put her hand into Babul's and

asked him to be her guardian. Babul consented and when Braja Kisor's health improved Babul advised him to secure Santi-devi's future by arranging her marriage. Considering his daughter's hand had already been placed into Babul's, Braja Kisor deemed it would be unchaste for her to wed anyone else. Thus Babul and Santi-devi were married.

It was a year hence when Seva Dasa Brahmachari entered Uddhava-baitthaka with news that Babul had suddenly expired! Santi-devi and her father rushed to the place where Babul lay dead on the ground.

"—Do as I say," Seva Dasa told her, "keep your vision on each of my heads as I chant on them." Seva Dasa chanted a mantra and Santi-devi held back her tears of grief as she watched each bead pass one by one through his fingers. An hour elapsed and as the final bead was honored Babul's eyes miraculously opened! Thus Santi-devi was saved from widowhood at the age of fifteen.

When Santi-devi was eighteen years old her father insisted she get initiated, otherwise no sadhu would eat her cooking. She took initiation from Radha-Vallabh Maharaja of the Nimbark-sampradaya. Upon asking him for instructions he said, "Just continue to do what you are doing—serve your father and mother, serve your mother-in-law, and serve your husband."

Trials and Tribulations

In the wake of India's independence its former monarchies were abolished and their income

reduced to a pension. Consequently King Brajendra Singh was unable to maintain his patronage of Kusum Sarovara. For want of a wage the staff abandoned their duty, all except for Babul who continued unconditionally. At around this time he compassionately relinquished his property in Kama to the pitiable tenants so becoming devoid of any regular income. These were decades of hardship. Babul and Santi-devi suffered the birth and death of three children; the loss of their last child was such a heavy blow to their soft hearts that they resolved to repose their parental affection in Krishna, loving Him as their own little boy.

Patience they tolerated poverty. They tolerated violence from those envious of their surrender to dharma and their contentment in whatever little the Lord allotted to them. They tolerated those who exploited their compassionate nature, and they tolerated the pain of seeing their relatives suffer the consequences of disregarding the path of grace. Yet despite such trials and tribulations they fulfilled their *grhastha* responsibilities.

The temples of Sri Uddhava-baitthaka, Sri Sri Radha Banabihari and Hanumanji, came into the care of a new government body called Devasthanana, responsible for the temples formerly under royal patronage. Babul and Santi-devi resided in the Dauji temple. In the late 1960's Devasthan requested Babul to be the servitor of the Sri Sri Radha Banabihari temple. Babul accepted. The temple had been abandoned by the previous pujari, the >



Maharaja Brajendra Singh
King of Bharatpur 1929-1947



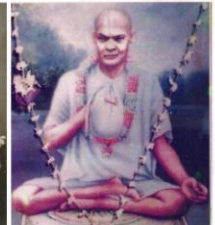
Sri Hanumanji to whom Babul would read the Ramayana after completing his schooling, and his temple just outside Deeg.



Braja Kisor, Pujari of Uddhava-baitthaka and father of Santi-devi



Seva Das Bramachari who brought Babul back to life



Sri Radha Vallabh Maharaja,
Santi-devi's spiritual master

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Deities had been stolen, and the temple property was overgrown with jungle vegetation. Babulal discovered a *Giriraja-sila* inside the temple whom he worshipped as Sri Banabihari (and is Sri Banabihari to this day). In due course the *Giriraja-sila* found and worshipped by SANTI-devi would be placed next to Him, this was Sri Radharani. Thus Babulal maintained the worship of Sri Sri Radha Banabihari, Sri Dauji, and Radha and Krishna's lotus feet on the monument. With the king's guards no longer protecting Kusum Sarovara, the monument was gradually plundered of its stone. To save the monument Babulal arranged for the king to sign it over to the protection of the Indian government's archeological department (A.S.I).

In the early 1970's, circumstances persuaded Babulal and SANTI-devi to relocate their home to Sri Radha Banabihari Temple. They cleared its land from the jungle and in the subsequent decades slowly renovated the existing structures.

One evening Babulal was returning from the monument when he was pushed. He tumbled down the steps and into the sarovara. SANTI-devi was watching from the roadside and she ran to his aid. When she arrived he had disappeared from her

vision, underneath the sarovara's surface. For SANTI-devi and Sri Radha Banabihari his expiry was inexplicable—what would become of Them now? With outstretched arms she searched beneath the surface and discovered him in a sitting position. He was still alive! With all her strength she managed to lift Babulal's head and shoulders above the waterline to find him fully conscious and remarkably calm—a miracle! "When I was submerged in Kusum Sarovara a personality protected me, and I was able to breath as normal," he later revealed to her.

A Family is Born

Their old acquaintance Abhay Caranaravinda Das had now taken sannyasa, established ISKCON, and was renowned worldwide as "Srila Prabhupada." Since then Giriraja's parikrama had grown in popularity. Babulal served the pilgrims by speaking Sri Sri Radha Banabihari's pastimes, distributing "*canori-prasada*" and being their well-wisher. Balabhadra Das was one of Srila Prabhupada's disciples to whom Babulal gave a *Giriraja-sila*. Balabhadra maintained a relationship with him and SANTI-devi. He served them by donating their

annual wheat, and when they became encumbered with old age he gave them one of his disciples to assist them—Palindri Devi Dasi. In this way they received Gaudiya Vaisnava association and by open heartedly embracing the mercy of Sri Sri Gaurā-Nitai three disciplic successions unified in the service of Sri Radha Banabihari.

In 2003 Babulal was diagnosed as suffering a liver disorder. Although he felt no pain his condition worsened and he was taken for tests in a Mathura hospital. On one occasion he appeared to have had died, but his consciousness returned and he spoke of the presence of cowherd boys at his bedside. Staff and patients attended his offering of arati accompanied by kirtana and simple prasada distribution. After three weeks he returned to his beloved sarovara.

As his body progressively deteriorated into a state of helplessness he became more deeply absorbed in his bhajan internally. Oneday he repeatedly put on and took off his spectacles and concluded his vision was perfect without them!

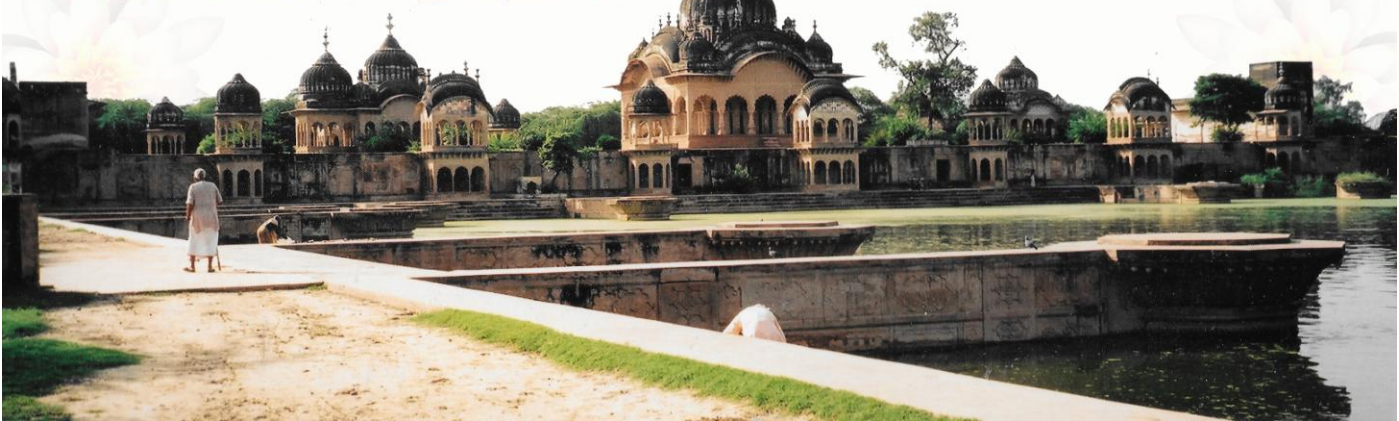
"What can you see?" SANTI-devi asked.
"Our Kisori and Kisora dancing," he replied. Their darshan became a frequent occurrence. On another

occasion she asked him—
"What is your service?"
"To pick flowers and to offer them at Their lotus feet," he replied. One night he awoke with tears in his eyes and his voice choked up.
Did you just receive Their darshan?", he was asked.
"Yes," he said, "but Kisori has told me not to speak of these *lilas* any more."

On the arrival of Karttika's sarad-purnima 2003, Babulal was on the verge of leaving his mortal body.

"I will be alright, you go now!" SANTI-devi said, ushering him to his eternal seva. A moment later he entered samadhi whilst softly chanting Sri Radhe's name in the association of devotees engaged in Hare Krishna kirtana.

Babulal had dedicated his life to the instruction of his spiritual master. SANTI-devi's instruction from her Guru was to serve her husband. Babulal had departed this world leaving Sri Sri Radha Banabihari and the glories of Kusum Sarovara in her care. But she was an elderly lady with no progeny, how could she manage his legacy? By Their Divine Grace Sri Sri Radha Banabihari would manifest a family to assist her. . .



Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Introducing the Deities

O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji, next we will introduce Your respected Vaisnavas and wellwishers to the personalities who are mercifully residing with You on Your altar.



The Radha Banabihari hair-braiding painting in the ceiling of the monument

Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji were originally worshipped in the form of a murti that resembled the above painting in the Queen's Chatri on the monument. This murti was stolen after Indian independence. When Pujariji (Babulal Sharma) was requested to become the sevaka of

Sri Sri Radha Banabihari Temple he discovered a *Giriraja-sila* inside whom he worshipped as **Banabihariji**. **Sri Radha** joined Him later. She is the *Giriraja-sila* worshipped by Ma since her childhood. Ma's other childhood Deities, **Laddu Gopala** and Sri Sri Sita-Rama-Laxman, also joined Them. >

Key to identify Who's Who on the altar

1. The Radha Banabihari painting in the chatri
2. Sri Banabihariji
3. Sri Radha
4. Sri Chota Giriraja
5. Sri Laddu Gopala
6. Sri Sri Krishna Balarama
7. Sri Salagram, Sri Surya Narayana, Sri Dwaraka-sila
8. Sri Balarama
9. Sri Vrnda-devi (framed photo)
10. Sri Tota Gopinath
11. Sri Lala Gopala
12. Sri Ratna Mukunda (framed photo)
13. Sri Narasingha-deva
14. Sri Sri Nitai Gauranga



Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare



Sri Chota Giriraja



Sri Sri Krishna Balarama



Sri Laddu Gopala



Sri Salagramji Sri Surya Narayana
Sri Dwaraka sila



Sri Sri Nitai Gauranga

Sri Sita-Rama-Laxman are no longer present on the altar. Many years ago Pujariji and Ma returned from Govardhana to find Sri Sita had been stolen. Henceforth Pujariji proceeded to worship Sri Sri Rama-Laxman as **Sri Sri Krishna-Balarama**.

Chota (little) Giriraja was given to the temple by a pilgrim. For practical reasons we daily offer puja to Sri Sri Radha Banabihari through Him. We directly offer full puja to Sri Sri Radha Banabihari twice a month.

On celebrated appearance days of the Lord we offer the festival abhisek to **Sri Salagramji**; i.e. on

Nityananda Triodasi Sri Salagramji is bathed as Lord Nityananda. **Sri Surya Narayana (sun-god) -salagram** was given to the temple by Prabhupada Vani Prabhu. We offer abhisek to this salagram as Lord Rama on Rama-Navami, because Lord Rama appeared in the dynasty of the sun-god.

Sri Dwaraka-sila joined the family in recent years. He was found on Govardhana Hill beside the parikrama path.

Sri Balarama, a *Giriraja-sila*, was received by Pujariji from a family in Mathura who realized their business and family were suffering greatly

since they had taken Him into their home.

Palindri Mataji inherited the puja's of **Sri Ratna Mukunda** (a *Giriraja-sila*), **Sri Tota Gopinatha**, **Sri Lala Gopala**, and **Sri Vrnda Devi** from her Guru Mata, Mother Ratnaranjini. **Sri Ratna Mukunda** is in the personal care of Prabhupada Vani Prabhu, and His photograph is worshipped on the altar here. **Sri Tota Gopinatha's** name and form are taken after the Deity worshipped by Sri Gadadhara Pandita in Jagannath Puri; **Sri Lala Gopala** is baby Kṛṣṇa lying on a banyan leaf, sucking His toe and playing the flute, as seen

by Sri Markandeya Rsi. These two Deities along with **Sri Narasingha-deva** are sculptured from the siddha-bakula tree of Sri Haridas Thakura. Bhakti Balabh Puri Maharaja instructed us to worship **Sri Narasingha-deva** for protection after Pujariji entered samadhi.

Sri Sri Nitai-Gauranga were gifted to the temple by Their sculptor Taralaksi Mataji.

Sri Hanumanji is very old, he has his own altar. To his right is **Ganeshi** who arrived the day after Govardhana puja in 2015 to receive Sri Giriraja's maha-ladoos handmade by Ma.



Sri Vrinda-devi



Sri Tota Gopinatha



Sri Lala Gopala



Sri Balarama



Sri Narasingha-deva



Sri Hanumanji and Sri Ganeshi

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare



Commemorating...

...Your Pastimes

O Sri Banabihariji, inconceivable are Your pastimes! You are self-sufficient, but to enjoy Your transcendental bliss You require the cooperation of Your devotees. 50 years ago, in Your original Deity form of Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji, You were stolen, Your temple abandoned, and a new pastime began which we are blessed with today: by Your own sweet will You engaged Pujariji and Santi-devi to assist Your pastimes and through their selfless cooperation You have since enjoyed transcendental bliss, with Sri Radha, in the form of two Govardhana-silas. Then some 20 years ago, with Your servitors weakening with sickness and old age, You blessed the family of Karuna Bhavan (ISKCON Scotland) with the opportunity to cooperate in Your Kusum Sarovara pastimes, together with devotees from Port Elizabeth (ISKCON South Africa). In the subsequent 10 years Your pastimes kept expanding, so much so that you blessed Sri Sri Radha-Gopinath's family (ISKCON Chowpatty, Bhaktivedanta Hospital and Research Institute—Mumbai, and Govardhan Eco Village) with service in Your pastimes, and in this past year You have blessed brahmacaris from Sri Sri Radha Vrindavanchandra's family (ISKCON Pune) with the opportunity of service in Vraja. O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji we cannot understand Your pastimes, nor the bliss You enjoy from them, but simply by assisting our spiritual masters and by pleasing them we understand You are pleased. Now it is the good fortune of Your present family of servitors to be engaged in the

pastime of celebrating Your temple reaching its 250th year. In this age the chanting of Your holy names and pastimes is most recommended and beneficial for all, and so for Your pleasure we offer You a recitation of the Srimad Bhagavatam and the Sri Ramayana, followed by the congregational chanting of Your holy names with prasadam for the local sadhu's and brahmanas, Your family of devotees, friends, wellwishers, and relatives of Pujariji and Ma. This will culminate on the full moon day of Pujariji's śrāddha-tirobhava. Furthermore, Your family have submitted written or spoken offerings explaining how and when they first came in contact with You, how and when they became engaged in Your service, together with a personal pastime or realization relating to You or Your temple. Some of the offerings directly address You, but by and large they address Your devotees. This is commendable because in the *Padma Purāna*, O Sri Banabihariji, You tell Your beloved Arjuna, "one who is devoted to My devotee is actually My devotee."

The names of the contributors and the page numbers where their respective offerings can be found is presented over the page. The offerings are arranged in a chronological order (the earliest servitors first and the most recent servitors last but not least) with those belonging to the aforementioned ISKCON families being sectioned together. O Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji thankyou for this wonderful pastime.

All glories to You Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji—all glories to Your pastimes!



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offering by
Her Grace
Santi-devi
(Ma)



“Pujariji and I have given
our lives to this temple”

Pujariji would fetch semi-stitched dresses from a shopkeeper in Govardhana in the morning which I would complete and return back by the afternoon. From the earnings of this tailoring work we sustained a living, and we maintained a cow. At this time (the late 1960's) there was another pujari of Sri Radha Banabihari Temple, who was initially employed by the king who was now given rations by Devasthan. He abandoned his pujari duty and went to join the services at Krishna Janmasthan in Mathura; thus Banabihari temple was closed. Pujariji was taking care of the services at the Chattri, the Hanumanji temple, and the Dauji temple. Devasthan officials saw that the Sri Sri Radha Banabihari temple had been abandoned and asked Pujariji to care of it. Pujariji said he would accept the servitorship of Sri Sri Radha Banabihari temple on the condition that it be given in writing. Thus an official paper was given to certify that Pujariji Babulal Sharma was the official servitor.

When we opened the temple, we found Girirajaji behind the altar, and the temple in great need of repair. Pujariji started mending the temple to its original shape. Then the Devasthan officials came to see that the work was in progress. There was a well containing clean sweet water. Cowherd men, Manori and others, would come here everyday to rest beneath a big tree outside the temple. Pujariji and I open a "Pyao" (a place to drink fresh water) on the grass outside the temple, along with a small shop selling tobacco. I would also make achar (pickle) and offer it to the cowherd men for free. In return they offered service: they cleared away the jungle vegetation area around the temple. They also collected the cow dung in one place near the temple. From that I would make flat cow patties which I sold as fuel for cooking (I cooked on wood fires). Nearby, at Sant Nivas, there was a furnace for manufacturing bricks. Trucks loaded with bricks would often stop outside the temple and the drivers would drink water at our pyao. I would >

Left, Pujariji and Santi-devi photographed on the monument (1960's).

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare



temple further, especially the back walls. Onetime a Gosai yatra visited Kusum Sarovara. One of their members was an old woman who used two walking sticks. She took bath in Kusum Sarovara and drowned. The next day morning her body floated to the surface. Usually the lower caste people (those who pick up the garbage) would remove these bodies out of the sarovara; however, when Pujariji saw Tulasi-mala on the neck of the body, thus indicating she was a Vaisnava, he instructed some other people to remove her body. Pujariji then inquired about her from his neighbours. The pujari at the Hanumanji temple identified the old lady to be a part of that Gosai yatra. This led Pujariji to make a report at Govardhana police station. Then he himself arranged for and lit the pyre on the opposite side of the road to Sri Radha Banabihari's temple. When the old lady's relatives realized she had gone missing they went to the Govardhana police station. The police showed them the cloth the old lady was wearing (which was given to them by Pujariji). Having confirmed that these were indeed those of their missing relative, they were introduced to Pujariji who had concluded the old woman's final rites according to her sampradaya. The relatives offered Pujariji the expenses incurred for the old lady's last rites and cremation. Pujariji refused to accept the money, explaining that the old lady belonged to the same sampradaya as himself, and he had just done his duty. Pujariji offered to perform the 12th day ceremony (after the death of the departed person), but the relatives desired to conduct it themselves.

also give them prasada, and out of gratitude, they would give us 5-10 bricks. They would also take their meals outside our temple. I offered them free pickle and they would barter for it with the bricks they carried. This was a very regular practice, and when enough bricks had accumulated we started to build up the other parts of the temple such as the room behind the altar. On the opposite side of the parikrama path was agricultural land. After the crops were harvested, we cut the remaining stalks of the crops and mixed them with cow dung and sand. This was used in construction as a strengthening agent applied to the bricks. These elements were also used to raise the ground level of the temple land which was then much lower than the agricultural land opposite.

Once during Purusottama Month (Adik Maas) villagers from Hodal operated our pyaao facility to serve the visiting pilgrims circumambulating Govardhana Hill during that auspicious month. Afterwards they desired to reciprocate by offering money; we suggested that instead of money they buy bricks so that Pujariji could build up the

ashram) initiated by the group from Hodal who operated the pyaao. The relatives donated the money to purchase bricks, and the wages for one labourer. The masonry work was undertaken by me along with the help of that worker. The bathroom today in the brahmachari ashram was originally the kitchen. Up until then we were living in the Dauji temple on the monument. When the kitchen was ready Pujariji and I shifted to Sri Sri Radha Banabihari Temple. We also brought Thakurji down from the Dauji Temple and created a door from the backside.

There are stories of how each and every room of Sri Radha Banabihari temple was renovated. The room adjacent to today's kitchen also has a story and was witnessed by Palindri who was an active member along with myself to make the entire room out of our own hands. Sri Radha Banabihari Temple as it is today is the result of so much of our own personal effort and hardwork. Most of these walls were built with my own hands using sand, cement and bricks.

It's been a long journey for us to come from so far to only build what we see today in front of us. The king had abandoned the temple; however Pujariji and I have given our lives to this temple. My only desire is that the temple should continue, that it never shuts down, and that the services to Thakurji should continue eternally. My only stress is that it flashes in front of my eyes over the amount of hard work over the years that have gone into physically building up this temple. Recently there was a huge threat for us to leave the temple and go away. This is something I don't want.

Earlier I was very active in doing everything on my own; however, I fell ill after exerting myself in taking care of Pujariji when he fell into Kusum Sarovara years ago. Even now, I like to perform as many services as possible, but I have to watch my my health, which is an important part in my day to day functioning. Therefore, what I desire is that the temple should stay as it is and not be broken down by external authorities.

Sri Sri Radha Banabihari ji ki Jaya!

Top left, Pujariji. Right, Ma with Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji (Photographs from the late 1970').



Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Gateway to the Heartbeat of Sri Giri Govardhana



offering by
His Holiness
Bhaktivendanta Kusum Sraman Swami

Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji are so very loving and merciful to Their devotees. That wonderful little temple of Theirs is the transcendental gateway to the heartbeat of Sri Giri Govardhana which is the unlimited transcendental playground of the topmost divine loving pastimes of the divine loving couple Sri Sri Radha Syamasundara. What to me is so very special about Kusum Sarovara and Radha Banabihari is Ma, Ma Sharma—that loving dedicated devoted servant of Sri Sri Radha Banabihari. Without her and her hard work and selfless service to Radha Banabihariji what would any of us who are in any way connected with the temple know of, or ever be engaged in, the service of Radha Banabihariji? Her and her wonderful devoted husband Sri Babulal Sharma, Pitaji, or Pujariji as he was generally known: we have to learn to serve the Lord through His dear loving devotees, and Ma is that dear loving devotee. Her and Pitaji gave their entire lives to keeping the service to their dear Lords Radha Banabihariji going for so many years under very difficult and what may even have seemed, impossible circumstances. It was not at all in any way easy for them. They went through so much hardship and severe physical and mental austerities to maintain the service and temple to honour, serve, and completely glorify Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji.

Santi Devi Sharma pran dana he!
Jaya Radha Banabihari, Radha Banabihari Radhe!
Babulal Sharma pran dana he!
Jaya Radha Banabihari, Radha Banabihari Radhe!

Without those two great souls, no one, none of us

would have had the great opportunity to be engaged in the service of Their loving Lordships. My *koti koti dandavats* are first offered at the lotus feet of my dear loving Ma and Pitaji. They put me at the lotus feet of Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji. They engaged me in the wonderful service of their dear loving Lords. I am just an insignificant, but very fortunate fallen soul, who has by the mercy of my divine master A.C. Bhaktivendanta Swami Prabhupada and the dear merciful Lord been accepted into the heart of Ma and Pitaji and thereby engaged in the service of the devotees of the most wonderful transcendental Lords of Kusum Sarovara, Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji. Ma and Pitaji are the external loving representatives of Radha Banabihari, and therefore by their love we are all getting the great opportunity to be engaged in service to the devotees of the Lords of Kusum Sarovara. By that service, we are able to become ever closer and ever dearer to our eternal Lords and Lovers, Sri Sri Radha Banabihari.



I thank Srila Prabhupada and Radha Banabihari for giving me the loving shelter and association of Ma and Pitaji, and thereby become eternally fortunate. It is by the loving mercy of Radha Banabihari that we have all come to Kusum Sarovara and thus been given the great benediction and blessing of the association of our Ma and Pitaji. By the mercy of the Lord we can come into contact and association with pure devotees (Ma and Pitaji) and by the mercy of the pure devotee we can attain the priceless gift of Krishna prem (Love for Krishna). By the great loving mercy of Radha Banabihariji, this is what is on offer here at Kusum Sarovara. We are indeed so very very fortunate. >

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Left: Sriman Balabhadra Das Adhikari (before taking sannyasa and receiving the name Bhakti Balabh Puri Goswami from His Holiness Sivarama Swami) with Pujariji and Ma the temple entrance (1990'). Above: Sri Banabihari—the Giriraja-sila received by Maharaja from Pujariji. Sri Banabihari ki—Jaya!



Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare



Pujaraji had limited use of his left arm because it remained broken at the elbow from a cycling accident; thus Ma is seen assisting him to put on his hat. The metal container to the right indicates he is about to fetch the milk from Udhava-kunda goshala. On the painted board behind them is the *Sri Radha-Kṛpa-Kataksa-Stava-Raja* spoken by Lord Siva to Gauri in the *Urdhvamnaya Tantra*. The last line of each verse is—

“O Radhika, when will You bestow Your merciful sidelong glance upon me?”

Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji ki Jai!
Kusum Sarovara ki Jai!
Sadhu-sanga sadhu-seva ki Jai!
Sri Rama-sevaka Pujaraji ki Jai!
Srimati Santi Devi Sharma Ma ji ki Jai!
Gouranga! Ananta Koti Vaisnava vrnda ki Jai!

Thank you Radha Banabihariji for wanting us much more than we ever wanted You. Thank you for giving us the association of Ma and Pitaji. Please keep showering us with Your loving mercy. Radhe Radhe!!

Radha Banabihari Prem seva ki Jai!!!!
Let us keep on serving and with complete heart and soul, then we may return to the spiritual world where we eternally belong and there be

engaged in the eternal service of Sri Sri Radha Banabihari. Sri Sri Radha Banabihari have brought us to Them at Kusum Sarovara, and have lovingly given us Ma and Pitaji as living exemplary instructions of how to serve and finally return to the eternal Radha Banabihari lila in the Transcendental world. We are most fortunate and I pray we remain that way.

The glories of Sri Sri Radha Banabihari are completely unlimited as is Their loving mercy, so I am just like a dwarf trying to touch the moon. But, I hope to keep jumping and jumping to try to one day touch that transcendental moon. With the mercy, love and direction of my dear Ma, some day, touching that moon will be possible and factual. Keep jumping! Keep serving!!

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare



Karuna Bhavan Family



Dear Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji,
Devotees of the Scottish yatra have served at Your temple since the 1990's.
This section is a presentation of their offerings.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare



offering by
Her Grace
Palindri Devi Dasi



Her Grace
Ratnaranjini Devi Dasi

With Guru Mata's Blessings...

At the age of 19, I joined ISKCON South Africa full-time. After being 1 year in Sri Sri Radha Radhanath temple in Durban, and meeting my divine spiritual master, Srila Balabhadra das Vishnupada, I went for training and association to ISKCON Karuna Bhavan in Scotland. This venture was on the guidance of my father, Dr Himatlal Parmar. He advised me to get a strong Krishna conscious training. To have a strong foundation will help my future, as I go through the 'storms' of life. "A house built on stone will withstand all storms than a house built on sand," he told me.

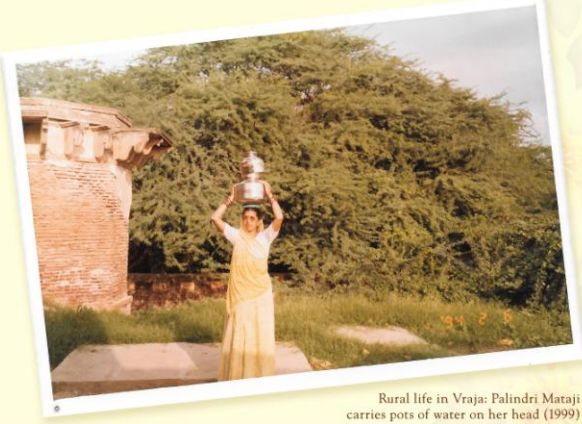
On inquiring from my spiritual master I was told that there was no training for brahmacarinis in ISKCON at that time. There was only brahmacari training. However, if I stay in the association

and shelter of dedicated and fixed devotees, and serve with them then my Krishna consciousness will become strong and flourish. He suggested a very sincere and serious devotee in Scotland, mother Ratnaranjini. She was a disciple of Srila Prabhupada who was very fixed in her services and Krishna consciousness. Mother Ratnaranjini was my Guru Mata. She was mother of 2 children, very serious, devoted, hardworking and a simple devotee. She always kept me with her and we served together. She trained me in cleaning, cooking, caring for tulasi devi, serving the devotees and managing the menial temple services and serving my Guru Maharaja according to his pleasure. After being with her for 5 years, she then developed a brain tumor which led her to being blind and fully paralysed. I then got the privilege

to be her personal carer for the period of 2 years till she left on Ekadasi in 1994 during the last leg of the Christmas book distribution marathon. The story of her final departure, her revelations of who she was and her service in the spiritual world Goloka-dhama was narrated by my Guru Maharaja in the book "Simple for Simple".

Some days before leaving she requested my Guru Maharaja to take me to Sri Vrndavana, my Guru Maharaja assured her that he would. I had heard of Sri Radha Banabihariji mandir and their dear servants from my Guru Maharaja who had received his Govardhana-silas from Pujari Baba and Ma, some years before. Our Guru Maharaja had deep respect and affection for them as his Vrajavasi parents. He would always speak excitedly and affectionately of Ma's wonderful and tasty Vraja rotis. He always expressed that each roti was full of love for Krishna and he could taste that love. He always wanted to offer them service in grati-

tude to them for giving him Sri Giriraja-sila to worship. I had a very long cherished desire to see Sri Vrndavana-dhama, one day in my life time, but I wanted to ever go for my first visit with my Guru Maharaja because I had read in the *Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta* that the actual dhama will be revealed by one's spiritual master. I wanted my Guru Maharaja to reveal Sri Vrndavana-dhama to me if I had to go for the first time. Now my Guru Mata's wish/blessings that my Guru Maharaja take me to Sri Vrndavana-dhama coincided with my desire too. After Guru Mata had auspiciously left her body chanting "Krishna, Krishna.....," holding her Giriraja-sila to her heart with both my Guru Maharaja and I chanting in her ears. Guru Maharaja with his 2 children, a brahmacari God-brother and myself left for Sri Vrndavana-dhama to immerse her ashes into Yamuna. Once our service was completed with Guru Mata's ashes meeting with Yamuna Maia, our Guru Maharaja brought >



Rural life in Vraja: Palindri Mataji carries pots of water on her head (1999)

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

us to meet Pujari Baba at Sri Sri Radha Banabihari Mandir, Kusum sarovara. When we arrived there Ma and Baba were very happy to see us all. After Guru Maharaja had taken his bath in Kusum Sarovara and told us the lila, Ma invited us to accept lunch which consisted of Vraja rotis, gur and water. It was amazingly delicious and I could then practically understand why our Guru Maharaja loved her rotis and lovingly named her "Roti Rani". Ma regarded my Guru Maharaja like her son and she very lovingly, with her very happy heart, showed her affection upon us all, disciples and children. I was very much attracted to their simplicity. They appeared to be so content and happy.

Sri Sri Radha Banabihari's Desire

My desire now developed to wanting to be with Ma. I was missing my service to my Guru Mata and was struggling being in the ashram where I was not fitting in. Meeting Ma sparked some meaning into my heart again. After being at Karuna Bhavan for 3 years my Guru Maharaja decided to send me with my husband, Prabhupada Vani Prabhu to do some Deity shopping for our Lordships Sri Sri Khoda Nitai-Mayapura-sasi. At the same time he wanted me to have a devotional break to be shown all the devotional places in

Sri Vrndavana-dhama, then bring *saligrama-silas* from Nepal. Our Guru Maharaja sent us with gifts to be delivered to Ma and Baba along with a donation. On arriving at Sri Radha Banabihari Mandir, we found both Baba and Ma extremely sick, weak, and bedridden. We learned they had typhoid fever and it appeared there was no one taking care of them. We telephoned our Guru Maharaja who then instructed us to bring them medical aid and prasadam and we should extend our stay till he returned in 15 days with a yatra. By the time Guru Maharaja arrived, Baba and Ma were both on their feet but still weak. Guru Maharaja had brought 10 or 12 devotees with him from Scotland. The first festival then was Vasant Panchami (January 1999). We all celebrated this occasion under the supervision of Ma. She directed us to make a Vasanti Kheer, Vasanti flower with potato subj. After the feast our Guru Maharaja confided in Ma of his desire to have someone to assist them. Ma refused as she didn't want to take responsibility of any girl to be with her in a jungle-like place at that time, and she would inform him when she needed help. However, Guru Maharaja told that we all were from the West and we do not know how to serve and live in Vraja, so it was best to train someone while Ma was in good health so that when she was sick we would

know how to do the services as she likes, and we would be trained according to her standards. Then Ma accepted it as being Sri Radha Banabihari's desire. Guru Maharaja asked my God-sister Jagannatha Priya to stay and serve, but she humbly and honestly said she could not do so. As I was standing next to her Guru Maharaja looked at me and asked me too. In my heart I knew this is what Guru Maharaja wanted, and I wanted to please him by trying, so I replied I would try although I too was not sure if I could do this service. Guru Maharaja then directed me to try for 3 months and if I could not manage then I could return to Scotland.

"A very unique and special Vrajavasi"

Guru Maharaja left me here and he told me he wanted me to serve Ma as long as she was living. He wanted me to accept her as my Guru and follow as she directed me. I should not hear anything outside of our ISKCON even though it appeared like devotional philosophy, because although it may appear devotional it may be misleading unless we can discriminate knowing sastras properly. So do not get involved. He told me, "Just to stick to what Ma says. She is a very unique and special Vrajavasi because she accepts Srila Prabhupada and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, which

most Vrajavasis do not. Unless one accepts Sri Gauranga one cannot receive Sri Radha Krishna Prema." I should simply serve sincerely then everything I need for my spiritual advancement, and who am I, what is my eternal service etc., will be revealed by Krishna himself at the right time before I leave my body. Guru Maharaja told me, "Vrajavasis are very dear to Krishna, they are in Krishna's heart. We are Yavanas and Mlecchas because we come from the West. Vrajavasis naturally love Krishna but we have to learn to love Krishna. If we want to make rapid spiritual advancement then we should serve Vrajavasis so nicely that we get into their heart, and by their recommendation to Krishna we will get Krishna in this lifetime. By serving them, their natural love for Krishna will rub-off on us, so just be a menial servant. Serve to please them. Just be simple like them. Do not become complicated, your Guru Mata was the same, a simple devotee." My Guru Maharaja also told me that as I had served my Guru Mata and she was pleased with me, she awarded me service in Sri Vrndavana-dhama. She was in *vatsalya-bhava* and she placed me in care of Ma and Baba who were also serving in *vatsalya-bhava* their Sri Sri Radha Banabihari. Thus I can develop in service in association and guidance by closely serving Vrajavasis like Ma and Baba. >



1999

Left, a loving embrace. Middle, Maharaja holds the chanori-prasadam container for Pujariji (January 1999).



The early days of Ma and Palindri Mataji getting to know one another.

Hare³¹ Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare³² Hare



Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare



Above: Sri Sri Krsna-Balarama, Sri Sri Radha Banabihari, Sri Laddu Gopala, and Sri Chota Giriraja sit side by side in traditional Scottish cloth of a Gaudiya Vaisnava pattern known as *Gauranga Tartan*.

Realizations

There are some realizations related to Sri Sri Radha Banabihari. One particular realization is they are the actual Boss, Director, and Manager of us all here at Kusum Sarovara. They are pulling the strings, we being the puppets in their hands. We are dancing to Their wish. We struggle for assistance. They allow Their temple to flourish with more visiting guests and we become anxious how to manage all Their services, but somehow They slot in souls to help us just at our real time of need. Otherwise They keep us anxiously depending on Them constantly. They like us to be anxiously depending on Them. They like attention. And Ma is totally fixed in that service mood to do everything in a way that will be pleasing to Them. They are hers and she is Theirs. By her mercy all of us who have been connected to her family of servants and sharing the gift that Sri Radha Banabihari belongs to us and we belong to Them. This is our great fortune.

One winter night at around 11pm, Ma and I were feeling extremely cold. Although we had thick

blankets still we couldn't sleep because of the cold. Ma got me to go see Sri Radha Banabihari on Their altar to see if They were covered properly. I went and peeped in and saw that Their pujari, Nityananda Mahajan Das Brahmachari had just covered Them with a thin blanket. So I went back to tell Ma. She directed me to cover Them with a thicker blanket. I did so and requested Them to rest nicely with Their warmer blankets. Once again we got back under our blankets. We were quickly feeling warm at heart and body, and soon fell asleep happily. This is how our Sri Radha Banabihari are. When we look after Them carefully and attentively, with the mood to see if They are happy in all circumstances, then They reciprocate with us in ways where we feel Their presence and pleasure. Just like in winter with proper warmth and in summer with proper cooling. They feel happy and then They give us the ability to endure the summers and winters in ways in which our minds and bodies are not disturbed. There is a natural acceptance and we can just tolerate comfortably so we can continue to offer our service. The main point is to be personal with Them. All our activities from cleaning, >

Left: Ma and Palindri Mataji converse at the temple entrance (1999)

Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare³⁴ Hare

a Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare



worshipping, cooking, preaching, attending to guests, maintaining Their temple and grounds, defending and protecting Their property, looking after Their family members, spreading Their glories and distributing Their blessings and mercy to all who come by—all this makes Them happy.

When I first came here 18 years ago, there was no electricity, plumbing facilities, toilets and drinking water. The temple was very basic with brick flooring, an electric wire heater as a stove to cook on, kerosene lamps for light at night; body waste was to be disposed in fields across the road; bathing and washing was done in Kusum Sarovara. Drinking water was fetched from Narad Kunda or Uddhava Kunda and carried on our heads. 6 buckets of Sarovara water was used daily for general cleaning like the washing of pots and floors.

Our maintenance concerns are totally dependent on Sri Radha Banabihariji. Pujari Baba would be a guide to the pilgrims who came to Kusum Sarovara. He would narrate Sri Radha Banabihari's hair braiding pastime and the history of the Vaisnava king Suraj-mal. Whatever donations the pilgrims would offer in gratitude was the income to maintain the Deities. Pujari Baba believed that he was Their servant and They would provide whatever They wanted to give him. Pujari Baba served selflessly, wanting Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji Mandir to be a shelter of relief, offering a place to sit and rest out of the sun and rain, a place to hear the pastimes, and a place to feel connected to the Lord without being harassed. This same mood of service still continues today at Sri Radha Banabihariji Mandir—to give each soul who comes through Their door, Their blessings and mercy so that they go away with a happy remembrance and experience. My Guru Maharaja instructed me to make Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji Mandir a temple where everyone who comes will go away with an affected heart of pleasure and satisfaction, which make them desire to come back to the Dhama again and again.

By practicing to follow the spiritual master's instructions, by the practice of serving to please the devotees, and by the practice of surrender to and



Left: Sri Sri Radha Banabihari's altar (1999). Above: Pujariji, Palindri Mataji, and Ma in the Temple entrance (2000 or later, photograph taken by Varsana Mataji).

fully depend on Sri Radha Banabihariji, the resultant proof is that there has been all auspiciousness, a growing flourishing temple with souls coming for inspiration and shelter: an expanding family of servants who all want to serve and please Them. Constantly chanting Their names by glorifying Their pastime and serving Their devotees who come as Their guest is a blissful experience and very benedicting.

On this occasion I would like to offer my repeated

respectful, humble obeisances and gratitude to all the family of servants for supporting me and assisting me to serve my Guru Maharaja's instructions to serve Ma. Her wish is that her Lordships Sri Radha Banabihariji are cared for and served eternally. Thankyou all from my insignificant but grateful heart for assisting me to try to serve my spiritual master's wish and instructions. I feel and remain indebted to you all. I pray to Sri Radha Banabihariji to bless you all.

All glories to Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji
All glories to Guru Maharaja and Guru Mata.
All glories to Srila Prabhupada.
All glories to Pujari Baba and Ma.
All glories to all the Vaisnavas.

a Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare³⁶ Hare

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare



To Serve in a Famous Place

offering by His Grace

Nityananda Mahajan Das

I took birth in England and grew up in a village. My father was a school teacher. I had a younger sister and brother. When I was 6 years old my parents purchased a 12ft caravan (a house/trailer on wheels that was towed by the car). In the schools holidays we would go in the car and caravan to a tourist spot in the UK, and later we visited many famous places in Europe. In this way I became attracted to living in a famous place.

Between the age of 20-30 years I lived in Edinburgh (Scotland) where I studied to post-graduate and then worked. Upon finishing at University my interest in seeking God became prominent. At night before I slept I prayed to Him, "Please show me how to live my life." One day a small printed paper was pushed through my door. It read—HARE KRSNA EVENING. I attended the programme and was impressed by the sincerity and

surrender of the devotees. After a few months I was requested to chant the holy names daily. I did so. Two years later I was ready to join Karuna Bhavan—ISKCON Scotland as a full-time devotee. I confessed to the devotees I still had a desire to travel and see something of the world outside Europe. "Two devotees are going to India," they told me, "why don't you go with them?" I wound up my material life, and a few days later I flew into Calcutta for a 5 week pilgrimage in Navadvipa and Vrindavana. The year was 1996—Srila Prabhupada's centennial.

On the Vrindavana yatra we visited Varsana and halfway back the bus stopped. "This is Kusum Sarovara," our guide informed us, "we'll take bath here. There is an old baba who serves here, you may see him, and there is an old temple near the gate." Everyone disembarked and went to the sarovara. I went to the old temple, there was no darshan so I did not see the Deities, but perhaps They saw me. I offered my obeisances and joined the rest of the devotees. This is how I first came to Sri Sri Radha Banabihari's Temple. At that time I did not know the name of the temple, nor that this temple, or the pujari, or Kusum Sarovara

was connected to my future Guru Maharaja.

In 1999 I was sent with Prabhupada Vani Prabhu and Mother Palindri to Vrindavana. Mother Palindri was returning having received a 5 year Visa. We stayed at the devotees' house in Vrindavana, and Mother Palindri returned to her service at Sri Sri Radha Banabihari Temple. Most days Prabhupada Vani Prabhu and myself would visit Sri Sri Radha Banabihari Temple, take lunch prasadam and then return to Vrindavana. Thus I received the darshan of Sri Sri Radha Banabihari and the association of Pitaji and Ma. Ma and Palindri served us hot prasadam which they cooked in a corner of the present prasadam room. Ma showed us how to wash our cups and plates with the mud from the parikrama path and a tiny amount of water in a cup. Mother Palindri pointed to the jungle across the road and told us we could do our bodily maintenance there. The electricity would come and go, and Pitaji would look toward the ceiling fan and say "Jaya Sri Rama" when the electricity returned to power it back into motion. I remember him offering evening arati. My memory of Ma on that trip was her asking me what I thought of it here at Kusum Sarovara. >



Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

"It is peaceful here," I said.
 "Yes," she replied, "peace is here."
 I again accompanied Prabhupada Vani Prabhu to Vrindavana in 2001 for 2 weeks before Gaura Purnima. Many parts of the property had been renovated, including the brahmachari ashram which now had a bathroom/toilet facility.
 In 2002 I was one of 3 brahmachari's who accompanied our Guru Maharaja on a 2 month visit to Vrindavana. We visited Sri Sri Radha Banabihari Temple everyday and honored lunch prasada. Oneday, all of us, with Pitaji, Ma and Mother Palindri, travelled in the taxi to Prema Sarovara. We decorated the temple room on Sri Radhastami, and in the lead up to Rama Vijay-utsava, we were given the service of painting the front of the temple. As I was artistic my service was to paint a decorative flower design and the temple name above the doorway, and to paint the names of the temple donors on the blades of the ceiling fans.
 My principle service in the Scottish temple was book distribution and I would drive the devotees to their daily place of sankirtana. I was one of 5 who were based at a sankirtana house in north England (returning to the temple for 2 nights every 2 weeks). One evening at the end of May 2003, I had just laid down to rest when our sankirtana leader, Godruma Bihari Prabhu, appeared at the door and said, "I've just received a phone call,

you are to return to Karuna Bhavan tomorrow: Guru Maharaja is sending you to Kusum-sarovara." The next day I travelled back to the temple. In the evening I was in my Guru Maharaja's room. At that time he was on the phone to Mother Palindri and Pitaji, and Pitaji accepted the name of Sri Rama-sevaka. Afterwards Guru Maharaja said to me, "I am sending you to Kusum Sarovara, is that alright?"
 "Yes Guru Maharaja," I replied.
 "There are alot of mosquitos and its hot." He added.
 A few days later, at 9:45 in the evening, I arrived at New Delhi airport. The pilot announced the local temperature to be 43°C. A taxi awaited me. I arrived at Sri Sri Radha Banabihari temple at around 3.30am. Pitaji, Ma and Mother Palindri were all sleeping outside on the parikrama path. The next night I was with them, hearing Sri Giriraja's pilgrims chanting "Radhe Radhe" throughout the night as they passed by my feet. The next day I was shown the cleaning services, I was sent to collect the milk from the *goshala*, and thus my training began. A couple of times I accompanied Pitaji up to the Dauji temple. The temple had remained unattended for sometime due Pitaji's weakness. Like previous occasions he instructed me to "pick flowers". I would do so and placed them in his little bucket. Then he would indicate that I should pick more. I remember this

instruction whenever I climb the stairs of the monument.
 In the afternoons Pitaji and I would rest in the present brahmachari ashram. He would chant japa and rise to perform Sri Sri Radha Bana-bihari's parikrama: for half an hour or more he would very very slowly go round and round their altar in the dimmest of light, feeling his way around, the corner of the painted altar walls worn bare by the touch of his hand.
 Suddenly, a month or so after my arrival, I was alone with Sri Sri Radha Banabihari. I was left to offer the puja's, the aratis, cleaning Their premises and the parikrama path, and to be the security guard. Ma and Mother Palindri had taken Pitaji to a Mathura hospital for treatment. They were away for over a week. Most days Mother Palindri came back by midday to cook prasadam and then immediately returned. Oneday Mother Palindri phoned to say "Pitaji is asking for you. Kadar Baba (Pitaji's brother-in-law) will bring you here on his scooter." Thus I went to Mathura received Pitaji's blessings and returned to Kusum Sarovara. They arrived back from Mathura in time for Guru Purnima. Pitaji's abdomen was inflated. After Guru Purnima they took Pitaji to an Agra hospital for further diagnosis. I was alone again. They returned for the Jhulan-yatra, the swing festival. Whilst in Agra, Mother Palindri instructed me to hang and

decorate Thakurji's swing. I picked green vegetation from the monument and covered the swing's ropes with it. On their return they received the darshan. Pitaji was discharged with 24 hours to live, his desire was to leave his body at Kusum Sarovara; he actually lived a further 2 months.
 After Pitaji entered samadhi, Ma said she would continue on his path. Now, instead of Pitaji meeting the pilgrims on the monument we met them on his behalf. At that time people seldom stopped at Sri Sri Radha Banabihari Temple. We welcomed people on the monument, told them the pastimes, gave them darshan of Kṛṣṇa and Radharani's lotus feet in the chattris, darshan of Sri Dauji, and then invited them to Sri Sri Radha Banabihari's Temple. We also distributed Srila Prabhupada's books in front of the temple. By Gaura Purnima we had Ma speak Kusum Sarovara's pastimes, and with the assistance of a brahmachari at the ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Ashram, Govardhana, we produced a leaflet in the English language of Sri Sri Radha Banabihari's hair braiding pastime with a synopsis of the other Kusum Sarovara pastimes, and printed it. Within the year a Hindi translation was made. Gradually, Sri Sri Radha Banabihari temple was established as a holy place to be visited on Giriraja's Parikrama, especially for the ISKCON yatra.
 When Sri Raghava took Srinivasa and Narottama to see the places near Govardhana where Kṛṣṇa >



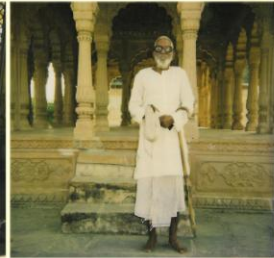
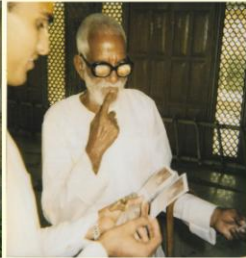
Pujariji in the King's Chattri



At Krishna's lotus feet (note the Giriraja-sila to the left), and Pujariji with visitors in front of the Queens' Chattri.



Pujariji looks at this series of photographs taken on an instamatic camera. Right, Pujariji in front of the Queen's Chattri.



Hare⁶⁵ Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare⁶⁶ Hare



Above and below right, the trip to Prema Sarovara. In the photographs are Pujariji, Ma, Maharaja, Palindri Mataji, and (below right) Nrsingha-vallabha Prabhu (2002).

performed His pastimes, he said, "the place known as Kusum Sarovara is a famous pastime place of Radha-Krishna (from *Bhaktiratnakara*). Thus, through the grace of the Vaisnavas Sri Sri Radha Banabihari have fulfilled the desire from my youth by placing me in a famous place, which of holy places stands supreme, for it is within Sri Radha-kund district. Moreover, I have been placed in the service of pure devotees living there: as Srila Prabhupada writes, "anyone visiting a holy place must search out the pure devotees residing there, take lessons from them, try to apply such instructions in practical life and thus gradually prepare oneself for the ultimate salvation—going back to Godhead."
 In the past fourteen years I have observed so many wonders of devotion in the service of Ma and Pitaji. Here is a pastime from 5 years ago—
 Ma's grand niece, Manini Gopi (Manu), had been suffering severe stomach pains, especially after eating. The doctor suspected she had worms and treated her accordingly, but there was no improvement. I was in Mathura when I recieved a call from Mother Palindri instucting me to purchase a flavoured nutritional powder that can be mixed into milk for Manu to drink.
 "Manu must take no solids for 2 days." Mother Palindri informed me. After fasting for 2 days she would go for a scan.

Manu controlled the urge to eat without any fuss. She maintained her simple diet. During the daytime all seemed well, she would play and study as usual, but the severe pains recurred every evening. When the day of the scan arrived Mohan, her father, drove Manu to Mathura in the car, escorted by Mother Palindri. They arrived back in the afternoon. The scan revealed that Manu was suffering from an infection in the stomache named *colley*. The doctor prescribed a very light dose of antibiotics to assist her natural bodily resistance in combating the intruder. Manu was told she might experience some discomfort for a few days but she was essentially on the mend. On hearing the report Ma declared they would now perform Giriraja's parikrama by car. She had told Giriraja that if Manu returns with good news from her scan then, "I'll do your parikrama!" Giriraja had apparently reciprocated, so Ma was to keep her promise. One might ask what does Giriraja have to gain from an old Vrajavasi performing his parikrama? The answer is her love. Her Lord says, whatever you do, that as an offering to me." Ma had offered her anxieties and hopes to Giriraja, now she was offering Him parikrama to say thank-you: an exchange of love for which fallen souls like myself are hankering, but for Govardhana-vasis like Ma and Pitaji it is the natural way of life.

Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

offering by
 Her Grace
 Vilas Manjari
 Devi Dasi



Thank You

Dear Sri Sri Radha Banabihariji I felt honored very much that You gave me, this unqualified person, the opportunity to glorify you and to serve Your Grace and serve You. Visiting Govardhana Hill was always amongst my strong desires for many years, somehow it was in me. Then in 2002 it came Truth. Thakurji, in the Holy Dhama, in the service of Your Lordship I felt my attraction to You was increasing. I

watched all your great servants, Ma my spiritual grandma, Palindri my spiritual sister, Arca-murti a devoted friend, and others, and all the animals of Braja. They were all teaching me how to love You, take shelter of You, and how to love Your devotees. I remember the time there with great joy and happiness in my heart. I can only say THANK YOU for all I have received there. Words cannot described it enough.

Thus end the offerings of the Karuna Bhavan family



Hare⁶⁷ Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare