

Thakura Bhaktivinoda's Guru Parampara (Part Ten)

How Raganuga Bhakti Begins

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Part Ten is Dedicated to Sri Ananga Manjari
(who is a very special gopi amongst the Vraja sundaris)



Manjari bhava, which is the most widely practiced form of raganuga sadhana, can also be called *gopi anugata bhajan*, as one will then desire to follow Radha's leading gopis. In this practice, though, Bhaktivinoda's parampara members follow Ananga Manjari. So as she is the Sampradaya's leading Acarya in Vraja lila, let us hear something about her glories.

Ananga Manjari is Radha's younger sister. Yet as the Vraja gopis all expand from Radha's *hladini sakti*, Ananga is a direct expansion of Balarama's *sandini sakti* as well. Thus being *Isvari tattva*, she stands apart as unique amongst the others. In fact, *Ananga Manjari Samputika** tells that she is not actually a manjari, but a *yuthesvari*, who has countless gopis serving in her group. Thus Krishna becomes very eager to enjoy conjugal loving pastimes with her.

But the *Samputika* goes on to reveal that Rupa Manjari, Rati Manjari, Guna Manjari, Rasa Manjari and Mani Manjari (who are Rupa Goswami, Raghunath das, Gopal Bhatta, Raghunath Bhatta and Srinivasa Acarya) join with Ananga and serve her as sub-leading sakhis in her group. In other words, although they are Radha's foremost manjaris, they also desire to serve Ananga as sakhis (in separate *prakasa* forms). And thus they are renowned as Ananga Manjari's *panca-ratna sakhis*.

What more can we say? Because when we often hear that the manjaris will never accept Krishna's *sambhoga* pleasure at any time, Jahnava Thakurani (who is Ananga Manjari) says that sometimes they do. In *Murali vilasa*, for example, Jahnava devi teaches her disciple Ramai this noteworthy siddhanta:

*sancari bhava anurupa krsne dite piriti
adhika prapustha kore bhavollasa rati*

“As a temporary mellow (*sancari bhava*) romantic love for Krishna (*krsna piriti*) can sometimes awaken in the manjaris—and this further nourishes their *bhavollasa rati*, or unconditional love for Radha.”

To explain what this means we must say that the manjaris love Radha even more than Krishna. For they totally engage in her *premamaya seva* without desiring

* *Ananga Manjari Samputika* is written by Jahnava's disciple, Ramai Thakura.

anything else. Nevertheless, sometimes Radha may feel indebted to them for their steadfast, selfless seva and desire to reward them with Krishna's *sambhoga* pleasure. Now if such an instance occurs, the teachings that we generally hear is that the manjari will even flatly refuse Radha's request!

But from Jahnava's siksa we learn that the manjari's *krsna piriti sancari bhava* can awaken at such times. Then she will gladly accept Radha's offer to serve Krishna with conjugal love—and this will in turn nourish her love for Radha even more. Here we find in *Caitanya caritamrita* supporting Jahnava's version:

*yadyapi sakhi krsna sangame nahi mona
tathapi radhika jatne koraye sangam
nana chole krsna preri sangam koray
atma sukha sanga haite koti sukha pay
anyone visuddha prema kore rasa pusta
ta sabar prema dekhe krsna hoy tusta*

Although the sakhis and manjaris focus on Radha's conjugal pleasure with Krishna without desiring such pleasure for themselves, Radha will carefully arrange their *Krishna sangam*. In fact, Radha will even make sure by various means that Krishna gets to enjoy them. Then Radha experiences a million times greater pleasure than when she unites with him. Radha's magnanimous behavior thus nourishes the sakhis' and the manjaris' prema and makes Krishna exceedingly happy.

Madhya 8, 211-13

Rasa Analysis

Now as we desire to be a manjari, don't we want to give Radha the most pleasure we can? So after learning where Radha's greatest pleasure lies, will she or Ananga Manjari be pleased if we say "no" if they should send Krishna to us for his *sambhoga* pleasure?

But by saying "yes," just see what will happen: Radha will become a million times happier, Krishna will become exceedingly happy, and their combined happiness will greatly nourish our love for them too. So what do we have to lose?



Because Ananga Manjari leads Bhaktivinoda's manjari parampara, there is a special item that has been handed down (from her time) in our *siddha pranali* and *ekadasa bhava* called *guna* or quality. Thus we may have *Krishna piriti kāma*, *Krishne kāma*, or *vilase Krishna piriti*, etc. In other words, these various designations that we may choose from simply indicate the type of *Krishna piriti* that will be present within us when our *Krishna piriti sancari bhava* awakens.

In *Krishna bhavanamrita*, Visvanath Cakravarti says the manjaris are *sarva vaidagdhi sāra svarupa*, which means that they are very clever and expert in all of the prema seva arts (and extremely beautiful too). So they could be *yuthesvaris* themselves. But they prefer to be Radha's dasi instead.

Then in *Dhyancandra Goswami's Arcana Paddhati*, the *manjari's dhyana* includes this confidential information:

*prtu-tunga-kuca-dvanda catusatigunanavita
nigura bhava govinde madan-ananda-mohini*

The manjaris can have large-raised breasts, they are expert in the 64 arts of prema seva, and they even have an intimate *mohini bhava* with Govinda that awakens Cupid's exciting moods of bliss.

So if Radha sends Krishna to a manjari with the desire to give him *sambhoga* pleasure, don't these two previous examples give us some idea about what they can do?

The Manjaris' Seva

But we must say that the manjaris' *dasi bhava* and seva expertise is truly their overriding quality. For they become *Radhamayi*, and see Radha everywhere and in every thing. Hence their dedication for serving her is quite amazing. The following two examples are taken from Narottam das Thakura's *Prarthana*:

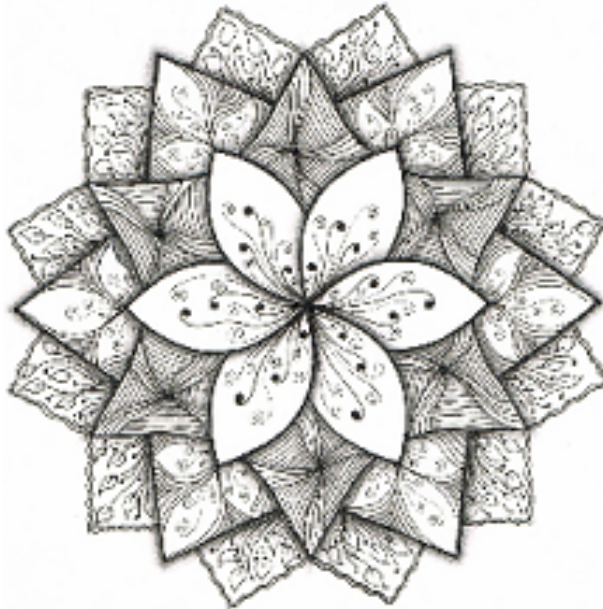
(1)

*pranesvari! eibara karuna koro more
dasanete trna dhorī, anjali mastake kori, ei jana nivedana kore
priya sahaçari sange, sevan koribo range, ange vesa kori dibo sadhe
rakho ei seva kaje, nija pada pankaje, priya sahaçarigana majhe
sugandhi candan, manimaya abharana, kousika vasana nana range
ei sab seva jara, dasi jeno hoy tara, anukhona thaki tara sange
jala subasita kori, ratana bhringare bhorī, karpura vasita guya pan
ei sab sajaiya dhala, labanga malatira mala, bhakya drabya nana anupama
sakhir ingita habe, ei sab aniya kabe, yogaibo lalitar kache
narottam das koy, ei jeno mora hoy, daraiya rohu sakhir pache*

“O pranesvari Radhe! Please be merciful to me. Placing a blade of grass between my teeth, and with my hands folded over my head, I offer myself unto your lotus feet.

I want to become the dasi of your *priya sahaçarīs* who expertly dress you. I will prepare candan, bring your jeweled ornaments and fancy clothing, and freshen your bathing water.

Then after bringing pan, baskets filled with labanga and malati malas, and many delicious edibles, I shall place everything before Lalita. Thus Narottam prays, O when can I remain with the sakhis in this way?”



(2)

*kusumita vrindabane, nacato shikigane, pikakula bhramara jhankare
priya sahaçari sange, gaiya jaibe range, manohara nikunja kutire
duhuk mantar gati, kautuke herabo ati, anga bhoiri pulaka antare
caudike sakhir majhe, radhikar ingite, ciruni laiya kore kori
kutila kuntal sab, bitariya acarabe, banaibo bicitra kabori
bhringare jale ranga, carana dhoyaibo, muchaibo apana cikure
kusuma komal dole, seja bichaibo, sayan korabo dohakare
dhabal camara ani, mrdu mrdu bijabo charamita duhuka sarire
duhuka kamal dithi, kauthuke herabo, duhu anga pulaka antare
sri guru karuna sindhu, lokanatha dinabandhu, mui dine koro abadana
radha krsna vrindaban, priya narma sakhigan, narottam mage ei dana*

“Vrindabana’s flowers are blooming, and the peacocks dance as humming bees and cooing kokilas all add to the forest’s bliss. Thus while wandering and singing along with the playful sakhis, we arrive before an enchanting nikunja mandira.

Then when Radha and Krishna come slowly strolling before us, my body will shiver with divine enrapture! Radha will then motion to the sakhis, and they will bring me a comb. So after carefully combing her curling hair, I will fashion it into an attractive *kabori* or bun.

But before they enter the *keli mandira*, I will pour water to wash their feet, and dry them with my own hair. After preparing their bed with soft flower petals, I will request them to lie down. Then taking up a fluffy *camara* I will gently fan them to relieve their fatigue. But when gazing upon their intriguing lotus faces my bodily hairs will stand erect.

O karuna sindhu Sri Gurudeva, O friend of the fallen, Sri Lokanath, please hear this fallen das as he submissively begs: O please let me serve Vrindaban’s Radha Krishna in the company of their *priya narma sakhis*.”

[Narottama’s gurudeva, Sri Lokanath Goswami, is one of Radha’s *asta manjaris*, namely Sri Manjulali. And the *priya narma sakhis* are the manjaris.]

Diksa

To become eligible for the manjari seva that Narottam das describes, one needs to receive initiation in a manjari parampara.

Bhaktivinoda lists in *Harinama cintamani's* last chapter, five stages in manjari bhava sadhana:

- 1) *sravan dasā*, the stage of hearing;
- 2) *barana dasā*, the stage of receiving one's manjari svarupa when diksa takes place;
- 3) *smaran dasā*, the stage of practicing *astakala lila smaran* with one's mentally conceived manjari svarupa;
- 4) *apana dasā*, the stage when one becomes very adept in lila smaran; and
- 5) *sampati dasā*, the stage when the bhakta attains *siddhi* by following this process.

We shall now try to explain these five stages in more detail.

During the first stage, *sravan dasā*, one should submissively hear from the guru about *astakala lila*, and read books such as *Govinda lilamrita*, *Krishna bhavanamrita* and the *Gutika*. For the more we read the Goswami's *lila granthas* our eligibility increases.

At the second stage, *barana dasā*, when the guru sees that the person he will initiate is truly prepared to take up lila smaran, he will award diksa along with *siddha pranali* and *ekadasa bhava*.

Siddha pranali is the disciple's *manjari parivara* or family that begins from a nitya parshad of Gauranga Mahaprabhu. As each *parivara* member will be there to guide us in our *lila smaran* and *manasi seva* this is important. Equally important is the *ekadasa bhava* that the guru awards—for this is the disciple's eternal svarupa that “she” will constantly meditate on to attain *siddhi*.

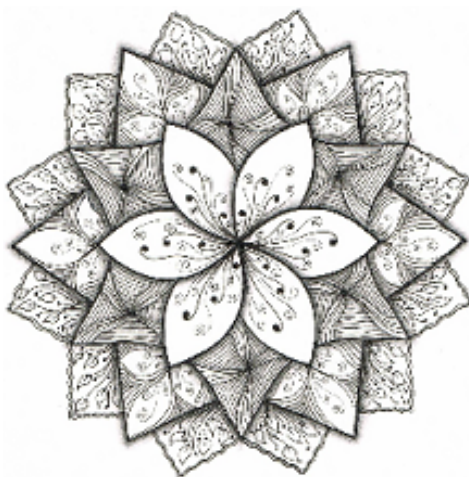
The third stage, *smaran dasā*, begins when putting everything we have learned into practice. And as this is a full time activity, we will gradually have to become free from our material duties that bind us to this world.

To enter the lila and perform *manasi seva* requires *lobha* (or eagerness) which is the active ingredient in raga bhajan. So the importance of our having *lobha* can never be overstressed. At the same time we are to perform *nama japa*. In his *Harinama cintamani*, Bhaktivinoda recommends that we come to the stage of daily chanting three lakhs.

As the lila sequences unfold, we are to enter the scene which is presently happening in the *astakala* in our mentally conceived manjari svarupa. As we learn to see the picture clearly in our mediation, and perform *manasi seva* there following our personal *ruci*, this is called *svarasiki bhajan*.

The fourth stage, *apana dasā*, will come as we become adept in this art. We recommend that sadhak and sadkhikas go back to scenes they have previously meditated on to make each picture more clear and profound, as newer and newer details are bound to pop up. Then gradually our lila smaran will flow uninterrupted like a river.

The final stage, *sampati dasā*, means the attainment of *samadhi*—when the Lord's divine *suddha sattva sakti* enters our heart. By its influence we can get the Lord's *saksat darshan* and actually see directly the lila that we are meditating upon. After reaching this stage, at the time of death we will immediately be transferred to the womb of a Vraja gopi in the *bhauma lila* where the Lord's pastimes are presently going on.



[In *Harinama cintamani's* last chapter, Bhaktivinoda says that *siddhi* can be attained in a short time if one becomes very determined to receive the Lord's blessings. Otherwise, they may take many lifetimes. We believe that Bhaktivinoda became *sadhan siddha* in a short time by receiving the blessings of Vilasa Manjari, and the other manjaris in Ananga Manjari's manjari parivara.]

Manjari Sadhana at a Glance

We have seen that gurus often prescribe to their *sisyas* the practice of *yoga-pitha lila smaran*, which is basically *mantramayi upasana*—a system of puja with many mantras. There are mantras to be recited for Krishna, Radha and every sakhi and manjari in the yoga pitha mandala—as a puja with flowers, candan, malas and a ghee lamp precede the mantra recitation of each member standing in the yoga pitha. To follow the unabridged system of yoga-pitha worship is a long process that can take several hours—and it is mostly a practice of *vaidhi* mixed with *rāga*. This is helpful to learn because it includes many of Radha's closest sakhis whom we want to be acquainted with and devoutly serve.

In Ananga Manjari's manjari parampara, we worship her in the yoga pitha's center with Radha and Krishna, as she stands on Krishna's right side.

Svarasiki Lila Smaran

Though becoming adept in *astakala lila smaran* is the most important. This meditation takes place in Goloka Vrindaban, and not in the *bhauma lila* where Krishna leaves Vrindaban and goes to Mathura, Dvaraka and Kuruksetra.

In Goloka's nitya lila, Krishna never goes elsewhere. He remains in his nitya kishora form, as Radha also remains a nitya kishori with her sakhis and manjaris. So because this eternal realm is where we will at last end up, and reside forever, these Goloka Vrindaban pastimes are what we constantly meditate on.

Govinda lilamrita focuses on Radha Krishna's astakala Goloka pastimes in detail. So we should devoutly read and memorize its 23 chapters. Interested readers can get our English version of this text which has an elaborate commentary.

Jiva Goswami has presented a doctrine saying that Radha Krishna's Goloka pastimes are *svakiya*, and their *parakiya* pastimes happen only in the *bhauma lila*. This was to mislead the atheists who vilify Krishna's *parakiya* affairs. But it is unfortunate that Jiva's doctrine has misled many bhaktas as well. So in his *Ujjvala nilamani* commentary, Visvanath Cakravarti defeats the idea that *svakiya rasa* exists in Goloka Vrindavana—and *Govinda lilamrita* supports his version, as it exclusively describes Radha Krishna's *parakiya* pastimes in Goloka Vrindaban.

Astakala Lila

To give some idea about what *astakala lila smaran* can be like, we shall now briefly touch on a few scenes in each of the eight time periods.

(1)

Nishanta Lila

3:36 A.M. - 6:00 A.M.

At the end of night, Radha and Krishna are sleeping together on a flower bed in a flower-laden kunja. When the manjaris arrive they peak into the *keli mandira* and observe: The Divine couple are tightly embracing—and their dress and ornaments are distinctly missing. Radha's body appears like a soft, golden campak flower, and Krishna's body a delicate blue lotus. Radharani's *nitamba* rests between Krishna's legs, and her lovely *kuca jugal* lay offered to his chest, while resting cheek to cheek, Radha embraces Krishna around the neck, as his sturdy arms become her pillow.

To awaken them, Vrinda then directs the forest birds to begin their chirping. Then Krishna's parrot named Dakha flaps his wings and recites in *Krishna premananda*: "O Krishna! Quickly return home to your bedroom before your mother enters." And Radha's female parrot named Sukhmadhi speaks in *Radha prema*: "O Krishna

priya Radhe! Quickly rise and head homeward before the Vrajavasis take to the pathways. For won't you become disgraced if you are seen?"

Radha then rises, and to increase Krishna's bliss she sits on his lap—and with tired rolling eyes she glances at him. Interlocking her fingers she then yawns and stretches her arms over her head. Thus when getting the splendid darshan of her lovely *stana yugal*, Krishna becomes fascinated. Yet as Krishna's glance falls over Srimati, she smiles and retracts her eyes in shyness. And beholding Radha's enticing sweetness, Krishna's desire awakens to resume *prema keli*. But Radha then utters "na, na" in a soft, indistinct voice—and hearing her repressing words, the sakhis' and manjaris' bodies erupt with goosebumps as they grin and stagger forward to tease Srimati.

Then lots of laughter and merriment ensues as everyone soon forgets the need to quickly return home. So Vrinda motions to Kak-kati (and old female monkey) who shrieks, "Jatila is coming!" Thus in fear and haste Radha Govinda separate to scurry homewards and slip into their own beds before sunrise.

(2)

Pratah Lila

6:00 A.M. - 8:24 A.M.

At daybreak, Purnamasi comes to Nanda bhavan and marvels upon viewing the jeweled palace's superb craftsmanship. When meeting Yashoda, she affectionately offers her a blessing, and they quickly go to awaken Krishna. But then the sakhas arrive too, and shout from the veranda, "Hey Krishna, get up! Let's go to the goshala!"

In Yavata, Radha and Ananga Manjari are resting in the separate palace that their father Vrsabhanu Raja built for them (just north of Jatila's house). After bathing and dressing, the manjaris are now busy cleaning the palace and arranging the dress and ornaments that Radha and Ananga Manjari will wear today. Radha's grandmother Mukhara then comes to greet her—and shortly after, Radha's *yuthesvari* friend Shyamala comes to have *rasodgara* (a discussion with Radha about what happened last night in her pastimes with Govinda).

At Nandagram, Krishna joins the sakhas to milk the cows at the goshala. And after returning, Mother Yashoda arranges to have Krishna bathed and dressed by the household servants.

Then in Yavata, Radha is bathed and dressed by her sakhis and manjaris—she wears twelve different items of dress, and sixteen various kinds of ornaments.

Receiving Mother Yashoda’s request to prepare Krishna’s morning bhojan, Radha then goes to Nandagram with her sakhis and prepares a sumptuous feast.

When Krishna dines with the sakhas, Radha and her sakhis watch from the kitchen window. Then Radha enjoys Krishna’s *adharamrita* (prasada remnants). But soon after she secretly slips away to enjoy *prema keli* with Krishna in the hidden nikunjas on Nandagram’s western side. The morning *yoga-pitha lila* next takes place in a jeweled mandira on the bank of Guptakund.

(3)

Purbahna Lila

8:24 A.M. - 10:48 A.M.

Seeing that it’s time to enter the forest, Krishna blows his buffalo horn named *Mandra-ghosa*. Thus floods of children, women and old folk appear to experience Krishna’s *darshan amrita*. When the devatas watching from the clouds see the long procession of white *kama dhenus* (the Ganga), black buffalo (the Yamuna), and the rising dust of their hooves (the Sarasvati), it creates a spectacular sight for them that they mistake for the *triveni*!

As Nanda and Yashoda cannot restrict Krishna from entering the forest, they cry pathetically. Thus Krishna stops to console them.

Meanwhile, Radhika watches Krishna’s *gosta yatra* from Nanda bhavan and returns home. Then Jatila orders her to perform Surya puja. Before leaving, however, Radha anxiously waits for her sakhi to return with Krishna’s news.

Govinda’s happiness awakens seeing the Vrajavasis (along with his mother and father) returning to their homes. So just as an intoxicated elephant leaps from its shakles, Krishna’s joy overflows after freeing himself from the Vrajavasi’s binding

glances of love. Thus the cowherd boys start to dance, sing, laugh, joke and stumble over each other in getting Krishna to themselves. But after a while, he leaves the sakhas with Baladeva at Manasi Ganga, and heads for Radhakund in his enmaddened search for Radha.

When arriving at Radhakund Krishna thus considers, “Aha! Radha’s body is *sundar*, her behavior is *sundar*, and even her sakhis, dasis, affection, happiness and everything else is *sundar*. Aha! Today as I view this kund an ocean of sweetness is causing my heart to dance within its waves. Aha! What enchantment! This kund appears to be offering my Prana priya Radha’s *anga madhuri* (bodily splendor)!

Vrinda then takes Krishna on a tour of Radhakund and shows him the asta sakhis’ kunjās. In the north is Lalita’s lightning color kunja, in the northeast is Visakha’s cloud color kunja, in the east is Citra’s multicolored kunja, in the southeast is Indulekha’s white color kunja, in the south is Campakalata’s gold color kunja, in the southwest is Rangadevi’s shyam color kunja, in the west is Tungavidya’s crimson color kunja, and in the northwest is Sudevi’s green color kunja.

At last, Vrinda sends a sakhi to watch the Manasi Ganga path, from where the sakhas could arrive. Then she sends another sakhi to watch the path from Gauri tirtha, in case some of Candravali’s sakhis should show up from there. In great expectation for Radha’s arrival then, Krishna fixes his glance on the Jabat path.

(4)

Madhyahna Lila

10:48 A.M. - 3:36 P.M.

While sitting at home Radha’s intense desire to meet Krishna tortures her. Yet *Kandarpa* is similarly torturing Krishna as he becomes greatly panged for Radha’s *anga sanga*.

So taking the Surya puja paraphernalia, Radha then leaves with her sakhis to meet Krishna and Radhakund. And after a great while, with lots of endeavor, Radha and Krishna’s bodies become ornamented by various transcendental emotions during the thrill of their *yugal milan*. Then a host of pastimes begins, such as: *holi*, *vana*

vihara, jhulan, madhu pan, rati keli, jala keli, sringar, bona bhojan, sayan, pasa khela and *Surya puja*. Now let us try to briefly describe all of these events.

Holi: This colorful lila takes place in the Northwestern corner of Lalita's kunja. When Ramani mohan Krishna mounts the stage with Radha and the parama sundari Vraja kishoris, everyone takes up *pichkaris* (syringes) and colored powders to bombard each other in a loving spirit. When getting splattered the gopi's wet clothes reveal their charming *anga madhuri*, but when Krishna's garments become wet too, the Vraja sundaris' eyes experience a similar nectar barrage!

Vana vihara: This pastime of sightseeing includes the seasonal forests of *vasanta* (spring), *grisma* (summer), *varsa* (monsoon), *sarat* (autumn), *hemanta* (dewy) and *sisira* (winter) where Radha, Krishna and the sakhis perform a different pastime while wandering through each of the six different forest nikunjas.

Jhulan: As Radha and Krishna next sit in a *hindola* (swing), the sakhis begin swinging them. But as the *hindola's* speed gets faster, Radha becomes frightened and embraces Krishna for support! Then the asta sakhis get up in to the *hindola's* eight petals and swing with Radha Krishna. But a miracle happens—each sakhi perceives that Radha and Krishna are directly looking at them. Then each sakhi takes her turn to swing with Krishna alone.

Madhu pana: Thereafter, Krishna takes Radha and the Vraja kishoris to a shady madhavi kunja to enjoy a brief rest. Then Vrinda and her assistants bring different kinds of intoxicating madhu in crystal decanters and places them all before the Divine couple. As everyone starts drinking, they soon become drunk.

Rati keli: The madhu's intoxication severs the gopis' modesty and resistance. Thus Krishna begins to make love with Radha. At first she resists Krishna's advances, but later climbs over his chest in an effort to defeat him in Cupid's battle. Then Radha arranges that Krishna enjoy with each one of her sakhis.

Jala keli: To relieve their *rati keli* fatigue, the gopis dress in thin white bathing cloth, remove their ornaments, and thus appear exquisitely beautiful. Then Radha and her sakhis enter Radhakund to contest Krishna in water sporting. When the Vraja sundaris get wet, Krishna experiences tremendous bliss in viewing their full

anga madhuri. But his wet garments reveal his *bhuvan mohan rupa*, as the gopis' eyes submerge within this nectar ocean. As the splashing competition progresses, Krishna gets to make love with some of the more experienced gopis in the water.

Srngara: Coming out of the water, Radhika sundari and her sakhis seat Priya Kesava upon the *srngar vedi* in the *padma mandira's* southern side. Then they dress and decorate him with a large assortment of flowers. The manjaris then dress Radha with the flower dress and ornaments that they previously made.

Bona bhojan: Then Vrinda escorts Radha-Krishna and the sakhis to the *padma mandira's* north side and shows them a vast assortment of delicious sliced fruits and sweets. Everything is selectively arranged on palasa leaf plates, sala leaves, and banana leaves. Some items are kept in leaf cups. As Krishna sits on a flower *asana*, Madhumangal and Subal sit on Krishna's right and left side. Then Radhika and a few sakhis sit facing Krishna to serve, as Vrinda brings each item one by one.

Sayana: After enjoying the meal, Krishna goes to another room in the *padma mandira* and rests upon a flower bed. And meanwhile, Radha sits down with her sakhis to enjoy Krishna's prasada remnants, as Rupa Manjari and Vrinda serve. Then Radha goes to take rest beside Krishna, as the manjaris massage their feet and fan them with camaras until they happily fall asleep.

Pasa khela: Radha, Krishna and the sakhis next go to Sudevi's kunj to play *pasa khela*. Thus Krishna, Madhumangal and Subal sit face to face with Radha and her sakhis. There are 64 squares on the *pasa* board contoured in the form of emerald mosaic designs in the mandira's center. The game is played by throwing dice, as each opponent moves their pieces over the board. Madhumangal is Krishna's referee, and Lalita gives suggestions to Radha, as betting is at stake. Sometimes Krishna wins, and sometimes Radha is the victor in this fierce competition.

But as the game continues, Vrinda's female parrot named Sukhmadhi suddenly flies into the assembly exclaiming: "Ayi! Jatila is coming!" Thus in panic Radha and Krishna drop everything and flee!

Surya puja: Kundalata then escorts Radha to the Surya mandira, and Jatila arrives there. But Kundalata arranges that Madhumangal be their pujari, and Krishna

accompanies him dressed in a brahmina's disguise. As Jatila cannot recognize Krishna, she engages him in Radha's Surya puja. Krishna then expertly performs the puja and satisfies Jatila.

After Surya puja, Radha returns home with Jatila, and Krishna returns to the sakhas. Then Krishna's *uttara gostha* begins (his returning home with the cows and his sakhas).

(5)

Aparahna Lila

3:36 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.

Getting lotus-eyed Krishna back, the sakhas are rejuvenated! They blow buffalo horns, make sweet sounds by blowing on leaves, and even play vinas! The sakhas then surround Krishna, as they each serve him according to their adopted mood.

With his Vamsi Krishna calls the cows, and they all come running with their tails sailing in the air! After he shows affection to them, the sakhas divide the herds and direct the *kama dhenus* towards Nandagram.

Meanwhile, Shyampriya Radhika arrives home, and the manjaris put her to rest. Then she and the sakhis prepare sweets such as *amrita keli*, *karpura keli*, *piyusa granti*, *ananga gutika* and *sidhu vilasa*. Some of them will be sent for Krishna's *sayana bhojan*, and the rest will be served during their late evening meal.

Radha is bathed, dressed and attractively decorated. And with the sakhis she ascends to the *candrasala* to view Krishna when he returns from the *gostha*. Though as Krishna emerges from a cloud of *dhenu-renu* (dust from the cows' hooves) Radhika's bee-like eyes soar and land on Krishna's *mukharavinda*. Then on Lalita's cue they descend into a flower garden. But when Radha's lurking eyes focus on Krishna's face, the red Sarasvati of his glance merges. And the black Yamuna of Radha's fluttering eye gestures unites with Krishna's glance. Hence the streaming white Ganga of their tears bursts forth. Aho! now the *Airavata* (heavenly elephant) of their hearts splash within this *triveni*. So it's not surprising that the sakhis' lotus eyes fully bloom at the *sangam* of these three rivers.

As Nanda and Yashoda see Krishna, their life returns! Thus they kiss their son, embrace him and smell his hair—just as one rejoices upon recovering a precious gem. Nanda’s eyes fill with tears and Yashoda also cries as milk streams from her breasts. Thus they clean their dusty son in *param-ananda*.

(6)

Sayahna Lila

6:00 P.M. - 8:24 P.M.

Vrajesvari Yashoda places Kanai and Balai upon the *snana vedi*, and has the household servants bathe them. Then she sends Dhanistha to Javat to collect the sweets that Radha made.

As Dhanistha enters Radhika’s sakhi assembly she sees that Srimati has already been waiting to send the sweets. Meanwhile, Vrinda’s messenger (*duti*) arrives and informs Radha that tonight’s meeting place (*sanketa*) will be Govinda sthali. Then Radha sends Tulasi and Kasturi Manjari with Dhanistha to Nandalaya to deliver the sweets.

After Krishna and Balarama are bathed and nicely dressed, Mother Yashoda serves them and the sakhas some light refreshments. Dhanistha then privately collects Krishna’s prasada remnants and sends them to Radha through her sakhi assistant, Gunamala.

Krishna then goes to milk the cows at the goshala where his father is affectionately waiting. And to watch Krishna’s activities from Jabat, Radha and her sakhis ascend up to the *balabhi sikhar* (a high turret above the house). After milking some of the cows, Krishna returns with his father to the house to view Sri Narayana’s *sandhya arati*. And afterwards, Mother Yashoda calls everyone to enjoy their *sandhya bhojan*.

Nanda invites many of his family members and friends to dine, and Krishna and the sakhas then come to sit before them. Although the evening meal’s setting is more grave than the morning bhojan, everyone fully enjoys the wonderful meal as

Yashoda and Tungit[†] affectionately serve many sumptuous dishes.

Tulasi and Kasturi then return to Radha with Krishna's prasada remnants and also give great pleasure to her ears by relating first hand all of Krishna's *sandhya* activities.

(7)

Pradosa Lila

8:24 P.M. - 10:48 P.M.

With the night's arrival, the sakhis eagerly prepare for Radha's *abhisara* (her secret journey to meet Govinda). During the waxing moon nights she wears white dress to blend with the moonbeams, and during the dark nights she dresses in deep blue to blend with the darkness.

Krishna and Balarama then join Nanda and the Vrajavasis to watch entertaining performances at the theater hall (*raja sabha*). As Nanda and his brothers enter the *raja sabha* they first greet all of the distinguished guests. But everyone is anxious to see Krishna. Thus as he enters surrounded by his sakhas, the Krishna-moon causes all of the guests' cakori eyes to rejoice. As Nanda gives the signal, the various artists begin performing to please the eager assembly. There are dancing performances, magic acts, juggling acts, and artists balancing above bamboo poles. Some tell stories from the *Puranas*, sing songs, or recite biographies about Krishna's ancestors. Other poets recite poetry, and there are orchestras playing vinas, murajas, flutes and karatals.

After the show, Nanda Maharaja offers the performers expensive clothes, ornaments and wealth. Meanwhile, Yashoda's servant Raktaka enters the assembly, and escorts Krishna back to the house. Then Yashoda offers Krishna and Balarama warm milk, and puts them to rest. In a short time, however, Krishna wakes up and heads for the secret nikunjas where he will meet Radha.

[†] Tungit: Upananda's wife

Radha's Abhisara

Radha fearfully hides under the shade of every tree as she walks along the forest path. And while fixing her sight on Vamsivata she and her sakhis arrive at the Yamuna's bank. Then they wade across knee-deep water to the island known as Govinda sthali. This is Vrindaban's crest-piece where the kunjās unfold in a thousand petal lotus formation. And atop of the hill, which takes the shape of a turtle's back, rests the jewel-studded yoga-pitha mandira.

When Radha and her sakhis arrive here, Vrinda gives them a tour of the many wonderful nikunjas around Govinda sthali. But Radha has become extremely anxious for Krishna's darshan.

(8)

Nisha Lila

10:48 P.M. - 3:36 A.M.

As they ecstatically meet, Radha and Krishna's nisha yoga pitha lila begins. And afterwards, Vrinda and her vana devis escort Vraja-natha and Vrajesvari Rai to a golden throne that is basking in the moonlight. Here they are outfitted in flower ornaments, flower crowns, and lovely flower malas, as the manjaris fan them. Then the nisha pastimes begin such as: *vana vihara*, *sangita*, *prahelis*, *Rāsa nrtya*, *madhu pan*, *rati kridha*, *jala keli*, *srngara*, *bona bhojan* and *sayana*. Let us now briefly describe these colorful events.

Vana vihara: Taking his *sundari ramanis* Krishna sweetly sings and wanders with them under every tree, every *lata*, and in every forest kunja. But the Vraja *sundaris* sing about Krishna while wandering with him. Thus the forest *latas* dance as peacocks, bees, and kokilas all sing in the fifth scale. So just as a prince warmly welcomes and king and his queen, the Vrindaban forest greets Radha-Govinda as it ecstatically horripulates with the cooling *malayan* breezes.

Rāsa sangita: Thereafter, Krishna composes songs about the moon, the *latas* and the stars, and the sakhis respond by singing songs about him. For example: Krishna sings, "The *Kalanidhi* (moon) excites everyone's romantic desires when

coming between the two stars Radha and Anuradha.” But the gopis then sing, “*Sri Kalanidhi* (the expert lover Krishna) has come between Radha and Lalita to excite their desire for *rati*.”

prahelis: Radha first recites her *praheli* (riddle): “O Prananatha! Who faints while singing your glories, resides in our village, and who is famous in *Ananga rasa*?”

Although the riddle’s outward appearance draws Krishna’s attention, the answer isn’t so erotic as it appears. Thus Krishna replies, “O Radhe! That talented and fortunate one, who can even remove my Vamsi’s pride, whose sweetness makes me happy, and who, like you, has plump gourd-like breasts, certainly must be your vina.”

Rāsa nrtya: There are two types of Rāsa dancing—*cakra bhraman Rāsa* and *Maha Rāsa*. *Cakra bhraman Rāsa* takes place upon a huge circular stage that rotates like a potter’s wheel from Krishna and the gopis’ dancing steps. Sometimes the *cakra* moves slowly, and when everyone fervently dances it moves swiftly. Radha and Krishna dance in the *cakra*’s center, and the gopis dance in three circles around them.

But *Maha Rāsa nrtya* is more spectacular, and it takes place on a Yamuna sandbar named *Anangollasa ranga*. As this site is purified by the Yamuna’s waves, scented by the lotus flowers, and basks in the fine white moon rays, it is ideal for *Maha Rāsa*. This *Rāsa lila* is like a *vilasa sagar* (ocean of conjugal love) for the fisherman named Kandarpa (Cupid). Because to catch the Krishna-fish he spreads his golden net of *parama sundari* gopis who display the attractive bait of their pumpkin-like breasts. When Radha dances a solo she ecstatically recites this *prabandha*:

*dham dham drka drka cham cham — ninam nam ninam nam tuka tuka tum tum
— guru guru guru dram dram guru dram guru dram dekha dekha dho dho — kiriti
kiriti dram drmi dram drimi dram!*

As their dancing continues, the Vraja sundaris sing with their mouths, enact dramas with their hands, keep the *tāl* (beat) moving with their feet, shake their necks and hips, and move their eyes to the right and to the left. Thus with their eyes fixed on Krishna’s *mukharavinda* (lotus face) they enjoy great erotic rapture!

Madhu pana: After the Rāsa dancing, Vrinda brings many kinds of madhu extracted from the flowers and fruit rasa. She also brings a vast assortment of sliced fruits, and places everything before Radha, Krishna and the sakhis. Krishna then expands himself to sit beside each gopi. Then he smiles and induces his *gopa ramanis* to sip the madhu. But he sips their *adharamrita* (nectar-like lips) and the madhu too.

Rati keli: Krishna first takes drunken Radha to a bed of flowers in a beautiful kunja beside the Yamuna. And there he enjoys lovemaking with her to his full satisfaction. Then afterwards, in seeing Radha's *svadhina bhartrika*[‡] mood awakening, Krishna obediently follows her order to nicely redress and decorate her.

Following Radha's request, Krishna next expands himself and enters each sakhi's kunja to enjoy *rati keli* with all of them. But afterwards, they behave like *svadhina bhartrika ramanis*, just as Radha did. So Krishna then obediently redresses and decorates them too.

Jala keli: To relieve the fatigue of the *Rāsa* and *rati vilasa* Krishna enters the Yamuna with his gopi consorts—just as a drunken elephant enters the water with his mates. Then Krishna lightly splashes them, so they splash him back in frolic. In this competition though wagers are at stake—for when someone wins, the loser must give a kiss. But sometimes the loser refuses to give a kiss, and a quarrel ensues. Thus Krishna enjoys *paramananda* with his *taruni ramanis*.

Srngara: When coming out of the water, Vrinda escorts Krishna and the gopis to the eastern wing of a padma mandira. And then, as everyone sits on a golden vedi that is smothered in flower petals, Vrinda collects baskets from the desire trees that are marked with the name of whom it is for. These baskets are filled with fine clothes, ornaments, scents, kun-kuma and tilaka for each gopi. Although the gopis are already decorated with the ornaments of *asta sattvika bhavas*, the manjaris expertly dress them so that their beauty doubles.

[‡] *svadhina bhartrika:* Radha's controlling mood, when she dictates to Krishna how to server her.

Nisha bhojan: After the *srngara*, Rupa Manjari brings sweets such as *ananga gutika*, *sidhu vilasa* and *amrita laddhus*. Then Vrinda serves an array of juicy, sliced fruits that have their seeds and skins removed. Thus Krishna enjoys bhojan with Radha and the sakhis. Then he performs *acamana* and goes to take rest in the keli mandira with Radha.

Sayana: The keli mandira is open on four sides so that the Yamuna's cool breeze can enter, and the jeweled bed in the center is covered by a swan-white sheet and smothered with fragrant flower petals. Lalita and Visakha supply pan to Radha Krishna, as Rupa and Rati Manjari massage their *carana kamal*. But there are other fortunate manjaris who fan them with camaras.

Then Lalita, Visakha and the other sakhis leave the *vilasa mandira*, and go to their own *keli kunj*s where Krishna will soon join them. But the manjaris slip outside to watch Radha and Krishna's *prema keli* by peaking through the lattice windows. For this is the greatest reward for their selfless *prema seva*. So what do they see?

Rasamaya nagar Shyam and *rasamayi nagari* Radha are both expert in the practice of Cupid's martial arts. Hence, their mutual desire to share such an amazing talent brings about Kandarpa's battle of love. But the sakhi of fatigue finally invites *Nidra devi* to put them to rest. In other words, owing to their great exertion in *prema keli*, they happily fall asleep.

