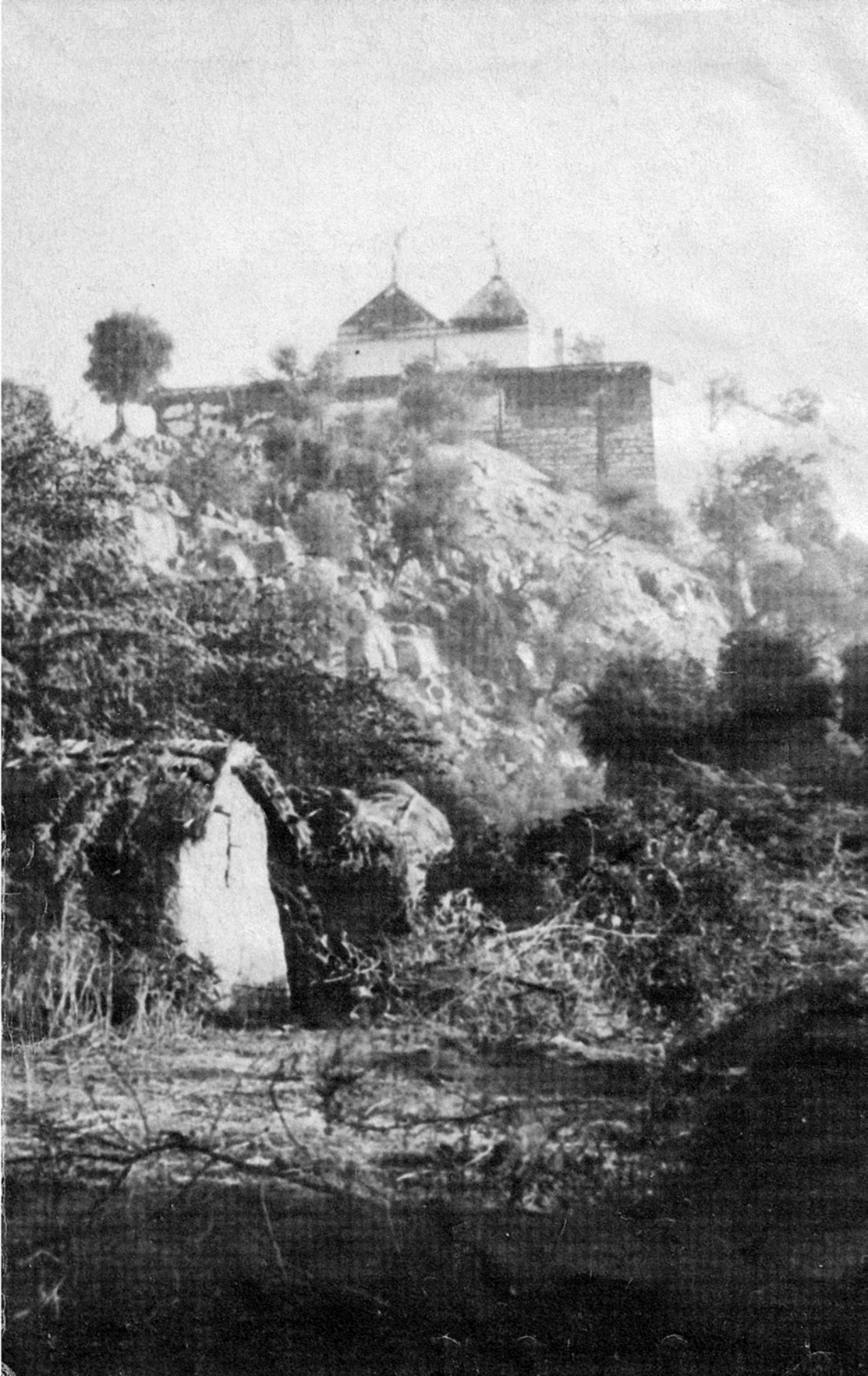

A.W. Entwistle

Braj Centre of rishna Pilgrimage

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Abbreviations

AA	Abu'l Fazl, *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī*
AN	Abu'l Fazl, *Akbarnāma*
AP	*Ādipurāṇa (Vṛndāvanamāhātmya)*
ASI	Archaeological Survey of India
ASIAR	Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report
AV	*Aṣṭachāp kī vārtā*, attrib. Gokulnath
AY	Vrindabanchandradas, *Aṣṭayām*
BBP	Nawal Singh Pradhan, *Braj bhūmi prakāś*
BC	Bhasa, *Bālacarita*
BhP	*Bhāgavatapurāṇa*
BKB	Vallabhji, *Brajmaṇḍal kamalākār bhāvnā*
BP	Brajnath, *Braj parikramā*
BRam	*Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa (pūrvakhaṇḍa)*
BRat	Narahari Chakravarti, *Bhakti ratnākar*
BYP	*Ban yātrā parikramā*, attrib. Gokulnath
BYV	Maheshwari, *Bīkānerī yātrā vivaraṇ*
CBC	*Caurāsī baiṭhak caritra*, attrib. Gokulnath
CC	Krishnadas Kaviraj, *Caitanya caritāmṛt*
CM	Lochandas, *Caitanya maṅgal*
EI	*Epigraphia Indica*
GLA	Krishnadas Kaviraj, *Govindalīlāmṛta*
GM	Banmalilal Sharma, *Gokul māhātmya*
GVY	Jagatanand, *Śrīgusā̃īī kī vanyātrā*
GS	*Gargasaṃhitā*
HBV	Gopal Bhatt, *Haribhaktivilāsa*
HV	*Harivaṃśa*
KCC	Murari Gupta, *Kṛṣṇacaitanyacaritāmṛta*
KK	Lakshmidhara, *Kṛtyakalpataru (Mathurāmāhātmya)*
MBh	*Mahābhārata*
MM	Mathura Museum
MS	Anantadev, *Mathurāsetu*
NBC	Janakiprasad Bhatt, *Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭacaritāmṛta*

NP	*Nāradapurāṇa*
PP	*Padmapurāṇa* (Venkateshwar Press edition)
PV	*Pītāmbardās kī vārtā*, attrib. Hariray (in 252V)
R	Rup Goswami, *Mathurāmāhātmya*
SC	Sudan, *Sujān caritra*
SP	*Skandapurāṇa*
SPV	Hariray, *Śrīgovardhannāthjī ke prākaṭya kī vārtā*
Sund.	Sundarlal, *Vraj yātrā*
TA	Vrind, *Tīrthānand*
VBV	Narayan Bhatt, *Vrajabhaktivilāsa*
VDA	Gopal Kavi, *Vṛndāvan dhām anurāgāvalī*
VGV	Jagatanand, *Vraj grām varṇan*
ViP	*Viṣṇupurāṇa*
VM	Mitra Mishra, *Vīramitrodaya (Mathurāmāhātmya)*
VOC	Narayan Bhatt, *Vrajotsavacandrikā*
VP	*Varāhapurāṇa*, ed. A.S. Gupta
VRC	Vishwanath Chakravarti, *Vrajarīticintāmaṇi*
VRI	Vrindaban Research Institute
VS	*vikram saṃvat*
VTK	Jinaprabha Suri, *Vividhatīrthakalpa (Mathurāpurīkalpa)*
VVS	Raghunathdas, *Vrajavilāsastava*
VVV	Jagatanand, *Vraj vastu varṇan*
84V	*Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā*, attrib. Gokulnath
252V	*Do sau bāvan vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā*, attrib. Hariray

Preface

Although many studies have appeared on different aspects of the Krishna cult, there is no up-to-date and suitably comprehensive account in English of Braj, the most important centre of Krishna pilgrimage. From the seventeenth century onwards various European travellers passed through the area and made a brief record of their impressions. A more detailed account of life in Mathura and the surrounding district was given by Mark Thornhill, who described his experiences as Collector at the time of the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857. Though he was more familiar with the area than previous European visitors, many of his comments now appear prejudiced and typically 'colonial'. The settlement reports of Deeds and Tyler (1831) and Whiteway (1879) are restricted to statistical, topographical, and economic information.

A major contribution to the study of Braj was made by Frederick Salmon Growse (1837-93), who was District Magistrate at Mathura from 1871-77. He had an antiquarian interest in local history and culture, was a keen amateur architect, and was responsible for unearthing, salvaging, and preserving many fine examples of ancient sculpture. Besides founding Mathura Museum, he restored the sixteenth-century temples and other monuments of Mathura and Vrindaban. His *Mathurá, A District Memoir* is a rather unorthodox kind of gazetteer in that the statistical information is overshadowed by his coverage of historical and cultural topics. The later gazetteers of H. E. Drake-Brockman and E. B. Joshi follow a more standard format and scarcely provide us with any additional information on local history and culture. Up to the present day Growse's *District Memoir* has remained a standard work of reference, though some of his views are outdated and much more information about the topics he discusses has since become available.

Early this century two missionaries who spent some time in Braj published accounts of its religious life. J. E. Scott's *Braj, The Vaishnava Holy Land*, while it contains some information about the Krishna cult, is primarily concerned with advertizing missionary activity. The tone of E. Mabel F. Major's *On the Wings of a Wish*, written to inspire children in the West to come to India and save the heathens, can hardly fail to provoke derision on the part of modern readers. Until fairly recently there were few westerners who attempted to appreciate Krishna from the standpoint of a Hindu devotee. Growse, for example, allowed his Catholicism to

colour his assessment of the ethics and behaviour of local devotees; others tended to dismiss Krishna rather superficially in terms of classical mythology. Joseph Tieffenthaler considered the songs and stories about Krishna to be indecent and deemed them more appropriate for 'ein muthwilliger Satyr oder Faun'. Emily Eden tells us that Krishna 'seems to have been a larking sort of Apollo', an identification also suggested some decades earlier by Thomas Twining, and by her contemporary James Tod, with reference to Shrinathji. A more sensitive and penetrating appreciation of the religious life of Braj is given by Klaus Klostermaier, who, during the two years he spent in Vrindaban in the 1960's, had many theological discussions with local Vaishnavas.

In recent decades several scholars have undertaken studies of specific aspects of the culture, history, and social life of Braj. *The Miracle Plays of Mathurā* by Norvin Hein, which gives a detailed account of the *rās līlā* tradition, begins with a good general introduction to the district and its religious activity. John Stratton Hawley also paints a vivid picure of the atmosphere of Vrindaban in the first chapter of *At Play with Krishna: Pilgrimage Dramas from Brindavan*. Bimanbehari Majumdar, in an appendix to one of the chapters of his *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend*, gives a list of the sacred places of Braj as recorded in some of the older texts. His listing, however, is much less comprehensive than the one given in chapter 8 of the present study, and in many cases his identification of the places is deficient or inaccurate. Much of what I have to say endorses and enlarges upon articles written by Charlotte Vaudeville on the reclamation of Braj and the cult of Govardhan; the additional detail I have provided and my investigation of a larger number of texts help to qualify and modify some of her conclusions.

K. D. Vajpeyi, sometime Director of Mathura Museum, produced the first detailed history of Braj in Hindi (1954-58). The second volume contains chapters by various local scholars on aspects of Braj culture. One of the contributors was Chandrabhan Rawat, who has elsewhere written on the local dialect (1967) and has surveyed some of the elements and themes of the literature of Krishna devotion (1976). Satyendra has written extensively on the folklore of Braj (1948, 1949, 1953), and has also produced a rather ragged history of Braj literature (1967). The only history of prose literature in Braj to have been published so far is that of Jaykishan Prasad. Prabhudayal Mital, besides editing the works of some of the devotional poets, has written three volumes on the cultural and religious history of Braj (1966, 1968, 1975), which are a mine of information. In addition there are several studies by Indian scholars and devotees that deal with particular sectarian traditions, especially their devotional literature. Some of them are pervaded with a distinct sectarian bias, or have been written by scholars who do not share an outsider's scepticism with regard to questions of historicity.

I cannot by any means claim that my own study has not been tinged by personal tastes and subjectivity. In my efforts to present the Vaishnavas' own account of their beliefs, history, and practices, I have tried to avoid giving undue stress to the views current in any particular Sampraday. Though I have attempted to suppress value judgements and be less opinionated than my colonial predecessors, my perspective remains that of an outsider who, while being charmed by the aesthetics and vivacity of Braj culture, has remained stubbornly impervious to the theology and mysticism. I am intrigued by the sentimental and emotional appeal of Krishna

devotion, but have failed to let it sweep me off my feet. Consequently, devotees will find much of what I have to say irrelevant, dry, and lacking in *ras*. Though, in their eyes, I will have completely missed the point, I hope that the majority of readers will find something of use in my survey of Krishna worship as practised in Braj. I have tried to assimilate and select information from the vast amount of material available in various languages, emphasizing the salient points and providing references to sources where more detail can be found. My aim has been to produce a digestible cultural history for the western reader and a handbook that will be useful for students of various disciplines. Though I may have personal preferences, I have no ideological axe to grind. Rather than adhering to any particular model, I have tried to survey the interpretations offered by other scholars. In summarizing the early history of the Krishna cult I have restricted the information to points that have some bearing upon later developments in Braj. Fuller accounts of the history of Krishna worship are given in recent studies by Suvira Jaiswal, Friedhelm Hardy (1983/1), Benjamin Preciado-Solis, and J. S. Hawley (1983), all of whom refer to earlier studies which, on the whole, they supersede. Similarly, I have merely summarized the canonical version of the story of Krishna, since there are enough readily available publications in which it is told in greater detail.

The historical chapters are based largely on secondary studies, supplemented with details gleaned from the accounts of European travellers and the mass of devotional literature. Anyone embarking upon further research into the history of Vaishnavism in Braj must delve into the various documents in the possession of Pandas and Goswamis, temple libraries, archives, and law courts. I am not equipped to deal with firmans and other documents in Persian, and even a study of archival material in languages known to me would have required much more patient negotiation and research, resulting in many more years of work. Though I would have liked more time to mull over several issues touched upon in this study, the time now seems ripe for a general introductory history.

My own particular contribution to the study of Braj has been to examine all available texts relating to the sacred places (chapter 6). By collating these sources I have produced a description of the pilgrimage circuit (chapter 8), presenting the itinerary in the form of a gazetteer. I have pruned away much of the whimsical or even fatuous detail given in many of the texts, retaining an occasional example in order to convey the flavour. My collated sequence of places does not correspond to any particular pilgrimage itinerary, but note has been made of variations, diversions, and omissions. The numbers given to the places correspond to those used in the maps to show their location. The references to sources give some indication of the antiquity of the different places and their sectarian affiliation. Variant spellings of place names have been noted, in the hope that they will be helpful to anyone speculating on the etymology of toponyms. I have included some of the etymologies suggested by Growse and others, even though they are often improbable.

In transcribing Indian names and terms the aim has been to keep the use of diacritical marks down to a minimum, restricting them to titles and words printed in italics. Proper names have been given an anglicized spelling, using the forms for toponyms that are given in the latest census report, unless they are anomalous or contradict established local usage. My transcription of b/v/w, cerebral d(h)/r(h),

and -o-/-au- is blatantly inconsistent, and there are some anomalies in my attempted compromise between Sanskrit spelling, Hindi pronunciation, and standard romanized forms ('Vrindaban', for example, is a conventional but questionable transcription, and I have resorted to 'Harivansh', where 'Haribans' would be a more accurate reflection of Hindi pronunciation). To minimize confusion, and to serve as a guide to pronunciation, anglicized proper nouns are accompanied in the index by the standard transliteration from Devanagari of their Sanskrit and/or Hindi forms. Similarly, in the bibliography, transliterated forms of Indian authors' names are given in parenthesis after the anglicized spellings used elsewhere in the text.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to some of the many people who have helped and encouraged me over the past decade. First and foremost I must thank Doctor Ram Das Gupta for providing me with the opportunity of spending two and a half years in Braj (1976-78) and for inspiring me with his enthusiasm for the local culture and his unflagging dedication to its study and preservation. While in Vrindaban I was able to benefit from the scholarly insight of other participants in the Research Project organized by the International Association of the Vrindaban Research Institute, in particular Professor J. C. Wright and Doctor Tarapada Mukherjee. Local associates of the Vrindaban Research Institute who facilitated my research and provided information and entertaining discussion were Doctor R. C. Sharma (then Director of Mathura Museum), Shri Srivatsa Goswami, and the late Doctor Moti Lal Gupta. The staff of the Institute were always ready and willing to help with my enquiries. Among them Shri Gopal Chandra Ghosh and Shri Brindaban Behari were especially forthcoming in sharing with me their extensive 'local knowledge'. On my excursions into the Braj countryside I was accompanied by Shri Keshav Singh Verma and Shri Pulin Krishna Goswami, who offered me valuable guidance and companionship and patiently answered my endless stream of questions about the local dialect and customs. More recently, Professor Owen M. Lynch kindly provided helpful criticism of remarks I made on the Chaube brahmins of Mathura in a draft of my opening chapter.

The compilation of this study was carried out under the auspices of Professor Jacob Ensink, who invited me to participate in a project on pilgrimage at the Institute of Indian Studies, University of Groningen. Thanks to a grant from the research fund of the Faculty of Letters, I was able to spend five years at Groningen working on this study and to make two trips to India for further research. Among the colleagues at Groningen who helped to create such a pleasant working environment, I am especially grateful to Doctor Ranajit Sarkar for his help with my reading of *Bhakti ratnākar*. My closest associate at Groningen was Doctor Hans Bakker, who was simultaneously busy with his study of Ayodhya. I was able to have many enjoyable and fruitful discussions with him, and his help in arranging for the publication of the book and maps has been invaluable.

1 Introduction

1 The landscape

The term 'Braj' does not refer to an area with clearly defined boundaries and has never been used as the official name of a political territory or administrative division. It is derived from the Sanskrit *vraja*, which is used in the oldest accounts of Krishna's childhood to mean 'an enclosure or station of herdsmen.' Modern pundits, however, define it as 'a place where cows roam' (*vrajanti gāvo yasminn iti vrajaḥ*), thereby endorsing the use of 'Braj' as a name for the countryside in which Krishna grazed his cattle and in which all the sacred places associated with his early years are located. It may also be used to designate the more extensive area in which the Braj dialect of Hindi is spoken, encompassing the westernmost part of Rajasthan and districts of Uttar Pradesh as far east as Hardoi.[1] Here, in accordance with popular usage, we shall use it to refer to the religious and cultural centre of this area, namely the districts of Mathura and Bharatpur and adjacent parts of other districts, including the towns of Aligarh, Hathras, Agra, and Alwar.

The pilgrimage circuit of Braj covers an area stretching ten kilometres to the east and south of Mathura and nearly fifty to the west and north. The Yamuna winds its way through the eastern part of this area, flowing past Shergarh, Vrindaban, Mathura, and Gokul, separating the many sacred places on its western bank from the few that are located to the east of it. For most of the year the river is sluggish and easily fordable, but during the rainy season, and for several weeks afterwards, it is broad and turbulant, covering the wide sands on which melons and marrows are grown in the hot season, flooding the surrounding fields, and sometimes even the streets of Vrindaban and Mathura. To the west, the low-lying terrain around Kaman and Govardhan is frequently inundated during the monsoon. The water eventually drains away leaving numerous ponds that gradually evaporate during the dry months from October to June. The fact that the roads and pathways of Braj are at their worst during the monsoon, if not completely unusable, does not seem to dampen the enthusiasm of the hordes of pilgrims who come here at this time of year.

1 See D. Varma, map facing p.2 and pp.7-11.

The countryside is at its most verdant during the rainy season, but visitors familiar with literature dealing with the setting of Krishna's encounters with Radha will find little that lives up to the conventional poetic descriptions. There are no luxuriant forests lining the banks of the Yamuna, no profusion of exotic flowers, nor does the breeze bear the fragrance of sandalwood. The twentieth-century pilgrim finds himself confronted with a flat expanse of agricultural land that is dusty in the dry months and muddy and waterlogged during the rains. In late December and January the fields are bright yellow with flowering mustard, but for the rest of the year they are filled mainly with duller crops such as wheat, barley, millet, sorghum, pulses, and sugar cane, while much of the wasteland is covered with low thorny bushes that grow out of the bare earth. It is no more distinctive for natural beauty than any other district of the plains through which the Ganges and Yamuna flow.

Nowadays there is just an occasional thicket or pond fringed with trees to remind one that this might once have been the lush forest of Vrindaban, or even the largely uncultivated woodland in which the sixteenth-century saints searched for the places frequented by Krishna. One of these devotees, Sanatan Goswami, said that the flora and fauna wasted away after Krishna migrated from Braj to Dwarka. The lofty mountain of Govardhan has been sinking steadily into the ground ever since, and the Yamuna has dwindled to a shallow stream.[2] A devotee surveying the relative starkness of the modern landscape is apt to bemoan the loss of the former paradise, his eyes filling with tears as if he had once witnessed the primordial beauty of Braj with his own eyes. The cause of this decline is usually attributed to our living in the degenerate age of *kali yug*, in which all the noble values of the past are vanishing. Nevertheless, even though there is hardly a trace of his mythological environment, the presence of Krishna remains alive in the hearts and minds of the people.

Four hundred years ago the Mughal emperor Akbar was able to go tiger hunting in the forests around Mathura, and his son Jahangir, in his autobiography, records the shooting of troublesome tigers on two occasions.[3] Wendel, who spent some time in the region in the 1760's, tells us that although there was nothing that could properly be called a forest, at several places on the plains there were woods which he describes as 'fort épais et de longue étendue'.[4] In those days the rulers of Bharatpur attempted to preserve the thickets and natural vegetation over a wide area around the town by prohibiting the cutting back of shrubs and bushes.

Ecological change has accelerated in the course of the last two centuries. The latest District Gazetter of Mathura notes the decline in the number and variety of wild animals since the beginning of the century, and Growse, writing a century ago, described the herds of deer as being 'so numerous that the traveller will seldom go many miles in any direction along a bye-road without seeing a black-buck, followed by his harem, bound across the path'.[5] Fifty years earlier Emily Eden had written

2 *Bṛhadbhāgavatāmṛta* 1.6.116-121.
3 AA vol.1 p.294, AN vol.2 pp.294 & 311, Jahangir, vol.2 pp.104-5.
4 Wendel, p.82.
5 E. B. Joshi, p.14, Growse, p.27.

that between Kumher and Bharatpur 'antelopes abound, there are hundreds of them to be seen at a time'.[6] She visited Mathura and Bharatpur in 1838, the same year that the area suffered from famine. Growse notes that this year was invariably cited as the date when land reclamation began on a large scale following the opening out of new roads as famine relief work.[7] The process was continued with the opening of the Agra canal for irrigation in 1874, and more recently by the Govardhan drain that was begun in 1962. Any elderly resident of Braj will confirm the rapid acceleration of land clearance and deforestation that has taken place since his childhood. There has been a widespread impoverishment of the type of common grazing land known as *rakkhyā* or *kadam khaṇḍī*, the latter denoting an abundance of kadamba trees. Nowadays the only places where there exists any kind of woodland that could possibly merit the descriptions given by the poets are the groves at Pisayo, Kokilaban, and Biharban. Some other sacred sites, such as Dhruv Tila at Maholi, are located in a copse adjacent to a village, but many of them now stand amid open agricultural land or have been encroached upon by expanding village settlements. Many of the sacred pools mentioned in pilgrimage itineraries have in recent years come under the plough.

With the disappearance of marauding armies and wild animals the villages themselves changed in appearance. The typical village stands on a mound that is either wholly artificial or partially composed of the rubble and debris of previous generations. Nearby there may be another low mound that was once the site of an earlier settlement, and round about a few natural ponds and perhaps one or more masonry tanks. Up to the first half of the nineteenth century villages were farther apart and surrounded by strong mud walls flanked with towers. The cattle, at least equalling, if not outnumbering the human population, would be led out at sunrise and brought back within the walls at sunset.[8] The particularly evocative atmosphere that still envelops the countryside in the early evening is known as *godhūli*, '[the time of] cowdust' when the light of the setting sun filters through clouds of dust kicked up by the returning herds of cattle.

The hills to be seen in the western part of Braj are outlying spurs of the Aravalli system that stretches diagonally across Rajasthan. To the west of Dig and Kaman lies a range of rocky hills on which the westernmost pilgrimage places are situated.[9] Further to the east there are just a few scattered quartzite ridges, none of them rising more than ninety metres above the plain. The lowest and most northerly of these is Charan Pahari, lying to the north of the Nandgaon hill. A short distance to the south-west a larger range commences at Unchagaon, runs along part of the boundary of Mathura District and continues past the village of Sehu on the road between Dig and Kaman. Parallel to it are three detached ranges on which stand the villages of Rankauli, Dibhala and, on the largest of them, the temples of Barsana. The most easterly and isolated of these ridges is the hill of Govardhan, lower than

6 Eden, p.354.
7 Growse, p.74.
8 Ibid., pp.71-2, citing Jacquemont, who visited Braj in 1829-30.
9 The highest of them, near the village of Alipur, rises to a height of 1357 ft above sea level.

most of those mentioned above but exceeding all of them in the degree of sanctity attached to it. Despite their low elevation, the summits of these hills, especially the cluster at Barsana, command extensive views of the plains around them.

2 The local inhabitants

In recent years light industry has begun to develop around Mathura and a massive oil refinery has been built beside the road to Agra, a few kilometres south of the town. The majority of the indigenous people of the district, however, still derive their income from agriculture, traditional crafts, or from temples and the pilgrimage trade. According to the most recent District Census Handbook the smaller towns are reliant on agricultural produce; among the most important commodities manufactured in Mathura are printed calendars and sarees, and the only article worthy of mention as a product exported from Vrindaban is the cheap rosary made from wood of the sacred basil plant (*tulsī*).[10] Those who earn their livelihood from pilgrimage are mainly the brahmins who act as guides or have custody of temples and the traders who cater for pilgrims and sell various kinds of religious paraphernalia. In the bazaars of Mathura and Vrindaban there are rows of shops selling items used in worship, brass deities and all the decorative articles that go with them, religious pictures and booklets, and the varieties of sweets made from condensed milk that are offered in the temples. Restaurants, with few exceptions, sell the kind of pure vegetarian food that is acceptable to Vaishnavas.

The vast majority of the population of Mathura District is Hindu, while Muslims, nearly all of them Sunni, account for no more than seven per cent, and the number of Jains, Sikhs, and Christians is minimal. The largest landowners and most important cultivators of the district are the Jats, comprised of various subcastes and predominant in the tahsils of Mathura, Chhata, and Mat.[11] In the eighteenth century Jats fortified several towns in Bharatpur District and became the Rajas of the land lying between Delhi and Agra and a large part of the Doab. Although they claim to be of Thakur or Rajput origin, and thus to belong to the noble martial (*kṣatriya*) class, they were originally an agricultural tribe who looted and plundered their way to power as the Mughal empire disintegrated. Genuine *kṣatriya* clans, settled mainly in the western part of the district, are the Jadons, who claim descent from the Yadava clan to which Krishna belonged, and others such as the Kachhwahas, Gahlauts, Gaurawas, Bachhals, Jaiswars, and Chauhans.

The Gujars are cultivators and cattle keepers who have lived in the area for many centuries. They are a non-scheduled *śūdra* caste living mainly in Chhata tahsil and Bharatpur District, but are nowadays less significant than they used to be, many of them having emigrated from Mathura District when, as a reprisal for their part in the 'Mutiny' of 1857, most of their land and villages were confiscated and given over

10 D. M. Sinha, pp.8-9.

11 Bingley, p. 52, lists the different sub-castes (*pāl, got*) of Jats and Gujars in Mathura District.

to the Raja of Hathras.[12] Wendel classed the Gujars, as well as the Gaurawas and Ahirs (a caste of herdsmen) with the Jats, since they all had a comparable style of living and observed similar customs.[13] In the north-western part of Braj, in the neighbourhood of Kaman and Alwar, live a number of Meos. They are nominally Muslims, but retain many Hindu customs and before their conversion were probably Minas, a tribe similar to the Gujars that was prominent in Rajasthan before the rise of the Rajputs. In addition to these groups there is the usual range of *śūdra* castes engaged in their traditional occupations. Among the scheduled castes the Chamars, also called Jatavs, are the most important agricultural labour force.

In the nineteenth century a family of Seths rose to prominence in Mathura and, with the profits of their banking empire, built fine mansions and temples.[14] Today there are no merchants who exert the same degree of influence. The Agrawals, followed by the Khandelwals, Maheshwaris, and Barahsainis are the main merchant (*vaiśya*) castes, but none of them can match up to the Seths of the nineteenth century. Nowadays business families from other parts of India, especially the Marwaris, are more notable as patrons of religious activity. Many businessmen decide to spend their retirement in Vrindaban, leaving younger members of the family to see to the daily running of their concerns.

The most significant brahmins in the district belong to the Sanadhya (or Sanaurhiya), Gaur, Chaube, and Ahivasi lineages. The Sanadhyas, of whom there are twelve main branches in Braj, are custodians of several of the old religious establishments. They are the most numerous among the brahmins who work as Pandas (priests and guides for pilgrims) at sacred places in Braj, apart from the town of Mathura. Many of the Gaurs came into the district as family priests of the Jats[15], and there are some Bhatt families of South Indian origin and Saraswats originally from Panjab. Some of the Bhatts and Saraswats have inherited temples founded by ancestors who settled in Braj from the sixteenth century onwards. Brahmins who belong to a family that has custodianship of one of the more important temples usually call themselves 'Goswami' a term that serves as a title as well as a surname. Literally it means 'owner of cows', though some claim that it should be interpreted to mean 'one who has mastered his senses'. In addition there are other priests known as Jogis, originally related to the Nath Sampraday, who preside over rituals at most of the Shaiva and Shakta shrines, but whose claims to brahminical status are often dubious.

Like other important pilgrimage centres, Braj has its hereditary communities of brahmins who act as guides for the pilgrims (Pandas) and perform rituals for them. They maintain registers (*bahī-khātā*) in which they enter the names of their clients

12 Whiteway, p.38. Bingley, ch.1, considered that since Gujars, Jats, and Rajputs are all of Scythian origin, the distinctions between them are social rather than ethnic.

13 Wendel, pp.7 & 81. He also included Bargujars, a caste that considered itself somewhat more noble than the Jats.

14 Including the temples of Dwarkadhish and Rangji. See Growse, pp.12-16, and Thornhill, pp.93-6, for an account of their importance in the commercial and political life of the town.

15 Whiteway, p.31.

(*jajmān*). These registers are passed on from fathers to their sons, who thereby inherit their fathers' clients. They are always on the lookout for new customers, and once they have entered a pilgrim's name in their books they can lay claim to any of his relatives or descendants who happen to visit subsequently. The Pandas of Braj are no less notorious and maligned than their counterparts at Prayag, Varanasi, and Gaya, yet pilgrims depend on them for ritual services, despite their reputation for being unscrupulous, money-grabbing, and ignorant.

The Pandas of Vrindaban belong to the predominant brahmin castes and, though they have formed an intermittently active association, operate largely on a 'free for all' basis. The Chaubes and Ahivasis, who reside respectively at Mathura and Baldeo, deserve special mention since they are two clans peculiar to Braj. From time immemorial the Chaubes, whose name derives from *caturvedin* ('learned in the four Vedas'), have exercised a monopoly over all rituals performed by pilgrims on the ghats at Mathura.[16] They identify themselves with the brahmins of Mathura whose wives once fed Krishna and his friends, a legend told to account for their being given the boon that the women descended from them would be fair-skinned, a quality for which the Chaube women are praised.[17] The Chaubes of Mathura claim to have no connection with other clans of Chaturvedi brahmins and are described as having two divisions called *mīṭhā* ('sweet') and *kaṛuā* ('sour'). The term 'sweet' is used for families that have emigrated and settled in Agra, Etawah, and other towns to the east. Those who live in Mathura or claim to have originated there are referred to as *māthur* and categorize themselves into two groups referred to as the *kulīn* ('noble, ancestral') and the Pandas. The Chaubes residing in Mathura form a tightly-knit community that has its own variant of the Braj dialect and preserves some peculiar customs. It is usual for wives to spend the afternoons at their mother's house and prepare and eat food there before returning to their marital home in the evening. Formerly brother-sister exchange marriage was current among them, though nowadays the dowry system is practised with increasing regularity.

The Chaubes are celebrated for their fair complexion, voracious appetite, voluminous paunches, and predilection for bhang, an intoxicating beverage made from cannabis leaves. Like brahmins at other places of pilgrimage they have a poor reputation among outside observers, especially among those who have an interest in downgrading them and who begrudge their socio-economic position, which is based on their ties with the pilgrims. The habits of a few of them have been used to characterize the clan as a whole. Thornhill, Collector of Mathura in the mid-nineteenth century, formed the opinion that 'by the educated and better classes they are regarded as a set of idle, dissolute beggars'; according to Growse they 'are now ordinarily described by their own countrymen as a low and ignorant horde of rapacious mendicants...they are the recognized local cicerones; and they may always be seen with their portly forms lolling about near the most popular ghats and

16 VP 161.51-2, 163.54-7, R 324-8. For more information on the Chaubes see Growse, pp. 9-10, B. Chaturvedi in Vajpayee 1958, pp.487-9, P. Mital 1966, pt.1 pp.75-6, Y. K. Chaturvedi, and Lynch's article on the ideal of the *mastrām*.

17 Lynch, ibid. For the story of the brahmins' wives see below §2.17.

temples, ready to bear down upon the first pilgrim that approaches'.[18] Thornhill went on to describe their daily routine in the following terms: 'To the north and west extend gardens. To them each morning the Brahmins repair, and, stupefied with bhang, pass the day lying beneath the shade of the trees, oblivious of all the world beyond. When they wake up they amuse themselves with wrestling and other athletics.'

Lynch has given a less biased and more favourable appraisal of their way of life.[19] He sees their consumption of bhang, taken more often later in the day than suggested by Thornhill, as an important factor in their typically carefree, spontaneous, extrovert, and boisterous way of life - some of the qualities that make them appear to 'epitomize the quintessence of Braj character.' The tradition of resorting to gardens where there was a wrestling arena (*akhāṛā*), a practice that has declined in recent years, provided an opportunity for engaging in exercise and other social activities. Young men could learn wrestling, an art for which many Chaubes became famous. The stout and celibate wrestler represented, for the Chaubes, part of the ideal of a carefree and contented life. Nor are the Chaubes as ignorant as their detractors would have us believe. There are several learned pundits among them, they run their own Sanskrit school, and down to the present day there have been many singers and poets of local repute. In the latter part of the eighteenth century they began to invest the income derived from pilgrimage and rose to become one of the prominent trading and money-lending groups in the region.[20] Like pilgrimage priests elsewhere, following the decline of the traditional *jajmānī* system, many of them have become engaged in banking, accounting, and various kinds of commercial activity.

The Pandas attached to the Balarama temple at Baldeo are all Ahivasis. Elsewhere in Braj members of this caste live as cultivators, and in former times used to supplement their income by 'taking salt from Rajasthan all over West India and bringing back sugar etc.'[21] Growse described them as a pseudo-brahminical tribe, having as many as seventy-two sub-divisions, who were hereditary proprietors of several villages west of the Yamuna, chiefly in the vicinity of Chhata, were 'without exception...utterly ignorant and illiterate', were largely employed as general carriers, and had almost a complete monopoly of the trade in salt.[22] He records the tradition that they are descended from a brahmin father and Chamar mother and first settled at a village called Sunrakh, which adjoins the place at Vrindaban where Krishna is believed to have defeated Kaliya, the great serpent (*ahi*) from which their name is supposed to derive. Alternatively they are said to claim descent from a sage named Saubari who did penance in the waters of the Yamuna, near the place where Kaliya dwelt, and later married the daughters of the king of Mandhata.[23] The

18 Thornhill, p.91, Growse, ibid.
19 Lynch, ibid.
20 Bayly 1983, p.139.
21 Whiteway, p.32.
22 Growse, pp.10-11.
23 P. Mital 1966, pt.1 pp.76-77. For Saubhari cf. BhP 10.17.9-11. Narahari (BRat p. 301) calls the place Sonarakh Gram and refers to the nearby 'pool (*hrada*) of Kaliya', and Sundarlal, p.11, says that Saubhari did *tapas* there.

Pandas of Baldeo claim descent from an Ahivasi who, according to legend, lived at the village of Rirha (now called Baldeo) and was put in charge of the service of the Balarama deity when it was recovered some four hundred years ago.

Although the people of Braj, or 'Brajbasis', as they are usually called, appear to have been originally preoccupied with worship of folk deities, Balarama, Shiva, and the Mother Goddess (Devi), they have absorbed the cult of Krishna in the form in which it was promoted by brahmins from other parts of India who settled in Braj in the sixteenth century. They have taken the image of the romantic and pastoral Krishna to their hearts and have made him the central character in their folklore. They are proud to be associated with the land in which Krishna spent his youth and delight in telling visitors stories about the deeds he performed in their neighbourhood. In keeping with their pastoral background, they are lovers of all dairy products and, if they indulge in a feast, prefer to gorge themselves on butter, ghee, and sweets made from milk, rather than any other kind of delicacy. They are also proud of their dialect, usually referred to as 'Braj Bhasha'.[24] It is universally admired for its sweetness and is popularly assumed to be the language that Krishna spoke while he lived and played among the rustic people of Braj. Because it was thought to be the dialect most appropriate for describing Krishna's pastoral adventures, it became the most widely used form of literary Hindi from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Throughout this period Braj was a centre of inspiration for anyone concerned with the adventures of Krishna and Radha.

3 The devotional sects

Devotees of Krishna usually belong to a particular group, order, or movement which may be referred to for convenience as a 'sect', though, since Hinduism has no established or orthodox 'Church', the term does not have the same connotations as it does in the context of Christianity. Generally devotees of a particular Vaishnava sect have never studied its specific theological doctrine and do not necessarily refrain from visiting temples administered by members of another sect. On the contrary, it is usually the reputation of a particular Krishna idol that attracts them, rather than the sectarian affiliation of the priests that run the temple. There is considerable variation in the degree of exclusivity and sectarianism shown by devotees. For many of them initiation into a particular sect is purely a formal matter. Most people are initiated by their parents' guru or another member of his family or sect, but they are free to take initiation again from any qualified person who makes an impression on them.

The priest or religious figure who gives initiation usually belongs to a particular *sampradāy*, a term that can best be translated as 'tradition', since this is the nearest English equivalent to its literal meaning. The conventional number of such 'traditions' in Vaishnavism is four: the Shrivaishnava Sampraday, which originated

24 See D. Varma for a study of the language and its dialectal variants, Rawat 1967 for a detailed study of the varieties spoken in and around Mathura, the dictionaries of Bahari and P. Tandan (based on *Sūr sāgar*), and 'Suman's' extensive glossary of local terminology.

about a thousand years ago in Tamil Nadu, where it still has its largest following; the Madhva Sampraday, named after its founder who lived in the thirteenth century at Udipi in Karnataka; the Nimbark (or Sanakadi) Sampraday, named after a teacher from Andhra Pradesh who probably lived at about the same time; the Rudra Sampraday, normally named after its obscure founder Vishnuswami, whose writings have entirely disappeared.

All of these Sampradays worship Vishnu or one of his incarnations, perform similar rituals in their temples, and follow the same basic religious observances. Their respective theological systems were all attempts at refuting the monistic doctrine of Shankara, looked upon as a champion of Shaivism, who argued that the phenomenal world is merely the result of illusion (*māyā*), that the supreme being is without attributes (*nirguṇa*), and that the path to ultimate liberation is one of intellectual realization (*jñāna*).[25] The Vaishnava theologians offered different explanations of the nature of god, individual souls, and the world, maintaining a more or less dualistic position so as to admit the possibility of a devotional relationship between god and his devotees. They all agree that god, as *brahman*, is the supreme cause of the universe, but emphasize his possession of attributes and his appearance in personified form as Vishnu, Rama, or Krishna. They hold that individual souls and the inanimate world are both as real as *brahman* and that the distinction between them cannot be completely erased. Only devotion (*bhakti*) to Vishnu or one of his incarnations can lead to deliverance from the material world and the endless cycle of rebirth. It is claimed to be a more effective means of approaching god in the present age than either reliance on ritual or intellectual apprehension. The ultimate goal is not one of extinction of the self and complete immersion in *brahman*, but an exalted state of adoration and communion with god in heaven.

While these four Sampradays survive in one form or another, the picture has been complicated by the emergence of sub-sects or new religious movements, most of which claim to belong to or even to be the true inheritors of one of the original four. Nearly all the Vaishnava sects of India have some kind of establishment in Braj, but the ones that are most active and have had most influence on developments since the sixteenth century are the Pushtimarg, Gaudiya Sampraday, Nimbark Sampraday, and two more localized groups called the Radhavallabh Sampraday and Sakhi or Haridasi Sampraday. They are all dominated by brahmins, even though in theory a devotee's background and personal circumstances are no bar to spiritual attainment. Low caste devotees may participate in certain aspects of worship, but the brahminical order prevails, with slight modifications of orthodox doctrines and social ethics. We shall have more to say about the origin of these groups and their contribution to the development of Braj, but it will be useful to make a few introductory remarks here before proceeding further.

The Pushtimarg, or 'Path of Grace', is often referred to as the Vallabh Sampraday, since it was founded by Vallabha (b. 1478), who was born into a family

25 See Karmarkar for a comparison of Shankara, Ramanuja, and Keshav Kashmiri on the nature of *brahman*, the world, and the soul (*jīva*), with reference to their *Brahmasūtra* commentaries.

of brahmins from Andhra Pradesh, but spent most of his life in North India.[26] He and his followers set up the temple of Shrinathji at Govardhan, which housed the main deity of the sect in Braj until it was removed to Nathdwara in Rajasthan in the late seventeenth century. The present gurus of the sect are all descendants of Vallabha and are venerated by their followers. From the very beginning the Pushtimarg appealed to the affluent mercantile castes, especially in western Rajasthan and Gujarat. In Braj their main centres are at Mathura, Jatipura, Gokul, and Kaman. Many of the Chaubes belong to the Pushtimarg and thus act as priests and Pandas for fellow devotees who come to Braj on pilgrimage. Pushtimarg doctrine does not value asceticism, and in fact virtually encourages its followers to indulge in sensual gratification, provided they first make a token dedication of everything to Krishna. This encouragement of material display and feasting was the reason why Growse dubbed them 'the Epicureans of the East'.[27] The movement is usually typified as one in which the infant Krishna is worshipped, but the childhood episodes in his mythology and his nature as an infant are given no special emphasis in the theology of Vallabha or any of his successors. It would be more accurate to say that some followers have particular affection for stories and songs about Krishna's infancy, and that in some ways his idols are treated as if they represented him as a child, but there is nothing so striking or peculiar in this to warrant its being cited as an essential characteristic of the Pushtimarg. More notable, in comparison with other Krishna sects, is its relative lack of emphasis on the role of Radha.

The Gaudiya Sampraday is so called because its main theologians came from the province of Gauda in Bengal.[28] The sect evolved out of the ecstatic devotional movement inspired by Chaitanya (b. 1486), and it is still the most popular form of Vaishnavism in his native Bengal, as well as in Orissa, and Assam. In the third decade of the sixteenth century some of his more intellectual followers settled in Braj and composed treatises which gave the theology and ritual of the movement a formal and theoretical framework. Descendants of the followers of Chaitanya who came to Braj have inherited custody of the Gaudiya temples and have become naturalized 'Brajbasis'. They cater primarily for devotees from Bengal, many of whom have taken up residence in Vrindaban, thus maintaining a strong Bengali community there. An important factor in the mass appeal of the sect has been its emphasis on communal singing and chanting of the names of Krishna.

The Nimbark Sampraday has probably been established in Braj the longest, though its presence is somewhat overshadowed by the Pushtimarg and the Gaudiya Sampraday.[29] Several of the older, but on the whole less imposing temples and places of pilgrimage are affiliated to the Nimbark Sampraday, and it has a larger

26 For a general account of the Pushtimarg see Barz, D. D. Gupta, and P. Mital 1968. For its theology see Marfatia and Redington.

27 Growse, p.284.

28 For an account of the sect see studies by De, Dimock, Eidlitz, Kennedy, D. C. Sen, R. Chakravarti (whose article of 1977 summarizes the development of the sect with copious bibliographical references), and (especially for its role in Braj) P. Mital 1968 and Bansal. A. N. Chatterjee's book is a compendium of traditional hagiographical sources.

29 There are no specific studies of the Nimbark Sampraday in English. See N. D. Sharma pt.1, P. Mital 1968, and Brajvallabhsharan (ed.) 1972.

following among local Brajbasis, including most of the Sanadhya Pandas and some of the Chaubes of Mathura. Followers are also found in other parts of North India, especially in Rajasthan.

Two smaller sects are described as *rasik* because they concentrate exclusively on savouring the emotional experience (*ras*) generated by contemplation of the love-play of Krishna and Radha. They have both developed out of the popular following of sixteenth-century devotional poets, whose lyrics are thought to supersede the standard canonical accounts of Krishna's life, or any theological treatise based upon them. The Radhavallabh Sampraday is named after a deity worshipped in Vrindaban by Hit Harivansh.[30] His lyrics deal with the eternal dalliance of Krishna and Radha in the bowers of Vrindaban, a theme that became the essential preoccupation among his followers. They venerate Radha in particular because she represents the ultimate beauty and perfection which attracted the love of Krishna. Swami Haridas also wrote lyrics on the love-play in Vrindaban, and his followers emulated the role played by the Sakhis, Radha's handmaidens.[31] Both of these Sampradays are based in Vrindaban and have no important centres outside Braj. The followers of Swami Haridas comprise an order of ascetics, who align themselves with the Nimbark Sampraday, and families of interrelated Goswamis who are custodians of the famous temple of Banke Bihari and claim to belong to the Vishnuswami Sampraday.

There are also some establishments of the Ramanandi order, though since its members are primarily devotees of Rama its main centre is at Ayodhya, his place of birth, which lies four hundred and fifty kilometres to the east of Braj. The Ramanandi presence in Braj consists mainly of ascetics belonging to orders whose worship of Rama has been strongly influenced by the emotional devotion to Krishna, especially its stress on his love for Radha.[32]

Goswamis form something of an elite among the Vaishnavas of Braj since they act as gurus and serve the most prestigious deities. In most cases their number is so large that they now have only a limited share in the service of the deity, and hence of the temple income. Many of them are continually engaged in protracted litigation, contesting their rights to a share of the communal inheritance either with fellow Goswamis, the government, or trustees appointed to regulate the temple administration. As well as receiving disciples at their temples, Goswamis sometimes go on tour visiting their followers. This enables them to propagate their sect, collect donations, and ensure that their followers invite them to initiate their children.

While members of the Pushtimarg are all householders and its leadership is restricted to descendants of Vallabha, the other Sampradays have, in addition to the Goswami families, one or more ascetic orders. The head of an order or group of ascetics, usually given the title 'Mahant', is succeeded by a pupil whom he has designated or who is elected from among his followers. Ascetics may wander continually from one pilgrimage centre to another, or settle down in one place to

30 See Snell, Snatak, Lalitacharan Goswami, and P. Mital 1968.

31 See Haynes, Datt, and S. B. Goswami (who also deals with two more 'Sakhi' groups called the Pranami and Lalita Sampraday).

32 For the origins of the Ramanandi order see Burghart 1978, B. P. Singh for those orders influenced by Krishna devotion, and van der Veer, ch.4, for their presence in Ayodhya.

live alone, or in a small or fairly large community. Wherever they go, they are dependent upon the charity of householders, though some of the larger monastic institutions derive considerable income from endowments. Ascetic establishments are referred to as an *āśram* ('hermitage'), *maṭh* (literally 'hut' or 'cell', but used to refer to an institution resembling a monastery or cloister), or *akhāṛā* ('arena, wrestling ground') - if its residents belong to one of the militant orders set up in the eighteenth century to defend their faith.

Ascetics aim at exercising more restraint than Vaishnava householders, as is implied by the use of the terms *virakta* and *bairāgī* ('dispassionate') to refer to them. Those who belong to the Gaudiya Sampraday usually shave their head, whereas those of the Nimbark Sampraday, like Ramanandi and Shaiva ascetics, have matted hair and smear their bodies with ashes - a sign that they are dead to the world. Even so, ascetics are unlikely to decline an invitation to a feast held in their honour, and will indeed eat heartily. They also indulge in the same kind of sensous emotional fantasies as other devotees of Krishna. Formerly some ascetics, especially those of the Gaudiya Sampraday, lived with nuns, referred to by the term *bairāgin*, who were often their concubines. The practice is no longer maintained, but there are still many Bengali widows who seek refuge in Vrindaban and live the life of a pious ascetic.

Krishna devotion is largely a popular and participatory form of religion. Practice consists mainly in visiting temples to look at deities, joining in the chanting of divine names, and listening to songs and plays about Krishna, or to sermons which deal with ethics and exemplary devotion rather than theology. Very few devotees take the trouble to study any of the Sanskrit doctrinal texts, but all of them are fond of the vernacular lyrics and narratives describing the adventures of Krishna. Despite the relative uniformity of practice, some devotees tend to look upon members of other sects as rivals. They claim that certain saints or devotional works belong to their sect rather than another, argue that theirs is the more original or authentic tradition, and criticize some of the practices observed in other sects for being unorthodox or unjustified. Like all Vaishnavas, they tend to be sanctimonious with regard to non-Vaishnavas, priding themselves on their ritual purity and vegetarianism.

4 Varieties of pilgrimage

In India pilgrimage is an increasingly popular phenomenon. It combines tourism and acquisition of merit and allows the faithful to participate in a shared experience of the sacred and to offer prayers to deities renown for their beneficence. Hein records that five hundred thousand pilgrims visited Mathura and Vrindaban in 1949-50. According to Klostermaier the annual total had reached two million by the 1960's.[33] Mathura and Vrindaban are ideally situated for both the serious pilgrim and casual visitor, since they lie just off the national highway that runs between Agra and Delhi. An ever increasing number of chartered buses and private cars turns off the main road to give passengers a chance to see the famous temples.

33 Hein, p.10, Klostermeier, p.1.

With the growth of India's urban middle class, and its increasing mobility, more and more people are coming for week-end trips.

Pilgrims arrive in Braj throughout the year, the busiest times being the spring, when Holi is celebrated, and the rainy season that lasts through the Hindu months of Shravan and Bhadon (July-September). This is when most of the buses arrive that bring pilgrims on organized tours, and when groups of devotees begin the full circumambulation of the sacred places. The second fortnight of Shravan, when the temple deities are placed in a swing, is a particularly hectic period. Other important festivals are the birthdays of Krishna and Radha that fall in the following month. At these peak times the narrow streets of Vrindaban and Mathura are filled with groups of villagers, especially from Rajasthan, who cling to each other as they jostle through the crowds from one temple to another. They may not be the most munificent pilgrims, but for the sharks who lurk at the bus stands, stations, and sacred places they are certainly the most gullible. The biggest fish, of course, are the wealthy merchants and industrialists who come with their families by taxi or private car. In addition there are convoys of politicians and other dignitaries, with police escorts forcing their way through the throng, their blaring jeep horns competing for attention amid the cacophony of loudspeakers.

A cursory visit to Braj must include at least Krishna's birthplace and the temple of Dwarkadhish in Mathura, and a trip to Vrindaban to see the temples of Banke Bihari, Rangji, Shahji, and the 'Hare Krishna' movement (ISKCON) - an intriguing attraction for Hindus who come to gape at the zealous foreign converts.[34] Many of the fine temples that once thrived on royal patronage and endowments are ignored because the service of the deity is no longer maintained in its former splendour. Although most visitors are shown the imposing temple of Govind Dev, it is the newer and more gimmicky temples that attract more attention than the battered relics of the sixteenth century. Rangji, apart from being the largest temple in Braj, is novel in that it is the only one built in Dravidian style and is equipped with a range of vehicles for the deity, a fabled 'golden column', and a gallery of mythological tableaux featuring electrically operated dolls. The italianate temple of Shahji, panned by Growse as resembling 'nothing so much as a disreputable London casino',[35] is admired for its colonnade of spiral marble pillars. The new temple founded by Pagal Baba on the approach road to Vrindaban promises to be a regular attraction on account of its tall tower accomodating a variety of deities on its many floors. Connoisseurs of kitsch will be delighted by a recently developed park next to the temple of Lala Babu which contains gaily painted cement statues of all the gods, saints, and sages, and a cow that provides drinking water from a tap attached to one of its teats.

A more extensive tour of Braj will include Govardhan, Barsana, Nandgaon, Mahaban, and Gokul. Most of the other pilgrimage sites, being less readily accessible by motorized transport, receive few pilgrims apart from those who make the full circuit of Braj.

34 C. R. Brooks carried out a poll in Vrindaban in 1982-3 which showed that 98% of all one-day pilgrims visited the ISKCON temple, and that only 6% of pilgrims who stayed 2 days failed to visit it. See his dissertation, p. 216

35 Growse, p. 263.

Apart from visits to temples to see the deities, pray to them, and make offerings, an important rite is the circumambulation of a sacred place. The act of walking in a clockwise direction around a sacred object (Skt. *pradakṣiṇa, parikrama*, Hindi *parikramā*) is a long-established religious practice. It was a fundamental part of the worship of a Buddhist or Jain *stūpa*, and in the late Vedic period sacrifice provided a context for circumambulation. It was interpreted as an act of encompassing or encircling the universe, defending it from evil spirits who roam the outerlying areas of darkness, demarcating the boundary between universe and non-universe, and of identifying the performer with the *brahman* that pervades and sustains creation.[36] Everywhere in India it is customary to circumambulate a sacred tree, a pedestal or mound on which the sacred basil plant grows, and any deity - either by walking around the temple itself or by using a passage within the building that encircles the shrine room. Pilgrims should also circumambulate any sacred place that they visit. The precincts of holy towns in India are delineated by a *parikramā* route, and are sometimes surrounded by another longer circuit that includes many subsidiary sacred places. Such is the case in Braj, where individual towns, villages, and groves have their circumambulatory paths that are all incorporated in an extended *parikramā* encompassing them all.

Local residents may walk around their sacred centre at any time - daily if they are particularly devout, on the eleventh day of any lunar fortnight, on the full moon, or every day during the month of Karttik and intercalary months. Circumambulations can usually be started at any point along the route and are not considered complete unless one returns to the point of departure. Some of them are done by large numbers of people, such as the ones called *ban bihār* performed at night around Mathura (on the full moon of Vaishakh) and Vrindaban (on Jyeshth I.5, and in the daytime on Jyeshth I.2). Joint circumambulation of Mathura and Vrindaban, known as *jugal joṛī parikramā*, is performed at the beginning and especially at the end of the four month period when the gods are believed to be asleep (i.e. on Ashadh II.11 and Karttik II.11). The route incorporates the normal circuit of Mathura as far as Saraswatikund, then proceeds via Garud Govind to Vrindaban, joining the *parikramā* path at Raman Reti and following it as far as Akrur Ghat, whence the participants take the old road back to Mathura, a total distance of some forty kilometres.

Circumambulation of the Govardhan hill is particularly popular among the people of Braj, especially on new and full moon days, above all the full moons of Ashadh, Karttik, or any intercalary month. Thousands participate on the important days, forming a continual stream of people all along the route, which is about eighteen kilometres long. Some people circulate the hill in a manner called *daṇḍautī parikramā*. This involves prostrating along the whole length of the sacred circuit at every step, lying flat on the ground with arms outstretched and then moving forwards to prostrate again at the place last touched by one's fingers. This takes between ten and twelve days; but there is an even more arduous form of *daṇḍautī parikramā* undertaken by those who wish to repay a boon, acquire merit, or feel that they have a heavy burden of *karma* to work off. They perform one hundred and eight prostrations on the spot before they move one body-length

36 Burghart 1985, p. 142, citing *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*.

forward, counting their prostrations by moving a small stone from a diminishing pile at their feet to a growing one at the point reached by their outstretched hands (see plate 1). This form of *parikramā* takes between two and four years, but one will always find a few people engaged in it if one walks around the hill. Sometimes they are sponsored by the guilty rich to perform it vicariously.

The full circumambulation of Braj is known as the *caurāsī kos parikramā*, so called because its length is reckoned as being eighty four *kos*,[37] a distance of some three hundred kilometres. Every year different groups of pilgrims undertake this pilgrimage, but they do not follow exactly the same route. Each group of pilgrims is led by, or mainly consists of members of one particular sect, hence they do not show the same degree of reverence for the various sacred places. The first person to draw up a detailed itinerary for the sacred circuit of Braj was Narayan Bhatt. In his *Vrajabhaktivilāsa*, written in 1552, he distinguished between two types of pilgrimage, a *vrajayātrā* ('Braj pilgrimage') lasting from the beginning of Vaishakh to the end of Shravan that toured the villages of Braj, and a *vanayātrā* ('forest pilgrimage, see appendix 5), held from Bhadon I.8 up to the full moon of the same month, that included the forests, groves, lakes, and ponds. The distinction between the two is not made today and may always have been a theoretical one; nowadays *ban yātrā* and *braj yātrā*, the modern equivalents of the terms used by Narayan Bhatt, are synonymous with *caurāsī kos parikramā*.

The nearest modern equivalent to Narayan Bhatt's *vanayātrā* is a pilgrimage undertaken mainly by ascetics of the Gaudiya Sampraday. They set out from Vrindaban on Bhadon II.11 and on the following day formally begin their circuit at Bhuteshwar in Mathura, where they return fifteen days later after completing their circuit. This circumambulation is known as the *rām dal* or *laṭhāmār yātrā*, the latter term, meaning 'stick-beating pilgrimage', referring to the fast pace at which the participants cover the route. The term *rām dal* suggests that it was once performed by a group (*dal*) of Ramanandi ascetics.

The most elaborate circumambulation of Braj is organized annually by the Pushtimarg and lasts between six and seven weeks. On account of its scale it is often referred to as the *baṛī yātrā*, or 'big pilgrimage'. There are always a few thousand participants, some years as many as ten thousand. The majority of them belong to the Gujarati trading community from among whom the sect draws most of its support. They are led by one or more of their spiritual leaders, referred to by the regal title of 'Maharaj', who trace their descent back to Vallabha - the founder of the sect. A few hundred Chaubes from Mathura accompany the pilgrims in order to provide guidance and ritual services. The number of participants varies according to the popularity of the Maharaj and the amount of publicity and other support that he is able to muster. Sometimes the pilgrims are divided into two separate groups with different leaders, one group following the other a couple of days behind.[38] Of all the groups that circumambulate Braj the *baṛī yātrā* is the one that bears most resemblance to the old Jain type of pilgrimage known as *saṅgha* in which

37 Skt. *krośa*.The number eighty-four, conventional in Hindu numerology, is arrived at by multiplying the number of months in the year by the number of days in the week.

38 As in the *baṛī yātrā* held in 1975 (see S. Mital, p. 4). The one held in 1983, in which 2,500 people participated, was reckoned as being very small.

a religious leader (*muni*) and his followers were financed and accompanied by rich merchants referred to as *saṅghapati*. A hundred years ago Growse noted that it was usual for the expenses of the whole circumambulation to be borne by a single wealthy individual, 'often a trader from Bombay or other distant part of India', who was accompanied by a large gathering of friends and retainers numbering at least two or three hundred persons.[39] Some Pushtimarg temples possess painted wall hangings (called *pichvāī*) depicting the places visited on the pilgrimage and the incidents in the life of Krishna that are associated with them. They are intended to be hung in the temple shrine while the pilgrimage is in progress.[40]

The *baṛī yātrā* begins and ends in Mathura, where most of the participants stay in the type of pilgrims' lodge called 'dharmshala', most of which are controlled by the Chaubes. Outside of Mathura camps are set up for them at some twenty-five places (see plate 2 and appendix 4). They spend seven nights at Jatipura, a village beside Govardhan where a great feast called *kunvārau* is offered to the sacred hill, three nights at some of the townships along the route (Kaman, Vrindaban, and sometimes Barsana, Nandgaon, and Gokul), and one or two nights at other places. Contractors from Mathura provide porters and watchmen, supply tents and other requisites, including 'tongas' (horse-drawn carts) or litters for the aged and infirm, and arrange for all the equipment and pilgrims' luggage to be transported from one camp site to another by truck, bullock cart, or tractor and trolley. The camp sites are referred to as *mukām* (Ar. *maqām*), a term referring to any kind of halting place or station, though its use in this context may have been inspired by Sufi mysticism in which it refers to the stages of a spiritual journey.

The Maharaj escorts his Krishna deity, which is carried in a litter and provided with a tent or mobile wooden and canvas temple, or is installed for worship in certain temples on the pilgrimage route. Tents are also erected to house mobile shops, a clinic, post office, and bank. The pilgrims rise every morning before dawn to attend the first service of the deity, then set off on foot to visit the sacred places featured on the day's itinerary. They arrive at the next camp site in time for an afternoon rest before enjoying an evening of preaching, singing, and a performance of a play (*rās līlā*) dealing with an episode in Krishna mythology. At some places there are special festive celebrations, a re-enactment of an incident in the life of Krishna, or a sponsored feast and entertainment for the deity (*manorath*). A special kind of feast (*tapelī*) is offered at shrines called *baiṭhak* which mark places where one of the early leaders of the Pushtimarg is believed to have preached or performed a miracle.

A few days before the start of the *baṛī yātrā*, on the day known as Radhashtami (Bhadon II.8), the Maharaj worships at the *baiṭhak* shrines of Vallabha and his son Vitthalnath at Gokul and asks them to confer their blessing (*āśīrvād*) on himself and his followers. On Bhadon II.11 he formally begins the *baṛī yātrā* by going to Mathura and, in a ceremony conducted by a Chaube beside the river at Vishram Ghat, proclaims his resolution (*saṃkalp*) to undertake the circumambulation of

39 Growse, p. 80.

40 I.e. daily between *bhog* and *śayan* during almost the whole of the month of Ashwin. Some examples are illustrated in Spink 1971, fig. 17 (and details of same, figs. 13, 14, 18, 33, 39, 41, 46, 50), and in Talwar and Krishna, pl. 23 & 24, pp. 26-7, nos. 16 & 17.

Braj. All of the pilgrims who are to accompany him must also make their vows under the supervision of one of the Chaubes. After making their *saṃkalp* they bathe in the Yamuna, offer milk and sweets at the *baiṭhak* of Vallabha, and promise to abide by all the rules that apply to a pilgrim (an act known as *niyam grahaṇ*). On the following day their Panda takes them on a tour of various places, mainly temples on or near the ghats in the quarter known as Chaubiya Para.[41] This is referred to as the *antargṛhī parikramā*, a term derived from the Puranic differentiation between two kinds of pilgrimage, an inner circumambulation (*antargṛhī* or *antarmaṇḍala*) and an outer pathway encircling the whole world (*bhūmaṇḍalayātrā*) that is followed by Brahma, and other gods and sages. The outer circumambulation of Mathura, referred to as *pañckośī parikramā* because its length is reckoned as five *kos* (about sixteen kilometres), is done by the *baṛī yātrā* pilgrims on their return to the town after finishing the full tour of Braj (usually on Karttik I. 9 or 10).[42] They may then formally renounce their pilgrimage vows, give their Panda his fee (*dakṣiṇā*), and return home, or decide to stay for a while longer in order to attend the festivals of Diwali at Govardhan and Yam Dwitiya at Mathura, and even Gopashtami, Kans ka Mela, and Prabodhini Ekadashi, which are celebrated later in the month of Karttik.

Another version of the *caurāsī kos parikramā* is organized under the leadership of the Mahant of Gore Dauji temple in Vrindaban.[43] This circumambulation lasts twenty-five days from Karttik II.3 to Margashirsh I.13. The ashram and temple of Gore Dauji is a Ramanandi establishment, but both ascetics and householders of other Sampradays participate in the pilgrimage. The daily programme is much the same as that of the *baṛī yātrā*, but the itinerary is not as comprehensive and only one night is spent at each camp site, apart from two nights at Govardhan, Kaman, Barsana, and Kosi. The Mahant and a band of followers walk at the head of the party, leading the others in a devotional chant (*kīrtan*) that is sung continually as they move along. At the halting places there is a programme of preaching and recitation of verses from *Rām carit mānas*, the most popular Hindi version of the story of Rama. On the first day the party sets out from Vrindaban and goes to Mathura, where they visit Krishna's birthplace and the nearby sacred places. The next day, after bathing at Vishram Ghat, they leave Mathura and begin the circumambulation of Braj, crossing the Yamuna at Chir Ghat and again at Raman Reti (Mahaban), so as to bring them back to Mathura, from where they return to Vrindaban and conclude their pilgrimage with a circumambulation of the town.

A circumambulation of Braj lasting nearly eight weeks is undertaken annually by Nimbarki ascetics of the Kathiya Baba Ashram, situated on Gurukul Road, Vrindaban. Led by their Mahant, they leave Vrindaban on Bhadon I.10 and begin their circumambulation from Mathura on the following day. Their route follows a

41 Among places visited are Ramji Dwar, Gopalji, Satghara, Gatashram, Adivaraha, the *caraṇ caukī* of Shrinathji and Dauji, Mathura Devi, Padmanabh, Shatrughna, and Virbhadreshwar. See 'Krishna', p. 56, for a more comprehensive itinerary.

42 The terms *antargṛhī* and *pañckośī* are also used for inner and outer circumambulations of Varanasi, cf. Eck, pp. 42 & 354-5.

43 See L. P. Purohit for an account of this pilgrimage, and appendix 4 for the schedule.

sequence that differs from that of other versions of the *caurāsī kos parikramā*, and includes some places that are not visited by other pilgrims (see appendix 4). This is partly because they stop at villages where local people provide a feast for them. Their visits to Barsana and surrounding places coincide with the series of re-enactments of adventures of Krishna that is called *būṛhī līlā*. Their stay at the village of Paigaon coincides with the annual festival of a legendary ascetic named Nagaji. Ascetics belonging to this order wear a distinctive kind of chastity belt known as an *āṛband* - a thick wooden girdle with a chain attached that passes under the groin. The wearing of such an uncomfortable trapping is said to prevent one from falling into a deep sleep, thus enabling one to keep one's mind pure and fixed on spiritual matters. At each halting place the ascetics are feted by the local people and there is a *rās līlā* performance.

The biggest circumambulation ever organized by the Nimbark Sampraday, held in the spring of 1970, followed a similar pattern to that of the Pushtimarg *baṛī yātrā*.[44] The spiritual head of the sect, Shriji Maharaj, led over two thousand people on a tour of Braj that lasted thirty-nine days. It began with mass bathing at Vrindaban, after which the participants crossed the Yamuna and followed the standard *parikramā* circuit, omitting Dahgaon, Kamar, and Rasoli, but including Nimgaon (a place of special importance for the Sampraday), and arriving at Barsana, Nandgaon, and Phalain in time to take part in their respective Holi festivities. They camped at thirty places along the route and were provided with the same kind of facilities laid on for the *baṛī yātrā*, including a 'Shri Sarveshwar Bank', named after a particular *śālagrām* stone that is especially revered by the sect.

In former times kings and princes used to undertake elaborate pilgrimages to Braj. On Vishram Ghat stand arches commemorating the fact that some of them donated their weight in gold to the priests who performed the necessary rituals (see plate 16). Bir Singh Deo, Raja of Orchha, made such an offering in 1614; inscriptions on the arches record others made by the Maharajas of Rewa in 1851, of Kashi in 1891, and by a Seth from Ahmedabad in 1931. The rulers of Datiya were among the most regular aristocratic pilgrims - from the time of Bhagwan Rao, son of Bir Singh Deo and founder of Datiya, down to the last Maharaja, Gobind Singh Deo[45]. One such royal pilgrimage undertaken by Raja Parichhat in 1822 was described by Nawal Singh Pradhan, a poet in the king's service. Throughout his narration the poet mentions his patron's largesse in distributing gifts to priests and temples and in sponsoring feasts. The first place in Braj visited by the royal party was Baldeo, since many of the Bundela nobles looked upon the Balarama idol there as a patron deity. On his arrival the king celebrated the Dashahara festival, and five days later, on the full moon day, had his head ritually shaved, donated accoutrements to the deity, and held a feast for local brahmins, ascetics, and other Vaishnavas. He then proceeded to Mathura, where he bathed at Vishram Ghat, offered eighty-one maunds of gold, and gave money to the priests. On the following day his queen also donated her weight in gold. He performed rites for his ancestors at Dhruv Ghat and then circumambulated Mathura. He proceeded to Vrindaban where, like many other nobles, he had a mansion that served as his official residence

44 See Govind Das 'Sant' (ed.) for a full description of this pilgrimage.
45 Babulal Goswami, in his introduction to BBP, p. 104.

while in Braj. He spent several days in Vrindaban visiting temples and receiving people, including a party of Englishmen and the Collector from Agra, whom he entertained on the day of Sharad Purnima. Although he did not circumambulate Braj, he did attend some of the local festivals. He spent three days at Govardhan during Diwali, and then returned via Shantanukund to Mathura for Yam Dwitiya. In Vrindaban he celebrated Gopashtami and did *parikramā* on the following day, after which he attended the Kans ka Mela at Mathura and the fairs that used to be held in Vrindaban at Keshi Ghat, Kalidah, and Bhatror. On the first day of the month of Margashirsh he sponsored a wedding ceremony (*byāhulau*) for Krishna and Radha, followed later by a *rās līlā* performance before his return to Datiya.

5 Rules and regulations

When a householder sets out on a pilgrimage he becomes a temporary ascetic. He is expected to renounce material comforts and dedicate himself to spiritual ends. He should maintain himself in a state of purity in accordance with the notion that the holy ground is pure, just as the act of pilgrimage itself has a purifying effect. These attitudes are reflected in the regulations that pilgrims agree to observe while engaged in the circumambulation of Braj. They vow to go everywhere barefoot, to sleep on the ground, to bathe and worship regularly, not to shave, cut their hair, or use oil, to wear clean clothes every day, to eat once a day, to remain chaste, to abstain from intoxicants, not to harbour sensual or aggressive thoughts, to show reverence for the land, to do no harm to the trees and plants, and to keep the ponds, tanks, and rivers pure. Once a pilgrimage is begun it must be completed; should any pilgrims have to suspend their circumambulation, as a result of illness or impurity arising from menstruation or the death of a close relative, they are expected to resume it as soon as they are able.[46]

The attitude devotees visiting Vrindaban are expected to adopt has beed described at length in a booklet recently published in the town.[47] Local residents, it says, are not to be regarded as ordinary people because they have been granted the privilege of living in Vrindaban. The visitor should therefore consider himself fortunate to be helped by those who live and work in the ashrams and pilgrims' lodges. During his stay he should not indulge in excessive sleep but rise and bathe in time to attend the earliest temple service, after which he may eat and rest for a couple of hours, then go for a walk along the Yamuna, visit one of the sacred gardens, or attend a sermon or *rās līlā* performance. After observing the customary period of rest and quiet in the early afternoon, he should prepare for the evening visit to the temple. He should go everywhere barefoot (the writer reminds us that Krishna was so fond of the earth of Braj that he even ate it), and have a tolerant and patient attitude towards the pigs, dogs, monkeys, and filth that he encounters. He is not to beat the animals of Vrindaban, and if a monkey snatches a piece of bread

46 There is no definitive listing of these regulations, though most of them are given by Narayan Bhatt in VBV 1.34-66.

47 Cf. 'Madhur'.

from his tray he should be able to see the funny side of it. Similarly the sweepers are not to be feared or beaten, but simply given a wide berth, for everyone in this world has his appointed function and all those who have earned residence in Vrindaban are in some respect blessed. In view of the sanctity of the cow and its role in the mythology of Braj, milk products are the most appropriate foods to be eaten while in Vrindaban. One should keep the river pure by not entering it with shoes on, and by not urinating, washing clothes, or spitting in it. After washing or gargling the used water should be disposed of on the bank, not in the flowing river.

Vrindaban is a 'dry' and ostensibly vegetarian town, but alcohol and meat are openly sold elsewhere in Braj. There is, however, tacit acceptance of the fact that many of the Bengali householders are partial to fish, though few of them will readily admit to their indulgence. Recently eggs have appeared on open sale in Vrindaban, a sight that offends the more pious inhabitants. Many devotees avoid and express strong disapproval of garlic and onions, items that are thought to be too inflammatory for a Vaishnava diet. Conscientious devotees will only consume food that is suitable for offering to Krishna, and so they abstain from carrots, tomatoes, red lentils (*masūr*), and other foods rejected because they are suggestive of blood or flesh. They may even be disqualified because their name has some unfortunate connotation, as is the case with cabbage and cauliflower because the first syllable of the word used to refer to them (*gobhī*) means 'cow'. Some even say that cheese (*panīr*) should not be made in Vrindaban since it is an offence to split the ambrosia that the cow produces. Accordingly it is a general rule in temples of the Pushtimarg not to offer sweets that are made with curdled milk.

Owing to its exclusively religious character, Vrindaban remains an enclave of orthodoxy. Vaishnava attitudes that are prevalent all over Braj are here found to an intensified degree. The town has a higher proportion of ascetics and others with a vested interest in religious fundamentalism. There are many who support the kind of traditionalism that opponents mockingly refer to as *lāgoṭīvād*, a term derived from a kind of undergarment made from a simple T-shaped piece of cloth that is championed by conservative Hindus in the face of the increasing popularity of the western-style underpants that they consider insanitary and sexually frustrating. In 1982, when suggestions were invited from people interested in restoring the pristine environment of Vrindaban, in order to recapture as far as possible the timeless autumnal and vernal atmosphere described in the scriptures, a handbill was distributed that, in addition to such welcome proposals as planting trees, counteracting pollution and excessive noise, provision of a green belt around the town, restoration of the ghats and the channelling of the Yamuna to make it flow along them, also advocated such retrogressive and intolerant measures as the banishing of hospitals and 'modern educational institutions' from the precincts of the town, and prohibition of meat, intoxicants, smoking, and tea. Although it did not go as far as to suggest a ban on western dress, it is not unheard of for some orthodox Vaishnavas to condemn the wearing of trousers instead of the traditional Hindu *dhotī*.

Some people in Braj have also been affected by the wave of communalism currently sweeping across North India. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, as part of its campaign to 'liberate' holy places that are occupied by Muslims, has formed a committee that aims to reclaim the birthplace of Krishna, believed to lie under a

mosque built in the late seventeenth century on the orders of Aurangzeb. The campaign is supported by a few local politicians, businessmen, teachers, and sadhus, and is spearheaded by a group of activists called the 'Bajrang Dal' ('the Hanuman party'). Like similar movements elsewhere in India, they attempt to inflame the situation by voicing anti-Muslim slogans and exploiting an emotive issue in order to whip up support among the Hindu majority for right-wing politicians.

Fortunately this kind of Hindu chauvinism and the more sanctimonious rules and regulations described above do not have much appeal for the majority of devotees and pilgrims, nor are they the most esteemed aspects of devotion to Krishna. Nearly everyone agrees that a devotee's state of mind and the intensity of his involvement in the pastimes of Krishna are of far greater importance. On the whole the people of Braj are fun-loving and easy-going, in accordance with the playfulness inherent in the mythology of Krishna. Many of the developments that have taken place in Braj and still motivate pilgrims to come there have been inspired by his adventures. Before proceeding further, it would be useful to summarize the basic story of Krishna, noting how it has been revised and supplemented to suit the local topography and culture.

2 The Myth

1 The scriptural sources

Orthodox Vaishnava scholars generally accept the idea that Krishna lived five thousand years ago at the conjunction of the *dvāpar* and *kali* ages. They also make unconvincing attempts to show that Krishna, as well as Braj, Vrindaban, and Radha are all somehow mentioned in the Vedas.[1] The name Krishna, literally meaning 'black', does indeed occur in the Vedas, but there is no apparent connection with the hero or god of later scriptures.[2] In the *Ṛgveda* the term *kṛṣṇam*, meaning 'night', is used in opposition to *arjunam*, meaning 'day' - two abstract concepts that had some influence in the formation of Krishna and Arjuna as characters in later epic literature.[3] In narratives about Krishna's childhood the role of his fair companion is played by Balarama, his elder brother. Another reference in the *Ṛgveda* that might conceivably have some relevance for later developments in the mythology of Braj is a mention of the abundance of cows on the banks of the river Yamuna.[4]

The oldest narratives of the early years of the gods we now call Krishna and Balarama refer to them more frequently by the names Vasudeva and Sankarshana. A remark made by Panini, a grammarian of the fifth or fourth century BC, to the the effect that Vasudeva was the object of 'adoration' or 'devotion' (if this is what he meant by *bhakti*) has been the subject of much discussion.[5] No less controversial

1 E.g. B. Chaturvedi in Dwivedi (ed.) 1972, pp.14 ff., with reference to *Ṛgveda* 1.10.7, 1.31.7, 1.86.3, 1.92.4, 1.101.8-11, 5.45.1-6, 6.10.3-4, 8.41.7, 8.46.9, 8.51.5, 10.25.5, 10.62.7; Brajvallabhsharan in *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, pp.22-44, 47-8, also referring to late Upanishads, Sanhitas, and Tantras. Arguments for c. 3,000 BC are summarized by P. Mital 1966, pt.2 pp.10-11, and A. Goswami, pp.129-144.

2 For discussion of Vedic references cf. Preciado-Solis, pp.11-17, 35-7.

3 Corcoran, p.34.

4 *Ṛgveda* 5.52.17, quoted, for example, by Jiv Goswami in *Kṛṣṇasaṃdarbha* (118) ad 372, p.305.

5 *Aṣṭhādhyāyī* 4.3.98. See Dandekar's discussion of references in Panini and Patanjali, and Preciado-Solis, pp.19-23, 27-9, 36-7, for a survey and assessment of scholarly opinions.

is Megasthenes' statement that the people of Mathura worshipped 'Herakles'. What he probably meant, though some have argued otherwise, is that Vasudeva (alias Krishna), was deified in the area of Mathura, as is implied by archaeological evidence.[6] Patanjali, in his commentary on the work of Panini, refers to Vasudeva's slaying of his maternal uncle Kansa and to some kind of re-enactment or staging of the event, which was already regarded as having taken place long ago.[7]

From these references, as well as from the Buddhist Jatakas, early Jain literature, and the oldest strata of the Puranas,[8] it appears that the story of Krishna/Vasudeva being separated from his parents and growing up in a pastoral community under the care of Nanda was well known by the third or second century BC. In epic literature, however, more attention was given to his role in events surrounding the Kurukshetra battle. Although a couple of passages in the *Mahābhārata* mention Krishna's early adventures,[9] they appear to have been of little interest to the bards who compiled and transmitted the epic. Initially the pastoral and epic Krishna may have been separate heroes popular among different groups of people. It was only when Vaishnavism emerged as a coherent and widespread cult that Sanskrit literature began to give a full account of Krishna's childhood.

The kernel of the legends told about his childhood is that he was destined to kill Kansa, a tyrant who had usurped the throne of Mathura, and that until he was old enough to do so he grew up in the country as a foster child of Nanda and Yashoda. This pastoral interlude was gradually expanded to incorporate other tales that presumably came from oral folk traditions. Most significant among these additions to the myth were the episodes in which he danced and frolicked with the Gopis - the young women of the cattle-herding community. This emphasis is closely related to the emergence of devotionalism (*bhakti*), a development that required a more human and personal deity. The *Bhagavadgītā* proclaimed that the hero Krishna/Vasudeva, already idolized by the second century BC (cf. below, §4.6), was identical with the Supreme Being (*puruṣottama*) who incorporated the most abstract form of *brahman*, yet was also a personal god identified with Vishnu. It also acknowledged worship of him by offering a flower, a leaf, or some water in the spirit of devotion - a

6 See Arrian, *Indica* 7-8 (tr. McCrindle, pp.198-202), on Dionysos and Herakles, based on the account of Megasthenes, and Preciado-Solis, pp.29 ff., for opinions about 'Herakles'.

7 *Mahābhāṣya* ad Panini 3.1.26, 3.2.111. These and other references to Krishna/Vasudeva are discussed by Dandekar and by Preciado-Solis, ibid. See Hein 1972, pp.240-51, for a survey of polemics over the question of whether Patanjali is referring to theatrical performance of the killing of Kansa. Patanjali is normally assigned to the second century BC, but in an introduction to part of their edition of his *Mahābhāṣya* S. D. Joshi and J. A. F. Roodbergen argue for his having lived in the first century AD.

8 For Jain and Buddhist sources see E. Hardy, Lüders 1904, and B. C. Law, pp.25-6. For the earliest strata of the Puranas see Kirfel's *Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa*, pp.472-81. Versions of the story from various Puranas are collated by Ruben and Tadapatrikar.

9 Viz. Shishupala's diatribe and Bhishma's mention of some of the places connected with Krishna's youth that later became places of pilgrimage, MBh *sabhā*. app.I pp.402-5, 729-856.

form of ritual from outside the orthodox tradition that has become an essential part of the worship of images. Such references show us how the mythology gradually conflated the legend of a hero (who was perhaps a historical figure), tales from popular tradition about his pastoral childhood, and concepts and mythical elements derived from Vedic or brahminical tradition that were reworked and made applicable to Krishna as an incarnation (*avatāra*) of Vishnu.

The oldest text giving us a continuous narrative of Krishna's childhood and youth is *Harivaṃśa*, a supplement to the *Mahābhārata*, that most scholars accept as having been composed by the fourth century.[10] In the *Mahābhārata* Krishna is a martial hero and in the *Bhagavadgītā* he is a rather solemn and aloof preacher, but in the *Harivaṃśa* he is a more playful figure, as befits the rustic milieu in which he spent his childhood. His beauty is seductive and his frankly erotic encounters with the Gopis are transgressions of conventional morality. A southern recension of the *Harivaṃśa*, in which the eroticism is given greater emphasis, appears to have been the main scriptural source for the Alvar poets of Tamil Nadu.[11]

A more concise narration of Krishna's early years is given in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, probably composed some time between the fifth and seventh centuries.[12] This version gave expression to the kind of devotion propagated in the *Bhagavadgītā* and served as a literary model for the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. It gives a fuller account than the *Harivaṃśa* of Krishna's play with the Gopis, but the story is padded out with theological digressions and eulogistic passages. The eroticism is subdued and theologically justified; physical contact with Krishna is reduced to mental identification in a condition of separation; the absent lover is someone whose presence is to be recalled and evoked in song. Thus the Gopis are obliged to withdraw from the world of the senses and meditate in yogic fashion upon Krishna as the Absolute.[13]

Another text that relates or alludes to many of the adventures of Krishna and Balarama (consistently referring to them as Damodara and Sankarshana) is *Bālacarita*, a drama attributed to Bhasa.[14] It is a secular work that is substantially derived from folk tradition, though there are similarities in content and wording

10 References here are to the critical edition of P. L. Vaidya, who explains in his introduction, p.xxxvii, that his aim was to present the text as it stood in c. AD 300. Most other editions give the narrative of Krishna's childhood in a second section of the HV entitled *Viṣṇuparvan*, but in Vaidya's consecutive edition it constitutes chapters 46-113. Ingalls, p.394, accepts the general consensus that it dates from between the 1st-3rd centuries. See also Masson 1974, p.455 fn.

11 F. Hardy 1983/1, pp.77, 459-60, 473.

12 ViP 5.1-31. An almost identical version is contained in *Brahmāpurāṇa* 181-194. Both relate the same incidents in the same sequence as HV, apart from placing Putana's attack before the overturning of the cart. For bibliography and a survey of opinions regarding these Puranas see Rocher, pp.154-6, 245-50.

13 As pointed out by F. Hardy, ibid. pp.41, 89-103.

14 F. Hardy, ibid. p.79, cites various scholars who are of the opinion that it was composed some time between the 2nd-4th centuries. Hawley 1983, p.27, correlating it with iconography, favours 7th-9th century, probably in the Deccan.

15 Some of these similarities are noted by U. V. Rao.

with the *Harivaṃśa*, and also the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*.[15] *Bālacarita* will be referred to below only in cases where its narrative differs from that of the other sources.

The Krishna stories travelled to the south and there became further elaborated by the introduction of Tamil themes.[16] The most important cultural centres were the Pallava capital of Kanchipuram and the city of Madurai, 'the southern Mathura', where Krishna was identified with Mayon, a local deity associated with the Pandya kings. By the sixth century a typically southern variety of Krishna devotion had evolved and the Tamil epic *Cilappatikāram* had included stories about Mayon/Krishna's rustic adventures. The Alvar poets, who were probably active from the sixth century onwards, gave expression to their religious ecstasies and love mysticism by borrowing themes from a folk literature in which Krishna was the hero of specifically southern myths. His devotees pined for him as an absent lover and revered him as a transcendent god who was represented on earth by temple images. The theme of love in separation came to the fore in the poems of Tirumangai and Nammalvar, expressed from the point of view of a Gopi and accompanied by all the emotional and physical symptoms of intense love, anxiety, frustration, and yearning.

The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, probably composed in the milieu of the temple of Shrirangam in the ninth or early tenth century, was inspired by the emotional type of devotion propagated by the Alvars. It incorporated some episodes from the Tamil poets that were new to Sanskrit literature, but presented the myth in terms of the northern brahminical tradition and in a style that was deliberately archaic.[17] Its many digressions explain the import of the story and the nature of devotion in terms of Vedanta theology and Sankhya ontology. It also makes use of terminology borrowed from poetics and lays stress on Krishna's transcendent beauty and the devotional sentiments felt by Yashoda and the Gopis, especially their ecstasy on meeting him and the pangs of separation they suffered when he abandoned them. Whereas the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* had pietized Krishna's adventures, the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* transformed them through its doctrine of mystical love.[18] The account of Krishna's adventures in the *Harivaṃśa* appears to have been composed primarily to entertain its listeners, but the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* were more concerned to edify them by portraying him as a divine being who bestows salvation on those who adore him. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* presented the adventures of Krishna as divine play (*līlā*) performed as a means of bestowing grace. The demons he defeats are granted salvation, whereas in the *Harivaṃśa* they are merely disposed of as evil forces. It adapted or justified those incidents which, in earlier sources, place Krishna in a rather dubious light, diminish his divinity, or are morally disconcer-

16 Adaptation of Krishna myths to the cultural milieu of southern India is explored by F. Hardy in 1983/1, pts.3-4, from which the summary given here is derived.

17 For Shrirangam as the milieu and various proposed datings see F. Hardy, ibid. pp.441-5, 486-8, 525-6, 637 ff. He attributes the admixture of Upanishadic ideas to the increase in immigration of brahmins from the North. For the dating of the BhP see also Hopkins in Singer (ed.), pp.4-6, who suggests AD 850. For the style of the BhP see van Buitenen's article in the same volume. For bibliography and further references to the BhP cf. Rocher, pp.138 ff.

18 Ingalls, pp.384-5.

ting.[19] Rather than being identified with Vishnu or the transcendent *brahman*, Krishna is clearly acknowledged as the Supreme Being, of whom all other gods are partial manifestations. Any apparent limitations are simply the result of the *māyā* he employs when he imitates human ways. Having dressed a number of non-orthodox elements in traditional garb, the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* became accepted by later devotees as the most authoritative account of Krishna's life on earth. Many later Vaishnava theologians looked upon it as the ultimate scriptural authority that superseded the Vedas, Upanishads, *Bhagavadgītā*, and *Brahmasūtra*.

The eventual acceptance of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* as a canonical scripture for Vaishnavas all over India is expressed in a short text written to proclaim its glory.[20] Here it is eulogized as the scripture that men must resort to for salvation in this age of *kaliyuga*, which began when Krishna returned to his celestial abode. It tells how the sage Narada later visits the earth, by which time there is decadence in all spheres of human activity and Muslims are in control of the sacred places. On the banks of the Yamuna he encounters Bhakti, a woman personifying devotion. She is in distress and is attempting to revive her two decrepit sons named Jnana ('higher knowledge, gnosis') and Vairagya ('dispassionateness, asceticism'). She tells him that she was born in the south of India, attained maturity in Karnataka, and grew old in parts of Maharashtra and Gujarat, but was mutilated by heretics and became weak. However, since reaching Vrindaban she has been refreshed and rejuvenated, but is pained and perplexed because her sons have remained old and exhausted. Narada explains that in the present age the paths to spiritual attainment that her sons personify are no longer viable and that they are in decline because men no longer have need of them. Nowadays consolation can come only from contemplating the lotus feet of Krishna. Devotion is the only means of gaining liberation; even pilgrimage, spiritual discipline, rituals, and preaching are of no avail. He makes an unsuccessful attempt to revive Jnana and Vairagya by reciting the Vedas, Upanishads, and the *Bhagavadgītā*, but a voice from above tells him that they will be reinvigorated only if he performs a particular rite. He wanders in search of information about the rite in question, but no one is able to help him. Eventually he meets the sage Sanaka and his three brothers, who tell him that recitation of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* will relieve the suffering of Bhakti and her sons. Following their instructions, Narada organizes a seven-day ceremonial recitation of the scripture, as a result of which Bhakti, Jnana, and Vairagya are given a new lease of life.

In various parts of India Jain versions of the Krishna story were composed during the first millennium and the centuries that followed, but they remain outside the Vaishnava tradition.[21] They relate how Neminatha, the twenty-second

19 This process is examined in detail by Sheth, with reference to HV, ViP, and BhP. See also Spink 1982, for a concise survey of the the emergence of the Krishna cult and the elaboration of his character in classical mythology.

20 *Bhāgavatamāhātmya* chs. 1-3 (= PP 6.193-5). Chapters with the same title and import are also found in SP, see below § 6.8.

21 The most notable are *Vasudevahiṇḍi*, composed in the first half of the first millennium, perhaps by the end of the 3rd century (cf. Jain's introduction to the text, pp.27-8), Jinasena's *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* (AD 783-4), Pushpadanta's *Mahāpurāṇa* (*Nemicarita* 81-6, completed AD 965), and Hemachandra. For further discussion and references to Jinasena and Pushpadanta see Hawley 1983, pp.27-9, and Rocher pp.91-3.

Tirthankara, was a Yadava and a cousin of Vasudeva/Krishna.[22] In addition to the textual tradition, iconographical representations of incidents in Krishna's childhood became increasingly widespread and popular in the course of the first millennium. Depictions of his adventures in Braj far exceed those dealing with his later life, and some themes appeared in iconography long before they were included in brahminical literature.[23] Some early verse anthologies in Prakrit also contain poems mentioning the love of Krishna and Radha, a popular theme that was not incorporated in religious texts until several centuries later (cf. below §33).

2 The setting

All accounts of the early life of Krishna say that he was born in the city of Mathura or Madhupuri. The former name may be related to the root *math*, in the sense of 'churning', and the latter may simply mean 'charming city'; but in mythology it is said to be named after Madhu, a character who is described as a 'demon' (*āsura, daityavaṃśī, dānava*), though he is praised for his intellect (*buddhi*) and reverence for brahmins. His son, Lavana, was a distinctly more demonic figure. According to the *Rāmāyaṇa,* some sages who were living on the banks of the Yamuna sent a message to Rama, then ruling in Ayodhya, complaining about the depradations of Lavana.[24] Rama despatched his younger brother Shatrughna, declaring that after defeating Lavana he should be consecrated as king of Madhu's city. After a fierce battle Shatrughna killed Lavana, became king of Madhupuri, and made the city even more beautiful and populous. Later he divided the kingdom between his two sons and returned to Ayodhya. The inclusion of this episode in the last book of the *Rāmāyaṇa* may well have resulted from a desire on the part of its Vaishnava author(s) to associate Mathura, a well-known centre of the Bhagavata cult, with Rama, regardless of any historical reality or probability.[25]

The *Harivaṃśa* gives a shorter version of the story in which Madhu is said to have lived not in a city but in a forest called Madhuvana.[26] Lavana sent Rama a message reviling him for slaying Ravana and challenging him to battle. Shatrughna was sent to deal with Lavana, after which he cleared the forest and founded the city of Madhura. Although the *Harivaṃśa* disagrees with the *Rāmāyaṇa* by attributing the foundation of Madhupuri/Madhura/Mathura to Shatrughna rather than Madhu, both versions describe it as a splendid city that stretched in a crescent shape along

22 See Hemachandra (tr. Johnson, vol.5 pp.153 ff.: 8.5, *Neminātha carita*).

23 For a survey of early Krishna iconography see Hawley 1983, ch.2 and appendices, and Preciado-Solis, ch.5. The sequence of events in friezes rarely follows that of the literary versions.

24 *Rāmāyaṇa* 7.59-62. The story is also referred to in *Agnipurāṇa* 11.6-7, BhP 9.11.13-14, *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* 2.3.63.186-7, *Vāyupurāṇa* 88.185, ViP 1.12.2-4, and in Kalidasa's *Raghuvaṃśa, sarga* 15. In a Jain version by Vimalasuri (*Paümacariyaṃ* 86-89) Madhu is described as king of Mathura and son-in-law of Ravana. This Madhu should not be confused with a demon of the same name who was slain by Vishnu.

25 Goldman 1986, p.478.

26 HV 44.21. See Goldman 1986 for a comparison of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and HV versions.

the bank of the Yamuna. According to the *Mahābhārata*, Mathura was subsequently entrusted to Bhima Satvata, who had two sons called Andhaka and Vrishni. It was their descendants who became the hereditary rulers of Mathura.[27]

Madhuvana is also named as the place on the bank of the Yamuna where Dhruva performed austerities.[28] At the age of five he left home after being repudiated by his father's co-wife. Narada told him that in order to have a vision of Vasudeva he should go to Madhuvana, bathe regularly in the Yamuna, meditate, and practise austerities. After six months Vishnu/Vasudeva appeared before Dhruva and, as a boon, promised him a lasting abode in heaven. Dhruva returned home, eventually succeeded to his father's kingdom, and at the end of his life took a vow of renunciation. On his death he assumed his place in the heavens as the pole star (*dhruvatārā*, 'fixed star'). Sites in Mathura that derive from this myth are a bathing place and mound named after Dhruva, a nearby mound named after Narada, and another named after Dhruva at Madhuban (Maholi).

On the very night that he was born, Krishna was smuggled out of Mathura and placed in the care of the herdsman Nanda. The scriptural sources use various terms for the environment in which Krishna grew up, but none of them refer to the precise geographical locations known to us today. The term *vraja* occurs frequently, but, unlike the modern 'Braj', it is not used as a name for the region around Mathura. Similarly *gokula*, another term used for the location of some of his adventures, should not be taken as referring to the modern village of Gokul. Both *vraja* and *gokula* are used to refer to the encampment or settlement of cowherds of which Nanda was the headman.[29] Monier-Williams, in his Sanskrit-English dictionary, defines *vraja* as an 'enclosure or station of herdsmen' as well as simply a 'fold, stall, cow pen or cattle shed'. Other synonyms used in the narratives are *govraja, nandavraja, nandagokula*, and *goṣṭha*.[30] It is clear that no permanent location or settlement is intended since *gokula* is used for the first encampment to which Krishna was brought for refuge, as well as for the later one established when the community moved to the area of Vrindaban. None of the earlier sources uses the term *vraja* to refer to an extensive area. An attempt at justifying such a usage is given in a relatively late passage in the *Skandapurāṇa*. There, in a story interpolated to explain how the sacred places of Braj were reclaimed, the sage Shandilya explains to Vajranabha that the term *vraja* connotes expansiveness.[31] Only relatively modern sources tell us that Nanda moved from a village called Gokul and settled at

27 MBh 2.13.29-30, 5.126.36 ff.

28 BhP 4.9-12, which gives an amplified version of the story of Dhruva that is alluded to in HV 2.8-13, *Liṅgapurāṇa* 1.62, *Matsyapurāṇa* 4.35-8, SP 4.1.19-21, and ViP 1.11-12.

29 Corcoran, p.146, notes that only in HV, where *gokula* may sometimes refer to the herds of cattle rather than the encampment, is there any discernible difference in meaning. When later Sanskrit sources wish to denote 'Braj' they use compounds such as *vrajabhūmi* and *vrajadeśa* (cf. §§2.40, 6.8, & 6.12).

30 See *Amarakośa* 3.3.30: *goṣṭhādhvanihā vrajāḥ*; BC uses *ghoṣa* as another synonym.

31 SP 2.6.1.19-20: *vrajanaṃ vyāptir ityuktyā vyāpanād vraja ucyate/ guṇātītaṃ paraṃ brahma vyāpakaṃ vraja ucyate*. See also the definition cited above at the beginning of the introduction.

Nandgaon. Even in the poetry of Surdas, written in the sixteenth century, *vraja* is most satisfactorily translated in its original sense rather than to mean what we now call Braj.

In the earliest narratives it is evident that Nanda is the headman of a nomadic pastoral community. The *Harivaṃśa* clearly depicts their contempt for urban life and their complaints about having to pay a yearly tax of bulls, buffaloes, and butter to the king of the city.[32] That they had no permanent settlement is evident from Krishna's telling Balarama of the need to change the location of their encampment (*vraja*) because the present one had become overgrazed. He suggested the area of Vrindaban as a suitable alternative, and it was there that they made a new encampment by arranging their carts in a broad semicircle and surrounding them with wood and thorns.[33] In the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* he declares that the herdsmen are not people who are confined by doors and walls, possess neither fields nor houses, and wander as they please in wagons.[34] The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* normally refers to carts, but on one occasion implies a more permanent settlement by saying that the houses of the *vraja* were decorated for the celebration of the birth of Krishna.[35] This suggests a tendency to consider Nanda as having a permanent home, which in later literature is described as a sumptuous mansion or palace.

It is presumably references to the 'great forest' (*mahā-/mahadvana*) surrounding the encampment that gave rise to the name 'Mahaban' for a village near to the modern Gokul.[36] The cattle are said to be taken to graze in a 'great forest' near to Nanda's encampment, but no specific location is intended, for subsequently the herdsmen decide that they should move on to another such 'great forest'.[37]

The name *vṛndāvana* refers to the area in which Nanda and his community set up a new encampment. The Yamuna flows there and it is described as having good pasture, many kadamba trees, luxuriant vegetation, plenty of fruits, and sweet water. In older sources, as well as many later ones, it designates the whole area in which Krishna and Balarama graze their cattle.[38] The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* says that it is an area with sacred hills and forests in which Krishna defeated the serpent Kaliya, slew the demon Keshi, and danced with the Gopis.[39] Later texts explain that the name derives from *vṛndā*, meaning the *tulsī* plant (sacred basil) or a goddess who personifies it, but the original meaning is obscure.[40] Govardhan is described as a

32 Ingalls, p.386.

33 HV 52, 53.21-22. See also BhP 10.11.35.

34 ViP 5.10.32-3.

35 BhP 10.5.6. Kirfel's *Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa*, p.473, also refers to *nandagopagṛha*, 'the house of the herdsman Nanda'.

36 Mahaban became the name of a stronghold near Mathura by the 11th century, see §4.8.

37 HV 52.7, 53.2. See also MBh 2 app.I 785. In BhP the term *bṛhadvana* is used, cf. 10.7.33, 10.11.21-9.

38 Later sources say that it is five *yojana* in extent, e.g. NP 2.80-72.

39 BhP 10.11.28.

40 Corcoran, pp.20 & 27 fn.1, suggests that it is related to *vṛnda* in the sense of 'group', perhaps referring to a grove resorted to by ascetics (*yativṛnda*). Kosambi, p.116, suggests that *vṛndāvana* means 'forest of the group goddess'.

lofty mountain, located either in Vrindaban or in the vicinity of Vrindaban and the river Yamuna.[41]

Later Vaishnavas suggested various explanations for why the setting of the scriptures does not conform to modern topography. Vallabha disposed of the problem simply by saying that the description given in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* is different because it refers to another era (*kalpa*).[42] Sanatan Goswami says that although Nandishwar (i.e. Nandgaon) is now a considerable distance from the Yamuna, it used to appear much closer because in those days people could walk faster.[43] Prabodhanand Saraswati reconciles the *vṛndāvana* of the scriptures and the modern toponym Vrindaban by differentiating between an extended grazing area called *goṣṭhavṛndāvana* and, within it, an inner realm of *dhāmavṛndāvana* where Krishna's most intimate encounters with the Gopis take place.[44] Some say that Braj is like a lotus: when it is open during the daytime the places on its petals are far apart; at night the petals close in on Vrindaban, bringing all the places closer together.

A gigantic banyan tree called *bhāṇḍīra* is said to grow in the area of Vrindaban or, like Govardhan and the Yamuna, to be visible from there.[45] It is described as reaching up to the sky and providing shade in which Krishna and Balarama used to shelter and play while they were out grazing the cattle.[46] Here they were once attacked by a demon called Pralamba. A grove with an old banyan tree on the east bank of the Yamuna is now identified as Bhandirban. Another modern toponym derived from early accounts of Krishna's adventures is 'Talban' - the 'palmyra forest' where Balarama slew the demon Dhenuka. In the *Harivaṃśa* it is said to be north of Govardhan and on the banks of the Yamuna,[47] a location that is at variance with that of Talban.

3 The birth of Krishna[48]

The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* begins its narrative of the birth of Krishna with the Earth, in the form of a cow, seeking divine intervention in order to be relieved of demons and tyrants. Vishnu decides to be born as Krishna among the Yadavas, a *kṣatriya* clan named after its founder Yadu. In this incarnation Vishnu is accompanied by Ananta, the cosmic serpent upon which he lies, who becomes incarnate as Balarama. Krishna's father Vasudeva was a Vrishni, while his wife Devaki, her uncle Ugrasena, and her cousin or brother Kansa were Andhakas, another branch

41 HV 49.16, 52.24-27.
42 *Subodhinī* 10.11.35.
43 Commenting on BhP 10.11.36, see B. Majumdar, pp.88-9. Sanatan, like Jiv Goswami in his commentary on the same verse in his *Kṛṣṇasaṃdarbha*, says that *vraja* extends from a point south of the Kaliya pool in Vrindaban for a distance of over two *yojana*.
44 *Vṛndāvanamahimāmṛta* 1.8. Other writers refer to the latter as *nijavṛndāvana*.
45 HV 52.27.
46 HV 55.17-22. MBh 2 app.I 803 ff.
47 HV 57.3
48 HV 47-8, ViP 5.1.3, BhP 10.1.4.

of the Yadavas.[49] The Andhakas were the hereditary rulers of Mathura and the Vrishnis ruled over Dwarka or a town called Shaurapura (identified with the modern Bateshwar). Vasudeva's sister Kunti married Pandu, chief of the Kurus, and gave birth to the five Pandava brothers. This family connection eventually led to the Andhakas and Vrishnis becoming embroiled in the *Mahābhārata* war.

Krishna's main task is to overthrow the wicked Kansa, who had deposed his father Ugrasena and usurped control of Mathura. When it was prophesied that Kansa would be slain by the eighth child born to Devaki, he imprisoned both her and Vasudeva and killed their first six children as soon as they were born. Vishnu, by means of his magic power, personified as Yogamaya, caused Ananta to be conceived as the seventh child of Devaki, but had the embryo transferred to the womb of Rohini, a second wife of Vasudeva who lived in the encampment of his friend Nanda. While everyone had the impression that Devaki had miscarried, Ananta was born safely to Rohini in the form of Balarama. The sources explain that because he was drawn out of the womb of Devaki he is also called Sankarshana, but the name can mean 'ploughing' as well as 'extraction' and probably refers to his function as an agricultural deity. He is also referred to by the names Rama, Baladeva, and Haladhara ('plough-holder'). After the birth of Balarama, Vishnu is then conceived as the eighth child of Devaki. The *Viṣṇupurāṇa* says that Vishnu plucked two hairs from his head, one black and one white, and placed them in the womb of Devaki, where they grew into the dark Krishna and fair Balarama, while Yogamaya was born as a daughter of Nanda's wife Yashoda.

Krishna was born in prison, but Vishnu's magic power caused the guards to fall asleep and Vasudeva's fetters to be loosened, allowing him to escape with his son and take him to Nanda's encampment, a place now identified with the township of Gokul. The *Harivaṃśa* says nothing about him having to cross the Yamuna to get there, but the other sources describe how the river, then flowing in full spate because of the rains, parted in order to enable Vasudeva to reach the opposite bank. Shesha (another name for Ananta) appeared to protect Vasudeva and the child from the rain by rearing up behind them and sheltering them with his serpent hoods. Vasudeva exchanges Krishna for the apparently still-born daughter of Nanda and returns with her to the prison. On hearing that Devaki has given birth, Kansa goes to her cell, seizes the daughter and dashes her against a stone. She rises up in the form of the goddess Yogamaya and tells Kansa that Krishna will one day return to slay him.[50]

49 The relationship between Devaki and Kansa is not consistent. In the most authoritative texts she appears to be Kansa's cousin and a niece of Ugrasena, but in the Buddhist *Ghatajātaka* (*Jātaka* no. 454) and in PP she is Kansa's sister and daughter of Ugrasena. For further discussion see Lüders 1904, p.697 and U. V. Rao. *Ghatajātaka* (cf. E. Hardy, p.32), which Lüders (ibid. p.696) suggests was composed in Sri Lanka, says that Upasagara (Vasudeva) lives with his wives Devagabbha (Devaki) and Rohini at Govardhan (*govaḍḍhamāna*).

50 She is called Yoganidra in ViP, Ekadasha in Kirfel's *Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa*, p.475, Katyayani by Bhasa in BC 2.20, and Anjani in *Ghatajātaka*. See Hiltebeitel, pp.66-7, for discussion of opinions regarding the name Ekadasha/Ekanansha.

4 Krishna overturns a cart (*śakaṭārohaṇa*)[51]

Yashoda wakes to find that she has acquired a son, and the whole community celebrates his birth. The first revelation of Krishna's supernatural power is his overturning of a cart (*śakaṭa*) under which Yashoda placed him to sleep. He kicks his feet in his sleep and overturns it, an event that in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* is related to the celebration of his 'sitting up' (*autthānika*), a rite that usually takes place three months after birth when the sign under which the child is born is in the ascendant. The incident seems to be no more than a demonstration of Krishna's miraculous power, but the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* describes how Yashoda felt that some evil spirit or inauspicious force may have been at work. Only Bhasa goes so far as to say that the cart was a form of demon (later known as Shakatasur), though it was depicted as such in iconography in the late seventh century.[52]

5 Putana (*pūtanāvadha*)[53]

The first demon sent by Kansa to attack Krishna is an ogress called Putana. She arrives at the encampment in the guise of a beautiful woman and offers her services as a wet nurse.[54] When she places her poisoned nipple in Krishna's mouth he sucks all the life out of her and she reverts to her terrible demonic form. Her gigantic body is then dismembered and burnt.

6 The whirlwind demon (*tṛṇāvartavadha*)[55]

When Krishna is one year old a servant of Kansa attacks the encampment in the form of a whirlwind (Trinavarta) and whisks Krishna away. Yashoda and the other women are greatly distressed, but Krishna is able to make himself too heavy for the whirlwind to carry. He chokes the whirlwind to death, causing it to revert back to its normal form and its eyes to burst out of their sockets.

7 Garga's visit[56]

Two of the main sources tell us that Garga, the family priest of the Yadus, visited the encampment in order to officiate in the naming ceremonies of Krishna and

51 HV 50.1-19, ViP 5.6, BhP 10.7.1-17, BC 3. See Herbert, pp.268-72, for a symbolic interpretation of the cart as representing the body.
52 Hawley 1983, p.27 fn.
53 HV 50.20 ff., ViP 5.5, BhP 10.6.1-34.
54 In HV and MBh 2.38.4 & 7 she is said to appear as a bird of prey (*śakuni*), cf. Ingalls, p.384.
55 BhP 10.7.18-33.
56 ViP 5.6.8, BhP 10.8.1-20.

Balarama. He predicts that the boys will delight and protect the herding community.

8 Krishna eats dirt[57]

Balarama and the other boys tell Yashoda that Krishna has been putting dirt into his mouth. Yashoda catches him doing it and scolds him, but he denies the offence and asks her to look in his mouth. When she does so she is amazed to see that it contains the earth and the whole universe, including the encampment and her very own self. The same thing happens some time later when she looks into his mouth after feeding him. These revelations hearken back to the story of the sage Markandeya who, after the dissolution of the world, found himself to be alone and walking on water.[58] He came across a child resting on the branch of a banyan tree who, on seeing his confusion, opened his mouth and allowed him to enter it. Inside, Markandeya finds the universe that he has just seen destroyed. This child is none other than Krishna, for he is described as wearing a yellow garment and as having the *śrīvatsa* mark on his chest. Accordingly Krishna is sometimes depicted lying on a banyan leaf and sucking his toe (see plate 8). Both myths may be interpreted as portraying a god who devours the devotee, who simultaneously realizes the god inside him.[59]

9 Krishna is tied to a mortar (*ulūkhalabandhana*)[60]

The mischievous side of Krishna's character shows itself as soon as he is old enough to move about. While Yashoda's back is turned he breaks one of her butter pots and gorges himself on its contents. She chases him with a stick, catches him, and ties him up to a heavy mortar. Her intention is that Krishna should stay put so that she can carry on with her chores without further hindrance, but he is so strong that he manages to crawl away, dragging the mortar behind him. The mortar gets stuck between a pair of teak trees (*yamalārjuna*), but Krishna keeps on crawling and uproots them. In the *Harivaṃśa* the two trees are said to be the abode of spirits worshipped by the women, and the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* states explicitly that the two trees had once been sons of 'the bestower of wealth' (viz. Kubera), named Nalakubera and Manigriva, who had been cursed by Narada for their unseemly behaviour. When Krishna uproots the trees the two spirits are set free and attain salvation. This incident is cited as the origin of Krishna's epithet 'Damodara' - 'having a rope round the waist'.

The image of Krishna as a butter thief (Hindi *mākhan cor*) became a standard theme in iconography from the fifth century onwards and must at the same time have been popular in poetry. In the older narratives Yashoda binds him to the

57 BhP 10.8.32-45.
58 MBh *āraṇya*. 3.186.81. ff.
59 O'Flaherty 1984, p.268.
60 HV 51, ViP 5.6, BhP 10.9-11.6.

mortar because of his ebullience rather than his naughtiness. It is in *Bālacarita* and the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* that he is portrayed as an unruly and mischievous stealer of butter.[61]

10 The encampment is moved to Vrindaban and other demons attack Krishna[62]

In the *Harivaṃśa* Krishna says that the pastureland surrounding the encampment is overgrazed and prompts the herdsmen to move the settlement by causing it to be plagued by a pack of wolves that issue from his body. In the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* Upananda, a junior brother of Nanda, suggests that the encampment be moved because of the threatening events that have taken place. At this point in the story it introduces some incidents involving three demons sent by Kansa to attack the boys while they are grazing the cattle. The first demon (Vatsasura) appears in the guise of a calf. Krishna seizes it, swings it around, and hurls it against a tree. The second demon (Bakasura) is a giant heron or crane that tries to swallow Krishna, but he grasps the tips of its beak and tears it apart. The third demon (Aghasura), intent on avenging the death of his sister Putana and his brother Bakasura, adopts the form of an enormous serpent. Krishna's companions inadvertently walk into the open jaws of the serpent, mistaking it for a cave, but he follows them inside and by causing himself to expand manages to choke the monster and split its sides.

11 Brahma spirits away the calves and cowherd boys[63]

These onslaughts are followed by an account of how Brahma spirited away the calves and the cowherd boys, simply because he wanted to witness Krishna's miraculous power. Krishna creates duplicates of himself and his companions in order to prevent their mothers from becoming distressed. These substitutes stand in for the real boys until their reappearance a year later, upon which Brahma praises Krishna and apologizes for his conceit.

12 The defeat of Kaliya (*kāliyadamana*)[64]

In Vrindaban there is a large pool beside the Yamuna where a serpent king named Kaliya dwells. His presence poisons the water and makes the surrounding woodland a frightening place. Krishna jumps into the pool from the branch of a kadamba tree and is dragged down by the serpent, causing panic among the onlookers. After a fierce struggle Krishna eventually resurfaces dancing on the

61 Hawley 1983, pp.30, 37-45, 54 ff., who refers to some of the early Tamil sources.
62 HV 52-53, BhP 10.11.21-12.39.
63 BhP 10.13.12-14.48.
64 HV 55-56, ViP 5.7, BhP 10.15.47-17.19.

hoods of the subdued serpent. Kaliya's wives plead for his life to be spared, and so Krishna banishes him to the ocean. The water of the pool is now suitable for drinking and the land around it is safe for the cattle and herdsmen.

13 Dhenuka (*dhenukāsuravadha*)[65]

The boys hear of a large grove where there are palmyras bearing delicious fruit, but dare not go there because it is guarded by Dhenuka, a demon in the form of an ass. The demon charges at Balarama when he begins to gather the fruit, but is killed when Balarama hurls him against one of the palmyras. Thereafter the herdsmen and cattle were able to frequent the grove.

14 Two forest fires (*davānala/davāgni*)[66]

A forest fire breaks out while everyone is sleeping somewhere near the Yamuna, but Krishna swallows up all the flames. Later, after the slaying of Pralamba, a second fire breaks out in a clump of rushes (*muñjāṭavī*) and threatens to burn the cattle. Krishna again swallows the fire and leads the cows safely back to the *bhāṇḍīra* tree. These incidents are assumed to have taken place in the dry season, for they are followed by a description of the rainy season and how Krishna began to enchant the Gopis by playing his flute.

15 Pralamba (*pralambāsuravadha*)[67]

The boys play a game in which they form two teams and race in pairs, skipping like deer, up to the *bhāṇḍīra* banyan tree. The boy who is last to reach the tree has to carry his rival back to the starting point on his shoulders. Krishna competes against Shridama, and Balarama against Pralamba - a demon who has joined them in the guise of a cowherd boy. Balarama reaches the tree first, but when he climbs on Pralamba's shoulders the latter reverts to his huge demonic form and races away with him. Balarama, however, manages to kill him by pounding his head with his fists.

16 Krishna steals the Gopis' clothes (*vastra-/cīraharaṇa*)[68]

During the month of Margashirsh the Gopis observe a ritual vow (*vrata*) in honour

65 HV 57, ViP 5.8, BhP 10.15.20-40.
66 BhP 10.17.20-25, 10.19.
67 HV 58, ViP 5.9, BhP 10.18.17-32.
68 BhP 10.22.1-28.

of the goddess Katyayani. Every day they go to bathe in the Yamuna, worship an image made of sand, and pray to the goddess that Krishna might become their husband. While they are bathing Krishna steals their clothes and hides with them in a tree, only consenting to hand them back when the Gopis agree to step naked out of the water. He reprimands them for bathing naked in the river and promises that their vow will be rewarded when he meets them in the autumn.[69]

17 The brahmins' wives (*yajñapatnī-*)[70]

When the boys tell Krishna that they are hungry he suggests they approach some brahmins engaged in a sacrifice and ask for some cooked rice. Their request is refused, and so Krishna tells the boys to ask the brahmins' wives. These women have all heard about Krishna and are eager to see him. They bring the boys food, despite the protestations of other members of their families. When Krishna blesses the women the brahmins feel ashamed for having at first refused to let the boys have any food. The story serves to illustrate the supremacy of devotion over sacrifice.

18 Krishna lifts up Govardhan (*govardhanadhāraṇa*)[71]

Krishna asks why Nanda and the other herdsmen are preparing for an annual festival in honour of Indra. He is told that Indra is worshipped because he becomes manifest as the rain-giving clouds upon which they all depend for good pastureland and milk. Krishna says that, rather than the Vedic Indra, their gods are the cows, mountains, and forests. He advocates worship of mountains in conjunction with that of cows, saying that mountain spirits wander about in the form of wild beasts in order to protect the forests. Since they are nomadic pastoral folk, mountain worship (*giriyajña*) is most appropriate for them, just as furrow worship (*sītāyajña*) is appropriate for cultivators, and the chanting of incantations is appropriate for brahmins. He describes the benefits of autumn, with its abundance of grain, water, and milk, and suggests that they perform the worship at the foot of Govardhan, bringing the cattle together, decorating them, and leading them around the mountain.

Impressed by Krishna's words, the herdsmen abandon the worship of a post or flag-staff (*dhvaja*) erected in honour of Indra and instead collect all the milk produced over three days and make a huge feast of heaps of rice and large quantities of fruit and meat. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, in accordance with orthodox Vaishnava principles, has dropped the reference made in the earlier sources to animal sacrifice and non-vegetarian offerings. Through his magic power (*māyā*) Krishna makes

69 The episode is based on a popular theme in Tamil poetry that originated in the custom of presenting girls with a leaf frock at puberty. For references see F. Hardy 1983/1, pp.195-6, 419, 499-501, 512-6.

70 BhP 10.23.

71 HV 59-62, ViP 5.10-11, BhP 10.24-28.

himself identical with the mountain, appears on top of it, and announces that he is pleased with their worship, will be auspicious for them, and take care of them. He then instructs them to lead the cattle around the mountain.

Indra is extremely displeased and retaliates by assailing them with wind and rain. Krishna lifts up the mountain in order to provide shelter underneath it for the people and their cattle. The torrential rain continues for seven days until Indra is exhausted. He arrives on his mount, the elephant Airavata, concedes victory to Krishna, confers upon him the epithets Upendra and Govinda, and ceremonially anoints him. The heavenly cow Surabhi appears and bathes Krishna with her milk, and Airavata pours Ganges water over him from his trunk. The *Harivaṃśa* account also says that Indra offered Krishna two of the four autumn months reserved for his worship, declaring that people will worship both himself and Krishna ('Upendra') by means of posts.

19 Nanda is abducted[72]

One night, when Nanda bathes in the Yamuna as part of his observances for the eleventh day of the lunar fortnight, he is abducted by a demon and taken to the realm of Varuna, lord of the waters. When Krishna goes to rescue him, Varuna apologizes for the stupidity of his demon servant and declares how blessed he feels to be honoured with a visit from Krishna.

20 Krishna dances with the Gopis[73]

On the night of the autumn full moon Krishna is inspired to indulge in love play with the Gopis. The *Harivaṃśa* tells how Krishna joins the girls in a type of dance called *hallīsaka*, which Bhasa refers to by the Prakrit form *halḷīsaaṃ*. What in these sources is no more than a herdsmen's dance or a conventional interlude in a drama, is described in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* as a more sensual *rāsa* dance, endowed with more religious significance.[74] The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* gives an extended account of this episode in five chapters (the celebrated *rāsapañcādhyāyī*), presenting it as the most significant encounter between the lord and his devotees. When the Gopis hear the enticing music of Krishna's flute they rush out of the encampment in disarray, abandoning the various household chores that they were engaged in, even if they were busy attending to their husbands or feeding their children.

Their meeting begins with Krishna reminding the women of their domestic duties, but they refuse to return home because their devotion for him takes priority over everything else. They all go to the bank of the Yamuna, where Krishna begins

72 BhP 10.28.

73 HV 63, ViP 5.13, BhP 10.29-33, BC 3.

74 For sources and discussion of this episode see F. Hardy, ibid. pp.84-5, 100, 499-506, 600 ff. He cites *Kāmasūtra* 2.10.25, where both *hallīsaka* and *rāsa* are mentioned as dances of an erotic nature. Bhasa also uses *halḷīsaaṃ* for the dance Krishna did on Kaliya's head.

his dalliance with the Gopis. After a while he suddenly disappears because, it is said, the women were beginning to feel proud at receiving so much attention from him. The Gopis are perplexed and begin to search for him, asking the trees and creepers where he has gone and distractedly imitating his various deeds and mannerisms. They discover the footprints of Krishna and one of the Gopis, whom they take to be his particular favourite. They find evidence that the two of them gathered flowers which he plaited into her hair. However, this Gopi became so arrogant at being singled out by Krishna that she asked him to carry her, saying that she was tired. Krishna began to comply with her request, but disappeared before she had a chance to climb up on his shoulders. The other Gopis come across this woman, who is now as desolate as they are because she too has been abandoned. They all sing a song of despair, expressing the pangs of separation (*viraha*) that they are suffering.

Eventually Krishna reappears and brings them relief by dancing the *rāsa* with them. They form a circle and Krishna multiplies himself so as to appear next to each of the Gopis as her partner. Following this experience the Gopis are able to appreciate that their feeling of love for Krishna is sufficient in itself. They learn how to derive comfort from thinking about him throughout the day, while he is out grazing the cattle, in anticipation of his return home in the evening.

21 The pilgrimage to Ambikavana[75]

The herdsmen undertake a pilgrimage to a grove sacred to the goddess Ambika. After bathing in the river Saraswati and worshipping Pashupati (Shiva) and the goddess, they settle down for the night on the bank of the river. While they are asleep a gigantic and ravenous serpent appears and proceeds to swallow Nanda, but Krishna frees him by touching the snake with his foot, thereby relieving it of its *karma* and restoring it to its original form of a supernatural being (*vidyādhara*).

22 Shankhachuda[76]

While Krishna, Balarama, and the Gopis are engaged in nocturnal revelry in the forest, a demonic attendant of Kubera named Shankhachuda attempts to abduct the women. Krishna pursues him, cuts off his head, and presents the crest jewel he wore to Balarama.

23 Arishta[77]

One evening a demon called Arishta charges into the encampment in the form of a ferocious bull. It begins to kill the bulls and assault the cows, making them and the

75 BhP 10.34.1-19.
76 BhP 10.34.20-34.
77 HV 64, ViP 5.14, BhP 10.36.1-15.

pregnant wives of the herdsmen so frightened that they miscarry. Krishna wrenches out the monster's horn and bludgeons it to death with it.

24 Keshi[78]

Kansa announces that a 'bow festival' is to be held in Mathura.[79] He arranges for the construction of an arena and orders Akrura to fetch Krishna and Balarama. He also begins a final series of attempts to annihilate the two youths. The first demon he sends to Vrindaban takes the form of a horse named Keshi. Krishna thrusts his arm into the beast's mouth, causing it to choke and burst apart.

25 Vyoma[80]

A demon called Vyoma adopts the guise of a cowherd boy and attacks the other boys while they are playing in the hills. He carries them off to a cave, but Krishna strangles him and rescues his friends.

26 Akrura fetches Krishna and Balarama[81]

Akrura arrives at the encampment and summons Krishna and Balarama, telling them about the 'bow festival' and the plight of Vasudeva and Devaki. The next morning they set out for Mathura, a parting that causes the Gopis much pain. At noon Akrura suggests that they pause to allow him to bathe in the Yamuna. When he ducks under the water he has a vision of Krishna and Balarama as Vishnu reclining on the serpent Shesha, but when he resurfaces he sees the boys sat as normal in the cart. He ducks into the water and again sees them in the form of Vishnu and Shesha, prompting him to give a eulogy in praise of them.

27 The return to Mathura[82]

The citizens of Mathura rush out to see the entry of Krishna and Balarama. The boys notice a dyer (*rajaka, raṅgakāra*) and demand some of the fine clothes that he is carrying. When the dyer disdainfully refuses, saying that the clothes belong to Kansa, Krishna decapitates him. The boys then choose some garments for themselves and give the rest to their companions from the encampment, who have also arrived in Mathura. The next person they meet is a gardener who gives them

78 HV 67, ViP 5.16, BhP 10.37.1-19. For comments on the incident see O'Flaherty 1980, p.225.
79 *dhanuryajña*: HV 65, ViP 5.15, BhP 10.36.16 ff. *dhanurmaha*: BC 4.
80 BhP 10.37.27-34.
81 HV 68-70, ViP 5.17-18, BhP 10.38-40.
82 HV 71-77, ViP 5.20, BhP 10.41-42.25.

flowers, and then a hunchbacked woman known as Kubja[83] who offers them some of the unguent that she is taking to the royal bath house. Krishna shows his gratitude by curing her of her deformity and making her beautiful again. He also promises to visit her after accomplishing his mission. He then goes to the place where the bow is kept, seizes it, breaks it, and slays the men who were guarding it.

28 Kansa is slain[84]

The next day Krishna and Balarama go to the arena (*raṅgaśālā* /*raṅgabhūmi*) where first Krishna has to dispose of an elephant named Kuvalayapida that Kansa had posted at the gateway to slay him. He rips out the elephant's tusk and uses it as a weapon to kill it. In the arena Krishna and Balarama first have to fight Chanura and Mushtika, Kansa's champion wrestlers. After defeating them Krishna slays Kansa and, according to the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, drags him by his hair. Vasudeva and Devaki are released from captivity, Ugrasena is reinstated as king of Mathura, and Nanda returns tearfully to his encampment. Having fulfilled their mission, Krishna and Balarama take their vows of celibacy and become students. They depart for Ujjain in order to study under the guidance of their guru Sandipani.

29 Uddhava's message[85]

After completing their studies Krishna and Balarama return to Mathura, but instead of going himself to visit Nanda and Yashoda, Krishna sends his counsellor Uddhava with a message for them. His foster parents shed tears of longing when they recall the happy years Krishna spent with them. Uddhava also tries to console the Gopis, one of whom addresses a bee, taking it to be another messenger from Krishna, and complains that they feel deserted. Uddhava praises them for the constancy of their devotion and their undivided attention to Krishna. He explains the ontological reasons for their condition of separation and how Krishna can be reached through remembrance and contemplation of his deeds. He praises them for having developed the supreme form of love through which they have earned the grace of Krishna. His cerebral arguments contrast with the Gopis' spontaneous outbursts of feeling.

This episode, which may well be based on the account given in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* of Balarama's visit to the Gopis,[86] became a popular theme in later literature. The dialogue served as a context for contrasting the passionate devotional path followed by the Gopis with the detached and emotionally cold approach offered by Uddhava, a spokesman for the path of transcendental and and yogic contempla-

83 BhP also calls her Trivakra; BC 5 calls her Madanika.
84 HV 78, ViP 5.19, BhP 10.42.26-44.
85 BhP 10.46-47.
86 See below §31. See F. Hardy, ibid. pp.499, 507-9.

tion.[87] In these later versions the Gopis often accuse him of disregarding feelings and human attachment, reflecting the increasing importance given to emotional experience rather than contemplation or rationalization.

This episode, as it is described in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, earned Uddhava the reputation of being the first pilgrim to Braj. After meeting the Gopis he stayed on for a few months, recollecting Krishna's adventures in the company of the Gopis and seeing the streams, forests, hills, and flowering trees that reminded the local people of Krishna. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* also tells how, on the banks of the Yamuna, Uddhava is met by Vidura, brother of Dhritarashtra and Pandu, while he is on a pilgrimage to various holy places.[88] It was Krishna's wish that Uddhava should be the sole survivor of the annihilation of his clansmen at Dwarka and remain on earth because he was the person best qualified to impart the message of devotion.

30 Krishna and Balarama move to Dwarka

Krishna, meanwhile, enters into new spheres of activity. In Mathura he visits Kubja and repays her for the gift of unguent by spending some time with her and making love to her.[89] Subsequently he becomes more involved in the conflicts between his kinsmen and between the Kurus and Pandavas. These topics are central to the *Mahābhārata*, but are treated briefly in the narratives referred to above and have had virtually no influence on developments in Braj. Krishna's departure from Mathura is occasioned by the arrival of Jarasandha, a brother-in-law of Kansa and the ruler of Magadha. He and his forces, as well as the foreign troops of a chieftain called Kalayavana, lay siege to Mathura. Krishna decides that the only escape for the Yadavas is to move westwards to Dwarka. There, on the shore of the Indian Ocean, Vishwakarma constructs a citadel for them. Krishna sets up court there and takes sixteen thousand wives, the foremost of whom are Rukmini and Satyabhama, but his relationship with them does not have the same intensity and significance as his earlier romance with the Gopis. His married life is no less erotic, but it does not have the same mystical overtones.

Balarama marries Revati, daughter of Revata, whose name means 'wealth' or 'prosperity'.[90] In view of Balarama's links with cults relating to the fertility of the soil, it is appropriate that Revati should be associated with the welfare of children. In the *Mahābhārata* she is one of the goddesses who preside over children's diseases and elsewhere she is described as one of the 'seizers of children', identifiable with the goddess Shashthi, or the Bahuputrika and Hariti of Jain and Buddhist texts.[91]

87 Nandadas' version of Uddhav's visit (tr. McGregor) is the most famous of later versions.

88 BhP 3.1-4.

89 BhP 10.48.

90 HV 58.84, BhP 10.6.28.

91 See U. P. Shah with reference to MBh *vana*. 129.27-30, *Suśrutasaṃhitā, uttara*. 31, and R. N. Mishra, p.75, with reference to *Kāśyapasaṃhitā*.

31 Balarama visits the Gopis[92]

The only subsequent episode in the early sources that is relevant for Braj is a visit paid by Balarama to Nanda's encampment. He is welcomed by the Gopis and herdsmen and consoles them with messages from Krishna. He goes to a grove beside the Yamuna and there dallies with the women. He becomes intoxicated after drinking liquor that flows from the hollow of a tree and commands the Yamuna to come near to him so that he can play in her waters. When she refuses, he becomes angry and drags her towards him by making a channel with his plough. He then enters the river and sports with the Gopis.

32 Later sources and developments

Gradually the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* gained acceptance all over India as the prime canonical source for the narrative of Krishna's adventures. In Bengal, at least, Sanskrit poems of unknown provenance derived from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* were known by 1100.[93] An indication that the work as a whole had attained canonical status in the North by about 1400 was the writing of a commentary upon it by Shridhara, a Shaiva ascetic and resident of Varanasi, who tried to explain its message of emotional devotion in terms of the monistic teachings of Shankara.[94] Even so, there is no extant Hindi version of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* earlier than the sixteenth century, and it was not the only source for vernacular poetry dealing with Krishna. Some time between 700 and 900 Swayambhu had written an Apabhransha version of Krishna's life entitled *Riṭṭhanemicariu*, or *Harivaṃśapurāṇa*, that is known to have been recited before a Jain audience in the vicinity of Gwalior in the mid-fifteenth century. This is precisely the period when, under the patronage of the Tomar rulers of Gwalior, the earliest narrative poetry dealing with Krishna in the Braj dialect emerged, though it did not emphasize his early years and the theme of devotion, which were to become the main concerns of sixteenth-century Braj poets.[95] What was lacking in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* was any reference to Radha, a figure who first appeared in poetry that was amatory rather than devotional in tone. Her acceptance as Krishna's divine consort can be explained in the light of religious developments in the medieval period, especially in eastern India.

The kind of devotion recommended in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* had its counterpart in the love mysticism of the Sufi saints, whose teachings had become widespread in the northern half of India by the thirteenth century. The Sufis, like followers of Hindu devotionalism, sought a more intense and emotional contact with god than was offered by their pedantic and orthodox co-religionists. Besides making use of song (in the form of *samāʿ* and *qawwālī*) to express their fervour, they were also preoccupied with the symbolism of divine love, particularly the traditional Indian

92 HV 83, ViP 5.24-25, BhP 10.65.
93 F. Hardy 1983/1, pp.547-552.
94 See below §5.2.
95 McGregor 1984, pp.33-5.

theme of the yearning felt by a woman in the absence of her lover.[96] Also influential in northern India throughout this period were the Nath Yogis, Shaiva inheritors of yogic and Tantric traditions. Against a background of mutual influence between the Nath Yogis and Sufi mystics there arose a current of non-orthodox religious enthusiasm, similar in its emotional intensity to that of the earlier Alvar poets of Tamil Nadu. Hindus attracted to this kind of devotion rejected brahminical ritualism in favour of direct and ecstatic communion with god. Some of them objected to the maintenance of caste distinctions and proclaimed that the spontaneous devotion of an untutored and humble soul was more rewarding than any amount of scholastic learning and expertise in ritual.

During the twelfth century the main cultural centre for the development of Vaishnavism in eastern India was the court of the Sena dynasty. Sculpture from the earlier Pala period shows that Krishna had already been locally popular from the eighth century onwards, but as the Senas were of Kanarese origin they may have been instrumental in the propagation of the teachings of southern schools of Vaishnavism.[97] People in eastern India would certainly have been receptive to the emotional kind of devotion advocated by the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, but the Tantric and Shakta traditions had also had a pervasive influence on their religion and culture. This explains why they were preoccupied with the notion of Krishna having a consort who personifies his creative power (*śakti*). The most influential work that described the love-play of Krishna and Radha was *Gītagovinda*, a cycle of songs in polished Sanskrit composed in the latter half of the twelfth century by Jayadeva, a poet at the court of Lakshmana Sena.[98] It is the earliest extensive treatment of Radha and, by virtue of its effective combination of the aesthetic and the spiritual, it not only became universally recognized as a classic of Sanskrit erotic literature, but was also used as a devotional text and recited each evening in the temple of Jagannatha at Puri, a tradition that survives to this day. By the sixteenth century the poem was used in religious performances all over India, but it was probably the emotive recitation of it at Puri that inspired Chaitanya and his followers to hold the work in such high esteem.

After Jayadeva the theme of the love between Krishna and Radha was further popularized by the vernacular lyrics of Vidyapati, who flourished in Mithila in the latter part of the fourteenth century. While his explicitly devotional verses are directed towards Shiva, he used the theme of Radha and Krishna in amatory verses that continue the tradition of Sanskrit court poetry.[99] It was the followers of Chaitanya who gave these lyrics a religious interpretation. Another influential poet was Baru Chandidas, who wrote a long sequence of lyrics in Bengali. The title 'Baru' implies that he was a temple brahmin; his name itself and the dedication of his songs to Basali (or Vasali) suggest that he was primarily devoted to a form of the

96 Ibid., pp.23-8.

97 See S. C. Mukherjee and the first two chapters of R. Chakravarti 1985 for a survey of evidence relating to the emergence of Vaishnavism in Bengal.

98 For a translation and introduction to the work see Miller 1977, and also Sandahl-Forgue. For studies of the poem see R. Sarkar and Siegal. The oldest Braj translation is that of Ramray, composed in 1565, cf. Mital 1962, p.148.

99 McGregor 1984, pp.29-33.

Goddess.[100] His exact date is uncertain, but he probably lived in the fifteenth century and at least some of his songs were known to Chaitanya and his followers. His *Śrīkṛṣṇa kīrtan* contains over four hundred songs strung together as a narrative of the courtship of Krishna and Radha. Around the beginning of the sixteenth century poets of eastern India developed a literary language that was considered appropriate for dealing with Krishna themes. It is called Brajabuli, 'the speech of Braj', and is basically the dialect of Mithila with a superstructure of Bengali and a smattering of elements from Hindi and the Braj dialect.[101]

Outside religious and cultic circles the childhood and loves of Krishna had long been a popular theme in lyric poetry, and have remained so until the present day. Anthologies dating back to the third century present Krishna as the typical lover (*nāyaka*) of traditional amatory literature, and are the earliest sources to name Radha as his beloved.[102] In the medieval period collections of Sanskrit verses attributed to Bilvamangala were widely circulated and were drawn upon by many vernacular poets.[103] These, along with poems from other Sanskrit anthologies, provided vernacular poets with a set of imagery and poetic devices that could be used to describe the childhood and amorous adventures of Krishna. For many of them the devotional overtones were implicit and did not need to be stressed. The love of Krishna and Radha was a theme exploited by devotees interested in the moods and emotions of love mysticism, as well by court poets who wrote amatory verses with a more scholastic intent. This meant that there is often no clear dividing line between devotional and profane lyrics, between those that aimed at evoking a devotional sentiment and those that were intended to exemplify some traditional poetic conceit in accordance with classical aesthetic theory. The love of Krishna and Radha is not just an allegory for religious passion, it *is* that passion, and so there is no call for any distinction to be made between the religious and the erotic.[104]

Devotional theology and aesthetic theory were successfully combined in the works of Rup Goswami, a disciple of Chaitanya and the foremost theologian of the Gaudiya Sampraday. He received a Sanskrit education that gave him a grounding in the Hindu scriptures as well as classical aesthetics. Since he was a native of Bengal and served in a Muslim court, he must have been familiar with both Tantric and Sufi doctrines. In their theoretical writings he and his followers freely adapted Tantric and Agamic sources, works of aesthetic theory, and manuals describing the

100 Klaiman, intro. to Baru Chandidas pp.16-17. See her introduction for further details about the poet and his work, and also Dimock, pp. 56-67, and Zbavitel, pp. 148-55, 179.

101 See S. Sen 1935.

102 For sources see below n.122.

103 The two anthologies are entitled *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta* and *Bālagopālastuti*, see Wilson's introduction to *Bilvamaṅgalastava*. According to CC 2.9.278-82 Chaitanya was impressed by *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta* when he found it to be popular among brahmins of southern India and had a copy made to take back to Puri. An anthology of Sanskrit verses by various poets that had a considerable influence on later vernacular poetry was *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, compiled by Shridharadasa in 1205.

104 For more discussion of this theme (with reference to *Gītagovinda*), see Siegel, pp. 178-84.

established Vaishnava form of ritual. A theologian as well as a poet, he was the foremost representative of a circle of scholars who produced Sanskrit works, either in the scriptural style of a Purana or *saṃhitā*, or using such classical poetic forms as the *kāvya*, *campū*, and *nāṭaka*, that expressed and gave sanction to developments in the worship of Krishna that had taken place in the preceding centuries. Rup and Jiv Goswami, Krishnadas Kaviraj, Kavikarnapura (Paramanand Sen), and later Vishwanath Chakravarti, were some of the *literati* of the Gaudiya Sampraday who retold the Krishna story with special emphasis on his sports in Vrindaban. Generally they went in for a stilted, rhetorical, and mannered style that featured prolix and euphuistic descriptions, endless elaboration of minutiae, and classification of sentiments in terms of aesthetic theory.[105]

Devotional poets familiar with the works of Rup Goswami and his followers conveyed their ideas through the medium of vernacular poetry. This type of literature was the most important medium for the propagation of devotion to Krishna among the masses. Thousands of devotional lyrics were composed in Bengali, and from the sixteenth century onwards poets writing in the Braj dialect proliferated in all sects devoted to Krishna.[106] Their works constitute a collective tradition that makes use of stereotyped themes, conceits, and situations in which there is seldom a hint of idiosyncrasy. This does not mean that all the poems are more or less of the same quality, but that there is a relatively small number of outstanding poems amid a vast sea of standard and fairly indifferent versification. The nature of the lyrics themselves, as well as the fact that they were initially transmitted by means of oral performance, gave plenty of scope for improvisation, expansion, and interpolation. A case in point is *Sūr sāgar*, the most famous anthology of Braj lyrics. They are all attributed to a poet named Surdas, who flourished in the first half of the sixteenth century. The oldest anthology of his work, compiled in 1582, contains only 241 poems, whereas the standard modern edition of the *Sūr sāgar* contains well over four thousand, arranged in such a way as to follow the structure of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.[107] This kind of inflation can also be observed in *Paramānand sāgar*, an anthology of the poems of Paramanandadas. The oldest manuscript, copied in around 1600, contains a mere 150 poems, a later one copied in about 1800 has 1,101, and a modern published edition has almost 1,400.[108] In both cases the interpolated poems have been inserted to make the anthologies more comprehensive, more suitable for liturgical use, or to substantiate the notion that the poets were adherents of the Pushtimarg, which in the case of Surdas is highly unlikely.

105 For a summary and appraisal of some of their works see De, pp.577 ff.

106 See McGregor 1984, pp.73 ff., for a survey of relevant authors and further bibliographical references. See also his introduction to Nandadas for an account of literary developments, and Zbavitel, pp. 176-84, for a concise survey of the thousands of Vaishnava poems composed in Bengali between the 15th and 19th centuries.

107 Viz. the edition of Vajpeyi. The 1582 ms. has been published in facsimile with an introduction by G. N. Bahura and K. Bryant. For the evolution of the *Sūr sāgar* see Hawley 1984, ch.2.

108 Viz. the edn. of Sharma, Shastri, and Tailang, to which reference is made here. Another edition of G. N. Shukla contains 900 poems.

The lyrics of these and many other devotional poets were sung regularly in the temples as part of the daily worship of Krishna. Most of them are written in the *pad* form - a poem usually consisting of three or four rhyming couplets with an opening line shorter than the rest that serves as a refrain. Anthologies of verse by some devotional poets that are venerated or used as liturgical texts are referred to as *vāṇī*, a term implying that they are the product of divine revelation. Many of the poets who lived in Braj described the adventures of Krishna in terms of the world around them, introducing themes and situations drawn from local culture. There are poems in the *Sūr sāgar* that describe the first feeding, ear piercing, and other ceremonies surrounding the birth of Krishna.[109] Other poems, written to be sung on festive occasions, describe some of the local customs that were incorporated into celebrations held in Vaishnava temples. Hariram Vyas, for example, describes how the birth of Radha was celebrated with *dadhikā̃dau* - a rite that consists of throwing around curds mixed with turmeric, as is still done in some Braj temples on the birthdays of Krishna, Radha, and Balarama.[110]

Theological ideas about Radha and her role as Krishna's creative power, or Shakti, were expressed in Sanskrit works belonging to one of the standard scriptural genres, but their influence was much less pervasive than that of the vernacular poetry. Tantric interpretations of the role of Krishna and Radha were particularly popular among Bengalis. In the *Mahābhāgavatapurāṇa*, for example, Shiva and the goddess Kali are said to have been reborn as Krishna and his beloved Radha.[111] Tantric adaptations of the Krishna and Radha theme are also found in the *Devībhāgavata*[112] and the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*. The latter, believed by most authorities to have been composed in the sixteenth century, is an extraordinary composition, quite different from an earlier Purana of the same name, or at best an extensively reworked version of it.[113] The largely spurious *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* attributes the last part of the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* to Rup Goswami, but the absence of specific topographical references suggests that it was not composed in Braj or by anyone familiar with its sacred places.[114] Judging from the content it would appear to be the product of a Bengali author who did not belong to the

109 *Sūr sāgar*, sequence of poems dealing with the arrival of Krishna in Gokul, nos. 633 ff.

110 Hariram Vyas, *pad* nos. 611, 615.

111 Chap. 149. For discussion of the work see Hazra 1958-79, vol. 2 pp.320 ff.

112 For summary and bibliography of the work see Rocher, pp. 167-72.

113 Rawal notes that the oldest listed ms. is dated 1692. See also Rocher, pp. 160-3, Hazra 1975, pp. 166-7, and Farquhar, pp. 240, 271, 376, who thought the *Kṛṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa* to be a late interpolation by a Nimbarki author. De, pp.11-12, without adducing any supporting evidence, accepts the suggestion that it pre-dates Jayadeva. Dimock, pp. 210-11, makes the plausible suggestion that it is influenced by the Sahajiyas. Brown, pp. 2-6, refers to catalogued mss. and printed versions, discusses its dating in chapter 2, and its possible milieu in chapter 11. He concludes that the evidence suggests that it was written in the 15th or 16th century.

114 *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* 3.14.19.39. Thirty-three groves or forests named after plants are mentioned in this Purana, including the traditional twelve *vana* of Braj, 28.160 ff., but there is no further specification of their location.

Vrindaban circle, since it is not cited by any of the Goswamis who lived there and does not appear to have had any influence on the Braj poets.[115] The story of Krishna and Radha is given in the latter part of the work, entitled *Kṛṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa*. It is full of repetitive and overblown descriptions of endless sexual encounters and orgies, replete with hyperbolic and tedious descriptions of the Gopis, their orgasms, and the millions of pleasure domes, bowers, and gem-encrusted dancing circles in which the participants disport themselves. It amounts to sanctified soft-porn, as relentless as *My Secret Life* or *Les 120 journées de Sodome*.

Another Sanskrit version of the Krishna story, which gives a truer reflection of developments in Braj, is *Gargasaṃhitā*, probably composed some time after the sixteenth century by a member of the Pushtimarg.[116] The narrative begins with an account of the descent to earth of Krishna, Radha, their entourage, and the whole area of Braj ('the eighty-four *krośa* area around Mathura'). Apart from the usual episodes in the life of Krishna, it contains additional information about Govardhan, stories about groups of Gopis from different parts of India, and a pilgrimage undertaken by Balarama in the course of which he defeats a demon called Kola (an event believed to have taken place at Aligarh). The eighth book describes the adventures of Balarama in some detail, and the tenth book contains a narrative of a return visit made by Krishna to Braj, during which he meets Radha and dances the *rāsa* with her once again. It concludes with an account of the Kurukshetra battle, the annihilation of the Yadavas, the submergence of Dwarka, and the return of all the participants to Goloka.[117]

33 Radha

The acceptance of Radha as the foremost of the Gopis and Krishna's consort is the most significant development in his mythology since the end of the first millennium. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* only went so far as to say that in the midst of the *rāsa* dance he departed with a favourite Gopi, whom he eventually abandoned just like the others. Later versions of the story show less concern for the 'heroic lover' who dallies with any number of women and turn their attention to the 'romantic lover' who is attracted to a single, irreplacable mistress whom he would rather serve and adore than vanquish and demand.[118] Krishna's intimate and exclusive relationship with Radha came to predominate over his more diffuse communion with all of the Gopis. Radha became so important in theology that later commentators, feeling obliged to find a reference to her in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, usually identify her with the Gopi that Krishna took with him when he disappeared during the *rāsa*.[119] Some

115 Some verses dealing with *janmāṣṭamī* are quoted in Gopal Bhatt's *Haribhaktivilāsa*, but they may well derive from an older work on ritual that was incorporated into the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*.

116 See below §6.2 for details of date and authorship.

117 Some other treatments of the Krishna story, such as Jiv Goswami's *Gopālacampū*, also describe the reunion of Krishna and the Gopis at Kurukshetra (2.23-24).

118 Here I have paraphrased Kakar 1985, p.77.

119 Stressing the use of *ārādhita* in BhP 10.30.28.

even go as far as to trace her name in Vedic occurences of words derived from the root *rādh-* ('succeed, be accomplished, propitiate, gratify'), but the most that can be said is that her name means 'perfection' or 'success' (Vedic *rādhas*), and that the use of *rādhaspati* as an epithet of Indra may be yet another incidence of the transfer of elements of Indra to Krishna, but there is no indication of any personality comparable with Krishna's Radha.[120] Early Tamil sources mention Krishna dancing with Pinnai or Nappinnai, a cowherd wife he won after fighting seven bulls, but the theme is either independent from the original Krishna story, an assimilation of the dance described in the *Harivaṃśa*, or some variant of the episode retold in terms of southern folk traditions.[121]

Radha, or Radhika, is first known to us from anthologies of secular verse, mainly in Prakrit and Apabhransha, compiled from the third century onwards.[122] Exactly when she became universally acknowledged as his consort is uncertain. Lakshmidhara referred to a pond or tank (*kuṇḍa*) named after her in his *māhātmya* of Mathura, written in the first part of the twelfth century, which may be the same as the modern Radhakund. A few decades later Jayadeva, in his *Gītagovinda*, brought together elements from secular poetic tradition and the themes of the *rāsa* dance and love in separation, which had been given so much emphasis in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. Jayadeva also developed the theme of *māna* - Radha's becoming offended and temporarily withdrawing herself when she suspects Krishna of infidelity. A Sakhi, one of her companions, is obliged to act as a go-between and effect a reconciliation between them. The imagery and phraseology used by Jayadeva were endlessly paraphrased by later vernacular poets, and his work was probably the main inspiration for the concept of Krishna and Radha retiring to a bower (*kuñja*) in order to make love.

The illicit nature of the relationship between Krishna and Radha exercised a particular fascination. The poets dwelt increasingly on Radha as someone swept away by her feelings, regardless of conventional propriety. Baru Chandidas depicts her as a shy and simple twelve year-old who is gradually won over by the tricks and scheming of the wily Krishna. Unable to resist his power, she succumbs to him, but although he is dominant, Krishna has to win her over and cajole her into making love to him. As Radha became more important, so the interdependence between her and Krishna is emphasized. Poems dealing with the theme of *māna* describe how distraught and penitent Krishna becomes when Radha refuses to see him. There are also some examples to be found of role reversal, in which Krishna does the kind of things normally expected of a devotee. Jayadeva describes how Krishna asks Radha to place her foot on his head as a sign of his submission to her.[123] The poet Dhruvdas describes how Krishna reacts when he comes across Radha's footprints: 'seeing those places where the ground was marked with the maiden's feet, that

120 See Miller 1975, pp.668-9, who also refers to Radha as the name of a *nakṣatra*.

121 See Hudson, Hardy 1983/1, pp.221-5, and Shulman, pp.285-6.

122 See Miller 1975 & 1977 (introduction), Hardy ibid., pp.56-65, 104-115, for references. The oldest is Hala's *Sattasāī (Gāthāsaptaśati)*, but most references date from the 8th century onwards.

123 *Gītagovinda* 10.8.

paragon of lovers rolled in the dust that he knew her feet had touched.'[124] Raskhan, in a well-known poem, tells how he searched the scriptures for some account of Krishna's transcendent beauty, but failed to find any adequate description. It was only when he collapsed in exhaustion that he was finally granted a vision of Krishna - and saw him secluded in a bower massaging the feet of Radha.[125] Poets sometimes refer to Krishna repeating the name of Radha when he longs for her, just as devotees repeat the name of Krishna.

Theologically Radha is different from other Hindu goddesses. She is neither a mother, creator, or personification of wifely virtues, nor has she anything to do with fertility. She has no independent function outside of her relationship with Krishna, in which she plays the role of a divine and fair-complexioned mistress with whom the dark Krishna can experience cosmic bliss. As the supreme consort of Krishna, she represents all the other Gopis, and thus the souls of his human devotees. It is claimed that the followers of Nimbarka were the first to worship her in conjunction with Krishna, but the oldest and most definitive theological accounts of her are those of Rup and Jiv Goswami. They describe her as the mistress of Vrindaban (*vṛndāvaneśvarī*), the eternal consort and Shakti of Krishna, identified specifically with the *hlādinīmahāśakti* of Tantra, the power by means of which Krishna is able to experience his bliss, while the other Gopis are various aspects or emanations of her.[126]

34 The entourage of Krishna and Radha

Texts written from the early part of the sixteenth century onwards give more information about the families of Krishna and Radha. After moving from the neighbourhood of Gokul, Nanda is said to have settled at Nandishwar or Nandagram (modern Nandgaon). Radha, who becomes a participant in some of the episodes in Krishna's childhood, is thought to have lived at nearby Barsana, referred to in the earliest Braj sources as *varasānau* and in the Sanskrit ones as *vṛṣabhānupura*, named after her father Vrishabhanu. The devotional poets say that she was born at her mother's native village of Rawal, or in her father's house at Barsana.[127] *Gopālakelicandrikā*, a Sanskrit drama written in the sixteenth century or later by a Gujarati brahmin named Ramakrishna, also mentions Radha's

124 *Śrī vṛndāvan sat līlā* 37 (*Bayālīs līlā*, p. 15): *kūvari carana aṃkita dharani, dekhata j[i]hi j[i] hi ṭhaura / priyā carana raja jāni kai, luṭhata rasika siramaura.*

125 Raskhan, p. 76. The poem begins *brahma mẽ ḍhũḍhyau purānana gānana...*, and ends *dekho duryau vaha kuṃja kuṭīra mẽ, baiṭhau paloṭata rādhikā pāyana.*

126 De, pp.288, 352-3, 410-11. The *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* even suggests that she is superior to him, but it holds onto the view that, as *prakṛti*, she is manifested from Krishna and dissolves back into him at the end of an aeon (cf. Brown, p. 139). See Brajvallabhsharan (ed.) 1966 for a collection of articles by various devotees on the concept of Radha in different Sampradays. See Hawley 1984, ch.3, esp. pp. 89-91, for Radha as portrayed in *Sūr sāgar*.

127 Poets are ambivalent about where her birth actually took place, see for example Hariram Vyas, *pad* 609-11, 614-115, Paramanandadas *pad* 46 & 52, Govindswami *pad* 19-23.

parents and says that they lived at Rawal. *Gargasaṃhitā* talks of there being nine Nandas, nine Upanandas ('junior Nandas'), and six Vrishabhanus, all of them herdsmen who graze their cattle in Braj.

Some writers of the Gaudiya Sampraday say that Nanda's father was called Parjanya and that he obtained five sons by performing austerities beside a pond near Nandgaon.[128] The seventeenth-century poet Hariray relates the visit of Nanda's genealogist (*ḍhāṛhī*) shortly after the birth of Krishna. He recites the child's supposed lineage, beginning with Abhirabhanu who settled at Mahaban, followed by his descendants Suraj Chand, Bhilakabahu, Kanana Sasi, Kanjanabha, Birabhana, Dharamadhira, Kalinda, his ten sons, and the nine Nandas.[129] A different and probably earlier genealogy is given in a *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* ascribed to the *Ādipurāṇa*, according to which Nanda was the youngest son of Chitrasena, who was in turn the youngest son of Kalamedhu, great-grandson of Abhirabhanu, the chief of the herdsmen of Mahaban.

The same text also gives the genealogy of Vrishabhanu, naming his father as Mahabhanu and his grandfather as Arshtisenu of Arshtigrama, probably referring to Radhakund. Her mother is here named Manavi, though in most sources, including the earliest Braj poets, she is called Kirti or Kirtida.[130] Mukhara is the name given to Radha's maternal grandmother in the dramas of Rup Goswami (*Vidagdhamādhava* and *Lalitamādhava*), in *Govindalīlāmṛta* by Krishnadas Kaviraj, and in some later works. According to Rup Goswami she was once the wet nurse of Yashoda.

These same sources also feature Radha's husband Abhimanyu and her mother-in-law Jatila. Here Radha is a married woman, like the other Gopis, and has a mother-in-law who does all she can to stop her from coming into contact with Krishna. These characters make their first appearance in the poems of Baru Chandidas, where Radha (daughter of Sagara and Padma) is married to Aihana (or Abhimanyu) who is a maternal uncle of Krishna. Radha's great-aunt (referred to as *baṛāyi*, 'grandma') helps to contrive meetings with Krishna, which Aihana's mother is always trying to prevent. Works written by devotees who lived in Braj follow the dramas of Rup Goswami, in which the role of Radha's great-aunt is played by Paurnamasi, who lived near Nandgaon. She is a white-haired old woman who personifies the moonlight, a phenomenon that stimulates the love-play of Krishna and Radha. Sometimes she is assisted in her match-making by her granddaughter Nandimukhi. In the last act of *Gopālakelicandrikā* she appears with another woman called Shardi, the two of them personifying the spring and autumn full moon nights respectively

Apart from Nanda and Yashoda, none of the relatives of Krishna and Radha plays an important part in literature or devotional activity, though Radha's parents and grandparents are enshrined in temples at Barsana. More interest is shown in

128 VVS 60, and later by Narahari and Sundarlal, who name the sons as Nanda, Upananda, Abhinanda, Sananda, and Nandana.

129 Hariray, ed. Mital, pp.23-5.

130 AP, *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* ch.12, entitled *Rādhākulakathana*. Kirti is mentioned, for example, in Shribhatt's *Yugal śatak*. In *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* (*Kṛṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa* 17) Vrishabhanu is the son of Surabhanu and marries Kalavati.

some of Krishna's friends, and above all in the close companions of Radha, known as Sakhis. They are daughters of herdsmen, like Radha herself, but they are more important than ordinary Gopis because they help to promote her love-play with Krishna by acting as go-betweens, contriving meetings, and decorating the bowers where they spend the night together. These hand-maidens of Radha represent the most privileged kind of devotee because they witness the most intimate pastimes of Krishna and Radha. Rup Goswami was probably influential in establishing their importance, and their number was considerably expanded by poets and theologians of the sixteenth century.[131]

The standard number of Sakhis is eight, but their names vary and some texts mention many more besides. The idea probably derives from Tantric conceptions of a deity as occupying the centre of a lotus, surrounded by eight Sakhis on the innermost ring of petals, as in *yantra* diagrams devised for meditation upon Vishnu and Kama, the god of love.[132] In *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā* the eight Sakhis of Radha are named as Lalita, Vishakha, Vijaya, Nanda, Jayanti, Jaya, Sumukha, and Subhaga,[133]. A more common enumeration, given by most writers of the Gaudiya Sampraday, is Vishakha, Lalita, Chitra, Indulekha, Champakalata, Rangadevi, Tungavidya (or Tungabhadra), and Sudevi.[134] Alternatively, their names are Lalita, Vishakha, Champakalata, Chandrabhaga, Bhama, Padma, Vimala, and Chandrarekha - the Sakhis with whom the Pushtimarg identifies its group of eight 'Ashtachhap' poets. Other Sakhi names met with in the literature are Chandravali, Chameli, Shaivya, Shyamala, and Vrinda. Baru Chandidas used the name Chandravali as an epithet of Radha, but in the plays of Rup Goswami she is Krishna's first sweetheart, whom he neglects when he becomes infatuated with the younger Radha. She thus plays the role of a jealous and offended mistress and tries to lure him back with the help of two friends called Padma and Shaivya. Chandravali and Radha are also rivals for Krishna's affection in *Kanhāvat*, a Sufi adaptation of the Krishna story written in 1541-42 and attributed to Muhammad Malik Jayasi.[135] In this work Krishna is married to Radha, but is attracted by the younger Chandravali, who is said to dwell in the moon. Krishna sports with Radha by day and with Chandravali by night, but ultimately choses to stay with the former.

Some of the Sakhis, in pilgrimage itineraries, are associated with villages in the neighbourhood of Barsana. Some works assign certain colours to them, specify their particular function in promoting the love play of the divine couple, and name

131 Rup Goswami gives the names, forms, colours, nature, and dress of a number of them in *Rādhākṛṣṇagaṇoddeśadīpikā*. The oldest text to name any of the Gopis is BC, which says that Chandrarekha, Ghoshasundari, Vanamala, and Mrigakshi keep company with Radha. There are Gopis who accompany Radha in the poems of Baru Chandidas and take part in certain incidents, but they are not named and do not act as intermediaries. Several are also mentioned in VVS.

132 See G. C. Tripathi in Eschmann et al. (eds.), pp.42 ff.

133 *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā* 31.69 & 32.

134 E.g. AY 358 ff., naming *Gautamīyatantra* as its source.

135 Jayasi, author of the more accomplished and celebrated *Padmāvat*, is said at the beginning of *Kanhāvat* to have composed it in Hijri 947.

various subsidiary Sakhis who attend upon the main eight.[136] An extremely elaborate listing of Sakhis is given by Harivyasdev in the *Siddhānt sukh* section of his *Mahāvāṇī*. He begins with Rangadevi, whom he identifies with Nimbarka, and then lists another seven who are said to have become incarnate as other gurus in the poet's sect. Each of these Sakhis has eight others in attendance upon her, and they in turn have eight more in attendance upon them, thus giving a total of five hundred and eighty four Sakhis, each of whom is mentioned by name.

The *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā* says that Vrinda is the presiding Shakti of the forest named after her.[137] Rup Goswami is believed to have discovered an image of Vrindadevi that was installed in a side chapel of the Govind Dev temple in Vrindaban. He describes her as a messenger of Radha or go-between (*dūtī*) who lived in Vrindaban and was always engrossed in the divine couple.[138] He names her parents as Chandrabhanu and Phullara, her husband as Mahipala, and her sister as Manjari. Krishnadas Kaviraj says that Vrinda is one of the most prominent Sakhis and that Vrindaban is named after her because of the efforts she made to establish and cultivate it.[139] Other poets refer to her as one who makes the flowers bloom and supplies Vrindaban with foliage in order to provide a pleasant setting for Krishna and Radha.

The *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* says that she lived in Vrindaban, remained absorbed in meditation there, and eventually became a consort of Krishna in his heavenly abode. It also says that she is equivalent to the sacred basil plant (*tulsī*), that as a result of a curse uttered by the sage Durvasa she was first obliged to marry Shankhachuda, and that she is a form of Radha who was cursed by Shridama to be born on earth as a forest goddess. In this form she became the daughter of a king called Kedara, who practised austerities in Vrindaban and was later married to Jalandhara.[140] This is partly derived from an older myth that appears in two different versions in the *Padma-* and *Śivapurāṇa*.[141] The former tells how Vrinda, a woman who had performed austerities in the forest named after her, immolated herself on the pyre of her demonic husband Jalandhara, an act which pleased Vishnu and inspired him to plant myrobalan, basil, and jasmine on the place where her ashes lay. The other Purana gives a Shaiva version of the story in which Vishnu impersonates first Jalandhara and then Shankhachuda in order to seduce their wives - Vrinda in the first instance and Tulasi in the second. Here Shankhachuda is an incarnation of Sudama, a friend of Krishna who had been cursed by Radha. As compensation for her maltreatment by Vishnu, Shiva grants a boon whereby Tulasi becomes the patron goddess of the basil plant and is worshipped in conjunction with the sacred *śālagrām* stone, symbolizing the relationship between her and Vishnu. To go further back in time, there is a remote possibility that she is

136 E.g. AY ibid., Dhruvdas *Sabhā maṇḍal līlā* and *Ras muktāvalī līlā*, nos.17-18 in *Bayālīs līlā*. Some listings are tabulated by Rawat 1977, pp.10, 139-40, 270. See also n.131. above.

137 *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā* 2.4.93-170, 3.1.155, 3.2.12.

138 *Rādhākṛṣṇagaṇoddeśadīpikā*, pp.64-6.

139 GLA 9.52.

140 *Kṛṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa* 2-3, 14.191-209, 17.193-219.

141 PP 6.3-16 & 102-3, *Śivapurāṇa* 2.5.14.41.

connected with a Yakshi (female spirit) of Mathura called Vendi who is mentioned in the Gilgit manuscripts.[142]

Like Radha, Krishna also has a retinue of companions (Sakhas). Rup Goswami assigns a particular duty to each of them,[143] but the concept did not have the same appeal as that of the Sakhis. Only two of Krishna's companions appear regularly in popular literature. One of them, called Shridama, first appeared in earlier narratives as one of the boys who played at the Bhandira tree when they were attacked by Pralamba. In an interpolation in the southern recension of the *Harivaṃśa* he is the son of Yashoda's brother,[144] but in later northern sources he is said to be the brother of Radha. He appears in adventures with Krishna in *Padmapurāṇa* and *Gargasaṃhitā*, and plays a more important part in *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*, where he is described as a friend of Krishna rather than a brother of Radha. This Purana relates how Radha refused to see Krishna when she learnt that he was having an affair with a woman called Viraja. Shridama, annoyed at her display of pique, began to argue with her. This resulted in them laying a curse on each other to the effect that she would be born on earth as Radha and he as Shankhachuda, the demon who later married Vrinda. This story provides a new motive for Krishna's incarnation: that he wanted to accompany Radha and sport with her during her period of exile from heaven. He therefore descended to earth along with his paradise and retinue, but, owing to Shridama's curse, he eventually had to abandon her and depart for Mathura and Dwarka. Madhumangala, or Mansukha, plays the role of Krishna's accomplice in some of his mischievous escapades. Rup Goswami, in his *Vidagdhamādhava*, says that he is a grandson of Paurnamasi. In this work and in modern *rās līlā* performances his role is that of the traditional jester or buffoon (*vidūṣaka*).

35 Krishna extorts curds from the Gopis

Krishna's extortion of curds from the Gopis is the most popular of the episodes added to the narrative by later texts. It is usually called the *dān līlā* because it describes how Krishna intercepts the girls and demands a toll (*dān*) on the pots of curd that they are carrying to market. They refuse to give him anything because they know that he is not authorized to make any such demand. A lively exchange ensues, culminating in Krishna attacking the girls, smashing their pots, and stealing the curd. It is a continuation of the theme of Krishna's theft of butter in his infancy, but with more aggression and sexuality, for he usually goes so far as to molest the Gopis, break their necklaces, and rip their bodices.[145] In most accounts of this incident he accosts the girls as they enter a gully or narrow passage between two hills, and is usually accompanied by a group of cowherd boys who also take part in the tussle. Several versions of the incident say that it took place at Sankari Khori in Barsana, where it is re-enacted every year; others locate it at Dan Ghati - the place

142 3, pt. I pp.2-17 (*veṇḍī*).
143 See Rup Goswami, op. cit.
144 HV (ed. Vaidya), vol.I pp.xliii-iv. See Hudson in Hawley and Wulff (eds.), p.241.
145 For further discussion of the theme see Hawley 1983, pp.144-7, 165, 185-190.

where the Mathura-Dig road crosses the Govardhan hill, and there are some who say that it happened at Vrindaban or between Gokul and Mathura.[146] In fact the term Sankari Khori or Gali may refer to any narrow lane in which Krishna meets or intercepts Radha,[147] though the place in Barsana bearing the name was known in the sixteenth century.

The episode is depicted in iconography from at least the eighth century,[148] but the earliest extended literary treatment of the theme is found in a sequence of over a hundred poems by Baru Chandidas.[149] The theme is taken up by Rup Goswami in his *Dānakelikaumudī*, a drama in one act that was probably composed some time between 1533 and 1541.[150] In this version Radha and the Gopis are intercepted by Krishna while they are carrying pots of ghee to be used in a sacrifice to be performed near Govind Kund, a tank beside the hill of Govardhan. Krishna, proclaiming himself lord of the forest and posing as a revenue official, demands that they pay him a toll. He goes on to declare that the girls should also be taxed for their physical charms. A dialogue full of sexual inuendo and punning ensues between Krishna and his companions and Radha and her Sakhis. Eventually Paurnamasi intervenes to suggest that Radha be offered to Krishna as payment, and assures him that Radha will come to meet him that night.

In his old age Raghunathdas, to whom Rup dedicated his *Dānakelikaumudī*, produced a similar version of the incident entitled *Dānakelicintāmaṇi*. He locates the incident at the tank called Dan Nivartan Kund near the Govardhan hill where Krishna and his friends set up an octroi.[151] In 1572 Kavikarnapura included a similar version in the third act (called *dānavinoda*) of his drama *Caitanyacandrodaya*.[152] More popular versions of the theme were written in the Braj dialect, notable examples being the relevant poems in *Sūr sāgar* and compositions entitled

146 The first location, also called Sankari Gali, is mentioned in *Sūr sāgar, pad* 945-6, Madhuriji's *Dān mādhurī, pad* 75 of Surdas Madanmohan, *pad* 556 of Govindswami, *pad* 173 & 234 of Paramanandadas. Dan Ghati is specified in the latter's *pad* 628, and the road between Gokul and Mathura in his *pad* 605. Hariray (*Dān līlā*, ed. Mital, pp.68 ff.) talks of a Gahwarban at Govardhan. Vrindaban is specified in *pad* 641 of Paramanandadas and by Dhruvdas (*Bayālīs līlā* no. 42), who says that Krishna waited for Radha at Bansi Bat.

147 E.g. Paramanandadas, *pad* 443, referring to a *sā̃karī galī* at Nandgaon, and Vrinda, *Yamak satsāī* 471, p.242: *merī kānha nisā karī, naĩka sā̃ karī nāhi / milana sā̃ka rī kuñja kī garī sā̃karī māhi.*

148 See Hawley ibid., pp.58-9. A terracotta plaque in the museum at Bikaner, perhaps dating from the 5th century, has been described as representing this incident, but the interpretation is open to doubt, cf. Preciado-Solis, pp.105-6.

149 The sequence is entitled *Dān khaṇḍ*, and is by far the longest section of his *Śrīkṛṣna kīrtan*.

150 It may, however, be a revised version of a work written before Rup Goswami met Chaitanya, cf. De, pp.161-2.

151 *ghaṭṭīpaṭṭa*, cf. De, pp.121, 123, 616-7 and the *Dānanivartanakuṇḍāṣṭaka* in the *Stavāvalī* of Raghunathdas. A work called *Dānacarita* is also ascribed to him.

152 De, pp.44, 571. There is also a work called *Dānakhaṇḍa* attributed to Gopal Bhatt (ibid. pp.123-4). See B. Majumdar, p.199, for some discussion of the antiquity of the theme in Vaishnava literature. The theme also appears in *Kanhāvat*, 93 ff.

Dān līlā by Kumbhandas, and Dhruvdas. There are several variations on the theme of Krishna intercepting Radha while she is on her way to market. Barū Chandidas wrote a sequence of poems on the theme of *naukā līlā*, in which Krishna poses as a ferryman and contrives to make love to Radha in a boat as he ferries her across the Yamuna.

36 *Līlā* of the eight watches of the day

Several later texts give an account of the various sports or pastimes (*līlā*) of Krishna, Radha, and the Gopis that take place throughout the day. The sequence of events corresponds both to the daily ritual cycle of the temples and to the notion that their play is eternal. Because each of the episodes takes place during one of the eight watches of the day, the cycle is referred to as *aṣṭayāmalīlā* or *aṣṭakālikālīlā*. The cycle is summarized in the thirty-sixth chapter of *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā* and in a short text by Rup Goswami entitled *Smaraṇamaṅgala*. It is described at length by Krishnadas Kaviraj in his elaborate *Govindalīlāmṛta*. Notable examples in the Braj dialect are the *Sevā sukh* section of Harivyasdev's *Mahāvāṇī*, *Ras mūktāvalī līlā* by Dhruvdas, *Gauraṅg aṣṭayām* by Chandragopal (in which it is applied to the worship of images of Chaitanya), and later works entitled *Aṣṭayām* by Vrindabanchandradas, Damodarvar, Chacha Vrindabandas, and Ativallabhji.[153] Several anthologies of lyrics by various poets were arranged into sections that could be sung in temples during the different watches.

In his *Govindalīlāmṛta* Krishnadas Kaviraj declares that the purpose of the work is to inspire devotees to contemplate the various pastimes of Krishna and Radha as they take place throughout the day.[154] He begins the cycle with the first watch (*prātaḥ*) when Vrinda calls upon the birds to wake Krishna and Radha, who have been sleeping together after meeting at night to dance the *rāsa*. They emerge dishevelled from the bower, return to their respective homes, and creep into bed before the rest of the household awakes. During the second watch (*pūrvāhna*) Paurnamasi visits Nanda's house in order to see Krishna wake up. She notices the marks caused by his love play with Radha, but assumes that they are the result of his having wrestled playfully with Balarama before falling asleep. Krishna gets up, plays with the other boys, and goes to milk the cows, while Radha is woken by her mother-in-law and begins her daily routine. During the third watch (*madhyāhna*) Krishna goes out into the forest to graze the cattle while Radha and the Sakhis go to worship Surya. Radha's mother-in-law had encouraged the Sakhis to take her with them in order to keep her occupied because she suspected that Krishna would attempt to meet her. Nevertheless, they do meet each other in the forest and during

153 The version by Dhruvdas is in *Bayālīs līlā*, 18.76 ff. Chandragopal's version is referred to by P. Mital 1962, p.165, and the last three are mentioned by Lalitacharan Goswami, p.493. For Vrindabanchandradas see below (AY). An adaptation of the cycle to the context of Rama worship is attributed to Nabhadas, cf. B. P. Singh, p.385, and in a secular context by Deva, cf. McGregor 1984, p.178.

154 GLA 23.94: *sevā'sya yogyavapuṣā'niśam atracāsyā rāgādhvasādhakajanmair manasā vidheyā.*

the fourth watch (*aparāhna*) amuse themselves on the banks of Radhakund. After playing in a swing and frolicking in the water of the lake, Radha returns home, and Krishna, during the fifth watch (*sāyāhna*), brings the cattle back to the village while playing his flute. During the sixth watch (*pradoṣa*) Krishna and Radha eat their evening meal and look at each other from the gazebos of their respective homes. During the seventh watch (*naiśa/madhyarātrī*) everyone goes to sleep and Krishna and Radha steal away for their tryst in Vrindaban. During the eighth watch (*niśānta*) they dance on the banks of the Yamuna, frolic in the water, and finally retire to their bower.

Govindalīlāmṛta, like other examples of the genre, intersperses this daily routine with accounts of various apocryphal incidents. Such episodes often form the subject of separate poems or a *rās līlā* performance, and usually revolve around some humorous trick or ploy instigated by one of the Sakhis or by Krishna himself in order to contrive a meeting between him and Radha. The tenth chapter of *Govindalīlāmṛta*, for instance, includes an episode in which Krishna's flute is stolen by one of the girls, in this case Shaivya, a companion of Chandravali. The theft of the flute is a popular theme, the thief in most cases being Radha. It is first found in the poems of Baru Chandidas, in a section entitled *Vaṃśī khaṇḍ*. Here Radha refuses to return the flute unless Krishna promises to remain faithful to her.

Raghunathdas wrote a poem called *Muktacarita* which tells how the Gopis refused to hand over their pearls to Krishna, and so he asked Yashoda to give him some. He sowed them in the soil of Vrindaban, where they grew into pearl-bearing creepers. On seeing this, the Gopis sowed their pearls as well, but the creepers that grew were covered with thorns. Radha and the Gopis then offered to buy Krishna's pearls, but he refused to sell them. This led to an argument in which Krishna declared that the only form of payment acceptable to him would be for the Gopis to let him embrace and fondle them. The dispute is finally settled amicably through the intervention of Nandimukhi.

Disguise or exchange of clothes (*chadma līlā*) is another popular theme, often combined with a certain amount of altercation and reconciliation. Sometimes Krishna dresses up as a Yogi in order to trick the girls or convey some message to Radha. In some poems (such as those entitled *Sājhī līlā*) Krishna manages to infiltrate the company of the Gopis by dressing up as a girl and calling himself Sanvari, a feminine form of his epithet *sāvaro*, meaning 'dark'. In *Gopālakelicandrikā* the Sakhi Lalita encourages Krishna to dress up as a Gopi in order to gain access to Radha's home. There he manages to meet her, draw her portrait, play with her dolls, and meet her mother. Sometimes he and Radha dress up as each other by exchanging clothes, a pastime interpreted theologically as being symbolic of their ultimate unity. The earliest poet to mention this is Bilvamangala, who describes how Krishna and Radha avoid each other after a quarrel. Later on Radha saw Krishna approaching dressed as a girl. Taking him for one of her friends she affectionately embraces him, upon which he tenderly kissed her and she turned into Krishna.[155]

155 *Bilvamaṅgalastava* 2.75.

37 The marriage of Krishna and Radha

All commentators are faced with the problem of justifying Krishna's relationship with Radha and the Gopis. In all the authoritative sources it is clear that the women are married to the herdsmen. In the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* doubts raised about the propriety of his touching other mens' wives during the *rāsa* dance are answered with the argument that a being as powerful as Krishna, who controls and dwells in all souls, who manifested himself and appeared on earth in order to experience the bliss within himself, bestow his grace, and inspire us with devotion, is not governed by the rules applicable to ordinary people. Furthermore, the herdsmen were not jealous of Krishna because, as a result of his magic power, they were unaware of the fact that their wives were absent.[156] Later commentators provide other more or less ingenious excuses for the adulterous behaviour of Krishna and the Gopis. Ultimately their justifications rest on the argument that his divine activity cannot be assessed in terms of our mundane and conventional morality.

The nature of Krishna's relationship with the Gopis was of particular concern to theologians of the Gaudiya Sampraday. There are two opposing points of view among them: some argued that Radha and the Gopis belonged to Krishna, that they were in effect his own wives (*svakīyā*); others defended the notion that they belonged to other men (that they were *parakīyā*).[157] Apart from the fact that there is no question of marriage in the scriptural sources, poetic convention, at least until the time of Baru Chandidas, required that they remain unmarried because extra-marital love was regarded as being more intense and spontaneous. Rup Goswami and his successors pursued various lines of argument: that adultery was not in principle committed; that some kind of unmanifested marriage took place; that the Gopis obtained Krishna as if he were their husband, not their lover, and are therefore to be considered as properly belonging to him; that the Gopis had never consummated their marriage with their husbands, and the latter had been deceived by Krishna's magic power into believing the contrary; that the Gopis are manifestations of Krishna's power and therefore belong to him; that the Gopis are in essence always with Krishna, and that their husbands were married only to secondary or illusory manifestations of them.

One way of resolving the problem was to effect a marriage between Krishna and Radha, thereby justifying, retrospectively at least, their premarital dalliance. The theologically convenient notion that they were married was accepted by many writers, but there is sometimes inconsistency within sectarian circles, or even in the works of individual authors. Rup Goswami presents Radha as the wife of Abhimanyu in *Vidagdhamādhava*, and in *Lalitamādhava* describes her marriage with Krishna at the 'New Vrindaban' in Dwarka.[158] Their marriage is also described in the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* and by Jiv Goswami in the latter part of his *Gopālacampū*. They are also married in *Kanhāvat*, but here the theme exemplifies a convention in Sufi literature whereby Radha plays the role of a first wife who must suffer when her husband is attracted to a younger woman. Their marriage is

156 BhP 33.27-40.
157 De, pp.204-5, 348-350, 410-11, Dimock, p.200 ff.
158 *Lalitamādhava*, act 10.

mentioned in *Gopālakelicandrikā*, but there is no conventional ceremony. Instead Lalita officiates at an informal *gandharva* wedding rite. In the fourth act Yashoda recalls how she and Kirti used to play together when they were young, and on one occasion performed a mock wedding with their dolls, promising that one day their children would marry each other. The engagement or wedding ceremony of Krishna and Radha occurs as a theme in the *Utsāh sukh* section of Harivyasdev's *Mahāvāṇī*, in some of the *Sūr sāgar* poems, and in the works of various poets of the Pushtimarg, including a poem called *Śyām sagāī* attributed to Nandadas.

In these and other later versions the marriage is usually described in terms of a Braj village wedding, as in a poem by Hariram Vyas dealing with various domestic rites and Krishna's wedding procession (*barāt*) from Nandgaon to Barsana.[159] Dhruvdas wrote some verses called *byāhulau* that describe how the Sakhis make arrangements for the wedding. The term *byāhulau* ('wedding') is used to refer to enactments of the marriage ceremony that are periodically performed with much pomp at the Radhavallabh temple in Vrindaban.[160]

The introduction of the marriage theme had no effect on the ideal of love in separation, for whether married to Radha or not, Krishna still abandons her when he migrates to Dwarka. Basically the question of whether they committed adultery is an ethical and theological problem that has only really bothered the more intellectual devotees. Most people are prepared to accept the ambivalence, being more concerned with the quality of their love rather than whether Radha should be regarded as a legally wedded wife or mistress.

38 Narada and Shiva change sex

An earlier myth about Narada becoming a woman was adapted in later texts to fit the Krishna story and underline the need for devotees to emulate the Gopis.[161] Originally Narada was ordered by Vishnu to bathe in a tank, as a result of which he turned into a woman. The reason for this penalty was his being so presumptuous as to expect to know the secrets of *māyā*, something that could even delude the gods. The female version of Narada married a king called Taladhvaja and, in the course of many years of sexual indulgence, gave birth to eight sons and many grandsons, but they were all killed in battle. Eventually Vishnu appeared in disguise and told Narada to bathe in another tank, as a result of which he regained his masculinity. Here Narada's becoming female is seen as a punishment for his arrogance, but in the versions relevant for Braj his experience as a woman is seen as a glimpse of a higher reality rather than a delusion, and both sexuality and femininity are

159 *pad* 721.

160 The poems are appended to *Bayālīs līlā*, pp. 293-5. Radhavallabh is the main deity of the poet's Sampraday. For mention of other Radhavallabhite poems on the marriage theme see Lalitacharan Goswami, pp.497-8.

161 For references and discussion of the older version of the Narada myth (*Devībhāgavata*, 6.28-30) see O'Flaherty 1984, pp.81 ff., and Shulman, pp.300-301 & 304, citing a Tamil adaptation in which the charioteer of the sun takes the form of a woman in order to watch the dance of Urvashi.

presented as positive factors. In these versions Narada is told by Vrinda to bathe in a lake called Pushpasaras (i.e. Kusum Sarovar), as a result of which he becomes the female Naradi and is able to join the Sakhis and participate in the erotic sports of Krishna. Later he became male again after bathing in Pushpasaras a second time or in some other lake to the south-east of it (i.e. Narad Kund).[162]

The story of Shiva wanting to watch the *rāsa* dance, but having to become a woman before he was able to do so, is a variant of the Narada myth that is popular in oral tradition and folk songs. Local people tell it to explain why the most famous Shiva temple in Vrindaban is called Gopishwar, 'Lord of the Gopis' or 'the Lord as a Gopi'. According to *Gargasaṃhitā*.[163] there was a sage called Asuri who lived on a mountain where he practised severe austerities, meditated on Krishna, and had visions of him with Radha. One night, however, he was unable to concentrate and felt a strong desire to see Krishna. He searched everywhere but could not find him, even when he went to the Vrindaban bower in heaven (*goloka*). Eventually he came before Shiva on Mount Kailash and asked if he had any idea where Krishna was to be found. Shiva, praising Asuri for his diligence in seeking Krishna, told him that he could find him dancing the *rāsa* with the Sakhis in the terrestrial Vrindaban. Shiva himself was intending to go there and invited Asuri to accompany him. Together they went to Braj (*vrajamaṇḍala*) and approached the bank of the Yamuna. Their path was blocked by female guardians who explained that Krishna was the only male who could participate in the *rāsa*, and that before going any further they would have to become Gopis by bathing in a pond called Manasarovara. Shiva and Asuri followed their instructions and, in the form of Gopis, were admitted into the area where the *rāsa* is performed. They marvelled at the dance and paid obeisance to Krishna. He explained that they had gained admittance by virtue of their prolonged asceticism and offered them a boon. They asked that they might permanently dwell in Vrindaban, a wish that was duly granted.

39 How Govardhan came to Braj

Gargasaṃhitā provides an explanation of how Govardhan came to Braj.[164] Initially it became manifest as a son of the mountain Drona on the western island of Shalmali. When the sage Pulastya saw it, he decided to have it moved to Kashi so that he could perform his austerities on it. Govardhan, however, was reluctant to go and made the excuse that he was too large to be transported. Drona, fearing that he would be cursed by Pulastya, allowed him to take Govardhan away with him. When they got as far as Braj, however, Govardhan remembered that it was his duty to be present there in order to participate in the sports of Krishna, and so he refused to let Pulastya carry him any further. This so annoyed the sage that he pronounced a curse to the effect that Govardhan would decrease in size by an amount equivalent to the size of a sesamum seed every day. The myth does not seem to have had much

162 SP 2.6.2-3, NP 2.80.9-32, PP 4.75.25-46.
163 GS 2.21-2.
164 GS 2.2.

currency. Narayan Bhatt gives an alternative explanation of Govardhan's arrival, saying that it was brought from the Himalayas by Hanuman.[165]

40 The reclamation of Braj

In order to link modern Braj with the mythological realm, as well as the terrestrial and transcendental planes on which Krishna performs his adventures, a myth was developed on the theme of the reclamation of Braj by Vajranabha. The basis for the myth is the tradition, mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*,[166] that Arjuna, while he was based at Indraprastha (Delhi), rehabilitated the Vrishnis under the leadership of Krishna's great-grandson Vajra. A relatively modern section of the *Skandapurāṇa* tells how Arjuna placed Vajranabha, the son of Krishna's grandson Aniruddha, in charge of those Yadavas who had survived the internecine warfare that followed the destruction of Dwarka.[167] Vajranabha complained to Parikshit that the domain he had been given control of (referred to as *mathurāmaṇḍala* or *vrajabhūmi*, i.e. modern Braj) needed to be repopulated. Parikshit summoned the sage Shandilya and asked for his advice. Shandilya, after extolling Krishna's pastimes with Radha and the Gopis, took Vajranabha on a tour of the places where they had occurred. He told Vajranabha that because these places were without guardians, he should establish some villages in the area and take care of the rivers, hills, tanks, and groves. He refers specifically to the establishment of settlements at Govardhan, Dirghapura (i.e. Dig), Mathura, Mahaban, Nandigrama (i.e. Nandgaon), and Brihatsanu (i.e. Barsana). He predicted that Vajranabha would meet Uddhava and learn all the secrets from him.

Vajranabha began to rule in Mathura, repopulated the sacred places, and established tanks, wells, Shiva shrines, and images of Krishna, including Govindadeva and Harideva. He spread the message of devotion and people began to take part in singing the praises of Krishna. He met Kalindi and other abandoned wives of Krishna who were suffering from the pangs of love in separation. She told him of their condition and suggested that he consult Uddhava, who was residing in the form of a creeper at Sakhisthala, near Govardhan. They went there together and rejoiced when they saw Uddhava appear beside a tank called Kusumasaras (Kusum Sarovar). Uddhava praised them for their devotion and the depth of their absorption in Krishna, saying that those who reside in Braj are more fortunate than the people of Dwarka because here Krishna continually sports with Radha, just as he is always present in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. He prophesied that the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* would be the subject of inspiration and commentary and that he would continue to reside at Narad Kund in order to convey its message to devotees.

Vajranabha also appears in *Gargasaṃhitā*, where he is said to be the founder of images of Dirghavishnu and Keshava at Mathura, Govindadeva at Vrindaban,

165 VBV 5.1.
166 MBh *sabhā*. 14.48 ff., 17.1.9, BhP 11.31.25.
167 *Bhāgavatamāhātmya*, viz. SP 2.61-3.

Harideva at Govardhan, Gokulesha at Gokul, and Baladeva at Baldeo.[168] In a later version of the story, given by Gopal Kavi in the early nineteenth century,[169] Vajranabha is said to have been so disconsolate when Krishna returned to his supreme abode that Parikshit took him to Uddhava, who told him that he should excavate four images of Krishna (Keshavadeva, Govindadeva, Harideva, and Baladeva) that had sunk beneath the ground because of the onset of the *kali* age.

168 GS 10.62.26-8.
169 VDA 24.

3 Devotion in theory and practice

1 Emotion and aesthetics

In the introductory chapter we described the different types of pilgrimage and the formal regulations that participants are expected to observe, while in the second chapter we summarized the scriptural accounts of the life of Krishna and surveyed later developments in his mythology. His amorous exploits became the dominant theme, especially his love for Radha. The mythology was elaborated in conformity with the increasing importance of the theme of divine love, both in theology and popular devotion. Accordingly, emotional involvement in the pastimes of Krishna was generally accepted as more rewarding than meticulous performance of rituals and other observances.

Human sensuality was acknowledged and celebrated, but there was also a tendency to create a theoretical framework that would contain potentially anarchic emotions. Rup Goswami, who flourished in the first half of the sixteenth century, was the most influential theorist of this type of devotion, not only among fellow members of the Gaudiya Sampraday, but also among devotees belonging to other sects. The excessive formalism of his theological system is in strong contrast to the emotional abandon of Chaitanya, the exemplary devotee. Its intricate definitions and categorization can hardly have had much interest for the average worshipper of Krishna. Although his theory and analyses, like those of other scholastic theologians who followed him, constitute a learned world unto themselves, they were an attempt at systematizing popular manifestations of devotion. Some of the terms they use, such as *ras(a)*, *bhāv(a)*, and *prem(a)*, have entered into the vocabulary of every devotee of Krishna.

Rup Goswami made a distinction between two types of devotion based on external effort, one that consisted of following scriptural injunctions governing religious practice (*vaidhībhakti*), the other of a more intense and passionate nature (*rāgānugābhakti*). The former is the approach followed by those who are still ensnared by delusion (*māyā*) and have no direct relationship with Krishna. It is a kind of preparatory discipline and training that is undergone by those as yet incapable of enjoying the superior and more passionate kind of devotion. Higher than either of these is the kind of devotion that results from spontaneous inward

emotion (*bhāvabhakti*), and above all is the kind that ripens into the sentiment of love (*premabhakti*).[1] The intensity of one's devotion ultimately depends on the degree to which one can experience *bhāva* - a kind of feeling or emotional identification, *rasa* - a refined mood or sentiment, and *prema* - love. These basic elements were already present in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, composed some seven hundred years earlier, which in turn had borrowed the terminology from classical aesthetic theory. In its opening lines the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* likens itself to a fruit filled with nectar (*rasa*) that is to be drunk by those who are connoisseurs (*rasika*) and have acquired a taste for the beautiful (*bhāvuka*). It points towards a form of devotion that seeks an emotional and aesthetic experience, that cultivates love for god concurrently with that of love for one's fellow men, rather than liberation or solitary enlightenment. Evocation and experience of sentiments by means of poetry, song, and visual display constitute in themselves a means of fulfilment and salvation. They take one further than any form of speculative theology and transcend any reservations one might have about Krishna's unruly behaviour and his flirtations with the Gopis.

Ideally the feelings experienced should be spontaneous and unconditioned, but the techniques used to evoke them are almost wholly conventional. In aesthetic theory, for which Bharata is the standard authority, *bhāva* refers to a basic human mood or sentiment that is transformed by an artist and experienced aesthetically as *rasa*.[2] This *rasa* is the 'essence' of the qualities that distinguish a work of art. It is something that cannot be explicitly stated because it is more rarefied than any feeling derived from direct sensual perception or experience. It is a sensation evoked in a listener or spectator that is experienced as an impersonalized condition of pure aesthetic enjoyment. In a devotional context the term *bhāva* refers to the appropriate attitude a worshipper adopts when he contemplates an aspect of Krishna. We may develop our emotional responses by dwelling upon an aspect that is best suited to our natural inclinations. In emulation of Yashoda, we may cultivate the emotions associated with motherhood (*vātsalyabhāva*) and adore Krishna as an infant. Alternatively, if we choose to look upon him as our lord and master, we may place ourselves in the role of his slave (*dāsyabhāva*). By identifying with his companions in Braj we may cultivate the emotions associated with friendship

1 The most important theoretical works of Rup Goswami are *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* and *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*. For a fuller account of Rup's definition of *bhakti* based on the latter see De, pp.170 ff., who also gives more detailed discussion of the theme of this section, mainly with reference to Rup and Jiv Goswami. An outline of devotion according to the Gaudiya Sampraday is given in CC 2.7 ff., where it is said that Chaitanya learnt the doctrines while in South India from Ramananda Ray. N. N. Law gives a summary of Gaudiya theories on *bhakti*, based primarily on CC. Other accounts are given by R. Chakravarti 1985, ch.3, S. Dasgupta, vol. 4 chs.21-3, Dimock 1966, ch.1, and in Singer (ed.), pp.41-63, Eidlitz 1968, pp.388-96, Kinsley, chs.1-2, Majumdar, Wulff 1984, pp.25-34 (and chs.VII-VIII for application of the theories in Rup Goswami's *Vidagdhamādhava*) and Haberman, esp. chs. III-IV. For Vallabha's interpretation of BhP see Redington.

2 Bharata, *Nāṭyaśāstra (rasādhyāya)*. See Gerow, pp.245 ff, for a concise summary of the aesthetics of Bharata and his successors.

(*sakhyabhāva*). The most intimate and powerful emotions, however, are those felt by the Gopis who fell in love with him.[3] They give rise to the highest and sweetest kind of sentiment, referred to as *śṛṅgāra-* or *madhurarasa*, 'the erotic' or 'sweet sentiment'. Identification with the Gopis is the basis for a theology in which the soul is regarded as feminine. The mutual love of Krishna and the Gopis is looked upon as the supreme parable of the relationship between god and the soul. The role to be played by a devotee is thus modelled on the ideal of womanhood - meek, self-sacrificing, and devoted to satisfying her partner's needs.

The impassioned form of devotion arises from the desire to realize the feelings of the people of Braj who took part in Krishna's sports. It is to be cultivated by living either physically or mentally in Braj and emulating the mental attitude (i.e. *bhāva*) of a member of Krishna's entourage, preferably one of the Gopis. This is to be achieved by recalling his pastimes, reliving them in one's imagination, and imitating the associated moods and feelings according to one's predisposition and emotional capacity. It is a form of vicarious participation, a sublimation of erotic and other intimate human feelings in terms of the devotional sentiments felt by the characters who associated with Krishna. When dwelling upon his amorous adventures, catharsis comes not from actual participation or physical enactment of the sexual experience, but by singing emotional and erotic lyrics about it.

Rup Goswami, his contemporaries, and successors are sometimes surprisingly frank in their treatment of the erotic elements in the Krishna myth. Even so, they tended to regulate or contain the eroticism by imposing an intellectual system upon it. They applied Bharata's enumeration of all the constituent elements of a work of art to the context of religious devotion, following his exhaustive classification of feelings and all the motifs used in poetry to evoke it. These include, for example, all those elements that serve to excite the emotions and foster the appropriate feeling, such as descriptions of the seasons, various items of luxury, diversions enjoyed in beautiful houses and gardens, and features of the environment of Vrindaban - its rivers, seasonal groves, and abundant flora and fauna.[4] Such stereotyped motifs recurr again and again in both secular and devotional poetry dealing with the pastimes of Krishna. The tendency is to follow the classical tradition in which intensity of mood is enhanced not by psychological depth, but by an accumulation of sensuous detail. Love is not described as something personal and subjective, but as a depersonalized voluptuous state. The lovers are not particularized individuals, but are stereotyped representations of any handsome youth and beautiful young woman.[5] While there were many inspired poets, there were also duller devotees who adopted a more clerical approach, creating works of literary overkill that laboriously reiterate the standard repertoire of imagery, metaphors, and vapid conceits.

3 *mādhurya-* or *gopībhāva*. See Singer in Singer (ed.), pp.129-36, for an account of how this is envisaged and experienced among devotees in Madras.

4 These elements are termed *uddīpanavibhāva*. See De, pp.180, 210-11, with reference to the works of Rup Goswami. For further discussion of the imagery of Vrindaban in Rup Goswami and other writers see Corcoran, ch.V, pp.195 ff.

5 Kakar 1985, pp.80-81.

2 Tantric influence

In addition to its use in the field of aesthetics, the term *rasa* had physiological connotations that were also taken up by the Vaishnava theologians. One of the ways they describe of contemplating Krishna is to visualize him in the centre of a lotus situated in the heart. At the root of this is the older conception, expressed in the Upanishads and *Bhagavadgītā*, of a microcosmic *puruṣa* (male principle) residing in the heart that corresponds to the macrocosmic Supreme Being (*puruṣottama*). Although the Vaishnava theologians were primarily influenced by Tantric ideas current in north and east India, their conception of Krishna was already foreshadowed in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, which proclaimed that he is equivalent to the supreme male principle (*puruṣa*) and is radiant amid the Gopis, who represent his female potencies (Shaktis).[6]

Esoteric yoga physiology, as it was propagated in Buddhist and Hindu schools of Tantra, conceived of there being a series of six centres of power (*cakra*) in the body that represent different states of consciousness. The lowest *cakra* is thought to be located at the perineum (or sacrococcygeal plexus) and the highest at the crown of the head. The latter is regarded as the seat of cosmic consciousness and is visualized as a lotus with a thousand petals. In the Hindu Shaiva or Shakta conception it is Shiva, the primordial male and representative of pure and static consciousness, who is envisaged microcosmically as residing in the thousand-petalled lotus. This is the seat of bliss where he unites with his Shakti, the dynamic female power that is conceived of as a coiled serpent (*kuṇḍalinī*) located in the lowest *cakra*.[7] The discipline of Tantric yoga was a way of internalizing sexual intercourse by making the female power rise up the hollow of the cerebrospinal axis. As it moves upwards it energizes the different *cakra*, causing the lotuses that symbolize them to open out. The union of Shiva and Shakti in the highest lotus represents the recovery of a state of non-duality, the ultimate condition of the macrocosmic absolute. It is a reunion that brings with it liberation from the process of phenomenalization. It is a reversal of the process of becoming that entailed separation and increasing bondage and suffering. One of the terms used to describe this blissful union is *samarasa*, meaning 'sameness or oneness of emotion'.[8]

The primary meaning of the word *rasa* is simply 'juice' or 'sap', but since it can refer to any kind of liquid essence or extraction, it is used in a variety of contexts. In the Vedas it refers to the 'fluid of life', which can be water, milk, or *soma*, and in the post-Vedic period it was used for both male and female sexual fluids. According to the *rasāyana* school, whose practitioners developed a form of theological alchemy, it was a substance (generally mercury, and equated with the seed of Shiva) that could be used to render the body immutable. In the Nath Sampraday, a cult closely related to *rasāyana*, this *rasa* was envisaged as a kind of nectar that oozed from the moon located in the thousand-petalled lotus at the crown of the head. By resorting to yogic practices this nectar, which is physiologically equal to semen, could be

6 BhP 10.32.10.
7 See Woodroffe, pp.641 ff.
8 See Shashibhushan Das Gupta, pp.xxxiv-xxxv.

transformed so as to make the body perfect and immortal.[9] The process is one of raising the *rasa* from the lowest *cakra*, the seat of sexual passion, up through the other *cakra* until it unites with the thousand-petalled lotus in the head. The technique is one of abstracting and transposing sexual power, avoiding seminal discharge in order to store semen in the head, as is believed to be done by yogis. It is said to lead to the realization of absolute truth, a state of supreme bliss that is expressed in terms of the ecstatic union of male and female ontological principles.

In the late tenth or early eleventh century Lakshmana Deshika, who came from Kashmir, wrote a work called *Śāradātilaka* that became especially influential in eastern India and was much quoted in Vaishnava ritual manuals.[10] It described the Supreme Being (*puruṣottama*) as uniting in himself the characteristics of Vishnu as the husband of Lakshmi, Krishna as lover of the Gopis, and Kama, the god of love. This inspired further Vaishnava developments of the theme with relation to Jagannatha, the main deity of Orissa, who was called *puruṣottama* and was identified with Krishna. He was visualized as a god of love who could be meditated upon by means of the lotus symbolism. This conception was shared by Vaishnavas of Maharashtra, for whom Krishna was represented by the regional god Vithoba.[11] They visualized him in the eight-petalled lotus *cakra* located in the heart rather than the thousand-petalled one in the head. In traditional Indian medicine (Ayurveda) the heart is the true location of the mind and the centre of the channels within the body through which the vital fluids flow. Furthermore, Vaishnava devotion was concerned with love felt in the heart rather than with the monistic union that takes place in the highest *cakra*. Conceptualizations that give precedence to the heart lotus incorporate the lotus of a thousand petals by visualizing the inner ring of eight petals as being surrounded by concentric rings of petals, each having twice as many as the ring it encircles. Such a conception was later applied to Braj, in which Krishna and Radha were visualized as occupying the centre of the lotus, located at Vrindaban, with sacred places in the vicinity on the surrounding petals.[12]

The Vaishnava sect most strongly influenced by Tantric and Shakta cults was that of the Sahajiyas of Bengal, whose name derives from their being concerned with everything that was *sahaja* ('spontaneous/natural'), a term also used to describe the ultimate state of being. In their system Krishna and Radha replaced Shiva and Shakti, representing absolute reality in a state of union of the enjoyer and the enjoyed.[13] Their system was more psychologically orientated than that of the Tantric schools, since their discipline was one of divinization of the emotions felt in human love. The Sahajiya doctrines were presumably known to Rup Goswami and other theologians of the Gaudiya Sampraday, and probably influenced their conception of the love of Krishna and Radha as something abstracted from the physical that could lead the devotee to experience a purely emotional and

9 Ibid., chs.VIII-IX, esp. pp.251-5.
10 G. C. Tripathi in Eschmann et al. (eds.), pp.42-50.
11 See Kiehnle, who calls them 'Nath-Vaishnavas'and refers specifically to Dnyandev.
12 This *yogapīṭh* concept is dealt with in more detail below, §6.13.
13 For an account of Vaishnava Sahajiya doctrines see Shashibhushan Das Gupta and Dimock 1966, pp.177-80.

psychological transmutation. In Gaudiya theology, Radha is considered to be a transfiguration of the blissful power (*hlādinīśakti*) that Krishna made manifest in order to be able to realize his nature as the eternal enjoyer. These conceptions found their way into the theology of the other Sampradays and underlie the way in which Krishna and Radha are extolled and worshipped. The state of union of the divine couple is generally referred to as *yugala*, a term borrowed from esoteric yoga. The term *yugala* is also used to describe idols of Krishna and Radha when they stand together in a shrine. One icon of Krishna and Radha shows them with their limbs entwined, a quasi-androgynous representation known as 'one soul, two bodies' (*ek prāṇ do deh*) that recalls Tantric icons showing male and female deities in a sexual embrace, and reflects the Tantric goal of realizing masculinity and femininity in one's own body (see plate 4).

3 The nature of Krishna's love

In devotional literature Krishna is described as having the qualities of the typical hero (*nāyaka*) of amatory literature. Some theologians also equate him with Kama, the god of love. Jiv Goswami says that for the women of Braj, Mathura, and Dwarka he plays the role of Kama and is worshipped by them as such.[14] Krishna's greatest quality is his belovedness; he attracts the soul just as love attracts people to each other on earth. The love between Krishna and his devotee is mutual, and both have need of each other. It is through Radha, the Gopis, and thus through his devotees, that Krishna is able to realize his own blissful nature. It was in order to achieve this experience that he caused the Gopis, and above all Radha, to become manifest.

The purpose of Krishna and his whole retinue appearing on earth was to reveal to mortals the nature of divine love. The love experienced among ordinary mortals is regarded as a gross transformation of the pure and eternal love that is realized in Krishna's supernal Vrindaban. Love in its carnal form, which is preoccupied with gratification, is known as *kāma*; the higher kind of love that does not seek self-fulfilment is called *prema*. It can be transposed into an emotion of intense devotion of the soul towards god, seeking the fulfilment of the divine desires in and through the whole being. Even though this kind of love is proclaimed to be pure and transcendent, it is described analogically in theology and literature in terms of human love, using the imagery and terminology of secular love poetry and erotic treatises (*kāmaśāstra*).

The model chosen is not the relationship between man and wife because, in the Indian social context, such a relationship is a dutiful one in which love is likely to become attenuated due to familiarity and formal obligations to each other and the rest of the family. Krishna enjoyed erotic play with sixteen thousand wives in Dwarka, but it has never received much attention in devotional literature. In erotic treatises it is said that women are more passionate if the love affair is an illicit one. Similarly, classical Sanskrit amatory verse is mainly concerned with the love of an unmarried couple. Devotional poets look upon extra-marital love as something

14 *Kṛṣṇasaṃdarbha* (115), ad 358.

more intense and romantic because it is maintained for its own sake and dares to transgress normal social conventions. The lovers take more risks and have more to lose, thus their love is a better example of *prema*. This first emerged as the dominant theme of emotional devotion in Tamil Nadu. Shulman has noted that in ancient Tamil love poems the illicit premarital love of the heroine for a stranger was seen as the supreme and the most fulfilling state of love, and so the total love of man and god is enacted in a dimension of disorder in which conventional limits are shattered and transgressed.[15]

Although several poets have described the wedding of Krishna and Radha, it remained a secondary development, a marriage of convenience that has never been more than a peripheral theme. Nothing is said about the subsequent married life of the divine couple; their premarital encounters remain the focus of attention. No interest is shown in Radha as a potential mother or daughter-in-law; she retains instead the characteristics of the *nāyikā* of amatory literature, and is thus portrayed as a deified courtesan rather than a self-effacing and sexless wife. Tantalizing imagery is used to describe the love between Krishna and Radha, but theological commentators attempt to camouflage the physical sensuality by giving an abstract interpretation of the erotic elements. They point out that although the path of emotional devotion is open to all, it is beset with difficulties and pitfalls; relatively few devotees can attain the degree of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and self-control that is necessary for transposing and transcending the seductive imagery that is used to convey the message of divine love.

The prevailing view among sects devoted to Krishna is that the human soul shares some of his infinite qualities, but cannot enjoy them until it is freed from the misperceptions caused by his power to create illusory appearances.[16] The way to free oneself from delusion is to follow the path of devotion, but without desiring any selfish reward, for there can be no true devotion if the goal is one's own satisfaction. Krishna's amorous relationship with Radha and the Gopis is the supreme example of reciprocal love, and so emulation of the female role is the best way in which a devotee can enter into a mutual love relationship with Krishna. The devotee should have no desire for material benefit or self-gratification, but must be intent on pleasing the beloved, regardless of social and other worldly constraints. The way of devotion is regarded as superior to the paths of intellectual knowledge (*jñāna*) and ritual practices (*karma*); it leads to emotional realization and vicarious enjoyment of Krishna's sports as a participant or spectator. The supreme condition of the soul is not one of cessation or extinction of individuality (like yogic *samādhi* or Buddhist *nirvāṇa*), but is a state of communion in which one experiences the eternal flow of divine love. This type of devotion is similar to the tradition of Tantric yoga in which sexual union is fantasized in macrocosmic terms, the purpose being to raise one's consciousness, denying oneself sexual release in order to harness and transpose one's sexual energy. By a gradual process of physical and psychological discipline human love can be dissociated from carnal desire and transformed into a loving communion with the Supreme Being. It is a blissful state of arrest that arises not

15 Shulman, p.157.

16 I.e. his *māyāśakti*. For the Gaudiya explanation see Dimock in Singer (ed.), pp.46-7.

from a denial of the sexual impulse, but from a transposition and purification of it.[17] Having renounced physical consummation with the object of their love, the Sakhis are content with a kind of voyeurism, doing all they can to bring Krishna and Radha together, while themselves remaining chaste.

Vaishnava poets often use the phrase 'ocean of *rasa*' (*rasa samudra*) when describing some aspect of the beauty of Krishna or Radha, or the sensations felt when immersing oneself in their love play. This points to a correspondence between oceanic and orgasmic feelings, evoking fantasies of plunging into a sea of unlimited sexual experience, of becoming both man and woman in the mystic process of achieving union with the universe.[18] This experience contrasts with the standard yogic goal of sharpening one's consciousness and suppressing distracting sensual thoughts. Devotional literature is full of phrases referring to immersion in joy, swooning, horripilating, forgetting oneself, no longer being responsible for one's behaviour, of being enchanted, stunned, transfixed, or spellbound by Krishna.

4 Love in separation (*viraha*)

Sexual union (*sambhoga*) is not the only way of experiencing love; it can also be felt intensely in a condition of separation from one's beloved (*viraha* or *viyoga*). This type of love, or yearning, is closer to the everyday experience of the devotee, in view of the virtual absence of any opportunity for passionate romantic attachment in real life, and the impossibility of consummating one's love with a god who cannot be realized within the human dimensions of time and space. Love in separation was felt by Radha and the Gopis when Krishna abandoned them, temporarily while they danced the *rāsa*, and definitively when he left for Mathura and Dwarka. The longing felt by a woman in the absence of her beloved is a stock theme in classical and popular literature. It was used in a devotional context by the Alvar poets of Tamil Nadu and was current in vernacular poetry throughout the the medieval period, notably in the *rāsau* ballads of western India, the mystical romances of the Sufis, and the poems of Vidyapati.[19] For the devotional poets of Braj the abandonment of Radha and the Gopis was the most poignant theme in the whole mythology. Through it they could pour out their emotive perception of the condition of the earthbound soul. It was their equivalent of renunciation, for they likened the pangs of separation to a fire that burns one up (*virahānala*), just as in traditional asceticism austerity generated internal heat (*tapas*) and sexual restraint was a means of storing up this fiery energy.

Although Krishna is said to miss the Gopis, their longing for him is much more intense, in accordance with the theological notion that the soul suffers more than the god from whom it is separated. The desired aim is not union with the transcendent, for such a state is impossible in the Vaishnava conception of the

17 Shashibhushan Das Gupta, p.147, with reference to the Vaishnava Sahajiyas.

18 See Masson 1980, p.72, for fuller treatment of 'oceanic feeling' in psychological terms.

19 See F. Hardy 1983/1 for an account of the beginnings of *virahabhakti* in South India in the 6th or 7th century; McGregor 1984, cf. index under *virah(a)*, for medieval Hindi literature; and Hawley 1984, ch.4, for a discussion of the theme in *Sūr sāgar*.

nature of the soul and god. They are viewed as being qualitatively the same, but the individual soul does not ultimately dissolve into the great universal soul, as in the monistic theological systems.

Mystical love in separation serves as an ideal substitute for involvement in a human love relationship. It is pure, orgasm is postponed, the state of desire and arousal is prolonged, the beloved is abstracted, there is more scope for idealization, and since the lovers remain apart there is less chance of rejection or disappointment. The condition of love in separation is thus an end in itself; the intensity of one's longing increases in proportion to the degree of love. Rather than being a form of withdrawl or admission of defeat, it is a state of sustained emotional involvement, the ultimate experience that the soul can enjoy. Emotional identification with the Gopis is the only means by which the forlorn soul can relate to the absolute from which it is ontologically separate. The fact that the devotee's emotional drive to unite is frustrated in separation reconfirms, in the words of Friedhelm Hardy, the basic validity of his full human existence, his anthropocentrism, his 'flesh and blood'.[20]

5 Eschatology

The form of dualism expounded by Vaishnava theologians meant that salvation was not seen as a state of total liberation or merging into a monistic absolute. Several passages in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* declare that the ultimate goal is not liberation (*mukti*).[21] Instead, the highest destiny of the soul is to participate in the transcendent play of Krishna. This is reflected in terms for death that are current among his worshippers. When referring to the demise of a fellow devotee they use phrases that denote his proceeding to the eternal realm of Krishna (*nitya dhām mẽ padhārnā*), his entry into the divine play (*līlā praveś*), his admission into the bower in which it takes place (*nikuñj gaman, nikuñj līlā mẽ praveś*), his taking up residence in the bower (*nikuñj vās*), or his attaining the dust of Braj or Vrindaban (*braj/brindāvan raj kī prāpti*). Devotees hope that they will be granted a permanent place as a Gopi in Krishna's highest heaven. Some have even declared that they will feel blessed if they are reborn as some lower element in the eternal sport of Krishna, a desire expressed in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* by Brahma, in the course of a eulogy to Krishna.[22] He hoped that he would have the good fortune to be reborn among the inhabitants of the cowherd settlement or forest frequented by Krishna, in any form whatever, so that he would have the privilege of bathing in the dust of the feet of one of Krishna's entourage. Similarly, when Uddhava returned to Braj to console the Gopis he was so impressed by their devotion to Krishna that he declared his wish to be reincarnated as a shrub, creeper, or herb of Vrindaban so that he might catch the dust kicked up by their feet.[23]

20 F. Hardy 1983/1, p.546, in the course of his evaluation of *virahabhakti*, pp.542 ff.
21 E.g. BhP 3.25.34, 9.4.67, 10.83.41-2, 11.14.14, 11.20.34.
22 BhP 10.14.30 ff.
23 BhP 10.47.61-3.

Reincarnation is not something to be avoided, so long as one is reborn in Braj and has the chance of serving Krishna and participating in his divine play. The poet Raskhan expressed his thoughts concerning his next life in a poem that virtually everyone in Braj has memorized:[24]

Should I be a man, then let me, Raskhan,
mingle there with the herdsmen of Gokul.
If as a beast, then how should I live
but ever grazing among the cows of Nanda?
If a stone, then one of the very hill that he made
an umbrella for Braj against the torrents of Indra.
If as a bird, then let me dwell for ever
in the boughs of a kadamba on the banks of the Yamuna.

6 The ontology of the sacred places

To wonder whether Brahma, Uddhava, and Raskhan are referring to a heavenly or earthly realm would be to miss the point that the transcendent is thought to pervade the terrestrial. Devotees believe that the earthly Braj is imbued with the heavenly one and that it is necessary to develop the kind of sensibility that allows one to appreciate this. A fundamental concept underlying the motivation for pilgrimage to Braj is that Krishna's activities, while they once occurred on earth in historical time, are by no means over and done with. They are not remote events that nowadays serve as no more than an allegory of how we should relate to god, but are being enacted eternally on a plane that transcends the world of our blinkered everyday experience. Krishna, who is not just another incarnation of Vishnu but the supreme manifestation of godhead, resides in his highest heaven where he is continually engaged in the sports that he once performed on earth. His dalliance with Radha serves to evoke the experiences of human love, but the landscape in which they disport is amorous rather than geographical; the setting is neither social nor historical, but sensuous.[25] Krishna's exploits are envisaged as taking place on a different plane, in another dimension of time and space. As earthbound mortals we are constrained by rules and obligations, but by worshipping Krishna we can identify with a being who is free from all restrictions of time and place. Because of the correspondence between contemporary Braj and the transcendent realm of Krishna the pilgrims and residents of the sacred centre are encouraged to experience what may be called a place and moment 'in and out of time'.[26]

Vaishnava theologians differentiate between Krishna's manifest (*prakaṭa*) and unmanifest (*aprakaṭa*) play, the former being cognizable in the phenomenal world,

24 *Raskhān-ratnāvalī*, p.73. The poem is usually placed at the beginning of editions of Raskhan's poems.
25 See Kakar 1985, pp.75-6.
26 A phrase borrowed from Turner 1974, p.197.

the latter being enacted on a transcendent plane.[27] In the manifest play Krishna moves between Mathura, Braj, and Dwarka, but in the unmanifest play he is eternally present in his transcendant Vrindaban. The term used to refer to Krishna's realm is *dhāman* (Hindi: *dhām*), which may be defined as the place where divine power is located, a 'refraction' or 'embodiment' of the divine, a dwelling place imbued with radiance.[28] The word *dhām* is regularly used to refer to Vrindaban, the earthly counterpart of Krishna's heavenly abode, and is also used for other places of pilgrimage where one of the gods became manifest on earth.

There are two heavenly spheres, named Goloka and Vaikuntha. Goloka, 'the world of the cows', is the exclusive abode of Krishna and his entourage where he sports eternally with the Gopis. In comparison, Vaikuntha is a rather staid place where the pleasures indulged in by Vishnu-Narayana do not transgress conventional norms. Sanatan Goswami describes the spiritual quest of a devotee named Gopakumara, who yearns for a vision of Krishna.[29] He goes to Vaikuntha, Ayodhya (the realm of Rama), and Dwarka, but learns that his goal can only be realized if he manages to get to Goloka. This is because Vaikuntha, Ayodhya, and Dwarka are realms where the majesty (*aiśvarya*) of Krishna is manifest, which means that in those places he inspires awe rather than love. The feeling of love can only arise in a more 'down to earth' environment in which Krishna can relate to people on a more human level. Sanatan Goswami makes it clear that the heaven of Goloka is synonymous with the realm of Braj (*vrajadhāman*) and can only be obtained by devotees who fix their minds on the pastimes that Krishna enacts there.

Rup Goswami said that Mathura, because Krishna was born there, is superior to Vaikuntha and Goloka. Residence in Mathura leads not to liberation, as is the case with other sacred places, but to the realization of devotion. Vrindaban is even higher than Mathura because the *rāsa* was danced there, but even higher is Govardhan because Krishna lifted it up with his blessed fingers. Here, he says, the most important place is Radhakund, because the essence of divine love (*premarasa*) flowed there.[30]

Jiv Goswami also discourses upon the nature of Dwarka, Mathura, and Gokul or Vrindaban, the three realms (*dhāman*) of Krishna, stressing above all the supernal quality of everything in Vrindaban.[31] The places on earth where Krishna spent his life are his *dhāman*, but besides being geographical locations they also have a transcendent nature. Gokul is that part of the Vaikuntha heaven where Krishna and Balarama play, and is ultimately identical with the heavenly realm of Goloka. Vrindaban is defined as being either the same as Goloka or as a region within it. The

27 The terms are used in *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā*, see below § 6.13, and were taken up by the Gaudiya theologians.

28 See Gonda and Eck, p.289.

29 In the second part of *Bṛhadbhāgavatāmṛta*; see 2.5.82-89 for his remarks on *aiśvarya*.

30 *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.2.237 ff.

31 *Kṛṣṇasaṃdarbha, anuccheda* 105 ff., in the light of Brahma's eulogy in BhP 10.14.30 ff. Jiv Goswami also discusses the nature of Vrindaban and Gokula/Goloka in his *Digdarśanīṭīkā*.

heavenly realms are thus considered to be immanent in their terrestrial counterparts. Sanatan Goswami says that all the participants in the play are eternal, just like Krishna himself. His various *līlā* are performed over and over again. Though he goes to Mathura, he never really abandons the people of Braj because his moving from one place to another is just an apparent withdrawl. The earthly region of Mathura (*mathurāmaṇḍala*) and the pastimes enacted there are the same as those that take place in Goloka.[32]

Jiv Goswami gives a more subtle definition of the difference between heaven and earth.[33] He says that in Goloka only the unmanifest play (*aprākṛtalīlā*) is performed, whereas in the earthly *dhāman* both the manifest and unmanifest forms take place. The transcendent play of Goloka cannot be perceived, described, or enacted in the phenomenal world. Krishna and his entourage can become manifest on earth, but they are not of it and are not tainted by contact (*sparśa*) with it. The realm of Krishna is beyond the power of illusion (*māyātīta*), and so it cannot be argued that the earthly *dhāman* is unreal and no different from any other place on earth, or is nowadays no more than a location where the divine play once took place. Krishna is still immanent in his earthly *dhāman*, just as he is present in his idols. The process by which the celestial realm appears on earth is similar to that by which Krishna becomes incarnate; in becoming manifest they both became visible to the human eye. All of Krishna's sports are taking place simultaneously and eternally in the transcendent sphere, while on the terrestrial plane they are perceived as occurring sequentially in different earthly locations. His apparent movement from one place to another is a feature of the manifest realm. Vrindaban, the terrestrial Goloka, is just as non-phenomenal as the celestial one, but through Krishna's inscrutable power it appears as a temporal and phenomenal manifestation of it in order to help benighted mortals comprehend the true nature of reality.

Devotees of all Sampradays recognize this kind of distinction betweeen a transcendent and terrestrial realm and regard the difference between them as qualitative and related to the nature of a god who is both immanent and transcendent. Followers of the Pushtimarg regularly distinguish between things that are *laukik* - belonging to the gross material world, and that which is *alaukik* - 'other-worldly' or 'transcendent'.[34] Members of the Radhavallabh Sampraday, however, hold that the actual Vrindaban is the real and only one, but that its transcendent nature is imperceptible to those who are entramelled by delusion (*māyā*).[35] However the difference is perceived and formulated, all agree that the phenomenal Vrindaban is a manifestation of an eternal and transcendent realm that can be experienced by those who have cultivated the appropriate devotional attitude. Anyone can go to Braj, but only those with purified and refined senses can perceive its transcendent dimension. Just as Krishna's amorous sports take place in

32 Sanatan Goswami, ibid., esp. 2.5.54-5 & 165-71, 2.6.352-9 & 372-5.

33 *Kṛṣnasaṃdarbha*, ibid. Sanatan simply distinguishes between Goloka and 'earth' (*bhūrloka*) or 'the world of mortals' (*martyaloka*).

34 See, for example, Dwarkeshji's *Bhāv bhāvnā*, pp.71-5.

35 As noted by P. Mital 1968, p.390.

secluded bowers or in the inner recesses of the temple, so they are perceptible only to the inner eye and are meditated upon in the heart of the devotee.

As evidence of the special nature of Vrindaban, Jiv quotes some verses from Rup Goswami's *Mathurāmāhātmya* that refer to a kadamba tree beside the pool of Kaliya that astonishes pundits by blossoming and remaining fragrant all the year round, and an *aśoka* tree at Brahmakund that bursts into flower every year on the twelfth day of the bright half of the month of Vaishakh.[36] Stories abound of miraculous indications of the transcendant nature of Braj and Krishna's continual presence there. Vaishnava hagiographies and oral tradition tell how Krishna appeared before various devotees in the form of a beautiful child. Among followers of the Pushtimarg there is a belief that Krishna, as represented by the deity of Shrinathji, returns nightly to Braj by an underground tunnel that connects the temple at Nathdwara with its original site at Govardhan, so that he can dance in the groves of Vrindaban. Attachment to Braj among devotees is expressed by their veneration of the dust of Braj (*braj raj*). Some devotees smear it over their foreheads or use it to make the sectarian *tilak* mark. Pellets of earth from Brahmand Ghat, a place near Mahaban where the infant Krishna is believed to have put dirt into his mouth, are sold for this purpose under the name of 'butter clay' (*mākhan maṭṭī*). The dark-coloured clay from Radhakund is also used for drawing the *tilak* or to make rosaries.

In order to cultivate the emotions essential for participation in the sports of Krishna, it is thought necessary to centre one's heart on the transcendental Vrindaban. The notion that Krishna's heavenly realm is immanent in Braj has spawned a number of visionary descriptions of interiorized landscapes. Krishnadas Kaviraj, after giving an extravagant description of Radhakund and the jewelled pavilions, bowers, and pools that surround it, says that such a luxuriant environment becomes apparent only to those who manage successfully to attain a state of empathy with the divine sport, while to those who fail to cultivate such an attitude it appears only in its phenomenal form.[37] Elsewhere he says that Vrindaban is the crest-jewel of the earth, a forest of wish-granting trees that appears as an illusion to material eyes and manifests its true form only to those who look upon it with the eyes of love.[38] Many other devotees composed panegyrics describing the transcendental beauty of Vrindaban and Braj, praising it as a timeless realm where everything remains fresh and green, where Krishna and the Gopis continually enjoy themselves in various seasonal surroundings. While declaring its beauty to be beyond the power of words and the scope of our imagination, they attempt to convey the wonder of it by describing the ground as being like gold, and the pavilions, arbours, and ever-blossoming trees and creepers as being studded with all kinds of precious gems.[39] Several works describe the

36 *Kṛṣṇasaṃdarbha* 105.332-5/R 409-410, 399-400.

37 GLA 7.119: *līlānukuleṣu janeṣu citteṣūtpannabhāveṣu ca sādhakānām / evaṃ vidhaṃ sarvamidaṃ cakāsti svarūpataḥ prākṛtavat pareṣu.*

38 Viz. *prema*, CC 1.5.17-18.

39 The most notable works of this type are *Ānandavṛndāvanacampū* of Kavi Karnapura, *Vṛndāvanamahimāmṛta* of Prabodhanand Saraswati, and *Vṛndāvan sat* of Dhruvdas. Later examples of the genre are *Ban jan prašaṃsā* of Nagaridas and *Vṛndāvan jas prakāś beli* of Chacha Vrindabandas.

spiritual Vrindaban in terms of a lotus, a meditative visualization derived from Tantric diagrams of the thousand-petalled lotus at the crown of the head.[40]

Terrestrial Braj, especially Vrindaban, is the place most congenial for the realization of emotional devotion, not only because it is the earthly location of Krishna's manifest play, but also because one can benefit from the company of other devotees who reside there. Many of the devotees who have taken up residence there declare that they have no intention of ever going outside of Braj because *bhāv* and *ras* are more readily attainable there than in any other place of pilgrimage. The merits of residing in Mathura, Braj, or Vrindaban are mentioned in some of the Sanskrit *māhātmya* texts that deal with the sacred area.[41] They declare that people who reside in Mathura become godlike and have a better chance of gaining spiritual attainment through the Lord's grace. All creatures who live there, even insects, will attain liberation; the benefits of living there are greater than those earned by someone who does penance by standing on one leg for a thousand ages. The *māhātmya* compiled by Rup Goswami includes verses that warn of the dire consequences of showing disrespect to the inhabitants of Mathura, state that those who live there dwell in close proximity to Hari, those who bathe in the Yamuna are better than all other classes of men, and that even the untouchables of Mathura are to be considered most pure.

Hariram Vyas, who lived in Vrindaban in the latter part of the sixteenth century, praises it as a place of eternal erotic play where the devotee may experience the spontaneous love that transcends the barriers of worldly propriety and scriptural injunction (*loka* and *veda*).[42] Because it is unaffected by time and the web of *māyā*, the birds continually sing and the flowers are always in bloom. It is the capital of all those who are receptive to sublime aesthetic feelings (*rasikana kī rajadhānī*), where one may experience the bliss that arises from beholding Krishna and Radha. Residence in Vrindaban offers the best chance of attaining, in the role of a female attendant upon Krishna and Radha, the full experience of the eternal and transcendent dimensions of the environment in which they sported. He even goes so far as to wish that he may be like a dog of Vrindaban that has the privilege of feeding upon the left-over food of the inhabitants of Braj. However, unlike most other poets, he gives us something more than fulsome praise. He was not so idealistic as to ignore the presence of hypocrisy and corruption, a blemish attributed to the degenerate age in which we now live (viz. *kali yug*). He declares that it is no use living in Vrindaban if one merely displays outward signs of religiosity while at heart one is interested only in material gain and sensual pleasure. The aim of residence in Vrindaban should be to cultivate the right emotional receptivity, not to enrich oneself by holding people in the thrall of magic and spells. His awareness that competition for clients had already begun to vitiate the atmosphere is apparent from his complaint that religious leaders of different persuasions had become envious and hostile towards each other.[43]

40 See above §3.2 and below §6.13

41 VP 150.21-23, 156.5, 163.49-59/R 329-343/VM, pp.416-7/PP 73.46-7.

42 See *pad* 38-57, 127-147, 253-269 in the edition of Vasudev Goswami.

43 Ibid., *pad* 142: *svāmī, bhaṭṭa, gusāī aganita mati kari gati ācaranī / prīti parasapara karata na kabahũ, miṭai na hīya kī jaranī.*

7 Manifestations of devotion

How and to what extent are the theoretical analyses of the theologians expressed in religious practice? The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* gives a classic enumeration of nine activities that constitute the necessary spiritual discipline for a devotee: hearing about Vishnu's deeds, singing his praises, remembering him, attendance upon his feet, worshipping him, adoring him, servitude, friendship, and surrendering oneself to him.[44] These nine activities somewhat overlap and are variously incorporated in different forms of devotional practice. Elsewhere the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* gives a more general description of how devotion should be cultivated by saying that we should begin by resorting to a preceptor under whose guidance the ways of devotion are learnt.[45] The devotee should cultivate humility, equanimity, and detachment from worldly things, exercise self-restraint, study and listen to the scriptures, dedicate everything he has to the Lord, and continually remember him so that his devotion turns into a rapturous experience of divine love, expressed by singing and dancing, as well as by peaceful contemplation. Krishnadas Kaviraj enumerates five practical means of cultivating devotion that might serve as headings for classifying religious activity: association with other righteous people (*sādhudsaṅga*), singing the names of the Lord, listening to the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, dwelling in Mathura, and serving a deity.[46]

In all these forms of worship the main concern is with immersing oneself in an appropriate devotional mood, with cultivating *bhāv*. Such involvement manifests itself when devotees stare at a deity and admire the way it is dressed and decorated. It is also manifested when one of them is inspired to dance or sing in front of the deity, or when he is touched by hearing about an episode in the life of Krishna, or when he becomes convinced or, to view it more cynically, when he wishes to convince others that he can hear Radha's anklets tinkling at night in one of the groves of Vrindaban. Devotees who shed tears when they relate one of the Krishna legends are also showing us the depth of their *bhāv*. The tears may arise from a nostalgic yearning to return to the Arcadian Braj of their fantasy, or from the rapture that flows through the soul when it is overwhelmed by emotional involvement in the activities of Krishna. The delirium, raving, and swooning of Chaitanya serve as a classic example of how a devotee can become possessed by intense emotions.

Religious celebrations, enactment of the Krishna legend, temple decoration, and devotional songs have their own kind of aesthetic that is not based on purely artistic criteria. Symbolic and conceptual considerations tend to predominate over purely artisitic ones. The trend in recent years has been for subtle ways of evoking *bhāv* and *ras* to be replaced by vulgar ostentation. Being seen to be doing the right thing has begun to predominate over doing it well. Expansion and commercialization of the pilgrimage industry, its development as a mass phenomenon, has encouraged the

44 BhP 7.5.23: *śravaṇaṃ kīrtanaṃ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇaṃ pādasevanam / arcanaṃ vandanaṃ dāsyam sakhyaṃ ātmanivedanam*. See Gail for a detailed account of *bhakti* in BhP, and Hopkins in Singer (ed.), pp.7 ff., with reference to its social context.

45 BhP 11.3.21-33.

46 CC 2.22.125.

tendency to be demonstrative. At any religious gathering in India loudspeakers are the most obtrusive symptom of this decline in taste and refinement. It is not merely symptomatic of an obsession with technology, but is done with the intention of attracting peoples' attention, of broadcasting the fact that one is doing something holy.

It is generally believed that taking initiation from a guru is a prerequisite for anyone wishing to follow the path of a devotee and become a recipient of Krishna's grace. The guru is regarded as someone who has managed to free himself from the trammels of *māyā* and who, by virtue of his contact with the divine, can act as a channel through which grace can pass from god to man. The procedure for initiation is basically the same as for any Hindu sect. The initiate brings the guru offerings of cloth and fruit, is asked to repeat some formulae, after which the guru whispers a secret *mantra* that he should repeat during his daily prayers and contemplation, then confers upon him a rosary of beads made from the wood of the sacred basil (*tulsī*), and a picture or small idol that he can worship as his personal deity. Lay devotees are usually householders and take initiation when young from the family of gurus who initiated their father, thus people generally retain their affiliation to the sect to which their forefathers belonged. Later, like ascetics, they may take a second initiation from a religious leader or teacher whose charisma impresses them.

By becoming initiated one joins a community of the faithful. Despite the egalitarian attitudes professed in certain texts and in the sayings of various saints, caste barriers are usually rigidly maintained among Vaishnavas. In part this may have been motivated by a desire on the part of brahmins to retain their monopoly over the temples. Vaishnavas are particularly scrupulous in their observance of purity regulations, especially in anything to do with preparation of food and the worship of a deity. Low caste, even Muslim, initiates are mentioned in the Pushtimarg hagiographical *vārtā* literature, but in practice their presence is shunned. Statements attributed to Chaitanya say that devotion was more important than caste, but he himself left the question open and took no real reformist position.[47] He professed the supremacy of devotion, but maintained conventional purity regulations, with the result that there is no common policy among different groups within the Gaudiya Sampraday. The Vrindaban Goswamis took an anti-caste stance, but in their temples the rituals followed an orthodox pattern, as formulated by Gopal Bhatt in *Haribhaktivilāsa*, though he did allow non-brahmins to act as preceptors to their equals and inferiors.[48]

Each sect has its own preferred manual giving details of the way Krishna should be worshipped. Such works are based primarily on Pancharatra ritual texts and probably derive from the form of ritual that evolved at Shrirangam and other Vaishnava temples in South India.[49] The different manuals cover a similar range of topics, varying only in minor details and, in their description of how a deity should be served, generally include the conventional sixteen acts of homage (*ṣoḍaśopa-*

47 Dimock 1966, pp.78-80.
48 De, p.343.
49 See J. Filliozat in his introduction to R. V. Joshi, pp.6-7.

cāra). They are comprised of quotations attributed to various Puranas, Tantras, *smṛti* texts, and obscure and usually untraceable branches of the Vedas. The earliest manuals of Vaishnava ritual appear to have been composed by Aniruddha Bhatta and Halayudha, and towards the beginning of the fifteenth century Shulapani wrote three works on specific rituals.[50] The relatively late Vaishnava *Gautamīya-tantra* is frequently quoted by some of the Vrindaban Goswamis of the Gaudiya Sampraday, including Gopal Bhatt.[51] His *Haribhaktivilāsa*, perhaps composed under the supervision of Sanatan Goswami, is one of the most comprehensive compilations dealing with the worship of Krishna. It is the authoritative manual for members of the Gaudiya Sampraday, but all other Krishna sects by and large observe similar rituals and practices.[52] Among the topics dealt with in such works are the daily ablutions and rituals that should be performed by individual devotees, sectarian marks drawn on the body, initiation, rosaries, the construction and consecration of temples, the making and installation of images, their worship, and the celebration of festivals.

8 Idols and epithets

The most central activity in devotion to Krishna is adoration of him in the form of an image. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* states that devotion consists of worshipping images, celebrating festivals in temples, caring for images and temples in the manner of a servant, and offering the image all the good things that one desires for oneself.[53] This form of worship, referred to as 'service' (*sevā*), requires continual attendance upon the deity. One should be preoccupied not with one's own needs but with ministering to those of the image. It is regarded as a living presence endowed with human feelings. It has to be woken up, bathed, dressed, fed, entertained, and put to sleep; in winter it is given a quilt and gloves, in summer it is scantily clad in light garments and smeared with sandal paste to keep it cool. Though the image is supposed to represent Krishna as a cowherd boy, it is, like other Vaishnava deities, treated as if it were a king or prince. By regaling the deity as if it has human tastes and needs a connection is established between man and god, and between the mundane and the transcendent.

Technical terms for the image of a deity are *vigraha* ('individual form or shape, figure'), *mūrti* ('embodiment'), and *svarūpa* ('own form') - referring to Krishna's ultimate or real nature rather than his physical form, which is simply *rūpa*. The most popular term in common parlance is *ṭhākurjī*, meaning 'lord', a term also used to refer to a feudal landlord, master, or chief. Krishna is often called *braj rāj* ('King of

50 Viz. *ekādaśī-*, *dolayātrā-*, and *rasayātrāviveka*, cf. R. Chakravarti 1977, p.110.

51 See Goudriaan & Gupta, pp.105-6, and their discussion of other Vaishnava Tantras in the same chapter.

52 See R. V. Joshi for a summary of the contents of *Haribhaktivilāsa*, with occasional reference to other texts, and Entwistle 1982, pp.11-12 & bibliography, for manuals used in the different Vaishnava Sampradays.

53 BhP 9.11.34-41, see also 9.27 where procedure for purifying oneself and serving an image is described as a combination of Vedic and Tantric rites.

Braj'), and in later literature the homes of Nanda and Radha's father Vrishabhanu are described as having all the luxuries that one would expect to find in a princely mansion, and which are appropriate for the courtly hero of classical amatory verse.

The most revered images are those which are believed to be 'self-manifested' (*svayaṃ prakaṭ*). Some of them are said to have been dug out of the ground or discovered in a nearby pond, usually after their presence was revealed to a saint in a dream. It is said that Shrinathji emerged gradually out of the hill of Govardhan, and that a *śālagrām* stone worshipped by Gopal Bhatt metamorphosed into the deity of Radharaman. Shrinathji at Govardhan and Govind Dev at Vrindaban came to light because a cow used to shed its milk on the ground beneath which they lay - a standard theme in stories told about the discovery of deities.

Krishna is represented in various postures or manifestations which are referred to by epithets that usually serve as a name for the temple in which they are enshrined. He is most commonly represented standing in the *tribhaṅga* posture, which means that his limbs are 'bent in three places' - his head inclines slightly to one side, the upper half of his body is bent in the opposite direction at the waist, and his right calf is crossed in front of his left shin with the ball of his right foot resting on the ground. Since this is the characteristic posture he adopts when playing the flute, his hands are raised beside his right shoulder (see plate 5). The flute is separate from the image and is placed in his hands in the daytime and removed at night. Names for this type of image are Gopal, Sakshi Gopal, Govind, Muralidhar, Muralimanohar, Gopinath, Bihari, Mohan, Madanmohan, and Madangopal - all epithets relating to Krishna as playing the flute while grazing the cows or enchanting the Gopis and enticing them to join him for the *rās* dance. Another name is Murari, meaning 'Enemy of Mura' - a demon slain by Vishnu. The flute-playing images are the ones most commonly accompanied by Radha, who stands gracefully at his left side. Epithets that emphasize his relationship with Radha are Radharaman, Radhamadhav, Radhakant, and Radhavallabh; others that denote their interdependence and joint worship are Jugal Kishor, Shyama-Shyam, and Larili-Lal. Three 'self-manifested' deities of Vrindaban, called Banke Bihari, Radhavallabh, and Radharaman, are not accompanied by an image of Radha; instead she is represented by her name or a coronet (*mukuṭ*) placed on a cushion beside Krishna.

Another common type of image shows Krishna standing up straight with his left arm raised in order to lift Mount Govardhan, which may or may not be shown in his hand. This type of image is called Giridhar or Giridhari, though both names are often used for flute-playing images. The most famous example is Shrinathji, an abbreviated form of Shri Govardhan Nathji, the main deity of the Pushtimarg (see plates 12 & 14). Some temples have, as a main or subsidiary idol, an image of Krishna as an infant crawling on his hands and knees with his right hand raised and holding a sweet (*laḍḍū*) or lump of butter. Images of this type, which first appeared independently (other than in narrative panels) in the eleventh century,[54] are called Navanitapriy ('Fond of cream or butter') or Laddu Gopal.

54 Hawley 1983, p.75.

Some images of Krishna are variations of the standard icon of Vishnu. They depict him standing with four hands, two raised and two hanging down, in which he holds a lotus, discus, conch, and mace. Sometimes the lower hands are shown making the classic iconographical gestures of benediction or giving. Such Krishna images are associated with his regal life at Dwarka and are referred to as Dwarkadhish, Dwarkanath, or Chaturbhuj. This is the type of Vasudeva or Krishna image that is described in older iconographical and ritual texts. Haridev and Keshav, two of the oldest images of Krishna/Vishnu recorded as being worshipped in Mathura, appear to have been of this type.[55] After the sixteenth century such images remained popular only in the Pushtimarg, probably because of its connection with Gujarat, where this type of icon was and still is popular.[56] The persistence of four-armed images in Gujarat is also evident from illustrated manuscripts of Bilvamangala's *Bālagopālastuti* dating from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. They depict Krishna with four arms, even when playing his flute in the company of the Gopis. In sects other than the Pushtimarg this type of image is regarded as representing the sovereignty (*aiśvarya*) that Krishna assumed after leaving Braj and settling in Dwarka, and so it is considered less appropriate for the emotional type of devotion than the two-armed forms.

The flute-playing image, which in Braj eventually superseded the four-armed ones, was probably introduced and popularized by devotees from eastern India, where it appears to have been popular from the fifteenth century.[57] Nevertheless, Gopal Bhatt, writing in the sixteenth century, makes only passing reference to the two-armed version but describes the variations of the four-handed type in detail, even though they had become far less current and were less suited to the evocation of Krishna's childhood and youthful adventures.[58] This is probably due to his reliance on older texts and his desire to follow orthodox forms of ritual.

Radha, who has a few temples in Braj dedicated primarily to her, is often called Shriji (an epithet of Lakshmi), Lariliji ('darling'), and Thakurani or, among members of the Pushtimarg, Swaminiji - which both mean 'mistress' (in the non-sexual sense). Sometimes she is referred to as Vrindabaneshwari ('Lady of Vrindaban'), and sometimes as Nagari, counterpart of Krishna as Nagar - two epithets that derive from their association with the urbane and sophisticated hero and heroine of amatory literature. Radha and Krishna images may also be

55 See below §4.6

56 The most famous are Shamlaji in Saba Kantha District and Ranchhor at Dwarka.

57 Vaudeville in Hawley and Wulff (eds.), pp.10-11, refers to the account in CC 2.4-5 of Chaitanya's visit to images of Gopinath at Remuna and Sakshi Gopal in Cuttack, both of which she says depict a flute-playing Krishna. In the Balasore *Gazetteer*, however, the Remuna figure is described as a crudely-fashioned image with, apparently, no distinct iconographical attributes.

58 The flute-playing Krishna is referred to in HBV 7, and the varieties of four-armed image (including *keśava, mādhava, saṃkarṣaṇa, govinda, nārāyaṇa, padmanābha, dāmodara, trivikrama*, and *vāmana*) in HBV 52.168-175 and 18. The earliest reference to the epithet *govinda* appears to be the *govindasvāmī* mentioned in an inscription dated 448 from Baigram (Bogra Distt.), probably referring to the four-armed type of deity of the Bhagavata cult, cf. EI 21 pp.81 ff. and S. K. Sarasvati in JISOA 8, pp.151 ff.

accompanied by one or more Sakhis. There are a few temples called Ashtasakhi Mandir in which all eight Sakhis are enshrined together. In Gaudiya temples images of Chaitanya and Nityanand are placed alongside the main deities and, as in Bengal, there are some temples dedicated solely to Chaitanya.

Balarama may also be enshrined alongside Krishna, as well as being worshipped in temples dedicated to him alone. He is regularly shown with a seven-hooded serpent rearing over his head and holds either a cup or a plough.[59] A popular epithet for him in Braj is Dauji, referring to his status as Krishna's elder brother. Sometimes, because of his fair complexion, images of him are called Gore Dauji. He is usually accompanied by his consort Revati, who is iconographically similar to Radha. Apart from the above deities there are a few other temples in Braj dedicated to particular manifestations of Krishna or to other incarnations of Vishnu, and a few with images of family members of Krishna and Radha.

Rituals performed in all Vaishnava temples follow the same basic pattern. At home devotees may tend for their personal household deities, but in public temples only male brahmins who have custody of the image, or other brahmins who are appointed by them, are allowed to enter the shrine. Bathing and dressing the image is always done behind closed doors. Before the attendant priests can enter the shrine and handle the image they have to purify themselves by bathing and putting on clean clothes. In order to preserve their purity they are careful to avoid physical contact with visitors when handing out consecrated food and holy water. Preparation of food and other offerings in adjacent rooms of the temple is also strictly governed by rules for maintaining ritual purity. In some cases, as in temples of the Pushtimarg, lay people may be permitted to lend a hand in the preliminary stages of preparing offerings, but only in tasks that do not result in the transfer of impurity.

In addition to the worship of images, Vaishnavas also revere the *śālagrām*, a kind of smooth and rounded black stone, usually marked with fossilized ammonites and other molluscs, that is found in the bed of the Gandak river, which flows through Nepal and joins the Ganges at Patna.[60] They are worshipped as representing Vishnu and are often placed in shrines containing an image of him or one of his incarnations. According to their shape, colouring, and distinctive markings they are related to different manifestations of Vishnu and are regarded as having special properties and effects. Worship of them is recommended as a regular part of daily ritual and may be performed by women and low caste people, who are not normally allowed to handle an image of a deity. They are worshipped in conjunction with the *tulsī* or sacred basil plant (Occimum sanctum) that is particularly sacred to Vishnu. Members of the Nimbark Sampraday show special reverence for the *śālagrām*. Their leading guru, who bears the title of Shriji Maharaj, has a particularly sacred one called Shri Sarveshwar that is believed to have been inherited from the founders of the sect. Some devotees also worship stones from the Govardhan hill as embodying Krishna and keep them in their domestic shrines. Most of the Krishna temples of Braj have a pedestal in their courtyard on which grows a *tulsī* plant,

59 Images in bold relief showing him with a cup are to be seen at Tarsi, Jikhangaon, Kamai, Baldeo, and in the Assi Khambha temple at Mahaban.

60 For details of how to worship a *śālagrām* see HBV 5.

around which is placed one or more such stones. The presence of *tulsī* is essential for any Krishna temple and at the time of its installation the plant is ceremonially married to him. Vaishnava devotees grow it in the courtyards of their homes, where it is tended by the women of the household. Its worship consists of circumambulation, watering it, and placing a lamp before it in the morning and the evening.

Regular service of the temple image incorporates both a daily routine and the cycle of annual festivals. The ordinary daily routine is based on a day in the life of Krishna in Braj, as described above in connection with the *aṣṭayām līlā* (see §2.36). All temples follow the same basic cycle, though the different Sampradays have their own variations in timing and detail. The most important part of the ritual is *āratī*, a form of lustration in which a lamp is waved before the image while a gong is beaten or a bell is rung and the spectators sing a hymn. It is done five times a day and a true devotee should be present for every performance, thus making his daily routine synchronize with a day in the life of Krishna. The first one, called *maṅgal āratī*, is held when the deity is woken up shortly before sunrise. Since one has to bathe before entering the temple, it is only the most fervent devotees, mainly ascetics and widows, who are regularly up in time for this early-morning service. The second performance (*śṛṅgār āratī*) takes place about two hours later after the deity has been fully dressed and decorated. The temple is closed for the first few hours of the afternoon in order to allow the deity to have a nap. He is woken for the third *āratī* (*dhūp āratī*), which is followed at sunset by *saṃdhyā āratī*. The final one, usually the most popular because people who work during the day are able to attend, is the *śayan āratī*, held just before the deity is put to sleep and the temple is closed for the night. It may be held as late as nine thirty, but in temples of the Pushtimarg, in which the deity is considered to represent Krishna at a somewhat younger age, it usually occurs at about five or six o'clock. This basic daily pattern is modified on festival days when special celebrations are organized.

9 Looking at idols (*darśan*)

Service of an image is commonly said to comprise three elements, namely food (*bhog*), music (*rāg*), and finery (*śṛṅgār*). The latter is used to refer to the clothes and other accoutrements worn by the idols as well as to the decoration of the shrine as a whole. Different sects, or even individual temples, have their own prescriptions governing the colour and style of dress that the idols should wear. Every temple deity has a wardrobe from which items of clothing and decoration are chosen to suit the requirements of a particular day of the lunar fortnight or a special festival. The style and thickness of the garments vary according to the season; drapery or wall hangings are changed regularly to match the costume of the idols or in accordance with a particular festive motif. Other items may also be placed in the shrine for the enjoyment of the deities, including toy animals, a game called *caupaṛ* (played with dice on a cross-shaped board or cloth), and a selection of cosmetics for Radha.

Devotees are extremely attentive to the deity's dress and overall appearance. They note all the minute variations, register the *bhāv* that is evoked by them, and pass comments about the charm and elegance with which everything has been

arranged. The act of going to a temple to admire the idol and the setting provided for it in the shrine is called *darśan*, a word meaning basically 'seeing'. The term is also applied to a visit to any kind of sacred place and to seeing or having an audience with one's guru, a saint, or any august person. Since eye contact and the appearance of a deity are so important, devotional poets emphasize visual imagery and the act of beholding Krishna in some kind of charming situation.[61] One genre of poetry is devoted to describing the beauty of every part of Krishna and Radha, from the top of their head to the tips of their toes (*nakh śikh varṇan*). Many devotional poems are concerned with how Krishna 'looked' at a particular moment or the manner in which his glances stole the hearts of the Gopis. His look is devastating: it causes trembling, horripilation, and all the other symptoms of infatuation. The poets employ the standard imagery of classical love poetry, describing his eyes as roving, darting, flashing like lightning, or (using his eyebrows as a bow) firing arrows at the heart.[62] The lover's sidelong glance (*kaṭākṣa*), when directed by Krishna at his adorers, is referred to as a 'sidelong glance of grace' (*kṛpākaṭākṣa*).

Throughout India the addition of eyes to an icon provides the finishing touch that brings it to life, thus it is usually done ceremonially as part of the consecration ritual. One liturgical text says that the sun and the moon should be invoked when marking each of eyes, and that they should be the main objects that shine in the lotus of the heart (of the person who marks them).[63] In the section of *Haribhakti-vilāsa* that deals with this ritual it is said that the divine presence becomes evident when the image becomes illuminated, trembles, takes on an expression of happiness, or when someone present becomes speechless, swoons, or begins to dance before the image.[64] In Pushtimarg temples, on completion of the decoration, the ministrant holds a mirror before the idol so that it can admire itself, and then presses it against his heart as if to implant the reflection of Krishna there. Enamel eyes, with black pupils standing out boldly against the whites, are fixed onto the face of an idol in order to make sure that its gaze can be clearly seen. They serve as the point of contact between the devotee who comes for *darśan* and the god who looks out at him from within the shrine.

10 Offering food

Feeding an image is particularly important because the food that is offered is subsequently distributed among the worshippers. A true devotee will not eat anything that has not first been offered to Krishna, and so they will place a portion of every meal they prepare at home in front of their household deity before they sit

61 See Bryant, pp.72-112, who refers to examples of the genre in *Sūr sāgar* as 'verbal icons'. Hawley 1980 discusses how such poems encourage the surrender of the beholder to what is seen and 'abrogate the distance' between the two parties.

62 See translation by Ingalls of poems 465, 468, 482, 520 from Vidyakara's *Subhāṣita-ratnakośa*. Other poems in the same sequence contain examples of the type of eye imagery used by later Krishna poets.

63 *Mānasāra* 70.69-71 & 111.

64 HBV, as summarized by R, V. Joshi, ch.5.

down to eat themselves. In temples the food is placed before the deity, then a curtain is drawn or the door of the shrine is closed to give him time to 'consume' it. The belief is that the food offered becomes infused with a divine potency which is subsequently transferred to anyone who partakes of it. Hindus normally regard the remnants of somebody else's meal with revulsion, but when they come from a deity or divine person they are regarded as pure, a kind of spiritual nourishment referred to as *prasād*, a word that also means 'grace' or 'favour'. Devotees are able to express their *bhāv* through the care with which they prepare the food, by impregnating it with loving feelings, and by anticipating the moment when it will be relished by Krishna. Their feelings are conveyed to him through the offering, and on receiving their share of *prasād* they are able to reabsorb his divine qualities, made manifest and augmented by the addition of his happiness and love.[65] When visiting a temple devotees may bring some sweets as an offering and take them away once they have been enjoyed by the deity, or they may purchase a package of *prasād* that has been prepared and offered by the priests in attendance. Wealthier devotees, as a form of thanksgiving, may sponsor one of the meals provided for a deity, or even his menu for the whole day. In larger temples the cost of such a donation may amount to several thousand rupees.

The Pushtimarg pays particular attention to the feeding of Krishna deities and has evolved the most detailed and sophisticated cuisine.[66] At the time of *maṅgal āratī* the deity is given milk, curds, fruit, sweets made from condensed milk, and a mixture of butter and sugar; after the *śṛṅgār āratī* he is offered a light meal of cereal and vegetable dishes; a couple of hours later he is given some milk sweets, a snack known as *gvāl bhog*, and later in the morning he receives a meal of cooked food. When he wakes up after his afternoon nap he is given fruits and a preparation of condensed milk; later in the afternoon and again at *saṃdhyā āratī* he receives more cooked food, and before he goes to sleep he is offered milk, halwa, and some light sweets. In addition areca nuts wrapped in betel leaves are placed in the shrine for him to chew between meals. The water that is used to bathe the image is also distributed among devotees after the end of an *āratī* ritual, usually with a few leaves of the sacred basil. It is referred to as *caraṇāmṛt*, 'elixir from the feet', and is regarded as being highly beneficial.

On special occasions large feasts may be prepared for the enjoyment of the deity, two particularly elaborate kinds being those consisting of thirty-six different dishes (*chattīs vyañjan*) and of fifty-six preparations made from each type of grain (*chappan bhog*), ideally consisting of fifty-six baskets of each of the fifty-six items, an offering that costs the sponsor between sixty and a hundred thousand rupees. Visitors to the temple are able to purchase a portion of food from the feast. The largest feasts are held in Pushtimarg temples on the occasion of Krishna's birthday, at the Annakut festival, and when the *barī yātrā* pilgrims arrive at Jatipura (a type of *chappan bhog* feast called *kunvārau* that is offered to the Govardhan hill). When the pilgrims arrive at a *baiṭhak* shrine of Vallabha or his son Vitthalnath, one of the party sponsors a feast called *tapelī* (named after a large cooking pot), which

65 Bennett, p.353.

66 See studies of food in the Pushtimarg by Bennett and Toomey. Several such preparations are mentioned in *Sūr sāgar, pad* 1831.

features some special dishes for certain places. The sponsor pays about a thousand rupees in order to feed the leading Goswami and his entourage of about a hundred, as well as a few dozen people invited by the sponsor himself, including his Panda.

11 Music, chanting, drama, and preaching

The *rāg* or musical element in the service of a deity consists primarily of *kīrtan* or *bhajan* - the singing of devotional poems in the temple. They are sung with instrumental accompaniment by someone who is appointed to be present every day, or by a group of devotees who sing as a chorus, led by a main singer (a kind of performance known as *samāj*). In addition, as often happens in smaller and private temples, onlookers may be inspired to sing a favourite poem spontaneously and unaccompanied. As with other devotional activities, the aim of the singing is to evoke *bhāv*. The lyrics usually describe a particular incident in the life of Krishna, conveying the emotions felt at a specific moment by a member of his entourage who is entranced or delighted by a revelation of his beauty or playfulness. Most sects have special anthologies containing lyrics by a number of poets that are arranged into sequences appropriate for a particular moment in the daily ritual or for a festive celebration. Some poets composed complete cycles of poems intended to be sung at different times of the day and at the various annual celebrations. The lyrics are chosen because they deal with an incident in Krishna mythology that is relevant to the time of day and season of the year. They therefore serve to enhance and complement the mood evoked by the decoration of the deity.

The importance of song in the spread of devotional cults, especially those related to Krishna, cannot be underestimated. The emotional form of devotion originated under the inspiration of the Alvar poets of Tamil Nadu. By the sixteenth century vernacular lyrics were being sung throughout India by devotional poets of various persuasions, encouraging large numbers of people to participate in a more emotive and spontaneous kind of worship. Many of the poems are stereotyped, but the better examples are among the highest artistic achievements of Hindu devotionalism and continue to retain their popularity. Translation cannot do justice to them because they depend so much on the emotive connotations of the imagery and mythological context. When performed by a talented singer they can have a profoundly moving effect on their audience.

Apart from listening to solo performers, devotees also gather to sing and chant together.[67] This type of singing is necessarily less ornate and more repetitive than that of the trained vocalist, but is often done with an impressive degree of enthusiasm and involvement. Besides having an emotionally cathartic effect on the participants, this form of worship has always played an important role in creating a feeling of solidarity among devotees. Biographies of Chaitanya tell how he reached the masses by leading groups of his followers through the streets, all of them

67 See Hein 1976 with reference to *saṃkīrtan* and *nagar kīrtan* by Chaitanya and his followers, and articles by Singer and Venkateswaran in Singer (ed.) for an account of *bhajan* sessions in South India.

ecstatically repeating the familiar 'Hare Rama, Hare Krishna' chant. This kind of chanting, known as *saṃkīrtan*, has retained its popularity, especially among Bengali devotees, and is performed regularly in celebration of anniversaries connected with saints and deities of the Gaudiya Sampraday. In Vrindaban there are a few charitable institutions known as *bhajan āśram* where widows, mostly from Bengal, spend several hours a day virtually singing for their supper. Whereas other forms of worship depend upon a personal and individual relationship with the deity, even though most of them take place in public, *saṃkīrtan* is the most communal of devotional activities. It occurs not only at specific gatherings but also among groups of people undertaking a pilgrimage or engaged in a circumambulation. Often there is someone up in front leading the chant (preferably with a megaphone); but it can also break out spontaneously among devotees, for example on a bus taking them to or from a sacred place.

Music is also an essential ingredient in a type of drama that originated in Braj called *rās līlā*.[68] The performance is divided into two parts, the first being a kind of prelude depicting the eternal pastimes of Krishna, Radha, and the Gopis in the celestial Vrindaban, and the second an enactment of an episode in Krishna mythology, usually featuring a few additional characters. Theorists of *rās līlā* say that the first part shows the eternal play in heaven (*nitya rās*) and the second a specific occasional play (*naimittik rās*) as it was performed in the manifest Vrindaban, a re-enactment (*anukaraṇ*) made perceptible for ordinary people.[69]

Traditionally it is performed in the round on a circular performing area called a *rās maṇḍal*. On one side sit the musicians and the main vocalist, usually the leader of the troupe, who sings lyrics and recites passages that link the narrative. Only boys with unbroken voices are cast in the roles of Krishna, Radha, and the Gopis, but older youths and men may act the parts of other characters in the story. The costumes worn by the boy actors are similar to those used to dress temple images of the characters whose part they play. At the rear edge of the *rās maṇḍal* is a dais on which Krishna, Radha, and the Gopis are periodically enthroned. Between acts a curtain is either drawn across or held up in front of the dais while the performers prepare for the following scene or tableau. During the performance the boys are thought to embody the deities they represent. They are consequently revered in the same way as an idol and are referred to by the term *svarūp*. Each *rās līlā* performance culminates in a tableau in which the boys dressed as Krishna and Radha pose on the dais and members of the audience come forward to pay obeisance and make offerings. The same kind of veneration is shown to boys who represent the gods in processions that occur on festive occasions.

Performances of *rās līlā* presumably developed as a means of conveying the

68 The most detailed study in English is that of Hein 1972, who investigates its origins, describes performances, and gives text and translation of a play entitled *Uddhav līlā*. See also R. N. Agrawal, Govind Das & R. N. Agrawal (eds.), Bansal, pp.427-440, P. Mital 1983 and 1966, ch.8, Hawley 1981 (which concentrates on reception among the audience and gives translation of four scripts), and 1983, pt.III (dealing with plays on the 'butter thief').

69 P. Mital 1983, pp.2-3. Cf. HV 64.26 (*kṛṣṇalīlānukāriṇyaḥ*), ViP 5.13.28 (*kṛṣṇalīlānukāriṇī*), BhP 10.30.14 (*anucakrus*).

stories of Krishna and their spiritual message to illiterate audiences. They are normally sponsored by a wealthy devotee or religious institution and are performed at a *rās maṇḍal*, or in the courtyard of a large house or dharmshala. They have always been an integral part of the circumambulation of Braj, being performed at some of the places visited and at the camps where the pilgrims stop overnight. Such performances enact the episode in the life of Krishna that is associated with the place in question. The texts used for the plays consist of lyrics by Braj poets that are linked by passages of prose and other verse composed by the scriptwriter. Most troupes have a repertoire covering the whole of Krishna's life in Braj. The kind of *rās līlā* performed today appears to have developed in the sixteenth century, when the whole process of promoting Braj as a pilgrimage centre began. Various saints are credited by their partisans as having first originated the form, but it is probably based on a dramatic tradition that had been current long before.[70] The history of *rās līlā* is closely associated with the village of Karhela, where there are troupes with a long family tradition. At other villages in the vicinity, as well as Vrindaban, there are troupes that have been in existence for several generations.[71]

Normally all the *rās līlā* troupes are active in Braj during the rainy season, either performing for pilgrims visiting Vrindaban and other sacred centres, or accompanying a group of pilgrims on the circumambulation of holy places. At other times some of the more successful troupes go on tour over the whole of India. Traditionally the plays are performed with a minimum of props, but in recent years the bigger troupes have gone in for a raised stage with proscenium arch, elaborate scenery, plenty of glitter, tinsel, and other eye-catching effects, as well as more slapstick comedy. Concentration on visual display, combined with the use of microphones, has led (if older accounts are anything to go by) to a deterioration in the quality of the singing and dancing, and a general vulgarization of the medium that has had an adverse effect on the *bhāv*. A recent development is the performance of plays on the life of Chaitanya that are called *gaurāṅg līlā*.

Attending performances of *rās līlā*, listening to devotional songs, and taking part in communal singing can be considered as aspects of the form of worship that is described in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* as 'listening to the adventures of the Lord'. Another related practice is attending *kathā* - sermons expounding the meaning of the stories as they are narrated in the scriptures. Sessions for this kind of preaching usually take place late in the afternoon at an ashram or in a temple courtyard. A local or visiting scholar sits on a podium and delivers his sermon to an audience consisting largely of elderly people and young ascetics. Regular attendance at such gatherings is a favourite pastime of people who retire to Vrindaban in order to spend their old age in devotional pursuits. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* is the most widely used text for *kathā* among Krishna devotees. Occasionally intensive week-long sessions are organized in which the text is recited and passages are commented upon. Other authoritative works by Vaishnava saints are also used for *kathā*, including the *Rām carit mānas* of Tulsidas and sometimes works dealing with lives of the saints or exemplary devotees, such as Nabhaji's *Bhaktamāl* and the Pushtimarg *vārtā* literature.

70 See Hein 1972, pp.223-4.

71 Ibid., pp.135-6. VDA 7, while dealing with Nagaji Kunj, lists directors of *rās līlā* active in Vrindaban in the 19th century.

12 Individual and solitary practices

All the above practices are public and communal manifestations of devotion. Basically Krishna devotion is not a religion of withdrawal, though followers, mainly ascetics and brahmin householders, do observe a certain amount of private ritual. The length of time spent in such observances varies and depends upon the devotee's commitments for the rest of the day. Only 'full-time' devotees will spend long periods engaged in ritual worship, purification, study, and prayer. Individual and solitary rituals are principally concerned with purification, fixing one's mind on Krishna, and caring for one's personal deity. Keeping oneself pure involves bathing in the morning, following all the regulations given in ritual manuals, and at any time of day after coming into contact with some form of pollution or before serving a deity.

Committed devotees, after bathing, mark their forehead, and also their body and arms, with the *tilak* mark peculiar to their Sampraday or sub-sect. It is drawn with a paste made with sandalwood and/or sacred earth and consists of a U-shaped outline, usually with a dot or line in the centre.[72] After preparing themselves physically, devotees should meditate on their guru and his predecessors, recite some prayers, and repeat to themselves their personal *mantra* or names of Krishna while telling their rosary of one hundred and eight beads made from *tulsī* wood. The rosary should not be seen while it is being used, and so devotees place a kind of bag over their hand while telling it. The names of Krishna are so beneficial that many devotees repeat one or other of them for long periods, even while walking around or engaged in other activities. Sanctimonious devotees like to make sure that they are observed mumbling the name of the Lord incessantly, though strictly speaking it is a practice that should be done discreetly, in silence, and not while standing, lying down, walking, or wearing shoes.[73]

Apart from being a means of concentrating one's mind on god, communal chanting of his names and repeating them to oneself in private are both manifestations of the belief that divine names have some intrinsic power to bestow spiritual benefits.[74] This belief is rooted in the idea that the name represents a primordial and ultimate sound, the phonic body of god, repetition of which has the power to purify and eradicate sin. It is believed that repetition of the names has a cumulative effect, helping one to amass merit; but even calling upon the Lord once can have miraculous results. Many tales are told of devotees who fell into misfortune, or even abject sinners, who were saved merely by exclaiming his name. The names of Krishna and other gods are regarded as their very essence. The belief that the gods are somehow present in their names is similar to the notion that they are immanent in idols, or that sacred places on earth have a transcendent heavenly

72 This contrasts with the horizontal marks drawn by Shaiva devotees. See Entwistle 1982 for further details.

73 See HBV 17, where this aspect of worship, known as *japa*, and the rosary are dealt with.

74 For the underlying theory see Venkateswaran in Singer (ed.), pp.168-170 and, with reference to the cult of Rama, Bakker, pt.I ch.7.

dimension.[75] Apart from being repeated as a form of meditation, the divine names are regularly used as greetings and exclamations. Common greetings of this type used in northern India are *jay sītā-ram!* and *jay rāmjī kī!*. Among devotees in Braj epithets relating to Krishna are more common, such as *jay śrī kṛṣna!*, *(jay) śrī rādhe!*, or *jay bāsīvāle kī!*.

As well as maintaining a strictly vegetarian diet, devotees are also expected to fast on certain days, including the birth anniversaries of Krishna and Rama and the eleventh day of every lunar fortnight (*ekādaśī*). Proper observance of the latter requires one to eat once on the tenth day, fast throughout the eleventh, and break the fast on the twelfth. One need not starve oneself, however; some fruit may be eaten once on the eleventh day, and a limited range of more solid foods is permissible, including certain kinds of rice, pulse, milk products, and flour made from water chestnuts.[76] In addition one should spend the day in prayer or chanting, remain chaste, and sleep on the ground.

13 Cows, milk, and *ras*

One of the fluids referred to by the term *ras(a)* was *soma*, an exhilarating sacrificial drink, beloved of the gods, which was pressed from the stalks of an unidentified plant that was gathered by moonlight on certain mountains. Later it was replaced in ritual by ghee, a substance churned from milk just as Soma, the moon as a cup of ambrosia that sustains the gods, was churned from the ocean of milk.[77] In ritual and mythology a metaphorical correspondence was established between milk, butter, semen, honey, and *soma*. In her study of the role of these analogous substances in mythology and ritual, O'Flaherty[78] points out that ingestion of them was believed to cause pregnancy. She cites the popular belief that women can become pregnant not only by eating remains of balls of rice (another seed substitute) fed to the ancestors, but also by eating food that is distributed after being offered to a deity.[79] She considers milk to be the primary procreative symbol in the Vedas, noting that the semen of the gods was equated with milk, which in turn produces male semen. Whereas ejaculation of male seed was considered debilitating, the flow of milk was welcome since it is a nourishing fluid from which semen is produced.

In Braj a fair that takes place at Bhandirban whenever a new moon occurs on a Monday (*somāvatī amāvāsyā*) serves as a local example of this correspondence between milk, semen, and the moon (viz. Soma, the seed of Shiva, who is especially worshipped on Mondays). Believing that the water of the well at Bhandirban turns to milk during the night of the new moon, hundreds of local people congregate there in order to bathe. The milky colour that the water acquires on such occasions is

75 Hein 1976, pp. 28-31, referring to Jiv Goswami and De.
76 See HBV 13 for regulations regarding the *ekādaśī*.
77 See Bedekar for references and discussion of various versions of this myth.
78 O'Flaherty 1980, §II.2, esp. pp.18 ff. dealing with *payas* and *duh-* in the Vedas with reference to bull's semen and cow's milk.
79 Viz. *prasād*, ibid., p.175.

presumably due to disturbance of the sediment as a result of so many people drawing from the well, or to some other kind of human intervention, yet the people believe that a miraculous transformation has taken place and that bathing in the water is especially beneficial for women who want to become pregnant.

The analogy between the moon, milk, and semen was not overlooked by Vaishnava theologians. In Krishna mythology the most striking appearance of the moon is on the autumn night during which he and the Gopis danced the *rās* - their most passionate and fulfilling encounter with their beloved. Commenting on the verses of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* that describe the rising of the moon, Vallabha says that it represents the semen of Krishna in the form of Indra. His son Vitthalnath added a passage to the commentary explaining that the moonbeams, which incite passion by suffusing the forest with a red glow, are referred to by the word *go-*, also meaning 'cow' and 'sense faculty', because they yield the milk of love.[80]

In popular devotion the seminal connotations of the moon and milk are not as overtly acknowledged or as explicitly stated. In devotional poetry the moon is primarily used as a metaphor for Radha's fair-complexioned face, though it may also be used for the face of the infant Krishna smeared with curd or butter.[81] Dairy products are the most highly valued sources of nourishment for Hindus and milk is the main ingredient of the sweetmeats offered to Krishna. Some devotees, such as the celebrated Krishnadas Payahari, may resolve to sustain themselves on milk alone. Milk, butter, and churning, important elements in the economic life of Braj, are also common motifs in its folklore and in Krishna mythology in general. Stories of Krishna stealing butter and curds from his mother and the Gopis are enacted regularly in the form of a play or as part of a festival.[82] Hindu interpretations of Krishna's theft of curds and butter generally refer to milk as a symbol of motherly love. Milk is indeed an apt symbol for the primary bond between mother and child, the latter's insatiable appetite for the milk he needs in order to grow, his boundless love for the mother who provides it, and the satisfaction he derives from sucking at the breast. When he grows older and steals from the Gopis the erotic overtones present in accounts of his infantile thieving become more explicit.[83] Here the theft of butter and curd are related to his captivating the girls' hearts, based on the analogy of milk with *ras* in its aesthetic and emotional sense. In his adolescence, as in his infancy, Krishna disregarded conventional standards of propriety in his craving for milk products and the maternal and adult love that they represent.

Milk is put to a variety of ritual uses. Being a propitiating and cooling substance it is offered as a libation to snake deities. It is also poured over Shiva *liṅgas* and stones from the Govardhan hill.[84] It is a libation that nourishes the deity, but it can

80 *idānīm bhagavānevendra iti tasya retorūpaḥ..., kiraṇānām rasadogdhṛtvam* (ad BhP 10.29.2-3). For text and transl. see Redington, pp.52-4, 358-9. See also commentary ad BhP 10.33.19, pp.285-6 & 451.

81 For examples from *Sūr sāgar* see Hawley 1983, pp.106 ff.

82 See above 2.35, and, for the 'butter thief' *rās līlā*, Hawley 1983, pt.III.

83 For an extensive study of the development of the butter thief theme see Hawley op.cit., esp. chs.4, 5, 8, & 9 dealing with imagery and interpretation.

84 See below §§ 7.3-4 for more examples of milk in connection with worship of Govardhan.

also be collected and passed back to the worshippers. Some of the more important temples regularly celebrate the birth of Krishna or the anniversary of the discovery or consecration of their deity by an *abhiṣeka* ceremony in which it is anointed with milk, curds, sugar, honey, and water from the Yamuna. These substances are mixed together to make the 'five-fold elixir' (*pañcāmṛta*), a drink that is distributed among the worshippers. It is a variant of *pañcagāvya*, a mixture of five products of the cow (milk, curds, butter, urine, and dung) that has a wider ritual application. On the birthdays of Krishna, Radha, and Balarama visitors to the main temples of these deities celebrate by drenching each other in a mixture of curds and turmeric, a rite known as *dadhikādau*. At Baldeo, for example, the mixture is thrown out from the shrine, as if the deity within were a source of fertility with which he fecundates his worshippers.

The cow is revered not simply because she produces milk, but also because she represents the protective and nourishing mother who is always ready to suckle her child. Cows are revered in Braj, just as they are by Hindus all over India. In and around Vrindaban there are a few charitable institutions of the type known as *gośālā* that care for cattle. The Panchayati Goshala, founded in 1850, has nearly four hundred cattle and serves as a dairy as well as an animal refuge. Its income derives mainly from donations made by visitors who perform the rite of 'gifting a cow' (*godān*), or who pay 1,100 rupees to become a supporting member of the committee.[85] The patrons are largely from the mercantile community, and it is noteworthy that the cow is especially venerated in the Pushtimarg, which draws the majority of its support from this class. Its temple of Shrinathji, located on the Govardhan hill, is the first one in Braj to be recorded as having maintained a cow shed. The original deity is now in Nathdwara, where devotees maintain a Goshala that has almost a thousand animals, including a cow thought to be descended from Nanda's herd.[86] In Braj, as at Nathdwara, the Goshalas participate in the annual celebration of Gopashtami, a cattle festival that has become associated with Krishna.

14 Femininity

We have already noted how, in devotional theology, the human soul is regarded as feminine and the attachment felt for Krishna by the Gopis or Sakhis serves as a paradigm for the devotee. In addition to this soteriological formulation, account should also be taken of the way in which Tantra offered an internal resolution of masculinity and femininity. Tantric practices can be interpreted as an attempt to recreate and internalize a primordial androgyny by assimilating the feminine aspect of a goddess. Both the soteriological and Tantric models can be seen as striving towards a kind of bisexual wholeness, and both of them underly the ways in which devotees of Krishna emulate the role of the Sakhis. In order to serve Krisha and Radha they are invited to imagine themselves as female, or to have a female counterpart. It is a form of internal or mental service that is rendered as a kind of

85 See Lodrick, pp. 122-9.
86 Ibid., pp.105-112.

meditation. Krishnadas Kaviraj distinguishes between external and internal service. The former is performed by the physical body and includes such acts as singing praises; the latter, performed mentally in or through one's 'spiritual body' (*siddhadeha*), is a more intimate kind of service that can only be carried out in the form of a Sakhi.[87]

Emulation of the female role, called *sakhībhāv*, is an ideal accepted in all the Sampradays devoted to Krishna, and is acted out with varying degrees of literalness.[88] Practically all devotional poems describing Krishna and his activities are written from the standpoint of a woman, be it Yashoda, Radha, a Gopi, or Sakhi. Saints and religious leaders are often extolled as the incarnation of a Sakhi and their portraits tend to show them as dreamy, limp-wristed, and effeminate characters. Chaitanya and Nityanand usually resemble women, or at least androgynes, and Vallabha is sometimes depicted with long flowing hair, mooning on the banks of the Yamuna with a couple of flaccid lotus buds in his hand (see plates 6 & 7). Krishna, though he is endowed with divine and superhuman power and is capable of ripping demons apart and defeating Kansa's prize wrestlers, is not portrayed with the same kind of muscular physique as Hanuman. He is primarily a seductive figure and is usually represented with slender limbs and soft, effeminate features.

As is to be expected, psychological interpretations of the type of devotion shown by male devotees to Krishna dwell on its homosexual undertones. Carstairs describes it as revealing a thinly-veiled longing for a homosexual lover, and Spratt characterized it as a 'narcissistic' rather than 'punitive' form of religion.[89] Its god is not to be feared and is not the object of unconscious hostility, there is less concern with guilt and self-punishment, and less intense suppression of sexuality. Among the characteristics of Krishna devotion which Spratt regards as typically narcissistic are the belief in an immanent god and assumption of a female role, the result of a passive homosexual attitude to the father and identification with the mother. Kakar describes it as 'the most striking illustration of cultural acceptance and outright encouragement of the passive feminine aspects of identity in Indian men'.[90] While he acknowledges that in more 'pathological' cases fantasies of feminine behaviour may well be a manifestation of homosexual libido, he makes a distinction between this and a more universal and 'primordial' yearning on the part of men, who are ensheathed and isolated by their 'phallic' masculinity, to yield their heroic trappings and delight in womanliness, which he suggests is mostly a legacy from our 'prehistoric' experience with our mothers.[91] An additional motivation for feminizing oneself may be a desire to acquire the potentially unruly power (*śakti*) of women.

87 CC 2.8.229. Rup Goswami, in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.2.295, distinguishes between serving Krishna with a *sādhakarūpa* and a *siddharūpa*. For further discussion of this theme see Haberman, chs. V-VII.

88 See S. B. Gosvami for an account of *sakhībhāv* among followers of Swami Haridas, Hit Harivansh, Nimbarka, Chaitanya, and the Lalita and Pranami Sampradays.

89 Carstairs, p.163, Spratt, ch.14.

90 Kakar 1981, p.111.

91 Kakar 1985, p.91.

Feminization of oneself is not a phenomenon restricted to worship of Krishna. Men who are devoted to one of the bloodthirsty Shakta goddesses may perform some kind of symbolic emasculation in order to avert the threat of her sexuality. Here we have the theme of the 'bad mother' who impels the son to identify with her in order to deflect her repressed sexuality and free himself from her domination.[92] This may even be taken as far as actual castration, as is done by the Hijras, groups of eunuchs found all over North India who permanently adopt female attire.[93] In the Krishna cult the sexual transformation is not a reaction to a feared threat, but is more an adulation of the indivisibility of Krishna and Radha and their identification with each other, whereby she is regarded as an emanation of him. The interchangeability of the divine couple is expressed in apocryphal stories of how Krishna and Radha exchanged clothes, or how Krishna dressed up as a Gopi.

While, on the one hand, devotees may identify with Krishna in his amorous encounters, they may also wish that they were Gopis. There is, inevitably, a thin dividing line between spiritual emulation of the Gopis as a devotional meditation and homosexual effeminacy. Emulation of the female role is encouraged and meets with approval when it is done in a restrained and sublimated manner, or takes place in an appropriate context. Maduro, who attended a religious song festival at Nathdwara, describes how men, some of them intoxicated with bhang, took turns to dance, affecting all the graces and mannerisms of Radha.[94] If, however, it extends to blatant and provocative transvestism, as is the case with the Hijras, it usually provokes revulsion or ridicule.[95] There are a few Krishna devotees who adopt female dress, either temporarily or permanently, and behave in an ostentatious and coquettish manner, like Hijras or drag queens. Transvestism among worshippers of Krishna is nowadays a comparatively rare sight, but a few 'Sakhis' still turn up each year at Barsana to celebrate the birth of Radha.

We have already noted mythological precedents for transvestism in the case of Narada and Shiva, who became Gopis in order to be admitted into Vrindaban (§2.38). In South India images of the thirteenth-century devotee Vedantadeshika, who imagined himself to be a female lover of Krishna, are dressed as a woman on his festival day.[96] Chaitanya used to imagine himself as Radha and (like certain followers of Vallabha) simulated a woman's menstrual retreat.[97] At Nabadwip, the home town of Chaitanya, there is temple dedicated to a goddess called Abhayama ('Fearless mother'). The Goswamis of this temple say that it originated when milk flowed miraculously from Chaitanya's breasts while he was playing the part of a woman in a theatrical performance. The Vaishnavas who witnessed this miracle drank a portion of the milk, upon which he proclaimed that they would never experience fear.[98] Some of Chaitanya's followers say that he was a dual incarnation

92 Kakar 1981, pp.102-3, 109-111; also O'Flaherty, 1980.

93 Their main goddess is Bahuchara, whose cult is centered in Gujarat. Their cult is a haven for transexuals, as well as hermaphrodites and androgynes.

94 Maduro, p.31.

95 Carstairs, ibid.

96 In which case he is called Mohini, the name of a feminine form once adopted by Vishnu to tempt Shiva. See Singer in Singer (ed.), p.133.

97 The latter are mentioned by Spratt, pp.193 & 237.

98 Morinis, p.149, relating the story as told by Goswamis of the temple.

of Krishna and Radha.[99] One explanation offered is that Krishna once fell in love with his own reflection and so, in order to taste his own sweetness, became incarnate as Chaitanya, in whose person he assumed the feelings and beauty of Radha.[100] With reference to the androgynous conception of Chaitanya, O'Flaherty remarks that 'the worshipper who imagines himself as female, and dresses like one, in order to be with Krishna, is expressing the explicitly heterosexual (and perhaps implicitly homosexual) erotic relationship with god - but that god himself is also imagined as participating in an explicitly homosexual embrace (he, in female disguise, embracing Radha) with his actually heterosexual consort'.[101] Gadadhar Pandit, a friend of Chaitanya, is said to have dressed as a woman in order to realize the state of Radha, and some of his later followers claimed that he was an incarnation of her.[102] Another celebrated case is that of the nineteenth-century Bengali saint Ramakrishna. He dressed as a woman in his childhood and played the part of Radha and her companions. In his adolescence he believed that if he had been a woman he would have been blessed with the ability to love Krishna and have him for a husband. On such occasions he imagined himself as a child widow, living austerely and waiting for him to return.[103] Some Vaishnava authors tend to 'camp up' sexual role-playing by describing scenes with plenty of teasing, licentiousness, dressing up, and role reversal. Characters who try to reassert conventional propriety are sometimes ridiculed, yet their authors tended to adopt a puritanical and normative public image.

Devotion to Krishna is more explicitly presented as a sublimation of homosexual desires in a story told about the poet Raskhan.[104] According to hagiographical literature he was a Pathan - virtually a by-word for a pederast in the popular imagination. He fell in love with the son of a moneylender and became so obsessed that he could think about nothing else and fell into disrepute. One day he met a group of Vaishnavas who told him about Krishna and showed him a picture of Shrinathji. He was so taken by the icon that he vowed to abstain from food until he saw the deity with his own eyes. He went to Govardhan, but was thrown out of the temple by a guard who recognized him. He fasted for three days beside a tank at the foot of the hill, after which Krishna appeared before him in person. Krishna introduced him to Vitthalnath, who duly initiated him and led him into the temple. Raskhan then began to compose his famous poems on the beauty of Krishna, his devastating glance, the entrancing effect of his flute, and the emotions felt by Radha and the Gopis.

Among the Sahajiya Vaishnavas of Bengal feminization was seen as a way of purifying oneself, of neutralizing one's masculinity in order to create a balance in oneself between male and female polarities (*puruṣa* and *prakṛti*).[105] Identification

99 CC 1.4.49-50, 2.8.278-81 & 287-88; De, pp.93-4 fn.2, 425-9.
100 De, pp.425-7.
101 O'Flaherty 1980, pp.298-9.
102 De, p.94 n.
103 See Singer, ibid. pp.133-5, and Masson 1980 for a more detailed attempt at psycho-analyzing Ramakrishna.
104 252V 218, pp.309-311.
105 See Dimock, pp.158-9.

with the Gopis or Radha may lead to a reduction of one's sexual desire for women, but in the Sahajiya context it also tended to encourage erotic feelings for the body of Krishna. Despite the esteem given to women in Tantra and the manner in which they are emulated by male Vaishnavas, in practice they are so devalued that they are prohibited from serving temple deities. Defensiveness and suspicion of the female sex are characteristic of Hinduism in general, and there are many ascetics who will have nothing to do with women and even refrain from setting eyes upon them. Krishnadas Kaviraj praises Chaitanya for his avoidance of women and declares that it is immoral to associate with them.[106]

Such attitudes did not prevent a few prominent female devotees from becoming highly respected. The most famous example is Mira Bai, a young widow who, according to legend, was persecuted and hounded out of the palace at Chittaurgarh by her cruel brother-in-law, but found consolation in devotion to Krishna. Tradition has it that Mira Bai visited Vrindaban and wanted to meet Jiv Goswami. He at first refused, saying that he did not look upon women's faces. She cunningly replied that he was being presumptuous by assuming that in Vrindaban anyone but Krishna could regard himself as male.[107] Women are not always shunned, or acknowledged only if they become pious widows. In Bengal some women were accepted as gurus, probably as a result of Tantric influence.[108] Jahnavi, wife of Nityanand, and thus identified with Balarama's consort Revati, became a guru and figurehead for the Sahajiyas. On her second visit to Vrindaban she was joyfully received by Jiv Goswami and other leaders of the Gaudiya Sampraday.[109] While she was in Bengal she is supposed to have had an image made of herself which she said represented Radha and should be installed in the temple of Gopinath at Vrindaban. A disciple named Shrinivas took it there and placed it to the left of the deity, moving the original Radha image to the right. Raja Man Singh, on a visit to the temple, was perplexed when he saw that there were two images of Radha. Jahnavi explained to him in a dream that she was present as the second Radha in order to appease the pique (*mān*) shown by the first one, which was upsetting Gopinath.[110] Another respected female devotee was Krishnapriya, who settled in Vrindaban with her sister Vishnupriya. They inherited from their father, Ganga-narayan, a Govardhan stone that had once belonged to Chaitanya. Among Bengali devotees the so-called female ascetics (*vairāginī*) played an ambiguous role, often living as concubines and, especially in the eighteenth century, taking up residence in monasteries and hermitages, in Bengal as well as Vrindaban.[111]

106 CC 2.22.49, 3.2.115 ff.

107 Myth as given by Rupkala in explanation of a remark made by Priyadas (commentary on Nabhaji's *Bhaktamāl*) *kavitt* 479.

108 Kennedy, pp.85-6, Dimock, pp.96-102.

109 For Jahnavi (alias Janhava Devi) see R. Chakravarti 1985, pp. 174-9 & 261-6. Her visits to Vrindaban are described in *Prem vilās* of Nityanandadas, ch.15-16, *Narottam vilās* and BRat by Narahari Chakravarti, and *Muralī vilās* by Rajavallabh Goswami, ch.15-17.

110 Shyamdas, p.143.

111 Kennedy, pp.170-74, noting that in Bengal the terms *vaiṣṇavī* or *vairāginī* had negative connotations. See Tieffenthaler's remarks, as noted below in §5.33

15 Fantasies

As devotion to Krishna evolved the stories of his early years became increasingly popular, while his role as a hero who came down to earth to restore law and order, by killing Kansa and by participating in the conflicts narrated in the *Mahābhārata*, receded into the background. It was the element of play (*līlā*) that became paramount. In his childhood and youth Krishna expresses the divine as something spontaneous, tumultuous, and unconditioned. He is unruly, carefree, and lives a joyous and unhampered life, with no apparent concern for maintaining world order.[112]. Hindu commentators assert that his bucolic adventures in Braj were performed with a salvific purpose. His intention in sporting with Radha and the Gopis was to shower his grace upon them, realize his own bliss, and convey the message of divine love in terms comprehensible to ordinary mortals. Like all religious myths, the stories about Krishna are open to other levels of interpretation besides the soteriological and theological. Since they have absorbed much from popular traditions and are a source of subject matter for various kinds of 'mass media', they invite analysis as a form of collective fantasy. The foregoing summaries of the Krishna myth and elements of devotion suggest that there is much in them that fits the classic psycho-analytic definitions of narcissism and sublimation.[113]

It is evident that the appeal of devotion to Krishna is much enhanced by its open invitation to indulge in fantasies. Pilgrimage, visiting temples, attending performances of religious dramas, and listening to recitations of the scriptures are all forms of communal worship that encourage identification with Krishna or those who sport with him. Although the message is a spiritual one, it is expressed in terms of human pleasure and instinctual gratification. The Krishna myths provide his devotees with a range of characters onto whom they can project their emotions and sensual feelings, tempering their impulses by realizing them externally and collectively. Participation in the enactment of Krishna's activities offers some possibility of catharsis. The shared emotional and aesthetic experience provides some kind of substitute for the renunciations demanded by society.

The multivalency of Krishna's character - baby, boy, gigolo, trickster, hero, and sermonizer - allows people of different backgrounds, sexes, and age-groups to select an appropriate mode for their devotion. Ultimately the erotic aspect receives the most emphasis, and was indeed dwelt upon exclusively by many devotees who settled in Braj. This is illustrated in a story told about Nehi Nagaridas, a devotee of the Radhavallabh Sampraday, a sect in which the poems of Hit Harivansh, dealing exclusively with the love of Krishna and Radha, are accorded the role of a canonical text. Nehi Nagaridas, while attending a sermon on the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, expressed his distaste for the work because of the Dhenuka episode. He could not bear to hear how the hand that had caressed Radha's cheek had grasped the hoof of a donkey.[114] There was nothing scandalous in this devotee's adverse reaction to a

112 For further discussion of Krishna's playful aspect see Kinsley 1972 and 1975, pp. 15-19, and Siegel, pp.171-7.

113 Cf. Freud 1908, 1914, 1930, chs.2 & 4, and (on love) 1921, ch.8.

114 Bhagwat Mudit, p.81.

canonical text; rather it is seen as a sign of his overriding commitment to Krishna's amorous adventures.

The basic message of Krishna's theft of butter or his adulterous romance with the Gopis is that love is something that cannot be contained within the rigid bounds of conventional morality. The devotee's imagination is stimulated by escapades that transgress social norms, just as the Gopis had to sneak out at night to join Krishna in the *rās* dance, or were obliged to step out of the water naked in order to retrieve the clothes that he had stolen from them. The appeal is that of an illicit love affair, but the anti-structural implications of such behaviour are moderated by the need for spiritual discipline, to be regular in serving images of Krishna and transferring to them all that one desires for oneself. Puritanical values, fear of pollution, and the caste hierarchy all persist, notwithstanding the liberalism professed by some of the saints and scriptures. The later invention of a marriage between Krishna and Radha, an attempt to sanction their behaviour, failed to fire the popular imagination simply because it was the anarchy and wantonness of their relationship that had so much fascination. An illicit affair or love in separation had more emotional appeal than a mundane and respectable married life. Kakar suggests that this sanctification of extramarital love, like the European romanticization of it, fascinates because it obviates many factors that promote sexual anxiety and consequently inhibit desire.[115] He views such a relationship as being relatively free from inhibiting factors in marriage that involve a transference to the spouse of unconscious sexual attitudes and prohibitions entertained earlier towards parents of the opposite sex.

Krishna's life in Braj contrasts with the forest exile endured by Rama and the Pandavas. For them the forest was a place of renunciation, but for Krishna it offered plenty of scope for free love, masquerades, and romance by moonlight. In contrast with the Krishna who, in the *Bhagavadgītā*, preached the necessity of external duty (*dharma*), the Krishna of Braj had more time for recreation and giving vent to his instinctual impulses. The company of a nomadic pastoral community provided an escape from social obligations; only later, in the cities of Mathura and Dwarka, did he concern himself with the responsibilities of kingship and adulthood.

Pilgrimage in particular, and spiritual discipline in general, help to resolve the opposition between the duties of a householder and the traditional ideal of living as a chaste ascetic in order to attain final liberation. Braj is seen as an idyllic setting that holds out the promise of narrowing the gulf between one's desires and the inability or impossibility of their being fulfilled in one's normal environment and social milieu. When he returned to the city, Krishna became a king whose role was to uphold the age-old brahmin-kshatriya alliance. The romantic escape into the countryside has particular appeal for the mercantile classes, but it also attracts a large number of people from higher and lower castes. The aristocrats who retired to mansions in Vrindaban in some ways resemble the courtiers of Versailles playing at shepherds and shepherdesses in Le Petit Trianon. For the wretched and dispossessed, who were only too aware of the harsh realities of peasant life, Krishna's

115 Kakar 1985, p.89.

adventures in Braj provided a fantasy of escape into Arcadian romance combined with courtly luxury.

Although myth and theology present Krishna's activities as an earthly manifestation of something transcendent, they seem more like an apotheosis of mundane human sensuality. An inherent paradox in the Krishna myth is the contrast between his sanctity and the impropriety of much of his behaviour when judged in terms of normal standards of human conduct. This comes to the fore in the depiction of him as an unruly child and lusty adolescent. Krishna's escapades are more human, piquant, and spicy than those of other gods, but they create problems for a theology that wishes to sustain the traditional morality, social hierarchy, and priestly monopoly. Theologians tell us that Krishna's activities are a form of divine play that serves to convey a sublime truth in terms that ordinary people can comprehend. This, however, fails to explain why he needs to perpetuate such activities in heaven. Ultimately all theological and ethical justifications have to resort to the argument that because Krishna and his retinue are divine, his actions are inscrutable and cannot be judged by human standards. When Shuka raises this question in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, he is told that we should heed the words of the gods, but not imitate their actions.[116]

While theologians are at pains to make everything Krishna does seem proper, the poets delight in the scandal and paradoxes that appealed to the popular audience.[117] For the masses the liberating message of Krishna's self-assertion is more important than the logic and ethics of his conduct. They are happy to revere him as a god with miraculous powers and to delight in the stories told about him without bothering too much about ethical justifications for his behaviour. Morever, they are used to conceiving of spiritual power in terms of material wealth. Krishna deities are pampered in just the same way as a powerful king in a sumptuous court. They are used to the idea that the rich and powerful are able to indulge in hedonistic activities which they can never hope to enjoy themselves.

Sublimation and vicariousness are inherent in devotion to Krishna, but the sensuality is not repressed. Devotion is modelled on human love and fully exploits all the seductive possibilities of sensuous imagery; yet the poets and theologians often remind us that the path of love is difficult and accessible only to a privileged few. It presupposes a capacity for self-denial and renunciation. Satisfaction has to be obtained by identifying with something that is transcendent and inscrutable, defined by means of such terms as *līlā, māyā, aprakaṭa*, and *alaukik*. But at least devotion offers some kind of aesthetic escape from social obligations and the miseries of a world in which everything is subject to decay. The yearning for an elusive condition of sustained bliss is expressed in human terms, even if we are denied the kind of climax that is attainable only by Krishna and Radha. The devotee is kept at a distance, both literally by remaining a mere spectator in the temple service, and psychologically by being invited to experience love in separation. The uncertainties and disappointments of carnal love are evaded and

116 BhP 10.33.27-32.

117 See Hospital, who remarks (p.67) that 'we can see the paradox inherent in the divine become human as the product of the discrepancy between the unlimitedness of the human imagination and the very limitations of human living.'

the instincts are directed into an impulse which has an inhibited aim, leading to a state of evenly suspended, steadfast, and affectionate feeling.[118] Rather as in the love felt by one human being for another, love for Krishna is thought to be based on his spiritual qualities. He is idealized and placed above criticism; as he comes to be regarded as sublime, so sexual satisfaction is pushed into the background and the devotee becomes increasingly unassuming and modest, allowing the loved one to swamp his being, reducing him to a condition of humility, surrender, and self-sacrifice.

In worshipping a temple deity one's own gratification should be renounced and one's energy devoted to serving the god. In dwelling upon Krishna's exploits instinctual aims are deflected in such a way that they cannot come up against the frustration of the external world. They are fixed on something that is 'finer' and 'higher', even though there is less likelihood that it will convulse the physical being in the same way as satisfaction of an untamed instinctual impulse.[119] By concentrating upon an imaginary world in pursuit of a transcendent experience, one's love is protected from the possibility of being confronted by reality. The cultivation of this mode of love as a purely mental experience is characteristic of the Hindu tendency to retreat into an inner world rather than strive to change external circumstances. Devotional movements in Hinduism have provided a subjective psychological outlet, but have allowed themselves to become integrated into the social order. The devotees turn their feelings inwards and refrain from directing their subjective resistance towards any kind of active or radical reform of the outside world. Any revolutionary fervour they may feel is dissolved through religious mystification. To some extent the impotent position of Hindus during the long period of Muslim domination may have helped to heighten and prolong this tendency. O'Connell has examined the way in which the Gaudiya Vaishnavas, under Muslim rule, appear to have withdrawn both legitimation and censure from the social and political sphere by confining the area of genuinely sacred activity to the interior devotional life of the individual.[120] Hein has suggested that the tendency to turn inward began in the Gupta period, when caste and other social restrictions became more rigid and entrenched.[121] There are, however, difficulties in trying to pin the tendency down to specific periods or places. Movements of emotional devotionalism seem to have arisen among people of different backgrounds who were somehow disillusioned with or excluded by orthodox religion or felt oppressed by socio-political circumstances. Once such a movement is underway, it is able to feed on the general psychological orientation of the populace at large.

118 See Freud 1930, ch.4, who cites St. Francis of Assisi as one who 'perhaps...went furthest in thus exploiting love for the benefit of an inner feeling of happiness.'

119 Cf. Freud 1930, ch.2 . This is not to say that there is no scope for sexual arousal and gratification: Maduro, p.32, records that many of his male informants at Nathdwara reported sexual fantasies, erections, and seminal discharge while standing before the image of Shrinathji.

120 O'Connell 1976, p.35.

121 See Hein 1986, who describes it as a scheme for exploiting sexual energy - the more the better - in ways harmless to the values and institutions of Hindu society.

Mythologically the escape is presented as a regression into the world of childhood. Krishna is not the only mythological hero of noble birth who is obliged to spend his early years in exile among peasants. In some respects the account of how Krishna was placed in the care of Nanda is in conformity with Otto Rank's analysis of myths of the birth of heroes.[122] The theme of the hero really being of noble birth reflects the child's growing realization that there is nothing unique or exceptional about his parents, and that other parents might be preferable. This gives rise to the fantasy that he is really the child of aristocratic parents and had some kind of miraculous birth. Masson takes up the theme of the need for adults to fantasize a happy childhood, seeing this as the reason why the Krishna myth lays so much emphasis on cows and milk, green pastures, and indulgent mothers. He compares the author of the *Harivaṃśa* to parents who 'are inclined to suspend in the child's favour the operation of all the cultural acquisitions which their own narcissism has been forced to respect', to renew on his behalf the claims to privileges which they have been obliged to suppress.[123]

As a child, Krishna is omnipotent and his infantile exploits prefigure the adolescent sexual activity that is implicit in them. While growing up among the herdsmen Krishna is no remote patriarchal god who demands subservience, but a playful and exuberant child who encourages others to indulge their instincts, regardless of the constraints of society or the super-ego. Removed from this world, on a transcendental plane, Krishna is the lord of his heaven where everyone caters exclusively for his needs. Out of space and time, in the intervals between periods of creation, the infant Krishna lies on a banyan leaf that floats on the cosmic ocean (see plate 8). In this condition of sublime independence he sucks his toe, engrossed in a condition of self-sufficiency and auto-erotism prior to his participation in the world.[124] Krishna's narcissism is encouraged by maternal indulgence, and later becomes manifest in his gorging himself on butter and sucking the teats of the cows while pushing the calves away (see plate 9). The oral theme is continued in adolescence by poetry describing the sensuous way in which he places his flute on his lips, or the nectar that can be obtained by kissing them.

Underlying Krishna's infantile omnipotence is the paradox of incarnation that arises from his need to conform to the restrictions of a human environment. This irony is expressed by his ambivalent subservience to his mother, as in the episode in which she tied him to a mortar. Hawley points out that his butter thievery can be interpreted as 'a parable of the elusive interdependence that pertains between humans and the divine', expressive both of his power over the Gopis and their power over him.[125] Kakar sees Krishna's 'feminine appeal' as lying in his presentation as an ideal son who consolidates and confirms a woman's identity as mother. His becoming a lover of Radha, a married woman older than he is, incorporates the fantasied fulfilment of the mother's sexual desire for her son.[126]

122 See especially Freud's contribution (*Family Romances*) to Rank's study, and discussion by Preciado-Solis, pp.43 f., of theories of Rank, von Hahn, Raglan, and others.
123 Masson 1974, with reference to HV.
124 See Freud 1905, ch.2 (on thumb-sucking).
125 Hawley 1983, pp.50-51.
126 Kakar 1981, pp.152-3.

O'Flaherty views the relationship between Krishna and Yashoda, in which the son is dominant, as a positive presentation of the erotic mother, contrasting with the negative presentation of her in the myths surrounding Kali. As an example of the use of the mother-son axis as the basic Hindu affective link between human and divine, the devotee, by imagining god as a child, can simultaneously fulfil love for god and love for a son, and at the same time imagine himself as a child worshipping the mother, reverting back to 'a time before adult tensions intruded upon his life'.[127]

The demons that attack the infant Krishna may be interpreted simply as projections of unacceptable feelings, as is suggested by Masson. Kakar follows the more tendentious line of seeing them as representative stages in a child's development. He suggests that the Putana, Aghasura, and Kaliya episodes are all 'pre-genital' fantasies. Aghasura is thus a symbolic projection of the child's own hunger for sustenance, while its slaying represents the elimination of infantile needs, marking the end of orality. The defeat of Kaliya represents the ego's taming and control of instinctual drives, as well as the son's grappling with anxieties and affects triggered by the perception of his mother, 'a developmental step forward towards adulthood and 'genitality', relatively free from the 'poisonous' incestuous passions of infancy'. The lifting of Govardhan is seen as representing the oedipal phase: Krishna incites the herdsmen to rebel against the paternal Indra and pay homage instead to the (maternal) fields, rivers, trees, and cows. He withstands Indra's wrath and by lifting the mountain on his finger displays his pride in his 'newly discovered tumescence'.[128] One may take or leave such interpretations, according to the rigour and zeal with which one cares to apply the Freudian view of psychological development.

There is a remarkable absence of representations of Yashoda suckling Krishna, an icon with considerable potential as a symbol of maternal love. This is not due to any reluctance to depict breast-feeding, but is probably a consequence of the myth's concern with Krishna's assertion of his independence, hence more attention is given to his sucking the life out of the ogress Putana. Agrawala has suggested that Putana and Yashoda reflect an opposition that can be traced back to Vedic mythology.[129] While Yashoda represents the illumination of the sun and the release of waters brought about by Indra, Putana is the putrefied and stagnant water that is deprived of sunlight and is pent up by Varuna and Vritra. A similar contrast between the beneficent Yashoda and the threatening Putana is also found in psychological interpretations of the incident. Putana's attempt to kill Krishna by offering him her poisoned breast makes her an ideal candidate for the title of 'bad mother'. Herbert appears to have been the first to suggest that Putana represents the possessive maternal instinct. He interprets the story as implying that we should ignore the dangers of this instinct and take full advantage of the sustenance that is offered.[130] Others have described it as a projection of the child's anxious feelings about his mother, or a struggle between the voracious infant and the malevolent devouring

127 O'Flaherty 1980, pp.111, 115.
128 Kakar 1981, pp.150-2.
129 Agrawala, 1960.
130 Herbert, p.276.

mother who refuses to let go of her son. While nurturing him she also threatens to cripple his individuality, a conflict with undertones of oral sexual violence, a fantasized and vengeful fulfilment of the mother's sexual demands.[131] As far as 'bad fathers' are concerned, Goldman sees Kansa (Krishna's maternal uncle) as the villain in an oedipal conflict in which Krishna plays the role of an aggressive and highly eroticized son.[132] Jaiswal leans towards a more socio-historical interpretation by seeing it as symbolical of the struggle between mother right and father right, resulting in the triumph of patriarchy.[133]

Following the developmental line, Krishna's sexual encounter with Kubja, the hunchbacked woman, has been interpreted by Masson as an event that marks the end of his playful childhood, his attainment of sexual autonomy and emotional distance from the parental home, 'his first genital encounter with a woman he has won by himself'.[134] He frees her from her ties to Kansa ('a thinly disguised father figure') and takes possession of her himself. His encounter with her represents his emergence as a young man, ready to assume a married life and take up his princely duties, having left behind the 'magic and regression that marked his life as a cowherder'. He enters a sphere in which he is concerned more with external and practical questions and becomes responsible for the survival of his kinsmen, emerging into an outer world where there is less scope for self-indulgence, and which therefore has less escapist appeal than his years in Braj.

The fantasies underlying the mythology, however they are to be analyzed, are certainly collective. The literature and forms of worship through which they are expressed are a common cultural inheritance. The authors of devotional literature are as lacking in individualism as the lovers they describe. The writings are ascribed to saintly figures, implying that they should be taken as revealed canonical texts, but there is little concern shown for attesting their authorship and authenticity. Even if we do have some reliable biographical information about a particular author, there is little or no reflection of it in the works ascribed to him. As far as authorship is concerned, there is not much scope for deconstruction in this vast ocean of devotional *écriture*. There is no *moi* or ego who presumes to be its inventor; each devotional text is a concatenation of transformational possibilities within a rule-bound grammar. There is rarely a trace of any authorial idiolect; the writing is generated from a 'ready-made' set of aesthetic themes and anticipated responses. In poetry the emphasis tends to be on alliteration and other verbal tricks that can be exploited to artistic effect in sung performance. The depersonalized authors juggle and permutate an assortment of codes that are preordained by aesthetic theory and have fixed and generalized associations. Over and above all the encoded meanings is a conventional belief system and presiding transcendental ideal. The myth provides a context in which everything is *donné*; the evocations and sentiments are inherent in the programme used by the creator of the text. Aesthetic and emotional

131 Kakar 1981, pp.147-50. See also Masson 1974, p.458, and O'Flaherty 1980, pp.41-2, 101-2, 250 with reference to 'the breast that feeds itself' and the fantasy of oral aggression.

132 Goldman 1978, pp.350, 358.

133 Jaiswal, p.66.

134 Masson 1980, ch.6.

response depends on the devotee being acquainted with the ideal and its particular modes of expression. For the devotee the poems can never be trivial, they are always taken as referring to something infinitely greater than the sum of their parts. The listener has learnt how to respond to all the themes and motifs that are employed. Most of them are cues for evoking emotions associated with fundamental psychological issues, such as the roles of sexes and generations, the nature of love, and the degree to which indulgence of the instincts is permissible. Poetry is not appraised on the basis of whether it expresses something original or uniquely personal; it is a depersonalized rather than idiosyncratic expression of a universal feeling or truth. This is not to deny that there are no outstanding works that are distinguished for particularly subtle and skilful versification, or imaginative juxtaposition of images, but that there is hardly a writer whose works do not contain a large amount of conventional material.

16 Motivations for pilgrimage

Before looking for more specific reasons for undertaking a pilgrimage to Braj, we should not dismiss too lightly mere curiosity to see new places and to get away from daily routine; in fact what amounts to the Hindu equivalent of a holiday.[135] Like the first Christians who journeyed to the Holy Land, the desire of the pilgrims is to recreate in their imagination the life of the god to whom they are devoted or whose stories appeal to them. They want to visit places mentioned in the scriptures and oral tradition, and to hear the stories retold at the sites where miraculous events took place.[136] Unsophisticated devotees, who find it difficult to grasp anything but the literal meaning of myths, are eager to find visible confirmation of their faith. The desire to see material evidence and representations of the gods, saints, and mythical incidents, to follow the footsteps of the gods and great devotees, are important motivating factors. The presentation of wonders, miracles, and religious mysteries in terms of visual images is as typical of popular Hinduism as it was of medieval Christianity. As with the spurious and sometimes absurd relics and miracles that attracted Christian pilgrims, and even draw the faithful to this day, so there is no limit to the credulousness of the Hindu devotee. And, of course, though some saints discovered and promoted sacred places with a view to inspiring devotion, there have always been priests who have been interested in nothing more than extorting money from gullible pilgrims.

In view of the strong element of fantasy in devotion to Krishna, and the emphasis given to visible signs of his presence, Braj can be seen as the Hindu equivalent of a 'theme park', the most extensive of its kind in India, a 'Krishnaland' for devotees seeking tangible stimulus for their imagination. This was so even in the sixteenth century when devotees came to Braj and mapped everything out, 'inventing' a location for every canonical and apocryphal incident in the life of Krishna. The

135 Curiosity and a desire to escape from the stifling framework of parish life are also some of the motivations cited by Sumption, p.13, for pilgrimage undertaken by medieval Christians.

136 Ibid., ch.6.

importance of sight-seeing in the pilgrimage is evident from the increasing tendency to visit Braj by bus on more superficial organized tours. The appeal of Braj is remarkably different from that of more traditional centres of pilgrimage. Kashi (Varanasi) has remained pre-eminent as a place of pilgrimage associated with attaining liberation (*mokṣa*) after death, and Gaya is the foremost place for the performance of rites in honour of the ancestors. Braj is, *par excellence*, a centre for a devotional type of pilgrimage. We shall see in the following chapters how the development of the sacred circuit of Braj reflects the evolution that took place in devotion to Krishna. From the sixteenth century onwards the sacred places were important not as sites at which to perform the traditional rituals, but as places that inspire one to contemplate and become immersed in the activities of Krishna that are associated with them. The circumambulation of Braj entails renunciation and self-deprivation, yet the goal is not to obtain release but to gain some kind of emotional fulfilment in the here and now. This motivation first appeared in South India concurrently with the emergence of an emotional form of devotion.[137] Braj is a place that offers a glimpse of the eternal, the paradise that ultimately awaits the faithful devotee, but it has lost the traditional associations that ancient places of pilgrimage have with the afterlife. In this way the pilgrimage enhances life in this world by encouraging the notion that the divine play is perpetually re-enacted in the environment of Braj, offering a foretaste of what can ultimately be enjoyed eternally in the company of Krishna.

Many of the oldest sacred sites in Braj are still visited, and there are priests whose ancestors performed the traditional rites at them, but the original function of both the place and its human mediators has been overshadowed by the sight-seeing tour. Rituals, when they are performed, are done so in a perfunctory manner, which tallies with the belief that they automatically generate the merit that is anticipated. Devotional religion sought to free itself from this form of ritual automatism. Propagators of the devotional path criticized the humbug and hypocrisy of such formalized religious performances. In the Pushtimarg the type of religion that strictly follows injunctions (*maryādā*) governing religious practice is rated lower than spontaneous and heartfelt participation in the play of Krishna. In practice, however, the temple priests have maintained a rigid formalism in the worship of Krishna images. They have managed to retain their role as intermediaries between the gods and the worshippers. Instead of performing rituals beside the river, the Pandas now spend more time taking parties of pilgrims on a tour of temples and other sites, coercing them to part with their money. The pilgrims are more interested in beholding some sacred object, a relic or token of Krishna's mythical activities, and in hearing some miraculous story. After the guided tour they are free to spend their time listening to sermons, meeting ascetics, mingling with other devotees, and attending *āratī* at their favourite temples. The sight-seeing element has also become more important in other Hindu places of pilgrimage, but in Braj it is the central activity. Places are visited because they have some kind of visual attraction, regardless of whether or not they are ancient and 'authentic'.

This is not to say that the more standard motivations for undertaking a pilgrimage do not apply. While *darśan* and related activities are the main purpose,

137 See Shulman, pp.20-21.

and have special appeal for higher-caste family groups, there are other aspects of the pilgrimage that motivate a smaller but significant number of visitors.[138] Pilgrims do not simply stare at the deity; like people who travel a relatively short distance to visit a specific temple, they also ask for blessings. Many will say that the purpose of their pilgrimage is to acquire merit (*puṇya*), fulfil a vow, or be blessed by the deities in order to avert danger and acquire some material benefit or condition of well-being (*kalyān*). Generally the concept of merit is diffuse and concerns the determination of both material and spiritual rewards.[139] Rites that are motivated by some obligation, such as those in honour of the ancestors or to atone for a breach of conduct, are also performed, but they are a parallel feature of the pilgrimage to Braj and are not integrated into the worship of Krishna.

Although pilgrims who follow the sacred circuit of Braj renounce many of the comforts they are used to, the pace is not too arduous and the distances covered each day are moderate. There is plenty of feasting on the way, and periods of rest during which sermons are given and *rās līlā* is performed. Penitence is apparent in the form of circumambulation that is performed with repeated prostrations (*daṇḍautī parikramā*). This is not done by pilgrims who have come primarily to see the sacred places, but by people who decide to undertake it as a means of atonement, purification of the soul, or fulfilling a vow. It is a specific type of circumambulation, restricted to Govardhan and occasionally Vrindaban, that is not performed as part of the tour of Braj as a whole.

Several anthropological studies have dealt with pilgrimage in India and elsewhere, but, as pointed out by Morinis in his survey of them, many of the proposed models are inapplicable to Hindu pilgrimage, in view of the diversity of deities and pilgrims involved, as well as the variety of goals and motivations.[140] Attempts at formulating a universal definition of the elements of pilgrimage do not get much further than the tautological 'journey through time and space to a sacred place.' L. P. Vidyarthi, in his study of Gaya, came up with the platitudinous conclusions that a 'sacred complex' comprises a sacred centre, performances, and specialists, and that it reflects the continuity, compromise, and combination that are evident in the context of interaction between the 'great' and 'little' cultural traditions. He notes the obvious fact that the sacred specialists at a place of pilgrimage maintain a distinct style of life and transmit elements of the great tradition to the rural population, and that general developments in the larger universe of Hinduism give rise to modifications of the sacred complex. Similar studies by Indian anthropologists of other sacred complexes suggest that they are more interesting for what is particular about them, and that any generalizations that can be formulated do little more than endorse impressions that can be gained by any casual observer.

Braj exemplifies the integrative function of pilgrimage in so far as people from diverse regional and cultural backgrounds are brought in touch with a specific tradition. On an all-India level this tradition has been propagated in a standard

138 This seems to be the case in Braj, as was found to be so for Nabadwip by Morinis, pp.160-4.
139 Ibid., p.270.
140 Ibid., ch.8.

form by means of Sanskrit scriptures belonging to the 'great tradition'. Braj, however, presents the pilgrim with a particularized variant of this great tradition. It incorporates typically local elements and the Vaishnava theologians have fashioned their own brand of orthodoxy by borrowing elements from a variety of sources. It is even less likely that pilgrimage to Braj helps to promote social cohesion. There is a temporary element of 'communitas' in that devotees participate in liberating or liberated forms of communal worship, but they still stick together in their family or village groups, the caste hierarchy is maintained, and the ultimate aim of participation in different forms of worship is to heighten one's personal experience.

Morinis has rightly pointed out that the view that pilgrimage is a form of *rite de passage* is inapplicable in the context of India.[141] Where Braj is concerned, the ideal is not one of entering into and then returning from an experience, but of remaining totally immersed in love for Krishna. The sacred area of Braj is not precisely delineated and there is no one particular area within it that is demarcated and separated off from the mundane environment, thus confining the divine presence within boundaries.[142] The sacred circuit is a sprawling and wide-ranging one with no specific omphalos or *axis mundi*. It comprises several smaller circumambulations and innumerable places of worship, but no single temple is universally acknowledged as supreme and their relative importance depends on a variety of factors. In addition to the temples there are numerous other sacred places and objects with a varying degree of accessibility. Close to the places of worship, and all along the sacred circuits, there are villages, landmarks, and other objects with absolutely no religious association. Braj is an area in which the sacred and profane interpenetrate and in which the various forms of circumambulation do not necessarily serve to delineate the boundaries.

Pilgrimage to Braj, rather than being a process of transition from the profane to the sacred, is really one of realizing the sacred within the profane by cultivating the appropriate sensibility. The whole pilgrimage circuit of Braj, or certain sacred centres within it, can be realized in the heart or recreated elsewhere to generate the same type of *bhāv*. The journey is one that can be realized in an interior, exterior, and transcendent sphere. The sacred circuit can be visualized in the heart as having the form of a lotus, thus establishing a correspondence between macrocosmic and microcosmic planes. It can also be transposed to other places, as at Nathdwara where parts of the temple complex, its rooms, courtyards, doors, windows, stairs, and objects in and around the shrine, are identified with locations in Braj, or in the series of powder paintings made in the temple during a festive fortnight that depict the sacred places of Braj.[143] Similarly Nabadwip, where Krishna became incarnate as Chaitanya and re-enacted his sports through him, is identified with the terrestrial and heavenly Vrindaban.[144] It also has a circumambulation, conceptualized as a lotus, and various shrines constructed to illustrate incidents in the life of

141 See for example Turner 1979, pp.55 ff., 112 ff., citing M. Csikszentmihalyi and others.

142 As is suggested by Morinis, p.279.

143 Jindel, pp.47 ff. and 169. The powder paintings are called *sājhī*, see below §7.13.

144 Morinis, pp.71, 122-64. Nabadwip is about 65 km north of Calcutta.

Krishna-Chaitanya. Among them is a a 'secret' (*gupt*) Vrindaban: a courtyard with models of Radhakund, Govardhan, Vrindaban, and other places in Braj.

Rather than being a sacred place that stands out from the profane, Braj is special because the mundane and transcendent are more closely integrated there than elsewhere. It favours interaction with the sacred by means of communion with a deity, ritual service of a deity, or beholding signs of Krishna's presence. In the temples the deities are placed in sanctuaries that are separated from the general public, but one should not suppose that the divine presence is thereby confined. Krishna is also active outside the temples, in the open air, and within the heart. People are as excited by a *rās līlā* performance as they are by the sight of a deity in a temple. Deities are segregated from the public in the recesses of the temples, but around the shrine the sacred and profane interpenetrate, with the result there is no certainty about what is really profane and what is part of the trickster's play. This allows for an ambivalent attitude that enables people to register signs of squalor and corruption without being in the least deterred from participation.

The *bhāv* sought by devotees may be likened to what Turner calls 'flow' - the sensation that derives from immersion in an artistic or ritual performance and involves, among other things, concentration on the enactment, surrendering one's ego, making oneself more receptive, and escaping from the past and future by immersing oneself in sacred time, with its daily cycle of rituals and seasonal round of festivals.[145] What is prominent in Braj is the playful or 'ludic' aspect of pilgrimage (expressed by Turner in terms of 'communitas' and 'flow'). This 'ludic' element finds its expression in a nostalgia for the lost paradise of childhood and adolescence. Normally the most powerful mode of expression of this nostalgia is the yearning felt during love in separation (*viraha*). The ludic element comes to the fore on the occasion of festivals and other forms of re-enactment of Krishna's playful adventures. These celebrations take place in a physical space that is in fact neither the mundane world nor an austere heaven, but in what is referred to as a 'realm of play' (*līlā bhūmi*).

While the pilgrimage circuit of Braj does not fully conform to the *rite de passage* as defined by Turner, the enactments of Krishna's adventures that take place along the route certainly contain that element of 'trickster tales told in liminal times and places'.[146] This kind of playfulness comes to the fore during the Holi celebrations. They do not occur during the months in which the circumambulation of Braj takes place, but they still attract a large number of pilgrims and visitors. The joking and revelry of Holi are comparable to that which takes place at other transitional celebrations, such as a wedding. The conflicts between Krishna and the Gopis, at Holi as well as during other enactments of confrontations between them, represent a devotional reorientation of a type of ritual jesting that originally had more to do with promoting fertility or losing virginity. The joking, though it may be taken to

145 See Morinis, pp.255-61, who cites Turner, Eliade, and others. See also Lynch ('pilgrimage with Krishna'), who, in his analysis of Braj pilgrimage with particular reference to the Pushtimarg *barī yātrā*, also stresses the importance of *bhāv* and *līlā*. He also takes up some points raised by Turner.

146 Turner 1979, p.25.

wild extremes, remains within a bounded formal context. The status quo is temporarily inverted, but not subverted. Social norms are commented upon and criticized, while making the point that chaos is the alternative to order.[147] Krishna's anarchic behaviour is accepted and condoned because he is a child as well as a god who reveals some transcendent and eternal truth. His adventures are 'liminal' in that identification with them presents a challenge to social norms and suggests a new way of framing reality.

Pilgrims are neither compelled nor obliged to go to Braj. The main inspiration for the pilgrimage presumably lies in the attractions of the ideology implicit in the Krishna myth and the manner in which he is worshipped. We have tried to suggest that it is the element of covert fantasy that is more significant than the overt interpretations propounded by theologians. People are motivated to visit Braj because it provides an atmosphere and environment that are more conducive to experiencing *bhāv*.

147 Ibid., p.36. See also Turner 1969, pp.178 ff., on rituals of status reversal.

4 Ancient and Early Medieval Braj

1 The devotee's view of history

The nostalgia and idealism that have inspired the Krishna legends do not find much endorsement in archaeology and other historical sources. The devotee, however, does not regard myth and human history as qualitatively different. He believes that the gods are as alive and active today as they have always been, though in previous ages the divine was more apparent on earth than it is today. The fantastic events described in ancient scriptures, medieval hagiography, and oral tradition are thought to be no less historical than factual evidence concerning social developments and the rise and fall of human dynasties. The devotee, being more concerned with mythical events and spiritual traditions, is inclined to dismiss political history whenever it contradicts his beliefs, declaring materially motivated human striving to be futile and illusory. Krishna's early life has been the subject of several extensive narratives and thousands of poems, all of them set in the countryside and containing detailed descriptions of the environment, but with never a word about the real condition of the peasantry and virtually no allusions to political and historical circumstances. The sole purpose of the literature is to charm its audience and awaken devotional sentiment. Reference to 'real' or factual history is avoided because it would detract from the idealism and undermine sectarian claims to antiquity, originality, authenticity, and divine origin. In many cases this must be the real motivation for retreating into eternal and timeless values and condemning objective history for being shallow, earthbound, and for completely missing the point. Archaeology is dry and dull; it is devoid of *ras*; its broken images are lifeless.

Myths and cults, however, are not conjured out of thin air. Some of their core elements and characters are rooted in history. Few Hindus bother to question the historicity of Krishna, there being no inducement to deny that events did not take place precisely as they are narrated in the scriptures. They make no attempt to separate strands that could be historical from those that have their origin in human psychology or the conventions and creative imagination of artists and theologians. For outside observers history helps to explain the way in which the devotional cults have evolved. Devotees themselves may refer to objective history, so long as it is

compatible with their ideology and can be manipulated in order to justify current circumstances; but when they do refer to historical events, the possibility of socio-political causes is denied and everything is said to be the result of Krishna's inscrutable play (*līlā*). It would not do to imply that Krishna was powerless to prevent his temples from being attacked by Muslims at the end of the seventeenth century. A short prose text entitled *Kāmban vilās* says that Muslim oppession was merely a pretext for the removal of the deity called Radhavallabh from Vrindaban to Kaman.[1] The real reason was that the deity wanted to enjoy a period of 'forest exile' (*ban vās*), such as was undertaken by Rama and the Pandavas. We are told that Krishna's purpose was to provide his devotees with an illustration of the way in which god becomes alternately manifest and invisible (*āvirbhāv, tirobhāv*).

Similarly, the sectarian account of the removal of Shrinathji from its temple at Govardhan says that it was done according to the express wish of the deity.[2] When he visited the place that is now known as Nathdwara, Vitthalnath predicted that one day Shrinathji would be brought there. Vitthalnath initiated Ajab Kunwari, daughter-in-law of Udai Singh, ruler of Mewar and founder of its capital Udaipur. Thereafter Shrinathji used to come regularly from Govardhan to visit Ajab Kunwari and play the board game called *caupaṛ* with her. When she said that he must be tired of all the coming and going, the deity replied that one day he would take up residence in Mewar. When the time came for the deity to be removed, he gave instructions to the descendents of Vitthalnath to take him to Mewar. After the deity was removed the Muslims did not actually destroy the temple, rather it became 'absorbed' (*līn*) into the sacred hill on which it stood

2 Dynasties of ancient Mathura

Archaeological explorations carried out to date lead us to suppose that were it possible to excavate all the mounds in Braj on which villages stand, or which lie abandoned in their vicinity, many more of them would prove to have been the sites of ancient settlements, a *stūpa*, or a Buddhist or Jain monastic community.[3] The oldest finds in Mathura Museum are palaeoliths dating from about fifty thousand years BC, and the earliest fragments of pottery are Painted Grey Ware dating from about 800 BC. The town itself is of great antiquity, though the exact location of its centre seems to have changed. Archaeological evidence reveals that in the sixth century BC a rural settlement flourished around the mound known as Ambarish Tila and that between the fourth and the second centuries BC a town had developed

1 VRI ms. acc.no.11545F, dated 1891.

2 SPV, pp.42 ff. This also said with respect to two earlier occasions on which it was removed to Gantholi and Mathura.

3 For information on finds over the last century see ASI volumes of Cunningham and Führer, museum catalogues of Vogel, Agrawala, Mathur & Zaheer, Srivastava & Misra, Shiv Sharan Lal, and R. C. Sharma 1976 and 1984 (the latter giving maps and bibliographical survey, pp.7-13, and an account of previous excavations, ch.4). For epigraphy see Lüders (ed. Janert) and Sircar 1965, vol.1. For coins see Allan, pp.cviii-cxvi, 169-91.

that was large and wealthy enough to have mud fortifications constructed around it.[4] These earthworks, enlarged in the Kushana period, partially survive on the north-west side of the modern town and are referred to as the *dhūlkoṭ* ('dust fort'). In later times they came to be regarded as the defences that Krishna built to protect the town from the attack of Jarasandha.[5] The growth of Mathura can be attributed to its location on the banks of the Yamuna and its being connected by roads radiating from it to the two main highways of ancient India, the 'southern route' (*dakṣiṇapatha*) leading to central India, and the 'northern route' (*uttarapatha*) leading from the east to Taxila and Bactria in the north-west. It grew into a cosmopolitan centre for trade and administration that was visited and inhabited by merchants and chieftains who were responsible for the introduction of cultural influences from the east and north-west. Their names appear as donors who contributed to the construction and decoration of Buddhist and Jain monuments. 'Secular' elements in the friezes and panels that were incorporated in such structures testify to the standard of living and degree of urban sophistication attained by the wealthy elite.

Mathura, as one of the most important towns in the western part of the Mauryan empire, was visited by early Buddhist and Jain monks from Magadha (modern Bihar) who introduced their religions to the local people.[6] It was also visited by Greeks who had settled in Gandhara, and thus came to be mentioned in the writings of Megasthenes and Arrian.[7] After the decline of the Mauryan power in around 200 BC, and then for a period of about a hundred and fifty years ('the Shunga period'), Mathura was the seat of one of the independent powers that held sway over the 'middle region' (*madhyadeśa*) of northern India. The local rulers were a succession of Hindu kings bearing the name Mitra, followed by others with the name Datta.[8] The Mitras were allied to their namesakes in Panchala and maintained contact with the Indo-Greeks further to the north-west. In about 150 BC they combined forces and attacked the cities of Saketa and the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra.[9] In about 60 BC Mathura fell into the hands of Shakas (Scythians) who held north and west India for the next few decades under the governorship of a succession of Satraps who maintained close links with Gandhara. The last of them was Shodasa, whose dominion appears to have been more restricted than that of his predecessors, and who ruled in the first few decades of the Christian era.[10]

4 B. N. Mukherjee, pp.97-8, 104.

5 VGV 29 (*dhūri koṭa*).

6 See Law, pp.20, 23, 27-8, for references to early Buddhist teachers in Mathura, the wealthy followers who lived there, and the legend of the Buddha's visit.

7 Arrian, *Indica* 8 (cf. tr. by McCrindle).

8 Allan, pp.cviii-cxi.

9 Narain, pp.89-92, 175-6.

10 V. A. Smith 1906, §IX, Allan, pp.cxi-cxvi, van Lohuizen 1949, pp.48, 332-6, B. N. Mukherjee, chs.1 & 2, Rosenfield, pp.133-7 & 263-73 (where he lists inscriptions pertaining to the Indo-Scythian dynasties, both Shaka and Kushana - also given in the volume edited by Basham, pp.270-8). Smith, ibid. p.191, places Rajuvula and Shodasa in the last half of the 2nd century BC. Van Lohuizen 1949, p.336, dates the last evidence of Shakas in Mathura under Shodasa in 57 BC, but later studies generally accept that he flourished between AD 10 and 25.

After a short period in which Mathura was ruled by Hindu kings, it again fell into the hands of invaders from the north-west, this time the Kushanas, who made it their eastern capital. Kushana dynastic rule in Mathura was consolidated by Kanishka, but the date when his reign began is uncertain.[11] He was followed by a succession of Kushana rulers, the last one mentioned in inscriptions bearing the Hindu name of Vasudeva. Mathura was a major centre of Kushana power, in conjunction with Taxila, capital of Gandhara in the north-west, but its character remained fundamentally Indian. Buddhism and Jainism continued to flourish and an important school of sculpture developed in the town. It produced the earliest representations of many Hindu deities, and probably the oldest Jain icons. The sculptors of Mathura and Gandhara were the first to create images of the Buddha. Sculptures from Mathura were sent to places all over northern India, including such major religious centres as Ahichhatra, Bodhgaya, Shravasti, Sanchi, Lumbini, and Kaushambi, then an important city further down the Yamuna.[12] The power of the Kushanas appears to have disintegrated by the end of the third century, but the period between them and the Guptas was one of cultural continuity with no evidence of any abrupt hiatus.

Numismatic evidence and the Puranas suggest that, after the Kushanas, Mathura was held by a succession of rulers who styled themselves 'Naga'.[13] When Mathura became part of the Gupta empire during the reign of Samudragupta (335-76) it was held by a certain Ganapatinaga, and in the following century one of the governors is recorded as having the name Sharvaṇaga. Early in the sixth century Mathura probably suffered from attacks by the Hunas who invaded from the north-west as the Gupta empire disintegrated. Eventually the Vardhanas managed to reclaim territory from the Hunas. Mathura was first controlled from Thaneshwar and then merged into the empire built up by Harsha (606-47), with its capital at Kanauj. In the ninth century the territory of Mathura passed into the hands of the Gurjara-Pratiharas, who controlled most of west and north India. By the end of the tenth century their empire had split up into territories held by Rajput families who, owing to their parochial interests and internal rivalries, failed to unite and defend North India against Mahmud of Ghazni and subsequent Muslim invaders.

3 Buddhism

For over a thousand years, up to about AD 600, Buddhism received more patronage from merchants and the ruling classes than any other religion. As

11 Most opinions vary between AD 78 and 144. Van Lohuizen 1949, p.65, concludes that he began to reign after AD 71; Rosenfield, pp.253-58, settles for some time between 110-115, Damsteegt, pp.9-12, 202-3, favours c.AD 200. For further discussion of the date of Kanishka see Basham (ed.), for a general account of the period see K. Prasad, and for bibliography of the Kushanas and a summary of current scholarship see B. N. Puri.

12 For more information on Mathura's influence as a cultural centre, esp. in relation to Gandhara, see van Lohuizen 1972.

13 For this period see Vajpeyi 1954, pp.103 ff. *Vāyupurāṇa* 99.383 mentions Naga kings of Mathura, who appear to have been tributaries of the Gupta emperors.

elsewhere in India, the finest artistic achievements and most extensive architectural complexes were those executed for Buddhist *stūpa* and monasteries. The Chinese pilgrim Fah-Hian, who visited Mathura in about AD 400, describes having seen twenty monasteries and some three thousand monks.[14] His compatriot Hsuan-Tsang, who toured India some two hundred years later, refers to the same number of monasteries and over two thousand monks, and also says that there were five temples of the (non-Buddhist) gods and adherents of non-Buddhist sects.[15] This suggests that while Buddhism was still predominant it had begun to lose ground to renascent Hinduism. Hsuan Tsang mentions numerous traces left by previous Buddhas, relics of the Buddha's disciples, and three *stūpa* reputed to have been erected by Ashoka (c. 269-232 BC). Whether or not they were actually founded by Ashoka, the oldest known Buddhist establishments do indeed date back to the third century BC.[16] His statement that some of the *stūpa* lay some distance from the town is corroborated by archaeological findings at Maholi, Giridharpur, Ganeshra, Ral-Bhadal, and Chaumuhan. Inscriptions record the existence of over two dozen monasteries,[17] and, apart from the *stūpa* and monastery complexes in Mathura itself, there were several other religious establishments in the suburbs and environs, a mile or two distant from each other, in a tract of land stretching some fifteen kilometres along the banks of the Yamuna and some ten kilometres to the west of it. In view of the extent of Buddhist remains, Vogel's description of the city as it must have been during the first few centuries of the Christian era is certainly no exaggeration:

> Thus we can still imagine the ancient city of Mathurā, as it revealed itself to the wondering eyes of the pilgrims, with the glittering domes of its *stūpas* - enclosed by elaborate railings and surmounted by rows of parasols, with the dazzling splendour of its temples, in which gigantic Buddhas silently received the homage of the faithful, and with its massive convents thronged by hundreds of yellow-robed monks.[18]

4 Jainism

Inscriptions show that both Shwetambara and Digambara schools of Jainism were already established in Mathura in the second century BC.[19] Jain tradition holds

14 Fah-Hian (tr. Beal), ch.XVI pp.53-61; also in Beal 1906, vol.I p.xxxvii.

15 See Beal 1906, vol.I pp.179-83, and Watters, vol.I pp.301-13, who suspects that Hsuan Tsang did not visit Mathura but based his account on hearsay. For some discussion of the reports of the Chinese pilgrims see Cunningham, ASI I pp.231 ff., III pp.28-9, XX pp.4, 32-3.

16 Cunningham, ASI XX p.3, with reference to a colossal statue with Ashokan characters inscribed on it.

17 Names and epigraphical data are tabulated by R. C. Sharma 1984, pp.52-8.

18 Vogel 1910, p.27.

19 Bühler in EI II 1894, pp.195-9. For a survey of Jain Mathura based on textual and epigraphic sources see A. K. Chatterjee, vol.I, esp. ch.5. See also Mehta & Chandra under *mahurā*, *bhāṃḍīra*, and *devanirmittastūpa*.

that the Tirthankaras Parshwanatha and Mahavira visited Mathura, and it was associated with the twenty-second Tirthankara Neminatha.[20] Vimala Suri, relates how the Shwetambara school was first brought to Mathura by the same seven saints who had previously established it in Saketa (Ayodhya).[21] Jain sources also refer to a park in or near Mathura called Bhandira in which the shrine of a Yaksha called *sudaṃsaṇa* (Sudarshana) was a place of pilgrimage.

From epigraphical evidence it is clear that although Jains did not enjoy much patronage from local rulers, they received support from traders and the common people as well as from the kshatriya class, especially aristocratic ladies.[22] The main Jain centre in Mathura was the *stūpa* complex that stood on the site now known as Kankali Tila. This place, known from inscriptions to have been in existence from the second century BC, is probably the one referred to in later texts as 'the *stūpa* founded by the gods' (*devanirmittastūpa*) and is named as the place where the sixth-century saint Jinabhadragni lived.[23] Literary sources tell us that in the fourth century a council was held in Mathura to collect and edit the canon, and that Jainism still flourished in the ninth century. The decreasing frequency of inscriptions during the period 600 to 1,000 implies that its popularity was on the wane.[24] Various sources indicate that Jain pilgrims continued to visit Mathura, but that eventually, after successive attacks on their shrines and the general decline of the faith in North India, the only important place that survived was Chaurasi.[25] This site, where Parshwanatha (Jambuswami) is believed to have obtained enlightenment, lies on the west of the *dhūlkoṭ*. Medieval images of Rishabhanatha and of Neminatha with Balarama and Vasudeva have been found there. The site is now occupied by a Digambara temple, largely the work of Seth Maniram, that contains images of Chandraprabhu and Ajitanatha, the latter being a large marble figure brought from a ruined temple at Gwalior.

5 Non-Vaishnava Hindu cults

In the period under discussion the deities that appear to have been most popular among humble local people and others who were not devoted exclusively to

20 A. K. Chatterjee, vol.1 p.44, B. N. Mukherjee, p.152 n.68, Hemachandra, vol.V (book 8: *Nemināthacaritra*).

21 Vimala Suri, *Paümacariyaṃ* 89. Dates proposed for this work range from the 1st to the 8th century (cf. Rocher, p.94). Kulkarni, in his introduction to the (Jacobi) edition, argues that it is not later than the 4th century.

22 A. K. Chatterjee, vol.1 pp.66-7.

23 VTK, p.19. See §12 below

24 A. K. Chatterjee, vol.1 pp.71-2, 105, 168.

25 See P. Mital 1968, pp.158, 487, for references to texts mentioning Jain pilgrimages undertaken in the 12th, 14th, and 16th century. On p.56 he refers to an article by A. Nahata (in *Braj bhāratī* 11.2) dealing with Sangama Suri's *Tīrthamālā* (12th cent.) and Siddhasena Suri's *Sakalatīrthastotra* (13th cent.), which mention a *stūpa* founded by Shridevi and others that was dedicated to Neminatha and Parshwanatha. Chaurasi is referred to in VTK p.18.

26 Allan, pp.cviii-cxi.

Buddhism or Jainism were mother goddesses, Nagas (serpent deities), and Yakshas and Yakshis - male and female spirits most commonly worshipped as residing in trees and as controllers health, fertility, and prosperity in general. Images of such deities and depictions of sacred trees were included in Buddhist and Jain sacred complexes, sometimes simply as elements in sculptural decoration. The earliest coins from Mathura, issued by the Hindu Mitra rulers, show a tree standing in a railing, and a device that was popular over a long period was the fertility goddess Lakshmi, usually with a tree beside her.[26] Yaksha, Naga, and mother goddess cults have remained popular among the people of Braj in some form or another, more or less integrated with brahminical religion. In several cases they have retained ancient images or pieces of stone as objects of worship.

The most revealing site for the ancient history of the district is the mound that dominates the village of Sonkh, twenty kilometres south-west of Mathura.[27] It gives a more complete picture of the nature of human settlement than any other site in Braj. Systematic excavation of the mound has yielded remains of successive periods of colonization from the Painted Grey Ware period until the time when it was fortified by the Jats in the eighteenth century. In the pre-Kushana and Kushana periods farmsteads at Sonkh were grouped around open spaces and lanes and in the centre of the settlement stood a shrine with a rounded altar niche. This structure, designated 'Apsidal Temple no.1', remained a permanent feature through successive phases of occupation and is the oldest Hinduistic brick temple yet unearthed in the subcontinent. The discovery here of a seated mother goddess (*mātṛkā*), and the prevalence of heads of goddesses and terracotta female figurines from the Mauryan and Shunga periods, at Sonkh as well as at other sites in the area, indicate the prevalence of a cult of female divinities, especially in groups of seven or eight.

On a small area of elevated ground a short distance from the main mound at Sonkh, local women were found to be worshipping an old stone sculpture as Chamar Devi (i.e. the goddess Chamunda). The sculpture itself and excavation at the spot showed that it was the site of a Naga temple, once surrounded by pillars and enclosed by railings with an ornamental gateway, of which the earliest traces date from the first half of the first century BC. Serpents are still worshipped locally in their own right, but as far as later developments in Braj are concerned, the absorption of Naga worship by the cult of Balarama is of more significance.

When Cunningham discovered a colossal Yaksha figure at Parkham, dating from the third century BC, he found that it was still being worshipped by the name of 'Jakkhaiya'. A colossal female statue at Jhing ka Nagara of the same age and school as the Parkham image, worshipped by local people as Manasa Devi, bears an inscription declaring it to be a Yakshi called Layava.[28] Another ancient Yaksha at the village of Noh near Bharatpur is the focus of an annual 'Jakh' fair. Such colossal

27 See Härtel, and Sharma 1984, pp.84-8.

28 Chanda in ASIAR 1922-23, p.165. The seated female image had a modern head added to it. According to Marshall, p.24 & pl.XVIIIb it was found at Gopalpur, 12m from Mathura along the road to Bharatpur. The same image is discussed by Agrawala, 1933 pp.7 ff., who locates Jhing ka Nagara 13m north of Mathura. At the same place were found a Kushana image of Hariti and an early medieval door jamb with a representation of Ganga, cf. Srivastava & Misra, 49.3508, 72.4.

figures are representative of a type erected in the last few centuries BC over a wide area of northern India.[29] Buddhist texts record that when the Buddha visited Mathura he had to contend with the Yakshas that prevailed there and that the place was inhospitable because of five defects: the uneven roads, the quantity of dust, wild dogs, Yakshas, and the difficulty of obtaining alms.[30]

Kanishka appears to have favoured Buddhism, but the Kushana rulers issued several coins depicting Shiva, usually standing in front of a bull.[31] There is also evidence to suggest that a gallery of royal statues (*devakula*) erected at Mat contained, besides colossal statues of the Kushana rulers, images of Shiva and Durga.[32] Many Shiva *liṅga* and icons have been found in and around Mathura dating from the Kushana period and the centuries following. The abundance of sculptures of Shiva and Parvati from the early medieval period indicates that Shaivism received at least as much patronage at this time as the worship of Vaishnava deities. An inscription dated AD 380 found at the temple of Rangeshwar Mahadev shows that followers of Lakulisha had a centre there during the Gupta period.[33]

A few images of Brahma and Indra have been discovered, as well as several of Surya, a deity whose cult was promoted under the Shakas and Kushanas and was continued in the Gupta and early medieval periods, as is attested by the discovery of several statues over a metre high that probably served as cult icons.[34] The *Mathurāmāhātmya* refers to a Surya image beside the river at Mathura, presumably in the vicinity of Vishram Ghat, as the patron deity (*kuleśvara*) of the Mathura brahmins,[35] but his cult declined after the thirteenth century and today the only indication of its former popularity is the retention of the name 'Suryakunda' for some of the oldest masonry tanks in Braj. The discovery of small statuettes of Skanda, Kubera, and Durga slaying a buffalo show that these deities were also popular in the first centuries of the Christian era. At Isapur, on the east bank of the Yamuna opposite Mathura's Swami Ghat, a sacrificial pillar was discovered that was erected to commemorate a Vedic ritual celebrated by brahmins in AD 102.[36]

6 The cult of Vasudeva/Krishna

From the literary sources referred to at the beginning of our second chapter it is

29 For other Yakshas in Mathura see Agrawala 1933, and for a general survey of the Yaksha cult see Agrawala 1970, ch.15, and R. N. Mishra, esp. pp.68-70, 84, 110-111, where he discusses images from Mathura, Maholi, Kaman, Parkham, Bharatpur, and Palwal.

30 Gilgit Mss. vol.3 pt.1 pp.15-17, *Aṅguttaranikāya* III, *Akkosaka-vaga* ccxx, p.256.

31 Whitehead, pp.183-213.

32 Agrawala 1951, pp.26-7, 51, 1952, pp.38-44.

33 See D. R. Bhandarkar 1931-32, and Lorenzen, pp. 179-81.

34 E.g. MM nos.1363 found near Baldeo, 155 near Mahaban, 1220 from Ainch in Chhata tahsil, and 542 - pedestal from Jugasna in Mat tahsil.

35 VP 158.75.

36 Viz. a *dvādaśarāttra* sacrifice. MM no.00.Q.13, cf. Lüders (ed. Janert) §94.

clear that the figure of Vasudeva or Krishna has from the earliest times been associated with Mathura and the surrounding countryside. However, the form of Krishna worship current today in Braj is a blend of influences from traditions that developed as far away as Tamil Nadu and Bengal. It is probable that the Herakles mentioned by Megasthenes in the fourth century BC as being worshipped by the people of Mathura is the Vasudeva of Hindu sources, the same hero whose defeat of Kansa was enacted there. This probably took the form of a dramatic performance since it is known from an inscription of the first or second century that there were actors in Mathura, and it is probable that it had been a centre of drama long before then.[37] Kosambi, citing the Govardhan legend, suggests that the cult of Krishna reflects a change from a pastoral culture, in which sacrifices were offered to Indra, to a settled agricultural one. Balarama or Sankarshana ('the ploughman'), closely associated with the Naga spirits, was the main deity of the pure agriculturalists; underlying the worship of Krishna/Vasudeva and Balarama/Sankarshana there seems to be 'some alliance between the Yadus and the other tribes, combined with a westward scattering of the tribesmen from Mathura, supposedly in flight to escape an invasion from Magadha, which lay to the east'.[38] Although the myth may well derive from some kind of change in the nature of the Govardhan cult, it need not have been the Vedic god Indra who was worshipped in conjunction with the mountain.

The pastoral folk who fit the bill as being the tribe that roamed around Braj in this early period are the Abhiras. They are first recorded as living in Sind, Panjab, and Rajasthan, and a branch is said to have lived in Matsya, the name of a region that included Mathura.[39] They appear to have been patronized by the Shakas, under whom they held responsible positions and served as soldiers.[40] Later, in the first centuries of the Christian era, they moved westwards into Gujarat and Maharashtra, eastwards into Bihar, Bengal, and Orissa, and southwards into the Deccan, where they served as mercenaries. Gradually they declined into scattered communities of backward forest people. In literature they are referred to as cowherds (*gopa, gopāla, gvāla*) and their settlements as a *ghoṣa*, a term equivalent to *vraja*.[41] Although Sanskrit literature does not specify that Nanda and his community were Abhiras, later vernacular writers, such as Raskhan, sometimes refer to them as Ahirs, the name of their modern descendants. There is a vague possibility that classical mythology reflects the adoption by the Abhiras of the Krishna cult, or even the assimilation of one of their heroes or deities, but declined to name them because they were of low status. What is more likely is that their culture served as a source of inspiration for some of the pastoral and rustic elements

37 See above §2.1. The inscription is given in Lüders (ed. Janert) § 27. See Hein 1972, p.5 and ch.9, who suggests that the actors referred to in the inscription were Vaishnava, though Damsteegt, pp.167-8, has argued more convincingly that they were Buddhist.

38 Kosambi, pp.117-8.

39 Suryavanshi, pp.106-9, tabulates the relevant sources.

40 Ibid., p.31.

41 Ibid., pp.18-21.

in the earliest narratives of Krishna's childhood, since they lived in the area of Mathura at the time these myths developed.[42]

In Sanskrit literature Mathura is said to have once been the capital of the land of the Shaurasenas, the original home of the Yadavas, and the area inhabited by two of their clans, the Andhakas and the Vrishnis.[43] This was before they were ousted by Jarasandha, the ruler of Magadha, which implies that the myth reflects the pre-Mauryan history of Mathura. Panini, the grammarian of the fourth or fifth century BC, associated Mathura with these two clans and their hero Vasudeva.[44] Dandekar, in an article on the beginnings of Vaishnavism, suggests that the identification of Vasudeva with Krishna is the result of close ties between the Vrishnis and the Yadavas in the period after Panini, and accepts that the cowherd aspect of Krishna derived from Abhira culture.

The earliest archaeological evidence linking the Vrishnis and Vasudeva with Mathura is an inscription dated in the reign of the Satrap Rajuvula, about two thousand years ago.[45] It was found on a slab that had been used as part of the terrace of a well near the village of Mora, ten kilometres west of Mathura and three to the north of the road to Govardhan. It records the construction of a shrine, 'the magnificent, matchless stone house of Toṣā', containing images of the five heroes (*pañcavīra*) of the Vrishnis. Further excavation at a nearby mound revealed fragments of a round building, two male torsos, a pedestal, two fragments making the lower half of a female figure, and a number of inscribed bricks bearing the name Yashamata, daughter of Brihatswatimitra, probably a king of Kaushambi in the latter part of the second century BC.[46] The male torsos are without doubt the remains of the five images mentioned in the inscription, and the female figure is inscribed as an image of 'Tośā' belonging to the reign of Kanishka. Most authorities agree that she is to be identified with the 'Toṣā' of the well inscription, in which case the statue was probably set up to commemorate her. The nearby village of Tos may also have been named after her.

The five heroes of the Vrishnis probably belonged to a line of local kings whose historicity was blended and overlaid with myth as they gradually became deified. Their names are given in brahminical literature as Sankarshana, Vasudeva, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, and Samba. In Pancharatra theology the first four of them

42 Goetz, p.53, thinks that a good part of the childhood stories cannot be older than the stay of the Abhiras at Mathura and suggests that they accepted the cult of Krishna-Govinda while they were settled there.

43 Both belonged to the Satvata sept. See Law, pp.24-5, for references to the Andhakas, Vrishnis, and Satvatas. The Buddhist text *Aṅguttaranikāya*, vol.I p.213 and vol.IV p. 252, includes Shurasena as one of the sixteen provinces (*mahājanapada*) of northern India.

44 Panini 4.2.34, 3.98, 3.131, 6.2.34, 3.90.

45 Lüders (ed. Janert) §113 in EI XXIV 1937-8, pp.194-200. Vogel Q.1, p.184, Cunningham, ASI XX pp.48-9, Agrawala 1951-52, pp.130-2.

46 The sculptural fragments are numbered E.20-23. See Lüders (ed. Janert) §§114 & 116, and in EI XXIV 1937-8, pp.200-202, Vogel in ASIAR 1911-12, pp.127-8 & pl.LVII, Agrawala 1952, pp.47-8, Sircar, p.122, Rosenfield, p.151, and Allan, pp.xcvii-viii (for the identity of Brihatswati-/Brihaspatimitra), B. N. Mukherjee, p.153, R. C. Sharma 1984 , pp.25-6 (giving a suggested chronology of *kṣatrapa* epigraphs).

were regarded as emanations (*vyūha*) of Vishnu, and in mythology the last three are said to be descendants of Krishna/Vasudeva. In the course of time Sankarshana and Vasudeva predominated and became popular deities. Their cult was spread and popularized by the Bhagavatas, the precursors of later Vaishnavism in which the idea of incarnations (*avatāra*) predominated over that of emanations, thus Krishna/Vasudeva gained superiority as an incarnation of Vishnu and Sankarshana took second place as an incarnation of the cosmic serpent Shesha.

Another fragmentary inscription on a door jamb from the time of Shodasa testifies to the presence of the Bhagavata cult in Mathura in the early part of the first century.[47] It was discovered in Mathura cantonment, but probably came from the Katra site, the place traditionally revered as the birthplace of Krishna and the oldest known location of a temple dedicated to him in Mathura. It records the construction of a shrine, an arched gateway, and railed platform or covered balcony at a spot referred to as the 'great place' (*mahāsthāna*) sacred to Vasudeva. Although Mathura had been an important centre of the Bhagavata cult from before the Shaka and Kushana periods, it is referred to in a relatively small number of inscriptions. This implies that it received much less patronage from the local elite than Buddhism and Jainism. Nevertheless, there are many statuettes and fragments of Vishnu/Vasudeva/Krishna images from the Kushana, Gupta, and medieval periods that testify to his popularity throughout the first millennium. Depictions of Krishna's adventures are conspicuously absent in Mathura, even though they form the subject of narrative panels in other parts of India.[48]

Though closely associated with Mathura, Vasudeva was known over a wide area. The earliest depiction of him, together with Sankarshana, is on Indo-Greek coins of Agathokles found in Afghanistan that were minted in the second century BC.[49] A column erected by Heliodorus at Besnagar in about 100 BC and other inscriptions from the western Deccan testify to the spread of the cult of Vasudeva under the auspices of the Bhagavatas.[50] Images of Sankarshana, Vasudeva, and their sister Ekanansha were common in the Kushana period and remained popular up to the ninth or tenth century.[51] In these Vasudeva/Krishna is usually shown with four arms with which he holds the attributes of Vishnu (discus, conch, lotus, and club). Vasudeva and Sankarshana also appear in Jain icons on either side of Neminatha or

47 See Lüders (ed. Janert) §115 and in EI XXIV 1937-8, pp.208-10 (who assumed that the piece came from Mora), Chanda 1920, pp.169-73, Agrawala 1951-2 , pp.134-6, Sircar 1953.

48 A Kushana panel in Mathura Museum (no.17.1344) is catalogued as a depiction of Vasudeva carrying Krishna across the Yamuna, but the identification is highly contentious and has been rejected by recent assessments, cf. Preciado-Solis, pp.103-4, and Srinivasan, p.127, though Hawley pp.338-9 supports it. He and Srinivasan, p.132, also refer to some Kushana stones used in weight-lifting that apparently depict Krishna.

49 Cf. Filliozat.

50 See Chanda 1920 and Preciado-Solis, pp.23 & 34-5, for a summary of the archaeological evidence.

51 E.g. at Ellora. The triad survives as an object of worship in the form of Jagannatha, Balarama, and Subhadra at Puri.

the Yakshi Ambika.[52] In narrative panels Vasudeva/Krishna appears in varied postures appropriate for the episode depicted,[53] but as an icon for worship he was shown standing in the posture of Vishnu and holding his attributes. The only other icons that seem to have served as a cult image are a few Gupta period depictions of him lifting up Govardhan. The earliest image of this type from Mathura is assigned by most scholars to the sixth or seventh century.[54] Another Gupta period example that probably served as a cult image belonged to a large temple that stood in a part of Varanasi which was considered to represent Mathura.[55]. The *Mathurā-māhātmya* implies that Keshavadeva, the presiding deity of Mathura, is a four-armed image, like most icons of manifestations of Vishnu that were worshipped in the early medieval period.[56] The classical iconographic sources list up to twenty-four forms of Vishnu, including those of deities named in the *Mathurāmāhātmya* (Keshava, Narayana, Govinda, Vamana, Padmanabha, Vasudeva, Hari), but they are all variations of the same type, differentiated only by the distribution of the four emblems of Vishnu.[57]

Alberuni, a scholar who spent ten years in India, gave an extensive account of its culture and society as he found it in the first half of the eleventh century. He talks of Vasudeva, rather than Krishna, and uses the same epithet to refer to Vishnu. He says that he was born in Mathura and came from 'a Jatt family, cattle owners, low *śūdra* people' - implying that his cult was current in lower as well as higher social spheres.[58] He says that the *ekādaśī* fast originated in the commemoration by the people of Mathura of the lifting of Govardhan because it resulted in the transfer of worship from Indra to Vasudeva. Originally they used to worship Indra one day in each month, but Vasudeva induced them to transfer this worship in his name on the eleventh day of each lunar fortnight.[59] Most of Alberuni's references to Vasudeva, however, relate to events in the latter part of his life on earth, when he was involved in the *Mahābhārata* war, implying that this aspect of Krishna still predominated in more formal or officially patronized religious circles.

7 Balarama

The worship of Balarama, through its close association with the cult of Nagas, is deeply rooted in Braj. In classical mythology he is identified as an incarnation of the cosmic serpent Shesha and in iconography is invariably shown with a seven-hooded

52 E.g. MM no.D.7.
53 Two Gupta period examples from Kans Kila, Mathura, show him slaying the serpent Kaliya, MM nos.47.3374, 49.3461.
54 MM no.D.47, from Gatashram. See plate 10.
55 Eck, pp.66-7, 207-8.
56 VP 156.18-19; also clearly stated in *Gopālottaratāpanyupaniṣad*. Adikeshava at Varanasi is described in SP (*Kāśīkhaṇḍa* 58) as jet-black and four-armed (Eck, p.205).
57 See Bidyabinod, who collates and tabulates various listings and gives some illustrations.
58 Alberuni, I p.401.
59 Ibid., II p.175.

cobra rearing over his head. As additional distinguishing features he holds a plough, club (*musala*), or cup, wears a long garland hanging down to his knees (*vaijayantīmālā*), and sometimes has a ring in his left ear.[60] The earliest identifiable representation of him, made in the second century BC, is a two-armed image holding a plough and club and in a stance similar to that of Yaksha images.[61] The plough characterizes him as an agricultural deity, which probably led to his being envisaged as a Naga since serpents, through their association with water, were also worshipped as fertility deities.[62]

The cup, which first appeared in icons of the Kushana period, became the most frequently depicted of his attributes. Usually he is shown with the cup in his left hand and his right arm raised above his head with the palm open. The cup may initially have been borrowed from representations of Kubera and other Yakshas, though it is appropriate for Balarama in view of references in mythology to his fondness for drink. In classical sources he is said to get drunk on wine or some form of liquor drawn from trees, perhaps toddy in view of his association with the palmyra, a plant that occurs as his emblem. None of these, however, is a traditional drink in Braj. Modern devotees always refer to the cup as containing bhang, a concoction made from the cannabis plant. Balarama is something of a patron deity for regular consumers of bhang, who often invoke him before they partake of it with the words 'Bounteous Dau, King of Braj, drink bhang and become manifest here'.[63] Bhang is offered to him and distributed among worshippers present as *prasād*, either in the form of a paste made from crushed cannabis leaves rolled into pellets, or as a meticulously prepared cocktail (*ṭhaṇḍāī*) in which it is combined and flavoured with other ingredients (i.a. milk, yoghurt, crushed raisins, ground almonds, rosewater). Another regular offering made to him consists of butter and sugar candy (*mākhan miśrī*).

The Naga rulers of Mathura during the Gupta period may have promoted the cult of Balarama, but the subsequent decrease in the number of representations made of him suggests that he became less important as a deity in his own right, being eclipsed in the sphere of higher religion by the rise of Vaishnavism in which Vasudeva/Krishna was the predominant deity. He survived, however, as a Braj folk deity and his iconography has remained the same as it was in the Kushana period. Most images of him are black, though some are white, in accordance with the scriptural tradition in which he is described as the fair counterpart of Krishna. Some Kushana Naga images, when discovered by archaeologists, were being worshipped as 'Dauji', his usual epithet among the people of Braj. The most notable of them is the colossal image in the temple at Baldeo.[64] Revati became

60 See N. P. Joshi 1979 for a survey of the iconography of Balarama.

61 State Museum Lucknow, no.G 215.

62 *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* 118.12-13, 123.12, says that he should be worshipped when beginning cultivation and for success in agriculture.

63 *dāū dayāl, braj ke rājā, bhāg pījai aur nyāhī ā jā.*

64 The Kushana identification was first affirmed by Vogel, 1972 pp.282-3. Other examples were found at Chhargaon (cf. Vogel 1908-9, pp.160-3 and pl.LIII) and beside the Govardhan road at Khamani (both places are in Mathura tahsil), at Kukargawan (Sadabad tahsil), and Itauli (Mat tahsil).

acknowledged as his consort and is often enshrined alongside him. She first appears in medieval icons in which she is shown holding a wine jar.

8 The end of Hindu power in Braj

Disaster struck Mathura with the arrival of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni in 1017. According to his contemporary Al-Utbi, and the later historians Badauni and Ferishta, he first fell upon Mahaban. There he defeated a Hindu prince called Kulchand, who killed himself and his family to avoid their being captured.[65] Mahmud then proceeded to Mathura where he found the city surrounded by stone walls with two gates opening onto the river that flowed beside it. He saw one building 'of exquisite structure, which the inhabitants said had been built, not by men, but by Genii' - which may refer to the Jain *stūpa* that was said to have been 'established by the gods'. There were a thousand stone houses with temples attached, and in the middle of the city there was a temple larger than the rest of which the Sultan wrote 'If any should wish to construct a building equal to this, he would not be able to do it without expending an hundred thousand red dinars, and it would occupy two hundred years, even though the most experienced and able workmen were employed'. Five of its idols are described as being five yards high, made of red gold, and studded with precious stones. When broken up these and other idols are said to have yielded ninety-eight thousand three hundred 'miskáls' of gold and two hundred of silver. Badauni, writing in around 1600, says that Mahmud razed Mathura to the ground and broke up the idols. Ferishta, writing in the first decade of the seventeenth century and says that, while he burned all the idols, he did not destroy the temples, either because he thought the labour would have been excessive or because, as some say, he was averted from his purpose by their beauty. Ferishta tells us that he stayed in Mathura for twenty days, during which time the city suffered greatly from fire, besides the damage inflicted by pillage.

Mahmud went on to sack the city of Kanauj, but after his withdrawal a branch of the Rashtrakutas managed to set themselves up in power there. They were followed by the Gahadwalas who succeeded in gaining control over the area stretching from Kanauj to Varanasi. The Gahadwalas saw themselves as protectors of the Hindu holy places. The foremost of them, Govindchandra (1112-1155), made numerous donations to a temple of Adikeshava in their capital at Varanasi. According to inscriptions they used to bathe in the Ganges beneath this temple, which stood on the northern edge of the Rajghat plateau that was once the heart of the city.[66]

By this time the Hindus of Mathura had recovered somewhat from the depradations of Mahmud. Alberuni, writing just a few years after Mahmud ransacked Mathura, mentions it as one of the foremost places of pilgrimage in India and says it was crowded with brahmins.[67] In the first half of the twelfth century

65 Al-Utbi (*Tārīkh Yamīnī*), tr. Elliot & Dowson, vol.II pp.44-5, Badauni, vol 1 pp.24-5, Ferishta, vol.1 pp.58-9.

66 Eck, pp.46, 80-81, 233.

67 Alberuni, vol.II pp.146-8.

Lakshmidhara, who was patronized by Govindchandra, compiled the earliest surviving collection of verses praising the sacred places of Mathura. An inscription of 1150 records the foundation by Jajja, apparently a vassal of the Gahadwalas in charge of Mathura, of a temple dedicated to Vishnu on the Katra site, described as 'brilliantly white and touching the clouds'.[68] Local rulers at Kaman who styled themselves Yadavas constructed a Vishnu temple there, the ruins of which are now called Chaurasi Khambha. Another temple built in the twelfth century by another branch of the lineage at Mahaban may also have been dedicated to Vishnu or Vasudeva.[69] These local chiefs were Rajputs, perhaps related to the Kulchand defeated by Mahmud and to other Yadavas (Jadons) whose descendants have long ruled over Jaisalmer. They claim descent from Krishna, but their real history begins with Dharmapal, who, in around AD 800, held control of Bayana, a fort eighty kilometres south-west of Mathura. Among their surviving descendants are the Maharajas of Karauli, the Jadovati of Sabalgarh, and the islamized Meos and Khanzadas.[70]

Hindu power in the Doab collapsed when forces of Muhammad Ghuri, led by Qutubuddin, defeated Jaichand of Kanauj, sacked Varanasi, and took Bayana and Gwalior.[71] The historians make no mention of Mathura or Mahaban, implying that by this time they were no longer places of much consequence, were not worth plundering, and were not the seat of any Hindu power. Growse records a tradition that the fort at Mahaban was built [or rather rebuilt] by a prince of Mewar who took refuge with the Raja of Mahaban (perhaps after Alauddin Khilji sacked Chittaurgarh in 1303), and that his son Kanh Kunwar, married the Raja's daughter and succeeded to his dominions.[72] He is reputed to have granted the township of Mahaban to his priests, who were Sanadhya brahmins of the Parashar clan. Their descendants still live in Mahaban and are referred to as 'Chaudhari'. The fort is said to have been recovered for Alauddin by Sayyid Yahya of Mashhad, who, with a party of soldiers, managed to gain entry by disguising themselves as Hindu ladies wishing to visit the shrines of Shyam Lala and Rohini (viz. the Assi Khambha). Sayyid Yahya, whose tomb lies beneath a *nīm* tree near the Nand Bhavan temple, was granted a third of the town by Alauddin. From this time onwards Mahaban, Mathura, and the surrounding district remained under the firm control of the Delhi Sultanate.

The Muslim conquest resulted in the destruction of all Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu temples and monuments in and around Mathura. Buddhism, already in decline, never revived, and for the next four hundred years the Jains and Hindus were unable to erect any temples that were not sooner or later demolished. Many of the sites that had been places of religious importance were abandoned and gradually

68 Bühler, EI vol.I, pp.287-93.

69 The temple is now called Nand Bhavan. An inscription found at Mahaban, dated AD 1150, refers to Ajaypal as a king of the Yadava lineage, cf. Cunningham, ASI XX pp.vi, 6, 46.

70 A list of the Yadava rulers of Bayana and Karauli, as recorded in bardic chronicles, is given by Cunningham, ibid. pp.5-8.

71 Ferishta, vol.I pp.178-80.

72 Growse, pp.273-4.

sank beneath the earth. But some of them were not forgotten, owing to the persistence of oral tradition, the refashioning of a temple into a mosque, or the presence of humble shrines, some of which housed sculptural fragments of earlier buildings. Several of them have survived as places of significance in the modern pilgrimage circuit.

9 The location of ancient Mathura

As noted above, there were many monastic settlements in and around Mathura. Some of the mounds in the area, apparently of natural formation, were chosen as the site of a settlement, fortification, monastery, or temple. The extensive area of broken ground and earthworks referred as the *dhūlkoṭ*, lying north-west of the modern town between the Delhi-Agra ring road and the road to Vrindaban, probably delineates the limits of the old town, or at least the fortified part of it in which some of the most important buildings stood. Growse suggests that the *dhūlkoṭ* may refer literally to the 'dust heaps' comprised of the refuse that accumulates outside a city, but he considered that some of the mounds are clearly of natural formation and indicate the old course of the Yamuna or one of its tributaries, while others are the remains of the walls of the ancient city.[73] Tavernier, who visited Mathura in 1650, records that the Hindus had abandoned their previous veneration for the temple that stood on the Katra site because the Yamuna, 'which used to pass close to it, has changed its course, and now flows half a league away'. He is probably reporting an ancient tradition rather than a relatively recent one, for it is unlikely that the Yamuna ever flowed near the temple in historic times.[74] Cunningham has suggested that the deep channel under the walls of the Katra was once the bed of the Yamuna, or a branch of it, that left its present course near Jai Singh Pura and rejoined it south of the modern city.[75]

10 Mounds outside the modern circumambulation of Mathura

Within three kilometres south-west of the *dhūlkoṭ* lies a group of twelve mounds, called Chaubara, that were uncovered when the road to Sonkh was laid through them. Among the finds was a Buddhist *stūpa* reliquary and an inscription on the pedestal of a seated Buddha image mentioning the locality of 'Madhuravanaka', implying that this site was once thought to be within the limits of Madh-

73 Ibid., p.122.

74 Tavernier, p.187, and note added by Crooke, citing Growse, p.129.

75 Cunningham, ASI XX pp.31-4, a suggestion which he believed to be more compatible with the accounts of Hsuan Tsang, Abu Rihan, and Rashiduddin. On p.31 he equates the Klisobora/Kaisobora of Arrian and Pliny with 'Kesopura', meaning the Katra site on which the temple of Keshava stood and which was then separated from the city of Mathura by the river. Growse, pp.278-9, identifies Klisobora/Kaisobora with Mahaban. See also Cunningham ibid., pp.44-5.

u(ra)vana.[76] Beside the Agra road, in the Cantonment area south of the old town, lies the Jamalpur mound. Inscriptions found here when foundations for the Collector's court-house were laid tell us that it was the site of at least two Buddhist monasteries named Huvishka Vihara, after the Kushana ruler who succeeded to Kanishka, and Kunda-Suka Vihara.[77] The latter produced finds dating from the first century BC, and beside the monastery named after Huvishka there stood a shrine of a Naga called Dadhikarna in which a slab was placed by two local actors.[78] Recent excavations at Govindnagar, west of the Katra and within the *dhūlkoṭ*, yielded sculptures and railing pillars of the first century that belonged to a Buddhist monastery called Viradatta Vihara.[79] The three Chaurasi mounds further west produced remains of Buddhist door jambs and related fragments.[80]

11 The Katra

For Hindu pilgrims the most important site in Mathura is the Katra ('market place'), now referred to as Krishna Janmasthan ('the birthplace of Krishna'). Excavations here have produced pottery and terracotta from the sixth century BC, evidence of a large Buddhist complex, including a monastery called Yasha Vihara that flourished in the Gupta period, as well as some Jain sculpture from about the same time.[81] Cunningham thought that the Buddhists were forcibly expelled from the site and that their buildings were overthrown to furnish materials for a Hindu temple.[82] It is possible that the Bhagavatas had a temple here as early as the first century, and there are some inscriptions from the latter half of the eighth century that record some Rashtrakuta contributions to the development of the site.[83] The Hindu temple here must have been the original one dedicated to Keshava that was sacked by Mahmud of Ghazni in 1017. A temple built to replace it in 1150 was destroyed by Sikandar Lodi, and another built in the early seventeenth century was demolished on the orders of Aurangzeb and replaced by the mosque that now stands on the site.[84]

76 Cunningham, ASI III pp.13 & 16-18, EI VIII pp.181-2.
77 Cunningham, ASI I pp.238-9, referring to it as the 'Jail Mound'.
78 Bühler in EI I, pp.380 ff., Vogel, ASIAR 1908-9 pp.159-60, Lüders (ed. Janert) §27, Fleet, pp.262-4 (inscription recording gift of a statue in AD 454-5).
79 R. C. Sharma 1984, ch.5.
80 Ibid., p.65, Cunningham, ASI III pp.18-19.
81 Cunningham, ASI I pp.235-8, III pp.13-16, Lüders (ed. Janert), pp.29-30, Vogel 1910, p.7 & ASIAR 1911-12 pp.131-3, Fleet, pp.573-4 (inscriptions of AD 359, 224, and 549-50 respectively), R. C. Sharma 1984, pp.82-3, Agrawala VS 1993, p.9 (Jain find, MM no.268).
82 Cunningham, ASI I p.237.
83 See above n.47, Vajpeyi 1954, p.129, and Fleet, pp.25-8 with reference to an inscription from the reign of Chandragupta II.
84 Cunningham, ASI I pp.235-6 & pl.XL (ground plan). See below §§5.1 & 5.24

12 Finds at other places along the circumambulation of Mathura

Near the Katra site is a temple dedicated to Shiva as Bhuteshwar, 'the Lord of Ghosts', referred to in *māhātmya* texts as the guardian of Mathura. At the back of it is a mound in which have been discovered female terracotta figurines of the Maurya and Shunga periods, Buddhist railing pillars and an image of Kubera of the Kushana period, a Shunga period lintel showing celestial beings flanking a Shiva *liṅga*, and an early medieval Durga.[85] These finds suggest that after the decline of Buddhism it once again became a Hindu site dedicated to the goddess in her own right or in conjunction with Shiva, as it may have been before it was claimed by the Buddhists.

South of Bhuteshwar lies the mound known as Kankali Tila, named after a ferocious form of the goddess, which was formerly the site of the main Jain *stūpa* in Mathura.[86] Nearly all the finds here are Jain, the earliest belonging to the first century BC, the latest dated 1177.[87] An inscription in Lucknow Museum records the installation of an image at the Vodva *stūpa* here in AD 157.[88] This was probably the one that was referred to as having been 'founded by the gods' and was restored in AD 749.[89] Recent excavations on the side of the mound facing the road have brought to light the remains of a Buddhist establishment and a brick-lined tank of the Kushana period.[90]

There are other sites of comparable antiquity along the circumambulatory route. The mound on which the temple of Mahavidya Devi stands has produced a Kushana pedestal with a depiction of Maitreya and a stone bowl of the Gupta period.[91] Further north a Kushana door jamb and a standing figure of Brahma were found at Saraswatikund,[92] and some Kushana fragments have been discovered at the Chamunda mound. Beside the Yamuna is a mound at Jai Singh Pura known as Ganesh or Vinayak Tila, from which some Buddhist fragments have been recovered.[93] This, and another mound nearby called Anand Tila, were thought by Cunningham to have been the location of the Anand and Upali *stūpa* mentioned by Hsuan Tsang, Upali having been a Vinayaka - or teacher of *vinaya* (rules of discipline).[94] A nearby well was found to contain a Kushana image of Kubera, a fragment of a Yaksha, and later images of Vishnu, Surya, Shiva, and Krishna holding up Govardhan. At Gayatri Tila, a site that has recently come into

85 MM nos.52.3625, 55.3874, 49.3458.
86 V. A. Smith, Cunningham, ASI III pp.19-21, Vogel 1910, pp.11, 27.
87 Agrawala 1952, p.26 (B.24).
88 Lucknow Museum no.J.20.
89 VTK p.19.
90 R. C. Sharma 1984, pp.60-2.
91 MM nos.49.3507 and 2599.
92 Vogel 1910, I.40; MM no.D.20.
93 Growse, p.135
94 Cunningam, ASI I pp.234-5. See also Vogel, ASIAR 1911-12 pp.130-1. Cunningham's Anand Tila is presumably to be associated with a bathing place known in *māhātmya* texts as Anantatirtha.

prominence with the foundation of an institution called Gayatri Tapobhumi, were found Buddhist remains of the Kushana and Gupta periods.[95]

On a rise behind the radio station, at a place where the earthen defences met the river, stands the small temple of Gokarneshwar. The epithet, meaning 'cow-eared lord', is the name of a celebrated Shaiva place of pilgrimage on the west coast, but has here been applied to the image on account of shapes on either side of its head resembling ears. Rosenfield has no doubt that the image is a portrait statue of a Kushana prince and that the 'ears' represent a cloth flap hanging down from a high headdress in the shape of a rounded cone.[96] Among Buddhist remains discovered at the site was a miniature *stūpa* of the late Kushana period.[97] Some small Kushana and early medieval finds have been unearthed at the nearby Ambarish Tila.[98] Cunningham identifies this mound with the hill described by Hsuan Tsang as having a cave filled with spikes or tallies of bamboo deposited by converts of Upagupta, the foremost Buddhist teacher in Mathura who is said to have been Ashoka's guide when he visited the city.[99]

On the southern side of the modern town the circumambulatory route passes by a series of mounds, one of which is called Saptarishi Tila. In the area south of this mound a lion capital was discovered in the steps of an altar containing sculptures worshipped as the goddess of smallpox.[100] It bears an inscription recording donations made in the first century BC by the chief queen of Rajuvula and some of her associates, and a grant of land by Shodasa to a complex called Guha Vihara, which comprised a *stūpa*, monastery, and a relic of the Buddha. A female figure in blue schist thought to represent Hariti and to have been imported from Gandhara was excavated from the mound itself.[101] Nearby, in the courtyard of a Hindu temple on Dhruv Tila, was found the base of a miniature *stūpa*.

A pillar found near the temple of Rangeshwar bears a carving of a man with matted hair holding a club and has an inscription dated AD 380, in the reign of Chandragupta II. It records the installation in a 'teacher's shrine' (*gurvāyatana*) of two Shiva *liṅga* called Upamiteshwara and Kapileshwara, named after two gurus that they were presumably intended to commemorate.[102] The club-bearing figure suggests that this was an establishment of the Pashupata followers of Lakulisha, and the two teachers, Upamita and Kapila, appear to have belonged to a line that

95 MM nos.1343, 1345-6, 1348.

96 Rosenfield, pp.142-3, 148-9, figs. 11 & 11a, also illustrated in Growse, 3rd edn. p.133, and discussed and illustrated in Marshall, p.23 & pl.XVIIIa.

97 Agrawala 1951-2, no.1605.

98 Mathur & Zaheer, nos.4081, 4032, 4034.

99 Cunningham, ASI XVII pp.110-12, suggesting Kans Kila as the location of Upagupta's monastery. For Hsuan Tsang cf. Watters, vol.I pp.306-8.

100 F. W. Thomas in EI IX 1907-8, pp.135-47, and Konow, pp.30-49, referring to an account given of its discovery by Bhagwan Lal Indraji in JRAS 1894, pp.543-4. It is now in the British Museum.

101 MM no.F.42. It has been suggested that it represents the queen mentioned in the lion capital inscription, cf. R. C. Sharma 1984, pp.66-7. The name suggests that the place may have been the location of the cave mentioned by Hsuan Tsang.

102 MM no.1931, D. R. Bhandarkar in EI XXI pt.I 1931, pp.1-9, Agrawala 1952, pp.145-6.

was established in Mathura by Kushika, a pupil of Lakuli. Other finds from Mathura are the remains of a Buddhist *caitya* from the time of Kanishka, found at Kans Khar, and a variety of small images and other fragments from the Saptasamudri well in the Museum compound. Various fragments have been found in a mound near the temple of Gatashrama, including a tenth-century figure of Vishnu in meditation and a Gupta period figure of Krishna lifting up Govardhan,[103] which imply that there was once a Vaishnava temple here. There has been little opportunity of excavating other places in the built-up area of the modern town.

13 Sites in the vicinity of Maholi

South-west of Mathura are the sites of Maholi, Pali Khera, and Naroli, lying within a couple of kilometres of each other. They have produced some remarkable 'bacchanalian' sculptures, belonging to one or more Buddhist monuments, that show a pot-bellied figure holding a cup and accompanied by attendants.[104] Another nearby site is Giridharpur, where, as at Pali Khera, a variety of pieces of Buddhist and brahminical sculpture have been discovered that belong to the Kushana and Gupta periods. Maholi is the only one of these sites that is included in the circumambulation of Braj. On the east side of the village is a copse or grove, regarded as a remnant of the original Madhuvana, in which a modern Ramanandi temple stands on a mound called Dhruv Tila. The discovery here of Kushana and Gupta period remains, including an inscription, a colossal Bodhisattva image, and a stone canopy implying the existence of a flat-topped shrine, indicates that it was once the location of an important establishment of Pravarika monks and that the name of the monastery on the mound was Khanda Vihara.[105] Archaeological evidence shows that Hinduism outlived and probably supplanted Buddhism at this site. Among Hindu finds are a Kushana *liṅga* two metres in height and Shaiva and Vaishnava images of the Gupta period. The lower part of an early medieval image of Shiva and Parvati was recovered from the village.[106]

14 Sites west and north-west of Maholi

There have been several finds at Satoha, five kilometres west of Mathura on the road to Govardhan and a regular halt on the pilgrimage circuit, and at the nearby village of Ganeshra, where there is a Gandharvakund mentioned in some

103 MM nos.D.37-42 & D.47 (see plate 10). The Krishna image might belong to the late Gupta period, but Agrawala, 1949 p.119, assigns it to the 7th century.

104 Cunningham, ASI XX pp.47-8, Agrawala 1951, pp.92-7.

105 Agrawala 1948, nos.1316, 2798-9. The siting of the Khanda Vihara here was disputed by Waddington, who (if she is indeed referring to the mound rather than some other site at Maholi) thinks that the place was once a stone-breakers yard to which pieces were brought from other sites in and around Mathura to be broken up into smaller stones.

106 MM nos.652 (Kushana *liṅga*) and 496 (Shiva-Parvati).

itineraries. Over a hundred small pieces of sculpture were recovered from the two ancient tanks at these villages, all of them brahminical except for a few Buddhist pieces of the Kushana period.[107] They include four statuettes of Vishnu, three of them Kushana and the other from the Gupta period, implying that there was at least one Vishnu temple in the vicinity. A fragment of a Buddhist doorjamb was also found at Satoha, and finds from Ganeshra, including a life-size Bodhisattva image, a stone parasol two metres in diameter, an inscription, and inscribed bricks, indicate that there was a *stūpa* complex here dating from the second century BC.[108]

West of these villages lies Mora, the site of a temple dedicated to the five Vrishni heroes, and Jikhangaon where an early Kushana lintel fragment was discovered.[109] There have also been finds at other villages in the neighbourhood, but they are places with little or no importance for the modern pilgrimage circuit. North-west of Ganeshra, near the village of Ral, is the mound at Bhadar (or Bhadal), which was a Buddhist site in the Kushana period and had a tank and garden dedicated to a Naga deity.[110] Architectural fragments of the Kushana period were also found at Maghera, a village midway between Ral and Jait.[111]

Five kilometres north-west of Mathura, beside the road to Delhi, is the village of Kota (referred to as Kutak- or Katakban) where pillars of a Buddhist building, presumably taken from the nearby mound, were found to have been incorporated into the masonry causeway of a large tank on the north-east side of the village.[112] Further along the road lies Chaumuhan, where there appears to have been a medieval Vaishnava temple.[113] The name of the village, which means 'four faces', derives from a broken capital with adorsed lions that was taken as representing the four faces of Brahma but, together with a railing pillar discovered here, probably belonged to a Buddhist establishment.[114] To the north east, at Sei, an image of Vishnu lying on Shesha was discovered.[115]

15 Finds in and around Vrindaban

There may have been a Buddhist establishment at Vrindaban in the Kushana period. The largest finds are a frieze carved with a *stūpa* and two railing pillars, each with a *śālabhañjikā* figure, but since both of them have a *tilak* carved on their

107 Agrawala 1951-2, §IX pp.119-28.

108 P.14 (doorjamb), A.5 (Bodhisattva, cf. Vogel 1910, p.39). For Ganeshra finds cf. Lüders (ed. Janert), pp.156 ff. and in EI XXIV 1937-38 p.206, Vogel, ASIAR 1911-12 pp.128 ff., Führer, p.100, Agrawala 1952, p.43, 1951-2 (F.10), Mathur & Zaheer 4258, s.no.352, MM cat. 1963, p.153.

109 Agrawala 1951-2, p.129. For Mora inscription see above §6.

110 A.71, P.16-17, 12.211 (Bhuminaga), cf. Lüders (ed. Janert) §102.

111 Agrawala 1951-2, nos.1539-42.

112 Cunningham, ASI XX pp.49-52, Führer, p.102.

113 Agrawala 1951-2, nos.1358, 2080.

114 Cunningham, ASI XX p.52. See also Growse, p.373, who thought it was the pedestal of a Jain statue or column.

115 MM no.1206, cf. Agrawala 1949, p.123

foreheads, they may have been brought from Mathura in order to adorn a much later Vaishnava establishment.[116] Two more Kushana pieces, a female figure and a Buddhist doorjamb, were found at the hamlet near Akrur Ghat and at Gopalgarh, near the temple of Garud Govind.[117] The various statuettes and fragments of Hindu deities found at Vrindaban are too small to attest the existence of a medieval temple, though on the basis of some Gupta finds from Dwadashaditya Tila, the mound on which the temple of Madanmohan stands, it could be argued that there was an older temple on the site, probably dedicated to the sun.[118]

16 Finds in the vicinity of Govardhan

Finds at Aring, where the circumambulatory route rejoins the Mathura-Govardhan road, suggest that there might have been Hindu and Jain shrines there in the post-Gupta period.[119] A Kushana period figure of a female worshipper that once belonged to a Rosika Vihara at 'Alika' may also have come from Aring.[120] At Narad Kund, a tank beside the path leading round the Govardhan hill, an early medieval image of Agni and attendants was discovered. The most important finds in the immediate vicinity of the hill are an image and an inscription attesting the existence of a Buddhist monastery at Anyor in the early Kushana period.[121]

An assortment of sculptural fragments lying around the temple of Manasi Devi indicates that there was at least one Hindu temple at Govardhan during the medieval period, perhaps a predecessor of the one built in the sixteenth century that was dedicated to Haridev. Jatipura is given as the provenance of a small medieval fragment in grey sandstone showing Krishna holding up Govardhan, but it was purchased at Mathura along with other miscellaneous pieces and could have come from anywhere in the district.[122] The existence of a Vaishnava shrine at Gantholi in the medieval period is indicated by the discovery there of an image of Vishnu over a metre high standing on a lotus with attendant figures.[123]

17 Finds in the north-western part of Mathura District

Kushana fragments discovered at Barsana indicate the existence of some kind of building there, but most of the finds are too small to be of much significance, apart

116 MM nos.40.2887-8 (found while digging the foundations for the Basanti Bai Dharmshala in 1941). See Vajpeyi in *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, pp.173-4, Agrawala 1951-2, no.119, and R. C. Sharma 1984, p.68.
117 Agrawala 1951-2, no.463.
118 MM nos.3375-80.
119 MM nos.462, 1292, 1529.
120 Lüders (ed. Janert) §180, R. C. Sharma 1984, p.57 no.32. The piece is now in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.
121 A.2, A.32, Cunningham, ASI XX p.49, Lüders (ed. Janert) §§134-5.
122 Indian Museum, Calcutta, no.N.S.3723. See D. Brainerd Spooner, ASIAR 1921-22 pl.XXXVIe, pp.103-4.
123 MM no.D.21.

from an early Jain Tirthankara.[124] Sculptures of lions and an adjacent pile of architectural fragments, as well as sculpture embedded in the walls of a nearby Sitala shrine, indicate that a fairly ornate temple once stood at Nandgaon in the vicinity of Yashodakund. Further north, at the village of Dahgaon, is a large Devi sculpture that must have been the central image in a medieval shrine (see plate 24). Near the Delhi road, between Chhata and Kosi, lies the village of Tumola, where a statue over two metres high was discovered that appears to represent a standing Buddha.[125] The most notable finds at Kosi are a Kubera image of the Kushana period and a medieval image of Parshwanatha .[126] Further west, at Shergarh, a medieval image of Durga slaying the buffalo demon was found. Growse noted that the walls of the fort there incorporated stones from an earlier Hindu or possibly Buddhist structure.[127]

18 Finds at Kaman

An inscription records the erection here of an image of the Buddha during the Kushana period and a monastery called Mihira Vihara.[128] Kaman was also the centre of a school of Jain teachers.[129] A medieval image of Rishabhanatha stands against the wall of a Jain temple on the extensive mound on the north side of the town. Kaman abounds in fragments of medieval sculpture, though they have been disappearing rapidly over the past few years. Some examples from Kaman are to be seen in the Bharatpur Museum.[130] At one time temples here of Shiva and Vishnu (i.e. the Chaurasi Khambha) were placed in charge of Acharyas of the Pashupata sect. The most famous temple in the medieval period was the one dedicated to Shiva under the name of Kamyakeshwara, which is mentioned in endowments dated from 787 to 906.[131]

The most notable monument at Kaman is the structure known as Chaurasi Khambha. It is a Hindu temple that has been dismantled and refashioned into a mosque consisting of a cloistered square with rows of pillars forming three aisles on three sides, a raised terrace with a double row of pillars on the north side, and a flight of steps and small balcony in the north-west corner.[132] There are over two hundred columns carved with vegetal motifs, grotesque faces, and mutilated figures of deities. Muslim additions are a pulpit and an Arabic inscription around the entrance mentioning Iletmish (AD 1211-1236), successor to Qutubuddin. A Sanskrit inscription, perhaps as old as the eighth century, was found on a pillar built into the inner face of the eastern wall, close to a flight of steps leading up to a raised

124 MM no.1504. For other finds cf. Agrawala 1951-2, nos. 266, 1273.
125 Cunningham, ASI XX pp.53-4.
126 MM nos.1505-6.
127 Growse, pp.171, 378.
128 Bühler in EI II 1894, p.212.
129 K. C. Jain, p.269.
130 The most notable are figures of Shiva and Parvati (7th/8th cent., 213/64) and Varaha (303/67).
131 K. C. Jain, pp.268-9.
132 Cunningham XX, pp.54 ff., ground plan pl.XI. See also K. C. Jain pp.267-8.

gallery and the roof above the entrance gateway.[133] It gives the genealogy of the Shurasena dynasty extending over seven kings, presumably local rulers at Kaman from about AD 600, and records the construction of a Vishnu temple by a queen called Vachchika. Epigraphical evidence indicates that they had links with the Yadavas of Bayana and must have held the fort or citadel that stood on the extensive area of high ground on the north-west side of the town centre, an area now strewn with rubble. They appear to have been feudatories of the Pratihara ruler Bhoja, and one of them, named Lakshminivasa, is recorded as having ruled here in AD 1032.[134]

19 Finds east of the Yamuna

The mound at Raya appears from archaeological evidence to have been a fairly large settlement from pre-Mauryan through to Gupta times, though nowadays the village is of no special importance. A short distance from Mat, on the eastern side of the road to Raya, is a site known as Tokri Tila, once the location of a hall or gallery (*devakula*) housing statues of the Kushana royal family, with a tank and garden nearby.[135] It appears to have been an isolated site, with no local function, that served as a dynastic memorial. The lower half of one of the statues bears an inscription referring to a tank that presumably lay where the upper half of the same statue (of Vima Kadphises) was being worshipped as 'Baran' (i.e. Varuna, according to Vogel), and where some Naga images were also found. An inscription records that the site was restored by Huvishka, but evidence suggests that it was vandalized before the Hunas arrived in the fifth century.

At the village of Mahaban is series of mounds that are the remains of a fortified settlement. Al-Utbi refers to the place as Mahaban, which implies that it has been associated with the Mahavana of Krishna mythology for at least the last nine hundred years. The Assi Khambha temple here, believed to be the residence of Nanda at the time Krishna and Balarama were born, consists of remnants of a medieval temple that were rearranged to form a mosque, though it has since been reclaimed by Hindus.[136] The discovery of Kushana pieces at the site indicates that it was previously a Buddhist establishment.[137] The various Hindu sculptures found in and around Mahaban presumably derive from the Assi Khambha temple or others constructed in the period when it was a stronghold of local Hindu rulers.

At Baldeo, where a Naga image of the Kushana period is still in worship as Balarama, the head of a colossal Buddha and a headless image of Surya from the Gupta period have been discovered.[138] The presence of a Jain temple somewhere in

133 See Bhagwanlal Indraji, and Cunningham, ASI XX pp.58-60, who gives a photograph and transcription.
134 K. C. Jain, p.267.
135 Lüders (ed. Janert), p.144, Vogel, ASIAR 1911-12 pp.120-6 (incl. plan and illustrations), Rosenfield, pp.140-2.
136 For description and illustrations see Cunningham, ASI XX pp.42-6, pl.VII-X.
137 Agrawala 1951-2, nos.258 and 2663. See also Growse, p.277.
138 MM no.1514 (Buddha).

the vicinity is indicated by the discovery of a medieval image of Parshwanatha at Bandi and another Tirthankara at Mahaban.[139] At Rawal two Kharoshthi inscriptions were found, one of them (on a small stone showing a decorated elephant) referring to a collar-bone relic.[140] The piece could easily have been brought from elsewhere, but it may indicate the presence of a *stūpa* at the mound where it was discovered.

139 MM nos.251, 259.
140 Konow, pp.49-50.

5 Braj since the thirteenth century

1 Braj under the Delhi Sultanate (1194-1526)

The Assi Khambha at Mahaban and the Chaurasi Khambha at Kaman are the only pre-Mughal Hindu monuments still standing, but only by virtue of their having been refashioned into mosques. Everything else that was built by Buddhists, Jains, and Hindus was either abandoned and left to collapse into ruins, or was destroyed by Muslim iconoclasts. The blame for this destruction cannot be laid wholly at the feet of one particular ruler. We have already noted divergent accounts of the damage inflicted upon Mathura by Mahmud of Ghazni in the eleventh century (§4.8). The temple that was rebuilt on the Katra site might have been destroyed by the forces of Qutubuddin, though Firuz Tughlaq (1352-88) is also said to have attacked it, after which it was repaired and survived until the reign of Sikandar Lodi (1488-1517).[1] The oldest attestation of a Muslim building in Mathura is an inscription found near Swami Ghat recording the construction of a mosque in about 1300 by Ulagh Khan, who had been deputed by Alauddin Khilji for the conquest of Gujarat.[2] It had been placed above the entrance to one of the tombs in an enclosure containing the grave of Makhdum Shah Wilayat, but must have come from the old wall-mosque outside the enclosure that was erected on a former Hindu site beside the river.

Sikandar Lodi seems to have been responsible for the destruction of temples that had been recently built or had survived previous attacks. Ferishta records that he was a staunch Muslim who made a point of destroying all heathen temples, and Abdullah reports that idols from the temples were given to butchers to be used as stones for weighing meat.[3] This implies that any finds described as 'medieval' could have belonged to temples that were in use any time between the Gupta period and fifteenth century. Somehow Hinduism and Jainism managed to survive in

1 P. Mital 1966, pt.II p.146.

2 Cf. Hasan.

3 Ferishta, vol.I p.586. His destruction of temples is also recorded by Abdullah in *Tārīk̲h-i-Dā'ūdī* (tr. Elliot & Dowson, vol.4 p.447). Halim, pp.117 ff., gives further details of his oppression of Hinduism.

Mathura, presumably practised with discretion and lack of ostentation, for fear of attracting the attention of zealous Muslims. Jinaprabha Suri's account of Mathura implies that there was enough to be seen in the early fourteenth century to make Mathura a worthwhile destination for Jain pilgrims. At Sahar the remains of a Jain temple have been discovered with inscriptions dated 1371-2.[4] The imposition of a tax on pilgrims is itself evidence that pilgrimages were undertaken and tolerated by the authorities, presumably because they were a source of revenue. It seems that when Father Monserrate visited Mathura, in the period 1580-82, one of the important medieval temples, apparently the one dedicated to Keshavdev, was still in use, or had at least been restored enough for it to serve as a place of worship.[5]

Sikandar Lodi, besides causing mosques to be built opposite the ghats at Mathura, ordered that no Hindus should be allowed to bathe in the Yamuna and prohibited the shaving of beards and heads, thus preventing visiting pilgrims from following the customary rites.[6] The memory of this ban is preserved in an absurd story relating either to Vallabha or Keshav Kashmiri Bhatt, a leader of the Nimbark Sampraday. In the Vallabhite version[7] the Muslim authorities are said to have erected a contraption on Vishram Ghat that deprived any Hindu who bathed there of his *coṭī* (small pigtail at the back of the head) and caused a beard to sprout on his chin. Vallabha wrote an incantation or drew some kind of magic diagram on a piece of paper and gave it to two of his followers, telling them to hang it above one of the main gates of Delhi. The result was that any Muslim who passed under the gate lost his beard and gained a pigtail. Sikandar Lodi was thwarted and duly ordered the removal of the islamizing device at Vishram Ghat. In the other version Keshav Kashmiri Bhatt defeats a Qazi who erected a contraption that caused Hindus who bathed in the Yamuna to be circumcised.[8]

The emphasis given to the ghats of Mathura in the older version of the *Mathurā-māhātmya*, and the fact that many of them have names associated with Shiva and Surya, implies that there was a community of brahmins of an eclectic religious orientation who catered for those who came to perform rites on the banks of the Yamuna. Apart from wandering ascetics, the pilgrims must have been householders who made the journey alone or in small groups. Not only did political circumstances discourage large-scale pilgrimage, the kind of devotion that enjoined public and communal worship and focussed on the childhood and amorous adventures of Krishna was not yet popular in this part of India.

The names of some Vaishnava deities are given in the older verses of the *Mathurā-māhātmya*, but it is doubtful whether there were any sizeable temples apart from the one dedicated to Keshavdev on the Katra site. The epithets suggest that the deities

4 Agrawala 1951-2, R.1-29, described also by Growse, pp.374-6, referring to inscriptions dated 1072, and Vogel 1910, who took them to be Hindu.

5 For Monserrate's remarks about Mathura see below §12.

6 Ferishta, ibid., and Abdullah, ibid. Some other sources are cited by Tandan, pp.541-2.

7 SPV, pp.10-11. Other versions are found in CBC (story relating to Vishram Ghat, pp.10-14) and Yadunath's *Vallabhadigvijaya*.

8 Nabhadas, *chappay* 75, and Priyadas, *kavitt* 337.

worshipped were of the four-armed Vishnu/Vasudeva type, or of Vishnu lying on the serpent Shesha, rather than the two-armed Krishna images that were introduced later. The sacred places mentioned are mainly those where pilgrims should bathe. The paucity of sites associated with Krishna's youth and the inclusion of non-Vaishnava deities and places of worship indicate that the nature of pilgrimage to Mathura was quite different from what it later became. Pilgrims may have been attracted to the town because it was famous as the birthplace of Krishna, was included in the standard list of seven liberation-giving cities, and afforded the opportunity of bathing in the Yamuna and other sacred waters. There is no evidence of their having visited other places outside the town apart from the hill of Govardhan. Folk tradition, and the fact that old icons still venerated were worshipped as Yakshas, Balarama, Shiva, Bhairava, Hanuman, or a manifestation of the goddess, imply that the local peasants did not yet regard Krishna as a particularly important deity and had little interest in orthodox brahminical worship of Vasudeva or Vishnu. It was probably wandering ascetics, shamanistic adepts, priests of questionable brahminical status, and Jogis more or less officially connected with the Nath Sampraday, who had more influence and contact with the settled rural people than the advocates of orthodox Vaishnavism.

During the Sultanate period Mahaban served as the administrative centre of the district and was the headquarters of a military commander appointed from Delhi. In 1427 it was attacked by Malik Muqbil, a supporter of the rebel officer Muhammad Khan.[9] The city of Agra was founded towards the end of the fifteenth century and became a centre of increasing political and cultural importance after Sikander Lodi had made it into an occasional seat of government.[10] Previously, from the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Hindu court at Gwalior was the main, if not the only court where literature in the Braj dialect was cultivated.[11] During the reign of Man Singh Tomar (1486-1518) the *dhrupad* style of singing had evolved there and lyrics on Krishna themes were composed by the poets Gopal, his successor Baiju 'Bawra', and Bakhshu.[12] Man Singh was succeeded by his son Vikramjit, but Sikandar captured Gwalior and made him governor of Shamshabad, where he died in 1526.

2 The arrival of a new kind of Krishna worship

Ironically, it was during the reign of Sikandar Lodi, a staunch oppressor of Hinduism, that propagators of the emotional variety of devotion to Krishna came in search of the sacred places of Braj. Nimbarka, Vallabha, and Chaitanya are thought to have inspired the reclamation of Braj, but there are conflicting accounts of the period and sequence in which they and their followers arrived on the scene. Sectarian writers claim that the leaders of their particular Sampraday were the main

9 E. B. Joshi, p.55, citing *Tārīkh-i-Mubārak Shāhī*.
10 Halim, pp.83-4.
11 McGregor 1984, pp.35-6. The Tomars were also generous patrons of Jainism, cf. A. K. Chatterjee, vol.2 pp.176-8.
12 McGregor 1984 , p.119.

instigators of the profound changes that took place in the course of the sixteenth century. This sort of sectarian rivalry began to colour Hindu histories by the end of the sixteenth century. Before then the differences between the Sampradays active in Braj do not seem to have been as significant, and families of hereditary Goswamis had not yet settled in temples and begun to compete for followers.

Nimbarka, founder of one of the four classic Vaishnava Sampradays, is said to have settled first at Dhruv Tila in Mathura, and later at Nimgaon, near Govardhan. According to tradition his pupil Shrinivas lived at Radhakund, and at least two of the twelve Acharyas who came between Nimbarka and Keshav Kashmiri Bhatt were Chaturvedi brahmins of Mathura. Nimbarka probably flourished in the thirteenth century, but there is no contemporary or external evidence to support the claim that he ever came to Braj or even propagated the kind of devotion that is now practised by his followers, even if he did provide a theological basis for it.[13] It does, however, seem likely that there was a succession of teachers in Mathura before the sixteenth century, since there are temples traditionally associated with the Nimbark Sampraday at several old sites in and around the town, such as the Dhruv, Narad, Saptarishi, Durvasa, and Satoha mounds. The type of devotion now practised in the Sampraday appears to have developed in a climate of mutual influence between saints and teachers who settled in Braj after the fall of the Delhi Sultanate. Keshav Kashmiri Bhatt is counted as the thirty-third Acharya of the Sampraday and, like Nimbarka, was a Tailang brahmin from Andhra Pradesh. Although sectarian biographies place him earlier, it seems unlikely that he was in Braj much before the end of Sikandar Lodi's reign, which would make him a somewhat older contemporary of Vallabha and Chaitanya.[14] He is believed to have earned the epithet 'Kashmiri' as a result of a long period of residence in Kashmir, but he is also said to have lived at Dhruv Tila in Mathura and his *samādhi* stands on the nearby Narad Tila.

All sources acknowledge the role played by a saint named Madhavendra Puri in the establishment of a Krishna image at Govardhan, but followers of Vallabha and Chaitanya give conflicting accounts of what happened. The dates for the lifetime of Madhavendra Puri are roughly 1420-90.[15] Kavikarnapura, writing some time after 1576, says that he belonged to the tradition of Madhva and was the guru of Ishwara Puri, the guru of Chaitanya.[16] The link with Madhva was probably fabricated in order to bring Chaitanya and his followers into the tradition of one of the four classic Sampradays. It is more likely that Ishwara and Madhavendra Puri were

13 For the traditional account of Nimbarka and the teachers who succeeded him, as well as general information about the sect, see Brajvallabhsharan (ed.) 1972, P. Mital 1968, pp.153-5, 186 ff., 343 ff., and N. Sharma, pt.1. *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, pp.185-8, refers to a work entitled *Svadharmādhvabodha* (also mentioned by N. Sharma, pp.17-18), that purports to describe Nimbarka's ashram near Vrindaban, and *Nimbārkavikrānti*, attributed to Audumbaracharya, which says that he lived with his parents in the vicinity of Vrindaban.

14 See N. Sharma, pp.30-6, for the sectarian biography and P. Mital 1968, pp.191-7, for refutation of sectarian claims that he lived in the 14th century.

15 Hardy 1974, p.40.

16 *Gauḍagaṇoddeśadīpikā*, cited by De, p.14.

followers of a movement within monistic Vedanta, most likely one associated with the school of Shankara based at Shringeri in Kerala, that gave greater emphasis to the path of devotion and drew inspiration from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.[17] An earlier representative of this trend was Shridhara Swami (c.1350-1450), a resident of Varanasi and the author of a commentary on the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. Shridhara's monistic interpretation of this text was apparently accepted by a class of ascetics who influenced the development of Vaishnavism in Bengal, and it was highly esteemed by Chaitanya and his circle.[18] Some of the main Gaudiya writers of the sixteenth century (Sanatan Goswami, Vrindabandas, Krishnadas Kaviraj, and Kavikarnapura) acknowledge Madhavendra Puri as the progenitor of Vaishnavism in Bengal. He is said to have initiated the scholar Adwaitacharya, an older contemporary and family friend of Chaitanya, who became the leader of a branch of his followers and whose name implies that he was educated in a monistic theological tradition.[19]

Krishnadas Kaviraj says that when Madhavendra Puri visited Govardhan he walked round the hill and bathed in Govind Kund, where he was approached by a boy who brought him some milk. That night the same boy appeared to Madhavendra Puri in a dream and pointed out the thicket where he lived. He told him that his name was Gopal, the lord of Braj, and that he had been concealed for fear of attacks by Muslims. The next day Madhavendra Puri told some local villagers to extricate the image of Gopal from the thicket that had been revealed to him, where it was found covered with earth and grass. Following the instructions he had been given, Madhavendra Puri arranged for a temple to be built on the hill and had the image washed with water from Govind Kund. He tended the image, bathed and oiled it, and fed it with milk and sweets. The local people offered it an Annakut feast and celebrated the occasion with great rejoicing. The deity 'consumed' the food that was offered and distributed it to all present as *prasād*, yet the heaps of food did not seem to diminish in size. Villagers from a wide area came with their offerings, and wealthy residents of Mathura made donations to the temple. Madhavendra Puri appointed some Bengali brahmins to help in the worship. After serving the image for two years he was commanded to go to Nilachal in search of cooling sandalwood from the famed Malaya mountain.[20] Tradition has it that while at Govardhan he resided at the foot of the hill and the settlement that grew up there became known as Gopalpur or Jatipura, the latter name deriving from his having been an ascetic (*yati*). Followers of Vallabha call the deity Shrinathji and say that the epithet *yati* refers to Giridhar, the eldest grandson of Vallabha.

The rival version accepts the tradition that Madhavendra Puri was a leader of Madhva's school and influenced Chaitanya and the development of Vaishnavism in Bengal, but also claims that he taught the young Vallabha while he was at Varanasi.[21] The prolonged contact between the two saints implied in this account is

17 Hardy 1974, pp.31-41.
18 Hardy 1974, pp.26-33 and De, pp.17 ff.
19 De, pp.16-17, 19, 23, 25, 30, 32.
20 CC 2.4. See Bagchi for a fuller account of the Gaudiya tradition.
21 SPV, pp.26-7. See Vaudeville 1980 (partial tr. of SPV), p.31 n.39 & n.44, p.43 n.10. A more distorted account in which Madhavendra Puri comes into contact with Vallabha's son Vitthalnath is given in 252V, *vārtā* 251, pp.360-1.

highly improbable, since the year of Vallabha's birth is unanimously accepted as 1479. When asked what he would like to receive as a fee for educating Vallabha, Madhavendra Puri had a premonition that Vallabha would institute the worship of Shrinathji and so asked if he could have the honour of helping to serve the image. The Pushtimarg account of the manifestation of Shrinathji relates specifically to its main deity, an image carved in bold relief depicting Krishna standing in the mouth of a cave with his left arm raised in order to hold up Govardhan. Whether this was the original image of 'Gopal' that was served by Madhavendra Puri is a matter of doubt. Shrinathji is carved in a black kind of stone, possibly the same as that used for the type of Vishnu images called Nilamadhava that were made in eastern India during the medieval period. Some of the other main deities of the Pushtimarg appear to be made from the same type of stone, and so it remains uncertain whether the image of Shrinathji is the original one installed by Madhavendra Puri, and perhaps brought by him from the east, or a replacement made later when followers of Vallabha wrested control of the temple from the Bengali priests.

The Pushtimarg account of the emergence of Shrinathji contains intriguing details that throw light on the way in which worship of the Govardhan hill was adapted by devotees of Krishna. While visitors from outside were attracted to Govardhan because of its association with Krishna, the local people appear to have regarded it in a different light. We are told that the left arm of the image first appeared above the ground on top of the hill in the year 1409. Two days later, on Nag Panchami (the day when snakes are worshipped), a cow drew the attention of a local herdsman to the risen arm. He and some friends immediately began to worship it, assuming that it was a divine manifestation. They offered it milk, flowers, and sandal paste, evidently assuming that it was a Naga deity. The cult became popular among the local people and a fair was held annually on Nag Panchami. Welfare of cattle, good health, and the granting of children are specified as some of the benefits obtained by those who propitiated the 'arm' with milk.

Sixty-nine years later, at the very moment that Vallabha was born, the image rose further out of the ground to reveal its 'lotus face' (or 'lotus mouth', *mukhāravind*). A cow descended from the herd formerly kept by Nanda began to wander up to the image and let its milk flow into its mouth. Eventually the cow's regular feeding of the image was noticed by its owners, Saddu Pande and his brother, who lived beneath the hill at the village of Anyor. Following Shrinathji's instructions, they arranged for the image to be supplied with milk until the arrival of Madhavendra Puri. While he was circumambulating the hill, Madhavendra Puri stopped to rest at Anyor and went with a group of people to see Shrinathji. He was delighted to behold the image and began to worship it. Although Shrinathji was happy to accept a garland and a decoration for his turban (*candrikā*) from Madhavendra Puri, he told him that he would only take solid food from the hand of Vallabha, and that in the meantime he would continue to accept only milk. As in the version told by followers of the Gaudiya Sampraday, this account also says that Madhavendra Puri was sent away to fetch sandalwood, but died before he was able to return to Govardhan. Pushtimarg history acknowledges Madhavendra Puri's role in the development of the worship of Shrinathji, and implies that it began as a transformation of a folk cult in which the mountain and snakes were worshipped in

connection with the welfare of cattle and general prosperity, but it reserves the institution of elaborate Vaishnava worship of the image for Vallabha himself.

3 Chaturanaga (Nagaji)

Another shadowy figure mentioned in the Pushtimarg account of the discovery of Shrinathji is an ascetic named Chaturanaga, or simply Nagaji.[22] He is, at least in retrospect, regarded as a local devotee of Krishna, but his original sectarian affiliation is uncertain. The legend says that he was the guru of an inhabitant of the village of Jamnauta (an uncle of the poet Kumbhandas), did penance in the forest of Tod, and never set foot on the sacred Govardhan hill. In order to reward him with a vision, Shrinathji caused himself to be mounted on a buffalo and brought to the forest by Saddu Pande and his companions. On another occasion the deity came to him and shared his lunch at Govind Kund, a tank at Anyor near which Nagaji's *samādhi* stands. A later Pushtimarg tradition claims that Vallabha met Chaturanaga at Kokilaban and describes him as a Nimbarki ascetic who was always accompanied by hundreds of Naga (naked) monks.[23] The same source gives a version of a popular anecdote concerning him, also current in the Nimbark Sampraday, which tells how one day his long matted hair got caught up in the branches of a tree, but he remained on the spot in an attitude of penance until Krishna appeared and set him free.[24]

Another tradition is that he became known as *braj dūlah* ('the bridegroom of Braj') because of his consistency in circumambulating Braj. Nabhadas says that he used to wander around Braj bringing joy to the people, and Priyadas mentions his having made a daily circumambulation.[25] It is said that he used to set out from Vrindaban each morning and return there in the evening to sleep at a temple of Atalbihari on Bihar Ghat.[26] The present head of his lineage resides at the Bihariji temple in Bharatpur fort, where there is a panel representing Nagaji with his hair entangled in a tree. The deity, which is claimed to be the Atalbihari that was worshipped by Nagaji at Vrindaban, is looked upon as the guardian (*kiledār*) of Bharatpur fort, and in former times the Mahant was treated with ceremonial deference by the Maharajas of Bharatpur.[27].

Among followers of the Nimbark Sampraday he is referred to as Chaturchintamani Nagaji and is said to have been born at Paigaon, where a fair is held annually in his honour on Ashwin I.7. He is said to have met Paramanandadev while doing penance in a thicket near Paigaon, and to have been initiated by him.[28] If this is

22 SPV, pp.6, 16-17, 22. Vaudeville 1980, p.44 n.17, assumes that he was a generation older than Madhavendra Puri.

23 CBC, story of the *baiṭhak* at Kokilaban, pp.40-3.

24 See also VDA 7, in connection with the temple of Atalbihari, and S. S. Chakra in *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, pp.283-3.

25 Nabhadas, *chappay* 148, and Priyadas, *kavitt* 535.

26 VDA, ibid., where the temple is also referred to as Nagaji ki Kunj and is said to be the location of his *samādhi*. It also gives his pupillary succession.

27 Lushington, pp.285-6.

28 Brajvallabhsharan in *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, p.227, S. S. Chakra, ibid., pp.282-3, N. Sharma, pp.47-9.

correct, it would mean that Nagaji lived later in the sixteenth century and could not have been present at Govardhan while Madhavendra Puri was there. It is quite possible that, because he was a popular local saint, the Pushtimarg sources back-dated him in order to give him a supplementary role in the development of the cult of Shrinathji. Mital, tending to compromise with the Pushtimarg tradition, suggests that there were two Nagajis who became confused, one a contemporary of Madhavendra Puri and another who was a later Nimbarki ascetic.[29]

4 Vallabha

Sectarian history is unanimous in saying that Vallabha, a Tailang brahmin, was born in 1479 in the forest of Champa, near Raichur in Madhya Pradesh.[30] His parents were returning to their home town on the banks of the Godavari in Andhra Pradesh, having left Varanasi because of the threat of an attack by Muslim troops. Shortly after his birth they heard that the situation in Varanasi had improved, so returned there to settle down. The hagiographies tell how Vallabha, while still a child, travelled extensively around India giving sermons on the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and defeating all opponents in theological debates. He is portrayed as a champion of the Vaishnavas, defending their dualistic philosophy against the Shankarite monists. When he arrived in Braj the goddess Yamuna appeared before him and revealed the forgotten location of Gokul, where Krishna had spent his first years. Vallabha stayed there and began to ponder over the plight of mankind in this degenerate age. Krishna responded to his desire to show men a straightforward path to salvation by appearing before him and saying that he should preach a religion of grace and devotion, which was to be called the 'Pushtimarg'. The name may be derived from a conventional classification of Vedic rituals according to whether their aim is pacification (*śānti*), the casting of spells (*abhicāra*), or *puṣṭi*, meaning 'prosperity, opulence, comfort', or 'fulfilment'. The original connotations of the term *puṣṭi* befit the non-ascetic doctrines of the Sampraday, but its followers use it to mean 'grace', interpreted as Krishna's power to make the devotee thrive.

Krishna also revealed to Vallabha the identity of his image on the Govardhan hill and imparted to him the words of the *brahmasambandh mantra*, a sacred formula that was to be used for initiating disciples.[31] The traditional date for this event is 1492, but this seems rather early in relation to his supposed date of birth. It occurs after a description of his winning a great debate at the court of Krishnadevaray of

29 P. Mital 1968, pp.353-4.

30 His birth is celebrated on Vaishakh I.11. For his biography see *Nijvārtā*, Vitthalnath Bhatt, Yadunath's *Vallabhadigvijaya*, K. Shastri, pt.2 pp.14 ff., P. Mital 1968, pp.214 ff., Barz (intro.).

31 The revelations at Gokul are narrated in *Nijvārtā*, pp.10-11, at the beginning of CBC, in 84V, pp.5-6 (Damodardas Harsani), and by Vitthalnath Bhatt, 5.24-7. SPV says that the revelation took place in Jharkhand (the jungle area of Central India). Text and translation of the *mantra* are given in Growse, pp.282-8. For initiation procedure and references to other sources see Entwistle 1983/1, p.51.

Vijayanagar, who did not succeed to the throne until 1509. After initiating his first disciple, Damodardas Harsani, Vallabha proceeded to Govardhan, where he met Saddu Pande and was shown the image of Shrinathji that had appeared on top of the hill. According to the deity's instructions, Vallabha had it placed on a pedestal and explained to the local people how it should be worshipped. Saddu Pande and other inhabitants of Braj became disciples of Vallabha, and Ramdas Chauhan, who lived in a cave beside Apsarakund, was placed in charge of the service of Shrinathji. After offering Shrinathji his first meal of solid food, Vallabha continued on his travels, winning converts in other parts of India.

As a result of Vallabha's visit the cult of Shrinathji became more formal, requiring the mediation of brahmins acting as priests and following the traditional brahminical style of worship based on courtly ritual. Nevertheless, the sectarian histories assure us that the people of Braj enthusiastically took to this new style of worship and devotion. The next significant step was the construction of a temple.[32] On a subsequent visit to Govardhan Vallabha was met by a merchant from Ambala called Puranmal (or Purnamall) Khatri, who said that he had been told in a dream that he should build a large temple for Shrinathji. We are told that an architect from Agra named Hiramani was asked to design the building and that the foundations were laid in 1499. Puranmal donated most of his money to the construction, investing the remainder in the diamond trade so that the profits could be used to finance its completion. This was eventually achieved in 1519, when the deity was installed on the day of Akshay Tritiya (Vaishakh II.3). Mital has suggested that the delay in completing the temple was due not so much to shortage of funds as to the anti-Hindu policies of Sikandar Lodi, who was in power until 1516.[33] This supposition is borne out to some extent by the tradition that for a time Shrinathji had to be taken to a hiding place in a wood near Gantholi called Tod ko Ghano.[34] Krishnadas Kaviraj, a Gaudiya writer, also tells us that when Chaitanya visited Braj he saw the deity at Gantholi, where it had been taken for safety.[35]

Pushtimarg sources say that when the new temple was completed Vallabha had to appoint more people to help in the organization of the worship.[36] He does not appear to have been able to find enough qualified people among his own followers, for Saddu Pande told him that members of his own caste had insufficient knowledge of ritual and doctrine and that Vallabha should appoint followers of Chaitanya who had settled at Radhakund. Accordingly, Madhavendra Puri was appointed as head-priest (*mukhiyā*) and his followers as assistants. Two of Vallabha's own disciples, the poets Krishnadas and Kumbhandas, were appointed as manager (*adhikārī*) and singer (*kīrtaniyā*), and Saddu Pande was given responsibility for organizing the supply of raw materials needed for the offerings. Madhavendra Puri had probably been long dead before the temple was completed, and it seems unlikely that followers of Chaitanya had already settled at Radhakund, but there

32 SPV, pp.17 ff., *Nijvārtā* pp.43 ff., 84V no.24 (Puranmal Khatri), pp.152-5.

33 P. Mital 1968, p.226. The dates of the foundation and completion of the temple are given in SPV, pp.18-19.

34 AV, pp.213 ff. (*Kumbhandās kī vārtā*).

35 CC 2.18.30-31.

36 SPV, pp.19-20, AV, pp.339-40 (*Kṛṣṇadās kī vārtā*).

may well have been some Bengali devotees, followers of Madhavendra Puri, living at Gopalpur (Jatipura) or somewhere in the vicinity of Govardhan, in which case the story reflects the way the service of Shrinathji was shared between them and the followers of Vallabha. This arrangement was to last until the expulsion of the Bengalis some time after the death of Vallabha in 1530.

In addition to founding the temple of Shrinathji, Vallabha is also said to have circumambulated Braj two times, once before he received the revelation at Gokul and later with his mother after completion of the temple.[37] The places where he rested are marked by *baiṭhak* shrines, but the idea of his having performed such an extensive circumambulation is undoubtedly a retrospective tradition.

5 Chaitanya

Chaitanya was born in 1486 at the town of Nabadwip in Bengal, at that time a centre of scholastic learning.[38] He received a traditional education and later married, but, according to his biographers, his life changed radically when, in his early twenties, he visited Gaya to perform rites for his late father. While he was there he took initiation from Ishwara Puri, after which he abandoned academic study and began to immerse himself in emotional devotion. This he cultivated primarily by repeatedly chanting the names of Krishna and by attending gatherings at which songs were sung about his deeds. His biographies are filled with exaggerated accounts of his ecstasies, wondrous encounters, and mass conversions. He became so distracted and absorbed in devotion that he would fall into a trance, or swoon with emotion and foam at the mouth when he experienced the feelings evoked by the love of Krishna and Radha. Though he was scorned by traditional pundits, his religious enthusiasm was so contagious that he attracted a large band of followers, who joined him in singing and dancing in the streets of Nabadwip. After a couple of years he declared his intention of becoming an ascetic (*saṃnyāsī*), shaved his head, and moved to Puri, where he became a fervent devotee of Jagannath. It was there that he spent the rest of his life, apart from a tour of the great temples of southern India and his pilgrimage to Vrindaban.

Before moving to Puri he had already had the idea of going to Braj, but for some reason he postponed his pilgrimage for several years. First he requested Loknath, a former fellow student at Nabadwip, to go there and begin to reclaim the sacred places.[39] At first Loknath was reluctant to leave Chaitanya, but eventually agreed to go to Braj. He is said to have arrived there in about 1509, accompanied by

37 See Vitthalnath Bhatt, 5.17, 6.6-8, and notes on CBC below in §6.21

38 For the life of Chaitanya see Kennedy, chs.2-3, Eidlitz, pt.2 ('Auszüge aus den frühen Quellen') and pp.533-46 (survey of sources), Dimock, pp.30 ff., S. K. De, pp.68 ff. (who discusses the main sources, viz. CC, KCC, *Caitanyabhāgavata* of Vrindabandas, *Caitanyacandrodaya* and *Caitanyacaritāmṛtamahākāvya* of Paramanand Sen, alias Kavikarnapura), and R. Chakravarti 1985, ch.III, (who mentions some of the people active in Nabadwip at the time of Chaitanya, pp.35-51).

39 De, pp.96-7. The biography of Loknath is given in the first part of BRat and in *Narottam caritra* (cf. Ghosh).

another devotee called Bhugarbh.[40] Loknath, spent the rest of his life in Braj and is believed to have settled at Khaira, where he began to worship a deity he had discovered called Radhavinod.[41]

Chaitanya set out for Braj a few years later. While passing through the province of Gauda he met the brothers Rup and Sanatan, who advised him against proceeding on his pilgrimage because he had attracted too many followers. Chaitanya returned to Puri and set out again in 1514 accompanied by only one disciple.[42] His biographers tell us that he was shown the sacred places in and around Mathura and then visited some of the more outlying sites, including the twelve forests, Kaman, Nandgaon, and Barsana. The accounts of his itinerary are probably restrospective, based on the pilgrimage circuit as it existed later in the sixteenth century. Krishnadas Kaviraj tells us that he went to Govardhan in order to see the deity that was being worshipped on the hill there by Madhavendra Puri. On the way he rediscovered the twin lakes of Radha- and Krishnakund. When he arrived at Govardhan he spent the night at the temple of Haridev. It was there that he realized that the hill was too sacred to set foot on because it is an embodiment of Krishna. We are told that the deity, aware of his predicament, caused its custodians to become anxious lest Muslims in the neighbourhood attack the shrine. The custodians removed the deity from the temple on the hill and took it to a dense grove at Gantholi. Chaitanya circumambulated the hill and then went to Gantholi to see the deity. Gaudiya sources say that Rup and Sanatan also refrained from walking on the hill, but the tradition may simply have arisen as an expression of resentment and disapproval after the followers of Vallabha had expelled the Bengalis from the temple of Shrinathji.[43] On his return to Mathura Chaitanya was disturbed by the crowds of people there, and so retired to Akrur Ghat, a quiet spot on the edge of Vrindaban. He stayed there for a while, but his ecstasies were becoming so exhausting and he attracted so many people that his disciples persuaded him to return to Puri.

6 Political developments from 1516 to 1556

Sikandar Lodi was succeeded by his son Ibrahim, who failed to retain effective control over the empire he inherited, owing to disaffection and restlessness among his feudatories. Babar, a Turkish chief descended from Taimur, began to make raids across the Indus and eventually, in 1526, defeated the forces of Ibrahim at the battle of Panipat, eighty kilometres north of Delhi. Babar advanced to capture Agra, and in the following year defeated a large force of Rajputs led by the Rana of Mewar. Badauni records that a slave of the defeated and executed Ibrahim, named

40 P. Mital 1968, p.305, Bansal pp.63-4.

41 According to P. Mital 1968, p.338, he died in 1588, which gives him a lifetime of about a hundred years and suggests that the date of his arrival in Braj has been brought forward.

42 Dc, pp.97-9. For descriptions of his pilgrimage see below §6.16

43 The refusal of Chaitanya, Rup, and Sanatan to set foot on the hill is mentioned in CC 2.18.23 ff.

Marghub, fortified the town of Mahaban and refused to acknowledge Babar as sovereign, obliging him to send a force to subdue him.[44].

By the time Babar died, in 1530, his hegemony stretched from Kabul and Kandahar to the borders of Bengal. He had laid the foundations for the Mughal empire, but his son Humayun failed to consolidate his hold over the territory. In 1540 he was ousted by Sher Shah (Sher Khan Sur) and was obliged to seek refuge in Iran. Sher Shah, an Afghan who had risen to power in southern Bihar, occupied Delhi and Agra and held control over the region. He constructed a road between the two cities, a fort beside the Yamuna at Shergarh, and a series of sarais, including those at Chhata and Chaumuhan, to provide refuge for travellers from the robbers who haunted the jungles around Mathura.[45] Besides linking the twin capitals, the road was a stretch of the highway running from Lahore to the Deccan. The increase in military and commercial traffic along it must have contributed significantly to the revival and growth of Mathura over the ensuing centuries.[46] The opportunity it gave for lucrative plunder meant that banditry was to remain a perennial hazard.

Sher Shah also began to organize a more efficient administrative system, but after his death in 1545 his successors were unable to retain power in the face of opposition from warring factions. In 1555 Humayun was able to return from exile and regain control of Delhi and Agra, but he died within six months and was succeeded by his thirteen year old son Akbar, under the guardianship of Bairam Khan. These four decades were a period of instability in which attempts to consolidate power at Delhi and Agra were interrupted by bouts of anarchy and lawlessness. There cannot have been any improvement in the lot of the average Hindu and poor peasant, but nevertheless an increasing number of devotees were inspired to come to Braj and create a milieu in which the Krishna cult was to flourish.

7 The Six Goswamis and other contemporary Gaudiya devotees

After his return from Braj Chaitanya spent the rest of his life at Puri, where he gradually became yet more distracted and delirious. He regularly received devotees who came to visit him, but does not seem to have made any efforts to organize his followers or establish a spiritual centre for them in Braj. After his death in 1533 his devotees in eastern India grouped themselves around Adwaitacharya and Nityanand. Initially only devotees descended from actual companions of Chaitanya were recognized as gurus, but in the course of time there were a number of Goswamis claiming to be descended from, or to be in pupillary succession of Nityanand,

44 Badauni, vol.I p.444.

45 Elliott & Dowson, vol.6 p.188.

46 The road and sarais are described by Europeans who travelled along it in the seventeenth century, viz. William Finch (cf. Foster 1921/1, p.186), Bernier, p.284, van Adrichem, p.122.

Adwaitacharya, the six leading Goswamis, eight great poets ('Kaviraj'), and sixty-four Mahants.[47]

Various opinions arose as to the status of Chaitanya. Some considered him to be an incarnation of Krishna even while he was still alive, others regarded him as a dual incarnation of Krishna and Radha.[48] It was also believed that Nityanand was an incarnation of Balarama, and that other members of his entourage had descended to earth from the celestial Vrindaban, where they were members of Krishna's retinue.[49] Images of Chaitanya and Nityanand were installed for worship in separate shrines or were placed beside idols of Krishna and Radha.[50]

Those followers who settled in Braj cultivated a somewhat different type of devotionalism. Led by Rup and Sanatan, they were more scholarly and reclusive than their fellow devotees in Bengal. Until this time the devotionalism of Chaitanya and his followers had been inspired primarily by lyrics composed in Bengali. The theologians at Vrindaban began to compose treatises in Sanskrit with the intention of providing the movement with a systematic theology based upon authoritative scriptures. They incorporated Tantric theories into their system, but remained orthodox in matters of caste, purity, and ritual. Although they acknowledged Chaitanya and invoked him at the beginning of their works, they did not deify him to the same extent as his followers in Bengal.

Before they met Chaitanya, the brothers Rup and Sanatan had served as high officials in the court of Husain Shah, the ruler of Gauda.[51] The story of their conversion has a certain allegorical value since they can be seen as representing many other Bengalis who had lost a certain degree of status by accepting employment in the Muslim administration. Their conversion shows how such people could be rehabilitated, not by being readmitted into Hindu orthodoxy, but by joining a more dynamic and loosely organized religious movement. According to the standard biographies of Chaitanya, he met Rup at Allahabad while he was returning from Braj to Puri. He directed him to go to Vrindaban and later, when Sanatan visited him at Puri, he sent him there as well.[52] If, as is claimed by his biographers, he was looking for scholars who would give his movement some kind of formal doctrine, then he could not have made a wiser choice. It is clear from their writings that Rup and Sanatan had both received a traditional academic education

47 For Nityanand and his following see Kennedy, pp.61-3, Dimock, pp.46-52, and R. Chakravarti 1985, ch.VII; for Adwaitacharya see Kennedy, pp.88-91 and R. Chakravarti 1985, ch.VI. See Kennedy, pp.149-52, and D. C. Sen for further details of Chaitanya's following and R. Chakravarti 1985, ch.X, for the 64 Mahants.

48 See Dimock, pp.32, 52-5. 148-50 for the various opinions that arose on this point.

49 CC 1.5.5, 1.13.

50 Kennedy, pp.64-5, 135 (development of Chaitanya as a cult figure by Vanshivadan and Narahari Sarkar), De, p.41 (the *pañcatattva* doctrine that became popular in Bengal, viz. veneration of Chaitanya, Nityanand, Adwaitacharya, Gadadhar, and Shrivas), Dimock, p. 95 (Narahari Sarkar), and R. Chakravarti 1985, ch.VIII (the 12 'Gopalas' and 'Upagopalas').

51 See O'Connell 1970 and 1976, pp.46-52, for details of Rup, Sanatan, and other Gaudiya Vaishnavas who were associated with the Muslim court.

52 CC 2.1 & 2.19, De, p.149.

at Nabadwip. In their commentaries and treatises they refer to a wide range of texts, and Rup in particular was thoroughly schooled in classical aesthetic theory, which he made use of in his dramas and in his elaborate classification of all the moods of devotion.

Rup is said to have arrived in Vrindaban in 1517, and Sanatan about two years later, by which time they were then aged about thirty.[53] Tradition has it that they first stayed at Dhruv Ghat in Mathura, and later settled in Vrindaban. It was there that they founded temples for Govind Dev and Madanmohan, their respective deities.[54] Rup is said to have discovered Govind Dev after a cow was seen shedding its milk on the spot where it had lain buried since the time of Vajranabha.[55] The myth told about Madanmohan is less conventional.[56] When Sanatan came to Mathura he obtained the deity from the wife of a Chaube who had been worshipping it as Bhairava. He took it to Dwadashaditya Tila in Vrindaban and washed off the vermilion with which it had been coated, thus revealing it to be an image of Krishna. He constructed his hermitage on the mound and installed the deity for worship there. Gopal Kavi tells us that the image had originally been worshipped by the legendary king Ambarisha and later by Kubja, the mythical hunch-backed woman of Mathura. He adds that the Raja of Puri sent two female figures to accompany the deity.

The two brothers appear to have spent the rest of their lives in Vrindaban, where they died within a few years of the accession of Akbar. They are commemorated by a *samādhi* and *bhajan kuṭī* beside the temples of Madanmohan and Radhadamodar. There are also *bhajan kuṭī* of Sanatan at Radhakund and Manasi Ganga, and of both of them at Nandgaon beside Pan Sarovar. Rup's most important works are dated between 1533 and 1550, and some of his compositions might be somewhat earlier.[57]

Rup and Sanatan were joined by four other devotees, forming a group that came to be known as the 'Six Goswamis'. Gopal Bhatt is generally acknowledged to be the author of *Haribhaktivilāsa*, a comprehensive work on ritual, though some say that it was written by Sanatan or that he played a large part in the compilation of it.[58] There are varying accounts of how he met Chaitanya and was instructed by him to go to Vrindaban. All sources agree that he was born in a village near

53 P. Mital 1962, pp.23-7, giving the traditionally accepted dates of birth of Rup and Sanatan as 1488 and 1489.

54 P. Mital 1968, p.313, says that they began to worship them in 1533 and 1535 respectively.

55 VDA 23. A. K. Roy, p.161, notes that according to the tradition of the shebait family Rup Goswami discovered Govind Dev at a mound called Goma Tila in 1525.

56 See P. Thakur, who bases his account on *Madanmohan caritra*, composed by Pt. Madanji at the end of the last century. An account of the discovery of the image is also given in the first part of VDA.

57 De, pp.160-3. Sanatan may have lived a few years longer, for De notes (p.164) that Jiv says that his *Vaiṣṇavatoṣinī* commentary was completed in 1554. BRat says that they both died in the same year.

58 CC 2.1.30 includes HBV among the works of Gopal Bhatt. For further information about him see CC 2.24-5, Kennedy, pp.134-137, De, pp.125-45, P. Mital 1968, pp. 314-5, Nityanand, pp.39-41.

Shrirangam and usually say that Chaitanya stayed in his father's house when he came to visit the temple there. He presumably arrived in Vrindaban some time before 1541, the date by which *Haribhaktivilāsa* must have been composed.[59] It is said that on the full moon day of the month of Vaishakh in 1542 he performed the first *abhiṣeka* ceremony of Radharaman, a deity believed to have manifested itself out of a *śālagrām* stone that he had brought from the river Gandak. After his death in 1585 the custody of the deity was entrusted to his younger brother, Damodar, and has remained with his descendants ever since.[60]

Raghunathdas was a Kayasth, the son of a wealthy Bengali *zamīndār*.[61] He lived for many years at Puri in the company of Chaitanya and came to Vrindaban after his death. He settled at Radhakund and composed works dealing with the amorous encounters of Krishna and Radha, some short hymns in praise of Govardhan and some of the ponds around it, and *Vrajavilāsastava*, in which he described the places, elements, and participants in the adventures of Krishna. His most important contribution was the development of Radhakund as a centre for the Bengali devotees. He acquired various properties there and it is recorded that in 1545 he purchased land from the local Panch for the purpose of dumping earth from the digging of the tank,[62] which implies that he was responsible for constructing or at least enlarging it. He is commemorated by a *bhajan kuṭī* and *samādhi* on the banks of Radhakund.

Raghunath Bhatt, who came from Varanasi, has left no literary works but was noted for his daily sermons on the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* before the deity of Govind Dev at Vrindaban.[63] The youngest of the Six Goswamis was Jiv, a nephew of Rup and Sanatan, who succeeded them as the highest authority in doctrinal matters. On arriving in Vrindaban he took initiation from Rup, and in the following year is said to have begun worshipping the deity of Radhadamodar.[64] His works, of which the dated ones span the period 1555-92,[65] include *Ṣaṭsaṃdarbha*, the most comprehensive account of his theology, and some commentaries on the works of his uncles.

During the period that followed the death of Sikandar Lodi the Bengali devotees, though they were not yet in a position to arrange for the construction of large temples, managed to continue serving Shrinathji and to set up shrines in Vrindaban and around Radhakund. Besides elaborating their theology, they were also busy integrating their doctrines, ritual, and the mythology of Krishna with the environment of Braj. A new *Mathurāmāhātmya* compilation appeared, attributed to Rup Goswami; Vrindaban was conceived of in terms of a *yantra* in which Krishna was envisaged as standing in the centre of a *yogapīṭha*; Radhakund was

59 De, p.139.
60 P. Mital 1968, p.315.
61 De, pp.119-23.
62 Wright & Mukherjee, p. 316 n.20.
63 De, p.125, and P. Mital 1968, p.315.
64 P. Mital 1968, p.317, gives the date as 1542, but a document entitled *Mahāprabhvādi-prākaṭyasaṃvatsarāṇi* in the City Palace, Jaipur, acc.5171 (cited by Wright & Mukherjee, p. 314) gives 1547.
65 De, p.164.

visualized as an area of bowers frequented by Krishna, Radha, and the Sakhis in the course of their transcendent love-play; Krishna mythology was related more closely to local culture and topography by the reworking of old myths and the invention of new ones.

Besides the Six Goswamis there were several other notable Gaudiya devotees who contributed to the movement in Braj during this period. Krishnadas Kaviraj joined his close friend Raghunathdas at Radhakund and spent the rest of his life there. He is commemorated by a *bhajan kuṭī* beside the tank in which he is believed to have composed his *Caitanya caritāmṛt*, which came to be accepted as the most authoritative biography of Chaitanya. He was the first to refer to Rup, Sanatan, and the others as the 'Six Goswamis', exaggerated the amount of personal contact they had with Chaitanya, propagated the notion that Chaitanya had suggested to them the framework that they should follow in systematizing the sectarian doctrines, and expressed their teachings in Bengali - a language that the majority of Chaitanya's followers could understand.[66]

Another devotee was Narayan Bhatt, who tells us that he was born in a town on the bank of the Godavari in 1531 and arrived at Radhakund in 1545.[67] According to his biographer, a descendant named Janakiprasad Bhatt, his father was named Bhaskar and came from Madurai.[68] Narayan Bhatt spent five years at Radhakund after receiving initiation from Krishnadas Brahmachari, a disciple of Sanatan, who entrusted him with the worship of a deity called Madanmohan.[69] He says that he received instructions from Krishna to carry out the reclamation of the places in Braj that had been lost for the past four thousand years.[70] In 1552 he completed *Vrajabhaktivilāsa*, the most exhaustive listing of the sacred places of Braj ever written. The large number of sites mentioned and the amount of detail it contains imply that he spent a considerable amount of time exploring the area, noting the relics of older sacred places as well as discovering new ones. Later he moved to Unchagaon where he began the life of a householder and founded temples there and in the vicinity.

A Goswami named Kashishwar is said to have been sent to Vrindaban by Chaitanya and was put in charge of the worship of Govind Dev.[71] Another devotee who appears to have arrived in Vrindaban while Rup and Sanatan were there was Madhu Goswami. He began the worship of a deity named Gopinath,[72] for which a temple was eventually provided by Raysal, a senior member of the Shekhawat federation, during the reign of Jahangir. Others who appear to have settled in Braj or to have spent some time there were Madhavdas Jagannathi, Ramray, and his younger brother Chandragopal - who are all acknowledged as the earliest Gaudiya devotees to write poetry in the Braj dialect.[73] Ramray is mentioned in one of the

66 Dc, pp.106, 144-5.
67 VOC, pp.228-30, NBC 1.45-54.
68 NBC 1.45-54. Janakiprasad Bhatt was born in 1665 (NBC, intro. p.8).
69 VOC ibid., Priyadas, *kavitt* 381.
70 VOC pp.50-52.
71 Priyadas, *kavitt* 398.
72 Ibid., *kavitt* 380.
73 Madhavdas Jagannathi: ibid., *kavitt* 322-6, P. Mital 1962, pp.132-8. Ramray: Nabhadas, *chappay* 197, P. Mital 1962, pp. 141-8.

vārtā as having been a disciple of Vitthalnath,[74] which is probably a way of saying that he was one of the followers of Chaitanya who helped in the worship of Shrinathji. He wrote a collection of verses that have been given the title *Ādivāṇī*, because they are believed to be the first such work composed by a Gaudiya poet. He also translated *Gītagovinda*, which is probably why he is claimed to be a descendant of Jayadeva. A temple of Radhamadhav in Dusayat Muhalla, Vrindaban, houses an image said to have been worshipped by Ramray that is now in the custody of his descendants, who say that he originally came from Lahore. Two devotees who are believed to have been disciples of Nityanand are Krishnadas Gunjamali and Shyamji (or Shyamdas), the former hailing from Lahore and the latter from a village in the nearby district of Sahiwal.[75] It seems that Gunjamali, while he was in Braj, was employed in the service of Shrinathji. Eventually he and Shyamji returned to their homeland, where they established temples and propagated the Gaudiya movement.

Prabodhanand Saraswati is thought to have been a follower of Chaitanya and a teacher of Gopal Bhatt, though it is also claimed that he belonged to the Radhavallabh Sampraday.[76] He was probably a follower of Chaitanya who was a close friend of Hit Harivansh, long before the latter's followers identified themselves as an independent Sampraday. His main work is *Vṛndāvana-mahimāmṛta*, a lengthy glorification of Vrindaban. He is sometimes credited with *Rādhāsudhānidhi*, a collection of Sanskrit verses in praise of Radha that is usually attributed to Hit Harivansh. His *samādhi* is at Kalidah Ghat, which some say was his place of residence at Vrindaban. Another poet who arrived in Vrindaban was a Tailang brahmin called Gadadhar Bhatt. He is believed to have taken initiation from Raghunath Bhatt and worshipped a deity called Madanmohan.[77] His descendants, known as the Bhatt Parivar, still serve the deity in a temple at Athkhambha. An associate of the Gaudiya Sampraday was Anandghan, a person whom Chaitanya is said to have met when he visited Nandgaon.[78] His descendants say that he came from the nearby village of Kharaut and installed images at Nandgaon that now stand in the temple called Nandarayji ka Mandir. The custody of this temple is still with his descendants. According to their genealogy his ancestors were local brahmins of Kharaut and Nandgaon who had served 'Nandababa' for many generations.[79]

74 252V no.243, pp.346-50 (under the name of Bhagwandas).

75 See Shyamdas, pp.184-7, Entwistle 1983/1, pp.56-7, for further information and references.

76 Priyadas, *kavitt* 613, P. Mital 1962, pp.45-7, Bansal, pp. 71-3, Bhagwat Mudit, pp.25-7. Lalitacharan Goswami, pp. 552-7, compromises by suggesting that there were two devotees with the same name who belonged to each of the two Sampradays. CC says that Chaitanya initiated him at Shrirangam.

77 Nabhadas, *chappay* 138, Priyadas, *kavitt* 523-30, P. Mital 1962, pp.154-8, Bansal, p.240.

78 P. Mital 1962, pp.39-40, Bansal, pp.212-4.

79 Bansal, p.212.

8 Vitthalnath's succession to leadership of the Pushtimarg

Whereas the Bengali devotees had a circle of religious leaders based in Braj, Vallabha did not take up residence there. He is said to have paid several visits to Govardhan, but he made his home at Adail, a place across the river Yamuna from Allahabad, within sight of its confluence with the Ganges. His first son Gopinath was born there in 1510, and five years later he had another son called Vitthalnath, who was born at Chunar, near Varanasi.[80] In 1530 Vallabha died at Varanasi at the age of fifty-two, shortly after leaving his family and taking a vow of renunciation.[81] Sectarian histories give a confusing account of the sequence of events that occurred between the death of Vallabha and Vitthalnath's assuming the leadership of his followers. Varying dates are given for the death of Gopinath and his son Purushottam, which gives the impression that the facts have been tampered with in an attempt to explain or justify Vitthalnath's taking precedence over his elder brother and nephew.

Gopinath is reputed to have been a fine scholar, but there is little evidence of his having done much to influence the development of his father's following, though he is said to have travelled to Puri, Gujarat, and Sind and to have brought over a hundred thousand rupees to be used in the service of Shrinathji.[82] His only son Purushottam is said to have been born between 1530 and 1532, or several years later in 1550.[83] Dates for the death of Gopinath and his son Purushottam vary from 1533 to 1563, some saying that they both died in the same year.[84] All the available sources agree that Gopinath disappeared from this earth when he became absorbed into the image of Balarama that accompanies Jagannath at Puri.[85] They suggest that he was a manifestation of Balarama, complementing the notion that Vitthalnath was a partial or even full incarnation of Krishna.[86] As if wishing to deprecate him and explain why Vitthalnath was a more worthy successor of Vallabha, they describe him as having been more interested in following the path of Vedic injunctions (*maryādā*) rather than the established doctrines of the Pushti-

80 *Nijvārtā*, pp.66-7, Vitthalnath Bhatt, 6.11-14. These dates are accepted in other sectarian sources, though some say that Gopinath was born either one or two years later.

81 Vitthalnath Bhatt, 6.50. See also SPV 22, *Gharūvārtā*, pp.27 ff.

82 K. Shastri, pt.2 p.87.

83 The earlier dates are given by K. Shastri, pt.2 pp.85 & 88, and Barz, p.53, the later one by Vitthalnath Bhatt, 7.69, and in *Sampradāyapradīpa*, cited by K. Shastri, ibid.

84 Death of Gopinath: cf. SPV pp.22-3 (1533), D. D. Gupta, p.75 (1538), P. Mital 1949, p.21, and Tandan, p.543 (1542), Barz, p.53 (1543), Vitthalnath Bhatt, 7.101-114, and K. Shastri, pt.2 p.89 (1563). Death of Purushottam: SPV, ibid. (1533), Gupta, ibid. (before 1538), Mital ibid., pp.23-6 (1549), Barz, ibid. (1550), Tandan, p.544 (1558), K. Shastri, pt.2 p.88 (before Gopinath in 1563).

85 An idea idea that was presumably modelled on Chaitanya's disappearance into Jagannath, as described by Kavikarnapura, cf. P. Mukherjee, pp.310-11.

86 Gopaldas, 2.23-4, *Nijvārtā*, p.66.

marg and to have been devoted to Balarama, whereas Vitthalnath showed undivided loyalty for Shrinathji.[87]

The story that Gopinath, grieved by the death of his son, retired to Puri and duly disappeared avoids the question of there having been any controversy over the leadership of the sect. The fullest account of events that occurred in this period is given in the *vārtā* of Krishnadas, a Kunabi Patel from Gujarat whom Vallabha had appointed as manager of the temple of Shrinathji.[88] As the temple flourished, so he became an increasingly influential character. He is described as having been accompanied wherever he went by chariots, horses, oxen, camels, wagons, and a hundred and fifty men. Once he fell in love with the daughter of a prostitute whom he saw dancing in the bazaar at Agra. According to the commentary on the story she was in fact a divine soul, a reincarnation of a companion of Lalita who had earned such a low birth as a result of accidentally dribbling on some sugar candy intended for Krishna. Krishnadas, who had been born in order to liberate this unfortunate soul, took her to the temple, where she swooned while dancing in front of Shrinathji and was received into the divine *līlā*.

Krishnadas's next affair was with Gangabai, a wealthy woman without heir who contributed so generously to the worship of Shrinathji that Krishnadas granted her the exceptional privilege of being present when food was offered to the deity. When Vitthalnath learnt that she was being shown such irregular favour, and rumours spread that Krishnadas was having an affair with her, he ordered that she should be banned from the temple. Krishnadas went to Purushottam and told him to challenge his uncle's authority and join him in taking full responsibility for the worship of Shrinathji. Krishnadas then banned Vitthalnath from the temple and said that he would only be readmitted with the permission of Purushottam. Vitthalnath spent the next six months at the nearby village of Parasoli, where he suffered pangs of separation at being deprived of the sight of Shrinathji. Ramdas Chauhan, the priest appointed by Vallabha, is portrayed as a supporter of Vitthalnath, for he is said to have brought him a daily dose of *caraṇāmṛt* and garlands in which messages from Shrinathji were concealed. Vitthalnath's eldest son is said to have reported the matter to Birbal, a sympathetic administrator in Akbar's court, who duly ordered the arrest of Krishnadas. Vitthalnath was distressed when he learnt that Krishnadas was in jail in Mathura, and so he went on hunger strike in order to procure his release. This led to a reconciliation between them, and thereafter Krishnadas remained as manager of the temple for the rest of his life.[89]

It is difficult to reconcile the account given in the *vārtā* of Krishnadas with the dates given in various sources for the lifetime of the participants. Akbar and two of his Hindu courtiers, Birbal and Todar Mal, became stock characters in folk

87 See *bhāv prakās* on the *vārtā* of Devi Kapur Khatri, Narayandas Bhat, and Prabhudas Jalotu, 84V, pp.123, 133, 307.

88 AV, pp.330 ff., also included in editions of 84V and translated by Barz, pp.217 ff. See also P. Mital 1968, pp. 249-55.

89 Vitthalnath Bhatt, 7.101-114, places the event before the death of Gopinath (dated 1563), and says that Purushottam died shortly after Vitthalnath celebrated his re-entry into the temple, after which Gopinath went to Puri.

memory and are apt to appear anachronistically or as a convention in stories told by members of the Pushtimarg and other sects. The intervention of Birbal should not lead us to to assume that the events actually did take place during the reign of Akbar. The most likely sequence of events is that Gopinath died while his son was still a minor, and so Vitthalnath assumed full control of the sect.[90] Some years later, in about 1548-9, when Purushottam was about eighteen, his mother, with the support of Krishnadas and a few other followers, began to press for her son's right to leadership. This was perhaps the real reason why Vitthalnath was banned from the temple for a while. It was during this period that Purushottam's untimely death occurred, with the result that Vitthalnath became the undisputed leader of the sect and his sister-in-law left for her homeland in Andhra Pradesh.

Disagreements with the Bengalis over the worship of Shrinathji began soon after the death of Vallabha. Krishnadas is again a central figure in the dispute and his *vārtā* gives the fullest account of what took place.[91] He complained that the Bengalis were embezzling money intended for the service of Shrinathji and sending a certain amount of the donations to their gurus in Vrindaban (i.e. Rup and Sanatan). Furthermore, they had installed an image of Vrindadevi alongside that of Shrinathji. Although the Bengalis could happily accomodate worship of the goddess in conjunction with that of Krishna, such a practice was opposed to the Pushtimarg's ideal of unalloyed devotion. Gopinath and Vitthalnath are said to have come from Adail to sort out the dispute. The Bengalis refused to leave the temple and so Krishnadas, while they were busy worshipping Shrinathji, set fire to their huts beneath the hill at Rudrakund. When the Bengalis ran down to put out the fire Krishnadas managed to take possession of the temple with the help of some local people. The Bengalis reported the matter to Rup and Sanatan and a complaint was lodged with the *hakīm* at Mathura. The *hakīm* failed to persuade Krishnadas to allow the Bengalis to return, and so the matter was eventually brought before Akbar. Krishnadas, through the intervention of Todar Mal and Birbal, won the case, and as consolation Vitthalnath gave the Bengalis an image of Madanmohan, which they took to Vrindaban. The discovery of this deity is attributed to a devotee named Narayandas Bhat, who found it at Radha Bagh in Vrindaban and presented it to Gopinath. Vitthalnath then appointed Sanchora brahmins from Gujarat to take care of the service of Shrinathji.

It is not clear from the sectarian account whether the expulsion of the Bengalis took place shortly after the death of Vallabha or nearly forty years later during the reign of Akbar.[92] Mital is probably right in concluding that the dispute was a drawn out affair that began when Krishnadas, after the death of Vallabha, sought to expand the temple service. After the expulsion of the Bengalis there probably followed some protracted litigation, which was finally settled when Vitthalnath's *de facto* custodianship was formally recognized during the reign of Akbar. The loss by

90 Here I agree with P. Mital 1968, p.255.

91 The events are also referred to in SPV, pp.22-3, 84V no.48 (*Rāmdās kī vārtā*), Vitthalnath Bhatt, 7.3-10.

92 P. Mital 1968, p.251, discussing the dates 1533 and 1571, as given in sectarian sources.

the Bengalis of their share in the service of Shrinathji appears to coincide with the expansion of their settlement at Radhakund during the 1540's.

Although Vitthalnath became leader of the Pushtimarg and eventually managed to gain control over the temple of Shrinathji, he did not settle in Braj until the reign of Akbar. He continued to use his father's residence at Adail and spent much of his time travelling around the northern half of India visiting places of pilgrimage, calling on his father's followers, and attracting new disciples.[93]. There exist two collections of stories (*vārtā*) about eighty-four disciples of Vallabha and two hundred and fifty-two of Vitthalnath. They are edifying tales describing the charisma and miracles of Vallabha and Vitthalnath, the manner in which Krishna intercedes on behalf of his devotees, and the attitude and conduct expected of followers of the Pushtimarg. All the stories are attributed to Gokulnath, the fourth son of Vitthalnath, but many of them appear to have been written or at least revised and expanded by Hariray, a nephew of Gokulnath.[94] Being hagiographical tales written down some time after the period in which the events described took place, they are of dubious historicity, but can be taken as throwing some light on the manner in which the Pushtimarg was propagated. The followers described in the stories are from various social groups, ranging from low menial castes to aristocrats, but most belong to the merchant class and a large number of them lived in Gujarat. From 1543 onwards Vitthalnath is said to have made several pilgrimages to Dwarka, staying regularly at Ahmedabad and visiting almost every important town in Gujarat.[95] He must have been aware of the financial advantages of converting members of the trading community and their enrolment on such a large scale influenced the manner in which he developed worship and ritual in the temples. The *vārtā* literature would have us believe that Vitthalnath initiated untouchables and even Muslims,[96] but the intention is probably to illustrate the all-encompassing nature of the type of devotion and salvation that is advertised.

Several years passed before Vitthalnath finally decided to settle in Braj, but in the course of his travels he had awakened the interest of a wealthy following in the cult of Shrinathji and encouraged them to look towards Braj for their spiritual inspiration. He himself is purported to have made an extensive circumambulation of the sacred places of Braj in 1543,[97] but it was probably only after his taking up residence there that a significant number of followers began to come on pilgrimage.

93 For dates and itineraries of his journeys see Vitthalnath Bhatt, 7 & 8, *Śrīmad vallabhkul ko prāgaṭya* (a short text published with *Khaṭ ṛtu vārtā* of Chaturbhujdas), K. Shastri, pt. 3 p.99, P. Mital 1968, pp.261-4. See also remarks on CBC in §6.21.

94 See below §6.20. The tales of a few disciples are also given in *Bhāvsindhu kī vārtā*, which is also attributed to Gokulnath.

95 See Cohen for discussion of the spread of the Pushtimarg among the merchants of Gujarat.

96 E.g. the *vārtā* in 252V of Madhuridas Mali, Meha Dhimar, Rupmanjari Vyadha, Mohan Bhangi, Pirzadi, Dhondi, Raskhan, Tansen, and Alikhan Pathan and his daughter.

97 Described in BYP, see below §§6.22-24.

9 Hit Harivansh

A contemporary of Rup and Sanatan who took up residence in Vrindaban was the poet Hit Harivansh.[98] Sectarian biographers say that he was born in 1502 at the village of Bad, south of Mathura on the road to Agra. His father, a Gaur brahmin by the name of Vyas Mishra, lived at Deoband, lying to the north of Delhi in Saharanpur district. He is described as a wealthy astrologer to the king, which probably means that he was engaged at one of the local Hindu courts. In due course Hit Harivansh married and had three sons and a daughter. Once Radha revealed to him in a dream that an image of Krishna was to be found in a well in his father's garden. The deity, known as Rangililal, was enshrined at Deoband, where it is still in the custody of descendants of Hit Harivansh. When his father died he declined the offer of replacing him at court. He received instructions from Radha that he should go to Vrindaban. On the way there, according to her prophecy, he met a wealthy brahmin who offered him the hand of his two daughters and presented him with an image of Krishna, which was given the name 'Radhavallabh'. Legend has it that he first settled on a patch of high ground beside the Yamuna. Some local people offered him as much land as he could cover with an arrow. He managed to shoot it as far as Chir Ghat, where he founded a *rās maṇḍal*. The patch of high ground is said to be the place where the temple of Radhavallabh now stands; between the two is the garden called Seva Kunj, where he first installed Radhavallabh for worship in 1534. He is believed to have spent the rest of his life in Vrindaban and to have frequented the pond called Man Sarovar on the opposite bank of the Yamuna. The only other places outside Vrindaban where he is commemorated are a *baiṭhak* beside the Radhavallabh temple on the bank of Radhakund and Vyas Bhavan, an ashram run by ascetic followers at Bad, his place of birth.

He is described as having immersed himself in the amorous sports of Krishna and Radha and to have had little concern for ritual procedure and scriptural injunctions.[99] He was an inspired poet rather than a theologian, and a collection of eighty-four of his poems is cherished by his followers as a canonical text.[100] These lyrics express an emotional and aesthetic form of devotion similar to that which was propagated by Rup Goswami. They are largely descriptive and deal more or less exclusively with the amorous pastimes of Krishna, emphasizing the importance of Radha and the role of the Sakhis. They are sung regularly in temples of the Sampraday and are intended to arouse devotional cum sensual emotions (i.e. *ras*). Theology and other points of doctrine were to be supplied by later commentators on the poems.[101]

98 For biography and sources see Growse, pp.199 ff., Snatak, Lalitacharan Goswami, pp.17-53, P. Mital 1968, pp.364-73, Snell 1978, 1980, and intro. to his edition of the hymns of Hit Harivansh. The most important sectarian sources are *Hit caritra* of Uttamdas, *Hit kul śākhā* of Jayakrishna, and Priyadas Shukla.

99 Viz. *bidhi niṣedh*, cf. Nabhadas, *chappay* 90, and commentary by Priyadas.

100 Viz. *Hit caurāsī*, cf. editions of Lalitacaran and Snell, and translation by White. See also Growse, pp.208-15, and comments by McGregor 1984, pp.88-90. Other works attributed to him are a *Yamunāṣṭaka* and a collection of Sanskrit couplets entitled *Rādhāsudhānidhi* (for text and tr. of some of them see Growse, pp.203-8).

101 See *Dvādaś yaś* of Chaturbhujdas for formulation of the doctrines and attitudes of the Radhavallabh Sampraday.

The organization of the followers of Hit Harivansh into what became known as the Radhavallabh Sampraday was the work of his sons and subsequent descendants. Among his disciples was Naravahan, a landowner from Bhogaon, a village beside the Yamuna to the north of Vrindaban.[102] He is described as leader of a band of dacoits who terrorized the people of Braj. After being converted by Hit Harivansh he reformed his ways, donated land to him, and began to do good works for his fellow devotees.

10 Swami Haridas

Another devotee who took up residence in Vrindaban at this time was Swami Haridas. Because he is often cited as a great musician, his fame has spread far beyond his relatively small sectarian following. He is traditionally acknowledged as the progenitor of the *dhrupad* style of singing and is sometimes said to have been the teacher of Tansen, the legendary musician at the court of Akbar. What seems more probable is that they were contemporaries who had, directly or indirectly, learned to sing *dhrupad* from musicians associated with the court of the Tomar rulers of Gwalior. Another unlikely but celebrated incident in the life of Haridas is his having been visited by Akbar in Vrindaban, a meeting that has often been depicted in miniatures. It is difficult to reconcile the information given about Haridas because, ever since a schism between his ascetic and householder following in the eighteenth century, there have been rival versions of his biography.[103] Both factions agree that he lived ninety-five years, but the various dates given for his birth range as far back as 1384. The year 1480, as given by the ascetic Kishordas, is more in keeping with other criteria, though even this date may be at least two decades too early.[104] The Goswamis claim that he was born at a village near Aligarh called Haridaspur and that his father came from the area of Multan; the ascetics say that he was born in Rajpur, a settlement on the edge of Vrindaban - but there is no substantial evidence to support either of these claims.

He may have been initiated into the Nimbark Sampraday, but in practice he followed his own path of devotion and lived as an ascetic in a grove in Vrindaban called Nidhiban.[105] It was here that an image of Krishna appeared miraculously before him, to which he gave the name 'Kunjbihari'. This deity, which later became known as 'Banke Bihari' (an epithet used in poems of two disciples named Bithal Vipul and Biharindas), was enshrined in Nidhiban, where it remained at least until the reign of Aurangzeb.

102 Bhagwat Mudit, pp.1 ff., Priyadas, *kavitt* 419.

103 See *Nijmat siddhānt* by Kishordas, VDA 3, 17, 21-22, 38-9., S. B. Goswami 1966, Gopal Datt, P. Mital 1968, pp.434 ff., Haynes, and Upadhyay (who effectively refutes the myths that have arisen about Haridas).

104 See Datt, pp.112-16 & 150, who favours 1480. Upadhyay, after weighing all the evidence, concludes that he must have been born around 1508. On his place of birth see Datt, pp.67-8.

105 Kishordas states that Swami Haridas and all the Acharyas who succeeded him belonged to the Nimbark Sampraday, a claim convincingly supported by Upadhyay, pp.82-98.

11 Shribhatt

The most prominent figure in the Nimbark Sampraday at this time was Shribhatt, a Gaur brahmin of Mathura. He succeeded Keshav Kashmiri as Acharya of the establishment at Dhruv Ghat,[106] which implies that he flourished in the middle of the sixteenth century. He has left a work entitled *Yugal śatak*, referred to by followers of the Nimbark Sampraday as *Ādivāṇī* because it is their earliest text written in the Braj dialect and the first to emphasize contemplation of the love-play of Krishna and Radha and emulation of the Sakhis.[107] The temple at Dhruv Tila is still in the custody of his descendants and his *samādhi* is thought be one of those beside that of Keshav Kashmiri at Narad Tila.

12 Akbar and his Hindu associates

During the reign of Akbar[108] circumstances became more conducive to further expansion of Hindu activity in and around Mathura. He made Agra his capital and from 1565 onwards began to rebuild and enlarge the Red Fort there. Between 1569 and 1585 he held court at Fatehpur Sikri, a new citadel thirty-five kilometres west of the city. In the years 1574-75 his forces conquered Bihar and Bengal, but they were little more than nominally part of his empire, since the Afghans and other noble families residing there managed to remain semi-independent in many areas. He admitted more Hindu nobles and other prominent figures into his service than any previous Muslim ruler and allowed them to play a larger role in the government. Most of those appointed were Rajputs, an indication that Akbar needed their support and was concerned to consolidate his hold over the chiefs who had submitted to his rule.[109] With few exceptions a career in higher service was restricted to Rajputs, and some of those who became influential were able to contribute towards the restoration of Hindu pilgrimage sites in Braj and elsewhere. Akbar conferred grants of land and other privileges upon Hindu religious leaders, banned consumption of beef, and himself forswore garlic, onions, and the wearing of a beard.[110] Abu'l Fazl's list of the singers at Akbar's court includes some Hindu names; several Hindu poets are also said to have received his patronage, though their treatment of Krishna themes was more amatory than devotional.[111]

Apart from having family ties with Hindus, Akbar appears to have been

106 For further information see Datt, pp.293-5, P. Mital 1968, pp.197-9, intro. by Brajvallabhsharan to *Yugal śatak*, N. Sharma, pp.36 ff.

107 Some copies end with a couplet giving the date of composition as 1395, which some have interpreted as an alteration for an original date of 1595.

108 For a general account of Akbar's reign see V. A. Smith 1902 and A. L. Srivastava.

109 Moreland 1962, pp.65-6. See Samsam-ud-daulah for biographical details of Hindu officers in Mughal service from the 16th to 18th centuries.

110 AA vol.1 p.202.

111 See McGregor 1984, pp.119 ff., for these poets and various editions and studies of their life and works.

genuinely interested in all religions. From 1575 diverse religious leaders and scholars, including some Jesuits from Goa, were invited to Fatehpur Sikri to put forward their beliefs and doctrines. Ten years later Akbar launched his own eclectic faith (*dīn-i-ilāhī*), but it never became popular. In 1563 he lifted the tax that had been imposed on all Hindus who visited places of pilgrimage; in the following year he repealed the *jizyah*, a poll-tax that had been levied on non-Muslim subjects.[112] Abu'l Fazl tells us that while Akbar was on a tiger hunt in the neighbourhood of Mathura it was brought to his notice that it was the custom to levy pilgrimage tax (*karma*) in proportion to the rank and wealth of the pilgrim. Akbar remitted these taxes throughout his dominions, despite the vast amount of revenue they brought in.[113] Hindu traditions claim that he met some of the leading Vaishnavas of Braj, but there is no confirmation of such encounters in non-Hindu sources.[114] Many new temples and other buildings were erected in Braj, using the same red sandstone that was employed for the forts and palaces at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri and blending Hindu and Musim elements in their largely abstract decorative carving. A visitor to Mathura was Father Monserrate, one of the Jesuits present at Akbar's court in the years 1580-82. He says that temples of Vishnu (i.e. Krishna), 'elegantly built in the pyramidal style', were to be found in many places in the neighbourhood, built at sites where he was fabled to have performed some action. Noting the presence of ruins of earlier buildings, he says that 'only one Hindu temple is left out of many; for the Musalmans have completely destroyed all except the pyramids. Huge crowds of pilgrims come from all over India to this temple, which is situated on the high bank of the Jomanis'.[115]

It was not only Vaishnavas who were able to benefit from the more tolerant climate; Jain traders were also able to contribute to the restoration of their shrines in Braj.[116] However, the financial benefits that accrued to merchants and zamindars (landowners) during this period did not filter down to the oppressed peasantry. At no time in the Mughal period was there any real improvement in the economic situation of the masses. The highly organized administration was not designed to stimulate production or a more equitable distribution of income, but served to perpetuate the tradition of administrative exploitation that dominated and sterilized the energies of the population.[117] Throughout the Mughal empire it was customary to grant land to zamindars and appoint a military commander (*fauzdār*) to hold them in check and ensure that they did not withhold revenue. So long as they rendered revenue and did not clash with the government, the zamindars

112 AA vol.1 p.198, AN vol.2 pp.316-7. For definition and explanation of the *jizyah* see Roy Choudhury, pp.298-310. For these taxes and more detail on Akbar's religious policy see Sri Ram Sharma.

113 AN vol.2. pp.294-5.

114 He is said to have gone to Braj to meet Swami Haridas, Jiv Goswami, and Surdas, cf. Vajpeyi 1954, p.153, Kishordas vol.1, VDA 21, *Sūrdās kī vārtā* in AV and 84V, P. Mital 1949, pp.128 & 139, and V. A. Smith 1902, p.445

115 Monserrate, pp.90-3.

116 Among them were Sahu Todar from Aligarh district, Kavivar Dayakushal, and Karmachand, a minister from the state of Bikaner, cf. Vajpeyi 1954, p.61, P. Mital 1966, pt.2 pp.175 & 182, and 1968, pp.488-9.

117 See Moreland 1962.

were left to their own devices. Many of them caused trouble and were quick to take advantage of any signs of weakness on the part of the government.

In 1580 the area round Mathura became part of the *ṣūba* of Agra and was divided into the *sarkārs* of Agra, Koil (Aligarh), and Sahar, each of which was divided into smaller administrative units called *mahal* (later *parganah*).[118] This system, with some readjustment of the smaller divisions, lasted throughout the Mughal period. A brick fort at Mahaban was built as a station for two hundred cavalry and two thousand infantry, and a smaller garrison was maintained at Maholi.[119] In the 1580's Shaikh Ibrahim was appointed overseer (*kaṛorī*) at Mahaban and his men are said to have rooted out theft and robbery from the region.[120] If this was the case, it was to be only a temporary respite; the peasants around Agra remained recalcitrant throughout the Mughal period. Abu'l Fazl says that they were notorious for their rebelliousness and courage, and records that Akbar once personally led an attack on a village.[121] The Mughal empire basically consisted of a network of trade routes and market towns that allowed for the collection of revenue, even though the hinterlands were rarely under firm control. The empire had no stable frontiers and the emperors were dependent on the loyalty of their feudatories and the landowners.

The most prominent Rajputs to join forces with Akbar were the Kachhwaha rulers of Amber. Bihar Mal (1548-74) presented himself before Akbar in the first year of his reign; his daughter was married to Akbar, and his son Bhagwandas (1574-89) also entered his service. A granddaughter of Bhagwandas was married to Prince Salim (Jahangir) and gave birth to Prince Khusrau; his younger (or adopted) son Man Singh (b.1530) was Raja of Amber from 1589 to 1614 and rose to become the highest ranking officer in the Mughal empire.[122] He was governor successively of the districts along the Indus, Kabul, and Bihar, and later annexed Bengal and Orissa. In 1588 he was appointed governor of Bengal and remained in charge of the eastern provinces for the next twenty years.

The Kachhwahas made some important contributions to the development of Braj as a religious centre. Bihar Mal's predecessor, Ratan Singh (1537-48) had a 'ten-pillared palace' built in Mathura at Vishram Ghat.[123] Bhagwandas, besides erecting a tower beside the Yamuna to commemorate his mother's *satī* (viz. the Sati Burj), is also credited with the building of the temple of Haridev at Govardhan. Man Singh founded a magnificent temple in Vrindaban for Govind Dev, the deity that had been worshipped by Rup Goswami. He is named in an inscription on the

118 Drake Brockman 1911, p.201, Vajpeyi 1954, p.171. See AA vol.3 pp.194-207, for details of revenues, land ownership, irrigation, and garrisons in Mathura district.

119 AA vol.2 p.194.

120 Rizvi, p.338.

121 AA vol.2 p.163, vol.3 p.231.

122 For details of these Kachhwahas see AA vol.1 pp.347-8, 353, 361-3, and J. Sarkar 1984, chs.IV-VII. The first part of Bihar Mal(1)'s name also occurs as 'Bhār' or 'Bahār'; Bhagwandas is sometimes referred to as Bhagwantdas. For a fuller biography of Man Singh see R. N. Prasad, esp. ch.XI for places that he built or which are named after him. A visit of his to Braj is described in the *vārtā* of Kumbhandas, AV pp.236 ff. (also in 84V).

123 A. K. Roy, p.227.

temple that gives the year of its construction as 1590. He patronized different Hindu sects, but was particularly sympathetic to the Gaudiya Sampraday, perhaps as a result of his long period of residence in eastern India, though it is said that his father Bhagwandas had been initiated by Ramray, a member of the sect.[124]

Another influential Hindu courtier was Todar Mal (d. 1589), who held the post of finance minister.[125] He was also a patron of the Gaudiya Sampraday and is believed to have taken initiation from Raghunath Bhatt.[126] It is recorded that, on behalf of Jiv Goswami, he persuaded Akbar to give official recognition to the custodians of the temples of Govind Dev and Madanmohan in Vrindaban.[127] He is also said to have given funds to Narayan Bhatt for the construction of a temple dedicated to Balarama at Unchagaon and for the restoration of the other sacred places he had rediscovered.[128]

The foundation of the temple of Gopinath in Vrindaban is accredited to Raysal Darbari, a chief of the Shekhawat branch of the Kachhwahas, who fought for Akbar and assisted Man Singh on several of his campaigns.[129] He had inherited the fiefdom of Lambhi, but was later granted more districts by Akbar and established himself at Khandela, which duly became the principle town of the Shekhawat confederation. He was in Akbar's service for many years and died at an advanced age during the reign of Jahangir. Up to modern times descendants of Raysal remained feudatories of the rulers of Jaipur and continued to revere Gopinath as their main deity. In Khandela and other towns in Shekhawati the main Krishna temples are dedicated to Gopinath. The Naunkaran or Nunkaran who built the temple of Jugal Kishor near Keshi Ghat may have been his elder brother, who had inherited Amritsar and surrounding towns and also served with Akbar's forces.[130]

13 Vitthalnath's expansion of the Pushtimarg

Vitthalnath, after deciding to settle permanently in Braj, proceeded to develop a centre for his following there. Apart from being closer to the seat of power in Agra and somewhat more accessible for his disciples in western India, its attraction as a place of pilgrimage must have been considerably enhanced by the propagation of devotion inspired by Krishna's pastoral adventures. The general increase in trade, especially through ports on the west coast, augmented the wealth and mobility of

124 Bansal, pp.262 ff. For Ramray see above §7.
125 AA vol.1 pp.376-9, AN vol.3 p.861.
126 Nityanand, p.28.
127 Wright & Mukherjee, p.315, with reference to a document at the Vrindaban Research Institute (ser.9 acc.1).
128 NBC 3.26-33. Führer, p.102, says that Todar Mal founded a temple of Gopinath at Khaira. There may be some confusion here with another Narayan Bhatt, the compiler of *Tristhalīsetu*, who was provided with money by Todar Mal for the reconstruction of the Vishweshwar temple at Varanasi in 1585 (see Eck, p.134).
129 See AA vol.1 p.462, Tod, vol.3 pp.1380-85, K. C. Jain, pp.263-4.
130 Growse, p.254, says that the construction of the temple is referred to the year 1627. AA vol.1 p.554, refers to him as Lon Karan.

the trading community. After Akbar's annexation of Gujarat in 1573 the province was ruled through local sovereigns and remained prosperous and untroubled during almost the whole of the seventeenth century.[131] It has been suggested that unrest in the eastern districts also had some bearing on Vitthalnath's decision to leave Adail.[132]

It is not certain exactly when he began to make his home at Gokul. It seems that for a while he lived at a house in Mathura called Satghara, said to be so named because he resided there with his seven (*sāt*) sons. Once, while he was on a visit to Gujarat, his eldest son took Shrinathji to Satghara for the Holi celebrations.[133] This incident is also referred to by Krishnadas Kaviraj, who says that Rup Goswami, then old and infirm, went with several followers to Mathura to see 'Gopal' in 'the house of Vitthaleshwar'.[134] He explains that the deity had caused itself to be taken there for a month by instilling its custodians with the fear that Govardhan would be attacked by Muslims. In Pushtimarg sources this is said to have taken place in 1566 or 1576, of which the earlier date seems more likely, though even that seems a little late if the deity really was visited by Rup Goswami.

By about 1570 Vitthalnath had begun to build temples at Gokul for various deities that were in his possession.[135] His influence at court was such that in 1577 he secured a firman from Akbar proclaiming his right to live in peace and security at Gokul without any demands being made on him, his family, and retainers. Two firmans issued in 1581 allowed him to graze cattle; another in 1593 acknowledged his purchase of land at Jatipura and the construction of gardens, cowsheds, workshops, and other buildings related to activities for the temple of Shrinathji, and ordered that the settlement or plot (*mauẓa*ᶜ) be granted tax-free (*mū'āf*) to Vitthalnath and his descendants. Another firman issued in the same year confirmed that the *mauẓa*ᶜ of Gokul and Guzar Ghat in Mahaban parganah were to be entrusted tax-free to Vitthalnath in perpetuity in order to pay for temple expenses. More firmans were issued after Vitthalnath's death conferring these rights upon his descendants.[136] Two unattested claims are that the large diamond embedded in the chin of Shrinathji was presented by Akbar after a visit he made to the temple, and that a wife of his named 'Taj Bibi' was initiated by Vitthalnath.[137]

Among the many aristocrats whom Vitthalnath is supposed to have initiated was Durgawati, who ruled the province of Gondwana from her capital of Garha, on the

131 Thoothi, pp.21-2.

132 K. Shastri, ch.3 p.97, Barz, p.54.

133 Caturbhujdas, *Khaṭ ṛtu vārtā* p.51, SPV pp.33-4, and Vitthalnath Bhatt, 8.51-5. The first two sources give the date as 1566, the latter as 1576.

134 CC 2.18.40-8.

135 Chaturbhujdas, *Khaṭ ṛtu vārtā* p.51, says that he built a *havelī* at Gokul in 1570. *Vallabhkul ko prāgaṭya* says that he settled there in 1564, Growse, p.284, gives the date as 1565, P. Mital 1968, p.257, as 1570, D. D. Gupta, p.77, as 1571, and Barz, p. 54, as 1572.

136 For text and translation of these documents see Jhaveri, nos.1-5. The construction of a cowshed for the temple of Shrinathji is referred to in SPV, p.30. *Vallabhkul ko prāgaṭya*, p.60, says that he built a 'bejewelled sleeping chamber' for Shrinathji in 1573.

137 The story of Taj Bibi is in SPV, p.36, and *Bhāvsindhu kī vārtā*, pp.292 ff. The diamond legend is mentioned by Maduro, p.28.

bank of the Narmada. Legendary for her beauty and heroism, she killed herself rather than face capture when Garha fell to Mughal forces in 1563.[138] Pushtimarg sources say that in the same year she arranged Vitthalnath's second marriage, and that she also granted him a large number of villages, and built the Satghara residence for him.[139] He is also said to have initiated Askaran, a brother of Bihar Mal, who was the ruler of Narwar and also in Akbar's service.[140] The names of other celebrated and less well-known princes and courtiers occur in the *vārtā*, but even though he probably sought favour with some of them, it seems unlikely that they all became his disciples.

Whereas his father had been more concerned with theology, Vitthalnath was more responsible for instituting the cult. He did much to embellish the temple ritual, with the result that Pushtimarg deities are provided with a more extensive and varied wardrobe and are treated to a more sophisticated cuisine than those of other sects.[141] In 1588, shortly before the birth of his sixth son Yadunath, he organized the first *chappan bhog* feast at Govardhan. He also brought the deities worshipped by members of his family together for celebrations in which they were offered elaborate feasts - a tradition that was to be observed periodically by his descendants, even after the deities were taken away from Braj.[142] The grand and luxurious manner in which the deities are worshipped is in harmony with the Pushtimarg's rejection of asceticism and celibacy and its offering to householders a religion in which they can enjoy their prosperity and indulge in the good things of life, provided they first make a token dedication of them to Krishna. It allowed lower status groups and those engaged in dubious businesses to achieve social status and provided, in the words of David Pocock, 'an arena in which the wealthy merchant classes could display their wealth and earn at once distinction and merit'.[143]

As well as elaborating the worship and increasing the membership of the Pushtimarg, Vitthalnath also took steps to ensure that control of the sect would remain within the family. Six sons were born to him by his first wife between 1540 and 1558, and a seventh by his second wife in 1571.[144] A year or two before his

138 AN vol.2 pp.324-41, Elliot & Dowson, vol.5 pp.169 (*Tārīkẖ-i-Alfī*, which gives the date as 1560) & 288, vol.6 pp.30-4, 118-121.

139 See her *vārtā* in 252V, pp.345-6, *Bhāvsindhu kī vārtā*, pp.254-67, and Vitthalnath Bhatt, 5.114.

140 See AA vol.1 p.509. His inititiation is mentioned by Vitthalnath Bhatt, 7.36, and in 252V (see also n.417 below), pp.139-56, but Nabhadas, *chappay* 174, says that he was a disciple of a Rama devotee named Kilhaji (see §19 below), and neither he nor Priyadas (cf. *kavitt* 602-4) make any reference to his having been associated with the Pushtimarg.

141 His elaboration of worhip is referred to in SPV, pp.29 ff., and the *vārtā* of Krishnadas (AV, pp.367-71, also in 84V).

142 The *chappan bhog* is mentioned by Vitthalnath Bhatt, 7.86-88. Reunions of the deities, the last of which was held in 1966, are mentioned by K. Shastri, ch.7 p.148 & 278-88, ch.5 pp.165-6, ch.8 p.61, P. Vairagi, pp.18-29, and Jindel, pp.73-4.

143 Pocock, p.117.

144 Their dates of birth are given in *Vallabhkul ko prāgaṭya*, pp.57-8, Dwarkeshji, pp.16-18, Vitthalnath Bhatt, 7.29, 40, 64, 74, 79 & 87, 8.19.

death, which occurred in 1585, he presented each of his sons with a deity, saying that they should worship them independently in their houses.[145] He thus established seven branches of the Pushtimarg that have become known as Gaddis (literally 'cushions/seats', also called *pīṭh* or *ghar*) and have been maintained by his descendants ever since. It became the custom that only agnatic descendants of Vitthalnath could become leaders of the Pushtimarg and initiate followers with the *brahmasambandh mantra* that had been revealed to Vallabha at Gokul. The only exception to this rule was made for a branch of the Pushtimarg that became known as the 'Eighth Gaddi'. This was established by Shri Lalji, an orphaned child of two disciples from Sind, who grew up as an adopted son of Vitthalnath. Like the seven sons, he was presented with a deity by Vitthalnath and was told to take it to Sind and cater for the members of the Pushtimarg who lived in the Indus region. He was the only person outside the family who was entitled to impart the *brahmasambandh*, but it became a requirement that his descendants should first be initiated by a descendant of Vitthalnath in order to be vested with the authority to initiate their own disciples.[146]

Goswami families in other Krishna sects observe the rule of primogeniture in the appointment of leading gurus, but the Pushtimarg is notable for the degree to which the concept of a spiritually qualified family was developed, and is exceptional in having no parallel ascetic order in which gurus are elected or designated from among the community of devotees on the basis of merit or suitability. Veneration of the dynasty had already begun by the late sixteenth century. Gopaldas, a Gujarati disciple of Vitthalnath, wrote a poem extolling the family of Vallabha, including the seven sons of Vitthalnath.[147] The myth arose that Vitthal or Vithoba, the deity at Pandharpur in Maharashtra, had told Vallabha that he should find a wife because he wished to become incarnate as his son.[148] Descendants of Vitthalnath came to be regarded as inheritors of this divine nature, and thus as embodiments of Krishna himself. As such they are treated with the same degree of reverence accorded to a temple deity. In accordance with the regal manner in which deities are treated, descendants of Vitthalnath are referred to by the title 'Maharaj', a term appropriate to their pontifical life-style. The buildings where they resided and housed their deities are referred to as *havelī*, a term used for the mansions of nobles and wealthy merchants upon which they are modelled. The implication was that the *havelī* was the courtly residence of a deity and of the descendant of Vitthalnath who had custody of it and was regarded as its representative. Some portraits of Vitthalnath show him wearing the Mughal court dress that was worn only by people of high

145 The distribution of the deities probably took place in 1583, cf. P. Mital 1968, p.276, Entwistle 1983/1, p.44. Vitthalnath Bhatt, 8.107-8, gives the date as 1584, and K. Shastri, ch.3 p.108, as 1578. The year of Vitthalnath's death is given as 1585 in all sectarian sources, except Vitthalnath Bhatt, 8.168 ff., who implies that he died in the spring following the Annakut festival held for the seven deities in 1587.

146 See the *vārtā* of Tulsidas (Shri Lalji) in 252V, pp.252-3, and Entwistle 1983/1, pt.II, for an account of the origins and subsequent history of the Eighth Gaddi, the main temple of which was at Dera Ghazi Khan.

147 Gopaldas, *Vallabhākhyān* 9.

148 Ibid., 2.23-4, Vitthalnath Bhatt, 5.81-6, *Nijvārtā*, pp.58-60.

status - a privilege that is supposed to have been granted to him by Akbar.[149]

The seven deities that Vitthalnath gave to his sons were worshipped in separate *havelī* temples at Gokul. They are referred to collectively as *sapt svarūp* and are said to be of supernatural origin, but the stories told about them imply that they were either acquired by Vallabha through his wife and mother, or were donated by disciples or commissioned from them by Vallabha or Vitthalnath.[150] The eldest son Giridhar was given a deity called Mathuresh, Mathuranath, or Mathuradhish, which is said to have been discovered by Vallabha near the Yamuna. He entrusted it to a disciple whose family eventually gave it to Vitthalnath.[151] The second son, Govindray, was given a deity called Vitthalesh or Vitthalnath, which had been discovered at Chunar by a *sādhu* who worshipped it for a while and then presented it to Vallabha.[152] A deity called Dwarkadhish or Dwarkanath was given to the third son, Balkrishna, whose descendants composed a legend telling how it was worshipped by a succession of sages and other mythological characters until it found its way into the hands of Vallabha.[153] A deity called Gokulnath, said to have been worshipped by the family of Vallabha's wife,[154] was given to the fourth son, who was also called Gokulnath. The fifth son, Raghunath, was given Gokulchandrama, a deity that had been discovered by a *kṣatrāṇī* at Brahmand Ghat and was entrusted by Vallabha to another devotee who lived at Mahaban. The same woman found another image called Navanitapriy at the same place and gave it to Vallabha. He passed it on to a devotee from Agra, who eventually gave it to Vitthalnath.[155] Yadunath, the sixth son, received a deity called Balkrishna, which had been found in Karnavedh Kup at Gokul, and the youngest son, Ghanshyam, was given Madanmohan, a deity which Vallabha had inherited from ancestors on his mother's side.[156] The descendants of the eldest son, who have also inherited custody of Shrinathji and Navanitapriy, are regarded as the most senior Goswamis of the Pushtimarg. The seven deities remained in their respective temples at Gokul until the latter part of the seventeenth century.

There are some later Pushtimarg texts that purport to describe circumambulations of Braj led by Vitthalnath in 1543, 1567 and/or 1571. Chaturbhujdas says that he did the eighty-four *kos* circumambulation after the birth of his seventh son in 1551.[157] As evidence that he performed the pilgrimage some local scholars quote

149 K. Shastri, ch.3 p.104.

150 See Dwarkeshji's *Bhāv bhāvnā*, pp.33-47, for description of these images and their *bhāvnā*.

151 See the *bhāv prakāś* of the *vārtā* of Padmanabhadas, 84V no.4, p. 39.

152 P. Vairagi, p.86.

153 Brajbhushan, pp.2-46.

154 *Nijvārtā*, p.65.

155 See the *vārtā* of Gajjan Dhavan, Narayandas Brahmachari, and *Mahāban kī ek kṣātraṇī*, 84V nos. 13-15, pp.107-121. Navanitapriy is now enshrined with Shrinathji at Nathdwara.

156 Vitthalnath Bhatt, 5.110 & 8.113, *Nijvārtā*, p.65.

157 *Khaṭ ṛtu vārtā*, pp.51-2. For other texts describing his pilgrimages see below §§6.21-3.

from a *vṛttipatra* dated 1543, written by Vitthalnath, in which he states that his pilgrimage priest was Ujagar Sharma.[158]

14 The Ashtachhap poets

Vitthalnath is supposed to have increased the importance of music in the temples by appointing eight poets to sing their lyrics before the deities. They are now famous as the Ashtachhap. or 'Eight Seals', the 'seals' being the names used in the last couplet of the poems to identify them as the author. Four of them, Surdas, Paramanandadas, Kumbhandas, and Krishnadas, are said to have been disciples of Vallabha, and the others, Chaturbhujdas, Nandadas, Chhitswami, and Govindswami, to have been disciples of Vitthalnath.[159] As a group of eight they correspond to other significant octads, such as the eight companions of Krishna, the eight Sakhis of Radha, the eight periods of daily worship (*aṣṭayām sevā*), the eight Gaddis of the Pushtimarg, and the eight syllables of the *mantra* used for primary initiation into the sect.[160] Apart from compilations of the works of each individual poet there are also anthologies in which verses attributed to all eight of them are arranged thematically for performance in Pushtimarg temples. It remains uncertain whether Vitthalnath himself was responsible for forming the octad. The earliest source mentioning the eight poets as disciples of Vallabha and Vitthainath is a manuscript of their *vārtā* dated 1640.[161]

The Pushtimarg tradition does not find much confirmation in non-sectarian sources. All that Nabhadas tells us is that Krishnadas was a disciple of Vallabha and servant of Shrinathji. Priyadas associates Krishnadas with Surdas and, like the *vārtā* legend, says he died when he fell into a well. The only other confirmation of Pushtimarg tradition by Priyadas is a mention of Vitthalnath and Shrinathji in connection with Govindswami.[162] The three most famous of the Ashtachhap

158 P. Mital 1966, pt.1 p.95, D. Parikh in Dwivedi (ed.) 1972, pp.304-5. He is referred to as 'Ujagar Chaube' in accounts of the pilgrimage. The document is in the possession of Ujagar's descendents, Chaubes who still perform rites for the Goswamis leading the *barī yātrā*. See Lynch's article on *mastrām* for legends current among the Chaubes of how Ujagar instituted the *jajmānī* system and consolidated their relationship with the Pushtimarg.

159 Their *vārtā* comprise AV, also included as the last four *vārtā* in 84V (see Barz for translation) and the first four in 252V. For studies of the poets and their relationship to the Pushtimarg see P. Mital 1949 and D. D. Gupta. See also comments by McGregor 1984, pp.83-88.

160 Viz. *śrī kṛṣṇa śaraṇaṃ mama*. See P. Mital 1968, pp.270-1, for tabulation of the dates of birth and death of the eight poets, the Sakhas and Sakhis with whom they are identified, the period of the day when they sang, their favourite themes, and the places around Govardhan associated with them.

161 Hawley 1984, p.7, expresses doubts about this date and cites Brajeshwar Varma's *Sūr mīmāṃsā*, where it is suggested that the manuscript bears a forged date. The date is accepted by K. Shastri, who used the manuscript for his edition of AV, giving variants from another ms. dated 1695.

162 Nabhadas, *chappay* 81, Priyadas, *kavitt* 346-7, 410-14.

poets, Surdas, Paramanandadas, and Nandadas, are the ones whose association with the Pushtimarg is most tenuous, though this does not exclude the possibility that they sang at the temple of Shrinathji at one time or another. Surdas, the most famous devotional poet in the Braj language, may possibly be identified with one of the singers at Akbar's court listed by Abu'l Fazl, but there can be little doubt that the legend of his having been a disciple of Vallabha and a singer in the service of Shrinathji is a fabrication.[163] There is somewhat more likelihood that Nandadas was initiated by Vallabha, but the *vārtā* has undoubtedly exaggerated his role in the Pushtimarg.[164] A closer association with the Pushtimarg and the cult of Shrinathji is more probable in the case of the remaining five, and considerably minor, poets. Krishnadas was the Gujarati manager of the temple whose role in the development of the worship of Shrinathji has already been mentioned (above §8). Kumbhandas, said to have been ten years older than Vallabha, was a farmer from the village of Jamnauta and the father of Chaturbhujdas. Chhitswami is described as a Chaturvedi (Chaube) brahmin who lived at Punchhari. Before his conversion he is said to have been a villain (*gũḍā*), the leader of a group of delinquent Chaubes who used to sit on Vishram Ghat and make fun of people.[165]

15 Some Gaudiya devotees of the late sixteenth century

After the death of his uncles, Jiv Goswami became the leading authority of the Gaudiya Sampraday in Braj and inherited custodianship of the temples founded by Sanatan, Rup, and Raghunthdas. In 1588 he bought a plot of land from a certain Alikhan Chaudhari on which he built a temple for his deity of Radhadamodar.[166] In 1606 he drew up a testamentary document, witnessed by Krishnadas Kaviraj and other leading Gaudiya devotees, which gave provisions for the succession to the custody of the temples, deities, and manuscripts. The worship and all necessary accoutrements were entrusted to one Shrivilasdas, who was given the right to pass them on to a devotee named Krishnadas. The latter was recognized as custodian by Shah Jahan in 1646, and later documents show that the property remained with his descendants for at least a century.[167]

At about the same time that work was in progress on the temple of Govind Dev, the deity worshipped by Rup Goswami, another temple in red sandstone was built for Madanmohan on the Dwadashaditya mound, where Sanatan is believed to have installed it for worship. The money for its construction is said to have been provided

163 Vaudeville 1971, intro. §III, McGregor 1984, pp.76-80. See Hawley 1984 for a comprehensive account of Surdas and a survey of relevant sources and opinions.

164 Available biographical details are discussed by McGregor, intro. to Nanddas, pp.29-38.

165 AV, p.593 (*Chītsvāmī kī vārtā*).

166 Wright & Mukherjee, p.302. His name is given in the document as 'Āliṣā' - he may be the Alikhan Pathan of Pushtimarg sources.

167 See Wright & Mukherjee for a transcription of Jiv's testament and references to other relevant documents. Priyadas, *kavitt* 381, refers to a Krishnadas 'Panditju', who was entrusted with the worship of Govind Dev.

as a thanksgiving by a merchant from Multan, called Ramdas Kapur Khatri, after the deity had helped to free a boat loaded with salt that had run aground on a sandbank in the Yamuna. Sanatan entrusted the service of Madanmohan to his disciple Krishnadas Brahmachari, and until the eighteenth century it remained in the custody of a succession of Bengali ascetics.[168] A notable devotee of the deity and a disciple of Sanatan was the poet Surdas Madanmohan. Priyadas tells us that he was a revenue officer at Sandila (near Lucknow), but he seems to have left government service and settled in Vrindaban during the reign of Akbar.[169] He is commemorated by a red sandstone *samādhi* beneath the mound on which the temple stands.

The writings of the Six Goswamis were not immediately recognized as authoritative by their fellow devotees in eastern India. Jiv Goswami is said to have entrusted this task to three devotees named Shrinivas, Shyamanand, and Narottamdas. Shrinivas probably arrived in Vrindaban some time between 1560 and 1570, took initiation from Gopal Bhatt, and returned to Bengal in about 1580 with copies of the works of the Six Goswamis, accompanied by Shyamanand and Narottamdas.[170] Narottamdas is said to have been initiated by Loknath, which implies that he had arrived in Braj many years before.[171] On his return to Bengal he founded a temple in 1583 at his native village of Kheturi, where his father had been local Raja. After his death in 1611 his ashes were brought to Vrindaban and interred in a *samādhi* next to that of Loknath.[172] Shyamanand, who studied with Jiv Goswami in Vrindaban, returned to the east, where he propagated the Gaudiya Sampraday in his native Midnapur and in Orissa.[173] Eventually his followers established a temple in Vrindaban dedicated to Shyamsundar.

Although Vrindaban and Radhakund became the main centres of the Gaudiya Sampraday in Braj, Narayan Bhatt chose to settle at Unchagaon, where he built a temple of Balarama. He also founded temples dedicated to Lariliji (Radha) at Barsana and to Radharaman at Sanket.[174] He wrote a work entitled *Premāṅkura* which formed the basis for the series of re-enactments called *būṛhī līlā* that are

168 Priyadas, ibid. See P. Thakur for the origin myth and (pp.97-9) for the succession of custodians.

169 Priyadas, *kavitt* 498-502, see also introductions to editions of Surdas Madanmohan's poems by P. Mital and Krishnadas Baba.

170 This is described in *Prem vilās* of Nityanandadas, composed in the mid-17th century, and in BRat 6-7. For further details of Shrinivas see R. Chakravarti 1985, pp.208-19.

171 His biography is given in *Narottam vilās* by Naraharidas. See also S. K. Ghos, who bases his account mainly on *Prem vilās* and *Anurāgavallī*, and R. Chakravarti 1985, ch.XIV, referring to him as 'Narottama Datta'.

172 P. Mital 1962, p.56.

173 See *Rasik maṅgal* of Gopijanvallabhdas, the later *Rasik vilās* of Sadhucharan, and R. Chakravarti 1985, ch.XV.

174 NBC 2. 81-157, 3.34-42 & VOC (see below §6.14). Krishnadas Baba, in his introductions to NBC and VOC, also credits him with establishing other shrines in Braj, including those of Gopinath at Khaira, Praudhanath at Shekhsai, Chaturbhuj at Paintha, and Adibadri.

performed annually in and around Barsana.[175] After his death the service of the deities at Barsana and Unchagaon was shared by his son Damodar and a disciple named Narayandas Shrotri, whose descendants are still in charge of the temples.[176] His biographer tells us that he established the *rās līlā* tradition and fixed the dates and places of the performances, created the Braj pilgrimage circuit (as described in *Vrajabhaktivilāsa*), and composed fifty-works at Unchagaon, in addition to the seven he had previously written at Radhakund.[177]

16 The Radhavallabh Sampraday

After the death of Hit Harivansh his eldest son Vanchandra (1528-1608) took over the leadership of his following. Three other sons named Krishnachandra (also referred to as Krishnadas or Krishnanand), Gopinath, and Mohanchandra also appear to have played a part in the development of the following into what was to become known as the Radhavallabh Sampraday.[178] Krishnachandra is remembered for a poetic work in Sanskrit called *Karṇānanda*, which deals primarily with Radha.[179] Vanchandra's most significant contribution was the building of a temple for the deity of Radhavallabh, for which funds were provided by a disciple of Gopinath named Sundardas Bhatnagar. According to Bhagwat Mudit he was a Kayasth who served as *dīwān* for Abdurrahim Khankhana (1556-1627), the son of Akbar's guardian, who, besides being a poet, was a general, statesman, and patron of other poets.[180] Legend has it that Man Singh and another officer in the service of Akbar wanted to provide a temple, but they were put off by a prophesy that the builder would die within a year of its completion. This did not deter Sundardas, who duly died a year after the installation of the deity and was commemorated by a *samādhi* constructed by Vanchandra near the gateway to the temple.

It is not clear exactly when the temple of Radhavallabh was built, but Wilson noted an inscription over the gateway, now no longer extant, that was dated 1585, implying that it was constructed at about the same time as the temple of Govind Dev.[181] The second son of Vanchandra, called Radhavallabhdas (b. 1553), frequented Man Sarovar, a pool that is believed to have been a favourite spot of his grandfather. A disciple of his from Lohban, named Trilokswami, obtained some land beside Man Sarovar and enshrined a Krishna deity there called Hit Vallabh.

175 Bansal, p.440.

176 NBC 3.44-96. Bansal, pp.311-12, gives the names of descendants from Narayan Bhatt down to Subal Shyam, fl. c.1700.

177 NBC 3.34-42.

178 P. Mital 1968, pp.366, 393.

179 Dated 1578, ed. N. S. Shukla, Pondicherry 1971. Lalitacharan Goswami, p.574, gives his date of birth as 1529.

180 Bhagwat Mudit, pp.44-8 (Sundardas Bhatnagar), McGregor, p. 121-2 (Abdurrahim Khankhana).

181 Growse, p.202, who also refers to another inscription on one of the front pillars dated 1626. See also comments on the date of the temple by Lalitaprasad Purohit in his introduction to Bhagwat Mudit, pp.16-18.

The establishment became known as Radhavallabh Nirmohi Akhara and is still in the custody of descendants of Radhavallabhdas.[182]

Hit Harivansh, Swami Haridas, and another poet called Hariram Vyas are believed to have been close friends and are referred to collectively as the 'Three Haris' (*hari trayī*). Hariram Vyas, the youngest of them, is said to have been initiated by Hit Harivansh at the age of forty-two and to have spent the latter part of his life at Vrindaban, where he founded a temple dedicated to Jugal Kishor.[183] Before then he had lived at Orchha, which some say was his place of birth, though the town was not founded until 1531. In some of his poems he refers to Madhukar Shah, the ruler of Orchha from 1554-92, and some claim that he acted as the king's guru. His verses cover a wide range of topics, some of them referring to contemporary developments in Vrindaban. In one poem he expresses his regret at the passing of Swami Haridas, Hit Harivansh, Rup, Sanatan, and Paramanandadas. Apart from a desire to benefit from the company of fellow devotees, he may also have been motivated to spend his later years at Vrindaban because of disappointment with his family, especially one of his sons. He complains that they resorted to Shakta worship, which he severely criticized.[184] However, Priyadas tells us that two of his sons were Vaishnavas and that one of them inherited the custody of Jugal Kishor, and the other, named Kishordas, became a disciple of Swami Haridas.[185] The temple of Jugal Kishor continued to receive the patronage of the rulers of Orchha, and later those of Datiya, until the deity was moved to Panna in the mid-eighteenth century.

A prominent disciple of Hit Harivansh was Damodardas, usually referred to as Sevakji, who was born in Garha and spent the latter part of the sixteenth century in Vrindaban.[186] He wrote a work known as *Sevak vāṇī*, which is generally accepted as the most important text of the Radhavallabh Sampraday after the verses of Hit Harivansh. Besides extolling his guru, the work deals with the interdependence of Krishna and Radha, stresses the importance of immersing oneself in their amorous play, and comments upon the conduct expected of a true devotee. A poet and pupil of Vanchandra was Nehi Nagaridas. Bhagwat Mudit tells us that he settled in a hermitage at Barsana called Mor Kuti, where he began to worship Radha and organize celebrations on the anniversary of her birth. He introduced a woman called Bhagmati to Vanchandra, from whom she took initiation. She lived at

182 P. Mital 1968, p.406.

183 See Bhagwat Mudit, pp.5-10, Nabhadas, *chappay* 92, Priyadas, *kavitt* 368-73, Vasudev Goswami's introduction to his edition of the works of Hariram Vyas, Lalitacharan Goswami, pp.383 ff., Snatak, pp.354 ff., P. Mital 1968, pp.374-6, and Bansal, pp.244-57 (who argues that he was initiated into the Gaudiya Sampraday). Vasudev Goswami gives his dates as 1510-c.1612, which are accepted by other scholars, apart from Lalitacharan Goswami, who suggests 1492-1598. The year of his arrival in Vrindaban is given as 1555 or 1565 (ibid., pp. 391-6), and he is said to have discovered Jugal Kishor in 1563 (Bansal, p.255).

184 Hariram Vyas, *pad* 282-295.

185 Priyadas, *kavitt* 373.

186 Bhagwat Mudit, pp.31-35, Snatak, pp.333 ff.

Orchha and was the wife of a certain Chintamani, an officer in the service of the Mughal court, but after becoming a devotee she settled at Barsana.[187]

17 Followers of Swami Haridas

It appears that after the death of Swami Haridas the service of his deity, Banke Bihari, was largely controlled by descendants of a Saraswat brahmin priest named Jagannath. This resulted in the formation of two factions, one of hereditary Goswamis descended from Meghshyam and Muraridas, two of the three sons of Jagannath, and the other of celibate ascetics who were led by a succession of Acharyas, each of whom designated his successor.[188] A schism between the two factions in the eighteenth century led to the creation of divergent histories. The Goswamis' claim that Jagannath was the younger brother of Swami Haridas is denied by the ascetics, who say that he was simply a priest appointed to serve the deity. The Goswamis say that Jagannath came from Panjab and today there is a branch of Goswamis at Haridaspur.

While there have been few persons of note among the Goswamis, many of the ascetics are noted for their devotional poetry. The poems of the eight Acharyas who followed in succession after Swami Haridas have been collected together to form a liturgical compilation.[189] The ascetics still maintain the tradition of singing them in solo performance and at devotional gatherings. Their Acharya (or Mahant) must be a native of Braj, and the ascetics themselves vow never to leave Braj. They are distinctive by their habit of smearing their face with the dust of Braj (*braj raj*), carrying a crooked stick (*kūbarī* or *bā̃kī*), and wearing garlands of wood from trees of Vrindaban and a white shawl covered with spots of indigo. The first of the Acharyas, Bithal Vipul, died within a week of Swami Haridas and was succeeded by Biharindas.[190] It was largely due to the efforts of Biharindas that the following of Swami Haridas developed into a distinct sectarian tradition. According to Kishordas he had been the son of an official in Akbar's government and had been in military service before taking up the life of an ascetic.[191] He wrote more poems, both doctrinal and devotional, than any of the other seven Acharyas. Since the poetry of the eight Acharyas emphasizes the role of the Sakhis, and since they

187 Bhagwat Mudit, pp.80 ff. Snatak, pp.460 f., Lalitacharan Goswami, pp.417 ff., Kishorilal Gupta's introduction to his edition of the works of the later Nagaridas, pp.18 ff.

188 Datt, pp.43 ff., 49, 97. On pp.44-7 he gives the ancestry and names of descendants of Jagannath.

189 The compilation is called *Aṣṭācāryõ kī vāṇī*. Formerly the tradition was not to publish them or circulate them outside Vrindaban, but they were published at Vrindaban in 1971 by Hargulal under the title *Sarvopari-nityavihāriṇī ras-sār*. VDA 39 gives details of the *samāj* tradition and Datt, pp.66-7, gives the dates of the most important gatherings.

190 He is also referred to as Biharinidas, Biharidas, or Biharindev. See Nabhadas, *chappay* 94, Priyadas, *kavitt* 377, Datt, pp.151-7, 262-71, Haynes, pp.87-95.

191 Kishordas, vol.3 pp.128 ff.

themselves are identified with the companions of Radha, the sect came to be referred to as the 'Sakhi Sampraday'.

18 Harivyasdev and other devotees of the Nimbark Sampraday

Members of the Nimbark Sampraday do not seem to have enjoyed the same degree of patronage from nobles and merchants as Vitthalnath and the spiritual leaders at Vrindaban. Although they did not manage to found new and impressive temples in Braj, they composed a certain amount of devotional literature in the Braj dialect. The most prominent figure in the Sampraday in the early part of Akbar's reign was Harivyasdev, who succeeded Shribhatt as head of the establishment at Dhruv Tila.[192] His main lasting contribution to the sect was an elaborate work entitled *Mahāvāṇī*, in which he assimilated aspects of devotion that had been formulated in Sanskrit texts by the leading Bengali Goswamis. It names a multitude of Sakhis and describes how they attend upon Krishna and Radha through the different watches of the day. It also describes the celebration of a number of festivals by Krishna and his entourage. Passages from it are still sung during gatherings of followers of the Nimbark Sampraday.

Like his predecessor, Harivyasdev came from Mathura and was a Gaur brahmin, the caste to which his twelve main disciples belonged. They became the founders of twelve branches (*dvār*) of the Sampraday that have since been maintained by a succession of Acharyas.[193] The foremost of the twelve disciples was Parashuram, a prolific poet.[194] He founded an establishment at Salemabad, near Jaipur, that is referred to by his followers as Parashurampuri. Harivyasdev presented him with a *śālagrām* stone that has remained in the custody of successive Acharyas, who are given the title Shriji Maharaj and are regarded as successors to the Gaddi of Nimbarka. Among their establishments in Braj is the temple and ashram at Nimgaon, supposed to have been the place where Nimbarka resided.[195]

The claim that the lineage of Parashuram is the foremost branch of the Nimbark Sampraday is challenged by followers of Swabhuram, another of the twelve disciples. Among establishments in Braj belonging to this branch are temples of Hanuman at Asikund (Mathura), Radhakant at Vishram Ghat, and others in Vrindaban.[196] Another disciple of Harivyasdev was Uddhavji, also called Ghamandadev, who is one of the figures credited with establishing the *rās līlā*

192 Nabhadas, *chappay* 77, Priyadas, *kavitt* 338-9. See also P. Mital 1968, pp.347-8, N. Sharma, pp.36-43.

193 P. Mital 1968, pp.348 ff. Sometimes members of the Sampraday are called 'Harivyasis'.

194 Nabhadas, *chappay* 137, Priyadas, *kavitt* 522.

195 P. Mital 1968, p.350-1, N. Sharma, pp.50-52.

196 P. Mital 1968, p.348, including the establishment founded by Kathiya Baba.

tradition.[197] Among other disciples of Harivyasdev, apart from the twelve main ones, was the poet Ruprasik.

19 The Sampradays of Ramanuja and Ramanand

It is uncertain how long there has been an establishment in Braj of the southern Shrivaishnava Sampraday, which looks upon Ramanuja as its founder. Its oldest establishment there is a temple of Lakshminarayan on the banks of Manasi Ganga at Govardhan. The present building appears to date from the eighteenth century, but Narayan Bhatt refers to 'a place of Lakshminarayan', which suggests that there was already a temple of this name there in the mid-sixteenth century.[198] Although the Shrivaishnavas had some influence on liturgical and devotional literature in northern India, they made no concrete contribution to the development of Braj until the nineteenth century. It is possible that the Lakshminarayan establishment was founded by a group of Ramanandis who claimed to represent the original Shrivaishnava Sampraday.

It is not certain when the Ramanandis began to establish temples and ashrams in Braj. Their first and more important centres were further to the east, while their most notable establishment in the west was at Galta, a gorge in the hills to the east of Jaipur. Mathura, as an old pilgrimage town and a centre of Vaishnava devotional activity, must have been of some interest to them, though of somewhat secondary importance in that it was associated with Krishna rather than Rama. It presumably became more relevant to them after the late sixteenth century, when the theology and practices of Krishna devotion began to have an influence on the Ramanandi orders.

According to their sectarian tradition Anantanand, one of the chief disciples of Ramanand, founded a Sanskrit school at Mathura.[199] One of his pupils was Krishnadas Payahari, founder of the establishment at Galta, and he in turn had a pupil named Kilhadev or Kiladas, who, according to Priyadas, visited Mathura and had a meeting with Man Singh.[200] In a narrow street near the temple known as Ramji Dwar (on Ram Ghat) is an establishment called Kilamath that is believed to stand on the site where Kiladas had his cell (*guphā*). Nearby, on Prayag Ghat, is Galta(wali) Kunj, said to have been founded in 1588 and now in the custody of

197 See P. Mital 1984, pp.55-8, who, like R. N. Agrawal, pp. 101-4, rejects claims made relatively recently that he is to be identified with a certain Ghamandi who is said to have begun *rās līlā* performaces at Karhela, as well as another (?) later Ghamandi, one who is said by Dhruvdas (*Bhaktanāmāvalī, dohā* 31) to have lived at Bansi Bat in Vrindaban. His *caraṇ pādukā* are worshipped at the village of Likhi (P. Mital 1968, p.349).

198 VBV 2.50, 5.9. Krishnacharyaji, p.166, and S. S. Chakra in *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, pp.316-18, say that the first Acharya was called Shathakopa. He is credited with a work called *Sahasragītisāra*, which deals with the sports of Krishna and describes Govardhan (Vijay, pp.118-9).

199 P. Mital 1968, pp.162-3. See also B. P. Singh, p.329, referring to a place called Anant Gupha.

200 Priyadas, *kavitt* 121. See n.140 above.

Mahants who claim to belong to the lineage of Kiladas.[201] According to another tradition, the old temple of Dirghavishnu was in the custody of Ramanandis from at least the sixteenth century until the reign of Aurangzeb.[202] The Ramanandi presence in Vrindaban has never been of much significance. Followers of the Sant Malukdas are said to have founded a Rama temple on Keshi Ghat, and nearby is Ramanandi Nirmohi Akhara, referred to by Gopal Kavi as an *akhāṛā* of the Khakhi order. He also mentions a *samādhi* of Sursuranand in Ram Kunj, an establishment of the Lashkari order near the temple of Radhavallabh.[203]. Other later Ramanandi establishments in Vrindaban are temples of Rama near Bansi Bat, Kalidah, and Varaha Ghat, a Jagannath temple at Gyan Gudri, and Digambar and Nirvani Akharas.[204]

20 The reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan (1605-58)

Jahangir's reign began with a brief period of disruption when his son Khusrau attempted to usurp the throne, a rebellion that was inspired by Akbar's professed wish that he should be the next emperor, rather than Jahangir, whom Akbar had considered unworthy. The rebellion was put down, though Khusrau's followers managed to indulge in looting when they passed through Mathura. Like his father, Jahangir visited the area around Mathura for tiger hunting. He records that in 1619 he visited the temples in Vrindaban which had been built by the Rajput nobles, but his only comment is that he could not bear to breathe the air because so many bats had made their abode inside.[205] The only Hindu religious person he mentions is Jadrup, apparently a Shaiva ascetic (*saṃnyāsī*) who had moved to Mathura from Ujjain, where they had met once before. Jahangir tells us that he highly valued his discussions with him.

Shah Jahan, who succeeded to the throne in 1627/8, seems to have wavered somewhat in his attitude towards Hinduism. At one stage he revived the pilgrimage tax, but it was soon remitted again at the insistence of influential Hindus. In 1632 he forbade the completion of temples begun in his father's reign and ordered the destruction of those at Varanasi, Allahabad, Orchha, and in Kashmir and Gujarat.[206] These decrees stand out as anomalous when considered in the light of his general religious policy, though they are indicative of a decline in Hindu influence in his immediate circle and a re-emergence of the orthodox Sunni clergy. His Hindu mother had died in 1619 and, unlike his father and grandfather, he did not take a Hindu bride. However, he issued no other iconoclastic or anti-Hindu decrees in the later part of his reign, perhaps as a result of the increasing influence of his son Dara Shukoh. The Vaishnava sects of Braj continued to flourish and leaders

201 P. Mital 1968, pp.163, 499.
202 Ibid., pp.499-500.
203 VDA 7 (Lashkari establishment) and 33 (Nirmohi Akhara).
204 P. Mital 1968, pp.574-5.
205 Jahangir, vol.2 pp.103-5.
206 Roy Choudhury, pp.258-9, Elliot & Dowson, vol.7 p.36.

of the religious communities in Braj were favoured with firmans granting them villages and revenue.

Commerce continued to thrive during both reigns; even Dutch and English merchants managed to establish trade missions at Agra which, among other items, exported saltpetre and indigo, the products most sought after by early European travellers. In return, they were able to supply the local nobility and upper classes with luxury goods and novelties. It is evident from Peter Mundy's account of his travels that neither the benefits of an increase in commercial activity nor the tolerance shown towards Hindu religious leaders did anything to improve the lot of the peasantry.[207] At the end of 1631 he visited Koil (Aligarh) in search of indigo, and then, in the new year, went to Shergarh which he thought produced 'the best saltpeter that is transported out of India to Christendome.' He expresses pity for the way in which the Hindu peasants were oppressed and impoverished, comparing their plight to that of Christians under the Turks. He remarks that the authorities were 'takeinge from them all they can gett by their labour, leaveinge them nothinge but their badd mudd walled ill thatched covered howses, and a few Cattell to till the ground, besides other misseries.' The area was plagued by bandits, 'hereabouts beinge the most daungerous place for Robbers that is in all India (by report), as usuall neere to great Citties.' The villagers did not dare to contradict the robbers and were obliged to harbour them, despite the gruesome executions and savage reprisals inflicted by the government. Another English merchant, named William Jesson, wrote in 1656 that a colleague of his had delayed his departure from Agra 'untill now that severall Banian merchants of quallity, which came up to Matra and Gocall to worship, are retourning to Amahdabad, soe well attended with souldiers that it is conceived he may with them travaile safely.'[208]

At one point there was a revolt among cultivators living on the east bank of the Yamuna, but they were soon quelled by the imperial army. They continually committed highway robbery, lived in rebellion, and did not pay revenue. In 1623 an expedition was sent against them, as a result of which many men were slain, women and children were taken captive, and much booty was acquired.[209] Several years later, in 1635, there was a rebellion among Tenwa Jats who had settled in Mathura parganah at the beginning of the century. A certain Murshid Quli Khan was appointed local commander in order to suppress the revolt. Apart from imprisoning many of the men, he also took to collecting beautiful maidens. Once, during Janmashtami celebrations at Gokul, he disguised himself as a Hindu and mingled with the crowds in order to abduct a woman that took his fancy. It was presumably such rapaciousness that led to his assassination by Jats in 1638.[210]

The Meos living in Mewat, an area that now forms the northern part of Bharatpur District, were also troublesome. They used to rob travellers on the road between Agra and Delhi and raid villages in the western part of Braj, with the result that revenue could not be collected. In 1650 Mirza Raja Jai Singh, a grandson of

207 Mundy, pp.71-7.
208 Foster 1921/2, p.69.
209 Habib, pp.339-42.
210 Samsam-ud-daula, pp.309-314, E. B. Joshi, pp.59-60, (citing Abdul Hamid Lahori, *Bādshāhnāma* 1 pp.71-2, 76, 2 p.425), Irvine, vol.1 p.321.

Man Singh, was ordered to deal with them. The outcome of his campaign was that many of the Meos were slain, enslaved, or expelled, the jungles of Mewat were cleared, roads were made, land was granted to subjects of Jai Singh, and his second son Kirat Singh was appointed *fauzdār* of Mewat and given the parganahs of Kaman-Pahari and Khoh.[211]

21 Bir Singh Deo of Orchha

The greatest contribution to the development of Braj during the reign of Jahangir was made by Bir Singh Deo, the Raja of Orchha.[212] His grandfather, Rudra Pratap, was a Bundela chief who had managed to extend his territory during the period of disturbance that followed Babar's invasion. He chose Orchha as the site for a new capital and built his first palace there in 1531. He was killed by a tiger later in the same year and was succeeded by his eldest son, who was in turn followed by his younger brother, Madhukar Shah, in 1554. His refusal to submit to Mughal hegemony resulted in Akbar twice sending an army to subdue him, which led to the loss of territory north-west of Orchha (in 1577 and 1588). He was a pious Hindu and a patron of the arts; during his reign Orchha became a notable centre of culture.[213] After his death in 1592 he was succeeded by his son Ram Shah, who made amends with Akbar and was acknowledged as ruler of the Orchha territories.

Ram Shah was unable to restrain his rebellious brothers, especially Bir Singh Deo, with the result that the state was plunged into civil war. In 1592 Akbar sent a force to arrest Bir Singh Deo, but he soon managed to escape and began to ingratiate himself with Prince Salim. At this time Akbar was showing his displeasure at Salim's recalcitrant behaviour, and the prince suspected that Abu'l Fazl, his father's close friend and advisor, was trying to block his succession to the throne. In 1602 Bir Singh Deo, at the instigation of Salim, murdered Abu'l Fazl in an ambush, after which he was obliged to go into hiding until Akbar's death three years later.[214] Soon after Salim succeeded to the throne, taking the title of Jahangir, Bir Singh Deo was made Raja of Orchha after his brother had been ousted. He remained in Jahangir's favour for the rest of his life, extended his dominions, and acquired immense wealth. Eighteen years later Jahangir conferred upon him the title of Maharaja.[215] He mellowed as he grew older and became more religious, perhaps a way of atoning for his earlier misdeeds. In 1614 he made a pilgrimage to

211 J. Sarkar 1984, pp.109-110.

212 He is referred to as Nar Singh by some Muslim historians. For a concise account of his life and ancestry see Luard, pp.17 ff. Some historical detail is given in *Vīrsiṃhdev caritra*, a eulogy of him composed by Keshavdas in 1607. For his father, Madhukar Shah, see AN vol.3 pp.294-5, 324-5, 379, 803.

213 There is a tradition that he once visited Vrindaban and met Swami Haridas (VDA 21).

214 These events are described in AA vol.1 pp.509, 524, 545-6, AN vol.3 pp.1216 ff., by Jahangir, vol.1 pp. 24-5, and in *Wikāya'-i Asad Beg* (Elliot & Dowson, vol.7, p.184).

215 Jahangir, vol.2 p.253.

Mathura where, on Vishram Ghat, he offered his weight in gold plus a further eighty-one maunds which were distributed as charity.[216]

He founded palaces and temples at Orchha and Datiya and in other parts of his dominions. He also contributed to the restoration and construction of tanks, ghats, temples, and other holy places in Braj.[217] At a cost of 3,300,000 rupees he built a magnificent new temple of Keshavdev in red sandstone on the Katra, the site on which earlier temples had stood.[218] It was the wonder of Mathura for the next half century. Tavernier, who saw it in around 1650, regarded it as 'one of the most sumptuous buildings in all India' and gave the following description:

> Although this pagoda, which is very large, is in a hollow, it is visible from more than 5 or 6 coss distance, the building being very elevated and magnificent. The stones which were used in its construction are of a red colour, and are obtained from a large quarry near Agra...it is seated on a great platform of octagonal shape faced with cut stone...Its form...is that of a cross, and in the middle there rises a lofty dome, with two others a little smaller at the sides. On the exterior of the building, from base to summit, there are numerous figures of animals such as rams, monkeys, and elephants, carved in stone, and all round are niches containing different monsters. From the foot of each of the three domes up to their summit, at intervals, there are windows from 5 to 6 feet high, and at each a kind of balcony where four persons can sit...Around these domes there are also niches full of figures which represent demons, one with four arms, another four legs; some of them have heads of men on the bodies of beasts, with horns and long tails which twine round their legs. There are, finally, numerous images of monkeys and it is a terrible thing to have before the eyes so many ugly representations.[219]

He says that the entrance was flanked by many columns and images of men and monsters, and describes the main deity as being of black marble, with what appeared to be rubies for eyes, and the two deities on either side as being of white, all of them dressed in embroidered robes.[220]

Another visitor, Bernier, considered it to be the only structure worthy of observation between Delhi and Agra and describes it as an ancient (?) and magnificent temple.[221] It also impressed Dircq van Adrichem when he saw it in

216 Luard, p.21.

217 Viz. places on the pilgrimage circuit numbered below as 13(a), 19.3, 26, 37.11, 39.1, 61, 55, 66.1, 10, 11, 19, 26, 29 & 42, 71.2 & 7, mentioned by Pratitray Lakshman Singh (cf. P. Mital 1957).

218 Elliot & Dowson 7, p.184.

219 Tavernier, vol.2 pp.187-8.

220 He says that these two deities, which must have been marble images of Gopis or Krishna's two main wives (Rukmini and Satyabhama), were called 'Becchor'. Vaudeville 1976, p.204, suggests that they represent Gopis, interpreting 'Becchor' as meaning 'suffering from separation'.

221 Bernier, p.284, who travelled through the Mughal empire between 1656-68.

1662, and Manucci says that it was 'of such a height that its gilded pinnacle could be seen from Agra.'[222] The main image was called Keshavdev or Keshoray, those on either side were called Mathuramal and Kalyanray, and there were other images, presumably in subsidiary shrines, of Raghunath (Rama), Narasinha, Devaki, Vasudeva, Yashodanandan, and Krishna.[223] Some years after its construction, probably in 1655, Dara Shukoh provided it with a stone railing.[224]

22 The Pushtimarg in the first half of the seventeenth century

After the death of Vitthalnath the structure of the Pushtimarg was one of separate but interrelated Gaddis, each with its own temples, disciples, and followers. The first Gaddi, which had custody of the deities Shrinathji, Mathuresh, and Navanitapriy, was acknowledged as the main one and its head was given the title of Tilakayat. The senior Goswami of each Gaddi was regarded as its leader and chief guru, and he was succeeded by his eldest male descendant. For some time this arrangement worked well enough, but conflicts began to arise when a senior Goswami died without heir and a successor had to be chosen from another branch of the family.

After the death of Giridhar, Vitthalnath's eldest son, the leadership of the first Gaddi was inherited first by Damodar and then by Vitthalray, who was born in 1600.[225] Vitthalray's inheritance of privileges conferred upon his great-grandfather Vitthalnath during the reign of Akbar was confirmed by firmans issued during the reign of Shah Jahan. Two firmans issued by Shah Jahan in 1633 confirmed his right to hold land at Jatipura and Gokul tax-free; another issued by Dara Shukoh in 1643 confirmed his right to live unencumbered at Gokul.[226] A firman issued by Ishaq Azam Khan, an official in the service of Shah Jahan, granted Vitthalray the right to collect taxes from the market at Gokul.[227] In 1658 Dara Shukoh issued two more firmans, one allowing the cows of the temple of Shrinathji to graze unmolested at Bachhgaon and the other acknowledging the inheritance by Giridhar of the *mauẓa'* of Gokul (presumably referring to the eldest son of Vitthalray, who was born in 1632).[228] Although these documents show that Vitthalray was acknowledged by the imperial authorities as leader of the Pushtimarg, his relatives challenged his assumption of the exclusive right to conduct the worship of Shrinathji. The conflict was settled when it was agreed that Vitthalray should conduct the worship on sixty

222 Van Adrichem, p.122 ('den grooten benjaanse tempel, die waardigh om zien en een zeer machtig groot gebouw is'), Manucci, vol.2 p.154. The temple is also described by Mitra Mishra, *Ānandakandacampū* 8.71-94.

223 BYV, naming the last as *sāvaro*.

224 Vajpeyi 1954, pp.160-1.

225 Vitthalnath Bhatt, 9.8, where he is referred to as 'Vitthalnath'.

226 Jhaveri, nos.5-8.

227 P. Mital 1968, p.284.

228 Jhaveri, nos. 12 & 13. The date of birth of Giridhar is given by Vitthalnath Bhatt, 9.27-8.

of the annual festival days and that the worship on the other days of the year should be shared out among Goswamis belonging to the six other Gaddis.[229]

The most respected figure in the Pushtimarg in the early part of the sixteenth was Vitthalnath's fourth son Gokulnath.[230] In sectarian sources he is acclaimed as a defender of the faith in a conflict over the right of Vaishnavas to wear their forehead mark (*tilak*). He is supposed to have been the victor in an incident of dubious historicity involving Jadrup, the Hindu divine who had found favour with Jahangir. In Pushtimarg sources Jadrup is portrayed as a malevolent Tantric ascetic who persuaded Jahangir to ban Vaishnavas from wearing their sectarian marks and garland of *tulsī* beads. They say that Gokulnath was obliged to leave Braj because he refused to observe the ban, and that he eventually went to Kashmir where he met Jahangir and persuaded him to revoke the order.[231] Gokulnath is also the reputed author of the stories (*vārtā*) dealing with the disciples of Vallabha and Vitthalnath. He may well have been the author of some of them, especially those dealing with the disciples of Vallabha, but it seems more likely that they were collected, expanded, and provided with a commentary by Hariray, a grandson of the second son of Vitthalnath.[232] According to Pushtimarg tradition he was educated by Gokulnath and succeeded him as the most revered authority in doctrinal matters. His *Śikṣāpatra*, a collection of Sanskrit verses with a Braj prose commentary by his younger brother Gopeshwar, is the most widely read doctrinal text in the Pushtimarg.

Gokulnath intervened in a dispute that arose between Goswamis of the third and sixth Gaddi. The origins of the conflict lie in the disappointment felt by Vitthalnath's sixth son Yadunath when he was presented with Balkrishna, a deity that was smaller than those given to his brothers. To console him, Vitthalnath's third son, Balkrishna, proposed that they share the worship of their two deities, Balkrishna and Dwarkadhish.[233] Vitthalnath agreed to this arrangement, provided that Yadunath or any of his descendants would be allowed to claim exclusive conduct of the worship of Balkrishna if ever they felt so inclined. This is precisely what Yadunath's son Madhusudan demanded, but Balkrishna's son Dwarkeshwar was reluctant to hand over the deity. The matter was taken up with Gokulnath, who had been present when the deities had been distributed by Vitthalnath. He acknowledged Madhusudan's right to take the deity and worship it separately. Within a year, however, he expressed his desire to return the deity to Dwarkeshwar. Gokulnath then proposed that an agreement should be drawn up between the two parties to avoid any further dispute. The result was that the deity of Balkrishna was given to Dwarkeshwar and Madhusudan was given the custody of another deity named Kalyanray, which thenceforth became the main deity of his Gaddi.

229 SPV, pp.39-40.

230 According to Vitthalnath Bhatt, 7.74 & 10.111, he lived from 1551-1647; other sectarian sources say he died in 1640 (P. Mital 1968, p.292).

231 See Tandan, pp.382-7, P. Mital 1968, pp.289-92, Entwistle 1982, pp.41-2.

232 According to Vitthalnath Bhatt, 10.30, Hariray was born in 1590, but the date is probably too early, especially in view of the fact that he is said to have lived until 1715.

233 Vitthalnath Bhatt, 8.111-112 & 145 ff., Brajbhushan, p.47 (and pp.52-4, for what happened later).

23 Some devotees in Vrindaban during the first half of the seventeenth century

A notable poet of the Gaudiya Sampraday in the first half of the seventeenth century was Madhuri, a name he uses as his 'seal' (*chāp*) in his poems and also in the title of his verse compositions. One of these, *Keli mādhurī*, ends with a couplet giving its date of composition as 1630.[234] It appears from his poems that they were written in Vrindaban, but tradition associates him with Madhurikund, a tank south-east of Aring.

Although Bhagwat Mudit belonged to the Gaudiya Sampraday he produced a work entitled *Rasik ananya māl* that contains stories about the disciples of Hit Harivansh and his sons. According to Priyadas he was once in the service of Shuja ul-Mulk, *ṣūbadār* of Agra, and was initiated by Haridas, the person then in charge of worship at the temple of of Govind Dev.[235] He also wrote a sequence of verses called *Vṛndāvan śatak*, a Braj version of part of Prabodhanand Saraswati's *Vṛndāvanamahimāmṛta*, which is dated 1650.

A member of the Radhavallabh Sampraday who flourished at the end of the sixteenth and during the first three decades of the following century was Chaturbhujdas who, like Sevakji (a disciple of Hit Harivansh), came from Garha in central India.[236] He was initiated by Vanchandra and composed a didactic work entitled *Dvādaś yaś*, in which the merits of devotion are illustrated with Puranic and hagiographical stories. Another poet of the Radhavallabh Sampraday at this time was Dhruvdas, the grandson of a disciple of Hit Harivansh who came from his village of Deoband.[237] Forty-two of his poems are found together under the title *Bayālīs līlā*, some of them bearing dates of composition between 1593 and 1641. They mainly describe various episodes in the love play of Krishna and Radha, a few are on didactic themes, and one of them, entitled *Bhaktanāmāvalī līlā*, gives brief descriptions of a number of Vaishnava devotees, including several of those who had been active in Braj during the previous century. In 1657, after the death of Damodar, the leading Goswami, the custody and worship of the deity named Radhavallabh was inherited by his two sons Rasdas and Vilasdas.[238] Their descendents split into two opposing factions called the Rasvansh and Vilasvansh, among whom the right to serve the deity is strictly divided into separate and equal periods.

Some time during the seventeenth century the antagonism between the Goswami and ascetic followers of Swami Haridas broke out into an open conflict over

234 Included in the edition of his *vāṇī* by Krishnadas Baba. He is also discussed by P. Mital 1962, pp.196-204 (noting that in some colophons he is referred to as Madhavdas), and Bansal, pp. 286-93.

235 Priyadas, *kavitt* 627. For further information see Lalitacharan Goswami, pp.18-21, P. Mital 1962, pp.207-12, Lalitaprasad Purohit's introduction to Bhagwat Mudit, p.5, and Bansal, pp.277-86, who suggests that its attribution to him is spurious.

236 Nabhadas, *chappay* 123, Priyadas, *kavitt* 493-6, Bhagwat Mudit, pp.35-44, Snatak, pp.39 ff., Lalitacharan Goswami, pp.438-40, McGregor 1984, p.160.

237 Bhagwat Mudit, pp.77-9, Lalitacharan Goswami, pp.440 ff.

238 P. Mital 1968, pp.409-10.

custody of the deity of Banke Bihari. The next two Acharyas after Biharindas were Nagaridas and his younger brother Sarasdas, both of whom wrote poems that are included in the collected works of the eight Acharyas.[239] A pupil of Nagaridas was a poet known as Nawaldas or Nawal Sakhi, who used to dress up as a Sakhi and had two followers from Barsana named Haldhar and Bhudhar. There are differing accounts of how these two brothers were involved in a conflict over the the deity of Banke Bihari. Kishordas and Gopal Kavi tell us that they gave Nawaldas thirty thousand rupees in order to erect a wall around Nidhiban and build a shrine.[240] They also say that Bhudhar sacrificed his life rather than let Muslims cut down the creepers in Nidhiban. Kishordas also tells how Haldhar attempted to abduct Banke Bihari on behalf of the ascetics, as a result of which he was thrown into the Yamuna and drowned.

The Goswamis tell another version of this incident according to which both Haldhar and Bhudhar stole the deity at night, but were pursued by the Goswamis, who caught up with them while they were attempting to cross the Yamuna.[241] Both brothers were killed in the fight that broke out and the Goswamis managed to reclaim the deity. The Goswamis say that this occurred while Naraharidas (Sarasdas' successor) was Acharya of the ascetics, which would mean that it happened during the reign of Aurangzeb. If this is the case then it is possible that the story of Bhudhar losing his life in defence of Nidhiban relates to an attempt by Muslim soldiers, acting under orders from Aurangzeb, to attack the temples of Vrindaban. This would imply that Haldhar was killed in a subsequent conflict with the Goswamis. At all events, it appears from these differing stories that some time during the seventeenth century there was a violent conflict between the Goswamis and the ascetics, among whom Haldhar was the protagonist, as a result of which blood was spilt and the two factions became even more alienated than they were before.

24 Aurangzeb (1658-1707)

The reign of Aurangzeb began with an even more savage struggle for power than was usual for the times. First he deposed his father and confined him within the fort at Agra until his death, then he eliminated Dara Shukoh and his two sons, as well as his two other brothers. At the very beginning of his reign there was renewed trouble among the Tenwa Jats who had settled on the east bank of the Yamuna in the area between Mat and Aligarh. Dara Shukoh, who had been in charge of the area around Mathura district, had been popular among his Hindu subjects. Following his murder and the flight of his troops and officials, the Jats rebelled under the leadership of Nandaram, who encouraged them to withhold their revenue

239 Datt, pp.271-3, P. Mital 1968, pp.467-9, Haynes, pp.102-8. The former is sometimes referred to as 'Bare Nagaridas', an epithet that helps to distinguish him from the earlier Nehi Nagaridas and the later 'Raja' Nagaridas.

240 Kishordas, vol.4 pp.94-100, VDA 22. According to Gopal Kavi, Bhudar became the next Acharya and adopted the name of Sarasdev, but other sources say that Sarasdas was the youger brother of Nagaridas.

241 Datt, p.38.

payments. In order to suppress and chastise them Aurangzeb appointed a new military commander named Abdunnabi Khan, who remained in charge of Mathura from 1660-69.[242] In 1661-62 Abdunnabi built a mosque (the Jama Masjid) in the centre of Mathura on the site of a Hindu temple that had been demolished by Sikandar Lodi and given over to butchers.[243]

Aurangzeb retained the services of Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber, who had been in the service of the Mughals since the time of Jahangir.[244] He was given the responsibility of dealing with Shivaji, the leader of the Marathas, who had been challenging Mughal power in the south-western part of the empire since the middle of the century. The last couple of years of Jai Singh's life brought him disappointment and humiliation. Aurangzeb became dissatisfied with his conduct of the campaigns in the Deccan, and his son Ram Singh was suspected of being involved in Shivaji's escape from Agra in 1666. After Jai Singh's death in 1667 there seems to have been nobody left at court who was capable of restraining the Emperor's increasing oppression of Hinduism. Although he retained many Hindus in his service, Aurangzeb no longer upheld the customary policy of conciliation towards the Hindu princes of Rajasthan. He projected himself as a devout Sunni Muslim, showing hostility to Shias and Sufis as well as Hindus. In 1665 he banned the celebration of Holi and Diwali and the cremation of the dead on the banks of the Yamuna.[245] In the following year he ordered the destruction of the stone railing which Dara Shukoh had presented to the temple of Keshavdev;[246] three years later he issued a general order for the demolition of Hindu schools and temples, and in 1670 he specifically ordered the destruction of the temple of Keshavdev. It was razed to the ground, its idols were taken to Agra and buried under the steps of the mosque of Jahanara,[247] and an Idgah mosque was built over part of the area on which the temple had stood. The names of Mathura and Vrindaban were changed to Islamabad and Muminabad, though in practice their use was restricted to official documents, and the settlement of Chandrasarovar-Parasoli was renamed Muhammadpur - a name that is still in use.[248] Another anti-Hindu measure was the reimposition of the *jizyah* tax on all non-Muslims, despite mass protests from Hindus. In 1671 he issued an order disqualifying Hindus from holding revenue posts, but was obliged to revoke it when it proved to be impracticable. Several years

242 Sarkar 1924-30, 3 pp.20, 266, Pande 1970, p.3.

243 Sarkar ibid., pp.292-3.

244 For the career of Mirza Raja Jai Singh see Sarkar 1984, chs.VIII-XI. He was born in 1611 and became Raja of Amber in 1621.

245 Roy Choudhury, p. 263. The ban on celebrating Holi is mentioned by Manucci, vol.2 p.154.

246 Sarkar 1924-30, p.267, Sri Ram Sharma, p.139.

247 Sarkar ibid., pp. 265-7, 281-2, Sri Ram Sharma, pp.141-2. According to Vijay, p.13, the original deity was taken to a village called Rasdhan in Kanpur District.

248 The alternative names for Mathura and Vrindaban survived and were used on coins issued from local mints during the reign of Shah Alam II in the late 18th century which bear the combined names of Muminabad-Bindraban and Islamabad-Mathura, cf. Whitehead, vol.2 pp.lvii, xl, cv.

later, in 1695, he forbade all Hindus except Rajputs from carrying arms and riding in litters and on horses and elephants.[249]

Such oppressive measures served to intensify resistance to Mughal rule in different parts of the empire. Another cause of unrest among the rural populace was the increasing power and autonomy of the zamindars, who were able to take advantage of the lack of firm control by the government. There was an uprising of Satnamis at Narnaul and of Sikhs in the Panjab, while Chhatrasal began to fight for independence in Bundelkhand. In the 1670's there was an uprising of Afghan tribes in the north-western provinces, and in 1678 armed conflict began in Marwar following the death of Maharaja Jaswant Singh. Militant resistance in Braj was organized by the Jats, who are referred to in the earliest accounts of their rebellion as simply 'peasants' or 'villagers'. According to Manucci their revolt was motivated by the demands of governors and military commanders for revenue.[250] The economic situation had been steadily worsening as the seventeenth century wore on.[251] Increasing pressure was placed on the peasantry in order to support the extravagant and luxurious lifestyle of the nobility and town dwellers. Administrative methods deteriorated while demands on production increased, leaving the rural populace on a subsistence level, with no incentive to produce more. The surplus was frittered away unproductively, and there was no sign of any marked alteration in standards of living or of any great increase in the size of cities or armies.

The Jats, who have been described as forming the back-bone of the agricultural community in Panjab, Sind, Rajasthan, and Braj, had a long tradition of falling upon the rear of retreating armies, as they had done in the time of Mahmud of Ghazni.[252] They were not a distinct caste but a broad category of warrior-cultivators who had absorbed many outsiders into their ranks. They formed a society in which there were few brahmins and in which male Jats married into the whole range of lower agricultural and entrepreneurial castes.[253] The Jats of Braj lived on both sides of the Yamuna in villages defended by mud walls. From time to time the headmen of these villages combined forces in order to resist or harass the imperial government. In the course of their struggle with Mughal power they showed themselves to be as much inspired by opportunities to plunder and seize land as by ideals of independence and religious freedom, as is evident from their internal quarrels and the opportunistic way in which they sided with imperial forces when it suited their interests. Concerted resistance against Aurangzeb began under the leadership of Gokala, an influential landowner of the Tilpat region, about twenty kilometres south of Delhi.[254] He encouraged Jat, Gujar, and Ahir cultivators to withhold revenue payments and mustered them into a force of twenty

249 All these measures are detailed in Sarkar, ibid., pp.268-78.

250 Manucci, vol.2 p.319.

251 See Moreland 1923 for an economic history of this period.

252 Qanungo, ch.1, in which he gives an account of the origin and early history of the Jat tribes. On the origin of the Jats see also Bingley, ch.1, and the article by G. C. Dwivedi.

253 As described by Bayly 1983, pp.22-3.

254 He is also called Gokal Ram or Gokula. See Sarkar 1924-30, ch.35, Qanungo, pp.37-9, Natwar-Singh, p.7, Pande 1970, pp.3-4.

thousand men. Fighting lasted several months in 1669, in the course of which Sadabad was looted and Abdunnabi was killed. Aurangzeb himself came from Delhi to suppress the revolt with the assistance of Hassan Ali Khan, the new commander at Mathura. The rebels were defeated at Tilpat and Gokala was taken to Agra and dismembered in public, after which we hear no more about the Jats for the next sixteen years.

25 The exodus of deities from Braj

Although he took measures to suppress Hindu activity from 1665 onwards, in the early years of his reign Aurangzeb issued some firmans in favour of the devotees in Braj. One of them was Goswami Purnanand of Shringar Bat in Vrindaban, who was granted Sakraya, Jahangirpur, and other villages on the east bank of the Yamuna.[255] Aurangzeb also took sides in a dispute that began in 1662 over the custody of two deities of the third Gaddi of the Pushtimarg.[256] Custody of the deities named Dwarkadhish and Balkrishna had been passed on to Giridharlal, a great-grandson of Vitthalnath. However, Giridharlal's father (named Dwarkeshwar) had considered him to be an unworthy successor and had declared that the deities should be entrusted to Brajbhushan, a descendant of a younger brother of his grandfather. Giridharlal died shortly afterwards, and, since Brajbhushan was still a minor, the service of the deities was organized by his daughter Ganga.

The young Brajbhushan had an uncle, named Brajray, who considered himself to be senior in line of succession and demanded that he should be given charge of the deities. He pressed his claim at the court of Aurangzeb, who had recently become emperor, but he lost his case and was obliged to sign a declaration acknowledging Brajbhushan as the heir of Giridharlal.[257] This did not deter him from hiring a band of dacoits and using them to invade the temple and steal the deities, much of the equipment used in worship, and a pair of sandals that had belonged to Vallabha. Ganga persuaded the authorities to help her retrieve the stolen goods, after which she took the deities away to Rajnagar, near Ahmedabad, where she could rely on the support of a community of devotees. Brajray continued to lobby at court and eventually managed to obtain an order from Aurangzeb addressed to Mahabat Khan, the governor of Ahmedabad, instructing him to ensure that the deity named Balkrishna be handed over to him. It is said that Brajray went to Ahmedabad, found where Ganga was hiding, and, with the help of government troops, and in breach of all rules of purity, seized the deity while it was being rocked in a cradle by Ganga and Brajbhushan. He took the deity to Surat in 1670, where the sixth Gaddi has had its headquarters ever since. In the same year Ganga and Brajbhushan took Dwarkadhish to a village in the hills north of Udaipur that had earlier been granted

255 Shyamdas, p.174.

256 Related by Vitthalnath Bhatt, 10.72 ff., and by Brajbhushan in *Dvārkādhīśjī kī prākaṭya vārtā*, pp. 52-4. See also K. Shastri, pt.4 pp.132 ff.

257 Reproduced in K. Shastri, pt.5 p.135.

to them by the Rana of Mewar. Several years later, in 1719, they moved into a mansion and temple that were built nearby at Kankaroli.[258]

In this way two of the main deities of the Pushtimarg were taken away from Braj a few years before the demolition of the temple of Keshavdev, an event that was preceded by increasingly repressive ordinances against Hinduism. The Jat uprisings can only have served to exacerbate the feeling of insecurity among the temple priests. In 1669 the custodians of Shrinathji decided that the deity should be removed from the temple at Govardhan.[259] It was first taken to Agra, where it was worshipped clandestinely in the house of a prominent devotee. There it was joined by Navanitapriy, the deity that had been provided with a temple at Gokul. Both deitites were taken to Kota, where the Raja offered them his protection. Later they were moved to Kishangarh, where the priests enjoyed the Raja's hospitality for a while, and then on to Chaupasani, on the outskirts of Jodhpur. From there the priests requested permission from Rana Raj Singh to come and settle in Mewar. When this was granted, they set out for Udaipur, but when they reached the village of Sinhad (or Siarh), forty kilometres north of the city, Shrinathji's cart got stuck beneath a pipal tree and could not be moved any further. This was taken as a sign that the deity wished to settle at that spot. It was installed in a hastily constructed shrine, which was later replaced by a larger temple. The journey from Govardhan to Sinhad is said to have taken two years, four months, and seven days. A rational explanation for the choice of the site is that it lay within a few kilometres of the spot where the deity of Dwarkadhish had been brought in the previous year and was securely located amid hills close to the capital of the Rana, who had managed to keep his dealings with the Mughals to a minimum and could be relied upon to afford his protection.

The temples of Shrinathji and Dwarkadhish flourished under the patronage of the rulers of Mewar and enjoyed considerable support from devotees in Gujarat and elsewhere in western India. The township that grew up around Shrinathji, known as Nathdwara, became the permanent seat of the Tilakayat (the most senior of the 'Maharajas'), the foremost sacred centre of the Pushtimarg, and an important place of pilgrimage for Hindus as a whole.[260] It appears that Vitthalnath, the deity of the second Gaddi, had also arrived in Mewar shortly before Shrinathji and was being worshipped by its custodian, Hariray, at Khamnor, a few kilometres west of Nathdwara.[261] It was later taken to Kota, but was finally installed in a temple adjacent to that of Shrinathji in 1821.[262] Worship of the deity called Mathuresh was inherited by descendants of the younger son of Giridhar, the

258 Brajbhushan, pp.67-8.

259 The deity's journey from Braj to Mewar is narrated in SPV, pp.42 ff., and by Vitthalnath Bhatt, 9.52 ff.

260 See Tod, vol.2 pp. 607-20, 642-3, 647-9, Jindel, and Vairagi for details of endowments and the subsequent history of Nathdwara, and K. Shastri for that of Kankaroli. For an account of modern Nathdwara see Jindel, Maduro, chs.2-3, and Verdia.

261 See Vitthalnath Bhatt, 10.30 ff., and K. Shastri, pt.5 p.148, who records that the deity was taken to Nathdwara for the celebration of Annakut in 1671.

262 Jindel, p.26, P. Vairagi, p.86. See P. Mital 1968, pp.285-7, for the history of the Gaddi.

eldest son of Vitthalnath. They are said to have taken it to Bundi and then to Kota where, under the patronage of the Maharaja, a mansion was built for the priests and a temple for the deity.[263] Gokulnath, Madanmohan, and Gokulchandrama, the deities of the other Gaddis, after being shifted about for several decades, settled in Jaipur in the latter part of the eighteenth century.[264] A prominent figure of the fifth Gaddi was Dwarkesh (b.1694), who was given the sobriquet 'Bhavnaware' because he wrote a few works expounding the nature of the affective connotations (*bhāvnā*) of various devotional themes and practices.[265]

None of the temples in Vrindaban was demolished, but the delapidated state of the original temples of Govind Dev, Gopinath, Madanmohan, and Radhavallabh, and the defacement of some of the figures adorning them, is accredited to attacks made at the behest of Aurangzeb. The Gaudiya priests of the temples of Govind Dev, Gopinath, Radhadamodar, and Radhavinod sought the protection of their long-standing patrons, the rulers of Amber. The deities were first taken to Kaman, a town that had been granted to Kirat Singh, younger son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh, and in 1671 was inherited by his successor, Jait Singh.[266] Temples were built at Kaman for the deities, but they did not stay there permanently. Govind Dev was taken to Amber in or shortly before 1714, and Radhadamodar was moved to Jaipur in 1760.[267] The deity of Vrindadevi, which had been brought from Vrindaban along with Govind Dev, was left behind in the temple at Kaman, where it remains to this day. Madanmohan was taken to Karauli in 1728 by Raja Gopal Singh, a brother-in-law of Sawai Jai Singh.[268] He built a temple for it opposite his palace, in which it is still housed.

Oral tradition current in the Radhavallabh Sampraday says that their main deity was removed from its temple during an attack made on the orders of Aurangzeb in which seven devotees were killed. In 1682 it was installed in a new temple built at Kaman, where it remained until 1785.[269] It was while the deity was in Kaman that a Goswami named Brajlal composed, in 1698, a manual on devotional practices for members of the Radhavallabh Sampraday entitled *Sevāvicāra*.[270] The Mahants of Dhruv Tila moved to the establishment that had been founded at Salemabad by Parashuram and made it the seat of their Gaddi. The deities from the Lariliji temple at Barsana are said to have been taken for a while to Saupur (between Dholpur and Gwalior) where the devotional poet Kishoridas had an estate.[271]

Gopal Bhatt's deity of Radharaman seems to have remained in Braj, probably because it was small enough to be readily concealed if necessary and there was as yet

263 P. Mital 1968, pp. 281-5, for the transfer and subsequent history of the Gaddi. Descendants of the elder son have custody of Shrinathji.

264 P. Mital 1968, p.302. They were eventually brought back to Braj, cf. §5.38.

265 E.g. *Bhāv bhāvnā*. He also wrote a work in praise of Vallabha entitled *Mūl puruṣ*. For more information on Dwarkesh see P. Mital 1968, p.293.

266 Sahai, pp.26-7. Kirat Singh was poisoned in 1671. Some say that his immediate successor was a certain Pratap Singh.

267 A. K. Roy, pp.27-8 & 166.

268 P. Thakur, pp.102-5.

269 P. Mital 1968, p.411.

270 Lalitacharan Goswami, p.583.

271 Krishnadas Baba, intro. to Kishoridas. Saupurwali Kunj still exists at Barsana.

no imposing temple to attract the attention of the Muslims. In 1700 Manohardas, a devotee of the deity, wrote a work entitled *Rādhāramaṇ ras sāgar* in which he describes the way it is served, without making any allusion to the worship being hindered.[272] His pupil Priyadas, in his *Rasik mohinī* (1737), says that he saw the deities of Govind, Madanmohan, Radhavallabh, and Kunjbihari (Banke Bihari). It is not clear, in the case of those that had evidently been moved out of Vrindaban, whether he is referring to the empty buildings or to deities that had been installed to replace the originals.[273]

Oral tradition has it that the deity of Banke Bihari remained hidden in Vrindaban during the period when attacks were anticipated, and that it was once necessary to conceal it in the waters of the Yamuna.[274] It appears that by this time the Goswamis were in full custody of the deity, for it is said that Naraharidev, the leader of the ascetic followers of Swami Haridas, moved out of Nidhiban and worshipped a deity called Gorelal (or Gorilal) at the site where the temple of Rasikbihari now stands.[275] In the period when the temples in Vrindaban were under threat he went back to his native Bundelkhand. His successor was Rasikdev, also from Bundelkhand, who served a deity called Rasikbihari.[276] When the latter died, in 1701, he left fifty-two disciples who formed themselves into three groups (called Gaddi), one under the leadership of his successor Pitambardev, who was given custody of the deity Rasikbihari, another under Govind Dev, who served Gorelal, and a third under Lalitkishoridev, who took possession of a gourd pot (*karuvā*) and patchwork garment (*gudaṛī*) that had belonged to Swami Haridas.[277]

It is evident that the oppressive measures taken by Aurangzeb did not bring devotional activity in Braj to a complete halt, even though many of the deities were taken elsewhere. Pilgrimage, especially tours organized on a large-scale, probably suffered a decline, but had begun to pick up again by the time Sawai Jai Singh was appointed Governor of Agra in 1722. Jagatanand, for example, towards the end of the first quarter of the century, wrote his detailed itineraries for the pilgrimage in which he named several deities. He does not refer to the exodus of Shrinathji, either because he chose to ignore history, or because worship in the original temple had already been revived, as seems to have been the case elsewhere.

As far as lyric poetry is concerned, the initial wave of inspiration had virtually exhausted itself. Poetry describing the antics of Krishna and the environment in which they took place had flowered in the latter part of the sixteenth century, but by the late seventeenth century the genre had become somewhat overblown. The

272 The date of the work is given in the colophon. Dates of some of his other works range from 1696 to 1719, cf. Bansal, pp. 305-9.

273 This is the same Priyadas who, in 1712, wrote *Bhaktiras bodhinī*, a commentary on Nabhaji's *Bhaktamāl*, cf. R. D. Gupta.

274 Datt, pp.39-40.

275 Ibid., pp. 158-9. Kishordas, vol.4 p.101, says that he lived from 1583 to 1684.

276 Datt, pp.60, 159-60, Brajvallabhsharan (ed.) 1972, pp.119-120. According to P. Mital 1968, p.471, the deity was taken to Rajasthan and eventually brought back to Vrindaban when a temple was built for it.

277 For their succession up to the present time see Datt, pp. 61-6, *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, pp.288 ff., Brajvallabhsharan (ed.) 1972, pp.126, 129.

schematic conception of the moods of devotion and elements of Braj that had been formulated by Rup Goswami and his followers had been more than sufficiently elaborated by such authors as Harivyasdev and Krishnadas Kaviraj. By the time Dhruvdas completed his series of *līlā* poems the poetic potential of the romantic episodes appears to have been exploited to the full. Later devotional poets failed to produce much more than stereotyped repetition of the same themes, with the result that there is hardly anything new in the poems on *līlā* themes offered by such late seventeenth-century poets as Vallabhrasik,[278] Hariray, and Kishoridas, and little to choose between them.

26 Rajaram and Churaman

For the last twenty-five years of his reign Aurangzeb was peoccupied with his campaigns in the Deccan. Besides being a drain on resources, the warfare detained him in the south and resulted in a lack of coordinated control in the north. It was the beginning of a long period of decline of Mughal power in which insignificant villages and townships rose into prominence as their chieftains gained control of larger tracts of territory. By this time the motivation appears to have been not so much agrarian unrest as a desire on the part of some zamindars to expand their dominions.[279] Between 1685 and 1688 the Jats living west of the Yamuna began to strike out under the leadership of Rajaram, the son of the zamindar of Sinsini (or Sansani, 25 km. north-west of Bharatpur).[280] He united his own clan of Sinsinwar Jats with those of Soghar (6 km. north of Bharatpur), under their chieftain Ram Chahara. Operating from a series of mud forts, they carried out raids on imperial convoys, looted Mughal villages, and extorted fees from travellers. During a fair at Govardhan Rajaram managed to kill Lal Begh, an officer in charge of the post at Au (a village lying between Sinsini and Govardhan), in revenge for his abduction of an Ahir bride.[281] He even went so far as to attack Akbar's tomb at Sikandra (on the outskirts of Agra), and some report that the Jats took out his bones and cremated them.[282] Aurangzeb sent his grandson Bedar Bakht to the north in order to deal with the Jats. He enlisted the help of the young Bishan Singh, Raja of Amber, and in 1688 appointed him military commander at Mathura.[283] The Kachhwahas saw in this an opportunity to prevent the Jats from establishing independence on their western boundaries, and even of winning some of their territory.[284] In 1690, after a

278 A descendant of Gadadhar Bhatt, cf. P. Mital 1962, pp.223-30, and Bansal, pp.241, 295.

279 Pande 1970, p.5.

280 Wendel, pp.10-12, Sarkar 1924-30, vol.5 ch.49, Qanungo, p. 39-42, Pande 1970, pp.6-7.

281 Natwar-Singh, p.9.

282 Manucci, vol.2 pp.319-20, giving the date as 1691. See also V. A. Smith 1902, p.328.

283 Sarkar 1984, pp.151-2, Bhatnagar, p.13. The part of Mathura known as Bisan Ganj or Bisan Pura is named after him, cf. intro. to Atmaram, p.13. Bishan Singh was born in 1672.

284 Pande 1974, pp.37-41.

siege and fierce battle, Bishan Singh took Sinsini, which was awarded to him as a *jāgīr*, and in the following year he managed to capture Soghar.

Rajaram had been killed in 1688 in the course of a skirmish between the Shekhawats and Chauhans, in which he had sided with the latter.[285] A few years later the Jats began another campaign of resistance under the leadership of Churaman.[286] Bishan Singh frequently complained to Aurangzeb that he did not have sufficient forces to keep down the Jats. In return Aurangzeb censured him for allowing the Jats to recover their villages, and in 1696 removed him from the post of *fauzdār* of Mathura and appointed Itiqad Khan in his stead.[287] Churaman continued to plunder caravans and strengthen his fortifications, and by the end of the century commanded an army of ten thousand men and was making the roads from Delhi to Dholpur unsafe for Mughal convoys.[288] In 1704 he managed to recover the stronghold of Sinsini, though the Mughals regained it the following year.[289] The death of Aurangzeb was followed by a struggle for power between his two sons, in the course of which Churaman managed to loot the forces of both parties. He acquired so much booty that he soon became a force to be reckoned with. By the time Bahadur Shah was on the throne (1707) Churaman was able to pay his troops and extend the fortifications of his stronghold at Thun (40 km. north-west of Bharatpur). Bahadur Shah was obliged to tolerate him as the unofficial ruler of the area west of the Yamuna and Churaman was free to cooperate with the Emperor or loot his armies. In 1708 he helped Mughal forces in an attack on Ajit Singh, zamindar of Kaman, and two years later he joined them in an expedition against the Sikhs.[290] The next emperor, Farrukh Siyar (Shah Jahan II), was obliged to receive him formally in Delhi in 1713 and give him charge of the security of the highway between Delhi and the Chambal river.[291] His brigandage thus legalized, Churaman could avoid paying dues himself and was free to extort taxes from travellers and harass local landowners.

27 Sawai Jai Singh

It was at this time that Sawai Jai Singh (b.1688), Raja of Amber, began to play a part in events in Braj.[292] In 1713 he had been appointed Governor of Malwa, where, like Mirza Raja Jai Singh, he had been responsible for dealing with the Marathas, as well as bands of Afghan soldiers of fortune. Following an unsuccessful attempt by Chabilaram, the Governor of Agra, to subdue Churaman,

285 Sarkar 1924-30, vol.5 p.242, Qanungo, pp.42-3.
286 Wendel, pp.13-15, 107-8, Sarkar, ibid. pp.302-3, & 1984, pp.168-71, Qanungo, pp.45 ff., Pande 1970, pp.11-27.
287 Sarkar 1984, p.153.
288 Natwar-Singh, p.14.
289 Sarkar 1924-30, vol.5 p.303.
290 Irvine, p.323.
291 Bhatnagar, p.122, Ranawat, p.8.
292 See Atmaram's contemporary biography, Bhatnagar's account (based largely on Jaipur state archives), and Sarkar 1984, chs.XIII-XVII.

Jai Singh was appointed to the task. In 1716, with the support of the Rajas of Narwar, Kota, and Bundi, he began a siege of Thun that lasted for two years.[293] By this time Farrukh Siyar was a puppet in the hands of two Sayyid brothers, Abdullah and Husain Ali Khan, who were favourable to Churaman. In addition he was receiving help from neighbouring landowners and the local peasantry. Through the intervention of Sayyid Abdullah Khan the siege was called off and a treaty was drawn up between Churaman and the Emperor. In 1717 Farrukh Siyar, under pressure from orthodox advisors, and with the aim of mustering Muslim opinion in his favour, reimposed the pilgrimage tax that had been abolished four years earlier - though it was never seriously implemented, perhaps for fear of losing the support of Hindu nobles.[294] After deposing Farrukh Siyar and placing Muhammad Shah on the throne, the Sayyid brothers, in order to make the new regime more acceptable to Hindus, repealed the pilgrimage tax and abrogated restrictions that had been placed on their holy places. The Sayyids were also obliged to arrive at an agreement with Sawai Jai Singh, who had earlier been opposed to them.[295]

Churaman managed to remain on amicable terms with the new Emperor and the Sayyids, even though he attacked and plundered one of their camps near Hodal in 1720.[296] He was now behaving as an independent local chief and had sent troops to support the rebellions of Chhatrasal and Raja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur,[297] but his leadership came to an abrupt end in 1721 when he committed suicide following an argument with his unruly son Mukham (or Mokham) Singh.[298] Following the death of his brother, Churaman had taken care of his two nephews, one of whom was called Badan Singh.[299] While his uncle was alive Badan Singh had become the leader of a faction of the Jats who favoured a compromise with the Mughals rather than a life of continuous rebellion. Churaman had Badan Singh arrested and confined to Thun, but he was released on the intervention of several influential Jat leaders. In 1722 Sadat Khan, Governor (*ṣūbadār*) of Agra, was dismissed for his failure to suppress the Jats and was replaced by Sawai Jai Singh, who undertook a second siege of Thun, supported by Badan Singh and various Hindu chiefs, including Arjun Singh of Orchha. This time he was successful; the defeated Mukham was obliged to take refuge with his ally Ajit Singh of Jodhpur. Badan Singh became chief of the Jats and was acknowledged as zamindar of their territories, and Thun and many smaller fortresses were dismantled.[300] Sawai Jai Singh was awarded more regal titles and, as the foremost Hindu in the realm, became a channel for appeals to the Emperor from lesser nobles. His younger son

293 Irvine 1922, vol.1 pp.323-7, Qanungo, p.52, Bhatnagar, pp.125-8.
294 Bhatnagar, p.130.
295 Ibid., p.139.
296 Qanungo, p.56.
297 Ibid., p.57, Sarkar 1984, p.170.
298 Irvine, ibid. p.122, Natwar-Singh, pp.18-19.
299 For an account of Badan Singh see Wendel, pp. 16 ff., Qanungo, ch.3, Natwar-Singh, pp.18 ff, and Pande 1970, pp.24 ff.
300 For the siege and its aftermath see Irvine, ibid. pp. 122-3, Qanungo, p. 59-60, Bhatnagar, pp.162-4, Natwar-Singh, pp. 19-20, Sarkar 1984, pp.170-1.

Shiv Singh was appointed *fauzdār* of Mathura and deputized for his father as Governor of Agra, though he died in 1724 at the age of 22.[301]

Sawai Jai Singh was a devout person and, besides visiting the holy places between Pushkar and Gaya, did much to improve facilities for pilgrims. In 1720 he persuaded Muhammad Shah to abolish the *jizyah* permanently; eight years later he managed to get all taxes levied on pilgrims to Gaya abolished, and in about 1730 he requested the Emperor to withdraw the long-standing tax paid by Hindus wishing to bathe at certain holy places.[302] A number of documents kept at Jaipur record his purchase of land from private persons at Mathura, Vrindaban, and other holy places, on which he subsequently built dharmshalas or ghats. In 1733 he was appointed military commander of Gaya, and in the same year arranged for the abolition of a tax levied on Gujaratis and Marathas who came to bathe in the Ganges at Allahabad. He also persuaded the Emperor to issue an order forbidding the confiscation of the property of Mahants and other ascetics after their death.[303]

As regards his devotional activity in Braj, we are told by his biographer Atmaram that, while he was engaged in his campaign against Churaman, he bathed in Radhakund on the full moon of Karttik, went to Mathura in the month of Shravan in 1724, where he performed the marriage of his daughter to Abhai Singh of Jodhpur (son of Ajit Singh) on Janmashtami, after which he undertook a circuit of the sacred forests of Braj, then visited Soron and, on his return to Mathura and Vrindaban, founded religious establishments and celebrated Holi.[304] In 1727, the year he founded the new city of Jaipur on the plains below the hills around Amber, he made another visit to Braj during which he offered his weight in gold at Vishram Ghat.[305] The headquarters he built at Mathura were at a site between the Vrindaban road and the Yamuna that is now called Jai Singh Pura. His mansion at Vrindaban is known as Jai Singh Ghera and lies between the Yamuna and Nidhiban.[306] He constructed some of the ghats at Vrindaban, repaired the fort at Mathura that is now called Kans Kila, and set up an observatory there.[307] He built a temple of Sitaram on Vishram Ghat in 1732 and four years later another at Govardhan dedicated to Govardhannath.[308]

In 1729 he was again deputed to Malwa and for the next few years was busy contending with the Marathas. After being relieved of the governorships of Agra and Malwa in 1737 he returned to Jaipur, where he spent most of his time during his

301 Sarkar 1984, p.202.

302 Ibid., p.225. The *jizyah* had been abolished by Farrukh Siyar in 1713, but he had been coerced by his *dīwān* to reinforce it.

303 All these points are mentioned by Bhatnagar, pp. 340-42, with references to the relevant documents.

304 Atmaram, 527-8, 655-68.

305 Ibid., 697-701.

306 The building has now been converted into the Chaitanya Prem Sansthan.

307 The observatory was dismantled in the 19th century. Tieffenthaler, p.143, described it as a feeble imitation of the one at Jaipur, though it did have the advantage of being on an elevated position. For Sawai Jai Singh's buildings in Braj cf. P. Mital 1966, pt.2 pp.225-7.

308 A. K. Roy, pp.228-9.

remaining years.[309] Despite the rising tension between the Mughals and the Marathas, the Peshwa's mother, Radhabai, made a pilgrimage in 1735 to the holy places of northern India, including Mathura and Vrindaban, during which Jai Singh ensured her safe passage.[310] Two years later Bajirao led his forces as far as Delhi, giving decisive proof that the Marathas now had the upper hand.[311] At the beginning of 1738 the Mughals and Marathas signed a treaty that acknowledged the Peshwa's sovereignty over the whole of Malwa. The following year Nadir Shah mounted an invasion from Afghanistan and occupied Delhi. He returned to Persia with a vast amount of booty, including the celebrated Koh-i-noor diamond and the peacock throne that had been constructed by Shah Jahan - symbols of the heyday of Mughal power that was now irretrievable.

28 Religious activity in the time of Sawai Jai Singh

The royal archives kept in the Kappadwara at Jaipur contain correspondence and declarations, mainly dating from the period 1725-35, that Jai Singh sollicited from various religious leaders. They deal with such controversial points of doctrine as the right of low caste people to take part in worship, the relationship between god and the soul, the nature of the personified (*saguṇ*) and abstract (*nirguṇ*) forms of godhead, and the differences between Shankara's principles and those of Vaishnava teachers, on which Jai Singh sought the opinion of Vrindabandev, who was head of the Salemabad branch of the Nimbark Sampraday. While it is inferred that Jai Singh believed worship should be based on scriptural authority, he emphasized that members of different sects were free to follow their own tenets. However, he was disturbed by the fact that some Vaishnavas, especially armed Ramanandi 'ascetics', had become involved in commerce and with women. He summoned representatives of different sects in order to regulate their conduct, and stipulated that they should not try to accumulate wealth, carry arms, or violate regulations concerning caste distinction. To remove the corruption that had arisen among some of the ascetics who were known to keep women, he induced them to marry and lead the life of a householder. In 1727 he established a colony for them in Mathura that was named (rather ironically) Vairagyapura. He is recorded as having disapproved of the Lal Panthis, followers of Laldas, a Meo who had sought to reconcile Hinduism and Islam. He made the Lal Panthis living in his state undertake in writing that they would follow Vaishnava precepts.[312] The archives show that he exercised the right to appoint Mahants and abolish any sects he disapproved of. He was particularly sympathetic towards the Gaudiya Sampraday and used the name of Govind Dev on his seal. In 1735 the deity was brought from Amber and installed in a temple facing his palace at Jaipur. The custody of Govind Dev and management of the temple

309 Bhatnagar, p. 256. Sardesai, vol.2 p.142, says he was appointed to Malwa in 1732.
310 Sardesai, vol.2 pp.147-9.
311 Ibid., 152-5.
312 For references to documents dealing with these issues see Bhatnagar, pp.341-2, A. K. Roy, pp.25-7, and Thiel-Horstmann.

were conferred upon a Goswami named Jagannath. He was the first custodian to marry, and ever since the office of head-priest has been hereditary.[313]

Although Jai Singh appears to have been more concerned with conduct than doctrine, the correspondence does refer to Ramanuja's *Brahmasūtra* commentary as a standard and authoritative text. Some sectarian sources refer to his summoning representatives of all the Vaishnava sects to Jaipur in order to prove that they were an authentic Sampraday and that their practices were based on Vedic principles.[314] The manner in which this conference is reported in sources sympathetic to the Gaudiya standpoint seems to reflect rivalry for Jai Singh's patronage and the resentment felt by other sects, in particular the Ramanandis, at the special favour he showed to the Gaudiya Sampraday. Gopal Kavi says that the dispute arose when members of the Vishnuswami, Ramanandi, and Harivyasi (i.e. Nimbarki) orders claimed the right to serve the Gaudiya deities of Govind Dev, Gopinath, and Madanmohan.[315] When Jai Singh asked the Gaudiyas to send a scholar to defend their cause, they recommended Vishwanath Chakravarti, whom they regarded as their most authoritative theologian. Born in Bengal, he had settled in Braj and written commentaries and other devotional works.[316] He belonged to the pupillary succession of Loknath and was entrusted with the worship of Gokulanand. This deity had been brought to Radhakund by Sarvabhauma, another celebrated Bengali scholar, who is said to have become Vishwanath's disciple when he realized his superiority in debate.[317] Although Gokulanand was worshipped along with Radhavinod at Vrindaban, Vishwanath Chakravarti is said to have lived mainly at Radhakund. He refused to go to Jaipur because he had taken vows of renunciation and no longer wished to leave Braj. Sarvabhauma offered to go instead, and was victorious in the debate that took place between representatives of the four Sampradays. Jai Singh, says Gopal, fell at his feet and declared himself to be his disciple, saying that the four Sampradays were in fact one. This, we are supposed to believe, is how he became a patron of the Gaudiya Sampraday and founded temples for it at Galta. Bansal has suggested that the reason for the conference was a dispute over whether worship of Govinda (Krishna) should take precedence over that of Narayana (Vishnu), whether the worship of Radha alongside Krishna was Vedic, and whether or not the Gopis were married when they made love to Krishna.[318]

313 A. K. Roy, pp.27-8, 160-171. The senior descendants of Jagannath are still the head priests of the temples of Govind Dev in Vrindaban and Jaipur. Roy gives the lineage of ascetic and then heriditary incumbents from Rup Goswami down to the present day on pp.164-6. The term used for the function of head-priest/manager is 'shebait'.

314 That this took the form of a great debate or conference is implied by P. Mital 1968, pp.208-11, suggesting the date as c.1723.

315 VDA 32.

316 Including VRC, cf. §6.13. Kennedy notes that his commentary on BhP was written in 1704. De says he lived from 1646-1724, but P. Mital 1962, pp.66, 1968, p.339, says he died in 1754.

317 VDA 32, where the succession is given as Loknath, Narottamdas Thakur, Ganganarayan Chakravarti.

318 Vishwanath Chakravarti and his pupils advocated the *parakīyā* doctrine. See Bansal, p.76, who, like P. Mital 1962, pp. 83-4, proposes a date of c.1718. Mital says that Shaiva opponents of the Vaishnavas had complained that they were non-Vedic.

Another disciple of Vishwanath Chakravarti was Baldev Vidyabhushan, a native of Orissa, who was the last great theologian among the Bengali devotees in Braj. Some say that it was he who defended the Gaudiya cause before Jai Singh and that he wrote a *Brahmasūtra* commentary entitled *Govindabhāṣya* especially for this purpose.[319] Elkman concludes that he did write the commentary for the supposed conference, but his real task was to justify Chaitanya's credentials by strengthening the notion that through pupillary succession he was linked with Madhva.[320] He notes that some sources suggest that the dispute arose after the Ramanandis of Galta, claiming to represent the Shrivaishnava tradition, complained that the followers of Chaitanya were not an authentic Sampraday and were not conducting the worship of Govind Dev in a proper manner. This suggests that the real cause of the dispute was rivalry between the Gaudiyas and Ramanandis for the patronage of Sawai Jai Singh.

Ramanandi sources tell of some kind of conference held at Galta, the purpose of which was to organize resistance against the threat from orders of Shaiva ascetics with whom there had been violent conflicts at some of the places of pilgrimage. The conference is seen as a turning point in the history of the Ramanandis, for it confirmed their assumed status as the independent northern representatives of the Shrivaishnava Sampraday and resulted in the formation of militant orders of ascetics (*aṇi, akhāṛā*), constituting what is referred to as a *khalsā* of the four Sampradays. A total of fifty-two ascetic orders (*dvār*) were recognized, thirty six of them comprised of Ramanandis, twelve of ascetics of the Nimbark Sampraday, and four claiming allegiance to the Sampradays founded by Madhva and Vishnuswami.[321]

The Mahant of a group of armed Ramanandi ascetics in the south-western part of Jaipur city was called Balanand. Some say that he was responsible for first organizing a meeting in Vrindaban of all the Vaishnava sects, but that at this stage only the Ramanandis formed militant groups.[322] A second conference, dealing specifically with affiliation to the four Sampradays, was held in the Brahmapuri quarter of Jaipur under the auspices of Jai Singh and under the leadership of Balanand.[323] Among those who attended was Vrindabandev, who also organized another meeting in 1734 at Nim ka Thana, a centre of the Nimbark Sampraday north of Jaipur, at which the Rama and Krishna devotees finally agreed on the number and formation of their militant orders.[324] Vrindabandev, who was head of the Salemabad Gaddi from 1697 to 1740, was on good terms with Jai Singh as well

319 P. Mital 1962, p. 67. See Elkman, ch.III, for further biographical details and his comments on Jiv's theology, and De, p.22, with reference to a conference at Galta.

320 Elkman, pp.26-7, 38-47. The tradition that Chaitanya was a spiritual descendant of Madhva is spurious, cf. De, pp.13 ff. and 21 ff, and A. K. Majumdar, pp.260-9. It may simply be based on the name of Madhavendra Puri.

321 Burghart 1978, pp.130-1.

322 B. P. Singh, p.120, and P. Mital 1968, p.209, give the year as 1713. For Balanand see A. K. Roy, pp. 191 ff.

323 P. Mital, ibid., gives the date as c.1726. In about 1756 another conference was held at Galta during the reign of Madho Singh.

324 P. Mital 1968, pp.358-9, naming the various *aṇi* and *akhāṛā* that were formed.

as with the rulers of Jodhpur, Udaipur, and Kishangarh.[325] He was himself a poet and had other poets among his disciples, including his successor Govind Dev, Ghananand - the most notable poet of his time,[326] Bankawati, the co-wife of Raj Singh of Kishangarh, and, eventually, her daughter Sundar Kunwari.

The cause of the ascetic followers of Swami Haridas at one or other of these conferences is said to have been defended by their leader Pitambardas. In response to the supposed challenge to prove that they belonged to an authentic Vaishnava tradition, he composed a work giving the spiritual descent of the order and linking it with the Nimbark Sampraday.[327] This point of view was later endorsed by his disciple Kishordas in a more elaborate history of Swami Haridas and his tradition entitled *Nijmat siddhānt*. The conference is also said to have motivated the Goswamis who had custody of Banke Bihari to declare themselves members of the Vishnuswami Sampraday.[328]

Followers of the Radhavallabh Sampraday say that their leading teachers declined to send a representative, produce a theological commentary, or align themselves with one of the four Sampradays. This was because they regarded their devotional practices as being based solely on divine love. According to sectarian tradition, their refusal to cooperate led to persecution of the Sampraday until the death of Jai Singh, after which his successor Ishwari Singh (1743-50) made peace with them and granted them land. This account is certainly exaggerated, to the extent that it is alleged that members of the sect were imprisoned or exiled and that Ruplal, the senior descendant of Hit Harivansh, was obliged to keep away from Vrindaban until the death of Jai Singh.[329]

29 Badan Singh

After becoming the recognized leader of the Jats and inheritor of most of the territory that had been under the control of Churaman, Badan Singh took steps to consolidate his authority over the districts of Agra and Mathura. He increased his influence by marrying daughters of powerful Jat chieftains established at Kamar and Sahar[330] and continued to remain on good terms with the emperor Muhammad Shah and Sawai Jai Singh. Although he was not a feudatory of Jai Singh, he accepted a position of subordination under him and, until he became incapacitated by old age, went each year to Jaipur in order to attend the royal Dashahra festival and pay his respects.[331] In 1725 he began to build a fort and

325 N. Sharma, p.55, P. Mital 1968, pp.356-9, Brajvallabhsharan (ed.) 1972, pp.237-40.
326 See below, end of §5.33.
327 Haynes, pp.120-4.
328 P. Mital 1968, p.464.
329 Lalitacharan Goswami, pp. 70-72, 484-5, P. Mital 1968, pp. 423-4, citing *Hari rūp caritra beli* of Chacha Vrindabandas, written in 1767.
330 Qanungo, pp.60-1.
331 Sarkar 1984, p.253. Qanungo, p.63, says that according to tradition Badan Singh attended a horse sacrifice held by Sawai Jai Singh at Jaipur (held in 1741, according to Bhatnagar, pp.264-5), though according to Pande 1970, p.33, there is no record of his having attended the *darbār* at Jaipur after 1734-35.

palaces at Dig, the town he chose as his new capital. For a time it seemed that Badan Singh was siding with the troublesome Meos, who lived in the northern part of his territory. To appease him, and to encourage him to subdue the Meos, he was granted land at Sinsini, Thun, and Nagar.[332] Suraj Mal, who appears to have been an adopted nephew of Badan Singh, though some say he was his son, showed the kind of capabilities that made him an obvious successor. In 1732 Badan Singh sent him to capture Soghar, an action that led to a reconciliation with the Sogharia Jats. Work was then started on extensive fortifications south of Soghar that resulted in the creation of the town of Bharatpur, a stronghold that was to become famous throughout India for its impregnability. At the same time the old fortifications at Thun and Sinsini were superseded by stronger ones at Kumher and Wair. Eventually Badan Singh was awarded the title of Raja, and thus became the first mortal to be acknowledged as 'King of Braj' (*braj rāj*), though he generally preferred to use the more modest title of 'Thakur' and declined invitations to the Emperor's court on the grounds that he was unworthy of such an honour.[333] He succeeded in reducing the powerful and wealthy Jats, pacifying them by giving them the honour of serving as elders or councillors and providing them with various concessions.[334]

In his later years he left the task of commanding his forces to Suraj Mal and retired to a mansion he had built at Sahar. Having turned away from the Jat tradition of brigandage, he began to show more concern for religious and cultural pursuits. Dig, and later Bharatpur, acquired fine palaces, a circle of court poets, and other quasi-Mughal and Rajput trappings. Suraj Mal, and later on his successor Jawahar Singh, embellished them with items looted from Delhi and Agra.[335] Badan Singh also built a mansion at Kamar, and another provided with a temple at Dhir Samir in Vrindaban, and made endowments to religious institutions. He also kept a large number of concubines by whom he had, according to Wendel, more than thirty sons and an untold number of daughters.[336] Like other royal households, the Jats began to mythologize their ancestry. They fancied themselves as descendants of the Yadavas, claiming common ancestry with the Jadon Rajas of Karauli and Jaisalmer.[337] Although they styled themselves after the Rajputs, they could not lay any convincing claim to descent from the Sun or the Moon. The Rajputs continued to regard them with scorn as a degenerate race;[338] everyone knew that, in the words of Thornhill, they had 'no more illustrious ancestors than the leaders of a band of thieves.'[339]

332 Pande 1970, p.33.
333 Pande 1970, pp.37 & 53, gives the date as 1739. According to Bhatnagar, pp.165-6, and Natwar-Singh, p.22, the title was awarded at the request of Sawai Jai Singh as a reward for the suppression of the Meos.
334 Pande 1970, pp.39-42.
335 Wendel, p.97, Barbé, p.48.
336 Wendel, p.20.
337 See Drake-Brockman, pp.29 ff., for origin myths and ancestry of the Jadons.
338 Barbé, p.49, quoting from the memoirs of Madec.
339 Thornhill, p.29.

30 Suraj Mal

The eighteenth century was a period of political turmoil, but the result was a gradual decentralization and commercialization of power that gave rise to a flourishing and resilient network of moneylenders, stewards, and service gentry, based in small centres of economic vitality away from the imperial capitals, who acted as intermediaries between the state and agrarian society.[340] The Marathas came to play an increasingly important role in events in northern India, but they had to compete for supremacy in a complicated series of campaigns, opportunistic double-dealing, and continually shifting alliances involving Mughal factions, Afghans, Rohillas (Afghans based in Rohilkhand), Rajputs, Jats, Sikhs, and Nagas or Gosains. The latter belonged in theory to one of the ten Dashnami orders of Shaiva ascetics established by disciples of Shankara, but they had a long tradition of fighting and were not necessarily celibate.[341] Large numbers of them roamed far and wide to attend fairs and take part in military campaigns, sometimes in the pay of Muslim leaders. Others settled down, became landowners, and were prominent in trade and moneylending in Bengal and the domains of the Nawabs of Oudh. Wendel describes them as 'une drole classe de soldats...un détachement de vagabonds...ce sont la plupart de jeunes gaillards gros et gras.' They were so revered that they managed to live off charity, but would readily resort to aggression in order to obtain funds. He says that they could muster an army of more than ten thousand and went about with matted hair, wearing only a thin piece of cloth or nothing at all, smeared with ashes and cow dung, and carrying an assortment of weapons. Though they were celibate in appearance, there were a number of women in their camps, but at the same time they were 'fort adonnés à l'abominable vice de sodomie' and abducted young boys to join their ranks.[342] The militant orders of Ramanandi ascetics followed their example, and may even have started as an offshoot of them.

In the midst of these opposing factions was a succession of increasingly pathetic Mughal emperors who were exploited by persons who sought to abuse their prestige and status as rightful heirs of the throne at Delhi. Meanwhile, the French and British, operating in the South and in the hinterlands of their trading posts around the coast, had begun to annex large tracts of India. Their military successes made the Indian princes aware of European techniques of warfare. Many began to hire the services of European adventurers, some of whom commanded their own force of mercenaries, in order to support and train their armies.

The Jats managed to set themselves up as rulers of the territory between Delhi and Agra under the able leadership of Suraj Mal.[343] He maintained good relations with Jai Singh so that Jat power could grow under his auspices. He supported Ishwari Singh, son of Jai Singh, in his conflict with his brother over succession to the throne. Suraj Mal strengthened ties with other Jat families by marrying Kishori

340 Bayly 1983, pp.459, 461.

341 See Cohn and Bayly for further information on the Gosains.

342 Wendel, pp.66-7.

343 See Sudan Kavi, Wendel, pp. 27-63, Qanungo, pp. 64-158, Natwar-Singh, and Pande 1970, ch.III.

(also known as 'Hansiya'), the daughter of the Jat chief at Hodal, and arranging the marriage of his son Nawal Singh to the daughter of Sardar Sitaram, who occupied the fortress at Kotban. He assisted the emperor Muhammad Shah in his campaign against the Rohillas in 1745. Five years later a victory over the Mughal forces resulted in a peace treaty favourable to the Jats, one of the terms of which was that pipal trees and Hindu temples should not be damaged. In 1750-51 he helped Mughal forces led by Safdar Jang against the Rohillas, after which he was appointed military commander of Mathura and awarded a regal title.[344] Two years later he seized the opportunity of plundering Delhi while assisting Safdar Jang in a conflict with the Queen Mother (Udham Bai) that followed the murder of her paramour, the eunuch Javid Khan. In 1753 the Maratha leader Khanderao Holkar camped at Hodal and sent detachments to plunder Jat villages, including Barsana and Nandgaon, but in the following year Suraj Mal managed to withstand a siege of Kumher launched by a combined force of eighty thousand Mughal and Maratha troops, which meant that they were obliged to recognize him as the local ruler.[345] Over the next couple of years he took control of towns nearer Delhi (Palwal, Ballabhgarh, and Ghasira) and managed to occupy Alwar, ousting the troops that had been stationed there by Madho Singh of Jaipur in an attempt to wrest control of it from the Mughals.

After the death of Badan Singh in 1756 Suraj Mal became Raja and his twenty-five surviving brothers were granted lands in the Jat territory. In the following year the people of Mathura and Vrindaban suffered the most appalling massacre in their history.[346] Ten years earlier Ahmad Shah Abdali, after assassinating Nadir Shah, had taken over Kabul and lay claim to all the territory in India that his predecessor had conquered during his invasion of 1739. Abdali advanced on Delhi, with the collusion of the Rohillas and Mughal factions who wanted to see the Marathas ousted from northern India and were opposed to Ghazi-ud-din (Imam-ul-mulk), who had been appointed to the post of Mir Bakhshi under Ahmad Shah. On arrival Abdali forced the emperor Alamgir into submission and allowed his troops to spend a month in the city indulging in murder and pillage. Many of the inhabitants fled to Mathura and Agra, some of them only to be robbed by Jats and other bandits on the way. Abdali then moved southwards and, with the support of the Rohillas, ousted Jawahar Singh from the stronghold at Ballabhgarh and considered attacking Dig and Kumher. Suraj Mal sent agents offering a fine in order to be left in peace, while at the same time preparing for battle. Wary of attempting to capture Suraj Mal's forts, Abdali decided to advance on the undefended towns of Mathura and Vrindaban, where Holi celebrations were in progress, and offered his troops a reward of five rupees for every infidel head that was brought in. At Chaumuhan ten thousand Jats made an unsuccessful attempt to check his advance, but they were outnumbered two to one. The Afghans spent two days plundering the villages round about:

344 'Raja Brajendra Bahadur', according to Sarkar 1984, p.253. Pande, ibid., says that he was created 'Kunwar Bahadur' with the title of 'Rajendra'.

345 Sarkar 1932-8, pp.513-4, Sardesai, vol 2 pp.375-8, Natwar-Singh, ch.5.

346 See the annotated translation by Irwin (1907) of Samin's account, Qanungo, pp.99 ff., Sarkar 1932-8, vol.2 pp.114-26, Natwar-Singh, ch.7, and Sardesai, vol.2 ch.XVII.

> One horseman mounted a horse and took ten to twenty others, each attached to the tail of the horse preceding it, and drove them just like a string of camels. When it was one watch after sunrise I saw them come back. Every horseman had loaded up all his horses with plundered property, and atop of it rode the girl-captives and the slaves. The severed heads were tied up in rugs like bundles of grain and placed on the heads of the captives...an order was given to carry the severed heads to the entrance gate of the chief minister's quarters, where they were to be entered in registers, and then built up into heaps and pillars. Each man, in accordance with the number of heads he had brought in, received, after they had been counted, five rupees a head from the State...It was a marvellous state of things, this slaying and capturing, and no whit inferior to the day of Last Judgement.[347]

The marauders then set upon Vrindaban, where the days of slaughter were no less horrific:

> Wherever you gazed you beheld heaps of the slain; you could only pick you way with difficulty, owing to the quantity of bodies lying about and the amount of blood spilt. At one place we reached, we saw about two hundred dead children lying in a heap. Not one of the dead bodies had a head...When I got to the town of Mathura I saw exactly the same state of things. Everywhere in lane and bazar lay the headless trunks of the slain; and the whole city was burning...I saw a number of Bairagi and Sanyasi huts, huddled close together...In each hut lay a severed head with the head of a dead cow applied to its mouth and tied to it with a rope around its neck.[348]

Abdali moved to Mahaban and encamped at a sarai that had been built there during the reign of Aurangzeb by Abdunnabi Khan. Gokul was defended by a force of four thousand Nagas, half of whom fell after killing an equal number of Afghans.[349] He then sent his general on to Agra, which was plundered for the next two weeks, but by this time large numbers of his troops were dying from an outbreak of cholera, and so they went back to Delhi and then on to Afghanistan.

After Abdali's withdrawal the Marathas returned to take possession of Delhi and Lahore and advanced as far as Peshawar. In 1759 Ghazi-ud-din engineered the murder of Alamgir and his replacement by Shah Jahan III. Abdali, already outraged by the expulsion of his son from Lahore, returned to drive the Marathas out of Panjab and avenge the murder of Alamgir. He reclaimed Delhi in 1760, while Ghazi-ud-din and many other Hindu and Muslim refugees fled to Dig and other

347 Irvine 1907, p.60.
348 Ibid., p.62.
349 Sarkar 1958, pp.153-4.

strongholds in Suraj Mal's territory. Bhau Sahab was nominated to lead a force of Marathas to the north to recover Delhi. On the way he was met by Suraj Mal, who agreed to support them in any actions undertaken in his territory. Abdali made an unsuccessful attempt to attack Dig, after which Suraj Mal helped Ghazi-ud-din and Bhau to recapture Delhi.[350] The alliance between the Jats and the Marathas was an uneasy one and eventually Bhau Sahab alienated Suraj Mal, probably by his refusal to put him in charge of Delhi.

Abdali, with the support of Shuja-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Oudh, defeated the Marathas at Panipat and placed Ahmad Shah on the throne at Delhi, though real power was in the hands of the Rohilla leader Najib-ud-daulah.[351] Among those who fought alongside the Muslims was a force of Nagas led by a Gosain named Anupgiri, better known as Himmat Bahadur - a title awarded him by Shuja-ud-daulah, whom he had earlier helped defend Lucknow against Abdali.[352] An estimated seventy-five thousand Marathas perished at Panipat; some of the survivors managed to find refuge with Suraj Mal. Himmat Bahadur obtained permission to retrieve the bodies of Bhau and other Maratha generals and cremate them according to Hindu rites.

After the battle Abdali returned to Afghanistan, having confirmed the position of Shah Alam as emperor, who had been installed on the throne by the Marathas the previous year. Abdali was not in a position to confront the Marathas again, should they send an expedition to the north. There was little left worth plundering in the neighbourhood of Delhi and he could find no money to pay his troops, who were unwilling to take on Suraj Mal, the nearest source of wealth, until their arrears were paid. Abdali must have been aware that the Jats could withstand any siege and could outlast the patience of his troops. He was not interested in occupying Delhi, being content to retain control over the fertile plains of the Panjab as far as the Sutlej - though in order to do so he had to contend with Sikh opposition. For some years after their defeat at Panipat the Marathas ceased to be active in the north and were preoccupied by their conflict with the Nizam of Hyderabad. To the east, in Bengal and Bihar, the British were in the ascendant, while Shuja-ud-daulah was involved in intrigues with the Nawab of Bengal. Najib-ud-daulah was unable prevent Suraj Mal from taking advantage of the situation. In 1761 he managed to occupy the fort at Agra, restored Ghazi-ud-din to power at Delhi, and instructed his sons, Nahar and Jawahar Singh, to take control of territory to the east of the Yamuna and in the area now called Haryana.[353]

In December 1763 Najib-ud-daulah, with the support of the Rohillas, confronted Suraj Mal south of Delhi. In the course of the fighting Suraj Mal was killed and the Jats withdrew, unvanquished but demoralized.[354] Suraj Mal's body was not recovered, but one of his four queens produced two of his teeth, which were used for

350 These events are described by Qanungo, pp.113-17, and Sardesai, vol.2 pp.417-8.

351 See Sardesai, vol.2 chs.XX-XXI for Panipat and events surrounding it.

352 He was born in 1734. For his biography see Sarkar 1958, pt.II chs.II ff., and Padmakar's *Himmat bahādur birudāvalī*, with introduction by Bhagwan Din.

353 Qanungo, pp.145-8.

354 The circumstances in which he died are uncertain, cf. Qanungo, pp.152-8 for various accounts.

a ceremonial cremation at Govardhan.[355] He is commemorated by an impressive cenotaph built along one side of Kusum Sarovar. At the time of his death his domain extended over the present districts of Agra, Mathura, Bharatpur, Dholpur, Alwar, Gurgaon, Rohtak, Meerut, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Hathras, Etah, and Mainpuri. The Jats remained in control of Agra for several years, giving the Hindus a chance to turn the tables on the Muslims. Public manifestations of Islam were suppressed, butchers' shops were closed, slaughter of animals was prohibited, and the great mosque was used as a market place.[356]

Suraj Mal's friend, mentor, and troubleshooter was Rup Ram Katara (c. 1710-80).[357] He came from Barsana and belonged to a family of priests who had connections with the Jat chieftains, as well as with the royal houses of Jaipur, Gwalior, and Karauli. He was first enrolled by Badan Singh as a chaplain (*purohit*) and financial advisor and remained in the service of the Jats after the death of Suraj Mal. Besides serving as a priest for Suraj Mal, he also acted as an envoy in negotiations with the Marathas and continued to serve Jawahar Singh. The two most significant encounters were negotiation of terms when the Marathas crossed the Chambal and withdrawal of Jat support at the time of their siege of Delhi in 1760. The money he earned in the service of various nobles was spent on the embellishment of Barsana and other places in Braj.

It was during the reign of Suraj Mal that various European adventurers became active in northern India. Jean Law de Lauriston, who came to meet Suraj Mal in 1758, notes that he had long wished to have some Europeans in his service.[358] He gives a description of how, as an ally of the Marathas, he had to lead his band of sepoys from Agra to Delhi and back. He managed to avoid paying any dues, but had to resist repeated harassment and attempts at plunder by the Jats - 'les plus grands voleurs qu'il y ait de ces côtés là'. On his return from Delhi, after his camp was plundered, he received a letter from Suraj Mal apologizing for the earlier attacks his kinsmen had made upon him.

31 Suraj Mal's successors

Suraj Mal's five sons were, in order of seniority, Jawahar, Ratan, Nawal, Ranjit, and Nahar Singh. Despite the valour Jawahar Singh had shown in military campaigns, his father favoured Nahar Singh as his successor and groomed him accordingly. Suraj Mal had put Jawahar in charge of Dig, but he showed himself to be extravagant and over-ambitious.[359] He gathered around him courtiers of whom Suraj Mal was suspicious and, aspiring to become more independent, led an attack

355 Natwar-Singh, p.105.

356 Modave, p.385.

357 Growse, p.77, Natwar-Singh, p.122.

358 See Law de Lauriston, ch.IX pp.303 ff., for an account of his march through Suraj Mal's territory.

359 For Jawahar Singh see Ranawat, Wendel, pp.64 ff., Sahai pp.78-86, Qanungo chs.X-XI, and Pande 1970, ch.IV. He was perhaps an adopted son of Kishori, Suraj Mal's favourite but barren wife.

on his father's forces. In the course of the fighting Jawahar was wounded and some of his supporters were killed. Jawahar's injury left him lame,[360] but father and son were reconciled. After the death of Suraj Mal his chief minister, commander, and other leading figures opposed to Jawahar Singh supported the cause of the younger brother, Nahar Singh, but he fled to Dholpur when Jawahar advanced on Dig to claim the throne. Shortly afterwards, motivated by the desire to avenge his father's death, Jawahar Singh spent a vast amount of money enlisting Maratha and Sikh mercenaries in an attempt to conquer Delhi. It was a costly failure, though he is reputed to have come back with gates that were installed at the north entrance of the fort of Bharatpur and a black marble throne that was brought to Dig.[361] He was supported by Gosain Umraogiri, a leader of a force of Nagas who had joined the service of the Jats while Suraj Mal was alive. In 1764 Umraogiri's elder brother, Himmat Bahadur, also joined the service of Jawahar Singh when his former employer, Shuja-ud-daulah, was no longer able to pay him.[362] In 1766 Jawahar Singh alienated the two Gosains when he ordered an attack on their camp, in which several Nagas were killed, having been led to believe that they were in collusion with the Marathas. In 1765 Jawahar Singh enlisted the notorious adventurer Walter Reinhardt (called Sombre or Somru), who had also left the service of Shuja-ud-daulah, and in the following year he was joined by René Madec, who had left the Rohillas because they had failed to pay his troops.[363]

In order to recoup his losses, Jawahar set about extorting payments from vassals and punishing those who had not supported his succession. Some of the Jats whom he alienated joined the cause of Nahar Singh, still waiting in Dholpur, and sought help from the Marathas. They were, however, defeated by Jawahar Singh, and his brother was obliged to seek refuge in Jaipur, where he eventually poisoned himself. In 1767 Jawahar invaded Bundelkhand and wrested some territory from the Marathas.[364] He formed an alliance with Bijai Singh of Jodhpur and was at loggerheads with Madho Singh of Jaipur. On his way back from a visit to Jodhpur and Pushkar he was attacked by Madho Singh. Both sides suffered heavy losses, but Jawahar managed to escape to Alwar, thanks to the help of Madec and Somru.[365] Perhaps the main reason for Madho Singh's hostility was that Jawahar, unlike his grandfather, had never acknowledged and respected the supremacy of Jaipur. Madho Singh must also have been angered by Suraj Mal's support for his rival, Ishwari Singh, and by his having ordered Jawahar to take control of Alwar. At the beginning of 1768 Jawahar Singh was again worsted in a second encounter with Madho Singh at Kaman, then a border outpost of the Jaipur territory. Shortly

360 Wendel, p. 44 :'il a le bras droit faible et...est encore aujourd'hui boiteux.'

361 For a detailed account of the attack on Delhi see Ranawat, ch.4, and Sarkar 1932-38, vol.2 pp.334 ff. His capture of the gates and throne is mentioned by Sahai and by Pande 1970, p.91.

362 Sarkar 1958, pp.167-77.

363 Somru's recruitment is mentioned by Qanungo, p. 180. See Barbé, pp.43 ff. for Madec's period of service with the Jats and Modave (index) for details of both adventurers.

364 Sardesai, vol.2 p 509, Ranawat pp.65-8.

365 Barbé, pp.49-50, Ranawat, pp.76-86, and Sarkar 1984, pp.252-8, deal with the intrigues and battles fought between Jawahar and Madho Singh.

afterwards Jawahar Singh went to Agra, where he was murdered by a disgruntled subject while watching an elephant fight.[366]

The two defeats suffered by the Jats in their conflict with Jaipur mark the beginning of their decline. Jawahar Singh had set himself up as an autocratic leader. He overruled important Jat headmen and zamindars and failed to make tactful compromises with them. The traditional Jat confederacy was transformed into a centralized state with a standing army and opulent court, but neither Jawahar Singh nor any of his successors managed to form any solid and lasting alliance with the Rajputs, Mughals, or Marathas.[367] Wendel, a German Jesuit who was in the service of Jawahar Singh from 1766-69, apparently as a spy for the British, remarked that the Jats, though they had become rich, were no longer as fierce and intrepid as they used to be. They failed to live up to the example set by Suraj Mal, their court lacked majesty, they were 'riches mais sordides, puissans mais paisans.'[368] This decadence is typified by Jawahar Singh's successor, Ratan Singh. He had no taste for politics and warfare. Instead, during his brief reign of nine months, he organized extravagant festivities on the banks of the Yamuna at Vrindaban, featuring four thousand dancing girls,[369] and is said to have ordered a hundred thousand maunds of red powder to be thrown around in the course of Holi celebrations.[370] He was hoodwinked by a Goswami of Banke Bihari temple named Rūpānand, who claimed that he could transmute base metals into gold. When the charlatan was pressed to demonstrate his powers, he promptly assassinated Ratan Singh.[371] The Goswamis themselves tell a different story.[372] They claim that a conflict broke out when Ratan Singh attempted to keep Banke Bihari at Bharatpur after it had been recovered from the Maharaja of Karauli, who had managed to bribe one of the Goswamis to let him abduct the deity.

Ratan Singh was survived by his infant son Kehari (or Kesari) Singh, but his two brothers, Nawal and Ranjit Singh, dismissed the child's guardian, Dan Singh, and began to fight each other for power. Among those supporting Nawal Singh was a Gosain named Balanand, leader of a contingent of Nagas, who came from Gohad - a territory in Bundelkhand belonging to a different branch of the Jats.[373] By this time (1770) the Marathas, under the leadership of Mahadji Sindhiya (1727-94), a survivor of Panipat, were beginning to reassert themselves in the north. They received support from Najaf Khan, acting on behalf of Shah Alam. Ranjit Singh sought the help of the Marathas, who attacked Nawal Singh at Govardhan and carried out a successful assault on Dig. Nawal Singh signed a treaty with the Marathas by which he agreed to pay them six and a half million rupees, while Ranjit

366 Qanungo, pp.216-7, Ranawat pp.88-90.
367 Pande 1970, pp.101-2.
368 Wendel, p.78.
369 Barbé, p.51, Sarkar 1932-8, vol.3 p.4, Qanungo, p.224.
370 Sahai, p.46.
371 Madec, cited by Barbé, p.51, Sarkar ibid., Qanungo p.226, and Growse, p. 41, who suggests that an unfinished *chatrī* near the temple of Madanmohan was intended to commemorate him.
372 Datt, p.40.
373 See Sarkar 1958, pp.188-90 for Balanand's services. For the struggle between Nawal and Ranjit Singh see Pande, 1970, pp.108 ff.

Singh gave up his claim to Jat kingship and accepted part of their territory as a *jāgīr*.[374]

In the same year the Marathas occupied Agra and Mathura, from where they waged a successful campaign to reclaim the Doab. In 1771 Mahadji took possession of Delhi and in the following year reinstated the Emperor, who had been under British protection at Allahabad. Mahadji managed to subdue the Rohillas, but the death of the Peshwa and the murder of his successor led to the withdrawal of the Marathas from the north. The Jats, with the help of Gosain Balanand, attacked the Marathas in the vicinity of Sonkh and Aring, against the advice of Somru and Madec, but the Marathas prevailed, with heavy losses on both sides.[375] Madec, who had been charged by Nawal Singh with the task of recovering the territory he had been forced to yield to his younger brother, went into the service of the Emperor, in accordance with instructions from the French government.[376]

Nawal Singh, taking advantage of the chaotic situation, advanced towards Delhi, but in the following year (1774) Najaf Khan drove him out of Ballabhgarh and back to Hodal, then on to Kotban, and finally towards Dig. After over a week of skirmishes in the area between Sahar and Barsana, a battle took place near Barsana in which Nawal Singh was supported by Somru with six battalions of musketeers, three battalions armed with flint guns with fuses and commanded by French officers, twelve thousand of Balanand's Nagas, and some ten thousand cavalry and foot soldiers commanded by chiefs who had come to assist him.[377] The battle, however, was lost and Barsana was subjected to looting by the imperial troops, in the course of which many of the recently erected mansions were almost destroyed in the search for hidden treasure.[378] Nawal Singh's father-in-law, Sitaram, evacuated the fortress at Kotban after a siege of nineteen days. Somru, who had managed to stand firm in the battle at Barsana while Nawal Singh was routed, severed his connections with the Jats and, taking his troops with him, went over to Najaf Khan.

Najaf Khan then sent a portion of his army, commanded by Najaf Quli, to lay siege to Kaman, supported by Rohillas under Mullah Rahimdad.[379] The fort was captured and Somru was placed in charge of it, an appointment which encouraged the Rohilla chief to defect to the side of Nawal Singh. The loss of Kaman upset the Rajputs of Jaipur, and so they joined forces with Nawal Singh in an attempt to regain it. Eventually it was restored to them in return for a cash payment of eleven hundred thousand rupees and a promise that they would break their alliance with the Jats.[380] Najaf Khan attacked Nawal Singh while he was on his way to bathe at Govardhan on the occasion of Ganga Dashahara, and then went on to capture and

374 Sardesai, vol.2, pp. 509-13, Barbé, pp.55-6. For Nawal Singh cf. Sahai, pp.87-95.
375 Sarkar 1932-38, vol.3 pp.8-12.
376 In 1773, cf. Barbé, p.72.
377 For an account of these events see Sarkar 1932-38, vol.3 pp.90 ff., and Qanungo, pp.257 ff.
378 Growse, p.42.
379 Qanungo, pp.274-8.
380 Modave, pp.382, 412-3. Sarkar, ibid. p.114, says that the deal with the Rajputs was negotiated by Somru.

plunder Dig.[381] Shortly afterwards Nawal Singh died, either from dropsy or by poisoning himself. Among those fighting on the side of Najaf Khan was Himmat Bahadur, who had recently joined him after another period of service with Shuja-ud-daulah and his successor.[382]

Following the death of Nawal Singh, the Rohilla chief, Rahimdad, managed to gain control of Dig and declare himself deputy for Kehari Singh.[383] Ranjit Singh set out from his stronghold at Kumher and, with the help of Balanand and two thousand Maratha horse, succeeded in ousting him. Later that year Dig was besieged by Najaf Khan, forcing Ranjit Singh to flee back to Kumher. Those Jats who remained at Dig, following a Rajput tradition, put their wives and children to the sword and rode out to meet their fate. After the fall of Dig, Balanand went to Jaipur and there became an advisor to Madho Singh and his successor Pratap Singh.[384] For the next few years Dig remained in the possession of the Emperor, during which time Najaf Khan built a mosque adjoining the Lakshman temple in Jawahar Ganj.[385] In 1777, following the death of Kehari Singh from smallpox, Ranjit Singh became Raja of the Jats.[386] By this time their dominions had shrunk to Bharatpur and the surrounding parganahs, but, by ingratiating himself with Najaf Khan, Ranjit Singh managed to get some of his lost territory restored to him.

32 The period of Maratha supremacy

Mahadji returned to the north in 1782, after the conclusion of the Anglo-Maratha war. Following the death of Najaf Khan, the emperor Shah Alam requested the support of Mahadji, who was then at Gwalior. For the next few years Mahadji was busy subduing the Emperor's troublesome vassals and collecting revenue and tribute from areas that were still nominally a part of the Mughal empire.[387] In 1785 he established his camp at Vrindaban, which remained his headquarters for the next six years. He reclaimed the fort of Agra, and was appointed plenipotentiary regent (*vakīl-i-mutlak*), but this was no more than 'an empty dignity conferred upon him by an insolvent Emperor'.[388] He faced opposition from Himmat Bahadur and Umraogiri, who had been awarded estates in the Doab for services rendered to Shuja-ud-daulah. For the past few years Himmat Bahadur had been in the service of Najaf Khan and the Emperor and was mainly based at Vrindaban. In 1779 Pratap Singh of Jaipur had asked for his help in resisting Maratha demands for tribute. Himmat Bahadur had helped Pratap Singh rehabilitate Jaipur and make

381 Sarkar, ibid. pp.114-5.
382 Sarkar 1958, pp.191-3.
383 Sarkar 1932-38, vol.3 pp.116 ff., Qanungo, pp.283-5.
384 Sarkar 1958, pp.235-6. For the siege of Dig see Modave, pp.432-9.
385 Sahai, p.94.
386 Ibid., pp.95-125, Pande 1970, pp.122-9, 133-56.
387 For an account of this period see Sardesai, vol.3 chs.V, VII, & VIII (pp.265 ff.), and Sarkar 1932-8, vol.3 chs.33-4.
388 Sardesai, vol.3 p.147.

him a paid-up vassal of the Emperor.[389] He based himself at Vrindaban until 1790, and was continually embroiled in intrigues with various Maratha and Mughal factions. He became a person of considerable influence at the Mughal court and for a while was Mahadji's chief advisor in administrative affairs, helping him to acquire more territory in the Doab and Bundelkhand. After Mahadji took control of the forts of Agra and Aligarh in 1785 he began to suspect Himmat Bahadur of being in league with their previous Mughal occupants. The ensuing conflict with Himmat Bahadur and Umraogiri was intensified when he confiscated their estates. Himmat Bahadur, in disgust, announced his retirement from politics, was paid off in cash, and was allowed to remain in control of Vrindaban and keep a hundred horse as his retainers. However, while Umraogiri led an uprising in the Doab against Mahadji, Himmat Bahadur attacked Firuzabad. When Maratha reinforcements arrived, he fled to the protection of the Nawab of Oudh's governor at Etawah. Thereafter the two brothers conspired with all conceivable opponents of the Marathas in northern India.

In 1788, as the result of a conspiracy between the Rohillas and the Rajputs, the Emperor withdrew his support from the Marathas and invited Taimur, the son of Abdali, to invade India.[390] This compelled Mahadji to withdraw to Malwa and allowed the Mughals to take over Agra and Kumher, and Himmat Bahadur to gain possession of Mathura, Vrindaban, and Sadabad. Ismail Begh and Ghulam Qadir attacked the Jats and Marathas, obliging them to fall back on Bharatpur. They captured Kumher, but made an unsuccessful attempt to take Dig and were repelled with heavy losses. The Jats and Marathas succeeded in routing their forces, driving them back to Vrindaban, where there was a battalion seven-hundred strong. Four hundred were killed there and many others were drowned while attempting to flee across the Yamuna. The Afghans were also driven out of Mat, Mahaban, and Koil, and Ismail Begh was defeated at Agra.[391] By the beginning of 1789 the whole conspiracy had collapsed. The Marathas had recovered Agra and arrived in Delhi to rescue the Emperor from the clutches of Ghulam Qadir, the sadistic Rohilla chief, who had blinded him. The lost towns were recovered; Ghulam Qadir was captured while trying to escape and was taken to Mathura, where he was blinded and dismembered in return for his treatment of Shah Alam. Mahadji was rewarded with the charge of Mathura and Vrindaban (August 1790), and, at his request, a firman was issued prohibiting cow slaughter throughout the empire. In the course of the next two years he formed a treaty with Pratap Singh of Jaipur, who agreed to pay his annual tribute. He also came to terms with the Sikhs and Afghans, thereby gaining possession of territory as far north as the Sutlej. Finally, Jodhpur submitted to him after a successful campaign led by De Boigne, a French commander who had been with him since 1784.[392]

Mahadji achieved these successes despite hindrance from Tukoji Holkar, who

389 For Himmat Bahadur's activities from 1779 onwards see Sardesai, vol.3 pp.146-9, and Sarkar 1932-38, vol.3 pp.213 ff., & 1958, pp.198 ff.

390 His advance was barred by the Sikhs. For an account of these events see Sardesai, vol.3 pp.159-67.

391 Sarkar 1932-38, vol.3 pp.283 ff.

392 Sardesai, vol.3 pp.217-19.

had been sent to assist him in 1789. The long-standing rivalry between the houses of Holkar and Sindhiya began to take its toll on Maratha efficiency and prestige in the north. Tukoji demanded a share of the territory that Mahadji had reclaimed and began to conspire with Himmat Bahadur and Umraogiri.[393] Himmat Bahadur tried unsuccessfully to ingratiate himself with Mahadji, in the hope of being awarded a *jāgīr*. When Mahadji began to suffer from boils, a woman of Vrindaban confessed that she had been employed by Himmat Bahadur and Umraogiri to supply materials for sorcery that had been used to cause the affliction.[394] Himmat Bahadur escaped arrest and sought refuge with Ali Bahadur, a commander of the Marathas who had been despatched to the north with Tukoji Holkar. For a while the conflict was a source of friction among the Marathas, but eventually Mahadji and Himmat Bahadur were reconciled. Himmat Bahadur lingered on in Vrindaban, but by 1790 he came to realize that there was little chance of regaining his influence, and so he accompanied Ali Bahadur to Bundelkhand. In the course of the remaining fourteen years of his life he managed to become the ruler of a considerable territory in the neighbourhood of Banda, under the suzerainty of the British.

In 1791 Mahadji was recalled to Pune and left Bakhshi and De Boigne in command of his forces in the north.[395] The previous year he had placed De Boigne in charge of Aligarh so that he could derive his own salary and pay his troops from the revenue. Tukoji began to seize land around Alwar that had been acquired by Mahadji, but lost a battle fought with the forces of Sindhiya at Lakheri (south of Sawai Madhopur) in 1793. The rivalry between the two houses was continued some years later between Daulatrao Sindhiya and Jaswantrao Holkar, further weakening the Maratha confederacy.

When he first arrived at Mathura, Mahadji deprived Ranjit Singh of some of his territory, but restored eleven parganahs to him on appeal in 1785.[396] Throughout this period Ranjit Singh had more chance of preserving his status and domains by siding with the Marathas. He served under De Boigne and, after his retirement in 1795, under his successor Perron, who had been in service of the Marathas since 1790 and before then had served in various princely states, including Bharatpur.[397] Ranjit Singh was given back control of Dig, which had been held by the Emperor since the time it fell to Najaf Khan. The town of Mathura was conferred upon Perron, who made it his headquarters, strengthened the defences, and established his principle canon foundry there.[398] In 1789 Mahadji had captured Kaman from its occupant, Hari Singh; from 1792-94 it was ruled by Bakhtawar Singh of Alwar, and in 1795 was granted by Perron to Ranjit Singh, after which it remained a part of Bharatpur state.[399]

393 Ibid., pp.206-9.
394 Ibid. See Sarkar 1958 for the last phase of Himmat Bahadur's career.
395 See Sardesai, vol.3 pp.243 ff., for events in the north after his departure.
396 Sahai, p.99.
397 Sardesai, vol.3 pp.412-7.
398 Hamilton, pp.216-7.
399 Sahai, p.27.

In 1803 General Lake defeated the Marathas at Aligarh and took control of Delhi, where Shah Alam was prepared to accept British protection.[400] On his way to Agra he took control of Mathura. Perron, who was unwilling to wage war with the British, quitted the service of Sindhiya. Ranjit Singh signed a friendship treaty with Lake that promised mutual assistance, acknowledged his independence, ceded extra territory to him, and exonerated him from the heavy tribute he paid to the Marathas.[401] He helped Lake to capture Agra from the Marathas and took part in the battle of Laswari (c.30km south of Bharatpur), which resulted in the total defeat of Daulatrao Sindhiya. However, when he thought the tide had turned against the British, Ranjit Sing began to conspire with Jaswantrao Holkar and evaded his obligation to send troops to help them. Wellesley decided that the alliance between Ranjit Singh and Holkar would have to be crushed, and so a force was sent to deal with them. After their troops had been routed in a battle near Dig, Ranjit Singh and Holkar took refuge at Bharatpur.

Lake arrived there on the first day of 1805 and managed to rout Holkar's forces, which had been entrenched around the town. He failed to breach the walls of the fort, despite making four attempts that cost the lives of over a hundred officers and three thousand men. Ranjit Singh lost a considerable amount of money and territory, but he gained in prestige, for Bharatpur became celebrated as the only fort in India that had managed to withstand the British. Nevertheless, he realized that ultimately the British were too strong to be resisted. When Lake was elevated to the peerage, he sent his son Randhir Singh to him with the keys of the fort and expressed his desire for a reconciliation. Dig was restored to him in 1805 after the conclusion of a friendship treaty, one of the terms of which was that one of his sons should remain as security in the custody of the British commanding officer in North India.

33 Devotional activity in the latter part of the eighteenth century

Lawlessness and banditry continued to be as rampant as they had been over the preceding centuries, even at the time when Suraj Mal had consolidated his hold over the region. Jean Law de Lauriston describes how travellers on the road from Agra to Delhi, and further south towards the Deccan, were obliged to assemble in caravans at large towns before proceeding further, for fear of being ambushed by bands of robbers who roamed the countryside in groups between two and four hundred strong, sometimes joining together to form a thousand, whose leaders were in collusion with local rulers.[402] All along the route there were 'douanes' who extorted tolls much larger than than they were supposed to. The villages between

400 For Lake's campaign against the Marathas and his relationship with the Jats see Thorn, Pearse, pp.335-90, Sardesai, vol.3 pp.412-29, and Pande 1970, pp.146-54. Lake's attack on Dig and attempts to take Bharatpur are also described by Pester, chs.22-4.

401 Creighton, pp.x-xi.

402 Law de Lauriston, pp.356, 358, using the term 'mawatis', i.e. Meos (of Mewat)?.

Delhi and Agra struck him as being fairly attractive and well populated, in spite of the damage they had suffered during Abdali's incursion the previous year. In 1760 Chacha Vrindabandas wrote a poem entitled *Hari kalā beli* in which he begged Krishna to restore tranquility to Braj after the devastation wrought by Abdali and his forces.[403] Wendel, writing ten years after the massacre, said that Abdali had made the towns and surroundings of Agra even more desolate than before, and that the sad vestiges of his invasion were still to be seen.[404] A few years later the Comte de Modave, although he described the Jat's domain as 'un tableau d'anarchie et de confusion dont il est bien difficile de représenter l'horreur', found the countryside to be less abandoned and the fields better maintained than one might have expected. He also admired the large number of merchants' houses that were to be seen in the towns.[405] Twining, who passed through the area towards the end of the century, says that the country was 'a perfect waste till we came to the sacred and poetic towers of Muttra. The approach to this celebrated town, as well as its situation, is very pleasant, it being surrounded by gardens and groves, whose verdant foliage presents a refreshing contrast with the glare of the surrounding desert.'[406]

We must make allowances for a certain amount of subjectivity on the part of the writers who recorded their impressions of the area. Despite Wendel's remarks, it would seem that Abdali, though he carried away a large amount of booty, had inflicted no permanent damage. In the 1760's and 1770's the protection afforded by Najaf Khan's military commanders allowed for further agricultural advances in the jungle tracts surrounding Mathura.[407] Tieffenthaler visited Mathura and other nearby towns in 1745, 1754, and again a few years later.[408] Although he found the streets of Mathura to be narrow and dirty, and most of the buildings in a ruinous condition, a large number of merchants and craftsmen from Gujarat and Delhi had taken up residence there. Twining described the town as 'large and populous, and probably rich, though without an external appearance of wealth', and notes that there was a considerable income from the large number of pilgrims.[409] Tieffenthaler admired the old but delapidated temples at Vrindaban and describes the town as having many fine mansions built by various Hindu nobles. He visited a wooded area beside the river where the hermits lived, and saw many shaven-headed ascetics (*vairāgī*) who had female devotees living with them as wives and were engaged in chanting day and night. He says that all visitors were struck by the multitude of monkeys and their familiarity, saying that they were fed daily with large quantities of peas and millet.

These monkeys had been a notable feature of Vrindaban at least since the time of Akbar. Father Monserrate informs us that three hundred or more monkeys were kept at public expense near a shrine that he says, perhaps in error, was dedicated to 'Anumantus'. He reports that the local brahmins, in order to give the impression

403 A ms. of the work is described in S. B. & S. B. Misra, no.196(k) p.252.
404 Wendel, p.46.
405 Modave, pp.209, 306.
406 Twining, p.211.
407 Bayly 1983, pp.77-8.
408 Tieffenthaler, pp.143-7, illustrated with drawings of Dig and Bharatpur.
409 Twining, ibid.

that the monkeys paid honour and worship to Hanuman, their patron, had trained them not only to assemble and disperse for meals at the sound of a bell, but also to take up arms, divide into companies, and fight like gladiators! The purpose of this exaggeration is to ridicule Hinduism, for he remarks that 'the poor folk...imagine this to be achieved by a divine miracle...they not only believe in but are entranced by such tricks.'[410] Peter Mundy, who travelled during the reign of Shah Jahan, refers to a grove near Patna called 'Bendrabun' where monkeys were fed by endowment, and notes that 'there are sundrie of theis places in India, but that neere Muttra by Agra is the chiefest, where are said to bee 10000 of them, whoe have certaine allowance of provision and graine every day.'[411] Thorn, writing in the early nineteenth century, says that Vrindaban was 'the residence of innumerable apes...supported by the voluntary contributions of pilgrims; and in such reverence are they held, that no one dares to resist or illtreat them, when they commit the most flagrant acts of outrage upon casual passengers, or even in the dwellings of the inhabitants.'[412] Bacon, who arrived in Vrindaban at the end of 1835, also noted the feeding of monkeys, fish, and peacocks. He says that several acres of land were cultivated for this purpose, and that the funds providing for it were largely bestowed by Mahadji Sindhiya.[413]

Devotional activity continued along the path of recovery that had begun in the time of Sawai Jai Singh, The Pushtimarg and Gaudiya Sampraday, however, were not as prominent as they had been in the previous two centuries, all their main deities having been taken out of Braj. Mahants of the Nimbark and Ramanandi orders appear to have been the main beneficiaries of Jat patronage. The Jat rulers of Braj adopted Lakshmana, the brother of Rama, as a patron deity and built a temple to house an image of Krishna called Bihari, which was worshipped by ascetics belonging to the order founded by Nagaji and was adopted as the guardian deity of the fort at Bharatpur.[414] Apart from being accorded the privilege of conferring benediction and legitimacy upon the Raja, the Mahants took a tithe in kind on all sorts of grain exported for sale in the bazaars, secured periodical grants of the whole of the Raja's share of the produce of the bazaars, and were awarded free land, grants of revenue, and an annual cess on all of the 1,200 villages within the dominion of Bharatpur.[415] While Rup Ram contributed to the development of Barsana, the Jat rulers did much to embellish Govardhan, for they were traditionally devotees of the hill and the temple of Haridev. Badan Singh and Rani Kishori built mansions on the south and east sides of Manasi Ganga; the Rajas were cremated nearby and are commemorated by ornate *chatrī* monuments, namely those of Ranjit Singh, Baldeo Singh, and Balwant Singh (incomplete) near Manasi Ganga, and those of Suraj Mal and his queens at Kusum Sarovar.

In the first half of the eighteenth century members of the royal households of Kishangarh and Rupnagar numbered among the prominent devotees of Vrinda-

410 Monserrate, p.94.
411 Mundy, p.136.
412 Thorn, p.178.
413 Bacon, p.344. Also mentioned a few years earlier by Hamilton, vol.2 p.217.
414 See above §5.3, with reference to Atalbihari.
415 Bayly 1983, pp.185-6.

ban. Kishangarh was named after the youngest son of Udai Singh, Raja of Jodhpur, who had founded it in 1611.[416] Rupnagar was founded by his grandson, Rup Singh, who, during a visit to Braj in 1647, joined in the Annakut celebrations at Govardhan and was deeply impressed by the image of Shrinathji.[417] A *havelī* called Nagari Kunj was built on a plot of land in Vrindaban that had been donated to Vrindabandev, then the most prominent figure in the Nimbark Sampraday, by Raj Singh, the son of Rup Singh.[418] The most famous devotee in the family is Raj Singh's third son, Samant Singh, more commonly known as Nagaridas, the name he uses in his poetry. At the age of eighteen he participated valiantly in Jai Singh's siege of Thun.[419] He succeeded to his father as ruler of Rupnagar in 1747, but within a year his younger brother usurped the throne while he was away in Delhi. He managed to regain partial control of the principality with the help of his son, Sardar Singh. Ten years later he placed his son in charge of state affairs and retired to Nagari Kunj in Vrindaban, where he died in 1764.[420] This mansion temple is still in the custody of followers of the Nimbark Sampraday. It has been argued that Nagaridas, like his ancestors, had originally been initiated into the Pushtimarg, but it appears that later in life, like other members of the family, he became a follower of Vrindabandev, who was head of the Gaddi of the Nimbark Sampraday at Salemabad.[421]

Raj Singh married his second wife, Braj Kunwari, better known as Bankawati, at Vrindaban in 1719. Fifteen years later their daughter, Sundar Kunwari, was born. Various devotional works are attributed to both women. Though they spent most of their time in the neighbourhood of Kishangarh, it is probable that they paid regular visits to Vrindaban.[422] Sundar Kunwari is said to have stayed in Vrindaban at Khinchiwali Kunj, a mansion near Keshi Ghat (named after the family name of her husband, the ruler of Raghavgarh), and to have installed there an image of Krishna called Brajlochan.[423] Another poetess of the household was Vishnupriya, better known as Bani Thaniji.[424] She was taken in as a young girl by Raj Singh and was initiated by Rasikdev, founder of the temple of the same name in Vrindaban. Later she lived with Nagaridas as his co-wife or concubine at Nagari Kunj, where they are each commemorated by a *samādhi*.

416 Vrind, *Bacanikā athavā rūpsiṃh kī vārtā* (*Granthāvalī*, pp. 115-203) v.30.

417 Ibid., 46-7, 92, 144 ff. Vrind gives Rup Singh's date of birth as 1628. According to Nagaridas, pp.28 ff., Rup Singh, his grandfather Kishan Singh, and the latter's uncle Askaran, were all followers of the Pushtimarg.

418 Brajvallabhsharan 1972, p.259, giving the date as 1725.

419 K. Gupta in his introduction to the works of Nagaridas, vol.1 pp.32-3, gives his date of birth as 1699.

420 Ibid., pp.34-5. The year of his death is inscribed on his *samādhi* in Vrindaban.

421 K. Gupta, ibid. pp.37 ff., argues that he was a follower of the Pushtimarg, but Brajvallabhsharan, (ed.) 1972, pp.241-62 and his introduction to *Nāgarīdāsjī kī vāṇī*, gives persuasive arguments to the contrary. No particular emphasis is given in his works to Gokul or any Pushtimarg temples.

422 See the survey of their life and works given by Ramesh Chandra Shastri in Brajvallabhsharan (ed.) 1972, pp.279-90. Some information is also given in *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, pp.284-6.

423 *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, pp.286-7.

424 Ibid., pp.290-2.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century the fashion for building mansions at Vrindaban spread among other aristocratic houses, especially those of Rajasthan and Bundelkhand. Members of the royal house of Datiya, founded by a descendant of the nearby house of Orchha, maintained a mansion for themselves called Hiramohan Kunj (or Datiyawali Kunj). It was founded by Prakash Kunwari, a sister of Raja Indrajit (1734-62), and housed a deity called Jugal Kishor, possibly the one that had been worshipped by Hariram Vyas and was eventually taken to Panna.[425] At least two deities that had been taken out of Vrindaban during the reign of Aurangzeb were returned in the latter half of the century. The deity of Rasikbihari was brought back from Dungarpur and installed in a new temple in 1755. Thirty years later the deity of Radhavallabh was brought from Kaman and installed in a new temple built alongside the original one by a merchant from Gujarat named Seth Lallubhai Bhagwandas.[426]

Once the Marathas had succeeded in re-establishing their control over Braj in 1789, Mahadji began to donate money to the temples and restore the sacred places. He built fine ghats at Vrindaban and gave Potarakund at Krishna's birthplace its present form.[427] He received orders from Pune that a firman should be issued assigning the holy places of Braj to the Peshwa. Although much of the land was held as long-established *jāgīr*, he managed to get some of the sites transferred to the Peshwa's representatives.[428] He arranged for a ban on the slaughter of cows and repealed some of the anti-Hindu firmans that had been issued by previous Mughal rulers. He was drawn to the ascetic followers of Swami Haridas and paid his respects to their leader, Lalitmohinidas, and to Govardhandas, custodian of the temple of Rasikbihari.[429]

From the late seventeenth century onwards the Marathas gradually became the foremost benefactors of a number of pilgrimage centres. Devotees from Maharashtra took advantage of the continual movement of troops to and from the north to visit places of pilgrimage. Ladies began to accompany military expeditions so that they could worship at such places as Nathdwara, Pushkar, Braj, Prayag, and Varanasi.[430] The Marathas substantially rebuilt Varanasi, the modern town being largely their creation.[431] In the latter part of the century a notable Maratha benefactor of Braj, as well as other places of pilgrimage, was Ahalyabai (d. 1795). She was one of the wives of Khanderao Holkar, who was killed during the siege of Kumher in 1754.[432] After the death of her father-in-law she acted as nominal chief of the Holkars, with Tukoji serving as an executive officer responsible for campaigns undertaken in various parts of the Maratha dominions. She was devout and pious, yet seems to have shared her family's jealousy of the predominance of the

425 BBP, note on p.189. According to tradition current in Datiya, Jugal Kishor is at Datiya and another deity worshipped by Hariram Vyas called Nawal Kishor is at Panna.
426 P. Mital 1968, pp.399, 481.
427 P. Mital 1966, pt.2 p.253, says that work on the latter was begun in 1782.
428 Vajpeyi 1954, p.204.
429 P. Mital 1966, pt.2 pp.253-4.
430 Sardesai, vol.2 p.243.
431 Eck, p.90.
432 Sardesai, vol.3 pp.211-15.

Sindhiyas. Since she had no alternative to Tukoji, she was obliged to put up with him, despite disagreements, his unruly conduct, and the scandalous behaviour of his sons. Among the buildings she erected at places of pilgrimage were new temples of Vishwanath at Varanasi and of Somnath on the coast of Saurashtra, and several temples, ghats, and dharmshalas at Gaya, where she is even deified in a separate temple.[433] In Braj she provided various bathing places with masonry steps.

The most significant development among the ascetic followers of Swami Haridas was the growth of the hermitage called Tatti Asthan. It was founded by Lalitkishoridev, one of the three disciples of Rasikdev who had established three separate ascetic Gaddis at the beginning of the century. Lalitkishoridev, having been given a gourd pot and a patchwork garment that had belonged to Swami Haridas, settled in a small hermitage in a wooded area beside the Yamuna on the outskirts of Vrindaban. This hermitage became the most important of the three ascetic establishments during the years that his successor, Lalitmohinidev, was its Mahant (viz. 1766-1801).[434] Lalitmohinidev is said to have enclosed the hermitage with a wicker fence (*ṭaṭṭī*), as a result of which the place became known as Maunidas (or Mauniju) ki Tatti, and later Tatti Asthan. He was presented with a deity called Radhikabihari, which is believed to have been dug up at Dig on one of the occasions when it was sacked by Muslims.[435] Lalitmohini, besides organizing the ascetic community at Tatti Asthan, was also the last of the succession of eight Acharyas whose poems, along with those of Swami Haridas, constitute the liturgical canon of the order. During the period when Mahadji Sindhiya was camped near Vrindaban, he appealed on behalf of the ascetics for custody of Banke Bihari and the grove of Nidhiban, but by this time both were securely in the hands of the Goswamis.[436] While Lalitmohini was Mahant there was a violent conflict between the Goswamis and the ascetics in which members of both parties are said to have been killed.[437] After the conflict the Goswamis took Banke Bihari to the site where it now stands. The small temple they made for it was replaced by the present building in 1864. In 1801 Shah Alam issued a *sanad* granting 'the fakirs of Mohinidas' the *mu'āfī* of the villages of Koela and Anwala (opposite Gokul) for their maintainance.[438]

Two notable poets of the mid- and late eighteenth century were Bhagwat Rasik, a disciple of Lalitmohini, and Ghananand (alias Anandghan), a disciple of Vrindabandev.[439] Ghananand is reputed to have been an accountant (*munśī*) in the court of Muhammad Shah and to have spent his later years in Vrindaban, where he is believed to have been one of the victims of Abdali's massacre. The most prolific poet of the Radhavallabh Sampraday, and indeed of any of the devotional sects,

433 Vidyarthi, p.27.

434 Datt, p.65.

435 VDA 39, and Datt, p.163 (citing *Lalitprakāś* of Sahacharisharan). Later a Pamar from Bundelkhand built a temple for it known as Chhatarpurwali Kunj.

436 S. B. Goswami, p.502, says the matter was brought before officials in 1785. The ascetics have only managed to retain a part of Nidhiban near the old entrance, Datt, p.38.

437 Datt, pp.40-1.

438 Ibid., p.104.

439 For Bhagwat Rasik see S. B. Goswami, p.503, McGregor 1984, p.165, and for Ghananand see P. Mital 1968, pp.211, 360, McGregor 1984, pp.179-80.

was Chacha Vrindabandas, who wrote about two hundred works dated between 1738-87.[440] Bansi Ali (1707-65) lived in Vrindaban and was influenced by the poetry of Swami Haridas and Hit Harivansh. He wrote works in Braj and Sanskrit that give a similar emphasis to Radha and was the founder of a so-called Lalita Sampraday, which has its main temple at Jaipur and others at Delhi and Vrindaban.[441] Another Vaishnava movement centered in Jaipur was started by Charandas, who was born at Dehra (Alwar district) in 1703 and later settled in Delhi. In his *Vraj caritra varṇan* he describes the twelve forests of Braj, of which the foremost is Vrindaban, which has a circumference of twenty *kos* and within which lies an inner *nij vṛndāvan* ('personal/innate/constant Vrindaban') that is triangular in shape and is the secret place of Radha's pleasure (*vihār*).[442] The Sampraday is named after the sage Shuka, but followers usually call themselves 'Charandasis'. They maintain a small establishment at Vrindaban in Dusayat Mohalla.

34 Pax Britannica

The defeat of the Marathas, the subjugation of Shah Alam, and the treaty concluded with Ranjit Singh gave the East India Company control over the whole of the present Mathura and Agra districts, apart from the parganah of Govardhan, which was granted to Ranjit Singh's youngest son and remained a part of Bharatpur until his death in 1826.[443] Mathura, Agra, Delhi, and districts to the east of them remained under the full control of the British Raj until Independence in 1947. Around them lay the semi-autonomous princely states of Bharatpur, Alwar, Karauli, Dholpur, Gwalior, and others further to the east and south in Rajasthan and Bundelkhand. There had been no noteworthy Raja of Jaipur since the death of Madho Singh in 1768; instead there had been a succession of rulers who mostly came to the throne as minors, resulting in periods of regency during which factionalism and rivalry developed among the vassals. The aristocratic Jat lineages of Bharatpur and Hathras separated themselves off as a town-dwelling landlord class, a tendency reinforced by the British preference for settling matters of revenue with large magnates rather than co-sharing brotherhoods of peasants.[444] Containment of the princely states brought an end to the bloody conflicts of the previous century. After taking over Mathura the British set up an extensive cantonment south of the town, but within a few years many of the troops were transferred. Nevertheless, William Hamilton, in his Gazetteer of 1828, still considered Mathura to be an important station 'on account of its vicinity to so many wild, independent, and turbulent rajas, not yet sobered down to their proper degree of temperature'.[445]

In the years immediately following the capitulation of Bharatpur the only violent

440 Snatak, pp.512-73, P. Mital 1968, pp.424-6.
441 S. B. Goswami, pp.688-706.
442 Ibid., p.730.
443 Growse, p.309.
444 Bayly 1983, pp.208-9.
445 Hamilton, vol.2 pp.216-7.

incident that seems to have been worthy of note occurred in 1808, when two young cavalry officers stationed at Mathura 'inadvertently' shot at the monkeys of Vrindaban. They were immediately set upon by infuriated priests and devotees and were drowned while attempting to flee across the Yamuna on their elephant.[446] Thereafter the British, to avoid causing further offence to local sentiments, issued orders forbidding their soldiers from firing arms in the neighbourhood of Mathura and Vrindaban.[447] Some years later, in 1816-17, there were disturbances following attempts to introduce a more general regulation of the *caukīdārī* tax. Powerful organizations of ascetics at Mathura, in conjunction with some commercial people, refused to cooperate with the local authorities. The matter was settled when representatives of the religious houses were prevailed upon to agree to assess themselves for a minimal tax along with 'heads of trades'.[448]

Ranjit Singh died soon after signing his final treaty with the British and was followed by Randhir Singh. Evidence came to light implicating the new Raja in raids conducted into British territory by bands of Jats. Suspecting him of receiving a share of the stolen property and giving sanctuary to the culprits, the British sought to intervene in matters of state of Bharatpur.[449] In the latter part of his reign relations with the British improved. He was followed in 1823 by his younger brother, Baldeo Singh, who died eighteen months later. Durjan Sal and Madho Singh, cousins of the two previous Rajas, both claimed the throne, leading to a dispute that gave the British a pretext for direct intervention.[450] In anticipation of a conflict over the succession, Baldeo Singh had secured a promise from the British that they would protect his young son, Balwant Singh. When Durjan Sal and his son murdered Madho Singh, the British laid siege to Bharatpur with twenty thousand troops commanded by Lord Combermere. After six weeks he managed to breach the fort with an immense mine and capture Durjan Sal. The fall of Bharatpur was a great propaganda victory for the British, since Lake's failure to capture it twenty years earlier had enhanced the legend of its invincibility.

Balwant Singh was placed on the throne under the supervision of a Political Agent and ruled until his death in 1853. He was succeeded by his three year old son, Jaswant Singh, who was watched over by a succession of Political Agents, long after he had come of age and expressed his desire to have them withdrawn. A compromise was reached whereby the Political Agent was stationed at an official residence in Agra provided by Jaswant Singh. The later Rajas of Bharatpur remained on friendly terms with the British and hosted many foreign dignitaries,

446 Ibid., p.217. The incident is also mentioned by Bacon, vol.2 p.344, Gopal Kavi (VDA 35, in a section entitled *Ãgrej prasaṅg*), and by Thorn, p.178, who blames the monkeys for starting the trouble and rails at the fact that the only reparation was 'that of depriving the people of Bindrabund of some of their lands.'

447 Slabs dated 1866 with orders to this effect inscribed in English, Hindi, and Urdu are to be found at the southern corner of Kusum Sarovar and set into the wall of a house in the Gautam Para quarter of Vrindaban.

448 Bayly 1983, p.321.

449 Pande 1970, pp.157-63.

450 Sahai, pp.132 ff, Pande 1970, pp.164 ff. See also Lushington, for the accession of Balwant Singh, Creighton, for a detailed account of the siege and capture of Bharatpur, and Bayly 1983, p.271, for the economic consequences of the defeat.

who were attracted by the state's reputation as a hunting ground, already well established when George Eden, Governor General of India, visited in 1838. His sister Emily noted at the time that 'the rajah is supposed to have the best shooting in India.'[451] Near to Bharatpur a system of sluices was constructed in order to create a waterlogged forest that would attract a wide variety of egrets, storks, pelicans, and other birds. In recent years this has become famous as the Keola Deo Bird Sanctuary.

In 1832 Mathura, hitherto included under Agra, was made the chief town of a separate district. During the rebellion of 1857 the District Magistrate, Mark Thornhill, took refuge in the sarai at Chhata while the rebels burned the Court House, broke open the jail, and seized the treasury while attempts were being made to take it to Agra.[452] Some Jats on the east bank of the Yamuna set up a Raja at Raya, but he was soon captured and executed. Thornhill and other Europeans were given refuge in the house of Seth Lakshmi Chand, and later managed to escape to Agra. The rebels held Mathura and Vrindaban for a few days and levied contributions from the inhabitants in lieu of plunder. Rebel landowners occupied the sarai at Chhata, which was damaged when they were evicted by British troops. The most active rebels in the district were Gujars living around Kosi. They suffered reprisals when the uprising was put down and ten of their villages were handed over to Gobind Singh, titular Raja of Hathras, as a reward for his loyalty. He belonged to the tribe of Tenwa Jats who had occupied territory in the Doab since the early seventeenth century, with their main strongholds at Hathras and Mursan, but had never managed to secure real indpendence from Mughal suzerainty.[453]

35 Patronage in the nineteenth century

It has been estimated that the number of pilgrims who visited Allahabad, Gaya, and Varanasi trebled in the period 1780-1820.[454] The flow of pilgrims to Braj probably increased in similar proportions, and has continued to grow ever since, thanks to improvements in transport and communications. It appears that pilgrimage as a status ritual spread from aristocratic families to recently ennobled zamindars and to the emerging business and service class, known as the 'service gentry'.[455] Although the British permitted Christian missionaries to be active in their territory, they adopted a policy of neutrality in religious matters and, in 1833, abolished the pilgrim tax. In the latter part of the eighteenth century aristocrats and merchants had begun to restore the old ghats or construct new ones, and to build temples, mansions, and dharmshalas, especially at Mathura, Vrindaban, Dig, and Barsana. Many more were were constructed throughout the nineteenth century and in the early decades of the twentieth. Many of them are noteworthy for their ornate

451 Eden, p.354.
452 Growse, pp.46-9. See Thornhill for a fuller account.
453 Growse, pp.16-19. See Sarkar 1958, pp.193-4, with reference to Puhup Singh's stand at Mursan in 1776.
454 Bayly 1981.
455 A similar development at Ayodhya has been described by van der Veer, ch.5 §3.1.

balconies, intricate tracery, and stone panels delicately carved with floral motifs. Vrindaban seems to have been especially attractive during the nineteenth century; the groves were more extensive than they are today and the ghats had not yet fallen into disrepair and become silted up. Bacon, though he remarks that 'all Hindu cities are filthy: Bindrabund and Muttra are the filthiest of the filthy', admired Vrindaban for its situation on the bank of the Yamuna, praised its architecture, and described the temples and ghats as being 'intersected with tufts and thick groves of banian and mango trees, which add greatly to the picturesque beauty of the place.'[456] He found it to be swarming with monkeys and religious mendicants, more numerous than he had ever met before. It was not as congested and densely built up as it is today, though a large number of mansions and temples had been built by the middle of the nineteenth century. Gopal Kavi's description of the town, written in 1843, names over three hundred and fifty Krishna deities, about fifty of Rama, and several temples dedicated to other gods.

Many of the devotees who contributed to the construction of temples and religious establishments did not come from an aristocratic (i.e. Rajput or *kṣatriya*) background, but were merchants and landowners who had earned their wealth through commerce and by serving in the administration of territories controlled by the British or their vassals. A significant figure in the early nineteenth century was Krishna Chandra Sinha, who became known as 'Lala Babu'.[457] He was born in 1775 and belonged to a family of Kayasth merchants and landowners from the district of Murshidabad (Bengal). His grandfather had been a diwan under British rule and his father became one of the wealthiest men in eastern India. In 1803 Krishna Chandra was appointed as the highest diwan in Orissa when it was annexed by the British; some years later, when his father died, he returned to Calcutta and took over the management of the family estate. He settled in Braj when he was about thirty and became a disciple of the second of two ascetics known as Ḍuhkhi Krishnadas. Ten years later he decided to lead the life of an ascetic and give his wife and son their due share of his fortune. He lived in a humble dwelling at Govardhan and spent the next few years wandering around Braj, until, in 1820, he died after being kicked by a horse. He had brought about two and a half million rupees from his estates in Bengal and Orissa, with which he purchased a considerable amount of land in Braj, including Jao, Nandgaon, Barsana, Sanket, Karhela, Garhi, Hathiya, Jait, and Maholi. Whiteway says, unsympathetically, that he acquired the property 'by wandering about the district dressed as a religious mendicant professing great sanctity and persuading the zamindars, then ignorant of the full value of their rights, to part with their villages to him for the most ludicrously inadequate considerations.'[458] He built a dharmshala, a fine temple of Krishnachandrama in Vrindaban (called 'Lala Babu ka Mandir'), and provided Radhakund with masonry ghats.

Another person from a mercantile background was Raja Patnimal, who was

456 Bacon, vol.2 pp.323-47.

457 Kapur, vol.1 pp.176-193. See also Growse, pp.257-9, R. Chakravarti 1985, pp.387-8, and *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, pp.320-1.

458 Whiteway, p.37.

born in 1769.[459] A year before his birth, his grandfather, Khyaliram Bahadur, the Nayab Subedar of Bihar, was awarded the title of Maharaja by Shah Alam. In his youth Patnimal fell out with his father and went to Lucknow, where he became involved in politics. In 1805, five years after the Emperor conferred upon him the title of Raja and made him a *pā̃c hazārī*, he settled in Varanasi and began to use his wealth for religious purposes. At Mathura he constructed the tank and temple at Shiv Tal in 1807, built a new temple of Dirghavishnu and another dedicated to Virbhadra in Chhatta Bazaar, and in 1815 bought the Katra site when it was auctioned by the East India Company, with the intention of building a new temple of Keshavdev.

The wealthiest and most influential person in Mathura during the nineteenth century was Seth Lakshmi (or Lakhmi) Chand. He received the Governor General when he visited in 1838, to whom he offered a hundred and one trays of presents. Emily Eden refers to him as the richest banker in India, saying that 'he has two millions of money in Company's paper at Calcutta, and only draws the interest once in four years.'[460] His banking firm was founded by Gokuldas Parikh, a brahmin from Baroda and follower of the Pushtimarg, who became treasurer of Gwalior state under Daulatrao Sindhiya. He was sent by Sindhiya to Ujjain to subdue a band of Nagas and managed to expropriate a large amount of money from them, becoming a wealthy man from his share of the booty.[461] He died childless in 1826 and bequeathed his fortune and property to Maniram, an employee who had become a close friend.[462] Although a Jain, Maniram befriended Lala Babu and frequently accompanied him on his wanderings around Braj. Lakshmi Chand, his eldest son, inherited the the greatest part of Maniram's fortune. Under his management the firm grew into the most reputed banking house in India. He was further enriched by property rights over estates confiscated from one of the rebel leaders - a reward for his protection of British officials in Mathura in 1857.[463] He built an impressive mansion in the centre of Mathura, near to Dwarkadhish temple and close to that of the Bharatpur Maharajas.

After his death in 1866, Lakshmi Chand's firm and wealth were inherited by his son Raghunathdas, but they were managed by his uncles Radhakrishan and Gobind Das. These two brothers of Lakshmi Chand came under the influence of Swami Rangacharya, a southerner who belonged to the Sampraday founded by Ramanuja. Thornhill says that 'according to scandal' the Swami came north after he had ruined his patron in the south and 'entered Mathura in rags on a miserable pony.'[464] He converted Radhakrishan and Gobind Das to Vaishnavism, and they provided him with a small temple in Vrindaban dedicated to Lakshminarayan.[465]

459 Growse, p.137, Agrawala 1936, p.20, P. Mital 1965 and 1966, pt.2 pp.278-9.
460 Eden, p.351.
461 V. K. Chaturvedi, pp.10-13.
462 Growse, p.14.
463 Ibid., pp.386, 393.
464 Thornhill, pp.97-8. P. Mital 1968, p.570, calls him Rangadeshika and says he was born in 1784.
465 It is located in Gopinath Bagh, on the street running between the temples of Gopinath and Gopishwar.

They then financed the construction of a huge Vishnu temple, dedicated to him as Ranganatha (or 'Rangji'), that was built in the Dravidian style and modelled on the one at Shrirangam. It cost four and a half million rupees and was completed in 1851 after six years of labour. The two Seths gave it an endowment of thirty-three villages in the districts of Mathura and Agra, including a quarter of Vrindaban. It was run on the lines of the great temples of Tamil Nadu, with priests invited from the south, celebration of festivals in Shrivaishnava style, and more stringent rules of purity than are usually observed in North Indian temples. It is the only important temple in Vrindaban that refuses admission to non-Hindus - a restriction that also applies to converts. Thornhill notes that the Seths, 'to the great amusement of the natives', were not allowed to enter the holy of holies. The temple is the most important centre of the Ramanuja Sampraday in Braj, but, although it attracts a large number of visitors, local people continue to take initiation from gurus of the northern sects. There are a few other temples in Braj now affiliated to the Shrivaishnava Sampraday, including those in Mathura of Shatrughna, Gatashram (founded in 1800), and Venimadhav (called 'Galtawali Kunj'), which seems originally to have been a Ramanandi establishment).[466]

The most famous Seth of recent years was Hargulal, a disciple of the ascetics of Tatti Asthan and a liberal patron of the temple of Banke Bihari. Besides maintaining a garden for the temple in Vrindaban and helping with the upkeep of Nidhiban, he also built the new temple of Lariliji on the hill at Barsana, which was completed in the early 1950's.

The pattern of patronage has changed over recent decades, with the result that temples can no longer depend on the charity of a Raja or a small circle of benefactors. The old princely families, no longer enjoying such a large and secure income, began to invest their wealth in commercial enterprises and were unable or unwilling to maintain the temples founded by their ancestors. In the early 1950's the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act had repercussions on temple economy. The power and prestige of many landlords was depleted and they were obliged to enter into politics or business, ceasing to be the leading benefactors of cultural and religious institutions. Nowadays the biggest patrons are industrialists and other business families, especially the Marwaris, whose older members tend to retire to places of pilgrimage and play a back-seat role in directing the family business. They are now the biggest donors to temples, and the trusts they have formed have taken over the role formerly played by the aristocrats and zamindars. Temples now have to compete for their patronage, as well as for the attention of the masses, whose small donations can accumulate into a considerable income.

36 The Gaudiya Sampraday in modern times

During the nineteenth century the Gaudiya Sampraday began to revive after a period of relative inactivity. There were no successors to such early eighteenth-century scholars as Vishwanath Chakravarti and Baldev Vidyabhushan, and in Bengal there had been a reassertion of orthodoxy and a general revival of Shakta

466 P. Mital 1968, pp.571-3, where others are also listed.

cults.[467] In the latter half of the eighteenth century an ascetic from Orissa named Siddh Krishnadas Baba came to settle in Braj.[468] He instructed a disciple, also named Krishnadas Baba, who produced a number of works that helped to synthesize the Vrindaban and Bengali branches of the Gaudiya Sampraday, including the assimilation of the worship of Krishna and Chaitanya and a general simplification of ritual. In Bengal the movement began to attract the support of zamindars who were flourishing under British rule.[469] As the nineteenth century progressed there was a revival of interest in Chaitanya and the early theologians of his movement. From 1815 onwards there were printed editions of Gaudiya Vaishnava texts and biographies; people began to show interest in discovering more about the history of the movement, and after 1831 various periodicals made their appearance. Towards the end of the century the Gaudiya Mission was founded in Bengal. Branches were established in different parts of India, where resident ascetics were supported by lay members.[470]

Landowners and titular Rajas of territory in eastern India also financed the construction of temples in Braj. In Vrindaban new temples of Govind Dev, Madanmohan, and Gopinath were built next to the original ones by a Bengali Kayasth named Nand Kumar Bos.[471] Earlier in the present century the Gaudiya Math was formed by Bhaktisiddhant Saraswati with the aim of reviving and propagating the original teachings of the sect, by publishing texts as well as by establishing new temples and monastic establishments in Bengal, Braj, and elsewhere. In 1826 a Seth named Biharilal, who was given the title of Shah by the Nawab of Lucknow, built a new temple in Vrindaban for the deity of Radharaman. His two grandsons, Kundanlal and Phundanlal, settled in Vrindaban in 1856 at the age of thirty-one and twenty-eight respectively, and changed their names to Lalitkishori and Lalitmadhuri.[472] In 1868 Lalitkishori built a temple in the italianate style, then fashionable at Lucknow, that is popularly known as 'Shahji ka Mandir'. He made a vow never to leave Braj, and would not even let pictures of himself be taken out of the district. It is also said that, to avoid soiling the sacred earth, he had clay pots made that could be used as chamber pots and dumped somewhere outside the limits of Braj. At the beginning of the present century Balwantrao Sindhiya of Gwalior built a temple of Radhakant beside Kusum Sarovar and set up trusts to provide for the feeding of ascetics.

37 The Nimbark Sampraday in modern times

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century members of the royal house of

467 Kennedy, pp.76-81.

468 R. Chakravarti 1985, pp.309 ff., P. Mital 1968, pp.535-6. Both he and his disciple are commemorated by a *bhajan kuṭī* beside the one of Sanatan Goswami, near the temple of Chakreshwar at Govardhan.

469 R. Chakravarti 1985, ch.XXI.

470 Ibid., pp.397-8. The Mission grew out of a Vaishnava Sabha founded in 1886 by an amalgamation of twelve earlier societies.

471 VDA 2. According to A. K. Roy, pp.27-8, Radhadamodar was brought from Jaipur to Vrindaban in 1796, but was returned in 1821.

472 Kapur, vol.3, pp.1-12.

Jaipur built some new temples in Vrindaban for the Nimbark Sampraday. In 1810 Ranawatiji, wife of Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh (1791-1803), built a temple dedicated to Krishna under the name of Chatur Shiromani. In 1819-20 three more Krishna temples were founded by wives of Sawai Jagat Singh (1803-18). One of the wives, Maharani Shri Anand Kunwari, built a temple for a deity called Anandmanohar in 1827, and ten years later a junior wife founded a temple of Krishnachandra.[473] The temple of Anandmanohar, referred to as 'Shriji Kunj', was apparently built by the queen as a thanksgiving for the birth of the posthumous son of her husband, who grew up to become Sawai Jai Singh III. Shriji Kunj serves as the chief establishment in Braj of the Salemabad Gaddi of the Nimbark Sampraday.

A notable guru of the Sampraday in the nineteenth century was Giridharisharan, better known as Brahmachariji.[474] He first settled in Vrindaban at Bansi Bat, and spent his last years at Gopal Garh, on the outskirts of the town, where a temple of Giridhar Gopal was completed in the year of his death (1889).[475] He also built a Dauji temple on the path circumambulating Vrindaban (near Rajpur), as well as other smaller shrines, but his main legacy comprises three large temples built with funds received from the rulers of Gwalior and Jaipur. Narendrarao Jivaji of Gwalior believed that it was through Brahmachariji's blessing that he at last gained a son. Brahmachariji used the money he received from him to build a temple in Vrindaban dedicated to Radhagopal and referred to as 'Brahmachariji ka Mandir', which was consecrated in 1860.[476] Under his inspiration Sawai Madho Singh II of Jaipur built a temple at Vrindaban called Madhav Vilas, dedicated to Krishna as Radhamadhav, and another on the hill at Barsana that houses an image called Kushalbihari. Both of these temples are usually referred to as 'Jaipurwala Mandir'. They are large and impressive, but are not very active nowadays, presumably because they never became as popular as the older deities of Braj and no longer have the means to put on the kind of display that attracts pilgrims. This is also true of Tikariwala Mandir, a temple beside the river near Gyan Gudari, which was completed in 1871 and was founded by Rani Indrajit Kunwari, widow of Het Kam, the zamindar of Tikari, near Gaya.[477] Originally in the custody of members of the Nimbark Sampraday, it was later given over to Ramanandis.

Another notable figure in the Nimbark Sampraday was Ramdas Kathiya Baba (d.1910), so called because of the girdle of wood (*kāṭh*) that he used to wear. He came originally from Panjab, but settled in Vrindaban and became leader of a group of ascetics related to the branch founded by Nagaji.[478] His disciple Santadas founded Kathiya Baba ka Ashram near Dawanal Kund, and he was followed by Dhananjaydas, who founded a new ashram of the same name near Gurukul. This is

473 A. K. Roy, p.230. Both women were known as 'Bhatiyaniji' because they belonged to the Bhati clan.

474 *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, pp.302-4, where his date of birth is given as 1798.

475 P. Mital 1968, p.544, says he died in 1891.

476 Growse, p.263.

477 Ibid.

478 Like other ascetics who headed this lineage he was referred to as *braj videhī*, (*videhī*: 'incorporeal'). See above, §5.3, for the title *braj dūlah* given to the head of the temple at Bharatpur.

the ascetic order that undertakes one of the annual (*rām dal*) circumambulations of Braj.

Tatti Asthan continued to be the most important of the three Gaddis of the ascetic followers of Swami Haridas. From 1821 until 1837 its leader was Sahacharisharan, and it was one of his followers, a Chaube named Gokulchandra, who initiated the annual fair at Tatti Asthan that is held on the day on which both Swami Haridas and Radha are believed to have been born.[479] Items believed to have belonged to Swami Ḥaridas are displayed and the establishment is visited by its local following, most of whom are Chaubes.[480] By the late nineteenth century the number of ascetics had declined, but the order was revitalized by Bhagwandas, Mahant from 1887-99, who installed an image of Krishna, and allowed the ascetics to beg anywhere for food and to attend celebrations held by other sects.[481] Nowadays they number about seventy, about thirty of whom reside at Tatti Asthan, about twenty elsewhere in Vrindaban, and the rest at other places in Braj.[482] The other two ascetic orders did not build up such a following. The Raja of Datiya provided a new temple for Gorelal during the period when the Mahant of the asectics who worshipped the deity was Shyamcharandev (1815-24).[483] The head of the other branch of ascetics at this time was Govardhansharandev, who installed the deity of Rasikbihari in a new temple in 1814.[484] He was granted the village of Sihana, where he built a temple housing images of Sanaka and his three brothers, the legendary founders of the Nimbark Sampraday. In the vicinity of Govardhan he established an image of Narada at Narad Kund and built a temple at Nimgaon.

38 The Pushtimarg in modern times

After the main Pushtimarg deities were taken out of Braj during the reign of Aurangzeb, Rajasthan and Gujarat became the most important areas of devotional activity. All of the Gaddis continued to survive; many of the younger sons founded junior lineages (referred to as *upagṛha*), and several leaders who had no sons were obliged to adopt successors from other branches of the family. A Gosain called Purushottam (b.1748), belonging to a junior branch of the second Gaddi, is thought to have been the main person responsible for a revival of the Pushtimarg in and around Mathura.[485] He is credited with stimulating devotional activity at Gokul and with organizing mass circumambulations of Braj. He had custody of two temples on the ghats at Mathura, one with images of Dauji and Madanmohan, called 'Bare Madanmohan', and the other with a deity known as 'Chhote

479 P. Mital, p.480.
480 Haynes, pp.174-7, reckons that there are about five to six hundred Chaubes who form the ascetics' only hereditary disciples.
481 Ibid., p.132.
482 Ibid., p.193.
483 Datt, pp.62-3.
484 Datt p.164, giving the year of his death as 1833.
485 P. Mital 1968, p.295.

Madanmohan'. The temples were inherited by his two grandsons, the elder of whom was the father of Brajnath, author of a complete guide to the pilgrimage circuit.[486]

Nowadays the most important temple of the Pushtimarg in Mathura is that of Dwarkadhish. In the early nineteenth century Gokuldas Parikh, the wealthy treasurer of Gwalior State, brought to Mathura a deity that is said to have been discovered when foundations were being dug for a house and temple that he built at Lashkar, near Gwalior.[487] At first he wanted to install it in a walled garden opposite the temple of Bhatror on the edge of Vrindaban, but the site proved inconvenient and so the present temple was built in the centre of Mathura in 1814-15. Like the rest of his property, the temple was eventually inherited by Seth Gobind Das who, in 1873, made it over to the Goswamis of the third Gaddi of the Pushtimarg, of which Gokuldas Parikh had himself been a devotee. The third Gaddi also acquired a fine temple on Swami Ghat dedicated to Govardhannath that was built in 1830 by Seth Kushal (known as 'Babu Kamdar'), an official of Baroda state.[488]

The deities of Gokulnath, Gokulchandrama, and Madanmohan, belonging to the fourth, fifth, and seventh Gaddis of the Pushtimarg, remained in Jaipur until 1866. It is said that Maharaja Ram Singh was persuaded to expel the deities and the priests who worshipped them by a malevolent Shaiva ascetic named Lakshman Giri, who challenged the orthodoxy of the Vaishnava Sampradays.[489] Whether or not Lakshman Giri was primarily responsible for the expulsion of the deities, the Pushtimarg as a whole acquired notoriety in the wake of a sensational libel case held in Bombay in 1860-62. A social reformer named Karsendas Mulji attacked leaders of the Pushtimarg residing in Surat and Bombay for their encouragement of degrading servitude on the part of their followers.[490] The most scandalous accusation was that some of the Maharajas, taking literally the dedication of mind, body, and wealth expressed in the *mantra* used for the *brahmasambandh* initiation, were exercising the right of *jus primae noctis*, the virgin brides of their disciples being the victims. This was based on the notion that a disciple, before taking pleasure in anything himself, should first dedicate it to the descendants of Vallabha, since they were recognized as incarnations of Krishna. When Mulji published these allegations, one of the Maharajas of the Gaddi at Surat filed a libel suit against him. After a long trial Mulji's accusations were upheld and the plaintiff was ordered to pay his costs. The whole episode, widely publicized in the vernacular press, dealt a severe blow to the reputation of the Maharajas. It appears that the affair induced Ram Singh to summon the priests at Jaipur to his palace in order to discuss matters of worship. Although he assured them that, contrary to rumour, he had no intention of expelling any of them from the city, the priest of Gokulchandrama left in 1867, taking the deity with him and 'followed by thousands of the inhabitants crying and

486 Viz. BP, see below §6.26. See P. Mital 1968, pp.521-4, for these and later descendants active in Mathura.

487 The story of the foundation of the temple is given in V. K. Caturvedi, pp.14-21. For Gokuldas Parikh see above §5.35.

488 P. Mital 1968, p.514.

489 Ibid., pp.517-19.

490 He wrote an anonymous account of the case entitled *History of the Maharajas*.

giving vent to their feelings by loud and frequent expressions of grief and sorrow at the great calamity which had befallen the city of Jeypore.'[491]

The deity of Gokulnath was taken back to its original temple at Gokul, while Gokulchandrama and Madanmohan were first installed in temples at Bikaner. A few years later, in 1871, they were housed in adjacent temples at Kaman, presumably because the custodians preferred to be in the state of Bharatpur, rather than at Gokul or Jatipura in the British-administered district of Mathura. Since 1913 the fourth and fifth Gaddis have been managed by the same Maharaja, since the previous head of the fourth Gaddi died without issue. The main deities of the other Gaddis remained in Rajasthan and Gujarat, but some of the leading Gosains have maintained temples and mansions at Mathura, Jatipura, and Gokul, which come to life during their visits to Braj.

The only other main deity to be returned to Braj was Mathureshji, belonging to the first Gaddi at Kota. Its transfer to Jatipura gave rise to litigation that resulted in a judgement that is symptomatic of the erosion of the Maharajas' infallibility in the eyes of their devotees and is concomitant with a decline in their temporal power. Earlier, in 1876, the Rana of Mewar deposed and exiled the Tilakayat in charge of the temple at Nathdwara and replaced him with his elder son. This was followed by litigation between the deposed Tilakayat and his son over property in Bombay, which eventually, in 1942, led to a decree from the Bombay High Court stating that all properties in territories then under British jurisdiction belonged to Shrinathji and that the Tilakayat was entitled to hold and manage them, but could not claim them as his personal property. In 1959 the State of Rajasthan passed the Nathdwara Temple Act, which aimed at vesting the temples at Nathdwara in a board of trustees. The Tilakayat challenged the validity of the ordinance, but in 1963 the Supreme Court ruled that he could only be considered as a manager, even though he was recognized as the head of a denomination who had the right to reside in the *havelī*, distribute *prasād*, and conduct and supervise worship of the deities.[492]

A similar conflict arose over the deity of Mathureshji. In 1953 the head of the Gaddi, to avoid encroachments on his authority by the State of Rajasthan, removed the deity from Kota and installed it in a temple at Jatipura. A group of devotees at Kota formed an action committee and alleged that the Maharaja was wrongfully claiming the deity and temple as his private property. After several years of litigation the district judge at Mathura, bearing in mind previous judgements in similar cases, taking into consideration the scale and style of the temple and worship performed in it, and the fact that the Maharaja's residence was separate from though adjacent to the shrine, and bearing in mind the fact that the general public were admitted to the temples, that offerings had been made through the Goswamis in favour of the deity, that the defendant lived mainly in Bombay, and that the deity had been removed from Kota surreptitiously by night, was unable to

491 A. K. Roy, pp.176-8, quoting an account of events as given in *Report on the Political Administration of Rajpootana for the Years 1865-66 and 1866-67*, pt.II pp.195-6.

492 See All India Reporter (50) 1963, Supreme Court, Shri Govindlal v. State of Rajasthan, pp.1638 ff., where earlier cases are also referred to.

conclude that the deity had been moved to Jatipura in exercise of a right.[493] It was ruled that the Maharaja should be allowed to retain his traditional right to worship the deity, but should be removed from the management ('shebait') of the deities and their properties, which should be transferred to a board of trustees of which the defendant and other members of the sect would be members.

Such adversities over the past hundred years have encouraged many of the Maharajas to adopt a more sober and scholarly profile and to modify the claims to semi-divine status that were made by their predecessors.

39 New arrivals

In recent decades several temples and ashrams have been built in Braj, mainly in and around Vrindaban. They have been mainly funded by the followers of gurus or spiritual leaders who do not belong to any hereditary spiritual lineage or have no particular affiliation with one of the older Sampradays. One such popular saint was Sadhu Ma (d.1943), a Gaudiya devotee who settled in Vrindaban and founded an ashram there.[494] Two gurus who built up a large following in the 1960's and 70's were Akhandanand Saraswati and Anandmayi Ma, who founded ashrams in Vrindaban. Another was Lilanand Thakur, better known as 'Pagal Baba'. He founded what is now the tallest temple in Vrindaban, which consists of a marble-faced tower containing a series of shrines on its different stories, culminating in the syllable 'Om' enshrined at the top. It is slowly but surely nearing completion, thanks to donations from visitors and devotees. In the 1960's the scholarly Swami Bon Maharaj founded a temple in Vrindaban and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, a college affiliated to Agra University. A guru named Nim Karoli Baba has managed to attract some western followers, some of whom visit his ashram in Vrindaban periodically.

The most successful propagator of Vaishnavism in the West was A. C. Bhaktivedant Swami, founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), often referred to by outsiders as the 'Hare Krishna movement'. Known to his disciples as 'Prabhupad', he was a disciple of Bhaktisiddhant Saraswati, founder of the Gaudiya Math. In 1965 Bhaktivedant Swami, at the age of seventy and after a period of ten years' residence at Vrindaban, travelled to the USA and began to recruit western disciples. As the market for Indian mysticism tailed off during the 1970's, the movement turned its attention to middle-class Hindus residing in India and abroad. Its well-kept temple complex in Vrindaban is located on the road connecting the town with the Delhi-Agra highway, making it a convenient stopping-off point for visitors travelling by bus or car. The devotees display the kind of zeal typical of converts, making them an intriguing novelty for Hindu visitors. Their founder stressed ritual practices (*vidhi*) rather than emotionalism (*mādhurya*) because he believed the latter to be too advanced for western neophytes. They are admired for their endorsement of pure 'Vedic' values

493 Chaube and Daga v. H. H. Goswami Ranchorlalji, Court of the District Judge, Mathura, 1971.

494 Kapur, vol.4 pp.133-9.

and have gained a cerain degree of acceptance by the local community, but they remain outside the brahminical social network of Vrindaban and there are many who doubt whether they really have the proper *bhāv*.[495] In addition to a temple, they have built a *samādhi* for Bhaktivedant Swami, a museum illustrating the history of the movement, a Goshala, and a Gurukul to provide children of western and Indian followers with a traditional Hindu education.

495 See Brooks for these and further observations on relations between ISKCON and the local Vaishnavas, and Burr for comments on the attitudes and behaviour of the devotees.

6 Texts dealing with places of pilgrimage in Braj

1 Earliest references

Although canonical sources for the life of Krishna can be placed in chronological order and dated fairly accurately, the development of early texts dealing with the related places of pilgrimage is by no means as clear. Of the texts composed before the middle of the sixteenth century, only two can be can be dated with certainty. Some of the Sanskrit texts composed between the twelfth and sixteenth century may well incorporate material dating from as far back as the Gupta period, though we have no idea of the scale and extent of Hindu pilgrimage in the first millennium, and cannot always be certain that the places mentioned in early sources are the same as those that bear their names today.

A few poets refer to Mathura and some of the places in the neighbourhood that were familiar from standard accounts of the early life of Krishna. Kalidasa, who probably flourished in the fifth century at the court of the Gupta kings at Pataliputra (modern Patna), mentions the king of Shurasena as one of the suitors for the hand of the Indumati. She is told that if she were to become his wife she would be able to enjoy herself in the groves of Vrindavana and, in the rainy season, see peacocks dance in caves on the Govardhana mountain.[1] Antal, the Tamil poetess who lived, probably in the ninth century, at Madurai, 'the southern Mathura', suggests that the northern Mathura was already renown as a place of pilgrimage. In one of her poems she imagines herself on a pilgrimage to Mathura, where she visits Gokula, the pool of Kaliya, Vrindavana, and Govardhana.[2] She might, of course, have been thinking of purely imaginary places, but in the twelfth century Ramanuja's nephew, Kurattalvan, declared that 'those places which enjoyed the touch from your foot-steps...alas! even today can be visited by fortunate people!'[3] Bilhana, a poet from Kashmir writing in the late eleventh or

1 *Raghuvaṃśa* 6. 45-51.

2 *Nācciyār-Tirumoḻi* 12, cf. Hardy 1983/1, p.424. On p.268 he tentatively places Antal in the ninth century. Some northern places of pilgrimage had already been mentioned a century earlier in an imaginary pilgrimage described by Tirumankai Alvar (Hardy 1983/1, pp.144-5).

3 In *Atimānuṣastava*, cited by Hardy ibid., p.566, and 1983/2, p.146.

early twelfth century, tells us that he went to Mathura and spent several days wandering around Vrindavana in the forests along the bank of the Yamuna, visiting the place where Radha used to swing in the groves and sport with Krishna.[4]

Another poet who mentions Mathura is Shriharsha, who probably lived at Kanauj in the latter half of the twelfth century, at a time when the Gahadwala kings were helping to restore Hindu places of pilgrimage. In his *Naiṣadhīyacarita* Saraswati tells Damayanti what she will see when she looks at the palm of the king of Mathura, one of the suitors who presents himself at her father's court:

> There in the centre thou wilt see the Yamunā river, a line of hair on the surface of the earth. The water is darkened, as if by the musk paint of the women of Mathurā washed away in its waters, and looks as if it had a navel in the shape of the great lake (at its bottom) belonging to the serpent Kāliya. In company with this king, do thou without fear enjoy the pleasures of sylvan sport in Vṛndāvana, dense with fragrant flowers. All serpents are banished therefrom by the strutting of flocks of peacocks on the Govardhan hill...[5]

It remains a matter of conjecture whether these early poets were describing places they knew to exist, or were simply using names familiar to them from mythology. For Antal at least, the wish to be taken to Vrindavana reflects her desire to transcend the limitations of her environment and be transported to a mythical realm in which she can feel closer to Krishna, whose mythology figures as the primary emotive force of her devotion.[6]

Probably the earliest attestation of a Hindu pilgrims's visit to Mathura is a plate of the Chandela king Devavarmadeva, dated 1015, that records his having bathed and worshipped Shulapani (Shiva) on a full moon day at Kotitirtha, and to have granted a village on the bank of the Yamuna to a brahmin.[7] The reference is presumably to the Kotitirtha at Mathura, this being the only bathing place on the Yamuna with such a name. Conclusive reference to Mathura as a place of pilgrimage associated primarily with Krishna comes from Alberuni, a scholar from Central Asia who, on the orders of Mahmud of Ghazni, spent ten years in India in the early part of the eleventh century. He names the holy places of the Hindus as Varanasi, Pushkar (?), Thaneshwar ('also called Kurukshetra'), Mathura, Kashmir, and Multan.[8] He remarks that just as Kanauj was famous because of the children of Pandu, so Mathura had become famous on account of its association with Vasudeva.[9] He describes it as a holy place crowded with brahmins, venerated because Vasudeva was born there and was brought up in the neighbourhood at a

4 *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.87.
5 11.106-7, tr. Handiqui.
6 Hardy 1983/1, pp.426-7.
7 EI XX, p.127.
8 Tr. Sachau, vol.2 p.146. In mythological contexts Alberuni uses the name *mathurā*, but here he gives the vernacular form *māhūra* (cf. VTK: *mahurā*). The name *pūkar* ostensibly refers to Pushkar, but it may be an error for *sūkara[kṣetra]*, i.e. Soron, since he refers to an image of 'Brahman as a pig'.
9 Ibid., vol.1 p. 199.

place called 'Nandagola' (i.e. Nanda's *gokula*?).[10] When referring to the Govardhan myth he says that the people commemorated the event by 'a monument on a mountain in the neighbourhood of Mahura'.[11]

It is clear that in Alberuni's time Mathura, Govardhan, and probably a place where Krishna spent his first years (Mahaban or Gokul?) were recognized for their sanctity and attracted pilgrims. Vrindavana known from legend to have been located on the banks of the Yamuna, might also have been identified with a wooded area near Mathura, possibly the site of the modern Vrindaban. If so, the present Kalidah Ghat may already have been identified as the pool of Kaliya. If the river once flowed closer to the town, as is indicated by the location of the old ghats, there would have been a turbulent pool here just before the spot where the flow of the stream ran against the promontory of Praskandan Ghat, beneath the mound on which the temple of Madanmohan now stands.

2 Lakshmidhara (KK) and the original *Varāhapurāṇa*

Old and established Hindu places of pilgrimage that have important brahminical temples, as well as a community of local brahmins who conduct rites for visiting pilgrims, are praised in a type of eulogy referred to as a *māhātmya*. Such texts name the places that should be visited and make extravagant claims about the benefits (*phala*, 'fruit') that will accrue to those who duly perform the appropriate rituals. Most of the available *māhātmya* texts are to be found in one or more of the Puranas, either as interpolations or later additions to the core of the work, or as part of a completely rewritten version. They are usually cast in the form of a dialogue in which one character asks another, usually divine, to tell him about the sacred area (*kṣetra*) and name all the holy places within it. Often stories are included to illustrate the rewards and merit gained by someone who worshipped at a particular spot. Examination of different versions of *māhātmya* texts usually reveals them to be composed of verses that have undergone revision and interpolation in order to bring them in line with changes in topography or patterns of worship. Names of sacred places are usually retained, even though they are no longer resorted to, have disappeared, or cannot be located with any certainty. Older verses deal mainly with the benefits obtained by performing rites at a *tīrtha* (a bathing place on the bank of a river or pond), while later ones often introduce deities that came into vogue when devotional religion made visits to temples a more important feature of pilgrimage.

The oldest datable version of a *māhātmya* dealing with Mathura is found in *Kṛtyakalpataru*, an extensive digest of scriptural quotations dealing with various kinds of religious observance. Its compiler, Lakshmidhara, was chief minister at the court of Govindchandra, a Gahadwala king, which means that he must have lived in the early part of the twelfth century. The section of his digest dealing with places of pilgrimage begins with a description of Kashi, the Gahadwala capital, and then

10 Ibid., vol.2 pp.147-8.
11 Ibid., p. 175.

gives shorter descriptions of other places of pilgrimage, including Mathura.[12] The fact that Mathura is not mentioned in Jimutavahana's *Kālaviveka*, another twelfth-century digest dealing with places of pilgrimage, suggests that Lakshmidhara's inclusion of it is a reflection of his patron's desire to restore and promote the importance of Mathura, one of holy towns in his dominions.[13]

All the verses included in Lakshmidhara's *Mathurāmāhātmya*, apart from the last six,[14] are said to come from *Varāhapurāṇa*, though the version from which he took them was quite different from the one that is available to us today. We have no way of knowing whether Lakshmidhara included all the Hindu sacred sites in and around Mathura that were current in the twelfth century, nor do we know if the verses he quotes really were an integral part of the original version of the *Varāhapurāṇa*. Some or all of the material quoted by him may have been composed many years earlier, and could have been transmitted either as a coherent written text or as an amorphous repertoire of oral material preserved by the local brahmins of Mathura and assigned by them, or an intermediary, to the *Varāhapurāṇa*.

There are a few lines common to Lakshmidhara's *Mathurāmāhātmya* and the version found in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa*, but most of them are simply conventional verses of a descriptive or eulogistic nature. In most cases, only half couplets are found to be common to both texts, and some later verses are no more than a paraphrase of earlier ones.[15] This gives the impression that ultimately both versions derive from a repertoire of conventional eulogistic verses. The mention of a bathing place, or some aspect of the glory of Mathura, would have been the cue for a local priest to spout out as many relevant verses as he had memorized or had the inclination to deliver, or as many as his listener had the patience to hear. This accounts for the conventional and often trite nature of the verses, discrepancies in the sequence of couplets or single lines in different versions of the *māhātmya*, as well as the numerous minor lexical variants and the substitution or transposition of tags or formulae. They constitute a kind of litany of the sacred places, variations in sequence and the information contained in the verses being partly dependent upon the oral traditions of different families, schools, or groups of priests. It is reasonable to suppose that local priests and pilgrimage guides who can still be heard reciting verses about sacred places in Sanskrit, Braj, or a mixture of both, are maintaining a tradition that is as old as pilgrimage itself. They preserve a fluctuating body of lore

12 KK, *Tīrthavivecanakāṇḍa* 9, pp.186-194.

13 Mathura is also omitted from the sacred Vaishnava *mahākṣetra* named in *Bārhaspatya arthaśāstra*. For Govindchandra and Gahadwala patronage at Mathura see above, §4.8.

14 From ViP, dealing with bathing in the Yamuna in the month of Jyeshth.

15 The first three and a half *śloka* of Lakshmidhara's *māhātmya* correspond to VP 150.11a, 24a, 11b, 25a, 27, & 28a; those on p. 187 praising an unspecified *kuṇḍa* in Vrindaban correspond to VP 154.6b-8; four dealing with Virasthala on p.189 are paraphrased in VP 155.15-16; a line on p.189 mentioning a *śilāpaṭṭa* resembling red sandalwood at *prakīrtanakṣetra* corresponds to VP 154.1, which mentions a red stone decorated with red sandalwood; three *śloka* on p.192 dealing with Govardhan correspond to VP 162.1-3; one half *śloka* on p.193 mentioning Muchukunda with reference to *nandiguhā* is applied in VP 156.28 to a place called *mucukundakṣetra* (for Muchukunda cf. HV 85.40 ff., ViP 5.23.15 ff., BhP 10.51.15).

and eulogy that is memorized in order to impress clients, can be readily adapted, and does not need to be set down in the form of a written text.[16]

Lakshmidhara's *Mathurāmāhātmya* and the version found in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa* are both written in the form of an address by Varaha to the Earth in which he extols Mathura as the place that will become famous in the *dvāpara* age as his place of birth (*janmabhūmi*, i.e. as the Krishna incarnation). Both versions also stress the importance of the Yamuna and declare that the circular area round Mathura (*mathurāmaṇḍala*) is twenty *yojana* in extent. Whereas Lakshmidhara mentions only a couple of dozen places in and around Mathura, the much longer version of the *māhātmya* in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa* names well over a hundred, often giving more specific locations and a more obvious association with Krishna mythology. Apart from Mathura, the Yamuna, and Govardhan, the only places mentioned by Lakshmidhara that specifically relate to Krishna mythology are Vrindaban, Bhandiraka, Yamalarjunakunda, Kaliyahrada, and a *kuṇḍa* named after Radha.[17] There is no indication as to whether these places are the same as the ones known to us today, but it is clear that in the early twelfth century there existed an area identified as the mythological Vrindavana and at least one site associated with Radha, which implies that the places mentioned by Bilhana, and perhaps even by earlier poets, were more than just figments of poetic imagination. Lakshmidhara's Radhakund and Bilhana's tree in which Radha used to swing were presumably derived from living popular tradition, for there is no evidence that Radha was yet recognized in canonical literature.

For the rest, Lakshmidhara presents a more archaic picture of Mathura than is found in the version of the *māhātmya* contained in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa*. Some of the places he mentions do not recur in later *māhātmya* texts [18], there is no mention of the twelve forests (apart from Vrindaban), and the only bathing places specified as being on the bank of the Yamuna are Asikunda and an unknown Pindaraka. Asikunda, the main bathing place, is said to be in the centre of Mathura, whereas later sources give a more elaborate listing of northern and southern series of bathing places. Lakshmidhara also refers to four images (*mūrtiḥ*) of Krishna, Balabhadra, Aniruddha, and Pradyumna - a remnant of the archaic and eventually outdated *vyūha* concept that was discarded by all but one of the later *māhātmya*

16 Such a body of material corresponds to the 'α-type of text' that Bakker postulates as the source of the different versions of *Ayodhyāmāhātmya*.

17 KK p.190, *rādhākuṇḍa*, a reading found in all mss. used for the published edition. By *vṛndāvana* he appears to mean a specific location with an unnamed tank or pond (*kuṇḍa*).

18 Viz. *nandanavana* (p.187, located on the banks of the Yamuna), *dhārmikatīrtha* (p.188, east of *bhāṇḍīraka*), *kanakakṣetra* (p.189, unless = Kanakhala), *prakīrtanakṣetra* (p.190, cf. n.15), *piṇḍārakakṣetra* (p.190, beside the Yamuna), a *kuṇḍa* at or called *jambīra-campaka* and a nearby (?) place called *karmāvarohaṇa* (p.190, the *kuṇḍa* is said to have pure (*vimala*) water, so it is possibly equivalent to Vimal Kund at Kaman), *vītānakakṣetra* (p.190, half a *yojana* west of Mathura), *ballabhakṣetra* (p.190, = *val(l)abhī*?, cf. appendix 1), *ūṣabhañjanaka* (p.191, = VP 155.35-6 *vṛṣabhāñjanaka-kṣetra*?), Binduprabha (p. 191), Astamana (p.191, = Samyamana?), Tamraprabha (p.191, five *krośa* south of Mathura). See note 26 for Vatsaprakridana.

texts.[19] The exact location of most of the places he names is not specified, and so they cannot be readily identified with those that nowadays bear the same or a similar name.[20]

3 Jinaprabha Suri (VTK)

Jinaprabha Suri's *Vividhatīrthakalpa*, which does not belong to the *māhātmya* genre, is the only source from the period between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries that can be dated with certainty.[21] The author was a Jain Acharya who wrote a series of descriptions in Sanskrit and Prakrit of places of pilgrimage, which he completed in 1332 and had begun at least twenty-five years earlier.[22] The section dealing with Mathura (*Mathurāpurīkalpa*, written in Prakrit), was therefore written about two hundred years after Lakshmidhara.

Jinaprabha Suri says that at Mathura a goddess called *kuberā* constructed a *stūpa* covered with jewels on the site of the monastery of Suparshwanatha, the seventh Tirthankara, which was later given a protective covering of bricks by Parshwanatha, the twenty-third Tirthankara. He says that in the year 769 Bappahatti (Vappubhatta) Suri, preceptor of Amaraya of Gwalior, reclaimed the sacred places of Mathura and repaired the old *stūpa* monuments. The dimensions of Mathura are given as twelve by nine *yojana* and the places to be seen were the temples of the Yakshas Ajjamangu and Hundiya, five *sthala* (*pāṃc thalāiṃ*), twelve forests (*vana*), and five *laukika* (i.e. Hindu) bathing places (*loiatitthāiṃ*). The tutelary deities of Mathura are said to be the goddesses Kubera and Ambika, mounted respectively on a man and a lion or tiger, and a male deity (*khittavālo*, = *kṣetrapāla*) whose vehicle is a dog (i.e. Bhairava ?).

Jain and Hindu traditions both mention five *sthala*, twelve forests, and some of the same bathing places. The earliest datable Hindu source to mention the twelve forests is *Pramāṇapallava* of Narasinha, composed some time between the mid-twelfth and early fourteenth century.[23] The names of eleven of the twelve forests given by Jinaprabha Suri are Prakrit equivalents of the Sanskrit ones found in Hindu sources, the exception being Kolavana instead of Bhadravana. Five of the twelve forests (Madhuvana, Talavana, Vrindavana, Bhandira(vana), and Maha-

19 The exception is VM. VP 164.23-4 has instead Varaha, Narayana, Vamana, and Langula.

20 Lakshmidhara's Somakunda may be equivalent to the later Somatirtha on the Yamuna, but the fact that he mentions it just before Radhakunda suggests that it may refer to the tank now known as Chandrasarovar; his Nandiguha (p.193) could refer to a site at Mahaban or Nandgaon, for often it is not clear whether the use of the word *tatra* ('there') is to be taken as referring to the site just mentioned or somewhere else in the area of Mathura.

21 References are given to the edition of Jina Vijaya, based on several mss. of which the oldest dated ones were copied in 1409, 1448, and 1470.

22 *Vaibhāragirikalpa* (p.23) is dated VS 1364; the date of completion of the whole work is given at the end (p.109).

23 B. P. Mazumdar, pp.326 & 338, referring to a ms. he found in Mithila. He says that it quotes Lakshmidhara and is in turn quoted by Chhandeshwara (fl.1300-1370).

vana) would seem to derive their names from the *Harivaṃśa*, a text known to Jains as well as Hindus, but Jinaprabha, unlike his Jain contemporary Rajashekhara Suri, makes no reference to Krishna in connection with them or any other site in the neighbourhood of Mathura.[24] It is evident from other sources that Bhandiravata or Bhandiravana was the site of a *caitya* or a shrine of a Yaksha who was resorted to by Jain pilgrims.[25]

The first two of Jinaprabha Suri's five *sthala* (Arkasthala and Virasthala) are mentioned by Lakshmidhara, and all five of them are found in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa*, but with Punya- or Pushpasthala instead of Padmasthala. Either Lakshmidhara simply omitted the other three *sthala*, or they were originally of more importance to Jain pilgrims but were later incorporated into the extant version of the *Varāhapurāṇa*. Of the five *laukika* bathing places referred to by Jinaprabha Suri, only Asikunda is mentioned by Lakshmidhara, whereas all of them occur in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa* as places in Mathura along the bank of the Yamuna, four of them referred to as a *tīrtha* (Vishranti-, Asikunda-, Vaikuntha-, and Chakra-) and one (Kalinjara) as the name of a Shiva deity presiding over Krishnaganga.

4 The *Mathurāmāhātmya* of the extant *Varāhapurāna* (VP)

There are five Puranas of uncertain date that contain one or more chapters dealing with places of pilgrimage in and around Mathura (viz. *Varāha-*, *Skanda-*, *Nārada-*, *Ādi-*, and *Padmapurāṇa*). The most detailed description is found in the *Mathurāmāhātmya* included in the *Varāhapurāṇa*. It consists of twenty nine chapters (VP 150-178), of which the first contains general praise of Mathura (some fragments of which are given by Lakshmidhara, as noted above), extols the benefits of pilgrimage to the town, compares it favourably with other places of pilgrimage, eulogizes the Yamuna, and mentions some of the benefits that can be gained by bathing at the twelve *tīrtha* that lie to the south of Vishranti. The next two chapters mention nine of the bathing places north of Vishranti, interrupted by an enumeration of the twelve forests. The next three chapters (153-5) deal with places round about Mathura in a random fashion, at least in terms of their modern location, and the following chapter (156) deals with the sacred area (*kṣetra*) of Mathura, saying that it extends over twenty *yojana* (either in length or circumference) and is five *yojana* broad. The next two chapters (157-8) praise the circumambulation of Mathura, give the date on which it should be performed, and then list the places on the circuit, corresponding fairly closely to the modern route but including several sites that have fallen into oblivion (cf. appendix 1). A very

24 Nahta, in *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, p.168, says that Rajashekhara Suri in his *Prabandhakośa (Sātavāhanaprabandha)* p.72, written in 1348, mentions Mathura as the birthplace of Krishna, where there are the 'forests of *vṛndāvana* et cetera'.

25 The Yaksha was called *sudaṃsana* (Sudarshana). For a *caitya* here *Abhidhāna rājendra* cites the first chapters of *Āvaśyakamalayāgiri*, *Āvaśyakakathā*, and *Āvaśyakacūrṇi*. For other references see Mehta & Chandra under *bhāṃḍīra*.

short chapter briefly referring to the twelve forests (159, but not all versions give the full list) is followed by another giving a typical *māhātmya* story to illustrate the merits of bathing at Chakratirtha. Subsequent chapters contain similar stories extolling other sacred sites or deities (Chatuhsamudrikakupa, Asikunda, Vishranti, Gokarna, the confluence of the Yamuna and Saraswati, Krishnaganga and Kalinjara, an image of Surya, and Dhruvatirtha), interspersed with chapters that contain passages of general eulogy or mention some of the sacred places and deities to be seen at Mathura (166, parts of 161 & 167) and in the vicinity of Govardhan (162).

The composition of this version of the *Mathurāmāhātmya* gives the impression that it is a rather haphazard conflation of old material, presumably from the original *Varāhapurāṇa*, with verses that were devised later. This is evident from the untidy manner in which topics are introduced, dropped, and taken up again further on, and the way in which the traditional *māhātmya* concept of a sacred place, with its emphasis on the benefits obtained from performing rites beside a river or some other water source, is combined with the notion of pilgrimage to Mathura as a tour of places associated with the adventures of Krishna - a concept that was more systematically presented in texts composed after the mid-sixteenth century. Either the redactor of this *māhātmya* was not concerned with giving a systematic presentation of the material, or the concept of pilgrimage to Mathura as a circuit of all the places associated with Krishna's early years had not yet been coherently formulated. Apart from a few verses in chapter 174, none of the material in the last ten chapters of this *māhātmya* is found in other versions of the *Mathurāmāhātmya*, implying that the stories they contain were composed specially for this version and made no impression on later writers. Nearly all the places mentioned, however, occur in other versions of the *māhātmya*, and most of the names are still used for some extant sacred place or deity.[26]

Although it is named among the oldest Puranas, the *Varāhapurāṇa* as it exists today is the result of a considerable amount of revision.[27] In the introduction to his critical edition Gupta reviews the comments of previous scholars on the evolution of the *Varāhapurāṇa* and notes that its fluent nature has allowed for inflation, conflation, and omission of material. Collation of nineteen manuscripts used for the critical edition showed that the text has been subject to regional variation. The Bengali versions have 202 chapters, while the southern recension has only a hundred. In the Venkateshwara Press edition the occurrence of a *phalaśruti* at the end of chapter 112,[28] followed by a *maṅgalācaraṇa* and the introduction of a new

26 Exceptions are the obsolete places included in the circumambulation of Mathura (cf. appendix 1), *vatsaputra-* and *phālgunatīrtha* (said to lie on the south side of Mathura), and *vṛṣabhāñjanakakṣetra* (VP 155.35-6, see n.18 above), a *kuṇḍa* at *mucukundakṣetra* (156.28, see above n.15), and a *tīrtha* called *vatsakrīḍana* (154.1, also mentioned in R 463) that may be the same as a *kuṇḍa* at *vatsaprakrīḍana* referred to in KK, pp.191-2, as lying half a *yojana* west of Mathura. According to VP there was a stone there daubed with red sandalwood, an item which in KK, p.189, is said to lie at an unknown *prakīrtanakṣetra* (see n.15).

27 See Rocher, pp.241-2, for bibliography and brief discussion.

28 = crit. ed. 111. In the Venkateshwara and Shastri editions the *Mathurāmāhātmya* comprises chs.152-80.

set of interlocuters at the beginning of the following chapter, suggests that the rest of the text, a further 105 chapters in this edition, most of them giving the *māhātmya* of places of pilgrimage, are supplementary material added at a later date. Hazra agrees that the extant *Varāhapurāṇa* is a comparatively late work and distinguishes four sections (chapters 1-112, 113-92, 193-212, 213-end) which he believes belong to different periods. He considers the *Mathurāmāhātmya* to be later than other chapters dealing with places of pilgrimage in the second section, which he thinks were interpolated before 1500.[29] It would seem that the *Mathurāmāhātmya* chapters were subject to an even later revision.

In the Vrindaban Research Institute there is a manuscript of the *Mathurāmāhātmya* from the *Varāhapurāṇa* that was copied in 1575.[30] Comparison of this manuscript, older than any of those used by Gupta for his critical edition of the whole Purana, with the various printed versions of the text shows that the *Mathurāmāhātmya* of the extant *Varāhapurāṇa* had attained its present form by the last quarter of the sixteenth century.[31] The detail it contains about places in Mathura and the immediate vicinity, its lack of any concept of a circuit encompassing the whole of Braj, its retention of 'archaic' material, and the inclusion of passages in praise of the local Chaturvedi brahmins suggest that it is a revised version of an earlier *māhātmya* made by a pilgrimage priest (*tīrthapurohita*) of Mathura who had not been influenced by the works of the Vrindaban Goswamis. It could have been compiled any time between the thirteenth and early sixteenth century. Bearing in mind Hazra's remarks, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, a

29 Hazra 1975, pp.96-107. He notes that the *Mathurāmāhātmya* chapters use the name Krishna more than once, which is rare in other parts of the Purana, and that a story about a *brahmarākṣasa* in ch.155 (crit. ed. ch.153) is a later version of one found in ch.139. Farquhar, pp.309-310, without adducing any reasons, has ascribed them to the Vrindaban Goswamis, but he may well have confused the *māhātmya* of VP with R.

30 VRI acc.no.559 s.no.995, from the temple of Radhadamodar. It has been copied by two scribes, one of whom completes the text from the middle of the seventh chapter and gives his name at the end as Keshavdas. A supplementary colophon records that in 1624 the ms. came into the possession of Lakshman Bhatt. Owing to the loss of the first folio the first 34 *śloka* of the first chapter are missing. Marginal notes added by a different hand give variants that have negligible, if any, effect on the sense. Colophons of individual chapters ascribe the *māhātmya* indifferently to the *Ādivarāha-* or *Varāhapurāṇa*. In the *Mathurāmāhātmya* ascribed to Rup Goswami both ascriptions are used for *śloka* that are found in VP and for others that are not, and so it is not possible to differentiate between a hypothetical '*Ādi-*' and a revised version of the *Varāhapurāṇa*.

31 Whereas the printed versions all have the same division into 29 chapters, the 1575 ms. has somewhat inconsistent numbering, added by a later hand. Chapters 159 and 160 of the critical edition are given together as chapter 10 in the ms. Subsequent chapters are not numbered, apart from the last, which is numbered 30. Titles assigned to the chapters in the ms. are substantially the same as those of the critical edition (where they are given as footnotes). The last chapter of Shastri's edition of VP (218) begins with a verse saying that it was compiled at Kashi by Madhav Bhatt with Vireshwara in 1564, followed by a versified list of contents in which the *Mathurāmāhātmya* chapters are mentioned.

plausible and cautious estimation of its date of composition would be around 1500 or somewhat earlier.

5 The *Mathurāmāhātmya* attributed to Rup Goswami (R)

The next version of the *Mathurāmāhātmya* to be considered may be the one mentioned by Krishnadas Kaviraj and Jiv Goswami as having been written by Rup Goswami.[32] It may also be the same as a *Vārāhīyādimathurāmāhātmya* included in a list of manuscripts at the temple of Radhadamodar that was compiled by or for Jiv Goswami in 1597.[33] Verses from this *māhātmya*, which are not found in any other versions of the *Mathurāmāhātmya*, are quoted by Jiv Goswami in his *Kṛṣṇasaṃdarbha*.[34] An edition of this *māhātmya* has been published by Krishnadas Baba, who attributes it to Rup Goswami, though he is not named as the author in the older manuscripts available, two of which are dated 1624 and 1717.[35] Apart from minor variants the printed and manuscript versions follow each other closely and are consistent in the attribution of verses to their respective sources. Although there is no conclusive proof that this *māhātmya* was written by him, it is referred to here for convenience as 'Rup Goswami's *māhātmya*'. Even if it was not compiled by him or one of his pupils, it seems likely that it was produced in the middle of the sixteenth century during the years that he was resident in Vrindaban.

All the 467 *śloka* in this *māhātmya* are ascribed to a source, apart from the four lines of invocation at the beginning and a few at the end in which the compiler says that Mathura has been extolled in *Gopālottaratāpanī* and other works. The reference here is to the second part (*uttarabhāga*) of the *Gopālatāpanī*, one of the late Vaishnava Upanishads, which names the twelve forests, saying that they lie between Bhadravana and Krishnavana (the latter not being included among the twelve) and that the twelve Adityas, eleven Rudras, eight Vasudevas, seven sages, five Vinayakas, and so on, are all present in them.[36] The compiler of the *māhātmya* concludes by saying that he hopes Krishna will be pleased with him for having collected verses in praise of some of the many sacred places of Mathura that are mentioned in the Puranas. One hundred and ninety-three of the *śloka* are attributed to *Ādivarāhapurāṇa*, and a further nineteen to *Varāhapurāṇa*, but there is no consistency in the application of these attributions to either the few verses that are

32 CC 2.1.35, and Dc, p.153 (referring to Jiv's list of works that includes a *Mathurāmahimā*).

33 VRI acc.no.5425.

34 Jiv Goswami, *Kṛṣṇasaṃdarbha, anuccheda* 105, verses 332-5 (= R 409-10, 399-400) & 338 (= R 373), *anuccheda* 115, ad 358 (R 425b), *anuccheda* 117, verse 374 (= R 376), attributing them to the same Puranas as R.

35 India Office Library, Eggeling cat.no.3715, ms.no.947a (dated 1624); VRI acc.no.1039, s.no.993c (dated 1717, from the temple of Radhadamodar); undated ms. in the collection of Hari Shankar Das of Vrindaban, VRI Ms. Preservation Project microfilm, reel 99, s.no.1188. There are several misprints in Krishnadas Baba's edition, but the text is adequate for present purposes.

36 *Gopālatāpanī, uttarabhāga* 29 ff.

also found in Lakshmidhara, who must have used an 'original' (i.e. *Ādi-*) version of the *Varāhapurāṇa*, or to the larger number that occur in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa*.[37]

It names a little less than two thirds of the number of places and deities mentioned in the *Varāhapurāṇa*, but the presentation of them is more systematic, especially with regard to the bathing places along the river at Mathura, and their location is in closer conformity with the modern situation. The work is more in tune with mid-sixteenth developments since emphasis is given to Govinda, the tutelary deity of Vrindaban and the epithet given to an image that Rup Goswami established there; some places that were obsolete or of no importance to Krishna devotees, such as the five *sthala*, are omitted. Like other versions of the *māhātmya*, it begins with general praise of Mathura and the Yamuna. This takes up nearly half the text and includes verses on the merits of bathing at Mathura, the dimensions of its *maṇḍala*, and the benefits of performing the circumambulation on Karttik II.9, which leads into the enumeration of the places to be visited. First the main deities of Mathura and the twenty-four bathing places along the river are mentioned; after some praise of the Chaturvedi brahmins and the merits of residing in Mathura, the twelve forests are named, then Vrindaban and its holy sites are dealt with, followed by Govardhan and its surroundings, and then a few other places in Braj. The *māhātmya* concludes with the merits of bathing at certain places on particular days.

Variant readings in the verses they share in common with Lakshmidhara's *māhātmya*, and differences in the pairing and sequence of full and half lines, suggest that this version of the *māhātmya* and the one in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa* have been derived independently from a common source.[38] This source contained some of the material from an older *Varāhapurāṇa* that was used by Lakshmidhara. It seems that whereas Rup Goswami made a judicious selection of the *Varāhapurāṇa* verses from this intermediate source, the compiler of the *māhātmya* in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa* inflated his selection by adding and repeating tags and formulae, though he did not incorporate all the material that was available.[39] Rup Goswami mentions two places, quoting verses ascribed to the *Varāhapurāṇa*, that are not found in any other *māhātmya*, namely a *kuṇḍa* at *bhāṇḍāgāra* ('treasure house'), lying half a *yojana*

37 R 33, 38b, 299-300, 406a, 420, 435-6/KK pp.186, 193-4. Eggeling says that the IOL ms. 'constantly' quotes its source as *Ādivarāha-*, but in fact the ascriptions to both *Ādivarāha-* and *Varāhapurāṇa* are the same as in the printed edition.

38 Compare verses praising Mathura in VP 150.8-31 with R 13, 31-33, 38-9, 42-5, 65, 163-4, 296-7, 329-30; verses on Mathura *pradakṣiṇa* in R 225-8 are equivalent to VP 156.7, 30, 5, & 34). Rup Goswami has also included some verses from Lakshmidhara that are not found in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa* (R 299-300. 406a, and some of the verses dealing with bathing in Jyeshth which Lakshmidhara ascribes to *Viṣṇupurāṇa* and which Rup Goswami (313-6) says are found in both the *Viṣṇu-* and *Agnipurāṇa*). R 428-30, dealing with *dvādaśī* lamps on Govardhan, are equivalent to those in KK p.192, but are ascribed by Rup to a *Mathurākhaṇḍa* of SP.

39 R 324-37 (on the merits of Chaturvedi brahmins and residence in Mathura) are attributed to '*Ādivarāha*' but are not all in VP; those that are in VP (150.21-2, 163.52-3 & 57-8) are found there in a different order and with variant readings.

west of Mathura, and *śakaṭārohaṇakṣetra* ('the place where the cart was overturned'), which has been identified with Chhatikara.[40]

Rup Goswami appears to have selected verses from the older *Varāhapurāṇa* in order to introduce themes and sacred places, and then supplemented them with verses attributed to other Puranas. Such attributions are not always to be trusted, for it was common practice among the Vrindaban Goswamis and their circle to ascribe spurious verses to various scriptural authorities. A precedent had already been set by earlier writers, such as Madhva, [41] and was carried to an extreme by Narayan Bhatt. A total of 121 *śloka* ascribed to the *Padmapurāṇa* are used to enlarge on general praise of Mathura and the Yamuna, the merits of dwelling there and bathing in the month of Karttik, and to tell more about Keshava, Bhuteshwara, Vishranti, and Radhakund. The only verses that actually occur in the (Venkateshwar and Anandashrama) printed editions are found in one of the *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* chapters of the *Pātālakhaṇḍa*, though in Rup Goswami's *māhātmya* they are said to come from an otherwise unknown *Nirvāṇakhaṇḍa*.[42] Several chapters of the published edition of the *Padmapurāṇa*, referred to as *Kālindīmāhātmya*, deal with the Yamuna, but the quotations given in Rup Goswami's text are not to be found in them. Mathura, under the name of Madhuvana and with specific reference to Vishranti, appears in a story illustrating the merits of the Yamuna,[43] but none of its verses is quoted in any version of the *Mathurāmāhātmya*. The discrepancy between the published version of the *Padmapurāṇa* and the one referred to by the Vrindaban Goswamis can be accounted for by the existence of two recensions, one from Bengal and another that appears to have been composed by Shrivaishnavas of southern India.[44] Since the verses from the *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* section of the *Padmapurāṇa* are not quoted by Mitra Mishra, they probably did not belong to the source material that he shared with Rup Goswami and may well have been composed by one of the Bengali or Vrindaban Goswamis in the middle of the sixteenth century. This would mean that this

40 R 448-51, 454-6; both, however, are mentioned by Narahari, BRat pp.249-50, who locates *bhāṇḍāgāra* at at a place called *bhādāli* (= Bhadawal, 4 km west of Chhata?). For Chhatikara cf §8.61a.

41 De, p.412.

42 Viz. R 51, 128, 237, 238b-9, 342-3, corresponding to PP 5.73.54, 26b-27a, 48, 51b-52, & 46-7. The other passages are said to be taken from the *Pātāla-* and *Uttarakhaṇḍa*, and the *Kārttika-* and *Yamunāmāhātmya* chapters. Asoke Chatterjee suggests that chapters 69-99 constitute the latest of the interpolated sections. They include the *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* and some verses that are cited by Gopal Bhatt in *Haribhaktivilāsa*. Chatterjee erroneously supposes that Gopal Bhatt lived in about 1400, and, on the assumption that it must have taken two hundred years for these chapters to have gained acceptance, suggests that they were composed in the period 1150-1200. For a survey of the structure of the PP and bibliography, see Rocher, pp.206-14.

43 PP 6.213-6.

44 Noted by Hazra 1975, pp.107-27, as the Bengali and 'western' recensions. The Venkateshwar and Anandashrama editions give the 'western' (i.e. southern) version. That it was produced by Shrivaishnavas is evident from references to their type of *mālā* and the prominence given to the worship of Lakshmi-Narayana, cf. Entwistle 1981/2, pp.18, 28, & n.53.

Vṛndāvanamāhātmya, initially assigned to a *Nirvāṇakhaṇḍa*, was later incorporated in to the *Pātālakhaṇḍa*.

The next most frequently cited source is the *Skandapurāṇa*, fifty-seven of the sixty-three *śloka* quoted being ascribed to a *Mathurākhaṇḍa* that is not included in the printed edition of this Purana.[45] Apart from praise of Mathura and the Yamuna, they enlarge upon Bhuteshwar, Talban, Kaman (Kamyavana), Bahulavana, Radhakund, Vishranti, Mokshatirtha, and introduce Mathura Devi. These passages also support the 'mythological' conception of Madhuvana and Vrindaban as extensive wooded areas that encompass Mathura and Govardhan respectively. At the same time it agrees with modern topography by mentioning tanks named after Brahma and Govinda that are both found at Govardhan and Vrindaban. Rup Goswami also quotes two *śloka* from the *Bādarīkāśramamāhātmya*, contained in the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa*, which mention Krishna's birthplace and Vishrantitirth.[46] The nineteen *śloka* ascribed to the *Saurapurāṇa* refer to Vishranti-, Prayaga-, Dhruva-, Kaliya-, Praskandana-, and Akruratirthas, as well as Gokarna, the deity of Govinda at Vrinadaban, and the Dwadashaditya mound. Sixteen verses are taken from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, one of which refers to Govinda playing the flute in Vrindavana.[47] This verse is the prime canonical source for the notion that Govinda is the epithet appropriate for Krishna as the presiding deity of Vrindaban (see below, §6.13). Eight *śloka* from the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, also found at the end of Lakshmidhara's *māhātmya*, deal with bathing in the months of Karttik and Jyeshth. Seven other Puranas are named as the sources for one, two, or three *śloka* in praise of Mathura and the Yamuna (*Brahmāṇḍa-, Vāyu-, Vāmana-, Matsya-*, and *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*) or extolling the meits of particular bathing days (*Bṛhannāradīyapurāṇa* for the full moon of Jyeshth and *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* for *bhīṣmapañcaka*).

6 Mitra Mishra's *Mathurāmāhātmya* (VM)

A later *Mathurāmāhātmya* containing material found in the sources so far discussed is included in the section of Mitra Misra's *Vīramitrodaya* that deals with places of pilgrimage.[48] The whole work is, like Lakshmidhara's *Kṛtyakalpataru*, a compilation of passages from authoritative scriptures dealing with various aspects of religious practice. Mitra Mishra was in the service of Bir Singh Deo, who was Raja of Orchha in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. His version of the *Mathurāmāhātmya* introduces no new holy places, but it does throw light on the interrelationship of earlier *māhātmya* material. He begins with a few verses in praise of Mathura that also occur at the beginning of the *Mathurāmāhātmya* of *Kṛtya-*

45 Four *śloka* attributed to this source are found elsewhere, viz. R 273 (on Mokshatirtha, =VP 150.60) and 428-30 (on *dvādaśī* lamps on Govardhan) =verses on KK p.192.

46 R 220/SP 3.3.1.32, R 241-2/SP 3.3.1.33-4.

47 R 380/BhP 10.21.10.

48 *Vīramitrodaya* vol.X (*Tīrthaprakāśa*) pp.502-28.

kalpataru, which is cited as their source.[49] Further on he gives some verses on bathing in the month of Jyeshth that are also found in the *māhātmya* of Lakshmidhara and Rup Goswami, but with variants not found in the available manuscripts or printed editions of these two texts.[50] Apart from the introductory verses borrowed from Lakshmidhara, the first three quarters of Mitra Mishra's *māhātmya* consist of material also found in Rup Goswami's *māhātmya*, but although they both ascribe the verses to the same sources, there are enough discrepancies to show that they were not derived from Rupa Goswami's *māhātmya*.[51] The rest of Mitra Mishra's *māhātmya* consists of a description of the circumambulation of Mathura which is found in the extant version of the *Varāha-purāṇa*, but of which only the first and last few lines are given by Rup Goswami.[52]

7 Anantadev's *Mathurāsetu* (MS)

Another compilation of *māhātmya* material, entitled *Mathurāsetu*, was made by Anantadev.[53] The manuscript of this work is undated, and all that we are told about the compiler is that he was the son of a certain Apadev. It is a compilation of verses dealing with Mathura and its sacred places, with the addition of some explanatory passages that appear to have been written by Anantadev. The main source is the extant version of the *Varāhapurāṇa*, from which long passages are quoted;[54] other eulogistic verses it contains are also found in the *māhātmya* of Rup Goswami and Mitra Mishra. Although it has many verses in common with Rup Goswami's *māhātmya*, it does not appear to be derived from it since it has additional verses in a few of the passages they share in common.[55] The verses that also occur in the *Varāhapurāṇa* are closer to those given in Shastri's edition than in

49 VM pp.502-3/KK pp.186-7. A few of the lines are also found with variants in R 299-300 and VP 150.11b, 27-28a.

50 VM p.507, KK pp.193-4, R 313-6.

51 VM pp.503-5 correspond to R 3-6, 9, 11-12a, 14, 22-23a, 42-5, 127, 130-1. Elsewhere there are passages in which verses in VM are in the same sequence as in R (VM pp.507-10, 511-16/R 86-242, 254-445), but there are other passages in which the sequence of verses differs: VM pp.505-6 (under the rubric *maraṇaphala*)/R 86-93, 95, 98, 156-161; Yamuna *māhātmya* verses in VM pp.510-11 correspond to R 305-7 and are placed between passages corresponding to R 240-2 and 255 ff.; VM pp.516-521 corresponds to R 402-39, 336-9, 344, 418, 345-77, 462-4; VM p.509 quotes VP 156.5-7, from which one and a half lines are omitted by R 225.

52 VM pp.521-8, comprising a few *śloka* from VP 156-7 and the whole of VP 158, but with some variants and a few omissions. The first and last lines correspond to R 213-4, 215-8/VP 156.34-5, 158.76-7, 79-80.

53 Ms. in the India Office Library, Eggeling cat. no.3714, ms. no.2638.

54 VP 151.33-49 (the twelve forests), 153 (Akruratirtha), 158 (Mathura *parikrama*), 162 (Govardhan).

55 It quotes more from *Padmapurāṇa* (*Kārttikamāhātmya* on *bahulāṣṭamī* and *annakūṭa*) than is given in R, and gives more verses than R on the Chaturvedi brahmins (viz. VP 164.51-2, 53b, 54b, 55b, 56-8).

the critical edition of Gupta or the one used by Mitra Mishra.[56] Comparison of passages found in other sources suggests that this is another independent compilation of the source material used by the extant *Varāhapurāṇa*, Rup Goswami, and Mitra Mishra.

It begins by introducing Mathura and its main deities, the twelve forests, and the Yamuna, goes on to enumerate the bathing places along its bank, then deals with places in the vicinity of Govardhan, followed by the Akrura-, Kaliya-, and Keshitirthas. It describes the circle of twenty *yojana* around Mathura as a lotus, declaring it to be an area in which liberation can be attained (*muktikṣetra*) and stating the advantages of dying in the centre of the lotus and other places upon it. This is followed by a description of the circumambulation of Mathura, following the itinerary given in the *Varāhapurāṇa* (cf. appendix 1), and the rites that precede and conclude it. After a description of the celebration of Annakut and Govardhan Puja there is a colophon announcing the conclusion of the first part (*pūrvārdha*) of the work.

The second part deals with initiation ritual, the qualities expected of a guru and his disciple, and the merits of *tulsī* and the clay used for marking the forehead (*gopīcandana*). It concludes with verses on the type of devotion that is based on aesthetic theory. The inclusion of the latter implies that the compilation was made some time after the middle of the sixteenth century. A *terminus ad quem* can be set at around 1800, since the manuscript was part of the Mackenzie collection that was acquired by the India Office Library in 1822-23. Its inclusion of archaic places and omission of ones that became popular later on suggests that it was compiled in the early part of this period, some time in the seventeenth century.

8 *Skandapurāṇa* (SP)

The *Skandapurāṇa* is a vast compilation that includes a large amount of *māhātmya* material. Those who have studied the sections of the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* dealing with Puri, Ayodhya, and Kashi are inclined to assign them to the thirteenth century, though the original version of the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* may be much earlier.[57] One of the sections of the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* ends with a chapter entitled *Mathurāmāhātmya*, followed by a short section in praise of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.[58] These chapters can readily be conceived of as having existed separately before they were included in the *Skandapurāṇa*, or as having been specially composed as supplementary material. The *Mathurāmāhātmya* chapter opens with an introductory *śloka* followed by verses in praise of Mathura, all of which are found in the *māhātmya* attributed to Rup Goswami.[59] These are followed by a passage (*śloka* 53-71) found in no other

56 Compare Anantadev's section on the circumambulation of Mathura with VP 158, Shastri's edn. ch.160, and VM pp.522-8.

57 G. Tripathi in Eschmann et al. (eds.), pp.36, 54, 485; Bakker, introduction to pt.2; Eck, p.347. The oldest part of the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* (some 500 verses) is found in a Nepali ms. in Lichhavi script. Hazra 1975, pp.157-66, discusses the evolution of the divisions of SP; for further discussion and bibliography see Rocher, pp.228-37.

58 *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa*, *Mārgaśīrṣamāhātmya* 17 and *Bhāgavatamāhātmya*.

59 Viz. SP 2.5.17.2-52 are found among the first 110 *śloka* of R.

source that extols the benefit of bathing at Mathura in the month of Margashirsh and on full moon days.

Apart from slight grammatical, syntactical, or lexical differences, the verses common to this chapter of the *Skandapurāṇa* and the *māhātmya* attributed to Rup Goswami differ only in that the former has omitted the attributions to various sources and the vocatives refer to Brahma rather than to the Earth. This gives the impression that the person who contributed this chapter to the *Skandapurāṇa* borrowed material from another source and simply changed the vocatives and added extra verses to justify its inclusion in a section dealing with the merits of the month of Margashirsh. Apart from a brief reference in *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa*, [60] no other *māhātmya* dealing with Mathura recommends bathing in this particular month.

It seems unlikely that these verses were taken directly from the *māhātmya* attributed to Rup Goswami; there the sequence of verses and the pairing of single lines is different and they are interspersed with other verses in praise of Mathura that might equally have been included.[61] A feasible explanation is that the verses found in both of these texts are derived from a common source that must have been in existence before the mid-sixteenth century, the period when Rupa's *māhātmya* was compiled. In the latter the verses are ascribed to various sources, mainly the *Ādivarāha-*, but also the *Padma-*, *Vāyu-*, and *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, and, in four instances, to a *Mathurākhaṇḍa*, said to be a portion of the *Skandapurāṇa*.[62] Nine *śloka* common to the *māhātmya* of the *Skandapurāṇa* and Rup Goswami are found scattered in seven chapters of the *Mathurāmāhātmya* of the extant *Varāhapurāṇa*,[63] providing some hint that all three might have derived them independently from a common source.

The *Bhāgavatamāhātmya* section of the *Skandapurāṇa* contains material that is not found in other sources. The first three chapters (of which the first is entitled *Vrajabhūmimāhātmya*) tell how Vajranabha came to Braj, repopulated its villages, reclaimed the sacred places, and met Uddhava, who gave him a sermon on the importance of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. The fourth and last chapter of this section extols the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*'s importance as a means of salvation in modern times. Places where the meeting with Uddhava took place are named, and among the villages which Vajranabha repopulated are *dīrghapura* and *bṛhatsānu*, presumably sankritized forms of Dig and Barsana. Obviously this section post-dates the acceptance of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* as a canonical text in North India, and there is no evidence to suggest that it was in existence before the reclamation of Braj by devotees of the sixteenth century. It may even have been written after 1725, when Badan Singh began to build a fort and palaces at Dig and transform this hitherto insignificant village into a capital.

60 BRam 105.4-5.

61 Compare *śloka* 23-28 in SP with R 43-49.

62 The use of the term *-khaṇḍa* implies something longer than the single chapter that is entitled *Mathurāmāhātmya* in the standard edition of SP. If such a *Mathurākhaṇḍa* exists anywhere, then it is one of several claiming to be part of SP.

63 SP 3-5/R 4-6/ VP 156.25, 159.3, 163.50; SP 12/R 13/VP 150.18; SP 17/R 22/VP 174.53; SP 20/R 31/VP 150.8; SP 21/R 34a, 35b/VP 167.2a, 158.19b; SP 25/R 45/VP 150.14-15; SP 36/R 65/VP 150.17; SP 48/R 93/VP 160.64.

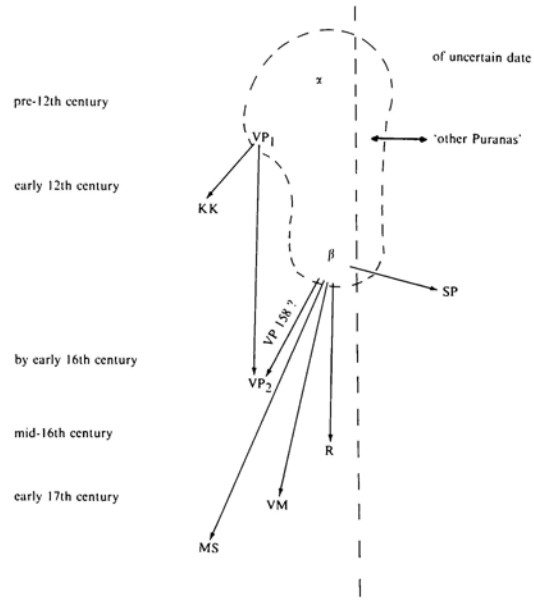
9 Interrelationship of texts so far discussed

In order to account for both the similarities and differences in the versions of the *Mathurāmāhātmya* compiled by Rup Goswami and Mitra Mishra, we may postulate the existence of a collection of verses dealing with Mathura, consisting of at least all the material they have in common, which were ascribed to or culled from a variety of sources, principally a version of the *Padmapurāṇa* (which does not yet appear to have acquired its *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* chapters), a *Mathurākhaṇḍa* that was said to be part of the *Skandapurāṇa*, and a body of material that belonged to the *Mathurāmāhātmya* of the original *Varāhapurāṇa*. If we choose to refer to the latter as an α type of text, then we can refer to the later fund or pool of material, to which verses attributed to other sources were added, as β. This later fund may be though of as comprising a corpus of related manuscripts and codices containing material from α with the addition of verses ascribed to other sources. It was also used for the *Mathurāmāhātmya* chapter of the *Skandapurāṇa* that has been described in the previous section, but the vocatives were changed and the attributions to different sources were omitted.

The itinerary for the circumambulation of Mathura that is given by Mitra Mishra and Anantadev, but not by Rup Goswami, was derived either from this β fund or from the extant *Varāhapurāṇa*. Elsewhere Mitra Mishra ascribes to the *Varāhapurāṇa* those verses which he has taken from it, but he introduces the passage dealing with the circumambulation with the rubric *tatraiva* ('also there'), presumably referring to the source of the verses immediately preceding it, which he calls *Māthuramahātīrthadevasaṃgrahaślokāḥ* ('Verses on the collection of great *tīrtha* and deities of Mathura'). This preceding passage is also found at the end of Rup Goswami's *māhātmya* with the heading *atha māthuramahātīrthānī*. These two headings possibly refer to a collection of verses that we propose to designate β, or to a portion of them that was also included in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa* (as chapter 158).

As far as other verses borrowed from the *(Ādi)varāhapurāṇa* by Mitra Mishra and Rup Goswami are concerned, they do not appear to have been derived from the extant *Varāhapurāṇa*, for there are so many variants and discrepancies in the sequence and pairing of lines. The hypothetical β fund must therefore have contained some of the *(Ādi)varāhapurāṇa* material from which Mitra Mishra and Rup Goswami made their independent selections, and which is also found in a revised form in the extant *Varāhapurāṇa*.

Since material common to the *māhātmya* compilations of Rup Goswami and Mitra Mishra must have been present in the β fund, it must already have contained verses dealing with the twelve forests and the sacred places that are said to be located in them, namely the tanks or ponds in some of the forests and the places included under Mahaban. It also described the bathing places along the river as comprising two series of twelve *tīrtha* to the north and south of a central Vishrantitirtha. The stemma given below attempts to illustrate how the texts so far discussed are related to each other. The *māhātmya* texts found in other Puranas cannot be accomodated into this scheme.



10 *Nāradapurāṇa* (NP)

Two chapters giving the *māhātmya* of Mathura and Vrindaban are found in the second part of the *Nāradapurāṇa*.[64] The first part of this Purana concludes with verses proclaiming the merits of listening to it, which implies that the rest has been added later. Some scholars have assigned the first part to the last centuries of the first millennium, which seems rather early unless one regards as interpolations those chapters that extol Radha as the foremost goddess, of whom Mahalakshmi and Durga are but partial incarnations, and give a litany of her thousand names.[65] The case for such an early dating is based merely on scattered quotations by medieval writers. Eck has noted that the chapters in the second part that praise

64 NP *uttarakhaṇḍa*, 79-80.

65 NP *pūrvārdha*, 82-3, 88. Hazra 1975, pp.127-133, dates chapters 1-41 of the first part and 1-37 of the second between 875 and 1,000, and describes the remainder as 'comparatively late'. Nambiar, pp.218-25, says that the *Bṛhannāradīyapurāṇa*, the whole of which forms the first 41 chapters of the *Nāradapurāṇa*, must date from between the 7th and 10th centuries, while chapters 42-62 must belong to the period 600-900, and the rest of the first part is probably earlier than the 10th century. He considers the first 37 chapters of the second part to be earlier than 1100, and the remainder to be 'comparatively late'. He summarizes the dates suggested by other scholars; Indians on the whole favour dates prior to the year 1,000, while H. H. Wilson suggests the 16th or 17th century, and R. Mehta the 17th century. For further bibliography see Rocher, pp.202-3.

Kashi plagiarize Lakshmidhara, which means that they were written some time after the middle of the twelfth century.[66]

The *Mathurā-* and *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* chapters are cast in the form of a narration given by Vasu to Mohini (wife of Rukmangada), the latter being presented as his account of what Vrinda told Narada. In the course of Vasu's narration over eighty deities and sacred places are mentioned. First the twelve forests are named, and then the two series of twelve bathing places to the north and south of Vishranti. As in the extant version of the *Varāhapurāṇa*, Hari is said to be present in Mathura as Varaha, Narayana, Vamana, and Haladhara, whereas an earlier tradition, represented by Lakshmidhara, uses the names of the four emanations (*vyūha*) of an older theology. The guardian deities of Mathura are named as Rangesha, Bhutesha, the goddess Mahavidya, and Bhairava; other places in Mathura mentioned are the Chatuhsamudrika and Kubja wells, Krishnaganga, Ganesha, and Keshava, who is declared to be lord of the whole area of Mathura and the many other sacred places that are to be found there.

Places located in Vrindaban and elsewhere outside of Mathura are dealt with in the *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* chapter. It begins with the story of Narada changing sex at a lake called Pushpasaras, says that Vrindavana is five *yojana* in extent, and names several places within it, most of them given in terms of their present location and in a more or less clockwise sequence. All of the places named are identifiable, apart from a *tattvaprakāśatīrtha* in the Yamuna, and *vatsītīrtha* (=Bachhgaon?) and *kāmakuṇḍa*, which appear to be located somewhere in the neighbourhood of Govardhan. Between Kaman (*kāmavana*) and Barsana (*bṛhatsānu*) it mentions *balasthāna*, which presumably refers to Unchagaon, where Narayan Bhatt founded a Balarama temple in 1555. In view of the conformity of these chapters with the modern pilgrimage circuit, and the fact that they are not cited by sixteenth-century authors, we may assume that they were composed in or after the late sixteenth century.

The Purana concludes by saying that it was recited by Vishnu in the form of Hansa to the sages Sanaka, etc. In view of their association with the Nimbark Sampraday, it is possible that the author of the later chapters belonged to this sect.

11 *Ādipurāṇa* (AP)

There is yet another *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya*, said to constitute or be part of the *Ādipurāṇa*. It consists of twenty-nine chapters that narrate the story of Krishna's early years and include description and praise of Mathura and Vrindaban.[67] It takes the form of a narration delivered to Vyasa by Narada, who begins by praising Mathura and Vrindaban as the eternal abode of Krishna and as places where his exploits can be experienced by those who have cultivated an attitude of love and devotion. He gives a variant of the story of how he turned into a woman, in this case by bathing in

66 Eck, p.348, with reference to NP 2.48-51.

67 These chapters have been published as the *Ādipurāṇa* by the Venkateshwar Press. Printed and ms. versions are discussed by Hazra 1958, pp.279-89.

lake Manas, and later became a man again after bathing at Krishnaganga. His description of the eternal sporting of Krishna that he was able to witness in female form begins with the lineage of Nanda and Radha, then mentions the demons slain by Krishna, and culminates in the Govardhan and *rāsa* episodes. The twelve forests are named, but with Chhatravana (=Chhata) replacing Mahavana. Emphasis is given to those episodes that take place in Vrindaban, with discussion of such topics as the character of the lover and his beloved (*nāyaka* and *nāyikā*), the marital nature of Krishna's relationship with Radha (*svakīyābhedavarṇana*), the glory of his name, and Radha's role as his supreme knowledge, power, and means of experiencing joy (*parāvidyā, parāśakti, hlādinīśakti*). It seems, therefore, that these chapters were composed under the influence of the theology of the Vrindaban Goswamis and cannot be considered part of any earlier *Ādipurāṇa*.[68]

12 *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* (BRam)

The *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* is a retelling of the story of Rama heavily influenced by the popularity of emotional devotion to Krishna. The title is derived from Bhushundi, a crow that vanquished Garuda and became a menace to the world until Brahma instructed it in devotion to Rama. The crow's account of the early life of Rama includes episodes derived from the childhood and amorous adventures of Krishna. The setting is modelled on the Arcadian environment of Braj, and the places where the episodes take place are related to the sacred geography of Ayodhya. Just as Rama and Lakshmana are cast in the roles of Krishna and Balarama, so the Sarayu takes the place of the Yamuna and Pramodavana that of Vrindavana as a setting for the *rāsa* dance. Sita, like Radha, has an entourage of Sakhis; Ravana, like Kansa, sends demons to kill the divine child. Along the banks of the Sarayu lies Rama's 'land of Braj' (*vrajadeśa*) with twelve forests (*vana*) and twelve groves or bowers (*upavana/kuñja*).[69]

Besides giving a description of Ayodhya, including the *yogapīṭha* concept that had earlier been applied to Braj,[70] the story also includes a description of Braj itself. This forms part of the narrative of a pilgrimage undertaken by Dasharaṭha after he had placed Rama in charge of affairs of state. He visits all the major places of pilgrimage in India, accompanied by the sage Vashishtha, who describes the sacred sites to him. He begins his description of Braj[71] with praise of the Yamuna and Mathura, then mentions the sacred sites, beginning with Keshava and Bhuteshwara

68 Hazra, ibid., notes that no verses from the *Ādipurāṇa* coincide with *dharmanibandha* quotations. He concludes that it was composed in Bengal before 1525 by a disciple of Chaitanya.

69 See BRam 101-2 and Bakker's commentary on Pramodavana in *Ayodhyāmāhātmya* 66, where it is a forest on the north bank of the Tamasa river (a tributary of the Sarayu) rather than a wooded area surrounding Ayodhya. The names of the forests around Ayodhya are not the same as those of Braj, but like them are largely botanical.

70 See following section, *Ayodhyāmāhātmya* (ed. Bakker) 19, dealing with *ratna-siṃhāsana*, and McGregor 1983, pp. 107-8 (on *Dhyān mañjarī*, a late 16th-century work by Agradas).

71 BRam, end of 104 ff.

as the main deities, followed by the twelve forests, some places in Vrindaban and Govardhan, the bathing places at Mathura, and then some of the deities lying in a crescent area demarcated by Hari in the west, Govinda in the north, Gatashrama in the east, and Varaha in the south. This is followed by a detailed description of the circumambulation of Mathura, based on the one given in the *Varāhapurāṇa* (cf. appendix 1), then the sacred places in Vrindaban, around Govardhan, and at Barsana (*varasānugiri*), Nandgaon (*nandagrāma*), Sanket, Gokul and Bhandirban. The following chapters (1.107-110) deal with the origin and descent of the Yamuna (the previous place visited by Dasharatha was its source at Yamunotri) and the bathing places along it, a topic that leads into Dasharatha's arrival in the 'Original Braj' (*ādivraja*), the area where Rama spent his childhood.

The description of Braj given by *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* seems to be an adaptation of earlier *māhātmya* material, the closest parallel being the extant version of the *Varāhapurāṇa*, but it has been updated by the addition of such places as Sanket, Nandgaon, Barsana, and Chir Ghat in Vrindaban. It includes Govind Kund at Govardhan, which is not named as such in the *Varāhapurāṇa*, as well as Rudrakund at Govardhan and Gokul, two places which the only other Sanskrit *māhātmya* sources to mention are the *Nārada-* and *Padmapurāṇa*. The date of *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* is not certain, but it must have been written after the period when emotional devotion to Krishna was grafted onto the environment of Braj. Raghavan, noting that it appears to have influenced Tulsidas and that some passages are derived from *Gītagovinda* and *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta*, places it in the fourteenth century.[72] However, the necessity of regarding it as a source for Tulsidas does not seem warranted, and in view of the amount of *rasika* material it has borrowed from Krishna literature and the relatively modern places included in its description of Braj, the late sixteenth century is an acceptable *terminus a quo* for its composition.[73]

13 The *yogapīṭha*-theme (PP, GLA, VRC, AY, etc.)

A part of the *Padmapurāṇa* (PP) entitled *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* gives an elaborate description of how Krishna, as the flute-playing Govinda, is to be envisaged as occupying the centre of a *yogapīṭha*. The term *pīṭha* refers to the pedestal on which a deity stands, and the compound *yogapīṭha* refers specifically to an area, pedestal, or platform on which a *maṇḍala* diagram is drawn as a means of concentrating power during worship or of determining the position a deity.[74] Besides being delineated in physical space, the *maṇḍala* and *yogapīṭha* can be meditated upon in order to concentrate the mind upon the deity located within it.

The focal element is the lotus, a theme common to all forms of Tantra (as noted above in §3.2), which in this context is developed as a means of visiting the sacred

72 BRam, intro p.21.

73 As is also argued by Bakker. B.P. Singh, BRam intro. p.2, says that the oldest ms. used for his edition is dated 1722.

74 The theme is developed in Pancharatra texts; cf. H. Daniel Smith, vol.2, under *maṇḍala* and *yogapīṭha*.

places through meditation rather than physically. The earliest known description of a lotus *yogapīṭha* applied to Krishna's Vrindavana is found in *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā*, a work belonging to the corpus of South Indian Pancharatra texts that are concerned mainly with ritual.[75] Its precise date is not known, but it was certainly written after the eleventh century since it refers to Ramanuja.[76] There are indications that it is a product of the Tenkalai branch of the Shrivaishnava Sampraday, which would imply that it was not written before the fourteenth century.[77] Another reason for assigning it to such a relatively late period is the importance given to the worship of Radha.[78] The second section gives a visionary description of the cosmos, the worlds and continents that comprise it, and the special place occupied by Vrindavana.[79] The merits of Vrindavana are described, as well as its saintly inhabitants, the virtues of living there, and the worship of Krishna and Radha as its presiding deities.

There is nothing in the description to show that the author was acquainted with the earthly Vrindaban. No specific *tīrtha* are mentioned and the only places named are those known from mythical accounts of Krishna's youth. The southerner who wrote this text was describing Vrindavana as an object of meditation, a transcendental realm that can be experienced at any time and place. He describes Goloka, the supreme heaven where Krishna sports eternally in the company of the Gopis, watching over the cows and his created worlds.[80] The author's intention is to tell us that places on earth where Vishnu became incarnate, primarily Vrindavana, but also Ayodhya, Dwarka, and Shrirangam have a transcendent and timeless dimension that can be experienced by those whose senses are properly attuned. The mind can be fixed on these unmanifest, transcendent realms by means of their symbolic representation as a *yogapīṭha*.

The whole area of Mathura is described as a lotus with a thousand petals, arranged in seven concentric rings, the innermost having eight petals and each successive ring twice as many as the one it encircles (giving an actual total of 966). In the centre of the lotus, under a pavilion (*maṇḍapa*), is the octagonal *yogapīṭha* on which Krishna stands, surrounded by female devotees and with other members of his entourage round about. Such a visualization serves as a means of transporting the mind to the celestial Vrindavana in Goloka, for it is believed that those devotees who can imitate the divine sports and visualize themselves in the surroundings of Vrindavana will also attain eternal life in the company of Krishna.[81]

The *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā* has all the basic elements found in later elaborations of

75 Smith, ibid. vol.1 pp.297-315, discusses the text and summarizes its contents on the basis of available printed editions, including that of Apte, to which reference is made here.

76 *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā* 2.7.67-71.

77 Besides referring to the supremacy of the temple of Shrirangam as a sacred centre, 2.7.60, it also refers to the sectarian forehead mark, 3.10.95, 130-1, as noted by Smith, p.297.

78 *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā* 2.4.171-82, 2.6.13-51.

79 Ibid., 2.4.93 ff.

80 Ibid., 3.1.120-56. Earlier in the same chapter the transcendental Ayodhya is described.

81 The *yogapīṭha* and its rewards are described in 3.2.

the *yogapīṭha* theme by the devotees of Braj: the lush and gem-encrusted paradise with its golden ground and wish-granting trees, the timeless environment where everything remains fresh and young, where nothing is subject to the degeneration and other constraints that affect the material world. In its description of the relationship between the celestial realm and its terrestrial equivalent, the same distinction is made between a manifest or phenomenal (*prākṛta*) and unmanifest or abstract (*aprākṛta*) nature as is found in the writings of the theologians of Braj, especially members of the Gaudiya Sampraday (cf. §3.6).

Krishnadas Kaviraj tells us that when Chaitanya came back from his tour of southern India he brought with him a copy of Bilvamangala's *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta* and the *Brahmasaṃhitā*.[82] Jiv Goswami's *Digdarśanīṭīkā* is a commentary on sixty-two verses that are said to constitute the fifth chapter of the *Brahmasaṃhitā*. At the beginning and end of this commentary he says that the *Brahmasaṃhitā* has a hundred chapters, but that the fifth contains the essence of the whole in *sūtra* form. Some of the verses in this fifth chapter refer to Govinda occupying a lotus of a thousand petals that represents Gokula, has a centre of six-pointed shape (formed by two intersecting triangles), and is surrounded by the square island of *śvetadvīpa*. These verses do not give such an elaborate description of the lotus as is found in the *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā*, and Jiv Goswami's commentary deals primarily with the ontology of Govinda and his realms, discussing the interrelationship of the terms *goloka, gokula, vṛndāvana, brahmaloka*, and *vaikuṇṭha*.[83] It appears that this fifth chapter, rather than being an integral part of the *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā*, is, as implied by Jiv Goswami himself, a later summary of its contents composed for the purposes of exegesis.

In the *Varāhapurāṇa* the area (*maṇḍala*) of twenty *yojana* around Mathura is conceived of as a lotus with Keshava in the centre, Harideva on the west at Govardhan, Govinda in the north, Vishranti on the eastern petal, and Varaha in the south.[84] Keshava and Vishranti must refer to deities at the Katra site and on or near Vishram Ghat, the Varaha image has disappeared (unless one of those mentioned below in §8.1.30 is intended), the location of Harideva is specified, and Govinda probably refers to a deity to be seen at Vrindaban, as is clearly stated in another verse found in the same *māhātmya*.[85] Since this passage is also found in the *māhātmya* attributed to Rup Goswami, it must have been composed at least by the early sixteenth century and taken from the β fund of text postulated above. The implication is that, some time between the late twelfth and early sixteenth century, there was an image of Harideva at Govardhan, before the temple dedicated to him was built by Bihar Mal of Amber, and an image of Govinda at Vrindaban, before Rup Goswami gave the name to the deity that he installed for worship there, assuming that 'north of Mathura' corresponds to the modern Vrindaban.

Apart from a verse in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* referring to Govinda playing the flute

82 CC 2.1.111, 2.9.220-24 & 278-82.

83 The verses mentioning the lotus with a thousand petals are commented on by Jiv Goswami more succinctly in *Kṛṣṇasaṃdarbha, anuccheda* 105 (verses 287-94, = *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā* 5.2-5) and *anuccheda* 153 (verse 440, = *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā* 5.2).

84 VP 161.14-20/R 157-61/VM p.506.

85 VP 151.49/R 388.

at Vrindavana,[86] there are two other sources that might have induced Rup Goswami to name his deity Govinda: the extant *Varāhapurāṇa*, in which Govinda, the presiding deity of Vrindaban, is said to stand on the northern petal of the Mathura lotus, and the *Brahmasaṃhitā* in which he is placed in the centre of a far more elaborately conceived lotus. It remains uncertain whether the verse in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* was the source for the Govinda epithet in both the *Varāhapurāṇa* and *Brahmasaṃhitā*. At any rate, the *yogapīṭha* conception of the *Brahmasaṃhitā* predominated and gave rise to several similar descriptions, as well as the notion that the deity of Govind Dev stands in the centre of the Vrindaban *yogapīṭha*, as is stated in an inscription on the outside wall of the temple (referring to *bṛndāvan jog pīṭh sthān*).

A lengthy description of the *yogapīṭha* is given in the *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* chapters of the *Padmapurāṇa*, which were probably composed in the mid-sixteenth century.[87] The first chapter names the twelve forests, specifying their current locations to the west and east of the Yamuna, and several minor forests or groves (*upavana*), but not all of them can be identified with existing places. There follows a description of how Govinda sits on a jewelled throne (*ratnasiṃhāsana*) on a *yogapīṭha* in the centre of the Vrindaban lotus, accompanied by Radha. The *yogapīṭha* is surrounded by a ring of eight petals on which are located places on the perimeter of Vrindaban, including Chir Ghat, Dwadashaditya Tila, Kalidaha, Bhatror, and Brahmakund, all of which are disposed on petals corresponding to their present location. On the sixteen petals of the next ring are located some of the forests and groves listed in the first chapter, and some other sites that are included in the pilgrimage circuit. The following chapters describe the role of the Sakhis and their location on the lotus, including those who guard the four directions, and mention the four emanations (*vyūha*) and other forms of Vishnu or Krishna that are assigned to different petals. The last few chapters of this *māhātmya* deal with such topics as the importance of becoming a Gopi, the application of the *tilak*, and the worship of *tulsī* and the *śālagrām*. Only a few verses in praise of Mathura and mentioning Bhuteshwar, found in one chapter of this *māhātmya*, are quoted in the one attributed to Rup Goswami. It is quite possible that the elaborate *yogapīṭha* description was written by one of the Vrindaban Goswamis some time in the middle of the sixteenth century and was then incorporated into the *Padmapurāṇa*.

Another description, based closely on the one in *Padmapurāṇa*, is found in a work entitled *Varāhasaṃhitā*, sometimes referred to as *Vṛndāvanarahasya*.[88] Like the *Mathurāmāhātmya* of the *Varāhapurāṇa*, it is presented in the form of answers given by Varaha to questions posed by the Earth. It contains five chapters (*paṭala*), of which the first four correspond to the first chapter and the fifth to the second chapter of the *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* of the *Padmapurāṇa*. There are a few differences in the naming of some of the minor forests and two more places in Vrindaban are specified as being on the innermost circle of eight petals of the lotus

86 BhP 10.21.10.

87 PP 5 (*Pātālakhaṇḍa*).69-83. For suggested date cf. above §6.5.

88 I have consulted VRI mss. acc.nos.921, 4593, 5863, 6734, and 9272 (the oldest, dated 1695).

surrounding the *yogapīṭha*, namely Dhir Samir and Keshi Ghat, replacing two huts (*kuṭī*) named in the *Padmapurāṇa* as *saṅketa* and *dvipada*.

Another *yogapīṭha* description is given in *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā*, a work different from two longer compilations with the same title that belong to the Pancharatra tradition.[89] According to this version there is an arbour one *yojana* in extent, lying within the five *yojana* area of Vrindaban, where, in the centre of a lotus with a thousand petals, Krishna dallies with Radha and the Sakhis. Shiva, the narrator, tells Sanaka and his brothers that to gain spiritual accomplishment (*siddhi*) one should meditate on Krishna in the area that stretches two *yojana* west of Govardhan and take up residence in Vrindaban.

A late Upanishad entitled *Puruṣabodhinī* or *Puruṣārthabodhinī* describes the *yogapīṭha* in similar terms.[90] In the centre of the lotus, beneath a giant wishing-tree, stands Krishna, flanked by Radha and Chandravali. It is surounded by the banks of the Yamuna and four pools (*kuṇḍa*) named after Brahma, Shyam, Radha, and Rudra. The one named after Radha is where one should bathe in order to acquire the form of a Gopi. As in the other descriptions, various Sakhis, Gopis, Sakhas, guardians, sages, forests, and groves are said to occupy places round the *yogapīṭha*.

Krishnadas Kaviraj, in the twenty-first *sarga* of *Govindalīlāmṛta*, describes how Radha and her companions go out at night in order to take part in the *rāsa* dance on an island in the Yamuna. As they move along they are at pains not to let their anklets tinkle and give themselves away, while in their lotus-hearts they visualize their destination in the form of a *yantra*.[91] Radha sees the place in the forest where she will meet Govinda as a *yogapīṭha* in the form of a lotus with a thousand petals in the highest part of Vrindaban, surrounded by two branches of the Yamuna and with its sides sloping like a turtle's back, on which the arbours appear as lotus petals. Numerous trees and creepers grow on the golden ground, all of them capable of granting wishes and fulfilling the desires of the women of Braj. In the centre, beneath a world-tree (*kalpavṛkṣa*), is a gem-studded hall (*maṇimandira*) in which there is a throne (*siṃhāsana*) in the shape of a lotus with eight petals. Around the hall are concentric rings of bowers, as well as gardens with flowers, fruits, sylvan goddesses, and handmaidens (*kuñjadāsī*).

Vishwanath Chakravarti, the foremost Gaudiya theologian of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, combines topography with a metaphysical description of Braj in his *Vrajarīticintāmaṇi* (VRC). The first of its three sections deals with the eternal and transcendental nature of Vrindaban and everything that happens there. This is followed by a description of places in the area of Vrindaban, beginning with Nandishwara (= Nandgaon), the residence of Nanda and the infant

89 The description in question constitutes *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā paṭala* 31-5 as given in *The Purāṇa Saṃhitā*. Hazra 1975, pp.158-60, says that the title is also given to one of the divisions of SP. For the other synonymous works see H. Daniel Smith, vol.1 pp.494-513, and Rocher, p.235.

90 I have consulted VRI mss. acc.no.9205, Cat.III s.no.6593, dated 1830, and acc.no.113, Cat.I s.no.78 (a later ms).

91 GLA 21.26: *nyasya svīye hṛdayakamale sohyamānā nigūḍhe / yantrākāre vrajavanabhuvā prāpa kṛṣṇāsamīpam.*

Krishna and therefore the foremost village of Braj. After giving an idealized description of Nanda's gem-encrusted mansion and the village surrounding it, he discusses the feelings Nanda, Yashoda, and their community had for Krishna and for each other, showing them to be exemplary devotees. He then discusses Radha's role as *śakti* and describes the house of Vrishabhanu at Barsana. Sanket and other places in the forest around Nandgaon are described, following the clockwise sequence of the circumambulation of Braj. At Vrindaban, in the centre of circles of various trees and creepers, is a *rāsa* circle in the middle of which a jewel-mountain rises from the golden ground, and on it grows a wishing-tree. Amid the arbours of Krishna's beloved followers is the *yogapīṭha*, around which are some of the places that actually exist in the earthly Vrindaban. Govardhan is also described in such idealistic terms: it is composed of precious stones, each of which is a throne, pedestal, or couch of Krishna. After giving a description of Radhakund, based on *Govindalīlāmṛta*, some of the places in and around Kaman (*kāmyavana*) are mentioned.

Poetic descriptions of the Vrindaban *yogapīṭha* were composed in the Braj dialect by Nandadas, Govardhan Bhatt, Gadadhar Bhatt,[92] and, most exhaustively, by Harivyasdev. His version, in the *Siddhānt sukh* section of his *Mahāvāṇī*, serves as a prelude to an account of the amorous play of Krishna and Radha. It gives a laborious description of the jewelled arbours of Vrindaban, in the centre of which the Sakhis stand on an lotus with eight petals. Harivyasdev does not assign places around Vrindaban to various petals of the lotus, but he does give the names of the four lakes surrounding it as Man Sarovar, Madhur Sarovar, Swarup Sarovar, and Rup Sarovar. In the late seventeenth century Rasikdev, a leader of the ascetic followers of Swami Haridas, produced a Braj version of the *Varāhasaṃhitā* and two other works entitled *Rasārṇav paṭal*, describing the throne in the centre of Vrindaban where Krishna and Radha stand amid the Sakhis, and *Kuñj kautuk*, which tells of three hundred and sixty bowers in which different *līlā* are enacted.[93]

Narahari Chakravarti, in his *Bhakti ratnākar*, quotes some verses from earlier sources dealing with the *yogapīṭha*. Vrindabanchandradas, another Gaudiya writer of the early eighteenth century, combines topographical and metaphysical descriptions of Braj in his *Aṣṭayām* (AY).[94] This work consists of nine hundred and twenty verses in different metres and, at the end, acknowledges Rup Goswami's *Smaraṇamaṅgala* and Krishnadas' *Govindalīlāmṛta* as sources of inspiration. It begins with a description of the pilgrimage circuit of Braj (*braj caurāsī kos*), starting at Barsana and concluding with a detailed description of Vrindaban and its

92 Nandadas describes the *yogapīṭha* in his *Rās pañcādhyāyī*, cf. McGregor 1983. Govardhan Bhatt's description is mentioned by Corcoran, pp.164-5, in the course of her discussion of 'symbolic Vrindaban' (part IV.ii of her thesis). Gadadhar Bhatt's version is included at the beginning (pp.1-6) of Krishnadas Baba's edition of his poems.

93 Datt, p.276.

94 BRat pp.295-301, and Krishnadas Baba's edition of AY. The poet's name is deduced from occurrences in the text of the phrase *vṛndāvanacandra śrī govinda*, interpreted as his *chāp*. Bansal gives his dates as 1678-1743 (pp.322-3) and the date of *Aṣṭayām* as 1738 (p.316).

yogapīṭha. His assignation of places located on the inner ring of eight petals is the same as that given in *Varāhasaṃhitā*, and he names the four surrounding ponds as Rup-, Jnan-, Prem-, and Man Sarovar. The first three are said to bestow the qualities after which they are named (beauty, knowledge, and, love), and by bathing in Man Sarovar a man will obtain the form of a woman. The rest of the poem describes the *līlā* of the eight watches of the day and gives an idealized description of Radhakund based on the seventh *sarga* of *Govindalīlāmṛta*.

14 Narayan Bhatt (VBV, VOC)

In pursuing the *yogapīṭha* theme into the eighteenth century we have passed over Narayan Bhatt's *Vrajabhaktivilāsa* (VBV), the most elaborate work ever composed on the sacred geography of Braj. It mentions more places of worship than any other text and goes further in attempting to reconcile an idealized conception of Braj with actual topography. At the end of the work the author declares himself to be a reincarnation of Narada, the original founder of the sacred places, and recommends worship of the book itself and of Braj in the form of a *yantra*. In the colophon he says that it was written at Radhakund in 1552 (seven years after his arrival in Braj at the age of fourteen).[95] His biographer tells us that this was one of seven works dealing with Braj that he wrote during his years of residence there.[96]

Vrajabhaktivilāsa has thirteen chapters, and, according to its author, consists of sixteen thousand *śloka*,[97] more than three times as many as the actual number. Almost all of them are ascribed to a Purana, Upanishad, Tantra, or Sanhita, but the attributions are entirely spurious, or the verses are at best adaptations of earlier material. After invoking his patron deity (*iṣṭadeva*) Balarama, along with Revati, Krishna, and Radha, he introduces Braj as a region extending over eighty-four *krośa* that is located on 'Kumuda', the central head of the serpent Shesha. The rest of the first chapter enumerates the twelve forests known from earlier *māhātmya* sources, as well as three sets of twelve minor forests referred to as *upavana, prativana*, and *adhivana*, five forests called *sevyavana*, and two that are designated as places of rest (*viśrāmasthala*). Narayan Bhatt provides each of these fifty-two forests with a presiding deity (*adhipadeva/adhiśvara*) and a *mantra* for its invocation. He also tells us on which side of the Yamuna they lie and assigns each of them to a part of the Lord's body.

95 Krishnadas Baba's edition, p.264. On p.6 he says that one of the mss. on which his edition is based was copied in 1794. Rajendralal Mitra, vol.2 pt.1, no.610, pp.54-5, describes a ms. in Bengali script dated *śaka* 1762, containing 4,435 *śloka*; the beginning and end are the same as in Krishnadas Baba's edition. For Narayan Bhatt's arrival in Braj see above §5.7.

96 NBC 2.160-1, viz. VBV, *Vrajapradīpikā*, VOC, *Vrajamahodadhi*, *Vrajotsavahlādinī*, *Bṛhadvrajaguṇotsava*, and *Vrajaprākaśa*. Narayan Bhatt has many namesakes, including an older contemporary who lived at Varanasi and whose works include a text on pilgrimage entitled *Tristhalīsetu*.

97 VBV 13.19, p.263.

The second chapter introduces five sets of twelve forests referred to as *tapovana, kāmavana, arthavana, dharmavana*, and *siddhavana*, six called *sāṅgavana*, four called *sīmāvana*, and sixteen banyans. Each of these has a presiding deity; all of the forests and banyans on the south (i.e. west) bank of the Yamuna are assigned to Krishna, and those on the east to Balarama. Many of them are associated with Radha, her nine Sakhis, or seventy-two subsidiary Sakhis. All of the one hundred and thirty-seven forests (cf. appendix 2) are then listed with the length of their respective circumambulations and the names of the deities, ponds, and other objects located in them. This schematic enumeration of such a large number of forests, many of them unidentifiable, gives the impression that the work is intended not so much as a description of actual circumstances, but as a prospectus for a full reclamation of Braj, making use of any existing objects, however trivial, and inventing the rest. Subsequent chapters deal in more detail with most of the places named in the first two, giving the relevant prayers (*prārthanamantra*), the date and auspicious moment (*lagna*) at which they are to be visited, and sometimes a fanciful story to explain the etymology of the place name. In many cases appropriate offerings or the particular benefit to be gained by worshipping at a forest are specified. As a typically banal example one may take Kokilaban, of which it is said that repetition of the relevant *mantra* six times will result in one's acquiring a voice as sweet as a cuckoo's (*kokila*).[98]

The first place treated in detail is Mathura, which is introduced with an account of how the gods requested Keshava to defeat Madhu, after which they visited the town and established eighty-four sites, thirty six of them in the south, thirty-five in the north, and thirteen in the centre. These places are then dealt with in the order in which they were visited and worshipped by the gods. The description of the northern and southern groups corresponds closely to the itinerary for the circumambulation of Mathura given in the *Varāhapurāṇa*, but some places named in the latter are omitted from the central group and some different ones are included (cf. appendix 1). The fourth chapter deals with the next seven forests (*adhivana*) listed after Mathura, and the fifth begins with Govardhan, the ninth *adhivana*. The rest of the work deals with other forests, but in an order different from the one given in the first two chapters. The treatment of the forests is interrupted by some passages giving the liturgy for rites of absolution or purification.[99]

At the beginning of the sixth chapter the eighty-four *krośa* extent (*parimāṇa*) of Braj is said to consist of four equal divisions, with Hasyavana, Jahnuvana, Parvatavana, and Suryaparvatavana in the east, south, west, and north corners. Although this appears to be a square, it is seen by the gods and other spiritual beings as a circle. The latter part of the seventh chapter recommends two kinds of pilgrimage, one a tour of Braj (*vrajayātrā*) in order to become absolved of one's sins, and the other a tour of the forests (*vanayātrā*) in order to obtain success in all

98 VBV 9.67.

99 For *śānti* after an abortion, with regard to Saptasamudrikakupa at Mahaban (5.87 ff.); for *prāyaścitta*, with regard to Shyam Kund at Kamavana, after causing the death of an embryo, of people of various classes (6.29 ff.), and of various animals, interrupted by verses on the *janmanirṇaya* of the ten incarnations of Vishnu (first part of *adhyāya* 7 and the following chapter).

one's undertakings. The first of these lasts four months, from the beginning of Vaishakh until the full moon at the end of Shravan, and concludes with the celebration of Rakshabandhan. The route to be followed is described as having the form of an octagon, each side of which is forty-two *krośa* in length. A distance of two and a half *krośa* per day is recommended as a comfortable pace at which to proceed. Beginning at Hasyavana, it covers the other three forests mentioned above as lying at the south, west, and north corners, and four more that lie at the intervening corners of the octagon, namely Gopana-, Gomaya-, Kamala-, and Harivana. The *vanayātrā* begins on Janmashtami and lasts until the end of the month of Bhadon, a total of twenty-three days (see appendix 4). The first two days should be spent celebrating Krishna's birth and the festival of Nandotsav at Mathura, after which one should circumambulate the town and then, from the *ekādaśī* onwards, go on a tour of Braj that should include the circumambulation of Govardhan (Bhadon I.14), Kaman (Bhadon II.2), and Vrindaban (Bhadon II.8). On returning to Mathura (Bhadon II.13), one should feed the local brahmins, stay the night, then go to Kaman in order observe the *anantavrata* (Bhadon II.14) and attend a *rāsa* festival. The description ends by saying that half the benefit of this pilgrimage may be obtained if it is performed between Karttik II.8 (Gopashtami) and the new moon day of Margashirsh. This description is presumably older than any of the Pushtimarg sources and is thus the oldest itinerary for a tour of the sacred places of Braj.

Another published work of Narayan Bhatt dealing with places in Braj is *Vrajotsavacandrikā* (VOC). The verses it contains are attributed to several Puranas, but the occurrence of non-Sanskrit toponyms indicates that they are spurious. Narayan Bhatt tells us that the work constitutes the second part (*uttarārdha*) of *Vrajasāroddhāra*, that the first seven chapters (referred to as *prakāśa*) contain six thousand *śloka* and have the title *Vrajapradīpikā*, and the following eight chapters, containing eight thousand *śloka*, are called *Vrajotsavacandrikā* - the title used for the whole volume.[100] There are, however, far fewer *śloka* than claimed, and there are several passages of prose.

The work describes the ritual for the consecration (*prāṇapratiṣṭhā* and *abhiṣeka*) of the deities of Balarama and Revati that the author installed in a temple 'on the bank of the Triveni' at Unchagaon, with the declared intention that his descendants should repeat the ritual anointing (*abhiṣeka*) every year on the birthday of Balarama. Instructions are also given for the ritual anointing of other Balarama deities (*prakāśa* 9), images of Krishna on the occasion of Janmashtami, and of Radha, Lalita, and other Sakhis at Barsana (all in *prakāśa* 10). The deities include the author's own Krishna image, referred to as 'Larileya', a Balarama deity in a family group at Nandgaon (i.e. the deities in Nandarayji ka Mandir?), Gokulchandrama at Gokul, Gopinath at Mathura, Madanmohan and Govind Dev at Vrindaban, Haridev and Govardhannath at Gopalpura (=Shrinathji?), Radhavallabh at Radhakund, Larililal at Barsana, and Bihari at Sanket. Not all of these deities belong to the Gaudiya Sampraday, and so the author's intention is presumably to suggest a suitable ritual for all of the notable deities of his time.

There are also instructions for *abhiṣeka* ceremonies to be performed on the

100 VOC pp.50-2, 227.

birthdays of Rama, Narasinha, and Vamana, for which the author's Larileya image may be used (*prakāśa* 11-12). Instructions are also given for the worship of Ganesh, Shiva, Devi (especially Sanketi Devi), Surya, and the *śālagrām* stone (*prakāśa* 13). The date given in the *saṃkalpa* for each of the ceremonies is 1555, which must refer to the year in which they were first performed and in which the work was composed. In the course of describing the rituals some places associated with the Sakhis and Sakhas are mentioned,[101] as well as their dates of birth and parentage. Several places in the vicinity of Barsana and Nandgaon are named, and there is a brief *māhātmya* of the latter.[102]

No manuscripts have been found of Narayan Bhatt's *Bṛhadvrajaguṇotsava* and *Vrajaprakāśa*. In *Vrajabhaktivilāsa* he says that the latter contains rites for the consecration of forty-eight deities of four of the sets of twelve forests (*vana, upavana, prativana*, and *adhivana*) and that *Bṛhadvrajaguṇotsava* contains twenty-six thousand *śloka* giving the various *mantra* for the villages of Braj and a pilgrimage itinerary.[103]

15 *Vrajavilāsastava* (VVS) and shorter eulogies

Of the texts so far discussed the *māhātmya* attributed to Rup Goswami and the works of Narayan Bhatt belong to the Gaudiya Sampraday. While the first of these conforms to the standard *māhātmya* genre, *Vrajabhaktivilāsa* can be seen as a culmination and turning point of earlier Sanskrit tradition. Ostensibly derived from authoritative scriptures, it applies a metaphysical conception of the sacred area to the existing topography, in the course of which previously unrecorded sites are associated with the activities of Krishna and his entourage, and itineraries are formulated for the circumambulation of the forests and villages. Other members of the Gaudiya Sampraday produced short poems in Sanskrit praising some of the sacred places. A *Govardhanāṣṭaka* and *Yamunāṣṭaka* are attributed to Rup Goswami, and similar poems were composed by his contemporary Raghunathdas and by several later Gaudiya authors, including Vishwanath Chakravarti.[104] A collection of shorter eulogies by Raghunathdas has been published under the collective title of *Stavāvalī*. Two of them deal with the merits of Govardhan (*Govardhanāśrayadaśaka* and *Govardhanavāsaprārthanadaśaka*, = *Stavāvalī* nos.5 & 6) and two are eulogies of eight verses (*aṣṭaka*) in praise of Radhakund and Dan Nivartan Kund (= *Stavāvalī* nos.7 & 21). His longer *Vrajavilāsastava* (VVS, = *Stavāvalī* no.8), consisting of one hundred and seven verses, praises Braj as the setting of Krishna's love sports and recommends it as a place in which to dwell. Several sacred sites are mentioned, including the older ones in Vrindaban and some

101 VOC pp.2-22, 113-115, 155-8.

102 VOC pp.136-7.

103 VBV 1.71, and *adhyāya* 7, pp.176-7.

104 Several examples, including those of Rup Goswami, the four shorter ones by Raghunathdas, and Vishwanath Chakravarti's *aṣṭaka* hymns in praise of Vrindaban, Nandishwar, and Krishnakund, are given on pp.736-74 of *Stavakalpadruma*, edited by Bhaktisarang Goswami and Purshottamdas.

of the ponds around Govardhan, but it gives no systematic list of the groves or any kind of pilgrimage itinerary.

16 Chaitanya's visit to Braj (KCC, CM, CC)

Most of the later Gaudiya texts dealing with the Braj pilgrimage circuit are written in the local dialect or in Bengali. They give itineraries for a tour of at least the twelve forests and the most important villages, or describe the pilgrimages that devotees and religious leaders are supposed to have undertaken. Members of the Sampraday believe that Chaitanya was the first saint to inspire his followers to rediscover the holy places. He is believed to have sent two of his disciples, Loknath and Bhugarbh, before making the journey to Braj himself a few years later in 1514 (cf. §5.5). The earliest biography of Chaitanya is Murari Gupta's *Kṛṣṇacaitanyacaritāmṛta* (KCC), a source referred to by Kavikarnapura in his *Caitanyacaritāmṛta-mahākāvya*, written in 1542.[105] Murari Gupta's biography gives a fairly detailed account of the pilgrimage, but it appears that the narrative of events in the life of Chaitanya from about 1513 onwards was interpolated at a later date and was not known to Kavikarnapura, who himself gives only a brief account of the journey to Braj.[106] The pilgrimage description must have been added to Murari Gupta's biography some time between 1542 and the last quarter of the sixteenth century, when Lochandas used it as the basis for his *Caitanya maṅgal* (CM), a Bengali account of the life of Chaitanya.[107]

Murari Gupta, Kavikarnapura, and Lochandas all belonged to the Nabadwip circle of Chaitanya's followers, and there is no evidence of their having visited Vrindaban. Lochandas informs us that he wrote *Caitanya maṅgal* for his guru Narahari Sarkar, an associate of Chaitanya who propagated *nāgarabhāva* - a doctrine that found a limited following in Nabadwip and encouraged devotees to imagine themselves as courtesans (*nāgarī*) in love with Chaitanya (the *nāgara*). The accounts of Chaitanya's pilgrimage given in *Kṛṣṇacaitanyacaritāmṛta* and the *Śeṣ khaṇḍ* of *Caitanya maṅgal* are identical, apart from a few omissions and differences in the order in which some incidents and places are mentioned. They describe his journey to Braj via Varanasi and Prayag and his arrival at Mathura after passing through Mahaban and Gokul. On arrival in the town he asked a local brahmin named Krishnadas to show him the sacred places of the area (*mathurāmaṇḍala*). Krishnadas first told him about the twelve forests and their location in relation to Mathura and the Yamuna, and then took him on a tour of the town. Chaitanya was first shown the fort that was believed to have been the residence of Kansa, and then some sites in the vicinity of Krishna's birthplace that are not mentioned in other sources and are unknown today.[108] He visited Gatashram and the southern series

105 For date and further details see De, pp.41-6.

106 Ibid., pp.35-9. Chaitanya's pilgrimage is described in the nineteenth canto of Kavikarnapura's work and in KCC, *prakrama* 4 *sarga* 1-12.

107 De, pp.58-9.

108 Viz. *rājāvāṭī, rājopaveṣanavedī, mūtrasthāna*, houses of Uddhava, the dyer, garland maker, Kubja, Vasudeva, and Ugrasena. For these and other unknown places see appendix 1.

of bathing places along the Yamuna, then saw Rangbhumi, Bhuteshwar, and some of the northern series of bathing places.

The places outside of Mathura are visited not in the order of the pilgrimage circuit, but in the chronological order of Krishnadas' account of the life of Krishna. When he mentions an episode in the life of Krishna the text says that the relevant place was shown to Chaitanya or implies that such a site was there for him to see. Krishnadas first took him to Mahaban and pointed out the places where the demons who attacked Krishna were slain; then they went via Gokul to Vrindaban, where several incidents are mentioned, implying that Chaitanya was shown places commemorating them, though only a Kaliyadamana deity, Dwadashaditya Ghat, and the Bhandir banyan tree are explicitly said to have been seen. Some of the incidents that are related by Krishnadas when he tells Chaitanya about Vrindaban, such as the slaying of the demons Vatsa, Baka, Dhenuka, and Pralamba, are normally thought to have occurred elsewhere. Other places they visited are Nandgaon, Govardhan, Ambikavana, Barsana (*vṛṣabhānupura*), Raivatagiri (mentioned only in KCC, =Unchgaon?), Kaman (*kāmyavana*), and Khaira (*khadiravana*). After returning to Mathura and hearing about the death of Kansa, Chaitanya returned to Puri. On the way he met Rup and Sanatan and told them to go to Vrindaban, revive the forgotten holy places, proclaim their importance (*māhātmya*), and expound the theology of devotion.[109]

On the whole the location of the places given in *Kṛṣṇacaitanyacaritāmṛta* conforms to that of other texts and the modern pilgrimage circuit, but there are a few discrepancies. After naming the twelve forests their location with regard to the Yamuna is given , but Khadiravana is said to lie south of Mathura and Bahulavana to the north-east, though when they are mentioned again further on they seem to be located accurately. Different versions of *Caitanya maṅgal* give variants with regard to the location of many of the places, the result either of scribal error or some editor's deliberate alteration of locatives referring to the four directions in order to make them conform to his notion of actual topography. The discrepancies found in these two accounts of Chaitanya's pilgrimage can be accounted for by the fact that they were both composed in Bengal by authors whose knowledge of Braj was second-hand.

Caitanya caritāmṛt (CC), the Bengali biography that Krishnadas Kaviraj completed in 1615, is acknowledged by members of the Gaudiya Sampraday as the greatest and most authoritative account of the life of Chaitanya.[110] In its description of his visit to Braj the route followed conforms closely to that of the modern pilgrimage circuit, as one might expect from a work written by someone who lived at Radhakund. Krishnadas tells us that, on arriving in Mathura, Chaitanya bathed at Vishranti and then saw the image of Keshava at the birthplace of Krishna. He visited all the places along the Yamuna in the forests that belong to the area of Vrindaban, including Madhuban, Talban, Kumudban, and Bahulaban. He then went to Govardhan, having heard that Madhavendra Puri had established an image of Gopal there. At a place called Arit he discovered the twin lakes at

109 KCC 4.13.6-15.

110 Date of composition in De, p.56. The pilgrimage to Braj is described in CC 2.17-18.

Radhakund and then circumambulated Govardhan. He learnt that the Gopal deity had been taken to Gantholi because it was feared that Muslim soldiers would come to attack it. From Gantholi he went on to Kaman (*kāmyavana*), Nandgaon (*nandīśvara*), Khaira (*khadiravana*), Shekhsai, Shergarh (*khelātīrtha*), Bhandirban, and the places on the east bank of the Yamuna. He returned to Mathura, but was disturbed by the crowds there and so went to Akruratirtha (Akrur Ghat). From there he visited Vrindaban in order to bathe in the Yamuna, but he still attracted too many visitors and became so distracted that his disciples persuaded him to return to Puri.

In this account Vrindaban, as a specific place rather than an extensive area, is reached at the end of the circumambulation, whereas in practice it is normally visited earlier. Krishnadas Kaviraj may have placed it at the end because Chaitanya's experiences there were the climax of his pilgrimage, though in some itineraries it is also visited last of all, as may once have been common practice. For fellow devotees of Krishnadas Kaviraj it was spiritually the most important place in Braj, as well as being the residence of the foremost Goswamis. Apart from Gantholi, all the places that Krishnadas Kaviraj says were visited by Chaitanya occur in the *māhātmya* of the *Vārāhapurāṇa* and of Rup Goswami. He does not claim that Chaitanya visited those that had recently been 'reclaimed' by devotees of the latter half of the sixteenth century, such as Barsana, Unchgaon, and Sanket, that were promoted by Narayan Bhatt. The only place that Chaitanya is said to have discovered was Radhakund, which implies that Krishnadas Kaviraj believed that a circuit of places mentioned in the *Mathurāmāhātmya* already existed in the early sixteenth century.

17 Narahari Chakravarti (BRat) and Sundarlal

Narahari Chakravarti's *Bhakti ratnākar* (BRat), a Bengali work that was probably written in the early eighteenth century, gives the history of the Chaitanya movement up to the end of the previous century.[111] Its fifth section describes how Raghav Pandit, at the request of Jiv Goswami, conducted Shrinivas and Narottamdas on a tour of Braj. Basically the standard pilgrimage circuit is followed, but a large number of additional places are mentioned, many of them lying off the main route. Although these additional places are said to have some association with Krishna and his entourage, there is no evidence that they were ever part of any widely acknowledged pilgrimage circuit.

Raghav Pandit and the two devotees set out from Vrindaban and first went to Mathura, where the circumambulation of Braj was formally commenced with a visit to the temple of Keshavdev. Some Sanskrit verses from Rup Goswami's *Mathurāmāhātmya* are quoted in praise of Mathura, its brahmins, sacred sites, circumambulation, and certain bathing days. After mentioning the places in

111 De, pp.38 & 66. Kennedy, p.134, says that he wrote BRat in the second or third decade of the 18th century and records that he had spent some years in Vrindaban as a cook in the temple of Govind Dev. This would mean that he was there at least fifty years earlier, unless he was working for the deity after it was moved to Kaman.

Mathura, those that lie outside the town are dealt with, again with some quotations from Rup Goswami's *māhātmya* and other sources, including *Padmapurāṇa*, some Tantras, standard Gaudiya works, and Bengali lyrics describing the various *līlā* that took place at some of the sacred sites. Sanskrit verses are followed with a Bengali paraphrase and there are passages that account for the importance of places for which no explanation from older sources is available, usually by means of an absurd etymology. When they reached Belban the pilgrims did not cross the Yamuna to Vrindaban, but went further south to see the places in and around Mahaban, and then returned to Mathura. Their pilgrimage ends in Vrindaban, where much emphasis is given to Govind Dev.

There is a prose text in the Braj dialect entitled *Vraj yātrā*, written in 1849 by Sundarlal, a Goswami of the temple of Radharaman in Vrindaban. It is based on *Bhakti ratnākar* but does not mention Raghav Pandit and his companions and does not consistently follow the same route. Many places mentioned by Narahari are omitted and some more recent sites are included, but it is the only work to include some of the more obscure villages that are to be found in *Bhakti ratnākar*. It does little more than name the sacred places and the order in which they are presented is occasionally idiosyncratic.

18 *Gargasaṃhitā* (GS)

A notable feature of descriptions of Braj produced by followers of the Pushtimarg is the emphasis they place on Govardhan as a spiritual centre. The temple of Shrinathji, the hill itself, and the villages around it became centres of activity in the period when members of the Gaudiya Sampraday were establishing their communities at Radhakund and Vrindaban. Pushtimarg authors felt the need to make Govardhan seem at least as important as Vrindaban, and so stories were concocted to illustrate how the hill, already sacred because Krishna had lifted it to provide shelter for the people of Braj, was also a place where Krishna and Radha had danced the *rāsa* and made love. This reappraisal of Govardhan was expressed in terms of Sanskrit scriptural tradition in a work entitled *Gargasaṃhitā*. It presents the story of Krishna as told by Garga, Nanda's family priest, whose account is said to be based on one first narrated by Narada to Bahulashwa, the king of Mithila. This *Gargasaṃhitā* is totally different from older works with the same title that deal mainly with divination and are ascribed to Garga as an expert in prognostication.[112]

It is evident from the content that it was written by someone who was closely connected with the Pushtimarg. In the tenth and last book Garga tells Vajranabha what life will be like in *kaliyuga*. He predicts the emergence of the four Sampradays and the appearance of Shrinathji on the Govardhan hill, saying that it will be worshipped by followers of Vishnuswami and referring specifically to Vallabha and the 'Swamis' of Gokul.[113] Some readers, however, may doubt whether the tenth

112 See Pingree, pp.69-72. The oldest version of this *Gargasaṃhitā* is probably some some two thousand years old.

113 10.61 & 62.29-30.

and last book was written at the same time as the rest of the work. The ninth book, instead of continuing the narrative of the previous chapters, deals with aspects of Krishna devotion and worship and concludes with verses in which the narrator (here Vyasa) declares that he has conveyed the teachings of Garga and praises the *Gargasaṃhitā*, saying that its nine books correspond to the nine jewels and nine divisions of the continent of Bharata. The tenth book begins with a summary of the adventures of Krishna as told in the earlier books and then takes up the story of a horse sacrifice organized by Ugrasena. This gives the impression that the tenth book is a later addition designed to round off the story by describing the extermination of the Yadavas and the return of all the participants to Goloka. However, even if it was added later by a different author, there is enough evidence in the earlier books to justify the assumption that their author was associated with the Pushtimarg. The third book begins with a description of the celebration of the Annakut festival and the offering of *chappan bhog*, and Shrinathji (called Devadamana, as in the Pushtimarg *vārtā* literature) is extolled as one of the five 'Naths' of India, the others being Jagannath, Rangnath, Dwarkanath, and Badrinath. A visit to Shrinathji is said to equal that of the other four Naths, whose *darśan* will be fruitless unless one also sees Shrinathji.

Apart from these specific references, the overall emphasis placed on Govardhan and Dwarka, and the instructions given for the worship of Krishna alone, rather than in conjunction with Radha, also reflect a typically Pushtimarg orientation. Judging from the names of temples in Gokul and elsewhere that are mentioned, and the propagation of the idea that Vallabha and his followers are the true inheritors of the Vishnuswami tradition, it would seem that the work was written some time after the late sixteenth century.

Vrindaban is conceived of as a wide area in which Nanda's cattle were herded, as well as being the foremost forest of the eighty-four *krośa* region (*maṇḍala*) of Mathura. It is an area of groves and bowers that encompasses the hills of Govardhan, Barsana (*bṛhatsānu*), and Nandgaon (*nandīśvara*).[114] The twelve forests are mentioned, some of them serving as locations for certain episodes, or are included in a *rāsa* tour undertaken by Krishna, Radha, and the Gopis.[115] Krishna and Radha are said to have danced the *rāsa* and dallied in caves at Govardhan and to have sported in the water of the nearby Chandrasarovar.[116]

As well as giving an account of how Govardhan came to Braj, the work also contains passages dealing with the worship of the *tulsī* plant, the merits of pilgrimage to Govardhan and worship of its stones (which are said to be equal to the *śālagrām*), worship of the Yamuna and its thousand names, the worship of Balarama and his thousand names, the thousand names of Krishna, and the merits the *ekādaśī* and directions for its observance.[117]

114 2.1.12-18.
115 2.17.18 ff.
116 1.16.45, 2.17.
117 See above §2.39 for the Govardhan myth. The other passages are GS 2.13 (*tulsī*), 3.10.11 and 3.1.30-1 (Govardhan pilgrimage and stones), 4.18-19 (Yamuna), 8.10-13 (Balarama), 10.59 (Krishna), 10.61 (*ekādaśī*).

19 Shorter texts dealing with Govardhan

The idea that Govardhan is the setting for the amorous play of Krishna and Radha is also expressed in the second verse of Raghunathdas' *Govardhanavāsaprārthanadaśaka* and in *Govardhanaśataka*, a poem composed by Keshavacharya. He is said to have been a Sanadhya brahmin from Gwalior who took initiation from a certain Rohinacharya, a member of the Vishnuswami Sampraday.[118] He worshipped the deity of Haridev at Govardhan and was the ancestor of the present Goswamis of the temple. They are not affiliated to the Pushtimarg, and there is no indication that Keshavacharya had close links with any of the Braj Sampradays. Govardhan is described as being surrounded by many moonlit pavilions (*candraśālā*) attended upon by hundreds of handmaidens (*sahacariṇī*). Keshavacharya expresses his desire to be continually engrossed in the hill and to reside for ever in its vicinity so that he may watch Krishna and Radha in their mountain cave. Here the idea that they retire at night to some kind of grotto takes precedence over the more usual notion that they spend the night in an arbour (*kuñja*). Praise is given to those who attend the Diwali festival and celebrate Annakut the next day after bathing in Manasi Ganga.

A work in five chapters entitled *Govardhanaparikramāmāhātmya*, compiled by Krishna Bhatt, praises the hill in the form of a dialogue between Shandilya and Vajranabha.[119] The colophons at the end of each chapter declare it to be part of a *Śāṇḍilyasaṃhitā*, but it refers to *Gargasaṃhitā* for its account of how Govardhan arrived in Braj. It deals in some detail with the celebration of Diwali at Manasi Ganga, includes a hymn entitled *Govardhanāṣṭaka*, and gives an itinerary for the circumambulation of the hill.

The same Sundarlal who wrote the *Vraj yātrā* mentioned above may also be the author of another prose work entitled *Govardhanotsav*.[120] It tells the story of how Krishna lifted up Govardhan, based mainly on the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* but referring also to the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*, quoting from the the *Varāha-* and *Padmapurāṇa*, and including a version of the *Gargasaṃhitā*'s account of how Govardhan came to Braj. It contains plenty of local colour and gives long lists of the kinds of foods prepared for offering to the hill and the garments worn by all the participants.

20 Govardhan in the *vārtā* literature (AV, 84V, 252V, SPV)

In the context of the Pushtimarg the term *vārtā* refers to prose narratives in the Braj dialect of a hagiographical nature that describe the activities of Vallabha, Vitthalnath, and their disciples.[121] Most of them are attributed to Gokulnath, the fourth son of Vitthalnath, or to his nephew Hariray. Gokulnath may well have been the author of some of the stories about his father and grandfather, which were later

118 Introduction to Krishnadas Baba's edition of the text.
119 A damaged and fragmentary ms. copied in 1861 is in the VRI, acc.no.3217.
120 VRI ms. acc.no.10817, dated 1851.
121 See Tandan for a detailed survey of Pushtimarg *vārtā* literature.

edited, expanded, and commented upon by Hariray. The two main collections are *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā* (84V), containing stories about eighty-four disciples of Vallabha, and *Do sau bāvan vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā* (252V), dealing with two hundred and fifty-two disciples of Vitthalnath. They are written in a straightforward and relatively colloquial style, and since the text is not regulated by the demands of rhyme and metre, there are many variants in the available manuscripts and editions. The oldest manuscript appears to have been copied in 1640 and contains the eighty-four *vārtā* of Vallabha's disciples and the four *vārtā* dealing with the Ashtachhap poets who were initiated by Vitthalnath. The eight *vārtā* dealing with these poets have been published as *Aṣṭachāp kī vārtā* (AV), an edition based on the manuscript apparently written in 1640 and another copied in 1695 that contains the commentary (*bhāv prakāś*) of Hariray.[122] Apart from the *vārtā* of four of the Ashtachhap poets, the collection of two hundred and fifty-two *vārtā* appears to have been written later in the seventeenth or early in the eighteenth century.[123] Another work attributed to Hariray is *Śrīgovardhannāthjī kī prākaṭya vārtā* (SPV), which tells the history of Shrinathji up to 1685.

Since the Ashtachhap poets are said to have been appointed as singers in the temples established by Vallabha and Vitthalnath, the incidents described in their *vārtā* occur mainly at Govardhan and villages in the vicinity. A few episodes take place in Gokul, while Mathura, Vrindaban, Mahaban, Barsana, and Bahulaban are mentioned only in passing. These *vārtā* propagate the notion that Govardhan was the real centre of Krishna's activity. Chandrasarovar is said to be the place where Krishna, in order to prolong the enjoyment of the *rās* dance, caused the moon to appear and remain in the sky for the duration of a 'night of Brahma'.[124] Govardhan is said to have eight gateways (*dvār*) where the Ashtachhap poets stand as guardians in the form of Sakhas by day and Sakhis by night.[125] It is said that long ago, in the Saraswati age (*kalpa*), the Yamuna divided into two branches at Chir Ghat, one of which flowed past Gokul and the other past Sanket, Jamnauta, Chandrasarovar, Govind Kund, and Apsarakund.[126] The commentary explains that in the Saraswati age the autumnal *rās* was danced beside the Yamuna at Parasoli (Chandrasarovar), and that in the Shwet Varaha age it was danced in the months of Chaitra and Vaishakh at Bansi Bat in Vrindaban. This is offered as a justification for the Pushtimarg claim that the area around Govardhan is the original ('Adi-') Vrindaban.

After the *rās*, Krishna and Radha are said to retire to a cave in the hill, as opposed

122 For details of *vārtā* mss. cf. introduction to AV, Parikh's edition of 84V (based primarily on the 1695 ms., cf. above §5.14 n.161), Tandan pp. 102-141, and D. D. Gupta pp.129-53. See Barz for discussion and translation of four of the Ashtachhap *vārtā*.

123 Sharma's edition is based on a ms. of 1748 collated with three printed editions. Stories concerning thirteen disciples of Vallabha, and six of Vitthalnath are also found in a collection entitled *Bhāvsindhu kī vārtā*.

124 *Kumbhandās kī vārtā*, AV pp.98-100.

125 AV, Hariray's *bhāv prakāś*, pp.98-9: Surdas at Chandrasarovar, Chhitswami at Apsarakund, Paramanandadas at Surabhikund, Govindswami at the Kadam Khandi named after him, Chaturbhujdas at Rudrakund, Krishnadas at Bilchhuban, Nandadas at Manasi Ganga, Kumbhandas at Jamnauta.

126 Ibid. pp.202-3.

to an arbour in Vrindaban. Chaturbhujdas, besides referring to their retreat into a cave in one of his poems,[127] wrote a work entitled *Khaṭ ṛtu vārtā* in which he describes how, while picking flowers near Apsarakund for the worship of Shrinathji, he absent-mindedly wandered into the cave of Ramdas, the temple priest. Here he had a vision of Krishna and Radha ('Govardhannath and Swaminiji') which inspired him to describe their eternal amorous play. He tells how Radha expressed a desire to enjoy the love play with Krishna in a series of seasonal arbours. Two arbours were created around Govardhan for each of the six seasons of the year, one studded with gems and the other full of flowers. They were decorated according to the season and six of the thirty-six musical modes (*rāg-rāginī*) were appointed to be present in each arbour. An anonymous *Sūā kī vārtā*, published separately from the other *vārtā*, tells how a devotee named Krishnadas Meghan was sent by Vitthalnath to the same cave near Apsarakund and, after spending six days inside it, experienced a vision of the jewelled arbours and pavilions inside the hill which are resorted to at night by Krishna and Radha.

The notion that there are caves in the Govardhan hill is not confined to Pushtimarg literature,[128] but it has a special significance for the Sampraday. The *vārtā* refer to Shrinathji emerging from a cave and accounts given of Vitthalnath's death describe how, by disappearing into a cave, he became absorbed into the hill and thus took his place in the eternal *līlā*. The eldest son, Giridhar, appeared on the scene in time to salvage his father's shawl, which was used for the performance of funeral rites.[129]

21 *Caurāsī baiṭhak caritra* (CBC)

The Pushtimarg sources mentioned in the previous section emphasize the pre-eminence of Govardhan as a spiritual centre. They consider it to be the setting for the nocturnal activities of Krishna and Radha that other sects associate primarily with Vrindaban. There is just as much sectarian emphasis in Pushtimarg descriptions of the pilgrimage circuit of Braj. They all incorporate the *baiṭhak* shrines that are believed to stand on places where Vallabha and Vitthalnath rested when they performed their circumambulations of Braj. These *baiṭhak* are all mentioned in *Caurāsī baiṭhak caritra*, a work ascribed to Gokulnath that is comparable in language and tone to the *vārtā* stories. Since it refers to several relatively late works, it must have been written some time after the early eighteenth century, though it appears that at least some of the *baiṭhak* shrines had been established by the mid-seventeenth century, since one of those at Gokul is referred to in the *vārtā* of Paramanandadas.[130] The *baiṭhak* of Vitthalnath are included in

127 Quoted in his *vārtā*, AV p.490.

128 E.g. Kalidasa, quoted in §6.1, and VRC 3.3. See remarks on Keshavacharya's *Govardhanaśataka* in the previous section.

129 Vitthalnath Bhatt, 8.168-74.

130 AV pp.158-9. Works referred to in CBC are *Mūl puruṣ* of Dwarkesh (b.1694, cf. §5.25 n.265), *Vallabhākhyān* of Gopaldas, *Vacanāmṛt* (of Gokulnath?), *Sūā kī vārtā*, and the *vārtā* of Meha Dhimar (in 252V).

Jagatanand's *Vraj vastu varṇan*, written some time in the early eighteenth century, as well as in *Ban yātrā parikramā*, probably composed some decades later.

As its title implies, *Caurāsī baiṭhak caritra* tells stories relating to eighty-four such shrines, all of which commemorate an incident in the life of Vallabha. There are twenty-two of them in Braj, the others being located at other pilgrimage centres and towns visited by Vallabha, especially in Gujarat. There are also stories of the twenty-eight *baiṭhak* of Vitthalnath, four of his eldest son Giridhar, thirteen of Gokulnath, seven of Hariray, one each of Vitthalnath's sons Raghunath and Ghanshyam, two of Vallabha's main disciple Damodardas, two of Shrinathji, and ten pedestals (*caraṇ caukī*) marking places where the deity was set up for worship while being taken from Govardhan to Nathdwara.[131]

The *baiṭhak* shrines, several of which are said to be beneath *chõkar* or *śyām tamāl* trees, commemorate places where the relevant teacher sat, often for several days, and preached, wrote one of his works, performed a miracle, or displayed his superiority over a Vaishnava of some other denomination.[132] The description of Vallabha's *baiṭhak* shrines in Braj takes the form of a year-long circumambulation of the forests, beginning with Gokul and Vrindaban and then following the usual sequence of the pilgrimage circuit, starting at Vishram Ghat, where Vallabha is said to have taken vows for the circumambulation with Ujagar Chaube on Bhadon I.12 in 1492. As he walks around Braj, accompanied by a band of followers, including Surdas and Paramanandadas, places along the route between the *baiṭhak* are mentioned. He spends a varying amount of time at each *baiṭhak* and eventually returns to Gokul in time to celebrate Krishna's birth. He then goes to Vishram Ghat, where the pilgrimage is formally concluded and Ujagar Chaube receives a fee of one hundred rupees.

22 Jagatanand (GVY, VGV, VVV)

A volume edited by Kanthmani Shastri includes six works by this poet, whose name appears variously as Jagatananda, Jagatananda, Jaganandana, Nandajaga, and Nanda, according to metrical requirements. He was active in the first half of the seventeenth century, appears to have been a resident of Gokul, and seems to have been associated with the Goswamis of the fourth Gaddi of the Pushtimarg.[133] At the beginning of four of his works he invokes his guru, a grandson of Gokulnath named Govardhanesh, who was born in 1616.[134] Two verses of *Vallabh vaṃśāvalī*

131 All published with N. Sharma's edition of CBC, which he says is based on several old mss. and printed versions. See Tandan, pp.106-7, for references to other editions.

132 Vallabha is said to have encountered Rup and Sanatan Goswami, Gopal Bhatt, Chaitanya, Vyastirth (a guru of Chaitanya and Madhavendra Puri), Chaturanaga, and Keshav Kashmiri Bhatt.

133 In *Vallabh vaṃśāvalī* he names 220 descendants of Vallabha, but gives dates only for those of the fourth Gaddi; in the fourth couplet he praises Gokul as if speaking from personal experience; in the fourth couplet of VGV he speaks of his familiarity with Gokul. The three works dealing with places in Braj have also been published in Parikh (ed.), pp.25-42.

give its date of composition as 1724, the year of birth of Vallabha, the youngest Goswami mentioned,[135] which implies that the author must have been initiated in his childhood when Govardhanesh was in his old age.

Three works by Jagatanand deal specifically with the places in Braj. *Śrī gusā̃ ījī kī van yātrā* (GVY) gives the itinerary of a circumambulation made by Vitthalnath in 1567 that is virtually the same as one described in *Pītāmbardās kī vārtā* (cf. following section). *Vraj vastu varṇan* (VVV) gives a classified enumeration in verse of a large number of deities and sacred sites (see appendix 3), and *Vraj grām varṇan* (VGV) is a sequence of verses about some of the villages, similar to those that are still recited by local brahmins and versifiers. It begins with Gokul and environs, followed by Mathura, Vrindaban, and then various other places at random, including some that have no significance in the pilgrimage circuit. In the opening verses Jagatanand refers to *Vallabh vaṃśāvalī* and *Viṭṭhal vanyātrā* (which must be the same as GVY), indicating that the work was written after 1724.

23 *Pītāmbardās kī vārtā* (PV)

A circumambulation of Braj is described in the *vārtā* of a disciple of Vitthalnath named Pitambardas, a brahmin from Gujarat.[136] It tells how he was initiated by Vitthalnath while on a visit to Gokul in 1571 and then took part in the circumambulation. The party consisted of Vitthalnath, Gokulnath, and twenty-four disciples, including a cook, three male singers from the temple at Gokul, and a female singer. The sequence and nomenclature of the places are basically the same as in Jagatanand's description of Vitthalnath's pilgrimage of 1567 (GVY), but the latter gives a clearer account of the daily programme and mentions more places, especially ponds and other minor sites. The most notable omissions in the printed edition of *Pītāmbardās kī vārtā* are Barsana and Unchgaon, though minor sites near them are included (Chiksoli, Novari-Chovari, Doban). The itinerary described in both accounts is much the same as the one followed today, the only difference in the sequence being that Vrindaban was visited after their return to Mathura. They then went back to Mathura to conclude the pilgrimage, after which they returned to Gokul. The pilgrimages were begun on Bhadon I.12 and ended on Bhadon II.7, and in both accounts vows are said to have been taken with Ujagar Chaube. It seems, therefore, that one of these accounts is based on the other and that they are both describing the same pilgrimage, despite the fact they disagree over the year in which it was undertaken.

134 *Vallabh vaṃśāvalī* 2, GVY 1, *Upakhāne sahit daśam skandh* 1, and VVV 1 (omitted in published text, but included in the ms. of BYP described below). Govardhanesh's date of birth is given in *Vallabh vaṃśāvalī* 138.

135 Date of composition is given in verses 174 & 184. Vallabha, a scion of the third Gaddi, is mentioned in verse 131. His date of birth is given in K. Shastri 1939, pt.1 p.158.

136 252V no.190, vol.3 pp.79-86, of the edition of B. Sharma and D. Parikh. It is not included in N. Sharma's edition.

24 *Ban yātrā parikramā* (BYP)

Another Braj prose text of uncertain date is entitled *Ban yātrā parikramā*, purporting to be an account of a circumambulation of Braj undertaken by Vitthalnath and his followers in 1543. It has been attributed to Gokulnath, but this seems unlikely in view of the fact that it mentions his *baiṭhak* shrines and the places where he did evening rites (*saṃdhyā vandanā*) and held a feast called *gvāl maṇḍalī*. The number of manuscripts and printed editions of this work indicate that it became the standard guide for members of the Pushtimarg, at least until the publication of Brajnath's itinerary (§6.26) It gives a detailed itinerary for the circumambulation of Braj and mentions the incidents in the story of Krishna that are associated with each place.

References given here to this text are based on a list of the places mentioned that has been collated from three manuscripts and four printed editions. The oldest dated manuscript was copied in 1819 and was brought to Vrindaban from Dera Ghazi Khan by a Goswami of the Eighth Gaddi of the Pushtimarg. It is included in a bound volume, compiled by a scribe named Mulchand Joshi, that contains several other texts, including Jagatanand's *Vraj vastu varṇan*.[137] The second manuscript consulted was copied in 1842 by Hiralal Bhatt and is now in the possession of Krishna Chaitanya Bhatt of Vrindaban, and the third is an undated one copied at Gokul by a certain Gokuldas.[138] Three of the printed editions were published in 1864, 1901, and 1982; the fourth, in Gujarati script, had lost its title page, but appears to belong to the late nineteenth century.[139] The nineteenth century editions are all lithographed and are illustrated with a series of drawings that seem to be derived from a common source.

All of these versions, apart from the manuscript of 1819, begin with a preamble stating that the work describes a pilgrimage begun by Vitthalnath on Bhadon I.12, 1543, as it was related by Gokulnath to his disciples. Only the printed editions of 1864 and 1982 go so far as to say that it was actually written by him. The manuscript of 1819 simply begins with the words *atha van yātrā parikramā*, followed by the first place mentioned in Mathura, 'the place of the prison'. Although it mentions a few places that do not appear in later versions, it is on the whole less detailed and mentions fewer places, either because the scribe deliberately produced a condensed version, or because the later versions give an expanded version of the original itinerary. In references made to this text note is made of places that do not occur in the 1819 manuscript and to any omissions occurring in more than one of the later versions.[140] The continual repetition in the text of such phrases as 'further on...,

137 BYP is on ff.45-61 and *Vraj vastu varṇan* on ff. 61-4, but it is not referred to as such, being introduced with the words: *atha vraj maṇḍal ke van upavan sthal, vraj līlā likhyate*. Both texts are available on microfilm (VRI microfilm project, reel 19 nos.206 (BYP) and 207 (VVV). For a fuller desription of this codex see Entwistle 1983/1, p.464 (ms. A).

138 VRI acc.no.9602.

139 Two other printed editions are those of Munshi Veni Prasad, (Lucknow, 1877), and D. Parikh in Parikh (ed.), pp.3-19.

140 Notable omissions in the 1819 ms. are Gokarna, Tos, Jikhangaon, Mukhrai, Paintha, Punchhari, Anani-Bandi, and Rida (Baldeo).

above that place...' has led to a certain amount of haplography, dittography, occasional differences in the sequence of places, and other errors of copying, but the itinerary is substantially the same and variants, apart from the absence of some places in the 1819 manuscript, are more likely to be the result of scribal error than deliberate tampering with the text. There is considerable variation in the orthography of toponyms, as well as syntactical differences and a certain amount of paraphrasing of one version by another. Some names are completely transformed: the *gāyan ko khirak* ('cowshed') and *dhān kī kyārī* (garden/plot of grain) of the two earliest manuscripts appear in later versions as *gyānokhari* ('pond of knowledge') and *dhyān kī kyārī* ('meditation garden'). In referring to this text orthographic variants are not noted if they are obviously the result of scribal error (e.g. *gajāśram* for *gataśram* (1819 ms.), *ãgiḍ* for *aḍīg* (1842 ms.). In some instances there are discrepancies in the order of places, especially of the clusters at Mathura, Govardhan, Barsana, and Vrindaban. On the whole the sequence of places in versions later than the manuscripts of 1819 and 1842 corresponds more closely to that of the current pilgrimage circuit. This gives the impression that the text was revised and updated in the course of the nineteenth century. The original version may have been produced in the latter half of the eighteenth century when Goswami Purushottam is believed to have revived the circumambulation of Braj.

All versions, apart from the manuscript of 1819, conclude with a classified listing of the sacred sites, similar to that given by Jagatanand in *Vraj vastu varñan* (cf. appendix 3). The work served as the basis for a *Mathurāmāhātmya* written in 1829 by Senapati Bahadur.[141] In the introduction to the work the author, who describes himself as having been in the service of Jaswantrao Holkar, says it recounts an itinerary he followed that was based on 'Gokulnath's book' (*pothī*), with the addition of other places he had sought out himself, giving the total number of sacred sites as 1,064.

25 *Braj maṇḍal kamalākār bhāvnā* (BKB)

Another text in Braj prose of uncertain date is *Braj maṇḍal kamalākār bhāvnā*.[142] A brief introduction to the only available published text says that its author, Gosain Vallabhji, was a son of Yadunath and that he circumambulated Braj in 1695. However, if the date given for his pilgrimage is correct, it seems more likely that he was the Vallabhji born in 1646 as the fourth and youngest son of Vitthalray, head of the first Gaddi during the reign of Shah Jahan.[143] The colophon refers to the work as a 'fifty-six petal Braj pilgrimage' (*chappan pãkharī kī braj yātrā*) since the places mentioned are assigned to petals of a lotus consisting of three concentric rings of eight, sixteen, and thirty-two petals. Unlike the *yogapīṭha* texts composed by other authors familiar with Braj (see above §6.13), there is no detailed visionary description and no attempt to make the distribution of the places on the petals correspond to their geographical location. Instead they are listed in the order of the

141 The ms.is mentioned by M. L. Gupta, pp.94-5.
142 Text published in Parikh (ed.), section in Gujarati script, pp.1-7.
143 His date of birth is given by Vitthalnath Bhatt, 9.100-101.

clockwise circumambulation of Braj, the first eight (Mathura to Mukhrai) being assigned to petals of the innermost ring, the next sixteen (places around Govardhan) to those of the middle ring, and the rest (Bilchhukund to Thakurani Ghat) to those of the outer ring. The *baiṭhak* shrines and presiding Sakhis are mentioned, and, as a reflection of the Pushtimarg's predilection for food offerings, the dishes appropriate for each place are specified.

The necessity of fitting the places onto a limited number of petals is probably the reason why the itinerary given is somewhat idiosyncratic. It includes, for example, the kadamba grove at Pisayo, a relatively minor site, yet omits other places in the vicinity such as Ajnokh, Kamai, and Karhela, even though they appear more frequently in other itineraries. Other relatively insignificant sites, such as Ganeshra, or Gop Kup at Raman Reti, are given a petal all to themselves, while places of more importance are omitted or crammed together on one petal. Places important for the Pushtimarg are included, such as those around Govardhan and others at Nandgaon and Gokul, while Vrindaban is not mentioned by name and of the sites there only Kalidah, Keshi Ghat, Bansi Bat, and Gahwarban are named. The last of these is not mentioned in the other Pushtimarg texts described above. Other places which it appears to be the first Pushtimarg source to name are Dhunka Dauji and a ghat at Sakraya, the latter being given a petal to itself. Apart from these few places nearly all the others mentioned are included in *Ban yātrā parikramā* and most of them are in *Caurāsī baiṭhak caritra*. It is unlikely, however, that Vallabhji relied solely upon these texts or their respective sources, for he also includes Brijwari, a place that they omit but which is mentioned by Jagatanand and in *Pītāmbardās kī vārtā*. The places are listed in the usual order, apart from the inclusion of Aring and Madhurikund among sites around Govardhan rather than between Jikhangaon and Mukhrai. Also, as in some modern itineraries, Vrindaban is included after Bachhaban and surrounding places and before those that lie on the east bank of the Yamuna.

26 Brajnath (BP)

Śrī braj parikramā, the definitive itinerary for the pilgrimage circuit followed by members of the Pushtimarg, was composed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by Brajnath (1849-1903), a Goswami of Mathura and a descendant of Purushottam (b.1748), who is credited with reviving the circumambulation after it had lapsed during the reign of Aurangzeb.[144] The itinerary it gives is the one that is followed today, though some places are regularly omitted. The circumambulation lasts one and a half months, from Bhadon II.12 to Karttik I.8, and involves the setting up of camps at twenty-six places outside Mathura. In Brajnath's itinerary the camping places serve as headings under which the sacred sites in the vicinity are listed and described. He mentions several non-canonical episodes in the life of Krishna, some of which feature Sakhis who are not included in the usual group of eight. He specifies the type of offering that is appropriate for certain places, and is

144 Dates from P. Mital 1966, pt.1 pp.91 & 96.

more prone than other writers to claim that the deities to be seen were discovered in a nearby pond.

27 Other Pushtimarg texts

There are two compilations of Sanskrit verses dealing with the Braj pilgrimage circuit that probably belong to the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. One of them, attributed to Vallabha and containing verses ascribed to various Puranas, is entitled *Vrajamathurāprakāśa* or *Mathurātīrthapraveśa*.[145] The verses are arranged so as to present an itinerary for visiting the sacred places, beginning with Mathura. A much larger compilation of Sanskrit verses is *Vrajayātrāśloka*, found in a manuscript of 1829 (presumably the original and only copy) consisting of 659 folios and containing over two hundred illustrations of episodes in the life of Krishna.[146] It refers to circumambulations of Braj begun on Bhadon I.12 by Vallabha in 1498 and 1508, Vitthalnath in 1535, and Gokulnath in 1571. The verses are attributed to various Puranas, Sanhitas, and other scriptures, and give the *māhātmya* of the places visited and the devotional sentiment (*bhāvnā*) appropriate to the incidents in the life of Krishna that are associated with them. Another Sanskrit work describing Vallabha's pilgrimage to Braj is *Vrajayātrākhaṇḍa*, part of an account of Vallabha's travels written in the last century by Kanhaiyalal Shastri.[147]

A detailed description of Gokul is given in Banmalilal's *Gokul māhātyma*, published in 1940. The author says in his introduction that it is based on a book belonging to his guru that contained Sanskrit verses in praise of Gokul written by Hariray to his brother Gopeshwar. Banmalilal has added his own commentary and emendations, incorporating verses from other Puranas and by various devotees, a Braj translation of the Sanskrit passages, and some poems describing Krishna's adventures in Gokul by Devi Prasad. It begins with Gopeshwar's requesting Hariray to tell him about the glory of Gokul. Hariray responds by quoting verses that Narada is said to have spoken to Naigunya, a pupil of the sage Durvasa. Gokul is compared to the mark of a cow's hoof on serpent hood of the circle (*maṇḍala*) of Braj; Vrindaban is said to comprise all the sacred places on the left bank of the Yamuna, and Brihadvana (Mahaban) all of those on the right. A full description is given of Gokul and places in the vicinity, (including Mahaban, Raman Reti, Koila, and Karnawal), referring to Rawal as 'Old Barsana' and Gokul as 'Old Nandgram'. It concludes with an account of the discovery of the image of Balarama at Baldeo entitled *Śrī dāūjī kī prākaṭya vārtā*.

145 I have consulted a ms. dated 1842 containing 37 folios and copied by Nanik Ram Gaur for Jawahar Tiwari, now in the possession of Balmukund Chaturvedi of Manik Chauk, Mathura. The manuscript is mentioned by P. Mital, 1966, pt.1 p.92 (who gives its colophon), and by D. Parikh in Parikh (ed.), pp.17-24, and in Dwivedi (ed.) 1972, p.302 (quoting beginning and end). Parikh also refers to other copies at Kaman and in the Vidya Vibhag, Kankaroli.

146 The ms. is also in the possession of Balmukund Chaturvedi and is described by P. Mital, ibid. p.93, and Parikh (ed.), pp.302-3.

147 Mentioned by P. Mital, ibid. p.92, who also refers to a published Braj prose translation of it by Shankar Dayalu Shastri.

28 Braj poets

The Ashtachhap poets lived in the sixteenth century but, as has already been noted, anthologies of their poems that were compiled in the ensuing centuries have been subject to a great deal of interpolation (§§2.32, 5.14). Among the few specific places in Braj referred to in the poems attributed to them, one of the most frequently mentioned is Barsana (spelt with its dialectal termination *-au* or *-o*). It is referred to as Radha's birthplace and her childhood home, though Rawal is often named as an alternative place of birth. Sankari Khori at Barsana is the location most commonly specified for the *dān līlā* episode, though several sources say that it took place at Dan Ghati, Govardhan. Bansi Bat is named by the Ashtachhap and other poets as the place where Krishna summoned the Gopis to the *rās* by playing his flute, though it is not certain whether the tree in Vrindaban that now bears the name is the one intended by the poets.[148]

The collected poems attributed to Paramanandadas contain more topographical references than those of the other Ashtachhap poets, though he does not appear to use Vrindaban and Gokul as names for specific locations and no distinction is made between Mathura/Madhupuri and Madhuban. Nandgaon is mentioned as the village where Krishna spent his childhood, and there are references to Talban, Kumudban, Parasoli, Man Sarovar, and Dhir Samir, a place also mentioned by his contemporary, Hariram Vyas - a poet who frequently refers to Vrindaban as a specific location (cf.§§3.6, 5.16). Some of Paramanandadas' poems express the desire to be reborn in Braj and praise the area as a whole, as well as Vrindaban, and the Yamuna.[149]

29 The account of a pilgrim from Bikaner (BYV)

A pilgrim from Bikaner named Maheshwari has left us an account of a journey to Braj made in 1656.[150] The tour began on Ashwin II.13 with a circumambulation of Govardhan, followed by visits to Mathura, Vrindaban, and Gokul. The account, written in the dialect of Bikaner, lists as many places as could be remembered and some detail is given of the way Shrinathji was worshipped, suggesting that the author belonged to the Pushtimarg. On Karttik I.8 the pilgrim left Mathura and went on to Soron.

30 Nagaridas (TA)

Nagaridas (1699-1764), the ruler of Rupnagar, spent his later years in retirement at

148 Many poems of the Ashtachhap refer to *baṃsī baṭa...yamunā taṭa ke nikaṭa*. See also Shribhatt's *Yugal śatak* 5 & 9, Surdas Madanmohan, *pad* 25.

149 Paramanandadas, *pad* 199, 443, 557, 567, 889 (Nandgaon/-gram); 262 (Talban); 288, 299 (Kumudban); 298 (Parasoli); 473 (Man Sarovar); 82 (Dhir Samir); 1349-51 (rebirth in Braj); 1367-87 (praise of Braj,Vrindaban, the Yamuna). Hariram Vyas, *pad* 260, 635,695.

150 *Bīkānerī yātrā vivaraṇ*, ms. in Anup Sanskrit Library, Bikaner, summarized by A. Nahta in Govind Das & Agrawal (eds.), pp.114-119.

Vrindaban (cf.§5.33). He wrote many devotional works in the Braj dialect, none of which shows any bias to one particular sect. His *Tīrthānand* (TA), written in Vrindaban in 1753, deals specifically with the places he visited and the festivals he attended.[151] He relates how he left Rupnagar, arrived in Braj, circumambulated Govardhan, bathed at Vishram Ghat, visited Vrindaban, and then proceeded to Soron - the same sequence followed by the aforementioned pilgrim from Bikaner, implying that this was a common procedure for devotees from Rajasthan. From there he participated in Janmashtami festivities at Nandgaon, celebrated the births of Lalita and Radha at Karhela and Barsana, and says that he attended other festivities in the vicinity, probably referring to the *būṛhī līlā* cycle. Later he attended the midnight bath at Radhakund on Karttik I.7, celebrated Diwali and Annakut at Govardhan, and Gopashtami at Nandgaon. All of these festivities are described as being well-attended and seem to have contained the same elements found today.

Other poems found in his collected works that deal with the spiritual importance of Braj are *Vraj sār*, *Vraj-vaikuṇṭh tulā*, and *Van jan praśaṃsā* in which he praises Vrindaban and all the different animals and castes who reside there.

31 Somnath and Sudan (SC)

Somnath and Sudan were court poets in the service of the Jat Rajas in the middle of the eighteenth century. In 1750 Somnath, at the behest of Suraj Mal, wrote *Sujān vilās*, a Braj version of a well-known collection of thirty-two stories associated with king Bhoja which, in other vernacular adaptations, is usually given the title *Siṃhāsan battīsī*. To this work he appended a description of the palaces, gardens, and fortifications of Dig entitled *Dīrghnagar varṇan*.[152]

A few of the sacred places of Braj and the incidents in the life of Krishna associated with them are mentioned in the first part of the last section of Sudan's *Sujān caritra*, an account of the battles fought by Suraj Mal between 1745 and 1753.[153] No attempt is made at presenting the places mentioned in the order in which they are visited in the pilgrimage circuit.

32 Chandralal, Abhayram, and Gopal Kavi (VDA)

Three writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century composed works describing Vrindaban. In 1767 Goswami Chandralal wrote *Vṛndāvan prakāś mālā*, a work introducing contemporary followers of the Radhavallabh Sampraday and

151 The date and place of composition are given in the last couplet. References are to the edition of Gupta, vol.2 pp.193-220, (based on the earlier *Nāgar samuccay* edition). Another version, with differences in orthography and stanza numbering, is included among the edition of his works by Brajvallabhsharan, pp.71-87.

152 *Somnāth granthāvalī*, vol.1 pp.819-27.

153 SC 7.1.36-59, pp.229-234.

notable members of other sects that also includes a description of Vrindaban.[154] Abhayram, a popular poet of his day, was one of the Gaurawa Thakurs who live in the Dusayat quarter of Vrindaban. He wrote a series of verses under the title *Vṛndāvan rahasya vinod*, that describe the main temples of Vrindaban in the early nineteenth century. He mentions forty-four deities in the town, beginning at Kalidah and more or less following the sequence given in much more detail by Gopal Kavi. Some of the poems also praise the creepers, alleys, ghats, cows, cowherds, animals, and people of various castes who reside in the town, in a manner similar to the earlier *Van jan praśaṃsā* of Nagaridas.

Gopal Kavi's *Vṛndāvan dhām anurāgāvalī* gives the most detailed description of Vrindaban ever written. A complete manuscript of the work, containing 303 folios, is found in the manuscript collection of Shri Advaita Charan Goswami.[155] The colophon states that it was written in 1843 by 'Gupaldas', possibly the author himself, though deficiencies in the text suggest that this is not an autograph copy.[156] The author refers to himself as a resident of the Mani Parau quarter of the town, says that he also wrote a *Dān līlā* and *Mān pacīsī*, that his guru was Pandit Raj Pratapi Tyagi, and that he wrote the present work at the suggestion of Narottamdas, incumbent of the Gaddi of the temple of Rasikbihari.[157] Other works by him include *Ban jātrā* (1840, a poem in 455 verses), *Vṛndāban māhātmya* (1846, a Hindi version of the *Vṛndāvanamāhātmya* of *Padmapurāṇa*), *Barṣotsav* (1846), and several poems on the *līlā* of Krishna and Radha.

In the opening verses of *Vṛndāvan dhām anurāgāvalī* he introduces it as a circumambulation of Vrindaban (*cakravedhī parikramā*). Its forty chapters, using a variety of verse forms, give a systematic description of the town, beginning at Kalidah and ending downstream with the wooded area beyond Tatti Asthan. The inventory of places must include all the noteworthy temples, mansions, and places of worship that existed at the time. Over three hundred and fifty Krishna deities are referred to, as well as many other shrines and sacred places. Whole chapters are devoted to the life of the more prominent figures in the history of Vrindaban, and in several cases details of the hereditary custodianship or guru-disciple lineage of the religious establishments are included. The location is given of numerous *samādhi* of notable devotees and their descendants or successors. The twenty-fourth chapter presents an account of Govind Dev that includes verses on the other three 'Dev' temples of Braj, namely Haridev of Govardhan, Keshavdev of Mathura, and Baldev of Baldeo.

154 Lalitaprasad Purohit, intro. to Bhagwat Mudit p.15, and Bansal, p.343, who calls him 'Hit Chandralal' and says he has a ms. copy of the work.

155 Available on microfilm, VRI microfilm series of Hindi manuscripts no.H5. A ms. containing part of the work is noted in S. B. Misra, no.62(j) p.89. In the VRI ms. the author is named as Gopal Kavi, in the other as Gopalray.

156 Viz. hypens indicating lacunae on f.45v, and irregular or erroneous numbering of some of the chapters and verses. The last half of f.224r and the verso side are in a different hand.

157 VDA 4 (ff. 26-7) & 18 (ff. 139-40, where he mentions his *Dān līlā* and *Mān pacīsī*). Mss. of works composed by him in the period 1828-50 are mentioned in S. B. & S. B. Misra, pp.84-90, where his full name is given as Gopalray Bhat. See also Bansal, pp.341-4, who reckons that he lived from c.1798-1863.

33 Nawal Singh Pradhan (BBP) and Lakshminarayan Singh

In 1822 Raja Parichat of Datiya made a pilgrimage to Braj, taking with him a poet his service named Nawal Singh Pradhan. Within a year of the completion of the pilgrimage this poet had completed an account of the journey, written in the Braj dialect with some influence from Bundeli, that was given the title *Braj bhūmi prakāś*.[158] The orthography and order of the places named are subject to metrical requirements and show frequent change of *r* to *l*. It describes how the king spent his time in Braj between Ashwin II.10 and Agahan I.4 (cf. end of §1.4). In the seventh section the twelve main and other minor forests of Braj are listed and the pilgrimage circuit is described, beginning with Vishram Ghat and including the circumambulation of Kaman, Barsana, Nandgaon, and (in the eighth chapter) Vrindaban, though it does not seem that the king himself made the full tour.

Bhawani Singh, another Raja of Datiya, made a pilgrimage to Braj and Chitrakut in 1890 that was described by Lakshman Singh Pradhan in a work entitled *Śrī lokendra brajotsav*. It contains 5,642 verses and includes a biography of Hariram Vyas and the genealogy of his descendants.[159]

34 Modern published sources

Since the late nineteenth century several Hindi and Gujarati guide books to the pilgrimage circuit of Braj have been published. They vary in quality, scope, and accuracy and are mainly intended as inexpensive handbooks for devotees undertaking the pilgrimage. The most noteworthy are those of Durgaprasad Trivedi, Pramod Bihari, Narayan Datt Madhavji Chaturved, and Rajesh Dikshit. The Gujarati guides of L. C. Desai and Premlal Mevcha both give a full and detailed itinerary for the Pushtimarg circuit based on personal observation. There are also a few handbooks that present the itinerary somewhat more in terms of traditional scholarship. Krishnadas Baba's *Braj maṇḍal parikramā* deals particularly with places of interest to members of the Gaudiya Sampraday, deriving much of its information from Narahari Chakravarti's *Bhakti ratnākar*. *Braj bhūmi mohinī* by 'Vijay' is not allied to one particular Sampraday and gives many anecdotes and minor *līlā* incidents associated with the different places. Prabhudayal Mital's *Braj kī sāṃskṛtik yātrā* is a reprint, with the addition of maps, of part of his *Braj kā sāṃskṛtik itihās*. Of similar scope and quality is *Braj yātrā darśan* by Acharya Kailash Chandra 'Krishna'. Itineraries and some related articles are given in *Vraj yātrā aṅk*, a special issue of the periodical *Vallabhīy sudhā* (*varṣ* 4, *aṅk* 3-4), edited by D. Parikh, in *Braj yātrā*, edited by Radheshyam Dwivedi, and, more worthy of note, in *Braj aur braj yātrā*, edited by Seth Govind Das and Ram Narayan Agrawal. Various minor articles are also included in the *Vrajāṅk* of a periodical called *Nām*

158 Ed. Babulal Goswami. The date of the pilgrimage is given in BBP 1.42.1-2, and the colophon says that the ms. was copied in 1825. See the editor's introduction for details of the poet and other works written by him.

159 Details given here are from Vasudev Goswami, pp.35-7.

māhātmya, edited by D. B. L. Sharma and Chhabilelal Goswami. Vrindaban is described in detail in *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, a special number of the periodical *Śrī sarveśvar*, edited by Brajvallabhsharan, and in *Nagar pālikā vṛndāvan śatābdi-smārikā*, edited by Sharan Bihari Goswami. Two publications which, in surveying all the Hindu places of pilgrimage, contain a certain amount of detail about Braj, are R. Mishra's *Tapobhūmi* and the *Tīrthāṅk* volume of the periodical *Kalyāṇ*, but neither of them match up to the more detailed publications of local scholars.

Two recently published accounts of interest are those of Saraswati Prasad Mital and Lalitaprasad Purohit, who describe pilgrimages in which they participated, the former of the Pushtimarg *ban yātrā* and the latter of a circumambulation organized by the Gore Dauji Ramanandi Akhara, Vrindaban. The only published account of a pilgrimage organized by members of the Nimbark Sampraday is given in *Vraj yātrā aṅk*, an issue of the periodical *Śrīnimbārk*, edited by Govind Das 'Sant'. It describes a circumambulation led by Shriji Maharaj in 1970 and contains some articles on related topics.

7 Varieties of sacred place in Braj

1 The origins of pilgrimage in Braj

Mathura is traditionally included among the 'top seven' centres of pilgrimage in India that have long been extolled for their power to grant liberation.[1] At the beginning of the previous chapter we deduced from references made by various poets, which are corroborated by comments made by Alberuni, that Mathura's reputation as a place of pilgrimage associated with Krishna had spread throughout India in the centuries preceding the Muslim conquest. None of the sources, however, has anything to say about the scale of pilgrimage during the first millennium, or the social background of the pilgrims. Later, when Mathura came under the control of the Delhi Sultanate, it retained its reputation as a sacred centre. The Shrivaishnavas conceived of a series of one hundred and eight temples or centres of pilgrimage. The first ninety-seven were located in South India, the following six were in the north, culminating with 'the northern Mathura' (*vaṭa maturai*) and the area of Vraja/Vrindavana (*tiruvāyppaṭi*), and the last two were the Milk Ocean and Vishnu's highest heaven (*paramapada*).[2]

From the mid-sixteenth century onwards the number of sacred places around Mathura multiplied. Nothing was too trivial for the pioneers of the new pilgrimage route; they discovered a location for every canonical episode and apocryphal incident in the life of Krishna; a sacred association was found for practically every village, pond, or landmark in the district. Apart from incorporating all kinds of natural phenomena, they also made use of such second-hand objects as ruins, mounds, and fragments of sculpture that had featured in earlier cults. So inflated was the number of places that came to light, so flimsy were the pretexts that inspired their discovery, so irrelevant were they for any kind of religious function, that many of them failed to gain recognition and can no longer be identified. Many of the villages mentioned in pilgrimage itineraries were included only because an absurd etymology associated their names with an incident in the life of Krishna. Although such places may seldom or never be visited, their inclusion exemplifies the desire of

1 The others are Ayodhya, Hardwar, Kashi, Kanchi, Ujjain, and Dwarka.
2 Hardy 1983, p.257 n.58.

compilers of pilgrimage itineraries to be comprehensive and show that the whole of Braj is imbued with the presence of Krishna.

Not all of the places they included were complete fabrications. The antiquated *Mathurāmāhātmya* was modified to suit the reorientation of devotion to Krishna, and relatively few of the old sites fell into oblivion. As at other centres of pilgrimage, most of the ancient sites survive in some form or another, though not necessarily in their original location. The pilgrimage circuit was revised and expanded with the intention of providing a systematic and encyclopaedic route for pilgrims interested in seeing all the places associated with Krishna. The primary motivation for pilgrimage was no longer to perform rites for one's ancestors, purify oneself and be absolved by bathing in sacred waters, attain liberation, or improve one's prospects in the next life, but to have some kind of vivid aesthetic and emotional experience in the here and now.

This change of emphasis probably took place gradually from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. The fact that Sikandar Lodi prohibited shaving on the ghats at Mathura (§5.1) implies that bathing and associated rites were still a central activity. Monserrate, who visited Mathura in 1580-82, reported that the brahmins did not allow pilgrims into the main temple until they had been to the river-side and shaven off their hair and beards and bathed in the river: 'It is an extraordinary sight; for there are more than three hundred barbers, who very swiftly shave a huge multitude both of men and women standing up to their waists in the river, on steps which have been built there.' At the same time he refers to the presence in the vicinity of temples 'built in spots where the silly old-wives fables...declare that [Krishna] performed some action...to preserve the memory of these wonderful deeds, lest they should be forgotten.'[3] Nowadays shaving and bathing do not take place on the same kind of scale at Mathura, though they remain prominent features of pilgrimage to Prayag, Varanasi, and Ayodhya.

The influx of a large number of devotees seeking some kind of emotional and aesthetic experience must have encouraged the local brahmins to adapt their shrines and rituals to suit the requirements of the new brand of pilgrim. The context was one in which sanctity was much in demand and could be easily marketed. Even today the masses are so credulous that Pandas have no difficulty in setting up spurious sites. There have long been two Chir Ghats where Krishna is said to have stolen the Gopis' clothes; an attempt is now being made to promote a new location for Krishna's defeat of the serpent Kaliya. It has been created by converting one of the *chatrī* adjacent to Chir Ghat into a shrine that duplicates the older one at Kalidaha, situated further upstream and somewhat inconvenient for pilgrims who are led around on a brief sight-seeing tour. The Panda presiding at the new shrine was unperturbed when asked about the pre-existing Kalidaha further upstream. 'No problem', he said, 'we can make a third one if we want !'

Some light can be thrown on the origins of pilgrimage to Mathura by comparing it with Gaya.[4] Both towns were important centres of pilgrimage for Buddhists, and at both places the Hindu sacred complex incorporates former Buddhist sites or

3 Monserrate, pp.90, 92-3.

4 I rely here on Jacques' edition of and introduction to *Gayāmāhātmya*. See also Vidyarthi 1961 for further description of Gaya and the rites performed there.

objects of worship with their name and function adapted to the mythology and rituals of brahminical religion. Whereas the nature of pilgrimage at Mathura has been transformed under the influence of devotionalism, Gaya has retained its original function as a place for conducting rituals associated with the hereafter. Its pilgrimage circuit is basicaly a tour of sites suitable for the performance of *śrāddha*. This rite, performed in honour of one's ancestors, bears relation to the semantics of the term *tīrth*, which literally means 'ford'. Many centres of pilgrimage referred to as a *tīrth* were indeed places where a trade route crossed a river, but in the ritual context the spiritual meanings of the term are more significant. A *tīrth* provides a point of mediation between the transient world and heaven, a place where a god may come down to earth and from where the prayers of the pilgrim can travel upward.[5] As such, it is a particularly suitable location for the performance of rituals relating to the transition from this world to the next, from life to death. The *śrāddha* is an act of filial piety performed with the aim of helping the souls of one's forebears escape their transient state as a disembodied ghost (*preta*) and attain the status of a mane (*pitṛ*) and enter the world of the ancestors, where they ultimately become released from the cycle of rebirth. A standard element of *śrāddha* is the offering of balls of cooked rice (*piṇḍa*) in order to feed a *preta* and help it attain the form of an ancestor. Besides appeasing the souls of the dead, the ritual also helps to ensure prosperity, for the welfare of the worshipper's family is thought to be partly dependent on the blessings of the ancestors. It adds to one's store of merit and results in longevity, good health, and plenty of sons.

Gaya is situated on the bank of a small river called Phalgu. On arrival pilgrims bathe and perform *śrāddha* at a point on the river bank named Phalgutirth, then go to hill a little over ten kilometres away where they offer *piṇḍa* to a rock called *pretaśilā* ('ghost-stone'). The *Gayāmāhātmya* tells the story of a 'demon' (*gayā-sura*) whose body constitutes Gaya in the form of a rock.[6] This demon performed austerities for thousands of years and acquired so much power that the gods became afraid of him. They conceded to his request that his body become exceptionally pure (*pavitra*), with the result that men who saw and touched it ascended to heaven (*brahmaloka*). Yama, lord of the underworld, when he saw that his realm had become empty, took the other gods along with him to complain to Vishnu. Vishnu suggested that Brahma ask the demon to let his body be used for a sacrifice, since it had been made so pure. The demon readily agreed, but when the sacrifice was about to be carried out he began to tremble. Brahma asked Yama to fetch a rock (*dharmaśilā*, of which the aforementioned *pretaśilā* is a fragment) from his house and place it on Gaya's head in order to still him. The demon, however, continued to tremble and would not be still until, upon the intervention of Vishnu, the gods agreed that they would continue to reside on the rock, that the surrounding sacred area would be named after him, and that *piṇḍa* offerings made there by mortals would obtain the desired rewards. Although the footprints left by Vishnu and the other gods are now revered at Gaya, the original presiding spirit of the hill was a 'demon' who saved his worshippers from the underworld and ensured that their *śrāddha* rites would be successful.

5 For a fuller treatment of the term see Eck, pp.34-5.

6 *Gayāmāhātmya*, chs.2-4.

At Gaya offerings of *piṇḍa* are made at the foot of the *pretaśilā* hill in a tank called Brahmakund, and in a small basin on the hill, though there is little doubt that the original intention was to offer *piṇḍa* to the *pretaśilā* itself.[7] Jacques has suggested that the main deity was once Brahma, supplanted later by Shiva, and eventually by Vishnu.[8] We shall see that Govardhan, in myth and ritual, has gone through a similar gamut of associations, reflecting different phases or levels in the development of Hinduism. Whereas in Gaya the demon acquiesced to the brahminical gods, in the Govardhan myth the role of the mountain spirit was usurped by Krishna.

According to the Pali canon, Gaya was a place of pilgrimage before the arrival of the Buddha. People went there to bathe in the month of Phalgun, and two important holy places were a nearby hill and a kind of dolmen shrine where two Yakshas were worshipped.[9] In view of the interchangeability of the terms *brahman* and *yakṣa* in ancient texts, the name Brahmakund may originally have been related to a presiding Yaksha at Gaya.[10]

There is no such record of Mathura having been a place of pilgrimage before it was visited by devout Buddhists as part of a tour of the great *stūpa* monuments and centres of their faith. This may lead us to suppose that Mathura's emergence as a brahminical pilgrimage centre was a consequence of its becoming an important city during the centuries in which Buddhism was the dominant religion. Since there is no notable confluence or other outstanding feature along the banks of the river at Mathura, it may be that non-Buddhist pilgrimage began only when local brahmins started conducting rites at the riverside for local people and visitors to the city. Similarly, the presence of several Buddhist *stūpa* at other towns such as Varanasi (Sarnath) and Ayodhya, may have helped to stimulate their growth as Hindu places of pilgrimage. However, in view of the ancient connection between Phalgutirth and the *pretaśilā* at Gaya, it seems more likely that pilgrimage in Mathura developed out of a long-established and pre-Buddhist custom of worshipping the hill of Govardhan and bathing in the Yamuna.

2 The primordiality of Govardhan

There can be little doubt that the two natural phenomena that have been worshipped in Braj the longest are the Govardhan hill and the river Yamuna. It is significant that initially the most common Krishna icons were those that showed him lifting up Govardhan. The presence of the hill in the vicinity of Mathura is mentioned by Hindu writers of the first millennium and its importance as a sacred site is confirmed by Alberuni (cf.§§4.8, 6.1) Vaudeville notes that in the version of

7 Jacques, intro. to *Gayāmāhātmya*, pp.ix-xi.

8 Ibid., p.lx.

9 Ibid., pp.xxi-xxv. Phalgutirth presumably derives its name from the festival. The hill is called *gayasīs* (‹*gajaśīrṣa*?); its identity is uncertain.

10 For *yakṣa*/*brahman* usage in the Brahmanas and Upanishads see R. N. Mishra, pp.22-3. There is also a tank called Brahmakund at Govardhan, which lies next to Manasi Ganga; cf. Uttara- and Dakshinamanasatirtha at Gaya.

the Krishna story found in the Buddhist *Ghatajātaka* he and his brother Baladeva are said to live at Govardhan (*govaḍḍhamāna*), a village granted to their parents by Kansa. She also notes that the city of Mathura is not central to the legend of Krishna's years as a cowherd, but merely 'provides an entrance and exit'.[11]

Although the authors of the classic accounts of Krishna's exploits describe it as a lofty mountain, in reality Govardhan is no more than a ridge formed by an outcrop of rocks rising hardly more than thirty metres above the plain. It stretches from the township of Govardhan to Punchhari and has its highest elevation between the villages of Anyor and Jatipura, where the temple of Shrinathji stands. To the north-east of the township the ridge gradually diminishes until, amid the thicket on the south-west side of Kusum Sarovar, there is nothing left but a few scattered rocks protruding above the ground. Though the ridge is universally recognized as the mythical Govardhan, in local parlance and in several vernacular texts it is called 'Giriraj' ('King of mountains', or 'Mountain King'), an epithet comparable to that of Shiva as 'Lord of the Mountain' (*girīśa*) - a role assigned to him at Nandgaon, where, as Nandishwar, he is regarded as the presiding deity of hill.[12]

The classic accounts of the Govardhan episode begin with Nanda and his fellow herdsmen preparing to worship Indra as controller of the rain clouds (usually likened to a herd of cows), upon which their pastures and thus their livelihood depended. Krishna argued that they should instead worship the mountain by circumambulating it with their cattle and offering it food. An important element in the festival that the herdsmen had hitherto celebrated was the erection of a pole or flagstaff in honour of Indra, a custom that is mentioned in several ancient and medieval sources and still survives in some parts of India. Whereas Krishna talks of the benefits of celebrating the festival in the autumn season, the rite in honour of Indra that he discourages was normally celebrated a couple of months earlier. Different texts give the date variously as the full moon day of Ashwin or Shravan, or the bright half of Bhadon, the most widely observed dates being Bhadon II.8 or 12.[13] The raising of the flagstaff was linked with obtaining sufficient rain and a good harvest, while kings made it into a political festival by performing it to avert calamities and ensure victory.

By supplanting Indra and replacing the festival held in his honour with worship of the mountain, with which he showed himself to be identical, Krishna revealed himself to be the real controller of the rains and protector of the herdsmen and their cattle. The Govardhan myth concludes by saying that he was thenceforth known as Govinda, an epithet that had formerly been applied to Indra as herdsman of the rain clouds.[14] Since it is possible that the authors of the *Harivaṃśa* and subsequent

11 Vaudeville 1976, pp.198-9. For *Ghatajātaka* cf.§2.3.

12 This is hinted at in the HV account of the Govardhan episode. When Krishna appears on the mountain to receive the *annakūṭa* offering he declares that he will be auspicious (*śiva*) and take care of the herdsmen.

13 These are the dates on which the festival is still celebrated in some areas. It is called *śakramaha* (HV), or *indramaha* (ViP), *indrayaga* (BhP); Bhasa refers to *indayañño*, but omits the Govardhan episode; elsewhere it is called *indramaha, indradhvaja, indradhvajocchraya, indradvādaśī, indrotthāpana, indarjagya*. For references to texts and further details see Gangoly, Agrawala 1970, ch.4, and Mazumdar, pp.286-9, 305.

14 See Gangoly, p.7.

versions of the story never visited Braj, and in view of the absence of any specific traces of Indra worship in the Govardhan cult as it survives today, his appearance may be no more than another example of the assimilation of elements of his mythology by the Krishna of the epics and Puranas.[15] Several places around the hill are associated with incidents and characters that appear in the Govardhan myth (such as the tanks named after Govinda, Surabhi, and Airavata, and a platform where Indra's flagstaff was erected), but most of them appear to be secondary. Places of more cultic significance, which are also mentioned in the oldest sources (such as Manasi Ganga, Sankarshan Kund, and Radhakund) do not feature in the Govardhan myth.

3 The original deity of Govardhan

Lurking in the background of the story of Indra's defeat is the presence of a non-Vedic deity who was responsible for controlling the rains, and much more besides. Krishna argued that worship of the mountain (*giriyajña*) was more appropriate for Nanda and his companions because they were nomadic herdsmen. He says that the mountain spirits are able to adopt any form they choose in order to protect the forests that surround them in which the cattle grazed.[16] In the *Harivaṃśa* and *Viṣṇupurāṇa* blood sacrifice forms part of the ritual in honour of the mountain. The ability to change form, guardianship of forests, and acceptance of blood sacrifice are typical characteristics of that ill-defined class of spirits called Yakshas. When Krishna revealed himself to be the guardian of the hill, he was usurping the role of the Yaksha-like spirit of the mountain. In other episodes he encounters beings that are explicitly said to be Yakshas (*yamalārjuna*, Shankhachuda) or which share their characteristics as spirits that haunt a tree, forest, or cave and are able to appear in various guises (Dhenuka, Pralamba, Vyoma, Arishta). Goetz, considering the connection between Krishna-Govinda and Govardhan, came to the conclusion that the local deity of Mathura whose cult was adopted by the Abhiras 'can have been only one of those many Yakṣas, whose images have been rediscovered over all the wide area around Mathura.'[17]

To what extent do beliefs, customs, and other evidence relating to the actual Govardhan, or to folk cults in Braj, bear out the impression given in the scriptures that the original spirit of the mountain was some kind of Yaksha? There is plenty of evidence for the prevalence of Yaksha worship in Braj during the ancient period. The Yakshas of Mathura are referred to in Buddhist and Jain literature, they were given a place in the establishments built by followers of both religions, and independent images of them were set up by groups of local devotees. The survival of Yaksha worship in modern times attests to its tenacity among certain sections of the local populace.[18]

15 See Gangoly for examples, some more convincing than others, and Narahari's article on Kaliya.

16 Viz. *kāmarūpinaḥ*, HV 59.24, ViP 5.10.34.

17 Goetz, p.53.

18 See §4.5 for evidence of Yaksha worship in the ancient period, and §7.12 for some examples of its survival in modern times.

The notion that Govardhan has the form of a man or beast corresponds to the belief that Yakshas could appear in different guises. In *Caurāsī baiṭhak caritra*, for instance, a Vaishnava is told to walk around the hill.[19] On the way he encounters a cow, a lion or tiger (*siṃh*), a cowherd boy (*gvāl*), and a serpent - each of which is said to represent one of the four essential forms (*svarūp*) of Giriraj. Dwarkeshji says that Govardhan has the form of a lion or tiger with its feet at Dandauti Sila and its face at Snan Sila.[20] Vishwanath Chakravarti describes it as a peacock with its tail at Govind Kund (Anyor), its cheek at Manasi Ganga, its mouth at Kusum Sarovar, and its eyes at Radha- and Krishnakund.[21] Kumheriya describes the popular conception of the hill as a peacock with its face at Radhakund, its tail at Punchhari, its stomach at the Govardhan township, and its feet at Anyor and Jatipura.[22] Such theriomorphic conceptions, occuring in relatively late sources, may simply have been suggested by passages in the scriptures. The conception of the hill as being a lion or tiger may derive from the *Harivaṃśa* version of the Govardhan myth, in which Krishna says that the mountain is able to adopt such a form in order to attack those who damage the forests that surround it.[23] The idea that the hill has the form of a peacock may derive from a simile occurring in the same text that likens the hill, when it is lifted up by Krishna and surrounded by rain clouds, to a peacock displaying its tail.[24] Possibly the association of the hill with a peacock is a relic of a local cult of Skanda, whose images were current around Mathura in the Kushana period and whose vehicle is the peacock. Ahirs who gather at Govardhan to dance during the Govardhan Puja festival carry staffs (or spears?) crowned with a bunch of peacock feathers, just like pilgrims to hill-top shrines of Murukan (Skanda) in southern India. Vaudeville has stressed the serpent and bull conceptions of Govardhan, but the examples from other parts of India that she cites to support her argument do not have direct parallels in legends and beliefs current in Braj.[25]

Although there is no consistent or well-established tradition of the hill representing one particular animal, several texts support the belief that it has some kind of corporeal form. The most striking example of attributing a body to the hill

19 CBC, pp.24-5.

20 *Bhāv bhāvnā*, p.71.

21 VRC 3.1 ff. Sundarlal also says that the hill has the form of a peacock.

22 Kumheriya, pp.13-14.

23 HV 59.25.

24 HV 61.35.

25 Vaudeville 1976, p.209 n.41, 1980, p.13 n.18, referring to the conception of the Sheshachalam-Nallamalai chain of hills in Andhra Pradesh as representing a serpent, and p.7, referring to Maibhatta's *Śrīkṛṣṇacarita* (1280), a Maharashtrian Mahanubhava text in which Krishna emerges from under the mountain in the form of a bull. In a recent paper (1986) she has considered the possibility that the cult of Shrinathji was an adaptation of a Bhairava cult, a claim put forward by a detractor of the Pushtimarg (who had worked in the temple administration at Nathdwara) under the name of Blaktanand in a polemical publication entitled *Vallabhkul chal kapaṭ darpaṇ athavā Vallabhkul kā kaccā ciṭṭhā* (1862). His arguments are not convincing and are based partly on comparing Shrinathji with a similar image that he calls a Jain Bhairava, but which has been identified by Agrawala (1940, p.115, MM no.D.26) as a Krishna image that does not appear to be earlier than the later Mughal period.

are the anthropomorphic images made for Govardhan Puja, a festival described below. Narayan Bhatt is the first to refer to the tail of the hill being located at Punchhari, and later sources talk of its tongue being at Radhakund. The poet Sudan says that the tail of the hill (*giri pūcha*) lies to the south and its face and eyes to the north, where there are twin lakes of Radha and Krishna.[26] In *Gargasaṃhitā* most of the holy places around Govardhan are assigned to a part of the body: the face, where the inhabitants of Braj celebrated Annakut, is beneath *śṛṅgāramaṇḍala*, its eyes are Manasi Ganga, its nose Chandrasarovar, its lips Govind Kund, its tongue Radhakund, its cheeks Lalitakund, its ears Gopal Kund, the area between its eyes and ears is Kusum Sarovar, etc.[27]

Apart from three separate rocks that are referred to as the 'lotus face' (*mukhāravind*) of Giriraj, the tongue and the tail are the only two parts of the hill's body that are marked by an appropriate cult object. The former, called *girirāj jī kī jibhyā*, is represented by a stone with a reddish grain in it that stands in a small shrine on the north side of Krishnakund. According to legend, blood issued from the stone when it was struck by workmen who were digging a well called Gop Kuan. That night Krishna explained to them in a dream that their spades had cut out his tongue and that the stone should therefore be removed. The following day the bleeding stone was dug out, appeased by being bathed in milk, and then set up for worship.[28] At Punchhari, the 'tail-end' of the hill, there is a shrine housing a deity called *pũcharī kau lauṭhā*, a vermilion-painted figure who, like comparable images of Hanuman and Bhairava, seems to have a tutelary function (see plate 19).

A more positive link between Govardhan and the worship of Yakshas is provided by the festival of Diwali. The celebration of Diwali at Govardhan is attended by thousands of people, who circumambulate Manasi Ganga in the evening and place lamps all around it.[29] Manasi Ganga is the most important tank at Govardhan and, according to *māhātmya* texts, is where one should bathe before circumambulating the hill and visiting other sites in the vicinity. According to popular belief, the water of Manasi Ganga turns into milk at Diwali, a notion reflected in Narayan Bhatt's description of the water being like milk.

From references compiled and examined by Gode it is evident that Diwali, formerly 'the night of the Yakshas', was widely observed as the last night of the year, was connected with wealth, and was an occasion for gambling.[30] Lakshmi has been associated with Diwali for at least a thousand years, though originally it was a time for worshipping Yakshas, especially their leader, Kubera, who was Lakshmi's

26 SC 7.1.58.

27 GS 3.7-8.

28 Accidental bloodshed followed by appeasement with milk is a common theme in origin myths relating to many *liṅga* in Tamil Nadu, cf. Shulman.

29 Cf. BRam 105.43-53, TA 135-43, and BBP 6.

30 See articles by Gode for the history of Diwali. On pp.219-226 he tabulates references from various texts, including *Kāmasūtra* 1.4.43 (*yakṣarātrī*) and Hemachandra's *Deśī-nāmamālā* 3.43 (*jakkharatti*).

31 This day is called *naraka caturdaśī*, known in Braj as *rūp caudas* or *choṭī dīvālī*. Similar rites are also observed on the day before the new moon of Ashwin, cf. Meyer, pt.2 pp.41, 56-73. In brahminical mythology Naraka was a demon slain by Krishna, e.g. MBh, HV, BhP 10.59.

predecessor as patron deity of wealth. On the new moon day and the day preceding it, lamps should be lit at nightfall in honour of Naraka, a personification of hell, in order that the souls of one's ancestors might be satisfied, and to avoid going to hell oneself.[31]

Festivities are continued on the day after Diwali, the first of the bright half of the month, with the celebration of Govardhan Puja or Annakut.[32] Women make an anthropomorphic figure of Govardhan out of cow-dung, depicting him as lying on his back with outstretched arms and a hollow at his navel (*ṭũḍī*) into which offerings are made of milk, curd, rice cooked in milk, puris, and sweets. The icon may be elaborated by the inclusion of twigs with cotton on them, said to represent trees but perhaps originally intended to symbolize clouds, and small representations in cow-dung of household implements, cows, and such figures as the guardian of the hill and a herdsman's wife. Dishes of food are placed in front of the image and, most important, a 'mountain of food' (*annakūṭ*), consisting of a heap of rice. The worship of the image takes place in the evening. A cowherd is invited to recite a few couplets in praise of the hill, after which the participants offer the food to the image and then walk around it. The women sing an *āratī* song while the herdsman leads a cow, and preferably a bull and more cattle, round the image. Finally a cow or calf is made to destroy the image by trampling on it - an action which it can perform with impunity. Some cite this ritual to support the notion that the name of the hill literally means 'a wealth of cow-dung' (*govara* + *dhana*) rather than 'causing cattle to thrive' (*go* + *vardhana*).

Far from being confined to Braj, Govardhan Puja is celebrated all over North India. Among the communities who observe it are the Ahirs, apparently the modern descendants of the pastoral Abhiras who once herded cattle in Braj. They believe Mathura to be their original home, regard Diwali as their main festival, and as part of the celebrations make mounds of earth which they refer to as Govardhan.[33] Some groups of Ahirs now settled in Madhya Pradesh make the pilgrimage to Govardhan, carrying staffs adorned with peacock feathers, to celebrate Diwali by dancing along the *parikramā* route. The Ahirs of Bihar worship a deity called Bir Kuar, who actively aids and protects them, exercises a general influence on cattle, and in particular causes she-buffaloes to come on heat and conceive. His worship lasts throughout the dark half of the month of Karttik and culminates on the day following Diwali. Archer considers him to be 'either an Ahir hero, who in the course of time has fused with Krishna', or 'a fragment or extension of Krishna who takes the form of a local Ahir.'[34]. A rite similar to Govardhan Puja is the *piṛiyā kā vrat* that is begun on the same day in the Bhojpur region. Unmarried girls, in order to promote the welfare of their brothers, stick small lumps of cow-dung on a wall that are taken from a figure fashioned for Govardhan Puja. The

32 Descriptions are given in SP 2.3.4.10.1-26, GS 3.1, P. Mital 1966, pt.1 pp.270-271, Buddha Prakash, and Vaudeville 1980, pp.2-4, who also notes some parallels in other parts of India (of which more are given by S. K. Das).

33 Suryavanshi, pp.90-92. See above §4.6 for further remarks on the Abhiras/Ahirs.

34 Archer 1947, pp.25 ff., 99, 103-4.

pieces of cow dung are called *piṛiyā*, a diminutive form of the word *piṇḍa*.[35]

Govardhan Puja is primarily a domestic ceremony that does not require the presence of a brahmin, yet, like other folk rites, it has been incorporated into the festive calendar of some Krishna temples. Here, as in some Vaishnava households, the cow-dung figure is given the iconographic pose of Krishna lifting up Govardhan with his left arm raised, right hand on hip, and legs crossed.[36] However, a more important and common element in the temple celebration of Annakut, especially in the Pushtimarg, is the offering of a grand feast to Krishna. A vast quantity and great variety of preparations is displayed in pots and baskets before the deity. A similar feast, called *kunvārau*, is offered by local people and pilgrims when the *barī yātrā* arrives at Jatipura.[37] A part of the rock face there, referred to as *pūjanī silā* ('worshipful stone') or *mukhāravind* ('lotus face') is first bathed by the Gosains with milk, which is collected by local inhabitants as a form of *prasād*. It is then bathed with water from Manasi Ganga, decorated, and offered the *kunvārau* feast. On the following day the consecrated preparations (called *mahāprasād*) are distributed among the devotees who participated in the feast and helped to finance it.

The new moon of Karttik is not the only time when Govardhan is worshipped. Although a circumambulation of the hill may be made at any time, the occasion of a new or full moon is particularly favoured. The popular preference for these times is only partially attested in brahminical sources. Rup Goswami and the *Varāhapurāṇa* both mention the offering of *piṇḍa* at Govardhan whenever the new moon falls on a Monday, but they also give Bhadon II.11 as a day for performing the circumambulation.[38] Lakshmidhara and Rup Goswami also say that lamps should be lit on the summit of the hill on every twelfth lunar day, and Narayan Bhatt, besides mentioning Diwali and the day following, also recommends the day preceding the new moon of Bhadon.[39] None of them mentions the full moon of Ashadh, an occasion for a nocturnal circumambulation that is performed by thousands of people who come from far and wide. This full moon occurs at the climax of the hot season when everybody is eagerly awaiting the imminent arrival of the monsoon. This suggests that circumambulation of the hill is associated with the beginning of the rains, just as the myth of Krishna's defeat of Indra led to the driving away of the monsoon clouds. Regular and sufficient rainfall was essential for the crops, pastures, and water supply, but the monsoon should not be excessive or prolonged, especially in low-lying areas like Braj that often become flooded. The mythological account of how Krishna came to lift up Govardhan seems therefore to reflect a tradition of worshipping hills and mountains in order to control the rains.[40]

35 K. Upadhyay, pp.205-6. The term *piṇḍa* can refer to a lump of anything, as well as balls of rice for *śrāddha*. For a rite performed by girls in Braj using cow-dung in a similar context see Entwistle 1984.

36 See Lodrick, pp.118-22 & fig.18, for a description and photograph of Govardhan Puja performed at the temple of Radharaman in Vrindaban.

37 For further description of *kunvārau* see Toomey and Lynch.

38 VP 162.13/R 424, VP 162.17/R 432.

39 KK p.192/R 429, VBV 5.1.

40 See Crooke, vol.1 pp.61-2, on mountain worship for rain among Dravidians and non-Aryans.

Govardhan's importance may partly be related to its having served as a place of refuge when the surrounding plains were flooded. In brahminical terms the deity of the mountain was Indra, herdsman of the rain clouds; for the local peasants it was the abode of a mountain spirit who controlled the rains, protected cattle, and thus ensured a good supply of milk.

The worship of Govardhan at the time of the new and full moon indicates that there was another dimension to the power of the original spirit of the hill. According to an ancient current of belief that has been partially assimilated into Hinduism, the moon serves as an abode for the souls of the dead. Its waning during the dark half of the month was the result of the gods drinking the life-giving *soma* with which it was filled. During the bright half the waxing moon is replenished with the souls of those who die and are later reborn on earth in the dark half, when they descend in the form of rain.[41] The literature, festival dates, and rituals relating to Govardhan all point to its having been connected with this moon-rain-rebirth cycle. Underlying it is the ancient belief that life on earth depends upon the recycling of the life-giving fluid. By virtue of his controlling the rains, the mountain deity influenced the whole life cycle and all aspects of fertility. He could thus be resorted to by anyone who was sick, childless, had lost a cow, or was short of milk - all of which are motives that the people of Braj are said to have had for worshipping the 'arm' of Shrinathji when it rose out of the hill in the fifteenth century.[42] The day following Govardhan Puja is an occasion for bathing in the Yamuna, a festival that will be discussed below. Apart from this festive period at the new moon, there are other significant celebrations observed in Braj during the month of Karttik. Two important *vrat* rites for the welfare of the family are celebrated by women on the fourth and eighth days of the dark half of the month.[43] Water used in the Ahoi Athain *vrat*, performed on Karttik I.8, is put aside and used for bathing on the day before Diwali. As part of the ritual women make a design on the walls of their houses that incorporates figures of gamblers, who are fed at the time of Diwali. At midnight a large number of local people come to bathe in Krishnakund (adjacent to Radhakund), especially childless couples, who tie their garments together while bathing.[44]

A month later, on the eighth day of the bright half of Karttik, the festival of Gopashtami is celebrated. Cows are washed , decorated, worshipped, and fed with sweets. In Vrindaban cows are driven through the streets, led by a bull and accompanied by two boys dressed as Krishna and Balarama.[45] People bow down to the cows as they pass, offer them food, and touch some of their dung to their foreheads. There are regional variants of the festival - in some areas bulls are made

41 The belief is expressed in *Ṛgveda* 10.85.5, and in the Upanishads, viz. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-* 6.2.16, *Chāndogya-* 5.10.1, *Kauśītakī-* 1.2, 2.8. For further discussion of moon/ancestor/*śrāddha* rites see Meyer, pt.2 pp.229-36.

42 SPV p.4.

43 Viz. Karuwa Chauth and Ahoi Athain, called Bahulashtami in R 441 and HBV 16, which also refers to lighting a lamp for Yama on Karttik I.13, his worship on the following day, Govardhan Puja, Yam Dwitiya, and Gopashtami.

44 The pilgrim from Bikaner (BYV) and Nagaridasa (TA 14) describe this as a well-attended gathering.

45 See description given by Lodrick, pp.114-118.

to lock horns in a test of strength.[46] The following day, Akshay Navami, is the main day for the circumambulation of Mathura; on the tenth the Chaubes celebrate Kans ka Mela to commemorate the killing of Kansa, and on the eleventh a circumambulation is made of Mathura, Garud Govind, and Vrindaban. As elsewhere in India, Karttik is recommended as a month in which to bathe regularly in a sacred lake or river, especially on the full moon day. The full moon of Karttik is also the occasion for a large fair held at Tarauli in honour of a deity there called Swamiji or Burhe Babu. In view of these and other festivities held in Braj during Karttik, it seems to have been the most important month for the earliest forms of festive activity or pilgrimage. This would imply that the custom of coming to Braj during the month of Bhadon developed later, under Vaishnava influence.

The evidence points to Govardhan having been, like Gaya, a centre for the performance of rites connected with the transition of souls of the dead under the supervision of a mountain deity who had many of the characteristics of a Yaksha. Since there is no evidence regarding the scale of the celebrations in ancient times, we cannot say whether it featured something comparable to what we now know as pilgrimage, or was simply a small-scale local variant of a more widespread phenomenon. There is also insufficient information regarding the degree of interaction in the cult between Aryan and non-Aryan peoples, though evidently the original function of the pilgrimage was overshadowed and transformed as Mathura became famous all over India as the birthplace of Krishna, a deified hero who attained the status of an incarnation of Vishnu. The mythologists would have us believe that the cult of Govardhan, almost certainly the oldest sacred object in Braj, was at one stage dominated by Indra. Whether or not this was the case, the myth certainly reflects the fact that with the rise of the cult of Krishna-Vasudeva the sacred hill was integrated into his mythology. There may have been Vaishnava temples at Govardhan before the sixteenth century (e.g. Haridev and Govind Dev at Anyor), but identification of the hill with Krishna only became of widespread significance when the temple of Shrinathji was established on top of it by devotees from other parts of India. The epithet 'Govardhannath' or 'Shrinathji' is most likely to have been inspired by the name 'Jagannath', whose temple at Puri was apparently visited by Vallabha and attracted the devotion of Chaitanya and his followers.

4 Govardhan and serpent worship

Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu advocates of non-violence and vegetarianism often described Yakshas and other folk deities as flesh-eating demons. Some of them, however, were not worshipped with blood sacrifice, or became vegetarian under the influence of these religions. If Govardhan was ever offered meat, as is stated in the *Harivaṃśa* and *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, the custom of its being given only 'pure Vaishnava' preparations would most likely have been introduced by devotees of Krishna. While solid food is offered to Shrinathji and, on special occasions, to the hill itself, the usual offering is simply milk. Pilgrims participating in the *baṛī yātrā* pour vast

46 As at Nathdwara, described by Lodrick, p.109.

quantities of milk over important stones like *daṇḍautī śilā* and the rocks referred to as *mukhāravind*. Some people, when they circumambulate the hill, take with them a pot of milk with a small hole bored in the bottom so as to make a trail all around the hill. The pot has to be refilled along the route and up to sixty kilograms of milk are said to be required. Presumably the original purpose of this 'stream of milk circumambulation' (*dūdh kī dhārā parikramā*) was to create a safe boundary around the abode of the hill spirit. Milk, as a cooling fluid, is generally used to placate and propitiate powers that can threaten one's livelihood. Its use in the worship of Govardhan has its mythological parallel in Indra's being obliged to exhaust his store of rain, the fructifying seed of the clouds, when Krishna held up the hill.

The prevalence of milk offerings is also a feature of the Naga cult. Serpent worship, like the cult of Yakshas, rears its head all over the place. Nagas were regarded as serpent deities, or beings half-man and half-serpent, who lived under the ground and controlled the life-giving waters. Vaudeville has suggested that at an early stage Krishna, associated with the Yaksha of the Govardhan hill, was initially subordinate to Balarama, the great Naga.[47] She emphasizes the apparent connection of Govardhan with Naga deities, particularly the notion that the hill has the form of a snake with its mouth at Manasi Ganga, a tank that may have been associated with Manasa, the name of a goddess popular in Bengal who is associated with serpent worship.[48] However, as noted in the previous section, the snake is not the most commonly conceived form of the hill. The most striking link between the worship of Govardhan and that of serpents is suggested by the story of the discovery of Shrinathji. The arm of the image, when it first appeared above the hill, was thought by local people to be a snake and was duly worshipped as such each year on the occasion of Nag Panchami.

Nagas, rather than being a primary element in the Govardhan cult, are more intimately connected with Balarama, a deity whose worship is deeply rooted in Braj. Brahminical mythology supports his association with Naga deities by declaring him to be an incarnation of Shesha, the cosmic serpent upon which Vishnu reclines. Like Naga deities, he is consistently represented in iconography with a seven-hooded cobra rearing above his head. Some of the ancient Naga images in Braj continued to be worshipped up to our own day as representations of Dauji ('elder brother'), the most popular epithet of Balarama. The most notable example is the image at Baldeo, which is served by a clan of local brahmins who call themselves Ahivasis and claim to have originally lived at Sunrakh, a village near the place where the serpent Kaliya is believed to have dwelt. The image has probably been worshipped constantly through the centuries; the story of its recovery from a nearby tank by Gokulnath being simply a way of recording that the cult was reorganized along Vaishnava lines.

There are some elements in the sacred complex of Govardhan which, like the

47 Vaudeville, 1968.

48 Vaudeville 1976, pp.198 n.9, 206-7, 209-210, 1980, pp.3, 6 ff.; other more tendentious connections she cites are *Ghatajātaka*, in which Krishna's father is called Upasagara (the 'inferior Ocean' - a Naga divinity?), and Syau Mata, specially worshipped on Ahoi Athain ('= a *nāginī* or *moranī*?'). See Manasi/Manasa Devi, §8.14.5.

origin myth of Shrinathji, suggest that the hill was at some stage, and to a certain degree, associated with Balarama. Among the oldest tanks around the hill is Sankarshan Kund at Anyor, and on top of the hill near the village is a shrine called Dhunka Dauji, mentioned only in a few later sources, in which stones of curious shape are offered milk. It is also worth noting that the *mukhāravind* stone worshipped at Dan Ghati resembles a head surrounded by cobra hoods. These features cannot be taken as conclusive proof that Govardhan was once the focus of a Naga cult, but they suggest a degree of coalescence between the worship of Nagas and of the hill. Serpents were originally worshipped in connection with rains and fertility, especially by those who tilled the soil, as is indicated by the application to Balarama of such epithets as *haladhara* ('plough-holder'), *halāyudha* ('armed with a plough'), and *saṃkarṣaṇa* ('ploughing'). A possible line of speculation is that worship of the hill and of serpents in Braj were once the respective concerns of pastoralists and agriculturalists, and that the cults merged as the two ways of life became integrated. Possibly the Naga element had come to predominate in the period preceding the arrival of Madhavendra Puri and Vallabha, under whose influence the worship of Govardhan became more closely linked with that of Krishna.

This is not to say that there were no earlier Vaishnava temples at Govardhan, or that the local people were not already aware of the fact that in standard mythology the hill was asssociated with Krishna. Folk religion is able to accomodate a range of deities whose personality and function tend to be less clear-cut than in 'higher' religion. Villagers of Braj are no less eclectic than other Hindus in their religious beliefs and observances. While revering Krishna, Rama, and other brahminical gods, they may also resort to folk deities who, to varying degrees, are identified with Shiva or a form of the goddess, or have managed to retain a separate though not very clearly defined identity. We need not, therefore, be surprised to find that Govardhan has also been associated with Hanuman, a deity whose cult became popular over a wide area during the medieval period. In the *Ghaṭajātaka* the name Anjani, Hanuman's mother in later sources, is given to the goddess who presides at Govardhan.

5 The worship of Govardhan stones

Apart from the aforementioned festivals and practices related to Govardhan, there is little left of the original cult. Nowadays, especially for people who come from outside Braj, the hill is regarded as being worthy of adoration solely on account of its association with Krishna. This has encouraged the belief that the hill is an embodiment of him, or is a manifestation of his essential form (*svarūp*), and that every fragment of it is sacred. This is why, according to Gaudiya sources, Chaitanya, Rup Goswami, and Sanatan Goswami refrained from setting foot on the hill,[49] though this tradition may have arisen out of resentment felt by the Bengali devotees after followers of Vallabha ousted them from the temple of Shrinathji. Members of the Pushtimarg and other devotees who wish to visit the

49 See §5.5.

temple are expected to prostrate themselves before a stone called Dandauti Sila that lies beneath the hill at Jatipura. This action is meant to absolve them from any guilt acquired by treading on the hill. Even the road that crosses it at Dan Ghati had to be carried over the rocks by a paved causeway.[50]

Chaitanya showed his adoration by embracing a detached piece of rock rather than defiling the hill with his feet by walking up to the temple. He also took a small stone from the hill with him to Puri, though nowadays Vaishnavas say that no fragment of it should ever be taken out of Braj. According to Krishnadas Kaviraj, Chaitanya treasured and revered the stone as the body (*kalevara*) of Krishna, and later entrusted it to Raghunathdas, telling him to worship it with water and sacred basil.[51] *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* extolls the stones of Govardhan by comparing them to the fabled wish-granting gem.[52] The dust of the sacred hill, it says, is marked by Krishna's feet and the application of it to one's body will protect one from Yama; the sight (*darśana*) of Govardhan stones will grant liberation, and they should be worshipped at home with flowers and perfume.

Like the *śālagrām* sacred to Vishnu, Govardhan stones are placed in Krishna shrines and can be worshipped by anyone with water and sacred basil. They are placed beside basil plants that grow on pedestals in temple compounds, and larger stones are sometimes set up by the roadside in a small shrine. Sometimes they are humanized by painting eyes and a forehead mark (*tilak*) on them. Larger rocks that are worshipped around Govardhan, such as the *mukhāravind* stone at Dan Ghati, are dressed in the evening with the same sort of garments and accoutrements that are used to decorate images of Krishna. The legend of how the deity of Shrinathji gradually rose out of the hill until it came to be recognized as an image of Krishna, illustrates how brahmins can transform the worship of a mere stone into the adoration of an anthropomorphic icon, direct access to which is regulated by strict rules of purity.

6 Stone worship in general

This kind of transition to anthropomorphism has many parallels elsewhere and in other religious contexts. In Orissa posts worshipped in the jungle are given eyes and garments as a first stage in their ascendency to a more prestigious form of worship, the ultimate example of which is the triad enshrined in the temple at Jagannath.[53] All over India eyes are fixed onto stones that serve as cult objects for the worship of Devi, Bhairava, or some similar deity popular in folk culture. In cases where a shrine becomes important enough to be given an anthropomorphic image, fashioned according to the brahminical canons of iconography, the original crude stone may be given a place beside the new image or relegated to a spot outside the shrine. Examples of this process can be seen in Braj, most of the cult objects being identified with a form of the goddess or some other Shakta or Shaiva deity, unlike

50 Growse, p.301.
51 CC 3.6.281 ff.
52 Viz. *cintāmaṇi*, BRam 106.66-75.
53 See Eschmann, pp.79-97, in Eschmann et al. (eds.).

the Govardhan stones whose worship has been adopted by Vaishnavism. In some cases the stones used are evidently fragments of sculpture that once belonged to a Buddhist, Jain, or Hindu temple that was demolished or fell into ruin. They are usually painted with vermilion, a sign that they are sacred to deities who are, or originally were, recipients of blood sacrifice. Despite their identification with a great deity of the brahminical pantheon, such cults are, in nature, power, and mode of worship, much the same as ancient cults of Yakshas and similar *genii loci*.

There is another category of sacred stone in Braj that features in the pilgrimage itinerary. These are the ones that bear some kind of marking supposedly made by Krishna or a member of his entourage. They are of course spurious, but one can at least appreciate the imagination of the people who identified them. Murari Gupta and Lochandas, for example, refer to a now unidentified *mūtrasthāna* ('urination place') where there was a stone bearing the marks made when the new-born Krishna urinated on it shortly after his father had carried him out of prison.[54] Any stone with a peculiar marking on it or a streak of coloured grain is liable to be identified as a place where Krishna wiped curd from his fingers, or where Radha applied her make-up. Some of them appear to be relatively recent discoveries, others have a certain pedigree in that they are mentioned in itineraries composed from the sixteenth century onwards. *Gargasaṃhitā*, for example, says that after lifting up Govardhan and being anointed by Indra, Krishna made marks on the hill with his hands and feet, which, along with a footprint of the cow Surabhi, have since become a *tīrtha*.[55]

Most of the stones that fall into this category have some kind of natural indentation or marking which, with some imagination, can be seen as resembling something associated in some way with the deeds of Krishna. Others have nothing about them that need lead anyone to the conclusion that they have not been forged by human hand, such as the footprints at three places called Charan Pahari, which are supposed to have been made by Krishna when the rock softened at the sound of his flute. Such markings are merely objects of curiosity that are taken as proof that Krishna was once present there. They are subject to no formal kind of worship, though a devotee may gaze upon them with adoration or touch them with his forehead. The ideal reaction was exemplified by Akrura when he arrived in Braj to deliver his message to the Gopis.[56] On discovering a footprint of Krishna he was filled with joy, his hair stood on end, his eyes brimmed with tears, and he rolled on the ground, ecstatic at coming into contact with particles of dust that had been touched by the feet of Krishna. A stone near Anyor called Sinduri Sila is somewhat exceptional in that pilgrims draw swastikas on it with red powder (*sindūr*).

7 The Yamuna

Before beginning their circumambulation of Braj, pilgrims should bathe in the

54 KCC 4.4.9/CM p.179.

55 GS 3.4.13-15. Other marks (Krishna's *mauli*, *citraśilā*, *vādanīśilā*, footprints of Airavata) are mentioned in 3.7.

56 BhP 10.38.24-6.

Yamuna. Its water is used to wash the local deities, and many pilgrims take some of it back home with them in sealed pots. The Uttar Pradesh State Transport bus that runs between Vrindaban and Udaipur carries a jar of Yamuna water from Mathura to Nathdwara for use in the service of Shrinathji. The Yamuna is mentioned in the various versions of the *Mathurāmāhātmya*, but none of them have much to say beyond conventional eulogy.[57] Rup Goswami includes a couple of verses recommending it for *śrāddha* and bathing in it as a means of destroying fear of Yama.[58] Like Lakshmidhara, he recommends bathing on the twelfth day of the bright half of an intercalary Jyeshth.[59] *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* deals with the Yamuna at greater length, giving an account of its origin, course, and the pilgrimage places along its banks.[60] The river is also known as Kalindi because it is said to have descended to earth by way of a mountain called Kalinda. In the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* the name Kalindi is used for a woman, apparently a personification of the river, whom Krishna met while he was in the neighbourhood of Indraprastha and took as one of his wives.[61] The *Kālindīmāhātmya* takes up several chapters in the *Padmapurāṇa*, but there is little in them that is specifically relevant to Braj. There are several Sanskrit poems of eight or nine verses bearing the title *Yamunāṣṭaka* that praise the river as an essential element in the romantic setting of Krishna's moonlight encounters with Radha and the Gopis.[62] A *Yamunāṣṭaka* attributed to Vallabha, recited daily when his followers perform *āratī* in honour of the river, declares that by serving the Yamuna one becomes united with the beads of perspiration that arose when Krishna sported with the Gopis.

The Yamuna is not only revered because it happens to flow past the city where Krishna was born and the forests where he spent his childhood and youth. In classical iconography she was depicted standing naked on a turtle and was usually placed at the entrance to a temple, opposite a representation of the goddess of the Ganges. The traditional explanation of the nature of these two riverine goddesses is that they symbolize fertility, offer water to the deity of the temple, and purify the devotee as he passes through the doorway. The Yamuna is a goddess in her own right and is mentioned in a myth that has nothing to do with Krishna.[63] The story goes that Sanjna, wife of the sun god Vivaswat, gave birth to a son called Manu and the twin Yama and Yami (an older variant of the name 'Yamuna'). In the Vedic hymns Yama is primarily mentioned in the context of funeral ceremonies. Mythologically he was the first person who opted for death, rather than divine immortality, in order to be able to have progeny, thus he was the first mortal to

57 VP 150.29-32/R 296-7.
58 R 303, 311.
59 KK pp.193-4, R 313-17, also VM 507.
60 BRam 107-110.
61 BhP 10.58.17-29.
62 See §6.15. A *Yamunāṣṭaka* is also attributed to Hit Harivansh.
63 BhP 6.6.39-41, *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* 74-75, *Sāmba-* 11, *Bhaviṣya-* 1.79, *Vāyu-* 2.22-3, 32-85. See discussion of Yamuna myths by von Stietencron, ch.7, and of Yama myths and rites by van den Bosch. In a more archaic context (*Ṛgveda* 10.10, cf. Schneider) allusion is made to Yama and Yami in connection with in a myth or ritual relating to the taboo of brother-sister incest.

proceed to the underworld and duly became the lord of the deceased ancestors.[64]

A later version of the Yama-Yamuna myth adapted it in order to provide an explanation for the rites performed on the day of Yam Dwitiya.[65] This version says that Yamuna invited her brother to eat, but he was detained by his duties as lord of the realm of the dead. Eventually he decided to come, and gave everyone in the underworld a day off. Yamuna bathed her brother and fed him, in return for which he gave her presents and promised that anyone who worships the souls of the ancestors on that day, bathes in the Yamuna, is fed by his sister, and gives her presents will be saved from hell, and that sisters who entertain their brothers will not become widows.

The day on which Yama visited his sister was Yam Dwitiya, the second day of the bright half of Karttik and a time when the souls of the dead are believed to roam about freely. Since this festival is celebrated on the day after Govardhan Puja, it is a continuation of the Diwali and Govardhan Puja festivities. In Braj it is the occasion for a large gathering on and around Vishram Ghat at which brothers and sisters bathe together and lamps are set afloat on the Yamuna.[66] It is believed that if sisters, following the example of Yamuna, entertain their brother and bathe with him they will both enjoy all the benefits promised by Yama. The sequence of festivities around the new moon day of Karttik reveals an intimate link between worship of Govardhan and the Yamuna, both of which are related to beliefs regarding the souls of the dead, while the hill has the additional function of ensuring the welfare of cattle.

The pre-eminence of Govardhan and the Yamuna as the oldest sacred sites in Braj is reflected in two conceptions current in the Pushtimarg. Followers of the sect claim that originally the Yamuna used to flow closer to Govardhan, a notion that supports the claim that Krishna danced the *rās* in the vicinity of the hill. The second conception is that of the 'three treasures' (*tīn nidhi*) - the deity of Shrinathji, the river Yamuna, and the preceptor Vallabha. The standard icon illustrating this conception shows the image of Shrinathji standing in front (or inside?) of the hill, flanked by Vallabha offering an *āratī* tray and Yamuna holding lotuses and offering a garland of lotus buds (see plate 14). There could be no more explicit illustration of the way in which the sacred complex of Braj is rooted in the conflation of the cult of a hill, a river, and a brahminical deity.

8 Bathing places

The oldest verses of the *Mathurāmāhātmya*, like those dealing with other pilgrimage centres, are largely concerned with bathing places. They tell us what rites are to be

64 Van den Bosch, pp.23-28.

65 SP 2.4.11/11.41-73, PP 6.124.88-98.

66 According to the most recent Gazetteer (E. B. Joshi, p.161) it is perhaps the biggest fair in the district, attracting 125,000 people. For more information on Yam Dwitiya see Meyer, pt.2 pp.208 ff., Kane, vol.5 pt.1 pp.207 ff. References to several Sanskrit sources are given by Mazumdar, p.269.

performed at them (most commonly *śrāddha*), the kind of merit (*puṇya*) that is thereby acquired, the benefit (*phala*) that will accrue, or the type and quantity of guilt or sin (*pāpa*) that can be absolved. The efficacy of these bathing places is often said to be equal to, or many times greater than that of one of the standard Vedic sacrifices. They were thus advertised as a simpler and cheaper means of obtaining the kind of benefits acquired by those who could afford to sponsor expensive, elaborate, and archaic rituals. Sometimes stories are told of how a sinner or some other unfortunate person resorted to a particular bathing place and attained salvation or a spiritual blessing. In later pilgrimage texts the motivation for visiting a *tīrth* tends to be of a different order, reflecting the way in which the original function of pilgrimage was overshadowed by a sight-seeing tour of places testifying to a god's having been present there or evoking some kind of devotional sentiment. We find that while some bathing places have standard names that occur at places of pilgrimage all over India (Chakra-, Koti-, Kanakhala-, Soma-, Suryatirtha), the ones that receive more attention in later texts and modern practice have some specific association with an incident in the mythology of Krishna.

In the more recent vernacular sources the older term *tīrtha* is replaced by *ghāṭ*, a word referring to part of a river bank where people can bathe, wash clothes, and step in and out of boats. Originally it would have been a sandy slope leading down to the water's edge, but in the course of time the more important or popular bathing places were provided with masonry steps. Bathing places designated as *tīrtha* that are not located beside the Yamuna, the only river that flows through Braj, are either tanks or ponds. Nowadays such bathing places are generally referred to as a *kuṇḍ*, and are described as *kaccā* if they are simply a natural pond, or *pakkā* if they are a pond or man-made reservoir that has been provided with a ghat on one or more sides. In some cases their name incorporates other terms meaning 'pond' or 'lake', such as *sarovar, tāl, talāī, pokhar*, or even *sāgar*, which literally means 'ocean'. In Sanskrit sources the use of the terms *kuṇḍa* and *tīrtha* can be confusing. Sometimes it appears that a *kuṇḍa* can contain one or more *tīrtha*, and sometimes a part of the river is referred to as containing a *kuṇḍa*.

At every large pilgrimage centre the main deities of the brahminical pantheon usually have at least one *kuṇḍ* named after them. In addition there are others bearing the names of subsidiary deities or other characters who took part in the mythical activities associated with a particular pilgrimage centre. Some other standard names relate to a ritual that should be performed at a *kuṇḍ* or to the benefit gained by bathing in it. One recurrent and specific type is the Suryakund, a tank dedicated to the Sun. Three notable examples are found in Braj (near Jatipura, at Kaman, and Nandgaon), all of which appear to be the oldest tank in the vicinity, and may therefore be vestiges of the Surya cult that flourished during the first millennium. Although the sun has been revered in the sub-continent from the earliest times, elements of solar worship as it was practised in the Parthian empire were introduced into India during the Indo-Scythian and Kushana periods. One belief current in Iran was that those who were afflicted with leprosy and leukoderma had in some way sinned against the sun;[67] accordingly we find that

67 Herodotus, 1.139.

bathing in the Suryakunds of Mathura and other places in India is declared to be a means of curing these diseases.

Pioneering devotees, eager to attach some religious significance to every topographical feature of Braj, managed to think up some sort of identification for virtually all the ponds in the neighbourhood of towns and villages on the pilgrimage route. Since their number is so large, the incidents associated with them tend to be both apocryphal and trivial. There was no problem in finding suitable names for them all, for there were numerous epithets for Krishna and a proliferation of Sakhis and other subsidiary characters in his mythology. Names for different kinds of milk product (*chāch, dahī, chīr/khīr*, etc.), and any item of apparel associated with Krishna, Radha, or a Gopi could also be brought into use. Narayan Bhatt lists an enormous number of tanks and ponds, mentioning the benefit that can be obtained by bathing in them and making offerings, but the main reason for their inclusion was their association with an incident in the life of Krishna. Many of the ponds are dry for most of the year or have come under the plough, with the result that a large number of them are untraceable. This is no great loss, since it is unlikely that they ever had any ritual, devotional, or historical significance.

Some water sources are connected with a cult object in its vicinity. In some cases temple deities are bathed with water from a particular *kuṇḍ* or river, or are said to have been discovered in it by a devotee. Broken images and other sacred objects that are no longer useful are also disposed of in a river, well, or *kuṇḍ* that is regarded as sacred. Not all sacred water sources are recommended as a place for performing a particular ritual, and there are few pilgrims who take the trouble to bathe in all but the most important of them. In most cases the ritual of bathing is substituted by the simple act of *ācaman* - sipping water from the palm of one's hand and sprinkling a few drops over one's head.

9 Groups of five bathing places (*pañctīrth*)

At some pilgrimage centres there are sequences of five bathing places. At Gaya the group comprises four tanks and a *tīrth* on the bank of the Phalgu, and at Varanasi all five are bathing places along the Ganges that are designated as confluences.[68] The Jain author Jinaprabha Suri mentions five bathing places at Mathura as well as five *sthala* (cf.§6.3 & appendix 1). Some Hindu sources also mention five *sthala*, apparently bathing places, but the original pentad became obsolete and was superseded by a five-day circumambulation of five sacred places in and around Mathura (*pañctīrth(ī) parikramā*), but even this custom was abandoned in the course of the first half of the present century. Various itineraries are given for this circumambulation. According to Growse it began on Shravan II.5 (Nag Panchami) with a visit to Madhuban, followed on the next four days by visits to Satoha, Gokarneshwar, Garud Govind, and Brahmakund in Vrindaban.[69] Another itinerary states that Madhuban should be visited on the first day, various places in Mathura on the next three days, finishing at Garud Govind, and on the fifth day

68 Jacques, p.xii and ch.7 of *Gayāmāhātmya*, Eck, p.220 fn.
69 Growse, p.180.

various places near the river on the way to Vrindaban, where the pilgrimage was concluded at Bansi Bat.[70] According to G. L. Sharma there were two versions, one that began on Bhadon I.11 and included Madhuban, Talban, Kumudban, Bahulaban, and Vrindaban, and another that began on Karttik II.14 and covered places on the east bank of the Yamuna (Bandi, Baldeo, Mahaban, Gokul, and Rawal).[71] A five-day pilgrimage of places around Varanasi is still performed; its length is reckoned to be five *kos* (16km), the same distance said to be covered by the circumambulation of Mathura.[72] There is also a similar circumambulation of Janakpur, following a route that lies at a radius of five *kos* from the centre of the town.[73]

10 Wells

As in other parts of the world, wells in India are often regarded as the abode of a spirit. Such a spirit may be benevolent or vindictive and is believed to influence the health and prosperity of those who approach it, and to control fertility in general. In some cases it may be the restless soul of someone who died an untimely and violent death or was not offered *piṇḍa* by his relatives. An example of such a well in Braj is the one at Punchhari, in which the poet Krishnadas is believed to have drowned. His soul is said to haunt it in the form of a ghost (*bhūt*).

In Braj rites are performed at a well ten days after the birth of a child. Women go in procession singing songs, accompanied by the barber's wife, who officiates in the ceremony. Sometimes, if the child is a boy, the procession is led by a small brass band. Water is drawn from the well and sprinkled over the child, swastika signs are made with red powder or turmeric, and offerings are made of milk, sweets, and betel nuts. An *āratī* is performed and the women circumambulate the well. Some say that the deity of the well is Varuna, the Vedic god who controlled the flow of water, and thus fertility in general, but he is normally referred to simply as 'Kuanwala' ('the well man'). His cult is similar to that of other deities who are resorted to for conception and protection of children, such as Jakhaiya and Sitala. Food offered to Kuanwala, as is the case with Sitala, is prepared on the previous day. The most famous place for worshipping Kuanwala is a well at Agra beside a temple of Sitala, who is said to be his mother. A fair is held here on Sundays in Ashadh at which the goddess and Kuanwala are worshipped together. Another Kuanwala fair that was once popular is held in Ashadh on the outskirts of Bharatpur, but here the object of reverence is not a well but a tree to which strips of cloth are tied.

Most of the wells that are included in itineraries for the circumambulation of Braj are not usually associated with Kuanwala or any other fertility deity. Rather than having any established local tradition of worship, they are associated with Krishna,

70 Bhagwandas, pp.10-11.
71 In Dwivedi & Krishna (eds.), pp.35-7.
72 Eck, p.42, Vidyarthi et al. (eds.), pp.80 ff.
73 Burghart 1985. In n.8 he points out that the five *krośa* may also refer to the five sheaths of the body and that the circuit can thus be seen as a symbolic circumambulation of the celestial body of Sita-Rama.

another character who appears in his mythology, or with some legend relating to him. An exception is the well at Bhandirban that is worshipped whenever the new moon occurs on a Monday (cf.§3.3). A well consistently mentioned in written sources is named after the seven seas (Saptasamudrikakup), but it is not clear whether the texts refer to one or more wells of this name. One Saptasamudrikakup, located in the compound of Mathura Museum, is traditionally resorted to by newly-married women on Nag Panchami.[74] In the Gupta period there were wells named after the seven seas at Prayag, Varanasi, Pataliputra, and Ujjain, as well as Mathura. They were worshipped by those who had returned from a successful voyage or by relatives left behind, who performed rites in honour of the god of the sea.[75] In Braj, in addition to the one at Mathura, there are wells of the same name at Mahaban and beside the temple of Gopishwar in Vrindaban. The existence of three such wells may be the result of different interpretations of the sequence in which the holy places are mentioned in the *māhātmya* texts.

11 Trees

We have already noted that in ancient sources trees are the most frequently mentioned dwelling place of Yakshas and Yakhshis, and that Krishna is said to have released two Yaksha spirits when he uprooted a pair of trees by dragging a mortar between them. It is mainly in connection with trees that Yaksha worship survives to this day. They belong to an ill-defined class of spirit or godling referred to generically as *devtā* ('divinity'). Their worshippers make no clear ontological distinctions between the various spirits and divinized human heroes.[76] Such *devtā* are most commonly worshipped at an open-air rectangular altar or platform (*thān, cautarā*) made of bricks or mud, often situated under a tree or beside a pond. Islamized versions of these altars are whitewashed and sometimes have a niche for a lamp, like the tomb of a Pir or Sayyid, and are worshipped on Thursdays. Hindu peasants worship a *thān* or *cautarā* at the new moon, usually by offering a clay dish of rice and a libation of milk or water.

In Braj the worship of Yakshas survives as the cult of Jakhaiya.[77] The name 'Jakh' appears in a poem attributed to Surdas that refers to Krishna stealing curd prepared for offering to a such a spirit.[78] A reminder of the ancient Yakshas' role as a bestower and guardian of wealth survives in the use of the term *jākh* to refer to a miser, and their ferocious aspect is remembered in the expression *jakhaiyā ā g(ay)au* ! ('Jakhaiya has arrived'), uttered when someone loses his temper.

74 P. Mital 1966, pt.1 p.153.

75 Agrawala 1963, p.182.

76 For the equivalence of Yakshas and heroes (*vīra/bīr*), especially with reference to the terms *mahāvīra*, 'five heroes' (*pañcavīra*) and, in an islamized variant, 'five Pirs', see Agrawal 1953 and 1970, pp.188 ff.

77 The name is derived from *yakṣa* with the suffix *-aiyā*, which appears to denote affection or diminutiveness, as in *kānh/kanhaiyā*, the most popular from of Krishna's name in the Braj dialect. Muslims refer to such spirits as 'Jakhaiya Pir'.

78 *Sūr sāgar, pad* 964. A variant of the poem is also attributed to Paramanandadas (*Paramānand sāgar, pad* 140).

Nowadays Jakhaiya is worshipped almost exclusively for the obtaining of children and for their subsequent welfare. Couples desiring a child will first pray to Jakhaiya, and if their wish is granted will return with the infant to have its first head of hair shorn at the place of worship. Jakhaiya is worshipped at gatherings in which the same elements are found as at fairs for Sitala, Kuanwala, and other deities who share the same function. Hindu sweepers (Bhangis) are present to wave a cock or bunch of peacock feathers around in front of a child, and Muslim sweepers (Bhishtis) sprinkle it with water from their goat-skin water carriers. Such gestures are intended to protect the child from harmful influences.

The two most popular Jakhaiya fairs in Mathura District are held at Mahaban and Parkham on Sundays in the bright half of the month of Magh.[79] The local brahmin who officiates at the Mahaban fair connects its origin with a larger fair held at Paindhat in Mainpuri District.[80] Besides being attended in connection with the birth of children, this Paindhat fair is also said to have a beneficial effect on winter rainfall. The place of worship at Mahaban consists of a circular platform of earth built around the base of a neem tree.[81] On the southern edge of the platform stands a small whitewashed niche where a lamp and incense are lit and where people place such offerings as garlands, pieces of cloth, food, cash, betel, bangles, and small pennons. The right to officiate at the place of worship rests with one of the local Sanaurhiya brahmin families whose senior members are referred to as 'Chaudhari' (cf.§4.8). As at Paindhat, members of the lower castes customarily sacrifice piglets. At Mahaban this is done at some distance from the tree, but the practice is dying out and is being replaced by simply cutting off a piglet's ear. The priest is also in attendance on Basant Panchami (Magh II.5), a day when Chaubes from Mathura come to worship Jakhaiya and have the heads of their new-born children shaved. For them the ceremony is part of a threefold rite for the protection of their children, the other two components being a visit to Sitala at Agra and the Ganges at Soron.

Parkham is the place where Cunningham found a statue of the Yaksha Manibhadra, which was set up by a group of traders over two thousand years ago and was still being worshipped as Jakhaiya.[82] It is over two metres tall and its face has been obliterated by repeated anointments of ghee and red lead. The statue was taken to Mathura Museum, but the annual fair at Parkham has survived. It attracts more people than the one at Mahaban, and there are various stalls selling

79 Another fair is held at Noh, site of an ancient colossal Yaksha figure. Parkham is in Mathura tahsil; two other villages in the same tahsil where smaller fairs are held are Pingri and Sersa.

80 Held on Sundays in the bright half of Ashadh as well as Magh. For a description see Neave, pp.76 & 245. According to the story told of its origin, Jaikhaiya was a Bhangi who was killed when he joined in the war between Prithviraj and Jaichand of Kanauj. He became a ghost (*bhūt*) and the place where he fell is now the site of the fair.

81 The priest in attendance said that formerly a pipal grew there. The neem (Azadirachta indica, Skt. *nimba*) is primarily associated with Sitala and other disease goddesses. *Aṅguttaranikāya*, vol.2 p.57, refers to a Yaksha named Naleru who was associated with a neem tree.

82 Cunningham, ASI XX pp.39-41. Also found at Parkham was a colossal headless Hanuman assigned by Vogel (cat.no.D.27) to the 9th century.

agricultural and domestic implements, as well as swings, a ferris wheel, and other amusements. Jakhaiya is here offered the hair of children along with pieces of fried bread (*pūṛī*) and leaves and flowers of the mustard plant. A fragment of medieval sculpture coated with vermilion now does duty for Jakhaiya. It is housed in a plain and small cell on a mound beneath which, beside a pond and an old and decrepit neem tree, the ancient statue used to stand. The priests in attendance live in the village and, if anyone cares to ask them, say that they are 'Vaishnava brahmins', though their role and status is similar to that of the Jogis who look after Shaiva and Shakta shrines.

Neither the village of Parkham nor the tree at Mahaban feature in the circumambulation of Braj, but the fairs held at both places throw light on the nature of the cults that were associated with tree spirits and similar types of folk deity. Ancient sources refer to a banyan tree called Bhandira, where Krishna, Balarama, Shridama, and other cowherd boys used to play and were once attacked by the demon Pralamba. According to some sources a Bhandira tree near Mathura was a place where pilgrims used to worship a Yaksha (cf.§4.4). At the place now known as Bhandirban, a halt on the pilgrimage circuit, there is a well worshipped when the new moon falls on a Monday and a tall banyan tree under which Krishna and Radha are said to have met or been married. In a grove lying across some fields to the south-west is a large banyan tree with many roots extending downwards from its branches (see plate 26). Beside it is a small temple housing a wooden image, said to represent Shridama, that is painted white and dressed in the same way as Krishna or Balarama. The temple is looked after by Goswamis of the temple of Govind Dev in Vrindaban, and each year, on Chaitra II.9, they organize a feast there called *gvāl maṇḍalī* ('circle of cowherd boys'). It is said to be held to celebrate Shridama's birthday and is attended by local villagers as well as Bengali followers of the Goswamis. The temple and fair may represent a Vaishnava reorientation of a pre-existing folk cult, though it is doubtful whether it can be seen as any kind of continuation of the earlier Bhandira Yaksha. It is probable that the grove in which it stands and the nearby Bhandirban site were once a continuous forest, but it is not certain that either is the location of the Bhandira tree of ancient sources.[83]

In Braj, as elsewhere, the most important cult trees are the two varieties of fig known as the banyan (Ficus indica, Skt. *nyagrodha, vaṭa*, Hindi *baṭ, baṛ, bargad*) and the pipal (Ficus religiosa, Skt. *āśvattha, pippala*, Hindi *pīpal*). The former is consistently associated with Shiva, the latter also with Vishnu. They both have a milk-like sap, which must be one of the reasons why they are associated with fertility. A special occasion for worship of the banyan is the new moon day of the month of Jyeshth (called *baṛ amāvāsyā*). Women worship the tree for the welfare of their husband and family by offering it food and tying auspicious red and yellow threads (*kalāvā, kalāyau*) around its trunk. Apart from the one at Bhandirban, other notable banyans in Braj are Bansi Bat (beside the Yamuna in Vrindaban), where Krishna played his flute, Shringar Bat (also in Vrindaban), where he helped Radha to adorn herself, and Akshay Bat ('imperishable banyan') - a name also given to banyans at Prayag and at Gaya, the latter being a place recommended for performing the *śrāddha* rite.

83 See below under Akshay Bat, §8.59.

There are also some sacred trees in Braj of the type called kadamba (Nauclea cadamba). One of them, at Kalidah Ghat in Vrindaban, is said to be the tree from which Krishna sprang into the Yamuna in order to fight the serpent Kaliya. There are two other kadamba trees beside the Yamuna, at places known as Chir Ghat, where he is said to have hidden with the Gopis' clothes. Female pilgrims who visit these trees tie strips of cloth to their branches. The custom of tying cloth to the branches of a tree, or hanging bangles on them, is practised all over India by people who want to make a wish, especially by women who want to become pregnant. Another variety of sacred tree is the shami (Prosopis spicigera, *śamī, chōkar*). It is often associated with Devi and is worshipped on the occasion of Dashahra. In Vedic ritual pieces of shami and pipal wood were rubbed together to produce the sacrificial fire. The tamal tree (Xanthochymus pictorius), or *śyām tamāl*, is revered because, by virtue of its dark-coloured bark, it is associated with Krishna.

Some trees are revered because a saint rested beneath them, as is the case with many of the Pushtimarg *baiṭhak* shrines, which are usually located under one of the varieties of tree mentioned above. A few trees are pointed out to pilgrims as having marks on their trunk that resemble some object connected with Krishna. Apart from those that have some specific association or cultic significance, the trees and creepers of Braj in general are held in high esteem because they are part of the setting of Krishna's pastimes. They are regarded as witnesses of his activities, hence the Gopis appealed to them when he disappeared while dancing the *rās*. They are praised by devotional poets, who often compare a creeper entwined around a tree with Radha embracing Krishna, and sometimes express the desire to be reborn as a tree or creeper of Braj in order to be a spectator of their eternal dalliance.

12 Forests, groves, and arbours

The forests around Mathura have always been an essential element in the setting for Krishna's bucolic adventures. The oldest name for the wooded area is 'Vrindavana', which, in the earliest sources, refers to an extensive forest rather than to the specific place now known as Vrindaban. The only forests mentioned by Lakshmidhara are Vrindavana and an unidentified Nandanavana, but nearly all sources written from the fourteenth century onwards refer to there being twelve forests around Mathura. The list is not always consistent, but all sources include Vrindavana, Madhuvana, Talavana, Bhandiravana, and Mahavana, names which can all be traced back to the *Harivaṃśa*.[84] Also consistently included among the twelve are Kumudavana, Khadiravana, Bilvavana, and Bahulavana, which are named after the lotus, acacia, wood-apple, and cardomum, though the latter may also refer to a goddess.[85] Three others that consistently appear are Kam(y)avana

84 See above §2.2. These five forests are now located at Vrindaban, Maholi, Tarsi, Bhandirban, and Mahaban. In some sources the latter is called *bṛhadvana*. Apart from KK the only *māhātmya* text not to mention the twelve forests is SP.

85 See chapter 8 for Kumudban, Khaira, Belban (=*bilvavana*, called *śrīvana* in PP and *Gopālottaratāpanī*), and Bati (called *bakula-* in AP and PP, and as a variant in VP).

('desirable forest', or 'forest of Desire'), Bhadravana ('auspicious forest', though perhaps named after a plant, or even Shiva), and the obscurely named Loha(jangha)vana.[86] In addition to the twelve main forests some others are frequently named in later sources, such as Gahvaravana, (or Gahwarban, 'deep forest'), referring to a wooded area at Barsana or Vrindaban, and Biharban, meaning a forest in which Krishna used to sport.[87] Some texts written after the mid-sixteenth century list twelve subsidiary forests referred to as *upavana*. Places such as Kamban (Kaman), Kotban, Kamar, and other villages that are sometimes given the termination '-ban' were actually market centres or fortified settlements. Narayan Bhatt multiplied the number by inventing many more categories, but many of the one hundred and thirty-seven he names are unidentifiable (see appendix 2). The pilgrimage circuit also includes some wooded areas that are referred to as *kadam khaṇḍī*, 'a thicket of kadamba trees'.

Narayan Bhatt formalized the concept of Braj as a sacred area by saying that its total perimeter of eighty-four *krośa* consists of four sides each twenty-one *krośa* in length, with a 'boundary grove' (*sīmāvana*) in each corner. He gives their names as Hasyavana in the east, Jahnuvana in the south, Parvatavana in the west, and Suryapatanavana in the north, but they cannot be identified with any certainty.[88] A couplet current in Braj says that its sacred area is demarcated by three places called Barhad, Sonhad, and 'the village of Surasen'.[89] In *Gargasaṃhitā* the equivalent names are *barhiṣada* in the north-east, *yadupura* in the south, and *sonapura* in the west.[90] Growse, who points out that *-had* is more likely to be the Persian word meaning 'boundary' (*ḥadd*) than a derivative of the Sanskrit *hrada* ('lake, pool'), says that 'Bar' refers to a place in Aligarh District, 'Sona' is a place in Gurgaon District famous for its hot springs, and that 'the village of Surasen' is supposed to be Batesar, an old place of pilgrimage on the Yamuna.[91] Sonhad may be the same as Sonkhar, a place with a fort that was sometimes considered to be the northernmost stronghold of the Jat rulers of Bharatpur.

In an older or more folk-based form of religion such forests, like individual trees, would have been regarded as the abode of a spirit. Such a belief probably underlies the epithet 'Bankhandi' when applied to Shiva or Hanuman.[92] A sage called

86 See Kaman, Bhadraban, and Lohban. In VTK *kolavana* takes the place of the *bhadravana* of Hindu sources.

87 Viz. *vihār*. Such a forest is named in SP 2.6.3.5, but with no location specified. VBV implies that it is near Sanket. Now there are groves called Biharban near Shergarh, Kamar, and Tos.

88 VBV 6.1. Vijay, intro. p.30, identifies them with Hasan Garh in Aligarh District, Jajau in Dhaulpur tahsil, Pahari near Kaman, and a village called Jewar in Aligarh district.

89 'Krishna', p.31: *ita barahada, uta saunahada, uta sūrasena kau gāma/braja caurāsī kosa mẽ, mathurā maṇḍala dhāma*. Growse, p.78, citing Elliot's glossary, gives it as *ita barahada ita sonahada uta sūrasena kā gāva/braja caurāsī kosa mẽ mathurā maṇḍala māha*.

90 GS 2.1.1-11.

91 Growse, p.79.

92 There is a Bankhandi Mahadev in Vrindaban and Bankhandeshwar Hanuman near Balbhadrakund, Mathura.

Latanwaro ('creeper man') or Jhariwala ('thicket man') is believed to inhabit the grove at Pisayo, and at Kokilaban there is a shrine dedicated to Barkhandi Baba ('ascetic of the banyan thicket'), who may have something to do with Nagaji, the ascetic whose matted hair once got caught up in the branches of a tree and who is commemorated by a *baiṭhak* in a temple nearby. Both of these sites are visited by local people on Saturdays, and beside the temple at Kokilaban there is a small shrine of Shanichar (Saturn).

From the medieval period onwards, under the influence of devotional Hinduism, more emphasis was given to the idea that wooded areas are reminders or relics of the environment of a golden age. Anandavana, 'the forest of joy', is a name used to refer to the area of Varanasi before it became urbanized.[93] The relevant *māhātmya* literature describes it as a paradise in which there were groves, streams, and parks abundant with fruit and flowers, filled with the song of birds and buzzing of bees, where the anklets of beautiful women resounded, and where ascetics had their hermitages. The forests of Braj are also visualized as having this idyllic quality, which is enhanced by the belief that they are remnants of the woodland frequented by Krishna and his companions. The devotional poets of Braj, in their descriptions of this sylvan setting, often talk of lanes leading through the tangled thickets to secluded seasonal bowers, and sometimes include such formal elements as pavilions and summerhouses. Such forests are places where natural passions are given free rein, contrasting both with the town, where life is governed by social norms, and the older conception of the forest as a place where ascetics retire to practise austerities.

Two terms used for the setting of Krishna's amorous play are *kuñj* and *nikuñj*, which can both be translated as 'arbour' or 'bower'. Examples of places bearing these names are Seva Kunj and Hari Nikunj, two adjacent walled gardens in Vrindaban that are believed to be meeting places of Krishna and Radha. Because their love play is eternal, many people believe that they still meet each other in such groves at dead of night. Another place in Vrindaban that is regarded as the setting for their nocturnal encounters is Nidhiban, from which we can infer that the terms *kuñj*, *nikuñj*, and *vana* (or *ban*) are more or less interchangeable, though strictly speaking the *(ni)kuñj* is a secluded arbour located within a *vana*. In devotional literature such love nests are described as being fragrant, shady, and cool, and usually have a couch of some sort that has been prepared for the couple by their attendant Sakhis. Essential to the *kuñj* are its seclusion and mystical darkness, but in the course of time it came to feature an abundance of glistening decorative elements appropriate for the particular seasons and the various games that were played in them.[94] Because the bower is associated with intimate devotional communion, the terms *kuñj* and *nikuñj* are sometimes applied to buildings in which there is a Krishna shrine. Most of the mansions (*havelī*) built in Vrindaban by aristocratic families in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are referred to as a *kuñj*. They usually have an ornate façade and carved porch that leads into a rectangular courtyard surrounded by a verandah with three or four rooms on each

93 Eck, pp.29-31.

94 See R. Sarkar, pp.32-3, on the *kuñja* in *Gītagovinda*, and Snell 1987 on its elaboration by Braj poets.

side, a gallery overlooking it, and sometimes more rooms on upper stories. The shrine is normally located opposite the entrance, and often creepers are grown in the courtyard to give it an arboreal atmosphere.

13 Goddesses

After the fall of Gahadwalas, Vaishnavism in North India ceased to enjoy the patronage of the prevailing dynasties. Shaiva and Shakta cults, deeply rooted in the villages, were fostered by Jogis of the Nath Sampraday. They were followers of the Tantric traditions that played such an important role in the development of popular Hinduism in the medieval period. Local goddesses became associated with manifestations of female divinity described in the Tantras and Shakta Puranas. Manasa Devi and Vimala, for example, the presiding goddesses of Manasi Ganga at Govardhan and Vimal(a)kund at Kaman, were probably given their names by devotees from eastern India. Manasa, a goddess popular in Bengal, was associated with serpent worship, and Vimala, the patroness of the sacred area of Puri, was a form of Katyayani-Durga who appears to have been the presiding deity of the site now occupied by the temple of Jagannath.[95]

Among Krishna devotees the Bengalis were the most sympathetic to goddess worship. They enshrined an image of Vrindadevi in a side chapel of the temple of Govind Dev, and there is a later temple in Vrindaban, near Keshi Ghat, with an image that is half-Krishna and half-Kali. Followers of the Pushtimarg, in which Tantric influence is less evident, have little concern for any female deity apart from Radha. According to their sectarian history, one of the reasons for the expulsion of the Bengali priests from the service of Shrinathji was that they had installed an image of the goddess in his shrine. In principle devotees of Krishna accept only those goddesses who do not receive blood sacrifice and are described as 'Vaishnavi'. This is illustrated by a story told about Harivyasdev, leader of the Nimbark Sampraday in the late sixteenth century.[96] He and his ascetic followers camped one day in a wood where there was a Devi shrine. When one of her devotees arrived and sacrificed a goat, the company of Vaishnavas felt that the place had become so polluted that they could not drink the water or eat the *prasād* they had prepared. They spent the night without food, with the result that the goddess was deeply impressed by the power of their austerity. She appeared before them and asked to be initiated so that she might join them in the preparation and sharing of *prasād*. Afterwards she went to her followers in the town and ordered them to convert to Vaishnavism as well.

Some goddesses popular among the inhabitants of Braj are included in the pilgrimage circuit, though their worship is not integrated into the Krishna cult. Like goddesses all over northern India, they are worshipped intermittently for general welfare and are resorted to with special fervour during the two Navaratra periods.

95 Von Stietencron in Eschmann et al. (eds.), pp.26-7.

96 Nabhadas, *kavitt* 77, Priyadas *chappay* 338-9. Bhagwat Mudit, pp.42-4, tells a similar story in connection with Chaturbhujdas, a member of the Radhavallabh Sampraday (cf.§5.23).

The Navaratra held in the bright half of the month of Chaitra is the more important for the local people of Braj and is a time when fairs are held at some Devi shrines. The largest of them takes place at Nari Semari, where there is a temple in which stones representing two goddesses are enshrined. The fair combines worship with the sale of agricultural implements and is attended by people from all over Braj, including a large number from Agra. Groups of men from different villages carry staves with which they beat the walls of the temple while running around it. This is supposed to be an attempt to persuade the goddess to leave the shrine and come back with them to their village. During the second Navaratra, held during the bright half of Ashwin, the most fervent worshippers of the goddess are the Bengalis who live in Vrindaban. Like their fellow countrymen in Bengal, they make painted clay representations of Durga which, on the last day of the festive period, are taken out in procession and immersed in the river.

In Braj the goddess is often associated with a junior male divinity said to be her son, chief devotee, or messenger. Elsewhere such a figure is sometimes regarded as a form of Bhairava, but in Braj he is called 'Languriya' and is primarily associated with Kaila Devi, a goddess south of Karauli who is visited by many people from Braj during the Chaitra Navaratra.[97] Sitala is also a popular goddess among the people of Braj. As elsewhere, she is primarily resorted to for the protection of children against smallpox and similar infectious diseases. The modern equivalent of the ancient Hariti, wife of Kubera (the chief of the Yakshas), she is known locally as Serh Maiya.

An interesting folk goddess is Sanjhi, who is worshipped by unmarried girls over a wide area of northern India. Rites are performed in her honour during the dark half of Ashwin, a fortnight during which male members of the family observe *śrāddha* rites for deceased relatives. The girls make a series of designs with cow-dung on the walls of their homes and decorate them with flowers and other items. Although there are elements in the ritual that bear some relation to *śrāddha*, the main reason for worshipping Sanjhi is to obtain a suitable husband. At the same time, in some of the Krishna temples, the priests make designs that they refer to as 'Sanjhi'. They are made by sprinkling coloured powders through stencils and depict scenes from the life of Krishna surrounded by intricate border patterns. They represent a Vaishnava adaptation of the folk rite, based on the assumption that Radha and the Gopis, as village girls of Braj, must have worshipped Sanjhi in the hope of gaining Krishna as a husband.[98]

14 Shiva

Several old Shiva temples have been incorporated into the pilgrimage circuit of Braj. In and around some of them are placed fragments of sculpture from older temples that stood either on the same site or in the vicinity. The inclusion of some of these temples in various versions of the *Mathurāmāhātmya*, as well as the fact that many of the bathing places at Mathura have Shaiva names, may be taken as

97 See Entwistle, 1983/2.

98 For more detail on both types of Sanjhi see Entwistle 1984.

indications of the predominance of Shaivism, probably under the influence of the Nath and Dashnami orders, in the centuries prior to the expansion of pilgrimage to Mathura by devotees of Krishna. As at other pilgrimage centres, some of the older shrines are said to belong to a manifestation of Shiva who acts as guardian of the sacred places. Sometimes four Shiva deities are said to be posted as guardians at the cardinal points of a sacred centre. In Mathura these four are given the names Bhuteshwar, Gokarneshwar, Pippaleshwar, and Rangeshwar. Some say that there are four main Shiva deities of Braj, namely Bhuteshwar at Mathura, Chakreshwar at Govardhan, Kameshwar at Kaman, and Nandishwar at Nandgaon. This concept, however, is not found in older written sources. Jagatanand and Brajnath name eight principal Shiva deities of Braj: the four just mentioned plus Gokarneshwar (Mathura), Uttareshwar (Gokul), Gopeshwar (Vrindaban), and Burhe Babu. The identity of the last of these is uncertain; perhaps the name refers to a *liṅga* beside Harji Pokhar at Jatipura. In other contexts Burhe Babu ('old man') is an ill-defined folk deity who is usually identified with Shiva. His worship is one of the peripheral rites performed during a wedding, where he is represented by a potter's wheel and is worshipped with the help of a potter. Burhe Babu, or Swamiji, is also the name given to a deity associated with Shiva or Brahma who is resorted to in particular for the cure of leukoderma.[99] His main shrine in Braj is at Tarauli, where a large fair is held on the full moon of Karttik.

15 The *samādhi, baiṭhak*, and *bhajan kuṭī*

A significant development in Hinduism over the past few centuries is the veneration of exemplary devotees and of the places associated with them. Edifying stories about the founders of religious orders and their followers constitute an extensive genre of devotional literature. The most famous of these hagiographical works is the *Bhaktamāl* ('Garland of Devotees') of Nabhadas (or Nabhaji), completed in the first half of the seventeenth century and usually published with its commentary by Priyadas (1712). It contains anecdotes about saints and devotees from all the Vaishnava Sampradays, is the most widely read work of its type, and was sometimes used as a text for sermons (*kathā*).[100] It inspired many similar works, but most of them deal only with devotees belonging to one particular Sampraday.[101] The genre as a whole reflects the increasing emphasis that was given to the

99 'Suman', vol.2 pp.351-2, 416-7.

100 The last celebrated exponent was Jagannath Prasad (d.1984 in Vrindaban), known simply as 'Bhaktamaliji'.

101 Devotees of the Radhavallabh Sampraday are dealt with in *Bhaktanāmāvalī* of Dhruvdas, *Rasik ananya māl* of Bhagwat Mudit, *Rasik ananya paricāvalī* of Chacha Vrindabandas (unpubl.), *Hitkul śākhā* by Jaykrishnadas, and *Rādhāvallabh bhaktamāl* by Priyadas Shukla. Devotees of the Gaudiya Sampraday are dealt with in *Gauḍagaṇoddeśadīpikā* of Kavikarnapura, two works entitled *Vaiṣṇav vandanā* by Devakinandan and Madhavdas, *Prem vilās* of Nityanandadas, *Karṇānand* by Jadunandandas, *Gauḍīya vaiṣṇav abhidān* by Haridas Das, *Nitāī cād* by Shyamdas, and *Śrīgauḍīy ṣaḍgosvāmīvṛnd evaṃ vrajmaṇḍal ke siddh-sant* by Nityanand. See also Kapur

personality of gurus, poets, and other notable devotees. Apart from demonstrating how devotion is to be cultivated, their lives provide a link between human history and divine mythology. Their role is continued in the present by living gurus who act as intermediaries between ordinary devotees and god.

In the case of Chaitanya this kind of emulation soon became a form of deification. He came to be regarded as an incarnation of Krishna, or as Radha and Krishna combined, while Nityanand was thought to be an incarnation of Balarama. We have already noted how Vitthalnath was proclaimed to be virtually an incarnation of Krishna, and how this sanctity was believed to have been inherited by his descendants. Somewhat less extravagant claims are made for other saints. Hit Harivansh is regarded as an incarnation of Krishna's flute, Swami Haridas of Radha's closest companion Lalita, and sometimes Nimbarka is said to have been an incarnation of Vishnu's discus. The poet Kavikarnapura wrote a work entitled *Gauḍagaṇoddeśadīpikā* in which he identified the Six Goswamis with the handmaidens of Radha, and other Gaudiya devotees with other members of Krishna and Radha's retinue. Similarly, the Ashtachhap poets and the successors of Swami Haridas are thought to have been manifestations of one of the companions of Krishna or Radha, in which capacity they are believed to be participants in the supernal pastimes of the divine couple.

The biographers place their saints in a specific period of Hindu history by describing how they met various historical personages, or outwitted Muslims or Tantrics who sought to hinder their devotional practices. At the same time Krishna plays a part in their biographies, showing that he has the power to intervene and influence the present. In order to bestow his grace, or to give some kind of advice or instruction, he appears before his devotees in a dream, in corporeal form, in the guise of a cowherd boy, or as an idol that comes to life. Hagiographies also tell us that many of the leading saints met and conversed with each other. Mira Bai and Tulsidas, the most famous Hindi Vaishnava poets from outside Braj, are said to have come to Vrindaban; accordingly there are two temples that are advertised by their custodians as the being the places where they stayed.

Celebrated devotees are commemorated by various types of shrine or memorial. The most common is a *samādhi*, which may contain the ashes of a saint or some other relic. It is either a structure shaped like a round-pointed cone or, more commonly, a marble slab carved with footprints and set into a raised platform, often with a dome or kiosk (*chatrī*) built over it. Veneration of memorials to the dead was, of course, an old tradition in India that was adapted to suit Hindu as well as Muslim contexts. The difference here is that the veneration of Vaishnava devotees encourages the notion that the pastimes of Krishna can still be experienced. The saints now exist in disembodied form, but the retelling of their biographies sustains the memory of them as distinct personalities; their memorials provide a tangible link between the recent historical past and the sempiternal realm of Krishna.

for a recent account of later devotees of Braj, mainly belonging to the Gaudiya Sampraday. Devotees of the Pushtimarg are dealt with in 84V and 252V. Other hagiographical works are mentioned by Callewaert, Radhakrishnadas in his introduction to Dhruvdas' *Bhaktanāmāvalī*, and Nahta in his introduction to the *Bhaktamāl* of Raghavdas (a work that is largely a paraphrase of the *Bhaktamāl* of Nabhadas).

There are also shrines built on the spot where a saint meditated or had some kind of vision or revelation. A *bhajan kuṭī* is a small hut representing the cell or hermitage where a saint used to sing the praises of Krishna or repeat his name. Similar structures, called *baiṭhak*, are built at places where a saint is said to have sat and preached, meditated, or composed some devotional work. Inside such shrines there is usually a platform of earth or cement that bears the saint's footprints and is draped with the type of shawl worn by members of the sect to which he belonged. On or beside it there may be other items such as a water pot, rosary, wooden sandals, or staff. The *baiṭhak* shrines are particularly important for followers of the Pushtimarg. In the course of their circuit of Braj the pilgrims offer a feast (*tapelī*) at twenty-two *baiṭhak* of Vallabha, sixteen of Vitthalnath, and a few others of some of their descendants. While physical contact with temple deities is restricted to the group of priests who serve them, anyone may enter the *baiṭhak* shrines and place offerings in them. The accessibility of memorials to the saints reflects the guru's role as a channel or medium between god and devotee. A similar type of shrine marks the places where the deity of Shrinathji is said to have been set up for worship. Platforms with the footprints of the deity are enshrined at the site of the original temple on the Govardhan hill, in the thicket of Tod where the deity was worshipped for a while, and, outside of Braj, at places where it was temporarily installed in the course of its journey to Nathdwara.

16 Parallels, imitation, and influence

Circumambulation or similar tours of sacred sites are by no means exclusive to India. Other types of sacred circuit can be found that share some elements in common with Braj. One may cite the sacred landscape of ancient Rome, before it was obliterated by the growth and development of the city as an imperial capital.[102] Varro tried to trace the landscape of the republican period in which the topography of natural phenomena and man-made landmarks was combined with an abstract and numerical symbolism. An essential feature of the landscape were the sacred groves of old Roman religion, named after various gods and heroes. There were various occasional and regular processions, undertaken by particular groups or the public at large, that encircled the boundaries or went from one temple or shrine to the next.

A pilgrimage that is even more extensive than the circuit of Braj is the one that takes place on the Japanese island of Shikoku.[103] Taking two months to complete, it follows a route of almost a thousand miles that is believed to have been trodden by the saint Kobo Daishi (b.774). The pilgrimage seems to have developed in the centuries following his death, but the oldest records of it date from the early seventeenth century. Like the circuit of Braj, it is a form of ascetic practice for the

102 This was brought to my attention by a paper ('Rome as Sacred Landscape') read by Hubert Cancik at a workshop on religious iconography held at the Faculty of Theology, University of Groningen, in 1984. The principal sources of information are Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* 5-7 and *De Lingua Latina* 5.

103 The pilgrimage has been described by Statler.

common man; but it is much more arduous, not only because of its length, but also because of the mountainous terrain. There is little stress on doctrine, for the essence lies in the demands made on the pilgrim and the physical, mental, and spiritual rewards that accrue to him. While the higher aim is to gain enlightenment, the pilgrims also seek miraculous cures or other material benefits. The circuit includes eighty-eight Buddhist temples and incorporates older local pilgrimages and Shinto shrines. Many of the places visited are connected with legends told about Kobo Daishi, including his vanquishing a giant poisonous snake and places where he produced springs by striking the ground with his staff. Pilgrims wear a special uniform and carry an album in which the names of the temples visited are stamped. While it is traditionally performed on foot, by pilgrims travelling alone or with a few companions, nowadays larger groups can do a more superficial tour by bus. Elsewhere in Japan, and in other countries where there is a large Japanese community, there are smaller replicas of the circuit of Shikoku that can be traversed in a few days, hours, or minutes.

These two examples are cited simply to indicate that there are certain elements common to different types of sacred circuit. Those with a long history invariably contain remnants of older religious beliefs and practices. Different sacred centres within India have had a certain degree of influence on each other. Underlying these correspondences is the notion that one place of pilgrimage is equivalent to all the rest. Kashi, for example, is said to embody all the other sacred places of India.[104] The Ganges is seen as a prototype for other sacred waters, thus they are often named after it or are said to contain its water. Other rivers in India have bathing places named after those that are to be found along the banks of the Ganges. The four *dhām* that mark the corners of India, and thus for Hindus the limits of the civilized world, are Badrinath, Puri, Rameshwaram, and Dwarka. Anyone who managed to visit all of them succeeded in accomplishing the 'great circumambulation'. In Braj there is a hill west of Dig presumptuously called 'the original Badri' (Adibadri); some hold that Baldeo is equivalent to Puri, Setubandh Kund at Kaman is described as the place where Krishna re-enacted Rama's deeds at Rameshwaram, and some sites at Kosi are named after places at Dwarka.

Besides incorporating types of sacred site already existing elsewhere, Braj also influenced developments at other pilgrimage centres. The kind of conceptualization that was employed in Braj was also applied to pilgrimage centres associated with Rama, the most popular deity of devotional religion in the area lying between Mathura and Bengal. Under the influence of the theologians of Braj, certain groups of Rama devotees borrowed themes and concepts from the emotional variety of devotion shown towards Krishna.[105] The earliest literary manifestations of this tendency among devotees of Rama appeared in the late sixteenth century. Tulsidas, in his *Gītāvalī*, describes scenes in Rama's childhood that are imitative of Krishna's and gives an account of Rama's Holi festivities at Chitrakut that are based on Krishna's play in Braj. His contemporary Agradas, a resident of the Galta monastery near Jaipur, wrote a poem called *Dhyān mañjarī* that was indebted to Nandadas' *Rās pañcādhyāyī*, a vernacular adaptation of the five *rās* chapters of the

104 Eck, pp.39-40.

105 See B. P. Singh for a full account of the so-called *rasik* groups of Rama devotees.

Bhāgavatapurāṇa.[106] In *Dhyān mañjarī* Rama's city of Avadha, a grove called Pramodavana, and the river Sarju (Sarayu) are counterparts of Braj, Vrindaban, and the Yamuna. Just like Krishna and Radha in Vrindaban, so Rama and Sita stand in the centre of their paradise on a lotus that grows on golden soil beneath a wishing-tree. Such correspondences between Braj and Ayodhya are also found in *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa*, a work that has already been discussed with reference to its chapters describing Braj (§6.12). Nabhadas, a pupil of Agradas and author of the famous *Bhaktamāl*, is credited with the composition of a work entitled *Rāmāṣṭayām* in which the scheme of pastimes performed during the eight watches (*aṣṭayām līlā*) by Krishna and Radha is applied to the daily activity of Rama and Sita, including such elements as twelve forests, various bowers, and female attendants. In imitation of the circumambulation of Braj, Ayodhya acquired a *caurāsī kos parikramā* that takes twenty-four days to complete.

Devotees of Rama who were influenced by these erotic themes naturally looked upon Sita as the equivalent of Radha. Two places associated with Sita's childhood, Sitamarhi in Mithila and Janakpur in the eastern Terai of Nepal, were 'rediscovered' at the turn of the eighteenth century by Surkishor and other Ramanandi ascetics.[107] A circumambulation of Chitrakut, the place of Rama's forest exile, also developed in the first half of the eighteenth century. Surkishor, in *Mithila vilās*, describes a vision of the celestial city of Janaka and the twenty-four groves that surround it. He was able to identify Janakpur as the earthly location of this eternal city. Four old Shiva shrines were designated as guardian deities of the gates once located at the cardinal points on the boundary of Janaka's realm. In the course of the following two centuries his successors, having secured the patronage of local rulers, added more places where Rama and Sita were said to have had their romantic encounters and where other episodes of the Rama legend took place. Some time after 1830 Ramanandi ascetics began a formal five-day procession each year around the sacred circuit. Later it was expanded into a fifteen-day affair, held in the bright half of the month of Phalgun and undertaken by some ten thousand pilgrims, comprising ascetics and laymen from the neighbouring districts. The pilgrimage concludes with an 'internal' (*antargṛhī*) circumambulation of the town of Janakpur on the full moon day, in which nearly a hundred thousand local townsmen and peasants participate.

106 See McGregor 1983 for a comparison of the two texts, and his translation of *Rās pañcādhyāyī* (Nandadas 1973). Bansal, pp.421-2, also compares Agradas' work with Gadadhar Bhatt's *yogapīṭha* description.

107 See Burghart 1983 & 1985 for an account of Janakpur and its rediscovery.

8 The pilgrimage itinerary

1 Mathura

Cf. 4.9-12. Enumeration of the bathing places along the river: VTK p.19; KK p.187; VP 150.33 ff./R 254 ff./VM p.511, 151.1-3/R 277-8/VM p.513, 152.8-25/R 279-88/VM pp.513-4, 158.48-59/VM p.526-7, 166.13, 167.6, 167.15-18/R 207-111 & 249, 172.6, 174.55-9; R 289/VM p.514; BRam 105.54-72; NP 2.79.22-47; VBV 2.42 ff., 3.1 ff.; BRat p.167; Sund.; BYV p.117; BBP 3.25-34. *Janma līlā* or *Madhukaitabhvadh līlā* at beginning and *Kaṃsvadh līlā* at end of the pilgrimage.

The *māhātmya* texts of the *Varāhapurāṇa* and Rup Goswami, after giving general praise of the town and the Yamuna, name the bathing places (*tīrtha*) situated on the right bank of the river. They are said to lie in the shape of a half moon and to comprise two series of twelve bathing places on either side of Vishrantitirtha, the first and last being named as the 'southern' and 'northern' Kotitirtha, or as Dashashwamedha- and Mokshatirtha (in a verse quoted by Rup Goswami and ascribed to *Skandapurāṇa*). This conception, however, seems to be an adaptation of an earlier scheme, for the same texts contradict themselves by beginning the description of the southern series with Avimuktatirtha, followed by Vishrantitirtha, an order that is reversed by later authors (e.g. Narahari), and by beginning the northern series with the statement that there are nine *tīrtha* lying to the north of Asikunda. This seems to be a remnant of an older conception that is apparent in Lakshmidhara's description. The only *tīrtha* that he specifically locates on the Yamuna is Asikunda, which he says lies in the centre of Mathura. The *Varāhapurāṇa*, when describing the circumambulation of Mathura (ch.158), gives an enumeration of the northern series of bathing places that is somewhat different from the one given in an earlier chapter (152).

The earliest datable reference to Vishrantitirtha is in Jinaprabha Suri's description of Mathura, written in the early fourteenth century. He names it as the first of five 'popular' (i.e. Hindu) bathing places, the others being Asikunda-, Vaikuntha-, Kalinjara-, and Chakratirtha. The extant version of the *Varāhapurāṇa* gives an alternative group of five that omits Asikunda- and Vaikunthatirthas and includes Saraswatitirtha and Krishnaganga, two bathing places that are not

included in the listing of the northern and southern sets of twelve. It says that one should bathe at them on the last five days of Karttik and equates the Saraswati-, Asikunda-, Kalinjara-, and Krishnaganga *tīrtha*, with Saukara (Soron), Naimisha, Prayag, and Pushkar. It would seem that the grouping of five bathing places was superseded by the enumeration of two series of twelve some time between the mid-fourteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries.

Narayan Bhatt groups the bathing places into northern and southern series, as well as listing other places as comprising a central group lying within Mathura, but he gives no systematic enumeration of the bathing places. Similarly, later texts (e.g. Jagatananad, BYP, BP), although they mention some of the bathing places in sequence, do not give a complete list of the northern and southern series. Later sources, whether or not they attempt to list all the bathing places, are in disagreement over the sequence and nomenclature of those that they choose to mention. The construction of new ghats or a change of name have resulted in some sources identifying two bathing places with each other, while other sources list them as separate. Faced with this confusion, we may appreciate a pun made by the pilgrim from Bikaner who visited Mathura in 1656. This pilgrim mentions the central ghat as *bisarāyat* (for Vishranti/Vishram) and tells us that there are twenty-four others, but forgot (*bisarāy*) their names (*bīc madanāyak bisarāyat ghāṭ chai, kaṃs māranai śrī ṭhākurā̃ bisarām līyo te bisarāyat kahāṇī, bījāī ghāṭ 24 rā hī nām chai paṇ siro bisarāy*).

Vishram Ghat is the traditional starting point for the circumambulation of Mathura as well as of the whole of Braj. From here the pilgrims proceed along the southern series of ghats, skirt the boundary of the old town until they return to the river north of it, and then follow the northern series of ghats downstream until they come back to the starting point. The itinerary given below includes the sacred places that are extant today, though not all of them are necessarily visited by people performing the circumambulation. It is followed by a description of some of the places lying within the area delineated by the route that are also visited by pilgrims to Mathura, especially those participating in the *barī yātrā* who begin their pilgrimage of Braj with an 'inner' (*antargṛhī*) circumambulation of the town and perform the 'outer' one on their eventual return. An older itinerary given in the *Varāhapurāṇa, Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa*, and by Narayan Bhatt is described in appendix 1.

1 Vishranti-/Vishrantatirtha/Vishram Ghat

VTK p.19 (*vissaṃtiatitthaṃ*); VP 150.34 & 36/R 247, 255/VM p.511, 158.59, 61, & 64/VM p.527, 165, 166.14, 167.18/R 249, 174. 56 & 58, 176.5, 177.33; R 109, 168, 240/VM p.510, 241-2/SP 2.3.1.33-4/VM p.510, 243-6, 250-1, 462/VM p.521; BRam 105.72-82, 109, & 114; NP 2.79.22; PP 6.213-4; VBV 3.76; KCC 4.4.16 (*viśrāma-*)/CM pp.179 (*viśrāntī ghāṭa*), 187; CC 2.17. 156; BRat pp.170, 288; Sund.; NBC 2.85; SPV pp.10-11; GVY 5-7; VGV 24; CBC; PV; BYP; BP; BBP 2.41, 3.3 ff., 17-10 & 25, 7.6-7 & 54. Vishnu deities at or near (?): VP 158.2-3 & 14/VM p.522-3, 161.19/R 160/VM p.506; 161.62-3, 167.39/R 232/VM p.509; R 147, 231-2/VM p.509, 233, 464/VM p.521; BRam 105.81 & 93; VBV 2.42; CC 2.17.191; BRat p.168; Growse p.141; Vajpeyi I p.173. Bathing day: Karttik II.8, after libations for ancestors and before doing *parikramā* (VP 158.1/VM p.522); Janmashtami (R 168). See plates 15 & 16.

The names for this bathing place, Vishranta- or Vishrantitirtha in most written sources and Vishram Ghat in later texts and modern parlance, all mean 'resting, repose, abatement, tranquility'. They are taken to refer to Krishna's having bathed and rested here after slaying Kansa, an association that is first made explicit by Murari Gupta. In a chapter dealing with the merit of this bathing place, the *Varāhapurāṇa* (165) relates the name to the placation of the ghost of an impious brahmin from Ujjain who had drowned in a well, though it concludes the story by saying that it is so named because Vasudeva rested there.

The original dedication of the place may have been to Vishnu lying on the cosmic waters, for the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, Rup Goswami, and derivative sources mention deities at or near the site named Dirghavishnu, Vishrantideva, Padmanabha, Gatashrama, Swayambhu, Keshava, Govinda, and Hari, some of which may be taken as referring to images in a reclining pose. None of these original deities survives, though Brajnath, writing in the last century mentions footprints of Dirghavishnu as being in the vicinity of Vishram Ghat. It would seem that at one time Dirghavishnu was the most important deity on the ghat; nowadays the name applies to a Vishnu temple built in 1807 by Raja Patnimal that stands near Bharatpur Darwaza in the neighbourhood known as Manoharpur. A temple of Padmanabha is situated in the Chaubiya Para quarter of the town.

Although Vishram Ghat may now be considered as the central place on the riverside at Mathura, there is a tradition that it was once the location of the cremation ground, which implies that it would have been downstream from the original town centre. The tradition finds some support in the presence nearby of a tower commemorating the suicide of a queen of Jaipur on her husband's funeral pyre (see Guhyatirtha). Apart from being named as the central ghat in revised versions of the *Mathurāmāhātmya*, hagiographers also say that it was the first place in Mathura visited by Chaitanya and Vallabha. Vajpeyi, citing Sujanray Khatri (*Khulā-sāt-ut-Tawārīkh*) says that Abdunnabi Khan, *fauzdār* of Mathura in the reign of Aurangzeb, was responsible for constructing the ghat. Above the steps leading down to the water is a paved terrace on which stand ornamental arches erected by Bir Singh Deo of Orchha and a Rana of Udaipur to commemorate their having donated their weight in gold here to the local brahmins (both mentioned in BBP). The terrace is enclosed on three sides by various buildings erected by princely families from the early eighteenth century onwards. Among the temples and shrines around the ghat are those of Krishna and Balarama, Muralimanohar, Radhadamodar, Yamuna, Lakshmi- or Satyanarayan, Languli Hanuman (at the beginning of the alley leading down to the ghat from Chhata Bazaar), Narasinha, a Mukut Mandir, and a *baiṭhak* of Vallabha.

An *āratī* ceremony is performed here early every morning and at sunset in honour of the Yamuna. The ghat is also the focal point for the celebration of Yamuna Chhat and Yam Dwitiya.

2 Gatashram

VP 150.35-7/R 252-3, 158.62/VM p.527; R 147, 464; BRam 105.73, 77, 85, & 109; VBV 3.77; KCC 4.4.15/CM p.179; BRat p.170; NBC 2.89; BYP; BP (*gateśvar nārāyaṇ*); BBP 3.20.

The *māhātmya* texts say that after bathing at Vishrantitirtha one should visit the deity of Gatashram, whose name probably means 'refreshed from fatigue'. In *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* it is one of the four deities governing the cardinal points of Mathura and is said to stand on the east, confirming that it is somewhere in the vicinity of Vishram Ghat. The original temple has disappeared, but the one that now bears the name, built in about 1800, may well be located on or near the original site. Its entrance is on Vishram Bazaar, opposite the alley that leads down to Vishram Ghat. Its custodians belong to the Shrivaishnava Sampraday and it houses a four-armed standing image of Vishnu/Krishna flanked by Radha and Kubja.

3 Kans Khar

ViP 5.20.76; VBV (*kaṃsakhāta*) 2.42, 3.33-4; KCC 4.4.16/CM pp.179, 187; BRat pp.183-4; VGV 27; BBP 3.30; Growse pp.141-2.

The 'ditch' or 'gully' of Kansa is so called because it is believed to have been formed when his body was dragged along by Krishna, as described in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*. Narayan Bhatt mentions it before Bhuteshwar, and other Gaudiya writers, who call it *kaṃsakhāli*, include it among places in and around the site of Rangbhumi (BRat) or mention it after Vishram Ghat (KCC, CM). Nawal Singh Pradhan agrees with this location and is unique in including it among the southern series of bathing places. The gully south of Vishram Ghat nowadays called Kans Khar is described by Growse as a natural water-course that had been arched over and was in his time closed because it had become an 'unhealthy sewer'.

4 Guhyatirtha/Sati Ghat and Charchika Devi

Guhyatirtha: VP 150.38/R 256/VM p.511, 158.27/VM p.524; VBV 3.25; BRat p.172; Sund.; BBP 3.30. Charchika: VP 158.16/VM p.523, 158.28-9/VM p.524, 158.69 (*caṇḍikā*, with VRI ms. v.l. *carcikā*); BRam 105.99; VBV 3.7-8, 3.31-2; BRat p.172; BBP ibid., 3.50 (*cachchikā*). On the name Charcika and temple to her at Varanasi cf. V. S. Agrawala 1970, p.94. Sansaramokshanatirtha: MS; BRam 105.55; NP 2.79.25. Balbhadra Ghat: BYP; Sati Burj: §5.12; Growse pp.148-9 (photograph and drawing for proposed restoration).

The sequence of places mentioned in the *Varāhapurāṇa* and by Narayan Bhatt suggests either that some confusion crept in regarding the sequence and nomenclature of places, or that Guhyatirtha and a goddess named Charchika were once located in the vicinity of Bhuteshwar. They first mention Charchika among places that appear to be situated near Dirghavishnu and Kansa's dwelling place. Narayan Bhatt says that the goddess was established by Vishnu beside a stream called Durgaseni. The *mantra* he gives invokes her as a Vaishnava form of Mahadurga.

When giving the sequence of bathing places, the *Varāhapurāṇa* mentions a Guhyatirtha after Vishrantitirtha and Gatashrama. Further on, however, both texts mention Charchika again among places between a thicket of kadamba trees and Bhuteshwar (cf. appendix 1).

Charchika, an epithet meaning literally 'repetition' (as of a sacred formula), is one of the names of Durga as well as of a cat-faced godess who protects new-born children. The name was current from the Gupta period onwards, and in the first half of the twelfth century one of the Paramar kings built a Charchika temple at Varanasi. The Charchika Devi of Mathura stands in a small shrine a few metres along a narrow street called Kilamath Gali, which begins near Sati Burj. The original features of the image of Charchika have been obscured by layers of vermilion. It looks as though it is either the top half of a standing figure or a seated one with raised arms or implements on either side of the head. The rounded chest suggests the breasts of a female figure, but it might also have been the top half of a Vishnu or Surya image. A relatively modern inscription beneath the image describes her as the 'ancestral goddess called Charchika who resides at the *pīṭh* of Mathura' (*śrī daśāvatāra carcikā mathurāpīṭha mahāna, mathurāpīṭha vāsinī kuladevī śrī carcikā nāma*). She is regarded as the ancestral goddess of the Samavedins of Mathura.

In one verse found in the *Varāhapurāṇa* and sources derived from it, Guhyatirtha is described as granting release to the whole world, a quality that three later sources have taken as referring to a separate Sansaramokshanatirtha. Most subsequent texts name Guhyatirtha as the second of the southern series of bathing places. BYP is exceptional in naming the second one as Balbhadra Ghat, saying that it is the place where the house built for Vitthalnath known as Satghara used to stand. Nowadays Guhyatirtha is more commonly referred to as Sati Ghat by virtue of the red sandstone tower that stands above it known as Sati Burj. It was built by Raja Bhagwandas of Jaipur to commemorate the immolation of his mother on the funeral pyre of his father, Bihar Mal (d.1574).

5 *Pippaladeshwar*

VP 158.64 (*piṅgalādeśvara*, but with *pippalād(y)eśvara* as a more common v.l., as found in other sources that quote this *śloka* (VM, MS); VBV 2.42, 3.78-9; Pippaleshwar: BP; BBP 3.30 & 48; = 'Bhairava' of NP 2.79.51? Jog Ghat: BYP; BBP ibid. (*joga māraga*). For the epithet and related myths cf. O'Flaherty 1980, pp.228-9, 232, with ref. to *Brahmapurāṇa* 110.85-210, *Śivapurāṇa* 3.24-5.

In the *Varāhapurāṇa* the deity called Pippaladeshwar is included in the circumambulation of Vishrantitirtha. It is said to have been worshipped by Pippalada, a son of Dadhicha who, according to other Puranas, performed austerities in order to kill the slayers of his father and became recognized as an incarnation of Shiva. Narayan Bhatt, however, explicitly says that Pippaladeshwar is an image of Vishnu. Pippaleshwar, as he is now called, is often said to be one of the four main Shivas of Mathura, but he is omitted from most pilgrimage itineraries, probably owing to the temple's association with the Naths rather than to its having disappeared and been revived. Alongside and around Pippaleshwar are a Batuka Bhairava shrine, various

stones representing Bhairava, a statue of a dog (his vehicle), and a modern marble image of Yogamaya.

The temple stands beside Prayag Ghat, though some call the bathing place opposite Yogamaya Ghat, Jog Ghat, or Bihar Ghat.

6 *Prayagatirtha/Prayag Ghat*

VP 150.39/R 257/VM p.511; R 258-9/VM ibid.; BRam 105.56; NP 2.79.26; KCC 4.4.16 (*priyāṇa-*)/CM p.179; BRat pp.172; Sund.; BYP (*prāg ghāṭ*); BP (+ Shringar Ghat); BBP 3.30. Galtawali Kunj: P. Mital 1968, p.571.

Opposite this ghat is an establishment called Ramanuj Kot or Galtawali Kunj, which houses a deity called Venimadhav. Although its custodians are now adherents of the Shrivaishnava Sampraday, it seems originally to have been a Ramanandi temple. Adjacent to it is Shringar Ghat, a relatively recent ghat mentioned only in modern itineraries.

7 *Kanakhalatirtha*

=KK p.189 Kanaka (a *guhyakṣetra*)?; VP 150.41/R 260/VM p.512; BRam 105.57; NP 2.79.27; BRat p.172; Sund.; BP; Kanakhar(a): BYP; BBP 3.32. Shyam Ghat: BYP; BP; BBP 3.30. Ram Ghat: BYP; BP; BBP 3.31; =NP 2.79.24 Ramatirtha?

The original Kanakhalatirtha must have been somewhere in the area now occupied by adjacent ghats named after the temples that stand above them. Shyam Ghat takes its name from a temple where the poet Chhitswami is said to have worshipped, which is now in the custody of priests who claim descent from him. Above Ram Ghat are temples of Rama (Ramji Dwar), Rameshwar, and an eight-armed Gopal. Dauji Ghat is named after the Pushtimarg temple of Dauji-Madanmohan. Some also say that there are bathing places here called Chenchawala Ghat and Dandi(ji ka) Ghat, a name said to refer to Dayanand Saraswati (1824-83), founder of the Arya Samaj, who resided here for a while.

8 *Tindukatirtha/Bengali or Govind Ghat*

VP 150.42/R261/VM p.512, 150.43-8, 166.15/R 458; BRam 105.58; NP 2.79.28; KCC 4.4.16 (*tindu-*)/CM p.179; BRat. p.172; Sund.; BYP (+Bengali Ghat); BBP 3.32 (Govind Ghat).

According to the *Varāhapurāṇa* this bathing place is named after a barber called Tinduka who came to Mathura after all his family had died, bathed here regularly, and was reborn as a brahmin. A Goswami of the temple of Govind Dev at Vrindaban constructed a flight of steps leading down to the river that is understood to incorporate or lie adjacent to the original Tindukatirtha. It has become known as Bengali or Govind Ghat, and is referred to as such in more recent itineraries.

9 Suryatirtha/Suraj Ghat and Vataswamitirtha/Bat Ghat

VP 150.49/R262/VM p.512, 150.50-54, 150.55/R 263/VM p.512, 158.74/VM p.528, 175; R 264-5/VM p.512; BRam 105.59; NP 2.79.29 (*paṭusvāmī-*); VBV 2.42, 3.86, also 3.91?; BRat p.172; Sund.; BYP; BP; BBP 3.33.

In view of the popularity of Surya in the early medieval period, it is likely that there was more than one important image of the deity at Mathura. The *Varāhapurāṇa* (175) narrates how Samba, who was exceedingly handsome, aroused the passions of the wives of his father, Krishna, who duly cursed him with leprosy. Following advice given by Narada, Samba went to Mathura and worshipped the Sun at Vatasurya in the morning, Dharalopaka at noon, and Krishnaganga in the evening. We are told that west of Vaikunthatirth there is a place named after the midday sun (*mādhyandinīyakatīrtha*), where Samba received teachings from Surya. After being cured of his leprosy, Samba set up three places of worship: a shrine south of the Yamuna at a place called Udayachala, an image in the centre called Kalapriya, which was to be worshipped at noon, and another at Mulasthana to be worshipped in the evening. The first and last of these were probably places outside of Mathura (the latter perhaps being Multan, an ancient centre of the Surya cult). The place he established at Mathura was named Sambapura, and the deity there is probably the one referred to elsewhere as the ancestral deity (*kuleśvara*) of the Mathura brahmins, who was to be worshipped at the conclusion of a circumambulation of the town (158.74). It is not clear whether the story of Samba relates to the Suryatirtha that is included by the *Varāhapurāṇa* among the southern series of bathing places. It is described as the spot where King Bali did penance and was rewarded with a 'wishing-gem' (*cintāmaṇi*) that Surya took from his own crown (cf. Bali Tila, below).

Rup Goswami adds two verses referring to a Vataswamitirtha, which may refer either to the same or an adjacent bathing place. Suraj Ghat is the first bathing place after the railway bridge that crosses the Yamuna, and some indicate a separate Vataswami or Bat Ghat, either next to it or further downstream beyond Dhruv Ghat.

10 Dhruvatirtha/Dhruv Ghat

See §2.2 for Dhruva myth. VP 150.56-8/R 266-7 & 271/VM p.512, VP 178; R 268-70/VM ibid., 462/VM p.521; BRam 105.60, 106.9 (*-sthāna*); NP 2.79.30; VBV 3.92 (*-kṣetra*); BRat p.173; Sund.; AV pp.450-1; BYP (*-kṣetra*); BP (*-ghāṭ*); *BBP 3.16 (-taṭa)* & 33.

In the *māhātmya* texts Dhruvatirtha is said to be named after the sage who performed austerities there. They recommend it as a place for offering *piṇḍa* and performing *śrāddha* rites for one's ancestors, especially during the dark half of the month of Ashwin (*pitṛpakṣa*). Also involved in the myth of Dhruva are Narada and the seven sages, after whom are named the nearby Narad Tila and Rishitirtha. In the *vārtā* narrative of the life of Krishnadas, the Ashtachhap poet, it is said that his soul was released from its condition of a ghost (*pret*) when Vitthalnath performed the *śrāddha* rite here for him. Nowadays this part of the riverside is called Dhuv Ghat and serves as a cremation ground.

10a Dhruv and Narad Tilas

See §2.2, and Maholi (below, §2). NBC 2.88 (*tapaḥsthāna* of Dhruva and Narada); Cunningham ASI I p.235; Growse p.147 (gives *guru paramparā*).

Near Dhruv Ghat is a mound, formerly a Buddhist site, that is known as Dhruv Tila and is mentioned in some of the later itineraries. Cunningham suggests that its name derives from *dhūl*, meaning 'dust', since it is 'undoubtedly composed' of the rubble and refuse from a brick kiln. According to followers of the Nimbark Sampraday this is one of their oldest establishments and was formerly their most important centre in Braj. The small temple that now stands on the mound, built in 1837, is said to replace a nearby ruined shrine that was dedicated to Dhruva. It houses an image and footprints of the sage and is in the custody of Goswamis who claim direct spiritual descent from Keshav Kashmiri Bhatt. Nimbarka is believed to have stayed here, as well as later leaders, including Keshav Kashmiri, Shribhatt, and Harivyasdev, whose *samādhi* memorials are on Narad Tila, a mound lying to the west. On the latter there is also a shrine of Narada and a temple dedicated to Radhadamodar.

10b Bathing places south of Dhruvatirtha

Tirtharaja: VP 150.58; BRam 105.61. Rishitirtha: VP 150.58 (as v.l. in VRI ms./R 271/VM p.513) - 60; R 272/VM p.513; BRam 105.62; NP 2.79.31 (*sapta(ṛṣi)-*); KCC 4.4.16 (*saptarṣi-*)/CM p.179; BRat p.174; BYP (1842: Rsitirtha, other versions & BP: *sapta ṛṣīn ko ṭīlo*); BBP 3.33 (*saptariṣi ghāṭa* + *ṭīlau*). Mokshatirtha: VP 150.60/R 273/VM p.513; R 289/VM p.514; BRam 105.63; KCC 4.4.16/CM p.179; BRat p.175; Sund. (+*avimukta-* & *adhirūḍha-*); BYP (1842 & VRI ms. only); BP; BBP 3.33 (*moccha tīrath*); P. Bihari p.18. (Dakshina)kotitirtha: VP 150.61 /R 274/VM p.513, 150.62, 158.10/VM p.522; 166.13/R 457, 167.4-5, 172.6; SP 3.3.1.36?; BRam 105.64, 66, 83 & 95; NP 2.79.34; VBV 3.11-12; KCC 4.4.16/CM p.179; BRat ibid.; VGV 28 (*rāvanakoṭi*); BYP (*rāvan-/rāmanakoṭi tīrth* or *rāman ko ṭīlo*); BP. Bodhitirtha: VP 150.63 (v.l. *vāyu-*, as in MS)/R 275/VM p.513; BRam 150.65 (*vāyu-*); NP 2.79.33 (*bodhinī-*); KCC 4.4.17/CM p.179; BRat ibid.; Sund. (*bodha-*); BYP (*buddhi-/budhya-*); BBP 3.34 (*budha tīratha*, one of the 'minor' (*upa-*) ghats).

Since Dhruva is identified with the pole star, the next bathing place along the river, Rishitirtha or (Sapta)rishi Ghat, is appropriately named after the seven sages who represent the constellation of Ursa Major. On a mound near the ghat is a shrine with images of the seven sages and Arundhati. Mokshatirtha is identified in some modern sources (e.g. P. Bihari) with Mahadev Ghat. The *Varāhapurāṇa*, followed by *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* and *Mathurāsetu*, mentions a Tirtharaja between Dhruva- and Rishitirthas, but it seems unlikely that there existed a bathing place of that name since it is mentioned in no other source. After Dhruv Ghat the circumambulatory path leaves the riverside and heads westward, thus the bathing places further downstream are not included in the normal perambulation of Mathura.

The *māhātmya* texts talk of the bathing places along the river at Mathura as lying between a 'northern' (*uttara*) and 'southern' (*dakṣiṇa*) Kotitirtha. Versions of *Braj yātrā parikramā* mention a Kotitirth as well as another, apparently separate, one

called Ravan (or Raman) Koti Tirth, or a mound called Ravan or Raman ko Tilo - a place where Ravana did penance. In most *māhātmya* texts Bodhitirtha is mentioned after the southern Kotitirtha, implying that it is nearby or further downstream. In the *Nāradapurāṇa* it is mentioned between Moksha- and Kotitirtha as Bodhinitirtha. It is said to be a place suitable for offering *piṇḍa* to one's ancestors.

11 Bali Tila

NBC 2.88 (*yajñasthāna valer*); Sund.; BYP; BP (+Vamana); BBP 3.33.

A short distance along the *parikramā* path, to the right, is a mound known as Bali Tila. On it is a shrine with images of Bali, Vamana, and Shukra (cf. BhP 8.15-24 and Suryatirtha above). It is believed that the dust found on this mound is black sacrificial ash (*yajñabhasma*), and that dust found at Saptarishi Tila is the white variety. The path also passes close by Nag Tila, but it is not included in the pilgrimage itinerary. On it stand stone slabs carved with serpents that are worshipped especially on Nag Panchami. Another mound nearby, on which stands an image of Hanuman, is called Kaliyugi Tila.

12 Rangbhumi

KCC 4.4.18-19/CM p.179; BRat pp.183-4 (*mañcasthāna*); NBC 2.86; BYP; BYP 3.48, 8.25. Place where Kansa's washerman (*dhobī*, for *rajaka*, cf.§2.27) was slain: BRat; where the bow was broken/Dhanush Tilo: BRat, BYP; Kubja's house: BBP 3.36 (*kūvarī kau makāna*); where Kuvalayapida was slain: VBV 2.42, 3.94, BRat, BYP, BP, BBP 3.36; where Chanura and Mushtika were slain: VBV 2.42, 3.95; Kans Tila: BP, BBP 3.35, =VBV 2.42 & 3.96 (*kaṃsaśayanasthala*)? =NBC 2.87 (*kaṃsavadhasthāna*)?: where Ugrasena was imprisoned and anointed king: VBV 2.42, 3.97-8.

After Bali Tila the path passes through an area named after the arena (*raṅgabhūmi* or *mañca*) where Krishna and Balarama slew Kansa and his wrestlers. Places associated with events preceding the slaying of Kansa are to be seen in the area, most of which are mentioned in one or other of the itineraries, but none of them in the *māhātmya* texts. The first place approached is Dhanush Tila, the mound where Krishna is said to have broken the bow. After this comes a shrine with figures of Krishna, Balarama, and the gardener (called Sudama), followed by another with images of Krishna and the hunchbacked woman Kubja. The latter stands above the path just before it passes under a bridge of the Mathura-Hathras railway line. Nearby are shrines commemorating the slaying of the elephant Kuvalayapida and Kansa's wrestlers Chanura and Mushtika. Kans Tila, the place commemorating the slaying of Kansa, lies further along the route and is visited after Rangeshwar Mahadev. The mound rises beside the road between the bus station and Holi Gate, just beside the path leading to Rangeshwar.

13 Rangeshwar

NP 2.79.51 (*raṅgeśa*); BYP (except 1819); BP; BBP 3.35 & 48.

This Shiva temple is a popular place of worship for local people and is included in the circumambulation of Mathura. There appears to have been a centre of the Lakulisha or Pashupata sect here in the fourth century (cf.§4.12), but Rangeshwar is not mentioned in any text older than the *Nāradapurāṇa*, where it is included among the four main Shiva temples of Mathura. Its present popularity may be due to the transformation of the road near which it stands into a busy thoroughfare and market street linking the old town with the Cantonment and bus station.

14 Saptasamudrakakupa

VP 155.13-14? (cf. §7.10, below §§66.36 & 71.3, and *arkasthala* in appendix 1. BRam 106.117-121; KCC 4.4.20/CM p.180 (*-kuṇḍa*); NBC 2.89; BYP; BP; P. Mital 1966 p.153.

A well named after the seven seas is mentioned in several texts, but the older sources probably refer to one located on the other side of the Yamuna, or at Vrindaban, rather than to this one in the compound of Mathura Museum. Newly-wedded wives traditionally worship here on the day of Nag Panchami.

15 Shivakunda/Shiv Tal

Shivakunda: VP 158.26/VM p.524, VBV 3.19 (see appendix 1); Shiv Tal: BYP (except 1819 ms.); BP; BBP 3.39; Growse pp.135-7 (description, illustrations, inscriptions, fair on Bhadon I.11).

The *Varāhapurāṇa* and Narayan Bhatt both mention a Shivakunda along with other deities and places that are no longer extant. Sanskrit and Persian inscriptions at the modern Shiv Tal, built by Raja Patnimal in 1807, declare it to be a restoration of the original bathing place. It is a large rectangular tank with kiosks in the corners and enclosed by a high boundary wall, just outside of which is a temple of Achaleshwar Mahadev that was built at the same time. It is included in the circumambulation and/or is visited by pilgrims on their way from Mathura to Maholi.

16 Balbhadrakund

=VP 158.34/VM p.525: *balihrada*?; =BRam 105.100: *bālahradā*?; BRat p.184 (Baladeva-); BYP; BP (+Narasinha); BBP 3.35.

On their way to Balbhadrakund pilgrims pass by the mound known as Kankali Tila, once the site of an important Jain establishment (cf.§§4.4, 4.12). Among the trees on the mound are small shrines dedicated to Hanuman and Kankali Devi, whose name means 'skeleton goddess', though according to a folk etymology she was a Kali deity worshipped by Kansa. A short distance away, beside the junction

of the road leading to Govardhan, is the large masonry tank called Balbhadrakund, nowadays dry for most of the year. Around it are Bhuteshwar Akhara, with an image of Bankhandeshwar Hanuman, and shrines of Dauji, Krishna, Lakshminarayan, Varaha, Krishna and Uddhava, Jagannath, and Narasinha.

17 Bhuteshwar

Cf.§4.12. VTK p.18?; VP 158.31/VM p.524, 166.1 ff. (166.2 & 5/R 235-6/VM p.510: *bhūtapati*), 167.19; see also VP 156.13-17; PP 5.73.48 & 51b-52/R 237-9, 5.73.49-51a; BRam 105. 17-19 (*bhūteśa*), 81 & 99; NP 2.79.51; VBV 3.5 & 35; KCC 4.4.2/CM p.180; CC 2.17.191; BRat p.169; NBC 2.89 BYV; GVY 7-8; VGV 26; BYP; BP; BBP 3.36 & 48 (+Patala Devi).

The *māhātmya* texts declare Bhuteshwar, 'Lord of the Spirits', to be the tutelary deity (*kṣetrapāla*) of the area of Mathura. The epithet may be related to a verse in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (10.36.26) in which Kansa orders the sacrifice of animals to Bhutaraja ('King of Spirits', viz. Shiva) as part of the preparations for the arrival of Krishna and Balarama in Mathura. It is possible that Jinaprabha Suri's reference to the temple of a *jakkhabhūassa* (*bhūtayakṣa*) called *ajjamaṃgū* (*ārymaṅgū*) refers to the Bhuteshwar of Hindu sources. The pilgrim from Bikaner, who visited in 1656, talks of a 'marvellous temple' (*adbhut deharo*) here. The present temple, built by the Marathas, stands before a mound that appears to have been the original location of a Hindu shrine and an older Buddhist one. In one corner of the temple compound is a flight of steps leading down to a subterranean shrine of Patal Devi ('goddess of the underworld').

18 Potarakund

BYP; BP; BBP 3.37 (*potalā-*); Growse p.131; P. Mital 1966 p.154.

Potarakund is a large and deep tank on the north-east side of the Janmasthan that never manages to retain much water. The flights of steps that surround it were constructed by Mahadji Sindhiya in 1782 and were restored by his descendants in 1850. The name of the tank is said to derive from the fact that Devaki washed Krishna's nappies (*potarā*) in it, or the garments she wore when she gave birth to him.

19 Krishna Janmasthan/Janmabhumi

Cf.§4.11; VTK p.18 (*ittha nayarīe kaṇhavāsudevassa bhāvititthaṃkarassa jammo*); R 220/SP 2.3.1.32, R 221-4/VM pp.508-9 (*janmasthāna, -sadana, -sadman,* in the month of Karttik, esp.II.11); CC 2.18.69?; BRat p.168; NBC 2.86; GVY 7 (*janmasthala*). For the modern complex see H. Sharma (ed.). Keshavdev: VP 156.6/VM p.509, 156.7/R 225/VM ibid., 156.30/R 226/VM ibid., 158.2-3/VM p.522, 161.15/R 157/VM p.506, 161.62-3, 167.39/R 232/VM p.509; R 36, 221, 233, 464; BRam 105.8-16, 81 & 114; NP 2.79.53; CC 2.17.156; BRat p.168; BYV & VGV 25 (*keśorāya*); BYP (*keśav-/kesorāy*); BP; BBP 3.39-41, 7.56.

The modern complex designated as the birthplace of Krishna stands on the Katra site, which in ancient times was dominated by an important Buddhist establishment but was eventually taken over by Hindus. The last medieval temple of Keshavdev to be built on the site was demolished on the orders of Aurangzeb and replaced by a mosque. References to Keshavdev in sources written before this time presumably refer to one of the medieval temples that stood on the Katra site. In the *māhātmya* texts it is evidently the most important deity and is said to stand in the centre of the lotus representing Mathura.

Efforts to revive the site began in 1943-4, when Madan Mohan Malaviya and Jugal Kishor Birla bought it from descendants of Raja Patnimal, who had acquired it from the East India Company in the early nineteenth century. A Shri Krishna Janmasthan Trust was set up and construction work began in 1953, after legal disputes with Muslim interests were finally settled. The new temple, slightly higher than the adjacent mosque, was founded by Ram Krishna Dalmiya, with additions paid for by members of other wealthy business families, including the newspaper magnate Ramnath Goenka. Against the rear wall of the mosque is an underground chamber representing the cell in which Krishna was born. The surrounding complex includes a Bhagavat Bhavan containing the text of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* inscribed on copper plates, idols of the main Hindu deities, statues of Malaviya and Birla, electronically operated tableaux of scenes from the stories of Krishna and Rama, an Ayurved Bhavan, International Guest House, library, shops, terraces, and an area for preaching and theatrical performances.

19a Karagar Mandir

= KC 4.4.5 (*bandhanāgāra*)/CM p.179 (*kārāgāra*)?; = BRat p.287?; NBC 2.86 (*kārāgāra*); BYP & BP (*kārāgṛha kī ṭhaur*); BBP 3.38 (*bandī graha*).

On the north-east side of the Janmasthan complex is a small temple referred to in nineteenth century sources as the prison house where Krishna was born. It is a small and nowadays neglected enclosure with a shrine containing images of Krishna and his parents. It stands in a quarter on the north-east side of Potarakund that is called Mallpura or Malhapura, popularly believed to be so called because Kansa's wrestlers lived here.

19b Wells near Janmasthan

Chatuhsamudrikakupa: VP 156.42/R 295, 163; R 463; NP 2.79.52; BRat p.180; Sund. Gyan Bawri: BP; BBP 3.37. Krishnakup: BRat ibid.; VVV; BYP. Kubjakup: NP 2.79.52; BRat ibid.; Sund.; VVV; BYP.

A well named after the four oceans (Chatuhsamudrikakupa), which is mentioned in a few sources, is believed to refer to one located between Janmasthan and the temple of Garteshwar. Gyan Bawri, a name perhaps derived from the famous well at Varanasi, lies near Bhuteshwar beside the path leading to Potarakund. As its name implies, it is said to bestow wisdom. Two wells mentioned in later sources after Krishna's birthplace are Krishnakup and Kubjakup. Both of these are

included in Jagatanand's list of wells, but without their location being specified. The latter, perhaps related to an image or place of Kubjika mentioned in older itineraries (cf. appendix 1), is nowadays identified as the well beside the road between the Janmasthan and Sapna Cinema.

20 Garteshwar Mahadev

VP 158.41 (VM p.525: *śvarregattaṃ śivam*), 167.19, 174.5; VBV 3.45-6; NBC 2.89; BBP 3.38; Growse p.122.

This temple on one of the *dhūlkoṭ* mounds is dedicated to Shiva as 'Lord of the Cave' (or 'hole'; Growse suggests 'God of the Moat'). The present temple has a recently constructed porch and is presumably a restoration or reinvention of the one mentioned in the older sources.

21 Mahavidya Devi

Cf.§4.12. VP 158.43/VM p.525, 167.37/R 234/VM p.510 (*mahāvidyeśvarī*); BRam 105.81 & 102 (*mahāvighneśvarī*); NP 2.79.51; VBV 3.50-1; CC 2.17.191; BRat p.169; NBC 2.90; BYV; BYP (all versions except 1819 & 1842 mss.); BP; BBP 3.37 & 50. Prabhalalli: VP 158.42 (v.l. *prabhāmallī*); BRam 105.102 (*prabhāvatī*); Sanketakeshwari: VP 158.44-6/VM p.525-6; BRam 105.102-3; VBV 3.48-52. Ambikavana: VTK p.19 (*aṃbiā*)?; VBV 3.51 (*mahāvidyāmbikāsthalam*); KCC 4.10.8/CM p.186; BRat p.288; Sund.; Growse p.135.

In the *māhātmya* texts Mahavidya is said to be the guardian deity of the area, to have been established for the protection of Krishna, and to bestow success or spiritual accomplishments (*siddhi*). As pointed out by Growse, the name Mahavidya and archaeological fragments found here suggest that it was once a Buddhist site. The present temple, standing on a high mound, was built by the Marathas in the latter half of the eighteenth century and placed in charge of a Tantric named Samrat Dikshit. It was later restored at the end of the last century. The central deity of Mahavidya, installed when the temple was constructed, is flanked by two smaller images that are referred to as Bagalamukhi (or Pitambara) and Pratyangira, or are identified with Prabhalalli and Sanketeshwari, two goddesses mentioned along with Mahavidya in older sources. According to Narayan Bhatt the former is an image of Ambika that was installed by Devaki for the protection of Krishna. She may be related to the Ambika mentioned by Jinaprabha Suri as one of the tutelary goddesses of Mathura. The *Varāhapurāṇa* says that Sanketakeshwari was the goddess worshipped by Krishna, Balarama, and their companions in preparation for their slaying of Kansa, while Narayan Bhatt relates her to the meeting of Krishna and the Gopis. In the corners of the shrine are two old images encrusted with vermilion. The one on the left is said to have been the original image of Mahavidya and the other is identified as Bhairava. The Sanketakeshikunda mentioned in *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* presumably refers to the dry and disused tank near the mound. The area around the Mahavidya mound, stretching as far as Saraswatikund and Saraswati Sangam, is identified with the 'forest of Ambika' mentioned in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. In accordance with the

legend, which says that the herdsmen bathed in the Saraswati and worshipped Pashupati, there is a small shrine dedicated to the latter on the slopes of the Mahavidya mound and a rivulet that flows through the area is identified with the Saraswati. Murari Gupta talks of Ambikavana as an area on the banks of the Saraswati where the Gopis worshipped Shiva and Gauri.

22 *Saraswatikund*

BYP; BP; Growse pp.134-5 (inscription).

An inscription over the entrance to the Saraswati temple here records that it was built when the tank was restored by a Goswami of Mathura in 1846. The tank, however, is almost always dry and the temple is neglected. The usual route followed by pilgrims goes from here towards Gokarneshwar, but local people, after crossing the nearby Delhi road, may go further north to the temple of Chamunda Devi and then proceed to Ganesh Tila, places that are also included in the joint circumambulation of Mathura and Vrindaban. This route crosses the Vrindaban-Mathura road at a recently founded institution called Gayatri Tapobhumi, a place visited by many pilgrims, where a daily 'Gayatri' *yajña* is held.

23 *Vighnarajatirtha/Ganesh Ghat*

Vighnaraja(tirtha): VP 152.22/R 287/VM p.514, 152.23-4, 158.48/VM p.526; BRam 105.70,* 101 & 103; NP 2.79.46, =2.79.52 Ganesha?; VBV 3.56, 3.63 (*-kuṇḍa*); BRat p.178; Sund; BYP (*gaṇeś tīrth*, in VRI & 1842 mss. only). (Uttara)Kotitirtha: VP 152.25/R 288/VM p.514, 158.50/VM p.526, 166.13/R 457, 167.4-5, 167.19, 172.6; SP 3.3.1.36?; BRam 105.67, 71 & 103-4; VBV 3.59; BRat ibid. (*paramakoṭi*); Sund. (*gokoṭi*); BYP (om. 1819 ms.). Ganesh (or Vinayaka) Tila: cf.§4.12; Growse p.125. Manasatirtha: VP 152.20-1; BRam 105.70; MS. Anantatirtha: NP 2.79.47; MS.

Vighnarajatirtha is nowadays more often called Ganesh Ghat, and is sometimes referred to as Senapati Ghat because the masonry steps were provided by one of Mahadji Sindhiya's generals. The *māhātmya* texts place Kotitirtha above Vighnarajatirtha, but in more recent listings Kotitirtha is omitted and Ganesh Ghat is named as the northernmost bathing place. The *Varāhapurāṇa* mentions a Ganesha deity both at Vighnaraja- and Kotitirtha, which suggests that the two bathing places are adjacent to each other, if not identical. Narayan Bhatt mentions Vighnaraja between Saraswati and Gargi-Sargi, invokes Ganesha in the *mantra* given for Uttarakoti, and later mentions a Vighnarajakunda just before Chakratirtha. Either the sources are talking about more than one Ganesha deity, or the same one both independently and in connection with Vighnaraja- and/or Kotitirtha. The *Varāhapurāṇa* (followed by *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* and *Mathurāsetu*) also includes a Manasatirtha here, but specifies that it is to the west of Mathura, which suggests that it could be a misplaced reference to Manasi Ganga at Govardhan.

Today the only Ganesha temple in the area is the one on Ganesh Tila, a mound near Ganesh Ghat that was once a Buddhist site. On display in the temple is a

'mask' (referred to as *colā* or *mukhautā*) formed from layers of vermilion with which the deity had been coated. Just as the Buddhist term *vināyaka* led to the association of the mound with Ganesha, so the nearby Ananda mound was renamed as Ananta and has given rise to an Anantatirtha, mentioned in *Nārada-purāṇa* and *Mathurāsetu* as the northernmost bathing place. The name implies an association with Balarama-Shesha and the incident that is normally reckoned to have taken place further upstream at Akrur Ghat (cf. below §66.42). Sawai Jai Singh built a mansion on Ganesh Tila and accordingly the settlement around it is known as Jai Singh Pura.

24 Gokarna/Gokarneshwar and surroundings

Cf.§4.12. For story of Gokarna see PP 6.196-7, (*Bhāgavatapurāṇamāhātmya* 4-5). Gokarneshwar: VP 158.47/VM p.526, 168-171; Gokarna: R 290/VM p.515 (*-tīrtha*), 463/VM p.521; BRam 105.103; NP 2.79.45; VBV 3.54; CC 2.17.191; BRat pp.178, 288; Sund. (*-tīrth*); BYV (*gokaranes*); VGV 28; BYP (om. 1819 ms., *+gautam ṛṣi kī samādhi*); BP; BBP 2.45, 3. 27 & 48; Growse p.133; Eck pp.186-7 (Gokarna at Varanasi).

The temple of Gokarneshwar, like the Mathura radio station behind which it is situated, stands on an area of raised ground near the Yamuna that in Growse's time was known as 'Kailas'. The Kushana statue enshrined here has presumably been given its epithet, meaning 'cow-eared', by virtue of what appear to be large ears on either side of its head. There are other Shiva temples in India with the same name, the most famous being the place of pilgrimage on the coast of Karnataka. The name is also given to an attendant (*gaṇa*) of Shiva who guards the western quarter of Varanasi. In the context of Mathura the nomenclature may perhaps be related to a story found in the *Padmapurāṇa* that serves to illustrate the glory of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. Here Gokarna, human apart from his having cow's ears, was the beautiful offspring of a cow who was fed a fruit by a woman who was herself reluctant to become pregnant by eating it. The woman deceived her husband by feigning pregnancy and then adopting a son born to her sister. This boy, who grew up to be wicked, unclean, and dissolute, eventually became a terrifying spirit after being murdered by his courtesans. Gokarna effected his redemption and earned for himself a place in Goloka by reciting and giving sermons on the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. The *Varāhapurāṇa* tells a long story about a merchant of Mathura called Gokarna who, by building a temple for the Shiva deity of the same name, laying out gardens around it, securing the salvation of a parrot, and performing a sacrifice, is finally blessed with children.

In the *Varāhapurāṇa* Gokarneshwar is referred to as 'Mahadeva', and likewise he is today worshipped as a manifestation of Shiva and is considered to be one of the four main Shiva deities of Mathura. Narayan Bhatt, however, refers to him as a sage (*ṛṣi*) who earned a vision of Krishna by performing austerities here for eighteen years. In the courtyard adjoining the temple is a pedestal that is said to be the *samādhi* of Gautama, a Vedic seer, though the name has obvious Buddhist associations.

24a Gargi-Sargi

VP 158.49 (*gaṅgā- sādhvī-*, crit.ed. v.l.: *mārgīṃ sarvāṃ, gargīṃ sādhvīṃ, gaṅgā(ṃ) sādhvī, gaṅgāṃ sādhīṃ, gārgīṃ sārvo*; ms. v.l.: *gaṅgā śārdhaṃ > gārgī śārgī*)/VM p.526 (*gārgaṃ sārvaṃ*), 158.54 (*gārgyatīrtha*, ms. v.l.: *gaṅgā- > gārgī-*, MS: *gārgya-*)/VM p.526 (*gārgi-*); VBV 3.57 (*gargī sārgī*), 3.61 (*gārgīnadītīrtha*); BRam 105.104 (*gārgyatīrtha*), 105.103 (*gaṅgārudramahālaya*); BYP (VRI & 1842 mss. only: *gārgī sārgī tīrth*); MS (*gaṃgāṃ sadhvīm*); BBP 3.29 (*nāragī-sāragī*); Growse p.134; R. C. Sharma 1984, p.68 (MM nos.73.30-31).

Gargi and Sargi are said to be wives of Gokarna, as stated by Narayan Bhatt, and are consequently identified by local pundits with Sati and Parvati. The names, however, have obviously confused the scribes, for they have produced a number of variants that refer to the Ganges, are feminine derivatives of Garga (the name of several sages), or might mean 'chaste and virtuous' (*sādhvī*), 'related to Shiva' (*śarva-*), 'procreative' (?, *sargī*), 'accomplished' (?, *sādhī*), or 'possessed of a host' or 'courageous' (?, *śardha*). Both Narayan Bhatt and the *Varāhapurāṇa* mention them after dealing with Gokarna, the Saraswati river, and Vighnaraja, and before Rudramahalaya and Uttarakoti. According to some they are images on either side of Gokarna, but Growse locates them in a shrine immediately under the bridge over the Saraswati on the Vrindaban road and says that they are sometimes called 'Great and Little Pathwari', forming part of a group of rude vermilion stones which do duty for Bhairava, Sitala, and Masani. This refers to a complex of shrines opposite the radio station that is called Masani Devi. R. C. Sharma reports that two small Kushana period Buddhist statues ('worshipped as female deities under the name 'Nagari' and 'Sagari') from the site of Gokarneshwar were made over to Mathura Museum when their heads were broken off by miscreants.

After mentioning Uttarakoti, Narayan Bhatt and the *Varāhapurāṇa* refer respectively to a river called Gargi and a Gargyatirtha, by which they may mean a stretch of the Yamuna, as suggested by Nawal Singh Pradhan, who gives Naragi-Saragi as the name of the northernmost ghat. His version of the name is presumably the result of contamination with *naraka-svarga* ('heaven and hell'). Gargi-Sargi is also given in some versions of BYP as the name of a bathing place (*tīrth*) mentioned between Saraswatikund and Uttarakoti, a sequence that may be taken as indicating a stretch of the Saraswati that was associated with the Masani Devi complex, though the rivulet is hardly suitable for bathing in.

24b

Mahatirtha: VP 158.54; VBV 2.42, 3.53. Shivakshetra: VP 152.27-8; BRam 105.71. Rudramahalaya: VP 158.50 & 54/VM p.526; BRam 105.103 (cf. Gargi); VBV 3.58, 3.62.

The *Varāhapurāṇa* refers to Mahatirtha, as does Narayan Bhatt, who says that it is a pond or stretch of water (*sarovara*) in the area where Gokarna and seven other deities are located. The *Varāhapurāṇa* also gives the name Shivakshetra to an area near Uttarakoti and refers to Rudra under the name of 'Mahalaya' ('great abode, universal spirit') being located beside the Gargi river. According to Narayan Bhatt

he is enshrined with Parvati. Rather than being a reference to Gokarneshwar, this probably refers to another Shiva shrine. Today the nearest Shiva temple is that of Nilkantheshwar, a mid-nineteenth building with a tall spire, beside which is a smaller Shiva shrine, situated near the confluence of the Yamuna and Saraswati.

24c

Dashashwamedha(tirtha): VP 152.19/R 286/VM p.514; R 289/VM ibid.; BRam 105.70; NP 2.79.44; KCC 4.4.22/CM p.180; BRat p.178; Sund.; GVY 70; BYP; BP; BBP 2.45, 3.27, 6.38. Chakratirtha: VTK p.19 (*cakkatitthaṃ*); VP 158.54 (as ms. v.l.)/VM p.526, 160, 166.15/R 459; R 285/VM p.514 (but not in corresponding verse in VP, viz. 152.17), R 464/VM p.521; NP 2.79.43; VBV 3.64; BRat p.177; BYP; BP. Bhadreshwar: VBV ibid. & 3.65; VP 158.55/VM p.526, 160.54-5; BRam 105.105.

The bathing place opposite Gokarneshwar is sometimes called Gokarna Ghat, but between here and Saraswati Sangam the texts also talk of Dashashwamedha-, Chakra- and Somatirtha, though the accepted location of the latter is further downstream (see below, §28). Dashashwamedhatirtha is probably to be identified with the stone ghat near the temple of Nilkantheshwar. Chakratirtha, in its Prakrit form, is mentioned by Jinaprabha Suri as the last (and therefore northernmost) of the five (Hindu) bathing places. The *Varāhapurāṇa* devotes a chapter (160) to a story telling how someone was absolved of the sin of killing a brahmin by bathing at Chakratirtha, but (in the most widely accepted version of the text) it is not included earlier when the bathing places are enumerated, and is hence omitted in *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa*, though it does appear in the corresponding verses of the *māhātmya* of Rup Goswami and Mitra Mishra. Although the sequence in which it is mentioned in the *māhātmya* texts and by Narayan Bhatt implies that it lies north of Saraswati Sangam, it is generally thought to be south of it. Some of the texts also mention an image or *liṅga* called Bhadreshwar that was located at Chakratirtha.

24d Ambarish Tila

Cf.§4.12, BhP 10.4-5. BYP (om. 1819 & 1842); BP; BBP 3.28.

Near Saraswati Sangam is a mound known as Ambarish Tila. It is associated with Ambarisha, a king of the Ikshwaku lineage who, according to the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, performed austerities there. The sage Durvasa was enraged and sent a demoness against him, but Vishnu intervened and slew her with his discus (*cakra*), an incident that provides some scriptural authority for associating the mound with the nearby Chakratirtha. A temple of Hanuman now stands on the mound, but archaeological finds indicate that there was once a Buddhist *stūpa* here.

25 Saraswati Sangam

VP 158.56/VM p.527, 168.4 & 10, (171.9), 172; R 462/ VM p.521; BRam 105.105; VBV 3.68; KCC 4.4.22/CM p.180 (*-kuṇḍa*, v.l. *-saṅgama*); BYP; BP; BBP 3.28.

Saraswati(nadi): VP 158.48/VM p.526, 174.58; BRam 105.105; NP 2.79.42 (*prācī-sarasvatī*); VBV 3.55; KCC 4.3.14/CM p.178, 4.10.8/CM p.186, CM p.180 (*-kuṇḍa*, v.l. *-saṅgama*); Sund. Saraswatipatana: VP 152.16/R 284/VM p.514; BRam 105.69 (*-dīpanaka*, v.l. *-pātanaka*); BRat p.177; Sund. Vamana: VP 172.53 & 62; NP 2.79.48-9.

What the texts and local devotees wishfully refer to as the Saraswati is really no more than a stream serving as a drain that becomes increasingly filthy as it nears the Yamuna, though the amount of water does increase for a while during the monsoon. It begins to the west of Mathura and flows through the area that is designated Ambikavana (see above, §21). The *Varāhapurāṇa* (172) tells how five ghosts (*piśāca*) were liberated by resorting to Saraswati Sangam (the confluence of the Saraswati and the Yamuna), as a result of which it is also called 'Pishachatirtha'. It particularly recommends worshipping Vamana there on Bhadon II.12 (*vāmanadvādaśī*). Accordingly a temple of Vamana, which in its present form does not seem to be much older than the early nineteenth century, is located above the Saraswati, beside the road bridge that crosses it. Saraswatipatana ('Descent of (the) Saraswati') might originally have been an alternative name for the confluence, though the sequence in which the bathing places are mentioned implies that it is downstream from Chakratirtha. Only later Gaudiya sources include it in their enumeration of the bathing places.

26 Krishnaganga

VP 173-4, 174.59/R 291/VM p.515, 175.39; R 462/VM p.521; NP 2.79.52; BRat pp.179, 288; Sund.; BYV (*kisan gaṅgā*); BYP; BP; BBP 3.26 (+Nilakantha); P. Mital 1968 p.74; B. Caturvedi 1975. Kalinjara: VTK p.19 (*kāliṃjaratitthaṃ*): VP 173.6 (*kālañjara*), 174. 15, 17, 58 & 70; Sund. (*kālañjara*); BP (*kālīharnāth*).

In the *māhātmya* texts and some later sources Krishnaganga is not included in sequential listings of the bathing places but is mentioned separately. Two chapters of the *Varāhapurāṇa* give a story illustrating the benefits of bathing there, at the beginning of which it is stated that it lies between Soma- and Vaikunthatirtha and was the location of the hermitage of Krishnadwaipayana Vyasa, the supposed author of the Puranas. The standard explanation for Vyasa's being called 'Dwaipayana' ('island-born') is that he was born on an island (*dvīpa*) in the Yamuna. Local scholars add that his father was a resident of Parasoli (supposed to derive from *parāśasthalī*), and that his mother married Shantanu, the king associated with Satoha.

The presiding deity of the place is said to be Shiva under the name of Kalinjara. It it is recommended, in conjunction with worship of the sun, for those suffering from leprosy and similar afflictions. Today a *liṅga* called Kalinjara (sometimes referred to as Kalindeshwar) is to be seen here, and above the steps leading down to the Yamuna is a building housing relatively modern images of an eighteen-armed Durga and a five-faced and ten-armed Hanuman.

27 Somatirtha

= KK p.190 Somakunda?; VP 152.14-15/R 283/VM p.514, 158.55/VM pp.526-7 (+Someshwar), 166.15/R 458, 173.3; BRam 105.69 & 105 (+Somesha); NP 2.79.41; VBV 3.65-7 (*-kuṇḍa(tīrtha)* +Someshwar); KCC 4.4.22/CM p.180; BRat p.177; Sund.; BYP; BP; BBP 3.26 (+*somesura*).

In their itinerary for the circumambulation of Mathura, Narayan Bhatt, the *Varāhapurāṇa*, and *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* include Somatirtha among places north of Saraswati Sangam, but in doing so the latter two texts contradict their earlier sequential listing of the bathing places, according to which it lies further downstream at the generally accepted location. Two Shiva shrines here are known as Someshwar and Rameshwar. In both of them, as elsewhere in the vicinity, old pieces of sculpture are embedded in the walls.

27a Bathing places adjacent to Somatirtha

Vaikunthatirtha: VTK p.19 (*vekuṃtatitthaṃ*); VP 158.57/VM p.527, 161.1-11/R 292/VM p.515, 166.14/R 458, 173.3; R 462/VM p.521; BRam 105.106; BRat p.179; Sund.; BYP; BP; BBP 3.26; (see appendix 1). Brahmalokatirtha: VP 152.12-13/R 282/VM p.514; BRam 105.69; NP ibid.; BRat p.177 (Brahma-); Sund. Ghantabharana(ka)tirtha: VP 152.11/R 281/VM p.513, 158.56/VM p.527 (+Garudakeshava); BRam 105.68 & 105-6 (+Garudakeshava); NP 2.79.40; VBV 3.69 (+*gaṇḍakeśava*); KCC 4.4.23/CM p. 180 (*kaṇṭhābharaṇa-*); BRat p.176; Sund.; BYP (*ghaṇṭāvaran*); BP (*ghaṇṭākaran*); BBP ibid. (*ghaṃṭaha karṇa* and *kaṃsa dauhana ghāṭ*). Nagatirtha: VP 152.10/R 280/VM p.513; BRam 105.68 & 107; NP 2.79.39; KCC (*nara-*)/CM ibid.; BRat ibid.; Sund. Dharapatana(ka)-tirtha: VP 152.7-8, 152.9/R 279 (*dhārāsampātana*)/VM p.513, 158.57 (*dhārā-lopanaka, v.l. -lepanaka*)/VM p.527 (*-pātanaka*); BRam 105.68 & 106; NP 2.79.38 (*dhārāyatana-*); VBV 3.71-2 (*dhārālopanaka*); BRat ibid.; Sund.; BYP; BBP 3.25 (*dhārāpadī*, +Narasinha). Go Ghat: BYP. Vasudev Ghat: BYP (1901 only); BP; Growse p.146.

Some other bathing places mentioned in Sanskrit sources also seem to have been located between Somatirtha and Kans Kila. The location of Vaikunthatirtha, although it is among the oldest bathing places, is not described clearly or consistently in the various sources. Older texts imply that it lies between Saraswati Sangam and Krishnaganga, but in more recent sources it is usually located further downstream after Ghantabharanakatirtha. A Brahmalokatirtha, apparently upstream from the latter, is also mentioned in the *māhātmya* sources when they enumerate the bathing places, but it is not mentioned again in the *Varāhapurāṇa* when it describes the itinerary for the circumambulation of Mathura. Narayan Bhatt accounts for the name Ghantabharanaka by saying that Vishnu wakes up here when a bell is sounded on the day before he ends his annual four-month sleep. Two later texts appear to have confused the name with Ghantakarna ('bell-eared'), an attendant of Shiva. Some sources refer to the presence here of an image of Garudakeshava (Vishnu on Garuda).

The *māhātmya* texts mention a Nagatirtha, which appears to be the next bathing place downstream, and then Dharapatanaka- or Dharasampatanatirtha. The

intended meaning of the variant forms of the name is probably that this is a place where water descends. Growse suggests that it was given this appelation because it is located on a projecting point beneath Kans Kila, where it bears the full force of the 'fall of the stream' (viz. the Yamuna). Narayan Bhatt (who calls it Dharalopanaka) says that it is so called because here the stream of activity arising in the minds of the gods is never interrupted.

Nowadays the bathing places adjacent to Somatirtha, called Somati Ghat in some modern sources, are referred to by various names. The bathing place in front of a Balarama temple is called Dauji Ghat; the one above which a Nimbarki temple of Giriraj (or Govardhannath) stands is called Satsang Ghat, or, by members of the Nimbark Sampraday, 'Old (*purāṇa*) Vishram Ghat'; the one opposite the Rameshwar shrine is called Ram Ghat. Further downstream is a shrine of Annapurna, followed by Vasudev Ghat, where there is a shrine containing crudely fashioned images of Krishna's parents, Vasudeva and Devaki. Beyond this is Go Ghat, where there is a Sikh gurudwara and shrines of Lakshminarayana and Shiva under the name of Chintaharana. From here a flight of steps leads up to Kans Kila. The river flows so close to the face of the promontory on which it stands that the sequence of bathing places is here interrupted.

28 Kans Kila

= KCC 4.3.9/CM p.178 *kaṃsasadana*?; BRat p.183 (ruins of Kansa's palace); BP (*kaṃs ko ghar*); Tieffenthaler p. 143; Growse pp.139-40.

Kans Kila is the name given to the remains of the fort that stands on a promontory above the Yamuna in the centre of modern Mathura. An illustration made by the Daniell brothers in 1789 shows how its sheer buttress walls once towered above the river (see plates 17 & 18). Nowadays these have largely crumbled away, and much of the area inside the former precincts has been built upon. Raja Man Singh erected fortifications and other buildings here in the time of Akbar, but the nature of the site is such that it probably served as a stronghold long before then. It was an occasional residence of Sawai Jai Singh, who built one of his observatories here. Tieffenthaler, who saw the fort in the middle of the eighteenth century, described it as the most distinctive structure in Mathura, resembling 'a mountain artistically constructed of stone'. It was used by the Jats and Marathas, but the British preferred to base themselves in the Cantonment and allowed the fort to be divided up and largely demolished. Foundations of part of the palace complex are still visible on an open space at the summit, from where there is a fine view of the bathing places upstream and the land lying between Mathura and Vrindaban. Nearby, housed in buildings that formed part of the fort complex, are shrines of Kanseshwar Mahadev and Kalabhairava. The latter appears to have once been the top part of an old statue, which had a large halo behind the head, that is now painted black and decorated with patches of vermilion and silver foil.

29 Samyamanatirtha/Swami Ghat

VP 151.3/R 278/VM p.513, 151.4 ff., 158.57/VM p.527, 166.15/R 458 (*yamana-*); BRam 105.68 & 107; NP 2.79.37; KCC 4.4.23/CM p.180 (*samyama(na)kuṇḍa*); BRat p.176; Sund.; Growse pp.144-6; *Vṛndāvanāṅk* p.218.

A path down the other side of Kans Kila leads back to the river and brings one to a bathing place that was once called Samyamanatirtha. The name, which means 'bringing to rest, self control', is also applied to the city or residence of Yama, which may explain why the *Varāhapurāṇa* goes on to recommend bathing here on the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month, a day associated with Yama. A variant reading of the *Varāhapurāṇa* verses given by Mitra Mishra declares that anyone bathing here will not go to the realm of Yama (i.e. *yamalokam* for *mama lokam*).

The name Samyamanatirtha does not occur in later texts; nowadays this stretch of the riverside is called Swami Ghat. Some also say that Vaikunthatirtha is located here. Above the ghats there are nineteenth-century temples of of Bihari, Govardhannath, and the goddess Ganga. Growse talks of a Sangam-tirth Ghat and a Sami Ghat, a name that he supposed not to derive from any 'Swami', but from its being situated 'opposite' (*'sámhne'*) or facing the main street of Mathura. Although he first states that Shaikh Ghat is an alternative name for Soma or Vasudev Ghat, he later says that Muslims use the term for Sami Ghat on account of a tomb of Makhdum Shah Wilayat, apparently dating from the sixteenth century, to which a mosque was added when it was rebuilt in 1875. These in fact lie to the south of Swami Ghat above a bathing place now known as Sant Ghat. Local Hindu scholars say that a temple of the Nimbark Sampraday stood on the site before it was taken over for a mosque by the brother of Alauddin Khilji. The mosque has been abandoned by Muslims and now houses an image of Hanuman and, presumably placed there by someone wanting to strengthen the Hindu claim to the site, some crude imitations of *stūpa* railing pillars that are said to have been dug up there. Adjoining it is a compound with a shrine of Shiva as Mahakaleshwar and several fragments of medieval sculpture.

30 Asikunda

KK p.187; VTK p.19; VP 151.1-2 (in VRI ms. and as v.l. for *śivakuṇḍa* in crit.ed.)/R 277/VM p.513, 158.57/VM p.527, 161.12 (+Gandharvakunda), 164, 166.14/R 458, 172.6, 174.58; R 462/VM p.521; BRam 105.107; NP 2.79.35; BRat p.179; Sund.; BYP; BP. Varaha: VP 161.20/R 161/VM p.506, 161.24 ff. (*kapila-*), 164.23-5/R 293; R 464; BRam 105.85; NP 2.79.48-9; NBC 2.89; BBP 3.25 (*-ghāṭa*) & 43-4 (Adivaraha); Varaha-/Sukarakshetra: BYP. Karkotaka: VP 158.66/VM p.527; VBV 3.80 p.76. Navatirtha: R 277; NP 2.79.36; BRat p.175; Sund.; =MS Bhavatirtha? Manikarnika: BP (+Kashi Ghat); BBP ibid. (+Pandarinatha).

Lakshmidhara describes Asikunda as the central bathing place of Mathura, an honour now accorded to Vishram Ghat. Its centrality is also alluded to in a chapter of the *Varāhapurāṇa* (164) that tells how Varaha went there to defeat a king called Vimati, who had vowed to destroy all the sacred places because his father had died

as a result of undertaking too many arduous pilgrimages. When Varaha slew the king, the point of his sword (*asi*) stuck in the ground, and when he pulled it out a beautiful pool appeared. Varaha declared that he would be present there every twelfth and fourteenth lunar day in the form of four idols (Varaha, Narayana, Vamana, and Langala), and said that Asikund is where a tour of the *tīrtha* of Mathura should be begun. Because of this incident the place is also known as Varahatirtha or Varahakshetra.

On the modern Asikund Ghat there is a temple with images of Ganesha and a black-coloured Varaha. In the adjacent courtyard is a Nimbark Sampraday temple of Sakshi- or Siddhpith-Hanuman, beside which stands a sculptural fragment consisting of the serpent hoods that once belonged to a colossal image, beneath which a Govardhan stone is placed. This is claimed to be the Naga with the botanical name 'Karkotaka' who is mentioned in the *Varāhapurāṇa*, though Narayan Bhatt refers to him as a form of Shiva, and both texts mention him after Pippaladeshwar, suggesting that he was located further downstream.

The *māhātmya* texts also talk of an image of Varaha lying south of the Vishrantitirtha-Gatashram area, and the *Varāhapurāṇa* and *Gargasaṃhitā* give a story concerning an image of Varaha that was first set up by Kapila, son of Kadarma, and was later worshipped by king Mandhata. Ravana established it in Lanka and Rama later took it to Ayodhya, from where it was eventually brought to Mathura by Shatrughna when he founded the town. The idol referred to is said to be one of a pair of dark (*nīla*) and white (*śveta*) images of Varaha that are housed in shrines owned by Chaubes at Manik Chauk, behind the temple of Dwarkadhish.

On the northern side of Asikunda, at the end of a road that leads up to the temple of Dwarkadhish, there is a masonry ghat with a temple on either side. One of them has a spire and is called Sati ka Mandir; the other is a Shiva temple that is called Kashivishwanath in some modern sources, which also refer to the place as Manikarnika Ghat. Both of these names are borrowed from famous holy places in Varanasi. Overlooking this ghat stand ornate mansions built by the rulers of Bharatpur and the banker Lakshmi Chand.

The statement in the *Varāhapurāṇa* (also quoted by Rup and Mitra Mishra) that there are nine (*nava*) bathing places north of Asikunda seems to have given rise to the notion of their being a Navatirtha, which modern scholars believe to be located at Asikunda or Sant Ghat.

31 Avimuktatirtha

VP 150.33/R 254/VM p.511, 158.58-60/VM p.527, 166.15/R 458; BRam 105.108 (*abhimukteśvara*); NP 2.79.23 (*vimukta-*); BRat p.172; BYP (*mukti tīrth*); BP (*alpamukta*). VP 158.57 (*mandākinyā*, v.l. *maṇḍikanyā*); BRam 105.107 (*mandākinī*); VBV 3.73-4 (*mandikanyā, + vimukteśvara/vimukteśa*). For Avimukta at Varanasi cf. Eck, pp.28, 130-1.

This bathing place was probably named after the famous one at Varanasi that is so called because it is 'never forsaken' by Shiva. There it is revered as the place where his *liṅga* was first established, and the name is often said to imply that pilgrims

should never leave the spot. In earlier listings of the bathing places at Mathura (VP, R) it is mentioned before Vishrantitirtha, implying that it lay to the north of it, but in some later listings (NP, BRat etc.) it is given as the next bathing place to the south. Brajnath is the only later writer to place it north of Vishram Ghat, in accordance with the location that is nowadays generally accepted.

One verse in the *Varāhapurāṇa* (followed by *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa*) mentions Samyamana together with a bathing place that would seem to be related to Mandakini, a tributary of the Ganges. This corresponds to Narayan Bhatt's 'Mandikanya', mentioned as a bathing place between Ghantabharana- and Vishrantitirthas. He tells how a sage called Mandika performed austerities here, as a result of which he obtained a beautiful daughter, who was transformed into a pond. He says that liberation is attained by bathing here and that the presiding Shiva is called Vimukteshwar or Avimuktesh.

32 Dwarkadhish Mandir

Cf.§5.38. BBP 3.45-6; Growse pp.155-6 (quoting Bishop Herber's description), 178; P. Mital 1966 pt.2 pp.269-72, 1968 pp.512-4; V. K Chaturvedi.

Dwarkadhish Mandir is the busiest and most famous temple in Mathura, though in recent years the redeveloped Janmasthan site has begun to rival it. Besides being centrally located and notable for its impressive decorations and rituals, it is also the largest Pushtimarg temple in the town and is therefore a must for all pilgrims participating in the *baṛī yātrā*. It is dedicated to Krishna as Dwarkadhish ('Lord of Dwarka'), an epithet borrowed from the principal deity of the third Gaddi of the Pushtimarg that is now at Kankaroli (Rajasthan). The Mathura temple was founded by Gokuldas Parikh, a native of Baroda whose family was devoted to the third Gaddi and who became treasurer of Gwalior State under Daulatrao Sindhiya.

33 Durvasa Tila

KCC 4.6.15? (cf. 67); BBP 2.41.

On the other side of the Yamuna, opposite Swami Ghat, is a mound named after the sage Durvasa. On it stands a temple housing an image of Durvasa standing next to a smaller one of Krishna. The ashram at the site is occupied by ascetics of the Nimbark Sampraday. The mound and temple are not included in the circumambulation of Mathura, but may be visited by pilgrims when they return to Mathura from the direction of Gokul. A large number of people attend a fair called Durvasa Mela that is held here on five days in the month of Magh. Nearby are the remains of Hans Ganj, a residence with garden and bathing steps built by Hansiya, one of the wives of Suraj Mal.

2 Madhuban (Maholi)

VTK p.18 (*mahuvaṇaṃ*); VP 151.33/R 345/VM p.517, 159.6/R 418/VM ibid.; R 17, 77, 198-206, 212; BRam 105.21; NP 2.79.6; AP; PP 5.69.16/KCC 4.3.7, 69.18; VBV 2.54, 10.17-19; KCC 4.3.5; CC 2.17.192; BRat p.185; AY 64; Sund.; GVY 11, 14; VGV 43; CBC; PV; BYP; BKB; BP; BBP 7.4 & 8-9; Growse pp.18, 124, 330. Lavana's cave: VP 158.25/VM p.524, VBV ibid. & 3.23. *Madhudaitya/Braj yātrā/Gocāraṇ līlā.*

Madhuban (Skt. Madhuvana) is listed in the Hindu sources as the first of the twelve forests, though, as in Rup's *māhātmya*, the term may be used for the area in which the town of Mathura is located, or even as a synonym for the town itself. In Sanskrit *madhu* can refer to honey, nectar, any milk product or spiritous liquor, or a kind of plant (usually Bassia latifolia). In the context of Braj reference is made to the legend of Madhu, a demon who gave his name to the forest where he lived (§2.2). His son Lavana was slain by Shatrughna, who then founded the city of Mathura. On the basis of this story some have claimed that Madhuban is the original site of Mathura; Growse even suggests that Maholi, the name of the village at Madhuban, is derived from 'Madhupuri'. There is no doubt that the site is an ancient one; archaeological evidence shows that Buddhist and brahminical establishments existed here in the Kushana period (§4.13). In Akbar's time and for many years afterwards Maholi was the headquarters of the local division.

Later Pushtimarg sources say that Krishna herded cattle in Madhuban and that the name is related to Madhuri, a companion of the goddess Yamuna. It is the first place on the circuit of Braj visited after Mathura; larger groups of pilgrims usually return to camp here after seeing Talban and Kumudban.

The main tank here, lying beside the village, is known as Madhu- or Krishnakund (VBV: Madhusudana-), near which are temples dedicated to Krishna as Kalyanray (GVY, PV) or Madhuban Bihari (BP; BBP: Madhubaniya Thakura), and Chaturbhujray (GVY, BYP, BP). There is also a Balarama temple, but the deity, like that of Chaturbhujray, was stolen during the 1970's. A *baiṭhak* of Vallabha (CBC, BYP, BP) lies a short distance from the village to the south of the tank. West of the village, across some fields, is the mound known as Dhruv Tila (BP). It stands in a grove that is said to represent the remains of the original forest. This site, and part of Maholi village, are shown in the bottom left-hand corner of the map of Mathura. On the mound stands a temple occupied by Ramanandi ascetics that houses a modern marble image of Vishnu appearing before Dhruva, who stands to the left of him.

On the edge of the grove, as one approaches it from the village, there is a hole in the ground (dug out as a flight of steps leading downwards) that is said to be the cave of Lavana. In some early itineraries a site of this name is included among places along the circumambulation of Mathura. Another place in the vicinity of Maholi, noted by Growse as being associated with Lavana, is the Buddhist mound at Pali Khera, which, according to local tradition, is the *kheṛā* of Nonasur (a corruption of *lavaṇāsura*).

3 Talban (Tarsi)

VTK p.18; VP 151.34/R 346, 155.37-8/R 347; R 348-9/VM pp.517-8; BRam 105.22; NP 2.79.7; AP; PP 5.69.16/KCC 4.3.7, 69.44; VBV 2.54, 10.70-71; KCC 4.3.5 & 11/CM p.178; CC 2.17.193; BRat p.185; AY 64; Sund.; GS 2.17.22-8 (story of *vetragaṅgā*); GVY 12; VGV 46; (CBC); PV; BYP; BKB; BP; BBP 7.4 & 9; Growse pp.82, 335. *Dhenukāsurvadh līlā.*

Talban (Skt. Talavana), the second of the twelve forests, is named after the palmyra grove where Balarama and Krishna slew the demon Dhenuka. Growse suggests that Tarsi, the name of the nearby village, derives from *tālasthalī* ('place of the palmyras'), but also reports that locally the name is referred to a Kachhwaha Thakur named Tara Chand, who moved the settlement from Satoha in relatively modern times. According to the *Varāhapurāṇa* and Murari Gupta, Talavana lies in the western part of Mathura at a distance of half a *yojana*, a location that may well apply to Satoha rather than to Tarsi.

The large pond west of Tarsi village is named after Balarama (VBV: Sankarshana-, VP: Balabhadrakunda), but is also referred to as 'Bent Ganga'. A story explaining the origin of the pond, included in *Gargasaṃhitā*, tells how Krishna, when he and the Gopis became thirsty while dancing, struck the ground with his cane (Skt. *vetra*, Hindi *bēṭ*), causing a stream to flow that became known as Vetra Ganga. On the north-eastern bank of the pond stands a Dauji temple (BP) cared for by priests belonging to the Nimbark Sampraday. Earlier sources talk of a temple of Biharilal (GVY, PV), but the only Krishna deity here is a small image that stands in the Dauji temple beside the larger and apparently older image of Balarama, who is also accompanied by a small image of Revati. Opposite the temple are some small Shaiva shrines resorted to by the villagers, and on the south side of the pond are an ashram and Hanuman temple.

4 Kumudban (Kudarban)

VTK p.18 (*kumuavaṇaṃ*); VP 151.35-6 (v.l. *kundavana*, as in Shastri's edn. & MS)/R 350/VM p.518; BRam 105.23; NP 2.79.8; AP; PP 5.69.16/KCC 4.3.7, & 69.45; VBV 2.54, 10.72-3; KCC 4.3.5, 4.3.10/CM p.178, 4.10.7 (*mukunda-vana*)/CM p.186 (*kumuda-*); CC 2.17.193; BRat p.185; AY 64; Sund.; GVY 13; VGV 47; CBC; PV (*kamodvan*); BYP (*kamodban*); BKB 4; BP; BBP 7.4 & 9-10; Trivedi p.19. *Jalkrīḍā* or *Chāk līlā.*

Named after the lotus, this grove is listed as the third of the twelve forests. No classical myth is associated with it, though according to Pushtimarg sources it was where Krishna and the Gopis frolicked in a pool. The pond here is referred to variously as Padma-, Kumuda, Vihara-, or Krishnakund. Beside it is a small temple and *baiṭhak* of Vallabha and a recently restored shrine housing a small modern image of the sage Kapila (BYP, BP). According to Trivedi the site (*mauẓa*^{c}) belonged to Jyotishi Baba of Mathura, and it was he who constructed the shrine to Kapila.

After visiting Kumudban pilgrims usually go back to Maholi and then on to

Satoha the following day. On their way to Satoha they may call at the village of Giridharpur in order to see a large image of Durga slaying Mahisha that is known locally as Chamunda or Charchika.

5 Shantanukund (Satoha)

BhP 9.22.12-19 (story of Shantanu). = VP 155.39-48 *sampīṭhaka*, v.l. *saṃvīṭaka*?; VRC 3.52? (*śāntanuvāsa* and Surya image where Rama worshipped Surya by a lake, though this seems to be at or near Kamyavana); BRat p.189 (*sātoṅā*) GVY 15 (+Suraj Kund); VGV 42; VVV (an *upavana*); (CBC); PV; BYP & BKB 5 (*sā̃tan kuṇḍ*); BP; BBP 6.37, 7.5 & 10 (*sānātana kuṇḍa*); Growse pp.299-300, 334; P. Mital 1968 p.548; Trivedi p.21; N. Sharma p.156. *Śāntanu līlā*. Datiya etc.: BRat pp.186-90, 212 (Magahera); Sund.

The *Varāhapurāṇa*, after mentioning Talavana (cf.§3 above) talks of another place half a *yojana* west of Mathura where there is a lake and image of Surya called Samvitaka (or in some versions Sampithaka). It recommends bathing and worship there on Bhadon I.7 and says that a king called Shantanu, by performing austerities and worshipping an image of the Sun that he had established, gained his son Bhishma. It is not certain whether Satoha, a village beside the Mathura-Govardhan road, is the original location of Talavana, but it certainly appears to be the place referred to by the *Varāhapurāṇa* in connection with the Shantanu story. Local people, especially couples desiring children, traditionally observe a vigil here and take an early-morning bath in the lake, after which there is a fair with wrestling and other entertainments. The day of the fair is referred to as 'Santan Saptami', but is observed in the bright half of Bhadon rather than the dark half (as mentioned in the *Varāhapurāṇa*). It is a local variant of similar rites found over a wide area that have been popular at least since the time of Alberuni (see appendix 5).

Women who want to become pregnant also come here on any Sunday that falls on the seventh lunar day. After bathing in the lake they draw swastikas with vermilion or cow-dung on the rear wall of the temple of Shantanu Bihari. The temple stands on a high mound that rises out of the centre of the lake and is reached by means of a causeway built across the water. Around the base of the external wall of the temple is a course of worn red sandstone, decorated with a vegetal motif, that appears to belong to the medieval period. Since the lake is associated with Surya, it is likely that the temple was originally dedicated to him. Trivedi says that a *liṅga* that used to stand on the mound was moved by ascetics to a place on the opposite bank near the beginning of the causeway, which would mean that at one stage the temple or an adjacent shrine was dedicated to Shiva. According to Mital the temple was built by Mohandev, a Mahant of the Nagaji branch of the Nimbark Sampraday, but nowadays the priest in charge is vague about the sectarian affiliation. Growse says that the temple was faced all round by Sawai Jai Singh early in the eighteenth century, and Trivedi notes that the causeway was built by Ahalya Bai. Other temples around the lake are dedicated to Balarama and Giridhari.

Growse suggests that the name Satoha derives from *śāntanusthāna*, while *Braj yātrā parikramā* elaborates the etymology by saying that Shantanu (*sā̃tan*) received

his boon when Krishna reached the age of seven (*sāt*), and that he was offered a meal of gruel (*satu(v)ā*) here.

There are variations in the number and sequence of places visited between Kumudban and Aring. The most detailed source is *Bhakti ratnākar*, which gives the sequence after Kumudban as Datiha (Dati(y)a), Ayore (=Ahore?), Gaurabai or Gaurai (=Gobardhan Gorwa?), Shrivana, Chhatikara (§61a below), Gandheshwar (Ganeshra, §6), Satona (=Satoha), Bahulavana (§7 below), Dakshinagrama (for Jikhangaon, §9?), Vasatigrama (Bisonti, cf.§12), Chhatikara (bis), Ral, Tosh (§8), and Arit (=Aring, §10). Datiya is said to be the place where Krishna slew Dantavakra, although in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (10.78) there is no indication that this happened in the neighbourhood of Mathura. Narahari also mentions Magahera as a place near Radhakund where the Gopis 'looked out' (*mā(r)g her-*) for Krishna, and later mentions Magahera ('formerly Maghahera') as a place visible from a mound near the villages of Barauli and Tarauli (cf. §61a). In both cases he is probably referring to Maghera, a village near Ral. Bhadal, another village near Ral with an old Devi temple, is probably intended by *bhadāyar*, 'the place of Bhadra *yūtheśvarī*'. Some modern sources include Ral in their itinerary, mentioning a pond and temple of Balarama established by Vajranabha. Some also mention another Balarama pond and temple at Sakna.

Few of the places mentioned by Narahari are included in other itineraries; they are seldom visited by pilgrims today, and have probably never attracted much attention. This may partly be due to the fact that the area between Bati and Aring is low-lying and often waterlogged during and after the monsoon. Nowadays the *barī yātrā* pilgrims usually make a tour of Ganeshra, Bati, Sakna, Biharban, and Tosh, and then return to the camp at Satoha. After Bati or Satoha the next camp site is usually at Jachonda, near Aring.

6 Ganeshra

Cf.§4.14. Gandheshwar(a)/Gandhesar(a): BRat p.188; Sund.; GVY 16; VGV 58; VVV (an *upavana*); (CBC); BYP (VRI ms. only, and probably =Gandharvavana, listed as an *upavana*); BKB 6; BP; BBP 7.11 (*ganesarā*); Growse p.342; Dikshit p.19. *Putanāvadh līlā*.

Those sources which refer to Ganeshra mention only a Gandharvakund, though there is also a small Bihari temple here. Growse proposes an etymology connecting the name with Ganesha, while Narahari says that it is where Krishna and his friends used to put on perfume (*gandha*). Dikshit records the equally improbable explanation that it was here that heavenly minstrels (*gandharva*) sang when Putana was slain. According to modern authorities the nearby village of Phenchari (referred to variously as *phaīcarī, khaicarī, khēcarī*) is where Krishna sucked the life out of Putana. Some say that Khainchari is a separate place where Putana was slain and that Phenchari is where the demon Baka was killed.

7 Bahulaban (Bati)

VTK p.18; VP 151.39 (*bahulavana*, v.l. *bakula-*)/R 355/ VM p.518 (*bāhula-*), 155.9-10 (*bahula-*); R 356-8/VM ibid.; BRam 105.25-6 (*vahulā-*); NP 2.79.11, 2.80.77 (*bahulāraṇyaka*); AP (*vakula-*); PP 5.69.16/KCC 4.3.7, 69.44 (*bakula-*); VBV 2.54, 10.14-16; KCC 4.3.5 & 15 (*bahūla(ka)-*)/CM p.178; CC 2.17.193; BRat p.189; AY 64; Sund.; GVY 16; VGV 49; CBC; PV; BYP; BKB 7; BP; BBP 7.4 & 11; Growse pp.82, 344; Satyendra 1949 pp.347-8 (*surahī* songs); Shulman pp.98-100 (myth of Bahula cow with reference to Tamil sources). *Bahulā līlā.*

The village beside the site of Bahulaban is nowadays called Bati. In some sources the grove is called *bakulavana*, a name derived from a kind of tree (Mimusops elengi, 'the Indian medlar'), which also occurs as an epithet of Shiva. Some older texts favour the name *bahulavana*, meaning 'forest of cardomum', or simply 'abundant forest', but the form *bahulāvana* has gained greater currency. In the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* the word *bahulā-* is used for cardomum; in other Puranas it also occurs as the name of a goddess. Narayan Bhatt informs us that it was the name of a Sakhi, while in Rup Goswami's *māhātmya* it is said that Bahula, 'the wife of Hari', is always present here.

Other sources associate the place with a mythical cow called Bahula, who, when seized by a lion or tiger, begged to be given leave to suckle her calf (or calves) before being eaten. The lion agreed, but when Bahula, keeping her word, returned to be eaten, he was so touched that he let her go free. The popularity of the theme in Braj is reflected in a kind of song in honour of Devi that is called *surahī*. These songs tell how the calves returned with their mother and implored the lion to eat them instead. In this context the cow is called Surabhi, the same name as is used for a version of the story that forms part of the legend of Dilipa.

The story is commemorated by a small shrine containing a bas relief of Bahula Gay. Here Vitthalnath is said to have worshipped and made the gift of a cow (*godān*, GVY). Another Pushtimarg source (BYP) says that one should bathe here on Shravan II.12 and that the offering of a cow here is equivalent to that of a thousand offered anywhere else. The shrine stands on the south side of Krishnakund (VBV, Sund. BYP, BBP), a large pond with masonry ghats. On the opposite bank is a *baiṭhak* of Vallabha that is associated with another story concerning the cow (CBC). A Muslim *hakīm* imposed a ban on its worship, but was persuaded to lift it after he saw the image of Bahula Gay come to life and consume grass offered to it by Vallabha.

Other tanks or ponds mentioned in the texts are Sankarshan or Balram Kund (R/VM, VBV, BRat, Sund., BBP), which lies on the east side of the village, and Man Saras or Man Sarasi (R/VM; BRat; Sund.: Man Sarovar) on the south. The deity in a temple on the north side of Krishnakund is referred to as Mohanray (GVY), Madanmohan (PV), or Muralimanohar (Growse). Near the cow shrine is another temple dedicated to (Bahulaban-) Bihari, and on high ground in the village is a walled enclosure in which stands a (formerly Ramanandi?) Shrivaishnava temple dedicated to Lakshminarayana (= BRat *lakṣmīśa kṛṣṇa*?). The walls were built by Mahant Ram Kishan Das in the time of Suraj Mal, and, as hereditary preceptors of the rulers of Bharatpur, the gurus were granted the village free of tax.

8 Tos(h)

BRat p.190 (*toṣa sthāna, māyūragrāma, māyūrakuṇḍa*); Tos Gam: (CBC); BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BKB 8 (*toṣan kuṇḍ*); BP.

This village is said to be named after a companion of Krishna who was called Tosha. The places to be seen here are a pond called Tosh-, Toshan-, or Taras Kund, and temples of Gopal and Radharaman. One mile to the north-west is a grove called Biharban, mentioned only in modern itineraries and also known as Burhiya ka Nagara, where there is a Bihar Kund and a *chatrī* built over footprints of Krishna, which are said to have been placed there by Vajranabha. Also near Tos is the village of Mora, the location of an ancient shrine dedicated to the five Vrishni heroes (cf.§4.6), which is presumably the place that Narahari refers to as Mayuragrama. There is also a small shrine of a deity referred to as Chhote Mahavirji.

9 Jikhangaon

= BRat p.190 *dakṣiṇagrāma*?; (CBC); BYP (*jakhin* or *jikhan gām*, om. 1819 ms.); BKB 8 & BP (*jakhin gām*).

The main temple here, housing images of Balarama and Revati, lies on the south side of the mound on which the village stands. Near the temple are Balbhadra- and Renukakund (BYP). The name of the village probably relates to a Yaksha or Yakshini who was once worshipped here.

10 Aring

Cf.§4.16. CC 2.18.3 & BRat pp.190-1: *āriṭa*, = Radhakund? SPV p.14 (*aḍīg*); GVY 17 (*āraṭha*); VGV 92 (*arīg*); BYP (+Kalol Kund); BKB (*arīg*); BP; BBP 7.11 (*arīga*); Growse pp.62, 83, 381; E. B. Joshi p.319; Desai pp.45-6; B. Chaturvedi n.d. p.19. *Dān līlā*. Madhurikund: VBV 5.39-41; BYP; BKB 13. Bhawanpur: SPV pp.8-9.

A variety of equally improbable etymologies has been proposed for the name of this village . Some (e.g. BYP) favour a derivation from the verb *aṛ*-, with reference to Krishna's obstinate insistence that the Gopis pay him tax on the pots of curd they carried to market. Others (Desai and Chaturvedi) relate it to the word *ari* ('enemy') and say that this is where Kansa's brothers fled after he was slain by Krishna and were themselves killed by Balarama. Growse suggests that it is a corruption of *ariṣṭagãv*, deriving either from the name of the soap-berry tree (Sapindus detergens, Skt. *ariṣṭa*, Hindi *rīṭhā*) or from the name of the bull-demon Arishta that was killed by Krishna. The latter association is implied by the use of *āriṭa* (CC, BRat) or *ariṣṭa* (PV), though the name seems to refer to the location of Radhakund rather than to Aring. On a more mundane level, Joshi notes that 'arang' is a local term for a market or bazaar.

The village is dominated by a high mound overlooking the Mathura-Govardhan

road, on which stand the ruins of a fort built by Phundaram, a Jat who held a large tract of territory under Suraj Mal. Remnants of old sculpture lying around a Devi shrine on the slopes of the mound (including a late medieval panel that had just been unearthed when I visited) suggest that one or more shrines stood here during the medieval period. Beside the main road lies Kokilakund, beside which is a Nimbark Sampraday temple of Kokilabihari. Other temples of the same Sampraday at Aring are dedicated to Balarama and Ganga.

Some distance to the south-east of Aring is Madhurikund and a temple of Madhurimohan, which some local scholars associate with the poet Madhuridas. Narayan Bhatt says that it lies in a grove called Jativana, which was cultivated by a Sakhi named Madhuri (who also made the *kuṇḍ*) and was one of the places where Radha retired in a fit of pique (*mān*). At Bhawanpur, south-west of Aring and about a mile from Jamnauta, is a shrine of the goddess Bhavani that is mentioned in some modern itineraries and is associated with a story about a lion protecting a local herdsman's cow (SPV).

11 Mukhrai

= VP 162.35 & BRam 106.56: *mokṣarājatīrtha*?; BRat p.199; Sund.; (CBC); VGV 98; BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BKB 8; BP.

Among the places around Govardhan the *Varāhapurāṇa* and *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* mention a *tīrtha* called Moksharaja. In both texts it is mentioned between Radhakund and Indradhwajatirtha, a sequence that corresponds with the location of the village now called Mukhrai. On the edge of the village, beside a pond, is a small temple with modern marble images representing Radha, her mother Kirttika, and her maternal grandmother Mukhara, after whom the village is said to be named. Also in the village is a stone that gives forth a ringing sound when it is struck, and is thus called *bājanī silā*. On Chaitra I. 2 the local women perform a kind of folk dance called *carkulā*, in which they balance pots and lamps on their head.

12 Radhakund

KK p.190; VP 162.29-34/R439/VM p.516/ R 440-3 (Diwali, Bahulashtami); BRam 106.39-55; NP 2.80.66-7 (*ariṣṭakuṇḍa*), 80.71-2 (*śrīkuṇḍa*); Rup Goswami *Dānakelikaumudī* 414; VVS 54 (*rādhāsarasī*), 58 (*ariṣṭasaras*); VBV 2.43, 4.1 ff.; VOC pp.109-10, 214-8; KCC 4.8.8-9 (*kuṇḍayugma*)/CM p.183; CC 2.18.3 ff. & BRat pp.190-8: *ārita*; GLA 7; NBC 2.39-40, 49, 73-83, & 158; VRC 3.29-46; AY 49-53; Sund.; GS 3.7 (+Lalita- and Gopalakunda); SPV p. 20; BYV; GVY 18 & VGV 55-6 & 58 (+Shyam Bat); CBC; PV; BYP (+Lalitakund); BKB 9; BP; TA 14, 128-135; BBP 6.4 & 36 (+ Lalita- and Vishakhakunda, *jibhyā*, 5 Pandava trees), 7.5; Growse p.258; Bansal p.503; Krishnadas Baba pp.27-8; Kumheriya pp.48-9; 'Sant' (ed.) pp.193-4 (Lalitabihari temple). For Bahulashtami cf. HBV 16. *Sakhī līlā*. Malyaharikund: Raghunathdas *Muktacarita*, VVS 79, *Govardhanāśrayadaśaka* 4; BRat p.198.

Lakshmidhara refers to a Radhakund somewhere in the area of Mathura, a place that later *māhātmya* sources include among those lying in the vicinity of Govardhan. The *Varāhapurāṇa* says that Krishna, after slaying the bull-demon Arishta, created a pond so that he could bathe and absolve himself of the sin of killing a bull. When he asked Radha what should become of this Arishtakunda, she embraced him and suggested that an adjacent *tīrtha* be named after her. These two ponds are now known as Krishna- and Radhakund. The latter is the more renown and has lent its name to the village that has grown up around it. *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* names both ponds and says that they lie north of Manasi Ganga, in the area where Arishta was slain (*ariṣṭaharaṇakṣetra*). Narayan Bhatt is exceptional in stating that the demon slain by Krishna was Dhenuka, and in giving the location of the episode as Arishtavana, lying to the north of Radhakund, between Lalita- and Mohana-kunda. Murari Gupta talks of a pair of lakes east of Govardhan where Chaitanya re-enacted the *rās* dance. Krishnadas Kaviraj, in his biography, tells how, at a place called Arit, Chaitanya rediscovered the original Radha- and Shyamakunda that lay hidden among paddy fields.

All subsequent pilgrimage itineraries mention Radhakund, and usually say that all the sacred waters of India assembled here so that Krishna could bathe and purify himself. Many people come here to bathe at midnight on Karttik I.8 (Bahulashtami or Ahoi Athain). Childless couples tie their clothes together and bathe in Krishnakund. Both Maheshwari, the pilgrim from Bikaner, and Nagaridas describe how the fair was attended by large numbers of people, as it still is to this day. Another important day is Diwali, referred to by Rup Goswami and Nagaridas, who says that people light lamps around both the tanks.

Radhakund, sometimes referred to as Shrikund, is included in the full circumambulation of Govardhan. Since the sixteenth century it has been, along with Vrindaban, one of the two main centres for devotees from Bengal. Many of Chaitanya's followers settled at Radhakund and were responsible for the construction of a number of temples and other establishments around the two tanks. Narahari tells us that Raghunathdas was given money for the construction of the tanks and that Shyam Kund (another name for Krishnakund) has such an irregular shape because nobody wanted to cut down five 'Pandava trees' that stood on its bank. The steps that now surround the two tanks and the causeway ('*saṅgam*') that separates them were reconstructed by Lala Babu in the last century.

Although he spent some time here, Narayan Bhatt does not deal with Radhakund in much detail. He mentions a *sakhīmaṇḍala* near the place where the two tanks meet, and names surrounding ponds as Lalita-, Mohana-, and Gopikakunda. Lalitakund, where there is a *baiṭhak* of Shrinivasacharya and a Nimbarki temple of Lalitabihari, lies to the south-east of Krishnakund, and Mohan Kund to the east of Radhakund. Others are Malyahari- or Maliharikund (BRat p.198) to the west, Narayan Kund (BYP), and Bhanukhor and Shivakhor (BRat ibid.; BP: Bhanokhar and Sokhar), which lie near the path around Govardhan to the north of Radhakund. Malyaharikund is first mentioned by Raghunathdas as a place where Krishna harvested pearls. According to the *Caurāsī baiṭhak caritra* Vallabha bathed in eight ponds of the Sakhis that lay in the vicinity of Radhakund.

Krishnadas Kaviraj (GLA) describes the various bejewelled bowers, pavilions (*maṇḍapa*), and other places associated with the Sakhis that are located around Radhakund. Other Gaudiya writers, including Govardhan Bhatt (*Rādhā-kuṇḍāṣṭaka*) and Sundarlal, took up the theme of an idealized Radhakund as seen though the eyes of a devotee immersed in the pastimes of Krishna and Radha. Krishnadas Baba's guidebook gives the most complete account of the places that, in reality or in the imagination, lie around Radhakund.

There are, or were, some trees around the twin lakes that are mentioned in Pushtimarg sources. One of them is Krishna (or Shyam) Bat, also called Jhulan Tala, beside which is a swing built by the Raja of Manipur. Others are the Chhote Narayan tree, the five Pandava trees, and a Raj Kadamb, in which the mark of a crown (*mukuṭ*) is to be seen, though more recent sources specify that it stands in Bisonti village. Another curiosity, located on the north side of Krishnakund near the temple of Govind Dev, is a small shrine housing a piece of rock with a reddish grain in it that is referred to as the tongue of the sacred hill of Govardhan (BP: *girirāj jī kī jibhyā*, cf. §7.3).

Narayan Bhatt mentions deities at Radhakund of Madangopal and Radhavallabh, the latter being presumably the Radhavallabh temple on the north side of Radhakund and the same as the '*kuñj* of the Radhavallabhis' mentioned in a document written in 1637 (transcribed by Bansal), which also names the dwellings of Raghunathdas and Krishnadas Kaviraj, and temples (*kuñj*) of the Mathura brahmins, Radharaman, and Bihariji. The latter stands beside the causeway that connects the two tanks. Among the numerous temples at Radhakund there are some that correspond to larger Gaudiya temples in Vrindaban, namely Govind Dev, Radhadamodar, Madanmohan, Gopinath, Shyamsundar, and Radhavinod. Others are dedicated to Radhakant, Radhamadhav, Jagannath, the eight Sakhis (Ashtasakhi), Chaitanya, Sitanath, Bankhandi Mahadev, and Hanuman. There are also *samādhi* memorials of Raghunathdas, Krishnadas Brahmachari, Bhugarbh, and Krishnadas Kaviraj, *bhajan kuṭī* of Gopal Bhatt, Raghunathdas, and Krishnadas Kaviraj, and *baiṭhak* shrines of Madhavendra Puri, Jiv Goswami, and Chaitanya. Jutting out into Radhakund is a small shrine under a tree that marks the *baiṭhak* of Jahnavi, who, as in Vrindaban, is enshrined next to the deity of the Gopinath temple. On one side of Krishnakund, near Panch Pandav Ghat, stands the temple of Radhavallabh and a *baiṭhak* of Hit Harivansh. On the opposite side of the tank is a Pushtimarg temple with *baiṭhak* of Vallabha, Vitthalnath, and Gokulnath.

Near Radhakund, on the road to Chhatikara and Vrindaban, are the villages of Junhedi, with a Shyam Kund, and Bisonti, with a Basant Kund (BRat p.190: *vasatigrāma*; BP *basaī gām*, om. 1819 ms.). About a mile east of Radhakund is Lagmohan Kund, where Raghunathdas is said to have lived before he settled at Radhakund. In a kadamba thicket here there is a mound of earth that is said to be the place where Krishna killed Shankhachuda for attempting to abduct Radha.

13 Kusum Sarovar

Pushpasaras: NP 2.80.9-35; BKB 10. Pushpasarovara: *Govardhanaśataka* 33; BRam 106.62 (*puṣpasāgara*). Sumanahsarovara: Raghunathdas VVS 79, *Govardhanāśrayadaśaka* 4; CC 2.18.16, GLA 10.61; Kusumasaras: SP 2.6.2.25; PP 71.78-9; NBC 2.83. Kusum Sarovar: BRat p.199; Sund.; BP; BBP 6.4-5 & 36, 7.59; Kusumakarasaras: GS 3.7; VRC 3.26-7; Kusumokhar(a/-i): AY 54; VGV 58; GVY 19; (CBC); BYP; Growse pp.307-8, Drake-Brockman (plan). *Sājhī līlā*

Uddhav Kund: BRat p.210 (place where Uddhava delivered his sermon); BP.

The name of this tank is related to the legend of Vajranabha's encounter with Uddhava (cf.§2.40). The appearance in literary sources of Kusum Sarovar ('flower pond'), or some synonymous variant of the name, suggests that it was a recognized location before it was provided with masonry steps. These and the fine *chatrī* that stand on the west side of the tank were built in the time of Raja Jawahar Singh to commemorate his father Suraj Mal. The ceiling of Suraj Mal's *chatrī* is decorated with paintings that show him in his durbar, hunting, in procession, and arriving in state for worship. It is flanked by two smaller *chatrī* commemorating his wives that are decorated with paintings of mythological scenes. To the north of the tank, beside the Govardhan circumambulatory path, is the Gwaliorwala temple (with a deity called Radhakant), which was built in the late nineteenth century. On the south-east side is an inscription dated 1866 that forbids the killing of animals in the Braj and Govardhan area. On the south east corner stands a temple dedicated to Ban Bihari which, until they were stolen, used to have images of Krishna plaiting flowers in Radha's hair - an incident said to have taken place at Kusum Sarovar. On the south-west side of the tank is Uddhava's *baiṭhak* and a shrine containing an image of him. Further west lie Uddhav Kund and a temple of Uddhav Bihari.

13a Narad Kund and nearby places

SP 2.6.3.50; VBV 2.40, 5.25-8; VOC p.220; BRat p.199 & Sund. (+*ratnasiṃhāsana*); GVY 19; VGV 67; (CBC); BYP (1819 ms. only); BP; BBP 6.35; Mital 1968 p.543, 1983 pp.88-9 (Baba Shyamdas); Gwal Pokhar: BYP; BP. Kalol Kund: (CBC); BP.

Further on, to the east of Kusum Sarovar and on the other side of the road, is Narad Kund, a pond with a masonry ghat that is associated with the myth of Narada turning into a woman (cf.§2.38). Here there is a temple of the Nimbark Sampraday housing an image of Narada. Narayan Bhatt refers to the area here as Naradavana and talks of Narada's place of meditation and an image of Saraswati as being beside the tank. Narad Kund is traditionally a place for bathing on Saturdays in the month of Bhadon.

In an overgrown area on the south-west side of Kusum Sarovar is a small pond called Gwal Pokhar, beside which is a rock of the Govardhan ridge that is called Ratnasinghasan ('bejewelled throne'), and Shyam Kuti, a cell containing the *samādhi* of Baba Shyamdas (d.1874), an ascetic of the Nimbark Sampraday. Further on, to the left, is Jawahar Kund, named after Raja Jawahar Singh, where

the road divides. To the right is the circumambulatory path that follows the ridge in the direction of Manasi Ganga; to the left is the road leading to the Govardhan bus station that passes by Killol Kund, beside which is a temple of the Nimbark Sampraday dedicated to Killol Bihari. The ghats at Narad Kund and Killol Kund are attributed to Raja Bir Singh Deo of Orchha.

14 Govardhan

1 The hill

KK p.192/ R 428-30; VP 162.1/R 420/VM p.516, 162.2-3/R 435-6, 162.4-10, 162.11-12/R 421-2/VM ibid., 162.13/R 424, 162.16, 162.17/R 432/VM ibid., 162.23-4/R 423, 166.13/R 457; R 425-7, 463; BRam 105.43-53, 106.26 ff.; SP 2.6.1.38, 2.6.3.67 & 73; NP 2.80.7; PP 5.69.39; VVS 51-3, 64; VBV 2.40, 5.1-17; KCC 4.3.12-13/CM p.178, 4.8.2; CC 2.18.16 ff.; VRC 3.1 ff., 3.23-29; NBC 2.39; BRat p.203; AY 56-8; GS *passim*, esp. 3; SPV & AV *passim*; CBC pp.24-5; PV; BYP; BP; SC 7.1.58; TA 10-17, 135-43; BBP 6, 7.5 & 11.

Lakshmidhara names what is evidently the modern Govardhan, specifying that it is eight *krośa* west of Mathura. The *Varāhapurāṇa* and Rup Goswami recommend circumambulation of the hill, referring to it as 'Annakuta' and beginning with a bath in Manasi Ganga and a visit to the temple of Haridev. The name Annakuta ('mountain of food') is used in both texts with particular reference to worship of the hill by Indra after it had been held up by Krishna. In *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* this name seems to apply to the village of Anyor (q.v.). Govardhan is mentioned in the *Skandapurāṇa* in connection with Sakhisthala (q.v.) and as one of the places repopulated by Vajranabha. Some texts, particularly those of the Pushtimarg, promote the idea that Govardhan is, like Vrindaban, a place of *rās* and amorous sport where there are caves and arbours frequented by Radha and Krishna (cf.§§6.19-20).

The name Govardhan applies not only to the ridge that represents the legendary mountain, but also to the township that has grown up where the Mathura-Dig road crosses it. The length of the circumambulation of the hill as it is performed today is reckoned to be seven *krośa*, a distance first specified by Narayan Bhatt. A shorter circuit of five *krośa* omits Radhakund, and a longer one of nine *krośa* includes Chandrasarovar.

2 Manasi Ganga

VP 152.20-21? (cf. under Vighnarajatirtha, §1.23 above), 162.12/R 422/VM p.516, 162.17; BRam 106.27, 39 & 76 (*manasī-/mānasagaṅgā*); Rup Goswami *Dānakeli-kaumudī* 24, 27, 52 (*mānasagaṅgā/-jāhnavī*); VVS 61, 64 (*mānasajāhnavī*); VBV 2.50, 5.4; VOC p.220; KCC 4.3.11-12 & 15/CM p.178, 4.8.2/CM p.182, 4.11.18/CM p.186 (*mānasa-, mano-, manaḥsvarganadī*); CC 2.18.32; GLA 6.36 (*mānasajāhnavī*, elsewhere and in *sarga* 8 as *manogaṅgā*); VRC 3.23-5 (*mānasa-jāhnavī*); NBC 2.83 & 104; BRat p.205 (*mānasa-*); AY 55; Sund.; *Govardhana-śataka* 21; GS 3.7; BYV; GVY 22; VGV 68; CBC; PV; BYP; BKB 11; BP; TA 139; BBP 6.12-13, 19 & 36; Growse p.303; Drake-Brockman (plan of tank and *chatrī* of Bharatpur Maharajas).

The earliest texts to refer to Manasi Ganga say that one should bathe here before circumambulating Govardhan. Biographies of Chaitanya say that he did just this when he visited Govardhan. Narayan Bhatt accounts for its name by saying that it was created by Krishna from his mind (*manas*) at the request of the Gopis so that he could expiate the sin of killing the bull Arishta, an explanation that other sources give in relation to Radhakund. Krishnadas Kaviraj (GLA) says that Krishna and his companions drank, watered their cattle, and ate here, while Jagatanand says that it is one of the places where Krishna tried to extort a toll from the Gopis (*dān līlā*).

Growse records that the ghats around it were originally constructed by Raja Man Singh, whose father built the nearby temple of Haridev. The similarity between his name and that of the tank must be purely fortuitous, for the *termini ad quem* for the *māhātmya* of the *Varāhapurāṇa* and Rup Goswami are too early to support the contention that Manasi is no more than a sanskritization of Man Singh. The Maharajas of Bharatpur repaired the tank and constructed some of the buildings that stand around it, the most notable of which are the mansion of Badan Singh and two *chatrī* commemorating Randhir Singh (d.1823) and Baldeo Singh (d.1825). The latter is decorated with pictures of the battles fought with Lord Lake.

In the texts the temples of Haridev and Chakreshwar are the most important places mentioned around the tank, but in practice more attention is given to the *mukhāravind* stone (cf.§8 below). Among places around Manasi Ganga that are not mentioned in any of the older sources are temples of Gangeshwar Mahadev, Mohanji, Sakshi Gopal, Vishwakarman, Nitai Gaurang, and a Ramanandi Nirmohi Akhara.

3 Brahmakund

Cf. KK p.192 & VP 162.2-10. R 434-6; NP 2.80.58-60?; VVS 79; VBV 2.50, 5.5; KCC 4.8.16/CM p.183; CC 2.18.21; BRat p.204; Sund.; BYV (*briham kuṇḍ*); GVY 22; (CBC); PV; BYP; BP; BBP 6.23.

A pond at Govardhan described by Lakshmidhara and the *Varāhapurāṇa* as being surrounded by trees and creepers and with Indra, Yama, Varuna, and Kubera guarding its four sides is given the name Brahmakund in the *māhātmya* of Rup Goswami. It is a smaller tank adjacent to Manasi Ganga; beside it are the temples of Haridev and Manasi Devi.

4 Haridev

VP 161.17/R 158/VM p.506, 161.62, 162.12/R 422/VM p.516, 162.15/R 433, 162.18; BRam 105.85, 106.28; =SP 2.6.26?; =NP 2.80.73? (cf. Parmadra); VVS 76 ; VBV 2.50, 5.3; VOC p.107; =Hariraya of Rup Goswami's *Dānakelikaumudī* 64, KCC 4.8.13/CM p.183 ?; CC 2.18.16-18; BRat p.205; Sund.; BYV ('built by Kachhwahas'); SPV p.9; GVY 22 & VGV 62 (Hara-); BYP; BP; BBP 6.23 (Hara-), 7.56; VDA 24; Growse pp.304-6 (ground plan, income, patronage by Bharatpur Maharajas); Trivedi p.30; Krishnadas Baba p.2; P. Mital 1966 p.108; 'Krishna' p.71 (removal of deity to Kanpur).

The *Varāhapurāṇa* mentions two deities with the name Haridev, one in Mathura and another, standing on the west of the lotus representing the circle (*maṇḍala*) of Mathura, that should be visited after bathing in Manasi Ganga when beginning the circumambulation of Govardhan. Krishnadas Kaviraj and *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* also refer to an image of Haridev that stands on the western petal of the Mathura lotus, and Narayan Bhatt says that it represents Krishna at the age of seven holding up mount Govardhan and without any consort. According to local scholars the deity was removed during the reign of Aurangzeb and, like Keshavdev of Mathura, was taken to a village in Kanpur district, but Nawal Singh Pradhan records the tradition that the two deities were taken away by Himmat Bahadur. The deity now housed in the temple of Haridev stands in the same pose as the original one. It is described by Gopal Kavi as being accompanied by handmaidens called Anangamanjari and Ratimanjari, alias Sukeshi (so-called because she helped to plait Radha's hair) and Vallabha, from whom the eight Sakhis became manifest. During the Holi festivities (on Chaitra I.2) the deity is taken out and carried in procession around Manasi Ganga.

According to legend, the original deity was discovered at Bilchhukund by Keshavacharya, the author of *Govardhanaśataka*. His descendants, who claim to belong to the Vishnuswami Sampraday, are hereditary custodians of the temple. Gopal Kavi says that it was found by Vajranabha in Vilas (for Bilchhu?) Kund, near the Govardhan hill, and was later rediscovered in the same pond by Keshavacharya on Karttik II.12. According to *Śrīgovardhannāthjī ke prākaṭya kī vārtā* Haridev was one of four images that became manifest around Govardhan and correspond to the four emanantions (*vyūha*) of Vishnu. The others are Shrinathji, Balarama (Sankarshana) and Govind Dev at Anyor, and Daniray.

The temple, mentioned in all later pilgrimage itineraries, was built during the reign of Raja Bhagwan Das of Amber, the father of Man Singh. Growse's contention that it stands on a site 'long occupied by a succession of humbler fanes', is supported by the presence around the nearby temple of Manasi Devi of several battered fragments of medieval sculpture. He also notes that the temple once had two towers in addition to the one that now remains, but they were levelled to the roof of the nave. In later years it benefitted from the patronage of the rulers of Bharatpur, and in the 1870's was restored by a merchant from Aring.

5 *Manasi Devi*

VBV 2.50, 5.6; NBC 2.140; Sund.; BBP 6.23; VDA 24; BP.

The goddess now referred to as Manasi Devi is called *manasā* or *mānasā* in the pilgrimage texts, thus associating her with the goddess who is especially popular in Bengal. According to Narayan Bhatt she is so-called because she grants all that the mind (*manas*) desires. Gopal Kavi says that just as Vrinda accompanies Govind Dev in Vrindaban, so Manasa accompanies Haridev, the two goddesses being embodiments of the Ganges and Yamuna respectively. Her temple stands above Brahmakund beside the path leading from Manasi Ganga to the temple of Haridev.

She is represented both by a stone that appears to have been part of an old temple and a relief depicting her on a tiger with a male attendant (said to be Languriya) standing in front and holding a pennon. At the back of the temple, facing Haridev, is a shrine of Sitala. The poet Nandadas is believed to have had his *baiṭhak* or hut (*kuṭī*) on the bank of Mansi Ganga, close to the Manasi Devi temple. Nearby there is a modern temple dedicated to Ganga.

6 *Chakreshwar*

Chakratirtha: VP 162.37 ; BRam 106.58; VVS 79; VBV 2.50, 5.7-8; BRat p.208; Sund.; GVY 22; BYP; BBP 6.21. Chakreshwar: VBV ibid.; NBC 2.140; Sund.; VVV 17 (*cakreśa*); BP; BBP 6.15 & 21 (*cakaleśvara*).

In the *Varāhapurāṇa* Chakratirtha and Panchatirthakunda (cf.§10 below) are named as places for bathing and maintaining a vigil after completing one's pilgrimage to Govardhan. Narayan Bhatt says that Chakreshwar is the presiding deity of Chakratirtha and describes him as having five faces and as being a protector of Braj. Jagatanand lists Chakreshwar among the eight Mahadevas and the four main Shiva deities of Braj. The shrine is located on the north bank of Manasi Ganga, more or less opposite the temple of Haridev. It houses a group of five *liṅga* and some old sculptures of Shiva, Parvati, etc. Behind the *liṅga* is a late-medieval/early modern relief decorated with small figures, including Krishna and the herdsmen holding up Govardhan.

Next to Chakreshwar are a *maṭh* of the Gaudiya Sampraday and *bhajan kuṭī* of Sanatan Goswami, Siddh Baba, and Siddh Krishnadas Baba.

7 *Lakshminarayan*

Cf.§5.19. VBV 2.50, 5.9.

The temple of Laksminarayan seems to be the oldest establishment in Braj associated with the Shrivaishnava Sampraday, but it has now been eclipsed by the large temple of Rangji in Vrindaban. It is possibly the place mentioned by Narayan Bhatt, after Chakreshwar, as 'the place (*sthala*) of Lakshminarayan'.

8 *Giriraj ji ka Mukharavind*

The 'lotus face of Giriraj' is the name given to a rock protruding above the surface of Manasi Ganga. It is in the eastern corner and is reached by an alley between the temple of Lakshminarayan and the mansion of Kishori Rani, wife of Suraj Mal. A terrace has been built around the rock and a small shrine above it. In the evening it is decorated with garlands, garments, eyes, and the type of headdress (*mukuṭ*) worn by Krishna. Some say that the rock itself has the shape of a *mukuṭ*. Although it is not mentioned in older texts, it is the most popular place of worship at Manasi Ganga and receives offerings of flowers and large quantities of milk.

9 Dan Ghati and Daniray temple

Dan Ghati: VRC 3.21 (*dānaghaṭṭa*); BRat p.203; Sund.; BKB 25; BP; BBP 6.34; Growse p.309; as setting for *dān līlā*: Rup Goswami *Dānakelikaumudī*; VVS 77; KCC 4.8.5-6/CM p.182 (specifying a *dāna cautarā*). Daniray: BYV (*dānārāy jī ro deharo*); SPV p.9; GVY 23; VGV 63; PV; BYP; BBP ibid. *Dān līlā*.

Another stone that is decorated and worshipped in the same manner as the one just mentioned is to be seen at Dan Ghati, the name given to the stretch of the Mathura-Dig road that crosses over a break or low point of the Govardhan ridge. Govardhan is mentioned by several authors as a place where the *dān līlā* took place (cf.§2.35), and the reference in many cases is probably to this very place, though Vishwanath Chakravarti says that Danaghatta is above the place where Annakut was celebrated, which might be taken as referring to the path over the hill between Anyor and Jatipura. The temple that stands beside the road at Dan Ghati is dedicated to Krishna as Daniray and has been embellished over the past few years and provided with a tall spire. In Growse's time a brahmin used to sit here and extract a copper coin from passers by. Today people stop to peer over the wall, look down at the stone, and toss a coin at it - unless they take the trouble of going down into the temple compound to worship it. It is common for bus passengers simply to throw coins out of the windows as they pass.

A disused and partly ruined temple standing on the hill above Dan Ghati, a short distance from the road, is indicated as being the original Daniray temple. It was probably built before the time of Aurangzeb and vacated at the same time as Shrinathji was removed from its original temple above Jatipura.

From Dan Ghati the path followed by people walking round the hill continues close to the foot of it in the direction of Anyor. Those who include Jamnauta and Chandrasarovar in their circumambulation begin by following the main road towards the bus station.

10 Ponds near Govardhan

BRam 106.30 (*pāpaharakuṇḍa*); VVS 79 (*mokṣaṇakuṇḍa*); KCC 4.8.16-17/CM p.183 (*pāpahara-, mokṣakuṇḍa*); BRat p.199 & Sund. (*riṇ-, pāpmochan-*); (CBC), BYP, BKB 12, & BP (*riṇ-, pāpmocan-, dharma-* and *gorocan*); BBP 6.24 (*riṇamocana-, pāpamocana-, dharma-, gokuṇḍa*); R. Dikshit p.21. Panchatirtha-kunda: BRam 106.58; VBV 5.13; KCC 4.8.16/CM p.183 (*pañcakuṇḍa*). Indra-dhwajatirtha and -vedi: VP 162.36; BRam 106.57; VBV 2.50, 5.12-17 (*indradhvaja-vana* etc.); Rup Goswami *Dānakelikaumudī* 49 (*śukradhvajavedī*); Raghunathdas *Govardhanāśrayadaśaka* 4 (*balāridhvaja-*); =KCC 4.8.16/CM p.183 *indrakuṇḍa*?; BRat p.199; Sund. Kadambakhanda-: VVS 79; VBV 5.10 (*-vana*).

R. Dikshit, in his itinerary, mentions four ponds at Govardhan called Rinmochan-, Papmochan-, Dharmarochan-, and Gorochan Kund. Some or all of these appear in a few older texts and in some other recent sources. They lay to the west of Govardhan, near the road from Mathura, but have now been filled in. The bus station is said to stand where Dharmarochan Kund used to lie, and Rinmochan Kund was on the opposite side of the road.

Panchtirth Kund, believed to incorporate five celebrated bathing places (the

Ganges, Gaya, Kurukshetra, Prayag, and Pushkar), is said by some local scholars to be the tank in front of the two *chatrī* of Randhir and Baldeo Singh, opposite the Lakshminarayan temple. This is more or less in agreement with *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa*, which says that it lies at the same place as Chakratirtha. Narayan Bhatt, after Chakreshwar and Lakshminarayan, mentions a kadamba thicket with a pond named after Haridev, beside which is Indradhwajavana, in which lies Panchatirthakunda, which contains *tīrtha* of Maindravati, Yama, Varuna, and Kubera. The location of his Indradhwajavana is not clear; possibly it refers to an area east of Govardhan, near Jamnauta, where there is a more or less forgotten and ignored mound that is said to be the platform where Nanda and his companions used to erect a flagstaff in honour of Indra (Indradhwajavedi). The *Varāhapurāṇa* and *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* refer to an Indradhwajatirtha between Moksharajatirtha (cf. Mukhrai) and Chakratirtha, which might refer to a pond beside this particular mound or another nearer to Govardhan. They also refer to a *tīrtha* near the hill of Annakuta established by Indra (= Govind Kund, see below §19.3). It is not certain whether a Kadambakhandakunda mentioned by these two *māhātmya*, as well as by Raghunathdas, was a pond in a kadamba grove near Jatipura (see §22.3 below), or is the same as the kadamba thicket mentioned by Narayan Bhatt after Chakreshwar and Lakshminarayan.

15 Jamnauta

BRat p.199; *jamunāvatā/-au/-o*: AV pp.200-3; SPV p.6; VGV 87; (CBC); BYP; BP (+Kumbhan Kup & Talai); BBP 6.26 (*jamunāvataura*).

According to the *vārtā* of the poet Kumbhandas, this is where the Yamuna used to flow, an idea implicitly endorsed by Narahari Chakravarti, who gives the name as Jamuna Grama. Jagatanand mentions it as the place where the drunken Balarama called the Yamuna to flow near to him. In the village is a *baiṭhak* of Kumbhandas, who is said to have lived here, and a well and a pond (Kumbhan Talai) that are also associated with him.

16 Parasoli and Chandrasarovar

NP 2.80.72 (*candrasaras*); Raghunathdas VVS 79, *Govardhanāśrayadaśaka* 4 (*jyotsnāsaraṃsī*); VRC 3.17; NBC 2.84; BRat p.200 (*parāsaulī*); AY 55, 59-60; Priyadas *Rasik mohinī* (in *Granthāvalī*); Sund.; GS 1.16.45, 2.17; AV pp.98-100; VGV 94, 98 (Parasoli + Akshay Bat); BYP (Bansi Bat or Parasoli Bat); CBC; BKB 14; BP; BBP 6.26, 7.59; Growse p.83; *Tīrthāṅk* p.101; Krishnadas Baba p.38; P. Mital 1966 pt.1 p.109; B. Chaturvedi 1975 (cf.§8.1.26). *Rāspañcādhyāyī līlā/Mahārās.*

The village of Parasoli, renamed Mohammadpur during the Mughal period, lies on the road from Govardhan to Sonkh. It is probably the place that Narayan Bhatt referred to as Parasparavana. In the *vārtā* literature Parasoli is said to be the village where Surdas lived. It is is called *parāsāga-solī* by Priyadas, *pararāsasthalī* in

Govardhanaparikramāmāhātmya (cf.§6.19), and *paramarāsasthalī* in some modern sources (Krishnadas Baba and *Tīrthāṅk*). These last two variants seem to have been concocted to support the idea that Krishna and the Gopis danced the *rās* here. Mital has suggested that the name derives from *palāśāvalī*, meaning a place where there are many *ḍhāk* trees, while B. Chaturvedi claims that it was originally called *parāśasthalī*, a village of the Parashar brahmins and the residence of Vyasa's father.

On the opposite side of the Govardhan-Sonkh road is a large tank called Chandrasarovar. Pushtimarg sources describe this as the place where Krishna caused the moon to stay full for a night lasting six months so that he could enjoy the *rās* dance with the Gopis. Writers from other sects sometimes support this contention, though generally they regard Vrindaban as the place where the *rās* was performed. Vishwanath Chakravarti, however, says that it took place at Chandrasarovar, and Narahari compromises by saying that the vernal *rās* was performed at Chandrasarovar and the autumnal one in Vrindaban.

Vrindabanchandradas describes the tank as circular and containing water that resembles moonlight (*cā̃danī saũ jala candramā saũ cakrākāra kuṇḍa*). It is in fact octagonal and is enclosed by masonry steps built by Raja Nahar Singh, according to Growse, and restored by Raja Jawahar Singh of Bharatpur in 1754, according to Mital. On its south-west side is a building called Shringar Mandir, and beside the road is a Gaudiya temple of Chandrabihari. Near the former are the hut of Surdas and *baiṭhak* shrines of Vallabha, Vitthalnath, and Gokulnath. Brajnath also mentions a *baiṭhak* of Chhote Dauji, a later Goswami who died here in a state of *viraha* after becoming unfit for serving the deity of Shrinathji as a result of his having touched the British Viceroy in Calcutta.

16a Places in the vicinity of Chandrasarovar

BP; BBP 6.27 (*nagāṛe*); Growse p.83 fn.

Nearby are Sankarshan Kund, Chandrakup or Shrinathji ka Jalghara, and stones referred to as 'Indra's upturned kettledrums (*indra ke aũdhe nagāṛe*), which are supposed to emit a drum-like sound when struck. In the area between Chandrasarovar, Paintha, and Anyor lie ponds called Gandharv-, Moh-, Duvela/Devala-, Dan Nivartan-, and Nip Kund, and Gauritirth. Of these the last three lie near the village of Anyor (q.v.). Moh Kund lies beside the road between Parasoli and Paintha. Growse refers to the area as Moha-ban and notes the presence of a *liṅga* called Moheshwar, which is believed to be deeply embedded in the ground and will never allow itself to be covered over. It is said that several attempts were made to erect a temple over it, but whenever a roof was put on the supporting walls collapsed.

17 Paintha

BRat pp.200-1 (cf. Rup Goswami *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi, nāyikābhedāḥ* 5-6); Sund.; AV p.507 (*pẽṭha*); VGV 97 (*peṭhau*); (CBC); BYP (*paiṭho/peṭho/pẽṭho*); BKB 15 (*peṭhā*); BP; BBP 6.28 (*paĩṭho*); Growse pp.83, 335.

One explanation for the name of this village, given in Pushtimarg sources, is that it is where Krishna 'entered' (*praviṣṭha-*) a cave under the Govardhan hill in order to lift it up, or that it was the herdsmen and their cattle who 'entered' when they took shelter from the rain. Narahari says that the name derives from an incident described in Rup Goswami's *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* in which Krishna appeared before Radha (Vrindavaneshwari) with four arms. She was alarmed at the sight and so, for the sake of her love, he withdrew two of the arms into his stomach (*peṭ*). A less quaint, but more credible etymology would be from *pratiṣṭhā(na)*, meaning some kind of settlement.

The village stands on a large mound beside the Govardhan-Sonkh road. On the south-western side stretches a pond called Narayan Sarovar, which has in places been provided with stone steps. At its western edge stands a temple of Chaturbhujaji, approached by a causeway across the water. It houses a large ('life size') image, said to represent Krishna with four arms, which is served by members of the Gaudiya Sampraday, who say that the worship was entrusted to them by the rulers of Bharatpur. Growse notes that the temple was built on the foundations of some older shrine that was destroyed by Aurangzeb. Behind the temple is a hollow that is said to be the place where Krishna went beneath the hill. Nearby is a temple of Radharaman, and at the opposite end of Narayan Sarovar are Lakshmikup, a temple of Janakivallabh and, beside a Sakshi Gopal temple, a gnarled tree called Aintha Kadamb (BP, BBP), believed to have been twisted by Krishna in order to show his companions that he was strong enough to lift up Govardhan.

18 Bachhgaon

NP 2.80.72, *vatsītīrtha*?; VGV 97; BYP (1842 & 1901 versions only); BP.

The village of Bachhgaon, lying west of Sonkh, is rarely visited by pilgrims but is included in some of the later itineraries. Brajnath says that it is the place where Brahma stole the calves, an incident which, according to the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, took place in the vicinity of Govardhan. In most other pilgrimage texts, however, this is said to have taken place at Bachhaban/Sei (§61 below). Brajnath does not name any specific places here, but more recent sources mention temples of Krishna as Makhan Chor and Vatsabihari, and six ponds called Kanak Sagar, Sankarshan- or Sahasrakund, Ram Kund, Aravar Kund, Ravarikund, and Suryakund.

19 Anyor

1 The village

=*annakūṭa(sthāna)* of KCC 4.8.12/CM p.183, CC 2.18.26, VRC 3.20-21?; as *ānyor*: BRat pp.201-2; SPV p.4, 11; VGV 57; CBC; BYP (1901 & 1982 edns. only); BKB 16; BP; BBP 6.29 (*ānora*); cf. VBV 10.53 *dadhibhojanasthala*; Growse pp.83, 347; Cunningham 1885 p.491 (*annakūṭa* > *annāūṭ* > *anyoṭ* > *anyor*); Vaudeville 1980 p. 28 n.15.

This village, once the location of a Buddhist monastery (cf.§4.16), is situated beside the Govardhan hill beneath the temple of Shrinathji. It seems to be the place referred to by some writers of the Gaudiya Sampraday as *annakūṭa*. Vishwanath Chakravarti specifies that the feast was held between the nearby Sankarshan and Dan Nivartan Kunds. Narahari and Murari Gupta also talk of a place where *annakūṭa* was held, the latter stating that it is on the hill itself. According to Krishnadas Kaviraj the village was a Rajput settlement, while Growse records that the original inhabitants were Kirars. Also called Kalars, or Kalawars, they were a low caste of merchants who traded in liquor, but have since climbed up the social scale and have lost their distinct identity. Growse suggests that the name of the village derives from *anya or*, so-called because it lies on the 'other side' of the ridge from Jatipura. Even more unlikely is the explanation given by Narahari and Brajnath that this is where Krishna cried 'bring more !' (*ān aur*) when he wanted another helping during the Annakut feast. A derivation from *annakūṭa*, implied in older Gaudiya texts, is supported by Cunningham and Vaudeville.

At the foot of the hill is the house of Saddu Pande, who, in Pushtimarg sources, is associated with the inception of worship of Shrinathji and became a disciple of Vallabha. Nearby a path leads through the rocks up to the temple of Shrinathji and down the other side to Jatipura. In Saddu Pande's house is a stone from the hill with an indentation that is referred to as (Krishna's) curd dish (*dahī kaṭorā*, =VBV *dadhibhojanasthala*?). Other stones of the hillside above Anyor are said to be marked with Krishna's hands, feet, staff, and vest (*jhagūlā*), and with Radha's signature.

2 Sankarshan Kund

VP 162.21 (*saṃkarṣanatīrtha*); BRam 106.31; VVS.79 (*sirīkuṇḍa*); Rup Goswami *Vidagdhamādhava* 7; VRC 3.18-20 (*saṃkarṣanānandasarovara*); Keshavacharaya *Govardhanaśataka* 29 (*-tīrtha*); BRat p.199; Sund. (*rām tāl*); BYV (*deharo* of Baladev and Mahadev; SPV p.9; GVY 23; VGV 59; (CBC); PV; BYP; BP (*baldev tīrth*); BBP 6.29.

This *kuṇḍ*, one of the earliest places at Anyor mentioned in the texts, lies on the south side of the village. Near it is a temple of Balarama and a memorial to the poet Kumbhandas, who is said to have died under a neem tree on its bank. Keshavacharya mentions it as a place where Balarama played in the water.

3 *Govind Kund*

Cf. VP 162.22-5; R 437-8; BRam 106.32 (*indratīrtha*) & 61; =NP 2.80.60-1?; Rup Goswami *Dānakelikaumudī* 16, 50; VBV 2.54, 10.51-4; VOC p.220; Raghunathdas VVS 74, *Govardhanāśrayadaśaka* 2; KCC 4.8.15-16/CM p.183; CC 2.18.35; VRC 3.23; NBC 2.84; BRat p.202; AY 61; Sund.; GS 3.4.16, 3.7; SPV pp.9, 13, 22; BYV; GVY (*govindarāi*); VGV 64; CBC; BYP; BKB 17; BP; BBP 6.30. Growse p.83, P. Mital 1966 pp.110-11.

A *tīrtha* near Annakuta that the *Varāhapurāṇa* says was established by Indra for worship of Krishna is given the name Govindakunda by Rup Goswami and *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa*. After conceding defeat, Indra used its water to anoint Krishna in acknowledgement of his supremacy. Some texts add that the water for the tank was supplied by the heavenly cow Surabhi (GS) or Kamadhenu (BRam). Growse says that the masonry ghats were provided by a queen called Padmavati, who also built the temple of Govind Dev on the south-east side of the tank, though it is also said that they were constructed by Bir Singh Deo of Orchha. On the south-west bank is a *baiṭhak* of Vallabha and a group of shrines, on the other side of which is the *samādhi* of Nagaji.

4 *Gauritirth and Dan Nivartan Kund*

Gauritirth: Raghunathdas VVS 78, *Govardhanāśrayadaśaka* 4; GLA 6.80, 7.128, 8.79; VRC 3.18-19; BRat p.201 (+Nipakunda); Sund. Dan Nivartan Kund: Raghunathdas, VVS 79, *Dānanivartanakuṇḍāṣṭaka*, *Dānakelicintāmaṇi*; VRC 3.16 & 20; BRat p.202; Sund.; (CBC) (*nivarta-*); BP (*nivṛtta-*); Gandharvakund: Raghunathdas, VVS 79; BRat p.200; Sund.; GVY 23; BYP.

In the seventh act of Rup Goswami's *Vidagdhamādhava* Gauritirth is described as a place where Radha goes to worship the goddess Gauri. Companions of Krishna, Radha, and Chandravali make efforts to contrive a meeting between him and one of the two women. Radha's husband, Abhimanyu, decides to send Radha to Mathura in order to prevent such encounters, but Krishna, disguised as Gauri, appears before him at a shrine beside the pond and dissuades him from carrying out his intention. Krishnadas Kaviraj relates how a Sakhi called Shaivya tried to contrive a meeting between Krishna and Chandravali, who was waiting for him at Sakhi-sthala. He suggested that she take Chandravali to Gauritirth and wait for him there, a ruse which allows him to go off with his friends. The pond referred to by these authors lies to the left of the *parikramā* path, a short distance further on from Anyor. Nearby are other ponds called Nip Kund and Dan Nivartan Kund, which Gaudiya writers associate with the *dān līlā* episode. Some other ponds in the vicinity are named Vidyadhar-, Keshar-, and Gandharvakund (or Gandharva Talai).

5 *Dhunka Dauji*

BKB 20.

This shrine, standing on top of the hill between Anyor and Puchhari, is built over

some curiously shaped rocks around which other Govardhan stones have been placed. Here Balarama is said to have have sat and watched his cows, or to have stationed himself in order to spy on the *rās* that Krishna danced with the Gopis at Chandrasarovar, for which reason the place is called *ḍhũkā* or *luk-luk dāūjī* ('spying/peeping Dauji'). Like other Govardhan stones, these are worshipped with oblations of milk.

Between here and Punchhari, on the side of the ridge facing Surabhikund, there are several marks that are said to represent footprints of Krishna, Surabhi (or Kamadhenu), Uchchhaishravas and Airavata (Indra's horse and elephant), and Indra's wooden sandal (mentioned variously in GS 3.4.11-13 & 3.7, VGV 60, BYV, BYP, and BRat p.203). Also nearby are a stone that is said to produce a ringing sound when struck (*vādanī* or *bājanī śilā*: GS ibid., VGV ibid., BYP, BBP 6.31) and stones that are coloured with vermilion and lamp-black called *sindūrī* or *sundar śilā* (AV p.201, VGV ibid., BYV, BYP, BBP ibid.) and *kājalī* or *añjanī śilā*, which some associate with Radha's preparations for the *rās*. Some say that the latter is one of the stones in the Dhunka Dauji shrine.

20 Punchhari

GS 3.8.11, 3.10.25; SPV p.8; AV p.447; VGV 65; (CBC); BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BP; BBP 6.31.

As the path from Anyor approaches Punchhari it passes between two modern shrines with crudely-fashioned images of Ganesha. Beside the path is a platform on which sprawls an anthropomorphic and ithyphallic representation of the Govardhan hill, made out of clay and painted with whitewash and ochre. The village of Punchhari is said to derive its name from its being at the 'tail-end' (viz. *pũch*) of the Govardhan ridge. The only Sanskrit texts to mention the place are Narayan Bhatt's *Vrajotsavacandrikā* (see following entry) and *Gargasaṃhitā*, which says that there is a Pucchakunda lying at the 'tail' (*pūccha*) of Govardhan. Jagatanand says that this end of the Govardhan hill remained on the ground when Krishna lifted it up. The *vārtā* of Krishnadas, the singer and manager of Shrinathji temple, tells how he drowned either at Rudrakund or in a well at Punchhari; consequently his ghost is now said to haunt either a well or a pipal tree here.

20a Apsarakund

VP 162.20; NP 2.80.72; VBV 2.54, 10.34-40; VOC p.221; VVS 79; BRat p.203; Sund.; AV p.206; SPV pp.13, 33; BYV; GVY 24; VGV 66; (CBC); BYP; BKB 18; BP; BBP 6.30; Kumheriya p.33.

An Apsarasakunda mentioned in the *Varāhapurāṇa* as lying between Pundarika- and Sankarshanakunda probably refers to the tank now known as Apsarakund (or Apchharakund in some vernacular texts). It lies beside the path leading around the hill, just before it reaches the village of Punchhari from the direction of Anyor. According to Narayan Bhatt it is in Apsaravana (VBV), in the 'tail area' (*puccha-*

deśa) of Govardhan (VOC), and is where heavenly damsels used to frolick. In the *vārtā* literature Apsarakund is mentioned with reference to the cave of Ramdas Chauhan, one of the first people employed by Vallabha to serve Shrinathji. It is a small cell at the back of an ashram among trees on the north side of the tank. On the opposite side of it is the place where Chhitswami used to sit, and around it are temples of Apsara- and Navalbihari (a temple of the Nimbark Sampraday), Ganga, and Narasinha. The adjacent tank is called Nawal Kund, which Kumheriya says was called Pucch Kund until it was restored by Rani Nawal Kishor of Bharatpur.

20b Punchhari kau Lautha

Sund.; BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BP; Vaudeville 1980 pp.7-8; Entwistle 1983/1 p.101 n.22; Govind Das & Agrawal p.151; Dwivedi 1972 p.282; 'Krishna' pp.82-3 (verses about the image). See plate 19.

Punchhari has gained local celebrity on account of an image enshrined at the foot of the hill that is referred to as *pũcharī kau lauṭhā*. It may once have been a seated Buddha or Yaksha image, but its original identity is obscured by layers of vermilion that are regularly applied to it. It is gaily decorated with eyes, a moustache, and coloured tin foil in the manner of stones and crude images that elsewhere serve to represent Bhairava. A verse by Giridhar Kaviray (quoted by 'Krishna') associates him with the story of how Hanuman brought Govardhan to Braj (§2.39). The word *lauṭhā* is understood to refer to a stout and youthful person, such as a wrestler, and the story most commonly told about him is that he was a cowherd boy or herdsman who, when Krishna prepared to return with all his entourage to Goloka, asked if he could stay behind in Braj. Krishna agreed and promised him that, even without food, he would become strong and fit (*silauṭā*). A popular ditty refers to the fact that he thrives, even though he is offered only water and receives no solid food.

Brajnath's etymology is that the herdsman 'asked' (*pūch-*) the *lauṭhā* where Krishna had gone when he once made himself invisible. I have found no support for Vaudeville's suggestion that *lauṭhā* refers to a stone tied to a stick to drive cattle forward, and that the deity therefore represents a cowherd guardian standing by the tail of the cow- or bull-shaped hill. Elsewhere I have suggested some link with the figure of Languriya, which may lead to an indirect association with Hanuman as well as Bhairava.

21 Shyam Dhak

=VP 162.18-19 & BRam 106.29 Pundarikakunda?; =VBV 2.54, 10.26-7 Kaj(j)alivana, Pundarikasaras?; =GS 3.7, *droṇakṣetra*?; BRat p.203; Sund.; SPV pp.32-3, 35; PV; BYP (Gopi Talaiya, Gopal Sagar, Sugandhi Sila); BKB 19; BP (Gopal Sagar, Shyam Talai, Gop Talai); L. P. Purohit 1982 p.35. *Chāk līlā*.

Shyam Dhak, named after the tree called *ḍhāk* or *palāśa* (Butea frondosa), lies some distance west of Punchhari and the circumambulatory path around the hill.

For this reason it is not much frequented and is not mentioned in many itineraries. Some modern sources refer to the area here as Kaj(j)ali Ban and say that it is where Krishna used to graze cattle. He is believed to have made the leaves of one of the trees here turn into cups so that he and his companions could eat their curd. The story is given in *Gargasaṃhitā*, which refers to the place as Dronakshetra (*droṇa-*, whence Hindi *donā*, meaning 'leaf cup'). This text also mentions three other unidentified places, namely Kandukakshetra, where Krishna and his friends played, Aushnishatirtha, where he stole their turbans, and Laukikatirtha, where they played hide-and-seek. Brajnath names the sites here as the *baiṭhak* of Shrinathji and Vitthalnath, Sugandhi Sila ('fragrant stone'), Shyam Talai, Gop Talai, Mohan Kund, and Gopal Sagar. According to L. P. Purohit there is a pond here called Pundarik Sagar, which may correspond to the Pundarikakunda of the *Varāhapurāṇa*.

22 Jatipura

1 The village

Sund.; 84V p.363; CBC; BYP; BP; Mevcha pp.97 ff. (for a detailed list of temples here). *Govardhan līlā*.

Jatipura is referred to as 'Gopalpur' in the *vārtā* literature and continued to be so called up to the time of Brajnath, who gives both names. Members of the Gaudiya Sampraday, who generally prefer to call the place 'Gopalpur', claim that the name 'Jatipura' refers to the ascetic (*yati*) Madhavendra Puri, who instituted the worship of a deity called 'Gopal'. This seems to have been the deity that was given the name 'Shrinathji' by followers of the Pushtimarg. They claim that the *yati* in question was Giridhara, the eldest son of Vitthalnath, who was known as 'Jatiji'. *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā* suggests that the name 'Gopalpur' refers to the herdsmen (*gopāl*) who settled there when the temple acquired a herd of cows.

In addition to Shrinathji there are several other Pushtimarg temples at Jatipura, including those built for the deities that Vitthalnath distributed among his sons. These temples remain in the custody of the Gaddis that were formed by the sons of Vitthalnath, but the only deity that is housed in its original temple is Mathuranath, which was brough back from Kota some years ago. The deity of Gokulnath is brought here from Gokul each year for the celebration of Annakut. There is a *baiṭhak* of Vallabha in the temple of Mathuranath and one of Gokulnath in the temple of the same name. Beside the *parikramā* path at Jatipura there is a large group of *samādhi* commemorating some of the Goswamis descended from Vallabha.

2 Surabhikund

BRat p.203; GS 3.4.8-15; AV p.193; BYV (*surahī-*); BYP; BP; BBP 6.32. Airavat Kund: Sund.; (CBC); BYP; BKB 20; BP; BBP ibid.

As the path around the hill approaches Jatipura it passes by Surabhikund on the

left. The *barī yātrā* camps in the area stretching between this pond and Jatipura. On the hill opposite Surabhikund is the shrine of Dhunka Dauji (see above, §19.5), and a place where the *chappan bhog* feast is offered to the hill. Beside the tank is a temple of Balkrishna ('Shrijivanlalji Bambaiware ka Mandir'). The hut of the poet Paramanandadas is said to have stood beneath a *tamāl* tree on the bank of Surabhikund. A little nearer Jatipura is another tank known as Airavat Kund. Both tanks are related to the appearance of Surabhi and Airavata when Indra came to concede his defeat at the end of the Govardhan episode. Some rocks on the hill nearby are said to be marked with their footprints.

3 Govindswami ki Kadam Khandi

=VP 162.26 *kadambakhaṇḍakuṇḍa?, BRam 106.36 kadambakhaṇḍāntakuṇḍa?*, BRat p.203 & Sund. *kadama khaṇḍī?*; (CBC); BYP; BKB 21; BP; BBP 6.32.; cf. §14.10 above.

Further away from the hill, beyond Surabhikund, is a grove named after the poet Govindswami, whose *samādhi* is to be seen here. It is probably the Kadam Khandi mentioned by Narahari after Rudrakund, and may be the location of a Kadambakhandakunda named in the *Varāhapurāṇa*.

4 Rudrakund

Cf. VP 162.28; BRam 106.62; NP 2.80.73; VVS 79; KCC 4.8.16/CM p.183; BRat p.203; Sund.; AV; GVY 24; BYP (*rūdan-*, om. 1819 ms.); BKB 22; BP; BBP 6.34.

A *kuṇḍ* associated with Shiva in the *Varāhapurāṇa* seems to be the same as the Rudrakund mentioned in some later texts. In some Pushtimarg sources its name is corrupted to 'Rudan Kund', with the explanation that Krishna's followers 'cried' there when he disappeared. It lies near Jatipura beside the road leading to Gulal Kund. On its bank is a memorial to the poet Chaturbhujdas, said to mark the spot where he died beneath a tamarind tree.

5 Harji Pokhar

Sund.; SPV p.31; VGV 60; BBP 6.32; Mital 1966 p.113.

Close to the hill, just before Jatipura, is Harji Pokhar or Harakund. Harji is said to have been a companion of Krishna, or a local cowherd boy whom Vitthalnath appointed to the service of Shrinathaji, giving him the responsibility of looking after the temple fields. According to Mital he was a Gujar official of Suraj Mal who built the tank.

6 Dandauti Sila

AV p.276; SPV pp.33-4, 39; VGV 61; (CBC); BYP; BP; BBP 6.33.

This is a round stone set in the middle of the circumambulatory path beneath the temple of Shrinathji. Like other Govardhan stones, it is anointed with milk, but, as its name implies, its function is to receive the prostrations (*daṇḍavat/daṇḍaut*) performed as an act of contrition by those who set foot on the sacred hill when they go to see Shrinathji. Some also begin and end their circumambulation of the hill by prostrating before the stone.

7 Shrinathji ka Mandir

VOC p.108; KCC 4.8.13/CM p.183 (*gopālarāya*); CC 2.17.166 ff., 2.18.41-54; Sund.; GS 3.7.32-7, 10.61-2; SPV & AV *passim*; GVY 20, 25; BYV; PV; BYP; BKB 23; BP; Vaudeville 1980 pp. 15 ff.

The top of the hill above Jatipura is the site of the temple that housed the deity of Shrinathji (also called Govardhannath) before it was taken to Nathdwara in Rajasthan during the reign of Aurangzeb. The ruins of the original temple stand behind a newer one that was built to replace it, which was later restored by Dwarkeshji Maharaj. Narayan Bhatt described the image as Krishna at the age of seven holding up the mountain. Krishnadas Kaviraj tells us that when Chaitanya arrived to see the image (usually called 'Gopal' in Gaudiya sources) that had been installed by Madhavendra Puri, he was told that it had been removed for safety to Gantholi (below, §26). The pilgrim from Bikaner also mentions the presence of Rangeshwar and Parvati on the hill, and BYP says that there is an image of Burhe Babu opposite the temple. These references may be to a small Shiva shrine beneath the hill beside Harji Pokhar.

8 Giriraj ji ka Mukharavind

BYP (place of Govardhan Puja); BKB 23 (*pūjanī silā*); BP; BBP 6.33 (Shrinathji's *bhog śilā*); Growse p.301.

Beside the path around the hill is a crack in the rock referred to as 'the lotus face of Giriraj', the same name given to the rock at Manasi Ganga (above, §14.8). It is regularly worshipped with milk and is offered feasts at certain times, hence it is also called *bhog silā* or *pūjanī silā*. Along with food and milk, yellow scarves are also offered to the stone. Some say that this is the spot where Nanda first worshipped Indra and later the mountain. It is also said to be the place where the mouth of Shrinathji first appeared. The Goswamis who lead the *barī yātrā* offer a feast (*kunvārau*) here, and it is worshipped with special festivities on the day of Govardhan Puja, for which the deity called Gokulnath is brought each year from Gokul. Growse records that the priests of the Gokulnath and Shrinathji temples were always in dispute over who should have the honour of providing the image of Krishna and shrine or pavilion for the occasion.

9 Suryakund

KCC 4.8.16/CM p.183.

Suryakund, an old tank that is now dry, lies on the north-east side of Jatipura to the left of the path around the hill. On the other side of the path is an old Hanuman temple, and further on the *samādhi* of 'Bhakta Ganika', the prostitute who attracted the poet Krishnadas and was invited to dance before Shrinathji (cf.§5.8). A small ashram has grown up around it.

23 Bilchhuban

Sund. (*bilāsban*); AV p.446; SPV p.37; VGV 61 (*bilachhūkuṇḍa*); (CBC); BYP (1819: *vilāsban*, 1842: *vichū-*, others: *bilchū-*, *+jān ajān* trees); BKB 24-5 (*+jān ajān*) BP (*bichuvā-/bilchūkuṇḍ*); BBP 6.34-5 (*vilacā, vilāsakuṇḍa, jān ajān* trees); Govind Das & Agrawal p.153 (quotes verse beginning *sakhī rī haũ jāna ajāna bhaī*).

In the *vārtā* literature a place called Bilchhu is associated with the poet Krishnadas, and a platform (*cabūtarā*) here is said to commemorate him. Some say that this is where Krishna found Radha's toe-ring (*bichuā*) when she lost it while bathing in the pond. It is also said to be the place where the deity of Haridev (§14.4) was found. In some later sources it is called 'Bilasban'. It is situated between Jatipura and Govardhan township, some distance away from the path around the hill. Beside the pond called Bilchhukund there is a temple of Krishna as 'Bilchhubihari'.

Beside the path leading from Jatipura to Govardhan there is a small pedestal filled with earth in which two saplings have been planted as replacements for trees that were known as 'Jan' and 'Ajan'. They are said to have been companions of Radha who turned into trees when Krishna said that he could not meet Radha in their presence.

24 Sakhisthala (Sakarwa)

SP 2.6.2.24 & 30; NP 2.80.7 & 46-7; GLA 6.78; =VBV 2.55, 12.7-8 *sakhīvana*?; BRat pp.194, 197, 209-10 (*sakhīsthalī grāma/sakhīkarā*); Sund. (*sokarā*, also *sakhītalā*, though the latter is erroneously included, along with Uddhav Kund among places around Adibadri); SPV p.15 (*sakhītharā*).

Sakhisthala is said in the *Skandapurāṇa* to be a place near Govardhan where Uddhava appeared to Vajranabha, while in the *Nāradapurāṇa* it is where the Sakhis used to bring Radha each day. Narahari adds that it was the village of her friend Chandravali and that its modern name is 'Sakhikara'. It is probably the same as Narayan Bhatt's 'Sakhivana', which he says is near Govardhan and has a Lilavatikunda. The place intended is probably the village of Sakarwa, lying to the north-west of Govardhan near Uddhav Kund. Like the other villages mentioned below, it is not normally included in the circumambulation of Govardhan.

25 Nimgaon and other places in the vicinity of Govardhan

= VBV 2.55 & 13.10-12 *nimbavana*?; BRat p.211 (*nīma grāma*); Sund. (*nirmāchan sthān, nīm grām*); Brajvallabhsharan (ed.) 1972, p.422. Other villages: BRat p.211-2; VBV 2.55 & VOC p.115 (*pāḍaravana*). Suryakund: GLA 8 (where Radha etc. worshipped Surya); Sund. (at *moran grām*); VGV 38 *bhānusarovara*?; BKB 40?; Growse pp.7 & 350; Nityanand pp.51-2, Kapur vol.1 p.41 (Gaudiya devotees).

Nimgaon, situated beside the road leading from Govardhan to Barsana, is only of interest for members of the Nimbark Sampraday. They believe that Nimbarka lived in a cave here, but it has disappeared due to the fact that the Govardhan hill has shrunk in size and left Nimgaon on low-lying ground. The Sudarshanji temple here, which houses an image of Nimbarka, was built by Gopishwarsharandev of the Parashurampur (Salemabad) branch of the sect in 1841. The *kuṇḍ* here is referred to as Sudarshan Kund or Nimbark Sarovar.

Narahari mentions some villages lying north of Govardhan, though it is doubtful whether they have ever been included in any pilgrimage itinerary. Padal occurs under the name of Patal and is said to be where Radha picked *pāṭal* flowers. It is perhaps the same as Narayan Bhatt's 'Padaravana', said to be the birthplace of Madhumangala, a companion of Krishna, and to be located near Radhakund. Nearby is the village of Kunjera, which has a Dauji temple and a place associated with Siddh Baba. According to Narahari it was once called Navagrama. His *ḍerāvalī*, where Nanda is said to have set up camp (*ḍerā*), is probably to be identified with the village of Dahroli. He also mentions a *moyonākhya grāma*, also called *sūryakuṇḍa grāma* because of a tank where an image of Surya stands. This is probably the village of (Chhote) Bharna, north of Padal and Kunjera, where there is a Suryakund at which Radha and her companions are said to have worshipped the Sun, as related by Krishnadas Kaviraj. Growse says that the village was originally called Marna and was corrupted to Bharna by a clerical error. It must therefore be the same as Sundarlal's 'Moran Gram', which he says has a tank and image of Surya. Madhusudandas Baba, a Gaudiya devotee who resided here in the last century, is said to have found a stone with markings made by one of Radha's ornaments when it fell into the pond. It was also the residence of Siddh Jagannathdas Baba, another devotee of the last century, for whom the local people built a hut and small temple in which images of Chaitanya and Nityanand were installed. Sundarlal also mentions *konaī* (= Konhi) as a place where Krishna asked a Sakhi why Radha had not yet arrived (*kyõ n'āī*) to meet him.

26 Gantholi and Tod ko Ghano

CC 2.18.27-8 & 35-6 (*gāṭhuli*); BRat pp.203 & 212 (*gāṭhuli*); Sund.; SPV pp.14, 28 (*gāṭhyoli*), 16 (Tod); AV pp.213 ff. (Tond/Tod; incl. poem of Kumbhandas beginning *bhāvata hai tohi toḍa ko ghano*) p.220 fn. (*baiṭhak* & *kuṇḍ*); GVY 25; PV; BYP; BKB 26; BP; BBP 6.34. Gulal Kund: BRat p.213; Sund.; AY 62-3; SPV p.30; BKB 25; BP; BBP ibid.; P. Mital VS 2014, p.47. *Holī līlā*. Deva- and Munishirshasthana: BRat p.214; Sund.

Beside the road leading from Jatipura to Gantholi is Gulal Kund, built by Bir Singh Deo of Orchha, where the *barī yātrā* pilgrims celebrate Holi. Narahari records the popular belief that the name of the village of Gantholi refers to the knot (*gā̃ṭh*) made when the garments of Krishna and Radha were tied together during their wedding ceremony, which some say was done by Lalita in jest during the Holi festivities. Krishnadas Kaviraj tells us that when Chaitanya came to Govardhan, he had to go to Gantholi in order to see the deity of Gopal, since it was being worshipped there in secret owing to the presence of 'Turkish' soldiers in the vicinity. Pushtimarg sources name the place where the deity (Shrinathji) was taken for safety as Tod ko Ghano (spelt *ṭõḍ, ṭoṛ, ṭaũṛ*), a thicket lying some distance north of Gantholi and reached by a path that follows the canal. It is mentioned in the *vārtā* of Kumbhandas, to whom is ascribed a poem in which he describes it as a place with thorny plants. Brajnath adds that Shrinathji appeared here before Nagaji. A small *kuṇḍ* and *baiṭhak* of Shrinathji were constructed here in 1927.

North-west of Tod ko Ghano are the villages of Deosaras and Mundsaras, which are presumably the location of the tanks or ponds at Devashirsha- and Munishirshasthana mentioned by Narahari as places where the gods praised Krishna and where the sages performed asceticism for him. (Some local scholars explain that they did so by standing on their heads, viz. *śīrṣāsana*!).

27 Bhej

BRat p.214 (*rehej*); BP (*bahej*); Krishnadas Baba p.54.

On the west side of the village of Bhej, near the Govardhan-Dig road and beside Balbhadrakund, stands a temple that used to house an image of Dauji. The deity was stolen several years ago and the roof of the shrine has collapsed, but the deity carried around with the *barī yātrā* is placed in it when the pilgrims visit. Brajnath also names a Vijay Kund here, and there are other temples in the village dedicated to Bihari, Radhakant, and Shiva.

Five kilometres south-east of Bhej is Sanwain-Kheriya, identified by Krishnadas Baba as Suryapatanavana, a grove mentioned by Narayan Bhatt as the place where the Sun came down to earth to seek refuge from Ravana. Krishnadas Baba gives the names of ponds here as Surya-, Gwal-, and Gopal Kund, and says there are temples of Gopal and Bihari. He also notes that at Iklehra, north-west of Bhej on the road from Dig to Mundsaras, there is an old temple of a goddess called Chandravali where a fair is held on Chaitra II.7.

28 Dig

SP 2.6.1.38 (*dīrghapur*); Somnath, *Dīrghnagar varṇan & Sujān vilās*; Drake-Brockman (map of town); M. C. Joshi (palaces, bibliography). Sahai pp.14-45. *Vaidya līlā*.

The town of Dig has no religious significance for the pilgrims who pass through it, even though the *barī yātrā* sets up camp here. It is presumably the Dirghapura named in the *Skandapurāṇa* as one of the places that Vajranabha was asked to repopulate (cf.§§2.40, 6.8). It must have been a relatively insignificant settlement until 1725, when Badan Singh made it the headquarters of his domain and began work on the fortifications, mansions, and gardens. By the reign of Suraj Mal it had become a strong citadel with towering bastions and the centre of a sophisticated court, as described by the poet Somnath. Suraj Mal's brother, Rup Singh, was responsible for the tank known as Rup Sagar. Although palaces were built here by Suraj Mal between 1759-63, he made Bharatpur the capital of his kingdom in the latter part of his reign. Dig, however, remained a town of some importance, as is evident from the fine houses that were built by merchants and nobles who prospered during the late Mughal period. Jawahar Singh built the palace called Suraj Bhavan, incorporating architectural fragments looted from Agra and Delhi, and was probably responsible for the larger of two temples in the town dedicated to Lakshmana, a patron deity of the Jats. The garden was famous for its fountains, which used to be turned on once a year when the *barī yātrā* pilgrims arrived. At least a fortnight was needed to fill the reservoirs in preparation for this display.

The ruined outer fortifications are over seven kilometres in circumference and encompass the town and some of the cultivated land around it. Apart from Rup Sagar and Gopal Sagar, which lie on either side of the palaces, there are also Krishnakund, Lalajikund, and temples of Sakshi Gopal, Govardhannath, and Dauji. Some modern sources refer to Dig as 'Lathaban', but older itineraries ignore it completely.

29 Parmadra

=VBV 1.111 & 2.55 (*paramānandavana*?), 7.7 (*paramandiravana*); GLA 6.81 (*pramadarā*); BRat p.214 (*pramodanā grāma*); Sund. (*pramodalā sthān*); GVY 26 (*paramandare*); VGV 101 (*paramadarā*); (CBC), PV, BYP, BKB 27, & BP (*param(a)d(a)rā/pariṃdarā*); SC 7.1.59 (*parama mandira*); BBP 7.12-13 (*paramadarī*); Desai pp.102-3. *Sudāmā līlā*.

Narahari explains that the village he names 'Pramodana' is so called because Krishna and Radha experienced joy (*pramoda*) there. Most other sources give a variant of the name that is closer to the modern toponym and say that it was the village of either Shridama, one of the cowherd boys, or of Sudama, a poor man who had studied with Krishna in Ujjain and whose friendship was handsomely rewarded when he visited him in Dwarka. Brajnath says that there is a bower of Shridama here, but talks of an image of Shridama-Sudama. The confusion remains to this day, for both the villagers and visitors from outside refer to the image enshrined in a temple here indifferently as Shridama or Sudama, and hardly seem to be aware of their separate identity in the scriptural legends. In modern sources it is generally the association of Parmadra with Sudama that predominates, which may be due to the influence of devotees from Gujarat, where the almost homonymous town of Porbandar is regarded as the home of Sudama.

The temple of Shridama/Sudama stands beside Krishnakund on the north side of the village. It contains a modern representation of him in marble, placed beneath images of Krishna and Radha. There is also a Charan Kund on the east of the village and a small temple of Sakshi Gopal.

30 Adibadri

VBV 1.111, 2.55, 12.15-17 (*godṛṣṭivana*); NBC (+*alakananda*); BRat p.214; Sund.; GVY 28; (CBC); PV (*badrīnārāyaṇ*); BYP; BP; BBP 7.13-14. Alakananda(-saras/-kunda): NP 2.80.73; Sund.; VGV 69; SC 7.1.59; BP & BBP ibid. (*alak gaṅgā*). *Tīrth darśan/Brahmacārī līlā.*

Various places of pilgrimage in and around Badrinath in the Himalayas are imagined to have their counterparts in the range of hills lying some distance to the west of Parmadra. The route leading to them passes by the village of Gohana, where there is a temple of Shyam Bihari and a pond called Shyam Kund or Shyam Talai. It appears to be the same as Narayan Bhatt's 'Godrishtivana', which he says has a Gopal Kund and shrine of Shiva as Swapneshwar. West of Gohana the path meets a road running from Dig via Didauli, which is followed as far as Pasopa. Here a path to the left leads to Alipur, a village lying at the foot of the hills at the mouth of the valley in which Adibadri, 'the original Badri(nath)', is situated.

As one proceeds up the valley the first place encountered, about one kilometre west of Alipur, is a pond called Gaurikund and a temple of a goddess called Gauri or Yogamaya. It has been reconstructed from fragments of a medieval temple, including a lintel and doorposts from which figures have been shorn off. Nearby lie an *āmalaka* and other architectutal fragments; the amount of rubble strewn around the area suggests that there was once some kind of settlement here in addition to the temple. A short distance further up the valley is Adibadri, a Nimbark Sampraday temple that stands above a tank called Taptakund. It houses a black stone image, said to be of natural formation and to represent Badrinarayan. This is a form of Vishnu that Krishna is said to have adopted here when he once revealed himself to the Gopis. Other figures enshrined with it include Ganesha and Uddhava in meditation. The latter's visit to Badrinath in order to worship Vishnu is mentioned in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (3.4.21-22 & 33).

In the surrounding hills is a temple referred to as 'Burhe Badri' and peaks and other natural features that are said to represent Haridwar and neighbouring places of pilgrimage, such as Rishikesh, Kankhal, Lakshman Jhula, Gandhamadan, Yamunotri, Gangotri, and Man Sarovar. A rivulet said to be equivalent to the Alakhananda also flows out of the hills and across the plains. From Adibadri pilgrims may go northwards to visit a small Shiva shrine on a hill above Bilond that is referred to as (Adi-)Kedarnath. What seems from a distance to be a temple is in fact a large stone resting on rocks so as to form a small chamber in which a *liṅga* is enshrined. Beneath the hill is a Ramanandi asram. From here pilgrims may proceed to Kaman by way of Charan Pahari or, more commonly, may return to Parmadra or go straight on to Sehu, a village further along the Dig-Kaman road.

31 Sehu

= PP 69.47 *setubandha*?; BRat p.214 (*setukandarā, gandhaśilā, rasiyā parvata, nīla-parvata*); = Sund. *seṛkĕdarā*?, *gandh śilā, sāmarī sikhar*); GVY 26 (*seu*); BP (*śiv tāl/se gām*). Shwet Parvat: Sund. (*setu parvat*); PV; BYP (+ *sugandhī silā*); BBP 7.14 (*nīla-* and *setaparvata, sugandhī śilā*).

Just north of Sehu the road to Kaman passes through a gap in a range of hills along the top of which runs a ridge of whitish coloured stones. This curious and distinctive natural formation is probably what is referred to in the texts as 'Shwet Parvat' or 'Setukandara', though some of them say that it is located nearer to Adibadri and, with another hill, forms a pair that corresponds to the celebrated Nila- and Shwetaparvata ('blue and white mountains') in South India. The correspondence between Sehu, *śveta-* ('white'), and *setu-* ('bridge') has led some to associate the ridge with the bridge of rocks built across to Lanka in a re-enactment of the *Rāmāyaṇa* that is supposed to have taken place here. In addition to other peaks and a 'fragrant stone' (*sugandhī* or *gandh silā*), some modern sources also refer to a Nayan Sarovar. Also in the hills above Sehu is Anandadri or Anand Ghati, where Devakinandan, a Pushtimarg Goswami from Kaman, built a residence and garden.

32 Indroli

VBV 2.55, 11.27-8 (*indravana, devatākuṇḍa*); BRat p.214 (*indrāvalī*); Sund.; GVY 28 (*indukuṇḍa*); VGV 69; (CBC) (*indrakūpa*); PV (*indraulī, indrakūpa*); BYP (*indrakuṇḍ, -kūp*); BP; BBP 7.14.

At Indroli, which some say is the village of the Sakhi called Indulekha, there is a well or *kuṇḍ* named after Indra. Between here and Kaman Brajnath also mentions a Kadam Khandi named after a herdsman called Narena.

33 Kaman

Cf.§4.18. MBh 2.1877, 3.218 & 242 ff. VTK p.18 (*kāmiavaṇaṃ*). Kamyakavana: EI XXIV p.332; VP 151.37/R 351; VVS 92; NBC 2.131-9. Kamyavana: R 353/VM p.518; NP 2.79.9; PP 5.69.16/KCC 4.3.7, 69.45 (*kāmāraṇya*); KCC 4.3.5, 4.3.13/CM p.178, 4.10.16/CM p.186; CC 2.18.55; VRC 3.47-51; BRat pp.214-8; Sund (*-ban*). Kamikavana: AP. Kamavana/-ban(a): BRam 105.24; VBV 6.2-29, 9.1-66; AY 64; GVY 29; VGV 50; (CBC); BYP; BP; BBP 7.4 & 14-19. Kaman (*kāmā*): Bhagwat Mudit, p.51. *Tīrthāṅk* p.82 (Kurukshetra). Drake-Brockman p.15; Cunningham 1885 p.59; K. C. Jain pp.266-270. *Kāmdev mardan līlā.*

The town of Kaman is the location of the place referred to in the earliest sources as 'Kamyavana' ('beautiful/desirable forest') and in later ones as 'Kamban' (Skt. Kamavana, 'forest of Love/Desire'). The *Varāhapurāṇa* calls it Kamyakavana, a name that occurs in the *Mahābhārata* as a place visited by the five Pandavas during

their long exile, where Krishna once came to console them. Accordingly, there are some sites in Kaman that are associated with the Pandavas, though there is also a Kamyakavana or Kamyakatirtha among the seven forests at Kurukshetra. Cunningham suggested that the name derives from *kadambavana*, but a ninth-century inscription already gives the form 'Kamyakavana'. Kaman is also associated with a local ruler named Kamasena, after whom the fort is named. According to Drake-Brockman the town used to be called 'Brahampore', before its name was changed by Kamasena. Some believe that Kamasena was the maternal grandfather of Krishna.

Narayan Bhatt appears to differentiate between a Kamya-, Kama-, and Kamanavana, but he, a later scribe, or the editor of the published edition, was not consistent in his application of the names. It is evident, however, that Kamyavana is the most important of the three and refers to Kaman (cf. Kamai, below §43). He gives the length of its circumambulation as seven *krośa* and says that the sacred places include sets of eighty-four *tīrtha*, temples, and pillars. Later sources also refer to Kam(y)avana as having eighty-four *tīrtha* or *kuṇḍa*, while Rup Goswami says that there are thousands of them. By and large the texts agree on the sequence in which the main sacred places are mentioned, but differ in the number and sequence of the intervening lesser ones. Kaman is surrounded by a relatively low-lying plain where a lot of water accumulates during the monsoon. As a result, it is not easy to identify or differentiate between the many ponds named in the texts, besides which many of them have apparently been filled in and turned into arable land. Many of the ponds and other places named in *Bhakti ratnākar, Braj yātrā parikramā*, and by Brajnath are not included below because of their relative unimportance or their having lapsed into obscurity.

The poet Bhagwat Mudit, writing in the mid-seventeenth century, says that Kaman was a place inhabited by dacoits, probably referring to Meos who live in the area. The town belonged to Jaipur until it became part of the Bharatpur territory at the end of the eighteenth century. It used to be encircled by a wall and had seven gates, some of which still stand. They are called Dig, Lanka, Amer, Devi, Dilli, Ramji, and Mathura Darwaza. Seventeen kilometres north of Kaman is the village of Jorera, which some say is the 'gateway to Braj' and used to be visited as part of the circumambulation, though it is not mentioned in any of the pilgrimage texts.

1 Vimal Kund

VP 151.38/R 352/VM p.518; BRam 105.24; NP 2.79.10; VBV 6.3; NBC 2.132; BRat p.215 (+Devi); Sund.;GS 4.7.28; GVY 32; VGV 53; PV; BKB 27; BYP; BP; BBP 7.15; S. P. Mital p.38.

Vimal Kund is the only *tīrtha* at Kamyavana mentioned in the *Varāha-* and *Nārada-purāṇa*, and is the first one named by Narayan Bhatt. Other pilgrimage texts, however, begin with other bathing places, even though Vimal Kund is the largest and most impressive. In Brajnath's itinerary it is the first place visited on the second day at Kaman, places to the west and north-west of Kaman being visited on the day before. It lies outside Dig Darwaza and is reached by a causeway that connects it

with the main road. According to S. P. Mital the tank was constructed by Vimal Shah of Sind, while *Gargasaṃhitā* says that it was created from drops of perspiration that fell from the daughters of a king called Vimal when they danced the *rās* with Krishna. In view of the currency of the name Vimala in Buddhism, the tank may originally have had Buddhist associations.

There are some Hanuman shrines around the tank, the largest of them a Ramanandi one in the north-west corner. Along the north side of the tank are temples of Dauji (Gaudiya), Suryanarayan, and Nilkantheshwar. The latter has a *śikhara* and is built out over the ghats. Along the eastern side, which some refer to as 'Go Ghat', is a mansion with a Ramanandi temple of Lakshman, and at the south-eastern corner is a temple with a modern image of Vishwakarman. On the ghats along the south side is a new temple of Santoshi Ma, behind which stands a *chatrī* built in memory of Raja Kamak Sen. Further along is a temple of Vimal Bihari, which contains a modern image of Krishna holding up Govardhan, and in the south-western corner is the temple of Vimaladevi. Along the west side are temples of Murali Manohar (Gaudiya), Sakshi Gopal (Nimbark Sampraday), and Ganga. There are several smaller shrines and a number of *samādhi* around the tank.

At the beginning of the causeway, on the left-hand side, is a Shiva temple with some old sculptural fragments lying around it, and opposite the junction with the Dig road is a Ganesha temple. Amid fields to the north-east of the causeway is a temple of Narasinha, beyond which is an area of open ground and a mound on which stands a temple dedicated to 'Tilaware Hanuman'. Beside it is a shrine with remnants of a medieval *śikhara*, and beneath the mound is a small Shiva temple.

2 *Dharm Kund and other places near Mathura Darwaza*

NP 2.80.74; VBV 6.9-12; NBC 2.133-4; BRat p.215; Sund.; GVY 30-1; VGV 53; BYP; BP; BBP 7.18-19. Five Pandavas: NBC 2.138; VGV ibid.; BP; BBP ibid. Dharmaray: NBC 2.138; BRat p.215 ('Narayana as Dharma'); BYP; BP.

According to Jagatanand the pilgrims led by Vitthalnath camped at Dharm Kund and bathed there before undertaking the circumambulation of Kaman. It is also visited before Vimal Kund in the sequences given by Narahari and in *Braj yātrā parikramā*. Nowadays it lies neglected amid the fields, a couple of hundred metres outside of Mathura Darwaza. Above it stands an abandoned building that may once have served as a temple. Other tanks or ponds that, according to the sequence in which they are mentioned, appear to have been in the vicinity are Charan Kund (BRat), Panch Pandav Kund (BRat, Sund.) or Panch Tirth (VBV, NBC, BYP), Yajnakund (VBV, NBC, BYP), and Manikarnika (VBV, BRat).

Just outside Mathura Darwaza, on the right, is a temple of Panchmukhi Shiva containing some old pieces of sculpture. On a hillock near the path leading from here to Dig Darwaza is a shrine containing images of Draupadi and three of the five Pandavas, which appear to be 'late medieval' or 'early modern' and were recently placed here after having been kept for a time elsewhere. It is uncertain whether the present shrine stands on the site where these images were originally installed. The

pillars supporting the porch incorporate carved fragments that are comparable in style to those of Chaurasi Khambha. In front of the shrine is a small enclosure in which have been placed a cluster of *liṅga* and other old pieces of sculpture. Beneath the mound, at the edge of the fields and beside the beginning of the path leading to Dharm Kund, is a well incorporating old architectural fragments. This is probably the *tīrtha* or well of the Pandavas mentioned in some of itineraries.

Inside Mathura Darwaza, along the street leading down to it, are temples of Vishnu as Dharmaray and Dauji.

3 Kameshwar

NBC 2.140; BRat p.215; Sund.; BYP; BP; BBP 7.19; EI XXIV p.331; K. C. Jaina pp.268-7.

This temple, containing one of the four main Shiva *liṅga* of Braj, stands on a small mound just inside Mathura Darwaza. Kameshwar is regarded as the guardian deity (*kṣetrapāla*) of Kaman and is one of the first places visited in the itinerary given by Narahari. There are some old sculptures embedded in the walls of the courtyard, but the finest of them, depicting Vishnu lying on Shesha, was removed a few years ago.

In the town, not far from the bus station, is another old Shiva temple of Vaidynath, which houses a four-faced *liṅga* and also has old pieces of sculpture embedded in the surrounding walls.

4 Tanks and ponds between the town and Charan Pahari

VBV 2.53, 6.5 ff., 9.2 ff.; VRC 3.49-50 ; NBC 2.132; BRat p.216; Sund.; GVY 32; VGV 53; BYP; BP. *Ãkh micaunī līlā* at Luk-luk Kund.

The texts name various *kuṇḍ* which must have been located west and south-west of the town. Only a few of them are indicated today; the rest were probably ponds that evaporated during the winter months or have since been brought under the plough. Their names as given variously in the different sources as Yashoda-, Madhusudan-, Lanka-, Luk-luk-, Padma-, Tap-, Dhyan-, (Manasa)devi-, Gaya-, Kashi-, Prayag-, and Dwarkakund, and Chakratirth. Brajnath lists most of them in the itinerary for the first day spent at Kaman, mentioning them after Vimal Kund, but in other texts they are visited after it.

All of the sources cited above refer to Luk-luk Kund, where Krishna and his companions played a form of hide-and-seek (*ãkh micaunī*), and Lankakund, where Krishna is said to have re-enacted Rama's invasion of Lanka. A raised path is pointed out as being the causeway (*setu*) that the monkeys built across the water; a mound represents the island of Lanka, and the site of Rameshwar is also indicated. The largest of the *kuṇḍ* mentioned is Gayakund, a tank lying beside the road near Kamasena Kila.

5 Charan Pahari

BRat p.216; Sund.; BYP; BKB 27; BP; BBP 7.16. Mahodadhitirth: Sund.; GVY 32; BP; BBP ibid. Nanda Bat & Kup: VBV 10.28-9; BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BP; BBP ibid.

On the top of this hill, a ridge west of the the town running from north-east to south-west, is a stone marked with what is believed to be the footprint of Krishna. A shrine has been built over it and nearby is a small hut and *rās maṇḍal*. On the west side of the hill is a tank referred to as Mahodadhitirth or Dadhisamudra, and nearby is a banyan and well named after Nanda, probably corresponding to Narayan Bhatt's 'Nandakupavana'.

6 Tanks and ponds north-west of Kaman

Manokamanakund: =R 354/VM p.518 & VVS 92 *kāmasaras*?; =NP 2.80.73 *kāmakuṇḍa*?; VBV 6.16; =BRat p.216 *kāmanākuṇḍa*?, 217 *kāmasarovara*?; =Sund. *kām sarovar*?; GVY 32 *kāmanā*-?; BYP (*mankāmanī tīrth*). Surabhikund: VBV 9.10; BRat p.217; Sund; GVY 33 (*surabhī guphā*); VGV 53; CBC; BYP; BP; BBP 7.18; =BKB 8 *śrīkuṇḍ*? Sitalakund & Devi: BP. Suryakund: BRat p.216; Sund.; PV; BBP ibid. (*ravi*-).

The sequence in which names of the different *kuṇḍ* are given by Narahari, Brajnath, and in *Braj yātrā parikramā* implies that there were several lying in the area to the west and north-west of Kaman, but only a few of them are now worthy of mention. Sitalakund, lying near the road from Kaman to Jorera, is named as such only by Brajnath. On the side nearest the town is a shrine of Sitala, and on the opposite bank is a mound with a roughly constructed shrine and fragments of sculpture. Nearby, amid fields to the south, is an empty temple said to have been dedicated to Shiva as Manokamana. The field in front of it may once have been the location of a pond known as Manokamanakund or some variant of the name. North-west of Sitalakund is Surabhikund, on the east side of which is an old temple with a *śikhara* that houses an image of Hanuman. The Pushtimarg *baiṭhak* shrines here stand in the north-west corner. The tank is irregular in shape and is also referred to as Shrikund, a double nomenclature that is probably the result of its having been thought of as consisting of two adjacent ponds. In the corner of the tank nearest the Hanuman temple is a ghat made of roughly hewn stones, similar to those at Suryakund, a tank on the edge of the town where the road from Jorera joins the ring road. These two tanks appear to be among the oldest at Kaman.

7 Khisalini Sila and Vyomasur ki Gupha

Khisalini Sila: VBV 9.14; KCC 4.10.16 (*picchalaparvata*)/ CM p.186 (*picchali-pāthar*); BRat p.217 (*candrasena parvata, pichalinī śilā*); Sund.; GVY 34; VGV 52; BYP; BKB 28; BP; BBP 7.16 . Vyomasur ki Gupha: VBV 9.15; BRat ibid.; Sund.; BYP (also caves of Agha & Baka); BP; BBP 7.17. *Vyomāsurvadh līlā*.

The hill west of Surabhikund running in a north-east/south-west direction, is referred to as Indrasena Parvat. On it is a smooth rock down which Krishna and his

friends used to slide, which is called Khisilani Sila ('sliding stone', referred to by Murari Gupta as *picchala*, 'slippery'). Pilgrims who visit this spot usually amuse themselves by sliding down it as well. High up on the rocky face at the north-west end of the hill, overlooking the Kaman-Jorera road, is the cave of Vyoma, the demon who abducted Krishna and his companions.

8 Bhojan Thari

PP 69.20 & NP 2.80.74? VBV 9.16; NBC 2.133; BRat p. 217; Sund.; GVY 34 (*thār kaṭorī cīnha*; BYP; BP; SC 7.1.59 (*bhojana thālu*); BBP 7.17. *Chāk līlā.*

This site consists of a low mound beside a tank lying north-east of the road to Jorera, not far from the cave of Vyoma. In the rocks above the tank are impressions that are thought to have been used as dishes (viz. *bhojan thārī*) by Krishna and his friends for eating yoghurt. In Sanskrit sources this place is referred to as Bhojanasthala (or -sthali). Above the rocks is a Shiva temple with old pieces of sculpture embedded in its walls, and a porch (*tivārī*) with an inscription recording its construction in 1843.

9 Chaurasi Khambha

Cf.§4.18. VBV 2.53 p.48; NBC 2.133; Sund.; BP; BBP 7.19.

Above the town of Kaman is an extensive rocky mound, which, judging from the amount of rubble scattered over it, once served as a citadel. A path leading up to it through a gateway at the north-west end of the main bazaar passes by a Jain temple and leads to the structure known as Chaurasi Khambha ('eighty-four pillars'). Unlike its equivalent at Mahaban, it is not associated with any incident in the life of Krishna. Narayan Bhatt refers to eighty-four pillars established by Kamasena, but says that the exact number could not even be determined by all the gods when they were asked by Vishnu to count them.

Nearby stands a temple of Laldas, and on the south side of the mound is Kamasena Kila, which survives as little more than a façade.

10 Gokulchandrama, Madanmohan, and Radhavallabh.

On the road leading from Dig Darwaza to the south-east corner of the main bazaar stand the temples (or *havelī*) of Gokulchandrama and Madanmohan, headquarters of the fifth and seventh Gaddis of the Pushtimarg. Both deities were taken to Jaipur when they were first removed from Braj in the reign of Aurangzeb. They were later taken to Bikaner, and in 1872 both were brought to Kaman (cf.§5.38).

A little further on from Madanmohan, near the junction of the street leading down to Mathura Darwaza, is another temple in the *havelī* style that served as the refuge for Radhavallabh, the deity of Hit Harivansh. It was worshipped here from the time of Aurangzeb until its return to a new temple in Vrindaban in 1784.

11 Govind Dev and Gopinath

Sund. (*brindā devī*); BP.

A narrow street that begins between the temples of Gokulchandrama and Madanmohan leads to the Gaudiya temple of Govind Dev. Here the deity from the Vrindaban temple was worshipped for a while before it was taken to its present temple at Jaipur (cf.§§5.25 & 28). Like the temples of Radhavallabh and Gopinath, it is not much frequented and is in a rather neglected condition. It consists of a courtyard with three shrines along one side, the central one with an image of Govind Dev, the others with the Jagannath triad and a vermilion-painted image of Vrindadevi, believed to be the one that was originally housed in a side-chapel of the Govind Dev temple in Vrindaban.

The temple of Gopinath, also built for the deity from Vrindaban before it was taken to Jaipur, is situated in the part of the town that lies to the north of the mound on which Chaurasi Khambha stands.

34 Kunwara

BRat p.214 (*kanoyaro* [Kanwaro]); BYP; BKB 29; BP; BBP 7.20 (*kanavārau*).

Narahari mentions this village before Kaman and says that it is where the sage Kanva performed austerities. In other itineraries it is mentioned between Kaman and Sonehara and is sometimes said to be where Balarama ate (BYP) or had his ears pierced (*karṇavedh*, BP).

35 Sonehara ki Kadam Khandi

VBV 1.18-19, 68 & 103-4, 2.54 (*kadambavana, svarṇavana - suvarṇavana?*); VOC pp.9 (*svarṇapura, svarṇācala*), 14, 223 (+*kadambavana, -khaṇḍī*); NBC 2.105 (*suvarṇācala*); BRat p.218 (*svanahāra grāma*); Sund. (*nāgājī kī kadam khaṇḍī*); Sunehara: GVY 37 (+Dehakunda); PV (+Kadam Khandi); Sunahara: VGV 54; BYP (om.1819 ms.); BKB 29 & BP (+Kadam Khandi). (CBC) (Kadam Khandi); BBP 7.21 (*sunairā kī kadam khaṇḍī*). *Gaucāraṇ līlā; Būṛhī līlā (cīrharaṇ).*

North-east of Kanwara, in a valley between parallel ridges running from south-west to north-east, lies a wooded area known as Kadam Khandi, and further on is the village of Sonehara. It seems that the first two syllables of the name of this village inspired Narayan Bhatt to invent Sanskrit forms beginning with *suvarṇa* ('gold', 'Hindi *sonā*). He adds that it is the birthplace of Sudevi, saying that she and the other Sakhis went to Kadambavana (or Kadambakhandi), where there is an image of Lakshminarayana. Narahari calls the village 'Svarnahar' and refers to a Ratnakund and Chaturmukhasthana ('place of the four-faced [god]'), though Narayan Bhatt locates them at Brahmaparvata (i.e. Barsana).

At Kadam Khandi there is a small tank called Krishnakund, above which is a

small temple of Bihari and a *baiṭhak* of Kaka Vallabhaji. Behind the temple is a large masonry swing frame (*jhūlā*). On top of the hill to the north is a *rās maṇḍal* built over a cell referred to as the cave (*guphā*) or *baiṭhak* of Nagaji. Near Krishnakund is an enclosure with a small temple and ashram where members of the Kathiya Baba group camp during their annual pilgrimage. While they are here, on Bhadon II.14, a fair is held and one of the series of *būṛhī līlā* plays is performed. Boys dressed as Krishna and Radha are placed on the swing behind the Bihari temple, and are then carried up to the cell of Nagaji and back down to Krishnakund, where the episode of Krishna stealing the Gopis' clothes is enacted. The temple of Gokulchandrama at Kaman also organizes a feast here on the birth anniversary of Kaka Vallabhji, one of its former Goswamis.

36 Unchagaon

NP 2.80.74 (*balasthāna*). Uchchagrama/Lalitagrama: VBV 2.46, 4.36-49; VOC pp.23 ff., 222; NBC 2.106 (*sakhīgiri, lalitājanmasthala*), 2.124-5, 2.129, 3.1 ff., 3.87 ff.; =KCC 4.10.12 *raivatakagirī*?; Sund.; GVY 37-8 (*deha kuṇḍa, baladeva ṭhaura*); VGV 92; (CBC); PV (*deh-* & *ratan kuṇḍ*); BYP (+*deh kuṇḍ*); BKB 30 (*deh kuṇḍ*); BP; TA 82-5; BBP 7.23 (+*deh kuṇḍ*). Chitra-vichitra Sila: CBC; BYP; BKB 30; BBP 7.21; BP. *Candrāvalī līlā*.

Narayan Bhatt, who lived here and founded the temple of Balarama, refers to a hill called Sakhigiri, on which are Khisalini Sila ('sliding stone') and the place where Lalita was married. The former, a smooth sloping rock with a *chatrī* built over it, is to be seen on a low rocky hill west of Unchagaon, on the other side of the canal. The latter, consisting of a small *chatrī* representing the canopy (*vivāhamaṇḍapa*) set up for Lalita's wedding ceremony, stands at the top of the village mound in front of a temple, in which she is enshrined next to Krishna and Radha. Khisalini Sila appears to be identical with a stone referred to in other sources as Chitra-vichitra Sila ('multicoloured stone'), a place where Radha applied henna or lac (*mahāvar*), though most of them imply that it is at Sonehara. Narayan Bhatt also mentions Trivenitirtha and a nearby Sakhikupa, one of which is probably to be identified with a well now called Trivenikup, as well as with Brajnath's 'Saraswatikup'.

At the foot of the hill, on the south side, is the temple of Balarama and Revati that was founded by Narayan Bhatt in 1555. His *samādhi* stands in an enclosure nearby. On the north side of the hill lies Deh Kund, the dimensions of which are given in *Vrajotsavacandrikā*. Beside it is a small Shiva temple that has a painted dome, similar in style to those found in the *chatrī* memorials built at Govardhan for the rulers of Bharatpur. It probably stands on the site of the Venishankara shrine mentioned in *Vrajabhaktivilāsa*. Narayan Bhatt names other minor places at Unchagaon, but they are no longer visited, if they even exist.

Brajnath begins his description of Unchagaon with some general remarks on the area of Barsana, saying that one has no right to go there without first acquiring a female body by bathing in Deh Kund. Krishna is said to have given Radha a gift here, and later she reciprocated by giving him gold. Brajnath and later descriptions of the *baṛī yātrā* say that it is the custom for pilgrims to give their Panda a gift of gold or silver here.

Between Unchagaon and Barsana lies Gendokhar Kund, further on from which is Badarola village and Badarolakund, which a few modern sources say was the residence of a woman who churned milk for Vrishabhanu.

37 Barsana

Brihatsanu: SP 2.6.1.38; NP 2.80.74; GS 3.1.17 (*-giri*); NBC 2.120. Brahmaparvata NBC 2.104, 3.34-43. Varasanugiri: BRam 106.85 & 107-9. Bhanupura: PP 69.21; GVY 40. Vrishabhanupura: VBV 2.47, 4.50-70; VOC pp.11-13, 155; KCC 4.10.11; VRC 1.80-81 (*-purī*); BRat pp.218-20 (also *varṣān*); GS 2.12.9; GVY 38. Varasana: VOC p.155. Barasanau/-o: NBC 3.73 & 88; AY 24 ff.; Sund.; VGV 77-8; BYP; BKB 31; BP; TA 57, 70-80, 101-119, 162-211; BBP 7.5 & 24-6. Growse pp.41-2, 74, 91 ff., 311 ff., 337-8; E. B. Joshi p.332; Krishnadas Baba pp.72-80; P. Mital 1966 pp.119-121; S. P. Mital pp.40-6. Nehi Nagaridas: Lalitacharan Goswami p.424, Snatak pp.476-7 (both of whom quote a verse attributed to him, a variant of which is found among the poems of Govindswami, *pad* 556). *Guṛiyā līlā, Śyām sagāī līlā, Dān līlā (būṛhī līlā).*

The names for Barsana given in Sanskrit texts appear to have been inspired by the vernacular toponym, which appears in the earliest vernacular sources with the *-au* or *-o* termination of the Braj dialect. Narayan Bhatt refers to it as Vrishabhanupura, the town of Radha's father Vrishabhanu, and names the two adjacent hills after Vishnu and Brahma, saying that the latter took the form of the hill in order to witness the sports that Krishna would perform on it. Janakiprasad Bhatt refers to Brahmaparvata, as well as to Barasanaupura, which might be intended to mean that the township was located on a 'choice mountain-ridge', equatable with the 'Varasanugiri' of *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* and the 'Brihatsanu' ('great mountain ridge') of the *Skanda-* and *Nāradapurāṇa*. Growse suggested that the modern name is a corruption of *brahmā-sānu*, which is in accordance with the popular notion that the pale-coloured hill of Barsana corresponds to Brahma, while Krishna or Vishnu is represented by the dark-coloured Govardhan, and Shiva by the reddish hill at Nandgaon. The four peaks of the range of hills at Barsana (on which stand Dan Garh, Man Garh, Vilas Garh and Mor Kuti) are said to correspond to the four faces of Brahma. In the *Skandapurāṇa* Brihatsanu is one of the places in Braj that Vajranabha is asked to repopulate. All sources accept that it was the place where Vrishabhanu resided and that Radha was either born here or spent her childhood here after being born at Rawal.

The existence of some of the places mentioned by Narayan Bhatt is confirmed in a verse by the poet Nehi Nagaridas, a devotee of Radhavallabh who settled here in the latter part of the sixteenth century. He praises Barsana as his 'capital' and refers to Sankari Khori, Gahwarban, Vilas Garh, Bhanokhar, and the hill-top temple of Radha ('Thakurani'). Originally Barsana was no more than a hamlet of Unchagaon, but it began to flourish in the mid-eighteenth century, largely under the influence of Rup Ram, a Katara brahmin who served as a priest and negotiator for Suraj Mal and Jawahar Singh. Most of the mansions and temples here were built in the latter half of the eighteenth century; Rup Ram was responsible for building a new temple for Lariliji on the hill above the town (since superseded by a newer

building), as well as the steps leading up to it, the market place, gardens, and several other buildings. Other wealthy families residing here at the same time were those of Mohan Ram, a Lavaniya brahmin, and Lalaji, a Tantiya Thakur who is said to have made his fortune in Lucknow and was granted funds from the state treasury to allow him to construct a mansion, large step-well, and two ordinary wells. The Lavaniyas faced Piri Pokhar with stone and built a market place, mansion, and a few *chatrī*. The town suffered when it was plundered by Najaf Khan after he routed the Jats here in 1774. In 1812 the Gaurawa Thakurs, zamindars of Barsana, transferred the whole estate to Lala Babu for the sum of 602 rupees.

Brajnath gives the most detailed itinerary for the circumambulation of Barsana. He begins with the temple of 'Swaminiji' (Lariliji), then says that places between there and Gendokhar are visited on the first day, those between the Ashtasakhi temple and Piri Pokhar on the second day, and that the third day is spent watching the *dān līlā* that is re-enacted at Sankari Khori. Nawal Singh Pradhan lists few places, but also begins with Gendokhar and ends with Piri Pokhar. S. P. Mital, describing a recent *baṛī yātrā*, says that the pilgrims circumambulated Barsana on one day (following an itinerary similar to Brajnath's) and in the evening enjoyed a wedding celebration organized by the 'Maharaja' leading the party (a celebration usually held at Sanket). On the following day they watched the *dān līlā* at Sankari Khori. The most popular festivals in Barsana are those held at Holi, Radhashtami, and the *būṛhī līlā* performances.

1 Gendokhar

BP (*gēdokhar*); BBP 7.24 (*gidoṣara tāla*). See below, §39.3

This tank is said to derive its name from Radha's having played with a ball (*gēd*) here. It lies between Unchagaon and Barsana and usually comes first in the modern sources that mention it.

2 Bhanokhar

Bhanusarovara: VBV 4.67-9 p.103 (+Kirttisaras, Vrajeshwara); VOC p.221; VOC p.6 (Vrishabhanukunda); NBC 2.120 (Vrishabhanu- and Kirttisaras); Bhanokhar: SC 7.1.59 (-i); TA 107.; BBP 7.24 (+Kiratakunda). BRat p.220 (Bhanukhor); Sund. (+ Jal Mahal); GVY 39; VGV 78; BYP; BKB 31; BP. Dohanikunda: VBV 4.65 p.102; NBC 2.121; BRat p.219; Sund.; GVY ibid.; VGV 79; BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BP; BBP 7.25. Vishakhakunda: VOC p.11. Führer p.97.

Führer gives a Sanskrit inscription found on a pillar inside this tank that gave the year of its construction by Rup Ram as *saṃvat* 1666, which must refer to the Shaka era and thus be equivalent to AD 1744, when Rup Ram would have been in his thirties. The tank lies opposite the bus station beside the road leading to Govardhan and is presumably the same as Narayan Bhatt's 'Bhanusarovara'. Rup Goswami, in the first act of *Vidagdhamādhava*, mentions a Bhanutirtha, which may refer to this tank or to Barsana as a whole. Although the name is said to be related to Vrishabhanu, it may originally have been associated with the Sun (*bhānu*).

On the west side of the tank stand a mansion called Jal Mahal, a Chaturbhuj temple of the Nimbark Sampraday, and another of Brajeshwar Mahadev. On the opposite side are four *chatrī*, three of which commemorate Rup Ram and two of his relatives. There is also a *baiṭhak* of Ruplal, an eighteenth-century Goswami of the Radhavallabh Sampraday. The adjacent tank on the north-east is called Kirtikund, after Radha's mother.

From here pilgrims usually proceed directly to Sankari Khori, but a more extensive circumambulation includes Ravarikund, where there is a Dauji temple, and Pavari-, Tilak-, Mohani-, Lalita-, and Dohanikunds, which lie in the area stretching from Bhanokhar to the other side of the Vilas Garh hill at Chiksoli. Some distance along the road to Govardhan is Vishakhakund, said by Narayan Bhatt to lie one *krośa* from Barsana.

3 *Sankari Khori*

VBV 4.60 & VOC pp.6, 12-13 (*sāṃkarikhori(sthala)*); NBC 2.122 (*saṃkocabīthikā*); BRat p.218; AY 27-30; Sund.; GVY 39; VGV 80; BYP; BKB 32; BP; SC 7.1.59; TA 115-9; BBP 7.24. See plate 20.

Sankari Khori, meaning 'narrow lane', refers to the rocky footpath connecting Barsana and Chiksoli where it passes between the hills on which stand Vilas Garh and Mor Kuti. Since only one person at a time can pass here, it has been identified as the location for the episode in which Krishna intercepted Radha and demanded a tax on the curd she was carrying. This incident, called *dan līlā* or *maṭukī līlā*, is re-enacted each year as part of the series of festivities known as *būṛhī līlā*. It was probably instituted by Narayan Bhatt, who mentions the place and the episode in *Vrajotsavacandrikā*. Above the narrow path is a platform on which a boy playing the role of Krishna challenges another dressed as Radha as she comes along carrying a pot.

4 *Vilas Garh*

VBV 4.61 & VOC p.12 (*vilāsamandira*); NBC 2.122 (*vilāsasthala*); AY 31; Sund.; VGV 79; BYP; BKB 33; BP; TA 109.

This small building stands on the hill to the south of Sankari Khori that some call Vishnu Parvat. It is associated with the amorous play of Krishna and Radha and is said by Brajnath to be the location of a *baiṭhak* of Krishna.

5 *Mor Kuti*

VBV 2.54 (*mayūrakuṭī*); VOC p.12; Sund.; BYP; BP; TA 109; BBP 7.26; VDA 6 (Nehi Nagaridas).

Mor Kuti is a small building with a shrine cared for by ascetics associated with Tatti Asthan in Vrindaban. It stands on the hill above Sankari Khori and commands a fine view of the plains lying to the west and south. It is supposed to be the place where Krishna performed a peacock dance, and is believed to have been the

residence of Nehi Nagaridas. Narayan Bhatt says it lies in Mayuravana, where there is also a Mayurakunda (or -saras), which presumably refers to the tank that lies beneath it in Gahwarban.

6 Chiksoli

VOC p.5 (*cikitsāpura*); NBC 2.121 (*cikitsāvana*); BRat p.219 (*cikasaulī* or *citraśālī*); Sund.; GVY 40; PV: BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BP.

Narayan Bhatt says that this was the village where the Sakhi called Chitralekha lived. Some say that Radha had a picture gallery here (*citraśālā*).

7 Dabhala and Rankoli

Rankapura(vana): VBV 2.55, 10.4-5; VOC pp.8-9. Dabharo: VOC ibid.; BBP 7.26-8 (*ḍabhārau, sūraja kuṇḍa, lovārī-covārī, ratanakuṇḍa*); BRat p.220 (*ḍabharāro*). GVY 41 (*nauvāri-cauvāra, ratanakuṇḍa*); *VGV 74 (nauvārī-cauvārī*); PV (*novārī-covārī, ḍoban*); BYP & BKB 34 (*nobārī-cobārī, ratan kuṇḍ*, om. 1819 ms.); BP.

West of Chiksoli and south of the village of Dabhala is the place of twin images of Nobari and Chobari. They are included by Brajnath among the twelve Devis of Braj, though he says that the images were stolen some years before. He says that Radha used to play with dolls here and that the two goddesses used to clean the cowsheds of Vrishabhanu. Nearby is Ratnakund and between here and Chiksoli lies Suryakund. Narayan Bhatt says that Dabhala was the village of the Sakhi Rangadevi, and his Rankapuravana, the village of Indralekha, must refer to Rankoli, standing on a detached hill further to the south-west. Neither of these villages are normally included in the circumambulation of Barsana.

8 Gahwarban

=PP 69.39 *gahvare*?; VBV 2.18 & 47, 4.62; NBC 2.123; BRat p.219; AY 32-3; Sund.; VGV 79; CBC; BYP; BKB 33; BP; SC 7.1.59; BBP 7.26 (*gevara*). See also §66.38a, below.

Gahwarban (Skt. Gahvaravana, 'deep forest'), refers to the wooded slopes of the north-western side of the hill of Barsana. The circumambulation leads one through it from Chiksoli, between Mor Kuti and Man Garh, and up to Dan Garh. Beneath Mor Kuti is a tank that Brajnath calls Sital Kund, probably the same as Narayan Bhatt's Mayurakunda and often referred to as Gahwar Kund. Beside it is a Gaudiya temple of Gahwarban Bihari. A short distance further along the path, in the direction of Dan Garh, is a *rās maṇḍal* beside a temple of the Nimbark Sampraday called Gopal Garh. A little further on is a *baiṭhak* of Vallabha.

9 Man Garh

VBV 2.54, 10.62-6; NBC 2.122 (*mānalīlāsthala*); AY 31; Sund.; GVY 40; VGV 79; BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BKB 32; BP; SC 7.1.59; TA 114; BBP 7.25 (*-ghāṭī*) & 28 (*-ghara*). *Mān līlā.*

The north-western end of the Barsana hill, above the village of Manpur, is designated 'Manengitavana' by Narayan Bhatt, who mentions a Manamandira, a swing, a *rās* circle, and Ratnakunda (cf. §37.7 above). This implies that a building on the hill was supposed to be the 'boudoir' that Radha retired to when her pride was ruffled by Krishna's flirting with other women. Today the small temple here is called Man Garh or Man Mandir. From it there is an extensive view of the rest of the Barsana hill, Unchagaon, Sanket, Nandgaon, and the hills around Sonehara. An image called Man Bihari that once stood in the temple here is said to have been stolen some years ago and now, as in many other shrines around Barsana, a picture serves as the object of worship. The building is being expanded by a 'Baba' who has taken up residence there and has begun to attract a large following.

10 Dan Garh

VBV 4.56 (*dānamandira, +hiṇḍola*); AY 31; NBC 2.121 (*dānalīlāsthala*); Sund.; GVY 40; VGV 79; BYP; BKB 32; BP; SC 7.1.59 (*dāna thala*); BBP 7.28.

At the point where the path leading up through Gahwarban reaches the crest of the hill stands Dan Garh, usually ignored by pilgrims in favour of the adjacent and more impressive 'Jaipurwala' temple. Brajnath refers to the deity as Dan Bihari. In front of it stands a large stone swing frame. The Jaipur temple, dedicated to Krishna as Kushalbihari, built by Sawai Madho Singh II, and completed in 1914, is cared for by priests of the Nimbark Sampraday.

11 Lariliji ka Mandir

Cf. VBV 4.50-1; VOC. pp.110, 131-148; NBC 3.34-43 & 88 ff.; Sund.; VGV 79 (*ṭhākurāṇī mandira*); BYP (*ṭhakurāṇi* or *svāminī kā mandir*); BKB 34; BP; P. Mital 1966 p.119. See plate 21.

An earlier temple on the site of what is now called Lariliji ka Mandir is referred to by Narayan Bhatt, who talks of images of Krishna and Radha on the 'hill of Brahma' (Brahmaparvata). We are told by his biographer, Janakiprasad Bhatt, that he discovered deities of Larili and Lal; Narayan Bhatt himself, in *Vrajotsavacandrikā*, says that 'Ladililala' represents the eleven year old Krishna accompanied by Radha. He gives the ritual for the anointing (*abhiṣeka*) of the deities on Radha's birthday, referring to the temple as Radhamandira or Bhanormandira. Sundarlal mentions a well on the hill called Bhanukup where the deity of Radha became manifest.

The present Goswamis are descendants of a pupil of Narayan Bhatt called Narayandas Shrotriji. The new temple that now houses the deities was built about forty years ago by Seth Hargulal. It stands next to previous temples, the oldest of

which is attributed to Bir Singh Deo of Orchha. On the terrace in front of the temples is a *chatrī* built by a Maharaja of Gwalior under which the image of Radha is placed on Hariyali Tij (Shravan II.3). As it is the most important temple in Barsana, and is believed to stand on the site of Vrishabhanu's residence, it is mentioned in all the 'non-Puranic' pilgrimage texts written after Narayan Bhatt.

12 Other temples at Barsana

The long flight of steps leading down from the town to the temple of Lariliji bifurcates as it nears the bottom. At the junction stands a small temple of Mahibhana and Sukhada, Radha's maternal grandparents (Sund., BP). They are represented by gold-painted images fashioned in 'folk' rather than classical style. From here the narrower flight of steps leads down to Rangili Gali and the bazaar; the broader one leads down to where cars bringing visitors to Lariliji temple usually pull up. Along this branch of the path are small temples of Chandravali, Dauji, and Sakshi Gopal. Nearby, at the foot of the hill, are temples of the eight Sakhis (Ashtasakhi Mandir: Sund., BP; *abhiṣeka* given in VOC pp. 148-64) and Vrishabhanu. The latter houses images of Radha, her parents, and her brother Shridama (BP).

13 Piri Pokhar

BRat p.220 (*pīlūkhor*); Sund. (*pīlū sarovar*); GVY 41; VGV 75; (CBC); BYP; BKB 34; BP; BBP 7.29.

The last place mentioned in most of the itineraries is the tank called Piri Pokhar. The usual explanation for the name is that Radha washed her yellow garments here, or her hands after they were coated with turmeric as part of the preparations for her wedding (e.g. Jagatanand: *tahã̃ pītapaṭa dhoiyo, pīrī pokhara pekhi*). No less fanciful, but somewhat more banal, is the suggestion that she gathered *pīlū* berries here.

38 Prem Sarovar

VBV 2.54, 10.55-9; VOC pp.21, 148, 221; BRat p.220; Sund.; VGV 74; CBC; BYP; BKB 34; BP; TA 83-9; BBP 7.29; Growse p.312 (Rup Ram). *Naukā līlā, Jalvihār* (as part of *būṛhī līlā*).

Narayan Bhatt refers to this place as Premavana and mentions Premasaras and a deity called Lalitamohana. In *Vrajotsavacandrikā* he says that Premakundasarovara is at Garjapura, a sanskritization of Ghazipur, the name of the village nearby on the road from Barsana to Nandgaon. Besides saying that Lalita established a temple here and that it was where Holi was celebrated, he adds that the *rakṣābandhana* rite was performed here on the full moon of Shravan. Some later sources (e.g. BYP) express this in vernacular terms by saying that a *rākhī* was tied on

Krishna's wrist here during the Saluno celebrations. The ghats around the octagonal tank were built by Rup Ram, who also constructed the nearby walled garden and octagonal monument to his brother, Hemraj. Around the tank are temples of Prem Bihari and a *baiṭhak* of Vitthalnath. In a walled garden close by is a temple of Radhagopal, built by Seth Lakshminarayan Poddar of Mathura.

39 Sanket

1 Vihval Kund

VBV 2.54, 10 42-5; VOC p. 221 (gives dimensions); NBC 2.127 (+*devī*); BRat p.220; Sund.; GVY 43 (*vidhulākuṇḍa*); BYP (*vihval-/vimal-, + devī*); BP (*vihval-tīrth & devī*); BBP 7.30 (*vimalā-*); Growse p.76. P. Mital 1966 p.122.

As one approaches Sanket from the direction of Barsana there is a pond on the right-hand side of the road called Vihval Kund. Above stone steps on its east bank there is a neglected shrine of a goddess called Vihvala. According to Mital the masonry ghats and temple were constructed by Bir Singh Deo of Orchha in 1618, but Growse says that the temple (at least in its present form) was built later by a Maharaja of Gwalior. The four-armed image of the goddess, which does not appear to be older than the eighteenth (or even early nineteenth?) century, depicts her standing and holding weapons. Narayan Bhatt says that the pond lies in Vihvalavana and names the presiding goddess as Sanketeshwari, probably referring to the goddess in the village.

2 The village

Sanketa(sthana): PP 5.69.21 & 27; NP 2.80.74; BRam 106.100-6 (alluding to Radharamana); VBV 2.52, 5.29-80 (*-vana* etc.), 2.56 & 13.22-3 (*-vaṭa*); VOC pp.11-16 (*-vaṭa, -vihārī, rādhāramaṇa*); NBC 2.108 (*-vaṭa*), 126 (*-sthāna*), 151-7 (*-sthala, - devikā, rādhāramaṇa*); VRC 1.82; BRat p.220 (*-kuñja*, quoting Rup Goswami's *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi*); AY 34-7 (*-vaṭa*); Sund. (*baṭ, rādhāramaṇ, -devī, baiṭhak* of Gopal Bhatt); GVY 42; VGV 76; CBC; PV (*saṃket ban & baṭ*); BYP; BKB 35; BP (+*saṃket bihārī, -devī*); BBP 7.31 (*-bana, -baṭa, -devī*); Growse p.76. *Vivāha līlā.*

The village of Sanket is said to be so called because it was a trysting place of Krishna and Radha, for which it is conveniently situated half way between their respective villages of Nandgaon and Barsana. The largest temple in the village is dedicated to Radharaman, a deity that, according to Janakiprasad Bhatt, was discovered by his ancestor Narayan Bhatt. Growse says that the original temple, attributed to Todar Mal, was rebuilt by Rup Ram. On the west side of the village is a tank with a temple of Sanket Bihari, said to have been built by a Raja of Burdwan, beside which are *baiṭhak* shrines of Vallabha and Vitthalnath.

On the north-west side of the village is the temple of Sanket Devi, beside which is a *baiṭhak* of Gopal Bhatt. The Devi temple, in which the goddess is represented by a modern marble image, is in the custody of the Gaudiya Sampraday. Behind it is an

enclosure in which stands a large masonry swing frame and, in one corner, a small shrine with two stones, one of which is coated with vermilion. These are revered by local people, who look upon them as representing the original goddess of Sanket. Here the wedding vow (*saṃkalp*) of Krishna and Radha is taken in the course of the re-enactment of their marriage ceremony that is held during the visit of the *barī yātrā* pilgrims. Beside the swing is a *rās maṇḍal* marking the spot where Krishna and Radha met. The banyan tree known as Sanket Bat used to stand next to the Devi temple and *baiṭhak* of Gopal Bhatt.

After mentioning Sanketavana, Narayan Bhatt deals with several other groves (*vana*) that are presumably located in the vicinity, but they are not recognized as part of any pilgrimage itinerary.

3 Villages to the north of Sanket

Rithora: VOC pp.10, 19, 158 (*riṇṭhapura*), VBV 2.55, 11.31-2 (*candrāvalīvana*); CBC, BYP, & BP (*candrāvalī ko ban/gām*); BKB 35 (*rīṭhor+candrāvalīkuṇḍ*); BBP 7.32 (*candrāvalīkuṇḍ*). Mahrana: BRat p.231 (*meherāna grāma*); BP (*maherāno*); Gidoh: BRat ibid. (*gedukhor, guptakuṇḍa*, =Sund. *taptakuṇḍ*?; Sund. & BP (*gẽdokhar*); Growse pp.335-6. Bilvavana: VBV 10.10-13; BP (*belban*). Paniharikund: cf. 40.5. Sancholi: VGV 103. Various routes are given in: BP p.56 & intro. by D. Parikh, Desai pp.143-7, R. Dikshit p.30, Govind Das & Agrawal p.163, Krishnadas Baba p.83.

From Sanket pilgrims usually go directly to Nandgaon, though there are a few villages to the north that are mentioned in some itineraries. Brajnath includes some of them as an extension of the circumambulation of Nandgaon, referring to the detour as *meharāne kī parikramā*. The village of Rithora, north of Unchagaon and north-west of Sanket, is said by Narayan Bhatt to be the village of the Sakhi Chandravali. He also refers to it as 'Chandravalivana' and mentions a pond named after her. Brajnath says that there are *baiṭhak* of Chandravali and Vitthalnath under a kadamba tree on the bank of Chandravalikund. Further to the north-west, on the other side of road between Kaman and Kosi and two kilometres from Mahrana, is Bhadokhar, said by some to have been the village of Abhinandana, Krishna's maternal grandfather. At Bhadokhar there is an image of Yashoda, a *kuṇḍ* named after her, and a Rama temple. According to Narahari the cowshed of Abhinandana was located at Mahrana, while Brajnath says that it was the residence of Krishna's maternal grandfather, whom he calls Mahananda. A pond here is called Kshir Sagar; others in the area between Mahrana and Gidoh are Chandra-, Shyam-, Bhramar-, Jalahal-, Khilori-, and Bihar Kund. North-east of Mahrana and four kilometres west of Gidoh is Sancholi, a village with a Devi temple that attracts a large number of local people during the spring Navaratra (especially on Chaitra II.6). Some say that she was the dynastic goddess of Abhinandana.

Gidoh, north-west of Nandgaon, has a pond known as Ge(n)dokhar, which, like the one of the same name at Barsana (§37.1), is said to be so called because Krishna and Radha played with a ball (*gẽd*) there. Growse calls the village 'Gindoi' and notes that Gendokhar Kund is the scene of an annual Phul Dol fair held in the month of Phalgun. He suggests that the name derives from *gẽdā* (marigold), or perhaps from *gajendra+vāpi*. The pond is on the north-west of the village and has a

temple of Jugal Kishor. On the west side is another pond called Guptakund. Both Narayan Bhatt and Brajnath talk of a Bilvavana or Belban that appears to be located just north of Nandgaon. The former says that the place where the Baka demon was slain is here, while Brajnath mentions a Bel Kund. A more well-known grove of this name is located on the bank of the Yamuna opposite Vrindaban (§65). Some sources also mention Paniharikund, perhaps with reference to a pond that is also included in the circumambulation of Nandgaon.

40 Nandgaon

Nandigrama: SP 2.6.1.38; NP 2.80.8 & 75. Nandagrama: VBV 2.44 (+*rudraparvata*), 4.11; VOC p.90 (+*rudraparvata*); BRam 106.93-9; KCC 4.10.15; NBC 2.104 (*rudraparvata*); BRat p.231; Sund.; AY 38 ff. (*-gā̃v*); VGV 71 (*-gāma*); BYP (*-gā̃v*); BKB 36; BP (*-gām*); TA 57, 91-5, 144-159, 162-211; BBP 7.5 & 30-3 (*-gā̃v*). Nandishwara: R 453; BRam 106.92 (*-giri*), 106.107-9; PP 5.69.19 & 42; VVS 8, 33, 62; VBV 2.44, 4.25; KCC 4.8.1/CM p.182, 4.10.16/CM p.186; CC 2.18.57-8; VRC 1.15 & 23; BRat pp.221 ff.; AY 35; Sund. ibid.; GS 2.1.17 (*-giri*); GVY 43. Krishnadas Baba pp.83 ff. *Śaṅkar/Mahādev līlā*. See plate 22.

At one time Nandgaon appears to have been associated primarily with Shiva as Nandishwar, 'Lord of (the bull) Nandi', rather than with Nanda, Krishna's foster father. Some Sanskrit sources name the village as Nandigrama rather than Nandagrama, and several of them talk of Nandishwara as the name of the village, or specify that there was a mountain or hill bearing the name (viz. Nandishwaragiri). The colophon of Rup Goswami's *Dānakelikaumudī* states that it was composed at Nandishwara. The *rās līlā* performed here during the visit of the *baṛī yātrā* relates how Shiva came to see the new-born Krishna. Since it was the residence of Nanda, the leader of the herdsmen, it is referred to in *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* as the capital (*rājadhānī*) of Braj, a term that recurs in some later vernacular texts. No text earlier than the sixteenth century associates Nandgaon with Krishna, and so it appears that the concept of his having grown up there gained acceptance as stories about his courtship with Radha, who lived at Barsana, became popular.

Brajnath gives a three-day itinerary for Nandgaon, the first day beginning with Rithora and including Belban and the third day covering Mahrana and neighbouring villages. His route for the circumambulation of Nandgaon itself on the second day begins with Charan Pahari. Krishnadas Baba, who gives the most comprehensive itinerary, says that three days are needed to see all the places in and around Nandgaon. His sequence is closely followed in the account of the places given below.

1 Nand Bhavan/Nandarayji ka Mandir

Cf. R 453 & CC 2.18.51-6; PP 5.69.42 (*nandālaya*); =BRam 106.87 Nandagopa's *goṣṭha*?; VBV 2.44 (*nandarāyamandira*), 4.26 (*nandadhāmamandira*); VOC p.90 (*nandabhavana*); VRC 1.15 (*nandarājālaya*); NBC 2.118; BRat p.221 (Nanda's *bhavana*); Sund. (*brajrāj ke mahal*); BYP; BKB 36; BP. Deities referred to: GVY

44; VGV 73; BBP 7.32. Yashodanandan: VBV 2.44, 4.27. Growse pp.314-5. Führer p.108; P. Mital 1966 p.122 & Dwivedi 1972 p.276 (Anandaghan); Nityanand p.25 (Sanatan Goswami).

Although the older texts tend to associate the name of the hill and village with Shiva, some of them also mention the presence here of Nanda's residence. Rup Goswami refers to Krishna, Nanda, and Yashoda being present on the hill of Nandishwar, deities that Krishnadas Kaviraj says were seen by Chaitanya. Narayan Bhatt also refers to their presence, as well as an image of Balarama. Such references are presumably to an older version of the temple that now stands on the hill and is the most prominent landmark of Nandgaon. It is known as Nand Bhavan or Nandarayji ka Mandir and houses identical images of Krishna and Balarama accompanied by Nanda and Yashoda. According to Gaudiya tradition the images were discovered in a cave on the hill by Sanatan Goswami. Another tradition holds that they were installed by Anandghan, an ancestor of the present Goswamis of the temple who came from the nearby village of Kharaut. According to Growse the present temple was built in the mid-eighteenth century by Rup Singh, a Sinsinwar Jat. He also notes that the steps leading up to it were made in 1818 by Baba Gaur Prasad of Calcutta and that buildings for dealers and pilgrims around the square below were constructed by Rani Kishori, the wife of Suraj Mal.

Beside the entrance to Nand Bhavan is a small shrine of Nandishwar, also called 'Burhe Babu'. Close by Nand Bhavan is a small temple housing a composite image referred to as Radhanandanandan, the right half of which is Krishna and the left Radha. Narayan Bhatt mentions Yashodanandan, presumably referring to the temple half way up the hill that, according to an inscription given by Führer, was erected in 1578.

2 Tanks and ponds to the north and north-east of Nandgaon

a Pavanasarovara/Pan Sarovar

R 453; VVS 59; VBV 4.21 p.90 (+ *yaśodākūpa*); KCC 4.10.15/CM p.186 & CC 2.18.55; BRat pp.221, 250 (+ *kuṭī* of Sanatan); AY 41; Sund. (+ *bhajan kuṭī*, cf.§3 below); GVY 48; VGV 72; CBC; PV; BYP; BP; SC 7.1.59; BBP 7.33; Growse pp.315-6. *Śyām sagāī līlā.*

Rup Goswami talks of bathing in Pavanasaras (called Pavanasarovara in other Sanskrit sources) before seeing the deities on the hill of Nandishwar. Chaitanya's biographers say that he came here, Krishnadas Kaviraj specifying that he bathed in all the ponds, beginning with Panasarovara. Jagatanand and some later vernacular sources call it Pan Sarovar; Sudana is exceptional in calling it Pani Sarovar and explaining the origin of the name by saying that Nanda drank water here with his hand (*pāni sõ*). It lies on the north side of the village near the road to Kaman. Beside it are a Bihari temple and *baiṭhak* shrines of Vallabha and Sanatan Goswami. The latter is first mentioned by Narahari, who describes the visit Sanatan and Rup Goswami made to Nandgaon. Growse gives an inscription from the Bihariji temple that declares it to have been built in 1748 on the site associated with Rup and Sanatan by the dowager Rani Rajyeshwari of Burdwan, who at the same time provided the tank with masonry ghats.

b

Mukta-/Motikund: NBC 2.116; BRat p.229; AY 41; Sund.; GS 3.6; GVY 52 (+*vilās baṭ*); BYP; BKB 36; BP; BBP 7.34. Taragtirth: VVS 60; BRat p.222; Sund.; Dohanikund: VBV 4.18; BRat p.223 (*dhoyani-*); BBP 7.32; Sund. Phulwarikund: BBP ibid.; BP. Isarapokhar: GVY 46; VGV 74; PV. Sahasikund: BRat.p.229; Sund.; BP (*usās kuṇḍ, śyām gāy pīpar ko vṛkṣ*); BBP ibid. (*sāsa-*, +*baṭ*).

Near Pan Sarovar is Moti- or Muktakund, a story about which is given in *Gargasaṃhitā*. Before confirming the engagement of Krishna and Radha, Vrishabhanu sent Nanda a golden tray filled with pearls in order to test his wealth. Nanda was unable to match this gift, but Krishna took a hundred of the pearls and sowed them in the fields. They produced trees laden with pearls, thus enabling Nanda to reciprocate Vrishabhanu's gift on a suitably lavish scale. Motikund is supposed to lie at the place where the pearls were sown, and some say that a gift of one pearl here is worth that of a hundred thousand offered elsewhere. North of Motikund is Phulwarikund, on the east side of which is a banyan called Bilas Bat, beneath which there is a *baiṭhak* of Krishna. Nearby are Isarapokhar, said to be named after a herdsman called Is(hw)ara, and Sahasi-, Usas-, or Sans Kund. Other ponds near Pan Sarovar are Dohanikund and Taragtirth at which, according to Gaudiya authors, Nanda's father Parjanya performed austerities and obtained his five sons.

3 Tanks and ponds to the east of Nandgaon

Aseshwar & As Kund : =GVY 45 *gopeśvara*?; BKB 37 (*ās- & jalbihār kuṇḍ*); BP. Krishnakund: BRat p.223; AY 42; Sund.; GVY 44; PV; BYP; BP; BBP 7.36; =VBV 4.17 *mohanakuṇḍa*?. Chhachhiharikund: GVY 45; VGV 74; BYP; BP (*chāch-*); BBP 7.33 (*chachiyā-*); =VBV 4.19 *dugdhakuṇḍa*? Yogiyasthana: BRat p.229; Sund.; BP (*jogiyākuṇḍ*).

Some distance to the east of Nandgaon are a small temple dedicated to Shiva as Aseshwar and a pond called As Kund. Nearby are huts of Rup and Sanatan and a tree called Ter Kadamb ('bent kadamb'). Other tanks and ponds in the area east of Nandgaon are Jalbihar-, Bahak-, Mor- or Kuhak-, and Chhachh- or Chhachhiharikund, where there is a shrine of Chhachhihari Devi, who appears to be a form of Sitala. The tank nearest the hill on this side of Nandgaon, lying beside the road to Barsana and near the bus stand, is Krishnakund. Just to the south of it is Jogi- or Jogiyakund, also referred to as Yogiyasthana and said to be the place where Uddhava delivered his sermon to the Gopis. East of this are Jhagara- and Lev- or Ler Kund and a banyan called Bhandar Bat.

4 Tanks and ponds south of Nandgaon

Suryakund: BRat p.223; Sund.; BP & BBP 7.36. Lalitakund: VBV 4.16; BRat ibid.; AY 42; Sund.; GVY 45; PV; BYP; BP; BBP ibid. Akrurasthana: NBC 2.117 ('place where Akrura and Uddhava arrived'); BRat p.229; GVY 46 (*akrūr thal*); PV (*akrūr sthal & ghāṭ*); Akrur Kund : Sund. (+footprint); BP (+*baiṭhak*). Vastraban: BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BP. Uddhav Kyari: BRat p.231 (*uddhavakriyā-sthāna*); GVY 47 (*vairāgī kyārī*); PV (*rāgī kī kyārī*); =BYP *rāmadās kī dh(y)ān kyārī*?; BKB 37; BP (*uddhav kuṇḍ & kyārī*); BBP 7.36; P. Mital 1983: *Uddhav līlā* performed here. Vishakhakund: BRat p.223; Sund.; BYP (v.l. *vilās-*); BP. P(a)urnamasikund: BRat ibid.; Sund.; BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BKB 38 (*pūrṇamāsī ke mandir, khīr kuṇḍ* [=Chir Talai?], *ādipokhar*); BP; BBP ibid.; P. Mital 1966 p.124.

On the south side of the hill, near the road to Barsana, is Surya- or Suraj Kund. In the area on the opposite side of the road are Lalitakund, with a (Gaudiya Sampraday) temple of Lalitabihari, and Akrur Kund. The latter, also referred to as Akrur Sthan, lies to the south of Jhagarakund and is said to be the place where Akrura saw a footprint of Krishna when he came to summon Krishna to Mathura. Some late sources refer to an area here called Vastraban and mention a Vastrakund or Chir Talai. South-west of Lalitakund is Uddhav Kyari, a field or flower-bed and pond associated with Uddhava. Another pond in this area is named after the Sakhi Vishakha. Further to the south-west is Purnamasikund, associated with the woman who helped to arrange meetings between Krishna and Radha. According to P. Mital it was provided with masonry ghats by the same Rani of Burdwan who restored Pan Sarovar. It stands at the edge of an area called Doman- or Domilban that stretches further to the south and south-west towards the villages of Brijwari and Sanket. In this wooded area are Runaki- and Jhunakikunds, said to be named after two Sakhis.

5 Tanks and ponds to the south-west and west of Nandgaon

Madhusudan Kund: VBV 4.12-13; VOC pp.136, 222; BRat p.228; AY 42; Sund.; GVY 47; PV (*madhūkuṇḍ*); BYP; BKB 36; BP; BBP 7.33 (*makasūdana-*); (Dadhi)manthanasthana/Yashoda's churning place: VBV 4.24; VOC p.136; NBC 2.117; BRat p.229; BYP; BP; BBP ibid. Yashoda- or Jasodakund: VBV 4.14; VOC p.222; BRat p.224; AY 42; Sund.; GVY 44; PV; BYP; BKB 36; BP; TA 144-59; BBP 7.32. Hau statues: VBV 4.15 (*hāva*); VOC ibid.; Sund. (*narsiṃh mūrti*); BYP; BP; BBP ibid.; Desai p.159 n.; P. Mital 1983: *Hāū līlā* performed here. Nanda's *baiṭhak*: BP. Dadhikund: VBV 4.20. Damodar Kund: GVY 45; BP. Karelakund: BRat p.228; Sund.; BP (Karol Kund). Chandokhar: BP. Panihari Gam/-kund: BRat p.228; Sund.; BYP; BBP 7.32 (*belī cauka kuṇḍa panihārī duti dīnaïihaï*). Charan Pahari: BRat p.228; Sund.; BYP; BKB 36; BP. Kadam Khandi: VBV 4.23 (*kadambavana*); BRat p.223; Sund.; GVY 48; PV; BYP; BKB 38; TA ibid.

The largest pond in the area stretching between the roads leading to Barsana and Kaman is Madhusudan Kund. On the north-west side is a small Narasinha temple and on the north is Yashoda's churning place, where there are two large clay pots. To the south of Madhusudan Kund is a pond named after Yashoda, on the west

side of which are four lion-like monsters carved in grey stone. They appear to date from the tenth or eleventh century and must once have stood on the steps of a temple, perhaps representing the lion or tiger mount of Durga. Desai notes that there used to be six of them but two were stolen, though Brajnath talks of their being only four. Near them is a small enclosure in which there is a heap of rubble, masonry, and fragments of sculpture. Two carved panels have been incorporated in the outer wall of a nearby Sitala shrine. All of these pieces are of the same type of stone and so probably belonged to the same temple. The four monsters have been placed in a row on a low mound and have stood here at least since the sixteenth century, for they are referred to by Narayan Bhatt (in VOC) as bogies (*hāva*, Hindi *hāū*) that once frightened the infant Krishna. Their presence is alluded to by Nagaridas, who describes how, during the Gopashtami celebrations, Krishna and Balarama (referring either to deities or boys dressed up as them) were taken to Yashodakund, where they were seated and warned by the women not to wander too far because of lions and tigers in the jungle.

Between Yashodakund and the road to Barsana is an ashram compound in which there is a *baiṭhak* of Nanda. Other ponds in the vicinity are Dahi-, Damodar-, Karela- or Karol Kund, and Chandokhar. Some distance away from Nandgaon in the direction of Belban, is Paniharikund, west of which is a shrine of Vrindadevi. North of Madhusudan Kund is a lower extension of the Nandgaon hill known as Charan Pahari because it is marked with the footprints of Krishna and the cows he herded there. Some sources also refer to a kadamba grove (Kadambavana, Kadam Khandi), which is presumably to the west or south-west of Nandgaon.

41 Ajnokh

BV 2.55, 11.17-19 & VOC pp.4, 19 (*añjana(pura)vana*); BRat p.242 (*ājanaka grāma*); GVY 51 (*ājanokh*); Anjanokhar: VGV 84; (CBC); PV; BYP; BP. Sund. (*aṃjan ban*); BBP 7.38 (*ājanau kuṇḍa, ājanī silā*); Vaudeville 1976 p.207 (suggests a connection with the goddess Anjani).

The name of the village of Ajnokh is related to the presence there of a pond called Anjanokhar, where Krishna is supposed to have applied lamp-black (*añjana*) to his eyes. Alternatively, as told by Jagatanand, it is where he applied lamp-black to Radha's eyes after she had rushed to meet him on hearing his flute, without stopping to put on any make-up. Narayan Bhatt refers to it by the sanskritized name Anjana(pura)vana, mentions a Kishorikund and deities of Krishna and Kishori (Radha), and says that it is the village of the Sakhi Vishakha. The pond, provided with a masonry ghat, lies on the south-east side of the village. At one time there was a stone on its bank called Anjani Sila because it gave off a substance that resembled lamp-black. Beside the pond is a neglected temple with a large masonry swing frame in front of it (see plate 23).

42 Karhela

Karaha(pura)-/Karahavana: VBV 1.93 (*nitambau karāhakāmau*), 2.55, 11.8-14; VOC pp.5, 157; BRat p.244 (*karālā*); *karahelā*: GVY 51; PV; BP; *karahalā*: VGV 81; (CBC); BYP; Sund. (*-rā*); TA 96-100 (-raī). Führer p.100 (date of swing); P. Mital 1983 pp.176-8 (*rās līlā* tradition); Growse p.84 fn. Lodholi: BRat ibid. (*ludhaunī*); VGV 98 (*lodhōlī*); BKB 42 (*ladholī*); BP (*ladhosī*); BBP 7.39 (*ludaulī*).

According to a folk etymology 'Karhela' derives from the Gopis' 'waving of hands' (*kar hilnā*) while they danced the *rās*. Growse has suggested that the place is so called because of the abundance of caper bushes (*karīl*). Narayan Bhatt (in VOC) says that it is the birthplace of the Sakhi Champakalata, though (in VBV) he gives the name of the pond here as Lalitasaras, a nomenclature that accords with the generally accepted notion, as stated by Narahari, that it is the birthplace of Lalita. Other places that Narayan Bhatt names are Bhanukupa, a kadamba grove, the place where Bhadradevi experienced *viraha*, a *rās maṇḍal*, and a swing, of which only the last two are in evidence today. When he describes the places in Braj as corresponding to the bodily form of the Lord, he says that Karhela and Kamai represent his buttocks. The two villages are often mentioned together as centres for the development of *rās līlā*. In some itineraries they are visited after Barsana.

Beside a pond on the eastern side of the village are *baiṭhak* shrines of Vallabha, Vitthalnath, and Gokulnath. Nearby are mansions (*mahal, havelī*) built by Sawai Jai Singh for the leader of a *rās līlā* troupe called Vikram, the two branches of whose descendants are referred to as Mahalware and Haveliware. The leader of one of the troupes is said to have been presented with a *mukuṭ* worn by the deity of Shrinathji. Nowadays there is more than one family in the village that claims to possess the original headdress, though none of the ones they display are particularly impressive. North of the village, in a walled enclosure, are a *rās maṇḍal*, a large masonry swing frame built in 1633, and two adjacent temples known as Jhulawara Mandir, the older one probably contemporary with the swing frame. The deities enshrined here represent Krishna and Lalita. The *rās maṇḍal* has recently been rebuilt and stands on the site of an older one that is attributed to Ghamandadev. Here ascetics of the Nimbark Sampraday organize a performance of the *mahārās* on the full moon day of Bhadon. Later on, in the evening, a more popular fair takes place beside the pond near the *baiṭhak* shrines. Here a performance of the *Mākhan corī līlā* is organized for the *baṛī yātrā* pigrims, in which the boy playing the part of Krishna wears a gold *mukuṭ* that is brought out only for this occasion.

North of Karhela is a small village called Lodholi that is mentioned in some itineraries.

43 Kamai

VOC pp.7, 293 (*kamaī*); BRat p.244 (*kāmāī*); BYP (om. 1819 ms.) BP; BBP 7.37; Vaudeville 1976 p.208 (suggests etymology from Kamakhya). Parson: BRat p.243.

While Narayan Bhatt says that Kamai is the village of a Sakhi called Tungadevi, Narahari says that it is the birthplace of Vishakha. On the west side of the village is Ravar Kund, near which, on the village side, are temples of Gopal and Dauji. In the compound of the former is a large Hanuman image; opposite the entrance to the latter is a *rās maṇḍal* where a *līlā* is organized in connection with the visit of the Kathiya Baba ascetics on the occasion of Dauji Chhat (Bhadon II.6). Outside the east entrance to the Dauji temple is an enclosure with a seven-headed image of a snake carved in stone (referred to by Brajnath as *sāt mukh ke śeṣaśāyī ke darśan*). It is served by local priests and stands in a recently built enclosure, though the image itself is older. On the opposite side of the village is a Krishna temple called Marai Mandir.

South of Kamai, on the Govardhan-Barsana road, is the village of Parson, referred to by Narahari as the place where Krishna told the Gopis that he would come again 'the day after tomorrow' (*parsõ*). His reference to a nearby Shrigrama refers perhaps to the nearby village of Sehi.

44 Pisayo

VBV 2.55, 11.41-3 (*pipāsavana*); *piyāso*: BRat p.244; VGV 82; Pisayo: (CBC); BYP; BKB 39; BP; =GVY 50 *pisorā*?; Growse pp.84, 351 (suggests derivation from *pāśavya-*, 'suitable for cattle').

In the District Census Handbook this village is called Pisawa, but the form 'Pisayo' is current among the local people and is given in vernacular written sources. The name is taken as referring to an incident involving 'thirst' (*pipāsa/pyās*) and has been sanskritized by Narayan Bhatt as 'Pipasavana'. Brajnath refers to a Sakhi named Pisaya who brought water here for the thirsty Krishna. Narayan Bhatt mentions a Mandakinikund, but today the ponds here are called Latanwaro- or Jhariwale Baba Kund and Pyas Kund. The former lies close to the village; beside it is a temple of Chaitanya and Nityanand and another named after Latanwaro/ Jhariwale Baba ('holy man of the creepers or thicket'). Ascetics who live here identify this sage with Ashwatthama, the son of Drona. He is said to make an appearance now and again and to frequent the extensive grove north of the village. This is one of the few places left in Braj that can justly be called a forest. In it are two ponds, one of which is Pyas Kund. Beside the other is a small grove with a *rās maṇḍal* and a building referred to as the hut (*kuṭī*) of Jhariwale Baba. The whole of the wooded area is waterlogged for much of the year and abounds with water lilies, but the inconvenience of having to wade through them is probably one of the reasons why it is not visited by many of the pilgrims who circumambulate Braj. On Saturdays some local people perform an independent circumambulation of Pisayo and the forest (*jhāṛī parikramā*) in fulfilment of a vow (*manautī*).

45 Khadiravana (Khaira)

VTK p.18 (*khaïravaṇaṃ*); VP 151.42/R 360/VM p.519; BRam 105.28; NP 2.79.13; AP; PP 5.69.16/KCC 4.3.7; VBV 10.3-4; KCC 4.3.5, 4.3.10/CM p.178, 4.10.19/CM p.185; CC 2.18.63; BRat p.249; Sund.; BBP 7.4 (*khiṭṭa-*) & 39. Khid(a)ravana: AY 65; GVY 49; VGV 83; (CBC); PV (*khīdarban*); BYP; BKB 39-40 (*khadrīban*); BP.

The village of Khaira corresponds to *khādira-* or (in texts of the Gaudiya Sampraday) *khadiravana*, 'the forest of acacia (or the flowering plant Mimosa catechu)'. On the north side of the village is Krishnakund, beside which is a Gaudiya temple of Dauji. Opposite the entrance is a *chatrī* commemorating Rup Ram, and on the south side of the pond is a low mound where there once stood a Gaudiya temple of Gopinath that is said to have been founded by Todar Mal. Now all that is left of it is a heap of rubble and the deity is housed in a nearby dwelling. Beside the pond and to the north of the Dauji temple is a *baiṭhak* of Loknath, which contains images of Chaitanya and Nityanand. Khadiravana, as reported by Narahari, is a place where Loknath and Bhugarbh used to live.

a Places in the vicinity of Khaira

Brijwari: BRat p.242 (*vidyuvārī grāma/brijoāri*); GVY 45 (*bajavārī*); PV (*bajavārī kuṇḍ*); BKB 39 (*brijabārī*); BP (*bajabārī*). Bakthara: BRat pp.249-50; Sund.; VGV 44 (*bagtharā*); BYP ('place where Aghasura and Bakasura were killed', i.e. Bakthara & Sapoli?). Sankhi: BRat p.245 (*sākhi*); Sund. (*sākhiyā*); =GVY 55 *śaṃkhacūṛa badha thala* & BYP (1819 ms. only) *śaṃkhacūḍ kī ṭhor*?. Umrao: BRat pp.246-8; Sund. Sahar: Raghunathdas *Dānakelicintāmaṇi* 3; BRat p.244 (*sāhār*); Sund.; Growse pp.38, 374-6; E. B. Joshi pp.2-3. Ranwari & Siddh Krishnadas Baba: Kapur vol.1 pp.28-32; P. Mital 1968 p.538.

A couple of kilometres west of Khaira is the hamlet of Brijwari, which some itineraries include between Nandgaon and Karhela. Some sources mention Sankhi, a village on the road between Chhata and Govardhan, as the place where Shankhachuda was slain, and Bakthara (or Bagthara), where the demon Baka was killed. Narahari and Sundarlal also mention Umrao, saying that it was where the Gopis proclaimed Radha to be sovereign (i.e. *umrāu*, Arabic *umarā*) of the area. It also the place where Loknath had a *bhajan kuṭī* and is said to have discovered the image of Radhavinod in a pond called Kishorikund. Further south along the road to Govardhan is Sahar, which, according to Raghunathdas and Narahari, was the village of Nanda's brother Upananda. It was once a place of some importance, as can be seen from the carved gateways of some of the houses and the ruins of a mansion built here in the eighteenth century by Badan Singh. Joshi notes that Sahar appears to have lost its function as headquarters of the district (*sarkār*) during the reign of Aurangzeb, when the status was first conferred upon 'Islamabad' (Mathura). Sahar continued to serve as the tahsil headquarters, but in 1857 these were moved for security to Chhata. Today the village is rather somnolent and is not visited by pilgrims. A neglected temple of Radhavallabh stands on the site of a Jain temple that existed here in the fourteenth century. North of Sankhi and near to

Chhata is Ranwari, a village where the celebrated nineteenth-century Gaudiya saint Siddh Krishnadas Baba is commemorated by a *samādhi*. An annual fair is held in his honour on the new moon day of Paush.

46 Chhata

AP (as an *upavana*); VBV 2.54, 10.1; BRat p.245; Sund.; VGV 88; Growse pp.29, 90, 373-4 (Suraj Kund and sarai); Führer p.100.

Sources that refer to Chhata give it the name Chhatravana, but it is not usually included in itineraries for the circumambulation of Braj. Narayan Bhatt mentions Suryakund, a pond on the north-east side of the town that was provided with a masonry ghat by an officer serving under one of the Rajas of Bharatpur. Narahari and Jagatanand say that Krishna proclaimed himself king of Braj here, an idea that is derived from the use of the parasol (*chatra*) as an emblem of royalty. A more likely association is with the prominent kiosks that are built over the gates of the high-walled sarai that dominates the town. Its construction is attributed to Sher Shah, but Führer thought that it was constructed in the time of Akbar. In reality the latter may have embellished and strengthened an older sarai in order to provide a suitable halting place on the main road between Delhi and Agra. It was partially restored by Growse, who had a street laid between the two gates. Beneath its walls is a temple ascribed to the reign of Shah Jahan that incorporates fragments from an older temple. On the south-west side of the town, beside the road to Mathura, is Chandrakund with a temple of Dauji on its bank.

47 Jao

NP 2.80.75: *kiśorīkuṇḍa*?. Yavavata: VBV 2.40, 2.56, 5.21-4 (+*rādhākuṇḍa* etc.); VRC 1.83-8 (*yāvaṭa*); BRat pp.221, 231 (*jāvaṭa, jāo*); Sund.; (CBC) (*jāv vaṭ*). Javak Bat: AY 43-6; BYP (*jāvak upavan*); BKB 40; BP; TA 113. Krishnadas Baba pp.93-6.

Narayan Bhatt refers to a banyan tree here called *yāvavaṭa*, relating the name to marks made here by the lac (*yāva-*, Hindi *jāvaka*) with which Radha painted her feet. Later Gaudiya sources say that this was the village of Jatila and Abhimanyu, the mother-in-law and husband of Radha. Vishwanath Chakravarti says that Krishna and Radha used to look at each other from their gazebos, he from Nandgaon and she from her husband's house. He says that the banyan tree is named after the lac that Krishna applied to Radha's feet.

The sources mention various ponds, trees, and other minor sights here, the most detailed listing of which is given by Krishnadas Baba. The most important is the temple of Radhakant, which occupies a building resembling a small fortress that dominates the village mound. It is a Gaudiya temple with images of Krishna, Radha, Jatila, Kutila, and Abhimanyu. There is also a Madanmohan temple in the village. On the north side of the village is Padar Kund, on the south is Chir Kund

with a small Dauji temple and nearby temple of Brajmohan. On the east side is Kishorikund, where there is a small temple of 'Kishori' (Radha). This is presumably the pond mentioned in *Nāradapurāṇa* and is the same as Narayan Bhatt's 'Radhakund'.

48 Kokilaban

VBV 2.54, 9.67-9; NP 2.80.75; BRat p.241; AY 46; Sund.; CBC; BYP; BKB 40; BP (+*pāṇḍu gaṅgā*); TA 113; BBP 7.40-1 (+*pāḍurī gaṅgā, pādarabana*); Growse pp.364-5; Mital 1968 p.125. *Panaghaṭ līlā.* Kunwarban: BYP; BBP ibid. (*kumāra-*).

Kokilaban lies in a rather swampy area in which *palāśa* trees abound. The main building here is a temple of the Nimbark Sampraday dedicated to Kokilabihari, in which there is a *baiṭhak* of Nagaji. On the terrace in front of the temple is a shrine with images of Shanichara, Hanuman, and a Shiva *liṅga*. On the other side of the temple, a short distance to the north, is a shrine of Barkhandi Baba (cf.§7.11) in which there are a few stones and, against the back wall, a low semi-circular projection. This is particularly revered by local people who come here at the full moon and on Saturdays, circumambulate Kokilaban, and visit Kokilabihari and the shrine of Shanichara.

The pond on the north side of Kokilabihari is called Krishnakund, beside which is a *baiṭhak* of Vallabha. According to Growse the masonry facing was constructed by Rup Ram, though Mital says that the steps at one end were provided by Bir Singh Deo of Orchha. One kilometre west of Kokilaban is a tank called Padar Ganga that is popularly believed to be associated with the Pandavas, having become manifest at the spot where an arrow fired by them fell. North of here, on the west side of the path leading from Kokilaban to Bathain, is an area called Kunwarban.

49 Bathain

BRat p.252-5 (*baiṭhān*); Sund.; GVY 54 (*baṭhen*); (CBC); BYP; BKB 41; BP; BBP 7.42; Growse pp.77, 348, 364. *Horī līlā.* Balbhadrakund: GVY 55; PV; BYP; BP; BBP ibid.

The main part of the village of Bathain is sometimes given the adjective 'Bare' ('great') to distinguish it from Chhote Bathain, a smaller settlement a short distance to the north. Growse suggests that the name derives from a word 'bathan' meaning 'pasture ground', though such a term is not recorded in any of the standard Hindi or Braj dictionaries. Needless to say, folk etymology seeks to derive the name from the verb *baiṭhnā*, suggesting that this is where Krishna and Balarama 'sat'. The main pond at Bare Bathain is called Balbhadrakund, beside which is a temple of Dauji. The masonry ghat here was provided by Rup Ram. Narahari calls the main pond here Kuntalakunda and relates a story about a visit made by Sanatan Goswami. At Chhote Baithan there is a Krishnakund and a Nimbark Sampraday temple of Sakshi Gopal.

50 Bhadokhar and Charan Pahari

= VBV 2.55, 12.22-3 *laghuśeṣaśayanavana*?; BRat p.255 (*beṛokhora*); Sund. (*beḍokhar*). Charan Pahari/Ganga: BRat ibid.; Sund.; GVY 55; PV: BYP; BKB 41; BP; BBP 7.42; cf. GS 2.18.48.

Two kilometres north-west of Chhote Bathain lies a Gaudiya temple beside a pond referred to as Bhadokhar (or Bhaindokhar). In the scrub nearby lies an outcrop of rocks, the lowest remnants of the Aravalli ranges, that is called 'Charan Pahari' because of various markings believed to be footprints of Krishna, his cows, deer, and an elephant. These are said to have been made when the rock softened at the sound of his flute, an incident described in *Gargasaṃhitā*, with reference either to this Charan Pahari or the one at Kaman. Some later sources refer to the temple here as Paurhanath ('reclining lord'), which suggests the place might be the same as Narayan Bhatt's Laghusheshashayanavana, as distinct from Shaikhsai lying further to the north-east (see below §55).

51 Kamar

BRat p.256 (*kāmari grāma*); Sund.; (CBC) (*baiṭhak* of Giridhara); VDA 15; BP; Growse pp.38, 350, 367.

Nowadays few pilgrims who undertake the circumambulation of Braj visit Kamar. The name is usually explained by Krishna's having lost his blanket (*kāmar*) here, or to his having given a blanket to the sage Durvasa. The village is described by Growse as a populous Jat town with a considerable trade in cotton. It flourished for a time in the eighteenth century after Badan Singh married into a family that resided here. He built a large masonry tank, a walled garden, and a series of mansions, but these have all fallen into disrepair.

On the south side of the village, beside Krishnakund, is a Mohan temple whose custodians claim adherence to the Vishnuswami Sampraday and are linked with the temple of Kaladhari in Vrindaban. Beneath the temple is a cell said to be connected by a tunnel with Jatipura and to have been used by 'Jatiji', a name given to Giridhar, the eldest son of Vitthalnath. Gopal Kavi informs us that Giridhar performed austerities here and that Krishna came to him in a dream and revealed the location of a deity, which was housed in the temple until it was taken to Bharatpur by Badan Singh. According to Growse the temple was founded by Suraj Mal and served as a meeting place for the Jats on the occasion of Phul Dol (Chaitra I.2-3). Brajnath refers to the temple and Giridhar's 'hidden' (*gupta*) *baiṭhak* and says that there are in all twenty-one *tīrth* at Kamar, though he names only the 'main' ones. The only one of these that is still of any account is a tank named after Durvasa lying some distance north of the village. Here the sage is represented by a modern marble image in a shrine beside the tank. Growse notes that the stone steps were provided by Suraj Mal.

52 Rasoli

=PP 69.41 *rāsasthala*?; Sund.; GVY 58; CBC; PV; BYP; BKB 41; BP; BBP 7.43-5.

The name Rasoli naturally suggests that it was a place where the *rās* was performed. Jagatanand refers to a banyan tree here, and Brajnath mentions Ras Kund and a *baiṭhak* of Gokulnath.

53 Dahgaon

Dadhigrama: PP 5.69.21; BRat p.257; Sund.; VGV 93 (*-gāma*); PV (*+braj-bhūṣaṇ*); BYP; BKB 41 (*dahegām*); BP (*dehgām*); BBP 7.44 (*-gāū*). *Daḍhidān līlā.*

The most interesting item in Dahgaon is a large image in yellowish sandstone of a goddess seated in the *ardhalalitāsana* posture dating from the tenth or eleventh century (see plate 24). She has full breasts and four arms, but a rosary, a pot, and a garland draped over her shoulders and resting on her thighs are the only attributes that survive. Animals musicians, and other smaller attendant figures are carved in the panel beneath her feet and on the frame that surrounds her. The image presumably represents Parvati, corresponding to Jagatanand's reference to a 'Gori Tilo' ('Mound of Gauri'). It has been leant against the external wall of a building in the village; beside it are other fragments of ornate sculpture that must have been doorposts of a temple in which the goddess was enshrined. Red palm prints and cow-dung swastikas on the wall behind her show that she is still an object of veneration. The villagers say that they moved the sculptures here for safety after an attempt was made to steal them from a roughly built shrine beside Dadhikund, a pond lying to the north of the village. They call her 'Piparasan Maiya', but she is probably the Dadhi Devi referred to by Brajnath and the Dadhihari or Dadhichori Devi of more recent pilgrimage itineraries. The villagers, however, use these epithets for a stone painted with vermilion that is placed under a small *chatrī* at the place where the path leading in from the north enters the village.

North-east of the village is a temple of Brajbhushan, but the original deity has been replaced by a cheap bazaar image of Vishnu. Nearby is Bhaminikund, beside which is an (eighteenth- or nineteenth-century?) Shiva temple with a slender *śikhara.*

54 Kotban

BRat p.257 (*koṭara-/koṭavana*); Sund.; VGV 93 (*koṭivana*); CBC; BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BKB 42 (*+sītal kuṇḍ*); BP (*+camelīban*); BBP 7.46 (*koṭarabana*); Qanungo p.267 fn. (description of fort). Khanbi and Banchari: BRat p.258 (*khāmī*).

Kotban, situated beside the highway between Delhi and Mathura, is dominated by a small fort built on top of the village mound by Sitaram, a Jat ally of the rulers of

Bharatpur. On the south side of the village is a pond beside which are *baiṭhak* shrines of Vitthalnath and Shrinathji.

North of Kotban and midway between Hodal and Hathana is a wooded area known as Chameliban, sometimes called Bhulanban 'because it is easy to lose one's way in it.' The Nimbark Sampraday has a Hanuman temple here, and two of the ponds are named after Rama and Sita. These and other ponds, like the wood itself, are only mentioned in modern itineraries.

North of Hodal is Banchari, seven kilometres north-west of which is the village of Khanbi where, Vajranabha is supposed to have erected a pillar (*khambha*) marking the northern boundary of Braj. Further west of here is Likhi, where there is a *samādhi* of Ghamandadev that is resorted to by local people when children or animals fall sick. None of these places feature in the circumambulation of Braj.

55 Shekhsai

Sheshashayanavana: VBV 1.109, 2.54, 10.67-9. NBC 2.115 (*prauḍhanātha*); Sheshashayi: NP 2.80.75 (+*payodadhi*); PP 5.69.20; VVS 91; CC 2.18.64; BRat p.257 (+*kṣīrasamudra*); AY 65 (*sesa sāyī*); Sund.; VGV 89 (*śeṣaśayana kī ṭhaura*); (CBC); PV; BYP (*kṣīr sāgar*); BKB 42; BP (+*bukharārī, nandavan*); BBP 7.5 & 46 (+*pauṛhānātha*); P. Mital VS 2014. *Kṣīrsāgar līlā.*

The name Shekhsai relates to the presence here of an image representing Vishnu reclining on the serpent Shesha. Narayan Bhatt refers to the place as Shesha-shayanavana, calling the pond here Mahodadhikunda and the deity Praudhanatha or Praudhalakshminarayana, an epithet referring to Vishnu lying on the serpent, or perhaps to his power and maturity. Later vernacular sources refer to the pond as Kshir (or Chhir) Sagar. The Pushtimarg temple here is attributed to Bir Singh Deo of Orchha, who presumably enlarged an earlier shrine. In its present form it appears to have been rebuilt, or at least modified, in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. On the ceiling of the nave are paintings depicting Govardhan, Barsana, Nandgaon, Vrindaban, Mathura, and Gokul. The main image, a painted stone relief that does not appear to be much older than the present temple structure, is the standard icon of Vishnu lying on Shesha with Brahma emerging from his navel and with Lakshmi and other figures in attendance. Beside the entrance to the temple is a Shiva shrine, and to the south-west is a *śikhara* (late 18th or 19th century?) that is said to have been originally intended for the Vishnu image and now houses a *liṅga*. On the opposite side of the pond is a *baiṭhak* of Vallabha.

Four kilometres south-east of Shekhsai is the village of Bukhrari, where there is a pond called Lotan Kund and an image of Lotan Bihari, supposed to derive their names from the cows' having 'rolled' (*loṭ-*) in the dust here. North of Kharaut, a village between Shesksai and Kosi, is an area referred to by Brajnath as Nandanban. Some later itineraries also mention a Chandanban lying to the east of it.

56 Kosi

Sund. (*kuśasthalī grām*); = GS 2.7.20 *kuśavana*?; BP; Growse pp.335, 361; Führer p.102.

Kosi (or Kosi Kalan) is sometimes referred to as Kushasthali, an alternative name for Dwarka - the pilgrimage place to which it is supposed to correspond. There are temples of Giriraj, Bihari, and Dauji, as well as some belonging to the Jains. Growse mentions the Maya-, Vishakha-, and Gomatikunds that allude to places in Dwarka and also refers to a Ratnakar Kund, which dates from the same time as the sarai that was built here during the reign of Akbar. Führer says that the sarai was built by Itibar Khan and that a nearby temple of Khera Devata was erected in the seventh century, according to an inscribed slab preserved there.

57 Paigaon

BRat p.257 (*-grāma*); Sund.; BP; Growse p.75. *Pūtanāvadh līlā*. Phalain: Growse pp.93. 353; Govinda Das 'Sant' pp.150-5.

Paigaon, believed to be the birthplace of Nagaji, is of most importance for those who take part in the circumambulation of Braj organized by the Kathiya Baba ascetics. They arrive here in time to participate in the annual 'Nagaji Mela'. A *rās līlā* is performed on Ashwin I.7 and on the following day a fair is held, which attracts people from neighbouring villages and features wrestling and performances of *svā̃g* and *ḍholā*. The Nimbark Sampraday temple here is dedicated to Krishna as Chaturbhuj. On the east side of the village is a Priya- or Radharanikund, beside which are temples of Radha and Shiva.

North-west of Paigaon is the village of Phalain, where there is a small shrine of Prahlada and a pond named after him. It is not usually visited by pilgrims performing the circumambulation of Braj, but is locally celebrated for its Holi fair, at which the priest attending to the Prahlada shrine runs through the *holikā* fire.

58 Shergarh

BRam 109.138 (*halākarṣaṇatīrtha*); NP 2.80.75-6 (*krīḍādeśa, rāmakuṇḍa*). Ram Ghat: VVS 94 (*-ghaṭṭa*); VBV 3.88 (? cf. appendix 1); AY 65; BRat pp.258 ff.; Sund.; GVY 59; (CBC); PV; BYP; BKB 46 (*rām tāl*); BBP 7.47. Khelatirtha: CC 2.18.66; Sund. (+*khelan baṭ*). Khelanavana/-ban: CC 2.18.66 VRC 2.32-3 (*khelā-*); BRat p.258 (+*-vaṭa, -tīrtha*); BYP (+*vilās baṭ*); BP; BBP 7.4. Shergarh: BBP 7.5 & 46; Growse pp.80, 85, 171, 378. *DvijapatníSBvrat/Dhenukāsurvadh līlā*.

As pointed out by Growse, Shergarh derives its name from a fort built by Sher Shah, of which some ruins survive, though it is evident that there was a township here long before then. It was held by Pathan landowners until 1859, when it was

purchased by Seth Govind Das, who made it part of the endowment of the temple of Dwarkadhish in Mathura. Hindu sources associate the area with games played by Krishna, Balarama, and the Gopis, referring to it as Khelanban, or some name with the same meaning. Some later sources claim that Shergarh is so called because it was here that Krishna was decorated with a *śeharā* (a fringe of flowers placed on the forehead of a bridegroom), or that it was the village of a herdsman named Shekhara. Because there is a bend in the course of the Yamuna at Shergarh, the nearby stretch of the river is called Ramatirtha or Ram Ghat, in allusion to Balarama's having diverted it with his plough when he became intoxicated while dancing the *rās* with the Gopis (§2.31). Beside the pontoon bridge connecting Shergarh with the road to Naujhil is a temple of Balarama, referred to as 'Aincha Dauji' because he dragged the river here. It is said to have been restored in the late eighteenth century by one of the Sindhiya rulers of Gwalior. An old banyan tree nearby is believed to represent a companion of Balarama. Other temples at Shergarh are dedicated to Krishna as Gopinath, Madanmohan, and Radharaman.

a Places in the vicinity of Shergarh

Ujhani: BRat p.258 (*ujānisthāna*); Sund. (*ujān grām*); 'Krishna' p.121. Lal Bagh: BYP; BKB 42; BP; BBP 7.46. Brahma Ghat: BRat p.267; Bhushanban: BRat ibid.; Sund.; BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BP; BBP 7.48; Gunjaban: (CBC); BYP; BP. Nivaranban: (CBC); BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BBP ibid. Biharban: BP.

Some modern sources give the name 'Khelanban' to an area beside the river north-west of Shergarh. Here there is a place called Lal Bagh, where Krishna is said to have worn a kind of red skirt (*lāl bāgā*). Further upstream, four kilometres from Shergarh, is a village called Ujhani (or Ujhiani), where, according to Narahari, the Yamuna flowed backwards at the sound of Krishna's flute. Some say that this is the place where he subdued the serpent Kaliya and that a Kaliyadaman temple here is older than the one at Vrindaban. Downstream from Ram Ghat is Brahma Ghat, where Krishna and his friends are said by Narahari to have played like turtles, hence it is sometimes referred to as 'Kacchapavana'. Further downstream are Bhushanban, Gunjaban, and Nivaranban. The latter is said to be the place where Krishna and Radha were reconciled (viz. *mān nivāraṇ*). South-east of Shergarh, some distance from the river, is Biharban, a wooded area in which there is a pond and a small *gośālā* and temple of Bihari maintained by ascetics of Tatti Asthan in Vrindaban.

59 Akshay Bat

NP 2.80.75; CC 2.18.66; VVS 93 (*bhāṇḍīraka*); BRat pp. 267-8; VRC 2.32-5; GVY 60; PV; BYP; BKB 43 & BBP 7.49 & 60 (+*tapovana*); BP.

Near the village of Khajraut is Akshay Bat, an 'imperishable banyan'. Nearby is a Krishna temple, referred to by some as 'Akshay Bihari', with a stone said to be a

crystal (*sphaṭik*) *śālagrām*, and a pond called Gop- or Gopi Talai. Some early Gaudiya sources also say that this is the Bhandira banyan tree, though nowadays its recognized location is on the other side of the Yamuna (below, §64). Perhaps there was once a distinction made between the banyan and the grove named Bhandir. Raghunathdas does not specify the exact location of 'Bhandiraka', though he does mention it along with other places in the vicinity of Akshay Bat. Krishnadas Kaviraj says Chaitanya visited Bhandiravana before crossing the river, and Narahari says that while some people refer to the tree as Akshay Bat, it is really Bhandir Bat - the place where Pralamba was slain, though he does say that some people consider it (and the nearby Munjatavi), to be on the other side of the river. Vishwanath Chakravarti locates the Bhandira tree, Munjatavi, and Gopighatta at Khelanavana, by which he must mean the vicinity of Shergarh. Narahari also mentions a Tapovana where the Gopis performed austerities and a village called *ārāgrāma*, by which he must mean Agaryala (or Agriala), where Sundarlal locates Munjatavi. The texts that identify Akshay Bat with Bhandir Bat are all Gaudiya, though Jagatanand and *Pītāmbardās kī vārtā*, two Pushtimarg sources, while they locate the Bhandira grove and banyan on the east bank, partially support them by saying that the incident involving Pralamba took place at Akshay Bat.

60 Chir Ghat

NP 2.80.76 (*cīracaurya*); VBV 3.89 (? cf. appendix 1); BRat p.269; Sund.; AY 65; GVY 61; CBC; BYP; BP; BBP 7.49. *Cīrharaṇ līlā*. Gopi Ghat: VBV 3.90; VRC 2.34; BRat ibid.; Sund.; (CBC); BYP; BKB 43; BP; BBP ibid.

On the bank of the Yamuna by the village of Siyara is Chir Ghat, the place where Krishna is said to have stolen the Gopis clothes while they were bathing. The kadamb tree in which he hid hangs over the river; beneath it is a small shrine of Katyayani, as mentioned in the classical account of the episode. Near the kadamba tree is a *baiṭhak* of Vitthalnath. Narayan Bhatt refers to the place as Chiratirtha and says that cloths of different colours should be tied to the tree. He also refers to a Chir Ghat at Vrindaban, which may also be the one mentioned in *Nāradapurāṇa*. Most of the sources that include Chir Ghat also refer to an adjacent Gopi Ghat where the Gopis performed austerities.

Pilgrims may cross the river here, but it is more usual to go further downstream to Nand Ghat. Some pilgrims, especially members of the Pushtimarg, may visit Bachhaban before crossing the river. Some of the modern itineraries say that instead of crossing the Yamuna at Nand Ghat pilgrims may proceed to Bacchaban, then visit Vrindaban and surrounding places, and from there cross over to Belban.

61 Bachhaban (Sei)

=PP 5.69.20 *vatsaharana (upavana)*?; VVS 96 (*vatsaharasthalī*); BRat p.269 (*vatsavana*); AY 65; Sund.; GVY 56; VGV 48; CBC; PV (+*alīkhān goravā ko*

sthal); BYP (*(ba)saī/bachaban*); BKB 44; BP; P. Mital 1957; Growse pp.12, 57, 376-7. *Aghāsurvadh/Brahmamohaharaṇ līlā.*

Near the village of Sei (or Sehi) is Bachhaban, the place where Brahma is said to have abducted the calves. Brajnath mentions the Pushtimarg temple of Bachha Bihari here, saying that it houses a four-armed image (of Krishna), a four-faced Brahma tree (referring to a pipal some distance away), the *baiṭhak* of Vallabha, and a Brahmakund. Other places mentioned in later sources are Haribol Tirth, Gwal Kund, and a platform referred to as *gvāl maṇḍalī*. Mital includes the Bihari temple among those founded by Bir Singh Deo of Orchha, and Growse noted a pillar dated 1748, which he took to be the year of its restoration. Jagatanand and *Pītāmbardās kī vārtā* name Sei as the place of Alikhan Gaurawa, alias Alikhan Pathan, a Muslim who was *hakīm* of Mahaban and, according to sectarian tradition, was initiated by Vitthalnath (see below, §71.7). Growse says that it is the residence of the leader of the Gaurawa Thakur clan, commonly known as Bachhals, who inhabit several villages in the locality and are said to have emigrated from Chittaurgarh.

a Places in the vicinity of Sei

Tarauli: BRat pp.270-1. Pasauli: VVS 95 (*sarpasthalī*); BRat ibid. & Sund. (*sapaulī*); VGV 45 (*pasoli*); Nari: VOC p.223; Sund. (+*baldev*); Nari-Semari: BRat p.248; VGV 92 (*narī*) & 99 (*sẽvarī*?) CBC (+*dāūjī, baiṭhak* of Giridhar); BYP (+*baldev*); BKB 47; Growse pp.11 fn., 86. Chaumuhan: BRat p.270; VVS 97?; VGV 91; Growse pp.29-30, 373. Sihana: BRat p.271 (*eseyāno, sehonā*); Sund. (*sihānõ*); VGV 90. Jait: VOC p.14 (*jaitakapura*); BRat pp.270-1 (*jayet*); Sund. (*jayat*); Cunningham 1878 p.4; Führer p.101; Growse pp.74, 350. Chhatikara: =R 454-6 *śakaṭārohaṇa*?; BRat pp.187-8; Sund.; VGV 37; BYP; BKB 47; Growse pp.180-1 fn. Garud Govind: NP 2.80.77 (*tārkṣyagovinda*); BRat ibid.; Sund.; VGV ibid.; BYP; BP; cf. 'Krishna' p.61 (for various folk tales). Atas: BRat p.271 (*āṭasu*); BYP. Sakraya: BRat ibid. (*śakrasthāna, śakaroya, varāhara*); =VGV 98 *sakaravā*?; BKB 45 (*sakarā ghāṭ*); =BBP 7.5 *sakaṭāyau*?

Some texts mention other places in the vicinity of Sei, but not many of them are now visited by pilgrims engaged in the circumambulation of Braj. Six kilometres west of Sei is Tarauli, a village inhabited mainly by Gaurawa Thakurs and noted for its temple of Burhe Babu (cf.§7.14). He is the focus of a large fair held at the end of the month of Karttik, attended mainly by Thakurs and Gujars. The deity is also called 'Swami Baba' and is thought to be particularly efficacious in the cure of leukoderma and other skin diseases. His temple, on the north side of the village beside the road to Shergarh, enshrines a modern marble image of a bearded man standing upright. Beside him is a small stone that used to be painted red and is now adorned with a *mukuṭ*. It served as the main object of worship before the idol was installed and is said to have been discovered in the pond beside the temple. Narahari refers to Tarauli and the nearby Barauli as a pair of villages formerly called *gopākṛta grāma*. He says that Krishna and his friends climbed up a hill here, perhaps referring to the *kheṛā* mound south-west of Tarauli, from where they could see the village of Maghahera (cf.§5, above).

Four kilometres south of Tarauli is the village of Pasauli. Narahari, who calls it

Sapauli, says that its original name is Sarpasthali and that the demon Agha took the form of a snake here. Jagatanand also refers to the Agha episode with reference to Pasauli. West of Tarauli, beside the main road, is the Devi temple of Nari-Semari, named after two villages on either side of the main road between Chhata and Mathura. The temple is situated beside a large pond at Semari, on the east side of the road. Narayan Bhatt mentions Nari, which he also calls Naraki(puri), as one of the places where there is a cow pen (*goṣṭhisthāna*) of Baladeva, and later sources refer to the Balarama temple here. Narahari says that Nari-Semari was formerly the residence of a female spirit (*kinnarī*) named Shyamala, and adds that the influence of Devi is strong here. He relates how Krishna, in order to appease Radha, appeared before her disguised as a Sakhi named Shyama, declaring himself to be a *kinnarī* and holding a *vīṇā* - (presumably of the type known as a *kinnarīvīṇā*). Growse, who suggests that Semari does indeed derive from the name Shyamala, records that in the reign of Muhammad Shah (1720-48) a Jadon zamindar known as Thakur Chaturbhuj moved from Nari and settled in Jalesar (now in Etah District), where he became a wealthy and influential 'free-booting chief', whose successor was recognized as the Raja of Awa (Jalesar). The temple at Semari and the growth in popularity of the fair held there in the Chaitra Navaratra owe something to patronage by Chaturbhuj and his descendants. The fair attracts a large number of people from Mathura, surrounding districts, and the city of Agra. Growse describes it as the largest fair in the district, saying that there are special days for pilgrims of particular castes and localities. Many of the Navaratra pilgrims also visit a Devi temple at Akbarpur, a village beside the main road four kilometres south of Semari, where a sarai built by Sher Shah used to stand.

Seventeen kilometres north of Mathura on the road to Chhata is the village of Chaumuhan, a name which, as pointed out by Jagatanand, refers to the 'four faces' of Brahma. These are represented by an old piece of sculpture that appears to have been a capital carved with adorsed lions. Growse, however, refers to a circular pedestal of a Jain statue or column with a lion at each corner and a nude female figure in the intervening spaces. This description might apply to a different piece of sculpture which, according to local informants, was stolen a few years ago. The old sculptural fragment supposed to represent Brahma lies in shrine located in a small grove outside the village, a few hundred metres east of the main road. Opposite the stone is a small temple with modern marble images of Brahma and Saraswati, which is cared for by ascetics of the Vishnuswami Sampraday. Throughout the Mughal period there was a sarai at Chaumuhan.

Four kilometres west of Chaumuhan is Sihana, which, according to Narahari, is also a place where the demon Agha was slain. Sundarlal refers to it as 'Chhoto Sesasai', and Jagatanand says that Lakshminath is here. These references suggest the presence of an image of Vishnu lying on the serpent Shesha. Another place associated with serpent deities is Jait, a village on the main road five kilometres south of Chaumuhan. Here, says Narahari, the people cried '*jayati*' ('he conquers') when Krishna slew Agha. It is mentioned by Narayan Bhatt as the birthplace of a companion of Krishna called Subala and as the residence of Pratinanda and his wife Manada. Growse mentions an ancient five-headed Naga image beside the tank here, but it has since disappeared. Its head rose about four feet out of the ground and, according to popular belief, its tail reached as far as Kalimardan Ghat at

Vrindaban. It was also supposed to keep its head above water whenever the level of the tank rose. Cunningham (followed by Führer) refers to such a Naga image being located at Jait but, apparently in error, locates it 'one march from Mathura and near the Jamuna river'.

South of Jait, where the road from Vrindaban meets the Mathura-Delhi highway, is Chhatikara. Narahari refers to it as *ṣaṣṭikarāṭabī*, saying that a more recent name is *ṣaṣṭīkarā* and that it is now called *ṣaṣṭīgharā*. He says that it was visited by Chaitanya and his companions as a diversion from the pilgrimage route when they were passing through places around Satoha. At a place called Shakatagrama they saw the spot where Krishna overturned the cart, suggesting that this is the location of the place called Shakatarohana, which is mentioned by Rup Goswami as lying half a *yojana* from Mathura on the western side (see below, §71.2). Popular tradition also holds that Chhatikara is a place associated with 'six' (*chaṭ*) of the Sakhis, or that it is where Nanda and his fellow herdsmen arranged their carts in a circle when they made a new encampment in the area of Vrindaban. Growse notes that it was founded by three Kachhwaha Rajputs, who are said to have moved from the nearby village of Ral fourteen generations previously (viz. in about the mid-sixteenth century), and that the name is thought to refer to 'six' villages that were obliged to cede part of their land to them.

Near Chhatikara, a short distance along a track leading off the highway (parallel with the road leading from the highway to Vrindaban), is Garud Govind, a temple of the Nimbark Sampraday with an image of a twelve-armed Krishna seated on Garuda. The inspiration for the image presumably comes from a passage in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (10.17) in which Garuda attacks the serpent Kaliya, who dwelt nearby in the waters of the Yamuna (cf.§66.1, below). The most widespread folktale concerning the image, as recorded by Sundarlal, is that Krishna turned Shridama into Garuda and rode upon him in the form of Narayana. In some sources it is included among the places of Vrindaban. It is one of the sites visited during the joint circumambulation of Mathura and Vrindaban and the *pañctīrthī parikramā* of places in and around Mathura (§7.9). Fairs are also held here on the day after Holi and on the full moon day of the month of Jyeshth. Along the road leading from Chhatikara to Vrindaban is Gopal Garh, a temple founded by Brahmachariji in 1889.

Beside the Yamuna, between Vrindaban and Nand Ghat, is Atas, a place where, according to Narahari, the sage Ashtavakra performed austerities. Local tradition holds that a Devi here is Krishna's sister (Ekanansha). Narahari also mentions Shakrasthana, by which he must mean Sakraya, a village further upstream, and Varahar, a place where he says Krishna appeared in the form of the boar incarnation.

62 Nand Ghat

NBC 2.101; BRat p.269; BYP; BP; BBP 7.51; VDA 11 (Jiv Goswami). Growse p.74. Bhay Gram: BRat ibid.; Sund.; GVY 59, 61; (CBC); BYP; Bhagwat Mudit p.1 (*bhaigãū*, residence of Narvahan). *Varuṇa līlā.*

At Nand Ghat is a ferry used by pilgrims and local people when crossing to Bhandirban and other places on the east bank of the Yamuna. It derives its name from the incident in which Varuna abducted Nanda while he was bathing. Above the ghat is a recently enlarged temple housing a tall yellow-painted image of Nanda. There is also a 'cave' (*guphā*) or *baiṭhak* of Jiv Goswami, who is believed to have stayed here for a while and composed his *Ṣaṭsaṃdarbha*. Gopal Kavi says that Sanatan searched for him and eventually found him in a cave here drinking only milk and eating the sacred earth of Braj.

North-east of Nand Ghat is the village of Gangrauli, which has become a halting place in the circumambulation of the Kathiya Baba ascetics, though it is not mentioned in older pilgrimage itineraries. On raised ground between Nand Ghat and Gangrauli is a small shrine built to shelter medieval sculptures of Shiva and Parvati, which lends some support to Growse's suggestion that the village of Bhogaon at Nand Ghat derives its name from 'Bhava', an epithet of Shiva. Narahari, followed by later sources, refers to it as 'Bhaya Grama' and derives the name from the 'fear' (*bhaya*) experienced by Nanda when he was abducted.

63 Bhadraban

VP 151.40-1/R 359/VM p.519; BRam 105.27; NP 2.79.12, 2.80.76; AP; PP 5.69.16/KCC 4.3.7, 69.49; VBV 2.54, 10.7-9; KCC 4.3.6, 4.3.19/CM p.178, 4.6.22/CM p.181; CC 2.18.66; BRat p.274; AY 66; Sund.; GVY 62; VGV 41; PV (*madasūdan kuṇḍ*); BYP; BKB 51; BP; BBP 7.53. Munjaban (Munjatavi): cf. 2.1.14, also BhP 10.19.5, GS 4.21.2, and above §59; KCC 4.7.14-15 (*īṣikākhya-vana*)/CM p.182 (*īṣika-muñjāṭavī*);BYP (*mũj ko ban*); BP; BBP ibid. (*mũjīra bana*); Surir: BRat p.274?; Growse p.395. *Bakrāsurvadh līlā*.

In the *māhātmya* texts Bhadravana is mentioned as the sixth of the twelve forests, some of them specifying that it is on the east bank of the Yamuna. The name *bhadra* may refer to any one of a number of plants or denote some association with Shiva. Narayan Bhatt mentions a pond called Bhadrasaras and Shiva by the name of Bhadreshwara, while Jagatanand and later sources refer to a Madhusudan Kund. The only object of interest is a row of three shrines beside the road that contain images of Krishna and Hanuman and a *liṅga* referred to as Jharkhandeshwar. Between Bhadraban and Bhandirban is an area that some sources refer to as Munjban or Munjatavi, the 'forest of rushes' where Krishna swallowed up a fire. Ten kilometres north of Bhadraban is Surir, a village which, according to some modern sources, was once called Surabhivana, though pilgrims do not come here. Growse notes that some people said that it was once called Sugriv Khera, after the name of the founder. It may be the place referred to by Narahari as Surakhur Gram, where Chaitanya and his companions halted after crossing the river.

64 Bhandirban

Bhandira(vana): MBh 2 app.I, 21.785 ff. pp.403-4; VTK p.18; KK pp.187-8; VP 151.46-7/R 368-9/VM p.520, 154.3-4, 154.5/R 370/VM p.520, (*-katīrtha*), 155.11

(*-hrada*), 166.13/R 457; BRam 105.33-4 (+*vaṭa*), 106.116 (*-kūpa & vaṭa*); NP 2.79.17, 2.80.76; AP; PP 5.69.16/KCC 4.3.7, 69.48; VBV 2.54, 2.56 (*-vaṭa*), 9.74-81; KCC 4.3.6, 4.3.19/CM p.178, 4.6.22/CM p.181, 4.7.12-14 (*-vaṭa*)/CM p.182; BRat pp.274-5; AY 66; Sund.; GS 1.15.60-1, 1.16 (marriage of Krishna and Radha), 4.1, 4.20 (Pralamba episode); GVY 62-3 (*-vana, -kūpa, -vaṭa*); VGV 39; CBC; PV & BYP (+*kūp*); BKB 51; BP; BBP 7.53 (*bhāḍila baṭa & kūpa*); R. N. Mishra pp.50, 52, 99 (Jain sources). *Pralambāsurvadh līlā*. Mat: BRat p.275; Sund.; VGV 102; BYP; BKB 51; BP; BBP ibid.

Lakshmidhara mentions a 'hidden area' (*guhyakṣetra*) called Bhandiraka, where there is a tank surrounded by trees and creepers. It is a place known to Yakshas and mighty demons and those who bathe there will sport in the realm of the Nagas. The *Varāhapurāṇa* refers to a Bhandiravana as the eleventh forest, a *tīrtha* called Bhandiraka, where there are various kinds of tree, and a Bhandahrada that is specified as a remote place on the other side [of the Yamuna]. In *Gargasaṃhitā* the Gopis are said to cross the Yamuna to offer food to Durvasa, who was staying at Bhandiravana. Jinaprabha Suri mentions Bhandiravana among the twelve forests; other Jain texts, as well as the *Mahābhārata*, refer to Bhandira as a grove or banyan, located in or near the city of Mathura, that belonged to a Yaksha called Sudarshana and was a popular place of worship. It is not clear whether the places mentioned in these various sources were all at the same site, or for how long Bhandiravana has been accepted as the location of the legendary Bhandira banyan, as is explicitly stated in *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa*. In the *Padmapurāṇa* Bhandiravana is said to be located on the twelfth petal of the Braj lotus, before Bhadra-, Shri-, Loha- and Mahavana (which lie on the thirteenth to sixteenth petals) - a disposition which implies that it is located in the area of Shergarh, though it is said to be one of the five forests on the east bank of the Yamuna. Some sources, primarily Gaudiya (but with the exception of Murari Gupta), say that the forest and/or the banyan called Bhaṇdira are located on the west side of the Yamuna (cf.§59 above). Narahari identifies the Bhandira banyan with Akshay Bat near Shergarh, but, noting that some people say that both the tree and the forest are on the east bank, duly refers to it again after Bhadraban and mentions a nearby village called *chaherī*, which must be the modern Chhanri.

Possibly the Bhandira banyan and grove were at different locations on either side of the Yamuna, whereas nowadays both are considered to be at Bhandirban on the east bank. Narayan Bhatt deals with the banyan and the grove separately, saying that at the latter there is an *asibhāṇḍahrada* and a Matsyakupa, on the north side of which is an *aśoka* tree. He calls this location Ashokavana, saying that it is the place where Aghasura was killed, that on the birthdays of the twenty-four incarnations of Vishnu the water in the Matsya well rises and becomes frothy like cream, and that on the birthday of Dhruva (Shravan II.14) the water turns to milk and Vishnu becomes manifest there as his ten principal incarnations and as Dhruva and thirteen other sages. If Narayan Bhatt's Bhandiravana corresponds to the one now recognized as such, his Mastsyakupa must be the same as the well now called Bhandir-, Venu-, or Dauji ka Kup, which becomes a place of local pilgrimage whenever the new moon falls on a Monday because its water is believed to turn into milk (cf.§3.13). Beside the well is a small shrine in which there is a low platform against the rear wall with the shape of a *mukuṭ* fashioned in relief above it (see plate

25). This is referred to as Mukut Mandir or a *baiṭhak* of Balarama, and is said to be where he took off his headdress (*mukuṭ*) when he bathed in the well. Women desiring children mark the walls of the shrine with swastikas made of cow dung. Around the well are small temples of Balarama, Bihari, Radhamohan, and Shiva. A short distance north-west of the well is a brick hearth used for Devi worship, around which some carved fragments of a medieval temple have been arranged.

Near the well is a banyan tree where the wedding of Krishna and Radha is believed to have taken place, as described in *Gargasaṃhitā*. This is sometimes referred to as the Bhandiravata of the Pralamba episode, but there is another banyan in a wooded area a few hundred metres south-west of the well on the other side of some fields (see plate 26). Some refer to the wood as Shyamban and the banyan as Bansi Bat, though others say that it is the original banyan where Pralamba joined Krishna and his friends in playing *kamarcaḍḍī*, the modern equivalent of the game described in the classical sources. Beside the banyan is a temple of Shridama, one of the boys with whom Krishna played. Some say that Shridama was banished to this spot for having disregarded warnings from other boys that it was not proper for him to climb on Krishna's shoulders in the course of the game. He is represented by a white-painted wooden image depicting a boy playing a flute. Alongside the temple is a small Hanuman shrine, and in a cleft at the base of the banyan are placed whitewashed stones. The temple is the location of a fair held on Chaitra II.9 (cf.§7.11) In the morning of the same day the *mukuṭ* shrine beside the well is worshipped and bathed with *pañcāmṛt*.

Mat, chief town of the tahsil, has no importance in the circumambulation of Braj, though it is mentioned by Narahari as 'Madha Grama', is listed in *Braj yātrā parikramā*, and is said to be where Krishna knocked over a large pot (*māṭ*) of curd. Brajnath also mentions the temple of Dauji here. In the vicinity is a stone that is said to mark the spot where the seed of Shiva fell when he was seduced by Vishnu disguised as Mohini, a place referred to by Narayan Bhatt as 'Rudraviryaskhalana-vana'.

65 Belban

Bilvavana: VTK p.18 (*billavaṇaṃ*); VP 151.45/R 367/VM pp.519-20; BRam 105.32; NP 2.79.16, 2.80.76; AP (*villaka-*); BRat p.275; AY 66 (*vela-*); Sund.; GVY 63; VGV 41; CBC; PV; BYP; BP; BBP 7.53. Shrivana: PP 5.69.16/KCC 4.3.7, 69.50; VBV 2.56 (*-vaṭa, lakṣmīmandira*); CC 2.18.67; KCC 4.3.6, 4.3.18/CM p.178, 4.6.15/CM p.181. Growse p.257. Dangauli: BYP; BKB 51.

The Belban of later Hindi sources is called Bilvavana in most Sanskrit texts. It is the tenth of the twelve forests and is named after the wood-apple tree (Aegle marmelos). The Gaudiya Sampraday has a temple of Lakshmi here, and some of its sources refer to the place as Shrivana, though Narayan Bhatt mentions a banyan named after the goddess rather than a grove. Growse notes that Belban and the nearby village of Jahangirpur are part of the endowment of the temple of Shringar Bat in Vrindaban. There is also a *baiṭhak* of Vitthalnath near the Lakshmi temple. Nearby is a hamlet called Dangauli, where Krishna is said to have left is staff (*ḍãg*).

KK p.187; VTK p.18 (*viṃdāvaṇaṃ*); VP 151.48/R 371/VM p.520, 151.49/R 388, 154.6/R 372/VM ibid., 154.7 ff., 159.6/R 418/VM p.517; R 128/PP 5.73.26b-27a, 373-7/VM p.520, 378-417; BRam 105.35, 106.14; SP 2.6.2.30 (*vṛndāraṇya*), 2.6.3.67 & 73; NP 2.79.18-19, 2.80; AP; PP 5.69-83; VVS 7; VBV 2.55, 10.70-80; KCC 4.3.5, 7 (=PP 5.69.16) & 9/CM p.178, 4.7.1 ff./CM pp.181-2, 4.9.3; CC 2.17.192, 2.18.71-83.; VRC 2.38-87; NBC 2.97-103; BRat pp. 290 ff., 447 ff.; AY 65, 73 ff.; Sund.; BYV; GVY 70; VGV 30-6; PV; BYP; BP; TA 28-41, 61-7, 121-7; BBP 3.57-60, 4, 5, 7.4, 8; VDA (cf.§6.32). For list of ghats cf. BBP 8.7-20, Growse p.270, and Krishnadas Baba pp.145-7. *Kālīnāg līlā*.

In most of the *māhātmya* sources Vrindaban is mentioned as the twelfth forest and is related to a presiding goddess called Vrinda, who once performed austerities here. The circumambulatory path skirts the town, passing along the ghats that line the banks of the Yamuna. The red sandstone ghats and kiosks that lie between Madanmohan and Chir Ghat were mostly built by aristocrats who had mansions nearby. Today they are silted up and, with the exception of Keshi Ghat, are only touched by the river when it is in spate during the monsoon.

The circumambulation of Vrindaban can be started at any point along the *parikramā* path. It passes only a few of the places in Vrindaban that are visited by pilgrims or mentioned in the texts. Pilgrims usually spend a few days in the town and see the temples and other holy places at leisure, without following any prescribed route. The most detailed and systematic description of Vrindaban is given by Gopal Kavi (VDA), who mentions all the places of note that existed in the early nineteenth century, beginning upstream at Kalimardan and ending downstream at Gahwarban. He deals with all the quarters of the town, mentioning the temples, mansions, and other places of interest. The description of Vrindaban given below follows his sequence, though many of the minor places he includes have been omitted.

1 Kalidah Ghat

KK p.192/R 406a (*kāliyasya hrada*); VP 154.13-22; R 404-5/VM p.515, 406-412 (*kāliyahrada, -tīrtha*); BRam 105.39, 106.10-12 (*kāliyasya hrada*); NP 2.80.63-4 (*kāliyatīrtha*); PP 5.69.31 (*kālīhrada*); VVS 81; VBV 2.55, 10.72 (*kāliyahrada*); KCC 4.7.8-9/CM pp.178, 182 (*kāliyadamana mūrti*); CC 2.18.71 (*kāliyahrada*) & 83 (*-daha*); BYV (*kālīmardanjī*); NBC 2.98 (*kāliyadamanasthala*); BRat p.301 (*kāliyahrada, kelikadamba*); AY 101-2; Sund. (+*kālīmardan ṭhākur*); GVY 71 & VGV 32 (*kālīdaha*); BYP (*kālīmardan*); BKB 48; BP; BBP 4.16-18, 8.12, 23 & 30-1 (+*kālīmardana*); VDA 1.5, 2.22 (*kālīmardana*); P. Mital 1966 p.133. Adivaraha: BYP; BBP 8.22. *Lāljī kī samādhi*: VDA 1.7-8.

The participants in the pilgrimages described by Narahari and Jagatanand approached Vrindaban by way of Akrur Ghat and Bhatror, then went to Kalidah Ghat, where they began their tour of the town. It must be one of the oldest sacred places of Vrindaban, for it appears in all the *māhātmya* texts. Lakshmidhara mentions a 'pond of Kaliya' among places lying outside of the city of Mathura, and the *Varāhapurāṇa* states that Kaliya was subdued in the Yamuna at Suryatirtha -

the adjacent bathing place beneath the mound on which Madanmohan temple now stands. Rup Goswami refers to the kadamba tree from which Krishna dived into the river, and Murari Gupta informs us that Chaitanya saw an image of Krishna defeating Kaliya here. An inscription on the steps records that they were constructed by 'Holkar Rao' (in the early nineteenth century), but this was apparently a replacement of an older ghat built by Bir Singh Deo of Orchha. Above the ghat is an old tree called Keli Kadamb, believed to be the one from which Krishna leapt into the water. One of the kiosks on the ghat has been converted into a small shrine with a modern image of Krishna dancing on the hoods of Kaliya. The image of Kaliyamardan mentioned in the older sources must refer to one that was recently stolen from a nearby temple of the Nimbark Sampraday.

Further upstream from Kalidah Ghat are Ram Gol (or Pol?) Ghat, built by Goswamis of Banke Bihari temple, Madan Ter Ghat, named after an adjacent garden associated with Hit Harivansh, and finally Varaha Ghat. Downstream from Kalidah Ghat are Gopal Ghat and Nabhawala Ghat, built by Raja Madan Pal of Karauli and Raja Hira Singh of Nabha, whose mansions stand above them. By Nabhawala Ghat is a small compound in which stands the *samādhi* of Shri Lalji, founder of the Eighth Gaddi of the Pushtimarg, and smaller memorials commemorating his descendants.

2 *Praskandan Ghat*

VP 166.13/R 457 (*praskandana*); R 413-4 (*praskandanakṣetra*); CC 2.18.71; BRat p.303 (*-kṣetra & ghāṭa*); Sund. (*prasagandan*); GVY 72 (*triskandha*); BYP (various corruptions); BP (*puṣpanandan*); BBP 8.12 & VDA 1.7 (*pasagandana*); Growse p.250. Suryatirtha/Suraj Ghat, Dwadashaditya: cf.§4.15; VP 154.13-21, 166.15/R 459; R 415/VM p.515, 416-7; PP 5.69.31; VVS 82; KCC 4.7.10/CM p.182 (*dvādaśādityaghaṭṭa*); CC 2.18.72; AY 100-2; Sund.; BP; BBP 8.12.

It is not clear why the term *praskandana* ('leaping forward, attacking [said of Shiva], voiding excrement') should be applied to the ghat beneath the cliff-like mound on which the temple of Madanmohan stands. The name must have puzzled later writers and scribes, for they have come up with a number of variants. Growse suggests that the name refers to Shiva or to the cliff as 'standing out', but it is also possible that it was coined to designate the place where Krishna leapt into the pool of Kaliya. It appears that originally the term applied to the area beneath the mound and that the bathing place there was called Suryatirtha. The mound is associated with the twelve Adityas, sons of Prajapati and Aditi who were identified with the solar months. Archaeological evidence indicates that it was the location of a temple in the Gupta period, which was presumably dedicated to Surya. The *Varāhapurāṇa* tells us that Suryatirtha is where Kaliya lurked in the waters of the Yamuna and that Krishna, after defeating the serpent, established images of the Adityas there. Two later authors, Vrindabanchandradas and Sundarlal, tell us that the Adityas appeared in order to warm Krishna after he emerged from the Kaliya pool.

3 *Madanmohan*

VBV 2.55, 10.75 (*madanagopāla*); BYV; GVY 72; BP; BBP 4.76-7, 8.12; VDA 1.10 ff.; Growse pp.250-3 (photograph, plan, inscription); P. Thakur (cf. pp.97-9 for succession of custodians). Adwaita Bat: BRat p.304; VDA 2.2, 9.1 ff.

The temple of Madanmohan stands above the Yamuna on the mound called Dwadashaditya Tila. The deity was first worshipped by Sanatan Goswami and subsequently by members of his pupillary lineage (cf.§§5.7 & 15.) During the custodianship of Subalanand the deity was taken to Jaipur, where it was provided with a mansion (*havelī*) by Sawai Jai Singh. In 1728 it was transferred to Karauli at the request of Maharaja Gopal Singh, where it has remained ever since. Subalanand entrusted the deity to his disciple Krishnacharandas, since when the custodianship has been inherited by his descendants.

The temple consists of a nave and octagonal spire (*śikhara*) next to which stands a second and more ornate *śikhara* that was added later by a donor named in an inscription as Gunanand. He was the father of Basant Ray, founder of the principality of Jessore. The original approach to the temple was by the flight of steps on the south side that leads up to a gateway with a pyramidal tower (plate 27), but nowadays the usual approach is by steps on the east side, which were cut out when the temple was restored by Growse. Beside the temple, is a *bhajan kuṭī* of Sanatan and a small shrine commemorating the place of the original Dwadashaditya (or Surya) temple. Beneath the mound on the south side is a new temple of Madanmohan, built by Nand Kumar Bose in the early nineteenth century, which is now the centre of activity. In a courtyard behind it is the *samādhi* of Sanatan and several smaller memorials commemorating subsequent Goswamis, as well as a *samādhi* said to mark the place where Sanatan's books were buried. At the foot of the mound on the south-eastern corner is the *samādhi* of Surdas Madanmohan. Beneath the mound on the east side are small shrines of Sitala, Shiva, and Surya, where stones are worshipped that may have belonged to the medieval temple. A short distance downstream from the mound is the site of Adwaita Bat, a banyan beneath which Adwaitacharya is supposed to have sat. The original tree was washed away, but has been replaced by a new one. East of Madanmohan is the prominent spire of an Ashtasakhi temple in which Krishna is enshrined with Radha and the eight Sakhis. It was founded in 1889 by the Raja of Hetampur, though the building as it now stands was erected nearly forty years later.

4 *Banke Bihari*

BYV; BYP; BP; BBP 5.12-18; VDA 3.1 ff., 21 (discovery of deity).

Banke Bihari is the most famous deity of Vrindaban and is a favourite of local people as well as of visiting pilgrims. The deity was originally worshipped by Swami Haridas under the name of Kunjbihari, though his disciples described it as *bā̃ke* ('crooked', referring to the *tribhaṅgī* posture in which he stands), an epithet that has been current ever since. It is said to have been discovered by Swami Haridas at his hermitage in Nidhiban, but was moved to its present site in the latter part of the eighteenth century following a dispute over its custody between his ascetic followers

and the Goswamis who claim descent from his brother. The Goswamis, who now have control over the worship of the deity, arranged for the construction of the present temple in the middle of the last century. There are now several hundred Goswamis eligible for a share in the service, and they all live Biharipura, the quarter behind the temple. Every year on Bihar Panchami (Agahan II. 5), the day when the deity became manifest, they organize a programme of music in Nidhiban and a procession from there to the temple of Banke Bihari.

There are some exceptional customs in the service of Banke Bihari. He is said to dislike the sound of the bell and conch, and so they are not sounded in his presence. When the doors of the shrine are opened and the deity is on display, a curtain is repeatedly pulled in front of it and held closed for a few seconds, either to prevent it from being affected by the evil eye, or because its gaze is thought to be too devastating to be endured for more than a couple of minutes. There are only three periods of worship each day (in the morning, *utthāpan*, and *śayan*), the early morning *maṅgal āratī* being omitted because it is believed that Banke Bihari has been up late sporting in Nidhiban. Huge crowds come to the temple for Dolotsav (held on Chaitra I.1), on Akshay Tritiya (Vaishakh II.3) - the only day when the deity's feet are exposed, on Janmashtami - the only time when *maṅgal āratī* is performed, and at the autumn full moon, when it is adorned with a special *mukuṭ* and holds a flute. Banke Bihari is only placed in a swing for one day in Shravan (II.3), whereas in other temples this is done for the whole of the bright half of the month.

5 *Radhavallabh*

BYV; BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BP; BBP 5.19-20 & 39, 8.15; VDA 5-6; Growse pp.255-6 (plan). Anandi Bai: *Vṛndāvanāṅk* pp.314-5; Kapur vol.4 pp.1-12.

Radhavallabh, the deity worshipped by Hit Harivansh, stands in a new temple adjoining the one in which it was housed before it was taken to Kaman during the reign of Aurangzeb. The old temple, built in the latter half of the sixteenth century, is still occasionally used for gatherings in which lyrics by poets of the Radhavallabh Sampraday are sung, but nowadays the new temple is the centre of activity. It is popular among pilgrims and the general public, and has a reputation for the attractive way in which the deity and shrine are decorated. It was built by Seth Lallubhai Bhagwandas and other Gujarati devotees after the deity was brought back from Kaman in 1784. A special feature of the worship of Radhavallabh is the *khicaṛī* festival held between the new moon days of Paush and Magh. Early each morning the deity is offered *khicaṛī* (rice cooked with lentils), vegetables, *pāpaṛ* (poppadums), and pickle, and is provided with costumes and other decorations appropriate for different festivals and incidents in the life of Krishna.

The two temples stand in a compound called Radhavallabh Ghera, which is entered through a gateway in a street that leads from Purana Bazaar at the junction known as Athkhambha. Also in the Ghera are the Calcuttawala temple and the small but popular Anandi Bai ka Mandir, founded earlier this century by a notable devotee. Among other temples in the neighbourhood are Radhamohan Ghera, founded by Krishnachandra, the younger son of Hit Harivansh, and Kalyanval-

labh, said to be the deity worshipped by Raja Askaran. On Purana Bazaar, near Athkhambha, are the adjacent Radhavallabh Sampraday temples known as Bari and Chhoti Sarkar, founded at the end of the eighteenth century. At the back of Chhoti Sarkar is the temple of the Eighth Gaddi of the Pushtimarg, which houses a marble image of Balarama and a deity called Gopinath that was brought here from Dera Ghazi Khan, where the Gaddi used to have its headquarters.

6 Bhattji ka Mandir (Madanmohan)

VDA 7

Beside the gateway leading into the Ghera is a Narasinha temple, and opposite is Bhattji ka Mandir, which houses a deity called Madanmohan that was worshipped by the poet Gadadhar Bhatt and is still in the custody of his descendants. The Goswamis of this temple are noted for their tradition of communal singing (*samāj*) and their skill in making Sanjhi designs.

7 Kaladhari Mandir

VDA 7; *Tīrthāṅk* p.549.

Past the entrance to Radhavallabh Ghera (in the direction of the river) is a narrow street on the left in which stands a temple dedicated to Krishna as Kaladhari. This temple had links with Goswamis in Bahawalpur and now houses a deity called Brajmohan, which was brought from there after it became part of Pakistan. There is another deity called Madanmohan that was once in Multan. The custodians claim to belong to the Vishnuswami Sampraday and to have inherited the Gaddi of Namdev, the Sant poet, who is commemorated by a *samādhi* in the temple. One of the Mahants, Yamunadas, founded an ashram near Dawanal Kund called Kaladhari Bagicha, where ascetics of all orders stay.

8 Jugal Kishor (Jugal Ghat)

Bhagwat Mudit pp.87-9; BYP; BBP 8.13; VDA 7.

The street in which Kaladhari temple stands leads down to Jugal Ghat, where there is a temple of Jugal Kishor. It was founded by a Tomar Rajput called Haridas, a disciple of a grandson of Hit Harivansh.

9 Bihar Ghat

VDA 7

Past the gateway of Radhavallabh Ghera the street curves to the right and leads down to Bihar Ghat. The place is associated with Nagaji and is thought to have been the site of his temple of Atalbihari (cf.§5.4). Nowadays he is commemorated simply by a pedestal marked with footprints (*caraṇ pādukā*). On the adjacent Shriji

Ghat stands the *samādhi* of Harivyasdev. The Vrindaban residence of Shriji Maharaj used to be here before the construction of Shriji Kunj (cf.§22 below). Facing Bihar Ghat is Topiwali Kunj, founded in the nineteenth century by the incumbent of the Gaddi of Mukundadev, one of the twelve disciples of Harivyasdev. In front of it is a *rās maṇḍal*, beside which a narrow lane begins that runs parallel to the ghats in the direction of Seva Kunj. One of the buildings along this lane is Nagari Kunj, the residence of Nagaridas, whose *samādhi* stands in an adjacent compound. Just past it there is a turning to the right that brings one to Seva Kunj.

10 Seva Kunj

Sund.; BYP; BP; BBP 4.20-6; VDA 9; Kishorisharan 'Ali' (construction of temple).

This walled garden is in the custody of Goswamis of the Radhavallabh temple. In it there is a small tank called Lalitasarovar, several *samādhi*, and a small temple referred to as Rang Mahal or Shriji ka Mandir. The present structure is the result of restoration carried out in 1931. The original shrine is said to have been built in about 1575 by a merchant named Puhukardas, a disciple of Goswami Damodar. Krishna and Radha are believed to be present here every night; it is said that any man or beast who dares to spend the night here will either die or become insane. A wall separates Seva Kunj from the adjoining Kishorban (or Hari Nikunj), in which stand a *rās maṇḍal* and the *samādhi* of Hariram Vyas. Near Seva Kunj is Indramani Kunj, the temple and residence of descendants of Priyadas, the *Bhaktamāl* commentator, whose *samādhi* is also there.

11 Imli Tala

CC 2.18.75-9; Sund.; BBP 8.15 (Imla Ghat, Imleshwar); VDA 10.

A street opposite the entrance to Seva Kunj leads down to the tamarind tree (Imli Tala) beneath which Chaitanya sat when he visited Vrindaban. The worship of the tree was initiated by Goswamis of Madanmohan temple, but was neglected after they went with their deity to Jaipur and Karauli. The site was restored in the nineteenth century by Bhaktisiddhant Saraswati, founder of the Gaudiya Math, whose disciples raised funds in order to purchase it from the Goswamis. A festival is held here at the full moon of Karttik, the day on which Chaitanya is supposed to have arrived in Vrindaban. On this occasion the tree is worshipped and a picture is brought here in procession from a Chaitanya shrine on Gopinath Bazaar. The ghat beneath the tree is attributed to Bir Singh Deo of Orchha.

12 Shringar Bat

VRC 2.82; BRat p.303 (Nityanand Bat); Sund.; BYP; BBP 4.40, 7.60, 8.15; Kennedy p.150.

According to Kennedy the Goswamis of Shringar Bat belong to one of three distinct lineages based in Bengal that claim descent from Nityanand. Their lineage is called the 'Lata line', named after a town in Burdwan District. The temple derives its name from a banyan tree that grows in its courtyard. Beneath it, according to Vishwanath Chakravarti, Krishna used to help Radha put on her adornments (*śṛṅgār*). A banyan named after Nityanand, mentioned by Narahari, probably stood near the temple on Shringar Ghat.

13 Radhadamodar

BBP 5.21-2; VDA 11-12 (incl. lineage of Goswamis).

The temple of Radhadamodar, founded in or around 1542, houses the deity given to Jiv Goswami by his uncle, Rup Goswami. Behind the temple are *samādhi* memorials of Rup and Jiv Goswami, Krishnadas Kaviraj, and many other Bengali devotees, as well as Rup Goswami's *bhajan kuṭī*. On Janmashtami a large Govardhan stone is displayed here that is said to have been presented by Krishna to Sanatan Goswami when, while he was staying at Chakreshwar on the banks of Manasi Ganga, he became too old to circumambulate the hill. It bears markings believed to have been made by the feet of Krishna and the hooves of his cows.

14 Ras Mandal

VBV 2.55, 10.79?

Further along the street is a *rās maṇḍal* said to have been established by Hit Harivansh. According to an inscription here, it was made into a masonry structure in 1584 by Bhagwandas Swarnakar, a disciple of Vanchandra. Beside the arena are footprints of Naravahan and memorials to the poets Sevakji and Dhruvdas, all members of the Radhavallabh Sampraday. A festival is held here from the full moon of Chaitra until Vaishakh II.11, during which *rās līlā* are performed.

Between Radhadamodar and the *rās maṇḍal* is Gangamohan Kunj (VDA 15), a large mansion built by Ganga, a queen of Bharatpur, to house a deity reputedly discovered in a pond at Kamar.

15 Chir Ghat

PP 5.69.29-30; NP 2.80.76?; BRam 105.37-8; VVS 84; VBV 2.55, 10.73; KCC 4.7.17-19/CM p.182; CC 2.18.75; Hariram Vyas, *pad* 600; NBC 2.101; BRat p.325; AY 95-9; Sund.; BYV; GVY 72; VGV 33; BYP (om. 1819 & 1842 mss.); BP; BBP 4.27, 8.16. Law de Lauriston p.356.

Chir Ghat (*cīraghaṭṭa*/*-ghāṭa* in most Sanskrit sources) is the place where Krishna is said to have stolen the Gopis' clothes and hid with them in a tree. Gopal Kavi omits Chir Ghat from his description of Vrindaban, though it was seen by Jean Law de Lauriston in 1785 and is mentioned in older sources, which implies that it is as old as the rival site at Siyarah (above, §60). Narahari compromises by describing

the latter as the place where Krishna stole the Gopis' clothes while they were bathing as part of their worship of Katyayani, as narrated in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, and the one in Vrindaban as the location of a second theft of the clothes carried out while the Gopis were bathing after dancing the *rās*. Narayan Bhatt refers to the practice of offering pieces of coloured cloth here, which, according to *Bhuśuṇḍi-rāmāyaṇa*, are tied to the tree by women in the hope of gaining a suitable husband. Murari Gupta and Krishnadas Kaviraj also include it among places seen in Vrindaban by Chaitanya. In the *Padmapurāṇa* the place where Krishna stole the Gopis' clothes is located on the north-eastern petal of the Vrindaban *yoga-pīṭha*.

The kadamba tree that is now revered as the one in which Krishna hid grows on the ghat behind the temple of Shahji. It is approached by a narrow street that begins near the entrance to Nidhiban and runs along the wall of Shahji temple and past the entrance to Jai Singh Ghera. An image of Krishna is placed in the tree, and a Panda who sits in attendance supplies pieces of cloth for women to tie onto one of its branches.

16 Nand Bhavan

Beside the path leading to the river from Ras Mandal is a small red sandstone temple referred to as Nand Bhavan, in which there is a deity called Govind Bihari. An inscription on the outer wall records that it was built by a wife of Man Singh in 1613. Pilgrims from eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bundelkhand, and Orissa bring sticks of cane that are deposited inside the temple. The attendant at the shrine used to beat the pilgrims with the canes in order to banish their sins and afflictions, but nowadays the dwindling number of pilgrims who maintain the custom receive no more than a gentle tap on the forehead. Pieces of a type of clay brought from Dwarka called *gopīcandan*, which is used to make the Vaishnava forehead mark (*tilak*), are also deposited here. The temple used to be in the custody of the Goswamis of Shringar Bat, but the rights were sold to members of the Pushtimarg earlier this century.

17 Shyamsundar

BBP 4.34; VDA 13.

This temple is said to have been founded by Shyamanand when he came to Vrindaban. There are several *samādhi* here commemorating the Mahants who succeeded him.

18 Savaman Shalagram

VDA 15

On Loi Bazaar is a temple housing an enormous *śālagrām*, which, as its name implies, is reckoned to weigh one and a quarter maunds (ca.50kg). It is enshrined with idols of Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana and is said by Gopal Kavi to have been

brought from Hyderabad by Seth Snehi Ram Fatehpuriya, whose son built the temple.

19 Bankhandi Mahadev

BBP 5.33

This Shiva temple stands at the beginning of Loi Bazaar and faces Purana Bazaar. It is attributed to Bir Singh Deo of Orchha, but is not mentioned in any pre-nineteenth-century source.

20 Vyas Ghera

BYV (*vyāsjī rā ṭhākurjī*); VDA 16-17; BBP 4.3 & p.189 n. (*hīrāmohan kuñj*).

The temple of Jugal Kishor in Vyas Ghera was founded in the mid-sixteenth century by Hariram Vyas, a companion of Hit Harivansh and Swami Haridas. The original deity worshipped by him is now in Panna, but there are other private temples in this quarter that are maintained by his descendants. Hiramohan (or 'Datiyawali') Kunj, was a residence of the royal family of Datiya and was used by Raja Parichhat, whose pilgrimage is described by Nawal Singh Pradhan. The editor of the text notes that it was established in the mid-eighteenth century by Prakash Kunwari, a sister of Raja Indrajit.

21 Rasikbihari (Chhatarpurwali Kunj)

TA 34; BBP 5.23-4; VDA 18.

This temple houses the deity of Swami Rasikdev, a Haridasi ascetic who lived in the latter half of the seventeenth century (cf.§5.25). On the corner of the street running behind Rasikbihari is the temple of Gorelal, housing an image once served by Naraharidas and then by Rasikdev. Both temples have enjoyed the patronage of rulers of Bundelkhand.

22 Shriji Kunj

VDA 20; *Vṛndāvanāṅk* pp.330-1; Brajvallabhsharan (ed.) 1972 p.272.

This temple, the largest and most important establishment of the Nimbark Sampraday in Vrindaban, was built by in 1827 by Anand Kunwari, mother of Sawai Jai Singh III of Jaipur (cf.§5.37). It serves as a residence for Shriji Maharaj, head of the Gaddi at Salemabad, when he visits Braj.

23 Shahji Mandir

At the end of Pratap Bazaar, near the entrance to Nidhiban, is a tall gateway leading into the garden and temple of Shahji, built by Seth Kundanlal Shah in 1868

(cf.§5.36). It is a popular attraction, thanks to the vulgarity of its italianate façade featuring spiral columns of white marble. A large crowd comes here on Basant Panchami (Magh II.5) to see the illuminated Basanti Kamra, which is filled with coloured chandeliers.

24 Nidhiban

GLA 14.100; VRC 2.76; BRat p.325; Sund.; BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BP; BBP 4.38-9; VDA 21.

Nidhiban is referred to as Nidhuvana by Krishnadas Kaviraj and Vishwanath Chakravarti, who have both described the love play of Krishna and Radha that took place in it. It is said to have been their retreat when they disappeared during the *rās* dance. In the walled garden is a small tank called Vishakhakund, a bed chamber (Rang Mahal or Shish Mahal) where Krishna and Radha are believed to sleep, and *samādhi* of Swami Haridas and other Haridasi ascetics. The *samādhi* of Haridas is flanked by those of Bithal Vipul and Biharindas, though the Goswamis of Banke Bihari, who have retained control over them, claim that the former commemorates Jagannath, whom they say was a brother of Haridas. A marble platform in the grove marks the spot where the deity of Banke Bihari appeared before Haridas. Each morning deities of Krishna and Radha are carried out of the sleeping chamber and placed in the *samādhi* shrine.

25 Govind Dev

Cf.§§5.7 & 12. VP 151.49/R 388, 155.22 & 29-30, 161.18 & 62; R 159/VM p.506, 375/VM p.520, 380, 389-391, 464/VM p.521; BRam 105.41 & 85; SP 2.6.2.6; PP 5.69 ff.; VBV 2.55, 10.76; VOC pp.108-9; KCC 4.9.9/CM p.183; BRat pp.290 ff.; AY 73; Sund.; BYV; GVY 73; PV; BYP; BP; BBP 4.8-9, 7.56; VDA 23; Growse pp.241-50 (plan, photographs, inscriptions); Cole, photos facing pp.22 & 24; R. N. Prasad p.446, appendix C, pp.178-9 (inscriptions). Vrinda(devi): VP 151.48/ R371/VM p.520; R 373, 390; VBV & VOC ibid.; VP 151.48; BYV (*vandrā-devī*).

Govinda is named in the *māhātmya* texts as the presiding deity of Vrindaban and is perhaps the same Govindadeva that is referred to as being on the north of Mathura (one of four '*-deva*' images). Govinda is also mentioned in *Brahmasaṃhitā* and other texts describing the *yogapīṭha* as the deity who stands in the centre of Vrindaban (cf.§6.13). Rup Goswami, the reputed founder of the temple, quotes a verse from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (10.21.10) in which the epithet 'Govinda' is used for Krishna with reference to his playing the flute in Vrindaban and enchanting all the creatures that heard it. He also quotes a verse attributed to the *Skandapurāṇa* with reference to Govinda having his abode (*niketana, mahāsadma*) in Vrindaban.

Govind Dev is the largest and most ornate of the sixteenth-century red sandstone temples in Vrindaban (plates 28 & 29). According to an inscription on the eastern wall, it was built by Raja Man Singh of Jaipur. There is some confusion over the date, which is given as *saṃvat 34*. This would normally mean VS 1634 (= AD 1577),

though some (including Growse and V. A. Smith) interpret it as referring to the thirty-fourth regnal year of Akbar (=1590). The importance of the temple is emphasized in texts produced by the Gaudiya Sampraday, which usually describe it as being located on the site of the Vrindaban *yogapīṭha*, as is stated in the inscription. The main part of the temple consists of a nave and two transepts, the crossing of which is surmounted by a dome with a vaulted ceiling consisting of a massive block of stone carved as a lotus. At the north end of the nave, opposite the main entrance, is a deep shrine room, the doors of which are framed with panels depicting episodes in the life of Krishna. Adjoining the north end of the nave, on the east and west sides, are two shrines or side chapels. The one on the west once housed an image of Vrindadevi, referred to in some *māhātmya* sources as the tutelary goddess of Vrindaban. It has remained empty since the image was taken to the Govind Dev temple in Kaman, though there is a cellar beneath it in which a small marble relief of Durga has been placed, which is given the name 'Yogamaya' or 'Patal Devi'. The exterior of the main building and the side chapels is covered with a variety of abstract mouldings and the capitals of the nave are richly decorated with clusters of carved bells.

The temple was restored by Growse, who gives a detailed description of it. An ornate *chatrī* that was insecure on its site to the south of the temple was removed and set up against the north wall. It bears an inscription dated 1636 which says that it was erected by Rambhawati, the widow of Raja Bhima of Mewar. A popular anecdote, recounted by all the pilgrim guides, is that the main shrine and two side chapels were once surmounted by tall spires, but they were demolished on orders from Aurangzeb after he saw a beacon burning on top of the temple from the terraces of the fort at Agra. The defacement of the figures around the door of the main shrine bears witness to some kind of iconoclastic attack, but it seems unlikely that the spire was destroyed for the simple reason that it was never finished. Growse rightly notes that the towers over the 'sacrarium' and 'choir' were completed, since they were indispensible for liturgical purposes, but he was unable to identify any fragments that might have belonged to the upper stories of the main tower.

The original deity of Govind Dev, much larger than is usual for images of Krishna, is now housed in a temple opposite the palace at Jaipur (see plate 5). The original shrine at Vrindaban houses smaller images of Krishna and accompanying figures, but a temple built at the back of the original one in the early nineteenth century is now the focus of of devotional activity.

26 Venukup

VRC 2.80-1; BRat p.447; Sund.; GVY 73; PV; BYP; BBP 8.23; VDA 25.

Near Govind Dev, along a street on the opposite side of the road, is a well called Venukup. It is virtually ignored by pilgrims, though it is mentioned in some texts dating from the seventeenth century onwards. Vishwanath Chakravarti says that Krishna created the well by playing his flute (*veṇu*) in order to provide water for Radha after they had disappeared together during the *rās* dance. In a walled garden nearby there is a collection of *samādhi* commemorating the sixty-four Mahants of the Gaudiya Sampraday and other devotees.

27 *Singhpor Hanuman*

VDA 25 (*siṃghporī*).

On the street leading up to Govind Dev from Gopinath Bazaar there is a popular shrine of Hanuman, who is accorded the epithet 'Singhpor', though today there is no 'lion gate' to be seen. Gopal Kavi attributes its foundation to Sawai Jai Singh and Bhagwandas, a leader of the Ghamandadev branch of the Nimbark Sampraday. He says that the image perspires in times of strife and danger, as it did once in the presence of Mahadji Sindhiya, and that its coating of vermilion crumbled when Dig and Bharatpur fell. The shrine is the location of Jharin ka Akhara (or Jhariya Nirmohi Akhara), founded by a Mahant called Jhariya of Nim ka Thana in Rajasthan.

28 *Rangji*

Growse pp.260-2; Thornhill pp. 97-8.

The temple of Rangji, dedicated to Vishnu and built in the 1840's (cf.§5.35) is visited by all pilgrims who come to Vrindaban. Belonging to the Tenkalai branch of the Shrivaishnava Sampraday, it is the largest temple in the town and is modelled on the temple of Rangnath at Shrirangam, both in its architecture and pattern of worship. It consists of a series of concentric quadrangles forming processional pathways. The outer gates are in local style, while the others are surmounted by gopurams decorated with sculpture. On the south side of the temple is a tank, and inside the southern gateway stands a tall flagstaff overlaid with gold. As is the case with its counterparts in Tamil Nadu, non-Hindus are not admitted into the inner part of the temple. There are numerous occasions throughout the year when processional images are taken out on a variety of conveyances and paraded around the temple precincts. At the annual Rath ka Mela the deity is placed on an large chariot and taken to a walled garden belonging to the temple (Rangji ka Bagicha).

29 *Brahmakund*

R 394-7 (KK p.187/VP 154.7-8), 398-401; NP 2.80.58-60?; PP 5.69.34-5 (*-hrada*); Jiv Goswami *Digdarśanī* ad *Brahmasaṃhitā* 5.5; KCC 4.9.1-4 (+*aśokānana*)/CM p.183 (+*aśokavana*); BYV (*brihman kuṇḍ*); VRC 2.73 (+*aśokavāṭī*); BRat pp.447-8 (+*aśoka* tree); Sund.; GVY 72 & PV (*dharma-*); BYP; BP; BBP 8.22; VDA 26; P. Mital 1966 p.134.

Some verses in Lakshmidhara and the *Varāhapurāṇa* describing an unspecified *kuṇḍ* at Vrindaban are introduced by Rup Goswami as relating to Brahmakund. In the verses from Rup's *māhātmya* as quoted by Narahari the identification is made more specific by replacing the words *tatra kuṇḍe* by *tatra brahme*. Rup adds verses saying that on its north side is an *aśoka* tree that miraculously bursts into flower on Vaishakh II.12. The tree is also mentioned in some subsequent sources. Gopal Kavi says that it will bestow happiness on those who worship it after bathing on

Vaishakh II.11. In the *Padmapurāṇa* a pond called Brahmahrada is said to be the place where Vyoma and Shankhachuda were slain, and to be situated on the south-western petal of the Vrindaban lotus. The intended reference seems to be to Rup's Brahmakund, though Jiv Goswami identifies Brahmahrada with Akrura-tirtha (cf.§42 below) and says that it is where Krishna gave Akrura and later devotees of Braj a vision of the world of Brahma.

The tank is said to have been provided with masonry ghats by Bir Singh Deo of Orchha. It has been cleaned and restored in recent years, but hardly manages to retain any water and has lost its former importance. Gopal Kavi tells us that many ascetics used to live around the tank and that it was a centre of devotion, especially among members of the Gaudiya Sampraday. He says that fairs were held here for five evenings from Shravan II.9 (as part of the *pañctīrthī parikramā*) and from the *ekādaśī* until the new moon evening of Ashwin, when Sanjhi designs were made. He says that Krishna and Radha used to gather flowers at Brahmakund in order to make Sanjhi decorations and that the fair was initiated by Nagaridas, who composed poems on the theme of the dialogue that took place between them. These and other poems were recited before images of Krishna and Radha that were placed under two *chatrī* beside the tank. Above the tank are some old red sandstone kiosks, a small shrine in which an image of Brahma has been installed, and a modern Ram Charit Manas Mandir constructed by a celebrated expounder of Tulsidas' work.

30 Gopinath

BYV; BYP; BP; BBP 4.10-11; VDA 28-30; Growse pp.253-4.

The street running between the temples of Govind Dev and Gopinath is called Gopinath Bazaar. On the right-hand side is the quarter known as Gopinath Bagh and on the left is Pathar Pura, which, according to Gopal Kavi, derives its name from the quantity of stones scattered over the area that were left behind after the construction of Govind Dev. He names thirty-five temples, mansions, and shrines in this area, but none of them attracts much attention from pilgrims. Nowadays the busiest places in Pathar Pura are the two 'bhajan ashrams' where a number of widows, mainly from Bengal, spend several hours a day chanting the names of Krishna.

The temple of Gopinath is one of the four red sandstone ones founded during the reign of Akbar, but most of the original structure is now obscured by later additions. Gopal Kavi says that the original temple was founded by Raysen Shekhawat (viz. Raysal Darbari, cf. end of §5.12), and that later additions were made by Sawai Jai Singh and, in the early nineteenth century, by Nand Kumar Bose. He informs us that the deity was first worshipped by Madhu Pandit, a disciple of Jahnavi, the wife of Nityanand. Apart from Radha, the main deity was also accompanied by an image of Jahnavi. Goswami Bhavanand, a descendant of Madhu Pandit, took all three images to Kaman in the reign of Aurangzeb, and later they were installed in a new temple at Jaipur.

Near the temple, on the corner of Gopinath Bazaar, is a shrine of Sitala that was probably built in the eighteenth century, when her cult became popular among Bengalis.

31 Radharaman

BYV; =BYP *rādhāmohan*? (om. 1819 ms.); BP; BBP 4.12-13; VDA 31; Kapur vol.3 p.4 (Shah Biharilal).

The deity of Radharaman was first worshipped by Gopal Bhatt, one of the Six Goswamis of the Gaudiya Sampraday, and is believed to have manifested itself in 1542 from a *śālagrām* stone in his possession. It is the smallest of the main deities of Vrindaban and is said to bear markings of a discus on its back and feet. There is no accompanying image of Radha; instead her presence is indicated by a *mukuṭ*. On Janmashtami and on the anniversary of the appearance of the deity (the full moon day of Vaishakh) an elaborate *abhiṣeka* ceremony is held, and on Shravan I.5 the death of Gopal Bhatt is commemorated by a procession and chanting. The ritual for the *abhiṣeka* and details of worship on festive occasions have been described by Manohardas in *Rādhāramaṇ ras sāgar*, composed in 1700. The Goswamis live nearby, most of them in Radharaman Ghera, a compound around the temple that is entered through a tall gateway. Gopal Kavi gives the names of Goswamis belonging to two lineages, one descended from Shrinivas and the other from a Goswami called Gopinath. Near the entrance to the Ghera are the *samādhi* of Gopal Bhatt, others in memory of later Goswamis, and a memorial commemorating the manifestation of the deity. Inside the temple are preserved a shawl that belonged to Gopal Bhatt and a wooden seat said to have been presented to him by Chaitanya. Flames required for the rituals are taken from a fire that is said to have been kept alive ever since it was first generated by Gopal Bhatt by means of verses from the Vedas.The present temple was built in 1826 by Shah Biharilal of Lucknow, grandfather of Kundanlal and Phundanlal, the founders of Shahji temple.

32 Radhavinod and Gokulanand

VDA 32

Along the narrow street that begins in front of the gateway to Radharaman Ghera is a small temple built for Radhavinod and Gokulanand, deities that were once worshipped by Loknath and Vishwanath Chakravarti and are now in Jaipur. Facing the temple there is a *samādhi* commemorating each of these devotees, and also one for Narottamdas Thakur, and another where a tooth of Gadadhar Pandit is buried. The temple has a Govardhan stone that was presented to Raghunathdas by Chaitanya and is said to bear the latter's handprint.

33 Jugal Kishor (Keshi Ghat)

BYV?; Growse p.254.

The temple of Jugal Kishor, said to have been built in 1627, stands among the narrow streets behind Keshi Ghat. The nave has entirely disappeared, but the 'choir' and shrine surmounted by a tapering spire still stand. The most notable element of decoration is the tympanum above the eastern entrance, which shows Krishna holding up mount Govardhan. The temple has remained empty ever since the deity was removed and taken to Panna.

In the neighbourhood there are other Krishna temples, one with an image that is half-Krishna and half-Kali, two Narasinha temples, and a few dedicated to Rama.

34 Keshi Ghat

VP 154.9-11/R 402-3/VM p.515; BRam 105.36(*keśīpaṭṭa*), 106.15-25; NP 2.80.65-6; PP 5.82.14; VVS 85; VBV 2.55, 10.72; CC 2.18.72; NBC 2.98; BRat p.325; AY 93-4; Sund.; BYV; PV: BYP; BKB 48; BP; BBP 4.42-3 (+*malūkadāsa asthāna, kuñja* of Raja of Bharatpur), 4.62, 8.17 & 26-7; VDA 33.

Keshitirtha, nowadays called Keshi Ghat, is mentioned in *māhātmya* sources as the place where Krishna threw down the horse demon Keshi. It is the most impressive ghat in Vrindaban and the only one where the Yamuna flows all the year round. Overlooking the bathing steps is a series of mansions (referred to as Kuñj) two of which are named after Kishori and Lakshmi, wives of Ranjit and Randhir Singh, Rajas of Bharatpur. On the ghat are small temples of Yamuna, Hanuman, and a Rama temple founded by followers of Malukdas.

35 Bansi Bat

VBV 2.55, 10.74; KCC 4.9.9/CM p.183; =CC 2.18.72 (*rāsasthalī*?); Dhruvdas 6.31 (*Bhaktanāmāvalī līlā*); VRC 2.75 & 83-4; NBC 2.97; BRat pp.326 ff.; BYV; GVY 72; VGV 34; CBC; PV; BYP; BKB 49; BP; BBP 4.7 & 34, 7.60, 8.18; VDA 33; Krishnadas Baba pp.127-8. Dhir Samir: VRC ibid.; AY 90-1; Sund.; BYP; BP; BBP 8.17.

Bansi Bat (Skt. *vaṃśīvaṭa*), the tree in which Krishna sounded his flute to summon the Gopis to the *rās*, is believed to have stood on the banks of the Yamuna some distance downstream from Keshi Ghat. The tree that now grows on the site is reputed to have been planted by Madhu Pandit, the founder of Gopinath temple, as a replacement for an older one that stood here. It stands in a walled compound in which there is a small temple of Bansibihari. Dhruvdas says that the saint Ghamandadev used to reside here; the small temple still belongs to the Nimbark Sampraday and is now cared for by the larger one founded by Brahmachariji. Close to Bansi Bat is a building in which there are *baiṭhak* shrines of Vallabha, Vitthalnath, Gokulnath, and Damodardas Harsani, the foremost disciple of Vallabha.

The stretch of river bank between Keshi Ghat and Bansi Bat is called Dhir Samir ('Gentle Breeze'), a name that presumably derives from the refrain of the eleventh song of Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* (*dhīrasamīre yamunātīre vasati vane vanamālī*). Vishwanath Chakravarti says that it is so called because the breeze softened when Krishna played his flute at Bansi Bat. According to Krishnadas Baba a temple of Shyamray was founded at Dhir Samir by Gauridas Pandit (a younger brother of Nityanand's father-in-law), whose *samādhi* is also here. The mansion (*kuñj*) and temple bearing the name Dhir Samir were built by Badan Singh.

VP 155.20a/R 363b/VM p.519, 155. 20b-c, 155.23-25, 155.26/R 364/VM ibid., 155.27, 155.28a/R 365a/VM ibid., 155.28b-32; PP 5.69.36; VVS 87; VBV 2.48, 4.80-1, 5.86-7; VRC 2.74; BRat p.447; Sund; VDA 34. Gopeshwar: BRam 105.42; KCC 4.6.12/CM p.181; NBC 2.140; AY 129; BYV; VGV 35 (*gopesur*); BYP; BP; BBP 5.31-2.

In some sources this temple is referred to as Gopeshwar, ('Lord of the Herdsmen' or 'Lord as a Herdsman'), but the older and more authoritative sources call it Gopishwar, an epithet relating to Shiva's becoming a Gopi in order to participate in the *rās* dance, which is supposed to have taken place at Bansi Bat. Gopal Kavi tells us that Shiva turned into a Gopi after bathing in Man Sarovar, after which the Gopis acknowledged him as the guardian of Vrindaban. He says that the temple was founded by Vajranabha, who is also believed to have established the image of Govind Dev, and that it was rediscovered by Rup and Sanatan when they noticed a cow shedding its milk on the spot. After serving the *liṅga* for a while, the two Goswamis entrusted it to a Jogi named Ganganath, whose descendants still have custody of the temple. He gives the name of its builder as Hardiyarau Chaturbhuj. In all probability the temple has been cared for by Jogis from the very beginning and the association with Rup and Sanatan is simply the result of their being accredited with the reclamation of Vrindaban as a whole. Although the oldest sources give the name as Gopishwar, this does not exclude the possibility that it was a Vaishnava adaptation of 'Gopeshwar', an epithet that (like Gopanatha) may have referred to Shiva as Pashupati ('Lord of the Cattle') in a period when the Nath Sampraday was more predominant in the area.

Gopal Kavi and Sundarlal call the well outside the temple Saptasamudrikup, and both the *Varāhapurāṇa* and Rup Goswami mention Gopishwar and a Saptasamudrikakupa together, recommending the latter as a suitable place for offering *piṇḍa*, especially when the new moon falls on a Monday. The *Varāhapurāṇa* adds that Matali, Indra's charioteer, created the well when he brought seven jars of water (i.e. from the seven seas) in order to anoint Krishna in the presence of the Gopis. At the same time he established Gopishwar and began to worship him. However, the *Varāhapurāṇa*, Rup Goswami, Murari Gupta, and Narayan Bhatt include Gopishwar and the well among places in the area of Mahaban. Narayan Bhatt relates Gopishwar and the well to the Yamalarjuna episode, saying that the well was dug by Nanda so that by bathing there the sin of uprooting trees could be expiated. The *Varāhapurāṇa*, however, also talks of the benefits obtained by those who resort to the area between Gopishwar and Govind Dev, which implies that Gopishwar is in Vrindaban, as stated in later sources.

The temple is a simple rectangular structure built over a *liṅga*. Some old pieces of sculpture are collected together in one corner of the gallery that is used for circumambulation. Being the most famous Shiva temple in Vrindaban, it is the one where most people come to worship on Shivratri.

Between Gopishwar and Rangji there are two temples which, although they are impressive, no longer attract much attention. On the right hand side as one goes up the street is the temple of Brahmachariji, which was completed in 1860 (cf.§5.37), and on the corner where one turns left to go down to Gyan Gudari stands the temple of Lala Babu, built about fifty years earlier (cf.§5.35).

37 Gyan Gudri

BYP (om. 1819 ms.); TA 35; BBP 4.14-15; VDA 35-6.

The name of this square derives from the patchwork garments made of rags of various colours (*gudarī/gūdarī/gudaṛī*) that are worn by some Hindu and Muslim ascetics, in this case those who are in pursuit of knowledge (*gyān/jñāna*). Around the square are several Krishna and Rama temples as well as a shrine of Jagannath. Deities from various temples are brought here on decorated carts for the celebration of Rathyatra (Ashadh II.2), and on the full moon day of Shravan there is a procession of carts decorated with flowers. Nearby is Tikari Ghat and the attractive, but nowadays neglected Tikariwala Mandir, completed in 1871 (cf.§5.37).

38 Tatti Asthan

BBP 4.31; VDA 38-9.

Tatti Asthan (or Tatiya Sthan) derives its name from the wattle fences that were put up when it was first established. Naval Singh and Gopal Kavi refer to it as the *ṭaṭṭī* or *ṭāṭī* of Maunidas, referring to Lalitmohinidas, the eighth leader in succession of the ascetic followers of Swami Haridas. It was originally founded by his predecessor, Lalitkishoridev, who built shrines for his deities named Radhikabihari and Mohinibihari (or Lalitamohini). It is one of the most conservative religious establishments in Vrindaban in that there is no electricity, visitors in western dress are frowned upon, and cameras and tape recorders are prohibited. Fairs are held on Radhashtami and the anniversary of the birth of Swami Haridas, and there are gatherings (*samāj*) commemorating previous Acharyas at which poems are sung.

a The area beyond Tatti Asthan

Gahwarban: BKB 50; VDA 37, 40; BBP 4.7 & 33, 8.20; Radha Bagh: 84V no.58; BYP; BBP ibid.

In some sources the wooded area downstream from Gyan Gudri and Tatti Asthan is referred to as Gahwarban. Gopal Kavi describes it as an area in which many ascetics live, and among the shrines, *akhāṛā*, and ashrams he mentions Paramarthi Akhara, founded by Ramdas Paramarthi during the reign of Sawai Jai Singh, and a temple of Chaturbhuj, a deity brought here from Nawargarh by Raja Askaran. There are still several ashrams and other shrines in the area, though it is now less wooded than it once was and part of it may have since been eroded by the Yamuna. Near the temple of Rangji and Tatti Asthan is a walled garden called Radha Bagh, where, according to *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā*, a devotee named Narayandas Bhat found an idol of Madanmohan, which was eventually presented to the Bengalis who had first served the deity of Shrinathji. Opposite Radha Bagh is Katyayani Pith, the images of which were installed in 1923. It was founded by a Swami from Bengal named Keshavanand and is claimed to be the place where Sati's hair fell. Behind

Rangji ka Bagicha is a neglected temple of Vijay Bihari built by Vijay Bahadur of Charkhari.

39 Govind Kund

R 392-3; NP 2.80.60-1?; VRC 2.71; BRat p.448; BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BBP 4.35.

Rup Goswami refers to a Govindaswamitirtha after dealing with Govind Dev, implying that the tank was built for the temple. Hardly any pilgrims come here and it is not visited during the circumambulation of Vrindaban, but it has always been a place of residence for ascetics of the Gaudiya Sampraday.

40 Dawanal Kund

NP 2.80.64-5; KCC 4.7.11 & 15/CM p.182; BRat p.448 (*davānala pāna sthāna*); Sund. (*davānal mokṣa sthān, kaivari kuṇḍ*); BP; BBP 4.41, 8.22 & 25; VDA 49; *Vṛndāvanāṅk* p.338.

Near the point where the Vrindaban *parikramā* path crosses the railway line is the tank known as Dawanal Kund, named after the forest fire that Krishna is believed to have consumed here. Near the tank is Nimbark Sampraday temple with a deity called Dawanal Bihari. The image is said to have been discovered by a Mahant named Lakshmandas, who also had the tank constructed. Today the temple is cared for by ascetics of the nearby Kathiya Baba Ashram. The area around Dawanal Kund is known as Kai(n)warban.

41 Bhatror

PP 5.69.32-3; NP 2.80.76 (*bhaktabhojana*); VVS 86; VBV 2.55 & 10.77 (*yajña-patnīsthala*), 3.93 (*odanasthāna*); KCC 4.7.21/CM p.182; NBC 2.102 (*yajñapatnī-bhojanasthala*); BRat p.301 (*bhojana ṭīlā*); AY 110-12 (where the brahmins' wives gave Krishna *dadhi-odana*); Sund. (*bhataroṇ*); GVY 71 & VGV 31 (*bhataroḍa*); BYP (*bhatarōḍ*); BKB 47; BP; BBP 3.59-60 (*bhatarauḍa, parakha bāga*), 8.32-3 (*bhatarōḍa/bhatarauḍa*, +fair); Growse pp.86 fn., 186.

A few hundred metres before the *parikramā* path crosses the Mathura-Vrindaban road, in the area known as Hanuman Nagar, there is a track to the left that leads to a mound on which stands the temple of Bhatror Bihari. This is said to be the place where Krishna and his friends were offered food by the wives of brahmins who were busy in the performance of a sacrifice. Raghunathdas and the *Nāradapurāṇa* suggest that the name of the place derives from the boiled rice (*bhakta*) that was given to the boys. The *Padmapurāṇa* says that the place of the brahmins' wives (*yajñapatnī*) is situated on the western petal of the Vrindaban lotus. Narayan Bhatt includes a place named after them among sites in Vrindaban, and in another context, while dealing with places in Mathura, mentions a spot where the Gopis offered Krishna boiled rice or porridge (*odana*). He says that the latter is situated in Mathura beside the road leading to Vrindaban, which suggests that it might also refer to the place now known as Bhatror.

Opposite the temple is the garden that Parikhji built for the deity of Dwarakadhish, later installed in the temple of the same name in Mathura. The track that passes the garden and mound used to be the main route from Mathura to Vrindaban, but, since the construction of the metalled road that runs parallel to it, these places are no longer frequented. Growse and Nawal Singh Pradhan mention a fair that used to be held here on the full moon day of Karttik at which the episode of Krishna and the brahmins wives was re-enacted.

42 Akrur Ghat

VP 153 (153.4-5/R 446-7, 166.13/R 457), 166.15/R 459; R 444-5/VM p.516 (*akrūratīrtha*); BRam 106.1-9 (*-tīrtha*); NP 2.79.47 (*anantatīrtha*), 2.80.77 (*akrūratīrtha*); MS; VBV 2.55, 10.78 (*-ghāṭa*); CC 2.18.70, 74, & 83 (*-tīrtha*); BRat p.288-9 (*akrūragrāma, -tīrtha*); Sund.; BYV (+*gopīnāth*, built by Muddate Madasudan); GVY 71 (*-thāna*); VGV 30; BYP (*-gām*/*-ghāṭ*); BP; BBP 3.58-9.

A short distance further on from Bhatror is Akrur Ghat, believed to be the place where Akrura stopped to bathe while he was bringing Krishna and Balarama to Mathura. In the *Nāradapurāṇa* Akruratirtha is mentioned along with Bhaktabhojana (i.e. Bhatror) and an apparently separate Anantatirtha is mentioned after Vighnarajatirtha (cf.§1.23 above), situated further downstream as the northernmost bathing place in Mathura. Anantadev deals with Akrura- and Anantatirtha separately, but in his source, the *Varāhapurāṇa*, they appear to be used synonymously in a chapter that illustrates the merits of the place with a story of how a merchant named Sudhana was confronted by a demon (*brahmarākṣasa*). The name Anantatirtha is presumably related to the vision of Balarama as the serpent Ananta/Shesha that Akrura had when he ducked under the waters of the Yamuna. The *Varāhapurāṇa*, Rup Goswami, and *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* recommend bathing at Akruratirtha on Karttik II.12 and the following full moon day, perhaps in connection with the fair that used to be held at nearby Bhatror. Krishnadas Kaviraj says that Akrur Ghat is where Chaitanya stayed during his visit to Vrindaban.

In most texts Akrur Ghat is the first place mentioned in Vrindaban, usually as being visited by pilgrims arriving from the direction of Mathura. There are small temples of Akrur Bihari and Gopinath, the latter reputedly founded by Bir Singh Deo of Orchha. Like Bhatror Bihari, they have both been neglected since the time when the new road began to carry all the traffic between Mathura and Vrindaban.

67 Man Sarovar

NP 2.80.76 (*mānasaras*); Bhagwat Mudit pp.12, 26; BRat p.276; AY 305-34; Sund.; GVY 65 & PV (+*maṇik silā*); CBC; BYP; BKB 51; BP; BBP 7.53 & 59; Growse p.87 fn. *Mān līlā*. Piparauli (Bat): GVY ibid.; VGV 95; PV; BYP; BKB 52. Durvasa's ashram: KCC 4.6.15; NBC 2.101 (*durvāsasthala*); BYP.

The name 'Man Sarovar' usually refers to the lake high in the Himalayas that was created by the mind (*manas*) of Brahma, but the one in Braj is related to the pique

(*mān*) felt by Radha when she suspected Krishna of being unfaithful. It lies on the opposite bank of the river from Vrindaban, near the village of Panigaon. Vrindabanchandradas describes it as one of the four lakes surrounding Vrindaban, bathing in which gives one the form of a Sakhi and makes one eligible for participation in the *rās* dance. He also says that it was where the *mān* episode took place, and that Krishna and Radha were reconciled on Phalgun I.11 and celebrated Holi on the following day. Members of the Radhavallabh Sampraday hold a fair here on Phalgun I.11 and revere the place because they believe that it was frequented by Hit Harivansh. Growse notes that it was owned by a Goswami of the Sampraday and that a garden was once planted here by the Raja of Ballabhgarh, who also constructed a *chatrī*. There are two small shrines beside the pond built by Ganga and Mohini, wives of Suraj Mal. Pushtimarg sources mention the *baiṭhak* of Vallabha at Man Sarovar and a banyan or pipal tree at the nearby village of Piparauli. In some modern sources the village of Panigaon, south of Man Sarovar, is said to have been the birthplace or residence of Durvasa, a claim that gains support from Murari Gupta's statement that Durvasa's ashram lay between Lohban and Belban, Janakiprasad Bhatt's inclusion of it among places around Vrindaban, and a note in *Braj yātrā parikramā* that it was opposite Dhir Samir (§66.35 above, but cf. Durvasa Tila, above §1.33).

68 Lohban

Lohajangha: VP 151.44/R 366/VM p.519, 158.42; VBV 3.47-8; (for others named *loha(jaṅgha)* cf. SP 1.2.65, 3.2.29; Growse p.339 (ref. *Bṛhatkathā*); Agrawala 1970 p.200 (listed among the *vīra*). Lohajanghavana: VTK p.18; VP/R/VM ibid.; BRam 105.31; NP 2.79.15; VBV 1.67; BRat p.276; GS 2.20.1, =2.7.21 *lohārgala-vana?* Lohavana: AP; PP 5.69.16/KCC 4.3.7, 69.51; VBV 1.123, 10.5-6; KCC 4.3.6, 4.3.19/CM p.178, 4.6.15/CM p.181; CC 2.18.67; BRat ibid.; AY 66; Sund.; GVY 67; (CBC); PV; BYP; BKB 52; BP; BBP 7.53; Growse pp. 87, 90, 339; Cunningham 1885 pp.46-7. *Lohāsurvadh līlā.*

Lohban, the ninth of the twelve forests, is named in Sanskrit sources either as Loha- or Lohajanghavana. The term *loha* may refer to a species of aloe, but the more usual meaning is 'iron'. However, according to *Braj yātrā parikramā* and oral tradition, the place is said to be named after a demon slain by Krishna at the well called Krishnakup. Narahari says that Lohavana is sometimes called Lohajanghavana and that it is the place where Lohajangha was slain. Some sources contain legends about characters called Lohajangha ('Iron Thighs') or Lohasura, but they do not feature in any of the standard accounts of the life of Krishna.

In the *māhātmya* texts Lohajangha is said to be the guardian of the forest named after him, but some versions of the *Varāhapurāṇa*, as well as Narayan Bhatt, also mention Lohajangha after Garteshwar when giving the sequence for the circumambulation of Mathura (see appendix 1). Narayan Bhatt says that he was a sage (*ṛṣi*) who did *tapas* there, and that anyone who offer his image an iron lamp fuelled with butter will not fall into the clutches of Yama's emissaries. In the critical edition and VRI manuscript of the *Varāhapurāṇa* he is said to be at the same place as the goddess Prabhallali, to be protector of the area, and one who ensures a sucessful

pilgrimage. However, in Shastri's edition (156.42) his name is replaced with that of Mahavidyeshwari, while Mitra Mishra and Anantadev, when quoting from this part of the *Varāhapurāṇa*, omit the Lohajangha *śloka* altogether. Unless there were once two different Lohajanghas, either the verse referring to him was misplaced in some versions of the *Varāhapurāṇa*, including one that was used by Narayan Bhatt, or he was some Yaksha type of deity on the circumambulation of Mathura who was later assigned the role of protector of Lohban. Whereas other sources refer either to a Loha- or a Lohajanghavana, Narayan Bhatt lists Lohajanghavana as the ninth of the main forests, located on the east bank of the Yamuna, and Lohavana as the last of the twelve *prativana* on the west bank (though in the printed text the two names are sometimes confused).

The places visited at Lohban lie around Krishnakund, a pond with a masonry ghat lying amid trees on the south-east side of the village. Near the ghat is the well called Krishnakup or Gopi Kuan and above it is a porch (*tivārī*) where the traditional offerings of ironware (*kaṭorā, karāī*, etc.) with oil, salt, and *pūṛī* are made. These offerings go to Barhare (ironmongers) of Mathura (according to Growse to a family of 'Mahabrahmans', i.e. those who receive offerings made in connection with funerary rites). The demon called Loha or Lohajangha is represented by the legs of an ancient red sandstone statue facing the ghat and standing in front of a low mound nearby. They must have belonged to an image of a king, Bodhisattva, Yaksha or similar figure that was broken at the waist. Both Growse and Cunningham note that the upper part of the surviving portion has been worn down by the sharpening of knives and iron tools. On the mound behind it a mud hut has been built over the entrance to a cave named after the seven sages (Saptarishi Kandara). On the other side of it stands a Pushtimarg temple dedicated to Gopinath, opposite which are shrines of Shiva and Hanuman and a *samādhi* said to commemorate a Bengali *mahātmā*. The Gopinath temple has a tall spire and, according to Growse, was assigned to the year 1712. Beneath trees on the opposite side of the *kuṇḍ* is a small Devi shrine.

69 Bandi

BYV (*bādrī & ānādī devī*); VGV 21 (*bādī & ānādī*); BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BKB 53; BP; BBP 7.54 (*nādī & ānādī, ānandakuṇḍa*); Growse pp.348-9 (*Gobar līlā*); cf. *Āyodhyāmāhātmya* 56.24 ff. (ed. Bakker) for Bandi at Ayodhya, a goddess connected with procurement of release from imprisonment (with ref. to *ba(n)dh*); Vaudeville 1976 p.207 (*vandīya*).

The village of Bandi is the location of shrines dedicated to two goddesses named Bandi and Anandi. According to *Braj yātrā parikramā* they were two servant women who used to collect the dung from Nanda's cowshed in order to make fuel cakes. The story is perhaps based on the fact that in Persian *bandī* means 'slave' or 'servant', but a more likely derivation is from the root *vand* ('praise'). According to local tradition the temple was dedicated to the ancestral goddess of Nanda, and so Krishna's hair-shaving ceremony (*muṇḍan saṃskār*) was performed here. The shrines stand in a walled garden beside a pond on the west side of the village. The

priest in attendance relates that the images of the goddess here were buried during the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni and unearthed some centuries later. The story is commonplace, but is lent some support by several fragments from a medieval temple that are placed around the shrines and are said to have come from an area of raised ground to the south-west of the temple. Above one of the gateways is an inscription recording the construction of a temple dedicated to 'Vandiji' by a devotee named Ghasiram Marwaha in 1653 (Magh VS 1710/Shaka 1575). Inside the compound is a row of three shrines housing images of Bandi (a four-armed black figure), Anandi (an eight-armed figure of Durga slaying Mahisha carved in red stone), and Manvanchhi (a smaller two-armed image coated with vermilion). Growse notes that the image of Bandi is a modern facsimile made in Vrindaban after the mutilated original. The restoration of the site, including the addition of the shrine of Manvanchhi, a new gate on the east side of the compound, a clock, and ceiling fans, has been funded over the past few decades by merchants whose dumb or inarticulate children were cured by the intervention of the goddess. People still come to seek her help and make votive offerings of silver tongues to Manvanchhi.

70 Baldeo

VBV 2.49, 4.87-90 (*baladevasthala*); VOC pp. 95, 223-4 (*dugdhakuṇḍa, goṣṭhisthāna* of Baladeva 'at Mahaban'?); AY 68; Sund. (*baldev grām*); VGV 20 (*rēḍā mẽ baladeva*), 102; (CBC); BYP (+*rīḍā grām, haṭorā*, om. 1819 ms.); BKB 53 (+*hatora*); BP (+*athorā*); BBP 1.149, 2.1-25, 7.5, 54 & 56-7, intro. p.100; Growse pp.292-4; *Śrī dāūjī kī prākaṭya vārtā* in B. L. Sharma pp.108 ff. *Mudariyā līlā* and others.

Narayan Bhatt, referring to 'the place of Baladeva', mentions a triangular temple (*trikoṇamandira*), images of Balarama and Revati, a place where Balarama is or was once fed (*bhojanasthala*), and a tank called Dugdhakunda, sometimes referred to as Sankarshanakunda, but nowadays known as Kshir Sagar. The deity has lent his name to the township that has grown up around the temple, but originally the place was called Rirha.

The large image of Balarama in the main temple here is certainly ancient, perhaps dating from the Kushana period. R. C. Sharma, while he was Director of the museum at Mathura, had a chance to examine it and noted, underneath the black patina it has acquired from repeated burning of incense and application of oil, that it is carved from the spotted red sandstone characteristic of early Mathura sculpture. The smaller image of Revati, which is placed in a corner of the shrine facing Balarama, appears to date from the medieval period. It was probably installed before the mid-sixteenth century since Narayan Bhatt refers to the presence of two images.

It is not certain whether the image of Balarama has been worshipped here consistently since the time when it was first made. The manner in which it is served and decorated has been influenced by the Pushtimarg, the sect into which the Ahivasi priests or Pandas are initiated, though in practice they function indepen-

dently. The standard account of the discovery of the deity says that Gokulnath, the fourth son of Vitthalnath, was told by some herdsmen that two cows were letting their milk flow over a stone protruding out of Kshir Sagar. He went to investigate and duly summoned labourers to extricate the stone, which was revealed to be an image of Balarama that had been established by Vajranabha. Gokulnath wanted to install the image at Gokul, but it refused to budge. Realizing that the image wanted to stay at Rirha, since it was the birthplace of Revati, Gokulnath entrusted its worship to a local Ahivasi named Baldevdas Baba (or Kalyan, according to Growse) and supplied all the requirements from his own temple at Gokul. Baldevdas was succeeded by his two brothers, from whom the present Pandas are descended. They eventually managed to purchase Rirha from the Jats and became landowners in other villages, some of which were granted by the Sindhiya family.

The original temple, a small and nowadays neglected building, stands opposite the entrance to the larger one that was built to replace it by Seth Shyamdas of Delhi towards the end of the eighteenth century. Facing the original temple is a gateway from which kettledrums are sounded on festive occasions. Kshir Sagar, a large tank of water coloured green by pond scum, lies behind the main temple. It is traditionally the province of a separate group of Pandas who are Sanaurhiya brahmins. The temple is popular with local people of all castes and has in particular benefitted from the patronage of merchants from Agra, Hathras, Mathura, and other towns in the region. From the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century such devotees paid for the dharmshalas that are built around quadrangles adjacent to the temple. The temple is given prominence in Nawal Singh Pradhan's account of Parichhat's pilgrimage, since Balarama was a patron deity of the royal house of Datiya. It was customary for many of the Bundelas to have such folk rites (*lokācār*) as first head-shaving and ear-piercing performed before the deity here. Nowadays the temple is run by a management committee consisting of members chosen from among the Pandas and a receiver appointed by the Government. Balarama is regularly offered bhang and butter and sugar (*mākhan miśrī*), and is worshipped especially on full moon days. The main festival days are the full moon of the month of Margashirsh, celebration of Holi on Chaitra I.2, and of Balarama's birthday on Bhadon II.6, when he is offered *chappan bhog* and an *abhiṣeka* is performed.

At the nearby village of Hathora (map: Hataura) is a *baiṭhak* of Nanda and temple of Gopal Lal Mahadev.

71 Mahaban

VTK p.18; VP 151.43/R 361/VM p.519; BRam 105.29-30 (*bṛhadvana*), 106.110 (*gokula*); SP 2.6.1.38; NP 2.79.14; PP 5.69.16/KCC 4.3.7, 5.69.18 (*mahāraṇya*, 'called *gokula*'), 5.69.52-3; VVS 89 (*vṛhatānana*); VBV 2.48, 2.52, 4.71 ff. (*gokula*), 5. 83-7 (*mahāvana*); KCC 4.2.5-6/CM p.177, 4.3.6 *mahadvana*), 4.3.18/CM p.178 (*mahāraṇya*), 4.6.1 ff./CM p.181; CC 2.18.67; NBC 2.92; BRat pp.277 ff.; AY 69; Sund.; VGV 16-19; (CBC); PV; BYP (+ *nandarāy ke dāton karive ko ṭīlo, govar ko ṭīlo*); BP; BBP 2.23 & 26-9, 7.4; Growse pp.272-81. Various *līlā* are performed enacting incidents in Krishna's infancy.

Mahaban, the eighth of the the twelve forests of Braj, appears to derive its name from references in early accounts of Krishna's childhood to the 'great forest' surrounding Nanda's encampment. The toponym has been in use since at least the eleventh century, when local Hindu rulers occupied a fort here. Some refer to the highest mound, on which the temple of Shyamji stands, as the actual fort, but the fortified area appears to have been more extensive, incorporating the whole series of mounds surrounding the village, two of which are referred to in *Braj yātrā parikramā* as 'the hill on which Nanda brushed his teeth' and 'the hill of cow-dung'. After it was taken by the Muslims, the fort remained in use as a military headquarters. The sacred places which, in the *Varāhapurāṇa*, are said to lie on the east bank of the Yamuna are specifically located by Rup Goswami and later sources as being at Mahaban. Some of the older sources, such as Narayan Bhatt and *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa*, refer to places at Mahaban as being located at 'Gokula', a name that now applies to the separate township established in the sixteenth century by the Pushtimarg Goswamis. Since the sites of the incidents that took place during Krishna's infancy are all located at Mahaban, some people refer to it as 'Old Gokul'. Narahari declares that Gokul and Mahaban are the same, which can be taken as an expression of Gaudiya reluctance to acknowledge the separate Pushtimarg township of Gokul.

1 Nand Bhavan/Chaurasi or Assi Khambha/Chhati Palna ka Mandir

= KK p.193 *nandiguhā*?; R 463 & KCC 4.6.1/CM p.180 (*nandageha*); VBV 2.48, 4. 73-5 (*nandamandira, yaśodāśayanasthala, ulūkhala*), =2.48 & 4.84-5 *baladeva-janmasthāna, nandagoṣṭhisthāna*?; CC 2.18.67 (*janmasthāna*); NBC 2.92 (place of Nanda and Yashoda); BRat pp.277-8 (*mahālaya* of Nanda and Yashoda, Nanda's cowshed); Sund. (*nanda sadan*); PV (*ūkhal*); BYP (temple of Nanda and Yashoda/Assi Khambha, Yashoda's churning pot, *chaṭhī pūjī, pālnā*, Nanda's cowshed); BKB 53 (*chaṭṭī pālnā*); BP (*caurāsī khambhā, ūkhal, ṛāī maṭhaniyā kī ṭhor, chaṭhī darśan, pālnā*); BBP 2.28 (*jamalārjuna kau ūkhala, palanai kau ṭhaur, chaṭhī dhām*); Cunningham ASI XX pp.42-6, pl. VII-X (description, plans, inscription).

The most remarkable site at Mahaban stands on raised ground close to the village and is usually called 'Assi Khambha', with reference to the 'eighty pillars' from which it is constructed. It is believed to have been the residence of Nanda (before he moved to Nandgaon), and is therefore regarded as the birthplace of Balarama and the place to which the newly born Krishna was brought for safety. Like the Chaurasi Khambha at Kaman (§33.9 above), it is constructed from medieval pillars that have been rearranged in the form of a mosque - in this case during the reign of Aurangzeb. Cunningham describes it as having been built entirely of Hindu materials, though Growse also found some Buddhist remains as well as fragments of a later Hindu temple built after 1500. The original site of the medieval structure (or at least of several of the fragments) may have been on raised ground about a hundred metres to the north-west, where Cunningham found corresponding capitals. As it now stands, the building consists of five rows of sixteen pillars, four of which are said to represent the four ages (*yug*). One of the pillars bears marks that are believed to have been made by Krishna when he wiped his hands on it after

stealing butter. Besides images of Krishna and a relief of Balarama, there is Krishna's cradle, the place where worship was performed on the sixth day after his birth (*chaṭhī pūjā*), and a large stone vessel representing Yashoda's churning pot, probably the same object referred to in some sources as the mortar (*ulūkhala, ūkhal*) to which Krishna was tied in order to stop him getting up to mischief. The temple is sometimes referred to as 'Chatthi Palna ka Mandir', referring to the cradle and Krishna's *chaṭī pūjā*, and is visited by mothers who come here for purification six days after giving birth.

2 *Places commemorating incidents in Krishna's infancy*

Overturning of a cart (*śakaṭa*): cf. MBh 2 app.I 755 (*patitaṃ śakaṭaṃ dṛṣṭvā bhinnabhāṇḍaghaṭīghaṭam*); VP 155.2/R362-3/VMp.519 (*...śakaṭaṃ bhinna-bhāṇḍakuṭīghaṭam*) & 155.21 (*bhinnam...ghaṭabhāṇḍakuṭīrakam*); BRam 106.111; KCC 4.6.2/CM p.180; VBV 2.48, 4.76 (*śakaṭasthala, bhinnabhāṇḍikuṭīka*); NBC 2.93 (*śakaṭāsura... gatisthāna*), 2.95 (broken pots at the place where Krishna was tied to a mortar); BRat pp. 278-9 (*śakaṭabhañjanasthāna*, see also §61a above: *śakaṭārohaṇa*, at Chhatikara?); Sund.; BYP (om. 1819 ms.). Place where Trinavarta was slain: BRam ibid.; VBV 5.84; KCC/CM ibid.; NBC 2.93; BRat p.280; Sund.; BYP (om. 1819 ms.). Place where Putana was slain: BRam ibid.; PP 69.53; VBV 2.48, 4.86 (*pūtanāstanyapānasthala*); KCC 4.6.2/CM p.181; NBC ibid.; BRat pp.278-9; Sund.; VGV 16; BYP; BBP 2.28. Yamalarjuna: KK p.188; VP 155.1-2/R 362/VM p.519, 155.21; BRam 106.113; cf. PP 5.69.53; VBV 2.48, 4.77-9 (+image of *dāmodara*); KCC 4.6.5-10/CM p.180; CC 2.18.68; NBC ibid.; BRat p.282; Sund.; GVY 67; VGV 19; PV; BYP; BKB 53. GM 74.

Along a path winding down behind Assi Khambha are some small shrines commemorating various episodes of Krishna's infancy. None of them appears to be of much antiquity, though the oldest texts do refer to the place where Krishna overturned a cart (*śakaṭa*) and describe it as being littered with broken pots, borrowing a phrase found in the *Mahābhārata*. Later sources refer to the place where Krishna defeated the whirlwind demon (Trinavarta), Narayan Bhatt saying that there is a tank there and *Braj yātrā parikramā* a ravine. Older sources also refer to the place where Krishna killed Putana, called Putana Khar in later texts, with reference to a ravine running down to the river that is supposed to have been made when he dragged her body along.

Lakshmidhara, other *māhātmya* sources, and Narayan Bhatt mention Yamalarjunakunda (or -tirtha), named after the spirits called Yamala and Arjuna who were liberated from the two trees that Krishna uprooted when he dragged a mortar between them. Nowadays the incident is commemorated not by a tank but by two trees and a small shrine attributed to Bir Singh Deo of Orchha, which stands on the edge of Mahaban beside the path leading to Brahmand Ghat.

3 *Shyam Mandir*

GVY 68; BYP; BP (*yogmāyā kī janmabhūmi*); BBP 2.28 (*śyāmalalā mandira*). Nandakup: GVY 68; VGV 19; PV; BYP; BKB 53; BP; Saptasamudrikakupa: BRam 106.117-21; VBV 4.80. BRat p.282; GVY 68; PV; cf. above §§1.14 & 66.39. Nanda's Lion Gate: BYP; BBP ibid. (*nanda paura*).

On high ground near the river stands the temple of Shyam or Shyamlala, said to be the place where Yashoda gave birth to a girl who was exchanged for Krishna and turned into the goddess Yogamaya when Kansa attempted to kill her. At the foot of the mound is a building that is referred to as a 'mansion of the herdsmen' (*gopan kī havelī*), which appears to be the same as the 'Lion Gate of Nanda' mentioned in some sources. A nearby well is probably the one that is referred to as Nandakup; other wells mentioned are Karnavedh Kup, where Krishna's ears were pierced, and Saptasamudrikakup. The latter is included with Gopishwar among places at Mahaban, and both may have existed there, but nowadays their recognized location is at Vrindaban (above, §66.36).

4 Mathurnath

GVY 68; PV; BYP & BP (also Dwarkanath); Mahamallaray: VBV 5.85 (*malla-mallatīrtha*); BYP; BBP 2.28-9; GM 74.

The largest temple in the village of Mahaban is dedicated to Krishna as Mathuranath. Others are dedicated to him as Mahamallaray ('King of Wrestlers') and Dwarkanath.

5 Brahmand Ghat

BRam 106.112-113; cf. KCC 4.6.3-4/CM p.181; NBC 2.94; BRat p.280; Sund.; GVY 67; VGV 17; (CBC); PV; BYP; BKB 53; BP; BBP 2.26; GM 75; Growse p.280; *Māṭīkhāvan liSB?ā.* Chintaharan Ghat: (CBC); BYP (om. 1819 ms.); BKB ibid.; BBP ibid.; GM 76; Growse ibid.

South of Mahaban, some distance from the village, is Brahmand Ghat, believed to be the place where Yashoda saw the universe in Krishna's mouth when she scolded him for eating dirt. The incident is commemorated by a small temple dedicated to Krishna by the name of Mrittikabihari, which is cared for by Ramanandis. Growse noted the presence here of a Jain sculpture, probably from the Chhati Palna site, let into the front of a small platform on which are placed *brahmāṇḍ ke peṛe* - small balls of sand representing sweets. Further downstream is Chintaharan Ghat, where there is a small shrine of Shiva under the name of Chintaharan Mahadev.

6 Karnawal and Koila

Karnawal: BP; GM 94; Koila: BYP; BP (*koylā gām, kolā ghāṭ*); Growse p.350.

On the west bank of the river, opposite Brahmand Ghat, is the village of Karnawal. Modern sources say there is a well here called Karnavedh Kup, but older texts may refer to another of the same name at Gokul. There is also a shrine erected at the beginning of the present century commemorating the spot where the Pushtimarg deity of Mathuranath (or Mathuresh) became manifest.

Further upstream is the village of Koila, for which *Braj yātrā parikramā* records two folk etymologies, one relating it to the charcoal (*koylā*) from Putana's funeral

pyre and the other to the cry '*koī le(h)u*!' ('Someone take [him]!'), supposedly uttered by Vasudeva while he was carrying Krishna across the river and feared that he would be swept away.

7 *Raman Reti*

= VBV 2.55, 11.63-5 *ramaṇavana*?; = KCC 4.6.14 (*rāvaṇasya tapovana*)/CM p.181?; GS 1.20.1-2 & NBC 2.94 (*ramaṇasthala*); BRat pp. 283-4 (*ramaṇaka bālu*); Sund.; VGV 14; (CBC); PV; BYP (*raman sthal*); BKB 53; BP; BBP 2.31-3; GM 85 ff.; Growse pp. 280-1.; Khelanban: BP (*khelban*); GM ibid.; Growse ibid.; Gop Kup: BRat p.284; BYP; BKB 54; BBP 2.28 (*gopīkūp*); GM 93; 'Raskhan's *chatrī*': BBP 2.39; BP; GM 93.

A part of the river bank between Mahaban and Gokul is called Raman Reti because Krishna is thought to have dallied on the sands there. *Gargasaṃhitā* mentions it as a place where Durvasa came to see Krishna, and Narahari says that Sanatan Goswami had a vision of him in the form of Madangopal or Madanmohan. Nearby is a grove referred to as Khelanban, in which grow some *pāras pīpar* trees. In this wooded area there is an ashram of ascetics that has grown up around a temple of Ramanbihari. A four-day fair is held here at Shivratri (Phalgun I.14). Not far from the grove is a well called Gop Kup, attributed to Bir Singh Deo of Orchha. On a mound between Raman Reti and Gokul stands a large red stone *chatrī* popularly believed to commemorate the poet Raskhan. Two smaller *chatrī* nearby are said by Brajnath to commemorate Alikhan Pathan and Taj, both said to have been converted by Vitthalnath. Nearer Gokul are mounds named after Narada and the poet Govindswami, who is believed to have sat there and sung his poems.

72 Gokul

PP 5.69.18, 23, & 26; VBV 2.48, 4.82 & VOC pp.104 ff. (Gokulchandrama, Gokulesh); CC 2.18.69; AY 69; BYV; GVY 5, 69, 74; VGV 3-13; CBC; PV; BYP; BP; BBP 2.34-7, 7.5. For detailed description see B. L. Sharma, Desai pp.232-43, Mevacha pp.257-75, Growse pp. 282 ff. *Janma līlā*. Kola Ghat: B. L. Sharma 94; Uttareshwar Ghat (= VBV *aṭaleśvara*?): GVY 69; VGV 9; (CBC); BYP; PV; B. L. Sharma 95 (*uttaleśvara*): BBP 2.27 (*utaleśvara*); Vallabh Ghat: BYP; BKB 55; B. L. Sharma 95; BP; Thakurani Ghat: BYV; VGV 5; CBC; BYP; BKB 56; BP. Jasoda Ghat: BYV; VGV 6; (CBC); BYP; BKB 55; BP. Govind Ghat: VGV 8; CBC; BYP; BP. Gau Ghat: VGV 11. Karnavedh Kup: BRam 106.114-5 (at Mahavana); VGV 7; BYP; BKB 55.

In the *Padmapurāṇa* it is said that Mahavana is called Gokula, and in some other sources the latter name is used for Mahaban (q.v.), but since the late sixteenth century 'Gokul(a)' has been regularly used to refer to the separate township that developed primarily as a centre of the Pushtimarg. Of the places mentioned by Narayan Bhatt as being at 'Gokula' the only ones that do not appear to be located at Mahaban are the temples of Gokulchandrama and Gokulesh (viz. Gokulnath?), though the reference may not be to deities of the Pushtimarg. Murari Gupta and Krishnadas Kaviraj mention Mahaban and Gokul as separate places, but most

Gaudiya sources tend to ignore the Pushtimarg centre and refer to Mahaban as 'Old Gokul'.

Pushtimarg sectarian history tells us that Vallabha used to visit Gokul and that Krishna appeared to him there and told him to start initiating disciples. The expansion of Gokul is largely due to his son Vitthalnath, who managed to obtain imperial firmans confirming his right to settle there. Most of the sources that deal with Gokul mention the temples (*havelī*) constructed for Navanitpriy and each of the seven deities (*svarūp*, viz. Mathuranath, Vitthalnath, Dwarkanath, Gokulnath, Gokulchandrama, Brajbhushan, and Madanmohan) that Vitthalnath gave to his sons. These temples still stand and remain in the custody of descendants of the respective sons of Vitthalnath, though Gokulnath is the only deity that is still housed in its original temple at Gokul. There are numerous other temples in the town, the majority of them founded by descendants of Vallabha and their followers. Most of them are dedicated to Krishna, but there are some of Balarama and two Shiva temples built by Raja Vijay Singh of Jodhpur in 1602. Besides three *baiṭhak* of Vallabha and two of Vitthalnath, there are others of the latter's seven sons and other descendants, which are located in the temples associated with them. The most complete description of the temples and other places at Gokul is given in Banmalilal Sharma's *Gokul māhātmya*.

The southernmost ghat at Gokul is called Kola or Koila Ghat, and lies opposite the village of the same name. Further upstream is Vallabh Ghat, followed by Uttaleshwar Ghat, said to be the place where Vasudeva came out of the river when he carried Krishna across it. The main ghat at Gokul is Govind Ghat, for it is here that Vallabha used to sit and is the place where he initiated his first disciple. It is usually reckoned as being synonymous with Thakurani Ghat. On it stands a *baiṭhak* of Vallabha, which is visited by pilgrims at the start of their circumambulation of Gokul, as well as by those who assemble here before proceeding to Mathura to begin the circumambulation of Braj. Other ghats at Gokul bear the names Vishram, Nanda, Jagannath, Ashtasakhi, Muralidhar, Chaugan, Go, and Jasoda. By Jasoda Ghat is a gate called Singh Paur, near which is a well called Karnavedh Kup, where Krishna's ears are said to have been pierced. It may be the one mentioned by *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* among the places at Mahaban.

73 Rawal

Ramakrishna *Gopālakelicandrikā* p.140; VVS 90; VBV 2.6 (listed among the *siddhavana*, but subsequently omitted); VOC p.155 (*rāvaligrāma*); BRat p.285; AY 67; Sund.; VGV 22; (CBC) (*-i*); BYP; BKB 52; BP; BBP 2.41-3, 7.5 & 54; GM 102; Growse pp. 87-9.

Those sources that mention Rawal call it *rāval(a)* or *rāvali* and say that it was the birthplace of Radha. This would imply that it was her mother's village, though some Gaudiya authorities say that Vrishabhanu used to live here before he settled at Barsana, a town that is nowadays generally accepted as her birthplace and has eclipsed whatever importance Rawal might have had. A temple dedicated to Radha (Lariliji) was built at Rawal by Kushal Seth in the early nineteenth century,

replacing an earlier one that was washed away by the Yamuna. The birth of Radha is still celebrated here on Bhadon II.8, but on a much smaller scale than at Barsana. Rawal may be included in the circumambulation of Gokul or visited between there and Mathura. *Braj yātrā parikramā* mentions the nearby Burhiya ko Khero, a place which, according to Growse, is associated with an old woman whose daughter-in-law Manvati was seduced by Krishna in the form of the latter's husband.

Plates



1 *Daṇḍautī parikramā* of Govardhan.

1 *Daṇḍautī parikramā* of Govardhan.

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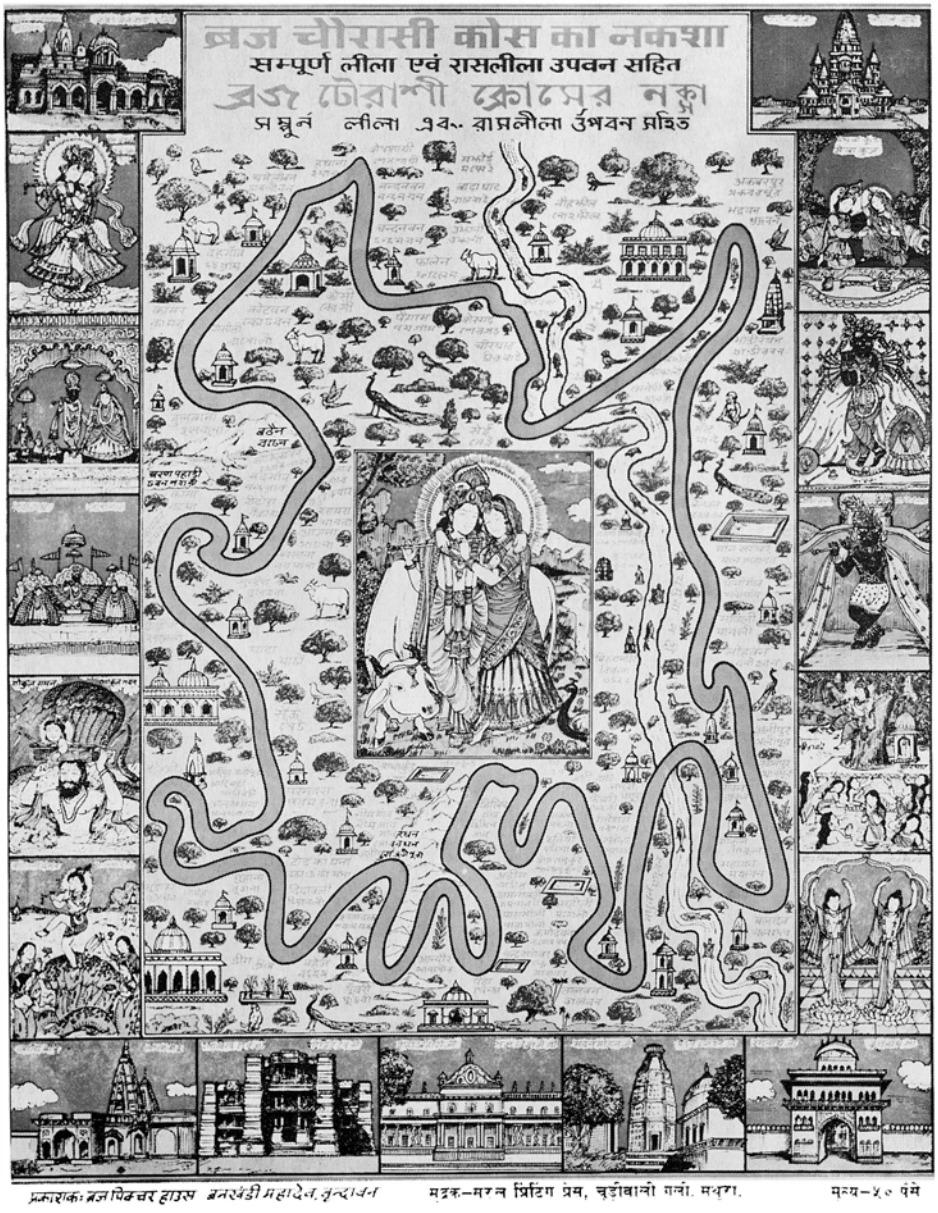

2 A poster illustrating the pilgrimage circuit of Braj.



3 Camp of the *baṛī yātrā* pilgrims on the sands of the Yamuna at Vrindaban.

3 Camp of the *baṛī yātrā* pilgrims on the sands of the Yamuna at Vrindaban.

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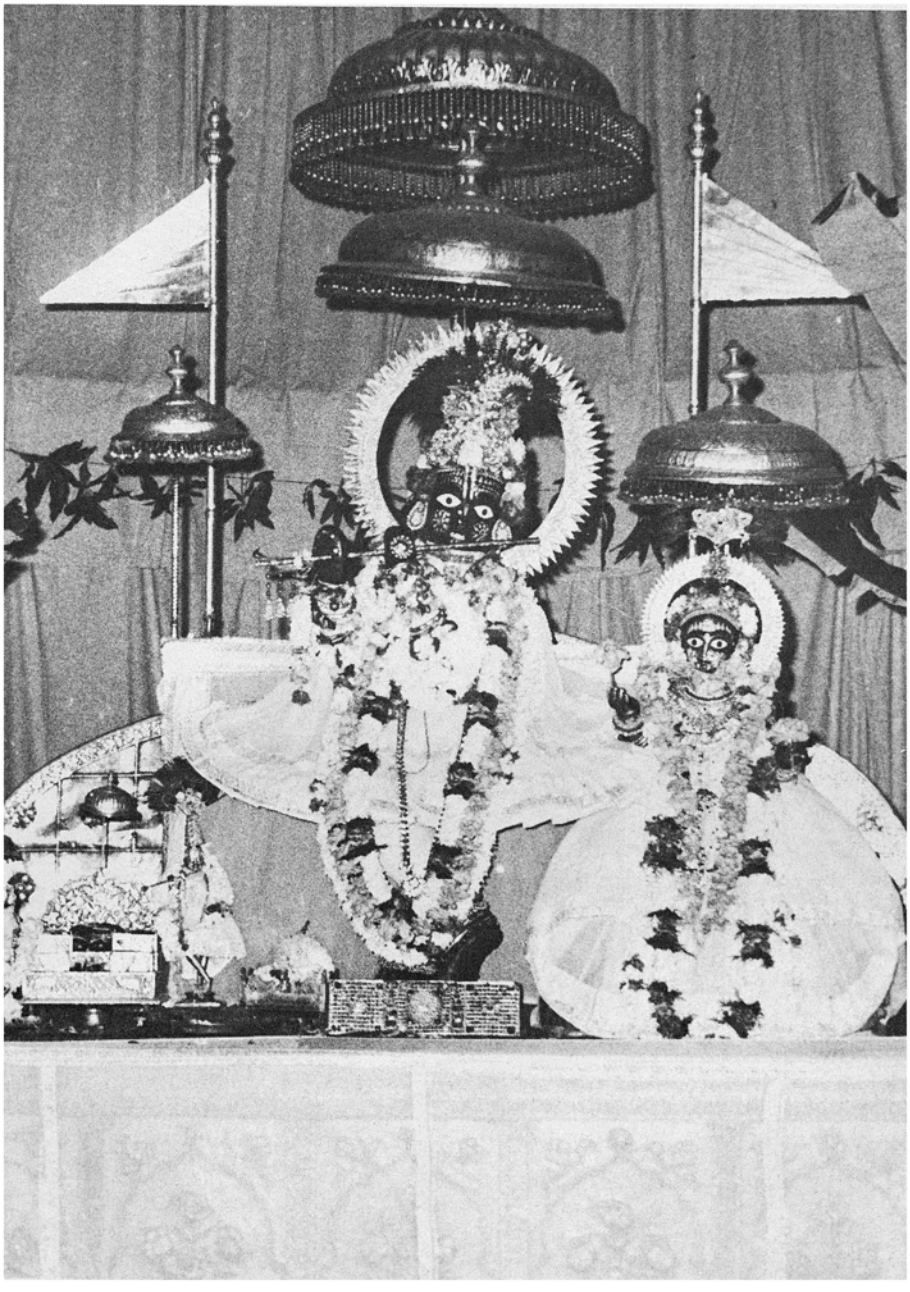
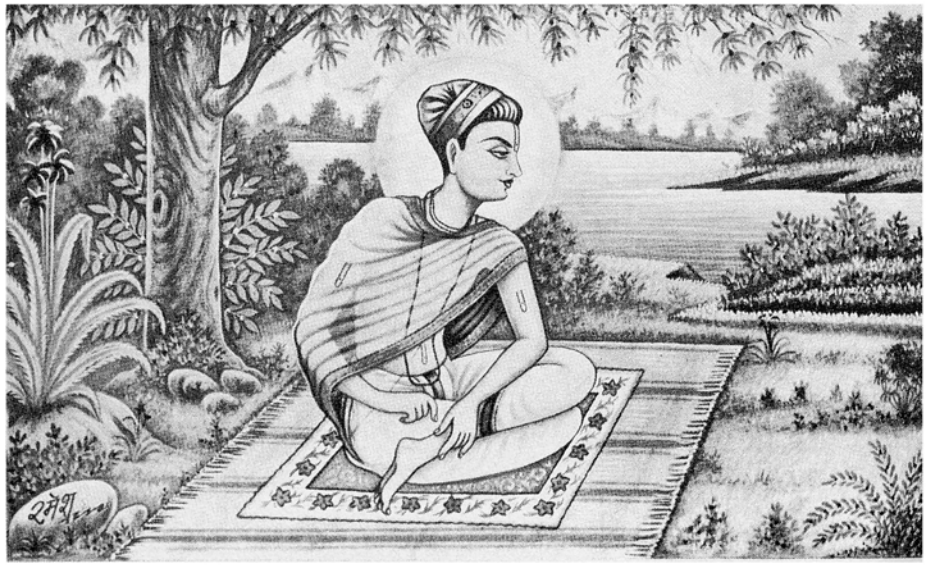
4 *Ek prāṇ do deh*: 'One soul, two bodies'.



5 The deity of Govind Dev (originally at Vrindaban, now at Jaipur).



6a Chaitanya and Nityanand.



6b Hit Harivansh.



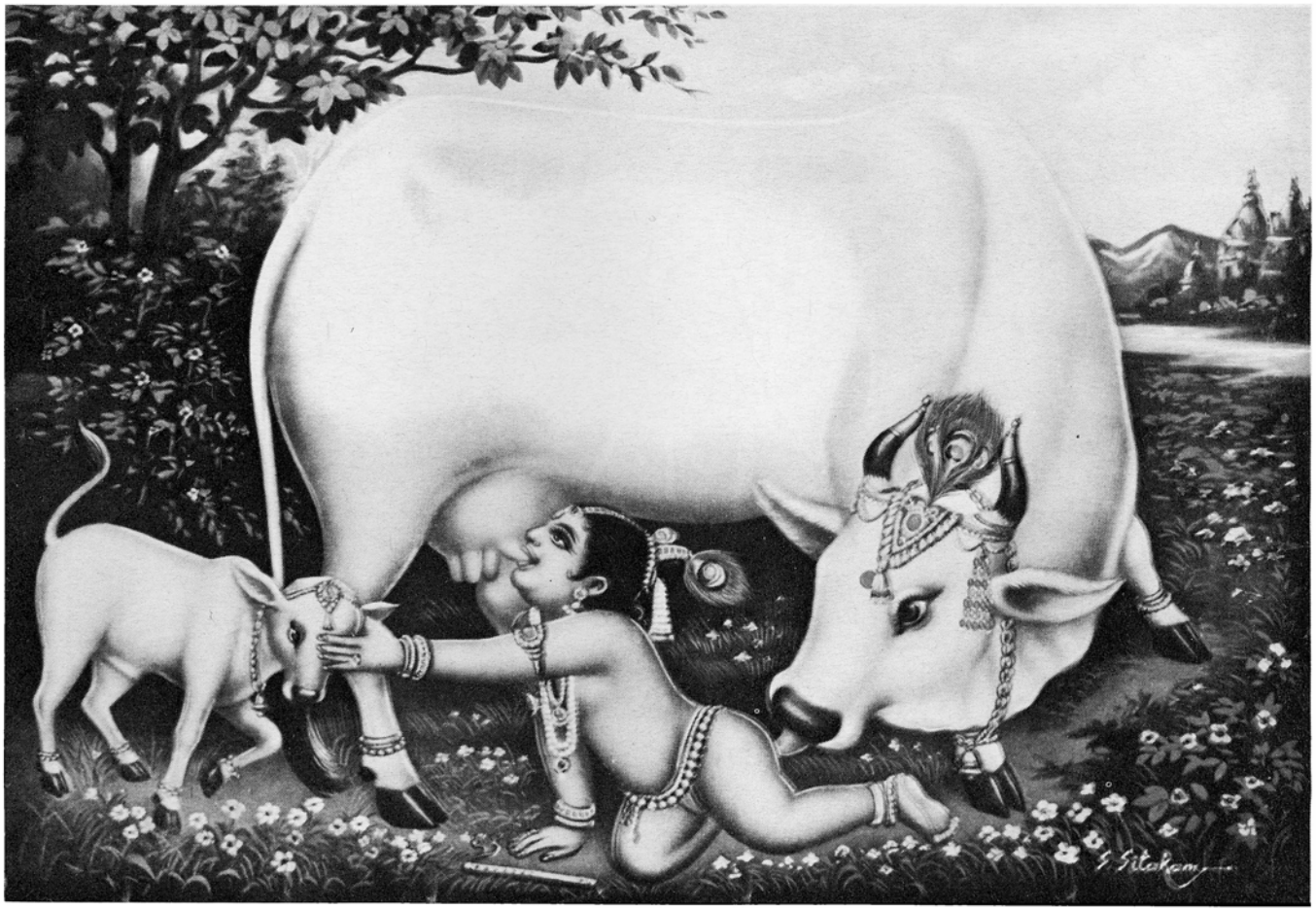


7a Vallabha.

7b Shiva as a Gopi (image at Bansi Bat, Vrindaban).



8 Krishna as a baby lying on a banyan leaf (a miniature from the collection of the Vrindaban Research Institute).



9 A print depicting the infant Krishna's greed for milk.

9 A print depicting the infant Krishna's greed for milk.

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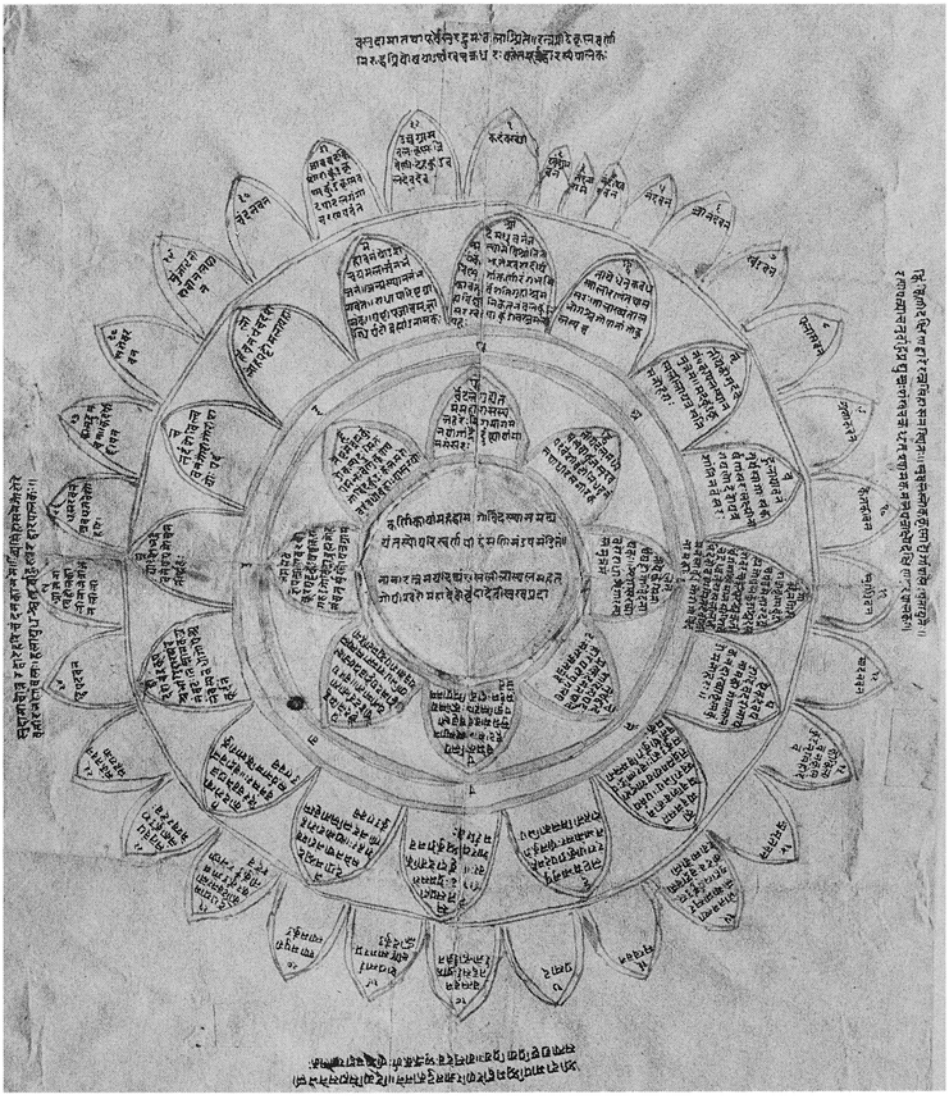
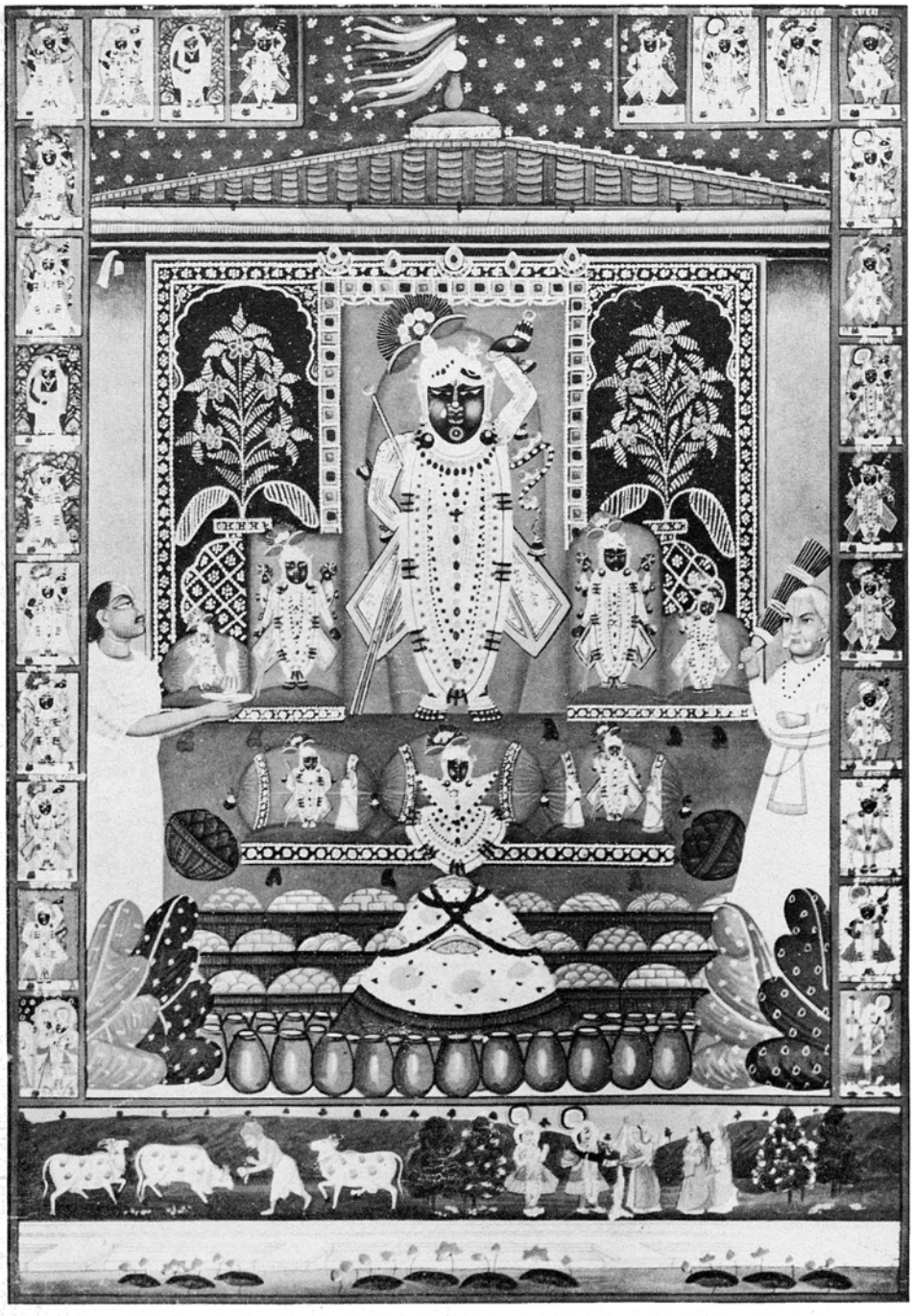
10 A Gupta period sculpture of Krishna lifting up Mount Govardhan (Mathura Museum, no. D.47).



11 A diagram of the 'Braj lotus' (*braj kamal*) from the manuscript collection of the Vrindaban Research Institute. Govinda is located in the centre, some places in and near Vrindaban on the ring of 8 petals, and various groves and sites of Braj on the surrounding circles of 16 and 32 petals.

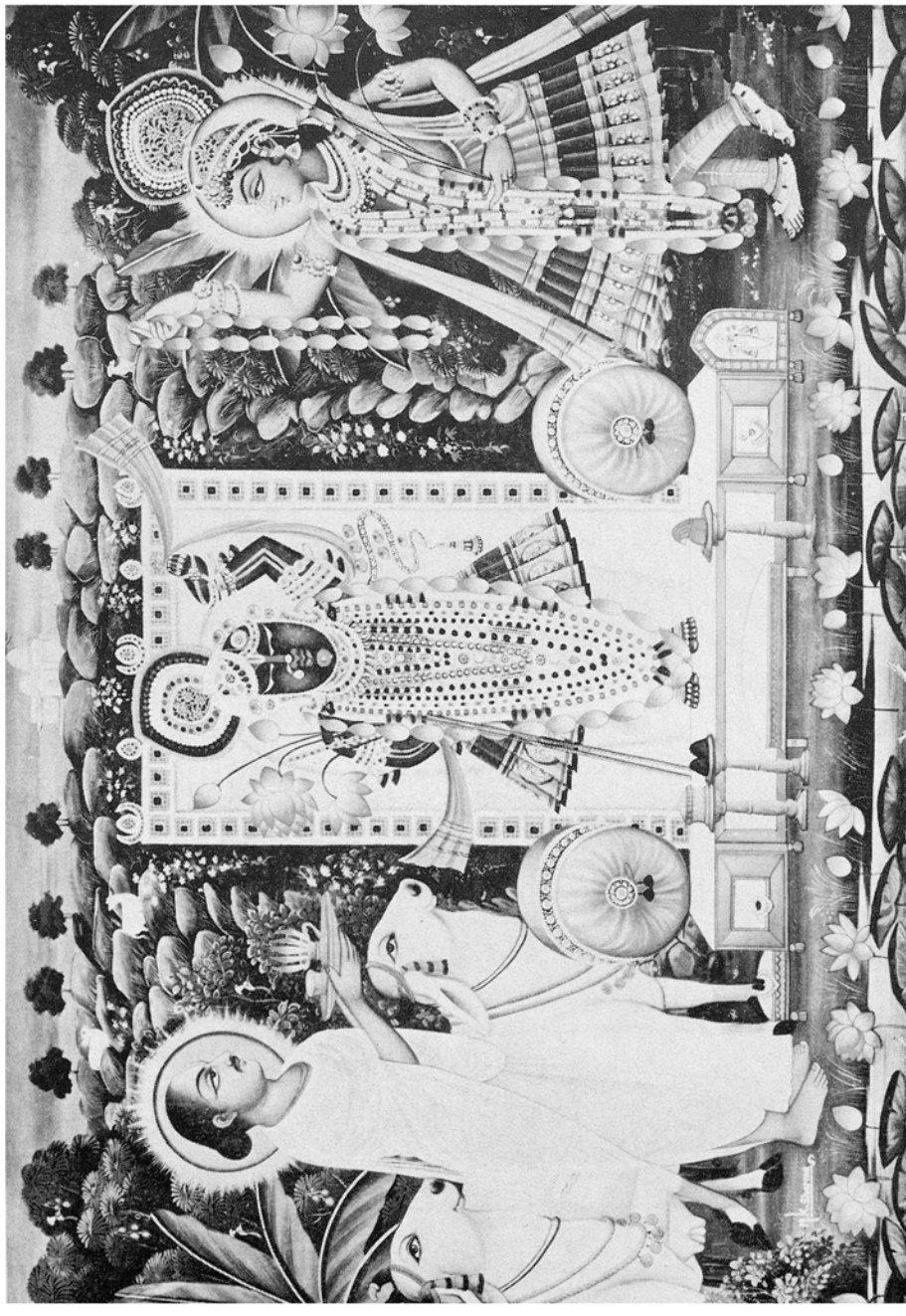


12 A print depicting Vallabha and Vitthalnath offering an Annakut feast to Shrinathji and the other main deities of the Pushtimarg.



13 A group of dancers at Jatipura during the Diwali/Annakut celebrations.

13 A group of dancers at Jatipura during the Diwali/Annakut celebrations.



14 A print showing Shrinathji with Vallabha (left) holding an *āratī* tray and the goddess Yamuna (right) with a garland of lotus buds.

14 A print showing Shrinathji with Vallabha (left) holding an *āratī* tray and the goddess Yamuna (right) with a garland of lotus buds.

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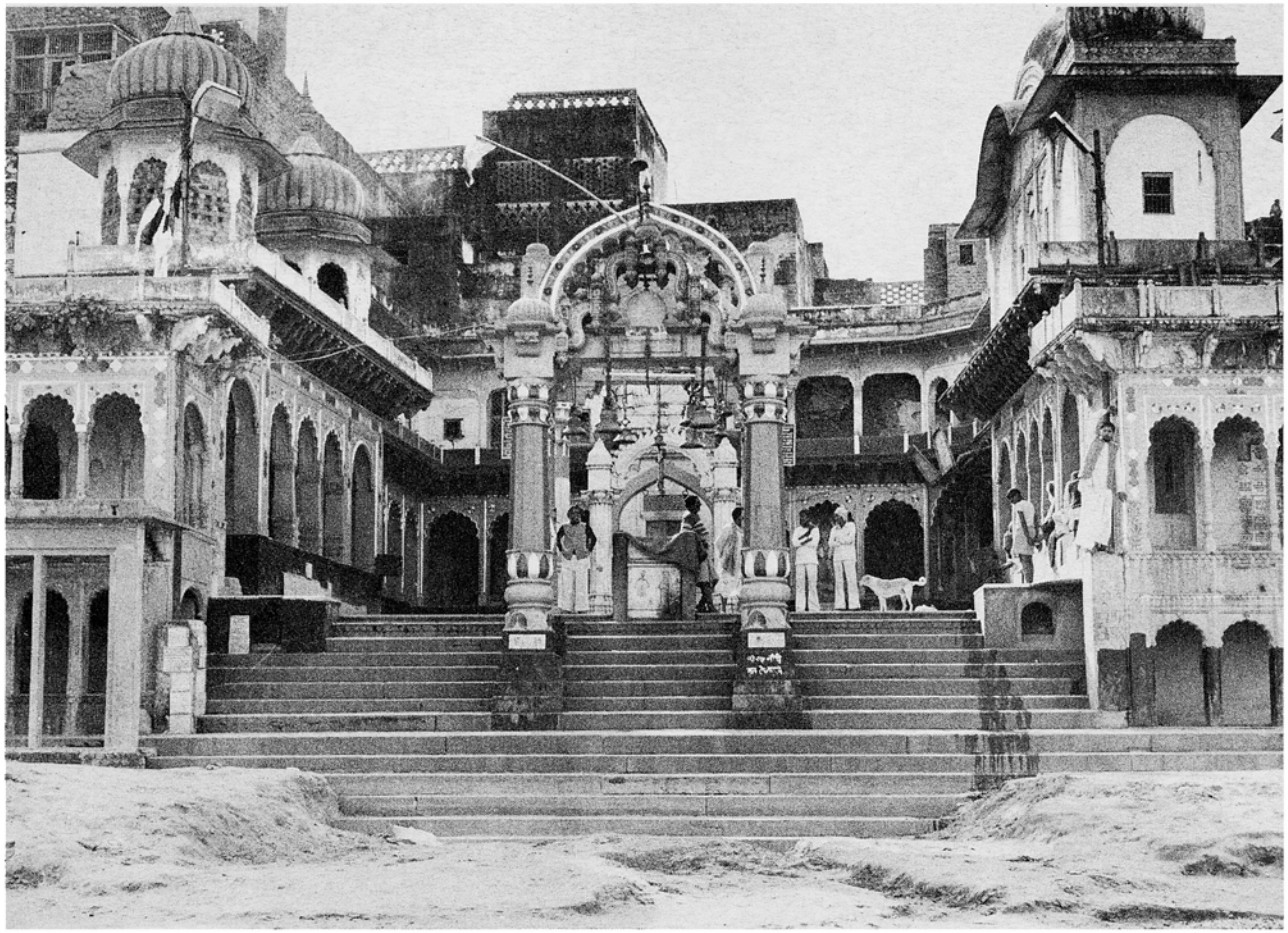
15 The riverside at Mathura showing Vishram Ghat (right of centre) and Sati Burj (to the left).

15 The riverside at Mathura showing Vishram Ghat (right of centre) and Sati Burj (to the left).

445

16 Vishram Ghat.



16 Vishram Ghat.



17 A view of Mathura showing the minars of Abdunnabi's mosque and Kans Kila. One of a series of drawings made in the vicinity in 1789 by Thomas and William Daniell and published in their *Oriental Scenery*, London 1795-1808. Reproduced by permission of the India Office Library and Records (British Library).

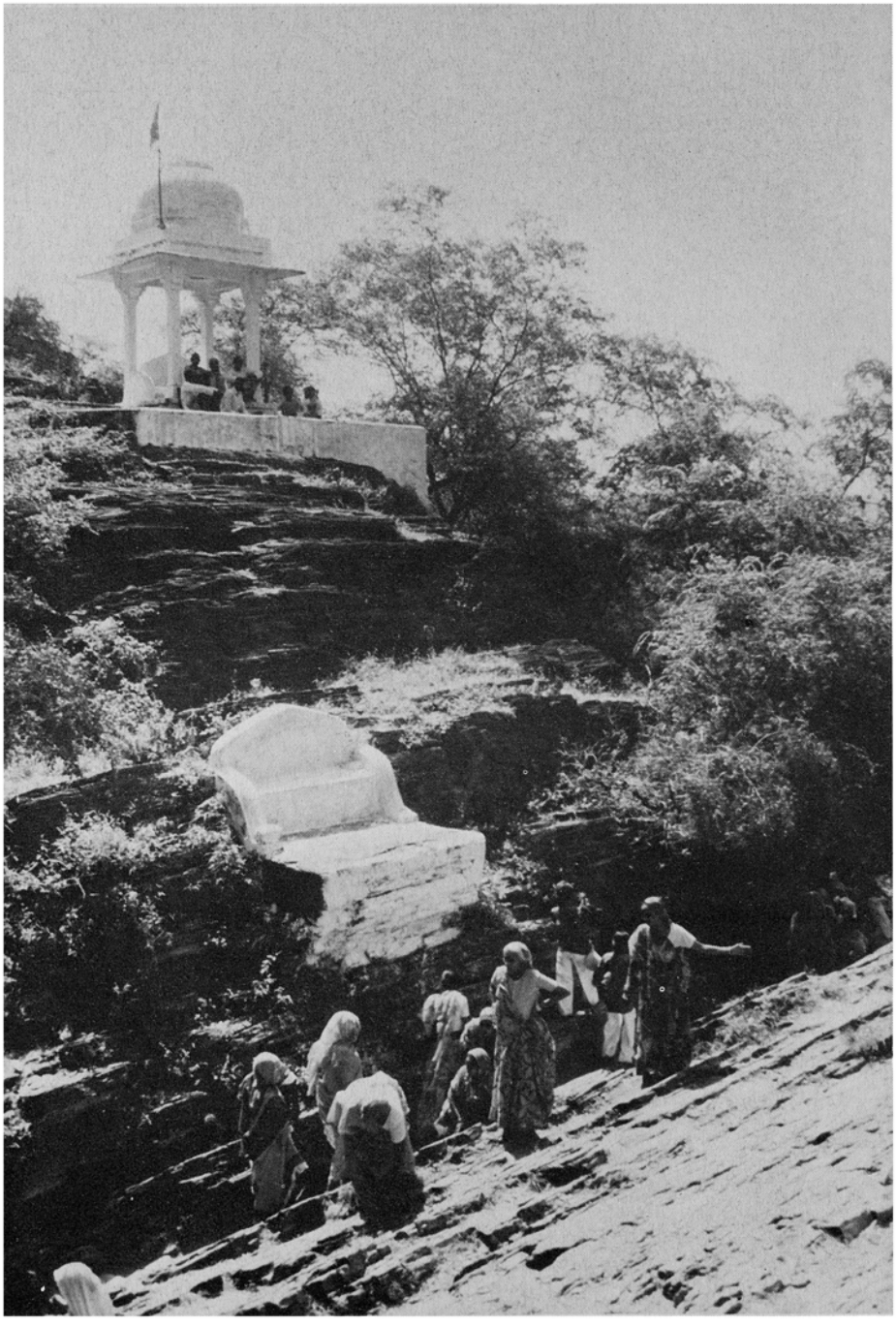
17 A view of Mathura showing the minars of Abdunnabi's mosque and Kans Kila. One of a series of drawings made in the vicinity in 1789 by Thomas and William Daniell and published in their *Oriental Scenery*, London 1795-1808. Reproduced by permission of the India Office Library and Records (British Library).

18 The view depicted by Daniell (pl.17) as it is today.

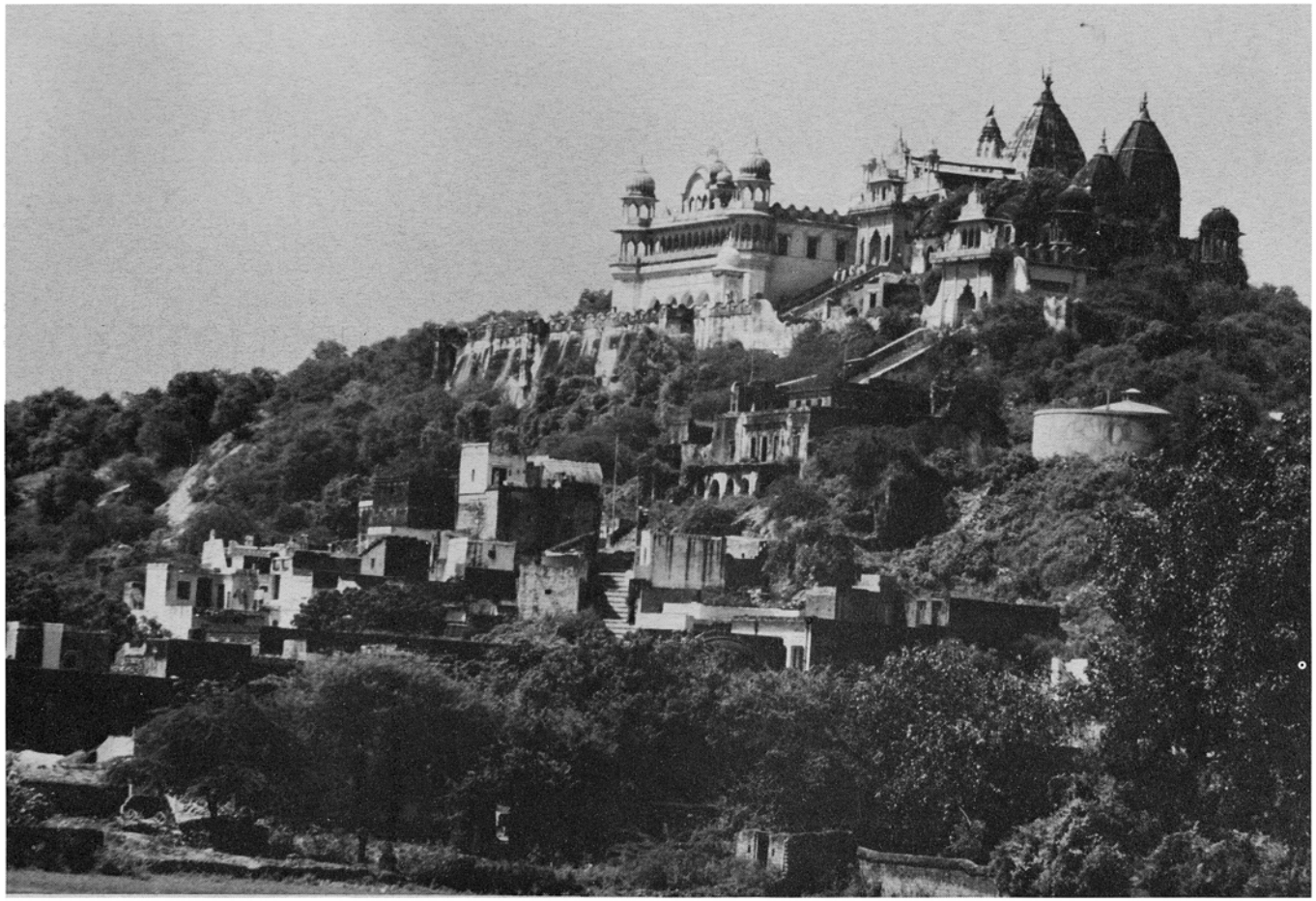
18 The view depicted by Daniell (pl.17) as it is today.



19 Punchhari kau Lautha.



20 Sankari Khori, Barsana.



21 Lariliji ka Mandir, Barsana.

21 Lariliji ka Mandir, Barsana.

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22 Nandgaon.

22 Nandgaon.

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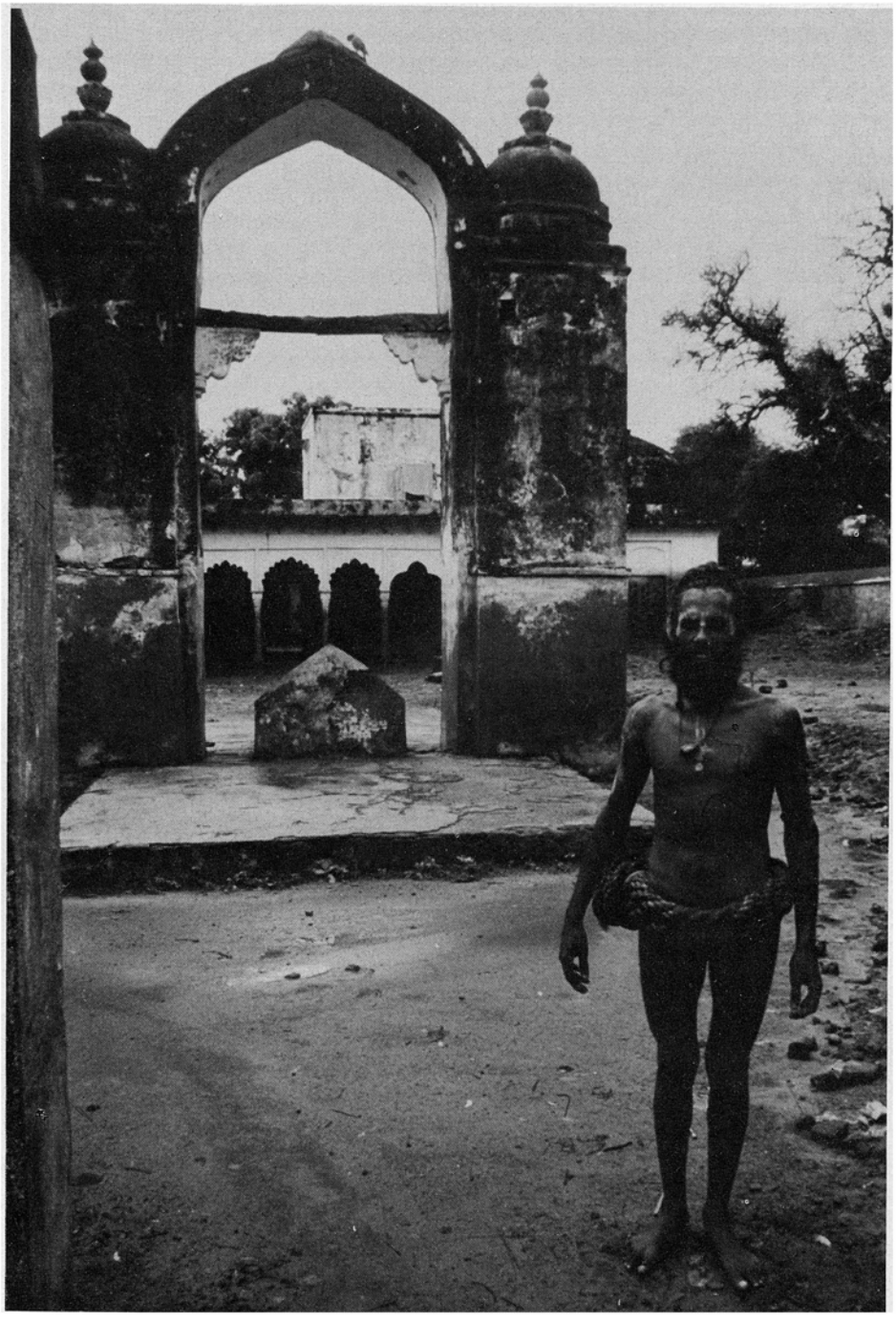

23 A Ramanandi ascetic standing near the swing frame (*jhūlā*) at Ajnokh.

24 A medieval image of a goddess (Parvati?) at Dahgaon.

24 A medieval image of a goddess (Parvati?) at Dahgaon.

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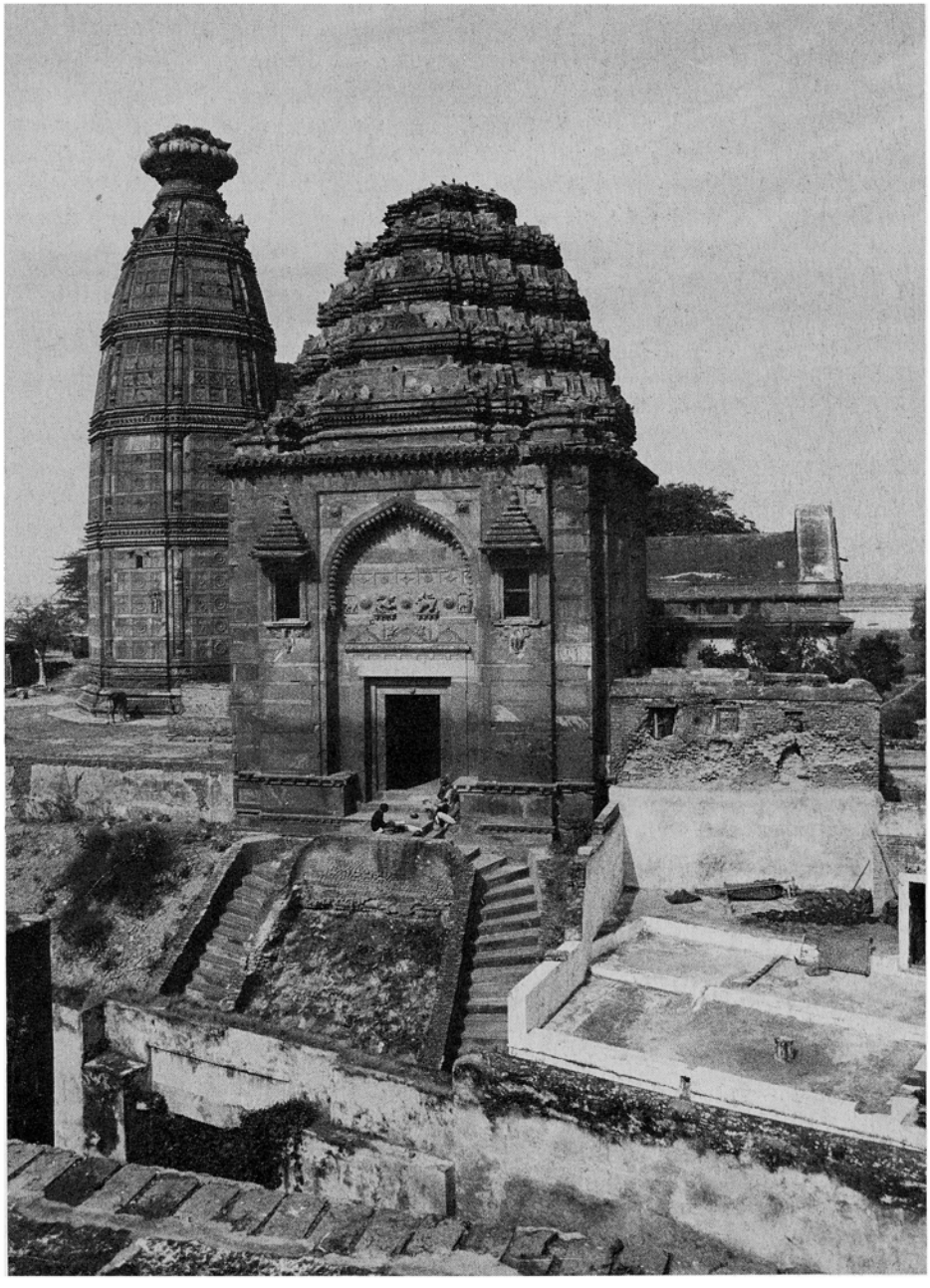
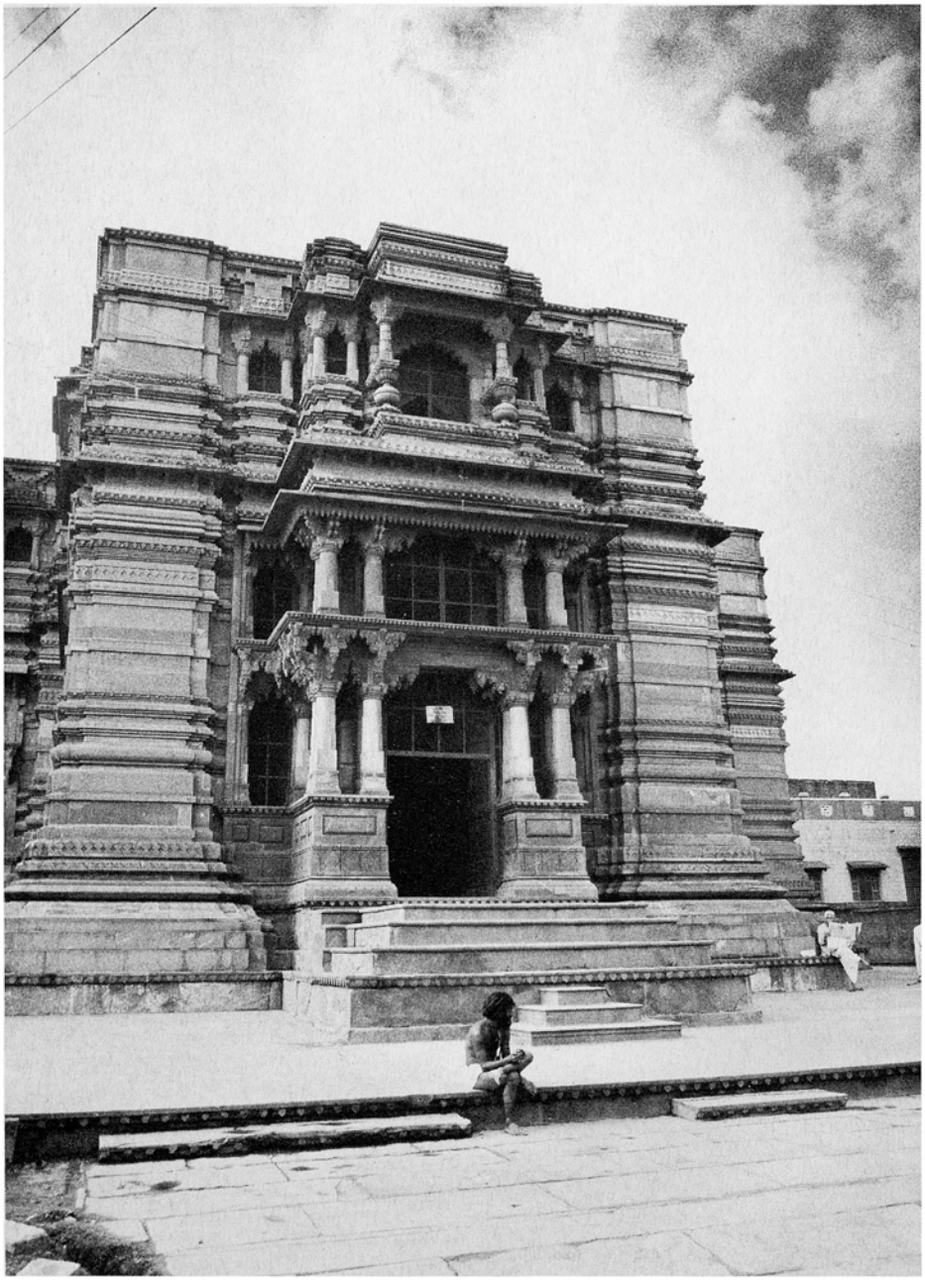
25 Interior of the Mukut Mandir, Bhandirban.

26 An old banyan tree in front of the Shridama temple, Bhandirban.

26 An old banyan tree in front of the Shridama temple, Bhandirban.



27 The temple of Madanmohan, Vrindaban.



28 The main entrance of Govind Dev temple, Vrindaban.



29 A side-chapel of Govind Dev temple, Vrindaban.

Appendices

Appendix 1

An obsolete itinerary for the circumambulation of Mathura

One chapter of the *Varāhapurāṇa* (158) gives an itinerary for the circumambulation of Mathura that is repeated more or less verbatim by Mitra Mishra (pp.522-8) and by Anantadev (under the rubric *pradakṣiṇavidhi*), who adds a description of concluding rituals and appropriate invocations for the deities encountered along the route. Other versions of the same itinerary are found in Narayan Bhatt's *Vrajabhaktivilāsa* (places listed in 2.42 and described in more detail in *adhyāya* 3) and *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* (105.90-109), which simply gives the names of most of the places mentioned in the *Varāhapurāṇa*. This itinerary does not appear in any other sources, which implies that it belonged to the pre-sixteenth-century mahatmya tradition and became obsolete because many of the sites it mentions had fallen into oblivion, either because they were no longer relevant, or had been lost or destroyed. The itinerary may have been obsolete even by the time it was included in the extant version of the *Varāhapurāṇa*. It was retained in the more conservative Sanskrit sources simply because it was part of the received textual tradition, or because later compilers were not aware that most of the places mentioned had disappeared. While Rup Goswami did not bother to include it in his *māhātmya*, Narayan Bhatt adapted it to suit his perception of the circumambulation. As in other chapters of the *Vrajabhaktivilāsa*, old places are retained or reinterpreted and new ones are 'invented'.

Narayan Bhatt introduces the itinerary by declaring that the gods, after the defeat of Madhu (the demon slain by Vishnu rather than the father of Lavana, cf.§2.2), came down to reside at Madhupuri/Mathura, where they established eighty-four *tīrtha*. He says that the places up to Aparajita were established by the gods in the *satyayuga*, those from Kansa's residence to Shivakunda by Krishna in the *dvāparayuga*, those from Hayamukta to Charchika by Ṣhatrughna in the *tretāyuga*, and those from Kansakhata onwards by the gods in the *dvāparayuga* for the purposes of Krishna's *līlā*.

The *Varāhapurāṇa* begins by saying that one should bathe at Vishrantitirtha on Karttik II.8, intent on worshipping the manes (*pitṛ*) and the gods. After Vishranti, one should see Keshava as Dirghavishnu (or Keshava and Dirghavishnu). The following verse says that one should walk around Mathura after seeing Keshava represented by the god Swayambhu, which may be the same as the Keshava/Dirghavishnu just mentioned, or a separate image of Vishnu. Before beginning the circumambulation one should have a light meal on the

previous evening, perform the necessary ablutions, and maintain a vigil at Vishrantitirtha. The ninth day of the bright half of Karttik (Akshay Navami) is still the most important day for the circumambulation of Mathura. Narayan Bhatt gives the date for starting the pilgrimage as Bhadon I.8 (Janmashtami), though later on, while describing the route, he says that it may also be performed on Karttik II.8-9 (VBV 3.38 & 74).

The following description of the itinerary is based primarily on the *Varāhapurāṇa*, comparing it with the version given by Narayan Bhatt. Reference is made to variants found in *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa*, Mitra Mishra, and Anantadev, as well as to Murari Gupta (KCC) and Lochandas (CM), who mention a few of the places included in the itinerary.

1 Deities invoked at the start of the circumambulation

VP 158.10-14/VM pp.522-3; BRam 150.12-13; VBV 3.1-6.

All versions of the itinerary begin with the worship of an image of Hanuman, who is said to have ensured the success of Rama's visit to Mathura and should be invoked by pilgrims in order to secure the benefits of the circumambulation. According to Narayan Bhatt the image of Hanuman was installed by the gods for the protection of Mathura. The Hanuman referred to may be the one that now stands at the beginning of the alley leading down to Vishram Ghat from Chhata Bazaar. After Hanuman one should invoke Padmanabha (Vishnu) as Dirghavishnu (VP, VM, BRam), or Dirghakeshava, Bhuteshwara, Padmanabha, and Dirghavishnu (VBV).

2 Various goddesses and Kansa's residence

VP 158.15-19/VM p.523; BRam 105.13-15; VBV 3.7-13; KCC 4.4.3/CM p.179.

The sources mention some martial goddesses who appear to have been associated in some way with the house of Kansa and/or Ugrasena. The *Varāhapurāṇa* and *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* say that one should visit, invoke, and/or seek the blessings of Vasumati ('the earth/wealth'; VM: *dīptimatī*), Aparajita ('unvanquished'), Ayudhagarasanstha ('one who is stationed in the armoury'), Kansavasanika ('of Kansa's abode'), Durgaseni (VM and VRI ms. of VP; crit. ed. of VP prefers the variant *augrasenī*), Charchika, Vadhuti ('daughter-in-law', referred to as a destroyer of demons), Jayada ('bestowing victory', described as 'mother of the gods'), and then various unspecified domestic goddesses.

Narayan Bhatt gives variants for some of these appellations, which do not refer specifically to goddesses. Instead of Vasumati he talks of a bathing place called Vasumatisarovara (or -tirtha), which has five presiding deities, and a river called Durgaseni, presided over by the goddess Charchika (cf.§8.1.4), whom he desribes as a *vaiṣṇavī* form of Durga. He says that there are two places at or beside the Durgaseni, one of them the goddess Aparajita and the other an 'arsenal' (*āyudhasthāna*) where Vishnu stands holding his four attributes, which should be worshipped by kings who are desirous of victory. He refers to Kansa's residence (*-vāsantikāsthāna*), by which he might have intended Kans Kila, or perhaps Kans Tila (§§8.1.12 & 28).

The next place mentioned is Dakshinakotitirtha, the last of the southern series of bathing places. This suggests that the aforementioned sites lay between there and Vishram Ghat, or in the nearby area called Rangbhumi (§8.1.12). All or part of this area seems to be the same as the *rājavāṭī* ('royal garden') of Murari Gupta or the equivalent *kaṃser āvās* ('Kansa's residence') of Lochandas, which are said to lie beside the south-west gate of the town. Both of these authors also refer to a well named after Kansa, to the south of which lies an Agastyakunda.

In the *Varāhapurāṇa* and *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* the goddess Vadhuti is mentioned just before the southern Kotitirtha. Narayan Bhatt is more specific in saying that at Dakshinakoti there is a bathing place called *vāstūkasaras*, beside which are to be established an image of Vadhuti and then one of Rudra, under the name of Dakshinakotishwara, either at the same place or (nearby) at Dakshinakoti. The *Varāhapurāṇa* says that after bathing at Dakshinakoti one should worship Ikshuvasa (a goddess somehow related to *ikṣu-*, 'sugar cane'?), who was once worshipped by Krishna. This curious name appears to have confused the scribes. Mitra Mishra's variant refers to a goddess called *ukṣavāsā* ('dwelling among bulls'?), *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* has the meaningless *ichuvāsā*, and Narayan Bhatt refers to *uñchavāsa* (a place related to gleaning?), which is linked with Vatsaputra (see next section).

3 The five sthala and Shivakunda

VTK (*paṃc thalāiṃ: akka- & vīrathala, paüma- & kuśatthala, mahāthala*); KK pp.188-9; VP 155.11-19, 158.20-21 & 26/VM pp.523-4; BRam 105.96-97; VBV 3.14-22. Owing to the omission of one full and two half *śloka* in the printed editions (compare VRI ms. with crit.ed. 155.16-18, and Shastri's edn. 157.15-17), which mention *mahāsthala*, the impression is given that Saptasamudrikakupa ('near *arkasthala*') should be counted as one of the five and that the place defined as a *śivakṣetra* is *puṣpasthala*, rather than *mahāsthala* (as in the VRI ms. and the other versions of the itinerary). The VRI ms. omits the *śloka* mentioning *kuśasthala* (crit.ed. 155.17) and gives the variant *puṇya-* for *puṣpasthala*. When the *Varāhapurāṇa* includes the five places in its circumambulation itinerary (158.20) the variant *puṇya-* is given ('some mss. *puṣpa-*').

The next place mentioned is called Vatsaputra, which is followed by a group of five places (*pañcasthala*) called Arka-, Vira-, Kusha-, and Pushpasthala. Such a group was also included by Jinaprabha Suri in his *Vividhatīrthakalpa*. Lakshmidhara mentioned two of the places, Arkasthala and Virastha, but all he tells us is that there was a well at Arkasthala and that the twelve Adityas were to be seen there. The five places are mentioned twice in the *Varāhapurāṇa*, which adds some remarks about the benefits obtained by resorting to them. All of them are mentioned by Narayan Bhatt, Mitra Mishra, and in *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa*, but they give no additional information as to what kind of places they were.

They are first mentioned in the *Varāhapurāṇa* (155) after some verses referring to a *bhāṇḍahrada*, said to lie on the other side of the river (cf.§8.64), where the Adityas are to be seen, where the Sun is to be worshipped, and where one should bathe in a *kuṇḍa* at Arkasthala, near which is a Saptasamudraka well. After Pushpasthala the *Varāhapurāṇa* goes on to mention Gopishwar, the place where Krishna uprooted the two *arjuna* trees and overturned the cart, and Saptasamudrika well. In most texts, and in the modern circuit of Braj, these places are located at Mahaban. The word *tatra* is used when introducing each of the five places, as well as most of the other sites mentioned in the same chapter. Strictly speaking, this should imply that they are all in the same locality (and thus outside the circuit of the town of Mathura), unless *tatra* is used more loosely to mean 'also somewhere in the region of Mathura'. The five places must have been close to the town, otherwise they would not have been included in the circumambulation of Mathura, unless one cares to argue that there were two sets of five places on both sides of the river. The selection of places mentioned in chapter 155 of the *Varāhapurāṇa* should probably be taken as an example of the rather haphazard way in which this version of the *māhātmya* has been compiled. The order in which the five places occur in the itineraries for the circumambulation of Mathura implies that they lay to the south or south-west of the town, somewhere between Dakshinakoti and the modern Shiv Tal. Saptasamudrikakupa may refer to the well of that name in front of

Mathura Museum, unless it was given this designation in retrospect on the basis of the *māhātmya*. Other sites that may once have been called Arkasthala are Surya- or Vataswamitirtha (§8.1.9), or a Surya temple in the Antapara quarter, near Rangbhumi.

The *Varāhapurāṇa* says that Mahasthala is an area presided over by Shiva (*śivakṣetra*), and all sources mention Shiva under the name of Siddhimukha (*siddha-* in VM and the VRI ms.). According to the *Varāhapurāṇa* Siddhimukha should be resorted to after seeing the (five) places in order to avail oneself of the benefit to be obtained by visiting them.

The *Varāhapurāṇa*, in its circumambulation itinerary, mentions Vatsaputra before the five places, but in the earlier chapter (155) it is mentioned after the Saptasamudrika well and Gopishwar. It is described as a *tīrtha* on the southern side of Mathura that is 'adorned with the (reddish) colour of calves' (*vatsarāgavibhūṣitam*, VP 155.33). In *Vrajabhaktivilāsa* Vatsaputra (also called *vatsasūna*) is invoked together with *uñchavāsa*, as if they are synonymous or adjacent. Vatsaputra may have been a later equivalent of Lakshmidhara's *vatsaprakrīḍana* (pp.191-2), the location of a *kuṇḍa* half a *yojana* west of Mathura.

After Vatsaputra the *Varāhapurāṇa* mentions a Phalgunakatirtha, also lying south of Mathura, where there is a place called *vṛṣabhāñjanaka*, but neither of them is included in the itinerary for the circumambulation. The name seems to be equivalent to an unidentified *ūṣabhañjanaka* (v.l. *ṛṣabhañjanaka*) mentioned by Lakshmidhara (p.191). Another unidentified place in the *Varāhapurāṇa* that seems to have lain somewhere in the vicinity of Mathura is an area (*kṣetra*) named after Muchukunda (156.28-29, om. in VRI ms.), where there was a pond in which one should bathe. Muchukunda was a king of the solar lineage who, with his glance, incinerated Kalayavana, an ally of Jarasandha (ViP 5.23, BhP 10.51). There is a similar reference to a *kuṇḍa* associated with or named after Muchukunda in Lakshmidhara (p.193).

4 *Obsolete places south-west of Mathura*

VP 158.22-30/VM p.524; BRam 105.97-8; VBV 3.20-34. Janakiprasad Bhatt (NBC 2.90) refers to a *kuṇḍa* called *sindūrī* after Mahavidyadevi, further along the circuit.

The *Varāhapurāṇa* says that after seeing Siddhimukha one should proceed to Hayamukti ('horse-liberation') and its companion *sindūra*. *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* talks of going to Hayamukti and then *sindūrayāvakau*. Anantadev, after quoting the relevant verses from the *Varāhapurāṇa*, mentions a stone at the *tīrtha* of Hayamukti that has the bright (or purifying) colour of vermilion (*sindūrapāvakavarṇe śile*). Later, when giving the *mantra* for various deities along the route, he invokes (a twin deity called?) *sindūrayāvakeśvarābhyām*. The *Varāhapurāṇa* accounts for the name Hayamukti by referring to a prince who came here on horseback, saying that the horse attained salvation but that the prince was left behind because he had failed to undertake the pilgrimage on foot. It says that absolution from sins can be obtained by seeing and touching (an image of) him (the prince or the horse?), and that the same benefit results from seeing the cave of Lavana and (an image of) Shatrughna. The next place it mentions is Shivakunda.

Narayan Bhatt says that 'beside the pond' (i.e. Shivakunda?) an image of Hayamukta was established by the gods, another of Lavana as Hayamukta was established by Shatrughna, and that Rama established a stable (*vājiśālā*) of the gods. The site seems to be an appropriate place of worship for anyone who is in some way associated with horses. After mentioning *sindūrī* and *sindūrā*, described as two wives of Lavana, and an image of Shatrughna, Narayan Bhatt gives an invocation to be recited at Lavana's cave. It seems that at some stage there was a bathing place referred to as Hayamukti, beside which lay one or more stones daubed with *sindūra*. Nowadays Lavana's cave is located at Maholi, 4km south-west of Shiv Tal (§8.2).

Either the site was relocated some distance away from Mathura, or Maholi was once considered to be within the circuit of the town. An inscription at Shiv Tal declares it to be a restoration of the ancient Shivakunda (cf.§8.1.15). There may be some remote connection between Hayamukti and Haryashwa, a king mentioned in some versions of the *Harivaṃśa* (App.1 no.18) as the husband of Madhumati, the sister of Lavana, and father of Yadu.

After Shivakunda the itineraries mention a goddess called Mallika ('jasmine'; BRam: *mallikī*; MS: *mallikeśvara*) or Malladevi (VBV), and a thicket of kadamba trees. The *Varāhapurāṇa* says that Mallika gave Krishna victory, presumably when he fought Kansa's wrestlers (*malla-*). It then refers to a Guhyatirtha, where there is a goddess called Ullola, and then to another goddess called Charchika (who is also in BRam and VM). A possibly separate or relocated Guhyatirtha and Charchika are now to be found just south of Vishram Ghat (§8.1.4). In the *Varāhapurāṇa* this goddess is described as a *yoginī* situated on the south side (of Guhyatirtha?).

Narayan Bhatt mentions *marīcikā(sthāna)*, a place between Guhyatirtha and Malladevi where there is a footprint of the seven-year-old Krishna and the mark of an anklet. This is followed by Mallikavana, in which lies a *kadambakhaṇḍa*, in which stands the image of Malladevi, who imparts strength, courage and victory. He says that Charchika is located at Ullolakunda, where Krishna dallied with the Gopis.

The *Varāhapurāṇa* then mentions Asprishya ('intangible') and Sprisha ('touching'; VP crit ed.; v.l. *aspṛśā*; VM: *apṛśā*), two mother goddesses who protect children. Narayan Bhatt talks instead of two ponds called *aspṛśā* and *saspṛśā* that wash away the pollution acquired by contact with untouchables and non-Hindus. The *Varāhapurāṇa* then mentions *varṣakhāta* (BRam: *varṣi-*), meaning a pond or ditch filled with rain water, where libations should be made to the manes. Mitra Mishra gives the name as *karṣakhāna*, perhaps intended to denote a pond made by ploughing. Narayan Bhatt mentions *kaṃsakhāta*, i.e. the ditch made when Krishna dragged Kansa's body along - a place now located between Vishram Ghat and the goddess Charchika (cf.§8.1.3).

The next place mentioned in the itineraries is Bhuteshwar, which implies that all the aforementioned sites lay somewhere along the present route between Rangbhumi and Balbhadrakund.

5 *Obsolete places in or near the* dhūlkot *area*

VP 158.31-46/VM p.525-6 (om. Lohajangha & Prabhalalli); BRam 105.99-102; VBV 3.36-52; KCC 4.5/CM p.180).

The places that are mentioned between Bhuteshwar and Mahavidyadevi presumably lay in or near the *dhūlkoṭ*, the area west of Krishna's birthplace that is surrounded by the remains of ancient earthen fortifications. The first place referred to after Bhuteshwar is Setubandha, which may refer to part of the earthworks. In the *Varāhapurāṇa* it is prefixed with *kṛṣṇakrīḍā-*, presumably meaning that Krishna created it while playing. The allusion here may be to a re-enactment of the episode in the *Rāmāyaṇa* in which the monkeys built a causeway across to the island of Lanka, as is explicitly stated in later texts that describe the Setubandha located at Kaman (§8.33.4, see also §8.31). Murari Gupta and Lochandas refer to a pond (*sarovara*) called Setubandha which, according to the former, is visited before crossing the river to Mahaban, Lochandas mentions it after Agastya- and Saptasamudraka-kunda, implying that it lay south of the town.

The *Varāhapurāṇa* says that there is a pinnacle, turret, or hut (*valabhī*) where Gadadhara (Krishna) used to come every day to play with his cowherd friends. At the same place, we are told, is a pond called Balihrada (= Balbhadrakund, §8.1.16?), where they played in the water. The reference may derive from a *ballabhakakṣetra/-tīrtha* mentioned by Lakshmī-

dhara (pp.190-1). There is no trace of any *valabhī* outside the *māhātmya* sources, though the reference was taken up by Jiv Goswami in his *Kṛṣṇasaṃdarbha* (105/336-7, and commentary, p.276, referring to Gadadhara making a *valabhī* when he played at Setubandha). Narayan Bhatt says that the gods, after establishing an image of Hari at Setubandha, proceeded to *(gopī)gānasthāna*, where the Gopis sang while Krishna was in Kansa's wrestling arena (*raṅgabhūmi*) and where they set up an image of Krishna described as *vallabhī* ('beloved').

According to Narayan Bhatt the places he has mentioned so far constitute the tour of thirty-six places included in the Dakshinakoti group. The Uttarakoti group begins with *kukkuṭasthāna*, followed by *sāmbhocchrāyamaṇḍala*. The latter seems to have been a group of posts or columns (VP & BRam: *stambhoccayam*, or an upright or tall post, VM: *stambhocchrayam*) that had fine peaks (or capitals?) and was 'tirelessly adorned and worshipped by Krishna with perfumes'. The other place is where Krishna once played with cocks (*kukkuṭaiḥ krīḍanaṃ kṛtam*; VM: *kukkuṭena kṛṣṇena krīḍanaṃ kṛtam*; BRam: *kukkuṭakrīḍanam*). The only mythological incident that may possibly be related to the place, if not derived from it, is in *Padmapurāṇa* (6.272.87-9, Anandashrama edn. only, not in the equivalent chapter of the Venkateshwar Press edn., viz. 245). It refers to Krishna killing a demon in the form of a cock (*kukkuṭaveṣadhṛk*) that had struck him. It occurs after the incident where he overturns a cart, but it is not found in any other account of the life of Krishna.

The next place is where Vasudeva slept alone for the protection of the embryo carried by Devaki (VP/VM; BRam: *talpagṛha*; VBV: *śayanasthala*). This is followed by Narayanasthana, where there were images of gods to be circumambulated, after which come images or shrines of Ganesh, called Siddhivinayaka (VP, v.l. *vidhi-*; VM, VBV) or Vighnaraja (BRam), and of Kubjika and Vamana (cf. Kubjakup §8.1.19b). Narayan Bhatt talks of a *kubjikāsthāna* where Kubja's beauty was restored by Krishna and where any woman suffering from a deformity or affliction may reside for three years in order to be cured. He seems to take *vāmanā* as an adjective qualifying Kubja rather than the name of a separate image. The itinerary continues with Garteshwar (§8.1.20), and Lohajangha (omitted in Shastri's edn of VP, and in VM, MS, & BRam cf.§8.68), and the goddesses Prabhalalli, Mahavidya, and Sanketeshwari (also called Siddheswari; cf.§8.1.21 for further details of these goddesses). The latter image is said to have been installed when Krishna and Balarama had a meeting (*saṃketa*) with the other herdsmen in order to plan the defeat of Kansa. Narayan Bhatt says that the place is where Krishna met the Gopis.

The eleven places or deities that Narayan Bhatt names between *kukkuṭasthāna* and Sanketeshwari are said to have been founded by Devaki for the sake of Krishna's sport at Devakikunda (=Potarakund, §8.18, or a tank that used to lay near the Mahavidya mound?). Elsewhere the *Varāhapurāṇa* (167.38), after mentioning Mahavidya, refers to a pond (*vāpi*, v.l. *dhārā*) of Dharmaraja on the west side of Mathura. This is unknown to other sources and is unlikely to correspond to Lakshmidhara's *dhārmikātīrtha* (KK p.188) or the Dharmakund at Kaman.

6 *Unidentified places along the northern series of ghats*

Most of the places mentioned in the itineraries after Mahavidya can be identified with extant sites (cf.§8.1.23-32), though not all of the deities said to be present at them can now be identified. Those that cannot be identified are a 'gambling place' (*dyūtasthāna*, VP 158.51/VM p.526, VBV 3.60, BRam 105.104), which is mentioned along with Uttarakoti-tirtha. This is said to be where Krishna played dice with the cowherds and won their wives, who were presented to him at that spot. There was also an image of Garudakeshava located at Ghantabharanakatirtha (VP 158.56/VM p.527, BRam 105.106; VBV 3.70: *gaṇḍakeśava*).

After Vaikunthatirtha the *Varāhapuraṇa* (158.57) mentions *khaṇḍavelaka*. The variants given by Mitra Mishra and *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* (VM ibid.: *khaṇḍacelaka*; BRam 105.107: *-cailaka*) suggest that it might have been a place where strips of cloth were tied as votive offerings. Narayan Bhatt, however, tells us that at Dharalopanakatirtha, beside the entrance to a Vishnu temple called *vaikuṇṭhadhāma*, there was a broken image of a bull (VBV 3.72: *khaṇḍavṛṣa*) that was associated with Krishna's slaying of Arishta and could be resorted to for expiation of the killing of a brahmin or a cow. The *Varāhapurāṇa* then mentions a *tīrtha* of the Gopas, Muktikeshwara, and Vailaksh(y)agaruda. The latter is mentioned in the other sources and seems to have been located at Avimuktatirtha or between there and Vishram Ghat.

The itinerary given in *Bhuśuṇḍirāmāyaṇa* ends with Vishrantitirtha and Gatashrama, but the other versions (VP 158.63-8/VM p.527, VBV 3.78-81) go on to mention a goddess called Sumangala, Pippaladeshwar (§8.1.5, om. VM), a Naga called Karkotaka (§8.1.30), the place where the wicked counsels of Kansa were first heard (*kaṃsabheda-*), and (or which is the same as) *sukhavāsa*, a place where the untiring Krishna rested and where *sukhāsīna* ('one who is comfortably seated') was installed for indicating lucky omens. According to the *Varāhapurāṇa*, this is where (the new-born) Krishna, in fear of Kansa, called to mind his sister, who appeared as Chandika. Mitra Mishra gives a variant reading that appears to refer to goddesses called *sukhavāsā* and *kharavāsā*. After mentioning the goddesses Chandika and Artihara (VP 158.69-70/VM p.527-8, also in MS), the *Varāhapurāṇa* includes a place or image called *agottara*, which was established in order to indicate the lucky omens that Krishna sought when he was preparing to kill Kansa.

Narayan Bhatt says that *sukhavāsa* is where Vishnu sports with Lakshmi, and then mentions the garden (*vāṭikā*) where the ogress Putana fell (VBV 3.82) and a grove called *agocaravana*, associated with Balarama as a Naga deity. In connection with Putana he refers to *kharavātyā* ('harsh gale'?), a word that must somehow be related to the *kharavāsa* ('pungent odour'?) mentioned by Mitra Mishra. The *Varāhapurāṇa* itinerary ends with Vajranana (158.72-4/VM pp.528), who was worshipped by Krishna before his fight with Kansa's wrestlers, and an image of Surya that was the ancestral deity of the brahmins of Mathura (cf.§8.1.9). These are also mentioned by Narayan Bhatt (VBV 3.84-7), who refers specifically to Vajranana as an image of Hanuman. He also mentions two forms of Shiva called Samvarana and Suryasamvarana, defining the former as terrifying (*bhairava*) and one who assures success in battle.

7 *Additional places mentioned by Narayan Bhatt (VBV 3.88-100)*

Narayan Bhatt concludes his chapter dealing with the circumambulation of Mathura with eleven places that are not mentioned in the other itineraries. The first three of these additional sites, Rama-, Chira-, and Gopighata are, in other sources as well as in the modern pilgrimage circuit of Braj, located in the vicinity of Shergarh (cf. §§58-60). For some reason they have been included (at least in the printed edition) in the itinerary for the circumambulation of Mathura, even though it is suggested that they are located elsewhere by the specification that Suryasamvarana, which immediately precedes them, is 'within Mathura', whereas Ramaghata is said to be in *mathurāmaṇḍala*. These three places are followed by Suryakunda (=§8.1.9?), Dhruvakshetra (§8.1.10), the place where the Gopis fed Krishna with rice (§8.66.41), the places where the elephant Kuvalaya and Kansa's two wrestlers were slain, Kansa's resting place, and the places where Ugrasena was imprisoned and anointed (cf.§8.1.12).

Appendix 2

The forests and banyans listed by Narayan Bhatt

In all Narayan Bhatt names 137 forests or groves, consisting of ten sets of twelve, two that are called *viśrāmasthala*, five *sevyavana*, six *sāṅgavana*, and four *sīmāvana*. However, in the printed edition at least, there are some inconsistencies, discrepancies, and omissions where the forests are listed more than once. There is some confusion of the names *kāmavana, kāmyavana*, and *kāmanāvana*. It appears that *kāmyavana* denotes Kaman, the second of the twelve main forests; one of the other two names probably refers to Kamai, and the other may denote a minor place in the vicinity of Govardhan. Jahnuvana occurs as the name of a *sīmāvana* as well as a *sevyavana* and there are two different sets of *viśrāmasthala*.

In the listing of the forests given below an attempt has been made to rectify anomalies and mis-spellings in the printed edition. Where the identification is not obvious or explicitly stated a possible location has been suggested, based on the order in which the forests are mentioned in the text and, in some cases, on the days specified for visiting them in their respective *prārthanamantra*. The letters N and S are used to indicate their assignation to the 'north' (i.e. east) or 'south' (i.e. west) bank of the Yamuna (in 2.18-19). The text also gives the length in *krośa* of the circumambulation of each forest (in 2.40) and the names of the presiding deities, but these have not been included here.

Twelve vana (1.13-17, 67, & 77-89)

1	*mahāvana*	N	=Mahaban
2	*kāmyavana*	S	=Kaman
3	*kokilāvana*	S	=Kokilaban
4	*tālavana*	S	cf. Talban (§8.3)
5	*kumudavana*	S	=Kumudban
6	*bhāṇḍīravana*	N	=Bhandirban
7	*chatravana*	S	=Chhata
8	*khadiravana*	S	=Khaira
9	*loha(jaṅgha)vana*	N	=Lohban
10	*bhadravana*	S	
11	*bahulāvana*	S	=Bahulaban
12	*bilvanana*	N	=Belban

Twelve upavana (1.18-22, 68, & 100-111)

1	*brahmavana*	N	
2	*apsarāvana*	S	cf. Apsarakund (§8.20a)
3	*vihvalavana*	S	cf. Vihval Kund (§8.39.1)
4	*kadambavana*	S	=Sonehara ki Kadam Khandi
5	*s[u]varṇavana*	S	=Sonehara
6	*surabhivana*	S	=Surabhikund?
7	*premavana*	S	=Prem Sarovar
8	*mayūravana*	S	cf. Mor Kuti (§8.37.5)
9	*māneṅgitavana*	S	=Man Garh (Barsana)
10	*śeṣaśayanavana*	S	=Shekhsai
11	*nāradavana*	S	=Narad Kund (§8.13a)
12	*paramānandavana*	S	=Parmadra?

Twelve prativana (1.23-8, 69, & 112-23)

1 *rańka(pura)vana* S = *Rankoli*
2 *vārtavana* S
3 *karaha(pura)vana* S = *Karhela*
4 *kāma(nā)vana* S = Kamai?
5 *añjana(pura)vana* S = Ajnokh
6 *karṇavana* S = Kunwara?
7 *(kṛṣṇa)kṣipana(ka)vana* S near Barsana?
8 *nandavana* S
9 *indravana* S = Indroli
10 *śikṣāvana* S near Barsana?
11 *candrāvalīvana* S = Rithora (§8.39.23)
12 *lohavana* S cf. §8.68.

Twelve adhivana (1.29-33, 70, & 124-35)

1 *mathurā* S = Mathura
2 *śrīkuṇḍavana* S = Radhakund
3 *nandagrāma* S = Nandgaon
4 *gaḍhasthāna/-vana* S perhaps near Kaman, since Vyoma is said to have lived there (2.45 & 4.29; cf.§8.33.7)
5 *lalitāgrāma* S = Unchagaon
6 *vṛṣabhānupura* S = Barsana
7 *gokula* N = Gokul
8 *baladevasthāna* N = Baldeo
9 *govardhana* S = Govardhan
10 *yāvavaṭa* S = Jao
11 *vṛndāvana* S = Vrindaban
12 *saṅketa(vaṭa)vana* S = Sanket

Two viśrāmasthāna (1.89-91)

1 *madhuvana* S = Madhuban
2 *mṛdvana* N

In *adhyāya* 7 (p.176) four *viśrāmasthala* are said to be located at the corners of Braj between the cardinal points, viz. *gopānavana* (south-east), *gomayavana* (south-west), *kamalāvana* (north-west), *harivana* (north-east).

The five sevyavana (1.92 & 94-99)

1 *jahnuvana* S near Sanket
2 *menakāvana* S
3 *kajjalīvana* S = Shyam Dhak?
4 *nandakūpavana* S near Kaman? (cf.§8.33.5)
5 *kuśavana* S

Twelve tapovana (2.1 & 9)

1 *tapovana* N
2 *bhūṣaṇavana* N
3 *krīḍāvana* N
4 *vatsavana* N
5 *rudravana* N
6 *ramaṇavana* N =Raman Reti (near Mahaban)?
7 *aśokavana* at Vrindaban? (cf.VBV 12.1-2, and above §§8.64 & 66.29)
8 *nārāyaṇavana* S
9 *sakhāvana* N
10 *sakhīvana* S =Sakhisthala?
11 *kṛṣṇāntardhyānavana* N?
12 *muktivana* N

Twelve mokṣavana (2.2 & 10)

1 *pāpāṅkuśavana* N
2 *rogāṅkuśavana* N
3 *sarasvatīvana* N
4 *jīvanavana*
5 *navalavana* N
6 *kiśoravana* N
7 *kiśorīvana* N
8 *viyogavana* N
9 *pipāsavana* S =Pisayo
10 *cātrakavana* (v.l.: *cātraga-*) S
11 *kapivana* N
12 *godṛṣṭivana* S =Gohana (§8.30)?

Twelve kāmavana (2.3 & 13)

1 *vihasyavana* S
2 *āhūta-/āhvānavana* S
3 *kṛṣṇasthitivana* S
4 *ceṣṭāvana* N
5 *svap(a)navana* S
6 *gahvaravana* S =Gahwarban (Barsana)
7 *śuka-/sukhavana* N
8 *kapotavana* S
9 *cakravana* N
10 *laghuśeṣaśayanavana* S =Charan Pahari (near Bathain, cf.§8.50)?
11 *dolāvana* N
12 *śravaṇavana*

Twelve arthavana (2.4 & 12)

1 *hāhāvana* S near Sanket?
2 *gā(ya)navana* S
3 *gandharvavana* S =Ganeshra?
4 *jñānavana* S

5 *(rāja)nītivana* S
6 *lepanavana* S near Kaman?
7 *praśaṃsāvana* S?
8 *melanavana* S
9 *parasparavana* S =Parasoli?
10 *pāḍaravana* S =Padal (§8.26)?
11 *(rudra)vīrya(skhalana)vana* S cf. §8.64
12 *mohanīvana* S

Twelve dharmavana (2.5 & 11)

1 *vijaya-/jetavana* S
2 *nimbavana* S =Nimgaon?
3 *gopāna-/gopīvana* S
4 *viyadvana* S
5 *nūpuravana* S
6 *yajña-/yakṣavana* S
7 *puṇyavana* S
8 *agravana* S near Govardhan?
9 *pratijñāvana* S
10 *campāvana* N
11 *kāmaruvana* S =Kamar?
12 *kṛṣṇadarśanavana* S?

Twelve siddhavana (2.52)

1 *sārikāvana* S
2 *vidrumavana* N
3 *puṣpavana* N
4 *jātīvana* om. =Madhurikund (§8.10)?
5 *nāgavana* S somewhere west of Parmadra?
6 *rāvala* om. =Rawal
7 *vakulavana* N
8 *tila(ka)vana* S
9 *dīpavana* N
10 *śrāddhavana* N
11 *ṣaṭpadavana* N
12 *tribhuvanavana* S

Six sāṅgavana (2.7 & 15)

1 *sūryapatanavana* S
2 *pātravana* N
3 *pitṛvana* N?
4 *vihāravana* N
5 *(vi)citravana* N
6 *vismaraṇavana* S

Four sīmāvana (2.16)

1 *hāsyavana* N
2 *pahāravana* S
3 *jahnuvana* S
4 *sonhada-/tribhuvanavana* om.

In 6.1 they are given as *hāsyavana* (east), *jahnuvana* (south), *parvatavana* (west), and *sūryapatanavana* (north). For possible identification see §7.12.

Sixteen banyans (2.8, 17, 20, & 41)

1 *saṅketavaṭa* S at Sanket
2 *bhāṇḍīravaṭa* N at Bhandirban
3 *yāvavaṭa* S at Jao
4 *śṛṅgāravaṭa* S at Vrindaban (§8.66.12)?
5 *vaṃśīvaṭa* S at Vrindaban (§8.66.35)
6 *śrīvaṭa* N at Belban
7 *jaṭajūṭavaṭa* S
8 *kāmavaṭa* N
9 *manorathavaṭa* N
10 *āśāvaṭa* N
11 *aśokavaṭa* N
12 *kelivaṭa* S
13 *brahmavaṭa* N
14 *rudravaṭa* S
15 *śrīdharavaṭa* S
16 *sāvitrīvaṭa* N

Appendix 3

Places listed by Jagatanand and in *Braj yātrā parikramā*

In *Vraj vastu varṇan* Jagatanand names 432 deities and sacred sites. The following list has been collated from the printed edition and the manuscript mentioned above in §6.22 (n.137). Most versions of *Ban yātrā parikramā* (BYP) conclude with a similar listing of sacred places, though there are some discrepancies between the different manuscripts and editions. Unless stated otherwise, the BYP listings are the same as those given by Jagatanand

Twelve vana

1 *madhuvana*
2 *tālavana*
3 *kumudavana*
4 *bahulāvana*
5 *kāmaru* (Kamar)
6 *khidara* (Khaira; v.l.: *chudra-/śyudrabana*)
7 *bṛṃdāvana*
8 *bhadravana*
9 *bhāṃḍīravana*
10 *velavana* (Belban)
11 *lohavana*
12 *mahāvana*

Twenty-four upavana

1 *āraṭha* (v.l. *arāṭha*; Aring)
2 *saṃtanakuṇḍa* (Shantanukund)
3 *govardhana*
4 *barasāno*
5 *paramādaro* (Parmadra; v.l.: *paramaṃḍarā*)
6 *naṃdagā̃ va*
7 *saṃketa*
8 *mānasarovara*
9 *śeṣasāi*
10 *khelanavana* (Raman Reti, §8.77.7)
11 *gokula*
12 *gandharvanana* (Ganeshra; v.l.: *govarḍhana*)
13 *parāsolī*
14 *ānyora*
15 *ādibadrī*
16 *bilāsagaṛha* (at Barsana, §8.37.4)
17 *pisāyo* (v.l.: *piāsõ*)
18 *ajanokhara* (Ajnokh; v.l.: *ajānoṣa*)
19 *karahalā* (Karhela)
20 *kokilavana*
21 *dadhivana* (Dahigaon)
22 *rāvala* (Rawal)

23 *bacchavana*
24 *koṭavana* (v.l.: *kauravavana*)
BYP omits Man Sarovar, Anyor, Vilas Garh, and (except 1842 ms.) Shantanu-kund and includes Shrikund (=Radhakund), Bilchhu(ban), Unchagaon, and Mat.

Ten banyans

1 *piparolīvaṭa* (cf.§8.67)
2 *jāvavaṭa* (Jao)
3 *rāsolīvaṭa* (§8.52)
4 *akṣayavaṭa* (§8.59)
5 *saṃketavaṭa* (Sanket)
6 *parāsolīvaṭa* (Parasoli)
7 *baṃsīvaṭa* (Vrindaban)
8 *bhāṃḍīravaṭa* (Bhandirban, or at Nandgaon?)
9 *bisālavaṭa* (for *bilāsavaṭa* at Nandgaon, §8.40.2b?)
10 *śyāmavaṭa* (Radhakund)
These are not listed in BYP.

Seven footprints (caraṇ cihna)

1 at *carana pahārī* (presumably §8.33.5)
2 at *carana pahārī* (presumably §8.50)
3 near *hāthī pad* (cf.§8.22.2)
4 at the foot (*tarahaṭī*) of Govardhan
5 at Nandgaon (cf.§8.33.5)
6 on Govardhan
7 at *surabhīkuṇḍa*

Five hills (parvata)

1 Govardhan
2 Nandgaon
3 Barsana
4 Kaman (viz. Charan Pahari)
5 Charan Pahari (near Bathain, §8.50)

Seven Devis

1 *vṛṃdādevī*
2 *saṃketadevī*
3 *vanadevī* and, or who is the same as *kātyāyanī*
4 *kātyāyanī* or *mathurādevī*
5 *mathurādevī* or *novārī*
6 *covārī* or *novārī-covārī* (cf.§8.37.7)
7 *mahāvidyādevī*
BYP (except 1864 edn.) lists eight Devis, adding Manasa. It has *upaban devī* instead of *vanadevī* and counts Nobari and Chobari as one. Jagatanand lists Bandi and Anandi (cf.§8.69) separately as two *dāsī*.

Eight Mahadevas

1 *būṛhe bābū* (v.l. *-bābā*; cf.§7.14)
2 *bhūteśvara* (Mathura)
3 *gokarṇa* (Mathura)
4 *kāmeśvara* (Kaman)
5 *gopeśajū* (Gopishwar, Vrindaban)
6 *nandīśvara* (Nandgaon; v.l.: *gokula-īśvara*)
7 *uttareśvara* (Gokul)
8 *cakreśa* (Chakreshwar, Govardhan)

Four kadam khaṇḍī

A footnote in the printed edition of VVV points out that the relevant couplet is corrupt, though it is clear that two of the *kadam khaṇḍī* are the ones near Sonehara (§8.35) and at Nandgaon (§8.40.5). The same footnote quotes a list from another manuscript that names five *kadam khaṇḍī* at Gantholi, Karhela, Sonehra, Nandgaon, and the one named after Govindswami. Only the 1842 ms. of BYP mentions the Kadam Khandis, saying that there are five of them.

Seven baiṭhak of *gusā̃īj̃ī* (Vitthalnath)

1 at Gokul
2 at Vrindaban
3 at Govardhan
4 at Kaman (Surabhikund)
5 at Parasoli
6 at Sanket
7 at Pan Sarovar and/or Rithora (§8.39.3)

The *baiṭhak* are mentioned only in the 1842 ms. and 1864 edn. of BYP, which locate them at Radhakund, Rasoli, Gopalpur, Sonehra, Surabhikund, Parasoli, Sanket, Manik Sila, and Gokul. All versions of BYP list twenty-two *baiṭhak* of Vallabha.

Six Baladevas

1 at Unchagaon
2 at Aring
3 at Ram Ghat (Shergarh)
4 at *rẽḍā* (Baldeo)
5 at Nari

BYP lists seven, adding the one at Jikhangaon.

Two ṭhakurāṇī (images of Radha)

1 at Rawal
2 at Barsana

Seven (places of) dān līlā

1 at Karhela
2 at Dan Garh
3 at Gahwarban (Barsana)
4 Manasi Ganga
5 Kadam Khandi (not specified)
6 & 7 at Sankhari Khori (Barsana)

After the two *ṭhakurānī* two (places of ?) *līlā* are mentioned, viz, *janma līlā* and *ḍhāḍhī-ḍhāḍhin līlā*. BYP refers to them as two *braj līlā*. It lists six places of *dān*, viz. Karhela, Govardhan, Dan Ghati, Sankari Khori, Gahwarban, and Kadam Khandi

Various swings

After the two aforementioned *līlā* Jagatanand refers to three swings (*hiṃḍorā*), one at Karhela and two at Sanket. Later on, after listing sixteen ghats, he mentions seven *ḍola*, which presumably refers to another type of swing or to shrines in which a deity is placed in a swing. He gives their names as *govinda, harideva, madanamohana, rāu uttara kau ḍola* (?; ms.: *rāvala tana ko dola*), *saṃketa, dānagaḍha*, and *mānagaḍha*. BYP says that there are six *hindor*, located at Govardhan, Karhela, Sanket, Ajnokh, Vrindaban, and Radhakund.

Four sarovar, *two* tāl, *and six* pokhar

1 Pan Sarovar (Nandgaon)
2 Man Sarovar (§8.67)
3 *ãjano[khara]* (Ajnokh)
4 Prem Sarovar (PA.38)

1 *rāma tāla* (Shergarh?)
2 *mukharī tāla* (v.l.: *mukhārā*; viz. Mukhrai)

1 *kusumokhara* (Kusum Sarovar)
2 *harajīpokhara* (at Jatipura)
3 *ã jano[khara]* (Ajnokh)
4 *pīrīpokhara* (at Barsana)
5 *bhānokhara* (at Barsana)
6 *īsarāpokhara* (v.l.: *īsvarā-*; at Nandgaon)

Ten wells

1 *saptasamudra(ka)* (cf.§8.66.36)
2 *naṃdakūpa* (Mahaban, or Kaman)
3 *indrakūpa* (Indroli)
4 *candrakūpa* (Chandrasarovar)
5 *bhãḍīrakūpa* (Bhandirban)
6 *karanavedhakūpa* (Gokul)
7 *kṛṣṇakūpa* (near Janmasthan, Mathura?)
8 *veṇukūpa* (Vrindaban)
9 *kubjākūpa* (near Janmasthan, Mathura)
10 *gopakūpa* (Raman Reti, §8.71.7)

BYP lists eleven wells, adding a *dṛgīkūpa*.

Sixteen ghats

1	*brahmāṇḍa* (near Mahaban)
2	*gaū* (Gokul)
3	*govinda* (Gokul)
4	*ṭhakurānī* (Gokul)
5	*jasodā* (Gokul)
6	*ut(t)areśvara* (Gokul)
7	*vaikuṇṭha* (Mathura)
8	*viśrānta* (Mathura)
9	*prayāga* (Mathura)
10	*baṃgālī* (Mathura)
11	*rāmaghāṭa* (Shergarh)
12	*keśī* (Vrindaban)
13	*bihārī* (Vrindaban, §8.66.9?)
14	*cīra* (probably §8.60, but perhaps at Vrindaban)
15	*nanda* (§8.62)
16	*gopī* (near Shergarh, cf.§8.60)

These are not listed in BYP.

Thirty-three rās maṇḍal

1-5	at Vrindaban
6-7	at Kaman
8	at Nandgaon
9-10	at Karhela
11-12	at Dan Garh (Barsana)
13	at Sankari Khori (Barsana)
14	at *māna paravata* (near Man Garh, Barsana?)
15	at Man Garh (Barsana)
16-17	at Vilas Garh (Barsana)
18	at Gahwarban (Barsana)
19-22	at Sanket
23	at Pisayo
24-25	at Jao
26	at Kokilaban
27-29	at Unchagaon
30	at Khisalini Sila (cf.§§8.33.7 & 8.36)
31	printed text: *giri ṭīle*; ms.: *gaurīelā* (=Gauri Tila at Dahigaon?)
32	at Sonehara
33	at [Sonehara ki] Kadam Khandi

These are not listed in BYP.

One hundred and fifty-nine ponds and seventy-five deities

The text concludes with the names of 159 ponds or tanks (*kuṇḍ*, comprising the 84 at Kaman and 75 elsewhere in Braj) and 75 deities (*ṭhākur*). The printed edition also has a list of sixteen temples (*mandir*, given after the seven *ḍola*). The *ṭhākur* and *mandir* lists both begin with with Shrinathji and the deities of the seven Gaddis of the Pushtimarg. The BYP has only a list of 84 *kuṇḍ* in Braj.

Eleven stones and six siṃhāsan

BYP adds two more categories that are not given by Jagatanand. The first of these, consisting of six *siṃhāsan*, is inserted between the lists of *sarovar* and *dān līlā* places. The term refers to a dais or podium where Krishna used to sit. They are *viṣṇusiṃhāsan*, three at Kaman (on Charan Pahari, at Bhojan Thari, and in a 'cave' at Luk-luk Kund), one at Sonehara ki Kadam Khandi, and another at the foot of Govardhan (beside Gwal Pokhar, cf.§8.13a). The eleven stones (*silā*), listed after the eleven wells, are called *sindūrī, kajalī, bājanī, sundar, siṃgār, sugaṃdhī, maṅika, khisalanī, citravicitra, snān*, and *daṇḍautī* (§§8.11, 19.5, 21, 22.6, 31, 33.7, 41, & 67).

Appendix 4

Some pilgrimage schedules

1 Narayan Bhatt's vanayātrā

The seventh *adhyāya* of *Vrajabhaktivilāsa* gives the following itinerary for a *vanayātrā*. It lasts twenty-three days and is to be performed in the month of Bhadon, though Narayan Bhatt concludes by saying that half as much benefit can be obtained if it is undertaken in Karttik, starting on Gopashtami.

I.8 Celebration of Krishna's birthday at Mathura.
I.9 Celebration of *nandagopamahotsava* and feeding of brahmins.
I.10 The nine *krośa* circumambulation of Mathura
I.11 *tālavana, kumudavana*, and back to Mathura.
I.12 *bahulāvana*
I.13 *rādhākuṇḍa*
I.14 The seven *krośa* circumambulation of Govardhan.
I.15 *paramamandiravana* (Paramadra)
II.1 To *kāmyavana* (Kaman)
II.2 The seven *krośa* circumambulation of *kāmyavana.*
II.3 *vṛṣabhānupura* (Barsana)
II.4 *khadiravana* (Khaira) and *nandagrāma.*
II.5 *bhadravana*
II.6 *śeṣaśayanasthāna* (Shekhsai)
II.7 *chatravana* (Chhata)
II.8 *vṛndāvana* and its five *krośa* circumambulation.
II.9 *mahāvana*
II.10 *baladevasthāna* (Baldeo)
II.11 *lohajaṅghavana* (Lohban)
II.12 *bhāṇḍīravaṭa* (Bhandirban) and *bilvavana.*
II.13 To Mathura in order to feed brahmins and stay the night.
II.14 To *kāmyavana* to observe *anantavrata*, and spend the night in *gaḍhavana* and watch the *rāsotsava* there.
II.15 Watch the *kṛṣṇotsava* and conclude the *yātrā.*

2 Vitthalnath's vanayātrā *as described by Jagatanand*

This itinerary, given by Jagatanand in *Śrī gusāīṃ kī vanayātrā* (GVY), is supposed to have been followed by Vitthalnath. A similar itinerary is described in *Pītāmbardās kī vārtā* (PV), though not all the places are mentioned. This intensive *yātrā* was begun on Bhadon I.12 and lasted eleven days.

I.12 Preparations for the *yātra* at Gokul and journey to Mathura.
I.13 Bathing and *saṃkalp* at Vishram Ghat, then on to Bhuteshwar, Janmasthan, Madhuban, Talban, Kumudban, and back to Madhuban for the night.
I.14 Shantanukund, Ganeshra, Bahulaban, Aring, Radhakund, Kusum Sarovar, Narad Kund, and Shrinathji.
I.15 [Govardhan *parikramā*:] Shrinathji, Haridev, Chakratirth, Manasi Ganga, Brahmakund, Keshoray and Daniray temples, Sankarshan Kund, Govind Kund, Gandharvakund, Govindray, Apsarakund, Rudrakund, and then on to Gantholi.
II.1 Parmadra, Sehu, Adibadri, Indroli, Kaman (camping at Dharmakund).

II.2 Circumambulation of Kaman.
II.3 Sonehara, Unchagaon, Barsana, Sanket, Nandgaon, and Khaira.
II.4 Pisayo, Karhela, Ajnokh, Motikund and Vilas Bat (Nandgaon), Bathain and Balbhadrakund, Charan Pahari, the place where Shankhachuda was slain, and Bachhaban/Sei.
II.5 Rasoli (which is out of sequence if the place near Kamar is intended), Nand Ghat, Ram Ghat (Shergarh), Akshay Bat, Chir Ghat, then across the Yamuna from Nand Ghat to Bhadraban and on to Bhandirban and Belban.
II.6 Man Sarovar, Piparauli Bat, Lohban, Brahmand Ghat, Yamalarjun and other sites at Mahaban, Gokul, and Mathura.
II.7 Akrur Ghat, Bhatror, Vrindaban, then back to Gokul via Mathura.

3 *Brajnath's itinerary, the basis for the* baṛī yātrā

The itinerary given by Brajnath in his *Braj parikramā* is basically the one followed by the *baṛī yātrā* organized by leaders of the Pushtimarg. The following list simply gives the places designated by Brajnath as camp sites. The pilgrims are supposed to visit the intervening places, as mentioned in Brajnath's full description (see references to BP in chapter 8). In practice some places are omitted and adjustments are made to the schedule, depending on the correlation between lunar and solar days. This means that some places may be visited a couple of days earlier or later than indicated. Some frequent alterations are noted below.

Bhadon
II.11 Vows taken at Vishram Ghat, Mathura.
II.12 *antargṛhī parikramā* of Mathura.
II.13 Madhuban
II.14 Kumudban
II.15 Shantanukund

Ashwin
I.1 Bahulaban. Sometimes visted from Shantanukund, with no overnight halt.
I.2 Jikhangaon. Nowadays Jikhangaon is usually omitted and the pilgrims camp beside the Mathura-Govardhan road at Jachonda.
I.3 Radhakund. The pilgrims normally camp at Killol Kund.
I.4-5 Chandrasarovar
I.6-11 Jatipura. Here *kunvārau* is offered and a day is spent circumambulating the hill.
I.12 Bhej. Nowadays pilgrims regularly spend a night at Dig and often omit the camp at Bhej.
I.13 Parmadra. Instead pilgrims may camp at Gohana and/or Pasopa, Khoh, or Ghata.
I.14-II.1 Kaman
II.2-3 Barsana
II.4 Sanket
II.5-7 Nandgaon
II.8 Karhela. Often visited between Barsana and Sanket.
II.9 Kokilaban
II.10 Kamar. Often omitted - pilgrims may camp at Jao (rather than Kokilaban) and at Bari Bathain.
II.11 Kotban

II.12 Kosi. Usually omitted - instead there are camps at Shekhsai and sometimes at Paigaon.
II.13 Shergarh
II.14 Chir Ghat
II.15 Bachhaban

Karttik
I.1-3 Vrindaban
I.4 Lohban. There may be an additional camp at Bandi.
I.5 Baldeo
I.6-7 Gokul
I.8 Mathura
I.9 Circumambulation of Mathura

4 *The* yātrā *organized by Gore Dauji Ashram, Vrindaban*

The itinerary given here was the one followed in 1983. It is subject to adjustment according to the correlation between lunar and solar days.

Karttik
II.3 Vrindaban to Mathura (Bhuteshwar).
II.4 Mathura to Madhuban.
II.5 Madhuban to Madhurikund, via Talban and Kumudban.
II.6 Madhurikund to Govardhan (Manasi Ganga and Killol Kund).
II.7 Circumambulation of Govardhan.
II.8 Shyam Dhak to Dig, via Gantholi and Bhej.
II.9 Dig to Khoh.
II.10 Adibadri to Pasopa.
II.11 Pasopa to Kedarnath.
II.12 Kedarnath to Kaman (Charan Pahari, Gayakund, and Vimal Kund).
II.13 Circumambulation of Kaman.
II.14 Kaman to Barsana, via Kunwara, Sonehara ki Kadam Khandi, and Unchagaon.
II.15 Circumambulation of Barsana.

Margashirsh
I.1 Barsana to Nandgaon (Pan Sarovar), via Prem Sarovar and Sanket.
I.2 Nandgaon to Kosi, via Kokilaban and Padar Ganga.
I.3 Kosi to Shekhsai.
I.4 Shekhsai to Phalain.
I.5 Phalain to Shergarh.
I.6 Shergarh to Chir Ghat, via Biharban and Akshay Bat.
I.8 Chir Ghat to Bhadraban. There was no *saptamī* in this lunar fortnight.
I.9 Bhadraban to Bhim(gaon), via Bhandirban and Mat.
I.10 Bhim(gaon) to Raya, via Man Sarovar.
I.11 Raya to Baldeo, via Bandi.
I.12 Baldeo to Gokul, via Chintaharan Ghat, Brahmand Ghat, Mahaban, and Raman Reti.
I.13 Gokul to Vrindaban, via Mathura (Bhuteshwar).

5 *The itinerary followed by ascetics of Kathiya Baba Ashram, Vrindaban*

The itinerary given here is based on the one followed in 1983, which lasted fifty-four days. As with other schedules, adjustments are made according to the correlation between lunar and solar days.

Bhadon

I.10	From Vrindaban to Mathura.
I.11	Mathura (visiting Bhuteshwar etc.).
I.12	Shantanukund
I.13	Aring
I.14-15	Govardhan
II.1	Kaman (Vimal Kund)
II.2	Prem Sarovar
II.3	Nandgaon
II.4-9	Ajnokh, Kamai, Karhela, and Pisayo.
II.10-13	Barsana
II.14-15	Sonehra ki Kadam Khandi

Ashwin

I.1	Kaman (Gayakund)
I.2-6	To Kosi, via Mahrana, Gidoh, Chhote Bathain, and Bare Bathain.
I.7-9	Paigaon
I.10-13	Shergarh, Biharban, Chir Ghat, and Gangrauli.
I.14-15	Nandgaon
II.1-5	Harnaul and Nasithi/Karwara (villages near Bhadraban).
II.6-10	Mat and the nearby village of Jabra.
II.11	Raya
II.12-13	Karab (north of Bandi).
II.14-15	Baldeo

Karttik

I.1	Gokul
I.2	Mathura
I.3	Return to Vrindaban.

Appendix 5

Fairs and festivals of Braj

In India fairs (called *melā* in Hindi) are invariably gatherings at which some religious observance is of central importance. The locus is usually a temple, shrine, or sacred site where people come to bathe, worship, and have some ceremony performed, such as the shaving of a child's hair. Fairs held in rural areas are usually related to seasonal harvests and often provide a context for such activities as dancing, entertainment, and trading in agricultural or domestic supplies. The term 'festival' (usually called *utsav* in Hindi) can also be used for celebrations in which the predominant element is some kind of ritual, but whereas fairs take place at one or more specific locations, most festivals are held simultaneously in the temples, homes, or neighbourhoods of a whole region, or are celebrated by all members of a particular sect or by all devotees of a particular god. Some festivals are specifically Vaishnava, since they are performed exclusively or primarily in temples of Vishnu or one of his incarnations; others may be Shaiva or Shakta, or a local variant of an all-India celebration that is not universally associated with one god in particular. Several of them are connected with a *vrat* ('vow'), a type of rite observed exclusively or mainly by women for the welfare of the family. In many cases the various temple, domestic, and folk rituals have had an influence upon each other, with the result that they may be wholly or in part an adaptation of a celebration that was originally exclusive to one particular sphere.

While the Vaishnava festivals tend to be organized by a group of priests with some kind of entertaining or edifying purpose, fairs and most other types of festivity are celebrated primarily by villagers or laymen in a more spontaneous manner. They often provide a context for rejecting normal constraints, as is the case with the teasing that takes place between the sexes at the spring festival of Holi. During the Holi festivities at Barsana and Nandgaon the women are teased by the men and retaliate by beating them with staves of bamboo. More or less ritualized taunting of women or jesting between the sexes also occurs during the Holi festivities at Jao and Bathain, and during some of the *būṛhī līlā* cycle of performances staged in and around Barsana in the month of Bhadon (viz. those held at Sankhari Khori and Sonehara ki Kadam Khandi).

Rites performed at fairs and rural festivals are seldom prescribed in written texts. There are, however, a number of Sanskrit works describing the festive rituals to be performed in honour of Vaishnava and other brahminical deities. A notable example is *Haribhaktivilāsa*, a compilation in the tradition of earlier *dharmanibandha* writers such as Hemadri, Chhandeshwara, and Lakshmidhara. *Haribhaktivilāsa*, usually attributed to Gopal Bhatt (sometimes to Sanatan Goswami), is the most generally applicable to the Vaishnava temples of Braj, though some of the festivals it prescribes have lapsed or are now celebrated differently or on another day. Each year the various sects and some of the larger temples publish booklets giving the dates of the festivals to be celebrated. Several devotional poets, or their posthumous editors, compiled sequences of festive verses that are usually referred to as *varṣotsav ke pad*. Different sects or specific temples have their preferred anthology from which appropriate festive lyrics are selected. In addition to the festivals observed by other Vaishnavas or Hindus as a whole, the various sects also observe the anniversaries of the birth or death of leading Acharyas, Mahants, Goswamis, and other notable devotees, and of the discovery or appearance of an important deity and the day on which it was first worshipped. These are usually celebrated by a special gathering in a temple and/or a *kīrtan* procession.

As elsewhere in northern India, the calendar used in Braj follows the *pūṇimānta* system, whereby the month culminates with the full moon (*pūnau, pūrṇimā*), rather than the *āmānta* system, prevalent in the South, in which the month ends on the new moon day (Hindi: *māvas*;

Skt.: *amāvāsyā*). Each month is divided into a dark half (or dark fortnight: *kṛṣṇapakṣa*), during which the moon is on the wane, and a bright half (or bright fortnight: *śuklapakśa*) during which it waxes. Throughout this book the figures I and II have been used to refer to the dark and bright halves, respectively, followed by the numbers 1-15 to designate the lunar day in each fortnight.

Most Hindu festivals occur on a lunar day (*tithi*), but a few of them fall on solar weekdays (*vār, divas*) or are related to the position of the sun. The exact date of a festival depends on the way in which the solar and lunar calendars are correlated. The two are made to correspond by coupling a lunar day beginning at or before sunrise with the solar day that began at the previous sunrise. A lunar day that starts after sunrise on one morning and ends before the following sunrise is not coupled with any solar day and thus lapses. If a lunar day stretches over two sunrises it is linked with both solar days. This means that a lunar fortnight may last between thirteen and sixteen solar days, depending on whether or not a *tithi* lapses or lasts for two solar days. Since the solar year consists of just over 365 days and the lunar year of 354 (each month averaging 29.5 solar days), it is necessary to insert an intercalary month every two years in order to maintain an alignment between the lunar and solar reckonings. In the *pūrṇimānta* calendar an intercalary month is inserted between the dark and bright halves of a normal month and is given the same name as that month, but is qualified by the terms *adhik* ('extra'), *puruṣottam*, *laūd*, or, because it is considered impure and inauspicious, *sthūl* ('gross') or *mal* ('filthy', cf. Kane pp.671-4). There are various rules governing the rituals that may or may not be performed during an intercalary month; in some temples there are secondary celebrations of some of the festivals that occur in other months of the year.

A lunar month is thought to be equivalent to one day of the ancestors. The spirits of the dead roam about during the dark half of the month, but in the bright half they are inactive and are nourished by the waxing moon. While the dark half is looked upon as rather sinister, a time when rites should be performed to appease dangerous, inauspicious, or ambivalent forces, the bright half is regarded as auspicious and is associated with beneficent deities. Accordingly, the majority of Vaishnava festivals are held in the bright half of the month. Some lunar days are thought to be particularly appropriate for the worship of certain deities. Goddesses are usually worshipped on the third or eighth lunar day, dark and threatening ones in the dark half of the month, and fair and beneficent ones in the bright half. Ganesh is associated with the fourth lunar day, the Sun with the seventh, and Shiva with the fourteenth. Devout Vaishnavas observe a fast on the eleventh day (*ekādaśī*) of each lunar fortnight (cf.§3.12 and Kane, ch.5). A different name is given to each of the twenty-four *ekādaśī*. Vishnu and the other gods are believed to sleep during the four-month period (*cāturmās(ya)*) lasting from Ashadh II.11 to Karttik II.11. The gods are not thought to be responsive to rites and ceremonies (referred to generically as *karma*) performed during this period, and so it is primarily a time for observances that help one to accumulate merit (*puṇya*), such as pilgrimage.

In Braj, as is usual in North India, the year begins with the new moon of Chaitra. Whenever the huge Kumbh Mela (held once every twelve years at Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain, or Nasik) takes place at Haridwar, ascetics from areas to the south and west of Braj first assemble at Vrindaban during the preceding month (Phalgun). It was last held in 1986.

The following list of fairs and festivals held in Braj has been compiled with the help of a number of sectarian calendars, a few other published sources, and personal observation. A question mark indicates doubt as to whether a particular fair or festival is still current. The list includes only those sectarian anniversaries that feature some noteworthy public manifestation.

Chaitra II

The most important celebration in the dark half of Chaitra are the 'nine nights' (*navarātra*) devoted to worship of the goddess in her various manifestations. In addition there are special displays called *phūl ḍol* ('flower swing'), for which deities are placed in a swing and surrounded with an intricate decorative lattice of threaded flowers. They are the local equivalent of the *dolotsava, dolayātrā*, or *hindolī caitra* mentioned in medieval sources (see Mazumdar, pp.276, 305-6, H. Daniel Smith 1982, p.33, PP 4.6-18, HBV 14, and, for the festival at Puri from which the Braj *phūl ḍol* probably derives: Mohapatra, pp.110-113).

1-9 *Navarātra/nyaurtā*: held at all Devi temples (esp. 8). The largest fairs are held at the Devi temples of Nari-Semari (esp. 2-6) and Sancholi (esp. 7); other locations are Chandravali Devi at Iklehra, near Dig (esp. 7?), and Jao (esp. 9?). Many people of Braj go on pilgrimage to Kaila Devi, south of Karauli.

1 *Phūl ḍol* at various places in Mathura (*keśavdeo kā melā*, and at Aurangabad, on the southern edge of Mathura?

2 *Phūl ḍol* at Gomatikund, Kosi?

3 The eighteenth, last, and most important day of worship of Gangaur (a form of Gauri). This is a popular festival in Rajasthan, but in Braj it is observed only by unmarried girls in some families.

6 *Yamunā chaṭ*: celebration of the birth of Yamuna at Mathura. *Phūl ḍol* at Vishram Ghat?

8 Fairs at Garud Govind, Majhoi (Chhata tahsil), and (on 8-9 and up to 13?) *Alakh kā melā*, in honour of Alakh Baba at Naujhil?

9 *Rām naumī*: special services and decorations in Rama temples (cf. Kane, pp.84-8).
Gvāl maṇḍalī: fair in honour of Shridama at Bhandirban (cf. §7.11).

11 *Kāmadā ekādaśī*: *phūl ḍol* in various temples.

14 *Bārāhī melā* at Kharaul/Bhadraban?

15 *Hanumān jayantī* (birth of Hanuman): various fairs (Hanuman fair at Farah, Devi fairs called *phūl garḥī* at Chhata and at Sonoth Janubi (Mathura tahsil), fair at Baldeo, and bathing at Radhakund?).
Beginning of *samāj* as part of *Hitotsav* (in honour of Hit Harivansh) at Ras Mandal, Vrindaban.

Vaishakh I

11 *Vārūthinī ekādaśī*: birth of Vallabha celebrated in Pushtimarg temples; beginning of ten-day commemoration of the death of Ramanuja, at Rangji temple, Vrindaban.

11-15 Fair at Sei?

Vaishakh II

3 *Akhai tīj (akṣaya tṛtīyā)*: joint circumambulation of Mathura and Vrindaban. Deities are smeared with sandal paste (*candanotsav, candan yātrā*) and offered cooling food; *darśan* of the feet of the deity of Banke Bihari (Vrindaban). For origins see Alberuni, 2 p.179, Kane, pp.88-9, Mazumdar, p.280, HBV 14.134, Mohapatra, pp.115-17.
Fairs at Sancholi and Nari Semari?

7 *Gaṇgā saptamī* (birth of the Ganges): celebration of the birth of Jahnavi (wife of Nityanand) at Radhakund (7-8).

9 *Jānakī naumī* (birth of Sita): formerly celebrated by a *Sītājī kā utsav* at Akrur Ghat, Vrindaban.

11 *Mohinī ekādaśī*: birth of Hit Harivansh, celebrated in temples of Radhavallabh Sampraday; vigil with dance and music on previous evening at Ras Mandal, Vrindaban.

14 *Narsiṃh caudas (narasiṃha caturdaśī)*: birth of Narasinha; enactment outside his temples of his slaying of Hiranyakashipu.

15 *Ban bihār*: circumambulation of Mathura at night.
Rādhāramanjī kā pāṭotsav (*abhiṣeka* of the deity of Radharaman, Vrindaban).

Jyeshth I

2/5 *Ban bihār*: circumambulation of Vrindaban at night.

11 *Aparā ekādaśī*: celebration at Ras Mandal, Vrindaban.

15 *Barsāyat/bar māvas*: women worship banyan trees.
Jal yātrā: fountains and special decorations in temples. Traditionally a day for worship of the banyan or Indra in connection with the advent of the monsoon, cf. Kane, pp.91-4.

Jyeshth II

10 *Gaṇgā daśaharā*: kite flying, bathing, and setting up of *pyāū* (stalls providing drinking water). Cf. Mazumdar, pp.281-2, Kane, pp.89-91.

11 *Nirjalā ekādaśī*: special celebration at Dwarkadhish temple, Mathura?

15 *Jal yātrā* (*jyeṣṭhasnāna*): special bathing of deities and, in Mathura, sale of pots of Yamuna water for this purpose; *dhūp kā din* fair at Garud Govind/Chhatikara?

Ashadh I

On Sundays many Braj women go to Agra to worship Sitala and Kuanwala (cf. §7.10).

11 *Yoginī ekādaśī*

15 Small fair called *kaṃs melā* at Arruwa, near Mat?

Ashadh II

2 *Rath yātrā*: deities taken out in decorated carts, especially at Gyan Gudri, Vrindaban. For equivalent at Puri, cf. Mohapatra pp.87-103.

11 *Devaśayinī ekādaśī*: beginning of the *caturmāsya*, when Vishnu and other gods go to sleep; joint circumambulation of Mathura and Vrindaban (*jugal joṛī parikramā*).

15 *Vyās/guru pūrṇimā*: veneration of gurus.
Muṛiyā pūnau: the death of Sanatan Goswami is commemorated by ascetics at Govardhan with *kīrtan* at Chakreshwar and circumambulation of Manasi Ganga; *dhīo dhīo kā melā*: Sanatan's death is commemorated at Madanmohan temple, Vrindaban (cf. VDA 1.41 ff.).
Alternates with Shravan II.15 as a day for enactment in the tank of Rangji temple (Vrindaban) of Vishnu's rescuing an elephant from a crocodile (*Gajendramokṣotsav*).
Pavan parīkṣā: priests at Gokul make harvest predictions (Growse, pp.290-1)?

Shravan I

Worship of Shanichar at Kokilaban on Saturdays during both halves of the month.

5 *Gopāl bhaṭṭjī kā utsav* (or *Rādhāramaṇ kā dhīo dhīo*): commemoration of the death of Gopal Bhatt at Radharaman temple, Vrindaban.

11 *Kāmikā/kāmadā ekādaśī*

15 *Hariyālī māvas*: farmers worship their ploughs; snakes drawn on walls with turmeric.

Shravan II

1-15 *Jhūlan*: deities are placed in a swing.

3 *Hariyālī tīj*: the deity of Banke Bihari is placed in a swing for this day only; the Radha deity at Barsana ('Lariliji') is placed in a *chatrī* outside the temple (cf. TA 78-80).

5 *Nāg pañcamī*: serpent worship (cf. Kane, pp.124-6).

6 Traditionally the second day of the *pañctīrthī parikramā* at Satoha (cf. §7.9; the day is specifically associated with worship of the Sun, cf. Mazumdar, pp.286-7).

8 Traditionally the fourth day of the *pañctīrthī parikramā* at Garud Govind. Regarded by some as the birthday of Garuda.

9 *Kālī ghaṭā*: shrine and deity of Dwarkadhish temple (Mathura) decorated in black and white.
Brahmakuṇḍ kā melā used to be held in Vrindaban (as the fifth day of *pañctīrthī parikramā*).

11 *Pavitrā/putradā ekādaśī*: sacred threads offered to deities (cf. Alberuni, 2 p.181, HBV 15.88 ff.).

12 Commemoration of death of Rup Goswami at Radharaman temple, Vrindaban.

15 *Salūno/rakṣābandhan*: traditionally the day when young wives return to their marital home after a period of stay in their parents' house; sisters tie threads (*rākhi*) as a charm on their brothers' wrists. Fairs at Balbhadrakund (Mathura) and Prem Sarovar (cf. TA 83-9)?
Alternates with Ashadh II.15 as day for *Gajendramokṣostsav* at Rangji temple, Vrindaban.

Bhadon I

Thursdays are traditionally a time for swimming contests in the Yamuna at Mathura, culminating on the last Thursday of the month.

1 Special *darśan* of Krishna and Radha in various guises in Gaudiya temples of Vrindaban.

8 *Janmāṣṭamī*: temples remain open to celebrate the birth of Krishna at midnight. Large gathering of devotees and pilgrims at Krishna Janmasthan. Cf. Weber, Kane, pp.131-43, Mazumdar, pp.284-5, HBV 15.

9 *Nandotsav*: celebrates Nanda's joy at birth of Krishna, (esp. at Gokul and Mathura). At Rangji temple (Vrindaban) men attempt to shin up a greased pole to get prizes fixed at the top (*laṭṭhā melā*).

11 *Ajā ekādaśī*: fairs at Talban and at Shiv Tal, Mathura?

15 Fair at Senba (Chhata tahsil)?

Bhadon II

4 *Gaṇeś/daṇḍā* or *caṭṭā cauth*: celebration of the birth of Ganesha. Boys sing a song while beating pairs of sticks (*daṇḍā/caṭṭā*) together. Cf. Kane, pp.145-9.

6 *(Bal)deo chaṭ*: celebration of the birth of Balaram, esp. at Baldeo (where festivities begin on the fourth). Smaller fairs in honour of 'Dauji' are held at Dahgaon, Pasauli, and Hulwana (Chhata tahsil).
Growse (p.299) refers to a fair at Shantanukund, which would correspond to similar fairs held in honour of the Sun mentioned by Alberuni (2, p.177) and still celebrated at Kashi (*Lolārka ṣaṣṭhī*, cf. Eck, p.207).

7 *Mahārās* performed at Karhela (cf. TA 96-100).

8 *Rādhāṣṭamī*: birthday of Radha, celebrated primarily at Barsana; also at Radhavallabh temple, Vrindaban, and at Rawal. Grand procession at Vrindaban in the evening.
Haridās jayantī: birth of Swami Haridas, celebrated by a fair at Tatti Asthan and a procession through the streets of Vrindaban the following day.

9 *Būṛhī līlā* at Mor Kuti, Barsana, at which women throw sweets down from Mor Kuti to Krishna, who dances in the guise of a peacock. This *līlā* and the ones held on the following days are mentioned in TA 109-119.
Fair at Pisayo?

10 *Būṛhī līlā* at Vilas Garh, Barsana, with Krishna and Radha in a swing.
Fair at Kokilaban/Padar Ganga?

11 *Vāmana/parivartinī ekādaśī*: Vishnu turns over in his sleep. *Būṛhī līlā*: at Sankari Khori and, in the evening, at Prem Sarovar, where Krishna and Radha go boating (*naukā vihār*).
Baṛī yātrā pilgrims bathe and take vows at Vishram Ghat.
Kaṇvā kā melā, in honour of a sage called Kanwa, at Sikandarpur/Hasanpur (between Naujhil and Bhadraban)?

11-13 At the tank of Rangji temple, Vrindaban, the deity is placed in a decorated barge.

12 *Vāman dvādaśī*: *Būṛhī līlā* at *Unchgaon (byāhulā*: wedding ceremony) and, in the evening, boating at Piri Pokhar, Barsana. *Rās līlā* and *samāj* at the *samādhi* of Narayan Bhatt.
Birth of Vamana celebrated at his temple near Saraswati Sangam, Mathura.

13 *Būṛhī līlā*: enactment of *dān līlā* (*maṭukī(phorī) līlā*) at Sankari Khori, Barsana.

14 *Anant caudas*: circumambulation of Govardhan; special worship of Balarama.
Būṛī līlā (*cīr haraṇ līlā*) at Sonehara ki Kadam Khandi.

15 *Mākhan corī līlā* at Karhela.
Brahmā kā melā at Chaumuhan?

Ashwin I

1-15 *Pitṛpakṣa*: fortnight in which *śrāddha* ceremonies are held. Sanjhi designs are made in the villages and, from *ekādaśī* onwards, in some temples (esp. Bhattji ka Mandir, Vrindaban, cf. §7.13).

4 *Bahulā caturthī*: fair in honour of the cow Bahula at Bati (Growse p.344)? This would be the *pūrṇimānta* equivalent of the *bahulādhenuvrata* mentioned in NP 1.113.23-7.

7-8 *Nāgājī kā Melā*: fair at Paigaon in honour of Nagaji.

11 *Indirā ekādaśī*

Ashwin II

1-9 *Navarātra/nyaurtā*: celebrated especially by Bengalis in Vrindaban as *Durgā pūjā*. Clay images of Durga are set up for worship at street corners and in temple courtyards and are taken in procession to the Yamuna for immersion on the 9th. Cf. Kane, ch.9. *Rām līlā* performances are held in the evenings (including Rama's wedding procession on the evening of the 2nd).

10 *Daśaharā*: climax of *Rām līlā* cycle (burning of images of Ravana). Worship of *chōkar* trees. Cf. Kane, pp.188-94.

11 *Pāpāṅkuśā/pāśāṅkuśā* ekādaśī: cicumambulation of Vrindaban and staging of Rama's reunion with Bharata (*Bharat milāp*) as part of *Rām līlā* cycle.

14 *Bārāhī melā* at Bhadraban/Harnaul?

15 *Sarad pūnau/śarat pūrṇimā*: shrines and temples decorated in white; *rās līlā* at Kamai

Karttik I

2-8 *Rath yātrā* festival (esp. 6-7) at Chaurasi Jain temple, Mathura.

4 *Karuvā cauth* (*vrat* performed by women).
Tṛṇāvart melā at Gokul(Growse, p.291)?

8 *Ahoī āṭhaī* (*bahulāṣṭamī*): women observe a *vrat*; couples bathe in Radhakund at midnight. Cf. TA 128-31, Alberuni, 2 p.180.

11 *Rambhā ekādaśī*

13 *Dhan teras*: described in HBV 16 as a time to place a lamp outside one's house in honour of Yama, who is worshipped the next day.

14 *Rūp caudas/choṭī dīvālī*

15 *Dīvālī*: celebrated especially at Govardhan (placing of lamps around Manasi Ganga); worship of Lakshmi at home. Cf. Alberuni, 2 p.182, Kane, pp.194-207, Mazumdar, pp.294-5, and above, §7.3.

Karttik II

1 *Annakūṭ/govardhan pūjā*: especially at Jatipura (cf.§7.3).

2 *Bhaiyā doj/yam dvitīyā*: brothers and sisters bathe together in the Yamuna at Mathura (cf. Kane, pp.207-10, Mazumdar, p.296, and above §7.7).

5 Circumambulation of Mahaban, Gokul, and Rawal?

6 *Pūtanā kā melā* at Putana Khar, Mahaban?

7 *Dhobī badh/dhobī māran līlā*: enactment of Krishna's slaying of Kansa's *dhobī* ('washerman', originally 'dyer', cf §2.27) at Vrindaban Darwaza, Mathura?

8 *Gopāṣṭamī*: cows are decorated and (at least in Vrindaban) are driven through the streets by boys dressed as Krishna and Balarama.

9 *Akhai naumī (akṣay navamī)*: circumambulation of Mathura.

10 *Kaṃs kā melā*: enactment of the slaying of Kansa at Kans Tila, Mathura, and procession to Vishram Ghat.

11-15 *Svāmījī kā melā*: large fair for the worship of Swamiji/Burhe Babu at Tarauli. (Equivalent to Alberuni's *bhīṣma pañcarātrī*?, 2 p.177).

11 *Devoṭhān/prabodhinī ekādaśī*: Vishnu and the other gods wake up. Circumambulation of Mathura, Garud Govind, and Vrindaban. Inauguration of sugar cane crop and mock marriage of *tulsī* and *śālagrām*.

12 *Davānal kā melā*, held formerly at Dawanal Kund, Vrindaban. This, and festivities on the following three days, are described in BBP 8.25-33.

13 There used to be an enactment of the slaying of Keshi at Keshi Ghat, Vrindaban.

14 There used to be an enactment of the slaying of Kaliya at Kalidah Ghat, Vrindaban.

15 Bathing in the Yamuna. Commemoration at Imli Tala of Chaitanya's arrival in Vrindaban. There used to be a fair at Bhatror at which the incident involving Krishna and the brahmins' wives was enacted.
Celebration of the birth of Nimbarka by *samāj* and a procession (in Vrindaban) the following day.

Agahan/Margashirsh I

11 *Utpannā/utpatti ekādaśī*

Agahan/Margashirsh II

5 *Bihār pañcamī*: procession from Nidhiban to the temple of Banke Bihari to commemorate the first appearance of the deity.

11 *Mokṣadā ekādaśī*

15 *Dāūjī pūnau*: fair at Baldeo.
Melā satī at Ladpur, also on/up to II.3?

Paush I

Lakṣmī melā: held every Thursday at Lakshmi temple, Belban.
Makar saṃkrānti (the passage of the sun from the sign of *dhanuṣ* to *makara*, cf. Kane, pp.211-24) occurs on January 13th or 14th and is celebrated by bathing in the Yamuna.

11 *Saphalā ekādaśī*

14-15 Fair at Ranwari to commemorate Siddh Krishnadas Baba.

Paush II

Special decorations and offerings (*khicarī*) at Radhavallabh temple, Vrindaban, until the new moon of Magh.
Commemoration of the death of Jiv Goswami at Radhadamodar temple, Vrindaban.

5-11 *Dhanurmahotsav* at Rangji temple, Vrindaban.

11 *Putradā ekādaśī*: beginning of *Vaikuṇṭhotsav* at Rangji temple, Vrindaban.

Magh I

Jakhaiyā melā is held on Sundays and on II.5 (cf. §7.11).

4 *Ganeś cauth*: alternative date for worship of Ganesh (cf. Bhadon II.4).

11 *Ṣaṭ tilā ekādaśī*: first day of *Durvāsā melā* at Durvasa Tila, Mathura.

15 *Maunī māvas*: bathing in the Yamuna; second day of *Durvāsā melā*.

Magh II

5 *Basant pañcamī*: start of Holi season; worship of Saraswati; third day of *Durvāsā melā*; fairs at Mahaban (*Jakhaiyā melā* and at Raman Reti); 'Basanti Kamra' at Shahji temple, Vrindaban, is illumunated; *samāj* at Seva Kunj; special decorations at Dwarkadhish temple, Mathura, and at Garud Govind.

7 *Bhānu saptamī*: Surya procession at Rangji temple, Vrindaban.

11 *Jayā ekādaśī*: fourth day of *Durvāsā melā*.

15 Fifth day of *Durvāsā melā*.

Phalgun I

8 Holi at Madanmohan temple (Pushtimarg), Mathura.

11 *Vijayā ekādaśī*: fair at Man Sarovar.

14 *Śiv rātri*: worship of Shiva (cf. Kane, pp.225-36, Mazumdar, p.301); fair at Raman Reti, Mahaban.

15 *Dāgal kā melā* at Kamai?

Phalgun II

9 *Holī* at Barsana: men from Nandgaon taunt the women of Barsana and are beaten by them (*laṭhāmār holī*, cf. NBC 5.58-84, TA 162-211).

10 *Holi* at Nandgaon (reciprocal version of Holi at Barsana on the previous day).

11 *Āmalakī ekādaśī*: *Raṅgīlī holī* procession at Vrindaban; fair at Raman Reti (Mahaban); *dāgal* at Ghazipur (Prem Sarovar) and *Pauṛhānāth kā melā* at Shekhsai?

15 *Holikā dahan*: burning of Holi bonfires; fair at Phalain (cf. Growse, p. 93, and Govind Das 'Sant', pp.150-5).

Chaitra I

1 Celebration of Holi (jesting, smearing each other with red powder etc., cf. McKim Mariott, in Singer (ed.), pp.200-212, Kane, pp.237-41, Mazumdar, pp.276-9); people gather at Krishna Janmasthan.

1-5 At night Jat women of Mukhrai, Umri, Rampur, and neighbouring villages perform *carkulā* dance (balancing pots, lamps etc. on their heads).

2 *Holī* celebrations at Baldeo and Jao; *phūl ḍol* and gathering of Jats at Kosi?; Haridev taken in procession around Manasi Ganga?

3 *Holī* at Bathain and Kotban.

3-13 *Brahmotsav* at Rangji temple, Vrindaban (a series of processions with a different vehicle each day).

5 *Raṅg pañcamī* celebrations at Bad; *phūl ḍol* at Mathura and Vrindaban.

8 *Sītalā āṭhaī/mātā pūjā*: worship of Sitala, esp. at Masani (Mathura), Kaman, and beneath Madanmohan temple, Vrindaban.

9 *Rath kā melā*: grand procession of car from Rangji temple, Vrindaban.

10 *Caitī kā melā* at Baldeo?

11 *Pāpamocanī ekādaśī*

15 Special *darśan* at Baldeo.

For a description of the Hindu calendar and methods for calculating dates see Sewell &

Dikhshit, Underhill, and Merrey. For further information on festivals in the medieval period see Kane and B. P. Mazumdar (ch.13), both of whom refer to various *dharmanibandha* works. See H. Daniel Smith (1975-80, cf. index vol.II, and 1982) for festivals mentioned in Pancharatra texts, and Gnanambal for a general survey of current Hindu festivals. For surveys of festivals held in Rajasthan and U.P. see C. S. Gupta and R. I. Verma (though in the latter many of the names are garbled and the estimated attendance figures seem arbitrary). For further information on the festivals of Braj see P. Mital 1966, pt.1 ch.7 (*Braj ke utsav, tyauhār aur melę*, also published separately). Several 'folk' festivals are listed by Satyendra (1949 & 1953) and R. Dwivedi (1972). Satyendra also gives a list of festivities held in Pushtimarg temples (1953, pp.142-4), and dates of anniversaries (*pāṭotsav*) connected with deities and leaders of the Nimbark Sampraday are given in *Vṛndāvanāṅk*, pp.181 ff. Editions of the works of most devotional poets have sections with headings for different seasons and/or such festivals as Holi, Phuldol, and the autumnal *rās*. Sequences or anthologies of poems dealing with a more complete cycle of festivals, as they are supposed to have been celebrated by Krishna and his entourage, are found in Harivyasdev's *Mahāvāṇī (utsāh sukh)*, and anthologies of poems of Paramanandadas (*Paramānand sāgar*), Govindswami, Chaturbhujdas, Hariray, and Nagaridas. For the *bhāv* of the main festivals see Dwarkeshji (*Bhāv bhāvnā*, pp.86 ff.).

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Key to Maps

The Pilgrimage Circuit of Braj

The numbers used to indicate places correspond to those assigned to them in chapter 8.

1 Mathura
2 Madhuban (Maholi)
3 Talban (Tarsi)
4 Kumudban (Kudarban)
5 Shantanukund (Satoha)
6 Ganeshra
7 Bahulaban (Bati)
8 Tos
9 Jikhangaon
10 Aring
11 Mukhrai
12 Radhakund
13 Kusum Sarovar
14 Govardhan
15 Jamnauta
16 Parasoli and Chandrasarovar
17 Paintha
18 Bachhgaon
19 Anyor
20 Punchhari
21 Shyam Dhak
22 Jatipura
23 Bilchhuban
24 Sakhisthala (Sakarwa)
25 Nimgaon
26 Gantholi
27 Bhej
28 Dig
29 Parmadra
30 Adibadri
31 Sehu
32 Indroli
33 Kaman
34 Kunwara
35 onehra ki Kadam Khandi
36 Unchagaon
37 Barsana
38 Prem Sarovar
39 Sanket
40 Nandgaon
41 Ajnokh
42 Karhela
43 Kamai
44 Pisayo
45 Khadiravana (Khaira)
46 Chhata
47 Jao
48 Kokilaban
49 Bathain
50 Bhadokhar
51 Kamar
52 Rasoli
53 Dahgaon
54 Kotban
55 Shekhsai
56 Kosi
57 Paigaon
58 Shergarh
59 Akshay Bat
60 Chir Ghat
61 Bachhaban (Sei)
62 Nand Ghat
63 Bhadraban
64 Bhandirban
65 elban
66 Vrindaban
67 Man Sarovar
68 Lohban
69 Bandi
70 Baldeo
71 Mahaban
72 Gokul
73 Rawal

Mathura

Numbers correspond to those used for subsections of chapter 8, section 1 (pp.310-31).

1 Vishram Ghat
2 Gatashram
3 Kans Khar
4 Guhyatirth and Charchika Devi
5 Pippaladeshwar
6 Prayag Ghat
7 Kanakhalatirtha
8 Bengali Ghat
9 Suraj Ghat
10 Dhruv Ghat
11 Bali Tila
12 Rangbhumi
13 Rangeshwar
14 Saptasamudrakupa
15 Shiv Tal
16 Balbhadrakund
17 Bhuteshwar
18 Potarakund
19 Krishna Janmasthan
20 Garteshwar
21 Mahavidya Devi
22 Saraswatikund
23 Ganesh Ghat
24 Gokarneshwar
25 Saraswati Sangam
26 Krishnaganga
27 Somatirtha
28 Kans Kila
29 Swami Ghat
30 Asikunda
31 Avimuktatirtha
32 Dwarkadhish Mandir
33 Durvasa Tila

Vrindaban

Numbers correspond to those used for subsections of chapter 8, section 66 (pp.400-418)

1 Kalidah Ghat
2 Praskandan Ghat
3 Madanmohan
4 Banke Bihari
5 Radhavallabh
6 Bhattji ka Mandir
7 Kaladhari Mandir
8 Jugal Kishor (Jugal Ghat)
9 Bihar Ghat
10 Seva Kunj
11 Imli Tala
12 Shringar Bat
13 Radhadamodar
14 Ras Mandal
15 Chir Ghat
16 Nand Bhavan
17 Shyamsundar
18 Savaman Shalagram
19 Bankhandi Mahadev
20 Vyas Ghera
21 Rasikbihari
22 Shriji Kunj
23 Shahji Mandir
24 Nidhiban
25 Govind Dev
26 Venukup
27 Singhpor Hanuman
28 Rangji
29 Brahmakund
30 Gopinath
31 Radharaman
32 Radhavinod and Gokulanand
33 Jugal Kishor (Keshi Ghat)
34 Keshi Ghat
35 Bansi Bat
36 Gopishwar
37 Gyan Gudri
38 Tatti Asthan
39 Govind Kund
40 Dawanal Kund
41 Bhatror
42 Akrur Ghat