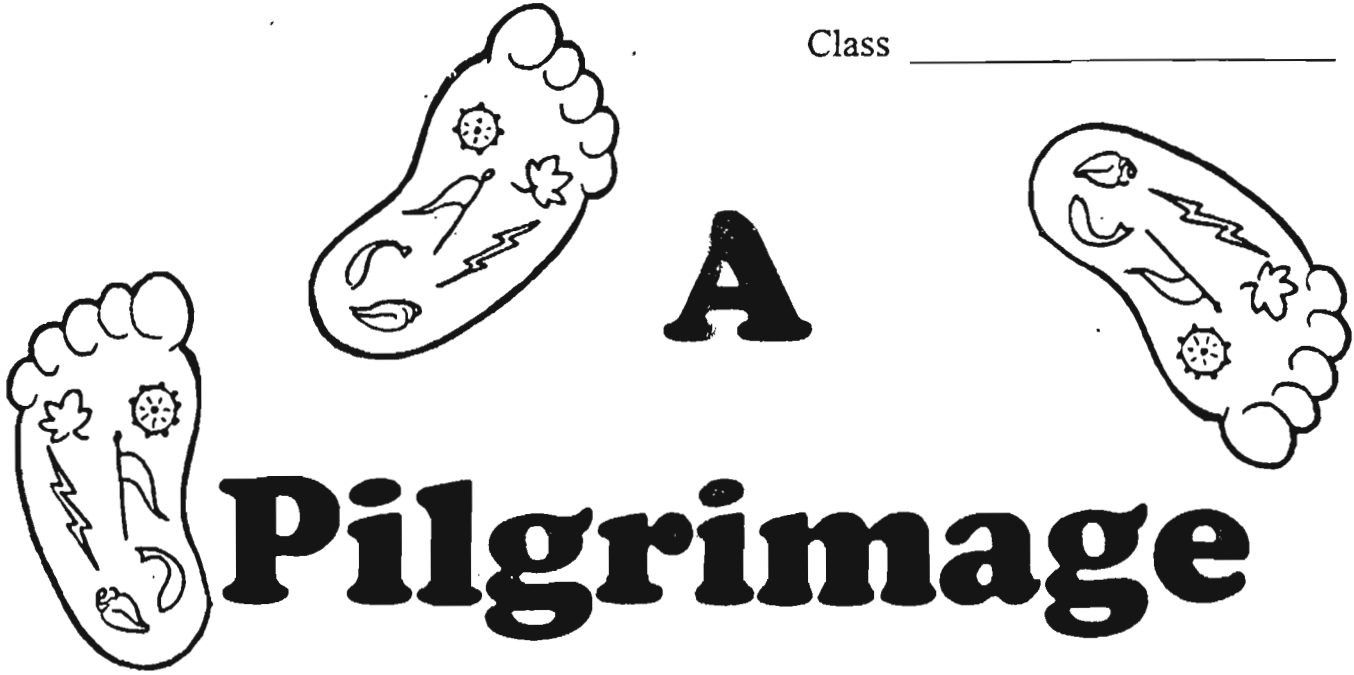


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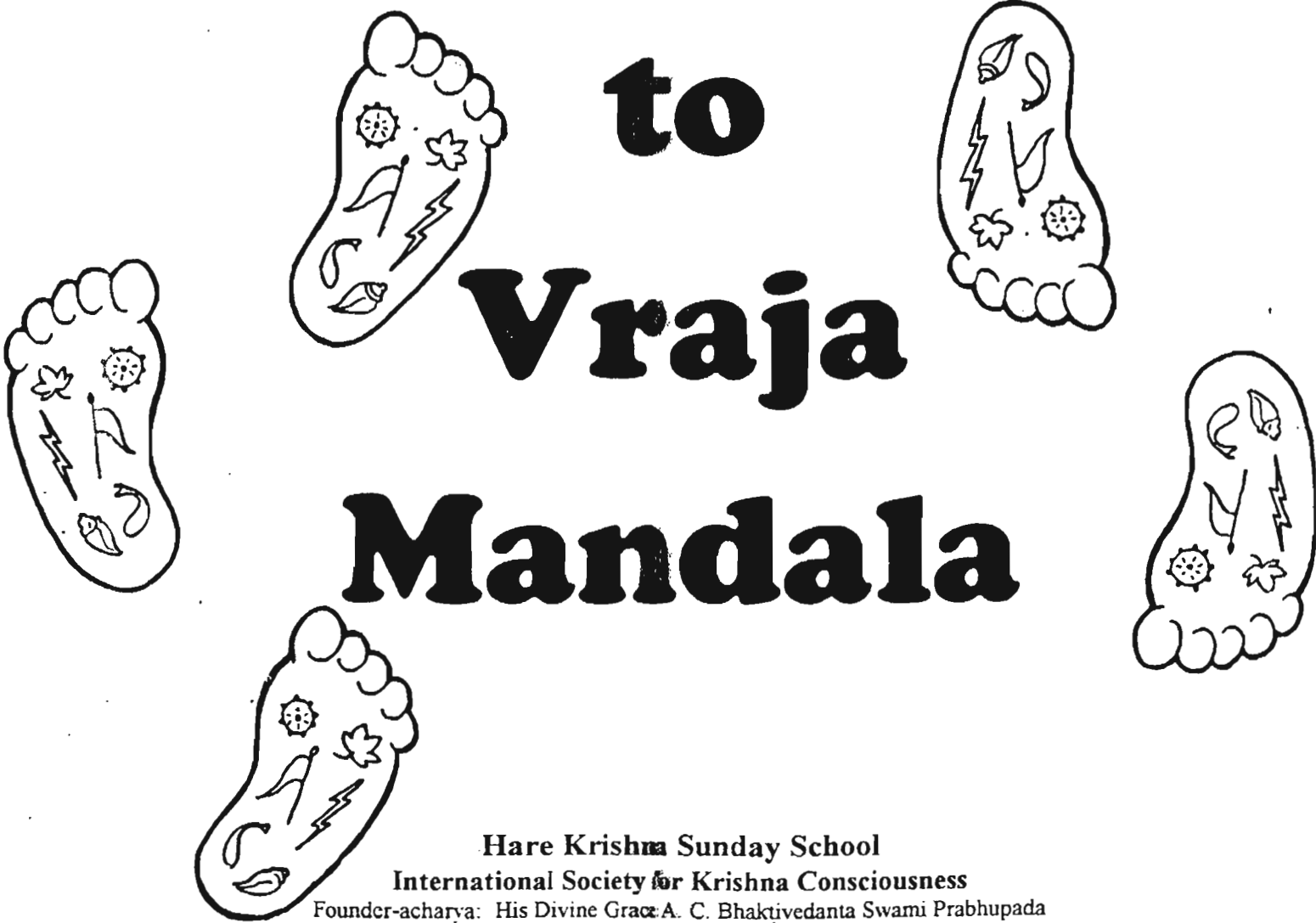


Pilgrimage

to

Vraja

Mandala



Hare Krishna Sunday School

International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Founder-acharya: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



*This book is dedicated to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.
Because of his preaching, we can experience the holy dham even though thousands of
miles away.*

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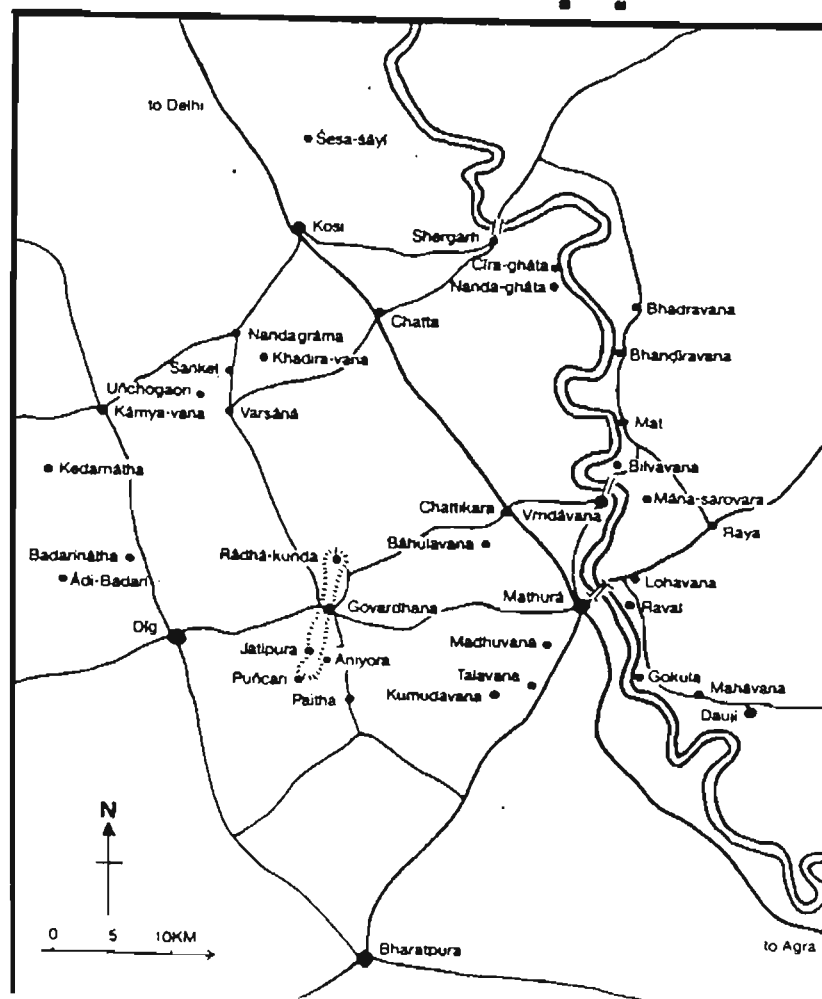
Introduction

Vraja Mandala is a land of many wonders. Krishna enacted so many pastimes in this area that it would be impossible to tell about all of them.

In the month of Kartik (October/November) there is a parikrama, or walking pilgrimage, around the area of Vraja Mandala. It lasts one month. Many of the holy places are visited and the stories of Krishna's activities are told.

There is nothing we'd like more than to pack up our whole Sunday School class and go to Vraja Mandala for a month. Since that isn't possible, we will make a shorter parikrama in our lessons. We can visit some of the main places in Vraja and learn some of the special pastimes that took place there. Then when you get the chance to go to Vraja (and don't worry -- if you really want to go, Krishna will help you get there) you will be able to see the places that we have learned about. You will hear many other wonderful pastimes of the Lord, too.

ŚRĪ VRAJA-MANḌALA





**O legs, if you have to go anywhere then make your way
to Vrindavan.**

**O eyes, if you must see anything then see the beauty of
Vrindavan,**

**O ears, if you want to hear, hear the pastimes of
Vrindavan,**

**O tongue, if you must say anything, speak the glories of
Vrindavan**

**O nose, if you want to smell, smell the sweet flowers of
Vrindavan**

Prabhodananda Sarasvati



*tapta-kancana gaurangi
radhe vrndavanesvari
vrsabhanu-sute devi
pranamami hari-priye*

Translation: I offer my respects to Radharani, whose bodily complexion is like molten gold and who is the Queen of Vrindavan. You are the daughter of King Vrishabhanu, and You are very dear to Lord Krishna.

Our First Stop Mathura Dham

A. The Birth Place of Lord Krishna

Our Vraja Mandala Parikrama will begin in the place where Lord Krishna appeared -- in Mathura. Mathura is not very far from the village of Vrindavan.

Over 5000 years ago, Lord Krishna decided to appear upon the earth. At that time the earth was ruled by terrible kings. The leadership of these demons was causing a great burden for the earth. Kamsa was the leader of these demons and he had Krishna's mother and father, Devaki and Vasudeva, put in prison. Devaki was Kamsa's own sister, but that's not all. Kamsa was so evil that he even put his father, Ugrasena, who was the rightful king, in jail.

Vasudeva and Devaki already had 7 other children but Kamsa killed them all, except for Balarama. Kamsa was waiting for the eighth child who was predicted to kill the evil king. One evening Devaki's eighth child was born to her. But He was not an ordinary child. He was Krishna. Kamsa could not kill Him.

In Mathura we find the sight where Krishna appeared and it is regarded as a very sacred spot. You will always find many devotees gathered here chanting and singing the glories of Sri Krishna.



B. Kans Tila

At Kans Tila there are the remains of a very old fort. This is the place where Krishna killed the demon Kamsa. Kamsa's aim was to kill Krishna and Balaram before They were able to kill him.

One time he sent Akrura to bring Krishna and Balaram from Vrindavan (where They were living) to Mathura. When they got to Kamsa's palace, the cruel king tried to kill Them in many ways. Kamsa sent his soldiers after the two boys; he sent a mad elephant to kill the brothers; and he had them fight with his best wrestlers. Krishna and Balaram defeated them all.

Kamsa wasn't happy to see this. He gave the order that Krishna and Balaram should be driven away from Mathura. He ordered his guards to kill Nanda Maharaj and Vasudeva. Kamsa also commanded his soldiers to immediately kill Ugrasena, his own father.

Lord Krishna became very angry when He heard this. He leaped at Kamsa, who pulled out his sword and shield. Krishna grabbed Kamsa's hair, dragged him off his seat and threw him to the ground. The Lord sat upon Kamsa's chest and began to hit him with His fists over and over again. Kamsa lost his life from this fight with Krishna.

Kamsa had eight brothers. When they heard that Kamsa was dead, they all rushed towards Krishna and Balaram, trying to kill Them. Balaram took charge of destroying the brothers. He took in hand his elephant tusk weapon and went after the brothers one by one. He killed them all just a lion kills a flock of deer. All this happened here at Kans Tila.

After this, Krishna and Balaram went to a place called Vishrama Ghat where they bathed and rested. This is also in Mathura, so we can visit and bathe in this holy ghat just as Krishna and Balaram did.

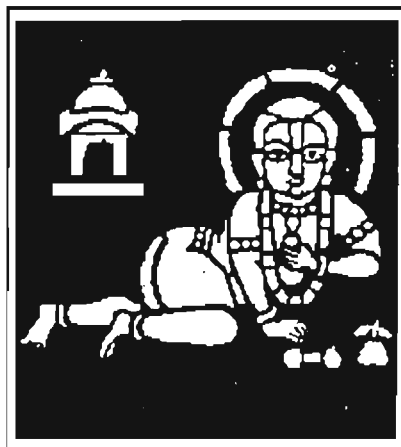
Check for Understanding

1. What is the city of Mathura famous for?

2. How was Kamsa related to Krishna?

3. How did Krishna kill Kamsa?

4. Who killed Kamsa's brothers?



Our Second Stop Govardhan Hill

A. The Story of Govardhan

Govardhan Hill has a very interesting history. Many years ago (*two million* years ago, in fact) a very powerful rishi named Pulastya Muni wanted to perform austerities on the beautiful slopes of a certain hill. The hill was covered with flowers and clear streams and rivers flowed all around. There were several caves which make good places for sages and rishis to live.

Pulastya Muni thought, "I like this hill. I must take it to my ashram. Then I can perform my services upon these wonderful slopes every day."

So he approached the king of mountains, Dronachala, and asked him for the mountain called Govardhan. Govardhan was Dronachala's son and the king of mountains didn't think he could bear to be separated from his son. He cried and cried and begged Pulastya Muni to leave Govardhan with him. But the sage became angry and was ready to curse Dronachala for refusing.

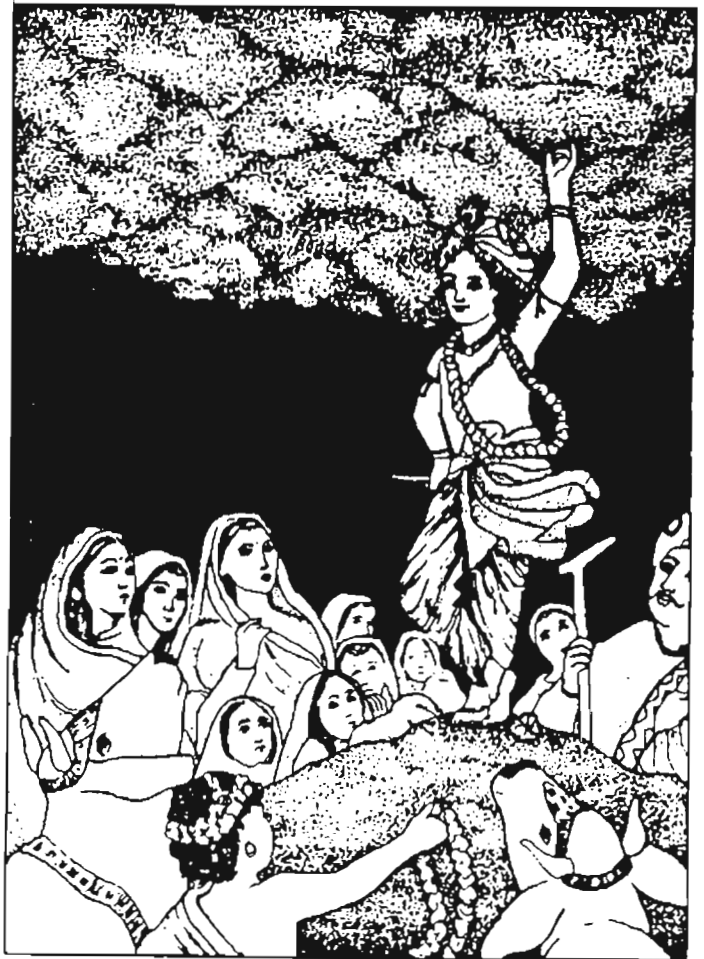
Govardhan spoke up so that his father would not be cursed. Govardhan agreed to move but he had one condition: wherever he was put down, that is where he would stay. That was OK with Pulastya Muni, so he picked up Govardhan and began his journey. You can see how powerful he must have been to be able to move a mountain!

It so happened that while they were passing by Vraja Mandala, Pulastya Muni had to go to the bathroom. He gently placed Govardhan down while he quickly went into the forest to relieve his bladder. When he returned he found that Govardhan would not move even an inch!

Pulastya Muni's eyes flashed angrily as he pointed a shaking finger at Govardhan. "What?! You have not allowed me to carry you to my ashram! So here you will stay. But I curse you that every day you will shrink! Each day as the sun sets, you will find yourself smaller by the width of one mustard seed."

But this didn't bother Govardhan. He knew that this would be the land in which Lord Krishna would appear. He would have to wait many years but he didn't mind. He remained where he was, providing grass and fresh waters for the cows of Vraja. In the future, Govardhan would be lucky enough to be lifted and held by Krishna's own hand for seven days.

Because of Pulastya's curse, Govardhan Hill *is* getting smaller. It was formerly a good size mountain. But now it is just a low hill. In some places it is not very high at all.



B. The Gopis Get Even with Krishna

There are several narrow paths around Govardhan. Krishna and the cowherd boys would often bother the gopis in these areas, not letting them through.

One time the gopis were fed up with this behavior. They made a plan to gang up on the boys this time. When they saw Krishna and the cowherd boys with their cows upon the hill, several of the girls gathered their milk and walked down the path as usual. The rest of the gopis hid in the forest around the pathway.

When Krishna and the boys stopped them, the hidden gopis rushed out from their secret places. They grabbed the cowherd boys and pulled them over to the trees. The boys struggled but they were no match for the gopis this time. The girls pulled the boys by their sikhas and tied their sikhas to trees! The cowherd boys were stuck there and couldn't get away. The gopis took advantage of this and boxed their ears. They picked up sticks and showed the cowherd boys just what they thought.

The people of Vraja still celebrate this pastime. On this day, the men prepare themselves by tying pillows around their bodies if they have to go out. Then they will try to escape the ladies that are waiting along the path to beat them with sticks. It is all done in playful fun, but if you are a boy, you might want to stay home that day!

C. Shyama Kunda

The shape of Govardhan Hill is like a peacock. At one end of Govardhan Hill we will find the holy waters of Radha Kunda and Shyama Kunda. They are the eyes of the peacock.

On earth, India is the holiest country. In India, the most holy place is Mathura. In Mathura, the holiest place is Vrindavan. In Vrindavan, the best place is Govardhan Hill and the most holy place in Govardhan is Radha Kunda. Radha Kunda is the most sacred and exalted place in the whole creation.

When Krishna was young, He killed a bull demon named Aristasura. Right after that He went to see Radharani and her gopi friends. When Radharani saw Krishna coming she said, “Don’t touch us! You have just killed a cow and that is a very sinful activity.”

The other gopis agreed. They told Krishna what He must do. “You will have to purify Yourself for this sin. You must bathe in all the holy places in the three worlds before You can associate with us.”

Krishna thought, “Hmmm... If I have to go to all the holy places I will be gone a long time. That means I won’t be able to be with Radha. Why should I have to do that?”

Krishna stamped His lotus heel into the ground and declared, “I will bring all the holy places here! Then I can take My bath in them.”



The sacred waters from all the holy places came and appeared before the Lord. The Yamuna River was there and so was the Ganges. The Sarasvati, the Sindu, the salt ocean, the ocean of milk and all the holy waters of the entire universe came so that Krishna could take His bath in them. They filled His kunda with their waters and Krishna was able to follow the gopis' order without leaving Vrindavan.

D. Radha Kunda

After Krishna took bath in Shyama Kunda He went to see the gopis again. He told them "Now I am pure because I did as you said. I bathed in all the holy waters of the universe."



The gopis looked at Him and said, "Maybe *You* are pure, but *we* are contaminated. Aristasura might have been a bull but he was still a demon. It was wrong for us to defend him against *You*. Now *we* have to take a bath in sacred waters to wash away our sin of siding with a demon."

Radharani instructed the gopis to make a kunda even more beautiful than Krishna's. She and her friends started digging and in a very short time a kunda was dug.

Krishna saw their kunda and said, "Oh, it's very nice, but there is no water in it. Why don't you take some water from My kunda and fill yours."

"No, no, no," said Radha. "Your kunda is contaminated because *You* killed a cow. We will get our own water." She lined up the gopis and had them bring water from Manasi Ganga, another holy place on Govardhan Hill.

Krishna didn't like to see Radha work so hard. He didn't think She should have to do one little speck of difficult work. He signaled the leader of all the holy rivers. This deity of the sacred waters appeared before Radharani

and offered beautiful prayers to Her. He told Her, “By the stamp of Krishna’s foot, we have come here to live. That makes us very happy. But now we can see that we would be even more satisfied if we could come to live in Your kunda too.”

Radharani smiled and looked at Krishna out of the corner of Her eyes. She told the deity, “You may come and fill my kunda, also.”

The holy waters of all the sacred places broke through the walls of Shyama Kunda and quickly filled Radha Kunda. Krishna was pleased and told Radharani that Her kunda would always be His favorite. Radharani told the Lord that She would always come and bathe in His kunda too. She promised that whoever bathes or lives near the kunda would become very dear to Her.

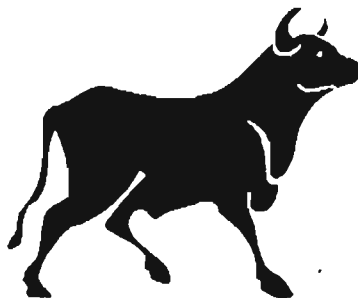


Check for Understanding

Choose a word from the box below to complete each sentence

Shyama Kunda	holy rivers	shrink
grow	Keshi	Aristasura
heel	peacock	green grass
flute	Radha Kunda	fresh water

1. Govardhan Hill is shaped like a _____.
2. Pulastya Muni cursed Govardhan Hill to _____ every day.
3. Two things that Govardhan Hill provided to the people of Vrindavan are _____ and _____.
4. _____ is the most sacred place in the whole universe.
5. The Pandavas are living as trees on the banks of _____.
6. Krishna called all the _____ to fill Shyama Kunda and Radha Kunda.
7. Krishna killed a bull demon named _____.
8. Krishna created Shyama Kunda by sticking His _____ in the ground.



Govardhan Hill Word Search

S	E	G	N	A	G	S	I	P	O	G	A	A	Q	Y
A	W	C	I	D	E	M	H	P	C	L	Q	A	C	E
C	P	W	H	N	X	A	E	K	V	P	P	N	G	D
R	E	N	M	U	A	E	F	M	U	Y	T	D	E	K
E	A	Y	I	K	O	R	K	L	C	E	Y	W	E	Y
D	C	D	N	A	N	T	A	H	O	R	D	S	M	Y
R	O	U	H	M	T	S	Z	H	B	W	G	X	D	Q
I	C	Q	R	A	T	N	Q	Q	D	Y	E	K	S	I
V	K	R	C	Y	K	L	U	E	N	A	L	R	A	V
E	V	O	A	S	U	U	S	O	N	M	R	I	S	V
R	W	O	A	B	I	A	N	H	M	U	K	R	J	P
S	V	K	N	I	R	H	S	D	N	N	Z	A	K	E
H	X	U	Q	G	C	I	N	G	A	A	X	I	O	E
M	Q	F	L	T	R	R	C	W	N	T	O	L	T	Z
S	K	P	G	K	A	R	U	G	Q	M	U	Z	S	U

Cows

Flowers

Ganges

Gopis

Krishna

Mountain

Peacock

Pulastya

Radha Kunda

Radharani

Sacred Rivers

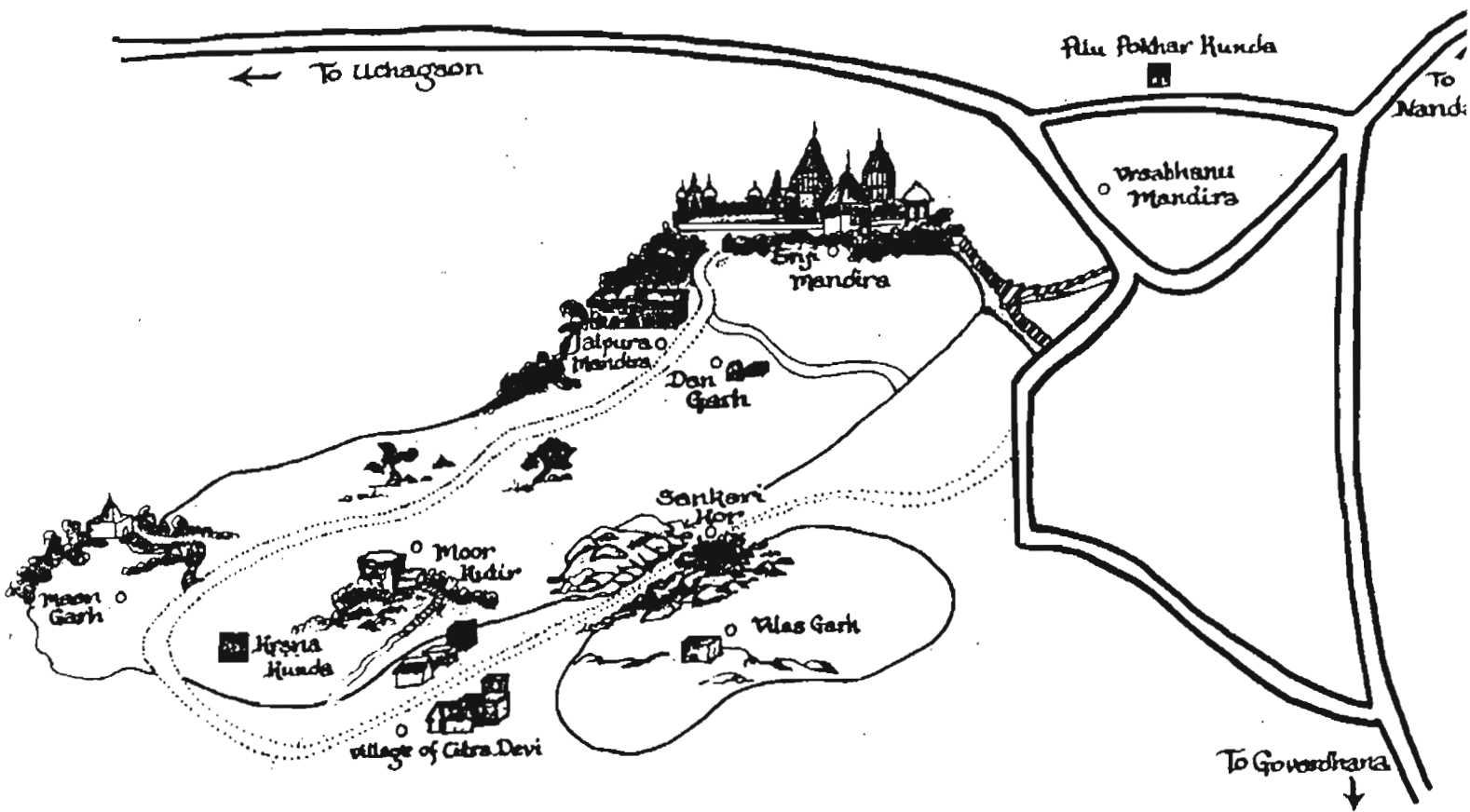
Shrink

Streams

Syama Kunda

Yamuna

Map of Varshana



Our Third Stop Varshana

A. The Tax Collection

Varshana is located atop of a very tall hill. It was the home of King Vrishabanu, Radharani's father. Varshana is where Radharani grew up.

There are some very narrow paths through the rocks when you walk up the hill to Varshana. Some places are rocky and steep and only one person at a time can go through. It is here, in a place called Sankari Kor, that Radharani and Her friends had some very funny pastimes with Krishna and the other boys.



Krishna would sometimes bring his cows to graze in this area. When the gopis heard that He was nearby, they would pack up their milk and butter and curds, saying they had to go sell them or take them to a yajna. They used this excuse so they could get away from the palace and meet Krishna.

When Krishna and His cowherd friends saw the gopis coming carrying their jugs of milk and butter, they would run to this narrow passageway in the hills and block the path. Krishna stopped the gopis and told them, "I have been appointed by the king to collect taxes from everyone that passes this way. You girls come through here all the time selling your milk products. You must make a lot of money. Now you have to give a fair share to the king."

The gopis just looked at each other. They didn't have any intention of paying any tax to this cheater!

Krishna continued, "Hurry up with your tax! If you take too long, I'll also have to charge you for the flowers you take from the kingdom. Pay the taxes now and you can go through."

"Who do you think You are?" the gopis asked. "You have a lot of nerve. You should be the one paying *us* tax for grazing your cows here."



And with that the gopis would start pushing their way through the narrow path. Sometimes they would win and burst through. Other times the cowherd boys would hold them back. But each time it was a good-natured fight. Saris were tugged, sikhas were yanked. With all the bumping and jostling, some milk always got spilled from the jugs that the girls carried. If you look about on the rocks surrounding the area, you can still see the white spots upon the rocks where the gopis spilled their milk.

This isn't the only place where Krishna would try to charge tax. Radha would often take milk to the other side of the Yamuna to sell it. She would have to pay a boatman to take Her across. But sometimes Krishna would stop Her from going and tell Her that She must pay a fee. If Radha would try to pick a flower anywhere, Krishna would claim to be the owner of the garden and try to charge Radharani a fee, also.

B. The Peacock Dance

Radharani and Krishna both were fascinated with the activities of the peacocks. When the peacocks would see dark rainclouds forming in the sky, they would raise up their tail feathers, shake them and begin to dance.

One time Radharani was playing in the forests around Varshana and She complained because there were not many peacocks. Krishna then appeared dressed like a peacock and danced for Radha and Her friends.

At the top of a hill, after going up many, many steps, you will find a very small temple that honors this pastime. There is a beautiful painting on the wall of Radha and Krishna dancing like the peacocks. It was painted by a blind saint who had a vision of this pastime in his mind.



Where in the World Are You?



Look at the clues to decide what place in Vraja Mandala it describes. It will be one of the places we have already visited.

1. I'm in the peacock's head.

I'm square.

I'm the most special place in the world.

I'm _____.

2. I have a fort.

Some demons were killed here.

Krishna's uncle knows me well.

I'm _____.

3. You might find many feathers here.

Don't get tired going up my steps.

I hope you like the painting on my wall.

I'm the place where _____

_____.

4. I'm the home of all the holy waters.

I see Arjuna, Yudhisthira, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva every day.

Radharani visits me, too.

I'm _____.

5. I have a big birthday party here on Janmastami each year.

If you're in Vrindavan, I'm not far away.

People visit me first when they go on parikrama.

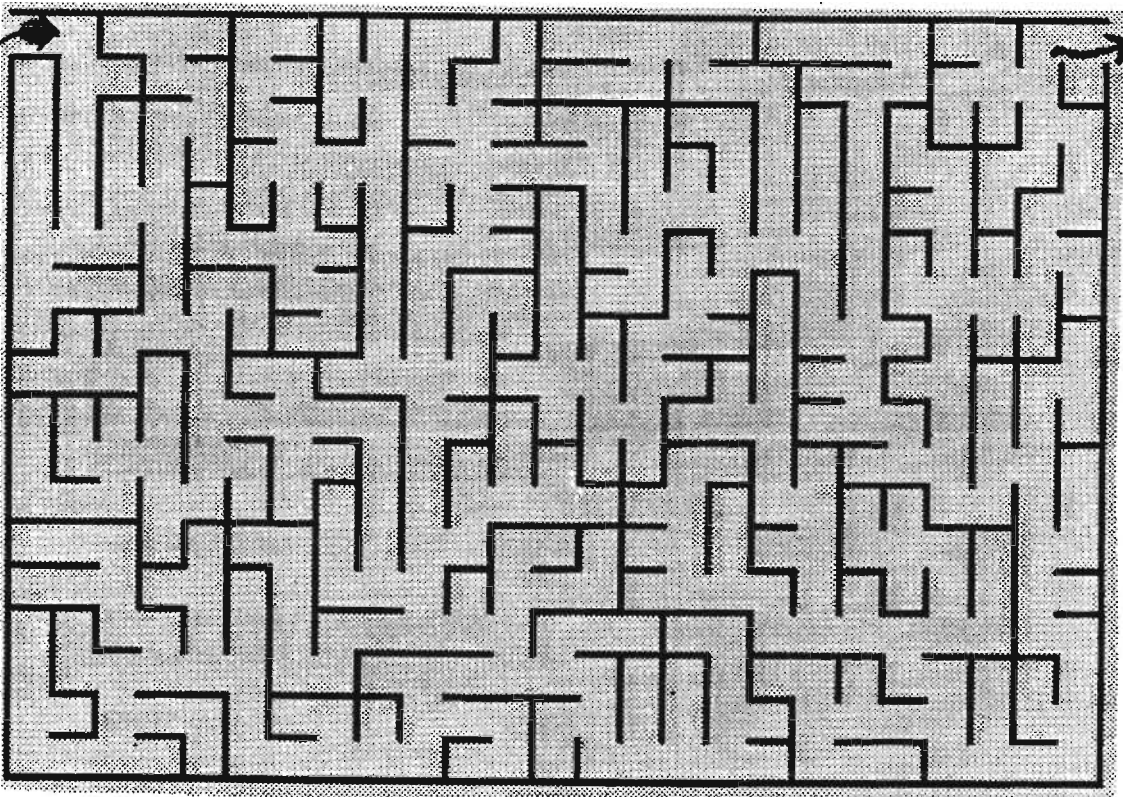
I'm _____.

Check for Understanding

Unscramble the letters in parentheses to make the correct word to complete the sentence.

1. Krishna would try to charge the gopis a _____ (atx) for using the path.
2. There are _____ (ewiht) spots on the rocks where the gopis spilled milk.
3. King Vrishabhanu is Radha's _____ (hrfaet).
4. Krishna learned to dance from a _____ (cpacoke).
5. Krishna would try to charge a fee if Radha took a _____ (lefrwo).

Help the cowherd boy wind his way through Vraja to find Krishna.



Our Fourth Stop Nandagram

A. Nandagram Pastimes

Nandagram is located on top of a very big hill, just like Varshana. Nanda Maharaj, his family and friends lived in Nandagram before Krishna appeared. Then they moved to Gokula, which was near the Yamuna River and had nice green grass for the cows to eat. That is where Krishna lived with them when He was a small baby. They moved a couple of more times and when Krishna was older, they returned to Nandagram.



Now Krishna was old enough to take all the cows out for grazing. Before he was only in charge of the calves. He knew the names of each of His father's 900,000 cows. If one was missing when they were taken out to pasture, Krishna would chase after it calling it by name.

There is a road leading from Varshana to Nandagram. It is the path that Radharani took when she came to cook for Krishna each day. Sometimes Krishna would sit here eating and Radharani would look at Him from the window of the palace to see what He was doing. Many times She made very special sweets for Him and She wanted to secretly see how He liked them.

When the special sweet was put on Krishna's plate, He knew immediately who had made it. First He looked out of the corner of His eye to make sure Radha was watching Him. Then He picked up the sweet with a

big smile on His bright face. He bit into it and made a terrible face, as if the sweet tasted awful. Then, still knowing that Radha was watching Him, He would sneak them all onto the plate of Sridam, Radharani's brother. Of course Sridam was very happy at this! Radharani then saw her brother eat all the sweets eagerly. She knew that Krishna had been teasing Her and this made Her laugh and feel happy.

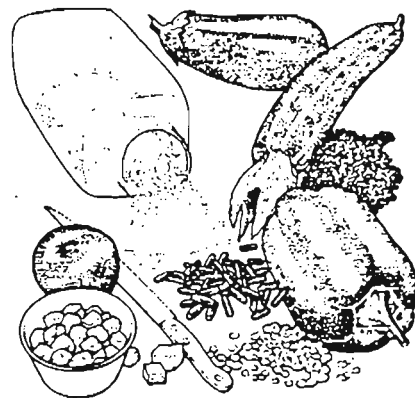
B. Pavan Sarovara

At the bottom of Nandagram Hill there is a beautiful lake called Pavan Sarovara. Nanda Maharaj and the men of the community used to come here for their baths. Krishna would also pass through here on His way home with the cows and He would give the calves a nice bath and water to drink.

Radharani had once pleased the great sage, Durvasa Muni, and he gave Her a benediction that whoever ate the food she cooked would never become sick. So Mother Yasoda would always try to arrange for Radharani to cook for her son.

Radharani made the trip everyday from Varshana to cook for Krishna. She did her cooking at Pavan Sarovara. Mother Yasoda loved Radharani just as if She was her own daughter. As soon as she arrived, Mother Yasoda would give Her a big hug and ask how Her family was.

“Come, wash Your hands and have a little breakfast before you begin cooking,” Yasoda devi told Radha. “All the vegetables have been cut for You and the cow's milk is ready on the stove if You want to make sweets. If there is anything else You need, just tell me.”



Radharani felt a little shy being in Krishna's house like this so She was a bit quiet.

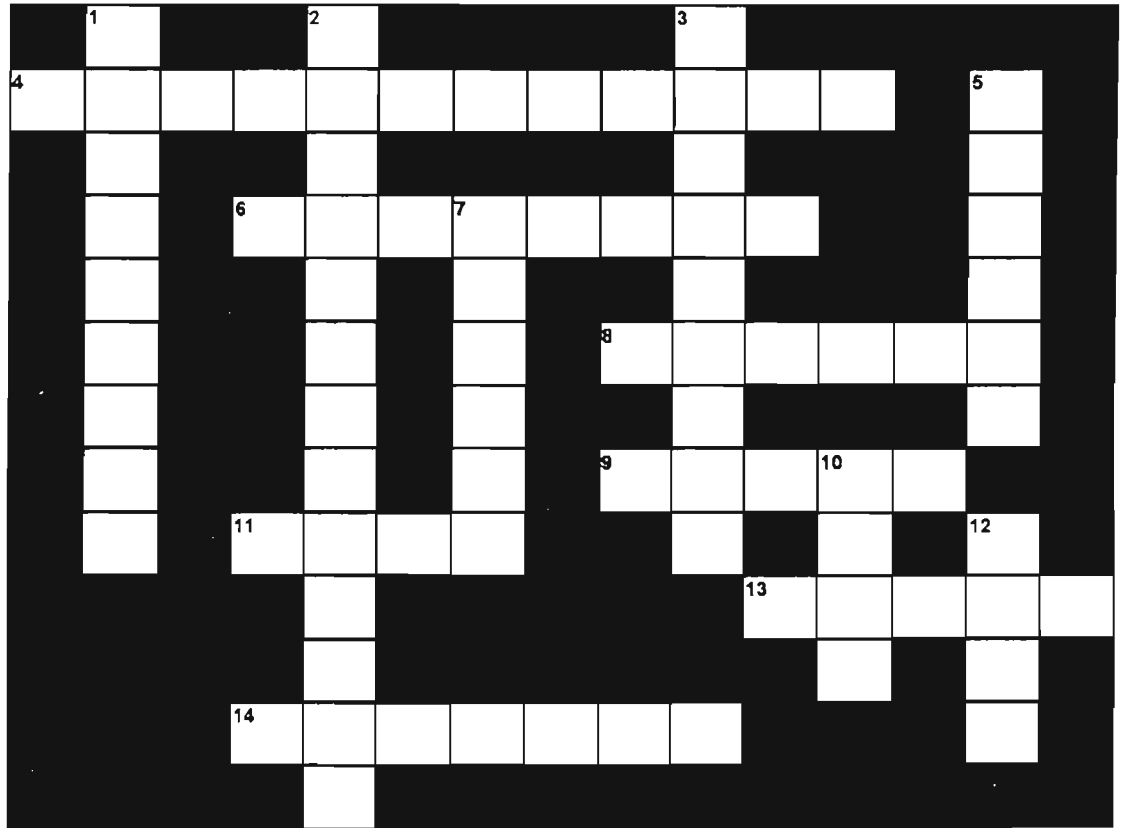
When Yasoda noticed this she said, “My dear child, why are You feeling shy? This house is Your house and You should do anything You like here. I will give You the keys so You know that I mean this. Now I will go, so please, dear Radhika, feel at home and take charge of the house.”

The other gopis had helped get ready for the cooking, so it didn't take Radharani much time at all to prepare dozens of delicious dishes for Krishna. Krishna could smell things cooking and knew that His beloved Radha was in the kitchen. He would sneak up to the house and peek in through the window, trying to get a look at Radharani.

After the cooking was finished, Mother Yasoda and Mother Rohini would serve the prasadam to Krishna, Balaram and Their cowherd friends. Radha stood behind a curtain where they couldn't see Her and there She could watch Krishna enjoy His meal.



Nandagram Crossword



Across	Down
---------------	-------------

- 4. Nandagram's owner
- 6. Vrishabhanu's home
- 8. Krishna's mother
- 9. peacock taught this
- 11. animals of Krishna
- 13. cowherd girls
- 14. Balaram to Krishna

- 1. Where Radha cooks
- 2. Where Nanda bathed
- 3. A home of Krishna
- 5. Radha's brother
- 7. Radha cooks these
- 10. Radha did this for K.
- 12. Shiva took this form

Our Fifth Stop Javat

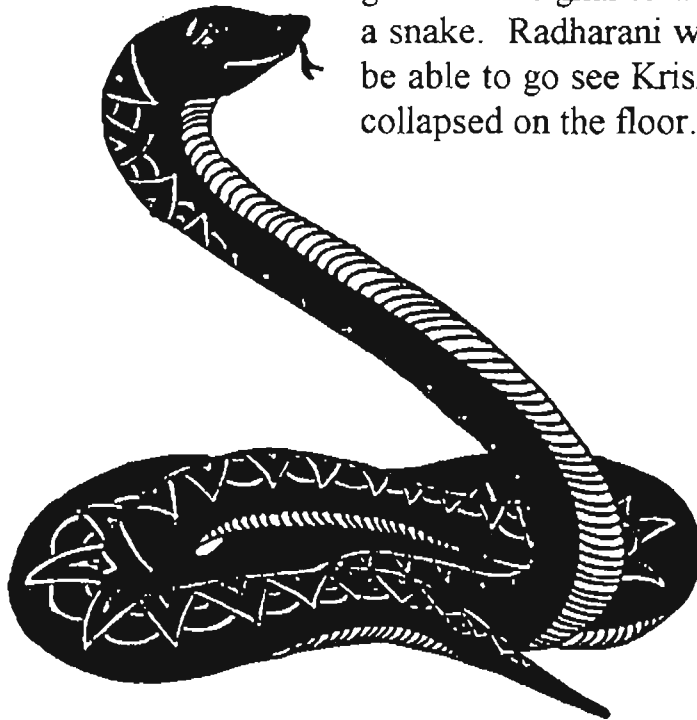
Radharani's husband, Abhimanyu, and his family lived in Javat. Radharani's sister-in-law was named Kotila, and her mother-in-law was named Jotila. Sometimes it seems that they were meant to Krishna but this is not really so. Their actions only served to increase Krishna's pleasure and make the love between Radharani and Him even sweeter.

Jotila and Kotila were always a little suspicious of Radharani's friendship with Krishna. And they were pretty clear about their feelings towards Krishna. They thought He was a Number One Rascal. Krishna always delighted in tricking Jotila and Kotila. He found some pretty clever ways to sneak into their house to visit Radha.

A. Radha is Bitten by a Snake

One day when it was time for Radharani to leave for Nandagram to cook for Krishna, Jotila didn't want to let her go. Radharani tried to persuade her, but her mother-in-law had made up her mind. One of Radha's friends

gave her a signal to fall down and pretend she was bitten by a snake. Radharani was willing to do just about anything to be able to go see Krishna, so She immediately cried out and collapsed on the floor.



In no time at all, the whole area had heard that Radharani was unconscious due to a snakebite and that the poison was spreading. Poor Jotila and Kotila were desperately running here and there trying to find someone who could help Her. Just then, one of Radha's friends named Champa came along with another girl whom she said was her maid.

“Jotila mata, this maid of mine is no ordinary girl,” said Champa to the worried women. “She is an expert in extracting all kinds of poisons. She is

the best in curing people of snakebites. She usually won't go to people's homes, but I begged her to come and help with Radharani."

Jotila and Kotila fell at the young maid's feet and cried, "Please, give us your mercy! Save our daughter-in-law! Otherwise our family will be ruined."

The young girl listened and said, "First let me check your daughter-in-law and see how far the poison has spread. You wait here while Champa and I examine the patient."

So Jotila and Kotila waited outside as Champa and her maid went in Radharani's room. As soon as the door was closed, the young girl started talking loudly as if she was talking to a snake in the room.

"What are you doing here, you snake? Why did you bite this innocent young girl? She didn't do anything to you!"

Then the young maid changed her voice and imitated the snake's voice and said, "Actually I have come to destroy Jotila and Kotila. I have come a long way just to be the death of them."

The young girl said in her normal voice, "Why?"

"Because Jotila has broken her promise to send her daughter-in-law to cook for Krishna. She won't let Her go, so that's why I bit this beautiful young girl. If young Radha dies, then Jotila's hopes and dreams will be smashed and she will die also!" said the snake voice.

The maid acted surprised and exclaimed, "But what can we do? Isn't there any way we can save this poor girl's life?"

The snake said, "If Jotila is willing to keep her word and never stop this innocent girl from fulfilling Her promise to cook for Krishna, then I will retract my poison and go away. I will never come back if Jotila keeps her promise."

Jotila, who had been listening outside with her ear pressed to the door, burst into the room and babbled, "I promise, I promise, I promise. Never

again will I stop Radhika from going to cook. I'll do whatever you say, just don't let her die, or it will be the end for all of us!"

Hearing this, Radharani's color returned to normal and she showed signs that she was coming back to life. Jotila was still worried and asked that this young snakebite healer stay for awhile, just in case.

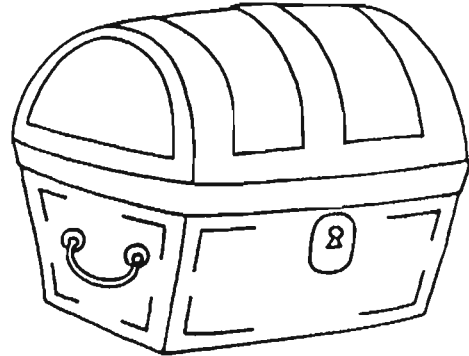
Champa said, "This talented girl is Gargacharya's daughter. I think it would be a good idea for her to stay longer, too. Let's let Radharani rest and Gargacharya's daughter can stay with Her in Her room."

Champa, Kotila and Jotila left the two girls in the room. But were they really two girls? Who do you think Gargacharya's daughter was? Why, it was really Krishna Himself, dressed in the disguise of a maid! He had tricked Jotila again and was able to spend time with Radharani.



B. A Very Valuable Gift

Mother Yasoda was very grateful to Radharani for coming over everyday to cook. She wanted to give Radha something special to show her appreciation. She got out a trunk and filled it with all kinds of jewelry and gorgeous silk saris. Krishna peeped in and saw her and asked what she was doing.



“I’m just packing a trunk full of some things,” she said.

Krishna said, “If those things are for Me, just let me wear them now. You don’t have to put them in a trunk.”

“They’re *not* for You,” His mother replied. “Just go out and play. This isn’t any business of Yours anyway.”

She finished packing, closed the trunk and locked it. She had sent a servant to Javat to bring Abhimanyu here so that he could take the trunk to his wife, Radharani.

While Krishna and His friends were outside playing, they saw Abhimanyu arrive. They figured out that Mother Yasoda must be sending the trunk to Radha. They quietly stole into the room where the trunk was stored. They boys broke the lock and took out all the clothes and jewelry. Krishna climbed in the trunk and hid. Then the boys closed the lid and placed another lock on just like the one Mother Yasoda had used.

She had just finished telling Abhimanyu that she had some gifts that she wanted him to deliver to Radharani. One of her instructions was that he must give the trunk to Radharani and no one else. Abhimanyu agreed and he and Mother Yasoda went to the room where the trunk was kept. By this time the boys had hidden the jewels and clothing and had climbed out the window.

Abhimanyu lifted the trunk onto his shoulders and said, “My, how heavy this is! You are very generous. Thank you, Mataji.”

When he arrived home, he told Jotila that these gifts had been sent for Radharani.

Jotila said, “Well, go ahead and take it in to Her. Then come back out. I want to talk to you about Radharani. I don’t think Her behavior is very proper. The way She acts with that boy, Krishna...”

Abhimanyu carried the trunk in to Radharani and gently laid it on the floor. He told Her it was a present from Mother Yasoda. He then softly shut the door and went out to speak to his mother. Radharani was eager and curious to see what the trunk held. She went to the trunk, unlocked it, and to Her surprise, out jumped Krishna right into Her arms. Poor Jotila got tricked again!

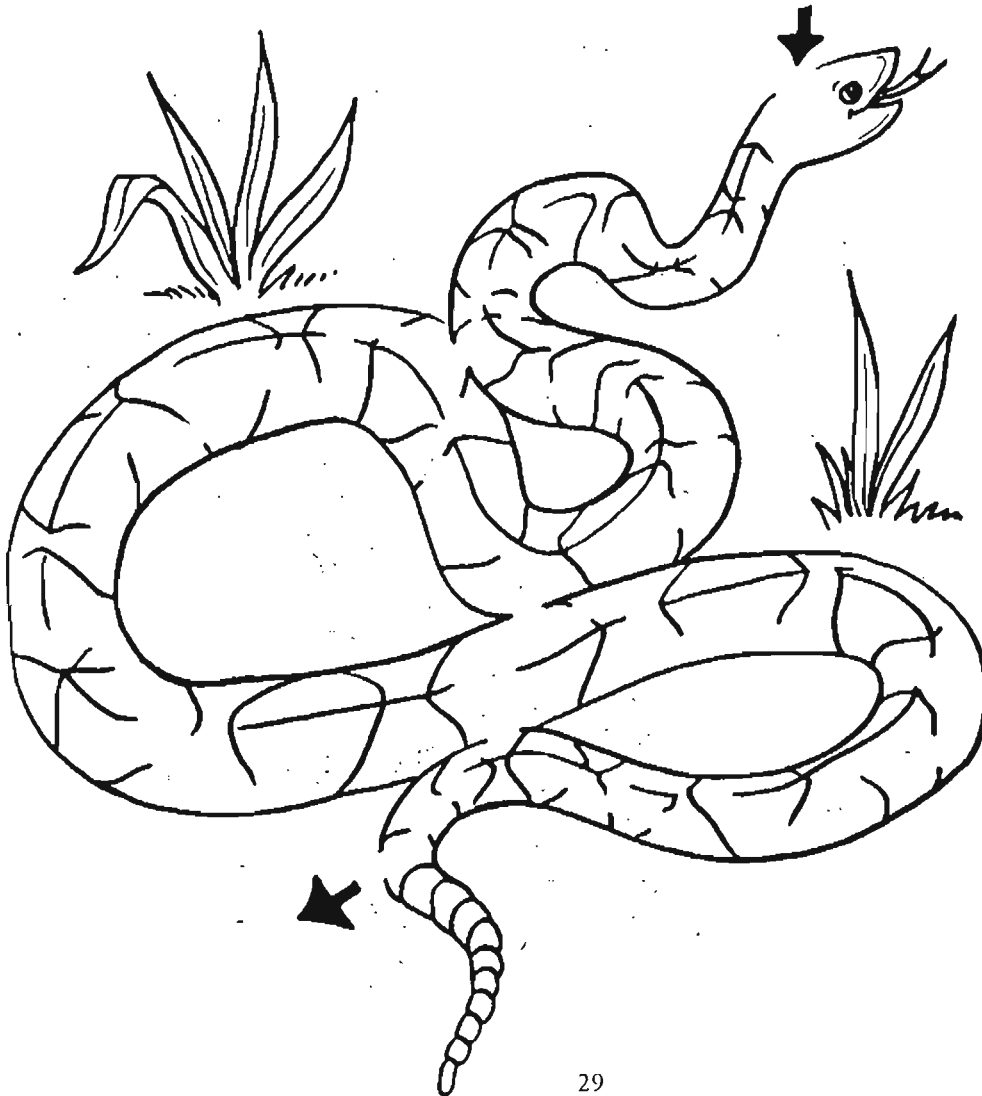


Check for Understanding

Fill in the blank with the missing word.

1. Radharani's mother-in-law is named _____.
2. Radharani's sister-in-law is named _____.
3. Abhimanyu is Radharani's _____.
4. Krishna pretended to cure Radharani's _____ bite so He would have a chance to see her.
5. Krishna hid inside a _____ in order to visit Radharani.

Find your way through the snake maze below.





Our Sixth Stop **Vrindavan**

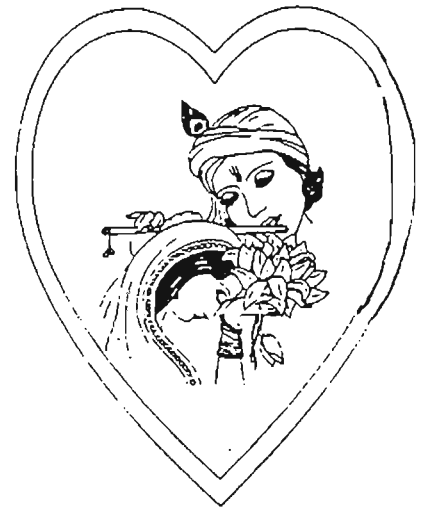
There are twelve forests in Vraja Mandala. Vrindavan is the most auspicious of them all. The Yamuna River flows within this forest. Govardhan Hill stands here. Radha Kunda and Shyama Kunda are also found within this sacred forest. Many of the most important temples of India are also located in Vrindavan. Vrindavan is the land of very special pastimes of the Lord. A whole month or more could be spent visiting all the sites of Vrindavan. Since we have so little time, we will just mention a few places.

A. Seva Kunja

In Seva Kunja, Krishna danced the rasa lila with Srimati Radharani and the gopis. Every night this rasa dance is still being performed here. We are not able to see Krishna dancing with the gopis because we don't have the spiritual vision. And it is said that anyone who tries to hide here during the night to watch it will either lose his life or go mad. Even the monkeys, birds and peacocks can be seen leaving the area before nightfall.

In Seva Kunja, Krishna would serve Radharani. He would brush Her hair and decorate it with flowers. He would massage Her feet and offer Her any other service that She wished.

One time Radharani's friend, Lalita, was here with Them and became thirsty. Krishna created a well by pushing His flute into the ground. The well can still be seen in the middle of Seva Kunja.



B. Banke Bihari Temple

One of the most popular temples in Vrindavan is the Banke Bihari Mandir. The area around the temple is always crowded and shenai bands play right outside the temple doors.

If you want to have darshan of Banke Bihari you have to act fast. The darshans are very short. You may go in the temple and see the curtain in

front of the Deity closed. In a minute, it will open and in just a few more seconds, it will close again! That was your quick darshan. There is a good reason for these unusual darshans.

One time a great devotee of Krishna came to this temple to see the Deity. He was very devoted to the Lord and offered many heartfelt prayers. When the devotee went to leave, Banke Bihari was sad to see him go. He was so sad that he walked right off the altar and followed His devotee out the door! The temple pujaris quickly caught Banke Bihari and placed Him back on the altar. But ever since then they are afraid that He might choose to leave again. That's why the darshan is so short. They don't want to give the Deity a chance to walk away with someone else!

C. Keshi Ghat

Keshi was the name of a horse demon that was sent to Vrindavan by Kamsa to kill Krishna. Many of you may already know the story. But something very interesting happened to Balaram just before the Keshi demon attacked Krishna.

Balaram and Krishna loved each other very much. They admired each other too. Krishna had killed many demons and had done many other heroic tasks, like lifting Govardhan Hill. Everybody was praising Krishna and Balaram's admiration for His brother grew.

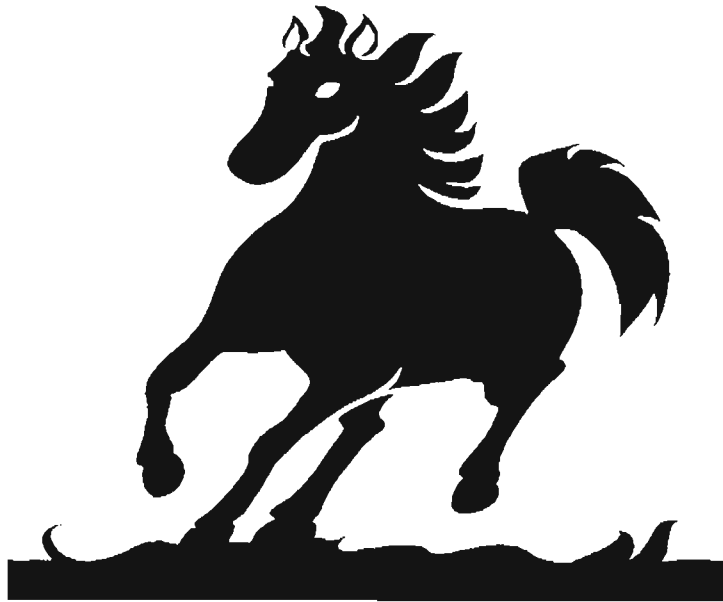
Balaram thought that it would be fun to dress like Krishna for a day. He went to His younger brother and asked Him, "Could I wear Your peacock feather and play Your flute just for today?"

Krishna agreed right away and took off His peacock feather, placing it on Balaram's head. He handed Balaram His flute and gave Him a big hug. Balaram was so delighted that He laughed happily and went skipping off playing Krishna's flute.

Neither brother knew that Kamsa had sent off Keshi, the horse demon, off to Vrindavan that very day. When Keshi was leaving, he asked Kamsa, "How will I know which boy is Krishna? I want to be sure I kill the right one!"

Kamsa replied, “It will be easy to recognize Krishna. He is the only person you will see wearing a peacock feather in His crown and playing a flute.”

This sounded easy to Keshi and he thundered through the countryside on his way to Vrindavan. His whinnying sounds were frightful to hear and his tail wheeled in the sky like a big, dark cloud.

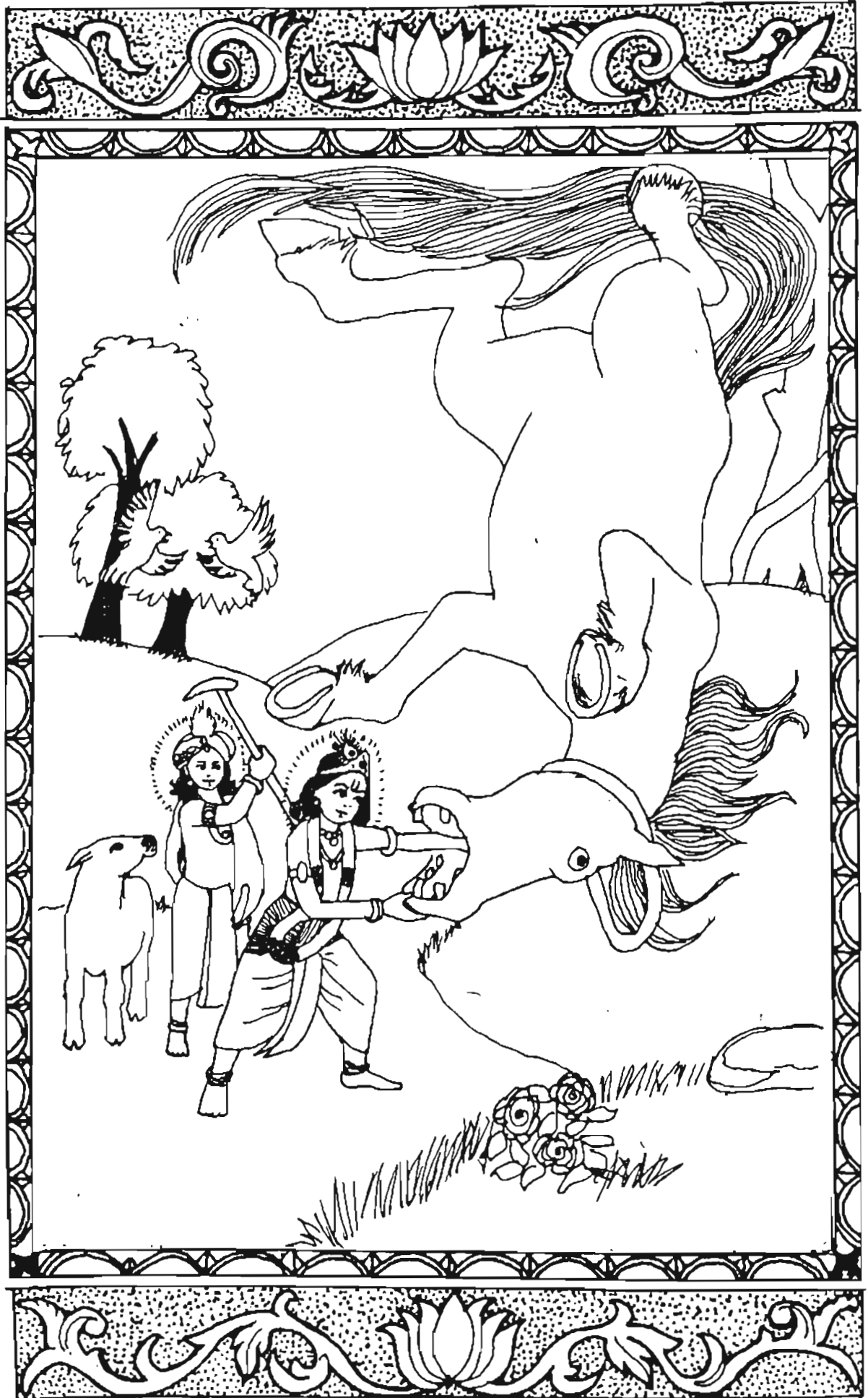


In the meantime, Balaram was really enjoying His day as Krishna. He frolicked with the cows, playing His flute and singing. He looked at His reflection in every pond and lake to see if Krishna’s peacock feather was still riding nicely on His own crown.

Suddenly, while Balaram was in the middle of playing a song on the flute, Keshi galloped up with an terrifying look in his eye. Keshi spotted the peacock feather on Balaram’s head and the flute in His hand.

“So you are Krishna!” he roared. “You are the one my master wants me to kill! You will now meet your death!”

Balaram certainly wasn’t expecting anything like this to happen and He could only stand there stunned with His mouth open. Before He could prepare Himself, the demon let loose a mighty kick that caught Balaram in the chest. The kick of the demon was strong enough to kill a full-grown elephant.



Keshi's kick knocked the wind out of Balaram and sent Him tumbling far out of the demon's sight.

Keshi figured that he had killed Krishna. He left the area and went off, huffing and puffing, to see what other trouble he could cause in Vrindavan.

Balaram picked Himself out of the dust and began to cry. He gasped as He breathed; His chest hurt where the demon had kicked Him. He was hungry and tired and sore all over. He started for home as fast as His weary little legs could carry Him.

As soon as He saw Krishna, He quickly handed over the flute and peacock feather.

"I never, ever want to wear these things of Yours again," He said tearfully. "A huge horse demon thought I was You and kicked Me really hard." Balaram ran into the house calling for His mother. Almost as soon as He got into her arms, He fell asleep.

Krishna tucked the flute into His belt and put the peacock feather back into His crown. He started back for the village. Keshi thundered up, his great mane flying and his hooves tearing up the earth. He saw Krishna and figured out that this must be the real Krishna whom he was sent to kill.

Keshi rushed towards the Lord, making a sound like a roaring lion. The demon tried to trample Krishna with His legs but Krishna grabbed His legs and outsmarted him. Krishna picked up the huge horse and threw him a hundred yards away. This knocked Keshi unconscious for awhile.

The fierce horse soon got up and rushed angrily towards Lord Krishna with his mouth open. As soon as Keshi reached Him, Krishna pushed His left hand within the horse's mouth. His hand burned like an iron rod and Keshi's teeth immediately fell out. With the Lord's hand in his mouth, the demon began to suffocate and his legs kicked out in all directions as he left his body.

Keshi's mouth loosened as he died and Krishna easily removed His hand. The demigods were in the heavens watching and were amazed that the Lord killed the demon so effortlessly. They showered flowers down from the sky to show their appreciation.

In the village of Vrindavan you can still visit Keshi Ghat. That is the place where Lord Krishna killed the demon. It is located right on the Yamuna River. There is a small altar area at Keshi Ghat with a Deity of Krishna holding His hand inside Keshi's mouth.



Holy *ghātas* of Vrindāvana scenically located on the River Yamunā.

Check for Understanding

1. How did Krishna kill Keshi?

2. Why can't you stay in Seva Kunja at night?

3. Why are the darshans at the Banke Bihari temple so short?

4. Why did the Keshi demon mistake Balaram for Krishna?

5. What river runs through Vrindavan?

Vrindavan Word Search

I	R	A	H	I	B	E	K	N	A	B	M	U	D	X
U	N	A	V	A	D	N	I	R	V	A	P	A	E	I
K	R	I	S	H	N	A	F	H	R	T	R	N	M	V
P	H	X	E	A	N	K	J	A	S	S	P	U	O	I
U	K	K	V	I	D	O	L	Q	H	E	Z	M	N	Z
B	N	Q	A	Q	B	A	R	A	C	R	K	A	S	X
J	U	F	K	M	B	W	N	M	B	O	J	Y	V	G
T	U	I	U	Y	S	M	W	C	H	F	V	K	B	R
M	G	Z	N	T	Y	A	H	S	E	C	K	A	U	L
R	M	X	J	C	Q	S	L	V	L	D	G	P	H	E
W	P	X	A	H	P	C	V	U	P	M	V	M	N	L
J	U	J	R	G	B	T	Z	X	M	F	U	D	C	Q
E	F	B	D	L	S	J	J	L	E	D	Z	H	F	F
N	X	Q	X	G	R	E	T	M	T	P	H	N	U	B

Balaram

Banka Bihari

Darshan

Demons

Forest

Kamsa

Keshi

Krishna

Rasa dance

Seva Kunja

Temple

Vrindavan

Yamuna