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Monthly Newsletter
2018 October
Issue No: 10

The Past Life of Sadan Kasai

In our last issue (Sandarshan 9) we told you about Sadan Kasai, the soft-hearted butcher who loved Krishn, and who left his family business after being blessed by Shaligram Shila. But what happened to Sadan after that? The rest of the story is revealed in the Bhaktmaal.

Taking his beloved *shaligram shila* with him, Sadan left his hometown for the holy city of Puri. On the way, he needed to rest, so he took shelter in the home of a husband and wife.





The wife found Sadan very attractive. She came to him very late at night and tried to seduce him. Sadan cried, "I consider you like my mother! Please think of me as your son and don't do this."

She thought that Sadan was saying no because he was afraid of her husband. So she took a sword and went to the room where her husband was sleeping. She cut off her husband's head and came back to Sadan, saying, "My husband is dead; no one can stop us from being together now!"

But Sadan was totally shocked, and of course he did not agree to her wishes. So the wife sat in the doorway of her house, crying loudly and beating her chest with her fists. A crowd gathered to watch the scene. When they asked why she was crying, the wife said:

"This traveller Sadan killed my husband, and now he wants to rape me!" The crowd pulled Sadan out of the house and started beating him. But he did not say anything to defend himself, even when they brought him to the court.

Sadan remained calm like a detached observer; he felt everything that happened was nothing but his Lord's *lila*. Although he had not done anything wrong, he felt he must have done something in the past to deserve this and was ready to accept any punishment.

The Judge ruled that both of Sadan's arms must be cut off. The deed was done and blood began to flow, yet even then Sadan felt this was also his Lord's mercy. He did not become angry at Krishn or at anyone else. Instead he

lost himself in the Holy Name, and in the bliss of *kirtan* he reached Puri.

As Sadan was about to arrive in the holy city, Jagannath Dev appeared to one of his *sevants* in a dream and said, "My beloved devotee Sadan is coming. Bring him to me in a *palki* with all honour." The *sevait* brought Sadan to the temple, and at the moment he bowed in front of Jagannath, Sadan's arms were restored.

But even though Sadan was healed, a doubt remained in his mind. Why had all this happened to him in the first place? The supremely merciful Krishn took his doubt away.

In a dream, Krishn said to Sadan:

"In your last birth you were a wise, clean and virtuous Brahmin living in Kashi. One day, a cow ran away from a butcher's yard. She cried for your help. But you put your arms around her neck and stopped her from escaping, even though you knew her 'owner' was a butcher. In her next birth, that cow became the woman who blamed you, and the butcher became her husband. In his previous birth, he killed her, so in this birth she killed him. And you used your arms to catch the cow and give her back to the butcher. That is why your arms were cut off in this life. But now you are free from all this sin."

Hearing Krishn's message of great mercy, Sadan drowned in the nectar of *prem*. He lived in Puri for the rest of his life, chanting *Hari-naam*, singing Krishn's glories, and meditating on him all the time. And in the end, he attained Krishn's eternal *seva*.

Light on the Path of Love

The *Narad Bhakti Sutra* says:

yal-labdhvā pumān siddho bhavati amṛto bhavati trpto bhavati

"After attaining devotion, the devotee becomes perfect, immortal and completely satisfied."

Devotion is its own fulfilment, and after gaining this wealth, we will discover an unlimited satisfaction within. We will no longer desire anything but devotion, and we will not feel any emptiness thereafter. Shankaracharya states in *Shivananda Lahari*, "Let me be born as a man or a god, an animal or a tree, a bug, a worm or a bird. I don't care which form I take, as long as my heart is full of love for your lotus feet."


The first point in this *sutra* says, "After attaining devotion, the devotee becomes perfect". Once we reach this level, we become completely calm, humble and perfect. Here perfection or *siddhi* does not mean supernatural powers. Instead, *siddhi* means reaching the highest stage of devotion, and one who attains this state is called a *siddh*. Sometimes the word *siddhi* is used to describe supernatural powers, and it is true that devotees may attain different powers as a side-effect of devotional practice. However, this is not a goal of devotion, and devotees do not want these powers. The *Patanjali Yog Sutra* describes eight yogic perfections (*siddhis*) such as to become extremely small, to become extremely large, to become very heavy or to acquire anything you desire, but these achievements are material in nature; they are not true perfection.

Nowadays, many people think superhuman

powers equal divinity, and those who attain such powers attract many followers. But such powers are not a sign of accomplishment in devotion. Further, those who use such powers for personal gain will fall from the path of devotion.

When we attain supernatural powers through our practice, we often become proud, and this pride is the most dangerous obstacle on the path. We may waste most of our time using or showing off these powers, instead of apply-





ing ourselves in devotion. For devotees, true *siddhi* means nothing less than attaining sacred love. It is like perfectly boiled rice which becomes soft, and after this stage it can never go back to being hard again. In the same way, after attaining devotion, a devotee becomes soft and humble. The pride of wealth, social status, and so forth, vanishes from him.

Once, a spiritual master named Gyandev and his disciple Naamdev were crossing a desert. After walking some distance, they felt the urge to drink water. Both were thirsty and luckily they found a well, but the rope and bucket were missing. So the spiritual master used his superhuman powers and went inside the well, drank the water and returned. Gyandev asked his disciple Naamdev to do the same, but Naamdev started to cry and said, "When a devotee of the Lord is thirsty, will the Lord not quench his thirst?" Two teardrops fell from his eyes into the well, and the water level rose higher. The disciple was able to drink the water without using any superhuman powers. Here, Naamdev is an example of a true *siddh* devotee. We should seek the association of a *siddh* like Naamdev, and not be misled in pursuit of supernatural powers (*siddhis*).

The second part of the *sutra* states "the devotee becomes immortal". Becoming immortal does not mean that the body becomes permanent. This is obviously impossible. Once the attachment to the material body disappears, we become free from the fear of death. Mortality then ceases to be a reality for us, and thus we become immortal.

Devotion is eternal, and those who practice it also become eternal. The devotee is always drowning in this never ending love.

The third part of the *sutra* states that the devotee becomes extremely satisfied. Human beings can tend to be greedy; we like to gain more fame, earn more wealth, and so forth.

A man afflicted with desire can never be satisfied, even if he has everything the world has to offer including grain, wealth, livestock and women. Indulging in desire never satisfies desire, just as pouring butter on a fire does not put the fire out, but rather makes it burn more intensely. (*Shrimad Bhagwatam* 9.19. 13-14)

Any sense object that we enjoy will not have a lasting effect. Suppose you like the smell of a particular perfume. You will enjoy the scent only as long as the fragrance lasts. The feeling stays only as long as the senses are in contact with the external object. When we are separated from the object of our enjoyment, the feelings start to disappear. But this is not the nature of devotion. Once we have gotten a taste for devotion, nothing else that we can possibly desire compares to it. Here, Narad explains that after attaining devotion, we no longer yearn for material things. We become free from all desires. The *Bhagwad Gita* (6.22) states, "When at last a devotee finds that ultimate joy, he understands that there is nothing more to be attained." After attaining this bliss, we will avoid sensual pleasures naturally, not wanting to disturb our inner satisfaction.

(From *Way to Love: A Commentary on the Narad Bhakti Sutra* by Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami, Sutra 4)

The Holy Month of Kartik

Kartik is a special month for performing spiritual practice. The *Padma Puran* says Kartik is Krishn's favourite month, and if we worship him even a little during this month, we can attain his eternal *dham*.

Every evening throughout Kartik, devotees offer ghee lamps to Shri Radha and Krishn, and chant *Damodarashtakam* for them. They may

also make other resolutions by the guidance of their Guru, like giving charity, bathing in the Yamuna River or Radha Kund, doing *parikrama*, fasting and staying up all night with *kirtan* on Ekadashi, giving up certain foods and spices, or increasing their spiritual practice in general.

"Even though Vrindavan is here on earth, and Kartik month comes every year, tragically, some people still do not come to Vrindavan during Kartik, and thus remain suffering in the ocean of birth and death!" (*Haribhakti Vilas* 16.162, quoting *Padma Puran*)





Festivals of Kartik (With Dates for 2018)



October 20: Papankush Ekadashi (Ashwin Shukla Ekadashi). This is the last Ekadashi before Kartik begins, and most devotees begin their Niyam Seva (Kartik resolutions) on this day.

October 24: Sharad Purnima/Sharadotsav (Ashwin Purnima). Sharad Purnima is the full moon night when Shri Radha-Krishn and the *gopis* met for the Raas Lila. In the Radharaman Temple, Shriji (Radharamanji) wears white, and the whole temple is draped in white cloth. There is a special *bhog* of puffed lotus seed pudding (*makhane ki kheer*) and fried flatbread covered in powdered sugar (*chandrakala*). Shriji sits on a special golden throne.

October 25: Laghu Sharadotsav (Kartik Krishna Pratipad). On this night, Shriji sits on a special silver throne. There is a special *bhog* of calabash pudding (*ghia ki kheer*) and fried flatbread covered in powdered sugar (*chandrakala*). From this day until the following summer, the Rajbhog Aarti is performed with ghee wicks, rather than flowers, because autumn has come and the weather is now mild.

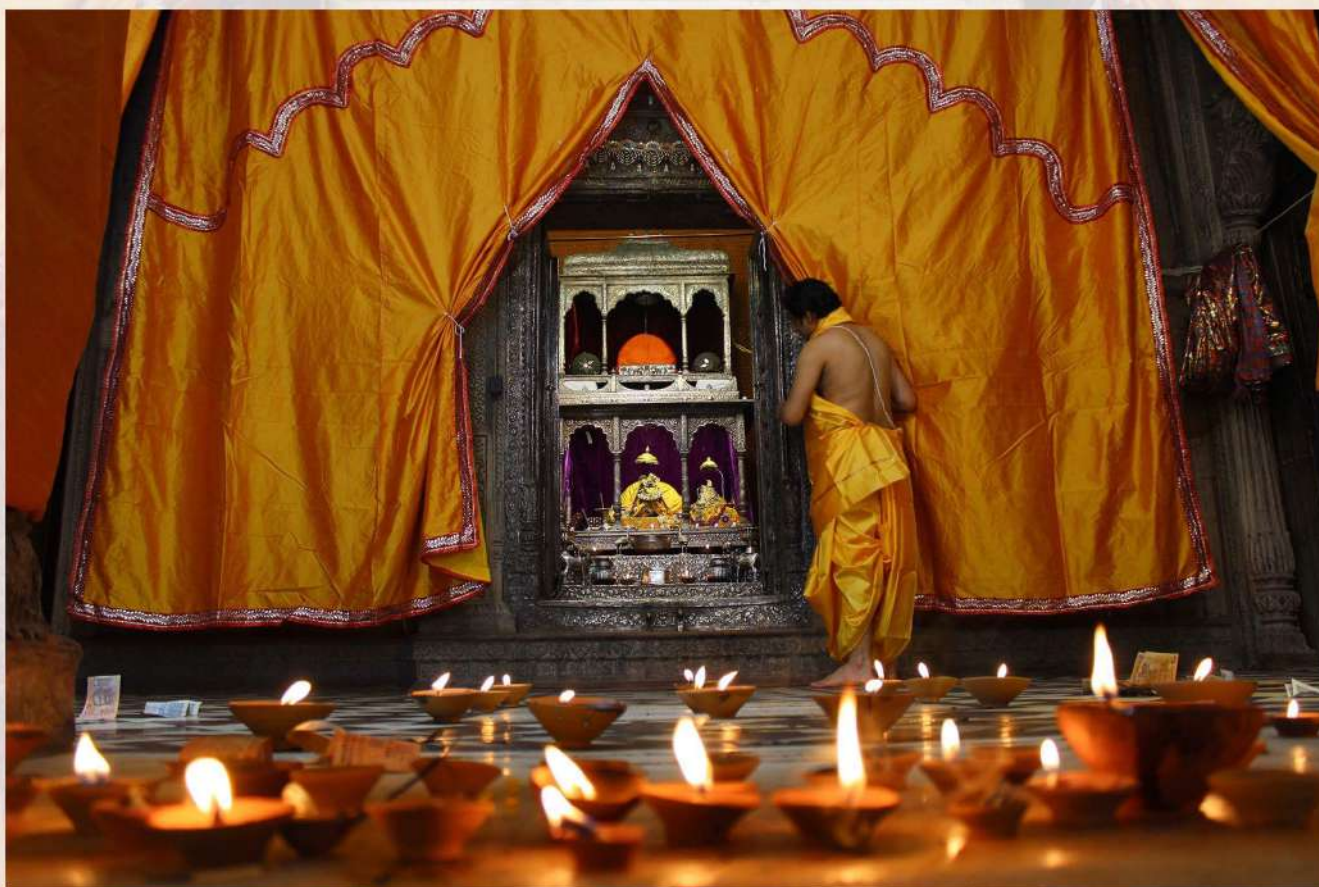
October 31: Bahulashtami (Kartik Krishna Ashtami). On Bahulashtami, devotees flock to Radha Kund in large numbers to take a midnight bath in the holy lake. The *Padma Puran* says *govardhana girau ramye rādhākuṇḍaṁ priyaṁ hareḥ, kārṭike bahulāṣṭamyāṁ tatra snatvā hareḥ priyaḥ* "Whoever bathes in Krishn's beloved Radha Kund near Govardhan on Bahulashtami during Kartik becomes very dear to him." It is thus understood that we may bathe any time on the *ashtami tithi*, not only at midnight. Sometimes this day is called the appearance day of Radha Kund, but it is more likely that Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu rediscovered Radha Kund on this day. Vishwanath Chakravarti says that Radha Kund's Appearance Day is on Chaitra Purnima (See *Sandarshan* Issue 4 and the *Sararth Darshini* commentary on *Shrimad Bhagwatam* 10.45.03).

November 4: Ramaa Ekadashi (Kartik Krishna Ekadashi). The first Ekadashi of Kartik is called Ramaa Ekadashi. From this day till the end of Kartik, Radharamaniji sits in a *hathri*: a little silver house with open sides.

November 5: Dhanteras (Kartik Krishna 13). Dhanteras is the appearance day of Lord Dhannvanti. In the evening, a *chaupar* boardgame is placed before Shriji so that he can play with Radharani.

November 6: Choti Dipawali (Kartik Krishna 14). Shriji wears yellow cloth on this day. After his bath the Goswamis touch *shirish patra* (lebbeck leaves) to his body as an Ayurvedic medicine to protect him from the changing weather, and they offer ghee lamps to him. There is also a ghee lamp offering to Yamraj.

November 7: Dipawali (Kartik Amavasya). Shriji wears a special crown today, which is reserved for Deepawali (Diwali) and Raskha Bandhan alone, and *tilak* is ceremoniously applied on his brow. *Abhishek*, *pujan* and *aarti* of Mahalakshmi is held. Multiple special dishes are offered as *bhog* to Shriji. In the night-time, every Goswami family comes to receive Shriji's blessings in form of *prasad*.



November 8: Govardhan Pooja and Annakut (Kartik Shukla 1). On this day, Govardhan Hill is worshipped with *annakut* (a mountain of food) and many devotees perform Govardhan Parikrama. In the Radharaman Temple, Shriji comes out on the altar in the morning and is seated on a special throne. There is *abhishek* of Giriraj Shila, worship of a cow and a cowherd boy, and *puja* of Govardhan Hill. A replica of Govardhan Hill is made on the temple floor from fresh cow dung. Many, many special dishes are offered on this day as *bhog*.

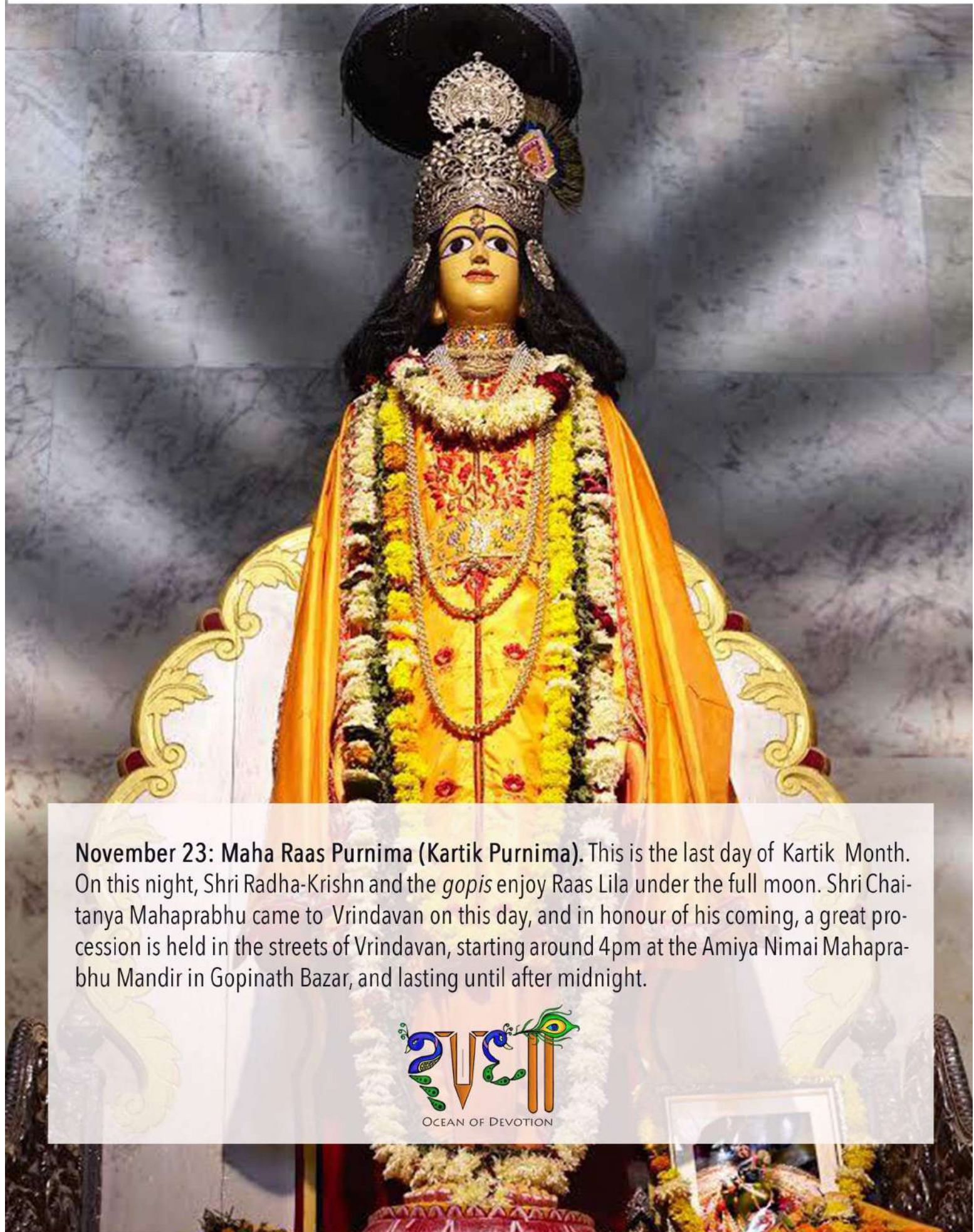
November 9: Bhaiya Dooj/Yam Dwitiya (Kartik Shukla 2). This day is the appearance day of Yamuna's brother, Yamraj. Sisters honour their brothers on this day, and brothers and sisters bathe together in the Yamuna River.

November 16: Gopashtami (Kartik Shukla 8). Gopashtami is the day when, as a child, Krishna was allowed to herd full-grown cows for the first time. In the Radharaman Temple, Shriji is dressed in *natvar srngaar*, which includes a bugle (*shringi*), cow-herding stick (*lakut*), flute (*murali*) and a special crown called *jura*, similar to the one he wears on Ekadashi. After Shrngaar Aarti, *puja* is offered similar to that which is done on Govardhan Puja. The Goswamis ceremoniously apply *tilak* on Shriji's brow and offer gold coins to him.

November 17: Akshay Navmi and Yugal Parikrama (Kartik Shukla 9). On this day, many devotees perform a large parikrama through both Mathura and Vrindavan.

November 19: Devotthan Ekadashi (Kartik Shukla 11). On this day, Shriji wears a special crown. In the evening, a *kunj* is created with sugarcane, under which an offering of raw fruits and vegetables is made to the gods. Without any bells or gongs, soft prayers are recited to awaken the gods from their four-month sleep of *chaturmasya*. After awakening them, *abhishek* is offered to *shaligram shila* with the sound of bells and gongs, and his full *puja* is performed. Then Shaligram Dev is placed on a small chariot and taken on parade (*vijay yatra*) around the outer altar. Thereafter, ghee lamps are offered to Shriji and from this day till the end of winter, Shriji uses a blanket at night. Whoever began their Kartik Niyam Seva on Ekadashi will end it on this day.





November 23: Maha Raas Purnima (Kartik Purnima). This is the last day of Kartik Month. On this night, Shri Radha-Krishn and the *gopis* enjoy Raas Lila under the full moon. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to Vrindavan on this day, and in honour of his coming, a great procession is held in the streets of Vrindavan, starting around 4pm at the Amiya Nimai Mahaprabhu Mandir in Gopinath Bazar, and lasting until after midnight.

