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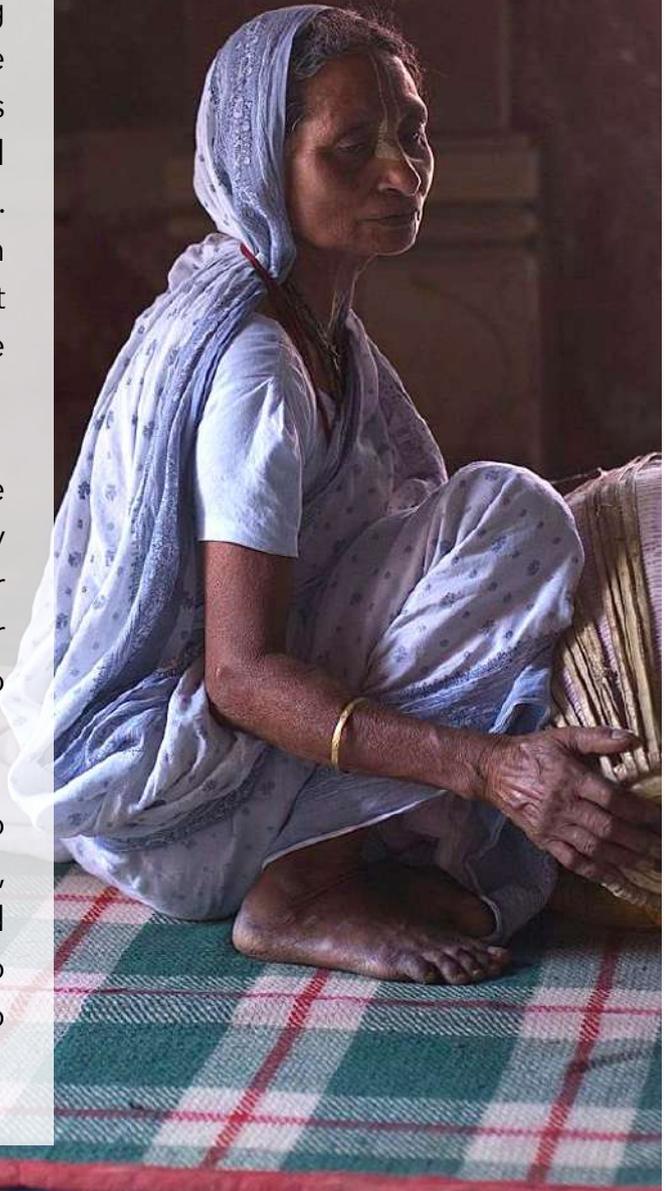
Monthly Newsletter
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Siddh Baba of Ranvari and the Fire of Separation

Siddh Krishndas Baba, better known as Siddh Baba of Ranvari, was born in Bengal, but he came to live in Braj when he was still a young man. In Braj, he lived in a simple hut in the remote village of Ranvari, and he spent all his time meditating on Radha and Krishn's eternal *lila*. The Brajwasis there loved him very much. They used to give him so much food in *madhukari* (alms) that he could not consume it himself, so he used it to feed the sweet village cows.

When Baba reached the age of fifty, he suddenly thought, "Since I came to Braj in my youth, I never got a chance to see any other holy places. I should at least visit the four famous *tirths* of this country." So Baba started to prepare for his journey.

However, the night before he was going to leave, Radharani came in his dream and said, "You have come to Vrindavan and surrendered to me. Do not leave this blessed land and go anywhere else. Just stay in Vrindavan and do *bhajan*, and you will attain everything."





Even though it was so powerful, Baba thought it was just a dream. And so he continued with his plan to visit different holy places.

The first place Baba saw on his journey was Dwarka. During his visit, a priest stamped Baba's body with *tapt mudra*, which is a heated stamp of the *shankh* (a conch shell) and *chakra* (a weapon in the form of a wheel). In Dwarka, Krishn lives as a king with Rukmini and Satyabhama, and the *shankh* and *chakra* are his weapons: the symbols of his divine power. But in Vrindavan, the mood is very different. There, Krishn is a simple cowherd who lives for Radharani's love. And he doesn't need any weapons: he only carries his beloved flute. For this reason, *tapt mudra* is not used by devotees in Vrindavan.

After having *darshan* in Dwarka, Baba suddenly lost all interest in his pilgrimage, and all he wanted to do was go back to Vrindavan.

The day Baba came back to Ranvari village, Radharani came in his dream again. This time she said, "I told you not to leave this holy land, but you went anyway. Now you are marked with the symbols of Dwarka. You are Satyabhama's maidservant now, not mine. Why don't you go back to Dwarka and serve her there?"

This time when he woke up, Radharani's words did not seem like a dream at all. He was very disturbed, and did not know

what to do. He decided to ask for help from some of the great *mahatmas* of his day.

First, Baba went to Siddh Krishndas Baba of Govardhan. As soon as Siddh Baba of Govardhan saw him, he embraced him lovingly and said, "I have not seen you in a long time! Where have you been?" Siddh Baba of Ranvari said, "Well, I took a trip to Dwarka and I received the *tapt mudra* on my body."

Siddh Baba of Govardhan's face changed when he saw the *tapt mudra* and he jumped back. With tears in his eyes he said, "Before we were so close. But now you are marked with such royal symbols! You have become the maidservant of a queen, while I am the maidservant of a Braj *gopi*. I am not even fit to touch you now!" Baba's heart was broken to hear this.

Baba went to several other great saints, but nobody could think of a way to help him. So Baba returned to his hut in Ranvari and wept. He stopped eating and drinking and only sat in his hut, meditating on the only queen of his heart, Radharani, as the fire of separation burned in his heart

After three months, the fire came out. It started at his feet and slowly moved up towards his head. Within a few days, the Brajwasis realised what was happening and broke down the door of Baba's hut. But although his body was burning to ashes, his lips were chanting Harinaam.

The fire reached Baba's throat and didn't continue burning until Siddh Jagannath Das Baba made three wicks and placed them on Baba's head. At that moment, his whole body turned to ashes.

Siddh Baba of Ranvari left his body on the Amavasya day of the month of Paush. Even now the Brajwasis of Ranvari hold a grand festival on his disappearance day, and devotees from all over Braj Mandal come to attend. And since that time, no famine or disease has ever touched Ranvari, even if the rest of Braj Mandal is affected.

This year, Siddh Baba of Ranvari's Disappearance Day falls on January 5th, 2019



Radharani and the Poor Farmer

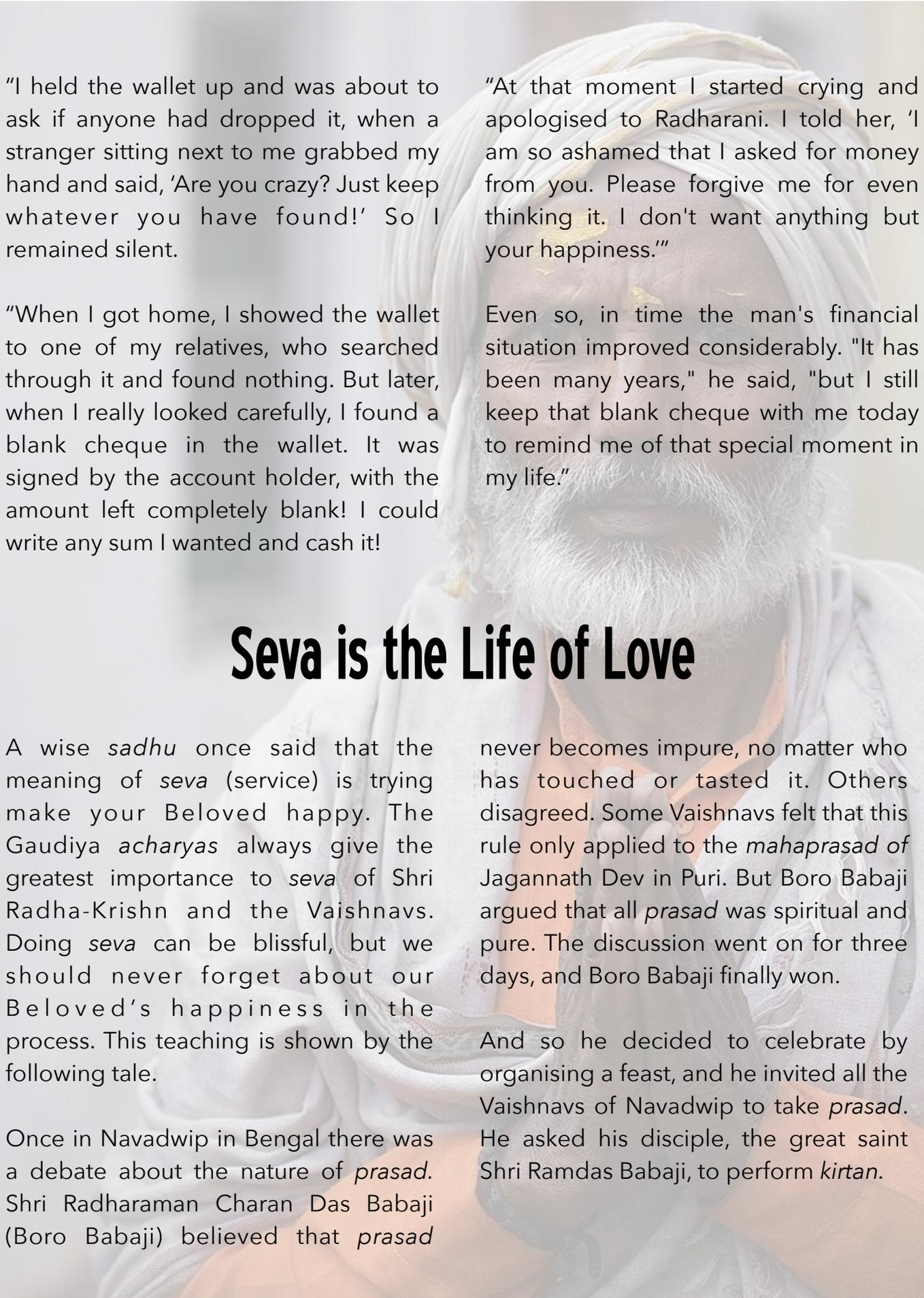


As part of an academic project to interview Babajis in Braj, a devotee, who is a scholar in America, went to Ranvari for Siddh Baba's festival three years ago. The devotee managed to get one Brajwasi to share a personal spiritual encounter. He said that although he did not want to do so, he felt that Radharani was inspiring him to reveal a particular incident. This man was perhaps in his early fifties, neatly dressed, with a bright smile on his face.

He said, "Once I was giving *dandavati parikrama* of Radha Kund. Whilst giving *parikrama*, a thought crossed my mind, 'I am a poor farmer, and Radharani is so merciful. Why doesn't she give me some money?' I didn't want to have such thoughts, but my situation at the time was pushing me to think like this. After completing my *dandavati parikrama*, I saw that someone was handing out *prasad*, so I went up several times and I received a lot.

"Taking *prasad* multiple times is a custom of Brajwasis," he said with a grin.

He continued, saying, "Then I boarded the bus to go home. On the way back, I felt very tired and hungry, so I reached in my pocket to take out some of the *prasad* I had collected. But instead of *prasad*, I found a wallet!



"I held the wallet up and was about to ask if anyone had dropped it, when a stranger sitting next to me grabbed my hand and said, 'Are you crazy? Just keep whatever you have found!' So I remained silent.

"When I got home, I showed the wallet to one of my relatives, who searched through it and found nothing. But later, when I really looked carefully, I found a blank cheque in the wallet. It was signed by the account holder, with the amount left completely blank! I could write any sum I wanted and cash it!

"At that moment I started crying and apologised to Radharani. I told her, 'I am so ashamed that I asked for money from you. Please forgive me for even thinking it. I don't want anything but your happiness.'"

Even so, in time the man's financial situation improved considerably. "It has been many years," he said, "but I still keep that blank cheque with me today to remind me of that special moment in my life."

Seva is the Life of Love

A wise *sadhu* once said that the meaning of *seva* (service) is trying to make your Beloved happy. The Gaudiya *acharyas* always give the greatest importance to *seva* of Shri Radha-Krishn and the Vaishnavs. Doing *seva* can be blissful, but we should never forget about our Beloved's happiness in the process. This teaching is shown by the following tale.

Once in Navadwip in Bengal there was a debate about the nature of *prasad*. Shri Radharaman Charan Das Babaji (Boro Babaji) believed that *prasad*

never becomes impure, no matter who has touched or tasted it. Others disagreed. Some Vaishnavs felt that this rule only applied to the *mahaprasad* of Jagannath Dev in Puri. But Boro Babaji argued that all *prasad* was spiritual and pure. The discussion went on for three days, and Boro Babaji finally won.

And so he decided to celebrate by organising a feast, and he invited all the Vaishnavs of Navadwip to take *prasad*. He asked his disciple, the great saint Shri Ramdas Babaji, to perform *kirtan*.



Shri Radharaman Charan Das Babaji
(Boro Babaji)

Ramdas Babaji started *kirtan* early in the morning. Suddenly in the midst of the *kirtan* he began to sing "arey amar nitai re!" ("Oh my Nitai! Oh my Nitai!) and burst into tears. He continued to sing this single line for a long time. He wept as he sang, and everyone who was listening also cried tears of blissful separation.

But because of the *kirtan*, the priest was unable to offer the midday meal (*rajbhog*) to Shri Radha and Krishn. Ramdas Babaji had lost all consciousness of time, so the *kirtan* continued well past noon.

At last, Boro Babaji came and said, "Ram! You only know how to cry in *kirtan*. You don't know how to do *seva*. It's already past noon and your *kirtan* has not stopped! Just think: Krishn is still sitting there waiting to be fed. He is hungry! But we cannot serve his lunch because of your *kirtan*. The Vaishnavs are also very hungry.

"*Seva* is the life of love. It is good to be absorbed in *kirtan*, but never forget the *seva* of your Beloveds. Their happiness is more important than anything else."

The *kirtan* was immediately stopped. After Shri Radha and Krishn were fed, the Vaishnavs happily took *prasad*. Then Boro Babaji himself sat down to eat. He looked around and said, "Where is Ram?"

A devotee replied, "He is sitting on the bank of the Ganga and weeping."

"Oh! He is angry!" said Boro Babaji, and called for Ramdas Babaji to come.

Ramdas Babaji came. He looked very sad, with his eyes fixed on the ground. Boro Babaji embraced him lovingly and said, "Listen, Ram. We have to be very attentive. We must take special care that we do not cause harm or inconvenience to anyone at any time. The *kripa* (mercy) of Shri Guru and the Vaishnavs is our only hope, so we have to be very careful not to offend them in any way."

Boro Babaji held Ramdas Babaji by the hand and made him sit down next to him to take *prasad*. As he ate, he kept placing bits of sweets and other foods from his own plate onto the plate of Ramdas, saying, "Taste this, Ram! This is delicious!" The heart of Ramdas became peaceful.



Shri Ramdas Babaji

Radharaman Premotsav: The Festival of Love

4th-21st December 2018

By the grace of Shriman Mahaprabhu and the blessings of Shri Gopal Bhatt Goswami, we personally invite you and your family to come join us in serving Shriji during his Festival of Love!

Program of Events at the Shri Radharaman Temple

Harinaam Sankirtan Daily

Mornings: 9:30am-12:30pm

Evenings: 6pm-9pm

Shri Radha Ras Sudha Nidhi

Shri Vaishnav Pad Das Babaji from
Radha Kund
5th-11th December 2018
2pm-5pm

Shrimad Bhagwatam Katha

Raas Panchadhyayi
Vaisnavacharya Shri Chandan
Goswami Maharaj
12th-19th December 2018
2pm-5pm

12th December

Kalash Yatra and Sankirtan

17th December

108 Parikrama of Radharaman Lal

13th December

Raag Seva by Sriparna Nandi

18th December

Deeptosav

14th December

Raag Seva by Shrimati Sonali Bose

19th December

Collective recital of the Bhagwad Gita
and Yagya (Gita Jayanti)

15th December

Nritya Seva (Kuchipudi) by Ayana
Mukherjee

20th December

Khichdi Mahotsav

16th December

Chappan Bhog

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