



SANDARSHAN

odev108@gmail.com
www.shriradharaman.com

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Cleaning the Dirt Within the Heart by Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami

When an old fountain is neglected, the stale water grows algae and starts to attract mosquitoes. But if the fountain is maintained, the water will be clean, plants and flowers will flourish around it and the honeybees will enjoy their nectar. The birds will come and take a bath in the water and sing melodiously. In the same way, if we start to chant God's Name, the layers of dirt in our hearts will be washed away and love will start to flow from us. In his *Shikshashtakam*, the God of Love, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, says: "The chanting of the Holy Name cleanses the dirt within the heart. It increases the ocean of bliss, and it enables us to taste the nectar of love completely."



Light on the Path of Devotion



The scriptures declare that Radha and the *gopis* of Vrindavan have the highest form of love, and after hearing about this land of love from Narayan in Vaikunth, Sage Narad wished to experience it for himself. He met Shiv by the banks of the Yamuna, who gave him a Krishn mantra and taught him about the method of chanting it, along with other instructions on devotion. Shiv also taught Narad how to worship the Divine Couple in the Vrindavan mood; particularly, the mood of a *gopi* maidservant of Radha. *To learn more about Sage Narad's journey to eternal Vrindavan, you can read Sandarshan 15.*

By the mercy of Guru, Narad had finally attained what he had been craving for so many years. To help others understand and follow the path to attain Vrindavan, he wrote the *Narad Bhakti Sutra*, where he defines the *gopis'* love in a concise way.

In the *Narad Bhakti Sutra*, Narad says:

यथा ब्रजगोपिकानाम्
yathā vraja-gopikānām

"The Braj *gopis* are the perfect example of supreme devotion."

All devotees consider the *gopis* of Braj to be the perfect role models of devotion, and Sage

Narad names them as the finest examples of the devotion he has described. In the *Shrimad Bhagwatam* (10.44.15), the women of Mathura state:

"The *gopis* are most fortunate, for their minds dwell on Krishn constantly. With love in their hearts and trembling voices, they sing about him as they milk their cows, thresh grain, churn butter, care for the children of their households, play on swings, clean, gather cow dung for cooking and do their other chores. All good and auspicious things come to them due to their glorious state of mind."

The great love of the *gopis* can be understood by the symptoms they showed when they heard the sound of Krishn's flute:

"As soon as the *gopis* heard Krishn's flute, whose alluring song incites romance, their hearts were looted by him. Unknown to the others, each *gopi* ran to him, with their earrings swaying against their cheeks. Some were milking cows when they heard it, and others were boiling milk or cooking food, but they all dropped what they were doing and ran towards that maddening sound. Some were feeding children or serving their husbands, while others were dressing themselves, bathing, or applying their eye-liner, but they instantly ran to him with their dress and

makeup in total disarray. The *gopis'* husbands, brothers and fathers tried to stop them and place obstacles in the path of their blessed love-journey, but Krishn had captured their hearts and minds. Possessed by the song of the flute, they refused to turn back. But some of the *gopis* could not escape their houses. They remained there with eyes closed, losing themselves in thoughts of him." (*Shrimad Bhagwatam*, 10.29.4-9)

In the *Shrimad Bhagwatam* (10.47.61), Uddhav, a great devotee of the Lord, said, "Blessed are the *gopis* of Braj! They have given up their families, which is very difficult to do, and have traded the path of piety for refuge at Krishn's feet. I wish to become a herb, a vine or a shrub in Vrindavan, so that I may receive the dust of their lotus feet upon my head eternally."

Krishn said to the *gopis*, "My dear *gopis*! Your connection with me is completely pure and without fault. I shall never be able to repay you for everything you have done for me, even if I try for a lifetime of the gods. You have truly loved me, breaking the chains of household life, which is very difficult to do. May your own wonderful character be your reward." (*Shrimad Bhagwatam*, 10.32.22)

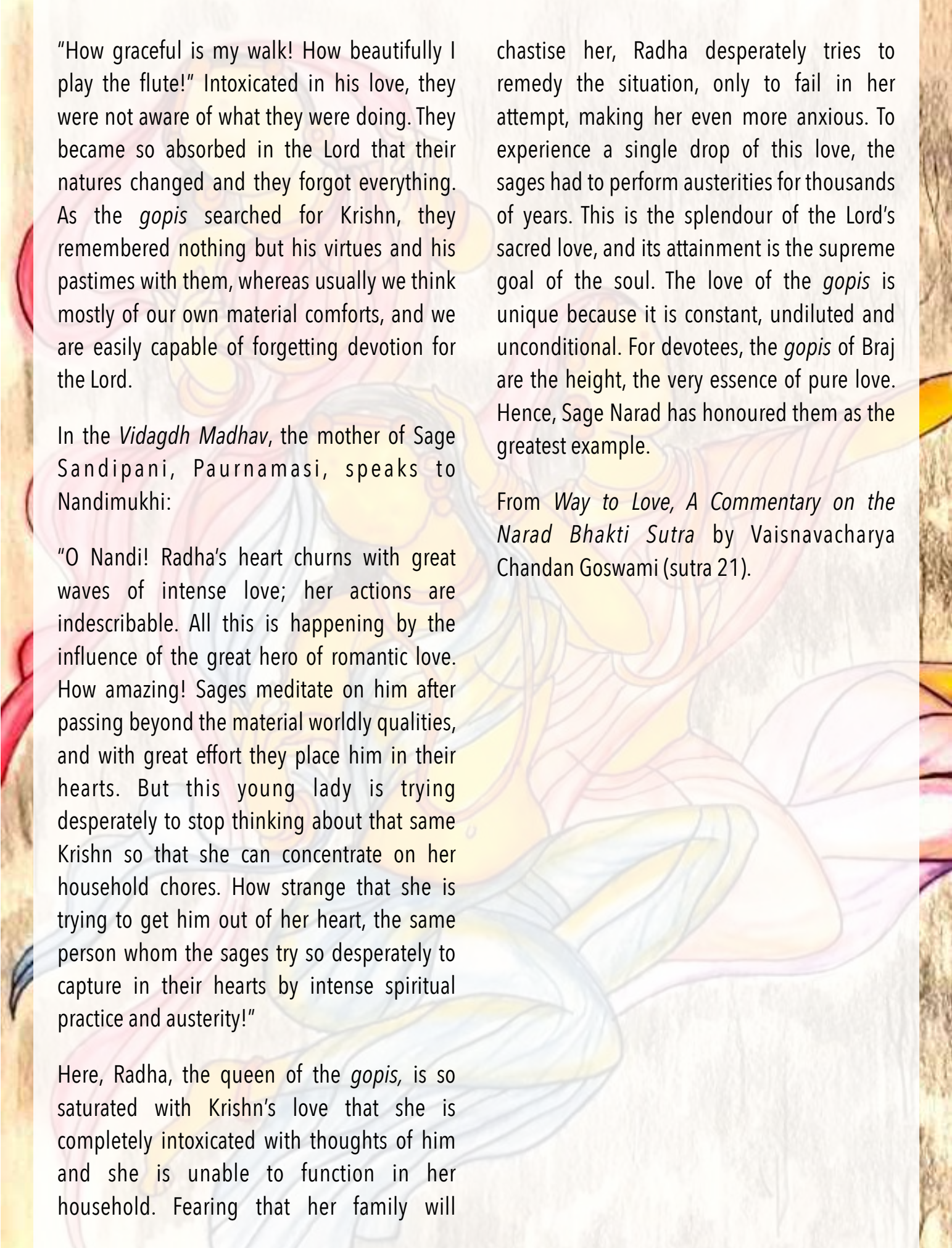

Krishn continuously praises the *gopis*: "Names and forms merge in the trances of meditating sages, just as great rivers merge into the sea. In the same way, the *gopis* also lost all awareness of their bodies, this world and the future in their constant thoughts of

me." (*Shrimad Bhagwatam*, 11.12.12)

The example of the sages in meditation is mentioned here only to illustrate concentration on a single object. The *gopis* simply loved Krishn and could not think of anything else. They cast off all obstacles that prevented their concentration whilst they were remembering Krishn, cursing even their own eyelids for blinking and thus blocking their vision of him for a split second. From the *Shrimad Bhagwatam* (10.30.43):

"The hearts of the *gopis* had become saturated with Krishn. They constantly thought of him and spoke about him alone. In the madness of love, they re-enacted his wonderful deeds and sang his glories. They were so absorbed in him that they did not even remember their own identities. How could they possibly think of home?"

Often if we have a duty to perform, but due to some difficulty we cannot complete it, we simply give up. But when Krishn disappeared from the Raas Mandal, the *gopis* were searching for him everywhere, asking the vines, the trees and the deer if they had seen him; still they could not find him anywhere. Yet the *gopis* did not return to their homes. Even though they could not find Krishn, their homes and families had been completely forgotten. The *gopis* became fully absorbed in his remembrance; it was as if they were possessed. Taking on the Lord's identity, they began copying his actions and saying to one another,



"How graceful is my walk! How beautifully I play the flute!" Intoxicated in his love, they were not aware of what they were doing. They became so absorbed in the Lord that their natures changed and they forgot everything. As the *gopis* searched for Krishna, they remembered nothing but his virtues and his pastimes with them, whereas usually we think mostly of our own material comforts, and we are easily capable of forgetting devotion for the Lord.

In the *Vidagdha Madhava*, the mother of Sage Sandipani, Paurnameyas, speaks to Nandimukhi:

"O Nandi! Radha's heart churns with great waves of intense love; her actions are indescribable. All this is happening by the influence of the great hero of romantic love. How amazing! Sages meditate on him after passing beyond the material worldly qualities, and with great effort they place him in their hearts. But this young lady is trying desperately to stop thinking about that same Krishna so that she can concentrate on her household chores. How strange that she is trying to get him out of her heart, the same person whom the sages try so desperately to capture in their hearts by intense spiritual practice and austerity!"

Here, Radha, the queen of the *gopis*, is so saturated with Krishna's love that she is completely intoxicated with thoughts of him and she is unable to function in her household. Fearing that her family will

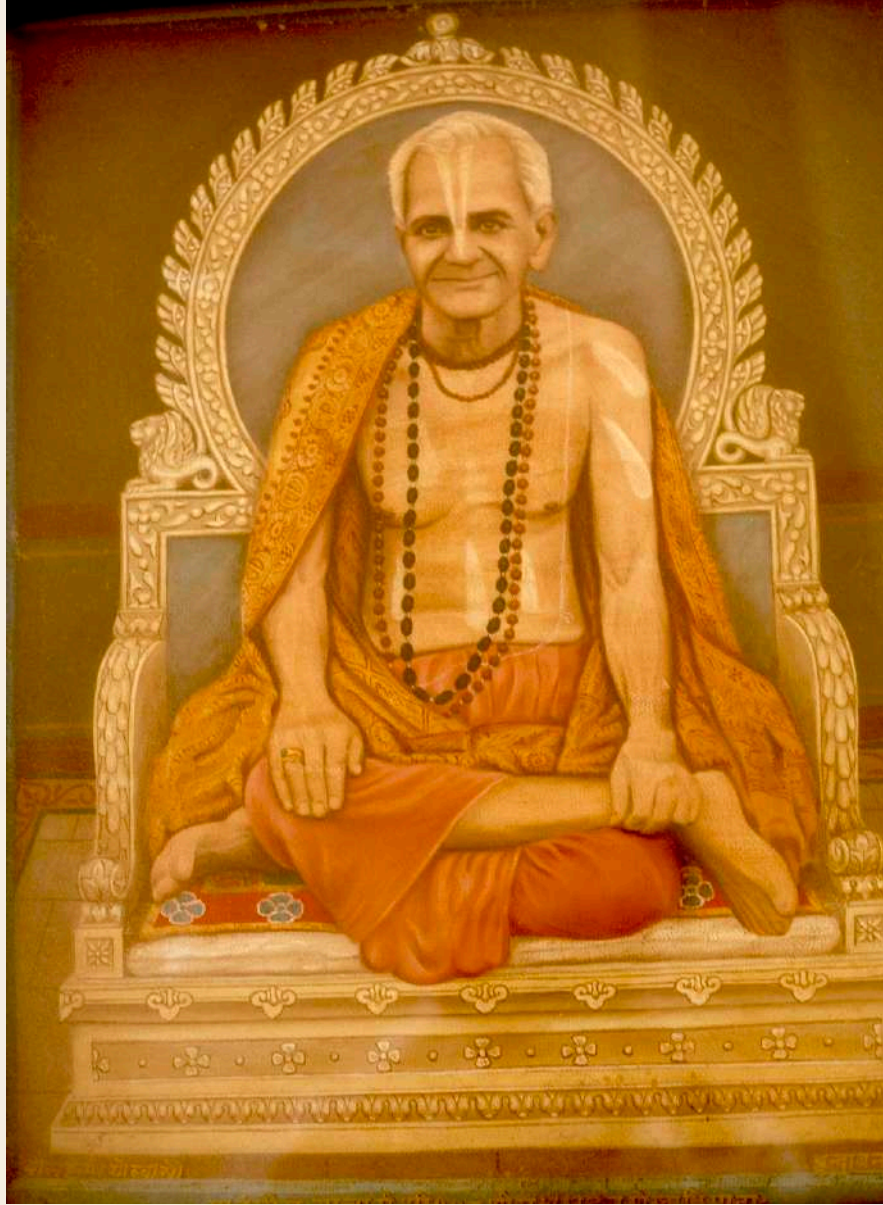
chastise her, Radha desperately tries to remedy the situation, only to fail in her attempt, making her even more anxious. To experience a single drop of this love, the sages had to perform austerities for thousands of years. This is the splendour of the Lord's sacred love, and its attainment is the supreme goal of the soul. The love of the *gopis* is unique because it is constant, undiluted and unconditional. For devotees, the *gopis* of Braj are the height, the very essence of pure love. Hence, Sage Narad has honoured them as the greatest example.

From *Way to Love, A Commentary on the Narad Bhakti Sutra* by Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami (sutra 21).



Radharaman Sevait: Sarvabhaum Shri Madhusudan Goswami

(1858-1929 CE)



Born in the lineage of the Goswamis from the Shri Radharaman Temple, Vrindavan, Sarvabhaum Shri Madhusudan Goswami was a spreading banyan tree, sheltering thousands of souls with his grace and scholarship. He was a child genius and at the age of ten, when his sacred thread ceremony (*upanayan samskar*) was held, he could understand and even explain all the Vedic hymns used in the ritual. His memory was so powerful that he used to memorise three hundred scriptural verses (*shloks*) a day, and he was blessed with the title of *acharya* at the age of seventeen.

But, his family worried about him, because the life line on his palm was very short. A sage, who knew palmistry, noted that all Madhusudan Goswamiji's other bodily features were those of a *mahapurush* (a great soul) and that the world would be very blessed if he lived a long life. The sage pressed on his life line with his fingernail. Later, around the age of 23, a serious illness threatened to end Madhusudan Goswamiji's life. On the verge of death, he saw two associates of Shri Radha and Krishna from eternal Vrindavan standing in the darkness of his room. One said, "His time is approaching." The other replied, "No, his time has been extended," and they threw him forcefully out of the bed, symbolising that his time had now come to preach in the world. Miraculously, he recovered quickly after this incident, and he found that the life line on his palm had grown longer. From then on, Madhusudan Goswamiji dedicated his entire life to spreading Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's religion of love all over India. He was especially influential in North India and Bengal. The Bengali people in particular used to look up to him like one of the ancient sages.

Although he toured extensively, he never accepted donations from anyone. He was a great devotee of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Once in Puri, he was invited to give a two-month *Shrimad Bhagwat Katha* in Gambhira, the place where Shriman Mahaprabhu lived alone during the last eighteen years of his life, drowning in Radha's love. On the last day of

the *katha*, the *mahant* gifted Madhusudan Goswamiji many gold coins, but he returned them and said, "If you feel the desire in your heart to make an offering, please bless me with a piece of Shriman Mahaprabhu's *prasadi* cloth which will remove all my desires forever, birth after birth." To give anyone a piece of that cloth was unthinkable, but the *mahant* was so pleased with Madhusudan Goswamiji that he fulfilled his desire. That piece of cloth is still worshipped in Madhusudan Goswamiji's family. On another occasion, when a philosophical debate was creating tension amongst the Gaudiya Vaishnavs, Madhusudan Goswamiji used his great knowledge to resolve the issue. Thereafter, the Vaishnavs of Navadwip honoured him with the title of "Sarvabhaum" (Universal Leader).

Radharamanji always used to help Madhusudan Goswami whenever he fell into difficulty. Once in Bengal, Madhusudan Goswamiji visited Ramkeli to tour the prison where the great saint Sanatan Goswami had once been held captive by the Sultan. Just for a moment, a doubt crossed Goswamiji's pure mind that perhaps the story of Sanatan Goswami's imprisonment in the *Chaitanya Charitamrit* was false, because he had not really committed any crime. How could they imprison an innocent man? Shri Radharaman removed this doubt immediately from Madhusudan Goswamiji's heart. The next night around midnight, a group of policemen came to the door and arrested Madhusudan Goswamiji. He spent the night in jail, and it

was only the next morning when his followers flooded the station in protest, that the police realised that Goswamiji was not the criminal they were looking for, and released him. The devotees found him sitting peacefully in the cell, singing *kirtan* and meditating on the great mercy his naughty Radharamanji had shown him. Madhusudan Goswami was a master of *bhakti* and the discipline of *yog*. His devotion was of such a high level that his interaction with the material world did not have the slightest impact on his spiritual life. His focus was unshakeable, even through the untimely deaths of his wife and eldest son.

One summer, Madhusudan Goswamiji was sleeping on his roof in the Shri Radharaman Temple premises. In the middle of the night, a well-known female thief scaled the wall of his home and approached him where he lay asleep. Madhusudan Goswamiji woke up to find the criminal bathing his feet with her tears. Before he could speak, she told him, "Maharaj, I have come to you for shelter. I am a criminal, and so is my son. He is on trial for murder and if he is convicted, he will surely be hanged. The judge is your disciple. Please tell him to let my son go." Goswamiji replied, "I cannot do any such thing, but there is a way that your son can be saved. First of all, you must give up crime forever. Second, you and your son must chant the Holy Name three hundred thousand times every day." The woman followed Madhusudan Goswami's instructions. Not only was her son released, but both of them continued to chant three

hundred thousand Holy Names for the rest of their days and led pure lives as devotees.

Madhusudan Goswamiji spent his last years deeply absorbed in *kirtan*, teaching the philosophy preached by Mahaprabhu and writing many books. Some of his titles include: a Hindi translation of *Amiya Nimai Charit*; a commentary on Shri Roop Goswami's *Upadeshamrit*; a translation of Shri Krishndas Kaviraj's *Smaran Mangla Stotra* in Brajbhasha poetry; *Samskar Tattva* in Hindi and Gujarati; *Guru Tattva*; *Basantik Kusum*; *Urdhva Pundra*; *Jnaner Vikrti* in Bengali, *Arya Samaj Rahasya*, *Mere Vichar*, *Gayatri Parinay*, *Ved Bhashya* and many other unpublished works.

Sarvabhaum Shri Madhusudan Goswami's *Shri Radharaman Prakatya* tells the miraculous story of Shri Radharamanji's appearance and the start of the Goswamis' lineage in beautiful poetic Brajbhasha. His words moved the Goswami community so deeply that they inscribed his work on the walls of the temple courtyard for all devotees to enjoy. Until his departure from this world, Sarvabhaum Shri Madhusudan Goswami lived an accomplished devotional life in the pure service of Radharamanji and his devotees. By the grace of Shriji, Madhusudan Goswamiji attained the eternal shelter of his lotus feet.

Reference: The Personal Diaries of Shri Vishwambhar Goswami

