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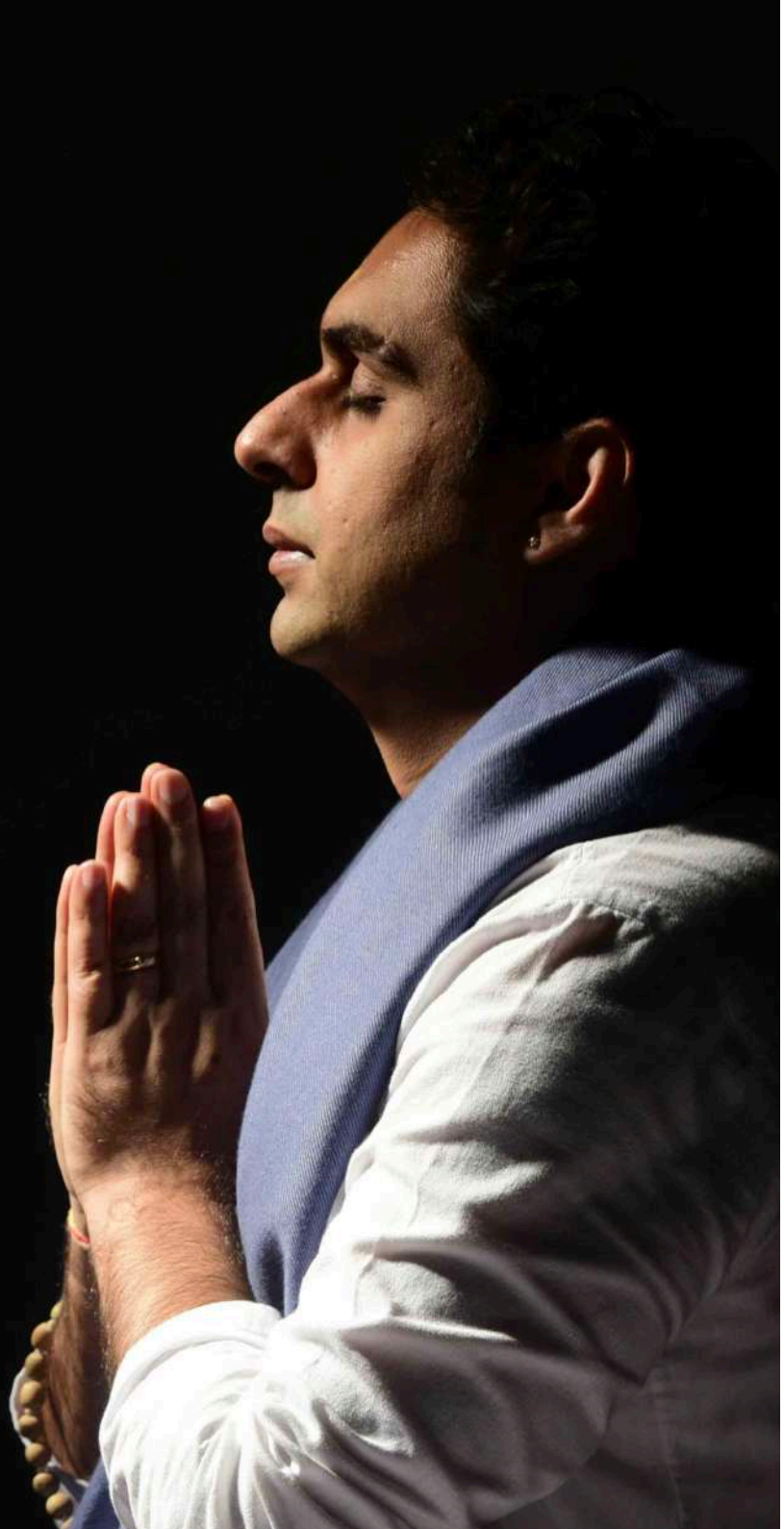
The Essence of Devotion by Chandan Goswami


यत्प्राप्य न किञ्चिद् वाञ्छति न शोचति न
द्वेष्टि न रमते नोत्साही भवति ॥

*yat prāpya na kiñcid vāñchati na
śocati na dveṣṭi na ramate notsāhī
bhavati ॥*

After attaining devotion, a devotee does not desire anything. He does not grieve or hate, nor does he delight in anything material, and he does not want to do anything else. (*Narad Bhakti Sutra*, 5)

In the modern age, people do not understand the real essence of devotion. We tend to consider everything from the perspective of worldly desire. In simple terms, when we are completely absorbed in "I", there is no place left for "you". Every time we pray and ask the Lord for something material in return, our "I" sense becomes very strong, therefore every effort should be made to remove this "I" first.





When we are self-centred, the Lord becomes secondary to our ego. This is a major problem, because the ego separates us from him. It builds a boundary around us, making us selfish, and we have no desire to share what we have with anyone. When we are absorbed in ourselves, we cannot relate to the feelings or the needs of others. But a genuine attempt in devotional practice removes ego from our lives.

This is not easy to put into practice, but it becomes easier if we develop a deep yearning for Krishn and understand our true identity as Krishn's eternal servant. A sincere search for the Lord will bring relief from all pain and unhappiness.

We should not assume that as spiritual aspirants, we will not suffer any problems in life. We may feel that because we are pursuing the Lord, he should remove all obstacles from our spiritual path. The Lord can certainly do this, but if he did, we would not develop the strength needed to walk on this path of devotion.

A muscle is made stronger by use alone. An inactive arm, hanging lifelessly to one side, becomes weak and withered. If a person wants to build his weak muscles, he has to use them regularly. Similarly, we need to practice devotion and use our inactive muscles of faith, compassion, dedication and patience to strengthen all these undeveloped qualities in ourselves. Without this dedicated practice, we will not change and overcome our human weaknesses and limitations.

In the *Bhagwad Gita* (12.17), Krishn states, "One who neither rejoices nor hates, who neither grieves nor yearns, who renounces both sin and piety and who has devotion for me, is dear to me." Sage Narad points to the same *Bhagwad Gita* verse in this *sutra*. Here, Krishn is revealing the qualities of the devotees whom he dearly loves. When we attain devotion, our hearts will not crave anything else. We will find complete contentment and satisfaction in the Lord. Then only one prayer will remain for us: that we may never again be fooled by this material world.

(From *Way to Love: A Commentary on the Narad Bhakti Sutra*, Sutra 5, by Chandan Goswami)



Shri Yashoda Ma Vairagini



Shri Yashoda Ma Vairagini was born as Monica Roy in 1882 CE to a very spiritual and wealthy Bengali family. It was clear from childhood that she was a dear devotee of Shri Krishn. Her family often invited *sadhus* to stay at their home. Whenever Swami Vivekanand visited, he would express a special fondness for little Monica and often offered *kumari puja* to Devi through her. Later in life, she would receive shelter at the lotus feet of Shri Balkrishn Goswami of the Shri Radharaman Temple in Vrindavan.

Monica's family arranged her marriage when she was only twelve years old. Her husband was a wealthy widower with a six-year-old daughter, to whom Monica became a stepmother. Understandably, the young bride had great difficulty conceiving and carrying babies to full-term. Once Monica became very ill after having a miscarriage. During this difficult time, she would lay on her balcony overlooking the Ganga River and watch a *sadhu* named Harihar Baba performing austerities. He never made efforts to get food, but sometimes people fed him on their own. Otherwise he would just eat handfuls of mud from the riverbed. Monica derived strength from his detachment. Later, she would often tell people to go for Harihar Baba's *darshan*, but he would tell people, "You should take *darshan* of Monica Roy." With time, Monica had four biological children and adopted forty more.

Although Monica was very young when she got married, she was well-educated and highly cultured. She was also quite beautiful, and though her own community did not always warm to her dark complexion, many people she met whilst travelling internationally appreciated her beauty.

Once on a trip to Italy, Monica and her husband visited the Vatican. That day, she was wearing a beautiful blue *sari* with silver stars embroidered on it. Some Italian Catholics, entranced by



Yashoda Ma as Monica Roy

Monica's spiritual aura, mistook her for the Virgin Mary. They surrounded her and some even tore off pieces of her *sari* to take home as a blessing. Monica was quite embarrassed by this and left the scene as fast as she could.

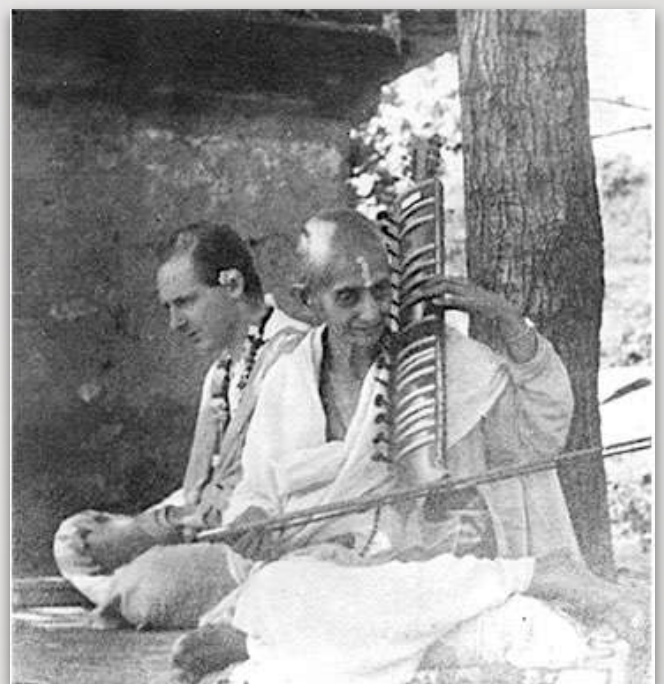
When Monica's husband became the chancellor of Lucknow University, the couple moved into a large mansion. They had many house guests during this time, and this is when Monica met Professor Ronald Nixon. Due to his association with Monica, Nixon became a devotee of Shri Krishn. He became a close family friend and moved into the mansion's guest house.

During the many parties that were held in the mansion, Monica played the part of the perfect hostess. But whenever *kirtan* was held in the house, she would withdraw within herself as tears rolled down her cheeks. The famous singer Dilip Kumar Roy once commented, "It seems there is far more to her than meets the eye. It's as if her true self belongs to some other world." Professor Nixon replied, "I am glad that you have learned the wisdom of not judging by appearances. Many have judged her as nothing more than a brilliant socialite. She is not an easy person to decipher. The real her has to be seen to be believed."

About a year later, Monica took the vows of renunciation from her guru and received the new name Shri Krishn Sevika Shri Yashoda Ma Vairagini, or Yashoda Ma for short.

Professor Nixon, in turn, received initiation from Yashoda Ma and became a renunciate named Krishnaprem Vairagi. The two of them moved to Mirtola in the Himalayas, where Yashoda Ma established an *ashram* called Uttar Vrindavan. There, Krishnaprem served her as a devoted disciple. Her *ashram* had a Radha-Krishn temple, a medical dispensary, temporary residences for *sadhus* and a school for poor children.

Once, a street dog sneaked into the kitchen and started eating the *kheer* Yashoda Ma had just made for her deity of Balgopal (the Child Krishn). She hit the dog hard, hoping to discourage it from coming back. At that moment, she saw in a vision that Balgopal was inside the dog. He was laying down, crying and hurt. Yashoda Ma felt terrible and apologised. After this incident, she adopted the dog and treated it like family.



Yashoda Ma and Krishnaprem

On another occasion, Yashoda Ma's Balgopal woke her up and complained, "You are sleeping happily because you are comfortable. But what about me? How can I sleep if the blessed ants keep tickling me?" She sat up in bed and saw that a bottle of honey on the altar had attracted a swarm of ants, which had also covered Balgopal. Yashoda Ma quickly removed the ants from Balgopal's body and placed him on her bed, where he was happy and fell asleep.

According to Yashoda Ma's closest followers, Shri Krishn would often appear before her and communicate with her. Once, one of them asked her:

"Do you see him all the time, Ma?"

"I can see him in my heart all the time," she replied. "But not outside. I mean, not always."

"Buy why can't you, Ma?"

After a brief pause, she replied, "I once asked him. He said, 'If I appear before you too often, your body will not last long.'"

With age, Yashoda Ma's health began to decline. Krishnaprem used to sleep on the floor of her room and serve her constantly. One day when he was busy with other *seva*, Yashoda Ma was laying down in her room alone. Suddenly, she felt a small pair of hands massaging her legs. Startled, she looked up at a picture of Radha and Krishn on a swing which hung on her wall, and saw that Radharani was missing from the picture.

Shri Yashoda Ma entered the eternal *lila* in 1944 CE. Not many of her teachings have been preserved. Her only book, called *Punarvartin*, was published in 1937 CE and translated by Krishnaprem into English as *The Homeward Journey*. However, the original book appears to be out of print, and the translation has never been published.

Dilip Kumar Roy has written about a few of Yashoda Ma's teachings in his book *Yogi Shri Krishnaprem*, including the following advice. According to Shri Yashoda Ma, four things are needed to attain Radharani's grace:

1. Loyalty to the Guru
2. Sincerity
3. True humility
4. Spontaneous trust in Radha's grace and love

References

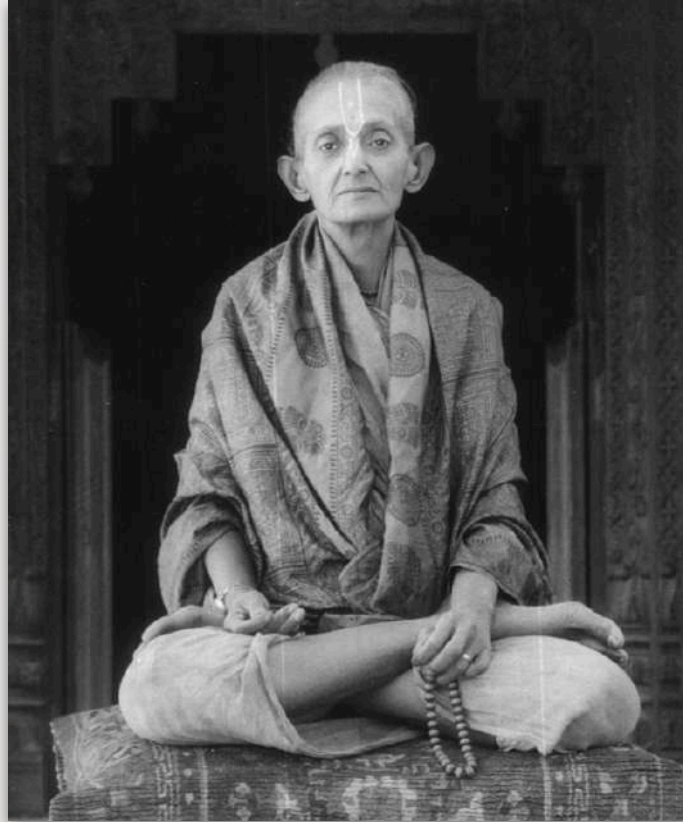
"Mirtola: A Himalayan Ashram with Theosophical Roots" by Shri Madhava Ashish

The Saints of Braj by Dr. O.B.L. Kapoor

Yogi Shri Krishnaprem by Dilip Kumar Roy



Krishn and the Guru are One, But . . .



Krishnprem's Guru, Shri Yashoda Ma Vairagini

An excerpt from a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy by Krishnprem about his guru, Yashoda Ma.

"I will tell you what is written in burning letters of fire in my heart that carry their own guarantee of truth: Krishn and the Guru are one, but if I leave him, Krishn may leave me – at least he may smile his inscrutable (the *samo'ham sarva-bhūteṣu*) smile and say, 'Well if you don't care for me then I don't care for you either – at least not more than I care for the louse on a monkey's backside.' But my guru will never leave me whatever I do. I might leave her, but she would never leave me. I may fall from the path, and return to the flesh-pots and wallow in their filthy slops for five lives or fifty lives. I may blaspheme the Sacred Stone within my heart and die cursing God and man – all this and more I may do, but she will never leave my side. Each separate folly of mine will be a stab of sorrow in the heart of she who is sorrowless, but she will never turn away her face nor cease from trying to assuage the pains that I suffer from my own foolish acts. Never, never will she leave my side nor cease to guide my steps until I stand in that eternal Braj where she stands now. God-forsaken and man-forsaken I may be, but guru-forsaken, never."



Braj Animal Care



A morning feeding with Maharajji

In December 2020, Braj Animal Care has continued to grow, and we had many beautiful experiences. We were thrilled that our founder and inspiration, Shri Chandan Goswami Maharaj, came with us for a morning feeding. There was also a piece about us broadcasted on a local news channel.

We also faced some new challenges this month. Recently, we found a dog with rabies in a local schoolyard. Rabies has no cure, is 100% fatal, and can be passed from dogs to humans through their saliva by bites or even licks on broken skin.

With no other place to quarantine the dog, we simply left him where he was. The school had been closed for almost a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but shockingly, we found out they had reopened the next morning. We were able to step in and avert a possible disaster by removing the dog from the premises.

We contacted city officials for help, but were told that they would have called us for help in such a case! With no place to quarantine the dangerous dog, we were forced to leave it in the road. By the time someone volunteered to keep the dog on an abandoned lot, the dog had already died. It had also bitten someone, and we had to find that person to encourage them to get a rabies vaccine. This dangerous situation simply underscores our dire need for a shelter.

November Medical Cases

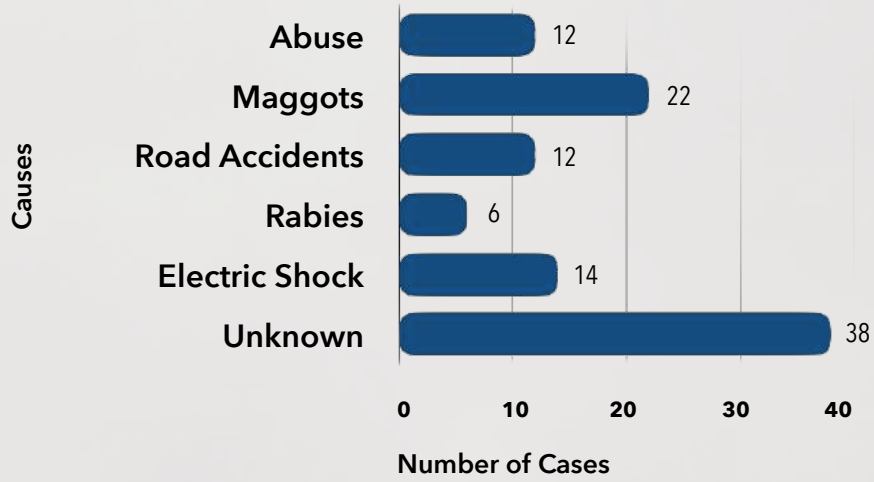
In November 2020, Braj Animal Care completed 162 treatments.

- 57 of these treatments were new patients (20 cows and 37 dogs), 58 were follow-up treatments for existing patients, and 47 were treatments performed in assistance to the local wildlife authorities or other groups
- The primary causes of suffering in all new cases we took on or assisted with were: maggots (22 cases), road accidents (12 cases), abuse (12 cases), electric shock (14 cases) and rabies (6 cases). The causes of 38 cases were unknown.
- Of all new traffic accident cases we took on or assisted with, the majority were on Vrindavan's Parikrama Marg. The graph on the following page contains the full breakdown.

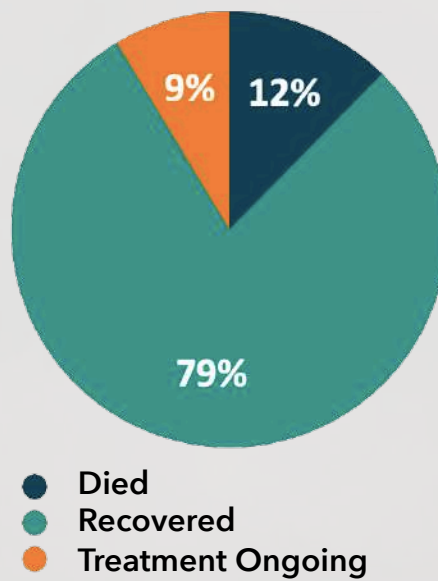


Our founder, Shri Chandan Goswami Maharaj with the Braj Animal Care team

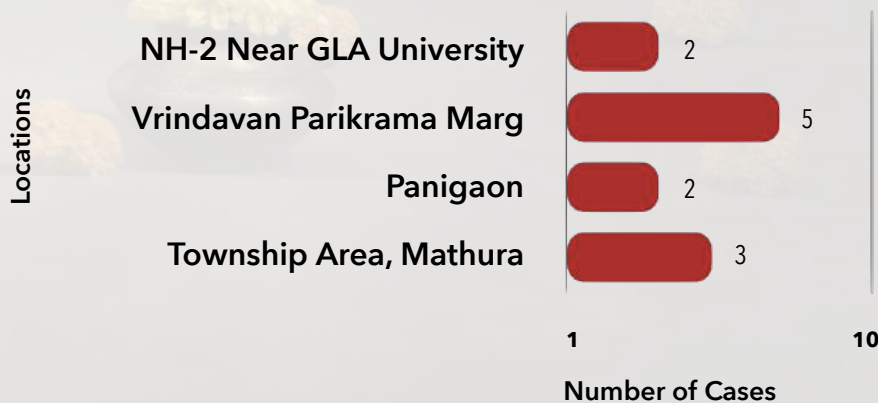
Causes of Suffering



Survival Rates



Road Accident Locations





Maharajji's Latest Updates



In December, Shri Chandan Goswamiiji Maharaj visited Delhi and gave a series of Question and Answer sessions to a limited audience. This was his first live program held since the lockdown eight months ago. Maharajji is also continuing his online lecture series on the topic of the mind, in English with live Spanish translations. To join these programs, please follow the [Ocean of Devotion \(ODev\)](#) Facebook page.

We invite you to follow Maharajji's [Facebook Page](#) for more updates. Our usual *sankirtans* have been temporarily postponed due to COVID-19, however regular virtual *sankirtans* are being held. We welcome you to join our online *sankirtan* programs on the following dates:

January 9th , 2021: Ekadashi

January 24th, 2021: Ekadashi

January 31st, 2021: Shri Gopal Bhatt Goswami's Appearance Day

To receive the meeting links and for updates on further programs, please join our WhatsApp group [Chandan Goswami Uvacha](#). You can also receive Maharajji's association through his recorded *kathas* on YouTube at [ChandanjiOfficial](#) and [ODevOfficial](#). For more information about Shri Radharaman Lal and Maharajji, please contact us at odev108@gmail.com or WhatsApp us on [+91 83687 83201](tel:+918368783201).

Vaishnav Calendar

For upcoming festivals and Ekadashi dates, please click [here](#) to view our Vaishnav calendar.

