



SANDARSHAN

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Vasant Panchami



January 22nd, 2018 is Vasant Panchami. This day marks the beginning of Spring and the first day of Holi in Vrindavan. On this day, the first touch of Holi colour is applied to Radharamanji's lotus face. Time stands still as the devotees witness this important moment, and the Goswami in seva sprinkles Radharamanji's colours on them as his *prasad*.

Today everything is yellow. Radharamanji's dress is yellow, the flowers that adorn him are yellow, and yellow is the shade of the temple decor. Radharamanji's *kirtanias* sing the seasonal Raags to the heartbeat of the *dhap* drum, evoking the deep emotions of this season of love.

बसंत Spring

By Gunmanjari Das
Goswami

श्री राधारमण जी नव बसंत खेलत वृन्दावन नित लसंत ।
प्यारीजी शोभित सखिन संग लखि नागर मन बाढ़ी उमंग ॥
अलबेली प्रथमही लै गुलाल मूठी भरि छोड़ी है मुखहि लाल ।
नागर मानत हैं धन्य धन्य सब रसिकन में हैं अग्रगन्य ॥
श्यामा मुख अतर लगाय गाय निरखत हैं शोभा समय पाय ।
सखियन पर दिये कुमकुमा दोर छवि को नहीं तहाँ ओर छोर ॥
बाजत बीणा मिरदंग ताल ढप मुरली सारंगी रसाल ।
गावत तहाँ हैं हिंडोल राग गुणमंजरी हर्षित मन की लाग ॥

(basant)

*śrī-rādhāramaṇjī nava basant khelat vṛndāvan nit lasant
pyārījī śhobhit sakhin saṅg lakhi nāgar man bāṛhī umaṅg
alabelī pratham-hī lai gulāl mūṭhī bhari choḍī hai mukh-hi lāl
nāgar mānat haī dhanya dhanya sab rasikan mē haī agraganya
śhyāmā mukh atar lagāy gāy nirakhat haī śhobhā samay pāy
sakhiyan par diye kumkumā dor chavi ko nahī tahā or chor
bājat bīṇā mirdaṅg tāl ḍhap muralī sāraṅgī rasāl
gāvat tahā haī hīḍol rāg guṇmañjarī harṣhit man kī lāg*

Shri Radharaman is like the glorious new spring, as he plays Holi in Eternal Vrindavan. He adores Priyaju with his eyes as she stands there with her *sakhis*. Radha's beauty overwhelms his heart. First, she takes a handful of coloured powder (*gulal*) and throws it on her beloved Shriji's face; thus the greatest romantic considers himself very blessed. Then, to steal a glimpse of Priyaju's sublime beauty, he childishly rubs fragrant oil on her delicate face. Throwing *kumkum* all over the *sakhis*, he runs; there is no limit to their splendour. The gopis sing in rag Hindol as they play the veena, *mridang*, *dhap*, flute (*muralī*) and *sarangi*, making sweet music full of nectar. Absorbing this festive celebration, Gunmanjari's heart overflows with delight.

(Translation by Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami from the book Sri Radharaman Gita)

The Springtime Raas Lila

by Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami



In Braj, the Holi festival is celebrated from Vasant Panchami until a few days after Phalgun Purnima. During this time, Nand Baba gives Krishn and Balram leave from cowherding to play Holi. They enjoy throwing coloured powders and drenching everyone with water dyed by the yellow juice of *tesu* flowers.

Just like Krishn gets free from cowherding during this time, the *gopis* too are released from their household chores to play Holi. Far from the prying eyes of their relatives, the Divine Couple and their friends are free to enjoy the Holi play without restraint.

And every night, Krishn and the *gopis* meet for the Raas Lila. The Raas happens in Vrindavan every night, but during three months of the year the Raas is celebrated in a special way. These months are Vaishakh, Kartik and the month of Spring, which is known as Phalgun.

During Phalgun, the Raas occurs near Govardhan Hill. In Shri Govardhan Ashray Dashakam, Shri Raghunath Das Goswami describes the Springtime Raas Lila:

*rāse śrī śata vandyā sundarā sakhī-vṛndāñcita saurabha
bhrājat kṛṣṇa rasāla bāhu vilasat kañṭhī madhau mādhavī
rādhā nṛtyati yatra cāru valate rāsa-sthalī sā parā
yasmin kaḥ sukṛtī tam unnatamaye govardhanaṁ nāśrayet*

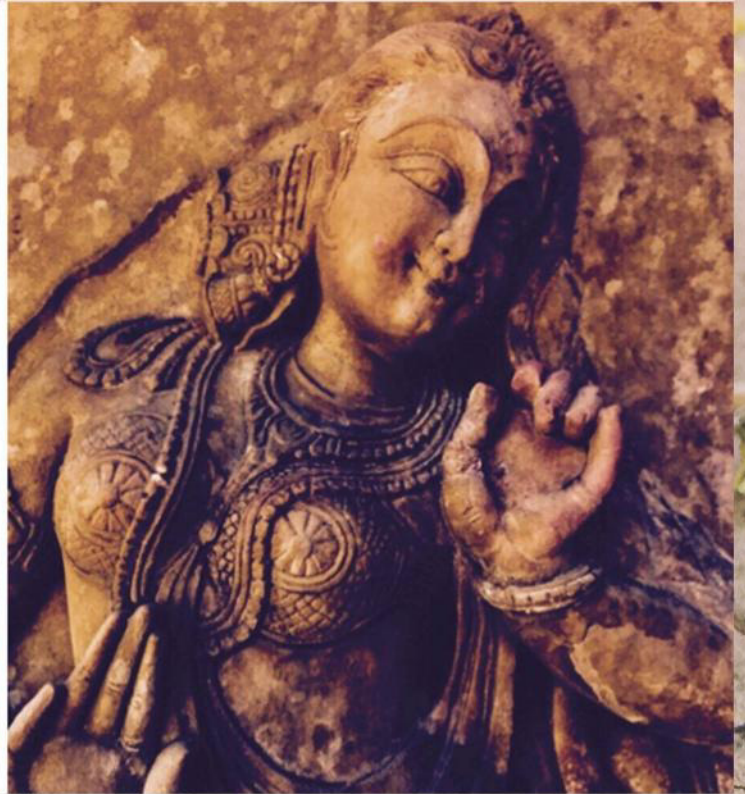
"The springtime Raas Lila is held beside Govardhan Hill. Radha's friends, whose beauty is worshipped by thousands of Lakshmis, make a circle. In the centre, Radha dances with her beloved, embraced by his strong and fragrant arms. Who would not take shelter of that most blessed Govardhan Hill?"

In *Ujjval Nilamani*, verse 5.7, Roop Goswami tells of a very special *lila*, that reveals the greatness of Radha's love. One spring day, Krishn was performing Raas Lila with the *gopis* near Govardhan Hill. In a playful mood, Krishn ran away from the *gopis* and hid himself in a *kunj* (grove). Not wanting to be captured so easily, he watched through the creepers.

Suddenly, Krishn saw that the *gopis* had surrounded his hiding place and were about to catch him. So he decided to trick the *gopis* by showing his four-armed Narayan form and standing motionless like a statue.

Seeing Krishn in this form, the *gopis* prayed to "Narayan" that they may see Krishn again. But when Radha came in front of him, Krishn was not able to maintain his four-armed form. His *aishwarya* or Godliness abandoned him in front of her supreme Love.

I pray that all of you are coloured in Shri Radha-Raman's love-holi!



The Eldest Sevait of Radharaman: Shri Ramakant Goswami Maharaj



At 99 years old, Shri Ramakant Goswami Maharaj is the eldest of Radharamanji's Goswamis. Although his children now live outside Vrindavan, he continues to live alone in Radharamanji's *ghera*. And every day, he comes for Radharamanji's *darshan*. Maharaj ji shares a memory of one of Radharaman's *lilas*, which he experienced personally. It includes a female saint, whose name was Girija Devi. It's said that Radharamanji used to speak with Girija Devi. Not only that, but he would secretly come to visit her in her room. After Radharamanji's visits, her *sari* would be filled with his fragrance. But the saintly lady always kept a low profile, in order to avoid fame.

Shri Ramakant Goswami Maharaj:

All this happened about 75 years ago; not recently. Back then I was a young man. Near my home there lived a lady named Girija Devi. Despite living so close to Radharaman Temple, she hardly went for *darshan*. Instead she used to spend time with a gentleman named Venu Vinod Ji and one of his disciples. She was a young lady then, and these two men would come and visit her in Radharaman *ghera*. She used to talk to them a lot. I thought ill of her because of that. I was curious as to why they spent so much time together, and why she honoured Venu Vinod Ji so much. At the time, I didn't know he was a scholar; I thought he was an ordinary man. And on top of that, Girija Devi didn't ever seem to go for *darshan* of Radharamanji. She was always busy talking to that man.

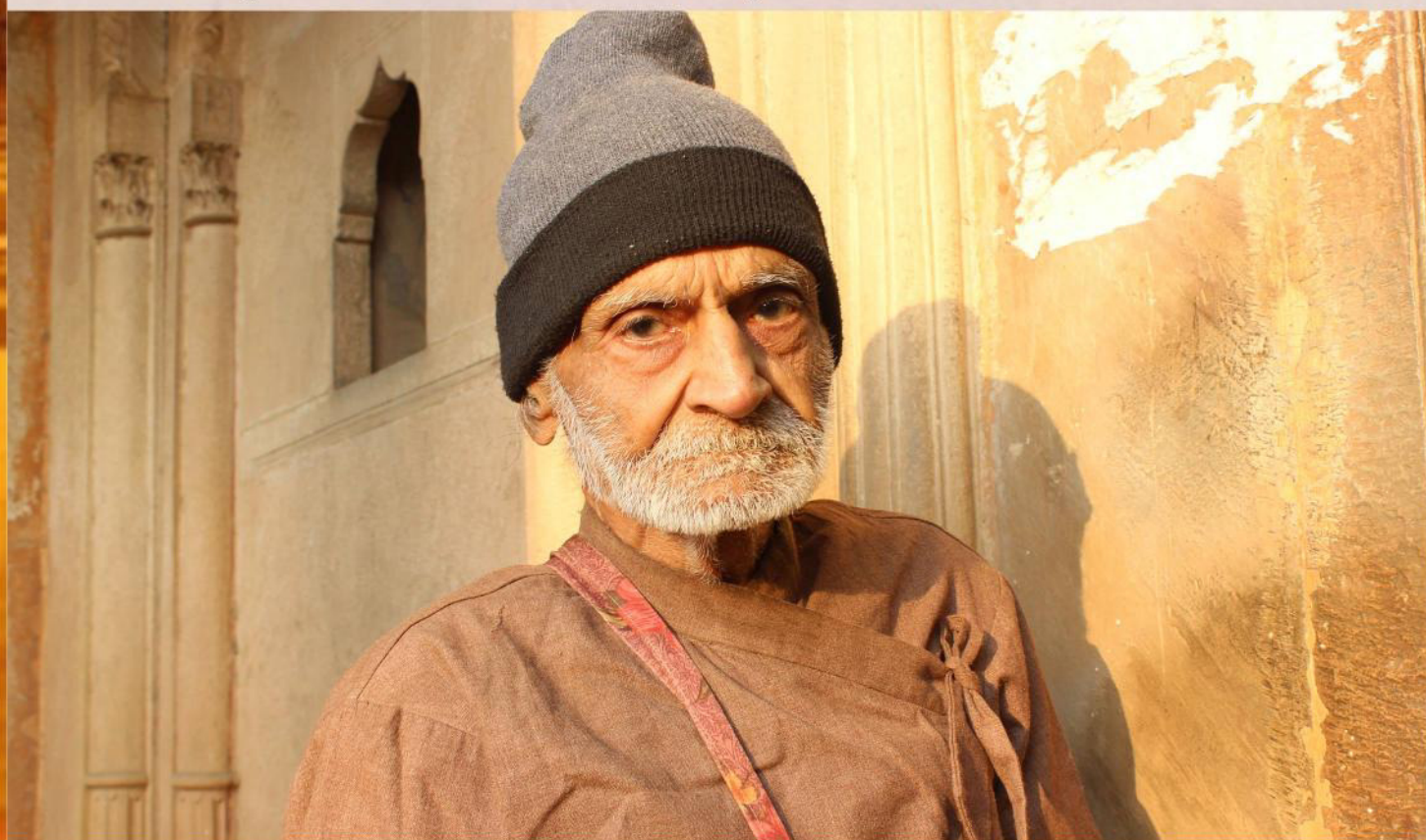
Then my family's turn came to serve Radharamanji. It was my father, me and my wife. At the time, there was a really good film playing in Mathura – I don't remember which film it was. That evening I was serving Shriji with my cousin. I said to him, "Bhai, could you please handle the prasad distribution tonight?"

"Why?" he asked. I said, "Because I want to go to Mathura and watch that film. If you are willing, I can put Thakurji to sleep and then go."

"No no," he said, "You go. I will do everything." I tried to convince him to let me put Shriji to rest before I went, but he insisted on doing it himself. Late at night no rickshaws or horse carts would be available, so he asked, "How will you get to Mathura?"

"I'll go by bicycle," I said.

He replied, "Then I'll also come by bicycle and join you at the theatre. We can attend the second showing. It will be more fun if we see it together."



Unfortunately, in his rush, my cousin didn't do Radharamanji's *aulai seva* properly. Each night, a pot of water with *paan* is offered to Shriji. That night, the assistant had filled the water pot, but my cousin forgot to put it next to Radharamanji's bed. At about 3:30am, as I slept, my *tauji* (uncle) Bihari Lal ji Maharaj came and knocked on my door. I was really tired, but my wife woke me up saying, "Tauji is calling you."

I woke up and went outside... and the first thing I saw was Girija Devi's face. I was completely irritated. Tauji said, "She wants to tell you something." I said, "You say it Tauji. What's she going to say?" I was a bit angry at the time. Tauji replied, "She is saying that Thakurji is too hot and he is very thirsty."

I said, "I really have no idea... My cousin was in *seva*, not me. I have no clue what happened or didn't happen in *seva* last night." But inside my heart I was thinking, "Radharamanji came in *her* dream? Has she become such a big devotee that Radharamanji is talking to *her*?" I really looked down upon her. I said to Tauji, "I really have no idea about any of this. Come, let's check on Radharamanji together. He said, "What can I do about it?" I said, "No, if you don't come with me, it won't work. If I go alone, it will be my word against hers."

In an angry mood, I quickly took a shower, then Tauji and I went together and opened the altar.

There we found that Radharamanji's beautiful dark form had gone completely pale. And his body was hot to the touch. And indeed, his water-pot was not there. Girija Devi was right.

