

*Complete Guide to Vraja Mandala : Embark on a  
Mystical Odyssey Across 84 Kos*

*by  
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## Dedication

*With deep reverence, we offer this book and its profound contents to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, whose heartfelt aspiration was to unearth the hallowed spiritual realms of Vraja Mandala and disseminate its resplendence worldwide. Instructing the venerable Goswamis of Vrindavan, He sought to empower them as instrumental figures in fulfilling His divine wishes. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the embodiment of Lord Krishna with the enchanting essence of Radharani's devotion, yearned for humanity to emulate the inhabitants of Vrindavan, adopting their sublime mood while serving the Supreme Lord. This pinnacle of devotional science represents the zenith of spiritual fulfillment. May this book serve as a significant stride toward realizing the cherished aspirations of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.*



## About the Authors

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## Preface

Welcome to the profound exploration of Vraja mandala, an awe-inspiring pilgrimage encompassing 84 Kos (252 kilometers), with the holy city of Vrindavan at its center. Within the pages of this book, we embark on a comprehensive journey, delving into the significance and splendor of these revered pilgrimage sites that were blessed with the enchanting presence of Lord Krishna over 5000 years ago.

Each article within this book offers a vivid depiction of these sacred places, accompanied by captivating visuals that bring them to life. As you immerse yourself in the pages, you will uncover the rich tapestry of their ancient histories, resplendent with tales of devotion, miracles, and divine interactions. Moreover, we have included a practical "how to Reach" section for each site, empowering you to embark on your own independent exploration and spiritual quest.

It is essential to note that the sequence in which these holy sites are presented within this book does not align with the traditional order prescribed for the Vraja mandala Parikrama. Instead, we have organized them based on their geographical proximity.

Prepare to be captivated by the sacred expanse of Vraja mandala as we unravel its mystical essence, providing you with profound insights, inspiring anecdotes, and a deeper connection to the divine abode of Lord Krishna. May this book serve as your trusted companion on this spiritual odyssey, guiding you towards a transcendent experience of Vraja mandala's sanctity and eternal love.

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# Mathura & Surroundings

## Vishram Ghat, Mathura - where Krishna rested after killing Kansa



‘Vishrama Ghat’ or ‘Vishranti tirtha’ is one of the most exalted pilgrimage destinations of Vraja Mandala. It was here that Lord Krishna took rest after killing Kansa, His tyrannical maternal uncle. The word ‘Vishram’ literally translates to ‘rest’ and the word ‘Ghat’ refers to a river bank. Thus the name ‘Vishram Ghat’ came into existence after Lord Krishna rested at this place. Vishram Ghat is also the holy place where Lord Varahadeva rested after slaying the demon Hiranyaksha. Situated on the bank of Yamuna, Vishrama Ghat is a revered place of worship for devotees. The circumambulation of all the holy sites of Mathura starts and ends at Vishram Ghat. Vishram Ghat is lined with elegant temples, and some of the most important temples of Mathura including Mukut Temple, Radha-Damodar, Murli

Manohar, Neelkantheshwar, Yamuna-Krishna, Langali Hanuman, and Narasimha deva temples are situated in its close vicinity.

Devotees take a holy dip in the river and offer lamps at Vishram Ghat every day in the morning and evening. People traveling from across the world light oil lamps and set them floating in the river at this sacred place. The sparkling reflection of the illuminated lamps drifting on the serene Yamuna presents a mesmerizing view. Various rituals including offering oblations to ancestors are performed at this holy site.

## **Vishram Ghat glorified in various scriptures**

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also took His bath and rested here at Vishram Ghat while undertaking His Vraja Mandala Parikrama. He then proceeded to take darshan of Keshava, the deity of Krishna at ‘Janmasthan’ (Krishna’s birthplace). This is confirmed in Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita -

*mathura asiya kaila visranti-tirtha snana  
janma-sthane keshava dekhi karila pranama  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita, Madhya, 17.156)*

-

*Reaching Mathura, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu took His holy dip at Vishram Ghat (Visranti tirtha). He then visited the birthplace of Krishna and on attaining darsana, He offered His respectful obeisances to the deity named Keshava.*

Vishram Ghat is also glorified in Saura Purana, wherein its stated -

*Tato-visranti-tirtha-kyan-tirthamaho-vinashanam  
Samsara-maru-sanchar-kleshavisrantinda-nrinam*

-

*Hence forward, people shall get relief from treading the desert of material existence and become absolved of their sins simply by taking shelter of Visram Ghat (Visranti tirtha).*



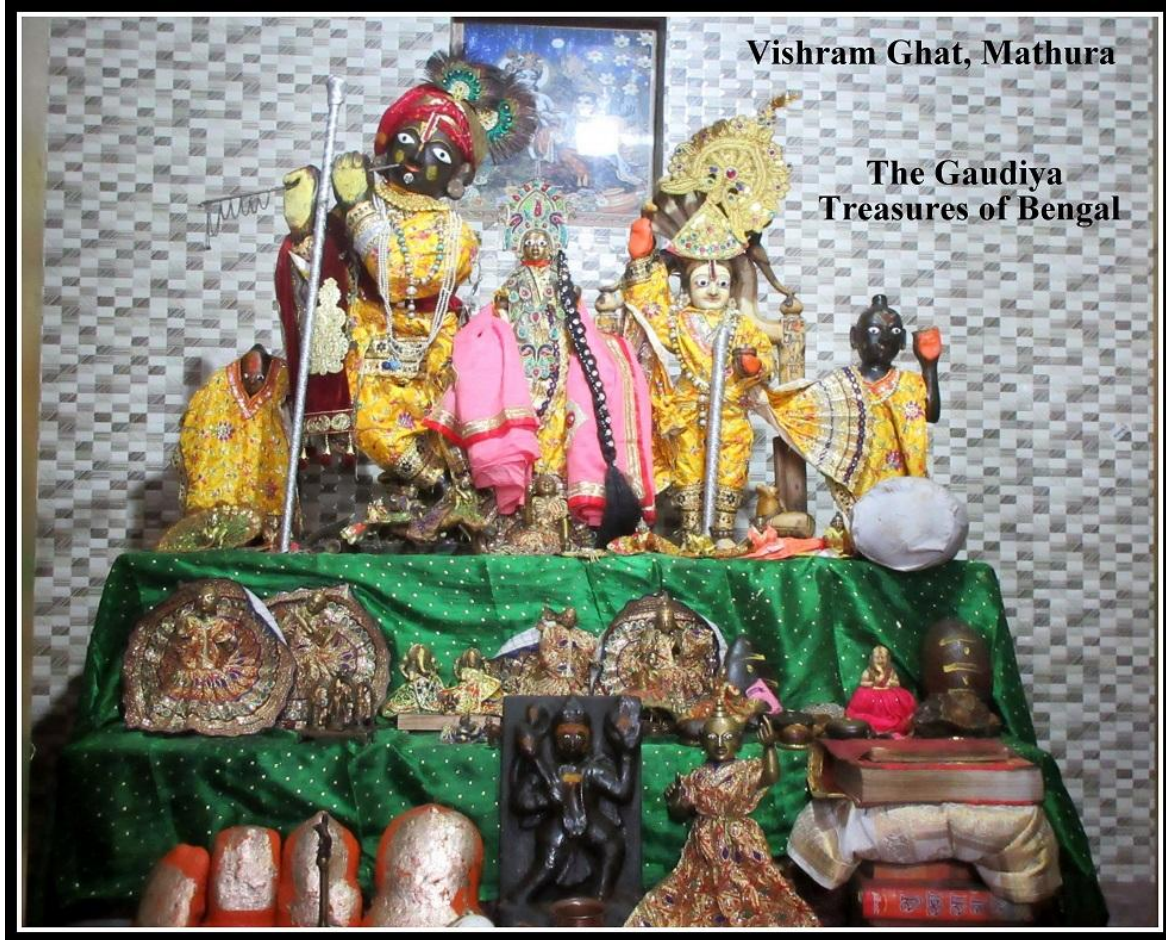
It is further stated in Saura Purana that those who bathe here at Visram Ghat and worship the Supreme Lord (Achyuta), attain freedom from repeated birth and death and become qualified for liberation.

The Mathura Khanda of Skanda Purana states : *'Is there any type of result that cannot be attained in Mathura, where Kshetrapala Mahadeva exists eternally and where there exists holy places like Vishram Ghat? Mathura bestows the three objects of human life (religion, wealth and sense gratification) to those who wish to enjoy material pleasures. Mathura grants salvation to those who seek it and it grants devotional qualities to the devotees. Wise men should take shelter of Mathura'*.

## **The Killing of Kansa**

When Krishna and Balarama returned to Mathura, Kansa was afraid that his end was near. He knew that Krishna, the eighth son of Devaki, was predestined to kill him. Kansa became scared on learning that Krishna and Balarama had effortlessly shattered the sacrificial bow and killed all the soldiers he had sent to arrest them. The next morning Krishna and Balarama entered the wrestling arena, to experience the great festivities. The two brothers were attacked by an elephant named Kuvalayapida, at the behest of their keeper. After teasing the elephant for some time, Lord Krishna finally yanked out one of the elephant's tusks and killed the elephant along with its keeper.

Thereafter, Canura and Mustika, the strongest of Kansa's wrestlers, challenged Krishna and Balarama respectively to a fight. The audience was not happy though, as they felt that the fighters were unevenly matched. Canura and Mustika were immensely powerful while Krishna and Balarama were mere boys. The fighters locked themselves hand to hand, leg to leg, and began pressing against each other. They smashed and dragged each other. The intensity of the fight increased with every moment. Krishna then chose to put an end to the fight. He struck Canura thrice with His fists and catching hold of his two hands wheeled him around. Canura immediately lost his life and while falling down his fashioned ornaments were dispersed all over the place. When Mustika struck Balarama, He returned the favor by striking the powerful wrestler. The powerful Mustika trembled and vomited blood. He collapsed just like a tree in a hurricane.



Witnessing Canura and Mustika dead, a wrestler named Kuta challenged Krishna and Balarama. Lord Balarama immediately caught hold of him and killed him effortlessly. Thereafter, Sala, Tosala, and other wrestlers came forward, but the two brothers killed all of them without wasting any time. The rest of the fighters fled the arena out of fear. The cowherd boys congratulated Krishna and Balarama and blew upon their trumpets. This further angered Kansa who could not accept the victory of Krishna and Balarama. He immediately ordered the band to stop playing and asked his soldiers to drive Krishna and Balarama away from Mathura. He ordered Nanda Maharaja to be killed. Kansa also ordered for the cowherd boys accompanying Krishna to be plundered and their riches taken away. He also ordered Vasudeva, Krishna's father, and Ugrasena, Kansa's father, to be killed without delay. In this way, Kansa tried to bring the situation under his control but it ended up angering Krishna even further.

Krishna jumped onto the high dais and tried to strike Kansa. Kansa, who was prepared for Krishna's attack, defended himself with a sword and a shield. As Kansa swayed his sword, Krishna caught hold of him and knocked off his crown. He dragged Kansa by his hair and threw him down to the wrestling arena. The Lord struck Kansa's chest with His fists again and again. In this way, Lord Krishna killed Kansa, his maternal uncle. Thereafter Krishna and Balarama immediately freed Vasudeva and Devaki who had been imprisoned by Kansa for so long. Although Krishna touched their feet and offered prayers, Devaki and Vasudeva, being aware of Krishna's supreme position, did not embrace Him but exhibited their reverence towards Him.



Since Kansa had learned that Krishna will become the cause of his death, he kept thinking about Krishna throughout the day and night. Incessantly plotting to kill Krishna, Kansa could not forget the vision of Krishna holding His wheel. Learned spiritual authorities opine that Kansa attained 'Sarupya mukti' (attained the same

form as Narayana) after his death, as he helplessly contemplated upon Krishna all the time, although he considered the Lord his arch enemy.

### **What to See :**

1. Vishram Ghat - The bank of Yamuna where Krishna rested after killing Kansa. Devotees take bath and offer lamps at this sacred place.
2. Boats are available and those interested can avail a boat ride.

### **How to Reach :**

Vishram Ghat is hardly a fifteen minutes ride from the Mathura junction railway station. Buses, rickshaws, and autos are readily available, and you can conveniently reach the Ghat within a short period.



## Krishna Janmasthan temple (Krishna Janmbhoomi), Mathura | Lord Krishna's birthplace



The foremost pilgrimage site of Mathura is the 'Krishna Janmbhoomi temple' or 'Sri Krishna Janmasthan temple' as it is sometimes referred to. It is built around the prison cell where Lord Krishna was born five thousand years ago. Krishna's parents Devaki and Vasudeva were imprisoned in this cell by Kansa, the tyrannical brother of Devaki. The temple is said to have been originally built by Vajranabh, Krishna's great-grandson, to commemorate the appearance of Sri Krishna. But it was later demolished by the invaders. Since then, the temple has been rebuilt and demolished numerous times over the past centuries. The present group of temples is a result of a major renovation project carried out in the 20th century. The temple compound comprises the impressive Keshava Deva temple, with the 'garbha griha'

(sanctum sanctorum), and the Bhagavata Bhavan. Although the place might come across as ordinary to the casual eye, it is of paramount importance to a spiritual seeker. The birthplace of Krishna, the Supreme Lord, is completely spiritual and free from any traces of material contamination.

When Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu visited Sri Krishna Janmasthan temple, 500 years ago, He sang and danced in ecstasy beholding the deity of Keshava deva. People were awestruck to witness His loving ecstatic sentiments for the divine. The people also began chanting and dancing with Him and there was a wonderful uproar. The priest who was serving Sri Keshava deva then presented a garland to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

*premanande nache, gaya, saghana hunkara  
prabhura premavesha dekhi' loke chamatkara  
(Chaitanya Charitamrita, Madhya, 17.157)*

-

*When Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu danced (before Keshava deva) in loving ecstasy while repeatedly chanting the holy names of Hari and Krishna, the people became astounded witnessing His divine love.*

**Bhagavata Bhavan** boasts five shrines. The main shrine is that of Sri Radha and Krishna. The path that circumambulates this altar contains all eighteen thousand verses of Srimad Bhagavatam inscribed in copper. To the right are worshiped the deities of Jagannath, Baladeva, and Subhadra. A deity of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu stands on a different platform facing them. To the left are worshiped the deities of Lord Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita. Hanuman stands on a separate platform facing them. There are also deities of Lord Shiva (Keshaveswara) and Durga devi in the temple compound. Other constructions in the Bhagavata Bhavan include an Ayurveda Bhavan, an International guest house, shops, a library, and an open space for performance. The holy ambiance and purity of the temple arouse one's eternal relationship with the divine.

## The Gaudiya Treasures of Bengal



**Sri Keshava deva temple** was built by Ramakrishna Dalmia in memory of his mother Jadiadeva Dalmia. The construction of this temple started in June 1957 and was inaugurated in September 1958 by Hanuman Prasad Poddar. The breathtaking white marble deity of Lord Keshava deva enchants and steals the hearts of the devotees. The original Keshava deva deity was installed at this place by King Vajranabh. It was however moved from Mathura to a village called Rajdhani and from there it was moved elsewhere. No one is aware of the deity's present whereabouts.

The **Garbha Griha** has the appearance of a prison cell. This is where Lord Krishna is accepted to have been born 5000 years ago. A marble pavilion and an underground prison cell were built on the site with a spacious veranda. The interior is decorated with beautiful portraits of Vasudeva carrying baby Krishna across the Yamuna, a portrait of four-handed Krishna giving darshan to Vasudeva and Devaki,

and demigods offering prayers unto Krishna with their folded hands. A temple devoted to the eight-handed goddess Yogmaya stands nearby.

On the southeast of the Janmasthan temple is a large and deep stepped water tank known as **Potra Kunda** or Pavitra Kunda. This is said to be the place where Krishna's baby clothes were washed by Devaki. The word 'Potra' means clothes. Mahadji Scindia constructed the tank stairs in 1782. In 1850, his descendants repaired them. The tank is connected via underground pipelines to river Yamuna which flows about 3 Kms away. The water from Potra Kunda is believed to cleanse one of his/her sins. That is why it is particularly crowded during festivals and holy occasions.

## **Glorification of Sri Krishna Janmasthan**

Skanda Purana says -

*Japopavasa nirato mathurayam sadanana  
Janmasthanam samasadya sarva papaya pramuchyate*

-

*O Karttikeya! One who, while chanting Japa and fasting, reaches the  
birthplace of Krishna is absolved from all his sins.*

Padma Purana says -

*Kartikke janma sadane kesavasya ca ye narah  
Sakrt pravistah sri krsnam te yanti param avyayam*

-

*Those who once enter Krishna's birthplace during the month of Kartik  
(October-November) are successful in attaining supreme, indestructible  
Krishna.*

Adi Varaha Purana says -

*Pradaksini krta tena sapta dvipa vasundhara  
Pradaksini krto yena mathuqrayam tu kesavah*

-

*The person who circumambulates Keshava deva in Mathura has achieved the piety of circumambulating the seven islands of the earth.*

## **Birth of Sri Krishna - Appearance of the Supreme Lord**

Devaki and her husband Vasudeva were imprisoned by Kansa (Devaki's oppressive brother) when Kansa learned that their eighth son would be the cause of his own death. Kansa was a tyrant who imprisoned the couple with the intention of killing his sister's sons one by one. Kansa made alliances with other demoniac kings and unleashed a reign of terror. No one could dare speak against Kansa or his monstrosities. When Devaki became pregnant for the seventh time, Sri Balarama, who is a plenary expansion of Krishna, appeared in Devaki's womb. Devaki was jubilant as she could perceive that Lord Vishnu had taken shelter in her womb. At the same time, she was morose fearing that Kansa would kill the baby soon after birth. Krishna, the supreme Lord, then instructed His yogamaya potency to move Lord Balarama from Devaki's womb to the womb of Rohini. Rohini was one of Vasudeva's wives who was living in Vrindavan out of Kansa's fear. Krishna declared that Lord Ananta would be renowned as 'Balarama' or 'Sankarshana' after His divine appearance. Thus, placing Devaki and Rohini devi in Yoga-Nidra, Yogamaya shifted Lord Balarama from Devaki's womb to Rohini's womb. As a result, people assumed that Devaki's seventh pregnancy was a miscarriage.

## Potra Kunda



Thereafter Lord Krishna, in His original form along with all His potencies, entered the heart of Vasudeva. He was then transferred to the heart of Devaki. Krishna was not put into Devaki's body through seminal discharge. Krishna, being the Supreme Lord, is not subject to the laws of material nature. The presence of Krishna in her body enhanced Devaki's transcendental beauty. Seeing her effulgence Kansa at once concluded that the Supreme Lord had taken shelter in Devaki's womb. At that time, demigods headed by Lord Brahma appeared in Kansa's house and they offered their earnest prayers to the Supreme Lord who was resting in Devaki's womb.

*Janma karma ca me divyam, evam yo vetti tattvatah  
Tyaktva deham punar janma, naiti mam eti so arjuna  
(Bhagavad Gita 4.9)*

-

*One who knows the transcendental nature of my birth and activities is*

*not born again in this material world, but instead attains my eternal spiritual abode, O Arjuna.*

The Supreme Lord is not forced to appear in this world like an ordinary person but instead appears out of His own sweet will. When the time was ripe for the Lord to appear, the alignment of the constellations became very auspicious, and the influence of the star Rohini was dominant. Auspicious signs of good fortune, peace, and prosperity pervaded all directions. The denizens of heaven showered flowers from the sky. They sang and danced in ecstasy. At that auspicious moment, on the eighth day of the waning moon, Sri Krishna, the Supreme Lord appeared from the womb of mother Devaki, just as the full moon rises over the eastern horizon.

Vasudeva saw his son decorated with the marks of Srivatsa and holding a conch, club, disc, and lotus with His four hands. He saw His son dressed in yellow silk, wearing a jeweled necklace of Kaustubha stone, wearing a vaidurya helmet, earrings, ornaments, and gleaming with bright effulgence. Vasudeva was astounded to behold the beauty of his child. He wondered how a newborn could be so ornamented. Vasudeva realized that the Supreme Lord had appeared as his son and he offered his prayers unto Him. Although Vasudeva was shackled in Kansa's prison, he imagined donating thousands of ornamented cows in charity to the brahmanas. Vasudeva and Devaki were scared that Kansa would try to kill Krishna as soon as he heard the news. Krishna revealed to Vasudeva and Devaki that they were the incarnations of Prsni and Sutapa who had previously performed severe austerities with the only desire of having the Supreme Lord as their child. Hence the Lord reciprocated their prayers by accepting them as His parents millennium after millennium. The Lord had previously appeared as Prsnigarbha, the son of Prsni and Sutapa. He had subsequently appeared as Upendra, the son of Aditi and Kashyapa, and now He has appeared as Krishna, the son of Devaki and Vasudeva.

## **Vasudeva carries Krishna to Gokula**

Krishna then concealed His divine features and turned Himself into an ordinary child having two hands. He ordered Vasudeva to immediately carry Him to Gokula and exchange Him for the daughter of Yashoda. Yashoda's daughter had also taken

birth about the same time as Krishna. She was the manifestation of Krishna's Yogmaya potency. By the dint of Krishna's prowess, all the residents of Kansa's palace, especially the doorkeepers, were put into a deep slumber. All the palace doors unlocked although they were shackled with iron chains. Although it was the middle of the night, Vasudeva could see everything very clearly. It was raining heavily, yet not a drop of rain fell upon Vasudeva or Krishna, who were protected by the hoods of Ananta Sesha.





On reaching the shore of Yamuna, Vasudeva saw that the river was roaring with furious waves. The river however parted itself for Vasudeva, providing him a safe passage to cross over to Gokula. Reaching Nanda Maharaja's palace in Gokula,

Vasudeva found everyone asleep. He silently exchanged Krishna with the newly born baby girl of Yashoda. Then, carrying the baby girl along with him, he returned to Kansa's palace and put the shackles back on himself so that Kansa would not suspect him. Once Vasudeva returned, the doors and palace gates locked automatically. When Kansa heard that Devaki's eighth child was born, he hurried toward the prison cell. Devaki pleaded with Kansa not to kill her daughter. She assured Kansa that a female child will not become the cause of his death and that he should spare her life. But Kansa valued his own life above all familial relationships. He picked up the little girl with the intention of killing her. Just then, the girl slipped out of his hands and assumed the form of Maa Durga. She identified herself as Vishnu's younger sister. Her eight arms were adorned with bow, lance, arrows, sword, conch, disc, club and shield. She chastised Kansa for his cruelty and informed him that the child who was destined to kill him has already taken His birth elsewhere. The goddess hence asked Kansa to release Devaki and Vasudeva. Hearing these words, Kansa became overwhelmed with fear and anxiety.

## **How to Reach Krishna Janmasthan**

The Krishna Janmbhoomi temple is situated at Deeg Marg, Near Deeg Gate Chauraha in Mathura. It is located 2 Kms from the Mathura junction railway station. Sri Krishna Janmasthan temple is heavily fortified and it towers above all the other buildings of Mathura. All visiting pilgrims are searched at the entrance. No electronic items like cell phones or cameras are allowed beyond the checkpoint.

# End of Preview