

**A Temple of Stone and a Temple of Love:
Govindadeva in the Religious Imagination of Early Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas**

Rembert Lutjeharms

In 1590 the temple was finally completed. Crowning a hill in the centre of the growing pilgrimage town of Vṛndāvana, now stood a majestic red sandstone structure, its five spires¹ piercing the sky, making the temple visible for many miles in the surrounding plains of Vraja. The building itself, which has been called “the most impressive religious edifice that Hindu art has ever produced”,² was financed and inaugurated by Mānasimha, king of Amber, general of the Mughal emperor Akbar’s army, and a powerful son of the Kachavāhā clan.

The Kachavāhā king had passed through Vṛndāvana some time prior, shortly after he had gained his prestigious position at the Mughal court, and when he first visited the temple of Govindadeva, he had made the following vow, according to Murāridāsa: “Oh, I will build, with great respect, a temple for Govindarāya in Vṛndāvana—the place all the gods praise—so that there may yet again be a flurry of festivals for the descent of Kṛṣṇa!”³ That vow was now completed, in 1590, with the official opening of the temple. No expenses had been spared. The architect, Govindadāsa, was brought from Delhi,⁴ and the very same craftsmen who constructed the imperial capital at nearby Fatehpur Sikri likely built this temple to Govindadeva,⁵ covering its walls, domes, and ceilings with detailed (mostly aniconic) carving. Later, Mānasimha purchased a significant amount of land surrounding it to construct Govindadeva’s gardens,⁶ and continued financing the priests of the temple.⁷

Mānasimha was to build other temples,⁸ but none as grand and none as famous as that of Govindadeva. And none would come to be so closely identified with Kachavāhā rule. During the reign of Shāh Jahān, the temple’s direct management would be transferred to Jayasimha I, Mānasimha’s descendant,⁹ and when the *mūrti* of Govindadeva left Vṛndāvana during the reign of Aurangzeb, he moved ever closer to the heart of the Kachavāhā kingdom, until a new temple was constructed for him by Jayasimha II, in the royal palace at the heart of his newly founded capital city, Jaipur. The Govindadeva temple, and even more so its deity, became one of the chief symbols of Kachavāhā prestige.

All of this has been well document and widely studied.¹⁰ But all of this does not explain why it is this temple that gained so much attention. The importance of the temple is not explained merely by the Kachavāhā patronage, because the temple predates this. The worship of Govindadeva was established by Rūpa Gosvāmī, one of Caitanya’s principal disciples and a leader of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas in Vraja, in 1534, and for many (Gauḍīya) Vaiṣṇavas

Govindadeva’s temple was regarded as the heart of Vṛndāvana’s growing religious landscape, many years before the new temple was built. Mānasimha’s grand temple thus merely re-established a temple that had stood there for several decades and carved in stone what had already been established in the devotion of many of Govindadeva’s devotees.

To understand the significance of the Govindadeva temple and the reason Mānasimha chose to rebuild specifically this temple, I argue here, we have to look to this “temple of love”—to the temple, built not with Kachavāhā stones, but with the ideas, narratives, and devotion of Govindadeva’s first founder, custodians, and devotees. This “imagined” temple—visualised, as we will see below, in the poetry of Govindadeva’s devotees as a divine temple carved from precious stone—gave the sandstone structure devotional significance and set it apart from all other temples.

In what follows, I look at the temple from three different angles. In the first section, I look at the ways Rūpa Gosvāmī, the temple’s founder, connects this new temple to the distant past, by claiming this new centre of worship to be the re-establishing of an older temple known from Purāṇic texts. I then examine, in the second section, how the temple was connected to the mythic present—to the abiding *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa—by examining what Gauḍīya authors thought about Govindadeva’s location. The third and final section examines Govindadeva’s temple’s relation to the other (Gauḍīya) temples of Vṛndāvana, mostly by exploring the views of Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, the fifth custodian of the temple, and demonstrates that legal battles over the temple and the increased involvement of Kachavāhā kings in the temple’s management in the seventeenth century—so well documented and so well studied—represents but one facet of a protracted conflict over the “imagined” identity of Govindadeva and his temple.

Part 1 – The Petal of the North: Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* and the temple of Govindadeva

According to Gauḍīya hagiographies, one of the main reasons Caitanya sent some disciples to Vraja was to recover its lost sacred sites. Murāri Gupta, for example, claims that Caitanya told Sanātana Gosvāmī to “recover the lost sacred sites (*tīrtha*), and reveal their greatness. By this devotion will become firmly established.”¹¹ Most often this is understood as referring to the work of rediscovering where Kṛṣṇa and his companions did what, a work which the Gosvāmīs perhaps did mostly through the songs, dramas, and poetry they composed, which describe the *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa and which make constant reference to specific sites in Vraja. By mapping those *līlās* known from scripture and tradition onto the land, they (re)created the sacred landscape of Vraja.

But there is another side to this. The places the Gosvāmīs attempted to “reveal” were not just those of Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā* in Vraja, but also those of past Vaiṣṇavas in Vraja—the lost temples,

bathing places (*ghāṭa*), and bathing tanks (*kuṇḍa*). Older pilgrimage guides, such as the *Mathurā-māhātmya* of the *Varāha Purāṇa* or the *Vṛndāvana-māhātmya* of the *Padma Purāṇa*, identify, praise, and describe not just specific places where Kṛṣṇa played—such as the site of his birth or the place where he rested after killing Kaṁsa—but also, and often more prominently, the temples and shrines that were later built on those spots. These guides linked the present landscape, which pilgrims would encounter, with that of the mythic past.

From Gauḍīya hagiographies we learn that the Gosvāmīs studied these pilgrimage guides (*māhātmyas*), which they used to identify those forgotten places. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, for example, writes that on his first trip to Vṛndāvana Sanātana Gosvāmī “collected the texts proclaiming the greatness of Mathurā (*mathurā-māhātmya-śāstra*), and, wandering through the forests [of Vraja], revealed the forgotten sacred sites.”¹²

The importance of these pilgrimage guides to the Gosvāmīs is most evident in one of Rūpa Gosvāmī’s own texts: the *Mathurā-māhātmya* (“The Greatness of Mathurā”). This text, a little over 460 verses long, is Rūpa’s own pilgrimage guide to the land of Vraja, and is in style identical to those earlier *māhātmyas*. Indeed, all but four verses of Rūpa’s work are citations from these *māhātmyas* and other Purāṇic texts.

Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* is one of his least popular works, and it is not very difficult to see why. The description of Kṛṣṇa’s sacred land offered in the text does not reflect Rūpa’s vision of Vraja quite as neatly as we perhaps might expect. The bulk of the work describes the inestimable glories of Mathurā, its various *ghāṭas* and temples, as well as what now appear to be relatively minor places in its vicinity. The site where Kṛṣṇa was born, in the jail of Kaṁsa,¹³ as well as the temple to Keśava that was later erected on that very spot¹⁴ are profusely praised, as are the other pilgrimage sites in Mathurā: Viśrānti-tīrtha, the bathing place where Kṛṣṇa rested after killing Kaṁsa and the temple erected there,¹⁵ the other 24 main sacred sites in the city that dot the bank of the Yamunā,¹⁶ and other sites of lesser prominence throughout the city.

The focus of the text thus seems to be on Kṛṣṇa as the Yādava prince of Mathurā, rather than on Kṛṣṇa the cowherd of Vṛndāvana, and, even then, many of the sites that are described are dedicated to other deities, like Sūrya, Soma, or Śiva,¹⁷ or are not related to incidents in Kṛṣṇa’s life but in that of various sages or mythic kings, such as Dhruva or Bali.¹⁸ This is no surprise, given that the text draws on earlier (Purāṇic) authors, for whom Mathurā was the prominent site, but given Rūpa’s specific interests in Vṛndāvana, the land of Kṛṣṇa’s childhood play (*līlā*), this focus is remarkable, and perhaps explains why the text is not very often referred to in later theological writings of the Gauḍīya tradition.

However, in focusing on Mathurā, Vṛndāvana and Kṛṣṇa’s childhood play is not ignored. Rather, by praising Mathurā, Vṛndāvana is automatically praised too, because, Rūpa argues,

Mathurā extends far beyond the boundaries of its city and includes all the twelve forests (*vana*) that surround it. Central in Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* is a passage he cites from the *Varāha Purāṇa*’s *Māhātmya*.¹⁹ The *Mathurā-māhātmya* of the *Varāha Purāṇa* describes greater Mathurā (*mathurā-maṇḍala*) as a lotus. In the whorl of the lotus resides the deity Keśava. This central temple is surrounded by four other sacred sites, each situated in its own petal of the Mathurā lotus. To the east there is Viśrāntitīrtha (or Viśrāmaghāṭa), a *ghāṭa* on the bank of the Yamunā, where it seems there once was a temple to Viśrāntideva, Kṛṣṇa who rested after killing Kaṁsa, which is no longer extant.²⁰ To the west, at Govardhana, was the temple of Harideva. To the south was a third temple, unnamed in the passage Rūpa cites (the verse merely says he has a handsome form, “similar to the form of Keśava”),²¹ but identified later on in the *Varāha Purāṇa* as a temple of Varāha.²² Finally, to the north lies Vṛndāvana, which comprises the fourth petal, where the deity Govinda resides.

The image is interesting for many reasons, but I am particularly struck by how we now likely visualise this. The current temple of Keśava in Mathurā, built in the middle of the twentieth century, was obviously not the temple Rūpa had in mind when he compiled his *māhātmya*. But neither was it the older Keśava temple which Aurangzeb destroyed, which was built with great pomp by the Rājput king Vīra Siṁha in the early seventeenth century, half a century after Rūpa’s passing.²³ The same is true for the temple on the western petal, the current temple of Harideva at Govardhana, which, as we will see below, was built a decade or two after Rūpa’s passing. What exactly there was in both places we do not know.

The state of the eastern and southern petals at the time that Rūpa wrote this are more difficult to ascertain. The eastern petal contains Viśrānti, which Rūpa’s citations refer to as a *tīrtha*,²⁴ but also refer to as a specific *mūrti*, called called “Rested [Kṛṣṇa]” (Viśrānti or Gataśrama).²⁵ It is unclear whether that temple still existed at the time that Rūpa wrote it, although the *ghāṭa* seems to have been a prominent sacred place regardless, since both Caitanya and Vallabha are said to have visited this site first on their pilgrimage to the region.²⁶ The southern petal is more obscure. Because Rūpa does not identify the *mūrti*—contrary to the *Varāha Purāṇa*, which gives a long account of its history—it seems plausible that Rūpa did not know it.

But what interests us most here is the northern petal, Vṛndāvana, where Govinda resides. Rūpa does not return to this place and its temple until the very end of the work, when his literary pilgrimage ends in Vṛndāvana. If we compare this final section of Rūpa’s *Māhātmya* with the section on Vṛndāvana in the *Mathurā-māhātmya* of the *Varāha Purāṇa*, what is immediately striking is the prominence Rūpa gives to Govinda. The *mūrti* of Govinda is praised in a few places in the *Māhātmya* of the *Varāha Purāṇa*,²⁷ but not given any particular prominence. The *mūrti* is

mentioned in the chapter on Vṛndāvana as well,²⁸ but very briefly—much more briefly than almost any of the other places mentioned in that chapter.

By contrast, Rūpa gives pride of place to Govinda. After about a dozen verses describing the extent of Vṛndāvana (to which we will return below) and its special nature, he first praises the “sacred temple of Govinda”.²⁹ There the “most beautiful” Govinda resides,³⁰ and his many servants, constantly absorbed in thought of him, are led by Vṛndādevī,³¹ the goddess who guards the place and after whom it is named.³² This “great temple” (*mahā-sadma*, 392) is “the best of all sacred sites (*tīrthas*)”.³³

As with some of the other temples Rūpa mentions in his *Mathurā-māhātmya*, this great temple of Govinda is a temple of the past, a lost temple that no longer existed when Rūpa arrived in Vraja. But to us, today—and to many generations of readers before us—the reference seems immediately clear. When we read the description of this “great temple” it is hard *not* to think of that magnificent sandstone temple that Mānasimha built at the very centre of Vṛndāvana, decades after Rūpa’s passing, where Govindadeva and Vṛndādevī were worshipped by generations of Vaiṣṇavas.

As far as we can tell, Govindadeva was the first *mūrti* that the Gauḍīya Gosvāmīs began to worship in Vṛndāvana. Rūpa is said to have found the *mūrti* of Govindadeva in 1534. The story of this discovery—now well known—is first told, as far as I know, a century later in the *Sādhana-dīpikā* of Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, a text to which we will return below. Rādhākṛṣṇa tells how Rūpa was instructed by Caitanya to settle in Vṛndāvana and “there reveal the bewildering beauty of Śrī Govinda, who is the Lord himself but has assumed a silent form.” He continues:

Hearing Mahāprabhu’s words, Śrī Rūpa was overwhelmed by separation (*viraha*). Like a stick he fell to the ground and offered respects again and again. To fulfil the command of the Lord, that wise man went to the heart of Vṛndāvana, but did not see the blessed form [of Govinda] there, and became anxious. In the houses of the residents of Vraja, in forest after forest, village after village, he did not find [Govinda]. The wise Rūpa wept and worried. One day, while he was sitting on the pure bank of the Yamunā, a beautiful person, who appeared to be a resident of Vraja, arrived. He saw him [Rūpa], and asked: “O ascetic, why are you sad?” Hearing those words, his mind was moved to affection for him. He cast off his weariness and told him, with words deep from love, everything that Śrī Mahāprabhu had instructed him. Having heard the entire account, the man said “Come!” and went away. He led him to the place known as Gumāṭilā. He then spoke again: “In recent days a most beautiful cow appeared here. Day after day she produced a stream of milk and, oh, then went away. Deliberate on this yourself and do what is proper. I’ll go now.”

Śrī Rūpa heard these words, and when he saw [on that spot] the form [of Govinda] he fainted. A little later that composed man regained composure and reflected. Although he knows everything that is secret, he imitates the behaviour of common men. He told the residents of Vraja: “Śrī Govinda is here!” Hearing this, love ruptured their thoughts. Gathering young and old, he excavated the earth. Seeing God, Kṛṣṇa, standing in the centre of the *yoga-pīṭha*—the son of Vraja’s king himself, who bewilders a million gods of love—they excavated the earth with great effort, following the command of Rūpa. Vṛndādevī was revealed close to the shore of Brahmakuṇḍa.³⁴

This story of Govindadeva’s discovery obviously supports the narrative implied in the *Mathurā-māhātmya* that Rūpa’s Govindadeva temple was not a new one, but the re-establishment of an older temple, and Rādhākṛṣṇa’s account too argues that Rūpa had envisioned that temple before his arrival in Vraja. This narrative certainly makes Rūpa’s temple of Govindadeva much more prominent as well as an aura of the inevitable by grafting this new centre of worship onto that of the Purāṇic past.

The Govindadeva temple seems to have been the first Gauḍīya temple that was established, but it certainly was not the only Gauḍīya temple in Vṛndāvana. Nor was it initially the most impressive. Compared to the grand structure that stands there now—which, even defaced, is majestic—the original sandstone temple built for Govindadeva seems to have been relatively modest. Sanātana Gosvāmī’s temple of Madanagopāla (or Madanamohana as it is now known) must have been much more impressive at the time. This temple was established at Dvādaśāditya, a prominent hill that then bordered the Yamunā—and an important site praised in every early *māhātmya*. It is the oldest surviving Gauḍīya temple building. Even if we ignore for the moment the prominent non-Gauḍīya temples that were established in Vṛndāvana, the temple of Govindadeva was hardly the only Gauḍīya temple. Paramānanda Gosvāmī established the worship of Gopīnātha at Vaṁśīvaṭa. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī established the temple of Rādhāramaṇa, and Jīva Gosvāmī the temple of Dāmodara at Sevākuṅja.

By the end of the sixteenth century, in other words, the Govindadeva temple was one of many temples, and one of many Gauḍīya temples. Why then did that temple specifically receive the patronage of Mānasīṃha and become the magnificent building we now know? Though the temple of Govindadeva was, in one sense, one of many, it seems like the Kachavāhās also regarded it to be the principal temple in Vṛndāvana precisely because it was considered to be the re-established temple of Govinda, praised in *Purāṇic* texts as the presiding deity of the northern petal of the Mathurā lotus.

One hint for this we see in another major Kachavāhā project in Vraja. Two decades before the grand Govindadeva temple was inaugurated, Bhagavāndāsa, Mānasīṃha’s father, began

construction of the Harideva temple at Govardhana. As we have seen, Harideva is praised in earlier texts as the presiding deity of the western petal of Mathurā, and Bhagavāndāsa, rebuilt this temple sometime in the 1570s-1580s (some decades after Rūpa passed away). Mānasimha began construction of the new temple for Govindadeva during his father’s lifetime, and the temple was completed in 1590, a year after his father’s rule. They were thus rebuilding the religious landscape of Vraja known from the *māhātmyas*, starting with the two regions that had suddenly grown tremendously in prominence—Govardhana and Vṛndavana.³⁵

Part 2 – A Jewelled Temple under a Wish-fulfilling Tree: The *yoga-pīṭha* and Govindadeva’s Goddess

The temple of Govindadeva is situated on a hill in the centre of Vṛndāvana, and early-on this spot becomes identified as the *yoga-pīṭha*, as we have seen in the above citation from Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī. What is a *yoga-pīṭha*? A. W. Entwistle describes it as follows: “The term *pīṭha* refers to the pedestal on which a deity stands, and the compound *yogapīṭha* refers specifically to an area, pedestal, or platform on which a *maṇḍala* diagram is drawn as a means of concentrating power during worship or of determining the position [of] a deity.”³⁶ Such a *maṇḍala*, used for meditation as well as for mapping sacred space, is often conceived of as a lotus, with the deity residing at its centre. We have seen one such *maṇḍala* earlier, used in the *Mathurā-māhātmyas* of the *Varāha Purāṇa* and Rūpa Gosvāmī, to map the land of Mathurā, with Keśava at the centre, in Mathurā’s *yoga-pīṭha*.

The place where Govindadeva stands is not identified as the *yoga-pīṭha* in Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya*, since the Purāṇas he cites describe the *maṇḍala* of Mathurā, not that of Vṛndāvana. But as the devotional focus shifts from Mathurā—where Kṛṣṇa, as the son of Devakī and Vasudeva, is a royal *kṣatriya*—to Vṛndāvana—where Kṛṣṇa, as the son of Yaśodā and Nanda, is a charming cowherd boy—the *maṇḍala* shifts too, and thus, very quickly, Govindadeva comes to be seen to be standing at the *yoga-pīṭha* of Vṛndāvana, the newly re-emerging sacred landscape.³⁷ Vṛndāvana is no longer the northern section of Mathurā’s *maṇḍala*, but a *maṇḍala* in its own right.

This shift, and the resulting focus on Govinda as the central deity of Vṛndāvana, is not without precedent. Several older texts detailing the worship of Kṛṣṇa cited by Gauḍīya authors in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century describe the *yoga-pīṭha* of Vṛndāvana and associate Govinda specifically with it. Most prominent of these texts is the *Brahma-saṃhitā*, a relatively brief Pāñcarātra text (or an excerpt thereof) that Caitanya himself discovered on his pilgrimage to the South.³⁸ The text is cited profusely by the Vṛndāvana Gosvāmīs (though,

curiously, not by the early Gauḍīyas in Bengal) and Jīva Gosvāmī wrote an elaborate commentary on it. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja proclaims: “There is no scripture of theology equal to the *Brahma-samhitā*; it is the primary source of knowledge of the greatness of Govinda.”³⁹ The text opens with a description of the thousand-petaled lotus *maṇḍala* that unfolds around Govinda, representing the divine realm Gokula, which was revealed to the demiurge Brahmā, through his meditation on the *gopāla-mantra*.⁴⁰ The heart of the text is Brahmā’s prayer, a long series of verses in praise of “Govinda, the primeval person” (*govindam ādi-puruṣam*).⁴¹

This association of Govinda with the *yoga-pīṭha* is also common in other texts cited by the early generations of Gauḍīyas in Vraja. For example, the *Vṛndāvana-māhātmya* of the *Padma Purāṇa* writes how in Vṛndāvana’s centre is “the place of Govinda” (*govinda-sthala*), where on a golden throne under a jewelled pavilion is the *yoga-pīṭha*. There, at the pericarp of the lotus of the land, Govinda sits on a lion throne (*siṃhāsana*), attended by the *gopīs*.⁴² Similarly, the *Varāha-saṃhitā*, a Pāñcarātra text on the worship of Kṛṣṇa that is cited profusely by Rāghava Paṇḍita, a Gauḍīya contemporary of Rūpa Gosvāmī, offers a similar description of this “place dear to Govinda”, at the heart of the lotus, where he resides with Rādhā.⁴³ The *Govinda-vṛndāvana*, a section of the *Bṛhad-gautamīya Tantra* cited by Rāghava Paṇḍita and Jīva Gosvāmī, likewise describes a “divine city” at the heart of Vṛndāvana, at the centre of which is a “divine temple, the above of love”⁴⁴ where Govinda and Rādhā sit on a lion throne.⁴⁵ And the *Ūrdhvāmnāya-tantra*, a text of unknown provenance that is cited by Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, says: “Govinda, who is a cowherd, is always manifest and unmanifest. He always stands in Vṛndāvana at the *yoga-pīṭha*. In all the four ages (*yuga*) he is the presiding deity of the beautiful Vṛndāvana.”⁴⁶

Indeed, this unique location becomes so strongly linked to the Govindadeva temple that whenever Gauḍīya authors refer to the latter, they almost invariably refer to the former. Thus Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja writes: “In Vṛndāvana, at the *yoga-pīṭha*, in a forest of wish-granting trees, in a pavilion made of gems, on a jewelled lion-throne resides Śrī Govinda, the son on Vraja’s king, revealing his sweetness, bewildering the world.”⁴⁷ Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa sings: “Govinda resides at the *yoga-pīṭha* of Śrī Vṛndāvana; the hope of serving his feet is Gadādhara’s refuge.”⁴⁸ And when Mānasiṃha’s grand sandstone temple was constructed, in 1590, the supremacy of this place was literally carved into stone. An inscription on the north side of Vṛndādevī’s shrine proclaims that Mānasiṃha “built this temple on the *yoga-pīṭha* of Śrī Vṛndāvana”.⁴⁹ Similarly, devotees who entered the inner sanctum of the temple (*garbha-grha*), would have walked past a Sanskrit composition ascribed to Jīva Gosvāmī inscribed on the right of the doorway.⁵⁰ This *Govinda-mandirāṣṭaka* (“Eight-verses in praise of Govinda’s temple”) opens with the following verse:

On the blessed *yoga-pīṭha* in Śrī Vṛndā's woods, which is venerated by hosts of gods in heaven led by Śiva and which uniquely makes even Vaikuṅṭha's very core appear dull, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is praised in many thousands of Śrutis and Smṛtis as Śrī Govinda, perpetually resides, resplendent, revealing his desire to protect his own devotees.⁵¹

For the followers of Rūpa Gosvāmī, however, the significance of the *yoga-pīṭha* goes beyond it being the geographical centre of Vṛndāvana. This is highlighted in Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's monumental *Govinda-līlāmṛta* ("The Nectar of Govinda's Play"), a text that describes the daily *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa—from morning to night. As the title itself suggests, the text was written specifically for the community of Govindadeva. Tradition holds that Kṛṣṇadāsa based this work on a short text of Rūpa Gosvāmī on the same theme,⁵² and Kṛṣṇadāsa reminds his reader at the end of each chapter that he considers the book to be "the fruit of my service to Śrī Rūpa, the bee at the lotus-feet of Śrī Caitanya".⁵³ Kṛṣṇadāsa lived for much of his life in Rādhākuṇḍa, but he long maintained a close connection with the Govindadeva temple, even after Rūpa's passing. Haridāsa Gosvāmī was the first custodian of the temple after Rūpa Gosvāmī. He oversaw the establishment of the new temple Mānasimḥa built, and seems to have had a profound influence on the devotional life of the Govindadeva community, as Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja describes in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*,⁵⁴ and is praised in the *Govinda-mandirāṣṭaka* that is carved into the temple: "May Śrī Haridāsa, the foremost of all those who serve the lotus feet of Śrī Govinda, bearing love for them, always be pleased. By his undertaking this temple enhanced the *rasa* of serving [Govindadeva], and he most certainly granted King Śrī Mānasimḥa extraordinary bliss."⁵⁵ Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja was close to the priests at the Govindadeva temple in general,⁵⁶ but especially to Haridāsa. Kṛṣṇadāsa donated a house he owned at Rādhākuṇḍa to him,⁵⁷ and the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, which would become Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's most influential work, was written at the request of Haridāsa.⁵⁸

The *Govinda-līlāmṛta* contains the most elaborate description and praise of the temple's site found in any work of the period. The narrative of the text culminates in chapter twenty-one with a description of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's meeting. When night had fallen, Rādhā sneaked out the house, and, dressed only in dark clothes and dark ornaments to help her remain hidden from the eyes of her elders, she rushed to Vṛndāvana. There, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja describes,

she saw the spotless slope, known as Śrī Govinda's place (*govinda-sthala*), the seat of union with Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-samyoga-pīṭha*), the highest part of Vṛndā's woods, which rises gently on every side like the shell of a turtle, resembling a thousand-petalled lotus—its true pericarp a building made of gems adorned by circles of petal-like groves, its filaments rows of golden plantains.⁵⁹

Kṛṣṇadāsa follows this with an elaborate description of this place and its surroundings, spanning over seventy verses. He describes in great detail the many trees, vines, and flowers that grow around the many jewelled basins, platforms, swings, and cottages, as well as the various animals that can be found there. The building that stands at the centre of this place, he writes, is “a temple made of colourful gems”.⁶⁰ “This jewel temple, situated under a wish-fulfilling tree, those who know Pāñcarātra (*āgama*) proclaim to be the *yoga-pīṭha*, the lion-throne of Gopāla, but Hari’s lovers call it his play grove (*keli-nikuñja*).”⁶¹

The shift Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja here describes is important. Govindadeva stands not just at the *yoga-pīṭha*, the centre of the *maṇḍala*, but at the *kṛṣṇa-saṃyoga-pīṭha*, “the seat of union with Kṛṣṇa”, the pleasure grove where the divine lovers Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are united. It is a shift from the rule-oriented worship of the Pāñcarātras—which Rūpa Gosvāmī called “devotional practice governed by injunctions” (*vaidhi-sādhana-bhakti*)—to the worship that emulates Kṛṣṇa’s most intimate devotees whose every action is directed only by love (*prema*)—which he calls “devotional practice pursuing passion” (*rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti*).⁶² The latter is generally not in conflict with the former, but adds to it and deepens it. As Rūpa explains, in such practice one serves Kṛṣṇa with the physical body as one normally would, but also serves him mentally, by visualising oneself as an attendant of the divine couple in the divine Vṛndāvana.⁶³ A narrative work like the *Govinda-līlāmṛta* is thus directly relevant to the temple worship Rūpa instituted: Govindadeva’s devotees worship him not just in the stone temple that stands on the *yoga-pīṭha* of the earthly Vṛndāvana *maṇḍala*, but, through their “mental service” (*mānasa-sevā*), also in the jewelled temple located in a bower of wish-fulfilling trees at the centre of the divine Vṛndāvana.

Given that the place on which the Govindadeva temple was built was seen to be the *yoga-pīṭha*, the centre of the divine landscape where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are to be worshipped together, it is perhaps to be expected that Govindadeva would not long be worshipped alone. Shrivatsa Goswami claims that Rādhā, who had not been worshipped in any temple before this, “first took concrete form in the image established in Govindadeva temple in the sixteenth century”.⁶⁴ When exactly Rādhā was established besides Govindadeva is unclear. When Kṛṣṇadāsa is writing the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* around the turn of the seventeenth century her worship seems to have been established already, as he makes reference to it.⁶⁵ The origin of the *mūrti*—made from metal, in contrast to the stone *mūrti* of Govindadeva—is, to my knowledge, first told by Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī in the mid-seventeenth century, and then elaborated on a century later by Narahari Cakravartī.⁶⁶ The *mūrti* is said to have been donated by a son of Pratāparudradeva, king of Orissa, and, if true, would have arrived in Vṛndāvana somewhere in the second half of the

sixteenth century, possibly before Rūpa passed away.⁶⁷ According to Narahari Cakravartī, however, this was not the first *mūrti* of Rādhā to be established; the prince had earlier sent two *mūrtis*—one of Rādhā, the other of Lalitā—for Madanamohana.⁶⁸ But Govindadeva’s Rādhā is special, and her story, as Rādhākṛṣṇa tells it, is certainly as important as that of Govindadeva himself. He writes:

Now, please listen to this old and auspicious tale. There was once a *brāhmaṇa*, named Bṛhadbhānu. He was from the South and a good Vaiṣṇava. He lived in Orissa, in the village Rādhānagara. He served her for many years like a man his wife.⁶⁹ By her compassion, nothing is impossible. Śrī [Sākṣī] Gopāla, that ocean of compassion, resided at Śrī Govinda’s place (*govinda-sthala*), and in order to act as a witness for a *brāhmaṇa*, he walked away from there using his own feet. Even today he resides in Orissa, since he is affectionate towards his devotees. Hari, God, is capable of acting or not acting. And she, his beloved and the supreme goddess is just like him.

Then, after some time, the *brāhmaṇa* passed away. The villagers worshipped Vṛṣabhānu’s daughter [Rādhā] in secret. Then, when here in Vṛndāvana, through Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Govinda, who is the son of Nanda himself, became manifest, the very handsome son of the blessed Pratāparudra—who was a great devotee, sober, well regarded amongst the saints, and a disciple of Śrī [Gadādhara] Paṇḍita Gosvāmī—became the custodian of that temple [in Rādhānagara]. That night he received this command from the jewel of Śrī Govinda’s lovers: “Govinda, the lord of my life, the son of Nanda himself, has now revealed himself, through Rūpa, in Vraja. I will quickly go there. It would not be proper for me to stay here. The wise scholar known by the name Gadādhara, who is my own form, will establish me very soon, through his disciples.”

After hearing her words, the king was greatly astonished. Then, the blessed goddess was brought to Vraja in that very form by two wise disciples of Rādhā Gadādhara. Continually worshipped along the road, the supreme goddess was led [to Vṛndāvana]. When Rādhā, my Queen, stands to the left of Govinda, then his already exceptional beauty increases.⁷⁰

Rādhā’s arrival in Vṛndāvana was thus seen to be a return. Rādhākṛṣṇa refers here to Sākṣī Gopāla, “Witness Gopāla”, a famous deity in Orissa who is said to have personally walked there from Vṛndāvana to act as a witness to one of his devotees.⁷¹ Exactly how Rādhā made her way to Orissa is unclear—even Narahari does not venture to guess that⁷²—but Rādhākṛṣṇa suggests she too moved to Orissa on her own accord, out of compassion for her devotees. Thus, though she may not have been the first *mūrti* of Rādhā to arrive in Vṛndāvana in the late sixteenth century, she certainly was, in the minds of the priests of the Govindadeva temple, the first *mūrti* of Rādhā in Vṛndāvana, who was only now reunited with Govinda and worshipped again at her proper place, the *yoga-pīṭha*. The temple—where both Vṛndā and Yogamāyā, the

directors of the divine couple’s play, were worshipped before Rādhā’s arrival—thus comes to fulfil the promise of its place: here, at the “seat of union”, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are reunited at last.

Part 3 – The Silent King: Govindadeva and the (Gauḍīya) temples of Vṛndāvana

If Vṛndāvana was indeed “full of jungle and uninhabited” when Rūpa Gosvāmī arrived in the first half of the sixteenth century, as one document claims,⁷³ the landscape looked markedly different by the end of the century. Many of the Vaiṣṇavas who moved to the growing town established temples there, and these became vibrant centres where Kṛṣṇa was worshipped through ritual, music, and dramatic performances.

By the early seventeenth century there were several prominent temples. In 1598 Akbar granted land to no less than 35 different temples in Vraja,⁷⁴ many of whom were located in Vṛndāvana. Little mention, if any, is made of the vast majority of these temples in most Gauḍīya sources from the period, who almost only describe the temples of their own tradition. While a stronger ecumenical spirit is evident in the earliest writings of the Gauḍīyas in Vraja, by the early sixteenth century, the Gauḍīya tradition—like all the others in the area—had established itself well enough to become somewhat more insular in its perspective. As a result, apart from what little we may glean from stray references in non-Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature of the period, we do not quite know how the Govindadeva temple was seen by the other Vaiṣṇava groups present in Vṛndāvana.

Perhaps the most interesting text of this period to discuss the importance of Govindadeva in relation to these other temples is the *Sādhana-dīpikā* (“A Lamp [Illuminating] Practice”) of Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, which we have cited several times already. Rādhākṛṣṇa was the fifth custodian of the Govindadeva temple. He succeeded his father Nityānanda Gosvāmī in the mid-seventeenth century, and was a direct disciple of Haridāsa Gosvāmī, who, as we have seen above, was the second custodian of the temple.⁷⁵

Rādhākṛṣṇa wrote the *Sādhana-dīpikā* for the Govindadeva community. It seems to have been intended as a manual of sorts for their priests, chronicling the history of the temple and its importance, listing the principal Vaiṣṇava festivals that were observed in the temple, and, especially, detailing the type of spiritual practice (*sādhana*) that the followers of Rūpa pursued. Rādhākṛṣṇa emphasises throughout the work the importance of Rūpa Gosvāmī to the temple, as well as that of Gadādhara Paṇḍita, whose disciple Haridāsa Gosvāmī was and to whose lineage all subsequent custodians belonged.

Not surprisingly, for Rādhākṛṣṇa, Govindadeva is not just one temple among many, but the most important one. One of the things that sets the Govindadeva temple apart from all others, Rādhākṛṣṇa says early in the text, is not *just* that he is the presiding deity of Vṛndāvana

(*vṛndāvanādhirāja*), and therefore primary among equals—like the crown prince among the other princes⁷⁶—or not just that the temple stands on the *yoga-pīṭha* of Vṛndāvana. He asserts all this, at great length, and thus reaffirms what Rūpa Gosvāmī and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja had said before him. But Govindadeva is particularly unique, for Rādhākṛṣṇa, because he is “self-manifested” (*svayaṃ-prakāśa*). Many other *mūrtis* in Vṛndāvana, Rādhākṛṣṇa explains, whether old or new, embody Kṛṣṇa because they are similar in form to Kṛṣṇa, or because the Lord manifested through that form out of affection for his devotees. But Govindadeva is directly Kṛṣṇa.

Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, the most authoritative and most comprehensive of Gauḍīya ritual texts, explains that there are two types of *mūrtis*: those that are “self-manifested” (*svayaṃ-vyakta*) and those that are consecrated. The former, in which Kṛṣṇa manifests himself out of his own will in a form of stone or wood, are very rare, and so most *mūrtis* come to embody the deity through the ritual of consecration.⁷⁷ Rādhākṛṣṇa seems to regard Govindadeva as such a self-manifested form, but he actually argues for more.

To illustrate Govindadeva’s special position, he tells the following “ancient Purāṇic tale” (*prācīna-paurāṇikāṃ kathām*):

In Pratiṣṭhānapura,⁷⁸ which was also known as the City of Love (*prema*), there was once a king, and he had five sons. When he was an old man he thought to himself: “I will grant my kingdom and the rest to that son of mine who is fit to protect the kingdom and the rest and loves me.” This he decided, and then began to act externally like a senile man. When they saw him, everyone became saddened. But those sons of his who were wicked inwardly rejoiced, and began to lead the kingdom and so on and enjoy its pleasures. One of them, however, a wise man and a scholar, who had loved his father even before this, began to serve him. Seeing his devotion, the king gave him the burden of his kingdom and so on. But when they heard this, the other sons began to beat and punish him. The ministers saw this and reported everything to the king. The king heard this, and then ceased acting dumb. He rejected those sons and, by his own free will, crowned that one son.

“In the same way,” Rādhākṛṣṇa concludes, “though Śrī Govindadeva here is the son of Vraja’s king himself, he rules here with Rādhikā, having assumed a silent form (*mauna-mudrā*) in order to determine the degrees of love of the present devotees.”⁷⁹ As we have seen earlier, Rādhākṛṣṇa argues that the same is true of Rādhā, who was brought there by Pratāparudra’s son: “While Kṛṣṇa, who assumed a silent attitude, revealed himself in Vraja, she revealed herself after him with that same attitude.”⁸⁰

This idea, that Govindadeva is Kṛṣṇa himself (*svayaṃ bhagavān*), directly (*sākṣād*), is central to Rādhākṛṣṇa’s devotion, and he repeats this throughout the *Sādhana-dīpikā*. This idea is based

on a verse from the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad*. This *Upaniṣad* is one of the most authoritative scriptural texts for the Gauḍīya community in Vṛndāvana, and is entirely devoted to the *gopāla-mantra*, which is the most important *mantra* for Gauḍīyas. The *Gopāla-tāpanī* offers the following meditation on Kṛṣṇa at the *yoga-pīṭha* to be used with this *mantra*: “His eyes like true lotuses, his lustre like that of a cloud, his clothes like lightning—the two-armed Lord, garlanded with forest flowers and with a silent form (*mauna-mudrā*) is seated on a red lotus beneath a heavenly tree, adorned with divine ornaments, surrounded by cows, cowherd men and women.”⁸¹

What about the other (Gauḍīya) temples in Vṛndāvana? The two temples closest to Govindadeva, according to Rādhākṛṣṇa, are those of Madanamohana and Gopīnātha, the other two Gauḍīya temples in Vṛndāvana to receive significant patronage and to be housed in grand stone structures. For Rādhākṛṣṇa these three temples are very closely linked, and he argues that the *mūrtis* of Madanamohana and Gopīnātha are non-different from Govindadeva. They are merely different ‘appearances’ (*prakāśa*) of him. In the *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* (1.1.21), Rūpa defines ‘appearance’ (*prakāśa*) as “that manifestation of a single form which is in several places at the same time and has, at all times, the exact same identity”.⁸² These three forms—Govindadeva, Madanamohana, and Gopīnātha—are thus identical. Just as Kṛṣṇa manifested many identical forms to dance simultaneously besides each *gopī* during the *rāsa* dance, but himself remained always besides Rādhā, so, Rādhākṛṣṇa explains, are all three identical, while Govindadeva is also ever unique.⁸³

There were two other important Gauḍīya temples in this early period: Jīva Gosvāmī’s temple of Rādhā-Dāmodara and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī’s temple of Rādhāramaṇa. Curiously, they are rarely referred to in the earliest sources. Perhaps these two temples, which had not received significant patronage and were likely housed in architecturally unremarkable structures, were at the turn of the century not regarded on an equal level as these other three temples, as we will see Akbar’s 1598 grant suggests.⁸⁴ Space does not permit us to look at Rādhākṛṣṇa’s views on the Rādhāramaṇa temple. About Dāmodara, Jīva’s deity, Rādhākṛṣṇa has little to say, but he claims that Rūpa had a hand in establishing this deity: Rūpa personally carved Jīva’s Dāmodara *mūrti* and entrusted him to Jīva for worship.⁸⁵ Thus, though Dāmodara was not so intimately linked with Govindadeva as Madanamohana and Gopīnātha, Govindadeva’s founder was, according to Rādhākṛṣṇa, responsible for establishing this worship, and so this temple too was dependent on that of Govindadeva.

The brevity of Rādhākṛṣṇa’s comments on the *mūrti* of Dāmodara in the *Sādhana-dīpikā* certainly does not represent how much the Dāmodara temple and its present custodian must have weighed on his mind. Indeed, Rādhākṛṣṇa became the custodian of the Govindadeva

temple at a tumultuous time, and it seems that for as long as he occupied that position he was embroiled in a complex conflict over the ownership of the Govindadeva temple (and its considerable assets) with the custodian of the temple of Rādhā-Dāmodara.

Though the controversy seems to have only arisen in the seventeenth century, its origin lies in the sixteenth century, with Rūpa and Jīva themselves. Rūpa had appointed Haridāsa Gosvāmī as his successor as the custodian of the Govindadeva temple, but had also bequeathed all his property and that of his brother Sanātana, which he himself had inherited, to his nephew Jīva Gosvāmī. In a decree (*farmān*) from 1568, we read that Ṭoḍara Mala, finance minister at Akbar’s court, requested that the emperor grant Jīva Gosvāmī, “a poor man, praying for His Majesty”, the custodianship (*adhikāra*) of the temples of Govindadeva and Madanamohana, which had been given to him by Rūpa, as well as “the right to claim all offerings (*khairāt*) at the temples”.⁸⁶ The mere existence of this document might suggest that Jīva’s rights over the management of these two temples was in dispute and needed to be protected, but there seems to be no other indication that there was a conflict between the temples of Govindadeva and Jīva’s Rādhā-Dāmodara. Haridāsa Gosvāmī was the custodian (*adhikāri*) of Govindadeva at the time, and he—as well as the wider Govindadeva community—seemed to have amiable relations with Jīva Gosvāmī.

In 1608, Jīva composed a will and in that document bequeaths all his property to Vilāsadāsa, who is stipulated to then bequeath it all to Kṛṣṇadāsa Gosvāmī. The document makes no direct reference to the temples—and, indeed, suggest that only Jīva’s own temple was under discussion⁸⁷—but since Jīva inherited the belongings of his uncles, Rūpa and Sanātana, this led to some ambiguity. By the mid seventeenth century—just a few decades after Jīva’s passing—there arose a bitter dispute as Kṛṣṇadāsa Gosvāmī fought with the priests of the Govindadeva temple, coming in Haridāsa Gosvāmī’s line, over the custodianship of the Govindadeva temple. For a second time a Mughal emperor intervened: in a decree dated 1644 Shāh Jahān affirmed Kṛṣṇadāsa’s rights over both temples, and warned that “no one should interfere with it”.⁸⁸

This did not end the conflict, however. Eleven years earlier, in 1633, Jayasiṃha I, a descendant of Mānasiṃha, was able to convince Shāh Jahān to transfer the imperial grant made by Akbar in 1598 to the Govindadeva temple to the Kachavāhā family,⁸⁹ giving them considerably more influence over the temple management. And, as reflected in surviving legal documents, Jayasiṃha I does indeed increasingly assert his authority over the Govindadeva temple in the next decade.⁹⁰ In 1643—a year before Shāh Jahān’s decree in favour of Kṛṣṇadāsa—Jayasiṃha I warned other Vaiṣṇavas not to interfere with the worship of Govindadeva overseen by Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, whom he himself had appointed as the custodian of that temple,⁹¹ and

in the following years local administrators (*jāgīrdar*) repeatedly restated Jayasiṃha I's rights over the temple, based on Shāh Jahān's decree from 1633.⁹²

Kṛṣṇadāsa Gosvāmī, however, did not desist, and the conflict “became most embittered” about 20 years later, when Jayasiṃha I defended the rights of Śivarāma Gosvāmī, Rādhākṛṣṇa's son and the sixth custodian of Govindadeva, over Govindadeva's property, “despite Krishan Dās's machinations”: “what status has Kishan Dās [Kṛṣṇadāsa] that he should by fraud (*sākht*) make himself (manager of) the sarkār of Govind Dev”?⁹³

The protracted conflict with Kṛṣṇadāsa Gosvāmī over the ownership of the Govindadeva temple undoubtedly influenced the writing of the *Sādhana-dīpikā* text in significant ways, and it is not difficult to see the intended moral of Rādhākṛṣṇa's “ancient Purāṇic tale” about the ageing king: Kṛṣṇadāsa, fighting for the ownership of the temple, is like one of the princes who try to enjoy their seemingly senile father's riches, but the real heir of Govindadeva's kingdom are those who actually serve him out of love, like Rādhākṛṣṇa and the priests of his temple. Like the king in the tale, Govindadeva has assumed a silent form to discover how much his devotees love him over his wealth, and Kṛṣṇadāsa bitterly failed the test.

The dispute between the Govindadeva community and Kṛṣṇadāsa Gosvāmī over the custodianship of the temple and its relation to the other sacred sites of Vraja was not purely a dispute over power and material assets. It is noteworthy that the dispute does not seem to have arisen when Vilāsadāsa inherited everything Jīva owned, even though, two decades earlier, Akbar's decree from 1568 had already declared that Jīva had authority over the Govindadeva temple. The conflict arises only when Kṛṣṇadāsa Gosvāmī inherits all Jīva's possessions from Vilāsadāsa. Why only then? We do not exactly know, but doctrine seems to have played a crucial role in this.

In the seventeenth century, the Gauḍīya community, in both Vṛndāvana and Bengal, became mired in a debate over doctrine that would repeatedly resurface in the centuries to come. The central issue in this controversy was Kṛṣṇa's relations with the *gopīs* of Vraja: were they married to him or did they break the bonds of their marriages to be with him? The issue is addressed in the works of the early Gosvāmīs, but the debate, it seems, only flared up with the reception of the works of Jīva Gosvāmī. Some argued that in his own writings Jīva asserted that Kṛṣṇa was wedded to the *gopīs*, even though his uncles Rūpa and Sanātana argued otherwise. Others, however, acknowledged that Jīva did indeed *seem* to teach this in some of his works, but that, ultimately, he established that the *gopīs'* love for Kṛṣṇa was extra-marital (*parakīyā*), not marital (*svakīyā*). That both sides were able to find support for their doctrine in Jīva's writings demonstrates the ambiguity of Jīva's views, and many words were spilled over a cryptic verse in

which Jīva states “I wrote something in accordance with my own will, but something is in accordance to the will of someone else.”⁹⁴

The debate was of great importance to Rādhākṛṣṇa, who devotes an entire chapter to it in the *Sādhana-dīpikā*. At length, Rādhākṛṣṇa attempts to demonstrate that every prominent follower of Caitanya propagated the idea that the *gopīs*’ love was extra-marital. He admits that Jīva did indeed support both positions, but argues that Jīva included the alternative view—that Kṛṣṇa married the *gopīs*—to please one of his disciples (“something is in accordance to the will of someone else”).⁹⁵

This issue is particularly pertinent to the conflict over the custodianship of Govindadeva, because that conflict seems to also have been grounded in this theological debate. At the very end of his long exposition on the extra-marital (*parakīyā*) doctrine, Rādhākṛṣṇa claims that Kṛṣṇadāsa Gosvāmī himself took the opposite position and argued that Jīva taught the marital (*svakīyā*) doctrine. Having already refuted this idea earlier in the chapter, Rādhākṛṣṇa ends with a personal attack on Kṛṣṇadāsa, questioning his claim to be the legitimate heir of Jīva Gosvāmī. He writes:

The Bengali *brāhmaṇa* named Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa is a disciple whom the blessed Jīva taught spiritual wisdom, not a mantra-disciple [i.e., a disciple through initiation (*dīkṣā*)], because Jīva did not initiate disciples. If he would have initiated disciples, why then would Śrī Jīva have rejected devotees like Śrīnivāsa and Narottama as his disciples?⁹⁶ Desiring the custodianship (*adhikāra*) for himself, after Jīva’s demise, Kṛṣṇadāsa himself has argued he is a mantra-disciple of him. In some places he has cut portions out of Jīva’s works, and in some places he has added to them.⁹⁷

This is quite the accusation. The claim that Kṛṣṇadāsa edited Jīva’s books, presumably to make a stronger case for the marital (*svakīyā*) position, does not concern us much at the moment.⁹⁸ What does matter here is that Kṛṣṇadāsa does seem to have been on the opposing side of the theological debate from Rādhākṛṣṇa, and, at least in Rādhākṛṣṇa’s view, might have gone to great length to support his claim. Although we have no statement from Kṛṣṇadāsa himself to that effect,⁹⁹ some legal documents certainly make the claim that he is Jīva’s disciple: Shāh Jahān’s decree (*farmān*), for example, refers to Kṛṣṇadāsa as the “disciple” (*murīd*) of Jīva.¹⁰⁰ In this passage, Rādhākṛṣṇa conveniently ignores Jīva’s will, which he would almost certainly have known about, given its importance in the legal fight.¹⁰¹ But for Rādhākṛṣṇa, the issue is clearly more than just legal: Kṛṣṇadāsa cannot be Jīva’s heir because he does not follow Jīva’s theology, and certainly not the theology of Rūpa Gosvāmī. Therefore, even if Kṛṣṇadāsa were to claim that he is merely a student of Jīva and not an initiated disciple, he would still fall short.

This theological issue is not peripheral to this fight over the temple, nor, I argue, an afterthought used to legitimise each side's claim. Rādhākṛṣṇa and indeed the entire Govindadeva community see themselves as the heir of Rūpa Gosvāmī, who founded the temple and instituted the worship. Rūpa clearly taught the extra-marital (*parakīyā*) doctrine, as Kiyokazu Okita has demonstrated,¹⁰² and so did other authors who were closely associated with the temple, like Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja.

The quarrel over the control of Govindadeva's assets is thus also rooted in a conflict over the imagined Govindadeva temple. For the Govindadeva community this is more than just a doctrine, however important, that it has inherited. The temple itself underscores this theological issue's importance. As we have seen in the previous section, besides the central shrine for Govindadeva and Rādhā, the temple also had two additional shrines: one for Vṛndādevī, and one for Yogamāyā. Both of these goddesses' only concern is to allow Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to come together at the *yoga-pīṭha*. That Rādhā is married to a cowherd man named Abhimanyu and therefore has an extra-marital affair with Kṛṣṇa is crucial to both their roles. Vṛndādevī's role is especially important because Rādhā has to meet Kṛṣṇa without raising suspicion in her own husband, Abhimanyu, and mother-in-law, Jaṭilā, and Vṛndādevī helps her to hide her trysts with Kṛṣṇa, as both Rūpa and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja describe. Thus, Rūpa writes, Vṛndādevī's sends her monkeys to distract Jaṭilā to help Rādhā's friends hide any evidence of her love for Kṛṣṇa,¹⁰³ and, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja narrates, Vṛndā's parrots wake Rādhā early in the morning, after she spent the night with Kṛṣṇa, urging her to return home before Jaṭilā notices she is missing.¹⁰⁴ Vṛndā continually tricks Rādhā's in-laws so Rādhā can slip out and meet Kṛṣṇa in the forest.¹⁰⁵

The same is true for Yogamāyā. Indeed, as Rūpa writes in the *Vidagdha-mādhava*, the *gopīs'* marriage is unreal, because their love is exclusively and eternally Kṛṣṇa's. All this is really orchestrated by Yogamāyā herself.¹⁰⁶ As Paurṇamāsī too she plays that same role, and makes Jaṭilā persistently obstruct Rādhā, as she admits in the *Lalita-mādhava*.¹⁰⁷ Such obstacles, Rūpa explains, enhance the *gopīs'* love for Kṛṣṇa. As he writes in the *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, "the best consummation of love is that because of which they are prevented [from meeting] often, which forces them to be secret lovers, and which is rare for both."¹⁰⁸ By creating these obstacles, Paurṇamāsī or Yogamāyā reveal Rādhā's deepest love for Kṛṣṇa. But Paurṇamāsī does not merely create obstacles. She is also highly regarded by Jaṭilā, both Rūpa and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja write, and thus Paurṇamāsī is able to influence Rādhā's mother-in-law in order to have her, unwittingly, facilitate the meeting of the divine couple.¹⁰⁹

The theological debate—and the conflict with Kṛṣṇadāsa Gosvāmī—thus affects the way the significance of the entire temple complex of Govindadeva is understood. Kṛṣṇadāsa's

enforced custody over the Govindadeva temple would likely have changed its community and its self-understanding in a most profound way, and the persistent opposition from the seventeenth century custodians, and Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī in particular, is thus very understandable. (In the light of this, there is also some irony to Jayasīṃha I's continuous support of Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, given that a few generations later, Jayasīṃha II would vehemently support the marital position.)¹¹⁰ Power and prestige acquired from the material assets of the temple were thus not the only stakes. Indeed, theological issues like these would have been experienced as concrete as the sandstone of the temple itself to those whose lives were so profoundly shaped around the *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa.

Concluding Remarks

What does that tell us about Govindadeva and Rūpa's work to (re)build Vṛndāvana? The *Mathurā-māhātmya* demonstrates quite clearly that Rūpa did not envision the Govindadeva temple as a new temple—or even as yet another temple—but as the re-establishing of the old and lost temple of Govinda praised in the *Māhātmya* literature he draws upon. Whether the text was indeed written before he moved to Vraja—and functioned as a blueprint for the building of Vṛndāvana—or not—and functioned as a justification for the new temple—is in a sense inconsequential. Govindadeva came to be seen as not just one deity among many, but the presiding deity of this newly revived place of pilgrimage, Vṛndāvana. Rūpa's inclusion of a shrine to Vṛndādevī in the temple only underscores this. As both *Mathurā-māhātmyas* state, she too is the presiding deity of Vṛndāvana, and she resides in Govinda's temple.

But in establishing the temple, Rūpa was not just reviving the old, but also developing it further by revealing the connection of the revived temples with Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* not hinted at in the *māhātmyas*—by connecting it with those *līlās* that, we have seen, were said to be lost in time. The Govindadeva temple stands on the *yoga-pīṭha*, the place where the divine couple Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa meet. The hill on which the temple stands is thus not just the geographic centre of Vṛndāvana, but also its spiritual centre: it is here that the most intimate *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa commence. Again, Vṛndādevī is central is this, as is Yogamāyā.

The centrality of Govindadeva in the developing town of Vṛndāvana is also underscored by Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's image of the Vṛndāvana lotus in Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*, with the *yoga-pīṭha* at its heart and the remaining groves and sites representing its petals, is now transposed on the present Vṛndāvana, in which all the principal temples in Vṛndāvana radiate outwards from the temple of Govindadeva.

What is particularly striking in all this is how these ideas deeply root the temple and *mūrti* of Govindadeva in the landscape of Vraja. Govindadeva is not just any temple, but unlike the

others a temple deeply anchored in the location where it stands. Sanātana’s temple of Madanamohana, for example, also stands on an important site, both geographically—a prominent hill—and devotionally—the hill is Dvādaśāditya, where Kṛṣṇa was warmed by the 12 Ādityas after subduing Kāliya, a place the earlier *māhātmyas* praise,¹¹¹ and possibly the site of an earlier temple.¹¹² But in a sense, that temple could have been elsewhere, in a different location, and would not have altered its character. This is unthinkable with Govindadeva, because he is so deeply rooted in the place where he stands. He is the presiding deity of Vṛndāvana and thus should stand centrally in Vṛndāvana, on the hill that overlooks the rest of the town. As Kṛṣṇadāsa writes in the *Govinda-līlāmṛta*, this hill is known in Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā* as Govinda-sthala, “Govinda’s place”. It stands on the *yoga-pīṭha* the place of union for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa—a union which both Vṛndādevī and Yogamāyā perpetually orchestrate. It is in other words difficult to think of Govindadeva residing anywhere else. And yet now he does.

The exact reasons for Govindadeva’s departure from Vṛndāvana are, like all Kṛṣṇa’s departures from Vṛndāvana, hard to fathom. In 1669, Aurangzeb ordered several temples in Vraja and beyond to be destroyed. This sudden move has often been attributed to a rising religious zeal of the emperor, but, as Heidi Pauwels has shown in relation to the Keśava temple in Mathurā, the main motive is likely a lot more political.¹¹³ The destruction of the Govindadeva temple is unique, however, since the temple was not actually destroyed, but very carefully dismantled. Its central shrine was removed and the five spires that towered above the temple were demolished.¹¹⁴ Govindadeva would begin a seven decade-long journey west, that would ultimately end in the newly built city of Jaipur, where Jayasiṃha II, a descendent of Mānasiṃha, worshipped him, and the residents of that city have done so till the present day. With the departure of its deity, the temple in Vṛndāvana was now an empty monument and fell into obscurity. By the nineteenth century, it was in ruins. F. S. Growse, who restored the temple in 1873, describes its condition before his work commenced:

From the reign of Aurangzeb to the present time not a single step had ever been taken to ensure the preservation from further decay of this most interesting architectural monument. It was looked upon by the people in the neighbourhood as a convenient quarry, where every house-builder was at liberty to excavate for materials; while large trees had been allowed to grow up in the fissures of the walls, and in the course of a few more summers their spreading roots would have caused irreparable damage.¹¹⁵

With the departure of Govindadeva, the main temple, built not with Mānasiṃha’s stones, but with the devotion of his devotees, left with him. The majestic red sandstone structure lost its

significance, not just for the descendants of Mānasiṃha, but also for the devotees who lived in Vṛndāvana.¹¹⁶

Bibliography

Primary sources

- Brahma-saṃhitā*, with the commentary of Jīva Gosvāmī and Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī. Edited by Bhakti Vilās Tirtha Goswami. Madras: Sree Gaudiya Math, 1973.
- Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad*, with the commentary of Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī. Edited by Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābā. Rādhākuṇḍa: Gaurahari Press, 1965.
- Govinda-vṛndāvana*, edited with a Hindi commentary by Haridāsa Śāstrī. Vṛndāvana: Śrī Gadādhara-Gaurahari Press, n.d.
- Jīva Gosvāmī, *Bhāgavata-sandarbhā (Ṣaṭsandarbha)*. Edited by Purīdās. Vrindavan: Haridāsa Śarma, 1951.
- Jīva Gosvāmī, *Gopāla-campū (pūrva & uttara)*. Edited with a Hindi translation and commentary by Śyāmadāsa. Vṛndāvana: Śrī Harināma Saṅkīrtana Maṇḍala, 1968-70.
- Jīva Gosvāmī, *Saṅkalpa-kalpa-druma*. Edited by Purīdāsa Mahāśaya. Vṛndāvana: Haridāsa Śarmā, 1951.
- Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Edited by Bhakti Kevala Auḍulomi Mahārāja, with the *Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya* of Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and the *Anubhāṣya* of Vārṣabhānavīdayitadāsa. Calcutta: Gauḍīya Mission, 1957.
- Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, *Govinda-līlāmṛta*, with the commentary of Vṛndāvana Cakravartī. Edited by Haridāsa Śāstrī. 3 Volumes. Vṛndāvana: Śrī Gadādhara Gaurahari Press, 2006.
- Murāri Gupta, *Kṛṣṇa-caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Edited by Haridāsa Śāstrī. Vṛndāvana: Śrī Gadādhara-gaurahari Press, 1984.
- Narahari Cakravartī, *Bhakti-ratnākara*. Edited by Nandalāla Vidyāsāgara. Second edition. Calcutta: Gauḍīya Mission, 1960.
- Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī, *Sādhana-dīpikā*. Edited by Haridāsa Śāstrī. Vṛndāvana: Śrī Gadādhara-Gaurahari Press, n.d.
- Rāghava Paṇḍita, *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti-ratna-prakāśa*. Edited Purīdāsa Mahāśaya. Vṛndāvana: Haridāsa Śarmā, 1954.
- Rūpa Gosvāmī, *Lalita-mādhava*. Edited by Purīdāsa Mahāśaya. Mayamanasiṃha: Śacinātha Rāyacaturdhurī, 1947.
- Rūpa Gosvāmī, *Mathurā-māhātmya*. Edited by Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi Dāsa, translated by Bhumipati Dāsa. Vrindavan: Rasbihari Lal & Sons, n.d.

Rūpa Gosvāmī, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, with the commentary of Viṣṇudāsa. Edited by Haridāsa Dāsa. Navadvīpa: Haribol Kuṭīra, 1955.

Rūpa Gosvāmī, *Vidagdha-mādhava*. Edited with a commentary by Paṇḍit Bhavadatta Śāstrī and Kāśīnāth Pāṇḍurang Parab. Bombay: Pāndurang Jāwajī, 1937.

Varāha Purāna. Edited by Hṛṣīkeśa Śāstrī. Vārāṇasī: Caukhambā Amarabhāratī Prakāśana, 1982.

Secondary Sources

Asher, Catherine (1996): “Kacchavāha Pride and Prestige: The Temple Patronage of Rāja Māna Siṃha” in *Govindadeva: A dialogue in stone*, edited by Margaret Case. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, pp. 215-30.

Bahura, Gopal Narayan (1996): “Śrī Govinda Gāthā: Service Rendered to Govinda by the Rulers of Āmera and Jayapura” in *Govindadeva: A dialogue in stone*, edited by Margaret Case. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, pp. 195-213.

Case, Margaret H. (ed.) (1996): *Govindadeva: a dialogue in stone*. New Delhi, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.

Dimock, Edward C. and Tony K. Stewart (1999): *Caitanya caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja: a translation and commentary*. Cambridge, Mass., Dept. of Sanskrit and Indian Studies Harvard University.

Entwistle, A.W. (1987): *Braj: Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage*. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.

Goswami, Shrivatsa (1996): “Govinda Darśana: The Lotus in Stone” in *Govindadeva: A dialogue in stone*, edited by Margaret Case. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, pp. 269-77.

Growse, F.S. (1993 [1882]): *Mathurā: A District Memoir*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services.

Habib, Irfan (1996): “A documentary history of the Gosā’ins (Gosvāmīs) of the Caitanya sect at Vṛndāvana,” in *Govindadeva: A dialogue in stone*, edited by Margaret Case. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, pp.131-159.

Hawley, John Stratton (2015): *A Storm of Songs: India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Holdrege, Barbara (2015): *Bhakti and Embodiment: Fashioning Divine Bodies and Devotional Bodies in Kṛṣṇa Bhakti*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Horstmann, Monika (1994): “Govindadevjī of Vrindaban and Jaipur and its Kachvāhā Patrons from the Mid-Seventeenth to the Mid-Eighteenth Century”, in *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature: Research Papers, 1988-1991 presented at the Fifth Conference on Devotional Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages*, edited by Alan W. Entwistle & Françoise Mallinson. New Delhi & Paris: Manohar & École Française d’Extrême-Orient, pp. 82-93.

- Horstmann, Monika (1996): “Govindadeva and His Custodians from 1643 through the Time of Jaya Siṃha II (1700-1743)” in *Govindadeva: A dialogue in stone*, edited by Margaret Case. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, pp. 185-93.
- Horstmann, Monika (1999): *In Favour of Govindadevjī: Historical documents relating to a deity of Vrindaban and Eastern Rajasthan*. New Delhi : Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts & Manohar Publishers & Distributors.
- Mani, Vettam (1984): *Purāṇic Encyclopedia*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Mitchell, George (1996): “The Missing Sanctuary” in *Govindadeva: A dialogue in stone*, edited by Margaret Case. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, pp. 115-22.
- Mukherjee, Tarapada & Irfan Habib (1987): “Akbar and the Temples of Mathura and its Environs”, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 48, pp. 234-50.
- Mukherjee, Tarapada & Irfan Habib (1988): “The Mughal Administration and the Temples of Vrindaban during the Reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan”, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 49, pp. 287-300.
- Mukherjee, Tarapada & Irfan Habib (1989): “Land Rights in the Reign of Akbar (The Evidence of the Sale-Deeds of Vrindaban and Ariṭha)”, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 50, pp. 236-55.
- Nath, R. (1996): “Śrī Govindadeva’s Itinerary from Vṛndāvana to Jayapura c. 1534-1727” in *Govindadeva: A dialogue in stone*, edited by Margaret Case. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, pp. 161-83.
- Okita, Kiyokazu (2018): “Ethics and Aesthetics in Early Modern South Asia: A Controversy Surrounding the Tenth Book of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*”, *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 22.1, pp. 25-43.
- Okita, Kiyokazu (2020): “Divine Transgression: Devotion and ethics in Bengali Vaiṣṇavism” in *The Legacy of Vaiṣṇavism in Colonial Bengal*, edited by Ferdinando Sardella & Lucian Wong. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 212-32.
- Pauwels, Heidi (2011): “A tale of two temples: Mathurā’s Keśavadeva and Orcchā’s Caturbhujadeva”, *South Asian History and Culture* 2.2, pp. 278-299.
- Prasad, Rajiva Nain (1966): *Raja Man Singh of Amber*. Calcutta: The World Press Private Ltd.

- 1 According to Growse (1993, p. 242-3), “one over the central dome, and the other four covering the choir, sacrarium, and two chapels”.
- 2 Growse (1993), p. 241.
- 3 *Vṛndāvane daivata-vṛnda-vandye govinda-rāyālayam ādarena / ahaṃ vidhāsye bata yena bhūyaḥ kṛṣṇāvatārotsava-saṃbhramaḥ syāt* (Murāridāsa’s *Māna-carita*; cited in Bahura, 1996, p. 199).
- 4 See Bahura (1996), pp. 200, 202.
- 5 Mitchell (1996), p. 119.
- 6 See Mukherjee & Habib (1989), pp. 251-52.
- 7 See Habib (1996), p. 143.
- 8 See Asher (1996) and Prasad (1966), pp. 146-70
- 9 See Habib (1996), p. 132 and Mukherjee & Habib (1989), p. 290.
- 10 See, especially, the works of Monika Horstmann, Tarapada Mukherjee, Irfan Habib, Gopal Narayan Bahura, Catherine Asher, and R. Nath listed in the bibliography.
- 11 *Lupta-tīrtha-prakāśaṃ ca tan-māhātmyam api sphuṭam kartavyaṃ bhavatā yena bhaktir eva sthīrā bhavet* (*Kṛṣṇa-caitanya-caritāmṛta* 4.13.15-16). This is echoed in Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja’s *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 3.1.218: *lupta-tīrtha saba tāhān kariha pracāraṇa*.
- 12 *Mathurā-māhātmya-śāstra saṅgraha kariyā, lupta-tīrtha prakāṣa kailā vanete bhramiyā* (CC 2.25.215).
- 13 Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 219-23.
- 14 Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 224-29.
- 15 Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 239-52.
- 16 Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 253-89.
- 17 For example, Sūryatīrtha (Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 261-62) and Vaṭasvāmī (263-64) are both dedicated to Sūrya; Somatīrtha (282) is dedicated to Soma; and Bhūteśvara (234-38), regarded as the guardian of Mathurā, is a form of Śiva.
- 18 For Dhruva, see the description of Dhruvatīrtha (Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 265-69); for Bali, see the description of Sūryatīrtha (261).
- 19 Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 156-61.
- 20 Entwistle (1987), p. 311, Holdrege (2015), p. 213.
- 21 *keśavākāra-sannibham* (Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 161).
- 22 *Varāha Purāṇa* 163.21-64. See also Entwistle (1987), pp. 329-30.
- 23 On the history of this temple (and other temples at this site), see Pauwels (2011).
- 24 Elsewhere Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* does use the term *tīrtha* to refer to a temple and its *mūrti*: see, for example, *Mathurā-māhātmya* 393: *govinda-svāmi-tīrthākhyam asti tīrthaṃ mahottamam*.
- 25 Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 239-52.
- 26 See Entwistle (1987), p. 311.
- 27 See, for example, *Varāha Purāṇa* 153.46, 163.19.
- 28 *Varāha Purāṇa* 157.28-29.
- 29 *puṇyaṃ govindasya niketanam* (Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 390).
- 30 Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 159.
- 31 Rūpa’s *Mathurā-māhātmya* 391.

- 32 *Tato vṛndāvano puṇyaṃ vṛndā-devī-samāśritam* (Rūpa's *Mathurā-māhātmya* 375).
- 33 *Govinda-svāmi-tīrthākhyam asti tīrthaṃ mahottamam* (Rūpa's *Mathurā-māhātmya* 393).
- 34 *Sādhana-dīpikā* pp. 157-58
- 35 The rest of the Mathurā lotus would also come to be reconceived and rebuilt. The Keśava temple in Mathurā, in the pericarp of the lotus, would come to be rebuilt in the seventeenth century, as we have seen above. And, as mentioned above, the deities Viśrānti and Varāha, in the east and south, came to be replaced with those of Gokulanātha and Balarāma.
- 36 Entwistle (1987), p. 246.
- 37 See also Jīva's *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbhā* 153: *ātta-veṇur iti [Bhāgavata 6.8.2] viśeṣeṇa govindaḥ, śrī-vṛndāvana-mathurā-prasiddha-mahā-yoga-pīṭhayos tan-nāmnaiḥ sahitau prasiddhau.*
- 38 See CC 2.9.237-41.
- 39 *Siddhānta-śāstra nāhi brahma-saṃhitā sama / govinda-mahimā jñānera parama kāraṇa* (CC 2.9.239, translation after Dimock & Stewart, 1999, p. 475).
- 40 See *Brahma-saṃhitā* 2-5, 24-28.
- 41 See *Brahma-saṃhitā* 29-55.
- 42 See the long passage cited in Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī's *Sādhana-dīpikā*, p. 9.
- 43 *Govindasya priyaṃ sthānaṃ [...] / śrī-govindaṃ taṃ tatra-sthaṃ vallavī-vṛnda-vallabham / [...] tat-priyā prakṛtis tv ādyā rādhikā tasya vallabhā [...]* (*Varāha-saṃhitā*, cited in Rāghava Paṇḍita's *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti-ratna-prakāśa* 5.56-58 and Rādhākṛṣṇa's *Sādhana-dīpikā* p. 10). See also *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti-ratna-prakāśa* 5.67. For more on the *Varāha-saṃhitā*, see Entwistle (1987), pp. 249-51.
- 44 *Tan-madhye nagarī divyā govindānanda-dhāmanī / tan-madhye mandiraṃ divyaṃ prema-dhāma mahotsavam* (*Govinda-vṛndāvana* 1.97).
- 45 *Govinda-vṛndāvana* 1.98-100.
- 46 *Gopāla eva govindaḥ prakāṭapraṭāṭha sadā / vṛndāvane yoga-pīṭhe sa eva satataṃ sthitaḥ / asau yuga-catuṣke'pi śrīmad-vṛndāvanādhipaḥ* (*Ūrdhvamnāya*, cited in *Sādhana-dīpikā* p. 7). In the *Sādhana-dīpikā*, Rādhākṛṣṇa cites many more texts in support of this; see pp. 6-11.
- 47 *Vṛndāvane yoga-pīṭhe kalpa-taru-vane, ratna-maṇḍapa, tāhe ratna-simhāsane / śrī-govinda vasiyāchena vrajendra-nandana, mādhurya prakāśī karena jagat mohana* (CC 1.5.218-219). See also CC 1.8.50-51: *vṛndāvane kalpa-drume suvarṇa-sadana, mahā-yogapīṭha tāhān ratna-simhāsana / tāte vasi āche sadā vrajendra-nandana, śrī-govinda-deva nāma sākṣāt madana.*
- 48 *Śrī-vṛndāvana-yoga-pīṭha govinda nivāsā tahāṃ gadādhara sarana carana sevā kī āsā @ref.* Also: *tā maṇḍapa maha yogapīṭha paṃkaja ruci lāgī tāke mana so udita hota jo koī vaḍabhāgī, @ref to Swapna*
- 49 *Śrī-mānasimhadeva śrī-vṛndāvana-joga-pīṭha-sthāna mandira karāyo.* See Bahura (1996), p. 200; Case (1996), p. 284 (figure A.15)
- 50 It is quite likely that the *aṣṭaka* was not composed at the time of the new temple's consecration, as Bahura (1996, p. 203) points out, since Akbar is talked about in the past tense, and he died only in 1605, fifteen years after the temple's completion.
- 51 *Śrī-vṛndā-vipine śivādi-diviṣad-vṛndāvalī-vandite, vaikuṅṭhāntara-kunṭhatā-kara-vare śrī-yoga-pīṭha-sthitaḥ / śrī-govindatayā śruti-smṛti-śati-sandoha-vandyāhvayah, śrī-kṛṣṇaḥ sva-bhakta-pālana-lasat-trṣṇaḥ sadā bhrājate.* From Bahura (1996), p. 201; Case (1996), p. 284 (figure A.16) The reference to Govinda's desire to protect

his devotees is a reference to his lifting of Govardhana, after which Indra gave him the name Govinda, as the *Bhāgavata* (10.27.23). The episode is given great prominence in Mānasimha's temple, as Cynthia Packert discusses in her chapter in this volume.

- 52 Rādhākṛṣṇa Gosvāmī includes the text in his *Sādhana-dīpikā* (pp. 69-70) and even wrote a commentary on it, the *Daśa-ślokī-bhāṣya*. S.K. De (1986, p. 673-75), however, was sceptical about the ascription of this text to Rūpa.
- 53 *Śrī-caitanya-padāravinda-madhupa-śrī-rūpa-sevā-phale* (GL 1.117).
- 54 CC 1.8.54-65.
- 55 *Śrī-govinda-padāravinda-paricaryāyāṃ samagrāgrāhis, teṣāṃ śrī-haridāsa eṣa vidadhat prītiṃ sadānandatu / yasyārambhata eva mandiram idam sevā-rasaṃ vardhitaṃ, yenānandam avāpa suṣṭhu nṛ-patiḥ śrī-māna-simho'dbhutam* (Govinda-mandirāṣṭaka 6). Cited in Bahura (1996), p. 202. I have not followed every emendation suggested by Bahura.
- 56 See CC 1.8.54-67.
- 57 See Mukherjee & Wright (1979), p. 316.
- 58 See CC 1.8.65.
- 59 *Śrī-govinda-sthalākhyam taṭam idam amalam kṛṣṇa-samyoga-pīṭham, vṛndāraṇyottamāṅgam krama-natam abhitaḥ kūrma-prṣṭha-sthalābham / kuñja-śreṇī-dalāḍhyaṃ maṇi-maya-grha-sat-karṇikaṃ svarṇa-rambhā-śreṇī-kiñjalkam eṣā daśa-śata-dala-rājīva-tulyam dadarśa* (Govinda-līlāmṛta 21.28).
- 60 *Madhye vicitra-maṇi-mandiram asti* (Govinda-līlāmṛta 21.28).
- 61 *Kalpa-drumādhaḥ sthita-ratna-mandiram gopāla-simhāsana-yoga-pīṭham / yam āgama-jñāḥ pravādanti yaṃ hareḥ priyā-gaṇaḥ keli-nikuñjam āha ca* (Govinda-līlāmṛta 21.94).
- 62 See *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.5.
- 63 See *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.294-296. See also Govinda-līlāmṛta 1.3: *śrī-rādhā-prāṇa-bandhoś caraṇa-kamalayoh keśa-śeṣādy-agamyā, yā sādhyā prema-sevā vraja-carita-parair gāḍha-laulyaika-labhyā / sā syāt prāptā yayā tāṃ prathayitum adhunā mānasīm asya sevāṃ, bhāvyaṃ rāgādhva-pānthair vrajam anu caritaṃ naityikaṃ tasya naumi*.
- 64 Goswami (1996), p. 275-76.
- 65 See CC 1.1.16: *divyad-vṛndāraṇya-kalpa-drumādhaḥ śrīmad-ratnāgāra-simhāsana-sthau / śrīmad-rādhā-śrīla-govinda-devau preṣṭhālībhiḥ sevyaṃānu smarāmi*. See also CC 1.5.204, 1.5.220, 2.1.4, 3.1.6, and 3.20.142-43.
- 66 See *Bhakti-ratnākara* 6.63-114.
- 67 Bahura (1996, p. 206) claims this happened only in 1633, but the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, which describes the worship of Rādhā alongside Govindadeva and which was completed in 1615, clearly contradicts this.
- 68 See *Bhakti-ratnākara* 6.63-74.
- 69 Narahari reads this as denoting a relationship of *vātsalya* on the part of Bṛhadbhānu; he considered Rādhā as his daughter: *bṛhadbhānu viprera vātsalya ye prakāra* (*Bhakti-ratnākara* 6.95).
- 70 *Sādhana-dīpikā* pp. 96-97.
- 71 Kṛṣṇadāsa tells the story in CC 2.5.
- 72 Narahari does add many other details to the narrative. According to him, after the death of Bṛhadbhānu, Rādhā requested the prince to bring her to Cakrabeḍa where she was to be worshipped alongside Jagannātha. There her devotees mistook her to be Lakṣmī and worshipped her as such. Once the

- Govindadeva temple was established, she requested the king to bring her to Vṛndāvana. See *Bhakti-ratnākara* 6.95-105.
- 73 Cited in Habib (1996), p. 156.
- 74 See Mukherjee & Habib (1987), pp. 238-45.
- 75 See *Sādhana-dīpikā* p. 158: *prabhor ājñā-balenāpi śrī-rūpeṇa kṛpābdhinā / gurau me hari-dāsākhye śrī-śrī-sevā samarpitā.*
- 76 See *Sādhana-dīpikā* p. 4: *yathā bahūnām rāja-putrāṇām rāja-putratve sāmye tathāpy eko rāja-siṃhāsanārho rājā bhavati...*
- 77 See *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 6.2-6.
- 78 This is a place near Prayāga, known from the *Mahābhārata* (see Mani, 1984, p. 605).
- 79 *Sādhana-dīpikā* p. 6.
- 80 *Mauna-mudrām dhṛte kṛṣṇe vraje'smin prakāṣaṃ gate / svayā tan-mudrayā yuktā tat-pūrvaṃ prakāṣaṃ gatā* (*Sādhana-dīpikā* p. 96).
- 81 *Sat-puṇḍarīka-nayanam meghābham vaidyutāmbaram / dvi-bhujam mauna-mudrādhyam vana-mālinam īśvaram / gopa-gopī-gavāvitam sura-druma-talāśrayam / divyālaṅkaraṇopetaṃ rakta-paṅkaja-madhya-gam* (*Gopāla-tāpanī* 1.10-11). Rādhākṛṣṇa cites this passage several times in the *Sādhana-dīpikā* (see pp. 6, 12, 13) but alludes to it more frequently.
- 82 *Anekatra prakāṣatā rūpasyaikasya yaikadā, sarvathā tat-svarūpaiva sa prakāśa itīryate* (*Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.1.21).
- 83 See *Sādhana-dīpikā* p. 4: *yathā vraje mahā-rāse dhāmano'bhede'pi parikara-bhedena serveṣu yūtheṣu pūrṇatama-prakāśena sthitaḥ san śrī-rādhikāyāḥ pārśve svayam eva virājate, tathā.*
- 84 Curiously, the temple of Rādhā-Dāmodara is not mentioned in the *farmān*. See Mukherjee & Habib (1989), p. 241.
- 85 *Rādhā-dāmodaro devaḥ śrī-rūpa-kara-nirmitaḥ, jīva-gosvāmine dattaḥ śrī-rūpeṇa kṛpābdhinā* (*Sādhana-dīpikā* p. 164, cited in *Bhakti-ratnākara* 4.289). Narahari Cakravartī claims that Rūpa had a dream in which he gave Jīva the *mūrti* of Dāmodara, which inspired him to do so later on (see *Bhakti-ratnākara* 4.286-289).
- 86 Mukherjee & Habib (1987), p. 236; Habib (1996), p. 144.
- 87 The will talks only of the worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (both in the singular) and of “everything that has been collected for their service” (*akhilāni tadīya-sevaupāyikatayā saṃgrhītāni...*), or, as it is stated later in the document, “the service and what is used for that service, along with Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, who are to be served, the premises, including the books, and all my belongings” (*sevā-sevopakaraṇāni sevya-śrī-śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-sahitāni sthānāni pustaka-paryyantāni sarvāṇi madīyāni...*). It is clear that the forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa that are referred to are those of Rādhā-Dāmodara, whom Vilāsadāsa, who would inherit it all, was already worshipping (see Mukherjee & Wright, 1979, p. 303, 309).
- 88 Habib (1996), p. 148; Mukherjee & Habib (1989), p. 296.
- 89 See Habib (1996), p. 132 and Mukherjee & Habib (1989), p. 290.
- 90 See Mukherjee & Habib (1989), pp. 295-98.
- 91 Horstmann (1996), p. 188; Habib (1996), p. 145.
- 92 See Mukherjee & Habib (1989), pp. 295-98, documents no. 28, 29, 31, 35, 40, 41.
- 93 Habib (1996), p. 148, 157.

- 94 *Svecchayā likhitam kiñcit, kiñcic cāpi parecchayā* (Jīva on *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* 1.21). For a discussion of this verse, see Brzezinski (1997), p. 92 and Okita (2018), pp. 34-38.
- 95 See *Sādhana-dīpikā*, chapter 9, pp. 60-61.
- 96 Śrīnivāsa and Narottama, who both studied with Jīva Gosvāmī in Vṛndāvana, were the chief leaders of the Gauḍīya community in Bengal in the early seventeenth century, and were responsible for bringing the works of the Gosvāmīs to Bengal. Śrīnivāsa was initiated by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī; Narottama by Lokanātha Gosvāmī.
- 97 *Śrī-kṛṣṇa-dāsa-nāmā brāhmaṇo gauḍīyaḥ śrīmaj-jīva-vidyādhyayane śiṣyaḥ, na tu mantra-śiṣyaḥ, teṣāṃ śiṣyākaraṇāt. Śiṣya-karaṇe pravṛttis cet tarhi śrīnivāsa-narottamādīnām śiṣyatvaṃ śrī-jīvena katham atyāji. Tasmāt teṣv aprakāṣeṣu svādhikārecchayā tan-mantra-śiṣyatva-prakāṣaṇam kṛṣṇa-dāseṇa svenaiva kṛtam. Teṣāṃ grantheṣu chedanādi kutra kṛtam, kutrāpi pallavitam.* (*Sādhana-dīpikā* chapter 9, p. 62).
- 98 Could this be a reference to the *Laghu-gopāla-campū* which was likely Kṛṣṇadāsa's? See Brzezinski, 1997, pp. 92, 109n160.
- 99 Mukherjee & Wright (1979, p. 314) claim Kṛṣṇadāsa wrote a commentary "on Jīva's *Kṛṣṇārcana-dīpikā*", but I have not been able to find the commentary or any other evidence to support this claim.
- 100 See Habib (1996), p. 148.
- 101 Not only do later documents refer to the will, but in 1637 Kṛṣṇadāsa himself issues a document (in Hindi) that restates the content of the will. See Mukherjee & Wright (1979), p. 316 and Plate III.
- 102 Okita (2018), pp. 28-34.
- 103 See *Vidagdha-mādhava* p. 151-52.
- 104 *Govinda-līlāmṛta* 1.73-77.
- 105 See, for example, *Govinda-līlāmṛta* 6.46, 6.56, 8.82-96.
- 106 See *Vidagdha-mādhava* p. 12: *Paurṇamāsī (vihasya): Tad-vañcanādy-artham eva svayaṃ yoga-māyayā mithyaiva pratyāyitam, tad-vidhānām udvāhādikam. Nitya-preyasya eva khalu tāḥ kṛṣṇasya.*
- 107 See *Lalita-mādhava* p. 6: *Paurṇamāsī: [...] tena mayāpi te kiśorikā-śīroratne niroddhum abhimanyu-govardhanayor jananyau jaṭilā-bhāruṇḍe nirbandhena niyukte.*
- 108 *Bahu vāryate yataḥ khalu yatra pracchanna-kāmukatvam ca, yā ca mitho-durlabhatā sā paramā manmathasya ratiḥ* (*Ujjvala-nīlamanī* 1.20). See also Okita (2018), p. 29 & 37.
- 109 See, for example, *Vidagdha-mādhava* p. 46, and *Govinda-līlāmṛta* 2.44-45, 3.20, 5.66.
- 110 See, for example, Burton (2000), pp. 111-16; Okita (2020), pp. 215-19.
- 111 See, for example, *Varāha Purāṇa* 156.12-15, 168.17 & Rūpa's *Mathurā-māhātmya* 413-15.
- 112 See Entwistle (1987), p. 130.
- 113 See Pauwels (2011), pp. 288-90.
- 114 See Nath (1996), p. 163.
- 115 Growse (1993), p. 245.
- 116 Some worship at the Govindadeva temple seems to have resumed in the middle of the eighteenth century (see Horstmann, 1994, p. 84), but by then the temple had lost much of its significance already and it is other Gauḍīya temples in Vṛndāvana, like that of Rādhāramaṇa, that gain in influence in the nineteenth century.