

Question Four

What Does It Mean to Bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa?

Before we begin exploring this topic, it would seem appropriate to elaborate on two related points Śrīla Prabhupāda makes in his 11p purport.

Point One

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes that even great sages and great devotees like Nārada and Sanaka do not get an opportunity to come to Rādhā-kuṇḍa to take their baths. what, then, to speak of ordinary devotees?

Why is that? It's because their *sthāyi-bhāva* (permanent *rasa* of relationship with Kṛṣṇa) is not *mādhurya-rasa*.¹

And as Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura tells us in Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport,

Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the most select place for those interested in advancing their devotional service in the wake of the lady friends (sakhīs) and confidential serving maids (mañjarīs) of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

This raises an interesting point. Yes, Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the topmost place, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's the best place for us. It all depends on the nature of our attraction for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Point Two

* Śrīla Prabhupāda also tells us in his purport that: *If, by great fortune, one gets opportunity to come to Rādhā-kuṇḍa and bathe even once, he can develop his transcendental love for Kṛṣṇa, exactly as the gopīs did.*

* So what is this "great fortune"? It's the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrīla Prabhupāda. **Their** mercy is our great fortune. **Their** mercy is giving us access to Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Her mercy. This is very, very important to remember.

In text 11 Rūpa Gosvāmī tells us: *Undoubtedly Rādhā-kuṇḍa is very rarely attained even by the great devotees; therefore it is even more difficult for ordinary devotees to attain.*

But in 1974 in Māyāpura, Śrīla Prabhupāda said: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is *mahā-vadānyāvatāra*, because He is teaching about the love of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and teaching everyone *kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāyate*, real destination of life, how to achieve *kṛṣṇa-prema*, and He's personally teaching. (CC Ādi 7.1 Lecture)

¹ Nārada Muni's *rasa* is a mix of *sakhya* and *dāsya*, Sanaka *rasa* is *śānta*.

And Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī tells (Ādi 14.1) “Things that are very difficult to do become easy to execute if one somehow or other simply remembers Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. But if one does not remember Him even as things become very difficult. To this Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu I offer my respectful obeisances.”

It is so very important to remember that we are mercy cases when we enter this most sacred realm called Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Our only *adhikāra* for approaching Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the mercy and potency of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates. This should be our conscious and honest mood.

Okay, so now let’s move on to our primary question:

What does it mean to bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa?

Let’s begin by taking a look at Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport:

It is stated that a devotee will at once develop pure love of Kṛṣṇa in the wake of the gopīs if he once takes a bath in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī recommends that even if one cannot live permanently on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, he should at least take a bath in the lake as many times as possible. This is a most important item in the execution of devotional service.

Obviously, we are not talking only of purification here, but more importantly of a transformation of heart.

Let’s do a quick Reality Check on this one!

- (a) Please raise your hand if you have ever bathed in Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
- (b) Please raise your hand if you have very often bathed in Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
- (c) Please raise your hand if the result was that your pure love for Kṛṣṇa was fully aroused.

If you haven’t gained the promised result of bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa by taking bath there, what does that mean?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura had some very illuminating insights to share about his. Let’s take a look at what he has to say.

Bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa

(Lecture at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, 16th October, 1932 by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura)

Only by Śrī Rādhā’s mercy can one reside eternally on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, the superlative place in the entire creation. Therefore, in his ultimate instruction Śrī Rūpa Prabhu mentions bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa:

*kṛṣṇasyoccaiḥ pranaya-vasatiḥ preyasībhyo 'pi rādhā
kuṇḍam cāsyā munibhir abhitas tādr̥g eva vyadhāyi
yat preṣṭhair apy alam asulabham kim punar bhakti-bhājām
tat premedam sakrd api saraḥ snātur āviṣkaroti*

Of the many objects of favored delight and of all the lovable damsels of Vrajabhūmi, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is certainly the most treasured object of Kṛṣṇa's love. And, in every respect, Her divine kuṇḍa is described by great sages as similarly dear to Him. Undoubtedly Rādhā-kuṇḍa is very rarely attained even by the great devotees; therefore it is even more difficult for ordinary devotees to attain. If one simply bathes once within those holy waters, one's pure love of Kṛṣṇa is fully aroused.

– *Upadeśāmṛta* 11

Therefore, Śrīla [Raghunātha] dāsa Gosvāmī wrote in his *Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍāṣṭaka* (2):

*vraja-bhuvi mura-śatroḥ preyasīnām nikāmair
asulabham api tūrṇam prema-kalpa-drumam tam
janayati hr̥di bhūmau snātur uccaiḥ priyam yat
tad ati-surabhi rādhā-kuṇḍam evāśrayo me*

May very dear and fragrant Rādhā-kuṇḍa, which for one who bathes therein immediately creates in the land of the heart a desire tree of pure love rarely found even among the *gopī* beloveds of Lord Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, be my shelter.



**Yes, Rādhā-kuṇḍa is very, very merciful, but
Please Be Very, Very Careful!**

(Lecture at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, 16th October, 1932)

“I have taken bath in Rādhā-kuṇḍa,” “I took a dip in Rādhā-kuṇḍa,” “I am a lump of flesh and blood,” “I am my wife’s maintainer,” “I am a *sannyāsī*,” “I am a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, or *sūdra*” – thinking in any of these ways disqualifies one to bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. What to speak of such materialistic conceptions, if we are filled with the attitude of awe and reverence we also cannot bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. We have to tread the path of Śrī Rādhā’s maidservants without imitating them.



By regarding ordinary water as sacred and the gross material body as the self, one can neither see nor bathe in Rādhā-kuṇḍa.



Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is always invisible to mortal eyes; nor can any mortal ever bathe in the same.

– This is from an article entitled ‘Circumambulation of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma,’
Harmonist, February 1932



If one’s consciousness is covered by *upādhis* when he bathes in Rādhā-kuṇḍa, he might as well bathe a bag of bones.

– A famous statement, date unreferenced



Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s statements are not intended to quell our enthusiasm for bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. He is simply reminding us not to approach Rādhā-kuṇḍa mindlessly or whimsically. And he’s encouraging us to intelligently and kindly make the most of the mercy Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Rādhā-kuṇḍa are offering us. Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the fundamental principle for understanding how to do that in his purport. He says,
one should bathe there regularly and give up all material conceptions, taking shelter of Śrī Rādhā and Her assistant gopīs.

Obviously, it’s best to work out the details of how to do this with our spiritual guides if we sincerely and seriously want the promised existential transformation of heart!

What About Midnight Bathing on Śrī Bahulāṣṭamī?

This is not mentioned in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sāstra*. In *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 16.207, 210 the following is quoted from *Padma-Purāṇa*: Śrī Kṛṣṇa is very pleased by devotees bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa on Bahulāṣṭamī, but no time is specified.