

Chapter 9
Varsänä
(Vāñabhānupura)

Varsänä is the pastime-place of Çré Kāñëa’s beloved Çrématé Rādhikā. Lying at the heart of this village is a multitude of the Divine Couple’s sweet and secret amorous pastimes (*sarasa-kelī*), together with Their *bhāvas* and desires. The Vaiñëava community reveres Varsänä. This venerable land with *sarovaras*, *kuëòas*, gardens, and forests – like Gahvaravana, Sāi karé Khor and other pastime-places – reminds one of Rādhā and Kāñëa’s various specific *lélās*. In Braja, the grass, small shrubs, creepers, trees, animals, birds, insects, snakes and so forth are all composed of *sac-cid-ānanda*. They assist Rādhā and Kāñëa in Their *lélās* and are very dear to Them. It is said in *çāstra* that even *siddha mahā-puruñas* like Brahmā and Çai kara repeatedly pray to attain a birth like theirs so that they too may be able to serve Rādhā and Kāñëa.

For instance, Çréla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmé says in *Çré Vraja-vilāsa-stava* (verse 102):

*yat kīi cit tāëa-gulma-kékaòa-mukhaà goñòhe samasta hi tat
sarvānandamaya mukunda-dayitaà lélānukūlam param
çāstrair eva muhur muhuù sphuòam idaà niñòai kitaà yāi cayā
brahmāder api sa-spāhena tad idaà mayā vandyate*

“All the grass, shrubs, insects and other creatures found in Braja are very dear to He who is the very embodiment of all transcendental bliss, Çré Mukunda, and they assist in His



Çreje Mandira

pastimes. All the scriptures have repeatedly established this fact, and devotees ranging from Brahmā to Uddhava have expressed a desire to take birth in Braja amongst these species. For these reasons, I worship all the creatures who reside in Braja.”

Varsānā’s original name is Vāñabhānupura. Vāñabhānu Mahārāja, the father of Çrēmatē Rādhikā, lived here with his family. Varsānā is situated fourteen miles west of

Govardhana and six miles east of Kāmyavana. According to the *Varāha* and *Padma Purāēas*, Brahmā pleased Çrē Hari at the end of Satya-yuga by performing arduous worship. Brahmā then asked for the following boon: “Please perform Your sweet pastimes with the *braja-gopēs* on top of me and allow me to take *darçana* of these *lélās*. Please make me successful, especially in the rainy season by performing *lélās*

like *jhūlana* (swing pastimes) and in spring by performing *lélās* like *phāga* (*holā*)."¹

Pleased with Brahmā, Çré Hari instructed him, "Go to Vāñabhānupura and take the form of a hill there. In that form you will be able to take *darçana* of all Our sweet pastimes."² And so it happened that Brahmā assumed the form of a hill at this place in Braja and fulfilled his cherished desire.

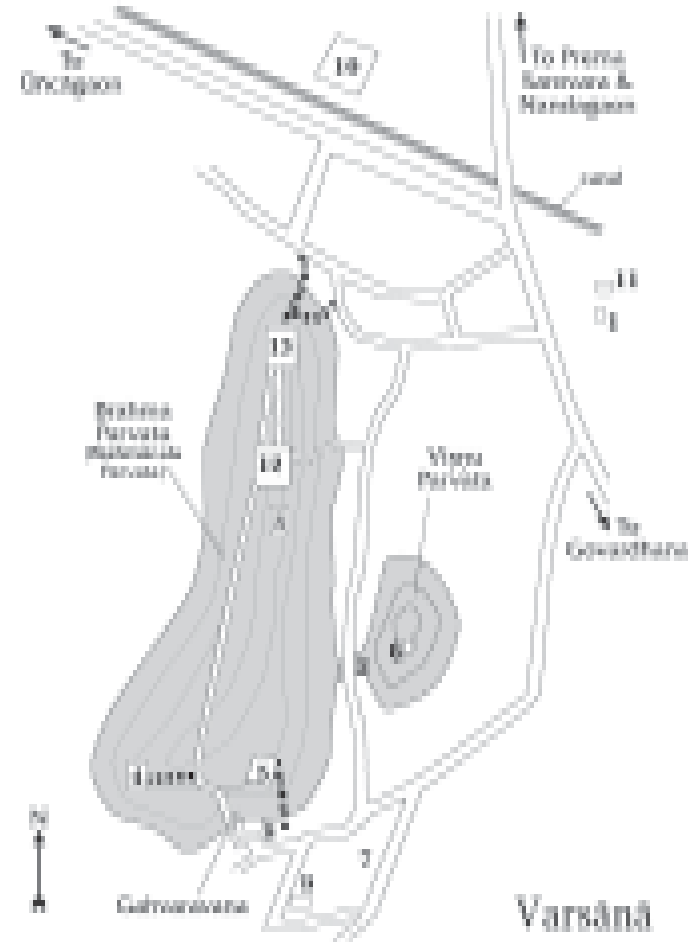
Pastime-places in the Area of Varsānā

The *parikramā* of Varsānā is four miles long. *Braja-bhakti-vilāsa*, quoting *Padma Purāēa*, describes the characteristics of Vāñabhānupura as follows:

viñēu-brahma-nāmānau parvatau dvau parasparau. dakñiēa-pārçve brahma-nāma-parvatau vāma-pārçve viñēu-nāma-parvatau. brahma-parvatopari çré-rādhā-kāñiēa-mandiraà, çré-rādhā-kāñiēa-darçanaà, tad-adho-bhāge çré-vāñabhānu-gopamandiraà, vāñabhānu-kērti-çrédāmā-darçanaà, tat-pārçve lalitā-çakhināà priyā-sahitānāà mandiraà rādhādi-navasakhināà darçanam. brahma-parvatopari dāna-mandiraà, hiēōola-sthalaà, mayūrakuē-sthalaà, viñēu-brahma-nāmnorubhayōu sāl karē khori-sthalaà. brahma-parvatopari çré-rādhā-mandiram agre lélā-nātya-maēōalam. viñēu-parvatopari-sthaà çré-kāñiēamandiram agre lélā-nātya-mandiram, tat-pārçve vilāsa-mandiraà tat-pārçve gahvarvanaà tad-adhausthale rāsa-maēōalaà, rādhā-sarovari dohanē-kuēōa, tat-samēpe citralekhyayā kāta-mayūra-saraū.

¹ *purā kāta-yuga-syānte / brahmaēā prārthito hariū mamopari sadā tvaà hi / rāsa-krēōāà kariñyasi sarvābhi vraja-gopēbhēu / prāvōkāle kātārthakāt*
(*Varāha Purāēa*)

² *tathā brahman vrajaà gatvā / vāñabhānu-puraà gataū parvato bhvasi tvaà hi / mama krēōāà ca paçyasi yasmāt brahmā parvato 'bhūd / vāñabhānu-pure sthitaū*
(*Padma Purāēa*)



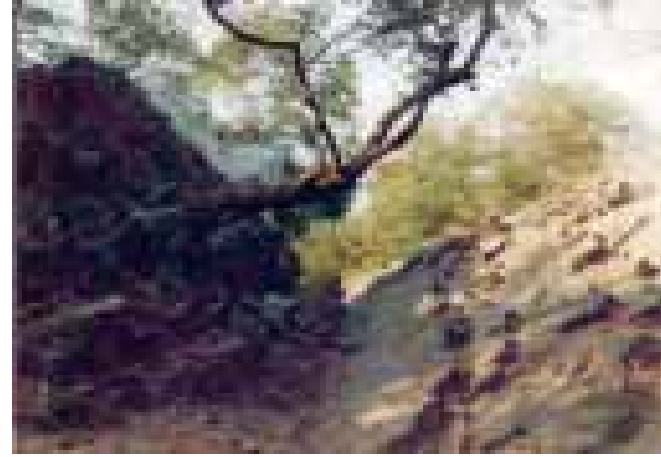
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|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Vāñānānā Kūñjā | 9. Dohānī Kūñjā |
| 2. Sāñānī Kūñjā | 10. Pīlī Pūñjānā |
| 3. Dāna Kūñjā | 11. Kīñjā Kūñjā |
| 4. Māyūra Kūñjā | 12. Jāyānā Mandira |
| 5. Māyūra Kūñjā | 13. Śrī Mandira |
| 6. Citlānī | |

"According to the *Padma Purāëa*, two hills face each other here – one is Viñëu and the other is Brahma. Viñëu Parvata is on the left and Brahma Parvata is on the right. On top of Brahma Parvata is a *mandira* of ÇrĒ Rādhā-Kāñëa. Close by to the north, on the lower side of this hill, is the palace of Mahārāja Vāñabhānu, where one can have *darçana* of Vāñabhānu Mahārāja, ÇrĒmatĒ Kĕrtidā Mahārāñë, ÇrĒdāma and ÇrĒmatĒ Rādhikā. Nearby is a temple of ÇrĒ Lalitā, in which one can have *darçana* of Rādhikā along with nine *sakhĕs*.

"Also on top of Brahma Parvata are Dāna Mandira, the place of a swing (*hiëöölā*), Mayūra Kuëë, a *rāsa-maëöala*, and a temple of ÇrĒmatĒ Rādhājĕ. Further on between the two hills is Sāi karĕ Khor. Near Sāi karĕ Khor is Vilāsa Mandira, and next to Vilāsa Mandira is Gahvaravana. Within Gahvaravana are Rādhā Sarovara and a *rāsa-maëöala*, and nearby is Dohanĕ Kuëöa. Very close to this *kuëöa* is Mayūra Sarovara, which was constructed by Citralekhā." Bhānu Sarovara is also nearby, and on its bank is Vrajeçvara, a *mūrti* of Mahārudra. On its left side is Kĕrti Sarovara.

There are four *sarovaras* around Varsāñā: (1) Vāñabhānu Kuëöa in the east, (2) Kirtidā Kuëöa in the north-east, (3) Vihāra Kuëöa (later named Tilaka Kuëöa) in the south-west, and (4) Dohanĕ Kuëöa in the south, south-west of the village of Ciksaulĕ.

Sāi karĕ Khor lies north of Ciksaulĕ, and on Viñëu Parvata, east of Sāi karĕ Khor, is Vilāsa Gaäh. This is the location of a *rāsa-maëöala*. Near Vilāsa Mandira is where Rādhikā, as a child, played with the sand, building palaces and so on. West of Sāi karĕ Khor, on top of the mountain, is Dāna Gaäh; and south-west of Sāi karĕ Khor and west of the village of Ciksaulĕ are Gahvaravana and Gahvara Kuëöa. Mayūra Kuëë is to the right when entering Gahvaravana. On the top of the hill, south-west of Gahvaravana, are Māna Gaäh and Māna Mandira; and below and



Sāi karĕ Khor

nearby is the village of Mānapurā. North of Māna Gaäh is the *mandira* of the Mahārāja of Jaipura, and north of that *mandira* is ÇrĒjĕ Mandira.

Just below ÇrĒjĕ Mandira, still on the hill, one comes to the *mandira* of Brahmājĕ and the palace of ÇrĒmatĒ Rādhikā's paternal grandfather, Mahĕbhānu. Below that lies the village of Varsāñā. West of Varsāñā is Muktä Kuëöa, or Ratna Kuëöa.

Among the places listed above, we will describe those where prominent *lĕlās* took place.

Vāñabhānu Kuëöa

This *kuëöa* is situated east of the village of Varsāñā. Mahārāja Vāñabhānu used to take his bath in this *kuëöa* every morning. He would also perform *āhnikā* and other morning duties here. It has been described that in a previous *kalpa* Mahārāja Vāñabhānu found Rādhikājĕ in this *kuëöa* while bathing. She was a newly-born baby girl playing on a lotus flower in the water.

This charming *sarovara* is surrounded on all sides by *jiyala* trees. Sometimes, Çrématé Rādhikā would bathe here and enjoy water sports (*jal-kréöä*) together with Her *sakhés*. *Rasika* Brajendra-nandana Çré Kāñëa would also bathe here, but at another *ghāöa*. He would then dive under the water, catch hold of the *gopés*' feet, and again emerge on His side of the *kuëöa*. Sometimes, Nandanandana Çré Kāñëa would also sport with these *gopés*, playing hide and seek. This *kuëöa* is named after Mahārāja Vāñabhānu.

Sāi karé Khor

This narrow passage-way lies between Brahma Parvata and Viñëu Parvata, and both *gopas* and *gopés* would make their way along it. After milking the cows, the *gopas* would carry the milk on *kāàvars*. A *kāàvar* is a bamboo stick with ropes attached to each end for carrying loads. They used this pathway to cross from one side of the hills to the other. *Rai géle* means 'showy', 'merry' or 'jovial'. *Rai géle* Kāñëa would plunder the milk, yoghurt and butter of the *rai géle gopés* here. Every year in the month of Bhādra on Çuklā Trayodaçé (the thirteenth day of the bright moon), *büöhé-lélä* is enacted here, as inaugurated by Çré Nārāyaëa Bhaööa.

At this *dāna-ghāöé*, Çré Kāñëa and His *gopa* friends would become tax collectors and demand milk, yoghurt and butter from the *gopés*. When the *gopés* refused to give any tax, Kāñëa would forcibly plunder and relish their milk products.

The *gopés*, being tired of these daily encounters, decided one day to retaliate strongly. They decided that on a chosen day they would all hide in the caves and dense *kui jas* on the hill on both sides of the narrow pathway. A few *gopés* would then cross Sāi karé Khor carrying pots of milk, yoghurt and butter on their heads. The plan was that the moment Kāñëa and His *sakhés* would stop them and try to plunder their load, the *gopés* would call out to their friends hiding nearby,

who would at once descend from their hideouts. Then, under the leadership of Lalitā, they would teach Kāñëa and His *sakhés* a good lesson.

And so it happened that the next day thousands and thousands of *gopés* divided into groups and hid themselves in the dense *kui jas* and large caves around Sāi karé Khor. Then, as usual, a few *gopés* placed pots of milk and yoghurt on their heads and made their way towards Sāi karé Khor. Kāñëa, Madhumai gala and the other *sakhés* obstructed their path and forcibly began to plunder their milk and yoghurt. At once, these *gopés* signalled the *gopés* who were hiding, and a wonderful *lélä* took place. Five to ten *gopés* forcefully caught hold of Kāñëa. Another five to ten caught hold of Madhumai gala, and further groups captured Subala, Arjuna, Lavaï ga and the other *sakhés*. They slapped their cheeks till they were swollen. They then tied their *çikhäs* to the branches of the trees and asked them, "What pleasure is there in plundering our yoghurt? Will you ever do it again?" Madhumai gala folded his hands and prayed at the feet of Lalitā. "Please spare me. I was very hungry. I am a simple *brāhmaëa* boy who fell under the influence of that fickle Kāñëa. I shall never behave like this again." The *gopés* thus taught the *sakhés* a lesson.

Çrématé Rādhikā, Viçākhā and some other *gopés* had captured Kāñëa. They slapped His cheeks a few times and then forcibly dressed Him like a woman with a blouse and *lahai gā* (skirt). They even put *sindüra* in the parting of His hair, bangles on His arms, anklets on His feet, and so on. They covered half His face with a veil, placed a pot of yoghurt on His head and began to make fun of Him by demanding tax on the yoghurt. From the top of the hill, Lalitā Sakhé aimed a stone at the pot of yoghurt on Kāñëa's head, breaking it and drenching His whole body. All the *sakhés* began to laugh and clap, and Çyāma felt very ashamed.

“Will You dare to demand tax on our yoghurt ever again?” they asked. “Hold your ears and vow, ‘From today, I will never try to tax the *gopés*’ yoghurt.’” They forced Kāñëa to repeat this.

To this day, this *lélä* is enacted here annually on the occasion of Rādhāñōamé, the appearance day of Çrématé Rādhikā, in the dramatic tradition of *büòhé-lélä*.

Dāna Gaāh

This beautiful place is on top of Brahmācala Parvata (Brahma Parvata). One day, *rasika* Çré Kāñëa and Subala Sakhā were sitting here as tax collectors, eagerly awaiting the arrival of Çrématé Rādhikā and Her friends, who were to pass this way carrying various articles of worship on the pretext of going to perform Sūrya-pūja. Upon seeing Her, Çré Kāñëa obstructed Her path and rebuked Her, saying, “Who are You? And where are You going?”

Çrématé Rādhikā answered, “Don’t You know who we are?” and She fearlessly continued forward.

Kāñëa and Subala Sakhā again obstructed Her way. Kāñëa said, “Don’t You know that I have been appointed by the king of this state to collect taxes here? You cannot pass without paying tax. Every day, You carelessly strut through here carrying a variety of valuable items, and You never pay tax. Halt! Pay the tax and then You may pass.”

Viçākhā then spoke in a stern voice: “This is Rādhikā’s kingdom. Vāñabhānu-nandiné Çrématé Rādhikā is Vāñdā-vaneçvaré, not anyone else. How have You become the tax collector here without receiving Her permission? Your offence is inexcusable. You will suffer a punishment for this.”

Çré Kāñëa replied, “Don’t talk so impudently. Kandarpa Deva (Cupid) is the king of this place. Every day you come and go through here, secretly carrying various expensive items, but you never pay any tax. This has angered Mahārāja

Kandarpa, who has sent Me here. If you refuse to pay tax, then I will arrest you all and bring you before the king. You will have to suffer whatever punishment he hands down to you.”

Hearing Kāñëa’s words, Viçākhā replied, “What can Your king do? Our queen is Vāñdā-vaneçvaré, the queen of Vāñdāvana. In Her presence we fear no one. We are well acquainted with the prowess of Your king, whose pride is shattered to pieces by the arrow-like side-long glances of Çrématé Rādhikā.” Having said this, all the *sakhés* moved forward, keeping Çrématé Rādhikā up front.

Kāñëa stepped forward, stood in the middle of the narrow path known as Sāi karé Khor. “O impertinent women of Braja! You fearlessly cross this place daily, hiding various kinds of jewels. Today, without fail, you must pay the tax on these jewels.”

After such joking words and much laughter, Kiçora-Kiçoré enjoyed various amorous pastimes (*krèòä-vilāsa*) in a solitary *keli-kui ja*, and all the *sakhés* became filled with *ānanda*. The temple here is called Dāna Mandira.³

Māna Gaāh

Māna Gaāh is a very attractive place on top of Brahmācala Parvata. Çrématé Rādhikā displayed *māna* here, but *rasika* Kāñëa very skilfully broke it.

One day, Çré Kāñëa sent a message to Çrématé Rādhikā through Subala, who is one of His *priyanarma sakhās*, and through Vāñdā-devé that They should meet at a certain time. Kāñëa was on His way when He suddenly met Padmā, Candrāvalé’s friend. Padmā described Çrématé Candrāvalé’s state of separation and repeatedly requested Him to meet with her. Çré Kāñëa could not ignore her plea, and He went to

³ *dānaveñadharā yaiva / dadhyupāsyañhilāñëe*
rādhāñirbhatsitā yaiva / kāñëāya satataà namaù
(*Brahma Puräëa*)

Candrāvalé's *kui ja* for what He intended to be a short time. However, He became so absorbed in sweet talks and playful pastimes with Candrāvalé that He forgot everything else, and the time for the arranged meeting with Çrémāté Rādhikā elapsed. Meanwhile, one of Çrémāté Rādhikā's trained *sārés* arrived on a tree in the same *kui ja*. The *sāréré* returned to Çrémāté Rādhikā and told Her the details of Çré Kāñëa and Candrāvalé's sweet conversations (*rasälapa*) and playful pastimes (*vilāsa*). Rādhikā became deeply distressed and went into a *māna* that was very difficult to break. Within Her heart, She firmly resolved to have no need for such an insolent Kāñëa; so when Çré Kāñëa finally arrived, long after the appointed meeting time, Çrémātijé turned Her face away from Him.

Seeing Her unwavering *māna*, Çré Kāñëa tried to appease Her through all kinds of means and tricks, but Her *māna* would not break. Becoming hopeless and feeling sad, Kāñëa left that place. On the road He met Viçākhā, who advised Him to disguise Himself as a new *sakhé* playing a *véëa*. He went to Çrémāté Rādhikā together with Viçākhā, who introduced this new *sakhé* as Çyāmā Sakhé. Viçākhā profusely praised Çyāmā Sakhé's ability to play the *véëa*, sing and perform many other skills. Çrémāté Rādhikā seated this new *sakhé* next to Her with great honour and respect. Upon hearing Her exceptional singing, She became filled with *ānanda* and embraced Her. Çrémāté Rādhikā recognised Her beloved merely by His touch; and as soon as She had done so, Her *māna* was broken. Surrounded by Her friends, She now became absorbed in *lélā-vilāsa* with Her *präëa-priyatama*.⁴

In Māna Gaäh, one can also have *darçana* of Māna Mandira, a *jhülā* (swing), a *rāsa-maëöala*, and Ratnākara

⁴ *deva gandharva ramyāya / rādhā māna-bidhāyine
māna-mandira saì jì äya / namaste ratna-bhūmaye
(Ādi Varāha Purāëa)*

Sarovara. Just near Māna Gaäh to the south is the village of Mānapurā, which reminds one of all these *lélās*.

Mayūra Kūöé

This place is situated on the top of Brahmācala Parvata. Here, one can have *darçana* of the *rāsa-maëöala* where Çrémāté Rādhikā and Kāñëa danced in the form of a peacock and peahen.

Once, Çrémāté Rādhikā and Kāñëa came to this place together with the *sakhés*. Upon seeing them, the peacocks became overjoyed with ecstasy and began to dance. A light shower of rain fell from the cloud-filled sky. Nature had decorated herself with sixteen kinds of *çāi gāras* (decorations) and thirty-two *ābharaëas* (ornaments), as if she was a beautiful and charming young woman. Çré Rādhā and Kāñëa could not check Their feelings. Taking the form of a peacock and peahen, They danced in an astonishing way along with the circle of peacocks and peahens. All the *sakhés* were astounded to see Their skilful dancing. They began to sing different kinds of *rāgas*, like *malhāra*, which increased Rādhā and Kāñëa's *ānanda*.⁵

Vilāsa Gaäh

This place is situated on Viñëu Parvata. Rādhā and Kāñëa performed many playful pastimes (*krëöä-vilāsa*) here. Nearby is where Çré Rādhā used to play in the dust together with Her *sakhés*.

One day, Kumāré Rādhikā was playing in the dust with Her *sakhés* when mischievous Kāñëa suddenly arrived. The

⁵ *kirëöine namastubhyaà / mayūra priya-vallabha
suramyāyai mahākuöyai / çikhaëöi padaveçmane
namaù sakhé sametāya / rādhā-kāñëāya te namaù
vimalotsava devāya / vraja-maì gala-hetave
(Brāhme)*



Rādhā and Kāñēa dancing as peacocks

sakhēs forbade Him to come inside the *kui ja*, but why would Çré Kāñēa obey them? He entered by force. At that moment, a dust-storm fell upon them by the wishes of the *devas*, and the entire sky became covered with dust. Nothing could be seen anywhere, and the *sakhēs* fearfully covered their eyes

with their hands. Kāñēa took this opportunity to embrace Kiçoré Rādhikā and kiss Her face. This *lélā* took place at the time of *vayaū sandhi*, or the period between childhood and youth. Today, Vilāsa Mandira is situated where this *lélā* took place.

The *Ādi Varāha Purāēa* states:

*vilāsa rūpiēe tubhyaà / namaū kāñēāya te namaū
sakhēvarga sukhāptāya / krēōā-vimala darçine*

"I offer my obeisances to Çré Kāñēa in the form of He who plays lovely pastimes. He performs these pastimes simply to give pleasure to the *sakhēs*."

Ciksaulé

This village is situated below Brahmācal Parvata and between Saì karé Khor and Gahvaravana. It is the birth-place of Citrā Sakhé, one of the *anōa-sakhēs*. Citrā Sakhé's parents were Catura Gopa and Carcitā Gopé. She was married to Pēohara Gopa in Jāvaōa. She is very expert at decorating and dressing Çrématé Rādhikā in a variety of wonderful dresses and ornaments. She is also skilled in many arts, such as painting and understanding the language of animals and birds.

Once, Vāñabhānu Kumārē Rādhikā was playing here with Her girlfriends when She heard the very sweet and alluring sound of Çré Kāñēa's flute (*muralē*) in the distance. She became so enchanted by that sound that She offered Her mind, body and everything to the person playing this sweet *muralē*, and became desirous to meet Him. Rādhikā then saw an amazingly beautiful painting of Çré Kāñēa that Citrā Sakhé had made. She forgot all else and offered Her everything to this astonishingly beautiful person. At this time, Çré Kāñēa and the *sakhēs* were leaving to herd the cows. Upon seeing His supremely heart-stealing *tribhai galalita* form, Rādhā could not control Her feelings and

offered Herself to this very beautiful young man. ÇrĒ Kāñĕa went far into the distance to graze His cows.

Now in a state of great restlessness, Çrĕmatĕjĕ began to relate what was on Her mind to Her *sakhĕs*. She told Lalitĕ, "O *sakhĕ!* I don't want to remain alive for a moment longer. Honourable women dedicate their hearts to one man only. When a young girl is engaged to someone, she considers him to be her husband and thinks of no one else. But today, I have become attached to three men – the flute player, the young man in Citrĕ's painting, and the beautiful young man taking the cows out to graze. My *Ārya-dharma* (righteous conduct) has been destroyed. What is the use of My remaining alive now?"

Hearing this, Çrĕ Lalitĕ burst into peels of laughter and said, "Arĕ *mugdhe!* (O bewildered one!) There is no need for You to die. These three are not different people; they are one and the same person. The man playing the sweet flute is none other than Nandanandana Çrĕ Kāñĕa. He is also the one in the painting and the one who went cowherding, so what need is there for You to give up Your life?"

Gahvaravana

Gahvara means 'deep', 'dense', 'inaccessible' and 'secret'. True to its name, this place is a dense forest thick with trees, creepers, *keli-kui'jas*, and Priyĕ-Priyatama's sweet and intimate pastimes. It is shaped like a conch. Situated here is the *baiĕhaka* of Vallabhĕcĕrya, where he recited *Çrĕmad-Bhĕgavatam*, as well as Rĕdhĕ Sarovara and a *rĕsa-maĕĕala*. One can also see the places of *bhajana* of many *bhaktas* here.⁶

One famous devotee, Nĕgarĕ Dĕsa, has described the *lĕlĕs* of this place in his songs. For instance, the following *lĕlĕ*

took place here one day, when Çrĕ Kāñĕa was out grazing the cows with His *sakhĕs*:

caksaulĕke canĕ curĕye
gĕrĕ de daurĕ rakhvĕrin gvĕrin sahit gupĕl bhagaye
hare bĕĕ dĕbe baglin meĕĕ svĕs bhare van gahvar ĕye
kahat ĕture bol lol dĕg haĕsat-haĕsat sab baran caĕhĕye
hare cabĕt, kou horĕ kari, van kĕ lĕlĕ lĕl lubhĕye
nĕgariyĕ baiĕhĕ chaki hĕrĕ chĕl-chĕl nandalĕlahiĕ khvĕye

"Nearby in a field, green chickpea plants were growing. Upon seeing them, Çrĕ Kāñĕa together with His *sakhĕs* broke off some plants. The woman taking care of the field came to know of this and ran to catch them, but Kanhaiyĕ was too swift. Keeping the plants under His arm, He ran very fast through crooked paths and finally came to a stop in Gahvaravana, where He roasted the green chickpeas and ate them with His *sakhĕs*. While they were laughing and enjoying eating roasted chickpeas, the cowherd woman arrived at that spot, but upon seeing the splendour of Kāñĕa's beauty, she forgot the incident and her anger was pacified. Due to absorption in *vĕtsalya-bhĕva*, she began shelling the peas and personally fed Kanhaiyĕ."

Kāñĕa Kuĕĕa

This *kuĕĕa* is also called Gahvara Kuĕĕa. Canopied by creepers on all sides and covered by thick trees, this pond is the very beauty of Gahvaravana. Nearby are beautiful *kui'jas*. Vainĕavas perform *parikramĕ* of these *kui'jas* with deep faith and roll in the dust there. This *kuĕĕa* holds many memories of Rĕdhĕ and Kāñĕa's various amorous exchanges (*lĕlĕ-vilĕsa*).

Dohanĕ Kuĕĕa

This *kuĕĕa* is situated south of Gahvaravana and south-west of the village of Ciksaulĕ. The cows were milked here at the

⁶ *gahvarĕkhyĕya ramyĕya / kĕñĕa-lĕlĕ vidhĕyine*
gopĕ-ramaĕa saukhyĕya / vanĕya ca namo namaĕ

time of Kāñëa's *prakaõa-lëlã*. This was the *goçãlã* of the many *lãkhs* of cows belonging to Vāñabhānu Mahārāja.

One day, Kiçorë Rādhikā was watching the cows being milked, and She too desired to milk them. Taking a clay pot, She began to milk a cow. Mischievous Kāñëa arrived at that spot and said, " *Sakhë!* Don't You even know how to milk a cow? Come, I'll teach You." He sat down next to Her.

Rādhikā said, "O Mohana! Teach Me!" and She placed Herself in front of Him.

"All right. You milk from two udders and I'll milk from the other two, and keep looking at Me." Laughingly, Kāñëa started to milk. Suddenly, He aimed a jet of milk at Rādhā's face, covering Her in milk. He and the other *sakhës* started laughing. This charming *lëlã* has been described in the following Braja-bhāñã poem:

*ãmeã sãmeã baiõh dou dohat karat õhaõhor
düdh dhãr mukh par paõat dãg bhaye candr cakor*

Õabharãro

After taking *darçana* of Çrëmatë Rādhikā here, Kāñëa's eyes brimmed with tears. The word *õabharãro* means 'full of tears', and this village therefore became known by that name. Õabharãro is situated two miles south of Varsanã.

Rasolë

One and a half miles south-west of Õabharãro is Rasolë, where Rādhā and Kāñëa performed the famous *rãsa* along with the *gopës*. This is the birthplace of Tungavidyā Sakhë. Tungavidyā's father is Puñkara Gopa, her mother is Medhā Gopë, and her husband is Vãliça. She is one of the *añõa-sakhës*, and is fully expert in dancing, singing, playing instrumental music, astrology, writing poetry, cooking, and various other arts. Tungavidyā Sakhë is also skilled in understanding the language of birds and animals and in arranging for Rādhā and Kāñëa's meeting.

Muktã Kuëõa

Here Çrëmatë Rādhikā, in a controversy with Kāñëa, cultivated a field in which pearls grew in abundance. This pastime has been narrated in detail by Çrëpãda Raghunãtha dãsa Gosvãmë in his book *Muktã-carita*.

Pëlë Pokhara

Surrounding this *kuëõa* are *pëlu* trees, which produce fruits in abundance. On the pretext of collecting *pëlu* fruits, Çrëmatë Rādhikā would come here to perform varieties of *krëõã-vilãsa*. Çrë Kāñëa would also come here from Nandagaon and enact many *lëlãs* with Çrëmatëjë. Once, Kërtikã-kumãrë Çrëmatë Rādhikā and Her *sakhës* went to Nandagaon to see Yaçodã Maiyã. Charmed by Çrëmatë Rādhikā's beauty and qualities, Yaçodã Maiyã desired in her heart to marry Rādhikā to her son Kāñëa and thus have Her as her daughter-in-law. So great was her desire that she painted Kiçorë Rādhā's hands yellow. Kiçorë's heart became very happy but, as She returned to Her father's house in Varsanã, She became quite embarrassed. She washed and scrubbed Her hands in this pond, and the pond's water turned yellow. This pond is therefore called Përé Pokhara or Pëlë Pokhara, the yellow pond. It is also called Piyãla Kuëõa because *piyãla* trees surround it.

Kërtidã Kuëõa

This *kuëõa* is situated near Vāñabhānu Kuëõa, in the north-east. Çrë Rādhikā's mother, Çrë Kërtidã, used to take bath here daily. This *kuëõa* is also famous by the name Kërti Sarovara.⁷

⁷ *namaü kërtir mahãbhãge! / sarveñãã govrajauskasãm
sarva-saubhãgyade tãrthe / sukërtisarase namaü
(Bãhat Pãrãçara; quoted in Braja-bhakti-vilãsa)*

Vrajeçvara Mahādeva

Near Bhānu Sarovara is a *mūrti* of *devādhideva* Mahādeva, which was installed by Vāñabhānu Bābā and the other *gopas* to fulfil their desires. The Brajabāsés worship him for their welfare. According to hearsay, some Brajabāsés once desired to remove this *mūrti* from here and take him to a better place. As they dug, the form of Mahādeva increased in depth, and they were unable to reach the deity's base. In the end, they gave up the idea of removing this deity, understanding that this was the appropriate place for him, and begged Mahādeva for forgiveness.

Pastime-places Visited After Parikramā of Varsānā

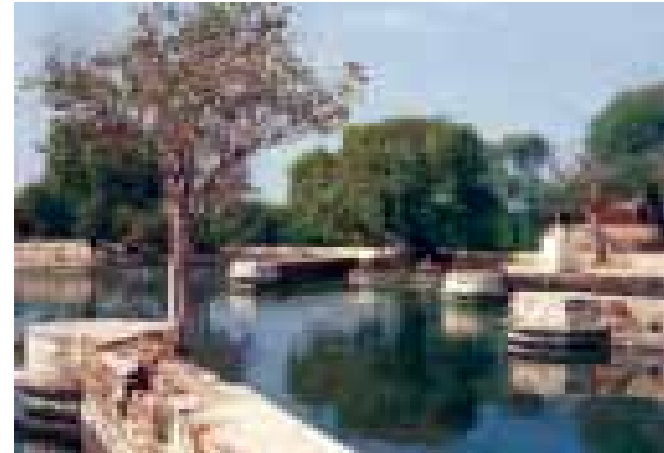
Prema Sarovara

This *kuēōa* is situated on the road to Nandagaon, one mile from Varsānā. It is shaped like a boat and is so beautifully decorated on all sides with lush *kadamba* trees that it seems *prema* itself has manifested as a *kuēōa*. This charming place, which attracts the hearts of the devotees, is where Çrēmaté Rādhikā and Çrē Kāñēa enjoy together. It is also where *prema vaicittya* manifested in Çrēmaté Rādhikā.

Once, Rādhā and Kāñēa, surrounded by Lalitā and the other *sakhés*, were immersed in various kinds of loving pastimes (*premamaya lēlā-vilāsa*) when a bumblebee hovered around the beautiful lotus face of Çrēmaté Rādhikā. Thinking Her face to be a lotus flower, the bee wanted to sit there and drink its nectar; it therefore continued to hover around Her face. Çrēmatéjé became afraid and covered Her face with Her palms. She also tried to chase the bee away, but to no avail. Madhumaī gala saw Çrēmaté Rādhikā's distress and chased the bumble bee far away with his stick. Upon his return, he announced, "I have chased *madhusūdana* far away

from here. He has gone and will not return." When Çrēmaté Rādhikā heard Madhumaī gala's words, She at once thought that Madhusūdana Kāñēa had gone away and had left Her, although She was sitting directly in Kāñēa's lap. She began to lament, deeply afflicted by separation from Him. She could not, at that instant, understand that *madhusūdana* also means 'bumblebee'. She wept and repeatedly cried out, "Hā Präēanātha! Where have You gone? Hā Präēanātha! Where have You gone?"

Upon seeing this amazing *bhāva*, called *prema vaicittya*, in His beloved Rādhikā, Kāñēa also forgot that She was sitting on His lap. He too wept and cried, "Hā Priye!" The tears that flowed from Their eyes and the perspiration that poured from Their bodies created this pond, and Rādhā and Kāñēa both fainted. When the *sakhés* saw Them in this state, they too became senseless. Çrēmaté's *sārikā* then began to loudly chant Çrē Rādhā's name, and the *çuka* began to loudly chant Çrē Kāñēa's name. As Their names entered Their ears, Rādhā and Kāñēa regained external consciousness and gazed



Prema Sarovara

upon each other with great yearning. Gradually, the *sakhés* also regained consciousness and in unlimited bliss began to call out, *Jaya! Jaya!* The poet Çré Mädhuréjé describes this *lélä* in a very charming way.

After this incident, Çré Kånëa thought to Himself, "Although I remain close by My beloved Çrématé Rädhikä, I am unable to pacify the suffering She experiences in separation. The heat of impending separation constantly scorches Her, and I see no means to console Her. When I am far away from Her, She constantly thinks of Me out of separation. She becomes so absorbed in *bhäva* that She laughingly talks to *tamala* trees, thinking them to be Me, and plays with Her *sakhés*. Sometimes She also displays *mäna*. In contrast, when I am nearby, a feeling of separation from Me overcomes Her, and She becomes distressed and cries. In this condition, I am unable to console Her, even when I am right beside Her.

"Thus, Çré Rädhä can be consoled only by My being far away from Her. In this state of separation, Her fire of separation can be somewhat pacified upon seeing My *sphürti* or beholding objects like the *tamala* tree that possess a lustre similar to My own. This is because She actually considers them to be Her Priyatama." Thinking in this way, Kånëa secretly decided to leave for a distant place. This is the main reason why He left Vändävana to go to Mathurä and Dväarakä.

The *bhäva* that Çrématé Rädhikä displays here is the topmost *mädana bhäva*, and is found only in Her. It does not manifest even in Lalitä and the other *sakhés*. In this *mädana bhäva*, feelings of both *vipralambha* (separation) and *saäbhoga* (meeting), as well as all other mutually opposed *bhavas*, are present simultaneously in an astonishing way.

Prema Sarovara is a manifestation of Rädhä and Kånëa's *bhavas*, as the following Braja-bhāña poem explains:

*prem sarovar prem ké bharé rahe din rain
jai h jai h pyäre pag dharat çyäm dharat tai h nain*

"Day and night, Prema Sarovara is always filled with *prema*. Pyäre, or Çrématé Rädhikä, keeps Her lotus feet there, and Çyäma desires to keep those lotus feet in the vision of His eyes. (In other words, Çyäma worships this *sarovara* because Çrématé has placed Her feet in its waters.)"

There is no doubt that by taking bath in this *sarovara*, one attains *prema* for Rädhä-Kånëa Yugala. Here one can take *darçana* of Lalitä-Mohanajé, a *räsa-maëöala*, *jhülä-sthala* (the place of a swing), Prema-Vihäréjé Mandira, and the *baiöhakas* of Çré Vallabhäcärya and Çré Viööhalanätha. The village of Gäjépura lies east of this *kuëöa*. On the day of Bhädra Çuklä Dvädaçé (the fourth day from Rädhänöamé), *bhüöhé-lélä* is performed here.

Vihvala Kuëöa

This *kuëöa* lies near Saì ket, to the south-east. Here Çré Kånëa became restless and overwhelmed (*vihvalä*) upon hearing Çré Rädhä's name.

One day, Çré Kånëa and Subala Sakhä were engaged in *rasäläpa*, or sweet *rasika* talk, as they sat in a beautiful *kui ja* by this delightful *kuëöa*. A *särikä* sitting on the branch of a nearby tree began to sing the glories of Çré Rädhikä's qualities. When Kånëa heard the name and qualities of Rädhikä, many kinds of sentiments arose in His heart and He saw manifestations of Rädhikä wherever He looked. He began to anxiously run here and there in an attempt to catch Her. Subala Sakhä saw the very elevated *añña-sätvika bhavas* of *mahäbhäva* on Çré Kånëa's limbs, and he started to contemplate how to pacify Kånëa's emotions. He thought that Kånëa would never be pacified without actually meeting with Çrématé Rädhikä, so he somehow sent news of Kånëa's astonishing state of restlessness to Viçäkhä Sakhé and

requested her to bring Çrémäté Rādhikā to Kāñëa. Çrémäté Rādhikā arrived there with Viçākhā and some other *sakhés*, and from a distance Subala pointed towards Çré Kāñëa, who was restless in separation. Being eager to meet, Rādhā and Kāñëa became extremely happy to have *darçana* of each other. When Çré Kāñëa touched the body of Çrémäté Rādhikā, He felt satisfied and content. That *sādhaka* who affectionately performs *bhajana* here will definitely become inundated by *prema* for Rādhā and Kāñëa.

Saì ket

This place is situated between Nandagaon and Varsānā. The first meeting of Çrémäté Rādhikā and Çré Kāñëa, after Their *pūrva-rāga*,⁸ took place here. Çrémäté Rādhikā would then come from the house of Her in-laws in Jāvaōa and Çré Kāñëa would come from Nandagaon, and They would meet here. Vāndā-devé, Vérā-devé and Subala Sakhā would act as messengers (*dūtés*) and arrange the meeting of Priyā and Priyatama by communicating through signals (*sai kets*). This is why this place is called Saì ket. Sometimes, Çrémäté Rādhikā would come here to meet with Kāñëa (*abhisāra*), and sometimes Kāñëa would come here to meet with Rādhikā.

In *Govinda-lēlāmāta* and *Kāñëa-bhāvanāmāta*, Çréla Kāñëadāsa Kavirāja and Çréla Viçvanātha Cakravarté Ōhākura describe Rādhā and Kāñëa's *milana* and *vilāsa* here during *naiçā* (midnight) and *niçānta* (pre-dawn). These descriptions are full of *rasa*. By Yogamāyā's desire, the principal *dūtés*, Çré Vérā-devé and Vāndā-devé, arrange the meeting of Çré Rādhā-Kāñëa Yugala. Çré Vāndā-devé makes very sweet arrangements to awaken the Divine Couple at *niçānta*, the end of the night, just before dawn breaks. The

⁸ *Purvarāga* is the *bhāva* or mutual feeling of attachment filled with eagerness and anticipation, that exists between the lover and the beloved before their very first meeting.

çuka and *sârë* awaken Them with enchanting words. The *kokila* helps to wake Them up with her sweet *kuhu-kuhu*, and the peacock and peahen with their *ke-kä*. Lalitā, Viçākhā and the other *sakhés* perform *āraté* to the Divine Couple. When Kakkhāé, the old she-monkey, calls out “Jaöilä!,” Çré Rādhā and Çré Kāñëa become embarrassed and make Their separate ways to Their respective residences, where they fall asleep.

Delightful places worth visiting here are the *mandira* of Saï ket-Vihārëjé, a *rāsa-maëöala*, and the place of a *jhülä* (swing). The *bhajana-kuöira* of Çré Gopāla Bhaööa Gosvämé stands in front of the *rāsa-maëöala*, to its east. Çré Caitanya Mahāprabhu rested here while travelling through the twelve forests of Braja. Just near the *rāsa-maëöala* is the temple of Saï ket-devé (Çré Vërä-devé); and nearby are Vihvalä-devé, Vihvala Kuëöa, Raï gamahala and Çayyā Mandira. Kāñëa Kuëöa lies to the west of the village. On the bank of Kāñëa Kuëöa is a *baiöhaka* of Çré Vallabhācārya.

Some people continue their pilgrimage of Braja Maëöala by travelling from Saï ket to Nandagaon. Others visit and perform *parikramä* of the following pastime-places before continuing on to Nandagaon: Riöhaura, Bhäëöokhora, Çrémeherāna, Sätöyā, Pāë, Tiloyāra, Çāi gāra Vaöa, Bichora, Andhopa, Sonda, Vanacārë, Hoöal, Kuï jaravana, Daégaon, Lālpura, Hāroyāna, Säi culé, Geëöo and so forth.

Riöhaura

This village is situated one and a half miles west of Saï ketvana, and is the village of Vāñabhānu Mahārāja's elder brother, Çré Candrabhānu Gopa. Candrävalé, the darling daughter of this same Candrabhānu, was born here. In the south-east of the village, surrounded by dense rows of trees, is Candrävalé Kuëöa, where Candrävalé used to perform her childhood pastimes (*balya-krëöä*) with her *sakhés*, take bath, and play in the water (*jal-krëöä*). Another *baiöhaka* of Vallabhācārya is here.

Bhäëöokhora

This place, situated four miles north-west of Riöhaura and four miles west of Nandagaon, is where Mahārāja Nanda had his western *goçälä*. Earthen vessels (*bhäëöa*) were filled with milk or washed here, which is why this place is known as Bhäëöokhora.

Meherāna Gaon

This village lies two miles west of Bhäëöokhora. Çré Kāñëa's uncle Abhinandana Gopa lived here, and his *goçälä* was nearby. Abhinandana Gopa is the second eldest among Brajarāja Nanda and his four brothers. Some people also consider this place to be the home of Yaçodä's father. In the eastern part of this village is Kñërasāgara. It is said that at midnight on Çiva-rātri, a stream of milk emanates from the middle of this *kuëöa*, which is why this *kuëöa* is named Kñërasāgara, or 'Ocean of Milk'.

Once, Yaçodä Maiyā and child Kāñëa came to the house of Abhinandana, Yaçodä Maiyā's older brother-in-law. After dinner, Yaçodä Maiyā sat on the bed lulling Kāñëa to sleep in her lap. Kāñëa said, “Maiyā, please tell a story.” Yaçodä proceeded to narrate a story as Kāñëa nodded ‘Yes, yes.’ Yaçodä said, “There was a king named Daçaratha. He had four sons – Rāma, Lakīmaëa, Bharata and Çatrughna. Rāma was married to Jānaké, the daughter of Mahārāja Janaka, who was also known as Sëtä. On the order of His father, Rāma went to the forest with His wife Sëtä and younger brother Lakīmaëa.” Kāñëa uttered “Yes, yes” and Yaçodä Maiyā continued. “In the forest, a demon named Rāvaëa kidnapped Sëtä.” Hearing this, Kāñëa, being absorbed in His previous incarnation as Rāma, called out, “Lakīmaëa! Bring My bow! Lakīmaëa! Bring My bow!” and jumped up from bed. Seeing this made Yaçodä Maiyā fearful. This *lëlä* took place here.

Sätoyä

This village lies two miles west of Meheräna Gaon. It is also called Satväsa. At this place, Mahäräja Saträjita, the father of one of Çré Kånëa's queens named Satyabhämä, worshipped the Sungod. Over the years, the word *saträ* has evolved into the name Satväsa.

North-east of this village is Sürya Kuëöa, on the northern bank of which is Sürya Mandira. Mahäräja Saträjita used to worship Süryadeva here after taking bath in the *kuëöa*. Süryadeva became pleased and awarded him a *süryakänta maëi*, a jewel which daily yielded him an abundance of gold.

Päëgaon

This village is situated five and half miles north-west of Satväsa. Once, Çré Kånëa was playing hide and seek with the *sakhés*. Kånëa hid somewhere, and Rädhikä and the *sakhés* anxiously searched for Him. After great endeavour, the *gopés* found Kånëa here. Rädhikä and the *sakhés* became overjoyed to have spotted Kånëa, and they cried out, *Päë-päë!* ("I have found! I have found!"). This village thus became renowned as Päë. All the villages mentioned above lie on the border of Braja.

Tiloyära

Here, Rädhä and Kånëa and the *sakhés* became so absorbed in *lälä-viläsa* that they entirely forgot to eat, what to speak of to return home. Somehow, Vändä-devé finally reminded them to return home. This place became known as Tiloyära because Kånëa and the *gopés* were not even slightly conscious of the passage of time here. *Tila mätra* means 'very slightly'; it is used in Hindi to denote a very slight amount of time or space. Tiloyära is also situated on the border of Braja Maëöala. Muslims of the Meva caste reside in the villages around here.

Çäi gära Vaöa

This place is situated two miles north of Tiloyära. While playing here, the *sakhés* decorated Çré Kånëa's body with sixteen kinds of ornaments (*çäi gära*). Sometimes, Çré Kånëa combed and decorated Çrématé Rädhikä's hair with sixteen kinds of ornaments. The *vaöa* tree that was once here has now disappeared, but the village is still known by the name of Çäi gära Vaöa or Çäi gära Gaon.

Bichora

This pastime-place is situated one and half miles north-east of Çäi gära Vaöa and ten miles south-west of Kosé. Çré Kånëa performed various kinds of *lälä-viläsa* here with Çrématé Rädhikä and the *sakhés*. After enjoying together, as they were about to return home, they both became greatly distressed by their impending separation. This village has therefore become known as Bichora. The word *bichora* derives from *viccheda*, meaning 'separation'. This is the purport of the following verse from Çré *Bhakti-ratnäkara*.

*krëöavasänete doì he cale nijälaya
viccheda-prayukta e 'bichora' näma haya*

Andhopa

This village lies two miles north-west of Bichora and three miles north of Çäi gära Vaöa. It too is situated on the border of Braja.

Sonda

The village of Sonda lies four miles north-east of Andhopa. It is the village where Nanda Mahäräja's younger brother Sananda used to live. He loved Kånëa very much. Sometimes he would call Kånëa, bathe and dress Him, seat Him next to himself, and feed Him delicious preparations.

Vanacaré

This village is situated two miles north of Sonda and east of the Mathurā-Delhi highway. It too lies on the border of Braja. One can have *darçana* of Däüjé here.

Hoðal

Hoðal lies four miles south-east of Vanacaré on the Delhi-Mathurā highway. Near this village is Pæöavavana, where the Pæöavas resided during their exile. Pæöava Kuëöa is also nearby, which is where the Pæöavas used to bathe and drink water.

Kui jaravana

South-west of Hoðal, about one mile away, is Kui jaravana, where Kāñëa used to play with the *sakhés* in the *kui jas*. Sometimes, many *sakhés* would together make themselves into an elephant (*kui jara*) here, upon which Çré Kāñëa would ride. Because this incident took place here, this place became known as Kui jaravana.

Daégaon

This place lies three miles south of Hoðal, and is where Kāñëa and His *sakhés* looted yoghurt from the *gopés* on the excuse of collecting tax. Here, one can have *darçana* of Dadhi Kuëöa, Madhusüdana Kuëöa, Çäi gāra Mandira, Çétala Kuëöa and Sapta Vākña Maëöalé. On the bank of Çétala Kuëöa under a *kadamba* tree is a *baiñhaka* of Çré Vallabhācārya.

Lālpura

This village is situated one and a half miles west of Daégaon. North of this village is the *āçrama* of Durvāñā Muni. Durvāñā Kuëöa and the *mandira* of Durvāñā are here.

Häroyāna Grāma

This village is currently called Péparavāra. Here, Çrématé Rādhikā defeated Kāñëa in a game of dice and won His *vaàçé*.

Once, Çrématé Rādhikā consulted Lalitā and the other *sakhés*, saying, "Since Kāñëa is physically more powerful than us, He defeats us in the games which depend upon bodily strength. Please think of a game based upon intelligence by which we can easily defeat Him." Lalitā Sakhé advised Çrématé to challenge Kāñëa to a game of dice. Following this meeting, the *sakhés* challenged Kāñëa to play dice with them. As soon as the game had started, Çrématé Rādhikā very easily defeated Kāñëa and snatched away His *vaàçé*, which had been kept on stake. Madhumaī gala, who was sitting nearby, pretended to be sad and said, "Kanhaiyā! The *gopés* have just taken Your *vaàçé*, and they will now confiscate everything of Yours. You are expert at grazing the cows, so go and do that. I feel very unhappy when I see You defeated like this." Saying this, He started laughing. Kāñëa rebuked him, calling him a talkative *brāhmaëa*, and told him to keep quiet.

This village has been named Häroyāna on account of this *lélā*, in which Kāñëa was defeated at dice. *Härnä* means 'to be defeated'.

Säi culé

This place is situated four miles south of Häroyāna Grāma and six miles north-west of Nandagaon. In this village, one can have *darçana* of the *mandira* of Candrävalé Sakhé and of Sürya Kuëöa. Candrävalé used to meet Kāñëa here on the pretext of performing Sürya-püjä.

Geëöo

This village lies three miles east of Säi culé Grāma. Kāñëa and Baladeva used to play ball games here with the *sakhés*. *Gei da* means 'ball'. This village has seven *kuëöas*. Gei da Kuëöa, which is where Çré Balarāma used to stand when they played ball games, is in the north of the village; and Gei da Khora, which is where Kāñëa used to stand, is in the

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north-west. Gaidharāvana is in the east, Belvana Kuēōa is in the south, Gopē Kuēōa is in the south-west, Jalbhara Kuēōa is in the west, and Vihāra Kuēōa is in the north-west. The *gopēs* filled their pots with water (*jal bharnā*) from Jalbhara Kuēōa.