

**JAI SRI KRISHNA
SRI KRISHNA JANAMA BHOOMI MANDIR**



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SRI KRISHNA JANAMA BHOOMI MANDIR, MATHURA

The most famous of Mathura's temples is the Krishna Janama Bhoomi Temple, built around the prison cell where Krishna was born after his parents were imprisoned by his evil uncle, Kamsa, king of Mathura. One of the most venerated shrines in India, the temple complex is located west of Mathura's old city and thronged by pilgrims throughout the year, whose number increases exponentially during festivals. The main shrine of the city, the Dwarkadhesh Temple, is a major attraction for the devout, particularly during festivals like Holi and Janmashtami. The present Krishna Janama Bhoomi Temple complex is fairly new. Inside, there are paintings of scenes from Krishna's life, idol of Krishna, Balrama, Radha, and a stepped water tank.

The beautiful city of Mathura lying on the banks of the river Yamuna is considered to be one of the most ancient cities known to mankind. In ancient times Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh was known as Mathura Janapada or Brajmandal and main city of Mathura was called Mahapuri. Between 1st Century BC and 1st Century AD, Mathura became the provincial capital of the northern province of the Saka Satraps such as Hagamasha, Hagana, Sodasa and Rajula. During the reign of the Kushanas, Mathura rose to prominence and gained distinction for a peculiar form of art currently recognized by the historians as the Mathura school of art. Mathura remained well established and an important political and urban center, as well as commercial center through the Maurya, post-Maurya, Sunga to the Kushana periods from 3rd century BC through 4th century AD. The city is one of the most prominent places in the epic Mahabharata and later an important centre of the Bhagavata cult in Puranic lore.



SRI KRISHNA JANAMA BHOOMI MANDIR,

Mathura's culture, its literature, songs, dance and cultural events revolve around the life of Lord Krishna. The culture of the people of Mathura is known as Braj culture. Various practices of the people of Mathura bring out the Braj culture Rasiya, a tradition of folk songs that describe the love of Radha and Lord Krishna is an integral part of Mathura's culture and of the festive celebrations of Mathura. *Raaslilas* is a dance act that was performed by Lord Krishna along with gopis on banks of Yamuna River. Mathura is also known for Sanjhee, the art of decorating the ground with flowers.

The famous Greek traveler Megasthenes (350 BC- 290BC), wrote about Mathura as the biggest kingdom ruled by a small king in his book about his Indian odyssey 'Indika'. It is known as the 'Athens of ancient India'. He also described the people of Mathura as culturally rich and highly organized. Also described Mathura as "a place of great regional importance" and suggested that it was then, as now, "a center of Krishna worship."

Lord Krishna is known by many different names in various traditions. The word Krishna means the person who is attractive to everyone. Historically, Sri Krishna appeared on the midnight of the 8th day of the dark half of the month of *Shravana*. This corresponds to July 19th 3228 BC. He exhibited His pastimes for a little over 125 years and disappeared on February 18th 3102 BC on the new moon night of *Phalguna*. His departure marks the beginning of the current age of corruption known as Kali Yuga.

The history and culture of the holy town Mathura revolve around the legends of Lord Krishna's childhood. The great saint/scholar Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti outlines Sri Krishna's activities in this way: 'the first three years and four months were spent in Gokula, then equal lengths of time in Vridavana and Nandagram, eighteen years and four months in Mathura, and finally ninety-six years and eight months in Dvaraka totaling 125 years of manifest pastimes'.

As the legend goes, Mathura was founded in the Treta Yuga by Shatrughna, the younger brother of Lord Rama and later was under the royalty of King Kamsa, the maternal uncle of Lord Krishna. Mathura is home of the Yadavas, the tribe in which Krishna was born. Vajranabha, Krishna's grandson, is said to have established the first temple at Krishna's birthplace, Janmasthan, shortly after He left His physical body. There he installed the Deity of Keshavadeva, or Keshav Deo, a form of Lord Krishna. The archeological excavations of the site had revealed pottery and terracotta from 6th century BC. The temple was located on Katra Mound, a large area several meters higher than the surrounding town. Even when Mathura became a stronghold of Buddhism and then Jainism, worship at the Janmasthan temple never ceased. Archeological proof seems to point that, by 100 BC, Jains used to live in Mathura. Around 400AD, the Gupta emperor Chandragupta Vikramaditya built a big temple on the Krishna Janma Boomi site. Mathura became the capital of the Shursen republic in the 6th century BC and soon after was ruled by the Maurya Empire and the Sunga dynasty. Hieun Tsiang visited India (630 - 644 A.D.) during the reign of Harshavardhana; Hinduism was flourishing in Mathura while Buddhism continued to maintain its stronghold. Hieun Tsiang noted five large Hindu temples, twenty Buddhist monasteries, about 2000 Buddhist monks and nuns and a good number of Buddhist stupas at Mathura.

The Krishna Janama Bhoomi temple was improved by the Rashtrakuta kings and others—so much so that in 1017AD, Mahmud of Ghazni and his army came here specifically to loot and demolish the temple. There was a massive idol of Krishna, over 4m tall, made of solid gold, and was decorated with a 3.5 pound (8,000 carat) sapphire, a blue one, which was stolen during an attack by Mahmud of Ghazni.

Sultan Mahamud invaded India 15 times between 1000 AD to 1027 AD, but Indian historical resources are silent about this invasion on Mathura. (Dr. Shailnath Chaturvedi – *Gazni ka Sultan Mehmood Aur Mathura*). Mahmud of Ghazni came to India, only to plunder, not to rule, and left the devastated area after a few weeks. By 1150 AD, local kings and devotees had rebuilt the temple. But it was destroyed again in the 16th century by the Sultan of Delhi, Sikandar Lodi. The temple's Deities were broken up and according to a report from the time, "used for weights in butcher shops made on the temple site to shed the blood of the cow over the birthplace of the heathen by the decree of Sikandar."

Around 1614AD, Raja Vir Singh rebuilt the Janama Bhoomi temple once again on Katra Mound. The huge structure, 250 feet high, could be seen from 33 miles away. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, a French merchant traveler, recorded in 1650AD that the red sandstone building as "the most magnificent he had seen; the main Deity [in the form of Keshavadeva] was of black stone and had rubies for eyes and was flanked by His two consorts of white stone, all in golden robes. It is one of the most sumptuous edifices in all of India."

'Ghazni's scribe, though not accompanying him on the expedition, Al Utbi describes in his *Tarikh-i-Yamini* neighbouring holy town which is identified as Mathura and wrote, "In the centre of the city there was a huge and magnificent temple, which the people believed wasn't built by men but by the angels... any description of the temple either in words or in pictures would fall short and fail to convey its beauty." Further, Mahmud of Ghazni wrote, "if any one wished to construct a building equal to it, he would not be able to do so without spending a hundred million dinars, and the work would occupy two hundred years, even though the most able and experienced workmen were employed." He ordered to burn all the temples and demolish them. He plundered gold and silver idols and carried away a load of hundred camels.' (F. S. Growse *Mathura-Brindaban—the Mystical Land of Lord Krishna*)

In 1662 the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb ordered that a mosque be built to the east of Katra Mound. In 1665 he banned the celebration of Holi and Diwali, and also banned cremations on the banks of the Yamuna. In 1670 he ordered that the temple and all ancillary shrines be completely destroyed. His generals carried the temple deity to Agra, where it was broken into pieces and placed under the steps leading to the Nawab Begum Sahib's mosque so that, in the words of the Mughal historians, the faithful could walk upon it and prove their faith. The name of Mathura was changed to Islamabad and remained so in the imperial documents of the Mughal era. The Eidgah Mosque was built upon the plinth of Raja Vir Singh's temple.

The overall destruction was such that the report, *Mathura, a District Memoir*, written by local magistrate F. S. Growse in 1882 stated, "Thanks to the Muhammadan intolerance, there is not a single building of any antiquity either in the city itself or its environs. ... At the present day it has no lack of stately edifices, but they are all modern."

Ahmad Shah Abdali, an Afghan ruler took Delhi in 1757. He entered Mathura and indiscriminate slaughter was carried out by Afghan soldiers during the festival of Holi. The Krishna's childhood place in Mahaban was defended by about four thousand strong ascetics, all of whom died fighting the Abdali's brutal troops.

On April 14, 1760, Marathas took a large force under Sadashiv Bhau and marched from Pune to deal with the threat of an Afghan invasion. Bhau was instructed to first defeat Abdali at Delhi and then turn east and liberate Hindu holy sites. The Marathas who rose to prominence after the decline of the Mughal power, established normalcy in the land of Braj. They built new temples and provided a sense of security for the people in the region.

'Mathura came under British control in 1803. The East India Company auctioned the land of Katra and it was purchased by Raja Patnimal, a wealthy banker of Banaras, in 1815. Raja Patnimal wanted to build the temple but could not do so. His descendants inherited the land of Katra. His descendant Raj Krishna Das was challenged, for the ownership of 13.37 acres of land on which the shrine and the Eidgah is situated, in two civil suits by the Muslims of Mathura but the Allahabad High Court ruled in favour of Raj Krishna Das in both suits in 1935'. (Pargiter, F.E. (1972). *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*)



Holi celebrations at Krishna Janama Bhoomi. On the left is the Eidgah Mosque, built by Aurangzeb on the site of the original temple.

Pandit Kailash Nath Katju and Sh. Madanmohan Chaturvedi had helped in lawsuits. Politician and educationist Sh. Madan Mohan Malaviya acquired the land from Raj Krishna Das on 7 February 1944 at the cost of Rs. 13000 with financial help of Industrialist Sh. Jugal Kishore Birla. Following death of Malaviya, Jugal Kishore Birla formed a trust named Shri Krishna Janama Bhoomi Trust, later registered as the Shri Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sansthan, on 21 February 1951 and acquired the land. Jugal Kishore Birla entrusted the construction of the new temple with another industrialist and philanthropist Sh. Jaidayal Dalmia. The construction of the temple complex was started in October 1953 with leveling of lands and completed in February 1982. Attempts to rebuild the Janama Bhoomi temple finally came to fruition in the

1950s under the patronage the Birla and Dalmia industrialist families, who were instrumental in forming the Sri Krishna Bhoomi Trust. *India Today* reported in 1993 that management of the mosque was entrusted to the existing Eidgah committee, with the understanding its right to the mosque would not be challenged thereafter. By 1982—three centuries after its last destruction—the Shri Krishna Janama Bhoomi Complex as we see it today was completed, including the restoration of the prison cell directly west of the mosque.

Garbha Griha shrine; ‘It is said that Shahi Eidgah was constructed on the *Sabhamandapa* (assembly hall) of the original temple and the *garbha griha* (sanctum sanctorum) was left. It is considered as the place of the prison cell where Krishna is believed to have born. A marble pavilion and an underground prison cell were built on the place with spacious *veranda*. There is shrine near it dedicated to eight-handed Goddess Yog Maya. It is located against the rear wall of the Shahi Eidgah.’ (D. Anand (1992) Krishna--the Living God of Braj)

Potra Kund; There is a large and deep stepped water tank, Potra Kund or Pavitra Kund, in south-east of the Janmasthan temple which is said to be used for the first bath of the child Krishna after his birth. (Asher, Catherine B ‘Architecture of Mughal India’) The steps of the tank were built by Sh. Mahadji Scindia in 1782. They were restored by his descendants in 1850.

Katra Keshava Dev temple. It is built over the place believed to be the prison cell where Lord Krishna was born. Standing adjacent to it is the Jama Masjid built by Abe-In-Nabir Khan, the local governor, in 1661 AD, on the ruins of the Keshava Deo temple destroyed under the instructions of Aurangzeb. The Keshava Deo temple or Krishna Deo temple is a Hindu temple situated besides the main Krishna Janama Bhoomi complex, the birthplace of Lord Krishna in Mathura; it is the place where, it is said, that Lord Krishna appeared. It was built in Mathura over the prison which was believed to be the birthplace of Lord Krishna. In contemporary memory, it was built by Raja Vir Singh Bundela of Orchha, in the reign of Jehangir. The Rajput prince enjoyed a special favour with the Mogul on account of his support to Jehangir in his succession. It is believed, to have been originally built 5000 years ago by Vajranabha, the great-grandson of Lord Krishna. According to a Sanskrit inscription found in Katra Keshavadeva, that in Vikrama Samvat 1150 A.D., when Maharaja Vijayapal Deva was the ruler of Mathura, a new temple built on the site of Shri Krishna's birthplace.

The gods always play where groves are near, rivers, mountains and springs, and in towns with pleasure gardens. — Brhat Samhita

Mathura has 25 *Ghats* along the Yamuna River, each one associated with a story of Lord Krishna. Many scriptures recommend pilgrimage to these *Ghats*. Some of the sacred Ghats like Vishram Ghat, Brahmamand Ghat, Somatirth Ghat, Koti Ghat, Chakrathirth Ghat, Somatirth Ghat, Vignaraja Ghat, Dashashwamedh Ghat, Saraswati Sangam Ghat, Samyamana Ghat, Dharapatanaka Ghat, Navtirtha Ghat, Naga tirth ghat and many more Ghats were built by the different rulers or social workers of Mathura.



Vishram Ghat

Vishram Ghat is considered the holiest. This is the centermost of the 25 Ghats, with 12 to the north and 12 to the south—the traditional *Parikrama*, beginning and ending point for circumambulation of the holy city. The word 'vishrama' or 'vishranti' means to 'rest' or a 'resting place'. Lord Krishna is said to have rested at this place after killing Kamsa. In ancient times, Lord Varahadev, after lifting the earth from the garbha queen and slaying the demon Hiranyaksha, also came here and rested. While He was resting at this place, Lord Varahadev spoke about the glories of Vraja Mandala to the Goddess Bhumi Devi, the mother earth, and these descriptions of holy *Dharma* were recorded in the *Adi-Varaha Purana*. At Vishram Ghat devotees pay homage to their ancestors through the *Shradha* ceremonies, and it is here that the festival of *Bhai Duj* is celebrated, in which sisters apply *tilak* to the forehead of their brothers. This is possibly the most popular festival observed at the Ghats, with brothers and sisters by the thousands coming to celebrate each year.



Brahmand Ghat

Brahmand Ghat is located just a few meters ahead of Raman Reti and Nand Bhawan, along the banks of the Yamuna River. It is considered a sacred place among the Hindus due to some mythological importance.



Vignaraja Ghat

Vignaraja Ghat is also called Ganesha Ghat or Senapati Ghat. It is believed that if one takes bath in this Ghat, Vignaraja will remove all the obstacles from one's path of devotional service.

Dashashwamedh Ghat ; In the past, Asvamedha Yajna was done here for glorifying Lord Krishna .Adi Varaha Purana mentioned that, one who bathes in Dashashwamedh Ghat will enjoy the pleasures of heaven.

Saraswati Sangam Ghat; The Rivers Yamuna and Saraswati meet at Saraswati Sangam Ghat. One who bathes in this *tirtha* will receive the qualities of a Sannyasi. There is a small Vamana temple next to the bridge which crosses the stream.

Brahma Ghat; According to the Hindu mythology, Lord Brahma did austerities at Brahma Ghat for nearly 1,000 years. It is believed that by taking bath at this Ghat, one will go to Vishnu Loka.

Somatirth Ghat is dedicated to the Hindu Moon God. If one bathes at this *tirtha*, one gets the happiness of living on Soma loka. This place is known as Krishna Ganga Ghat. It is called so because Lord Krishna manifested Ganges in this place. The river Ganga and Yamuna meet at this place.



Naga Tirtha Ghat

Naga Tirtha Ghat is the best of all *tirthas*. By taking bath here, one can attain heaven and by dying here one is freed from rebirth.



Koti Ghat

Koti Ghat; If a person takes bath at Koti Ghat and offers charity, he will be worshiped in Vishnu Loka. It is said in the Vishnu Purana that one who bathes at Kooti Ghat, will get the benefits of bathing in *koti tirthas* i.e., bathing in million holy Ghats and rivers and giving charity of koti cows. If one performs *Shradha* at this place, all his ancestors will be liberated from the sins.

Samyamana Ghat; This ghat is on the bank of River Yamuna. This is the Ghat from where Vasudeva shifted Lord Krishna to Brindavan.

Though only a short distance downstream from Vrindavan, the river flow is stronger, the water much cleaner, and devotees bathe without reservation.

In heart of Braj Vrindavan is Barsana, birth place of Shri Radha Rani, and heart of Barsana is Gahvarvan, a Van or forest where every single tree and piece of grass is planned by Shri Radha Rani by Her own hands. In Gahvarvan, Shri Ramesh Baba ji Maharaj started a movement to cleanse Brij Boomi and revive its ancient cultural heritage. He picked Shri Maan Mandir, which is located at the hilltop of Brahmachal Parvat. Brahmachal Parvat, head of Lord Brahma, is one of the 4 hilltops of Barsana. The Braj region once upon a time had more than 1000 water bodies called kunds or sarovars. Most of them are over five thousand years old and find mention in scriptures and folklore. All these kunds are associated with various legends of Lord Krishna and Gopis playing *leelas* around these kunds. Also these kunds were a primary source of fresh water in Braj during ancient times. Over 36 Kunds (water bodies) have been protected and preserved. Gaya Kund, Dohani Kund, Vrishbhanu Kund are few examples. The historic Braham Kund (Vrindavan) and the Rudra Kund (Goverdhan) are some of the prominent Kunds which have been completely beautified in recent years. These Kunds were almost extinct. Other water bodies in Brij will follow. With Baba ji's inspiration and efforts some other organizations and locals helped to rebuilt and preserved these Kunds. Maharaj ji started Maan Mandir Trust and under its aegis started a cow shelter, a Goshala, with only 2 cows but now it has over 22,000 cows.

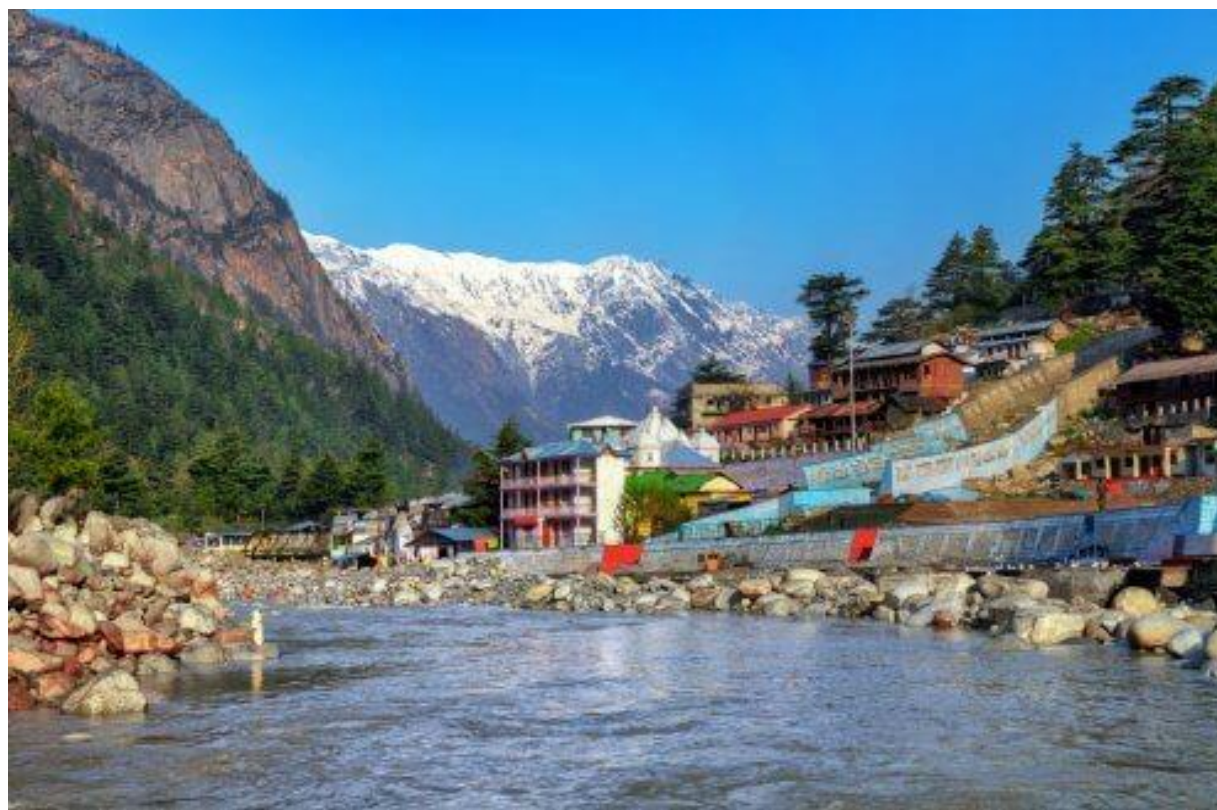
FORTH COMING BOOK

GANGA TIRTHAS

RELIGIOUS HERITAGE AND HISTORY

OF

GANGA TIRTHAS-GANGA MELAS-GANGA CIVILIZATION-GANGA POLLUTION



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