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Tereza Huspeková

Field of Ritual:

A Case Study on the Role of Space
in Daily Temple Ritual of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism

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Vedoucí práce: Radek Chlup, Ph.D.

Abstract

This thesis presents an interpretative case-study on the role of space within the daily temple ritual of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*. The work attempts to develop a theoretical approach to a particular set of empirical data by merging together various analytical concepts and theories from different levels of theorizing on ritual. The interpretation is based on a selection of empirical data from field research which was carried out in a local *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple in Kolkata, West Bengal in 2007.

The thesis consists of two parts, descriptive and interpretative. The descriptive part is ordered according to the main analytical concepts employed further in the process of theorizing. It contains textual and audio-visual materials providing a detailed description of the studied ritual environment seeking to enable the reader to enter the field of research. The interpretative part attempts to view the data through a 'focusing lens' of the concept of 'field of ritual' which shows that the ritual environment can operate as a responsive matrix structuring the actions of ritual actors which is further structured by them.

key words: ritual, field, space, place, theorizing, *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava*, *Vaiṣṇavism*, temple, worship, Bengal

Contents

1 Preface.....	1
2 Introduction.....	3
3 Descriptive Part: Into the Field.....	6
3.1 The Basic Features of <i>Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism</i>	7
3.2 The Place and Its History.....	9
3.3 The Space and Its Objects.....	13
3.4 Emplacements, Gestures, and Their Time Pattern.....	20
3.5 The Pattern of Daily Rites and Tending Practices.....	28
3.5.1 Early Morning.....	28
3.5.2 Morning.....	30
3.5.3 Forenoon.....	32
3.5.4 Midday and Early Afternoon.....	32
3.5.5 Afternoon.....	32
3.5.6 Evening.....	33
3.5.7 Night.....	39
3.6. The Rite of <i>Ārati</i>	41
4 Interpretative Part: Over the Field.....	51
4.1 The 'What' of the <i>Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava</i> Ritual.....	51
4.2 The 'How' of the <i>Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava</i> Ritual.....	57
4.3 The 'Field' of the <i>Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava</i> Ritual.....	65
4.3.1 The Focusing Lens of the Field.....	65
4.3.2 Pivoting the Place.....	66
4.3.3 Resolving the Space of the Place.....	67
4.3.4 Emplacing the Place and its Space.....	69
4.3.5 The Matrix of the Field.....	70
5 Conclusion: "Everything in Its Right Place".....	75
6 Glossary.....	77
7 Bibliography.....	80
Appendix 1 – Visual Materials Used in the Text.....	83
Appendix 2 – List of Video Files.....	91

Attachment: CD with Video Files

1 Preface

This thesis is an attempt to develop a theoretical approach to the spatial aspect of daily temple ritual within the tradition of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* on a particular set of empirical data. So far, only limited attention has been paid to the notion of ritual space in theories in the field of Religious Studies, and approaches explicitly focusing on the role of space within ritual enactments are rare. Although the topic of 'sacred space' or 'sacred place' has been somehow present in the study of religion from its beginnings, it has usually been studied from the 'large-scale' point of view as a wider background of some other processes and phenomena or as an aspect of general world-view of a tradition, e.g. in the form of sacred geography. Thus, for example Mircea Eliade in his influential phenomenological perspective viewed sacred place as a point through which the sacred time breaks into the profane world,¹ or Victor Turner in his theory of ritual processes showed that the spatial relations may become one of the dimensions in which the transgressions of boundaries between different social or ritual phases are expressed.² Such approaches can, nevertheless, hardly provide sufficient methodological tools for interpretation of certain 'small-scale' spatially relevant processes within the enclosed micro-cosmos of an actual living ritual enactment.

The importance of the spatial relations in ritual has been stressed by Jonathan Z. Smith in his explicitly 'spatialized' theory of ritual,³ which is, however, based mainly on textual descriptions of 'sacred spaces' (e.g. on the description of the Temple in the book of Ezekiel) and as such centres upon the normative synchronic aspect of ritual. Ronald L. Grimes later criticized Smith's theory for not taking into account the processual fluidity and embodiment of actual ritual behaviour and suggested some possibilities of creating a theory which would be more 'performative'.⁴ Although Grimes has not developed a systematic approach to the study and interpretation of the spatial aspect of ritual performances, the notion of ritual space along with other aspects like ritual time, ritual objects, or ritual actors in his method of field-study constitutes one of the angles from which ritual enactments can be viewed. For this reason, I will follow this line of thought within ritual studies and as a starting point of my interpretative approach I will use Grimes's concept of ritual field which is "both the locus of ritual practice and the totality of a ritual's structures and processes."⁵

As a study of actual living ritual processes, my thesis is grounded in the data from field research that I carried out in a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple in southern Kolkata, West Bengal in 2007 as a part of a project supported by the Grant Agency of the

¹ See the chapter "Archétypes et répétition" in Mircea Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour: Archétypes et répétition*, Saint-Amand: Gallimard, 1969, p. 14-64.

² See especially the chapter "Pilgrimages as Social Processes" in Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Actions in Human Society*, Ithaca / London: Cornell University Press, 1974, p. 166-230.

³ See Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual", *History of Religions* 20.1/2 (Aug-Nov 1980): 112-127 and Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*, Chicago / London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

⁴ See Ronald L. Grimes, "Jonathan Z. Smith's Theory of Ritual Space", *Religion* 29 (1999): 261-273.

⁵ Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies: Revised Edition*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995, p. 5.

Academy of Sciences of the CR (GAAV). The research centred upon the daily temple ritual, which enabled me to observe the same rites enacted over and over again with a small and relatively consistent group of practitioners in stable settings. Based on this set of data, the descriptive background of the essay is modelled as a case-study without any generalizing ambitions concerning the interpretation of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* ritual. My attention will be restricted to a specific set of ritual actions in a specific place, and data from other primary sources will serve merely as a necessary context for the results of the field-study.

The thesis is divided into two parts, descriptive and interpretative. The descriptive section seeks to provide a valid empirical frame of the interpretation and to allow a reader to gain better insight into the studied ritual environment. It consists of a short analysis of the basic outlines of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* doctrine and a detailed description of the studied ritual space along with the structure of performed rites. The interpretative part, then, presents an attempt to merge various analytical concepts and theories to develop an approach suitable for the interpretation of the respective set of data.

The textual data from the field research are supplemented with photo- and video materials. Black-and-white photographs are inserted at relevant points into the text of the descriptive section, and their colour versions can be found in the Appendix 1. The position of the video-files, which are attached on the CD, can be traced on a list in the Appendix 2.⁶ The thesis is equipped with Glossary containing some more frequent terms from Indian languages. I will follow the standard indological transliteration in the form used for Bengali (terminal 'a' is omitted, words which e.g. from Sanskrit would be transliterated with 'v' are transliterated with 'b' etc.) with the exception of some established terms like *Vaiṣṇava* (which, from Bengali, should be transliterated as *Baiṣṇab*) or terms from the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* theology (like e.g. *acintyabhedābheda*), which was elaborated mostly in Sanskrit.

⁶ The complete collection of the photo- and video-materials will be available at the web-site of the Institute of South and Central Asia at <http://iu.ff.cuni.cz/ritual>.

2 Introduction

When observing an actual living ritual enactment, one is easily taken aback by the complexity of levels on which the performance operates. Ritual as a multi-dimensional medium has the power to involve the whole body-mind of a person in a ritual process by simultaneously appealing to all the senses and to the entire flux of consciousness at once. During a ritual performance, our perception is captured by colours, smells, sounds, by the sense of bodily presence of other participants or by the motions of performers, and our mind enters the stream of meanings which can be enacted by means of ritual. The outer form of rites can be vivid and impressive, which naturally leads us to focus on action, communication, symbolism or other obvious elements of ritual performance. Thus we can easily fail to reflect on the tacit and only implicitly realized aspects of ritual, such as ritual space. In ritual studies the notion of space has often been neglected, and even theoretical approaches which to some extent take into account the spatial dimension of ritual tend to view the place where the enactments occur as a dead background, as a mere scene for the actions of ritual performances. However, as we will see below, ritual space can become an active agent which shapes and structures the actions of performers and which, reciprocally, is structured by them. Hence in my thesis I will try to show that ritual space can operate as a receptive and responsive field, as an active zone which bears direct influence on ritual actors, and to outline the possibilities of viewing the ritual enactment through the focusing lens of spatial relations.

My methodological standpoint will be based on a specific approach to ritual studies as it is presented by Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek and Michael Stausberg in the project *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*.⁷ In an introductory essay to the volume, the editors introduce the concept of 'theorizing' as opposed to 'theories' and state that

the age of 'grand theories' – thus, theories that seek to explain everything – is over. In modern scholarly practice of the study of ritual, one will therefore probably always need to refer to more than one theory. Today theoreticians of ritual(s) instead generate – to put it more modestly – theoretical *approaches*, which only try to explain a certain aspect of the material concerned.⁸

Unlike *theories*, which are developed to deal with the widest possible spectrum of phenomena, "*theoretical approaches*... are concerned with a particular field of research; for this purpose, they operationalize relevant theories as their general frame of reference for their argument while addressing specific theoretical issues related to the respective empirical data."⁹ 'Theorizing rituals' thus becomes a playful and creative enterprise across and among theories which attempts to set up a theoretical approach made to fit for a particular set of data. In this way, 'theorizing' turns into a handy

⁷ Jens Kreinath / Jan Snoek / Michael Stausberg (eds), *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2006.

⁸ "Introductory Essay", in Kreinath et al, *Theorizing Rituals*, p. xiii-xxv, p. xxi.

⁹ Jens Kreinath, "Meta-Theoretical Parameters for the Analysis and Comparison of two Recent Approaches to the Study of the Yasna", in M. Stausberg (ed.), *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2004, p. 99-136, p. 103-104.

hermeneutic tool that can be likened to a scaffold, built to follow the shape of a building we wish to examine. Therefore, the goal of this essay will be to “build a scaffold” around the building which is the spatial aspect of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* ritual as it is performed in one particular south-Kolkatan temple.

We should, however, still bear in mind that what we see, metaphorically, depends on where we stand and which part of the building we are looking at. Quite naturally, the resulting form of the ‘scaffold’ will be affected to a great extent by our initial ideas about what it might look like, by the collection of elements that were at hand and by our personal preferences about what we want to see. All these factors direct the course of the dialectical process that constitutes an empirically grounded theoretical approach in which the theory affects the collection of the data and the data affect the theory.

The relation between the theoretical approach and the data is further determined by the main analytical concepts constituting the actual theoretical frame.¹⁰ The necessity of field-study is implied already in the basic concept of the ‘field of ritual’, which I aim to reach in my theorizing. If we attempted to carry out an ‘armchair’ study of ritual, we would most likely end up theorizing on abstract disembodied rules and concepts (that is the ideal categories, which nevertheless constitute only the basis of an actual ritual field) or on symbolic translations made by other researchers. However, as we will see, in the field of ritual ‘here’ is merged with ‘now’ which requires the prospective student of ritual to enter the field. Thus it is not possible to pretend that the research was conducted by a disembodied invisible observer who did not disturb the ritual environment by his presence; a student of ritual becomes a part of the unity of the field as an actor who is directed and affected by his surroundings and who comes into contact with the ‘native’ ritual actors. Neither is it possible to present the study as if it was carried out by a ‘native’ ritualist who belongs to the environment as naturally as a pillar of the temple verandah (or, actually, to ‘go native’ which might – apart from bearing a hardly predictable impact on the body-mind of the observer, and subsequently on the whole process of theorizing – cause unwanted misunderstandings on the part of the ritualists). One’s identity is impossible to deny and the presence of an outsider – particularly in the small and relatively enclosed community of the local *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple – is noticed and reflected upon. A middle path between the two untenable positions was suggested by Grimes in an attitude expressed in the term ‘going with’, which, in Grimes’ metaphor drawing on the language of performative arts, can be compared to “an aikido-like entry into the vector of another person’s movement.”¹¹ In this manner, a student of ritual may retain his identity of a ‘stranger’ who affects and transforms the field by his presence both on the bodily and conceptual level, and at the same time, avoid disturbing the transformational processes of the ritual matrix by intrusive or confusing actions. From this position, the observer is fully aware of his influence on the field and can even turn it into advantage, for example by reflecting on the borderlines between the ‘native’ and his own ritual attitude.

¹⁰ For the discussion of the position of analytical concepts within a theoretical approach and their relation to empirical data see Kreinath, “Meta-Theoretical Parameters...”, p. 103-110.

¹¹ Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, p. 19.

As such, my study in the field of the particular *Gauḍiṃya Vaiṣṇava* temple, and its reflection, was carried out from the position of someone who ‘goes – or sometimes rather stumbles – with’. In the interpretative part of the thesis, I have deliberately used only a representative selection of the available empirical material to illustrate my theorizing on ritual space, which is nevertheless firmly grounded in the data from the field and which could be further elaborated and reflected upon by comparison with the descriptive section. The outcome is inevitably determined by the way I have – both literally and metaphorically – moved through the field and by my initial area of interest, therefore it is quite likely that e.g. a male observer focusing on the social dimension of ritual behaviour would end up with a completely different set of data. The result of my study can, however, be taken as a glance at one particular part of the ‘building’ from one particular angle by one particular pair of eyes.

3 Descriptive Part: Into the Field

In following sections I will try to describe both the doctrinal and the actual physical and conceptual background of the ritual environment, where the field-research has been carried out. The first section focuses on some aspects of the *Gauḍiṃya Vaiṣṇava* doctrine underlying the attitude to ritual practice within the tradition, and its purpose is to provide basic orientation in the system of thought and its terminology. The remaining sections, which are based mainly on the accounts of informants, comprise a detailed description of the ritual field at the site of research divided according to the analytical distinction made by Grimes, which will be employed further in the interpretative part of the thesis. In this way, the field may be resolved to three mutually interdependent aspects, namely the place along with its history, the structure of its physical space along with its objects, and the emplacements, that is the net of spatially relevant rules and concept along with performed gestures and respective time pattern embedded in the actual field. The last two sections of this part of my thesis contain the description of the pattern of daily rites performed in the temple and a separate section on the daily rite of *āraṭi*. Following the pattern described above, the description of the rites conducted at the site of the research is based on the characterization of the geographic location of the site and its history, on the description of the physical arrangement of the site and the objects within its ritual space, and on the record of the most distinctive concepts, rules and gestures somehow referring to the spatial relations along with the mythical pattern underlying the form of the temple schedule. Both the textual and the visual materials seek to allow the reader to visualize the site of research and, metaphorically, to enter the field.



P.1 Eastern Gate of Gaurāṅga mandir

3.1 The Basic Features of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*

The beginnings of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* tradition lie in the 16th century Bengal (*Gauḍa* was a historical name of a part of contemporary Bengal, so *Gauḍīya* means literally 'Bengali').¹² This line of *Vaiṣṇavism* draws upon the powerful wave of emotional *bhakti* that to some extent affected most religious traditions and movements on the Indian subcontinent. To the focus on the right way of conduct and practice, which is usually stressed in non-*bhakti* traditions, *bhakti* adds an emphasis on the passionate intimate relation to a personally perceived divine being. In the case of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*, the worship is focused on Kṛṣṇa – who ceases to be a mere incarnation of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Being and himself becomes the highest Lord – and, subsequently, on his divine consort Rādhā. The birth of the movement is connected with a famous religious leader known under the name Śrīkṛṣṇacaitanya or simply Caitanya who is himself worshipped as an incarnation of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in one body.

If we are to understand the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* attitude to ritual practice, we must become familiar at least with the basic features of the complicated and rather unintuitive doctrine of the tradition. The cornerstone of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* theology is a concept called *acintyabhedābheda*, "a doctrine of inconceivable difference in non-difference".¹³ The notion expresses the view that Kṛṣṇa as the ultimate source of the universe possesses divine energies called *śaktis* which bring into existence the living beings and the phenomenal world and which are at the same time different from and identical with their supreme Lord in a manner inconceivable by human consciousness. Kṛṣṇa's inner nature consists of three aspects, namely existence (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*) and his *śaktis* are accordingly divided into the *śakti* of existence, *śakti* of consciousness, and the *śakti* of bliss. Among them, the *śakti* of bliss, through which Kṛṣṇa causes bliss both to himself and to the creatures, is considered the highest and is expressed in Rādhā.¹⁴ Thus the amorous sports of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as depicted in the extensive mythology of *Vaiṣṇavism* become a divine drama, stretching as a play between the Supreme Lord and his *śakti* over the whole of creation.

Kṛṣṇa's *śaktis* operate on different levels according to their position in relation to their ultimate source. The internal *śakti* constitutes Kṛṣṇa's inner nature and his glory with perfected *bhaktas* (worshippers) who eternally share in Kṛṣṇa's play, *līlā*. The external *śakti* is the source of the phenomenal world and causes the ignorance of the

¹² For an account of the early history of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* movement see Sushil Kumar De, *Early History of the Vaishnava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1986, p. 34-165.

¹³ The *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* doctrine has been systematized shortly after the birth of the movement by early theologians known as the Six Gosvāmins of Vṛndāvan. The basis of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* ontology and soteriology has been formulated above all by Jīva Gosvāmin, while the aesthetics and the rules of meditative practice have been elaborated especially by Rūpa Gosvāmin. For a discussion on the relation of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* doctrine to practice see David L. Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation: A Study of Rāgānugā-Bhakti Sādhana*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2001.

¹⁴ Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p. 32.

individual soul which belongs neither to the realm of Kṛṣṇa's glory nor to the level of external *śakti*, but is exposed to the influence from both sides.¹⁵ When the soul perceives the external *śakti*, it cannot perceive the inner realm of Kṛṣṇa and vice versa. *Bhaktas* therefore seek to shift gradually from the phenomenal world to the realm of Kṛṣṇa's eternal *līlā*. For *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*, the path to this goal leads through *bhakti* as affectionate relational devotion which by means of the emotion of spiritual love partakes in the eternal *śakti* of bliss and through this connection enables the soul to shake off the snare of the phenomenal world.

The attainment of *bhakti* thus becomes the centre of the spiritual path, and this is where we get to the role of practice in the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* tradition. Although its doctrine allows for the possibility of attaining *bhakti* by sheer grace of Kṛṣṇa, the theologians observe that such cases are rare and stress the importance of *bhakti sādhana*, the purposeful spiritual endeavour seeking to obtain the desired spiritual emotions.¹⁶

The *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* theologians developed a sophisticated framework of imagery and ritual practice, the purpose of which is to direct every single thought and feeling of a practitioner to the constant recollection of the world of Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*.¹⁷ For the meditation practice, which is performed by means of imagination in the identity of an inhabitant of Kṛṣṇa's eternal world, the visualised actions, their imaginative surroundings and the corresponding time periods are divided according to the rules based on particular episodes from the *Vaiṣṇava* mythology (thus, for example the morning is the time when Rādhā performs the sun worship, while the night is the time of her love union with Kṛṣṇa¹⁸). Thus, the whole practice is closely connected to the mythical tradition which elaborates the stories of Kṛṣṇa's birth and boyhood, his amorous sports with *gopīs* (milkmaids) in the mythical forests of Braj and his heroic slaying of demons. As such, for *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas* the stories mean both an account of actual events which took place in an actual geographic location of Mathura south of Delhi and a description of the eternal time-less *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa with his perfected *bhaktas*.

These patterns lie at the base of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* aesthetics and are closely followed by the outward actions expressed chiefly in tending practices centred upon the temple idol. The reminders of the eternal *līlā* become all-permeating, and in this manner the implicit patterns constantly and almost sub-consciously affect even those practitioners who do not adopt the path of meditative practice and remain on the path of ritual acts and injunctions, or those who are not familiar with the meanings ascribed to the rites by theologians. Hence the ritual practice of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* constitutes an integral part of a complex and relatively consistent system of myth, theology,

¹⁵ For the relations between the levels of existence see "Figure 1. The Three Śaktis of Kṛṣṇa" in Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p. 59.

¹⁶ Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 1.3.6. [*The Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu of Rūpa Gosvāmin*, with trans. by D. L. Haberman, New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts / Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2003, p. 99.]

¹⁷ The extensive classification of the rules and methods has been accomplished by Rūpa Gosvāmin in his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* and in the complementary work *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi*.

¹⁸ See "Figure 4. The Eight Periods of the Vraja-līlā" in Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p. 127.

religious discipline and aesthetics which, in contrast to many non-*bhakti* schools, is considered purposeful and intentional by the tradition itself and which requires genuine affectionate involvement with the prescribed acts.

3.2 The Place and Its History¹⁹

The temple, in which the field-research has been conducted, is known under the name 'Śrī śrī Gaurāṅga mandir' (lit. 'The Śrī Gaurāṅga's Temple'; Gaurāṅga is a name of Caitanya) and it is located in the area of a former refugee colony in south Kolkata, West Bengal. The site was founded in 1952, but its story stretches much further both in time and in space. The history begins in the village of Kṛṣṇapur in the Kumilla district in East Bengal (present-day Bangladesh) and it is connected with a local *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple dedicated to Śrī Gopāl (Kṛṣṇa). At the beginning of the 20th century, a son of the family, which was in charge of *sebapūja* (temple service and worship) in the temple, was married to Mādhabī Debī, who began to practice her spiritual endeavour in the temple as a 'lay person' ('*saṃsāre theke*' or 'from the world', that is as a person living with her family without ascetic vows). Soon she became known as the local *gurumā* (female spiritual preceptor) and gathered a group of *bhaktas* (devotees) around herself. The place attracted local devotees, but during the great annual celebrations also many people from Kolkata and from the East Bengal capital, Dhaka. The journey to Kṛṣṇapur was long and strenuous, and the *bhaktas* eventually suggested the *gurumā* to move to the proximity of Dhaka so that they could visit her more often. At first she refused the idea and wished to stay in Kṛṣṇapur, but finally agreed on the insistence of her devotees, and moved to a Dhaka house belonging to one of the *bhaktas*, Abināś Sen, to search for a site of the new *āśram*. After some time, they managed to find a suitable parcel of land in Tējgao not far from Dhaka. The site was covered with flower and fruit trees and the extent of the area was almost 8 bighas (that is over 1 hectare; 1 bigha=20 kathas, 1 katha=720 sq ft). *Gurumā* claimed the place to be an auspicious site of a tomb of a *pīr* (Muslim 'saint') and agreed with its purchasing. The *bhaktas* cleared the jungle on the site the same day they arrived and they performed *pūja* and *kīrtan* at the foot of a tree. The image of Gopāl had remained in the original Kṛṣṇapur temple, so the *sebapūja* at the new site was provisionally performed by the *bhaktas* in front of a *Gopāler paṭ* (religious scroll-painting).

After that, *gurumā* returned to her home in Kṛṣṇapur, and the *bhaktas* began to gather finances for purchasing the land and for construction of the new temple. The works on the *āśram* were finished around 1930 and the expenses exceeded 6 000 rupees. *Gurumā* moved to the Tējgao temple with the image of Gopāl and the regular worship was begun. First *āśram* residents were *gurumā* and *sebāit Nityānanda Dās Bābāji*, and some time later also *chaṭamā* ('little *gurumā*' – *gurumā*'s widowed daughter-in-law) with her little son and a daughter moved from Kṛṣṇapur. Soon after that, a nephew of Abināś Sen and his fellow-student began to visit the place and after a pilgrimage to Bṛndāban they decided to become renunciators. In 1932 they were admitted to the *āśram* by *gurumā* and under new names Gaurdās and Purīdās began to partake on the temple *seba*.

¹⁹ This section is based on an unpublished essay "Manuṣer jībane..." by D. R. Sengupta, which had been compiled mainly from the accounts of the *sebāit* Gaurdās Bābāji.

The *āśram* grew in fame and around 1933–1934 *gurumā* suggested to install new temple images of Kṛṣṇa in the form of Madanmohan (lit. ‘one who infatuates even the god of love Madan’) with Rādhā and Gaurāṅga with Nitāi in the form of two companions immersed in singing *kīrtans* (lit. ‘*kīrtaner bhābsamṛddha rūp*’). The images were made of *aṣṭadhātu* (an alloy consisting of eight metals, namely gold, silver, copper, bronze, bell-metal, zinc, lead and iron) by a single artist from Citpur in Kolkata and transferred to Tējgao first on a steamer and than on a horse-drawn wagon. In the first year the images of Gaurāṅga and Nitāi were installed, whereas the installation of the other two images was delayed for one year due to manufacturing complications. The *aṣṭadhātu* images as well as the fame of *gurumā* began to attract more and more people and the temple became to be known under the name ‘Sonār Gaurāṅgamandir’ (The Temple of Golden Gaurāṅga) or ‘Rādhākṛṣṇa-Rādhāmadanmohan mandir’. After some time, however, *gurumā* got ill with cancer and her health began to get worse rapidly. One day she called her devotees and announced she would die the next Sunday. According to the accounts of *bhaktas* this actually happened, and *gurumā* died on Sunday 19th *agrahāyaṇ* 1350 of Bengali calendar (that is in December 1943).

After the partition of India (15th August 1947) many people were forced to leave their homes due to clashes between Hindus and Muslims and millions of refugees had to flee over the border between East and West Bengal in both directions. The impact of these painful events touched also the residents of the Tējgao temple. In 1950 the authorities of the region decided that the parcel must be handed over to the government for the sake of industrial development. The *bābājis* of the temple learned about it in advance and concealed the temple images in the wells of the temple garden. The following night the residents had to leave after a warning from a Muslim military officer and the temple was looted by rioters. The military officer promised to take care for the temple residents, so they could move to a local factory, which, however, was already full of other refugees, and the residents still did not feel secure. After an appeal to the Indian High Commissioner’s Office they were at their own wish moved by plane to Kolkata and they settled down in Dover Lane in a flat of a *bhakta* who was connected with the Tējgao *āśram*.

After some time the former temple residents decided to retrieve the lost images, so they asked a friend who went on a business trip to Dhaka to visit the site of the Tējgao *āśram*. When he arrived to search the well in the temple garden, the images could not be found. The military officer, who had helped the refugees escape from Tējgao, traced the statues of Gaurāṅga and Nitāi to some local rascals, returned them to *bhaktas* and arranged their transport to Kolkata. The images of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, however, seemed to have been lost. After a few months, the *sebāits* of the temple, Gaurdās and Purīdās, decided to go back to Tējgao to search the place thoroughly, and eventually they managed to find the remaining images in another well of the garden. These two statues were also moved to Kolkata and installed in the flat on Dover Lane, where the former temple residents continued the worship.

Soon the *bhaktas* began to consider founding a new regular site of worship for the images and to re-establish the *āśram*. They spend a few months searching for a

suitable place and finally decided to purchase a stretch of land in the area of refugee colonies in south Kolkata inhabited mostly by East Bengali population. The extent of the parcel was about 11 kathas (almost 900 sq m) and it was circumscribed by roads from the north, east and south. The piece of land was covered with trees, bushes, seasonal plants and an oca field and its southern part had been turned into a small pond. This time the finances for the construction of the temple were provided partly by the government of East Pakistan (present day Bangladesh) in a compensation for the loss of the Tējgao *āśram* and by the families of *bhaktas*. The works on the temple buildings were finished in 1952, and on the eighth day of the great autumn festival of the Goddess Durgā the temple images were brought to the new *āśram* from Dover Lane and installed by the *sebāits*.



P.2 Temple Verandah

The outer form of the *āśram* remained more or less unchanged until now (see the ground-plan) except for some less significant changes. Originally the temple verandah over the platform in front of the inner temple was smaller and raised only on concrete pillars, later it was extended by a tin roof on four steel pillars to cover most of the front part of temple garden. The pond, which was used by local people for activities like fishing or bathing and as such was a cause of many inconveniences to the temple residents, was filled up with earth. The flat piece of land, however, attracted the attention of children, who kept using it as a play-ground, so eventually a high brick wall with a small gate close to the verandah was erected around the temple garden. A plate carrying the name of the temple 'Śrī śrī Gaurāṅga mandir' was placed over the gate and some time later the road leading around the site was given its name. A couple of years ago, a large entrance gate was built in the southern part of the temple wall and visually opened the space of the temple out to the street. Apart from that, after the death of the original temple residents four *samādhi bedis* (tombs) were installed next to the eastern entrance gate.



P.3. Surroundings of the Temple

The refugee colony surrounding the site of the temple was set up after the partition of India in a sparsely inhabited area south of Kolkata covered with jungle and ponds without any urban planning, and the arrangement of the streets and houses in the original built-up area still bears the signs of such settlement process. In the meantime, however, the area of the former refugee colony has changed considerably due to the recent socio-cultural development of south Kolkata, which has been followed by rapid housing development. The peaceful neighbourhood of the temple has changed into a busy Kolkata suburb lying only a few miles from the Tollygunj metro station and the *āśram* became somewhat drowned in the midst of quickly growing high-rise buildings. These changes meant a considerable danger for the future of the temple, so in 1995 the people connected with the place decided to found a trust board comprising of nine members through the Registered Trust Deed to make sure that no part of the temple will be changed into a building plot. Recently the Trust Board together with an executive committee consisting of 25 members is in charge of the administration and management of the activities in the *āśram*.

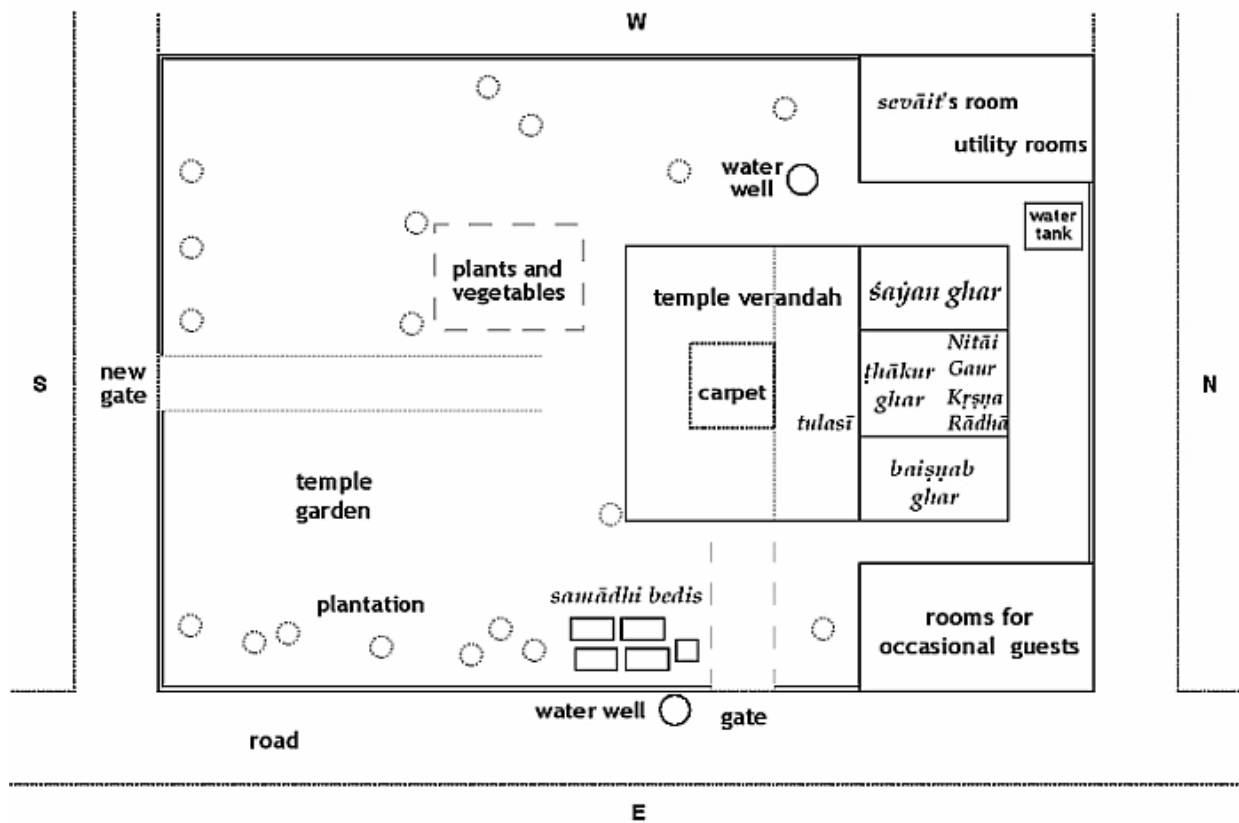
3.3 The Space and Its Objects

The *āśram* is built on an 11 katha (almost 900 sq. m) oblong plot following the east-west and north-south directions. The southern part is covered with trees and plantation to form a temple garden, whereas the *āśram* buildings are situated on the northern side. The plot is surrounded by a high brick wall built many years ago to isolate the space of the *āśram* from the hubbub of the street (the road encircles the area from the north, east and south). There is a small latticed entrance gate in the northern part of the eastern wall and a large barred gate on the southern side of the plot facing the main temple building, which was built only a couple of years ago.



P.4 Eastern Gate with Tube Well

The arrangement of the space of a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple is usually carefully considered by *sebāits* during its construction. According to the accounts of informants, the entrance path to a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple traditionally should not be located on the west side of the area. Nowadays, however, the rules are not followed so strictly and it is possible to find sites with various types of spatial orientation, although the east-west north-south orientation of the plot is usually retained.



P.5 Ground-plan: Horizontal Arrangement of the Space in the Temple

The main temple building is located in the middle of the northern part of the plot to face the south direction. It consists of a low oblong brick-built house divided by two separating walls not reaching to the top of the structure into three more or less equally sized rooms constituting the space of the inner temple.



P.6 Temple Verandah and the Inner Temple

The tin roof of the structure is raised on four concrete pillars to form a gable with the name 'Śrī śrī Gaurāṅga mandir' written over the temple verandah, which is further extended to the south by a steel construction resting on four steel pillars. The northern section of the verandah is used for sitting during the *pāṭh* and *kīrtan*, and for this purpose it is usually covered with a carpet and next to one of the concrete pillars a low

bench is placed. There is one electric fan over the front middle part of the temple veranda for fanning the *bhaktas* and another one in the inner temple for cooling the deities. The whole surface of the temple verandah is raised on a concrete platform separating the temple structure from the rest of the space of the temple garden. In the surface of the concrete pillars and in the floor of the platform there are commemorative plaques the names of *bhaktas* who have supported the temple.

The other buildings of the *āśram* including the utility rooms and the rooms for *sebāits*, are situated on the eastern and western side of the main building to form a narrow corridor which leads along the back wall and encircles the inner temple from three sides.



P.7 Back Corridor

The house on the western side includes a kitchen and a small room for present-day temple residents, whereas the oblong house on the eastern side with windows to the street, where the temple *sebāits* used to live, is recently left unoccupied as a shelter for occasional guests. On the left side of the back corridor next to the kitchen, there is a water tank, a place for washing the dishes, and an earthen oven (*unun*), which has been, however, substituted for a gas cooker in the kitchen. A bucket with water and a plastic cup is usually placed under the western edge of the verandah platform, so that the incomers could wash their hands and feet before entering the space in front of the inner temple.

The temple garden is covered with trees and plants like mango tree (*ām*; *Magnifera indica*), jackfruit tree (*kāthal*; *Artocarpus heterophyllus*), coconut palm (*narkel gāch*; *Cocos nucifera*), areca palm (*supari gāch*; *Areca catechu*) eucalyptus, mahogany, cape jasmine (*gandharāj*; *Gardenia jasminoides*), spanish cherry (*bakul*; *Mimusops elengi*) Chinese box tree (*kāminī*; *Murraya paniculata*), *mādhālatā* (*Hiptage benghalensis*), *tulasī* plants (basil tree, *Ocimum sanctum*) and other kinds of trees and herbs.



P.8 Temple Garden with the Southern Gate

As mentioned above, a pond used to be situated in the northern part of the garden between the edge of the veranda and a line marked by the coconut palm, but it was filled up with earth some twenty years ago in order to reduce the inconveniences caused by the activities taking place around it. A few square meters of the flat ground were turned into a patch planted with vegetables and seasonal flower plants. Earthen pots with oleander trees or *tulasī* plants are usually placed in the northern part of the garden or arranged to form a fake path leading visually from the central room of the inner temple to the large gate on the southern side.



P.9 Flower and Vegetable Patch

At the time of the evening *pāṭh*, one of the potted *tulasī* plants is taken out to be worshipped as *tulasīdebī* and placed in the middle of the space in front of the central room, its pot is covered with a piece of coloured cloth, and later in the evening it is shifted to the right side of the entrance to the inner temple before the rite of *ārati*. The water supply is ensured from a tube well situated on the western side of the garden next to the verandah, and there is also another well used mostly by the people from the neighbourhood which is located outside the garden next to the small entrance gate.

South of the entrance gate there is a *tulasīmañca* (a platform with a *tulasī* plant which receives particular attention in worship) and four *samādhi bedis* or *samādhi*

phalaks (tombs) dedicated to three *sebāits* of the temple, namely to Gaurdās Bābāji, Purīdās Bābāji, and Nityānanda Dās Bābāji, and to Abinās Sen, who was a maternal uncle of Gaurdās and a faithful disciple of the revered *gurumā* Mādhabī Debī. Purīdās, Nityānanda Dās, and Abinās Sen, who died earlier, were buried without cremation in *samādhis* on the temple garden, but in the case of Gaurdās Bābāji, who died in 2000, the municipal corporation would not allow to keep the uncremated body anywhere in the area of the temple, so his tomb contains only the *nabhikuṇḍal* (the part of the body around the umbilical cavity which remains unburnt after cremation).



P.10 *Samādhi Bedis*

The inner room of the temple is usually referred to as *thākur ghar*, *thākurer mandir*, metaphorically as *bhagabāner bāri* (lit. 'the house of God') or simply as *mandir*. These terms are used also for the central room of the inner temple, where the images of the deities are installed, while the room on the western side is called *śāyan ghar* or *śāyan mandir* (lit. a 'bedchamber' for the night rest of the deities), and the room on the eastern side, where a photography of *gurumā* Mādhabī Debī is placed, is called *baiṣṇab ghar*, *baiṣṇaber mandir* or *gurudeber mandir* (i.e. 'temple of *Vaiṣṇavas*' or 'temple of *guru*').



P.11 *Baiṣṇab Ghar* with the Image of *Gurumā*

The rooms are connected by narrow passages in the partition walls, and each of them has its own entrance door with wooden leaves and an iron grille. The entrance to the central room is wider than the other two in order to allow a good view of the temple images, which are placed above the eye-level in two couples facing the south direction on two raised wooden frames (*siṃhāsans* or 'thrones') at the northern wall of the inner temple.



P.12 Space of the Inner Temple

The image of Rādhā stands on the eastern side, at her right hand there is an image of Kṛṣṇa, at Kṛṣṇa's right hand there is Gaurāṅga, and at Gaurāṅga's right hand there is an image of Nītāi. According to the accounts of informants, this arrangement is prescribed by the tradition and the images should always face south. In the central *thākur ghar*, there is also an image of child-Kṛṣṇa with a ball of butter in his hand at the feet of the large images of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā (this representation refers to the famous story about Kṛṣṇa stealing butter in his childhood in order to comfort his foster-mother by behaving as an ordinary boy). According to the informants, the worship in the central room is offered also to a small figure of Śiva which was brought to the temple a year ago (normally, Śiva is not installed in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava temples, but when someone brings his image to the temple, it may be kept and receive worship along with the Vaiṣṇava deities). There is an *ālpānā* (a white ornamental floor painting) in the middle of the floor, which was painted by Gaurdās Bābāji at the time of the installation of the images, and the room is equipped with all necessary objects used for the acts of worship performed in the inner temple. A large clock, an important item in a temple organized according to a prescribed time pattern, is hung on the back wall in the inner temple between the *siṃhāsans*. When the wooden door of the central room is open, a box for contributions from *bhaktas* is placed at the inner right side of

the entrance, but when the wooden leaves are shut, the box must be removed. There is a coloured picture of baby-Kṛṣṇa outside on the wall of the inner temple on the right and a blackboard used for announcing the actual date and festival. Next to the door, there are also black and white photographs of the original Tējgāo temple.

The *śāyan ghar* for the night rest of the deities is equipped with two small wooden beds and objects necessary for the service to the deities. In the centre of the *baiṇḍāb ghar*, there is a large photograph of *gurumā* and the room contains a frame of a wooden bed which according to some informants was actually used by people living in the *ghar*. The grill of the *baiṣṇab ghar* is normally locked and it is opened only under specific circumstances.

3.4 Emplacements, Gestures, and Their Time Pattern

To deal with the notion of emplacement it is possible to outline a selection of spatially relevant ideas, meanings and gestures which along with the specific time pattern constitute the conceptual image of a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple. We can begin with the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* tendency to 'emplace' the actual place of ritual on the conceptual map of specific sacred geography connected with the area of Indian sub-continent. The site of a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple is organized according to the main points of compass with the emphasis on the eastern direction, hence in Gaurāṅga mandir, the celestial path of the sun along with the name of the Sun-deity (Sūryadeb) is frequently referred to both in some ritual acts and in the accounts of practitioners. The south direction, then, is traditionally perceived as an entrance point of malign powers and spirits, which may lie in the basis of the custom to keep the southern gate of Gaurāṅga mandir closed due to inauspicious events connected with its construction and open it only for utility reasons during the *dol* celebration, when several hundred devotees gather in the temple garden and when the small eastern gate would not be sufficient.

The east-west north-south orientation of the temple pivots the place into the notional geography of Bengali *Vaiṣṇavism*. It is worth mentioning that when asked about the spatial orientation of the inner room one of the informants chanted a line "pūrbe bande gaṅgālāy, uttarete himālāy, dakṣinete ācchen jagannāth-ṭhākur, paścimete bande kariba gayā-gadādhara" which invokes the four main points of compass and its respective deities, namely Gaṅgā in the east, the deities residing in Himalay in the north, Jagannāth as a form of Viṣṇu which is worshipped in the city of Puri in Orissa in the south, where Caitanya spent a large part of his life, and Viṣṇu connected under the appellation Gadādhara with the city of Gaya in Bihar, west of Bengal. Apart from that, a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple with its outer form and the time structure, which strictly follows the pattern of a day in the land of Kṛṣṇa's plays, is often sensed as a condensed reflection of the world of mythical Bṛndāban, and as such it is directly related to the geographic and conceptual centre of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* world.

This connection becomes actual chiefly in beliefs concerning the temple images which constitute the focus of ritual life of the temple. The material form of the image is called *mūrti* ('statue', 'figure'), but when the rites of installation have been performed the image itself is always referred to as *bigraha* ('image') or more colloquially as *ṭhākur* ('godhead'). The deities are thought to have come from their eternal abode in Bṛndāban to accept the worship out of their mercy to *bhaktas*, and as such they are supposed to be actually present in the statues. Thus, the *mūrti* becomes literally a 'body' of the deity and its true live image in this world. According to *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas*, however, the deity will not reside in an image which has been touched by an impure or incompetent person or defiled in some other way, and in the case of such mistreatment the image will turn to a mere *mūrti* (so when the informants from Gaurāṅga mandir were telling a story about an unwelcome guest, who had falsely accused them of being unfit to carry out the acts of *seba*, they said literally "o baleche ye prān nāi, Bṛndābane cale gecche; ekhāne ye ṭhākur nāi, khāli mūrti dāriye ācche", that is "he said, that there is no 'breath' [or 'life' of the images], that it had gone back to

Bṛndāban; that there were no deities, but mere empty statues were standing here”). The belief in the actual presence of the deities lies in the basis of the constant and anxiously careful involvement with the images. The deities are supposed to actually reside in the temple as if it was their house and the acts of *seba* must be performed as if it was a service to an actually present person, and for this reason the *āśram* must be equipped with everything necessary for satisfying everyday needs of the deities. This is e.g. the reason why one entire room of the inner temple building must be reserved as a *śayan ghar* (bedchamber) for the night rest of the deities, or why a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple could not operate without a kitchen. This concept constitutes also the ground of the claims of the informants that the simple offerings and modest appearance of Gaurāṅga mandir with its small ground-floor houses is due to the fact that the temple pays special respect to the unconcerned ascetics Gaurāṅga and Nitāi (the *bhaktas* sometimes explicitly and literally say that “mandirer jami Gaurer jami” or that the site of the temple is Gaurāṅga’s land) who, as *sannyāsīs* (renouncers), would not appreciate a large multi-storey house with rich offerings.

The arrangement of the images in the inner temple is not haphazard, but strictly prescribed by the theologically informed rules of the tradition. Thus in a temple where images of Kṛṣṇa with his consort Rādhā and Gaurāṅga with his companion Nitāi are installed, as it is the case in Gaurāṅga mandir, Kṛṣṇa stands at the right hand of Rādhā, Gaurāṅga stands at the right hand of Kṛṣṇa and Nitāi stands at the right hand of Gaurāṅga, as we have seen in the previous section. The reason for such ordering lies in the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* doctrine and mythology, because, iconographically, the position at the right hand of someone always means a position of a servant, and in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* a deity always lowers out of mercy and humility. In this manner, Kṛṣṇa, who in fact is considered the supreme Lord and the source of the universe, stands in the position of a servant towards Rādhā, who in fact is considered to be his power *śakti* and who herself claims to belong to him as a slave in the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* mythical narratives. Gaurāṅga, who is the joined incarnation of the divine couple in one body and who came in the human form of a perfect *bhakta*, gives himself as a servant to Kṛṣṇa in the divine play. And Nitāi, who – while being a historical personage and a companion of Caitanya – is thought to be the ‘second body’ of his Lord and a divine gateway to his mercy, stands in the subordinate position, although he was more than ten years older than Gaurāṅga, and as such could have enjoyed the position of a superior older brother. Such spatial arrangement with its interpretation can be seen as a specific kind of material expression of the basic ideas about the merciful character of the Supreme Being expressed in connection with the nature of his relation to the devotees.

If some revered *Vaiṣṇava* personages (*‘mahābhaiṣṇabs’*, ‘great *Vaiṣṇavas*’) are worshipped in a temple along with the deities (be it characters from *Vaiṣṇava* epics like for example Arjuna, the hero of the *Mahābhārata* epic, or some later historical *Vaiṣṇava* ‘saints’), their images can never be installed in the same room as the deities and a special *baiṣṇab ghar* must be reserved for them. Such arrangement is due to the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* doctrine which claims that although Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Lord is willing to pay homage to his devotee (as it is depicted e.g. in a story from *Mahābhārata*

where Kṛṣṇa as a royal charioteer bowed before the king Judhiṣṭhira), the devotee is still a mere human being fully contingent upon the Supreme Lord which is bound to pay respect to the deities and ask for their blessing (thus when the offerings are presented in the inner temple in front of the temple images the whole meal must be left in the central *ṭhākur ghar*, and only when it has been blessed by the sight of the deities, a portion may be placed in front of the images of 'human *Vaiṣṇavas*' in the *baiṣṇab ghar*, because as Kṛṣṇa's devotees they receive the same meal blessed by the deities as the *bhaktas* partaking on the offerings). In Gaurāṅga mandir, the *baiṣṇab ghar* is reserved chiefly for the worship of *gurumā* Mādhavī Debī whose image is installed in the form of a large black and white photograph at the back wall of the room.

As we have seen, a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple is supposed to be an actual dwelling of the deities, and as such it is divided into the space of the temple itself and into the utility section. In Gaurāṅga mandir the space where the worship takes place and where the *bhaktas* gather is marked by the raised concrete platform of the covered verandah in front of the inner temple. The side buildings and the back corridor include a kitchen, a water tank and a room for those who perform the service in the temple. This division is implicitly present, among others, in the different ways the incomers walk around the main temple building on different circumstances. When someone comes to take part on the *kīrtan*, to listen to the discussion of sacred scriptures or to receive *darśan* (blessing by the sight of the deities), or when someone is to perform the acts of *seba* connected with the inner temple, they will step on the platform of the verandah, whereas in the case of some administrative or other practical dealings the visitor will be most likely led straight to the back corridor without crossing the space in front of the temple images. Also when someone needs to purify himself by washing his hands and feet before saluting the deities, he will not enter the verandah, but will walk around its front part to the bucket of water which is for these purposes prepared at the pillar on the western edge of the platform. On entering the temple verandah, everybody is supposed to take off their shoes as in any other Indian temple. *Bhaktas* usually do not walk into the temple garden, and the temple residents normally enter the space only when they need to pick flowers for worship, to tend the garden plants or to do some other work.

On entering the space in front of the images or even on catching a glimpse of the inner temple from the outside through the temple gate, a devotee is supposed to salute the deities in the gesture of *praṇām* which is usually translated as 'prostration' or 'taking one's dust'. When *praṇām* is performed to an actual revered person (e.g. one's *guru*), it usually takes the form of kneeling or deep bowing in front of the person with touching first his or her feet with the right hand, and then touching one's head (on Indian subcontinent, it is considered very offensive to touch someone with the foot or leg, so when a person places the 'dust' from someone's feet on the head, it expresses deep humility). However, especially when performed to the images of deities or other revered objects, *praṇām* can take various forms. A devotee may salute the deity with *ṣaṣṭāṅga-* or *aṣṭāṅgapraṇām* ('*praṇām* of six/eight limbs'; depends on the particular classification of the parts of the body), which is a full prostration on the ground with

one's eyes half closed and arms stretched forwards,²⁰ bow down in *pañcāṅgapraṇām* ('*praṇām* of five limbs'), which means kneeling with one's head and hands on the ground,²¹ touch the spot between the eyes with the thumbs of joined hands, or simply join the hands in front of his or her chests (as in the ordinary Bengali salutation called *namaskār*).²²



P.13 *Praṇām* at the End of the Rite of *Ārati*

The gesture of full *ṣaṣṭāṅgapraṇām* is compulsory only at certain prescribed moments during the rites in the inner temple, otherwise it is not so frequent, and most women usually do not perform it at all. When *ṣaṣṭāṅga-* or *pañcāṅgapraṇām* is done in front of the temple images, the left side of the body should be turned to the inner temple; the images should always face the south direction, so the head of the devotee is turned to the place where the sun rises (the custom to keep this position, however, is not followed too strictly).

The devotees are more or less free to chose the actual form and position of the salutation, and in this way they may express their reverence not only in front of the images of the deities, but also in front of the *baiṣṇab ghar*, at the *samādhi bedis* (tombs) or at the *tulasī* plant. In Gaurāṅga mandir the devotees often perform many small ritual acts like 'taking the dust' from various objects (e.g. the threshold of the inner temple, the stool with the book during the time of reading and discussion of the scriptures, musical instruments during *kīrtans*) or placing the head on various places (e.g. on the pillar of the temple).²³ Also during the rite of *parikramaṇ*, when the temple is circumambulated three times, the devotees always halt in salutation every time, they walk past the images, and when walking through the back corridor some of them will place the forehead on the spot on the back wall of the inner temple, behind which the images of the deities are installed.

²⁰ See the video file 27 (further only 'VF').

²¹ See VF 15.

²² See VF 7.

²³ See VF 3.

One of the most obvious emplacements is, however, the restriction of the access to the inner temple. Only a person, who meets certain characteristics (i.e. who is a *Vaiṣṇava*, initiated, versed in the ritual practice, but, within Bengali *Vaiṣṇavism*, not necessarily of the Brahman caste) and who is entitled to perform the acts of *seba* in the inner temple, may enter the space and touch the temple images and objects directly used in worship.



P.14 Temple Servants: *Bigrahasebak* with His Mother

Some acts and tending practices may be performed both by a man and by a woman (e.g. preparing the objects for the rite of *ārati* or performing the evening incense offering), but the actual ritual service may be conducted only by a man, whereas women are rather in charge of activities like cooking or preparing the clothes for the images, which take place outside the inner temple (so in the case of Gaurāṅga mandir the whole *seba* is nowadays carried out by one man and his mother, who are the only permanent residents of the temple). A person responsible for the rituals in the inner temple is referred to as *bigrahasebak* (lit. 'servant of temple images'; *bigraha* = image, *sebak* = servant) and sometimes colloquially addressed as *thākurmaśāi* (or, shortly, as *thākur*). The people who are not entitled to perform the acts of worship of the temple images are not supposed to cross the threshold of the inner temple, and they may enter only on special permission to do some work which could not be performed by the regular servants (in Gaurāṅga mandir this situation occurred e.g. when the heavy images had to be lifted from the wooden thrones so that the inner room could be cleaned and repaired). In such case, the person entering the temple must purify himself with a bath and take fresh clothes.

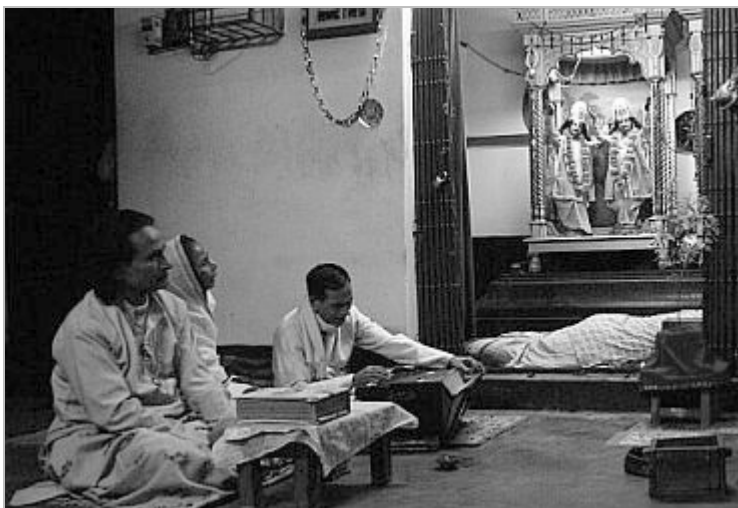
Another rule, which restricts the movement of the devotees through the space of the temple, is the pan-Indian custom that women and men should sit or stand

separately in public places. Where one sits means who one is, so in Gaurāṅga mandir women sit on the red carpet in the middle of the temple verandah or on stools and benches around it (or sometimes a woman may chose to sit at the feet of the *guru*), whereas men usually sit on stools behind it or on a carpet east of the entrance into the *thākur ghar*, and they dare to shift to the middle part only when there is no one left on the carpet (and when a stranger, who is unaware of the custom, sits next to the women, he may be asked gently to shift elsewhere).



P.15 Carpets for Sitting

There is also a special place reserved for the *paṭhak* (person who reads and explains the scriptures during the evening *paṭh*), which is left empty when there is no one to read, and right next to it a place where the local *guru* is ushered, when someone else has come to read and explain the sacred texts.²⁴



P.16 *Guru's* and *Paṭhak's* Place

All these explicitly or implicitly realized concepts, customs and ideas are embedded in a specific temporal frame modelled on the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* mythology.

²⁴ See VF 16.

The key text, which constitutes the base of the pattern of the day in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple, is an excerpt of *Govindalīlāmṛta* by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Gosvāmin comprising of eight strophes depicting *aṣṭakālyanityalīlā* ('eternal *līlā* of eight periods'), that is the activities of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in eight periods of day as envisioned by the author in meditation.²⁵ The day in mythical Bṛndāban begins with the first period of time before the dawning when the divine lovers wake up together after a night spent in the forest and separate to return to their homes. The second period after the sunrise is the time when Rādhā after finishing her ablutions is called to Kṛṣṇa's house by his mother to prepare the meal for him. Kṛṣṇa wakes up, milks the cows, takes his bath and eats his breakfast with his cowherd friends. In the third period before the noon, Kṛṣṇa goes to forest with cows followed by his cowherd friends, while Rādhā is sent to perform the Sun worship, and eventually they meet at the lake Rādhakuṇḍa. The fourth period around midday is the time when the divine couple engages in love-play, roams the forests, and plays various sports with their friends. In the fifth period in the afternoon, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa after returning to their homes and having afternoon rest take a bath and dress new clothes. The sixth period in the early evening is the time when Rādhā partakes of the remainder of the food earlier tasted by Kṛṣṇa, which was brought to her home by a friend, while Kṛṣṇa milks the cows and takes his meals. In the seventh period after sunset, Rādhā prepares for the night adventures in forest and retires to a bower in Bṛndāban with a messenger to wait for her lover, while Kṛṣṇa enjoys the company of his cowherd friends, and then quietly leaves his house, when his mother has brought him home and tried to put him to bed. In the eighth period at night, the couple roams the forest singing and dancing with their friends, and later they retire on a bed of flowers in the forest and fall asleep.

The schedule of activities in a temple should follow this mythical frame. Thus in Gaurāṅga mandir, early in the morning (*maṅgal*, 'auspicious hour', after 4 AM) the deities are woken up, hands and feet of the images are washed, and the deities are welcomed and praised in the rite of waving lights in front of the images (*ārati*, *maṅgalārati*). In the morning (*bālyabhog*, after 7 AM), the images are bathed (*snān*) and dressed, the deities are invoked and invited, and their meal is prepared and presented to them. Before the noon, the midday meal is cooked and at midday (*madhyakālin bhog*, 'midday meal') it is presented to deities (*nibedan*). After the meal the midday rest follows, so the door of the inner temple is closed and the fan is switched on. In the afternoon (the time of *baikālik bhog*, 'afternoon meal', around 4 PM), the deities are woken up and offered sweets and fruit. In the evening (*sandhyā*, after 5 PM) the offering of incense is performed and the time of *pāṭh* (reading and discussion of sacred scriptures) and *kīrtan* begins. The evening meal (*sandhyā bhog*) consisting of sweets and fruit is prepared and presented to deities, and after the meal, the deities are again praised with the rite of *ārati*. After the rite *tulasībandanā*, i.e. the

²⁵ Simple English transcription of the text with a gross English translation can be found at <http://www.harekrsna.de/Asta-kaliya-nitya-lila.htm>. For a translation of the whole work see Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Gosvāmī, *Śrī Govinda Līlāmṛta: The Eternal Nectarean Pastimes of Śrī Govinda*, Vrindavan: Rasbihari Lal & Sons, 2000. For a concise diagram of the time frame with respective activities see "Figure 4. The Eight Periods of the Vraja-*līlā*" in Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p. 127.

praise of the basil tree, and the circumambulation of the temple (*parikramaṇ*) is usually performed, *kīrtan* continues, and the *bhaktas* take *prasād* (sanctified meal). About 9 PM *kīrtan* ends and the temple is closed so that the deities could retire to take their night rest (*śāyan*). This time arrangement inevitably affects all participants and implicitly communicates the mythological background even to those practitioners who are not familiar with the mythical imagery.

On the level of monthly temporal pattern, the life in the temple follows typical Indian lunar calendar, and the time is always divided into the dark and light fortnight with fasting on *ekādasī* day. The list of annual feasts and celebrations follows the prescribed *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* calendar (although the emphasis on different festivals may vary in every temple). Gaurāṅga mandir celebrates chiefly the three most important *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* festivals, namely the swing celebration of *jhulan* or *jhulan yātrā* celebration in the month of *āṣāṛ* (June-July), when the deities are pushed on a swing in an cheerful and festive mood, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa janma aṣṭamī* (Kṛṣṇa's birthday) in the month of *bhādra* (August-September), and the spring festival of *dol* or *dol purṇimār din* in the month of *phalgun* (February-March), which in other parts of India is known rather as *holī*. In the first Tējgao temple, the devotees used to celebrate also a whole day *kīrtan* on the 1st *baisākh* (in the middle of April, Bengali New Year's Day), a whole day *kīrtan* on the day of the installation of the temple images, and a whole day *nāmkīrtan* on the eight day of the *Durgāpūjā* festival.

All these conceptions, gestures, meanings, and customs together with the physical ordering of the site and its location on geography constitute the actual field of ritual, where the ritual activities take place.

3.5 The Pattern of Daily Rites and Tending Practices

Most of the daily rites and tending practices in a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple are performed in the inner temple or in its close proximity. The ritual is focused upon the temple images in the central *thākura ghar* and upon the images of *Vaiṣṇava* 'saints' in the *baiṣṇab ghar*, who receive the same worship as the divinities in the central room. As we have seen, *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple is modelled to function as an actual dwelling of the divinities, so the structure of the temple rites follows the pattern of *aṣṭakālyanīlīlā*, the eight-fold vision of the past times of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in mythical Bṛndāban, and the activities in the temple should reflect the activities of the deities in particular periods of the day.

3.5.1 Early Morning (*maṅgal*, after 4 AM)

The day in a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple begins long before the sunrise. Early morning in the temple schedule corresponds to the first period of *aṣṭakālyalīlā*, when Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā wake up together in the forest and hurry to their homes. Before the temple *seba* begins, it is a duty of the *bigrahasebak* to utter the praise of the Sun (sometimes it is said that the sun would not rise if the *sebak* would not utter the praise in the morning) and also to perform *gurubandanā*, the praise of one's *guru* (in Gaurāṅga mandir, *gurubandanā* is usually sung after the morning rite of *ārati* together with the *bhaktas* in the form of a *Vaiṣṇava* song accompanied by drum and other instruments). After that the deities are woken up (lit. '*jāgarita karā*') and the *sebak* washes their hands and their feet (*hastyapādyaprakṣālyā*) with water with *tulasī* leaves (the water used for the rites in the inner room and for *prasād*, the meal offered to the deities and blessed by their sight, should always be prepared in the same way by adding the *tulasī* leaves to the water in some of the brass vessels deposited in the inner temple or in the conch-shell used during the rites).²⁶



P.17 Adding *Tulasī* Leaves into the Water

²⁶ See VF 33.

The early morning is the time when the floor of the temple buildings and the *samādhi bedis* may be sprinkled with water and when the flowers used for the worship and for ornamenting the temple images should be gathered. The flowers should be collected before the sunrise either in the temple garden or at some other place (but not from a tree standing for example near a burning ground), or they may be even bought from a street seller. The flowers fallen on the ground should be avoided and only some specified kinds may be used. The flowers should have a pleasant smell and be preferably of white, yellow, or orange colour, thus in most cases species like *rajanīgandha* (tuberose; *Polianthes tuberosa*), *gandharāj* (cape jasmine; *Gardenia jasminoides*), *gāḍāphul* (marigold; *Tagetes patula*), *mālatī* (jasmine), or lotus are used. Species typical for the *śākta* worship like *jabā* (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*; used in the worship of the goddess Kālī) are prohibited in *Vaiṣṇava* worship (in Gaurāṅga mandir there is one exception from this rule in the case of *ākanda*, crown flower or *Calotropis gigantea*, which has been used as an offering to Śiva since a devotee brought an image of this deity to the temple). However, when flowers with these characteristics are unavailable, the *sebak* may use even flowers which would be otherwise considered unsuitable (e.g. collected from the ground or obtained after the sunrise) in compliance with the ever-present *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* saying that with *śraddhā* (pious devotion) the less binding rules may be transgressed for a good reason (because from the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* point of view the rules were invented to enhance the devotion and not to impede its cultivation).



P.18. Image of Rādhā with Flower

Around 6 AM the *sebak* opens the door of the inner temple and prepares the items necessary for the rite of *ārati* or *maṅgalārati* (see the section on *ārati*) and the rite is performed. In Gaurāṅga mandir the devotees normally do not gather until 7 AM, hence only the people actually residing in the temple come to watch the performance in the inner room and the other devotees usually do not arrive until the time when the rite is already about to end. After *ārati* the deities are left to take a rest for approximately half an hour and the devotees sing *kīrtans* or the *sebak* performs *gurubandanā*, as mentioned above. After the sunrise, the devotees come to the temple to receive *darśan* of the deities, to partake on the *kīrtan*, to bring small offerings of flowers, fruits or some vegetables for *bhog* (the meal eaten by *bhaktas* after it has been

presented to the deities), to take *prasād*,²⁷ which is placed in the form of a cup of sanctified water with *tulasī* leaves and sweets or fruit on a plate placed under a plastic basket next to the entrance of the *śāyan ghar*, to partake on the rite of circumambulation of the temple (*parikramaṇ*) referring to the *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa or perform it individually.



P.19 *Prasād*

3.5.2 Morning (*bālya bhog*, after 7 AM)

The early morning activities pass fluently into the morning *seba* which corresponds to the second period of *aṣṭakālyalīlā* when Rādhā after finishing her ablutions is called to Kṛṣṇa's house by his mother to prepare the meal for him, and Kṛṣṇa wakes up, milks the cows, takes his bath and eats his breakfast with his cowherd friends. In the inner room, the images are bathed (*snān*) and dressed. The water is prepared every morning with the use of camphor, santal paste, *aguru* ('white santal') and the necessary *tulasī* leaves, which are compulsory under any circumstances. For bathing the images water from Ganga may be used, but it may be substituted for any other clean water. In Gaurāṅga mandir, where heavy statues made of *aṣṭadhātu* metal are installed, the images cannot be possibly bathed everyday, so the *bigrahasebak* only wipes their surface with the water and a piece of cloth, and also pours some water over the lips of every image in order to cool the deities on a hot day. According to the informants, on four important annual celebrations (namely on *jhulan yātrā*, *Kṛṣṇa janma aṣṭamī*, *dol* and also on *Nityānanda trayodasī*) the images are bathed with a mixture of the water from Ganga and *pañcagabya* (paste made of five products of cow – milk, butter, curd, urine and cow-dung – used for purification). During the ablutions the clothes and ornaments including e.g. the caps of the images of Gaurāṅga and Nitāi or the Kṛṣṇa's flute are taken off and the door of the temple are closed. After finishing the ablutions the images are dressed and decorated with flowers and ornaments. According to the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* doctrine the deities reside in the temple images as if they were their actual bodies, so the selection of the clothes should correspond to the particular season

²⁷ See VF 7 and 8.

(thus in summer the clothes will be light and simple, whereas in winter the images may be wrapped in warm shawls or even wear woollen caps).



P.20 Images Dressed in Winter Clothes

During the time of ablution of the images, the morning meal for the deities (*bālya bhog*) is being prepared. The offerings in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple are strictly vegetarian, and even items like red lentils, garlic or onion are prohibited. Any meal presented to the deities should include water with leaves of *tulasī*. The morning *bhog* may consist of fruits and sweets, *nakuldānā* (small white sugar candies traditionally used in India as vegetarian offering), puffed rice or anything else which is a usual part of the morning meal in India (but e.g. biscuits are prohibited). In the morning the deities are invoked and invited (*ābāhan*) and the meal is offered in the inner temple in the rite of *nibedan*; the *sebak* performs the rite behind the closed door of the inner temple and accompanies it with ringing of the bell as e.g. in the rite of *ārati* and with uttering the *mantra* given by his *guru* at the moment of initiation (opinions on the use of *mantras* vary considerably in different branches of the tradition, but according to some of the informants from Gaurāṅga mandir this particular *mantra* is said also at any other ritual circumstances where uttering of a *mantra* is prescribed). Before the *seba* any ornaments and other items decorating the images like flower garlands or the Kṛṣṇa's flute, which might cause inconvenience during eating, must be taken off. In Gaurāṅga mandir in which there is both a room for deities and for *Vaiṣṇava* 'saints', the meal is first presented to the deities in the central *ṭhākur ghar* and left there for approximately 15 minutes (during that time the *sebak* may leave the inner temple through the door of the *śayan ghar*). Only when the meal has been blessed by the sight of the deities one portion can be taken to the *baiṣṇab ghar* and offered there in the same rite of *nibedan*. After another 15 minutes the meal is taken out as *prasād*, consecrated food, and shared with the devotees or eaten by the temple residents, who should not eat anything but the consecrated meal. Earlier in the history of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* a belief that the meal is actually eaten by the deities in the inner temple and that the devotees partaking on the *prasād* eat actual remains of food of the deities was prevalent, but nowadays it is usually supposed that the deities enjoy the food by casting their sight on it and the meal is blessed in this manner.

3.5.3 Forenoon

The morning passes into the forenoon which in the eternal *aṣṭakālyalīlā* is the period when Kṛṣṇa goes to the forest with his heard and meets Rādhā who was sent to perform the Sun worship. No specific performances in the inner room are prescribed in the forenoon, and the period is dedicated to preparation of the cooked midday meal (*annabhog*, *madhyakālin bhog* or sometimes *rāja bhog*). As mentioned above, offerings in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple are strictly vegetarian. Apart from meat and fish also onion and garlic is prohibited and only *mug* and *maṭar dāl* (pigeon pea or yellow pea) is allowed. Like in any other Bengali household, the meal should consist of rice (in temple it is called *anna*) and of some other items. A special kind of rice called *gobindabhog* (lit. 'Govinda's – i.e. Kṛṣṇa's – feast'), which the temple residents obtain under allocation from local stores, should be used, and only when the *gobindabhog* is not available some other kind of rice (like e.g. *ātop* which is normally prepared in India for ritual purposes) may be offered. According to the informants from Gaurāṅga mandir, the meal should include 8 kinds of *bhaja* (fried vegetables), 5 kinds of vegetable sauce, lentil sauce, spinach, and also some sweet milk rice or chutney may be added. In practice the temple residents cook what *bhaktas* bring on the particular day, hence some of the items are often omitted. This situation, however, is not perceived as a serious problem by the people performing the temple *seba*. It is explained by the fact that the temple is dedicated foremost to Gaurāṅga, who was an ascetic and as such is not supposed to be greedy of rich and elaborate meals. Thus when 8 kinds of *bhaja* or 5 kinds of vegetable sauce are not available even one kind of *bhaja* and one kind of sauce will do (but at least some *bhaja* and some sauce should be offered). And when some of the prescribed items cannot be obtained at all, it may be substituted by anything else which is available at the moment, because from the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* point of view the deities will accept any offering, which meets the basic characteristics and which is not considered impure, under the condition that it is offered with sincere affection – as one of the informants put it "the Lord does not ask for food, but for love and affection; with devotion even biryani [a kind of non-Bengali rice dish] may be offered."

3.5.4 Midday (*madhyakālin bhog*) and Early Afternoon

After midday the cooked meal is presented to the deities. The flower garlands and ornaments are taken off and the meal with some water with *tulasī* leaves is offered in the rite of *nibedan* in the same pattern as in the morning *bālyā bhog*. After that the meal is taken out from the temple as *prasād* and eaten by the temple residents or shared with the *bhaktas*. In that time the deities are supposed to take the early afternoon rest, so the fan in the inner temple is switched on and the door is closed.

3.5.5 Afternoon (*baikālik bhog*, around 4 PM)

In the afternoon, the deities are woken up from the afternoon rest, ornamented and given flower garlands.



P.21 Images Decorated with Flower Garlands

When taken off, the flower garlands must be kept on the *simhāsan* at the feet of the images, otherwise they cannot be used anymore. When a new garland is offered it is usually done at this time, but also the garland which was worn in the morning may be used. There may be more than one flower garland on one image, but when a devotee brings a new garland to be used in the afternoon, he may ask for the other ones to be removed. In such case the other garlands are kept on the usual place at the feet of the images. A garland which is taken off an image may be later dressed to a *guru* who has been invited to read from the scriptures or to another revered person (in such case it cannot be placed on the images anymore). Before decorating the images with flowers²⁸ the afternoon meal (*baikālik bhog*) consisting of sweets or fruit and water with *tulasī* leaves is offered in the inner temple in *nibedan*.

3.5.6 Evening (*sandhyā*, after 5 PM)

In *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple the evening begins in the time around twilight when in *aṣṭakālyalīlā* Kṛṣṇa enjoys the company of his friends and watches their acrobatic feats, while Rādhā prepares for the night adventures in Bṛndāban. In Gaurāṅga mandir this period begins after 5 PM when the *sebak* unfolds the carpet for sitting, prepares a wooden stool, on which the book used during the evening reading and discussion will be placed, shifts a potted *tulasī* plant into the middle of the space in front of the inner temple, places it on another wooden stool and covers its pot with a piece of cloth.

²⁸ See VF 9 and 13.



P.22 *Tulasī* Plant with the Book

After that the *bigrahasebak* performs a rite which is usually referred to as *sandhyā* (lit. 'evening') and which according to the informants may be performed in any Bengali household (the people usually say '*bārite sandhyā deoyā*', that is 'to give *sandhyā* in the house').²⁹ In Gaurāṅga mandir the rite begins in the inner temple where the *sebak* begins to ring the bell held in the left hand and waves two incense sticks (*dhūp*) held in the right hand in clock-wise circles in front of the images (the *bhaktas* say that the object is '*dekhāno*', that is literally 'shown' to the deities), i.e. in front of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, then in front of Gaurāṅga and Nitāi, and also in front of the small Kṛṣṇa placed on the right *siṃhāsan*, then in front of the small objects placed between the *siṃhāsans*, and finally he shifts to the *baiṣṇab ghar* and waves the stick before the image of *gurumā* Mādhavī Debī.³⁰ After that he stops ringing the bell, leaves it in the temple, comes out with the sticks still held in the right hand and proceeds to the *tulasīmañca* and *samādhi bedis*. There he stops and may raise the incense to the forehead, bow almost to the right angle with hands placed on the stone platform and stick one of the *dhūps* into the earth of the *tulasī* plant. After that he walks around the temple anti-clock wise – that is in the opposite direction that during circumambulation – through the back corridor while still waving the remaining incense stick and finally stops in front of the door of the inner temple and places the *dhūp* into a holder next to the *tulasī* plant placed on the stool in the middle of the space. After coming out of the inner temple the *sebak* is – unlike e.g. during the time of *ārati* – allowed to interrupt the rite, talk to other people or fetch some items used later in the worship from the utility rooms of the temple. At the end of the rite he enters the inner temple again and blows the conch for three times after he has clapped its flat side a few times so that the sound could come out. If there are any devotees present, the women are supposed to answer with a typical high sound called *ulul* and the men may join their hands or bow in the gesture of *praṇām*. Finally the *sebak* lies on the floor in the inner temple with the left side of the body turned to the images in the gesture of *ṣaṣṭāṅgapraṇām* (full

²⁹ See VF 34.

³⁰ See VF 36.

prostration), remains in this position for some time, than raises to the kneeling position with the hands on the ground and finally sits on his heels and touches the ground and his head with his hand a few times.³¹ During the whole rite the door of the temple must be open so that the devotees could see the deities, but the grille may be locked.³² The evening incense offering can be also performed by a woman when necessary (however, a woman would not blow a conch and would not perform the *ṣaṣṭāṅgapraṇām* in front of the images).

In the evening the devotees gather to listen to the discussion of the sacred scriptures and to *kīrtan*,³³ but they may also drop in only for a short while to receive the *darśan* of the deities,³⁴ to take *prasād*,³⁵ to bring some flowers, vegetables or money as a gift to the temple or as an offering to the deities or to bring some sweets and other things to let them bless by the deities. On such circumstances the food is left in the central room for a while in the usual way and after that according to individual wish it may be returned or kept in the temple as the *prasād* for the residents (only when there is a time of fasting in the temple, the giver must wait until the end of the fast, which is usually the other day). The devotees may also bring some other items for blessing – like e.g. a pen-case of a child who is going to sit an exam – and in such case the object will be left at the feet of the deities on a *siṃhāsan* for a while. The devotees are not expected to pay for such service, but it is a custom to leave some small change in the money box on the threshold of the inner temple. The temple residents may dedicate this time to some necessary work around the inner temple or other activities, like e.g. preparing the cotton rolls soaked in oil, which will be lit in the lamp during the rite of *ārati*, by first rolling the pieces of clean cotton to one small jar and than placing some of the prepared rolls to another jar with mustard oil.³⁶



P.23 Evening *Pāth*

³¹ See VF 35.

³² See VF 19 and 20.

³³ See VF 4.

³⁴ See VF 7.

³⁵ See VF 8, 28 and 39.

³⁶ See VF 31 and 32.

In Gaurāṅga mandir twilight is the time of *pāṭh* (lit. 'reading') which usually begins after 5 PM.³⁷ Its commencing may sometimes precede even the moment when the *bigrahasebak* gives *sandhyā* in the temple, but it may be also delayed almost until 6 PM, when the *pāṭhak* (person who specializes in reading and explaining the scriptures) has a duty elsewhere, or when there is no one to read, or deliberately especially in the late autumn months, when there are two many mosquitoes in that area and when it is wise to wait until it gets dark. The *pāṭh* may be performed by the local *guru*,³⁸ or a *pāṭhak* may be invited,³⁹ or if there is no other option, one of the male devotees may be asked to read. The *pāṭh* may take various forms, from simple reading or chanting the text of the scripture by a *bhakta*, an interactive discussion of a topic or a strophe of the scripture led by the *pāṭhak* and shared with the devotees, or a sermon over the scriptures interlaced with *kīrtans* and *nām-kīrtans*, to a narration of *Vaiṣṇava* mythical stories and moral tales with *kīrtan* performed by the local *guru*, who would not be able to read a written text due to his weak eye-sight. However, even if the *pāṭh* is not carried out by reading directly from the scriptures, the book is usually placed in front of the *pāṭhak* on a wooden stool and together with the *tulasī* plant it constitutes the centre of the space in front of the inner temple (so when the readers change during the *pāṭh*, they do not hand the book over among themselves, but shift their position around it). If the temple has invited another *pāṭhak*, but the local *guru* is also present, the *pāṭhak* will sit in front of the stool with the book, while the *guru* will be introduced to sit next to him closer to the entrance of the inner temple.



P.24 Sermon in the Time of the *Pāṭh*

The *pāṭh* may be commenced and finished in various ways more or less according to the preference of the person who is about to read (so a *pāṭhak* may begin the discussion with a long praises and *mantras* in Sanskrit⁴⁰ whereas a devotee who has been asked to read a few strophes from the scriptures will make do with a simple '*jāy guru*'). Usually some of the key text of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* like *Bhagavadgītā*, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* or *Śrīkṛṣṇacaitanyacaritāmṛta* is read (in Gaurāṅga mandir the books

³⁷ See VF 10 and 11.

³⁸ See VF 16.

³⁹ See VF 22.

⁴⁰ See VF 29.

are normally kept on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *siṃhāsan* at the feet of the images and taken out only for the time of *pāṭh*) or the *pāṭhak* may choose for discussion some moral topics from the *śāstras* (Hindu scripts constituting the foundation of the rules of moral conduct). If there is no *pāṭhak* who could give the *pāṭh* and no devotee who would be able and willing to read from the scriptures, the *sebak* may chant some *Vaiṣṇava bandanā* (praise) from a book with accompaniment of drum or the devotees may fill the time with singing some *kīrtans* and other songs.

During the *pāṭh* the *sebak* prepares a bit of clay coloured paste made of white santal – or on rare occasions of petals from the flowers blessed by the contact with the temple images – mixed with water on a small brass plate and, using a piece of cotton or sometimes a marigold blossom, marks the devotees with the typical mark called *tilak* (or colloquially *phōtā*, ‘spot’), which in India is a distinguishing sign of different sects and traditions. *Vaiṣṇavas* normally use white santal for the *tilak* and during *pāṭh* only a simple santal tip on the spot between the eyes is given, but apart from that the mark may take a more elaborate form of clay coloured lines shaped vertically as a horse-shoe painted from the forehead to the nose or sometimes even on the upper side of the arms (while e.g. in *Śaiva* worship the white lines will be horizontal and made with grey ash and the spot between the eyes will be red).



P.25 *Phōtā*



P.26. *Tilak*

When giving the *phōtā*, the *sebak* – or another devotee who has taken charge of the task – always begins from the most revered person, which is usually the local *guru* if he is present, then he proceeds to the *pāṭhak*,⁴¹ then to other male devotees, then he hands the plate over to one of the women who marks his own forehead⁴² and finally the plate is passed among the women who mark themselves (because a woman may give the mark to a man, but not a man to a woman).⁴³ After giving the mark the *sebak* usually bows on his knees with the head on the ground in the gesture of *pañcāṅgapraṇām* and the other person responds usually by joining the hands in front of the chest or the forehead. The *sebak* may also mark the stool of the basil plant or the book which is used during the *pāṭh* (or even sprinkle the book with flower blossoms taken out of the inner temple, if it is not used directly for reading). Usually by the end

⁴¹ See VF 15 and 25.

⁴² See VF 15.

⁴³ See VF 23, 24 and 26.

of the *pāṭh* the *bhaktas* pass among themselves a plate to collect money as the fee for the *pāṭhak*, because in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* there is no institutionalized system of support for the *pāṭhaks* and *gurus* – regardless whether they are under ascetic vows or not – and they must live from the contribution of devotees and disciples.⁴⁴

In Gaurāṅga mandir the *pāṭh* usually ends between 7 and 7:30 PM, but it may be lengthened slightly or it may end earlier (usually the *guru* has the last word in this matter if he is present, but the devotees may sometimes persuade the *pāṭhak* and the *bigrahasebak*, who is about to commence the *ārati* to carry on with the discussion for a while). When the *pāṭh* ends earlier the *bhaktas* with their *guru* usually begin to sing *kīrtans* or *nāmkīrtan*, while the *bigrahasebak* prepares the items used during the *ārati*. As accompaniment of the songs *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* devotees normally play a kind of oval shaped drum with skin on both sides called *mṛdaṅga* or *khol*, harmonium, small cymbals held in both hands with a piece of string (*kartāl*), brass bowl hit with a wooden stick (*kāsar*), and during great celebrations also typical Indian drums called *tablā* and a bamboo flute (*bāsi*) may be used. The drum is normally played by a man, but the cymbals, the bowl or sometimes even the harmonium may be played by a woman as well.⁴⁵



P.27 *Tulasibandana*

The evening *ārati* begins usually immediately after ending of the *pāṭh* and it is marked with the sound of conch-shell, which is blown three times by the *bigrahasebak* in the inner temple (for detailed description of the rite see the section on *ārati*). In Gaurāṅga mandir many of the devotees, who has turned up to listen to the *pāṭh*, leave before the beginning of *ārati*, but those who stay usually take part on the *nāmkīrtan* accompanying the performance in the inner temple. After the end of the celebration the *kīrtan* usually continues and passes into the *tulasibandana* (that is the praise of a *Vaiṣṇava* goddess worshipped in the form of the sacred *tulasī* plant), which is played and sung by the *guru* or – if the *guru* is not present – by the *bigrahasebak*. After the *tulasibandana* the devotees continue the *kīrtan* and at some point they begin *nāmkīrtan* on a tune different from those used during *ārati* and with the exception of

⁴⁴ See VF 5.

⁴⁵ See VF 17 and 18.

the person playing the harmonium they stand up to perform the rite of *parikramaṇ* (circumambulation of the temple) which refers to the mythical dances and sports around Kṛṣṇa.



P.28 *Parikramaṇ*

While singing a *nāmkīrtan* and playing the musical instruments they gather in front of the entrance to the inner temple and after some time they begin to walk or dance around the temple through the back corridor in the clock-wise direction to circumambulate the temple three times. Every time they pass the front side of the temple they salute the images of the deities and the image of the *gurumā* in the side room and also when they pass through the back corridor they place the forehead on the spot on the back wall of the inner temple, behind which the images are installed. When the *guru* is present, the procession is usually led by him, but otherwise there is no custom concerning the succession of the devotees during the circumambulation. The devotees end the rite in front of the entrance to the inner room, where they sing and dance for a while and finally stop the performance with a deep *praṇām* to the deities. This rite is not strictly compulsory, so when there are not enough devotees or when there is a power-cut caused by a storm and the circumambulation in the rain and in the dark could be dangerous it can be omitted. When it is not too late, the *kīrtan* may continue even after the circumambulation.

3.5.7 Night (*śayan*, after 9 PM)

The public activities in Gaurāṅga mandir end usually after 9 PM when the *bhaktas* take *prasād*, make *praṇām* in front of the deities and leave the temple. Having offered the evening meal consisting of sweets or fruit and water with *tulasī* leaves (*sandhyā bhog*) to the deities in the usual way at some point during the evening time, the

bighrasebak begins to prepare the temple images for the night rest. The door of the inner temple is closed, the ornaments and flower garlands decorating the images are taken off (but e.g. the woollen caps dressed in winter are left on the images) and in the side room of the inner temple called *śāyan ghar* (lit. 'bedchamber'), where there are four small wooden beds for the deities, the places for their night rest are prepared. The images are not taken to the other room – because they are too heavy to be lifted by one person – but everything is done as if the deities were actually to spend the night in the *śāyan ghar*. During the hot months a mat is prepared for each deity, while in winter some warmer bedding with a blanket will be used. Also some pillows are prepared, a mosquito net is stretched over each bed, and in winter months the fan in the inner temple is switched off. Finally the *bighrasebak* may leave the inner temple, close the door of the *śāyan ghar* and lock the entrance grille.

3.6. The Rite of *Ārati*

In Gaurāṅga mandir the rite of *ārati* is performed around the break of day (that is approximately after 6:00 AM) and after the sunset (usually between 7 and 7:30 PM). The preparations for *ārati* can on some occasions be made by any temple resident who is entitled to enter the space of the inner temple, but the rite itself is performed by the *bigrahasebak* and it cannot be conducted by a woman. Thus if the *sebak* suddenly falls ill or is unavailable from some other reason, the people who are in charge of the administration of the temple are responsible for finding someone else who meets the prescribed qualities (i.e. who is an initiated *Vaiṣṇava* versed in the ritual practice, but not necessarily of the Brahman caste) and who is able to perform the temple service.

The rite reflects the ancient traditional way of entertaining an honoured royal guest or another revered person. On such occasion e.g. incense, some cool water or new clothes would be offered and the person would be fanned by the servants on a hot day, while during the rite of *ārati* the images are presented (it is said lit. *dekhāna*, 'shown') a lamp with five flames (*pañcapradīp*), an incense stick (*dhūp*), water in a conch-shell (*śaṅkha*), a special piece of cloth (*bastra* or, colloquially, *rumāl*), flowers (*phul*), and finally fanned with a long-haired yak tail (*cāmar*).

Before the beginning of *ārati* the potted *tulasī* plant, which has been placed in the centre of the space in front of the inner temple during the time of *pāṭh*, must be shifted to the right side of the entrance to the inner temple from the outer side either by the *bigrahasebak* or by another person in charge of the temple *seba*.⁴⁶



P.29 Preparation of *Ārati*

The preparation of the rite takes about 10 minutes when the *bigrahasebak* must line up the objects used in the worship on the floor of the inner temple in front of the images. In the confined space of the inner temple, where the rite is repeated every day in the same pattern, it is important for a *sebak* to allocate the position of every item used during the rite precisely, so that he could carry out the prescribed movements without much variation and improvising.⁴⁷ In Gaurāṅga mandir the *bigrahasebak* may prepare the items in a different order every time, but their position and arrangement

⁴⁶ See VF 38

⁴⁷ See VF 29 and 30.

will always be the same (and even in the case that he did not himself prepare the objects for *ārati* and that they are arranged in a slightly different way than usual, he will shift the items to their right place, so that there was not any confusion during the rite itself). The objects are always lined up on the floor of the inner temple according to the order in which they are waved in front of the images, thus the line always begins with *pañcapradīp* followed by an incense stick in a brass holder, a conch-shell with water and *tulasī* leaves resting on a small wooden frame, and a small plate with flower blossoms. Apart from that a small steel cup containing water with *tulasī* leaves and flower petals (e.g. from marigold flowers), which is poured with a small brass spoon on each item before and after its presentation to the images for the sake of purification, is placed in front of the line to the left side from the view of the *bigrahasebak*.⁴⁸ There is also a large steel jug in the middle of the room close to the *ālpanā* ornament painted on the floor, the function of which is to collect the water poured off from the conch-shell during *ārati* so that it would not fall straight on the floor.

The *pañcapradīp* is a lamp formed as a brass holder with five small concave plates, in which five cotton rolls soaked either in oil or in clarified butter are lit. In Gaurāṅga mandir ordinary cotton wool and mustard oil are used. The *bigrahasebak* usually prepares the rolls from a bag of cotton during the time of *pāṭh* and then lets them soak in a plastic jar with oil kept under the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *siṃhāsan*. When preparing *ārati* he takes five rolls out of the jar, wads them so that their upper part formed a wick-like point and then carefully places them on the *pañcapradīp*.⁴⁹ For the offering of *dhūp* two incense sticks are simply taken out from a packet kept in the left corner of the room and placed into a holder behind the *pañcapradīp*. The conch-shell is the same as is used for washing the images and it is usually kept under one of the *siṃhāsans* on a wooden holder. The water – either ordinary or the water from Ganga – is poured from one of the three brass vessels stacked up on each other in the corner of the room and some *tulasī* leaves are added to purify the water (during this act the *bigrahasebak* does not have to utter any *mantra*, but the opinions concerning this matter may vary). The flowers for *ārati* are usually kept in the inner temple from the morning – because a flower used in worship should be collected before the sunrise – but on rare occasions when all the flowers gathered in the morning were used up during the day the flowers may be collected in the garden directly before *ārati*. Finally the *bigrahasebak* lights the incense sticks and the *pañcapradīp* (for this reason the electric fan in the inner temple must be switched off) and may eventually give a signal to his *guru* or to the devotees who will accompany the performance with music that the *ārati* is about to begin.

⁴⁸ See VF 33.

⁴⁹ See VF 6.



P.30 Lighting the *Pañcapradīp*

In Gaurāṅga mandir the evening *ārati* is accompanied usually with *nām-kīrtan* sung and played by the devotees and led by the *guru* if he is present. The actual form of the songs may vary, but in most cases the devotees sing the *mahāmantra* ('Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare') to three tunes changed successively along with the progress of the performance in the inner temple. During the morning *maṅgalārati*, when it is too early for any of the regular temple-goers to turn up, the *mahāmantra* is sung to the three tunes by the *bigrahasebak* himself possibly with the help of the people actually residing in the temple. In India the Hindu devotees usually stand up during *ārati*, but in the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*, where the devotees usually sit during the *kīrtan* which may sometimes last even for hours, it is normal to remain sitting also during the *nām-kīrtan* accompanying rite of *ārati*.

At the beginning of *ārati* the *bigrahasebak* takes a conch-shell from the shelf in the left southern wall in the central room of the inner temple, claps its flat side a few times so that the sound could come out and blows it loudly for three times in the same way as after giving the *sandhyā* in the temple.⁵⁰ If there are any women present they answer with the typical high sound called *ulul*⁵¹ (the intensity of the sound corresponds to the number of the female devotees so e.g. on *ekādasī*, when more *bhaktas* come to the temple, the *ulul* is much louder than on an ordinary day) and the man may respond with joining the hands in front of their forehead or chest.

⁵⁰ See VF 21.

⁵¹ See VF 14 and 34.



P.31 Blowing the Conch

Since that moment the *bigrahasebak* is not allowed to talk to other devotees or interrupt the enactment with any unnecessary action. After commencing the rite the *bigrahasebak* places the conch-shell back on the shelf, takes a bell (*ghaṇṭā*) from the straw basket in the left back corner of the central room to his left hand, bends down to pour a three spoons of the liquid from the steel cup on the *pañcapradīp*, lifts it with his right hand and stands up, bows lightly, starts ringing the bell and begins to wave the *pañcapradīp* in front of the images.



P.32 Waving with *Pañcapradīp*

When the *bigrahasebak* presents the above listed items to the deities, he proceeds according to the same pattern in every case with only slight alterations corresponding to the nature of the particular object. The basic gesture of the rite is the typical gyratory movement of the arm, which waves the presented item in clock-wise direction in front of the worshipped object, accompanied by loud ringing of the bell held in the left hand, which is disrupted only at the moment, when the *bigrahasebak* bends down to put away the actually held object and take another one. The size of the circles is contingent upon the size of the object in front of which the gesture is carried out and the speed of the movement more or less corresponds to the character of item which is being presented (so e.g. the presentation of flowers, which might fall down from the plate, must be slower than the same movement carried out with a piece of cloth). The

actual mood of the performance and of the enacted actions may also depend on the liveliness of the music, on the degree of involvement of the devotees in the observation of the rite, on the time of the day etc.

During the time of presentation of each item the *bigrahasebak* does not interrupt the motion with the hand and shifts through the *thākur ghar* only by strictly organized sidesteps inscribing a constant pattern into the space of the inner temple. He begins from the images of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā on the right side of the room from the view of a devotee with his back turned to the *bhaktas*, then he proceeds to the left in front of the images of Gaurāṅga and Nitāi, then he turns slightly to the right for a while to carry out a few smaller circles in front of the small objects between the *siṃhāsan* and after that he turns his face out of the entrance of the central *thākur ghar* and continues in front of the *tulasī* at the right side and then over the plant with the eyes fixed on the *samādhi bedis* next to the entrance gate. Finally he proceeds to the side *baiṣṇab ghar* through the passage in the partition wall – that is without leaving the space of the inner temple – to present the particular item in the same way in front of the photography of *gurumā* Mādhavī Debī and returns to the central room to take another item. While conducting the rite, he is supposed to keep the eyes fixed on the worshipped object and even if he shifts between two positions where there is a gap with no object to worship he often tries to leave the arm with the presented item behind and then move it as quickly as possible to another worshipped object. The sequence of the movements should reflect the doctrinal background of the rite, because although Gaurāṅga is considered to be the incarnation of the Supreme Being for this age with Nitāi as his eternal companion and ‘second body’, out of humility he would not bear to be praised before Kṛṣṇa, whom he worshipped in the identity of a perfect devotee and who had openly proclaimed that he himself is the Supreme Lord. Apart from that the exact allocation of the movements allows the *bigrahasebak* to accomplish the rite without interruption under almost any circumstances (so e.g. even in the case of power cut when the whole temple suddenly goes dark the *bigrahasebak* is able to finish the presentation of the particular item correctly).

When the *bigrahasebak* waves the *pañcapradīp* with the five burning flames in front of the images the movement is solemn, slow and careful and it is carried out with the whole arm in wide circles in front of the worshipped objects.⁵² Having finished the presentation of the lamp, the *bigrahasebak* places the *pañcapradīp* on the threshold to the middle of the entrance of the inner temple.

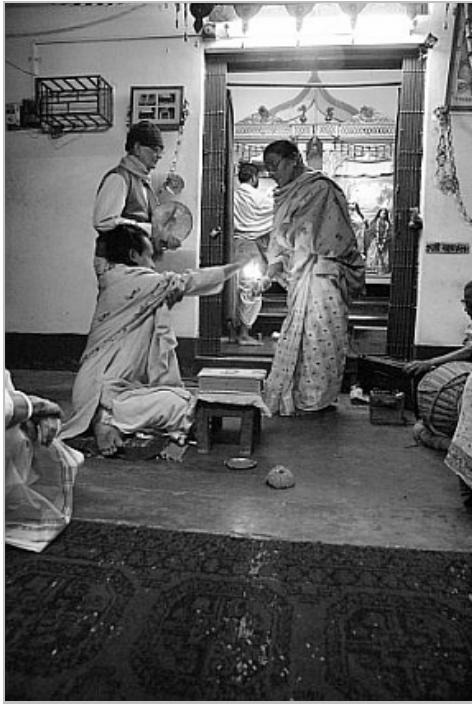
⁵² See VF 21.



P.33 Placing the *Pañcapradīp* on the Threshold

While he proceeds with the rite, one of the female takes the *pañcapradīp* and goes round the devotees so that they could ‘take the light’ (lit. *ālo neoyā*) and receive the blessing of the deities. Although the order is not always followed so strictly, it is a custom to wave the lamp in front of the *tulasī* plant, then offer the flame first to the *guru*, then to the *pāṭhak* if he has stayed to watch the *ārati*, then to the other man and finally to the women. The person who is to ‘take the light’ may stretch out the right hand over the flame and pass the hand down from his or her head to the chest and than back to the top of the head, but in practice the gestures are much simpler, so most devotees will merely hold the hand over the flame and than touch their had lightly and someone may only join his hands in front of the chest or bow lightly. Anyone who is present in the temple is supposed to take the blessing and no one is excluded regardless whether he is a *Vaiṣṇava* devotee or not. After offering the flame to all devotees, the woman carrying the *pañcapradīp* will ‘take the light’ herself and places the lamp to the side to let it burn out. If there is no one to take the *pañcapradīp* around, it may remain standing on the threshold and the onlookers may come and ‘take the light’ themselves.⁵³

⁵³ See VF 40.



P.34 Taking the Light

Meanwhile the *bigrhasebak* begins to wave the holder with incense sticks and after finishing the offering in the side room places it on the threshold of the inner temple next to the *tulasī* plant.⁵⁴ Then he lifts up the conch-shell with the water from its wooden holder, pours off some water from into the steel jug standing in the middle of the central room and begins to wave it in a slow and careful manner in front of the images.⁵⁵ In this case he stops after a few circles conducted before every object to pour some water from the conch-shell to the jug (that is after worshipping Kṛṣṇa, then Rādhā, then Gaurāṅga and Nitāi, the objects between the *siṃhāsans*, and finally the *samādhi bedis*), which restricts his movements slightly, because as long as he is performing the rite in the central room he may not distance himself too far from the jug.

⁵⁴ See VF 37.

⁵⁵ See VF 37.



P.37 Pouring off Water from the Conch-shell

After that the *bigrahasebak* takes the piece of cloth folded to the square used in the worship, holds it in his right hand so that his index finger and small finger were placed under the square of cloth and his middle finger and ring finger rested on the top of it, and continues in the usual way.⁵⁶



P.36 Waving with *Bastra*

Having finished the offering of water from the conch-shell, the *bigrahasebak* takes the plate with and bows almost to the right angle. After that he begins ringing the bell again and continues in the usual way. The movement is slower and careful, because the flowers might fall from the plate (if some of the blossoms do fall down the *bigrahasebak* does not collect them until the end of the performance). In this phase the women may join in *ulul* (especially in the winter months when fanning with *cāmar* is omitted and the presentation of flowers constitutes the final part of the rite).⁵⁷

⁵⁶ See VF 2 and 18.

⁵⁷ See VF 14.



P.37 Presenting Flowers

Finally the *bigrahasebak* takes the *cāmar* from the wall and begins fanning the images. This phase of *ārati* is normally accompanied with loud *ulul* from women and the music is usually more intensive. First he waves the *cāmar* from below to upwards in the usual succession, but after finishing in front of the both couples of images and the small objects in the middle he begins to wave the *cāmar* in half circles from the left to the right and from the right to the left in front of both *siṃhāsans* only by rotating the wrist and the forearm. Then he turns to fan the *tulasī* plant and the *samādhi bedis* and then he proceeds to the *baiṣṇab ghar* in the usual way. After returning he does not end yet, but turns his face out of the entrance of the inner temple and fans the devotees as if he was driving out the air from the inner temple (he may even look out from the inner temple to the sides to make sure that he has fanned all the onlookers). If some of the devotees are standing at this moment, they usually bow when the *cāmar* points to them. As mentioned above, in winter months this phase of the rite is usually omitted because there is no need to cool the deities. The customs vary in different temples, so somewhere they stop using it according to the decision of the *bigrahasebak* and somewhere they do not interrupt it at all, but Gaurāṅga mandir keeps to the rule that the *cāmar* should be omitted from the 1st *agrahāyaṇ* in the Bengali calendar (approximately in the half of November) until the *dol* celebration on the eve of the first day of the month of *caitra* (in March).

At the end of the rite the *bigrahasebak* takes blows the conch-shell, while the women respond with *ulul* and men may join in salutation to the deities.⁵⁸ After placing the conch back on its shelf the *bigrahasebak* lies on the floor of the inner temple in the gesture of full *ṣaṣṭāṅgapraṇām* (closer to the threshold of the entrance than after giving the *sandhyā* in the temple so that he would not disturb the line of the items which have been used during *ārati*) and the devotees usually perform *praṇām* as well.

⁵⁸ See VF 12.



P.38 *Aśīrbād*

After *ārati* the devotees may continue the *kīrtan* or the *guru* may begin to chant and play the *tulasībandanā*, while the *bigrahasebak* takes the conch-shell with the water, which has been used during *ārati*, goes around the temple verandah and sprinkles every person with water from the conch sometimes making sure if the water has really touched the head of the person (the devotees usually refer to the act as *aśīrbād*, 'blessing'). Finally he sprinkles a few drops on his own head and returns the conch-shell back to the inner temple.⁵⁹ After that he may join in the *kīrtan*, perform the *tulasībandanā* if the *guru* is not present or tidy up the space of the inner temple after the *ārati*.

Although many devotees leave the temple immediately after the *pāṭh* or spend the time of *ārati* in a position where they cannot watch the performance in the inner temple (we have seen that the carpet for men is at the right side of the entrance, so some of the devotees cannot see into the temple), the rite of *ārati* constitutes the centre and culmination of public daily ritual and it is of the same importance as offering the meal to the deities or the temple *seba*.

⁵⁹ See VF 1.

4 Interpretative Part: Over the Field

In previous sections we have become familiar with the basic outlines of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* doctrine and with the form of the particular field of research. We could notice especially the remarkable complexity of both conceptual and physical arrangement of the environment. In this manner, even the modest structure of the local *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple presents itself to us as a colourful and carefully arranged micro-cosmos with its own specific history and conceptual map, where, especially in the close proximity of the temple images, every action may be governed by a net of either implicit or even physically embodied rules and principles. With this image in mind, let us now begin our theorizing over the particular field and its spatial and conceptual relations.

4.1 The 'What' of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* Ritual

Whereas a question concerning the 'point' of ritual in general may seem to touch on too complex a topic to provide any clear and widely applicable answer, the issue of the role of ritual in a particular tradition can become a valid point of departure for further theorizing. Although ritual and its functions in every single system can be studied from many angles and the data usually allow a vast plurality of approaches, each tradition emphasizes some main features which can be subsequently used as a basis for interpretation. Hence, in this case, we will ask "what ritual does" specifically for the system of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*.

In the section on *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* theology, we could note the tendency of the tradition to intertwine the theology with practice in order to develop a purposeful and effective system inscribing the conceptual patterns into the mind of an individual by employing elaborate aesthetic principles, which use natural human drives and emotions for reaching deep emotional love to Kṛṣṇa. When we seek to find an approach which could help us to cover this particular set of data, we must disregard the use of attitudes nowadays often involved in the theorizing on other Indian traditions, which often emphasize the concept of 'ritual for ritual' and stress the 'meaninglessness' of ritual enactments. While these theories can be very helpful in dealing with, for example, Jainism where there has always been a sense of uneasiness about the 'empty' ritual existing alongside the strictly atheistic and pragmatic doctrine, the interpretation of the theologically coherent practice of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* requires an approach which would be an exact opposite and which would allow to interpret the ritual in connection with the system of myth and doctrine. Thus, although the myth-ritual theory which regards myth and ritual as mutually implicit parts of one continuum has often been criticized in recent ritual studies, I have decided to make use of its key assertion of the close connection between the actional and narrative/conceptual aspect of a religious system and to employ it as a basis for theorizing in the particular case of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ For a discussion of the implications and the future of the myth-ritual theoretical approaches in ritual studies see Robert A. Segal, "Myth and Ritual", in Kreinath et al, *Theorizing Rituals*, p. 101-121.

Following this assumption, I will ground my argument in a specific theory of myth as it has been presented by Terence S. Turner in his analysis of the Oedipus myth.⁶¹ His approach arises from the critique and refinement of the structural theory of Claude Lévi-Strauss, and it is grounded in the concept of opposition between the synchronic and diachronic dimension of mythical time. While the synchrony is the underlying timeless order of normative categories, the diachrony is the irreversible historical time of individual experience. The actual form of the abstract synchronic order differs in every society or tradition of thought, and as such it is not a self-evident system. The range of combinations, which might constitute a particular synchronic structure of categories is potentially unlimited, and therefore a selection from this indefinite mass of possible relations must be made. We can say with Mary Douglas that

[g]ranted that disorder spoils pattern, it also provides the material of pattern. *Order implies restriction*: from all possible materials a limited set has been realised and from all possible relations a limited set has been used.⁶²

Hence, any ordered structure inevitably rests upon a selection of categories constituting the patterns of order out of disorder, which is the source of the order but at the same time presents a threat to the order as a realm of creative yet chaotic liminality. Apart from being endangered by this initial potentiality of possibilities, the synchronic order cannot escape the occurrence of diachronic events which spring from the social and cultural processes and from the lives of individuals. Such transformations constantly distort the equilibrium of synchronic relations and endanger the order by drawing attention to its contingency. The occurrence of an event that somehow does not fit into or even goes directly against the 'right' order of things might result in a break-down of the whole system, either on personal or on social level. To use a concrete example, a tradition may be based on the concept of a perfectly merciful and at the same time omnipotent, personally conceived Supreme Being (as it is the case with *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*). Viewed from outside, there is no self-evident reason to prefer this conception as the basis of a particular order instead of, say, a concept presuming all-permeating presence of witchcraft, which means that a restricting selection has been made by the tradition. However, in the face of a terrible natural disaster, eruption of social violence, tragic death of a beloved person or another 'disorderly' event, the validity of the fundamental claim may be threatened by creeping sense of meaninglessness and chaos and the situation may result in social disintegration or in a individual lapse and desperate search for a different matrix of sense. Thus, every system must find a way to balance the elements of its structure and continually transform their relations so that the chaotic disorder could be 'put in its place' and the diachronic changes subordinated to the ordered patterns of the system.

Such operations can be carried out by various means. Turner, however, shows that one of the most successful vehicles for the synthesis of synchronic and diachronic time is myth which binds the two temporal modes together by means of the sequential

⁶¹ Terence S. Turner, "Oedipus: Time and Structure in Narrative Form", in R. Spencer (ed.). *Forms of Symbolic Action*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969, p. 26-68.

⁶² Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London / New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 117 [my italics].

ordering of events in the narrative.⁶³ Concerning the arrangement of the narrative pattern, Turner writes:

The story of a myth is bounded at both ends by implicit or explicit assertions of synchronic order. The narrative itself, however, represents a complex temporal mediation of this framework of timeless order, necessitated by the eruption of conflict or confusion in the relations of actors or elements of the initial synchronic order. The sequence of events, in other words, takes the form of a dialectic between the antithetical forces of order and disorder, the latter like former taking on specific content through its concrete manifestation in the actions and events of the story. The temporal form of the narrative is thus a synthetic product of two antithetical tendencies: synchronic order and diachronic (disorderly) change.⁶⁴

Typically, a mythical story begins with a distortion of the initial balance – e.g. by an occurrence of a new deity alongside an established pantheon – and continues over a series of narrative situations, which, nevertheless, still contain some structural tensions, until the pendulum of transformations eventually stops in a new equilibrium (the new deity, for example, becomes a part of the traditional pantheon). The resulting state, however, is not a restoration of the original situation – because new relations and elements have been introduced – which means that the structure has been transformed into a new and more flexible system. The operations proceed according to the principle of invariance⁶⁵ which makes possible the integration of new combinations into the grid of synchronic categories, and at the same time protects the structure from falling apart by keeping to a certain basic frame of relations (so in the case of a new deity, the initial form of the synchronic order without the deity unarguably differs from the resulting equilibrium with the new element in it, the process of integration, however, must have balanced any tensions caused by the situations both on personal and on social level and related it – e.g. through constituting new kinship relations with other deities – to other elements of the order). Myth, as a genre usually focused on the most problematic situations of human life, thus becomes an effective tool for the reorientation of individual conduct in accordance with the normative categories of synchronic order.⁶⁶ For an individual listener, the mediation between order and disorder reflects both the level of his personal micro-time (the individual disorderly experience of life-time events) and the level of macro-time (the historical time of socio-cultural processes).

These operations can be found in most mythical traditions all over the world, but it is interesting that they lie also at the basis of many 'historical' or individual narratives which we would normally hesitate to call a myth. I would argue that this is the case also with the accounts of the history of the local *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple, in which the field research was conducted. As we have seen above, the story of the temple stretches to the beginning of the 20th century when a group *bhaktas* gathered around their *gurumā* from a small East Bengal village decided to establish a new temple in proximity of the capital city and to install new precious metal temple images. The temple had flourished even after the death of *gurumā* until the partition of India in 1947, when the clashes between the Hindu and Muslim drove the temple inhabitants

⁶³ Turner, "Oedipus", p. 33.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 33-34.

⁶⁵ Terrence S. Turner, ["A Letter from Correspondence between R. Chlup and T.S. Turner"], 2007.

⁶⁶ Turner, "Oedipus", p. 36.

to conceal the temple images in the wells and seek refuge in the capital of West Bengal, Kolkata. After much circumlocution the images were retrieved and the worship had continued in a private flat. Finally, a new temple was built in a Kolkata suburb and the images were reconsecrated. It is interesting to note that in the accounts of informants the story follows the pattern of the narrative sequence beginning in an initial 'synchronic' equilibrium which is distorted by a disorderly diachronic event and after a series of partially stable, but at the same time liminal situations and provisional solutions (e.g. the worship of the images in a private flat) finds a new stability, the structure of which is nevertheless transformed, while at the same time reflecting the basic outlines of the original frame. For the particular community of practitioners the narrative becomes a 'founding myth', which, through the figure of *gurumā*, bears a direct relation to the synchronic order, but which at the same time works both with the 'macro-time' social experience of the partition and with the 'micro-time' individual experience of uprootedness and loss of homeland. In this way, potentially any narrative can be transformed into 'myth' by relating its elements to the underlying grid of synchronic relations.

Moreover, isolated narratives can be organized into extensive mythical cycles which constitute a balanced and all-encompassing system, and from this point of view, the mythical and theological tradition of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* seems to constitute an unusually viable structure of order. The appeal to the constant recollection of the *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa's legends makes the synchronic basis of the myths ready to permeate every aspect of individual life, so that there could not be any place left for anything lying outside this frame of reference. The system becomes all-pervasive and, as we have seen, is flexible enough to embrace almost any disorderly diachronic event either from the macro-time of socio-cultural historical processes or from the micro-time of an individual.⁶⁷ On the large scale, we can observe these tendencies for example in the smooth integration of the historical personage of Caitanya, who as a joint incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā becomes a continuation of the divine *līlā*, and his story is in this manner directly related to the wider mythical cycle of older *Vaiṣṇava* epics. On the narrow scale of the community gathered around the south-Kolkatan temple, which is nowadays endangered by rapid urban development of the area followed by loosening of the traditional family and social ties, the process still continues in the tendency of the *bhaktas* to incorporate the particular disorderly events to individual narratives which, subsequently, become a part of the large scale pattern of all-encompassing synchronic order. In this manner, every aspect of the diachronic experience can be brought into relation with the stable and yet flexible transformational structure.

If the normative categories of the synchronic order in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* were carried only by means of the abstract sequential ordering of mythical narratives, the appeal could hardly be so successful. The tradition itself nevertheless offers a powerful medium for transmitting the structural message, namely the whole system of religious

⁶⁷ Of course, this is not to say that the regulative operations of order must always be successful; the lapse of the transformational processes becomes obvious e.g. in the cases of disintegration of religious communities or on the personal rejection of the originally accepted order of categories. Such situations can certainly be found also in the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* tradition.

practice and ritual injunctions. By means of elaborate ritual cycles, which are often modelled on the episodes from Kṛṣṇa's legends, the synchronic normative order is made actual in disorderly lives of the individual practitioners and provides a way to reconcile the diachronic events with the general synchronic frame.

At this point we could be tempted to view the rites of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* tradition as a means to stage the structural play between the synchronic order and the diachronic disorder in the form of a vivid multi-media performance which can be simultaneously transmitted to a wide mass of practitioners. This certainly holds true for the great seasonal celebrations which are usually connected with some key episodes from the legends of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā and which, as dramatic performances full of tension and effervescence, can be consequently analysed in accordance with Turner's concept of sequential operations seeking to reconcile the structural conflicts. However, in the case of daily ritual, which has been my main concern during the field-research, this methodical approach appears inapplicable. The tirelessly repeated and, for an uninvolved observer, sometimes almost boring ritual acts and tending practices consistently lack any detectable structural conflict seeking for reconciliation. This is not to say that the daily rites are lacking in *performative* tension – after all, the evening celebration with lights and music in front of the temple image can be very lively and playful. Nevertheless, if we realize that e.g. the circumambulation of the temple that is connected with the episodes depicting the *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa can take both the form of a vivid public celebration and the form of a peaceful uneventful individual walk around the temple, we can hardly expect that the tension enacted in these rites is a result of dealing with a *structural* conflict by means of sequential ordering of the actions.

For this reason, I find it useful to distinguish the regular *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* rites roughly into three levels playing slightly different parts in the whole system of ritual and practice. Firstly, there are the feasts and celebrations which follow the calendrical time pattern (e.g. the Kṛṣṇa's birthday) and which, in many cases, can be seen as a multi-media expression of the directed structural operations between synchrony and diachrony occurring in the mythical cycles. The second level consists of the all-pervading net of formalized acts connected with everyday religious discipline, with the study of texts and with tending practices which constitute a necessary environment for the rest of the ritual practice seeking to constantly remind practitioners that they themselves play a part in the cosmic drama of Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. The last category comprises the daily ritual enactments, the chief example of which is the temple ritual of *ārati* conducted in front of the temple images at the high points of the day to please the divinity and to obtain blessing. These performances are usually secluded from the ordinary course of time and at the same time lack any inner 'narratively' diachronic dimension apart from their occurrence in the actual irreversible diachronic time of everyday experience (in the case of *ārati*, for example, the performance in the inner room of the temple cannot be interrupted by talk or any other unnecessary action, the sequence of its acts lacks an obvious narrative structure, its time is clearly marked off by the sound of a conch-shell at the beginning and at the end, the whole sonic environment is filled by music and by loud ringing of a bell, etc.). Therefore, I would assume that these rites belong by its nature to the realm of synchrony and that they

consequently operate as a tool for a direct induction of the synchronic dimension to the actual diachronic time. Whereas, in a mythical narrative or in an equivalently ordered ritual celebration, the pendulum of structural transformations does not stop until the diachronic disorderliness of the mythical events is balanced with the synchronic frame, a daily ritual enactment presents a direct eruption of synchrony into the lives of participants, the logic of which operates in accordance with the structural logic of the level of synchrony.

I would argue that the relation between these three dimensions of the ritual system is one of mutual interdependence. The daily rites and tending practices are repeated and replicated along the same pattern every day and as such they constitute a "ritual backdrop" on which the annual and monthly ritual cycles may proceed. Hence the daily enactments present basic structural units, which as essentially synchronic entities may 'hook' participants on to a net of synchronic logic transforming their diachronic experience. Such units constitute larger wholes of ritual cycles which, supported by the level of everyday ritual acts and tending practices, form an effective ritual system seeking to encompass the entire field of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* world-view, conduct and practice. Thus, if we are to formulate an answer to the question concerning the 'point' of ritual in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*, we can say that one of its main functions in this particular tradition is to operate as an effective multi-media device for relating the diachronic disorderly experience of individuals and individual communities to the synchronic order of normative categories.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ For the multi-media nature of ritual enactments see Günter Thomas, "Communication", in Kreinath et al, *Theorizing Rituals*, p. 321-343, p. 333-335.

4.2 The 'How' of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* Ritual

If we accept that the ritual and practice of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* can operate as a tool coordinating the interplay between synchrony and diachrony, we should ask how this goal is accomplished. It is impossible both for individuals and for communities to have their experience, their existential states or their behaviour transformed in accordance with the structure of synchronic order without receiving some processed and coordinated information. At least some message must be transmitted and received by the participants – be it something as simple as “the prescribed action has been conducted” or “the right *mantra* has been chanted” – which means that at least some communication is taking place, regardless of whether there is any articulate ‘meaning’ attached to the actions and utterances or not.⁶⁹

Communication in general, however, is a complicated process which does not operate as a simple act of transmission and acceptance of prefigured clusters of information. Günter Thomas, drawing on Niklas Luhmann’s theory of communicative processes, views an act of communication as

the *emergent unity* of three selections: 1) *information* as a selection of meaning from an initial horizon of meaning (“repertoire of possibilities”) within a psychic or social system; 2) the act of *utterance* as a selection of this information effected by this first psychic or social system, using some *medium* of communication, and 3) *understanding* as subsequent selection from a *second* horizon of meaning – a selection ‘triggered’ by the first and second one.⁷⁰

A process can be called truly communicative only when the understanding occurs within a psychic/social system different from the one where the first selection has been made. Obviously, to constitute a process of communication, the three selections cannot occur within the mind of a single person; there must be some communicating ‘other’, be it another person or another group of individuals. Also at least some sub-conscious intention to communicate must be perceived on the other side of the communicative exchange, so that it would be possible to distinguish an act of communication from mere ‘natural’ perception, which is, however, a necessary part of the communicative process. Every act of communication is inevitably based on some kind of perception – because without perceiving that something has been uttered by another communicating system we would have nothing to respond to – but unlike ‘natural’ perception, communication requires a distinction between the initial selection of information and between the act of utterance (so to interpret, for example, a sudden waving of a flag as an act of communication, we must assume that there was someone’s intention to communicate and that the event was not caused accidentally or naturally by wind).⁷¹

The two systems involved in the process of communication are not mutually transparent, because the two horizons of meaning, that is the initial ‘pool’ of meanings from which the selection of the subsequently uttered information has been made, and

⁶⁹ For a critique of the approaches based on the concept of ‘meaninglessness’ of ritual, see e.g. Günter Thomas, “Communication”, p. 325-326; 341-343 or Jens Kreinath, “Semiotics”, in Kreinath et al, *Theorizing Rituals*, p. 429-470, p. 446-456.

⁷⁰ Günter Thomas, “Communication”, p. 328-329.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 329.

the horizon created on the level of utterance that is perceived by another psychic/social system, can never be identical – it is impossible to ‘read’ other person’s thoughts, hence the information to be understood can only be selected from what has been uttered. For this reason, the occurrence of understanding can be confirmed only by continuation of the communicative interchange, where every utterance is followed by another utterance contingent upon the previous one; if the exchange continues in a more-or-less meaningful way, we can expect that some understanding has taken place on both sides.

Thomas, however, also shows that communication can be a risky process and that understanding is determined by several factors.⁷² Firstly, the initial ‘pool’ of meanings within the first communicating system must be at least to some extent familiar to the other side; if the mental world of a speaker is too different from that of his audience, he will not be understood (this may happen e.g. in the case of an encounter of people from entirely different cultures). Also, the motives behind the selection of the means and the moment of utterance must appear comprehensible and unsuspecting. Finally, the process can be endangered e.g. by confusion between communication and ‘natural’ perception. In this respect, two types of misinterpretation can occur: transmission of a signal which, in fact, is merely a result of an unintentional state of the transmitting system, may be interpreted as a communicative utterance (e.g. yawning which, in fact, is a result of mere fatigue, is interpreted as an ostentatious sign of boredom) or an act of utterance may be passed unnoticed as an insignificant part of ‘natural’ perception (e.g. polite coughing, which was actually meant to hint the inadequateness of a situation, is understood as a mere symptom of flu).⁷³ A deviance on any of these levels may result in termination of the communicative process, and even if something is eventually understood, it still does not mean that it will be accepted; when something is understood, it can be objected or even rejected.

When transferred to the context of ritual – and in the case of our theorizing, to the concept of ritual as a tool mediating between synchrony and diachrony – this general theory of communication enables us to view ritual process as a specific case of communicative interchange. Thomas, however, observes that in ritual communication the selections described above are largely restricted, and it is evident that in traditional ritual the actors are not the sole authors of the enacted meanings.⁷⁴ Some other level of meanings, not dependent on the motives and intentions of ritual actors, enters the field of communication, and within our frame of reference can be equated with the structuring grid of synchronic order. The categories of the order arranged according to the synchronic rules stand in front of the individual as something objective and external, despite the fact that the order is related to his diachronic experience by means of a continual transforming interchange. As we have seen in the case of the history of the local temple, even individual diachronic events may be related to the grid of

⁷² See *ibid*, p. 332-332.

⁷³ See *ibid*, p. 331; it is necessary to realise that such distinction is rather schematic, because especially in non-verbal communication, the issue of intentionality in the act of transmission of a signal is a very complex topic.

⁷⁴ See *ibid*, p. 332-333.

synchronic relations, and subsequently objectivized as a part of the structure (we can observe such objectivizing process e.g. on the above-mentioned case of the East Bengal *gurumā* whose diachronic historical life story became a part of the 'founding myth' for the community and was integrated even on the level of ritual, when an image of *gurumā* was installed in a side room of the newly built temple and began to receive worship). The exchange between individuals/individual communities and the net of synchronic relations nevertheless remains relatively tacit in order to uphold the sense of objectivity of the system, and as such the synchronic structure may in a sense become a partner in communication as the external 'other' restricting and framing the understanding of ritual participants regardless of their motives or intentions.

Within the frame of our emerging theoretical approach, the level of the initial horizon of meanings, from which the uttered information is selected in the process of ritual communication, quite naturally corresponds to the set of possibilities constituting the grid of relations and elements which put together the given synchronic order of categories on the background of latent 'disorderly' combinations. Hence for the order of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*, the initial horizon of meanings contains e.g. the statement "Kṛṣṇa is the Lord", but not the statement "a ghost residing in a tree in the corner of the garden is the Lord". For a 'native' practitioner, who has been socialized to this particular structure of order, such restriction reduces the risk of misunderstanding, because the initial horizon of meanings draws on the same 'pool' which constitutes his own mental world.

In a significant part of everyday communication, the first two steps of the process, that is the selection of information and the selection of the moment and means of utterance, are dependent solely on the choice of performers, which will be limited only by the culturally shared horizon of meanings. Ritual, however, in most cases becomes what Thomas has called 'frozen autopoiesis' of communication which provides the participants with ready-made communicative schemas restricting both the selection of information and the form of the actual utterance, while the degree of freedom in these two selections is usually determined by the particular structure of order and varies from tradition to tradition. So for example in the south-Kolkatan temple, the expression of praise is reserved to the temple images, to the image of *gurumā* and to the tombs of other local personages (a restriction in the selection of information) mainly in the rite of *ārati* (a restriction in the selection of the means of utterance) in prescribed times of the day (a restriction in the selection of the moment of the utterance).

The advantage of such restrictions, which allow for managing the above described risks of communicative processes, can be observed both on the level of individual experience and on that of the inner coordination of communities. To draw a line between these two dimensions of communication, Roy A. Rappaport distinguished between auto- and allo-communication. The notion of auto-communication is based on the assertion that the transmitters of any ritual message are at the same time among its most important receivers, which makes possible to account even for solitary rites sometimes viewed as intrinsically uncommunicative.⁷⁵ In this way, auto-

⁷⁵ Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University

communication as a form of self-affection provides the participants with prefigured schemas of action and meanings which are, by nature, external to those who utter them and which can subsequently transform the psychic reality of the participants regardless whether there are any other 'embodied' agents of ritual action or not. Hence even a solitary circumambulation of the temple, which is meant to refer to the circle dances around Kṛṣṇa in the mythical forests of Braj, can be viewed as being endowed with the power to transform the consciousness of the practitioner by reminding him both on a conceptual and a bodily level that he is also a part of the *līlā*.

Allo-communication, on the contrary, is the stream of transmitted information, flowing to the outer environment of the transmitting subject. In ritual enactments where the flux of communication is considerably restricted and schematized, allo-communication often consists of relatively objective sequences which do not allow the participants to interrupt the communication process by discursive interchange or by uncontrolled expressions of inner experiential states and opinions. Thus, during the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* rite of *ārati*, for example, the possibility to talk is limited by loud music and ringing of a bell, and the *sebāit* performing the rite is not allowed to speak at all; also once begun, the enactment does not stop until the end regardless of whether a half of the *bhaktas* feel sleepy or disagree with some parts of the doctrine. Due to deference of practitioners to a particular synchronic order of patterns, the 'frozen' entities of ritual schemas tend to remain invariant for long periods of time and even the expressions of the actual mental/bodily states are usually shaped into the form which is expected by the particular cultural environment (so *bhaktas* may begin to dance out of joy during the circumambulation of the temple, but they will do so in a manner which is considered appropriate by the tradition).⁷⁶ In this way, communities can effect the continuation of shared and coordinated understanding which cannot be derailed by an individual deviation of opinion – the process simply goes on, because, as Thomas put it, "ritual does not require 'faith', but merely participation."⁷⁷

By restriction of the first two selections, ritual coordinates the participants, but at the same time allows them to understand differently. This aspect of ritual communication brings the risk of individual misunderstanding which we could expect to threaten the sense of coherence and plausibility of the underlying order. Therefore, we must ask how ritual deals with this particular danger. Firstly, we should realise that many situations, which we might choose to view as a lapse in the transmission of some particular meanings, are in fact only seemingly cases of misunderstanding. Indeed, it is a well-known fact that in most traditions – and *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* is no exception – the practitioners often do not themselves reflect on the 'meaning' of enacted rites, and when they do, the accounts may differ considerably. The most likely answer on questions concerning the reason why a ritual act is performed in a certain

Press, 1999, p. 51.

⁷⁶ It is interesting that Rūpa Gosvāmin, whose theory of visual meditation have informed the outer form of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* system of conduct, practice and visual art, dedicated a whole chapter of his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* to a long list of particular types of outer bodily expressions corresponding to particular emotions (see *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* 2.3).

⁷⁷ Thomas, "Communication", p. 334.

way will be some variation on "I do this because my preceptor has taught me to do so" or simply "we do this because this is how it should be done". Now if we chose to equate the 'meaning' in ritual with the referential articulate meanings attached to the rites by individual practitioners, we would have to quit our theorizing on communication in ritual by Frits Staal's statement that "[r]itual is pure activity, without meaning or goal."⁷⁸ 'Meaning' in ritual – as well as in everyday face-to-face communication – may nevertheless consist of various contents and streams of information transmitted by various media and received on various levels. In the environment of a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple, a person may react on a message contained in lyrics of a devotional song as well as on the scent of incense or on a specific colour scale of the environment which is modelled according to the lines prescribed by the tradition.⁷⁹ The body-mind of an individual may respond to many kinds of sub-conscious and implicit signals, which may remain outside the frame of conceptual reflection – as Ronald L. Grimes put it, "the body often understands even against our own desires and thoughts..."⁸⁰

Even if the individual misunderstanding does take place, it still does not mean the end of the ritual process. Ritual by its nature allows the temporalization of understanding,⁸¹ because, as 'frozen autopoiesis' of communication, it can be endlessly repeated and replicated. Especially, regular rites allow the practitioners to participate in the process over and over again until the totality of the message is eventually understood. This possibility is further supported by the relative invariance of traditional rites which may be transmitted in a more-or-less unchanged form for long periods of time due to the deference of practitioners to something which transcends them, be it the authority of a spiritual preceptor, tradition or even some vague sense of 'rightness'.⁸² Through deference, the lack of articulate meanings shared by ordinary participants can be actually turned into an advantage in ritual process, because it constantly reminds the practitioners that the enacted sequence is not a product of their own creation, but that they themselves are subordinated to the order of categories deferred to. In this way, the lack of articulate meanings enhances the sense of the order of categories as something external and objective. This dimension is naturally stronger within stable and consistent communities where individuals are exposed to a higher degree of social pressure, so a weakening of the social bonds usually results in weakening of the relation to the 'orderly' categories, and subsequently in weakening of the willingness to accept a 'meaningless' ritual system as binding, as it actually happens e.g. in the educated middle-class of present-day Kolkata.

The most interesting aspect of the tension between the coordinated understanding and individual misunderstanding, however, is the potential plurality of individual

⁷⁸ Frits Staal, *Ritual and Mantras: Rules without Meaning*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996, p. 131.

⁷⁹ *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temples by its outer form usually follow a scale of colours which reflects the set of colours connected with the appearance of Kṛṣṇa as it was described in the list of rules for imaginative mediation by Rūpa Gosvāmin in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, e.g. in the verses 2.1.347, 349 or 357.

⁸⁰ Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, p. 103.

⁸¹ Thomas, "Communication", p. 334.

⁸² For a discussion of the role of deference in ritual see Maurice Bloch, "Deference", J. Kreinath et al, *Theorizing Rituals*, p. 495-506.

understandings. Ritual usually leaves the participant partial freedom to interpret the actions differently, although the extent naturally varies in particular traditions. This dimension of ritual communication provides one of the sources of the structural flexibility, because it enables the communities and the individual participants to connect the prefigured stream of sequences and utterances with their actual experiential states and existential situations according to their either conscious or sub-conscious preference. Thus, a woman who has come to the temple to seek comfort at the feet of merciful Gaurāṅga after a period of mourning for a deceased relative, and a young man who has come to rejoice in the joyful mood of Kṛṣṇa's companions may watch the rite of *ārati* in the same group of *bhaktas* and express their emotions by singing the same tune of *kīrtan*; or a man who has come to hear the singing of Kṛṣṇa's name in the hope that he might be healed from mental disorder can sit next to a *bhakta* who, by singing in front of the temple images, means to imitate the actions of the perfected devotees of eternal Braj. Although the moods and intentions are completely different, the enactment proceeds in an unchanged form and the communicative process is not disrupted. In this way, the individuals or even whole communities can relate the actions of ritual to their particular diachronic lives or historical context and transform their experience in an interchange with the synchronic pattern of categories through 'frozen' ritual schemas.

Besides dealing with the risks concerning understanding, ritual communication also addresses the improbability of acceptance of uttered information.⁸³ Firstly, the acceptance may be ensured again by means of deference – an utterance is accepted because it belongs to the realm of the deferred and 'objective' order of categories or because it has been carried out by a deferred authority (e.g. an act performed by one's *guru* is less likely to be objected). Such connection with synchronic structure could nevertheless be too fragile and insufficient – especially in an unstable social situation when the sense of deference may be weakened, or in the case of participants who are not fully socialized to the environment – so the form of ritual must employ also other tools enhancing the sense of plausibility of the uttered information. For this reason, ritual often relies on material and bodily signs which are more obvious than articulate phrases. In ritual enactments even verbal utterances are often strongly formalized and "made material" in order to reduce their discursive value – when something is 'meaningless', we cannot disagree (so chanting of Kṛṣṇa's name does not transmit any particular referential claim which might be agreed or disagreed, and yet it transforms the mind of a practitioner by directing it to Kṛṣṇa as the centre of the order). Moreover, the material and bodily signs often affect us by means of sensory perception at a level which is not fully conscious and reflected. For example, a smell of a certain kind of incense can call to the mind of a practitioner certain images or trigger some emotional responses without even being realised.⁸⁴ These inarticulate and sub-conscious messages remain tacit, and as such they are naturally much harder to argue.

⁸³ For a more detailed discussion of the improbability of acceptance of a ritual message see Thomas, "Communication", p. 336-338.

⁸⁴ On the mechanisms connected with the use of scent as a symbol in communication see Dan Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism*, trans. by A. L. Morton, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 115-123.

In order to enhance the acceptance of transmitted information, many traditions also create specific ritual environments that blur the difference between communication and 'natural' perception. The advantage of 'natural' perception is that, compared to communication, it is much faster and capable of inducing the sense of presence – when we see that something is white we realise it instantaneously and we know without any complicated conceptualization that we are looking at the object here and now. While shared communication makes possible a discursive dialogue reaching into the past and future, shared perception allows a group of individuals simultaneous and non-discursive experience of an actual situation which is consequently sensed as 'real' and usually does not have to be further validated⁸⁵ – when all members of a group see a white object, they normally do not need to discuss whether it is really white and whether it is really there. In the beginning of this section, two kinds of possible misinterpretation, i.e. mistaking an act of communication for 'natural' perception and mistaking 'natural' perception for a communicative utterance, were mentioned. It is interesting that by creating specific elaborate settings, ritual makes use of both of these processes. Ritual environments, which are usually organized as highly artificial and complicated structures based on the inner logic of synchronic order, tend to constitute enclosed units of 'the world as it is' for the time of ritual enactments, and thereby compel the practitioners to treat their surroundings as something unconditioned and 'really real'.⁸⁶ In this way, the participants accept a considerable part of the totality of the received information, which is to a large extent constituted by intentional contents belonging to the order of synchrony, as 'natural' perception. In this manner, the outer form of a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple seeks to fill the surroundings of a practitioner only with those objects and perceptions which conform to the 'synchronic' aesthetics based on the mythical imagery as it was process through the rules of meditative practice – the site should be covered with vegetation to recall the forest of Braj as the site of Kṛṣṇa's sports, colours belonging to a certain specific scale should prevail, only those flowers, garments and ornament which are prescribed by the tradition as being suitable for Kṛṣṇa are used in worship etc. The whole environment is covered with reminders of the mythical world until there is not much place left for anything else. In this way, the abstract synchronic categories and patterns are brought into the temporal frame of diachrony. While belonging by its nature to the level of intentional communication, they are sub-consciously mistaken for 'natural perception' through the above described cognitive processes operating in the human mind, and subsequently experienced as actually present and shared by the group of practitioners.

On the other hand, the participants always at least partially, if not always reflectively, realise that there is some communicating 'other' in the communicative process which does not belong to the realm of mere perception, and which is at the same time only partially dependent on the intentions of performers. This dimension of ritual communication reminds the practitioners that even 'something else', which transcends the performers, may be communicating. However, the line between the contents constituting the schema of the enactment as 'frozen autopoiesis' of

⁸⁵ Thomas, "Communication", p. 330.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 337.

communication, between the intentional expressions of the actual states of individuals and between a 'natural' occurrence of certain phenomena is often blurred. Therefore, in ritual environment an individual is much more likely to interpret even random diachronic events as an act of communication or as a part of the autopoietic schema (e.g. if the power is switched on again after a power-cut during a ritual in a Hindu temple, the participants may choose to view the event as a direct intervention of the deity).

As a result, ritual by means of all these processes – both articulately through 'meaningful' verbal utterances and inarticulately through material indices and 'materialized' speech acts often in intentionally artificial settings – transforms the body-mind of an individual by means of coordinately shared schemas which belong to the realm of synchrony by their nature and which are consequently transmitted as more-or-less invariant sequences due to deference to the 'right' order of relations. At the same time, the outer organization of the settings compels the participants to interpret potentially any diachronic or 'natural' event or situation occurring within the boundaries of ritual environment in connection with the all-permeating net of orderly synchronic categories.

4.3 The 'Field' of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* Ritual

4.3.1 The Focusing Lens of the Field

To become a part of a ritual enactment, all the processes described above must be actualized in a concrete ritual environment in the interaction of concrete ritual actors. The communicative schemas and strategies must be "brought alive" and the logic of the structure must become, to borrow Rappaport's expression, "enacted and embodied."⁸⁷ Following Rappaport, Robert E. Innis observes that the logic of the underlying relations seems to be actualized in multiple ways on multiple levels and "embodied in the stream of acts and utterances... in objects... [but also] in places."⁸⁸ Thus, if we dare to dissolve the totality of the outer manifestation of the communicative processes, which often proceed simultaneously in different steps on different levels, into separate elements like ritual objects, actors, space, sound, etc.,⁸⁹ we can eventually turn our attention to the role of space within the arrangement of ritual enactments.

As we have seen in the introduction to this thesis, in an essay concerning the study of ritual space we could hardly go without mentioning the 'spatial' theory of ritual which has been developed by Jonathan Z. Smith in his works "The Bare Facts of Ritual"⁹⁰ and especially *To Take Place*.⁹¹ Although I will not follow Smith's theoretical approach, because for my purposes it is too static and it does not take into account the 'diachronic' dimension of ritual enactments,⁹² I will use one of his assumptions as a basis for my theorizing on space in ritual. In the "Bare Facts", he writes that "[w]hen one enters a temple, one enters marked-off space in which, at least in principle, nothing is accidental; everything, at least potentially is of significance. The temple serves as a *focusing lens*, marking and revealing significance."⁹³ Even though we could find a vast array of data from various traditions problematizing or probably even contradicting this statement, such expression compellingly describes the environments of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* system of ritual and practice (e.g. Steven J. Rosen, who is himself connected with the tradition, writes that for *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* temple is "a material structure that brings one into contact with divine").⁹⁴ If we chose to view the ritual in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* as a tool directing the relating play between synchrony and diachrony by means of employing the results of the above described communicative strategies which are embodied – among others – in the structure of spatial arrangements, the area where the ritual takes place becomes, metaphorically, a

⁸⁷ Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion...*, p. 3.

⁸⁸ Robert E. Innis, "The Tacit Logic of Ritual Embodiments", *Social Analysis* 48. 2 (Sum. 2004): 197-212, p. 199.

⁸⁹ For a text on mapping the ritual in the field in connection to its aspects see Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, p. 24-39.

⁹⁰ Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual", *History of Religions* 20.1/2 (Aug-Nov 1980): 112-127.

⁹¹ Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*, Chicago / London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

⁹² For a critique of Smith's theory of ritual see Ronald L. Grimes, "Jonathan Z. Smith's Theory of Ritual Space", *Religion* 29 (1999): 261-273.

⁹³ Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual", p. 113.

⁹⁴ Stephen J. Rosen, "Introduction", *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 3.3 (Sum. 1995): 1-3, p. 1.

lens focusing the attention of practitioners to synchrony and affecting the way they view the relations between the 'disorderly' diachronic elements constituting their lives.

Even if we extract the notion of ritual space as a separate element from the continuum of mutually interconnected aspects of ritual, the concept still remains too broad and complex to be of any use. For this reason, I will follow a modified version of the terminological distinction made by Grimes, which distinguishes between place, space and emplacement and which has been already employed in the descriptive part of the thesis for ordering the selection of the empirical data from field research.⁹⁵ By 'place' I mean an actual localization in geography, whereas the term 'space' will be used for the physical ordering of the inner structure of an area where a rite is enacted. 'Emplacement', then, is a term denoting the set of the explicit and implicit conceptual schemas related to the spatial ordering of the space in an actual place. Needless to say, these terms are somewhat artificial, and in practice these elements constituting the spatial dimension of ritual are intertwined in a constant mutual interaction. Such distinction, however, enables us to reconstruct a schematic model describing the process of embodiment of the abstract synchronic categories within actual 'diachronic' settings as it is likely to occur in many cases in the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* tradition (and as it was more-or-less the case with the construction of the temple where the field-study has been carried out). With these analytical concepts in mind, we can now look from a new angle at the data already listed in the descriptive part of this thesis.

4.3.2 Pivoting the Place

If a group of practitioners decides to found a site of ritual behaviour – whether a large temple complex or a makeshift sanctuary marked off for a specific occasion – the individuals must share at least some basic idea of what the place should be like. In many traditions, there is a wide range of both explicit and implicit prescriptions and shared imagery constituting the basic set of potential spatial relations that draw on the logic of the given synchronic order. In *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*, the tradition itself provides a vast list of rules and schemas for the construction of a site of worship which are closely connected to the aesthetic science of the tradition and to the rules for visualisation of abstract spaces in the meditative practice.⁹⁶

The relation between these imaginary structures and abstract spatial concepts and actual places of ritual, then, resembles the relation between the schemas of ritual performances and actual enactments. To constitute an actual site of worship, the logic must be embodied and the embodiment inevitably begins from the selection of place. When a location is marked off as a site of ritual, it suddenly becomes a point where synchrony breaks into diachrony. The occurrence of a ritual place can be viewed as a result of actualization of synchrony within diachronic settings. When a ritual place is founded, an 'ordinary' diachronic area is bound with synchrony and connected to the net of orderly relations both in time and in space. The place becomes a location in the

⁹⁵ Grimes, "Jonathan Z. Smith's Theory of Ritual Space", p. 270.

⁹⁶ For the connection between abstract visualized spaces and actual geography see e.g. David L. Haberman, "Shrines of the Mind: A Meditative Shrine Worshipped in *Mañjarī Sādhana*", *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 1.3 (Spr 1993): 18-35.

sacred geography of the tradition – if there is any – and the history of the place potentially connects the site to the respective cycle of myth and doctrine. In the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* tradition any temple is potentially related to the order of synchronic relations already in the moment of its founding. Through its spatial orientation, the site is enrooted in the specific conception of geography related to the area of the Indian sub-continent,⁹⁷ and as we have seen, through its outer form it should bring in mind the mythical land of Braj both as an actual location of Kṛṣṇa’s sports on earth and as a visualised background of the events in meditation belonging by its nature to the realm of eternal *līlā*. In the specific case of the south-Kolkatan temple, the site becomes an actualization of the events connected with the story of the Dhaka *gurumā* and the history of the community around the partition of India. As shown above, for the particular community of practitioners the history of the temple was integrated to the large-scale synthesis of synchrony and diachrony within mythical time, and through this connection the temple became a material expression of such interplay.

4.3.3 Resolving the Space of the Place

A ritual place, however, usually does not remain empty and unresolved. The inner space of the place is further organized according to the set of synchronic rules and appropriate objects may be installed within the spatial net. As we have seen in the descriptive sections, in a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple the ground-plan of the area and the construction of the images should follow a long list of rules prescribed by the tradition,⁹⁸ so the images should always face south, the entrance gate should not be on the western side, the rooms of a temple with the particular type of images should be always arranged in the order which is shown on the schema of the ground-plan etc. The main features of the physical arrangement, which were described above in relation with the particular south-Kolkatan temple, are somehow present in the tradition in general, so we can only call back into mind their basic outlines. The whole structure of a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple is built as a house serving to sustain the needs of Kṛṣṇa, his divine companions and the revered personages who are considered to have entered the realm of his eternal *līlā*, so every action should be aimed to this goal. The temple is sometimes called *bhagabāner bāri*, i.e. the ‘house of the Lord’, and as such it is modelled as Kṛṣṇa’s dwelling equipped with everything which is necessary for the acts of *seba* (service to Kṛṣṇa). The temple should have pleasant surroundings and should be adjoined by utility rooms for servants, who prepare the meals and take care of everyday needs of the divinities. A sacred *tulasī* plant (*Ocimum sanctum*, ‘Holy Basil’), which is especially dear to Kṛṣṇa, should be worshiped on the site. The inner room of the temple should comprise a separate ‘bedroom’ for the night rest of the deities (*śāyan ghar*), and if images of some revered *bhaktas* are worshipped on the site,

⁹⁷ This aspect of the spatial arrangement of a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* site of public worship, which might strictly speaking belong rather to the level of the below described concept of ‘emplacement’, can be deduced e.g. from the Bengali line invoking the four main points of compass and their respective deities mentioned in the section 3.3.

⁹⁸ For a summary of basic rules concerning the construction of images and their consequent installation in the temple as described by theologian Gopāla Bhaṭṭa see De, *Early History...*, p. 507-515.

the room for the divinities (*thākur ghar*) and the room for the *bhaktas* (*baiṣṇab ghar*) must be separated. The position of the images is prescribed by tradition and every object used in the worship should have its own place. Even the time is strictly divided according to the pattern of the day in mythical Braj and activities like bathing and dressing the deities, cooking and serving meals for them, amusing them by music etc. are arranged to follow the daily activities of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.

In the particular case of the south-Kolkatan temple, apart from objects which are considered obligatory by the tradition, also five *samādhi bedis* or tombs of *bhaktas*, who were connected with the original Dhaka *āśram* and who dedicated their lives to *seba* in the temple, were installed next to the entrance gate inside the temple garden. As we have seen, a small pool was situated in the front part of the garden, but it was filled up with earth so that the local people would not disturb the peace of the temple and a high wall erected around the garden. In this way, although the area is surrounded by roads from three sides, the temple is secluded from the hubbub of the street, and viewed from the inside, it forms an enclosed environment. At the same time, however, viewed from the outside it visually communicates with its surrounding through two entrance gates, which allow a direct view of the space in front of the inner temple, and it is almost impossible to pass the temple without noticing. The space is also arranged vertically by means of the raised platform of the temple verandah and by elevating the images on wooden frames, which compels the incomers to look up at them. Furthermore, the space is vertically secluded from its surroundings by tops of the high trees in the temple garden. As such, the whole space constitutes an enclosed whole arranged to reflect the 'synchronic' form of the mythical background of the *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa.

According to Terence Turner, a ritual space may also comprise some 'pivotal' object or objects, that is entities which help to objectify the internal force of ritual outside the actual ritual frame.⁹⁹ In the case of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple, such a role can be ascribed to the temple images, which are considered to be used as temporal 'bodies' by the deities who have come to our world from their eternal abode to enjoy the worship (the practitioners literally say that 'orā svarga theke eseche pūjo nite', that is 'they have come from heaven to receive worship'), which explains the constant involvement with the images and the anxious care for them. As such, the images present a direct 'pivoting' of synchrony materially expressed in the diachronic context – a temple becomes a real temple at the moment of consecration of the images – and in this manner become a point of reference for a particular community even outside the frame of the actual ritual activities. In the case of the south-Kolkatan temple, the entire history of which spins around the construction, loss, retrieving and subsequent re-installation of the prized metal images, the statues present also an obvious connection with the local 'founding narrative' related to the quest for re-establishing the lost stability in the face of the historical and individual disruptions. In this manner, the images become a fixed point that can be metaphorically leaned on in the disorderly individual experience.

⁹⁹ Terence Turner, "Structure, Process, Form", in J. Kreinath et al, *Theorizing Rituals*. p. 207-246, p. 237.

4.3.4 Emplacing the Place and its Space

The process of embodiment of synchronic schemas within the diachronic settings is not completed until the physical organization and the geographic context of the location encounters the complex of concepts and ideas, which are somehow related to spatial dimension of ritual in the minds of practitioners and which subsequently become the basis of the actual emplacement. Emplacement as a grid of spatially ordered conceptions and values is a fluid and rather abstract entity which nevertheless closely follows the actual ritual space. Hence, an emplacement is not identical with the abstract potentiality of synchronic spatial rules. Rather, it is an actualization of the given conceptions in concrete settings which allows certain individual deviation, but which is to a large extent shared by the whole group of practitioners (there is, for example, an unwritten rule in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temples that men and women sit separately, but only when the rule is made actual in a temple where everybody knows that women sit on the red carpet in the middle and men sit on the other carpet on the right side, we can call it an emplacement). While the localization of a place and the structuring of its space can be observed mostly from the physical appearance of the area, the form of the emplacement can be more likely deduced from the actions and accounts of practitioners.

In an illustrative selection of such categories already described in the section 3.4 we can note especially the arrangement of the temple in which the position at the right hand expresses the position of a servant and in which Kṛṣṇa, who in fact is considered the supreme Lord and the source of the universe, stands in the position of a servant towards Rādhā, Gaurāṅga, who is the joined incarnation of the divine couple in one body, gives himself as a servant to Kṛṣṇa, and Nitāi stands in the subordinate position towards Gaurāṅga, although he was more than ten years older. Through this ordering the tradition 'makes material' the basic claim about the merciful character of the Supreme Being expressed in connection with the nature of his relation to the worshippers. Apart from that, it also records the outlines of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* ontology focused on the concept of incarnation and the divine play of Kṛṣṇa, and at the same time it brings in mind various mythical narratives connected with the particular aspect of the doctrine. In this same manner, we can remember the separation of the room for the images expressing the respective forms of the divine and the room where '*Vaiṣṇavas*', which enables the tradition to draw a clear line between perfected human beings and the deities – so when *prasāda* is distributed, it is placed at first into the room of the deities and only when it was sanctified by them, one plate can be taken to the room of the worshipped *Vaiṣṇava* 'saints', because although they receive the same care as the deities, they still remain mere human beings who humbly take what was, metaphorically, left by the deities.

Also, the treatment of a particular basil tree in a sense depends on its position in the space – when it is taken out from the row of inconspicuous looking plants in earthen pots standing in the temple garden, placed in front of the temple images and dressed into a coloured cloth during the evening rites, it becomes the *tulasīdebī* who is praised by songs and small ritual acts. However, if its leaves begin to turn yellow, it can be substituted with another *tulasī* plant the next day.

Concerning the emplacements restricting the motions of the people in the space of temple, we can choose for example the unwritten rule that the shoes must be taken off before entering the raised platform of the temple verandah in the same way as one takes off shoes when entering an Indian household. Such acts refer both to the reverence for the images and to the personally conceived character of the deities which are thought actually to reside in the temple as in their house. Another case of such emplacement is the custom that the incomers sit in front of the images during the worship on a place which corresponds to their gender and social role. Women and men sit separately, there is a place reserved for the local *guru* or for the person who will read from the scriptures, and the guests are likely to be introduced to the place of honour behind the *guru*. Where one sits means who one is, which in the case of our temple means that e.g. a female anthropologist at the beginning of the research will be expected to sit next to the 'men's carpet' close to the *guru's* place, while after a couple of days she may shift to the 'women's carpet' and begin to sit together with local women.

The most obvious, but at the same time most interesting emplacement is the restriction concerning the inner room of the temple, where only a person entitled to perform the acts of *seba* to the images may enter. In this manner, the inner temple is completely secluded from the rest of the ordinary 'space' and the contact with the deities is only visual. This sense of exclusion of the inner temple out of its surroundings is further enhanced by the fact that the temple servants who perform the worship normally belong among those *bhaktas* who have dedicated their entire lives to the service to Kṛṣṇa, and as such somehow belong to the middle position of what Victor Turner called 'liminal *personae*'¹⁰⁰ who are 'neither here nor there', but betwixt on the borderline between the 'synchronic' realm of Kṛṣṇa's divine play and the 'ordinary' diachronic events of everyday experience.

4.3.5 The Matrix of the Field

Through all the process connected with pivoting the place, with resolving of its space and with actualizing the net of emplacements, the abstract synchronic order is embodied and made actual in diachrony. The categories and rules of synchrony emerge expressed in a net of various 'diachronic' entities or acts and can be literally touched or looked at as something objective and external. On the level of ritual place, synchrony is expressed in the actual geography; within a ritual space, it is expressed in the spatial organization and in the outer manifestation of any ritual elements which may be localized somehow (usually objects, but also sounds, smells etc.); and on the level of emplacement, the synchronic categories are expressed in the shared conceptions concerning the given ritual space in the actual place. These three aspects constitute the totality of the spatial dimension of ritual which may be called the field of ritual.

The field of ritual becomes a directing matrix of 'communicative possibilities' which constitute the horizon of information from which the selection of what is to be

¹⁰⁰ See Victor Turner, *Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Chicago: Aldine, 1969, p. 95.

understood is made. Anything that enters the field of ritual – be it a thing, a sound or a smell – potentially turns into a vessel carrying a certain amount of information which may be responded to by ritual actors on multiple levels,¹⁰¹ and as such, it is manipulated and directed in accordance with the underlying synchronic ‘vectors’ of spatial schemas. The receptive matrix constitutes the totality of the ritual environment where the synchrony is expressed through ‘diachronic’ entities and their mutual relations. The level of information which is selected to be understood by an individual is determined by the restricting processes described in the paragraphs on ritual communication, and in this way also the understanding is directed in accordance with the synchronic schemas. So in the most obvious case of the rite of *ārati*, when a lamp, incense, conch-shell, cloth, plate with flowers and fan is waved in front of the images successively, the movements of the person performing the worship strictly follow the prescribed pattern (see the section 3.6). The sequence of actions during presentation of the items to the deities exactly follows the doctrinal hierarchy of the worshipped deities and personages – the *bhaktas* buried in the *samādhis* being disciples of the *gurumā* – and it is continually repeated every day year after year, which exerts a considerable pressure on the freedom of an individual in the matter of understanding the nature and hierarchy of relations among the worshipped entities. Thus an individual who as a ritual actor becomes a ‘content-bearing’ element affecting both other actors and by means of auto-communication also himself is compelled to accept the synchronic background of the diachronic settings by accepting certain units of information offered by the organized ritual field. The body-mind of a practitioner is continually transformed through the outer form of the field, through the interaction with other ritual actors, who are also directed by the structure of the field, and through the actions he is expected to perform within the boundaries of the field.

By means of such processes an individual entering the field is constantly affected both on the mental and on the gestural and bodily level, so in the proximity of the field a person is manoeuvred in appointed directions both explicitly through the actual physical arrangement of the space and implicitly through the set of emplacements, which require a certain style of behaviour. Such pressure is most obvious in some expected ritual gestures which mark the crossing of spatial boundaries or which are related to certain spatially conceived categories. To use a concrete example, we can remember the typical gesture of *praṇām*, the humble salutation on crossing the view of the images which may take the form of prostration with face to the east and the left side of the body turned to the images or of a simple halting in front of the statues with clasped hands. Performing/omitting such gestures clearly shows whether the person is willing to give praise to the deities, and in this way marks the line between ‘natives’

¹⁰¹ In this way, one single signal or perception may be understood by different people on different levels according to personal preference or knowledge. So when perceiving a scent of jasmine flowers adorning the temple images, a person may begin to think about a particular episode from the legends of Kṛṣṇa, where Rādhā becomes motionless after hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute while weaving a jasmine garland for him; in another person, the familiar smell may evoke a long forgotten memory from childhood when during a celebration jasmine flowers were used as offering in the worship; and in someone else, the scent of jasmine may simple invoke a pleasant feeling of peace and joy without even being consciously realised.

and outsiders. In the particular case of the south-Kolkatan temple, the force of such rule stretches even over the actual boundaries of the temple ground, because the area visually communicates with its surroundings through the view in the entrance gates, and the rule thereby applies even to a casual passer-by riding on a motorbike around the temple. Also the rite of *parikramaṇ*, the circumambulation of the temple, operates on similar lines, because it vectors the practitioners around the temple images constituting both the spatial and the conceptual centre of the temple, and makes them stop during the rite both when they are passing in front of the images in the gesture of *praṇām* and when passing around the back wall of the inner temple by placing the forehead on the point on the wall, behind which the images are installed. Through such acts, an incomer is invited to share in the 'pool' of synchronic categories offered by the field and allow it to transform both his consciousness and his bodily ritual attitude.

However, it seems obvious that the field of ritual does not belong to the realm of pure synchrony, but rather is an expression of the synchrony embodied in diachrony. As such, it is inevitably liable to the influence of diachronic events and actions of practitioners. Following the threefold distinction of the spatial aspect of ritual, we can say that from a certain point of view the position of a place on the synchronic/diachronic geography may change through transformation of the surroundings of the site; so the position of a small temple situated in the middle of sparsely inhabited jungle is quite different to the situation of a temple which is suddenly surrounded by increasing number of high-rise buildings, as it has happened with the temple in southern Kolkata. These changes have affected also the character of the inner space of the site, which is gradually becoming drowned among the houses which have begun to grow around the area. Apart from that, even the inner ordering of the space may be changed by a deliberate act or an accidental event (e.g. a new deity may be included in worship in an Indian temple when someone brings its image and asks the temple servant to worship the deity along with those already installed at the site). The emplacement as an exceptionally fluid category may be continually transformed through the changes in shared consensus on the plausibility of conceptions connected with the actual space (e.g. men and women might in theory begin to sit together in a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple, as it happens recently in some reformed synagogues). In this way, the field of ritual, which in fact structures and shapes the experience and actions of practitioners in accordance with the underlying synchronic patterns, is conversely structured by their acts and diachronic events, which opens a possibility of gradual modification of the level of synchrony.

All these processes do not proceed at random, but rather are directed within the confines of the synchronic frame which balances the equilibrium of the structure, so that it neither destroys the individual by unbearable pressure nor breaks into pieces after an encounter with an unexpected event. The field becomes one of the devices that transform the process of thought of individuals and enhance the shared understanding within particular communities, so that their members can transform their experience of the world in connection to the order of synchronic relations both within the ritual environment and the diachronic life outside the field. When we apply this conclusion

to the concrete case of the temple where I did my field research, it is evident that the whole ritual field directs the attention of a practitioner by means of the communicative processes to the temple images as the central ‘pivotal objects’. The images present an obvious embodiment of the underlying principles of the synchronic order (indeed, the statues are thought to constitute the ‘bodies’ of the deities in our material world), so the involvement with the images means constant connection with the order. The idols, metaphorically, bend the space around themselves, and it is worth noticing that the degree of orthodoxy and loyalty to the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* doctrine and world-view among individual *bhaktas* is often directly proportional to the measure of their involvement with the ritual practice. So if a site of worship is a ‘lens’ focusing the attention of practitioners to the realm of synchrony, then a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple is a lens focusing the practitioners on Kṛṣṇa and his eternal *līlā*.

This connection is noticeable both on the level of the large-scale mythical cycle and on the level of the narrow-scale ‘mythical’ narrative treating the historical background of the south-Kolkatan temple. The first dimension can be perceived on the exclusion of the space of the inner room which through its high degree of separation from its more ‘diachronic’ surrounding becomes, in a sense, a small unit of the ‘synchronic’ space belonging by its nature to the realm of *līlā*.¹⁰² The narrow-scale dimension is expressed chiefly in the worship of the local ‘saints’ connected with the history of the temple. The *baiṣṇab ghar* where the image of the East Bengal *gurumā* is worshipped can be viewed as an entity ‘pivoting’ both the macro-time of the historical processes connected with the events around the partition of India and the micro-time of respective life-stories of individuals. The five *samādhis* contain the actual bodies – or in one case the part of the body which remains unburnt after cremation – of the people who were *gurumā*’s direct disciples from the first Dhaka *āśram*, but some of whom were at the same time known in person even to many people from the younger generation as true images of the ideals of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*. In this manner, the tombs embody a physical connection with the ‘liminal *personae*’ who on one hand partly belonged to the eternal realm already in their earthly lives, but on the other hand remain actually ‘bodily’ present in the diachronic settings and who through this ambivalent identity present an ideal vehicles expressing the process of transition from the construction of the identity, its loss and consequent reconstruction.

On the level of interaction between ritual actors, we can observe that the structure of the field constantly inscribes relational attitudes and social and gender roles to the minds and bodies of the participants. Although the actors in the field have certain freedom of choice in the form and location of particular gestures and positions (e.g. a salutation can be made first to the tombs on entering the temple before praising the

¹⁰² This specific nature of the space of the inner temple is most apparent in the case of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* practitioners who have adopted the path of meditation practice, which is performed with the ‘perfected body’ (*siddha deha*), that is a new identity of a perfected inhabitant of Kṛṣṇa’s eternal world – often a female servant of the divine couple – that will become the permanent eternal identity of the person after the end of the present life. Haberman mentions that some of his informants who have chosen this path claimed to enter the inner room of the temple only in the identity of their ‘perfected body’ and not in their actual ‘diachronic’ identity, which should be left behind at the moment of crossing the threshold of the inner room (Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation*, p. 137).

deities, or the tombs can be left unnoticed and a deep *praṇāṁ* can be performed in front of the inner temple), they are nevertheless continually compelled by the net of emplacements to carry out the prescribed actions.

5 Conclusion: "Everything in Its Right Place"

As we have seen, through the optic of Terence S. Turner's distinction between the order of synchronic categories and the diachronic temporal dimension of historical and life events, ritual can be viewed as a means of connecting the disorderly changes by continual transformation of the underlying grid proceeding in a certain restricted frame, which makes it possible to incorporate new elements and situations without deleting the particular structure of order. To deal with this task, ritual employs specific communicative strategies, which are more or less identical with the processes present in ordinary face-to-face communicating, but which are capable of turning to an advantage some typical dangers of communication – e.g. mistaking an act of communication with natural perception or the limited possibility of conceptual reflection of some material indices – and make them even the basis of their effectiveness. For this reason, ritual often relies on implicit and materially expressed communicative acts, which become embodied e.g. in gestures, objects, stylized motions of ritual actors, but also in places. This makes the spatial dimension of ritual enactments a useful 'focusing lens' through which the ritual enactments may be viewed and reflected upon. The tension between the level of synchronic order and the diachronic temporal frame affects the selection of a place of worship in relation to its history, lies at the basis of the physical arrangement of the space within the site, and is present in the net of spatially relevant conceptions, meanings and gestures connected with the position of the site on the particular conceptual geography and with the actual spatial ordering. These three dimensions together constitute the directing matrix of the 'field of ritual' which is a synthetic embodiment of synchronic categories and relation within diachronic settings through material indices and symbols and concepts, rules and customs shared by the particular group of practitioners.

All such processes are persistently being imprinted on the individual to make him become what Stephen J. Rosen has called a 'walking temple',¹⁰³ which, in the language of our theoretical approach, means that the body-mind of a practitioner is gradually transformed to include a whole grid of synchronic relations along with its balancing principle, which makes him ready to structure the unresolved mass of the diachronic life events operatively and to share this experience with other people. Through such influence, an individual may become a willing bearer of the abstract structure of synchronic concepts and categories, which are nevertheless capable of being embodied within diachrony under favourable circumstances (indeed, the wish to found a new temple arose in the minds of the *bhaktas* gathered around their *gurumā* and did not leave them even after the destruction of the first site of worship, but on the contrary became a driving force of the impulse for founding of the new temple in southern Kolkata). Hence in the mind of actual ritual participants the synchronic structures are deposited and may be transferred even outside the particular ritual frame to cover the totality of everyday life experience. To sum up, in the form of the ritual field, the

103 Stephen J. Rosen, "Introduction", p. 1.

individuals are given an effective tool which helps them to deal with potentially any situation – be it a stressful life event or an occurrence of a greenish porcupine at the door of a forest hunting shrine (which, actually, might be a good test of flexibility of the particular synchronic system) – by enabling them to connect it to the chain of synchronic relations and, both conceptually and literally, to ‘put everything in its right place.’

6 Glossary

ālpanā – white ornamental floor painting

anna – name for rice which is not colloquial and is used in temples for the rice which has not yet been offered to the deities

ārati – rite performed in the temple at high points of the day when various objects are waved in front of the temple images in order to entertain and please the divinities

aṣṭadhātu – an alloy consisting of eight metals, namely gold, silver, copper, bronze, bell-metal, zinc, lead and iron

aṣṭakālyanīlīlā, aṣṭakālyalīlā – ‘eternal *līlā* of eight periods’; the activities of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in eight periods of day depicted in eight strophes of *Govindalīlāmṛta* by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj Gosvāmin as a record of *līlā* envisioned in meditation

bābāji – in this context a title used for *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* renunciators

baikālik bhog – the afternoon meal offered to the deities

baiṣṇab ghar, baiṣṇaber mandir, gurudeber mandir - ‘temple of *Vaiṣṇavas*’ or ‘temple of *guru*’; the side room of the inner space of a *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* temple where *Vaiṣṇava* ‘saints’ are worshipped

bālya bhog – morning meal for the deities (and also the time when the meal is offered)

bastra – or colloquially *rumāl*; the piece of cloth folded into square with golden fringes which is presented to the deities during *ārati*

bhakta – devotee

bhog – ‘feast’; in this context a meal eaten by *bhaktas* after it has been presented to the deities

bigraha – ‘image’; a term used for the temple images of deities after installation

bigrahasebak – lit. ‘servant of temple images’ (*bigraha* = image, *sebak* = servant); the person responsible for the rituals performed in the inner temple

Bṛndāban – or Braj; both mythical background of Kṛṣṇa’s legends and actual geographic location in the historical region of Mathura, south of Delhi, which is the most important pilgrimage centre of the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* sacred geography

cāmar – fan made of yak tale used for fanning the temple images during *ārati*

darśan – blessing by the sight of a deity

dhup – an incense stick

Gaurāṅga – a name of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava* leader *Caitanya*, who is considered to be an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in one body; this appellation literally means ‘of fair limbs’ and it refers to his beauty which was said to resemble the fairness of Rādhā

gurubandanā – the praise of one’s *guru* sung by the *bigrahasebak* in the morning often in attendance of other devotees

gurumā – female spiritual preceptor

hastyapādyaprakṣālya – washing of the hands and feet of temple images in the early morning

kīrtan, saṁkīrtan – a *Vaiṣṇava* song of praise or an act of singing such songs

madhyakālin bhog – or *annabhog, rāja bhog*; cooked midday meal for the deities (and also the time when the meal is offered)

mandir – temple

mūrti – ‘statue’; the outer material form of the temple image

nāmkīrtan – singing of Kṛṣṇa’s name in the form of *mahāmantra* (‘Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare’)

namaskār – joining the hands in front of one’s chests as in the ordinary Bengali salutation

Nitāi – or Nityānanda; an eternal companion of Gaurāṅga who in his earthly life was an ascetic and the closest follower and ‘older brother’ (he was more than ten year older) of his master

pañcagabya – purifying paste made of five products of cow, namely milk, butter, curd, urine and cow-dung

pañcāṅgapraṇām – ‘*praṇām* of five limbs’; kneeling with one’s head and hands on the ground

pañcapradīp – lamp with five flames in which rolls of cotton wool soaked in oil or clarified butter is lit

parikramaṇ – triple circumambulation of the temple, which refers to the *līlās* of Kṛṣṇa and which is performed either individually or collectively at some point after the rite of *ārati*

paṭ – scroll-painting depicting episodes from legends and mythical cycles

pāṭh – ‘reading’; reading, explaining and discussion of the sacred scriptures which is performed usually in the evening

pāṭhak – person who specializes in reading and explaining the sacred scriptures

praṇām – translated as ‘prostration’ or ‘taking one’s dust’; a gesture which is performed in front of a temple image or in front of a revered person (e.g. one’s parents or spiritual preceptor)

prasād – food and water offered to the deities and blessed by their sight

pūja – daily or occasional worship

samādhi bedi – or *samādhiphalak*; a tomb, where the body of a *sebāit* or another important person is buried. In some cases also the *nabhikuṇḍal* (i.e. the part of the body around the umbilical cavity which remains unburnt after cremation) may be kept in a *samādhi*

śaṅkha – conch-shell

sannyāsī – renouncer

sandhyā – ‘evening’, also a name for an incense offering performed around the time of twilight

saṣṭāṅga- or *aṣṭāṅgapraṇām* – ‘*praṇām* of six/eight limbs’ (depends on the particular classification of the parts of the body), which is a full prostration on the ground with one’s eyes half closed and arms stretched forwards

śāstras – Hindu scripts constituting the foundation of the rules of moral conduct

śāyan ghar, *śāyan mandir* – ‘bedchamber’; the side room of the inner temple, which is meant to serve as a bed-room for the night rest of the deities

seba – service to Kṛṣṇa in the form of a temple image; acts and tending practices connected with the temple worship

seba-pūja – temple service and worship

sebāit – a man under ascetic vows who is entitled to perform the acts of *seba*

siṃhāsan – ‘throne’; a wooden frame on which the images of the deities are raised

snān - bathing of the images

thākur – 1) colloquial designation of a temple image; 2) shortened colloquial address of a person who is entitled to perform the acts of worship in the *thākur ghar*

thākur ghar, *thākurer mandir* – refers either to the whole structure of the inner temple or to the particular room, where the images of the deities are placed

thākurmaśāi – colloquial appellation of the *sebak* responsible for the rituals performed in the inner temple

tilak - or colloquially *phōtā*, ‘spot’; a distinguishing sign of different Indian sects and traditions. *Vaiṣṇavas* normally use white santal and the mark may take either a more elaborate form of clay coloured lines shaped vertically as a horse-shoe painted from the forehead to the nose or sometimes even on the upper side of the arms or a simple form of whitish spot between the eyes of the devotee

tulasīmañca – platform with the sacred *tulasī* plant which may be set up both in a temple and in any other household

tulsī, *tulasī* – “Holy Basil”, *Ocimum sanctum*; a plant which is considered especially dear to Kṛṣṇa and which plays an important role in many ritual acts and in mythical stories connected with the forests of Bṛndāban (Bṛndā Debī is a name of a goddess eternally serving to Kṛṣṇa in his world who took a material form of the lady of Bṛndāban forest in this world; Bṛndā’s partial expansion is Tulasī Debī whose material form is the *tulasī* plant)

tulasībandanā – praise of Tulasī Debī worshipped in the form of the sacred *tulasī* plant

ulul – specific sound performed by female devotees at some points of certain rites

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Electronic Resources

"Radha Krishna's Eternal Eightfold Daily Pastimes ", at
 <<http://www.harekrsna.de/Asta-kaliya-nitya-lila.htm>>, 21/03/2009.

Appendix 1 – Visual Materials Used in the Text



P.1 Eastern Gate of Gaurāᅅga mandir



P.2 Temple Verandah

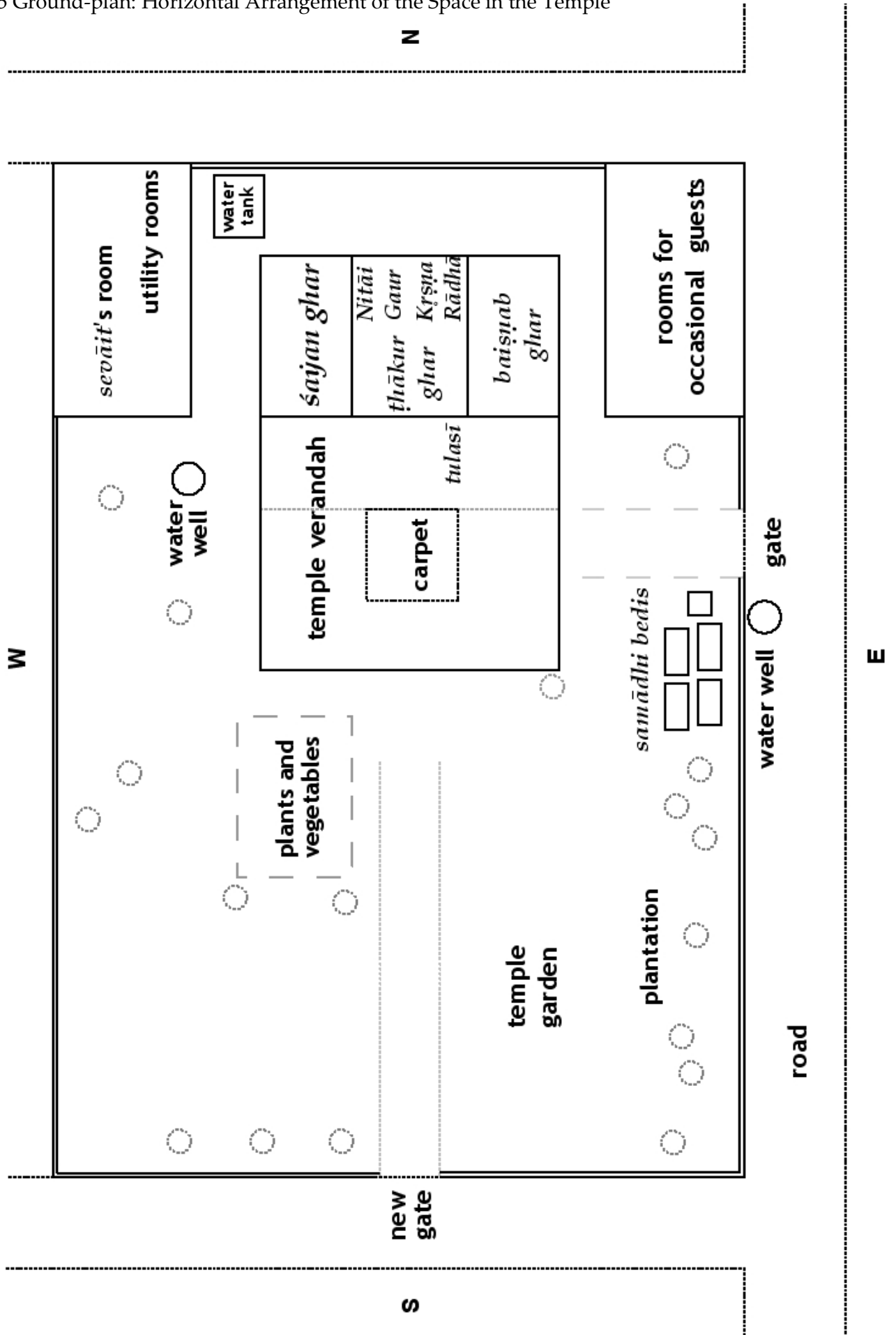


P.3. Surroundings of the Temple



P.4 Eastern Gate with Tube Well

P.5 Ground-plan: Horizontal Arrangement of the Space in the Temple





P.6 Temple Verandah and the Inner Temple



P.7 Back Corridor



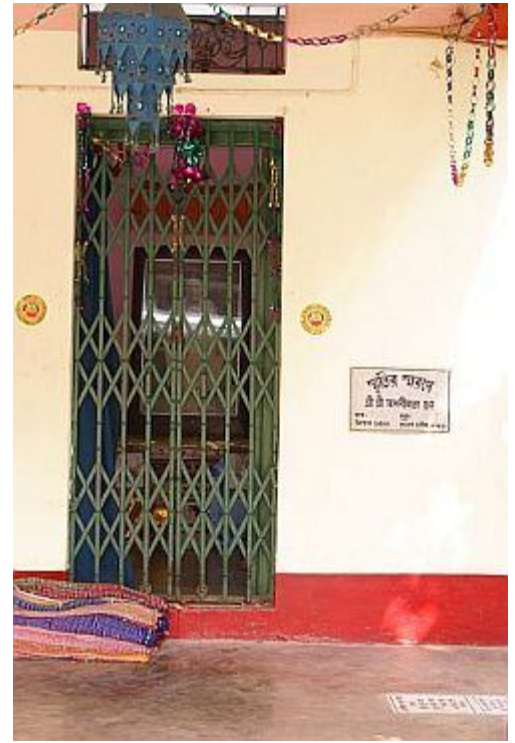
P.8 Temple Garden with the Southern Gate



P.9 Flower and Vegetable Patch



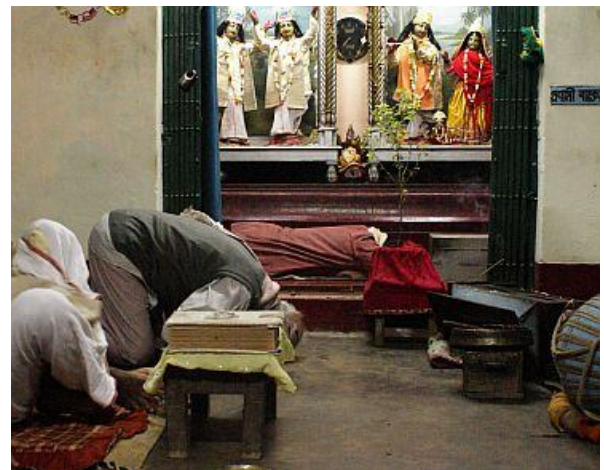
P.10 *Samādhi Bedis*



P.11 *Baiṣṇab Ghar* with the Image of *Gurumā*



P.12 *Space of the Inner Temple*



P.13 *Prañām* at the End of the Rite of *Ārati*



P.14 *Temple Servants: Bigrahasebak* with His Mother



P.15 *Carpets for Sitting*



P.16 *Guru's and Pathak's Place*



P.17 Adding *Tulasī* Leaves into the Water



P.18. Image of *Rādhā* with Flower



P.19 *Prasād*



P.20 Images Dressed in Winter Clothes



P.21 Images Decorated with Flower Garlands



P.22 Tulasī Plant with the Book



P.23 Evening Pāth



P.25 Photā



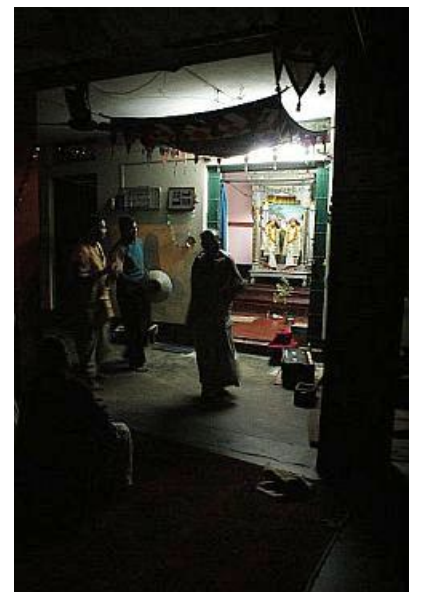
P.24 Sermon in the Time of the Pāth



P.26. Tilak



P.27 Tulasībandanā



P.28 Parikraman



P.29 Preparation of *Ārati*



P.30 Lighting the *Pañcapradīp*



P.31 Blowing the Conch



P.32 Waving with *Pañcapradīp*



P.33 Placing the *Pañcapradīp* on the Threshold



P.34 Taking the Light



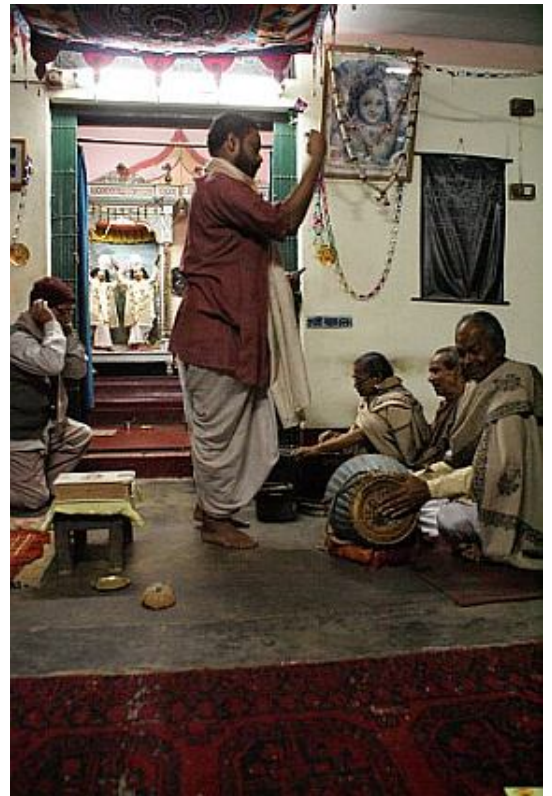
P.37 Pouring off Water from the Conch-shell



P.36 Waving with *Bastra*



P.37 Presenting Flowers



P.38 *Aśīrbād*

Appendix 2 – List of Video Files

1. vd01_asirbad
2. vd02_bastra
3. vd03_bhakta with dhup
4. vd04_bhaktas
5. vd05_contributions
6. vd06_cotton rolls
7. vd07_darsan
8. vd08_darsan_prasad
9. vd09_decorating the images
10. vd10_discussion
11. vd11 _discussion2
12. vd12_end of arati
13. vd13_flowers for Radha
14. vd14_flowers_ulul
15. vd15_giving phota
16. vd16_guru
17. vd17_kirtan
18. vd18_kirtan_bastra
19. vd19_opening the door
20. vd20_opening the grille
21. vd21_pancapradip
22. vd22_pathak
23. vd23_phota to bhaktas
24. vd24_phota to bhaktas2
25. vd25_phota to pathak
26. vd26_phota to women
27. vd27_pranam
28. vd28_prasad
29. vd29_preparation of arati
30. vd30_preparation of arati2
31. vd31_preparation of cotton rolls
32. vd32_preparation of cotton rolls2
33. vd33_preparation of steel cup
34. vd34_sandhya
35. vd35_sandhya at samadhis
36. vd36_sandhya in inner temple
37. vd37_sankha
38. vd38_shifting tulasi
39. vd39_taking prasad
40. vd40_taking the light

Appendix 1 – Visual Materials Used in the Text



P.1 Eastern Gate of Gaurāṅga mandir



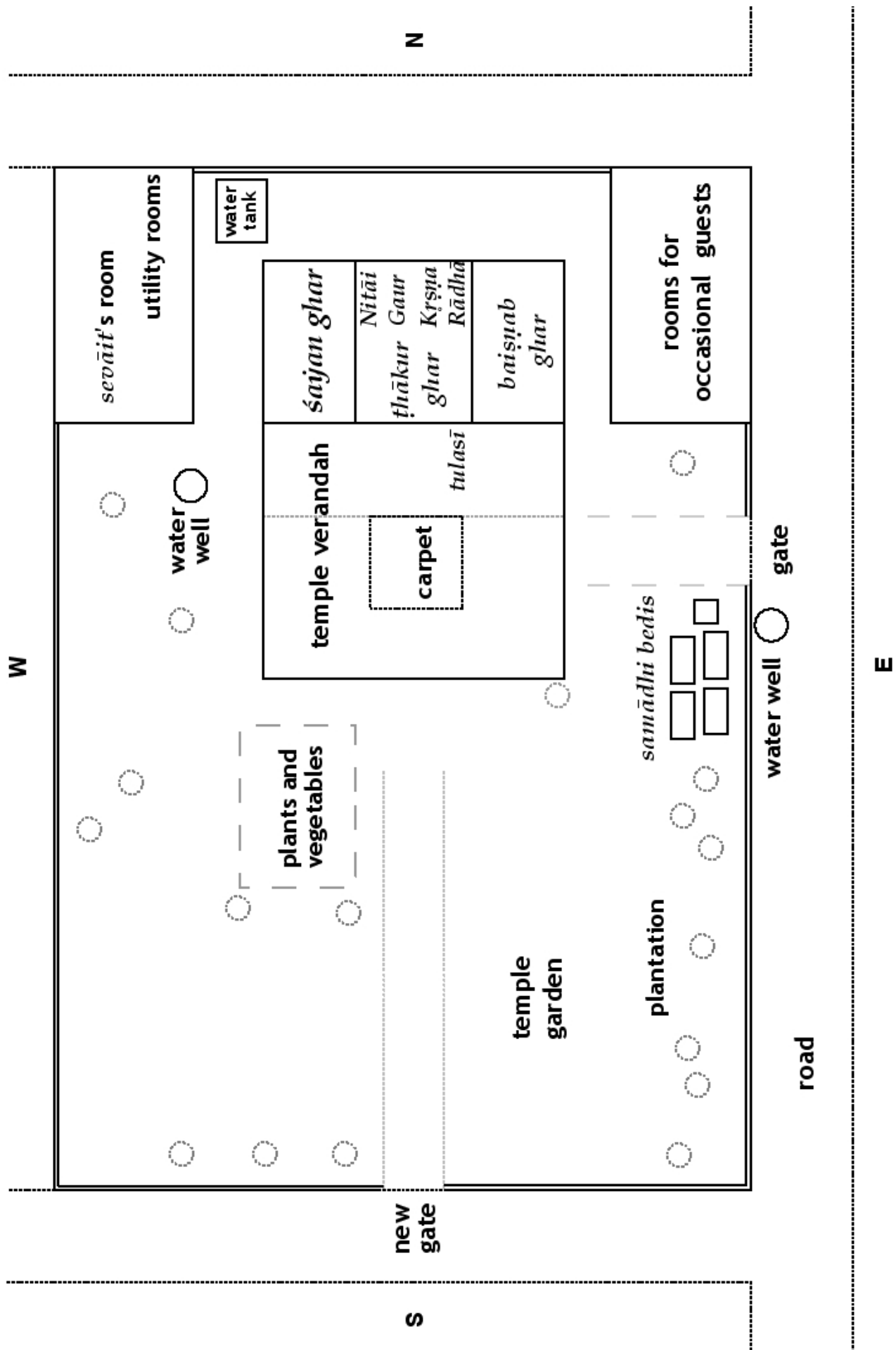
P.2 Temple Verandah



P.3 Surroundings of the Temple



P.4 Eastern Gate with Tube Well





P.6 Temple Verandah and the Inner Temple



P.7 Back Corridor



P.8 Temple Garden with the Southern Gate



P.9 Flower and Vegetable Patch



P.10 *Samādhi Bedis*



P.11 *Baiṣṇab Ghar* with the Image of *Gurumā*



P.12 *Space of the Inner Temple*



P.13 *Praṇām* at the End of the Rite of *Ārati*



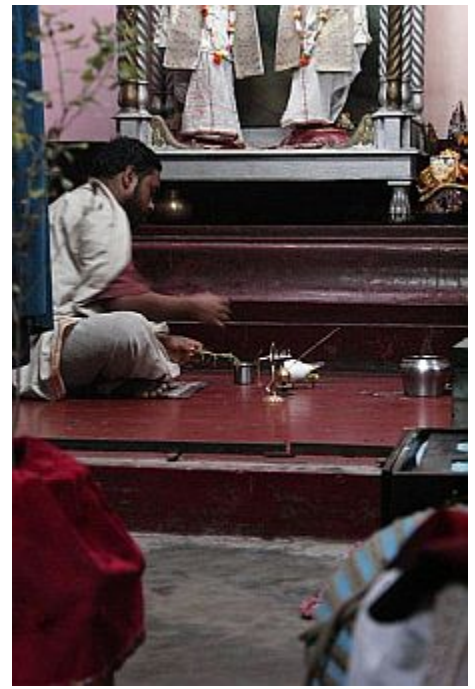
P.14 *Temple Servants: Bigrahasebak* with His Mother



P.15 *Carpets for Sitting*



P.16 Guru's and Paṭhak's Place



P.17 Adding *Tulasī* Leaves into the Water



P.18. Image of Rādhā with Flower



P.20 Images Dressed in Winter Clothes



P.19 *Prasād*



P.21 Images Decorated with Flower Garlands



P.22 Tulasī Plant with the Book



P.23 Evening Pāṭh



P.25 Photā



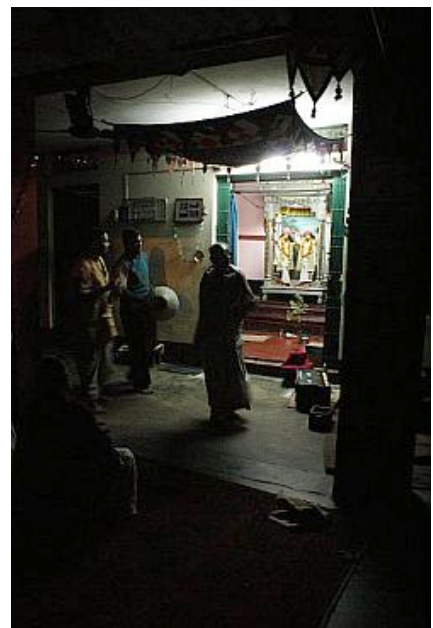
P.24 Sermon in the Time of the Pāṭh



P.26. Tilak



P.27 Tulasībandanā



P.28 Parikramāṇ



P.29 Preparation of *Ārati*



P.30 Lighting the *Pañcapradīp*



P.31 Blowing the Conch



P.32 Waving with *Pañcapradīp*



P.33 Placing the *Pañcapradīp* on the Threshold



P.34 Taking the Light



P.37 Pouring off Water from the Conch-shell



P.36 Waving with *Bastra*



P.37 Presenting Flowers



P.38 *Aśīrbād*