

The Braj Foundation

Heritage, Community, Environment
www.brajfoundation.org



Radha Rani's Jal Mahal and Kund in Barsana restored by The Braj Foundation



Vrishbhanu Kund and Jal Mahal after restoration

Very few people know that Barsana, the village of Sri Radha Rani - the eternal consort of Sri Krishna, located some 40 kms North West of Mathura is



Jal Mahal before restoration

home to some of the most beautiful and awesome heritage buildings which have survived the plunder and destruction of medieval ages.

Overlooking the temple of Radha Rani on top of Brahmanchal hill, there is a huge complex spread over 10 acres of land and is enclosed by strong masonry walls on all the four sides. This complex encloses two water tanks known as Vrishbhanu Kund & Kirti Kund named after the parents of Radha Rani. As per the local tradition Radha Rani used to come to these tanks along with her parents to bathe.

On the margin of Vrishbhanu Kund is located a 3 storey palatial mansion popularly known as Jal Mahal which is supported on a series of vaulted colonnades and opens on to the water.

The entire complex has withstood the test of time and has been restored time and again. The farthest record of restoration as per a Sanskrit inscription dates back to the

year 1610 by the then King of Barsana. Interestingly, the Archaeological Survey of India has taken up the protection of this inscription alone and has left out the magnificent Jal Mahal and Kund which stands in the backdrop of this inscription.

The latest effort for restoring this grand heritage was made by *The Braj Foundation*. In the year 2003 with the financial assistance of Mr. Rishikesh Mafatlal and Mr. Rajiv Shukla, Congress MP and Mr. B. P. Singhal & Mr. Balbir Punj, BJP MPs, the de-silting work of the Vrishbhanu Kund and the repair of Jal Mahal was undertaken. It took eighty



Side view of the Jal Mahal before restoration

artisans and ten months to finish the job. A lot more needs to be done and The Braj Foundation has plans for that. **All these distinguished donors have expressed extreme pleasure and satisfaction with the work of the Foundation. Infact, Mr. Balbir Punj, said in a public function that, "The Braj Foundation has made the best**

Inside stories

Pg-2 : Cover story continues...

Pg-3 : Media reports & field action

Pg-4 : Invitation for Barsana Mahotsav



Wisdom Words

"Protecting the environment and heritage of Braj is most pleasing to Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Krishna Bhagwan, a fact very few people know".

Sri Ramesh Baba



From Vrindavan

Dear Readers!

If you are interested in conserving the cultural and environmental heritage of Braj- the land of Shri Radha Krishna, then we are the people who will give you authentic knowledge and a noble cause to take-up. Under the Chairmanship of well known philanthropic like **Mr. Kamal Morarka**, (Chairman, Gannon Dunkerley Group, Mumbai) this Foundation has done unprecedented historic research and developmental work in Braj in a short span of three years.

The foundation has a unique vision for the whole Braj and a dedicated team of young and experienced professionals from IITs and IIMs etc. to execute this. If you visit our website (www.brajfoundation.org) you will be able to appreciate this.

Other eminent trustees of the Foundation are **Mr. Suresh Neotia** (Chairman, Gujarat Ambuja Cement Kolkata), **Mr. Alfred Ford** (Director, Ford Motor Foundation, Detroit, USA) **Mr. Hrishikesh Mafatlal** (CEO, AMGroup, Mumbai) **Mr. John Robert Sims** (MD, Himalayan Ski Village .Shimla) **Mr. Vineet Narain** Eminent journalist, (www.vineetnarain.net)

Through this newsletter we will give you a regular update on our efforts to make Braj the most beautiful place on earth. We will appreciate if you kindly circulate this among your friends. May the divine couple bless you and your family.

Kamla Agarwal

use of my MPLAD fund. I wish they had approached me earlier, I would have given them entire funds for such a noble cause".

However to revive the cultural significance of this historic spot, The Braj Foundation has undertaken to organize four festivals



Sharad Mahotsav at Vrishbhanu Kund

annually **Barsana Mahotsav** on the eve of Radha Ashtami, **Sharad Mahotsav** on the night of Sharad Purnima, **Basant Mahotsav** on the occasion of Basant Panchami and **Holi Mahotsav** on the occasion of world famous **Lathmar holi** of Barsana.

Unfortunately, the land within the four boundaries of the entire complex adjacent to the water bodies has been continuously encroached upon. Several unauthorised kuccha & pucca constructions have come up in the entire complex whose dirty water fall into the kund. Off late, a local land developer has been successful in manipulating the land revenue records and is all set to sell plots all around the Vrishbhanu Kund; thereby ensuring the complete devastation of this historic site.



Illuminated Jal Mahal

The Revenue Dept. Mathura administration has failed totally to check this illegal and undesirable development. Even the ASI has paid no heed to the protection and preservation of the Sanskrit inscription alone, what to talk of the entire

complex.

The plunder of this priceless heritage needs to be checked not only by locally active organizations such as **The Braj Foundation, Braj Rakshak Dal** but also by the connoisseurs of Braj culture and heritage from all over the world.

The Vrishbhanu Kund complex is not only important from its heritage point of view, but also because of its water harvesting potential. If buildings get constructed all around it, the catchment area of the tank would get totally obstructed and subsequently the Kund will die an unnatural death.

Since, Governments alone have been unable to conserve and protect the heritage; a strong public-private-people's partnership needs to be evolved to preserve these landmarks of history which also have a promise for future sustenance of Indian villages and towns.

The Braj Foundation has constituted a committee called, **Vrishbhanu Kund-Jal Mahal Sanrakshan Samiti** for the protection and maintenance of this heritage. Headed by the SDM Chatta this voluntary committee has nine members from the village of Barsana and one representative of The Braj Foundation. This committee can be more active once the further development and beautification is done.

Recently the CEO Mr. Vineet Narain and Project Coordinator Mr. Raghav Mittal of the Foundation had a fruitful meeting at Lucknow with **Mr. Shashank Shekhar, Cabinet Secretary** who in turn sent the Principal Secretary Tourism to Mathura. He visited the restoration sites of The Braj Foundation and gave instructions to the District Administration to remove all hurdles from the path of this dedicated team. It seems that Ms. Mayawati Govt. is wanting to perform. Let us pray to Radharani that the Foundation is able to further beautify this land mark in Barsana. The plan includes to undertake following projects in this complex; 1. Landscape designing and development of the complex

(Contd. On Pg. 4)

Action in field



Desilting at Mansa Kund

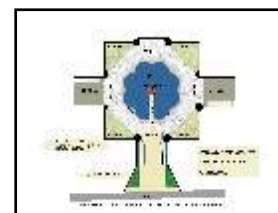
The earthmover of the Foundation is desilting the ancient **Mansa Kund** in Pasauli village, near Vrindavan. The step brothers of Bhismpitamah took a holy dip in this kund to wash off their mental sins and then performed self-immolation under the Peepal Tree. After digging 35 feet we were fortunate enough to get sweet water. The villagers are in ecstasy and the foundation is waiting to get a financial help of Rs 25 lakhs to complete the project. So far we have received only Rs. 1.24 Lakh from Mrs. Indira Saraf and her friends from Peddar Road, Mumbai. This is the village where demon Aghasur used to live, whom Lord Krishna killed. For details of this project please visit our website.



Restoration of Brahma Kund, Vrindavan

Vrindavan has eight Kunds associated with the past times of Lord Krishna and all of them were in a very poor state. The above picture is of **Brahma Kund** near Rangnathji temple in Vrindavan, which had become the garbage dumping ground for local municipality. This historic kund is being restored by the Foundation with financial assistance from **Mr. Ajay Piramal, MD, Nicholas Piramal Group, Mumbai.**

Foundation is making this Kund as an eight petal lotus flower with a fountain and deity of lord Brahma in the centre. (See box)



Media report

Efforts to revive the past glory of Braj, the land Lord Krishna, seems to have yielded results even without the support of government agencies. The efforts under the leadership of the Chief Executive Officer of Braj Foundation, an NGO, Vineet Narain, have restored the glory of the area to certain extent.

THE TIMES OF INDIA (Lucknow), 30.07.2006

The Braj Foundation, dedicated to all round development of the culturally vibrant region, gave a graphic presentation of the crumbling culture. The audience was senior bureaucrats.

Hindustan Times (Lucknow), 29.07.2006

A meeting was held between UP Cabinet Secretary Shshank Shekhar and the CEO of NGO, Braj Foundation, Vineet Narain and Raghav Mittal in Lucknow to discuss various aspects, including co-operation of the administration.

The Pioneer (New Delhi), 2.09.2007

From cleaning and restoring old temple tanks for rainwater harvesting to spreading awareness about cleanliness and deforestation, a two year old organization The Braj Foundation is now preaching lessons of conservation as part of religious discourses and using the Bhagwatam to inform villagers about their rich natural surroundings that they live in.

THE HINDU (New Delhi), 2.11.2004

A voluntary organization called The Braj Foundation is fighting to save sacred sites and dozens of hills in the region of Braj, associated with the legend of Lord Krishna, from the illegal mining and stone quarrying. The two year old organization had already started by cleaning and restoring old temple tanks.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES (Mumbai), 13.01.2005

(From Pg. 2)

2. Sound and light show
3. Deployment of two watchmen and two gardeners
4. Generator set
5. Two Iron gates
6. Mural paintings on the inner walls of the Jal Mahal
7. Construction of Raas Manch - open air theater for performances



Odissi dancer at Barsana Mahotsav

The foundation solicits generous support for this noble cause. Once developed this whole complex will attract millions of tourists and devotees from world over. The supporting agencies or individuals will get due recognition in the publicity material and on the plaque. All donations made to The Braj Foundation are exempted u/s 80(G) of the Income Tax Act.



Audience at Barsana Mahotsav

If you plan to visit this heritage site then please do let us know. We will be glad to assist you.

Please feel free to contact our New Delhi office for further information.

Head Office:

The Braj Foundation, C/6/28 SDA, Hauz Khas, New Delhi- 110016.
Tele (011)2656-6800, 2651-9080.


Field Office:

303 Keshav Kunj, (Opp. ISKCON), Raman Reti, **Vrindavan** (Mathura).
Tel: 0565-3202303, 2540084

Email: brajfoundation@gmail.com


Web: www.brajfoundation.org

Forthcoming Events



Barsana Mahotsav 2007
19 Sept.2007

This year's Barsana Mahotsav will be celebrated in association with the UP Tourism and Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, on Wednesday 19 Sept. from 6PM onwards at the Vrishbhanu Kund, Barsana. You are cordially invited to enjoy the festivity, folk music, raas leela and bhajans. For route directions and other details, please visit our website or feel free to call our Delhi office.



Do you want to enjoy the Power Point Presentation on Braj ?

“Visually pleasing and very informative” that is what the viewers say about our power point presentation. We will be glad to give this to your friends and colleagues if you invite us to do so.

This presentation has already been seen and appreciated by the heads of top corporate houses, several Union Cabinet Ministers, leaders of other parties, Govt. officials including Cabinet Secretary & several Secretaries of the Govt. of India, Chief Election Commissioner of India, Secretary General, Rajya Sabha, Members of the Central Vigilance Commission, Director CBI, Hon'ble Judges of High Court and Supreme Court, Diplomats, DG Income Tax, Chief Secretaries & secretaries of UP, Rajasthan govt. and by other prominent people from India and abroad.



Mr. Kamal Morarka
Chairman
The Braj Foundation

Foundation gets three new earthmovers

The villagers of Braj express their gratitude to Mr. Kamal Morarka, who has generously donated three new earthmovers (worth Rs. 70 Lakhs) to the Foundation for desilting the ancient Kunds in Braj. He has also donated funds for restoration of several kunds in Braj. We have already desilted 22 kunds in the rural areas of Braj during 2006-07

There are over 800 magnificent kunds in Braj, which are to be restored by the Foundation. To achieve this target in 5 years, The Braj Foundation needs 25 more earthmovers.

Corporate houses or lovers of Braj can help the foundation by donating or by leasing these earthmovers to the foundation on charitable basis. Please remember that this is going to be the biggest and historic exercise of water conservation in Braj which you too can support under your CSR.



Published by Rajneesh Kapur for limited private circulation only. Media colleagues are welcome to use this material for their stories.