

Introducing another Surdas
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Surdas is an important name in the history of Braj/ early Hindi literature. The famous Surdas has written under various signatures like Sur, Surdas, Surij, Suraj, Surijdas, Sur Shyam and so on. Interestingly there were many poets of similar name who many a times used the signature of Surdas for recognition! There is a similar signature, but with a difference. Here, let me introduce another Surdas who was better known as 'Surdas Madanmohan'. Braj/early Hindi literary histories and several other books on the Chaitanyaite literature of that period provide only a brief introduction of Surdas Madanmohan.

As for many other Bhakti poets, *Bhaktamal* of Nabhaji is the primary source of information regarding this poet. Nabha ji praises his versatility as a poet, composer and singer. After retiring as a revenue officer in Mughal emperor Akbar's administration at Sandila, near Lucknow, he moved Vrindaban and settled there permanently. It is said that our Surdas became a disciple of Sanatan Goswami, a profound theologian, great scholar and one among the prominent six associates of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Surdas, in his poetry, always expresses his inseparable faith in Lord Madanmohan, the deity served by Sanatan Goswami at Vrindaban. Thus his signature became Surdas'Madanamohan.

Due to the resemblance of the name many of his verses are recorded and merged in the Sursagar of Surdas.

Surdas Madanmohan might not be as famous as the other Surdas but he is very well received in the literary and artistic culture of Braj, especially in Raslila performances, samaj kirtan and other devotional and musical fora. His verses are also recorded in various Varshotsav anthologies.

Surdas Madanmohan is popular for his musical and rhythmic Raslila songs highlighting *madhura rasa*. At the same time there is a lot of play of other *rasas* including *vatsalya rasa*. I shall share a few stories about him (based on Priyadas's commentary of *Bhaktma*) and various aspects of Krishna Lila displayed in his poetry.

Baba Krishnadas of Kusum Sarovar, Govardhan has published a collections of his 105verses under the title "*Surdas Madanmohan Ki Vani*", in 1943 (*samvat* 2000) which was reprinted with additional 39 songs in 1958 (*samvat*2015). 14 padas of Surdas Madanmohan have been included in '*Braj Madhursar*, edited by Viyogi Hari.