

Janamashtami



Om Vishnupad 108 Tridandi
Swami Sri Srimat Bhakti Sravan
Tirtha Goswami Maharaj

VAISHNAV BEHAVIOUR

His Divine Grace OM Vishnupad 108 Tridandi Swami
Sri Srimat Bhakti Sravan Tirtha
Goswami Maharaj

While teaching Sanatana Goswami, Lord Chaitanya described twenty-six qualities of the Vaishnava :

krpalu, akṛta-droha, satya-sara, sama
nirdosa, vadanya, mridu, suci, akincana
sarvopakaraka, santa, kṛṣṇaika-sarana
akama, aniha, sthira, vijita-sad-guna
mita-bhuk, apramatta, manada, amani
gambhira, karuna, maitra, kavi, dakṣa, mauni

Devotees are always merciful, humble, truthful, equal to all, faultless, magnanimous, mild and clean. They are without material possessions, and they perform welfare work for everyone. They are peaceful, surrendered to Krishna and desireless. They are indifferent to material acquisitions and are fixed in devotional service. They completely control the six bad qualities—lust, anger, greed and so forth. They eat only as much as required, and they are not inebriated. They are respectful, grave, compassionate and without false prestige. They are friendly, poetic, expert and silent.

—Chaitanya Charitamrita Madhya 22. 78–80

As Sukadeva Goswami explains in Srimad Bhagavatam (6. 1. 15) : Only a rare person who has adopted complete, unalloyed devotional service to Krishna can uproot the weeds of sinful actions with no possibility that they will revive. He can do this simply by discharging devotional service, just as the sun can immediately dissipate fog by its rays.

1. A devotee is merciful, kṛpalu.

Lord Kapila, in his teaching to his mother Devahuti, discusses mercifulness as one of the symptoms of a sadhu.

The Vaishnava is merciful because he is the well-wisher of all living entities. He is not only a well-wisher of human society, but a well-wisher of the animal society as well. It is said here, "sarva dehinam", which indicates all living entities who have accepted material bodies.

—Srimad Bhagavatam 3. 25. 51

We can also serve the merciful mahatma; therefore, we can share in his distribution of mercy. We can distribute Krishna consciousness under the authorization of the merciful and compassionate great soul, and thus we also become merciful workers.

2. A devotee is not defiant, akṛta-droha.

Lord Chaitanya is Siksastaka gives the ultimate expression of humility : "One should chant the holy name of the Lord in humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than a blade of grass; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly". Humility is glorious and is one of the prime qualities of a transcendently situated person. "The qualities of humbleness and meekness lead very quickly to spiritual realization".

Out of humility the sannyasi goes from door to door, not exactly to beg but to awaken the householders to Krishna consciousness. Meeting many difficulties in his traveling and preaching, the sannyasi remains tolerant humble and therefore gains the strength to go on preaching.

When Lord Chaitanya came into the company of Mayavadi sannyasis at Benares, He humbly sat by the place where everyone washed their feet. The Mayavadi sannyasis had taken elevated seats, and when they saw Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu so humble and meek, they thought He must be lamenting. They couldn't understand His meekness. His humility was inconceivable.

3. A devotee is truthful, satya-sara

To be truthful you first have to know the truth. Being truthful is not just a matter of refraining from telling lies. "Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. They self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth (Bhagavad Gita 4. 34)".

The Absolute Truth is Krishna as he is described in the first verse of Srimad Bhagavatam (1. 1. 1) :

"O my Lord, Sri Krishna, son of Vasudeva, O all-pervading Personality of Godhead, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You. I meditate upon Lord Sri Krishna because He is the Absolute Truth and the primeval cause of all causes of the creation, sustenance and destruction of the manifested universes. He is directly and indirectly conscious of all manifestations, and He is independent because there is no other causes beyond Him. It is He only who first imparted the Vedic knowledge unto the heart of Brahmaji, the original living being. By Him even the great sages and demigods are placed into illusion, as one is bewildered by the illusory representations of water seen in fire, or land seen on water. Only because of Him do the material universes, temporarily manifested by the reactions of the three modes of nature, appear factual although they are unreal. I therefore mediate upon Him, Lord Krishna, who is eternally existent in the transcendental abode, which is forever free from the illusory representations of the material world. I meditate upon Him, for He is the Absolute Truth."

Knowledge of the truth makes us free. The concept of the body as the self is false. Life in the material world, suffering the changes of birth, death, disease, and old age, is not the true, constitutional situation of the self. We are meant for the eternal, spiritual world. The spiritual world is true, and only due to a false notion of the self (false ego) are the living entities imprisoned in the material world birth after birth.

4. A devotee is equal to everyone, sama.

Lord Krishna declares that all the living entities, or jivas, are His “eternally fragmented parts and parcels”. They have come into this material world due to their desires and are now struggling with the senses and the mind.

In addition to perceiving the presence of the individual soul, the learned devotee knows the Supreme Soul is also there within the heart of every living entity. Therefore, in Bhagavad gita (15. 15) Lord Krishna declares, “I am seated in everyone’s heart, and from Me comes remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness”. He reaffirms, “The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone’s heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated on a machine made of material energy”. Lord Chaitanya was able to engage even the jungle tigers, lions, and elephants in chanting the Mahamantra.

5. A devotee is faultless, nirdosa.

Even if a devotee accidentally deviates from pure devotional activities, he should still be considered saintly. The Nirsingh Purana states : “If a person has completely engaged his mind, body, and activities in the service of the Supreme Godhead, but externally he is found to be engaged in some abominable activities, these abominable activities will surely be very quickly vanquished by the influence of his staunch devotional force”.

The rightness and purity of the devotee’s resolve to serve Lord Krishna is so great that it rectifies all faults. But to see this, one requires devotional vision. The nondevotee will see faults even in the greatest devotee, whereas the devotee will always see Lord Krishna’s pure devotee as faultless.

The “faults,” then, are only the imagination of persons with material vision. If the devotees mispronounces a Sanskrit verse, technically speaking we can say he has committed an error, but that error doesn’t undermine his faultless position—that he is trying to glorify Lord Krishna under the order of the spiritual master.

6. A devotee is magnanimous, vadanya.

The dictionary defines magnanimous as “Noble of mind and spirit; generous in forgiving; above revenge or resentment; unselfish, gracious ... from Latin, magnanimus, “great-souled”.

Rupa Goswami, in his prayer to Lord Chaitanya, gives a brilliant expression of the magnanimity of the devotee :

namo maha-vadanyaya krishna-prema-pradaya te
krishnaya krishna-chaitanya-namme gaura-tvise namah.

“My obeisances unto Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is the most munificent incarnation, because He is giving freely what was never distributed before, pure love of God”. According to this prayer, Lord Chaitanya is the most magnanimous of all benefactors because He is distributing the gift of love of God, which is infinitely superior to all other gifts.

The name Krishna describes the Supreme Person as “all-attractive”.

Therefore, when a devotee begins to realize God's all-attractive name, fame, form, and activities, he gives up all other consideration for gain or safety and simply dedicates himself to serving the All-Attractive Person. Dhruva Maharaj was performing austerities to see God for obtaining a material boon; this is known as approaching God as the Supreme order supplier.

But when Dhruva saw the all-beautiful Supreme Person, he relinquished all other desires but that of surrendering himself to Krishna. Dhruva Maharaj said, "Now that I have seen You, I am completely satisfied".

Lord Krishna has positively concluded the Bhagavad Gita (18.66) with the order, "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender to Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear". But because an ordinary man, even if he believes in God, may find it difficult to follow Krishna's pure teachings and surrender everything to Him, Lord Chaitanya came only five hundred years ago and taught a sublime and easy method of surrender to Krishna.

The Vedic literature reveals Lord Chaitanya as Lord Krishna Himself. But in His appearance as Lord Chaitanya, He acted not as God but as the pure devotee of God. He took the position of the greatest, most loving of all the Lord's devotees, Srimati Radharani, and thus showed the world how a pure devotee should love God with all his mind, words, and activities. His demonstration of devotional service, therefore, is most authoritative.

Lord Chaitanya freely gave the gift of love of God unconditionally. Before Lord Chaitanya's appearance, no religious teacher had taught that a devotee may love the Supreme Being with all the personal feeling and fervor that a lover offers to his beloved. Lord Chaitanya, however, taught that what exists in this material world as the most intense relationship—the love between man and woman—is in fact a perverted reflection of the original, spiritual relationship between God and His parts and parcels. This is not easily understood and is generally misunderstood by anyone who approaches it with a material, or sexual conception. It is the highest understanding of love of God.

Prior to Lord Chaitanya, God was seen somewhat impersonally or at best as the Father, the Provider. But Lord Chaitanya taught that a devotee may worship God in different rasas, known as "mellows". The Supreme Person can be approached as the supreme unknown, as the supreme master, as the supreme friend, the supreme child, and the supreme lover. In this way a devotee can dedicate all his life's activities in devotional service to his supreme lovable object—Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And Krishna, being the reservoir of all pleasures and rasas, can reciprocate with each devotee according to his devotional inclination. One can understand this science of rasa only by taking guidance from a spiritual master in disciplic succession, from one who understands love of God according to the authorized directions of Guru, shastra, and sadhu.

Lord Chaitanya did not introduce this science of love of God as a new thing; it exists eternally as the original relationship of all living beings with the Supreme, and it is described in Vedic literatures. Lord Chaitanya's unique contribution was to distribute the mellows of pure love of God in a very simple method. Lord Chaitanya was most magnanimous, therefore, in

“Not considering who asked for it and who did not, nor who was fit and who unfit to receive it, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu distributed the fruit of devotional service.

The transcendental gardener, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, distributed handful after handful of fruit in all directions, and when the poor, hungry people ate the fruit, the gardener smiled with great pleasure”.
—Cc. Adi 9.29–30.

This is the vigorous living purport of the quality of magnanimity. Lord Chaitanya and His followers knew that love of God is the greatest of all things, and they went on distributing it without self-motivation, without disappointment, and without being checked. Their magnanimity knows no bounds, and the good fortune of those who receive their gifts is unparalleled.

7. A devotee is mild, mridu.

The ordinary man, because his mind and senses are agitated, is not calm and peaceful. His senses are madly and vainly engaged in pursuing happiness by eating, mating, sleeping, and defending; or he is hankering to engage in such acts; or he is lamenting at having futilely attempted to find happiness in the pleasures of the senses and the mind.

Explaining yoga-samadhi in Chapter Six of Bhagavad-gita, Lord Krishna uses the metaphor of a lamp in a windless place to describe the constant, undisturbed meditation of the devotee upon his worshipful Lord. The five-year old devotee Prahlada Maharaj also remained mild and composed even while his father tried to torture him, for Prahlada never forgot the lotus feet of Lord Krishna. The Gita compares such peaceful devotees to the ocean : ‘Just as the ocean remains calm though many rivers enter into it, the devotees remains peaceful despite the incessant flow of desires.’

Only ecstatic love of God can move the devotee's self-contained, mild nature. Similarly, the mild devotee, when chanting the holy name of Lord Krishna, sometimes experience ecstatic turbulence and sings and dances and cries, without caring for his social appearance. But within the turbulence of material life the devotee remains calm, because he has reached the supreme objective in life. This is called ‘atmarama’ satisfaction in the self. As a result, a devotee lives a life which doesn't unnecessarily provoke the senses. His habits of eating and sleeping are simple and are maintained only to keep himself healthy for executing devotional service. His regulated, temperate life of eating, drinking and sleeping helps to produce a non-turbulent, non-violent, disposition.

Such was the calm state of the life of Haridas Thakur. Even his dwelling place, although simple, reflected his pure state of mind : “Everyone who saw the beauty of the cave of Haridas Thakur, with the tulsi plant on a clean altar, was astonished and satisfied at heart”. Not only was Haridas's cave calm and clean, but his heart and mind were so steadfast and pure that even Mayadevi herself, who came in the form of an alluring woman, could not dissuade Haridas from the ecstasy of chanting the Mahamantra.

A devotee is also mild in his dealing with others. Of course, the saying is “A Vaishnav is as soft as a rose and as hard as a thunderbolt”. So sometimes, when responding to a

giving the fallen souls of this age an easy process to attain the highest standard of love of God.

Why did Lord Chaitanya do this? It is His inconceivable mercy. He is the most magnanimous person, and this is His gift. Others—prophets, sons, and servants of God—gave mostly moral instructions for religious behaviour. Even Krishna Himself did not reveal the secret of loving surrender to Him. Only when appearing in the form of Lord Chaitanya did He give the most magnanimous gift. Therefore, when we want to speak of the quality of magnanimity, we must put forward the example of Lord Chaitanya. He showed all the qualities of a devotee and especially the quality of magnanimity.

Lord Chaitanya's method of loving surrender to God was the chanting of the Mahamantra. Lord Chaitanya taught that in the name of Krishna, Lord Krishna Himself appears. One can, therefore, attain full love of God simply by chanting His holy name. Lord Chaitanya also taught that for full effect the chanter of the holy name should lead a holy life and chant without offense.

Lord Chaitanya stressed five methods of devotional service : (1) to chant the Mahamantra, (2) to live in a holy place, (3) to read the Bhagavad gita and the Srimad Bhagavatam, (4) to worship the Deity of Lord Krishna, and (5) to associate with devotees. This process of chanting the Mahamantra and living a Krishna conscious life was the magnanimous gift of Lord Krishna in His most merciful form of Lord Chaitanya. He instructed His followers to write books and propagate His method so that it would be followed by the people of the future.

One great contemporary follower of Lord Chaitanya was the famous philosopher and logician Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya composed a prayer of appreciation for Lord Chaitanya which describes His magnanimous gift to mankind :

'Let me take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, who has descended in the form of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to teach us real knowledge, His devotional service and detachment from whatever does not foster a Krishna conscious life. He has descended because He is an ocean of transcendental mercy. Let me surrender unto His lotus feet.'

—Cc. Madhya 6.254

"By rendering devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, one immediately acquires causeless knowledge and detachment from the world" (Bhag. 1.2.7). Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya says that Lord Chaitanya also taught us the science of surrender. The followers of Lord Chaitanya have enunciated six symptoms of surrender : (1) to do everything favourable for the service of Lord Krishna, (2) to avoid everything unfavourable for the service of Lord Krishna, (3) to have faith that only Lord Krishna is one's maintainer, (4) to believe that Lord Krishna is one's protector, (5) to realize that nothing takes place except by Lord Krishna's sanction, and (6) to feel oneself as fallen and therefore in need of Lord Krishna's mercy.

Lord Chaitanya described Himself as a gardener who has harvested an overabundance of fruits. The fruits are compared to love of God, and Lord Chaitanya, as the gardener, is also the distributor of the fruits. In Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita Krishnadas Kaviraj writes :

blasphemous persons, for example, he is not mild. That mildness, again, comes not from timidity but from deep self-satisfaction. Like the great ocean, he is pacific. Thus a non-violent, undisturbed, transcendental mildness is another attractive feature of the devotee.

8. A devotee is clean, suci.

"Cleanliness is next to godliness" may be a homely proverb, but it has wisdom for those interested in spiritual life.

Lord Krishna thus describes the 'asuras' the deminics : "Neither cleanliness nor proper behaviour nor truth is found in them." Cleanliness is also one of the four principles of religion, which are presently declining due to the age of Kali.

"The principles of religion do not stand on some dogmas or manmade formulas, but they stand on four primary regulative observances, namely austerity, cleanliness, mercy, and truthfulness ...Cleanliness is necessary both for mind and body. Simple bodily cleanliness may help to some extent, but cleanliness of the mind is necessary, and it is effected by glorifying the Supreme Lord. No one can cleanse the accumulated mental dust without glorifying the Supreme Lord. A godless civilization cannot cleanse the mind because it has no idea of God, and for this simple reason people under such a civilization cannot have good qualifications however they may be materially equipped.

—Srimad Bhagavatam 1.17.25.

External cleanliness is important, but it has to be done in connection with Lord Krishna. The high standard of cleanliness in worshipping the Deity in the temple indicates the worshipper's devotion.

An example of the dynamic relationship between outer and inner cleanliness was shown by Lord Chaitanya in His pastimes of cleaning the Gundicha temple. As the leader of the Vaishnavas, Lord Chaitanya showed not only symbolically but practically the importance of cleanliness. In preparing the temple for the appearance of Lord Jagannath, Lord Chaitanya led the devotees by personally cleaning on His hands and knees. He praised those devotees who collected the most dust, and He chastised those who did not let enough. Engaging many sweepers, He swept the whole temple and courtyard and then began to wash everything with Ganges water. Lord Chaitanya's devotees splashed water high on the ceilings and walls of the temple, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Himself wiped the stone altar clean with His own cloth.

9. A devotee is without material possessions, akincana

"My Lord, Your Lordship can easily be approached, but only by those who are materially exhausted. One who is on the path of (material) progress, trying to improve himself with respectable parentage, great opulence, high education and bodily beauty cannot approach You with sincere feeling."

—Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.8.26.

Material wealth creates an illusion. We put our faith in the power of our bank account. We depend on our country, our family, or friends. We love our material possessions, and in doing so, we cannot feel that Lord Krishna is our only shelter. Utter dependence on Lord Krishna includes becoming 'akincana' materially exhausted.

The six Goswami of Vrindavana are classic examples of renunciation in Krishna consciousness. Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami were highly placed government ministers, and Raghunatha Das was the son of a very wealthy landowner. They gave up all their material possessions as insignificant and lived in Vrindavana wearing only loin cloths and subsisting as mendicants.

It was Rupa Goswami, however, who enunciated the principle of renunciation through using things in the service of Lord Krishna :

"When one is not attached to anything, but at the same time accepts everything in relation to Krishna, one is rightly situated above possessiveness. On the other hand, one who rejects everything without knowledge of its relationship to Lord Krishna is not as complete in his renunciation".
—Bhakti rasamrita-sindhu 2.255–26.

It is not that material objects in themselves are evil or lead to repeated birth and death; it is their use outside or direct service to Lord Krishna. By this higher realization of 'akincana', an expert devotee can use anything in Lord Krishna's service and thus transform the whole material world into the spiritual world, Vaikunth.

10. A devotee perform welfare work for everyone, sarvopakaraka.

Srimad Bhagavatam (10.22.35) enjoins : "It is the duty of every living being to perform welfare activities for the benefit of others with his life, wealth, intelligence, and words." In praising the ideal Vaishnav, Sanatana Goswami, Lord Chaitanya said, "By the force of your devotional service you purify the whole universe."

The devotee distributes love for Lord Krishna to everyone, thus proving its universality. Lord Chaitanya has given this duty of distributing Lord Krishna's name to everyone :

"One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of Bharat-varsh should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all other people".

—Chaitanya Charitamrita Madhya Adi 9.41.

Both Srimad-Bhagavatam and Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu emphasize that pure devotional service to Lord Krishna is open to people of all social orders all over the world.

"Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu recommends that Lord Krishna's name should be heard in every nook and corner of the world. How is this possible unless one preaches everywhere?...By this process the entire world can be converted to Krishna consciousness."

—Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.8.54, purport.

Vasudeva Datta approached Lord Chaitanya with a request. He said he was very aggrieved to see the suffering of all conditioned souls. "I request you," said Vasudeva Datta, "to transfer the 'karma' of their sinful lives upon my need." Being full prepared to accept the sins of everyone in the universe and to suffer all their reactions, Vasudeva Datta demonstrated an inconceivable desire for other's welfare. he was willing to risk everything to rescue the conditioned souls

from material existence. With great feeling, Lord Chaitanya then explained that simply by Vasudeva Datta's desiring, Lord Krishna would deliver the living entities. In response to the wishes of His pure devotee, the Supreme Lord can easily deliver the whole world.

The good wishes, prayers, intentions, and self-sacrificing activities of the devotee bring about immense good for all persons in the material world. The devotees are rarely celebrated for this work while within the material world, but they are very dear to Lord Krishna. We are all indebted to the true humanitarian workers, the devotees of the Lord.

11. A devotee is peaceful, santa.

Some of the twenty-six qualities appear to be quite similar. I have already discussed "mild", which is close in meaning to "peaceful", and I shall also discuss "desireless", which is the main basis for peacefulness. Also I have discussed "without material possessions", and I shall later discuss "indifference to material acquisitions". "Mercifulness" has been discussed and its near synonym, "compassion", is yet to come. So there are often fine distinctions in the various meanings, with some overlapping and repetition. But this indicates that certain traits are an especially important part of a devotee's character.

A devotee is peaceful because he realizes that Lord Krishna is everything. There is a common expression, "Make peace with God." This implies that one is "warring" with God and that he cannot become peaceful until he makes peace with the Supreme. To make peace with God we must first know who he is and what his position is. Bhagavad-gita describes this knowledge : 'vasudevah sarvam iti', or "Lord Krishna is everything".

We say "God is everything", but here are three important realizations about God : (1) whatever work we do is actually meant to be offered unto him; (2) the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the owner and controller of all the planets, and men and nations should not claim they are proprietors; (3) Lord Krishna is the friend of all living beings. One who acknowledges these three attributes of Lord Krishna and who serves and worships him "attains peace from the pangs of material miseries."

This is described in Srimad-Bhagavatam : (1.2.10) : "Life's desires should never be directed towards sense gratification. One should desire only a healthy life, or self-preservation, since a human being is meant for inquiry about the Absolute Truth. Nothing else should be the goal of one's works".

Bhagavad-gita describes the human body metaphorically as a city of nine gates. (The nine gates refer to the nine natural openings of the body : mouth, ears, etc.) Lord Krishna says that a person in the mode of goodness, lives happily within the city of nine gates, whereas one in passion or ignorance suffers various distresses and ailments. A devotee does not pamper his body with excessive eating or sleeping, nor does he unnecessarily deny the body these things. A devotee regards the body as a temple of the Lord, because the Supersoul is transcendently situated in the heart along with the soul. He does not become confused about distresses of the body, knowing they are temporary. Both pleasures and pains he learns to endure. He is peaceful, not giving in to the demands of the body.

A devotee is also peaceful in his dealings with others. He has no quarrel. He depends on Lord Krishna and is not involved in the struggles for existence, nor is he after another's possessions. This is the basis for brotherly love. As a brother cooperates with another brother, so all humanity can cooperate by realizing the Supreme Father as the center of existence.

The dictionary defines peaceful as "undisturbed by strife, turmoil, or disagreement". Of course, it is impossible to find a place or situation in the material world that is completely tranquil. To be peaceful, therefore, one must be undisturbed despite the presence of strife and turmoil. Bhagavad-gita explains this criterion of transcendental consciousness :

"In that joyous state one is situated in boundless transcendental happiness and enjoys himself through transcendental senses. Established thus, one never departs from the truth, and upon gaining this he thinks there is no greater gain. Being situated in such a position, one is never shaken even in the midst of the greatest difficulty. —Bhagavad-gita 6.21.

This rare peacefulness is the blessing of Lord Krishna for whoever sincerely enters his devotional service and gives up the unpeaceful world of material desires.

12. A devotee is surrendered to Lord Krishna, Krishnaika-sarana.

This quality of the Vaishnav is explicitly devotional. The Sanskrit words 'krishna-eka', only to Krishna, and 'sarana', surrendered to, are clear and to the point. Although "mercifulness," "truthfulness", and other qualities are also strictly in relation to Lord Krishna, with 'krishnaika-sarana' the connection is transparent and the meaning saturated with bhakti.

Lord Chaitanya's immediate followers, the six Goswamis, scrutinizingly studied all the revealed scriptures with the aim of presenting Lord Krishna as the cause of all causes, and the object of all worship. In Bhagavad-gita, the most widely accepted and respected of all Vedic literatures, the speaker is Sri Krishna Himself, and he reveals, "There is no truth higher than me. Everything comes from me." *Srimad Bhagavatam* (1.3.28) gives the same conclusion : 'ete camsa-kalah pumsah krishnas to bhagavan svyam'. "All the incarnations of God are either plenary portions of the Lord, but Krishna is the original Personality of Godhead.

Bali Maharaj surrendered everything to Lord Krishna. Then when there was nothing left, still Lord Krishna was asking for more. Bali said, "Please, therefore, place your third lotus footstep on my head" (Bhag. 8.22.2). The greatest surrender of all was that of the Gopis, who risked social ruin and the dangers of the forest at night, and who gave Lord Krishna all their love and affection. They gave Lord Krishna their minds and always thought of him, even after he had left Vrindavana.

Lord Chaitanya taught that we should avoid the ten offenses in chanting and dedicate our lives to the instructions of the spiritual master. Surrender is not whimsical but authorized and scientific. If we practice, we will learn how to surrender. A devotee engaged in a life of full surrender to Lord Krishna has many things to do and does not waste a moment. His goal is to completely surrender to Lord Krishna so that he can be rid of all material desires and serve Lord Krishna more and more in the footsteps as the servant of the servant of the Gopis.

13. A devotee is desireless, akama.

The real goal of desirelessness is revealed in the literal meaning of 'akama', without lust. Two words we should consider here are 'kama' and 'prema'. Kama means lust, or material desire, and prema means love. When a man loves a woman, his family, his country, or his vocational or intellectual pursuits, his "love" is really kama, "lust" not prema, 'love', love is reserved for Lord Krishna. Affections and attachments for things other than Lord Krishna are always some kind of kama. Even desires to become one with the impersonal spirit are for one's own satisfaction and are kama.

Only when one attains prema, love of Krishna, can he come to the platform of desirelessness. Desiring only to please Lord Krishna is 'akama'. In pursuing the pure desire to serve Lord Krishna, one must be very steadfast. Material desires have been haunting every conditioned soul for many, many lifetimes, and it is not easy for one to suddenly renounce them. Lord Krishna advises that 'kama' cannot be given up artificially :

"The embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness.
—Bhagavad-gita 2.59.

If one sincerely follows the process of devotional service under the guidance of 'Guru, shastra,' and 'sadhu', he will experience the higher taste and given up material desires even while still in the early stages of devotional service.

Narottam Das Thakur compares liberation (mukti) and material sense enjoyment (bhukti) to two witches who haunt the conditioned soul. In another song, Narottam compares 'jnana' (desire for non-devotional, philosophical knowledge) and 'karma' (desire for material gains by work) to "two pots of poison".

Rupa Goswami describes that in the beginning the devotee progresses regular stages; faith association with other devotees, initiation by the spiritual master, giving up bad habits, steadiness, and finally 'ruci', or taste. The sincere devotee comes to this stage progressively and automatically. After 'ruci', he goes on to the higher ecstasy and attachment of 'bhava' and 'prema'.

A devotee, therefore, does not begrudge austerity; he willingly struggles to overcome his lower nature. Nothing valuable is achieved without endeavour, and love for Lord Krishna is the most valuable thing. The devotee receives immense help from the spiritual master and from Lord Krishna residing in the heart. Lord Krishna promises, "To those who worship Me with love, I give the intelligence by which they can come to Me" (Bhag. 10.10).

The Lord also sometimes helps the reluctant devotee by force. If a devotee is sincerely desirous of attaining love of God and yet at the same time has strong material desires, Lord Krishna sometimes intervenes. "When I feel specially mercifully disposed towards someone, I gradually take away all his material possessions. His friends and relatives then reject this poverty-stricken and most wretched fellow" (Srimad-Bhagvatam 10.88.8).

Two levels of advancement in devotional service are 'sadhana bhakti', following the rules and regulations out of obligation to the spiritual master and 'raganuga bhakti', the advanced stage of spontaneous loving service to Lord Krishna.

Rupa Goswami says the price for pure love of the Lord is intense desire. It will therefore take time and effort. But success is guaranteed for sincere practitioner, and whatever he does is his permanent gain.

14. A devotee is indifferent to material acquisitions, aniha.

The quality of 'aniha' indifference to material acquisitions, is another part of the Vaishnav's opulence. He doesn't have to acquire things because he is already satisfied in devotional service. A devotee may use material things in the service of Lord Krishna, but he doesn't become attached or dependent on them.

The temporality of life in this material world makes the devotee-transcendentalist neglectful about acquiring "possessions" that he will sooner or later have to leave behind. So this is the basis for his indifference to material acquisitions. The very word 'material' implies temporality. And ultimately, material things are lost at death. But 'kama', the desire for getting and keeping things, will cause a person to suffer birth after birth.

The world emperor Maharaj Parikshit, although surrounded by great opulence, remained unaffected because he used everything in the service of the Lord. But when he received seven day's notice of his death, he thought it better to leave all his royal paraphernalia and sit by the Ganges without eating or drinking, while hearing Srimad-Bhagavatam from Sukhdev Goswami.

15. A devotee is fixed, sthira.

The Vaishnav qualities may not appear as soon as a person takes to devotional service, but gradually they will develop as the devotee matures. 'Nitya-siddha' devotees, those who never fall to the conditioned state, have all the Vaishnav qualities eternally. But when a conditioned soul comes to devotional service, he must patiently, and in time all the twenty-six qualities will develop. The qualities of a devotee, because they are the very nature of the soul, are within each person, and they become manifest through the process of 'bhakti'.

Rupa Goswami describes the devotee's gradual progress. A conditioned soul has to first hear about Lord Krishna with faith (sraddha). Then he associates with devotees (sadhu-sanga). Next he takes initiation from a bonafide spiritual master (bhajan-kriya). And as he follows the rules and regulations of devotional service under the spiritual master's order, he loses his bad habits (anartha-nirvriti). The next step is steadiness, 'nishta', and this is a close synonym to 'sthira', or fixed. A devotee must be fixed in the Absolute Truth.

In Shrimad-Bhagavatam (6.5.14) Narada Muni contrasts the steadiness of the devotee with the fickleness of the 'karmi' : "Mixed with the mode of passion, the unsteady intelligence of every living entity is like a prostitute who changes dresses just to attract one's attention. If one fully engages in temporary fruitive activities, not understanding how this is taking place, what does he actually gain?

Firm faith in the spiritual master paramount. Viswanath Chakravarti instructs us in his 'Guru-ashtakam' that to please the Guru is to lose one's standing in spiritual life. Without firm faith in the spiritual master, one cannot be 'sthira'. Prahlad Maharaj, considering his debt to his spiritual master, says, "I was falling into the ways of the common man, and my spiritual master Narada saved me. How could I ever leave him?"

A devotee is fixed in the philosophy of the Absolute Truth, not only intellectually but out of love. And as the devotee is fixed on Lord Krishna and no one else, so is Lord Krishna fixed on His devotee : "The pure devotee is always within the core of My heart, and I am always in the heart of the pure devotee. My devotees do not know anything else but Me, and I do not know anyone else but them". (Srimad-Bhagavatam 9.4.68). Lord Krishna is so fixed in His relationship with His devotees that He never leaves Vrindavan, but remains always engaged there in pastimes with His eternal associates.

16. A devotee completely controls the six bad qualities, vijita-sad-guna.

In the material world the spirit soul always has the tendency to fall under the control of 'maya'. Although it is impossible for the Supreme Personality of Godhead to come under the control of His own 'maya', the 'jivas', being marginal, come sometimes under the pure devotees, although marginal energies, stay always under the shelter of the internal energy; thus they never succumb to the bad qualities. As Bhagavad-gita (2.70) stated: "A person who is not disturbed by the incessant flow of desires-that enter like rivers into the ocean which is ever being filled but is always still-can alone achieve peace, and not the man who strives to satisfy such desires."

The six bad qualities are lust (kama), anger (krodha), greed (lobha), illusion (moha), madness (mada), and envy (matsarya). A pure devotee controls these qualities by full engagement in the service of Lord Krishna. Although the six bad qualities are material, they can be used in Lord Krishna's service. This transforms them. The bad qualities are perverted reflections of qualities existing in an original pure state in the spiritual world. Narottam Das Thakur writes 'kama krishna-karmarpane' : "Lust can be transformed into love of Lord Krishna." In Srimad-Bhagavatam (7.1.31) Narada Muni informs King Yudhisthira how Lord Krishna can be served by transforming material qualities into devotional service :

"My dear King Yudhisthira the Gopis by their lusty desires, Kamsa by his fear Sisupal and other kings envy the Yadus by their familial relationship with Krishna, you Pandavas by your great affection for Krishna and we the general devotees, by our devotional service have obtained the mercy of Krishna."

1. Lust, Kama. Lust is epitomized by sex desire. The Gopis approached Lord Krishna as a beautiful young boy, and yet we know this is the complete opposite of mundane lust. We have been warned not to imitate the Gopis. So how can we, who are trying to practice pure devotional service, understand lust in service to Lord Krishna? Bhagavad-gita (7.11) states, 'dharmaviruddho bhutesu kamo'smi' : I am sex life which is not contrary to religious principles. When 'kama' is controlled, it is not illicit and can be used in Lord Krishna's service. In the beginning there may be material desires, but when sex is regulated and used for the service of the Lord, it is transcendental.

Aside from the Gopis, Kubja also approached Lord Krishna with lusty feelings. She wanted to serve Lord Krishna by offering Him her body. But as soon as Lord Krishna's lotus feet touched her, her lusty contamination vanished.

Lust is the spirit soul's original love for Lord Krishna after becoming contaminated by association with the mode of passion. Just as milk touched by sour tamarind become yogurt, so 'prema' love of God becomes "soured" into 'kama'. When the 'jivas' wrongly desire their own sense enjoyment, Lord Krishna allows them to come to this material world and take on different material bodies. But lust can never satisfy the 'jiva' soul. Only when he transfers his desire back to the service of Lord Krishna can he experience eternal bliss. Even while in the material world, if by the grace of the spiritual master and the Vaishnavas a 'jiva' establishes his relationship with Lord Krishna, he can revive his pure desire, once the 'jiva' takes up devotional service under the direction of the spiritual master, his lust is turned into love. The pure presence of Lord Krishna removes all impurities. Devotional service can be compared to the sun. The sun is so powerful that when it shines on something impure-like a puddle of urine-it sterilizes the impure place.

2. Anger, Krodha. Lust can never be satisfied, and therefore it is followed by anger. When anger spreads, the whole body becomes polluted. But anger can also be used in the service of Lord Krishna, by directing it against the enemies of Lord Krishna.

The famous example is Hanuman, Lord Rama's warrior servitor who fought against the forces of Ravana. Lord Chaitanya also showed transcendental anger when He heard that Jagai and Madhai had assaulted Lord Nityananda.

Uninformed Hindus sometimes think that a 'sadhu' can never show anger. Such persons do not understand transcendental anger. Of course, anger should not be uncontrolled or used to combat an insult toward oneself.

Once a snake, after meeting Narada Muni, became very peaceful. But when the local village boys learned of the snake's nonviolence, they began throwing stones at him. When the snake complained to Narada that his nonviolence had brought on these attacks, Narada advised the snake to remain peaceful but to rise up, show his hood, and scare the boys away. This is an example of using controlled anger.

Anger should be controlled and used only in the service of the Lord. Sometimes a teacher will assume an anger face or gesture to instruct a student. He teaches by kind words, encouragement, and also occasionally by chastisement and show of anger. But this anger is controlled; anger can only be used as an instrument in devotional service.

3. Greed, Lobha. A greedy person wants to accumulate as much as possible for himself-much more than he actually needs. Obsessed with taking for himself, he conflicts with others and has no mercy for them. Out of greed one nation allows millions of people in other parts of the world to starve. The greedy people of one nation take many times over their requirements for food and fuel, while others go without. So greed can become a great evil. But because

a devotee is greedy to use everything for the Supreme Personality of Godhead's satisfaction, his greed benefits everyone. This transcendental greed for performing service to Lord Krishna culminates in 'laulyam', the hankering to serve Lord Krishna. When one is absorbed in intense hankering for service, no possibility of material greed arises.

4. Illusion, moha. The main illusion of the conditioned soul is that he thinks of his body as the self and the material world as his home. When Arjuna became enlightened by Lord Krishna's teachings in Bhagawad-gita, he declared, 'nasto mohah' : "My illusion is now gone".

But there is a transcendental illusion known as 'yoga-maya'. By yoga-maya a liberated devotee can think he has become the father or mother of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna does not need a protector, and yet He accepts mother Yasoda as His protector and chastiser. When Lord Krishna as a child, fell into the River Yamuna, His father, Vasudeva, was in the illusion of extreme anxiety over Lord Krishna. Actually, Lord Krishna could not drown in the river, but as an expression of love for Lord Krishna, Vasudeva became mad with anxiety. Lord Krishna's falling into the water was His arrangement to intensify the paternal feelings of His devotee. Lord Krishna is so attached to His pure devotees, the Gopis, that He can never forget them or reject them, yet in their conjugal exchange He allows them to act like rejected lovers, just to increase their sublime sense of separation from Him. These exchanges of 'Yoga-maya' are not really delusions, but are confidential pasttimes between the Supreme Lord and His eternal associates. They are ultimate reality, but they are not manifest to the general devotees.

5. Madness, mada. When a person contemplates the sense objects, he develops desire; he then become angry; this leads to delusion and bewilderment of memory. In extreme cases of madness a person cannot even perform bodily functions, and he becomes like a vegetable or a wild beast. As described in Srimad-Bhagavatam (5.5.4) :

"When a person considers sense gratification the aim of life, he certainly becomes mad after materialistic living and engages in all kinds of sinful activity. He does not know that due to his past misdeeds he has already received a body which, although temporary, is the cause of his misery. Actually the living entity should not have taken on a material body, but he has been awarded the material body for sense gratification. Therefore, I think it is not befitting an intelligent man to involve himself again in the activities of sense gratification by which he perpetually gets material bodies one after another."

The above verse, spoken by Lord Rasabhadev, describes madness as being impelled by sense gratification.

6. Envy, matsarya. According to Chanakya Pandita, nothing is worse than an envious man. An envious person is unhappy to see others' good fortune, and he is happy to see others failure. But when one takes to devotional service, he loses this poisonous mentality; he becomes humble and wants to serve Lord Krishna.

"Kamsa and other enemies of Lord Krishna merged into the existence of Brahman, but why

should Lord Krishna's friends and devotees have the same position? Lord Krishna's devotees attain the association of the Lord as His constant companions, either in Vrindavana or in the Viakuntha planets."

—Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.1.31, purport.

17. A devotee eats only as much as required, mita bhuk.

This quality is not inconsequential, and so Lord Chaitanya has included in His list. (Bhagavad-gita 6.16) sets the standard of eating for the 'bhakti-yogi' : "One should not eat too little or too much." What does it mean, to eat enough and not too much? It is an individual matter, according to the size of one's body. An individual can honestly sense when he has eaten sufficiently for strength and nourishment.

According to the 'yoga' of sense control, the tongue, belly, and genitals form a straight line, and all three can be controlled if the tongue is controlled. If the tongue is uncontrolled, then a person will eat too much. His stomach will be overloaded and will then put pressure upon his genitals, and the result will be great demand for sex.

"However, if one accepts 'prasada' only because of its palatable taste and thus eats too much, he also falls prey to trying to satisfy the demands of the tongue. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu taught us to avoid very palatable dishes even while eating 'prasada'. If we offer palatable dishes to the Deity with the intention of eating such nice food, we are involved in trying to satisfy the demands of the tongue. If we accept the invitation of a richman with the idea of receiving palatable food we are also trying to satisfy the demands of the tongue."

—Upadesamrta #1, purport.

An apparently contradictory description of the Vaishnav's eating is related in 'Chaitanya-caritamrita'. Krishnadas Kaviraj repeatedly writes that Lord Chaitanya would order His devotees to eat "upto the neck". Sometimes Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu would serve large quantities of 'prasada' to the devotees with His own hand. In the 'Chaitanya-caritamrita', the exchange of offering and receiving 'prasada' is obviously an important loving pastime between the Lord and His devotees. Sometimes the Lord's loving devotees would induce Him to eat large quantities of 'prasada'.

Certainly if Lord Chaitanya or the spiritual master is personally serving 'prasada', the devotee cannot stand upon the rules and regulations and refuse to eat. On the occasion of Vaishnav festival Lord Krishna's desire may sometimes be that the devotees eat "upto the neck" to satisfy the wishes of the Vaishnav and the spiritual master.

Raghunath Das Goswami is celebrated for Serving a large feast to Lord Nityanada and the Vaishnavas at Panihati in Bengal. But Raghunath Das Goswami is also celebrated for minimizing his own intake of food to an extreme minimum.

18. A devotee is without inebriation, apramatta.

Apramatta is the opposite of 'pramattah', which means crazy. One who is truly on the devotional path under the guidance of Guru, 'sastra', and 'sadhu' is sane. He wears the dress and paraphernalia of the Vaishnav, which although strange to the uninformed, is highly orthodox.

His habits are pure, his speech 'parampara'. He can deal sanely, and even diplomatically, with the 'karmis' and with the affairs of the material world.

The devotee's sanity, however, goes beyond the appearance of coolheaded poise. Understanding his position as the tiny part and parcel of the Lord, he does not have the insane view that he is the center of the universe or that life is meant for sense enjoyment. Nor is he insanely attached to family members. In Srimad-Bhagavatam (2.1.4) Sukhdev Goswami uses the word 'pramattah' to describe the householder who does not inquire into the problems of life : 'tesam pramatto nidhanam' translates to 'pramattah' as "too attached". The householder is so attached to his body, children, and wife that he neglects to inquire into the Absolute Truth. Sukhdev Goswami says, "Although sufficiently experienced, they still do not see their inevitable destruction".

A devotee is not inebriated. He is not lopsided. He is not intoxicated by material pleasure. He reduces his material needs to a simple level and patiently dedicates his life to the service of Lord Krishna. His life is therefore the real example of moderation, balance, and sanity.

19. A devotee is respectful, manada.

The Sikastaka describes how the devotee offers respects to others without expecting any respect for himself. He is respectful even to the ant. A materialist is not deeply respectful to others because his concern is to get respect for himself. But the devotee wants to be the servant, not the master, and taking that humble position, he respects the lives of others. He respects their right to live and doesn't want to hurt or disturb anyone. He respects that all living beings have been given their life by Lord Krishna, and he knows that he has no right to take it away. He sees all living beings equally and respects them equally.

The Vaishnav's respect is real-not based on fear or diplomacy, like the polite respect businessmen and politicians offer each other.

Although the devotee respects all, he doesn't worship anyone except Lord Krishna or the pure devotee of Lord Krishna. Worship is for the Supreme Personality of Godhead alone. The topmost devotee, the 'mahabhagavata', respects even the demons, because he sees everyone is his place as a servant within the plan of the Supreme.

The disciple offers the spiritual master the same respect as to God, and whatever the spiritual master says, the disciple should try to execute right away.

20. A devotee is without false prestige, amani.

The word prestige comes from the French : "illusion brought on by magic". The Latin word 'praestigiae' has a similar meaning : "juggler's tricks"-magic moments in life. You may obtain prestige for a time, but very soon you may also lose it. Lord Krishna therefore says in Bhagavad-gita that His dear devotee "is equipoised in honour and dishonour, fame and infamy."

When a devotee loses all false prestige and becomes completely absorbed in humble service at the lotus feet of Lord Krishna, he becomes eligible to go to Lord Krishna and associate with Him in eternity, bliss, and knowledge. The aspiring devotee fights hard to kick off all vestiges

of false prestige, and he prays to Lord Krishna : "O savior of the fallen, please don't kick me away, but allow me to serve Your servants. I am a rascal possessed by material desires and am falsely taking credit for things which are Yours, not mine. Please deliver me."

21. A devotee is grave, gambhira.

The Bhakti rasamnta-sindu states :

"A person who does not express his mind to everyone, or whose mental activity and plan of actions are very difficult to understand, is called grave. After Lord Sri Krishna had been offended by Brahma, Brahma prayed to Him to be excused. But in spite of his offering nice prayers to Lord Krishna, Brahma could not understand whether Lord Krishna was satisfied or still dissatisfied. In other words, Lord Krishna was so grave that He did not take the prayers of Brahma very seriously. Another instance of Lord Krishna's gravity is found in connection with His love affairs with Radharani. Lord Krishna was always very silent about His love affairs with Radharani, so much that Baladeva, Lord Krishna's elder brother and constant companion, could not understand the transformations of Lord Krishna on account of his gravity."

Regarding Lord Krishna's gravity, a verse in Srimad-Bhagavatam (3.16.14) describes the Kumara's bewilderment at hearing the profound speeches from the mouth of Lord Visnu at Vaikuntha : "The Lord's excellent speech was difficult to comprehend because of its momentous import and its most profound significance. The sages heard it with wide open ears and pondered on it as well. But although hearing, they could not understand what he intended to do."

If one hears the profound speeches of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one becomes grave. Similarly, if one associates with serious devotees, he too becomes serious and grave.

22. A devotee is compassionate, karuna.

The Bhakti rasamrita-sindu describes compassion : 'A person who is unable to bear another's distress is called compassionate.'

Lord Krishna's compassion was also exhibited when Grandfather Bhisma was lying on the bed of arrows which had been shot through his body. While lying in this position, Bhisma was very anxious to see Lord Krishna, so Lord Krishna appeared there. Upon seeing the pitiable condition of Bhisma, Krishna began speaking with tears in His eyes. Not only was He shedding tears, but He also forgot Himself in His compassion. Therefore, instead of offering obeisances to Lord Krishna directly, devotees offer obeisances to His compassionate nature. Actually, because Lord Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, it is very difficult to approach Him. But the devotees, taking advantage of His compassionate nature, which is represented by Radharani, always pray to Radharani for Lord Krishna's compassion."

'Kripalu', merciful, 'vadanya', magnanimous, and 'sarvopakaraka', working for the welfare of everyone, are all similar to 'karuna', compassion. The Bhaktirasamrita-sindu describes Radharani as the protectress of devotional service and of all devotees who want to approach the Lord. She is compassionate, Radharani, like all genuine devotees, wants to help others become devotees of Lord Krishna.

The essence of compassion is preaching. But the force that drives the preaching is purity. Preaching rests on the sincere, pure hearts and minds of the devotees. When a devotee surrenders to Lord Krishna, Krishna blesses his efforts.

23. A devotee is a friend, maitra.

A devotee is a friend because he directs you to Lord Krishna. Krishna is the best friend of all living entities. In the pastimes of Lord Chaitanya, devotees like Rupa Goswami and Haridas Thakur were fast friends because of their like mentalities. The six Goswamis also regularly associated together sharing their devotional experiences, singing 'bhajan' and taking 'prasad'.

Certain sensitive thinkers have noted that an important part of human friendship is that one friend supports and encourages the solitude of the other. But only a devotee really knows how to nourish another's solitude. In Krishna consciousness solitude does not refer to mere egoism in a void. In the positive sense, solitude means an individual's eternal relationship with Lord Krishna. A friend can respect another person's individual relationship with Lord Krishna and try to encourage it.

24. A devotee is a poet, kavi.

In Chaitanya-caritamrita, Raya Ramananda praises the wonderful descriptions by Rupa Goswami :

"What is the use of a bowman's arrow or a poet's poetry if they penetrate the heart but do not cause the head to spin?"

"Without Your mercy, such poetic expressions would be impossible for an ordinary living being to write. My guess is that You have given him the power."

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu replied, "I met Srila Rupa Goswami at Prayag. He attracted and satisfied Me because of his qualities." Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu praised the metaphors and other literary ornaments of Srila Rupa Goswami's transcendental poetry. Without such poetic attributes, He said, there is no possibility of preaching transcendental mellows.

—Chaitanya charitamrita-Antya 1.95.98.

One of the many names of Lord Krishna is 'uttamashloka' which means that He is praised with the choicest poetic words. To describe the beauty of Krishna's form, His pastimes, the nectar of His holy name, the glories of His abode, Vrindavana, and the sweetness of His love, is impossible-except by poetic language.

The compilers of the 'shastra', such as Srila Vyasdeva and in the later age Krishnadas Kaviraj, were all highly endowed poets. The 'shastras' compare Krishna's hue to the fresh raincloud, His eyes to lotuses, the rays from his toenails to soothing autumnal moons. When Lord Chaitanya says that without poetic metaphors a devotee cannot describe Lord Krishna's pastimes, this does not mean that Lord Krishna is imaginary or unreal. Rather, Krishna 'bhakti' is not dull; it requires poetry.

Many references state that only authorised devotees can write transcendental literatures,

whether poetry or prose. To be able to write 'parampara' descriptions of Lord Krishna is a prerogative of the devotee who has been blessed by Lord Krishna and Guru. The empowered 'kavi' never takes credit for himself but acknowledges that whatever he writes is dictated by the Lord in the heart. A devotee should, therefore, never write anything speculative. Whatever he writes should be first confirmed by Lord Krishna and the Vaishnav. He should write only on the order of higher authorities in Lord Krishna consciousness. There is no scope for a devotee's becoming an ambitious poet or author, famous for his own compositions, Krishnadas Kaviraj explains that his motive in writing is to purify himself and to bless the world with pasttimes of Lord Chaitanya.

Only five hundred years ago Rupa and Sanatan Goswami' entered directly into the pasttimes of Sri Radha and Sri Krishna and described them in their poems and plays. Their Sanskrit writings display expertise in grammar, logic and metaphor. Lord Chaitanya Himself demonstrated mastery in the art of literary criticism by defeating Keshav Kashmiri in Navadvipa. Lord Chaitanya found defects in the renowned poet's compositions by intricately applying various rules of Sanskrit grammar composition. Jiva Goswami is another highly acclaimed Sanskritist whose Vaishnava philosophical dissertations are profound and poetic. Kavi means "learned" as well as "poetic", and Jiva Goswami is both.

Not all the Vaishnav poets in disciplic succession wrote in highly literate Sanskrit 'mantras'. Narottam Das Thakur composed his songs in simple Bengali language, but the erudite Vedic acharya Viswanath Chakravarti Thakur later approved the songs of Narottam Das to be as good as Vedic 'mantras'.

The essence of Vaishnav poetry, therefore is devotion to Lord Krishna. It is not the language itself that is important, but the subject matter.

Aside from making poetic compositions, a devotee is a poet by his poetic perception. He is not dull. He tastes Lord Krishna in pure water and sees the sun as Lord Krishna's eye. He uses language to describe God. He has in his mind's eye a vision of intense beauty the transcendental form of Sri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He frees his own life from the fetters of what mundaners call reality and dedicates himself to serving the Supreme Absolute. Always hearing transcendental sounds passed down from great poets of the past, always chanting the Hare Krishna 'mantra', dancing and signing in ecstasy, and aspiring to please Krishna, the devotee lives minute to minute in ever-fresh Krishna consciousness. He is a poet.

25. A devotee is expert, daska.

Lord Krishna promises, "I give the intelligence by which they can come to me." We therefore see devotees applying their skills in constructing temples, learning arts and crafts, dealing in business, cooking, painting, and so on.

The deluding energy, 'maya', is herself very expert, keeping the conditioned souls illusioned and bound. Srimad-Bagavatam compares the materialistic householders to silkworm who has spun a cocoon around himself and become inextricably entangled. He who becomes free of 'maya', free of the cycle of birth and death, is expert.

The supreme expert is Lord Krishna, and it is He who gives us the expert process of devotional service. 'Dharman tu saksat-bhagavat-pranitam' : no one can enunciate true religion except the supreme Lord Himself. Lord Krishna in His munificent form as Lord Chaitanya gave the method whereby even the most fallen and slowest souls of kali-yuga could revive their pure Krishna consciousness—"chant Hare Krishna." Lord Chaitanya knew that in this age people would not be able to practice severe austerities or understand 'Vedanta' through meditation or Sanskrit. Therefore He very expertly gave us the 'Maha-mantra' and simple process of hearing Srimad-Bhagavatam and Bagavad-gita from pure devotees in disciplic succession.

For us the required expertise is simple : we have to grasp the lotus feet of Lord Chaitanya's Krishna conscious practices. Millions of species of life and millions of varieties of sense gratification are being offered to the bewildered conditioned soul. Moreover, especially in the present age, one's chances of becoming free from 'maya' are more and more reduced. 'Maya's influence has expanded, and even if a person is inclined to spiritual life, a bogus 'Guru' is likely to cheat him. We are, therefore, not playing with words when we take the meaning of expert to be, "He who becomes free from 'maya' by surrendering to Krishna." Such an expert devotee avoids the greatest danger, and he attains the greatest goal.

When Lord Chaitanya began His 'sanskirtan' movement, He had to figure out a way to reach those who were very reluctant. So that people would respect Him, He decided to take the 'sanyas' order.

Expertise in skills will not get us back to Godhead, but rather the expertise in seeing our real position as the servant of the servant of the Lord.

26. A devotee is silent, mauni.

A devotee never speaks any nonsense; this is his silence. 'Mauni' does not refer to vows of not speaking or becoming incommunicado, as is practiced by some 'yogis'. Sometimes, therefore, a 'Guru' will ask a frivolous disciple whose speech is uncontrolled to practice complete 'mauna'. Speech is very important. A fool is not exposed until he begins to speak.

Another example of a great devotee's using silence is that of Lord Chaitanya silently listening to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya speak 'Vedanta' philosophy for seven days. Sarvabhauma finally became frustrated and asked why Lord Chaitanya was silent. Sarvabhauma said that if Lord Chaitanya had some questions at least He could ask them, or if He disagreed He could say. But why was He silent? In this way Lord Chaitanya showed His respect to the great scholar, and at the same time dramatically showed His disapproval. When Lord Chaitanya finally spoke, He defeated all the Mayavadi ideas Sarvabhauma had been expounding for seven days. Lord Chaitanya's silence was also a demonstration of tolerance.

So there are some varied uses for silence in Krishna consciousness, but the main purpose is that a devotee is silent in nonsense, but always eager to talk about Lord Krishna.

His Divine Grace OM Vishnupad 108 Tridandi Swami Sri Srimat Bhakti Sravan Tirtha Goswami Maharaj

—Neeta Kotecha

His Divine Grace was born on 16th March, 1926, in a religious, wealthy Bengali Brahmin family settled in Allahabad. His father was a Doctor of repute, and mother a Professor.

When His mother was in deep pain, and finding it impossible to give birth to the Holy child, a Sannyasi who was passing by blessed the nervous mother and prophesied that the child she was about to give birth to would be a Great Soul.

The child grew up in a pious and religious atmosphere. His mother was devout and personally conducted the puja of the deity Sri Krishna in their home. He was well-bred and educated under her supervision, but showed a strong inclination of having his own way in many matters.

He mastered all the scriptures with consummate ease. At the early age of 15 He gave His first discourse, on the Kathopanishad, to a small gathering in Allahabad, which was spell bound by the young lad's luminous brilliance.

Besides training in the scriptures, He also acquired a formal education. He successfully completed His post graduation from Allahabad University with First Class, in English and Philosophy. None of His peers could match His accomplishments in short story, poetry, essays and debating. His classmates treated Him with genuine love and affection. They acted upon His advice in all matters due to their implicit faith in Him. He was an enigma to His classmates—a genius par excellence.

On many occasions He would gently but firmly correct even his teachers. For instance, once He was asked to expound upon a passage from the Srimad Bhagavatam as a test of His knowledge. This particular passage was actually from another religious treatise. Baba humbly pointed out the error, much to the amusement of His fellow class mates, and went on to explain the passage anyway. This incident confirmed that His was no ordinary intellect.

His family observed with increasing apprehension the signs of renunciation in Him. Their worries were heightened by the fact that His elder brother had left home and taken 'sanyas'. They made several attempts to get him married, but always to no avail. At the age of 24 He became aware of His future mission, i.e, to devote Himself to the service of the people. Consequently, with resoluteness and missionary zeal He left home one night, with the help of His younger sister (who was an FRCS Doctor), never to return. This drove His mother mad with grief, as she could not bear this separation. Baba prayed for her well-being, and she gradually recovered from the shock.

After leaving home, He met Srila Bhaktaprabana Damodar Goswami Maharaj, who initiated Him as a Sannyasi on the auspicious day of Magh-purnima. Thereafter, He went with His matter to Santipur in the District of Nadia, where He is to this day looked upon with reverence and

worshipped. The people of Nadia have indeed been blessed and are fortunate to have witnessed Baba perform Naam-Sankirtan and Bhagavat Saptahas.

At the behest of His Gurudev He decided to conduct 108 Bhagavat Saptahas in different places. The first such Bhagavat Saptaha was conducted at Anjanganagar in the district of Krishnanagar. He has successfully completed 105 Bhagavat Saptahas to date, and the 106th, 107th & 108th Saptahas will be held in Nabadwip, Puri and Vrindavan in due course. Scores of people have listened with deep devotion to the interpretations of the 1008 slokas of the Srimad Bhagavatam. Of all the Saptahas, the one conducted in Santipur at Babila is perhaps most memorable for on the last day His discourse was so soulstirring that tears flowed from the eyes of the deity of Advitya Acharya, in whose temple premises the Saptaha was being held. His devotees witnessed this miraculous event in astonishment, and speak of it to this day with awe.

His mission took a new turn in 1961 after His meeting with Swami Sadananda of Hardwar, who is popularly known as Gulabi Baba, owing to His rose-like complexion. The Swami was 108 years old, and possessed a rare religious treatise written by Srila Jiba Goswami which was considered a scriptural gem. Baba wanted the text for Himself, but His requests and entreaties were turned down by Gulabi Baba. In 1963, when Baba was at Radhakunda at Vrindaban, a small boy handed Him a packet, which surprisingly contained the very same treatise. Meanwhile, Gulabi Baba was understandably bewildered and agitated at the loss. Not long after, Gulabi Baba had a dream in which He saw that the text had been delivered to the rightful owner by the Lord Himself. The Lord further-instructed Him to also hand over the Nrsingha Dev Salagram Shila to Baba. This text is at present being preserved in the Nrsingha Dev temple in Bhubaneswar, and worshipped by scores of ardent devotees.

In 1978 Baba had a vision that He would lead the effort of building a modern hospital in Bhubaneswar. For this purpose 3 acres of land has been donated by the Government of Orissa. The foundation stone was laid by the Governor of Orissa. Construction work is due to commence shortly. In 1980 he founded the Bhubaneswar Ashram and the Sri Nrsingha Dev temple.

Since long, Baba has been treating people with different ailments, with the help of Tulsi leaves and water offered to Sri Nrsingha Dev. His humility, love and empathy are evident to people from all walks and strata of society who have approached Him for solace.

In 1985, to commemorate the 500th birth centenary of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Baba performed a Srinam Sankirtan Parikarma, along with 50,000 devotees of Shridham Navadwip (the holy birthplace of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu). In the same year, along with 15,000 devotees, He undertook a Padayatra from Kharagpur to Puri and southward from Puri to Rameshwaram. This Padayatra took 3 months, 17 days to complete.

The Padyatra was a wonderful and memorable experience for all devotees who participated in it. The event was made more significant, as almost 500 years ago, Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had walked along the very same route, spreading the message of love and bhakti. Baba is the first Mahatma since then, to have gone on this route, retracing the footsteps of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and spreading the same message in His inimitable way.

In 1988, Baba visited the Gulf States to preach Vaishnav philosophy. The trip was very successful-despite the many hazards in the preaching of Sanatan Dharma in these countries, what with the aid of the rigid tenets of 'Al-Koran' & 'Al Hadis'. But Baba took all these obstacles in His stride with a smile. A senior Arab police officer of Dubai who volunteered to accompany Baba on the tour, commented at the end, that while he was profoundly influenced by our Gurudev's divine qualities, the one trait that most impressed him was the indomitable courage displayed by Baba throughout this difficult tour.

In 1990, Baba visited the U.K. This too was a highly successful trip. The Indians residing there felt blessed to get an opportunity to listen to His discourses and kirtans. He delivered lectures in Cambridge University, Nottingham, Birmingham, Leicester and Albert Hall. Around 250 non-Hindu families were initiated into Krishna mantras by Baba, on the tour. Baba has also been invited to deliver a lecture at the National University of Canberra, Australia, but He declined the invitation on account of His poor health.

Throughout His life, Baba has been observing the austerities befitting a Vaishnav Sannyasi. Since 1967, He has lived on milk alone, without any other food. During Saptahas He goes on a complete fast. As a brahmachari in His Guru's ashram, He never refrained from performing tasks which were for the most part arduous, if not reprehensible to the tastes of a young man reared in luxury and comfort. His life is hard, but he has tremendous powers of endurance and will power. He is deeply affectionate to His devotees and is always praying for their well-being. Be it night or day, He goes out of His way to help people in times of trouble and distress. Baba is a brilliant conversationalist. His upto date knowledge about the latest trends of the modern world is fascinating. His utter humility and affectionate charm is magnetic. I have never seen him lose his temper, and his knack of finding some hidden opportunity in any adverse circumstances, has taught us a lot.

I feel blessed to be able to stay with him and serve him, unworthy though I am, and pray to Him never to deprive me of this rare opportunity.

Through Him I have had the opportunity to travel to so many different places and meet people from all walks of life. I can look back and recall so many memorable experiences.

Mere words are inadequate to express my gratitude to Him for making my life so easy-always caring and protecting me, and gently but firmly showing me the right way. Without Him I would be nowhere.

Let us pray on this auspicious occasion of the 69th Birth Anniversary of Baba, that He may long remain with us.

My obeisances at His lotus feet.

(* This article was written in 1996. Since then His Divine Grace has completed 108 Bhagavat Saptahas.)

समय, शालिग्राम और बाबा

लेखिका : भावना सूद

हमें मालूम है कि शालिग्राम श्यामवर्ण की पवित्र शिला है। पौराणिक विचारों के अनुसार शालिग्राम की महत्ता इस कारण है कि इस शिला के माध्यम से स्वयम् ईश्वर प्रकट हुए हैं जिसकी पूजा की विधि विस्तृत तो है ही साथ ही आवश्यक है कि आराधक में हो गहरी भक्ति का संचयन।

बाबा के पास तीन सौ सड़सठ शालिग्रामों का जो संग्रह है, उसमें रंग-रूप एवम् आकार प्रकार में तरह तरह की भिन्नताएँ हैं। इन शिलाओं की वास्तविकता यह है कि ये हिमालय के एकांत स्थानों से शुरु होकर समुद्र की दूरी तक भगवान् कृष्ण एवम् उनके असंख्यों गुणों के अनन्य प्रकटीकरण हैं। इस तथ्य में संभवतः सत्य यही है कि नदी की यात्रा में सहज एवम् दूर्गम स्थानों पर ईश्वर लीलावश प्रकट होते रहे।

अब हम हमारे गुरुदेव बाबा की यात्रा की एक कहानी का वर्णन करेंगे जो सितम्बर 1997 में दक्षिण भारत के तिरुमाला देवस्थानम् से शुरु हुई थी। उन दिनों उनके साथ थे कलकत्ता, मुम्बई और हैदराबाद के कई भक्त। रात्रि के एक बजकर चालीस मिनट पर बाबा पूजा की तैयारी कर ही रहे थे कि अचानक उनके कक्षका दरवाजा स्वयं खुल गया। सामने खड़ा था एक अपरिचित पुरुष। बाबा ने कोई प्रश्न नहीं किया और उसे अपलक देखते रहे।

“मैं वृंदावन से आया हूँ।” सामने खड़ा व्यक्ति ने कहा, “आपके दिव्य हाथों को सौंपने के उद्देश्य से कुछ अनन्य सुंदर और अशेष गुणों से मंडित शिलाएं लेकर आपके समक्ष उपस्थित हुआ हूँ।” बाबा मौन रहे।

सम्पूर्ण परिवेश चमत्कृत करनेवाला हो गया था। प्रतीत हो रहा था कि अब भी क्षण कोई सम्मोहित करने वाली घटना घटित हो जाएगी। आगत पुरुष बाबा के मस्तक पर चन्दन अंकित देखकर अभिभूत हो गए थे। उसका प्रभाव इतना तीव्र था कि उसे अपने माथे पर इसी प्रकार का एक तिलक प्राप्त करने की इच्छा जागृत हो गई। बाबा ने विलंब नहीं किया और अतिथि की इच्छा पूर्ण कर दी।

तिलक से अलंकृत अतिथि का मस्तक स्वर्ण की भाँति उज्ज्वल था। उज्ज्वल एवम् दिव्य। अब उसने एक मोहक कांजीवरम अंगवस्त्र प्राप्त करने की इच्छा प्रकट की। अंगवस्त्र बाबा के बक्से में सुरक्षित रखा था। किन्तु स्वयम् अतिथि ने बिना चाबी के बक्से को खोलकर एक अंगवस्त्र निकाल लिया। बाबा को इससे कोई आश्चर्य नहीं हुआ। उन्हें संभवतः ज्ञात ही था कि घटना घटित होने वाली है।

बाबा ने अपने अतिथि को एक आकर्षक रेशमी लबादा भेंटस्वरूप दिया तो उसने प्रत्युत्तर में बालाजी वेंकटेश्वर की एक अनन्य शालिग्राम बाबा को समर्पित कर दिया। वह विग्रह दिव्यता से मंडित था। श्यामवर्ण के उस

विग्रह को देखकर बाबा चमत्कृत हो गये थे। प्रतीत हो रहा था, बाबा के कक्ष के बाहर का सम्पूर्ण अंधकार विग्रह में घनीभूत हो गया है।

अतिथि ने बाबा को संबोधित किया, “इस शालिग्राम से आप मोहित हो गए हैं यह मुझे मालूम है। इसका कारण यही है कि आपके प्रिय गोपाल इस शिला में प्रकट होकर सम्मुख आ गए हैं। किन्तु इतने मात्र से ही इस प्रकरण की समाप्ति नहीं हो जाती। कुछ समय बाद आपको हरिद्वार जाना है वहाँ आपको इस प्रकार के अनेक शालिग्राम प्राप्त हो जायेंगे। निश्चित ही उस दिन की वह घटना सामान्य नहीं थी। वह समय के बारे में संकेत था। एक दिव्य संकेत। बाबा उस दिन चमत्कृत तो हुए थे लेकिन हैरान नहीं। वे समझ गये थे कि भविष्य में क्या घटित होने वाला है।

कुछ समय के बाद शालिग्राम की पूजा में आसन पर बैठे तो स्वयम् बालाजी वही अंग्रवस्त परिधान किए प्रकट हो गये, जो वृंदावन के अतिथि को बाबा ने उपहार स्वरूप कुछ समय पहले दिया था। इसके बाद घटित हुई एक और अविस्मरणीय और दिव्य घटना। विग्रह के गले की माला आश्चर्यजनक रूप में अपने स्थान से खिसककर बाबा के कंधे पर चली आई थी।

इस घटना के तुरंत बाद बाबा हरिद्वार और ऋषिकेश की यात्रा पर चले गये थे। उस यात्रा के बीच ऋषिकेश में स्वामी ओकारानंद का साथ बाबा का साक्षात्कार हो गया। उस समय ओकारनाथजी की आयु एक सौ नौ वर्ष की थी। उनके पास नरसिंहदेव शालिग्राम एक लंबे समय से सुरक्षित थे और प्रतीक्षा थी कि किसी महायोगी की यह धरोहर अपनी आध्यात्मिक पूँजी के साथ सौंप कर वे चिरविश्राम में जा सके। उन्होंने अपना अमूल्य शालिग्राम बाबा को सौंप दिया और निश्चित हो गए कि अब नरसिंह ने अपना निवास स्वयं तय कर लिया है। इसके बाद हरिद्वार में स्वामी शुद्धानंद परमहंस के आश्रम में बाबा गये तो उनसे पच्चीस और शालिग्राम शिलाएं प्राप्त हो गईं।

ऋषिकेश के बाद स्थान का परिवर्तन हो गया वृंदावन तथा मथुरा में। ये दो स्थान हैं जहाँ कृष्णलीला निशि-दिन निरंतर अनादि काल से रूपामित ही रही है। वृंदावन के ललिताकुंज में बाबा गुलाब के फूलों की माला पहने परिक्रमा कर रहे थे कि एक वानर समीप आया एवम् वह माला प्राप्त करने का प्रयास करने लगा। भक्तों की दृष्टि बचाकर उसने बाबा के हाथ में एक सामग्री थमा दी और तत्काल पेंडों के बीच अदृश्य हो गया। कुछ पलों के उपरांत बाबा ने अपनी हथेली खोली तो उन्हें एक पत्र मिला था। लिखा था, “कल इसी समय विश्रामघाट में प्रतीक्षा करो।”

अगले दिन परिक्रमा के बाद अपने भक्तों के साथ बाबा यमुना के तट पर विश्रामघाट जाकर निर्धारित समय पर प्रतीक्षा करने लगे। यह वही स्थान है जहाँ अपने माथे पर पुत्र कृष्ण को लेकर अशांत यमुना पार करने के बाद वासुदेव ने कुछ घड़ियों के निमित्त अपनी यात्रा स्थगित कर विश्राम किया था।

दोपहर के भोजन के बाद वे विश्राम हेतु शय्या पर आए और पुरुष अतिथि शून्य से एक कपड़ा प्राप्त कर उसमें से एक के पश्चात दूसरा शालिग्राम सबको चकित कर क्रमागत निकालते चले गए। कपड़े में क्या रहस्य था, यह तो किसी ने नहीं जाना लेकिन कुछ समय के उपरांत सारे आश्रमिकों ने देखा कि कपड़े के उपर असंख्य शालिग्राम दृश्यमान हैं। वे पूरी तरह श्यामवर्ण अवश्य थे किन्तु उनमें अवर्णनीय उज्ज्वलता भी थी। अतिथि ने अब प्रत्येक शालिग्राम का नाम बताकर उसकी अर्चना की विधि भी घोषित कर दी। बाबा समझ गये कि उनके आश्रम में पार्वती के साथ शंकर का आगमन हुआ है। वह एक अत्यंत दुर्लभ क्षण था कि स्वयम् शंकर ने बाबा के आश्रम में प्रकट होकर उन्हें एक सौ सड़सठ शालिग्राम प्रदान किए थे।

अब अतिथियों के जाने का समय था। उनके साथ तब बाबा के अतिरिक्त कोई और नहीं था। आश्रमिकों का अनुमान है कि बाबा अपने अतिथियों को तुलसी के समीप विदा देते हुए ले गये थे। वहाँ वे कहाँ अंतर्धान हो गये, यह किसी को पता नहीं चला।

बाबा के पास गिरी महाराज के प्राप्त शालिग्राम और गोलापी बाबा के शालिग्रामों के साथ अब कुल तीन सौ सड़सठ शालिग्राम हैं। उनमें से इक्कीस शालिग्राम बाबा की यात्राओं में भी साथ रहते हैं।

इन शालिग्राम शिलाओं के संचयन में बाबा को कुछ उपहार प्रेमचंद गिरि से प्राप्त हुए थे। यहाँ प्रेमानन्दजी के सम्बन्ध में कुछ व्यक्त करना अत्यंत रोचक होगा।

प्रेमानंद गिरी के पिता पंडित भगवान वल्लभ पांडेय कनखल निवासी थे। भगवत् सप्ताह करते हुए वे संपूर्ण देश की यात्रा करते थे। एक बार वे पूरी की यात्रा से लौटे तो उसके कुछ ही समय बाद उनके पुत्र का शरीर शांत हो गया। वह मात्र बारह वर्ष की आयु का था।

इस घटना से पांडेयजी टूट गये थे। सूचना मिली तो स्वामी कृष्णानंदजी मित्र को सांत्वना देने हरिद्वार में गंगा के तट पर चिंता के सम्मुख पहुंचे। बारह वर्ष के बालक को अंतिम शय्या पर शायित देख वे स्तब्ध रह गये थे। उस समय कृष्णानंदजी की आयु थी एक सौ ग्यारह वर्ष। शोकत पिता के सम्मुख तब उन्होंने एक प्रस्ताव रखा, "मेरे इस जीर्ण शरीर का अब क्या प्रयोजन? यदि आप स्वीकार करें, इस पार्थिव चोले को त्याग मैं आपके पुत्र के शरीर में, प्रविष्ट हो सकता हूँ। साधन-भजन के निमित्त फिर मुझे कुछ और समय प्राप्त हो जाएगा।"

पांडेयजी प्रस्ताव पर सहमत हुए।

अचानक यमुना में कुछ दूरी पर बाबा को एक अत्यंत मनोहर नाव आती हुई दिखाई पड़ी। उसके रूप रंग चमत्कृत करने वाले थे। हर तरह से वह नाव सामान्य थी। नाव बाबा के समीप आकर ठहर गई तो उसमें से अपनी पत्नी को लेकर एक पुरुष निकल आया। वह अपने कोमल चरणों से बाबा के सम्मुख आया और प्रणाम कर लिया। बाबा समझ गए, वे वासुदेव एवम् उनकी पत्नी देवकी हैं। उनके भीतर भी बाबा के दर्शन की तीव्र अभिलाषा थी और वे अपना कृष्ण शालिग्राम बाबा को उपहार स्वरूप सौंपना चाहते थे। बाबा ने शिला पर अपनी दृष्टि रखी तो गिरधर गोपाल के दर्शन हो गए थे।

किन्तु इन सबसे अधिक महत्वपूर्ण घटना घटित हुई थी बाबा के दिल्ली स्थित आश्रम में। वृंदावन के दिव्य अनुभवों के बाद बाबा को ज्ञात हो गया था कि दिल्ली के आश्रम में भी उन्हें अनेक शालिग्राम प्राप्त होंगे। बाहरी तौर पर तो हुई प्रकट नहीं हुआ था किन्तु बाबा का आंतरिक अनुभव था कि अब शीघ्र ही उनके आश्रम में कई देवी शिलाएँ प्रकट होने वाली हैं।

रविवार की सुबह थी।

बाबा ने आश्रम के रसोईया और सदस्यों को निर्देश दिया कि अगले दिन दोपहर के भोजन में क्या व्यंजन पकाए जाएँ। जाहिर है अगला दिन सोमवार था। आश्रम में दो अतिथियों के लिए साढ़े ग्यारह बजे तक दोपहर का भोजन तैयार कर लेना था।

सोमवार को सुबह के पौने ग्यारह बजे एक व्यक्ति अपनी पत्नी के साथ आ उपस्थित हुए। अतिथियों का स्वागत पूरी आन्योग्यता पर बैठने का आग्रह किया गया तो वे सहमत नहीं हुए और बाबा के सामने उन्हीं के कक्ष में उन्हें जमीन पर बैठना ही उचित प्रतीत हुआ। कुछ ही समय के बाद भोजन का अवसर था। उनसे इस हेतु आग्रह किया गया तो महिला ने निमंत्रण स्वीकार नहीं किया और विनयपूर्वक निवेदन किया कि सोमवार के दिन वह शिव की पूजा अन्न जल ग्रहण किए बिना करती हैं। लेकिन जब बाबा ने महिला से दृढ़तापूर्वक आग्रह किया, उन्हें स्वीकार करना पड़ा और अततः उन्होंने दोपहर का भोजन स्वीकार कर लिया।

सब इस बात पर चकित थे कि दोनों अतिथियों ने आश्रम आकर स्नानादि के बाद अपने कपड़े कैसे बदल लिये जब वे कपड़े लाये नहीं थे। स्नान के बाद उनके चेहरे उद्भासित हो रहे थे और कपड़ों से आ रही थी एक नई खुशबू। किन्तु उनके स्नान से पहले के कपड़े कहाँ गए, यह किसी को पता नहीं चला।

आश्रम का हर सदस्य पूरी तरह विस्मित था। उन्हें इतना तो ज्ञात था कि जो कुछ हो रहा है, वह ईश्वर की लीला मात्र है लेकिन स्थिती को उसकी दिव्यता में ग्रहण कर शांत रहने में वे असमर्थ थे। आश्रम के सदस्यों के सामने इसके बाद एक और अविश्वसनीय दृश्य था। भोजन के निमित्त बैठे अतिथि थाली में घास लेकर मुँह तक लाते किन्तु वह घास फिर कहीं अंतर्धान हो जाता। यही क्रिया बार बार चलती रही और बाबा के आश्रम के सारे सदस्य प्रतिक्षण विमूढ़ दृष्टि से यह देखते रहे।

इसके बाद अधिक समय व्यतीत नहीं हुआ था। कृष्णानंदजी ने अपना शरीर त्याग दिया और चिता पर शायित मृत बालक के शरीर में उतर आया था जीवन का स्पंदन। पांडेयजी आनंद से विभोर हो चुके थे। किन्तु बालक ने पिता को सतर्क कर दिया, “अब मैं आपके साथ घर नहीं जा सकता। मुझे तो तपस्या में जीवन व्यतीत करना है।”

वह बालक अंततः प्रेमानंद गिरि के नाम से प्रसिद्ध हुए थे। वे फिर तपस्या हेतु हरिद्वार से गंगोत्री तथा यमुनोत्री की यात्रा पर चले गए। नौ वर्ष की कठोर तपस्या के बाद जब वे हरिद्वार लौटे पुनः पिता से साक्षत्कार हो गया किन्तु उनके साथ घर चलने का निमन्त्रण वे स्वीकार नहीं कर पाए। बोले “मुझे तो अपने गुरु भक्ति श्रवण तीर्थ गोस्वामी महाराज के चरणों के दर्शन हेतु तत्काल खड़गपुर का यात्रा करनी है।”

गोस्वामी महाराज स्वयम् हमारे बाबा हैं जो किसी पिछले जन्म में प्रेमानंद गिरि के गुरु थे। बाबा को अपने इस शिष्य से अनेक शालिग्राम शिलाएं प्राप्त हुई थी। यही नहीं, प्रेमानंदजी के गुरुभ्राता थे गोपाल बाबा नामक एक विख्यात योगी। उन्होंने भी कुछ दिव्य शिलाएं बाबा को प्रदान की थी।

बाबा के दिल्ली स्थित आश्रम इन शालिग्रामों की उपस्थिति के कारण एक दिव्य वातावरण समेटे हुए हैं। प्रतिदिन नियमानुसार उनकी पूजा की जाती जिससे आश्रम का एक-एक कोना दिव्यता की अनुपमेय गंध से भर कर पूर्ण हो उठता है।

प्रत्येक शालिग्राम का अपना एक जीवनकाल है और है एक कहानी और एक विस्तृत इतिहास, समय के पन्नों पर लिखा हुआ। प्रत्येक का आकार दूसरों से भिन्न है और हर शालिग्राम में हित है अनेक दिव्य प्रतीक। भक्तों का विश्वास है एक दिन इन शिलाओं में बाबा की अनुशक्ति समस्त संसार के सामने दिव्यता को निश्चित ही पार्थिव धरातल पर विस्तार से प्रकट करेगी।

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