



Divya Sandesh

New Year 2015 Edition



Pind Daan in Gaya

On November 15, 2013, our *Gurudev, Jagadguru* Shri Kripalu Ji Maharaj, who was as dear as life itself to His devotees, left us devoid of His physical presence and ascended back to His divine abode, Golok. Even though every devotee feels His divine presence and guidance every moment, nonetheless, His enthusiastic interaction with devotees and His various pastimes and glimpses, all of which gave devotees indescribable bliss, make us aware of His physical absence.

Shri Maharaj ji's obligations are being carried on by His daughters, who have relentlessly tried to lessen the pain of His devotees. After His ascension, His sons, grandsons, and daughters, along with His preachers and several devotees went to various pilgrimages, and with great reverence and devotion performed His last rites in accordance with Vedic rituals.

Gaya is one of the holiest pilgrimages in India. Performing *Pind Daan* in Gaya finally completes the series of rituals that are part of the *Pind Daan* ceremony. Performance of mother's *Pind Daan* is not possible unless Father's *Pind Daan* has been performed. Therefore, all the devotees were eager to perform both our *Pujya Jagatjannani Maa* Padma and Shri Maharaj Ji's *Pind Daan* together. With the advice of the *Pandits*, the dates decided upon were 6th, 7th and 8th November, 2014. Having received this information all the devotees from India and abroad started planning their trip. Approximately 1000 people from Canada, America, England, Hong Kong, Singapore, China, Malaysia, and Trinidad, and about 4000 devotees from India arrived in Gaya for the ceremony. Two of Shri Maharaj Ji's preachers, Shri Yugal Sharan Ji and Sushri Raseshwari Ji had organized the entire ceremony wonderfully. Arrangements were made for Shri Maharaj Ji's family members and other devotees in various upscale hotels.

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A three day *Sadhana* program was held in Gandhi *Maidan* (field) in Gaya. An elaborate tent was built and decorated with many beautiful posters of Shri Radha Krishna, Shri Maharaj Ji, and Pujya *Amma Ji* and ornamented with various colorful flowers. Cut-outs of Shri Radha Krishna, Shri Maharaj Ji, and Pujya *Amma* were placed on stage where every morning, from 4.30 to 9:00am, *Artis*, *Kirtans* and *Pravachans*

would take place. Every morning the day would begin with daily prayers, Radha Krishna *Arti* and *Guru Arti*. Even during meal times, Shri Maharaj Ji's CDs were played in order to keep the mind absorbed in Divine thoughts. Thereafter, a *kirtan* session would start to enable all devotees to lovingly do *Roopdhyam* of their *Ishtdev* and *Guru*. All of this took place under the guidance of Shri Maharaj Ji's oldest daughter Sushri Vishakha Tripathi.



In the same way, the hotel venues, Vishnu temple, Phalgu River, Akshay Vat, and many other places where ceremonies were performed were decorated



with colorful flowers, beautiful posters and yellow flags with *Radhey Radhey* inscribed on them. The entire *Gaya Dham* was adorned in an elaborate manner. Thousands of Shri Maharaj Ji's devotees wearing yellow *Radhey Shyami* and chanting *Radhey Radhey* making *Gaya Dham* a truly sacred experience. Residents of *Gaya* were astounded to see such a Divine event being held there. They were curious to know about the Divine personality is in whose honor such arrangements had been made. The devotees

would lovingly tell them about all of Shri Maharaj Ji's glories, and gladly talk to them about the Divine loving personality of their *Gurudev*.

***Pind Daan* and *Tarpan* arrangements were organized mainly in three places in *Gaya*.**

1. **Phalgu River** – On November 6th 2014, the first *Pind Daan* was performed on the bank of Phalgu River from 1 to 3pm. It was here that Dashrath Ji



himself came to Sita Ji and asked Her to perform *Pind Daan* made of sand. There is a belief that Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram Ji, along with His brother Shri Lakshman Ji, and wife Shri Sita Ji had come to Gaya to perform His father's *Pind Daan* and *Tarpan*. Before the ceremony, when both the brothers had gone for bath in the river and also to arrange for rice and sesame seeds for the ceremony, Sita Ji was idly sitting on Phalgu river bank and playing with the sand. At that moment Dashrath Ji appeared from heaven and requested Sita Ji to perform his *Pind Daan*. Hearing this Sita Ji hesitated and said, "Both your sons have gone to take bath in order to perform this ceremony and will soon come and perform your *Pind Daan* with rice and sesame seeds, please wait for their return". Dashrath Ji replied, "No, I am very hungry. Give me *Pind Daan* right now with the same sand in your hand". Sita Ji obeyed Her father-in-law's request and performed *Pind Daan* in front of five witnesses. Those five witnesses were: the Phalgu river, Akshya Vat, a cow, Brahmins who were present there and a Tulsi plant.

When *Bhagwan* Ram came back with His brother to perform *Pind Daan*, Dashrath Ji did not appear before them. Shri Ram was very surprised by this, as in those days, the ancestors would appear in person to accept *Pind Daan*. Seeing this, Sita Ji told Shri Ram about Dashrath Ji's appearance earlier and accepting *Pind Daan*. *Bhagwan* Ram could not believe that His father accepted *Pind Daan* made out of sand. He asked Sita Ji, "Do you have any evidence of this incident?" Sita Ji instantly asked the five witnesses to give validation. Besides Akshay Vat all the other four witnesses, greedy to get more offerings and in hopes of getting Shri Ram's favor and respect, denied having seen anything. Hearing their response, Sita Ji got angry and cursed each of them by saying that from that day onwards in Gaya, the Phalgu River would remain dry, Tulsi would not have any place in Gaya, the Brahmins of Gaya would always be dissatisfied and the worship of a cow in Gaya would be from the back side, never from the front.

Nonetheless, being pleased by Vat *Vraksha*, She gave him a boon of immortality. Whoever went to Phalgu River to perform *Pind Daan* would always worship the Vat tree. It has been known that all other trees in that area shed their leaves once a year in winter, but the Akshay Vat stays evergreen. Even during dissolution it is not destroyed.

Having been cursed by Sita Ji, only sand is seen on top of the Phalgu River. If you dig a foot into it, you can see the water. Ever since then Phalgu River has been proclaimed a false (*phalgu* means false) river. Every Hindu comes here to fulfill their ancestors *Pind Daan* and by performing *puja* of Akshay Vat, they conclude the ceremony.



Mahaprabhu Chaitanya also came to Gaya to perform

Only sand is seen on top of the Phalgu River. If you dig a foot into it, you can see the water.

Shraddha of His father. And to tie another knot in the chain of historical events, on the historic day of November 6th, 2014, the 5th Original *Jagadguru* 1008 Shri Kripalu Ji Maharaj and His wife *Jagatjannani Maa Padma's (Amma Ji) Pind Daan* was performed by their sons (Shri Ghanshyam



Tripathi and Shri Balkrishna Tripathi), daughters (Sushri Vishakha Tripathi, Sushri Shyama Tripathi and Sushri Krishna Tripathi), grandsons (Shri Ramanand Tripathi and his wife Sita Tripathi, Shri Krishnanad Tripathi, Shri Premanand Tripathi, Neelmani Tripathi), and their great grandson Shri Luvanand Tripathi, along with other relatives and devotees present on the

banks of Phalgu River.

Here as well, for the convenience of the devotees, a magnificent tent was built, and that part of the river was echoing with *Bhagwan Naam Sankirtan* continually. A beautiful stage was created inside the tent where all the *Pind Daan* ceremonies took place.



Invited *Pundits* performed *Pind Daan* with proper Vedic Mantras and *Yagna*. Shri Ramanand Ji and his wife took the seat of the main *Yajman*. Shri

Maharaji and Amma's pictures were placed on a beautifully decorated stage and all of the family members placed garlands and offered their reverence to the Divine couple. Thereafter they performed *Arti* of Shri Maharaj Ji and Amma along with the devotees. The entire atmosphere reverberated with sounds of *Jai Jaikar*. Afterwards, according to the Vedic rituals *Pind Daan* ceremony was carried out.



Shri Maharaj Ji's daughters and other female devotees doing *Tarpan*

Shri Maharaj Ji has always propagated *Raaganuga Bhakti*. Therefore, following the footsteps and principles of Sita Ji, Shri Maharaj Ji's daughters, preachers and all female devotees offered *Tarpan* with faith and devotion.

2. **Vishnu Pad Mandir** – On November 7th, 2014, under the guidance of Sushri Vishakha Didi (Badi Didi), *Shraddha* was organized on the grounds of Vishnu Pad Mandir.

A magnificent Chariot was decorated with beautiful colorful flowers. On that a cutout of Shri Maharaj Ji was placed on a throne. All the family members put garlands and offered their respects. This was followed by *Guru Arti* by all devotees and the grand procession commenced. In front of the procession was a large banner with Shri Maharaj Ji's name written on it. This was followed by devotees sprinkling flower petals on the path. Thousands of devotees followed the Chariot singing *Hari Naam Sankirtan*, advancing towards Vishnu Pad Temple. Ramanand Ji sat on the chariot to fan and offer flowers. All other family members, including sons, grandsons, and daughters stayed close to the chariot, followed by preachers and devotees.



The *Shraddha* event started at 8:00 am and took place inside the temple hall. Shri

Ramanand Ji and his wife Shrimati Sita Devi were the main *Yajman* (performers) of the *Shradha*. This program continued till 11.30 am.

Due to limited space, a tent was put up in the outer courtyard of the temple to accommodate all the devotees. Where *Puja* was conducted, only family members, preachers and foreign devotees were present. They all participated in *Pind Daan* ceremony and went to the temple for *Charan darshan* and *puja*. During the ceremonies, live *keertan* continued in the tent. Later these devotees too went to the temple for *Vishnu Pad darshan*.

According to the *Vayu Puran*, *Gayasur*, who was a great devotee of God *Vishnu*, declared that whosoever sees or touches him would attain heaven. However, with time, the boon that he



Procession going to Vishnu Pad Temple

received from Lord Vishnu started being misused. Displeased by his behavior, Vishnu Ji placed His right foot on Gayasur's head and pushed him back down to the earth. Since then His footprint is left on this place. Later on, Queen Ahilya Bai Holkar built the present temple at that auspicious place. Having received the *darshan* of Vishnu Ji's footprint, many devotees have extraordinary experiences. It is said that after pleading with God Vishnu several times, Gayasur got a place to live in Gaya in the form of the hills. That is why Gaya is now known to be a very exuberant place to visit.

3. **Akshay Vat** - On November 8, 2014, the third day of *Shraddha* took place. In the morning after *Sadhana* and breakfast, all the devotees, under the guidance of Badi Didi, proceeded towards Akshay Vat.



Pind daan in Akshay Vat

The significance of Akshay Vat has already been told in reference to Phalgu River earlier. At the time of creation, Shri Krishna Himself, in the form of a child, slept on one of the leaves of the Vat tree.

करारविन्देन पदारविन्दं मुखारविन्दे विनिवेशयन्तम् ।
बटस्य पत्रस्य पुटे शयानं बालं मुकुन्दं मनसा स्मरामि ॥
Kararvinden Padarvindam Mukharvinde Viniveshyantam.

Vatasya Patrasya Pute Shayanam Balam Mukundam Manasa Smarami!

Here also, magnificent tents were set up and Shri Maharaj Ji and Amma's decorated pictures were placed on the stage. The entire place was adorned with beautiful posters and flags bearing Shri Radha Rani's name. Starting from 8.30 to 11 am, the Pundits performed *Puja* and *Pind Daan* ceremony. At the end of the ceremony, Pundits were endowed with gifts, food, and Dakshina, and everyone proceeded for Prasad.

Thereafter, all the devotees, with beautiful impressions from the *Shraddha* ceremony and recollections of many other happy memories of Shri *Gurudev* and *Amma Ji*, left for Shri Vrindavan *Dham* and Shri Barsana *Dham* where *Sadhu Bhoj* and *Vidhwa Bhoj* were to take place.

Devotees, who participated in the ceremonies at Gaya give thanks with a grateful heart, to the three Didis for organizing this program and having given them the opportunity to participate in the Divine *Shraddha* ceremony of Shri *Gurudev* and Amma. They only had one thing to say, "This Yatra will never be forgotten".

गया में पिंड दान

गत वर्ष १५ नवम्बर को जब हमारे गुरुदेव, (जगद्गुरु श्री कृपालु जी महाराज) जो अपने समस्त भक्तों के प्राण स्वरूप थे, हमें प्रत्यक्ष दर्शन से सदा सदा के लिये वंचित करके गोलोक महाप्रयाण के हेतु प्रस्थान कर गये। यद्यपि हर पल हर भक्त अघावधि उनकी मनोहर उपस्थिति, सानिध्य व मार्ग दर्शन का प्रत्यक्ष अनुभव करता है, तथापि उनके प्रतिभायुक्त हास परिहास, अनेक प्रकार की लीलाएँ व छविyaँ, जो भक्तों को सदा एक मंगलमय मधुर रस में निमज्जित रखती थीं, उनका अभाव सभी के क्षुभित मन को प्रभावित कर उनके

अभाव का आभास भी कराता रहता है।

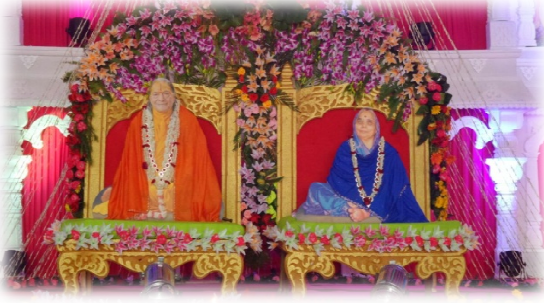
श्री महाराज जी के बहुत से दायित्वों को उनकी पुत्रियों ने अपने कंधों पर लेकर, भक्तों की इस पीड़ा को कम करने का स्तुत्य प्रयास किया है। बस यही एक आधार शेष है।

श्री महाराज जी के महाप्रयाण के पश्चात् लगभग प्रत्येक तीर्थ पर जाकर उनके पुत्र, पौत्र, पुत्रियों ने श्री महाराज जी के प्रचारकों व अन्य भक्तों के साथ विशेष उत्साह के साथ संपूर्ण वैदिक विधियोंका अनुपालन करते हुये, उनके पुष्प विसर्जन का कार्य सम्पन्न किया था।



गया भी एक परमपवित्र तीर्थ है। वहाँ पर पिंड दान देने के पश्चात् ही पिंडदान संबंधी कर्मकांड की पूर्णतामान्य होती है। पिता का पिंड दान न होने तक माता का गया में पिंड दान भी वर्जित है। अतः परम आदरणीया जगज्जननी माँ पद्मा व श्री महाराज जी के गया में सम्मिलित पिंडदान देने की प्रतीक्षा करतेहुये सभी भक्त अतिशय आतुर थे। पंडितों के परामर्श से नवम्बर ६, ७ व ८ की

तिथि निश्चित हुई। यह सूचना प्राप्त होते ही देश व विदेश के समस्त भक्त ट्रेनों व वायुयानों में अपना अपना आरक्षण कराने में तत्पर हो गये। लगभग १००० विदेशी (कनाडा, अमेरिका, इंग्लैण्ड, हांग कांग, सिंगापुर, चीन, मलेशिया, ट्रिनिडाड आदि देशों के) व लगभग ४००० भारतीय उचित समय पर पहुँच गये। वहाँ श्री महाराज जी के दो प्रचारकों (श्री युगल शरण जी व सुश्री रासेश्वरी जी) ने सैकड़ों सत्सङ्गियों के सहयोग से निवास, भोजन व होने वाले समस्त कार्यक्रमों की अभूतपूर्व व्यवस्था की हुई थी। श्री महाराज जी के परिवार वालों के लिये यथोचित निवासीय प्रबन्ध के साथ प्रचारकों व अन्य भक्तों के लिये भी विभिन्न श्रेष्ठ होटलों में ठहरने का सराहनीय प्रबन्ध किया हुआ था।



गया के गाँधी मैदान में त्रिदिवसीय साधना शिविर हेतु एक भव्य पंडाल का निर्माण करवाया गया था जो राधाकृष्ण, श्री महाराजजी व पूजनीयाअम्मा जी के सुन्दरातिसुन्दर बड़े बड़े पोस्टर व फूलों के विशेष कलात्मक श्रृंगार से सुसज्जित था। रङ्गमंच के ऊपर श्री राधाकृष्ण, श्री महाराजजी व पूजनीया अम्मा जी के वृहदाकार कट आउट्स लगाये गये थे, जहाँ प्रातः काल ४.३० से रात्रि ९

बजे तक(भोजन व श्राद्ध आदि के समय के अतिरिक्त) आरती, कीर्तन व प्रवचन आदि होता रहता था। भोजनादि के समय पर भी प्रायः श्री महाराज की ही आवाज़ में कीर्तन के सी.डी. व वीडियो आदि चलते रहते थे। ताकि भगवदीय चिन्तन का तारतम्य बना रहे। प्रातःकालीन कीर्तन का शुभारम्भ दैनिक प्रार्थना, राधाकृष्ण आरती व गुरु आरती से होता था। ये कार्य श्री महाराज जीकी ज्येष्ठा पुत्री सुश्री विशाखा त्रिपाठी के नेतृत्व में सम्पन्न होता था। पश्चात् कीर्तन प्रारंभ होता था, जिसमें सभी भक्त करुणा पूर्वक अपने इष्टदेव व गुरु का रूपध्यान करते थे।

इसके अतिरिक्त उसी प्रकार के भव्य चित्रों, फूलों के श्रृंगार व पीली पताकाओं से, जिन पर बड़े बड़े अक्षरों में राधे राधे लिखा था, सारे होटलों, विष्णुपाद मंदिर, फल्गु नदी, व अक्षय वट आदि स्थानों व उनके मार्गों की सज्जा की गई थी। कार्य क्रमों की सूचना देने वाले विशाल बोर्डिंग्स व पताकाओंसे सज्जित सम्पूर्ण गया धाम अलौकिक शोभा को प्राप्त हो रहा था। तिस पर चारों ओर एक से रङ्ग की राधे श्यामी धारण किये हुये, राधे राधे का उच्चारण करते हुये श्री महाराज जी के हजारों भक्तों से आच्छादित गया धाम एक दिव्य नगरी सी प्रतीत होती थी। गया वासी इतने विशालजन समूह, नगर की सज्जा व व्यवस्था को देखकर स्तब्ध थे। वे बारंबार सत्सङ्गियों से पूछते "ये कौन हैं जिनके पिंडदान के लिये विदेशों तक से इतने लोग आये हुये हैं और ऐसी भव्य व्यवस्थाकी गई है ? उनके पूछने पर भक्त जन अपने महाराज जी के दिव्य ज्ञान, भक्ति व उनके प्रेममय अलौकिक व्यक्तित्व का गुणगान कर के श्री महाराज जी के चिर स्मरणीय व्यक्तित्व व उनके विशेष आकर्षण के कारणों से परिचय कराने लग जाते थे। वहाँ के निवासियों ने बताया कि गया में प्रथम बार ऐसा हुआ है कि किसी भी उच्च स्तरीय होटल में ठहरने हेतु कोई रिक्त स्थान नहीं बचा।



पिंडदान व तर्पण की व्यवस्था मुख्यतः तीन स्थानों पर की गई थी।

१. **फल्गु नदी** - ६ नवम्बर को प्रथम पिंड दान फल्गु नदी के तट पर मध्याह्न १.०० से ३.०० बजे के मध्य सम्पन्न हुआ, जहाँ दशरथ जी ने स्वयं आकर सीता जी को बालू से बने पिंड दान देने का आदेश दिया था। इस संबंध में यह कथा ज्ञातव्य है कि मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम श्री राम अपने अनुज श्री लक्ष्मण जी व पत्नी श्री सीता जी के साथ पिंड दान व तर्पण हेतु गया आये। तर्पण के पूर्व जब दोनों भाई नदी में स्नान व तिल एवं चावल का प्रबन्ध करने गये हुये थे, सीताजी उस समय नदी के किनारे बैठकर बालू के साथ क्रीडा कर रहीं थीं। तभी दशरथ जी स्वर्ग से पधारे और सीताजी को आदेश दिया कि तुम मेरा पिंड दान करो। सीता जी असमंजसमें पड़ गई और उन्होंने कहा, "आपके दोनों पुत्र इसी उद्देश्य की पूर्ति हेतु स्नान करने गये हैं, वे आकर तिल व चावल के साथ यथोचित रूपेण पिंड दान करेंगे। कृपया तब तक आप थोड़ी प्रतीक्षा कर लीजिये।" दशरथ जी ने कहा "नहीं, मुझे बहुत भूख लगी है, मुझे अभी इसी समय इसी बालू से, जो तुम्हारे हाथ में है, ही पिंड दान दो।" सीता जी ने अपने श्वसुर की आज्ञापालन के लिये बाध्य हो, पाँच लोगों को साक्षी बना कर पिंडदान दिया। वे पाँच साक्षी थे-फाल्गुनी नदी, अक्षय वट, गाय, उपस्थित ब्राह्मण एवं तुलसी का पौधा।

प्रभु राम जब अपने अनुज के साथ स्नानोपरान्त पिंड दान देने को तत्पर हुये तो दशरथ जी प्रकट नहीं हुये। इस पर श्री राम को बहुत आश्चर्य हुआ क्योंकि उस समय तक पूर्वज अपना पिंडदान ग्रहण करने हेतु स्वयं प्रकट होते थे। तत्पश्चात् सीता जी ने दशरथ जी के पूर्वागमन की सारी बात बताई। प्रभु श्री राम को विश्वास नहीं हुआ कि उनके पिता दशरथ ने बालू का पिंडदान स्वीकार किया होगा। अतः वे सीता जी से बोले, "क्या इस बात का तुम्हारे पास कोई प्रमाण है?" सीता जी ने तत्काल पाँचों साक्षी से प्रमाण देने को कहा और कहा कि आप इन से पूछ सकते हैं। वट वृक्ष के अतिरिक्त अन्य चारों ने और अधिक दक्षिणा, नैवेद्य व प्रभु श्री राम से आदर आदि प्राप्त करने के लोभ वश श्री राम कापक्ष लेते हुये स्पष्ट रूपेण घटना का प्रमाण न देते हुये कह दिया, "हमें इस विषय में कुछ नहीं पता।" इस पर सीता जी ने कुपित होकर चारों को शाप देते हुये कहा १. गया में आजसे फाल्गुनी नदी का जल सूख जायेगा। २. तुलसी को गया में कोई स्थान नहीं प्राप्त होगा। ३. गया के ब्राह्मण सदा अतृप्त रहेंगे। ४. यहाँ गाय की पूजा केवल उसके पिछले भाग से होगी, सामने से नहीं।

किन्तु वट वृक्ष से प्रसन्न होकर सीता जी ने उसे वरदान दिया कि तुम्हारा अस्तित्व अक्षय होगा। जो भी पिंडदान हेतु गया धाम में फल्गु नदी के तट पर आयेगा वह तुम्हारी भी पूजा करेगा व पिंडदान देने का पुण्य प्राप्त करेगा। ज्ञातव्य है कि सभी वृक्षों के पत्ते वर्ष में एक बार अवश्य क्षय होते हैं किन्तु अक्षयवट के पत्र सदैव हरे भरे रहते हैं। प्रलयकाल में भी इसका क्षय नहीं होता।

शापवश फल्गु नदी में जल के स्थान पर बालू ही गोचरित होती है। लगभग एक फुट खोदने पर जल प्राप्त होता है और तभी से फाल्गुनी नदी को फल्गु (झूठी) नदी घोषित कर दिया गया।



प्रत्येक हिन्दू अपने पूर्वजों का पिंडदान करने यहाँ अवश्य आता है। और अक्षय वट की पूजा कर श्राद्ध को सम्पन्न करता है।

महाप्रभु चैतन्य भी अपने पिता का श्राद्ध करने हेतु यहाँ आये थे और आज ६ नवम्बर २०१४ को इतिहास की श्रृंखला में एक और कड़ी जोड़ने के लिये पंचम मौलिक जगद्गुरु १००८ श्री कृपालु जी महाराज व उनकी पत्नी जगज्जननी माँ पद्मा (अम्मा जी) के पिंडदान हेतु उनके पुत्र (श्री घनश्याम त्रिपाठी व श्री बालकृष्ण त्रिपाठी), पुत्रियाँ (सुश्री विशाखा त्रिपाठी, सुश्री श्यामा त्रिपाठी, सुश्री कृष्णा त्रिपाठी) पौत्र (श्रीरामानन्द त्रिपाठी व उनकी पत्नी श्रीमती सीता



त्रिपाठी, श्री कृष्णानन्द त्रिपाठी, श्री प्रेमानन्द त्रिपाठी व नीलमणि त्रिपाठी प्रपौत्र श्री लवानन्द त्रिपाठी, एवं अन्य सम्बन्धी व सहस्रों भक्त, श्री राम कथा से संबद्ध इसपवित्र स्थान पर प्रथम पिंडदान देने हेतु गया में फल्गु नदी के तट पर पधारे हुये हैं।

यहाँ पर भी भक्तों की सुविधा हेतु भव्य पंडाल का निर्माण कराया गया था और नदी का वह क्षेत्र निरन्तर भगवन्नाम कीर्तन से गुंजारित होता रहा। पंडाल में एक कलात्मक ढंग से सुसज्जित रंगमंच भी तैयार कराया गया था, जिस पर पिंडदान संबंधी यज्ञ की सब तैयारियाँ की गई थी।

आमंत्रित पंडितों ने आकर वेद मंत्रों के साथ यज्ञ व पिंडदान को सम्पन्न कराया। श्री रामानन्द जी व उनकी पत्नी ने प्रमुखयजमान का स्थान ग्रहण किया। श्री महाराज जी व अम्मा जी के एक एक विशाल चित्र को, फूलों की सज्जा से युक्त एक उच्च स्थान पर स्थापित किया गया था।

परिवार के सभी सदस्यों ने सर्वप्रथम दोनों प्रतिमाओं को माल्यार्पण कर के सजल नेत्रों से शीशनमन किया। पश्चात् समस्तभक्तों सहित दोनों की आरती हुई। जय जयकार से संपूर्ण क्षेत्र गूँज गया। तदुपरान्त वैदिक रीति से पिंडदान संबंधी कार्यक्रम सम्पन्न हुआ।

श्री महाराज जी पूर्णतया विशुद्धा रागानुगाभक्ति के ही प्रतिपादक थे। अतः सीताजीको आदर्श मानकर पुरुषों के साथ साथ श्री महाराज जी की पुत्रियों व अन्य महिला प्रचारिकाओं व सत्सङ्गी महिलाओं ने भी श्रद्धा व भक्ति के साथ गुरुदेव को तर्पण दिया।



२.विष्णुपाद मंदिर- ७ नवम्बर २०१४ को सुश्री विशाखा जी (बड़ी दीदी) के निर्देशन में दूसरे दिन का श्राद्ध विष्णुपाद मंदिर के दिव्य परिसर में संयोजित हुआ ।



एक विशाल रथ को रंग बिरंगी पुष्प-मालाओं से सजाया गया । उस पर श्री महाराज जी का चित्र स्थापित किया गया । परिवार के सभी सदस्यों ने माल्यार्पण करते हुये श्री महाराज जी का अभिनंदन व पूजन किया । पश्चात् सभी लोगों ने गुरु आरती की और रथ के पीछे पीछे हज़ारों भक्त पंक्तिबद्ध हो कर, हरिनाम संकीर्तन करते हुये विष्णुपाद मंदिर की ओर चल पड़े । रथ के आगे एक विशाल बैनर था, जिस पर श्री महाराजजी का नाम लिखा था, उसके पीछे भक्तगण पुष्प अर्पण करते हुए चले । रामानन्द जी पंखे व पुष्प आदि से सेवा करने के लिये रथ पर आसीन हुये । शेष सभी पुत्र, पौत्र व पुत्रियाँ भक्तमंडल का नेतृत्व करते हुये आगे-आगे चले । उनके पीछे प्रचारिकायें प्रचारक, उनके पीछे समस्त भक्त जन चल पड़े ।

प्रातः ८ बजे से श्राद्ध संबंधी कार्य कम आरम्भ हो गया । यह कार्यक्रम मंदिर के भीतरी बराम्दे में सम्पन्न हुआ । श्री रामानन्द जी व उनकी पत्नी श्रीमती सीता देवी ने प्रमुख यजमान का आसन

ग्रहण कर के पिंडदान यज्ञ की समस्त औपचारिकताओं को श्रद्धा व धैर्य के साथ सम्पन्न किया । यह कार्यक्रम प्रातः ८.३० से ११.०० बजे तक चला ।

स्थानाभाव के कारण मंदिर के बाहर एक पंडाल बनवाया गया था । पूजाके क्षेत्र में पारिवारिक सदस्यों के अतिरिक्त कतिपय प्रचारक व विदेशीभक्त ही थे । उन सभी ने पिण्डदान कार्यक्रम को सम्पन्न कर के मंदिर के विशेष आकर्षण केन्द्र विष्णुपाद स्थली पर जा कर चरण दर्शन व पूजनआदि किया ।



शेष जन विष्णुपाद के दर्शन हेतु पंक्ति में खड़े हुये थे अथवा पंडाल में बैठे हुये थे । वायु पुराण के अनुसार गयासुर, जो भगवान् विष्णु का परम भक्त था, उसने घोषित कर दिया कि जो भी मेरा दर्शन या स्पर्श करेगा वह स्वर्ग को प्राप्त होगा । शनैः शनैः विष्णु जी के वरदान से प्राप्त अपनी शक्ति का वह दुरुपयोग



करने लगा। उसके उत्पात से खिन्न हो कर जब विष्णु जी ने अपने दाहिने चरण को उसके मस्तक पर रख कर उसे पृथ्वी के नीचे ढकेल दिया था, तभी से उस स्थान पर यह चरण चिन्ह अंकित हो गया। कालान्तर में महारानी अहिल्याबाई होल्कर ने वहीं पर विष्णु पाद मंदिर की स्थापना करवा दी। विष्णु जी के दक्षिण चरण का दर्शन पाकर अनेकानेक भक्तों को विचित्र अनुभव हुये।

गयासुर की बहुत विनती पर भगवान् विष्णु ने उसके शरीर को वहाँ पर स्थित पहाड़ियों का रूप देकर गया में रहने का अधिकार दिया, जिसके कारण गया एक अत्यन्त रमणीय स्थान हो गया है।

३.अक्षय वट- श्राद्ध के तीसरे दिन, दिनाङ्क ८ जनवरी को प्रातः ६.०० बजे से ८.०० बजे तक साधना व जलपान कर के सभी लोग बड़ी दीदी के निर्देशानुसार अक्षय वट की ओर अग्रसर हुये।

अक्षय वट की महिमा तो फल्गु नदी के संदर्भ में बताई ही जा चुकी है। सृष्टि के समय श्री कृष्ण स्वयं शिशु रूप में इसी वट वृक्ष के एक पत्ते पर सोए थे।

करारविन्देन पदारविन्दं मुखारविन्दे विनिवेशयन्तम् ।
बटस्य पत्रस्य पुटे शयानं बालं मुकुन्दं मनसा स्मरामि ॥

वहाँ पर भी विशाल पंडाल में सुन्दर सा रङ्गमंच बनवाया गया था जिस पर श्री महाराज जी व माँ पद्मा(अम्मा जी) की प्रतिमायें सजाई गई थीं। पूरा क्षेत्र बड़े बड़े पोस्टर्स व राधे नाम की पीली पताकाओं से अति सुसज्जित था। प्रातः ८.३० से ११.०० बजे तक पंडितों द्वारा पूजन व पिंड दान की प्रक्रिया चली। पश्चात् पंडितों को पर्याप्त उपहार भोजन व दक्षिणा द्वारा संतुष्ट कर के सबने अपने उस पंडाल में जहाँ भक्तों के भोजन का समुचित प्रबंध किया गया था, प्रस्थान किया।



Shri Krishna lying on Akshay Vat leaf during creation

तदुपरान्त सब गुरुदेव व परम पूजनीया अम्मा जी के इस समारोह एव उनके मानस पटल पर अंकित अन्य बहुत सी स्मृतियों को संजो कर अपनी अपनी योजना के अनुसार श्री वृन्दाबन धाम

व श्री बरसाना धाम में होने वाले साधु भोज एवं विधवा भोज में सेवार्थ सम्मिलित होने के लिये चले गये ।

गया-कार्यक्रम में भाग लेने वाले सभी भक्त इस कार्यक्रम की संयोजिका तीनों दीदियों को सद्गुरु दम्पति के इस महान् कार्य में सम्मिलित होने का सौभाग्य प्रदान करने हेतु धन्यवाद करते हुये एक ही बात कहते हैं कि "यह यात्रा अविस्मरणीय है ।"

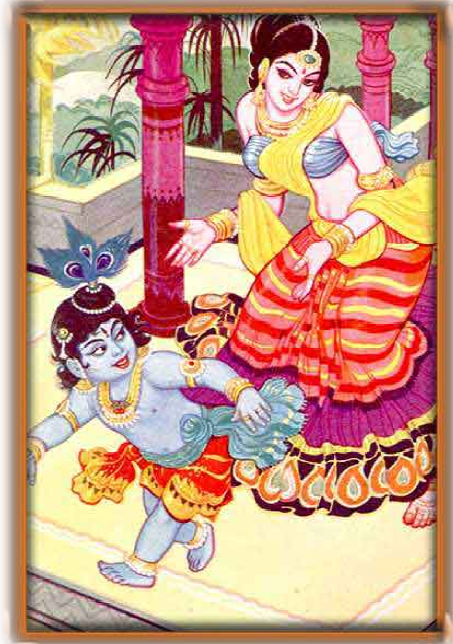
What after death?

अन्त मति सोई गति, गोविन्द राधे । याते मन नित हरि गुरु में लगा दे ।
Ant mati soi gati govind radhe, Yate man nit hari guru mein laga de

All scriptures unanimously proclaim that we will only attain whosoever we recall moments before dying. There are only four scenarios that we are compelled to think of. Let us now examine these four scenarios. Three are from the material realm, *tamas*, *rajas* and *satvik*. And the last one is beyond the material realm or involves God and *Mahapurush* (one who has attained God). Everybody's mind is attached to one of these four at the time of death.

को हि जानाति कस्याद्य मृत्युकालो भविष्यति । महाभारत
kohi janati kasyad mrity kalu bhavishyati

This lesson should always stay in your mind. No one knows when you might have a heart attack or meet with an accident. If your mind is attached to God then after death you will go to Golok. Constant remembrance (*smaran*) does not come easily at first. But start reminding yourself every 30 minutes that He is sitting on that table in your office and continue to work. When you get into that habit, then do the same every 15 min, then every 10 minutes, then every 5 minutes. In this manner if you practice for a month or two, or a year or two, a day will come when at all times you will realize that God is with you.



Always focus on God's name, form, pastimes etc

This is not mere imagination, this is the truth. He is sitting in your heart and also is omnipresent.

य आत्मनि तिष्ठति
Ya atmani tishtati

He is omnipresent in His divine form.

यद्यपि सकारोऽयं तथैकदेशी विभाति यदुनाथः ।
सर्वगतः सर्वात्मा तथाप्ययं सच्चिदानंदः ॥ शंकरा.

You will have to practice this. You have a lot of valuable information from your *Guru*, but keep losing it. Scriptures say-

आवृत्ति रसकृदुपदेशात् ।

Repeated contemplation of valuable teachings is very important.

Listen repeatedly and remind yourself constantly, only then will the idea stick. Let alone Godly matters, even the attachments to material transient things increase due to constant repetition. Extended use of things like cigarettes, alcohol will allow them to will eventually grip you and force you to consume them. We have forced ourselves into this habit. We did not have these problems from the time of our birth. After our birth we drank unsweetened mother's milk, kicked our feet and cooed joyously. Later we started asking for sweetened milk, saffron in the milk, cardamom, tea etc and the list kept growing.

When we get addicted to material things that enslave us, we must constantly remind ourselves of the ocean of bliss as then our mind will definitely start craving for that bliss all the time. Remember that this state will come only with practice.

Shri Krishna told Arjun

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन् मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।
यः प्रयाति त्यजन्देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥ गीता ८.५
*ant kale ch mamev smaran, muktva kalevaram,
yah prayati tyajandeham sa yati parama gatim gita 8.5*

When a soul, before leaving the body remembers Me then that soul comes to Me after leaving the body.

यं यं वापि स्मरन् भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय, सदा तद्भावं भावितः ॥ गीता ८.६
Yam Yam yapi samara bhavam .. kalevaram ... gita 8.6

Would you then attain whatever you remember at the final moment? There is such a dog lover in America who has named his dog as the beneficiary of his property worth Rs17,000,000,000. The dog lives in a palatial house, roams around in an air-conditioned car, has several servants to cater to its needs.

Jad Bharat Paramhans recalled a deer fawn at the time of his death and was granted the body of a deer after death.

तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युद्ध्य च ॥
Tastmat serveshu kaleshu mamanusmar yudh cha.



Always imbibe me in your mind

Hence Arjun you should always imbibe me in your mind, for no one knows when death might embrace you. If a person knows that he is going to leave the body at 8:05 then till 8:00 he can be callous and after that start focusing on God and attain God. But when you don't know the time of death, you will have to remember God all the time. This is a great secret that God does not reveal to anybody except God-realized saints.

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन् मामनुस्मरन् ।
यः प्रयाति त्यजन्देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥
गीता ८.१३

The one, who leaves this mortal body remembering Me alone by heart, attains highest reward of divine abode.

You may chant My name or not but for sure remember Me Gita 8:13

Where ever the attachment lies at the time of death, people ask for that person, so they can see them, embrace them one last time before leaving the body. Some ask for their son, some people ask for their

daughter. You have seen your loved ones several times and still your thirst is not quenched then how do you think it will get quenched by seeing them one more time? Let alone wanting to see people, some others ask for porridge, one last time, before dying.

So if you constantly remember God, only then can you cross the cosmic ocean as nobody knows when the time to leave the body will come. At that time you won't even be spared a moment.

The scriptures repeatedly use the words *satat*, *nirantar*, *nitya* means always remember God.

Magic of words “Bhee” and “hee”

20th Dec 2011

भी ने बिगाड़ा सब, गोविन्द राधे । बिगरी बनाना है तो ही को लगा दे ॥
Bhee ne bigara sab, govind Radhey; Bigri banana hai to, hee ko laga de

The Hindi word “*bhee*” means also and the word “*hee*” means only. Use of these two words in spiritual realm is so significant that it changes the entire life. Lord Krishna says in Geeta,

मामेकं शरणं ब्रज
Mamekam sharnam braj

You have to surrender yourself unto me alone (*hee*)

“*Bhee ne bigara sab*” using ‘also’ is the cause of all our miseries and yet we always put “*bhee*” (also). That is why our infinite lives have been ruined. Infinite times we got human Body. This human body is so invaluable that celestial gods, living in heaven, desire for this filthy body. These celestial gods are worshipped by human beings. The bodies of these celestial beings are fragrant, they don’t excrete yet they desire the human form. The reason being the living being has to face the consequences of every action performed only in this form. One can therefore make spiritual gains only in this form. There are two areas in which one can earn, because other than the living beings, there are only 2 other personalities. One is God and the other is *Maya*. The expansion of that *Maya* is this world. So all that we can desire, we will have to search in one of these 2 areas. First we will search in this world, for this world is perceptible to our senses. God cannot be perceived. Agreed, He is present in each and every spec of this world and He sits in the heart of every living being. Still, He cannot be perceived. We cannot see Him, because He is divine. Every sense of ours is material. We got this body in our mother’s womb. She too had a body made of 5 material elements, in her womb our body was formed that is also made of material elements. But God is divine. Hence even when He descends on this earth in a physical form it does not benefit us, because when He descends, with these material eyes we can’t see His divine body. We have seen Him infinite times.

हरे राम हरे राम राम राम हरे हरे । हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण कृष्ण हरे हरे ॥
Hare ram hare ram hare krishn hare krishn

The Supreme Lord whose name we chant, that Lord Ram comes on this earth in every *Treta yug*. And Shri Ram ruled for 11,000 years. We too were there. God is not senior in age to us. We are eternal and so is He. This body dies but we don’t die. We were sent into the mother’s womb from outside and a body was made in her womb. At the time of death, we will leave this body and go in some other body. We will roam around in these numerous bodies, but we cannot cease to exist. Even God cannot kill us. We are eternal. God is eternal. And *Maya* is also eternal. God can’t kill *Maya* either. Yes, it is insentient, but it is a power of God. So none of these powers can destroy another.

Maya released from its clutches all the *Mahapurush* (God-realized saints). But it is still holding others in its clutches. *Maya*, God’s material power, is still existent. If *Maya* was non-existent then all others would have been released from the clutches. If God or any *Mahapurush* had killed *Maya* then all other beings would have benefitted from it. Just like when somebody kills a dacoit, then all others are relieved of its terror. It is not so. Infinite beings have been liberated from its clutches. But the power of *Maya* still remains.

Ok, let me simplify it further. In the jail there are iron shackles. A heinous convicted criminal’s hands and feet are tied with these shackles. Once the time of imprisonment is completed, then the shackles are removed and he is instructed not to indulge in un-lawful activities. But he has already made plans in the jail itself to rob a couple of places before reaching home. But that is a private thought. So the jailer opened the shackles for one of them. Just because one person is released does not mean all the shackles disappear. Others still have those shackles. Similarly, every being is overpowered by



Just because one person’s shackles are removed does not mean all the shackles disappear

Maya. God instructs *Maya* to leave those alone who have surrendered to God and *Maya* leaves that being. *Maya* is God's servant. Nobody is her enemy. As per God's instruction, *Maya* punishes us in this jail. If we realize our faults, then our job is done. We don't have to do anything else. No compensation needs to be made. Nope, just admit from the inner most depths of your heart that you are faulty.

When the world pushes us to our knees, at that time we admit," O Lord! You ALONE are mine. All these people are my rivals; they inflict pain on me mercilessly". And when these people become apologetic and approach us lovingly, then we go back to square one. Just like when a hungry dog approaches you for a loaf of bread and is hit hard with a stick, it runs away whimpering in pain. After reaching a certain distance, it looks back thinking that even if you are human and powerful, instead of hitting me, you could have given me one loaf of bread, and it would not have changed anything for you as have so many. At that time, if you show him the loaf of bread again and call out to it, it will come again, and if you again hit it and keep doing so, the dog will still keep coming back. Such is our situation with father /mother /brother /sister /husband /wife who insult each other all day long and the tug-of-war of selfish motives is happening all the time. But after the conflict if the other party approaches affectionately, then the offended party forgets all about the misbehavior and gets attracted to the same people all over again.

Why? Because we are a part of God. So what? God is Happiness. So? We are a part of Happiness, hence we desire for happiness. This is our motive. Hence for our own motive we perform all these covetous actions. It is not a bad goal. And we cannot stop desiring happiness either. Because, without attaining happiness, we cannot sit idle for even a moment. One desires for one's own happiness. Not for the happiness of father/mother/husband/son! We want to attain our goal with all relatives and even from cows, dogs, cats, lions and tigers. And we do that too. See, there are several people who have pet lions and they perform shows where they put their hand in the lion's open mouth. And people give money for watching them. Every being is trying to fool every other being, get control and satisfy one's own desire of attaining happiness. But he does not understand that there is no happiness here in this world. Hence one cannot get it from this area.

This is a market of all blind people. One blind man says, please show me the way to *Golok dham*. The other blind man thinks this guy does not know if I am blind or not. So he calls out to the other blind man and says- come here, I will show you the way. One holds the hand of the other, both of them walk together for a while and then both fall into a ditch. This is the same repeat comedy that is going on for infinite lives. But it still did not get 100% crystallized in our minds that there is no happiness here. When we are beat up by our circumstances, we do realize this. For example, at the time of death, we chant "*Ram naam satya hai*" ("Ram! Your name alone is true"). See, I did not obey my father so he gave the entire property to someone else, I did not listen to my brother so he is ready to shoot me dead, I did not listen to my wife so she has become characterless, I did not listen to my husband so he is ready to divorce me. As soon as the selfish motive is destroyed, love ends.

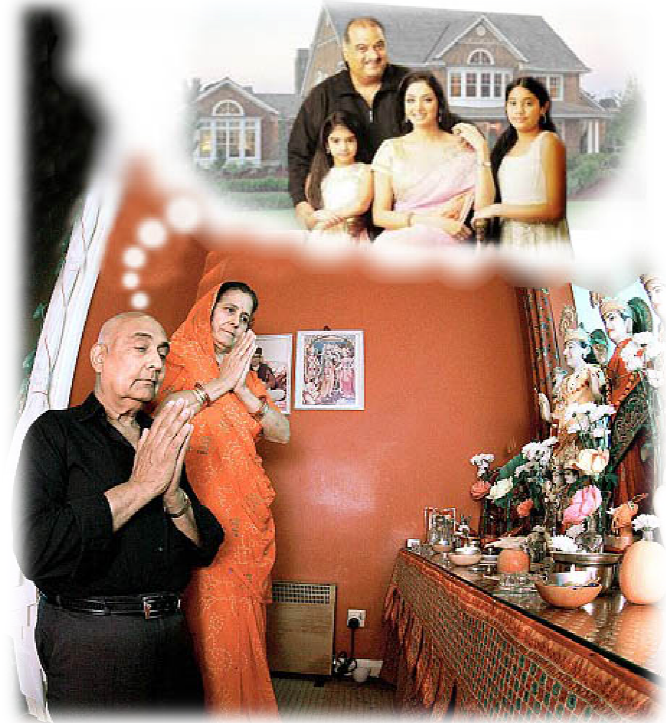
But when you have too much pain, you turn to God- O Lord, have mercy! That is why you all have come here. You have this faith that there is some happiness in God. So let us go and listen about Him. But, none of you here have decided that whatever my *Guru* says I will do ONLY that, and I won't go back and fall a prey to material desires. So what do we do? We say God ALSO is mine and world ALSO is mine. In the temples we say

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव...

Tvamev mata pita tvamev...

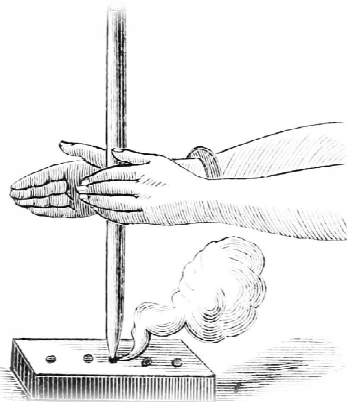
“ev” in Sanskrit means “ALONE”. You ALONE are my mother, you ALONE are my father, you ALONE are my wealth. That is what we say. But the reality is “you ALSO are my mother and I have a mother at home, you ALSO are my father and I have a father at home, you ALSO are my wealth and I have a bank balance too”. So in this manner, we have increased our attachment in this world. That means that whatever we earned we lost it too and always stayed in debt. There are several in this world who have earned millions in this world but when asked about their net worth, they say that their net balance is zero; as the bank loan is worth millions. Why? “Oh, what can I say? During my youth, I thought money will keep flowing in the same way. So I spent unscrupulously on dinners, vacation etc. Now I

am old, and I can’t work. So I took a loan, but have no means to repay it. So just like that we have lost all our wealth. God says, “Arjun surrender ONLY unto me”. You can’t go to both sides.



While worshipping engage your mind. If mind is wandering in the world then it is termed as worship of the world

So now let us understand the philosophy. Our mind is dirty. It is full of material attachments and afflictions. We have to get rid of these attachments. God and *Guru* are pure. When we attach our mind to then for an hour or two then our mind becomes cleaner. But the rest of the day we start thinking about the material world and it becomes dirty again. So you earned Rs. 10 and you lost Rs. 20. That is why we never stopped roaming around in the 8.4 million life forms. So if you continuously attach our mind to *Guru* and God, only then will it become pure. When you rub two bamboo sticks continuously, the temperature keeps increasing and finally fire appears. If you rub it for 30 seconds and keep it aside, it becomes cold again. Again, if you pick this up, after a couple of hours, rub for some time and keep it aside, you could be doing this for years but no fire will appear.



We shed a couple of tears for the *Guru*, then as our daughter is getting married, we shed tears there too. Mom died and we shed tears there too. You get news that your son met with an accident. You start panting as if you have an unbearable physical discomfort. Your son is hurt, so he is crying, but why are you crying? You are not hurt. Oh, he is my son!

See we were born alone. Once our stomach is full we throw our legs happily and keep cooing. If mother dies you would not care, father also dies you still would not care. Once you grew up, then your attachment to mother increased. After a little while attachment to father also increased, after some more time, attachment to sister and brother too. After yet some more time, you got a wife and 2/4/6/8 children. Now the old man boasts of a family of 25 people. When they say one met with an accident, he cries, another dies then he cries too. When there are so many, someone will have cancer, someone will die, some will meet with accidents. Something or the other will keep happening. Now he is upset due to the sufferings of 25 people. And all this is in addition to one's own physical ailments. It is amazing how all these people are alive after enduring so much pain.

And when we meet a saint we say, oh, he explains so well. So now use the word ONLY in the statement 'Love God Only'. Oh, how can I do that? I love roaming around in these 8.4 million life forms. Sometime I will become a dog then a cat, then a worm, then a donkey. It is full of variety, this is what I like. What is the fun in reaching Golok and staying there? A drunkard asked a *maulvi* (holy man), how is heaven, how many people are there, what do they do? And what happens in hell? The holy man replied, in heaven there are a few people and they keep reading *namaz* all the time. In hell there are lots of people and they keep getting beatings all the time. The drunkard said Oh, then I will get bored in heaven, I prefer going to hell. So I'll keep sinning. We are all like this.

We are fools but we don't consider ourselves fools. If you tell a real mad person to eat medicine, he replies back that he is not mad. "Why should I eat medicine? You must be mad to call me mad." There are several fathers who are troubled as their sons don't take their medicine. They come to me and say please tell him to take his medicine. We are just like that. We don't consider ourselves a fool. If we start considering ourselves a fool then we will put ONLY instead of ALSO and we will become wealthy forever.

Sunahu Sadhak Pyare - 19

हरि में गुरु में गुरु में भक्ति में रह, रति अनन्यहिं प्यारे ।
hari mein guru main bhakti mein rah, rati ananyahin pyare.

One more very important point. ALWAYS realize Hari and *Guru* beside you at all times. Practice it. You might take 10 days, 20 days, 2 months, 6 months to have unyielding faith. Wherever we think we are alone, that is where we sin. Privacy! Ved says even if you don't consider *Guru* is there with you at all times, at least believe that God is present in your heart and notes down all your thoughts. Consider Hari *Guru* are there to protect you. Always feel that you are not alone, They are there with you and noting down every thought that crosses your mind. So let alone perform wrong action you should not even think of wrong things. When you become careful, you will stay away from sin.

हरि को गुरु को सदा ही, राखु साथ अपने प्यारे ।
hari ko guru ko sada hi rakh, sath apne pyare

Another point to remember is that we are house-holders. We don't practice devotion at all times. We might practice devotion for 2 hours, 4 hours or 6 hours in a day. We need to think, that we might not get another moment. We have to earn everything we can in this very moment.

This human body is short lived. Just like with the bubbles in river water, some bubbles disappear the moment they are formed while some stay for a minute or so. Our time to leave this body is pre-determined. But we haven't been told when that day will arrive. We state, "Oh, I am not old. I am barely 60 years, Kripalu ji is 80 years." Forget about 80 years. Some children die before turning 80 days old. That is why one must always remind oneself, "This human body might be snatched away from me at any time. That is why I should not procrastinate till tomorrow." Some say, "Oh yeah, I will do it. I am waiting for such and such to happen, after that what else but devotion remains to be done?" Several have died with this very thought and then they roamed around in 8.4 Million life forms. That is why, every moment, increase your urge to meet Him.



क्षणहिं क्षण व्याकुल बनो नित, हरि मिलन हित प्यारे ।
 सुनहु साधक सुनहु साधक, सुनहु साधक प्यारे ।
 Chanahi chan vyakul bano nit, hari Milan hit pyare!
 Sunahu sadhak sunahu sadhak, sunahu sadhak pyare!!

Kid's Section

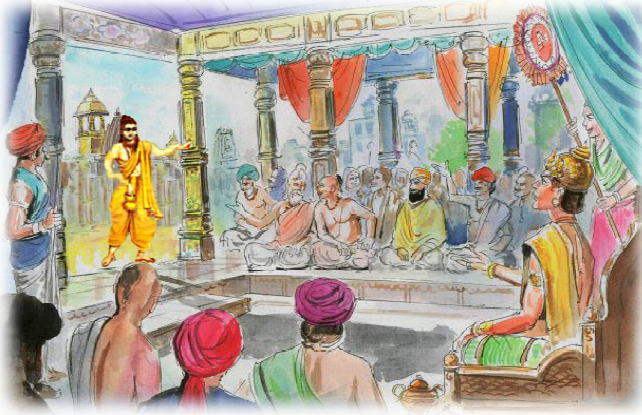
Ashtavakra

Sage Uddalaka ran a school (Ashram) teaching Vedic knowledge. Kahoda was one of his best disciples. Uddalaka was so pleased with him that he got his daughter Sujata married to him. In due course, Sujata conceived a child and wanted to instill the Vedic knowledge in her child early in life. So she too began to sit in the classes taught by Uddalaka and Kahoda. She along with the unborn baby would listen to the lectures and chanting sessions. It was one day, in a class taught by Kahoda, the unborn baby spoke up from inside the womb, "This is not the way to chant the verse, father." Kahoda felt insulted in front of the class and cursed, "You will be born deformed."

Sujata did not take the instance too seriously. When her baby was born he was deformed in 8 places. In order to raise her child Sujata needed money. So she asked her husband to go to king Janak (Father of Mother Sita) who was then preparing for a fire worship ceremony (*Yagna*) hoping that the ceremony will bring money to the family.

When Kahoda approached Janak, the king received him respectfully but said with regret, "Kahoda, I am unable to perform the *Yagna* which I decided to perform several years back. Sage Bandhi arrived and asked me to only include those sages in the Yagya who can defeat him in a scriptural debate (*Shastrartha*). His condition further includes that the sages who come forth for the debate, if defeated,

would be drowned. So far he has killed many learned sages. Now it is up to you to take the challenge." Kahoda agreed to debate with Bandhi. He was defeated and drowned in the nearby river. The widowed Sujata heard the news and repented having sent her husband to the king's assembly. A few months later she gave birth to a boy with deformity at eight joints, hence was named Ashtavakra. He got his education from his grandfather Uddalaka. Ashtavakra was extremely intelligent and his grandfather loved him dearly and was very proud of him. When Ashtavakra was only twelve, he finished learning all that he needed to know from his grandfather. He also heard the fate of his father and the *Yagna* of king Janak which still remained unfinished as no one could defeat Bandhi.



The scholars laughed on seeing the deformed Ashtavakra

When the scholars laughed on seeing the deformed Ashtavakra, he said, "Janak! I had heard that your court is the seat of the learned. Little did I know that this learned gathering is no better than a bunch of cobblers". All scholars took offence to this statement. Hence king Janak humbly asked Ashtavakra to explain the reason behind his comment. Ashtavakra said, "A cobbler works with leather and is an expert in judging the quality of leather. These people saw my body which is deformed in 8 places and started to laugh. That is why I called them cobblers. Learned scholars should not judge a person by the skin but by the knowledge he has."

To everyone's surprise, Ashtavakra defeated Bandhi in no time. As per the agreement, he then requested the king to drown his father's killer. Bandhi then disclosed his identity. He said, "I am the son of Varuna, the god of water. I came to earth on the request of my father to get the best sages from here to perform his twelve years of *Yagna*. The only way I could get them to my father was to challenge them in a debate and throw them into water. Now that my father has completed the *Yagna*, let us go to the river bank and watch the sages walk out of the river."

People rushed to the river bank and watched the sages return from the river. Kahoda came and embraced his learned son Ashtavakra. He then openly admitted that his son Ashtavakra was a lot wiser than him. Bandhi then asked Ashtavakra to take a dip in the river, with the blessings of his father, Varuna, which would make him normal. Ashtavakra did as he was told and came out of the river as a handsome young man. Janak rewarded Ashtavakra and Kahoda. They went back to their hermitage to be united with the family. Uddalaka was very happy to see his worthy grandson surpass all the great sages of his time in knowledge. Sujata rejoiced at seeing her handsome son and the husband.

Moral- A wise man appraises the qualities only.

A TERRIBLE TWIST

By, Tia Vasudeva (A 10 year old devotee wrote this story as a tribute to her dear Guru)

A tiny tear dropped on the solid ground. Images danced in a girl's head. Everytime she ran away from them, they came back and taunted her harder than before. That sad little girl was me. And the images, the painful sweet memories were the ones of my grandfather.



*It hit me like a boulder
I fell down on jagged rocks
So hurt I was, you couldn't tell
My happiness was lost*

It was just another ordinary day, no different from the day before. I had come back from a long day of school, finished my homework, and I bolted up the stairs. I barged in my dad's room, only to find heavy suitcases laying in front of me like a tombstone. I shook my head to get the image out of me. I thought about a vacation at the beach, just relaxing, or maybe a theme park. I could already hear the shouts of children in my head. I shook my head back to reality. No plans for any vacations as far as I know, and winter break was in a month. Clueless, I asked my dad about it. His deep voice answered, "You will know at dinner." His stiffness resembled a petrified tree.

*There was a mystery behind these suitcases
I couldn't know just yet
Exciting, sad, or scary?
Anyone want to bet?*

As I walked down to the wooden table, the delicious aroma possessed me. I followed to the table, picked up the silver fork like it was a weapon, began to attack the food, and prison them in my mouth. Soon, I was done. With a hope for desert, I cried, "I'm ravenous!" Visions of ice cream danced. I felt it melt away as my dad stopped me. With a deep breath that could have swallowed all the oxygen in the world, he broke the news about the heavy suitcases. There was great sorrow in his voice.

*Your grandfather is very ill.
He fell down, and now he is still.
A coma is what he is in
What we have now is
Great big din!
To India we leave in two days
Come on, come on, we must make haste!
It is time who we race.*

The rumbles in my stomach halted like an emergency break. My appetite disappeared. I was ready to go by all means. After two days, we boarded the overcrowded planes. I hopped into the window seat, glad to sit down after a wait of 5 hours. I pulled out a snack of oreos, and peeked at the majestic view. At least I thought it was going to be majestic. We weren't off land yet! To let time pass, I cuddled in a blanket and pulled out a book. After a while, internet connection came. I watched on scary movie. It had

me on my wit's end! My hair was standing. I don't know whether it was from the movie, or the cold. I shivered, and fell asleep. The plane ride was my enjoyment. I hadn't realized how consequential this situation was, unlike my mom, who was praying. I had ignored the call of my brain that banged against my head screaming, "Give it a thought!!"

When we landed at the airport, the first thing that I saw made me crack a grin. It was a shiny black car that we would be riding in. The second thing I saw was heartbreaking. I felt tears start rolling down my cheeks. There in front of me was my own grandfather's coffin!!! So it was all over. Time had won the race. I couldn't believe it. My grandfather's body was being flown to his birth place, *Mangarh*.

*A storm built up in my head
Everywhere dust flew.
How? How?
Just how could this be true?*

We got into my dream car. As we got closer and closer to the funeral, my mom started crying which set me off too. As we stepped out of the car, we saw that the priests had gently lay my grandfather, my dead grandfather on sweet maple wood. We all threw roses on the cadaver. Suddenly they set the body on fire. A soft moaning sound arose, like a pained old man. My grandfather was ashes. While this was going on, sweet memories flashed through my head. My grandfather giving me lollipops. My grandfather looking at dancing chick. My grandfather hugging me.

I shook myself. I blinked. I pinched myself as hard and tight as a crab, just to make sure I wasn't in a dream. No, a nightmare. I prayed really hard. But I had to accept the truth. My grandfather was dead. A wave of pain washed over me. I loved my grandfather. He meant the world to me. I would never forget him. I scooped some ash, and pocketed it in a ziplock. My grandfather was now with me. As I gingerly picked up the ziplock, the smooth black ash reminded me of one of my grandfather's promises. He had said, "To get knowledge till my end, serene or chaos. My grandfather's last message was that your loved ones are always with you." I saw his deep blue eyes and winsome smile as the message sank in.



*Wishing you lots of devotion
in the upcoming New Year*