

# The Mysterious Controller of the Universe: Shree Neelamadhava - Shree Jagannatha : Guiding the Humanity across the Ages

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*Madhava madhava vacyam, madhava madhava harih;  
Smaranti madhava nityam, sarva karye su madhavah.*

Towards the end of Lord Rama's regime in Tretaya Yuga, Shree Hanuman was advised by Lord Shree Rama to remain immersed in meditation (dhyana yoga) in 'Padmadri hill' till his services would be recalled in Dwapar Yuga. When the great devotee, Shree Hanuman expressed his prayer as to how he would see his divine Master during such long spell of time, Lord advised him that he would be able to see his ever-cherished 'Shree Rama' in the form of Lord Shree Neelamadhava whom he would worship in Brahmadri, the adjacent hill and enjoy the everlasting bliss '*naisthikeem shantim*' as Gita describes (Ch.5, Verse 12). Shree Hanuman was a *sthitadhi*. Those devotees, whose minds are equipoised, attend the victory over the world during their life time. Since Paramatma the Almighty Father is flawless and equipoised, such devotees rest in the lotus feet of the Lord '*nirdosam hi samam brahma tasmad brahmani te sthitaah*', (ibid v.19). According to the sacred thought expressed in Gita, the Lord, always desires His devotees to have equanimity in all circumstances: favourable or unfavourable '*nityam ca sama itatwatm istanistopapattishu*' and to work in a detached manner surrendering the fruit of all actions to the Lotus feet of the Lord

so that he does not become partaker of the sins as the Lotus leaf is not affected by water '*brahmani adhyaya karmani sangam tyaktwa karoiti yah, lipyate na sa papena padmapatramivambasa*' (Ch.V, Verse 10). The Graceful Lord desired His dearest devotee to experience this blissful ecstasy and unalloyed purity since according to His own saying '*matcintah madgat prana. . . . . nityam tusyanti ca ramanti ca*' (Ch.10, Verse 9).

Indeed, no sublime thing in this world can be achieved without perpetual *sadhana* (perseverance). The Lord, therefore, has also suggested later, the solution, '*mayi ca ananyayogena bhaktih avyabhicarini, viviktadeshasevitwam aratih janasampadi*' (The Gita, Chapter 13, Verse 10). One can have this equanimity of mind and undisturbed worship and devotion through meditation concentrated *japa* (utterance of Lords's name) and *tapa* (penance which literally means to be equally happy in good fortune and misfortune. Yoga about which the Lord has explained in details in the Gita staying in an isolated and pure place. What is required is that the devotee through the prescribed Yogic process, should have undisturbed faith in the Lord. He should develop the inclination towards staying in places enriched with human habitation charged with materialistic aspirations. Thus, the reasoning

for the advice to Hanuman to stay in Padmadri, an isolated and pure place is clearly perceptible. The Lord desired that his dearest devotee should continue through unalloyed devotion and *Yoga* against the currents of time. This is one of the popular 'Lokakathas'<sup>1</sup> about Shree Neelamadhava temple at Kantilo. It is now not a legend but an acknowledged position accepted by many scholars that the cult of Lord Shree Jagannatha is inextricably linked with the tradition of Lord Shree Neelamadhava at Kantilo (Nayagarh).

But the above Lokakatha has a secret message. Usually where the spiritual struggler finds difficulty is, how to have this '*ananyayogena bhakti avyabharini*' as explained in verse 10 Ch.13 of Gita discussed in the foregoing paragraph. The great scholar and sage Swami Ramasukhadasji explains in this context

Because of having shelter in this world the spiritual practitioner becomes unable to get rid of the illusion of body. The infatuation for body is a great obstacle to know the 'avyakta', the Mysterious Controller. To help the devotee overcome this obstacle, the Lord advises to have unalloyed *bhakti* which leads to unflinching faith in Him. This faith gradually unfurls that material body is untrue. This, in a way, means that 'devotion: chaste and meticulous, enables the practitioner to cross the infatuation for the body'<sup>2</sup>.

The above devotion is again a consequence of much cherished *budhiyoga*. The Lord has confirmed in Gita that those who are perennially engaged in meditating on Him and uttering His name, He bestows on them the '*budhiyoga*' by which the devotee gets Him, '*tesham satatayuktanam bhajataam preetipurvakam, dadami budhi yogam tam yena mam upajanti te*' (Ch.10, Verse 10). The

learned scholar and sage, Swami Ramasukhadasji, however cautions that the practitioner in spiritual line should not develop any desire to get anything from anybody other than God. There should not be an iota of feeling in the devotee's mind that he can get the 'adhwatma vidya' (spiritual wisdom) by virtue of his strength, intelligence or eligibility. Nor there should be the feeling that he can be able to realise the 'divine wisdom' by the help of other human beings, preceptors or spiritual books. Only by the grace of the Lord, grace alone, he gets a chance to realise the divine wisdom, the 'Brahmavidya'. His only saviour is the Lord Himself and total surrender before His lotus feet. This surrender is 'ananya yoga' i.e. uncommon yogic practice.<sup>3</sup>

Shree Hanuman, therefore was advised to practise this 'ananyayoga' staying in Padmadri and worship Lord Shree Rama in the form of Lord Shree Neelamadhava, the Divine Splendour with His incomparable beauty and elegance. In the prayer of Goswami Tulshidasji for Shree Rama, one may observe a hidden prayerful description of Lord Shree Neelamadhava, the Lord revealing Himself with incomparable effulgence and always kind enough to save the humanity from the confusion of Kaliyuga.

Nilotpala shyama kama kotisobhaadhika  
sunia tasu guna grama jasu nama agha khaga badhika<sup>4</sup>

The Lord, whose body is like a blue lotus, whose beauty defeats the beauty of crores of Kamadeva, listening to Whose sacred name the devotee destroys all his sins, (as a hunter kills birds). It is beneficial always to hear about the *leela* of the same Lord Shree Rama-Neelamadhava. Tulshidasji has also held that the Lord's name is the medicine to cure the disease of the cycle of birth and death. The man or woman who hears this, all his/her wishes will be fulfilled by the 'enemy of Trisirari' i.e. Shree Ramaji.

*bhava bhesaja raghunatha Jasu sunahin je nara nari  
tinhakara sakala manoratha siddha karahi trisirari.*<sup>5</sup>

At the end of Dwapar Yuga, at a later period, Lord Krishna advised Jara Savar (as the latter was totally flabbergasted due to his soul-killing blunder of piercing the Lord's lotus feet with an arrow) to go to Brahmadrī and see the Tiger cave (Byaghra gumphā) there and worship the Lord there. The legends say that in those days a tiger was safe-guarding the cave where Lord Madhava was worshipped. Biswavasū, the staunch devotee of Madhava and the father-in-law of Vidyapati, the ambassador of King Indradyumna is believed to be belonging to Jara Savar's dynasty.

Reference about the present construction of Lord Shree Neelamadhava's temple is very difficult to be traced in contemporary scriptures/literature. Except 'Neeladri Mahodaya', recorded chronicles are almost rarities in this regard. But the lovable legends around are soul-stirring. One such source says that a king, namely Merukalpa, who happened to be in the genealogy of Kakabhusandī, constructed the temple of the Lord. Celestial beings from heaven and seventy two local *sewayats* contributed their concerted efforts to build the temple. Originally there were 752 caves in and around the temple. Kapila Samhita gives a vivid description of the river Mahanadi, flowing by the side of the temple. According to the above masterpiece in Sanskrit literature, by the blessings of 'suradhuni, papanashini Divine Mother Ganga, who was satisfied with the penance of 'Sukanti' a sage in Tretaya Yuga, (son of Sage Pulastya and Habirbhu), the river Mahanadi situated by the temple side of Lord Madhava to the point of mingling with *purvasagar* was declared as the incarnation of the sacred river, the Ganges.

A sacred book namely Neelamadhava Mahatmya written and compiled by Shri Samsari

Behera correlates marked similarities in the cult of Shree Alaranath at Brahmagiri and Shree Madhava at Niali with the tradition of Lord Shree Neelamadhav at Kantilo. The book also describes that Lord Shree Neelamadhava was worshiped earlier somewhere near the Bay of Bengal proximate to the present Shreekshetra Puri. The Lord whom Indradyumna saw in the dream was the Lord Neelamadhava. But when Indradyumna came with a large number of courtiers and followers to offer his prayer to the Lord, Yamaraj took shelter before the Lord and explained that if the Lord would give darshan to all those human beings coming, then everyday would get salvation and the Yamaloka would be vacant. Hence administration in Yamabhuvan would be in shambles. With the request of Yamaraj, the Lord disappeared from the referred place and made appearance at Brahmagiri which is at a considerable distance from Puri. The Lord also allowed a simultaneous mingling of His cosmic glow with Lord Shree Neelamadhava at Kantilo. The *Neeladhri Mahodaya*, though does not explain all these details but has some similar description about disappearance of the Lord from His abode near Mahodadhi (The Bay of Bengal). The Lord is mysterious and his actions are also mysterious. Words are incomprehensible, they cannot comprehend the action of the Lord who is the first word in the creation and the last word of the creation. He is the *ekakshara* Om Who alone exists after the 'Mahapralaya', when all other created beings cease to exist. Therefore, there is also every possibility that the Lord Madhava whom Yamaraj prayed was Lord Neelamadhava at Kantilo and the Ocean water might have receded or changed its course over the years.

At Brahmagiri the Lord was worshipped by a Brahmin namely Allalya. The Brahmin was very truthful, virtuous and religious.<sup>6</sup> Due to their

stainless devotion, the Brahmin and his son were awarded *darshan* and all his family members got salvation. The Lord is Master of His own decision. From Brahmagri He desired to move to Niali and a part of; the divine effulgence again merged with the Lord at Kantilo (His ancient citadel). Years have passed in the meanwhile. But even today, the principal traditions of Shree Neela Madhava at Kantilo are to a large extent, similar with the traditions followed in Shreekshetra, Puri.

There are some exceptions, however. One such exception is the Magha Sukla Ekadasi celebration when a five day long fair is held at Kantilo. It is said that those who take sacred ablution in the Chitrotpala-Mahanadi and get the holy darshan of Lord Shree Neelamadhava especially on the above sacred occasion, attend salvation. Sage Bharadwaja in the Puskara forest and the sages living in the said forest are correlated with the worship of Lord Shree Neela Madhava and his divine cult by some scholars. It is beyond all questions however, that the divine grace and wisdom make the seeker God-ward and the divinity in him is unfurled. Gita says, '*Jnanena tu tadjnanam jesam, nasitatamatmaanah tesam adityavat jnanam prakasayati tatparam*' (Ch.5, verse 16). A seeker of spiritual solace through rare wisdom finds in the Lord Neelamadhava the effulgence of Shree Ramavatara and Shree Krishnavatar both rather the complete Brahman, the 'Adinatha'. The Neelamadhava Mahatmya describes :

You are Raghunath O' Lord Neelamadhava  
You are also known as Shreepati  
You are also Chakradhari,  
As the most potent and powerful weapon  
'Sudarshan'.

Adorns your finger in the right hand  
In dwapara age, you were Lord Krishna  
Winning everyone's heart,  
By sacred love and wisdom  
and fighting for virtuous and right causes.

To restore dharma.  
The charismatic, melodious magic of your flute,  
Showered divine bliss  
In each heart and each soul;  
You are Govinda, Gopala and the sacred Moon.<sup>7</sup>

A concentrated look at the Lotus feet of Lord Shree Neelamadhava opens the gateway to salvation. He is the Mysterious Controller of the Universe. He is 'Endless, Infinite and Sanatana'. He is 'anadi' and anantaviryam (Ominipotent). He is the Power the only knowable, after knowing Whom, nothing exists to be known. Arjuna after seeing the 'Viswarupa' the cosmic appearance was extremely moved by the divine splendour. He sang with all humility his prayer with awe and devotion:

twamaksharam paramaveditavyam  
twamasya viswasya param nidhanam  
twamavyayam saswata dharmagoptaa  
sanatanah twam puruso mato me.

(The Gita, Chapter 11, Verse 18).

The ecstasy was same with Vidyapati when he saw Lord Madhava first. The direction to Arjuna was '*yuddhaswa jetasi rane*' where as the order to Vidyapati was to return to Shreekshetra and await for the Lord's reappearance there. In both the cases the devotees, who took shelter under the lotus feet have destroyed their illusion and were blessed with effulgence of divine wisdom and each felt that they had come out of the World of illusion and were read to obey the Lord's command '*sthitosmi gatasandehah, karisya vacanam tava*' (The Gita, Chapter 18, Verse 73).

The Divine is all pervasive. But His sacred presence is visibly felt in certain chosen places. The Lord and His Leela (divine play) cast magnetic and magnificent influence on His creation in general and chosen devotees in particular. Those who have destroyed all attachments and those whose consciousness is eternally fixed with

Paramatma, ‘*gatasangasya muktasya jnanabasthitacetasa*’ (Ch. IV, Verse 23) are assured of emancipation. Apart from being Omniscient Omnipotent and Omnipresent, the Lord has also always been the saviour of the weak, downtrodden and fear-stricken and the *jijnasu* and devotees. The Car-festival in Puri bears ample testimony to the same. On this occasion of cosmic vibration, the Lord’s sacred *darshan* is open to all, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, status and power, giving a perennial message of universal brotherhood. At Kantilo similarly on the occasion of ‘Chandan Mahotsava’, despite the scorching heat, Lord Shree Madhava moves around the township in a very informal manner. The Lord moves from lane to lane across Kantilo town. Popularly known as ‘Bhaunri Yatra’, the Lord moves with His retinue, when sacred offerings and ‘*sapta-alati*’ are offered by the resident before His Lotus Feet. On this occasion accompanying Shree Madhava’s representative idol, the idols of Divine Mother Maha-Lakshmi, Divine Mother Saraswati, Lord Shiva and Divine Mother Parvati also move. The yatra symbolises the concern of the Master for his subjects and the Father for his children on one side, and the acculturation of different types of worship attributable to the Trinity on the otherside. Elders, youth, and children all equally rejoice on the occasion. As their supreme Master is amidst them, they get the feeling of spiritual ecstacy ‘*bhavasamanwita*’, as the scriptures say. The Lord has held in the Gita ‘*aham sarvasya pravavo mattah sarvam pravavate, iti mattwa bhajanti mam buddha bhavasamanwita.*’ (Chapter 10 verse-8). Even though, the Lord is the Master of all, He is so kind and magnanimous that He fulfils His desire to bless all His children alike through such celebrations while advising the secular governance to follow His footprints and make the justice and governance reach the doorsteps of the citizens. Simultaneously the Lord is advising the citizens

to follow the enjoiments made by codified law, abide by truth and the rules in a disciplined, ideal and humble manner with a serene sense of service and dedication leaving no room for anger, greed and sense linked-desires.

*tasmat shastram pramana te karyakarya vyavasthitou  
Jnatwa shastravidhantktam Karma kartum-  
ihahahasi.*

(Ch.16. Verse 24)

It is irresistible to conclude therefore that the mysterious Controller of the Universe has guided the humanity across the ages to develop equanimity, control of senses, purity, humility, self-restraint, wisdom, self-knowledge and surrender (*prapatti*). In the process the humanity learns that by His grace alone the man gets salvation, *matprasadat avapnoti saswatam padam avyayam*’ (Chapter 18, Verse 56). To get the grace, ‘*niskama karma*’ is one of the easiest ways. It is said that the Lord, Himself exists in ‘*niskama karma*’, ‘*tasmad sarva gatam brahma nityam jajne pratisthitam*’ (The Gita 3/15). There are also other ways prescribed by the Lord in the Gita and God realised noble saints in other scriptures.

The Shastras teach us that the jeevi gets salvation by divine grace alone. Needless to mention, however, that the Lord is One, the Ekaksharam ‘Om’. Karma yoga, jnana yoga, bhakti yoga, dhyana yoga, samkhya yoga, astanga yoga, laya yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga, mantra yoga all have been created by the Lord and the God-realised souls as already discussed to save the humanity, to help them lead a peaceful life in this world and to reach the heavenly abode thereafter. Goswami Tulshi Dasji writes in Ramacharita Manasa ‘*hetu rahita jaga yuga upakari : tumh tumhari sevak asurari*’<sup>8</sup>. Swami Ramasukhadasji also quotes a devotee singing with similar surrender:

divi ba bhubi ba mamastu baso  
narake ba narakantaka prakamam,  
avadharita sarada arabindou caranou,  
te marane pi cintayami<sup>9</sup>

A free translation of the above verse means that, O' destroyer of the hell, O Lord Madhava, You may keep me in heaven, in hell or in this world or may also keep me anywhere You like. Whatever You want to do with me, I have nothing to say rather I will gladly accept. I have only one prayer. I must meditate on Your Lotus Feet always; those feet which defeat in Their beauty, the gracefulness and beauty of the lotus flower, blooming in early autumn. I should not ever forget Your sacred lotus feet even at such crucial hour like death. I should never forget your lotus feet in any circumstance.

Experiences countries across, reveal that the devotees of Shree Madhava (Shree Jagannatha) face no obstacles. They never deviate from their sadhana, as is the case with wise persons. Rather with confidence they move across the heads of great generals, least caring for the turbulent obstacles on their ways. Shreemadbhagavatam affirms:

tatha natene madhava tavakah kwacid  
bharyanti margattwayi baddha souhrudah  
twayabhigupta vicaranti nirbhayah  
vinayakanikapamur dhasu pravo<sup>10</sup>

To conclude it is appropriate to say that the Mysterious Controller of the Universe is the real friend, true guide and the wisest philosopher. Those who have surrendered before Him through undisturbed yoga "avikampene yogena" they are purged of their past sins, as they partake of the divine splendour which is capable destroying all impurities. Besides, the Mysterious Lord graciously, being seated in the heart of His devotees destroys their ignorance through the vivacious light of wisdom. The Lord has promised in the Gita :

"teshan eva anukampartham aham,  
ajnanajanam tamah,  
nasayami atmabhabastho jnanadeepena bhaswta"  
(Chapter 10, Verse 11).

In the vast canvas of time it has been proved that the lotus feet of Lord Shree Neelamadhava (Shree Jagannatha) are the repository of eternal peace. His grace only gives salvation. As Indians we are fortunate that we are born in a land, where Shree Jagannatha is our Leader and the Guide. It is time that each son of this sacred soil should carefully treasure the Lord's advice to Arjuna which is the perennial solace during all difficult times;

tameva saranam gachha sarvabhavena bhārata  
tatprasadat param shantim sthanam prapysasi  
saswatam.

(Ch.18, Verse-62)

To conclude, the prayer that enthralled the heart of all the sages of 'Naimisharanya' can appropriately be quoted here:

trivenim madhavam somam bharadwajam ca vasukim  
vande akshaya-vatam, sesham, prayagam  
tirthanayakam

(I bow humbly before Triveni, idol of Shree Madhava, Someswara, Sage Bharadwaja, Vasuki, akshaya kalpavata, Shree Seshadeva Ananta and the king of tirthas, the Prayaga Raj).

#### References :

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9. Rasagaja /sabheevabee O,1279

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