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Vishnu Sahasranama Part 23: Keshav - The One with the Beautiful Hair by Shri Chandan Goswami Maharaj

The 23rd Name in the Shri Vishnu Sahasranama Stotram is Keshav. In his commentary, Shri Baldev Vidyabhushan reveals several meanings of this Name:

1.

केशयोर्विधि रुद्र योर्जनकत्वात्केशवः

keśayorvidhi rudra yorjanakatvātkeśavaḥ

क इति ब्रह्मणो नाम ईशोऽहं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।
आवां तवाङ्गसम्भूतौ तस्मात्केशवनामवान् ।

*ka iti brahmaṇo nāma īśo'haṃ sarvadehinām ।
āvāṃ tavāṅgasambhūtau tasmātkēśavanānavān ।*

"The Name Keshav is made of the syllables *ki*, meaning Brahma, and *sha*, meaning Shiv. Shri Rudra says in the *Harivansh Puran*, 'Both I, Shankar, lord of the *jeevs*, and '*ka*', or Brahma, both originate from your form. Therefore, you are known as Keshav.'"

Often, people think that Shiv and Krishn are two separate Gods. But according to the *Bhagwad Gita* and other scriptures, Shri Krishn is the supreme Lord and the origin of all.

In the *lila* of creation, first Kaaranodakashaayi Vishnu¹ creates *mahat-tattva*² and with it, all the elements of the Universe. Then Garbhodakashaayi Vishnu³ emanates from him, and in turn, from him come Brahma, Shiv and Ksheerodakashayi Vishnu.⁴ It is these forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv who create, maintain and destroy the Universe.

Ksheerodakashayi Vishnu and Shiv are friends, and several tales of their friendship are mentioned in the scriptures. Sometimes, people illogically compare the Shiv and Kaaranodakashaayi Vishnu of our Universe. Yet Shivji himself says in the *Harivansh Puran* that he and Brahma both originate in (Garbhodakashaayi) Vishnu himself.

2.

यस्मात् त्वयैव दुष्टात्मा हतः केशी जनार्दन ।
तस्मात् 'केशव'नाम्ना त्वं लोके ज्ञेयो भविष्यसि ॥

*yasmāt tvayaiiva duṣṭātmā hṛtaḥ keśī janārdana ।
tasmāt 'keśava'nāmnā tvam loke jñeyo bhaviṣyasi ॥*

"Shri Krishn is known as Keshav because he killed the demon Keshi." (*Vishnu Puran*, 5.16.23)

1. The Supreme Soul who manifests all the universes.
2. Through his glance, Kaaranodakashaayi Vishnu infuses his power into *pradhaan prakriti*, a state before creation, resulting in a state called *mahat-tattva*.
3. The Supreme Soul of the collective living beings.
4. the form of Vishnu who resides in Ksheer Saagar.

3.

प्रशस्ताः केशा अस्य सन्ति इत्यर्थे केशात् वा अन्यतरस्यामिति व प्रत्ययः

praśastāḥ keśā asya santi ityarthē keśāt vā anyatarasyāmiti va pratyayaḥ

"The one who has very beautiful hair is known as Keshav."

Shri Adi Shankaracharya also echoes this in his *bhashya* with the words अभिरूपाः केशाः यस्य सः, *abhirūpāḥ keśāḥ yasya saḥ*.

4. Shri Vishwanath Chakravarti gives a beautiful fourth meaning for the Name Keshav:

केशान् वयते संस्करोतीति केशवः

keśān vayate saṁskarotīti keśavaḥ

"The one who combs his beloved Shri Priyaju's hair (*kesh*) is known as Keshav."

Once, Shri Krishn was running a golden comb through Shri Priyaju's hair. As he tenderly braided her hair, he adorned it with strings of flowers, *gunja* berries and jewels. The *sakhis* and *manjaris* were overjoyed to see this beautiful *lila*. When Shri Laalji's work was complete, he held up Shri Priyaju's golden mirror in his lotus hands and asked, "O Priya! Look at your hair. Tell me, are you pleased with my *seva*?" Shri Priyaju was overwhelmed with bliss to see how beautifully her Beloved had decorated her hair.



Gadadhar Bhatt Goswami



Shri Gadhadhar Bhatt was an acclaimed poet. He wrote very few poems based on the *Madhur-lilas* of Radha-Krishn, and the following poem attracted the heart and mind of Shri Jeev Goswami:

सखी, हौं स्याम रंग रंगी।
देखि बिकाइ गई वह मूरति सूरति माहिं पगी ॥

संग हुतौ अपनौ सपनौ-सौ सोइ रही रस खोइ ।
जागेहुं आगें दृष्टि परै सखि नेकु न न्यारौ होइ ॥
एक जु मेरी अंखियन में निसिद्योस रह्यौ कर भौन ।
गाय चरावन जात सुन्यौ सखि! सो धौं कन्हैया कौन ॥
कासौं कहौं कौन पतियाबै, कौन करै बकवाद ।
कैसें के कहि जात 'गदाधर' गूंगे कौ गुड़ स्वाद ॥

*sakhi, haun shyaam rang rangi ।
dekhi bikaai gai vaha murati surati maahin pagi ॥
sang hutau apanau sapanau-sau soi rahi rasa khoi ।
jaagehun aagen drishti parai sakhi neku na nyaarau hoi ॥
eka ju meri ankhian mein nisidyos rahyau kar bhaun ।
gaay caraavana jaat sunyau sakhi! so dhaun kanhaiyaa kaun ॥
kaasaun kahaun kauna patiyaabai, kaun karai bakavaad ।
kaisen ke kahi jaata gadaadhar gunge kau gud swaad ॥*

"O sakhi! My entire being is saturated with the colour of 'Shyam'.¹ From the moment I first saw him, I became his forever, and I lost myself completely in his beauty.

"My sleep is filled with such sweet dreams of him that I never want to wake up. But when I do awaken, I see nothing but him everywhere I look! In this way, he doesn't leaves me for a single moment.

"O my darling friend! I've heard that Krishn takes his cows to pasture each day, so who is this charming boy who haunts me day and night? Is it really him?

"Who else can I trust with my secret, dear sakhi? Who would even believe me? There is no use trying to explain what is happening in my heart. Shri Gadadhar Bhattji says, 'This divine ras can only be experienced, not explained. It is like a mute man trying to explain the taste of gur.'"

Shri Jeev Goswami was in complete bliss but felt pain when he realised that the author of this sweet poem did not reside in Vrindavan. To bring Gadadhar to Vrindavan, Jeev sent him a letter

1. "Shyam" refers to the colour dark blue, but here it specifically indicates Shri Krishn, whose divine form is of this colour. In other words, the gopi speaking has become completely saturated by her Beloved, both inside and out.

with his devotees, which contained a *shlok* written by Shri Raghunath Das Goswami.

अनाराध्य राधापदाम्भोजयुग्ममाश्रित्य वृन्दाटवीं
तत्पदाकम्।
असम्भाष्य तद्भावगम्भीरचित्तान कुतःश्यामासिन्धोः
रहस्यावगाहः॥

*anārādhyā
rādhāpadāmbhojayugmamāśritya
vr̥ndāṭavīm tatpadākam।
asambhāṣya tadbhāvagambhīracittāna
kuta:śyāmāsindho: rahasyāvagāha:॥
(Sva Sankalp Prakash Stotra, Verse 1)*

“Without worshipping the pollen (dust) from the lotuses that are Shri Radha's feet, without taking the shelter of Shri Vrindavan which is adorned by her footprints and without bowing down to those great souls whose hearts are filled with love for her, how can a person hope to dive deep in ocean of love for Krishn?”

As they approached him, Gadadhar asked where they had come from. They said, “Shri Vrindavan Dham.” Hearing this, Gadadhar fell into a divine trance and fainted. To revive him, the devotees told him they had a letter for him. Upon awakening, Gadadhar touched the letter to his head and heart and read the it repeatedly. He immediately ran to Vrindavan.

Arrival in Vrindavan

When Gadadhar met Jeev Goswami, he felt ecstatic love and tears began to flow from his eyes. Jeev asked for his favourite poem to be sung and both began to sway in the ocean of Krishn *prem*.²

Gadadhar took initiation from Shri Raghunath Bhatt Goswami and studied many *shastras* under the guidance of Jeev. He became a profound *Bhagwatam-vakta*³ and after the disappearance of Shri Raghunath Bhatt, Gadadhar would continue the discourses on the *Shrimad Bhagwatam* every evening in the Govind Dev Temple.

Bhagwat Katha

Gadadhar was an expert in his recitation and discourse on the *Shrimad Bhagwatam*. The hearts of those in the audience would melt and many found themselves ready to completely withdraw from the world and surrender at the lotus feet of the Lord.

On one such occasion, Rajput Kalyan Sinha found himself feeling *vairagya*⁴ from his family life. Angered, his wife set out to defame Gadadhar by sending a young pregnant woman to state, after *katha*, that Gadadhar had blessed her with his *prashad* in the form

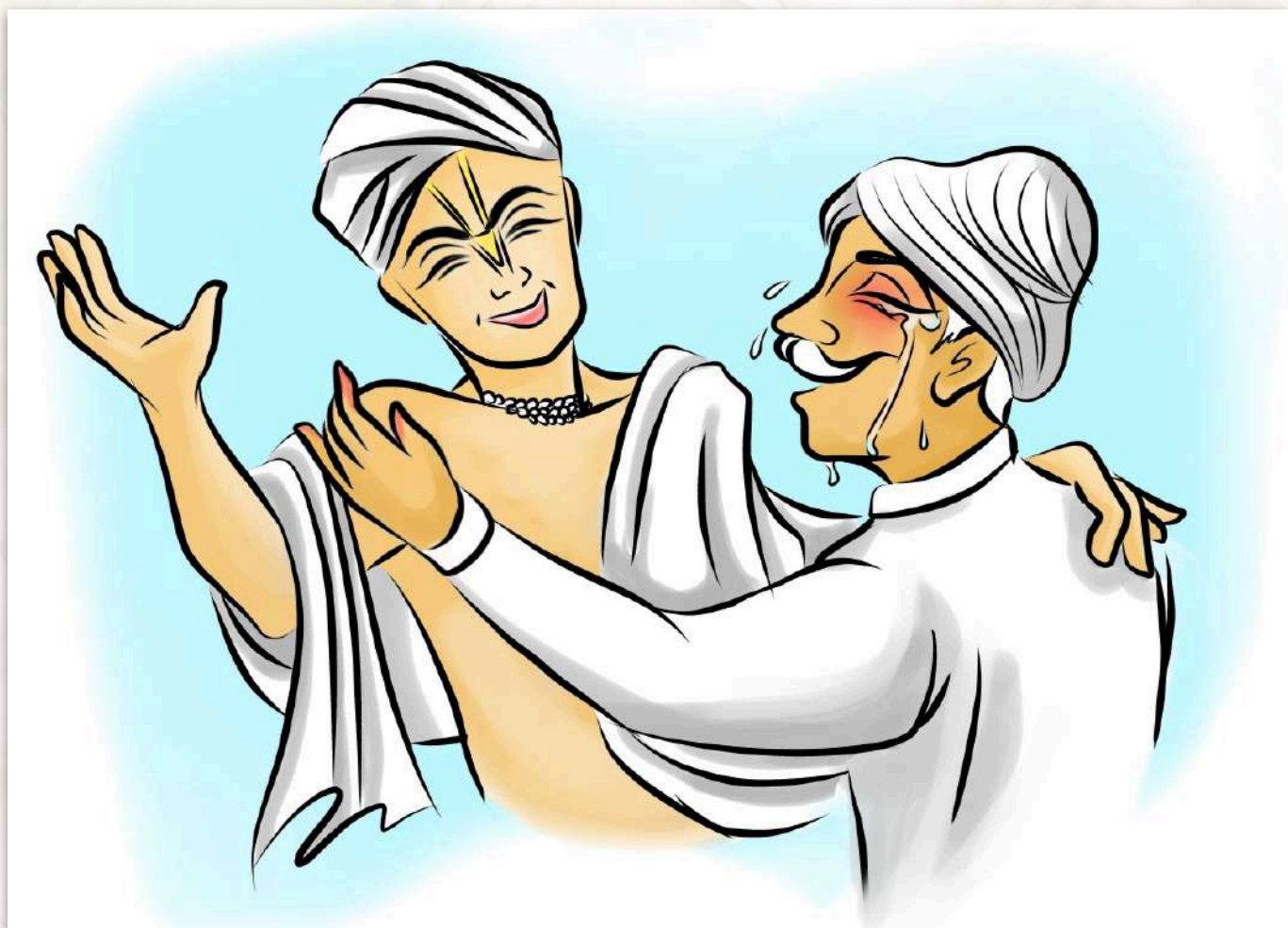
2. Krishn *prem* refers to the highest state of love for the Lord where one loses control over the body.

3. A speaker of the glories from the *Shrimad Bhagwatam*.

4. Detachment.

of a child. Although no one doubted Gadadhar, his kindness and sympathy surprised people. When the truth came out, Gadadhar continued to show compassion, and he calmed down Sinha, who was ready to kill his wife with his sword.

There was a *mahant*⁵ who would regularly come to listen to *katha* recited by Gadadhar. He observed that almost all of the listeners would become emotional, and tears would flow from their eyes. After a few days, the *mahant* decided to bring some red chilli powder to produce tears. When another listener saw this, he informed Gadadhar who then went to the *mahant* and said, "Blessed are you! Blessed is your divine love! I have read and heard that those eyes which do not produce tears after hearing the praises of God are worthy of the merciful dust from the devotees' feet. But you turned out to be an even greater devotee of God. Instead of taking the dust, you gave punishment to the eyes by putting red chilli in them!" Both Gadadhar and the *mahant* embraced. Feeling the pure love of the Lord and compassion from Gadadhar, the *mahant* began to cry. His tears finally fell naturally, overwhelmed by the purity of such a great devotee of the Lord.



Gadadhar and the *mahant* embrace

5. A chief priest of a temple.

Dedication to Braj

Shri Gadadhar Bhatt never wanted to leave Braj. His dedication and love for the holy land is clearly stated in his poem:

हों ब्रज मागनों जू । ब्रज तजि अंत न जाऊँ जू ॥
बड़े बड़े भूपति भूतल में दाता सूर सुजान जू ।
कर न पसरोँ, सिर न नवाऊँ या ब्रज के अभिमान जू ॥

hon braj maganon ju | braj taji anta na jaun ju ||
bade bade bhupati bhutal mein daataa sur sujaan ju |
kar na pasaron, sir na navaaun yaa braj ke abhimaan ju ||

"My only wish is to live in Braj, and I will never leave this divine land to go anywhere else. In the pride of being a Brajwasi, I will never bow down before worldly people, nor ask them for anything, no matter if that person is a dignitary, a king, or the biggest philanthropist in the world!"

The descendants of Shri Gadadhar Bhatt are known for being great scholars and *Bhagwatam-pathaks*.⁶ His deity, Shri Radhamohan, is still worshipped today in Vrindavan near the East gate of Radhavallabh Temple in Atkhamaba.

Although there is little information about Shri Gadadhar Bhatt, he was alive until after 1608, as he had signed as a witness in the will of Shri Jeev Goswami which was executed that year. The will can still be found in the Vrindavan Research Institute today.

6. Speakers of the *Shrimad Bhagwatam*.



Braj Animal Care



Vrindavan has experienced some floods during the recent monsoon season. The water levels of the Yamuna River rose due to heavy rain and the release of additional water from the dams. The last time Vrindavan experienced water levels this high was in 1978. Some parts of the town have been more affected than others, with stray animals suffering terribly. Though it is challenging to travel and move around, Braj Animal Care is doing its best to treat injured animals daily.



The water levels in Vrindavan during the floods

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Maharajji's Latest Updates



Maharajji made a whirlwind trip to the UK before heading off to Argentina. He visited the Midlands, where he initiated some disciples while devotees sang sweet *sankirtan*. Afterwards, Maharajji gave a beautiful explanation of Braj *bhakti*, specifically the importance of *madhurya*¹ worship.

He said that Brajwasis never accept Thakurji as *bhagwan*. By doing so, our destination changes; we end up in Nitya Dwarka, not Nitya Vrindavan, even if we worship Radha and Krishn. Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur explains that we can attain Eternal Vrindavan by removing *aishwarya*² from our devotion and focusing solely on *madhurya*. On the path of *bhakti* we understand that Krishn is the Supreme Being, then we set aside that knowledge by maintaining a relationship with him – because love expresses itself through relationships.

Spiritual Questions and Answers with Maharajji

Q: How does one get to know Radharaman and Guru on a deeper level?

1. Worship in the mood of sweetness or sweet love.
2. Worship with the mood opulence and reverence.

A: There are five practices suggested by the devotional scriptures as well as the Gaudiya Vaishnav *acharyas*:

1. Harinaam
2. Worship or *archana*
3. Association of devotees
4. Living in Dham or meditating upon Dham
5. Studying the *Shrimad Bhagwatam*

For more information about Maharajji's upcoming programmes, please contact us via the following channels:

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Vaishnav Calendar

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