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Shalagrama-shila

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Shalagrama-shila Shastrict Evidence

Compiled by

Padmanabh Goswami*

Dedication

Offering hundreds of obeisances at his feet,
I dedicate this article to the loving memory
of my beloved father



the late Shri Vishvambhara Goswami,
Who was my guide, well-wisher, and source of inspiration.
After him, I have been blessed with the good fortune of daily worshipping his shalagrama-shila.

Shri Radharamanaji: Self-Manifesting Deity



When Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu was touring South India, He spent the four months during the rainy season called Caturmasya in Shri Rangam at the house of Vyenkata Bhatta, the chief priest of the Ranganatha Temple. His son, Shri Gopala Bhatta, was then able to serve the Lord to his heart's content. Being pleased by his devotion, Shri Caitanya gave him initiation and ordered him to go to Vrindavana after the disappearance of his parents. There he should remain with Rupa and Sanatana doing bhajana and writing books. - At the age of thirty, after the death of his parents, Gopala Bhatta, left for Vrindavana. When Lord Caitanya heard that Gopala Bhatta Goswami had arrived in Vrindavana and had met Shri Rupa and Sanatana Goswami, He was very pleased. At that time Mahaprabhu had already visited Vrindavana. Although Rupa and Sanatana had gone to visit him in Puri, Gopala Bhatta never received any invitation to go. Understanding his disappointment, Shri Caitanya sent His personal asana and cloth to him through Rupa and Sanatana, which can still be seen on special festivals in Radharamana Temple. - Later when Gopala Bhatta heard of the disappearance of Mahaprabhu, he felt intense separation from the Lord, having associated with him only in his childhood. One night Lord Caitanya appeared in a dream and told him, "If you want my darshana, make a pilgrimage to Nepal." In Nepal, Gopala Bhatta visited the river Gandaki. After taking his bath he filled his water pot and was surprised to see that some Shalagrama-shilas had entered it. Emptying his pot, he filled it again, only to find the shilas had re-entered his water pot. Again he emptied his pot, and when he filled it for a third time he found that now twelve Shalagrama-shilas were there. Thinking this must be the mercy of the Lord, he decided to bring those shilas with him to Vrindavana. - One day after returning to Vrindavana, a wealthy devotee approached Gopala Bhatta Goswami with dresses and ornaments for his Deity. Gopala Bhatta told him that as he was only worshiping a shalagrama-shila, it would be better to give to someone else who was worshiping a Deity and could use them. It happened to be Narasimha-caturdast and thinking deeply on this incident Gopala Bhatta remembered how Lord Narasimha deva had manifested from a stone pillar. He then began to prey to the Lord, "O Lord, you are very merciful and fulfil the desires of your devotees. I wish to serve you in your full form." In ecstasy he read the chapters of Shrimad Bhagvatam about Lord Narasimha deva's pastimes, and then took rest. In the morning when he awoke, he found that one of the twelve Shalagramas, the Damodara-shila, had manifested as Shri Radharamana (vide picture). The time of this writing, 1992, is the 450th anniversary of his appearance. - He immediately called Rupa and Sanatana and all the other devotees. They were all astounded by

the beauty of Shri Radharamanaji. They remarked that from the feet to the waist He had the form of Shri Madana-Mohanaji, His chest was like that of Shri Gopinathaji and He had the moonlike face of Shri Govindadeva. Then with the blessing of all the Vaishnavas, he began the worship of Shri Radharamanaji.

Foreword

The present article has been translated mainly from the chapter on shalagrama-shila of Shri Hari-bhakti-vilasa compiled by Shri Gopala Bhatta Goswami, the desciple of Shri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Collecting references from various Puranas and other Vedic scriptures, Shri Gopala Bhatta Goswami has sought to resolve various arguments and doubts in relation with shalagrama-shila. In this translation we have humbly tried to carefully put before our readers the many evidences gathered by him from different Puranas. - After the disappearance of His divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, many devotees have begun the worship (puja) of shalagrama-shila. Thus over the years, devotees have been approaching us with numerous questions about both the shalagrama-shila and dvaraka-shila. One devotee brought a shiny black stone he found in the sea, wishing to know if it could be a shalagrama-shila. According to the Gautamiya Tantra, however a stone from any place other than the Gandaki River in Nepal can never be shalagrama-shila. We replied to another query that one should not make the mistake of thinking that due to its white color the dvaraka-shila can be accepted as the form of Radharani. - Due to poor fund of knowledge, it is possible the devotees may make some aparadha. Thus in this first attempt at writing on my life, it is my sincere desire to provide the devotees with as much information as possible about shalagrama-shila. - Before going to the West to preach, Shрила Prabhupada was a close friend for several years of Shri Visvambhara Goswami, an acarya in the line of Gopala Bhatta Goswami. Shрила Prabhupada visited the temple of Radharamana many times and was impressed with the service of the Deity. Later Shрила Prabhupada often commented to his disciples how they should learn from the high standard of Deity worship and Vaishnava etiquette of Radharamana Temple. - After reading this book somebody may question that since Lord Hari always resides in the shalagrama-shila, then what is the necessity to worship the temple Deity? I should simply worship my shalagrama-shila. In reply we may say that the Deity in the temple attracts the hearts of the devotees, so it is always the duty of the devotees to adore the temple Deity. - I am very much obliged to my wife, Shrimati Saroj Goswami, and Shri Astaratha Prabhu who gave me full inspiration to do this work. I also wish to offer my heartfelt thanks to Asarya Gaur Krishna Goswami, Mahanidhi Swami, Pundarika Vidyanidhi Dasa, Dina Bandhu Dasa, Daivi Sakti Daivi, Nitya-Siddha Lila Dasi and veda Sastri Dasi. They all assisted me with editing, typing, and other valuable services to help to bring this publication to light.

Appearance of Shalagrama and Tulasi

We are including the following history of the appearance of Shalagrama and Tulasi from the Brahma-vaivarta Purana. Though the description there is quite elaborate, we are presenting it here in brief. - There was once a king named Vrsadhvaja who, despite arriving in a dynasty of pious Vaishnava kings, was strictly devoted to Lord Shiva. He had no faith in Lord Vishnu or any of the demigods, and even began to criticise the worship of Lord Vishnu. Seeing the offensive behaviour of Vrishadhvaja, Suryadeva cursed him to lose all his wealth and power. He and two generations of his descendants thus became destitute until the appearance of Dharmadhvaja. - Dharmadhvaja and his wife very devotedly worshiped Lakshmidēvi to gain her favor and thus a plenary portion of Lakshmi entered his wife's womb. On Kartika Purnima at a time marked with every auspicious sign, the wife of Dharmadhvaja, Madhavi, gave birth to a very beautiful daughter. She was decorated with all fortunate signs and grew to be an exquisitely beautiful young girl never aging beyond sixteen years. Her beauty stole the mind and heart of everyone, and being impossible to compare her with anyone else, She became known as Tulasi (matchless). - Leaving home, Tulasi went to Badrivan where she performed severe penances with a desire in her mind that Lord Narayana himself become her husband. Pleased with her austerities, Brahmaji appeared before her and asked what boon she desired. Tulasi explained to him, "In my pervious birth, I was a gopi named Tulasi. By my wonderful good fortune, I was able to become the very dearly beloved maid servant of Lord Krishna. One day in the rasa-mandala, Radharani angrily cursed me to be born on the earth in human society. Thus leaving my divine body, I have taken my birth on the earth in this present form. Now I desire the boon of attaining Lord Narayana as my husband." - Lord Brahma replied, "There was one cowherd boy named Sudama who also received Radharani's curse to be born on the earth. By that curse he has been born in the family of demons and is now famous on the earth as Sankhacuda. He has done extreme penances to attain certain boons and to get you as his wife. Thus in this life he will become your husband for some time. Later by the influence of lili you will curse Lord Narayana, but accepting your curse, Lord Narayana will then become your husband. Lord Vishnu will love you more dearly than His own life, and without your presence all puja will be fruitless. By my boon, becoming the presiding deity of all the trees, you will freely enjoy unlimited happiness in the constant association of Lord Vishnu." - Sankhacuda, receiving his desired benedictions along with an all-auspicious protective shield (kavaca) from Lord Brahma, came to Badri-van where he met Tulasi. As they were conversing with each other, Lord Brahma appeared on the spot and said, " Sankhacuda, please accept this young maiden as your wife." Turning to Tulasi he told her, "After the death of Sankhacuda, you will obtain Lord Vishnu as your husband." - The other boon that sankhacuda received from Lord Brahma was that as long as the chastity of his wife was not violated, no one would be able to kill him. Thus becoming very arrogant, he began to terrorize all the demigods and human beings. Severely afflicted by his

attacks, the demigods approached Lord Shiva and begged him to protect them. Then Lord Sankara went there and personally began to fight with Sankhacuda. - Meanwhile, Lord Vishnu made a plan to destroy the chastity of Tulasi. While Lord Shiva and Sankhacuda were ferociously fighting, Lord Hari in the form of a brahmana arrived on the battlefield. He said to Sankhacuda, " Please give your kavaca in charity to me, a brahmana." Then Sankhacuda immediately gave Him the kavaca in charity . That same Lord Hari, disguising Himself as Sankhacuda then went to see Tulasi. Deceiving her in this way, He began to enjoy with her as if He were her husband and thus broke her chastity. - The Bhavisya Purana goes on for great length to point out that there was certainly no fault on Lord Vishnu's part. He wanted to maintain the benediction given by His devotee Lord Braham to Sankhacuda, and at the same time He wanted to protect the demigods and devotees. For this purpose He created this particular pastime with the appearance of improper behaviour. But since Tulasi is the plenary part of Lakshmidēvi, she is actually the wife of Lord Vishnu. - At that very moment Sankaraji killed Sankhacuda on the battlefield. When Tulasi understood all that had happened, she said, "By deceiving me, you have broken my chastity, and killed my husband. You;re absolutely stonehearted! Thus I curse you to remain on earth as a stone!" - Lord Hari said, "For many years you underwent very difficult penances to achieve Me. At the same time, Sankhcuda has also done severe penances to get you. By the result of his austerity, he enjoyed you as his wife and has now gone to Goloka. Now you will get the fruit of your penances. Leaving this mortal body and taking a divine form, you will always remain with Me. Your present body shall turn into the river Gandaki, and from your hair will grow many trees famous as Tulasi. To fulfil your curse, I will become a stone (Shalagram-shila) and will always live on the banks of the Gandaki River. The millions of worms who live in that place will adorn those stones with the sign of My cakra by carving them with their sharp teeth." After this Lord Vishnu began do dwell perpetually in the waters of the Gandaki River in the form of stones.

The Results of Worshipping - Different Types of shilas

The Gautamiya Tantra states that the worshipable stones known as shalagrama-shilas are only found in the Gandaki River in Nepal. According to the Skanda Purana, these shalagrama-shilas appear in various colours, shapes, and markings. Their colour may be either black, blue, yellow, whitish, blood-red or tawny coloured. Their shape may be either smooth, rough, uneven, very plump, or frog-shaped. They may be without markings, marked with one cakra, many cakras, large cakras, broken cakras, a cakra in the middle of a circle, or with one cakra attached to another. Some shalagrama-shilas exhibit a large mouth and others a down-turned mouth. - The Skanda Purana also enumerates the good and bad results derived from venerating different types of shalagrama-shilas. Worshipping a smooth shila brings mantra-siddhi (perfection in the chanting of one's given mantra). Black shilas bestow fame, yellow shilas give sons, whitish shilas destroy one's sins, blue shilas increase wealth, and blood-red shilas bring dis-

eases. Rough shilas create anxiety, uneven shilas give poverty, and fat shilas decrease one's life span. Shilas devoid of markings yield no results. If one mistakenly adores a shila with the following qualities he will certainly get suffering: tawny coloured, uneven, broken, with one cakra, too many cakras, large cakras, a circled cakra, a broken cakra, a cakra attached to another, with a large mouth, or with the mouth turned down. - The Agni Purana mentions several types of shalagrama-shilas whose worship brings unhappiness and never happiness. These include a shila with a mouth like that of a snake, a broken shila, one with cakras facing each other, with a circled cakra, a shila with a producing navel, a tawny-coloured shila known as Narasimha, a shila with many lines inside the circle, and a shila unidentifiable due to its confusing markings. - The Agni Purana further describes many shalagrama-shilas who award beneficial results to those who attentively worship Them. These benevolent shilas include those that are perfectly smooth, jet black in colour, round like a pearl, natural (not made by hand), or with an evenly shaped cakra. The Varaha-shilas, the Ananta-shila, the shila with a deeply indented navel, the tiny Vasudeva-shila that has an evenly formed mouth, shilas shaped like amalaki fruits, or those shaped like the palm of the hand (arched above and convex below) all give perfection. A devotee of the Supreme Lord should carefully adore his favorite shalagrama-shila. He will thus be blessed both in this world and the next. - As for the shalagrama-shilas that bring misfortune and sadness, as mentioned above, one should understand that this is only for worshipers impelled by material desires. But for one free from material desires there is no harm to worship these shilas. Thus in the Brahma Purana the Supreme Lord Vishnu states that any shila from the place of shalagramas can never be inauspicious though cracked, chipped, split in two though still in one piece, or even broken asunder. Lord Shiva also confirms in the Skanda Purana that even if a shila is cracked, split, or broken it will have no harmful effect if it is worshiped with attention and love by a devotee. It further states there that the Supreme Lord Hari, along with His divine consort, Lakshmi, live in the shalagrama-shila that has either only the mark of a cakra, a cakra along with the mark of a footprint, or only a mark resembling a flower garland. - Some acaryas say that the best shalagrama-shila is the smooth blackish one and that the blood-red shila is the worst. But in the absence of the best type of shalagrama-shila one may worship an inferior one.

Different Features of Shalagrama-shilas

In the Brahma Purana Lord Narayana says, "O Brahma, I eternally reside in the form of Shalagrama-shila. Hear from Me the different names of all these shilas according to the various cakras marking them." The Visudeva-shila is white in color, very attractive looking, and has two equal-sized cakras on the front, but off-center. The Sankarsana-shila is red-coloured, with two cakras combined in one section, a fat front portion, and is very beautiful to see. That yellow shila with small cakras and a very large mouth with numerous small holes within is known as Pradyumna. The Anirudha-shila steals the mind with His blue colour

and naturally round shape. He has three lines in front of His mouth and a lotus mark on His back. The Keshava-shila is square-shaped and gives great fortune. A black shila with a cakra in His raised navel is called Narayana. The Hari-shila fulfils all desires, grants moksha (liberation), and especially gives wealth to the faithful worshiper. He has a long line and a mouth opening upward and placed right of centre. The Paramesthi-shila, is colored red with marks of both a lotus and acakra. The Vishnu-shila is most attractive, but it will create problems if non-celibates do His puja. Black and shaped like a bael fruit, He has two big cakras with a large mouth on His back. - In another place it is described that the Narasimhadeva-shila with three spots on it and the Kapila-shila with five spots both have two wide cakras. Only a brahmachari and no one else should do Their puja or they will suffer all kinds of Problems. Thus one must remain celibate while worshiping Them. Those Narasimha or Kapila-shilas that have two large cakras, brownish colour, and a lotus-shaped line above the mouth, along with various uneven cakras give liberation and victory in battle. In the Kartika Mahatmya of the Padma Purana it states that a shalagrama-shila that contains the above mentioned signs, a large mouth, and many lines like the filaments of saffron is called Narasimhadeva. - In the Brahma Purana it describes the Varaha-shila as sapphire-blue, large sized with three lines, two unequal cakras, two signs of shakti, and pleasing to see. According to the Padma Purana the Varaha-shila is naturally hog-shaped with uneven cakras, many lines, and awards His worshiper with material enjoyment and liberation. Giving the same blessings as Varaha, the Matsya-shila is described in the Brahma Purana as long, bronze or golden in colour, and adorned with three dots. There it also describes the shalagrama-shila named Kurma as round with an arched back, green in colour, and marked with the sign of the Kaustubha jewel. The Padma Purana says the Kurma-shila is naturally turtle-shaped and marked with a cakra. - The Hayagriva-shila has a mark shaped like an elephant goad, a line near one cakra, many other cakras, and His back is the colour of a blue rain cloud. Another scripture describes the Hayagriva-shila as bluish, with the sign of elephant goad, five lines, and many spots. The Padma Purana states that the Hayagriva-shila has a long line in the shape of a horse's mouth and His worship gives one knowledge. Elsewhere it says His mouth is like a horse's mouth, there is the sign of a lotus, and on top of the shila the sign of a lotus seed garland. - The Brahma Purana gives descriptions of the following shilas. The shila name Vaikuntha looks jewel-like in color, has one cakra, a three-cornered flag, and beautiful lotus-shaped lines above His mouth. The Shridhara-shila is black and shaped like a kadamba flower, has five lines, and the marks of a flower garland. A small beautiful shila with a cakra on the top and the bottom and that fulfills all desires, is known as Vamana. A second type of Vamana-shila is round-shaped, smaller than a marble, blue in color, and adorned with spots. The Sudarsana-shila is black, very shiny, marked with a cakra and club on His left side, and lines on His right. The Padma Purana says He has many lines in the form of a cakra and He satisfies the aspirations of His worshipers. - In the Kartika Mahatmya of Purana it describes three types of Damodara-shila. One is plump in shape, the color

of black-green durva grass, with a cakra in the middle portion, a small mouth, and a yellow line. The second has cakras on its top and bottom, a small mouth, with a long line in the middle. His worship always gives happiness. The third is plump, with a narrow mouth, and two cakras on the middle portion. The shila called Ananta has a variety of colours, the sign of a snake's body, along with many other signs. He is also described as decorated with many different signs and numerous cakras. Like most shilas, Ananta fulfils all desires. - The Brahma Purana give further descriptions. The Purushottama-shila has many mouths on the upper portion and awards material enjoyment and moksha. The Yogeshvara-shila has a cakra on its top and worshiping Him removes the sin of killing a brahmana. A poor man will become wealthy by offering Tulasi leaves to the reddish Padmanabha-shila marked with the signs of a lotus and an umbrella. The Hiranyagarbha-shila is moon-shaped, gives off many rays, and has many golden lines on His crystal white surface. By adoring the half-moon shaped Hrishikesha-shila one attains the heavenly planets and fulfilment of all desires. A Lakshmi-Narasimha-shila is black, with two equal cakras on His left side, and some dots on the surface. This shila gives both pleasure and mukti (liberation) to His worshiper. A very shiny dark blue shila with two cakras on His left side and one line on His right is known as Trivikrama. Decorated with the marks of a forest garland on His left side, the Krishna-shila bestows grains, wealth, and happiness. - The Gautamiya Tantra states that after many, many births the fortunate person who receives a special Krishna-shila that is decorated with a cow's hoof print will never take birth again. It also describes the Caturmukhi-shila with two cakras placed between four lines. - The Kartika Mahatmya of Padma Purana continues its descriptions with the shila with a row of many small lines called Vishnu panjara. The Shesha-shila has coils like a snake. The Garuda-shila has the sign of a lotus between two lines and one long line below. The Janardana-shila has four cakras. Awarding both material pleasure and liberation, the Lakshmi-Narayana-shila has four cakras, a small mouth, and a flower garland decorating its middle portion. - All the shilas mentioned above give auspicious results, but those that are very small are even more auspicious. Elsewhere in the Padma Purana, the Supreme Lord Vishnu explains to Lord Brahma that the smaller the shila is, the more auspicious results it gives. Such a shila should certainly be worshiped by the devotee to attain perfection in religion, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation. He declares, "O Brahma, in that shila small like an amalaki fruit or even much smaller, I eternally remain along with My divine consort, Shrimati Lakshmidivi."

The Glories of Shalagrama-shilas

It is written in the Gautamiya Tantra that merely by touching a shalagrama-shila one becomes freed from the sins of millions of births, so what to speak of worshipping Him! By shalagrama-puja one gains the association of Lord Hari. - The Magha-mahatmya of the Padma Purana describes the glories of shalagrama-shila in the many verses that follow. By worshiping Lord Hari in the shalagrama-

shilas decorated with cakras, one constantly gains the merit of performing a thousand Rajasuya sacrifices. Even a person attached to the formless Brahman mentioned in the Vedanta will develop attachment for the Lord's devotees if he adores a shalagrama-shila. As the rubbing of two wooden sticks brings out the dormant fire within, so too by constant worship of shalagrama-shila Lord Vishnu will manifest. Even sinful people with no qualification for performing pious activities will not see the abode of Yamaraja (the lord of death) if they worship the shalagrama-shila. - Worshiping shalagrama-shila is more satisfying to Lord Narayana than the worship of His Deity form along with Lakshmi in the temple. By adoring Lord Hari in the cakra of a shalagrama-shila one receives the same benefit as performing the agnihotra sacrifice and giving the whole world with all its oceans in charity. The lowest of men covered by lust, anger, and greed will attain the highest abode of the Supreme Lord Hari by worshiping shalagrama-shila. One who adores the shalagrama-shila as Govinda will never fall from the heavenly planets up to the end of the universe - Even without serving holy places, giving in charity, doing sacrifices, or studying the scriptures, persona who simply worship a shalagrama-shila will still achieve mukti. By worshiping Shri Krishna in a shalagrama-shila, even a sinful person becomes free from the fear of residence in the lowest hell and being reborn as an insect or animal. If, however, a brahmana who is properly initiated and learned in prescribed mantras does the puja of shalagrama-shila, he will attain Lord Hari's transcendental abode without a doubt. In Kali-yuga, if a devotee with a surrendered and loving mood offers a bath, flowers, lamps, food, prayers, and kirtana with sweet music for the transcendental pleasure of his shalagrama-shila, he will eternally enjoy sublime spiritual happiness in the association of the Supreme Lord Hari. - Merely by worshiping one shalagrama-shila, a person gets the same benefit as seeing or adoring thousands of shiva-lingas. Wherever Lord Keshava dwells as shalagrama-shila, all the gods, demons, yakshas, and fourteen bhuvanas (worlds) are also present there. A shraddha ceremony done in front of shalagrama-shila will satisfy many generations of forefathers and grant them residence in deva-loka for hundreds of days of Brahma (kalpas). - The area within a radius of twenty-four miles from where a shalagrama-shila is worshiped is counted as a holy place (tirtha). The fruits of japa, charity, sacrifices, or any other religious activities done in that area will be multiplied millions of times. If someone dies within a radius of two miles of a shalagrama-shila, though a low-born man from a sinful place, he will go straight to Vaikuntha. Giving a shalagrama-shila is the best form of charity, equal to the result of donating the entire earth together with its forests, mountains, and all.

Conversation of Shiva and Kartikeya Regarding Shalagrama-shila

In the Kartika Mahatmya of the Skanda Purana Lord Shiva tells his son Kartikeya, "Know that the entire three worlds along with their moving and non-moving beings, always with me in shalagrama-shila." One who sees, bathes, worships, or offers obeisances to the shalagrama-shila will receive the same pi-

ety as doing millions of sacrifices and giving millions of cows in charity. Even if a person full of lusty desires or without any bhakti-bhava worships a shalagrama-shila, he will still receive the mercy of Lord Narayana. - One who simply remembers, worships, meditates upon, does kirtana before, or pays obeisances to shalagrama-shila, will become free from all sins even the sins of killing millions of people. As deer flee upon seeing a lion in the jungle, so all types of sins run away from one who sees a shalagrama-shila. As the rising sun dispels darkness, so too the shalagrama-shila removes all sins from the devotee who simply offers Him obeisances. - Even if a person lusty or angry by nature worships shalagrama-shila with devotion, or even carelessly, he will get liberation. Those who speak hari-katha in front of shalagrama-shila need not fear Yamaraja or repeated birth and death. In Kali-yuga one who devotedly worships shalagrama-shila with prayers, kirtana, and musical instruments, will live eternally in Hari-dhama. - Lord Shiva further declares that my devotees who offer obeisances to the shalagrama-shila even negligently become fearless. Those who adore me while making a distinction between myself (Shiva) and Lord Hari will become free from this offences by offering obeisances to shalagrama-shila. Those who think themselves as my devotees, but who are proud and do not offer obeisances to my Lord Vasudeva, are actually sinful and not my devotees. O my son, I always reside in the shalagrama-shila. Being pleased with my devotion the Lord has given me a residence in His personal abode. - The fruit of worshiping me with hundreds of millions of lotus flowers will be multiplied millions of times if one offer the same worship to shalagrama-shila. I do not accept the worship or prayers of one who neglects the puja of shalagrama-shila. The result of one who adores me in front of a shalagrama-shila will last for seventy-one yugas. O son, one who never worship a shalagrama-shila is not considered a devotee of Vishnu. Even if someone worships hundreds of shiva-lingas, he will still not receive any benefit from it. - Items like foodstuffs, leaves, flowers, fruits, and water unofferable to me due to any impurity will become purified by touching them to shalagrama-shila. One who calls himself my devotee but is not attracted to Lord Hari will suffer in hell for the life span of fourteen Indras. Though devoid of knowledge of the absolute truth, a person who even once worships a shalagrama-shila will obtain moksha. The darsana and worship of millions of shiva-lingas will give the same benefit as the worship of one shalagrama-shila. O son, those who desire my affection should regularly worship the shalagrama-shila with devotion. Whenever Lord Keshava dwells as shalagrama-shila, all the gods, demons, yakshas, and the fourteen bhuvanas are also present there. - The forefathers of one who performs pinda-dana even in front of a shalagrama-shila will enjoy boundless satisfaction. O son, although the fruits of pious activities may be calculated, the profit of worshiping shalagrama-shila is unlimited. Those who donate a shalagrama-shila to a brahmana devotee if Lord Vishnu will receive the gains of performing many sacrifices. - Without having accumulated pious activities, it is very difficult to find a shalagrama-shila in this world, especially in the age of Kali-yuga. Those who adore shalagrama-shila in their home are fortunate and their lives are meaningful. - When one worships a shalagrama-shila with con-

trolled senses and in a devotional mood, each flower offered is equal to the performance of an ashvamedha sacrifice. In-deed, whether at an auspicious or inauspicious time, either with or even without devotion, if a shalagrama-shila is worshiped He will bestow great piety upon the worshiper. Any-one, whether he is filled with enmity, greed, pride, duplicity, or sadness will become purified by seeing a shalagrama-shila. Merely by touching a shalagrama-shila even a wicked person who is dishonest and addicted to bad habits becomes purified instantly. - Worship of shalagrama-shila brings the same result as devoutly giving sixty-four tolas (about 750 grams) of sesame seeds daily in charity. My dear son, by offering leaves, flowers fruits, roots, water, grass, and rice to the shalagrama-shila, one receives a boon as great as Mount Sumeru. Even if someone adores a shalagrama-shila without proper method, mudras, or mantras, he will still get the full result according to the shastras.

Other Evidences

In other places it is written that those people who travel with their shalagrama-shila on their shoulder are considered to be carrying everything that is movable or immovable in the three worlds. Even if one has killed a brahmana or similar gross sinful acts, his reactions will be instantly burnt to ashes by worshiping shalagrama-shila. To adore a shalagrama-shila, it is even unnecessary to know japa, prayers, mantras, meditation, or other methods of worship. - The area within a radius of twenty-four miles from where a shalagrama-shila is worshiped is counted as a holy place (tirtha). The fruits of japa, charity, sacrifices, or any other religious activities done in that area will be multiplied millions of times. A shraddha ceremony done in front of shalagrama-shila will satisfy many generations of forefathers and grant them residence in deva-loka for hundreds of kalpas. If someone dies within a radius of two miles around a shalagrama-shila, though a lowborn man from a sinful place, he will go straight to Vaikuntha. - The Padma Purana says giving a shalagrama-shila, is the best form of charity, being equal to the result of donating the entire earth together with its forests, mountains, and all. The Garuda Purana describes the glories of keeping a shalagrama-shila with the auspicious mark of a cakra in one's house. The forefathers, devotees, Ganga and other holy rivers, Pushkara and other holy places, ashvamedha and other holy sacrifices, and all holy mountains become present there. - The Kartika Mahatmya chapter of the Padma Purana states that for those who worship Shri Hari in the shalagrama-shila, Shri Hari will remove their sins and give them the intelligence by which they may obtain liberation. By worship of shalagrama-shila in Mathura during the Kartika month, Lord Hari grants moksha. For those who worship shalagrama-shila on behalf of their forefathers, Lord Hari protects those forefathers and their families and delivers them to his own spiritual abode. - The Yajñadvaja chapter of the Brihan-naradiya Purana states that wherever Lord Keshava in the form of shalagrama-shila remains, demons, and other such beings will be unable to cause any disturbance. Wherever there is a shalagrama-shila, that place is considered a holy place for doing austerity be-

cause Lord Madhusudhana remains there. And if one worships twelve or a hundred shalagrama-shila he will reap even more benefit.

Different Results of Worshipping Many Shilas

The Magha Mahatmya chapter of the Padma Purana describes the results of worshipping more than one shalagrama-shila. O Vaishya, the piety accrued by one who worships twelve shalagrama-shila according to the proper rules and regulations for one day only is the same as received by worshipping twelve crore of shiva-lingas with golden lotuses. One who worships one hundred shalagrama-shila with devotion lives in Hari-dharma and will take birth on earth as an emperor of emperors. - The Kartika Mahatmya of Skanda Purana describes the piety of a Vaishnava who worships twelve shalagrama-shilas for only one day. It is the same as worshipping a thousand crore of shiva-lingas on the bank of the Ganga and living in Kashi (Varanasi) for eight yugas. And if a Vaishnavas worships more than twelve shalagrama-shilas, then even Lord Brahma and other gods are unable to describe the fruit he will receive.

Sale and Purchase of Shalagrama-shilas Prohibited

The Skanda Purana warns that no one should buy or sell shalagrama-shilas. One who puts a price on a shalagrama-shilas, sells a shalagrama-shilas, gives his opinion on its value, or examines one with a view to estimate its sale value, all such people will live in hell until the time of universal destruction.

Shalagrama-shilas Require No Installation

The Skanda Purana also says that shalagrama-shilas do not require installation. When one begins the worship of shalagrama-shila, however he should start with elaborate puja using all articles. The worship of shalagrama-shila is the best form of worship, better than the worship of the sun. - The Magha Mahatmya chapter of Padma Purana states that those who adore Lord Hari either in the Deity, the sun, the water, the earth, or the heart, they all will go to Hari dhama. If they do not feel spiritually fulfilled in such worship, and if they desire liberation, then they should worship Lord Hari in the shalagrama-shila, O Vaishya, the form of Lord Hari as the shalagrama-shila gives piety, removes sinful reactions, and grants liberation. - The Kartika Mahatmya of Padma Purana declares: O Prince, Lord Shri Vishnu may be worshiped in the form of a Deity made from eight kinds of material like stone, wood, metal, mud, written word, earth, jewels, and in the mind. But you should know that worship of shalagrama-shila is worship of Shri Krishna Himself since jagad-guru Shri Vasudeva exists eternally in the shalagrama-shila. The Kartika Mahatmya chapter of Skanda Purana states that Lord Hari may not always remain within the Deity of gold, jewels, or stone, but He always exists in the shalagrama-shila. - The shalagrama-shila in the form of Lord Narasimha is unlimitedly merciful. Taking the Tulasi leaves offered to His lotus feet frees one from the reactions of all sins, including theft, drinking

alcohol, killing a brahmana, or having sex with the wife of one's guru. As it is impossible to count the waves of the ocean, similarly one is unable to fully describe the importance of worshipping shalagrama-shila.

Daily Worship of shalagrama-shila

The Padma Purana warns that one who eats before worshipping shalagrama-shila becomes a worm in the stool of a dog-eater for one millennium (a complete cycle of four yugas). The Skanda Purana says that one who has no faith in the adoration of shalagrama-shila will have his body smashed to bits by being thrown from the top of high mountains. - The Skanda Purana recommends that everyone, whether he be a brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya, shudra, or woman, should take initiation and worship the Lord in the form of the shalagrama-shila, In a conversation between Brahma and Narada in the Skanda Purana, it is stated that a brahmana, kshatriya, and vaishya have a right to worship the shalagrama-shila. Even a shudra who is filled with devotion to Lord Hari also has a right to worship the shalagrama-shila. Lacking devotion however, even a brahmana has no right to worship shalagrama-shila. Elsewhere the Skanda Purana confirms that women, brahmanas, kshatriyas, shudras and anyone else who worships a shalagrama-shila will obtain the mercy of the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu. - Some people say that women and shudras cannot worship shalagrama-shila, but great sages explain that the following references refer only to those who are devoid of Vishnu-bhakti. Purified or unpurified only a brahmana has a right to My worship. The touch of a woman or shudra gives me pain like the striking of a thunderbolt. If a shudra chants pranva (omkara), worships shalagrama-shila, or enjoys with a brahmani, he becomes a dog-eater. - Thus it is the duty of the Vaishnavas to worship the shalagrama-shila with heartfelt love and devotion. It is also recommended to worship a dvaraka-shila along with a shalagrama-shila.

Dvaraka-shila

Worshipping Shalagrama-shila with Dvaraka-shila

The Brahma Purana states that wherever shalagrama-shila and Dvaraka-shila sit together, there certainly mukti also resides. In the conversation between Brahma and Narada in the Skanda Purana Brahma says, "O Munishvara! Wherever dvaraka-shila sits in front of the shalagrama-shila every class of opulence goes on increasing unlimitedly." In another place it says that one who daily worships dvaraka-shila along with twelve shalagrama-shila will be honored even in Vaikuntha-dhama.

Identifying Symbols of Dvaraka-shilas

The Prahlada Samhita states that a dvaraka-shila with one cakra is known as Sudarshana, a shila with two cakras is Lakshmi-Narayana, and one with three cakras is Trivikrama. The shila marked with four cakras is Janardana, with five cak-

ras is Vasudeva, with six cakras is Pradyumna, and with seven cakras is Baladeva. The one that has eight cakras is called Purushottama, with nine cakras Navavyuha, with ten cakras Dashmurti, and with eleven cakras Aniruddha. That dvaraka-shila with twelve cakras is Dvadasatmaka, and one with more than twelve cakras is known as Ananta.

The Glories of Dvaraka-shila

The Varaha Purana says that whoever touches a shila with the mark of a Vishnu-cakra will become free of all sins. The Garuda Purana declares that simply the darshana of Sudarshana and other dvaraka-shila fulfils all desires. The Skanda Purana declares that without a doubt if a very sinful man worships a dvaraka-shila with devotion, or even without he becomes free from all sinful reactions. According to the Dvaraka Mahatmya, a shila marked with cakras coming from Dvaraka is also called cakra-tirtha. Even if this shila is worshipped by a sinful person from a degraded country, the worships still becomes liberated.

Benefits of Different Types of Dvaraka-shilas

The Kapila-pancaratra explains the benefits of worshipping different types of dvaraka-shilas. That charming shila known as Sudarsana, which has one cakra on it, gives one liberation. The Lakshmi-Narayana dvaraka-shila with two cakras gives opulence and liberation, and an Acyuta-shila with three cakras gives one respect equal to Lord Indra. The shila known as Caturbhuja with four cakras brings religion, economic development, enjoyment, and liberation. A Vasudeva-shila, Which has five cakras, will remove the fear of birth and death, and a Pradyuman-shila with six cakras will give one beauty and wealth. The one called Balabhadra-shila with seven cakras gives fame and a continuation of one's dynasty, while a Purushottama-shila with eight cakras gives all types of benedictions. With nine cakras, a Narasimhadeva-shila gives the highest benefits, and a Dashavatara dvaraka-shila with ten cakras gives kingship. An Aniruddha-shila, which has eleven cakras, give fame and lordship, and the one known as Dvadasatmaka-shila with twelve cakras gives liberation and happiness. - The Kapila-pancaratra also describes the bad results derived from worshipping certain types of dvaraka-shilas. A black dvaraka-shila gives death, a smoke colored one gives constant fear, a multi-colored one gives bad health and a blue colored shila takes away one's wealth. That dvaraka-shila that has a hole passing through it brings poverty, a pale one gives terrible distress, and a broken shila brings separation from the wife. The white shila gives sons, grandsons, wealth, power, and all types of happiness, so this type of shila should be adored. - The Prahlada-samhita also says that a black shila causes death, reddish gives constant fear, multi-colored brings disease, yellow or smoke-coloured gives poverty, and a broken one causes death to the wife. Shilas with a hole, uneven cakras, triangular in shape, or half-moon shaped should never be worshiped. Garga and Galava Rishis have stated that a shila with uniform cakras brings happiness, a twelve

cakra shila is very auspicious, and round and square shilas give happiness. But worshipping shilas that are broken, triangular, having holes, with uneven cakras, or half-moon shaped is fruitless.

Additional Information

From other Sections of Shri Hari-bhakti-vilasa

The Gautamiya Tantra says devotees should take the caranamrita mixed with Tulasi leaves from the shalagrama-shila in their hand and sip it, sprinkling the balance on their heads. If somebody refuses this caranamrita it is as if he has killed a brahmana. The Padma Purana explain that all those holy rivers awarding moksha, such as the Ganga, Godavari, and others, reside in the caranamrita of shalagrama-shila. In the Skanda Purana it is written that if one bathes daily in shalagrama-shila's caranamrta, though remaining at home, it is equal to bathing daily in the Ganga. By bathing with the caranamrita of both shalagrama-shila and dvaraka-shila, one is freed from all sins, even the killing of a brahmana. The Garuda Purana warns that religion will flee from those devotees who do not sprinkle their heads three times a day with the caranamrita from shalagrama-shila. - The Skanda Purana says a devotee who makes the mark of a swastika in front of the shalagrama-shila, especially if done in the Kartika month, purifies up to seven generations of his family. There it also says that one who keeps gopi-candana, Tulasi, a conch, and a dvaraka-shila together with a shalagrama-shila in his house will have no fear of sin. - In the Saammohana Tantra it is written that shalagrama-shila should not be placed on the earth or ground and worshiped. The Shrimad Bhagavatam mentions that in the worship of shalagrama-shila it is unnecessary to call the Lord for worship or request Him to return His abode upon completion. - The Brihan-naradiya Purana warns that if one worships a shalagrama-shila and doesn't offer Tulasi leaves, then his house is considered equal to cremation ground. There Shri Narada Muni says it's impossible to explain the importance of Tulasi leaves in the worship of shalagrama-shila, as Tulasi is the most beloved consort of Hari in the form of shalagrama-shila. - The Skanda Purana says that the fingers of a devotee who regularly picks Tulasi leaves for the worship of shalagrama-shila are fortunate. It also states that one who adores shalagrama-shila with Tulasi leaves will become free from all types of offences to Lord Keshava. - The Brihad Vishnu Purana glorifies the water containing Tulasi leaves that is seen by Lord Keshava, especially the caranamrita of the shalagrama-shila. It is always more purifying than the water of all the holy places and hundreds of sacrifices. Thus one who takes this water will be purified of all sin. - The Skanda Purana explains that for one who daily takes the caranamrita of shalagrama-shila there is no necessity for taking Panca-gavya nor visiting thousands of holy places. If someone drinks caranamrita with devotion, he will not experience the misery of staying in a mother's womb again and his suffering in hell will be destroyed. He is protected from all his sinful reactions and becomes fixed on the path of liberation. - In the Skanda Purana Lord Shiva

tells Parvati that one who takes the caranamrita of shalagrama-shila destroys all sinful reactions at their roots, even the killing of a brahmana. Elsewhere the Skanda Purana states that by taking the remnants of foodstuffs offered to shalagrama-shila, one will get the result of performing many sacrifices.

From other sources

Elsewhere it is written that one should not worship two dvaraka-shilas along with two shalagrama-shilas in the house. If any householder will do so then he will become filled with anxiety. - In Shrila Rupa Goswami's Shri Laghu-Bhagavatamrita the following account is given from the Padma Purana. Seeing the wonderfully attractive form of Lord Krishna, Lakshmidivi became very greedy to attain him. Thus she began to practice severe austerities for this purpose. Lord Krishna became curious to know the reason for her penance. Lakshmidivi told Him that she wanted to gain His intimate association as a gopi in Vrindavana. Lord Krishna told her that it's impossible to fulfil her prayer as she does not have the intense love and devotion found in the gopis of Vraja. Hearing this, Lakshmidivi then prayed to always remain on Lord Krishna's chest like a golden sacred thread. Lord Krishna accepted her request, and so on some shalagrama-shilas a line like a golden sacred thread is visible.

Marriage of Shalagrama and Tulasi

Shri Vasishthaji said that what I have heard in ancient times from Lord Brahma about the marriage of Tulasi I will now describe according to what is written in the Narada-pancaratra. First one should plant Tulasi either in the house or the forest, and after three years one may perform her marriage. The auspicious times when one may perform the marriage of Shalagrama and Tulasi are described as follows. When the sun is moving in the north, Jupiter and Venus are rising, in the month of Kartika, from the Ekadashi to the full moon in the month of Magha, and when constellations that are auspicious for marriage appear, especially the full moon day. - First one should arrange a place for sacrifice (yajnakunda) under a canopy (mandapa). Then after performing shanti-vidhana, one should install sixteen goddesses, and do the shraddha ceremony for his female maternal ancestors. One should call four brahmanas learned in the Veda, and appoint one to be the Brahma, one to be the acarya, one to be the rishi, and one to be the priest. One should establish an auspicious waterpot (mangala-ghat) under that mandapa according to the Vaishnava rituals. Then one should establish an attractive shalagrama-shila (Lakshmi-Narayana). After that one should perform home sacrifice (griha-yajna), worship the sixteen goddesses, and do the shraddha ceremony. - When it is dusk one should install a golden Deity of Narayana and a silver murti of Tulasi according to one's means. With vasa-shanta mantra two cloths should be tied together, with yadavandha mantra the marriage bracelets (kangana) should be tied on the wrists, and with ko' dat mantra the marriage should be consecrated. Then the host along with the acarya, rishi, and

others should make nine offerings in the yajna-kunda. After these marriage rites have been done, the wise gurudeva should offer sacrifice according to the Vaishnava rituals chanting, "Om namo bhagavate keshavaya namah svaha." - The host with his wife, friends, and relatives should then do parikrama of Tulasi four times with shalagrama-shila. Everyone should then recite the following prayers in front of the yajna-kunda: shatkumbha-sukta, pavamani-sukta, shakti-kadhyaya, nava-sukta, jiva-sukta, and vaishava-samhita. After this the ladies should blow conch and other similar instruments, sing auspicious songs, and recite mangalacarana. Following this the final sacrifice should be done (purnahuti) and then abhisheka. An ox is to be given to the Brahma, a cow, cloth, and bed to the acarya, and cloth to the rishi. Dakshina should be given to all. - In this way installing Tulasi Devi one should begin her regular worship along with Lord Vishnu. Whoever sees the marriage of Tulasi Devi will have all of the accumulated sins of his life removed. Whoever with devotion plants Tulasi, collects her leaves, or installs her along with Vishnu will achieve liberation, the abode of the Lord, all varieties of enjoyment, and will enjoy along with Shri Hari.

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The author and his wife Saroj celebrating a yagna in Germany.

