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Remarkable Monkey Attracts Devotees' Affection at Nepal's Hanumat Durbar Temple

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Janakpur, the capital city of Nepal and the birthplace of Sita, is truly a magical place. Lying some 400km from Kathmandu, Janakpur still attracts sages, saints and spiritual seekers from various parts of the world, as it has throughout history. With numerous temples and sacred ponds, this land offers a peaceful environment for penance and spiritual growth. For the past ten years, a unique center of attraction has been the now 14-year-old Babua Hanuman--a mysterious monkey in whom devotees see Divinity.

Babua Hanuman likes to be called "Babua," meaning "baby." She was brought to the Hanumat Durbar temple in Janakpur by local physician Dr. L.N. Jha when she was merely three months old. The Janakpur-based Triflorous Explorers Association declared on September 10, 1991, that she was the largest monkey in the world, with a weight of 55 kg and height of 40 inches. However, we didn't find her in the Guinness Book of World Records. Devotees have reported that sometimes Babua Hanuman "grows" to the height of five feet and her hand "stretches" up to three feet.

Some devotees have so much faith in Babua that they dutifully visit her every day. Mr. Anurajan Goiet, a lawyer by profession, is one such devotee, who serves her food daily. There is full faith that the Babua goddess fulfills all the wishes of her devotees. Mr. Chandeshwar Thakur, age 59, reports that he gave up drinking and got his daughter married with her blessings. On Tuesdays and Saturdays there is usually a surge of devotees seeking her darshan.

A priest stays with her and tends to her needs. She has her own wardrobe of wool blankets to keep her warm. Her time for taking food is fixed. She takes half-a-liter of milk at 8 am, and has lunch at 12:00 noon, when she accepts bread, rice, pulse and vegetables, as do ordinary people. At 5:00 pm, she is offered fruits, such as grapes. Later in the evening she takes dinner. She insists that her food be sattvic, pure. If the food is ever mixed with garlic or onion, she refuses to take it. A devotee informed the author how she refused to take food brought by a woman who was in menstruation. She often refuses food as a baby does--in a tantrum. But when devotees start loving her, she accepts their offering.

For the last ten years, Babua has lived in the temple, in an enclosure with bars on two sides. Before that she was free to move about at will. However, it was found that she does not venture out of the temple even if her door is opened.

Babua is very fond of hearing kirtana, devotional singing, especially when the devotees chant "Sita-Ram." From March 1977, the kirtana has taken place everyday.

Sometimes Babua assumes an ireful state. Whenever a person appears before her with impure body or mind, she tries to show her anger towards him or her. But she always shows motherly love to one who approaches with devotion. The author himself saw this furious face of Babua when one man visited her after smoking.

According to Mr. Thakur, the goddess-monkey takes the posture of meditation--the padmasana yogic mudra--at midnight. It was observed that the Mahant of Hanumat Durbar, Sri Ram Chandra Sharan, who expired on November 24, 1995, used to meditate in this posture at the same hour. When Sharan was alive, he rebuked anyone who referred to her simply as "bandar" or monkey. This was because he saw her as the living Goddess and treated her as such.