

## Srila Prabhupada Deity Department

### Brief History

This department was initially constituted in the United States of America with HG Lochandas Prabhu as its head. Later, it was shifted to Ujjain under the guidance of HH Bhakti Charu Swami Maharaj. Maharaj tried to get a few artists and sculptors for Srila Prabhupada (SP) deity, but in vain. HG Amal Bhakta Prabhu, then Manager of Govinda's Restaurant expressed his desire to give a try. The SP deity at ISKCON Ujjain was his first job, after which he was given the seva to sculpt the Guru Parampara. Pleased by his work, Maharaja made him the head of the deity department. This department started with the inception of the temple in the year 2005.

### Overview of Workflow

- First the casting is made of clay. A mould made by mixing silicon rubber with raisin, marble dust, hardener and fiber. Around 500-700 statues can be sculpted from this preparation. The procedure is different for big and small deities.
- Orders for deities are placed from the ISKCON Ujjain website under the 'SP Murti Project' and delivery is done within 1 month. In the past 12 years, around 1000 SP deities have been sculpted.
- There are 5 helpers for sculpting the deities but the key features such as face, lips, eyes and finishing touches are done by HG Amal Bhakta Prabhu.
- Deliveries in India are made by train. A ticket in the name of SP is booked as a senior citizen. A group of devotees accompany the deity on the journey, with continuous kirtan. This serves as an excellent preaching opportunity too.
- For foreign deliveries, the deity is packed within a wooden box and transported by Air.
- Special care is taken to make the deities look real and authentic.

### Finance

The earnings from the Murti Project contribute around Rs. 4 Lakh per month.

### Lessons

- Over the last 12 years, there has been a lot of perfection in work. There has been a steady growth in the demand of SP deities.
- The focus has always been to enhance quality and not to chase quantity.
- Even outsiders come to get sculptures of other persons, which HG Amal Bhakta Prabhu undertakes independently in his free time.

### Challenges

There have been no threatening challenges as such apart from facing competition. However, there is no deliberate effort to beat competition by using cheap quality material.

### Key Points

- When there is a huge backlog, work goes on upto 11 in the night. Apart from SP deities, deities of others in the Guru Parampara viz. Bhaktivinod Thakur, HH Bhaktisiddhantha Saraswati Thakur, etc. are also sculpted.

- Apart from temple orders, orders for homes are also undertaken (small deities), their size ranging from 4.5 inches to life-size.

### Inspiration

- Amal Bhakta Prabhu gives all the credits for success to HH Bhakti Charu Swami for having faith in him and Lord Krishna.
- Sculpting deities gives a lot of satisfaction and at times he is so engrossed that he loses the track of time.