CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF LORD SRI KRISHNA
on August 9 & 10, 2012
His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, came to America in 1965, at age 69, to fulfill his spiritual master’s request that he teach the science of Krishna consciousness throughout the English-speaking world. In a dozen years he published some seventy volumes of translation and commentary on India’s Vedic literature, and these are now standard in universities worldwide. Meanwhile, travelling almost nonstop, Srila Prabhupada moulded his international society into a world wide confederation of ashramas, schools, temples and farm communities. He passed away in 1977, in Vrindavana, the place most sacred to Lord Krishna. His disciples and followers are carrying forward the movement he started.
How to Approach a Spiritual Master

Lord Krishna gives three requirements for one seeking enlightenment from a self-realized soul.

A lecture given in New York on August 14, 1966

by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.—Bhagavad-gīta 4.34

Krishna advises, “if you want to know the transcendental science, just approach someone who knows it.” Pranipata means “surrender.” You must select a person to whom you can surrender yourself.

Nobody likes to surrender to anyone. We are puffed up with whatever knowledge we have. “Oh, who can give me knowledge?” And there is regular propaganda that for spiritual realization there is no need of a spiritual master. But the Vedic literature—Bhagavad-gīta, Srimad-Bhagavatam, the Upanishads—says that there is need of a spiritual master. For example the Vedic Upanishads say, tad-vijñanartham sa guṇum evabhigacchet: “If you want to learn the transcendental subject, you must approach a spiritual master.”

The first requirement is that you must be eager to learn the transcendental subject. Suppose I want to learn the art of music. Then I have to find a musician. Without having the association of a musician, one cannot learn the art of music. The same holds true for any art. If you want to become an engineer, you have to enroll in an engineering college or a technical college and learn there. Nor can one become a medical practitioner simply by purchasing books from the market and reading at home. That is not possible. You have to enroll in a medical college and undergo training and practical examination and so many things.

Similarly, if you want to learn Bhagavad-gīta or any transcendental subject matter, Lord Krishna says that you must go to a person to whom you can surrender yourself. That means you have to check: “Who is the real person who can give me instruction on Bhagavad-gīta or any Vedic literature?” Your search must not be whimsical. You have to search very seriously for a person who actually knows the subject. Otherwise, why surrender to someone? But since you have to find a person to whom you can voluntarily surrender, without finding that person your mission will not be fulfilled.

In the beginning of the Bhagavad-gīta Arjuna was talking with Krishna just like a friend. But when Arjuna realized, “Our friendly talk will not make a solution,” he surrendered unto Krishna. Shishyas te 'ham sadhi mam tvam prapannam: “I become a surrendered disciple unto You. Please instruct me in my duty.” This is the process.

Intelligent Inquiry

Here Krishna advises, ”If you want to learn Bhagavad-gīta, then you have to go to a person to whom you can surrender.” But you should not blindly surrender. You must be able to inquire—pariprasna. The next qualification is pariprasna, “inquiry.” Without inquiry you cannot make advancement. A student in school who inquires from the teacher is intelligent. Even a child who inquires, “Oh, father, what is this? What is this?” is intelligent.

So inquiry is required, not only surrender—“Oh, I have found a very good spiritual master. All right. I have surrendered. Now all my business is finished.” No. You may have a very good spiritual master, but if you have no power to inquire, then you cannot make progress. Inquiries must be there. How do you inquire? Not to challenge. Not “Oh, I shall see what kind of spiritual master he is. Let me challenge him and put some irrelevant questions and talk nonsensically, this way and that way.” That kind of inquiry will not help. Pariprasna means “inquiry on the point.”

And that inquiry should be sevaya, ”with service.” Seva means “service.” One should not think, “Oh, I have inquired so many things from such and such person, and I have not rendered any payment or service, so I have gained.” No. Without service your inquiry will be futile.
King Rahugana recognizes the greatness of Jada Bharata
So three requirements for approaching a spiritual master are given here: pranipata (surrender), pariprasna (inquiry), and seva (service).

**No Diamonds from a Grocer**

*Pranipata* means you must at least have the qualification to find a person actually qualified to give you real instruction. That qualification you must have. That remains on you.

Suppose you have to purchase some gold or jewellery. If you do not know where to purchase—if you go to a grocery shop to purchase a jewel—then you'll be cheated. If you go to a grocery shop and ask, "Can you give me a diamond?" the grocer will understand, "Here is a fool. So let me give him something else."

"Here. This is a diamond."

"Oh. What is the price?"

The grocer can charge anything. And when you come home, your relatives will ask, "What have you brought?"

"This is a diamond. I bought it at the grocery shop."

That way of finding a spiritual master will not do. You have to become a little intelligent, because without being intelligent one cannot make any spiritual progress.

The *Vedanta-sutra* says, *atha brahma-jijnasa*. Brahman." That inquiry requires a qualification: *atha*. *Atha* indicates that those who have become experienced by the miserable life in the material world can inquire about the Absolute Truth, about spiritual life.

Similarly, the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* states, *tasmad gurum prapadyeta jijnasuh sreya uttamam*. *Uttamam* means *udgata-tamam*, "transcendental." *Tama* means "darkness." Anything of the material world is in darkness, because this material world is dark. You know that the whole universe is dark and therefore there is need of sunlight, moonlight, electricity. *Uttamam* refers to that which is beyond this darkness—the transcendental subject, the spiritual subject. In the spiritual world there is no darkness.

Only one who wants to inquire about the spiritual world must find a spiritual master. Otherwise, there is no need of a spiritual master. For material improvement you don't require a spiritual master. For that you can work just as so many people are working. That is prescribed.

But because you are interested in the subject of Brahman—the spiritual subject—*therefore* you require a spiritual master. That is clearly stated. *Tasmad gurum prapadyeta*: "Therefore one has to surrender unto the spiritual master." *Tasmat* means "therefore."

**Easy with Bhakti**

In any Vedic literature you'll find the same instruction as stated in the *Bhagavad-gita*:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tad viddhi} & \text{ pranipatena} \\
\text{pariprasnena} & \text{ sevaya}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{upadeksyanti} & \text{ te jnanam} \\
\text{jnaninah} & \text{ tattva-darshinah}
\end{align*}
\]

*Jnaninah* means *jnani*, or "a man in perfect knowledge." One in perfect knowledge has perfect vision—not theoretical, but actual vision of the spiritual subject matter.

*Tattva* means "the Absolute Truth." You'll find in the *Bhagavad-gita* that Krishna is the supreme *tattva*, the Absolute Truth. Krishna says, *manusyanam sahasresu kascid yatati siddhayate*: "Out of many, many thousands of people, a few may try to get spiritual salvation." Not everyone is expected to hanker after spiritual salvation. That hankering requires many, many years' qualification. Then Lord Krishna says, *yatatatam api siddhanam kascin mam vetti tattvatah*: "Out of many perfected spiritualists, only some may know Me in truth." First of all, out of many, many thousands of people, only some want perfection in spiritual life. Then out of those who have attained such perfection, one or two may understand Krishna.

The subject matter of Krishna is not easy. It is very difficult. But one can understand it very easily by following the process given in *Bhagavad-gita*:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{bhaktya mam} & \text{ abhijanati} \\
\text{yavan yas casmi tattvatah} \\
\text{tato mam tattvato jnatva} \\
\text{visate tad-anantaram}
\end{align*}
\]
If you accept *bhakti*, devotional service, you can understand the difficult subject matter of Krishna very easily. *Bhaktya mam abhijanati*. *Abhijanati* means that you can understand perfectly. *Yavan yas casmi tattvatah*. *Tattvatah* means that you can understand the Absolute Truth as it is. And *tato mam tattvato jnatva*: after understanding the science of Krishna perfectly, you become eligible to enter the spiritual kingdom.

Lord Krishna says that after many, many births, when I am fully perfect in knowledge, I have to surrender to Him. “Then why not immediately surrender to Him? Why shall I wait for many, many births?” That is a very intelligent question. If surrender to Him is the end of perfection, then why not accept the perfection immediately?

But people are doubtful. Somebody asked me, “How long will it take to be perfect in Krishna consciousness?” I replied that Krishna consciousness can be had in one second, or it cannot be had in thousands of births and deaths. But if I understand the principle that after attaining full knowledge I have to ultimately surrender to Krishna—to become a *mahatma*, a great soul—why not immediately surrender to Krishna?

Most of us are not prepared to immediately accept Krishna as Supreme, or we have many doubts. Therefore, to drive away all our doubtful ideas, the *shashtras*, the scriptures—especially the *Bhagavad-gita* and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*—are there. If we scrutinizingly study these two books, we can understand the science of Krishna very nicely, and our progress in Krishna consciousness will be definite.

Thank you very much. ☺

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Srila Prabhupada: These modern so-called scientists have much in common with Hiranyakashipu—such a big demon. His only idea was, “The devatas, the demigods—they prevail over us sometimes. But now I shall attack them and prevail over them. And because I am now virtually immortal, what can they do? They cannot kill me. So I will go on with my demonic activities, and they will not be able to do anything.”

Hiranyakashipu did not know that by trying to achieve immortality for his material body, he was exhibiting the greatest foolishness.

When Brahma, Krishna’s first created being in the universe, told Hiranyakashipu, “No, no, it is not possible,” still Hiranyakashipu expected, “Yes, somehow I shall become immortal.”

Lord Brahma flatly said, “No, no, this is not possible. I myself am not immortal. How can I give you immortality?”

But Hiranyakashipu would not hear even Lord Brahma. He thought, “In a roundabout way I shall befool this man Brahma.”

Hiranyakashipu said, “All right, sir, then give me this benediction.”

“What is that?”

“I’ll not die on the land.”

“All right.”

“Nor shall I die in the water.”

“Yes.”

“Nor in the air.”

“Yes.”

So Hiranyakashipu thought, “All three realms are eliminated. So where can I die? After all, there are only three realms—land, water, air. And Brahma has given me the benediction that I shall not die anywhere within these three. So I have cheated Brahma.”

And then Hiranyakashipu continued, “Grant that I shall not die in the daytime.”

“Yes.”

“Grant that I shall not die in the nighttime.”

“Yes.”

But by nature’s arrangement, there is still another interval of time—between day and night. [Laughing.] Hiranyakashipu forgot that. That interval of time is called sandhya. That is accepted in the Vedas. But Hiranyakashipu forgot that. Krishna is more intelligent than any of His creatures. So Hiranyakashipu was not killed in the daytime or the nighttime. He was killed in the sandhya, the interval between daytime and nighttime.
And as for land, sky, and water, that matter, also, was adjusted with tricks—Krishna killed Hiranyakasipu on His lap. You cannot say that one's lap is land; you cannot say it is sky; you cannot say it is water.

So Krishna is so kind that because His devotee Brahma had given Hiranyakasipu all these benedictions, Krishna would kill Hiranyakasipu without touching all those points conceded by Brahma. In this way, Hiranyakasipu could not accuse Brahma that “Sir, you have cheated me.”

“No,” Brahma would be able to reply. “Whatever you wanted I have given you. You have cheated yourself. You did not know that your knowledge of the cosmic situation was imperfect. Nor could you make it perfect. So, that was your folly. Whatever you wanted, I said, ‘Yes, yes, yes.’ At the same time I added, ‘In spite of all this, you cannot become immortal.’ After all, that is not possible.

“But you—you fool—did not heed my warning. So despite your cunning, you remained a fool. You thought you were very intelligent, very cunning: ‘I am now fully equipped. Nobody can kill me.’ ”

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, it seems Hiranyakasipu was acting much like a modern lawyer. He was trying like anything to find loopholes in the law.

Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes. A big lawyer is simply someone who is very expert at finding and exploiting weaknesses in the present law. That is the definition of a big lawyer.

Actually, these modern leaders are acting like big lawyers—trying to be more intelligent than Krishna and His law. [Laughs.] These rascals are trying to be more intelligent. Therefore they are called mudhas—rascals and fools.

Disciple: Moghasa.

Srila Prabhupada: Ah. Moghasa mogha-karmano mogha-jnana vicetasah. In Bhagavad-gita Krishna confirms, "Every atheistic rascal will see all his hopes, all his activities, all his so-called knowledge come to nothing. Such a rascal will be utterly baffled." To begin with, Krishna asks such a simple thing: "You just surrender unto Me. You'll get all protection."

But the rascal says, "No, no. That is not possible. I must act according to my own whims. Why shall I surrender?"

“All right. Go on,” Krishna says at last. “I’ll give you all facility for executing your whims. You’ll get it. You do whatever you like. Try your best.”

This is going on. Krishna is giving good advice. But unfortunately, the rascal will not accept it. So Krishna is so kind that He says, “All right. You act in your own way. I shall give you all facility.” That facility is Maya, the Lord’s illusory energy. When the soul desires to leave the spiritual world, Maya gives him this material world and a materially affected mind by which he can try to lord it over. Actually, Maya gives him that mind so that she can punish him very severely.

So anyway, Maya has given us a clever, materially affected mind. “All right. Now you go on desiring illusory material enjoyment. You go on desiring and desiring, and I will give you facility.”

Disciple: So our seemingly clever mind is really an agent of punishment.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. This material mind is just that. For instance, when you see a madman, you see he is not mindless. No. He has a mind. But that mind is polluted. That is why he is acting abnormally. His mind is there, but it is covered by some infection. Therefore, one moment a madman is thinking this way, the next moment that way, then again this way, and so on. That’s all.

Disciple: Constant anxiety.


Disciple: Sometimes, Srila Prabhupada, a person who goes mad has to be put into a padded cell, so that he doesn’t harm himself.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Otherwise he will create danger for others. Similarly, this whole material world is a “padded cell” for those who have left the spiritual world. They must be kept within this padded cell, so that they can go on with their madness of mind without disturbing the sane and peaceful residents of the spiritual world.

Still, Krishna has kindly left the Vedic literature here, with instructions that “If you act this or that way, then you can promote yourself to this or that higher material planet. And yanti mad-yajino ‘pi mam—if you act in devotional service, you can come to Me.” But the soul who has gone mad will not take that instruction.

Disciple: Coming to Krishna means he’ll have to give up all his mad desires.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, but all the instructions are there for escaping this material world and going home to Krishna’s blissful abode. All the instructions are there. We simply have to accept them. If we don’t accept them, we suffer. What can be done? If you accept the path leading to hell, in spite of higher authorities’ instructions, then who can save you? That is going on.

Disciple: Rascals.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. A rascal is thinking he has become so very intelligent that he can deceive God, deceive the spiritual master, and be happy. He does not know that he can neither deceive God nor deceive His representative, the guru. That is not possible. But he is thinking like that, even though he is being put into one suffering condition after another. For instance, an
ordinary thief or rogue thinks, “I am deceiving the government,” even though the government has got so many agents that sooner or later he will be arrested. Of course, this sinful modern government may not be so expert, but how can some rascal deceive the government of Krishna? That is not possible.

Disciple: Krishna’s undercover agents are everywhere.

Srila Prabhupada: Everywhere, in every direction. They are bearing witness. And ishvarah sarva-bhutanam—Krishna is sitting within the heart of everyone. How can you deceive Him?

Disciple: Krishna knows more about what’s going on than we do.

Srila Prabhupada: Anumanta upadrasta. Ksetra-jnam capi mam viddhi sarva-kshetresu bharata. Krishna is sitting within everyone’s heart as the witness and permitter. So how can these rascals think, “I can deceive God”?


Srila Prabhupada: Hmm. Vigata-jnana, yes. Their knowledge is stolen by illusion.

Disciple: Like children playing, they think that they’ve become a king or this or that, and they’re completely absorbed in that illusion.

Srila Prabhupada: Why “children playing”? In this age the father and mother are also playing.
The Ecstasy of Insignificance: Happiness Through Reality

By Vishakha Devi Dasi

Our drive for significance in this world reveals our ignorance of the basis a true significance.

...
known as Gopinatha. He wanted to prepare the same dish (sweetened condensed milk boiled with rice) to offer to his Gopala. Although Madhavendra Puri didn’t reveal his desire to anyone, Gopinatha appeared to the temple priest in a dream and told the priest to give Madhavendra Puri a pot of the sweet rice.

Madhavendra Puri began to think, “The Lord has given me a pot of sweet rice, and when the people hear of this tomorrow morning, there will be great crowds.” Thinking this, Sri Madhavendra Puri offered his obeisances to Gopinatha [Krishna] on the spot and left Remuna before morning. When Madhavendra Puri came to Jagannatha Puri, people were aware of his transcendental reputation. Therefore crowds of people came and offered him all sorts of respect in devotion. Even though one may not like it, reputation, as ordained by providence, comes to him. Indeed, one’s transcendental reputation is known throughout the entire world. Being afraid of his reputation [pratishtha], Madhavendra Puri fled from Remuna. But the reputation brought by love of Godhead is so sublime that it goes along with the devotee, as if following him. Madhavendra Puri wanted to leave Jagannatha Puri because the people were honouring him as a great devotee; however, this threatened to hinder his collecting sandalwood for the Gopala deity. (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya-lila 4.141-142, 145-148)

Although Madhavendra Puri left Remuna to avoid being honoured, his service to Gopala obliged him to remain in Jagannatha Puri, and there he had to tolerate the honour he received.

As one becomes happy by not seeking happiness but by absorbing oneself in devotional service to the Lord for His pleasure, similarly one becomes significant by not seeking significance but by absorbing oneself in devotional service to the Lord for His pleasure.

**The Satisfaction of Smallness**

Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu prays, “O almighty Lord, I have no desire to accumulate wealth, nor do I desire beautiful women, nor do I want any number of followers or fruitive activities described in flowery language. All I want, life after life, is unmotivated devotional service to You. O son of Nanda, Krishna, I am Your eternal servant, yet somehow I have fallen into the ocean of birth and death. Please pick me up from this ocean and place me as one of the atoms at Your lotus feet.” (Sikshastaka 4, 5)

We are capable of being happy in the life Krishna has provided for us, in which we contentedly do our devotional service, guided by our spiritual superiors and by Him. Our lives are deeply significant simply by our accepting what is within reach, making of it what we can, and offering it to the Lord with a sincere desire to please Him and His servants. Why can we not be content with this confidential, personal significance that comes by the grace of guru and Krishna and does not need to be explained or announced? Why do we feel discontent if we are not significant in some publicly approved way?

In Bhagavad-gita (2.44) Krishna explains the root cause of our discontent: “In the minds of those who are too attached to sense enjoyment and material opulence, and who are bewildered by such things, the resolute determination for devotional service to the Supreme Lord does not take place.” Distracted by our senses and material desires, we miss our real significance and inner satisfaction.

Srila Prabhupada’s writes, “Anyone who has any desire or aspiration for satisfying his senses by becoming more and more important, either in the material sense or in the spiritual sense, cannot actually relish the really sweet taste of devotional service.” (The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 3)

Similarly, in the words of Bhaktivinoda Thakura, another of our spiritual ancestors, “If I think I am a Vaishnava...
[a pure devotee of Krishna], I shall look forward to receiving respect from others. And if the desire for fame and reputation pollute my heart, I shall certainly go to hell.” (Kalyana-kalpa-taru)

Insignificance

By realizing the insignificance of material significance and by acknowledging that each of us is a spirit soul, part of Krishna, we discover that we are permanently and genuinely significant. And, enigmatically enough, at that time we feel genuinely insignificant, for we become aware of Krishna’s greatness and of our own smallness, helplessness, and vulnerability.

Srila Prabhupada explains:

[Krishna’s] planet, Goloka Vrindavana, is the original planet, and from that planet, that brahmajyoti, light, is coming. And in that light, everything is resting. And in an insignificant portion of that light, this material world is situated. In that place there are innumerable universes, as we are seeing one. And in one of these universes there are millions and billions of planets, of which this earth is only an insignificant fragment. And in that earth, the land of America, United States, is still insignificant. And in the United States, the state of New York is still insignificant. And in the state of New York, New York City is insignificant. And in New York City, this 26 Second Avenue is insignificant. And we are sitting here. So just see how insignificant we are. (Lecture, New York City, December 7, 1966)

Srila Prabhupada spent one month crossing the Atlantic Ocean on his first trip to America. He suffered seasickness and heart attacks. Before he disembarked, he wrote a prayer to the Lord, appealing for His help in offering Krishna consciousness to Westerners. He signed the prayer, “the most unfortunate, insignificant beggar A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.”

Srila Prabhupada was perpetually humbled by the unimaginable greatness and incomparable perfection of Krishna, and he perpetually felt himself an insignificant servant of the Lord. Still, in his mindfulness of the Lord he was materially and spiritually fulfilled, for he had Krishna, and whoever has Krishna wants nothing. And Srila Prabhupada could simultaneously see and love the significance within each of us while showing us our insignificance before Krishna.

The more we deny our insignificance, the more we are impelled to be materially significant, which is to have no factual significance at all. The Lord’s gift to us, the gift of truth, is to doubt our importance, to allow our instinctive appetite for insignificance to emerge, to resolutely realize our insignificance before Krishna, and to refrain from the temptation to be materially significant. We may receive that gift or reject it.

Understanding our insignificance is not an outward gesture but an inner awakening; it is purification. If we choose to accept our insignificance, then although we may be surrounded by materially significant people, we advance spiritually because of Lord Krishna’s support. Queen Kunti prays, “My Lord, Your Lordship can easily be approached, but only by those who are materially exhausted. One who is on the path of [material] progress, trying to improve himself with respectable parentage, great opulence, high education, and bodily beauty, cannot approach You with sincere feeling.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.8.26) Humility accepts insignificance; pride rejects it.

Realizing our insignificance will help us fulfill our irrepressible, life-giving aspiration to know Krishna. When we have understood and unhesitatingly accepted our insignificance, special grace in our devotional life will enable us to happily engage in His work. Rather than worrying about our image, we will be absorbed in our service.

Humility means awareness of our own insignificance along with respect for the worth of others. In the words of Lord Chaitanya, “One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honour yet is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord.” (Sikshashtaka 3)

Humility is essential for pure chanting, the central practice of Krishna consciousness. Lord Chaitanya’s devotee par excellence, Srila Haridasa Thakura, taught by his example how to chant the holy names of Krishna. He revealed his mood of deep humility in these words to Lord Chaitanya: “My Lord, if an insignificant insect like me dies, what is the loss? If an ant dies, where is the loss to the material world?” (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Antya-lila 11.41)

Higher Realms

A feeling of insignificance and a humble service attitude come not by astuteness, not by knowing some tricks, but by simple steadfastness in the process of Krishna consciousness. The Srimad-Bhagavatam (3.21.21) tells us that Krishna showers all benedictions on those who consider themselves insignificant. Seeing them as significant, by His causeless mercy He shares with them the sweetness of devotional service.

Insignificance is so inconceivably ecstatic that the Lord Himself desires it, as Srila Prabhupada describes: “Krishna says in Chaitanya-charitamrita, you will find, ‘Everyone worships Me with awe and veneration. But if anyone worships Me without any awe, veneration, and treats Me as insignificant, I like that. I like that.’ So that exchange of Krishna’s feelings you can find in this Gaudiya-Vaishnava philosophy—that mother Yasoda is treating Krishna as very insignificant. ‘He is my child. If I don’t give Him protection, He will die.’ Therefore Krishna is very much obliged to mother Yasoda.” (Lecture, New York City, April 10, 1973)
What would modern-day social services make of a man who gives away the food meant for his own children to satisfy the hunger of strangers? How would they judge this man, whose family “shivered for want of food,” while he persisted in his unusual dedication to charitable impulses?

The story of this man, King Rantideva, who lived thousands of years ago, is told in the Ninth Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam.

King Rantideva would not endeavour for anything. He simply took whatever came to him through the guiding hand of providence. Sound like a handy excuse to avoid gainful employment?

In fact, Rantideva’s apparent irresponsibility did not stem from a lack of concern for his family’s welfare. He himself had no material needs, owing to a firm understanding that all things come by the inscrutable mercy of the Lord. If the Lord wanted to maintain him, then so be it. If not, then the king would accept whatever fate might come.

King Rantideva also understood that because the Supreme Lord is present in the heart of every living entity, all beings deserved the king’s respect and compassion. So when he saw someone in need, he felt no regrets about giving away the food from his own family’s table.

Honourable Guests

One time, Rantideva was ready to eat after having fasted for forty-eight days. Just as he and his family sat down for an opulent meal, a brahmana arrived. Rantideva was honoured to receive the exalted guest and gave the brahmana some of his meal. The brahmana ate the food and left. Rantideva divided among his family what was left and again prepared to eat. But just as he was to begin, a shudra (labourer) visitor arrived. Now, one might expect that in Vedic society a brahmana would be honoured with a meal but a shudra would receive little prestige. But Rantideva did not see the shudra as lesser simply because of the shudra’s social position. Rantideva gave the visitor a share of his food.

After the shudra had left, yet another guest arrived—a man surrounded by dogs. The man called out, “O king, I and my company of dogs are very hungry. Please give us something to eat.” King Rantideva did indeed give them something to eat—all that was left of his meal. He then offered his obeisances to the man and his animals.

By now, all that was left for Rantideva was the drinking water. Just as he moved to drink, a chandala (outcaste) appeared, tired and thirsty, and begged the king for some water.

The king did not hesitate. He not only gave the water but said, “I do not pray to the Supreme Personality of Godhead for the eight perfections of mystic yoga, nor for salvation from repeated birth and death. I want only to stay among all the living entities and suffer all distresses on their behalf, so that they may be free from suffering.”

Rare Compassion

Picturing King Rantideva transplanted in modern society, we can imagine that his family would surely be labeled “dysfunctional,” and that the king himself would be seen as seriously co-dependent. What sort of pleasure can one derive from suffering on behalf of others? After all, Rantideva didn’t create the suffering in their lives. And he was a king—why not enjoy the opulence of that position? Obviously, the man lacked a sense of personal boundaries.

The activities of King Rantideva are especially perplexing because in this age to hear such genuine declarations of compassion is rare. We are accustomed to politicians who wrap themselves in compassionate statements until re-elected. We are suspicious of charitable organizations, since so many have been found corrupt. To be as selfless as King Rantideva means to set yourself up as bait for conartists and thieves. Charity is one thing, but if you don’t look out for number one, who’s going to do it for you?

Rantideva knew, however, that the Supreme Lord would look after him. “By offering my water to maintain the life of this poor chandala, who is struggling to live, I have been freed from all hunger, thirst, fatigue, trembling of the body, moroseness, distress, lamentation, and illusion.”

King Rantideva, as it turns out, was being tested by demigods like Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva, who had come disguised as guests to interrupt the king’s meal. But even when this was revealed to Rantideva, he did not take advantage of the situation by requesting boons from these exalted demigods. He didn’t really care for anything they could offer. Srimad-Bhagavatam goes on...
to explain that everyone who followed the principles of King Rantideva became a pure devotee of the Lord, equally freed from the effects of material suffering.

Just as a runner trains for a marathon, we can train ourselves toward this enormous generosity of spirit by practicing compassion in our daily lives. True compassion comes by understanding the intimate spiritual connection all living beings share with the Supreme Lord. No one, no matter how fallen he or she might appear externally, is without such a relationship. When one performs kindness with this understanding, the act becomes more than pious duty—it becomes a source of the deepest pleasure. ☺
Mr. Bernard Shaw has congratulated Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of the latter's 76th birthday in the following words:—“I can only wish this were Mr. Gandhi's 35th birthday instead of his 76th.” We heartily join with Mr. Shaw in his attempt to subtract 41 years from the present age of Mahatma Gandhi. Everyone tries to subtract at least some years from his calculated age and this attempt of increasing duration of life within the mind is quite natural for an ordinary cult of man. The psychology of such artificial way of increasing life's duration is that everyone of us does not wish to die. But death is so cruel that it does not respect our wishful desire. It comes when it must and any amount of our worldly acquisition cannot protect us from the cruel hands of death. Mr. Shaw or Mahatma Gandhi both are distinguished thinkers and lead the world in respect of many things. There are other great men and scientists who are equally respected leaders of thought in the world but none of them has ever tried to solve the question of death which none of us, beginning from Mr. Shaw to the man in the street, desires. The leaders of nations have however opened many factories for manufacturing weapons for the art of killing but none has opened a factory to manufacture weapons for protecting man from the cruel hands of death, although our wishful desire is always for not to die.

A layman may ask why the leaders of the world have set aside such a big problem and are engaged in the temporary arrangement of dal bhat which are lavishly produced by nature’s own way but extremely mismanaged in distribution by the leaders of men. While the dal bhat problem is solved by nature’s own production, the leaders of men may pause for a while and can see their way if the big question of death can be solved There is a suggestion, however, in the Bhagavad-gita which solved the death question without wishful desire to live by subtracting ages. The suggestion is this (Bg. 8.16)

\[
a\text{brahma-bhuvanal lokah punar avartino 'rjuna } \\
mam upetya tu kaunteya punar janma na vidyate
\]

‘Oh son of Kunti! the world (planets) up to the Brahmaloka, are all destructible but one who attains to Me, has no more to take his birth.’

The Kingdom of God is non-destructible and one who enters there does not come back to this region of death. This verdict is confirmed by all the scriptures of the world. If there is at all any such abode where death does not take place—why the leaders of nations should cling to the earth of the land of their birth where death is inevitable? They should now combine and make research if there is at all such a place. We wish that in their ripe old age, Mr. Shaw and Mahatma Gandhi will make combined effort to educate men to learn how to go back to home, back to Godhead.
At the present moment the human society teaches one to love his country or family or his personal self, but there is no information where to repose the loving propensity so that everyone can become happy. That missing point is Krishna, and The Nectar of Devotion teaches us how to stimulate our original love for Krishna and how to be situated in that position where we can enjoy our blissful life.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Preface to The Nectar of Devotion

This temporary life is full of miseries. Take shelter of the holy name as your only business.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura
Arunodaya-kirtana, from Gitavali

Philosophical research culminates in understanding the Supreme Personality of Godhead. After achieving this understanding, when one becomes free from the material modes of nature he attains the stage of devotional service. Either by devotional service directly or by philosophical research, one has to find the same destination, which is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Lord Kapiladeva
Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.32.32

One should try to keep himself satisfied in any condition of life whether distress or happiness which is offered by the supreme will. A person who endures in this way is able to cross over the darkness of nescience very easily.

Sri Narada Muni
Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.8.33

Unto one who has transcendental qualities due to friendly behaviour with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, all living entities offer honour, just as water automatically flows down by nature.

Sri Maitreya Rsi
Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.9.47

Give up all fear and shyness and take shelter of the merciful Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He rescues the most wicked of heart, and therefore He is known as Patita Pavana, “the saviour of the fallen.”

Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura
Prarthana

The transcendental body of Krishna is very sweet, and His face is even sweeter than His body. The soft smile on His face, which is like the fragrance of honey, is sweeter still.

Srila Bilvamangala Thakura
Krishna-karnamrita

In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then real devotion and devotional service begin.

Lord Kapila
Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.25.25
AN APPEAL

An ISKCON Bangalore Life Patron member, Sri A.G. Venkatesh, residing in Bangalore, has appealed to the patrons of ISKCON and other subscribers of this newsletter, for financial help. Sri Venkatesh met with a severe road accident in January 2004 and sustained injuries which have rendered him immobile. Now doctors have advised that he undergo cold laser treatment which is very expensive. He is finding it difficult, under the present circumstances, since he has been unable to attend work as the accident occurred. Philanthropic readers are requested to come forward and help.

Please contact: Sri Venkatesh
No. 1306, 24th Cross, 28th Main, B.S.K. 2nd Stage, Bangalore- 560070 Phone: 080-26715832
ISKCON
KRISHNA LILA PARK

Project Update

The temple kalyani as it appears now

An additional floor on the current main structure
Jagannatha Ratha Yatra, Puri

Lord Jagannatha’s ratha passes by the premises of the Hare Krishna Movement center on Grand Road, during the annual Ratha Yatra (left).

Devotees distribute prasadam to visiting pilgrims during the Ratha Yatra (right & below).
Offer Seva to Sri Radha Krishna-chandra on the auspicious occasion of Sri Krishna Janmashtami
(August - 9 & 10-2012)
visit www.iskconbangalore.org
Join the conversation on the festival by using #janmashtami in your social media updates.

ISKCON Bangalore’s Official facebook page
www.facebook.com/ISKCONBangaloreTemple
2013
Calendars & Diaries

Customized calendars & diaries for your esteemed organization.

Madhusudhana Calendar
Sri Vigna Calendar
Table Top Calendar

Diaries

Half Demi Calendar

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CULTURAL EDUCATION TOURS
2012-13

AHOBILAM
Sri Narasimhagiri Pravasa

August 17 – 20, 2012

Tour destinations: Ahobilam, Mahanandi and Kadiri
Navanarasimha Temples - Bhargava Narasimha, Yogananda Narasimha, Chatravata Narasimha, Ugra Narasimha, Varaha Narasimha, Malola Narasimha, Jwala Narasimha, Pavana Narasimha, Karanja Narasimha and Kadiri Narasimha temple

Last date for registration: August 12, 2012

Grand Narasimha homa! Delicious Prasadam!
Fun-filled travel! Comfortable accommodation!

Other Tours

PANDHARPUR
September 28 - October 02, 2012

GURUVAYUR
November 22 - 25, 2012

PURI VIHARA
December 22, 2012 - January 01, 2013

HIMALAYA CHARDHAM YATRA
May 16 - 31, 2013

Sri Radha Krishna Mandir
Hare Krishna Hill, Rajajinagar, Bangalore - 10.