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.
No Greater Truth

Five hundred years ago, the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna, descended as Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and spread the same message He had spoken fifty centuries before.

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

A lecture given in Mayapur, West Bengal, March 27, 1975

yad advaitam brahmopanisadi tad apy asya tanu-bha
ya atmantaryami purusa iti so ‘syamsa-vibhava
sad-aishvaryah purno ya iha bhagavan sa svaam ayam
na chaitanyat krishnaj jagati para-tattvam param iha

"What the Upanishads describe as the impersonal Brahman is but the effulgence of His body, and the Lord known as the Supersoul is but His localized plenary portion. He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna Himself, full with six opulences. He is the Absolute Truth, and no other truth is greater than or equal to Him."

—Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila 1.3

The author of the Chaitanya-charitamrita, Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, is establishing with great stress that there is no greater truth than Krishna Chaitanya. We are after truth. The author of the Chaitanya-charitamrita is asserting, "Here is the Supreme Truth: Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu."

Krishna has appeared as Krishna Chaitanya. We explained this truth yesterday, according to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's declaration:

vairagya-vidya-nija-bhakti-yoga-
siksartham ekah purusah puranah
sri-krishna-chaitanya-sarira-dhari
krpambudhir yas tam aham prapadye

"Let me take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, who has descended in the form of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to teach us real knowledge, devotional service to Him, and detachment from whatever does not foster Krishna consciousness. He has descended because He is an ocean of transcendental mercy. Let me surrender unto His lotus feet."

The purusah puranah, the oldest person, is Krishna. Govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami: "I worship Govinda [Krishna], the primeval Lord." In many Vedic scriptures Krishna is described as the puranah purusah, the oldest person. Puranah purusah nava-yauvanam ca: "Although He is the oldest of all, still He is always a fresh youth."

How it this possible? People are trying to understand God. Sometimes they paint a picture of God as a very old man. "Because He is the original person, by this time He must have become very old." That is imagination. That old man is not actually the form of the Lord. The form of the Lord is described in the Brahma-samhita and other Vedic scriptures. Even Shankaracharya, an impersonalist, has accepted Lord Krishna as the supreme Narayana, the Personality of Godhead. Commenting on the Bhagavad-gita, Shankaracharya says, narayanah parah avyakat: "Narayana is beyond the material creation." And while describing Narayana, he has affirmed, sa bhagavan svaam krishnah: "Narayana is Krishna." To confirm this he has clearly mentioned, "Now He has appeared as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva," because a person's identity is confirmed when his father's name is given.

Krishna is accepted as para-tattva, the Supreme Truth, by all the acharyas, the great spiritual teachers in the Vedic tradition. We are not talking of the fools and rascals who theorize without any knowledge. We are concerned with the authorities. In India, people follow the Vedic system under the authority of the acharyas. Acharyavan puruso veda: "One who follows the path of the acharyas has real knowledge." We cannot accept anyone as an authority if he does not follow the parampara, the disciplic succession of acharyas. That is the Vedic system.

Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami is emphatically asserting, na chaitanyat krishnaj jagati para-tattvam param iha: "There is no greater truth than Krishna and Krishna Chaitanya." According to the Vedic system, if you say something emphatically you must prove it by Vedic evidence. Otherwise, you can go on talking, but nobody will listen. Sometimes people ask us about Krishna and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu—"What are the Vedic evidences?" The Vedic evidences are given in later chapters of Chaitanya-charitamrita. Kaviraja Gosvami is not falsely asserting. He is a very, very advanced devotee and scholar, not an ordinary human being. To write Chaitanya-charitamrita he was...
empowered by Madana-mohana, a Deity of Krishna in Vrindavana.

No ordinary person should try to write Vedic literature. Vedic literature means the shruti, the smrti, the Puranas, and so on. Srila Rupa Gosvami has confirmed this:

sruti-smrti-puranadi-pancaratra-vidhim vina
aikantiki harer bhaktir utpayaiva kalpate

"Devotional service to the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literature like the Upanishads, Puranas, and Narada-pancaratra is simply a needless disturbance in society." Utapa means "simply a disturbance." People claim, "I can manufacture my own way." But this rascaldom has been condemned by Srila Rupa Gosvami. You will find many so-called bhaktas, devotees, imitating the ecstasy of advanced devotees by crying, falling on the ground, and so on. But immediately after their exhibition you will see them smoking. Why? Because they do not follow the injunction of Srila Rupa Gosvami. They chant very loudly, dance, and after the performance is finished— I have seen it—"Can you give me a bidi [a cigarette]?" You see? "My throat is now dried up." This is utpata. Srila Rupa Gosvami has described this kind of so-called devotional attitude as simply a disturbance.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has condemned these imitators. There are so many apa-sampradayas, deviant sects, pretending to be Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's devotees. Who are they? Aula, baula, kartabhaja, neda, daravesa, sani, sahajiya, sakhibheki, smarta, jata-gosani, ativadi, cudadhari, and gauranga-nagari. Bhaktivinoda says, "I do not associate with these classes of men." After the disappearance of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, many apa-sampradayas sprang up. So we should be very careful not to be fooled by them.

Sampradaya means those who carefully follow the Vedic principles. Therefore Kaviraja Gosvami, although asserting the truth, is prepared to give Vedic evidences. Now with today's verse he has begun, by citing the Upanishads. The Vedic literature includes the four Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Ramayana, the Vedanta-sutra, then the Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Srimad-Bhagavatam is the explanation of the Vedanta-sutra. Therefore at the end of each chapter of the Srimad-Bhagavatam Vyasadeva states, brahma-sutrasya bhasya: "The Srimad-Bhagavatam is the commentary on the Brahma-sutra."Brahma-sutra, or Vedanta-sutra, gives the gist of the Vedic literature in codes. And the Srimad-Bhagavatam explains these codes. The Vedanta-sutra begins, athato brahma-ijnasa: "Now is the time to inquire into the Absolute Truth." And the Srimad-Bhagavatam states, jivasya tattva-ijnasa: "The only business for living beings is to inquire about the Absolute Truth."

That is the only business. People are in trouble because they have given up their real business. Human life is meant for this business—brahma-ijnasa, to inquire about the Absolute Truth. We human beings have been given so many facilities by nature. There are so many living entities who must stand rooted to the ground for many years—the trees, the plants. The aquatics are in the water for many, many years. The flies and insects remain in their condition for many, many years. And gradually, by the soul's evolution, we come to this form of human life.

The Aryans, especially—the advanced, civilized human beings—have all the necessary facilities for inquiry about the Absolute Truth. Uncivilized men, such as those living in the jungle, cannot utilize such resources. Therefore Narottama Dasa Thakura, in a simple Bengali song, says, hari hari biphale janama gonainu: "O Lord Hari, Krishna, I've wasted my life." This is our position. We have the human form of life, but we are simply spoiling it. In the Krishna consciousness movement we are traveling all over the world, and we see that people are spoiling their valuable human life in the false identification that "I am this body!" Under big, big names—"I am American," "I am Indian," "I am German"—they are spoiling their life by this bodily conception.

According to shastra, scripture, anyone who identifies himself with his body is a fool. That is the first instruction of the Bhagavad-gita. Krishna brought Arjuna to fight with the Kurus, and because Arjuna identified himself as the body, Arjuna thought, "Killing my cousin-brothers will not be good, because I have a bodily relation with them." So to dissipate that conception of life, Krishna rebuked him, asocyan anvasocas tvam prajna-vadams ca bhasase: "While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief."

We are talking very big talks and plans, but actually we are nothing better than cats and dogs. This is our position, because we identify with the body. "My country, my community, my society, my family." This is the basic ignorance. Aham mameti: "I and my." People do not know the truth. They are thinking, "I am this body, and anything in relationship with the body is mine." This is ignorance. But this ignorance is going on all over the world.

Therefore in the beginning of the Chaitanya-charitamrita the author says:

vande shri-krishna-chaitanya-nyanandau sahodita-
aurodaye puvapavantu citrau sandau tamo-nudau
"I offer my respectful obeisances unto Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Lord Nityananda, who are like the sun and moon. They have arisen simultaneously on the horizon of Gauda to dissipate the darkness of ignorance and thus wonderfully bestow benediction upon all." Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu have come to deliver the fallen souls of the material world who are in the darkness of false conceptions. Somebody just told me that the king of Saudi Arabia has been killed by his own nephew. This is going on. Even in family affairs it is going on. Why? Because of this darkness: aham mameti, "I and mine."

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu along with His associates—Nityananda Prabhu, Advaita Prabhu, Gadadhara Prabhu, Srivasa, and other devotees—are trying to dissipate the darkness of this false identification. Krishna instructed Arjuna about Arjuna's darkness as to his identity. Krishna chided him, "You are talking very big, big words, but you are lamenting on a subject matter for which no learned person laments." Then Krishna said, gatasun agatasums ca nanusocanti panditah: "You are fool number one. No learned person talks like that. Now try to understand the real position."

Krishna then said:

dehino ‘smin yatha dehe
kaumaram yauvanam jara
tatha dehantara-praptir
dhiras tatra na muhyati

"As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change." Or in other words, "First of all try to understand what you are."

That is the beginning of Bhagavad-gita. Bhagavad-gita is not politics. It is knowledge, pure knowledge. The politicians take advantage of it, and the sociologists and so-called swamis and yogis take advantage of it to try to prove their nonsensical theories. But what they present is not at all Bhagavad-gita. Bhagavad-gita “as it is” is pure knowledge, beginning with the first knowledge one has to understand: that we are not the body. Because the basic principle of ignorance is: "I am this body,” "I am American,” "I am Indian,” "I am a brahmana,” "I am this,” "I am that."

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu points out the same ignorance in a different way. He says, "I am not a brahmana. I am not a kshatriya [warrior]. I am not a vaishya [merchant]. I am not a shudra [laborer]. I am not a brahmachari [celibate student]. I am not a grhastha [householder]. I am not a vanaprastha [retired person]. I am not a sannyasi [renunciant]." These are negations. Then what is the positive? He says, gopi-bhartuh pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanudasah: "I am the servant of the servant of the servant of the gopi-bhartuh, Krishna, who maintains the gopis, His cowherd girlfriends."

So this is also our identity, but we have forgotten. We have forgotten our real relationship with Krishna, and we are trying to be happy by material adjustments. This is modern civilization. One is thinking, "If I get a nice house, a nice motorcar, a nice business, a nice bank balance, a nice wife, nice children ..." This is material civilization. But people do not know that this way they will never be happy. Now, you Europeans and Americans have a good qualification: As I have described many times, you are no longer very much interested in all these "nice" things. The real nice thing is spiritual understanding. That nice thing begins, aham brahmasmi: "I am not this body." That is the beginning of the Bhagavad-gita. Krishna is instructing Arjuna, "You are not this body. You are spirit soul. Try to understand."

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We should learn from Krishna. We should learn from Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is Krishna Himself. Therefore the author of Chaitanya-charitamrita says, “Accept this authority.”

When Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared five hundred years ago, people had already become fools and rascals. They did not care for the teachings of the Bhagavad-gita. Therefore He came as a devotee of Krishna to teach us how to serve Krishna, how to love Krishna. This is Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s cult. When Krishna appeared He said, sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja: “Give up everything, all your rascaldom. Just surrender to Me.” And Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, as a devotee, said the same thing: Yare dekha, tare kaha krishna-upadesa: “Whomever you meet, tell him about Krishna’s instructions.” Lord Chaitanya said nothing new. That is the sign of authenticity. Those who say “I have manufactured some way” are all rascals. In your country it is said, “Old wine in a new bottle.” Similarly, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is teaching the same thing as Krishna. Krishna says, mattah parataram nanyat kincid asti Dhananjaya: “There is no truth superior to Me.” Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says the same thing: yare dekha, tare kaha krishna-upadesa. And we are saying the same thing, na chaityat krishnaj jagati para-tattvam: “There is no truth superior to Krishna Chaitanya.” Why? Because He is the same truth as Krishna. This is called the parampara system: We are repeating what Krishna said and what Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said.

So it is not difficult to understand the Absolute Truth. Krishna says directly, “Surrender to Me.” And Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says, “Preach Krishna’s message.” We are not going to teach anything but what is spoken by Krishna and supported by Krishna Chaitanyadeva. This is our principle. This is the principle of the Krishna consciousness movement. Krishna preached about Himself, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu preached the same principle, and we are preaching the same thing. We do not preach anything else. We do not manufacture anything. That is not our business.

By the grace of Krishna, by the mercy of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, you European boys and girls joined this movement at my soliciting. I went to your country with this word only. I did not show you any magic, nor do I have any knowledge of how to play magic. I simply repeat the same message: “Here is Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Here is Krishna Chaitanyadeva, the devotional form of Krishna. Accept Them, and your life will be successful.”

Thank you very much.

Akshaya Patra News

Ms. Elizabeth John Dobson Jeffords handing over the keys of the vehicle to Sridhama Krishna Dasa, Head - Resource Mobilization, The Akshaya Patra Foundation.

This is the third vehicle donated by her over the last 3 years.
Disciple [reading Bhagavad-gita As It Is, 16.4]: “Pride, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness, and ignorance—these qualities belong to those of demoniac nature, O son of Prtha.”

Purport, by Srila Prabhupada: “In this verse, the royal road to hell is described. The demoniac want to make a show of religion and advancement in spiritual science, although they do not follow the principles. They are always arrogant or proud in possessing some type of education or so much wealth. They desire to be worshiped by others and demand respectability, although they do not command respect. Over trifles they become very angry and speak harshly, not gently. They do not know what should be done and what should not be done. They do everything whimsically, according to their own desire, and they do not recognize any authority. These demoniac qualities are taken on by them from the beginning of their bodies in the wombs of their mothers, and as they grow they manifest all these inauspicious qualities.”

Srila Prabhupada: So here is your answer as to how modern civilization is defective. Everyone thinks “liberation” means he can do whatever he likes. And that is the definition of a demoniac person. Now you can discuss this point.

Disciple: We can see that this modern civilization has turned everything upside-down. What Krishna describes as exalted qualities they think of as degraded. What Krishna describes as degraded, demoniac qualities they think of as exalted.

Srila Prabhupada: Therefore preaching is required.
Disciple: Many people feel godly qualities are a sign of weakness. The demoniac qualities are a sign of strength.

Srila Prabhupada: "Heroism." The demoniac qualities constitute "heroism."

Disciple: Yes. "heroism." In this purport, Srila Prabhupada, you perfectly describe our student life. As students, we were doing everything whimsically. Or we simply accepted bad things.

Srila Prabhupada: For that reason Prahlada Maharaja recommends, kaumara acaret prajno dharman bhagavatan iha: students should be trained up in Krishna consciousness. That is what Prahlada Maharaja recommends. Currently, from the very beginning of student life, one is trained up as a demon. So many things have to be reformed by pushing on Krishna consciousness. So we have to do all this.
regulative principles of the different orders of life is transcendently situated."

**Srila Prabhupada:** Discuss this point.

**Disciple:** People say that "Your understanding is arbitrary. You allow the possibility of a 'godly war' and say that for a bona fide military man, fighting and killing are exalted, but we think war is degraded. We think everyone should be peaceful. That's our idea of a good man."

**Srila Prabhupada:** Our understanding of the divine qualities and the demoniac qualities is not arbitrary. It is given by Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So it is not arbitrary. This knowledge is given by the Supreme's order. How can people say it is arbitrary? Then what is the use of referring to Bhagavad-gita? Yes, things must not be arbitrary or whimsical. Therefore we make reference to Bhagavad-gita—the lawbook. When a judge gives his verdict he does not give it arbitrarily. There are lawbooks. So there is no question of "arbitrary." The reference is there. How can you say it is arbitrary? But if you don't care about the scriptural verdict then you'll never be successful. In this same chapter you'll find the verse beginning yah sastra-vidhim utsriya.

**Disciple:** Yah sastra-vidhim utsriya vartate kama-karatah/ na sa siddhim avapnoti na sukham na param gatim: "But he who discards scriptural injunctions and acts according to his own whims attains neither perfection, nor happiness, nor the supreme destination."

**Srila Prabhupada:** So we are not giving anything arbitrary.

**Disciple:** That's quite easy to see, Srila Prabhupada. By following the authority of Lord Krishna, people really do become happy. And by merely following their whims, people really do become miserable.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. So the result is there—even in this life we can see it. And what to speak of beyond this life.

**Disciple:** But people may counter that even in a godly war, it's hard to feel happy.

**Srila Prabhupada:** In a godly war, such as the Battle of Kurukshetra, bona fide military men feel happy. Take Arjuna, Drona, Bhishma—they felt happy. Otherwise, they could not have fought. They were not like these modern soldiers, who, when they are attacked, go away. Real kshatriyas, godly military men, are not like that. They are determined that "I'll either lay down my life or gain victory." That is their attitude. Do you think they are afraid of fighting? They are not afraid of fighting. Yuddhe capy apalayanam—"not fleeing in battle." That is a real kshatriya, a real military man. That is real training.
The land where Jatayu liberated

Pullam Bhootankudi Sri V alvil R ama temple

by Sampat Kumara Ramanuja Dasan (Ashwin S)

Fifteen kilometers north west of Kumbakonam is the magnificent Pullam Bhootankudi Sri Valvil Rama temple. This is the place where Jatayu, the vulture devotee of Lord Rama, was awarded liberation.

The Legend

Aruna, the charioteer of the sun god, was blessed with a great son called Jatayu. Jatayu was a vulture and the nephew of Garudavega. There is a well-known pastime of Jatayu associated with the Lord in His Sri Rama incarnation.

According to the wish of King Dasharatha’s youngest queen, Kaikyesi, Lord Rama, along with His brother Lakshmana and consort Sita Devi, was living in exile in Panchavati forest. One day, Sita saw a beautiful golden deer, which, in reality, was the demon Mareecha. Mareecha was sent by the demon king, Ravana, to lure Rama and Lakshmana away from the ashrama, so that Ravana could easily abduct Sita. Sita Devi was captivated by the beauty of the deer and insisted that Rama catch it for Her. Rama went in search of the deer and commanded Lakshmana to take care of Sita. The deer ran fast and as far away from the cottage as it could, to distract Rama. Rama struck down the deer with His arrow, and the deer shouted Lakshmana’s and Sita’s names in Rama’s voice, with his dying breath. Suspecting danger to Her husband, Sita ordered Lakshmana to go in search of Rama. While both Rama and Lakshmana were thus distracted, Ravana made his move. Disguised as a sage, he arrived at the cottage where Sita was now alone, and begged for alms. As She unsuspectingly gave the sage something in charity, Ravana captured Her. Forcing Her into his pushpakam or aircraft, Ravana sped away towards Lanka. Sita’s cries for help were heard by Jatayu. The old vulture fought bravely to rescue Sita but he was no match to Ravana’s power. Jatayu wings were chopped off by Ravana and he was left bleeding and helpless.

Meanwhile, realizing the deceit of Mareecha, Rama and Lakshmana rushed back to the cottage and found Sita missing. They had no clue about Her whereabouts. They set out through the dense forest calling out Her name. On their way they saw the fallen Jatayu. The dying bird devotee told his beloved Lord that he had seen Ravana carry Sita away and tried to rescue Her, but in vain. Their conversation is described thus in the Ramayana:

Rama: Oh jewel among birds, if you can utter again, speak something more about Sita. Why did Ravana capture the noble lady? Please tell me, dear uncle.

Jatayu: Ravana is the king of Lanka and the son of Vishrava.

(Then, Jatayu died, uttering, “Rama! Rama!”)

Rama: Speak on, please!

Jatayu: Ravana is the king of Lanka and the son of Vishrava.

Rama: Speak on, please!

Jatayu: Ravana is the king of Lanka and the son of Vishrava.

Rama: Speak on, please!

Jatayu: Ravana is the king of Lanka and the son of Vishrava.

Rama (to Lakshmana): This bird friend of My father has done most valuable service to Me. After living for millions of years this bird has laid down his life for My sake. Agony caused by Sita’s abduction does not pain Me as much, Lakshmana, as the death of this beloved bird. He is worthy of My adoration as much as My father. Fetch logs of maharohi wood and invite the seven holy rivers. Let us perform his last rites.

Rama gave the sanctified waters of the sacred rivers to Jatayu and he attained moksha by focussing his attention as he died, on the beautiful form of Lord Rama. Rama was moved by the devotion of Jatayu. In spite of both his wings missing, Jatayu was lamenting about how he was incapable of serving Rama. This is called the perfection of devotion. One must not see to one’s comfort and distress - the Supreme Lord should be satisfied at all cost. Jatayu was one of those rare personalities in history who represented that mood of anukulyena bhakti. It was in Pullam Bhootankudi that Jatayu attained Vaikuntha.

The Temple

References to this temple can be found in the Brahmanda Purana and Padma Purana. The temple is situated in a small sleepy village above which the majestic rajagopura...
As we pass through the gopuram we can see the dhvajastambha and the balipeeda. In the main altar, we have audience of the Lord in reclining posture. Perhaps this is the only temple where Lord Rama is seen in this posture, reclining on Adisesha with His hands resting under His head. Brahma is seen on a lotus emerging from the Lord's navel. There are Deities of Bhoomi Devi, Hanuman and Jatayu also, in the altar. The four-armed festival Deity (utsava vigraha) of Rama is known as Valvil Rama. The main Deity is known as Chakravarthy Thirumagan.

The consort of the Lord, Hemambujavalli Thayar, is seen in a different altar. The Goddess blesses the devotees with two hands and in her other two hands she holds lotuses. There is a beautiful Deity of Yoga Narasimha in this temple, known for fulfilling the devotional desires of devotees. There are separate altars for the twelve Alwars and Sri Ramanuja. There are two ponds in this temple, named Jatayu theertha and Shukra theertha.

### Festivals

Apart from the five monthly festivals, Janmastami, Sri Ramanavami, Sri Ramanuja Jayanthi are celebrated with much pomp in this temple.

The annual eleven day Brahmotsava is celebrated in the month of Panguni (April-May). During this festival, Sri Rama comes out to the streets in different vahanans and palanquins, to the delight of the devotees who relish the sight of their beloved master on the streets. Even today many people compare these to the processions of Rama in Ayodhya during the Treta Yuga.

### Other Attractions

Very close the Sri Valvil Rama temple is Mandangudi, the birthplace of a great devotee and one among the twelve Sri Vaishnava saints of south India, Thondaradippodi Alwar or Vipranarayana.

Vipranarayana was born as the incarnation of the vanamala (garland) of the Supreme Lord. For obvious reason, the Alwar made a huge garden in Srirangam to supply flowers to make garlands for the Lord. He made it his life's mission to weave garlands for the Lord and to sing about Him. There is an interesting episode from the life of Thondaradippodi Alwar which is worth mentioning here.

There was celestial dancer by name Deva Devi who happened to pass by the garden of Vipranarayana. Vipranarayana, who was fully focussed on devotional service, did not look at Deva Devi. She asked about...
Vipranarayana from her sisters and came to know about his devotion to Lord Hari. Deva Devi challenged her sisters that she would attract him in a few days and make him her slave. She turned herself into an ordinary woman and bowed down before Vipranarayana. She offered to help him in his service, and this was promptly accepted. In due course, Vipranarayana became very much attached to Deva Devi and he gave up his routine service to Lord Hari. Lakshmi Devi was sad at this and requested her husband Sri Hari to remove the illusion of Vipranarayana.

The Lord went in the disguise of a messenger, taking a golden vessel from His temple in Srirangam. He gave these to Deva Devi's mother, informing her that it was sent by Vipranarayana. The next day the temple priests discovered the absence of the gold vessel. Suspecting theft, they reported it to the king. The king made an investigation and Vipranarayana, Deva Devi and Vipranarayana's servant were arrested. Vipranarayana said that he neither had a messenger nor did he own any golden vessel. Still, the King put Vipranarayana in jail.

That night, the Supreme Lord appeared in the dream of the king and asked him to release Vipranarayana. Upon waking up, the king released Vipranarayana and begged pardon from him. Vipranarayana then realised the glories of the Lord and his efforts to purify him. He at once gave up all attachments and became a great devotee of the Lord and composed various hymns in praise of Hari. To this day, Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam wakes up by hearing verses from Vipranarayana's Thirupalli Ezhuchi. There is a deity of Vipranarayana in the temple of Mandangudi.

Thirumangai Alwar, one among the twelve Alwars, has sung about Pullam Bhootankudi:

*The Lord who aimed arrows so fiercely to let the heads of the asura king Ravana fall and thus finished him off, later appeared as Kannan and tore open the Keshi demons mouth; He fought with Chanura and Mushitka (wrestlers) and killed them; He made the two big trees fall down (by crawling between them); this most wonderful Lord is here at Thirupullam Bhootankudi!*  
*The Lord, who effortlessly lifted the Govardhana mountain and protected the cattle from torrential rains (and made the rains waste – as sent by Indran); the One who cut the twenty strong shoulders of Ravana – such a most valorous Raman is here at Thirupullam Bhootankudi, where beautiful houses, small hills, and big halls are seen!*  

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam
What?” asks my eighty-three-year-old mother.

This has become something of a personal mantra for her. Her hearing has been going for some time now, and “What?” is her frequent response to nearly every sound she hears. Or doesn't hear.

My sister and I have been urging her to get a hearing aid for almost a decade.

“The ear is an important organ,” I tell her. “If it's not working right, it affects more than your ability to hear. It can also affect your equilibrium, your sense of balance.”

“So I’ll sit,” she says.

On a more serious note, she wanted me to ask her doctor about her loss of hearing, and what, if anything, should be done about it. So I did. The doctor explained to me that the ear is made of three parts: the outer ear, the middle ear, and the inner ear. The fluid in the ear canals and the hairlike nerve cells at the end of each allow us to hear and to keep our balance when we stand, run, walk, ride a bicycle, and even when we sit.

The doctor said my mom's inner ear was worn down and that this happens to a good number of people over time.

As his barrage of technical words entered my own ears, my mind wandered to another kind of sound vibration, and another use of the auditory sense altogether. The inner ear is an entirely physical phenomenon. But I was more interested in an inner meaning to the inner ear—one I've learned from Srila Prabhupada and the texts of ancient India.

The Unheard World of Sound

Human beings can't perceive portions of the known vibratory spectrum. While extremely sensitive to sound waves of about 1,000 to 4,000 cycles per second (cps), man is all but deaf beyond 20,000 cps. Dogs and cats, on the other hand, can hear up to 60,000 cps, while mice, bats, whales, and dolphins can emit and receive sounds well over 100,000 cps.

In other words, there are definitely things we just don’t hear. And India's ancient Vedic texts tell us that if this is true in the material sphere, it is even more true of sounds that exist beyond the material world. Such spiritual sounds, these texts tell us, can be vibrated and received only by people who qualify themselves through spiritual practice. Only then can these sounds be truly heard.

Despite our inability to hear certain frequencies, whether material or spiritual, we tend to hear better than we see. Psychologist Katharine Le Mee writes in her book Chant:

The sense of hearing . . . connects experientially with the heart, and music and sound touch us most directly. We do not resonate so deeply with the visual as with the auditory. This may be explained by the fact that our visual apparatus has a frequency range of slightly less than one octave, from infrared to ultraviolet, whereas our auditory system has a range of about eight octaves, approximately 60 to 16,000 hertz, or number of vibrations per second. We are sensitive to sound frequency as pitch and to light frequency as colour. The frequencies of the visual field are much higher than those of the auditory field (by an order of 1010), and, as is well known, the higher the frequencies, the lesser the penetration of a given material. For instance, a piece of cardboard shields us easily from the light, but it takes a thick wall to block out sound, and the lower the pitch the deeper the penetration. We are very sensitive to sound, not just through the ear but through our whole skin, and all our organs are affected by it.

Thus, science has shown that our human senses are imperfect and limited and that there is a world of sensual experience beyond human perception. Vaishnava scriptures confirm these limitations in man’s seeing and hearing and elucidate untold categories of spiritual sound.

Spiritual Sound in the Vedic Literature

Portions of the Vedic literature are almost like textbooks on sound, informing us about an ancient art in which sound was used as a spiritual tool. The same concept is echoed in other cultures. Chronicles from lands as diverse as Egypt and Ireland tell us of a time when vibrations lying at the foundation of our universe were harnessed by spiritual adepts for the benefit of mankind. Like the Bible, which states, “In the beginning was the Word (John 1.1),” Vaishnava scriptures affirm that the entire cosmic creation began with sound: “By His utterance came the universe.” (Bṛhad-āranyaka Upanisad 1.2.4) The Vedas add that ultimate liberation comes from sound (anavṛttihśabdāt).

Primal sound is referred to as sabda brahman, God as word. Closely related to this is the concept of nada brahman, God as sound. Nada, a Sanskrit word meaning “sound,” is related to the term nadi, denoting the stream of consciousness—a concept that goes back to the Rg
Veda, the most ancient of the Vedas. Thus, the relationship between sound and consciousness has long been recorded in India’s ancient Vedic texts, which, again, describe sound as the preeminent means for attaining higher, spiritual consciousness.

Mantras, or sacred sounds, are used to pierce through sensual, mental, and intellectual levels of existence—all lower strata of consciousness—for purification and spiritual enlightenment. The sounds of different letters, particularly Sanskrit letters, have been shown to affect the mind, intellect, and auditory nerves of those who chant and hear them. The seven energy centers (chakras) of the spinal column, as well as the ida, pingala, and susumna nadis, or the three pranic channels of the subtle body, all respond to mantras, bringing practitioners to elevated levels of awareness.

The Power of God’s Names

Vedic texts tell us that in much the same way that sound can awaken someone, calling out the name of God can awaken the soul from conditioned, materialistic slumber. In fact, the world’s major religious traditions concur that it is by chanting the name of God that one attains enlightenment and freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

Mohammed counseled, “Glorify the name of your Lord, the most high.” (Koran 87.2) Saint Paul said, “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10.13) Buddha declared, “All who sincerely call upon my name will come to me after death, and I will take them to paradise.” (Vows of Amida Buddha 18) King David preached, “From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised.” (Psalms 113.3) And the Vaishnava scriptures assert, “Chant the holy name, chant the holy name, chant the holy name of the Lord. In this age of quarrel there is no other way, no other way to attain spiritual enlightenment.” (Brhan-naradiya Purana 38.126).

Praise of the holy name of God is found throughout the Vaishnava scriptures. Here are two examples:

Oh, how glorious are they whose tongues are chanting Your holy name! Even if originally low-born dog-eaters, they are to be considered worshipable. To have reached the point of chanting the Lord’s name, they must have executed various austerities and Vedic sacrifices and achieved all the good qualities of true Aryans. If they are chanting Your holy name, they must have bathed in all holy rivers, studied the Vedas, and fulfilled all prescribed duties. (Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.33.7)

The holy name of Krishna is the spiritually blissful giver of all benedictions, for it is Krishna Himself, the reservoir of pleasure. Krishna’s name is complete in itself and is the essential form of all spiritual relationships. It is not a material name under any condition, and it is no less powerful than Krishna Himself. This name is not tinged by any aspect of material nature, because it is identical with Krishna. (Padma Purana 3.21)

And, finally, Krishna says, "I do not live in Vaikuntha, in the hearts of the yogis, or inside the sun. Rather, My dear Narada, I am present wherever My devotees sing about Me.” (Padma Purana, Uttarakhanda 92.21-22)

Because chanting the name of God is so much emphasized in Vaishnava texts, we focus on chanting as a central devotional practice. Thus, deep meditation and great emotion accompany japa (soft chanting) and kirtana, or sankirtana (congregational chanting). When perfected, the chanting leads to awareness of God’s absolute nature, i.e., that there is no difference between nami (“the named one”) and nama (“the name”). Elucidation on the absolute nature of Krishna and His name is the heart of Vaishnava practice, leading to love of God.
In the singing of verses like these, each line, separately, is incanted by the leader first, and the whole assembly repeats each line after him, one by one. As the verse is gone through again and again, the leader steps up the tempo. When the speed of utterance approaches the utmost possible, the whole group, in unison, begins to shout the lines, at the same time beating out the rhythm with sharply-timed clapping of hands. The singers begin to sway and let themselves go in ungoverned gestures. Faces flush. From the line of instrumental accompanists the bell-like peal of small brass cymbals swells up with the rising shouting and pierces through it. The whole process approaches a crashing, breathtaking crescendo. The point of explosion is reached: eyes flash, mouths drop open, a tremour runs through the entire assembly. The Power, the Presence, has been felt!

Chanting Hare Krishna

Scripture asserts that the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, or “the great chant for deliverance,” is the most powerful of incantations, for it includes the potency of all other mantras. Thus, for the current age the Vedic literature recommends the chanting of Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Statements to this effect can be found in the Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa, the Kali-santarana Upanishad, and other Vedic texts.

In this sacred mantra, the word Hare refers to Lord Hari, a name for Krishna that indicates His ability to remove obstacles from His devotees’ path. In a more esoteric sense, Hare is a vocative form of Hara, which refers to Śrīmati Radharani, the divine feminine energy—Lord Krishna’s eternal consort and transcendental counterpart. Krishna means “the all-attractive one,” God in His original form. Etymologically, the word kṛṣṇa indicates the attractive feature of the Lord’s existence, and na means spiritual pleasure. When the verb kṛṣṇa is added to the affix na, it becomes Krishna, which means “the absolute person, who gives spiritual pleasure through His all-attractive qualities.” According to Sanskrit semantic derivation (nirukti), it is also understood that na refers to the Lord’s ability to stop the repetition of birth and death. And kṛṣṇa is a synonym for sattartha, or “existential totality.” Another way of understanding the word Krishna, then, is “that Lord who embodies all of existence and who can help the living entities overcome the repeated suffering of birth and death.” Rama refers to both Balarama (Krishna’s elder brother) and Lord Ramachandra, a prominent incarnation of the Lord who is the subject of the epic known as the

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Ramayana. It is also said, however, that Rama refers to Radha-ramana, another name for Krishna, meaning “one who brings pleasure to Srimati Radharani.” Thus the maha-mantra, composed solely of the Lord’s most confidential names, embodies the essence of the divine. As a prayer, the mantra is translated in the following way: “O Lord! O divine energy of the Lord! Please engage me in Your service.” The selflessness of this mantra—asking to serve God rather than asking God to do something for us—situates it in a unique category, even among the best of prayers and the most powerful of incantations. But its pure form can only be heard by the pure devotee—in his “inner ear,” which is in his heart of hearts.

The Right Hearing Aid

When I returned to my mom’s home to tell her about my meeting with her ear doctor, she had already made up her mind: “I’m not getting a hearing aid.” She just didn’t want to be bothered. Truth is, her doctor said that a hearing aid would just add to her discomfort and probably wouldn’t help her much anyway. I told her how, as I spoke to her doctor, my mind had wandered to Vedic mantras and spiritual sound vibrations. But she couldn’t hear what I was saying, literally or figuratively.

She asked me if I would get a hearing aid if I were her. “Probably not,” I said.

“What?”

I spoke up: “No, I wouldn’t get one.”

After some time, I added that I had already accepted a hearing aid many years ago. She knew what I meant, and let out a loud guffaw.

“You mean your Swami Prabhupada, right?” She smiled.

“You hearing was definitely in trouble, but Prabhupada taught you to hear things in a way that serves you well.”

She thought for a second, and added, “I should have such an effective hearing aid.”

The Touchstone of the Holy Name

harinama chintamani akhilamrta khani krishna-krpa bale ye paila
krtartha se mahasaya sada purmananda-maya raga-bhave sri-krishna bhajila

“This touchstone of the holy name is a limitless mine of luscious gems. The fortunate soul who discovers it by Krishna’s grace is inevitably fulfilled by it. Such a person always experiences ever-increasing joy, for it leads him to worship Krishna in the mood of spontaneity.” —Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura Harinama Chintamani 15.114
Vaikuntha Hill
Sri Jagannatha Baladeva Subhadra Ratha Yatra

The first annual Ratha Yatra of Their Lordships Sri Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra on Vaikuntha Hill, was conducted on July 10, and attended by enthusiastic devotees who performed kirtana while they pulled the chariot.

On the auspicious occasion of Sri Sudarshana Jayanthi, July 16, Lord Sudarshana received abhisheka in this temple on Vaikuntha Hill.
Above: The Deities of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai receive abhisheka at the Indian Heritage Foundation’s temple at Sunnyvale, USA. In the background are the moola vigraha of Sri Sri Krishna Balarama.

Left: Special alankara at the Mangalore temple on the occasion of the Panihati festival.
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Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Hare Hare
Sri Krishna Janmashtami
August 27 & 28 - 2013

Celebrations at ISKCON,
Hare Krishna Hill & Vaikunta Hill
Continuous Darshan: 9 am-11 pm

Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the all-auspicious Lord Sri Krishna,
about whom glorification, remembrances, audience, prayers, hearing
and worship can at once cleanse the effects of all sins of the performer.
—Srimad Bhagavatam 2.4.15

Stills Prabhupada's
ISKCON
Vyāsa-pūjā
117th Appearance Day of Srila Prabhuṣāda
Thursday, August 29, 2013

CELEBRATIONS
6:30 pm onwards at ISKCON,
Hare Krishna Hill,
Bangalore-10

I was born in the darkest ignorance, and my spiritual master opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisances unto him.
Regarding Jhulan Yatra Ceremony, during these five days the Deities' clothings should be changed everyday, and there should be nice prasadam distribution and sankirtana as far as possible. If you are able to do it, a nice throne may be constructed on which the Deities can be placed. This throne may be swung gently during kirtana. That will be very good, and surely the Deities will enjoy the function.

— Srila Prabhupada

Celebrations
7 pm onwards
at ISKCON
Radha Krishna Temple
Hare Krishna Hill,
Chord Road,
Bangalore 10
BALARAMA JAYANTI
The Appearance of Lord Balarama
August 21, 2013

Celebrations 6 pm onwards
Grand abhisheka, special video presentation,
soul stirring kirtanas, sumptuous prasadam

Balarama is the protector of the devotees of the Lord. By His divine grace only one can approach the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna, and thus Sri Balarama is the mercy incarnation of the Lord, manifested as the spiritual master, the saviour of the pure devotees.

— Srimad Bhagavatam 1.14.28-29
2014
Calendars & Diaries

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