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.
In the Padmapurana the Absolute Truth is compared with fire. As the fire illuminates by diffusion of its rays, although it is situated in one place, so also the Absolute Truth, although situated far beyond the reach of our imperfect vision, is omnipresent in all directions by distribution of His varied energies. These energies or potentialities of the Absolute Truth are innumerable and immeasurable in quantity and quality, but primarily all of them can be grouped into three principal divisions under the following headings, viññ, (1) Internal Potency or “Chit Potency” (2) Marginal Potency or “Tatastha Potency” (3) External Potency or “Maya Potency”

The Absolute Truth is omnipresent everywhere and anywhere represented by all these potencies by a transcendental process which is inconceivable by any mental speculation. As the fire expands its heat as its natural potentiality, so also the Absolute Truth, call Him the impersonal Brahman, localised aspect of Godhead Paramatma or the Personality of Godhead Bhagavan—in all such manifestations, He manifests His different potentialities in respect of creation, destruction and maintenance of the universe or the entities within the universe. These are quite natural to Him as the heat is to the fire. The material nature as we try to explain by our imperfect mental speculation, is only the external nature or external potency of the Absolute Truth, whereas the living entities represented by different species of spirit embodied, which are eighty four lacs of varieties-are but innumerable manifestations of His marginal potency as separate individual portions. The actions of the internal potency technically called the chit potency, is almost similar to the activities of the external potency technically known as maya or illusion. The difference between chit potency and the maya potency is of quality and quantity. The manifestations of the maya potency by creation of the innumerable universes like one as we can see presently, is said to be one-fourth quantity (portion) of the whole creation. The creation of the chit potency is three-fourth of the whole creation and is the Kingdom of God or technically called Vaikuntha. Herein lies the difference in quantity of maya and chit potencies. The other difference is one of the quality namely the creation of the chit potency is non-destructible and eternal while the creation of the maya potency is destructible and temporary technically called the material nature. The former is real while the latter is unreal or shadow. The one is light while the latter is darkness. In the darkness one cannot find out what he wants. And in the material nature also one cannot find what he searches out throughout the whole span of his life. From the darkness one however can make out a guess for the light and from the shadow one can make out an idea of the origin. The real is technically known as Transcendence or Noumenon as opposed to the shadow technically called the mundane or phenomenon. But all the same we must not misunderstand them as one and the same as sometimes it is wrongly interpreted by imperfect speculation. Thus lies the qualitative difference between the chit and the maya potencies.

The creations of the marginal potency technically called the tatastha potency-are the numberless individual living souls trying to lord it over the material potency (maya). The difference between the chit potency and the tatastha potency is one of quantity only but almost not of quality as opposed to the difference with the maya potency both in quality and in quantity. In other words quantitatively there is much difference between the chit and the tatashta potencies but qualitatively there is almost no difference. Therefore tatashta potency is in all respects superior to the maya potency in relation with the chit potency. We can see therefore a perpetual endeavour on the part of the living souls to lord it over the material nature or maya.

The living entities therefore being one with the transcendence in quality are also indestructible and eternal. This fact is elaborately corroborated in the Gita as follows (Bg. 11) “The soul or the spirit of the living entity is never born nor does it ever die. It was never created in the past nor it is created at present neither it shall be created in the future. That is the soul is transcendental to physical time, represented by past, present and the future. The spirit is therefore unborn, indestructible, eternal, the oldest but always fresh, it is never put to annihilation even after the destruction of the body and the mind.”

“Thus one who knows the soul to be non-destructible and eternal—can he ever kill any other soul or does he order to kill others.”

“Transmigration of the soul from one body to the other after the destruction of the body is just like one’s changing an old garment for a new one. The non-destructible soul simply changes its material body but is never killed or put to death as we generally misunderstand.”

“No weapon can penetrate the soul, no fire can burn it, no water can moisten it and no air can dry it up.”

“The soul is impenetrable, incombustible, incapable of being moistened or dried up. It is permanent, constant,
immovable and eternal."

"The soul is declared to be incomprehensible, invisible, immeasurable and knowing the soul to be so, one has nothing to lament for, Oh Mighty armed."

The living entity is therefore permanently related with the chit potency as opposed to its temporary relation with the material nature or the maya potency. His relation with the material nature is casual and the cause for such accidental relation is the forgetfulness of his real nature. The living entities are just like sparks of the fire (the fire being compared with The Absolute Truth) or the molecules of the rays of the Sun (the Sun being compared with The Absolute Truth). Qualitatively there is no difference between the fire and its sparks or the Sun and its molecules of rays but quantitatively there is a gulf of difference between them.

The living entity therefore when he forgets his real nature as one with the chit potency and identifies himself as one of the creations of the material nature or the maya potency by his tendency of forgetfulness-is as a matter of consequence, put into the various material afflictions represented by the threefold miseries of material existence. These threefold miseries are:-

(a) Misery pertaining to the material body and the mind such as perceptions of cold and heat and conceptions of distress and happiness.

(b) Misery pertaining to the awards of other living entities such as an attack by the enemies, bites by the animals etc.

(c) Misery pertaining to the controlling powers of gods such as occurrences of earthquakes, famines, wars, pestilence etc.

A temporary relief from one of the above threefold miseries is known to us as happiness. Negation of distresses is undoubtedly called happiness but all happiness in the material nature are adjusted by the maya potency and as such all such happinesses are conditional as much as they again await the onslaught of another distress. In the material nature, all so-called happinesses or the so-called distresses are of temporary nature. As such temporary happinesses cannot satisfy the living entity, the latter's nature being one with the chit potency i.e., non-destructible and permanent.

The tendency of the living entities is therefore a hankering after eternal happiness and non-destructible existence. The entire activities of living beings are directed towards this end. But as they are under the conditions created by the maya potency which is itself destructible and temporary, the desire for a happiness of permanent nature, remains ever unfulfilled in the material nature. The exodus of the residents of Calcutta to other places out of fear of being raided by the Japanese bombs is due to the same tendency of non-destructible existence. But those who are thus going away do not remember that even after going away from Calcutta saved from the raids of the Japanese bombs, they are unable to protect their bodies as non-destructible at any part of the material universe, when the same bodies will be raided by the bombs of material nature in the forms above threefold miseries.

The Japanese also who are threatening the Calcutta people with ruthless air-raids for increasing their own happiness by possession of lands do not know that their happiness is also temporary and destructible as they have repeated experience in their own fatherland. The living beings, on the other hand, who are designed to be killed, are by nature eternal, impenetrable, invisible etc. So all those living entities who are threatened to be killed as well as those who are threatening to conquer are all alike in the grip of the maya potency and are therefore in the darkness. The Hindu conception of the Goddess Kalika Devi is the symbolised representation of the darker manifestation of the Absolute Truth and in that darkness-destruction, annihilation, death and miseries are the only concomitant factors as we can observe in the grim-figure of the Goddess “Kalika Devi” in an attitude, always threatening with destruction.

Leaders of materialistic civilization take shelter in this darker aspect of the Absolute Truth or the goddess of darkness in order to dissipate the present and temporary distresses without knowing that darkness cannot be removed by an unscientific handling of the darkness itself but it can be removed only by the scientific handling of the light only. Without light any amount of speculation of the human mind (which is also a creation of the material nature) can never restore the living entities to permanent happiness. In that darkness any method of bringing peace in the world which will stand eternally, be it nonviolent or violent, can bring only temporary relief or distress as we can see all creations of the external potency. In the darkness, non-violence is as much useless as violence, while in the light there is no need of violence as much as of non-violence.

Without entering into the details of these, we may take it for granted that fear of being destroyed and killed is an outcome of our association with material nature while in reality we are one with the transcendence. As such we have nothing to fear or to be destroyed. The body is destructible but the spirit is not. The living entity in the darkness of the Absolute Truth wrongly identifies with the material nature or maya and concludes himself to be destructible.
This causes his fear of being destroyed while actually he is not to be so. Forgetfulness of the Almighty Father is the cause of such misidentification. Intelligent persons therefore should approach the bona fide spiritual master and accepting him to be nondifferent with the Lord, will devote himself cent per cent in the transcendental service of the Lord. This is what we mean by going Back to Godhead.

Forgetfulness of the transcendental loving service of the chit potency of the Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna is the cause of fall-down of the living entities. Reinstallation of the relation of the chit potency shall therefore be the ultimate goal of human life. If the living entity therefore somehow or other comes in touch with a bona fide saint and scriptures and thus becomes eager for revival of his lost relation of the chit potency, he can then only be liberated from the clutches of the maya potency and then only all creation of the material nature appears to him as insignificant, temporary and illusion.

At this state of being related with the internal potency of the Absolute Truth, the living entity does not hanker after unnecessary accumulation of material wealth for utilizing them in the service of the external potency namely maya for destruction and darkness; nor does he lament for any so-called material loss. He looks at that time on all other entities in a spiritual light, as one and the same, covered only in different material encagement of different names under the influence of maya. The beginning of such spiritual existence thus ushered forth by the Divine Grace makes the liberated soul turn towards the transcendental loving service of the Personality of Godhead under the influence of His chit potency in place of his (soul's) engagement in the temporary service of the maya potency as above-mentioned. This fact is corroborated in the Bhagavad-gita by Lord Sri Krishna as follows:—

“One who is situated in the Transcendence and is fixed up in his mind, he is always untroubled and does not rejoice by attainment of what is desirable nor does he lament by attaining what is undesirable.” (Bg 5.19.)

“Unsurmountable are the ways by which one can get rid of the maya potency with her threefold modes, but one who surrenders unto Me (Sri Krishna) he only can get rid of the clutches of maya.” (Bg 7.14.)

When the living entity becomes overwhelmed in the engagement of his service of the maya potency, he forgets altogether his divine relation with the Godhead. This horrible state of life is technically called the asuric i.e., the life of a demon. The name of demon as we often hear in different scriptures, does not mean any horrible figure of extraordinary dimension as the artist generally paint by imagination, but demon is a man who is godless. Description of such godless man is given in detail in the sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavad-gita.

A godless man does not know what shall he do and what he shall not. He is mostly unbeliever in the teachings of the different scriptures and is generally atheist by nature. In his opinion, religion is superfluous and an unnecessary engagement and as such he attacks religion especially in the most brutal manner. He does not follow any injunction of the scriptures but commits all kinds of sins which he could not have done by following the order of scriptures. He follows his own path and does not accept any authority. In his opinion there is no cause of the creation of the universe except a desire of passion, as a child is born by the passion of a man and a woman. He does not find therefore any design behind the creation of the universe, and thus says that there is no Creator whatsoever. The universe is a product of Nature’s fortuitous course and there is no ultimate controller of Nature. He finds every day that matter is unable to take any initiative out of its own will and thus the world is produced by a chance assembly of atoms and so forth. Without any fear of the Authority therefore, he finds it easier to preach his own way of thinking that there is no God at all. He says that everyone can manufacture his own religion and thus the process of religiosity so sublime and so divine becomes a subject for his recreation. He preaches that there should be as many religions as there are men on the surface of the globe and there is no necessity of accepting the fact that God is one and religion is one.

In the opinion of a godless man, conception of Godhead is the product of the Devil’s workshop in the idle brain. God is manufactured by designing brain of the professional class and thus everyone and anyone can manufacture his own God and follow his own way of religiosity for so-called salvation.

Thus concluding, the godless man in demonic propensity engages himself in the service of the maya potency for the destruction of the world. Devoid of spiritual knowledge, he is less intelligent and works out foolish designs out of his foolish brain, in order to create trouble in the world. He considers himself over intelligent and by his over intellectual method he brings disaster on the tranquility of the world peace. He becomes a leader of similar less intelligent persons and leads them also towards destruction like a blind man leads another blind man to get themselves both fallen in the ditches.

The motive power for such unlawful leadership is nothing but an unquenchable thirst for power, desire for domination and unconquerable passion. This is hankering for recognition and drunkenness of power. Moved by such unholy passions he starts all sorts of agitation for the fulfillment of his manufactured ideals of world leadership. And thus proceeding on his onward march, he is met with another demon of the like nature and thus a clash begins between the rival demons. Both of them being godless, the maya potency of Godhead takes them to task, like the demon
The godless man is always overwhelmed with material thoughts of unlimited measure. He not only thinks for his own sense-gratification but for the sense-gratification of his family, society, country, nation and so on and that not only for one decade but also for all the time to come after his death. He does not, however, understand that after his own death he has to change all the details of his calibre. Ignorantly situated, thus he accumulates wealth for the respective welfare works by committing all kinds of sins. For such welfare works he does not hesitate to do harm to others in respect of his own self, family, society, country or nation. Thus he becomes an ill-conceived leader of his family, society or nation in order to satisfy an unquenchable desire for self-gratification without knowing the modes of nature by whom he is engaged in such unholy task up to the destruction of the creation and without caring for the Supreme Authority who is competent and able to take care of all families, societies, countries or nations without any distinction of caste, creed and colour.\(^8\)

The godless man is bound up with many hopes based on self-gratification and anger and for the satisfaction of such unholy desires, he continues to accumulate worldly riches and powers by all possible means.

The godless man thinks like this. "I have got this thing today and thus my mind is satisfied for the present. I have got so much and in the near future this shall be increased again and again. I have killed that enemy and my other enemies shall be killed in due course. There is no God and if there is any God at all, He is my order-supplier or it is I. I am therefore Godhead enjoyer, perfect, powerful and happy etc. I am recognised by all men on the earth and who is there who can be my rival in so many respects? I shall therefore hoard up wealth for the benefit of me and my men."

Thus he becomes more and more overwhelmed with the darkness of the Goddess Kalika Devi or the maya potency in order to perpetuate his life of darkness until the end of creation.

The godless man also sometimes poses himself as a pseudo religious man. He engages his men and money with pride and vanity in the so-called spiritual activities or religious ceremonies. By such performances he wants to demonstrate the grandeur of his wrongly accumulated wealth in order to be recognised as a great devotee of God, not for the sake of Godhead (as he does not believe in the existence of Him) but for the sake of his kinsmen, friends, flatterers dictated by a false sense of respectability and aristocracy. Such a godless man however, envies the all-pervading Godhead situated along with him as also with other living entities. He thus makes unlawful animal sacrifices and if any saintly man advises him not to commit such sinful acts, he casts aspersions on such saintly persons propelled by his ill-acquired self sufficiency, power, pride, passion and anger, etc.

Such hellish godless persons are gradually forced to go down and down in the domain of darkness and in the kingdom of demons, so that perpetually they may suffer the pangs of the threefold miseries as above mentioned by the unfailing stroke of the trident in the hands of the maya potency. In other words such people are themselves responsible for gliding down to such a horrible state of life without any hope of deliverance from the clutches of nescience.

But the all-merciful Personality of Godhead is so kind to us that He has sent forth His authorised agents scriptures like the Vedas and the Puranas. These transcendental sounds when admitted by aural reception in a submissive mood by any man in the world, he can realise Godhead in the form of scriptures and saints and then only he comes to his senses that it is Godhead or His authorised agents only that can deliver him from all miseries and no one else.

Therefore the highest form of philanthropic or altruistic service that a man can render to his fellow brethren is the propagation of transcendental service of the Personality of Godhead by awakening the spiritual sense of all sleeping men caught hold of by the grip of the maya potency. The easiest method for reviving such spiritual sense in the heart of all fallen souls was taught by Lord Chaitanya who took compassion with the fallen souls of the present age, as congregational chanting of the holy name of Godhead. He saw that fallen souls of the present age are always engaged in a habit of quarrelling with one another in the fields of sociology, politics, economics, philosophy and religion and as such they have no hope of deliverance by the practice of good works, cultivating spiritual knowledge or by means of performing costly sacrifices. He therefore inaugurated the movement of the transcendental sankirtana or congregational chanting of the names of Godhead. This process of reviving the sense of spirituality in human society is the most potent and universal form of religion in which everyone can take part irrespective of caste, creed and colour distinctions. It is assured by the Lord that by this method only one will be able to attain to all spiritual perfections. So everyone must help in the propagation of such transcendental movement for the supreme benefit of mankind, nay, all living entities.
Amongst the innumerable transcendental names of the Godhead, Lord Chaitanya has prescribed the following sixteen words composed of thirty-two Sanskrit letters,—as the most potent sounds in the Kali age. As uttered by the Lord Himself—men may take advantage of repeating the following transcendental sounds every day in an assembly of family members both male and female at least once in every evening or at any time conveniently for his own as well as others’ benefit without any grudge. The sixteen words run as follows:

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

1 “But above this visible nature there exists another transcendental nature which is unseen but eternal and which does not perish even when all other created things of material nature perish.” (Bg. 8.20).

2 Description of the Mundaka Upanishad (3.9.10).

3 This part is well explained by Lord Chaitanya in His doctrine of achintya bhebheda, i.e., simultaneously one and different.

4 “Living entities are My parts and parcels and they are eternal. But they are undergoing prisoner’s life bound up by the material nature of mind and the six senses.” (Bg. 15.7)

5 It is futile attempt therefore to produce life-substance in the laboratory of scientists.

6 All works are entirely done under the influence of the modes of Nature (maya) and the living entity bewildered by false vanity thinks that he is the performer. (Bg. 3.27)

7 Vishnubhakta vabet daiva asura tad viparjaya.

8 “Those men who devoutly seek refuge unto Me (Sri Krishna the Godhead) and always think of Me without a pause of a second, I personally carry their necessities of life.” (Bg. 9.12).
Here is an excerpt from an exchange between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and the poet Allen Ginsberg. It took place on May 12, 1969, in Columbus, Ohio.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, Your Divine Grace, my so-called popularity doesn't seem to be having much effect. That's why I'm asking you very specifically what to do, because I've been chanting for five years, six years. Since 1963 I've been chanting Hare Krishna on this continent, beginning in Vancouver in July 1963. And I am finding there is a limitation to how many people will join that chant. Or I have found a limitation. Part of the limitation is the fact that it seems strange and new to people here.

Srila Prabhupada: They may think it unfamiliar, but there is no loss.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, and as it becomes familiar, it might spread a little. Part of the limitation is just a natural resentment or resistance—people wanting a prayer in their own tongue, in their own language. I don't know. For the same reason, an American Indian chant would not take hold, or even a Latin chant would not take universal hold.

Srila Prabhupada: The Lord's names, though, are a mantra.

Allen Ginsberg: And as a result, many of us are asking, "Is it possible to find an American mantra?"

Srila Prabhupada: Mantra means transcendental sound. You see. Take, for example, omkara.

Allen Ginsberg: So you think the chanter experiences transcendence by the very nature of the sound. Okay. But now, om is an absolutely natural sound, the way it flows from the throat to the mouth—and yet even om, natural as it is, sounds foreign.

Srila Prabhupada: Om is natural, yes. Therefore, it is also found as a pranama that begins many longer mantras. Om is accepted.

Allen Ginsberg: But even om sounds foreign here. It's hard to get people to say om, even. I tried in Chicago, with om and with Hare Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada: But there is no alternative.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, we haven't been able to think of one yet. I'll tell you that.

Srila Prabhupada: That is people's misfortune—if they don't appreciate.

Allen Ginsberg: Many people here have said, "What about 'God, God, God, God'"? But that doesn't have the right . . .

Disciple: [Laughs.] No, that doesn't make it. You couldn't do that for five minutes.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, you could almost do "Amen, Amen."

Disciple: That's not English.

Allen Ginsberg: Yes. That's not English. [Laughter] But it's known in English. And maybe Krishna could become as well known as God and Amen, or something like that.

Srila Prabhupada: Krishna is already in the English dictionary.

Allen Ginsberg: Now in the dictionary?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Allen Ginsberg: He's infiltrated the dictionary.
Disciple: Although they improperly describe Him as an incarnation of Vishnu. Really, you know, Krishna is the source of Vishnu.

Srila Prabhupada: Here is an English dictionary.

Allen Ginsberg: Let's see how Krishna is described in the English dictionary.

Disciple: Sure enough. "Eighth incarnation of Vishnu."

Woman from India: [Makes a comment in Bengali.]

Srila Prabhupada: Just see. Here is an intelligent statement. [To the woman:] Yes. You can explain in English.

Woman: I was saying that when it comes to the question of ultimate knowledge and when Western civilization fails to embrace the oldest known name of God, that is their limitation. They may just not want to know.

Allen Ginsberg: Okay. Partly there may be the fear that the study of Krishna consciousness will become as bureaucratized in America as the examination system has made the study of higher Western knowledge.

Woman: Yes. But everyone knows that this modern technological culture is limited, while the Vedic culture is unlimited. It centers on the Lord's glories—which makes it unlimited. You see? And the Vedas explain that the original name of the Lord is Krishna. So what is the trouble?

Srila Prabhupada: For gaining a technological education, everyone takes so much trouble. And yet simply for uttering one simple name, Krishna, they are not prepared to take a little trouble?

Woman: Human life is meant for this ultimate spiritual liberation, going back to Krishna. But some people won’t take this golden opportunity. "Krishna is a word in the Indian language." Krishna is not a word in the Indian language. Krishna is the ultimate name of God.

Srila Prabhupada: Nor does Krishna say that He is Indian.

Woman: Krishna doesn’t say, “I am Indian.” His name is not Indian. It’s universal. See?

Srila Prabhupada: So you have to accept a little “trouble” and utter Krishna. That’s all.

Allen Ginsberg: I’m willing.

Srila Prabhupada: We have all taken so much trouble so that we can understand the English language. And now, for our transcendental understanding, we simply have to utter . . .

Allen Ginsberg: Krishna is next to Kris Kringle—Santa Claus—in the dictionary.

Woman: Yes, Krishna is Santa Claus—He gives everything.
Srila Prabhupada: Very good. What is the definition they give for Krishna? What do they say?

Disciple: "Eighth avatar of Vishnu." This is the usual thing. It's in all the dictionaries.

Woman: The people in India are lucky that they are holding tight to the world's original culture. Krishna is not an "avatar of Vishnu." He's the source of Vishnu—He's the Supreme Lord. With the passing of so many millennia, other parts of the world have forgotten. But this knowledge is universal.

Srila Prabhupada: In Bhagavad-gita Krishna says, sarva-yonisu kaunteya: "I am the father of everyone." Not only human beings. All animals, plants—everyone. So Krishna is universal.

Allen Ginsberg: Now, for instance, in America many of the black people are tending toward Allah and toward Mohammedanism.

Srila Prabhupada: That is another thing. Somebody is inclined to something; somebody else is inclined to some other thing. That is going on, and it will go on till the end of the creation. But our proposal is, "You are searching after the center—here is the center." That is our proposal.

Allen Ginsberg: But what do you do when different religious groups claim to be the center?

Srila Prabhupada: No. We welcome every religion. We don't decry any religion. Our point is the love of Godhead. Our Krishna is love. All-attractive. So we want to be attracted by Krishna.

Take the example of magnetic force and a piece of iron. Unless the iron is rusty, it is automatically attracted by magnetic force. Similarly, although we are now contaminated by material coverings, we have to make ourselves "rustless," so that immediately we shall be attracted by Krishna. This is the programme. Krishna is all-attractive. And we are naturally attracted. But because we are covered with this rust, instead of being attracted by Krishna we are being attracted by maya. So our central programme is how to love Krishna, how to love God.

Therefore, when people come to us for spiritual knowledge, to begin with we want to see, as Srimad-Bhagavatam advises, "How much have you enhanced your love of God?" You can call Him Krishna or something else; that doesn't matter. But phalena pariciyate: We want to see the result. Your religious principle—what is the result? Are you enhancing your love for God or dog? That we want to see. If you are enhancing your love for God, it is all right; we don't say anything. But people should learn how to love God. That is the perfection of life. And that we are teaching.
In Majestic Slavery

Sri Padmanabha Swami Temple, Thiruvananthapuram

by Sampatkumara Ramanuja Dasan (Ashwin)

Sri Padmanabha Swami Temple in Kerala is very famous in India for the Deity of Sri Padmanabha, Vishnu reclining on the bed of the serpent Anantha. This temple is the embodiment of devotion and is the beacon of varnashrama dharma.

History and Pastimes

In northern Kerala, while the sage Bilvamangala Thakura performed his daily puja at the temple, a child appeared every day during the puja and created disturbance by putting the worshipable shaligrama-shila into his mouth. Bilvamangala would angrily reprimand the child. Once, Bilvamangala showed his annoyance by pushing back the little one with his hand. The child then stared angrily at Bilvamangala and told him, "If you want to see me again, come to the Anantha forest." Then the Thakura realised that the child was none other than Lord Krishna Himself!

Bilvamangala moved from northern Kerala to the south in his ceaseless quest of the divine child and the Anantha forest where he would find Him. At last, after many days, Bilvamangala reached Anantha forest and the Lord gave darshana as Anantha Padmanabha – His form as Vishnu reclining on the divine serpent Anantha.

Bilvamangala was in an overwhelmed trance. In that condition, he could offer the Lord only unripe mangoes in a coconut shell. This same shell is encased in gold now and the Lord receives unripe mango offering in it, to commemorate the pastime.

On Bilvamangala Thakura’s request the Lord decided to stay there forever and grace His devotees. The place is now called Thiruvananthapuram (Thiru-Anantha-Puram /Trivandrum), the city of Lord Anantha Padmanabha.

About the Deity

The original deity whom Bilvamangala Thakura had darshana, was made of wood. Now the main deity there is that made of 12008 shaligrama shilas sent by the King of Nepal to the King of Travancore (where the temple is located) on special elephants. The festival Deities (utsava vigraha) of Sri Padmanabha with His consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi receive the daily abhiseka. With His right hand, Sri Padmanabha gives shelter to Lord Shiva. It is said that behind the altar, an amazing sound of ocean waves can be heard, as the Lord rests on the milk ocean. Even the priests are forbidden to look to this area when they are inside the altar.

The Deity of Lord Padmanabha is about 18 feet long and majestically reclines on the serpent Anantha. Devotees can have darshana of the Lord through three doors. The first door reveals the Lord’s beautiful face, the second, His navel with a lotus on which Lord Brahma is seated, and the third door reveals His beautiful lotus feet. In the altar we can see a three feet high golden Garuda (the eagle carrier of Lord Vishnu) and two other silver Garuda Deities.

The King as Slave

In the year 1750 AD, His Highness Anizham Thirunal Marthanda Varma who reigned this kingdom, made Thiruvananthapuram his capital. In an act of complete surrender, he offered his entire kingdom to Lord Padmanabha and took the title ‘Padmanabha Dasa’ (servant of Padmanabha) for himself, acknowledging that Sri Padmanabha is the real king and the mortal kings are just His servants. Till today, all his successors rule the kingdom as servants of Lord Padmanabha.

King Marthanda Varma renovated the temple complex and made it as we see today. His successors (12 kings so far) expanded the temple, built massive gateways and donated huge amount of wealth to the temple. It is a tradition in the royal family that whenever an heir is born, the baby is taken to the temple, placed before the altar and offered to Sri Padmanabha and to get the title ‘Padmanabha Dasa’. Subsequently after he assumes kingship, he performs elaborate ceremonies like tulapurusha dana in which he is weighed with gold, and donates the entire gold to Lord Sri Padmanabha.

Every day at a fixed time the present king, His Highness...
Uttradam Thirunal Marthanda Varma comes to the temple to offer prayers to Sri Padmanabha, failing which he has to pay a fine to the temple. When the king comes, no one is allowed to be present the temple complex. The king then gives the accounts of the previous day's administration to Sri Padmanabha, since the Lord is the proprietor of the entire kingdom and the king is just a servant.

Daily Rituals

The descendants of Bilvamangala Thakura continue to do pushpanjali seva to Sri Padmanabha and head the temple management. All advice is taken from them and their presence is very vital for the rituals of the temple.

The chief priest, known as periya nambi, performs the daily puja with the help of other priests (21 or more). It is a custom that the priest obtains the permission of the current descendant of Bilvamangala Thakura and carries out his service. In case he wants to quit the services to Sri Padmanabha, he will not be allowed to worship in any other temple. It is deemed that Padmanabha's service is the ultimate. The Nambi priest must stay in the Nambi Matha and must maintain complete celibacy during his tenure as Lord Padmanabha's chief priest. His movements are restricted to the matha and the temple. An assistant with a lamp (as a mark of honour) walks before him, announcing his arrival.

Other temples inside Sri Padmanabha temple complex

Narasimha temple

This shrine is next to the altar of Sri Padmanabha and devotees have darshana of Sri Yoga Narasimha before they enter Lord Padmanabha's sanctum. Here, Lord Narasimha is extremely beautiful but ferocious. To pacify His anger, Ramayana is recited whenever the altar is open. Priests offer prayers to Narasimha and only after that go for services to other altars. This Narasimha is said to be the protector of the temple and has amazingly protected the temple from many dangers.

Krishna Temple

Another temple dedicated to Sri Krishna, is extremely beautiful. This deity of Krishna is very beautiful and is seen with butter in His hand. The japa mandapa in front of this temple is exquisitely carved with depictions of the Lord's pastimes.

Varaha Temple

A temple, Sri Varaham, dedicated to Lord Varaha (the boar incarnation of the Supreme Lord) is situated outside the temple complex. The Lord is seated here seated with Lakshmi on His lap. This temple, though not very large, has the largest temple pond in all of Kerala.
Festivals

There are many festivals that enliven the temple activities and are celebrated by the devout royal patrons as well as the citizenry. All of them are observed with meticulous standards.

One such festival is the Alpasi festival or the royal hunt festival. Sri Padmanabha, Sri Narasimha and Sri Krishna are taken in three separate flower bedecked palanquins, seated on golden Garudas, decorated with diamonds and gold. Varahadeva is taken on elephant back. The procession starts with the king leading in his ceremonial robes and bearing the sword, with all other royal members following him. The police escort Their Lordships with guns and swords. No musical instruments are played, as it is a hunting expedition and the king on behalf of the Lord does a symbolic hunt. Then the procession goes back to the temple with many musical instruments playing. When their Lordships reach the temple, a 22-gun salute is given by the police. An elaborate arati is performed for Sri Padmanabha, Sri Narasimha and Sri Krishna. An exquisite bed made of cotton covered with velvet, silk and many beautifully studded bolster pillows with flower canopies is arranged for their Lordships to rest. It is a feast for the eyes!

The next evening Their Lordships are taken on a procession to the beach nearby and given a dip in the sea with many brahmanas chanting Vedic hymns. Here also the king comes in his ceremonial robes, with sword in his hand, and leads the procession with other male members of the family. These festivals are unique to this temple, the richest temple in the world. Chanting of the holy names of Vishnu, the Vishnu Sahasranama, and the recital of Ramayana and Srimad-Bhagavatam are routine in this temple.

Sahasrakalasam

Once every year, 1000 golden kalashas or pots are used to perform a grand abhiseka to the utsava deity.

How to reach Sri Padmanabha temple

Sri Padmanabha temple is situated in the southern Indian state of Kerala, in its capital Thiruvanathapuram. The city is well connected by railways, international airways and roadways. The temple is situated in the city, about 5 km from the airport.

Temple timings:

The temple timings are 4:30 am to 12:30 pm and 5:15 pm to 7:30 pm. All the devotees intending to visit this temple must follow the dress code: dhoti for men and sari for women. 

(The author belongs to the Sri Vaishnava sampradaya and is a disciple of Tondanur Nambi. He lives in Kerala.)

Photos courtesy: www.sreepadmanabhaswamytemple.org

(left) The temple complex at night during the ceremonial procession.

(left) The Maharaja of Travancore, Uthradam Thirunal Marthanda Varma at the commencement of the Arattu procession of the Sri Padmanabha Swami Temple.
From the Previous Acharyas

Here we present the messages of Srila Prabhupada's predecessor acharyas, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura and Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura. These were translated from Bengali by Srila Prabhupada and published in his Back to Godhead magazine in the 1940's.

Message of His Divine Grace

His Divine Grace Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaj the celebrated acharya (spiritual head) of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas spoke the following few lines as his message just a few days (December 23rd, 1936) before his passing away from this mortal world.

"I have most probably given many people troubles in the mind. Some of them might have thought about me that I am their enemy because I was obliged to speak the plain truth for service and devotion towards the Absolute Godhead. I have given them all those troubles only for the reason that they may turn their faces towards the Personality of Godhead without any desire for gain and with unalloyed devotion. I hope some day or other they may understand me rightly."

"I advise all to preach the teachings of Rupa-Raghunatha (disciples of Lord Chaitanya) with all energy and resources. Our ultimate goal shall be to become the dust of the lotus feet of Sri Sri Rupa and Raghunatha Goswamis. You should all work conjointly under the guidance of your spiritual master with a view to serve the Absolute Knowledge, the Personality of Godhead. You should live somehow or other without any quarrel in this mortal world, only for the service of Godhead. Do not please give up the service of Godhead in spite of all dangers, all criticisms and all discomforts. Do not be disappointed for most people in the world do not serve the Personality of Godhead; do not give up your own service which is your everything and all, neither reject the process of chanting and hearing of the transcendental holy name of Godhead. You should always chant the transcendental name of Godhead with patience and forbearance like a tree and humbleness like a straw."

"We wish that this mass of our body of flesh and blood may be sacrificed at the altar of preaching the sankirtana movement (congregational chanting of the holy name of Godhead) propagated by Lord Chaitanya. We are not desirous of becoming a hero of work or a reformer of religion, but our reality may be identified with the dust of the lotus feet of Sri Rupa and Raghunatha for that is our everything. The flow of the transcendental tide of the attraction of devotion will never be blocked, and you with your all energy shall devote yourself for fulfilling the desire of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura. There are many amongst you who are well qualified and able workers. We have no other desire whatsoever."

"There are certainly many difficulties while we are in this mortal world, but it is not our business simply to be overwhelmed with those difficulties or to try to overcome them only. We must know even during the duration of our present life, as to what we shall gain after overcoming all those difficulties of life and what shall be the mode of our permanent existence. We must make an adjustment of all things that evoke our love and hatred and for those that we want and do not want. Attachment and detachment of this mortal world will engage us more and more as we become farther and farthest from the lotus feet of Sri Krishna. When we are able to transcend the position of attachments and detachments of this mortal world and be attracted with the holy name of Godhead, it is then only we can understand the import of the transcendental service of Sri Krishna the Personality of Godhead. At the first instance the subject Krishna is startling and perplexing to us. Every one who is called by the name ‘man’ is more or less struggling knowingly or unknowingly to eliminate those invading elements that are baffling our conception of eternal need. It is our only duty to enter into the kingdom of eternal need."

"We have no love or hatred for any one in this world. All arrangements made in this world are but temporary. There is, therefore, unavoidable necessity for that ultimate need for every one in this world. You should attain the transcendental loving service of the objective, being situated in concerted action for that one aim. Let there be a constant flow of the ideas and thoughts as conceived by Rupa Goswami and His followers. We shall not at any time show our slightest dejection for the seven tongued sankirtana movement. If we have undaunted faith in it we shall then only achieve all perfections. You should all therefore preach with fearlessness and with utmost energy the message of Rupa and Raghunatha under the guidance of the followers of Sri Rupa."

Message of Thakura Bhaktivinode

“There is no other way out of this great ocean of nescience except the unalloyed mercy of the Absolute Godhead. Although the living entity is superior in nature in comparison to the nature of matter, he is by association dependent and weaker than the material nature. The
Absolute Godhead is the creator of all entities, He is the maintainer and deliverer of all entities. The innumerable living entities are infinitesimals and Godhead is Infinite. The infinitesimal living entity is therefore subordinate to the Infinite and as such he is transcendentally the eternal servitor of the Absolute Godhead. The Supreme Spirit Godhead is the ultimate rest of all entities. This material world is a construction of the material energy and the material existence of the living entity is a sort of punishment, just like a prisoner. The punishment is due to forgetfulness of Godhead by the living entity. And therefore there is no deliverance of the living entities from the clutches of nescience save and except by the revival of his sense of Godhead. Those who have forgotten the relation of Godhead are only the prisoners of this material world and those who have not forgotten Him are the liberated souls.

"The conditioned souls who are bound up by the material energy can get rid of prison life by the mercy of Godhead if he prays for it by penance and service. Great sages and messiahs of the world have devised various ways and means for this self-realisation of the living entity and all such means can be grouped into three different channels namely good work, knowledge and devotion.

"There are many sub-divisions within good works such as the system of four castes, of four orders of life, sacrifice, austerity, charity, penance and various such things. And there are scriptures wherein the respective results of all the above mentioned good works are illustrated and explained. If those results are again analysed and scrutinised, we can understand that higher station of life such as one in the Heaven, opulence in this material world, power, deliverance from miseries and diseases or attainment of higher standard of services are the net results of the above good works. And by separating the one of higher standard of services, we can only understand all other results as one of material world. As such all the results pertaining to the material energy which can be attained by the performances of good works, are but temporary and subject to exhaustion. In order of mundane time and space, created by the material energy, everything is limited by the laws of nature. So all these limited acquisitions cannot help us in our attempt to get rid of the conditional life; on the contrary the temporary good results of these good works bind us more strongly within the limits of material energy.

The ultimate end of attaining higher status of life is to obtain sufficient time for culture and performances of higher duties. The system of the four castes and four orders of life as introduced by the religion of the Hindus, is designed to mould the character of the respective performers for higher duties and thus to give them ample chance for cultivating spiritual knowledge. If therefore any one who even after obtaining higher standard of
life as well as sufficient leisure, does not culture this higher duties, namely the cultivation of spiritual knowledge and philosophy, then according to the opinion of Bhagavatas, the labour and energy lost in this direction is spent up for nothing. And in most cases it has been found that those who have obtained sufficient rest and comfort after performances of hard labour, have mostly squandered away the valuable time and energy thus obtained, in different occupations other than spiritual culture. This fact proves conclusively that good works cannot give any one the ultimate goodness that is freedom from the bondage of conditioned life.

“Cultivation of higher spiritual knowledge which discerns the matter from spirit does not also help us in the achievement of the highest goal. By this culture of spiritual life one can realise only one’s self, as distinguished from gross matter, and can also understand that the spirit soul is above matter as ignorance of this fact makes him bound to undergo the rigours of conditioned life. This self-realisation may help one for attaining the marginal position between material and spiritual existence but this does not mean actual spiritual life and its spiritual activities without which the spirit soul cannot obtain the highest bliss. This marginal state of life may be called the life of self-satisfaction as distinguished from the life of self-realisation which means engagement in the transcendental activities of the spiritual world. Self-satisfaction without this self-realisation (attachment for spiritual activities) does not bear any substantial fruit.

“The quality of spiritual activity is so much attractive that it attracts even the most self-satisfied spiritualists and thus engages them in the spiritual activities as distinguished from the material activities.

“Thus the result of good works, when it gives sufficient leisure for the cultivation of spiritual activities and spiritual knowledge it is then and then only that good works or cultivation of spiritual knowledge can be accepted as means to the ultimate goal. Therefore devotional activities only can lead us to the spiritual activities and nothing else. Good works or spiritual knowledge under the guidance of devotional activities can be helpful for spiritual activities but devotional activities even without the help of good works or spiritual knowledge can alone help us in the attainment of spiritual life.

“The Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna informed Uddhava that neither good works even without any desire for fruitive action, nor spiritual knowledge, nor the system of caste and creed nor the studies of scriptures, nor penances, nor even renunciation can satisfy Him, as do the devotional activities themselves.
There is a misconception that the Krishna consciousness movement represents the Hindu religion. In act, however, Krishna consciousness is in no way a faith or religion that seeks to defeat other faiths or religions. Rather, it is an essential cultural movement for the entire human society and does not consider any particular sectarian faith. This cultural movement is especially meant to educate people in how they can love God.

Sometimes Indians, both inside and outside of India, think that we are preaching the Hindu religion, but actually we are not. One will not find the word “Hindu” in Bhagavad-gita. Indeed, there is no such word as “Hindu” in the entire Vedic literature. This word has been introduced by the Muslims from provinces next to India, such as Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Persia. There is a river called “Sindhu” bordering the northwestern provinces of India, and since the Muslims there could not pronounce “Sindhu” properly, instead they called the river “Hindu,” and the inhabitants of this tract of land they called “Hindus.” In India, according to the Vedic language, the Europeans are called mlecchas or yavanas. Similarly, “Hindu” is a name given by the Muslims.

India’s actual culture is described in Bhagavad-gita, where it is stated that according to the different qualities or modes of nature, there are different types of men, who are generally classified into four social orders and four spiritual orders. This system of social and spiritual division is known as varnashrama-dharma. The four varnas, or social orders, are brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya and shudra. The four ashramas, or spiritual orders, are brahmacharya, gṛhastha, vanaprastha and sannyasa. The varnashrama system is described in the Vedic scriptures known as the Puranas. The goal of this institution of Vedic culture is to educate every man for advancement in knowledge of Krishna, or God. That is the entire Vedic programme.

When Lord Chaitanya talked with the great devotee Ramananda Raya, the Lord asked him, “What is the basic principle of human life?” Ramananda Raya answered that human civilization begins when varnashrama-dharma is accepted. Before coming to the standard of varnashrama-dharma there is no question of human civilization. Therefore, the Krishna consciousness movement is trying to establish this right system of human civilization, which is known as Krishna consciousness, or daiva-varnashrama—divine culture.

In India, the varnashrama system has now been taken in a perverted way, and thus a man born in the family of a brahmana (the highest social order) claims that he should be accepted as a brahmana. But this claim is not accepted by the shastra (scripture). One’s forefather may have been a brahmana according to gotra, or the family hereditary order, but real varnashrama-dharma is based on the factual quality one has attained, regardless of birth or heredity. Therefore, we are not preaching the present-day system of the Hindus, especially those who are under the influence of Shankaracharya, for Shankacarya taught that the Absolute Truth is impersonal and thus he indirectly denied the existence of God.

Shankaracharya’s mission was special; he appeared to reestablish the Vedic influence after the influence of Buddhism. Because Buddhism was patronized by Emperor Asoka, 2600 years ago the Buddhist religion practically pervaded all of India. According to the Vedic literature, Buddha is an incarnation of Krishna who had a special power and who appeared for a special purpose. His system of thought or faith was accepted widely, but Buddha rejected the authority of the Vedas. While Buddhism was spreading, the Vedic culture was stopped both in India and in other places. Therefore, since Shankaracharya’s only aim was to drive away Buddha’s system of philosophy, he introduced a system called Mayavada.

Strictly speaking, Mayavada philosophy is atheism, for it is a process in which one imagines that there is God. This Mayavada system of philosophy has been existing since time immemorial. The present Indian system of religion or culture is based on the Mayavada philosophy of Shankaracharya, which is a compromise with Buddhist philosophy. According to Mayavada philosophy there actually is no God, or if God exists, He is impersonal and all-pervading and can therefore be imagined in any form. This conclusion is not in accord with the Vedic literature. That literature names many demigods who are worshiped for different purposes, but in every case the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead Vishnu, is accepted as the supreme controller. That is real Vedic culture.

The philosophy of Krishna consciousness does not deny the existence of God and the demigods, but Mayavada
philosophy denies both; it maintains that neither the demigods nor God exists. For the Mayavadis, ultimately all is zero. They say that one may imagine any authority—whether Vishnu, Durga, Lord Shiva or the sun-god—because these are the demigods generally worshiped in society. But the Mayava philosophy does not in fact accept the existence of any of them. The Mayavadis say that because one cannot concentrate one's mind on the impersonal Brahman, one may therefore imagine any of these forms. This is a new system, called panchopasana. It was introduced by Shankaracharya, but Bhagavad-gita does not teach such doctrines, and therefore they are not authoritative.

Bhagavad-gita accepts the existence of the demigods. The demigods are described in the Vedas, and one cannot deny their existence, but they are not to be understood or worshiped according to the way of Shankaracharya. The worship of demigods is rejected in Bhagavad-gita. The Gita clearly states: kamais tais tair hrta-jnana prapadyante ‘nya-devatā tam tam niyamam asthaya prakṛtya niyatā svaya

"Those whose minds are distorted by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures." (Bg. 7.20) Furthermore, in the Second Chapter of the Gita, verse 44, Lord Krishna states:

bhogaisvarya-prasaktanam tayapahrta-cetasam vyavasayatmika buddhih samadhu na vidhiyate

"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 does not take place." Those who are pursuing the various demigods have been described as hrta-jnana, which means "those who have lost their senses." That is also further explained in Bhagavad-gita, Chapter Seven, verse 23:

antavat tu phalam tesam tad bhavaty alpa-medhasam devan deva-yajo yanti mad-bhakta yanti mam api

"Men of small intelligence worship the demigods, and their fruits are limited and temporary. Those who worship the demigods go to the planets of the demigods, but My devotees reach My supreme abode." The rewards given by the demigods are temporary because any material facility must act in connection with the temporary body. Whatever material facilities one gets, whether by modern scientific methods or by deriving benedictions from the demigods, will be finished with the body. But spiritual advancement will never be finished.

People should not think that we are preaching a system of religion. No. We are simply preaching how to love God. There are many theories about the existence of God. The atheist, for example, will never believe in God. Atheists like Professor Jacques Monod, who won the Nobel Prize, declare that everything is chance (a theory already put forward long ago by atheistic philosophers of India such as Charvaka). Then other philosophies, such as karma-mimamsa philosophy, accept that if one goes on doing his work nicely and honestly, automatically the result will come, without need for one to refer to God. For evidence, the proponents of such theories cite the argument that if one is diseased with an infection and takes medicine to counteract it, the disease will be neutralized. But our argument in this connection is that even if one gives a man the best medicine, he still may die. The results are not always predictable. Therefore, there is a higher authority, daiva-netrena, a supreme director. Otherwise, how is it that the son of a rich and pious man becomes a hippie in the street or that a man who works very hard and becomes rich is told by his doctor, "Now you may not eat any food, but only barley water"?

The karma-mimamsa theory holds that the world is going on without the supreme direction of God. Such philosophies say that everything takes place by lust (kama-haituka). By lust a man becomes attracted to a woman, and by chance there is sex, and the woman becomes pregnant. There is actually no plan to make the woman pregnant, but by a natural sequence when a man and a woman unite, a result is produced. The atheistic theory, which is described in the Sixteenth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita as asuric, or demoniac, is that actually everything is going on in this way, because of chance resulting from natural attraction. This demoniac theory supports the idea that if one wants to avoid children, he may use a contraceptive method.

Actually, however, there is a great plan for everything—the Vedic plan. The Vedic literature gives directions regarding how men and women should unite, how they should beget children, and what the purpose of sex life is. Krishna says in Bhagavad-gita that sex life sanctioned by the Vedic order, or sex life under the direction of the Vedic rules and regulations, is bona fide and is acceptable to Him. But chance sex life is not acceptable. If by chance one is sexually attracted and there are children, they are called varna-shankara, unwanted population. That is the way of the lower animals; it is not acceptable for humans. For humans, there is a plan. We cannot accept the theory that there is no plan for human life or that everything is born of chance and material necessity.

Shankaracharya's theory that there is no God and that one can go on with his work and imagine God in any form just to keep peace and tranquility in society is also more or less based on this idea of chance and necessity. Our way, however, which is completely different, is based on authority. It is this divine varnasrama-dharma that Krishna recommends, not the caste system as it is understood today. This modern caste system is now condemned in India also, and it should be condemned, for the classification of different types of men according to birth is not the Vedic or divine caste system.

There are many classes of men in society—some men are engineers, some are medical practitioners, some
are chemists, tradesmen, businessmen, and so on. These varieties of classes are not to be determined by birth, however, but by quality. No such thing as the caste-by-birth system is sanctioned by the Vedic literature, nor do we accept it. We have nothing to do with the caste system, which is also at present being rejected by the public in India. Rather, we give everyone the chance to become a brahmana and thus attain the highest status of life.

Because at the present moment there is a scarcity of brahmanas, spiritual guides, and kshatriyas, administrative men, and because the entire world is being ruled by shudras, or men of the manual labourer class, there are many discrepancies in society. It is to mitigate all these discrepancies that we have taken to this Krishna consciousness movement. If the brahmana class is actually reestablished, the other orders of social well-being will automatically follow, just as when the brain is perfectly in order, the other parts of the body, such as the arms, the belly and the legs, all act very nicely.

The ultimate goal of this movement is to educate people in how to love God. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu approves the conclusion that the highest perfection of human life is to learn how to love God. The Krishna consciousness movement has nothing to do with the Hindu religion or any system of religion. No Christian gentleman will be interested in changing his faith from Christian to Hindu. Similarly, no Hindu gentleman of culture will be ready to change to the Christian faith. Such changing is for men who have no particular social status. But everyone will be interested in understanding the philosophy and science of God and taking it seriously. One should clearly understand that the Krishna consciousness movement is not preaching the so-called Hindu religion. We are giving a spiritual culture that can solve all the problems of life, and therefore it is being accepted all over the world.
What food is sometimes buttery, sometimes sweet, sometimes spicy, sometimes mellow, often unusual and always tastes good? Answer: Krishna-prasada. “Prasada” means “God’s mercy,” and it specifically refers to food that’s been offered to Krishna. If you’ve ever been around Lord Krishna’s devotees, you may well have been offered some prasada in the form of exotic dishes like puris, halava, kachories or laddus, or perhaps just slices of apple with dates and nuts. What’s the difference between prasada and ordinary food? They may look quite the same. But the difference is that prasada has been offered to Lord Krishna in love by one of His devotees, whereas ordinary food has not.

The special quality of a devotee that distinguishes him from others is that he recognizes God’s supreme dominion over all that is. He knows that the Supreme Lord, Krishna, is creating and providing not only all the food we eat, but also the air we breathe, the water we drink and, in fact, the very earth on which we live. In Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna says:

\[
\text{aham sarvasya prabhavo} \\
\text{mattah sarvam pravartate} \\
\text{iti matva bhajante mam} \\
\text{budha bhava-samanvitah}
\]

“I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything comes from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.” (Bg. 10.8) Thus the devotee, out of a sense of duty, gratitude and love, first offers all his food to Krishna. Although God is independent and in no way needs such offerings, our desire to serve Him is natural, like the natural wish of a mature child to serve the parents who have provided for him all his life.
The offering of prasada gives a good example of how a devotee acts in relationship with Krishna. A Krishna conscious devotee does not ask, “O God, please give us our daily bread.” No. The devotee does not ask God to be his order supplier, for he knows that God is already providing everything for us—and for all other living beings, from the elephant to the ant. Therefore the devotee accepts the food that the Lord has already provided—food made with fruits, vegetables, milk, sugar and grains—but first he offers the food back to Krishna. The food may be offered to the Deity of Krishna in the temple, or to the spiritual master, who is Krishna’s representative. In any case, it is always understood that the offering is made through the spiritual master.

Nondevotees, of course, will object that such devotion is senseless. This world and the life in it, they will say, have sprung from an impersonal lifeless force. The perfect order and harmony of the universe originated from the dust of outer space. Life originally came from matter—from some chemicals that came together by chance. Krishna reciprocates with such dull materialists by remaining hidden from their view, until finally, at the end of their contaminated lives, He comes to them as death and takes away everything they have.

Those who have understood that God exists but who have not yet fully understood the science of devotion may ask why, since God is already providing everything, we should take the trouble to offer our food to Him. Aside from expressing gratitude, we should offer our food first to the Lord because this will protect us from the materialist snares that would otherwise entangle us as we eat. That every action has an equal and opposite reaction is a commonly known law in physics. What people generally don’t know, however, is that this law extends far beyond the boundaries of physics; it is a law of nature that profoundly affects almost every aspect of our lives. Even a simple act like eating can involve us in a network of material reactions.

The Vedic literature says, jivo jivasya jivanam: one living being serves as food for another. To eat, we all must kill. Because animals are less intelligent, the laws of nature do not hold them responsible for the killing they naturally perform. However, when a human being kills, he becomes involved in a complex network of actions and reactions. For the suffering he inflicts, he himself will have to suffer at some time in the future. But by preparing food for God and offering it to Him before eating it, one becomes exempt from the reactions imposed by material nature. As stated in Bhagavad-gita, “The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food which is offered first for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin.” (Bg. 3.13)

Commenting on this verse, Srila Prabhupada says, “The devotees of the Lord, who are in Krishna consciousness, offer food to Krishna and then eat—a process which nourishes the body spiritually. By such action not only are past sinful reactions in the body vanquished, but the body becomes immunized to all contamination of material nature. When there is an epidemic disease, an antiseptic vaccine protects a person from the attack of such an epidemic. Similarly, food offered to Lord Vishnu [Krishna] and then taken by us makes us sufficiently resistant to material affection, and one who is accustomed to this practice is called a devotee of the Lord.”

Neophytes in self-realization offer their food to Krishna according to the instructions of advanced devotees whose only interest is to please Krishna. Such great souls serve Krishna out of love and expect nothing for themselves in return. But how does one please that Supreme Person, who is completely independent, fully cognizant and all-pervading and who is the original cause of all causes? Simply by following His instructions—and the instructions of His pure devotees—with a serious and sincere attitude. Lord Krishna says:

\[
\text{patram puspam phalam toyam}
\]
\[
yo me bhaktya prayacchati
\]
\[
tad aham bhakty-upahrtam
\]
\[
asa nami prayatatmanah
\]

"If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it." (Bg. 9.26)

If one wishes to be purified by rendering transcendental devotional service to the Supreme, he should find out what the Lord wants of him. One who loves Krishna will give Him whatever He wants, and he avoids offering anything undesirable or unasked for. Thus, one should not offer meat, fish or eggs to Krishna. If He desired such offerings, He would have said so. Instead, He clearly requests a leaf, fruit, flowers and water, and He says of such an offering, “I will accept it.” Therefore we should understand that He will not accept meat, fish and eggs. Vegetables, grains, fruits, milk and water are the proper foods for human beings and are described by Lord Krishna Himself. Whatever else we eat cannot be offered to Him, since He will not accept it. Thus we cannot be acting on the level of loving devotion if we offer such foods.

Once the Supreme Personality of Godhead has accepted an offering (He can accept it by seeing it and hearing the prayers of His devotees), the food, now prasada, has tremendous spiritual potency. Therefore devotees distribute it freely to everyone. Such spiritualized food increases one’s duration of life, purifies one’s existence, and gives strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Moreover, it nourishes one’s transcendental realization. And that is a special quality that one cannot purchase with any amount of money. 😊
Govardhana Puja at Mysore Temple

On behalf of Rotary Club Peenya & Rotary Foundation, Sri Hanuman Marur hands over the keys of a vehicle donated to Akshaya Patra, to Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa, Chairman, The Akshaya Patra Foundation.
During the early morning *abhisheka*, the *moola vigraha* of Sri Srinivasa Govinda is bathed in yogurt (*top left*), showered with varieties of flowers (*top right*), smeared with turmeric and offered an *arati* with several types of ghee lamps (*below*).  

*Krishna Voice, January 2013*
Vaikuntha Dwara darshana of the Lord Sri Vishnu reclining on Sri Ananta Sesha with Smt. Lakshmi Devi at His lotus feet.

Devotees offered Laksharchana Seva to Sri Srinivasa Govinda

Utsava vigraha of Lord Sri Krishna, Smt. Rukmini Devi and Smt. Satyabhama during the Kalyanotsava Seva.

Find more pictures at: www.iskconbangalore.org/Vaikuntha-Ekadashi-Dec-12
Join our Community

www.facebook.com/ISKCONBangaloreTemple

Srila Prabhupada Book Marathon 2012
From Dec 1, 2012 to Jan 13, 2013
Distribute Srila Prabhupada's books and get his mercy

Iskcon Bangalore
23,636 likes • 9,195 talking about this • 9,599 were here

Sri Srinivasa Govinda on Vaikunta Ekadashi
Dec 23, 2012
Watch darshan LIVE on
www.iskconbangalore.org/live-darshan

Activity
Recent
Iskcon Bangalore created Sri Vaikunta Ekadashi.

Today's Darshan (24-12-12) (6 photos)
CULTURAL EDUCATION TOURS
2012-2013

HIMALAY CHARDHAM YATRA
Explore the mystical abodes of the Lord
Tour destinations - Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Uttarkashi, Rudraprayag, Mussoorie; Places of visit – 44
May 16 - 31, 2013

A rare opportunity to take holy dips in the sacred waters of Ganga in the year of PRAYAGA KUMBHA MELA

Package cost includes Travel; Accommodation; Meals; Entry fee; Travel insurance; Toll, parking and other state road tax; Tour kit*; On board Doctor*, Housekeeping, Photographers and first aid facility

PANDHARPUR
Haridham Darshana
January 23 - January 27, 2013
Tour destinations - Pandharpur, Tuljapur, Kolhapur, Pune, Dehu and Alandi

AHOBILAM
Sri Narasimhagiri Pravasa
February 8 - 11, 2013
Tour destinations - Ahobilam, Mahanandi and Kadiri

Registration open for all the tours

For registration and details contact:
Ph : 9341124222, 080 32214522, E-mail: cet@hkm-group.org
Website: www.iskconbangalore.org/cet

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

RATHA YATRA

Come... pull the chariot

rathe ca vamanam drstva punar janma na vidyate

Simply by seeing the Lord on the chariot, one makes advancement for stopping the repetition of birth and death. — Srila Prabhupada

MYSORE
Sat, January 5, 2012

BANGALORE
Sat, January 12, 2012

HUBLI
Sat, January 19, 2012

DHARWAD
Sat, January 26, 2012

MANGALORE
Sat, February 2, 2012

CHENNAI
Sat, February 16, 2012