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.
Freedom in Krishna

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

vande rupa-sanatanau raghuyugau sri-jiva-gopalakau.

We are following in the footsteps of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in order to understand Krishna consciousness. Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is said in Sri Isopanishad to be very far away from us yet at the same time to be very near. Ishvara, the supreme controller, is situated in everyone's heart, not only in the hearts of human beings, but also within the beasts, birds, aquatics, and even within the atoms themselves. We simply have not realized Him. Actually anyone, however, can find Krishna within his heart.

The process of finding Krishna is called yoga. There are many types of yoga. In the Western countries people are generally familiar with the process of hatha-yoga. This is an approved method and is described in the Sixth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita. At the present moment, however, people are short-lived, they are not very fortunate, and they are always disturbed by many external affairs, and therefore it is not possible to properly execute this hatha-yoga. Even five thousand years ago when Krishna advised His friend Arjuna to accept the hatha-yoga process, Arjuna said, "Krishna, this practice is impossible." He further said that to control the mind is as difficult as to control the wind. The mind flickers from one engagement to another and changes so swiftly that it is very difficult to control it in this age. Therefore Arjuna said that for him this process of hatha-yoga was not possible.

In order to encourage Arjuna, Krishna said that the yogi who always thinks of Him with love and faith is the topmost yogi. This Krishna consciousness movement is attempting to teach the people in general this process of Krishna consciousness, which is the topmost yoga. In order to succeed in this process, we have to accept the bona fide method for this age, and that is the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra, as enjoined by Lord Chaitanya: harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam/ kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatir anyatha. “Chant the holy name, chant the holy name, chant the holy name. In this age of Kali there is no other alternative, no other alternative, no other alternative for God realization.”

Simple Truth

This age is called Kali-yuga. It began five thousand years ago, after the Battle of Kurukshetra, or after the death of Maharaja Pankshit. The full duration of Kali-yuga is 432,000 years, so there is a balance of 427,000 years facing us. As this age progresses, everything becomes degraded—people's life span, memory and the quality of mercy become diminished. In the shastras it is pointed out that in this age people are very slow to engage in spiritual realization. This was apparent to me when I met a professor in Moscow whose claim was that with the annihilation of the body, everything is finished. At the present moment people have fallen into such a degraded state, into such ignorance, that they do not know the difference between spirit and matter. Even great philosophers and scientists, who claim to be very great leaders of society, have no knowledge of the spirit which exists beyond this body. Bhagavad-gita goes into considerable detail in its description of the body and soul, of the body and the owner of the body. The individual living entities are owners of these bodies, and they change bodies just as they change dress. This simple truth is practically unknown to modern civilized man. Contemporary civilization stresses the body only, and consequently this type of civilization is described as suicidal in Vedic literatures.

The living being evolves from aquatic life to plant life, to insect life, to animal life and to human life. Amongst human beings there are civilized and uncivilized forms. Those who are advanced in civilization should take advantage of their position by advancing in their spiritual consciousness, which means advancing in Krishna consciousness.

Originally we are all Krishna conscious because we are all part and parcel of Krishna, just as a finger is part and parcel of a body. The consciousness of the living entity is spread throughout the entire body, and according to Bhagavad-gita, that consciousness is indestructible. As long as the finger is attached to the body it has use and I will spend thousands of dollars in order to keep it, but as soon as that finger is detached, it is worth nothing. Similarly, when we are detached from the totality, Krishna, we are useless and have no value. As soon as we dovetail our desires to Krishna, then we have value. That is real life—bhakti-yoga.

The Spiritual World

Bhakti may be defined as devotional service. When one renders devotional service he becomes free from all designations. One may be born an American, an African, an Indian or whatever, but on the absolute platform of rendering service to Krishna, devoting the senses to engagement in the work of Krishna, and spreading Krishna's
message through this society for Krishna consciousness, one can transcend all these designations of nationality, birth, species, etc.

In working for Krishna the individual living entity forgets his designation, which in actuality only belongs to the body. Devotees of Krishna only think of themselves as servants of Krishna and consider themselves in different categories of servitude. Someone may write for Krishna, or paint for Krishna, or wash dishes for Krishna—whatever the activity is, the purpose is satisfaction of Krishna, and therefore all engagements are on the same platform. In this way when one works in Krishna consciousness he can become free from all designations.

This may sound very difficult, but Krishna, who is sitting in everyone’s heart, will give the living entity all facility as soon as He sees that the person is sincere. Krishna is the Supreme, and if He likes He can give the living entity whatever he desires. The goal should be to become a sincere servitor of Krishna, and if we sincerely desire this, Krishna will grant it to us. In Bhagavad-gita Krishna enjoins Arjuna and all men to engage in His service, to abandon all other engagements and simply surrender unto Him. Krishna then vows to take charge of the living entity and give him all protection. We all suffer from our sinful activities, but Krishna assures us that He will protect those who are devoted to Him from the resultant actions of their sinful activities. Except for those who are devoted to serving Krishna, everyone is engaged in sinful activities more or less. That is a fact. Consequently in the material world there are so many varieties of bodies, so many species of life. In Vaikuntha, the kingdom of God, there is only one variety of living entity—the four-handed Narayana form of the Lord. Everyone is a servant of Narayana or God, but everyone in His transcendental abode has the same features—the features of God. In our present position we cannot understand what the situation is in the Vaikunthas, the transcendental world, but it is surely different from what we experience here. The Bhagavad-gita gives some hint of what the Vaikunthas are like—there is no need of sunlight, moonlight or electricity because everything is illumined by the effulgence of the Almighty.

Beyond this manifested and unmanifested material nature there is another nature, which is called sanatana, or eternal. Everything in this material world has a certain date of birth or manifestation, a certain duration of life—everything grows, gets old, dwindles and then vanishes. In the spiritual world there is no question of birth, death, growth or diminution or death. Everything there is eternal. We get information about the spiritual world from Krishna via Vedic literature or from His line of disciplic succession. There are many differences between the material and spiritual worlds, but the primary difference is that the material world is temporary and the spiritual world is eternal. Therefore if we want eternal, blissful life, full of knowledge, we must take to this Krishna consciousness process. It is recommended by the great sages, by the disciplic succession stemming from Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and from Lord Sri Krishna Himself in Bhagavad-gita.

Wonderful Krishna

Lord Brahma, the first in the line of disciplic succession, concluded each verse of his Brahma-samhita with the words govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami, which translates as “I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord.” Similarly, in the mahamantra, we repeat the words Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

What is the purpose of this repetition? The more we repeat, the more we learn to love. That is required. We cannot repeat that which we do not love, for it will soon become disgusting. If we take any word and repeat it over and over again, we will soon become disgusted with it. Sometimes those who are not in the disciplic succession feel that this repetition of Hare Krishna is hackneyed and disgusting. This is because they have not developed a love of Krishna. Rupa Gosvami says, “Of what use is this one tongue, and what do I expect to hear with two ears only? If I only had billions of tongues, then I would be able to chant a little of the glories of the Supreme Lord.” Rupa Gosvami and other great acharyas feel this way about the holy names of Krishna because they have love for Krishna. They taste the nectar of chanting and so cannot give it up. Even in the material world, when we love a person, we will repeat his name over and over. The real point is that this love should be developed for Krishna. In Vrndavana, Nanda Maharaja, Mother Yasoda, Radharani, the gopis and the cowherd men and boys and even the calves, trees and cows all love Krishna. They do not know that Krishna is God, and when Krishna does something wonderful, they simply take Him to be a wonderful child or boy. Yet despite this the inhabitants of Vrndavana do not know anything but Krishna. That is because of their love for Him. That is what is wanted in this present society. We should not be bogged down with so much philosophy, debating whether Krishna is God or not, whether the symptoms of God are there or not. The inhabitants of Vrndavana did not care for any of this. As far as they were concerned, be Krishna a God or man or whatever, they simply loved Him. That is the standard to which we must aspire. We have to increase our love for Krishna by engaging in His service. When one does service to Him, his love naturally develops. Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said that prema, love for Krishna, love for God, is the highest achievement in human life. This should not be confused with religion or religiosity, for they
are different. Generally people go to a church or temple with some material purpose, asking God to give daily bread. Of course to go to God to pray for something material is better than not going at all. In the Communist countries, for instance, they say, "Why should we go to God at all? We shall create bread." Thus propaganda to make people godless is waged. But our relationship with God is permanent, and it is not possible to artificially erase it. Being atheistical, not believing in God, is simply an artificial and temporary state for the living entity. When a godless person is actually in danger, he thinks of God. It is not natural for the living entity to remain godless, for loving God is the natural life for the living entity.

Freedom to Choose

People are very fond of claiming to be free, and in the name of freedom they are prepared to have sex in the street. Such illusioned living entities do not know that there is no freedom at all as long as we are under the grip of material nature. One may claim to have freedom, but nature will soon contradict this claim. We are all conditioned, and we are simply thinking that we have freedom, yet this is all illusion. No one wants to die, and yet no one is free from death. No one wants to become old, yet no one is free from old age unless he dies young. No one wants to be in bondage to sexual desires, but the desires keep up, even in old age, for old men and old women try to remain young by cosmetic help. One would like to be free and to remain good-looking, but where is that freedom? Nature forces one to become old and wrinkled. So actually there is no freedom; freedom in this material world is simply false. No one wants to die, but death is certain. No one wants to become old, but old age is certain. No one wants to get sick, but disease is certain. At a higher stage, the living entity does not even want to take birth, but according to Bhagavad-gita birth is also certain. One cannot be free to stop death or birth unless he comes to Krishna consciousness.

Unless one comes to the position of love of Krishna, there is no question of freedom. That is nature's law. In our present state of illusion we have forgotten Krishna, and instead of loving Him we have developed a love for the things of material nature. This is symptomized in love of dog instead of love of God. In America there is a popular saying to the effect that a dog is man's best friend. In Bhagavad-gita Krishna says that He, God, is the friend and well-wisher of all living entities, but those in forgetfulness of Krishna have replaced God's position with the dog's position. The living entity thinks that he will be free from love of God by embracing material nature, but actually he is trapped into loving a dog. That is nature. Indeed, it is our nature to love something. There is no freedom, therefore. If we do not love Krishna, we will then be forced to love dog. We do have freedom, however, to make the choice, to choose the object of our love.

The human form of life in particular is meant for inquiring after the Absolute Truth. Currently it has become fashionable to glide down into animal life. When one becomes degraded or slides down to animalistic living, he cannot understand the Absolute Truth. At the present moment human society has become thus degraded. In the course of the evolutionary process, material nature gives the living entity the chance to come out of her clutches.

Devotion Beyond Death

Nature, or material energy, has clasped us very tightly and is loathe to let us get away, yet she gives us another chance in the human form of life. The unfortunate fact is that although trapped in material nature, the living entity does not consider himself trapped. Consequently, Yudhisthira Maharaja, upon being asked what the most wonderful thing in the world was, replied, "Every moment thousands of living entities are being delivered into the hands of cruel death, but those who are alive are thinking, 'I shall not die.' " Thus everyone is thinking that he has a permanent settlement. What could be more wonderful than this in the face of a changing universe? Everyone knows that death is sure—everyone sees his friends, parents and relations dying—but he is at the same time thinking, "I will live a long time." This is nature. The actual fact is that the living entity thinks that he will not die because by nature he is eternal. Unfortunately he has lost his spiritual identity and in the material entanglement, in the body, will be forced to undergo the death of the material body. Bhagavad-gita, however, describes the living entity as separate from the body and not dissolving with the body at death.

The process of gaining real freedom from the body and from the miseries of the body, which ultimately result in death, is this process of Krishna consciousness. In Bhagavad-gita Krishna says that His devotee never perishes. At death, the living entity who has devoted his life to Krishna does not have to return to the cycle of birth and death, as Krishna promises innumerable times in Bhagavad-gita and as the sages remark throughout the Vedic literatures. The conclusion then is that real freedom is in Krishna consciousness, in the realization of one's real identity as a functioning part of the Supreme Whole. Once that identity is realized, the living entity will not have to undergo the frustration of being lost in a world of death and ignorance. By the rendering of devotional service, he is catapulted out of the darkness of the material world into the light of Krishna's effulgence.

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Krishna Voice, June 2013
Srila Prabhupada: The purpose of this Krishna consciousness movement is to awaken man's original consciousness. At the present moment our consciousness is designated. I am thinking, "I am American," and you are thinking, "I am Englishman," or he is thinking, "I am American." But actually we do not belong to any of these designations. We are all part and parcel of God—that is our real identification. If we simply come to that consciousness, all the problems of the world will be solved. Now due to our designated consciousness we are thinking ourselves to be different from one another, but if we come to Krishna consciousness we shall come to know that we are one—the same spirit soul. The same spirit soul is within everyone, although it may be in a different dress. This is the explanation given in Bhagavad-gita.

This Krishna consciousness movement is actually a purificatory process. Sarvopadhi-vinirmuktam. Its purpose is to make people free from all designations. Tat-paratvena nirmalam. In Krishna consciousness we become purified, and when we are purified our activities carried out by our purified senses make us perfect. That is the ideal perfection of human life. This process is also very simple. It is not necessary for one to become a great philosopher, scientist or whatever. We need only chant the holy name of the Lord, understanding that His person, His name and His qualities are all absolute. This Krishna consciousness process is a great science; unfortunately in the universities there is no department for this.
so many others. Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Lord Chaitanya and on it. It is approved by all great acharyas—

Bhagavad-gita, the most authoritative book of knowledge. Many of you have heard of Bhagavad-gita. It is most important, for our movement is based on it. It is approved by all great acharyas in India—Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Lord Chaitanya and so many others. You are all representatives of newspapers, so now I am asking you to try to understand this movement as far as possible for the good of all human society.

Interviewer: Your Grace, it seems to many people that there are probably more people in the world seeking some kind of new spiritual life. At least there is evidence of this. I wonder if you agree with that, and, if so, if you could tell me why.

Prabhupada: That is an absolutely natural hankering. Because we are spirit souls, we cannot be happy in the material atmosphere. If you take a fish from water, it cannot be happy on land. Similarly, if we are without spiritual consciousness, we can never be happy. Today so many people are after scientific advancement and economic development, but they are not happy. So many of the young people are becoming hippies. They are acting in this way because they are rejecting materialistic life and are trying to search for spiritual life. Actually this is the proper search. Krishna consciousness is the proper goal of life.

Interviewer: Presumably you would encourage this movement and encourage more people to participate.

Prabhupada: Yes. Unless you take to this movement you cannot be happy. That is a fact. Therefore we invite everyone to study and understand this great movement.

Interviewer: What frankly worries me is that since the arrival in Britain some time ago of an Indian yogi who was the first guru that most people ever heard of, there have been a lot of people and a lot of gurus that have suddenly appeared out of nowhere. One gets the feeling sometimes that they are not all as genuine as they ought to be. I wondered whether you thought it would be right to warn the people who are thinking of entering into some kind of spiritual life that they should take care to make sure they have a genuine guru to teach them.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you feel there is such a danger?

Prabhupada: Of course to search out a guru is very nice, but if you want a cheap guru, or if you want to be cheated, then there will be many cheater gurus. But if you are sincere, you will have a sincere guru. Because people want everything very cheaply, they are cheated. We ask our students to refrain from illicit sex, meat eating, gambling and intoxication, and consequently people think that this is all very difficult and is a botheration. But if someone else says, “You may do whatever nonsense you like. Simply take my mantra,” then people will like it. The point is that people want to be cheated, and therefore cheaters come. No one wants to undergo any austerity. Human life is meant for austerity, but no one is prepared to undergo austerity. Consequently cheaters come and say, “No austerity. Whatever you like, you do. Simply pay me and I’ll give you some mantra and you’ll become God in six months.” All this is going on. If you want to be cheated like this, the cheaters will come.

Interviewer: But what happens if someone in all seriousness wants to find spiritual life and happens to finish up with the wrong guru?

Prabhupada: If one wants simply an ordinary education, he has to devote so much time, labour and understanding to it. Similarly, if one is going to take to spiritual life, he must become serious. How is it that simply by some wonderful mantras they can become God in six months? Why do they want something like that? This means that they want to be cheated.

Interviewer: And how does one tell that one has a genuine guru?

Prabhupada: That of course depends on the person who is really anxious for a guru. When you go to the market to purchase some things, you test whether they are genuine or not. Similarly, you have to test whether the guru is genuine.

Interviewer: How can you tell if you don’t know?

Prabhupada: That requires a little education, a little knowledge. Therefore we are opening so many centers to give people an opportunity to know what is genuine and what is not.

Interviewer: How many followers do you have now throughout the world?

Prabhupada: For anything genuine, the followers may be very little. For something rubbish, the followers may be many.

Interviewer: I meant initiated followers.

Prabhupada: We have about three thousand.

Interviewer: It is growing all the time?

Prabhupada: Yes, it is growing, but slowly. This is because we have so many restrictions. People do not like restrictions.
Interviewer: Where is your following the greatest? In America?

Prabhupada: In America, Europe, Canada, Japan and Australia. And of course in India there are millions belonging to this cult. Apart from India, however, in other countries there are but small quantities.

Interviewer: Do you think your movement is the only way to come to know God?

Prabhupada: Yes.

Interviewer: How do you have that assured?

Prabhupada: From the authorities, from God, Krishna. Krishna says:

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\begin{align*}
\text{sarva-dharman parityayya} \\
\text{mam ekam saranam vrja} \\
\text{aham tvam sarva-papebhyo} \\
\text{moksayisyami ma sucah}
\end{align*}
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“Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.” (Bg. 18.66)

Interviewer: If one wants to become initiated in your Society, what does he have to do or not do?

Prabhupada: First of all you have to give up illicit sex life.

Interviewer: Does that include all sex life? What is illicit sex life?

Prabhupada: Illicit sex is sex without marriage. Animals have sex with no restrictions. In human society there are restrictions. In every country and in every religion there is some system, and that is the guide. Without marriage sex life is illicit. You must also give up all intoxicants. This includes tea, cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana-anything that intoxicates.

Interviewer: Anything else?

Prabhupada: One also has to give up animal food. This includes meat, eggs and fish. One also has to give up gambling.

Interviewer: I think everyone lives in the temple, don't they?

Prabhupada: Yes. Unless one gives up all these sinful activities, he cannot be initiated.

Interviewer: So one should give up one's family as well?

Prabhupada: We are not concerned with families but with individual persons. If one wants to be initiated in this Krishna consciousness movement, he has to give up all sinful activities.

Interviewer: And the family as well?

Prabhupada: No.

Interviewer: But suppose I were to become an initiate wouldn’t I have to come and live in the temple?

Prabhupada: Not necessarily.

Interviewer: I can stay at home?

Prabhupada: Oh yes.

Interviewer: What about work? Does one have to give up his job?

Prabhupada: You simply have to give up these bad habits and chant these beads. Chant the Hare Krishna mantra. That’s all.

Interviewer: Would I have to give any financial support?

Prabhupada: No, that is your voluntary wish. If you give, that’s all right. And if you don't, we don't mind. We do not want to depend on anyone’s financial contribution. We depend on God or Krishna.

Interviewer: I wouldn't have to give any money at all?

Prabhupada: No.

Interviewer: Is this one of the main things that distinguishes the genuine guru from the fake guru?

Prabhupada: Yes, a genuine guru is not a businessman. Guru means a representative of God. Whatever God says, the guru repeats. He does not speak otherwise.

Interviewer: But would you expect to find a real guru, for instance, traveling in a Rolls Royce and staying in a penthouse suite or a top class hotel?

Prabhupada: Sometimes people provide us with a top class hotel, but we generally stay in our own temples. We have some sixty temples around the world, and we don’t require to go to any hotels.

Interviewer: I wasn't trying to make any accusations. I was merely trying to illustrate the fact that you have given a warning which I think is a valid one. There are so many people interested in finding a spiritual life, and at the same time there are a lot of people who are interested in cashing in on it. The point is that we should be able to distinguish one from the other.

Prabhupada: Are you under the impression that spiritual life means voluntarily accepting poverty? Do you think like that?

Interviewer: Well, I don't, but I only thought that—

Prabhupada: A poverty-stricken man may be most materialistic, and a wealthy man may be very spiritual. Spiritual life does not depend on one's living in poverty or wealth. Spiritual life is different. Consider Arjuna.
for instance. Arjuna was a member of the royal family, and in Bhagavad-gita Sri Krishna said: *evam parampara praptam imam rajarsayo viduh:* "This supreme science was received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way." (Bg. 4.2) In the past all kings who were saintly understood this spiritual life. Therefore spiritual life does not depend on one's material condition. A person may be a king or a pauper—whatever his material condition may be, he can still understand spiritual life. Generally people do not know what spiritual life is, and they unnecessarily criticize us because they have no knowledge of spiritual life. If I asked you whether you. know what spiritual life is, how would you answer?

**Interviewer:** Well, I—

**Prabhupada:** Because they do not know what spiritual life is, they unnecessarily say, "It is this," or "It is that." But first of all one should know what spiritual life is. Spiritual life begins when you understand that you are not this body. That is the real beginning of spiritual life. One thus comes to understand that,"I am spirit soul." The exact Sanskrit term for this realization is *aham brahmasmi.* "I am spirit soul."

**Interviewer:** Yes, but how can one actually determine who is a cheater and who is not?

**Prabhupada:** For that we have to become a little expert. If a person is a mechanic, he can understand things mechanical, and he can understand who is a valid mechanic. If you have no knowledge of machines, then how can you detect whether this man is a mechanic or not? So some little knowledge is required. If you want to purchase gold and know nothing about gold, then how can you understand whether this is gold or some other ore?

**Interviewer:** So how can people understand about a guru?

**Prabhupada:** You have to be expert in spiritual knowledge. Then you can understand. Otherwise you will simply be cheated. People are being cheated because they have no spiritual understanding, education.

**Interviewer:** Do you think there are many phoney gurus?

**Prabhupada:** Well, there may be many, but there are also many genuine ones. It is not that because there is some counterfeit money there is no genuine money. Both of them are there. You simply have to select whether one is counterfeit or not. I may give you a hundred dollar note, but if you do not know what is genuine, you will be cheated. Therefore it is up to you to find out what is counterfeit and what is genuine.

**Interviewer:** But how can you find out?

**Prabhupada:** That means you have to be qualified also.

A Disciple: Once I remember John Lennon asked you, "How will I know who is the genuine guru?" And you answered, "Just find out the one who is most addicted to Krishna. He is genuine."

**Prabhupada:** But if someone does not know Krishna, then how can he find out who is most addicted to Him? That is the test for one who is already aware of Krishna. But if one is not aware of Krishna, God, how can he find out? That depends on his fortune. If he is fortunate, he comes in contact with a genuine guru.

**Interviewer:** That is why I was asking about the Rolls Royce and the penthouse suites because that was a very simple way for a learner to be able to say, "Well, this man is in a Rolls Royce, so therefore—

**Prabhupada:** That is not the test. Suppose a genuine guru is riding in a Rolls Royce. Do you think that just because he is in that car he is not genuine?

**Interviewer:** No, but—

**Prabhupada:** Then why are you making this the test? First of all you have to accept that your position is that you do not know the test. Because you do not know, you conclude, "Oh, this man is going in a Rolls Royce. Therefore he is not genuine." But that is the wrong conclusion. You should know what is genuine. The genuine guru may go in a Rolls Royce or on foot, but that doesn't matter. What you have to test is whether or not he is genuine, and that will require your qualification. My point is that people are not given any spiritual education. Therefore they cannot understand what is genuine and what is not.

**Interviewer:** How do you think people should be educated then?

**Prabhupada:** People should first be taught what they are. Are they the body or something else? That is the beginning of education. Now everybody is being educated to think that he is this body. Because one accidentally gets an American body, he thinks, "I am an American." This is just like thinking, "I am red," just because you are wearing a red shirt. You are neither red, nor black nor white. You are a human being. Similarly, this body is considered to be a dress or a shirt or coat. If we simply recognize ourselves by our shirt and coat, then we have no spiritual education.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that such education should be given in schools?

**Prabhupada:** Yes, in schools, colleges, universities. There is an immense literature on this subject, an immense fund of knowledge. But the people are not
Interviewer: Presumably if spiritual education were given in schools then we wouldn’t have to worry about this problem.

Prabhupada: Yes, that is so. What is required is that the leaders of society come forward to understand this movement.

Interviewer: Have you ever had people come to you who have been previously to a fake guru?

Prabhupada: Yes, there are many.

Interviewer: And what has happened? Have they had their spiritual lives in any way spoiled by the fake gurus?

Prabhupada: No, they are seeking something, and that is their qualification. As soon as one is genuinely seeking, God, who is within everyone’s heart, helps.

Interviewer: I wonder if the real gurus like yourself have ever tried in any way to put a stop to the false gurus—that is, put pressure on them to put them out of business, so to speak.

Prabhupada: No, that was not my purpose. I started my movement simply by chanting Hare Krishna. I chanted in New York in a place called Tompkins Square Park, and gradually people began to come to me. So this Krishna consciousness movement gradually began to develop. Many accepted, and many did not accept. Those who are fortunate have accepted.

Interviewer: Don’t you feel that people are suspicious because of their experience with bad gurus? If you went to a bad dentist and he broke your tooth, you might be suspicious about going to another.

Prabhupada: Yes, naturally if one is cheated, he becomes suspicious. But this does not mean that if one is cheated once, he will always be cheated. He should find out something genuine. Either one must be fortunate or well aware of this science. From Bhagavad-gita we understand that the genuine seekers are very few. Manusyanam sahasresu kascid yatati siddhye. Out of many millions of people there may be only one who is interested in spiritual life. Generally people are interested in eating, sleeping, mating and defending. So how can we expect to find many followers? First of all it is not difficult to notice that people have lost their spiritual interest. Those who are actually interested are all being cheated by so-called spiritualists. You cannot judge a movement simply by the number of its followers. If one man is genuine, then the movement is successful. It is not a question of quantity but quality.

Interviewer: I just wondered whether you knew that there are hundreds or thousands of people who have turned up with the wrong guru. I wondered how many people you think might have been taken in.

Prabhupada: Practically everyone. (laughter) There is no question of numbering. Everyone.

Interviewer: So this would be thousands of people, wouldn’t it?

Prabhupada: Millions. Millions have been cheated because they want to be cheated. God is omniscient. He can understand. He is within your heart, and if you want to be cheated, God sends you a cheater.

Interviewer: Do you think it is possible for everyone to attain the perfectional stage you spoke of previously? Is it possible for everyone?

Prabhupada: Within a second. Anyone can attain perfection within a second provided he is willing. The difficulty is that no one is willing. For instance, in Bhagavad-gita Krishna says, sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja: “Simply surrender unto Me.” But who is going to surrender to God? Everyone says, “Oh, why should I surrender to God? I will be independent.” If you simply surrender, it is a second’s business. That’s all. But no one is willing, and that is the difficulty.

Interviewer: When you say that lots of people want to be cheated, do you mean that lots of people want to carry on with their worldly pleasures and at the same time, by chanting a mantra or by holding a flower, think that they can achieve spiritual life as well? Is this what you mean by wanting to be cheated?
**Interviewer:** What about a Christian priest?

**Prabhupada:** If you understand what a genuine guru is, why are you trying to understand the opposite?

**Interviewer:** But the bad gurus—

**Prabhupada:** If you understand what a genuine guru is, why are you trying to understand the opposite?

**Interviewer:** A bad guru just wants some money or some fame.

**Prabhupada:** Well, if he is bad, how does he become the guru? 

**Interviewer:** (laughter) How can iron be gold or gold be iron? Actually a guru cannot be bad, for if he is bad he cannot be guru. You cannot say “bad guru.” That is a contradiction. You may say “false guru.” But that is not so important. What you have to do is simply try to understand what a genuine guru is. The definition of a genuine guru is that he is simply talking about God, that’s all. If he’s talking about some other nonsense, then he is not a guru. A guru cannot be bad. There is no question of a bad guru any more than there’s a red guru or a white guru. Guru is guru. So have you noted the definition of guru?

**Interviewer:** Yes. Thank you very much.
By devotional service one can understand that Krishna first of all manifests Himself as Svayamrupa, His personal form, then as Tadakatmarupa, and then Avesharupa. In these three features He manifests Himself in His transcendental form. The feature of Svayamrupa is the form in which Krishna can be understood by one who may not understand His other features. In other words, the form in which Krishna is directly understood is called Svayamrupa, or His personal form. The Tadakatmarupa is that form which most resembles the Svayamrupa but has some differences of bodily features. This Tadakatmarupa is divided into two manifestations, called the personal expansion and the pastime expansion. As far as Avesharupa is concerned, sometimes Krishna empowers some suitable living entity to represent Him; when a living entity is acting as a representative of the Supreme Lord, he is called Avesha avatara, or Shaktavesha avatara. His personal form is again divided into two: Svayamrupa and Svayamprakasha. As far as His Svayamrupa is concerned, it is in that form that He remains always in Vrindavana (also called pastime form) with all the inhabitants of Vrindavana. That personal form is again divided into two, known categorically as Prabhavav and Vaibhava forms. For example, Krishna expanded Himself in multi forms in the rasa dance, and when He danced with the gopis, He expanded Himself in multi forms to dance with each and every gopi who took part in that dance. Similarly, He expanded Himself also in 16,000 forms at Dwaraka when He married 16,000 wives.

There are some instances of great mystics also expanding their bodily features in different ways, but that sort of expansion by yoga process is not applicable to Krishna. There are instances in the Vedic history such as Saubhari Rishi, a sage who expanded himself into eight forms by the yoga process, but that expansion was not actually into eight forms—it was simply a manifestation, for Saubhari remained one. But as far as Krishna is concerned, when He manifested Himself in different forms, each and every one of them was a separate individual. When Narada Muni visited Krishna at different palaces at Dwaraka, he was astonished, and yet Narada is never astonished to see the expansion of the body of a yogi since he knows the trick himself. But a verse in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* states that Narada was astonished to see the expansion of Krishna. He explains his
wonder as to how the Lord was present in each and every one of the 16,000 palaces with His queens. Krishna Himself was in a different form with each queen, and He was acting in different ways. For example, in one form He was talking with His wife; in another form He was engaged with His children and yet another form He was performing some household work. These different activities are called actions in the Lord's different emotions, and when He is in these "emotional" forms, the expansions are known as Vaibhavaprakasha. Similarly there are other unlimited expansions of the forms of Krishna, but even when they divided or expanded in such unlimited forms, they are still one and the same. There is no difference between one form and another; that is the Absolute conception of the Personality of Godhead.

In the Srimad Bhagavatam it is stated in the Tenth Canto, Chapter 40, that at the time when Akura was carrying both Krishna and Balarama from Gokula to Mathura, he entered into the water of the Yamuna and could see all the spiritual planets in the spiritual sky—he saw there, the Lord in His Vishnu form along with Narada and the four Kumaras, and he saw how they were worshiping the Lord. This is described in the Srimad Bhagavatam as "form." It is stated in the Bhagavata Purana that there are many worshippers who are purified by different processes of worship, as the Vaishnava, or the Aryan who also worship the Supreme Lord according to their convictions and their spiritual understanding; each process of worship involves the understanding of different forms of the Lord mentioned in the scriptures, but the ultimate idea is to worship the Supreme Lord Himself. In the feature of His Vaibhavaprakasha, the Lord manifests Himself as Balarama. The feature of Balarama is as good as Krishna; the difference is that Krishna is blackish and Balarama is whitish. The Vaibhavaprakasha form was also displayed when Krishna appeared in the four-handed form of Narayana before Devaki when He was appearing in this world, and by the request of His parents He transformed Himself into a two-handed form. Therefore, sometimes He becomes four-handed and sometimes He becomes two-handed. When He is in a form of two hands that is actually Vaibhavaprakasha, and when He is four handed that is Vravhavabilasa. In His personal form He is just like a cowherd boy and He thinks Himself so, but when He is in the Vasudeva form He thinks Himself as the son of a kshatriya, and He feels Himself also as a kshatriya or a princely administrator.

Form, opulence, beauty, wealth, attractiveness, and pastimes are fully exhibited in His form as the son of Nanda. In some of the Vaishnava literature, it is found that sometimes in His form as Vasudeva, He becomes attracted to the form of Govinda in Vrindavana; sometimes as Vasudeva He desires to enjoy like Govinda, although the Govinda form and the Vasudeva form are one and the same. There is a passage in the Lalita Madhava 4th chapter in which Krishna addresses Uddhava as follows: "My dear friend, this Govinda, form as a cowherd boy, attracts Me. I wish to be like the damsels of Vraja and be attracted by this Govinda form." Similarly, in the Lalita Madhova, 8th chapter, Krishna says: "O how wonderful it is, who is this personality? After seeing Him I am attracted by Him, so that now I am desiring to embrace Him just like Radhika."

When this form of Krishna becomes a little differentiated, it is called Tadekatma. In this Tadekatmarupa or form, there are two divisions also: one is called Svamsha. Both in the Vilasa and Svamsha forms also there are many differential features which are also divided into Prabhava and Vaibhava. As far as Vilasa forms are concerned, there are innumerable Prabhava Vilasa. Krishna expands Himself as Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Someshvara, Nanda, Damodara, Keshava, Madhava, Hrishikesha Padmanabha and Aniruddha in the original Chaturvyuha, or four-armed forms.

There are innumerable four-armed formal manifestations in different planets and different places. For instance, this four formal manifestation is both in Dwaraka and Mathura eternally. And from these four forms originally there are the principle twenty four forms, named differently in terms of the different adjustments of the symbols in the hands—and they are called Vaibhavavilasa. The same four formal manifestations of Krishna is in each planet of the spiritual sky, called the Narayana loka or Vaikuntha loka. In the Vaikuntha loka He is manifested in a four-handed form called Narayana. And from each Narayana there is a manifestation of the four formal forms as mentioned above. Therefore Narayana is in the center, and the four formal forms are surrounding the Narayana form. Each of the four forms again expands in three different forms, and they all have their different names, beginning from Keshava, and they are twelve in all. Such forms are understood by different names according to the different placements of the symbols in the hands of Narayana. As far as the Vasudeva form is concerned, in the four formal forms they are three, namely Keshava, Narayana, and Madhava. The three forms of Govinda are known as Govinda, Vishnu, and Sri Madhusudana. It should be noted however that this Govinda form is not the same Govinda form as manifested in Vrindavana (as the son of Nanda). Similarly, Pradyumna is also divided into three forms known as Trivikrama, Vaman, and Sridhara, and similarly there are three forms of Aniruddha known as Hrishikesha Padmanabha and Damodara. ☺
The temple of Lord Purushottama is located ten kilometres from Thiruchirapalli, on the banks of the Kollidam River.

**History**

It is said that originally the five-headed Brahma or Panchmukha Brahma is the creator of this earthly planet. Lord Shiva also has five heads. Goddess Parvathy Devi thus mistook Brahma for Shiva, as she is very chaste and always casts her glance down, not looking straight at the man before her. So she offered flowers at Panchmukha Brahma’s feet, thinking they were her husband’s. Infuriated by this, so that Parvathy would not repeat this mistake, Shiva plucked off a head of Brahma. Thus Brahma became four-headed or Chaturmukha Brahma.

As a result of his offence to Brahma, Shiva could not get the skull of Brahma off his hand, as it stuck fast to his hand. All efforts to remove it went in vain. With the head stuck to his hand, Shiva continued to perform his *uncha vrutti* (a Vedic system where *brahmanas* go from door to door begging for grains just sufficient for that day). But the skull would consume all the food! When Shiva finally came to Lord Purushottama (Vishnu), the Lord asked His consort Sri Mahalakshmi to offer food to Shiva. She did so and the bowl became full with more than sufficient food to satiate Shiva’s hunger. Mahalakshmi is named Poornavalli or one who fulfils the requirements of Her children. Shiva realised the greatness of Mahalakshmi, the universal Mother, and requested Her *moksha*. Mother Mahalakshmi directed Shiva to go to a place called Thirukandiyur and pray to Lord Vishnu there. Accordingly it is from Thirukarambanur that Shiva received instructions on *moksha*.

Mahalakshmi is known as *Thayar* in Tamil, which means mother. She is regarded as the mother of the universe.

When Sri Ramanujacharya offered his treatise on surrender to the Lord, he first offered his obeisance to Mother Mahalakshmi as She is more compassionate than the Supreme Lord, just like a mother is more attached to her children than the father.

Bhrigu Muni’s curse stripped Brahma of worship at his temples. Lord Brahma was so worried that there was no temple for his worship, that he came down to Earth and performed austerities on the banks of the Kollidam River. To test him, Lord Purushottama stood there as a *kadamba* tree. Brahma understood that the tree was indeed Vishnu and began to offer worship to it. Lord Brahma was so immersed in the worship of Lord Vishnu as Purushottama that he totally forgot about his motive of penance. That was his pure devotional service.

Many ages later, when Maharaja Janaka was performing a *yagna* on the banks of the Kollidam, a dog ate the *havis* rice kept for the offerings. To relieve himself from the sin of this, Janaka Maharaja worshipped Lord Purushottama in the *kadamba* tree and built a huge temple complex with shrines for Brahma as well. A very unique feature about this temple is that this is the only *divya desam* apart from Thirunavai in Kerala, which has Mahalakshmi in standing posture. Since She gave *bhakti* to Shiva here, She is seen in standing posture and the...
Shiva deity here is known as Bhikshadanar (a mendicant). Another very unique feature of the temple is that there are no doors in this temple, so devotees can worship the Lord twenty four hours a day!

Since Lord Vishnu appeared as a kadamba tree at this place, it is called Kathambanur, which later became Karambanur. The name Karambanur is mentioned in the works of Thirumangai Alwar, one of the twelve Alwar saints of South India. This temple is commonly known as Uthamar Kovil, after the Lord's name, Purushottama.

The Temple

The temple is very simple and does not have huge gopurams. Lord Purushottama is seen lying on Adisesha, facing east. Facing south is the deity of Shiva as a mendicant or Bhikshadanar. There is a separate shrine for Varadaraja Perumal, Mahalakshmi, Venugopala Krishna, Sri Rama with Sita and Lakshmana, Goddess Saraswathi, Sri Ramanujacharya, Sri Kulashekara Alwar, Manavalan Mamunkal, Anjaneya, Garuda and Thirumangai Alwar. The vimana of this temple is known as udyyoga vimana and there is a beautiful pond called Kadamba Pushakarani adjacent to the temple.

Festivals

Devout Vaishnavas perform various festivals for the pleasure of Lord Purushottama, apart from the daily worship as per the agama shastras. The daily temple worship takes place with six bhoga offerings. The major festival of this temple is the Brahmostsavam, performed in the month of Karthika. Once a year Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam comes to this temple and blesses the devotees and Lord Shiva. As a return courtesy, Lord Purushottama goes to Srirangam on Masi month in the asterism of Makam along with Lord Sundarajaraja of Anbil. Apart from the Brahmostsavam, Vasantotsava and Janmastami are other important festivals of this temple.

Thirumangai Alwar

The glorious Thirumangai Alwar stayed in Uthamar Kovil when overseeing the construction of seven prakara walls of Srirangam. It is part of the history that Thirumangai Alwar was a king and one of the greatest Vaishnavas of that time who decided to build and expand the Srirangam temple, since Ranganatha was his beloved. He had great wealth that was piled up in Uthamar Kovil, which he used for the construction.

Thirumangai Alwar called Lord Purushottama as “uthamar” and hence the name Uthamar Kovil. Only Thirumangai Alwar and Andal referred to Lord Vishnu as Uthamar. Thirumangai Alwar could see the Uthamar Kovil from Srirangam itself and sang in praise of the Lord: “Oh Purushottama, glorious Lord of Karambanur who dwells in the divya desam too.

You are the one who has no doors to Your temple.
You are the only one whom I can see from Srirangam.
You are Uthama Purushottama! 😇

Photo courtesy: Santanakrishnan, Srirangam
The Deity or archa vigraha is the form that the Supreme Lord resides in, to accept the offerings of His devotees and to give them an opportunity to personally relate with Him in this material world. Although the Supreme Lord is transcendental to matter and His form is spiritual, He permeates all matter, including stone, wood and metal. Worshipping His deity form is not different from worshipping the Lord directly. Vedic scriptures mention a variety of materials that may be used to create the Deity.

Every year, the Brahmotsava festival is held on Hare Krishna Hill to commemorate the appearance of the Deities here—Sri Sri Radha Krishnachandra, Sri Sri Krishna Balarama, Sri Sri Nitai Gauranga, Sri Srinivasa Govinda and Sri Sri Prahlada Narasimha.

From April 24 to May 5, the colourful Brahmotsava celebrations with vahana utsava, dolotsava, kalyanotsava and churana abhisheka were celebrated. Every evening the devotees participated in the vahana utsava and with the Lord they witnessed dance and music performances that were held for the pleasure of Their Lordships. Fireworks lit up the sky during the vahana utsava. The festival culminated with the churana abhisheka ceremony when all the utsava vigraha of the temple received a ceremonial bath together in the main temple hall, an event that takes place only once every year. After ten hectic days of exciting festivities followed by a relaxing churana abhisheka, Their Lordships Sri Radha Krishnachandra were taken on a tranquil ride on a flower decorated barge in the temple kalyani, during the Theppotsava.
Gaja Vahana
Raja Rani Alankara

Bharatanatyam by Smt. Gayathri Shriram
Bharatanatyam by Mudrika Academy of Performing Arts

Ananta Sesha Vahana Vaikunthanatha Alankara
Surya Prabha Vahana
Giridhari Alankara

Odissi by Smt. Sarita Mishra
Hanumad Vahana
Seeta Rama Pattabhisheka Alankara

Kuchipudi by Vempatti Chinna Satyam’s Kuchipudi Arts Academy
Garuda Vahana
Ashtabhuja Narayana
Alankara

Kuchipudi by
Smt. Deepika
Reddy & group
Kalpa Vriksha Vahana
Venugopala Krishna Alankara

Bharatanatyam by Kalakshetra’s
Sri. P T Narendran
Maha Pallaki
Radha Raja Gopala
Alankara

Bharatanatyam by
Sri Parshwanath Upadhye & group
Ashva Vahana
Kalki Alankara

Bharatanatyam by
Kalakshetra’s
Sri Haripadman & group
Brahma Ratha
Vrindavan Krishna Vishesha Alankara

Gotipua Nritya
by Nakshyatra
Gurukul
Churna abhisheka

Theppotsava