Dasara Celebrations at ISKCON Mysore

Dasara was celebrated on a grand scale at ISKCON Mysore. On Vijayadashami, the day Lord Rama slew the demon Ravana, an evening of festivities dedicated to glorifying this extraordinary feat of the Supreme Lord was organised. Devotees offered Dashasahasrarchana seva – chanting 10,000 names of Lord Rama.

Devotees from Bangalore, Mangalore and Hubli gathered at Mysore for this grand festival. The utsava vigraha of Sri Sri Krishna Balarama adorned as Sri Rama and Lakshmana, rode on the Gaja Vahana.

50 feet high effigies of Ravana & Kumbhakarna were burnt, marking the victory of truth over evil.

International danseuse Dr. Vasundhara Doraswamy & troupe performed Sri Rama Darshanam, a dance drama narrating the glorious pastimes of Lord Rama.
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.
From Folly to Defeat

Do modern achievements spell success to the eyes of the enlightened?

A lecture in Stockholm on September 10, 1973
by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

parabhavas tavad abodha-jato
yanva na jijnasato atma-tattvam
yavat kriyas tavad idam mano vai
karmatmakam yena sarira-bandhah

"As long as one does not inquire about the spiritual values of life, one is defeated and subjected to miseries arising from ignorance. Be it sinful or pious, karma has its resultant actions. If a person is engaged in any kind of karma, his mind is called karmatmaka, coloured with fruitive activity. As long as the mind is impure, consciousness is unclear, and as long as one is absorbed in fruitive activity, he has to accept a material body." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.5.5)

In the previous verse, Rsabhadeva has said that madness after sense gratification and doing all kinds of sinful activity are not good. Those who are atheists may say, "Suppose we get a material body, and it's a little miserable. What is wrong with that? It will be finished. Then there will be no more pains and pleasures." That is also the Buddhist theory, that the body is a combination of matter, and there are pains and pleasures. So make this body zero. Then there will be no more pains and pleasures.

So Rsabhadeva answers this point: "No, this body will be finished, and you'll have to accept another body. And as long as you continue to accept one body after another, the miserable condition of material existence will continue."

In the beginning, Rsabhadeva said that this human body is not to be misused simply for sense gratification like the dogs and hogs. So now he says, parabhavas tavad abodha-jato yavan na jijnasato atma-tattvam: "These rascals do not know that for want of knowledge of the soul (atma-tattvam)—in the bodily concept of life—whatever they are doing is defeat." They are thinking, "Now, by scientific advancement, we are able to go to the moon planet. This is our achievement." Of course, I do not know whether they can go. But at least they are attempting. But Rsabhadeva says, "That is not your achievement That is your defeat." Why? Because they cannot go to the moon planet or sun planet or any other planet like that. They are simply wasting their time.

Just try to understand. Suppose you want to go to some foreign country, can you enter by force? Just like in England, some foreigners come by smuggling. So that is not allowed. Similarly, from the shastra [scripture] we understand that nobody can go to the moon planet or any other planet unless he's fit. It is said in the Bhagavad-gita, yanti deva-vrata devan. These are the higher planetary systems. The demigods live there. So unless you are fit to live with the demigods, you cannot go there.

Similarly, unless you make yourself fit to enter into Krishnaloka, you cannot go there by force. That is not possible. To enter a foreign country, you have to have a visa, you have to have a passport, meet immigration requirements—then you'll be allowed to enter.

So even if you go to another planet, you'll be driven away. What is the use of such an attempt? You cannot stay there. Nor will you be allowed to enter. So this endeavour to go there by so-called scientific advancement is simply defeat. What have they achieved by these excursions? Nothing. No tangible achievement. But Russia and America have spent billions of dollars to go to the moon.

Even if you go there, you'll still have to die—you'll have to give up this body—and you do not know where you'll be placed after death. That is under nature's hand. You cannot dictate—"After death, I shall go to that planet or this planet." No. You are completely under nature's control.

Everyone is ambitious, but simply by becoming ambitious can one become a very rich man or a very respectable man? That is not possible. One must qualify himself. So these are futile attempts. You have to act according to the higher laws. But they do not believe that there is higher authority, that there is judgment. They blindly think they can do whatever they like. That is not good. Parabhava. This is called defeat. Parabhavas tavad abodha-jatah. And as long as one is not inquisitive to understand what he is (yavan na jijnasata), that is defeat.

This is the condition. Nobody is interested to know his identity. This is the instruction we get from Sanatana...
Gosvami. When he first approached Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, his question was: 'ke ami', 'kene amaya jare tapatraya.' This is a very nice question: "Kindly tell me what I am and why I am subjected to the threefold miseries of material existence. I do not want all these miserable conditions of life, but I am forced to accept them. Therefore, what is my position? Why am I forced to accept them?"

This is called atma-tattva jijnasa, inquiry: "What am I?" Nobody knows what he is. Everyone thinks, "I'm this body." Therefore he's abodha-jatah: from the very birth he's a rascal. He does not know his identity. Someone's thinking, "I'm American." Someone's thinking, "I'm an Indian." Someone's thinking, "I'm a Russian." All these identifications are doggish identifications.

The dog is thinking, "I am this body." The cat is thinking, "I am this body." Similarly, if a human being thinks like that, then he remains in ignorance. And if you remain in ignorance, whatever you believe to be to your credit is not an achievement: it is defeat. This is to be understood.

One should be inquisitive. Sanatana Gosvami has set the example. He went to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and asked, "Sir, let me know what I am. In ordinary behavior, people say that I am a very learned man. They say, 'Panditji.' "The brahmana is addressed in India as "Panditji." Panditji means "very learned." So Sanatana Gosvami submitted, "The general people say I am very learned, but actually I do not know what I am." He admitted this.

Ask any so-called scholar, doctor, Ph.D if he knows what he is. Professor Kotovsky in Moscow said, "After finishing the body, everything is finished." He does not know what he is. This is the position. Therefore, the so-called scholars, learned men, whatever they are doing, they're being defeated because they do not know their identity. Unless you know your identity, then how can you work for the goal of your life? If your identity is mistaken, then whatever you are doing, that is your defeat.

Yavat kriyas tavad idam mano vai karmatmakam yena sarira-bandhah. Everyone has a different type of mentality. Karmatmakam refers to the general mentality that "I shall work very nicely, I shall get money, and I shall enjoy life." Those who are followers of Vedic ritualistic ceremonies are trying to enjoy in the next life also—by punya karya, or "pious activities." But pious activities are also karmic activities. Therefore, according to our philosophy, not only are we uninterested in impious activities, we are not even interested in pious activities. This is our position.

By pious activities you can get birth in a very aristocratic or rich family. You can become a very learned scholar. You can become beautiful. You American or Western people are supposed to be very learned, advanced in material science. You are also good-looking and richer than other countries. This is due to your past pious activities.

Suppose you have received these opportunities for your pious activities, and somebody has taken birth in Greenland, where there is always snow and there are so many inconveniences. Or someone has taken birth somewhere in Africa where there are no facilities as you have. From the spiritual point of view, both these kinds of facility or inconvenience are one. In any birth, you have to enter within the womb of a mother to stay nine months in a packed-up condition. And nowadays they are killing the child within the womb. You cannot even come out. Before your coming out from the womb of your mother, you might be killed by your very mother or father. So either you are in the womb of a very rich mother or a poor mother, or in the womb of a black mother or white mother, or a learned mother or a foolish mother, the pains of staying within the mother are the same.

And as soon as you accept some material body, you'll have to suffer the bodily pains and pleasures. Then, at the time of death, the same painful condition is there for everyone. So it doesn't matter whether one is rich or poor, the material condition will cause one to suffer.

If you continue to absorb your mind in fruitive activities, and if you do not fulfill your desires, then nature will give you another body in your next life to fulfill those desires. This is going on. Therefore it is parabhava, defeat. Your business is to know that you are not this body; you are spirit soul, part and parcel of God, Krishna. Your real business is to become Krishna conscious, fully, and go back home, back to Godhead, to finish this business of repetition of birth and death. But who will understand this? Therefore it is said: krishna ye bhaje se bada catura.

One who has understood the meaning of the Krishna consciousness movement must be very intelligent. Without being intelligent, nobody can understand the basic principle of this movement.

The basic principle of this movement is to understand Krishna. And if you understand Krishna, then after giving up this body, you go to Krishna. This devotional service—worshiping Krishna in the temple, dressing Him, and so on—all these occupational duties will help you understand Krishna. Although it is very difficult to understand Krishna, if you engage yourself in Krishna's service as prescribed in the shastras or by the spiritual master, then Krishna will reveal to you what He is. And that is wanted. That is the perfection of your life. As soon as you understand Krishna, then you become fit to go back home, back to Godhead and finish this business of repeated
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Rsabhadeva says that as long as one's mind is absorbed in the conception that "I shall work, and I shall enjoy," then one is defeated. As people are doing here—industry, trade, so many things. The real purpose is to gratify their senses. But without understanding Krishna consciousness, without being Krishna conscious, if one simply wastes his time for these fruitive activities, then he is defeated. Parabhavas tavad abodha-jatah.

In the next verse. Lord Rsabhadeva says:

*evam manah karma-vasam prayunte avidyayatmany upadhiyamane pritir na yavan mayi vasudeve na mucyate deha-yogena tavat*

“When the living entity is covered by the mode of ignorance, he does not understand the individual living being and the supreme living being, and his mind is subjugated to fruitive activity. Therefore, until one has love for Lord Vasudeva, who is none other than Myself, he is certainly not delivered from having to accept a material body again and again." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.5.6)

So everyone is under this impression, this wrong conception of life. But he can be saved if he somehow or other becomes a devotee of Vasudeva, Krishna. *Pritir na yavan mayi vasudeve.* Rsabhadeva is an incarnation of Vasudeva. In this entanglement of birth and death, if someone comes in contact with a devotee and gets the seed of devotional service, that is the beginning of his being saved from the repetition of birth and death. We are giving opportunities to the people in general. We are opening centers in different parts of the world. What is the purpose? The purpose is to give the chance for everyone to become a devotee of Vasudeva, Krishna. Then he will be saved.

People are struggling, working hard and getting the result for sense gratification and the repetition of birth and death. In this struggle for existence, if somehow or other one gets the seed of devotional service to Vasudeva, then he's saved. Unless one becomes Krishna conscious, his repetition of birth and death—contacting one body after another—will continue. This understanding is the basic principle of Krishna consciousness.

Do not misunderstand that Krishna consciousness is a kind of religious faith. It is a science: how to get release from the repetition of birth and death. This is the science. It is not a system of religion, as people accept some type of religion. Somebody's a Hindu; somebody's a Muslim; somebody's a Christian. It is not that. It is a science. We are teaching. "Somehow or other, enhance your love for God. Then you are saved." And how do we enhance that love of Godhead? By our activities: rising early in the morning, offering *mangala-arati*, dressing the Deity, offering Him nice foodstuff, observing festivals, writing books, distributing them. These activities in devotional service will save us from the repetition of birth and death. Otherwise, we are doomed. We'll have to continue this repetition of birth and death.

This is *avidya.* By *avidya,* ignorance, sometimes we are human beings, sometimes cats, sometimes dogs, sometimes demigods. This is going on. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says: *brahmanda bhramite.* We are wandering throughout the universe from one body to another, one planet to another. But if somebody comes in contact with this Krishna consciousness movement and tries to understand Krishna consciousness, he's fortunate, because he'll be saved from the repetition of birth and death.

Therefore Krishna personally comes, and He says, *sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja.* That is for your interest. Krishna says, "Surrender unto Me." It is not Krishna's interest. If you don't surrender. Krishna does not lose anything. He's omnipotent. He can create millions of devotees like you by His desire. He's not canvassing: "You become My devotee, and I shall be very rich." No. It is for your interest. If you become a devotee of Vasudeva, then you are saved from the repetition of birth and death.

It is Krishna's interest in this way: because we are part and parcel of Krishna, we are His sons. The rich father does not like to see his son become a crazy fellow loitering in the street. But if his son does not come home, there is no loss for the father. And if the son comes back to the home of his rich father, it is in the son's interest.

So Krishna is canvassing: "Surrender unto Me." Those who are fortunate will accept this offer of Krishna's. And when we actually love Krishna, that is called *priti.* We love our beloved—our child or husband or wife—but that is not real love. That is a temporary sentiment. Actual love is possible only with Krishna. Once you love Krishna, that love cannot be broken at any time. Therefore, somehow or other we have to engage ourselves in loving Krishna. That is the success of life.

Thank you very much. 😊
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Srila Prabhupada: If, rather than surrender to Krishna, you want to do something else. Krishna is so kind that He’ll say, “All right, do it—see the effect.” After all, without Krishna’s help, we cannot do anything.

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, you have said that today’s leaders are followers of Hiranyakashipu. Like that demon, they are devoted to the idea of becoming powerful and opulent—just devoted to becoming powerful and opulent.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. The scriptures describe two kinds of men: daiva asura eva ca—all over the universe, there are two groups, the godly and the ungodly. These two kinds of men and these two kinds of activities will go on. This is the nature of the material world. You will not find that cent percent of the men here are perfect. That is not possible. There are a class of men who are imperfect, bewildered.

But in the scriptures it is being described who is perfect and who is imperfect. That you have to distinguish. You cannot clear this material world of imperfect persons; that is not possible. But you must know who is perfect and who is imperfect. And you must make your choice—
whether you want to remain imperfect or you want to make progress toward becoming perfect. That is up to you.

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, it seems almost like a contradiction, in one sense, when Krishna says in this verse [Bhagavad-gita 16.9], speaking of the demoniac, prabhavan— that they are flourishing.

Srila Prabhupada: Materially—materially. It is just as when you go to a modern city and say, “Oh, how developed.” Prabhavan—a kind of flourishing is going on. But what kind of prabhavan, what kind of flourishing? Krishna explains this in His next words. Ksayaya jagato ‘hitah: flourishing, yes—flourishing toward world destruction.

So the flourishing of the demoniac is in the wrong direction. That is not nourishing, actually. It is flourishing in the material sense, but what is the purpose, what is the end? Ksayaya jagato ‘hitah—world destruction. In other words, there are two kinds of progress: to hell, to heaven.

Disciple: As you know, Srila Prabhupada, starting around the turn of the century, people were thinking it was progress to build big skyscrapers. Now it’s so hellish in the cities, everybody is moving out.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Yes. Actually, when there are so many skyscrapers, it is hell. The natural flow of air is obstructed. In Bombay, for instance, you’ll see this unnatural situation. If you are on the top floor, you have got a little facility. If you are on the lower floors, it is hell. When you are in the midst of several skyscrapers and you are on the first or second floor, it is simply hell. No air. You have to run electric fans or air conditioning. You cannot see the sky, because the buildings are so tall. In fact, is that not why they are called skyscrapers?

Disciple: Yes, Srila Prabhupada. They are so tall that they virtually touch the sky.

Srila Prabhupada: So you have touched the sky in such a way that I cannot see, even. And always I need to use electric lights.

But here in the country, we see the sky, the sun. How nice it is! This is life. We see the green. We see down and up—clear sky, sun. This is life. We get rejuvenation in this atmosphere.

What is this nonsense—all skyscrapers, no air, no light? Ksayaya jagato ‘hitah. The mind becomes crippled. Health deteriorates. Children cannot even see the sky. Everything is spoiled.

Disciple: Every day in the big cities, Srila Prabhupada, an “air-quality management” bureau makes a report on the level of pollution. And on some days, it is not good for your health to leave your home. Now some people are even selling fresh air.

Srila Prabhupada: Fresh air? (Laughter.) Fresh water also.

Disciple: In Tokyo there are special machines from which you can purchase clean air and clean water.

Srila Prabhupada: “Clean water”—by treating sewage and cleaning urine. Now people are doing that. Clean water by cleaning urine. During the last war, the German people derived fat from stool. Fat extracted from stool. Scientifically. You can use it as butter very nicely on your bread. This kind of thing is going on.

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, some of these materialists argue that their modern techniques are not totally unbeneficial. For example, they have developed the tractor, which, they say, enables them to produce bountiful harvests. So much so that they can feed practically the entire world.

Srila Prabhupada: Why do they not?

Disciple: Because their mentality is very abominable.

Srila Prabhupada: But if they can feed so many people, they should do that. There are so many starving people, and in America alone, so much land is lying fallow.

Disciple: Yes. and so many people are unemployed. Better to put people to work in the fields than in factories. If they are going to work. let them grow grain and milk the cows.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Then they will live very happily.

“But,” say the leaders, “that we will not do.” Ksayaya jagato ‘hitah: they are bent upon world destruction. Ksayaya means “total ruination.” So save these people from ruination.

(To be continued) 😊

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Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is regarded around the world as a powerful example of true love. The play's magic deeply moves many who see or read it. Some people admire the lovers' determination to die rather than compromise their ideal love; others are struck by the tragic way lasting happiness eludes Romeo and Juliet; and many see reflected in the story hankerings and frustrations experienced in their own lives.

Whatever the cause of the story's appeal, it is interesting to imagine what might have happened if the story had ended in a different way. After all, in romantic stories the hero and heroine often overcome all obstacles, marry, and live "happily ever after."

Let's suppose Friar Lawrence's plan to reunite Juliet with her exiled new husband had worked. His idea was to have her drink a sedative that would make her appear dead. He would then inform Romeo of the ruse and rescue Juliet, with Romeo's help, from the crypt where she would be lying. The couple would then go to the city of Mantua and start a new life together. No tragic endings, no untimely deaths, no irony of destiny.

Let's return to their home some twenty years later to see how "ever after" has favoured the fabled lovers. Upon arriving, we learn that Romeo and Juliet recently had their eighth child, but the neighbours doubt they'll stop there. Having so many kids has taken a toll on poor Juliet. She is no longer the exquisite beauty Romeo first met years ago. She looks tired and aged, and Romeo has begun calling her "Pumpkin." Disposable diapers haven't been invented, nor have canned baby food, coin laundries, or any other modern conveniences. "Happily ever after" has turned into "entanglement ever after."

Juliet is thinking of talking to Romeo about her frustration with the kind of life they now have: their romance is long gone, the routine of everyday life is boring, and she's discovered many defects in Romeo she'd overlooked when they were dating back in Verona, such as his table manners. And, if ignorance is bliss, Juliet is better off not knowing about a couple of love affairs he's been trying to hide.

Romeo hasn't fared that well either. After the Friar failed to get a pardon for him in Verona, the couple settled down in Mantua, where Romeo was unemployed for a while. Finally, he got a job as a town clerk, but that wasn't much help: his wages weren't enough to maintain their former aristocratic standard of living. And having been rejected by their families, he can't expect any support from them.

Looking at himself in the mirror recently, Romeo noticed with dismay his receding hairline, his expanding waistline, and a few other lines—in his face. To make things worse, he's been realizing that Juliet isn't the bright angel he had originally thought she was, but rather a short-tempered, spoiled kid completely unprepared for real life. And now, with so many children and all those household chores, she doesn't even have time for him anymore.

Both are going through an early mid-life crisis, and their future doesn't look worth writing about, much less by the great Shakespeare. They are preoccupied with fearful thoughts of unfulfilled dreams, rebellious children, impending old age, inevitable diseases, and finally death.

If this had been the story of Romeo and Juliet, instead of the one in Shakespeare's tragic play, they would never have become famous. Their story would have been just one more among the millions of trivial real-life "love stories" occurring daily around the world.

Now let us analyze Shakespeare's version of the story of Romeo and Juliet from the unique perspective of the ancient wisdom of India. In the renowned *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.62-63), Sri Krishna explains the cycle of entanglement in material life. He begins, "While
contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them.” Romeo fell hard for Juliet simply because he happened to see her at a party; otherwise, he could have gone on enchanted with his girlfriend Rosaline, or he might have found another young love. As Friar Lawrence put it, “Is Rosaline, whom thou didst love so dear, so soon forsaken? Young men’s love, then, lies not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes.”

Furthermore, Krishna says, “From such attachment lust develops.” Lust is an irresistible impulse to enjoy something, or someone, such as Romeo felt for Rosaline or Juliet. Influenced by lust, Romeo jumped over fences, climbed walls, risked being seen and killed by the Capulets, and arranged an elopement. In less passionate circumstances he himself would have regarded all this as zany behaviour unbefitting a respectable Italian gentleman.

Then, “From lust, anger arises, from anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion, bewilderment of memory.” Anger manifests because sense objects tend to let us down; either we become bored with them after a while, or our plans to enjoy them fail. In any case, we are unable to enjoy them forever. As for Romeo and Juliet, the dispute between their families prevented them from enjoying each other as they so ardently desired. Anger, delusion, and confusion thus quickly arose in their minds.

From there, “Intelligence is lost and one falls again into the material pool.” Because of the many impediments to their happiness, Romeo and Juliet gradually lost their sense of discrimination, and this eventually led to their tragic deaths. To dispel the mystique of the outcome of the story, a modern youth counselor might add that their disregard for their own lives was the result of a combination of adolescent immaturity and a lack of communication at home, factors that lead to suffering or even death for many unfortunate young people today.

Seeing Shakespeare’s version of the story in the light of Bhagavad-gita, we can conclude that what touches people is that destiny was unkind to Romeo and Juliet and pushed them too soon into the final stages of the above-mentioned cycle of material entanglement, without their even having enjoyed some of the “normal” pleasure found in the early stages of the cycle. Readers wouldn’t be moved by our modified and less exciting version of the story, because the same cycle took a more natural course.

The cycle of entanglement described in Bhagavad-gita is universal, applying to everyone in material life under every circumstance. It would have applied to Romeo and Juliet as individuals even if they had never met each other, if they had gone their own ways after meeting, or if they had had a picture-perfect family life after getting married.
The cycle of entanglement does not discriminate regarding one’s sex, religion, time in history, wealth, and so on, and thus it affects all of us when we develop a materialistic approach to happiness. And it starts in a rather innocent way. In everyday life we can’t but contemplate other people’s appearance, possessions, and social life; we also see the slick new consumer products in the market; and we witness the romance and glitter of TV, cinema, and stories like Romeo and Juliet. We gradually become attached to these objects and begin selecting the ones we think will help us live happily ever after.

Full of energy, we then go out and try to make our dreams a reality. But things get complicated at this point because our narrow-minded optimism often overlooks the frustrating side effects that manifest along with our dreams. The ensuing entanglements often become the predominant factor in our lives. Or we achieve our dreams, only to find that they don’t bring us the happiness we thought they would, or that we are unable to hold on to them forever. By then we usually don’t have the energy or the direction to start all over again, and so we have to adjust our expectations and learn to live with the realities around us.

Since these are the results of our materialistic attempts to attain happiness, we need to look elsewhere to find lasting satisfaction. Bhagavad-gita warns us that happiness in the material plane is always subjected to the cycle of entanglement in material life. Bhagavad-gita offers us an alternative: finding happiness in a manner befitting our original, spiritual nature. There is a way of life in which actions don’t entangle us further, but gradually liberate us; a way of life in which the world is seen as it really is, and not as it appears to be; a way of life in which we use time to accomplish a higher goal, not just pass it until it’s used up; and a way of life in which the pleasures come from within, and not from our interaction with matter. That way of life is a means to self-realization and begins with chanting the Hare Krishna mantra.

For all Romeos, Juliets, and other seekers, we offer a word of advice from Srila Prabhupada, the founder-acharya of the Hare Krishna movement: “Material sense pleasures are due to the contact of the material senses with their objects. These pleasures are all temporary because the body itself is temporary. A liberated soul is not interested in anything which is temporary. Knowing well the joys of transcendental pleasures, how can a liberated soul agree to enjoy false pleasure? Those who are true yogis or learned transcendentalists are not attracted by sense pleasures, which are the causes of continuous material existence. The more one is addicted to material pleasures, the more he is entrapped by material miseries.”
We came to Bangalore in the summer of 2004 and we asked our new driver to take us to some temple where we can do puja and stay in Bangalore. He took us to what he called the biggest temple in Bangalore and that happened to be the ISKCON temple at Hare Krishna Hill.

At first glance we were amazed at such a big and clean temple. We have visited several Indian temples. But unfortunately none of the temples are really clean. Water and milk will be flowing all over the temple attracting flies, mosquitoes and other insects. We always had trouble sitting in the temple for long time. But the ISKCON temple is unique in that respect. They have put a lot of thought into keeping the place clean. You remove your shoes long before you enter the temple. The marble floor and 108 steps are kept clean somehow. I have never seen sweeper cleaning the temple but somehow the temple stays clean.

The temple is filled with chants all the time and that is another unique feature. You can literally sit anywhere in the temple and listen to chants and pray to God. Of course the main hall is where you want to visit to complete the darshan. The place is normally crowded but without crowd behaviour of pushing and jostling. You never feel threatened in the crowd and despite having so many people visiting the temple everyday there is never a very long wait for darshan. People at the ISKCON temple understand the queuing system to maintain the steady flow of crowd and there are no bottlenecks. Also everyone gets prasadam and some flowers to take home.

“At first glance we were amazed at such big and clean temple. They have put lot of thought into keeping the place clean”

The Higher Taste Restaurant in the ISKCON temple is one of the best vegetarian restaurants in Bangalore. Recently we have started to stay longer in the temple. With Bangalore traffic getting worse every day, reaching the ISKCON temple from our place now requires two hours. When we go to the temple we also plan lunch and dinner at the temple itself, thanks to the Higher Taste Restaurant. I am glad the management thought of this idea.

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Thiru Adanur, a temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu, is located on the banks of the Kaveri River near Trichy in Tamil Nadu. The temple is said to have been consecrated by Lord Durvasa, a renowned sage, who performed tapas (austerities) and tapas to attain moksha (liberation from the cycle of birth and death). The temple is revered as one of the 12 Jyotirlinga shrines of Lord Shiva, and it is also associated with the legend of Lord Indra and Durvasa Muni.

The temple is unique in that it is dedicated to Lord Vishnu in the guise of a mendicant, holding a pen and a palm leaf, as if He is going to take measurements. This represents the aspect of Lord Vishnu as the Supreme Architect of the universe who created everything with a cosmic scale.

The temple is also associated with the legend of Indra and Durvasa Muni. Indra, the king of the devas, was once cursed by Durvasa for his arrogance and pride. However, Durvasa later acknowledged his mistake and apologized to Indra, thereby restoring their relationship.

The temple is known for its beautiful architecture and intricate carvings. The main deity is Lord Vishnu, who is depicted in various forms, including as a mendicant holding a pen and a palm leaf. The temple also houses several shrines dedicated to other deities, including Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma.

The temple is a popular pilgrimage site fordevotees of Lord Vishnu and is known for its spiritual ambiance. The temple premises are surrounded by lush greenery and are a perfect spot for meditation and reflection.

Located in the picturesque surroundings of the Kaveri River, Thiru Adanur is a must-visit for devotees of Lord Vishnu and those who seek spiritual solace.

The Lord Who Reclines with Measuring Bowl, Pen and Palm Leaf!

Thiru Adanur Andalakkumayyan Perumal Temple

by Sampatkumara Ramanuja Dasan (Ashwin S)

The rajagopuram of Thiru Adanur

Located 11 kilometres from Kumbakonam is the temple of the Supreme Lord Vishnu as Andalakkumayyan Perumal in Adanur.

Pastime of the Temple

The legends of the divya desams are known by the temple's sthala purana. According to the sthala purana, Adanur is the place where many important pastimes of the Supreme Lord manifested.

One of the pastimes is associated with the great sage Durvasa. In Chapter 44 of the Brahmanda Purana, it is mentioned that once Brahma and Shiva got into a quarrel. Shiva's consort Parvati complained to Lord Vishnu that it was almost impossible to live with Shiva. Realising the inconvenience his anger had caused, Lord Shiva decided to deposit his anger into a great Muni patni's womb. A son (wife of a sage) womb. The quarrel was so violent that as a result of the anger of his anger had caused, Lord Shiva decided to deposit his anger into a great Muni patni's womb. A son (wife of a sage) womb. As a mendicant, Durvasa was travelling all over the universe preaching dharma. Once he happened to see a beautiful maiden named Vidhyadhari in the sky with a parijatha garland in her hands. Upon enquiry, Durvasa came to know that the garland was meant for Lord Vishnu. Durvasa took it as an opportunity to render his devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and, taking the garland from Vidhyadhari, proceeded to Vaikuntha. Paying obeisance to the nitya suris (eternally good beings) in Vaikuntha, Durvasa proceeded to have darshana of Lord Vishnu. In Vaikuntha Durvasa saw that the inhabitants were flying with their consorts in different types of airplanes made of gold, emerald and other gems. They all were just doing one thing - singing in praise of Lord Vishnu. Durvasa noted that while singing the glories of the Lord, the inhabitants even derided the presence of the blossoming madhavi, mandara, kunda, kurabaka, utpala, champaka, arna punnaga, nagakeshara, bakula, parijatha which all are fragrant and laden with honey. Seeing all this opulence of Vaikuntha, Durvasa paid obeisance to Lord Vishnu and offered the panjara garland. Lord Vishnu was seated on a beautiful couch of Adisesha with His consorts Sri Devi, Bhooodevi and Neela Devi. When Durvasa was about to leave Vaikuntha, Lord Vishnu presented him the prasadam garland. Durvasa was ecstatic and continued his travelling mission.

On the way Durvasa saw Indra, the king of the devas. Lord Indra was riding on his white elephant Airavatha. Indra paid obeisance to Durvasa, and, pleased with him, Durvasa gave Indra the prasadam garland he had just received. Indra placed the prasadam garland on the head of Airavatha. Apparently, the elephant was apprehensive of bees that the nectar in the flowers on the garland would attract, so he threw the garland down and stamped on it, destroying it. Durvasa fell into a rage for two reasons; the garland was the prasadam of Lord Vishnu and it was again mahaprasadam to Indra because it was given to him by his spiritual master (Durvasa). Durvasa's anger knew no bounds and he cursed Indra, "Oh Devendra you have not respected this mahaprasadam which is transcendental and the source of all wealth! You have not respected me and Lord Vishnu! As a result, you will lose all your wealth and reduce to be as insignificant as an ant. You have showed disrespect to me as a result of your unbridled pride and arrogance."

Indra begged pardon from Durvasa, but the sage did not relent. He said, "Look here Devendra, I am not as merciful as other sages. I do not have the quality to pardon others. Sages like Gauthama pardoned you and your arrogance has doubled. I will not pardon you!"

Durvasa left the place in a huff. Indra's wealth was looted by asuras and he was left with practically nothing. Indra came down to a sacred spot called Bhargava Kshetra. - Adanur. The place got the name Bhargava Kshetra because it was here that Bhrigu Muni prayed for a child. As a result of the intense penance of Indra, Lakshmi Devi came with Lord Vishnu and relieved him of his curse. This place where Lord gave darshana to Indra is called as Adanur.

There is another interesting pastime associated with this place. Once the celestial mother cow Kamadhenu wanted to have darshana of the Lord. She began penance here in Bhargava Kshetra. To test her devotion, Lord Vishnu gave her a marakkal (traditional measuring instrument for measuring rice etc.) and asked her to fill it with her offerings. No matter how much offering was supplied, the container simply couldn't be filled. Lakshmi Devi took compassion towards Mother Kamadhenu and placed a tulasi leaf in the vessel. The marakkal was filled instantly. Kamadhenu surrendered to the Lord and stayed there to serve the Him. Thus Bhargava Kshetra was renamed to Adanur by the Lord as a mark of the devotion of Kamadhenu. In Tamil aa means cow and then means tapas and oor means place - thus Aa-then-oor or Adanur.

The Lord with Measuring Bowl, Pen and Palm Leaf!

One of the unique features of this temple is that we can see the Lord reclining on the measuring bowl (marakkal) with a pen and a palm leaf, as if He is going to take measurements and note them down. The pastime of Thirumangai Alwar is associated with this unique darshana of the Lord.

Thirumangai Alwar, one of the 12 Alwars of South India, was the one who took up construction of temples as a task. He is known for his devotional songs in praise of Lord Vishnu, which have become an integral part of Tamil devotional literature.

Located in the picturesque surroundings of the Kaveri River, Thirumangai Alwar is a perfect spot for meditation and reflection. The temple is known for its beautiful architecture and intricate carvings. The main deity is Lord Vishnu, who is depicted in various forms, including as a mendicant holding a pen and a palm leaf. The temple also houses several shrines dedicated to other deities, including Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma.

The temple is a popular pilgrimage site for devotees of Lord Vishnu and is known for its spiritual ambiance. The temple premises are surrounded by lush greenery and are a perfect spot for meditation and reflection.
service. That was his unique devotional service. He took up the construction of the massive walls of Srirangam which stretch upto one kilometre in length. These can be still seen in Srirangam. Once, the Alwar went on a trip to collect funds for the service of Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam. At Thiru Adanur, he happened to meet a young devotee and struck up a conversation with him. The Alwar came to know that the devotee was a messenger of Vishnu and had come to help the Alwar, who was ecstatic on learning this and was curious to know the lilas of the Lord. The stranger had a measuring bowl (marakkal) in his hand. He explained that by chanting the holy names of the Lord, if anyone would ask for anything, the bowl would be filled with the substance desired. Being a great devotee, Alwar had no desire for wealth or money. But he asked the devotee to pay wages to the thousands of workers engaged in the construction of the wall in Srirangam. They came to an agreement that the devotee would measure the bowl with sand and pay it to the workers. This sand would turn to gold if the worker was sincere and toiled hard for the mission of Thirumangai Alwar. And for lazy workers it would remain sand forever. For most of the workers, the sand turned into gold. The devotee waited daily and gave the workers their wages in this way himself, making a note of these on a palm leaf as part of account keeping. One fine afternoon Thirumangai Alwar saw the devotee lying down with the measuring bowl as a pillow and the pen and palm leaf in both his hands. On closer observation, he noticed that this devotee closely resembled Sri Ranganatha of
Srirangam. Alwar found out that the devotee was none other than Lord Vishnu. Thirumangai Alwar went into a trance when he came to know that the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself came down to help him and that the Lord Himself paid the workers their salary!

The Lord decided to give darshana in Andalur, in the same way that Thirumangai Alwar had darshana. Therefore we can see the Lord with a measuring bowl for a pillow, and a pen and palm leaf in each of His hands. He took the name Andalakkumayyan (one who measures).

The Temple

The temple which is facing east is comparatively small yet magnificent. The three tiered rajagopuram is a simple one with dwarapalakas sculptured on it. The dvajasthamba is made of copper with Garudadeva praying to the Lord with devotion. Inside the sanctum sanctorum we can find the beautiful Lord Andalakkumayyan seated in reclining position on Adishesha with a marakkal as a pillow and an iron pen and palm leaf in His hands. Sri Devi and Bhoodevi are seen at the lotus feet of the Lord. Brahma is seated on a lotus emerging from the navel of Lord Andalakkumayyan. Bhrigu Muni, Mother Kamadhenu and Thirumangai Alwar can be seen in the sanctum, offering their prayers to the Supreme Lord. The enchanting smile of the Lord will immediately steal our hearts! The festival Deity is called Sri Ranganatha and is seen with His consorts Sri Devi, Bhoodevi and Andal. There are two pillars in the sanctum known as manathoon. Devotees hug these pillars as they replicate the same two pillars at the Srirangam temple. The vimana of the Lord is known as pranava vimana and the small pond adjacent to the temple is known as Surya Theertha. The temple as we see it today was built by the devotee king, Aditya Chola.

Other Shrines

There is a separate shrine for Lakshmi Devi. She is known as Ranganayaki in this temple. There are also

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separate shrines for Yoga Narasimha, the Alwars and acharyas.

Festivals

In the Tamil month of Vaikasi, a 10 day grand Brahmotsava is celebrated for the pleasure of Lord Andalakkumayyan. A three day Pavitrolsava is celebrated in the month of Avani when sacred silk threads in five colours are offered to the Lord, amidst the chanting of Vedic hymns and the Alwars’ Divya Prabandas (works of 12 Alwars). On the appearance day of Andal, the Deities of Andal and the Lord come out in procession. On all Fridays of Adi and Thai months, Ranganayaki Devi is taken out in procession. On the occasion of Narasimha Jayanthi, a grand abhisheka is performed to Yoga Narasimha.

Thirumangai Alwar has sung in praise of the Lord in his work Periya Thirumadal. This is the only temple where one can have darshana of Thirumangai Alwar in the sanctum, along with the main deity.

“Oh Lord who has stolen my heart!
Oh Lord who appears in Moozhikulam temple,
I see that Lord as Andalakkumayyan in Adanur!”

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Nestled within the nucleus of a large suburban hospital is a room of a different colour. Its decor departs from the chrome-and-tile motif that slinks throughout the hallways; this room is adorned with thick red draperies, mahogany benches, somber wallpaper. A perpetual hush hangs in the air, unbroken by nurses’ chatter or clanging bed trays. Yet it is in this room that the most significant utterances in the hospital find their voice. The small placard outside the door reads simply “Chapel.”

On any day herein you’ll find heads bowed into clasped hands, a pose rarely adopted elsewhere under the relentless scrutiny of fluorescent hospital lights. Here, tears flow without excuse, as victims of despair plead for one merciful last hope. And here, in the face of the uncontrollable, supreme will is acknowledged with poignant supplication.

My mother, who works in the hospital, confided to me that she sends people here when she senses that their human endurance has crumbled. “And you know, they always do find strength,” she nods sagaciously, “when they put it in a prayer.” Indeed, the solace of sincere prayer is the testament of every religious creed. Prayer draws forth with solemn clarity the essence of spiritual being. Some tremendous source of love and compassion is tapped, some sense of higher destiny revealed, if only for a brief glimpse, to the humble believer.

Now there’s even scientific evidence to bolster my mother’s recommendation. In an unusual study conducted by San Francisco cardiologist Dr. Randy Byrd, prayers seemed to benefit the health of the prayer’s beneficiary. The 393 patients in a coronary care unit were split into equal groups of comparable age and degree of illness. Unbeknownst to both the patients and their doctors, members of one group were assigned to individuals who agreed to pray for them each day. The prayer-persons were asked to pray in any manner they chose, adding a prayer for the “beneficial healing and quick recovery” of their assigned patient.

The results showed that the health of the prayer recipients fared markedly better than that of the control group. They had fewer complications, required less antibiotics, and none of them required incubation.

Yet, interesting as this evidence might be. God is never compelled to answer anyone’s prayer, however ardent, and so this “scientific” study presents a distorted image of God and prayer. The Supreme Lord is not like the genie in the lamp, awaiting our commands. After all, while these particular prayers were selfless and beneficent, other equally heartfelt prayers are less so. Some people pray, for instance, for tickets to a rock concert. Others pray, quite earnestly, for sunshine on weekends or revenge on the neighbourhood bully. And what happens when the objectives of two prayers collide, such as when soldiers’ wives on both sides of a battle pray for their husbands’ safe return? How can both be satisfied?

Ultimately, God’s inscrutable will is shrouded to our puny calculations. Sometimes He seems to lavish some patient who is remaining fiercely implacable to another. From scriptural descriptions, however, we can gain some understanding of His transcendental dealings, for whatever the outcome. He always has the spiritual prosperity of the petitioner at heart. From His viewpoint, our physical bodies, our complicated lives, our burning hopes and fears all constitute but a flicker in the movement of infinite time. It all comes and goes so quickly that it’s really inconsequential. His concern is for the beloved spirit soul encased in the body: how to awaken his spiritual consciousness? Sometimes that awakening requires some shocking insight into the ephemeral nature of material happiness, some great pain or loss that brings us to perceive reality. If through suffering we are driven to seek out the Lord’s mercy, then we are brought closer to the permanent liberation of spiritual realization.

When we pray, therefore, we might consider forgoing requests for material boons, however altruistic, that will eventually vanish anyway. All material benedictions are but patchwork remedies for an underlying spiritual disease. Our best prayer, for ourselves and others, is one that will awaken our relationship with the Supreme Lord. Thus the advice of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is that we concentrate on one very special prayer: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna. Krishna Krishna. Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. This prayer is translated. “O my dear Lord, please engage me in Your service.”

Loving service to the Supreme Lord, guided by knowledge of Him, removes material illusions from the heart. Thus the Hare Krishna mantra is the most powerful remedy for suffering, and it is the highest form of prayer.
Yet it is so simple that it can be uttered again and again, under any circumstance, for it is always the appropriate prayer.

Since we all have a precious, unique relationship with God, our prayers are special and dear to Him. So we might pray as our heart leads us and at the same time chant Hare Krishna and cultivate a higher understanding of spiritual existence. Gradually we can be drawn into a state of exalted consciousness, untroubled even at the prospect of suffering and death, secure in spiritual trust of Him. 😊
NARADA MUNI
The Father of Devotional Service
One of the most prominent sages in the Vedic literature, he travels throughout the universe awakening love for the Lord.
by Satyaraja Dasa

Narada Muni is exalted in Vedic texts as one of the twelve mahajanas, or great authorities on eternal truth. Details of his life and teachings are recounted in the Narada Purana, the Padma Purana, and throughout Srimad-Bhagavatam. So advanced is his level of spirituality that in these texts he is even sometimes called “Bhagavan,” a term usually reserved for the Supreme Lord, and in the Bhagavad-gita (10.26) Lord Krishna Himself says, “Of the sages among the demigods, I am Narada.”

As a preeminent representative of God, Narada Muni is often considered the original spiritual master. Srila Prabhupada states in his commentary to the Srimad-Bhagavatam (6.5.22), “The immediate spiritual master is the representative of Narada Muni; there is no difference between the instructions of Narada Muni and those of the present spiritual master.” Prabhupada further refers to Narada as “the father of devotional service.” (6.16.26)

ISKCON devotees know Narada Muni as “the eternal spiritual spaceman,” because he is described throughout the Vedic literature as a transcendental mystic who received from Krishna the ability to traverse the cosmos, delivering the Hare Krishna maha-mantra to sincere souls and instigating advancement on the spiritual path.

“Instigating” may seem the wrong word to describe a celestial sage, but Narada is famous for pushing people to the limit, forcing them to make decisions that enable them to advance in Krishna consciousness.

Narada also serves as an instigator in Lord Krishna's pastimes. One example occurs around the time of Krishna's birth. When the demon Kamsa hears a voice from the sky, telling him that Devaki's eighth child (Krishna) will kill him, it is Narada who instills Kamsa with fear that any of Devaki's children might be his enemy. Narada thereby persuades Kamsa to kill all of Devaki's children. Narada does this to accelerate Krishna's appearance and enhance Kamsa's reputation as a demon, causing Krishna to eventually kill him and establish righteousness in society. (This was all done under the Lord's mysterious internal potency. Later, Lord Krishna brought the children back to life.)

Another example of Narada's instigative powers is seen in his exchange with Princess Rukmini, to whom he elaborately describes Krishna's unsurpassed beauty and superlative qualities. Upon hearing Narada's description, Rukmini becomes infatuated with Krishna, giving her heart to Him in total surrender. She is thus unable to marry Shishupala, to whom she was promised. Narada's “meddling” leads to the unfolding of an important episode in Krishna's manifest pastimes: Shishupala is humbled, and Krishna kidnaps and marries Rukmini. In the fulfillment of her heart's desire, Rukmini serves Krishna as His loving wife in the spiritual realm.

In yet another important episode, Narada chides Vyasadeva for not getting at the essence of Vedic knowledge in compiling the Vedic literature. Narada tells Vyasadeva that the remedy is to describe in his writing the name, form, fame, and pastimes of Krishna. Vyasadeva does so, the result being the Srimad-Bhagavatam, the cream of ancient India's scriptural legacy.

The Three Lives of Narada

Just who is Narada Muni, and what did he go through to become one of the most respected saints in the Vedic tradition?

The Srimad-Bhagavatam describes how Narada attained the audience of God and thus became renowned in the Vedic tradition. The story begins with his previous two lifetimes. During the first, his name was Upabarhana, a Gandharva, or singer from a heavenly planet. Upabarhana's beautiful voice and handsome features made him attractive to women, and he became a playboy, losing his spiritual perspective and falling into materialistic life. Fortunately, whether a saint blesses or curses, the result is the same: the recipient of the saint's attention advances in God consciousness.

Once, Upabarhana attended a festival put on by the prajapatis, residents of higher planets responsible for populating the universe. While performing sankirtana, the congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord, Upabarhana glorified the demigods. The devotees present took this action as a great offense, because sankirtana is meant for glorifying the Supreme Lord only. The devotees then cursed Upabarhana to be born in his next life as a shudra (labourer) devoid of beauty. Fortunately, whether a saint blesses or curses, the result is the same: the recipient of the saint's attention advances in God consciousness.

That's what eventually happened to Upabarhana (Narada). When he was born as the son of a maidservant, he was inclined to devotional service and managed to
serve the pure devotees of the Lord.

Narada’s pious mother had the good fortune to serve travelling mendicants, so five-year-old Narada had the same opportunity. Moreover, he was able to take the remnants of their meals (prasadam) and hear them speak on transcendental subjects. Primarily these two activities, says the Bhagavatam, enabled Narada to move forward in his spiritual life.

The travelling mendicants could not find any fault in the little boy. He seemed to be uninterested in playing like other boys; he was not naughty in any way, nor did he speak more than necessary. For all of these reasons, the sages showered their blessings upon him. Narada underwent a vital transformation and became intoxicated with God consciousness. He meditated day and night, then left home after his mother’s death to become a wandering mendicant himself.

As Narada travelled, he learned to dedicate every moment to the pursuit of spiritual realization. One day, during Narada’s meditation the Lord appeared within his heart—he was able to see the form of God. Tears of love flowed from his eyes as he gazed upon the Lord’s beautiful form.

And then the Lord disappeared from his vision. The Bhagavatam describes Narada’s grief-stricken condition and tells us that as much as he tried, he could not regain his vision of God. His realization: God is not at our beck and call. He appears before us by His sweet will, and if He desires to conceal Himself, no amount of
meditation or prayer will force Him to show us His beautiful form. As Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, Srila Prabhupada's spiritual master, has said, "Don't ask to see God, but rather act in such a way that God will want to see you."

Narada then heard the Lord's voice, telling him that it is not possible to see God if one is not completely pure. The Lord told Narada another thing: He had shown Narada His form out of kindess and to increase his longing for Him.

The Lord's enticement worked. Narada now meditated on the form of the Lord more intensely than ever before. His hearing and chanting of the glories of Krishna engulfed his soul, and he became oblivious of the world around him. When the moment of death came, he was ready.

"Being freed from all material taints," Narada told his disciple Vyasadeva, "I met with death just as lightning and illumination occur simultaneously."

The transition was seamless, and when the material world was again created (for the material cosmos manifests in cycles), Narada was born from the creator-god Brahma's heart, as his most dear son. In this form, Narada had indeed reached perfection. The Bhagavatam tells us that his birth was not forced, as are most births in the material realm, but was completely voluntary: he was born merely to assist the Lord in His mission. Moreover, says the Bhagavatam, his body was just like the Lord's—transcendental and immortal, with no difference between his outer body and the inner animating spark, the soul.

Teacher of Pure Devotion

Thus, Narada is considered a perfect devotee. His teachings, found throughout the Srimad-Bhagavatam as well as in his Narada-bhakti-sutra and Narada Pancharatra, are exemplary for souls on the path of pure devotion. They embody the essence of selfless devotional service.

Lord Krishna, feeling grateful for Narada's dedication and love, once asked him, "What can I do to serve you?"

"I do not care where I may be," Narada replied, "but I pray that I may be allowed to constantly remember Your lotus feet."

This single-minded determination marks Narada as the perfect guru, and many great sages have taken shelter at his feet. He is the spiritual master of Valmiki (the author of the Ramayana), and of Prahlada Maharaja, Dhruba Maharaja, the Prachetas, Chitraketu, and many other prominent personalities in Vedic history. Most important, he is the spiritual master of Vyasadeva, often considered the model guru. For this reason, Narada Muni is the guru of gurus.

Transcendental travelling Musician

Narada is a perfect brahmachari, a celibate whose sole purpose is pure devotional service to the Lord. The Linga Purana says that Krishna awarded Narada a vina, a stringed musical instrument, which Narada plays as he traverses the universe. Because the vina was a direct gift from the Lord, it is considered non-different from Him. Narada, then, carries the Lord with him as he travels the material cosmos, delivering the holy name to the devotees and helping those in need with his spiritual blessings.

Because Narada is a musician who travels throughout the universe enlightening people with Krishna consciousness, it was fitting that during Lord Krishna's appearance five hundred years ago as Lord Chaitanya, Narada appeared as Srivasa Thakura. It was in his courtyard, Srivasa Angan, that the sankirtana movement, full of song and dance, began on earth. In this way, both as Narada and as Srivasa, he uses music—particularly the chanting of the maha-mantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare— to spread the glories of Krishna.

Narada becomes a Gopi

According to the Narada Purana (2.80.9-32), the Skanda Purana (2.6.2-3), and the Padma Purana (4.75.25-46), when Narada first heard that Lord Krishna had appeared in Vrindavana, he wandered Vrindavana's twelve forests looking for any signs of his beloved Lord. With great intensity he ran through the secret bowers in which Krishna would meet with the gopis, His cowherd girlfriends. But he could not find any evidence of Krishna's appearance.

Vrinda Devi, a prominent gopi who helps arrange Krishna's rendezvous with His girlfriends, appeared before Narada and told him that to see such esoteric pastimes he would have to adopt the mood and form of a loving gopi himself. This was possible, she said, only for the most advanced practitioners of spiritual life. Vrinda Devi told Narada that he was one such soul and could affect such a change by bathing in a nearby pond known as Kusum Sarovara.

Narada did as Vrinda Devi had instructed and emerged from the waters as a gopi named Naradi. He was thus able to see Vrindavana with new eyes and enter into Krishna's pastimes with the cowherd girls.

Later, Vrinda Devi instructed him to bathe in another pond, which came to be known as Narada-kunda, and he resumed his male form.

The Narada Purana says that the lesson to be learned from this episode is that even a sage as great as Narada must meditate on Vrindavana in the intense mood of a gopi to attain the highest level of prema, love for Krishna. Such meditation is possible for only the most accomplished devotees. ☀️
“Always Remember Krishna...”

By Rohininandana Dasa

We may now be far from the Vrindavana plane of existence, but because Krishna is absolute, no matter how we think of Him, we will be in His presence one way or the other whenever we turn our thoughts towards Him. We may be or where we may happen to roam.

Not only is Krishna the Supreme Self. He is also supreme lover. We can learn that our self is spiritual and that we are parts of the Supreme Self, Lord Krishna. Our selfhood and our very existence are inseparable from Krishna, and we are never forgets Krishna. Similarly, Krishna has never forgotten us, and we may be or where we may happen to roam.

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