Sri Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir
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.

To know more about Srila Prabhupada visit www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada
Redirected Love

London—August 15, 1973:

Lord Krishna tells us how to find the fulfillment of our natural desire to love and be loved.

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

“Sanjaya said: Having spoken thus, Arjuna, chastiser of enemies, told Krishna, ‘Govinda, I shall not fight,’ and fell silent.”—Bhagavad-gita 2.9

IN THE previous verse Arjuna said, “There is no profit in this fighting, because on the other side are my relatives, and by killing them, even if I become victorious, what is the value?” That kind of renunciation sometimes takes place in ignorance. It is not intelligently placed renunciation.

Evam uktva hrsikesam. Arjuna is speaking to Krishna, or Hrsikesha, the master of the senses. In a previous verse Arjuna said, sisyas te ‘ham... prapannam: "I am Your surrendered disciple." Krishna has become the guru, and Arjuna the disciple. Formerly they were talking as friends. But friendly talking cannot decide any serious question. When there is some serious matter, it must be spoken by authorities.

Hrsika means the senses, and isa means the master. Hrsika-isa. And they join together: Hrsikesha.

Arjuna is called Gudakesa. Gudaka means darkness. And, again, isa, means master. Darkness means ignorance. A disciple comes to the guru for enlightenment. Every living being is born foolish, even the human beings. Because they are coming from the animal kingdom by evolution, their birth is, like that of the animals, in ignorance.

Therefore, even though one is a human being, one requires education. An animal cannot take education, but a human being can. Therefore shastra, scripture, says, nayam deho deha-bhajam nrloke kastan kaman arhate vid-bhujam ye [Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.5.1]. In conditions of life lower than those of the human being, we have to work very hard simply for four necessities of life: eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. The main object of concern is sense gratification. Therefore everyone has to work very hard. But in the human form of life, Krishna gives us so much facility in the form of intelligence. We can make our standard of living very comfortable, but that should be done with the purpose of attaining perfection in Krishna consciousness. Live comfortably. That's all right. But don't live like animals, simply increasing sense gratification.

The human effort is going into living comfortably, but people want to live comfortably for sense gratification. That is the mistake of the modern civilization. Yukthara-viharasya . . . yogo bhavati duhkhha-ha. In the Bhagavad-gita (6.17) it is said yuktahara. Yes, you must eat, you must sleep, you must satisfy your senses, you must arrange for defense. But as much as possible do not divert your attention too much to these things.

We have to eat—yuktahara. That's a fact. But not atyahara, overeating. Rupa Gosvami has advised in his Upadeshamrta that if you want to advance in spiritual consciousness—the only worthy objective of life—then you should not eat too much or acquire too much. That is our philosophy.

Krishna The Enjoyer

The other day in Paris a reporter from the Socialist Press came to see me. I informed him, "Our philosophy is that everything belongs to God." Krishna says bhoktaram: "I am the enjoyer." We become happy by working for His enjoyment. For example, the whole body is working to enjoy life, but where does the enjoyment begin? The stomach. You have to give sufficient nice food to the stomach. If there is sufficient energy, you can digest and all the senses become strong and you can enjoy sense gratification. But if you cannot digest, there is no question of sense enjoyment. So sense enjoyment begins from the stomach.

Another example: The luxuriant growth of the tree begins from the root if there is sufficient water. Therefore trees are called pada-pa: They drink water from the legs—the roots—not from the heads. We eat from the head. There are different arrangements, but one must eat.
As for Krishna, He can eat from anywhere. He can eat through His hands, His legs, His eyes, His ears—anywhere—because He is complete spiritual. There is no difference between His head and legs and ears and eyes. That is stated in the Brahma-samhita.

So in the body our sense enjoyment should begin from the stomach, and the tree begins developing luxuriantly from the root. Similarly, Krishna is the origin of everything, so without Krishna consciousness, without pleasing Krishna, you cannot be happy. That is the system.

How will Krishna be pleased? We are all Krishna's sons, God's sons. Everything is Krishna's property. These are facts. Because Krishna is the proprietor and the enjoyer, everything should be given first to Him, and then we can accept it from Him. That will make us happy.

That principle is stated in Bhagavad-gita (3.13). Bhunjate te tv aham papa ye pacanty atma-karanat: "Those who cook only for themselves, without offering the food first to the Lord, are simply eating sin." Everything should be done for Krishna, even your eating. You can enjoy all sense enjoyment—but after Krishna has enjoyed. Then you can eat.

Therefore Krishna's name is Hrsikesha, the master of the senses. You cannot enjoy your senses independently. A servant may cook very, very nice food in the kitchen, but he cannot eat first. He will be dismissed. The master first of all must take, and then the servant can enjoy all the nice food.

The whole world is struggling for sense gratification. Here is the simple philosophy: "First of all let Krishna enjoy. He is the master. Then we enjoy."

The Isopanishad says, isavasyam idam sarvam: "Everything belongs to Krishna." Our mistake is that although everything belongs to Krishna, we are thinking, "Everything belongs to me." This is illusion. Janasya moho 'yam aham mameti. Everyone is thinking, "I am this body, and everything—whatever we find in this world—is to be enjoyed by me." That is the mistake of modern civilization.

The real knowledge is "Everything belongs to God. I can take only whatever He gives me, whatever He kindly allows for me." Tena tyaktena bhunjithah.

This is not just Vaishnava philosophy; this is fact. Nobody is the proprietor of anything. Isavasyam idam sarvam. Krishna says, "I am the enjoyer. I am the proprietor." Sarva-loka-mahesvaram. Maha-isvaram. Maha means great, and isvaram means controller. We can claim that we are also an isvaram, a controller, but Krishna is described as maha-isvaram, "controller of the controller." That is Krishna. Nobody else is an independent controller.

**Definition of Bhakti**

Therefore Krishna is called Hrsikesha, and bhakti means to serve Hrsikesha by the hrsika, the senses. Krishna is the master of the senses. Therefore whatever senses I have, the master is Krishna. When our senses are engaged in the satisfaction of the master of the senses, that is called bhakti. That is the definition of bhakti, devotional service. And when the senses are engaged for sense gratification, not for the master, that is called kama, lust.

Two words: kama and prema. Prema means to love Krishna and do everything for His satisfaction. That is prema, love. And kama means doing everything for the satisfaction of my senses. That is the difference. Either you satisfy your senses, or you satisfy Krishna's senses. But when you satisfy Krishna's senses you become perfect, and when you satisfy your senses you become imperfect, illusioned. Because you cannot satisfy your senses without Krishna.

Therefore one has to purify the senses. At the present moment everyone is trying to satisfy his senses. There are two kinds of living entities, male and female. The male is trying to satisfy his senses, and the female is trying to satisfy her senses. There is no love. It cannot be love, because neither the man nor the woman is trying to satisfy the other party's senses. Everyone is trying to satisfy his or her senses. A woman loves a man for satisfying her senses, and a man loves a woman for satisfying his senses.

Therefore, as soon as there is a little disturbance in the sense gratification, there is divorce. "I don't want this." Because the central point is personal sense gratification. But we can make a show: "Oh, I love you so much. I love you so much." There is no love. It is all kama, lust.

In the material world, there is no possibility of love. The so-called love is only cheating: "I love you. I love you because you are beautiful. You will satisfy my senses. Because you are young, you will satisfy my senses." That is the nature of the material world. The basic principle of the material world is sense gratification. In the material
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world, so-called society, friendship, and love depend on sense gratification, beginning with sex. Yan maithunadi-grhamedhi-sukham hi tuucchham. When one becomes free from maithunadi-sukham, happiness beginning with sex, he is liberated.

As long as one is attached to the sex impulse, he is neither a swami nor a goswami. Swami means master of the senses. As Krishna is the master of the senses, when one becomes Krishna conscious he becomes master of the senses. It is not that the senses should be stopped. No. They should be controlled. When I require, I shall use them; otherwise not. That is the position of a master of the senses. I shall not act impelled by the senses. The senses should act under my direction. That is the position of a swami.

Therefore Arjuna is called Gudakesha. He is a master of the senses. And he is not a coward, but he is compassionate because he is a devotee of Krishna. Anyone who becomes a devotee of Krishna has all the good qualities manifest in his body.

That is Arjuna’s position. Otherwise how could he become an intimate friend of Krishna? They must be of the same position. Friendship becomes very strong when the friends are on an equal level: same age, same education, same prestige, same beauty. The more similar the position, the stronger the friendship. Arjuna is on the same level as Krishna. If somebody becomes the friend of the President or the friend of the king or the queen, he is not an ordinary man. He must be of the same position.

Giving Up Religion

In our line, Lord Chaitanya’s chief disciples Rupa Gosvami and Sanatana Gosvami were big leaders, government ministers. They could associate with the governor because they were also important men. But as soon as they became acquainted with Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, they decided, “We shall retire from this ministership and join Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to help Him.” Rather, to serve Him, not to help Him. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu does not require anyone’s help. But if we try to associate with Him and serve Him, then our life becomes successful.

Krishna came to teach Bhagavad-gītā. That was His mission: “These rascals have become servants of so many things—society, friendship, love, religion, nationality, community. They should stop all this nonsense.” Sarva-dharman parityajya: “Give up all this nonsense. Simply surrender unto Me.”

That is religion. Otherwise, why would Krishna advise, “Give up all religious systems?” He came to reestablish the principles of religion: dharma-samsthapanarthaya. Now He says, sarva-dharman parityajya: “Give up all religion.” That means that anything without Krishna consciousness, without God consciousness, is a cheating religion. It is not religion.

Religion means the order of the Supreme Lord: dharma tu saksad bhagavat-pranitam. If we do not know who is the Supreme Lord, if we do not know what is the order of the Supreme Lord, then where is religion? That is not religion. That may go on in the name of religion, but that is cheating. So Bhagavad-gītā ends sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja, and the Srimad-Bhagavatam begins from that point.

Therefore Bhagavad-gītā is the preliminary study of Srimad-Bhagavatam, which begins, dharma-projhitaka’tavo ‘tra: “Now, in this Bhagavatam, all cheating types of religion are rejected, projhita.”

Real religion means to love God. Therefore Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.2.6) says, sa vai pumsam paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhoksaje: “Devotion to the Supreme Lord is first-class religion.” The Bhagavatam’s definition doesn’t say that you must follow this religion or that religion. You may follow

Rupa Gosvami and Sanatana Gosvami
any religion. It doesn’t matter. Either Hindu religion or Christian religion or Muslim religion—anything you like. But we have to test. For example, if a student has passed the M.A. examination, nobody inquires, “From which college have you passed your examination?” No. “You have passed the M.A. examination? That’s all right. We are concerned whether you are a graduate. That’s all.” Nobody inquires, “From which college, from which country, from which religion have you passed your M.A. examination?”

Similarly, nobody should inquire, “To which religion do you belong?” One must see whether he has learned this art: how to love God. That’s all. That is religion. Here is the religion: sarva-dharmam parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja. That is religion. The Bhagavatam says, dharmah projjhita-kaitavo ‘tra: “All cheating types of religion are kicked out from this Srimad-Bhagavatam.”

The Bhagavatam is only for the nirmatsaranam, those who are not envious of God. The demons ask, “Why shall I love God? Why shall I worship God? Why shall I accept God?” But the Srimad-Bhagavatam is only for those who are actually serious about loving God.

Redirecting Our Love

Real success of life is when you have learned how to love Krishna. Then your heart will be satisfied. Krishna means God. If you have another name of God, that is also accepted. But you must love God, the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Person.

We all love somebody. The loving propensity is there in everyone, but it is misdirected. Therefore Krishna says, “Kick out all these love objects. Try to love Me.” Sarva-dharmam parityajya mam ekam. Misdirected love will never be able to satisfy you. If you want real satisfaction, you must love Krishna, God.

That is the whole Vedic philosophy—or any philosophy you take. Because, after all, you want satisfaction of your self, full satisfaction of your mind. That can be achieved only when you love God. Therefore that religion is first-class which trains the candidate how to love God. And that love is without motive. Here in the material world we say, “I love you; you love me.” But in the background is some motive. Love of God means no motive. All other desires become zero.

The pure nature of bhakti, love of God, is taught in the Bhagavad-gita. Somebody is working for knowledge, and somebody is working for sense gratification. That is the material world. Somebody is trying to become a very big scholar: “What is this? What is this? What is this?” He is not trying to understand God but to gain some superfluous knowledge. That is called jnana. And karma means working day and night for sense gratification. But bhakti is transcendental. It is not tainted by all these contaminations, jnana and karma.

Therefore Narottama Dasa Thakura says, jnana-kanda, karma-kanda, kevala visera bhanda: “Whether you engage in karma or speculative knowledge, both are pots of poison. Whether you drink this one or that one, it doesn’t matter.”

If you follow karma-kanda, the path of karma, you’ll get a body next life according to your karma. Jnana-kanda also leads to another material body. If you become very advanced in knowledge, you can get a body in a brahmana family, in a very educated family. But you’ll have to go through the transmigration of the soul, the repetition of birth and death. There is that risk. You do not know what body you will get. It is not guaranteed. Even a little mistake can result in your getting a lower body. For example, at the time of death Bharata Maharaja was thinking of a deer, and next life he got the life of a deer.

Nature is so perfect that you will get a body similar to your mental condition at death. Krishna is with you. He will see, “Now he is thinking of becoming a king,” or “Now he is thinking in such a way that he will become a dog.” So Krishna immediately gives you the body of a dog or a lion or a king. You must take the body He gives you.

Similarly, if you are thinking of Krishna, you will take a body like Krishna’s—immediately. That is Krishna consciousness: to train the mind to die thinking of Krishna. Then your life is successful.

Therefore we have to chant Hare Krishna and always think of Krishna. Then our life is perfect.

Thank you very much.

Srila Prabhupada, the founder-acharya of ISKCON, has delivered more than 1500 lectures on Vedic scriptures like Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam and Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita. The audio recording of his lectures are available in ISKCON centers. You can also hear some of these lectures in www.iskconbangalore.org/lectures-and-conversations

Krishna Voice, April 2014
So in the present age, one has to take directly to the function of the soul. Then other understandings will automatically come.

It is not possible at present that you can go to a secluded place and peacefully sit there and meditate. It is not possible in this age.

It is impossible. If you try artificially, it will be a failure.

Therefore, you have to take to this process: harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam kalau nasty eva nasty eva gatir anyatha—"In this age of Kali, there is no alternative for Srila Prabhupada: How is the body growing? On account of the presence of that small particle, the soul. Take, for example, this boy. This boy has got a small stature of body. Now, this boy will grow a very stout and strong body in his young manhood, say by the age of twenty-four years. Then that young-man body will go; another body will come.

How is it all becoming possible? On account of the presence of the small particle, the soul. But if that particle of soul is taken away or if it goes away, this body will no longer grow or change.

These are the subject matters of meditation. But when you come to the point of understanding that "I am not this body—I am spirit soul," then the next stage will be "What is the function of the soul?"

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self-realization but this chanting of Hare Krishna, chanting of the Lord's holy name.” That is the practical, real fact.

**Disciple:** Srila Prabhupada, is there any way for a Christian in this age—without the help of a spiritual master—to reach the spiritual sky through reading the words of Jesus Christ in the Bible and trying to follow his teachings?

**Srila Prabhupada:** When you read the Bible, you are following the spiritual master. How can you say “without a spiritual master?” As soon as you read the Bible, that means you are following the instruction of Lord Jesus Christ. That means you are following the spiritual master. So where is the opportunity of being without the spiritual master?

**Disciple:** I was referring to a living spiritual master.

**Srila Prabhupada:** There is no question of whether the spiritual master is “living.” The spiritual master is eternal. Now, your question was what to do “without the spiritual master.” Without the spiritual master you cannot be, at any stage of your life. You may accept this spiritual master or that spiritual master. That is a different thing. But you have to accept.

When you say “reading the Bible,” that means you are following the spiritual master, represented by some priest or some clergyman in the line of Lord Jesus Christ. So in any case, you have to follow the spiritual master. There cannot be the question of “without the spiritual master.” Is that clear?

**Disciple:** I mean, for instance, we couldn’t understand the teachings of Bhagavad-gita without your help, Srila Prabhupada, without your presentation.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Similarly, you have to understand the Bible with the help of Christ and the priest in the church.

**Disciple:** Yes, but is the priest receiving a good interpretation from his disciplic succession or his bishop? Because there seems to be some kind of discrepancy in the interpretation of the Bible. There are many different sects of Christianity that interpret the Bible in different ways.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Of course, there cannot be any interpretation of the Bible. Then the Bible itself has no authority. It is just like the old saying, “Call a spade a spade.” Now, if someone calls it something else, that is another thing. He’s not a spiritual master.

For instance, this is a watch. Everybody has called it a watch. But if I called it a spectacle, then what is the value of my being a so-called spiritual master? I’m misleading. [Laughter.] “It is a watch.” That I must say.

So when someone makes some misrepresentation, he’s not a bona fide spiritual master. Reject such a spiritual master immediately.

That intelligence you must have: Who is a pseudo spiritual master, and who is a real spiritual master? Otherwise, you’ll be cheated. And that is being done. Everyone is interpreting in his own way.

The Bhagavad-gita—there are thousands of editions, and all of them have tried to interpret in their own way. All nonsense. They should all be thrown away. Simply you have to read Bhagavad-gita as it is. Then you’ll understand.

There is no question of interpretation. Then the authority is gone. As soon as you interpret there is no authority.

Take a law book. Do you mean to say that in court, if you say before the judge, “My dear lord, I interpret this passage in this way,” it will be accepted? The judge will at once say, “Who are you to interpret? You have no right.”

After all, then what would be the authority of the law book if everyone came and said, “I interpret in this way”? When is interpretation required? When a thing is not understood. If I say “This is a watch” and everyone understands that “This is a watch, yes,” then where is the opportunity of interpreting that “This is a spectacle”?

So unnecessary interpretation is not required, and that is not bona fide. And those who are interpreting unnecessarily—they should be rejected immediately. Immediately, without any consideration.

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Located about 5 miles north of Thiruvurur is the pristine temple of Lord Bhaktavatsala Krishna in Thirukannamangai. This is one of the five Krishnaranya temples, the others being Thirukannapuram, Thirukanngudi, Thirukovilur and Kapisthalam.

The Pastime

Sage Romasa, the grandson of Brahma and son of Bhusunda Maharshi, was blessed with a unique gift, a gift which reminds us about the material temporary world. Romasa was an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu. Once while Lord Vishnu was constantly observing the ego of Brahma, He decided to put an end to it by setting a reminder for Brahma. Accordingly, Lord Vishnu blessed Romasa with a body full of hair. After the life span of each Brahma, one strand of hair would fall off from Romasa’s body. When there is no strand left out, Romasa would eventually make his journey back to home, back to Godhead. The intense desire of Romasa Rishi to preach the glories of Vishnu made him one of those travelling preachers like Sage Narada. Once when Sage Romasa was doing an intense penance on the banks of a pond by name Vishnupada Ganga in Thirukannamangai, the Pancha Pandavas made a visit to the sage’s hermitage to obtain his blessings. At this point of time the Pandavas were spending their exile after the burning of the wax house by Gandhara’s King Shakuni.

Sage Romasa pacified the Pandavas and instructed them to follow the footsteps of Krishna. He further instructed that all the hardships in life are mainly due to karma and most often the test of the Supreme Lord. He narrated the famed story of Nala and Damayanthi.

The sage who knew past, present and future was warning them about the ill effects of gambling and blind love. Damayanthi was princess of the Vidharbha dynasty. She was such an outstanding beauty that even the demigods could not stop staring at her. Once when she was on her balcony in the palace, a beautiful swan came to her and started singing in praise of King Nala of the Nishadha dynasty. The swan said, “Oh beautiful princess! I wish to tell you about King Nala. He is a brave king who loves animals and trees. A more handsome man does not exist in this universe! He had asked me to tell you that he loves you dearly!” Damayanthi instantly fell in love with Nala and sent back the swan with a message.

When she was of marriageable age, Damayanthi’s parents arranged for a swayamvara, when noble kings would be invited to the court of a king whose daughter was to be married, and the bride was allowed to choose her husband from among them. Even the demigods like Agni, Varuna, Indra came for the swayamvara of Damayanthi, hoping to win her heart. Even the evil personification of Kali yuga, Kali Purusha, came to the marriage. He threatened Nala not attend the marriage but brave Nala did not heed this. On the day of the swayamvara Damayanthi paid her respects to all the demigods assembled, but chose Nala as her husband. Kali was furious and vowed to cause the downfall of Nala’s kingdom through his propensity for gambling.

Damayanthi and Nala were happily married and soon blessed with two children. Kali entered their palace as a servant and for twelve long years he kept a close watch on any imperfection by which he could destroy
Nala. One day, as he was in a hurry, Nala did not adhere to the Vedic injunction of washing his legs properly before partaking his meal, thereby giving Kali a chance to attack and all kinds of misfortune soon followed. In games of dice Nala lost his kingdom to his brother. Nala and Damayanthi proceeded to live in the forest. There, a flock of birds once flew away with the only garment Nala possessed. Damayanthi and Nala shared the bits of the same garment and underwent severe hardships. In desperation, Nala decided to abandon Damayanthi in order to protect her from his bad luck. While she was asleep, he left a note asking her to go back to her parents’ house. But the aggrieved Damayanthi instead became a servant of the Queen of the Chedi kingdom. But Damayanthi’s identity was soon discovered because of her unparalleled beauty and charm. She was taken back to her parents and reunited with her children.

After learning of the fate of his daughter and son-in-law, Damayanthi’s father sent emissaries in all directions to locate Nala’s whereabouts. Damayanthi knew that the only way to find out about Nala would be to enact a fake swayamvara and it worked. Meanwhile Nala was bitten by a serpent by name Karkotaka and he was transformed into a dwarf. He began to work as a charioteer in the court of King Rituprana. On the news of Damayanthi’s swayamvara, Rituprana set out to try his luck and drove to Vidharbha with Nala. Damayanthi was waiting on her balcony, listening to the hoof beats as the carriage passed her palace. She immediately

Silk threads adorn the Lord during Pavitrotsavam
recognized the pattern of the hoof beats of the chariot being driven by Nala. She sent out a maid to inquire and was informed that it was King Rituprana with his charioteer. Meanwhile Rituprana refused to dine in the palace and asked Nala to cook for him. Damayanthi asked her maid to smuggle some item of the food. The taste was identical to her husband’s cooking. Throwing all decorum to the winds, she ran down to meet the chariot driver and was stunned to meet a dark dwarf man. Damayanthi asked him, “Why does a man want to send his dutiful wife back to her father’s kingdom?”

The man replied, “Because he has lost his kingdom and great evil has fall upon him. He does not want his wife to share his bad luck.” Immediately the chastity of the couple resulted in Nala’s transformation to his youth and charm. Nala successfully regained his kingdom with the help of Rituprana and lived happily according to dharma.

After narrating this story to the Pandavas, Sage Romasa advised them that addiction to hunting, gambling, women and wine are the four things that lead to a man’s downfall. And even a small act of negligence would eventually cause great calamity. The sage explained, “For every action which is performed in the material scenario, a result or the fruit of activity follows. They are called fruitive activities and can be both good and bad. The consequences of sinful activities like meat eating, illicit sex and gambling can be grave and may even result in accepting lower bodies just like in the story of Nala. Even a small act of impiousness may leave an eternal wound which cannot be nullified.”

The sage explained to them about the effects of Kali and asked them to simply focus on their beloved Lord Krishna. Enchanted by the preaching of Sage Romasa, Lord Vishnu appeared as Bhaktavatsala, the Lord who loves His devotees. A magnificent temple was constructed for the Lord at that sacred spot.

Wedding Re-enactment

Mother Lakshmi once re-enacted Her wedding pastime here in Thirukannamangai for the pleasure of Her devotees. All the 33 million demigods descended in the form of bees to witness the marriage. This beehive and the bees can be still seen in the altar of Lakshmi Devi, the consort of Lord Bhaktavatsala. It has been described that the bees buzzing was juxtaposed with one of the names of Lord Vishnu- Hari.

The Temple

As one enters the holy town, a big tank welcomes the devotees with its sweet water. This tank is known as Vishnupada Ganga. This sacred pond is interestingly protected heavily by Shiva in the east, Brahma in the south, Kumara in the west and Ganesh in the north. It is believed that Lord Shiva of Kashi came and took bath in this pond and worshipped Vishnu with lotus flowers. On the north street there is a small temple of Sri Ramanuja and Lord Srinivasa. On the west street there is a beautiful small temple of Hanuman. A beautiful garden surrounding the temple looks like a huge garland adorning the temple. A beautiful gopuram welcomes the devotees inside the temple. The 9 feet tall balipeetha is used for making offerings to the demigods. A copper flag post of 31 meter height is used for hoisting the Garuda flag during the annual Brahmotsava. Adorable sculptures of baby Krishna adorn the walls of the temple. On the southern side of the flagpole is the magnificent shrine of Nammalwar. In the north side of the temple...
are two mandapams called as ardha mandapam and maha mandapam. This prakaram is called champaka prakaram. There is a second rajagopuram to the west of the balipeetha. Entering trough this, one can see Garuda facing the Lord with folded hands. After this we find a mesmerising mandapam called as Thiruvandhikapu. At a height of 16 feet and breadth of 14 feet with 8 supporting pillars, this mandapam is a visual treat. Sculptures of various sizes and forms, depicting the pastimes of Lord Vishnu, adorn the pillars and roofs. On the two sides of the entrance to the maha mandapam one can find colossal deities of Jaya and Vijaya, the celestial gatekeepers of Vaikuntha. There is an unusual figurine of a female gatekeeper on the left side. The sanctum santorum is a square structure with utpalavadaka vimana atop. The beautiful Lord in all His magnificence, is Lord Bhaktavatsala, one for whom His devotees are dearest. On the sides of the Lord are the deities of Sri Devi and Bhoo Devi. Varuna and Markendeya are seen having darshana of the Lord with folded hands.

**Abhishekavalli Devi**

There is a separate shrine for the Lord’s consort, Abhishekavalli Thayar. There are two beehives in the south and the north wall of the shrine. Miraculously, the bees live in the northern beehive during utharayana and they move to the south beehive during dakhinayana. A beautiful mandapa with 8 pillars depicting 8 forms of Lakshmi (Ashtalakshmi) stands testimony to the architectural marvel of the Chola dynasty. There are also deities of Lakshmi Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Balarama, Srirama, Venugopala, Andal, Alwars and acharyas in this temple.

**Festivals**

An annual Brahmotsava is celebrated with Lord Bhaktavatsala coming out in various vahanas such as Garuda, Hanuman etc. Pavitrotsavam is celebrated in this temple when silk threads of five principal colours adorn the Lord. Lord Bhaktavatsala comes on His Garuda carrier in the month of Masi on Maka asterism. There are various other festivals like the swing festival, Vaikuntha Ekadashi and so on which are celebrated with much pomp and show in this temple.

Tirumangai Alwar has sung about this Lord:

Oh Lord who is so sweet like a fully ripened fruit that can be bitten and eaten desirously!

Oh ocean coloured one!

Oh cute sweet Lord who is like the milk!

I see the ever youthful Lord with His Lakshmi!

Oh Lord who tastes like sugarcane and grants liberation,

Fools are those who turn to demigods, ignoring You!

I see that effulgent Lord in Thirukkannamangai!

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam
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Temple features

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Honourable Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Sri Akhilesh Yadav, (above) participates in the Shilanyas ceremony of Sri Vrindavan Chandrodaya Mandir at Vrindavan and (below) unveils a plaque commemorating the event.

Find more pictures at: www.iskconbangalore.org/vcm-foundation-gallery
A Personal Look at the Nature of God

Why impersonalist philosophers don't see the whole picture.

by Satyaraja Dasa

God exists, and God is light
For those poor souls who dwell in night.
But doth a human form display
To those who dwell in realms of day.

—William Blake (1757-1827)

A major publisher recently approached me to write a book that would compare the more than one thousand existing English translations of the Bhagavad-gita. I replied to say I would consider their offer, and within a week I received, by special delivery, a box full of the decade’s most prominent Gita translations. Looking through each one carefully, I noticed that most translators misunderstood the basic teaching: that God is a person, Krishna, and that the goal of life is to develop love for Him. Instead, these “Gitas” claimed that God is an abstract force, an impersonal entity that lies beyond the purview of the senses. The commentators squeezed this out of the Sanskrit itself and often made it the focus of their analyses.

The impersonal or monistic conception of the Supreme—wherein one envisions God as an inconceivable force, without form—is clearly a legitimate part of what the Bhagavad-gita teaches. But that part is eclipsed by the idea of God as the Supreme Person. As Krishna Himself says in the Gita (7.24), “Unintelligent people, who do not know Me perfectly, think that I, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, was impersonal before and have now assumed this personality. Due to their small knowledge, they do not know My higher nature, which is imperishable and supreme.”

And yet, despite the Gita’s emphasis on God’s personhood, the impersonalistic dimension of the Gita has become more popular. Teachers in the Krishna consciousness tradition suggest that the desire to depersonalize God comes, on a subliminal level, from the desire to avoid surrender. After all, if God is a person, then questions of submission and subservience come into play. If God is a formless abstraction, we can philosophize about it without a sense of commitment, without the fear of having to acknowledge our duty to a higher being. Then again, maybe the popularity of the impersonal conception, at least in relation to the Gita, can be traced, plain and simple, to inadequate knowledge of Sanskrit.

Impersonalism really doesn't even make sense. Form is everywhere, from mountain to snowflake. Everything has form. Even invisible things have shape. Consider the atom: Though we don't see it, we know it occupies definite space, and with the proper equipment we can perceive it. Deep down we know that in this world a thing and its form are inseparable.

And this, of course, is where the theory of impersonalism comes in. Impersonalists reason that if everything in this world has form, everything in “that” world must be formless, for matter and spirit are seen as diametrically opposed. While the premise here may be true, the conclusion is illogical. The reasoning is like the thinking of a cow that has once run from a burning barn: whenever it sees red, it runs. Similarly, everyone in this world knows that material forms are temporary and limited. This truth is embedded in our consciousness, and we naturally (if sometimes subliminally) apply it to all form, never imagining that spiritual form may have different characteristics altogether. So we foist formlessness on God and on all spiritual phenomena, inadvertently following a tradition of impersonalism with the enthusiasm of a fire-fearing cow running from red.

If one studies the Gita in Krishna consciousness, however, one sees clearly that the person Krishna, also known as Bhagavan (the Lord), reigns Supreme. Nearly every verse stresses service to Him. There is much evidence that the Gita supports the personalistic doctrine. Krishna says, "I am at the basis of the impersonal Brahman [the formless Absolute]." (14.27) And when discussing the comparative value of the impersonal and the personal, He says, "Those who focus their minds on My personal form, always engaged in worshiping Me with intense spiritual faith, are considered by Me to be most perfect." (12.2) In other words, according to the Gita the conception of God as a person, to whom one may become devoted, is prior to and superior to the conception of God as an impersonal force, into which one may merge.

And what exactly is meant by “merging”? Vaishnavas, worshipers of Krishna, shun this idea of becoming “one with God,” saying it is almost as repulsive as gross materialism. Srila Prabhupada says the idea is motivated by fear. In his purport to Bhagavad-gita 4.10 he writes:

It is difficult for a person who is too materially affected to understand the personal nature of the Supreme Absolute Truth. . . . Consequently, they consider the
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Supreme to be impersonal. And because they are too materially absorbed, the conception of retaining their personality after liberation from matter frightens them. When they are informed that spiritual life is also individual and personal, they become afraid of becoming persons again, and so they naturally prefer a kind of merging into the impersonal void.

So just as impersonalism stems from the fear that one will have to submit to a higher entity, as stated earlier, we now see that its concomitant "merging" is also a product of fear—the fear that one’s individual existence, with all its imperfections, will continue into eternity. But Vaishnavas promote a philosophy of fearlessness, for they know that spiritual personality is not beleaguered by the limitations of matter. Some scholars are wise to this too. Professor Huston Smith, a prominent author and teacher in the field of comparative religion, eloquently expresses the Vaishnavas’ distaste for merging with the Supreme. He does this with the help of a traditional bhakti poem written in sixteenth-century India:

As healthy love is out-going, the bhakta [devotee] will reject all suggestions that the God one loves is oneself, even one’s deepest Self, and insist on God’s otherness. As a devotional classic puts the point, "I want to taste sugar; I don't want to be sugar."

Can water quaff itself?
Can trees taste of the fruit they bear?
He who worships God must stand distinct from Him,
So only shall he know the joyful love of God;
For if he say that God and he are one,
That joy, that love, shall vanish instantly away.
Pray no more for utter oneness with God:
Where were the beauty if jewel and setting were one?
The heat and the shade are two,
If not, where were the comfort of shade?
Mother and child are two,
If not, where were the love?
When after being sundered they meet,
What joy do they feel, the mother and child!
Where were joy, if the two were one?
Pray, then, no more for utter oneness with God.
—poem by Tukaram

Is God Really a Person?

Seeing the many impersonal translations and commentaries got my fire. God is, first and foremost, a person. Prabhupada is clear on this in his Gita commentary, incredulous that anyone could accept the impersonal idea of the Absolute:

We cannot understand how the Supreme Personality of Godhead could be impersonal; the imposition theory* of the impersonalist monist is false as far as the statements of the Gita are concerned. It is clear herein that the Supreme Absolute Truth, Lord Krishna, has both form and personality. (Bg. 7.24, Purport)

Even the findings of modern scientists support this personalistic view. Here is a particularly powerful statement by Dr. John C. Cotran, who before he retired was Professor of Chemistry and the Chairman of the Science and Mathematics Department at the University of Minnesota:

Chemistry discloses that matter is ceasing to exist, some varieties exceedingly slowly, others exceedingly swiftly. Therefore, the existence of matter is not eternal. Consequently, matter must have had a beginning. Evidence from Chemistry and other sciences indicates that this beginning was not slow and gradual; on the contrary, it was sudden, and the evidence even indicates the approximate time when it occurred. Thus at some rather definite time the material world was created and ever since has been obeying law, not the dictates of chance. Now, the material realm not being able to create itself and its governing laws, the act of creation must have been performed by some nonmaterial agent. The stupendous marvels accomplished in that act show that this agent must possess superlative intelligence, an attribute of mind. But to bring mind into action in the material realm as, for example, in the practice of medicine and the field of parapsychology, the exercise of will is required, and this can be exerted only by a person. Hence our logical and inescapable conclusion is not only that creation occurred but that it was brought about according to the plan and will of a person endowed with supreme intelligence and knowledge (omniscience), and the power to bring it about and keep it running according to plan (omnipotence) always and everywhere throughout the universe (omnipresence). That is to say, we accept unhesitatingly the fact of the existence of "the supreme spiritual being, God, the creator and director of the universe."

It gets Personal

Vaishnava devotees feel offended when their beautiful Lord is described as having no eyes, no mouth, no hair, no form, and as a result, no love. To deny God these distinct personal characteristics is the height of arrogance. Do humans have something that God does not? Would this not make us greater than He is—especially when it comes to loving exchanges? We can love, but God cannot?

To say that God is unlimited and then to say that He cannot have a form is contradictory. If He is unlimited, He can do whatever He likes. And if loving exchange is the highest thing in creation, as most will admit, then God would most definitely deign to be a person, for loving exchange loses meaning without personhood; it can exist only between people.

Ultimately, Vaishnava philosophy says that all conceptions of God are included in the personal form of Sri Krishna. The impersonal Brahman, according to the tenets of Vaishnavism, is but an aspect of the
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Absolute, which by its very nature is endlessly qualified and perfect in unlimited ways. Vaishnavas dismiss as absurd and meaningless the concept of the Absolute as merely impersonal, beyond all thought and speech. Such an Absolute cannot stand, for it would cancel itself out. Our very language disallows it: Even to say that Brahman is inexpressible or unthinkable is to say or think something about it.

Shankaracharya, an eighth-century Indian philosopher, was among the first to emphasize the impersonal Absolute. While he accepted the undifferentiated Brahman as the sole category of existence, he failed to give a satisfactory explanation of the world of appearance, which implies distinct qualities (vishesha) in Brahman. In other words, how can a variegated world, with such diverse attributes, come from an undifferentiated Absolute? Impersonalist philosophers say that all variety in the material world is false and only the Supreme Brahman, or Spirit, is real. Vaishnavas counter that because the world emanates from Brahman, if Brahman is real how can the world and its varieties be false? For example, if a tree bears fruits, can anyone realistically claim that the tree is real but its fruits are not?

The Logic of Personalism

The notion of personality is not only consistent with the infinite Godhead but essential to it. The whole impersonalistic enterprise leaves some very basic questions unanswered. Consider this: I'm a person. If my source is impersonal, then where do I come from and what am I in an ultimate sense? If my source is impersonal, how can I, a person, relate to it? Moreover, even if some kind of mystical, impersonal experience exists, such an experience always occurs to a person. It's you and I—people—who have the "impersonal" exchange with God. In other words, even if you call the exchange impersonal, it must be considered a variety of personal experience because it happens to a person.

When all else fails, impersonalistic philosophers generally grasp at one well-worn argument: A qualified and personal Absolute must be limited, they say, because to attribute certain qualities to it is to deny their opposites. But impersonalists must understand that it is not personification or the attribution of character or qualities to the infinite that limits it, but it's these things not carried to their fullest extent. Chandogya Upanishad (7.14.4) says that Brahman is not only endowed with characteristics but displays such characteristics in endless ways. For example, Krishna's form may seem limited in size, but it is described as inconceivably "all-pervading" as well. He has innumerable expansions and incarnations, and He is endlessly beautiful. His wisdom knows no bounds, and He experiences unending bliss. In short, His form is not like ours—it is entirely

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spiritual. Countless scriptural verses support this view, showing how He is, in fact, unlimited.

Lord Chaitanya argued that the impersonalistic view of unqualified Brahman derives mainly from the indirect meaning of Sanskrit words. He says that the indirect meaning of words (lakshana vrtti) is justified only where the direct meaning (mukhya vrtti) doesn’t make sense.

Shankaracharya’s exclusive emphasis on unqualified Brahman conceals the direct and real meaning of the scriptures, which more often than not describes Brahman as qualified.

How, then, can impersonalists who accept the Vedic texts make any case at all for a formless Absolute? To be fair, we must admit that many texts describe Brahman as unqualified. Katha Upanishad (1.3.15), for example, describes Brahman as being without sound, touch, or form. This idea is echoed in the Brhad-aranyaka Upanishad (1.4.10), where Brahman is said to be without...
eyes, ears, speech, mouth, or mind. But what does this really mean?

The celebrated philosopher Jiva Gosvami, in the line of Lord Chaitanya, partly resolves the question by showing that the word nirvishesha ("without distinction or qualities"), for example, is often used by the scriptures to deny all prakrta (material) qualities of Brahman and not to deny qualities as such. If nirvishesha were not used to deny qualities as such, it would not be possible to attribute to Brahman the qualities of nityatva (eternity) and vibhutva (all-pervasiveness), which even the followers of Shankaracharya accept as undeniable qualities of the Absolute. Jiva Gosvami also quotes from the Vishnu Purana to prove that although Brahman does not have any ordinary, or material, qualities, it has infinite transcendental qualities.

Thus, Brahman, or God, cannot be described as merely impersonal or unqualified. Jiva Gosvami writes that such a "Brahman" is like a subject apart from its predicates or a substance apart from its attributes. Since the complete (samyak) form of an object includes both its substance and its attributes, the unqualified Brahman is only an incomplete (asamyak) manifestation of the Absolute. Jiva Gosvami insists that the personal Brahman includes the impersonal Brahman as the formless luster of His divine form (anga-kanti). In Prabhupada's words, the impersonal Brahman is merely Krishna's effulgence.

Implicit in these arguments is the understanding that God is inconceivable and, ultimately, both personal and impersonal. His impersonal aspect depends upon His personal form, which is prior. The arguments are logical enough, and yet our minds revolt against the idea of an Absolute being at once personal and impersonal. We want to choose one or the other, because we are inclined to think of the Absolute in human terms. Therefore, I should reiterate that the form of the Absolute is different from our own. We have to be careful not to limit the infinite with our human thoughts and terms—the fallacy that impersonalists attribute to the doctrine of a personal God. When dealing with any problem relating to the infinite, we have to use the laws of our understanding with reservation and caution, not allowing them to impair the perfection of the infinite or impoverish our notion of divinity.

Henry L. Mansel, a nineteenth-century English philosopher, who was Professor of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy at Oxford, expressed the same idea in this way:

It is our duty, then, to think of God as personal; and it is our duty to believe that He is infinite. It is true that we cannot reconcile these two representations with each other, as our conception of personality involves attributes apparently contradictory to the notion of infinity. But it does not follow that this contradiction exists anywhere
but in our own minds; it does not follow that it implies any impossibility in the absolute nature of God. The apparent contradiction, in this case, as in those previously noticed, is the necessary consequence of an attempt on the part of the human thinker to transcend the boundaries of his own consciousness. It proves that there are limits to man’s power of thought, and it proves no more.

**Conclusion**

To describe the Absolute as merely nirvishesha, or without distinct qualities and attributes, is to make Him imperfect by “amputating” His divine limbs. Once we recognize the absolute, complete, and perfect nature of the Divine Being, we move beyond the philosophy of impersonalism. We can reconcile conflicting statements of the Vedas and the Puranas when we understand the Absolute as both personal and impersonal, or rather, as possessing infinite attributes and forms, including an impersonal dimension. But according to the primary and general sense of the scriptures, the Absolute is essentially personal, because only in a personal Absolute, possessing infinite and inconceivable potencies, can the infinite forms of Godhead, including the impersonal Brahman, have their place.

Will I write the requested book about the many editions of the Gita? Probably not. Srila Prabhupada’s Bhagavad-gita As It Is is clear enough about what the Gita teaches and includes the best of all the versions I looked through. In terms of design, clarity, scholarship, and accessibility, no other Gita comes close. So I may just have to send all those books back to that publisher. But if they would like me to do a book on personalism versus impersonalism... 😊
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Bangalore: At the start of the celebrations, the utsava vigraha of Sri Sri Nitai Gauranga were carried on a pallakki while devotees performed harinama sankirtana.

Their Lordships were offered an elaborate abhisheka (right), followed by a grand arati (below).

Find more pictures at: www.iskconbangalore.org/gaura-purnima-gallery
Notice: ISKCON - Bangalore has no “Old Age Home Project” at Udupi / Melkote / Mandya

Attention: All Donors and Life Patrons

We wish to bring to your kind attention that some devotees and agents of ISKCON - Mumbai calling themselves “devotees of ISKCON Temple” are collecting donations claiming to set up a Vanaprastha Ashram or an Old Age Home at Udupi / Melkote / Mandya. They carry visiting cards that mention a project office in RT Nagar. They have also engaged tele-callers to promote their projects and raise funds.

Last month, some of our donors encountered these devotees and agents of ISKCON - Mumbai who falsely claimed to be part of ISKCON - Bangalore temple located on Hare Krishna Hill, Chord Road, Rajajinagar, Bangalore. Believing them, they gave a donation to them thinking that it was one of the projects of ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna Temple, Hare Krishna Hill, Bangalore. Later when they learnt from us that they were not devotees from ISKCON - Bangalore temple, and that their contributions have not come to ISKCON - Bangalore temple, they were surprised and upset with what had happened to them.

Hence we wish to clarify that these Old Age Home projects are not projects of ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna Temple located on Hare Krishna Hill, Chord Road, Rajajinagar, Bangalore. Nor do these devotees and agents represent ISKCON - Bangalore. We are not responsible for the donations that they collect nor are we responsible for the projects that they claim to represent. We also do not have any office in RT Nagar.

We also wish to state that ISKCON - Bangalore presently functions at three places in Bangalore –
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2. ISKCON Sri Sudharshan Narasimha Temple, Krishna Lila Park site, Vaikuntha Hill, Kanakapura Road, Bangalore
3. ISKCON Whitefield, #35, East Parallel Road, LRDE Layout, Karthik Nagar, 800 mts from Marathalli Junction, Bangalore – 560037 (Landmark: Opp ISRO, behind Karthik Nagar bus stop)

Apart from the above locations, ISKCON - Bangalore does not have any other office or temple in Bangalore city.

The agents of ISKCON - Mumbai are meeting our donors to raise donations by leveraging the good name ISKCON - Bangalore temple has earned over several years. It is also the furtive intention of these agents of ISKCON - Mumbai to create confusion among the donors, and in this way perpetrate some disturbance to our peaceful conduct of our services to Lord Sri Krishna and society in Bangalore city.

Hence we request all our donors and life patrons to be aware of whom they are giving their donations to, and what project they represent.

If the devotees and agents of ISKCON - Mumbai clearly state that they are collecting for ISKCON - Mumbai, and not on behalf of ISKCON - Bangalore, then it is up to the donor’s will to make the donation, and we really do not have any objection. This message is only to caution the donors that the devotees and agents of ISKCON - Mumbai do not misrepresent that they are from ISKCON - Bangalore, and misstate that they are collecting for ISKCON - Bangalore projects.

For any other clarification, please feel free to call the Donor Care Centre of the ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna Temple at landline: 080-23378052 and mobile: 93791 56083.
BRAHMOTSAVA
2014
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time  8:45 am – 1:00 pm (Class I - III)
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eligibility  Class I – Class X (girls till Class VII only)
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Class (I – III) :  Coloring, Craft, Krishna Rhymes, Animation Show
Class (IV – X) :  Arts and Crafts, Painting, Vocal Music, Classical Dance, Drama, Folk Dance, Dance Drama and Yakshagana

batch dates  Batch I : March 29 – April 20, 2014
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