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 asramas, 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
Paris—June 13, 1974

Freedom from Fear

The key to fearlessness is to rise above material existence by connecting with the supreme controller.

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

tasmad bharata sarvatma
bhagavan isvaro harih
srotayah kirtitavyas ca
smartavyas cecchatabhayam

“O descendant of Bharata, one who desires to be free from all miseries must hear about, glorify, and also remember the Personality of Godhead, who is the Supersoul, the controller, and the saviour from all miseries." Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.1.5

Who does not want abhayam? Abhayam means fearlessness. Everyone wants it. Covered by material nature, we have four positions. One position is to be always fearful: "What will happen next?" Even a big man like President Nixon is fearful: "What will happen next?" So many charges are brought against him. Although he is in a very exalted position as the President of the USA, he is also always fearful. That is the result of being under the material nature. Can anyone say that he is not fearful? Is it possible? Then what to speak of us.

The next position is that we require to eat something. Then after eating comes rest, sleeping. Then after rest, sex indulgence.

In today's verse it is implied that one who desires fearlessness and does not make any arrangement to get out of fearfulness is not a human being. Human beings always take precaution to save themselves. Although it is natural to be fearful, human beings still try to save themselves from the causes of fearfulness. Therefore it is said, icchata abhayam. Abhayam means no fear. If anyone wants to be fearful no more, then for him the prescribed duty is given in this verse.

Parikshit Maharaja is addressed here as Bharata, which means "descendant of Maharaja Bharata." Parikshit Maharaja belonged to the dynasty of King Bharata, from whose name the word Bharatavarsha has come. This planet is called Bharatavarsha because it was ruled by King Bharata. At that time the world was ruled under the Aryan culture. Gradually, the original Aryan, or Vedic, culture was lost. You French people are also from the Aryan family, but the culture is lost now.

This Krishna consciousness movement is reviving the original Aryan culture. We are all inhabitants of Bharatavarsha, and therefore we should be within the Aryan culture. But over time the Aryan culture has been lost, and Bharatavarsha has become divided. Now it is divided into so many countries: “This is India,” “This is France,” “This is Germany,” “This is this,” “This is this.” But formerly, the whole planet was known as Bharatavarsha. One culture: Vedic culture. One flag. Now they have increased hundreds and thousands of flags. If you want United Nations, unity, then you must take this culture, Krishna consciousness, and again become Bharata, followers of the Vedic culture. That will save the situation.

“One culture” means politically one flag; religiously one God, Krishna; to understand Krishna, one scripture, the Bhagavad-gita; and one work, simply to satisfy Krishna. That is oneness. And if you want at least to become free from all fearful conditions, then you should always remember—whom? Sarvatma.

Sarvatma means the living force of everyone. He is called sarvatma. There is a living force. I have got a living force, you have got a living force—everyone. But from where is the living force coming? From Krishna. Bijo 'ham sarva-bhutanam [Bhagavad-gita 7.10]. Krishna is the origin of the living force. He is the supreme living force. Mamaivaṁso... jiva-bhutah [Bhagavad-gita 15.7]. This is all stated in the Bhagavad-gita. "All these living entities are My parts and parcels." Just as a man with sons can claim, "They are all my sons," Krishna can claim, "All living entities are My sons." That is stated in the Bhagavad-gita (14.4):

sarva-yonisu kaunteya
murtayah sambhavanti yah
Krishna says, "I am the seed-giving father of all living entities." Sarva-yonisu means in all the forms or species of life.

Vedas for Full Knowledge

This outward dress, the body, is different from the self. Someone has become ant, and someone has become an elephant or, bigger than that, a fish. There is a kind of fish called timingila. That perhaps we have not seen. Some have seen the whale. It is as big as a big house. The timingila can swallow a whale as you might swallow a small nut.

There are so many varieties of life. We do not know them all. But we know about them from the shastra, the scriptures. Therefore we should consult Vedic literature to have full knowledge. In the Vedic literature it is said, jalaja nava-laksani: "In the water there are 900,000 species of life." Now, who can deny it? If you deny, then I shall tell you, "Go and count." [Laughs.] But we can get full knowledge from the shastra. That is the quality of Vedic knowledge. Everything is complete.

Learn from the Vedic literature. All information is there. And all the Vedic literature is summarized in this Srimad-Bhagavatam. Nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phalam [Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.1.3]. The Vedic literature is compared to a desire tree. Every word used in the Vedic literature is peculiar to the ordinary man. The ordinary man has no experience of the desire tree. But there is a tree called the desire tree, kalpa-taru. What is the business of the desire tree? Whatever you desire you get from that tree. The desire tree is there in Krishna’s loka, Krishna’s abode. In the spiritual world there are trees, but each tree is a desire tree. You can get anything from that tree. The Vedas are considered a desire tree. That means that any kind of knowledge you want, either spiritual or material, is there completely and perfectly in the Vedas.

There is Dhanur-veda, Ayur-veda, Jyotir-veda. Veda means knowledge. So for military art, if you want to consult Vedic literature you will get complete information, perfect. Similarly, Jyotir-veda. Jyoti means the luminaries in the sky, the stars. You can get information about them in the Jyotir-veda. We are trying to go to the moon and wasting our time and energy, but if you consult the Vedas, you get full information of the moon, the sun, or any other planet. There are millions and trillions of planets. You can get information on planets up to Brahm aloka, the topmost planet. And Ayur-veda. Ayuh means duration of life. Nobody wants to be diseased. So the medical science is given fully in the Ayur-veda.

The Father of Everyone

Because material life means we are all full of fear, in today’s verse the Srimad-Bhagavatam is giving the prescription for becoming fearless: “Hear about, glorify, and also remember the Personality of Godhead, who is the Supersoul...” Krishna is sarvatma, the supreme father of everyone, of all living entities, in all forms. He says in the Bhagavad-gita, “I am the seed-giving father of all living entities.” The father impregnates the mother by giving the seed. Similarly, this huge material cosmic manifestation is considered the mother, and the father is God, or Krishna, who impregnates her with the seed of the living entities. When there is creation, they come out as children of this material world. Just as a woman is impregnated and the child comes out, this material world is impregnated by the seed-giving father and the living entities come out.

Women cannot produce children automatically, without being impregnated. Similarly, to produce all the living entities in different forms of life, the seed-giving father is required, and that is God, Krishna. Is there any bad logic in that? There is confirmation in the shastra. Krishna says, aham bija-pradah pita: “I am the seed-giving father.” [Bhagavad-gita 14.4] Is it possible to produce life without the father? Is it possible? Then why do the rascal scientists say, “Now we shall produce life”? How can you do it? It is not possible. This is rascaldom.

In the Christian world the Supreme Lord God is accepted as the supreme father. “O father, give us our daily bread.” To accept the Supreme Lord, the supreme father, is very good. Everyone must accept Him. That is human life. That is human knowledge. That is common-sense knowledge: “If I am produced by my father, where have so many living entities come from? They have come from the supreme father.” He is called sarvatma.

Struggle for Existence

Today’s verse is about freedom from fearfulness or material existence. Material existence means the struggle for existence. Everyone has to struggle: “I want to stay.” In your country there has been so much fighting, such as the French Revolution and so many fights between the Protestants and the Catholics. And your Napoleon Bonaparte fought. Fighting is called the struggle for existence. Everyone wants to exist, and so he has to fight. And if there
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is no fighting, at least we must fight with the winter season or the summer season. Without fighting, you cannot stay in this world. That is called the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. You must be fit. That is the nature of life in the material world. And in the spiritual world there is no fight—simply friendship, that's all. That is the spiritual world, which is called Vaikuntha. *Kuntha* means “anxiety,” and *Vaikuntha* means “without anxiety.”

We have been put into this place of anxiety on account of our rebellion against God. That is the cause of all material existence. We should know this. Why are we put into this condition of fearfulness, anxiety, and always struggling for existence? We don't want it. When this inquiry comes, then one is a human being. As long as this "Why?" does not come, one is an animal. The animal does not ask, "Why am I put into the slaughterhouse? Why have I been brought here to be slaughtered?" Similarly, a human being is like an animal if he does not understand, "I have been put into this material world for being slaughtered by the laws of material nature. Never mind whether I am Napoleon or an ordinary man, I will be slaughtered."

This world is called *martya-loka*, “the universe of being slaughtered.” Nobody wants to be slaughtered. The animal does not want to be slaughtered, but by force it is slaughtered. Similarly, nobody wants death, but we are forced. Even such a big man as Napoleon—he wanted to complete that arch, but he was slaughtered before his desire was fulfilled. That is material nature. You must be slaughtered before your desire is fulfilled. That is material nature. You must be slaughtered as soon as required.

Therefore it is said here, *icchata abhayam*: "Anyone who wants fearlessness, who wants to be saved from being slaughtered, must do this." What is that? One must hear about, glorify, and remember *sarvatma bhagavan ishvarah*, "the Supreme Lord, the origin of all living entities, Bhagavan."

**Bhagavan and Ishvara**

*Bhagavan* means “all-powerful” and “possessor of all-opulences.” *Bhagavan* can do anything and everything. He is not like the imitation rascals who claim "I am God" but cannot do anything. He is not that kind of *Bhagavan*. *Bhagavan* means all-powerful. Whatever He likes, He can do. *sad-aisvarya-purna*, full of six opulences. That is *Bhagavan*.

\[
\text{aisvaryasya samagrasya} \\
\text{viryasya yasasahsriyah} \\
\text{jnana-vairagyayos caiva} \\
\text{sannam bhaga itingana}
\]

[Vishnu Purana 6.5.47]

This is the definition of *Bhagavan*. Everything has a definition. Nothing should be accepted blindly. First mentioned is *aisvaryasya*, wealth. *Bhagavan* means the person who has the complete riches. Now, I have some money, you have some money, he has some money, but nobody can claim, "I have all the money." No, that is not possible. One who possesses all the money is *Bhagavan*. And He possesses all strength, beauty, intelligence, fame, and renunciation.

You can find some very big rich man in this material world, but you cannot say that he is the supreme richest man. That is not possible. You will find another man richer than him. And then you will find someone richer than that man. In this way, by research, when you actually come to the richest person, He is *Bhagavan*. He is God.

If you have the energy you can search for such a person, and He is *Bhagavan*. It is not difficult. The definition of God is there in shastra. But here in the material world, there is competition for His position. God is known not only as *Bhagavan* but also as *ishvara*, "controller." *Everyone is ishvara*. I am controlling this institution. Somebody is controlling his office, his factory, his kingdom. President Nixon is controlling the United States. So all of us, more or less, are *ishvara*, controllers. This mother is controlling the small child. So she is also *ishvara*, because she is controlling.

God has given everyone a little controlling power. In that sense every one of us is *ishvara*. But here it is said, *bhagavan ishvarah*: “the supreme controller.” We are controllers, but we are controlled by somebody else. But the *Bhagavan Ishvara* is not controlled by anyone. That is Krishna. *Ishvarah paramah krishnah*: “The supreme controller is Krishna.” [Brahma-samhita 5.1].

We are being controlled. Foolishly we are thinking, "I am free." How can we be free? The biggest personality in this country, Napoleon Bonaparte, was not free. How can you be free? This is a misconception. Nobody can be free. Everyone is controlled.

But we rebel. "No, I don't want to. I don't want to be controlled." But you will be controlled. For example, if you
don’t want to be controlled by the state laws, the state will force you into the prison to be controlled. This is our position. We cannot be free. Therefore freedom is not good for us. If a child is given freedom, he will simply create havoc. So he is not to be given freedom; he must be controlled. Similarly, all living entities, being children of God, must voluntarily put themselves under the control of God. That is the perfection of life. Don’t try to be falsely free. That is not possible.

The mother will never give freedom to the child, because that is not good for him. Anyone who is weak must not be given freedom.

Similarly, we are weak. God is great. God is all-powerful. We are very tiny. We have no power. Therefore our normal life is to voluntarily accept the controlling power of God. That is human life. And God comes and He pleads, “My dear boy, why are you struggling here? You will never be happy.” [Bhagavad-gita 18.66] “You have manufactured so many plans to be happy, but you will never be happy. Therefore your only business is to come under My control, and then you will be happy.” [Bhagavad-gita 18.66] “I will give you all happiness.”

That is the sum and substance of the Bhagavad-gita. And when anyone agrees to be controlled, then success of life begins from that point. Unfortunately, at the present moment the whole world population has been taught in such a way that they do not want to be controlled. Therefore there is always a chaotic condition.

Read These Books

Here is the solution: If you want to be saved from the chaotic condition of life, if you want to be free from all anxieties, then your business is srotavyah: “Hear about the supreme controller, Krishna.” And for hearing about the supreme controller, we have got eighty books. Not one, two, three, four—eighty books. If you are actually intelligent, if you are actually a scientist, if you are actually philosopher, read these books. That is called srotavyah: Hear about the supreme controller. Not simply, “God is there.” Just try to understand how God is there. That you will find in this literature. There is no other literature like it throughout the world.

And after you hear from this literature, spread this knowledge. Kirtitavyah: “My dear sir, there is God. God is like this. I have heard from the authority.” That is called kirtitavyas ca, preaching. First of all hearing. Without hearing, how will you preach? And smartavyah. As soon as you become an expert hearer and an expert chanter, you will remember always. And as soon as you always remember Krishna, there is no more fear. Finished. That is life.

Thank you very much.

Sri Krsna Prabhu, 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

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"What is the Value of Your Education?"


Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, the universities nowadays don’t teach any courses in the nature of the soul.

Srila Prabhupada: Therefore, the young person says, “What is the wrong if I become a dog?” Because there is no education. He does not know the difference between the dog and the human being. Therefore, he says, “What is the wrong if I become a dog? I will get more facility for sex without any criminal charges.” This is the advancement of education.

Dr. Mize: How does the mind, then, come to know that there is a soul?

Srila Prabhupada: You have to be educated. How are these people, my students, convinced about the soul? They have been educated by knowledge and by practice. Everything has to be learned by being properly educated. And therefore, the Vedic injunction is *tad-vijnanartham* — "in order to know that science" — *sa gurum evabhiyacchet* — “you must go to a guru, a teacher.” So the answer is that you must go to the teacher who can teach you how the soul is there.

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, you’re teaching us how the soul is there, and is there a way to describe the connection between the soul and the mind?

Srila Prabhupada: The mind is there in the soul. But the mind is now polluted by material contamination. Just like a madman: he has got his mind, but his mind is contaminated. Therefore, he requires treatment by a psychiatrist. You cannot say the madman has no mind. He has got a mind, but it is contaminated. You have to see about treatment.

So the mind is there— everything is there in the soul. And now the mind, contaminated by matter, is perverted.

The same example: a madman has got a mind, but it is useless. He is simply acting in madness. The same madman, when properly treated, will act like a sane man. So the mind is there always, whether we speak of the pure soul or the soul encaged in the material body. Everything is spiritual. The soul is spiritual; the mind is spiritual; the intelligence is spiritual. But it is now contaminated. So you have to see about treatment. When it is purified, by Krishna consciousness, then the mind is controlled, the intelligence is properly acting, and the soul is in its proper position. Therefore, those who are under treatment must observe it strictly. They must not do something wrong, such that the treatment may be hampered.

Dr. Mize: When the soul was in the spiritual sky, he also had a mind and an intelligence like he has here?

Srila Prabhupada: Just like the madman is speculating, He is thinking, “I am president.” He is lying down on the street. “Oh, I am completely independent. Why shall I go on the foot path?”

Dr. Mize: What if the soul didn’t have a mind and intelligence here?

Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes. Yes. Unless he
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has got a mind, how does he misuse his intelligence?

Dr. Mize: But he misused that intelligence in his freedom, his independence.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Yes. In the spiritual world, the mind is there also. Spiritual mind. Everything is spiritual. There is nothing material. The body is spiritual; the mind, spiritual; the intelligence, spiritual; each person, spiritual; the land, spiritual; the water, spiritual. Everything is spiritual. That is the spiritual world.

Here in the material world, except the spirit soul everything is material. And he is encumbered with this material atmosphere, by twenty-seven strata, layers. For instance, the five gross elements, then ten senses, and then three gunas, or modes of nature.

In this way, there are twenty-seven layers. The soul is within, and he has to be taken out. That is called liberation. For instance, if you are covered with twenty-seven layers of dirty things, it is a very difficult position. But there is a process to clear the garbage and take the soul out. That is this Krishna consciousness movement—to take the soul out of the covering of twenty-seven layers of material atmosphere. That sloka we read before says nasta-prayesu abhadresu: “almost cleansed”—prayesu abhadra. Abhadra means dirty things. So this clearing process is going on. When the soul is almost cleansed, he feels, “Oh…”

And that process: nityam bhagavata-sevaya—constantly being engaged in the service of the Bhagavata: the grantha, or book, Bhagavata and the person Bhagavata. Then the covering will be cleansed away.

And then, when the soul comes out, that is brahma-bhutah prasannatma: “Oh, I am now free.” Na socati na kanksati—no more lamentation, no more greediness. Everything finished. Then he begins his real business, as part and parcel of God. That is perfection.

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, in the thirteenth chapter of Bhagavad-gita, “Nature, the enjoyer, and consciousness,” in texts six and seven, Lord Krishna mentions those twenty-seven coverings: “The five great elements, false ego, intelligence, the unmanifest, the ten senses, the mind, the five sense objects, desire, hate, happiness, and distress, the aggregate, the life symptoms, and convictions—all these are considered, in summary, to be the field of activities and their interaction.”

Srila Prabhupada: In material life, these are our field of activities. The body is a combination of all these things, like a huge computer. The body is made of these material things, but the mechanical parts are very minute, different. All these are matter. But within this matter, because the soul is there, this finest machine is working.

Just like our composition machine for publishing my books—kut-kut-kut-kut-kut. But one has to push the button; otherwise, it is useless. However very nicely made the machine, without a living being’s touch, it is useless. So this whole big machine, the material body, is wonderful so long as the soul is there. And as soon as the soul is out, the body is a lump of matter. Useless. Not worth a penny. Throw it away.

But in modern civilization, we are giving importance to the machine—not to the person who is dealing with the machine. This is the folly of modern civilization. We are thinking like a child: “The machine is working independently.” But that is not the fact. The big airship, the 747, is flying because the pilot is there. And the pilot is a soul, covered by another bodily machine. And that is the missing point in modern civilization: who is working with the machine. That they do not know. That is ignorance. It is said… [glancing at a disciple:] you see Bhagavad-gita… ishvarah sarva-bhutanam hrd-dese ‘rjuna tisthatti/ bhramayan sarva-bhutani yantrarudhah mayaya. Yantra means “machine.” So the modern education is missing the pilot. They are simply wandering with the machine. [Glancing again at the disciple:] Read it.

Disciple: “The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone’s heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.”

Srila Prabhupada: That’s it. They do not consider this body a machine. In spite of all education, they are thinking there is no other element than this machine. And yet actually, they are finding that such a big, nice machine as a computer—without an operator, it does not work. And this huge machine, the material nature, is working without any spiritual touch? Just see how much foolishness. They think, “Automatically working. Nature is working automatically.” Do they not think this?

Dr. Mize: They think there’s a mind, but not a soul.

Srila Prabhupada: No, that’s all right. Something is there which is working. Now, that may be debatable—you call it soul or mind. That is the next understanding. But the machine is not working independently. That should be understood first. Then how the machine is working—that will be the next chapter.

So they have no understanding, even, of how the machine is working. Mudho ‘yam nabhijanati loko mam ajam avayayam…. Mayadhysakena prakrtih suyate sa-caracaram: God is directing everything—that fact these mudhas, asses, do not know.

So if you do not know how the machine is working, then what is the value of your education? Education means enlightenment. But you do not know what is the final cause. That huge body is working as nature: so many planets—big planets like the sun and moon—they are floating in the air. Who has made this arrangement? We see it every day. And yet these great professors will never accept that God is the original cause. That thing does not come to their brain. They are putting forward different theories, and those are being accepted. One theory is accepted today, and tomorrow, “No, this is not accepted any longer. Here is another—an advanced theory.” That “advanced” means he does not know. 😊
What?” asks my eighty-three-year-old mother.

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

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

“So I’ll sit,” she says.

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

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

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

The Unheard World of Sound

What is the nature of sounds that are not perceived by the human ear? Why can’t we hear sounds beyond our normal range of hearing? What is the spiritual significance of hearing?

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

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

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

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

**Spiritual Sound in the Vedic Literature**

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

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

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

**The Power of God's Names**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Because chanting the name of God is so much emphasized in Vaishnava texts, we focus on chanting as a central devotional practice. Thus, deep meditation and great emotion accompany japa (soft chanting) and kirtana, or sankirtana (congregational chanting). When perfected, the chanting leads to awareness of God's absolute nature, i.e., that there is no difference between
nami ("the named one") and nama ("the name"). Elucidation on the absolute nature of Krishna and His name is the heart of Vaishnava practice, leading to love of God.

Norvin Hein, Professor Emeritus at Yale University, has witnessed enthusiastic Vaishnava kirtana. In his essay "Chaitanya's Ecstasies and the Theology of the Name," he captures its most emotional components:

In the singing of verses like these, each line, separately, is incanted by the leader first, and the whole assembly repeats each line after him, one by one. As the verse is gone through again and again, the leader steps up the tempo. When the speed of utterance approaches the utmost possible, the whole group, in unison, begins to shout the lines, at the same time beating out the rhythm with sharply-timed clapping of hands. The singers begin to sway and go themselves in ungoverned gestures. Faces flush. From the line of instrumental accompanists the bell-like peal of small brass cymbals swells up with the rising shouting and pierces through it. The whole process approaches a crashing, breathtaking crescendo. The point of explosion is reached: eyes flash, mouths drop open, a tremor runs through the entire assembly. The Power, the Presence, has been felt!

**Chanting Hare Krishna**

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

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

Rama refers to both Balarama (Krishna's elder brother) and Lord Ramachandra, a prominent incarnation of the Lord who is the subject of the epic known as the Ramayana. It is also said, however, that Rama refers to Radha-ramana, another name for Krishna, meaning "one who brings pleasure to Srimati Radharani."

Thus the maha-mantra, composed solely of the Lord's most confidential names, embodies the essence of the divine. As a prayer, the mantra is translated in the following way: "O Lord! O divine energy of the Lord! Please engage me in Your service." The selflessness of this mantra—asking to serve God rather than asking God to do something for us—situates it in a unique category, even among the best of prayers and the most powerful of incantations. But its pure form can only be heard by the pure devotee—in his "inner ear," which is in his heart of hearts.

**The Right Hearing Aid**

When I returned to my mom's home to tell her about my meeting with her ear doctor, she had already made up her mind: "I'm not getting a hearing aid."

She just didn't want to be bothered. Truth is, her doctor said that a hearing aid would just add to her discomfort and probably wouldn't help her much anyway. I told her how, as I spoke to her doctor, my mind had wandered to Vedic mantras and spiritual sound vibrations. But she couldn't hear what I was saying, literally or figuratively.

She asked me if I would get a hearing aid if I were her.

"Probably not," I said.

"What?"

I spoke up: "No, I wouldn't get one."

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

"You mean your Swami Prabhupada, right?" She smiled.

"Your hearing was definitely in trouble, but Prabhupada taught you to hear things in a way that serves you well."

She thought for a second, and added, "I should have taken your advice." She was right.

"You mean your Swami Prabhupada, right?" She smiled.

"Your hearing was definitely in trouble, but Prabhupada taught you to hear things in a way that serves you well."

She thought for a second, and added, "I should have taken your advice." She was right.

**The Touchstone of the Holy Name**

*harinama cintamani akhilamrta khani
krishna-krpa bale ye paila
krtartha se mahasaya sada pumananda-maya
raga-bhave sri-krishna bhajilai*

"This touchstone of the holy name is a limitless mine of luscious gems. The fortunate soul who discovers it by Krishna's grace is inevitably fulfilled by it. Such a person always experiences ever-increasing joy, for it leads him to worship Krishna in the mood of spontaneity."

—Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura Harinama Chintamani ☯
Located in Thirunageshwaram near Thanjavur is the famous temple of Lord Vishnu, Thiruvinnagaram Oppiliappan Perumal Kovil.

The Pastime

The Brahma Purana narrates an interesting pastime of the Supreme Lord in connection with this temple. Little known parts of the Brahma Purana narrate an interesting episode of tulasi, the favourite plant of Krishna.

Often described with the epithet Vishnupriya, or the beloved of Vishnu, tulasi holds an important place in the heart of Krishna and His devotees. A Hindu household is incomplete if it does not have a tulasi plant in the courtyard. Most families construct a special pot for tulasi with an alcove for a small lamp. The Skanda Purana explains the glories of having tulasi in our houses:

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asmin grhe dvija srestha tulasimula mrtika
sarvada tisthate dehe devata na sa manusa
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"In anybody's house or on his body, if the mud from tulasi is available, they are not just men, but they are equal to the demigods. Oh best among the sages, in anyone's house, if there is the clay of tulasi, tulasi wood, and tulasi leaves available, that house is certainly a place of Lord Vishnu."

Such is the potency of Srimathi Tulasi Devi.

There is an interesting pastime which describes the birth of Tulasi Devi.

The story of tulasi is related to the great bhagavata called Dharmadhvaja. Each Manvanthara has its own Manu. At present it is Vaivaswatha Manu. Once long ago, the ninth Manvanthara was ruled by a Manu called Dakshasavarni. He was in incarnation of Rishabadeva. He was extremely glorious and a part of Vishnu. He was born to a great devotee couple, Ayushman and Ambudhara. One of the descendants of Dakshasavarni was Vrisadhvaja who is 6th in his lineage. Vrisadhvaja was a great devotee of Shiva and owing to his great affection for this devotee, Shiva lived a whole period of a deva-yuga in the ashrama of Vrisadhvaja. Vrisadhvaja issued a proclamation by which he banned worship of all deities other than Shiva in his country. Even the practice of worshipping Mahalakshmi during the Navaratri in the month of Bhadra (September) became extinct. Worship of Vishnu was banned completely and all yagnas (yoga or yagna means to please Vishnu) came to a standstill. Surya (the sun-god) was furious at this belittling of demigods other than Shiva and cursed the King Vrisadhvaja that he would cease to be prosperous. Shiva did not like it and he went to punish Surya, holding his trident in his hand. Trembling with fear, Surya approached his father Kashyapa. Kashyapa expressed his inability to counteract the trident of Shiva. Kashyapa meditated on his father Brahma. Kashyapa and Surya went to Brahma and acquainted him with all details. Brahma also was helpless in the matter and so the three of them went to the Supreme Lord Vishnu.

They prostrated before Vishnu and begged for a solution. At that time Shiva also came there and paid obeisance to Vishnu. Vishnu said, "Oh, demigods, within this half an hour, twenty-one yugas have passed by on the earth."
King Dharmadhvaja was married to Madhavi. Mahalaksmi made her appearance in Madhavi’s womb as an embryo and after a hundred years of gestation, Madhavi gave birth to a daughter. Even at the time of birth the child looked like a grown up girl and was extremely beautiful. The devout couple decided to name the daughter Tulasi, meaning “one who is matchless”. This Tulasi was an extraordinary girl. She was least interested in the luxuries of life and decided to be a renunciant. Abandoning all worldly pleasures, she went to Badarikashrama in the Himalayas and started doing penance there with the prayer that the Supreme Lord should become her husband. She did severe penance for twenty-four thousand years sitting amidst fire in the hot season and sitting in water in the cold season. She consumed fruits sparsely during her severe penance.

Upon realizing that Lord Vishnu had not made His appearance, she decided to increase the severity of her penance. She did penance for another thirty thousand years eating leaves only, still the Lord did not grant her audience. She decided to further increase her penance another forty thousand years, taking air only as food, and another ten thousand years without any food. At this stage Brahma appeared and asked her the object of her penance. She replied that she wanted Lord Vishnu to be her husband. Hearing this Brahma said, “Oh devout lady, you know the cowboy Sudama is born of a part of Sri Krishna. That extraordinary cowboy has now been born on earth, due to a curse of Radha, as a demon named Shankachuda. He is very eminent and had once fallen in love with you, seeing you in Goloka. You will become his wife and later you can become the wife of Narayana. At that time a part of your divine body will remain on earth as a plant named tulasi. Tulasi will become the most sacred of all plants, dear to Vishnu, and all worship without using tulasi leaves will be ineffective. Thus tulasi was married to Shankachuda.

Still her prayer of becoming the consort of the Lord was not sanctioned by the Lord. She again performed severe penance. One day the Supreme Lord granted audience to tulasi. Tulasi asked Vishnu to accept her as His consort. The Lord replied, “Lakshmi attained Me after severe penance and now She is about to incarnate on the banks of the river Cauvery. You may appear in that
spot as a *tulasi* plant and Lakshmi will be born in your lap. Since Lakshmi owes you an obligatory duty in this regard, She will be more than happy in Me accepting you. As such in that spot where Lakshmi is born, you will be more glorified than Lakshmi. I will accept you close to My chest as a garland and you will be more dear to Me than the lotus which symbolizes Lakshmi."

Hearing this from the Supreme Lord, Tulasi Devi appeared in the spot called Thiruvinnagaram on the banks of the Cauvery. She appeared jubilant and glorious. Later Mrkandu Maharishi’s son Markandeya worshiped the Lord in Thiruvinnagaram and desired that Lakshmi be born to him as his daughter. The intention was that Markandeya Maharishi wanted to be the father-in-law of the Supreme Lord, a rare privilege and rather unique relationship. The ever-merciful Lord decided to fulfill the desire of Markandeya Maharishi, who performed severe penance and austerities for one thousand years to please Lakshmi Devi. Lakshmi was born as a little girl under the *tulasi* plant in the hermitage of Markandeya Maharishi in Thiruvinnagaram.

When the girl was an adolescent, an old *brahmana* approached Markandeya and asked for her hand in marriage. Shocked by such a blunt request, Markandeya Maharishi thought for a while and began to give excuses. In the Vedic tradition, a *brahmana* should be given whatever he asks as alms. That is the prime duty of the *grihasthas*. Markandeya Maharishi said, "Oh greatest of *brahmanas*, my daughter is not fit to be a wife. She does not even know to put salt in the dishes she cooks." Hearing this, the *brahmana* said, "That is simply wonderful. I have decided that I should not get angry with my wife so I have decided to quit taking salt. Your daughter is an apt choice for me. Please give her in marriage to me." Though the Supreme Lord is never ever affected by such bodily miseries, He did this to show the world how He loves His devotees and His unflinching prema towards His consorts.

Markandeya went into his deity room and prayed hard to solve the problem. On the one hand, he did not want his daughter to get married to anyone apart from Vishnu and on the other hand as a pious *grihastha* he was obliged to fulfill the wishes of *brahmanas*. In such a dilemma he prayed hard to the Lord of the universe for a solution. Suddenly the old *brahmana* revealed himself as the Supreme Personality of Godhead in disguise. Markandeya ecstatically performed *kanyadanam*. The
wedding of Lakshmi and the Supreme Lord was performed in this place called Thiruvinnagaram. Thirty three million demigods took part in the festivities. After the wedding, Markandeya put forward a condition to his son-in-law. He said, "Since You have already promised to quit eating salt, my daughter who is Lakshmi Devi Herself will never put salt in Your dishes. I am so much attached to my daughter that I can’t tolerate my son-in-law getting angry with Her. So please keep up Your promise and quit eating salt." The Supreme Lord was more than happy to bow down to the wishes of His father-in-law. Thus even to this day in the temple of Thiruvinnagaram there is no salt used for preparing the dishes offered to the Supreme Lord. Hence He was named Oppiliappan or “the one who never eats salt.” He is also known as Lavana Varjita Venkatesha or “the Lord who avoids salt.” So much is the aversion that even bringing salt or foods containing salt inside the temple complex is considered a sinful activity. No one should ever take anything that contains salt into this temple and the Puranas indicate that such persons who knowingly do so are believed to suffer in hell for long years.

Lord took tulasi and kept her close to His heart as a huge garland, thus fulfilling the desire of Tulasi Devi.

The Temple

The temple has an ornate five-tiered rajagopuram. The temple complex is quite vast and enshrines a pond called Ahorathra Pushkarani. There is an interesting episode which describes the pastime of this great pond. Once, a devotee king of a local kingdom committed a great sin which is highly condemned in the scriptures: he had illicit sex with the daughter of a saint. The saint cursed the king to become a bird. The king as a bird came to the temple of Thiruvinnagaram and started praying to the Supreme Lord. The bird performed severe penance. One day there was torrential rainfall and the bird who was sitting on a tree adjacent to the pond, fell into the pond accidently. The bird immediately got relieved of his curse and assumed his human form. Usually the Vedic scriptures prohibit bathing after sunset. But this is the only pond in the entire world which permits bathing after sunset. Hence the pond is called Ahorathra Pushkarani or “a pond where anyone can bath at any time.”

There are many mantapas in the temple. One beautiful marble mantapa is located on the western side in the innermost prakaram, where the Deity of Oppiliappan rests for a while accepting offerings from the devotees, before coming out during various festivals. Another ornate granite mantapa is located on the northern side where the Deities are swung during the annual swing festival. Adjoining this is a shrine for Rama, Lakshmana, Sita Devi and Hanuman. Located beyond this is the sacred bed chamber, full of beautiful mirrors, where during festivals, the Lord and His consort rest at night. One spacious yaga-shala for performing fire sacrifice rituals is restricted only to priests. The temple includes another octagonal mantapa with 8 carved pillars on the banks of the Ahorathra Pushkarini. To the south of the Garuda shrine is the huge, spacious Koti mantapa, used during Brahmotsavam. There is a small garden in the outer prakara of the temple. There is also a much bigger garden about 1/2 km to the south of the temple, where tulasi and flowers are grown for the temple’s use. A big mantapa is located amidst this garden, where the Deities rest during summer days.

A shrine dedicated to Swami Deshika, one of the great acharyas, is near the main sanctorum. Ramanuja’s shrine is located in the northern part of the temple. The very spot where Tulasi made her appearance and Mahalaksmi was born is located in the northern side of the temple.

The Lord and His consort in procession

The shrine of the Alwar saints in the temple complex
near Ramanuja’s shrine. There is a beautiful shrine of Krishna dancing on the hoods of serpent Kaliya in the southern side of the main sanctum. In the sanctum sanctorum, the Supreme Lord as Oppiliappan grants audience to the devotees. In His two hands He holds conch and discus. In one of His hands He gestures to the devotees to surrender to His lotus feet. The sloka from Bhagavad-gita, mam ekam sharanam vraja, meaning “Surrender unto Me,” is inscribed on His palm. This reminds us that shelter at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord is the only way by which we can cross the material ocean. Bhoomi Devi, the consort of the Lord, is seen with folded hands at the lotus feet of the Lord. Markandeya Maharishi is also seen in the main sanctum, praying to the Supreme Lord with folded hands.

Festivals

All the worship of the Lord is conducted according to the Vaikhanasa Agama Shastra. Worship is performed to the Supreme Lord six times everyday. The Lord is awakened from His celestial sleep by the chanting of the Oppiliappan suprabhatam. The annual Brahmotsava is celebrated in the month of April. A huge chariot festival takes place on the ninth day of the Brahmotsavam. A six-day annual spring festival is celebrated in the month of June. During September Pavitrotsava is celebrated when the Supreme Lord is adorned in silk threads of the principal five colours. This festival lasts for five days. Holy wedding or kalyanotsava is celebrated in the month of October when the divine wedding of the Supreme Lord is reenacted. It is a 12-day festival celebrated with much grandeur and is a visual treat to the devotees. During Vaikuntha Ekadashi, a twenty-day festival is celebrated for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord. Sri Rama Navami and Sri Krishna Janmashtami are other prominent festivals of the temple. A grand Pattabhisheka or coronation festival of Sri Rama is celebrated during Sri Rama Navami. The reenactment of the coronation episode of Ramayana is done.

Periaiwar, Thirumangai Alwar and Nammalwar are the Vaishnava saints who have sung about this temple. Nammalwar sings:

“It seems Lord’s holy feet said to the residents of Earth during Vamana avatara,

‘Oh folks watch this! Take this rare opportunity to see the lotus feet!

Grab it! Cling on it! Wash your sins!

He is the one who gives so much heat while
Simultaneously He is the one who cools as a shadow!
Just like what He was during Nrisimha avatara
As Agni to Hiranyakashipu and the cool moon to Prahlada
This beautiful Lord resides in Thiruvinnagaram, the land of wealthy people!
There is no other means for me except taking refuge at His Feet!!

Brahmanda Purana is one of the 18 Mahapurana and is listed as 18th by all scholars unanimously. Brahma means “biggest” in Sanskrit and anda means “egg”. So Brahma means “biggest egg”. It connotes the creation of the universe. Apart from this the Brahma Purana has many other subjects of discussion, which constitute the main topics namely: creation of the universe, determination of kalpa, differentiation of yugas, description of Manvantaras, description of Jambudweepa and Bharatavarsha, a detailed description of Bharata clan, Prithu clan, Deva clan, Rishi clan, Agni clan and their preceptors, sages, the dynasties of rulers and the legends of Pitas and their propitiation, the conflict between Kartikeya, King of Hihayas and Lord Parashurama, subsidiary episodes as that of Sagara, the lineage of Vaivasvatha Manu and the dissolution of the universe, the ultimate annihilation, etc. 

To read online visit: http://goo.gl/RAXAyb
I'm groggy. It's early. I'm way too tired to go to work today. After nearly shattering my alarm clock, I slowly drag myself out of bed. I shower, worship my Deities, chant my rounds, and head downstairs for breakfast. I glance at the newspaper that sits untouched on the kitchen table.

"Father Convicted of Killing Two Children"
"Young Couple Victim of Hit and Run"
"Infant Dies of Malnutrition After Abandonment"
And I thought my problems were bad.

True to my morning ritual, I glance at Radha-Krishna, who guard the kitchen through the antique picture frame that hangs above the table. I flash Them my best "good-morning-have-a-great-day" smile and touch Their feet. Usually, I'd now head out to face the cut-throat corporate world. But today I pause, turn around, and pull up a chair in front of Radha-Krishna.

"I don't get it," I say aloud.
I scan the vicinity to ensure that no one is within earshot.
When I'm sure the coast is clear, I say, "This world is filled with suffering. Even the people who try to serve You go through so much misery. Why?"

The only thing I know for sure is that I'm not the only one who doesn't quite understand the apparent inequality and unfairness of the material world, characterized by birth, death, old age, and disease. The current age of Kali is further characterized by greed, drought, famine, envy, irreligion, and, well, the kinds of stories you read about in the newspaper every morning. In fact, the entire history of the material world is filled with sadness and tragedy, even during Lord Krishna's time here. Lord Krishna Himself went through seemingly troubled times, such as His separation from His beloved gopis, the cowherd girls. His paternal aunt and dedicated servant Kunti lost five grandsons to murder in one night. His sister, Subhadra, lost her son Abhimanyu in the battle of Kurukshetra. His friend Arjuna was faced with a dilemma most of us never even dream of: whether or not to kill some of his own family. The Lord's great devotee Prahlada Maharaja was tormented by his own father and survived several of his father's plots to kill him. Why must the Lord's own servants suffer so much in this world?

People can tell us until they're blue in the face to have unflinching faith in the Lord and devotion to Him, amidst all of our pain and suffering. People can tell us to trust that the Lord has a specific plan for us and it's fruitless for us to try to comprehend this plan. But that doesn't stop us from hurting, or from dwelling on our misfortunes. But here's the thing: Those people are right. If Lord Krishna can put His own family and intimate associates in such severe "misery," what makes us so special?

Finding the Silver Lining
Nurturing our faith helps ease the inevitable suffering of life in the material world.

By Rashi Singh

The reason I do not immediately reciprocate the affection of living beings even when they worship Me, O gopis, is that I want to intensify their loving devotion. They then become like a poor man who has gained some wealth and then lost it, and who thus becomes so anxious about it that he can think of nothing else. My dear girls, understanding that simply for My sake you had rejected the authority of worldly opinion, of the Vedas, and of your relatives, I acted as I did only to increase your attachment to Me. Even when I removed Myself from your sight by suddenly disappearing, I never stopped loving you. Therefore, My
beloved gopis, please do not harbour any bad feelings toward Me, your beloved. I am not able to repay My debt for your spotless service, even within a lifetime of Brahma. Your connection with Me is beyond reproach. You have worshiped Me, cutting off all domestic ties, which are difficult to break. Therefore please let your own glorious deeds be your compensation.

**Krishna is Listening**

It is clear: More than anything else, we should understand that so-called misfortune and disaster truly are a form of Krishna’s mercy. They are a sign that Krishna is trying to deepen our love for Him, intensify our devotion.

It is true what people say: Unflinching faith is really the answer to all our problems and uncertainties. There are times when it appears that Krishna is neglecting us or not listening to our prayers. But as the Supersoul, He’s always listening. He’s not our order-carrier. His will is what ensues. The better and more sincerely we serve Him, the more He reciprocates and answers our prayers.

Pure devotees want nothing from Krishna but more opportunities to serve Him and His devotees. Our goal should be to aim to attain even the smallest fraction of the mood of the gopis. Krishna was so overwhelmed and appreciative of the gopis’ loving service that He told them, "I have nothing left to give you. Please be content with your own actions." He becomes indebted to them. The creator, the proprietor of everything, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, had nothing left to give those dear sweet gopis. In fact, He was so overwhelmed by their pure love for Him that He became their servant.

He did all He could to satisfy them. If they asked Him to dance, He danced. If they asked Him to play the flute, He did all He could to satisfy them. If they asked Him to play the flute, He played. That is the beauty of the relationship between the Lord and His devotees. So simple, so pure, so honest, so real—unlike anything we can find among ourselves in the material world.

Another example of unfaltering faith is Kunti, who after the death of her grandsons approached Lord Krishna and asked Him to please continue to put her through distress and hardship, because it was in those times that she thought of Him the most. That is the sign of a pure devotee.

A pure devotee looks at misfortune as bad karma being exhausted. A devotee thinks that Krishna is lessening his sinful reactions. A devotee realizes that during the most difficult times, Krishna within is guiding and protecting him. He realizes that his hardships are simply the Lord trying to keep His child close to Him, trying to encourage him to remember Him.

I understand that suffering comes because of karma, or things we've done in the past. And I understand that karma exists because we have free will, which Krishna has given us so we can freely choose to love Him. Still, I can't explain exactly why a particular thing happens. I don't know why that man killed his children. I don't know why that father disapproves of his son's choice. I don't know why that poor baby's mother left him to die.

But I do know that Krishna has a plan for all of us. I do know that He loves all of us equally; He is impartial, like a father who doesn’t favour any one child. Still, Krishna reciprocates loving transactions with us proportionately to what we offer. Chanting Hare Krishna will burn all of our good and bad karma, the causes of bondage to the material world.

**Maximum Protection**

A devotee once suggested to me that because the world is filled with exploitation and deceit, for maximum protection one should try to chant sixteen rounds every morning before leaving home. He said that if I did that, I’d develop an aura, almost a shield, that would bar people from hurting me. Minimum sixteen rounds each day for maximum protection.

The *maha-mantra* is so powerful. It is Krishna Himself incarnating as His name, and we directly associate with the Lord while chanting. We are awakening our dormant love for Him beneath the dust of the mirror of our hearts. It’s simple: Unfortunate circumstances will ensue, we won’t always understand what Krishna’s plan is, but chanting, reading, and associating with devotees will virtually, if not completely, remove our pain. These practices will cause us to view our suffering in a different light, just as the gopis did, just as Kunti did, as Prahlada Maharaja did, and as Srimati Subhadra did.

Raise your hands and rejoice in the power and beauty of the Lord’s sweet names: *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare!*

And that's what I do as I look at the photo Radha-Krishna this morning.

"Ahem!"

That's my mum. She has just rounded the corner and is peering at me, clearly wondering what exactly I'm doing, and if I'll be in need of medication.

"Were you just talking to yourself?"

"Oh. Hi mum. I... uh... well, emmm... Stop talking to me—I'm late! Bye!"

And with that, I once again venture into the cut-throat corporate world. But I feel safer. I feel protected. I feel the warmth of Krishna in my heart. I can deal with anything today.
If you have this faith—that the soul is the eternal servant of Krishna—then you will have no more misery and when you chant the holy name of Krishna, your body will shiver in ecstasy and your eyes will shed tears in love of God.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura
Gitavali

If somehow or other by good fortune one develops faith in hearing and chanting My glories, such a person, being neither very disgusted with nor attached to material life, should achieve perfection through the path of loving devotion to Me.

Lord Sri Krishna
Srimad-Bhagavatam 120.8

Even a liberated soul merged in the impersonal Brahman effulgence is attracted to the pastimes of Krishna. He thus installs a Deity and renders the Lord service.

Sri Shankaracharya
Commentary on Narasimha-tapani Upanishad

The Vedic literatures composed by the omniscient Mahamuni Vyasa-deva are evidence of all spiritual existence. Only through these revealed scriptures can all conditioned souls attain knowledge.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya 20.353

Because of His great handsomeness, sweetness, charm, and opulence, because of the musical sound of His flute, because He is filled with love, and because of His host of friends and relatives, great poets and philosophers say that Lord Krishna, the son of Nanda, is the original Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhushana
Sri Aisvarya-kadambini 10

To the extent the heart is polluted with sins, it cannot place its faith in the Vedic scriptures or the bona fide spiritual master. By hearing the Vedic scriptures in the association of saintly devotees, love for the Lord is manifest. That is the great result of having performed many pious deeds in many previous births.

Brahma-vaivarta Purana
Quoted in Bhakti-sandarbha (15-6)

Not knowing the real value of life, people think that the material body and the land where it is produced are all in all. This is the basic principle behind nationalism, socialism, and communism. Such thinking, which simply bewilders the living entity, is nothing but rascalism. It is due to the darkness of maya, but as soon as one becomes Krishna conscious, he is immediately relieved from such misconceptions.

H is D'ivine G race A . C . B haktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, Madhya 22.32, Purport
Hare Krishna Chanters Club
An initiative of ISKCON Bangalore to involve more and more families in practicing the

YUGA DHARMA – CHANTING OF THE HOLY NAMES

We request all of you to be a part of this programme and benefit by chanting
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
at least 108 times every day…

Why should I chant this mantra?

• It is Yuga Dharma – the prescribed religious principle for this age.
• It is the medicine for our material disease (bhava roga).
• It cleanses our heart and relieves us from material miseries.
• It protects us from the vices of Kali Yuga, this age of quarrel and hypocrisy.
• It is the only way recommended by scriptures to attain liberation.
• It makes us experience real peace and the ever-increasing joy of Krishna Consciousness.
• It helps us excel in our life’s activities and finally attain the highest perfection.

Register for the Hare Krishna Chanters Club… and receive -

• Regular newsletters of Hare Krishna Chanters Club
• Continuous guidance from the temple on practicing japa meditation
• Opportunity to take part in sankirtana festivals at the Temple
• Invitation for exclusive seminars, training sessions and japa workshops
• Opportunity to render voluntary service to propagate Yuga Dharma

For more details please contact: 080-23471956
To further the propagation of Harinam Sanka\pana, ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna Temple, Bangalore launched the Hare Krishna Chanters Club on September 7, 2014 to coincide with the auspicious appearance day of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. By the efforts of Srila Bhaktivinoda the Sanka\pana Movement of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was rejuvenated and later on it was spread around the world by Srila Prabhupada, the founder-acharya of ISKCON.

The primary purpose of ISKCON is to teach and encourage the Sanka\pana movement, the congregational chanting of the holy names of God, as revealed in the teachings of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. This method of spiritual advancement is a combination of Shravanam (hearing about the Lord) and Kirtanam (chanting the glories of the Lord) which are the two potent forms of devotional service. The Harinam Sanka\pana is easy to perform and brings about quick spiritual transformation in a person who practices it sincerely with faith and devotion.

The Hare Krishna Chanters Club is an initiative by ISKCON Bangalore in order to involve more and more families in the chanting of Hare Krishna maha-mantra. Anyone who commits to chant at least one round of Hare Krishna maha-mantra (108 times) every day will be eligible to become a member of this club. This new initiative received an overwhelming response on its first day itself from the people visiting the temple. More than 400 visitors registered and committed to chant the Hare Krishna maha-mantra 108 times every day. The members will get regular e-newsletters from the temple and also guidance on the practice of chanting (japa).
Seven Benefits of Chanting
—Nagaraja Dasa

On encountering Hare Krishna devotees chanting on the street, people respond with every reaction from amusement to anger. Few understand what the chanting is all about. To many, it seems a frivolity, often inspiring the remark "Get a job!"

But there’s nothing frivolous about chanting the names of God. Srila Prabhupada had great faith in the transformative power of chanting. He told us that simply by chanting Hare Krishna we would become self-realized. He spoke from experience and on the basis of the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who emphasized chanting as the most effective means of God-realization in the present age.

Prabhupada saw his disciples mature spiritually by chanting. And he stressed that if we continued to chant sincerely, we would attain spiritual perfection.

In the Shikshastaka, or “Eight Teachings,” Lord Chaitanya Himself listed seven spiritual benefits of chanting:

- **Chanting cleans the mirror of the heart.** Lord Chaitanya compares the heart, or the consciousness, to a mirror in which one sees oneself. The dust of lifetimes of material pursuits sullies our consciousness, blocking a clear vision of our true identity as spiritual beings. Chanting the holy names washes away that dust, allowing us to finally see who we really are.

- **Chanting puts out the fire of material existence.** We think we’re the body, and that brings on limitless sufferings, chief of which are disease, old age, death, and rebirth. Because chanting awakens our true identity, it delivers us from repeated lifetimes of misery at the hands of nature.

- **Chanting is like a moon, spreading good fortune.** Even in the early stages of practice, a chanter feels the lightening of a great burden. Because God and His names are identical, the blessings invoked by chanting are incalculable.

- **Chanting is the life of all knowledge.** Without spiritual knowledge, we eternal beings are doomed to stay in this temporary place where we can never be fully satisfied. The essence of spiritual knowledge is to know our eternal relationship with Krishna. By removing the material covering, chanting awakens that knowledge, which lies dormant within us.

- **Chanting expands the ocean of transcendental happiness.** Any spiritual happiness is far beyond anything attainable through material endeavours, but the highest spiritual pleasure comes from our relationship with Krishna. As the purity of our chanting increases, so does our love for Krishna, the key to an ever-deepening relationship with Him. Lord Chaitanya gives the example of an ocean to show the amount of happiness that awaits us—even an ordinary ocean isn’t big enough to hold it; an ever-expanding ocean is needed.

- **Chanting lets us taste the nectar of happiness at every step.** We eventually become satiated by any kind of material pleasure, but the spiritual happiness unlocked by chanting Hare Krishna is always new and fresh.

- **Chanting bathes us in full satisfaction.** Restoring our long-lost relationship with Krishna fully soothes the soul. Lord Krishna longs for us to return to Him, and our heartfelt plea spoken in the Hare Krishna maha-mantra is just what He wants to hear.
Sri Sri Radha Krishnachandra are showered with flowers during the abhisheka ceremony (above) 108 cakes sponsored by devotees are offered on this occasion (below).
The auspicious appearance day of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, one of the spiritual masters in the Gaudiya Vaishnava sampradaya and also the pioneer to revive the Harinama Sankirtana movement in its original form, was celebrated at ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna Temple, Bangalore, on September 7, 2014.

During the time of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura who was a great saint in the 19th century, the true message of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings was almost lost and the general populace was misled by the propaganda of unauthorised and false religious practices. At that time, Srila Bhaktivinoda strived hard to spread the glories of the holy names everywhere by lecturing and compiling voluminous literatures on the transcendental science of bhakti-yoga in accordance with the teachings of Lord Chaitanya. He was the pioneer to broadcast this divine message to the West.

On the appearance day of Srila Bhaktivinoda, a day-long Harinam Festival that featured Hare Krishna sankirtana and bhajans was organised to spread the awareness among people about the importance of chanting the Lord's holy names and inspiring them to take up this devotional practice for their ultimate benefit, both material and spiritual.

Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa, Temple President, ISKCON-Bangalore inaugurated the festival by lighting the lamps. In his inaugural address, he called upon all the devotees to spread Harinam by meeting people and convincing them to chant the Hare Krishna mahamantra which is the best welfare activity and also the yuga-dharma of Kali-yuga.

Hundreds of devotees participated in Harinama sankirtana during the festival. A few songs of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura were also sung by the devotees. The participants also listened to Srila Prabhupada's lectures on the eight verses (Sri Shikshastaka) composed by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Sri Stoka Krishna Dasa and Sri Vasudeva Keshava Dasa, Vice Presidents of the temple presided over the festival and described the importance of uttering the names of the Lord by narrating Ajamila’s episode from the Bhagavata Purana. Throughout the programme, a number of quotes from the Vedic scriptures and the teachings of the acharyas were cited on the glories of the Hare Krishna mahamantra.

The Hare Krishna mahamantra was rendered in different tunes to the accompaniment of different musical instruments by the Yuga Dharma band. This was followed by an audio-visual presentation on the life and accomplishments of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. The celebration concluded with an arati to Bhaktivinoda Thakura and a grand sankirtana by the assembled devotees.
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DEEPOTSAVA 2014
the festival of lights

Oct 08 - Nov 06
at ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna Temple
Celebrations every evening
at 7:30 pm

Participate in offering ghee lamps to Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Krishnachandra during the auspicious month of Karthik and celebrate the spiritually enlivening month-long Deepotsava festival.

Vishesha Deepotsava Oct 22, 23 & 24

For more details about the festival visit: www.iskconbangalore.org/deepotsava
Download Damodara-vrata e-book: www.iskconbangalore.org/damodara-vrata
Govardhana Puja

ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna Temple
Hare Krishna Hill, Chord Road, Bangalore-560010

Friday, Oct 24, 2014
Celebrations 6 pm onwards
Go-puja, Pravachana, Govardhana-arati,
Govardhana-parikrama, Vishesha Deepotsava,
Prasadam Distribution

Be blessed with darshana of the Lord in Giridhari alankara, and partake of the grand annakuta

govardhano me disatam abhiṣṭam
May Govardhana fulfill my inner desire and grant me special sevā to Śrī Radhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa

For more details visit www.iskconbangalore.org/govardhana-puja
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