SRI NARASIMHA JAYANTI
THE APPEARANCE OF LORD NARASIMHADEVA

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2015

Celebrations 6 pm onwards
ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna Temple, Hare Krishna Hill, Chord Road, Bangalore

tava kara-kamala-vare nakham adbhuta-sṛṅgam
dalita-hiranyakaśipu-tanu-bhrṅgam
keśava dhṛta-narahari-rūpa jaya jagadīśa hare

O Kṛṣṇa! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of half-man, half-lion! All glories to You! Just as one can easily crush a wasp between one's fingernails, so in the same way the body of the wasp-like demon Hiranyakaśipu has been ripped apart by the wonderful pointed nails on Your beautiful lotus hands.

https://www.iskconbangalore.org/sri-narasimha-chaturdashi
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
Why We Must Know Who God Is

Evidence about the identity of God is available, but are we willing to see it?

A lecture in Vrindavana, India, on August 16, 1974

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

yad atra kriyate karma
bhagavat-paritosanam
jnanam yat tad adhinam hi
bhakti-yoga-samanvitam

"Whatever work is done here in this life for the satisfaction of the mission of the Lord is called bhakti-yoga, or transcendental loving service to the Lord, and what is called knowledge becomes a concomitant factor."

—Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.5.35

Earlier in Srimad-Bhagavatam we find a similar passage:

atah pumbhir dvija-srestha
varnasrama-vibhagasah
svanusthitasya dharma
samsiddhir hari-tosanam

"O best among the twice-born [brahmanas], it is therefore concluded that the highest perfection one can achieve by discharging the duties prescribed for one's own occupation according to caste divisions [varna] and orders of life [ashrama] is to please the Personality of Godhead."

Bhagavat-paritoshanam and hari-tosanam are the same thing. Bhagavat and Hari both refer to God; paritoshanam and toshanam both mean "satisfy." First, we must know God; then we may try to satisfy Him.

Unfortunately, people do not know God. So what is the question of satisfying Him? Nowadays people have only a vague idea of God, practically no idea. What is God? People say, "God is good." Or sometimes people say, "God is great." But how great He is, how good He is, nobody knows. Then what is the question of satisfying Him?

If I do not know someone, and somebody says, "Go and satisfy so-and-so," what will I do? If I do not know him, or where he lives or what he does, then how can I satisfy him?

So hari-tosanam, or bhagavat-paritosanam, is possible when we actually know God. As far as we Krishna conscious devotees are concerned, we know God. Therefore the service of satisfying God is possible for us. We know God. Not that we have some vague idea. We know who God is, where He lives, what He does, His name, His father's name—everything. We are competent to satisfy God because we know exactly who God is. He is Krishna. Krishnas tu bhagavan svarayam: "Krishna is the Supreme Lord."

How do we know that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead? By history, by authority, and by His actions. We know from the historical point of view. Krishna is discussed in the Mahabharata, "The History of Greater India." In the Yajur Veda also we find the name of Krishna and His father, Vasudeva. Besides that, five thousand years ago Krishna appeared as He is and acted as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So what is the difficulty in understanding Krishna?

Krishna is the richest person, the most beautiful, the wisest. He spoke the Bhagavad-gita. Who else—in the whole world, the whole universe—has given such wise instruction? No one. God means the wisest, the richest, the strongest, the most beautiful. Krishna was so beautiful that 16,108 very, very beautiful women married Him. And many millions of unmarried girls were attracted by Krishna, the most beautiful.

One of Krishna's names is Shyamasundara. Shyama means "blackish," and sundara means "very beautiful." He's so attractive and beautiful that He surpasses in beauty millions and millions of Cupids. One of His names is Madana-mohana. Madana is Cupid. Cupid enchants everyone, but Cupid is enchanted by Krishna. Therefore God's name is Madana-mohana.
Accepting the Evidence

We know God. The scriptures say, the saintly authorities say, and the histories say that Krishna is God, bhagavan. What more proof do you want? Is there anyone to challenge Krishna?

But still you are searching after God. This is foolishness, or owls' philosophy. The owl will not open his eyes to see the sun.

"Just open your eyes, and you will see—here is the sun."

"No, there is no sun."

This is owls' philosophy. Close the eyes and meditate.

We do not follow this owls' philosophy. We follow real philosophy. What is real philosophy? Shruti-pramanam: evidence from the Vedas. There are many types of evidence, but for followers of the Vedic principle, the best evidence is shruti-pramanam. If something is mentioned in the Vedas, Upanishads, or other Vedic books, then it is shruti-pramanam. There are four Vedas, 108 Upanishads, eighteen Puranas, the Mahabharata. All these are part of the Vedic literature. We find real philosophy in the Puranas, the histories, the Vedas, and in the words of the authorities.

Brahma is the best authority because he is the first living being created within the universe. Brahma is adi-kavi, the first learned scholar. And what does Brahma say? What is his knowledge? He says, govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami. Brahma says that Govinda, or Krishna, is the original person and the source of Brahma himself.

In the Brahma-samhita, Brahma describes Krishna and Krishna's abode. Brahma's words are our authority. They are shruti, Vedic evidence. Brahma describes how Krishna is very fond of tending cows—surabhir abhipalayantam. He describes Krishna's abode: chintamani-prakara-sadmasu. In Krishna's abode, Goloka Vrindavana, the houses are made of chintamani, touchstone. Touchstone is a stone that turns iron to gold. Touchstone is used as bricks in Krishna's abode.

Things in Krishna's abode are unlike here. Here everything is material. But there everything is spiritual.

The material world also depends on spirit. In Bhagavad-gita, Lord Krishna, the supreme spirit, says, "I am the seed of all existence." There is no question of anything material being manifest without the spiritual touch. This body—your body, my body—is material. Everyone knows it is made of earth, water, fire, air, and so on. But how did it become manifested? There is a spiritual touch: The spirit soul is there.

Dehino 'smi yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanam jara tatha: the external body is changing, from childhood to youth to old age, on account of the spiritual touch. "Spiritual touch" means Krishna. He is the spiritual seed-giving father, the origin of everything. Just as the origin of a big tree is the root, so Krishna is the original person, the cause of all causes—sarva-karana-karanam. A tree has a trunk, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, and fruits, but their cause is the root or the seed.

In today's verse it is said, bhagavat-paritosanam. The root must be satisfied. If you want to maintain a tree, then the root, or the original cause of the tree, should be watered. Then everything is satisfied. Here in the material world people are trying to be happy, but they do not know how to become happy. They are put into the ocean of nescience and may be very expert swimmers, but swimming will not save them. They must know how to be saved.

Two Kinds of Activity

Here it is said, yad atra kriyate karma. Everyone is doing something. There are two kinds of activity: vaidiki and laukiki. Vaidiki means "according to the Vedic rituals": performance of big sacrifices, and so on. Laukiki refers to other activities: labour in factories and mills, scientific research, and so on. Here it does not say that you can be happy only by big ritualistic ceremonies. You can be happy even by activities for maintaining the body. Yad atra refers to the material world, and kriyate refers to anything you are doing. Yad atra kriyate karma bhagavat-paritosanam: it doesn't matter that you do not understand Vedic rituals and that you want to develop the economic position of your country by industrial enterprises. That is also good. How? Bhagavat-paritosanam: if it is conducted for the satisfaction of Krishna.

Our Krishna consciousness movement does not tell you to stop anything. No. Whatever you like, you can do, but try to satisfy Krishna by your work. That is our proposal.

The divisions of work must be there; otherwise, society cannot run very nicely. If everyone is uninterested in anything material, the world will not go on. There must be statesmen, politicians, generals, and there must be the
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productive class and the workers. Everything is required.

So we do not say, "Stop this" or "Stop that." No. These divisions are scientifically made in the Vedic conception of life: four ashramas [spiritual divisions] for spiritual advancement and four varnas [occupational divisions] for material advancement. We want all of them because our life is a combination of spirit and matter.

We try to make the best use of a bad bargain. Suppose you have a car, not a very good car. It's not an American car, but an Ambassador from India [laughter]. Three times it breaks down, but you still have to use it—bad bargain. Similarly, somehow or other we have the material body. We cannot neglect it. We don't say, "Neglect it. Don't care for the body."

**Using the Body**

That is the instruction of the six Gosvamis, the prominent disciples of Lord Chaitanya: Don't be attached to bodily demands—eating, sleeping, sex, and defending. We could say, "I am not this body, so I don't care for eating, sleeping, and so on." No. That kind of renunciation is not recommended by our Krishna consciousness movement. We say: Do not be attached to the demands of the body, but use the body for advancing in Krishna consciousness.

Eating is required; otherwise, the body cannot be maintained. But do not eat too much, and do not eat according to the taste of the tongue—meat, fish, and eggs. You are a human being. For you Krishna has given so many varieties of food: fruits, vegetables, rice, dal, milk, ghee. Why should you eat meat? Don't eat like the cats and dogs but eat like a human being.

Similarly, you require some rest, but don't sleep twenty-six hours. Six to eight hours is sufficient for any healthy man. Even doctors say that if anyone sleeps more than eight hours he is diseased. He must be weak. A healthy man sleeps six hours at a stretch. That is sufficient.

"Gosvami" means you must be the master of the senses, or self-controlled. The six Gosvamis conquered over eating, sleeping, and sense enjoyment. Our process is to follow the six Gosvamis. We should keep in view what they did. They passed their time talking about Krishna.

The only aim of our Krishna consciousness movement is to satisfy Lord Krishna. We should use our intelligence and accept a process by which our spreading of Krishna consciousness goes on very nicely. The only process should be to satisfy Krishna, hari-toshanam. That is the recommended Vedic process: samsiddhir hari-toshanam. Samsiddhi means "perfection." If we want the perfection of our activities, then we should try to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead by our activities.

**The Test for Satisfying Krishna**

You may say, "I do not see the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face. How will I be able to know whether I am satisfying Him or dissatisfaction Him?"

That you can know through your spiritual master. It is not very difficult. If your spiritual master is satisfied, then you should know that Krishna is satisfied. You cannot satisfy Krishna by dissatisfying your spiritual master. That is not possible. You must satisfy him. Do not use the excuse that you do not know God or do not see Him and thus you cannot know whether you have satisfied Him or dissatisfied Him.

We receive knowledge from Krishna, from Arjuna, from Brahma, from Narada. It comes down to your spiritual master, and you receive the knowledge in that way, step by step. That is called parampara, disciplic succession. Similarly, you satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead step by step. That is the process. Just as you go down stairs step by step, you also go up step by step.

Our aim is bhagavat-toshanam or hari-toshanam. And we receive knowledge from Bhagavan, God, in the parampara system. The parampara system must be maintained. If you act within the parampara system and satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then whatever you do is perfect. It doesn't matter what you do. The test is whether Krishna is satisfied, whether your spiritual master is satisfied. Then you are perfect.

Thank you very much.
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Allen Ginsberg: Your Divine Grace, I'm trying to imagine ways by which this spiritual movement of yours can become more and more widespread and more and more acceptable to people. I don't know how. It's difficult for me to conceive that everybody in America will...

Srila Prabhupada: Nothing is accepted by everybody.

Allen Ginsberg: I mean, it's hard to imagine a vast number of modern Americans living a life based on ancient Sanskrit yoga scriptures, totally vegetarian food offered to the Lord, and celibacy except for procreation. And many of us have been thinking, What form of religious practice, what form of simple meditation exercises, could be set forth in America that could be adopted by a great, great, great, great many people on a large scale? We haven't solved the problem.

One thing I've noticed is that your Krishna temples have spread quite a bit and are firmly rooted and solidly based. There are a number of them now. So that really is a very solid root. And I think that will continue.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Allen Ginsberg: But I'm wondering, What future is there? What's the future of a religious observance so technical as this, so complicated as this? For instance, your movement requires much sophistication in terms of diet. I mean, no flesh-eating, plus Ekadashi, your fast twice a month from grains. And so much sophistication in terms of daily ritual, like arati, where you offer the Lord food and flowers and so on. The whole thing that you've been teaching—how far can that spread by its very complexity?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. These practices are a little complex. The whole idea is to keep the devotees always engaged in Krishna consciousness. That is the programme. Gradually, we shall introduce more and more of this Krishna culture, so that the devotees feel the richness and no need to go outside Krishna consciousness.

First of all, you have to understand that we are trying to make people Krishna conscious. So how can a person remain Krishna conscious twenty-four hours a day? That is the programme.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, the orthodox Jews have a very heavy, complicated, moment-by-moment ritual daily existence for that same purpose. It is to keep them conscious of their religious nature. And that has maintained a small group of Jews over the centuries as an integral unit, but has tended to disappear in the later generations now, because modern life does not allow that much Krishna consciousness or Jewish consciousness or religious consciousness and attention, act by act throughout the day. So my question is, How far can total Krishna devotion—act by act, all day—spread? How many people can that encompass in a place like America? Or are you intending only to...
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get a few devotees, like several hundred or a thousand who will be solid and permanent?

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. Yes. That is my programme, because Krishna consciousness is not possible for everyone. In the Bhagavad-gita we learn, bahunam janmanam ante: Only after many, many births can a person come to this full understanding. So at any one point in time, it is not possible that a mass of people, a large number of people, will be able to fully grasp it. You see? Bahu-nam janmanam ante jnanavan mam prapadyate: "After many births, one who is at last in knowledge surrenders unto Me." Elsewhere in Bhagavad-gita we find manusyanam sahasresu: Out of millions of men, just one may be inquiring how to liberate himself from this material world. And out of millions of such liberated persons, just one may actually understand Krishna.

So ordinarily, understanding Krishna is not a very easy thing. That is why, when Krishna came as Lord Chaitanya, five hundred years ago, He was so munificent that He gave us an easy process, the chanting of His holy names. Otherwise, Krishna consciousness is not easy, because insofar as the Absolute Truth is concerned, Krishna is the last word, and generally, people are just like animals, absorbed in this temporary material world.

Out of many such materially illusioned persons, one becomes interested in the scriptures. Now, most persons—if they're at all attracted to the scriptures—are attracted to the ritualistic ceremonies recommended there for improving their economic condition. You see? People take up religion, or dharma, with the motive of artha—improving their economic position. Artha means money.

Why artha? Why do you want money? For kama, your futile attempt to satisfy these temporary, illusory senses. And when you become frustrated in sense gratification, then you seek moksha, or liberation, supposedly merging with the Absolute. These four are going on. Dharma, artha, kama, moksha.

But the scriptures, such as Srimad-Bhagavatam, say that dharma is not meant for acquiring money, and that money is not meant for satisfying the senses, and that sense gratification should be accepted simply to maintain the body. That's all.

The real business of human life is tattva-jijnasa, understanding the Absolute Truth. Jivasya tattva-jijnasa nartho yas ceha karmabh. Kamasya nendriya-pritir labho jiveta yavata. Kamasya, sense gratification, does not mean you have to increase the volume of sense gratification. No. Jiveta yavata: You have to accept sense gratification only insofar as you need it for living nicely. The real business of human life is jivasya tattva-jijnasa. Every human being should be inquisitive about the Absolute Truth. But you won't find the mass of people trying to come to this point. It is not possible. Don't expect it.

**Allen Ginsberg:** Your plan in America, then, is to set up centers so that those who are that concerned can pursue their studies and practice a ritual?

**Srila Prabhupada:** Personally, I have no ambition. But it is the mission of human life to come to this point. So there must at least be some center or institution that gives people this idea.

Of course, it is not that everyone will come. For instance, during my studies, at the University of Calcutta a professor's salary was thirteen or fourteen hundred dollars a month. And yet there were comparatively few students, and the fees collected from each student were at most thirty-six dollars per month. You see? But still, the classes had to be maintained, because the ideal must be there.

So our mission is, the intelligent persons of the world must know that the aim of human life is not simply seeking after sense gratification. As the Srimad-Bhagavatam says, jivasya tattva-jijnasa: Human life is meant for inquiring about the ultimate truth. That is the same thing that Vedanta had said before, because the Srimad-Bhagavatam is nothing but the explanation of Vedanta. So Vedanta says, athato brahma-jijnasa: This human form of life is meant for inquiring about Brahma, the Supreme Spirit. Atha means "now," and atha means "after," signifying that now, after passing through untold lower species of life, when the soul at last rises to the level of civilized human life, at that time his business is to inquire about the Absolute Truth. What is the Absolute Truth? That is the whole Vedanta philosophy: What is the Absolute Truth? And as I have said, this same thing is explained in the Bhagavatam. Jivasya tattva-jijnasa. Jivasya means that for all living entities, the main business is to inquire about the Absolute Truth.

Yet nowadays, thanks to so-called educators and leaders, people are being misled. Instead of taking people to the highest, topmost stage—to the platform of inquiring about the Absolute—these misleaders are merely giving facilities for how you can satisfy your senses nicely.

**Allen Ginsberg:** OK. But now in America there is a feeling of spiritual bankruptcy, due to our overemphasis of sense satisfaction. Everyone agrees.

**Srila Prabhupada:** That feeling must be there. Must be there.

**Allen Ginsberg:** Everyone agrees that our civilization has come to the end of its possibilities materially. So everyone understands that. It's in New York Times editorials as well as in the editorials of ISKCON journals. So everyone, then, is looking for an alternative to material extension.

**Srila Prabhupada:** They should inquire about the Absolute Truth.
Recently a Union Minister made a statement that the Bhagavad-gita should be made the national book of India. This stirred up a hornet's nest and has made even the so-called progressive thinkers in Bengaluru and Mysuru, sit up and take notice. These persons, owing to their ignorance, have, at certain forums, made blasphemous remarks about the Gita and Lord Krishna, and the noise is being reported by the media. They have made these remarks with reference to certain verses of the Gita, where there seem to be derogatory statements about women and those who have taken birth in so-called lower castes. They have called not just for burning the holy Gita, but denied the very divinity of its speaker, Lord Krishna. This article is an effort to clear up the misconceptions of the public in general, and these misleaders in particular.

**Source of Inspiration through the Millennia**

For thousands of years, the Bhagavad-gita has inspired millions of readers. Gandhiji, celebrated as the father of the nation, said, “When doubts haunt me and disappointments stare me in the face and I see not one ray of hope on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagavad-gita and find a verse to comfort me; I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow.”

Not only in India, but even in the western world, Bhagavad-gita has inspired many great minds. Albert Einstein admitted, “When I read the Bhagavad-gita and reflect about how God created this universe, everything else seems so superfluous.” Henry David Thoreau stated, “In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonial philosophy of the Bhagavad-gita, in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seems puny and trivial.”

Despite the controversy to declare it the national book, the fact remains that the Gita is the best known and the most frequently translated of Vedic religious texts. There are hundreds of editions translated and published in scores of languages around the world, proving its universal significance and acceptance. Recently it has been translated into Urdu by noted poet Anwar Jalalpuri.

While Indians aspire to bag foreign degrees, some Harvard University students, on the other hand, are studying the Bhagavad-gita and Ramayana. The Seton Hall University, New Jersey (USA) has made the study of Gita compulsory for all its students by including it in its “core course,” observing the importance of the Gita in life. According to the University management, through the wisdom of the Gita, students can better understand and cope with the complexities of life and be better prepared to face life’s challenges.

What a shame that Gita is compulsory study in an American university, but at home in India, our ‘progressive’, ‘secular’ friends spit venom against it!

**Secularism Defined**

Secularism does not mean the absence of religion. Secularism means respect for all religions. Hurting the religious sentiments of a community is not secularism at all! Secularism as per the Constitution of India means equal treatment of all religions by the State.

A secular State may be impartial to any particular type of religion, but it cannot be indifferent to the principles of religion. Otherwise it will lead to a godless State where the government and people are interested only in mundane activities. A secular government should ensure that a Hindu is following the religious codes of the Hindu religion; a Muslim is following the mandates of Quran; and a Christian is following the principles of Christianity. It is the duty of the government to ensure that no one neglects his religious principles to act whimsically.

Furthermore, the messages contained in the Gita are universally applicable, irrespective of country or religion. It is not a scripture for only a certain section of society.
The Gita teaches us the right way to lead our life.

**Half-Hen Logic of the ‘Progressive’**

Some of the so-called progressive thinkers accept some verses of the Gita as beneficial, while rejecting other verses, calling them oppressive and harmful. This then is the madness of the half-hen logic. There is a story of a peasant with a few chickens. In order to get the daily egg supply he had to feed the birds and this was expensive. He thus came up with a brilliant idea: chop off the head and retain the egg-giving rear! Thus, with only a half-hen you can imagine his plight. Similar is the condition of our so-called progressive friends. If you try to study Bhagavad-gita according to your whims, cut this and take this, which is not a proper study of Bhagavad-gita. If you want to understand the Gita, it has to be taken in toto. Arjuna says, “O Krishna, I totally accept as truth all that You have told me.” The acceptance by Arjuna of all that Krishna says should be emulated; then we can understand the essence of Bhagavad-gita, and then only can we understand that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Arjuna, the student who took lessons from Lord Sri Krishna, accepts everything that He says without contradicting Him. One is not allowed to accept one portion of Bhagavad-gita and not another. No. We must accept Bhagavad-gita without interpretation, without deletion and without our own whimsical participation in the matter.

Lord Krishna says, “Fools deride Me when I descend in the human form. They do not know My transcendental nature as the Supreme Lord of all that be.” Srila Prabhupada explains, “Despite the transcendental qualities of Lord Krishna’s body, its full bliss and knowledge, there are many so-called scholars and commentators of Bhagavad-gita who deride Krishna as an ordinary man. The scholar may be born an extraordinary man due to his previous good work, but this conception of Sri Krishna is due to a poor fund of knowledge. Therefore he is called mudha, for only foolish persons consider Krishna to be an ordinary human being. The foolish consider Krishna an ordinary human being because they do not know the confidential activities of the Supreme Lord and His different energies. They do not know that Krishna’s body is a symbol of complete knowledge and bliss, that He is the proprietor of everything that be and that He can award liberation to anyone.”

**Difference between Teacher & Cheater**

Anyone who teaches or professes something without actually knowing the subject, is cheating. What is a practicing doctor without a degree from a medical college? A quack! What is someone who comments on the Gita without understanding it from a bonafide devotee? A cheater!

Therefore, if a sincere person actually wants to learn the science, he must go to a true teacher.

Lord Krishna says, “Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.” Srila Prabhupada explains, “The path of spiritual realization is undoubtedly difficult. The Lord therefore advises us to approach a bona fide spiritual master in the line of disciplic succession from the Lord Himself. The Lord is the original spiritual master, and a person in the disciplic succession can convey the message of the Lord as it is to his disciple. No one can be spiritually realized by manufacturing his own process, as is the fashion of the foolish pretenders. Therefore, mental speculation or dry arguments cannot help lead one to the right path. Nor by independent study of books of knowledge can one progress in spiritual life. One has to approach a bona fide spiritual master to receive the knowledge.”

**What actually is the Gita?**

Srila Prabhupada explains: In this world men are not meant for quarreling like cats and dogs. Men must be intelligent to realize the importance of human life and refuse to act like ordinary animals. A human being should realize the aim of his life, and this direction is given in all Vedic literatures, and the essence is given in Bhagavad-gita. The purpose of Bhagavad-gita is to deliver mankind from the nescience of material existence. Every man is in difficulty in so many ways, as Arjuna also was in difficulty in having to fight the Battle of Kurukshetra. Arjuna surrendered unto Sri Krishna, and consequently this Bhagavad-gita was spoken. Not only Arjuna, but every one of us is full of anxieties because of this material existence. Our very existence is in the atmosphere of nonexistence. Actually we are not meant to be threatened by nonexistence. Our existence is eternal. But somehow or other we are put into asat. Asat refers to that which does not exist.

Out of so many human beings who are suffering, there are a few who are actually inquiring about their position, as to what they are, why they are put into this awkward position and so on. Unless one is awakened to this position of questioning his suffering, unless he realizes that he doesn’t want suffering but rather wants to make a solution to all suffering, then one is not to be considered

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“When doubts haunt me and disappointments stare me in the face and I see not one ray of hope on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagavad-gita and find a verse to comfort me; I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow.”

—Mahatma Gandhi
a perfect human being. Humanity begins when this sort of inquiry is awakened in one’s mind. In the Brahma-sutra this inquiry is called brahma jijnasa. Athato brahma jijnasa. Every activity of the human being is to be considered a failure unless he inquires about the nature of the Absolute. Therefore those who begin to question why they are suffering or where they came from and where they shall go after death are proper students for understanding Bhagavad-gita.

Why Bhagavad-gita As It Is?

According to Srila Prabhupada, Vedic knowledge is not a question of research. Our research work is imperfect because we are researching things with imperfect senses. We have to accept perfect knowledge which comes down, as is stated in Bhagavad-gita, by the parampara (disciplic succession). Vedic knowledge is received from transcendental sources, and the first words were spoken by the Lord Himself. The words spoken by the Lord are called apauruseya, meaning that they are different from words spoken by a person of the mundane world who is infected with four defects. Anyone (1) is sure to commit mistakes, (2) is invariably illusioned, (3) has the tendency to cheat others and (4) is limited by imperfect senses. With these four imperfections, one cannot deliver perfect information of all-pervading knowledge. Vedic knowledge is not imparted by such defective living entities. It was imparted unto the heart of Brahma, the first created living being, and Brahma in his turn disseminated this knowledge to his sons and disciples, as he originally received it from the Lord.

We have to receive knowledge from the proper source in disciplic succession beginning with the Supreme Spiritual Master, the Lord Himself, and handed down to a succession of spiritual masters. Spiritual knowledge has to be revealed by an authority of Vedic science. It is not a matter of intellectual exercise. The scriptures advise that if one wants to understand spiritual knowledge properly, one must humbly approach a spiritual master who is learned in the Vedas and who is firmly devoted to the Absolute Truth. Therefore there is a need to accept this great science of Bhagavad-gita from a pure devotee of the Supreme Lord coming in the authorized disciplic succession.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada is that pure devotee who comes in the spiritual lineage of acharyas of the Brahma- Madhva-Gaudiya sampradaya presenting Bhagavad-gita As It Is for the benefit of the whole human civilization.

Varnashrama Dharma vs Caste System

With regard to the alleged statements of Lord Krishna in the Gita, about those born in “lower castes”, we should understand, firstly, the exact definition of the varnashrama system. Varnashrama system is the division of society into four varnas (social orders) and four ashramas (spiritual orders). Varna classification is made for smooth
social intercourse and ashrama classification is done for gradual spiritual emancipation. Lord Krishna says that He is the creator of this scientific system on the basis of guna (nature) and karma (work), and not by birth. Catur varnayam maya srstam guna karma vibhagasah (Bg 4.13). The four orders of the social system—brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras—are His creation. They should act according to the regulative principles of this institution and satisfy the Lord, just as different parts of the body all engage in the service of the whole. The whole is the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His virat-rupa, or universal form. The brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras are respectively the mouth, arms, abdomen and legs of the universal form of the Lord.

In this system, a person is called a brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya or shudra according to his nature and occupation. Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom, and religiousness—these are the qualities of the brahmanas. The brahmanas, the head of the social body, are meant to guide society in knowing the aim of life. The kshatriyas, the arms of the social body, are meant to protect it from any harm. The vaishyas, the belly, are supposed to produce food for the body, and the shudras, legs, are to render service to the whole body.

In this system, the son of a brahmana has good opportunity to also become a brahmana by qualifying himself, just as today the son of a doctor has facility to become a doctor. It is a folly therefore to assume that the son of a brahmana automatically, or by birth becomes a brahmana. In the original varnashrama system, it was not by birth, but by qualification and occupation.

This original system unfortunately turned into the oppressive caste system in the Kali yuga. The caste brahmanas are responsible for this chaos. Taking advantage of the innocence of people in general, they claim to be brahmanas by hereditary right. And deterioration is the order of this world. But this does not warrant condemnation of the Creator. If a gentleman gifts a valuable thing to a friend and because of misuse it malfunctions, is it proper to blame the benefactor?

Srila Prabhupada explains, “The Vedic system of religion—the varnashrama system created by Krishna—is not to be confused with the present-day caste system—determination of social divisions by birth. Certainly, this wrong caste system should be abolished and educational centers should be opened for teaching people how to become genuine brahmanas and kshatriyas.”

Srila Prabhupada explains, “According to their qualities and work, people naturally belong to different social groupings. So you cannot avoid it, but because you have created a false caste system, that should be abolished, and the system recommended by Krishna—that should be adopted. The benefit will be that the whole social body will function harmoniously. The social body must have a brain and arms and a belly and legs to be complete. If there is no brain, no head, then what is the use of these arms and legs and belly? It is all dead. So in human society, if there is not a class of learned, truthful, and honest men—men with all the brahminical qualifications—then society is ruined.”

**Classified by Consciousness**

The verdict of the Vedic scriptures is that by birth everyone is a shudra. No one becomes a brahmana simply by birth. The real meaning of shudra is ‘a foolish man who simply laments’. A brahmana is ideal in character, behaviour and God consciousness. A kshatriya is a little lesser qualified than a brahmana; vaishya is lesser, shudras are the least, and less than the shudras are the chandalas. The principles from which higher-class men are restricted, namely illicit sexual indulgence, meat-eating, gambling and intoxication are an integral part of the lives of the chandalas.

Srila Prabhupada explains, “The word papa-yonayah means ‘born into a lower class.’ According to the Vedic system of classification, women, vaishyas, and shudras belong to a lower social order. A low life means a life without Krishna consciousness. High and low positions in society are calculated by considering a person’s Krishna consciousness. A brahmana is considered to be on the highest platform because he knows Brahman, the Absolute Truth. The second caste, the kshatriya caste, also know Brahman, but not as well as the brahmanas. The vaishyas and shudras do not clearly understand God consciousness.”

The Vedic social situation is so planned that persons accepted as shudras can gradually be elevated to the position of brahmanas by the cultural advancement known as samskara, or the purificatory process. If he doesn’t, if he degrades himself further, he is then called a mleccha or yavana.

**Materially Unequal, Spiritually Equal**

It is said that a pandit, a learned man sees an educated brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater with equal vision. Does that mean that he would equate a scholar with a dog? Will it please the scholar? That would be an insult! This means that we cannot change the social etiquette or position materially. Having said that, if at all we want to see everyone equally, treat everyone equally, we have to come to the spiritual

“When I read the Bhagavad-gita and reflect about how God created this universe, everything else seems so superfluous.”

—Albert Einstein
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Lord Krishna says, “One who engages in full devotional service, unfailing in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman.” There is an opportunity for men in the modes of ignorance and passion to be elevated to the mode of goodness, and that system is called Krishna consciousness. One may be a shudra, vaishya or woman, but if one is situated in the service of the Lord in Krishna consciousness, one should not be considered shti, shudra, vaishya or lower than shudra. Though a person may be from a lowborn family, if he is engaged in the Lord’s service he should never be considered to belong to a lowborn family. The Padma Purana says that a person goes to hell quickly when he considers a devotee of the Lord in terms of birth.

Srila Prabhupada explains, “Being situated in his original Krishna conscious position, a pure devotee does not identify with the body. Such a devotee should not be seen from a materialistic point of view. Indeed, one should overlook a devotee’s having a body born in a low family, a body with a bad complexion, a deformed body, or a diseased or infirm body. According to ordinary vision, such imperfections may seem prominent in the body of a pure devotee, but despite such seeming defects, the body of a pure devotee cannot be polluted. It is exactly like the waters of the Ganges, which sometimes during the rainy season are full of bubbles, foam and mud. The Ganges waters do not become polluted. Those who are advanced in spiritual understanding will bathe in the Ganges without considering the condition of the water.”

Vedic Culture or Holy Name – Result is Purification

In human society, by the process of varnashrama, Lord Vishnu is worshiped. Vedic culture means to cleanse the heart and make a man perfectly spiritualized to know the Supreme Lord. But at the moment everything is topsy-turvy and the so-called leaders, who are spiritually blind themselves, are trying to lead other blind men in this social situation, there is no hope of reviving the Vedic culture.

Therefore, Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has mercifully simply recommended: harer nama harer nama harer nama eva kevalam. By chanting the transcendental holy names of the Lord, the consciousness is purified and one’s perception of the truth is perfected.

Conclusion

We all know that religious differences are the cause of terrorism and war, even in this modern age – in fact, more so. We also know that if those who bear grudges against others who follow different faiths, could also accept them as children of the same God, albeit in a different cultural context, such war and atrocities would end. In other words, if all human beings look beyond the confines of colour, race and faith, and accept each other as being spiritually equal, then there will be no conflict. Similarly, since society naturally demands differences of varna and asrama, for practical purposes, and although today we do not define or label these classifications yet use them in the organization of society, if we honestly acknowledge the practical need for these differences, we will have no grouse against the term varnashrama.

The Bhagavad Gita As It Is is not to be burned, but to be treasured. No one of any faith or philosophical persuasion who reads it with an open mind can fail to be both moved and impressed. It is axiomatic that no book can be expected to satisfy all its readers. Here is one, however, which is an exception.

Comments welcome: ppad@hkm-group.org

Q: What is the relevance of Bhagavad-gita in the modern age?

A: The Supreme Lord Krishna descended on this earth more than 5,000 years ago, in order to reach out to all people with His message of love, compassion and universal brotherhood. In today’s world where there is strife everywhere, Krishna’s teachings are all the more relevant. Lord Krishna teaches in the Bhagavad-gita that He is the Supreme Father of all living entities - not only for human beings but also for animals, plants, birds, aquatics, etc. If we have to realize this and develop our love for the Supreme Lord Krishna, then we must learn to love all His other children, who are our brothers and sisters. Krishna teaches us to love all living entities including humans and animals alike, as our own brothers and sisters. This not only places the responsibility of peaceful coexistence among individuals, communities and nations, irrespective of caste, creed, colour, religion or nationality, but also emphasizes the importance of conserving our environment by a responsible and compassionate approach to all living forms. With war, terrorism, global warming and alarming environmental changes becoming more and more common, Lord Krishna’s teachings become more and more important for each and every one of us. Our Founder Acharya, Srila Prabhupada, has presented the teachings of the Gita in a very simple manner and in the most effective way for implementation in modern day lives.

Q: But many critics have pointed out that the Bhagavad-gita incites violence. How can a message of peace and love accompany one of violence? Doesn’t this seem incongruous?

A: In India’s recent budget, the defence budget was hiked by 11 percent. Does it imply that India is inciting violence? I don’t think so. The United Nations has a Security Council and maintains an army. If we have to realize this and develop our love for the Supreme Lord Krishna, then we must learn to love all His other children, who are our brothers and sisters. Krishna teaches us to love all living entities including humans and animals alike, as our own brothers and sisters. This not only places the responsibility of peaceful coexistence among individuals, communities and nations, irrespective of caste, creed, colour, religion or nationality, but also emphasizes the importance of conserving our environment by a responsible and compassionate approach to all living forms. With war, terrorism, global warming and alarming environmental changes becoming more and more common, Lord Krishna’s teachings become more and more important for each and every one of us. Our Founder Acharya, Srila Prabhupada, has presented the teachings of the Gita in a very simple manner and in the most effective way for implementation in modern day lives.

UN’s army is called a peace keeping force. The UN peacekeeping force has more than 90,000 troops and deployments in about 16 locations across the globe. In some such locations, violence may become essential in order to maintain law and order. In other words, when peace and harmony become threatened, it is legitimate to use violence to curb such threats. However, when a nation increases its military might with an intention to annex a neighbouring nation, then such a motive renders it an act of aggression. Such violence per se is not abhorrent. It is the motive behind such violence that makes it so.

Now we need to look at the context in which Lord Krishna asks Arjuna, who wants to put down his arms, to take to warfare. Before the battle of Kurukshetra, the Pandavas went through unimaginable persecution for no fault of theirs. Their food was poisoned, they were attempted to be murdered in an act of arson, they were cheated of their rightful kingdom, mercenaries were engaged to attack and murder them etc. The Pandavas bore everything stoically. Their response to all such acts of violence was exemplary tolerance and patience. Finally, when the time came to reclaim their right to rule, they were denied the opportunity. Lord Krishna, to set an example, although being the Supreme Lord, Himself set out as a messenger of peace to the Kauravas. And what was the result? Duryodhana tried to unlawfully imprison Him and when he failed, refused to part with the rightful share of the kingdom to the Pandavas. Still seeking peace, Lord Krishna made one last ditch effort – He asked for five villages instead of a whole kingdom. In reply, Duryodhana said that he wouldn’t give land even to the extent of the tip of a needle. That was the trigger for the war. So when the Gita was spoken, all options for peace had already been exhausted. Hence the use of violence became essential to avoid an infringement on the right of the Pandavas and to establish a just and transparent government.
Q: Why couldn't have Lord Krishna just allowed the Kauravas to rule, especially when so much violence was essential to enthrone the Pandavas?

A: Now take this hypothetical case for comparison in today's world. Suppose a new government is formed and the Prime Minister is announced. It is then discovered that the Prime Minister named actually won the poll by rigging and the real winner is someone else. As a natural reaction there are vociferous calls for his step down. But the illegitimate PM refuses to step down and starts persecuting his most powerful opponents. The next recourses available will be agitation, approaching the judiciary etc. Even after all that if he refuses to step down, then what option are you left with other than to use force? No person who becomes a leader by illegitimate means can be accepted as a leader or allowed to occupy a position of power. It bodes ill for the society. A person who assumes governmental control must be of the highest integrity and must do so by fair means as per the established norms. Drawing a parallel, Duryodhana was not to be the ruler by the established norms. He further disqualified himself by trying to eliminate the eligible Pandavas, akin to a modern day despot who persecutes his opponents. Duryodhana also disregarded calls for his step down from respectable statesmen like Vidura, Bhishma and even the Supreme Lord Krishna Himself. So as a last resort, use of force had to be resorted to, to displace him, since such a person obviously cannot think of the state's welfare selflessly.

Q: There have been calls by some literateurs to burn the Gita because it foments violence. How would you respond to this?

A: My question to all such peace lovers - isn't the act of burning the Gita an act of violence itself? Doesn't such a call promote the themes of hatred and revenge? Hate a book of philosophy for a misunderstanding of its principles and take revenge on it with an act of violence by burning it. How does that promote peace? When a book is banned today, a hue and cry is raised about freedom of speech and expression. The very same people in the very same breath will also advocate burning of the Gita. Why? Does it mean that freedom of speech and expression is only available to us "modern" people but not to Lord Krishna? The Gita was spoken by Lord Krishna. What about His freedom of speech and expression? Why don't we respect that? Instead of making such fashionable statements assuming a "holier than thou" attitude, it would behoove all such people to set aside the misconceptions, misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the Gita and understand it's true message. The problem is, we don't want to understand what Krishna wants to say. We want to understand Krishna's words in whatever way we want and then condemn the Gita.

Q: But the Gita does recognise the discriminatory caste system which we all know is an evil. There are references to shudras as papa yoni or in other words, that its sinful to be born as a shudra. How
can propagation of an evil like this be accepted as freedom of expression?

A: In the verse in question, Lord Krishna says “O son of Prtha, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth—women, vaishyas [merchants] and shudras [workers]—can attain the supreme destination.” 

Bhagavad-gītā 9.32. Please note that Lord Krishna is merely saying that even those considered to be low born like the shudras are not to be discriminated against. They are not deprived of attainment of spiritual goals in their lives too. Srila Prabhupada explains that Lord Krishna is declaring here that in spiritual life there is no such discrimination as low or high class. In fact Lord Krishna speaks this verse after saying in the 29th verse, “I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all. But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him.” 

So this verse is actually a declaration by Lord Krishna that in His eyes, there is no high or low class although in the material world there may exist such discrimination. So in the context of this verse, it is clear that Krishna is not condemning shudras as sinful and to be rejected, but contrary to that, He is declaring that even those considered to be low born cannot be deprived of the highest spiritual goal. In effect, Lord Krishna is saying that spiritual knowledge and life is not the sole prerogative of so-called brahmanas but also that of even the so-called low born.

Q: But Lord Krishna does say that He is the creator of varnashrama or the caste system…

A: The exact verse you are quoting is from the fourth chapter, verse 13 –

chatur varnyam maya srishtam guna karma vibhagasah

According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me.

Krishna did not say janma karma vibhagasya – He said guna karma vibhagasya”. That means the original varnashrama system which Lord Krishna created was based on qualities and work. Factually, this is the original varnashrama system which wasn’t based entirely on birth. Vedic history is replete with examples which illustrate this. Vishwamitra Muni was born in a kshatriya family and worked as a kshatriya but later when his activities changed to spirituality, he became a celebrated brahmana. Ravana & Hiranyakashipu were born to brahmana fathers but they are never considered brahmanas since they did not work like brahmanas. Valmiki Muni was born in a shudra family but later by his activities became a great brahmanas age. There is the brilliant example of Narada Muni who was born in a shudra family but went on to become the greatest amongst the brahmana sages so much so that he is known as devarsi or a sage among demigods. The Jabali Upanishad describes how Satyakama Jabali, because of his characteristic truthfulness, was accepted by Gautama Muni as a brahmana although he was the son of a prostitute and was considered to be born in a shudra family. So the original varnashrama system was based on the person’s work and qualities. In fact the Vedas state janmana jayate shudro – by birth everyone is a shudra. This is because shudra actually refers to a person who is spiritually in ignorance. And definition of brahmana is brahman janatiti brahmanah – one who is knowledgeable about the spirit soul is defined as a brahmana.

So this verse of the Gita: chatur varnyam maya srishtam guna karma vibhagasah is actually establishing that the varnashrama system is NOT based on birth. True followers of the Vedas do not accept discrimination based on birth. Srila Prabhupada gave brahmana initiation to so many westerners who were born in mleccha families, considered lower than shudras, based on this proper understanding. Unfortunately in the last 500 years or so, the actual varnashrama system has become corrupted and converted into a caste by birth system.

Those who allege that the Gita promotes caste by birth are as much guilty of misrepresenting the Vedic conclusions as are those who claim to be a brahmana or kshatriya or shudra simply by birth. We should on the other hand take support of this verse of the Gita to demolish the caste by birth system and root out its associated evils from the Indian culture.
Seven Benefits of Chanting
by 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 Shiksashtaka, 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.
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 dreamed 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?

Krishna and the Gopis

Probably the most touching of Krishna's pastimes involve His association with His most dedicated and sincere servants, the gopis. They were absorbed in thoughts of Him twenty-four hours a day. They cringed at the thought of grass hurting the soles of His lotus feet as He traversed the forests of Vrindavana. His happiness was their happiness.

One day, the gopis were enjoying spending time with their beloved when they began to feel proud of being with Him. Sensing their pride, the Lord disappeared from their sight. The pure, simple-hearted gopis could not endure even one moment without Krishna's company. Their pain was immeasurable; the only thing they could think about was where He was, why He'd left them, and if He was all right. Their tears were plentiful, their grief unbearable. They sought advice from animate and inanimate objects alike: Had anyone seen their beloved? Where had He gone? In their desperate attempts to find Him, they became even more immersed in thoughts of Him. When He finally reunited with them, they couldn't have been happier or more relieved. But they were still confused; they could not understand why He'd left them to begin with. When they asked Him, He responded as follows (Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.32.20-22):

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.
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 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 driver fled the scene after striking that couple. 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. 😊

Krishna Voice, April 2015
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ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna Temple, Bangalore organized a day-long Harinam festival on March 1, 2015 in order to highlight the importance of chanting the holy names of Lord Krishna in this age. The day was filled with the singing of the Hare Krishna maha mantra accompanied by musical instruments. A similar festival was held six months ago.
Sri Gaura Purnima

Bangalore: (above) Abhisheka & (below) Pallakki Utsava
The Honourable Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Sri Akhilesh Yadav, inaugurated The Akshaya Patra Foundation’s latest kitchen facility in Lucknow today. The Guest of Honour Sri Ram Govind Chaudhary, Minister for Basic Education was present during the inaugural ceremony. Representatives from the Caterpillar Foundation, the principal investor of the kitchen and other dignitaries were also present.

The Honourable Chief Minister took a tour of the kitchen where he witnessed the operations of the centralised kitchen and commended Akshaya Patra’s work. Sri Akhilesh Yadav appreciated the efforts of Akshaya Patra and wished the organisation success in all its endeavours.

The state-of-the-art kitchen in Lucknow is spread across two acres of land which is allotted by the State Government. This is the second centralised kitchen setup by Akshaya Patra in the state. The Caterpillar Foundation’s investment will help build the capacity to produce 60,000 rotis, 10,000 litres of dal and 7 tonnes of cooked rice within two hours. The automated kitchen is equipped to achieve high standards of quality and hygiene in all processes.

The Lucknow kitchen will serve 11,800 school students in 109 schools. Akshaya Patra plans to expand the reach to about 1 lakh children in over 690 schools in the region by July 2015.
Distinguished Visitor

Sri Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister of Delhi, visited Sri Radha Krishna Temple on March 15, 2015 with his parents. He said, “I am happy to have visited this beautiful and well-maintained temple of Lord Krishna…” “Akshaya Patra is doing an extraordinary job of feeding poor school going children. This is God’s work that they are doing. As a society and as individuals, we all need to support them in this noble work.”

Magnanimous Contribution

Manipal Foundation has donated Rs.1 Crore to the Akshaya Patra Foundation. Dr. Ranjan Pai, Managing Director & CEO of Manipal Foundation handing over the cheque to Sri Sridhama Krishna Dasa.
Bhumi Puja of Bhojamrta Kitchen

“BHOJANAMRITA” is a project initiated by Hare Krishna Movement (HKM), Hyderabad to feed underprivileged attendants of inpatients on a daily basis in Government & Trust hospitals. The devotees of HKM – Hyderabad were inspired by the instruction of Srla Prabhupada (Founder-Acharya of ISKCON) who desired that “No one within a ten mile radius of a Hare Krishna temple should go hungry”.

On 27th Feb, 2015, Bhumi Puja was conducted for a “Bhojamrta Hi-Tech Kitchen” which will cater to over 10,000 hungry stomachs. At present, over 3000 patients and attendants at 10 hospitals of Hyderabad are being fed every day under this programme. This will also help in catering to 6000 needy persons at 26 locations under the Rs. 5 meal programme in partnership with GHMC (Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation).

Among the dignitaries who participated in this event were Sri Swamy Goud – Chairman, Telangana Legislative Council, Sri Eteia Rajender – Finance Minister of Telangana, Sri Mahender Reddy – Transport Minister of Telangana, Sri Daivagnya Sharma – Pramukha Saraswati Upasakulu and Sri Sharat Chandra Reddy – Director, Aurobindo Pharma. His Grace Satya Gaura Chandra Dasa, President of HKM-Hyderabad & Bhojamrta programme presided over the event.

On this occasion, two food distribution vehicles were launched by Sri Eteia Rajender and Sri Mahender Reddy. Each vehicle is capable of carrying food for over 2000 beneficiaries.

Visit: http://hkm-hyderabad.org/
Featured Article : PK Movie Answered - Part 2

This is a humble attempt to create the right perspective on the questions raised in the movie PK. In our previous articles we answered 5 of these questions and in this article we have taken another 5 questions. However without a holistic understanding of the philosophy it may be very difficult to understand the intricacies of religion. This is just an attempt to clarify certain doubts. For a thorough understanding we recommend that you read the books written by our founder-acharya, Srila Prabhupada.
Read More: http://goo.gl/mOQYdw

Hare Krishna World
Day-long sankirtan and maha-abhisheka mark Gaura Purnima
Gaura Purnima festival was celebrated on Hare Krishna Hill, ISKCON Bangalore on March 5, 2015 in commemoration of the divine appearance of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.
Read More: http://goo.gl/BMkwY

World Review
Does Gita Encourage Violence?
Instead of making fashionable statements assuming a “holier than thou” attitude, it would behove people to set aside their misconceptions.
Read More: http://goo.gl/OU7rHi

Krishna Katha
Demons Killed by Krishna - Part 3
Once, a demon named Aristasura entered the village in the form of a bull with a gigantic body and huge horns.
Read More: http://goo.gl/wvhvZC

Pilgrimage
Holi Celebrations in Krishna’s Holy Land
As icy winds and fog in North India force people to stay indoors, residents of Vrindavan and surroundings, shedding all fear of the cold are ready to be drenched.
Read More: http://goo.gl/SrfzI

Download April e-Calendar at www.iskconbangalore.org/desktop-calendar

Reviews from Trip Advisor
Anjana Girish
Hare Rama Hare Rama Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Excellent devotional place. I visited this temple three times. Every time I visit I feel very devotional. A peaceful place to shed your worries. You feel very relaxed after visiting Lord Krishna. The temple organizers have created a very good ambience.

Shob
One of the biggest ISKCON temples in India
Have been to many ISKCON temples across India, but this one truly is the biggest of all. Best part is the walk on the 108 sacred stone steps with Hare Ram Hare Krishna chant. Temple has a divine atmosphere inside with bhajans being enchanted in the back ground. Best time to visit on weekdays and non-holidays.

Sam
Divine and Sacred Place
It’s an amazing feeling when u visit the temple. Really when you enter, one of the devotees of Lord Krishna will give u a Lord Radha Krishna’s different avatar pictures at one side and the Maha mantra of life on the other side ‘Hare ram, hare ram, ram ram hare hare’, Hare Krishna hare Krishna Krishna hare hare’. So, for entering into the temple, there are 108 slabs where u ll keep ur every step and ll have to chant this Maha mantra. This is the time, when a divine and sacred feeling will automatically come into ur heart. And it’s the starting and when u will see the Arati, u can’t imagine and i can’t express what u ’ll then feel in ur heart....... U really will feel such as you are at God’s place ... N rest you will experience when youself visit...

To write a review visit: www.tripadvisor.com

Top YouTube Picks
https://youtu.be/BsUr1tpwGE
Sri Gaura Purnima Festival Glimpses

https://youtu.be/RK_5p-JRtcs
Why Gita 7 by Srila Prabhupada
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