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SRI
VAIKUNTHA
EKADASHI

DECEMBER 21, 2015 MONDAY
DARSHANA: 8AM TO 11PM

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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

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The Real Thing is Bhakti

Lord Krishna tells us how He reveals Himself to us in many ways just to draw out our love for Him.

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

punyo gandhah prthivyam ca
tejas casmi vibhavasau
jivanam sarva-bhutesu	
tapas casmi tapasvisu

"I am the original fragrance of the earth, and I am the heat in fire. I am the life of all that lives, and I am the penances of all ascetics." Bhagavad-gita 7.9

Krishna is describing in detail how He is spread everywhere. Before this verse, He has mentioned so many ways. We can see Krishna at every step and every moment. If we practice seeing Krishna, that is not difficult.

Whenever there is a fragrance—from a rose, for example—you can immediately remember Krishna: "Here is Krishna." You simply have to practice.

As soon as you remember Krishna or you say or utter the word "Krishna," Krishna contacts you. You are in contact with Krishna immediately. And if you remain constantly in contact with Krishna by studying all the details He mentions here, then where is the lack of Krishna consciousness? And if you remain always in that way, Krishna conscious, then you are the topmost yogi. Yoginam api sarvesam [Bhagavad-gita 6.47]. Very easy. It is not at all difficult. You simply have to practice.

In another place it is said that the blooming flower is the smiling of Krishna. So you can see Krishna smiling as soon as you see a flower.

I do not know why people say, "Can you show me Krishna?" Krishna is showing Himself in so many ways. They will not accept that. It is not at all difficult to see Krishna every moment, at every step, if we study what Krishna says: "I am," "This is."

Punyo gandhah prthivyam ca: "I am the original fragrance of the earth." Now, within the earth, every stock is there. The flavour of the rose is there, and the flavour of some other flower is also there, but you cannot take it out by your so-called scientific chemical process. Take some lump of earth and extract from it the flavour of a rose. It is there. That is a fact. You sow the seed of a rose, and it will exact the rose flavour from the earth. That's a fact. Who can deny it? Otherwise, where is the flavour coming from?

Here Krishna says, jivanam sarva-bhutesu: He's life. In the next verse He'll say, bijam mam sarva-bhutanam: "I am the original seed of all existences." Bija: the seed. The seed is so nicely made by Krishna's brain that as soon as you put the seed within the earth and add some water, it will fructify and gradually grow and exact the flavour, the colour, everything. This is a fact. Everybody knows it. Not only that, but Krishna is within the small seed of the gigantic banyan tree. Otherwise how can this wonderful thing happen? How can a huge tree come from a small seed? And not only one tree—there are many millions of fruits on the tree, and in each fruit there are many millions of trees. This is the power of Krishna's brain. You cannot do that. The so-called manufacturers can manufacture a very complicated watch, but from that watch many watches will not come. No, that is not possible.

But Krishna is so powerful—omnipotent—that He has manufactured such a thing, because He is there in the seed. Bijam mam sarva-bhutanam [Bg. 7.10]. Wherever He is, He can play in wonderful ways.

The Cause of All Causes

This is the study of Krishna consciousness. Where is the difficulty? Now, this electric lamp, it is brilliant and it has some heat. Where is it coming from? It is coming from Krishna. That's a fact. He's the cause of all causes.

isvarah paramah krishnaha sac-cid-ananda-vigrahah anadir adir govindah sarva-karana-karanam

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead is Krishna, and He has a body of eternity, knowledge, and bliss. He has no beginning, for He is the beginning of everything. He is the cause of all causes." [Brahma-samhita 5.1]
But we should not, like the Mayavadi philosophers, make mistake of thinking that because the electric light is being caused by Krishna, the electric light is Krishna. No, not that. Krishna is always separate from the electric light. The Mayavadi says, "Because Krishna is there in the electric lamp, or in the tree, or in the seed, or in the color, or in the flavour, Krishna is finished. There is no more Krishna. Because Krishna has spread Himself in so many ways, Krishna is finished." This consideration is material, not spiritual. If you take a piece of paper, tear it into small pieces, and throw it, then the original paper is lost. This is material.

But Krishna is not like that. Krishna is a person, and from His energies so many varieties of productions are coming out. But still, He is existing.

Purnasya purnam adaya purnam eva avasisyate [Isopanishad Invocation]. He's purna, complete. Not that because so many things have been taken from Krishna, He is finished. This misconception is part of material life. The Mayavadis cannot conceive of the omnipotence of God. They accept that God is omnipotent, but they cannot understand His omnipotence.

Krishna's omnipotence means that so many things are being manifested by His energies, but Krishna is not lost. Krishna is there. We haven't got to worship so many things—pantheism. "Krishna, or the Absolute Truth, has become divided in so many ways; therefore everything combined together is the Absolute Truth." This is the theory of pantheism. But ours is the Vedic proposition: Krishna is the cause of everything. Varieties of material and spiritual things are there, but Krishna in His original identity is present in Vrindavana.

Krishna is this electric lamp, and still, He's not the electric lamp. Krishna is this pillow, but He's not the pillow.

**Not Everything is Krishna**

In one big mission, the leaders say, "We accept anything as God." No. We do not say like that, nor does Krishna. When Krishna speaks of worshiping, He does not say that you should worship the electric light or something else. Mam ekam: "Me alone." That is the instruction. Not that "Krishna has become everything; therefore everything has to be worshiped." No. That is wrong.

Our philosophy is achintya-bheda-abheda: simultaneous oneness and difference. We have to take shelter of Krishna personally, not the varieties. Mam ekamsaranam vraja: "Surrender unto Me alone." You have to understand that varieties are dependent on Krishna. Not that "Because there are varieties, Krishna is finished." No, that is not the philosophy.

Here it is said, tapas casmi tapasvisu: "I am the penances of all ascetics." Tapasvi means those who seek eternal happiness. Karmis, yogis—there are many tapasvis. But the real tapasvi is interested in tapah divyam. Divyam means transcendental. Just perform tapasya for realizing Krishna.

The demon Hiranyakashipu also performed tapasya. What was that tapasya? He performed severe tapasya, so much so that the whole universe became perturbed and Brahmaji came to see him.

"What do you want?" Brahma asked Hiranyakashipu.

"I am performing tapasya to become immortal. So if you make me immortal, it will be very kind of you." Brahma replied, "I am myself not immortal. How can I make you immortal? That is not possible."

So Hiranyakashipu also performed tapasya, but that tapasya was for material gain. That is not real tapasya. Tapasya means to undergo voluntarily some bodily inconveniences. We are accustomed to enjoy bodily senses, so tapasya means voluntarily to give up the idea of sense gratification. That is tapasya.

Ekadashi one day of fasting each fortnight—is also tapasya. Or fasting on some other auspicious day. That tapasya is good, even for health, and what to speak of advancing in Krishna consciousness. So we should accept this tapasya. There are many prescribed days for fasting. We should observe them. And the preliminary tapasya is no illicit sex, no gambling, no intoxication, no meat-eating. There may be some inconvenience for those of us who were accustomed to these practices, but we'll have to accept this tapasya if we want to purify our existence.

At the present moment our existence is not purified; it is impure. Therefore we are suffering. When one's physiological condition becomes infected, he suffers from fever and other symptoms of disease. Similarly, we are suffering in this material world on account of this material body. If we want real happiness, then we must accept tapasya. Tapasya is required. If you think, "Without tapasya, I can get spiritual advancement simply by imagination," then you become a sahajija, one who take things very cheaply. No. Tapasya is required.

Therefore Krishna says tapas cashmi tapasvishu. Tapasya is itself Krishna. You associate with Krishna. When you voluntarily give up meat-eating or intoxication, this giving-up process is Krishna.
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Krishna is so Kind

Tapasya means to accept voluntarily something as enjoined in the shastra, the scripture. Whatever Krishna says is shastra. What is Veda? Veda means what Krishna says. There is no other Veda. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam it is said, tene brahma hrda. Brahma means Veda. Krishna imparted the Vedas to Lord Brahma through the heart. Krishna is situated in everyone's heart. Lord Brahma had no other spiritual master, but Krishna is there within his heart. Krishna's name is Chaitanya, "The Guru in the Heart." Krishna is so kind. He is the guru within, and when we are serious, He manifests Himself as a spiritual master. That is described in the Chaitanya-charitamrita.

The guru helps from inside and outside. Krishna is so kind; He manifests Himself as the spiritual master. Therefore Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura says, saksad-dharitvena samasta-shastraih . . . : A pure devotee is empowered by Krishna to act as the spiritual master. Therefore the spiritual master should be accepted as Krishna's representative. Tatha bhavyata eva sadbhih: Those who are learned scholars, actual devotees—they accept the spiritual master as such.

But that does not mean that the guru is Krishna. "Accept" means that you honour the spiritual master as being as good as Krishna, because he's Krishna's representative. That's not the same as the Mayavada philosophy, which says that the guru and the devotee are the same. In fact, they are simultaneously one and different. Kintu prabhore yah priya eva tasya: The guru is as good as Krishna because he is very dear to Krishna. Why is he dear? Because he's preaching on behalf of Krishna. What Krishna wants, he's doing that. Therefore he's very dear.

Krishna wants everyone to surrender unto Him. A guru's business is to teach that. A guru does not take the position of Krishna. He simply teaches people, "Accept Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Surrender unto Him. Always think of Him. Always offer your obeisances. Become a pure devotee of Krishna."

That is the guru's business. It is not very difficult. Anyone who is sincerely following Krishna's instruction and instructing others to do that is an acharya. Behave exactly as stated in the shastra, as ordered by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, as ordered by Krishna. And teach all your disciples the same thing.

So acharya, guru, representative—it is not difficult. One simply has to become very, very sincere. One must undergo the simple tapas as prescribed in the shastras. By personal example, Lord Chaitanya's associate Haridasa Thakura was preaching the glories of chanting Hare Krishna; therefore he is accepted as a guru. In our line, all the Vaishnavas, all the Gosvamis acted accordingly and preached. Therefore they are acharyas.

Remembering Krishna

In the Krishna consciousness movement we teach that one should always remember Krishna. Now, because we are materially attached, we cannot think of Krishna twenty-four hours a day. Remembering Krishna is very pleasing, but because we are materially attached, we cannot do it. Therefore Krishna is prescribing, "See the varieties of this material world and try to remember Me." These are the varieties: punyo gandhah prthivyam ca tejas casmi vibhavasau. "Study nature and see these important points. And there I am."

It is very scientific. You study nature and pick up some point and Krishna says, "I am this." Where is the difficulty? This is Krishna consciousness. You drink water—you remember Krishna. You see the light—remember Krishna. You smell the aroma of a nice flower—immediately remember Krishna. Practice this. It is not difficult.

Actually, we have to think of Krishna always. Therefore we chant Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. That is the way to always think of Krishna. And Krishna is present before us in His form as the Deity in the temple. Therefore we have to worship the Deity. If we constantly worship the Deity, then Krishna's form is always impressed upon our minds. We will be able to see Krishna any time. If I close my eyes, I will see Krishna, how Krishna is nicely dressed. I will see how Krishna is very pleasingly eating what I have prepared with devotion, bhaktya.

The real thing is bhaktya, not simply official worship. Krishna does not accept anything if it is not offered with bhakti and by the bhakta, the devotee. Why should He accept it? Is He hungry like me? No. He simply wants to see how you have learned to love Krishna, how you are eager to serve Krishna. Otherwise He does not require your service. He's always being served by hundreds and thousands of goddesses of fortune.

People pray to the goddess of fortune, "My mother, Goddess of Fortune, give me some fortune." But the goddess of fortune is afraid that Krishna may reject her. For example, when Krishna was joking with His wife Rukmini, she thought, "Maybe Krishna is going to leave me." Immediately she fainted.

The goddesses of fortune are humbly, fearfully engaged in Krishna's service. What service can we give Krishna
in comparison? What are we compared to the goddesses of fortune? We are nothing. Insignificant. So why does Krishna accept our service? Why does He come as the deity to accept our service? Just to induce us to serve Him with bhakti. That is wanted.

Therefore He says, “Give Me even a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water. It doesn't matter. But give Me with bhakti.” That is our real business. If you have no bhakti, if you offer something only officially, Krishna does not touch it. Krishna is not so poor.

Whatever you do, you should always be humble: "Krishna, I am quite unfit. So whatever I could collect with my capacity, kindly accept it."

This is our only plea to Krishna. Don't proudly think, “I am doing so much for Krishna. Krishna will be obliged to accept it.”

The process is very easy, very sublime, but we have to learn it. And that is not very difficult. Here in this verse Krishna is showing how to see Him in a variety of ways. Always think of Krishna, and Krishna will give you intelligence.

You cannot cheat Krishna. That is not possible. Krishna is within your heart. He sees everything—your intention, your purpose, your activities, everything. Upadrasta: He is the witness. You cannot cheat Krishna. Be sincere, and try to serve Him. He'll accept your service. And He will give you intelligence. Your life will be successful.

Thank you very much. 😊
SRIILA PRABHUPADA SPEAKS OUT

Education for Eating, Sleeping, Mating and Defending Will Not Satisfy

*This conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and the mother of one of his students, along with a Jesuit priest, took place in the garden at Bhaktivedanta Manor, near London, England, on July 25, 1973.*

*Sri Prabhupada (with an airliner roaring overhead):* The airplane botheration was not in Switzerland. They do not fly so low, for fear of the mountain peaks. That was the only place in the world where there was no such sound. Otherwise, everywhere. In America we have got so many temples. Even in West Virginia, quite a hilly tract, there is also the sound of airplanes, although less loud. Anyway, here it is near London, so there must be this sound. Yes. Formerly, people were satisfied to remain in their village. That is the defect of the modern civilization.

*Mother:* In India, you mean. You’re talking of India now.

*Sri Prabhupada:* Everywhere.

*Mother:* Everywhere.

*Sri Prabhupada:* Yes. Everywhere.

*Mother:* What about India? I mean, do they believe in this Vedic culture—the villagers?

*Sri Prabhupada:* In India, actually, they do so.

*Mother:* Yes.

*Sri Prabhupada:* The villagers have cows and land. That is sufficient for their economic problem. But the industrialists are alluring them: “To get more money, come here.”

So the villagers are going to the cities. And the food production in the village is neglected. And therefore the grain price is rising. Actually, everyone should be engaged to produce food, but the modern setup of civilization is that few people are engaged in producing food, and others are eating.

The industrialists are artificially getting money. And they are offering paper: “Here is one hundred dollars.” Although it is simply a piece of paper—cheating. The ordinary people are captivated by cheating. They are thinking, “I have got now one hundred dollars.”

What is this hundred dollars? It is paper. So some people are cheating, and some people are being cheated. This is the society.

*Mother:* But I think one has to be clever enough not to let people cheat you.

*Sri Prabhupada:* “Clever” means that the person must stay on his own land. He should not be cheated by the paper and go to the city.

*Mother:* But we have to teach our young to be able to define between those who cheat and those who . . . be able to tell people who . . .

*Sri Prabhupada:* The whole civilization is a plan for cheating others. That’s all. And they’re all sinful. According to our Vedic understanding, there are four things sinful, four pillars of sinful life: illicit sex, unnecessary killing of animals, intoxication, and gambling.

*Mother:* But you can lead a very happy life, still.

*Sri Prabhupada:* Our students are trained in that way.
Mother: There are a lot of very good people in the world.

Srila Prabhupada: Just see. You can see from your son. These devotees can sit down anywhere. They can lie down. There is no artificial living. They are satisfied with nice foodstuffs made from vegetables and milk. And chanting Hare Krishna, the holy name of God.

Mother: I see my son Michael is happy. But, you know, he came from a very happy home. So he should be happy, shouldn't he?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Mother: I see my son Michael is happy. But, you know, he came from a very happy home. So he should be happy, shouldn't he?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Mother: Very happy home. Brothers and sisters. And we've all been very happy. And I hope he will remain happy.

Srila Prabhupada: Now he's even happier.

Mother: Yes, I can see.

Srila Prabhupada: He was happy; now he's happier. That is the difference.

Mother: Yes. Oh, I don't think he's happier. [Laughter as she glances at her son, who is nodding in the affirmative.] You are? I didn't think it was possible.

Srila Prabhupada (playfully): You are not happier.

Mother: I didn't think it was possible.

Srila Prabhupada: Because your son has come here, you may not be happier. But he's happier.

Mother: Oh, you're saying this. I'm not saying this. I'm very disappointed that he is not continuing with his education. I'm not sorry that he's happy. I'm happy for his happiness, wherever he is.

Srila Prabhupada: But what is the purpose of education?

Mother: You're a cultured man. You're educated.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Mother: Did you not learn? Who gave you the talent to translate your Vedic scriptures?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Mother: Who gave you the talent, Father?

Srila Prabhupada: No. I'm asking, What is the best part of education? So far as my schooling or college education is concerned, that is not being perused here.

Mother: Oh, but you're cultured. You in your old age are getting tremendous comfort from being able to read and to understand what the world is doing—the goodness of your books—and you're able to understand the spiritual way of life.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Mother: If you couldn't, if you hadn't been educated, Father, well, how would you be able to have achieved all these things?

Srila Prabhupada: No, education is required.

Mother: Now, I am so happy that my son is happy, truthfully. But I am very distressed. [To devotees on hand:] And, little boys, don't laugh, because this is serious. Um. I am very distressed that none of these boys continue their education. [In fact, Srila Prabhupada encouraged his academically inclined students to complete their university training. Ed. Note.] What is going to happen to them when they are like you, when they're older, but they have no talents?

Srila Prabhupada: But your educational system—in the Western countries, you have got big universities. Why are the students becoming hippies?

Mother: Oh, well, there are always a certain amount becoming hippies, in America, anywhere. But we must develop the good ones that have talent. We must develop them. You have the power to give these boys . . .

Srila Prabhupada: I mean to say that in India for the most part there are no such big, big universities, such big facilities, but in your Western countries you have got nice universities, a nice teaching system. Why is the result hippies?

Mother: Oh, but we're talking of you. You have got the power. People follow you because they believe in you. So you have the power to educate them. And you and your people are not hippies, are you?

Srila Prabhupada: My point is that this education simply for eating, sleeping, mating, and defending—this sort of education will not satisfy.

Mother: Well, you're educated, you see.

Srila Prabhupada: No, I am educated.

Mother: Yes, but how many of these are?

Srila Prabhupada: But I am not educated only on this platform—eating, sleeping, sex life, and defense. I am educated on a different platform.

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The trout is caught by the fisherman’s lure, the mouse by cheese. An irony of the struggle for existence is that living beings are often destroyed by what they desire. But at least the fish and the mouse have excuses: the bait and the cheese look like sustenance. And the fish and the mouse don’t know they’ll be trapped. Human beings seldom have either of these excuses. The temptations that wreck their lives are quite often pure indulgences known to be dangerous. For example, no one has to smoke for survival, and any half-awake person knows that smoking is dangerous.

Consider the following statistics from the World Health Organization:

- Tobacco kills nearly 10,000 people worldwide every day.
- It is predicted that by 2020 tobacco use will cause over 12% of all deaths globally. This is more deaths worldwide than from suicide, homicide, HIV, tuberculosis, maternal mortality, and motor vehicle accidents combined.
- Half of those who start smoking in adolescence will die in middle age, losing around 22 years of normal life expectancy.

Add the facts that an average cigarette contains 401 poisons and 43 cancer-causing chemicals, and that there are around 1.1 billion smokers in the world (about one-third of the global population aged 15 and over), and we have quite a sobering picture of the world around us. The statistics about other self-destructive behaviours—alcoholism, substance abuse, suicide—are equally, if not more, alarming. And even among so-called normal people, practically everyone is victimized by some form of self-destructive behaviour—unwarranted expressions of anger that turn out to be disastrous, unintentional use of caustic words that break hearts and ruin lives, and so on.

A question naturally arises: How does an intelligent human being embark on such a destructive course? Most people know that when they start, say, smoking, they are treading into a danger zone. But the media, friends, and peddlers persuade them to experiment just once. Seeking a break from the humdrum daily life with its inane pleasures, they acquiesce. The impression of instant pleasure gets embedded in their mind, and whenever they face a reversal, they tend to seek immediate relief through smoking. Every successive experience of smoking reinforces the earlier impressions, strengthens the tendency to seek momentary relief, and weakens the voice of intelligence and conscience. Smoking becomes an irresistible demand, a compulsion, an addiction. Smokers turn into helpless victims, driven again and again to the irresistible.

The Tragedy of Self-Destruction

A spiritual solution that gets to the root of the problem is the only sure protection against the lure of self-destructive behaviour.

by Chaitanya Charana Dasa
Current Solutions

Here are some methods now in use for breaking addictions:

1. Knowledge: It would seem that if people knew about the dangers, that would deter them from indulgence. Sometimes. But not generally. Knowledge can have the opposite effect. For example, after governmental regulations made it mandatory to display “Cigarette smoking is injurious to health” on every cigarette ad and pack, cigarette sales increased; the warning seemed to evoke a dare-devil spirit in young people.

2. Emotional Support: People often turn to addictions when emotionally let down or betrayed by loved ones. Emotionally neglected adolescents are especially susceptible to addictions. Providing emotional support through personal counseling is a potential solution. But professional counseling often leads to chronic dependence on the counselor. And for many, professional guidance costs too much. Friends can help, but in our fast-paced modern life few people can invest the time and energy needed to consistently provide intensive emotional support.

3. Sublimation: Sublimation involves replacing a gross physical drive with a more refined substitute. For example, an alcoholic might seek refuge in music instead of alcohol. But this can work only if he has a strong liking for music and if his addiction to alcohol is not overpowering. Another problem is that the mental impressions of indulgence in alcohol make it seem far more attractive than its substitute.

4. Willpower: Seeing the physical and emotional pain he is inflicting upon himself and his loved ones, an addict may sometimes by sheer determination decide to give up his perverted habit. Unfortunately few people are able to muster the necessary willpower. Even if successful, they face the grim prospect of an entire lifetime of constant inner struggle, with the fear of succumbing at any moment. And failure often brings with it intolerable feelings of guilt, making living itself an agony.

5. Religion: Statistical surveys have shown that the religiously committed are less likely to succumb to seeking perverted pleasures. Adopting religious principles rigorously also sometimes helps addicts to free themselves. Dr. Patrick Glynn writes in his book God: The Evidence, “It is difficult to find a more consistent correlative of mental health, or a better insurance against self-destructive behaviours, than a strong religious faith.”

6. Substitution: Addicts often try to switch their addiction to a less harmful substitute—smokers try a nicotine patch or nicotine gum, heroin addicts try methadone, and so on. While this may make the addiction less debilitating, the addict is still not free of emotional craving and mental dependence on external substances. And the substitute drug continues to take its toll on the health and the wealth of the addict. Thus substitution leads at best to lessening of the evil and at worst to its perpetuation, rarely to its elimination.

While each of these methods has had some small degree of success, the real solution to self-destructive behaviour lies in understanding its roots. Let’s consider the problem from the Vedic perspective.

The Vedic Paradigm

In the Bhagavad-gita (3.36), Arjuna asks Lord Krishna, “By what is one impelled to sinful acts, even unwillingly, as if engaged by force?”

Lord Krishna replies (3.37), “It is lust only, Arjuna, which is born of contact with the mode of passion and later transformed into wrath, and which is the all-devouring sinful enemy of this world.”

The background of this dialogue is the fundamental teachings of the Bhagavad-gita: The source of life, the actual self, is a non-material particle of spirit, known as the atma or the soul. The essential need of the soul is to love and be loved and to experience unbounded happiness through loving exchange. Being spiritual by constitution, the soul belongs to a higher dimensional milieu, the spiritual world. There the loving propensity of the soul finds complete fulfillment in the supremely lovable all-attractive person, who reciprocates with the soul’s love.

The Vedic texts state, eko bahu syam: the Supreme

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has expanded into infinite subordinates for loving reciprocation. The Taittiriya Upanishad (2.7.1) explains, raso vai sah: the Supreme is the reservoir of all divine loving emotions. The Srimad-Bhagavatam confirms that the Supreme Person is all-attractive and is therefore best known by the name “Krishna,” which means all-attractive in Sanskrit. In the spiritual world Krishna is the pivot of all relationships, and there the soul continually relishes ever-intensifying and ever-expanding ecstasies of love in relationship with Him.

Love necessitates freedom; only when the object of love freely chooses to reciprocate one’s love does the experience of love becomes truly satisfying and fulfilling. The soul is therefore endowed with a minute free will to enable him to feel the joy of loving the Supreme Person, Krishna. But when the soul misuses his free will and becomes unwilling to love Krishna, he has to find a substitute in whom to repose his love. Of course, there can be no substitute for the Supreme, and by constitution the soul cannot find happiness in loving anyone other than the Supreme. But for those souls who insist on making that attempt, the world of matter (where all of us currently reside) provides the necessary arrangement for experimentation and rectification.

The Enemy Within

As soon as the soul comes to the material world, his love for Krishna becomes perverted into lust. Lust is a formidable illusory force that offers the soul various surrogate objects of love to experiment with. Lust creates and perpetuates the misidentification of the soul with the material body he is given. Lust causes within all living beings the overpowering drive for gross sexual enjoyment in specific, and all forms of material enjoyment in general.

Modern civilization with its media, culture, social environment, and overall values aggravates lust. The celluloid promises of unending sexual bliss especially provoke wild erotic fantasies. But sexual enjoyment is heartbreakingly brief; dreams cherished for years vanish within moments. Even though what people experience is so pathetically little compared to the hype, the media blitz goads them on.

Sexual enjoyment, especially illicit, is a complicated matter, involving time, money, intense emotions, relationship dynamics, risk for prestige, and so on. And the attempt for such enjoyment, even if somehow successful, leaves one feeling disappointed and cheated—and craving for more. If unsuccessful, it creates great anger. Either way the victims are soon so enslaved by lust that the more they try, the more they get frustrated—and yet the more they become impelled to keep trying. Eventually the accumulated enormous frustration makes instant relief a desperate necessity. Frustrated people easily fall prey to the lure of quick pleasure offered by intoxicants.

Lust is thus the internal enemy at the root of all self-destructive behaviour. The Gita (18.38) describes vividly the nature of all perverted pleasures: they appear at...
first to be like nectar but in the end are poison. Elsewhere Prabhupada comments, “While one enjoys sense gratification, it may be that there is some feeling of happiness, but actually that so-called feeling of happiness is the ultimate enemy of the sense enjoyer.” Why? Because it reinforces the illusion that true happiness can be found in this world.

Lust is present in everyone in varying degrees. That is why everyone, no matter how materially successful he may be, has some tendencies toward self-destructive behaviour. People generally become concerned about such tendencies only when they exceed socially acceptable limits. But actually lust throttles the ability of everyone to make meaningful contributions to society and even their own future; the difference is only in degree. From the spiritual point of view, lust is inherently self-destructive; it strips the soul of the unlimited spiritual happiness that is his birthright and forces him to labour for paltry material sensations of pleasure that can never satisfy his immortal longing.

The Only Way to Conquer Lust

Lust, being a perversion of our original, essential nature, cannot possibly be annihilated, suppressed, repressed, or even sublimated. But it reverts to its original nature if we direct our loving propensity back to Krishna through the scientific process of devotional service. Action on the spiritual platform is what Lord Krishna recommends to Arjuna as the key to overcoming lust: “Thus knowing oneself to be transcendental to the material senses, mind, and intelligence, O mighty-armed Arjuna, one should steady the mind by deliberate spiritual intelligence [Krishna consciousness] and thus—by spiritual strength—conquer this insatiable enemy known as lust.” (Bhagavad-gita 3.43) The channeling of consciousness from matter back to Krishna is most easily and effectively executed through the medium of divine sound. The Supreme Person, Krishna, being omnipotent, is fully present in His holy names. Chanting the holy names therefore connects one immediately with Krishna, the supreme pleasure principle. Regular meditation on the holy names enables one to taste happiness streaming down from the spiritual dimension. This spiritual pleasure is so satisfying that it soon frees one from the craving for perverted mundane pleasure like drugs and alcohol.

Millions of people all over the world have discovered the purifying potency of the holy names of God. During the period of the counterculture in the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s, Srila Prabhupada spread the congregational chanting of the holy names and thus set one thousand young people from a condemned life of drug addiction. All over the globe ISKCON devotees who practice mantra meditation everyday for about two hours—chanting the maha-mantra, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare —are easily able to eschew all forms of intoxication, gambling, meat-eating, and illicit sex, the main self-destructive activities impelled by lust. The ability to give up these four activities is not necessary to begin chanting, but because they greatly obscure the original consciousness of the soul, abstaining from them helps accelerate the purifying effect of the chanting. While many people today are so captivated and enslaved by lust that they consider life without these activities an impossibility, devotees lead lives that are natural, peaceful, satisfying, meaningful, and constructive, protected as they are by their mantra meditation.

The benefits of chanting do not stop with freedom from addiction, nor is chanting meant only for those victimized by self-destructive behaviour. Chanting the holy names of God is a universal, time-tested, nonsectarian method of bringing about the blossoming of consciousness to its highest bloom of pure love for God and all living beings. Chanting frees one from selfish desires, which throttle the flow of the fullness of life. It enables one to find continuous happiness, independent of the state of the body and the external world. Chanting thus heralds the advent of a life of selfless spiritual service to God and all His children. Only this selflessness within individuals can form the basis of lasting world peace and harmony. Srila Prabhupada summarizes: “Without the awakening of divine consciousness within the individual, there is no use of crying for world peace.”

Krishna Voice, December 2015
Sri Sivakumar M R donated a vehicle to Akshaya Patra Foundation. He handed over the keys of the food distribution vehicle to Sri Stoka Krishna Dasa, Vice-President, ISKCON-Bangalore.

VEDIC THOUGHTS

If one sincerely searches for spiritual salvation, then Krishna, being situated in everyone’s heart, gives him the intelligence to find a suitable spiritual master. By the grace of a spiritual master..., one gets the proper instruction and advances in his spiritual life.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.20.4, Purport

And I declare that one who studies this sacred conversation of ours worships Me by his intelligence.

Lord Sri Krishna, Bhagavad-gita 18.70

The Supreme Lord, who is greater than the greatest, becomes submissive to even a very insignificant devotee because of his devotional service. It is the beautiful and exalted nature of devotional service that the infinite Lord becomes submissive to the infinitesimal living entity because of it. In reciprocal devotional activities with the Lord, the devotee actually enjoys the transcendental mellow of devotional service.

Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi-lila 7.145
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Located in the Thirunagari village north of Sirkali is the spectacular temple of Thirunagari, the kingdom of Thirumangai Alwar.

Continued from the previous issue, here are the glories of Thirumangai Alwar.

**Vaishnavism vs Shaivism**

Alwars are saints in the realm of Sri Vaishnavism and Nayanmars are saints of Shaivism. Most often there have been conflicts between these two groups. This is an interesting such incident which happened between Thirumangai Alwar and Thirugnana Sambhandar.

Kochenganaan had been born as a spider in his previous birth, at the Shiva temple by name Thiruvanaikka. The spider’s attempts to weave a shelter over the linga had been thwarted by an elephant. Reborn as the Chola king, Kochenganaan continued where he had left off, and ended up building 70 temples for Shiva. But to explain the Alwar Nayanmar connection, one has to unravel the past some more.

When Kochenganaan’s mother went into labour, Lord Shiva, in the guise of an astrologer, ensured that the child’s birth was held back by some minutes, so that at the time of his birth, Lord Mahavishnu’s glance would fall on him, for this would guarantee moksha for Kochenganaan. It was predicted that the child would never taste failure. Sure enough, when he assumed the mantle of power,

Kochenganaan faced victory after victory. But at one stage

Wondering why the prophecy about his success had proved false, Kochenganaan went in search of the astrologer, who, of course, was none other than Lord Shiva himself. Shiva took Kochenganaan to the Thirunaraiyur Vishnu temple, and gave him diksha (initiation) in Vaishnavism ‘by instructing om namo narayanaya. Kochenganaan recited the mantra and worshipped the Supreme Lord Narayana.

Soon after, Kochenganaan won a decisive victory against his enemies, and went on to build a big temple for the Thirunaraiyur deity - Naraiyur Nambi (refer Krishna Voice Dec 2013).

It was at Thirunaraiyur, that Thirumangai Alwar received Vaishnava diksha. To express his gratitude to the Chola king who built the temple for Naraiyur Nambi, the Alwar praised him. In one of the songs he sang, nine out of ten verses are about the Chola king.

Commentators observe with wonder that one half of each verse was devoted to Naraiyur Nambi and one half to Kochenganaan - the Nayanmar who built a temple for Vishnu.

**Thirumangai Alwar and Thirugnana Sambhandar**

Historians by and large in Tamil Nadu agree that this incident did take place and the two stalwarts did live in the same era. Saint Thirugnana Sambhandhar and Thirumangai lived during the same time. This has been established again and again. There is absolutely no doubt about this and a biography on Thirumangai provides much more details.

Besides, they both respected each other so much for their knowledge in Tamil and in fact they both longed to see each other. This has been established by Tamil historians again and again. In fact this has been explicitly explained in both their Tamil works: both Thirumangai and Thirugnana Sambhandar expressed their eagerness to see each other. They never argued with each other and on the contrary held each other in high esteem as fellow Tamil poets. They had a debate as promoted by their disciples. The debate was not on whether Shaivism or Sri Vaishnavism was greater. At the request of Saint Sambhandhar, Thirumangai delivered the songs on Lord Thadalan (refer Krishna Voice Dec 2014) in His temple at Sirkali and Saint Sambhandhar accepted the song with great veneration, appreciating the poetic skill of Thirumangai even after the very first line in which he stacked numbers 1 to 10 in Tamil poetry and indirectly cited them as the 10 incarnations of Lord Vishnu. After this Saint Sambhandhar presented his own holy spear (vel) as a reward and as an acknowledgment of Thirumangai’s winning the so-called debate. This is why we see Thirumangai Alwar with a spear in his hand.

Thirumangai Alwar and the Tamarind Tree

Thirumangai Alwar wanted to build huge walls around the Srirangam temple. Even for the king of Nangoor, the wealth was not sufficient to build the walls. Alwar sent his disciples to find out from where they could raise funds for this noble cause. One of the disciples came and told him that there was a gold Buddha statue in a Buddha Vihar at Nagapattinam and if they could get it, they could sell the statue and get money for the construction work. But the statue was installed on top of the vimana and if the statue was removed the vimana would be damaged. Hence they had to find a way to remove the statue without damaging the vimana, and to do this, they had to find the sculptor who constructed it. Alwar sent his disciples to find out where the sculptor lived. Later locating the place, he went in person with his disciples and stayed with a person living opposite to the sculptor. He told that person that he was

Thiruvai Thirunagari Temple
going on pilgrimage and just waiting for the arrival of a ship to continue his pilgrimage to Nagapattinam. One day he was talking to his disciples in a raised voice and was telling them that he came to know that the golden Buddha statue was stolen. The sculptor who heard this was shocked and started cursing the helper who worked with him and knew the secret of the construction of the statue. Thirumangai Alwar asked the sculptor where the helper lived so that he could search for him and punish him for his misdeed. The sculptor did not know his assistant’s whereabouts, except that he was from Chola Nadu. Alwar spoke to him pleasingly and requested him to tell him about the secret of vimana (vimana makuta sutram) construction. He assured the sculptor that he would find the assistant and recover the statue from him. The same day a ship arrived and the Alwar boarded the ship with his disciples. Alwar went to the Buddha Vihar with one of his disciples and hid there till nightfall. As he had already taken clues from the sculptor to remove the golden statue without damaging the vimana, with his disciple’s help he removed the statue. The statue glittered in the moonlight and Alwar was just thinking, Buddha who renounced his princely home and kingdom did not deserve a golden statue. On Alwar’s chanting a song, the gold from the statue melted and dropped into Alwar’s lap. Immediately he told his disciple that he did not want both of them to be seen together and ordered him to go back to Srirangam. Alwar decided to walk back to Srirangam. When he was approaching Thirukkannankudi it was getting dark. He was also feeling tired and so wanted to take rest. Seeing a big tamarind tree, he sat underneath the tree. Beside the tree he saw a wet ploughed field. He dug the muddy field and buried the gold. Then he took rest under the tamarind tree. He was afraid that he might fall asleep and someone might take the gold. He told the tree that even if he fell asleep, the tree should be awake and take care of the gold. Next morning the tamarind tree woke him up by shedding its leaves upon him. He thanked the tamarind tree and blessed it as a tree which doesn’t sleep. It is believed that the leaves of the tree never closed after this incident. The owner of the field came to plough the field in the morning. Thirumangai Alwar stopped him by saying that it was his land and he would not allow him to plough. The farmer told him that for generations the land belonged to his family and how could Alwar tell him now that it belonged to him. Alwar told him that he was also asking the same question to him. The owner took him
to the panchayath and when they asked for proof the farmer showed his patta. When Alwar was asked for his patta, he told them that it was at Srirangam and if they gave him twenty four hours’ time he would bring it and show it to them. The panchayath gave him time. Alwar just wanted to take out the gold and leave the place, and for that he asked for time. Alwar sneaked away with the gold and continued his service of constructing the grand walls of Srirangam, which still stand as a testimony to his devotional service.

Thirumangai Alwar and Sri Ranganatha

The Alwar leaves a lot of autobiographical information about himself in the last verse of his works. There is an amusing story about the tendency of the Alwar to speak a lot about his own achievements while singing the praises of the Lord. There lived in the temple of Srirangam, a devotee who was employed to clean the lamps, known as Villakku Pichchai. He used to talk to himself while working. Lord Ranganatha reclining in the sanctum sanctorum started conversing with this man out of sheer boredom. He in turn used to report to the Lord all that was going on in the temple. Not that the Lord didn’t know the news, but He chose to amuse Himself with this diversion. Villakku Pichchai soon grew a little pompous with this special attention he received from the Lord. Once he heard the chanters in the temple reciting the Periya Thirumozhi verse (a work of Thirumangai Alwar) wherein the Alwar speaks about his various titles a bit more than usual. Pichchai brought this to the attention of the Lord and said, “Your devotee starts by singing Your praises and ends up singing more about himself!” Lord Ranganatha was annoyed with Pichchai’s impertinence and remarked, “So what is wrong with that? All the fame of Thirumangai is due to My grace, his devotion is to Me is My praise indirectly!” After this, the Lord withdrew into his archa code of not
Thirumangai Alwar went to Thirunaraiyur (refer Krishna Voice Dec 2013) and sang his verses bewitched by Nambi’s (Lord of Naraiyur) beauty. Thirunaraiyur Nambi was also the Alwar’s spiritual master and therefore commanded a special position in the Alwar’s heart. Later when Thirumangai returned to Srirangam, Lord Ranganatha, with evident disappointment, confronted him saying, “Alwar! You offered your special verses as female mode to Nambi!” The Alwar tried to pacify Sri Ranganatha saying, “But I built the huge rampart walls of Your temple to make it fit to be called the biggest temple. This is a special service offered to You alone!” Unconvinced by this explanation given to placate him, Lord Ranganatha is said to have retorted, “I would have been happier if you had offered your madal (song in Tamil) to me and built the madil (Tamil word for wall) for Nambi.” This charming anecdote reveals the magic of Thirumangai’s words that kept the Lord spellbound. It also reminds us that what impresses the Lord and Vaishnavas is the benedictory words of the saints, not the massive walls of bricks, stones and mortar built around them.

**Thirumangai’s Love for the Deity Form**

This Alwar’s devotion to the deity form is incomparable. The deity form was vibrantly alive to him and responded to his faith and entreaties. He was truly the pioneer of the modern trend of pilgrimage tourism. One must keep in mind that the Alwar reached out, covering distant kshetras like Salagramam, (Nepal) Badri, Naimisharanyam, Ahobilam, in days when most modern comforts were unknown and transport was primitive. Among the 108 temples, Thirumangai visited 86 and sang about them, unlike the songs of Nammalwar who never stirred from his abode under the tamarind tree at Thirukkurugoor. All Nammalwar’s verses on temples were sung with his special vision. But Thirumangai Alwar took great pains and travelled to remote places with great zeal. In his first song, Periya Thirumozhi, he dedicated a song to each temple. But in later works he started singing about many temples together. Many commentaries throw light on why the Alwar did this: the Alwar was getting older, nearing his departure to Sri Vaikuntha. His immense love for the Deities makes him recall all the earlier experiences he had with Them. This can be compared to a young girl leaving her home after marriage. She goes around visiting all the dear ones, recalling her joyous days with them and taking leave with a heavy heart.

Thirumangai Alwar’s devotion to the deity form was so total that he rejected moksha, the land of eternal bliss where the liberated soul remains close to the Lord in celestial form, to be inferior to deity worship in this world. In one of his works, he uses the analogy of a hunter pursuing a rabbit, abandoning the chase to try and catch a crow flying in the sky. The rabbit is easier to capture and tastier too. The Deity is likewise within our reach and is the abode of all auspicious attributes while the spiritual form is beyond reach and the bliss it confers is only hearsay spoken by the scriptures. The Deity evokes actual experience. To Thirumangai Alwar the Lord came in person with His consort to give initiation through the 8 syllable mantra when threatened with a sword. The Alwar’s love for the Deity was special and he in turn demanded special treatment from the Lord. When he did not get such treatment or response, he threw a tantrum and poured out his anger in verses, as in the verses on Thiru Indaloor. The Alwar reached the temple and found the doors closed and could not contain his disappointment. He said “O Lord of Indaloor! Scriptures speak of You as the omniscient one! But You seem to know everything other than my presence here at Your gate!”

Such is the freedom Thirumangai had with the Lord. He further chastises the Supreme Lord:
The scriptures declare that Your glorious form belongs to the devotees. What then is the point in closing the gates when I have come all the way to have Your darshana and to sing Your praise? Do not consider me to be a submissive devotee like the other Alwars! I cannot tolerate separation from You and I need regular doses of Deity darshana for survival."

At another temple, Thiruninravoor, there is yet another sweet episode that drives home the point that the Lord of lords needed the Alwar as much as the Alwar needed Him. The Alwar was visiting and singing full verses on each temple: Thiruvalloor, Thiruvallikeni, Thiruneezhimalai, Thirukkadalmallai, Thiruvadavendai in a sequential order, when the Goddess of Thiruninravoor drew the attention of the Lord saying, “O Lord! Thirumangai, the last among the Alwars has passed by Our temple and We were preoccupied playing a game of dice. If he doesn’t sing Our praises, Our temple will never be known as a divya desam. So please invite him with befitting honours.” The Lord of the temple invited the Alwar who made a passing reference to Him as “one who stopped me and made me sing” in his verses on Thirukkanadalmallai. These two words from the lips of Alwar made this temple one among the revered hundred and eight divya desams.

**Festivals**

Manjalkuli Festival which is taking place right from the lifetime of Sri Thirumangai Alwar is sublime and without a parlance in our spiritual history, was gifted to Sri Thirumangai Alwar by Lord Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam for conducting the Vaikuntha Ekadashi festival at Srirangam.

The Thirumangai Alwar song festival in the month of Thai (after the new moon night) witnesses 11 Garuda seva, a spectacular event in which festival Deities of the Supreme Lord Narayana from the 11 divya desam shrines in the area are brought on Garuda mounts to Thirunangur. A festival deity of Thirumangai Alwar is also brought here on a swan carrier (from Thirunagari) and his songs - dedicated to each of these 11 temples - are recited. The deity Thirumangai Alwar circumambulates each of these Deities, and at the conclusion of the festival, the utsavars are returned to Their temples. Prior to this, the utsavar of Thirumangai Alwar and his consort, Sri Kumudavalli Naachiyar, are taken in a palanquin to each of the 11 Thirunangur temples, through the paddy fields in the area, and the songs dedicated to each of the 11 temples are chanted in the respective shrines. The 11 Garuda seva is the most important of the festivals in this area, and it draws thousands of visitors.

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam

To read online visit: [www.goo.gl/7z6G8J](http://www.goo.gl/7z6G8J)
In a recent conversation with a well-to-do Hindu gentleman in New York City, I happened to mention that I was twice-initiated—a brahmana priest who regularly chanted the confidential Gayatri mantra and sometimes officiated at Vedic ceremonies. He was taken aback. 

"How is that possible?" he asked. "You're not born Indian or to brahmana parents."

My Hindu friend—his name, I soon came to learn, was Amarnath—obviously believed that brahmana hood is related to birthright, a common misconception in India. Wanting to set things straight, I decided to fill him in on the ancient varnashrama system as it was originally espoused in Vedic texts, millennia ago. This system is described in the earliest portions of the Vedic literature (Rg Veda 10.90.12), where the various classes of society are compared to the human body. One part may be positioned higher than the other, but all parts are necessary for the body's proper functioning. Varnashrama is further delineated in the Vishnu Purana (3.8.9) and in Bhagavad-gita (4.13), where it is described as a natural component of any well-established society.

Briefly, the varnashrama system comprises four basic material occupations or duties (varnas) and four spiritual stages (ashramas). The varnas are (1) brahmans (intellectuals and priests), (2) kshatriyas (warriors and administrators), (3) vaishyas (farmers and business people), and (4) shudras (manual labourers and general assistants). Most people exhibit qualities that reflect an overlapping of these categories, but one occupational inclination will eventually predominate.

The four spiritual stages (ashramas) are (1) brahmacharya (celibate student life), (2) grahastha (married life), (3) vanaprastha (retired life), and (4) sannyasa (renunciation and complete dedication to the Absolute). But we will not concern ourselves in this short article with these spiritual stages of life, both because of limited space and because it was not the subject of the discussion between Amarnath and I.

Birthright or Birth-Wrong?

I pointed out to Amarnath that Vedic culture takes into account the psychophysical nature of individuals before assigning a place for them in the varnashrama system. Unfortunately, this system has devolved into the modern-day caste system, where people are classified according to birth. If one is born into a brahmana family, for example, one is automatically considered a brahmana, regardless of qualifications. This superficial reading of varna has led to the jati system, with its innumerable sub-castes and variations on the original four varnas. This system has caused considerable confusion, civil strife, and social unrest in Indian society.

In the early 1970s, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder and spiritual preceptor of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, discussed this topic with a prominent Indologist in Moscow:

Prof. Kotovsky: According to the scriptures—the Puranas, etc.—every member of one of these four classes of varnas has to be born within it.
Srila Prabhupada: No, no, no, no.

Prof. Kotovsky: That is the foundation of all the varnas.

Srila Prabhupada: You have spoken incorrectly. With great respect I beg to submit that you are not speaking correctly. In the Bhagavad-gita [4.13] it is stated, caturmuryam maya srtam guna-karma-vibhagasah: “These four orders of brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas, and shudras were created by Me according to quality and work.” There is no mention of birth.

Prof. Kotovsky: I agree with you that this is the addition of later brahmanas who tried to perpetuate these qualities.

Srila Prabhupada: That has killed the Indian culture.

The Varna System According to Gandhi

The varnashrama system emphasizes “quality and work,” not birth. People fit into particular categories according to their qualifications, not the families they were born into. While birth may point one in a particular direction or help in other ways, it is never the sole factor in determining one’s lifelong occupation. For example, birth in a judge’s family may afford one a good education and provide one’s vocational inclination early in life, but it doesn’t guarantee judgeship. Again, this “quality and work” criterion in relation to varna is clear from the Gita itself, though few modern Indians are aware of this.

Amarnath, for instance, insisted that while ancient Vedic texts, and thus Prabhupada, as a modern representative of these texts, may endorse the idea that varna is about quality and work, “modern Hinduism,” as he called it, has another story to tell. He pointed out that most Indians today say that varna refers to birthright. We both wondered aloud: What, if anything, do they base this on? Even Gandhi, considered by many to be the father of “modern Hinduism,” himself totes the “quality and work” line:

Varna is generally determined by birth, but can be retained only by observing its obligations. One born of Brahmana parents will be called a Brahmana, but if his life fails to reveal the attributes of a Brahmana when he comes of age, he cannot be called a Brahmana. He will have fallen from Brahmanahood. On the other hand, one who is born not a Brahmana but reveals in his conduct the attributes of a Brahmana will be regarded as a Brahmana. * (1. M. K. Gandhi, “In Search of the Supreme,” in Harijan, September 28, 1934, p. 260.)

A Few Words from Bhaktivinoda Thakura

Social stratification occurs naturally, and it cannot be dictated by birthright. Bhaktivinoda Thakura (1838-1914), a great scholar and saint in the Krishna conscious tradition, observes how the varna system naturally occurs in all societies:

When we consider the modern societies of Europe, whatever beauty exists in these societies depends upon the natural varnashrama that exists within them. In Europe, those who have the nature of traders are fond of trading and thereby advance themselves by trade. Those who have the nature of kshatriyas adopt the military life, and those who have the nature of shudras love doing menial service. * (2. Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Chaitanya-sikhamrita, Bengali edition (Mayapura: Chaitanya Math, 1974, reprint), p. 107: V, 61. See also Sree Gaudya Math translation of the same text, Chapter 2, entitled “Competence of Karma and Caste Distinctions,” pp. 76-83.)

But Bhaktivinoda is critical of the prevailing caste system, specially because it points to birth as the selective criterion of one’s varna. * (3. Ibid., Appendix V, 58) He writes that the original varna system was pure and based on scientific (vaijnanika) principles. * (4. Ibid., Appendix V, 59.) He further writes that from the time of the Mahabharastra (roughly five thousand years ago) the system had become corrupt and deviated from its original purpose, that is, to help people gradually develop love of God. Bhaktivinoda called the original system, which centered on spiritual principles, daivi-varnashrama (divine varnashrama)—a far cry, he says, from the current-day caste system. * (5. Ibid., Appendix V, 60. See also Shukivak N. Dasa, Hindu Encounter with Modernity (Los Angeles: Sri Publications, 1999), p. 212.)

As for the societies of the Western world, while Bhaktivinoda recognizes a natural varna system within these societies, he stops short of calling them scientific (vaijnanika) varnashrama: “Though the nations of Europe follow the varna system to some extent, it is not scientific. . . . In Europe, and, for that matter, in all countries except India, it is the nonscientific varna system that guides them.” *(6. Ibid., pp. 107-8.) Bhaktivinoda is here expressing his appreciation for the system as it is elucidated in Vedic texts, which elaborate on specific principles for determining the part of society in which a particular individual may belong.

Briefly, Bhaktivinoda summarizes the Vedic perspective:

1. Varna should be determined by studying the nature of a child after examining a child’s associations and tendency toward learning during childhood.

2. At the time of selecting varna there should also be some consideration of the varna of the mother and the father.

3. Varna should be determined, at the time of education, by the family priest, father, respectable seniors, and spiritual preceptor.

4. In case of dispute, there should be a two-year trial period and a review committee to examine the case after that time. *(7. Ibid. part 1, p. 113. See also Sajjana-tosani, Volume 2, 1885, p. 123.)
Bhaktivinoda goes on to write of an unscrupulous class of brahmanas and ksatriyas who, to establish authority over others, rewrote books like the Manu-samhita and other dharma-shastras so that these respected texts appear to endorse birthright as a preeminent qualification for brahmana hood. This, he writes, contributed to the fall of a once glorious society in the Indian world.

The Varna System According to Plato

The Greek philosopher Plato—though apparently unaware of Vedic texts—recognized social divisions that are strikingly similar to those of the varna system. In his Republic, he argues that social classes correspond to a hierarchy of personality types. The class predominated by the philosophical intellect, he says, is the highest, after that come those dominated by the emotions, and finally we find those in whom “the appetites” (sensual desires) predominate. Further, says Plato, one finds that society is naturally divided in a similar way. On top are the philosopher-kings, who rule; below them are the warriors, whom he refers to as “auxiliaries,” since they assist the king; and finally we have the merchants and workers, whom Plato combines into one distinct category.⁴

He compares rulers to gold, auxiliaries to silver, and those in the third class to brass and iron. According to Plato, golden parents will tend to have golden children, as silver parents will naturally have silver children, and so on. But sometimes, he admits, golden parents may have silver, brass, or iron children, and the reverse is also true. When this occurs, says Plato, one must be flexible enough to acknowledge that a golden child born to an iron parent, for example, is indeed golden—his birthright should be disregarded in favour of his natural quality. *(8. See Plato’s Republic, in The Dialogues of Plato (tr., B. Jowett, New York: Random House, 1965, reprint), vol. 1. p. 415.)*

Prabhupada’s teachings on this point concur with Plato’s. Both say that birth is not the sole criterion but can afford one a better chance in a particular area of endeavour. Prabhupada says: “It is not that one automatically becomes a brahmana because he is born in a brahmana family. Rather, he has a better chance of being trained as a brahmana if his father is a brahmana, just as one has a better chance of being trained as a musician or a cobbler if those are his father’s occupations. However, it is not that a cobbler cannot become a brahmana. If he acquires the qualifications, he should be considered a brahmana.” *(9. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Dialectic Spiritualism: A Vedic View of Western Philosophy (Moundsville, West Virginia, Prabhupada Books, 1985), p. 287.)*

All Varnas for Krishna

Amarnath accepted the point: Vedic texts and their modern-day representatives, like Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Srila Prabhupada, endorse the varna system as natural and beneficial, and as an asset in developing love for God. Further, Gandhi and Plato accept the basic premises of the varna system—even down to the fact that it should be based on inherent quality and natural inclination rather than family status and birthright. Still, we agreed, being born in a particular family may help because if one is educated from birth in the duties of a specific occupation, then one will more likely develop expertise in that field.

As we reviewed one of the other central points of our discussion, Amarnath was disturbed, but he had to admit that it rang true: In the present epoch of world history (Kali, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy), the actual varna system has degraded into what is now known as the caste system, so much a part of modern India. As noted, this is because brahmanas and ksatriyas wanted to maintain their status without developing the necessary education and qualifications to legitimately do so. They deceptively emphasized birthright and powerfully enforced their position among the common people, creating the oppressive atmosphere now associated with the Indian social system.

“What to do?” Amarnath asked.

In response, I presented the basic message of the Krishna consciousness movement: By proper work, according to one’s inclination, one can gradually advance in one’s pursuit of God. Anyone properly engaged can rise to the level of a brahmana and, further, to that of a Vaishnava, or a pure devotee of Krishna. Vaishnavas both embrace and transcend the varna system. They engage their God-given talents in Krishna’s service—this is the essence of the varna system—but accept all classes equally, for all are directing their endeavours in the service of Krishna. This, as Bhaktivinoda tells us, is the daivi, or divine, varna system.

Prabhupada referred to a story from the Mahabharata known as “the enchanted pool.” King Yudhisthira was once called upon to answer questions before being allowed to drink deeply from a pool of beautiful, clear water. One of the questions was “What makes a true brahmana? Is it birth, learning, or good conduct?” Yudhisthira replied, “Birth and superior learning do not make one a brahmana. Good conduct alone does.” Thus, by action anyone can rise to a higher spiritual level. In this context, birthright is never mentioned, and is merely a peripheral consideration.

Amarnath was convinced.

"But how can we convince others?" he asked. "Get them to read Srila Prabhupada’s books," I answered. "There one finds the essence of all Vedic knowledge, as well as the most valuable insights of thinkers like Gandhi and Plato."
ISKCON SRI SRI KRISHNA BALARAMA

RATHA YATRA

Come... pull the chariot!

rathe ca vamanam drstva
punar janma na vidyate

Simply by seeing the Lord on the chariot, one makes advancement for stopping the repetition of birth and death.

Saturday JANUARY 09, 2016 Mysore Saturday JANUARY 30, 2016 Dharwad
Saturday JANUARY 16, 2016 Bangalore Saturday FEBRUARY 06, 2016 Mangalore
Saturday JANUARY 23, 2016 Hubli Saturday FEBRUARY 27, 2016 Chennai

For more details visit www.iskconbangalore.org/ratha-yatra
Govardhana Puja

Bangalore (above & left)

Mysore (right)

Ahmedabad (left)
Dasara Celebrations

MYSORE: Sri Sri Krishna Balarama in Rama Lakshmana alankara ride on the majestic Gajavahana (left), Gigantic effigies of Ravana and Kumbakarna are burnt to celebrate Sri Rama Vijayam (below). Vidushi Anuradha Vikranth of Drishti Art Foundation, Bangalore performed Sri Rama Vaibhava, a dance drama on the glorious life of Lord Ramachandra.

AHMEDABAD: At the Hare Krishna Movement’s Ahmedabad temple, Dasara celebrations included Rama Darbar darshana, Ravana Dahana (left) and a dance drama on Sri Rama Lila. Smt. Meenaxiben Patel, Hon’ble Mayor of Ahmedabad city, was present at the festival.
Srivigraha Shringarotsava
Vaikuntha Ekadashi Online Contest

An online contest for devotees who worship Deities of Lord Krishna, Lord Vishnu or any other of His forms at home on the altar/puja room.

Guidelines
- Gorgeously decorate your Deities and altar at home with silk garments, jewels and flowers.
- Take a photograph and upload it on www.iskconbangalore.org/srivigraha-shringarotsava

This competition is also open for photographs of altars with Deity pictures / frames
Please do not upload photographs of temples, religious festivals or temple Deities
The competition opens online at 11 am on Dec. 01, 2015 and closes at 11 am on Dec. 20, 2015
The best photos will be published on the auspicious day of Vaikuntha Ekadashi on Dec. 21, 2015

Visit www.iskconbangalore.org for details on Sri Vaikuntha Ekadashi festival

Free Srinivasa Archana Seva

Only once in a year, on the occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi, a laksharchana seva is offered to Sri Srinivasa Govinda on Hare Krishna Hill. Devotees chant one lakh names of Lord Sri Krishna while they perform the archana with a variety of fragrant flowers.
You can register online for the archana seva free of charge.
Log on to www.iskconbangalore.org/free-online-puja/ to avail the offer.

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Harinam festival and abhisheka mark Srila Prabhupada’s disappearance day

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada departed from this world on November 14, 1977 in Vrindavan, India.

One would not usually celebrate the disappearance day of a person, especially one so loved and venerated as Srila Prabhupada. However, the departure of a pure Vaishnava gives cause for jubilation because he returns to his eternal service at Krishna’s lotus feet in Goloka Vrindavan, the spiritual world.

Although Srila Prabhupada is no longer physically with us, on the spiritual platform he is very much present. He is present in his deity form, in his books and through his instructions. His mercy is available to all those who seek it.

The disappearance day of Srila Prabhupada, was observed at our temple on November 15, 2015.

As part of the celebration, a day-long Harinam festival was organized along with a special worship of Srila Prabhupada in the evening.

The Harinam festival included sankirtan of the Hare Krishna Maha mantra and bhajans. Hundreds of devotees participated in singing the holy names of Lord Krishna and some of the songs composed by Srila Prabhupada and other acharyas in the Gaudiya Vaishnava parampara. The Hare Krishna mantra was rendered in various tunes to the accompaniment of different musical instruments. The spiritual vibrations of the holy name increased the devotional fervor of the participants as many batches of devotees led the sankirtan.

After the Harinam festival, an elaborate abhisheka was performed to the deities of Srila Prabhupada amidst the chanting of Hare Krishna mantra and singing of Vaishnava songs by devotees. During the abhisheka, the deities were given a massage with paste of white sesame seeds and sandalwood and then bathed in milk, curds, ghee, honey, etc. This was followed with a shower of a variety of fruit juices. The ceremony also included an arati to Srila Prabhupada, kalasha snana (bathing with sacred water from the kalashas) and a shower of fragrant flowers.

A video presentation after the abhisheka, included excerpts from Srila Prabhupada’s lectures as well as anecdotes by some devotees who were in personal association with Srila Prabhupada.

During the Gauri puja that was performed next, all the devotees offered flowers and obeisances to His Divine Grace. The festival concluded with Damodara arati and shayana pallakki utsava.

Featured Article: Conserve tiger. Protect stray dogs. But cows...?

As someone rightly pointed out, we see the community being so hypocritical about its attitude towards the cow. For a moment, let us keep aside all the religious considerations and ponder over the fact that the cow is also an animal that deserves protection from us. Our ancestors recognized the importance of the cow and they worshiped her as mother. We drink the milk of the cow, and its other products like curd, ghee, butter, paneer and cheese are part of our regular diet; and we also prepare a variety of food stuffs using them. How can we be so thankless? Killing a cow is like killing one’s own mother.

Read More: https://goo.gl/bVliw

Hare Krishna World

890 kg Govardhana cake offered to Lord Krishna

The festival of Govardhana Puja or the worship of the Govardhana Hill was celebrated at our temple on November 12 in a grand manner.

Read More: https://goo.gl/SdJwME

Hare Krishna World

Harinam festival marks Prabhupada’s disappearance day.

The disappearance day of Srila Prabhupada, the Founder-Acharya of ISKCON was observed at our temple on November 15, 2015.

Read More: https://goo.gl/DLaQgs

Krishna Katha

Govardhana Puja – a day for worshipping cows

The Govardhana Hill is adored as the exalted servant of Lord Krishna. The hill was a favorite spot of the Lord for His blissful pastimes.

Read More: https://goo.gl/IcdCfA

Timeless Wisdom

Existence in this world is auspicious

Chaitanya Charitamrita says that a materialist may calculate some things as shubha and some other things as asubha – auspicious and inauspicious.

Read More: https://goo.gl/NPG1MP

Gita Dana

Gift a Gita during the auspicious month of Gita Jayanti.

Reviews from Trip Advisor

Debasish B

“Divine blessing”

Always love going here. The vibhuti of god and the peaceful divine blessing is simply superb. You can be rest assured that you will come back for rejuvenating your spiritual self.

pv2lina

“A great experience when in Bangalore”

The ISKCON temple is an amazing experience if you want to merge into the HARE-KRISHNA culture. I am from Brasil, and the cultural impact was great. The temple offers an insight of the religion along with beautiful architectural details. It’s a must see.

Nilesh S

“Hare Krishna”

It is a place to get peace of mind. It is a place to chant Hare Krishna Hare Krishna... It is very big and requires a day to enjoy fully.

To write a review visit: www.tripadvisor.in

DD

“Peaceful”

Like any ISKCON center, this is clean and peaceful. One can find a quiet corner and rest awhile. Nice when singing is happening.

DNpillai

“Experience the Bliss...!!!”

ISKCON is one of the best places to start your day trip in Bangalore. Very good ambience and bliss. Good administration, neat & clean. Good restaurants and good facilities. Don’t forget to enjoy the Sweet Boll made here. You can have a bit of shopping as well. Laddu prasadam is also a must.

crystal1192

“Beauty in existence”

This temple is a grandeur, such peaceful ambience. A must go if you are in Bangalore! Every deity in the temple has a splendour of its own. Calm environment!

Top You Tube Picks

https://youtube.be/47ltb_5bZoA

Why Kill a Cow?

https://youtube.be/NNY6G2eOnsc

Mahasudakat Book Release by Governor of Karnataka

For more videos visit: https://youtube.com/iskconworld
Bring in the New Year with spiritual blessings!!

HARI NAMA AMRITA

THE NEW YEAR'S FESTIVAL OF BLESSINGS
★ Hari Nama Yajna ★
Tastes Of India Feast

Friday, January 1, 2016
Saturday, January 2, 2016

We invite you to begin the New Year - 2016, with the blessings of Lord Sri Krishna.

You are welcome to participate with your family in the Hari-Nama-Yagna, at the ISKCON - Sri Radha Krishna Temple.

Post darshan of the Lord, Hari-Nama-Yagna & arati - celebrate the blessings of the Lord, with TASTES OF INDIA, a 56 delicacies Feast - Prasadam Dinner.

For more details and reservations please contact
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Kanhaiya Krishna Dasa: 93797 60807
Cauvery Serenity is at the Centre of Everything, which means you can do it all!

- Have breakfast at Taj Vivanta
- Drop the little ones off at National Public School
- Collect your dad’s medical report at the People Tree Hospital
- Walk across to the metro station to get around the city quick
- Walk across for a business meeting at the World Trade Centre
- Do a bit of window shopping at the Orion Mall

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