Sri Gaura Purnima
Glorious appearance day of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
Thursday March 5, 2015

Celebrations at
ISKCON
Hare Krishna Hill
Bangalore
6:00pm onwards

Maha Sankirtana
Pallaki Utsava
Abhishekam & Arati
Video Presentation
Prasadam Feast

namo mahā-vadānyāya
krṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
krṣṇāya krṣṇa-caitanya-
nāmne gaura-tvīṣe namaḥ

"O most munificent
incarnation! You are Kṛṣṇa
Himself appearing as
Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya
Mahāprabhu. You have
assumed the golden color of
Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and You
are widely distributing pure
love of Kṛṣṇa. We offer our
respectful obeisances unto You."
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
Even God's Killing is Good

A true devotee of the Lord loves to hear about all His activities, including those that seem violent.

A lecture given in London on July 10, 1973

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

utra sura mahesvasa
bhimarjuna-sama yudhi
yuyudhano viratas ca
drupadas ca maha-rathah

"Here in this army are many heroic bowmen equal in fighting to Bhima and Arjuna: great fighters like Yuyudhana, Virata, and Drupada."—Bhagavad-gita 1.4

People may ask, "What spiritual progress can we make by reciting the names of these great fighters? We understand that we can make spiritual advancement by chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, but what do we gain by chanting these names?"

The answer is nirbandhah krishna-sambandhe: whatever is connected with Krishna becomes Krishna. That is the subtle philosophical understanding. One class of so-called devotees, known as sahajiyas, do not read Bhagavad-gita but jump at once to reading about Krishna's rasa-lila—His dancing with His cowherd girlfriends—in the Tenth Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam. Such sahajiyas distinguish between Krishna's fighting pastimes and His rasa-lila. But the two pastimes are in fact the same, because Krishna is the center of both. And whatever is connected with Krishna becomes Krishna. That is the idea.

Srila Rupa Gosvami has taught, prapancikataya buddhya ... Everything has a connection with Krishna because ultimately everything is Krishna's energy. Prapancikataya means "material." The material world is a manifestation of Krishna's energy, made up of five gross elements (earth, water, air, fire, and sky) and three subtle elements (mind, intelligence, and ego). Krishna says, bhinna me prakrtir astadha: "These material elements are separated from Me, but they are My energy."

For example, a cloud is created by the sun's energy. Sea water evaporates and forms clouds. So the cloud is created by the energy of the sun, but when there is a cloud you cannot see the sun. The sun is covered. Similarly, the material energy is Krishna's energy, but when we become covered by the material energy, we do not see Krishna. That is our position.

Srila Rupa Gosvami writes,

prapancikataya buddhya
hari-sambandhi-vastunah
mumuksabhah parityago
vairagyyam phalgu kathyate

“One who rejects anything without knowledge of its relationship to Krishna is incomplete in his renunciation.” Mumuksu means those who are after the liberation of merging into the Supreme, such as the Mayavadis. The Mayavadis say, brahma satyam jagan mithya: "This world is false; only Brahman, spirit, is reality." But we ask why the world should be false if it is coming from the reality. We do not agree with the Mayavadis. We do not accept that this world is false. We can say that it is a temporary manifestation. But it is not false.

We are living in this house. If someone says, "It is false," we say, "Why is it false?" We are using the house. We are using the microphone. We are using the dictaphone. Why would they be false?

They are not false, because they have a relationship with Krishna—sambandha. Anything material is made of earth, water, fire, and air, and these are Krishna's energies. Therefore everything has a direct relationship with
Krishna. And if Krishna is reality, why should His energy be false? It is not false. We must know how to use it. Krishna is on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, and everything there—soldiers, commanders-in-chief, chariots, ground—is Krishna's energy.

If we remember that everything is a manifestation of Krishna's energy, there is no question of materialism. Everything is spiritual energy, so we have to use everything for Krishna.

Krishna Wanted the Battle

Many soldiers had gathered on the battlefield at Kurukshetra, and Krishna would display one of His energies. Paritranaya sadhunam vinasaya ca duskrtam: He wanted to kill all the demons. That is a side of His business. As one of His sides is to give protection to the devotees (paritranaya sadhunam), the other side is to vanquish all the demons (vinasaya ca duskrtam). If you want to grow paddy in a field, first you have to destroy all the unwanted weeds. Then you sow the seeds, and the paddy will come out nicely.

These two are required: destruction and construction. Both are Krishna's activities or energies. We have to understand that both are working as different manifestations of Krishna's energy. Parasya saktir vividhaiva sruyate. In the Vedas it is said that the Absolute has multi-energies. One energy works in one way; another energy works in another way. When we do something, we require varieties of energy to make that activity perfect. Everything—Krishna, Krishna's material world and spiritual world—is working in order under His different energies.

So we should not neglect hearing the names of these warriors. Krishna wanted to bring together on the battlefield of Kurukshetra all the demoniac powers and kill them. That was His plan.

Krishna has His plan. We should not be attached to things as they are but should try to understand everything in its relationship with Krishna. As soon as we recognize anything's relationship with Krishna, we can use it properly. That is Krishna consciousness.

Everything for Krishna

Everything can be used for Krishna. Krishna is not a stereotyped, stagnant block. Krishna is a dynamic force. Therefore everything can be dovetailed in Krishna's service. One should simply learn the art of dovetailing, under proper guidance. That art will be the perfect form of Krishna consciousness.

Read the next verse.

[A disciple reads:]

dhrstaketus cekitanah
kasirajas ca viryavan5
purujit kuntibhojas ca
saibyas ca nara-pungavah

Translation: “There are also great heroic, powerful fighters like Dhrstaketu, Chekitana, Kashiraja, Purujit, Kuntibhoja, and Saibya.”

[Srila Prabhupada continues:] In the battle of Kurukshetra, great warriors from all parts of the world came and joined. Some of them joined one side, and others joined the other side. We have not given all the information on these great warriors in our Bhagavad-gita As It Is, because that would have increased the number of pages. But information about them is available in a book called The Personalities of Mahabharata. Bhagavad-gita is part of the Mahabharata. Mahabharata means “greater India.” Maha means “greater,” and bharata refers to India. The whole planet was originally known as Bharata-varsa. There was only one flag. The whole planet was ruled by one king, from Hastinapura [modern-day Delhi]. The battle of Kurukshetra would determine who would be the king—Maharaja Yudhisthira or Duryodhana.

Krishna had decided, “Duryodhana is unfit. Maharaja Yudhisthira is fit.” Krishna wanted Yudhisthira to be king. Therefore the battle of Kurukshetra took place. Krishna wanted to wipe out all unwanted demons from the face of the world and enthrone Maharaja Yudhisthira because Yudhisthira was the exact representative of Krishna.

Krishna Conscious Monarchy

Monarchy or dictatorship is welcome. Now the Communists want dictatorship. That is welcome, provided the dictator is trained like Maharaja Yudhisthira. Not that simply by the votes of the rascal population one becomes a dictator, then another rascal comes, and another big rascal comes. The Communist dictator Stalin is said to have
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been the greatest criminal in the history of the world. He would not tolerate anyone going against him. As soon as he found that someone was against him, he would call that person before him and say, "Take poison, or I shall kill you." That was his policy. In that way he killed so many enemies, not only the Czar family. His business was killing.

That kind of dictatorship is not wanted. A dictator is wanted by whose direction the citizens will be so happy that they will not have any anxiety.

We read the other day in Srimad-Bhagavatam of the three miserable conditions of life: adhyatmika (miseries caused by one's own body and mind), adhibhautika (miseries caused by others), and adhidaivika. The adhidaivika miseries, such as famines and earthquakes, are caused by the higher beings, the demigods. These things are not under your control. At any time there may be earthquakes, famine, pestilence, floods. These are called daiva, "controlled by demigods." For example, Indra wanted to flood Vrindavana, being angry at the residents. But Krishna saved them as Giridhari—the lifter of Govardhana Hill.

These disturbances are there—adhyatmika, adhibhautika, adhidaivika—the king or dictator should be so perfect and should guide the citizens in such a way that they will not feel these disturbances. That kind of dictatorship is wanted.

Adhibhautika means “You are envious of me; I am envious of you.” There is always cold war, struggle. Under the dictator’s rule this should be stopped. There should not even be excessive heat or cold. People should feel happy in all respects.

Such a condition existed under Maharaja Yudhisthira, his forefathers, and his grandson. The sons of the Pandavas all died in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Maharaja Parikshit, the grandson of the Pandavas, was within the womb of his mother, and he was saved. During his reign and the reigns of his ancestors the whole planet was very nicely governed by dictatorship.

We can bring in such dictatorship, provided the dictator is perfectly Krishna conscious. Then he will know how to conduct the kingdom, how to make everyone happy.

So here is another list of fighters. The real purpose of this battle is to bring all the big fighters of the world together, and under Krishna’s guidance they would all be killed. Nimitta-matram bhava savya-sacin. When Arjuna declined to fight, Krishna ultimately said, “My dear Arjuna, whether you fight or not it doesn’t matter. These people are not going back home. It is already settled. You can simply take credit that you have fought and killed. They are already killed, because that is My plan.”

Krishna wanted to kill them, and the result was—you will find in Bhagavad-gita—they all attained svarupa, their eternal form. All who died on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, in the presence of Krishna, attained their original, constitutional position, their spiritual form. They all went back home, back to Godhead.

Krishna is absolute, so His killing and His protecting are the same. Don't think that Krishna is killing. No. Anyone killed by Krishna gets liberation at once. The liberation for which great, great saintly persons, sages, undergo severe austerities life after life—one gets that simply by being killed by Krishna.

So if by becoming Krishna's enemy one gets that benefit, just think of the benefit of becoming Krishna's friend. That is the Krishna consciousness. The Mayavadis, impersonalists, are after liberation. But that liberation is granted even to the enemies of Krishna.

The Mayavadis are also Krishna's enemies. Krsne aparadhi. They are offenders to Krishna because they do not accept the form of Krishna.

Everything studied in relationship with Krishna is perfect knowledge, and that is described in the Bhagavad-gita. We are not like sahajiyas, the sentimental pseudo devotees, who are interested in Krishna's rasa dance but not in His fighting on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra. That attitude is not wanted.

Thank you very much.
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Education Means to Know God

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

Mother (to Srila Prabhupada): Yes, Father, I understand you are educated on a different platform, as you say—no doubt a most sublime and spiritual platform. But aren't you still drawing upon your basic educational background for translating your books?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. That's all right.

Mother: Isn't that a great joy to you?

Srila Prabhupada: For translating of books, it does not require so much education. Of course, that is required when the purport of the translation is given. Otherwise, the real thing is culture. The essence of education is culture. Simply money-making education for maintaining this body—that education will not satisfy any more. Just as I told you: Despite all arrangements for education, why are the young men turning out to be hippies? That is my question.

Mother: Oh, but not your followers. Your followers are not being hippies—people who follow you. Therefore, you've got the people whom you could help to become cultured like you.

Srila Prabhupada: So my father educated me in a different way. Therefore, I have come to this stage. My father never allowed me even to drink tea.

Mother: Well, I'm disappointed in you. I came to see you because I felt that, being so cultured, you would want all your boys to have this culture and to have this, to have the best...

Disciple: Thanks to Srila Prabhupada, we've got this culture.

Mother: Oh, but you haven't, you see. You're all young boys.

Disciple: No. Your culture we don't have.

Mother: But you're not mature yet.

Disciple: But the culture that Srila Prabhupada has—this culture he's giving to us.

Mother: Yes. But you're not mature. It takes years to become mature. Hurt, pain, happiness, everything together. You find God? Yes, I've found God. We all... I feel very close to God, and I feel very happy. But I would also still wish to be educated. And fortunately, I was given the chance to have an education, and I don't misuse it.

Srila Prabhupada: Education means to know God. That is education. In our Vedic culture, the high-class man is called a brahmana.

Mother: Yes.
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Srila Prabhupada: Brahmana. You know that.

Mother: Brahmana. Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: So who is a brahmana? One who knows God—he is called a brahmana. Therefore, the culmination of education is to understand God. That is education. Otherwise, to get education about how to nicely eat, how to nicely sleep, how to nicely have sex life, and how to defend—this education is there even in the animals. The animals, also—they know how to eat, how to sleep, how to have sex life, and how to defend.

Mother: Yes. It seems to worry you—this sex life. I mean... we don't take...

Srila Prabhupada: No, no, no. I'm not worried. Mother... any notice if... It fits into its place.

Srila Prabhupada: This is also necessary. This is also necessary. But these four types of branches of education are not sufficient for a human being. A human being—above all this education, he must have the knowledge of how to love God. And that is the perfection of life.

Mother: Yeah. Well, Michael was taught that when he was very small. The Jesuits saw to that.

Srila Prabhupada: Knowing how to love God—that is perfection.

Mother: The Jesuits certainly did.

Srila Prabhupada: So to understand how to love God, there must be a religious system. In every civilized human society—it doesn't matter whether the system is Christianity or Hinduism or Muhammadanism or Buddhism—the religious system is there, along with the education about eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. That other education is there in the animal society. So a human being is distinct from the animal when he has education about how to understand God and how to love Him. That is perfection.

So that is now wanting. Our Krishna consciousness movement is not depriving people of their education. You get education about how to eat, how to sleep, and that's all right. But side by side, you take education about how to know God and how to love Him. That is our proposition.

Mother: Yes. I agree with you.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Mother: Yes, I agree with you every time.

Srila Prabhupada: We don't say that you stop all this education. No.

Mother: No, I don't agree with you there. No, Father. No, no. No, no.

Srila Prabhupada: We don't say. Mother: No, I think these young men here must...

Srila Prabhupada: You can go on with your industries. You can go on with your university. But side by side, you become competent to know what is the nature of God and how to love Him. Then your life is perfect.

Mother: I could mention a lot of persons that are still very close to God and brilliant men in science. Where would we be without our scientists, without our doctors, medicine? They all have to go to university and get a degree before they...

Srila Prabhupada: That I say. You get a degree.

Mother: Yes, but we need them.

Srila Prabhupada: You get.

Mother: Yes. Well, the some of your boys could be doctors.

Srila Prabhupada: But simply becoming a doctor of medical science will not save me. Unfortunately, these men do not believe in the next life.

Mother: Oh, yes they do. I go to... I had a doctor who came to church—and Michael knows him—every Sunday. A very good man.

Srila Prabhupada: Mostly. I have spoken with many educated persons. In Moscow I was talking with Professor Kotofsky. He said, “Swamiji, after this body is finished, everything is finished.” But he's a big professor. Generally, even if they do believe in the next life, they do not believe in it very seriously. If we actually believe there is a next life, then we must be prepared: “What kind of next life am I going to have?”

Mother: Yes. Well, Father...

Srila Prabhupada: Because there are 8,400,000 forms of life. The trees are also forms of life. The cats and dogs—they are also forms of life. And there are higher, more intelligent persons in the higher planetary systems. They are also forms of life. The worm in the stool—that is also a form of life. So, calculating all of them, there are 8,400,000 species of life. So I am going to have a next life. Tatha dehantara-praptih—we have to change out of this body and go to another body. So our concern should be, “What kind of body am I going to get next?”

Mother: I agree for some people to—you especially—to think of this, because you are a leader of your Vedic religion. But for everybody to do that—where would we be? We couldn't all sit down and think all the time.

Srila Prabhupada: But where is that education?

Mother: But we... you can also work and think.

Srila Prabhupada: No. We work. I mean to say, where is that education in the university to prepare the student for the next life? 🤔
The ceremony of diksha, or initiation, is that by which the spiritual preceptor admits one to the status of a neophyte on the path of spiritual endeavour. The ceremony tends to confer spiritual enlightenment by abrogating sinfulness. Its actual effect depends on the degree of willing cooperation on the part of the disciple and is, therefore, not the same in all cases. It does not preclude the possibility of reversion by the novice to the non-spiritual state if he slackens in his effort or misbehaves.

Initiation puts a person on the true track and also imparts an initial impulse to go ahead. It cannot, however, keep one going for good unless one chooses to put forth his own voluntary effort. The nature of the initial impulse also varies in accordance with the condition of the recipient. But although the mercy of the good preceptor enables us to have a glimpse of the Absolute and of the path of His attainment, the seed that is thus sown requires very careful tending under the direction of the preceptor if it is to germinate and grow into the fruit-and-shade-giving tree.

Unless our soul of his own accord chooses to serve Krishna after obtaining a working idea of his real nature, he cannot long retain the spiritual vision. The soul is never compelled by Krishna to serve Him. But initiation is never altogether futile. It changes the outlook of the disciple on life. If he sins after initiation, he may fall into greater depths of degradation than the uninitiated. But although even after initiation temporary set-backs may occur, they do not ordinarily prevent the final deliverance. The faintest glimmering of the real knowledge of the Absolute has sufficient power to change radically and for good the whole of our mental and physical constitution, and this glimmering is incapable of being totally extinguished, except in extraordinarily unfortunate cases.

Reluctance in Following
It is undoubtedly practicable for the initiated, if only he is willing, to follow the directions of the preceptor that lead by slow degrees to the Absolute. The good preceptor is verily the saviour of fallen souls. It is, however, very rarely that a person with modern culture feels inclined to submit to the guidance of another specifically in spiritual matters. But the very same person submits readily enough to the direction of a physician for being cured of his bodily ailments, because these cannot be ignored without consequences that are patent to everybody.

The evil that results from our neglect of the ailments of the soul is of a nature that paralyzes and deludes our understanding and prevents the recognition of itself. Its gravity is not recognized because it does not apparently stand in the way of our worldly activities with the same directness as physical ailments. The average cultured man is, therefore, at liberty to ask questions without realizing any pressing necessity of submitting to the treatment of spiritual maladies at the hands of a really competent physician.

Why Formal Initiation?
The questions that are frequently asked are like these: “Why should it be at all necessary to submit to any particular person or to subscribe to any particular ceremony for the purpose of realizing the Absolute, who by His nature is unconditioned? Why should Krishna require our formal declaration of submission to Him? Would it not be more generous and logical to permit us to live a life of freedom in accordance with the principles of our perverted nature, which is also His creation? Admitting that it is our duty to serve Krishna, why should we have to be introduced to Him by a third party? Why is it impossible for one to serve Sri Krishna directly?”

In understanding the scriptures, it would no doubt be highly convenient and helpful to be instructed by a good preceptor who is well-versed in the scriptures. But one should never submit to another to an extent that may furnish a rascal with an opportunity of really doing harm. The bad preceptor is a familiar character. It is inexplicable how those gurus who live in open sin contrive nevertheless to retain the unquestioning allegiance of the cultured portion of their disciples.

Such being the case, can we blame any person who hesitates to submit unconditionally to a preceptor, whether he is good or bad? It is of course necessary to
be quite sure of the bona fides of a person before we accept him even tentatively as our spiritual guide. A preceptor should be a person who appears likely to possess those qualities that will enable him to improve our spiritual condition.

Those and similar thoughts are likely to occur to most persons who have received an English education, when they are asked to accept the help of any particular person as their spiritual preceptor. The literature, science, and art of the West put forward the principle of the liberty of the individual and denounce the mentality that leads one to surrender—to however superior a person—his right of choosing his own course. They inculcate the necessity and high value of having faith in oneself.

**Condition of Surrender**

But the good preceptor claims our sincere and complete allegiance. The good disciple makes a complete surrender of himself at the feet of the preceptor. But the submission of the disciple is neither irrational nor blind. It is complete on condition that the preceptor himself continues to be altogether good. The disciple retains the right of renouncing his allegiance to the preceptor the moment he is satisfied that the preceptor is a fallible creature like himself.

Nor does a good preceptor accept anyone as his disciple unless the latter is prepared to submit to him freely. A good preceptor is duty bound to renounce a disciple who is not sincerely willing to follow his instructions fully. If a preceptor accepts as his disciple one who refuses to be wholly guided by him, or if a disciple submits to a preceptor who is not wholly good, such preceptor and such disciple are, both of them, doomed to fall from their spiritual state.

**Submission to the Absolute**

No one is a good preceptor who has not realized the Absolute. One who has realized the Absolute is saved from the necessity of walking on the worldly path. The good preceptor who lives the spiritual life is, therefore, bound to be wholly good. He should be wholly free from any desire for anything of this world, whether good or bad.

The categories of good and bad do not exist in the Absolute. In the Absolute everything is good. We can have no idea in our present state of this absolute goodness. Submission to the Absolute is not real unless it is also itself absolute. It is on the plane of the Absolute that the disciple is required to submit completely to the good preceptor. On the material plane there can be no such thing as complete submission. The pretense of complete submission to the bad preceptor is responsible for the corruptions that are found in the relationship of the ordinary worldly guru and his equally worldly-minded disciples.

All honest thinkers will realize the logical propriety of the position set forth above. But most persons will be disposed to believe that a good preceptor in the above sense may not be found in this world. This is really so. Both the good preceptor and his disciple belong to the spiritual realm. But spiritual discipleship is nevertheless capable of being realized by persons who belong to this world. Otherwise there would be no religion at all in the world. But because the spiritual life happens to be realizable in this world, it does not follow that it is the worldly existence which is capable of being improved into the spiritual. In fact, the one is perfectly incompatible with the other. They are categorically different from one another. The good preceptor, although he appears to belong to this world, is not really of this world. No one who belongs to this world can deliver us from worldliness. The good preceptor is a denizen of the spiritual world who has been enabled by the will of God to appear in this world in order to enable us to realize the spiritual existence.

The much vaunted individual liberty is a figment of the diseased imagination. We are bound willingly or unwillingly to submit to the laws of God in the material as well as in the spiritual world. The hankering for freedom in defiance of His laws is the cause of all our miseries. The total abjuration of all hankering for such freedom is the condition of admission to the spiritual realm. In this world we desire this freedom but are compelled against our will to submit to the inexorable laws of physical nature. This is the unnatural state. Such forced submission does not admit us into the spiritual realm.

In this world the moral principle indeed claims our willing submission. But even morality also is a curtailment of freedom necessitated by the peculiar circumstances of this world. The soul, who does not belong to this world, is in a state of open rebellion against submission to an alien domination. He is by his very constitution capable of submitting willingly only to the Absolute.

The good preceptor asks the struggling soul to submit not to the laws of this world, which will only rivet his chains, but to the higher law of the spiritual realm. The pretence of submission to the laws of the spiritual realm without the intention of really carrying them out in practice is often mistaken for genuine submission by reason of the absence of fullness of conviction. In this world the fully convinced state is non-existent. We are, therefore, compelled in all cases to act on make-believes, or the so-called working hypotheses.

The good preceptor tells us to change this method of activity that we have learned from our experience of this world. He invites us first of all to be really and fully informed of the nature and laws of the other world, which happens to be eternally and categorically different from this phenomenal world. If we do not sincerely submit to be instructed in the alphabets of the life eternal but go on perversely asserting, however unconsciously,
our present processes and so-called convictions against the instructions of the preceptor in the period of novitiate, we are bound to remain where we are. This also will amount to the practical rejection of all advice, because the two worlds have nothing in common, though at the same time we naturally fail to understand this, believing all the time, in accordance with our accustomed methods, that we are at any rate partially following the preceptor. But as a matter of fact when we reserve the right of choice, we really follow ourselves, because even when we seem to agree to follow the preceptor, it is because he appears to be in agreement with ourselves. But as the two worlds have absolutely nothing in common, we are only under a delusion when we suppose that we really understand the method or the object of the preceptor or, in other words, when we reserve the right of assertion of the apparent self.

Faith in the scriptures can alone help us in this otherwise unpracticable endeavour. We believe in the preceptor with the help of the scriptures when we understand neither. As soon as we are fully convinced of the necessity of submitting unambiguously to the good preceptor, it is then and only then that he is enabled to show us the way into the spiritual world in accordance with the method laid down in the scriptures. He can apply that method properly and without perpetrating a fatal blunder in as much as he himself happens to belong to the realm of the spirit.

Necessity and Choice

The crux of the matter lies not in the external nature of the ceremony of initiation as it appears to us, because that is bound to be unintelligible to us, being an affair of the other world, but in the conviction of the necessity of, and the successful choice of, a really good preceptor. We can attain to the conviction of the necessity of the help of a good preceptor by the exercise of our unbiased reason in the light of our ordinary experience. When once this conviction has been truly formed, Sri Krishna Himself helps us in finding the really good preceptor in two ways. In the first place he instructs us as regards the character and functions of a good preceptor through the revealed scriptures. In the second place He Himself sends to us the good preceptor at the moment when we are at all likely to benefit by his instructions.

The good preceptor also comes to us when we reject him. In such cases also it is certainly Krishna who sends him to us for no reason whatsoever. Krishna has revealed from eternity the tidings of the spiritual realm in the form of transcendental sounds that have been handed down in the records of the spiritual scriptures all over the world. The spiritual scriptures help all those who are prepared to exercise reason for the purpose of finding not the relative but the Absolute Truth. The scriptures help them to find out the proper instructor in accordance with scriptural directions. The only good preceptor is he

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who can make us really understand the spiritual scriptures, which enable us to realize the necessity and the nature of submission to the processes laid down in them.

But there is still every chance of foul play. A very clever man or a magician may pass himself off as a person who can properly explain the scriptures by means of his greater knowledge or deceptive arts. It is very important, therefore, that we should be on our guard against such tricks. The scholar as well as the magician pretend to explain the scriptures only in terms of the objects or happenings of this world. But the scriptures themselves declare that they do not tell us at all of the things of this world. Those who are liable to be deluded by the arts of false yogis persuade themselves into believing that the spiritual is identical with the perversion, distortion, or defiance of the laws of physical nature. The laws of physical nature are not unreal. They govern the relation of all relative existences. In our present state it is therefore always possible for one who possesses the power or the knowledge to demonstrate the merely tentative character of what we choose to regard as our deepest convictions—by exposing their insufficiency or inapplicability. But such surprises as these belong to the realm of the phenomenal, having nothing to do with the Absolute.

Those who have an unspiritual partiality for scholarship or for magic fall into the clutches of the pseudo-religionists. The serious plight of these victims of their own perversity will be realized from the fact that no one can be delivered from the state of ignorance by the method of compulsion. It is not possible to save the man who refuses on principle to listen to the voice of reason. The empiric pedants are no exception to this rule.

The plain meaning of the scriptures should, therefore, be our only guide in the search for the good preceptor when we actually feel the need of his guidance. The scriptures have defined the good preceptor as one who himself leads the spiritual life. It is not any worldly qualifications that make the good preceptor. It is by unreserved submission to such a preceptor that we can be helped to reenter the realm that is our real home but which unfortunately is veritable terra incognita to almost all of us at present. That realm is also impossible to access by the body and mind that are the result of the disease of abuse of our faculty of free reason and the consequent accumulation of a killing load of worldly experiences that we have learned to regard as the very stuff of our existence.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura is the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and the founder of the Gaudiya Matha institution. He passed from this world in 1936.
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Astonished, Balarama understood the greatness of Arjuna. Arjuna's hair was reciting, "Narayana! Narayana!" to Arjuna's hair lock. Balarama heard each strand of hair, asked Balarama to come closer and keep His ears closer to the hair. When Balarama appeared before Krishna, Arjuna was standing in front of Krishna. He was the last son of Kunti. Krishna and Arjuna shared a special bond. Once Balarama asked Krishna why He was so fond of Arjuna. To show Him, Krishna shared the story of how Arjuna eloped with His sister Subhadra, against the wishes of Balarama. Such is the bond of friendship between Krishna and Arjuna. The friendship between Arjuna and Krishna is celebrated in all scriptures.

The personification of friendship
Parthanpalli Parthasarathy Perumal Temple
by Sampatkumara Ramanuja Dasan (Adv. Ashwin.S)

The magnificent temple of Thirunangur Parthanpalli Parthasarathy temple is located about 11 kilometres from Sirkali in Nagapattinam district.

The Pastime
Padma Purana makes a detailed mention of this divya desam. This temple is the embodiment of the perpetual sakhy rasa between Arjuna and Krishna. The friendship between Arjuna and Krishna is celebrated in all scriptures.

Arjuna was born to the royal clan of Hastinapura as the son of Queen Kunti. He was fathered by the grace of Indra. He was the last son of Kunti. Krishna and Arjuna shared a special bond. Once Balarama asked Krishna why He was so fond of Arjuna. To show Him, Krishna asked Balarama to come to Him after the noon meal. When Balarama appeared before Krishna, Arjuna was sleeping with his head resting on Krishna's lap. Krishna asked Balarama to come closer and keep His ears closer to Arjuna's hair lock. Balarama heard each strand of Arjuna's hair was reciting, "Narayana! Narayana!" Astonished, Balarama understood the greatness of Arjuna.

In the Bhagavad-gita, Krishna declares that Arjuna is His dear most friend. Every jiva enjoys a special relationship with the Supreme Lord, in relationships as servant, friend, parent or conjugal lover. Arjuna is one typical example of a pure devotee of the Lord in a fraternal relationship. The Supreme Lord's dealings with Arjuna are displays of the highest degree of friendship. He even agreed to become the charioteer of Arjuna, just to protect him from the risks of warfare. Being the driver of his chariot is hardly a request one would make of the Supreme Lord. Every time Arjuna remembered the mercy of the Supreme Lord, He would become overwhelmed with thoughts of the Lord's magnanimity.

Krishna Himself asked Arjuna to elope with His sister Subhadra, against the wishes of Balarama. Such is the bond of friendship between Krishna and Arjuna. Arjuna often addressed Krishna thus: "Oh my friend! Oh Yadayav! Oh Krishnat!"

It is very interesting to note that even during the imparting of the Gita on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, when the Supreme Lord exhibited the universal form or virat roopa, Arjuna trembled at seeing this amazing form. Yet he does not forget his sakhy relationship with Krishna. Arjuna stammered an apology:

"I have in the past addressed you as 'O Krishna,' 'O Yadava,' 'O my friend,' without knowing Your glories. Please forgive whatever I may have done in madness or in love." (Bg. 11.41)

In the Mahabharata (Saupatika Parva, XII), Krishna states, "I have no dearer friend on earth than Arjuna, and there is nothing that I cannot give to him including my wives and children." In the Drava Parva Krishna says,"O Daruka, I shall not be able to cast My eyes, even for a single moment, on the earth bereft of Arjuna…Know that Arjuna is half of My body."

Sometimes Krishna breaks His promise. The Kurukshetra war was inevitable, and it was time for each side to line up their friends and allies. Shakuni, the maternal uncle of Duryodhana, wanted to get the best allies possible and the question came up as to whose side Lord Krishna would take. Duryodhana had marital ties with Krishna's family which even Arjuna had. Both of them came to the palace of Krishna in Dwarka to seek His ties as allies.

The Lord was fully aware that both parties would come to Him for help. He pretended to be fast asleep even as Duryodhana came to meet Him in His private chambers. Not wanting to wake up Krishna, Duryodhana seated himself at the head of Krishna's bed, for he reasoned that this would befit a king of his stature. He was not ready to accept the position of servant of the Supreme Lord, Soon after, Arjuna entered, but humbly chose to sit at Krishna's feet. Arjuna was fully aware of Krishna's position and always cherished to become the dust at His lotus feet eternally.

Krishna suddenly gave up His pretense of sleeping, and welcomed Arjuna. But He completely ignored Duryodhana. Duryodhana shouted that he was the first to arrive and commanded respect from the Supreme Lord Himself! The Lord then offered them two choices: each of them could either have the entire army of the Yadavas or, they could have Krishna Himself on his side, but on the condition that Krishna would not take up any weapons during the war. The first choice was given to Arjuna as he is younger to Duryodhana. Duryodhana felt nervous because he had wanted the army of the Lord and thought Arjuna would choose this before him. But Arjuna chose Krishna. Relieved, Duryodhana foolishly chose to have Krishna's army. But Arjuna was wise to know the advantages of having Krishna on his side, even if Krishna vowed that He would not take up any weapon during the war.

During the war, when Bhishma showered arrows towards Arjuna, Arjuna was reluctant to fight with his full might, as he loved his grandfather Bhishma very much. Thus, Arjuna was almost defeated. Suddenly Krishna took up a chariot wheel and rushed towards Bhishma to finish...
him off and to protect His dear most Arjuna. Arjuna then jumped off his chariot and begged the Lord to withdraw. The Supreme Lord thus revealed that He does not mind breaking His promise to protect His devotees.

After the war, when it was time for Arjuna to alight from the chariot, the Lord asked Arjuna to alight first so that He could follow. Arjuna, playing the role of the hero and Krishna his charioteer, asked why this peculiar advice, as it was customary for the servant to alight first and then help the master to do so. The Lord replied that since the chariot had borne the brunt of various deadly weapons, if He alighted first, Arjuna would be killed as the chariot would explode. So Arjuna obeyed His instruction and when Krishna alighted, the chariot exploded. In this way also the Lord saved Arjuna's life.

Once when Krishna had to leave Hastinapura for Dwaraka, He hurried to Arjuna's chamber and spent the whole night discussing various topics with His friend, at the risk of upsetting His consort Satyabhama who is known to be temperamental.

It is opined that Krishna ended His earthly pastimes before the Pandavas as He could not bear to remain on earth after Arjuna had departed from it. When Yudhishtira (Dharmaraja) attained Vaikuntha, he was surprised to see Krishna there with Arjuna. He then understood that dharma is what pleases the Lord, which is exactly what Arjuna did.

Once while Lord Krishna and Arjuna were walking down a lane leading to a beautiful lake, Krishna looked up at the sky and saw a bird flying above. He said “Look, Arjuna! How beautiful the bird is!” Arjuna replied, “Yes my Lord, it is indeed a beautiful bird.” Krishna observed the bird and asked “Arjuna, what do you think of the bird? I think it's a white cattle egret.” Without a second glance at the bird Arjuna immediately replied, “Yes my Lord, it's a white cattle egret.”

Lord Krishna thought for a while and remarked, “No, it's a flamingo. It looks pinkish and white. It's a flamingo for sure.” Again, Arjuna immediately replied “Yes my Lord You are right. It is pinkish white and it's a flamingo.”

Lord Krishna again remarked, “No Arjuna. The bird is coming closer. It's neither a cattle egret nor a flamingo. It looks like a giant brown eagle.”

Arjuna immediately replied “Yes, my Lord. You are right. The bird is brown and it's a giant eagle.” The Lord teased Arjuna in this manner, denying what He had said earlier, but Arjuna would agree to whatever Krishna said.

This made Lord Krishna stop His joyful play with Arjuna further, “I see you are mocking Me! Whatever I say, you agree upon. Don't you have your own judgments and can't you use your senses, your mind and your intelligence in determining what bird it is? Why are you always agreeing upon what I say? I see you are making fun of Me.”
Arjuna replied to Lord Krishna, “My Lord, why do You put me to such tests? Even if you declare that it's not a bird at all but a dog or cat, I will still agree with You. For, my Lord, who can be a greater authority than You? You are the Supreme Lord, the creator of all the living entities and even the non-living objects of this world - the father, mother and the sustainer of the entire universe. I have to only obey and agree to whatever You say.” Krishna was amused by the reply.

Arjuna went on, “It won’t take more than a fraction of a second for You to create a cattle egret and then instantly convert it to a flamingo. You can transform it into an elephant as well. You are all powerful and can do anything. Everything is resting upon You as pearls are strung on a thread. I therefore accept whatever You say. You are my authority. Even the demigods cannot understand Your magnitude. I am a worthless insignificant insect in Your presence. This is the real fact. My beloved Lord, how can I disagree with You?”

Lord Krishna embraced Arjuna and they thus exchanged intimate moments of perpetual friendship.

During an incident when some thieves stole a brahmana’s cows, Arjuna was forced to violate Yudhishtira’s and Draupadi’s privacy, as he had left the Gandhiva bow in their chambers. Despite the understanding of all and being forgiven by both Yudhishtira and Draupadi, Arjuna accepted the punishment agreed upon with Narada Muni and set off on a twelve-year pilgrimage. Arjuna started his pilgrimage by visiting the source of the river Ganga. It was here that he met the Naga princess, Uloopi. She was mesmerized by Arjuna and forcefully took him to Nagaloka (the land of the snake-people) and gave him a choice: if he married her, she would let him go; otherwise, she would not. He married her, and they had a son called Iravan. Then he proceeded towards the south and when he reached the delta of the Cauvery, he began to miss the Supreme Lord terribly. With tears in his eyes, Arjuna began to perform a penance to invoke the Lord’s presence before him. The Lord immediately appeared blissfully before him. His lotus eyes earned Him the name Thamaraiyal Kelvan or the blissful Lord with lotus eyes. The spot where Arjuna had this darshana of the Lord is called Parthanpalli. It was here that Arjuna was also initiated into learning the Absolute Truth by Lord Parthasarathy, to understand who he really was and what his real powers were. Since Arjuna was initiated here and played the role of a student, this temple came to be known after him as ‘Parthanpalli.’ (Partha is another name of Arjuna and palli means temple). The Lord came to be known as Thamaraiyal Kelvan or Parthasarathy, or the charioteer of Partha.

The Temple
A majestic five-tiered, west facing rajagopuram of Lord Parthasarathy with sword
significant proportion welcomes people with all grandeur. The temple complex has a single prakaram. As we pass through the dwajastambha, colossal figures of Jaya and Vijaya, the gatekeepers of Vaikuntha, guard the doors. The main sanctum sanctorum is that of Thamaraiyal Kelvan Perumal, or the Lord with lotus eyes. He is seen with His consorts Sridevi and Bhoodevi. The procession Deity Lord Parthasarathy holds a sword in one hand. Kolavalli Rama is next to the procession Deity, holding a bow. The specialty of this temple is that Sri Rama appears here with two consorts, which cannot be seen in other temples.

Emperor Dasharatha performed a yagna, praying to Lord Narayana for children. He was sure that Lord Narayana Himself would be his son and wanted to see the gift in advance. Lord Narayana appeared before Dasharatha with His two consorts. As Lord Narayana had vowed to marry only once in His Rama avatara, it would not be possible to have such a darshana during this incarnation, so King Dasharatha was greatly delighted to see Them.

In the first prakaram we find a separate shrine for the consort of the Lord, Mahalakshmi, who is known in this place as Shenbagavalli Thayar or the mother who is the colour of champaka flowers. There is also a unique shrine here for Arjuna. The vimana of the temple is called Narayana Vimanam and there is a beautiful pond on the southern side of the temple complex called Katka theertham. The festival Deity of Thamaraiyal Kelvan is called Parthasarathy. There is a separate shrine for Krishna and Rama, both of whom can be seen in the shrine of Thamaraiyal Kelvan. There is a separate hall in the temple complex that houses the festival chariots.

Festivals

The temple is open from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Sri Vaishnava priests perform the rituals during festivals and on a daily basis. There are separate priests for daily worship and for festivals. The temple follows the pancharatra method of worship. The temple rituals are performed four times a day - the early morning worship or the ushat puja at 8 a.m., morning worship or kala santha at 10 a.m., the sayamkalam puja at 5 p.m. and ardhajama at 7 p.m. During each puja delicious foodstuffs are offered to the Lord. The menu of offerings changes according to the season. Elaborate arati is offered to both Thamaraiyal Kelvan Parthasarathy and Shenbagavalli. Sacred chants from the 4000 divya prabandhas are chanted by priests and brahmanas during the worship. There is a separate section of brahmanas who chant the Vedic scriptures during the worship. and

Lord Parthasarathy on Garuda Vahana

Krishna Voice, February 2015
worshippers prostrate themselves in front of the temple mast. There are weekly, monthly and fortnightly rituals performed in the temple.

The annual Theerthavari festival is celebrated during the new moon day of the Tamil month of Aadi when the festival Deity of the temple is taken in a procession to the sea at Poompuhar and is given a sacred dip in the sea.

The Thirumangai Alwar festival to commemorate the occasion of his visiting this temple is one of the major festivals in this temple, celebrated on the new moon day of the Tamil month of Thaai (January–February). The festival deity of Thirumangai Alwar is brought to the temple from Thiruvali-Thirunagari (the birth place of Thirumangai Alwar). The highlight of the festival is Garudasevai, an event during which the festival Deities of the eleven divya desams around Thirunangur are brought on golden Garuda vahanas, to Thirunangur. The festive deity of Thirumangai Alwar is also brought on a Hamsa vahana (swan carrier) along with his consort Kumudavalli Nachiyar and his poems in praise of Vishnu dedicated to each of these eleven temples are recited during the occasion. The festival deities of Thirumangai Alwar and his consort Kumudavalli Nachiyar are taken in a palanquin to each of the eleven temples. The verses dedicated to each of the eleven temples are chanted in the respective shrines. This is one of the most important festivals in the region which draws thousands of visitors. Recently all the Garuda vahanas that are made of gold have been studded with gems.

The Lord of Parthanpalli is the only divya desam Lord among the 11 Vishnu temples in Thirunangur, who is praised by an Alwar other than Thirumangai Alwar. Thirumangai Alwar has praised Parthasarathy, the Lord of Parthanpalli, in ten verses in a work known as Periya Thirumozhi. He refers to Krishna as the one who protects His devotees, and provides happiness to all those who believe in Him and His powers. The Alwar goes on to say that He who rules the seven worlds is also the one who resides here inside the sturdy huge walls of Parthanpalli at Thirunangur.

Photo Courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam

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Buddhism has at times attracted a measure of interest from a small number of Americans. In the last century Henry David Thoreau wrote, “Some will have bad thoughts of me, when they hear their Christ named beside my Buddha.” And in the middle of this century, writers like Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and Alan Watts showed a regard for Buddhism that made it part of the sixties counterculture.

But scroll to the 1990s and forget the counterculture. Buddhism is riding a wave in the American mainstream. Two recent Hollywood movies recount the story of the Dalai Lama; Buddhist motifs and Buddhist-inspired rock lyrics appear in television sitcoms; Buddhist musings grace the labels of bottled fruit-teas. Nor is this merely a pop culture craze. There are nearly 100,000 American-born Buddhists, and the number of English-language Buddhist teaching centers has doubled in the past ten years to over a thousand. On the Internet you can browse thousands of pages of Tibetan Buddhist writings.

Some attribute this expanded interest to Buddhism’s emphasis on qualities like nonviolence, humility, and simplicity in a world growing daily more violent and complex. Others say the nontheistic approach to religion is also key, as the Buddha said there was no Creator, no Jehovah or Allah or Vishnu. The Vedic literature confirms that both these features of Buddhism are important aspects of its allure, and they say more as well, providing a confidential account of the Buddha’s identity and of the rationale behind Buddhism’s singular teachings.

The Vedas explain that Buddha is an incarnation of God who appears in the Age of Kali, or Kali-yuga, the most materialistic of the four earthly ages that rotate like the four seasons. We are now five thousand years into the current Kali-yuga, which lasts another 427,000 years, and Lord Buddha appeared about 2,500 years ago. He has appeared in other Kali-yugas also, His mission always the enlightenment of especially materialistic and atheistic people.

In one Kali-yuga, in an appearance, or incarnation, recorded in the second canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam (2.7.37), Lord Buddha countered atheistic scientists who had taken advantage of technical portions of the vast Vedic scriptures to construct weapons of mass destruction, a situation with striking parallels to our own Kali-yuga arms race. Lord Buddha captured the attention of that atheistic culture by speaking extensively on upadharma, or subreligious principles.

In fact, the teachings of Lord Buddha, commonly known as the Buddhist Dharma, are more exactly the Buddhist Upadharma. Lord Buddha avoids speaking of dharma in the sense of primary religious principles, since those principles are meant for directly understanding and surrendering to the Supreme Lord. Atheists or materialists cannot by their nature understand or surrender to God directly, but they can sometimes appreciate godly qualities like humility, pridelessness, nonviolence, tolerance, and simplicity, important qualities for religious persons. Lord Buddha, concealing His identity as God, focuses on these godly qualities, or principles of upadharma, to bring people gradually closer to qualifying for direct knowledge of the Supreme Person.

God’s Freedom

Although appearing within the material universes as Lord Buddha and innumerable other incarnations, the Supreme Person is not bound by material laws. Just as a governor visits the state prison, coming and going as he likes, God comes and goes within the material world, where we, His eternal individual parts, suffer in the prison of samsara, the cycle of repeated birth and death. Prisoners who take advantage of the Lord’s appearance to reawaken their relationship with Him in loving service become free of samsara, like state prisoners who by proper behaviour are released by the governor.

In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna says that He appears in the samsara prison to deliver His devotees and annihilate nonbelievers who harass the world with their mischief. In the Kali-yuga, however, when mischief-makers are in the majority, Lord Buddha devises a way to deliver them too.

When Lord Buddha appeared 2,500 years ago, atheists were again causing trouble, again by misusing the Vedic literature, this time to legitimize indiscriminate slaughter of animals. Animal slaughter is the way of subhumans and is almost completely forbidden in Vedic culture. The Vedic scriptures make very limited exceptions for those materialists who absolutely cannot resist eating flesh. But in Lord Buddha’s time those narrow exceptions were taken as the rule, as authorization for widespread animal killing. The poet Jayadeva Gosvami explains in his Dasha Avatara verses describing ten principal incarnations of God that Lord Buddha, feeling compassion for the poor animals, rejected the Vedic literature. By defying all the Vedic texts and advocating ahimsa, or nonviolence, He pulled the rug on scripture-thumping meat-eaters.
We might glimpse how Buddhist ahimsa appealed to people 2,500 years ago by weighing its appeal in our own violent times. Helen Twwork, editor of the Buddhist quarterly Tricycle, points out that people coming of age during the Vietnam war explored Buddhism in response to the war’s savagery and to the calm protests of Vietnamese Buddhist priests. Nonviolence also plays a role in the popularity of the two recent films about the Dalai Lama. In one, Seven Years in Tibet, workers refuse to dig a foundation because they don’t want to kill any worms. Martin Scorsese, director of Kundun, the second film, says, “Anything infused in our world today about nonviolence can only help.”

Amid the violent animal slaughter of Lord Buddha’s time ahimsa must have attracted many people in a similar way, since animal slaughter has never been the norm on the Indian subcontinent. The current interest in Buddhist ahimsa would be true to Lord Buddha’s desire if it spurred refusal to take part in the culture of meat-eating. That might require our own rejection of scriptural license, or at least a radical sacrifice of almost sacred personal habits.

In rejecting the Vedas, Lord Buddha Himself adopted an apparently radical strategy for an incarnation of God, since God is the author of the Vedic literature, and either the author or the immediate inspiration for all world scriptures. The Upanishads say that the Vedas come from the breathing of the Personality of Godhead, and here was Lord Buddha using His breath to negate them. Of course, even an ordinary author can do as he likes with his own books, and the tactic served to remove the Vedas from the arsenal of destructive, materialistic people. As Lord Krishna says in the fifteenth chapter of the Bhagavad-gita, the purpose of the Vedas is to know Him.

The Vedas, in other words, are the source of the highest dharma, and yet in both the Buddha incarnations of which we have information, the Vedas were in the hands of people completely ignorant not only of dharma but of upadharma as well. Both times the Lord preached to people who did not understand the value even of nonviolence, what to speak of service to the Supreme Person, but who nevertheless used the Lord’s books to promote subhuman behaviour.

Lord Buddha’s strategy is like that of a parent coaxing a toddler to give up a hundred-dollar bill the child has found. “That’s just a dirty old scrap of paper,” the parent tells the child. “Here, this candy bar is more valuable.” It’s a boldfaced lie, but any parent might tell it, because it’s for the benefit of the child, who can later learn to use money intelligently.

Denying God

In addition to defying the Vedas, Lord Buddha denied the existence of God, another radical move calculated to secure Him the devotion of His atheistic audiences. With their minds emptied of scriptural misconceptions and fear of a supreme authority, Lord Buddha’s followers were ready to give their full attention to His teachings, summed up in the Four Noble Truths: existence is full of suffering; suffering is traceable to desire; desire can be transcended, leading to nirvana, or cessation of material existence; and the means to transcendence is the Eightfold Path of proper views, action, resolve, speech, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. These truths, though spoken by the Supreme Himself as Lord Buddha and though clearly derived from His Vedic literature, were expertly presented without citing scripture or mentioning God.

Absence of a supreme authority figure is another current selling point for Buddhism. Writer Alan Watts once stated rather harshly that Buddhism helped him “get out from under the monstrously oppressive God the Father.” Other believers also maintain that Buddhism enables them to follow a spiritual path without the hellfire and brimstone or the guilt for alleged sins judged by an Almighty. Lord Buddha’s expertise, however, was that while denying God, the lawmaker, He inculcated within his followers a respect for His laws of karma and reincarnation. In the book Buddhism Without Beliefs, former Buddhist monk Stephen Batchelor recommends that Buddhism throw out karma and reincarnation to produce a “liberating agnosticism.” This may seem like a logical progression: throw out scripture, throw out God, then throw out karma and reincarnation. But that isn’t what Lord Buddha taught, nor is it liberating.

Lord Buddha gave his followers knowledge of samsara, the cycle of birth and death, and of karma, the universal law of action and reaction, because those ignorant of these features of material nature have no context in which to grasp the Four Truths and no impetus to follow the Eightfold Path. The First Noble Truth is that our suffering occurs within the painful cycle of repeated birth, death, old age, and disease; the Second Noble Truth is that as long as we have desires to gratify our material bodies we do things that get us a reaction in this cycle. If we kill or eat innocent animals, then by our individual karma we take birth as animals and are killed, and by our collective karma we are forced to herd our innocent children off to war every few years. If we employ weapons of mass destruction on civilians, we suffer massively, life after life. When Lord Buddha stops animal killing or an arms race, He therefore liberates from slaughter not only the victims of those crimes but their perpetrators as well.

With an enlightened perspective on his current and impending suffering, the atheist has impetus to advance to the third and fourth Noble Truths, transcending the desires at the root of his entanglement in samsara by attention to the Eightfold Path of proper views, speech,
action, livelihood, and so on. This is commendable for atheists, who are not normally concerned with proper anything. The Gita explains: "Neither cleanliness nor proper behaviour nor truth is found in them. They say that this world is unreal, with no foundation, no God in control. They say it is produced of sex desire and has no cause other than lust." People without God and scripture are prone to see life solely as an opportunity for sex enjoyment without reference to religious or moral codes. If everything is a phantasmagoria of matter, why restrict the targets of my lust? This is your standard liberating agnosticism.

"Following such conclusions," the Gita continues, "the atheists, who are lost to themselves and who have no intelligence, engage in unbeneficial, horrible works meant to destroy the world." Unbeneficial works like butchering animals and nuking civilians.

It is a testimony to Lord Buddha's supreme intelligence and mercy that He created in such persons a mindfulness of propriety. When people behave properly by following principles of the Buddhist Upadharma, they produce a peaceful atmosphere in human society and earn for themselves happy and prosperous future births in the cycle of samsara. The Gita states that good, moral behaviour elevates one to positions of heavenly opulence (urdhvat gacchanti satv-stha) or to birth in wealthy and pious families (prapya punya-krtam lokan), quite a step up from births as animals bound for the slaughterhouse or births in other, even less appealing locales.

While proper behaviour does not alone lead to freedom from desire or to nirvana, the end of material existence, it does place the individual soul imprisoned in samsara on a platform with opportunities for further advancement in spiritual life. In an ordinary prison good behaviour might win us parole. In the prison of samsara it earns the individual soul a very nice cell.

The Soul's Desire

The Vedas say that the individual soul is eternal and cannot be desireless in either the imprisoned or liberated condition. As individual parts of God, we either desire power, up to the level of nuclear power, for our own sense gratification, or we desire to serve the transcendental senses of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As the governor of the material prison, God appears in unending incarnations to accept our service and take us back to the deathless spiritual world, back to Godhead. Persons who desire only to please the Supreme Person are actually desireless because they have given up the material desires and the concomitant behaviour, either "proper" or "unbeneficial," which keeps them in the prison of repeated birth and death. Nirvana, the cessation of material existence, is a by-product of the desire to please the Supreme.

Lord Buddha said none of this to His atheistic followers. He had already indulged them by denying the existence of God, so He taught them that the object of meditation was not service to the Lord but sunyata, emptiness. Sunya means "zero" or "void." Like atheism, voidism is a predisposition of grossly materialistic people, people like the scientists in the Kali-yugas of our two Buddha incarnations. Science in the current Kali-yuga teaches that life comes from a combination of material elements within the body and that when the body falls apart we cease to exist; we are void. With the Buddhist knowledge of karma and samsara, the concept goes a step further: we continue to exist as individuals within the cycle of birth and death until we overcome material desire. Then void.

It is true that everything material comes to nothing and that meditation on the impermanence of the material world may help us quell our desires for the fleeting manifestations of home, family, country, fame, and fortune. In the Kundun movie a character muses: "My enemies will be nothing. My friends will be nothing. All will be nothing." In the material world what we hate and what we love will disappear in due course. But since we are eternal, the question that remains is what to do with our meditation once we have withdrawn it from the objects of our material desire and loathing. For those who have followed the Eightfold Path of proper action Krishna answers: "Persons who have acted piously in previous lives and in this life and whose unbeneficial works are completely eradicated are freed from the duality of desire and hate, and they engage themselves in My service with determination." (Bg. 7.28) "For those whose minds are fixed upon Me, O son of Prtha, I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death." (Bg. 12.7)

Void meditation may suffice while we practice the Eightfold Path of proper behaviour and rid ourselves of the horrible works that drown us in the darker regions of samsara. After that, from a position of detachment and relative freedom from suffering we are set to make further advancement. "At the ultimate stage," Srla Prabhupada says of the Buddhist path, "one has to accept the Lord and become His devotee; otherwise there is no religion. In religious principles there must be God in the center; otherwise simple moral instructions are merely subreligious principles, generally known as upadharma, or nearness to religious principles." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.7.37, purport)

Proper behaviour short of loving devotion to God keeps us in the cycle of birth and death. But faithful practitioners of the Eightfold Path are in a fortunate position. For deliverance from the ocean of birth and death they have only to turn their meditation from the void to the astounding humility, nonviolence, and mercy of their teacher, Lord Buddha, the Supreme Person and well-wisher of the atheists. 😊
Sri Vaikuntha Ekadashi

(above) Sri Srinivasa Govinda abhisheka
(below) Vaikuntha Dwara darshana
(above) Kalyanotsava
(below) Laksharchana
Sunday, March 1, 2015
10:30 am to 8:00 pm

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The recent Bollywood movie PK raised some questions on religious customs and traditional practices. In no time controversy erupted and many groups protested against it for hurting their religious sentiments. In the film, the character of Aamir Khan is portrayed by Rajkumar Hirani as an innocent alien trying for answers to religious practices of this world. However, far from trying and getting the right answers, the film labels all questions as ‘wrong numbers’.
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Hare Krishna World

Thousands Pull the Chariot in Mysore
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Pilgrimage

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Reviews from Trip Advisor

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God is Calling
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Mayank
Nicely Maintained - Gives Real Peace Being Here
Although the surrounding area is very posh and busy being close to the World Trade Center and Orion Mall, one starts getting peace of mind right from the moment one gets in the ISKCON premises. Parking space and management is too good for a temple and cleanliness, guiding the devotee queue, the atmosphere inside the main hall is above par. In addition you can find a huge lot of religious stuff to buy and delicious snacks to eat inside the temple. Visited December 2014

Mandar J Kokatay
Find Peace and Serenity
A clean and well organized temple experience. No vendors, touts or beggars harass devotees. No one asks for money. Try taking the path which has 108 tiles on which you take steps while chanting ‘Hare Rama Hare Krishna’ one step at a time. You forget all your worries and tension in the 10 min that it takes to enter the temple. After darshan you can enjoy melodious bhajans. As you exit the temple, shops offer books, souvenirs and eatables. Free prasad is distributed to every devotee. A must visit in Bangalore.

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Questions from PK Movie Answered – Part 01
www.iskconbangalore.org

The recent bollywood movie PK (a Rajkumar Hirani Film) raised many questions related to the religious customs and traditional practices. Controversies erupted and many groups protested for hurting their religious sentiments.

16,000 Wives - Sriila Prabhupada Narrates The Story

Krishna had 16,000 wives! Why did he marry so many? Sriila Prabhupada narrates the story behind this. To know more qualities of Krishna:
https://www.iskconbangalore.org/qualities-krishna

Don't try to imitate Krishna.

Free Online Puja Gets Overwhelming Response

The results derived from chanting the thousand names of Vishnu three times can be attained by only one repetition of the name of Krishna.
Free Online Puja Gets Overwhelming Response

The Vaikuntha Ekadashi celebrations on 1st January 2015 at ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna temple, Hare Krishna Hill, Bangalore drew large crowds of devotees on this auspicious day. Over one lakh devotees visited the temple and sought the blessings of Lord Srinivasa Govinda. This festival also provided a special opportunity to all to enter the main temple through the Vaikuntha Dwara where the Deities of Their Lordships Sri Lakshmi Narayana had been installed.

In view of the huge inflow of visiting devotees, elaborate and well-organized arrangements had been made with the help of over 350 volunteers for smooth darshan and non-grain Ekadashi prasadam distribution. There were separate parking arrangements made for the donors.

Laksharchana and Kalyanotsava were the other two major ceremonies on this day. There was a unique opportunity offered to devotees by ISKCON for registering their names online in order to perform free puja (Laksharchana) in their name to Lord Srinivasa Govinda on this auspicious day. This offer got an overwhelming response from the devotees. Around 26000 fortunate devotees enrolled their names for the free puja and received the blessings of the Lord.

During Laksharchana, two batches of devotees, fifteen in each batch, took turns to worship Lord Srinivasa Govinda by chanting the holy names of the Lord two lakh times along with the offering of flowers from 8:30 am till 10:00 pm.

Their Lordships Krishna and Balarama received Pushparchana seva. Throughout the day, devotional music was rendered by various musical troupes and also Harinam sankirtan was performed by temple devotees in the main temple hall.

The last part of the celebration was ekanta seva at 10:45 pm. Lord Srinivasa was offered an elaborate worship followed by devotional songs during this seva.

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- Srila Prabhupada

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