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 ashrams, 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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Avatara Credentials

If we know where to look, we can find out who's an authentic incarnation of the Lord, and who's not.

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

sarvajna munira vakya—shastra 'paramana'  
amasa-saba jivera haya shastra-dvara 'jnana'

"The Vedic literatures composed by the omniscient Mahamuni Vyasa-dvaa are evidence of all spiritual existence. Only through these revealed scriptures can all conditioned souls attain knowledge."—Chaitanya-charitamrita (Madhya-lila 20.353)

We should always think that we are in the mode of ignorance. We are just trying to make progress from ignorance to goodness and then transcend. That is the process of spiritual realization. Nobody should think that he is perfect. We cannot be. Only God is perfect, and we are all imperfect. Even in our so-called liberated stage we are still imperfect. Therefore we have to take shelter of authority, because constitutionally we are imperfect.

Lord Chaitanya says, ama-saba jivera haya shastra-dvara 'jnana.' For real knowledge we have to consult the scriptures, shastra. Sadhu-shastra-guru. Sadhu means a pious, religious, honest person. One whose character is spotless is called a sadhu. Shastra means scripture, and guru means spiritual master. These three are on an equal level. Why? Because the medium is scripture. The guru is considered to be liberated because he follows the scripture. The sadhu is considered to be honest and saintly because he follows scripture. Nobody can become a sadhu if he does not accept the principles of scripture. Nobody can be accepted as a guru, or spiritual master, if he does not follow the principles of scripture. That is the test.

tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet  
samit-panih srotriyam brahma-nistham

"To learn the transcendental subject matter, one must approach a spiritual master. In doing so, one should carry fuel to burn in sacrifice. The symptom of such a spiritual master is that he is expert in understanding the Vedic conclusion and therefore he constantly engages in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." [Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.12] Srotriyam means that one who has accepted the Vedic literature, the shastra, as guidance can be a guru. An extravagant upstart who makes some group and religious principles of his own cannot become a guru.

Guru Required

Lord Chaitanya is replying to Sanatana Gosvami's inquiry about how to know who is an avatara. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says that the medium is shastra and the direction is from the guru. We need the help of a guru to understand the scripture. Sometimes we find contradictions in the scripture. There is no contradiction, but because of my poor fund of knowledge I might think there is. I cannot understand. Therefore the assistance of a guru, a spiritual master, is required.

Lord Chaitanya says that we have to see through the shastra whether or not a person is an incarnation. We should not blindly accept anybody as an incarnation, because there are, nowadays, numberless "incarnations."

In the next verse Lord Chaitanya says,
avatara nahi kahe—'ami avatara'  
muni saba jani' kare laksana-vicara

"An actual incarnation of God never says 'I am God' or 'I am an incarnation of God.' The great Vyasa-dvaa, knowing all, has already recorded the characteristics of the avatara in the shastras. An incarnation never says, "I am incarnation of God." I have read a book about a big "avatara" in India. He was canvassing his students, "Do you now accept me as an incarnation? Do you now accept me as incarnation?" Perhaps you know. And the disciple was denying: "No." Then, after some time the disciple said, "Yes, I accept you."

This is not an avatara. Here Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says that an avatara does not canvass: "I am an avatara." A guru does not canvass. A sadhu does not canvass. Automatically, by their qualities, they become accepted.
Muni saba jani' kare laksana-vicara. The munis, those who are thinkers and are actually in the line of disciplic succession, see the symptoms and specify, "Yes, here is an avatara." What are the symptoms of an avatara? First, there is reference in the shastra, scripture, that in such and such time, such and such personality will come and he will be an incarnation of God. Even his father's name, his birthplace—everything is written in the scripture. So we have to identify, lakshana. The scripture will say that he'll act like this, he'll come like this, and so on. We have to analyze according to these criteria to determine whether someone is actually an avatara.

Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu never said, "I am an avatara." But from His symptoms, from His characteristics, later on great sages, great philosophers, decided that He's an avatara.

Here Sanatana Gosvami is trying to get Lord Chaitanya to confirm that He's an avatara. The avatara of Krishna for this age, Kali-yuga, is described in the Srimad-Bhagavatam [11.5.32]: krishna-varnam tvisakrishnam sangopangastra parsadam. He is in the category of Krishna, but unlike Krishna His complexion is "non-black," akrishna. And He's always followed by confidential associates. Yajnavi sankirtana-prayair yajanti hi su-medhasah. People who are intelligent will worship Him by the process of sankirtana, the congregational chanting of the names of God.

Su-medhasah refers to persons who have got good brain substance, not foolish persons. They can understand, "Oh, here is the avatara for this age." Lord Chaitanya's appearance is described in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, the Mahabharata, the Upanishads, the Puranas. There are many explanations of His symptoms. But still many fools do not accept Him.

Accept or not, His work, His activities, His characteristics will be known, because God will be known. Take, for example, Lord Buddha. He is accepted as an incarnation in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. Buddhism was patronized by Emperor Ashoka. So Buddhism was broadcast throughout the Far East, including India, and practically everyone became a Buddhist. Later on, Shankaracharya drove Buddhism from India.

The difference between Buddhism and Hinduism is that Lord Buddha did not accept Vedic authority. According to Hindu culture, if somebody does not accept the Vedic authority, then he's not an authority.

There are different philosophical parties in India. Generally, there are two parties: the Mayavada philosophers and the Vaishnava philosophers, or the impersonalists and the personalists. The Mayavadi philosophers say that God, the Supreme Absolute Truth, is impersonal. The Vaishnava philosophers say that in the ultimate end, the Absolute Truth is a person and He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna. Krishnas tu bhagavan svayam.

That is the little difference between the two parties. They stick to their positions and fight by philosophical arguments. That has been going on for a very long time. But both of them belong to the sanatana Hindu dharma because both of them will talk on the Vedanta philosophy. They'll give different interpretations, but they cannot say, "We don't accept Vedanta." If they do, then what they say is at once rejected. One must give an interpretation of the Vedanta philosophy, then he'll be accepted as an acharya, or spiritual authority. One must be able to explain three books—Vedanta philosophy, Bhagavad-gita, and Srimad-Bhagavatam—then he'll be accepted as an acharya. These are the principles.

The impersonalists also accept the principle of avatara. They accept Krishna. Shankaracharya accepted Krishna: sa bhag-avan svayam krishna. To specify Krishna, Shankaracharya called Him devaki-vasudeva jatah: Krishna who appeared as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva. That Krishna.

**Shankaracharya's Prayer**

Shankaracharya has written a nice prayer about Krishna. The present followers of Shankaracharya cannot say that this is not composed by Shankaracharya. It is very famous.

\[
\text{bhaja govindam bhaja govindam bhaja govindam mudha mate}
\text{samprapte sannihite kale na hi na hi raksati dukrn-karane}
\]

Shankaracharya has made many prayers about Krishna, especially about His Vrindavana pastimes. He has worshiped Krishna in many ways. And this was his last composition of poetry. Bhaja govindam bhaja govindam bhaja govindam mudha mate. Mudha mate means "you fools." He was addressing the whole world: "You fools." Bhaja govindam: "Just become a devotee of Krishna. Just become Krishna conscious." Samprapte sannihite kale na hi na hi raksati dukrn-karane: "You are philosophizing. You are talking on grammar in this way and that way."

People want to establish impersonalism from Bhagavad-gita by strength of grammar. Such nonsense they are. They want to understand God through grammar, as if God is so cheap that He can be understood through grammar. Therefore Shankaracharya specified, samprapte sannihite kale: "When death will catch you, your grammar will..."
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not save you. You fools. Please become Krishna conscious.” That was the instruction of Shankaracharya. And he has especially mentioned Bhagavad-gita and Ganges water: “A little Ganges water and a little study of Bhagavad-gita will save you from many dangerous positions.” So, because Krishna has the symptoms of bhagavan, God, even the so-called impersonalist Shankaracharya accepted Him as God.

Many others don’t accept Krishna. The spiritual authority Sri Yamunacharya wrote a verse about such persons. Sri Yamunacharya, a great devotee, is considered to be the spiritual master of Ramanujacharya. He was a great king, and later on he became a great devotee. In the Ramanuja-sampradaya, there are twelve great authorities, and he’s one of them. He has written a very nice verse in his Alavandaru about the atheistic demons. In the Vedic literature, those who are atheists are called demons, rakshasas. The atheist Ravana, for example, was a great scholar in Vedic philosophy. He was the son of a brahmana, and he was very learned. His kingdom was so materially advanced that his capital was called golden. He was so rich. He was so great in every way—in education, in opulence, in power. His only fault was that he was an atheist. Therefore he’s called rakshasa, asura. The only fault of all the asuras, demons, mentioned in the shastra is that they are atheists. Otherwise, they are very much advanced.

In the Bhagavad-gita, Lord Krishna describes the asuras:

\[
na \text{ mam duskrtino mudhah prapadyante narakdhamah}
\]

"Those miscreants who are grossly foolish, who are lowest among mankind, whose knowledge is stolen by illusion, and who partake of the atheistic nature of demons do not surrender unto Me.” As soon as one becomes an atheist—oh, it is very difficult to convince him. Therefore our preaching should avoid the atheist class. Of course, if we do that, then we cannot find any theists. The present time is such that 99.9% of the people are atheists. So we have to take the risk of talking with atheists also. But generally it is advised that preachers should not talk to the atheist class because they simply argue. Their only point is to argue and waste your time. That’s all. They’ll never accept, however you may try to convince them with reason and argument.

**Arguing Atheists**

Here is the verse by Yamunacharya. It was written, say, about one thousand years ago. He says,

\[
tvam \text{ sila-rupa-caritaih parama-prakrstaik sattvena sattvikataya prabalais ca shastraik}
\]

"My dear Lord, devotees like Vyasadeva and Narada know You to be the Personality of Godhead. By understanding different Vedic literatures, one can come to know Your characteristics, Your form, and Your activities, and one can thus understand that You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But those who are in the modes of passion and ignorance, the demons, the nondevotees, cannot understand You. They are unable to understand You. However expert such nondevotees may be in discussing Vedanta and the Upanishads and other Vedic literatures, it is not possible for them to understand the Personality of Godhead."

There are different kinds of authorities. The first is authorized shastra, scripture. The description of each avatar—his characteristics and his work—is mentioned there. Prabala is ca shastrair. Prabala means “very powerful.” Vedanta philosophy is very powerful. Bhagavad-gita is very powerful. Srimad-Bhagavatam is very powerful. So we give evidences from these powerful shastras. Not only that—prakhyata-daiva-paramartha-vidam mattais ca. We give the opinions of great stalwarts. Prakhyata means “very famous.” Vyasadeva, for example. Who can be more famous than Vyasadeva? He’s the compiler of all the Vedic literature. And Narada, the greatest rsi, sage. And Asita, Devala, Vashistha—there are many stalwarts. Especially these twelve persons: Brahma, Narada, Lord shiva, the Kumaras, Manu, Kapila, Janaka, Prahla, Bhishma, Bali, Sukadeva, and Yamaraja. These are authorities. So Sri Yamunacharya writes that even after hearing the evidences of the authorized scriptures, which are accepted by great stalwarts and sages and munis, still the atheistic persons will never accept God. They’ll never accept. They’ll simply go on arguing.

The Vedic process is that if something is mentioned in the Vedas and is accepted by the previous acharyas, then one must accept it. That’s all. I don’t have to bother with research. This is the simple process. Suppose I am fool number one. That doesn’t matter. I may be a fool, but if I follow the previous authorized acharyas, then I am all right. A child may be innocent, but if he catches the hand of his father, then he’s all right. He can walk. He can cross the street. In the Vedic process there is no research. What nonsense research can you do? You shall research about God? There is no such research. Research is not accepted in Vedic philosophy. You have to accept the authority. That’s all.
Yamunacharya says, "My dear Lord, by understanding different Vedic literatures, one can come to know Your characteristics, Your form, and Your activities, and one can thus understand that You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead." Krishna's character was certified by Bhishma. Bhishma was Arjuna's grandfather. So practically he was, in age, Krishna's grandfather. He was fighting on the battlefield, a great warrior. He's called pitamaha, Grandfather Bhishma. His character was spotless. Although he was living as a house-holder, he was more than any sage or any saint.

The history of Bhishma is that he was the son of the Ganges. The Ganges was his mother. His father, Maharaja shantanu, after the death of his wife wanted to marry again. At that time Bhishma was grown up. He was about twenty years old. But instead of getting the son married, the father was himself very much anxious to get married. So he selected a very beautiful girl, but she belonged to a low-caste family. Kshatriyas can marry girls from any caste. That is the injunction. They are not within the boundary of the caste system.

The girl was a fisherman's daughter. Maharaja shantanu wanted to marry her. Her father was very cunning. Her father said, "No, no. I cannot offer my daughter to you. You are an old man. You have got your son. So I cannot offer her to you."

Maharaja shantanu was bargaining. "No? Why? I shall give your daughter a palace. We shall enjoy so many years."

"No," the girl's father said. "I can offer you my daughter provided my daughter's son becomes the king after your death. Then I can offer her."

"Oh, I cannot agree to that, because my eldest son is living."

Bhishma understood. "My father wants to marry that girl, but the only impediment is that the father of the girl is making a condition that her son should be king, and my father is declining because I should be king."

Bhishma at once approached the father of the girl. "What is your condition, sir?"

"This is my condition."

"All right, I shall not accept the kingdom of my father. Your daughter's son will be king. I agree to this."
"Oh, no. You may agree, but your son will claim the throne, because you are the proprietor, you are the prince."

"Oh, you think so? Then I shall not marry. Is that all right?"

Bhishma promised, "I shall never marry in my life. That's all right? Then marry your daughter to my father."

Bhishma was so pious and so strict. He was a brahmachari, a celibate, from the very beginning.

Bhishma glorified Krishna's character during Maharaja Yudhishthira's Rajasuya-yajna. The Rajasuya-yajna is a sacrifice performed by the world emperor. All the princes of the world are invited, and they recognize the performer as the emperor of the world. In that sacrifice, with all the princes present, Krishna was proposed to become the president of the assembly, although He was a young man. But the princes Sishupala and Dantavakra, who were very much against Krishna, objected: "Oh, Krishna cannot be selected. There are many others."

At that time Bhishma recommended, "Nobody present here is of spotless character like Krishna. When He was sixteen years old, He was surrounded by girls, but He had no sex desire. I am a brahmachari from my birth. I think I could not be such a restrained personality as Krishna."

Bhishma recommended like that. That is mentioned in the Mahabharata. So that is Krishna's character.

Sri Yamunacharya also mentions rupa, form. Lord Chaitanya's form is mentioned as tvīṣa akṛṣṭa: by complexion He's not black. Similarly, everything about the avataras is mentioned. So Yamunacharya says, "Your character, Your beauty, and Your wonderful work are mentioned in shastras. You are accepted by great authorities. In spite of all this, those who are atheists will never accept You."

Thank you very much. 😊

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

**AWARDS**

ISKCON Bangalore Sri Radha Krishna Temple and The Higher Taste were awarded Certificates of Excellence by Trip Advisor, winning the year 2015 ratings by guests.
Philosophy and Religion should be combined

Here we conclude an exchange between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and a television interviewer. It took place in Gainesville, Florida, on July 29, 1971.

Srila Prabhupada: You are concerned about the relationship between one man and another man. But if the central point is missing, then there is practically no relationship. For instance, if you are American and another man is American, both of you feel some relationship, because the center is America. In the same way, unless both of us understand God, the central point, you cannot understand what I am, nor can I understand what you are. So we have to first of all reestablish our lost relationship with God; then we can talk of universal brotherhood. Otherwise, there will be discrimination.

For instance, in your country, or any country, a "national" means a man born in that land. Is it not? But humans do not take the animals as nationals. Why do the animals have no right to be regarded as nationals? That is imperfect knowledge. There is no God consciousness; therefore, they think only the human born in this land is a national—not others.

Interviewer: That is not necessarily based on religious principles, of course.

Srila Prabhupada: That is a philosophical principle.

Interviewer: Right.

Srila Prabhupada: And religion without philosophy is sentimentality.

Interviewer: Don't you think there are very good reasons for the existence of these rules and regulations in this respect?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. The rules and regulations of society must be established on the basis of philosophy. Otherwise, the whole thing is sentimentality. Defective. Religion without philosophy is sentimentality—and philosophy without religion is mental speculation. Philosophy and religion should be combined. Then the situation will be perfect.

Interviewer: I think that in this . . . in this part of the world—in the Western world, at least as much as I am aware of it—we do place a good deal of emphasis on religion.

Srila Prabhupada: Everything should be based on philosophy.

Interviewer: Well, as to religion, what I would like to highlight, what I would like to emphasize, is that we place a good deal of emphasis on religion in the way it gets one man to deal with another man. The ethic of religion. Now, in the Krishna consciousness movement . . .

Srila Prabhupada: One moment. We must be clear.

Interviewer: Beg your pardon?

Srila Prabhupada: We are not concerned about how one man deals with another man.

Interviewer: But, you know, let's take the Christian religion, for an example.

Srila Prabhupada: I do not know.

Interviewer: You know the Ten Commandments, for example.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: There is a heavy emphasis in the Ten Commandments on the relationships between one human being and another, you know. "Thou shalt not kill." "Thou shalt not steal." You know. That sort of thing.

Srila Prabhupada: But Jesus Christ never said that "Thou shalt not kill" protects only human beings. Where is the evidence? Jesus Christ never said "Thou shalt not kill" protects only human beings. Thou shalt not kill any animals, either.

Interviewer: Any life.
Srila Prabhupada: Do not take any life. That is religion.

Interviewer: It has never been interpreted that way.

Srila Prabhupada: You have interpreted it the wrong way. But Jesus affirmed the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." He never said, "Thou shalt not kill human beings." Why do you interpret in that way?

Interviewer: How would I recognize a true follower of the Krishna consciousness movement by his behaviour? What would his traits be? What would his outward expressions be?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Yes. He would be a very perfect gentleman. That's all. You would not be able to find any fault in him. That is Krishna consciousness, perfect Krishna consciousness. Therefore, it is stipulated not to eat meat.

Interviewer: Not to eat meat?

Srila Prabhupada: Correct. And therefore, there is a prohibition against illicit sex. Therefore, there is a prohibition against intoxication. A Krishna conscious person does not smoke, even—what to speak of other intoxication. And therefore, there is a prohibition against indulging in gambling. So if people can observe these four rules and regulations, they will become perfect men. Simple.

Interviewer: Or women, I presume.

Srila Prabhupada: Oh, men or women.

Interviewer: Men or women?

Srila Prabhupada: Anyone.

Interviewer: There is a place for women in Krishna consciousness too, isn't there?

Srila Prabhupada: Men and women have got the same right. For instance, we are getting married boys and girls as our disciples. They are following the same principles. The same principles. These are the four pillars of perfect life. Now, if we indulge in those sinful things—illicit sex, meat-eating, intoxication, and gambling—then those become the four pillars of sinful life. And if we take the sinful things away, then the prohibitions become the pillars of perfect life.

Interviewer: Now I would like to ask you one more question, and I would like to ask you to end the programme by chanting your mantra of Hare Krishna. One more question, though. In the six years that you have been in this country, in the United States, have you been encouraged or discouraged?

Srila Prabhupada: I am encouraged.

Interviewer: Encouraged? Why?

Srila Prabhupada: Because so many devotees are coming daily.

Interviewer: "So many? You say so many. You know, we have maybe—what?—two dozen people sitting here.

Srila Prabhupada: We have got sixty centers.

Interviewer: There are roughly two hundred ten million Americans.

Srila Prabhupada: But when you sell diamonds, you cannot expect that everyone will purchase. There must be bona fide customers for diamonds. You cannot expect that diamonds are going to be purchased by everyone among the mass of people. You cannot expect it.

Interviewer: Do you in general approve of this society, or do you have major complaints about it—the American society that you now live in?

Srila Prabhupada: I have no complaint. These boys and girls—they are very nice. I am, rather, encouraged that these boys and girls are so much inquisitive about Krishna. So it is the best field for this movement, the best field anywhere. But anyway, these boys and girls—I can understand they were hankering after something nice. They were frustrated. So now they have got the things they have been hankering after, and they're coming to this movement.

Interviewer: All right. I would like to thank you very sincerely for giving us a very brief insight into the teachings of the Krishna consciousness movement. May I ask you to ask your followers who are present here with us tonight to join you in the chanting of the mantra for just a minute to close out the programme? Please?

Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes. We can chant. 😊

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That the Supreme Lord who is birthless and deathless, also takes rebirth, must be astounding! Yes, this indeed is the transcendental, divine pastime of the archa-vigraha – the deity form of the Lord in the temple. The temple city of Puri, in Odisha, known the world over for its annual car festival (the oldest and biggest festival in the world), is also known for celebrating Navakalevara, with as much religious fervour, if not more.

Nava means new and kalevara means body, thus Navakalevara is a ceremony in which the old deity forms of Lord Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra are replaced by new deity forms. This however does not, like the car festival, occur every year, but only once every 12 or 19 years. This year Their Lordships will thus, after ‘rebirth’, grant Their first audience on July 17 to tens of thousands of devotees who assemble from everywhere for this purpose. We invite you to join us in this glorious festival and receive the Lord’s blessings.

Significance of Navakalevara

As Srila Prabhupada explains, although God is inconceivably great, He appears visibly in forms made of stone, metal and wood, to mercifully receive the devotees' service. As nothing is impossible for the omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient Lord, if someone out of impudence or sheer foolishness considers the deity form to be just a statue or a doll, he is the most condemned, unfortunate individual.

The scriptures prescribe replacement of metal and stone deities if and when they are damaged. Wooden deities however are replaced regularly as they wear out faster. Once in 12 to 19 years, an extra month appears called ashadha, and this time period is recommended for observing Navakalevara. As there are 365 days in the solar calendar and 354 days in the lunar, an extra month is added to the latter once in 32 months in order to sync both. This extra month is called the adhika month. The last Navakalevara happened in 1996.

The Navakalevara ceremony consists of 4 principal stages: 1. Search for the Daru (divine wood), 2. carving of the forms, 3. consecration, and 4. giving final shape to the deities. The scriptures and previous experience serve as guides at every stage.

The Great March

The great march in search of Daru commences on the 10th day of the bright fortnight of the month of Chaitra, more than 2 months before the Snana Purnima (bathing festival). The party usually consists of Daitas - descendants of Vishwavasu, Pati Mohapatra – descendant of Vidyapati (see separate description), 4 Visvakarmas (carpenters), the Lenka (carrier of Vishnu disc on long wooden shaft), brahmana priests for performing forest sacrifice, temple functionaries, and

“O unborn one, learned Vedic scholars who are advanced in spiritual knowledge certainly know that this material world is perishable, as do other logicians and philosophers. In trance they realize the factual position of this world, and they preach the truth as well. Yet even they are sometimes bewildered by Your illusory energy. This is Your own wonderful pastime. Therefore, I can understand that Your illusory energy is very wonderful, and I offer my respectful obeisances unto You.” Srimad Bhagavatam 5.18.4
various others to look to the party's worldly needs. Before proceeding on the journey the party obtains ajnamala – blessing of the Lord. The temple management gives sandal paste and vermilion in consent. The whole party then moves out of the temple to the accompaniment of conches, drums and gongs and proceeds to the palace of the King of Puri. Through the Rajaguru, the King gives coconut, arecanut, rice and gold to the party and sees them off. After obtaining blessings of spiritual as well as temporal power, the party proceeds on their sojourn in a joyous mood. The journey being full of hazards and tasks extremely onerous, only those who are found mentally and physically equipped to handle the job are selected as members of the group, and once selected they undertake their respective jobs to the best of their ability. The party proceeds to Kakatpur – 50 km from Puri – barefoot, taking only one frugal meal a day.

**Camp at Kakatpur**

On reaching Kakatpur, the party sets up camp and stays there till the last Daru – the Daru of Lord Jagannatha is sent to Puri. The presiding deity of Kakatpur, Goddess Mangala, is worshipped extensively, seeking her favour in the search. It is said that the Goddess appears in the dream of one of the devotees and reveals the locations of the Darus. If no instruction is received in 3 days, another extensive worship of the Goddess is performed in which the deity is completely bedecked with flowers. The first fall of flower from the body of the Goddess gives the clue as regards the direction the Darus are to be searched. Thereafter the members of the party move out in that direction to search out the Darus.

**Selection of Daru**

Although neem wood is used to carve the deity forms of Jagannatha, just any neem tree will not do. The trees must fulfill certain criteria in order to qualify as ‘Daru Brahman.’ Some of them are as follows:

- Lord Jagannatha’s tree must be blackish.
- There must be four principal branches indicating Narayana’s four arms.
- There must be a cobra snakehole near the tree.
- No birds should have built nests in the tree.
- There must be natural impressions of shankha-chakra.
- Lord Shiva’s temple must be in the vicinity.
- No creepers must have grown on the tree.
- No branches should be broken/cut.

Baladeva’s tree must be light brown in colour with 7 branches like the hoods of a snake. Moreover, there should be natural impressions of the plough and other weapons Lord Baladeva carries. Subhadra’s tree must be yellowish, have 5 branches and a natural impression of a five-petalled lotus. Lord Sudarshana’s tree must be reddish with 3 branches and an impression of the chakra. In the order of tree selection, Sudarshana comes first, followed by Baladeva and Subhadra. Lord Jagannathaa’s tree is obtained last. The Daru is transported to Puri, also in the same order.

**Vanayaga and Tree Cutting**

As soon as the first Daru in the order noted above is found out, the place surrounding the tree is swept clear, sanctified with water, cowdung and clay. Sandal paste and vermilion are then applied to the tree and the tree is wrapped with a piece of new cloth and ajnamala of the Deity brought from the temple is placed on it, thus symbolizing the identity of the Deity and its Daru. Before cutting the tree, a forest sacrifice, vanayaga is performed. Ankuraropana, sowing of seeds for germination, is an important rite, which is almost invariably observed in every significant religious ceremony. After a 3-day fire sacrifice, the trees are cut. The trees are cut a bit by the Pati Mohapatra with a golden axe while chanting the Sudarshana mantra. The Daitas then cut a little more using a silver axe, and the carpenters next use their iron axes to fully cut down the trees, all the while chanting the holy names of Hari. After the Darus are cut, the trunk of the tree as well as thick branches are transported to Puri for fashioning of the images, transported in carts constructed indigenously with the
wood of kenda, vata and tamarind trees. The Darus are covered with coloured cloth pieces and tied up with silken cords firmly with the carts. The carts are pulled by devotees and brought to the Puri temple in the same order as they are collected and they reach the temple before the annual bathing festival, Snanayatra.

Carving of the Deities

Before the Darus reach the temple, the administration constructs special structures for housing the Darus and carving the Deities. This work is performed in the first two weeks following Snana Purnima. The processes of carving the images, as well as measurements of different parts of the Deities, are considered closely guarded secrets. No one is allowed to see the fashioning of the images or even hear the sound. The fashioning is done within a closed enclosure and nobody except the Daitas and Pati Mohapatra are allowed entry.

Parallel to the fashioning of the images, the brahmana priests of the temple, the Rajguru and some others selected by the temple administration undertake the ceremony of consecration, pratistha. The pratistha ceremony starts from the second day of Ashadha. Since the construction of the deities is not yet over, the consecration ceremony is performed on a piece of wood cut from any one of the four Darus, known as Nyasa Daru. After an extensive ceremony of consecration lasting for 2 weeks, the Nyasa Daru is cut into four pieces of prescribed size and each one of these four parts serves as lid to cover the cavity in the belly (or heart) of the deities after the Brahmapadartha has been inserted into it.

Brahmaparivartan

By the 14th day, the consecration of the Nyasa Daru, as well as fashioning of wooden deities being over, on the night of that date, the Nyasa Daru is taken in a small cart to the temple and handed over to the Daitas, and then it is cut into four pieces according to the measurement laid down in the shastras. On the next night, i.e. new moon night, the wooden deities are taken around the temple, subsequently brought inside, and placed in front of the old Deities. In the illumination of small ghee lamps the mysterious Brahmapadartha is transferred from the old to the new Deities. The person entrusted with this job is blind-folded and his hands wrapped up to elbows so that he can neither see nor touch the Brahmapadartha. This work is done at dead of the night after ensuring that no outsider remains present during this ceremony.

After the transfer, the cavity of the new Deities is covered with one of four pieces of the Nyasa Daru which was consecrated earlier.

Purificatory Rites

One of the finest features of the Jagannatha culture is the feeling of oneness of the devotees with the Deities. After the Brahmapadartha is removed from the old Deities and the images are buried inside the temple premises, the Daitas and their family members mourn the loss and observe purificatory ceremony for a period of 10 days. They take one meal per day and observe all the obsequies mentioned in the shastras. Their houses are given fresh coat of colour, and on the 11th day they wear new clothes. On the 12th day they feed the brahmanas, poor, co-sevayats and others who attend.

Giving Final Shape

After Brahmaparivartan, the Deities are still not complete and Their bodies are compared to skeletons over which various limbs are added with the help of silken cord, resin, sandal paste, perfumed oil, camphor, musk, etc. The process of infusing ‘flesh’ and ‘blood’ in the new Deities starts after the asaucha (ritual impurity) period is over, i.e. from the dark fortnight of the extra Ashadha. Since the wooden Deities are identified with bones, perfumed oil is rubbed which represents the marrow inside the bones. Strips of coloured cloth representing blood and veins are wrapped around the Deity. A thick paste of resin with oil, camphor, musk and sandal paste is then applied to represent the flesh. Strong cords of cloth are wrapped up, representing the skin. In the process due care and attention is given to bring out
specific features and contours of each Deity.

Next, They are made over to the chitrakaras (painters) for colouring using indigenous material according to the prescribed specifications. The painters are not allowed to paint the pupils of the eyes of the Deities, which work is left to brahmana priests, on the auspicious day of Netrotsav - the most auspicious of all rituals performed during Navakalevara, carrying a great deal of sanctity and religiosity. This Netrotsav ritual is also performed every year after the termination of the anavasara period.

After the Netrotsav, the Lord gives first darshana in His Navayauvana vesha.

Conclusion

The merciful Supreme Lord has thus been manifesting His ‘rebirth’ pastime and blessing His devotees. The essence of this mercy is mentioned in the Uttarakhanda of the Narada Purana. There, Lord Narayana speaking to Mother Lakshmi, says, “In that great abode known as Purusottama-kshetra, which is rarely achieved among all the three worlds, the Keshava Deity, who was fashioned by Me, is situated. If men simply see that Deity, they are easily able to come to My abode.” Let us offer our respectful obeisance to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Jai Jagannatha! 🙏

Reference: www.nabakalebara.gov.in
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Located in the historic temple town of Chidambaram in Cuddalore district is the magnificent temple of Govindaraja Perumal.

The Pastime

Once there was a sportive fight between Lord Shiva and his consort Parvathi over their mastery on dance. Each of them claimed to be expert at the art. They invited Lord Brahma to judge the event. Considering the fierce nature of Shiva, Brahma considered it wise to hand over the issue to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Narayana.

A stage was decided by the parties. It was Chidambaram, the abode of Govindaraja Perumal. This place was specifically chosen for a reason. It was the place where the Supreme Lord was majestically reclining on Adisesha and settled a dispute between rishis. As such a golden stage was specifically made for the divine dance competition of Shiva and Parvathi. Lord Shiva had another intention to plan up this divine act - to entertain Lord Narayana. Vishnu. It was the divine devotional service of Parvathi and Shiva.

At the end of the dance, Parvathi copied every dance step which Shiva performed and gave him tough competition. But when Shiva lifted his leg up above his head, Parvathi accepted her failure and defeat, Lord Govindaraja, whose durbar was the venue for this divine dance, bestowed Shiva with the title Nataraja or King of Dancers.

The demigods assembled to see the felicitation given to Shiva and requested Brahma to explain the importance of Chidambaram, which Brahma did, much to the delight of the demigods:

In the forest called Daruvana or Thillai (present day Chidambaram), was the dwelling place for a community of rishis and their wives. They lived in thatched roofed mud houses. They performed severe austerities and were masters of the processes of yoga. Through the performance of rituals they had achieved great knowledge and power, but they had not realized the importance of devotional service. Soon they seemed to have developed a thought that they were superior to the Supreme Lord Narayana. Shiva requested Vishnu to accompany him to enlighten the rishis, by showing them the limited nature of human power, and how knowledge is of no use when one is not able to conquer one’s ego. To accomplish this purpose, the two deities changed Their forms. Shiva entered the hermitage of the rishis as a mendicant or a young brahmachari beggar: with dazzling beauty, wearing only a mendicant’s sandals and almost naked except for a loin cloth, the wives and daughters of the rishis fell madly in love with him, forgetting everything else, and completely losing themselves. They were astonished to see the beauty of the fair- skinned Shiva.

Vishnu transformed Himself into a beautiful woman called Mohini or the divine damsel who appeared during the Sathyar yuga to steal nectar from the asuras. As soon as the rishis saw Mohini dance before them, they too lost all good sense and rationality and with desire burning in their hearts, they followed Mohini around like madmen.

A few rishis happened to see that their wives were madly gazing at a handsome brahmachari boy and suddenly came to their senses. They became enraged and started a great fire sacrifice against this Shiva-Bhikshatana. First they called from the fire a tiger, but when it attacked Lord Shiva he laughed, and killed the ferocious animal with his hands, tearing off its skin and wearing it. Next the rishis sent poisonous snakes, which Shiva draped around his arms and neck, as jewellery. Then Shiva prepared to perform his cosmic dance. His two other arms became visible and his third eye shone on his forehead. The rishis called a fierce dwarf from their magical fire, but Shiva’s dancing foot simply took him for a pedestal and danced. Finally the rishis sent the fire itself to destroy the cosmic dancer, but he just took it on to his left hand. And from the mantas that the rishis used against him, Shiva made his anklets. Then Lord Shiva danced his thandava or cosmic dance.

The Supreme Lord Narayana was the only one who did not move from the sight of this fierce dance. He was resting on His Adisesha couch, attended to by His consorts. All other demigods trembled with fear and requested Lord Narayana to calm down Shiva. Shiva was calmed down by Lord Narayana just by a wink of His eye. But the Lord danced smiling, showing his raised foot. The rishis understood Lord Shiva’s divine grace, and attained realization. They started to dance themselves and all of creation danced with them. One of the rishis who was present there, imitated this style of dancing to Rishi Bharatha who later on wrote the master piece of dance called natyashastra. The present day Indian dance forms have been created from natyashastra.

The forest of Thillai is situated on the middle point of the earth, and constitutes its heart center, the Lotus Space. Through it passes the main energy nadi, or vein, of our mother planet. This place is the birth place of the famous saint, Patanjali, who authored the masterpiece book on hatha yoga. There is yet another interesting episode regarding the place name Thillai. A demoness named Dhilli prayed to Lord Govindaraja Perumal so she would become transformed into a forest full of trees and that Lord should grace the place with His presence. She became Thillai trees. Named after her, the place came to be known as Thillai Nagar.

Once, as Patanjali reached the Thillai forest, he found on the southern bank of the lotus pond, the saint Vyagrapada (refer KV 2013 Sirupuliyur for pastime on Sage Vyagrapada), worshipping Shiva and performing austerities. Vyagrapada had come to the Thillai forest following the advice of his father, Rishi Madhyandina. To worship the Shiva linga, Vyagrapada used to gather flowers in the early morning, but however early he collected the flowers, insects had already damaged them. Deeply upset that his worship was not as complete or perfect as he desired, he cried to Lord Shiva to help him. In answer to his prayer, Shiva gave Vyagrapada tiger claws for hands and feet, enabling him to find his way through the thick forest at night to gather flowers long before daybreak, before the insects could inflict their damage.

History in Modern Kali yuga

Chidambaram temple is a venue of constant battle between the Shaivas and Vaishnavas. The fact is that the temple is originally that of Govindaraja and even today there is no fixed moolavar deity of Lord Shiva here. A moolavar deity is one who is never removed...
and is thus fixed to the ground by 8 elements. The Shiva deity in Chidambaram is a movable one and the moolavar is that of Govindaraja whose lotus feet point towards Lord Shiva. Thus, by divine intent, Shiva stands as a humble servant in the durbar of Govindaraja.

Kulothunga Chola and Demolition of Govindaraja Temple

Kulothunga was a great devotee of the Shiva shrine of Chidambaram. He celebrated his coronation in that city, as Chidambaram is one of five places where Chola princes were crowned as kings. He also financed the elaborate renovation of the Shiva temple in Chidambaram. The poem Kulothunga Cholan Ula describes in detail the work carried out in Chidambaram. It is possible that this renovation work is the continuation of the work started by Vikramachandra Chola. He commissioned the work called Thiru Thondar Puranam, by his noble Sekkilar, who composed it from Thillai (Chidambaram).

Kulothunga was so intolerant that he uprooted the Deity of Govindaraja and deposited it in the sea and gave two options to the Vaishnavas living there - either to convert to Shaivism or to die. Most Vaishnavas chose the latter. It is estimated that about 3000 Vaishnavas were murdered by the king.

Ramanujacharya fled to Thirupati with the utsavar (festival Deity) of the Chidambaram temple and installed Him there, so there is a Govindarajaswamy temple in Thirupathi.

King Krishnappa Nayak (1564-1572 A.D.) was instrumental in installing the moolavar Deity of Govindaraja back in the temple. There was lot of resistance from the Shaivas against placing the Vishnu Deity in a revered Shiva temple, but the king was unmoved and the Lord was installed in the present form. Many Shaivas threatened to commit suicide if the Deity of Govindaraja was brought back and twenty of them did so when the king did not relent.

Fate of Kulothunga Chola

Kulothunga was also called Krimikantha Chola (worm-necked Chola) because of an interesting incident which reinforces faith in the theory of karma.

Kulothunga was hell-bent on routing out Vaishnavism from his kingdom. The best way to do that, he thought, was to destroy Ramanujacharya. He issued royal summons to Ramanujacharya to appear in his court for the ostensible purpose of engaging him in a scholarly debate with his royal pundits. The real intention, however, was to coerce Ramanujacharya to recant from Sri Vaishnavism, and if he refused, to have him murdered.
Ramanucharya’s followers dissuaded him from going to Gangaikondachozhapuram on the invitation of the king. Kuresa (Kurathalwar) and Mahapurna volunteered to go as Ramanujacharya’s proxy and respond to the royal summons. With great reluctance, Ramanujacharya left Srirangam with a small band of acolytes and fled to Melukote or Thiru Narayanapuram where he lived in exile for 12 long years, a difficult period in life for the aged Acharya.

It was at Melukote that Ramanujacharya heard about what had happened to Kuresa and Mahapurna. In the court, the King said, “Nothing higher than Shiva exists,” and commanded them to agree to it. Kuresa refused. He contended that Lord Narayana was the Supreme Principle and none was higher than He.

The Chola King was incensed. He commanded Kuresa again to swear allegiance to Shiva. “If you refuse, we shall have your eyes pulled out here and now!” On hearing this Kuresa flew into a rage. “Let me save you the trouble, you tyrant, for I shall pluck out my eyes with my own hands! These eyes that have set sight on a sinner such as you have no further use for me!” So saying, Kuresa plunged a sharp writing quill into his own eyes. Mahapurna too suffered a similar fate but died a little later.

One day, the blind Kuresa made his way from home to the temple of Ranganatha to have darshana of the Lord. The temple guards, however, stopped him at the gates saying, “We have instructions from the King to let people in only if they swear that they will renounce Ramanujacharya as their guru.” Kuresa told them blandly, “Please tell your King that Kuresa is prepared to forsake Lord Ranganatha in this world and even in the next. But denounce Ramanujacharya, never!” The blind Kuresa then took his wife and children and lived at Thirumalirunjolai (near Madurai) till Ramanujacharya’s return.

King Krimikantha died of a deadly rash on his neck. After his death, the fanaticism of Shaivism in the kingdom quickly lost its militant edge and the land of the Cholas again reverted to sanity. Krimikantha Chola’s successor turned out to be a wise king. He discouraged religious bigotry in his kingdom. Ramanujacharya then decided to return to Srirangam.

The Temple

The temple is a huge structure with separate shrines for Govindaraja and Nataraja.

Lord Govindaraja can be seen in three different postures: standing, sitting and lying down. Mother Pundarikavalli Mahalakshmi has a separate shrine. The padukas (sandals) of the Lord are in a shrine in the prakara, ensuring salvation to the devotees. Garuda is mounted by Lord Gajendra Varadar, the Lord who saved the elephant king. Their Lordships Narasimha, Venugopala
and Maharshi Patanjali, Sri Andal and Sri Anjaneya also have separate shrines in the prakara. The Lord dwells below a sattvika vimana. A beautiful pond named Pundarika Pushkarani graces the temple complex which is filled with numerous pillars and mantapas.

**Festivals**

There are weekly, monthly and fortnightly festivals in the Govindaraja temple. However the fanatic Shaivas of the temple forced the discontinuation of the Lord’s Brahmotsava festival. Chidambaram has been at the center of the centuries’ old conflict between the Shaiva and Vaishnava communities of Tamil Nadu. Although shastra states that Lord Shiva is the foremost Vaishnava, his followers do not acknowledge this in Chidambaram. The Vaishnava community of this temple are even today severely targeted and disturbed by the Shaiva community. The matter is subjudice.

**Kulashekara Alwar’s Verses on Chidambaram**

In just 10 verses King Kulashekara recites the entire Ramayana and offers it to Govindaraja. Alwar here narrates the concise story of Ramayana. He first describes Ayodhya. Then he describes the birth of the Sri Ramachandra avatara of Lord Narayana in the Suryavamsha. The reason for His avatara is to remove the sorrows of demigods caused by Ravana. Then there is the description of Ramachandra who resides in Thillainagar (Chidambaram) in deity form. King Kulashekara Alwar in these Prabandhas has sung Sri Ramayana in short form, from Sri Ramachandra’s birth upto His reaching Vaikuntha:

Sage Vishwamitra requested Dasharatha to send Ramachandra and Lakshmana to protect his yaga. Ramachandra was asked to kill Tataka even though she was a woman. Then of the two rakshasas who were disturbing his yaga, Subahu was killed and Mareecha escaped narrowly. Then follows a description of Chidambaram, where green trees abound and where about three thousand brahmanas sing hymns to Bhagavan sitting on the throne.

King Kulashekara Alwar describes Sita Devi. Then Lord Rama breaks the Shiva bow. After the wedding, Lord Rama encountered Parashurama who had gone round the world to conquer kshatriyas. When He challenged Ramachandra, the latter defeated Him, took his bow along with His tapas. This hero who is feared by enemies resides in Chidambaram. The devotees always worship Him. I worship those devotees of Lord Narayana.

Now King Kulashekara Alwar narrates how Kaikeyi asked Dasharatha the boons and sent Ramachandra to the forest, renouncing His rightful kingdom. Then Guha helped Him to cross the Ganges. Bharata came to request Him to return to Ayodhya and be the king.
Ramachandra refused to do so in order to uphold Dasharatha's promise. He gave Bharata the padukas and the right to be the king. Then He reached Chitrakoota and stayed there. King Kulasekara Alwar says that though Ramachandra's avatara appeared ages ago, we can still see Him in Thillai. Those who see Him and feel the purpose of their sight fulfilled, are even greater than nityasooris.

Ramachandra killed the rakshasa called Virada. Then He went to Sage Agastya and received the bow and arrows. When Ramachandra took away the bow from Parashurama, the devas came and praised Him. Ramachandra gave the bow to Varuna and asked him to keep it safely, to return it at proper time. When He came to the forest Varuna went to Agastya's ashrama and gave him the bow and arrows that Ramachandra took from Parashurama.

Shoorpanaka appeared as a beautiful lady, disguising her demon form, and requested Ramachandra to marry her. Though it is Lakshmana who cut her nose and ears off, it is said here Ramachandra did it. Since Lakshmana always does according to Ramachandra's intentions, it is not wrong to say so. When Kara and Doshan arrived with a huge army, Ramachandra killed them all single-handed. Then He killed Mareecha who came as a golden deer. He resides in Chidambaram. Those who worship Him wander the earth purifying it.

Sita was abducted by Ravana when Ramachandra and Lakshmana were near Mareecha. Ramachandra lamented over her loss. They met Jatayu who fought with Ravana and lost his wings. They conducted pitrudharma to him and sent him to Paramapada (Vaikuntha). According to Jatayu's instructions, they meet Sugreeva the king of monkeys hiding from Vali. Ramachandra killed Vali and restored the kingdom to Sugreeva, who sent his army in all directions to find out the whereabouts of Sita. Hanuman found her in Lanka and burned the city, terrorizing Ravana and others. Ramachandra resides in Chidambaram. Those who worship Him are His devotees. King Kulasekara Alwar says I am the devotee of devotees.

Ramachandra went with Sugreeva and others to wage war against Ravana. They crossed the sea by building a bridge over it. The war broke out between the monkeys and asuras. Ramachandra killed not only Ravana but also all the asuras. He made Vibheeshana the king of Lanka. King Kulasekara Alwar says he considers placing Ramachandra's lotus feet on his head as the greatest kingdom than ruling over a small territory.

Ramachandra reached Ayodhya with Vibheeshana, Sugreeva and others. He accepted the kingdom from Bharata. He listened to the comments of the people and sent Sita to the forest. She lived in Valmiki's ashrama. She gave birth to the twins Lava and Kusha who studied under Valmiki Maharshi. He taught them Sri Ramayana which they sang in the city of Ayodhya before King Ramachandra. This Ramachandra resides in Chidambaram. We shall hear His story and see Him in deity form. This is the sweetest nectar; no other nectar do we seek.

Sri Ramachandra killed the Shudra tapasvi and brought back alive, the dead son of a brahmana; wore the gem garland which Sage Agastya gave Him; sent Shatrughna to kill Lavanasura; renounced Lakshmana due to the curse of Sage Durvasa; resides in Chidambaram where we can see Him and worship Him. And never feel the loss of not seeing Ramachandra.

After renouncing Lakshmana Sri Ramachandra wanted to go to His realm. The people of Ayodhya requested Him that they should be allowed to go wherever He goes. He agreed and asked them to follow Him. The trees, birds and animals too followed Ramachandra to Sarayu River. Their Ramachandra went into the river followed by them. He gave them a realm equal to Vaikuntha and Himself went to His place received by all the residents thereof. With four arms Bhagavan sat on the throne revealing His glories. He is residing in this Chidambaram as He is in Vaikuntha, so let us worship Him here.

He is forever residing in Thiru Chitrakoota. Hanuman wanted to remain in this world as long as Ramachandra's pastime exists. But Ramachandra could not bear the separation of His bhaktas. So He too has come from Vaikuntha to Chidambaram, staying with Hanuman.

With this King Kulasekara Alwar ends His work Perumal Thirumozhi.

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam

To read online visit: www.goo.gl/OPfaOz
Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada was the founder and organizer of a large worldwide religious movement; that he developed it in just twelve years, all after his sixty-ninth birthday, shows that he was not only practical, innovative, and determined but also spiritually empowered. Although these are valid reasons to think highly of Srila Prabhupada, he always de-emphasized his own abilities, preferring to be judged on the more objective grounds of his bona fide allegiance to the teachings of the Vaishnava tradition he represented. He did not credit his preaching success to any special abilities of his own. As he once said, “I don’t claim that I am a pure devotee or perfect, but my only qualification is that I am trying to follow the instruction of the perfect.”

In any case, spiritual realization is essentially a private matter, not open to objective evaluation. There are too many false saints who allow their disciples to fanatically advertise them as much greater than they really are. In the opinion of orthodox Vaishnavas, the saintliness of a person can be known only by someone just as saintly. To publicly establish spiritual authority, then, a teacher, rather than making an open spectacle of his intimate ecstasies, should simply speak philosophically on the basis of what previous authorities have said in scripture and on reputable commentaries of scripture. Srila Prabhupada wanted his own authority to be accepted according to how faithfully he lived up to that standard.

The Gaudiya school of Vaishnavism to which Srila Prabhupada belongs was founded by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in Bengal five centuries ago. This Gaudiya sampradaya is officially connected with the Vaishnava school established by Madhva in the thirteenth century and also has strong philosophical and cultural bonds with the even older Sri Vaishnava school of Ramanuja.

Although the founding teachers of other Vaishnava schools each wrote major commentaries on Badarayana Vyasa’s Vedanta-sutra and their followers carried on debate with Advaita impersonalists and others on the basis of their theistic interpretation of Vedanta, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu chose not to busy His own followers in the...
same way. He proposed that the ancient Bhagavata Purana (known also as Srimad-Bhagavatam) served perfectly well as a natural commentary on the Vedanta-sutra, having been written by the same Vedavyasa. Lord Chaitanya advised His associates that since the Bhagavatam was already available and easily understandable, there was no need for them to compose new commentaries and sub-commentaries on Vedanta.

Another Purana, the Garuda Purana, corroborates Lord Chaitanya’s reliance on Srimad-Bhagavatam:

purnah so 'yam atisayah
artho 'yam brahma-sutranam
bharatartha-vininayah
gayatri-bhasya-rupo 'sau
vedartha-paribrmhitah
purananam sama-rupah
saksad bhagavatoditah
dvadasa-skandha-yuktō 'yam
sata-viccheda-samyutah
grantho 'stadasa-sahasram
sri-bhagavatabhidhah

“This [Purana] is perfectly complete. It is the purport of the Vedanta-sutra, establishes the meaning of the Mahabharata, is a commentary on Gayatri, and completes the message of the Vedas. It is the Sama Veda among the Puranas, spoken directly by an incarnation of God [Vyasa]. This work, consisting of twelve cantos, hundreds of chapters, and eighteen thousand verses, is called Srimad-Bhagavatam.”

Srila Prabhupada considered the Srimad-Bhagavatam, along with the Bhagavad-gita, the substantial foundation of his International Society for Krishna Consciousness. He created ISKCON primarily for making the theology of the Gita and Bhagavatam universally accessible, and he directed his disciples to give priority to the work of publishing and distributing these two scriptures, in English and many other languages.

Srila Prabhupada’s opus magnum, a multi-volume English translation of and commentary on the Srimad-Bhagavatam, was unfortunately left incomplete when he passed away in 1977; it was finished, however, ten years later by the collaborative effort of a few of his disciples. Having served as an editor of this entire series of the Srimad-Bhagavatam and participated in its posthumous completion, I have gathered some insights into Srila Prabhupada’s hermeneutic methodology. In this essay, I will examine Srila Prabhupada’s translation and commentary on one verse from Srimad-Bhagavatam, with the aim of showing how he based his own presentation largely on the commentaries of previous authorities.

Narada’s Allegory

Srimad-Bhagavatam is presented as literal, albeit very ancient, history. A few narrations in this Purana, however, are intended to be understood as fiction—most of them allegories devised by one of the most frequent speakers in the Bhagavatam, the itinerant preacher Narada. The text we are going to look at belongs to one of these allegorical passages, the story of King Puranjana told by Narada to Maharaja Prachinabarhi in Chapters 25-29 of the Fourth Canto.

In brief, the imaginary Puranjana is equivalent to the Everyman figure in medieval European morality plays. He represents the illusioned soul suffering from misidentification with his temporary embodiment in material life. Puranjana tries for years to enjoy with his consort, the female personification of his material intelligence; he finally succumbs to old age, disease, and death, and then, because of too much attachment to his wife, takes his next birth as a woman. This female reincarnation of Puranjana marries a pious king who dies young, leaving his wife bewildered in lamentation.

Our text occurs at this point in the narration, as the fifty-first verse of Chapter 28. It describes an unexpected visit by an old, forgotten friend. Here are the original Sanskrit text and Srila Prabhupada’s translation:

tatra purvatarah kascit
sakha brahmana atmavan
santvayan valguna samna
tam aha rudatim prabho

"My dear King, one brahmana, who was an old friend of King Puranjana, came to that place and began to pacify the Queen with sweet words."

Srila Prabhupada’s explanation of this verse, his “purport,” fills two pages. It is based on the short commentaries, each only a few lines long, by two standard Vaishnava teachers, Sridhara Swami and Vishwanatha Chakravarti. We will first describe these commentaries and then analyze how Srila Prabhupada used them.

Sridhara’s Commentary

The oldest extant commentary on Srimad-Bhagavatam was written by Sridhara Swami; older commentaries are known only by name or by isolated fragments. No solid evidence supports his exact life span; Karl Potter has tentatively assigned his birth to the beginning of the fifteenth century, though Sridhara Swami may have lived earlier than that, since less than a century later Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu described Sridhara as being a venerable authority. In India, more than one century is usually needed for a commentator on traditional literature to become established as an authority.

As far as is known, Sridhara Swami did not belong to any of the major Vaishnava schools, but was probably an initiated member of Shankara’s Advaita sampradaya. Nonetheless, the opinions he expressed in his commentaries on Srimad-Bhagavatam and the Vishnu Purana were staunchly Vaishnava. Chaitanya
Mahaprabhu's cutting comments to Vallabhacharya, a prominent Vaishnava, testify to the great respect Chaitanya had for Sridhara's opinions, as Lord Chaitanya's biographer Krishnadasa Kaviaraja recounts:

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu smilingly replied, "One who does not accept the swami [husband] as an authority I consider a prostitute. ...You have dared criticize Sridhara Swami, and you have begun your own commentary on the Srimad-Bhagavatam, not accepting his authority. That is your false pride. Sridhara Swami is the spiritual master of the entire world because by his mercy we can understand the Srimad-Bhagavatam. I therefore accept him as a spiritual master. Whatever you might write due to false pride, trying to surpass Sridhara Swami, would carry a contrary purport. Therefore no one would pay attention to it. One who comments on the Bhagavatam, following in the footsteps of Sridhara Swami will be honored and accepted by everyone." (Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, Antya-lila 7.115 and 132-136)

The two-sentence commentary of Sridhara Swami on the verse we are considering reads: "The friend who is 'very old' in the sense of being eternal without origin is the Supreme Lord, in accordance with the statement of revealed scripture beginning 'Two birds...'. He addressed her with sweet words of consolation."

In the first sentence, Sridhara Swami identifies the old friend of the queen as every soul's original friend, the supreme controller (ishvara). He supports this opinion by proposing that this verse of Srimad-Bhagavatam alludes to one of the oldest Vedic hymns. Although it is well known that the verse beginning dva suparna occurs in both the Mundaka and Shvetasvatara Upanishads, less well-known is that the verse is originally found, verbatim, in the First Mandala of the Rg Veda, the most archaic of scriptural sources:

dva suparna sayuja sak haya
samanam vrksam parisasvajate
tayor anyah pippalam svad atty
anasnann anyo 'bhicakasiti

"Two friendly companion birds together reside on one tree. One of them is eating the tree's fruits while the other does not eat but simply watches His friend."

Vaishnava commentators explain that this verse refers to God in His accompanying of the finite soul in all the soul's incarnations in material existence. In every form of life, the finite soul and Supreme Soul sit together in the heart, one of them trying to enjoy material life and the other simply waiting for His eternal friend to remember Him.

Vishwanatha's Commentary

The second commentary drawn upon by Srila Prabhupada in his purport to the Srimad-Bhagavatam 4.28.51 is the one written by Vishwanatha Chakravarti Thakura in the second half of the seventeenth century. Sri Vishwanatha Chakravarti was the most prominent spiritual master of sixth-generation Vaishnavas in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's sampradaya. Srila Vishwanatha led the Gaudiya Vaishnava community in Vrndavana during the time of the Mogul emperor Aurangzeb, who persecuted the Vaishnavas. Vishwanatha's own predecessor was the celebrated devotional poet Narottama Dasa, and among his disciples was Baladeva Vidyabhushana, author of the Govinda-bhashya commentary on Vedanta-sutra.

Vishwanatha Chakravarti's commentary on this verse is four sentences long. The first sentence suggests a deep meaning to the allegory of Queen Puranjani's lamentation: "[This verse] implies that in such a mood of distress as is suffered when one's spiritual master has departed from this world, a disciple can experience the direct presence of God."

In this realization of Vishwanatha Chakravarti, Everyman has been replaced with a rare, special soul—the surrendered disciple of a pure Vaishnava. Without any other qualifications of his own, a sincere disciple earns the right to see God simply by his attachment to his spiritual master. After the guru has passed away, the serious disciple does not lose his spiritual strength but continues to advance by remembering and executing the guru's instructions. The intense devotional mood of separation can develop into direct vision of the Supreme Person.

Vishwanatha Chakravarti's second sentence is a near exact repeat of Sridhara Swami's first sentence: "In this context, the friend who is 'very old' in the sense of being eternal without origin is the Supreme Lord, in accordance with such statements of revealed scripture as the one beginning 'Two birds...'"

In the tradition of Sanskrit commentary, this sort of "plagiarism" is considered ethical. It is appropriate to simply repeat the statements of one's predecessors when further explanation for one's own generation is not required. To pretend to be original, furthermore, is frowned upon. Most of Vishwanatha Chakravarti's contemporaries who could read Sanskrit were probably acquainted with Sridhara Swami's commentary and would have recognized this citation; for those unfamiliar with Sridhara, Vishwanatha was being considerate by passing on the past master's words.

The third sentence explains why the old friend in the allegory appears as a brahmana: "He [the Supreme Lord in the heart] is a brahmana, or in other words, he is in the guise of a brahmana; by this [the present verse] means to inform us that without pure love of God one can never have direct realization of God's true, original form."

The sincere disciple represented by Queen Puranjani is not prepared to fully realize God's personality, but even in His disguised form the Lord kindly gives the..."
soul instructions that enable him to gradually achieve perfection.

Vishwanatha Chakravarti's fourth sentence explains another word in the verse, the adjective atma-van (literally, “self-possessed” or “self-realized”), which further characterizes the brahmana: “Self-possessed here means also having His original form, which He kept hidden within Himself.”

Ordinarily, God, who sits silently within every person’s heart, limits His functions to being a witness, sanctioner, and facilitator of the living being’s endeavours. In the case of the rare soul who has become purified from material desires, God advises the soul directly from within the heart how to progress toward liberation. Besides being the Supersoul, however, He is simultaneously nondifferent from God in His full personal form. Those who progress beyond liberation to pure devotion thus realize their own personal relationship with God.

**Srila Prabhupada’s Purport**

Now we can look at Srila Prabhupada’s purport. He begins by retelling Vishwanatha Chakravarti’s second sentence, which, as we have seen, is Sridhara Swami’s first sentence and refers to the Upanishads and the Rg Veda. Vishwanatha Chakravarti had said: “In this context, the friend who is ‘very old’ in the sense of being eternal without origin is the Supreme Lord, in accordance with such statements of revealed scripture as the one beginning ‘Two birds...’”

Srila Prabhupada writes:

The appearance of an old friend in the form of a brahmana is very significant. In His Paramatma feature, Krishna is the old friend of everyone. According to Vedic injunction, Krishna is sitting with the living entity side by side. According to the shruti-mantra (dva suparna sayuja sakhayah), the Lord is sitting within the heart of every living entity as suhrt, the best friend. The Lord is always eager to have the living entity come home, back to Godhead. Sitting with the living entity as witness, the Lord gives him all chances to enjoy himself materially, but whenever there is an opportunity, the Lord gives good counsel and advises the living entity to abandon trying to become happy through material adjustment and instead turn his face toward the Supreme Personality of Godhead and surrender unto Him.

Srila Prabhupada next presents the idea of Vishwanatha Chakravarti’s first sentence, which reads: “[This verse] implies that in such a mood of distress as is suffered when one’s spiritual master has departed from this world, a disciple can experience the direct presence of God.”

From this, Srila Prabhupada’s derives the following:

When one becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As explained before, this means meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the instruction of the spiritual master. This is technically called vani-seva.

In Sanskrit the word vani means “the faculty of speech,” “words,” and “instructions.” Seva means “service.” A disciple can serve his spiritual master’s body (vapuh) whenever opportunities arise, but more important is serving his vani. Vani-seva is not limited by the absence of the person being served. Prabhupada continues in his purport:

Srila Vishwanatha Chakravarti Thakura states in his Bhagavad-gita commentary on the verse vyavasayatmika buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana (Bg. 2.41) that one should serve the words of the spiritual master. The disciple must stick to whatever the spiritual master orders. Simply
by following on that line, one sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Then Srila Prabhupada renders the third sentence of Vishwanatha Chakravarti: “He [the Supreme Lord in the heart] is a brahmana, or in other words, he is in the guise of a brahmana; by this [the present verse] means to inform us that without pure love of God one can never have direct realization of God’s true, original form.”

Srila Prabhupada writes,

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Paramatma, appeared before the Queen as a brahmana, but why didn’t He appear in His original form as Sri Krishna? Srila Vishwanatha Chakravarti Thakura remarks that unless one is very highly elevated in loving the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one cannot see Him as He is.

Vishwanatha Chakravarti’s fourth sentence was “Self-possessed” here means also having His original form, which He kept hidden within Himself.”

Srila Prabhupada’s version of this is:

Nonetheless, if one sticks to the principles enunciated by the spiritual master, somehow or other he is in association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Since the Lord is in the heart, He can advise a sincere disciple from within. This is also confirmed in Bhagavad-gita (10.10):

```
tesam satata-yuktanam
bhajatam priti-purvakam
dadami buddhi-yogam tam
yena mam upayanti te
```

“To those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.”

Srila Prabhupada finishes his purport with a citation from another Vaishnava authority:

In conclusion, if a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by vani or vapuh. This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Instead of being eager to see the Lord in some bush of Vrindavana while at the same time engaging in sense gratification, if one instead sticks to the principle of following the words of the spiritual master, he will see the Supreme Lord without difficulty. Srila Bilvamangala Thakura has therefore said:

```
bhaktis tvayi sthiratara bhagava yadi syad
daivena nah phalati divya-kisora-murtih
muktih svayam muculitanjali sevate ‘smam
dharmartha-kama-gatayah samaya-pratiksa
```

“If I am engaged in devotional service unto You, my dear Lord, then very easily can I perceive Your presence everywhere. And as far as liberation is concerned, I think that liberation stands at my door with folded hands, waiting to serve me—and all material conveniences of dharma [religiosity], artha [economic development], and kama [sense gratification] stand with her.” (Krishna-kamamrita 107)

If one is very highly advanced in devotional service, he will have no difficulty in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one engages in the service of the spiritual master, he not only sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead but attains liberation. As far as material conveniences are concerned, they automatically come, just as the maidservants of a queen follow the queen wherever she goes. Liberation is no problem for the pure devotee, and all material conveniences are simply awaiting him at all stages of life.

This single text, of course, is only a tiny sample of Srila Prabhupada’s purports. A much broader survey needs to be taken before a fair appraisal can be made of how he used his predecessor’s commentaries. The project of researching the sources of Srila Prabhupada’s purports in Srimad-Bhagavatam and Bhagavad-gita As It Is is only beginning, and requires the ongoing diligence of any number of disciples and scholars.

Srila Prabhupada was firmly convinced of the relevance of Srimad-Bhagavatam. In his view, the Bhagavatam’s teachings were timeless, the perennial science of God consciousness. His own responsibility was simply to translate them without distortion. If the instructions of his authoritative predecessors were properly served, the whole world would surely benefit.

Admittedly, the ideas and images Srila Prabhupada strove to convey in his purports are sometimes difficult for modern readers to comprehend, what to speak of assimilate. The original texts he translated are messages from a different world, ancient and foreign. But Prabhupada felt the urgent need to deliver these messages as best he could. He was thus always concerned with how to make the Bhagavatam’s enlightening instructions comprehensible to the average, contemporary public. Certainly not everyone would understand, but even if only a few readers received benefit from this transcendental knowledge, the endeavour could be counted as a great success.

Before Srila Prabhupada came to America in 1965 with his first English volumes of Srimad-Bhagavatam, a well-intentioned person could have questioned him, “Why present this work, which has a very small audience? Why not something else, easier and more popular?” Prabhupada, however, did not think in such a way. To him it did not matter that there were no readers for the Srimad-Bhagavatam; he created his own readership. In a few years, thousands of disciples became serious students of the Bhagavatam, and millions of other people around the world brought the book into their homes. This is the sign of a great author—that he creates an audience where there was none. 😊

Krishna Voice, July 2015
Featured Article: Nava-kalevara

The Nava-kalevara festival attracts millions of devotees from across the world to Jagannath Puri when the Deities of Jagannath, Baladeva, Subhadra and Sudarshana at the Lord Jagannath temple are replaced with a new set of Deities. The next Nava-kalevara is scheduled to be celebrated in the month of July, 2015 after a gap of 19 years. It is expected that more than 50 lakh pilgrims will visit Puri on the occasion of this mega festival. The Odisha Government is preparing for this festival and taking up many infrastructure and health-care projects at an estimated cost of Rs. 1000 crores to manage the pilgrims.
Read More: http://goo.gl/omtqA

Hare Krishna World

Panihati Chida-dahi festival celebration
The Panihati Chida-dahi festival was celebrated at Sri Radha Krishna Temple, ISKCON, Bangalore and its other centres in different cities on May 31, 2015.
Read More: http://goo.gl/AWcSNA

Krishna Katha

Puri Jagannath Ratha Yatra
This year, the annual Ratha Yatra of Lord Jagannath is scheduled to be celebrated on July 18 in the holy town of Puri in Odisha.
Read More: http://goo.gl/gBWbNB

Timeless Wisdom

Is our suffering real or just a dream?
We think that we are the body even though we are not the body. The result of such thinking is that we have to suffer in this material world in so many ways.
Read More: http://goo.gl/YgkUs3

Pilgrimage

Sri Gopala Krishna Temple of Kanipura
The Kanipura Gopala Krishna temple is situated in a town called Kumbala, 13 km north of Kasaragod city in Kerala and about 35 km from Mangalore.
Read More: https://goo.gl/RO9mkY

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To know more about the seva, please visit www.iskconbangalore.org/sudama-seva

Reviews from Trip Advisor

Chennaredddy
Nice temple
I have been there with my family members. Very well organized and well-constructed. Planning to visit soon again.

Sajal
Meet Krishna along with Radha in a peaceful abode high on a hill top
Beautiful and clean entrance leads you to a serene and very peaceful place of sitting in front of God. I feel like forgetting whole world outside once I sit in front of God. I will suggest don’t miss evening arati, it is so peaceful and i don’t have proper words to suggest but I wish you should be a part of that arati procession.

Shyam
Magnificent structure
The temple looks marvellous and stunning. One enjoys the chanting and calmness inside the temple. They have many shops where you can buy spiritual books.

Jayant
A wonderful place to visit
We were wondering what to do on a Saturday evening and decided to go to the ISKCON temple in Bengaluru. The trip was worth it. The architecture is awesome and the sanctum sanctorum takes your breath away. The magnificence of the place and the devotion it creates in people from all over the country is really great...

To write a review visit: www.tripadvisor.in

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The Story of Panihati Festival

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Panihati Festival Glimpses 2015

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Panihati Chida Dahi Festival

Bangalore
Sri T B Jayachandra, Minister of Law, Government of Karnataka, inaugurated Swacha Mandir Abhiyan in Kote Venkateswara Temple, Bangalore. A team of 60 ISKCON-Bangalore devotees participated in the temple cleaning service.
ISKCON Bangalore has started free Annadana for all devotees visiting the temple from 24th, January 2015. The programme is running very successfully, feeding over 2000 people per day. Annadana is considered the most sacred activity in any faith or society. We encourage all the donors of the temple to support this mammoth project.

DONOR TESTIMONIAL

I am a retired Engineer residing in Vijayanagar, Bengaluru. I belong to a community called ‘Ashtagrama Iyers’. Ashtagrama means 8 villages located in Kolar district, about 70 kilometers from Bengaluru.

Annadaana means feeding the people with free food. In our Indian culture we give more importance to treat the guest with respect and offer food to him to his satisfaction. That is why the sloka “Athithi devo bhava” (the guest is god) is put into practice in our country. I notice ISKCON is following this sloka religiously. Every pilgrim/devotee who visits this temple can take lunch as prasadam of Lord Krishna after darshan. Food here is prepared in a clean atmosphere hygienically. One can eat as much one wants. Food is served with love and affection and one carries a sweet memory of one’s visit to the temple. It is praiseworthy to note that unique technology has been employed to prepare the food. It is really an engineering marvel. Several thousands of pilgrims take food daily. It is a treat to watch the whole process of food preparation. Hats off to the ingenious mind which conceived the idea of mechanized food preparation on a large scale here.

I was delighted to see Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa, President of ISKCON-Bangalore in person during my recent visit to the temple. He appeared to be a simple, humble and unassuming person. I was wondering in my mind how this simple man was able to manage the whole affairs of ISKCON so effectively and efficiently like a professional person.

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'Yoga for Happiness' - for Chanters Club members

While the International Yoga Day was observed on 21st June, 2015 in India and other parts of the world in a big way, it was a unique day of education on bhakti-yoga for the members of Hare Krishna Chanters Club at ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna Temple, Bangalore. The Chanters Club is conducting a year-long spiritual course called Yoga for Happiness consisting of 12 monthly sessions. The first session held on this day saw around 250 participants.

After its inception on 7th September last year, the Chanters Club conducted two japa sessions as part of its various programmes to support, guide and train the members on the practice of chanting the Hare Krishna mantra on a regular basis. This programme gave the members a higher understanding of the spiritual significance of chanting the mantra, along with important guidelines to practice it in an efficient manner. The Yoga for Happiness course is intended to guide them further on the fundamentals of bhakti-yoga which they can practice at home, apart from their commitment to chant one round (108 times) of Hare Krishna mantra every day.

The session began with Harinama Sankirtana which was conducted by temple devotees. Then there was a video show on the design and construction of the ISKCON temple on Hare Krishna Hill depicting the trials and tribulations the devotees went through before the magnificent temple manifested on the hill. It was a testimony to the power of the holy names of the Lord by which all the obstacles were removed.

The session was inaugurated by the Temple President Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa. He gave a talk on developing Krishna Consciousness based on five verses selected from the Bhagavad-gita. He explained the importance of chanting the Hare Krishna mantra, remembering Lord Krishna always, worshipping Him and offering Him food. Each verse was explained and illustrated with a video which demonstrated the principles in the life of devotees like Prahlada and Sudama, as narrated in the scriptures. Then there was a question and answer session followed by one round of Hare Krishna japa by all. Some of the members shared their experiences on how chanting brought about a significant change in their lives. The event concluded with lunch prasadam for all the participants.

All those who took part in the session found it quite inspiring and enlightening. Over 100 members of the club registered for the year-long course and did not want to miss out on any session.
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