SRI GAURA PURNIMA
Glorious appearance day of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Wednesday March 23, 2016

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

Maha Sankirtana-Pallaki Utsava - Abhisheka & Arati
Video Presentation - Prasadam Feast

śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu doyā koro more
tomā binā ke doyālu jagat-samsāre
My dear Lord Caitanya, please be merciful unto me!
Who can be more merciful than Your Lordship, within these three worlds?

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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, came to America in 1965, at age 69, to fulfill his spiritual master’s request that he teach the science of Krishna consciousness throughout the English-speaking world. In a dozen years he published some seventy volumes of translation and commentary on India’s Vedic literature, and these are now standard in universities worldwide. Meanwhile, travelling almost nonstop, Srila Prabhupada moulded his international society into a world wide confederation of ashramas, schools, temples and farm communities. He passed away in 1977, in Vrindavana, the place most sacred to Lord Krishna. His disciples and followers are carrying forward the movement he started.

To know more about Srila Prabhupada visit www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada
Purification beyond Ritual

All religious scriptures prescribe pious acts, but pious acts alone aren’t enough for liberation.

A lecture at Kumbha-mela in Allahabad, India, on January 16, 1971 by His Divine Grace A C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

na niskrtair uditair brahma-vadibhis
tatha visuddhyaty aghavan vratadibhih
yatha harer nama-padair udbhartais
tad uttamasloka-gunopalambham

"By following the Vedic ritualistic ceremonies or undergoing atonement, sinful men do not become as purified as by chanting once the holy name of Lord Hari. Although ritualistic atonement may free one from sinful reactions, it does not awaken devotional service, unlike the chanting of the Lord's holy names, which reminds one of the Lord's fame, qualities, attributes, pastimes, and paraphernalia." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.2.11)

There are twenty kinds of ritualistic religious scripture, out of which Manu-samhita is considered to be the greatest. These scriptures prescribe many methods for getting oneself released from the reaction of sinful activities.

Anyone who is engaged in karma is performing sinful activities. A karmi is one who is working for his own benefit. Everyone is working so hard not for others' benefit but for his personal benefit. That is called karma. And whenever you perform karma for your personal interest there must be some sinful activity. Therefore every karmi is a sinful man. This is the clear understanding. No karmi can live without being sinful.

Therefore how can one work and avoid sin? Take the example of the government. The government gives you license, say, for business. Every businessman is given some license: the municipality gives a license; the sales tax department gives a license. There are so many rules for obtaining licenses that a businessman has to follow. There are rules and regulations because all these departments know it very well that any businessman or karmi is sure to commit sinful activities. Therefore there are so many regulations just to stop him as far as possible from sinful activities. Similarly, there are twenty kinds of dharma-shastra, which tell how one can live faithfully and religiously. The directions are there in the scriptures written by Parasara, Manu, and many other sages.

So therefore it is said here, na niskrtair uditair brahma-vadibhih. Brahma-vadi means those who are trying to lead persons to realize Brahman. The whole direction of the Vedic injunctions is to lead us to understand this point: “I am not this material body; I am spirit soul.” And in order to understand this factual position, there are so many directions in the dharma-shastra, or religious scriptures.

You'll find in a later chapter of this volume of Srimad-Bhagavatam that Yamaraja will say, dharmam tu saksad bhagavat-pranitam: “Originally, the regulator of religious principles is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” Therefore Krishna is sometimes addressed as dharma-setu. Setu means bridge. We have to cross over. The whole plan is that we have to cross over the ocean of nescience in which we are now situated. The material existence is an ocean of nescience, and one has to cross over it then one gets real life.

This present life is not real life. People are so foolish. They do not take it very seriously because they do not know that they are eternal. That is ignorance. Bhagavad-gita begins from the knowledge that the living soul is eternal: na hanyate hanyamane sarire. But people are in ignorance. They take it as a matter of fact that this life, this body, is all in all; and after death there is no more body, so who cares for sinful activities? That is another ignorance. And in order to give them direction, there are so many religious scriptures.

Therefore it is said, dharmena hinah pasubhih samanah: “If one is not following the principles of religious scriptures, one is no better than an animal.” It doesn't matter whether it is Hindu religion or Christian religion or Muslim religion. It doesn't matter. But a civilized human being must follow some religious principles. That is the aim of human life. And anyone who does not follow any religious scripture is simply an animal. That is the position of the present world. We may claim to be Hindu or Muslim or Christian, but nobody cares for religion. They are simply karmis. Therefore they are all sinful.

Now, here the Vishnuduta says, “The directions given in the religious scriptures to get out of the reactions of sinful
activities are not sufficient." For example, in the Christian religion there is the direction that if anyone is sinful he should go to a priest and confess that "I have committed these things." And if the priest, who is supposed to be a representative of God or Christ, excuses the sinner because of his confession, then the sinful activities become null and void. But this verse says that this direction cannot purify the sinful man because the same man who has confessed that "I have committed these sins" comes out of the church and again commits the same sins. Therefore he is not purified.

This is not only in the Christian religion. In every religion there are some prescribed methods for purification. Because it is accepted that every man is sinful, therefore in religious scriptures there are certain methods of purification. But here the Vishnuduta says that these prescribed methods, although they are authorized, cannot purify the heart of the follower of that religion.

You can see also in the Hindu and Muslim religions that even if they perform the ritualistic ceremonies, they do not cease from committing sins. They are just like a rascal patient. He goes to the physician, who gives him some medicine and some direction. The physician says, "You take this medicine. Do not do this. Do not eat so many things. You eat like this." So the patient takes the medicine, and for the time being he follows. But again he commits the same mistake, and again he goes to the physician—"Doctor, please give me medicine." This is going on. So this kind of treatment is not accepted by the Vishnuduta.

Therefore it is said here, "Such prescriptions for performing ritualistic ceremonies are not sufficient to purify a person." But if one chants the holy name of God, the Hare Krishna mantra, once only, one is purified. The purification of chanting harer-nama (the name of Hari, or Krishna) is that as soon as you chant the holy name of Krishna, immediately you will see the form of Krishna, you will realize the qualities of Krishna, and you will remember the pastimes of Krishna. That is the result of pure chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra.

Srila Jiva Gosvami has said that a pure devotee who chants the Hare Krishna mantra experiences immediately Krishna's name, form, qualities, pastimes, and so on. Simply by chanting Krishna's name, you will feel the form of Krishna: "Here is Krishna. Here are His qualities. Oh, Krishna is so qualified. He is so kind. He is so magnanimous." You will remember so many of His qualities. Then you'll remember His pastimes: "Oh, Krishna instructed Arjuna. Krishna played with His cowherd boys. Krishna had very nice talks with the gopis and with His mother, Yashoda." These things will be remembered.

This is the factual perfection of chanting. Although Ajamila became fallen in later age, in his early life he was a brahmachari (celibate student). He was being trained by his father, and he knew the pastimes, the form, the names of Narayana. But by bad association, for the time being he forgot. Then as soon as he chanted the name of Narayana, he remembered all these—Narayana's form, pastimes, and so on. Therefore he was saved. Try to understand this.

One should know that offenseless chanting means remembering the form of Krishna. Therefore Mayavadis, those who are impersonalists' cannot think of the form of the Lord, nor of His pastimes. They do not believe in the pastimes of the Lord. They think these pastimes are maya (illusion). Krishna's transcendental pastimes—they think they are maya. Because they are impersonalists, they think His form is maya. Therefore Krishna says, janma karma ca me divyam: "My birth and activities are transcendental." The rascals cannot understand the activities and pastimes of Krishna. They think they are maya. But they are divyam, transcendental, not of this material nature. Krishna-lila is not of the material nature. Krishna says that anyone who knows this factually, in truth, he only is immediately liberated.

Here it is said that simply by chanting "Narayana, Narayana," if immediately you remember the nature of the form of Krishna, the nature of His pastimes, the nature of His entourage, then you immediately become liberated. That is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita:

jamma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvatah
tyaktva deham punarjanma
naiti mam eti so 'rjuna

"One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna."

Therefore chanting is so easy and sublime. One who is offenselessly chanting the Hare Krishna mantra will always remember Krishna's form, Krishna's pastimes, Krishna's qualities, Krishna's entourage. He will remember all these things, and that remembering will make him liberated. By offenseless chanting one is liberated.
We should therefore be very careful not to commit offenses. So long as you chant the Hare Krishna mantra, you remain liberated. Actually, Srila Rupa Gosvami has said that chanting is possible only by the liberated soul: ayi mukta-kulair upasyamanam. When Rupa Gosvami glorifies the holy name, he says, mukta-kulair upasya: “Those who are liberated can chant the pure holy name of the Lord.” And Parikshit Maharaja also has stated in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, nivrtta-tarsair upagiyamanat: “The holy name of Krishna can be chanted by persons who are nivrta-tarsaih.” Nivrta means those who have completely ceased from material desire. They can chant. The holy name of God, Krishna, can be chanted by persons who are completely liberated from all kinds of material desire. That is the pure stage of devotional service.

Srila Rupa Gosvami states,

anyabhilasita-sunyam
jnana-karmady-anavrtam
anukulyena krishnanusilanam bhaktir uttama

“One who has become completely freed from all kinds of material desires can engage in pure devotional service.” Jnana, the cultivation of knowledge, and karma, the cultivation of pious activities, are also on the material
field. To become very pious does not mean that one is liberated. A good man is also a conditioned soul. He is bound up by his good condition. A brahmana, for example, has acquired good qualities, but that does not mean that he is a devotee. You will find many good men, but you will rarely find a pure devotee. So a good man is not necessarily a devotee. Try to distinguish. A good man is good for this material existence, but a devotee is different from a good man.

For example, Arjuna was engaged in killing. People may think, “Oh, Arjuna is not a very good man: he is killing his grandfather; he is killing his nephews and devastating the whole family. Oh, he is not a good man.” Sometimes people comment like that But Krishna says, bhakto ‘si me sakha ceti: "You are My very dear friend.”

Just try to understand. In the estimation of the material world, Arjuna is not a good man, because he is killing his own kinsmen. But in the estimation of Krishna, he is a dear friend and devotee. So that is the difference between a devotee and a good man of this world. A devotee is naturally a very good man, but when he acts just like a bad man on behalf of Krishna, he does not fall down. He still remains a pure devotee.

There is a class of persons known as sahajiyas. They think, "Krishna's rasa-lila is very nice, but Krishna's fighting with the demons and killing the demons—that is not very nice." But they do not know the Absolute Truth. Krishna is good in any circumstance, whether He is enjoying the company of the gopis or He is killing the demons. That is the Absolute Truth.

So these things should be understood. So if you remember any krishna-lila, any of Krishna's activities, by chanting the Hare Krishna mantra, then you are liberated. Immediately you are liberated. This we learn from the authoritative description of Srimad-Bhagavatam.

On the other hand, it is said here, na niskrtair uditair brahma-vadibhih: those who are very much anxious to realize Brahman—the Brahmavadis—have prescribed so many ritualistic methods, but these methods are not sufficient because they cannot elevate a person to the standard of a pure devotee.

This Kumbha-mela arrangement is a prescription by the Brahmavadis. There is a prescription that one should go
Srila 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.

During this time and live on the bank of the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna for at least three days. Then he becomes eligible to enter into the heavenly kingdom. The people who have come here are ambitious to enter into the heavenly kingdom. But a devotee does not care for the heavenly kingdom. A devotee doesn’t care a fig for any planet within this material world. Devotees know the benefit of entering into the heavenly kingdom: There is no benefit.

Suppose I may get a life span of thousands of years and enjoy a very high standard of life, with women, money, wine, and so forth. But what is the benefit? There is no benefit.

I was very glad to read an article sent by one of my disciples in Boston. He has written, "What is this society and family? It is all hellish. We do not wish to live without Krishna." This is a very nice statement. That is real realization: "We do not like to live without Krishna."

So anyone who has realized, "Any amount of material happiness is to be kicked out. I don't care for it. I simply care for Krishna, how Krishna will be happy"—that person is a pure devotee. Anukulyena Krishnanusilanam. Anukulyena means “favourably.” We should simply try to please Krishna favourably, not unfavourably like Kamsa. Kamsa was also Krishna conscious, always thinking of Krishna, but unfavourably. His business was how to kill Krishna. He was thinking of Krishna, but he was thinking. "How can I kill Krishna?" That is called prakriti, "unfavourable."

Pratikula is not bhakti. When you think of Krishna against His desire, against the principle of satisfying Him, that is not bhakti. although that is also Krishna consciousness. An enemy of Krishna’s is also thinking of Krishna. That does not mean that he is a devotee of Krishna. He is Krishna conscious unfavourably. Therefore it is not bhakti. You have to act favourably.

So Arjuna became a devotee because he acted favourably for the satisfaction of Krishna. It was not favourable to material life, but it was favourable to Krishna. That should be your business: how Krishna should be satisfied. And therefore naturally it is concluded that you have to satisfy his representative. Therefore we have sung just now, yasya prasadad bhagavat-prasadah: if you satisfy Krishna's representative, then He is satisfied.

For example, in an office the proprietor has a head of a department If you satisfy the head of the department, the proprietor is satisfied. The report goes to the proprietor—“This clerk is working very nicely.” So your promotion and increase in pay are already there.

So a pure devotee’s business is how to satisfy Krishna. And as soon as he chants the Hare Krishna mantra, immediately he remembers the whole plan of how to satisfy Krishna. Therefore he’s liberated.

Thank you very much. Hare Krishna.

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The Function of the Soul

This exchange between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and some of his disciples took place in Seattle, Washington, on October 10, 1968.

Srila Prabhupada: How is the body growing? On account of the presence of that small particle, the soul. Take, for example, this boy. This boy has got a small stature of body. Now, this boy will grow a very stout and strong body in his young manhood, say by the age of twenty-four years. Then that young-man body will go; another body will come.

How is it all becoming possible? On account of the presence of the small particle, the soul. But if that particle of soul is taken away or if it goes away, this body will no longer grow or change.

These are the subject matters of meditation. But when you come to the point of understanding that "I am not this body—I am spirit soul," then the next stage will be "What is the function of the soul?"

That function of the soul is Krishna consciousness, working in Krishna consciousness. So in the present age, one has to take directly to the function of the soul. Then other understandings will automatically come.
It is not possible at present that you can go to a secluded place and peacefully sit there and meditate. It is not possible in this age. It is impossible. If you try artificially, it will be a failure.

Therefore, you have to take to this process: harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam/ kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatir anyatha—"In this age of Kali, there is no alternative for self-realization but this chanting of Hare Krishna, chanting of the Lord's holy name." That is the practical, real fact.

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, is there any way for a Christian in this age—without the help of a spiritual master—to reach the spiritual sky through reading the words of Jesus Christ in the Bible and trying to follow his teachings?

Srila Prabhupada: When you read the Bible, you are following the spiritual master. How can you say "without a spiritual master"? As soon as you read the Bible, that means you are following the instruction of Lord Jesus Christ. That means you are following the spiritual master. So where is the opportunity of being without the spiritual master?

Disciple: I was referring to a living spiritual master.

Srila Prabhupada: There is no question of whether the spiritual master is "living." The spiritual master is eternal.

Now, your question was what to do "without the spiritual master." Without the spiritual master you cannot be, at any stage of your life. You may accept this spiritual master or that spiritual master. That is a different thing. But you have to accept.

When you say "reading the Bible," that means you are following the spiritual master, represented by some priest or some clergyman in the line of Lord Jesus Christ. So in any case, you have to follow the spiritual master. There cannot be the question of "without the spiritual master." Is that clear?

Disciple: I mean, for instance, we couldn't understand the teachings of Bhagavad-gita without your help, Srila Prabhupada, without your presentation.

Srila Prabhupada: Similarly, you have to understand the Bible with the help of Christ and the priest in the church.

Disciple: Yes, but is the priest receiving a good interpretation from his disciplic succession or his bishop? Because there seems to be some kind of discrepancy in the interpretation of the Bible. There are many different sects of Christianity that interpret the Bible in different ways.

Srila Prabhupada: Of course, there cannot be any interpretation of the Bible. Then the Bible itself has no authority. It is just like the old saying, “Call a spade a spade.” Now, if someone calls it something else, that is another thing. He’s not a spiritual master.

For instance, this is a watch. Everybody has called it a watch. But if I called it a spectacle, then what is the value of my being a so-called spiritual master? I’m misleading. (Laughter.) “It is a watch.” That I must say.

So when someone makes some misrepresentation, he’s not a bona fide spiritual master. Reject such a spiritual master immediately.

That intelligence you must have: Who is a pseudo spiritual master, and who is a real spiritual master? Otherwise, you'll be cheated. And that is being done. Everyone is interpreting in his own way.

The Bhagavad-gita—there are thousands of editions, and all of them have tried to interpret in their own way. All nonsense. They should all be thrown away. Simply you have to read Bhagavad-gita as it is. Then you'll understand.

There is no question of interpretation. Then the authority is gone. As soon as you interpret there is no authority.

Take a law book. Do you mean to say that in court, if you say before the judge, “My dear lord, I interpret this passage in this way,” it will be accepted? The judge will at once say, “Who are you to interpret? You have no right.”

After all, then what would be the authority of the law book if everyone came and said, "I interpret in this way"? When is interpretation required? When a thing is not understood. If I say "This is a watch" and everyone understands that "This is a watch, yes," then where is the opportunity of interpreting that "This is a spectacle"?

So unnecessary interpretation is not required, and that is not bona fide. And those who are interpreting unnecessarily—they should be rejected immediately. Immediately, without any consideration.

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**Fasting**

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**Festivals**

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Kimberly picks up a tape by a rock band known for its satanic image and clicks it into her Walkman. Putting on the earphones, she turns the volume way up.

"Maybe I was just made evil," says Kimberley to herself. That leads to another thought. "Maybe some people are made good. Like Heather. Everything always seems to go right for Heather. God seems to like her."

Kimberley’s not a theologian, but she’s contemplating something that Western theologians have discussed for centuries without reaching any definite conclusions. The question is this: Does God choose certain individuals or groups for salvation? In other words, are there chosen people? And, alternatively, are certain persons selected for condemnation?

The technical term for the matter under discussion is predestination, a word which implies that our final destination, be it heaven or hell, is programmed into our souls from the beginning of our existence. Thus the question of predestination is closely connected with the concept of free will.

A lot has been spoken and written about all this, but most of it is highly speculative. Not surprisingly, many of the views expressed contradict each other.

Speaking of the Judeo-Christian tradition, C. T. McIntyre writes in his article on predestination in The Encyclopedia of Religion, "Advocates of all positions have appealed to the scriptures, although the scriptures do not contain doctrines of free will and predestination, nor even these words."

It would be too bad, however, if we had to
rely on theological speculators to answer such questions. It's hard to trust them, because the human mind is so limited and prone to error. That's why God gives scriptures in the first place.

According to the sages of India. God has given different scriptures to different people at different times and places according to their level of understanding. Some scriptures therefore give more information than others. The Bible and the Koran, for example, give only very limited information about the soul and the important questions of free will and predestination. The Vedic scriptures of India, however, give more detailed information, which will help us examine these questions without going off into the insecure realm of imagination and speculation.

The basic message of Vedic literature on the question of predestination is that the choosing is done by the individual soul and not by God. We are choosing people, not chosen people.

God says He is neutral. In Bhagavad-gita (9.29), Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, says, "I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all." We could say that God is the original equal opportunity employer.

Yet Krishna goes on to state in that same passage of the Gita, "But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him." God exhibits no special favouritism to any particular person or group. But if someone voluntarily behaves in a friendly way toward Him, He responds in kind.

Now one might object: "Ha! So if you're not friendly to God, then He zaps you, right? That's not very cool." But no, you zap yourself, so to speak.

The Vedanta-sutra (2.1.34) says vaishamya-nairghrmye na sapeksatvat tatha hi darsayati: The Lord neither hates nor likes anyone, though He appears to." He surely does appear to, one might be tempted to say.

The reason God appears to hate one person and like another is related to the fact that He arranges to fulfill the desires of each individual, giving each his or her justly deserved reward or punishment. A perverted desire yields a bad result. A good desire yields a good result. Mixed desires yield mixed results. Because the results come by God's arrangement it looks like He is to blame. But He's not really.

Consider the example of a judge. One person comes before the judge and receives an award of a million dollars in a lawsuit against an insurance company. Another person comes before the judge and is sentenced to ten years in prison for fraud. The judge is responsible for neither the award of a million dollars nor the ten-year prison sentence. The law is there, and in the final analysis the persons who come before the judge have by their own behaviour determined the results they will receive. The judge is neutral—at least he should be.

One difficulty with the suggestion that God is fulfilling our desires is that we do not appear to always get from God what we consciously want. If I want a million dollars, then why don't I get it? Right away!

The reason is that the results of our desires and activities accumulate over the course of many lifetimes, as we take on one material body after another. If in a past life we unlawfully deprived others of wealth, we may now have to suffer for that by having unfulfilled desires for riches. In other words, what we desire is weighed against what we deserve.

Another consideration is that the desire to get rich quick by demanding large amounts of cash from God is a perverted desire. Our desires are evaluated according to a standard not of our own making. And it is according to that standard, whatever it may be that the results of the specific desires are calculated. Maybe those results will match up with our expectations, and maybe they won't. But as the Bhagavad-gita teaches, whatever we get is exactly what we deserve, which might be the pain of poverty, or a struggling middle-class existence, or being rich but not rich enough.

So to sum up. God sets up the system but is not responsible for what we get. The responsibility lies squarely with each one of us. As Krishna says in the Gita (4.13), "Although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the nondoer." He also says in the Gita (9.9), "I am ever detached from all these material activities, seated as though neutral." And in Chapter Thirteen He says, The living entity is the cause of the various sufferings and enjoyments in this world."

Now, if you want to criticize God for setting up the system as He did (so that we get bad results for certain desires and actions), you can. But it really doesn't do much good. Srila Prabhupada says it well in his purport to Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.2.39:

The Lord does not create this material world at anyone's request... If one argues, "Why does He act in this way?" the answer is that He can do so because He is supreme... The answer is that to prove His omnipotence He can do anything, and no one can question Him. If He were answerable to us concerning why He does something and why He does not. His supremacy would be curtailed.

Certain people will be satisfied with a statement like this; others will feel extreme dissatisfaction, even repulsion. Here we are getting to the heart of the whole question.

Krishna Voice, March 2016
By nature we are capable of liking God or disliking Him, of obeying His orders or disobeying them. More accurately, according to the Vedas our natural position is to serve God with love; and if we so desire we can give up that position and attempt to serve our own selfish desires.

The Vedic literature gives reliable information about the fundamental nature of the living being. The Vishnu Purana states:

\[
\text{vishnu-saktih para prokta} \\
\text{ksetrajnah tyatha para} \\
\text{avidya-karma-samjnyaya} \\
\text{tritiya saktr isyate}
\]

"The potency of Lord Vishnu is summarized in three categories, namely the spiritual potency, the living entities, and ignorance. The spiritual potency is full of knowledge; the living entities, although belonging to the spiritual potency, are subject to bewilderment; and the third energy, which is full of ignorance, is always visible in frutitive activities."

In other words, God has three main energies: the spiritual energy, the energy composed of the innumerable living entities, or souls, and the material energy. The living entities are known as the tatastha-shakti, or the marginal potency of the Lord, because they have the ability to identify with either matter or spirit to exist in full knowledge or in total illusion.

By nature, however, the soul belongs to the spiritual potency. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita (15.7), wherein Lord Krishna says, mamaivamso jiva-loke jiva-bhutah sanatanah: "The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts."

We have always been around. As God has always existed, we have always existed. Some theologians speculate that the soul comes into being when the present body comes into being. This is not only illogical (how can something eternal have a beginning?) but unsupported by scripture.

The Vedic scriptures further state, vasanti yatra purusah sarve vaikuntha-murtayah: "In the spiritual planets everyone lives in bodies featured like the Supreme Personality of Godhead’s."

So if in our original condition we were eternal beings living in the spiritual world, in spiritual bodies like God’s, then what happened to us? What are we doing here, subject to birth and death?

An obvious question and a good one. Lord Krishna tells us in Bhagavad-gita (7.27).
iccha-dvesa-samutthena
dvandva-mohena bharata
sarva-bhutani sammoham
sarge yanti parantapa

“O scion of Bharata, O conqueror of the foe, all living entities are born into delusion, bewildered by dualities arisen from desire and hate.”

So one component of the reason for our being in the material world rather than the spiritual world, our real home, is that at some point we developed a desire to enjoy separately from the Supreme Lord, Krishna. Instead of serving Him with love, we desired to serve our own false ego. Although Krishna knows we can never be satisfied without serving Him in our natural position. He nonetheless respects our independence and free will and allows us to act out our impulses to enjoy separately from Him in the material world.

A second component of the reason for our being in the material world is our hatred for, or envy of, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One aspect of envy is the desire to usurp the position of the envied person. For example, if one envies a wealthy person, one may desire to become the enjoyer of that person’s wealth. Similarly, the envious soul may desire to take the Lord’s position as the supreme enjoyer. This necessarily involves partial or total forgetfulness of God’s existence.

One thing to keep in mind is that no one can honestly say, “The devil made me do it.” According to the Vedas, God has no competitor battling with Him for souls. God is described as asamaurdhva, “having no equal or superior.” If we are apart from God, we can blame no one but ourselves, our own desire and hatred.

There is no irreversible, eternal condemnation. Each soul always has the opportunity to exercise its free will. If a soul is “eternally” condemned, it is only because of its own continuing unwillingness to love God. One can always turn back to God, even from the most fallen position. Srila Prabhupada explains:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead expanded Himself into many for His ever-increasing spiritual bliss, and the living entities are parts and parcels of this spiritual bliss. They also have partial independence. But by misuse of their independence, when the service attitude is transformed into the propensity for sense enjoyment, they come under the sway of lust. This material creation is created by the Lord to give facility to the conditioned souls to fulfill these lustful propensities, and when completely baffled by prolonged lustful activities, the living entities begin to inquire about their real position.

Although the Vedic literature doesn’t talk of Satan, or
the devil, it does describe Maya, the goddess in charge of the material energy. Maya is a servant of Lord Krishna who performs the unpleasant but necessary task of creating the temporary world of illusionary happiness and distress for the souls who desire to forget Krishna and enjoy themselves apart from Him. And if a soul somehow develops a desire to return to Krishna, Maya is always there to test him with allurements: “So you think you love God? Well what about this...? And this...?”

So if that’s our position now, then what is to be done? The answer is simple. We should use our independence to reestablish a friendly relationship with the Supreme Lord, Krishna, and thus end our unpleasant stay in the material world. This is the most important business of human existence.

We should choose to make ourselves pleasing to God. And everyone has an equal opportunity to do that. It is not that any particular group of people has a monopoly on salvation.

Every soul has the opportunity to achieve the highest goal. pure love for God. In his introduction to Bhagavad-gita As It Is. Srila Prabhupada explains, “The ways and the means for ultimate realization, ultimate attainment, are stated in the Bhagavad-gita, and the doors of this knowledge are open for everyone. No one is barred out. All classes of men can approach Lord Krishna by thinking of Him, for hearing and thinking of Him are possible for everyone.”

Lord Krishna Himself says in the Gita (9.32), “Those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth... can attain the supreme destination.” It doesn’t matter if one is male or female, higher or lower in social status.

The real chosen people are those who choose to endear themselves to God by their behaviour. And in the Bhagavad-gita (12.20) Lord Krishna explains who is dear to Him: “Those who follow this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engage themselves with faith, making Me the supreme goal, are very, very dear to Me.”

The imperishable path of devotional service begins with hearing and chanting the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Lord Chaitanya taught the simple method of awakening love of God through the congregational chanting of His holy names: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Lord Chaitanya was Krishna Himself, appearing as a devotee of Krishna. In other words, He was God showing by His own example how to please God.

Lord Chaitanya prayed, “O son of Maharaja Nanda (Krishna), I am Your eternal servitor, yet somehow or other I have fallen into the ocean of birth and death. Please pick me up from this ocean of death and place me as one of the atoms at Your lotus feet.”

When a devotee petitions Krishna in this way. Krishna responds. He says in Bhagavad-gita (12.6-7): “Those who worship Me, giving up all their activities unto Me and being devoted to Me without deviation, engaged in devotional service and always meditating upon Me, having fixed their minds upon Me, O son of Prthu—for them I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death.”

One can best meditate upon Krishna and fix one’s mind upon Him by chanting His holy names. In this way one can escape the cycle of birth and death and become situated at Krishna’s lotus feet. Lord Chaitanya prayed:

O my Lord, Your holy names alone can render all benedictions to living beings, and thus you have hundreds and millions of names, like Krishna and Govinda. In these transcendental names You have invested all Your transcendental energies. There are not even hard and fast rules for chanting these names. O my Lord, out of kindness You enable us to easily approach You by Your holy names, but I am so unfortunate that I have no attraction for them.

Here Lord Chaitanya is revealing our problem. We are trapped in the material world because we misused our independence. Even so, Krishna has made it possible for us to return to our original position simply by chanting His holy names. The method is easy; even a child can perform it. And it is guaranteed to be effective. Yet we are so unfortunate that we are not attracted to chant. We remain reluctant, attracted to other things.

Still, Krishna is nondifferent from His name. And in the form of His name, He is waiting for us to choose to accept Him into our hearts once more. If we can do so, we shall also enter into Krishna’s heart. Krishna says in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (9.4.68).

The devotees are always in My heart, and I am always in the hearts of the devotees. The devotee does not know anything beyond Me, and I also cannot forget the devotee. There is a very intimate relationship between Me and the pure devotees. Pure devotees in full knowledge are never out of spiritual touch and therefore they are very much dear to Me.

So, although we are choosing people, in a sense there are also chosen people—the devotees—for because they have chosen God. God has chosen them. And He guarantees that their destination will be His eternal, spiritual abode.
Sri Vaikunta Vinnagaram
by Sampaṭkumara Ramaṇuja Daṇa (Adv. Ashwin, S)

Located 10 km from Naḍapattinam in the town of Nangoor is the serene temple of Viṣṇu as Vaikuntaṇaṭha Perūmal, Sri Vaikunta Vinnagaram.

The Pastime

There was once a great saint by name Gautama Maharshi. Many disciples came to the achārya in pursuit of spiritual knowledge. Among them was Uttanka Muni, who was exemplary in his devotion to Gautama Maharshi. Uttanka did the household work for Gautama, helped him prepare for the sacrificial rites and knew exactly what his guru needed at the right time. His knowledge of the Vedic scriptures was outstanding and the other disciples went to him for guidance. Gautama Maharshi had never had such a sincere and dedicated student before.

Uttanka and his classmates completed their education. All his classmates left the hermitage (ashrama) but the guru loved Uttanka dearly and wanted him to learn more (ashrama). Uttanka and his classmates graduated and left the hermitage in their independent (ashrama) life.

As years passed by, Uttanka became old. He was unable to carry the load of firewood required for the sacrifice, his back ached and his hair began to turn white. One day when he was unable to do the household chores due to his declining strength, he came to his guru Gautama in frustration and poured his heart out.

“Achārya, Your Divine Grace did not allow me to leave the ashrama for all these years. Now, I am old and unable to take care of your household chores. I am unhappy that I could not see the world as other disciples did.”

Gautama Maharshi replied, “My son, I kept you here for the sake of your penance in serving me, you will become a young man again and I shall give my daughter to you in marriage.”

Immediately, Uttanka regained the looks and strength of a young man. He was very grateful to his guru. He married Gautama’s daughter and was ready to lead his independent life.

Before his departure Uttanka wanted to pay tribute (gurudakṣīna) to Gautama. The sage said, “You have served me with devotion for all these years. No other tribute is necessary.” Then Uttanka went to Gautama’s wife and requested her to ask for something that she had wanted all her life.

After repeated coaxing, Gautama’s wife said, “Uttanka, if you insist, I want the earrings worn by King Saudasa’s wife. I have heard so much about these earrings that I yearn for them in my dreams.”

Uttanka promised to get the earrings. He knew that it was not an easy task and he would face many dangers. So, he asked his wife to stay with her parents while he set out in search of the earrings. Uttanka was confident that his sincere penance to his guru would help him in his challenging task.

When sage Gautama Maharishi heard that Uttanka had left on a dangerous endeavour, he was concerned and enraged. He told his wife, “You should have not asked for the earrings, my dear. A wife of a saint must learn to live in simplicity and devoid of pleasures like gold. Uttanka will face many dangers that may even threaten his life.”

Gautama’s wife regretted her request, but it was too late. Uttanka had already left on his quest, eager to serve his gurupatni (wife of guru).

On the quest of the earrings Uttanka had to pass through dense forests. King Saudasa was living in this forest. He had annoyed Vasiṣṭha Muni (a brahmarishi), and was cursed by the sage to lead the life of a cannibal.

Uttanka came to Saudasa’s abode. As soon as Saudasa saw Uttanka, he attacked him. Uttanka stopped him by saying, “Oh king, wait! I have come on a mission for my guru. Know for a fact that it is against dharma (righteousness) to injure someone who is on such a mission. I promise that I will offer myself to you after I have completed my mission.”

Saudasa inquired what the mission was about.

“I have come to beg for your wife’s earrings.” Saudasa was taken aback. He admired the courage of Uttanka, in approaching him, a cannibal. He said, “Go to my wife and tell her that I would like her to give the earrings to you. This good act may reduce my life of suffering as a cannibal.”

Uttanka went to the queen with Saudasa’s message. The queen immediately parted with her earrings with the hope that her husband would benefit by her good deed.

When Uttanka examined the earrings, he could not find anything special about them. Out of curiosity, he asked, “What is special about these earrings?”

Vaikuntaṇaṭha in pallaki darshanā
The queen said, “This is a very special ornament from the planet of Indra. The wearer will be free from hunger and thirst and will be protected from all dangers.”

The queen further warned, “Oh great sage, it is my duty to warn you against the Nagas (serpents), who have a fancy for these earrings for a long time and will steal them at the first opportunity. So, guard them well. Hide them in the folds of your deerskin and never part with them. They may use any tactic to get the earrings.”

Uttanka thanked the queen and assured her, “I shall protect them with my life, for this is for my acharya’s wife.” Then he left and came back to Saudasa as he had promised. He requested the cannibal to spare him until he had handed over the earrings to his guru’s wife. Saudasa agreed.

Uttanka then added, “You helped me in getting the earrings and in fulfilling my promise to my guru’s wife. Your good deed will reduce the tenure of your life as a cannibal. Hence, I have also been of help to you. By helping each other, we have become friends. The scriptures say that one should not eat the flesh of a friend. So you would surely not like to eat me?”

Saudasa was struck by Uttanka’s logic, and could not disagree with him. There was even the possibility of leading a normal life soon! Uttanka quickly departed before Saudasa changed his mind.

On the way back to Gautama’s hermitage, Uttanka felt tired. So he tied the deerskin which was encasing the earrings, on the branch of a tree and lay down to rest in its shade.

Unfortunately, the deerskin slipped off and fell on the ground. A naga was waiting for this opportunity. It quickly picked up the earrings and sneaked away.

Uttanka saw the naga slipping away with the earrings and chased it. The naga disappeared into an anthill. Uttanka started digging the anthill with his staff. He continued to dig for several days without food or water. He was determined to give up his life in the search of the earrings rather than return to his guru’s hermitage empty-handed.

An old man suddenly arrived on the scene and asked, “What are you doing, young man?”

Uttanka explained, “A naga stole the celestial earrings that I was carrying for my guru’s wife and went into this anthill. I am trying to find the naga.”

The old man said, “You must be joking! The naga may be hidden thousands of miles deep in the soil. It may take your entire life to dig with your staff which can hardly make a pit in this hard soil.”

“I prefer to die here rather than face my guru’s wife
without fulfilling her wishes. I am so devastated with my carelessness”, said Uttanka, sorrowfully.

The old man was none other than Indra, king of the demigods. Appreciating the determination of Uttanka, Indra assumed his real form and asked Uttanka to strike his staff onto his weapon by name Vajra (Vajra ayudha or the thunderbolt is the weapon of Indra, made out of bones of a Maharishi). Uttanka did as he was told and his staff was energised. The energised staff accelerated the process of digging into the anthill.

Uttanka soon tunneled into the kingdom of the Nagas. It was huge and well protected by the inhabitants. Uttanka was puzzled. “How can I search this place and where can I look for the naga who stole the earrings?”

Suddenly he saw a horse standing before him with blazing fire around him. Uttanka, overcome by awe, did not move. The horse spoke, “Do not be afraid, Uttanka. I am Agni (god of fire). You have served me well at your guru's hermitage. I am very pleased with you. (Agni is one of the best friends of a brahmana who is strict with his religious duties. Agni could come to help whenever such a brahmana is in trouble). Blow at me hard and I will emit smoke that will choke the Nagas. They will come to you for rescue. Then, you can ask the naga king to return the earrings.”

Uttanka did as he was told and in no time the entire Naga kingdom was filled with smoke. The nagas could not breathe and they were all forced to come out of their homes. They bowed before Uttanka. Uttanka asked the nagas to return the earrings. The nagas realized that they had to choose between their lives and the earrings. And of course, they chose to save their lives and quickly returned the earrings!

Uttanka returned to Gautama's ashrama and gave the earrings to Gautama's wife. Everyone was very happy at Uttanka's safe return. Gautama and his wife showered their blessings on Uttanka. Uttanka fulfilled his obligation of giving gurudakshina and was finally free to lead his own life.

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During a conversation between Indra and Lord Krishna, Lord Krishna appeared distracted. When Indra enquired about it, Lord Krishna replied that he was thinking about a sage named Uttanka who was meditating upon Him in the desert. A few days before, Lord Krishna had granted him his Vishvaroopa darshana (His universal form). He also granted Uttanka a boon that He would bring him water whenever he was thirsty. At that moment Uttanka was thinking about Lord Krishna, as he was thirsty. Lord Krishna told Indra that he was considering giving him amritha (divine nectar). Indra was worried that Lord Krishna was being a bit hasty. He wanted to test if Uttanka is worthy to receive the amritha. Lord Krishna was confident that Uttanka, being an enlightened soul, would definitely pass the test. Indira requested that he be allowed take the amritha to Uttanka. He also told Lord Krishna that he would be taking the amritha, wearing a disguise.

Uttanka was in the desert meditating upon Lord Krishna, when he heard a sound which he assumed is the sound of Lord Krishna's anklets. However, when he opens his
eyes he sees a chandala. (A chandala is the keeper of cremation grounds. He usually appears as someone who has not taken a bath for many days, and wears a necklace of skulls. He is always in the company of a few dogs). When Uttanka saw the chandala who was in reality Indra, he felt repelled by him. He tried to move away from him as the chandala offered him some water. He told the chandala that he would not accept water from a person of lower caste. Suddenly, the chandala vanished and Lord Krishna appeared. Uttanka was surprised. Lord Krishna explained to him that the chandala was Lord Indra in disguise, and that Uttanka who was such an enlightened soul, should have known better than to discriminate.

Lord Krishna however kept His promise to Uttanka and told Uttanka that whenever he is thirsty, a rain cloud would appear over him and he would get water. Till today the rain clouds that appear over the desert are referred to as Uttanka clouds.

Sage Uttanka requested the Supreme Lord to grant him darshan in the form of Vaikuntanatha in the company of His three consorts. The Lord asked Uttanka to go on a pilgrimage to South India and reach the town of Nangoor. Uttanka did as he was instructed and upon reaching Nangoor he saw Svethakethu.

King Svethakethu belonged to Ikshvaku dynasty which Lord Sri Rama chose for His incarnation. He loved every one and was a living example of honesty and integrity. He and his wife had a passion to visit Vaikunta to have the darshana of Lord Vishnu. As a king, he completed all his political duties and prepared for penance with his queen Damayanthi. They prepared a fire around them, stood looking at the sun and began a severe penance. Days passed. Narada Maharishi appeared before the king and asked him to take guidance from Uttanka Maharishi. Thus all four of them did penance to the Supreme Lord.

The Supreme Lord granted them darshana of His Vaikuntanatha form, seated on Adisesha along with His consorts Lakshmi Devi, Bhoomi Devi and Nila Devi. The four of them were in ecstasy. This is how He appears in Vaikunta Vinnagaram.

The Temple

The temple of Vaikunta Vinnagaram is in a very serene and pristine village. The temple is of a modest structure and there is only one shrine in the temple, that of Vaikuntanatha under the Ananda Satya Varthaga vimana.

Festivals

The major festival of this temple is the 11 Garudaseva festival, when the Supreme Lord along with the Deities of the 11 divya desams of Thirunangoor is carried on a golden Garuda vahana. Other festivals of the temple are the Pavitra Utsava, the swing festival, Vaikunta Ekadashi festival etc.

Thirumangai Alwar sings about Vaikuntanatha of Vaikunta Vinnagaram:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who split open the broad chest of Hiranya out of love for Prahlada; who churned the milk ocean and got nectar out of love for the devas; who is like a dark cloud showering blessings on all—happily resides in Thiru Vaikunta Vinnagaram—where there are forests of jasmine creepers, champaka and kadamba trees having flowers spreading their aroma everywhere; where there are ponds in which fish jump and play.

Our Supreme Lord resides happily in this divine temple—He who split open the chest of Hiranya with His sharp nails; He who took the most fearful Narasimha avatara that all the people were afraid to look at while all the devas and danavas stood aghast on seeing His form. This divine temple called Sri Vaikunta Vinnagaram is rich in Vaidika brahmanas who are adept in teaching Vedic scriptures, in chanting them and in singing hymns with seven swaras and who have excellent gunas. Oh! My foolish mind! Why don't you worship Him?—asks Alwar.

He keeps all the worlds - oceans and everything else to protect them from being destroyed by pralaya. He is mudalvan (sarvakarana, primeval) who removed the curse of Shiva when he roamed with a skull stuck to his hand, by pouring the sweat from His chest. He is the one who resides in Thiru Vaikunta Vinnagaram—where there are forests full of blooming trees like champaka, kadamba, betel leaf creepers, areca nut trees to which bees come and drink honey; where the thick forests imitate the darkness caused by rain clouds so that the peacocks are deluded that it is going to rain and they dance in joy. There are fertile red paddy fields on all sides enhancing the richness of the city.

Sri Rama cut off the nose and ears of Shoorpanaka, the sister of Ravana—and made her run crying loudly to Lankapuri (situated on the top of a mountain) causing the great war in which the wicked people were killed. He resides in the divine temple Thiru Vaikunta Vinnagaram—where there are spears (to ward off evils) placed on the top of big mansions that pride the bottom of the clouds causing the downpour of pearls that lie scattered on the balcony. This speaks of the wealth of the city.

The Lord who cut off Ravana's ten heads and twenty arms with His matchless Kodanda bow and fierce arrows in order to save Sīt; He, with great anger, destroyed Lankapuri and the rakshasa clan. He resides in Thiru Vaikunta Vinnagaram, where there are red paddy fields, where lotuses and champaka flowers grow as weeds and where in the muddy water variety of fish live. The city is famous for the Vaidikas who read, teach and follow Vedic life.
The Supreme Personality of Godhead killed Putana who came disguised as a uttama kula stree (aristocratic woman) in order to kill Krishna. But Krishna killed her by sucking her life out of her and made her die in her natural form of a demon. It is He who broke the deep rooted maruda trees and kicked Shakatasura to death. This Supreme Lord resides in Sri Vaikunta Vinnagaram—where brahmanas who are great Vedic brahmanas chant four Vedic scriptures, read and give discourses on the itihases and puranas; possess great qualities like patience, etc. and are always kind and philanthropic.

Sri Krishna killed two asuras with one stroke by throwing Vatsasura (calf demon) on kapittasura (tree demon); ate lot of butter etc. till He felt satisfied. But ate all the worlds, seas, mountains etc. as if not satisfied. He resides happily in this divine temple called Sri Vaikunta Vinnagaram—where there areca nut trees, coconut trees, betel leaf creepers, paddy fields, sugar cane fields. All the crops grow profusely since plenty of water irrigates the fields.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead has long arms in which He has sharp and effulgent chakrayudha that killed Narakasura; He has such great compassion and love towards Mahalakshmi and Shiva that He gave His chest to her and one side of His body to him. He is the chief of the eternal residents of Vaikunta, who resides in Thiru Vaikunta Vinnagaram, where the farmers hastily build a mud bund to prevent the honey flowing like river from the nearby fields of lotus and sengazhuneer from entering in their lands and flooding their fields. In such a wealthy and beautiful city is this divine temple where He happily stays for the sake of His bhaktas.

Our Lord who lies on the milk ocean is worshipped by the devas and rishis who come there, offer fragrant flowers at His lotus feet and pray ‘Oh! Our excellent leader and Lord! You bless us’. He resides in Thirunangoor where there are paddy fields in which fish jump and play; there are streets where ponds are built to rear fish; where there are tall buildings from the top of which one can see the bottom of the moon when he wanders in the sky.

Thirumangai Alwar, the chief of Thirumangai, also called Parakala, has sung ten songs in beautiful Tamil, on the Supreme Personality of Godhead who holds panchayudha, (shanka, chakra, gadha, sword and a bow) in His hands; who is very beautiful with lotus-like eyes; who resides in Sri Vaikunta Vinnagaram in Thirunangoor which is a coastal city where ships are seen sailing in the sea. Those who read these songs will be the kings of this earth.

All the Deities bathed in sandalwood paste during abhisheka

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BHAGAVAD-GITA
A Book of Violence?
Perplexed by Krishna's urging Arjuna to fight,
some students of the Gita accuse Krishna of being immoral.

By Rohininandana Dasa

Bhagavad-gita is famous as a harbinger of peace and good fortune. Mohandas K. Gandhi wrote, "The Gita has always been my source of comfort. Whenever I was unable to perceive a silver lining on the horizon, I opened the Gita and found a verse that gave me new hope."

Yet even Gandhi, a great advocate of ahimsa, or nonviolence, found some of the Gita's verses puzzling and disagreeable. Lord Krishna explains that killing can be perfectly religious and a form of yoga: "One who is not motivated by false ego, whose intelligence is not entangled, though he kills men in this world, does not kill. Nor is he bound by his actions." (Bg. 18.17). Gandhi comments in his Anasakti Yoga, "The meaning of these verses of the Bhagavad-gita seems to depend upon an imaginary ideal which one cannot find a practical example of in this world."

What should we make of this? If Krishna's words, or some of them, do indeed depend upon imaginary ideals that are impractical for life today, we might wonder about Krishna's overall authority as the "perfect, infallible Supreme Person" (Bg. 15.18). We might consider that Krishna's opinion carries only relative importance, like Gandhi's or anyone else's, and so why should we base our lives upon the Gita's doctrines?

Srila Prabhupada's purport to the verse in question (18.17) endorses Krishna's statement. Srila Prabhupada writes,

One who knows the instrument of work, himself as the worker, and the Supreme Lord as the supreme sanctioner is perfect in doing everything. Such a person is never in illusion. Personal activity and responsibility arise from false ego and godlessness, or a lack of Krishna consciousness. Anyone who is acting in Krishna consciousness under the direction of the Supersoul or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, even though killing, does not kill. Nor is he ever affected by the reaction of such killing. When a soldier kills under the command of a superior officer, he is not subject to be judged. But if a soldier kills on his own personal account, then he is certainly judged by a court of law.

As a fellow countryman and contemporary of Gandhi, Srila Prabhupada knew well the pros and cons of Gandhi's peaceful noncooperation ideals. He also knew of his American followers' pacifistic ideals during the Vietnam War. But still he always stuck firmly to Krishna's words, convinced that they contain the highest morality and gentility and will remain absolutely true for all time.

Those attached to their own sense of morality will certainly doubt Krishna's conclusions. So let us objectively pursue the issue of violence and nonviolence and see whether or not Krishna is giving imaginary and impractical advice.

In our changing world it is not surprising that Krishna's words often challenge some people's conceptions. Clinging to whatever threads of peace remain today, they write of Krishna as unethical and immoral in persuading the reluctant Arjuna to fight. They commend Arjuna's pacifism and condemn Krishna's bellicoseness. But perhaps such opinions arise from an incomplete understanding.

For instance, if Krishna is actually a bellicose advocate of killing, war, and violence, why does He glorify ahimsa as "an exalted, divine quality stemming from proper knowledge" at least three times in the Gita (Bg. 10.5, 13.8, and 16.2)? Krishna fully supports the Vedic injunction ahimsayat sarva-bhutanam: "Do not commit violence to any living being."

We should also note that although Krishna's words and arguments are for everyone, His direction to kill is specifically meant for Arjuna. Not that someone can justify his crimes by pulling out of context a few sentences like "The self slays not nor is slain."

Duty is the real principle determining what constitutes violence and nonviolence. Perhaps it was Arjuna who was proposing violence in the name of nonviolence—out of a mistaken sense of duty. Let us examine his apparent non-violent refusal to fight.

At first glance it appears that Arjuna had substantial reasons for not participating in the war. Friends and relatives opposed him, even his beloved grandfather, Bhisma, and his guru, Drona. If he won the war, he would be miserable without his friends, and he would suffer the sting of retribution from their wives and families. He foresaw that the women, bereft of their husbands and fathers, would be unprotected, and their bastard children would wreak havoc, the reactions to their sins
Lord Krishna gave a piercing reply to Arjuna's arguments: "You try to speak so well, but you don't know the truth of the soul. You're forgetting your duty, and your heart is weak. Armed with yoga, arise and fight!"

Arjuna had a sacred duty to perform. As a soldier he was bound to protect the citizens from aggressors. The very word kshatriya (soldier) means "one who protects from harm." Duryodhana, the main cause of the war, was an aggressor worthy of punishment. The Vedic scriptures describe six kinds of aggressors who should be checked and sufficiently punished, even by death: (1) one who gives poison, (2) one who sets fire to another's house, (3) one who attacks with deadly weapons, (4) one who plunders riches, (5) one who occupies another's land, and (6) one who kidnaps another's wife.

Duryodhana had committed all six of these offenses. He had poisoned Bhima, Arjuna's brother. He had tried to burn to death all five brothers with their mother, Kunti, his own aunt. He had usurped the Pandavas' land and property and had tried to steal their wife, Draupadi and make her his slave. And now he was attacking the Pandavas with all the force he could muster. He was a violent man in every sense.

A dictionary definition of violence is "an outrage or injury: an unlawful exercise of force." And outrage is defined as "a forcible violation of others' rights or sentiments, or an infringement on morality."

Duryodhana's violence was not confined only to the physical platform but extended to a violation of the spiritual rights of the citizens. In the monarchical system then existing, the people had a right to expect the king to represent God and give them full opportunity to develop their spirituality and God consciousness.

Arjuna's duty was clear, and Krishna, far from being bellicose, was impartially removing the misconceptions preventing its execution. As a soft-hearted devotee, Arjuna hesitated to kill but Krishna reminded him of the reality of the soul which never dies in any circumstance. Certainly the souls present before them could never be touched by any of Arjuna's powerful weapons. Only their bodies would fall. Such dull material bodies are always, in a sense, dead, whether or not they are occupied by a soul. How could Arjuna think his own "dead" body could be violent to others' dead bodies? Furthermore, Arjuna would enable aging heroes like Bhishma and Drona to gain fresh, new bodies and so revive their depleted energy.

Someone may still complain: "Arjuna's retaliation and punishment of Duryodhana is in itself an act of violence and is therefore censurable."

But does force or even killing always mean violence? And does apparent friendly behaviour always mean nonviolence? A factor appears to be causing injury by cutting off a limb, and a layman may jump to the wrong conclusion—"What a cruel and violent act!" Yet the doctor's act is both lawful (because he is authorized) and protective of health. His actions are an exhibition of mercy.

A person may be trying to give up smoking, and if in the name of friendship I attempt to cajole him into accepting a cigarette, my apparent friendly gesture actually shrouds a violent attitude. Apart from causing injury to his health, I am also, perhaps unwittingly, interfering with his right of free choice.

Or suppose a policeman refrains from violence when duty dictates that he defend a person from attack? His apparent nonviolence is in fact a criminal violation of the right of a citizen to be protected by the state.

A child suffering from typhoid may be crying for food, but his doctor refuses to mitigate his hunger pangs. Giving food to the child would be an act of violence.

Without knowledge of an absolute standard, however, it is sometimes difficult for us to determine what is right.

Yet there is an Absolute Truth, in which all relative conceptions can be satisfied. According to the Vedic literature, Lord Krishna is the supreme lawmaker, and His laws are meant to be followed by everyone, in every time, place, and circumstance, for the immediate and ultimate good of all. "Unlawful" therefore means to break His laws. One who acts unlawfully, however kind and friendly he may appear, can hardly be called a good person, any more than a criminal can be called a good citizen. Thieves may talk about dividing up their loot honestly, but how can there be honesty among thieves, when the basis of their dealings is dishonest? Real honesty, morality, and goodness come from following the Lord's laws, which are transcendent and therefore higher than any man-made edict.

A study of Bhagavad-gita under the guidance of Krishna's representative, the bona fide guru, will reveal the universal relevance of God's laws. For instance, as a soldier Arjuna was duty bound to defend the principles of religion, so grievously outraged by Duryodhana. And the Supreme Lord was requesting him to fight. Convinced at last, Arjuna fought and saved the people of the world from blind leadership.

Duryodhana and company were saved from severe karmic reactions and prevented from committing further sinful deeds. Everyone associating closely with Duryodhana had been influenced by his lust for power, his greed, anger, vanity, and envy. Thus, like
Duryodhana’s, their own mentalities were also polluted. By destroying their bodies in battle, Arjuna acted like a doctor removing a limb to save the patient. His treatment was so effective that the soldiers killed in Krishna’s presence were liberated from all reactions to their sins. By removing such politically motivated aggressors, Arjuna and Krishna created a favourable social condition for the progressive march of civilization toward spiritual perfection.

The quest for such perfection is everyone’s highest duty. Srila Prabhupada once defined violence as “impeding a person in the performance of duty.” Duties possess different degrees of importance. Consequently the severity of a man’s violent offenses will also vary. Duryodhana, already an aggressor, made the fatal mistake of standing in the way of the spiritual right and duty of the citizens to practice self-realization under the protection of the self-realized king Yudhisthira, who, apart from being the rightful heir to the throne, had minutely studied all the Vedic truths.

Duryodhana did not care that God’s laws exist in this world to facilitate everyone’s spiritual progress. Souls who occupy the bodies of beasts, birds, and other creatures gradually evolve to the human form, where they should be offered all facility for continuing their spiritual development. If a leader is unqualified to help liberate a soul but instead acts to bind his followers further to the cycle of birth and death, he should be corrected and if necessary removed for his violation of their natural rights.

As there are clear standards today for examining the proficiency of such public services as medicine and catering, in the Vedic literature clear standards exist for every facet of individual and social behaviour, both spiritual and material.

Take eating, for instance. We learn from the Gita and other Vedic literature that in this material world one living being is food for another. When an animal kills, it does not interfere with its victim’s spiritual evolution through different species, because all its activities are within the parameters of God’s laws.

When a soul is awarded a human body, however, he can make a conscious choice whether to cooperate with these laws or reject them. If he whimsically kills another creature, the soul in that creature is prevented from living out his term of imprisonment in that body and must take birth again in the same species before moving on to the next. If he kills a cow, for example, the soul in the cow will have to take birth again in a cow’s body before progressing to the next stage, the human form. A person with knowledge of this law decides to give up eating meat.

Eating plants also interferes with a soul’s evolution, although less dramatically. So what should we do?

The Bhagavad-gita supplies the answer by explaining that if we offer our food to the Lord, neither we nor the living being within the plant will be adversely affected. In fact the evolution of the soul in the plant’s body up through the lower species of life toward the human form will be accelerated. And by eating such offered food (prasadam), we will be purified of karmic reactions, and our inherent spiritual consciousness will gradually awaken. Far from advocating violence, Lord Krishna is concerned that the smallest detail of our lives be pervaded with sensitivity.

Krishna’s purpose is to free us from all ignorance and confusion. The world today is so dominated by violence, often even under the guise of spiritual life, that to save us the Lord comprehensively presents the highest principle of nonviolence, culminating in one clear course of action: “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” (Bg. 18.66). By acting according to Krishna’s direction, we will always be situated correctly. We should not think, “Here is yet another opinion.” When we fully accept Krishna as God, we will discover His advice to be perfect for everyone.

Let the transcendental pastimes of the blackish personality Krishna and the golden cowherd girl Radha, who are constantly overwhelmed with ecstatic love for each other, who always reside in Vrindavana, whose beauty attracts the minds of everyone, and who are the reservoir of wonderful loving pastimes, become constantly manifested in my heart.

Srila Prabodhananda Sarasvati
Sri Vrindavana-mahimamrita 17.4
Sri Nityananda Trayodashi

BANGALORE
above: Pushpavrishti during abhisheka
left: Arati during abhisheka

MYSORE
above: Sahasradhara during abhisheka
left: Darshana of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai in special alankara
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During Summer Vacation
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Fee: ₹3500/- (includes japa kit, module materials & course certificate)
Time: 8:45 am – 3:00 pm
Eligibility: Class I – Class X (girls till Class VII only)
Modules:
- Class (I – III) Colouring, Craft, Krishna Rhymes, Animation Show
- Class (IV – X) Arts and Crafts, Painting, Vocal Music, Classical Dance, Drama, Folk Dance, Dance Drama and Yakshagana

Batch dates:
- Batch I: March 28 – April 17, 2016
- Batch II: April 18 – May 08, 2016
- Batch III: May 09 – May 29, 2016

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NOTE:
1. Refreshment/lunch should be brought by participants. Alternatively, you can have lunch prasadam by purchasing coupons at the temple.
2. Transportation charges extra.

Values Education classes for all participants!
ISKCON Bangalore is conducting an online quiz series based on the Bhagavad-gita. Each quiz in the series will have 15 multiple choice questions and a brief summary of the related topic, divided into a few sections. You may also refer to Bhagavad-gita As It Is written by Srila Prabhupada. There are also one or two thought-provoking questions for you to answer.

The quiz series is designed to facilitate a better understanding of the Gita and enable you to assess yourself on your progress. Further, there are some interesting ways to add credit points to your score and also win attractive prizes with the crossing of each milestone, thereby making it an exciting experience to be a part of the quiz.

For participating in the quiz
1. Log on to our website: www.iskconbangalore.org/gita-quiz/
2. Enter the reference code 100172 when you are registering for the quiz.
Madhu Pandit Dasa: I dedicate the Padma Shri to Srila Prabhupada

Padma Awards, one of the highest civilian awards of the country, are conferred in three categories – Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri. Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa, Chairman of The Akshaya Patra Foundation and President of ISKCON Bangalore is one among the 83 Padma Shri awardees this year. The award has been conferred in recognition of the distinguished service rendered by Akshaya Patra for the children of India. The Akshaya Patra Foundation is providing mid-day meals to more than 15 lakh children every day in 10 states across the nation.

Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa designed the first centralized kitchen of Akshaya Patra to provide mid-day meals to underprivileged children in the government schools of Bangalore Rural District in the year 2000. He is a visionary and under his inspiring leadership and impeccable commitment, the organization is growing from strength to strength, moving towards its vision of feeding five million children by 2020.

Thanking the government for this recognition, Madhu Pandit Dasa said, “I dedicate this award to Srila Prabhupada, a true visionary who wanted to see a hunger-free world. This award will give immense encouragement to the Akshaya Patra team to reach greater heights in its service.”

Srila Prabhupada desired that no one should go hungry in this country. Inspired by this instruction of Srila Prabhupada, Madhu Pandit Dasa has seen the programme grow from providing 1500 children with mid-day meals to 1.5 million children in 15 years, thus becoming the world's largest NGO-run school lunch programme.

Madhu Pandit Dasa set up a robust Governance Model which has made Akshaya Patra a hallmark of transparency and accountability. This is highlighted by the fact that Akshaya Patra is the only NGO in the country to win the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) Gold Shield Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting five times in a row and placed in its prestigious Hall of Fame.

Madhu Pandit Dasa further added, “It is an inspiration for me and the entire team at Akshaya Patra to reach out to many more hungry children of this country. Quality food for these children is a need for productive educational experience in schools that will help create citizens with ability and good character. Our children are the real asset of our nation.”

www.iskconbangalore.org/news/padma-awards/
Featured Article: The course of ‘Joys, Sorrows and Self-Discovery’

All of us, who are living in this material world, have our own share of joys and sorrows. It is seldom that we remember or try to thank God in our daily lives when we are happy. But when unforeseen miseries hit us, we seek the help of God to pull us out. At times, one might also come across the question of finding one's existence and seek an opportunity to find the meaning and purpose of life. So, have you ever wondered about the reason behind your existence? Have you ever asked yourself who you are? Have you ever realized that you are more than your body? The answer would be a “No” for many of us.

Read More: https://goo.gl/A65WKL

Hare Krishna World
Harl Sankirtana enthralls Devotees
ISKCON Bangalore organized a day-long Harinam festival on January 26, 2016. It included Harinama sankirtan and singing of bhajans.
Read More: https://goo.gl/h2WIdy

Krishna Katha
The Supreme Lord and His Incarnations
The Lord is the inexhaustible source for innumerable incarnations which are distinguished by specific extraordinary feats.
Read More: https://goo.gl/4fK39d

Pilgrimage
Thiru Thevanar Thogai Madhava Perumal Koil
This temple is situated in the pristine village of Thevanar Thogai, about 3 km towards north-west of Thiru Nangur in Tamil Nadu.
Read More: https://goo.gl/5mdsVb

Timeless Wisdom
How to seek Real Pleasure
One can be joyful only in the state of transcendence by realizing the Brahman. Such a person neither hankers for anything nor does he lament.
Read More: https://goo.gl/mB2ZAu

Download the March 2016 e-Calendar at www.iskconbangalore.org/desktop-calendar

Reviews from Trip Advisor
Kamal M
An experience spiritually connected to God
A very neat & clean temple in spite of the huge number of devotees. It felt as if I was spiritually connected to God. If you are in Bangalore then you should certainly visit this temple.

KatsKatiyar
An excellent place to worship
A nice place where one can worship without spending a single penny in a serene and clean environment.

SMRUTI2015
Praise the Lord
Best place to get serenity and inner peace in the busy life of Bangalore. Love the prasad there. I felt like staying there for hours together.

Bisbalbir
Religious
Well-maintained temple with organised parking, food, queue, darshan. Best time is to reach by aarti time (7 pm) to enjoy the religious hymns.

Ourfootprint
Little bit crowded area
The “Hare Krishna Hare Rama” chants inside the temple complex along with the beautifully painted interior roofs create a mesmerizing effect on the soul. You can buy a lot of good books and merchandise too. There are food stalls before the exit.

DrKumaresh
Spiritual
Good location, extremely serene. Best part is the Maha Aarti (8:15 pm) and you become one with the Lord. Make sure you go in the evenings.

vishalraj82
The largest temple in Bengaluru
A fantastic temple of Radha Krishna. Plus the food here is excellent. You can buy all sort of stuff such as T-shirts, organic products, gift items, etc. Must-visit if in Bengaluru.

To write a review visit: www.tripadvisor.in

Top You Tube Picks
https://youtu.be/n87j54VYyxA
Sed-goswami Ashrtoke by Anagha Lila Dasa

https://youtu.be/9ZUAlCNgJbA
Glimpses of Goshala at ISKCON Bangalore
For more video visit youtube.com/iskconworld
Akshaya Tritiya
A festival of Lord Sri Krishna's blessings for prosperity and devotion

Sudama Vaibhavam
celebrating Lord Krishna's love for His dear devotee Sudama

MONDAY, MAY 9, 2016

etāvatālaṁ viśvātman sarva-sampat-saṁṛddhaye
asmin loke 'tha vāmuṣmin puṁsas tvat-toṣa-kāraṇam

After touching the hand of Lord Krishna, Queen Rukmini said, "My dear Lord, You are so kind to Your devotee that even this one morsel of chipped rice pleases You very greatly, and Your pleasure assures the devotee opulence in both this life and the next."

(From Srila Prabhupada's translation of Srimad Bhagavatam 10.81.11)

Here is a wonderful opportunity for you and your family to observe this auspicious day at the ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna Temple, Bangalore

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Krishna-sudama Katha
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Akshaya Tritiya Suvarna Mudra Bahumana
Tastes Of India Prasadam Feast

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- Walk across for a business meeting at the World Trade Centre
- Do a bit of window shopping at the Orion Mall

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