Dasara at ISKCON Mysore
Bhoomi Puja at ISKCON Mysore

In the city of monuments, ISKCON Mysore plans to build Nava Brindavan Dham – a spectacular cultural monument for social and spiritual upliftment. It was the desire of Srila Prabhupada, our Founder-Acharya, that monumental temples be built - temples that disseminate spiritual knowledge to all, thereby creating a world of unity and peace. Nava Brindavan Dham will be a grand religious and cultural complex, with landscape featuring attractive musical and light shows depicting Indian culture and tradition.

Designed in neo-classical style, the cultural complex on nine acres of land, harmoniously integrates the age old charm of Hoysala architecture and modern architectural forms, blending ethnicity with abstractness. This prestigious project is estimated to cost Rs.120 crores and shall enrich the glory of Indian heritage. Nava Brindavan Dham will be a centre for disseminating the profound message of the Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam to everyone. It is a project to support preservation of Vedic culture, tradition and sanatana dharma.

(left) On the auspicious occasion of Vijaya Dashami 2016, the Bhoomi Puja of the Nava Brindavan Dham project was conducted at Mysore. Senior leaders of the ISKCON Bangalore group participated in the Bhoomi Puja.

(left to right) Sri Vasudeva Keshav Dasa (Vice President ISKCON Bangalore), Stoka Krishna Dasa (President Hare Krishna Movement Chennai), Madhu Pandit Dasa (President ISKCON Bangalore), Sri Jai Chaitanya Dasa (President ISKCON Mysore) and Sri Chanchalapathi Dasa (Senior Vice President ISKCON Bangalore).
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 worldwide 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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This Is Perfect Knowledge

Real knowledge begins with freedom from identification with the body—
the source of all our suffering.

A lecture in London, England, on August 20, 1973
by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

matra-sparsas tu kaunteya
sitosna-sukha-duhkha-dah
agamapayino 'nityas
tams titikasasva bharata

"O son of Kunti, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed." (Bhagavad-gita, 2.14)

This is a very important verse. In the previous verse Krishna said, dehino 'smin yatha dehe: "The living entity, the soul, is within the body." So the bodily pains and pleasures are not the pains and pleasures of the soul within. And when we think the bodily pain and pleasures are ours, this is simply due to our misidentification with the body.

For example, suppose you are sitting in a nice motorcar, and a man in front of you is pulling a ricksha. I have seen this in India. So, the ricksha has come in front of the nice motorcar, and the driver of the car is shouting to the man drawing the ricksha, "O ricksha, make way!" The man sitting in the motorcar is thinking that he has become a motorcar and that the man drawing the ricksha has become a ricksha. Actually, the man drawing the ricksha is a human being, and the man sitting in the nice Rolls Royce car is also a human being. But because the rascal is sitting in a Rolls Royce car, he is thinking, "I am a Rolls Royce, and he is a ricksha." This is the material conception of life—to adopt a designation according to the body instead of the soul.

So, when we get out of this bodily conception of life, that is real knowledge. Then we become a pandita, or brahmana. As Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gita [5.18], vidya-vinaya-sampanne brahmane gavi hastini/ suni caiva sva-pake ca panditah sama-darsinah: "One who is actually a pandita, a learned man, sees a brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater equally, because he sees that each of them is a spirit soul, not the body."

An actually learned man knows, aham brahmasmi—"I am Brahma, spirit." And he also knows that the individual Brahman, the spirit soul, is part and parcel of the Supreme Brahman. One must come to know, "I am not this body; I am spirit soul." Knowledge begins from there. If one does not reach that point—aham brahmasmi—then he is an animal. The animals think, "I am a cat," "I am a dog," "I am this," "I am that." And an animal-like man thinks, "I am a ricksha," "I am a motorcar." That is animalistic thinking.

But a learned person thinks, "I am not this body; I am part and parcel of the Supreme Brahman." And when you are further advanced, you can understand, "I am an eternal servant of Krishna." This is perfect knowledge.

But the beginning is to know, "I am not this body; I am spirit soul." In this modern world many rascals are passing as spiritual leaders, but they do not know the very first lesson of spiritual knowledge—that I am not this body. These so-called leaders are doing so many sinful acts for the satisfaction of the body, and still they are passing as religious or spiritual. Nobody can be spiritual or religious unless he understands his spiritual identification.

In the Bhagavad-gita the last instruction of Krishna is sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja: "You rascals and fools have created so many religious systems simply on the basis of bodily differences. That is not religion. Real religion is to know that I, Krishna, am the Supreme Soul, Parabrahman, and that you are My parts and parcels. So we have an intimate relationship, like that between a father and son. It is the son's duty to obey the father; therefore you should surrender to Me, and I will protect you. That is the perfection of life."

The bodily concept of life is so strong that even big, big learned so-called religionists say that the animal has no soul. Because the human body is very much advanced and has the power to kill animals, these so-called religionists speak this nonsense—that the animals have no soul. Why do animals have no soul? What is the symptom of possession a soul? Consciousness. So if I am a conscious spirit soul within this body, why does the poor animal have no soul? He also has consciousness. So what is the essential difference between the human being and the
It is very easy to understand the existence of the soul within the body. As Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gita, yena sarvam idam tatam: “The soul spreads its influence all over the body.” Just as the sun spreads sunshine all over the universe, so God, the Supreme Soul, spreads His consciousness all over the creation. Similarly, since I am part and parcel of God, I am also soul, and like the sun I spread my “shining,” my consciousness, all over the body (yena sarvam idam tatam).

Therefore, the proof of the soul’s existence is that consciousness is spread all over my body. As soon as I pinch any part of my body, I feel pain. Therefore it is to be understood that the soul is there. When a man is going to die, the doctor examines the pulse or the heart, and if he finds that they are still beating, that is the sign the man is still living. Similarly, the proof that the soul is within my body is that I can feel pain and pleasure in my body.

So, the body in touch with consciousness feels pain and pleasure. Otherwise, what is this body? It is simply a lump of matter. Earth, water, fire, air—a combination of material elements. Suppose you make a doll out of earth and water and then dry it in the sunshine. That is form. So, the doll is made of earth, water, and fire, but there is not soul. That is the difference between the doll and my body. You can prepare a doll with earth, water, air, fire—all kinds of material elements—but you cannot give it a soul. That is not possible. Only Krishna can provide the soul: aham bija-pradah pita.

The same principle is there when a man and woman engage in sex. The man gives the seed, and the woman gives the ingredients for developing the body of the child. Could a woman produce a child without the aid of a man? No, that is not possible, because with his seed comes the soul. And when the soul is situated in the womb of the mother, she can assist by supplying the ingredients to develop the body.

By nature’s process, when one gives up this gross material body, the subtle body carries the soul to his next gross body. But where will the soul go? That is explained in the Srimad-Bhagavatam [3.31.1]: karmana daiva-netrena jantur dehopapattaye. The calculation is made by superior judgment to determine the soul’s assets and liabilities, and according to this judgment he receives his next body. It is just like when a man in a business concern for some time has his record reviewed. Then his superiors judge, “Yes, this man has done nicely, so give him a promotion.” But if he has not done nicely, they will say, “Oh, no, don’t give him a promotion. He should be fired.”

Similarly, we are getting different types of bodies according to our karma. Otherwise, why don’t all living entities have the same bodily features? Why are there differences? This is common sense. Varieties of body, varieties of position, are due to one’s previous activities, or karma. Again the example of the ricksha and the Rolls Royce: The poor man has only a ricksha because that is all he could purchase, but the rich man has a Rolls Royce because he has paid more. Similarly, if your activities are nice, you will be promoted to a higher standard of life, perhaps to the heavenly planets or even to Brahmalaoka, the highest place in this universe. But if your activities are sinful and abominable, you will be degraded to the cats and dogs.

Our situation is based on the qualities of our body. With a first-class body you can live in the higher planetary system. With a second-class body you have to remain in the middle planetary system. And with a third-class body, you go down. In other words, you become and animal, a tree, an insect, a bird, or a beast.

All these situations of enjoyment or suffering are due to our misidentification with the body. But the soul is different from the body, and on that basis Krishna is trying to convince Arjuna to fight: “Do your duty. Your so-called grandfather and so-called guru are not their bodies. So if their bodies are killed, why should you lament? Their souls are eternal. They existed in the past, they exist at present, and they will continue to exist. Simply their bodies will change. So why are you lamenting? Because it is My desire that you fight, you will not commit any sin by killing them, and in the end you will come to Me in My spiritual abode.”

So, on the whole one has to understand that we are not this body, and that when we feel bodily pains and pleasures, they are not the pains and pleasures of the soul. It is because the soul ignorantly misidentifies with the body that it feels pains and pleasures. Otherwise, the soul has no pain or pleasure in connection with the body.

In the Vedas it is said, asango hy ayam purusah: “The soul has nothing to do with the body.” Still, out of ignorance the soul identifies himself with the body. Again the example of the Rolls Royce: Out of ignorance, the rascal is thinking he has become a Rolls Royce, and if the Rolls Royce is broken in some accident, he becomes overwhelmed: “O, I am lost!” This is going on.

When one becomes brahma-bhuta, actually self-realised, there is no more lamenting, no more hankering (na socati na kanksati). Since I am not this body, why should I hanker after bodily comfort? Whatever Krishna has given,
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that's all right. But because people are absorbed in the bodily concept, they are simply seeking bodily, sensuous enjoyment. That's all. This is the material world.

All materialists are fools and rascals, mudhas. And because they are fools rascals, they are committing sins, becoming entangled in the transmigration of the soul in different types of bodies, and perpetually suffering. As soon as you get a material body, you suffer. Whether you have a white body, a black body, or a yellow body, a man's or an animal's body, it doesn't matter: as soon as you get a material body, you must suffer. This is the punishment of nature.

At least four suffering must be there: birth, old age, disease, and death. Whether you become a king or a dog or a cat, it doesn't matter. Even if you become Lord Brahma, you must suffer these four miseries.

Therefore, our problem is how to get out of this bodily entanglement. I am a spirit soul, but somehow or other I have fallen into this entanglement of bodily transformations. Bhaktivinoda Thakura says, anadi karama-phale padi bhavarnava-jale taribare na dekhi upaya: "Somehow or other I have fallen into this ocean of birth and death, and I do not know how to get out of it." Suppose you are thrown into the middle of the ocean. However expert a swimmer you may be, you cannot be comfortable. You have to swim all day long; otherwise, you will immediately drown. Similarly, as soon as you get yourself into this material world, you have to struggle for existence. You have to. So if you want to stop this struggle for existence, you must get out of material world. That is the problem of life.

Therefore Chaitanya Mahaprabhu teaches us, ayi nanda-tanuja kinkaram pattam mam vishame bhavambudhau: "My dear Lord Krishna, son of Nanda Maharaja, I am Your eternal servant, but somehow or other I have now fallen into this material ocean." (Vishame means "very ferocious danger." This ocean of material existence is very dangerous.) "Although I am Your servant, somehow or other I have forgotten You and have fallen down." Then, krpaya tava pada-pankaja sthita-dhuli-sadrsam vicintaya: "Now I am seeking Your mercy. Please pick Me up and make Me a particle of dust at Your lotus feet." This should be our prayer, and we should have no other prayer.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu also teaches, na dhanam na janam na sundarim kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye: "O Lord, I don't want wealth, followers, or women." People generally pray for material benefits: "O God, give us our daily bread. Give me a nice position. Give me a nice wife." So on and so—praying simply of material enjoyment. My Guru Maharaja [Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura] used to say that if we pray to God for all these nonsense things, we are just like a man who goes to a king for some benediction but doesn't know what to ask for. The king says, "Whatever you want, you can ask from me," and the man says, "Kindly give me a pinch of ashes." The man could have said, "Please give me half your kingdom." Why should he ask for a pinch of ashes?

So, praying to God for material things is foolishness. You may pray, "O God, give us our daily bread," but the bread is already there. Why just for you? For everyone. For all living entities the "bread," or food, is already provided by God: eko bahunam yo vidadhathi kaman. "The Lord provides all creatures with the necessities of life." The elephant does not go to church to pray "Give me food," yet it is supplied food in the jungle. Similarly the tiger is supplied food, and the ant is supplied food within his hole. How are they all eating, how are they living, how are they begetting offspring? God is providing everything.

So, getting our material necessities is not the real problem. But these rascals are simply perplexed with this problem—how to eat, how to sleep, how to defend, how to mate. These things are already fixed up according to your karma. You should simply use your time to advance in Krishna consciousness. That is your only business. Otherwise, your life is spoiled.

You cannot improve your material situation. That is already fixed up: prakteh kriyanamani gunah karman sarvasah. According to your lot, according to your karma, it has been fixed up that you will eat like this, you will sleep like this, your sex life will be like this, and you will be able to defend like this. That is destiny. By destiny these are already fixed, so don't spoil your life trying to improve these things.

As the shastra [scripture] says, tasyaiva hetoh prayateta kovido na labhyate yad bhramatam upary adhah: "You have transmigrated from so many bodies—this body to that body, this body to that body. Now that you have a human body, you can read Bhagavad-gita, you can learn from Krishna what the real problem of life is. Utilise your life for that purpose. Don't be perplexed with these problems of the body."

As Krishna says in the present verse from Bhagavad-gita, tams titiksasva: "Just try to tolerate the bodily pains and pleasures." For example, the summer season comes, and it will go away. Similarly, the winter season comes, and it will go away. So just try to protect yourself as far as possible, but don't be affected by the summer season or winter season. In India the temperature is sometimes 120 degrees during the summer. Does that mean people will stop all their work? No. Or, in the Western countries, the winter is so strong that sometimes the temperature
falls below zero. Does that mean everything will be stopped? No, you have to do your duty. Similarly, Krishna advises Arjuna, “You are afraid of the little pain that will come because you have to kill your own men. That pain is coming, and it will go, but still you have to do your duty and fight. This fight is taking place under My guidance. So you must fight. That is your duty.”

Krishna says in the present verse that we should not be bothered by this matra-sparsah. Matra means “skin,” and sparsah means “touch.” We should not be too much concerned with bodily pains and pleasures. But ignorant people are mad after this “skin disease,” headed by sex. What is sex? Simply an itching of the skin. There is an itching of the skin, and you become satisfied by scratching it. That’s all. Therefore the shastra advises, visaheta dhirah: “Be sober and tolerate the itching of sex.”

But these rascals who are very much attached to so-called family life are completely absorbed in this itching. They are known as grhamedhis. A grhastha is different. The grhastha knows the science of Krishna consciousness, but he is not so advanced. Therefore he lives with a wife and children, but for Krishna consciousness. And those who are not Krishna conscious, who simply live like animals with their children and wife—they are grhamedhis. The grhastha makes the best use of a bad bargain, while the grhamedhi lives like an animal, for material happiness.

And what is the happiness of the grhamedhi? Sex pleasure, that’s all. Otherwise, he has no other impetus to work day and night like an ass. His only hope is that at night he will enjoy sex. That’s all.

The shastra advises us to tolerate the itching of sex and in this way avoid implication in the repetition of birth and death. The best thing is to be brahmachari—no sex. Tolerate this itching. You will avoid so much displeasure, so much unhappiness in life. Otherwise, if you try to satisfy the itching sensation, you may attain a little happiness, but what is that happiness? Suppose there is some itching in your body. If you scratch it, you feel some pleasure—but then again the itching becomes even stronger. Sex is like that. So, one who is sober, advanced, will tolerate that itching sensation and be happy. He will think, “Sex is not my necessity. It is only something of the skin—my ‘skin disease.’ But I am not this skin; I am a soul, and my duty is to serve Krishna.”

Thank you very much.
On War and Death

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and some of his disciples took place on an early morning walk in San Francisco.

First disciple: Srila Prabhupada, recently a student committed suicide here. It's happening all over the country.

Srila Prabhupada: Some are publicly committing suicide, and others are silently committing suicide. If the human life is wasted for sense gratification, that is suicide. People have the opportunity for enlightenment, yet they live like dogs and cats. This is suicide.

Second disciple: One month ago there was a big story in the papers about how a student went through the archives in the Library of Congress and compiled enough information to construct an atom bomb. They concluded that, theoretically, anyone who wanted to could gather enough information from public sources and build an atom bomb.

Srila Prabhupada: This is also suicide. The atom bomb manufacturer is thinking he is successful in his life by building an atom bomb, but he does not know how to save himself.
from death. Nothing he has done can save him from death. So what is the use of his scientific knowledge? The dog is going to die, and he is also going to die, so where is the difference?

First disciple: Incidentally, the scientists’ original purpose in building the atom bomb was to prevent death—-to end the Second World War as soon as possible.

Srila Prabhupada: How can they prevent death? That they do not know—how to prevent death. They can accelerate it, that’s all. Here are the real problems: janma-mrtyu-jara-vyadhi—birth, death, old age, and disease. What scientist can solve these problems? These are the really fearful problems, but where is the chemist or psychologist who can solve them?

First disciple: The theory nowadays is that since Russia has so many nuclear weapons and the United States has so many, they are both afraid to use them.

Srila Prabhupada: No. They must use them. That is nature’s arrangement. This is not astrology; it is a natural conclusion. There is no doubt about it.

First disciple: The only difficulty is that if they use the nuclear weapons there’ll be total destruction. So everyone is afraid of using them.

Srila Prabhupada: Well, total or partial, that we shall see. But the weapons must be used. If the leaders want to avoid war, they must understand three items: God is the proprietor of everything. He is the enjoyer of all work, and He is the friend of everyone. But the leaders act in just the opposite way, thinking, “I am the proprietor, I am the enjoyer, and I am the friend of everyone, because I am God.” This is demonic. Nixon was elected President by pretending to be a friend of everyone, but later on he proved to be an enemy. Nobody can be the friend of everyone except Krishna.

Third disciple: But isn’t a pure devotee of God a friend to all?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, because he carries the message of Krishna. If there is a universal friend, and if somebody gives information of that universal friend, then he is also a universal friend. Krishna is the friend of all (suhrdam sarva-bhutanam), and the pure devotee tells everyone that Krishna is his friend. Therefore, nobody can be your friend except Krishna’s representative. In the material world, “I am your enemy, and you are my enemy.” This is the whole basis of the material world. But the spiritual world is just the opposite: “I am your friend, and you are my friend, because Krishna is the dearmost friend of us both.”

Third disciple: When we distribute your books, Srila Prabhupada, are we trying to show people we are their friends, also?

Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes. That is being a real friend.

As Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says, kota nidra jao mayapa-sisacira kole... enechi ausadhi maya nasibaro lagi’ / Hari-nama maha-mantra lao tumi magi’:

“O people, you are sleeping under the spell of maya [illusion]. How long will you sleep and suffer in this material world? I have the medicine—the Hare Krishna maha-mantra—so take it and sleep no more.”

First disciple: Wouldn’t the threat of nuclear warfare make Krishna consciousness easier to spread?

Srila Prabhupada: The threat is already here, but people are so foolish that they are not afraid of the threat. Certainly the threat of death is already here: everyone will die. That is the real problem, but who cares for it? People are avoiding this problem because they cannot make any countermeasure.

Fourth disciple: Srila Prabhupada, we constantly hear from you and your books that we will die and that we must learn how to face this. But still, even as your disciples, we’re not so convinced. We’ve been brought up in a culture that hides death. Particularly here in America, we rarely see death.

Srila Prabhupada: You think you’ll not die?

Fourth disciple: I know I will, but how can we come to the platform of realizing that?

Srila Prabhupada: Everyone is dying. Your mother is dying, your father is dying, your friends are dying—and still you cannot understand? Then how will it be possible to make you understand? Every day, every moment, so many men and animals die. Death is inevitable, but still you are thinking, “I’ll not die.” And this is our real problem. Nobody wants to die, but everyone is dying. This problem the rascal scientists cannot solve.

Sometimes we see a dog swimming in the Pacific Ocean and think, “Oh, let me grab hold of the dog’s tail, and I shall cross the ocean.” Similarly, those who are thinking the so-called scientists and philosophers will solve the problems of birth, death, old age, and disease are exactly like those who are trying to cross the Pacific Ocean by holding on to the tail of a dog. The scientists are like dogs, and to catch hold of their tails is hopeless.

First disciple: So one must become convinced of the reality of death through philosophy?

Srila Prabhupada: At the present moment philosophy means “mental concoction.” But real philosophy means to find out reality. That is philosophy. Not “I think like this, he thinks like this, he thinks like that.” This is mental concoction. Real philosophy is what Krishna says in Bhagavad-gita: janma-mrtyu-jara-vyadhi-duhkha-dosanudarsanam—“Always remember that there is death, that there is birth, that there is old age and disease, and try to save yourself from these by becoming Krishna conscious.” This is philosophy.
Although Lord Chaitanya is the incarnation of Krishna for the current age, He is generally unknown beyond India. Even within India, few outside the Gaudiya Vaishnava line are familiar with the Pancha-tattva. For persons unfamiliar with the Pancha-tattva, we often give a simple description: the Pancha-tattva is Lord Chaitanya and His four main associates. But that's only part of the story. The Pancha-tattva ("five truths") is actually one God in five features.

At first glance the idea of God in five features may seem
peculiar. By definition, God is One, the unequalled source of everything. He is the Supreme Being, from whom all other beings originate. If another shared His preeminent position, He could not be considered God. For God to be supreme, He must be a singularity, without comparison and without competition. The world’s monotheistic traditions have gone to great lengths to establish God’s oneness, His exclusive position as the original cause of all causes.

And yet, despite their insistence that God is one, many in the Christian world accept the idea of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and that all three are in some sense God. This is not to say that some Christians believe in three Gods, which would be polytheism, but rather that they believe in three complete persons composing one God. Similarly, those who recognize the truth of the Pancha-tattva accept one God who manifests in five features. This ability to expand into various personalities is evidence of God’s incomprehensible nature, and is detailed in all holy scriptures, from the Bible to Vedic literature.

Though God manifests in a variety of forms, and though these forms are simultaneously one and different, we might legitimately ask, Why would one Supreme Being manifest as five? What is His motivation? Gaudiya Vaishnava thinkers since the time of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu concur that the One becomes many to exchange and disseminate divine love. Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, author of the Chaitanya-charitamrita, explains: “Spiritually there are no differences between these five truths, for on the transcendental platform everything is absolute. Yet there are also varieties in the spiritual world, and in order to taste these spiritual varieties one should distinguish between them.” (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi 7.5).

Expanding for Love

Kaviraja Gosvami has further written that the characteristics of Krishna are understood to be like a storehouse of transcendental love. Although this repository of love certainly accompanied Krishna when He was present in the world five thousand years ago, it was subsequently sealed. When the Pancha-tattva arrived some five hundred years ago in Bengal, they broke the seal and plundered the storehouse to drink transcendental love of Krishna. The more they tasted it, the more their thirst for it grew. This is the nature of love. It is dynamic—a constant surge upward. The more it is relished, the more it is desired.

It follows, then, that if God has more love than any other being—indeed, He is the very embodiment of love—His yearning for love must be greater than anyone else’s (as is His potency to fulfill that yearning). But love is not enjoyed alone: it is shared between people. Therefore, the One becomes many (and, inconceivably, remains One). So He becomes the Pancha-tattva to relish loving exchange. Even prior to the manifest pastimes of the Pancha-tattva, God expanded for love: He first expands into His eternal consort, Sri Radha, and into His full expansions and incarnations, and then into the multifarious living entities, or jivatmas, who are removed expansions and therefore constitute a separate category, known as jiva-tattva.

The two primary living beings, Radha and Krishna, reunite in the form of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and so the expression of love that the Lord manifests in this feature is beyond the ken of ordinary and extraordinary
perception. So inconceivable is this love, writes Kaviraja Gosvami, that "although the members of the Pancha-tattva plundered the storehouse of love of Godhead and ate and distributed its contents, there was no scarcity for this wonderful storehouse is so complete that as the love is distributed, the supply increases hundreds of times." (Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi 7.24)

Five Truths

According to Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.5.32),

```
krishna-varnam tv sakrishnam
sangopangraha-parasdam
yajnaih sankirtana-prayair
yajanti hi su-medhasah
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"In this Age of Kali, people endowed with sufficient intelligence will worship the Lord, who is accompanied by His associates, by performance of sankirtana-yajna [the chanting of the holy name]." Traditional exegesis reveals that this verse and others like it refer to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. As a manifestation of Radha and Krishna in one form, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the original Godhead in His most confidential and intimate feature. As the prime member of the Pancha-tattva, He is accompanied by His plenary expansion (Nityananda Prabhu), His incarnation (Advaita Prabhu), His internal potency (Gadadhara Pandita), and His marginal potency (Srivasa Thakura).

Of these five truths, only Sri Chaitanya is called Mahaprabhu ("the Great Master"), because even among manifestations of God, He is supreme. He appears in this world in a vibrant golden form, much like that of Sri Radha, whose essence He embodies. He brings to the world the congregational chanting of the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, far beyond ritualistic forms of religion that offer ordinary salvation, and He brings the inner core of spiritual love—the highest achievement of devotional sentiment. Armed with profound philosophy and the mood of Krishna's greatest lovers, He comes with the best secret known to man: bhakti, or devotional love. By His own example He shows how to practice this love, and He exhibits the symptoms that come from embracing Krishna in one's heart of hearts.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu cannot be understood or approached without the mercy of Nityananda Prabhu, who is the cardinal guru of the universe and who serves as an intermediary between Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the devotee. As Balarama, Krishna's elder brother, is described as Krishna's "second body," so too is Nityananda the second body of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He is the Lord's active principle, He functions as such in both material creation and in spiritual lila, or pastimes. This means that Krishna is simply engaged in play, while "serious business" is handled by His first expansion, Balarama. In kingly terms, a monarch is merely interested in enjoying his well-deserved delights, while his immediate associates tend to his various services and obligatory necessities. This is similar to how the "servitor" Godhead—whether Balarama or Nityananda—functions in relation to Lord Krishna.

In manifested earthly lila, Nityananda Prabhu is senior to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu by more than a decade. He is statuesque, like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, though He is whitish in complexion, whereas Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is golden. His graceful gait is often compared to that of an elephant, and in a deep voice He is always repeating "Krishna, Krishna."

Both Maha-Vishnu and Sadashiva—forms of the Lord who evoke awe and reverence in the spiritual world—descend in Chaitanya's lila as Advaita Acharya. Because He is identical to Vishnu, the all-pervading Lord, He is called Advaita, meaning "nondifferent." Advaita Acharya is one cause of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance in this world: Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Himself confirmed that it was because of Advaita's prayers that He manifested His pastimes. Sadashiva (who appears as Advaita) is the intermediary between the spiritual world and the material world; it is therefore fitting that it was Advaita Acharya's prayers that brought Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Advaita Acharya, the senior Vaishnava of Navadwip, was middle-aged when Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was born. He is usually depicted with white hair and a long white beard. His clothes are as white as His facial hair, and sometimes their whiteness is compared to that of the moon or the jasmine. Great devotees meditate upon Him as the root of transcendental joy and the cause of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance in this world.

Gadadhara Pandita is understood to be Krishna's shakti, or internal energy, and is described both as a direct incarnation of Radharani and as an incarnation of Sri Radha's effulgence. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is often called "the life and soul of Gadadhara Pandita." The relationship between them is intimate, if not perplexing. For example, since Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is both Radha and Krishna, and Gadadhara is in fact Radha, there seems a strange overlapping of spiritual identities. But mundane limitations should not be foisted upon divine personalities.

A closer look reveals that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is Radha in the mood of separation from Krishna. In the intimacy of love, Her mood is to be demanding of Krishna, while being uncompromising in Her service to Him. Gadadhara, on the other hand, is Radha in the mood of Rukmini, one of Krishna's prominent queens in Dwarka. In Her undeviating devotion, Her mood is to be conciliatory and accommodating. These different moods manifest as different personalities in Chaitanya's lila. Such distinctions are difficult to understand, and one must be realized to enter into their mystery.

At least this much may be understood: Gadadhara Pandita is a perfect manifestation of Krishna's hladini.
potency, embodied as Sri Radha. The \textit{hladini} potency is the power by which God enjoys pleasure. It is also the potency by which the servants of God enjoy the highest spiritual pleasure in love of God.

The essence of love of God is \textit{bhava}, or intense spiritual emotions, the ultimate development of which is called \textit{mahabhava}, embodied in Sri Radha. As it is said, Lord Krishna enchants the entire world, but Sri Radha enchants Him. Therefore, She is the supreme goddess, above all others. She is the \textit{purna-sakti}, the full power, and She manifests in Chaitanya \textit{lila} as Gadadhara Pandita. He is the very form of blissful love, and to gaze upon His sweet, smiling face is to see love personified. To achieve His association is the goal of existence.

Therefore the Pancha-tattva mantra ends with the phrase \textit{srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-vrnda}: “[All glories to] the devotees of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, beginning with Srivasa.” (The full mantra is \textit{jaya sr-krishna-chaitanya prabhu nityananda sr-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura- bhakta-vrnda}.)

\textbf{Five Factors for Action}

The members of the Pancha-tattva can fulfill all aspects of devotional life and bring happiness and spiritual bliss to all devotees who serve them. Those who honour the Pancha-tattva will reach perfection. According to \textit{Bhagavad-gita} (18.13-14), there are five factors in the accomplishment of any action: \textit{karta} (the performer), \textit{cesta} (endeavours), \textit{daivam} (Supersoul, or the will of God), \textit{karanam} (the senses), and \textit{adhishthanam} (the place of action). The performer is the devotee, represented by Srivasa Thakura; the endeavour requires energy, the supreme form of which is known as Gadadhara Pandita; the Supersoul is Advaita, the embodiment of Vishnu; the senses are controlled by following the guru, the external manifestation of Nityananda Prabhu; and the place of action is Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's heart, from which everything else expands. In conclusion, we react on the words of scripture: “By remembering the lotus feet of the Pancha-tattva, a dumb man can become a poet, a lame man can cross mountains, and a blind man can see the stars in the sky.” (\textit{Chaitanya-charitamrita, Adi 8.5})

\textbf{Unity in Variety: the Five Spiritual Truths}

Taken together, the five categories of truth, or spiritual reality, represented by the Pancha-tattva give us a full picture of the Absolute Truth, or God. Lord Chaitanya represents the \textit{ishvara-tattva}.

\textit{Ishvara} means “controller.” The Supreme controller, above all others, is Lord Chaitanya (who is Lord Krishna Himself). Lord Nityananda represents the \textit{prakasha-tattva}.

\textit{Prakasha} means “expansion.” From Nityananda (who is Lord Krishna Himself), Lord Nityananda expands the \textit{prakasha-tattva}. \textit{Prakasha} means “expansion.” From Nityananda (who is Lord Balarama) expand all the Vishnu or Narayana forms of God. Advaita Acharya (who is Maha-Vishnu) represents the \textit{avatara-tattva}.

All the avatars, or incarnations of the Lord in the material world, expand from Him. Gadadhara Pandita represents the \textit{shakti-tattva}.

\textit{Shakti} means “energy,” and here refers specifically to the internal energy of God, which includes the eternal spiritual world and the ever-liberated associates of the Lord who reside there. Finally, Srivasa Pandita represents the \textit{jiva-tattva}.

The \textit{jiva} is the infinitesimal living entity (we ourselves), who, like the forms and energies of God mentioned before, are also spiritual. In this way the members of the Pancha-tattva represent the main spiritual varieties that make up the one Absolute Truth.
Able Guidance

There’s an emphatic command in the Vedic texts that no human being can afford to ignore.

by Dhanurdhara Swami

In West Bengal, India, in 1900, twenty-six-year-old Bimala Prasada Datta, an accomplished scholar in mathematics, astronomy, and theology, was requested by his father to seek spiritual initiation from Gaurakashora Dasa Babaji, a saintly yet illiterate mendicant. Hoping to avoid the distraction of an adoring public, the old saint was absorbed in chanting God’s names next to the local cremation grounds.

Although the intellectual young aspirant was sincere in his request for initiation, the ascetic refused. Rebuked by his father for his repeated failure to win the favour of the great saint, a determined Bimala Prasada went to Gaurakashora Dasa Babaji again: “If I do not receive your mercy, I see no need in holding on to life.” Seeing the sincerity of the young man, Gaurakashora Dasa Babaji accepted him as his only disciple.

Although Bimala Prasada’s action may seem drastic, it was not done in ignorance. According to the Padma Purana there are 8,400,000 species of life through which the soul evolves. Only at the juncture of human life does the living entity have the ability to achieve perfection by inquiring from a spiritual master. The guru is therefore not a fad or luxury but a dire necessity. Throughout the Vedic literature the same basic message is found: “Any person who seriously desires to achieve real happiness must seek out a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him.”

The necessity of accepting a guru is perfectly illustrated by the illusion and consequent enlightenment of Arjuna as described in the Bhagavad-gita. Despite all effort to the contrary, Arjuna found himself in the unenviable predicament of a fratricidal war. He became overwhelmed with anxiety because in good conscience he was unable to either renounce his duty as a kshatriya or fight against his relatives.

Fortunately, his frustrations led him to seek a solution by surrendering to Lord Krishna, the supreme spiritual master. “Now I am Your disciple and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me.”

As a result, Arjuna attentively heard Lord Krishna’s instructions and at the conclusion felt a new hope and direction in life: “My dear Krishna, my illusion is now gone. I have regained my memory by Your mercy. I am now free from doubt.”

Arjuna’s predicament is not unique. Everyone is faced with difficulties that happen without his desire. The Vedas, therefore, comparing the world situation to a forest fire that somehow blazes without being set, enjoin that one should not remain in material perplexities but should approach a spiritual master.

Another analogy commonly used in the Vedas to help us understand the need for accepting a guru is the comparison between the spiritual master and the captain of a ship. The insurmountable ocean of material existence can be crossed by the boat of human life, which is aided by the favourable winds of the Vedas and directed by the able guidance of the spiritual master.

To fully appreciate the urgency of accepting a guru, one needs to understand something about the source of the guru’s knowledge. The guru carries a message that has been passed down in an unbroken chain of spiritual preceptors originating from the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna, Himself. These disciplic successions are described in the Padma Purana. There are four of them: the Brahma-sampradaya, through Sri Madhvacharya; the Laksmi-sampradaya, through Sri Ramanujacharya; the Rudra-sampradaya, through Sri Vishnu-swami; and the Kumara-sampradaya, through Sri Nimbarkacharya.

A disciple in a bona fide disciplic succession receives from his guru not a sermon of philosophical speculation but a potent recitation of standard knowledge, not different from the Lord’s original instruction to His first disciple. The term guru therefore literally means “heavy,” because of the weight of the message the guru carries.

Perfect understanding of any subject is received through authorized sources. A new lawyer becomes an apprentice to an experienced lawyer, and a young doctor becomes the intern of a licensed practitioner. The Mundaka Upanishad thus concludes. “To learn the science of God, one must approach a spiritual master.”

By Lord Krishna’s method of presenting Bhagavad-gita, He also highlights the necessity of accepting knowledge from the proper authority. Although He is the original spiritual preceptor. He still supports His statements to Arjuna by informing him that “the supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession.”

The principle of accepting a spiritual master is essential, and in Vedic history we find no one becoming enlightened without the mercy of a preceptor. Even the Supreme Lord accepts a guru when He appears, just to teach how to accept knowledge from the right source. Thus Lord Ramachandra, Lord Rishabhadeva, Lord Krishna, and Lord Chaitanya all accepted gurus.

When Bimala Prasada expressed his feeling that he could not live without the blessings of the great saint...
Gaurakishora Dasa Babaji he demonstrated the importance of accepting a bona fide spiritual master for enlightenment. Human life is specifically meant for self-realization, without which life has no profit. Not only did Bimala Prasada, later known as Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, apparently achieve perfection by the mercy of Gaurakishora, but by carrying the message of his guru perfectly, he became the thirty-first preceptor of the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya-sampradaya.

Furthermore, on his direct order, his disciple Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada carried the message of the disciplic succession throughout the world. We are all indebted to the young Bimala Prasada, for because of his resolve to attain the mercy of a bona fide guru, the most important instruction of the Bhagavad-gita was made available to people of all countries: “Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.”
I do not know how much nectar the two syllables ‘Krs-na’ have produced. When the holy name of Krishna, is chanted, it appears to dance within the mouth. We then desire many, many mouths. When that name enters the holes of the ears, we desire many millions of ears. And when the holy name dances in the courtyard of the heart, it conquers the activities of the mind, and therefore all the senses become inert.”

These lines, conceived in a state of religious ecstasy, flowed from the pen of Srila Rupa Gosvami, the great Vaishnava theologian and mystic, as he wrote his famous devotional drama Vidagdha-madhava in early sixteenth-century India. His equally famous brother, Srila Sanatana Gosvami, exults in his Brihad-bhagavatamrta,

“All glories to the all-blissful holy name of Sri Krishna, which causes the devotees to give up all conventional religious duties, meditation, and worship. When somehow or other uttered even once by a living entity, the holy name awards him liberation. The holy name of Krishna is the highest nectar. It is my very life and my only treasure.”

To the uninitiated, these expressions of enthusiasm for the practice of contemplative recitation of the name of God may appear odd. For how can repeated recitation of mere sounds—linguistic formulations—transform consciousness and invoke ecstasy? Modern secular students of religion, especially those of a reductionistic temperament, seek often to divest such spiritual experiences of their unique metaphysical properties, attributing them to quantifiable psychological (or other) causes. Some even view them as pathological. But mere psychological reductionism can do little to shed light upon the profound religious experiences of those who “taste,” in devotional ecstasy, “the nectar of the name. Nor can it explain the profound influence this practice has had on the religious adepts of many different spiritual traditions, most prominently the Vaishnava religious tradition of India, within which the theology and practice of the holy name has reached its highest development.

According to historically reliable literary accounts, medieval India witnessed a massive religious renaissance centered largely on the popular mysticism of the congregational chanting and singing of the names of God. This litany often took the form of the maha-mantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. The great sixteenth-century saint Sri Chaitanya, Himself worshiped as an incarnation of Lord Krishna, first turned this public congregational chanting (sankirtana) into a mass movement in Bengal and then spread it to other parts of north India, and later to the south of India, where, according to His biographers, He traveled on foot for six years and converted millions to the religion of the holy name. The chanting of the divine name was no longer to be confined to the retreats of solitary mystics and hermits, but to spread itself widely and assume a central role in the spiritual lives of the common people. Exuberant chanting processions, accompanied by drums and cymbals, swept through the streets of the cities, towns, and villages, inundating countless people in a tidal wave of ecstasy emotion. Not only the common people but some of the most prominent religious intellectuals of the day, having first been inspired by the brilliance and clarity of His teachings, succumbed to the devotional ecstasy of Sri Chaitanya’s revivalist movement. No meant to remain confined even to India, Chaitanya-style sankirtana has in recent decades appeared on Western shores, where members of the Hare Krishna movement, modern followers of Sri Chaitanya, publicly chant in the streets of major cities.

Why the profound effect on human consciousness? How is this process of meditation performed? What are its effects? Why its universal appeal, which appears to transcend all historical and cultural bounds? To gain a deep understanding of these matters, we will need to explore the theological and mystical literature of the Vaishnava tradition. In preparation, because we are dealing with, subject that is not quantitative and empiric but experiential, we will need to suspend our limiting ethnocentric and ideological prejudices and attempt to understand these apparent mysteries with an open and inquisitive mind. To do so, let us assume the reverential attitude of the sincere pilgrim, for this will give us chance to penetrate the mystery. Now, let us proceed.

The Divine Attributes of the Holy Name

According to Vaishnava wisdom, the holy name of Krishna has extraordinary spiritual potency because the name of God is non-different from God Himself. In the material sense, name is different from form. Language is merely
representative, symbolic; it does not itself embody the reality it seeks to represent. Recitation of the sound water does not quench our thirst, nor does calling the name of our beloved invoke the full presence of the beloved. In the divine realm, however, symbol embodies reality. Krishna self-manifests within His "sound incarnation," His holy name. In the only literary work ascribed to Sri Chaitanya, the eight-verse Sikshastaka, Sri Chaitanya prays, "My Lord, in Your holy name there is all good fortune for the living entity, and therefore You have many names, such as Krishna and Govinda, by which You expand Yourself. You have invested all Your potencies in those names." That the name of God, being nondifferent from God manifests all transcendental potencies and attributes is explained in this verse from Padma Purana:

The holy name of Krishna is transcendently blissful. It bestows all spiritual benedictions, for it is Krishna Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. Krishna’s name is complete, and it is the form of all transcendental mellow. It is not a material name under any condition, and it is no less powerful than Krishna Himself. Since Krishna’s name is not contaminated by the material qualities, there is no question of its being involved with maya [illusion]. Krishna’s name is always liberated and spiritual; it is never conditioned by the laws of material nature. This is because the name of Krishna and Krishna Himself are identical.

The great seventeenth-century Vaishnava poet Narottama dasa Thakura writes, golokera prema-dhana, hari-nama-sankirtana: the transcendental sound of the holy name of the Lord has its origin in the spiritual world.

Being the sound incarnation of the Lord, therefore, the holy name is not an ordinary material sound; it is divine, transcendental. But the divine nature of the holy name remains forever a mystery to those whose approach is merely empiric or intellectual. In discussing the theology of the holy name with an assembly of scholars, Srila Haridasa Thakura, the great teacher of the name, asserted, "One cannot understand the glories of the holy name merely by logic and argument." The holy name is understood and experienced only by those who have renounced all conceit and pretension and directly embraced the process of chanting with humility, faith, and devotion. As sound transmitted from afar can be heard when received by an appropriate electronic device, so transcendent, spiritual sound can be properly heard and assimilated by one equipped with the proper means to receive it: bhagavata-prema, love of God.

The Practice of Chanting the Holy Name

Since the holy name is spiritual, it must be received from spiritual sources. The holy name—and, ultimately, all spiritual wisdom—is preserved and transmitted by generation after generation of realized souls comprising a disciplic succession of spiritual teachers. The mantra, the holy name, which is the seed of spiritual devotion, is planted within the heart of the sincere disciple by the spiritual master at the time of formal spiritual initiation. When uttered in devotion by a fully realized guru, the holy name has great efficacy upon the hearer, who achieves immediate benefit. Having received the holy
name from the lips of a spiritual master, the student embarks upon the path of daily chanting, being careful to pronounce the mantra clearly and distinctly and to chant loudly enough to hear himself. The chanter must absorb his consciousness deeply within the divine sound of the mantra, vigilantly protecting the mind from the distraction of trivial or directionless thought.

The chanting of the holy name is not, however, a mechanical process depending merely upon contemplative prowess. It is a devotional art, a form of prayer, and thus one must chant with reverence and devotion. The Hare Krishna mantra is a prayer for protection and deliverance, a prayer to the Lord for His divine presence and for the opportunity to serve Him. Chanting is compared to the helpless cry of a child for its mother. It is a prayer from the core of the repentant heart. It is chanted, therefore, in humility. Once, in a state of devotional ecstasy while in the company of two close followers (Svarupa Damodara Gosvami and Ramananda Raya), Sri Chaitanya described the quintessential importance of chanting with the mood of humility. He said, "One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honour but is always prepared to give all respect to others, can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord." Commenting upon this famous verse, Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, author of Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, declares, "Everyone please hear me! String this verse on the thread of the holy name and wear it on your neck for continuous remembrance. One must strictly follow the principles given by Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in this verse. If one simply does so, certainly he will achieve the ultimate goal of life, the lotus feet of Sri Krishna."

When and where is chanting appropriate? There is no restriction as to the appropriate time or place for chanting the holy name. The devotee is advised to chant always and everywhere. The process of God realization is not a mere liturgical or social formality to be restricted to circumscribed times and places. It is a quest that should underlie and pervade all one's activities. In Bhagavad-gita, Krishna describes that great souls (mahatmas) constantly chant His glories (satatam kirtayanto mam). The final line of Sri Chaitanya's prayer mentioned above recommends that one chant the holy name continuously (kirtaniyah sada harih). Srla Haridasa Thakura says, nirantara nama laco: "Chant the holy name without stopping."

To experience the full effects of the holy name, one must attain the stage of offenseless chanting. According to Vaishnava scripture, there are three progressive stages in the development of chanting: the offensive stage (nama-aparadha), the stage of lessening offenses (namahbasa), and the offenseless, pure stage. A neophyte commits offenses against the holy name. According to Padma Purana, there are ten offenses, involving misuse of or mundane misconceptions about the holy name and the scriptures and saints who embody and teach the holy name. One who remains at the offensive stage does not attain the ultimate goal of chanting, love of God. Says Krishnadasa Kaviraja, "If one chants the exalted holy name of the Lord again and again and yet his love for the Supreme Lord does not develop and tears do not appear in his eyes, it is evident that because of his offenses in chanting, the seed of the holy name of Krishna does not sprout."

How can one overcome offenses and develop pure chanting? By more chanting. In his commentary on Srimad-Bhagavatam (Bhagavata-Purana), Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura quotes a verse from Padma Purana stating that even if in the beginning one chants the Hare Krishna mantra with offenses, one can become free from such offenses by repeated chanting. By the immense purificatory power of the holy name, constant chanting frees one from offenses to the holy name and gradually elevates one to the transcendental platform of pure chanting, by which one can attain pure love of God. Elsewhere it is recommended that one can also overcome offenses by realizing that the holy name is nondifferent from the Lord, by chanting in humility, and by developing an attitude of service to the Lord.

After the offensive stage, as one's offenses cease, one approaches the platform of pure chanting. Finally, with offenseless chanting, one becomes completely enlightened and liberated, and one's dormant love of God fully awakens. In that stage, one actually enters the kingdom of God, although physically he may apparently be within the material world.

The Transcendental Effects of the Holy Name

The holy name exerts the deepest and most profound influence upon those who invoke it in a mood of reverential devotion.

Freedom from the Reactions to Sin

First, the holy name eradicates the results of sins committed both in the present and in prior lifetimes. According to the law of karma, a human being is responsible for the sinful acts he performs and must suffer for them ("As ye sow, so shall ye reap"). Deeply enmeshed in a complex web of material actions and their reactions, one must suffer the duality of pleasure and pain, lifetime after lifetime. The holy name, however, eradicates all reactions to past sins, both those
manifesting themselves at present and those destined to manifest themselves in the future. Simply by chanting the holy name, one attracts the attention of the Supreme Lord, who therefore considers, “Because this person has chanted My holy name, My duty is to give him protection.” The power of the holy name to absolve sins is declared emphatically in the scriptures. The Garuda Purana tells us, “If one chants the holy name of the Lord, even in helplessness or without desiring to do so, all the reactions of his sinful life depart, just as when a lion roars all the small animals flee in fear.” Says the Brihad-vishnu Purana, “Simply by chanting the name of Han, a sinful man can counteract the reactions to more sins than he is able to commit.” In the Vishnu-dharmottara we read, “This word Krishna is so auspicious that everyone who chants this holy name rides himself immediately of the reactions of sinful activities from many, many births.” But for the chanting of the holy name to exert such a powerful purifying effect, the devotee must chant the holy name in purity, without offense. Having ceased to indulge in sinful actions, he must live a pure and holy life.

Freeddddomb from Desire due to Illusion

How can one escape the will to sin? By escaping the illusion that supports it—the illusion that the material body is the self. When the embodied soul erroneously identifies himself with the gross material body and its subtle mind, intellect, and false ego, he seeks pleasure in the comfort and gratification of the body. As he wanders throughout the material creation, lifetime after lifetime, trying to dominate and enjoy the resources of the phenomenal world, he goes through myriad temporary, fleeting sensory experiences, which create myriad impressions of the phenomenal world upon his heart and consciousness. In this way, his original, pure consciousness becomes covered by layer after layer of material contamination. Because the self is purely spiritual, no variety or amount of physical or mental gratification can give him real satisfaction. Under the illusion of bodily identification, therefore, he perpetually suffers the unnatural and frustrating condition of material existence.

This illusion and its painful effects, which have haunted and tormented the embodied soul since time immemorial, are destroyed by the transcendental effects of the holy name. Because the divine name and the Lord Himself are identical, when one regularly chants the holy name he develops attraction toward the Lord Himself. That divine, spontaneous attraction cleanses his heart of all desires for lesser, material pleasures. Lord Krishna personally aids in that progressive purification, as the great devotee Suta Gosvami explained to the sages assembled at Naimisharanya forest: “Sri Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramatma [Supersoul] in everyone’s heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge to hear His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted “ When the heart is fully purified by chanting of the holy name, the devotee loses interest in everything unspiritual. He views the entire creation as the Lord’s energy and thus gives up the desire to exploit and consume matter. As chanting cleanses the mirror of the heart (ceto-darpana-marjanam), one fully awakens to spiritual reality.

Enlightenment

All knowledge, both spiritual and material, is contained within the ancient writings called the Vedas. The knowledge of the Vedas is said to be eternal and of divine origin; it is not a creation of historical, imperfect human speculation. Long before the Vedic literature was compiled (by Srila Vyasadeva, the “literary incarnation of God,” according to orthodox Vedic historiography) that Vedic knowledge existed in the form of pure, transcendental sound (shabda-brahman). In the Bhagavad-gita, Lord Krishna, the speaker of the Gita, identifies Himself as the summum bonum of Vedic knowledge: “By all the Vedas, I am to be known” (vedais ca sarvair aham eva vedyo). The holy name of Lord Krishna, being nondifferent from the Lord Himself, is the quintessence of the Vedas, and therefore of all knowledge. Chanting the holy name thus enlightens the soul with complete knowledge—knowledge of his own existential identity, of the material and spiritual worlds, of God, of the soul’s eternal relationship with God, and of the means to revive that transcendental relationship. The maha-mantra embodies all knowledge, all wisdom.

Those who worship the Lord by chanting His holy name invoke the mercy of the Lord, who acts as the indwelling teacher (chaitiya-guru) and supreme friend of the conditioned soul by enlightening the soul from within: “To those who are constantly devoted and who worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. Out of compassion, I, dwelling within their hearts, destroy with the lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.” Rupa Gosvami compares the holy name to the sun, “for just as a slight appearance of the sun dissipates the darkness of night, so a slight appearance of the holy name of Krishna can drive away all the darkness of ignorance that arises in the heart because of greatly sinful activities performed in previous lives.”

Liberation

When through purification and knowledge one no longer identifies himself with the material body and the material world, he ceases to engage in material actions, and thus he is freed from material reactions. Thus freed, he no longer has to take birth again. He is free from samsara, the cycle of repeated birth and death. This is the meaning of moksha, liberation. Spiritual sound (shabda-brahman)
has the power to liberate. The Vedanta-sutra speaks of anavrttiḥ shabdat, “liberation by sound.”

The ease with which one attains liberation through chanting is affirmed in the Skanda Purana: “By once chanting the holy name of the Lord, which consists of the two syllables ha-ri, one guarantees his path to liberation.” As stated in Srimad-Bhagavatam, even unconscious chanting brings results: “Living beings entangled in the complicated meshes of birth and death can be freed immediately by even unconsciously chanting the holy name of Krishna.” “Even the faintest rays of the effulgence of the Lord's holy name,” says Haridasa Thakura, “can grant one liberation.”

**God Consciousness**

Ultimately, the chanting of the holy name produces God consciousness, which culminates in ecstatic devotion to Krishna (Krishna-bhakti). Liberation (moksha) is not the ultimate in spiritual perfection. It simply indicates freedom from, or a negation of, material existence. Once liberated from material contamination, the soul must return to its original, constitutional position as a loving servant of the Lord.

As one progresses on the path of bhakti, divine love of God, the chanting of the holy name brings one into closer and closer contact with the Lord. On that path, the holy name invokes remembrance of the Lord, association with the Lord (via His form as sound), attraction to the Lord, the transcendental (“beatific”) vision (darshana) of the Lord, and finally divine love of God, wherein the devotee experiences various and intense spiritual ecstasies.

One should note that the efficacy of the process of chanting presupposes the Lord’s direct intervention in the devotional life of the spiritual adept. There is, in other words, nothing automatic or mechanical about the process of chanting. Revival of the soul's dormant God consciousness depends not on any ritualized litany but on the causeless mercy of the Lord, who responds to the sincere efforts of His devotee to glorify Him in devotion.

Since the holy name is Krishna Himself, the chanting of the holy name invokes remembrance of and association with Krishna Himself. Recollection, absorption, meditation, constant remembrance, and trance (samadhi) are the five stages in progressive remembrance of Krishna (Krishna-smarana). In conscious remembrance, the devotee feels the presence of the Lord as a transcendental, mystical fact. When the devotee chants the holy name, all the Lord's transcendental opulences-His divine form, activities, qualities, and so on—become manifest within the devotee's heart. Indeed, Krishna Himself appears. “My dear Narada, I do not actually reside in My abode, Vaikuntha, nor within the hearts of the yogis. I reside where My pure devotees chant My holy name and discuss My form, pastimes, and qualities.” (Padma Purana) Thus, the devotee's consciousness becomes attracted to Lord Krishna. Along with remembrance, association, and attraction, the devotee's attitude of service to the Lord develops, and in an advanced stage the devotee engages directly in the service of the Lord in the spiritual realm, even while situated within the material body. Thus, through pure, devotional chanting of the holy name, the devotee directly realizes the presence of the Lord and enters the deepest mysteries of God consciousness.

**Ecstatic Love of God**

Absorption in God consciousness culminates in prema-bhakti, pure love of God. Writes Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, “The holy name of Krishna is so attractive that anyone who chants it... becomes imbued with love of Krishna. This is the effect of chanting the Hare Krishna mantra.” Sri Chaitanya similarly instructs Sanatana Gosvami, “Of the nine processes of devotional service, the most important is to chant the holy name of the Lord always. If one does so, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of Godhead.”
Pure love for Krishna elicits the most sublime and lofty emotions of the soul. Liberation or spiritual perfection implies not the absence of cognition or emotion, but their ultimate perfection. Within the soul are profound transcendental emotions, which lie dormant as long as the soul sleeps in maya, material illusion. But such sublime emotions awaken with the awakening of pure, spiritual consciousness. The entire range of emotions experienced by a conditioned soul (such as happiness and misery, love and hate, compassion and envy) are merely dim and perverted reflections of their spiritual counterparts, which exist in absolute purity and are experienced by fully realized souls in their eternal relationship with the Lord. When the soul has awakened to pure love of Krishna, he tastes the infinitely sweet flavours of a wide variety of transcendental emotions, emotions which are variegated manifestations of spiritual ecstasy. Such transcendental, ecstatic emotions within the heart and mind of the pure devotee are so powerful that they erupt and spill over into the realm of the physical. In pursuance of the order of His spiritual master, Sri Chaitanya entered upon the path of constant chanting of the holy name of Krishna. When such chanting invoked intense spiritual ecstasy, He wondered whether He had lost His sanity. He approached His guru, Ishvara Puri, who then explained,

It is a characteristic of love of Godhead that by nature it induces transcendental symptoms in one's body and makes one more and more greedy to achieve the shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord. When one actually develops love of Godhead, he naturally sometimes cries, sometimes laughs, sometimes chants, and sometimes runs here and there just like a madman. Perspiration, trembling, standing of one's bodily hairs, tears, faltering, fading, madness, melancholy, patience, pride, joy, and humility—these are various natural symptoms of ecstatic love of Godhead, which causes a devotee to dance and float in an ocean of transcendental bliss while chanting the Hare Krishna mantra.

Of course, such states of spiritual ecstasy are very rarely achieved. They are experienced only by those who have entered the most intimate, confidential relationship with Lord Krishna. Such experiences are unavailable even to those who worship the Lord in awe and veneration, viewing the Lord merely in His aspect of greatness, power, and majesty. The divine flavours of such ecstasy are relished by those who, by the grace of the Lord, gaze beyond His majestic feature and deal with Him in spontaneous, intimate affection. As stated in Chaitanya-charitamrita, the pure devotional chanting of Lord Krishna's personal names ushers the devotee into the Lord's personal presence and into the highest bliss: “Dealings in affection with the Supreme Personality of Godhead bring happiness many millions of times greater than dealing with Him in awe and veneration. Simply by hearing the holy name of the Lord, the devotee is
merged in transcendental bliss.”

Beyond Death

By chanting the holy name in purity and devotion throughout his life, the devotee returns to Krishna at the time of death. Lord Krishna explains in Bhagavad-gita,

“Whoever, at the time of death, quits his body remembering Me alone at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt. Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail... He who meditates on Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his mind constantly engaged in remembering Me, undeviated from the path... is sure to reach Me.

Thus by chanting at the time of leaving the material body, the devotee who has practiced Krishna-smararana, remembrance of Krishna, by chanting Krishna’s holy names throughout his life can escape the painful cycle of birth and death and return to Krishna in the spiritual realm (Vaikuntha) to render Him intimate, ecstatic loving service.

The Divine Dispensation

Apart from the holy name’s importance as a means toward individual spiritual perfection, a reading of Vaishnava literature reveals the holy name to possess the broadest historical and universal significance as well. Chanting of the holy name is in fact described as the universal and supreme religion in the current epoch, an epoch referred to in traditional Indian texts as Kali-yuga, “the Age of Kali,” the great Iron Age, an age of materialism, hypocrisy, and quarrel. Kali-yuga is the last of the four Great Ages, each progressively worse than its predecessor, four vast epochs that cycle perpetually. The Age of Kali is the age wherein human society degrades from human to subhuman, in which the people of the world forget their souls, identify with their gross bodies, and become mad competitors for the world’s stock of material goods and pleasures. As stated in Srimad-Bhagavatam, the unfortunate inhabitants of the Kali Age are “quarrelsome, lazy, misguided, unlucky, and, above all, always disturbed.”

Because such unfortunate persons have little or no inclination toward spiritual advancement, there is a compelling need for a simple method by which they can wake up from their deathly slumber and receive the opportunity for spiritual emancipation. That Great Dispensation is the holy name. Declares Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, “In the Age of Kali, Lord Krishna has descendend in the form of the holy name.” The holy name is the one true glory, the one saving grace of this condemned age, as Sukadeva Gosvami tells King Parikshit: “Although Kali-yuga is full of faults, there is still one good quality about this age. It is that simply by chanting the holy name of Krishna one can become free from material bondage and be promoted to the transcendental kingdom.” Various means of spiritual advancement practiced in the previous eras are rendered virtually ineffectual in Kali by the degradation of human beings, individually and collectively. The chanting of the holy name now supersedes all other forms of spiritual discipline: “Whatever result was obtained in Satya-yuga by meditating on Vishnu, in Treta-yuga by performing sacrifices, and in Dvapara-yuga by serving the Lord’s lotus feet can also be obtained in Kali-yuga simply by chanting the holy name of the Lord.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam 12.3.52) The primacy and exclusivity of the practice of the holy name is emphatically declared in this often cited verse from the Brhan-naradiya Purana: “In this Age of Kali there is no alternative, there is no alternative, there is no alternative for spiritual progress but the holy name, the holy name, the holy name of the Lord.” Thus the chanting of the holy name of the Lord is the yuga-dharma, the universal and supreme religion of the age, meant to unite all faiths in common, joyful glorification of the one Supreme Lord.

Although the chanting of the holy name has played a role in India’s religious history for millennia, it was specifically propagated and popularized as the yuga-dharma by the great Chaitanya, whose effulgent presence and fervid ecstasies drew millions into nama-dharma, the Religion of the Name. As the great popularizer of the holy name, Sri Chaitanya was regarded and worshiped as the Kali-yuga avatara, the prime avatar (incarnation) for the Age of Kali. Further, He was worshiped as the greatest incarnation of the Lord because He liberally bestowed pure Krishna-bhakti, ecstatic love of God, upon all persons. The mantra, the chant popularized by Sri Chaitanya, is specifically mentioned in the Kalisantarana Upanishad as the exclusive means for escaping the debilitating conditions of the Kali Age: “Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare—these sixteen names composed of thirty-two syllables are the only means to counteract the evil effects of Kali-yuga. In all the Vedas it is seen that to cross the ocean of nescience there is no alternative to the chanting of the holy name.” Not only does the holy name bestow the highest benefits upon human beings both individually and collectively, but it purifies even lower species of life. Any living being fortunate enough to hear the divine, transcendental sound incarnation of the Lord receives immense spiritual benefit.

Sri Chaitanya did not intend the holy name to remain confined to India, but predicted that the holy name would reach “every town and village.” Four centuries later, this missionary ideal, based upon a compelling vision of the universality of the holy name, gained momentum through the efforts of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, a great follower and ninth-generation disciplic representative of Sri Chaitanya. Writing in his religious journal Sajjana-
thoshani in 1885, he declared prophetically,

Lord Chaitanya did not advent Himself to liberate only a few men in India. Rather, His main objective was to emancipate all living entities of all countries throughout the entire universe and preach the Eternal Religion... There is no doubt that this unquestionable order will come to pass... Very soon the unparalleled path of hari-nama-sankirtana will be propagated all over the world...

Oh, for that day when the fortunate English, French, Russian, German, and American people will take up banners, mridangas and karatalas and raise kirtana through their streets and towns! When will that day come?... That day will witness the holy transcendental ecstasy of the Vaishnava dharma to be the only dharma, and all the sects and religions will flow like rivers into the ocean of Vaishnava dharma. When will that day come?

Eighty years later, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, a disciple of Bhaktivinoda's son (Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami), left India and traveled to the United States to transform Bhaktivinoda's dream into reality. In 1966 he founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which, for its active propagation of the maha-mantra, came to be popularly known as “the Hare Krishna movement.” The chanting and propagation of the holy name are the stated basis and goal of the movement. The Society's founder, Srila Prabhupada, writes, “Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu introduced the congregational chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra to give everyone a chance to hear Krishna's holy name, for simply by hearing [the holy name] one becomes purified. Therefore our Krishna consciousness movement I chiefly engaged in chanting the Hare Krishna mantra all over the world. ""The Krishna consciousness movement,"" he says, ""is based on this principle: chant the Hare Krishna mantra at every moment as much as possible, both inside and outside of the temple."" This movement “is especially meant for creating an atmosphere in which people can take to the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra." The public chanting of the holy name performed by Srila Prabhupada's followers, clad in traditional Indian dhotis and saris, is now a familiar sight on the streets of most major cities of the world.

The holy name of Krishna, for so long concealed within India locked away from Western view, has now entered the mainstream of Western society. It has become, so to speak, a “household mantra,” available to everyone. But although it is in open, public view, the holy name is not an ordinary commodity one can find and purchase in the market. It is a hidden treasure. One must develop the eyes to see it or, rather, the ears to hear it. If one simply approaches the holy name with reverence and allows the holy name to enter through his ears into his heart, and especially if he accepts the divine name as his very life and soul, he can enter the deepest, most profound, most sublime of all spiritual mysteries.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare 🙏
Man’s quest for the elixir of immortality goes on, and old age continues to shatter his hopes.

by Ananta-Shakti Dasa

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?

“Not me, that’s for sure,” I muse while a grim countenance stares back at me from the bathroom mirror. As the years advance, crow’s feet spread from the comers of the eyes, varicose veins discoulour the once clear skin, and the teeth are a constant concern. In the medicine cabinet are fortifiers for the over-forties and tonics to cure falling hair—just a hint of things to come.

Old age, the “daughter of time,” encroaches upon us all, whether we like it or not. This unwelcome lady is attended by many maidservants, such as deafness, arthritis, and senility. Her first flirtation staggers our steps and slackens our skin. We make futile attempts to forestall her advances with cosmetic surgery and organ transplants. Old ladies with pink permed hair and powder masks carefully disguise body odours with heavy scents and wear gloves and glittering rings to distract our eyes from their withering skin.

Alas! All this is vanity, a sad masquerade for old age. She is irresistible and compels us to surrender to her increasing demands, until as unwilling victims we are easily delivered into the hands of death.

There is nothing as effective as old age for dispelling the myth of eternal youth in this world. Even the yogi, who by virtue of breath control lives for hundreds of years—he too must eventually vacate his mortal frame.

Yet in spite of the facts being what they are, the aspiration for eternal youth is intrinsic to each of us, just as sweetness is present in each grain of sugar.

Is eternal youth an impossible dream, an imagination contrived to defeat despair? The perfect answer is given by the perfect person. Lord Krishna, God Himself. In Bhagavad-gita (2.20). Lord Krishna addresses Arjuna. His dear friend and devotee:

na jayate mriyate va kadacin nayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah
ajo nityah sasvato 'yam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire

“For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.”

The terms young and old refer only to the temporary body and not to the soul. One who is free from bodily consciousness can discover the ever-fresh nature of the soul.

The key to this desirable state of consciousness is to understand that as spirit souls we are eternally fragmental parts of the supreme spirit soul, Lord Krishna, and that our natural relationship with Him is one of loving service. When we act on this knowledge, we can enjoy unlimited happiness in relationship with the Supreme Lord.

Lord Krishna, although the oldest person, is celebrated as nava-yauvana, an eternally fresh youth. He is Govinda, giver of pleasure to the senses, and He is Adi-purusha, the original enjoyer. Thus Krishna is the fountain of eternal youth from which we desire to drink deep. If we enter His loving service especially by chanting His names, we gain His association and become rejuvenated.
Feed the Stomach, Water the Root

We’re already the willing servants of our families, our countries—even our dogs.
Why do we hate to be told we’re the servants of God?

By Nagaraja Das

"Maharaja Parikshit attained the highest perfection, shelter at Lord Krishna’s lotus feet, simply by hearing about Lord Vishnu. Sukadeva Goswami attained perfection simply by reciting Srimad-Bhagavatam. Prahlada Maharaja attained perfection by remembering the Lord. The goddess of fortune attained perfection by massaging the transcendental legs of Maha-Vishnu. Maharaja Prithu attained perfection by worshipping the Deity, and Akrua attained perfection by offering prayers to the Lord. Hanuman attained perfection by rendering service to Lord Ramachandra, and Arjuna attained perfection by being Krishna’s friend. Bali Maharaja attained perfection by dedicating everything to the lotus feet of Krishna."—Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu 1.2.265

The Krishna consciousness movement has an important reminder for the world: we’re all servants of God. You won't see throngs of people pouring into our temples every day to hear that, as people often do when all-is-one swamis flatter them that they're God. Since people really don't know much about God, they also haven't the faintest notion what it means to serve Him. But those rare souls who know God and serve Him say the pleasure they obtain is unsurpassed. After all, it is God they're serving. If you have to serve someone, why not serve the Supreme?

And we do have to serve in one way or another, though we don't like to admit it. We're always serving others—our employers, our customers, our families. If we have no one else to serve, we serve a pet.

Though to be called a servant sounds demeaning, we serve in many ways without complaint. Why? Because we have a motive. We expect some reward for our service, some love or some money. We want pleasure, something we don't expect to get by serving God.

Now, what happens when we choose to serve someone other than God? Do we get the reward we expect? Not really. Not the lasting happiness we seek. If we want that, we have to offer our service to the Supreme Person, our primeval Lord and master, the reservoir of all pleasure.

This is a simple concept, which the Vedic literature explains with a couple of analogies: If you want to

Shukadeva Gosvami narrates Srimad-Bhagavatam to Maharaja Parikshit

The apperance of Prithu Maharaja and his consort, Archi, from king Vena’s body

Akrura becomes overwhelmed at the sight of Krishna footprints
nourish the parts of your body, you must supply food to the stomach: if you want to water the limbs, leaves, and flowers of a tree, you have to water the root.

God, or Krishna, is the root of everything. He explains this Himself in the Bhagavad-gita: aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah sarvam pravartate. "I am the source of all material and spiritual worlds. Everything emanates from Me."

There is much evidence that Krishna is God, the Absolute Truth, the source of everything, but the best evidence is Krishna’s word. Krishna’s Gita has been read, honoured, and even worshiped by millions of people for thousands of years. In the modern age, many great thinkers, such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Schopenhauer, have studied Krishna’s teachings. Srila Prabhupada suggests that if we respect Krishna’s integrity enough to study His words, we should at least theoretically accept that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That’s what He says, and indeed, only when we accept Him as such is the Gita comprehensible. "The most secret of all secrets" was perfectly clear to Arjuna because, as Krishna told him, "You are never envious of Me." When we put aside envy, we can consider what Krishna is saying.

Krishna explains that we are all part of Him, and so our satisfaction naturally comes when we serve Him. But for many people, serving God seems intangible. God seems remote. "It’s not like serving the members of my family," we say, "They’re right here, and it’s natural to serve them. I like to do it."
Family affection is so strong, in fact that sometimes people who have lived together a long time can’t bear separation from each other. My grandparents, for instance, who were married for sixty years, died a week apart. My grandmother couldn’t live without her husband. If such deep attachment can develop in sixty years, how deep must be our attachment for Krishna, who is “right here,” right in our hearts, forever.

When we awaken that relationship with Krishna, the all-attractive Supreme Person, then naturally we’ll want to serve Him. It simply requires some practice, much as a child can walk by practice because the ability is already within him.

The Vedic literature describes nine ways we can serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead: hearing about Krishna, chanting His glories, remembering Him, attending Him, worshiping Him, praying to Him, serving Him through thick and thin, making friends with Him, and fully surrendering to Him. Even if done without full love, these nine aspects of bhakti-yoga (“linking with God through devotional service”) will gradually bring us to maturity in our relationship with Him.

Bhakti-yoga is so powerful that the Vedic literature abounds with stories of people who became pure lovers of God by perfecting only one type of service. Sukadeva Gosvami, for instance, perfected his Krishna consciousness by reciting Srimad-Bhagavatam, and Parkshit Maharaja, who sat enthralled at Sukadeva’s feet, became perfect by hearing the transcendental topics of Krishna.

Although all the processes are important and effective, hearing is the beginning and the most important. Unless we hear about Krishna and how to reawaken our love for Him, we can’t even begin spiritual life. The Chaitanya-charitamrita states, nitya-siddha krishna-prema ’sadhya’ kabhu naya/ sravanadi-suddha-citte karaye udaya: “Love for Krishna is eternally situated within the living entity. It can be awakened by devotional service, beginning with hearing.”

We have been asleep to devotional service for so long, though, that even after hearing about Krishna, we may still feel that serving Him is a chore. Until we are completely free of the misunderstanding that we are the number one enjoyer of this world, we can’t selflessly serve the Supreme. We want to be served. We still envy God; He is still our rival. By progressive devotional service, however, we gradually understand that we are never independent to do as we please. Is anyone so independent that he doesn’t have to get sick, grow old, and die? Our attempts to lord it over this world are like the attempts of a person to get pleasure by bashing his head against a wall. His only pleasure is the relief he feels when he stops. The pleasure of devotional service, however, goes beyond mere relief from material misery. As our desire to serve Krishna grows, our consciousness awakens to transcendental bliss.

When we finally revive our pure love for Krishna, we re-enter our unique, eternal relationship with Him. The relationships we live and die for in the material world are but pale reflections of the immortal relationships we can share with Krishna. We can be Krishna’s servant, friend, parent, or even His lover. And Krishna is so touched by our service that unlike the bad masters of this world. He selflessly tries to serve us. Such is the sweetness of pure love.

It shouldn’t be hard for us to agree to join Krishna. Because God is the source of all pleasure, nothing can compare to a relationship with Him. Some devotees who have re-entered their relationship with Krishna and are absorbed in serving Him have recorded their realizations in many beautiful prayers. King Kulashekhara of South India prayed, “O my Lord Mukunda! I bow my head before Your Lordship’s lotus feet and respectfully ask for the fulfillment of my only desire: Throughout my repeated births, may I never forget You but always remember You by Your Lordship’s mercy.”

King Kulashekhara has realized his position as servant of Krishna, and His addressing Krishna as “Mukunda” is significant. Mukunda is a name for Krishna that means “the giver of liberation.” Although King Kulashekhara knows he can obtain liberation from the material world by Krishna’s grace, he doesn’t care about that. He simply wants the benediction that he can always serve Krishna by remembering Him—even if he must remain in the material world.

We often find in prayers by great devotees that they decry liberation. In fact, the very word liberation, or in Sanskrit mukti, is sometimes repulsive to a devotee. That’s because it often implies impersonal liberation, or merging into the effulgence of God, the liberation sought by the Mayavadis, or impersonalists. The devotee finds this idea horrifying. Prabhodananda Sarasvati says, kaivalyam narakayate: “Merging into the impersonal Brahman is worse than hell.” Why? Because it denies one the opportunity to serve Krishna.

The happiness of serving Krishna is millions of times greater than that obtained by the impersonalists who enter the Brahman effulgence. One devotee says that if you multiply the happiness of Brahman liberation millions of times, it won’t equal an atomic fraction of the pleasure of serving Krishna, which is an ocean of bliss. Devotees will not give up serving Krishna for anything. There are many descriptions in the Vedic literature of impersonalists who have become devotees of Krishna—Sukadeva Gosvami and the four Kumaras are examples—but a devotee never becomes an impersonalist. In the First Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam, the sage Narada Muni tells Srila Vyasadeva, the compiler of Vedic literature, that even
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

The verdict of all revealed scriptures is that by even a moment’s association with a pure devotee, one can attain all success.

Chaitanya Charitamrita Madhya 22.54
Dasara celebrations at ISKCON Mysore

(above) The utsava vigraha of Sri Sri Krishna Balarama in Sri Sri Rama Lakshmana alankara ride on Gaja Vahana with devotees performing kirtana going before Them, as the procession moves towards the massive 60 feet tall effigies of Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Meghnad (below), which were burnt as part of the Dasara celebrations at ISKCON Mysore. Thousands of devotees participated in the festival.
Dena Bank donated a food distribution vehicle to The Akshaya Patra Foundation. Sri Ashwani Kumar, CMD, Dena Bank handed over the keys of the vehicle to Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa, Chairman, The Akshaya Patra Foundation.

Smt Chitra and Sri Arvind Sonde donated a vehicle to The Akshaya Patra Foundation for the second time. Sri Vasudev Keshav Dasa, Vice President, ISKCON Bangalore, accepted the contribution on behalf of the Foundation.

Himalaya Wellness has donated Rs 42,75,000/- to The Akshaya Patra Foundation, towards feeding 4500 children for a year.
Hingonia Goshala

The Akshaya Patra Foundation (APF), Jaipur has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Urban Development and Housing for the better management of Hingonia Goshala. APF will set up a separate trust under the terms of the agreement, which will also include officials from the Dept. of Animal Husbandry and...

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

Meals to Pourakarmikas

The BBMP has entered into an agreement with ISKCON to provide midday meals to pourakarmikas at Rs. 20 per head. Speaking at a press conference, Mayor G Padmavathi said that the meal will be delivered at 10.30 every morning.

Read More: https://goo.gl/QCP02Y

Relief to Rain-Affected

The Hare Krishna Movement (HKM), Hyderabad provided hot meals to about 10,000 people affected by the recent heavy rains. Sri Satya Gaura Chandra Dasa, President of HKM, Hyderabad said, “For the last few days, because of incessant rains, the whole city is practically waterlogged and the common people are facing many problems. Poor people residing in low-lying areas are the most affected...”

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Vijaya Dashami

Vijaya Dashami is one of the most significant festivals in the cultural tradition of India. This festival is observed on the tenth day of the bright fortnight in the month of Ashvina (September/October) and is considered an auspicious occasion to start any new venture, purchase new household items or begin a journey.

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

Reviews from tripadvisor®

Amazing Temple: If you visit one place in Bangalore, this has to be your choice. The cultural experience is unlike any other. If you only went for the food you will be more than satisfied. Also, best prices on local souvenirs you will find! Brent G

Beautiful Krishna Temple: The architecture of the temple is really impressive. The place is well organized but most often found to be crowded. But worth the visit. They have strict security checks and no photography allowed inside. Stores and food items are also available. Esha S

Modern yet holy place in Bangalore: Good temple to visit. Very near to Yeswantpur railway station. Easily accessible from Majestic. Temple is well-constructed and maintained. Krishna is the main Deity. Lots of social activities carried out by ISKCON organization. You can visit their kitchen Akshaya Patra which helps in feeding many poor. Do visit when in Bangalore.

Keerthivasa

Excellent: Excellent place to visit. This is my 5th ISKCON temple visit. This is an absolutely great place. Fabulous place. Sarada M

Come seek inner peace: Very calm and peaceful place right in the middle of busy Bengaluru city. Must visit while you are in Bangalore. mJ2527

Amazing ISKCON Temple: Beautiful temple to visit and it’s worth seeing place, beauty of the temple attract lots of people here. I visited this place on Janamastami in August and got impressed with its notified infrastructure, arrangement done by authority. Feeling great inner peace and satisfaction. Jai Shree Krishna. Shitalkatoch

Hare Krishna Hare Rama: One of the biggest and good temples in the city. Most visiting temple for learning and for peace of mind. My request - please visit the temple and seek blessings of Lord Krishna. Hare Rama Hare Krishna. RajuS533

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