Sri Jagannatha Baladeva Subhadra
Ratha Yatra
ISKCON, Vaikuntha Hill, Bangalore
Sunday,
June 25, 2017
at 5.00 pm

Sri Sudarshana Narasimha
Abhishek

6:00 pm:
followed by pravachan,
kirtan, arati &
dinner prasadam

Transportation facility is available for devotees from ISKCON-Hare Krishna Hill to ISKCON-Vaikuntha Hill at Rs 200/- per head (inclusive of dinner prasadam). Only 80 seats available on first-come-first-serve basis. To avail the facility devotees are requested to contact Giridhari Krishna Dasa – 09986508281 OR Venulola Dasa-09845536693.
His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, came to America in 1965, at age 69, to fulfill his spiritual master’s request that he teach the science of Krishna consciousness throughout the English-speaking world. In a dozen years he published some seventy volumes of translation and commentary on India’s Vedic literature, and these are now standard in universities worldwide. Meanwhile, travelling almost nonstop, Srila Prabhupada moulded his international society into a world wide confederation of ashramas, schools, temples and farm communities. He passed away in 1977, in Vrindavana, the place most sacred to Lord Krishna. His disciples and followers are carrying forward the movement he started.

To know more about Srila Prabhupada visit www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada
Simply studying the "machine" of the human body is not enough. We must use the machine to attain life's ultimate goal.

A lecture in Philadelphia on July 14, 1975
by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

nisamya mriyamanasya
mukhato hari-kirtanam
bhartur nama maharaja
parsadah sahasapatan

"My dear king, the order carriers of Vishnu, the Vishnudutas, immediately arrived when they heard the holy name of their master from the mouth of the dying Ajamila, who had certainly chanted without offense because he had chanted in complete anxiety." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.1.30)

In your city the police are wandering in their car, and if somebody calls for the police, immediately they go to him. Similarly, the attendants of Lord Vishnu are wandering throughout the universe, searching out somebody who is chanting the holy name of the Lord. If you chant the holy name of the Lord, they are very much pleased, and they immediately come.

When Ajamila called out "Narayana!" he was simply calling his son, but the attendants of Hari took notice of the chanting only, that's all. They did not care to know whether or not Ajamila meant Lord Narayana. No. Because they heard their master's name, they immediately appeared. This is clear.

So, anyone who chants the holy name of the Lord is immediately taken care of by the attendants of the Supreme Lord. Especially if one chants at the time of death—that is when the account is figured up. If you practice chanting Hare Krishna during your lifetime, naturally at the last moment of your life you will be inclined to chant Hare Krishna. It is so nice.

If in this life I practice chanting the Hare Krishna mantra, then gradually the core of my heart will be cleansed and everything will become manifest. My position, my duty, what is God—everything will become manifest (ceto-darpana-marjanam). Now, because our hearts are filled up with so much rubbish, we cannot understand the science of God. But if you practice chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, your heart will become cleansed and you will see things as they are.

And as soon as you are able to see things as they are, your material bondage is over. Now you are researching the bodily senses—finding out how they work—and doing so many things simply on the basis of the body. But as soon as your heart becomes cleansed, you will immediately understand, "I am not this body. So what is the use of studying cells and atoms, this and that? I am simply wasting my time."

Suppose I am driving a very nice car, but I am simply absorbed in the machine only. I have forgotten my destination, where I have to go, and I am busy studying the car. What is the use? You may be driving a good car, but you must know how to reach your destination. That is your main business. Knowing how the car works is secondary. Your main business is knowing how to utilize the car so you can reach your destination. That is intelligence.

So, we have fallen into this material condition, and we are occupying various forms. As long as we are in the bodily concept—thinking "I am this 'car' "—that is ignorance. What is wanted is to think, "I am not this body. I am spirit soul, and I have to utilize this body to go to my destination—the spiritual world—where I can meet the supreme spirit, God, and live in His association." Human life is meant for understanding what the Supreme Lord is, where He lives, what He does, and what our relationship with Him is. To seek to understand these things is called brahma-jijnasa, "inquiry into the Absolute Truth." That is actual education.

We are given this machine of the body, but what is the use of simply studying the machine? The shastra [scripture] says that since the machine will work until it is rotten, you shouldn't bother with the machine but should search out the Absolute Truth. But people are simply thinking, "Oh, now we have such a good machine."

The dog also has a machine. The ant also has a machine, the elephant has a machine, the human being has a
machine—every living entity has a bodily machine. But the shastra says that this human machine should not be utilized like the animals'.

God has given us a human machine, and now we should utilize it to go to our destination. Nṛ-dehaṁ adyam ... plavam sukalpam. This nṛ-deha, this human machine, is very carefully made—not by me but by nature. Nature is the agent of God. I wanted to do something, and so I required a particular type of machine. God ordered nature: “This living entity wants to do such and such, so give him an appropriate machine.” And she did that.

So, prakṛti, or nature, gives us different types of machines. Prakṛteh kriyamanani gunaih karmani sarvasah. I am not the ultimate controller of the machine, nor have I made the machine. Rather, I have been given this machine as a gift to fulfill my desires. This is our position.

Now, the shastra says, nṛ-deham adyam sulabham sudurlabham plavam sukalpam. This human body is a very good machine, and it is very rare. With great difficulty we have gotten this machine, because we had to come through so many other machines—the aquatics, the plants, the insects and trees, the serpents and reptiles, and then the birds and beasts. This has taken millions and millions of years. If you get that kind of machine, you cannot move: you have to stand in one place. We had to go through this. Foolish people do not know.

Therefore this human machine is sudurlabham, “very difficult to attain.” And it is also sukalpam, “very nicely made.” Those who are medical men know how nicely it is made—how the nerves are working, how the brain is working, the intestines and heart and everything is working so nicely. It is a grand machine. Therefore it is called sukalpam, “very well constructed.”

And what for? Suppose you have a nice, well-constructed boat. Then you can get into it and cross over a river or ocean. Similarly, in the human “boat” we can cross over this material ocean. Life after life we have been struggling in this material ocean, but now we have a suitable boat to cross it—this human body.

The human boat is especially advantageous because the breeze is very favourable. The breeze is the shastra. When you ply your boat, if the breeze is favourable for pushing on to your destination, that is another advantage. So, we have a good boat and a good breeze. And, guru-karnadharam—the guru is the good captain who can steer the boat. He is giving instructions: “Sail like this, turn quickly this way, now that way.”

So, we have a great opportunity: the boat is very nice, the captain is very good, the breeze is very favourable. But if with all these advantageous facilities we do not cross over the sea of ignorance, of material existence, then we are committing suicide (sa atma-ha). You have such a great opportunity, yet still you are remaining in this material world, repeatedly suffering birth, old age, disease, and death. Is that very good intelligence? No. That is not good.

People are being misled. They are studying the human machine, that’s all. Instead of taking advantage of the machine to cross over the material ocean, they are busy studying it. And they cannot even study it completely. I may claim, “This is my body,” but if somebody asks me, “How many hairs do you have on your body?” I cannot say. How I am eating something, how it is being turned into some secretion, how the secretion is becoming blood and going to the heart, how the blood is being distributed throughout the arteries and veins—I do not know any of these things. I can simply theorize.

The human machine is not under your control. The machine is made by God, or by nature. It is a very subtle machine. So if you are intelligent, you will ask, “What is the use of simply studying the machine? I have it, so let me utilize it for going to my destination.” That is intelligence.

But no, people neglect to use the human machine for going to their destination, and instead they simply study it. And this is going on in the name of science. What is this nonsensical science? Simply busy in studying the machine?

This is our mistake: Although we should use our developed human consciousness for going back home, back to Godhead, we are not doing so. Why should we waste our human intelligence? Suppose you study the human machine throughout your whole life. What will you get? Can you adjust the machine so that it will not be lost, so there will be no death? All you scientists who are studying the machine, have you found any means by which there will be no death? Where is that knowledge? Death will come. You may study the machine or not study the machine, but in due course of time death will come and take you.

You cannot cure even one disease. You are embarrassed by the cancer disease. So, find out how the cells are working and how they can be changed, and then there will be no more cancer. No, that you cannot do. You go on studying and simply waste your time.
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The shastra says, “Don't waste your valuable time in that way. Try to understand God. Use your intelligence for this purpose.” It is also said, tapo divyam ... yena sattvam suddhyet. You have to undergo austerities so that in the future you will not be subjected to this machine. That is your business—not to study the machine, but to become independent of the machine.

As long as you are in this material world, you are desiring in a certain way, nature is supplying you a certain type of machine, then you are busy trying to fulfill your desires, then the machine breaks, and then you accept another machine. This is going on. So your problem is to stop this repetition of birth, old age, disease, and death. Come to your spiritual life. That is your business. That is the instruction of the shastra.

Everyone knows how to maintain the machine. The dog knows how to maintain his machine. He eats according to the necessity of his doggish body. Similarly, we are maintaining our human body. That is natural. The supplies are already there. You cannot manufacture them. That is the Vedic instruction: nityo nityanam cetanas cetananam eko bahunam yo vidadhati kaman. “There are millions and trillions of living entities, but there is one living entity—God—who is supplying the necessities of all the others.”

We ordinary living entities have many millions of duplicates. Therefore the word nityanam is used, meaning “eternal living beings.” The ordinary living beings, or jivas, are innumerable. You cannot count them. But above these innumerable living entities is one prime living entity, God. He is also a living entity, as we are. In your Bible there is the statement that “Man is made in the image of God.” So, God is a living entity, and this human form is made according to the form of the Lord. The human form is an imitation; God's form is real (sac-cid-ananda-vigraha).

But you are thinking that God has no form. Why? Wherefrom did you get your form? You are daily praying, “O God, our father, give us our daily bread.” So, you accept God as the supreme father. And if you have form, your father must have form. This is reasonable. Therefore, how can you say God has no form? This is all foolishness.

Suppose a child is born after the death of his father. So, simply because he has not seen his father, that does not mean he should conclude, “My father had no form.” This is not a good conclusion. His mother can tell him, “Yes, my child, your father had form.” This is intelligence.

So, God is a living entity, but the difference between Him and all the other living entities is that they are all dependent on Him. That's all. God is great, we are small. He is just like a father who maintains all his children. We are all children, and the supreme father maintains us.

Now one child may like to play with a motorcar toy, another with a doll, and so on. And the parents are supplying: “All right, you take this toy car, you take this doll.” Similarly, we are playing like that—making plans to enjoy—and God is supplying all our necessities. But He doesn't want to do that. He says, “My dear child, you are grown up now, you have this human body. Don't play like this and waste your time. Get an education and know things as they are.” That education is called brahma-jijnasa, “inquiry into the Absolute Truth.” As the Vedanta-sutra says, “Now that you have the human form of life, try to understand God. That is your main business.”

Unfortunately, we are misled by blind leaders. We have been engaged in studying the body, that's all. So here it is said, nisamyra mriyamanasya mukhato hari-kirtanam. God very much appreciates it when we use our tongue and mouth to chant His holy name. He very much appreciates that. Because the name of God is not different from God Himself, as soon as you chant Hare Krishna you are in touch with Him.

In another place the Bhagavatam says, punya-sravana-kirtanah. Sravana means “hearing,” and kirtanah means “chanting.” So, one who is chanting God's name and one who is hearing God's name both are purified. Simply by chanting the name of God one can be delivered from birth and death. The example is given here—Ajamila. He was addicted to so many sinful activities, and out of fear or because of good luck he chanted “Narayana!” at the time of death. Immediately the attendants of Narayana came to deliver him. This is the great benefit of chanting the holy name of the Lord.

Hare Krishna. Thank you very much.😊
SRILA PRABHUPADA SPEAKS OUT

Give God the Nobel Prize

The following conversation took place between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and some of his disciples on an early-morning walk in Geneva, on June 6, 1974.

Srila Prabhupada: Just look at this fig. In this one fig, you find thousands of seeds—and each tiny seed can produce another tree as big as the original fig tree. Inside each little seed is a whole new fig tree.

Now, where is that chemist who can do such a thing: first, make a tree, and then, make the tree bear fruit, and next, make the fruit produce seeds—and finally, make the seeds produce still more trees? Just tell me. Where is that chemist?

Disciple: They talk very proudly, Srila Prabhupada, but none of these chemists and such can do any of these things.

Srila Prabhupada: Once a big chemist came to me and admitted, "Our chemical advancement, our scientific advancement, is like a man who has learned to bark. So many natural dogs are already barking, but no one pays any attention. But if a man artificially learns the art of barking, oh, so many people will go to see—and even purchase tickets for ten dollars, twenty dollars. Just to see an artificial dog. Our scientific advancement is like this."

If a man makes an artificial imitation of nature, say by barking, people go to see and even pay money. When it comes to the natural barking, no one cares. And when these big so-called scientific rascals claim they can manufacture life, people give all sorts of praise and awards. As for God's perfect, natural process—millions and millions of beings born at each moment—no one cares. People don't give God's process very much credit.

The fool who concocts some utopian scheme for creating living beings from dead material chemicals—he is given all credit, you see: the Nobel Prize.
"Oh, here is a creative genius." And nature is injecting millions and millions of souls into material bodies at every moment—the arrangement of God—and no one cares. This is rascaldom.

Even if we suppose you could manufacture a man or animal in your laboratory, what would be your credit? After all, a single man or animal created by you, and millions and millions created by the Lord. So we want to give credit to Krishna, who is really creating all these living beings we see every day.

**Disciple:** Prabhupada, you remember Aldous Huxley, who predicted in *Brave New World* a process of genetically screening babies, of breeding men for certain traits. The idea would be to take one strain of traits and breed a class of working men, take another strain of traits and breed a class of administrators, and take still another strain of traits and breed a class of cultured advisors and scholars.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Once again, that is already present in God's natural arrangement. Guna-karma-vibhagasah: according to one's qualities and activities in his past life, in this present life he gets a fitting body. If one has cultivated the qualities and activities of ignorance, he gets an ignorant body and must live by manual labour. If one has cultivated the qualities and activities of striving passion, he gets a passionate body and must live by taking charge of others—administration.

If one has cultivated the qualities and activities of enlightenment, he gets an enlightened body and must live by enlightening and advising others.

So you see; God has already made such a perfect arrangement. Every soul receives the body he desires and deserves, and the social order receives citizens with required traits. Not that you have to "breed" these traits. By His natural arrangement, the Lord equips particular souls with particular kinds of bodies. Why even try imitating what God and nature already do perfectly?

I told that scientist who visited me, "You scientists—you are simply wasting time." Childish. They are just imitating the dog's barking. The scientist pays no attention, gives no credit to the real dog doing the real barking. Actually, that is today's situation. When the natural dog barks, that is not science. When the artificial, imitation dog barks, that is science. Isn't it so? To whatever degree the scientist succeeds in artifically imitating what the Lord's natural arrangement is already doing—that is science.

**Disciple:** When you heard, Prabhupada, about the scientists claiming they can now produce babies in a test tube, you said, "But that is already being done in the mother's womb. The womb is the perfect test tube."

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. Nature is already doing everything with utter perfection. But some puffed-up scientist will make a shabby imitation—using the ingredients nature supplies—and get the Nobel Prize.

And what to speak of actually creating a baby—let us see the scientists produce even one blade of grass in their proud laboratories.

**Disciple:** They should give the Lord and Mother Nature the Nobel Prize.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes, yes.

**Disciple:** Really, I think they should give you the Nobel Prize. You've taken so many foolish atheists and created devotees of God.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Oh, I—I am a "natural dog," so they'll not give me any prize. [Laughs.] They will award the prize to the artificial dogs. ☺

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A Treasure House of Tribulations

Freud’s astute analysis of material suffering strikingly resembles the Vedic description. But does he offer a viable remedy?

by Mathuresa Dasa

The conditioned soul . . . is always covered by ignorance and embarrassed by the threefold miseries of life. Thus he is a treasure house of all kinds of tribulations. (Chaitanya-charitamrita [a sixteenth-century Bengali scripture], Antya-lila, Chapter 5, verse 127)

The radium has once again begun to eat away at something, causing pain and toxic manifestations, and my world is what it was previously, a small island of pain floating on an ocean of indifference. (Sigmund Freud, in a letter to Princess Marie Bonaparte, a few months before his death in 1939)

Miseries and tribulations are things we try to avoid. Nobody treasures them. Nobody cherishes deprivation or hoards disease. Yet miseries sometimes besiege a person in enough quantity and variety to constitute a perverse kind of wealth. Some people are richly constipated, some richly arthritic, some richly hungry or lonely, and some are all of these and more.

For the final sixteen years of his life, from 1923 to 1939, Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, was richly cancerous. In October of 1923, to arrest the spread of a malignant tumour, surgeons cut away large portions of the upper and lower jaw on the right side of Freud’s mouth. The prosthesis they inserted so that Freud could eat and talk caused him constant discomfort up to his death. The dozens of additional operations and radiation treatments he underwent over the years to remove and inhibit further growths were also a source of continual torment. Doctors and friends close to Freud during his long illness marveled at his stoicism. Never openly cursing his fate, he treated those around him with kindness and continued to see patients and to write until almost the very end.

Although Freud was a staunch atheist, his philosophic views on suffering closely resemble those of the Vedic literature, the world’s oldest and most comprehensive religious texts. In Civilization and Its Discontents, published in 1929, Freud argues that belief in God, in a supreme father, is “patently infantile” and “foreign to reality.” Yet his analysis of the design of the universe reveals a nearly perfect understanding of the Supreme Lord’s intentions. “One feels inclined to say,” Freud writes, “that the intention that man should be ‘happy’ is not included in the plan of ‘Creation.’” Well said. In Bhagavad-gita, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, certifies His material creation as a place of misery, a place devoid of lasting happiness. While denying the supreme father, Freud seems to have somehow understood His mind.

Confirming (unintentionally, of course) an aphorism in the Vedanta-sutra, Freud also states that our purpose in life is, simply enough, to be happy, to follow what he called “the pleasure principle.” But we can’t be happy. Freud continues, because, “We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction: and finally from our relations to other men” (Civ., p. 24).

Again Freud’s statements resemble those of Vedic authorities, who elaborate somewhat on two of Freud’s categories: mental disturbances and diseases are included in the category of bodily suffering, since the mind is a subtle body, and suffering from our relations with other humans is grouped with suffering that comes from nonhuman creatures, like insects and rodents. But aside from these slight differences, the Vedic literature agrees with Freud that we suffer continuously from either bodily ailments, natural disasters, or the assaults of other living creatures, and that in the face of these three kinds of miseries, fulfillment of our desire for pleasure is more or less impossible.
So not only do miseries sometimes besiege some of us with a wealth of tribulation, in varying degrees they constantly besiege everyone. This is a question not of pessimism but of stark realism. What people call happiness or pleasure consists in fact of nothing more than momentary relief from unpleasant physiological and psychic tensions. Money, good health, and sexual companionship, for example, are enjoyable only because they temporarily repel poverty, sickness and sexual craving. In our present state of existence, happiness is the flip side of misery, could not exist without misery, and is so closely related to misery that it’s hard for us to distinguish between the two. The Vedic literature therefore classifies us as “conditioned souls”—we are conditioned to equate happiness with escape from unhappiness and to look upon our physical bodies, which are in fact “small islands of pain,” as oases of pleasure.

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Despite acknowledging the hopelessness of finding happiness anywhere within the creation, Freud nevertheless outlines a number of ways by which we can at least attempt to overcome or elude the threefold miseries. To avoid suffering in human relationships, for example, we might choose to isolate ourselves from society. This won’t produce much positive pleasure, but it will afford us some relief. Better than isolation, however, is to join the human community and, with the help of science, try to forcibly overcome misery. Civilized man has indeed managed to eliminate some diseases and foresee some natural disasters. So if we join the ranks of civilized men, there’s a chance we can gang up on the sources of our torment.

But scientific progress, Freud points out, also does little to increase human happiness. We may extend our lives by curing a disease, but that only prolongs our suffering from other sources, including other diseases. The wonders of modern transportation enable us to conquer distances, but that “victory” in turn practically forces us to live and work far from our loved ones. In otherwords, the happiness derived from technical achievements seems to carry with it some corresponding distress, or, as a Vedic spokesman would put it, again concurring with Freud, the advantages of material progress never outweigh the disadvantages.

What next? Freud outlines many other alternatives, including the creation and appreciation of works of art, the pursuit of scientific truth, and the use of intoxicants. Yes, intoxicants. Suffering, after all, is only a sensation, and there are many substances we can deposit in our bloodstreams to deaden unpleasant sensations. While acknowledging some drawbacks to this “drown your cares” method, Freud gives it a fairly high mark. Here he gets no support from Vedic followers. Drowned cares always surface again, often accompanied by hangovers and other physical and emotional creatures of the deep. (Freud’s own addiction to tobacco, a relatively mild intoxicant, was the direct cause of his suffering. Although doctors repeatedly warned him of the “nicotine etiology” of his cancer, he never gave up smoking cigars.)

Yoga, which according to Freud involves “killing off the instincts,” is another somewhat viable alternative, at least in theory. If indulging our instinctual appetites spells but momentary happiness, and the inability to indulge them spells severe pain, then why not do away with our appetites altogether? On this path we eliminate the sources of misery but sacrifice all opportunities for positive enjoyment as well, again achieving only relief. As the isolationist avoids social suffering by avoiding his fellow man, so the yoga practitioner obviates privation by isolating himself from instinctual desires.

The Vedic literature has much to say about yoga and control of our instincts. But before discussing these topics more fully, let us consider one more path sometimes followed to circumvent misery: the path of adjusting reality. On this path, Freud warns, one becomes a madman and tries to re-create this miserable world, to replace it with a dreamland, a “delusional remolding of reality,” where misery is nonexistent and all one’s wishes are fulfilled. To a certain extent, each of us tries to “correct” reality in this way, but there are also cases where large numbers of people cooperate to create a common delusion. “The religions of mankind must be classed among the mass delusions of this kind,” says Freud, once again attacking belief in a supreme father.

No matter which path we take. Freud concludes, we cannot obtain lasting happiness. We are doomed to suffer the threefold miseries. The best course of action, he suggests, is to invest our energies in each path according to our inclinations, spreading out our “investments” as a businessman would, so that our failures on one or two paths do not leave us bankrupt of all pleasure. In this way we may eke out some little satisfaction here in this world of misery. Religion, says

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Freud, by restricting our choice of investments and intimidating us to remain on one path, prevents us from savouring even the tiny bits of happiness available amidst the treasure of our tribulations.

* * *

Now, that’s pessimism! The Vedic literature certainly says that this world is a miserable place, but rather than leave us in the lurch, it elaborately describes the systems of yoga by which we can transcend this world and enjoy unadulterate transcendental pleasure. Freud was correct to a degree in saying that by controlling our instinctual desires through yoga we can remain aloof from the sources of misery, but he didn’t go far enough.

According to Bhagavad-gita, the desire laden soul is an eternal, indestructible individual who lives within the fragile physical body. Nursing a penchant for gratifying the bodily senses, the conditioned soul ignorantly identifies with his body and thus experiences the mixed pleasure and pain of sensual life, just as a person eating a mixture of ice cream and sand feels a painful grating on his teeth even as he relishes the ice cream’s sweetness.

Understanding as Freud did, the ultimate futility of striving for pleasure on the sensual plane, an intelligent soul may take advantage of the yoga disciplines to detach himself from desires for bodily pleasure. Thus he renounces sandy ice cream—renounces all paths to bodily happiness—and attains relief by eating nothing. As Freud correctly indicated, yoga cannot be practiced alongside paths that recommend enjoyment of the material elements.

But on the path of yoga, renunciation is only half the picture. As the soul is eternal and indestructible, so also are his desires for enjoyment. There is no way to “kill” desire altogether. We are forever sentient and pleasure-seeking, even after giving up bodily attachments. The bodily senses are merely coverings over the eternal, spiritual senses of the soul. Therefore even after detaching ourselves from the body, we have senses and sensual needs.

So what’s a yogi to do? In the third chapter of the Gita, Lord Krishna Himself states that the soul cannot be inactive even for a moment. Even if the yogi manages to restrain his senses, his mind will be active, dwelling longingly on all that rejected ice cream. Sure the sand grates on your teeth, but isn’t that better than nothing at all?

Little did Freud suspect that the other half of the yoga picture is active service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the supreme father, Lord Krishna. Employing one’s senses in Krishna’s service is known as bhakti-yoga, the yoga of devotion. Yoga literally means “union,” or “yoke,” so to complete the process of yoga we must not only detach ourselves from matter but also yoke ourselves to the Supreme through active service. Since Krishna is transcendental to His material creation, and since He possesses an eternal, blissful, spiritual body, attachment to Him and detachment from matter are one and the same thing.
The bhakti-yogi has no affinity for sandy ice cream. He directs his mind toward the all-attractive form of Krishna by hearing about His pastimes, chanting His many names, offering Him prayers, cooking for Him, cleaning His temple—in short, by dedicating his mind, body, and words to Krishna's service. The bhakti-yogi gives only perfunctory attention to the care of his physical body, maintaining his health and strength not for the futile pursuit of material pleasure, but for the performance of spiritual activities—activities that please the senses of the Supreme Person. The pure, transcendental happiness that a bhakti-yogi experiences through serving Krishna erases from his mind any lingering illusion that the so-called pleasures of material life are worth the trouble.

Yoga as it is most commonly known—involving sitting postures and breathing exercises—is called astanga-yoga, and it is true that the astanga-yoga system emphasizes physical inactivity and silent meditation. But meditation on what? Modern, commercial yoga schools may recommend meditation on "the void," on a "white light," on a candle, a flower, or what have you. But in the Vedic source books of yoga—in the Gita as well as in Patanjali's Yoga-sutra—stress is given to the ultimate achievement of uninterrupted meditation on the form of the Supreme Person.

Since the bhakti-yogi can achieve uninterrupted meditation on Krishna's form from the very start, he is beyond the practice of sitting postures and breathing exercises, which are preliminary disciplines designed to withdraw the mind from matter and the senses from material activities. The devotee is already meditating, already free from material desires and activities, whereas the astanga-yogi has yet to rise from the platform of detached inactivity to the platform of devotional attachment to Krishna, which is the perfection of yoga.

** By giving a tentative thumbs up to yoga and an unequivocal thumbs down to religion, Sigmund Freud betrayed his incomplete knowledge of both, since the major religious traditions of mankind are based on the principles of bhakti-yoga. The followers of the world's various faiths go to churches, mosques, or temples, offer prayers to the Supreme, bow down before Him, hear His instructions and activities, and render service to His cause. In each faith, the more devout followers give up their worldly connections to join monastic communities and fully devote themselves to God. Though the world's faithful, both laymen and clergy, may address the Lord by names other than "Krishna," may know of the Lord's personality in varying degrees, and may be unaware of the full meaning of the word yoga, they are nonetheless practicing bhakti-yoga in its most fundamental sense: communion with the Supreme through devotion. Bhakti-yoga is not a sectarian dogma—the property of a particular religious tradition—nor is it a mass delusion. It is the scientific process of pleasing Supreme Personality of Godhead with our service and thus activating the transcendental chemistry of a loving exchange with Him.

Perhaps Freud's failure to recognize the intimate connection between yoga and religion was due in part to the inability of many religionists to show they possess two essential symptoms of the yoga practitioner: knowledge and renunciation. The yogi, according to both Freud and the Vedic literature, renounces material enjoyment because he knows it brings unavoidable material miseries. Above and beyond these preliminary qualifications, the devotional yoga should have transcendental knowledge of the all-blissful Supreme and a strong desire to renounce everything for His satisfaction. "Unless one renounces the desire for sense gratification," Lord Krishna warns in the Gita, "one can never become a yogi." Bhakti-yogi included.

If a religionist is eager for material enjoyment and ignorant of the concomitant material miseries—miseries that even a great atheist like Freud could perceive—then where is the question of yoga practice, what to speak of devotion? Religious leaders who encourage their congregation to petition God for political, economic, or even philanthropic objectives have missed the point. Yes, the almighty supreme father can grant material benedictions, but why ask Him for more sandy ice cream, even if by His grace the sand is minimized to some degree? The Srimad-Bhagavatam, the topmost Vedic literature, states that bhakti-yoga has the power to completely uproot the threefold miseries and instate the devotee in a heart-to-heart relationship with Krishna. Bhakti is not meant for strengthening our old material roots, or for establishing new ones.

In addition to missing the purpose of devotion, religionists often exhibit their disqualifications as bhakti-yogis in more cardinal ways. In both Discontents and The Future of an Illusion, published in 1927, Freud notes religion's failure to inspire obedience to basic religious and moral (and, we can now add, yogic) codes, such as those aimed at curbing man's sexual and aggressive drives. For one thing, Freud asserts, if we take into account the nature man has inherited from his ape ancestors, commandments like "Love thy neighbour as thyself" are just about impossible to follow, anyway" (Civ., p. 56). Furthermore, Freud says, some religious authorities in effect encourage immorality by teaching that man is by nature weak and unable to control his instinctual drives, while God is by nature strong and merciful. If we repent our transgressions of God's laws, He will bless us with His mercy. Some say that transgressing and repenting is in fact the best way to get His blessings. "In every age," Freud concludes, "immorality has found no less support in religion than morality has" (Future, p. 38).

Freud was specifically referring to some European Christian traditions, but the debased transgress-repent
mentality also manifests in traditions outside Christianity—wherever the principles of devotion and yoga are poorly understood. It is true that Krishna is merciful and forgiving toward His devotees, whatever their professed faith. And it is also true that man is weak and more or less helpless in the face of, material, instinctual desire. But the genuine bhakti-yogi, even the neophyte, is no longer faced with material desires or captivated by material pleasures. He has experienced God’s mercy in the form of the superior pleasure of devotional service, and he for the most part faces only his own growing enthusiasm for serving God. Past bad habits may lead the bhakti-yogi to accidentally transgress moral or religious guidelines, but material instincts can never drive him to incorporate transgression into his doctrine of faith.

Would these vindications of religion’s apparent shortcomings have placated Sigmund Freud? Would he have acknowledged that religion and yoga renunciation go hand in hand, and that religious devotion is therefore at least as valid as inactive yoga for escaping the threefold miseries?

Maybe not. In Discontents Freud, with typical caustic wit, scoffs at those who try, using “pitiful rear-guard actions,” to defend religion. Perhaps Freud would have mistaken scientific Vedic explanations for such rear-guard actions—for shallow attempts to perpetuate mass delusion.

On the one hand, there’s no need to give much attention to Freud’s allegations. The atheist can always dig up new ways to muddy the waters of faith and knowledge. In general the better part of valour is to avoid such mudslingers and calmly proceed with devotional service in the company of fellow believers. Freud’s allegations merit reply only because of the widespread long term effects of his slingling.

On the other hand, we can profit by giving our attention both to Freud’s keen insights into the inherent misery of material life and to his partial understanding of the value of yoga. Chanakya Pandita, a Vedic sage, advised that an intelligent man should not hesitate to pick up gold from a filthy place or to take good advice from someone who is otherwise a fool. Freud’s golden insights into misery can serve to inspire the devotional yogi with the determination to pull up his material roots by wholeheartedly serving the transcendental Personality of Godhead.

That wasn’t Freud’s intention, of course. He said there was no escape from the threefold miseries. For his own part, that meant he was convinced there was no escape from his aging, cancer-ridden body—from his treasure house of tribulation. But what did that conviction get him? Hardly anything: he spent his very last days quiet, wistful, and withdrawn—“a small island of pain floating on an ocean of indifference.”
The search for happiness is natural, because it is the constitutional position of the spirit soul to be eternally joyful. But our search for happiness in the external, physical world is always frustrated; we look everywhere, never realizing permanent pleasure.

The musk deer, an animal native to Central Asia, gives us a hint to the solution of this predicament. The musk deer is famous for the scent produced from a glandular sac beneath the skin of the male’s abdomen. Not only is the reddish-brown secretion from this sac much sought after by human beings, who use it as a base for many perfumes, but according to the Vedic tradition, the musk deer himself sometimes goes mad over the powerful fragrance. In his madness he runs wildly about, looking everywhere for the intense scent. Everywhere, that is, except within himself.

Are you about to hear some facile pronouncement about “the happiness within”? Well, yes and no. Yes, the devotees of Krishna will tell you that by serving Krishna one feels happiness within—happiness independent of the fleeting pains and pleasures of the physical body. No, their statement is not facile; it is based on experience, and on a realized understanding of our spiritual identity.

Every living entity is a spirit soul—part and parcel of the Supreme Soul, Krishna—and entitled to the unlimited spiritual pleasure derived from satisfying Krishna’s transcendental senses. The temporary physical body is only a covering over the soul, just as a shirt or coat is only a covering over the body. In comparison to even a drop of the transcendental happiness of serving Lord Krishna, the greatest pleasures of the physical world appear meager.

We just instinctively follow the “scent” of happiness, but if that scent leads us to gratify our bodily senses, rather than to serve and please Lord Krishna, we have been fooled. Like the musk deer, we’ll search vainly in the external world, never experiencing the happiness within.
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Revelation of the secret mantra
Thirukoshtiyur Sowmyanarayana Perumal Temple
by Sampatkumara Ramanuja Dasan (Adv. Ashwin S.)

Located 60 kms south west of Madurai is the sprawling temple of Sowmyanarayanan. This is the place where the great Saint Ramanuja received the “secret mantra” from his acharya.

The legend of Ramanuja and Thirukoshtiyur

May 1st 2017 commemorated the 1000th birth anniversary of Sri Ramanujacharya. Contrary to the usual practice of taking the readers to the legend of the temple first and then to the pastimes of the acharyas, we would first immerse ourselves in the bliss of the pastimes of Ramanujacharya in Thirukoshtiyur.

Yamunacharya was a great acharya of Sri Vaishnavas and preached devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Narayana from his matha in Srirangam. One of Yamunacharya’s chief sannyasi disciples was Sri Sailapurna. He had two sisters, the elder named Kantimati and the younger named Diptimati. Kantimati was married to a very pious brahmana known as Asuri Keshava Somayaji. Because of his expertise in the performance of all five kinds of fire sacrifices, he was also known as Sarvakrata. Years passed by, and the couple lived happily in the village of Bhutapuri, but, because they still had no children, Keshava Somayaji became disturbed at heart. He decided to perform a fire sacrifice to please the Lord and thus beg Him for the gift of a son. For this purpose he journeyed with his wife to the temple of Sri Thiruvallikeni Parthasarathi on the shores of the ocean, in what is now the city of Chennai. They performed sacrifices together, begging the Lord to be merciful to them and grant them the benediction of a son. Certainly Lord Rukumin Parthasarathi of Thiruvallikeni was pleased by their prayers, for about one year later Kantimati gave birth to a baby boy, who bore all the auspicious marks on his body. This was in the year AD 1017, and it was this child who grew up to be renowned all over the world as Sri Ramanujacharya, the great devotee of Lord Narayana. At about the same time, Kantimati’s younger sister, Diptimati, also gave birth to a son. On hearing the news of the births of his two nephews, Sailapurna, the intimate disciple of Yamunacharya, came to visit them. He was astonished to see all the auspicious marks on the body of Kantimati’s son, and gave him the name Ramanuja, a name of Lakshmana which means the younger brother of Rama. To Diptimati’s son he gave the name Govinda.

After Ramanuja’s education in the shastras from Yadavaprapaksha, Yamunacharya once saw him in the temple of Lord Varadaraja in Kanchipuram and was impressed by the boy’s dedication to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. After his return to Srirangam, Yamunacharya summoned Ramanuja, but Yamunacharya, left to the supreme abode much before Ramanuja could reach Srirangam. Ramanuja soon took initiation into Sri Vaishnavism from Mahapurna, who was another intimate disciple of Yamunacharya. Ramanuja has 5 important gurus in his life:

1. Mahapurna, who performed his initiation at Sri Rama Temple, Madhuranthakam
2. Goshtipurna or Thirukottiyur Nambi, who revealed the meaning of the “secret mantra” or the eight syllable mantra of Narayana
3. Sisalila purna or Periya Thirumalai Nambi (uncle of Ramanuja), who taught him the Ramayana
4. Thirumalai Andan, who taught him the verses of the great saint Namalwar
5. Srirangam Anyar, who taught him the verses of Alwars

In this divya desam, a wonderful pastime of Ramanujacharya blossomed, which later on became the foundation of the whole faith that came to be called as Sri Vaishnavism. Srirangam, Ramanuja was very pleased to assume his role as the disciple of Mahapurna; through this relationship he felt relief from the sadness that had afflicted him since the disappearance of Yamunacharya. By his behaviour toward Mahapurna, he set the example for all disciples to follow in rendering service to their spiritual master. Under the expert guidance of Mahapurna, he resumed his study of the revealed scriptures. Mahapurna was so impressed by the incomparable genius and Vaishnava qualities of his disciple that he gave his son, Pundarikaksha, to be the disciple of Ramanuja.

One evening, when he had completed their studies for the day, Mahapurna said to Ramanuja, “Not far from here is a prosperous town known as Thirukoshtiyur. A great scholar and devotee, Goshtipurna by name, who was born in the Pandya country, lives in Thirukoshtiyur. It is no exaggeration to say that there is no other Vaishnava like him in this part of the country. If you desire to fully learn the meaning and significance of the Vedic mantras, then there is none but he who is qualified to teach you. I advise you to go to Thirukoshtiyur without delay and receive the mantra from Goshtipurna.”

Hearing this instruction from his guru, Ramanuja went to Thirukoshtiyur a few days later to see Goshtipurna. In the presence of that famous devotee, he offered his prostrated obeisance and begged for the Vaishnava mantra to be bestowed upon himself. Goshtipurna, however, was very reluctant to impart the secret of the mantra and replied, “You may come here some other day, and I will consider your request.” Ramanuja felt very dejected at this reply, and with a heavy heart he returned to Srirangam. A few days later a big festival was held in honour of Lord Ranganatha, and Goshtipurna came there to participate. At that time one of the priests in the temple was inspired by the presiding Deity Lord Ranganatha, and he spoke on behalf of Lord Ranganatha as follows to Goshtipurna, “You should bestow the mantra on My devotee, Ramanuja, who is most worthy to receive it.” Realizing that the Lord was speaking to him through His servant, Goshtipurna replied, “But my Lord, is it not true that the mantra may only be given to one who has completely purified his mind by long austerities? How can the mantra, which is non different from Yourself, reside in the mind of one who is not pure?” To this the priest replied, “You do not understand the purity of this devotee. He is able to deliver all of humanity.”

After this incident, Goshtipurna began to consider the matter deeply, but still he was unwilling to give the mantra to any other person. Time and again Ramanuja approached him, but repeatedly Goshtipurna refused his request. When his appeals had been denied on eighteen separate occasions, Ramanuja began to feel that there must be some great impurity in his heart and that it was for this reason that Goshtipurna would not bestow his mercy upon him. In this state of dejection, Ramanuja began to shed tears of despair. When some people informed Goshtipurna of Ramanuja’s condition, he was moved by pity for the young devotee. Therefore, when Ramanuja came before him again, he spoke to him in a kind way, “Only Lord Vishnu Himself is aware of the glories of this mantra. Now I know that you are worthy to receive it, for you are pure and firmly fixed in devotion to the lotus feet of the Lord. At the present time I can find no one but yourself who is fit to receive the mantra, for whoever chants it is certain to go to Vaikuntha at the time of death. Because this mantra is so pure and sacred, it must not be touched by the lips of anyone who has material desires. Therefore, you must not disclose the mantra to any other person.” Having thus instructed Ramanuja, Goshtipurna initiated him into the chanting of the mantra of eight syllables.

Ramanuja was filled with ecstasy to chant this wonderful vibration, and his face began to glow with spiritual vibration, and his face began to glow with spiritual light. It was at this time, Kantimati’s younger sister, Diptimati, also gave birth to a son. On hearing the news of the births of his two nephews, Sailapurna, the intimate disciple of Yamunacharya, came to visit them. He was astonished to see all the auspicious marks on the body of Kantimati’s son, and gave him the name Ramanuja, a name of Lakshmana which means the younger brother of Rama. To Diptimati’s son he gave the name Govinda.

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Revealing the secret mantra

Having taken leave of Sri Goshtipurna, Ramanuja, in a joyful mood, began to return to Srirangam. But as he was walking, he began to think about the potency of the mantra that had been given to him. He became filled with feelings of compassion for the sufferings of all living beings in this material world. Then, as he was walking near the walls of the Sowmyanarayana temple in Thirukoshtiyur, he began to call out to all the people who were passing by, “Please, all of you, come near to Lord Vishnu’s temple, and I will give you a priceless jewel!” Attracted by his pure expression and unusual words, a large crowd of men, women and children began to follow him. A rumour began to spread all over the town that a prophet had appeared who could fulfi all of one’s desires. Within a short time a huge crowd had assembled outside of the temple. On seeing this mass of humanity, Ramanujacharya’s heart swelled with joy. He embraced the two disciples who had accompanied him, Dasharathi and Kuresha, and then climbed up the tower of the temple. In a loud voice he began to address the gathering, “All of you are dearer to me than my own life. Therefore I have a strong desire to deliver you from the torments and sufferings all of us must undergo in this temporary world. Please recite this mantra which I have obtained for you. Do this, and the Lord’s mercy will be upon you.” When they heard Ramanuja’s words, all the people in the crowd called out, “Please tell us the mantra. Shower the Lord’s blessings upon us!” Then Ramanuja called out in a deep resounding voice the mantra he had just received from Goshtipurna. Immediately the crowd responded, everyone calling out the sacred words together, producing a sound like thunder. Twice more Ramanuja called out the mantra, and twice more a thunderous response resounded from the crowd. Everyone became silent and looked at one another with feelings of deep ecstasy in their hearts. At that time it seemed that the earth had become Vaikuntha. The faces of the men, women and children were flushed with joy and it seemed that all miseries were gone from the earth. Those who had come running to the temple hoping to receive gold or jewels, immediately forgot their worldly desires, feeling as if they had been given a diamond in place of a piece of broken glass. As the joyful crowd melted away, men and women came and prostrated themselves before Ramanuja, considering themselves most blessed to have received such a benediction from that great soul. Ramanuja then climbed down from the tower and began walking towards Goshtipurna’s residence to worship the feet of his guru.

By this time Goshtipurna had come to hear in detail of everything that had taken place outside the temple and was extremely angry, feeling Ramanuja had betrayed his trust. When Ramanuja approached him with his two disciples, the aged acharya addressed him in a voice that trembled with rage. ‘Get out of my sight, O lowest of men! I have committed a great sin by entrusting the most precious gem to such an untrustworthy person as yourself. Why have you come here again, forcing me to commit the sin of looking at your face? Surely you...’
are destined to live in hell for countless lifetimes!" Without any sign of remorse, Ramanuja replied to his guru in a most humble manner, "It was only because I am prepared to suffer in hell that I dared to go against your order. You told me that whoever chanted the mantra of eight syllables was certain to be liberated. Thus, according to your words, so many people are now destined to find shelter at Lord Narayana’s lotus feet. If an insignificant person like me has to go to hell, it is of no great importance if so many others thereby attain the mercy of Lord Narayana." On hearing these words, which fully revealed the depth of the devotee’s compassion, Goshtipurna was completely stunned and filled with great wonder.

All his fierce anger disappeared in an instant, like the passing of a violent storm, Goshtipurna embraced Ramanuja with profound affection. Everyone who was able to witness this transformation was filled with joy and astonishment. Goshtipurna then addressed Ramanuja with folded palms, ‘My child, I have never known anyone as magnanimous as yourself. From this day you are my guru, and I am your disciple. There is no doubt that you are a most intimate associate of the Lord, whereas I am nothing but a common man. How can I comprehend your greatness? Please forgive all of my offenses.'

Ramanuja fell to his knees and clasped the feet of his guru. With his head bowed in humility, he said, ‘You are my eternal guru. The perfect mantra has become even more potent because it has emanated from your lips. Thus today it has burnt to ashes the miseries of so many thousands of people. Although I committed the offense of transgressing the order of my guru, I have become eternally fortunate by receiving your embrace, which is desired even by the gods. My prayer is that, regarding me as your son and servant, you will eternally bestow your mercy upon me.’ Being highly pleased by Ramanuja’s humility and gentle behaviour, Goshtipurna asked him to accept his son, Sowmyanarayana, as his disciple. Then, with the permission of his spiritual master, Ramanuja returned to Srirangam. After this incident Ramanuja’s fame expanded even further, and for several weeks it seemed the local people could speak of nothing but this great devotee who had come into their midst.

**Dasharathi and essence of Bhagavad-gita**

A little while later, Dasharathi, Ramanuja’s second disciple, approached him with the same request as Kuresha. To him Ramanuja replied, “You are my relative, and therefore it is my desire that you understand the verse by hearing from Goshtipurna. Even though there may be some fault in you, I will tend to overlook it because you are my family member. The duty of the guru is to remove all taints from the heart of the disciple. Therefore it is better that you take instruction from Sri Goshtipurna.” Dasharathi was famous as a great scholar and still a little proud of his learning. It was for this reason that Ramanuja directed him to approach Goshtipurna. As instructed by his guru, Dasharathi went to reside in Thirukoshtiyur and for six months he sat at the feet of Mahatma Goshtipurna. However, even at the end of this time, the acharya had still not explained to

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Yamunacharya deity

Ramanuja moolavar deity in Thirukoshtiyur
him the meaning of that sublime knowledge spoken by Lord Krishna. Eventually, taking pity on the young man, Goshtipurna told Dasharathi, “You are certainly a most brilliant scholar; I know that well. However, you must understand that education, wealth, and birth in an aristocratic family can cause pride to arise in the heart of a small-minded man. In those who are virtuous, great learning brings self-control and thus gives rise to good qualities, not blemishes. Understanding these instructions, now return to your own guru; he will reveal the meaning of the verse as you desire.”

Dasharathi then returned to Srirangam and reported to Ramanuja all that had taken place in Thirukoshtiyur. At that same time, Athulai, the daughter of Mahapurna, came there, obviously in some distress. When Ramanuja inquired from her as to the cause of her unhappiness, she replied, “Dear brother, my father has sent me to you. I live at the house of my father-in-law and every day, both morning and evening, I have to bring water from a lake which is over two miles from the house. The road there is lonely and difficult to traverse and as a result I have become overwhelmed by fear and physical exertion. When I told my mother-in-law of these difficulties, rather than empathizing with my plight, she flew into a rage, saying, ‘Why did you not bring a cook from your father’s house? Can I afford to employ a servant while you sit idly at home?’ Being very unhappy at this treatment, I returned to my father’s house and he has instructed me to come to you for help with this problem.” To this request Ramanuja immediately responded, “Dear sister, do not worry. Here I have one brahmana whom I will send with you. He will do the work of fetching water from the lake and the cooking as well.” So saying, he glanced at Dasharathi, the great scholar. Although working as a servant in the kitchen was an occupation he might have considered unbefitting for a renowned learned man such as himself, Dasharathi understood the desire of his guru and gladly followed Athulai to her father-in-law’s house.

There, Dasharathi began to do all the work in the kitchen with great care and devotion. In this way six months passed. One day a Vaishnava came to the village and was explaining a verse before an assembly of people. Dasharathi was among the crowd and when he heard the speaker’s presentation tinged with impersonalist misconceptions, he could not restrain himself from pointing out these errors. At this the man was very irritated and shouted out, “Stop, you fool! Where is a jackal and where is heaven! Whoever heard of a cook explaining the scriptures? Go back to the kitchen and display your talents there.” Without showing the least sign of annoyance at these harsh words, Dasharathi calmly went on with his explanation of the verse. His presentation, based on many different scriptures, was made so perfectly that everyone who heard his speech was captivated. Even the proud speaker begged pardon from him by touching his feet and asking, “How is it that such a sincere devotee and learned scholar as yourself is engaged in doing menial work in the kitchen?” To this Dasharathi replied that he was simply acting in accordance with the order of his guru, which was his life and soul. When all the people learned he was Dasharathi, the famous devotee-scholar, they went in a group to Srirangam. All of them presented their petition before Ramanuja, “O Mahatma, it is not proper that your worthy disciple should be engaged as a cook any longer. He has not a trace of pride in his heart and is certainly an exalted paramahamsa. Please give orders so that in great honour we may bring him to your feet once more.” Ramanuja was so pleased to hear the people describing his disciple in such a way that he returned with them. When they met, Ramanuja embraced Dasharathi and blessed him. After returning to Srirangam he explained to Dasharathi the full significance of Lord Krishna’s final instruction to Arjuna in the Bhagavad-gita, which reveals the essence of a devotee’s surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Because Dasharathi had fulfilled his desire by rendering service to the devotees, from that day he was known as Vaishnava Dasa.

Thus Thirukoshtiyur is an important place where both the secrets of Bhagavad-gita and the essence of Vaishnavism spread to the whole world. In the next issue we will take a tour of the temple of Sowmyanarayana of Thirukoshtiyur.

Photo courtesy:
In Pursuit of Perfection

For those who think perfection is unattainable, the Vedic literature says think again.

By Nagaraja Dasa

Claims of perfection generally draw skeptical responses. I saw a bumper sticker that read “Christians Aren't Perfect, Just Forgiven,” implying that if we claim to be perfect no one will believe it. It seems the old adage “Nobody’s perfect” is as popular today as ever. Yet despite popular opinion, the Vedic literature assures us we can indeed become perfect.

Ordinarily we say that something is perfect when it does what it is supposed to do. A nut may fit a bolt perfectly. A certain gift may be the perfect one for a friend—one that genuinely satisfies him. Or we may have just eaten the perfect chili pepper—hot!

The example of the chili pepper helps illustrate the Vedic idea of perfection. The chili is supposed to be hot. You might say that to be hot is its function, the reason for its existence. In Sanskrit the function or intrinsic qualities of an object are said to be its dharma. Thus something is perfect when it displays its dharma, when its activity is consistent with its constitutional character.

We also have a dharma, an activity we are inherently meant to do. The Vedic literature explains this by first clearing up any misconceptions we may have about our identity. Without knowing who we are, knowing what we are meant to do is impossible. The Vedic literature reveals to us our eternal identity as an infinitesimal spirit soul. We are all tiny parts of the unlimited supreme spirit soul. Lord Sri Krishna. Since we are subordinate parts of God our constitutional function is to serve Him. The Vedic literature further states that the pure spirit soul originally and naturally serves God in the mood of unalloyed love. The dharma of the living entity, therefore, is to engage in pure devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Now, does this agree with our everyday experience? Well, don't we all want to love and serve, but we do not find satisfaction in the temporal relationships of this world despite our honest endeavors to love and serve. Our attempts to express love and service in the limited, temporary relationships of this world are destined to fail because our love is specifically meant for God. By trying to satisfy our loving propensity independent of God, we remain imperfect.

The perfection of human life, therefore, is to attain to the stage of pure devotional service to Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And there is a way to reach that stage. The Vedic literature describes not only the process for attaining perfection but also the various levels of perfection along the way.

The Vedas emphatically and unequivocally declare that the process for advancing from our condition of materially contaminated consciousness to the exalted state of pure consciousness, wherein one serves God with spontaneous, unadulterated love, is the chanting of the holy names of God:

harer nama harer nama
harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nasty eva nasty eva
nasty eva gatir anyatha

[Cc. Adi 17.21]

“In the present Age of Kali, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is chanting the holy name of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.” (Brhan-naradiya Purana)

When Krishna descended five hundred years ago as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, His specific purpose was to inaugurate the sankirtana movement—a movement meant to purify anyone who adopts the simple process of chanting the holy names of God. Lord Chaitanya especially recommended the chanting of Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Not only did He spread the chanting of Hare Krishna all over India, He also empowered His disciples to continue His mission.

Although Lord Chaitanya was widely renowned as a scholar, He did not write any books. He left the task of presenting the philosophical and scriptural basis of the Hare Krishna movement to His intimate disciples. Foremost among His disciples was Rupa Gosvami, an erudite scholar and former minister in the government.
of West Bengal. In his treatise on the science of Krishna consciousness, entitled Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu, Rupa Gosvami elaborately described the stages through which one passes as he progresses in spiritual life to the ultimate perfection of pure love of God.

Rupa Gosvami, after a scrutinizing analysis of the vast library of Vedic literatures, defined nine steps to perfection: 1) preliminary faith, 2) association with devotees of the Lord, 3) engaging in regulated devotional activities, 4) becoming free from sinful habits, 5) remaining steady in self-realization, 6) acquiring a taste for hearing about the Supreme Lord, 7) attachment for Krishna consciousness, 8) ecstasy, and 9) pure love of God.

By understanding the characteristics of these nine levels of realization, the candidate for spiritual perfection can continually monitor his or her advancement. The aspirant will also be able to determine who, among those claiming to love God, exhibits the symptoms of God realization. Each level of spiritual advancement warrants elaborate description, but for our present purpose we will simply explain the prominent characteristics.

The first level of realization is called shraddha, or the point at which one has a little faith that the spiritual path may be the solution to the problems of life. As we previously explained, the soul's innate craving for fulfillment in love can never be satisfied in the material world. No matter how hard we try to be happy, we will inevitably meet with frustration. Realizing the futility of material life, the intelligent and sincere soul will become attracted to the spiritual path.

One who has awakened his attraction to spiritual life, one who possesses a small degree of faith, will naturally want to associate with those who have already progressed to advanced stages of realization. Sadhusanga, associating with saintly people, is the second stage. If one is sincere, then Lord Krishna, who knows everyone's heart, will direct one to other sincere souls.

In the association of devotees one hears spiritual truth, receives spiritual instruction, develops a stronger faith in the Lord and in the process of Krishna consciousness, and prepares to make lifelong vows and to receive formal initiation from a bona fide spiritual master. The Vedic literature declares that one who wants to advance in spiritual life must accept a spiritual master. If one wants to learn some mundane subject, one requires a teacher. Certainly to even hope to understand supramundane subject matter, one requires the guidance of a God-realized spiritual master.
In the third stage one accepts a spiritual master and begins to follow his instructions. This stage is called bhajana-kriya. It is generally understood that one’s spiritual life actually begins at the point of initiation. “Initiation,” of course, means “beginning.” At the time of initiation the disciple begins a new life, regulated by the spiritual master, a life that will enable him to advance surely and steadily toward the final goal.

Developing pure love of God is something like cultivating a plant. At the time of initiation the spiritual master gives the seed of the plant that will one day bear as its fruit pure love of God. Just as a gardener must prepare the earth before seeding it, the disciple must have already prepared his heart (by developing faith and by associating with devotees) to receive the seed of spiritual life at initiation. Now he must give the tender seedling of devotion regular care, hearing and chanting about Krishna and following the directions of the spiritual master.

The bona fide spiritual master initiates the candidate into the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra. Chanting Hare Krishna is itself sufficient for self-realization; however, one must chant properly, without offenses. One waters the delicate devotional plant by chanting Hare Krishna, but one must simultaneously pull the weeds: material desires, offenses against devotees, offenses against the holy name. The continual guidance of the spiritual master is essential to insure that the disciple applies the process correctly and thus makes steady advancement.

The fourth stage is called anartha-nivrttih, freedom from all materialistic pursuits. This has nothing to do with repression, but is a natural stage in spiritual evolution. When one regularly chants the Hare Krishna mantra and follows the programme of spiritual activities prescribed by the spiritual master, one’s material desires will undoubtedly diminish. Initiates in the Krishna consciousness movement vow to refrain from meat-eating, illicit sexual relations, intoxication, and gambling. Thus they immediately shun sinful habits and, by the potency of chanting Hare Krishna, gradually purge the desire to commit even the smallest sins.

Unless one is completely pure, understanding God will not be possible, what to speak of entering a loving relationship with Him. God is the supreme pure; to associate with Him we must also become pure. A genuine religious process must have the power to purify one of the tendency to sin.

The fifth stage is called nistha, steadiness. When one is freed from sinful habits, spiritual advancement is rapid
and steady. Only when one abandons all desire to act independently of the order of the Lord can he attain steadiness in self-realization. If one’s consciousness is not free of material desire, he will sometimes become distracted from his spiritual pursuit. One on the platform of nistha has firm faith that the single act of perfecting his devotional service to Krishna will certainly fulfill all his desires. Therefore, he is not disturbed by the desire to perform extraneous activities.

Due to his full faith in Krishna, the steadily devoted soul acquires a taste for Krishna consciousness. This taste is called ruci, the sixth stage of advancement. The transcendental taste of Krishna consciousness is far greater than any taste within our worldly experience. Krishna is the reservoir of all sublime tastes, and as one begins to reawaken his relationship with Krishna, he relishes those tastes with ever-increasing pleasure. One highly advanced devotee has revealed the depth of spiritual pleasure available in Krishna consciousness by declaring:

Since I have begun to enjoy the transcendental exchanges of love with Krishna, which are always newer and newer, whenever I remember the pleasure of past sexual activities, my lips curl and I wish to spit on the idea.

Although sexual pleasure is generally considered the highest pleasure in material life, the devotee who has attained the stage of ruci finds it repulsive.

The devotee savours such great pleasure in Krishna consciousness that he naturally becomes increasingly attached to Krishna. That attachment is the seventh level of spiritual realization, called asakti.

It is the nature of pleasurable objects that one becomes attached to them. In material life this attachment causes great anguish, because we inevitably separate from the objects of our attachment. The devotee who has attained the seventh level of realization need not fear separation from the object of his attachment, because that object is Krishna, who is ever existing and ever present. A devotee who is attached to Krishna will never give up Krishna consciousness, for nothing can sway his determination to serve his supremely attractive master. Madhavendra Puri, an eminent devotee of Lord Krishna, prays,

“Let the sharp moralist accuse me of being illusioned; I do not mind. Experts in the Vedic activities may slander me as being misled, friends and relatives may call me frustrated, my brothers may call me a fool, the wealthy mammonites may point me out as mad, and the learned philosophers may assert that I am much too proud. Still my mind does not budge an inch from the determination to serve the lotus feet of Krishna, though I am unable to do it.”

The pleasure experienced by the devotee in the ruchi stage gradually intensifies to the point of overwhelming spiritual ecstasy, called bhava, which is the eighth level of transcendental realization. When a devotee reaches this stage, certain symptoms indicative of transcendental ecstasy appear in his body. Rupa Gosvami discusses eight symptoms: perspiration, becoming stunned, standing of the hairs on end, faltering voice, trembling, changing bodily colour, tears, and devastation.

Sometimes one who has not advanced through the preceding seven stages of realization—one who is not even free from material desires—may imitate the ecstasy of an advanced devotee. Don't be fooled. Spiritual ecstasy does not come cheaply; it is the result of dedicated practice of the principles of Krishna consciousness for many, many years.

The bhava stage is the preliminary stage of love of God, because one's love for Krishna is almost mature. The ecstatic bodily transformations mentioned above are evidence of this, just as the lightening horizon is evidence of the rising sun. An even more reliable demonstration of the devotee's level of advancement can be seen in his normal activities. Rupa Gosvami describes the standard of behaviour for a devotee absorbed in ecstatic love (bhava) as follows:

1) He is perseverant and forgiving. 2) He is concerned that no time is wasted outside of devotional service to Krishna. 3) He is detached from worldly affairs. 4) He is free of false prestige. 5) He has great hope for receiving Krishna's mercy. 6) He is intensely eager for Krishna's association. 7) He chants Hare Krishna with great relish. 8) He is attached to hearing descriptions of the transcendental qualities of the Lord. 9) He has deep affection for those places where the Lord resides.

Having progressed through all subordinate levels of spiritual realization, the devotee finally reaches the stage of pure love of God, known as prema. The great spiritual teachers of the Vedic tradition define prema as the stage in which one invests all of his love in one object—Krishna. At this ultimate level of spiritual perfection, the devotee is fully liberated from the influence of the material energy. Although apparently existing within this world, he is undeniably situated in the spiritual world by dint of his complete absorption in the name, form, qualities, and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The fully matured devotee has now completely reestablished his eternal loving relationship with Krishna. He has attained perfection.

Although perfection is rare, it is nevertheless possible. In this age especially, by the inconceivable mercy of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, one can steadily and quickly progress to the ultimate goal of life by chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.
On Akshaya Tritiya, April 29, 2017, ISKCON Bangalore conducted the ‘Sudama Vaibhavam' programme. On this day, Lord Krishna blessed the poor brahmana Sudama, with unlimited prosperity in return for his most humble offering of chipped rice. The seva kartas offered poha to Lord Krishna and participated in the homa. Then they honoured a grand feast of 56 items of Krishna prasadam.
Akshaya Patra News

Bank of India donated a food distribution vehicle to The Akshaya Patra Foundation.

Sri Dinabandhu Mohapatra, MD & CEO, Bank of India hands over the keys of the vehicle to Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa, Chairman, The Akshaya Patra Foundation.

P S Somasunder, Managing Director of “FABS”, FACILITIES AND BUILDING SOLUTIONS hands over the keys of the donated vehicle to Sri Sridham Krishna Dasa, The Akshaya Patra Foundation.

Rtn. Ananth H R, District Governor of Rotary Bangalore Midtown hands over the keys of the donated vehicle to Sri Sridham Krishna Dasa, The Akshaya Patra Foundation.
The second Patotsav celebration of Sri Sri Radha Madhav began on 28th April, 2017. On the first day of the festival, Their Lordships were offered ‘Nauka Vihara Seva’ (boat ride) in Madhav Kund. As Sri Sri Radha Madhav went around the pond, the devotees distributed maha-prasadam from the boat. Their Lordships were then offered Jhulan Seva (swing) on an exquisitely decorated swing, accompanied by melodious Krishna bhajans. The event concluded with a Pallaki Utsav and maha-prasadam was distributed to all.

The second day of Patotsav was on the Akshaya Tritiya day. Their Lordships were installed on this very day in 2015. The festivities were marked with a grand ceremonial bathing of the Lord, called as Churnabhisheka. On this auspicious occasion His Grace Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa, Chairman of GBC of Hare Krishna Movement enlightened the assembled devotees on significance of the Lord’s incarnation as the artha vigraha or Deity. Following this, there was shayana arati for Their Lordships and then the most exciting part of the festival, ‘samprokshan’ (sprinkling of the sanctified water over the head) was performed.

On the third and concluding day of Patotsav celebrations, Ratha Yatra was conducted for the pleasure of Sri Sri Radha Madhav. Devotees carried Their Lordships in a beautifully decorated Brahma Ratha, around the Hare Krishna Mandir.
BANGALORE: The moola vigraha of Lord Narasimha receives abhisheka (above) & the utsava vigraha of Lord Narasimha are offered abhisheka (below)
SRI NARASIMHA JAYANTI
May 9, 2017

Ahmedabad

Hubli

Hyderabad

Mysore
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>PILGRIMAGE NAME</th>
<th>PLACES OF VISIT</th>
<th>NO. OF SEATS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 2017</td>
<td>Fri 31 - Mon Apr 3</td>
<td>Rameshwaram Madurai</td>
<td>Rameshwaram, Dhanushkodi, Pamban Bridge, Rama-Sita-Lakshmana Teertham, Ramarpadam and more</td>
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<td>Fri 12 - Mon 15</td>
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<td>Fri 9 - Mon 12</td>
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<td>Sat 1 - Sun July 9</td>
<td>Puri Bahuda Ratha Yatra and Mayapur</td>
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<td>Fri 28 - Mon 31</td>
<td>Kishkinda Hampi</td>
<td>Kishkinda, Hampi, Kodanda Rama temple and more</td>
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<td>Aug 2017</td>
<td>Fri 25 - Mon 28</td>
<td>Ahobilam</td>
<td>Nava Narasimha temples</td>
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<td>Fri 8 - Mon 11</td>
<td>Guruvayur</td>
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<td>Fri 22 - Mon 25</td>
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<td>Sept 2017</td>
<td>Sat 30</td>
<td>Dusshera Festival (in ISKCON Mysore)</td>
<td>ISKCON Mysore, Soumya Keshava Temple &amp; Kaveri/Melukote</td>
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<td>Sat 21 - Mon 30</td>
<td>Jaipur &amp; Vrindavan</td>
<td>Mathura, Vrindavan, Barsana, Govardhan, Jaipur, Karauli and more</td>
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<td>Train, Bus Flight options</td>
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<td>Chennai Ratha Yatra</td>
<td>ISKCON Chennai, Mahabalipuram, Nitya Kalyan Perumal and more</td>
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<td>Train and AC Bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 2018</td>
<td>Sun 21 - Sun 28</td>
<td>Pancha-Dwaraka</td>
<td>Ahmedabad, Dwaraka, Nathadwar, Kankroli, Bet Dwaraka, Mul Dwaraka, Somnath and more</td>
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<td>Train, Bus Flight options</td>
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<td>Mysore Ratha Yatra</td>
<td>ISKCON Mysore, Srirangapatna Temple, Kaveri and Melukote</td>
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<td>Hubli Ratha Yatra</td>
<td>ISKCON Hubli, Devarayana Durga, Harihar, Sode Mutt, Sahasra Linga and more</td>
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<td>AC Bus</td>
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<tr>
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<td>To be confirmed by Nov 15</td>
<td>Dharwad Ratha Yatra</td>
<td>ISKCON Hubli, Savana Durga, Harihar, Gadag, Aihole, Pattadakal, Badami and more</td>
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<td>To be confirmed by Nov 15</td>
<td>Mangalore Ratha Yatra</td>
<td>Talakaveri, ISKCON Mangalore, Udupi, Malpe, Shaligramara Narasimha and more</td>
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<td>AC Bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2018</td>
<td>Fri 9 - Mon 12</td>
<td>Rameshwaram</td>
<td>Rameshwaram, Dhanushkodi, Pamban Bridge, Rama-Sita-Lakshmana Teertham, Ramarpadam and more</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Volvo Bus</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The auspicious appearance day of Lord Narasimha was celebrated at ISKCON Sri Radha Krishna temple, Bangalore on May 9. There was an elaborate abhisheka for the mulavar Deity of Sri Prahlada Narasimha at 5:30 a.m. The utsava Deity of the Lord received special abhisheka and puja in the evening.

Read More: https://goo.gl/6IlHtK

The annual Patotsav festival was celebrated at Hare Krishna Mandir, Ahmedabad from April 28 to 30 in commemoration of the installation of the Deities of Sri Sri Radha Madhav at the temple. On the second day of Patotsav was Akshaya Tritiya. (actual day of Installation of the Deities in 2015).

Read More: https://goo.gl/TF9prg

Sri Gadadhara Pandita was an intimate associate of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He stayed with Lord Chaitanya at Jagannatha Puri after the Lord took sannyasa. He resided at Sri Tota Gopinatha Temple. Lord Chaitanya gave the responsibility of Sri Tota Gopinatha’s service to Gadadhara Pandita and also awarded him kshetra-sannyasa.

Read More: https://goo.gl/271KkM

Every living being is anxious for full freedom because that is his transcendental nature. And this freedom is obtained only through the transcendental service of the Lord. Illusioned by the external energy, everyone thinks that he is free, but actually he is bound by the laws of nature.

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

The most beautiful places I’ve ever seen! My impression of this place is almost indescribable. Its beauty is absolutely breathtaking, and that’s not even touching on the overwhelming feeling of peace when you’re inside. By far, my favorite place of everywhere that I went in Bangalore. An experience you don’t want to miss. toddjm02

Temple of Lord Krishna: The temple is so nice and clean and looks too rich. Only temple that I’ve seen in my life with such a silent and divine place. Vishwajith K

Don’t miss the Evening Aarathi: Best place to go for an evening, eyes will be filled with beauty of special evening Aarathi. U can catch Metro rail from Mantri Square for a quick ride, traffic free. Shreybeka!

A place of Peace, Piety and Inspiration: This is indeed a very special place, and it is more inspiring and more spectacular with each visit. I came here in the early days and what has not changed is the cleanliness, the attention to detail and the sheer intensity of prayer and devotion. aabraham77

Very good place to feel the spirituality: Every time I visit the temple there is a fresh feeling. Continuous bhajans, nama smaran, good prasad, lot of books to buy. For kids there are some movie shows about Krishna. There are some summer classes also for kids. Next to the temple (within the campus) there is a veg restaurant with delicious food. sreedharsaraswathi

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna... positive vibes all around: This place is the ultimate stress reliever. Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare...maha mantra relieves stress and infuses positivism. tapas m

Iskcon temple: One of the landmarks in Bangalore, worth visiting... very well organized and one place which contributes to society with their annadan and midday meal programmes. chinnachit
Welcome to the ISKCON Culture Camp 2017, a unique and holistic camp, where children had such fun, that they all echoed, “It’s truly a cool place to be in, this summer.”

In one hall, children waited expectantly as a huge multimedia screen lighted up the stage with verses from the *Bhagavad-gita*. In another hall, children were rehearsed for their Yakshagana performance. Elsewhere in the amphitheatre, children were spiritedly practicing to get their act together for the portraying of Lord Narasimha emerging from the pillar after being struck by Hiranyakashipu to save His devotee, Prahlada. Some other kids were absorbed in their stained glass paintings and paper craft work, while a few others were melodiously singing the glories of Lord Sri Krishna.
The camp, which was started 16 years ago with the aim of enriching young minds with cultural values, is conducted for children between 2 to 16 years. Apart from Hare Krishna Hill, Rajajinagar, on popular demand the camp has, for the very first time, been extended to other centres in Whitefield, Kanakapura and HSR Layout. This year, the camp saw a participation of 550 children from all the four centres.

The camp comprised exciting animation shows, Vedic Quiz, Bhagavad-gita sloka recitation, classes on Indian Philosophical Studies, besides different modules such as Arts and Crafts, Group Vocal Music, Indian Traditional Dance, English Theatre and Yakshagana. Each 21-day batch culminated in a grand stage performance presented during the Talents Day programme.

Grand celebrations of festivals such as Sri Rama Navami, ISKCON Brahmotsava and Narasimha Jayanti, during the duration of the camp, saw children enthusiastically participating in the festivities by donning resplendent ethnic wear. The significance and essence of each festival was explained through a special discourse by senior devotees at the temple.

Three educational trips were organized to ancient temples around Bengaluru which revealed the inquisitive side of the children and their families. The eagerness of the children to learn more about the treasured temples was creatively channelized through these trips.

![Ramdevara Betta, Ramanagar](image1)

![Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple, Magadi](image2)

All in all, ISKCON Culture Camp 2017 brought huge smiles on the children’s faces as they learnt about Indian culture and values in a fun-filled environment.

**A few testimonials:**

“We feel it as a blessing that Arjun got a chance to attend this summer camp. I can clearly see his learnings in the summer camp. I am stunned by the way you have taught the details to the kids and the fact that they remember it so well. We sincerely thank you for all the learnings Arjun will be taking with him for life from this camp.”

- Gayathri Nagarajan, IT Professional

“We don’t have many words to describe how great the camp is. It is really wonderful and nice! I wish and hope we will have a full-fledged school in Whitefield.”

- Satish Mandavilli, IT Professional
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