Sri Nityananda Trayodashi
Appearance day of Lord Nityananda

Mon, January 29, 2018
-Fasting till noon-

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

Festival Highlights
abhisheka - arati - kirtanas
video presentation
pallaki utsava - prasadam feast

The lotus feet of Lord Nityananda are a shelter where one will get the soothing moonlight not only of one, but of millions of moons. If the world wants to have real peace, it should take shelter of Lord Nityananda.

Unless one takes shelter under the shade of the lotus feet of Lord Nityananda, it will be very difficult for him to approach Radha-Krsna. If one actually wants to enter into the dancing party of Radha-Krsna, he must firmly catch hold of the lotus feet of Lord Nityananda.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare
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
The Final Point for the Bubble of Illusion

An explanation of a song by the great spiritual teacher Narottama Dasa Thakura, given by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, in Los Angeles Hare Krishna center.

Narottama Dasa Thakura, who has written this song, is a famous acharya [spiritual master], and his compositions are accepted as Vedic truth. In this song he represents himself as a common man, as one of us. He laments, appealing to Hari, Lord Krishna, hari hari biphale janama gonainu: “My dear Lord, I have uselessly spoiled my life, because I have not worshiped You.”

People do not know that they are spoiling their life. They are thinking, “I’ve got a very nice apartment, a very nice car, a very nice wife, a very nice income, a very nice social position.” All these material attractions make us forget the purpose of our life—to worship Krishna.

In one verse [5.5.8], the Srimad-Bha{gavatam summarizes the material attractions: pumsah striya mithuni-bhavam etam tayor mitho hrdaya-granthim ahuh/ ato grha-ksetra-sutapta-vittair janasya moho ’yam aham mameti. The basic principle of material attraction is sex: pumsah striya mithuni-bhavam etam. A man hankers after a woman, and a woman hankers after a man. And when they actually engage in sex, they become very much attracted to each other: tayor mitho hrdaya-granthim ahuh. Hridaya means “heart,” and granthim means “hard knot.” So when a man and a woman engage in sex, the hard knot in the heart is tied. “I cannot leave you,” he says. “You are my life and soul.” And she says, “I cannot leave you. You are my life and soul.”

For a few days. Then divorce.

But the beginning is sex. The basic principle of material attraction is sex. We have organized sex life in many social conventions. Marriage is a social convention that gives sex a nice finishing touch, that’s all. Sometimes it is said that marriage is legalized prostitution. But for keeping up social relations one has to accept some regulative principles, some restrictions on sense gratification. Therefore civilized human beings recognize that there is a difference between sex in marriage and sex outside of marriage, which is just like sex between animals.

In any case, when two people unite some way or other, their next demand is a nice apartment (griha) and some land (kshetra). Then children (suta). When you have an apartment and a wife, the next requirement is to have children, because without children no home life is pleasant. Putra-hinam grham sunyam: “Home life without children is just like a desert.” Children are the real pleasure of home life. Finally there is the circle of relatives, or society (apta). And all these paraphernalia have to be maintained with money (vittaih). So money is required.

In this way one becomes entangled in the material world and covered by illusion. Why illusion? Why are such important things—wife, children, money—illusion? Because although at the present moment you may think everything is all right—you have a nice arrangement of home life, apartment, wife, children, society, and position—as soon as your body is finished everything is finished. You’re forced to leave everything and move on to your next platform. And you do not know what your next platform will be. Your next body may be that of a human being or a cat or a dog or a demigod or anything. You do not know. But whatever it is, as soon as you leave your present body you will forget everything. There will be no remembrance of who you were, who your wife was, what your home was like, how big your bank balance was, and so on. Everything will be finished.

Everything will be finished in a flash, just like a bubble bursting in the ocean. The thrashing of the waves in the ocean generates millions and billions of bubbles, but the next moment they are all finished. Finished.

In this way material life is going on. The living entity travels through many species of life, many planets, until he comes to the human form of life. Human life is an opportunity to understand how we are transmigrating from one place to another, from one life to another, and simply wasting our time, not understanding what our constitutional position is and why we are suffering so much distress.

These things are to be understood in this human form of life. But instead of inquiring about our real position, we
are simply engaged with mithuni-bhavam and grha-ksetra-sutapta-vittai—sex, wife, home, property, children, society, money, and position. We are captivated with these things, and we are spoiling our life.

So Narottama dasa Thakura, representing us, is lamenting, “My dear Lord, I have spoiled my life.” Why? Manusya-janama paiya radha-krishna na bhajiya: “This human form of life is meant for understanding Radha-Krishna (the Lord and His energy) and worshiping Radha-Krishna. But instead of making contact with Radha-Krishna, I am simply spoiling my life in sense gratification.”

Then his lament goes on. Golokera prema-dhana hari-nama-sankirtana rati na janmilo kene tay: “Alas, why have I no attraction for chanting Hare Krishna?” The chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra is a transcendental vibration; it is not a material thing. It is imported from the transcendental abode of Krishna. From there the transcendental sound of Hare Krishna has come. This sound is like the sunshine coming from the sun. Although you cannot go to the sun—it is far, far beyond your reach—you can understand that the sunshine is coming from the sun globe. There is no doubt about it. Similarly, the vibration of the Hare Krishna mantra is coming from Krishna’s planet, Goloka (golokera prema-dhana). And this chanting produces love of Krishna. (Prema-dhana means “the treasure of love for Krishna.”)

Narottama Dasa Thakura laments, hari-nama-sankirtana rati na janmilo kene tay: “Alas, why do I have no attachment for the chanting of Hare Krishna?” Why should one be attached to this chanting? That is explained in the next line. Samsara-bisanele diba-nisi hiya jwale jurate: “Chanting Hare Krishna is the only remedy to relieve the heart from the burning poison of sense gratification.” Hiya means “heart.” Our heart is always burning. Why? Because it is in touch with the sense-gratificatory process. No sense-gratificatory process can give me satisfaction, even though I try this way and that way, this way and that way. People are trying sense gratification in so many ways, and now they have come to the last point: the naked dance and... what is that called—that short skirt?

Devotee: Miniskirt.

Srila Prabhupada: Miniskirt, yes. [Laughs.] So, because in the material world the basic principle is sex, everyone is inviting, “Yes, come on, enjoy sex. Come on, enjoy sex.” But no matter how you try to enjoy sex, you cannot be satisfied. That is certain, because sense gratification is not your real platform of enjoyment. You are a spirit soul, and unless you come to the spiritual platform you will never be satisfied by any sense gratification. You’ll simply go on hankering after pleasure, but you will find no satisfaction.

Therefore, Narottama Dasa Thakura says we are suffering in samsara-bisanele. Samsara indicates our material demands for eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. These are just like fiery poison. Then he says, “My heart is burning from this poison, but I have not searched out the means of relief: the chanting of Hare Krishna. I have no attachment for this chanting, and therefore I have spoiled my life.” Then he says, vrajendra-nandana jei sachi-suta hoiho sei. The chanting of Hare Krishna was introduced by Krishna Himself, Vrajendra-nandana, in the form of Lord Chaitanya, Sachi-suta. Krishna took the part of the son of Maharaja Nanda, the king of Vrindavana. Therefore Krishna is called Vrajendra-nandana. And Lord Chaitanya took the role of the son of Mother Sachi; so He is known as Sachi-suta. The Supreme Personality of Godhead takes pleasure when He is addressed with His devotee’s name, with His energy’s name. (His devotees are also His energy.) Although He has no father—He is the father of everyone—He accepts some devotee as His father when He appears on earth. When a pure devotee wants Krishna as his son, Krishna accepts the devotee as His parent.

So Narottama Dasa Thakura says that Vrajendra-nandana (Krishna) has now appeared as Sachi-suta (Lord Chaitanya), and Balarama (Krishna’s brother) has become Nitai. And what is Their business? Dina-hina-jata chilo hari-name uddharilo: saving all kinds of wretched, sinful, conditioned souls by teaching them the chanting of Hare Krishna. In this age, Kali-yuga, you cannot find a pious man or a saintly person. Everyone is addicted to sinful activities. But simply by distributing the chanting of Hare Krishna, Lord Chaitanya saved everyone, however fallen he might have been. “Come on!” He said. “Chant Hare Krishna and be delivered.”

What is the evidence that Lord Chaitanya saved even the most fallen? Tara saksi jagai madhai. Jagai and Madhai were two brothers who engaged in all kinds of sinful affairs. They were born into a very high brahmana family, but by bad association they became sinful. Similarly, in the present age, although the people of the West are descending from Aryan families, very nice families, by association they have become fallen. Their environment is full of illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating, and gambling. So Jagai and Madhai are specimens of the modern population, and Lord Chaitanya delivered them simply by inducing them to chant the Hare Krishna mantra.

So chanting Hare Krishna will actually deliver all fallen souls, without doubt. This is not bogus propaganda. Whatever his past life, anyone who takes to this chanting process will become saintly. He will become a pure, Krishna conscious person.

Chanting Hare Krishna will purify our heart, our burning heart. Then we will understand, “I am an eternal servant
of the Supreme Lord, Krishna." Ordinarily we can come to this understanding only after many, many births, as Krishna confirms in the Bhagavad-gita [7.19]. Bahunam janmanam ante jnanavan mam prapadyate: “After many, many births, when a person becomes a man of wisdom, he surrenders unto Me.” Why? Vasudevah sarvam iti: because he knows that Vasudeva, Krishna, is everything. But that kind of great soul is very rare (sa mahatma sudurlabhabhah).

But Lord Chaitanya has made it easy to become such a great soul. How? Simply by chanting Hare Krishna. Therefore at the end of his song Narottama Dasa Thakura says, ha ha prabhu nanda-suta vrsabhanu-suta-juta koruna karoho ei-baro: “My dear Lord Krishna, You are now present before me with Your internal potency, Your pleasure potency, Radharani. Please be merciful to me. Don’t neglect me because I am so sinful. My past life is so black, but don’t neglect me. Please accept me. Don’t kick me away. I surrender unto You.”

So, all of us should follow in the footsteps of Narottama Dasa Thakura. The purificatory process is chanting Hare Krishna. And as soon as our heart is purified, we will become completely convinced that Krishna is the Supreme Lord and that we are His eternal servants. We have forgotten this. We are serving, but instead of serving the Lord we are serving our senses. We have never become the master. We are not the masters of our senses; we are the servants of our senses. That is our position.

So why not become the servant of the Supreme Lord instead of remaining the servant of your senses? Actually, you can become the master of your senses only when you become the servant of Krishna. Otherwise, it is not possible. Either godasa or gosvami: that is your choice. A person who is the servant of his senses is called godasa, and a person who is the master of his senses is called gosvami. He controls his senses. When his tongue wants to eat something not offered to Krishna, he thinks, "O tongue, you cannot taste this thing. It is not krishna-prasadam [food offered to Krishna]." In this way one becomes a gosvami, a master of his senses.

When a person does not allow his senses to do anything for sense gratification but acts only for the service of Krishna, that is called devotional service. Hrsikena hrsikesa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate: devotional service means to engage your senses in satisfying the master of the senses. The supreme master of the senses is Krishna. Now we are trying to use our senses for our personal service. This is called maya, illusion. But when we engage the same senses in the service of Krishna, that is perfection. We don’t stop the activities of the senses, but we purify the senses by engaging them in the service of the Lord. This is Krishna consciousness.

Thank you very much. Any questions?

Devotee: Srila Prabhupada, how is it that Lord Jesus is called the son of God? If Krishna is usually the son, how is Jesus—

Srila Prabhupada: Not usually. Krishna is the Supreme Father, but He becomes His devotee’s son out of His love. Being a son is not Krishna’s constitutional position; being the father is His constitutional position (aham bija-pradah pita). But sometimes He voluntarily becomes a son to taste His devotee’s fatherly or motherly love for Him.

When a pure devotee prays, “My dear Lord, I want You for my son,” Krishna accepts his prayer. Vasudeva and Devaki become Krishna’s parents in this way. In a previous life they underwent severe austerities. They were married, but they had no sex. They were determined that unless they could get the Lord as their son they would not have a child. So they performed severe austerities for many thousands of years. Then the Lord appeared to them and asked, “What do you want?”

“Sir, we want a son like You.”

“How can you get a son like Me? I’ll become your son!”
So Krishna, the Lord, is the father of everyone, but He voluntarily becomes the son of His devotee. Otherwise, His position is always the Supreme Father.

Devotee: Srila Prabhupada, I read in the Srimad-Bhagavatam that when one becomes a liberated soul he attains perfect freedom and that sometimes his freedom is on the same level as Krishna’s or even more than Krishna’s. Can you explain this?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Take Vasudeva, for example. He’s more than Krishna. Or Mother Yashoda. You have seen the picture of Yashoda binding Krishna?

Devotee: Krishna looks like a little baby?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is feared by everyone, but He becomes fearful of Mother Yashoda: “My dear mother, kindly do not bind Me. I shall obey your orders.” So Mother Yashoda has become more than God, more than Krishna. The mayavadi [impersonalistic] philosophers want to become one with the Lord, but our philosophy is to become more than Krishna. Why one with Krishna? More than Krishna. And, actually, Krishna does make His devotee more than Himself. Another example is Arjuna. Krishna took the part of his chariot driver. Krishna was actually the hero of the Battle of Kurukshetra, but He gave that position to His devotee: “Arjuna, you become the hero. I shall be your charioteer.”

Krishna is just like a father who wants to see his son become more than himself. If the father has an M.A., he wants to see his son get a Ph.D. Then the father is satisfied. He’ll not tolerate an outsider’s becoming more than him, but he’s glad if his son becomes more than him. Similarly, Krishna, the Supreme Lord, wants to see His devotee become more than Himself. That is His pleasure.

Srila Prabhupada, the founder-acharya of ISKCON, has delivered more than 1500 lectures on Vedic scriptures like Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam and Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita. The audio recording of his lectures are available in ISKCON centers. You can also hear some of these lectures in www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada-lectures.
Srila Prabhupada: Now, for one who is actually God conscious, where is the question of fighting or killing? Everyone is his brother. He knows God is the supreme father and we are all His sons. So one should know it for a fact—saśa-yoniṣu kaunteya murtayaṁ saṁbhavanti yah/ tāsam brahma mahād yonir aham bija-pradah pita [Bhagavad-gītā 14.4]: “It should be understood that all species of life are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I, the Lord, am the seed-giving father.” That is God consciousness.

And in the Christian Bible you have the specific commandment “Thou shalt not kill.” Last night, a gentleman asked me, “Thou shall not kill whom?” But there is no question of whom.

If you ask “Whom?” then at least “Thou shalt not kill thy father and thy mother.” And the cow is your mother, because she supplies you her milk. The cow supplies her milk, and so she is your mother. So how can you kill your mother?

Dr. Hauser: Well, some people drink other milk, too. Like goat’s milk. Is the goat a mother if you drink goat’s milk?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, yes. But generally we drink cow’s milk. Some people may also have drunk goat’s milk at times, but nobody can say, “I’ve never drunk cow’s milk.” Nobody can say this, virtually anywhere in the world. Cows are created for that purpose—supplying us milk.

But we are killing the cow, our mother. And
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we are killing our father, the bull. The bull is our father because he plows the fields to supply us grain. He goes out and works hard to supply us food. He is a father to us. And yet we are killing him. Therefore, we are killing our very mother and father.

The Bhagavad-gita specifically instructs us, krsi-goraksya: We human beings must protect the cow, our milk-giving mother. Go-raksya—“protect the cow.” Not go-hatya—”kill the cow.” This is most sinful.

If one is sinful, how can he say he is religious? Do you think a sinful man can be truly religious? Yet this is going on. In the name of religion, people are committing sins. I mean to say, this sinful killing of animals, especially cows, is the main cause of humanity’s current degradation.

Veda-nisidhya-karya kale veda-mukhya mane. As Lord Chaitanya said, “People are acting against every religious principle, but advertising themselves” “I am religious. I believe in religion.” These nonsensical things are going on. A Christian is going against the basic Christian principle; nonetheless he is proud of being a Christian.

Today virtually all people are like that—even the Buddhists. In Japan I asked the head of a big printing firm, “You are a Buddhist, and Lord Buddha taught ahimsa, nonviolence—no flesh-eating. Do you eat meat?” And he said, “Yes.” He admitted—“Yes, I am sorry. I eat meat.”

These things are going on. Actually, no religion will allow flesh-eating. In the Mohammedan and Jewish religions also it is allowed only after offering sacrifice—and never is the flesh to be taken when wholesome fruits, nuts, grains, and milk products are available. Only in the desert, or in other words, only as a last resort. Not from a slaughterhouse.

Dr. Hauser: Pardon? Not from what?

Srila Prabhupada: A slaughterhouse. But now people are regularly maintaining slaughterhouses. These grossly sinful activities are going on.

So in our movement we have got restrictions. Anyone who comes to be a serious student—he must give up the four main sinful activities: illicit sex, gambling, intoxication, and flesh-eating. Every one of our students. Every one. First of all, he must agree to this principle. Then I accept him as my student.

Dr. Hauser: Do you use leather?

Srila Prabhupada: Generally we avoid it, since at the present time people are obtaining it by sending the animals to the slaughterhouse.

Dr. Hauser: So you don’t allow it?

Srila Prabhupada: We don’t use it. For instance, none of our shoes are made of leather. Today there are so many substitutes, various plastics and other things. And every one of them is nice.

But leather, in itself, it is not prohibited, because you can get it after the animal has died a natural death. Yes. In India, those who are flesh-eaters wait until after a cow has died, and then they come and clear away the carcass. Then they eat the flesh and save the bones and horns and hooves and take off the skin to make shoes, and so forth. Since they get all their supplies for nothing, they can easily make their living.

The main idea is, sooner or later the animal will die. So let us wait for that time. Why should we kill a living animal?

Dr. Hauser: Do you use leather in your drums?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, after the cow has died a natural death, that leather can be used.

Dr. Hauser: So you have leather drums?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that has been the way of making drums for thousands of years. But that leather is collected only after the animal has died a natural death. Not by killing.

So our principle is mercy. Mercy. We never needlessly kill or torment any living being. The Lord is the all-merciful, and now, in this human form, we can revive our relationship with Him. After traveling through untold millions of lower forms, now we can revive our old relationship with the all-merciful. Yes. But only if we become merciful.

Dr. Hauser: Thank you very much.

Srila Prabhupada: Hare Krishna.

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While viewing a recent exhibit at New York’s Asia Society, I met an extremely interesting fellow named Ta Khan, a Cambodian war refugee. Although Ta was familiar with Eastern religion, his knowledge of the Krishna consciousness movement was minimal. He had heard about Vedanta, yoga, sanatana-dharma and so on, but like most people who frequent the Asia Society, he had only a theoretical knowledge of these things. And he was completely unaware that thousands of Westerners had adopted the Krishna conscious lifestyle.

I was standing before a beautiful painting from Akbar’s court when Ta approached me. “Are you a devotee of Krishna?” he asked. But before I could answer, he stammered, “Oh! Y-you’re American!”

“Devotion to Krishna is the eternal function of the soul,” I assured him, “and it transcends cultural designations.” We continued to look at the exhibit together. Soon he turned again to me, obviously anxious to speak, but he seemed unsure of where to start.

Hoping to make it easy for him, I explained, “Krishna is God. Actually, there is one God, but He is revealed by different prophets according to the intellectual and spiritual capacities of a given culture.” I could see he was attentive and eager to hear more.

“No matter where you are born,” I continued, “God can come to you. It’s not that Krishna can come only to a Hindu. If you’re sincere, He’ll search you out. He will either come personally, or He’ll send His pure representative.” I concluded my little sermon: “When His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada came to Western shores in 1965, he brought Krishna with him.”

Ta seemed pleased. “I know exactly what you mean,” he ventured. Then with increased confidence he said, “Krishna came to me in Cambodia.”


“Oh, He came as Krishna and also as Rama. He came in the form of the world’s largest Vishnu temple.” Now he had caught my interest.

“The massive Vishnu temple apparently was constructed by the Pallava dynasty under King Suryavarman II’s patronage. The Pallavas were mostly Vaishnavas, Krishna conscious devotees, and with their great missionary spirit brought Vedic culture from India to many lands.
Angkor Wat, the crown jewel of Pallava masterworks, dominates the plain where the Khmer empire—heir to the kingdoms of Funan and Chenla—flourished from the ninth century A.D. Built over a span of some forty years, the temple is one of the world’s most elaborate religious masterpieces, surpassing even the most elegant Christian cathedrals in splendour and magnitude. Worship of Vishnu engaged thousands under its roof until the fall of the Pallava dynasty in the fifteenth century, at which time, with the transferal of culture, it became a tribute to Lord Buddha. Today, the temple is being partly protected from its most lethal enemy, water, by a network of hidden drains emplaced there in the 1960s. As Ta read the description of Angkor, it brought back memories of his homeland and of his vow to search out the devotees of Vishnu.

“Its epic symmetries,” he read to me, “begin with the outer gallery, which runs in a circumference of half a mile. Within the gallery, sculptures in bas relief retell the pastimes of Vishnu and Rama.” What Ta and I were most happy to read, however, is that Lord Krishna’s pastimes are also depicted on the walls of the great structure. As we read this in an old copy of National Geographic (Vol. 161, No. 5, May 1982), we began to feel closer, as if his background in Kampuchea and my involvement with the Krishna consciousness movement were interrelated. Somehow, they were.

“Does it shock you that your Vedic culture existed outside India so long ago?” Ta asked me.

“No,” I confessed. “I can understand that Vedic culture is our birthright. Veda means ‘knowledge,’ and true knowledge is everybody’s birthright. If something is indeed true, it must be true everywhere and for everyone—just like the sun. There’s no question of a Cambodian sun or an American sun—the sun is the sun. Vedic knowledge is like that. It is true for everyone. It is the Absolute Truth.

It was getting late. Ta was reflective. Although we had only met earlier that day, we were already old friends. He repeated his story to me; he spoke of his ordeal in Kampuchea; he reminisced about his visit to the Vishnu temple. His prayers did not go unanswered, he told me. Not only was he able to flee Kampuchea with his life, but he was led to Vishnu’s devotees. I was embarrassed. I realized that he was referring to me. And I, in turn, became even more grateful to Srila Prabhupada, who spread the teachings of Krishna consciousness all over the world so that I could be led to Vishnu’s devotees.
The Most Confidential Knowledge

Our colleges and universities have neglected the essential subject.

by Mathuresha Das

In the Ninth Chapter of the Bhagavad-gita (9.34) Lord Krishna explains that the most confidential of all knowledge culminates in the activities of devotional service:

“Engage your mind always in thinking of Me and become My devotee. Offer obeisances and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me.”

Who is Krishna that absorption in thought of Him is the most confidential knowledge? The Bhagavad-gita, and indeed all the Vedic literatures, answer: Krishna is the Supreme Person. The Brahma-samhita (5.1) states, “The supreme controller is Krishna. He has an eternal, blissful, all-cognizant spiritual body. He is without beginning, He is the origin of everything, and He is the cause of all causes.”

As living entities we are each part and parcel of Krishna and therefore eternally connected with Him. Thus our most intimate, most confidential relationship is our relationship with the Supreme Lord.

For most people who profess some religion, an intimate relationship with God is a vague idea at best. They worship God only as the supreme father and the supplier of necessities. And in this age many people do not even believe in God, what to speak of being aware of their confidential relationship with Him. They say that God is dead or that He is merely a product of man's imagination. Or they say that belief in a Supreme Person is a superstition of primitive cultures. Just to clear up these and other misconceptions, Lord Krishna spoke the Gita to His friend and disciple Arjuna.

Arjuna knew Krishna to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore he accepted Krishna’s every word as fact. To understand the Gita we should follow in Arjuna’s footsteps and accept, at least theoretically, that Krishna is the supreme person, the supreme authority. One might object that this is blind faith. But there is no need of blind faith. We can remain aloof and think, “Let me theoretically accept that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ultimate authority. Then what are the implications of His instructions in the Bhagavad-gita?”

The Gita itself recommends this process of understanding. When we purchase some prescription medicine, a label on the bottle tells us how to take it. “Two pills every four hours:” the label might read. If we take two pills every eight hours, the medicine will be ineffective, and if we take two every hour, the overdose may make our illness worse. Similarly, in the Bhagavad-gita (4.3) we learn of Arjuna’s qualifications for understanding Krishna’s instructions:

“That very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as my friend; therefore you can understand the transcendental mystery of this science.”

This is the Gita’s “label,” so to speak, and if we study it in this way, accepting Krishna as the supreme authority, as Arjuna did, then our study becomes very rewarding. Just as we confide only in someone we can trust, Krishna reveals the confidential meaning of the Gita only to those who approach Him with a devotional mood.

In the Second Chapter of the Gita Krishna elaborately explains the difference between the body and the self. Understanding of this difference—understanding that “I am not this body”—is the beginning of confidential knowledge.

Krishna explains that although the body changes from childhood to youth to old age, the person within the body does not change. A grown man can remember his childhood body, although it is long gone. Who is remembering? The person within the body—the self, or soul. We customarily say “my hand,” “my leg,” or “my mind,” indicating that these are our possessions; they are not we ourselves. Similarly, we can say “my body,” indicating that we are not the body but that it belongs to us, to the living soul within it.

The body is like an automobile, which requires an intelligent person to drive it. A car is simply a pile of inert metal, rubber, glass, and so on, and without a driver it remains parked at the side of the road. Only with an intelligent driver at the wheel does it move from place to place. No one but a fool would think the car is moving by itself. Similarly, the body is only a lump of dead matter that appears alive and active only as long as the living entity, the self, is present within it. When the individual living soul leaves the body, the body dies. But, says the Gita (2.20), for the self there is no death:

“For the soul there is never birth or death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying, and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.”

The body has a beginning and an end; but we, the spirit soul within each body, are eternal. This is the beginning of confidential knowledge: to understand our eternal identity apart from the body.
As mentioned above, confidential knowledge culminates in absorption in thinking about Krishna and serving Him. In the Bhagavad-gita (9.2) Lord Krishna calls this the “king of education.” Real education begins with understanding the difference between the body and the self, or soul, and ends with our full surrender to the Supreme Soul, Lord Sri Krishna. Unfortunately, modern educational institutions almost completely neglect these topics.

No modern educational institution has a department for understanding the difference between the body and the self. Institutions of higher learning are interested in the sciences of physics, chemistry, sociology, psychology, politics, astronomy, anthropology, and so on, which focus exclusively on the body and its extensions but neglect the spirit soul. But of what relevance are these sciences to a dead body? A dead body takes no interest in them, nor can any scientist revive the body. These
sciences are valuable only when the body is alive, and the life within the body depends on the presence of the soul. Therefore the science of the soul is the most important science, the “king of education.”

When a body passes from life to death, something has radically changed. What, exactly, is missing in the dead body? Is it a certain chemical? A certain atomic or subatomic particle? If so, then what is that chemical or particle? Even if we deny the existence of an eternal soul, our educational interest should still focus on finding that element within the body which causes the living symptoms. This is essential, for without life our education has no meaning.

Without knowing what life is, a person cannot properly say what he is. One may say, for example, “I am Mr. Bob Jones, a twenty-eight-year-old lawyer.” But when the life leaves his body, we will say that Mr. Jones is “dead and gone” or that he has “passed away.” Mr. Jones’s dead body may still be lying in the casket, but we know that Mr. Jones himself is gone. One way or another, whether we are spirit souls or combinations of chemicals, when our body dies we will no longer be present. So to be in ignorance of the exact difference between a living body and a dead body is to be in ignorance of who we are.

As we have seen, the path of intellectual research through the various material sciences is limited and faulty. Indeed, after many thousands of years of this research, no one can say with assurance what life is. One school of thought may rise to prominence for some time, but in due course it is rejected and another school established. The intellectual skyline is always changing.

To call this change “progress” is misleading, for each school is in turn rejected as faulty, and therefore we are left with only a progression of mistakes. Two centuries ago no one had heard of Darwin or Freud, and two centuries from now they will be all but forgotten. Thus the path of material research is never safe or certain.

We must conclude, therefore, that our present research tools are themselves inadequate for finding out the nature and origin of life. If life originated in chemicals, we could find its source in the chemical laboratory. And if life and consciousness were a function of our mental activity, we could fully explain them by psychology. But since the origin of life and consciousness is the eternal spirit soul, who is beyond the material body and mind, our material sciences have not succeeded and never will succeed in reaching satisfactory conclusions in this field. The Bhagavad-gita therefore proclaims that after many lifetimes spent pursuing knowledge on the path of intellectual research, an intelligent man at last surrenders to Krishna and accepts the path of devotional service.

Being a spiritual process, devotional service is the proper context in which to study life and consciousness. As spirit souls we are part and parcel of Krishna, the Supreme Soul, just as the hand is part and parcel of the body. The hand’s natural position is to serve the body by supplying food to the stomach. Then both the hand and the body as a whole are nourished. The hand cannot directly benefit from the food; it can get nourishment and energy only by feeding the stomach. Similarly, if we satisfy Krishna by our service, we ourselves will automatically feel satisfied.

To experience this satisfaction directly, we must engage in devotional service to Krishna. There are nine methods of devotional service: hearing about Krishna, chanting His glories, remembering Him, serving Him, praying to Him, worshiping Him, befriending Him, carrying out His orders, and surrendering everything to Him. By executing even one of these processes, we begin to reestablish our relationship with the Supreme Lord. For example, we can hear Krishna’s own words from the Bhagavad-gita, and we can hear about Krishna from the Srimad-Bhagavatam (the foremost of the Vedantic literatures known as Puranas, ancient histories). Then we can discuss what we have heard, and we can also chant the names of God: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. By hearing and chanting in this way we can reawaken our remembrance of Krishna, and as our knowledge of God develops we will want to render service by worshiping, carrying out His orders, and so on. We can also cook for Krishna. Devotees offer sumptuous vegetarian dishes to Krishna, as. He Himself requests in the Gita (9.27): “If one offers Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it.” After offering the dishes to Krishna, the devotees partake of the delicious remnants, which are called krishna-prasada (the Lord’s mercy). All these activities are easily and joyfully performed.

This is spiritual education, and we can directly perceive and judge the results. In an ordinary university the student requires periodic examinations to confirm that he’s learning something. Otherwise, he might doubt that he is getting an education—or others might doubt it. But in the spiritual education of devotional service, we directly perceive our advancement. When a hungry man eats a hearty meal, he feels satisfaction directly; he doesn’t need anyone to tell him he’s satisfied. Similarly, we don’t need diplomas to confirm that we’re getting a spiritual education, because the outcome of a spiritual education is that one becomes happy and satisfied in every way. This is the result of pleasing Krishna with our service. Anyone who participates in the activities of devotional service feels transcendental pleasure. The purpose of the centers of Krishna consciousness in cities and towns around the world is to give people an opportunity to culture the most confidential knowledge and participate in this happiness of serving Krishna.
Located close to Thirunangur, in a small village 8 km east of Sirkali en route to Thiruvenkadu, is the modest yet very prominent temple of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Narayana, Thirumanikoodam Varadaraja Perumal.

The Pastime

Chandra who is the master of the moon planet is said to have emerged from the sea of milk, when it was churned by the asuras and devas. Because of his brilliant form and radiance, he was given the status of a planet, one of the Navagrahas, and is considered a deva. He is also referred to as Soma. He is described as a tall person with a very handsome personality. However, before this birth, he is said to have been born twice before.

According to legend, the moon god, Chandra, was born three times, which is why he also came to be known as Trijannmi. The first time, he was created by Brahma, and the second time, he emerged from the eyes of Sage Atri.

Chandra’s radiance became so powerful and intolerable that he was immersed in an ocean of milk to ensure the world’s survival. Later, during the churning of the ocean by the asuras and devas, Chandra was reborn and released along with Goddess Lakshmi and thus came to be known as Lakshmi’s brother.

Prajapathi Daksha, one of the prajapathis or progenitors, married off 27 of his daughters to the handsome Chandra on condition that Chandra should love them all equally. Among his 27 wives who were Prajapathi Daksha’s daughters, Chandra was especially fond of his fourth wife, Rohini, and spent most of his time with her. The other wives resented his indifference to them and complained about it to their father. Prajapathi Daksha immediately cursed Chandra, “May your powers decline with the passing of each day!” losing his temper as usual.

Now the rest of the daughters regretted telling Prajapathi Daksha, as their intention was not to punish Chandra -
all they wanted was his attention. What if their husband simply disappeared one day along with his powers?

Chandra begged Prajapathi Daksha to take the curse back. But once a curse is uttered, no one can revoke it. “I am sorry, son,” Prajapathi Daksha said, “There is nothing I can do now. Perhaps if you pray to Shiva, he may help you.”

Holding on to this slim ray of hope, Chandra came down to Thirumanikoodam and prayed earnestly to Lord Varadaraja, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Pleased with Chandra’s devotion, Lord Varadaraja appeared and said, “Chandra, I empathise with your plight and though I cannot reverse Prajapathi Daksha’s curse, I can soften it to some extent. From this day onward, you will increase in brightness for 15 days in Shukla Paksha and then wane for 15 days in Krishna Paksha. You will fill the world with your radiance on full moon days and disappear on new moon days.”

Chandra was disappointed at the thought of waxing and waning. His crescent shape would just be a constant reminder of the curse and his reduced strength! Lord Varadaraja consoled him by saying, “My dear child, the crescent indicates that you will still retain some of your powers. I will wear your crescent on My chest as an ornament to show My devotees that they are dear to Me even in their lowest moments. That way, you will be My constant companion. To this day, the Chandraharam or moon crescent ornament is a favourite ornament in most Vishnu temples. In Srirangam the Supreme Lord wears a very antique and precious Chandraharam.

The moon came to be known as Soma and one day of the week—Somavara or Monday—was dedicated to him. The Deity that Chandra worshipped became famous as the pilgrimage site of Thirumanikoodam in Thirunangur. Generous donations were made to this temple, which was later plundered many times by fanatic Muslim rulers.

The 27 wives of Chandra are the constellations surrounding the moon’s orbit, and are frequently referred to as nakshatras or stars. The names of these nakshatras—for example, Kritika, Rohini and Ashwini—are still an important part of the Hindu calendar.

There is yet another legend surrounding the temple, the legend of all the eleven temples of Thirunangur being closely associated with each other. Shiva started dancing in fury at this place after the death of his consort Uma due to the yagna (sacrifice) of Daksha. Each time a lock of Shiva’s matted hair touched the ground, eleven other forms of Shiva appeared. The celestial deities were worried that if the dance continued, it would result in decimation of the entire creation. They prayed to Lord Vishnu for help, who appeared at this place. On seeing Vishnu, Shiva’s anger was reduced and he requested...
Vishnu to appear in eleven forms as he had. On his request, Vishnu appeared in eleven different forms at Thirunangur. The eleven places where Vishnu appeared are believed to be where the eleven temples in Thirunangur are located. And this temple of Thirunangur is related to Vishnu answering the prayer of Chandra.

The temple
The temple is of modest nature and perhaps stands today as a silent victim of cruel Islamic invaders, devoid of the past glory and pomp. The temple complex has a single prakaram (outer courtyard) and a single altar. Garuda, the celestial vehicle of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is seen at the entrance of the temple. The mahamandapam and ardhamandapam are in modest form. The main Deity, Sri Varadaraja Perumal, facing east with four hands, also known as Manikooda Nayakan, is in a standing posture on Adishesha. On the right of the square shaped lotus pedestal, Mahalakshmi appears in the standing position and Bhooodevi is seen on the left. The festival Deity known as Varadaraja Perumal, is flanked by Sridevi and Bhooodevi on both sides. In the northern side of the ardhamandapam, Nammalwar graces in sitting posture. The Chandra Pushkarani (pond) is situated nearby.

Festivals
The annual Brahmotsavam festival is celebrated during the new moon day of the Tamil month of Aadi, when Lord Varadaraja Perumal is taken in a procession to the sea at Poompuhar, to take a dip and purify the sea. During the new moon day of the Tamil month Thai, the festival Deity of Thirumangai Alwar is brought to the temple from Thiruvali-Thirunagari. The Thirumangai Alwar Mangalasasana Utsavam is celebrated in the Tamil month of Thai (January–February). The highlight of the festival is Garudasevai, an event in which the festival Deities of the eleven Thirunangur divya desam are brought on Garuda Vahana, to Thirunangur. The festival deity of Thirumangai Alwar is also brought on a Hamsa Vahana and his pasurams (verses) dedicated to each of the eleven temples are recited during the occasion. The festival deity of Thirumangai Alwar and his consort Kumudavalli Naachiyar are taken in a palanquin to each of the eleven temples. The verses dedicated to each of the eleven temples are chanted in the respective shrines. This is one of the most important festivals in the region, which draws thousands of visitors.

Thirumangai Alwar
Thirumangai Alwar has composed this beautiful poem on the Lord of Thirumanikoodam:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana—who saved Gajendra from the wicked crocodile; who saved the Vrindavan folk and cows from the onslaught of heavy rain caused by Indra - resides in Thirumanikoodam where the Ponni River brings along in her current, heaps of gold and where the trees bear flowers whose fragrance spread everywhere.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana killed Pootana when she come screaming and shouting to kill Him. He did so by sucking the milk along with her life. Sri Rama killed the whole clan of rakshasas in Lankapuri and wiped them out them like one eradicates the plague. He resides in Thirumanikoodam where young women take bath in the Kaveri. The kumkum paste smeared on their beautiful breasts dissolves in the water, making it red and aromatic.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana killed Keshi—an asura in the form of a horse. He crawled to fell the twin maruda trees. He subdued the might of seven bulls to marry Andal. He resides in Thirumanikoodam where vaideekas not only chant Vedas but practice the dharma said therein, and also perform the sacrifice that the Vedas administer them to do.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana does the act of virodhi nirasana - conquest of enemies. He pulled out the tusk of the huge and angry Kuvalayaapeeda, tore open the mouth of Keshi, broke the kurunda tree, subdued the seven bulls, split open the beak of Bakasura. He resides in Thirumanikoodam where there are mango groves and banana crops. The monkeys eat the mangoes, jump on to the banana trees (which made the bees that were drinking honey from the banana flowers fly away) and started eating bananas.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana cut off the ears and nose of Shoorpanaka, the rakshasi
who exercised her power over Lankapuri since she was the sister of King Ravana. He resides in Thirumanikoodam with Bhoomi Devi (who patiently bears the offences done to her by people) and Mahalakshmi.

(Though it was Lakshmana who cut off the ears and nose of Shoorpanaka, all the Alwars credit this to Lord Rama, since it is said that the younger brother is the right hand of Rama: \textit{ramasya dakshino bahuh})

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Srīmad Narayana takes many avatars to subjugate the wicked and protect the virtuous. He takes the forms of fish, dwarf, swan, boar, man-lion, half horse (horse headed form). Not only is He very compassionate, He is the niyanta and antaryami to all objects like sun, moon, etc., and whatever exists. He resides in Thirumanikoodam where live the devotees who drove away the Pandya and Chola king from the battle field.

He is the mountains, sky, earth, water, sun, moon and other luminaries in the sky and everything else in this world. He resides in Thirumanikoodam where the southern breeze blows, bringing sweet fragrance from the forests through the broad streets, fields, forests, buildings and houses and all the places of this holy city.

He is thus the giver of all kinds of knowledge and is the truth and falsehood. He is also the giver of blessing without any discrimination and without any asking, without any expectation in return. He is, in short, everything in this world. He resides in Thirumanikoodam where there are lotus ponds in which valai fish live, playing and jumping after drinking the pollen fallen on the water. When they suddenly jump, the red fish are frightened and swim away from the spot.

All these above are ordained by Him. Understanding the nature of these and the nature of the Supreme Lord who has ordained these, the rishis and devas praise Him and worship Vishnu of the trimoorthi.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Srīmad Narayana resides forever in the Thirupati called Thirumanikoodam, where there are tall buildings, the roofs of which touch the bottom of the moon. About Him, Thirumangai Alwar has sung these ten pasurams. Those who meditate on the meaning of these will rule over this vast earth surrounded by seas and finally reach the supreme abode Sri Vaikuntha and live happily rendering eternal service to the Supreme Lord.

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam
“My exposure to the young devotees and to Swami Bhaktivedanta as well as the chanting of Hare Krishna has brought me moments of inner peace and has enabled me to live a little more spiritually with my family and in my profession. My two older children also spent some beautiful moments with the Swamiji—times we will always treasure.

“It is not necessary to shave your head and to become fully absorbed in the teachings to absorb some of the spiritual vibrations which flow from the devotions and activities of the Krishna consciousness movement. Chanting and feasting in the woods behind my house here in White Plains has brought joy and bliss to our neighbours from all walks of life.” —from a letter by Stephen J. Goldsmith, attorney-at-law, White Plains, New York.

Krishna Consciousness is also known as bhakti-yoga, which means attaching or linking oneself to the Supreme Lord through divine love. Love is the highest, most exalted state of consciousness, and of all kinds of love the most satisfying is love of God, or Krishna. When love is reposed in Krishna, that love will automatically extend to all His creatures. Krishna consciousness, therefore, is total love.

Krishna consciousness provides the enlightenment by which to understand who one is, what the world is, and who God is. One achieves this consciousness by performing various scientific spiritual disciplines recommended by great authorities in the past. These disciplines assure progress in spiritual life and result in happiness in both this life and the next. The various yoga practices of Krishna consciousness are natural, they cost nothing to learn, and one can perform them in one’s own home. To begin Krishna consciousness one does not have to suddenly leave home, renounce everything, and become a brahmachari monk. Rather, while remaining at home, one can perform the recommended spiritual practices, preferably with the other members of one’s family, and in this way advance very quickly in Krishna consciousness.

The idea is to make Krishna consciousness, or bhakti-yoga, the spiritual center of one’s life. When the radio was first introduced, it became so popular that families all across America gathered around it in the evenings. Then came television, and that has now become central. But through Krishna consciousness, with its singing, dancing, feasting, and philosophy, spiritual life can become the spiritual center of one’s home.
When Srila Prabhupada first began spreading Krishna consciousness in America, he gave specific instructions on how one can become Krishna conscious at home.

First, set up an altar in your home at some convenient place. The altar is a place where you can perform meditation, offer devotion to the Lord, and receive the Lord’s love. The altar can be a small table (this is what Srila Prabhupada first used). Or you may even want to set aside an entire room as a “meditation room” for added sanctity and serenity.

On the altar, place a picture of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Krishna’s incarnation as a perfect devotee. Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is one, but because He is unlimited He is also many. Krishna has incarnations and expansions as numerous as the waves in the ocean, yet Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is a very special manifestation. It is the special mercy of Krishna that He comes as His own devotee, just to show us how we can best worship Him. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, being Krishna, is all-perfect, and so He perfectly showed how to worship Lord Krishna—by chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra.

Also on the altar should be a photo of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder and spiritual preceptor of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, who introduced Krishna consciousness to the West. Between 1965, when he came to America from India, and 1977, when he passed away from this world, Srila Prabhupada conveyed the fullness of spiritual life through his lectures, letters, books, recordings, and the example of his own life.

The altar is the focal point for expressing your love for God. God is everywhere, and because He is everywhere He is also in His picture on His altar. It is not that because He is everywhere He is not in His picture. Nor is God limited to being only in His picture. Rather, He is in His picture as well. So by looking at Krishna’s picture on the altar you can see God, and God also sees you.

The best time to meditate before the altar is in the morning, if possible just before sunrise, and again in the evening, around sunset. These are the best times for spiritual advancement. In the early morning the mind is especially fresh and clear, and by beginning and ending the day with meditation you sandwich the activities of your day between spiritual practices.

In front of the altar, you can perform the purest, most joyful form of meditation, called kirtana. Kirtana means meditating on God by glorifying and praising Him with a mantra, a transcendental sound that cleanses and liberates the mind. The recommended mantra for the present age (the Iron Age of Quarrel) is the maha, or great, mantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Chanting the Hare Krishna mantra
will reveal to you the essence of all Vedic literatures and instructions. It is a transcendental vibration, nondifferent from Krishna Himself. Krishna is absolute, so He is the same as His name. To chant Hare Krishna, therefore, is to experience Krishna directly.

A yogi of the highest order will never meditate on anything impersonal or void. Only yogis who are stuck on the bodily platform do this. And even if such second-class transcendentalists achieve liberation from the material world, their achievement is temporary, because they fall again to materialistic life. But by chanting Hare Krishna faithfully and attentively, you will come in personal touch with Krishna and get that true transcendental experience you are looking for. While chanting, it is best to fix your mind on the chant by hearing the sound of each word, each syllable of the mantra. This will help pacify your mind and bring it under your constant control, and with a controlled mind you will be able to experience great spiritual pleasure.

There are two ways of chanting. First, you can chant quietly to yourself with the help of meditation beads. This quiet chanting is called japa. Using the beads helps engage your sense of touch in the meditation, as well as your speech and hearing. The second way to chant is aloud. With your family or a group of friends you can sing responsively and play hand cymbals, drums, or other musical instruments, or if you prefer you can just play a record or tape of the kirtana and sing along. It's really a joyous thing, especially with a group, so why not invite your friends? The more the merrier. And if you feel like getting up and dancing during the singing, well, just go ahead. Enjoy the chanting of Hare Krishna.

After the chanting, the mind and body are clear, and you are ready to give full attention to spiritual subject matters. Now you can read from the Bhagavad-gita As It Is. The Bhagavad-gita was spoken by Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, five thousand years ago in India. Within its pages you will find such diverse spiritual topics as the soul and proof of its existence, the difference between the body and the soul, the nature of God, the choice between work and renunciation, the nature of the world, how to live a godly life, reincarnation (transmigration of the soul), what yoga is, what karma is, how to prepare for death, what happens after death—all this and more, compressed within seven hundred verses. Srila Prabhupada's purports, his explanations of the verses, elucidate the meaning and guarantee clear understanding of exactly what Lord Krishna spoke. You can read the book little by little, so as to digest it carefully. Reading out loud, even if alone, sharpens the mind's attention.

When you finish the Gita you can begin reading the Srimad-Bhagavatam. This is a comprehensive thirty-volume work, complete with full-colour illustrations and
indexes. It is called the Encyclopedia of Spiritual Knowledge, because it can tell you everything you ever wanted to know about spiritual life. So just as you may have a bookshelf reserved for the encyclopedia of the material world, you can also have one for the encyclopedia of the spiritual world.

After the chanting and philosophy, you will probably have quite an appetite. So refreshments follow. On the altar you can offer food to Lord Krishna with devotion, and He is so kind that He partakes of the offering, and what is left you can take as His holy remnants, called prasada. You can offer Krishna simple fruits, whatever happens to be in season; or if you are more ambitious you can prepare and offer vegetarian dishes using milk, sugar, butter, vegetables, grains, and spices. The Lord will not accept nonvegetarian offerings, but a Hare Krishna Cookbook is available that gives recipes of wonderfully tasty dishes you can prepare for Krishna’s satisfaction. In addition to offering food, you can also offer some flowers and incense on the altar, and this will make for a very nice atmosphere.

After placing the food on the altar, you can recite this prayer: “O Lord, this material body is a lump of ignorance, and the senses are a network of paths to death. Somehow I have fallen into this ocean of material sense enjoyment, and of all the senses the tongue is the most voracious and uncontrollable. It is very difficult to conquer the tongue in this world, but You, dear Krishna, are very kind to us, and You have given us this nice prasada, spiritual food, just to conquer the tongue. So we now take that prasada to our full satisfaction and glorify Your Lordships Sri Sri Radha and Krishna and in love call for the help of Lord Chaitanya and His associate Lord Nityananda.”

Now it’s time to partake of the prasada—undoubtedly one of the most enjoyable aspects of Krishna consciousness.

Now that you have had spiritual food that has first been offered to Krishna, you’re ready for your daily work. Whatever it is, you will perform it more efficiently and with definite satisfaction. Naturally, the benefits of bhakti-yoga performed at home will accompany you throughout the day, at your work. Because your consciousness has been cleared, you will be alert about what to do and what not to do. Also, you can directly spiritualize your work by using a portion of its fruits—your wages—for spiritual life, either by purchasing Krishna conscious books and paraphernalia or by donating a portion to spread Krishna consciousness. I, for instance, worked as a teacher for two years while learning Krishna consciousness, and I donated my wages. Often people can dovetail their work with the service of Krishna and do something that assists the Krishna consciousness movement. Take Mr. Goldsmith, for example, who wrote the letter quoted at the beginning of this article. Back in 1966 he used his ability as an attorney to draw up ISKCON’s constitution and formally register ISKCON as a religious organization. Surely that alone has endeared him to Lord Krishna and Srila Prabhupada eternally, making his life as a human being a success. So you see, it’s very easy to begin Krishna consciousness.
Srila Prabhupada: What is the meaning of the word Christ.

Father Emmanuel: Christ comes from the Greek word Christos, meaning “the anointed one.”

Srila Prabhupada: Christos is the Greek version of the word Krishna.

Father Emmanuel: That is very interesting.

Srila Prabhupada: When an Indian person calls on Krishna, he often says, “Krsta.” Krsta is a Sanskrit word meaning “attraction.” So when we address God as “Christ,” “Krsta,” or “Krishna,” we indicate the same Supreme Personality of Godhead. When Jesus said, “Our Father, who art in heaven, sanctified be Thy name,” that name of God was “Krsta” or “Krishna.” Do you agree?

Father Emmanuel: I think Jesus, as the son of God, has revealed to us the actual name of God: Christ. We can call God “Father,” but if we want to address Him by His actual name, we have to say “Christ.”

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. “Christ” is another way of saying Krsta, and “Krsta” is another way of pronouncing Krishna, the name of God. Jesus said that one should glorify the name of God, but yesterday I heard one theologian say that God has no name—that we can call Him only “Father.” A son may call his father “Father,” but the father also has a specific name. Similarly, “God” is the general name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose specific name is Krishna. Therefore, whether you call God “Christ,” “Krsta,” or “Krishna,” ultimately you are addressing the same all-attractive Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Father Emmanuel: Yes, if we speak of God’s actual name, then we must say “Christos.” In our religion, we have the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe we can know the name of God only by revelation from the Son of God. Jesus Christ revealed the name of the father, and therefore we take the name Christ as the revealed name of God.

Srila Prabhupada: It doesn’t matter—Krishna or Christ—the name is the same. The main point is to follow the injunctions of the Vedic scriptures that recommend chanting the name of God in this age.

I have come to the West only to request you to please chant the name of God. And the Bible also demands this of you. So let’s kindly cooperate and chant, and if you have a prejudice against the name “Krishna,” then chant “Christos” or “Krsta”—there is no difference. Sri Chaitanya said: namnam akari bahudha nija-sarva-saktih. God has millions and millions of names, and because there is no difference between God’s name and Himself, each one of these names has the same potency as God.” Therefore, even if you accept designations like “Hindu,” “Christian,” or “Muhammadan,” if you simply chant the name of God found in your own scriptures, you will attain the spiritual platform. Human life is meant for becoming self-realized—learning how to love God. That is the actual beauty of man. Whether you discharge this duty as a Hindu, a Christian, or a Muhammadan, it doesn’t matter—but discharge it!

Father Emmanuel: I agree.

Srila Prabhupada [pointing to a string of 108 meditation beads]: We always have these beads, just as you have your rosary. You are chanting, but why don’t the other Christians also chant? Why should they miss this opportunity as human beings? Cats and dogs cannot chant, but we can, because we have a human tongue. If we chant the holy names of God, we cannot lose anything; on the contrary, we gain greatly. My disciples practice chanting Hare Krishna constantly. They could also go to the cinema or do so many other things, but they have given everything up. They eat neither fish nor meat nor eggs, they don’t take intoxicants, they don’t drink, they don’t smoke, they don’t partake in gambling; they don’t speculate, and they don’t maintain illicit sexual connections. But they do chant the holy name of God. If you would like to cooperate with us, then go to the churches and chant “Christ,” “Krsta,” or “Krishna.” What could be the objection?

Father Emmanuel: There is none. For my part, I would be glad to join you...

Srila Prabhupada: I think the Christian priests should cooperate with this Krishna consciousness movement. They should chant the name Christ or Christos and should stop condoning the slaughter of animals. This programme follows the teachings of the Bible; it is not my philosophy. Please act accordingly and you will see how the world situation will improve.
The Yogi in the River

Ages ago, Saubhari Muni was so accomplished at yoga that he could meditate underwater.

Everything was going fine, until...

by Mathuresha Dasa

To practice yoga, or silent meditation, you first of all need a secluded place. Traditionally, yogis have retired to Himalayan caves, to remote corners of dense, unexplored jungles, even to the depths of an ocean or river. The great yogi Saubhari Muni meditated for many years within the Yamuna River, with only the local fish for company. He was able to do so because he possessed many mystic powers—the sign of a true yogi—and could, like his aquatic companions, breathe underwater.

Why such extreme measures? Because the purpose of yoga is to withdraw the senses from all material engagements and fix the mind on the Supersoul (the form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead who dwells within the hearts of all living creatures). The aspiring yogi must completely abstain from even the thought of sex, reduce and regulate his eating and sleeping, and even restrict what he sees and hears. By extended, uninterrupted practice, the yogi transcends material nature and returns to the eternal spiritual world, the abode of Lord Krishna.

So don’t expect to properly practice the yoga of silent meditation in a city or a suburb or, for that matter, even in most rural areas; there are just too many distractions nowadays. You may practice sitting postures and breathing exercises, trying to improve your health, your aura, or your sexual prowess, and if you like you can call that yoga. But according to the ancient Vedic literature, the sourcebooks of yoga instruction, the purpose of yoga is to fully and continuously restrain the senses and fix the mind on the Supreme Person.

With this purpose fixed in his mind the yogi Saubhari Muni long ago entered the Yamuna River. Surely there he would be undisturbed. There were no attractive girls in designer jeans strutting along the river bottom, no ads for cigarettes, beer, or fashionable clothing to divert the attention, no business-wise yoga instructors crowning that their brand of spiritualism makes one a better executive or a better student or a better lover. No distractions whatsoever. Hardly a sound. Just Saubhari and the river. And the fish.

Poor Saubhari. He was a qualified, sincere, no-nonsense yogi, so well endowed with mystic powers that he could meditate underwater, yet his mind was diverted by a pair of fish. After many years of underwater meditation, Saubhari observed two fish copulating, and feeling the desire to enjoy sexual pleasure awaken within himself, he emerged from the river and went looking for a mate.

From this we can understand that meditational yoga, also known as astanga-yoga, although recommended in the Vedic literature as a means of ascending to the spiritual plane, is extremely difficult. We are all by nature active and pleasure-seeking. Most of us find it difficult to sit still even for a few minutes. We want to enjoy life by seeing, hearing, touching, walking, talking, and so on. To abruptly stop all these activities and meditate on God is almost unthinkable. Even such a highly qualified yogi as Saubhari Muni, who lived thousands of years before the rise of our noisy, polluted, fast-paced modern civilization, had a hard time of it.

So why would anyone attempt such a difficult form of yoga? Well, the aspiring transcendentalist, the yoga candidate, usually understands that bodily and mental activities alone cannot bring satisfaction. He has heard from Vedic authorities that we are not these material bodies but are eternal spirit souls dwelling within the body. The yogi wants to free himself from bodily engagement.

In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krishna teaches that the body is a temporary vehicle for the soul and that after the demise of the body the soul takes a new body. The unenlightened soul transmigrates from body to body in the painful cycle of birth, old age, disease, and death, trying to enjoy life but is ultimately frustrated in every attempt. To become free from this cycle of misery and to experience transcendental bliss, the yogi is advised to reduce bodily activity and to meditate on the Supersoul, Lord Krishna. According to the Bhagavad-gita, the state of mind at death determines our next life. Thus, the yogi who passes away fully absorbed in meditation on Krishna attains an eternal, blissful body in the spiritual realm and never returns to take birth and die in this material realm.

In previous ages many yogis were able to perfect the process of astanga-yoga. In fact, Saubhari Muni himself, after exhausting his desire for material enjoyment, completely renounced the life of sensual pleasure, returned to his meditation, and attained perfection. In the present age, however, astanga-yoga is more or less impossible, and the Vedic literature recommends instead the path of bhakti-yoga, devotional service.

The purpose of bhakti-yoga is the same as that of astanga-yoga: to withdraw the senses from all material activities and to concentrate the mind in unwavering meditation on the Supreme Person. In bhakti-yoga,
however, we actively use our senses in Krishna’s service. In particular, bhakti-yoga involves hearing—hearing about Krishna’s qualities and pastimes, about the activities of His incarnations and great devotees, and about the transcendental philosophy spoken by the Lord Himself in the Bhagavad-gita. The bhakti-yogi learns to see everything in relation to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to see that the material universe is His creation. The bhakti-yogi also regularly meditates on the beautiful Deity form of the Lord in the temple. The bhakti-yogi can even employ his tongue in Krishna’s service—by tasting food offered to Krishna and by chanting His holy names.

In this way the bhakti-yogi is always active within the realm of devotional service. He attains the same result as the inactive astanga-yogi; but easily and naturally. The bhakti-yogi can live with his friends and family in the midst of modern civilization. In fact, many of the practices of bhakti-yoga are best performed in the company of other devotees—the more the merrier. Far from distracting, the association of devotees is an inspiration for the performance of devotional service. The serious astanga-yogi; however, must remain alone and even then, as in the case of Saubhari, there is a chance of falling away from the path of austerity and renunciation.

The purpose of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is to make the spiritual association of devotees (bhakti-yogis) available in every part of the world. ISKCON centers are open to anyone interested in hearing about the Supreme Personality of Godhead and rendering service to Him in the company of devotees. Aspiring yogis can thus attain perfection, unperturbed by the distractions of modern life.
Gita Jayanthi in Hyderabad

Hyderabad Nov 30, 2017: Hare Krishna Movement – Hyderabad (HKM), celebrated Gita Jayanthi with reverence and devotion at its Sri Lakshmi Narasimhaswamy Temple located at Road #12, Banjara Hills.

Gita Jayanthi is the day on which Lord Sri Krishna delivered the supreme knowledge to his dear devotee Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurushetra. To mark this divine occasion, Gita Jayanthi is celebrated the world over by spiritualists and followers of Bhagavad-gita.

The Gita Jayanthi celebrations began at 5.30pm with a grand Harinama sankirtana, 108 Gita Sloka Parayanam for the pleasure of Lord Krishna, to bring prosperity to one and grand maha mangala arati to Bhagavad-gita. Dinner prasadam was served to the devotees.

Gita Jayanthi in Ahmedabad

Gita Jayanthi was celebrated on 30th Nov, 2017. The celebration began with Bhagavad-gita arati. All the assembled devotees synchronously recited 18 chapters of Bhagavad-gita. It was followed by an enlightening discourse on the Gita by His Grace Shri Jaganmohan Krishna Dasa, President, Hare Krishna Movement, Ahmedabad.
On November 23, 2017, The Akshaya Patra Foundation inaugurated its 34th kitchen in Jigani, Bengaluru with the support of Bosch India.

Shri Soumitra Bhattacharya, Managing Director, Bosch Limited & President, Bosch Group India; Shri Bhaskar Bhat, Chairman, CSR Committee, Bosch Limited & Managing Director, Titan Company Limited; Shri Prasad Chandran, Former Chairman, CSR Committee, Bosch Limited and our CEO, Shri Shridhar Venkat, were present at the occasion. Currently, the kitchen in Jigani is equipped with a capacity of preparing 40,000 meals every day.

Honourable Chief Minister of Jharkhand visits Guwahati kitchen

Honourable Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Shri Raghubar Das, visited our Guwahati kitchen in Assam on December 14, 2017. He was pleased to tour our kitchen and had words of appreciation for the Foundation. “Akshaya Patra is serving society selflessly. Organisations like these are the soul of social development,” he said.
On November 23, 2017, Akshaya Patra conducted the groundbreaking ceremony (Bhoomi Puja) of a new kitchen in Kothagudem, Telangana. The kitchen will be able to provide nutritious meals for 10,000 school children. The kitchen has been co-sponsored by Nava Bharat Ventures Ltd and film producer Shobu Yarlagadda.

The Akshaya Patra Foundation in association with GT Foundation and Diya Systems Pvt.Ltd laid the foundation for its Mega Kitchen in Kodman village, Benjanapadavu in the outskirts of Mangaluru on 22nd Dec. The kitchen, to be operational by 2019, is expected to help the foundation to serve midday meals to over 50,000 students every day in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts. At present, 14,000 students from 135 schools in and around Mangaluru are served, according to Karunya Sagar Dasa, President of Akshaya Patra Foundation, Mangaluru. GT Foundation and Diya Systems have lent a helping hand to the foundation to build it. Dignitaries present at the ceremony expressed happiness at being part of such an initiative addressing the national issue of eradicating classroom hunger. They congratulated the foundation for successfully completing 17 years of implementing the school lunch programme and also appreciated GT Foundation and Diya Systems for their support.
ISKCON SRI SRI KRISHNA BALARAMA

RATHA YATRA

come...pull the chariot

Saturday, January 20, 2018
at 5:00pm

For more details visit www.iskconbangalore.org/ratha-yatra
ISKCON Bangalore launched a website on the occasion of Gita Jayanti (November 30, 2017) to facilitate online purchase of Bhagavad-gita. The site also features inspirational and enlightening quotes, videos, testimonials and various other topics connected to the Gita.

Bhagavad-gita As It Is, authored by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of ISKCON and also India’s foremost teacher of Vedic knowledge in modern times, is the world’s most widely read authentic edition of the Gita.

Also available on the site is - Krishna, The Supreme Personality of Godhead - a book on the various pastimes of Lord Krishna, by the same author. Currently both these books are available in 10 languages (English, Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Bengali, Oriya, Gujarati and Marathi) at more than 50% discount. This special Gita Jayanti offer is open for a limited period only.

Visit: www.bhagavad-gita-as-it-is.org/ to buy now!

Use the promotion code: SPBMKVX17 to avail of the special offer.
Gita Jayanti Celebrations
The Hare Krishna Movement, Hyderabad, celebrated Gita Jayanti at its Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple, 108 Gita sloka parayana was one of the highlights of the celebration.

https://goo.gl/wxxJ1X

Markine-Bhagavata Dharma
Srila Prabhupada wrote a poem upon arriving in Boston on September 17, 1965. It illustrates his complete humility and dependence on Lord Krishna for his preaching mission.

https://goo.gl/xjJc4W

This world is like a bubble
The material world has got a date for its creation. It stays for some time, and then it is dissolved just like bubbles in the ocean. This is explained in the Bhagavad-gita (8.19).

https://goo.gl/hF4gxq

Gita Prachara
Contribute towards the dissemination of the divine teachings of Lord Krishna for the benefit of people at large.
To donate, please visit: www.iskconbangalore.org/visheshasevaslist

Iskcon Bangalore: Very nice temple and not to be missed. Visited at the time of arathi and not much crowded during week days. Very well maintained and clean. Good food served as annadanam and not to be missed. Also they sell variety of food at quite cheap price... Avighna2015

Excellent atmosphere: Very positive environment and good vegetarian food. I felt very peaceful and spiritually looked after there. Venkata K

Very peaceful place: If you visit this place during morning hours it will give you a peaceful experience. Very huge temple elegantly decorated. The main attraction is the main hall. uditgupta4u

Divine: Wonderful experience. The khichdi as prasad available while returning back stepping down the stairs was really awesome. musicforlyf

Quiet place to contemplate: Very well organized place. A treat to watch and go through the entire temple premises. The prasadam is very good. The food court or the restaurant inside serves delicious food. Great cafeteria. Books collection is great. Lastly, the temple where deity resides is mesmerizing. It offers a place to meditate. NITISH R

World Holy Name Festival 2017
https://goo.gl/UK7sUR

Recipe - Sabudana Vada
https://goo.gl/tJDNFC
Hare Krishna! – A documentary film on Srila Prabhupada

An award-winning documentary film that captures the life and message of Srila Prabhupada, the Founder-Acharya of ISKCON, was released across India on December 15.

The internationally acclaimed film - Hare Krishna! The Mantra, the Movement and the Swami who started it all - is the true story of a saint from India who brought about a spiritual revolution all over the world by establishing the Hare Krishna Movement which began simply by the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra - Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

It is an amazing account of Srila Prabhupada’s spiritual purity, dedication, and his unparalleled accomplishments.

The film features real-life scenes from Srila Prabhupada’s life, his own recorded words, and interviews with his early followers.

The 90 minute film was written and directed by filmmakers John and Jean Griesser, devotees within ISKCON known as Yadubara dasa and Vishakha devi dasi.

**Movie Reviews:**

Revealing moments in this glorified infomercial are few and far between. Most of the time, the film is a story waiting to be told. —David Lewis, San Francisco Chronicle

This movie was Inspiring & Absolutely beautiful. It provided knowledge and insight for those who aren’t familiar with Srila Prabhupada and the movement. It was extremely well composed and moving. I had tears of joy, respect, and most of all gratefulness to Srila Prabhupada throughout the whole movie. Hare Krishna!! —Krista Zohn Denver, CO

Movie of the decade. Must see. Very inspiring story of a great spiritual guru whose sacrifice, grit & determination & love for mankind has created a society which shows any soul the true meaning of life and how to live it and break from the bondage of life and birth. —Ritu Makhija

Truly a great spiritual Guru and ambassador who has transformed trillions of fallen souls with his simple teaching and Maha Mantra - Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. —Radhakrishnan Subramanian
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