Sri Vaikuntha Ekadashi

Monday - Jan 6 - 2020
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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, came to America in 1965, at age 69, to fulfill his spiritual master’s request that he teach the science of Krishna consciousness throughout the English-speaking world. In a dozen years he published some seventy volumes of translation and commentary on India’s Vedic literature, and these are now standard in universities worldwide. Meanwhile, travelling almost nonstop, Srila Prabhupada moulded his international society into a world wide confederation of ashramas, schools, temples and farm communities. He passed away in 1977, in Vrindavana, the place most sacred to Lord Krishna. His disciples and followers are carrying forward the movement he started.

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

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The You That Doesn't Change

A talk given in April 1968

by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada,
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness,
at Boston University's Marsh Chapel.

Krishna consciousness, the science of God, is very important, because it enables us to understand God and our relationship with Him. Of course, in every religion there is some conception of God: "God is great." But simply understanding that God is great is not sufficient. We must have knowledge about our relationship with God.

Generally, we take it for granted that God is our order supplier. So those who believe in God usually approach Him in distress or when they're in need of money. Then there are some who approach God out of curiosity, and a few who want to understand the science of God. These are the four classes of men who are interested in God, and they all have a background of pious activities. Without a background of pious activities, a person will not be interested in the science of God. Therefore those who are unfortunate, who are impelled by impious activities, do not believe in God; they never care for God. So it is very difficult for the atheists to understand God.

Still, because Krishna consciousness is a science, even an atheist can appreciate it if he is intelligent. Atheist or theist, everyone is conscious. That is a fact. It doesn't matter whether you believe in God or you do not believe in God: you are conscious. As soon as I pinch any part of your body, you at once protest, "Somebody is pinching me! I am feeling pain!" Even in the animals there is consciousness.

Now, what is this consciousness? The Bhagavad-gita says, avinasi tu tad viddhi yena sarvam idam tata: "Consciousness is that which is spread all over your body, and it is eternal." How is consciousness eternal? That you can understand by practical experience. In your childhood you were conscious, in your boyhood you were conscious, in your youth you were conscious, and as you progress to old age you will be conscious. So your body is changing, but your consciousness continues unchanged. This you cannot deny. Therefore Bhagavad-gita says, na hanyate hanyamane sarire: "Consciousness is eternal. It is not vanquished with the destruction of the temporary body."

As soon as there is no consciousness in the body, the body is dead. Then what is consciousness? It is the symptom of the presence of the soul. Just as a fire situated in one place distributes heat and light everywhere, the spirit soul present in your body spreads consciousness all over your body. This is a fact.

From your childhood body to your boyhood body to your youthful body, your consciousness continues. Similarly, your consciousness will carry you into another body, and that transmigration from one body to another is called death. When your old body cannot be maintained any more, the consciousness has to be transferred to a new body. When your garment is too old, it has to be changed. Similarly, when the material body is too old to carry on, your consciousness is transferred to another body and you begin another life. This is the process of nature.

But unfortunately the modern educational system has no department for teaching about consciousness or the spirit soul, although this knowledge is the most important. Without consciousness, without the soul's being present, the body is useless. Unfortunately, we take very good care of the body but have no knowledge of consciousness or the spirit soul. This ignorance is due to maya, or illusion. We are very serious about the nonpermanent things: the body and its extensions, which will not exist, which will be vanquished after a certain period of years, but we do not care about the eternal consciousness, the spirit soul, which is transmigrating from one body to another. Ignorance of the spirit soul is the main defect of modern civilization.

As long as we are unaware of the presence of the spirit soul in the body, as long as we do not inquire about the spirit soul, all our activities are simply a waste of time. This is stated in Srimad-Bhagavatam [5.5.5]: parabhavas tavad abodha-jato yavan na jijnasata atma-tattvam. Anyone who has accepted a temporary body is understood to be foolish. So every one of us is born foolish, because we identify ourselves with the temporary body. Everyone knows that his body will one day not exist, but everyone still identifies himself with his body. This is ignorance, or illusion.

Nearly everyone in the world is immersed in this ignorance, for they do not know that they are spirit souls transmigrating from one body to another. Although no one wants to die, cruel death is forced upon everyone. But people do not consider this problem very seriously. They think they are very happy following the principles of animal life: eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. At the present moment people are very proud of the advancement of human civilization, but they are almost totally concerned with these four principles. According to the Vedic Krishna Voice, December 2019

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Human life is meant for advanced knowledge. And what is that advanced knowledge? To know oneself, to answer the question, What am I? In every civilized society there is some set of religious principles, either Mohammedanism or Christianity or Judaism or Hinduism or Buddhism. And what is the purpose of the scriptures and religious principles? To understand consciousness, to understand the spirit soul and how it has fallen into material, conditioned life, how it is transmigrating among various species of life, and how it can be released from this cycle of birth and death. There are 8,400,000 species of life, and we are wandering among them. Only when we reach the human form of life do we have the opportunity to ask the question, What am I? If we do not understand what we are, then we miss the opportunity of human life. We simply waste our time in the propensities of animal life: eating, sleeping, mating, and defending.

We must inquire, "I do not wish to die; why is death forced upon me? I do not want to be diseased; why is disease forced upon me?" But even if a person becomes very ill, he will generally not inquire like this. He will simply think, "All right, I am diseased. Let me go to the doctor and get some medicine." But from the innermost part of his heart he doesn't ever want to be diseased, he doesn't want to be dead. Why? Because he is eternal. His real position is eternal life, blissful life, without any death, without any birth, without any disease. So he is missing the opportunity of human life unless he inquires into how he can attain this position.

The human form of life is the opportunity to achieve the highest perfection. If we do not make progress toward that vision, we are simply spoiling this opportunity of civilized human life. I especially mention civilized human life, with developed consciousness, developed education. At this developed stage we should ask, "Why are calamities being forced upon me?" Nobody wants to meet calamities. In every city of your country I see the fire brigade and the ambulance always wandering in the street. Who wants his house to be set on fire? Who wants to meet with an accident? These things are being forced on us, but still no one asks, "I do not want these calamities. Why are they being forced upon me?" As soon as we become inquisitive to know why all these miserable conditions of life are being forced upon us, that is the beginning of our self-realization.

Now you are trying to solve these problems through so-called scientific research or so-called philosophical research, but the actual solution is to reform or purify your consciousness. If you purify your consciousness, you will end the process of transmigration from body to body. Of course, now you may be very happy that you have a nice American body. You are enjoying life. But do you know what your next life will be? That you do not know. But you should know that life is a continuity. This present life is only a flash, a moment in our journey through millions of species of life. So the Krishna consciousness movement is the movement for purifying consciousness, ending transmigration, and solving all problems.

Krishna consciousness is very simple. Simply chant these sixteen words: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. We are simply requesting you to chant these sixteen words. There is no loss on your part, but there is immense gain. Why don't you make an experiment? It is not very difficult. These American boys are chanting. Although the mantra is written in Sanskrit, it is a universal transcendental vibration.

If we take to chanting this mantra, we come directly in touch with the Supreme Lord. That makes us purified. If we go near the fire we become warm. Similarly, if we come directly in touch with the Supreme Spirit, our purification begins. So if you chant this Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, your impure consciousness will be purified and you will know what you are.

Chanting Hare Krishna is the process of cleansing the mind of all dirty things. And as soon as you are cleansed of all dirty things, your material anxieties are over. That is stated in Bhagavad-gita [18.54]:

\[
\text{brahma-bhutah prasannatma na socati na kanksati}
\]
\[
\text{samah sarvesu bhusesu mad-bhaktim labhate param}
\]

The word brahma-bhutah means that as soon as you come to the platform of spiritual understanding, you immediately get free from all material anxieties. You no longer hanker after any profit, nor are you very sorry when there is a great loss (na socati na kanksati). Then you can see everyone on an equal level, and your lost relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead is again established. Then your real life begins. Taking up Krishna consciousness means that we begin our real life and get free from the temporary life of changing from one body to another. So the Krishna consciousness movement is a very important movement. Try to understand it. We have our magazine, Back to Godhead, and we have branches in several places in your country.

So we invite you to come. There is no expenditure. We simply request that you come and try to understand this
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movement. It is very scientific; it is not a bogus bluff. Try to understand with all your argument, reason, logic. We are prepared to answer your questions.

This movement is for your benefit; it is not an institution to make some profit. It is just meant to render service to the whole of humanity so that you may understand the science of God and be benefited. We are simply presenting Krishna consciousness before you. Now it is up to you to accept it or not. Thank you very much.

Are there any questions?

**Student:** How does Krishna consciousness relate to advaita philosophy?

**Srila Prabhupada:** The basic principle of advaita philosophy is that the living being is one with God. That is a fact. We are nondifferent from God. For example, the president of your country is an American, and you are also an American. So there is no difference between you as far as being Americans is concerned. In that sense you are one. But at the same time, you are not the president. That you are an American does not mean you are on an equal level with the president. Is that not a fact?

Similarly, we are all qualitatively one with God. The word qualitatively means that whatever we have as spirit souls. God also has. There is no difference in quality. For example, suppose you take a drop of water from the vast Atlantic Ocean and you chemically analyse the ingredients. The composition of the drop of water is the same as the composition of the vast Atlantic Ocean. So qualitatively the drop of water is equal to the vast mass of water in the Atlantic Ocean. Similarly, you are a spirit soul, a spark of the Supreme Spirit Soul, God. You have all the spiritual qualities that God has. But God is great, you are minute. He is infinite, you are infinitesimal. So you and God are qualitatively one, but quantitatively different.

Those who are simply accepting the feature of being qualitatively one with God, they are called advaita-vadis. They forget that quantitatively they cannot be equal to God. If the living entity is quantitatively equal to God, then why has he fallen into this conditioned life of material existence? Because the living entity's constitutional position is infinitesimal, he is prone to be caught up by the influence of maya, illusion. How could he be caught by maya, if he is also the Supreme? Then maya would be greater than God. These things are to be considered.

So our philosophy, the Vedanta philosophy, is achintya-bhedabheda-tattva, inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference between God and the living entity. We are qualitatively one with God, but quantitatively we are different. That is our philosophy, Vaishnava philosophy. So advaita-vada (oneness) and dvaita-vada (difference) are both true. We are nondifferent from God in quality, but different in quantity. That is perfect philosophy.

Is that clear to you?

**Student:** Well, I heard someone give an analogy that we're just like rivers flowing to the sea. The sea is Brahman, the Absolute, and when we reach enlightenment we merge into Brahman and become one with the pure light and the spirit.

**Srila Prabhupada:** But although water is always being poured into the sea, water is also being taken out. That is a fact. From the sea, water evaporates and forms a cloud, and from the cloud water again falls down into the sea as rain. Sea water is not in a fixed position. So do not think that because you have once mixed with the sea water there is no chance of coming out again. You have to come out. But if you enter within the water and become one of the living entities there, you don't have to come out. So our philosophy is not to mix with the water but to go deep into the water and become one of the aquatics there. Then we won't have to come out again.

Srimad-Bhagavatam [10.2.32] says,

\[
\text{ye 'naye 'ravindaksa vimukta-maninas tvayy asta-bhavad avisuddha-buddhayah} \\
\text{aruhya krcchrena param padam tatah patanty adho 'nadrta-yusmad-anghrayah}
\]

This is a very nice verse. It says that although some people think they have become liberated by Brahman realization, their thoughts are not yet purified, because they reject the service of Krishna. Therefore, even after performing severe austerities and entering the Brahman effulgence, they must come back again to the material world. So if you don't want to come back again, then you have to enter deep into the "water" of the spiritual kingdom and remain as one of the servants of the Lord. This is the Vaishnava philosophy.

We want to enter into the spiritual kingdom and live in our spiritual identity. We don't want to superficially mix with water and again evaporate, again come back. Those who believe in the philosophy of advaita-vada generally give the example you have given, but any sane man can understand that mixing superficially with the water of Brahman is not perfection. Then you must come out again by evaporation. If you want to use that example, you have to also...
accept this conclusion. How can you say you are not coming back? It is a fact.

So if you don’t want to come back again, go deep into the water and become one of the living entities under the shelter of the water. They have no problem; they do not come back. The big aquatics live peacefully within the water. They never come out into the rivers, because in the rivers there is no place to accommodate them. So if you want to live perpetually in the spiritual kingdom, you have to understand your identity as one of the servants of God. Then you’ll be perfect. Otherwise you’ll be baffled, that’s all.

Your question is very intelligent. Unfortunately, most people are not intelligent enough to ask questions about this great science of Krishna consciousness. Although they are very proud of their advanced education, they do not know what they are. They are simply taking birth, living for some time, and dying just like cats and dogs. That’s all. At the present moment the condition of human civilization is most abominable, because people do not care about the real identity of the self. They are mistakenly identifying themselves with the body (yasyatma-buddhih kunape tri-dhatuke). Srimad-Bhagavatam says that one who identifies his body as his self, who thinks he is the protector of his kinsmen, who thinks the part of the world where his body has been produced is worshipable such a man is no better than an ass or a cow (sa eva go-kharah). So this is the challenge in the Srimad-Bhagavatam.

But people are so much engrossed in ignorance that they don’t care. “All right. Let us go on like this.” But if I say, “You are God; you can do whatever nonsense you like,” then they will be very pleased. People will be very eager to hear me. But we cannot say such a thing.

Any further questions?

All right, let us chant. Please chant Hare Krishna with us for some time. 😊

Sri Prabhupada, the founder-acharya of ISKCON, has delivered more than 1500 lectures on Vedic scriptures like Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam and Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita. The audio recording of his lectures are available in ISKCON centers. You can also hear some of these lectures in www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada-lectures
It was early one morning at about 5:30 during the Bombay winter, on the smooth sands of Juhu Beach, that we first met. I and my friends Babubhai, Bhanubhai, and Chandubhai were walking from the north end of the beach toward the south, and just opposite the Sun 'n' Sand Hotel, in the semidarkness of dawn, the saintly figure of a sannyasi [renunciant] came within the purview of my vision. It was His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada.

He was walking with a group of devotees from the opposite direction, from south to north, striding toward us about twenty feet away. As soon as I saw him my feet automatically turned toward him, and my friends followed me. And lo! He too started coming toward me. We met halfway.

My friends and I were all Vaishnavas [devotees of Krishna], born in Vaishnava families, and we had been taught from our early childhood how to pay respect and obeisances to a saint, a sannyasi, or a sadhu. So we fell at his feet, all of us, one after the other. He put his pious hand on my head and inquired about my name, profession, and so on. I answered all with full respect. From there we all returned to the temple, joining him in a procession, and from that time he and I started knowing each other more and more, and we came nearer and nearer to each other.

I was educated in the Western way and am greatly influenced by the modern methods of imbibing knowledge. So at our first meeting I started arguing with him, sometimes foolishly, sometimes methodically and logically. The first epithet I received from him was "You are a mudha, a big fool." Considering my respectable qualification of doctorate from one of the world's most renowned universities, I went into a fit of laughter, and

he too rejoiced and laughed. And there you are. We soon became very close.

The many such occasions we shared opened vistas for us to know each other more and more and generated greater and greater love between
us. He was a pious, venerable saint to me; I was a mudha, a big fool, to him. But he loved me dearly so much so that if he did not see me for a day on the Juhu sand, he would make urgent inquiries about me.

After our first few meetings, a regular program for our having his sat-sanga [spiritual association] on Juhu Beach came into being automatically. Every day my friends and I would rejoice at his frank and sweet talks about the superiority of bhakti-yoga [devotional service] and atma-vidya [self-knowledge]. And I, for arguing with him, used to get my special epithets: "mudha" and "rascal." Then both of us would laugh to our hearts' content. And so we had our daily routine on Juhu Beach as long as he was in Bombay.

As I already mentioned, I was born into an orthodox Vaishnava family, and right from the early age of ten or eleven I was taught to get up every day before 4:00 a.m., take a bath, say prayers to Krishna, read Bhagavad-gita, water the sacred tulasi plant, and then do yoga exercises and pranayama [breathing exercises] to keep body and mind fit. This has been my daily routine even until today, and now I have entered my seventieth year.

But until my talks with Srila Prabhupada on the Juhu sand, I had not received and understood the real essence of the teachings of the Gita in the true sense. I soon became a life member of the Hare Krishna movement. As a member I got a copy of Bhagavad-gita As It Is, and I started reading it with gusto. I compared Srila Prabhupada's commentary with the commentary of the great Vaishnava acharya [exemplar] Ramanuja, and I found that both are truly equal and parallel to each other. Srila Prabhupada: a real saint and a true acharya.

Now very great respect, love, and devotion developed in me for this saint/yogi/acharya. I saw that his daily life mirrored the Bhagavad-gita, the great song of Lord Krishna, and I used to feel an acute sense of dejection when he would go away from Juhu and deprive me of his sat-sanga. I would eagerly wait for his early arrival in Bombay and would keep on inquiring about him from the devotees. When he was there it was the greatest occasion of my life. We used to have sweet talks, slow walks, and sharp arguments with loving quarrels, and I used to get my regular epithets of "mudha" and "rascal."

Not all days were smooth sailing. One day we had a gust of fiery arguments and a small quarrel with respect, of course, on my side for him, and with tender love on his side for me. The next day, not as usual, I, instead of walking on the sand, sat with my friends away from his path so that he might not see me. Then, when he came onto the sand for his usual walk, he started searching for me all around, and not finding my whereabouts he started inquiring, "Where is Dr. Patel?"

Someone showed him where I was sitting, rather hiding, and lo! he started coming toward me with his band of devotees. I felt extremely ashamed and got up immediately and ran toward him. I fell at his feet and he gave me his benediction. What a saint he was! For him there was no friend or foe: all were equal. A godly personality indeed!

One day I requested him to sanctify my place of residence with his pious feet and to do sankirtana [congregational chanting of Hare Krishna] and take prasadam [sanctified food] with all the devotees of the Juhu temple. He readily agreed. He graced my house with his presence and sanctified it. A true devotee of Lord Krishna is a true representative of the Lord; in his presence we all felt as if Lord Krishna were there. That is the blessing of a true devotee of Lord Krishna.

Sometime thereafter I began going to his residential quarters in the temple, accompanying him on his walk from the temple to Juhu Beach, and then walking with him back to the temple. This became a regular routine whenever he was in Bombay. One day I went to his quarters in the early morning and he was still in bed. The attendants would not let me in, not even into the anteroom.

While I was talking with the attendants he must have awakened and heard my voice. He spoke out: "Is it Dr. Patel? Doctor Sahib, come here into my room." I went in. He was lying on his bed telling his beads. The bed was covered all around with a mosquito net. I touched his pious feet and stood near the end of the bed. He invited me to sit on the bed near him. I wouldn't do that, as he was a saint. He said, "I want to tell you a secret." And what was that secret? "Look," he said, "we were brothers in our previous birth."

I said, "I don't know."

"Don't you see," he said, "we are so much attracted to each other. You come so early from your home to see me, and I also await for your arrival here."

I was stunned and stood speechless. I submitted.

One day he inquired about my full name. I said, "My name is Chaturbhai Purushottamdas Patel." He said, "Patel is your surname, indicating you are a village headman's son."

"Yes."

"Then your father's name is Purushottamdas, that is, 'servant of Purushottama, Lord Krishna.'" I agreed.

"Then your name should be Chaturbhujan and that is, 'the joy of four-handed Lord Vishnu' rather than Chaturbhai."

"No," I said, "I am Chaturbhai. Chatur means 'clever,' and bhai means 'brother.' So my name means 'clever brother of yours.'"

There was a big burst of laughter amongst all of us. I
was his intelligent brother from his previous birth, but I became his mentally initiated disciple, a confirmed devotee of Lord Krishna and His incarnations. Srila Prabhupada was a sannyasi and an acharya, while I was a full-fledged grihastha [householder] living at home, but still, by his grace, my mind was fixed on the sacred feet of Lord Krishna.

Every third year an extra month is inserted into the lunar calendar to bring it into line with the solar calendar. As per astronomical calculations, one year sacred Shravana was the month that came twice. The first month of the double month is called pursottama-masa, and devotees of Lord Krishna observe it by fasting, praying, and reading Srimad-Bhagavatam. The last day of this month was somavati-amavasya, a very auspicious occasion. On this day all religious people take a bath in the early morning in the sea, or in a river or sacred lake.

I proposed that on that auspicious day Srila Prabhupada take a dip in the sea along with me and the others. He agreed at once. We all planned to go to the sea with extra clothes, take a bath, and change. He accompanied us, but just near the edge of the water someone suggested that he not take a bath in the sea, since he had had a coronary episode some time back. So he halted then and there and would not enter the water. He pondered for a while and then suddenly asked me to bring some water in my palm and pour it on his head. He said, “That is as good as a bath on this auspicious day.” Very intelligently, he found the means, and I obliged him. He was pleased. I touched his feet and felt satisfaction at having taken a bath in the sea with him on a very auspicious day.

Thus I had ample opportunity to have his sat-sanga, both in the temple and during our walks on the seashore. He liked to sit in my car and be driven by me to the temple. This was our regular program every day. Then I would touch his feet, leave him at the temple, and go home or to my work at my clinic.

He knew Bengali, and I knew Gujarati. Sometimes I would speak to him in Gujarati, and understanding me fully, he would reply in Bengali, which I in turn could understand. He could not speak Gujarati and I could not speak Bengali, but we could still understand each other very well. So sometimes we would converse in this way.

Chandubhai and I had nicknamed one of Srila Prabhupada’s young sannyasis "Major Domo," for he was really a dominating personality among all the devotees. I told Srila Prabhupada, and he started to use the nickname himself. At least in our presence he would address that sannyasi as Major Domo, and we all used to laugh. Srila Prabhupada was such a noble person with childlike innocence.

I cannot forget my life’s most precious moments with Srila Prabhupada. In my busy life as a medical man, these were my best times. He rectified and sanctified the entire span of my life. He took me to be his brother from his previous life and that is greatly auspicious for me.

***

The following conversation between Srila Prabhupada and Dr. Patel took place in March of 1974

Srila Prabhupada: If you want to worship Krishna, you should worship Him directly; you shouldn't worship the demigods just as if you want to give some food to eat, you should give it to the mouth, not to the rectum. [Laughter]

Dr. Patel: But there is a way of feeding through the rectum.

Srila Prabhupada: To give someone food, there is only one hole: the mouth. You cannot say that because there are so many holes in the body, any hole will do.

Dr. Patel: That is not the real argument.

Srila Prabhupada: Worship of the demigods is avidhi-purvakam [improper].

Dr. Patel: But through them one can worship God.

Srila Prabhupada: No. Everyone is part and parcel of God, but not everyone is God. That is the proper understanding. Every hole in my body is part of my body, but when food is to be taken, it is only through

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Dr. Patel: But you can give food in the vein.

Srila Prabhupada: But that is not the proper way. That is avidhi-purvakam.

Dr. Patel: But in the Bhagavad-gita Krishna Himself says, “Worship of the devas [demigods] is worship of Me.”

Srila Prabhupada: No, no. Krishna says,

\[ \text{ye ‘py anya-devata-bhakta yajante sraddhayanvitah} \\
\text{te ’pi mam eva kaunteya yajanty avidhi-purvakam} \]

“Worshiping the demigods is seva [worship] of Me but it is avidhi-purvakam [improper].” Earlier He says, matusthani sarva-bhutani na caham tesv avasthitah.

Dr. Patel: Can you translate that?

Srila Prabhupada: “Everything is connected with Me, but I am not everything.” Nobody can exist without Krishna, but that doesn’t mean everybody is Krishna.

Dr. Patel: But there is nobody other than Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada: No, no. Na caham tesv avasthitah: “I am not everybody.”

Dr. Patel: As I was reading in the Bhagavata today, everything is emanating from Krishna; even the jivas [souls] are part and parcel of Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada: That does not mean Krishna is a jiva.

Dr. Patel: Nothing can exist without Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada: That’s all right. Everything is material energy, but that does not mean the land is the sea. That is nonsense. Do you say the land and the sea are the same?

Dr. Patel: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: That is nonsense.

Dr. Patel: It is not nonsense, and I will give you an argument. As a scientist I’ll tell you. You break the atoms.

Srila Prabhupada: You are the lowest scientist. No, no! I cannot hear this nonsense. If you say the sea and the land are the same, this is complete nonsense.

Dr. Patel: It is nonsense in the present circumstances, but...

Srila Prabhupada: Any circumstances, any circumstances. We admit that the land and the sea are both matter, but you cannot say land is water, water is land. You cannot say that.

Dr. Patel: Would you please give me a decent hearing?

Srila Prabhupada: Everything is matter; that is all right.

Dr. Patel: That is right; that is what I want to say.

Srila Prabhupada: That I admit. But the difficulty with the mayavadis [impersonalists] is that they do not distinguish between the varieties.

Dr. Patel: Matter is made of maya [material energy]. So we are all mayavadis all of us you and me, because we are talking of maya. Nothing can happen without the energy of God.

Srila Prabhupada: That’s all right. But you cannot avoid the varieties. In your body, you have a head, you have a hand, and so on. Everything is the body, but if I point to your hand and ask, “What is that?” and you only say, “It is my body,” that is nonsense.

Dr. Patel: How can it be nonsense?

Srila Prabhupada: It is nonsense. This is the head, this is the hand, this is the leg [Pointing to the various parts of his body]

Dr. Patel: And the whole thing is the body.

Srila Prabhupada: This is called unity in variety.

Dr. Patel: Shall I speak?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes but you cannot say the head and the leg are the same. You cannot say that.

Dr. Patel: Shall I talk now? When this body was being manufactured in the womb—

Srila Prabhupada: I know: it was just a lump at first. [Pauses] But it became variegated.

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Dr. Patel: Or take the example of the seed. In the seed there is a whole banyan tree. The Upanishads give this example: from a small seed a big banyan tree has come out.

Srila Prabhupada: That is all right.

Dr. Patel: So the seed is the real thing. And that seed is Krishna. So everything is Krishna.

Srila Prabhupada: Again “Everything is Krishna.” Again the same nonsense, the same nonsense. Krishna says, “I am not everything” (mat-sthani sarva-bhutani na caham tesv avasthitah).

Dr. Patel: Na ca mat-sthani bhutani. Krishna corrects Himself in the next verse.

Srila Prabhupada: No. it is not a correction. Fools simply cannot understand. Krishna is clear: “Although everything exists in Me, I am not everything.”

Dr. Patel: Still, “Everything exists in Me.”

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Just like in this hotel [Pointing to a nearby hotel], there is so much furniture, there are so many rooms. But if you say everything is the hotel, that is nonsense.

Dr. Patel: But without the furniture the hotel cannot be, without the rooms the hotel cannot be.

Srila Prabhupada: [To the others] This man is less intelligent.

Dr. Patel: That is what I am.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. If you say the furniture is the hotel, that is less intelligent.

Dr. Patel: But if you take out the furniture, the hotel will not be a hotel any more.

Srila Prabhupada: That’s all right, but you cannot say the furniture is the hotel.

Dr. Patel: But that is also an argument.

Srila Prabhupada: That is a nonsense argument: “Hotel is furniture.” You cannot say everything is the hotel. “The furniture is the hotel. The doorman is the hotel. The food is the hotel.” What is this? There must be varieties.

Dr. Patel: We are trying to dig to the seed of the tree of varieties.

Srila Prabhupada: But you do not know how the tree is manifested. Therefore you are less intelligent.

Dr. Patel: I am very less intelligent. The tree is manifested from the seed.

Srila Prabhupada: That’s all right. That everyone knows. But when the tree is grown you cannot say the leaf is also the seed, the fruit is also the seed, the trunk is also the seed. This is nonsense.

Dr. Patel: This is what the Vedas say.

Srila Prabhupada: No, that the Vedas do not say.

Dr. Patel: You understand it differently; I understand it differently.

Srila Prabhupada: How can you say everything is the same? There is variety. This is called achintya-bheda-bheda-tattva philosophy: God is simultaneously one with everything and different from everything. This is Chaitanya’s philosophy.

Dr. Patel: That is the philosophy?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Take the same example as before: the water is matter, and the land is also matter. As matter they are one, but the water is different from the land, and the land is different from the water. Simultaneously one and different. You are simply thinking abheda [nondifference]. That is your deficiency.

Dr. Patel: No, no. I will try to understand your bheda [difference] also, but for me abheda is more important at the present.

Srila Prabhupada: That means you are less intelligent.

Dr. Patel: I don’t mind becoming the least intelligent. Why less? [Laughter]

Srila Prabhupada: But you should come to this understanding: that in the abheda [oneness] there is bheda [variety]. It is a very simple thing. My hand is not different from my body, but still my hand is not my body. Even a child can understand. But you are not submissive;
therefore you do not understand.

Dr. Patel: No. [Insistently] I am extremely submissive. But I cannot submit without understanding. That is what I was taught in my school.

Srila Prabhupada: Because you do not submit, you do not understand.

Dr. Patel: But I will not submit without understanding.

Srila Prabhupada: No, no. Tad viddhi-pranipatena. Pranipata: first of all you must surrender.

Dr. Patel: I am being pranipata. Do you think I am disrespecting you? If you think so, then please pardon me.

Srila Prabhupada: No, no. It is not a question of disrespecting. But there is no full surrender. You think that you know better than me.

Dr. Patel: I don't think so.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Dr. Patel: No, no. If you think that, I will not talk, starting from tomorrow.

Srila Prabhupada: No, no.

Dr. Patel: I want to learn.

Srila Prabhupada: That is very good. So don't talk, simply hear; that will be beneficial.

Dr. Patel: But if I don't talk—

Srila Prabhupada: No, simply hear; don't talk. That will be your respect.

Dr. Patel: And when I want to make you talk, what will I do?

Srila Prabhupada: Your habit is that as soon as I begin talking, you immediately talk, without hearing. Therefore you do not understand.

Dr. Patel: In what way will I make you talk? You tell me the way.

Srila Prabhupada: Simply hear first of all.

Dr. Patel: Acha, let us hear.

Srila Prabhupada: Simply be patient. Then if you cannot understand, inquire. Don't think, "I know better than him; therefore I shall talk." That will never help you to understand.

Dr. Patel: Well, if you run away with the idea that I am thinking like that, you are wrong.

Srila Prabhupada: You are habituated to think like that.

Dr. Patel: I'm habituated, but I have all respect for you. Don't say that I'm disrespectful.

Srila Prabhupada: No, no, I know that.

Dr. Patel: The idea that I'm disrespecting you—

Srila Prabhupada: I am simply pointing out your defects.

Dr. Patel: That's all right. I am prepared to correct them. But if I don't excite you, you keep mum. So how shall I excite you?

Srila Prabhupada: Put a question, and I shall answer it from the shastra [scriptures]. Any child can understand, if I ask him, "What is this?" "Hand." "What is this?" "Head." "What is this?" "Leg." Does he say, "Body"? So you are speaking like less than a child.

Dr. Patel: That is what I am. That is what I am.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Arjuna in the beginning was arguing, but when he saw it was useless he said to Krishna, "Now I surrender to You." That is required.

Dr. Patel: But you are so very hard and harsh.

Srila Prabhupada: I must be hard. The whole world is falling for this mayavada philosophy. Therefore I am very much hard. I don't make any compromise with these mayavadi rascals. No. I'll never do that. Even if I don't make any disciples, I'll be satisfied, but I cannot make any compromise with these rascals. I cannot. If I make one moon, that is sufficient; I don't want many stars. That was my guru maharaja's principle, and that is my principle. What is the use of any number of fools and rascals? If one man understands rightly, he can deliver the whole world.
"Hare Krishna!" You've probably heard these two words at least once in the last few years, either by themselves or as part of the longer Hare Krishna mantra. But chances are you had only a vague idea of what they meant or why the Hare Krishna devotees chant them over and over again for hours at a time. No, the devotees aren't practicing autohypnosis at the behest of some demoniacal cult leader; they're practicing the chanting of the holy names of God, a method of self-realization taught five hundred years ago in India by an incarnation of God named Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Lord Chaitanya chose to teach this process of self-realization primarily through oral instruction and personal example. Yet He did write eight seminal Sanskrit verses describing the glories of chanting the holy names of God, especially in congregation. In a series of seven metaphors, the first of these verses sets forth the inestimable benefits we can attain through this sublime process: "All glories to the chanting of the holy names of Lord Krishna, which cleanses the mirror of the mind. That chanting is the waxing moon that causes the white lotus of universal good fortune to blossom. It is the life and soul of all transcendental knowledge, and it expands the ocean of spiritual bliss. It enables one to taste full nectar at every step and gives a cooling effect to everyone" (Shikshastaka 1).

The first metaphor is cetodarpana-marjanam: "The chanting of the holy name of God polishes the mirror of the mind." Krishna consciousness is technically known as bhakti-yoga, and as in any yoga system, the mind is the crucial element. If our mind is absorbed in thoughts of family, money, personal pleasures or safety, mundane philosophy, science, or literature, or our own salvation in short, in any subject other than God and service to God then our mind will bind us to the world of matter, with all its limitations and suffering. Such thoughts constitute dirt on the mirror of the mind, because they prevent us from seeing our true identity as fully God conscious servants of the Supreme Lord.

The chanting of God's holy names quickly polishes the mirror of the mind and reveals both Him and ourselves. "The face is the index of the mind," Srila Prabhupada was fond of pointing out. And then He would often call attention to the uniquely bright faces of his Krishna conscious disciples. God is by nature full of happiness, and when we become God conscious by chanting His names, we also become full of joy and free from anxiety.

The second of Lord Chaitanya's metaphors is bhavamahadavagni-nirvapanam: "The chanting of God's holy names extinguishes the blazing fire of material existence." The Sanskrit word bhava means "becoming," and it often indicates the series of severe miseries that unavoidably accompany material life: birth, old age, disease, and death. If we're caught in a raging forest fire, our position is hopeless. Similarly, without transcendental knowledge our position in the blazing forest fire of birth, old age, disease, and death is also hopeless.

And what's more, death provides no release from these four miseries. The primary teaching of all Vedic literatures, beginning with the Bhagavad-gita, is that we are not our ever-changing bodies but eternal, immutable spiritual souls within the body. At the time of death, the soul whose mind is full of material thoughts enters a new body to undergo another term of birth, old age, disease, and death. This painful process, extended over countless lifetimes in millions of species (both human and nonhuman), makes being caught in a forest fire seem pleasant.

But there is a way to end this suffering once and for all: by chanting God's holy names. And the Brhan-naradiya Purana, an authoritative Vedic scripture, says this is the only way: "In this Age of Kali [the present Age of Quarrel and Confusion], the only way to attain liberation from the cycle of birth and death is to chant the holy name of God. There is no other way; there is no other way; there is no other way." Our minds are too disturbed and our bodies too frail for us to practice any process of self-realization other than the easy, blissful congregational chanting of Hare Krishna. By absorbing the mind in the names of God, we become attracted to Him and lose...
our affinity for mundane things: an affinity, as mentioned before, that keeps us trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Krishna literally lifts us out of the conflagration of the material world and takes us back to the kingdom of God.

That is why Lord Chaitanya says, sreyah-kairava-chandrika-vitaranam: “The chanting of Hare Krishna is the waxing moon that causes the white lotus of universal good fortune to blossom.” Just by hearing the devotees chanting Krishna’s holy names, we begin our spiritual life. The names of God enter into the heart of even the most diffident listener and strike a chord of remembrance. However fleeting, this remembrance of God through the sound of His holy names will never be totally lost and will eventually develop into full God consciousness.

Of course, now we may not think of this as such good fortune. Maybe we think good fortune, “good luck,” means that we have plenty of money and the capacity to enjoy it. Perhaps for us good luck means winning the state lottery, finding a roomy, affordable apartment in a safe neighbourhood, or meeting an attractive mate. Yet all these things are simply ephemeral flashes of light in the overwhelmingly dark and tragic world of material life. They all end, at the latest, at the time of death. They yield no permanent benefit but simply lull us into believing there is some hope for happiness outside the service of the Lord. Genuine good fortune, on the other hand, is to see and hear the devotees of Krishna chanting His names and have our mind turned toward God.

Next Lord Chaitanya says, vidya-vadhuvjanam: “The chan[ting of God's holy names is the life and soul of all transcendental knowledge.” In the Bhagavad-gita (13.3) Lord Krishna says that real knowledge means to know matter, the individual spiritual soul, and the Supreme Soul, God. One who fully understands the nature of these three subjects and the relationships among them possesses transcendental knowledge.

This knowledge is not something that has to be brought from outside; it already exists within us, deep within our subconsciousness. Like amnesiacs, we have simply forgotten who we are, who our father is, and how we should use everything we have in His service. The chanting of the Lord’s holy names acts as a powerful reminder. As mentioned before, the holy name “cleanses the mirror of the mind” and reveals the truth about God, the soul, and matter. So when the devotees shout “Haribol!” they are calling upon all of us to chant God’s names and awaken our innate transcendental knowledge.

Anandambudhi-yardhanam, says Lord Chaitanya next: “The chanting of Hare Krishna expands the ocean of transcendental bliss.” We are all searching for pleasure; that is our nature. But where to find unlimited, unending, ever-increasing pleasure, that we do not know. The chanting of Hare Krishna reveals that source of unlimited pleasure to us because it reveals Krishna Himself. This is the great mystery of the holy names of God: they are identical with Him in every respect. In other words, by chanting and hearing Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Haré/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Haré, one associates directly with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the source of infinite pleasure. The pleasures of sex, drugs, mundane music, and so on are like drops of water compared to the ocean of bliss we can enjoy by chanting the names of God.

The chief characteristic of spiritual pleasure is that, unlike material pleasure, it is constant. So Lord Chaitanya now says pratipadam purnamtrasvadanam: “Chanting Hare Krishna enables one to taste full nectar at every step.” Anyone who witnesses devotees chanting on the street will be struck by their sustained exuberance over two, three, or more hours. What keeps their spirits so high? The distinctive quality of the holy name as a reservoir of ever-fresh transcendental pleasure. “Sensual pleasures have a beginning and an end, so wise men do not seek them,” says Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-gita (5.16). He also declares that “the self-realized person enjoys unlimited happiness, for He concentrates on the Supreme” (Bg. 5.15). The devotees fully absorbed in chanting and hearing Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Haré/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Haré are tapping the source of unending pleasure that lies beyond the limitations of body and mind. On this platform one can enjoy constantly, in any condition of life.

Finally, Lord Chaitanya describes the chanting of the holy name as sarvatma-snapanam: “It gives a cooling effect to everyone.” The Vedic literature often describes life without spiritual awareness as beset by tapa-trayi, “threefold burning miseries.” These are the miseries caused by one’s own body and mind, such as cancer or insanity; the miseries caused by others, such as war or pestilence; and the miseries caused by natural disasters, such as earthquakes or floods. Everyone in the material world is constantly being burned to some extent by one or more of these miseries, and most of our energy is spent trying to counteract them.

But we can never find real relief from the scorching heat of material misery until we chant the holy names of God. Since all misery affects only the body and mind, if we can transcend these and enter into the spiritual realm of existence, we can also transcend misery. This is precisely the effect of chanting the Hare Krishna mantra. Like material pleasures, material pains become insignificant for one who bathes his consciousness in the cooling river of sound called Harinama-sankirtana, the congregational chanting of Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna. Hare Haré/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Haré. So the next time you hear the words Hare Krishna, you’ll know a little more about the tradition behind them and the wonderful benefits they can give you and maybe you’ll even feel inspired to join in the chanting yourself.
Ramanuja, the great acharya of Sri Vaishnava philosophy had his initial base in Kanchipuram. Ramanuja had many disciples and chief among them was Kurathazhwan or Kuresha.

Kuresha hailed from the small hamlet of Kura (or Kooram) near Kanchipuram. He belonged to the clan of the Haritas and to a ruling class family and was very wealthy. Their family lived in peace with its neighbours and friends. Kuresha had a gem of a person in his young and comely wife, Andalama. They lived a happy and contented life in Kooram. They were both known in Kanchi for their unstinting philanthropy and kindness. He used to give many cows and wealth to many poor and underprivileged every day, so much so that not one person was allowed to sleep with an empty stomach in Kooram and Kanchipuram. At one point of time, Perundevi, the Mahalakshmi of Kanchipuram, expressed Her bewilderment of Kuresha’s wealth to Lord Varadaraja Himself. Both Kuresha and Andal were ardent devotees of Kanchipuram Varadaraja Perumal. Early in his life, Kuresha came under the strong influence of the philosophy and teachings of Sri Ramanuja, who at that time was living in Kanchipuram. It was the time when Ramanuja was slowly emerging as the propagator of Sri Vaishnavism.

A strong spiritual bond of kinship developed between master and student over the years they spent together in Kanchipuram. In his mid-life, Ramanuja took sannyasa (refer previous issue) and was called away by the community of Sri Vaishnavas in Srirangam, to lead the devotees in the fold and to preach the loving philosophy.

Thus, in deference to the commandments of great acharyas in Srirangam like Mahapurna, and Kanchipurna in Kanchi, Ramanuja decided to migrate to Srirangam. He left Kanchi only to return for brief visits. Kuresha’s close relationship with Ramanuja thus drew to a closure for a brief period of time. Seeing off his guru Ramanuja to Srirangam, Kuresha returned to his hamlet of Kooram and commenced living his life as before. But Lord Varadaraja and His consort Perundevi had other plans for Kuresha.
One evening, after they had completed their daily routine of feeding the poor at dusk, Kuresha and his wife retired for the day. They shut the big brass doorway to their home. This clanging of the brass door was so loud in the quiet of the night that it was heard some distance away in Kanchi. Lord Varadaraja and His consort Perundevi too were a little startled by it. Perundevi queried the Lord as to the cause of the gong reverberating through the night air. The Lord turned to His beloved Kanchipurna and asked, “Tell Us, wherefrom this sound tonight?”

Kanchipurna replied, “Lord, it is the doorway of our dear Kuresha’s home being shut for the day after the daily alms-giving.” The Lord and Perundevi, very pleased to know of Kuresha and his piety and charity, commanded that Kuresha be brought to their presence. Kanchipurna hastened to Kura to beckon Kuresha to Kanchi. At Kura, when Kuresha came to know from Kanchipurna the purpose of his visit, Kuresha’s reaction was the epitome of devotion; if it would have been anyone else, they would have rushed to the chambers of Lord Varadaraja, but Kuresha was upset with the call of Perundevi!

He became extremely indignant with himself. “What? Did the clanging of my doorway bell disturb the Lord and His consort in Kanchi?! What a wretch am I that I should let my charity be announced thus to the whole world! What a vain sinner am I!”

The incident seemed to rudely awaken Kuresha out of a strange spiritual power. He realized that spiritual life and abandonment of material wealth had been staring him in the face, but he had been subconsciously avoiding this all the while since Ramanuja’s departure. Either he could continue to live in Kura and lead a life of pious, vain but ineffectual charity, or he could pursue his guru Ramanuja to Srirangam and serve him in his life’s great mission.

Kuresha made his choice instantly!

He dispatched Kanchipurna to Kanchi. He told his wife Andalama to immediately renounce all their wealth and belongings and to join him in migrating to Srirangam to wed themselves forever in the devotional service of Sri Ramanuja. It was a turning point in the life of Kuresha. The same night, husband and wife walked out of their homes with nothing but the clothes they wore. They set out for Srirangam by foot. Along the way, Kuresha and Andalama had to journey through a jungle infested with dacoits.

Andalama was afraid of nocturnal robbers and expressed her fears to her husband. When he heard of his wife’s anxieties, Kuresha quickly replied, “Andal, watching your agitation I suspect that your fears are founded in something you have not fully disclosed to me. I asked you to renounce all our material belongings, back in our village of Kooram. Have you renounced everything? I mean really EVERYTHING?”

When questioned so intensely by Kuresha, Andalama had no choice but to confess, “My Sir, I did renounce everything, save for this little golden plate which I hid in...”
the folds of my saree. I thought I would need it during the journey to serve you some food, as you used to eat on this golden plate.” Kuresha looked at the golden plate that his wife pulled out from her saree folds and then mildly chided her, “My dear woman, when I wanted you to renounce everything, I meant this little gold plate too!”

So saying, Kuresha took the plate from Andalama’s hands and threw it away deep into the forest. “There now!” he said turning to his wife, “There now, my dear wife, has been cast away the source of all your fears.”

Kuresha and Andalama were received in Srirangam with great joy and fanfare by Sri Ramanuja. He welcomed them as if they were his own children, put them up in the matha’s quarters and quickly settled them into the life and society of Srirangam.

Kuresha started a new chapter in his life in Srirangam, as one of the closest disciples of Sri Ramanuja. He assisted Sri Ramanuja in all aspects and affairs of his preaching works, the temple of Sri Ranganatha and the Sri Vaishnava community. He was Ramanuja’s aide in scriptural study, disputations and exegesis. He was at his beck and call. He tended to his minutest needs.

In Srirangam, although Ramanuja and Kuresha succeeded in the stupendous task of systematising an exciting philosophy, they both knew that the magnum opus of Ramanuja, i.e. the explanation of Vedanta Sutra, Sri Bhashya, still needed a final coat of brilliant polish - the polish of irreputability, before it could go into and earn an unchallenged place in Vedantic history. Ramanuja knew that in order to lend irreputable authority to his commentaries on the Brahma Sutra, he badly needed to consult with ancient texts and treatises that could be actually shown to affirm some of the fundamental theories and theses of Visishtadvaaita or Sri Vaishnavism.

Ramanuja knew he must access an ancient parchment called Boddhayana Sutra - a rare treatise on Vyasa’s Brahma Sutra, which was lying somewhere in the royal library of the then king of Kashmir state. Daunting as the task appeared to him, Ramanuja decided that he must have access to the text. To that end he, at the advanced age of about 60 odd years, decided that he would undertake a journey, an all-India tour by foot - which would not only take him to Kashmir in pursuit of the text, but also enable him to propagate his message throughout the vast land through establishment of several mathas. Ramanuja, with his disciples, thus set out from Srirangam on a formidable expedition. Kuresha was with him.

The expedition sojourned through vast provinces - Thirupati, then south of the Malabar areas, up north along the western coastal belt of India, to the eastern regions of Puri, Kashi, Naimisharanya, Varanasi, Salagrama in Nepal, westward to Dwarka, Pushkaram and to Bhatti (near Lahore) and finally into the Himalayan districts of Kashmir.

In the court of the king of Kashmir, Ramanuja was told that before they gave him access to their library, he would first have to prove his credentials as a philosopher genuinely propagating a new school of thought. Ramanuja not only put forth his exposition of the new
Visishtadvaita, but also engaged the royal pundits in 
debate to show them his philosophy.

The king was pleased and freely gave permission for 
Ramanuja and Kuresha to access the archives in the 
royal library. The royal pundits however were not too 
happy about the king’s generosity and held that, 
notwithstanding the royal assent, Ramanuja would not 
be permitted to take the text out of the library precincts.

Ramanuja and Kuresha then began to study the text 
within the library premises itself. Then the pundits came 
up with another plot to frustrate them. They held that 
Ramanuja would not be allowed to take down any notes 
from the text. So Ramanuja and Kuresha proceeded to 
memorise vast portions of the text.

The pundits’ seeing that Ramanuja and Kuresha were 
thwarting them at every point, finally plotted murder. It 
was then that Ramanuja decided to leave Kashmir. 
Kuresha was ekagrahi – or a rare talent when a person 
memorises a text however vast it is, just by reading it 
alone. Kuresha memorised the entire Bhodayana Sutra.

The expedition slowly wound up and returned south to 
Srirangam. In spite of the disappointment faced in 
Kashmir, Ramanuja however, as it turned out, suffered 
no loss at all! For, back in Srirangam, when Kuresha 
and he sat down to complete the Sri Bhashya by 
incorporating authentic references to the Bhodayana 
Sutra, Kuresha, by the sheer power of his prodigious 
memory, was able to instantly and accurately recall vast 
passages from the Bhodayana Sutra, word for word!

Sri Vaishnava philosophy exists today because of the 
great acharya Kuresha.

Acceptance of Thiruvarangathu Amudhanar into 
Sri Vaishnavism

In those days, a person by name Thiruvarangathu Amudhanar was 
the chief of those employed in Srirangam temple. One day he 
came to Sri Ramanuja and requested him to order a holy man 
to educate him in Vaishnavism, as he was immersed in sin. Ramanuja 
sent word to Kurathazhwan and introduced him to Amudhanar, “He 
is the chief who looks after the day-to-day affairs of Sri Ranganatha. 
Without caring for his failings and weaknesses, bring him into our 
fold.” Kurathazhwan closely moved with Amudhanar for six months and 
made him fit and took him to Sri Ramanuja. Sri Ramanuja made 
Amudhanar a disciple of Kurathazhwan. Amudhanar himself 
adopts in a famous stanza in the text of Ramanuja Nuranthathi that he composed to 
glorify Ramanuja, that having sought the holy feet of Kurathazhwan, he was able to overcome three-fold sins.

Kurathazhwan taking food in Amudhanar’s house 
on the eleventh day ceremony

While Amudhanar was spending his time with Kuresha 
studying the holy books and so on, his mother passed 
away and the 13-day ceremonies post death was to be 
performed. The tenth day ceremony was performed. Then Amudhanar requested Sri Ramanuja to ask 
somebody to be the guest on the eleventh day ceremony. 
(The tradition is that guest who partakes the 11-day 
ceremony and food can ask for anything from the 
performing yajamana, who must fulfil the wishes and 
thereafter the guest is not allowed 
to take any food from any house apart from his own 
and also must not participate in any functions or temple 
festivals as such. Usually only poorest of poor and 
socially low standing brahmanas become guests on 
11th day ceremonies). Sri Ramanuja asked Kuresha to 
accept. Without showing any disrespect to his acharya, 
Kuresha accepted. Amudhanar was simply overtaken 
and fed Kuresha in the ceremony with all respect and 
humility. Since he felt what all he had was his 
acharya’s, he offered him plenty of money and requested him to 
accept it. Though Kuresha accepted them, he never 
cared for them but simply threw them away in the street.

At the end of the ceremony, the guest who has been 
fed must say that he is satisfied. So Sri Ramanuja had 
asked Kuresha not to express satisfaction unless the 
temple keys were handed over. Kuresha did so and got 
the keys. This was a great lila of Sri Ramanuja to get 
control over the temple for much needed reforms in the 
temple, so that he could introduce and implement the 
Sri Vaishnava philosophy in the temple.
Kuresha and Chola king – Kuresha saves Sri Ramanuja

Later during the Chola reign, there were arguments going on between who is superior of all, Shiva or Vishnu. The king sent his courtiers to Ramanuja’s matha to bring him to his court. Knowing about the danger that Ramanuja might undergo, Kuresha decided to go to the king’s court in disguise, wearing saffron cloth and carried sannyasi danda. Ramanuja wore white clothes and escaped to Melkote in Mysore state. Along with Kuresha, Mahapurna also went to the court. The king instructed a written declaration which should read: “Nothing higher than Shiva exists” and commanded them both to affix their signatures to it without protest. Kuresha refused. He launched into a long and magnificent recital of authoritative texts and sources from the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis and Puranas that proved that Narayana is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and none was higher than Vishnu and hence He was the only object fit for worship and contemplation. The Chola king was incensed. Thrusting a writing-quill into Kuresha’s hands he commanded Kuresha again to forthwith sign the declaration swearing allegiance to Shiva. “If you refuse, we shall have your eyes pulled out here and now!” On hearing this Kuresha flew into a greater rage. He grabbed the quill from the king’s hands and said, “But let me save you from the trouble, you tyrant! I shall pluck out my eyes by my own hand! These eyes that have set sights on a sinner such as thee have no further use for me!” So saying, Kuresha plunged the sharp writing-quill into his own eyes, and extracting ball from socket, threw his eyes on the floor at the king’s feet! The sudden and violent act of martyrdom of Kuresha struck terror into the hearts of all assembled there.

The cruel king remained unfazed! He turned next to Mahapurna and commanded him to sign the declaration of apostasy. The elderly Sire too flatly refused, upon which the vengeful king ordered his courtiers to overpower Mahapurna and gouge out the old ‘acharya’s’ eyes. Kuresha and Mahapurna returned to Srirangam, but alas Mahapurna attained moksha on his way back.

After 12 years, Ramanuja came back and was shocked to see blind Kuresha. Ramanuja took him to Kanchipuram and asked Kuresha to pray to Lord Varadaraja to get his eyesight back.

Kuresha composed Varadaraja Stavam and instead of asking for his eyesight, Kuresha prayed for moksha of all devotees of Ramanuja. Such was his great devotion. Ramanuja blessed Kuresha with eyesight later on. Finally, at a ripe old age, Kuresha requested moksha from Periya Sri Ranganatha and the Lord granted it. When Ramanuja asked “How can you leave before me?” Kuresha replied “According to Nammalwar in his text Thiruvaimozhi, when one goes to Vaikunta, nityas and muktas come and wash the feet of the newly arriving mukta atma. How can I allow you to come and do that for me? That is why I am leaving before you.”

Kuresha was indeed the greatest of all disciples of Ramanuja.

Thus by discussing Kuresha, the dearmost devotee of Varadaraja of Kanchipuram, we end the series on the Thirukanchi temple. 😊

Photo courtesy: Keshavabhashyam, Kanchipuram
Bhumi Puja of Chaitanya Bhavan in Ahmedabad

With the inspiration of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada, HKM Ahmedabad is coming up with a multi-facet infrastructure, “Chaitanya Bhavan,” equipped with modern amenities, with an objective to promote and preserve Cultural, Heritage and Indian Vedic values through various Krishna conscious activities of the temple. The Bhumi Puja ceremony was conducted on Nov 17, 2019.
It was during the auspicious month of Karthika that Lord Krishna saved the Vrajavasis from the wrath of Indra. The Vrajavasis were preparing to offer Indra his annual worship and sacrifice when Lord Krishna told them to direct their offerings to Govardhana Hill instead, as the hill provided the villagers with all that they needed - fresh green grasses for their cows, water from lakes and streams, fruits and flowers from the groves and forests that covered the hill. While the Vrajavasis circumambulated the hill after their worship, keeping their cows in front of them in procession, Lord Krishna appeared from the hill in a gigantic form to accept all the offerings, thus revealing that Govardhana Hill is non-different from Himself. Soon after, when he heard the news of this worship of Govardhana Hill, Indra was furious and sent torrential rainfall to inundate Vrindavana and destroy the villages and people. The Vrajavasis sought Krishna’s protection and He saved them by easily lifting Govardhana Hill on the little finger of His left hand, and holding it up as an umbrella from the storms. Indra’s pride was defeated and he surrendered in submission to Lord Krishna, realizing that the little boy whose instructions the Vrajavasis had followed was none other than his own Supreme Master.

Devotees celebrate Govardhana Puja every year to commemorate this amazing pastime of Lord Krishna. In ISKCON temples around the world, devotees offer a mound of food stuffs or annakoota to the Lord and also perform go-puja on this auspicious day. Here is a photo feature of the celebrations of Govardhana Puja in some of the temples of the Hare Krishna Movement. (above & below: Bangalore, Hare Krishna Hill)
**Upcoming ISKCON Pilgrimages**

**PURI PILGRIMAGE**  
Fri, Dec 20 to Tue, Dec 24, 2019  
**Places of visit:** Jagannatha temple, Gundicha temple, Alarnatha, Tota-Gopinatha, Sakshi-Gopala, Bhubaneshwar-Sun temple, sea bath and more  
**Amount:** ₹21,000/-  
+ flight charges

**MAYAPUR PILGRIMAGE**  
Wed, Dec 25 to Sun, Dec 29, 2019  
**Places of visit:** Yogapeetha, Chandrodaya Mandir, Rajapur, Ekachakra, Shantipur, Panipati, Ganga bath and more  
**Amount:** ₹15,000/-  
+ flight charges

**PURI & MAYAPUR PILGRIMAGE**  
Saturday, Feb 22 to Saturday, Feb 29  
**Places of visit:** Puri Jagannath, Gundicha, Alarnath, Tota Gopinath, Gamibhini, Sakshi Gopal, Bhubaneshwar Lingaraj, Konark & many more,...  
Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's birth place,  
Mayapur Chandrodaya, Rajapur, Navadvip, Ganga bath, Shanthipur, Panipati & many more,...  
**Amount:** ₹24,000/-  
+ flight charges

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**Divya-Arambham Pilgrimage**  
DEC 31, 7 AM TO JAN 1, 9PM  
**Places of visit:** Kaveri snan, Srirangapatna, Kirtan and Bhajan Sandhya on Dec 31, Mid-night Arati, Special Puja at Melukote Narasimha on Jan 1, Special Prasadam feast at ISKCON Bangalore and more..  
**Amount:** ₹12,020/-  
per person

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**Sankranti Prayag Snan and Kashi Pilgrimage**  
**Travel date:** Monday, Jan 13 to Thursday, Jan 16, 2020  
**Places of visit:** Kashi Vishwanath and local temples, Ganga Arati, Triveni Sangam Snan on Sankranti day, Prayagraj local temples.  
**Amount:** ₹15,000/-  
(+ flight charges)

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**Pancha Dwarka - Somnath and Matru-Gaya Pilgrimage**  
**Travel date:** Sunday, Jan 26, 2020 to Sunday, Feb 2, 2020  
**Places of visit:** Dakor, Nathdwara, Kankroli, Dwarka, Bet Dwarka, Mula Dwarka, Porbandar, Somnath, Nageswara Mahadev, Matru Gaya and more...  
**Amount:** ₹25,000/-  
+ flight charges
CHARDHAM DHAM YATRA

“Excellent Chardham darshan. Enjoyed the beauty of Himalayas, the rivers, the association of ISKCON devotees and very good co-travellers. I also appreciate the careful driving, intermediate halts, support in luggage movement and of course the kirtans by ISKCON prabhujis.” — Leela, Group Leader, Software Engineer

“The arrangements and hospitality extended by ISKCON devotees are commendable. This Chardham pilgrimage gave us enlightenment and encouragement to get into spiritual mood. Visit to Gangotri, Yamunotri, Badrinath and Kedarnath was indeed a great blessing”
- Jayanthi Raghavan, Branch Manager, SBI

UTTAR BHARAT PILGRIMAGE

“The Pilgrimage was informative, interesting and we thoroughly enjoyed. We had good darshan at all places and temples. We are thankful to ISKCON for timely decisions, meticulous planning and caring”
- Ajith Nargund, Retd. Accountant

“The Uttarbharrat Pilgrimage was to best of our satisfaction....we felt that we were under divine spell. The bhajans, kirtans, explanations was awesome. We enjoyed every moment of the pilgrimage and the visits to rare temples.”
- Sathyaprakash and Radhika, Retd. Teacher

SRI LANKA PILGRIMAGE

“I feel blessed to be a part of Sri Lanka Ramayana Pilgrimage. It was a very memorable International Pilgrimage. Everything was excellently arranged. We were kept very comfortable with volvo bus, extremely good stay in the Hotels and good saatvik food. We enjoyed the daily kirtans, arati and discourses.”
- Brunda BJ, Lecturer

“the Pilgrimage duration was perfect. Great efforts put by ISKCON Bangalore for hotels, food, travel and overall hospitality. Information shared about Ramayana sites in Sri Lanka was really good.”
- Bimalkumar Bhattacharya, Retd. Oil & Gas Professional

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Sri Krishna Darshan

The Cultural Education Services (CES) division of ISKCON Bangalore organized a spiritual tour of the Hare Krishna Hill temple for thirty-five students and ten accompanying staff of Hani Foundation Pre-school, Kanakapura, on Wed, 13th November.

The program commenced with the children going on an educative visit to the temple cow shelter (goshala). The children got the opportunity to have a first-hand look at the grooming of cows. The joy of the kids on seeing the cows from such close quarters was truly palpable. As a part of the program, the children were trained to recite a Bhagavad-gita shlokas in the blessed precincts of the temple. It was amazing to see the tiny-tots expressively recite Krishna rhymes too.

The kids, along with their teachers, enthusiastically sang and danced to the ecstatic kirtan while witnessing the performance of puja vidhana. The sight of children devotedly chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra on chanting beads was indeed incredible.

The children were briefly informed about the presiding Deities of the three temples, following which, they had a special darshan of the Deities. The program concluded with the children savoring delicious lunch prasadam.

The testimonial of Shri Nitesh Krishnappa, Chairman, Hani Foundation, resoundingly sums up the essence of the Sri Krishna Darshan program: “Thank you so much. It was really superb. This day will definitely remain very special to all of us. All the parents were happy hearing the kids sharing their experiences with them. Thank you again, we truly appreciate all the efforts which has gone into this event making it so successful.”

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Personality Enrichment Workshop

Families of children from Hani Foundation Pre-school celebrated Deepotsava festival on 5th November, as part of the Personality Enrichment Workshop, a monthly program conducted by the Cultural Education Services (CES) division of ISKCON Bangalore.

For more details about the program call: 9341124222 / 9341211119
ISKCON Heritage Fest 2019

The last lap of ISKCON Heritage Fest 2019, inter-school traditional arts competitions, concluded with the final round of the Oratory contests on Sat, 16th November 2019 at Hare Krishna Temple, Rajajinagar. A panel of expert judges handpicked the finalists from over 1000 participants in the preliminary round of Gita Shloka Chanting, Vedic Mantra, Story Telling and Krishna Rhymes, from schools across Bengaluru and surrounding areas.

The enthusiastic presence of finalists with parents and grandparents in tow, spoke volumes of the encouragement extended by families to participation in the one-of-its-kind cultural fiesta. The temple corridors resonated with sounds of children blissfully chanting Bhagavad-gita shlokas, Vedic mantras, expressively narrating past times of Lord Sri Krishna and melodiously singing Krishna Rhymes. Indeed a befitting finale to the grandest cultural carnival of heritage-themed competitions!
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Seva Opportunities

Srivari Hundi Seva:
Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gita (9.27) that whatever one may offer or give away, should be done as an offering to Him. You may contribute towards Srivari Hundi Seva according to your capacity.

www.iskconbangalore.org/srivari-hundi-seva/

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- Kalyanotsava
- Vishesha Alankara Seva
- Vishesha Naivedya Seva
- Vaikuntha Dwara Archana Seva
- Tulasi Hara Seva
- Govinda Prasada Seva
- Tulasi Archana Seva

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Prabhupada takes Initiation
In 1922, Srila Prabhupada, the Founder-Acharya of ISKCON first met his spiritual master Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and in 1933 he took formal initiation from him.

Nimbarkacharya
Sri Nimbarkacharya comes in the line of the Kumara Sampradaya. He was a great ascetic of the Tridandi order. He is known for propagating the philosophy of Bhedabheda.

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Good pilgrim place: You will really feel good and memorable of visiting ISKCON temple. Such a nice and wonderful experience you will get. - buntu00990099

Always pleasure: Visiting Iskcon is like my friends favorite thing as u get pongal as prasad and they love it. It's easily visited as there is metro nearby like 500 meters away. The place is nice and calm and when I visited there was bhajan going on which was great. - Prady07

Beautiful Temple! This temple is exquisite! A must see in Bangalore. Although I'm not Hindu, this temple is awe-inspiring in its design. - Johnna C

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