On Akshaya Tritiya, May 7, 2019, ISKCON Bangalore conducted the 'Sudama Vaibhavam' programme. On this day, Lord Krishna had blessed the poor brahmana Sudama, with unlimited prosperity in return for his most humble offering of chipped rice. The seva kartas offered poha to Lord Sri Krishna, took part in the Mahalakshmi homa to invoke the blessings of Lakshmi Devi, learnt the importance of offering seva to Sri Krishna from Sri Chanchalapathi Dasa, Sr. Vice-President, ISKCON and also got to treat their taste buds with the grand Chappan-bhog Mahaprasadam (56 items) offered to Sri Krishna.

Seva kartas participate in the homa at the Sri Radha Krishna Temple, to invoke auspiciousness

Participants receive the swarna mudra prasadam

Sudama katha at the temple auditorium

Devotees enjoy the grand, elaborate prasadam feast
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

Joining Krishna's Pastimes 4
Srila Prabhupada Speaks Out 10
Ashtabhuja Perumal Temple, Kanchipuram 12
No-Nonsense Facts of Life 16
The Nectar of the Name 18

Cover pages-4  Text pages-32

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Joining Krishna’s Pastimes

*Understanding that ultimately we have to give up our body and everything we possess, an intelligent person asks, “What’s next?”*

A lecture in Los Angeles in December 1973
by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

nisamya bhagavan-margam
samstham yadu-kulasya ca
svah-pathaya matim cakre
 nibhrtatma yudhisthirah

“Upon hearing of Lord Krishna’s returning to His abode, and upon understanding the end of the Yadu dynasty’s earthly manifestation, Maharaja Yudhisthira decided to go back home, back to Godhead.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.15.32)

Yudhisthira Maharaja was very sober and very advanced spiritually, so when he heard how Krishna had gone back to His abode and how the Yadu dynasty had been destroyed by fighting among themselves, he thought, “Let me give up everything and surrender fully to the Lord.”

So, everyone should understand that, ultimately, we have to give up this body and whatever we possess. And after giving everything up, what is next? We have to give everything up. That is a fact. If we don’t give it up now, at the time of death we must give it up. As Krishna says [Bhagavad-gita 10.34], mṛtyuh sarva-haras caḥam: “As death I take everything away.” You may try to keep your possessions, but at the time of death you will have to give them all up. By force they will be taken away. Everyone should understand this.

The foolish person thinks, “My family, my nation, my society, my bank balance, my skyscraper building, my motorcar-these will save me.” But that is not possible. As it is said in the Srimad-Bhagavatam [2.1.4], tesam pramatto nidhanam pasyann api na pasyati: Those who are mad do not see that everything they possess will remain behind when they die. It will not stay with them. You will be vanquished, your body will be vanquished, and everything will be lost.

Body, wife, relatives, children—all these things are temporary, but I am eternal. People do not think, “I am eternal, yet I am engaged in temporary things. So what is my eternal business?” This question they do not ask. Simply fools, mudhas.

I have experienced being a child, a boy, a young man. But now my childhood body, my boyhood body, my youthhood body are gone. I have a different body. But I know that I had a childhood body, a boyhood body, and a youthhood body. So, the conclusion is that I am eternal and this body is not eternal. It is a very simple thing. Why can people not understand? In the Bhagavad-gita [2.17] Krishna says, avinasi tu tad viddhi yena sarvam idam tatam, and antavanta ime dehah. This body is antavat, “temporary.” One day it will be finished. But that thing which is spread all over the body, that will not be annihilated. What is that? Consciousness. Consciousness is spread all over the body, and Krishna says that it is immortal.

So, now we have to see whether our consciousness is absorbed in what is immortal or in what is mortal. If I am absorbed in thoughts like “This is my country,” “This is my body,” “This is my family,” “This is my community,” “This is my nation” this is “mortal” consciousness. But “immortal” consciousness is to think, “Krishna is mine, and I am Krishna’s.” This is immortal consciousness. When you come to this consciousness, that is called Krishna consciousness. Then you are saved.

As long as we are absorbed in temporary consciousness, our mind will always be changing. I may accept something now, but then I will reject the same thing. This body is being manufactured according to the acceptance and rejection of the mind. Otherwise, why do you have different bodies? So many boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen, are sitting here, but no one’s body is exactly like another’s. No. You all have different minds, and therefore you have different bodies. This is to be understood.
Now, here it is said about Yudhisthira Maharaja, svah-pathaya matim cakre: “He decided to go back to Godhead.” In other words, he meditated, “What am I? Wherefrom have I come? If I am eternal, why is my body not eternal? I would have been very happy if my body were eternal, but that is not possible. I desire that I will not die, that my body will not be vanquished. That is my desire. Therefore I will go back to Godhead and attain my eternal, spiritual body.” Unfortunately, today no one is meditating upon this subject matter. They have learned some nonsense impersonal meditation.

So, now Yudhisthira Maharaja will retire. He will give up his kingdom. This is the Vedic system. However rich you may be, however prosperous you maybe, however much you are attached to your home or your nation, you have to realize, “These things are all temporary, but I am eternal. So what is my eternal function? What is my eternal duty? Where is my eternal home?” That is real meditation. And that is Krishna consciousness.

The Krishna consciousness movement is not an ordinary movement, manufacturing something for recreation. No. It is a very serious science. People are searching after some permanent place, some permanent settlement in this world. Nobody wants to die, but everyone must die. But if there is the possibility of going someplace where there is no more death, why don't you search after it? That is intelligence.

In the Bhagavad-gita [8.16] Krishna gives us information about the place where there is no more death:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a-brahma-bhuvanal lokah} \\
\text{punar avartin \textit{r}juna} \\
\text{mam upetya tu kaunteya} \\
\text{punar janma na vidyate}
\end{align*}
\]

If you go to the topmost planet in this universe, which is known as Brahma-loka, you will not even be able to calculate the duration of life the people enjoy there. Their day and our day are different. Their day lasts for 8,600,000 times 1,000 of our years, and they live for 100 years made up of such days. Still, even if you go to Brahma-loka-or to any other planet you must die.

Therefore, the intelligent person asks, “If I am eternal, why should I accept death? Is there a place where there is no death?” That information Krishna gives in the Bhagavad-gita [8.16]:

\[
\text{mam upetya tu kaunteya punar janma na vidyate.}
\]

“If you come to My planet, you will no longer have to come back again to this mortal world.” He also says [Bg. 15.6],

\[
\text{yad gatva na nivartante tad dhamma paramam mama.}
\]

“That is My supreme abode, and one who goes there never returns.” That is actually what we want. In another place [Bg. 4.9] Krishna says,

\[
\text{tyaktva deham punar janma naiti mam eti so \textit{r}juna:}
\]

“My dear Arjuna, after giving up this body, one who knows Me never again comes into the womb of a material mother.” Then where does he go? Mam eti. “He comes to Me.”

In his Brhad-bhagavatamrta, Sanatana Gosvami has stated that if you become perfect in Krishna consciousness, then immediately after death you will be sent to where Krishna is enjoying His pastimes within this material world. Just as the sun is rising and setting, Krishna is enacting His pastimes on different planets in this material world. That is another feature of His activities. Because He wants to reclaim the fallen souls and there are unlimited millions and trillions of fallen souls within this material world He goes everywhere. As He says [Bg. 4.7],

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{yada yada hi dharmasya} \\
\text{glinir bhavati bhara} \\
\text{abhyutthanam adharmasya} \\
\text{tatdaman srjamy aham}
\end{align*}
\]

“As soon as there is some discrepancy in the understanding of eternal life, I appear in order to teach real religion.”

So, right now Krishna is teaching somewhere in this material world. There are innumerable universes, and Krishna is appearing in one of them. Krishna appeared on Janmastami in this universe, and immediately thereafter, in another universe, there was Janmastami. Then immediately thereafter, in still another universe, there was Janmastami. Therefore Krishna’s activities are called nitya-lila “eternal pastimes.” This means that Janmastami is always going on, His Govardhana pastime is always going on, everything He displayed when He was present on this planet is always going on in some universe.

Now it is half past seven, but somewhere else it is half past six. It is not that because the sun has passed half past six in this city, there is no more half past six. Somewhere else it is half past six. Similarly, it is not that because Krishna has now finished His Janmastami here, there is no more Janmastami. Janmastami is going on elsewhere. That is krishna-lila.
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So, if you become perfect in Krishna consciousness, that means you have no more material desire. Your only desire is to serve Krishna, that's all. That is perfection. So long as you have a pinch of material desire, you will have to take birth. According to your desire, Krishna will give you facility. We are making our next body by our thoughts. We have so many material thoughts, and at the time of death, whatever thought is most prominent, the next moment you will get a body like that. So if you simply think of Krishna only, then you will get a body whereby you can go to Krishna. It is very scientific and practical.

By going to Krishna's planet, you can talk with Krishna personally, you can play with Krishna personally, you can dance with Krishna. Here is a picture of the rasa dance. So, everyone can get this opportunity. When Krishna comes here, He shows practically how enjoyable is life with Him in Vrindavana. Krishna is simply jolly anandamayo bhyasat. In Vrindavana life everyone is jolly. The birds, the trees, the water, the land, the cows, the calves, the cowherd boys and girls, everyone is happy simply by loving Krishna. Simply by loving Krishna.

So, when Krishna manifests His pastimes here, He invites us: “Why are you rotting in this material world? Come to Me and enjoy life eternally.” That is Krishna's business. He is so kind.

What is the enjoyment in this material world? This highest enjoyment is sex life. That is not very good enjoyment, but people have accepted it as very significant. As Prahlada Maharaja says [Bhag. 7.9.45], yan maithunadi-grhamedhi-sukham hi tuccham: “The happiness of sex life is very insignificant.” But for materialistic people, sex is their life and soul. They have no information that there is better pleasure, eternal pleasure. That they do not know.

Therefore there is great need for this Krishna consciousness movement, so people can understand bhagavan-marga, the way of God. The rascals do not understand what God is, they do not know of the features of God yet still they will not accept this Krishna consciousness movement. We are declaring openly: “Here is God. Here is the form of God. He is so nice. He is so beautiful. His address is Krishnaloka. You can go there by devotional service.”

“No,” people say, “I don't want it.” “Then what do you want?”

“I want to become a pig.” “And what shall you eat?” “I will eat stool, that's all.”

“Not prasadam [food offered to Lord Krishna]?”

“No.”

So, what can you do? We are distributing prasadam, and people will go to eat some rascal thing in a restaurant. Just see! This is misfortune. People are very unfortunate in this age. They will accept so many wrong things. Therefore our task is very responsible. We have to canvass. We have to lead, solicit: “Please come here in this temple and learn something.”

Thank you very much.

Sri Krsna 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fasting</th>
<th>Festivals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jun 29 Ekadashi</td>
<td>Jun 15 Panihati Chida Dahi Utsava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30 break fast</td>
<td>Jun 17 Jagannatha Snana Yatra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul 12 Ekadashi</td>
<td>Jul 2 Srilabhaktivinoda Thakura - Disappearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul 13 break fast</td>
<td>Fasting till noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jul 4 Jagannatha Puri Ratha Yatra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 10 Sudharshan Jayanti at ISKCON VK Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 12 Jagannatha Puri Bahuda Ratha Yatra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Feeding the World

The following exchange took place after a talk by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada before the World Health Organization, in Geneva, on June 6, 1974.

W.H.O. member: Your Divine Grace, do you have any suggestions for solving the worldwide problem of food shortages?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. My suggestion is that people should utilize all this vacant land for crops. I have seen so much land lying dormant. For instance, in Australia and also in America, there is so much land lying dormant.

The people are not utilizing it.

And whatever produce they get, sometimes they dump tons of it into the ocean to keep the prices high. And I have heard here in Geneva that when there was excess milk production, some of the people wanted to slaughter twenty thousand cows just to reduce the milk production.

This is what is going on in people’s brains. Actually, they have no brains. So if they want to get some brains, they should read these authentic Vedic literatures, and they should take spiritual guidance. And that guidance is simple: produce your food. All the food the world needs by properly utilizing the land.

But today people will not utilize the land. Rather, they have left their villages and farmlands and let themselves be drawn into the cities for producing nuts and bolts. All right. Now eat nuts and bolts.

Mahatma Gandhi’s basic program was to revive the natural, God-given way of life. Simple villages and farms. This can solve India’s and the whole world’s food problems. But our big Pandit Nehru topsy-turvyed everything. He wanted more industrialization.

Gandhi’s program was very nice: you organize yourselves into small farming villages and produce your own food. Live free from
cities and factories. This way, you can work only three months and still you get your produce for the whole year.

Three months' work for the whole year's produce. And the rest of the time, the time you save, you can use for chanting Hare Krishna. Sing the Lord's glories and develop your original God consciousness. This is our Krishna consciousness movement. Be spiritually advanced, be a human being.

Otherwise, the life you are leading is risky. In the Bhagavad-gita it is said, tatha dehantara-praptir dhiras tatra na muhyati: however big a plan we may make, someday we will have to give up this plan, because someday we will have to give up this body. And there is no guarantee what kind of body we are going to get next time.

Suppose that this time, this life, I am very busily constructing a big skyscraper. Next time, next life, I may have to live in that skyscraper in the body of a cat or dog, because I have developed the grossly selfish, body-centered consciousness of a cat or dog. And at that time who will care about my so-called title to the skyscraper?

These are the facts. Because nobody can change nature's law. Nature's law is exactly like an infectious disease: expose yourself to it, and it takes hold of you, that's all. Karanam guna-sango 'syā sad-asad-yoni-janmasu: one gets born into a nice or nasty situation because of his prior actions and because of nature's inexorable reactions. This is nature's law.

But now, many people do not even believe that there is a life after death. In Moscow a big professor named Kotovsky told me, “Swami, after death there is nothing.” You see? He's a big professor. And yet he has no knowledge of the soul. A big professor just see. This kind of nonsense is going on.

So as this godless civilization drags on, by nature's law there will be more and more problems. As predicted in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, there will be anavrśti, insufficient rain; and as a result, durbhiṣka, insufficient food production. Of course, these problems have already begun.

And on the plea of providing relief from the drought and famine, the government will crush the people with excessive taxation. And consequently, acchina-dara-dravina yasyanti giri-kananam: the people will be so disturbed that they will give up their hearth and home and go to the forest. They will feel utterly harassed by scarcity of rainfall, by scarcity of food, and by the government's excessive taxation.

In such a predicament, how can one keep his brain in equilibrium? He will become mad. Unless we take the instruction of the scriptures, all these tragedies are guaranteed to befall us. So we should immediately take this instruction of the Bhagavad-gita to heart:

annad bhavanti bhutani
parjanyad anna-sambhavah
yajnad bhavati parjanyah
yajnah karna-sambuddhavah

“All living bodies subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains. And rains are produced by sacrifice.”

This is why we have introduced this movement, this chanting of the names of the Lord. This is sacrifice. And in this age of confusion, this unfortunate age, this sacrifice alone is possible. This is the remedy, the solution for all the world's problems. But people will not take the remedy. They have got their own remedy.
The eight-handed warrior

Ashtabhuja Perumal Temple, Kanchipuram

by Sampatkumara Ramanuja Dasan (Adv. Ashwin.S)

Located in Vishnu Kanchipuram (little Kanchi) is the lovely temple of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Narayana Ashtabhuja Perumal.

The Pastime

As per the pastime of the land, Brahma was worried about the constant disturbances caused by asuras in performance of yagnas by sages and rishis under his supervision. Lord Vishnu is considered as the protector of yagnas. Lord Brahma decided to perform an ashwamedha yagna and a severe penance for a very long period. Mother Saraswathi was unhappy about the long separation from her consort Lord Brahma and expressed her desire to join the penance. Lord Brahma advised her against it. Saraswathi was unhappy with the decision and decided to stay away from Brahma. Brahma, however, went on with the performance of severe austerities and the ashwamedha yagna.

Saraswathi was angry that Brahma had not invited her to accompany him in the yagna, which is usually performed along with one’s consort. She therefore tried to disrupt the penance in various ways, but Vishnu interfered in all her attempts. She then realised that the penance was for the world peace and decided to do penance in Satyaloka, the abode of Lord Brahma and her residence as well. Many demons were very much worried about the outcome of the yagna and penance and decided to disrupt it at any cost. The Supreme Lord Narayana, who is very dear to His devotees, appeared before Brahma in His eight-handed form with many weapons, and started killing all the demons. The asuras prayed to Lord Shiva and performed a penance to propitiate him. Lord Shiva appeared as a huge bird by name Sharabha, who could take the form of a lion with wings, and attacked Vishnu. Lord Vishnu defeated Sharabha as well. After Vishnu killed all the demons...
and being pleased by the devotion of Brahma, He decided to stay and bless the devotees in His eight-handed form, Ashtabhujam, in this temple.

At least four of the 14 Vaishnavite holy places in Kanchipuram town are connected to the story of Brahma performing the yagna to have a darshan of Lord Narayana. They are Yadoktakari, Thoopul Deepaprakashar, Ashtabhujakaram and Varadaraja or Devaraja Perumal temples. The last temple appeared in the yaga kundam as the Punyakoti Vimanam with the Deity of Sri Varadaraja, when the ritual was completed. According to legend, the first in the order is the Yadoktakari temple where the Lord appeared as Vega Sethu and stalled the attempt made by Saraswathi, who appeared as a river to disrupt the yagna.

According to another legend, Sage Mahasudha underwent severe penance and Lord Indra was anxious to witness these severe austerities performed by the sage. Lord Indra was very concerned about losing his title. Indra is a designation and various Indras who occupied the post were constantly worried when sages performed penance. In most cases, the sages were least interested in the material benefits like Indra’s post, nevertheless Indra was worried. In order to safeguard his highly honoured title, he assigned a few apsaras or celestial dancers to Earth, to create an obstacle to Sage Mahasudha’s penance. The celestial dancers disguised as attractive elephants and distracted the attention of Sage Mahasudha. Sage Mahasudha fell prey to the trick played by Lord Indra and spent several years in the company of the disguised apsaras as Gajendra, the chief of the elephants. Later Sage Mahasudha realized his foolishness. On the divine instructions of Sage Markandeya, the elephant Gajendra practiced to worship Lord Vishnu with lotus flowers. While the elephant was plucking lotuses from a pond to worship Lord Vishnu, a crocodile caught his leg firmly and the fight between the two went on for several years. Finally, Lord Vishnu hurried to save the elephant from the clutches of the crocodile and the crocodile was killed instantly with His Sudarshana disc. Thus, the elephant king Gajendra attained salvation at the lotus feet of Sriman Narayana.

The Temple

We are greeted by a rajagopuram of modest nature that pierces the concentric rectangular walls. The temple construction as we see today is believed to be originally built during the rule of Pallavas. The temple has inscriptions from the period of Kulothunga Chola I (1070 - 1120), indicating gifts of land to the temple. There are contributions mentioned in the same inscription indicating contributions from the local people for perpetual lighting of the temple. There are inscriptions on the Southern walls of the temple from Kulothunga I indicating sale of
lands by Rajasundari Chaturvedimangalam, to meet
the kitchen expenses of the temple. Another inscription
from the same period on the same walls indicates gift
tax-free land in Chola Chaturvedimangalam to the
temple for two years and levying tax of not more than
2 paisa subsequently. There were lot of gifts endowed
to the temple during the Pallavan kings.

The *moolavar* Deity of the Lord has eight arms
(Ashtabhujakaram), with weapons such as the bow,
arrow, sword, shield and mace, and a lotus, conch, and
discus. He is known as Ashtabhujha Perumal. The *utsavar*
is in His four-armed form and is lovingly addressed by
devotees as Adikesava Perumal. The Lord here is
known as Adikeshava Perumal, Ashtabhujakaran,
Ashtabhuja Swami, Chakradharar and Gajendra Varadan
and His consort is known as Alamelumangai,
Pushpavalli Thayar and Padmasini. There is a shrine
for Varaha Perumal in the complex, who is in seated
posture under the hoods of two serpents. The temple
also has shrines dedicated to Hanuman, Alwars, Andal,
Chakrathalwar and Sarabeshwara. The temple
tank, the holy water source, is called Gajendra
Pushkarani.

**Festivals**

There are weekly, monthly and fortnightly rituals
performed at the temple. The 10-day Vaikunta Ekadashi
festival celebrated during the Tamil month of Chittirai
(December - January) is the most prominent festival
celebrated in the temple. Rama Navami and Navarathri
are other prominent festivals celebrated here. Gajendra
Moksha festival is celebrated during the Tamil month of
Aadi (July - August) in the star of Hastham.

Thirumangai Alwar has sung many songs in praise of
the Lord in this temple.

Thirumangai assumes the form of a female and sings
in praise of the Lord. He takes the name Parakala Nayaki
or female form in these compositions.

The Parakala Nayaki says, "Oh! Listen to what happened.
I saw a wise man and asked him, pointing to a figure,
'Who is He, who is—like a man-lion (Narasimha), having
fire-like mane and sword-like teeth, who killed the asura
called Hiranya by splitting open his body into two; who
is praised by Shiva (who burnt the three cities) and
Brahma (who is born of a lotus) and the people of
all worlds, the sound of the hymns resembling the roaring
of the sea?' The 'person' answered, 'I am the one
residing in Ashtabhujakara temple. I have taken this
unique form to help my Bhakta Prahlada and have come
to help you too.'

If Parakala Nayaki had not known the form and nature
of the person, it is but natural that she should ask who
He is. But here Parakala Nayaki asks in wonder, "Who
is He?"

Alwar’s doubt is—whether this extraordinary divine form
is real or illusory. Sita Devi, while in Ashoka vana doubted
the identity of Hanuman even after he said he had come
as Rama *dootha*.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead’s name in this
divya desa is Ashtabhujhan (having eight arms);
Ashtabhujakara temple is the name of the divya desa.
Parakala Nayaki could not see Him face-to-face. Hence
she asks the wise man standing nearby “Who is He?”
The Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself replies,
“i am Ashtabhujan.” He does not say, “I am Vishnu,” but
says Ashtabhujan, why? He does not want to reveal His
own identity Himself. So the indirect way of the name
is revealed: “I am the Lord of Ashtabhujakara temple or
I am the one who resides in Ashtabhujakara temple.”

In Kalidasa’s *Shakuntala*, King Dushyanta meets
Shakuntala in a forest near a sage’s *ashrama*. He reveals
his identity: “I am appointed to do dhrama karya by
Puruvamsa king.” It is interpreted in two ways: “I am
appointed by my father as a king, to carry out the
dhrama karya,” or, “I am just a servant of the people to do their
rakshana karya.”

Similarly the Supreme Personality of Godhead introduces
Himself indirectly and humbly. She asks the wise man, “Who is He? Is He Sri Rama,
the bravest of the brave, who is eulogized by all the
devas with Vedic hymns? Is He Srinivasa of Thirumula,
who the Alwars (Peyyalwar, Bhoodattalwar and Polhai
Alwar) glorify in Tamil *pasurams*? Is He the Vanama
*brahmachari* who begged three feet of land from
Mahabali during his *yaga* and measured them by taking
Thrivikrama *avatara*? I don’t know.”

The Supreme Personality of Godhead replies: “I am
Ashtabhujan.”

The girl asks the wise man, “Oh! He looks very beautiful
with eight arms holding arrows, bow (Saranga), *gadha*
(Kaumadaka), sword (Nandaka), *shankha*
(Panchajanya), *chakra* (Sudarshana), shield and a lotus.
Is He Krishna who is dark like a rain cloud and who
killed Kamsa’s elephant Kuvalayapeeda, pulling its white
tusk?”

The Supreme Personality of Godhead again answers—
’Ashtabhujan.

The girl continues, “Sir! He looks like Krishna of
Vrindavan, who held the Govardhana Mountain as an
umbrella, to protect the cattle and cowherds against the
heavy rains. He looks like Krishna, who killed
Kuvalayapeeda, pulling its huge tusk. He looks like the
Supreme Personality of Godhead of Vaikunta, holding
*shankha* and *chakra* in His hands, chanting Vedas. I do
not really know who He is as I am deluded by His maya.”

He answers, “Ashtabhujan.”
He has created Vedas, which consist of two portions, the karma section and Upanishads, Itihasas (Ramayana and Mahabharata), kalpasutras (method of conducting rituals), grammar (the use of proper words), mimamsa (logic) and the lokas that can be attained by conducting the rituals. All these are given by Him out of extreme compassion for devas and men, so that they can be better persons.

He is sea-hued—He is normally compared to a sea. Here, however, the simile is complete. Whatever is found in the sea is found in Him too. His shoulders are like two huge strong mountains; precious gems in the sea and Kaustubha jewel, on His chest resides Lakshmi Devi who is also born out of sea; shankha (conch shell) Panchajanya in His hand.

Parakala Nayaki continues, “I tried several ways of probing into His nature, but all in vain. He is an expert in maya and captures the minds of all the women, causing pallor of skin, loosening of bangles, abandonment of modesty etc. He is dark like the deep sea and dark clouds. I think He has come here for the purpose of capturing our minds, do you know who He is?”

He answered, “I am from Ashtabhujan.”

She continues, “He is wearing a garland of tulasi that has abundant honey. The bees come and drink the honey, get intoxicated and dance with joy. He has smeared His body with the fragrant sandal paste (given to Him in Krishna avatara by the hunch-backed woman).

Oh! His beauty is beyond description and imagination. His lotus-like eyes, the thirumarbu, red mouth—every part of His body is so beautiful, as if drawn by a skilful painter. When I asked the wise man who He is, He answered, ‘Ashtabhujan.’

She continues, “He has not come alone? There are nitya sooris or eternal residents of Vaikunta who sing hymns standing all around Him; there is Mahalakshmi who is the chief consort; there is shankha in one hand and chakra on the other; Oh! Let me see what His colour is! It is dark like the blue lotus flower and like the dark deep sea. His eyes and form are beyond description. In short, He is my very life. But I do not know who He is. When I asked the wise man he did not reply, but the Supreme Personality of Godhead replied and said, ‘Ashtabhujan.’

She continues, “My mind slipped into darkness (I swooned); my bangles slipped down when I saw Him. He has robbed me of all mine. As if not satisfied and to rob me more, He looked closely at my slender waist. His look was fearful and like poison. He said something in my ears. I did not understand it nor did I understand who He was. He Himself said, ‘I am Ashtabhujan. Why do you fear Me? I have come to save You!’

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

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

To experience the full effects of the holy name, one must attain the stage of offenseless chanting. According to Vaishnava scripture, there are three progressive stages in the development of chanting: the offensive stage (nama-aparadha), the stage of lessening offenses (namabhasa), and the offenseless, pure stage. A neophyte commits offenses against the holy name. According to Padma Purana, there are ten offenses, involving misuse of or mundane misconceptions about the holy name and the scriptures and saints who embody and teach the holy name. One who remains at the offensive stage does not attain the ultimate goal of chanting, love of God. Says Krishnadasa Kaviraja, “If one chants the exalted holy name of the Lord again and again and yet his love for the Supreme Lord does not develop and tears do not appear in his eyes, it is evident that because of his offenses in chanting, the seed of the holy name of Krishna does not sprout.” In fact, without giving up the offenses in chanting, one does not develop a spontaneous attachment for chanting. Taking the role of a conditioned soul, Sri Chaitanya prays, “My dear Lord, although You bestow mercy upon the fallen conditioned souls by liberally teaching Your holy names, I am so unfortunate that I commit offenses while chanting the holy name, and therefore I do not achieve attachment for chanting.”

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

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

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

Krishna Voice, June 2019
died, no one prepares for his own death. He acts as if he will live forever.”

Time vanquishes everything material. With each rising and setting of the sun, with each passing moment, the balance of our life is being snatched away. Each passing birthday means one year closer to death.

Lord Kapila describes a dying man’s final moments:

In his diseased condition, the old man’s eyes bulge due to the pressure of air from within, and his glands become congested with mucus. He has difficulty breathing, and upon exhalting and inhaling he produces a sound like ghura-ghura, a rattling within the throat.

In this way he comes under the clutches of death and lies down, surrounded by lamenting friends and relatives, and although he wants to speak them, he no longer can. Thus he dies pitiably, in inconceivable pain and grief.

Unable to finish his plans, dissatisfied with the provisions he’s made for his family, and unaware of his own fate, the dying man is as helpless as a newborn.

Our brief lifetime is likened to a bubble in the ocean. The tossing of ocean waves produces many small bubbles that stay together for some time and then separate, never to reunite. Similarly, our family, friends, and countrymen cluster like bubbles, only to be separated by death.

Although all conditioned souls, as eternal spiritual beings, are not meant to die, they are subject to death because their existence is intertwined with material nature. But it is possible to become disentangled, to solve the problem of death.

Conclusion

“The saints and sages,” Devahuti said, “being freed from all the disturbances of the senses and mind, meditate upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for by His mercy only can one become free from the clutches of material nature.”

Lord Kapila appreciated her realization and said.

The path of devotional service is very easy. You can execute this system without difficulty, and by following it you shall very soon be liberated, even within your present body. Persons who are not conversant with this method of devotional service to the Supreme Lord certainly cannot get out of the cycle of birth and death.

Since the conditioned soul doesn’t know of the spiritual science called devotional service, he works hard and neglects to look philosophically at the causes of and cures for his miseries. But the unconditioned soul withdraws his senses from material activities and, well-equipped with knowledge and detachment, engages them fully in the service of the Supreme Lord. Anyone whose only aim is to serve the Supreme Lord under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master is liberated even within the material body. Although he will still have to satisfy the body’s basic needs, he is not disturbed by the forces of material nature.

“You mean an unconditioned soul doesn’t grow old, get diseases, or die?” you may ask in disbelief. Of course, from an external viewpoint he does experience these conditions. But in a higher, spiritual sense he doesn’t, because he has realized that he’s not the material body but the spirit soul within. Just as my wearing an old coat and blouse won’t make me old, similarly the conditions of the body and mind can never actually affect the eternal soul.

So even death the ultimate material condition has no influence on the liberated soul. For example, when a cat holds a rat in its mouth, the rat feels terror, knowing that death is near. But when that same cat holds its kitten in its mouth, the kitten feels comfort. Similarly, when death comes for a conditioned soul, he’s terrified, but for an unconditioned soul “death” means that the Lord has come to carry him back to Godhead, back to the spiritual world. 😊
"I do not know how much nectar the two syllables 'Krishna' have produced. When the holy name of Krishna, is chanted, it appears to dance within the mouth. We then desire many, many mouths. When that name enters the holes of the ears, we desire many millions of ears. And when the holy name dances in the courtyard of the heart, it conquers the activities of the mind, and therefore all the senses become inert."

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

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

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

According to historically reliable literary accounts, medieval India witnessed a massive religious renaissance centered largely on the popular mysticism of the congregational chanting and singing of the names of God. This litany often took the form of the mahamantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, An investigation into how transcendental sound transforms consciousness and invokes spiritual ecstasy

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

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

The Divine Attributes of the Holy Name

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

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

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

The Practice of Chanting the Holy Name

Since the holy name is spiritual, it must be received from spiritual sources. The holy name-and, ultimately, all spiritual wisdom is preserved and transmitted by generation after generation of realized souls comprising a disciplic succession of spiritual teachers. The mantra, the holy name, which is the seed of spiritual devotion, is planted within the heart of the sincere disciple by the spiritual master at the time of formal spiritual initiation. When uttered in devotion by a fully realized guru, the holy name has great efficacy upon the hearer, who achieves immediate benefit. Having received the holy name from the lips of a spiritual master, the student embarks upon the path of daily chanting, being careful to pronounce the mantra clearly and distinctly and to chant loudly enough to hear himself. The chanter must absorb his consciousness deeply within the divine sound of the mantra, vigilantly protecting the mind from the distraction of trivial or directionless thought.
4 No-Nonsense Facts of Life

A hard look at the problems we all face.

by Visakha-devi dasi

You may have heard Krishna’s devotees use the term *conditioned soul*, and you may have wondered what it meant. A conditioned soul is one controlled by the insurmountable forces of material nature, especially the miseries of birth, aging, disease, and death.

For us conditioned souls in the material world, all the rewards and pleasantries of life, the tender love of our friends and relatives, our homes, hobbies, studies, dinners at eight, and tennis on Sundays, all are fleeting because of these relentless impositions of nature. Some souls, desiring to attain lasting pleasure, try to become unconditioned, free from the influence of material nature.

To do this they require a qualified spiritual teacher, as well as guidebooks, like *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, elaborate treatises on material and spiritual knowledge. *Bhagavad-gita* describes one aspect of knowledge as “the perception of the evil of birth, death, old age, and disease.” This unabashedly pessimistic view of material life is an impetus for those who want to become unconditioned.

In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Third Canto, this impetus is strengthened through a discussion between Lord Kapila, an incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and His mother, Devahuti.

“Devahuti said: My dear Lord, please describe in detail how the life force, the soul, enters a woman through a particle of male semen during sexual intercourse, how the fetus develops over the weeks and months of pregnancy, and how it suffers. Owing to the mother’s eating bitter pungent food, or food which is too salty or too sour, the body of the child incessantly suffers pains which are almost intolerable. Covered outside by the intestines, the child remains lying on one side of the abdomen, his head turned toward his belly and his back arched like a bow. The child thus remains just like a bird in a cage without freedom of movement.

Although scientific researchers have confirmed many of the *Bhagavatam’s* statements about the development of the fetus, they have yet to discover how much it suffers. As we have forgotten the pain of injuries or illnesses we suffered years ago, we have similarly forgotten the pain of the fetal condition.

And what to speak of the birth itself! “Pushed downward all of a sudden by the wind that helps parturition,” Kapila describes, “the child comes out with great trouble, head downward, breathless, and deprived of memory due to severe agony.”

As any mother knows, the infant’s miseries continue after birth. The helpless babe can’t express what he wants, nor can he refuse the undesirables given him. He can’t scratch himself or even move properly, and he cries from indigestion, colic, teething, teasing, and from pains that only he knows.

Just as a farmer neglects his old and worn-out animals, so, in Lord Kapila’s words, “seeing the old man unable to support them, his family members do not treat him with the same respect as before.” Thus old people, regarded by their relatives as too difficult to live with and care for, languish in homes for the aged. If they do stay home, “they remain just like a pet dog and eat whatever is negligently given to them.” Afflicted with many illnesses, Kapila explains, they eat only small morsels of food and remain idle invalids, while their bodies dwindle and deteriorate under the imperceptible yet indomitable influence of time. The old person’s body becomes a time-ravaged shell, like an abandoned house, a barren structure without facilities or comfort.

In the form of old age, time serves a summons of death that no one can refuse. But instead of preparing for death, senior citizens erect a lackluster facade of painted wrinkles, dyed hair, and sporty clothes. Living on their “golden years” retirement funds, they enjoy shuffleboard, mild surf, and shopping expeditions until death comes and their body, along with its facade, returns to dust.

Despite extensive medical research, sophisticated hospitals, and hard-working doctors, disease has not decreased. Just as the body must take birth and must die, so it must be wracked by one or more of myriad diseases from arthritis to AIDS, from muscle sprains to mental imbalance. Though considered an abnormal condition, disease is actually the normal condition imposed on the bodies of all conditioned souls subjected to the impositions of nature.

“What is the most amazing thing?” a sagacious king was once asked. “The most amazing thing,” the king responded, “is that although everyone knows he is destined to die, just as his relatives and friends have
Freedom from the Reactions to Sin

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

Freedom from Desire Due to Illusion

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

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

Enlightenment

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

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

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

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

God Consciousness

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

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

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

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

Ecstatic Love of God

Absorption in God consciousness culminates in prema-bhakti, pure love of God. Writes Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, “The holy name of Krishna is so attractive that anyone who chants it.... becomes imbued with love of Krishna. This is the effect of chanting the Hare Krishna mantra.” Sri Chaitanya similarly instructs Sanatana Gosvami, “Of the nine processes of devotional service, the most important is to chant the holy name of the Lord always. If one does so, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of Godhead.”

Pure love for Krishna elicits the most sublime and lofty
emotions of the soul. Liberation or spiritual perfection implies not the absence of cognition or emotion, but their ultimate perfection. Within the soul are profound transcendental emotions, which lie dormant as long as the soul sleeps in maya, material illusion. But such sublime emotions awaken with the awakening of pure, spiritual consciousness. The entire range of emotions experienced by a conditioned soul (such as happiness and misery, love and hate, compassion and envy) are merely dim and perverted reflections of their spiritual counterparts, which exist in absolute purity and are experienced by fully realized souls in their eternal relationship with the Lord. When the soul has awakened to pure love of Krishna, he tastes the infinitely sweet flavours of a wide variety of transcendental emotions, emotions which are variegated manifestations of spiritual ecstasy. Such transcendental, ecstatic emotions within the heart and mind of the pure devotee are so powerful that they erupt and spill over into the realm of the physical. In pursuance of the order of His spiritual master, Sri Chaitanya entered upon the path of constant chanting of the holy name of Krishna. When such chanting invoked intense spiritual ecstasy, He wondered whether He had lost His sanity. He approached His guru, Ishvara Puri, who then explained,

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

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

Beyond Death

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

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

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

The Divine Dispensation

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

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

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

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

Lord Chaitanya did not advent Himself to liberate only a few men in India. Rather, His main objective was to emancipate all living entities of all countries throughout the entire universe and preach the Eternal Religion.... There is no doubt that this unquestionable order will come to pass.... Very soon the unparalleled path of hari-nama-sankirtana will be propagated all over the world.... Oh, for that day when the fortunate English, French, Russian, German, and American people will take up banners, mrdangas and karatalas and raise kirtana through their streets and towns! When will that day come?.... That day will witness the holy transcendental ecstasy of the Vaishnava dharma to be the only dharma, and all the sects and religions will flow like rivers into the ocean of Vaishnava dharma. When will that day come?

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

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

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare
Patotsav at HKM Ahmedabad

Patotsav, the anniversary celebration of the appearance of Sri Sri Radha Madhav at HKM Ahmedabad was celebrated from May 3-7, 2019. The festivities included Ratha Yatra, Nauka Vihar, Jhulan Seva, Swarna Ratha (Golden Chariot) and Churnabhisheka.

Brahmotsavam at HKM Hyderabad

The Brahmotsavam celebrations conducted grandly at Hare Krishna Golden Temple with festivities for 5 days (May 9 - 13) in which there were elaborate Vedic rituals including grand Sudarshana Narasimha homas, pallaki processions, maha abhishekams, Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy kalyanam, ecstatic sankirtans and the celebrations, concluded with a grand Radha Govinda abhishekam, purnahuthi and maha

samparkshana. In maha kumbha samparkshanam, Padma Sri Awardee Sriman Madhu Pandit Dasa - Chairman of The Akshaya Patra Foundation and Temple President of ISKCON Bangalore, participated and performed Sri Radha Govinda abhisekham. Then holy waters were sprinkled on the gathered devotees. Many devotees from all parts of the city participated enthusiastically in the celebrations and received the Lord's blessings.
PANIHATI CHIDA-DAHI UTSAVA

Saturday, June 15, 2019

Panihati Chida-dahi Utsava was first conducted 502 years ago in Panihati near Kolkata by Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami on the order of Sri Nityananda Prabhu. He offered a delicious sweet preparation, made with chipped rice, yogurt, milk and fruits, called chida-dahi in Bengali to Sri Nityananda Prabhu and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in this festival. By the mercy of Lord Nityananda, he joined Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mission.

We invite you to participate in the celebrations at ISKCON Bangalore and receive the blessings of Sri Sri Nitai Gauranga.

Know More

The Story of Panihati Festival

Panihati Festival - 5 Lessons

Lord Nityananda

Srila Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami
https://bit.ly/2Q8MxG0

Chida-dahi Recipe
https://bit.ly/2rjXhHL

Glimpses of Panihati Festival
https://bit.ly/2vZXbFt

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Bangalore
## ISKCON Pilgrimages

### Mayapur Pilgrimage

*“Chaitanya-Mercy Unlimited”*

- **Mon, Jul 15 to Sat, Jul 20, 2019**
- **Places of visit:**
  - Sridham Mayapur, Yogapitha - birthplace of Lord Chaitanya, ISKCON Chand Kazi samadhi, Rajapur, Ganga, Shantipur, Panthiati, Srimla Bhaktinoda Thakur house, Chaitanya Matha
  - .....and many more
- **Amount:** ₹11,000/-
  - + flight charges

### Srirangam – Kumbakonam Pilgrimage

- **Fri, Aug 16 to Mon, Aug 19, 2019**
- **Places of visit:**
  - Kumbakonam - Sarangapani, Chakrpani, Ramaswamy, Uppiliyappan temples, Srirangam - Ranganathaswamy, Yamunacharya, Narasimha temples, Kaveri and more
- **Amount:** ₹6,500/-

### Trivandrum – Kanyakumari Madurai Pilgrimage

- **Thu, Aug 1 (6 pm) to Mon, Aug 5 (6 am) 2019**
- **Places of visit:**
  - Adikesava temple and Anantha Padmanabhaswamy temple in Trivandrum
  - Many temples in Kanyakumari
  - Temples in Nagarkoil and Tirunelveli
  - Madurai Meenakshi temple and Koodal Azhagar temple
- **Amount:** ₹10,500/-

### Pandharpur – Kolhapur Pilgrimage

*“Vitthala-Vitthala”*

- **Fri, Aug 30 (6 pm) to Mon, Sep 2 (6 am) 2019**
- **Places of visit:**
  - Pandharpur, Vitthala temple, Vishnupada Gopalgad, Chandrabhaga river, Kolhapur Mahalaxmi temple and more
- **Amount:** ₹7,500/-

### Char-Dham Pilgrimage

- **Batch 1**
  - **Sat, Sept 7 to Wed, Sept 18, 2019**
- **Batch 2**
  - **Thu, Sept 19 to Mon, Sep 30, 2019**
- **Places of visit:**
  - Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Rishikesh, Haridwar and more
- **Amount:** ₹56,000/-
  - (Including Kedarnath helicopter charges and flight from Bangalore-Dehradun-Bangalore)

**Limited seats. First come first served basis**
“Thank you so much for organizing this pilgrimage so well ..., thoroughly enjoyed and gained knowledge more about Lord Hanuman. This trip will be a great memory lane in my life. Hare Krishna.” —Jagathi, Software Engineer

“Thank you ISKCON. We had devotional enjoyment in the tour. Nicely organised. Stay and prasadam were also nice. Thanks to your entire team. Hare Krishna.” —Anant Bhat and Jayanti Bhat, Mangalore

“I thank the ISKCON team for one more wonderful pilgrimage which gave us knowledge and information about our Lord’s (Sri Rama) visit to the South India. It will be a great memory for us. Thank you.” —Jayashree, Homemaker

Join us for a spiritual and devotional retreat with ecstatic kirtans, bhajans, pastime narrations and delicious Krishna prasadam!

For registration contact: 93791 55555  
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The Cultural Education Services (CES) division of ISKCON Bangalore organized its unique and holistic Culture Camp 2019, in two batches at the Hare Krishna Hill temple, Rajajinagar. It is that time of the year when the presence of innocent children bring further buzz to the spiritually surcharged atmosphere of the temple, with their bubbling energy adding to its vibrancy.

Organised with the sole aim of enriching young minds with the timeless Vedic culture and appreciation of our glorious heritage, the camp saw the participation of children across the age group of 6 to 16 years. The children journeyed through the systematically planned camp course with immense eagerness and enthusiasm to learn, their faces always lit with joyous smiles all through the camp.

The marvelous sight of children reciting Bhagavad-gita slokas, learning the nuances of pronunciation of Sanskrit mantras and prayers, doing mantra meditation, participating in soulful kirtans, gleefully immersing in festival story-telling sessions, experientially gaining awareness and knowledge about historical pilgrimage centres like Jagannath Puri dham and Vrindavan dham, undertaking a spiritual trip to a holy place, creatively decorating their camp scrap books, besides imbibing life skills through a variety of modules based on
performing and non-performing arts, all of it indeed, a sight to behold. The two camps culminated into grand Talents Day celebrations with children visually treating the gathering of family and friends to a wonderful glimpse of all that was remarkably imbibed by them within a short span of 21 days.

The curtains to the ISKCON Culture Camp 2019 were drawn with the promise of enabling children to stay connected with the value-based learnings, not only during the summer vacations, but throughout the year, with the announcement of the Culture Camp Connect program, a quarterly event that will offer children the much-required opportunity to re-assemble, reinforce and enhance cultural learnings on a regular basis.

For more details about the Culture Camp Connect Program call: 9341211119/9341124222
Sri Rama Navami
The divine appearance day of Lord Ramachandra was celebrated at Hare Krishna Movement, Ahmedabad and Hare Krishna Golden Temple, Hyderabad on April 14, 2019.

Srila Gaurakishora Dasa
Srila Gaurakishora Dasa Babaji, a great Vaishnava acharya, was an embodiment of a high level of renunciation. Though illiterate, he was a vastly learned and self-realized soul.

The Stages of Chanting
Srila Prabhupada explains the three stages of chanting the Hare Krishna maha-mantra: chanting with offense, chanting as a liberated person and chanting in love of God.

Sudama Seva
This is an opportunity for devotees who wish to contribute on a monthly basis towards the charitable initiatives of ISKCON Bangalore.

Reviews from tripadvisor

Nice place to worship and enjoy prasadam: Lord Krishna's blessings for Bangalore crowd. Love the place, food and ambience. Every corner is filled with holy wishes of Krishna. Hare Rama Hare Krishna everywhere. You can buy cool souvenirs. - Shubham S

Place with lot of positive vibrations... Can feel the Lord's presence: My favorite place to feel the presence of energy that energizes you at the start of the day and calms you down at the end of the day... The best place to visit the temple is for the Darshan Aarti at 7:15 am or the Shayana Aarti at 8:00 pm. ... The evening wind breeze while the devotees sing bhajans in a soothing lighting invokes a beautiful feeling within me that I can't describe... Everyone should definitely experience it once. - GowriM33

Beautiful temple!! The Hare Rama Hare Krishna is really beautiful from the inside. The chanting of Hare Krishna is really soothing to the mind. Quite crowded during weekends and evenings. The food is great and wide variety of food stalls to choose from. - 46manjunathh

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