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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 ashrams, schools, temples and farm communities. He passed away in 1977, in Vrindavana, the place most sacred to Lord Krishna. His disciples and followers are carrying forward the movement he started.

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

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Dhritarashtra was the eldest son of his father, and therefore according to law he was to be installed on the throne of Hastinapura. He was disqualified, however, from his rightful claim because he was blind from birth. Nevertheless he could not forget this bereavement, and his disappointment was somewhat compensated after the death of Pandu, his younger brother. His younger brother left behind him some minor children, and Dhritarashtra became their natural guardian. At heart, however, he wanted to become the factual king and hand over the kingdom to his own sons, headed by Duryodhana.

With all these imperial ambitions, Dhritarashtra contrived all sorts of intrigues in consultation with his brother-in-law Shakuni. By the will of the Lord, however, everything failed, but at the last stage, even after losing all his men and money in the Battle of Kurukshetra, Dhritarashtra still wanted to remain king, being the eldest uncle of Maharaja Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira, who emerged victorious after the Battle of Kurukshetra, maintained Dhritarashtra in royal honour as a matter of duty. Thus Dhritarashtra was happily passing his numbered days under the illusion of being a king as the royal uncle of King Yudhisthira.

Dhritarashtra at this point was aided by his youngest brother, the great saint and sage Vidura. Vidura came to the palace to speak to Dhritarashtra because he felt duty-bound to awaken him from his slumber of disease and old age. Consequently Vidura addressed Dhritarashtra as “King” although Dhritarashtra was not a king in fact. Actually everyone is a servant of eternal time, and therefore no one can be king in this material world. A king is a person who can order. However, even a king cannot order time and tide. Therefore one is only a false king in this material world, and Vidura particularly reminded Dhritarashtra of this false position and of the fearful happenings approaching him at this time. Vidura informed him that if he wanted to be saved from the fearful situation that was approaching him fast, he had best get out of his illusion immediately.

An insanely attached householder who is blind to the passing of eternal time thinks, “I am now happy. I have everything in order. My bank balance is quite enough. I can now give my children enough estate. I am now successful. The poor sannyasi beggars depend on God, but they come to beg from me. Therefore I am more than the Supreme God.”

The fact is, however, that our duration of life is measured, and no one is able to enhance it even by a second against that time ordained by the supreme will. A human being should cautiously spend his valuable time because even one second passed away cannot be replaced, not even in exchange for thousands of golden coins amassed by hard labour. Every second of human life is meant for making an ultimate solution to the problems of life, namely the repetition of birth and death and the continuation of the cycle of birth in 8,400,000 species of life.

The material body, which is subject to birth and death, disease and old age, is the cause of all sufferings for the living entity. Otherwise the living entity is eternal; he is never born, nor does he ever die. Foolish people forget the problem of repeated birth and death. They do not know how to solve the problems of life, but instead they become engrossed in temporary family affairs, not knowing that eternal time passes imperceptibly. Unaware that their measured life span diminishes with every second, they do not make any solution to the big problem, which is the repetition of birth, death, disease and old age. Such a mentality is called illusion.

There is no superior power that can check the cruel hands of death. According to Srimad-Bhagavatam:

\[
\text{pratikriya na yasyeha} \\
\text{kutascit karhicit prabho} \\
\text{sa esa bhagavan kalah} \\
\text{sarvesam nah samagatah}
\]

“This frightful situation cannot be remedied by any person in this material world. It is the Supreme Personality of Godhead as eternal time [kala] that has approached us all.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.13.19) However acute the source of bodily sufferings may be, no one wants to die. Even in these days of so-called scientific advancement of knowledge, there is no remedial measure either for old age or for death. Old age is the notice of the arrival of death served by cruel time, and no one can refuse to accept either summon calls or the supreme judgment of eternal time.

Because Dhritarashtra might otherwise have asked Vidura to find some remedy for the imminent fearful situation, Vidura informed him that there is no remedial measure against death in this material world. Because there is nothing comparable to death in this material world, death is identical with the Supreme Personality of Godhead,
and this is stated by the Lord Himself in Bhagavad-gita: (Bg. 10.34): mṛtyuh sarva-haras caham. "I am all-devouring death."

Death cannot be checked by anyone. Hiranyakashipu, in an attempt to become immortal, underwent a severe penance that caused the whole universe to tremble. Brahma himself approached Hiranyakashipu to dissuade him from executing such severe penances, and Hiranyakashipu asked Brahma to award him the blessings of immortality. Brahma said, however, that he himself was subject to death, which governs even the topmost planet. How, then, could he award him the benediction of immortality? Therefore there is death even in the highest planet of this universe, and what to speak of other planets, which are far, far inferior in quality to Brahmaloka, the residence of Brahma.

Wherever there is eternal time, there is birth, disease, old age and death, and all of these are invincible. Indeed, there is no powerful living being within the universe who can overcome the influence of time. Many poets have written verses on the influence of time, and many devastations have taken place over the universe due to the influence of time. No one could check these devastations by any means. Even in our daily life so many things come and go, and we have no hand in them. We simply have to suffer or tolerate them. We are helpless to provide any remedy. This is the result of time. According to Srimad-Bhagavatam:

yena caiva bhāpam yo
pranaiḥ priyatamār api
janah sadyo viyujyetā
kim utanyaiṛ dhanadibhiḥ

"Whoever is under the influence of supreme kāla [eternal time] must surrender his dear life, and what to speak of other things, such as wealth, honour, children, land and home." (Bhag. 1.13.20)

Thus Vidura reminded Dhritarashtra of his precarious condition, influenced by cruel time, for by his past experience Dhritarashtra should have more intelligently seen what was going to happen to his own life. Vidura told him:

pitr-bhrat-suhrt-putra
hatas te vigatam vayam
atma ca jaraya grastah
para-geham upasase

"Your father, brother, well-wishers and sons are all dead and passed away. You yourself have expended the major portion of your life, your body is now overtaken by invalidity, and you are now living in the home of another person." [Bhag. 1.13.21]

Dhritarashtra's father, Vichitravirya, had died long ago, when Dhritarashtra and his younger brothers were all little children, and it was due to the care and kindness of Bhishmadeva that they were properly brought up. Then again his brother Pandu died also. Then in the Battle of Kurukshetra his one hundred sons and grandsons all died, along with all other well-wishers like Bhishmadeva, Dronacharya, Karna and many other kings and friends. Thus Dhritarashtra had lost all his men and money, and now he was living at the mercy of his nephew, Yudhisthira, whom he had put into various types of trouble.

Despite all these reverses, Dhritarashtra thought he would prolong his life more and more. Therefore Vidura wanted to point out to him that everyone has to protect himself by his action and the grace of the Lord. One has to execute his duty faithfully and depend for the results on the supreme authority. No friends, no children, no father, no brother, no state nor anyone else can protect a person not protected by the Supreme Lord. One should therefore seek the protection of the Supreme Lord, for the human form of life is meant for seeking that protection.

Vidura even went further in warning Dhritarashtra of his precarious condition,

andhah puraiva vadhiro
manda-prajnas ca sampratam
visirna-danto mandagnih
saragah kapham udvahan

"You have been blind from your very birth," Vidura told him, "and recently you have become hard of hearing. Your memory is shortened, and your intelligence is disturbed. Your teeth are loose, your liver is defective, and you are coughing up mucus." (Bhag. 1.13.22) The symptoms of old age were already developed in Dhritarashtra, and one by one Vidura pointed them out to him, concluding that they all served as a warning that death was approaching very quickly. Nonetheless Dhritarashtra was foolishly carefree about his future.
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|| Hare Krishna Hare Rama ||
The signs pointed out by Vidura in the body of Dhritarashtra were signs of the material body's dwindling before the last strokes of death. The body takes birth, develops, stays, creates other bodies, dwindles and then vanishes. Foolish men want to make a permanent settlement for the perishable body, and they think that their estate, children, society, country, etc., will give them protection. Because of such foolish ideas, they are over taken by temporary engagements, and they altogether forget that they must give up this temporary body and take on a new one to arrange for another cycle of society, friendship and love, which will again ultimately perish. Forgetting their permanent identity, they become foolishly active in nonpermanent occupations, forgetting their prime duty altogether.

Saints and sages like Vidura approach such foolish men to awaken them to the real situation, but unfortunately such sadhus [holy men] and saints are taken as social parasites. Thus foolish men refuse to hear the words of these sadhus and saints, although they welcome show bottle sadhus and so-called saints who can satisfy their senses. Vidura was not a sadhu who satisfied the unfortunate sentiments of men like Dhritarashtra. He was correctly pointing out the real situation and informing him how he could save himself from the catastrophes of life. A sadhu should never flatter kings or rich men to live comfortably at their cost. A sadhu should speak to householders about the naked truth so that they may come to their senses regarding the precarious material existence.

Dhritarashtra is a typical example of an attached old man in household life. Although he became a pauper in the true sense, he nonetheless wanted to live comfortably in the house of the Pandavas. Thus Vidura told him:

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aho mahiyasi jantor
jivitasa yatha bhavan
bhimapavarjitam pindam
adatte grha-palavat
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"Alas, how powerful are the hopes of a living being to continue his life. Verily, you are living just like a household dog and are eating remnants of food given by Bhima." (Bhag. 1.13.23) Vidura especially mentioned Bhima because Bhima personally killed Dhritarashtra's two prominent sons, Duryodhana and Duhshyasana. These two sons were very dear to Dhritarashtra for their notorious and nefarious activities, and Bhima was particularly pointed out because he killed these two pet sons. Why was Dhritarashtra living at the house of the Pandavas? Because he wanted to continue his life comfortably, even at the risk of all humiliation. Vidura was therefore astonished at the powerful urge to continue life despite humiliation.

This sense of continuing one's life indicates that a living being is eternally a living entity and does not want to change his bodily habitation. A foolish man does not know that a particular term of bodily existence is awarded to him as a term of imprisonment, and the human body is awarded after many, many births and deaths as a chance for self-realization to go back home, back to Godhead. Persons like Dhritarashtra try to make plans to live in the material body in a comfortable position with profit and interest, for they do not see things as they are.

Dhritarashtra was blind, and he continued to hope to live comfortably in the midst of all of life's reverses. A sadhu like Vidura is meant to awaken such blind people and thus help them return to Godhead, where life is eternal. Upon returning to God, one does not want to return to this material world of miseries. We can hardly imagine how responsible a task is entrusted to a sadhu like Mahatma Vidura.

The system of varnasrama religion sets aside a part of one's life completely for the purpose of self-realization and attainment of salvation in the human form of life. That is a routine division of life. But persons like Dhritarashtra, even at their weary ripened age, want to stay home, even in a degraded condition. Dhritarashtra was actually accepting charity from his enemies. Wanting to point this out and impress upon him that it was better to die like his sons than to accept such humiliating charity, Vidura told him:

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agnir nisrsto dattas ca
garo daras ca dusitah
hrtam ksetram dhanam yesam
tad-dattair asubhih kiyat
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"There is no need to live a degraded life and subsist on the charity of those whom you tried to kill by arson and poisoning. You also insulted one of their wives and usurped their kingdom and wealth." (Bhag. 1.13.24)

Five thousand years ago there was one Dhritarashtra, but at the present moment there are many Dhritarashtras in every home. Politicians especially do not retire from political activities unless dragged by the cruel hand of death or killed by some opposing element. To stick to family life till the end of one's human life is the grossest type of degradation, and there is an absolute need for Viduras to educate such Dhritarashtras, even at the present moment.

Vidura further informed Dhritarashtra: “Despite your unwillingness to die and your desire to live even at the cost...
of honour and prestige, your miserly [krpana] body will certainly dwindle and deteriorate like an old garment." (Bhag. 1.13.25) The words krpanasya jijivisoh in this verse are significant. There are two classes of men. One is called a krpana, and the other is called a brahmana. The krpana, the miserly man, has no estimation of his material body, but the brahmana has a true estimation of himself and the material body. Having a wrong estimation of his material body, the krpana wants to enjoy sense gratification with his utmost strength, and even in old age he tries to become a young man by medical treatment or otherwise. Dhritarashtra is addressed herein as a krpana because without considering his material body he wants to live at any cost, and Vidura is trying to open his eyes to see that he cannot live more than his time and that he must prepare for death.

Since death is inevitable, why should one accept such a humiliating position? It is better to take the right path, even at the risk of death. Human life is meant for finishing all kinds of miseries that arise due to material existence, and life should be so regulated that one can achieve the desired goal. Because of his wrong conception of life, Dhritarashtra had already spoiled eighty percent of his energy, so it behooved him to utilize his remaining days for the ultimate good. Dhritarashtra's life was miserly because he did not properly utilize the assets of the human form of life. By good luck such a miserly man meets a self-realized soul like Vidura, and by Vidura's instructions he gets rid of the nescience of material existence.

Narottama Dasa Thakura, a great Krishna conscious devotee and spiritual master, has sung:

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hari-hari viphale janama gonainu
manusya-janama paiya,
radha-Krishna na bhajiya
janiya suniya visa khainu
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"My Lord, I have simply wasted my life. Having obtained the human body, I have neglected to worship Your Lordship, and therefore willingly I have drunk poison." In other words, the human body is especially meant for cultivating knowledge of devotional service to the Lord, without which life is full of anxieties and miserable conditions. Therefore one who has spoiled his life without such cultural activities is advised to leave home without the knowledge of friends or relatives and, being thus freed from all obligations to family, society, country, etc., give up the body at some unknown destination so that others may not know where and how he has met his death.

Thus Vidura advised Dhritarashtra:

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gata-svartham imam deham
virakto mukta-bandhanah
avijnata-gatir jahyat
sa vai dhira udahrtah
```

"He is called undisturbed [dhira] who goes to an unknown, remote place and, freed from all obligations, quits his material body when it has become useless." (Bhag. 1.13.26) A dhira is one who is not disturbed, even when there is sufficient provocation. Generally, one cannot give up a comfortable life due to his affectionate relation with wife and children. Self-realization is obstructed by such undue affection for family, and if anyone is at all able to forget such a relation, he is called undisturbed, or dhira.

This, however, is the path of renunciation based on a frustrated life, but stabilization of such renunciation is possible only by association with bona fide saints and self-realized souls who can engage one in the loving devotional service of the Lord. Sincere surrender unto the lotus feet of the Lord is possible by awakening the transcendental sense of service, and this is made possible by the association of pure devotees of the Lord. Dhritarashtra was lucky enough to have a brother like Vidura whose very association was a source of liberation for his frustrated life. Vidura further told Dhritarashtra:

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yah svakat parato veha
jata-nirveda atmavan
hrdi krtva harim gehat
pravrajet sa narottamah
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"He is certainly a first-class man who awakens and understands, either by himself or from others, the falsity and misery of this material world and thus leaves home and depends fully on the Personality of Godhead residing in his heart." (Bhag. 1.13.27) Real perfection on the path of liberation is obtained when one is practiced to depend fully on the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who lives in everyone's heart. One may live in the darkest jungle alone, but a steadfast devotee knows very well that he is never alone. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is within him, and He can protect His sincere devotee in any awkward circumstance. One should therefore practice
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"Thus Maharaja Dhritarashtra, the scion of the family of Ajamidha, firmly convinced by introspective knowledge, broke at once the strong network of familial affection by his resolute determination. Thus he immediately left home to set out on the path of liberation, as directed by his younger brother Vidura." (Bhag. 1.13.29)

Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the great preacher of the principles of Srimad-Bhagavatam, has stressed the importance of association with sadhus, or pure devotees of the Lord. He said that even by a moment's association with a pure devotee, one can achieve all perfection. Vidura's association with Dhritarashtra serves as an example of this truth. Maharaja Dhritarashtra was tightly bound in a network of material affinities related to politics, economy and family attachment, and he did everything in his power to achieve so-called success in his planned projects, but he was frustrated from the beginning to the end so far as his material activities were concerned. And yet, despite his life of failure, he achieved the greatest of all success in self-realization by the forceful instructions of a pure devotee of the Lord, who is the typical emblem of a sadhu. The scriptures enjoin, therefore, that one should associate with sadhus only, rejecting all other kinds of association, and by so doing one will have ample opportunity to hear the sadhus, who can cut to pieces the bonds of illusory affection in the material world.

It is a fact that the material world is a great illusion because everything appears to be a tangible reality but at the next moment everything is evaporated like the dashing foam of the sea or a cloud in the sky. A cloud in the sky undoubtedly appears to be a reality because it rains and due to rain so many temporary green things appear, but in the ultimate issue, everything disappears, namely the cloud, rain and green vegetation, all in due course. But the sky remains, and the varieties of luminaries in the sky also remain forever. Similarly the Absolute Truth, which is compared to the sky, remains eternally, and the temporary cloudlike illusion comes and goes away. Foolish living beings are attracted by the temporary cloud, but intelligent men are more concerned with the eternal sky with all its variegatedness.

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So who cares what a rascal believes or disbelieves? For instance, a child may receive some factual information and say, "I don't believe." His mother will say, "You are a rascal. Go to your room."

So rascals may believe or not believe that they will have a next life and they must not slaughter animals. They believe or disbelieve. What is the difference? The next life is part of nature's law. Those who do not believe are mudhas, asses. And in their next life they will go to their room—Mother Nature will confine them in hog, dog, ass bodies.

Tatha dehantara-praptih. In Bhagavad-gita, Lord Krishna gives this simple example: Just as the soul gets new bodies in this life—first a baby body, then a child body, next a teenage body, later an adult body, and finally an aged body—so after this life, he'll get still another new body.

What is the difficulty in understanding this simple fact? We know that whatever body we have at present, it will not remain. In the womb, the soul had a very tiny body. When he emerged, he had a considerably larger body—a new body. And as time goes on, he will get another new body, and another new body, and another new body. And if at the end of this life he remains ignorant of his real, spiritual identity, then nature will force him into another womb and yet another new material body.

So it is very difficult to deal with rascals who disbelieve in the spiritual self—the soul. It is difficult to deal with these ignorant rascals. That's a fact. But you should also know that in their ignorance, whatever else they are doing in their lives is defeat. Defeat. They are missing the priceless opportunity of going back to the spiritual world. Instead, they will have to stay in this material world and accept more and more material bodies—more rounds of birth, old age, disease, and death. Ignorant rascals are automatically defeated, by their very own ignorance.

[To a disciple:] Your little baby here—does he believe he's going to get the body of a young man?
[To the baby:] Do you believe?
[Laughs.]

Huh? What is your opinion?
[Laughter.]

Now, those who are flesh-eaters
are going to get obnoxious bodies in their next lives. For their wanton cruelty, nature will force them into the bodies of hogs and dogs.

So why don't you inform these unfortunate souls? Tell them, "Friend, you have no need to kill animals. When one of our cows dies, you can come here to our farm and take away the carcass. You'll have an ample supply of flesh, at no expense."

**Disciple:** That would be illegal. The government would not allow it. It would be illegal.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Killing is illegal, according to the law of God. But the government does not want to follow God's law. They would rather follow their own cruel whims.

On the one side, the government prohibits the flesh-eaters from eating animals who have died a natural death. On the other side, they allow the flesh-eaters to put millions of animals to most unnatural, painful death in slaughterhouses.

These rascals are in power. But legally—according to God's law—they should permit flesh-eaters to eat only animals who have died a natural death.

In India, for example, after some animal has died, people come and take the carcass away—free. They get it without any cost to themselves. They get the skin for making shoes and so forth. They get the flesh for eating. Let them cook and eat it if they want. The farmer does not charge anything.

And we would not charge anything. "Here. You can take it. Why slaughterhouses? Take this."

**Disciple:** Nowadays the government objects even if you let wild animals eat the carcass.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Oh, if jackals and foxes come and eat the carcass, the government doesn't like it? They would rather have the jackals and foxes come and eat townspeople?

You see, once these wild animals have gotten their fill on some carcass, they will not attack humans. If a wild animal is not hungry, he will not attack you. Even a ferocious tiger—if his hunger is satisfied, he doesn't attack.

So some day, when the government is made up of godly men, there will be no more slaughterhouses. And you'll be able to advertise, "Here is a cow carcass—available free." Those who are butchers and tanners can take the flesh and skins free. If they had to obtain these things from some slaughterhouse, they would have to pay. But this way, they'll make more profit.

**Disciple:** Srila Prabhupada, many people may object, "We don't want to eat an aged, partially decomposed carcass. The animal has to be slaughtered fresh."

**Srila Prabhupada:** That argument is not valid. For instance, on airplanes I have seen other passengers eating lobster. It is so decomposed, it has become exactly like pus. And this is how they eat it.

**Disciple:** They cannot eat an animal when it is fresh. They never eat cows fresh. They age the flesh at least three weeks; otherwise, they say, it is not tasty. [Laughter.]

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. So the flesh must be partly decomposed in any case. Therefore, just as with humans, the animals should be allowed to die a natural death.

**Disciple:** Srila Prabhupada, we can point out all the benefits of this ideal spiritual civilization, but many people will say, "That's all right for you, but it's just not practical for us."

**Srila Prabhupada:** So what is not practical for you about our system of civilization? Our system: spiritual realization and compassion—kindness toward all the Lord's creatures. And your system: civilized cruelty. Your system is also not practical for us.

(To be continued)
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In the previous verses of Srimad-Bhagavatam, Queen Kunti prayed that the Lord kindly cut off her attraction for her kinsmen, the Pandava and Vrishni families. However, giving up one's attraction for material things is not sufficient. The Mayavadi philosophers say, brahma satyam jagan-mithya: "This world is false, and Brahman [spirit] is truth." We admit this, but qualify it. As living entities, we want enjoyment. Enjoyment means variety. It is not possible to enjoy anything without variety. Why has God created so many colours and so many forms? In order to create enjoyment out of variety. Indeed, variety is the mother of enjoyment. Mayavadi philosophers wish to negate this variety, and therefore they are called impersonalists.

The human form of life is meant for re-establishing our relationship with God. This material world means forgetfulness of our relationship with God. There is no Krishna consciousness in this material world, for as soon as there is Krishna consciousness, as soon as there is action on the basis of Krishna, there is nothing material. Everything is spiritual.

As a woman, Kuntidevi had a relationship with two families. That was her attachment. Therefore she prayed to Krishna to cut off these relationships and free her. But after becoming free, what should she do? That is the question. One may be employed in some business and, feeling inconvenience, resign. That resignation may be all right, but if by resigning one becomes unemployed and has no engagement, then what is the value of resigning?

Those who are frustrated and confused want to negate this material world. They know what they don't want, but they do not know what they do want. People are always saying, "I don't want this." But what do they want? That they do not know.

What they want is actually explained by Kuntidevi. She says, "Let my family relationship cease." But she further adds, "Let my relationship with You be confirmed." In other words, she does not want to be attracted to anything but Krishna. This is perfection, and this is actually wanted.

We must simply be attached to Krishna twenty-four hours a day without deviation. In this way our renunciation can be perfect; if we think we can be attached to Krishna and material things at the same time, we are mistaken. We cannot ignite a fire and at the same time pour water on it. If we do, the fire will not act.

The Mayavadi sannyasis try to renounce this world (brahma satyam jagan-mithya). It is very good to preach renunciation of the world, but side by side we must have attachment for something, otherwise our renunciation will not remain. We see many Mayavadi sannyasis who say brahma satyam jagan-mithya, but after they take sannyasa they return to the material world to open hospitals and do philanthropic work. Why, if they have left this world, considering it mithya, false, do they again return to take up politics, philanthropy and sociology? Actually this is bound to happen, for we are living entities and are active. If, out of frustration, we try to become inactive, we will fail in our attempt. We must engage in activities.

The supreme activity, the Brahman (spiritual) activity, is devotional service. Unfortunately the Mayavadis do not know this. They think that the spiritual world is void. However, the spiritual world is exactly like the material world in that it has varieties. In the spiritual world there are also houses, trees, roads, chariots-everything is there, but without the material inebrieties. As described in Brahma-samhita:

\[
\text{cintamani-prakara-sadmasu kalpa-vrksa-}
\text{laksavrtesu surabhir abhipalayantam}
\text{laksmi-sahasra-sata-sambhrama-sevyamanam}
\text{govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami}
\]
"I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, the first progenitor, who is tending the cows, yielding all desire, in abodes built with spiritual gems, surrounded by millions of purpose trees, always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds of thousands of goddesses of fortune, or gopis." (Bs. 5.29)

In the spiritual world there are kalpa-vriksha trees, which yield whatever type of fruit we desire. In the material world a mango tree cannot supply grapes, nor can a grape vine supply mangoes. In the spiritual world, however, if we take a mango from a tree and at the same time desire grapes, the tree will supply them. This is called a “desire tree.” These are some of the actualities of the spiritual world.

In this material world we require sunlight and moonlight, but in the spiritual world there is no need of sunlight and moonlight because everything is effulgent. Everything can be seen by the light emanating from Krishna. In Krishna-lila, Krishna stole butter, and the neighbourhood friends of mother Yashoda complained. Actually they were not complaining but were just enjoying the bodily features and the fun of Krishna. They told mother Yashoda, “Your son comes to our house and steals butter. We try to conceal it in the dark so that He cannot see it, but somehow He still finds it out. You had better take away all His ornaments because we think the light of His jewels helps Him to find the butter pot.” Mother Yashoda replied, “Yes, I will take off all His ornaments.” But the neighbours would reply, “No, no. It is useless. Somehow this boy has an effulgence that comes out of Himself. He can find the butter even without the ornaments.” Thus the transcendental body is effulgent.

Because of the effulgence of Krishna's transcendental body, there is light. Whatever light we see is simply borrowed light from Krishna's effulgence. As stated in Brahma-samhita:

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yasya prabha prabhavato jagad-anda-koti-
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The bodily effulgence of Krishna generates millions of universes. In this solar system the sun produces many planets, and due to sunshine the planets are warm and the seasons change. Due to the sun there are trees, green foliage, fruits and flowers. Similarly, whatever we see in creation is all due to Krishna's bodily effulgence.

The Mayavadis simply see the effulgence, which is impersonal. They cannot see anything more. We may see an airplane rise in the sky, but after a while it passes out of our sight due to the dazzling sunshine. The airplane is there, but we cannot see it. Similarly, if we simply try to see the effulgent brahmajyoti, we are unable to see within it. One of the mantras in the Ishopanisad petitions the Lord to wind up His effulgence so that He can be seen properly.

The Mayavadi philosophers cannot see the personal activities of Krishna nor the planet where Krishna is personally active. Because they do not see the lotus feet of Krishna, they have to return to this material world, despite all their serious penances and austerities. Thus renunciation in itself will not help us. We may artificially renounce, but again we will become so-called enjoyers. Such renunciation and enjoyment is like a pendulum that goes this way and that. On one side we become false renunciates, and on the other we become false enjoyers. The remedy is here, however, if we really want to become detached from this material world, we must increase our attachment for Krishna consciousness. Renunciation alone will not help us. Therefore Kuntidevi prays: tvayi me 'nanya-visayad. She prays that her attraction be constantly drawn unto Krishna without being diverted to anything else.

In this material world there are jnanis and karmis. The karmis are fools who unnecessarily work very hard, and the jnani are those who, when a little elevated, think, “Why work so hard? So many things are not required. Why accumulate so much money and food and so much false prestige?” The jnani thinks in this way. The bhakta, however, is beyond the karmi and the jnani. Jnana-karmady-anavrtam. The karmi has many desires, and the jnani tries to get rid of all desires, but desirelessness can be possible only when we desire to serve Krishna. Otherwise it is not possible to get rid of desire. As bhaktas, we should have no desires for jnana and karma. We should be without attachment for material things, but we must have attachment for Krishna. In this way our detachment will be fixed.

We must cultivate Krishna consciousness favourably. This means thinking of how Krishna will be satisfied. We must always think of Krishna, just like the gopis. The Krishna consciousness of the gopis was perfect because they had no other desire but to try to please Krishna. That is perfection. Therefore Chaitanya Mahaprabhu recommends: ramya kacid upasana vraja-vadhu-vargena ya kalpita. There is no better process by which to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead than that method adopted by the gopis.

The gopis had no desire other than to satisfy Krishna. All of the gopis tried to satisfy Him, including the elder gopis,
Yashoda and her friends, and so also did the elderly gopas, Nanda Maharaja, Krishna's brother and His friends of the same age, the boys and girls of Vrindavana. Everyone tried to satisfy Krishna—even the cows, the flowers, the fruits and the water in Vrindavana. This is because everything in Vrindavana is spiritual; nothing is material.

We should understand the difference between spiritual and material. Material means "no living symptoms," and spiritual means "all living symptoms." Both the trees in the spiritual world and those in the material world are living entities, but in trees here the living symptoms are absent. A human being is also a living entity, and the devotees in the spiritual world are also living entities, but in the human beings who are not Krishna conscious the real symptoms of life are absent.

Actually there is no other consciousness but Krishna consciousness. And that consciousness is spiritual. Thus even while in this material world if we simply increase our Krishna consciousness, we will live in the spiritual world. If we live in the temple, we live in the spiritual world because in the temple there is no business other than Krishna consciousness. There are so many engagements carried out for Krishna. Those who strictly follow the regulations of Krishna consciousness actually live in the spiritual world, not the material world. We may think we are living in New York, Los Angeles or elsewhere, but we are actually living in Vaikuntha.

It is a question of consciousness. A bug may sit on the same seat with the spiritual master, but because the spiritual master has developed consciousness and the bug does not, they are different. They may be sitting in the same place, but the bug remains a bug, and the spiritual master remains the spiritual master. The position in space may remain the same, just as we may remain in the material world or the spiritual world, but if our Krishna consciousness is strong, we are not in the material world.

Thus renunciation by itself, the simple giving up of worldly things, is not sufficient. Renunciation may be a helpful process, but it will not help absolutely. When we increase our attachment for Krishna, our renunciation will be perfect. As we increase attachment for Krishna, attachment for this material world will automatically diminish. Attachment for Krishna and the material world cannot go hand in hand. If a woman is attached to two men—her husband and her paramour—she cannot maintain her attachment for both. Her attachment will increase for her paramour. Although she may work at her husband's home very nicely, her mind will be attached to her paramour, and she will think, "When will I meet him tonight?" In the same way, if we increase our attachment for Krishna, detachment or renunciation of this material world will automatically come.

Thus Kuntidevi prays to Krishna that He may grant her His mercy by which she can become attached to Him. We cannot increase our attachment for Krishna without Krishna's mercy. We cannot become devotees without Krishna's mercy; therefore we simply have to serve Krishna, for by service Krishna is satisfied.

Krishna does not require anyone's service, for He is perfect in Himself. However, if we give Him service wholeheartedly and sincerely, then, by His mercy, we will make advancement. Sevonmukhe hi jivadav svayam eva sphuraty adah. God will reveal Himself to us. We cannot see God with these blunt eyes. How then, can we see Him? premanjana-churita-bhakti-vilocanena santah sadaiva hrdyesu vilokayanti. We have to smear our eyes with the ointment of love; then Krishna will reveal Himself. Krishna will actually come in front of us.

When Dhrueva Maharaja was undergoing penance and meditating upon the form of Vishnu within his heart, the Vishnu form suddenly disappeared, and his meditation broke. Upon opening his eyes, Dhrueva Maharaja immediately saw Vishnu before him. Thus Krishna is there. Like Dhrueva Maharaja, we should always think of Krishna, and when we attain perfection we will see Krishna before us. This is the process. We should not be too hasty. We should wait for the mature time. Of course, it is good to be eager to see Krishna, but we should not become discouraged if we do not see Him immediately; if a woman gets married and wants a child immediately, she will be disappointed. It is not possible to have a child immediately. She must wait. Similarly, just because we engage ourselves in Krishna consciousness, we cannot expect to see Krishna immediately. But we must have faith that we will see Him. We must have firm faith that because we are engaged in Krishna consciousness we will be able to see Krishna face to face. But we should not be disappointed. We should simply go on with our Krishna conscious activities, and the time will come when we will see Krishna, just as Kuntidevi sees Him face to face. There is no doubt about this.

Kuntidevi addresses Krishna as madhu-pati. Krishna has thousands of names, and the name madhupati indicates that He killed the demon Madhu. Krishna consciousness is likened to a river, but not an ordinary river. It is like the River Ganges, which is very pure and directly connected to Krishna. Kuntidevi prays that just as the River Ganges flows toward the sea, her attraction will flow incessantly to touch Krishna's lotus feet. This is called ananya-bhakti, unalloyed devotion. Thus Kuntidevi prays that her attraction for Krishna will flow without hindrance. This should also be our prayer. ☺️
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In his book *Teachings of Lord Chaitanya*, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada describes how Sanatana Gosvami, a learned scholar and expert politician, became an important member of the Krishna consciousness movement. Five hundred years ago, Sanatana Gosvami was a central figure in the government of Bengal, but by leaving his governmental responsibilities to surrender to Lord Chaitanya, he fulfilled a far more important responsibility to both himself and humanity in the service of the Supreme Lord.

Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the father of the Krishna consciousness movement, was a householder for the first twenty-four years of His life, and He began the Hare Krishna movement before He was twenty. But He gave up His wife and home and entered the renounced order, sannyasa, to facilitate His mission of preaching Krishna consciousness.

For the first six years of His life as a sannyasi, Lord Chaitanya travelled all over India performing sankirtana, the congregational chanting of Hare Krishna, singing and dancing with thousands of people and thus over flooding the land with love of God. While thus engaged, He came to a village in Bengal named Ramakeli, and there He met Sanatana Gosvami and his brother Rupa.

Although the two brothers, then known as Sakara Mallik and Dabhir Khas, appeared exalted in their posts as ministers in the Mohammedan government of Nawab Hussain Shah, they were actually degraded. They had been highly placed Hindu brahmanas (intellectuals), but their acceptance of posts in government service had jeopardized both their intellectual and religious standing. Indeed, because of the brothers' association with worldly, sinful people addicted to meat eating, illicit sex, intoxication and worldly power, the other brahmanas considered them fallen and ostracized them from the Hindu community.

That the Hindus had rejected the brothers, considering them half-Moslem, did not concern Lord Chaitanya, for He was a universal teacher who declared that He was neither Hindu, brahmana nor sannyasi, but was a servant of the servant of the Supreme Lord. Krishna declares in Bhagavad-gita that He is the father of all living entities, not the God of any one sect or religion, and He asks everyone to surrender to Him. Therefore Lord Chaitanya, while distributing the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra, taught as a devotee that one should surrender to Krishna. When the two brothers Sanatana and Rupa met Lord Chaitanya at Ramakeli, they decided to resign from their governmental posts and join the Krishna consciousness movement. And later, despite his former aristocracy, Sanatana Gosvami admitted that Lord Chaitanya had saved him from a hellish life.

Once in office, most politicians, being interested only in gratifying their own senses, scheme to stay in office until they die or their constituents kick them out. But Sanatana wanted to disentangle himself from the service of the State. Nawab Hussain Shah, the ruler of Bengal, liked to hunt and conduct military campaigns, and he usually left the government in Sanatana's hands. Therefore, since Sanatana was practically guiding the entire government, how could he leave his post? His resignation would be comparable to our modern Secretary of State's suddenly resigning to become a renounced monk of the Hare Krishna movement.

Nevertheless, after handing over his official responsibilities to his immediate assistants, Sanatana stayed home to study Srimad-Bhagavatam intensively with ten or twenty brahmanas. Srimad-Bhagavatam is called the spotless scripture because it leaves behind all compromising philosophies and religions, teaching only pure love of God. Lord Chaitanya has declared that for spiritual perfection one need study no books other than Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam, and therefore His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the spiritual master spearheading the modern resurgence of Krishna consciousness, translated the Bhagavatam into English with elaborate purports to teach knowledge of Krishna to the people of the West.

Sanatana absorbed himself in studying the Bhagavatam because simply hearing the Bhagavatam can change one's life. One should not think that Krishna consciousness is meant only to give shelter to economic failures, for although he was a wealthy aristocrat, a learned scholar in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, and a successful and influential politician, Sanatana Gosvami, considering such opulences insignificant, aspired only to be a humble student of Srimad-Bhagavatam.

While preparing himself in this way to join Lord Chaitanya, Sanatana submitted reports of sickness to the Nawab, but since the ruler was anxious to get Sanatana's advice on governmental affairs, one day he appeared at Sanatana's home. When he entered the assembly of Sanatana and the brahmanas, they all stood up to receive him, but unfortunately the Nawab was not interested in hearing Srimad-Bhagavatam.
"You have submitted reports of sickness," he said, "but I sent my physician to see you, and he reported that you have no illness. Your behaviour greatly perturbs me." When the Nawab demanded to know Sanatana's intentions, Sanatana answered that he was unable to work any more and that it would be kind of the Nawab to appoint someone else to do his work. The Nawab then left in anger, and shortly afterwards he went off to conquer the province of Orissa, ordering the arrest of Sanatana Gosvami until he returned.

It is unfortunate that the Nawab did not see the value of Srimad-Bhagavatam, for it would have been valuable to his administration. Formerly great leaders consulted the Bhagavatam and its brahminical devotees for practical guidance in organizing a peaceful and prosperous society according to principles of God consciousness. But the Nawab, being a rather low-minded hunter, did not take the Bhagavatam seriously.

Despite Sanatana's apparent misfortune in being imprisoned, one should not think him an ordinary conditioned soul entangled in a snare of material circumstances. As confirmed by revealed scriptures, Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is Lord Krishna Himself, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. To make the knowledge He formerly taught in Bhagavad-gita easily available to everyone, Lord Krishna appeared in India five hundred years ago to propagate love of God by chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Hare Hare. Sanatana Gosvami is an eternal servant of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and he appeared in this world to assist the Lord in His pastimes. He was never under the influence of material contamination, but difficulties beset him only so that he might set an example of how to act in Krishna consciousness.

Dedication to Krishna consciousness is a declaration of war against material illusion. Freeing oneself from sinful life is sometimes difficult because of one's previous attachments, but if one is sincere, like Sanatana, and depends on the Lord, he will emerge from all difficulties and be able to engage freely in devotional service. Therefore, although Sanatana appeared to fare badly as soon as he took to Krishna consciousness, his apparent setback was but another feature of his glory, for he had escaped a hellish life and was on the path to becoming a gosvami, or master of the senses, who always feels transcendental ecstasy.

Sanatana did not stay long in prison, for his brother Rupa heard of his plight and came to his aid. Rupa, who had been able to leave his governmental post and start for Jagannatha Puri to meet Lord Chaitanya, arranged to make ten thousand gold coins available for Sanatana's release. On hearing that this money was available, Sanatana offered five thousand coins to the jail keeper as a bribe for letting him go. The jail keeper expressed fear that he would be caught, but when Sanatana raised his offer to ten thousand coins, the jail keeper agreed, and Sanatana then set out to meet Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, traveling not by the open roads but through the jungles.

One might ask, "You describe Sanatana Gosvami as a saint, yet he did not hesitate to bribe a government official to release himself. What kind of saintliness is that?" To understand Sanatana's purity, however, one must first
understand that a devotee's foremost duty is to satisfy the Supreme Lord. A devotee always acts to please Krishna, not whimsically but as directed by the scriptures and his spiritual master. Since Krishna is the absolute morality and the absolute good, one who strives in this way only to please Krishna is the greatest, purest moralist. Impure and selfish men who do not understand that everything belongs to Krishna and should be offered to Him try to enjoy God's property themselves, not properly recognizing the Lord's ownership. Despite their social standing and their reputation as public-spirited citizens, it is such men who are actually cheaters and thieves, whereas devotees like Sanatana, who work not for their own purposes but only to serve Krishna, are thereby able to make the greatest contributions to human society.

After escaping from prison, Sanatana, traveling on foot with one servant, reached a place in Behar called Pabda, where he rested at a hotel. But when the hotel keeper's astrologer calculated that Sanatana had eight gold coins with him, the hotel keeper formed a plot to kill Sanatana. Treating him with artificial respect, the hotel keeper said, "My dear sir, just rest here tonight, and in the morning I shall arrange to get you out of this jungle trap."

Sanatana, however, suspecting the man's insincerity, asked his servant, Ishana, if he had money with him. When Ishana admitted that he indeed had seven gold coins, Sanatana, angry at him for secretly carrying money, demanded, "Why do you carry this death knell on the road?" He then took the seven coins and offered them to the hotel keeper.

"I understood that you had eight coins with you," the hotel keeper admitted, "and I was thinking of killing you to take them. But I understand you are a good man, and you don't have to offer me the money. I'll help you out of the jungle in any case."

But Sanatana insisted, "if you don't take this money, someone else will kill me for it. Please take it." The hotel keeper agreed, and that very night he helped Sanatana past the hills.

When clear of the jungle, Sanatana sent his servant home. Although he was supposed to have been Sanatana's menial helper, he was secretly carrying eight gold coins, and when his master asked about them he lied, saying he had only seven, so he could keep one coin for himself. It is not that one may not use money in Krishna's service—indeed, one may collect and spend millions of dollars to build temples and publish books glorifying the Lord. But a devotee, especially one in the renounced order, should be wary of collecting money for his own sense gratification.

Realizing the contaminating influence of his former wealth and aristocracy, Sanatana wanted to divest himself of his opulence and approach Lord Chaitanya in a spirit of purity and humility, not as a dollars-and-cents man. To Sanatana, material acquisitions were burdens that weighed him down. He understood that they lead only to future bondage in birth and death. As stated in Bhagavad-gita, "The wise, engaged in devotional service, take refuge in the Lord and free themselves from the cycle of birth and death. Thus, by renouncing the fruits of actions in this world, they obtain the place beyond all misery."

After the departure of his servant, Sanatana Gosvami, feeling completely free, wearing torn clothing and carrying a water pot in his hand, proceeded toward Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. While traveling he met his rich brother-in-law, who was surprised to see him traveling alone in the guise of a beggar. Sanatana was no longer eager to associate with worldly men, but his brother-in-law insisted that he take an excellent blanket, and Sanatana accepted it.

Sanatana finally arrived in Benares, and he was glad to hear that Lord Chaitanya was indeed in the city. When he approached the house of Chandrashekhara Acharya, where the Lord was staying, the Lord, understanding that Sanatana had arrived, asked His host to go outside and ask the great devotee standing by the door to come in. Chandrashekhara went outside, but when he came back he reported to the Lord, "There is no great devotee out there, but only a wretched man with a beard."

"The man you saw," Lord Chaitanya replied, "is actually a pure devotee. Have him come in at once." Thus we can understand that unless one already has genuine spiritual knowledge, one cannot recognize a great devotee simply by seeing him. So many false swamis and yogis make money by growing long beards, dressing up in saffron robes and pretending to be saints. Therefore one should recognize a great spiritualist not by his appearance but by his words. The best way to recognize a genuine pure devotee is by his teachings.

When Sanatana entered the courtyard of the house, Lord Chaitanya ran to receive and embrace him. He touched Sanatana with His hand, but Sanatana, thinking himself a lowly, contaminated man, pleaded, "My dear Lord, please do not touch me."

But the Lord replied, "I am touching you just for My purification because you are a great devotee. By your devotional
service, you can deliver the whole universe and enable everyone to go back to Godhead." He then quoted a verse stating that one who fully engages in devotional service is the most valuable person, regardless of his birth or any other consideration.

After Sanatana explained how he had gotten free from custody, the Lord introduced him to Chandrashekhara. The Lord asked Chandrashekhara to take Sanatana to a barber and make him gentle because he had grown a long beard that Lord Chaitanya did not like. Chandrashekhara also offered Sanatana new clothes, but Sanatana accepted only used garments. When Chandrashekhara invited him to have lunch with him every day, Sanatana replied, "As long as I stay in Benares I shall beg from door to door."

When Lord Chaitanya heard about this behaviour of Sanatana, He was greatly pleased. But He noticed the blanket given Sanatana by his brother-in-law, and although He said nothing about it, Sanatana understood that the Lord did not approve of his wearing it. Therefore he immediately went to the bank of the Ganges, and when he saw a mendicant there washing an old quilt, he asked him to trade the quilt for his valuable blanket.

The poor mendicant thought Sanatana was joking with him. "You appear to be a nice gentleman," he said. "Why are you mocking me?"

"I am not joking with you," Sanatana informed him. "I am serious. Will you kindly take this blanket for the torn quilt?" Then Sanatana exchanged his blanket for the quilt and came before the Lord.

Lord Chaitanya was pleased, and He thanked Sanatana. "Being intelligent," He declared, "you have now left behind all your attraction for material wealth."

Sanatana Gosvami then brought forward his inquiries about spiritual life. Falling down at the feet of the Lord with great humility, he asked about his own identity. "I have been born of a low family," he said, "and my associations are all abominable. I am the most fallen and wretched of men. Suffering in the dark well of material enjoyment, I never knew the actual goal of my life. I do not know what is beneficial for me. Although in the mundane sphere I am known as a greatly learned man, I am in fact so much of a fool that I even accept that I am learned. You have accepted me as Your servant and delivered me from the entanglement of material life. Now please tell me my duty in this liberated stage of life."

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada comments: "We see by this plea of Sanatana’s that liberation is not the final word in perfection. There must be activities in liberation. Sanatana clearly asks, "You have..."
saved me from the entanglement of material existence. Now, after liberation, what is my duty? Kindly explain it to me. Who am I? Why are the threefold miseries always giving me trouble? How can I be relieved from material entanglement?"

Sometimes people think liberation is the end of spiritual life, but here we see that although the Lord considered Sanatana already liberated from all material connections, this did not mean that his business in spiritual life was finished. Now he had to take on the activities of spiritual life because acting in Krishna consciousness is the true essence of renunciation.

Thus by placing his sincere and relevant questions before the Lord with all humility, Sanatana Gosvami provided Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu with the opportunity to expound upon the true meaning of liberated life. Sanatana accepted Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as his spiritual master, not as a matter of fashion or to dominate the spiritual master as one might a pet, but to surrender unto Him and ask sincerely and seriously for direction.

The teachings of Lord Chaitanya to Sanatana Gosvami begin where the instructions of Bhagavad-gita leave off. In the Gita's last instruction, Krishna, the Supreme Lord, answering the questions of Arjuna, said that one should surrender unto Him and thus realize true happiness. But now Krishna Himself in the form of Lord Chaitanya, answering the questions of Sanatana Gosvami, explained the transcendental activities of a surrendered soul. These instructions give the essence of devotional service to the Lord.

The Lord instructed Sanatana not only in the basic principles of liberated life but also in its scientific details. He explained the symptoms of a wise man, how to approach God, and what the expansions and avatars of Godhead are. Describing Krishna as the original source of all other forms of God, He explained the Lord's opulence and the practicalities of rendering service unto Him and attaining the highest stages of attachment and ecstasy. Srila Prabhupada’s Teachings of Lord Chaitanya describes these instructions in detail.

Lord Chaitanya requested Sanatana to explain these teachings by writing books about devotional service, but Sanatana prayed, "My dear Lord, You have taught me so many things, and now You are asking me to explain the principles of devotional service in books for devotees in the future. But I belong to the lowest caste. I have no knowledge, nor do I know how I can execute such an important task. But if you kindly give me some hints about the preparation of such books, then I may become qualified to write."

The Lord then blessed him, saying, "By the grace of Krishna, whatever you write will come from your heart to be accepted as you have asked. I shall give you some notes to take down. The first and foremost thing is that one should accept a bona fide spiritual master, for that is the beginning of spiritual life."

After receiving elaborate instructions from the Lord, Sanatana Gosvami went to Vrindavana, where he faithfully carried out the orders of the Lord, thus becoming one of the six Gosvamis who propagated the immortal teachings of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Lord Chaitanya Himself wrote only eight verses, which describe the essence of His teachings, but He entrusted to the six Gosvamis the task of explaining the teachings in their fullness. Thus it is the grace of the six Gosvamis that they scientifically explained devotional service, establishing it firmly on the basis of the ancient Vedic scriptures.

Not only did Sanatana and the other Gosvamis write books, but they also taught the meaning of these books by the examples of their own lives. Commissioned by Lord Chaitanya, Sanatana Gosvami, as a transcendental archaeologist, uncovered all the places where Krishna had engaged in His pastimes 5,000 years ago in Vrindavana, such as the Govardhana Hill and the area of the rasa dance. With the other Gosvamis, Sanatana helped construct seven important temples in Vrindavana for the worship of Lord Krishna in the land where Krishna appeared. Sometimes writing, sometimes dancing and chanting by the River Yamuna, always feeling the ecstasy of Krishna's love for the gopis and faithfully carrying out the orders of Lord Chaitanya, the Gosvamis hardly slept at all—perhaps one or two hours a night—and they lived very austerely; but they were always feeling great happiness in executing devotional service to the Lord. Although Sanatana had given up an exalted position, he considered it insignificant, and he felt no remorse, for he had gained the great treasure of love of God.

Thus Sanatana Gosvami, formerly an aristocratic minister of a materialistic ruler, became a humble servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and a confidential assistant in Lord Chaitanya's mission of distributing love of Godhead to the fallen souls of this age. Teachings of Lord Chaitanya describes him as follows: "Sanatana Gosvami was a great devotee of the Lord, and he was directly instructed to spread the cult of bhakti by writing many books. His brother, Rupa Gosvami, was also a minister in the government, but both of them gave up their lucrative government service and became mendicants to serve the Supreme Lord. Within their hearts they were full of transcendental loving service, but externally they were just like ordinary mendicants with a great liking for the cowherd boy of Vrindavana (Krishna). Sanatana Gosvami was very dear to all pure devotees of his time."
Located in Thiruvidandai, a suburban village 19 kms south of Chennai, is the temple for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nithya Kalyana Perumal.

The Pastime

Srimad Bhagvatha Purana describes 12 Mahajanas or 12 great devotees of Lord Sriman Narayana:

SB 6.3.20-21

स्वयंभूर नरदह सम्भुह
कुमारह कपिलो मनुह
प्रहलादो जनको भीमो बलिर भिष्मो भ्रमो
बलीर वियासाकिर्क्षेऽः ्वयम्

dvadasaite vijanimo
dharmam bhagavatam bhatah
guhyam visuddham durbodham
yam jnatvamrtam asnute

Synonyms
— Lord Brahma; — the great saint Narada; — Lord Siva; — the four Kumaras; — Lord Kapila; — Svayambhuva Manu; — Prahlada Maharaja; — Janaka Maharaja; — Grandfather Bhisma; — Bali Maharaja; — Sukadeva, the son of Vyasadeva; — we; — twelve; — these; — know; — real religious principles; — which teach a person how to love the Supreme Personality of Godhead; — O my dear servants; — very confidential; — transcendental, not contaminated by the material modes of nature; — not easily understood; — which; — understanding; — eternal life; — he enjoys.

Translation

Lord Brahma, Bhagavan Narada, Lord Shiva, the four Kumaras, Lord Kapila [the son of Devahuti], Svayambhuva Manu, Prahlada Maharaja, Janaka Maharaja, Grandfather Bhisma, Bali Maharaja, Sukadeva Gosvami and I myself know the real religious principle. My dear servants, this transcendental religious principle, which is known as bhagavata-dharma, or surrender unto the Supreme Lord and love for Him, is uncontaminated by the material modes of nature. It is very confidential and difficult for ordinary human beings to enjoy.
understand, but if by chance one fortunately understands it, he is immediately liberated, and thus he returns home, back to Godhead.

One of the 12 Mahajanas is Bali Maharaja, who is a great devotee of Sriman Narayana. He is a great Vaishnava and always adhered to the principles in the dharmashastras.

Bali Maharaja was a mighty and valorous daitya who had conquered all the material worlds, including heavenly planets, thus Indra had to surrender to him. At the same time, he was a great and exemplary king dedicated to the welfare of the people in his kingdom. He lived according to the instructions of dharmashastras and was a great devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He was also well known for his charitable qualities. Donation to brahmanas was part of his daily routine. He was determined that he would fulfil the wishes of every person who came to him for alms.

Maharaja Bali learned all the shastras and obtained Vedic knowledge under the guidance and supervision of his illustrious grandfather Prahlada. It must be noted that Prahlada Maharaja was an exemplary devotee of the Supreme Lord. Therefore, we can say that the seeds of devotion were sown by him in Maharaja Bali. During his reign, the kingdom and the people were very prosperous. With the help of his preceptor, Maharaja Bali decided to perform 100 Ashwamedha yagnas.

There is a popular perception that Ashwamesha yagnas involve the killing of a horse. We shall peek into the real meaning of this yagna, before resuming the discussion about the pastimes of the Lord.

Satapata Brahmana is a collection of commentaries on Vedic hymns, and contains mostly ritualistic information and teachings. This text describes the exact meaning of Ashwamedha yagna.

Rashtram va asvamedhah, implying that the true meaning of the term Ashwamedha, is to administer and manage the state in an efficient manner. Thus, Ashwamedha sacrifice was performed as a symbol of good governance, where the needs of the subjects were considered and addressed with due care and responsibility.

- Satapata Brahmana (13.1.6)

It is not right to literally translate the word medha as sacrifice or killing. In the Shantiparva of the Mahabharata (3.336), we observe a passage that details the procedure in which a particular Ashwamedha sacrifice was performed. In a meticulously planned and organized Ashwamedha yagna conducted by him, King Vasu had invited a large gathering of learned men. The passage clearly states without any ambiguity that during the yajna...
there was no killing of an innocent animal: na tatra pashughato-abhoot is the exact verse.

In the predominant version of Ashwamedha sacrifice, at the conclusion, of the horse that was worshipped and honoured during the sacrifice was released to roam free. Carrying the royal insignia of the king who performed the sacrifice, the horse would move forth unhindered. It is assumed that the regions where the horse set foot, accepted the supremacy of the king who sent it. In case someone wanted to challenge the king's supremacy, they might capture the horse and tie it, to indicate that they are ready for a war with the king who sent the horse.

The horse symbolically represents the senses of human beings that are restless and wavering in nature. In this context, Ashwamedha means exercising a proper control over the senses through which a man can conquer his lower passions and rise up to the level of a spiritual being. Thus, in this sense, Ashwamedha sacrifice does not refer to the horse sacrifice, but symbolically talks of the process of purifying and elevating oneself.

Bali Maharaja being a great devotee of Sriman Narayana, wished to get the darshan of the Lord when he performed this yagna.

The rest of the history about Vamana's appearance and subsequent events have been discussed in length in our previous issues in the same column.

Literally, ‘Bali’ means sacrifice. King Bali is a classic example of atma-nivedana, complete surrender with devotion to the Supreme Lord, and taking refuge in Him to achieve the ultimate goal. Knowing from his preceptor that the one who has come for charity is none other than Lord Narayana, and knowing fully well that he would fail in keeping up his promise, Bali did not listen to his Guru and wanted to proceed honouring his word. Bali was prepared for any consequence and felt that there could not be a better fortune for him (in the position of a giver to the Lord) than this, when the Lord Himself had come seeking charity from him without-stretched hands.

Ultimately, when King Bali fell short of fulfilling his promise given to Vamana, he surrendered completely to the Supreme Lord, for which he was amply rewarded by the Lord. He became the ruler of Suthala (nether world), with the Lord Himself protecting the kingdom. Bali became immortal and was identified as the future Indra of the next Manvantara period.

The great illustrious Bali Maharaja, who is the son of Meghanatha and grandson of Prahlada, was once asked help by Malayavan and Sumali, two daityas. Malayavan and Sumali requested Bali Maharaja to help them fight a war with the devatas of Swargaloka. Maharaja Bali refused. Malayavan and Sumali requested Bali Maharaja multiple times and finally Maharaja Bali relented.

Bali Maharaja was so powerful that he could easily win the war, but he had to incur brahma-hathya dosha or the sinful reaction of killing brahmanas.
Bali Maharaja was asked by Prahlada to do severe penance in Thiruvidandai. Finally the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sriman Narayana, appeared before him as Varaahadeva and absolved him of his sins. Bali Maharaja was in ecstasy to see the form of the Lord, and built a temple for Him at Thiruvidandai.

There is an interesting pastime associated with the name of the Supreme Lord here: Nithya Kalyana Perumal, which means the Lord who marries every day.

Sage Kuni had 360 daughters and he wanted them to get the best husbands for them, who were qualified to be addressed as Purushottama (best among the purushas). He came to Thiruvidandai and after years of penance realised that only one person can be qualified to be addressed as Purushottama: Sriman Narayana.

Sage Kuni married off his 360 daughters to the Lord who agreed to the wishes of the sage. The marriage was conducted over 360 days in such a way, that one daughter was married to the Lord on each day. After each day, the newly wedded bride would merge to the divine Deity of Mahalakshmi, the consort of the Lord at this temple. Thus the Lord here is affectionately addressed as Nithya Kalyana Perumal or the Lord who marries every day.

The Temple

The main sanctum sanctorum is approached through a sixteen-pillared sculpted hall in front of the temple. The pillars have sculptures indicating various legends, with one of them carrying the replica of the image of the presiding Deity. The temple has two prakaras approached through two flat gateway towers. It is believed that the grand rajagpuram was destroyed during Muslim invasions. All the shrines in the temple are enclosed within granite walls. The second prakara has two temple masts, each of them located axial to the sanctum and the entrance. The prakara also has a hall to house the temple chariot, which is taken out during festivals. The sanctum is approached through an assembly and prayer hall. The main sanctum houses the most beautiful form of Nithya Kalyana Perumal in the form of Varaha, having Bhudevi on His lap and resting His lotus feet on the hoods of Adisesha. The Lord’s most beautiful form stands tall, around 7 ft. (2.1 m) and is one of the rarest forms of Lord Varaha. Garuda, the vahana of Vishnu, has a small shrine facing the sanctum. The North-West corner of the temple houses the shrine of Komalavalli Thayar, who is the consort of Lord of this temple.

There is a separate shrine for Ranganatha and His consort Ranganayaki in the first precinct. The shrine of Andal is located to the left of the sanctum in the first precinct. There are inscriptions on the walls around the assembly and prayer hall. There are three temple tanks associated with the temple. Kalyana Pushkarani is the principal temple tank located right opposite to the temple at the end of the street and visible from East Coast Road (ECR). Varaha Pushkarani is located near the northern compound wall of the temple, while Ranganatha Thirtham is located to the North-East of the temple. Punnai tree, which is usually associated with Shiva temples, is the sacred tree associated with this temple.

The temple as we see today was built during the Pallava
reign, in the 7th century. Kanchipuram was the capital of the Pallavas who ruled the region between the 6th and 9th centuries. They had Mamallapuram and Thiruvidandai as their port towns and the two towns emerged as strong ports for the empire. The temple is believed to have been built along with the other monumental temples in the region. It has inscriptions dating back to 959 CE from the Pallava era.

One of the earliest inscriptions in the temple is from the Rashtrakuta king, Krishna III (939–67) in 959 AD, indicating the gift of a lamp to the temple. There were later additions from the Chola kings, as indicated from an inscription during the 35th regnal year of Rajadhiraja Chola, in 1052 CE. Raja Raja Chola is believed to have commissioned the Panguni Uthiram festival during 1003 CE, which continues unhindered today. There are inscriptions indicating benevolent contributions from Kulothunga Chola I during 1115 CE. The temple is a declared monument of the Archaeological Survey of India because of the inscriptions. There are inscriptions from the period of Jatavarman Vira Pandyan II indicating gifts to the Goddess of the temple.

**Festivals**

There are weekly, monthly and fortnightly rituals performed in the temple. Various festivals are celebrated in the temple, with the Chittirai Brahmotsavam during the Tamil month of Chittirai (during April–May), and Vaikuntha Ekadashi during Margazhi (December–January) being the most prominent. During Brahmotsavam, the festival Deities of Nithya Kalyana Perumal and Komalavalli Thayar are taken in procession around the streets of the temple. Thirumangai Azhwar Utsavam is celebrated during the star of Kiruthikai during November–December.

Saint Thirumangai Azhwar has sung in praise of the Lord in this temple.

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