



# KRISHNA VOICE

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# Sri Radha Krishna Temple

(Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada)

Hare Krishna Hill, Chord Road, Bangalore-10.



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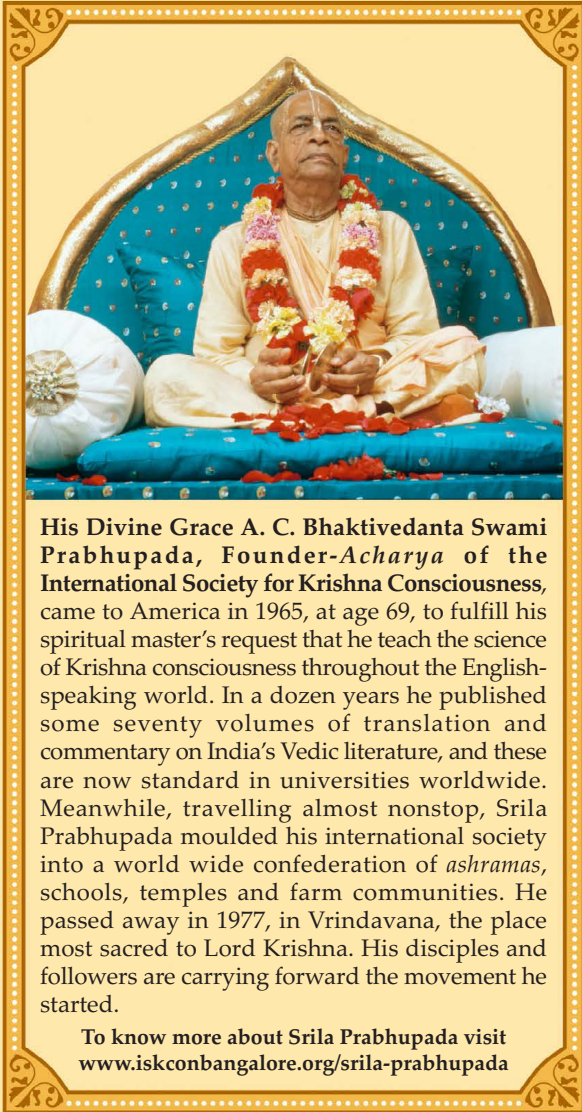


# KRISHNA VOICE



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

To know more about Srila Prabhupada visit [www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada](http://www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada)

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# The Highest Education

## *The Vedic literature reveals the essential qualification of a person ready to accept a spiritual master*

A lecture given in New York, November 22, 1966

By His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada  
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*raja-vidya raja-guhyam  
pavitram idam uttamam  
pratyaksavagamam dharmyam  
su-sukham kartum avyayam*

“This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed.”—*Bhagavad-gita* 9.2

*Vidya* means “education,” and *raja* means “king.” What is the king of education?

We have different statuses of life in the material world. In education, someone is an M.A., someone is a B.A., someone is in school three years, someone four years. There are different grades of education. Now, what is the *summum bonum*—the highest or topmost education? The topmost education—*raja-vidya*—is Krishna consciousness. Real knowledge is to understand what I am. Unless we come to this point, we are not in knowledge.

When Chaitanya Mahaprabhu began His preaching, His first disciple was Sanatana Gosvami, a finance minister of Nawab Hussain Shah. Being attracted by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s movement, Sanatana retired from service and joined Lord Chaitanya. When he came to Lord Chaitanya for the first time, he inquired, “What is education?”

Sanatana was highly educated. In those days the Persian language was being taught in India. Just as during British rule the English language was taught to us, during Pathan rule the Persian language was the state language. Sanatana Gosvami was a great scholar in Sanskrit also. Still, he inquired, “What is education?”

Why did he inquire like that? He told Lord Chaitanya, “People in general consider me very educated, and I am such a fool that I accept that I am educated.”

So the next question is, “Then why do you think you are not educated? You are great scholar in Sanskrit, a great scholar in Persian. Why do you think you are not educated?”

Sanatana replied, “I think I’m not educated because I do not know what I am. I do not wish to suffer, but material miseries are forced upon me. I do not know where I have come from or where I will have to go, and still people think that I am very educated. They designate me a great scholar, and I am satisfied. But I am such a fool that I do not know what I am.”

Actually, this is our present situation. We are very proud of our advancement of education. But if you inquire from various persons, “What are you?” hardly anyone will be able to answer. Everyone is under the conception that we are the body. But we are not actually the body. This we have discussed many times. So by passing this examination—by knowing “I am not this body”—one has come to real knowledge. That is the beginning.

### **Knowledge and Action**

Of the knowledge Lord Krishna is now imparting to Arjuna, Krishna says, “This is *raja-vidya*.” *Raja-vidya* means to know oneself and act accordingly. If I do not know what I am, then I am mistaken about my situation, and all my activities are mistaken and illusory. Simply knowing “I am not the material body” is not sufficient. You are not material; you are spiritual. So you must act accordingly. That spiritual activity is Krishna consciousness, and it is called *raja-vidya*, the king of all education.

*Raja-guhyam* means “very confidential.” It is not possible to accept Krishna consciousness very easily. But by the mercy of Krishna and Lord Chaitanya, it is very easily delivered to us through chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.



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Lord Chaitanya has given an analytical study of the living entity. He has begun by saying that there are innumerable living entities all over the universe. If you dig into the earth, you'll find many living entities. If you study the air, you'll find many living entities. If you go deep into the water, you'll find living entities. So all over the universe there are different types of living entities.

Lord Chaitanya divides the living entities into two classes: some are moving and some are not moving. Trees, stones, plants, grass—they cannot move. A stone has life, but a stone has no developed consciousness. It is too covered. Similarly, if a person in the human body does not understand his position, he's almost stonelike.

Then there are the moving entities, such as aquatics, beasts, birds, reptiles, human beings, demigods, celestial angels. Out of the moving entities, a very small number are human beings. There are 8,400,000 species of life. Out of them, only 400,000 are in the human body. Lord Chaitanya says, "Out of these 400,000 human species, some are civilized. And out of many civilized persons, some are devoted to the scriptures." People say, "I belong to the Christian religion," "I belong to the Hindu religion," or "I belong to the Moslem religion." But in the present age, most people who claim "I belong to this religion" do not believe in the scriptures.

### Three Kinds of Religious Acts

Those who do believe in the scriptures are mostly attracted by pious, philanthropic activities. They believe, for example, that charity is a good thing. Pious, religious acts are of three kinds: *yajna-dana-tapah*. *Yajna* means "sacrifice," *dana* means "charity," and *tapah* means "penance." The spiritual orders of *brahmacharya* (celibate student life) and *sannyasa* (renounced life) involve *tapah*. *Tapah* means voluntarily accepting rigid principles of austerity. Charity means voluntarily giving away one's material possessions.

*Yajna* means "sacrifice." Nowadays we have no experience of sacrifice. But we get information about sacrifices from such historical literature as the *Mahabharata*. Formerly kings performed big sacrifices. They distributed millions of rupees, millions of valuables, and gold and silver. That is not possible today. But formerly the kings did that. The kings used to collect taxes from the citizens, but when the kings performed sacrifices, they distributed wealth freely to the citizens. Nowadays the state simply collects taxes but never distributes. So we have no idea what is *yajna*.

*Yajna* is the duty of kings or heads of state, *dana* is the duty of the general householders, and *tapah* is the duty of the *brahmacaris*, *sannyasis*, and *vanaprasthas* (retired persons). These are different kinds of rules in religious life. Some who believe in scriptures adopt these rules. Mostly, however, people simply accept a certain faith. They say they accept a certain religion, but they do not do anything. Still, out of many millions of people like that, some are really religious: they perform sacrifice and penance and give charity.

Lord Chaitanya says, "Out of many millions of persons actually engaged in charity, penance, and sacrifice, some come to the perfect understanding of what they are: 'I am not this body.'"

Now, simply theoretically knowing "I am not this body; I am spirit soul" is not perfect. You actually have to become liberated from material entanglement. That is called *mukti*, liberation. Out of many thousands of people who know what they are, some of them are actually liberated. And out of many thousands of people who are liberated, some can understand Krishna.

### Symptoms of Liberation

So understanding Krishna is not easy. But Krishna is kind. He knows that in this Age of Kali it will be very difficult for people to become liberated by the ordinary process—first to become civilized, then to become religious, then to give charity and perform sacrifices, then to come to the platform of knowledge, and then to come to liberation. Therefore He came as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and gave us a direct method of becoming Krishna conscious.

After being liberated, you can know Krishna. That is stated in the *Bhagavad-gita*: *brahma-bhuta prasannatma*. The first symptom of a liberated person is that he is very happy. You'll never find him morose. *Na socati na kanksati*: he has no anxiety. We are full of anxieties. "Oh, I haven't got this thing. I have to secure that thing. I have to pay this bill. Oh, this I have to do"—so many anxieties. But a liberated person has no anxieties. Does this mean that because he has no anxieties he is a very rich man? No. Not necessarily. But he has no anxiety.

He also has no lamentation. He does not think, "I am poor." Why should he think he's poor? When I think, "I am a part of this material world, and I haven't got this material possession," then I think, "I am poor." But one who is liberated from the material conception of life has no concern for what he possesses or does not possess. Therefore he's *prasannatma*, joyful. "Oh, I have nothing to lose, nothing to gain. I am completely separate from here." That is liberation.



The liberated person's vision of life is *samah sarvesu bhutesu*: he does not see anyone as rich or poor, foolish or educated. There are so many dualities in the material world, but the vision of the liberated person is completely on the spiritual platform. He sees that every living entity is a part and parcel of Krishna. Therefore he tries to take all living beings back to Krishna consciousness. He does not distinguish "He is a *brahmana*. He is a *shudra*, a labourer. He is Indian. He's American," or "He's black. He's white," or "He's educated. He's noneducated." No. "Everyone should come to Krishna consciousness." That is his viewpoint. *Samah sarvesu bhutesu*. When one is qualified in that way, then *mad-bhaktim labhate param*. Lord Krishna says, "Then he becomes eligible to become My pure devotee."

The process of coming to liberation under regulative principles is not easy, especially in this age. The *Bhagavatam* describes the people of this age as *prayenalpayusah*: "Their duration of life is very short." And *mandah*. *Mandah* means "very slow." Out of twenty-four hours, people sleep twelve, and out of the remaining twelve, they're busy ten hours earning money. Two hours left. What can they do for spiritual understanding? There's no time.

Then the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* says: *sumanda-matayo*. If someone has the intention to make spiritual progress, then there are so many pseudo spiritual societies to entrap him.

Then *manda-bhagyah*: “And most of the people are unfortunate.” Most people don’t even have sufficient arrangements for the primary principles of life—eating, sleeping, defending, and mating. These are only primary principles; they are available even in animal life. But in this age, even these primary principles are difficult to obtain—shelter, food, a wife. And everyone is afraid. “When will war be declared and I’ll be sent to the warfield?”

And finally, *upadruta*—“On top of all this, people are always disturbed with diseases and so many other things.”

This is the position of people in this age. Therefore Lord Krishna thought that it would be impossible for such people to come to the point of liberation under the regulative process. So out of His causeless mercy, He came as Lord Chaitanya and distributed the highest perfection of life—spiritual ecstasy—through the chanting of Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. This chanting is practical. It does not depend on whether you are liberated or nonliberated, on your position or your condition. Just come and take part in it, and you’ll feel spiritual ecstasy. Therefore this process is called *pavitram*, “very pure.” Anyone who takes to this process becomes purified. The purification begins at once.

*Uttamam* means “the highest,” or “transcendental.” Yesterday I explained the meaning of *uttamam* by quoting a commentary on today’s verse. The commentator explained the meaning of *uttamam* by referring to a verse from the *Padma Purana*:

*aprarabdha-phalam papam  
kutam bijam phalonmukham  
kramenaiva praliyeta  
visnu-bhakti-ratatmanam*

This means that when one is in Krishna consciousness—in the highest transcendental knowledge—gradually the seeds of all reactions to his sins become vanquished. We have studied in the *Bhagavad-gita* the example that if you put something into the fire, the fire turns it into ashes. Similarly, as soon as the fire of Krishna consciousness begins, all reactions of sinful activities from our past life are destroyed.

### The Purpose of Scripture

Our suffering is due to sinful activities. And sinful activities are due to our ignorance. Sinful activities are done by persons who do not know what is what. A child does not know the result of touching fire, because he is ignorant. But as soon as the child touches fire, his hand becomes burned. The fire does not allow any concession for the child. The fire will act as fire. Similarly, we do not know how this material world is going on—what the laws are, who the controller is, how it is being controlled. Out of ignorance we act in some way, but nature is so stringent that it will never excuse us, whether we do it knowingly or unknowingly.

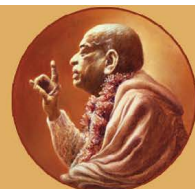
Therefore ignorance is the cause of suffering. So one should be put into proper knowledge. And proper knowledge means knowing things as they are: what we are, what the world is, what God is, what our relationship with God is. We should know these things. One should not simply become a technical expert or some departmental expert. That is not knowledge. Here is knowledge: you should know what you are and how you should act. And this knowledge can be achieved in the human form of life, not in the animal form of life. Therefore, to give you knowledge, to give you proper direction, there are so many scriptures in all parts of the civilized world. They should not be neglected.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says, “Since time immemorial, people have forgotten their relationship with the Supreme Lord. Therefore the Lord has sent many representatives to give them the scriptures.” So we should take advantage of the scriptures, especially the *Bhagavad-gita*. In *Bhagavad-gita* you’ll find everything presented nicely. You can put your arguments. You can try to understand with your knowledge, with your intelligence. Everything will be clear.

So we should take advantage of the *Bhagavad-gita*. And our power to understand it will increase if we begin our study with this transcendental sound vibration: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Thank you very much. 🙏

Srila Prabhupada, the founder-*acharya* of ISKCON, has delivered more than 1500 lectures on Vedic scriptures like *Bhagavad-gita*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita*. The audio recording of his lectures are available in ISKCON centers. You can also hear some of these lectures in [www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada-lectures](http://www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada-lectures)





# SRILA PRABHUPADA SPEAKS OUT

## Real Advancement of Civilization

This conversation between Srila Prabhupada and some American disciples took place in Surat, India, on December 21, 1970.

**Srila Prabhupada:** In your country there is a welfare department. The expenditure is increasing.

**Disciple:** Yes.

**Srila Prabhupada:** That means the social structure is very bad. Otherwise, the natural procedure is that everyone should be self-independent....

**Disciple:** But what can the state do? Should the state just leave the people alone?

**Srila Prabhupada:** No. The state should make the citizens so nicely developed in their Krishna consciousness that they will be self-dependent, self-satisfied. That is the ideal of civilization.

**Disciple:** But America is very far from that.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Therefore it is not advanced, although they are very proud of their advancement. This is not a sign of advancement....

Not very long ago, say about two hundred years, there was a big *zamindar* [landholder]. He was known as king in Krishnanagar. He was very charitably disposed, so he went to a *brahmana*—a greatly learned scholar—and asked him, “Can I help you in any way?” And the *brahmana* replied, “No, I don’t require your help. I am quite satisfied.”

The *zamindar* asked, “How are you satisfied?”

The *brahmana* said, “Oh, my students bring some rice, so my wife boils that. And I have got this tamarind tree. I take some leaves and prepare some juice out of it. That is sufficient.” You have perhaps heard of Chanakya Pandita.

He was the greatest politician. He was prime minister of India. But he was living in a cottage and just giving instructions. So that is India's Vedic civilization. Everyone is satisfied, self-sufficient.

And now, in your country, to work you have to go to an office fifty miles away. And because you have to take this trouble, Krishna has provided you with cars. You are thinking, "I am advanced." You don't think, "Although I have got a car, I have to go fifty miles from my home." This is illusion. You are thinking, "I am advanced. I am happy. I have got this car." This is illusion.

Yes, [my disciple] Gaurasundara was going to work [to maintain a temple in Hawaii], and he was driving fifty miles to Honolulu. The poor fellow had to rise early in the morning, and he had to hurry greatly. Therefore I advised, "Gaurasundara, better you give up this job. Just depend on Krishna." So he has given it up.

What is this? Going fifty miles by motorcycle or motor car—how tedious it is. But still they are satisfied: "We are advanced." And because they have many cars, there is always that [imitates a traffic noise] wherever I go.

**Disciple:** And more problems come after that.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Wherever you go—[makes a traffic noise again]. Up in the sky [makes an airplane noise]. And then digging [makes a jackhammer noise]. Is it not so? Don't you feel botheration? But they are thinking, "America is very much advanced in machines." And when that garbage truck comes ... [makes appropriate noise]. So many sounds are going on, always. Of course, you have got very nice cities, nice roads everywhere. But you have created so many troubles. In the news there was the story of a lady who became a patient. She became mad from all these sounds. And I think they are thinking very seriously how to stop all these sounds. Is that so?

**Disciple:** Especially the airplanes. They make such a tremendous sound that they break windows.

**Srila Prabhupada:** I am staying with Sambhu in Bombay. When an airplane comes over the top of the house, it is just like a thunderbolt....

So this is called illusion. We are creating a civilization which is very painful, but we are thinking that we are advanced. This is illusion. We are simply creating problems, and still we are thinking that we are advanced.

But from another point of view, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* says there is no problem. *Tasyaiva hetoh prayateta kovido na labhyate yad bhramatam upary adhah*. You simply try for Krishna consciousness. And how shall I live? The answer is: *tal labhyate duhkavad anyatah sukham*. You don't aspire for miseries, but they come upon you; they are forced upon you. Similarly, happiness will also be forced upon you, whatever you are destined to receive. So don't try for getting happiness or avoiding distress. Happiness and distress will go on. You simply try for Krishna consciousness, which without your trying will never be achieved. You have to voluntarily try for Krishna consciousness, revive it.

Therefore Lord Krishna says, *sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja* ["Simply surrender unto Me"].... Krishna can force you to become Krishna conscious. But He doesn't do that. He doesn't interfere with your independence. He simply says, "Do it." Therefore you have to try for Krishna consciousness, not for other things.

Other things are already there. For the birds and beasts there is no problem for eating. Why should you have a problem? A prisoner has no eating problem. The government supplies what he needs. He only has the problem that he should not be a criminal. That is his problem. He should try for that: "I shall never again become a criminal." That is the real activity. It is not that in the prison he has to worry, "What shall I eat?" No, eating is already there. Even if you are a prisoner, the government has supplied food. Similarly, God has supplied everyone with eatables, even cats and dogs. Why not you? You have created your own problem. The real problem is how to develop Krishna consciousness.

**Disciple:** These problems will take care of themselves if people develop Krishna consciousness?

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. 🙏

| Fasting |            | Festivals |                    |
|---------|------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Jan 13  | Ekadashi   | Jan 13    | Vaikuntha Ekadashi |
| Jan 14  | break fast |           |                    |
| Jan 28  | Ekadashi   |           |                    |
| Jan 29  | break fast |           |                    |

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## The Glories of the Demigods

# LORD BRAHMA

## The Original Created Being

by Satyaraja Dasa

*According to the Vedic literature, behind the workings of the cosmos stand powerful controllers, known as devas, or demigods. As we people in this world control our cars or homes, the devas control various aspects of the cosmos. They are among the exalted servants of Lord Krishna.*

Everything in the universe begins with Brahma, the four-headed (*chatur-mukhī*) demigod who rides a swan and carries in his four hands the *Vedas*, a ladle, a water vessel, and a *mala*, or string of prayer beads. He is known in the *Mahabharata* as Pitamaha, “the grandfather,” for he is the oldest person in the universe, the original instructor, or guru, of the sages. He is the first created being—the original progenitor of mankind—and he is the founder of the esoteric lineage to which ISKCON belongs.

In India the Hare Krishna tradition (*sampradaya*) is known as the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya-*sampradaya*. That is to say, Brahma relayed eternal knowledge to his successors, it eventually reached Madhva, a great teacher who systemized the knowledge, and about five hundred years ago the whole tradition was revitalized by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who appeared in Bengal, then called Gauda-desh. Hence: the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya-*sampradaya*. And the line is carried on to this day through ISKCON.

How did Brahma originally receive Vedic knowledge? The Supreme Lord uttered the eternal truths of Krishna consciousness to Brahma at the beginning of time. Brahma’s enlightenment is described in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (Canto 2, Chapter 9), which depicts him, at the dawn of creation, being born on a lotus sprouted from the divine navel of Vishnu. Brahma, finding himself in a new world, is wholly ignorant, both of his own identity and of his purpose in life. Seeking a clue as to his origin, Brahma climbs down the stem of the spiritual lotus, but to no avail. With a heart resigned to his fate, he hears the voice of his Lord and master, Vishnu, calling out two syllables: *ta-pa*, literally, “austerity,” or “penance.”

The syllables are deep with meaning, and Brahma obeys by performing austerity in the form of meditation for one thousand celestial years. Brahma can then see first the Lord’s abode and then the Lord Himself, who lovingly shakes Brahma’s hand and recites for him the four seminal verses of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, which contain its essential meaning and, indeed, the meaning of life.

When we speak of Brahma meditating for one thousand celestial years, we should understand just how long Brahma’s life actually is. *Bhagavad-gita* (8.17) gives us a hint: “By human calculation, a thousand ages taken together form the duration of Brahma’s one day. And such also is the duration of his night.”

What is meant here by “ages”? Here an “age” is the Vedic *divya-yuga*. If you add together one Satya-yuga





SELF-DECEPTION

FEAR OF DEATH

ANGER, AFTER FRUSTRATION

SENSE OF FALSE OWNERSHIP

BODILY CONCEPTION

LOGICAL ARGUMENT

GREED

MARICHA

POWER OF SPEAKING

KRATU

ATRI

ATHARVA

VASISTHA

ANGIRA

PULASTYA

RK

SAMA

PURANAS

MEDICAL SCIENCE

ya-ta-a-va

BHRGU

bhur bhuvah svah  
sa-sa-sa-ha

DAKSA

sa-r-ga-ma-pa-dha-ni

NARADA

a-a, u-u, r-r, l, e-ai, o-au, ar

PULAHA

ka...ma

KARDAMA

---

(1,728,000 years), one Treta-yuga (1,296,000 years), one Dvapara-yuga (864,000 years), and one Kali-yuga (432,000 years), you have one *divya-yuga*. That comes to 4.32 million of our years.

Now, according to the *Gita* verse quoted above, if you put 1,000 of those *divya-yugas* together, you get 4.32 billion earth years—a mere 12 hours (one day) in Brahma’s life. So his day and night come to 8.64 billion years. Each of Brahma’s years takes 360 of those days and nights. And he lives a full 100 years.

Before we brush off Brahma’s inconceivable life span as some kind of outlandish mythology, we should keep in mind that time is relative. Imagine if we could explain our life span to a microorganism whose life lasts but a few seconds or minutes. The creature would be extremely sceptical, to say the least, unable to accommodate the concept of a week, a month, a year. So although Brahma’s life may seem inordinately long to us, for him it seems perfectly natural, perhaps even a little short.

Since Brahma is, essentially, an extra-terrestrial, living on a higher planet, his perceptions of time and space are entirely different from our own. Indeed, the Vedic literature tells us that demigods are made of subtle substance; in Brahma’s case, he has a body composed of pure intelligence. His feet never touch the ground, he doesn’t blink, and he casts no shadow. Demigods are simply different kinds of living entities, and there is no reason to expect them to conform to our conceptions of time and space.

Because Brahma’s life span is the longest in the cosmic creation, he outlives all other living things. At the beginning of each of his days all varieties of life forms appear, and with his night comes partial annihilation until the next day, when he sets everything in motion again, re-creating the various forms of life.

The details of creation may differ slightly from day to day, but one thing remains the same—Brahma begins each day by meditating on the Supreme Lord. At that time he says, “I pray only to engage in the Lord’s service in the creation of the material world, and I pray that I not be materially affected by my works, for thus I may be able to give up the false prestige of being the creator.” (*Srimad-Bhagavatam*, 3.9.23)

In fact, Brahma takes every opportunity to glorify Vishnu, or Krishna, as supreme and to acknowledge his own subservience. In the very first verse of *Brahma-samhita*, for example, Brahma says, “Krishna, who is known as Govinda, is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternally blissful and spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin, for He is the prime cause of all causes.”

Later in the same work (5.49), Brahma makes clear that he is indeed subservient to the Supreme Lord Krishna: “The sun manifests his brilliance in a gem, although it is stone. Similarly, the original Personality of Godhead, Govinda, manifests His special power in a pious living entity. Thus that living entity becomes Brahma and manages the affairs of the universe. Let me worship Govinda, the original Personality of Godhead.”

Unlike many other demigods, Brahma is rarely mistaken for the Supreme. For that reason, in all of India Brahma has only one major temple dedicated to his worship—in Pushkara, Rajasthan.

Still, Brahma is deeply revered as a great devotee. In fact, he is considered by all Vaishnavas to be a *guna-avatara*, a manifestation of the Lord who presides over the mode of passion. Thus his passionate nature is put to work, and he is engaged in creation, as described above. He is therefore known as the “creator god,” in contradistinction to Vishnu, who is seen as “the preserver” (and the master of the mode of goodness), and Shiva, “the destroyer” (who presides over the mode of ignorance).

In popular Hinduism this triad of *avataras* (*thrimurthi*) is viewed as merely diverse modalities of one and the same God—and there is a scriptural basis for this—but a careful study reveals that both Shiva and Brahma are subservient to Vishnu.

In fact, making this clear—that Krishna is supreme—was one of the main reasons why Brahma wrote his *Brahma-samhita*. Commenting on the *Brahma-samhita*, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura notes that it refutes *panchopasana*, the popular Hindu worship of five gods: Vishnu, Surya, Ganesa, Durga, and Shiva.

“The worship of Vishnu as found in *panchopasana*,” Srila Bhaktisiddhanta says, “does not please Vishnu; it is heterodox and highly improper.” Vishnu is the Supreme, the Personality of Godhead; no one is equal to or greater than Him. But the worship of Vishnu as one of the five deities brings Him down to the level of the others, as though He were one of several deities, and this is a great spiritual offense.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati continues, “It is the eternal duty of all *jivas* [living beings] to serve [only] Krishna, the Lord of all lords. All other deities are His servitors. Their function is only to carry out Govinda’s commands.” Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati concludes that those who “conceive of the deities as the different names and bodies of Vishnu instead of knowing them as His servitors” will never acquire liberation. One becomes perfectly liberated only by surrendering fully to Vishnu, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. ❁

# He That Killeth an Ox

by Hare Krishna Devi Dasi

Srila Prabhupada used to say that changing from one religion to another to make spiritual advancement is not necessary. All that's necessary is to actually follow the rules given in the revealed scripture of one's own religion. Srila Prabhupada emphasized that the fundamental principles for spiritual advancement are the same in every religion: truthfulness, austerity, cleanliness, and mercy. The Vedas say that these principles are maintained by avoiding four sinful activities: gambling, intoxication, illicit sex, and meat-eating.

Because all scriptures promote the same basic principles, we find in all religions prohibitions similar to these.

Still, sometimes people assert that their scripture permits them to kill and eat animals. Srila Prabhupada pointed out that such a belief is due to a mistaken interpretation of scripture. For example, he was concerned that many who call themselves Christians cripple their chances for spiritual advancement by eating meat, defying the Bible's commandment "Thou shall not kill."

Some people try to evade the meaning of this commandment by using the argument that the rule is meant to apply only to the killing of humans, not animals. But the Bible gives other statements opposing animal slaughter, some of which are quite explicit.

For example, the prophet Isaiah says, "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man." (Isaiah 66.3) Even someone outside the Christian tradition can appreciate that this statement is true in many ways and how devastating animal slaughter is to spiritual advancement.

## Killing the loyal workmate

The most obvious point is that a cow or bull is an exceptionally evolved creature of God, capable of fear, of learning commands taught by humans, and of expressing loyalty and affection to humans. To kill an animal that can serve so ably, faithfully, and affectionately is just like killing a man. With the same mental deviousness by which a person represses his horror at the sinful act of animal killing, he also shuts his heart, dulling its ability to perceive the true message of God. To enjoy meat one must set aside mercy and moral honesty—at the cost of spiritual awareness. Prabhupada writes, "Only the animal killer cannot relish the transcendental message of the Supreme Lord." (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.3.24, purport)

## Killing the poor and hungry

If I kill a bull and eat him, I and my wealthy friends may have a few meals, but if that animal had lived for ten or twenty years he could have produced enough grain to feed hundreds of people. Consider this example: When the bulls of South America are valued as raw material to export for hamburgers, the bulls become too costly for poor farmers who need them to produce grains for their families. If I want to enjoy eating a hamburger, I make it harder for poor farmers to come up with their daily sustenance.

Beef-eaters starve the poor in other ways too. Sometimes poor farmers are pushed off their land, and livestock are grazed directly on fields that used to feed peasants. More often the dynamics of growing feed grains for the meat industry causes the farmers' misery. As soon as you hear that it takes sixteen pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef, you know someone has to suffer. Both mercy and austerity are destroyed with every bite of



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hamburger.

The global pattern of poor farmers being shut out by invasion of the meat industry is described by David Barkin, Rosemary Blatt, and Billie De Walt in *Food Crops vs. Feed Crops*: “Staple cereals, traditionally produced by small-scale farmers for themselves and for most of their neighbours to consume, are being displaced by grains produced commercially for animal feed, for sale in middle and upper income markets, and export.”

So how do the poor survive once they have lost their food and homes to help expand the meat industry? Not very well according to Barkin and his colleagues:

Once traditional food production systems are destroyed and small producers displaced, it is extremely difficult to reverse the process. Displaced producers often leave rural areas altogether in search of other means of livelihood. This disruption and migration is wreaking havoc with existing organization of society in many countries, while no alternative productive activities are emerging for these displaced populations.

### **Killing the body**

Doctors and scientists warn of the deadly toxins, pathogens, and cholesterol ingested by eating meat—so much for the principle of cleanliness. In light of the injunction “He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man,” we can understand that when a man kills and eats a bull, in one way the man he is killing is himself. Worse yet, if he takes his kids to a hamburger stand for a treat, the man he kills may be his son, since children more than adults are at risk of dying of kidney failure by eating tainted meat.

### **Killing Mother Earth**

The cow is the emblem of Mother Earth, and when we raise cows and bulls for slaughter we are killing Mother Earth. Crowding cows into a cattle ranch is a far cry from having a couple of oxen and cows for ploughing and milk. Commercial beef production is one of the most ecologically ruinous businesses of the industrial age. Without encouragement from the meat-eater, the whole disastrous business would quickly end. Meat-eating is killing Mother Earth.

### **Killing the slaughterhouse worker**

In 1988 the U.S. House Committee on Government Operations found conditions in the meat-packing industry to be more dangerous than in any other industry, including coal mining and construction, with nearly a third of slaughterhouse workers suffering job-related injuries or illnesses annually. As described by one union vice president, “Workers stand in a sea of blood ... on treacherously slippery floors covered with animal fat buildup. ... Nearly all the workers wield razor-sharp knives and power tools. ... Because of breakneck chain speeds and close working conditions, workers frequently are accidentally stabbed by their neighbours.”

Working conditions in the slaughterhouse are so hellish that annual turnover rates commonly run between sixty and a hundred percent. What does this kind of work do to a person’s ability to act and feel as a normal human being? We don’t want to think about it. *Washington Post* columnist Colman McCarthy summarized the invisible plight of the butchers: “Flesh-eaters keep the workers as far out of sight as they do the idea of swallowing pieces of animal corpses out of mind.” (“Those Who Eat Meat Share in the Guilt,” 16 April 1988)

### **Do Unto Others ...**

As we see, there are many ways to “kill a man” simply by eating a hamburger. And every principle for spiritual advancement is destroyed when we kill an ox and eat his flesh.

Yet, ironically, when I once shared Isaiah’s admonition with a self-proclaimed Christian, he maintained that Christians are exempt from the teachings of the Old Testament of the Bible and had only to follow Christ’s instruction “Do to others what you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6.31) What he failed to see was that Christ’s instruction leads to the same conclusion.

Would he like to have his throat cut in a slaughterhouse surrounded by screaming, terrified animals? Would he like to have hear his children crying in starvation because he couldn’t afford a bull to produce their food? Would he like to be a child with his body racked with fever and pain from eating poisoned meat? If he were Mother Earth, would he like to see his forests and fields destroyed by the cattle industry? Would he like to annihilate his human sensibilities by having to work in a slaughterhouse? Would he like to have any of these things done to him? No? Then how can meat-eating be considered compatible with his claim of being a Christian—especially with the complex set of miseries meat-eating creates in the modern context?

To truly follow Christ’s instruction would mean to be free from such sin by not taking part in the meat-eating culture at all. As Vaishnavas, we’re not planning to follow all the details of the Christian’s scripture, and we don’t expect him to follow all the details of our scripture. We’re only asking that he make his spiritual life successful by following the injunction given in his own scripture: “Thou shall not kill.” 🙏

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*Our Azhwar - where everything began*

# Azhwar Thirunagari Adhinatha Temple - Part I

by Sampatkumara Ramanuja Dasan (Adv. Ashwin.S)

Located on the banks of the Thamirabarani river in the town of Azhwar Thirunagari, is temple for Lord Adhinatha and Swami Nammazhwar.

## **The birthplace of Nammazhwar**

Nammazhwar is worshipped in a prominent way in every Sri Vaishnava temple in South India. His hymns are chanted daily at the time of worship. His most important work is *Thiruvaimozhi*, which consists of 1,102 stanzas. The holy temple city of Azhwar Thirunagari is the birth place of this illustrious devotee of the Supreme Lord, Swami Nammazhwar.

Most civilisations originated on the banks of rivers. The Egyptian culture blossomed on the banks of the Nile river. Ancient Russian culture developed on the banks of River Volga. Civilizations rose on the banks of the rivers Ganga and Sindhu. Ancient Indian culture came to stay permanently on the banks of the river Ganga. As witnesses to the greatness of this culture, river banks are dotted with several famous temples. Here, many distinguished personalities have been born and become outstanding devotees. Thamarabarani is one such river. On the banks of this river, are nine temples known as Nava Thirupathi.



*Swami Nammazhwar in Azhwar Thirunagari*





Swami Nammazhwar

Thirukkurugur is one of the Nava Thirupathi. Most people belonging to the Vellala community live in Thirukkurugur, except for the *brahmanas* who serve in the temple. These days the Vellala community is associated merely with farming, but they are more than farmers. They are also religious persons who grow crops in spiritual fields. They are vegetarians. All of them are devotees of Lord Narayana. In this community was born a great devotee in Thirukkurugur, named Thiru Vazhudhivala Nadar. The term 'Vazhudhi' in Tamil indicates that he belonged to a family of soldiers of the Pandyan Kings. Nammazhwar was born in his family. Today, one's life is controlled by school, college, films and magazines. But in ancient times, it was the family that determined the education of a person. More importance was given to family traditions than to the individual. In those days, one's *bhakti*, heroism or scholarship was measured by one's ancestors. Seen from this view point, Nammazhwar's ancestors were greatly devotion-oriented and had spiritual inclinations. Thiru Vazhudhivala Nadar, Aranthaangiyar, Chakrapaniyar, Achuthar, Chenthamaraikkannanar, Chenkannanar, Porkariyar, Kariyar were the seven generations of ancestors of Nammazhwar. Porkariyar decided to perform the marriage of his young son, Kariyar, and thus was searching for a proper bride. It is not wrong to hope to raise one's family's greatness through the girl who comes as a bride. It is also a joy for parents to watch their son and daughter-in-law lead a happy family life. Close to Thirukkurugur is the village of Thiruvanparisaram. The presiding Deity of the village is Thiruvazhmarban (*divya desam*). The Mahalakshmi of this temple is Kamalavalli Nachchiyar. There lived in the village, a house holder named Thiruvazhmarban. Porkariyar learnt that he had a beautiful and accomplished daughter. The elders spoke to each other and the boy and the girl gave their approval. The marriage was celebrated with great enthusiasm. The newly married couple would often go to Thiruvanparisaram from Thirukkurugur. On the way is a tiny village called Thirukkurugudi, another *divya desam*. The Lord of this place is known as Nambi.

**"I will incarnate":**

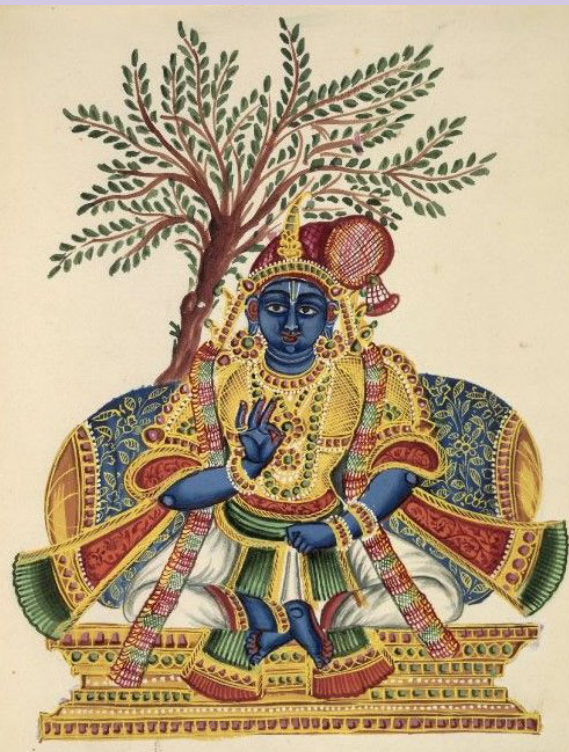
Once, Kariyar worshipped in Nambi's temple along with his bride Udayanangai. The couple prayed for progeny. A disembodied voice spoke through the priest: "I will incarnate!" The young couple were taken aback. They were

filled with delight with this indication of grace from the Lord. Taking holy water and *prasadam*, they returned to Thirukkurugur. After a little while, Udayanangai became pregnant. Nambi's boon came true. The *kaustubha* gem shed its luster on the baby in the womb. Vishwakshena uttered the victory- blessing for the establishment of the kingdom of *bhakti*.

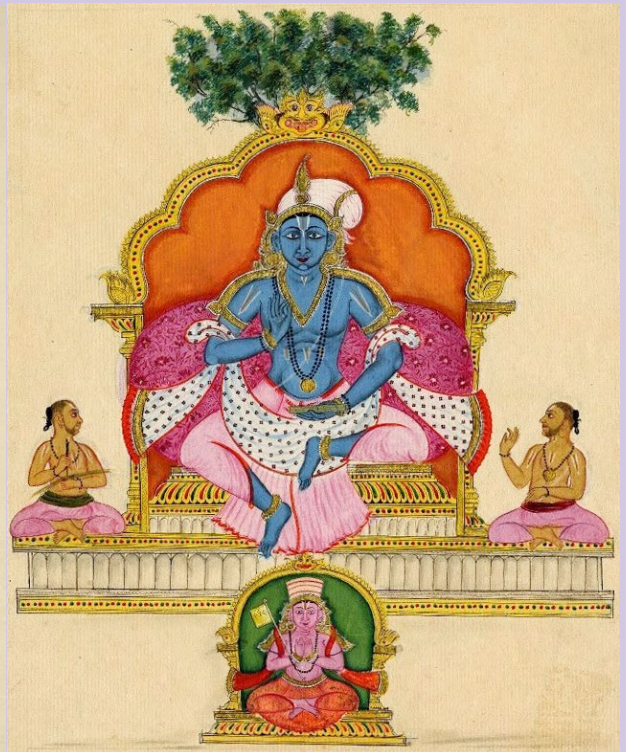
About eleven centuries ago, Nammazhwar was born. Strange attributes, unusual names: Nammazhwar did not move his limbs after birth like common babies. He did not cry. He did not laugh. Nor did he take food. The parents were at first frightened. Later, remembering the words of the Lord in the Thirukurungudi temple, they ceased to worry. Twelve days passed by. The baby was free of birth pollution. The couple took the baby to the temple of Adinatha in Thirukkurugur. As the baby was unlike common children, they named him 'Maran.' 'Maran' means 'different' in Tamil. Saying, "O Lord, you are the guardian of this child," the parents placed him in a cradle tied to the tamarind tree near the temple. Maran grew up. As long as one is in the womb, the *satha* wind covers the knowledge of the Supreme. But Maran's utterance of the *hoonkara* sound chased it away and the wind never came near him. Hence he came to be known as Sathakopa, one who was angry with *satha*.

Years went by, but there was no change in the boy. The parents were very unhappy. They blamed themselves for having done evil in their earlier birth. But they remembered the Lord's boon and consoled themselves. It is said Vishwakshena came in person and performed the ritual of placing the signs of the Disc and the Conch on Nammazhwar's shoulders. Time moved on. Lord Vishnu with Lakshmi on their Garuda mount, gave *darshan* to Nammazhwar. The Lord also showed His various forms found in different temples. Then Nammazhwar began reciting the glory of the Lord in *pasuras* (verses). Nammazhwar wrote four works titled *Thiruviruttam*, *Thiruvasiriyam*, *Periya Thiruvandadi* and *Thiruvaimoli*. He presented them as the essence of *Rig*, *Yajus*, *Sama* and *Atharva* Vedas. That is why scholars hail him as *Vedam Tamil Seyta Maran* (One who gave the Vedas in Tamil). Delighted with these works, *Polindu Ninra Piran* (Adhinathaswami), the presiding Deity of Thirukkurugur temple, presented Nammazhwar with a garland of *vakula* blossoms. Hence he is also known as Vakulabharana.

With his ideas and arguments, Nammazhwar defeated those who followed non-Vedic religions. That is why he is called Parankusa, which means he was like the goad that controlled the elephant-like non-Vedic religions that had proliferated in his time. Nammazhwar's fame spread to many lands. Innumerable devotees came to him to offer their salutations. The common man received a new strength, thanks to Nammazhwar's compassionate glances. Philosophers understood important Vedantic matters from Nammazhwar. Spending his life in meditation beneath the tamarind tree, Nammazhwar reached Vaikuntha in his 35th year in Srirangam, 10 days after Vaikunta Ekadashi. Madhurakavi Azhwar consecrated a deity of Nammazhwar under the tamarind tree and felt blessed.



Swami Nammazhwar under tamarind tree



Swami Nammazhwar with Nathamuni, Madhurakavi and Ramanuja



Swami Nammazhwar in Srirangam, Thirumala, Kanchipuram, Thirunarayanapuram

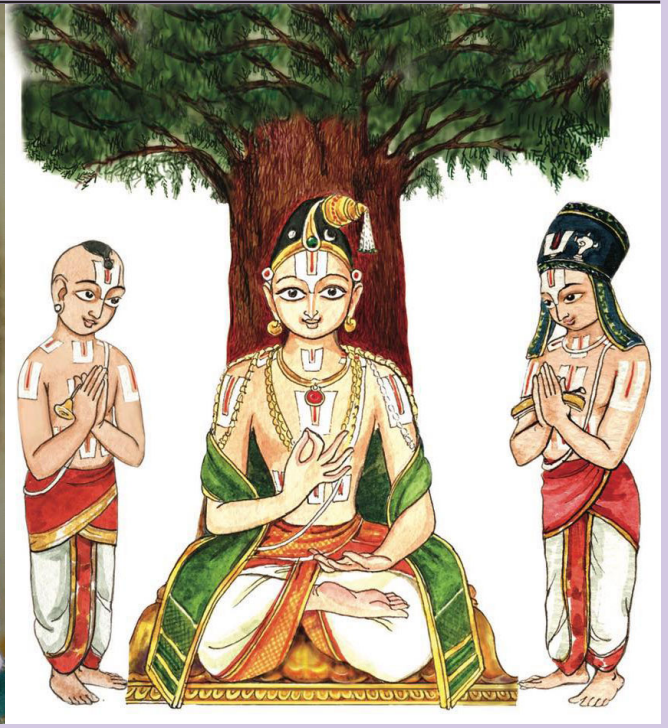
## Madhurakavi

The ascent of the star Chittirai in the month that is also known as Chittarai (which falls between mid-April and mid-May) is the birth anniversary of Sri Madhurakavi Azhwar, who is included among the “10+2” Tamil Azhwars whose works are contained in the *Nalayira divya prabhandam* ( 4000 songs). However, unlike the others, who composed dozens of mystical hymns on Sriman Narayana and His wondrous qualities, Madhurakavi Azhwar composed just 10 *pasurams*, and all of them were directed not towards Krishna, but to his Acharya, Nammazhwar, the most enigmatic but perhaps greatest among all of the 10 Azhwars. Although hailing from the South, Madhurakavi spent a good deal of his life touring the *divya desams* in the northern parts of India.

On one occasion, while he was worshipping Sri Rama at Ayodhya, he saw a brilliant light just above the southern horizon that seemed to be beckoning him back to Southern India. Madhurakavi followed the light to the small temple town of Thirukkurgur. There, Madhurakavi saw a saintly young man sitting in deep meditation under the shade of a large tree that was contained within the courtyard of the temple. This young man was called Maran by the local townspeople, but he would soon be later known as Satakopan or Nammazhwar. From conversations with local residents, Madhurakavi came to understand that this young man had been under the shade of this tree all his life, in deep mystical contemplation of the Divine. He never ate, walked, slept, or even spoke. It would appear as if he were there waiting for someone who would have the right qualifications, aptitude and attitude to awaken him from his trance, such that he could begin to share the secrets of his mystical experience.



Swami Nammazhwar in Kanchipuram



Swami Nammazhwar with his disciples Madhurakavi and Nathamuni

Madhurakavi approached Nammazhwar respectfully with a complex question that he hoped would be just the right one to awaken the great soul from his trance. He asked, in Tamil “*Sethathin vayaril siriAdhu pirandhal, yethai thinru, yenge valurum* (If a living being is born into a dead body, what does it eat, and where does it live)?” Hearing this deeply esoteric question, Nammazhwar opened his eyes and replied, “*Athai thinru, ange valarum* (It lives there, and eats that).” This simple yet perplexing conversation refers to the nature of the soul, which at birth finds itself in a lifeless body, which is made of the same five basic elements (earth, air, water, fire, and ether) that make up the world that it lives in. For the duration of its life, the soul lives within the body and partakes of the materials of this world of which its body is made. Consequently, “it lives there and eats that.” Overwhelmed by this simple, succinct response to a many layered question, Madhurakavi knew at that moment that he had found his Acharya, his true spiritual teacher, and a true devotee of Sriman Narayana. As what would serve as a paradigm for the

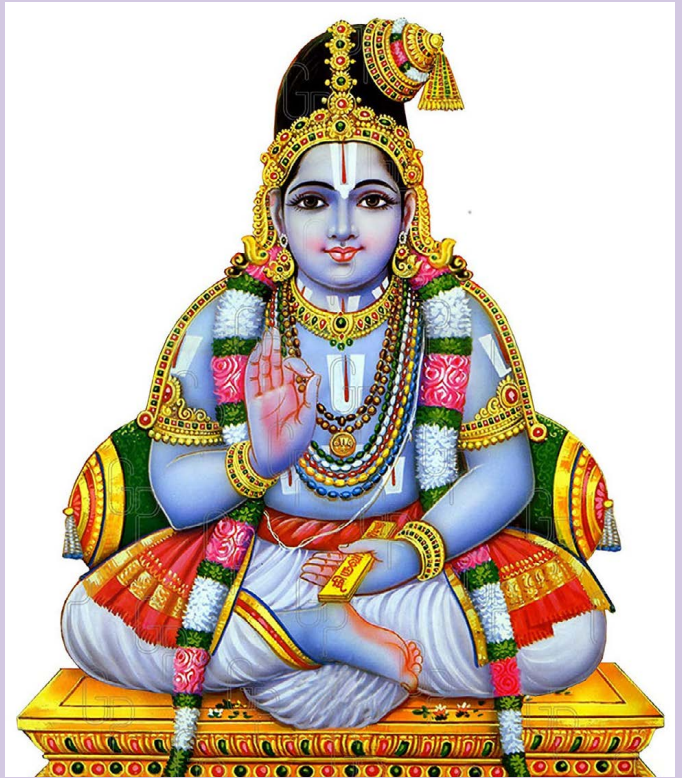


The sacred tamarind tree of many thousand of years old preserved in the temple of Azhwar Thirunagari

egalitarian nature that Sri Ramanuja would later propagate, Madhurakavi set aside the fact that he was born into the *brahmana* community, while Nammazhwar belonged to the *shudra* community, and simply and whole-heartedly dedicated himself to learning from and serving him.

So much was Madhurakavi's devotion to Nammazhwar, that he composed a set of 10 *pasurams*, which came to be included among the Sacred Collection of 4000, to describe his feelings. This set of 10 verses is called *Kanninun Siruthambu*, the Short-Knotted String, in reference to the short string (which is seen as a metaphor for Pure Divine Love) which Yashoda used to capture her playful son, Sri Krishna. Madhurakavi uses the example of this thread to describe that while it is used by Nammazhwar in much the same way to hold Sri Krishna in his heart, Madhurakavi's short-knotted thread of devotion would be used only to holding Sri Nammazhwar. So, while all of the other Azhvars' mystical experiences have the Supreme Lord as the center of devotion, Madhurakavi's divine experience places his guru alone as the center of everything. Nammazhwar is seen by Madhurakavi to be the mother, father, friend, teacher, and even Krishna.

In one verse, Madhurakavi says, "My mouth is filled with the nectar of reciting the holy name of my *kurugur nambi*



Swami Nammazhwar



A sculpture in the temple where Nammazhwar is seen seated under a tamarind tree

(the leader of Thirukkurugur). I know refuge only at His Divine Feet; I know of no other Krishna. I will spend my days singing the sweet songs that he sings (Nammazhwar's *Thiruvaimozhi*).

Madhurakavi's experience of seeing a devotee of Krishna as being his everything, even being over and above Krishna Himself, has been likened to the relationship that Sri Rama's youngest brother, Sathrugna, the twin brother of Lakshmana, shared with Bharata. For, while Lakshmana became a virtual shadow and servant to Supreme Lord Sri Rama, Sathrugna found his purpose in serving Sri Rama's brother and regent, Sri Bharata. This experience also serves as the precedent for the concept of surrender, reverence and service to the spiritual master. It is this relationship that is of utmost importance in Vaishnava practice, as it is through the Acharya alone that we share the connection to Sriman Narayana. So, while it may be difficult to experience Krishna directly, as we are unable to fully know Him, the Acharya is in and of himself the very personification of the Lord's mercy and compassion, always available to provide us with his care, solace, and guidance. So service to the Acharya becomes more important than serving the Lord Himself, and in a sense, becomes our only means to Krishna realization. 🙏

(To be continued)

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam

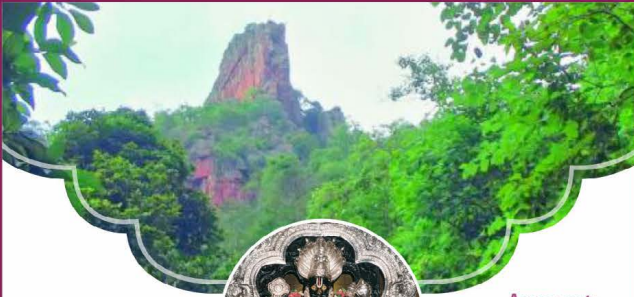
# Akhanda Gita Parayana

On the occasion of Gita Jayanthi, 'Akhand Gita Parayana' was held at ISKCON Bangalore. Around 600 people attended from 14 bhajana mandalis. The program began at 10am with invocation prayers followed by an address by H.G.Sridham Krishna Dasa, the Gita chanting started at 10:30am and ended at 2pm.





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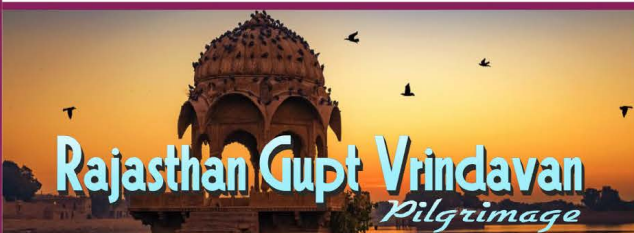


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