



# KRISHNA VOICE

Vol 24, No.8, August 2023





# Sri Balarama Jayanti



The Appearance Day of Sri Balarama

**Thursday - August 31 - 2023**

Celebrations 6 pm onwards

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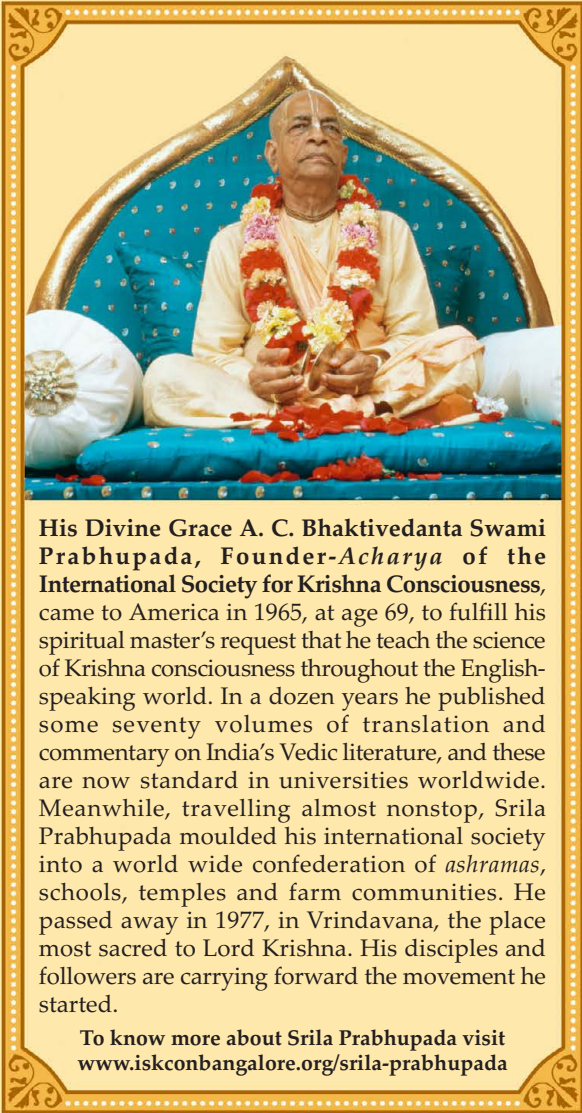


# KRISHNA VOICE



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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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# Our Happiness Is Krishna

***Material life means struggling  
to find happiness, but people don't know where to look.***

A lecture given in Los Angeles, on September 28, 1972

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

*This issue of Krishna Voice coincides with Janmashtami, the anniversary of Lord Krishna's appearance, so we've selected a lecture in which Srila Prabhupada discusses Lord Krishna's appearance and activities. All Hare Krishna centers hold a special celebration on Janmashtami. Call a center near you for the exact date in your area and a schedule of events.*

*ekonavimse vimsatime vrsnisu prapya janmani  
rama-krishnav iti bhuvo bhagavan aharad bharam*

"In the nineteenth and twentieth incarnations, the Lord descended as Lord Balarama and Lord Krishna in the family of Vrishni, or the Yadu dynasty, and by so doing He removed the burden of the world."—*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.3.23

Krishna can appear from anywhere. But He chooses to appear in the dynasty of Vrishni. Balarama appeared first, and then Krishna appeared, in the family of Vrishni, the Vrishni dynasty. One of Krishna's names is Varsneya because He appeared in the Vrishni family, just as sandalwood is known as "Malayan sandalwood" because it was formerly grown in large quantities in Malaysia.

*Janma karma me divyam.* Krishna's birth, or appearance, and work are not ordinary. *Divyam*—they are transcendental. *Yo janati tattvatah.* If one understands Krishna *tattvatah*, "in truth," then the result is *tyaktva deham punar janma naiti*: after giving up this body one does not take another material body. Krishna says, *mam eti*: "He comes to Me." That is the success of life. If you simply try to understand Krishna—His transcendental appearance, disappearance, activities—then your life is successful.

The purpose of the Krishna consciousness movement is to try to make people understand Krishna. Simply by understanding Krishna one will become liberated from material bondage. Every one of us is trying to get out of some kind of bondage. We feel, "I am bound up by certain circumstances, so I must get out." Ending this bondage is called *atyantika-duhkha-nivrtti*.

*Duhkha-nivrtti* means avoiding painful situations. Everyone is trying to avoid painful situations. That's a fact. We are struggling. I have got some income, say two hundred dollars, but that is not sufficient for me. So I struggle hard to get five hundred dollars, to avoid the painful situation. When I have five hundred dollars I feel another pain, so I try for one thousand dollars. In this way I go on increasing, and the painful situation is never mitigated. It will continue. Otherwise, why are millionaires committing suicide? They have money. But they do not know that no amount of material comforts will make them happy. That is not possible.

India is advertised as a very poor country. But still the majority of the people in India are happy. People elsewhere do not know that. Materially, Indians, especially the villagers, haven't got many possessions—may-be only one or two pieces of clothing. But still they follow the Vedic principles, bathe early in the morning, go to their business, and eat whatever they get. And they are happy. People say, "Primitive." But, after all, you want happiness. Primitive or advanced—what is that? If in an advanced civilization you commit suicide, why not be primitive?

## Real Happiness

People do not know what is actual happiness. Therefore the struggle is going on. *Na te viduh svartha-gatim hi vishnum*: The rascals do not know that real happiness is Vishnu, God. Our happiness is Krishna. For Krishna we are working day and night. The *karmis*, the nondevotees, are also working day and night, but they are not happy. We are happy. That they do not know. We are also doing the same things they are doing. We are not lazy. We are not sleeping. Every one of us is busy. Someone is writing, someone is typing, someone is selling books, someone is preparing *prasadam* [food offered to Krishna], someone is cleaning, someone is going to *sankirtana* [spreading Krishna consciousness]. Not a single moment are we lazy. But because we are working for Krishna, there is happiness. Here nobody is paid a single farthing. Rather, you bring money. But still you are happy. But the *karmis* are getting money, and still they are not happy. Why? This is practical.

We sometimes have to tell someone that he cannot live with us. So he leaves, but he cannot stay away. Unless there is happiness, why is he sticking to Krishna consciousness? Those who leave and then come back could not find any happiness outside Krishna consciousness. People may say, "These are foolish people, working under









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some idea.” But those in Krishna consciousness are happy. They must be happy. But others do not know this. *Na te viduh svartha-gatim hi vishnum*. Nondevotees do not know how happiness can be attained.

Happiness can be attained when you come to God, because you are part and parcel of God. Take this example: A little child is crying, and no one can pacify him. But as soon as the child is put on the breast of the mother, he is at once happy, because the child is part and parcel of the mother and immediately he understands, “Now I have come to safety, my mother.”

Similarly, we are all part and parcel of God, Vishnu. So unless we come to Krishna or Vishnu—Krishna is Vishnu—there is no happiness. It is not possible. But the rascals do not know this. They are trying to become happy by so-called scientific advancement.

### **The Platform of No Distress**

The aim of life is to come to the platform of happiness, where there is no distress at all, simply happiness (*anandamayo 'bhyasat*). That is our aim.

You see so many pictures of Krishna—Krishna is playing with the cowherd boys, Krishna is dancing with His girlfriends, Krishna is stealing butter. Krishna is doing so many things, and they are all simply happiness. You won't find Krishna morose or sitting and crying. Even if He kills some demon He does it very laughingly, as an easy job. You see? Whether He is killing or dancing, He is happy.

We are giving this information of happiness, the topmost happiness—without any unhappiness—*Anandamayo 'bhyasat*. The *Vedanta-sutra* says that the nature of the individual soul and the Supersoul is to become happy. *Anandamaya*—“happy.” Spiritual life means happiness. That happiness can be attained in cooperation with the Supreme.

We are like sparks of fire. Sometimes the sparks looks very beautiful. But if a spark falls from the fire, the fiery quality of the spark is at once extinguished. Our material condition is like that. We gave up the company of Krishna, and we wanted to be happy in this material world; therefore we are suffering.

If you put the spark, the particle of carbon, back into the fire, it will again become fire and red-hot. In the Krishna consciousness movement we are trying to pick up the sparks that by chance have fallen from the fire and put them back into the fire. That return to the fire is real happiness.

### **The Test for God**

In today's verse it is said, *rama-krishnav iti*: God appeared as Rama and Krishna. There must be symptoms of Rama and Krishna. What is the test? The test is *bhagavan aharad bharam*: God can remove the burden of the world. When Krishna and Rama appeared, Balarama killed so many demons to make the world peaceful. From birth Krishna killed Putana, Aghasura, Bakasura, the Keshi demon, and so many other *asuras*, or demons. Every day Krishna and Balarama used to go to the forest, and some *asura* would come to disturb Them, to kill Them, and Krishna would finish him. And Krishna's friends would come home and narrate the story to their mothers: “Mother, Krishna is so wonderful. Such a big demon came, and Krishna killed him at once in this way and that way.” That is Krishna. Not that because one has some so-called meditation one becomes Krishna without any test. What is the proof that someone is Rama or Krishna? Foolish people do not take the proof. They simply pose a bogus man as Rama or Krishna.

Balarama and Krishna are Bhagavan. They are actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and They proved it. They are not the “Rama” or “Krishna” dying of cancer. We are not after such a Rama or Krishna. When there is a real Rama and a real Krishna, why should I go to the imitation Rama or Krishna?

We should be intelligent enough not to be bluffed. *Krishna yei bhaje sei bada catura*: Without being intelligent, nobody surrenders to Krishna.

*bahunam janmanam ante jnanavan mam prapadyate  
vasudevah sarvam iti sa mahatma su-durlabhah*

Anyone who has surrendered to Krishna is the most intelligent (*jnanavan*). Krishna says that one who is fully wise after many, many births surrenders unto Him.

### **We Can't Be Cheated**

Everyone is trying to put forward a competitor to Krishna. “Oh, why that Krishna? Here is another Krishna—with a big beard.” That kind of “Krishna” is for the foolish man, and those presenting him as Krishna are also foolish.

Lord Krishna says in *Bhagavad-gita*,

*catur-vidha bhajante mam janah sukrino 'rjuna  
arto jijnasur artharthi jnani ca bhatarasabha*





Four classes of men, if they are pious, come to God: the wise, the distressed, the inquisitive, and those in need of money. Generally, if an ordinary person is pious he prays to God, “My dear Lord, I am in distress. Kindly save me.” Or if somebody needs money, he also approaches God: “My dear Lord, for want of money I am suffering. Kindly give me some money.” The *jnani* approaches God for knowledge. He wants to know the constitutional position of God. And the inquisitive person is inquiring, “What is God?”

These four classes try to understand or approach God. Out of these four, two classes—those in distress and those in want of money—forget God as soon as they get money or their distress is over. But the inquisitive and the wise continue to search out God. Out of these two classes, when one understands what is God he is perfect. That becomes possible after many, many births: *bahunam janmanam ante jnanavan*. What kind of knowledge does one get? *Vasudevah sarvam iti*: “Krishna is everything, Vasudeva.” One of Krishna’s names is Vasudeva.

*Sa mahatma su-durlabhah*: that type of great soul—who accepts Krishna as everything—is very rare. Those who have taken Krishna as everything are the greatest souls, the topmost souls within the world. They cannot be misled by an imitation Krishna. They are interested in the real Krishna: Vasudeva Krishna, the son of Vasudeva.

Krishna appeared in the Vrishni family, and our business is to understand Krishna. We cannot understand Krishna fully. He is unlimited. But still, by following in the footsteps of *mahajanas*, great devotees, we can understand to some extent what is Krishna.

Our real aim is to love Krishna. The *gopis*, Krishna’s cowherd girlfriends, did not know that Krishna is God. The cowherd boys did not know. Even His mother, Yashoda, did not know that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But their love for Krishna was spontaneous. They did not know anything beyond Krishna. If you come to that stage, that is perfection.

Not that we want to know God. What will we know? What knowledge have we got that we can understand God? But we can see by God’s activities. When Krishna appeared, all His activities were uncommon. He was not a human being, but He played as a human being. The human being marries, so Krishna married. But His marrying is wonderful. He married 16,108 wives. That is uncommon. Nobody can marry like that. Muslim nawabs used to marry many wives. One nawab married 160 wives, but he could not reach all the wives every day or every night. That was not possible. But Krishna is not like that. Krishna expanded Himself into sixteen thousand forms and personally accompanied each wife.

So this incarnation of Krishna-Balarama is described in detail in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Their symptoms, the father’s name, the mother’s name, the place, the activities—everything is being described. We cannot be cheated by a false incarnation of God. That is not possible. Those who want to be cheated are cheated. But we don’t want to be cheated. We want real God. Therefore nobody can cheat us.

Thank you very much. ☺



# SRILA PRABHUPADA SPEAKS OUT

## The Highest Pleasure In A Rascal Culture

*This exchange between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and some of his disciples took place on October 18, 1975, during a morning walk in Johannesburg, South Africa.*

**Disciple:** Srila Prabhupada, people sometimes criticize by saying, “Your Vedic culture was most solidly established in India. And India is now considered relatively poor and unfortunate. So why should we respect the Vedic culture?”

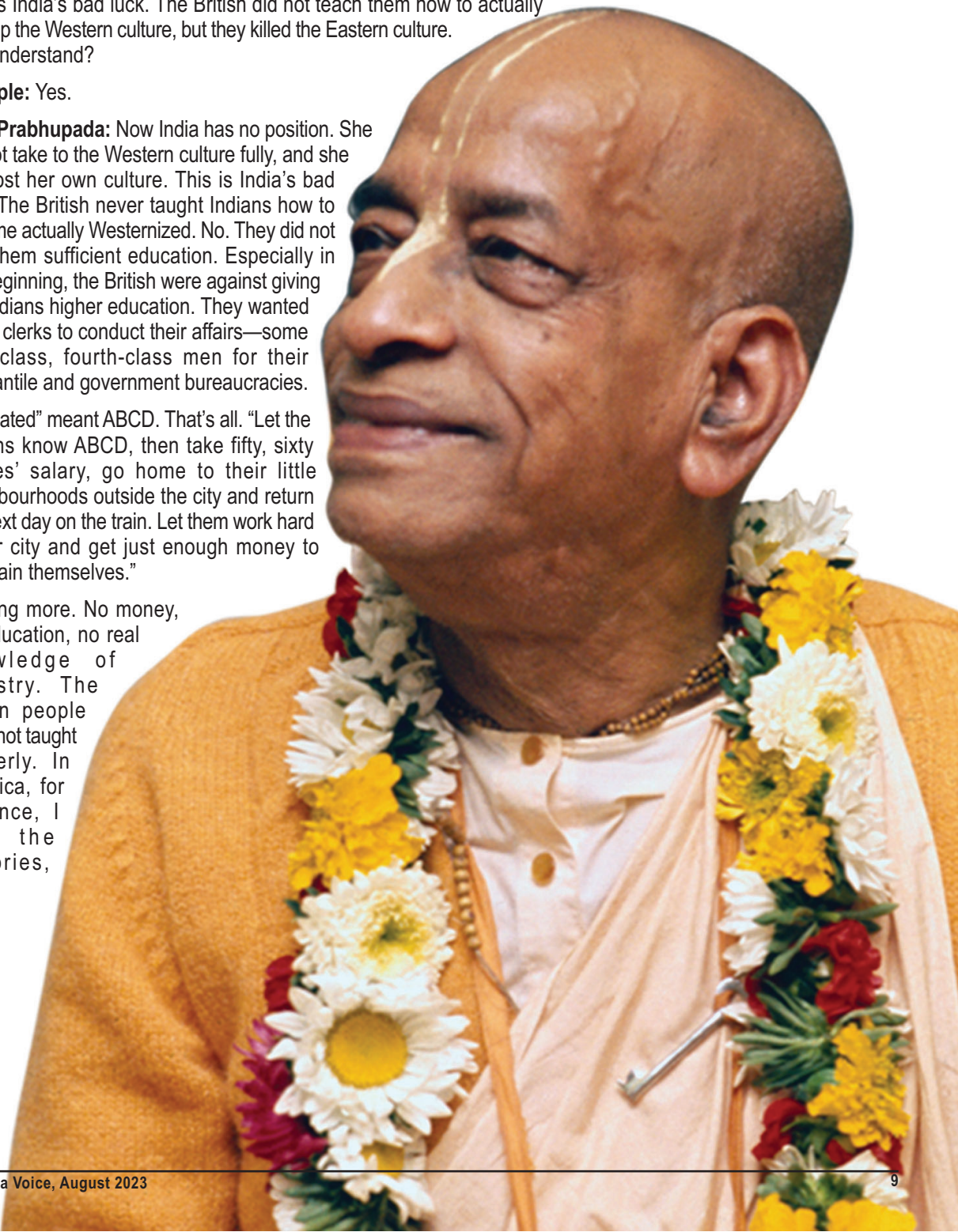
**Srila Prabhupada:** The thing is, when you Westerners went to India you curbed down the original Vedic culture. The people in India could not take to your rascal Western culture, and thanks to you they have lost their own culture. This is India’s bad luck. The British did not teach them how to actually take up the Western culture, but they killed the Eastern culture. You understand?

**Disciple:** Yes.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Now India has no position. She cannot take to the Western culture fully, and she has lost her own culture. This is India’s bad luck. The British never taught Indians how to become actually Westernized. No. They did not give them sufficient education. Especially in the beginning, the British were against giving the Indians higher education. They wanted some clerks to conduct their affairs—some third-class, fourth-class men for their mercantile and government bureaucracies.

“Educated” meant ABCD. That’s all. “Let the Indians know ABCD, then take fifty, sixty rupees’ salary, go home to their little neighbourhoods outside the city and return the next day on the train. Let them work hard in our city and get just enough money to maintain themselves.”

Nothing more. No money, no education, no real knowledge of industry. The Indian people were not taught properly. In America, for instance, I see the factories,



and the arrangement is so nice. But go to those Indian factories—it is hell. Hell. Simply hell. The Britishers exploited the Indians, and the mercantile class of India—they have learned simply how to exploit.

**Disciple:** Exploit their own people.

**Srila Prabhupada:** That's all. Formerly, the Manchester people were exploiting the Indians. And now the Ahmedabad people—they have learned how to exploit. And the government is satisfied, because the exploiters pay taxes: "Never mind. The workers may go on suffering." This is going on. And the Indian people have lost their own culture. They have been taught how to drink alcohol, how to eat flesh.

Aside from all this, Indians cannot work as hard as Westerners. The hot climate does not allow it. India's climate is good for living peacefully, not working so hard, and instead engaging the brain in spiritual advancement. That is India's gift. Her people are not meant for hard work.

Actually, hard work is not required for anyone. This is animal civilization—simply to work very hard. If a man works hard like an animal, then what is the difference between the man and an animal? Here in the Western countries the climate is more suitable for heavy industry, and as one would expect, the people are being taught to work very hard like animals, and they do that. Therefore, materially they have become so-called advanced, to the point that spiritually they are committing suicide. Is it not?

**Disciple:** This is true.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Materially advanced, spiritually suicidal. Am I right or wrong?

**Disciple:** Right, Srila Prabhupada. Another dimension also comes to mind. In your commentary on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* you write that if people want to increase their material advancement, then they should also increase their sex lives.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. Without sex one cannot be materially enthusiastic. And if you stop sex, then you become spiritually advanced. This is the secret. If you stop sex, then you will become spiritually advanced, and if you indulge in sex, then you will become materially enthusiastic. That is the difference between Western and Eastern culture. The whole Eastern culture is based on stopping sex, and here in the Western countries on how to increase sex. The people here are eating meat, eggs, drinking wine. These things increase sex desire. And as soon as you get a very satisfactory sex life, you become enthusiastic to work hard. Therefore for *karmis*, or those seeking material advancement, marriage is necessary, because without sex they cannot work. And for those seeking spiritual advancement, sex is prohibited.

Actually, in this Western culture, people do not know the science of life. For them, "life" means this body. Their life is this body. That means they do not know what life is. After all, when the living person has gone, the body they thought he was is lying there. They are very proud of their scientific advancement, but in reality do they know who the person was? They cannot explain. This is their ignorance. And yet they are very proud of their advancement.

But once this person's life span has come to an end, can they bring him back to life? That they cannot do. That means the whole basic principle of their so-called culture is ignorance. *Mudho 'yam nabhijanati*: Krishna says, "Fools and rascals can never understand the soul or the Supreme Soul." And *moghasa mogha-karmano mogha-jnana vicetasah*: "Their material cleverness—their so-called knowledge—leaves them spiritually baffled." Why? *Raksasim asurim caiva prakrtim mohinim sritah*: "Those who take shelter not of My divine nature but of *prakrti*, the material nature, become so bewildered that they do not know life's real aim." *Moghasa*: "They are utterly baffled." And therefore, *mogha-karmano*: "Whatever they are doing—that will be useless." Again, *mogha-jnana*: in this so-called advanced culture, there is no spiritual knowledge. So actually there is no knowledge. ☸

hare krishna hare krishna  
krishna krishna hare hare  
hare rama hare rama  
rama rama hare hare



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# The Spiritual Master

## How to Find Him ... How to Honour Him ... How to Follow Him

From the Vyasa-Puja addresses of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Garlanded with roses and gardenias, surrounded by devoted followers, Srila Prabhupada sits upon a magnificent throne. Disciple after disciple prostrates himself on the ground at Srila Prabhupada's feet. The disciples praise him. Srila Prabhupada sits gravely and says nothing. Finally he begins to speak.

"Vyasa-puja," he says, "means that one day in a year, on the birthday of the spiritual master, he is offered respect." Why? "Because he is the representative of Vyasa [here Srila Prabhupada refers to the ancient compiler of the Vedic wisdom] and is delivering without any change the same knowledge which has come down by disciplic succession." \*\* (New Vrindavana, September 2, 1972.)

Srila Prabhupada's birthday comes the day after Janmashtami, the appearance festival of Lord Krishna. These days fall at the beginning of September this year.

Here we select from what Srila Prabhupada said about the meaning of the Vyasa-puja ceremony. Let us listen as he continues to speak.

### The Original Guru

"Vyasa is the original *guru* because from his literature we understand spiritual knowledge. All these literatures, whatever we have produced, are originally from Vyasadeva." \*\* (London, August 22, 1973.)

"This *asana* [throne] where they have seated me is called the *vyasasana*. The *guru* is the representative of Vyasadeva.... So anyone who represents the great *acharya* [spiritual master] Vyasadeva is allowed to sit on the *vyasasana*."

### Disciplic Succession

As an orthodox representative of an ancient tradition, Srila Prabhupada follows the system of Vyasa-puja out of respect for the practices and philosophy of that tradition.

"This Vyasa-puja ceremony," he says, "means to offer our thanks to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because He is the original *guru*. We receive this message through the *parampara* system: from Krishna to Brahma, Brahma to Narada, Narada to Vyasadeva ..."

Srila Prabhupada continues to name the illustrious teachers in the *parampara*, the disciplic chain: "Madhavendra Puri, then Ishvara Puri, then Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, then the six Gosvamis, then others—Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Jagannatha dasa Babaji, Gaura Kishora dasa Babaji, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati ..." It is in this *parampara*, Srila Prabhupada says, that he himself comes next.

"So we come to Krishna conscious understanding through this long *parampara*. Similarly, in the Vyasa-puja ceremony, whatever respect, honour, and presentations you give go to Krishna through that *parampara* system." \*\* (London, August 22, 1973.)

### The Lord's Viceroy

"The spiritual master," Srila Prabhupada explains, "receives all honour, all contributions, on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, not for himself. For example, in our country when there was British rule there was a viceroy, a king's representative. So naturally when the viceroy used to go to some meeting, many people used to present valuable jewels just to honour him. But the law was that the viceroy could not touch a single jewel or contribution. It was going to the royal treasury. On behalf of the king the viceroy could accept all contributions, but they went to the king.

"Similarly, on Vyasa-puja day whatever honour, contributions, and feelings are being offered to the spiritual master go to Krishna. As we have received the knowledge from upwards, this respect goes upwards." \*\* (New Vrindavana, September 2, 1972.)

Don't jump over to God, crossing the spiritual master. Then it will be a failure. You must go through the spiritual master. We are observing the Vyasa-puja ceremony, the birth anniversary of our Guru Maharaja [spiritual master].





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Why? We cannot understand Krishna without a spiritual master.

If anyone wants to understand Krishna by jumping over the spiritual master, then immediately he becomes bogus. Nobody can understand Krishna without going through His most confidential servant.

“If you think that you have become very learned and very advanced and can now avoid the spiritual master and understand Krishna, that is bogus....

We should always pray, *yasya prasada bhagavat-prasada*: only by the grace of the spiritual master can we achieve the grace or mercy of Krishna. This is the meaning of Vyasa-puja.” \*\* (Atlanta, March 2, 1975.)

### **A Revolutionary Practice**

Srila Prabhupada is very much aware that some people may misconstrue the Vyasa-puja ceremony.

“Of course,” he says, “those who are my students know what is this ceremony. ... But an outsider may ask, ‘Why is a person being worshiped like God?’ There may be some doubt.” \*\* (New Vrindavana, September 2, 1972.)

“Now I must explain my position, because in these days a person’s being worshiped as a most exalted personality is something revolutionary.” \*\* (Hyderabad, August 19, 1976.) (8)

“It is not that I am training my disciples to worship me—man worship—or that I’m getting some honour from them for nothing. No. It is not that. Whatever honour, whatever respect, whatever presentation you are giving to your spiritual master, it will go to Krishna by the *parampara* system.” \*\* (London, August 22, 1973.)

“An outsider may think, ‘This man is being flattered, and he is hearing his own eulogy.’ But this is not the fact. The disciples are receiving the message sincerely, and they are expressing their feeling. So that feeling is going to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And as the message has come through the channel of disciplic succession, all these praises will also reach Krishna through that disciplic succession.” \*\* (Hamburg, September 5, 1969.)

“If you offer prayers to the *acharya*, then Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is pleased. To please Him you have to please His representative.

‘If you love me, love my dog.’ And in the *Bhagavad-gita* it is said, *acaryopasanam*: we have to worship the *acharya*.” \*\* (Hyderabad, August 19, 1976.)

“Krishna says, *acharyam mam vijaniyan*: ‘You accept the *acharya* as Myself.’ Why? I see that he is a man. His sons call him father, he looks like a man, so why should he be as good as God?

“Because he speaks as God speaks, that’s all.... He says as the Supreme Personality of Godhead says; therefore he is *guru*. Even though you see that he is materially born, that his behaviour is like that of other men, he says the same truth spoken in the *Vedas* or by the Personality of Godhead; therefore he is *guru*. He does not make any whimsical change; therefore he is *guru*. That is the definition. It is very simple.” \*\* (Hyderabad, August 19, 1976.)

### **The Humility of the Pure Devotee**

Srila Prabhupada explains that he himself is but a servant of his spiritual master. “Of course, my students offer me so much respect, but all these respects are due to my spiritual master.”

“I am nothing. I am just like a peon. When a peon delivers a letter, he is not responsible for what is written in that. He simply delivers.” \*\* (Hamburg, September 5, 1969.)

Srila Prabhupada feels indebted, he says, not only to his spiritual master, from whom he received the message of Krishna, but also to his disciples, who are helping him spread it.

Anyone who is coming to Krishna consciousness is not an ordinary living being.

Actually, he’s a liberated soul. And I am very much hopeful that, even if I die, my disciples who are now participating today will continue my movement....

“Bhaktivinoda Thakura wanted European and American people to understand the philosophy of the Chaitanya cult and take part in it. That was his desire. My Guru Maharaja, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Prabhupada, also attempted to send his disciples to preach the Chaitanya cult in the Western world....

At our first meeting, perhaps you know, he asked me to preach. So at that time I was a young man, only twenty-five years old, and I was also a house-holder. I should have joined and executed his desire immediately, but due to my ill luck I could not immediately execute his order. But it was in my heart: ‘It is to be done.’

“So anyway, although I began very late, at the age of seventy years, by the help of my disciples this movement

is gaining ground and is spreading all over the world. Therefore I have to thank you. It is all due to you. It is not my credit. It is your credit that you are helping me execute the order of my Guru Maharaja.” \*\* (London, August 22, 1973.)

### How Does One Meet A Spiritual Master?

“Krishna is within everyone.... So He is called *chaitya-guru*, the *guru* within the heart. ... And when Krishna sees that a living entity is very anxious to understand Him or to revive his Krishna consciousness, then Krishna gives him all opportunity, especially by manifesting Himself as the spiritual master. ... The spiritual master is therefore Krishna’s manifestation—Krishna’s mercy manifestation to help a person develop his Krishna consciousness.” \*\* (London, August 22, 1973.)

“The whole world is in the blaze of the threefold miseries, and a person who is authorized to deliver people from those material pangs is called a spiritual master.” \*\* (Hamburg, September 5, 1969.)

### Continuing the Disciplic Succession

Srila Prabhupada tells his disciples that they too should become spiritual masters.

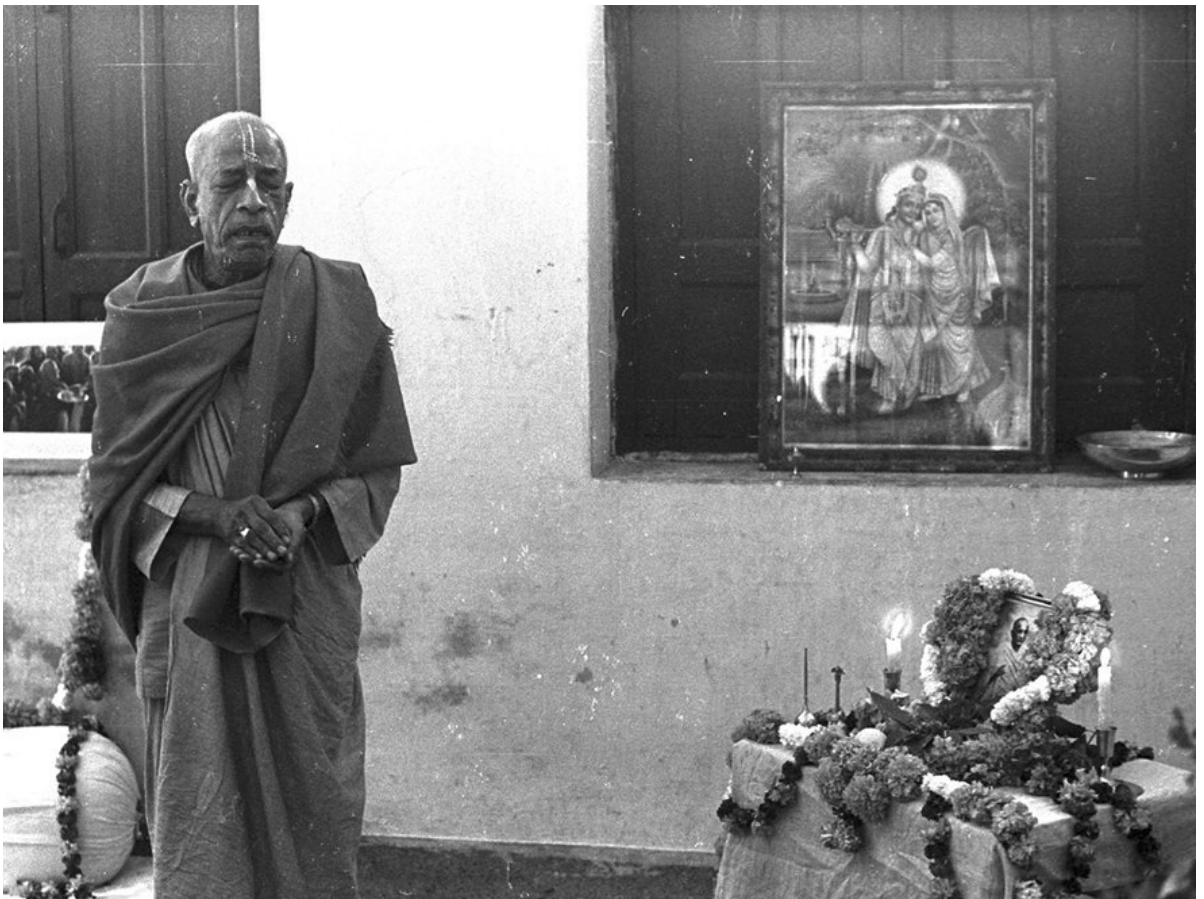
Spiritual master is not a new invention. So all my students present here who are feeling so much obliged ... I am obliged to them because they are helping me in this missionary work. At the same time, I shall request them all to become spiritual masters. Every one of you should become spiritual masters next.

And what is your duty? Whatever you are hearing from me, whatever you are learning from me, you have to distribute the same in toto, without any addition or alteration. Then all of you will become spiritual masters....

“To become a spiritual master is not a very wonderful thing. One simply has to become a sincere soul.” \*\* (Hamburg, September 5, 1969.)

It is not difficult. It is difficult when you manufacture something. But if you simply present whatever you have heard from your spiritual master, it is very easy.

“If you want to become over intelligent, to present something, to interpret something, over what you have heard



*Srila Prabhupada performs guru puja*



from your spiritual master, then you'll spoil the whole thing. Don't make any addition or alteration. Simply present it as it is. ... Remain always a servant of your spiritual master and present the thing as you have heard it. You will be a spiritual master. This is the secret." \*\* (London, August 22, 1973.)

"One should not think, 'I am not qualified to become a *guru*.' No, you are qualified if you follow strictly the *parampara* system." \*\* (London, August 22, 1973.)

"If you simply preach this cult—'My dear friend, my dear brother, you surrender to Krishna'—you become a spiritual master." \*\* (London, August 22, 1973.)

### There Is a Need

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has asked everyone to become a *guru*. Everyone. Because there is need of *gurus*. The world is full of rascals; therefore there is need of so many *gurus* to teach them....

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says: *amara ajnaya guru hana tara' ei desa*: Wherever you are living, become a *guru* and deliver them. Suppose you are living in a small neighbourhood; you can become a *guru* of that neighbourhood and deliver them.

How is it possible? I have no education. I have no knowledge. How can I become *guru* and deliver them?

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said: It is not at all difficult. *Yare dekha, tare kaha 'krishna'-upadesa*. This is your qualification. If you simply deliver the message given by Krishna, you become *guru*.... "Krishna said, *sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja*." ["Give up all other engagements and surrender to Me."] You preach. You request everyone, 'Sir, you surrender to Krishna.' Then you become a *guru*. It is a very simple thing. Krishna said, *man-mana bhava mad-bhakto mad-yaji mam namaskuru*. ["Think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer obeisances to Me."] You say, 'You become a devotee of Krishna. You offer obeisances. Here is a temple. Here is Krishna. Please come here....'

So this is the *guru's* qualification. The *guru* does not show some magic or produce some wonderful things to become *guru* ...

People are giving me credit that I have done miracles. But my miracle is that I carried the message of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu: *yare dekha, tare kaha 'krishna'-upadesa*.

So this is the secret. Any one of you can become a *guru*. It is not that I am an extraordinary man, an extraordinary god coming from some mysterious place. It is not that—it is a very simple thing.

"Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says: *yare dekha, tare kaha 'krishna'-upadesa*. So I request you to follow Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's instruction that you also become a *guru* at your home. It is not that you have to make a gigantic show of becoming a *guru*. The father has to become a *guru*; the mother has to become a *guru*. Actually, in the *shastra* it is said one should not become a father, one should not become mother, if he does not become a *guru* to his children." \*\* (Hyderabad, August 19, 1976.)

### Become Krishna's Favourite

"So I hope that all of you—men, women, boys, and girls—become spiritual masters and follow this principle. Simply sincerely follow the principles and speak to the general public. Then you become Krishna's favourite. Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita*, *na ca tasman manusyesu kascin me priya-krttamah*: 'One who is doing this humble service of preaching work, Krishna consciousness—nobody is dearer to Me than him.' So if you want to become recognized by Krishna very quickly, take up this process of becoming a spiritual master. Present the *Bhagavad-gita* as it is. Then your life is perfect." \*\* (London, August 22, 1973.) 🙏

Fastening	Festivals
Aug 12 Ekadashi	Aug 17-30 First month of Chaturmasya continues
Aug 13 <i>break fast</i>	<i>Fasting from green leafy vegetables</i>
Aug 27 Ekadashi	Aug 21 Garuda Panchami (in ISKCON Bangalore)
Aug 28 <i>break fast</i>	Aug 27-31 Jhulan Yatra
	Aug 31 Balarama Jayanthi: Appearance of Lord Balarama
	<i>Fasting till noon</i>
	Second month of Chaturmasya begins
	<i>Fasting from yogurt for one month</i>

## The self manifested

# Thothadri Vanamamalai Temple (Part 2)

by Sampatkumara Ramanuja Dasan (Adv. Ashwin.S)

Continued from part 1....

India, a land of countless shrines, boasts of eight naturally formed temples, known as Swayambu Kshetrams. Thothadrinath is a part of this esteemed group, along with Badrinath, Salagram, Naimisharanyam, Pushkaram, Thirupathi, Srirangam, and Srimushnam. These places of worship, nestled in various corners of the country, are revered pilgrimage destinations for devout Hindus.

Thothadrinath, originally named Romasalshetram, is situated in what was once a tank bed surrounded by a large mango grove, now known as Nanguneri. The sacred site is also linked to the legend of Romasarishi, a sage who undertook penance under a nearby tree and was granted a vision of Sriman Narayana. Inspired by this divine encounter, Romasarishi found Deities within a neighbouring rock, which he incorporated into a temple for worship. Although steeped in legend, it's plausible that a sage named Romasarishi initiated the construction of this temple.

A deity of the *rishi* is installed in the Krishna temple near his supposed place of penance; there is some justification for this belief.

The shrine is called Vanamamalai evidently after the Pandya kings who held the title of Vanavan. This part of the country was called Vanavanada. The earliest Chera kings also were called Vanavans and a Pandya queen who was a Chera princess was called Vanavan Mahadevi. Somehow the earliest Pandya kings acquired the title of Vanavan also. So the fact that this part of the country formerly called Thenpandi was ruled by the Pandya kings from very early times and the fact that the early Pandya kings have done lot of benefactions in this shrine, leads to the conclusion that the place should have been named after them.

Swami Nammazhwar has described this place as Varamangalanagar. This accounts for the fact that the *utsava* Sriman Narayana has been given the name of Varamangai Nachiar as there seems to have been a convention



Vanamamalai Perumal with Andal



Vanamamalai Perumal in Vaikuntanatha alankara



in ancient days to name the *utsava* Sriman Narayana after the name of the town or village where the temple was situated. At Thirukurungudi we have Kurungundi Nachiar. It was a practice with the Pandyas to name any new settlement formed during their period as 'mangalam.' We have Maramangalam in this district as well as many other such examples. The donor of the Velukudi grant had a surname Srivara. There is good reason to believe that he was responsible for having changed the name of this village into Varamangalanagar. Considering the probable fact that Swami Nammazhwar visited this village after this king's time, the presumption may hold ground.

### The Temple

Swami Nammazhwar who visited this temple and the village, has described this part of the country as Vanavanadu and the village as Varamangalanagar. He has described the temple as Vanamamalai. In his time, the place was very fertile and there was abundant paddy and sugarcane cultivation and water was in plenty. It was surrounded by mango groves and the houses in the village were well constructed. The local *brahmanas* were proficient in all the lores and many of them had performed *yagas* and *yagnas* also. He has made mention of Deivyanayaka Deity as having existed in the temple. Historians have not yet fixed the date of the Azhvars. Swami Nammazhwar was the last but one of the Azhvars, though the greatest among them. The last of the Azhvars, Thirumangai, is said to have lived by the middle of the 10th century A. D. He was a contemporary of Thirugnanasambanda, who flourished during the reign of Pallava Narasimhavarman in the latter part of the 7th century A. D. This fact will take Swami Nammazhwar to a period prior to the 10th century. If Swami Nammazhwar had visited this temple after the time of his father and his royal patron, we must take him to a much later period in the 10th century A. D. Nowadays historians have begun to surmise that Swami Nammazhwar was an eighth century personage and so the above conclusion can be justified.

There is absolutely no doubt that the temple enjoyed considerable patronage at the hands of the Pandyas. Though the Pandya kings were Shaivite, they were not intolerant towards the Vaishnavite faith. On the contrary, we see a Varaguna having constructed Vaishnavite temples and endowed benefactions to those already in existence. The early people belonging to both the faiths were not sectarian in their outlook. Even when Swami Manavalamamuni visited this shrine, he found the adherents of both the faiths living in complete amity towards each other and even united by intermarriages. Probably this accounts for the fact that we find a good number of Shaivite relics within this famous Vaishnavite shrine. Just on the western side of the sanctum, there are a large number of deities representing *rishis*. The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana Vigneswara finds a prominent place among them. On the western wall of the inner *prakaram* there are a number of stone relief works representing the mythical dance of Nataraja, events connected with the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana Subramania and various other Puranic episodes. There are representations also of social and religious dances of early days and nautch-girls and various ancient Dravidian musical instruments are exhibited. These musical instruments are specimens of those that were in vogue in very early times, and the fact that these sculptural works are highly worn out by lapse of time suggests that they should have been in existence from very remote times.



Swami Manavalamamuni with Sri Ramanuja Jeeyar (Ramanuja Jeeyar is different from Swami Ramanujacharya)



Lord Deivyanayaka with Sridevi and Bhudevi



Lord of Vanamamalai with consorts

Either these mixed relics are there as evidence of the cosmopolitan feeling that existed between the adherents of both the faiths in olden days, or they are standing monuments of the Pandya rulers' religious tolerance. Either way they are noteworthy.

Tradition has it that this temple suffered during the reign of the Vaduga kings that followed. Just after the Bellala regime, there was a short interregnum of Muhammadan occupation of this part of the country, from 1328 to 1872 A. D. Probably this part of the country was ruled by a sultan appointed by the Delhi emperor and the temple might have had suffered. Malik Kafur, who introduced the Delhi emperor sway over the Karnatic, is credited with having put to death 12,000 Vaishnavites in the holy city of Srirangam alone, and also considerably harmed the Madurai temple.

Though the Muhammadan interregnum lasted for 47 years, they were not allowed a peaceful occupation of the country. The warlike Maravars of the southern country gave them good lot of trouble until the Madurai country was rescued by the Vijayanagar general Kempanna in 1372 A. D. The Pandyas thereafter ruled the country under the suzerainty of Vijayanagar. But this part of the country called Nanjianad was frequently changing hands, and in the fifteenth century it was included in the Travancore dominions. Naturally this village and the temple were in the Travancore territory then.

The Travancore kings occasionally resided in Shermadevi, Kalakad and Valliyoor in the 15th century. They were Vaishnavites and have made many grants to the Vaishnavite temples like Shermadevi, Thirukurungudi, Thirukkaloil and Mannarkoil. One of them, Kulashekhara Perumal Raja, mostly resided at Shermadevi and Valliyoor. He visited Nanguneri temple and made large grants to the temple and the *brahmanas*, arranged for proper worship in the temple and entrusted the management thereof to a Vaishnavite *sannyasi*. That it is quite historical is evident from the fact that this Maharaja Kulashekhara Perumal's name is connected with the construction of the big *mantapam* in front of the sanctum. That this *mantapam* could not have been constructed before 1444 A. D. is certain from the fact that a Jeeyar's image is installed in one of the pillars thereof. At the entrance to this *mantapam*, life-like images of a king and his *brahmana* minister are installed. This *mantapam* should have been for a very long time the only principal structure in this temple outside the sanctum. Even now the Sahasranama and the Sevakalam *goshtis* congregate in this *mantapam* and all the principal functions during the festivals take place here. The Unjal Utsavam is held in this *mantapam* every Friday. Shankabishekam, *homams* and other functions take place here. So this *mantapam* has an importance which is not possessed by the other later but more imposing and spacious structures. Maharaja Kulashekhara Perumal ruled from 1382 to 1444 A. D. and he must have done all the benefactions to this temple before 1444 A. D. The construction of the *mantapam* might have been finished in his time or it might



have been begun in his time and been completed later on.

The Vaishnavite *sannyasi* who was entrusted with the management of the temple was one Pushpanjali *sannyasi*. He was residing in the small *matha* which is the nucleus around which the various buildings and halls of the present Vanamamalai *matha* grew later on. It is to the credit of the Vanamamalai *matha* that they have not pulled down either this modest structure or any of the other low structures that had grown around it later on, even when they were found quite unsuitable for the requirements of a prosperous institution. The walls round this small *matha* have lot of inscriptions and if they are deciphered some historical fact may see the light. It is said that this *sannyasi* had a dream in which the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana Thothadrinath directed him to hand over the temple to Swami Manavalamamuni, so he set off to Azhwarthirunagari and invited Swami Manavalamamuni to proceed to Nanguneri and take charge of the temple as directed by Thothadrinath.

At this time, some notable events were taking place in the religious history of the country. An intense propaganda of dynamic Vaishnavism was being carried on by the Tamil Vaishnavite saints, and varied attempts were made to spread a knowledge of the Tamil *prabandams* through every nook and corner of the country. Swami Manavalamamuni, the celebrated saint and *acharya*, was touring the country, gathering disciples and followers and establishing centres and institutions for Vaishnavite propaganda and spread of *prabandams*. On this mission, he came to Nanguneri. As Swami Manavalamamuni's programme included the acquisition of temple management and temple repairs, and as Pushpanjali *sannyasi* had also made up his mind to hand over the temple to him, the former might have secured an influential hand in the management of this temple. Subsequent events give room for presuming that he did not disturb the existing state of affairs in the temple for a time. Both Swami Manavalamamuni and Maharaja Kulashekara Perumal attained *moksha* in the year 1444 A. D. and so all those events should have happened before their death. A brass plate said to have been in the possession of the *matha* records that this temple was handed over to Ramanuja Jeeyar, the first Jeeyar of the Vanamamalai *matha*, on the 10th of Panguni, Kollam year 622 (1447 A.D.).

Swami Manavalamamuni appointed Swami Ramanuja Jeeyar, one of his principal disciples, to take charge of the temple and the *matha*. He acted on the former's directions and formally took charge of the temple management probably in 1444 A.D., but allowed the existing management to continue till 1447 A.D., when there was a definite handing over charge of both the institutions as recorded in the above said grant. In the above mentioned grant, the transferor of the *matha* has stated that he came "by the possession of the *matha* from his guru." So he could



Swami Manavala Mamuni



Andal in Vanamamalai temple





Swami Nammazhwar

from Thirupathi. Swami Nammazhwar has made mention of the existence of the *utsava* Deity of Deivanayaga alone in this temple. He has also mentioned about the existence of Vananayaga in this temple. This Vananayaga with the Ubaya Nachiar is, however, given an unimportant position in the temple. The expression Varamangai used by Swami Nammazhwar in his *mangalasanam* is given different interpretations by different people. Some say he refers to Varamangai Nachiar and others say it refers only to the name of the town. One commentary on this *mangalasanam* confirms the latter view. In the grant relating to the year 1447 A.D., the town is described as Varamangai and this part of the country as Vananadu. The records relating “to the periods prior to the Nawab’s rule” describe this town as Srivaramangai and this part of the country as Vananadu. So we may safely decide that the expression Srivaramangai mentioned in Swami Nammazhwar’s *mangalasanam* represents only this town and this theory naturally leads to the conclusion that the *utsava* Deity of Sriman Narayana of Srivaramangal was installed for the first time only during the time of Ramanuja Jeeyar. Further, there are a lot of festivals in this temple when Deivanayaga is treated as the bridegroom and Sri Varamangai Nachiar as the bride of the *matha*. On the Pongal day, Sri Varamangai Nachiar stays in the *matha* and celebrates the Kanu festivities. Deivanayaga is invited into the *matha* and the celebration takes the form of a function connected with the honouring of a married couple. This occasion is noteworthy, as both the Deities are



H H 31st Vanamamalai Madhurakavi Ramanuja Jeeyar Swamy

not have been the *sannyasi* appointed by Maharaja Kulashekhara Perumal to manage the temple. Probably the *sannyasis* who were installed into office in this *matha* called themselves Pushpanjali *sannyasis*, evidently after the name of the original incumbent. temple was under the supervision of the Travancore rulers and consequently the people who were conducting *aradhanam* in the temple were Tulu or Namboodiri *brahmanas*. Pushpanjali *sannyasi* himself was a Namboodri *brahmana* wearing the traditional *tilak*. Naturally the practices and modes of worship in the temple did not conform to the canons of prescribed Sri Vaishnavism. So the first thing that Ramanuja Jeeyar did was to replace the Smartha *brahmanas* who were conducting worship, and to appoint in their places, four Vaikanasa *archakas* whom he had brought from Thirupathi for the purpose. Learned Vaishnavite *brahmanas* were invited from outside and they carried on their work of spreading a knowledge of *prabandams* and Visishtadwaitic philosophy as chalked out by Swami Manavalamamuni.

Ramanuja Jeeyar is said to have brought the *utsava* deity of Varamangai Nachiar



decked with very valuable and grand-looking Makara Kantis which are the most remarkable among the jewels in this institution. On the 9th day of the Chithrai festival, all sorts of provisions are exhibited in the *mantapam* in front of the *matha* and on that day the *matha* distributes betel leaves to people of all communities in celebration of this event. These provisions are intended as dowry presented by the *matha* to Mahalakhsmi. The above facts clearly evidence that the Devi of Srivaramangai was installed in the temple by the Jeeyar.

The Mohammedan occupation of the country lasted till 1832 A.D. and during this period the Vaishnavite settlement of Srirangam suffered terribly, so the Deity of that temple had to be taken to Thirupathi. Deities from other temples were also taken to Thirupathi for safe custody during this perilous period. Madurai itself suffered badly. Naturally a suggestion arises that this Deity of Srivaramangai might have been originally removed to Thirupathi for safe custody and brought back during Ramanuja Jeeyar's time.

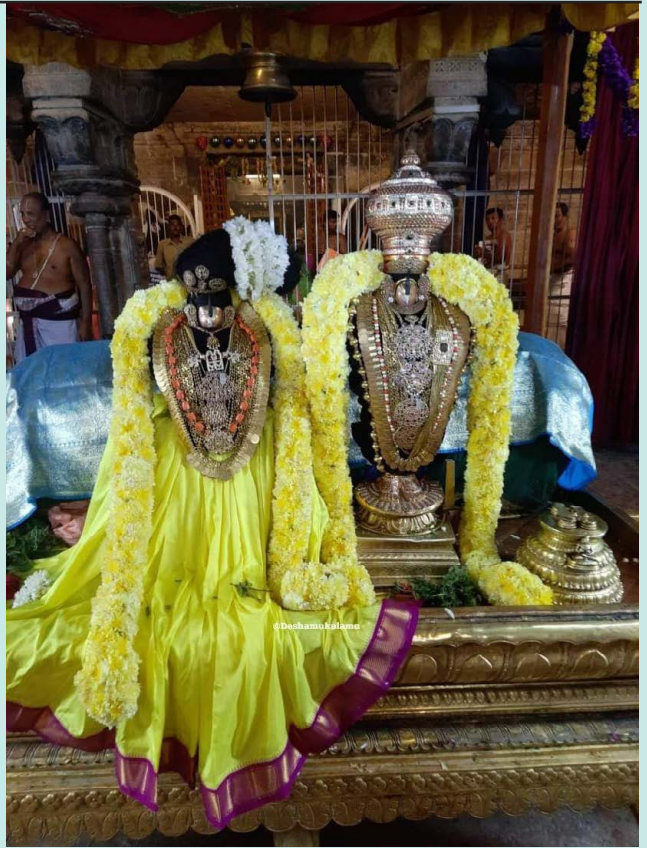
The next royal patron who has done benefactions to this temple is Virappa Nayaka who ruled at Madurai from 15672 to 1595 A. D. He was a great temple builder and he constructed the walls of Chidambaram temple, the *gopuram*, the thousand pillared *mantapam* and the Virappa Nayaka Mantapam at Madurai. He constructed the Virappa Nayaka Mantapam in this temple and it is a masterpiece of the Nayak style of architecture.

The next Nayak ruler who has immortalised his name by making many munificent grants to this temple is Viswanada Vijjaranga Chockanadha Nayaka who ruled at Thiruchirapalli. His attention was mainly devoted to religious practices and gifts to temples. He has made lavish grants to the temple at Azhwarthirunagari, Srivaikuntam and Thirunelveli. He has made a grant of considerable property to this temple also. It is recorded on a copper plate in the possession of the *matha* and is dated Salivahana Sakha year 1857 (1646 A. D.). It records the gift to this temple of all the lands bounded on the north by Myladaumparai, on the east by the Kallamoli hills, on the south by the Tortoise hills

and on the west by the Vajiravalli hills besides the topes at Kalakad, Sengalukurichi, Sirumalanji, Perumalanji, Attangarai and other villages. The Jeeyar has also been given a big grant for the feeding of *brahmanas* in the *matha*. This is the biggest grant ever made to this temple and the temple now retains the Sengalukurichi tope alone. The fact that the temple possessed these lands once is further evidenced by the practice at present of reading the purport of the above grant from a record before the Sriman Narayana, when the latter proceeds on the Kudiravahanam (golden horse) on the 9th day of the Margazhi festival. The implication is that the Lord goes round on horseback inspecting those lands. 🙏

(To be continued)

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan,



Lord of Vanamamalai with Andal



The presiding Deities of Vanamamalai Matha





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PJ Margo Private Limited partnered with The Akshaya Patra Foundation by donating a food distribution vehicle. Shri Nandanandana Dasa, Associate Vice-President, ISKCON-Bangalore presented a memento of appreciation to Shri Pradeep Jaipuria, Managing Director, PJ Margo.



MPP Technologies Pvt Ltd partnered with The Akshaya Patra Foundation by donating a food distribution vehicle. Shri Vasudev Keshav Dasa, Senior Vice-President, ISKCON-Bangalore presented a memento of appreciation to Shri Devraj, Director and Shri Narasimha Murthy, CFO of MPP Technologies Pvt Ltd.

PS Srinivasan & Girija partnered with The Akshaya Patra Foundation by donating a food distribution vehicle. Shri Acharya Ratna Dasa, Associate Vice-President, ISKCON-Bangalore presented a memento of appreciation to Shri PS Srinivasan & Girija.







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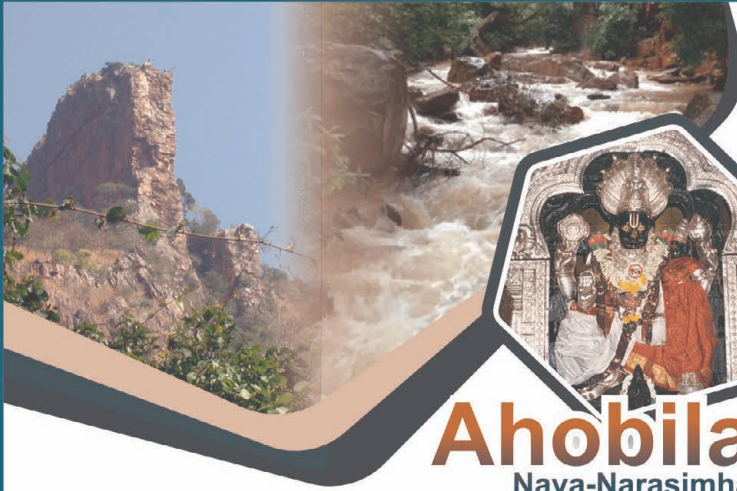


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Nava-Narasimha  
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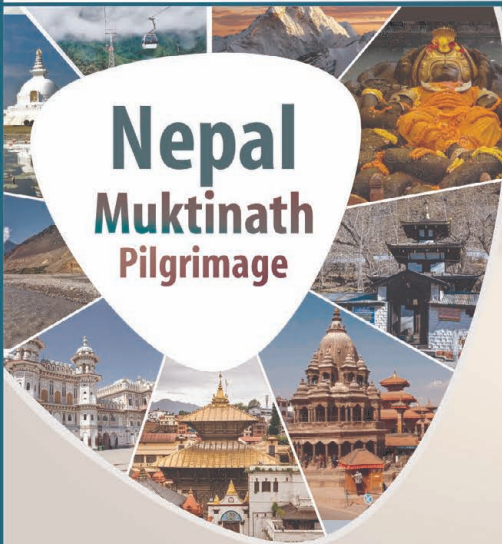
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**Travel dates:**  
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**Places of visit:**

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Pilgrimage



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