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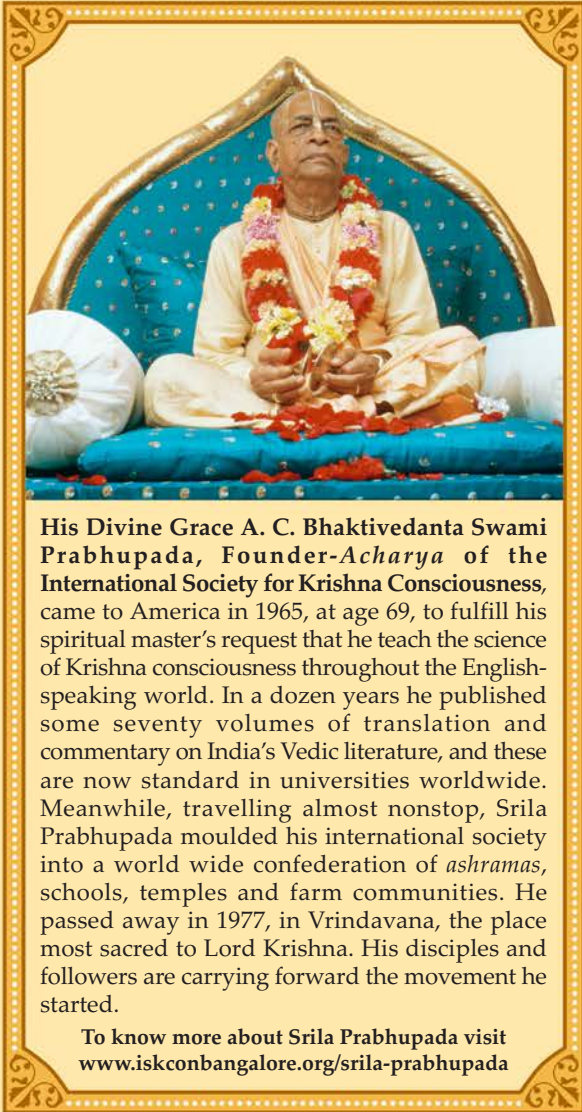
Chandan Yatra of Sri Prahlada Narasimha

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
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Symptoms of the Liberated

How we can recognize a person truly free from the influence of material nature.

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

*prayena munayo rajan nivrta vidhi-sedhatah
nairgunya-stha ramante sma gunanukathane hareh*

“O King Parikshit, mainly the topmost transcendentalists who are above the regulative principles and restrictions take pleasure in describing the glories of the Lord.”

—Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.1.7

There is a stage called the *paramahamsa* stage. At that time, one does not very strictly follow the regulative principles. Or, rather, it is not that the *paramahamsas* are not following, but they're above all regulative principles. We should not imitate that position: “Now we have become *paramahamsas*, and we can neglect all regulative principles.” No. You must prove that you are a *paramahamsa*.

What is the *paramahamsa* stage? *Nairgunya-stha ramante sma gunanukathane hareh*—when one's only business is to glorify Krishna. A *paramahamsa* does not think, “I have become a *paramahamsa*. Let me eat and sleep.” No. The symptom is that one cannot waste a moment without glorifying Krishna. That is a *paramahamsa*. When you cannot remain even for a single moment without describing Krishna, then you can know that you are on the *paramahamsa* stage. No attachment for anything material; simply attachment for Krishna.

Then you can give up the regulative principles. Not before that. Don't imitate. You must first come to that positive stage.

Desirelessness Impossible

The *paramahamsa* stage is not simply negative. You must stand on a positive platform. Those who are *sunyavadi* [voidists] are simply concerned with the negative. The other day a Zen Buddhist came. He said that the goal is “to become desireless.” These people do not know that it is impossible to become desireless. Therefore they are disturbed always. It is not possible to become desireless. That is a negative post, *nirvana*.

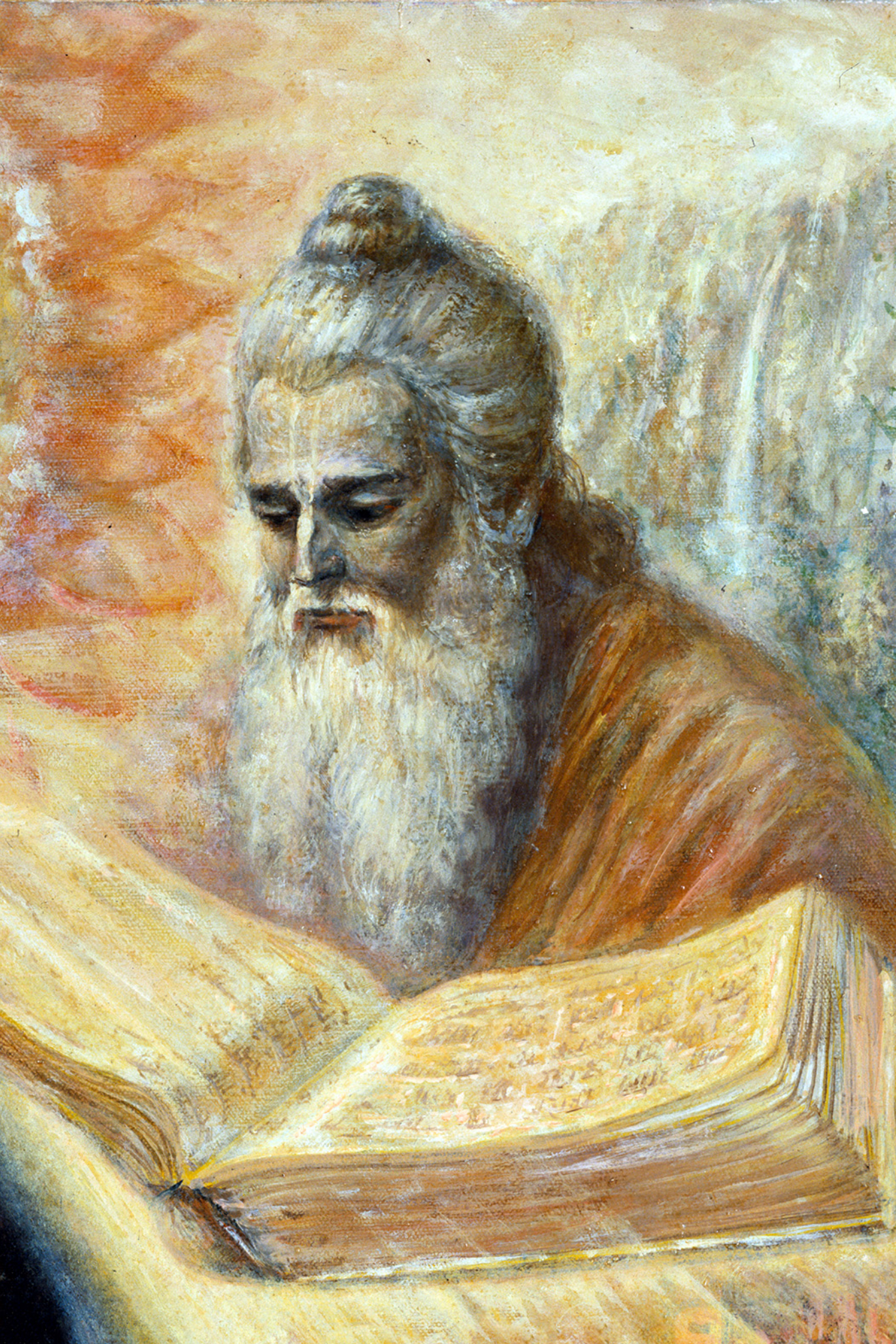
That is Buddha philosophy, *nirvana*. “Stop these material nonsense activities.” But unless one has positive activities, how he can give up this nonsense? *Param drstva nivartate* [Bhagavad-gita 2.59]. You must give someone good engagement. Otherwise, he'll go on committing all nonsense. Just like you. You have been given good engagement—deity worship and so many other things. You are engaged. Therefore you have no time to divert your attention for nonsense things.

To try to stop nonsense artificially will not work. The U.S. government tried to stop intoxication—LSD—by spending millions of dollars. Not a single man was stopped. And here in Krishna consciousness, as soon as they come, immediately they stop. Why? *Param drstva nivartate*. When one understands that he is getting better “intoxication,” then he thinks, “Why shall I go to LSD?” That is required.

Here it is said, *nivrta vidhi-sedhatah*. There are two things—*vidhi* and *nisedha*, or do's and don'ts. We say, “Chant the Hare Krishna mantra,” and “No illicit sex.” Positive and negative. *Vidhi* means do's, and *nisedha* do not's.

These do's and don'ts are the beginning of life. Don't try to become a *paramahamsa* from the very beginning. Then you'll fall flat. *Nairgunya* means above material nature. Material nature is called *traigunya*. *Traigunya* means the three modes of material nature: goodness, passion, and ignorance. When you rise above these three *gunas*, or modes, then there is the possibility of becoming a *paramahamsa*.

Krishna advised Arjuna, *traigunya visaya veda nistraigunyo bhavarjuna* [Bhagavad-gita 2.45]. The *Vedas* deal with the three *gunas*, giving directions according to each one. For persons in *sattva-guna*, or the mode of goodness, there are six *Puranas*. There are eighteen *Puranas* in all. Some of them are for persons situated in the mode of goodness, some of them are for persons in *rajo-guna* (passion), and some of them are for persons in *tamo-guna* (ignorance).



In the *Vedas* there is a recommendation to worship goddess Kali. That is for the *tamo-guna*, not for the *sattva-guna*. The *Puranas* for *sattva-guna* include the *Vishnu Purana*, *Brahmanda Purana*, *Brahma-vaivarta Purana*, and *Bhagavata Purana*. Knowledge has to be given to everyone, but according to each person's capacity. If one is in *tamo-guna*, you cannot raise him immediately to the *sattva-guna*. *Tamo-guna* is meat-eating, drinking. These are in *tamo-guna*—in darkness. The *Vedas* give everyone a chance: "All right, you want to eat meat? All right, eat meat. But offer it to the goddess Kali." That means that there is a restriction. Meat-eating is not required, but a rascal will not want to hear this immediately. Therefore give him some concession: "All right, you can eat meat by offering a sacrifice. Not the cow, but a lower animal, like goats."

But regulated meat-eating is not meant for *sattva-guna*. For persons in *sattva-guna* the prescription is different. And for *rajo-guna* the prescription is different.

Rise Above the Modes

On the whole, we are always mixed up with the *sattva-guna*, *rajo-guna*, and *tamo-guna*. That is our material position. Therefore sometimes we come to Krishna consciousness when we are in *sattva-guna*, and when *tamo-guna* or *rajo-guna* attacks, we sometimes fall down. So we have to rise above these *gunas*. *Traigunya-visaya veda nistraigunyo bhavarjuna*. Krishna advised Arjuna, "Rise above these three *gunas*."

How it can be done? Simply by hearing about Krishna. This is *nairgunya-stha ramante sma gunanukathane hareh*. If you simply engage yourself only in hearing about Krishna, then you are *nistraigunya*, above the modes. That is the process. Simple. No other business than hearing about Krishna.

We have given you so many books. Don't sleep. Don't waste a single moment. Of course, you have to sleep, but reduce it as much as possible. Eating, sleeping, mating, and defending—reduce them.

That is the example shown by the six Gosvamis. *Nidrahara-viharakadivijitau*: they conquered eating, sleeping, and sex. That is the spiritual platform. No more sleeping, no more eating, no more sex life. That is perfection. And one who can conquer these three things—eating, sleeping, and sex—is fearless, automatically. There is no requirement of defense because such a person can meet any situation.

That is the *paramahamsa* stage, where there is no regulation. Don't imitate. Some of our students have exhibited that their thought is "There is no need of regulations. We are all *paramahamsas*." Not *paramahamsa*—rascal number one! Here is the test of the *paramahamsa*: one who is not influenced by the material qualities—*rajo-guna*, *sattva-guna*, and *tamo-guna*. And the test of that is that one has conquered eating, sleeping, and sense enjoyment.

Rise above the modes by hearing about Krishna. The Gosvamis were always writing books about Krishna. Following their example, we are simply describing the different activities and attributes of Krishna. In today's verse it is said, *gunanukatha*: "describing the glories of the Lord." *Anu* means not whimsically, but by following the superior authorities. You cannot write anything not approved by the superior authorities. Therefore, we have to give examples, with quotations from the *shastra*, the scripture. What I am speaking, it is supported by the *shastras*. Not that I have inventive power—"I can write anything I like." That is nonsense. *Anukathane* means you must hear from the authority perfectly. Then try to write. Not that you write whimsically, whatever you like. That is not allowed. And that will not be accepted.

Therefore, in the beginning of this chapter [2.1.1] we learned,

*variyan esa te prasnah krto loka-hitam nrpa
atmavit-sammatah pumsam srotavyadisu yah parah*

"My dear King, your question is glorious because it is very beneficial to all kinds of people. The answer to this question is the prime subject matter for hearing, and it is approved by all transcendentalists." *Atmavit-sammatah*: "It is approved by the realized souls." Not that whimsically I do something or you question something. No. The question must be approved by *atmavit*, a self-realized person, and the answer should be given by the self-realized person. That is wanted.

No Independence

We have no independence, either materially or spiritually. But we're falsely thinking to become independent. That is called illusion, *maya*. The rascals do not know that there is no independence at all, either materially or spiritually. Just like the outlaws—they have no independence, either criminally or civilly. When a person is a good citizen there is no independence, and when he's a criminal there is no independence. So why is he thinking, "I shall act criminally and become independent"? That is not possible. And because he cannot understand it, he is a rascal. His independence is illusion.

Where is your independence? Illusion. *Maya*. When you are under the strict rules and regulations of material nature, how are you independent? *Daivi hy esa gunamayi mama maya duratyaya* [*Bhagavad-gita* 7.14]. People think that to surrender to Krishna is a slave mentality. “I shall remain free.” But where is your freedom, sir? That is illusion.

As long as one is a rascal, falsely thinking that he’s independent, he must observe the regulative principles, *vidhinisedha*. When he’s actually situated on the transcendental platform, that is called *nairgunya-sthah*. *Sthah* means “situated,” “not flickering,” “permanent.” So *nairgunya* means devotional service. That is *nairgunya*.

That is stated in the *Bhagavad-gita*:

*mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena bhakti-yogena sevate
sa gunan samatityaitan brahma-bhuyaya kalpate*

“One who engages in full devotional service, unailing in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman.” [14.26]

*brahma-bhutih prasannatma na socati na kanksati
samah sarvesu bhutesu mad-bhaktim labhate param*

“One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me.” [18.54]

Everything is there in *Bhagavad-gita*.

Nairgunya means one who is twenty-four hours engaged in devotional service. He’s on the *nairgunya* platform and is no longer influenced by the material qualities. *Mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena. Avyabhicarena* means without any flaw, without any fault. When one is strictly following and engaged in devotional service according to the restriction, or instruction, of the *shastra* and spiritual master, one can conquer or surpass the three modes of material nature. And that stage is *brahma-bhutih*.

Symptoms of the Spiritual Platform

Now, everyone can say, “I am now in the *brahma-bhutih*.” But the symptom of one on that platform is given, so you cannot cheat. What is that symptom? *Brahma-bhutih prasannatma*. If you are actually on the *brahmabhutih* platform, then the symptom will be *prasannatma*: jolly, always. There will be no more moroseness. Always jolly. That is the first symptom. “Oh, I am now free from the material clutches.”

As soon as you are actually engaged in devotional service, there will be no more punishment by the material nature. Therefore you will always be jubilant, *prasannatma*. What is the meaning of *prasannatma*? *Prasannatma* means *na socati na kanksati*: not desiring anything, and not lamenting for anything. That is the *brahma-bhutih* stage. If something is lost, “Never mind. Krishna desired the loss. That’s all right.” And if there is a gain, one does not jump like a monkey—“Oh, I have gained this! I have gained this!” [*Laughter*.]

No. Everything is Krishna’s. I am engaged in Krishna’s service. If there is some loss, it is Krishna’s desire. And if there is some profit, it is Krishna’s money. I don’t possess anything. Why shall I jump? Of course, we can jump. “Oh, we have gained so many things for Krishna!” That is different.

Another symptom of the *brahmabhutih* stage is *samah sarvesu bhutesu*: equal to everyone. One who understands that everyone is a spirit soul, some way or other entangled in a material body, is fit for transcendental service to the Lord.

After being liberated from the three material modes, one has to be situated in *nistraigunya*. Here it is stated “*nairgunya*.” *Nairgunya* and *nistraigunya* have the same meaning. *Nairgunya-stha ramante*: one enjoys life. As soon as you come to the platform of *nairgunya*, free from the infection of the three material qualities, then *ramante*: everything is pleasure.

Therefore those who are *yogis*—who are *bhaktas*, *bhakti-yogis*—also enjoy life. It is not that we restrict: “Don’t enjoy the senses.” Sense “enjoyment” is not enjoyment; it is bondage. Suppose I am enjoying either illicit or legal sex. I am under bondage. Even if it is legal sex life, I get children, and then I have a duty to the children. So either in goodness or in ignorance, there is bondage.

Therefore one has to rise above the three modes, and then one enjoys. What is that enjoyment? *Ramante yogino 'nante*. That is not limited enjoyment, for few minutes. No. *Anante*, eternal enjoyment. And that is *satyanande*, that

is real *ananda*. That is real bliss. When your *ananda* does not stop, that is real *ananda*. And the *ananda*, or the pleasure, which is for a few seconds or a few minutes, that is not *ananda*. That is illusion. Real *ananda* will continue. It will never stop. It will never end. Therefore it is said,

*ramante yogino 'nante satyanande cid-atmani
iti rama-padenasau param brahmabhidhiyate*

“The Supreme Absolute Truth is called Rama because the transcendentalists take pleasure in the unlimited true pleasure of spiritual existence.” [Padma Purana] When we enter the platform of continuous blissfulness, *ananda*, that is the connection with, and that is the meaning of, Rama. That means that when one is situated in the service of the Param Brahma, the Supreme Truth, his life is successful.

Fix the Mind on Krishna

Here it is said, *nairgunya-stha ramante sma gunanukathane hareh*: when not a single moment is wasted without talking about Krishna. So practice this. First of all, fix your mind on the lotus feet of Krishna. If your mind is fixed, then the other senses will act, because the other senses act under the leadership of the mind. Your mind is your enemy or your friend. The mind engaged in Krishna consciousness is your friend. And the mind engaged in other consciousness is your enemy.

You can create your mind as friend or enemy—according to your desire. Deity worship means to fix your mind on the lotus feet of Krishna, always worshiping Krishna. If you fix your mind on the lotus feet of Krishna, immediately you are *nairgunya-stha*—situated in the *nairgunya*, the transcendental platform.

In another place, it is said,

*srmvatam sva-kathah Krishnah punya-sravana-kirtanah
hrdy antah-stho hy abhadrani vidhunoti suhrt satam*

“Sri Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramatma [Supersoul] in everyone’s heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge to hear His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted.” [Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.2.17]

Krishna is situated within your heart. He’s your best friend. *Suhrdam sarvabhutanam*. He’s always considering how your perfect welfare can be done. Krishna is so nice a friend. When I take the body of a hog, Krishna is there advising me. And when I am in the body of a human being, there also Krishna is advising me. Krishna is so kind. Therefore *suhrdam sarva-bhutanam*. He’s the friend not only of human beings, but even of the hogs, dogs, cats—everyone. *Suhrdam sarva-bhutanam*.

This is the science one has to know. People are trying to become leaders of society to act for others’ welfare, but that is impossible. If a person is a rascal, how he can become the friend of the citizens? One’s business should be to make friendship with Krishna and advise others to make friendship with Krishna. That is real leadership. But the rascals do not know what is their own benefit, and they have become leaders.

Sanatana Gosvami said to Lord Chaitanya, *apanara hitahita kichui na jani...* “Sir, I was a government minister. People used to say that I was a very learned scholar, and I accepted that. But when I came into contact with you, I thought, ‘What kind of leader am I? I do not know what is beneficial for me. I am such a leader. I am such a fool. I do not know my own benefit, and I want to become a leader to lead others for benefit in life.’”

Andha yathandhair upaniyamanah. How can a blind man lead other blind men? That is cheating. All these leaders are blind themselves. They do not know the aim of life, and they’re becoming leaders. So the blind leader and the blind followers are all going to hell. That is the position of the world.

Therefore we should be careful that we don’t imitate—“I have now become a *paramahamsa*. I do not require to follow the rules and regulations. Let me do whatever I like.” Don’t do that. The test is there: *gunanukathane hareh*. When you are a *paramahamsa*, you have no other business than simply to hear about Krishna and chant about Krishna. 🌸

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



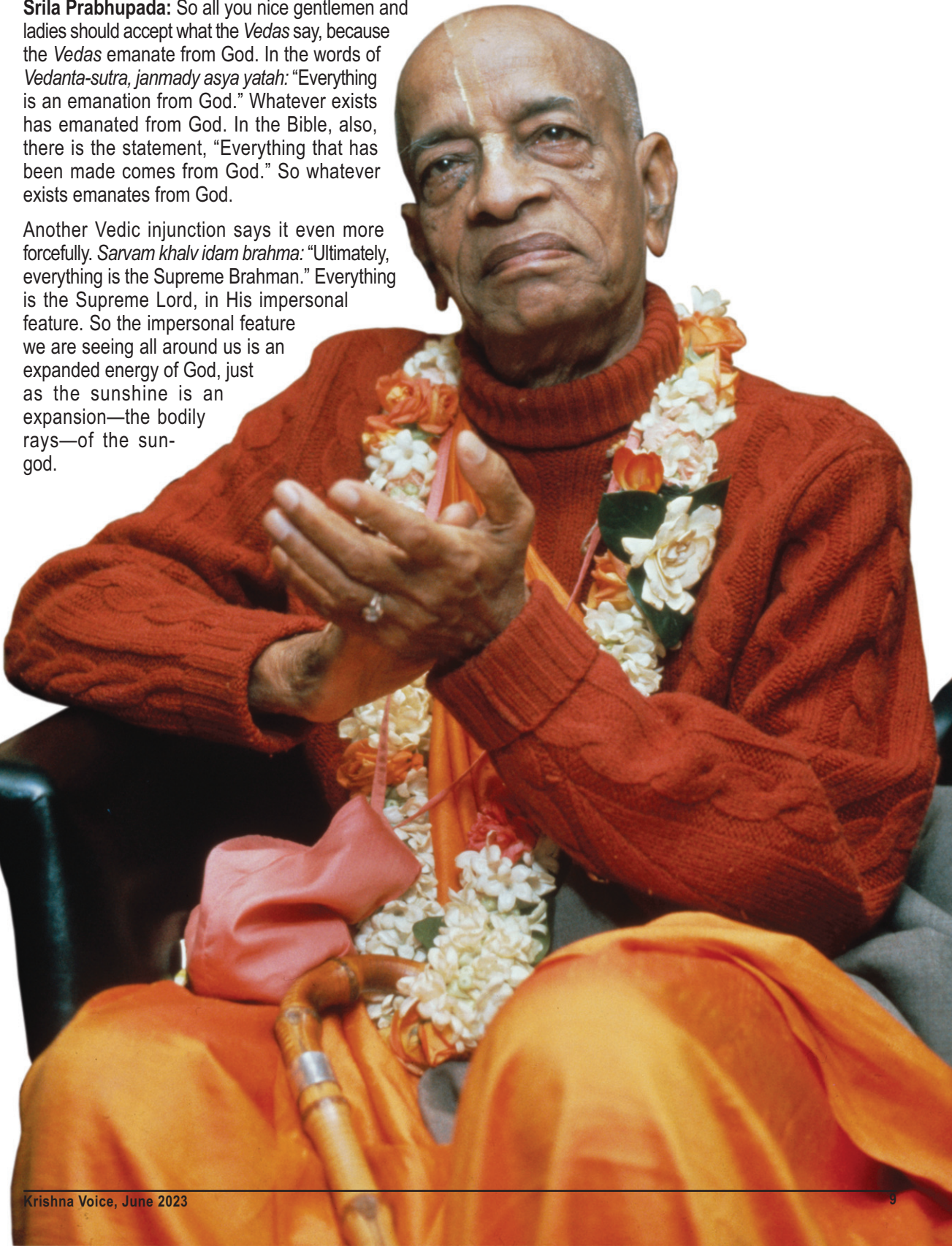
SRILA PRABHUPADA SPEAKS OUT

And the Word was God

This exchange took place in Paris, on June 15, 1974, between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, two priests, and two Christian scholars.

Srila Prabhupada: So all you nice gentlemen and ladies should accept what the Vedas say, because the Vedas emanate from God. In the words of *Vedanta-sutra, janmady asya yatah*: “Everything is an emanation from God.” Whatever exists has emanated from God. In the Bible, also, there is the statement, “Everything that has been made comes from God.” So whatever exists emanates from God.

Another Vedic injunction says it even more forcefully. *Sarvam khalv idam brahma*: “Ultimately, everything is the Supreme Brahman.” Everything is the Supreme Lord, in His impersonal feature. So the impersonal feature we are seeing all around us is an expanded energy of God, just as the sunshine is an expansion—the bodily rays—of the sun-god.



Therefore, the *Bhagavad-gita* says, *brahmano hi pratisthaham*: “The foundation or source of the impersonal energy is God, Krishna.” [To his Sanskrit editor:] Find this verse, *brahmano hi pratisthaham*.

Sanskrit editor: Yes, Srila Prabhupada. From the fourteenth chapter of *Bhagavad-gita*:

*brahmano hi pratisthaham
amrtasyavyayasya ca
sasvatasya ca dharmasya
sukhasyaikantikasya ca*

And the translation of Lord Krishna’s words: “I am the basis of the impersonal Brahman, which is the constitutional position of ultimate happiness, and which is immortal, imperishable, and eternal.”

Father Fransad: Your Divine Grace, will you tell us how old are the oldest of the Vedic scriptures? How long have the *Vedas* existed?

Srila Prabhupada: They have existed from before the creation—*tene brahma hrda ya adi-kavaye*. [To his Sanskrit editor:] Find this verse: *janmady asya yato 'nvayad itaratas carthesu abhijnah svarat tene brahma hrda ya adi-kavaye muhyanti yat surayah*.

Sanskrit editor: Srila Prabhupada, that will be in the first chapter of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, echoing *Vedanta-sutra*:

*janmady asya yato 'nvayad itaratas carthesu abhijnah svarat
tene brahma hrda ya adi-kavaye muhyanti yat surayah
tejo-vari-mrdam yatha vinimayo yatra tri-sargo 'mrsa
dhamna svena sada nirasta-kuhakam satyam param dhimahi*

And here is the translation: “I offer my obeisances unto Lord Sri Krishna, the son of Vasudeva, who is the supreme, all-pervading Personality of Godhead. I meditate upon Him, the transcendent reality, who is the primeval cause of all causes, from whom all manifested universes arise, in whom they dwell, and by whom they are destroyed. I meditate upon that eternally effulgent Lord, who is directly and indirectly conscious of all manifestations and yet is beyond them. It is He only who first imparted the Vedic knowledge into the heart of Brahma, the first created living being.”

Srila Prabhupada: So this is Vedic knowledge. [Again to his Sanskrit editor:] Now read another verse, *aham adir hi devanam*.

Sanskrit editor: In the tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita*, Krishna says, *aham adir hi devanam maharsinam ca sarvasah*: “Neither the hosts of demigods nor the sages know My origin, for in every respect I am the source of the demigods and the sages.”

Srila Prabhupada: *Aham adir hi devanam maharsinam ca*—“I am the source of the demigods and sages,” says the Supreme Lord. Similarly, in the Bible it is said, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.” That is Vedic knowledge. That word—that divine sound—is the *Vedas*. So before the creation the *Vedas* were there. You cannot find the beginning of the *Vedas*. If you could find out when the creation began, then before that the *Vedas* were already there.

Father Fransad: According to our understanding, God revealed Himself little by little, and then at a certain moment He revealed Himself in His totality. But in the Vedic literature it is said that the whole knowledge was given at the beginning—everything together.

I very deeply respect your vast learning, and yet I’m asking that we should not say that the contents of these two bodies of literature—the Bible and the *Vedas*—are the same. The Bible and the *Vedas* are two different things.

For another example, the verse you referred to—“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God”—that is similar to what is taught in the *Vedas*, but if we take that verse and the rest of that chapter from the Bible and look at them closely, we find discrepancies, differences.

Srila Prabhupada: What discrepancies do you find?

Father Fransad: For example, in that same verse and chapter the Bible also says that the word of God became flesh and this flesh was the son of God, Lord Jesus Christ.

Srila Prabhupada: That simply means that although Jesus Christ appeared in the material world, he is transcendental, not of the material world.

Father Fransad: But we think that Lord Jesus was a human being. He was spiritual, but he was also part of the

material world.

Srila Prabhupada: No. If anything, the material world is part of Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ is not part of the material world.

Father Fransad: We beg to disagree. We feel that Jesus had a human body, a material body.

Srila Prabhupada: That body appears human, but Jesus did not have material flesh and blood. If Jesus had had a material body, then how could he have manifested his resurrection?

Father Fransad: Well, we would say that God could create a glorious resurrection of someone's material body by His inconceivable power.

Srila Prabhupada: That is beside the point. These rascals who wanted Jesus Christ dead—why did they think they could actually accomplish this? Because they themselves also thought, “Jesus has a material body.” So Jesus bewildered them more, so that they would remain rascals. They would go on thinking that Jesus had succumbed to death at their hands and that he had a material body.

Madame Siaude: Jesus bewildered them?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, he bewildered them more, by saying, “All right, go on thinking like that.” That is their punishment. They remain always in darkness, thinking, “Jesus had a material body.”

Father Fransad: Again, we respect your explanation, but we have another explanation.

Srila Prabhupada: But to give an explanation, we must rely on reason and evidence. You cannot explain all this whimsically. If Jesus Christ is the son of God, that means he has a spiritual body.

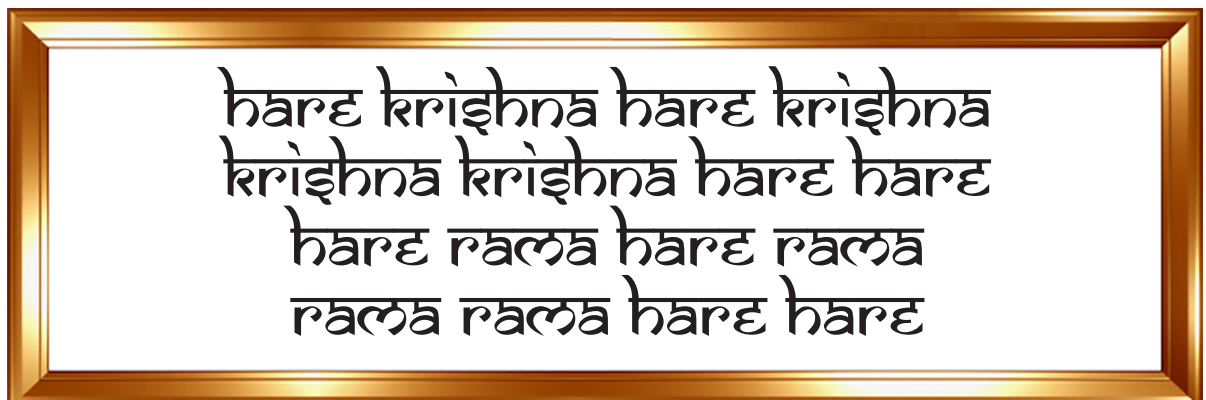
Madame Siaude: Yes, we accept that Jesus Christ has a spiritual body, but we say that he also assumes a material body.

Srila Prabhupada: No. And another thing. You accept Jesus Christ as God's only son. Do you not? And yet when you pray in the church you address God as “Our Father.” Then why do you say Jesus Christ is God's only son, when you say in your prayer that everyone is God's son? If you want me to address God as my Father, then I am also God's son. So why do you say that Jesus Christ is God's only son?

Madame Siaude: Yes, we say that we are “adopted sons.” All of us are also God's sons, but by adoption.

Srila Prabhupada: So therefore these adopted sons' bodies and Jesus' body cannot be equal. The adopted son—not the real son—has a material body. 🙏

Fasting		Festivals	
May 31	Ekadashi	Jun 2	Pani Hati Chida Dahi Utsava
Jun 1	<i>break fast</i>	Jun 4	Jagannath Snana Yatra
Jun 14	Ekadashi	Jun 18	Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura Disappearance <i>Fasting till noon</i>
Jun 15	<i>break fast</i>	Jun 20	Jagannath Puri Ratha Yatra
Jun 29	Ekadashi	Jun 28	Sudharshana Jayanti (HK Hill & VK Hill) Jagannath Puri Bahuda Ratha Yatra
Jun 30	<i>break fast</i>		



What Does Bhakti Have to Do with Vedanta?

NOTHING, says a letter to the *Bhaktivedanta Institute*.
EVERYTHING, Ravi Gomatam replies.

Puzzling Inconsistencies

The letter to the Institute

The brochure you sent me states, “Our in-house research uses paradigms for consciousness from the Bhagavata tradition of Vedanta.” This statement is a source of confusion for me.

It is well known that the *Vedas* are divided into two sections, the first being the *karma-kanda* section and the last the *jnana-kanda* section. The *jnana-kanda* section is also called Vedanta (or “end of the *Veda*”).

The word “bhagavata” means “one who is devoted to Bhagavata (the Lord).” The material relating to the “Bhagavata tradition” and “bhakti” (devotion) is covered in the *karma-kanda* section of the *Vedas* and is not the subject of Vedanta.

Bhakti assumes a dualistic relationship between the devotee and the Lord whereas Vedanta is “advaita,” or nondualistic.

Therefore, I am confused by the name of your institute, “Bhaktivedanta,” since according to my understanding the words “bhakti” and “Vedanta” refer to separate teachings, with fundamental differences, that employ different methodologies.

My confusion is further augmented by the fact that there was a well-known swami, Swami Prabhupada (who also went by the name A.C. *Bhaktivedanta*), who founded the Hare Krishna movement. As you no doubt know, the Hare Krishna society is a modern religious movement totally unrelated to traditional Vedanta.

When one studies traditional Vedanta, one learns that there is a clear distinction made between absolute reality



(*paramarthika*) and empirical reality (*vyavaharika*). In this context, science is the study of empirical reality. Traditional Vedanta teaches that the fundamental nature of everything (absolute reality) is consciousness (or awareness). Further, empirical reality is *dependent* on consciousness (absolute reality). So if one subscribes to the teachings of traditional Vedanta it logically follows that science (the study of dependent reality) is subsumed by consciousness. Another way of saying this is that “science” is the “object” of the “subject” which is consciousness.

I am impressed that you have a highly competent staff, and I am puzzled by the philosophical inconsistencies that appear in the material you sent me.

I would very much appreciate your response to this letter.

Sincerely,
Lee Kaplan
Santa Barbara, California

The Purpose of Vedanta

Ravi Gomatam, international secretary of the Bhaktivedanta Institute, responds

The word *Bhaktivedanta* is not at all incongruous, popular understanding of *bhakti* and Vedanta notwithstanding.

There are two traditions of Vedanta—the impersonalist and the Vaishnava. Both have existed since time immemorial. Sripada Adi Shankaracharya is the best-known modern *acharya* (teacher) of the impersonalist school, and Sripada Ramanujacharya, Sripada Madhvacharya, and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu are the best known modern *acharyas* of the Vaishnava school.

When the impersonalists speak of Vedanta, they generally refer to the *Sariraka-Bhasya* of Sripada Adi Shankaracharya. But this is not the only *bhasya* (commentary) on *Vedanta-sutra*. There are outstanding commentaries by Vaishnava *acharyas*, such as the *Sri Bhasya* of Ramanujacharya, *Govinda Bhasya* of Baladeva Vidyabhushana, and *Tatparya Nirnay* of Madhvacharya.

Personalist Vedanta

The presence of the Vaishnava commentaries refutes the popular notion that only one tradition studies Vedanta, while the other, called *bhakti*, has nothing to do with it. *Bhakti*, supposedly, is for the less intelligent (“people of the heart” is the usual cliché) while impersonalist *jnana* is for the highly intellectual (and, by implication, more advanced).

But the truth is that every bona fide Vedic tradition is directly based on Vedanta. The two schools, therefore, are not *jnana* and *bhakti*, as you mention, but Mayavada (impersonalist) and Vaishnava (personalist).

It is therefore untrue that those who perform *bhakti* are devoid of knowledge. Rather, knowledge at its highest level culminates in devotion. This is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gita*, which gives the essence of the *Upanishads*, which in turn form the basis of *jnana-kanda*. *Bahunam janmanam ante jnanavan mam prapadyate*: After many births and deaths, the real *jnani* surrenders to Vasudeva, Lord Sri Krishna (Bg. 7.19).

In the twelfth chapter of *Bhagavad-gita*, Arjuna asks which path is better, the impersonal or the personal. Lord Krishna answers unambiguously that the personal path is better.

The personalist and impersonalist schools both follow practices of *bhakti* and of *jnana*. Indeed, *jnana* and *bhakti* are eternal characteristics of the conscious spirit soul. In the material world they are directed to the wrong objects, but in the spiritual world they are present in their pure form.

When we speak of Bhaktivedanta, therefore, we refer to the Vaishnava (personalist) Vedanta tradition. We use the term deliberately, since Vedanta alone has come by usage to refer to the impersonalist school.

The first Bhaktivedanta commentary on *Vedanta-sutra* was *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, written by the compiler of *Vedanta-sutra* himself, Srila Vyasadeva. Later Vaishnava *acharyas* further elaborated on the meaning of Vedanta by following in Srila Vyasadeva’s footsteps.

Beyond Devotion to Demigods

Now, some of your objections are not just a matter of philosophical difference but are factually incorrect. For example, you say, “*Bhakti* is covered in the *karma-kanda* section of the *Vedas* and is not the subject of Vedanta.”



Nowhere in the scriptures is this substantiated. The *karma-kanda* section of the *Vedas* concerns fruitive activities—that is, religious rituals performed for material rewards. These are technically called *traigunya-visaya veda*, or affairs of the three modes of material nature.

But *bhakti* is transcendental to the three modes and to fruitive mentalities. The beginning and fundamental tenet of *bhakti* is to serve the Supreme Lord without expectation of material rewards. How then can *bhakti* be a subject of the *karma-kanda* section? What you might be confusing it with is the worship of the demigods—Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva, Indra, Mother Parvati, Chandra, etc.—which is indeed part of the *karma-kanda* section.

Traditional Vedanta

Such worship, however, is not properly called *bhakti*. It is simply worship within the three modes to obtain material benedictions. Worshipers of demigods are described in the *Bhagavad-gita* as less intelligent (*alpa-medhasam*), and the fruits they receive are limited and temporary.

Bhakti is often thought to be a mere sentiment cultivated in relation to any object of worship (*ista-devata*). According to this idea, it is only a means to come to the higher platform of *jnana*. Yet the scriptures do not support this definition of *bhakti*.

Bhakti properly refers only to service to God, not to any demigods. Therefore, *bhakti* is not an affair of the *karma-kanda* section.

You say, “*Bhakti* assumes a dualistic relationship, whereas Vedanta means *advaita*, or nondualistic.” This, however, is not stated anywhere in the Vedic scriptures. Vedanta is simply the study of the Supreme Brahman. That Supreme can be studied by either the monists or the Vaishnavas. Otherwise, how is it that great Vaishnava *acharyas* have written commentaries on the *Vedanta-sutra*?

You also assert that *bhakti* is not the subject of Vedanta. But in *Bhagavad-gita* the Supreme Lord Himself declares, *vedais ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*: “By all the *Vedas* [and this naturally includes Vedanta], I am to be known.” The same truth is indicated in the beginning of the *Vedanta-sutra*: *athato brahma jijnasa*. The very purpose of Vedanta is to inquire into the Supreme Brahman. And inquiring into the Supreme Brahman ultimately leads to *bhakti*, or serving the Supreme Brahman, the Personality of Godhead.

The Hare Krishna movement, you say, is a “modern movement totally unrelated to traditional Vedanta.” Here you are wrong on two counts.

First, the Hare Krishna movement is not a modern movement, but is in the Vaishnava tradition. It may be new, and hence modern, to Westerners, but not to us Indians. I was born a Vaishnava, and I know that this is the ancient tradition and culture of India. Not only that, but the modern form of the Hare Krishna movement as it is known in the West was inaugurated by Sri Chaitanya five hundred years ago in Bengal. So it can hardly be called modern in the sense of having a recent origin (though it may be called modern for being relevant to contemporary life).

Second, and more serious, you say that the Hare Krishna movement is not at all connected to traditional Vedanta. I take it that you mean monistic Vedanta. The Hare Krishna movement has nothing to do with monistic Vedanta but everything to do with traditional Vaishnava Vedanta.

Science and Consciousness

The term Bhaktivedanta in our institute’s name refers to the *Bhagavata*, or Vaishnava, tradition of Vedanta. The Bhaktivedanta Institute is an autonomous institute dedicated to examining the relevance of the *Bhagavata* concepts of consciousness to modern science.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the Hare Krishna movement, inspired the formation of the Bhaktivedanta Institute. The word Bhaktivedanta in his name is a title awarded him in the 1930’s for presenting the Vaishnava tradition of Vedanta authoritatively and clearly.

The institute, though autonomous, draws from the same spiritual tradition as the Krishna consciousness movement, which was also founded by Srila Prabhupada. The institute’s programmes, however, are specifically in the realm of science and consciousness.

As for your final point concerning the nature of empiric reality and absolute reality—this touches the core of our scientific work. I would like to talk with you more about it once we clear this stage of our discussion.

Sincerely,
Ravi Gomatam 🌸

Lord of Ambarishaa

Vaithamanidhi Perumal Temple

by Sampatkumara Ramanuja Dasan (Adv. Ashwin.S)

The Vaithamanidhi Perumal Temple, also known as Thirukolur, is a Vishnu temple. It is one of the Nava Thirupathi, located in Tamil Nadu, on the Thiruchendur-Thirunelveli highway.

The Pastime

In the vast and intricate *lila* of our ancient scriptures and epics, there exist a plethora of fascinating and vivid characters, each with his own unique stories to tell. Among these, one figure stands out in his sheer complexity and enigmatic nature - Rishi Durvasa, a venerable sage and a partial manifestation of Lord Shiva himself. His name echoes through the corridors of history, resounding with the fame and glory of his austere and ascetic practices, which were believed to be imbued with an awe-inspiring power.

Yet, Durvasa Maharshi's reputation was not without its darker side. For, alongside his legendary piety, he was also infamous for his explosive temper, which could be triggered by even the most trifling of reasons. Numerous tales abound of hapless individuals who suffered the brunt of his wrath, cowering in fear at the mere mention of his name.

However, there exists an intriguing tale in which the great sage Durvasa himself fell prey to his own anger - a story that centres around the noble and just Ambarisha, a scion of the illustrious Ikshvaku dynasty, in which Lord Sri Rama Himself would later appear. Ambarisha Maharaja was a ruler who truly embodied the virtues of justice and compassion, and his subjects lived in a state of blissful contentment under his benevolent rule.

But it was not merely as a ruler that Ambarisha Maharaja shone - he was also a devoted and unwavering adherent of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana, observing the sacred Ekadashi fast with rigorous discipline and unwavering faith. Indeed, his devotion was such that he would commence his fast on the evening preceding Ekadashi, a testament to his unshakeable resolve and commitment to his faith.

As the evening prior to Ekadashi approached, Maharaja Ambarisha would prepare himself for the sacred observance

The entrance of the temple of Vaithamanidhi





Thirukolur Vaithamanidhi in Garuda *Vahana*



Mahalakshmi Thayar of Vaithamanidhi Perumal

with utmost care and reverence. He would partake only of fruits and milk, abstaining from any other food or drink. As the first rays of dawn broke in the horizon, he would commence his fast in earnest, resolutely dedicating himself to the worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana.

For the entire duration of the day of Ekadashi, Maharaja Ambarisha would remain steadfast in his resolve, his mind attuned to the divine glory of his beloved Lord. As the day would draw to a close, he would prepare himself for the final act of devotion - the breaking of his fast at the auspicious moment prescribed by the scriptures. For, as it is written, the observance of Ekadashi fast is not to be taken lightly. Its rules and regulations are precise and exacting, leaving no room for error or negligence. If the fast is not broken at the proper time on Dvadashi morning, the entire Ekadashi fasting is considered null and void, rendering all the pious efforts of the devotee to naught.

Even the mighty king of the demigods, Indra, was awed by the sheer power of Maharaja Ambarisha's devotion. Ever troubled by the fear of losing his throne to a more worthy successor, Indra sought to undermine the king's



The temple complex

faith by enlisting the aid of the mercurial sage Durvasa, whose wrath was feared even by the *devatas*.

Durvasa Maharshi arrived at Ambarisha Maharaja's palace in the early hours of Dvadashi morning, when the king was about to break his fast. Accompanied by a retinue of disciples, the sage requested that arrangements be made for their repast after they had completed their ablutions at the nearby river. Maharaja Ambarisha, ever the gracious host, readily agreed to the sage's request, eager to offer his respect and hospitality to the venerable guest.

However, fate had other plans in store for Maharaja Ambarisha, as Sage Durvasa was delayed in his return. The king, caught between his respect for the sage and the importance of adhering to the rules of his fast, ordered the preparation of a sumptuous meal, hoping to placate the sage upon his arrival.

But Durvasa Maharshi was not one to be easily appeased. For he relished testing the mettle of those around him, and he knew well the power of his own wrath. And so, he tarried at the river, delaying his return and deliberately causing the time for Dvadashi *paarana*, the breaking of the fast, to draw nearer.

As the fateful moment approached, Maharaja Ambarisha found himself beset by conflicting emotions. On the one hand, he was eager to show his respect and hospitality to the sage whom he held in high regard. On the other hand, he knew that the rules of the fast were not to be taken lightly, and that the consequences of breaking them could be dire.

In this state of uncertainty, the king turned to his royal Guru and other learned priests, seeking their advice on how to proceed. Together, they counselled him to make an offering to the *devatas*, the divine beings who preside over the celestial realm, and to keep a portion aside for Durvasa Maharshi.

With a heart full of devotion and faith, Maharaja Ambarisha proceeded to break his fast, sipping a little water as a token of the sacred act. And yet, he continued to wait for the sage's arrival, his mind filled with a sense of foreboding and uncertainty, as he wondered what fate held in store for him.

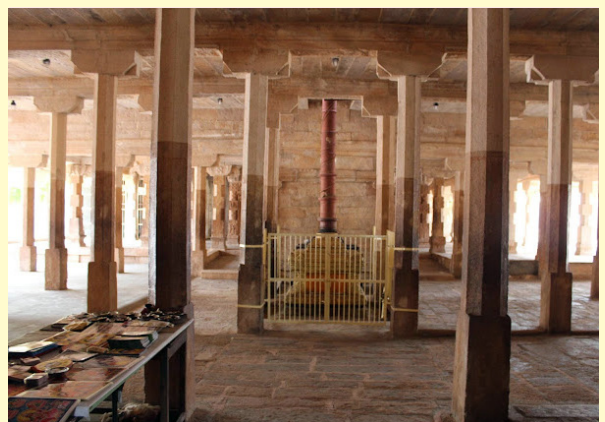
Upon Durvasa Maharshi's return, he was filled with rage upon learning that the king had not waited for him and had already offered a portion of the food to the *devatas*. His anger was so intense that he created a fearsome demon named Kritya, with the sole purpose of killing the king. The demon charged towards Ambarisha Maharaja.



Sculptures in the temple



The sculptures



Dwajastamba in the temple



Vaithamanidhi Perumal in *pallaki*



The *utsavar* of Vaithamanidhi Perumal

However, Ambarisha Maharaja, who had completely surrendered himself to the Lord, remained calm and composed. He joined his palms together and focused his mind on the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana, praying for His grace and protection.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana, upon seeing His devotee in danger, invoked His infallible weapon, the Mahasudharshana Chakra, to protect him. The Chakra was so powerful that it instantly destroyed Kritya, leaving no trace of the demon behind. The Mahasudharshana Chakra, however, did not stop there, and began to chase Durvasa Maharshi relentlessly.

At the conclusion of this event, Ambarisha Maharaja constructed a massive temple, dedicated to Vishnu, whom he named Ambarisha Varadhar or Vaithamanidhi Perumal, for devotees to worship, in the city of Vaithamanidhi.

The Temple

At the center of the temple lies the magnificent shrine of Vaithamanidhi Perumal, the presiding Deity of Narayana, who is depicted in a reclining pose, facing the east. Surrounding the central shrine are two *prakarams* or closed



The most handsome Vaithamanidhi Perumal



The subshrines



Garuda Vahana procession in the temple



The vimana of the temple



Wonderful murals of the temple

precincts, which are intricately designed and adorned with beautiful sculptures and carvings. Vaithamanidhi Perumal is depicted with a *marakka*, a traditional pillow made of wood or stone, placed beneath His head. The Deity is seen looking at the palm of His left hand, which is believed to symbolise His watchful gaze over the location of wealth. It is believed that devotees who offer prayers to Vaithamanidhi Perumal are blessed with great wealth and prosperity.

The temple, originally built during ancient times, underwent a major renovation during the reign of Rani Mangammal, from 1689 to 1704. It is said that the Queen spared no expense in restoring the temple to its former glory, adding new structures and embellishments to enhance its beauty and grandeur.

Today, the temple stands as a testament to the architectural brilliance and cultural heritage of India. It continues to attract devotees and visitors from all over the world, who come to seek the blessings of Vaithamanidhi Perumal and admire the intricate craftsmanship of the temple's design.

One of the unique features of the temple is the lotus stalk that emanates from the navel of the main Deity, which represents the birth of the creator, Brahma. This lotus stalk is considered to be a sacred symbol of creation and is believed to hold deep spiritual significance.

Another interesting aspect of the temple is the passage that leads to the central sanctum, from where the feet of the Deity can be viewed. This provides a rare and intimate glimpse of the divine form and is considered to be a highly auspicious and blessed experience for devotees.

The temple is comprised of two *prakarams*, or closed precincts, which are designed with exquisite artistry and intricate carvings. Within the central sanctum, the festival Deities are housed, and devotees flock to the temple during festivals and special occasions to offer their prayers and seek the blessings of the divine.

Overall, the temple is a testament to the rich cultural and religious heritage of India, and its unique architectural features and devotional significance continue to draw visitors and devotees from all over the world. 🙏

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam

VEDIC THOUGHTS

The greatest enemies to progressive spiritual culture in human society are the old fossils of political parties who are blind themselves and who try to lead other blind men. They bring about disaster in a peaceful human society.

*His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Light of the Bhagavat, page 101*

A pure devotee of the Lord ... will not give up his shelter at the lotus feet of the Lord for a single moment — indeed, not for half a moment — even in exchange for the benediction of ruling and enjoying the opulence of the entire universe.

*Sri Havir Rsi
Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.2.53*

The conditioned soul sometimes personally appreciates the futility of sense enjoyment in the material world, and he sometimes considers material enjoyment to be full of miseries. However, due to his strong bodily conception, his memory is destroyed, and again and again he runs after material enjoyment, just as an animal runs after a mirage in the desert.

*Sukadeva Gosvami
Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.14.10*

The highest, best, and most spiritual ideal of the Divinity is to be found in Krishna. To bring arguments against Him is simply to deceive one's self and deprive one's self of the blessings that God has kept in store for man.

*Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura
Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, His Life and Precepts*

The pure devotee is always within the core of My heart, and I am always in the heart of the pure devotee. My devotees do not know anything else but Me, and I do not know anyone else but them.

*Lord Sri Krishna
Srimad-Bhagavatam 9.4.68*

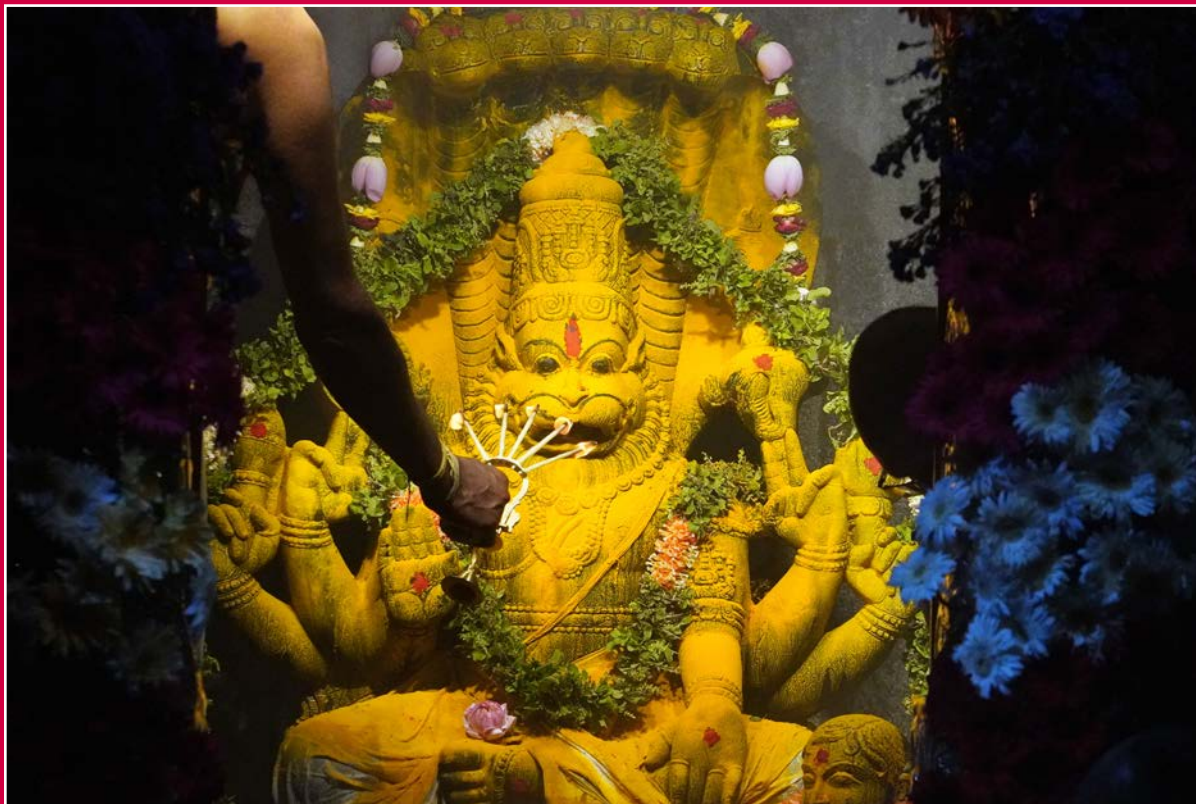
In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then real devotion and devotional service begin.

*Lord Kapila
Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.25.25*



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Arati (above) & homa (below)





SRI NARASIMHA Jayanti

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Vishesha Alankara at ISKCON Vaikuntha Hill

Bhumi Puja for Hare Krishna Heritage Tower at Narsingi, Hyderabad



Hon'ble Chief Minister of Telangana Sri K. Chandrasekhar Rao performed Bhumi Puja and Shanku Sthapana for the upcoming Hare Krishna Heritage Tower on May 8th at Kokapet, Narsingi. Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa, Chairman, Hare Krishna Movement, Sri Satya Gaura Chandra Dasa, President, Hare Krishna Movement Hyderabad and a host of other dignitaries were present at the grand ceremony marking the commencement of the prestigious project.

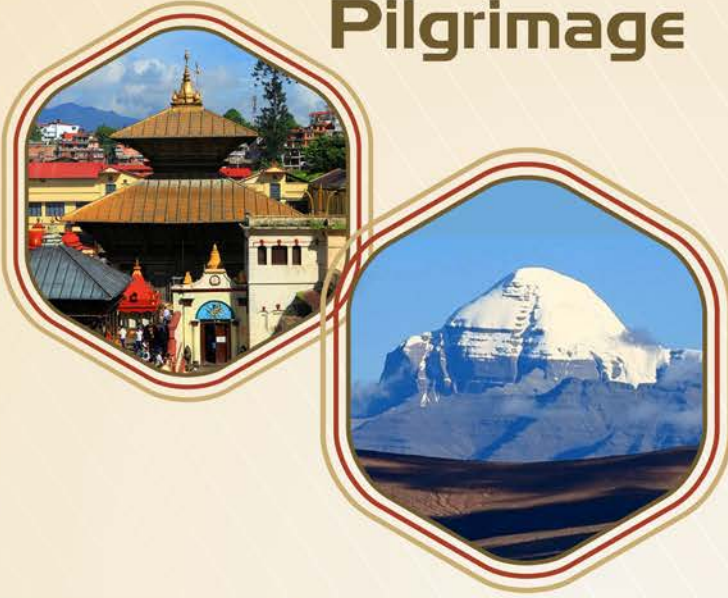


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