



KRISHNA VOICE

Vol 24, No.9, September 2023



Smt. Rajalakshmi Padmavathi at Vaikuntha Hill



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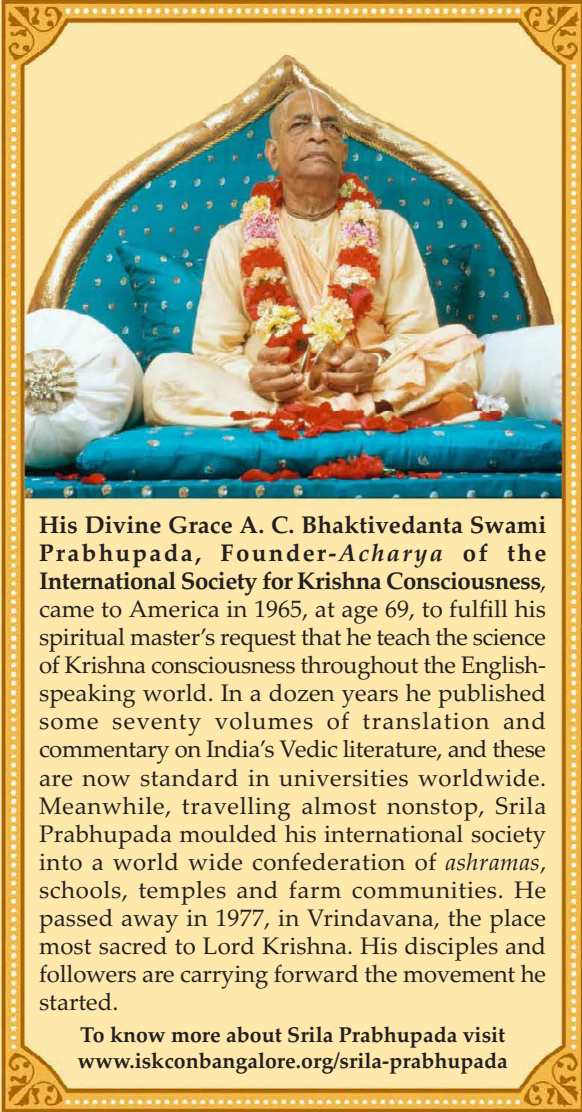
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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, came to America in 1965, at age 69, to fulfill his spiritual master's request that he teach the science of Krishna consciousness 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

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Bhakti Is Only For Krishna

Real devotees are not after rewards

A lecture given in Bombay, April 1, 1974

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

*kanksantah karmanam siddhim
yajanta iha devatah
ksipram hi manuse loke
siddhir bhavati karma-ja*

“Men in this world desire success in fruitive activities, and therefore they worship the demigods. Quickly, of course, men get results from fruitive work in this world.”—*Bhagavad-gita* 4.12

Last night we were discussing the previous verse:

*ye yatha mam prapadyante
tams tathaiva bhajamy aham
mama vartmanuvartante
manusyah partha sarvasah*

“As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Prtha.” Everyone is seeking the Absolute Truth in different ways. Worship of the demigods is one way of searching after the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore demigod worship is recommended in the *Vedas*, in the *upasana-kanda*.

The *Vedas* are divided into three *kandas*, or divisions: *karma-kanda*, for fruitive work; *jnana-kanda*, for philosophical speculation; and *upasana-kanda*, for demigod worship. Therefore one name for the *Vedas* is *trayi*, “three.”

The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* states, *stri-sudra-dvijabandhunam trayi na shruti-gocara*: “Women, the labouring class, and friends of the twice-born cannot understand the *Vedas*.” *Dvija-bandhu*—“friends of the twice born”—refers to those who are born in families of *brahmanas* [intellectuals], *kshatriyas* [administrators], or *vaishyas* [farmers and merchants] but who do not possess the qualities of these higher classes.

A *brahmana*’s qualifications are given in the *Bhagavad-gita* (18.41):

*samo damas tapah saucam
ksantir arjavam eva ca
jnanam vijnanam astikyam
brahma-karma svabhava-jam*

“Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom, and religiousness—these are the natural qualities by which the *brahmanas* work.”

The *kshatriyas*’ qualities are also given (18.42):

*sauryam tejo dhrtir dakshyam
yuddhe capy apalayanam
danam isvara-bhavas ca
ksatram karma svabhava-jam*

“Heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity, and leadership are the natural qualities of work for the *kshatriyas*.”

The duties of the *vaishyas* are given (18.44):

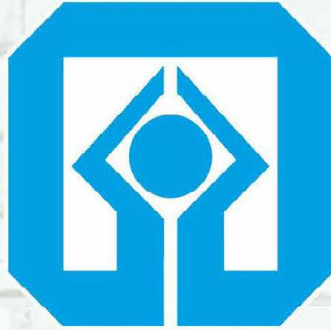
*krsi-go-raksya-vanijyam
vaisya-karma svabhava-jam*

“Farming, cow protection, and business are the natural work for the *vaishyas*.”

And, finally, the duties of the *shudras* are given (18.44):

*paricaryatmakam karma
sudrasyapi svabhava-jam*





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“For *shudras* there is labour and service to others.”

A *shudra* is satisfied by serving somebody, just as a dog is satisfied to have a nice master.

To get success in a particular type of occupational duty, people sometimes worship the demigods. That is described here. Like us, demigods are also living entities, and all living entities are part and parcel of Krishna. *Mamaivamso jiva-loke jiva-bhutah sanatanah*. There is no difference between the demigods and us, but they are more fortunate to have gotten the post of Chandra [the moon-god], Surya [the sun-god], Indra [the king of the heavenly planets], Brahma [the chief demigod], and so on.

To get success in material activities, people sometimes worship demigods. But in the *Bhagavad-gita* Lord Krishna explains that although in one sense demigod worship is worship of Him—because the demigods are part of Him—demigod worship is *avidhi-purvakam*, done “in a wrong way.” The *vidhi*, or “rule,” is to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Demigod worship is something like bribing a doorman to enter the room of a great officer.

By demigod worship one can get results very quickly. But the results are *antavat*, “limited.” *Bhakti*, however, is unlimited. The less intelligent worship the demigods instead of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In India especially we will find many devotees of the demigods. These devotees are not actually devotees. Devotion can only be in connection with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Those who worship the demigods are not devotees, because they want to get a reward from the demigods. But *bhakti* is not like that. The *bhaktas*, devotees, are not after any reward from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is the difference between *bhakti* and demigod worship.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu teaches us *bhakti*. He says, *na dhanam na janam na sundarim kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye*: “My Lord, I do not wish to ask from You opulence, riches, a nice wife, or many followers.” These are material opulences. So Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says, “I do not want all these things.” *Mama janmani janmanisvare bhavata bhaktir ahaituki tvayi*: “I only want Your causeless devotional service birth after birth.” That is the desire of a devotee. He doesn’t want liberation. He wants to serve the lotus feet of the Lord birth after birth—*janmani*. That is his aspiration.

The *karma-kandiya*, those on the platform of fruitive activities, are generally attracted by demigod worship. But those detached from material happiness become attached to Krishna. We have to choose whether for temporary benefit we shall worship demigods or for permanent benefit we shall worship Krishna. That is our choice. But people generally choose the immediate result (*ksipram hi manuse loke siddhir bhavati*). That immediate result may be palatable in the beginning, but it will produce bitter results at the end. But that we do not consider.

The immediate result and the remote result are described by the Sanskrit words *shreyas* and *preyas*. *Preyas* means “immediate benefit,” and *shreyas* means “ultimate benefit.” Those interested in the ultimate benefit go back home, back to Godhead. For them, worshiping the Supreme Lord is most beneficial. And those interested in temporary benefit worship demigods. They may pray to goddess Durga, *dhanam dehi, rupam dehi, yaso dehi*: “Give me wealth. Give me beauty. Give me fame.” They forget that whatever material benefit they get will be lost with the end of the material body, when everything is lost. In the *Bhagavad-gita* Lord Krishna says, *mryuh sarva-haras caham*: “At the end, I, as death, take away all your material possessions.”

So to desire temporary benefits is not good. Because we are eternal—*nityo nityanam cetanas cetananam*—we should be after eternal happiness, eternal benefit. That should be our business. Therefore we should not be *karmis*, fruitive workers. Neither should we become *jnanis*, mental speculators. We should become yogis. And what kind of yogi? *Bhakti-yogi*.

There are different types of *yoga* practice. Out of them, *bhakti-yoga* is the topmost. Krishna says, *bhaktya mam abhijanati yavan yas casmi tattvatah*: “I can be understood only through *bhakti*.” Without being in *bhakti-yoga* one cannot be happy or understand Krishna or one’s relationship with Krishna. *Evam prasanna-manaso bhagavad-bhakti-yogatah*.

We hold this class for the benefit of human society. The Krishna consciousness movement is meant to allow us to constantly hear about Krishna, talk about Krishna, chant about Krishna, eat about Krishna, work for Krishna, sleep for Krishna, walk for Krishna. Anything we do in relationship to Krishna is pious. *Punya-srava-kirtanah*. Srila Rupa Goswami recommends, *nirbandhah krishna-sambandhe yuktam vairagyam ucyate*: dovetail everything with Krishna activities, Krishna consciousness. Then our life will be successful.

Krishna is sitting within your heart. When He sees that you are very serious about Him, then He helps you. We have many dirty things within our heart, but as soon as we begin to hear about Krishna they become washed away. Now we are hearing from Krishna in the *Bhagavad-gita*. Krishna is speaking about Himself. Krishna is speaking

about the situation of the material world. He'll speak about the spiritual world. Everything is there in the *Bhagavad-gita*. So if you regularly hear, that is the beginning of your success in life.

The *Vedas* are called *shruti*, "hearing." One has to hear the *Vedas* from the right person. That is the recommendation of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. *Sthane sthitah shruti-gatam tanu-van-manobhih*. To achieve success in self-realization or God realization, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu recommends, *sthane sthitah*: "Just stay in your present position, as a *grhastha* [householder] or as a *brahmana* or as a *sannyasi* [renunciant] or as a businessman or professional man—it doesn't matter." But, *shruti-gatam tanu-van-manobhih*: "Just try to hear about Krishna." *Sruti-gatam* means "aural reception." *Tanu-van-manobhih*: "And try to employ your body, words, and mind in Krishna's service."

Ye prayaso 'jita jito 'py asi. One of Krishna's names is Ajita, "He who is never conquered." But anyone who, without speculation, humbly and meekly hears about Krishna from the realized soul will one day will be able to conquer the unconquerable.

The Krishna consciousness movement is meant to give everyone the chance to hear about Krishna. That hearing is the first process—*sravanam*. And when one has heard very nicely about Krishna, then one can speak about Krishna. And one must speak. One who has heard nicely about Krishna cannot remain without speaking about Krishna. He must speak or preach. Hear and preach about whom? Vishnu, or Krishna.

*sravanam kirtanam visnoh
smaranam pada-sevanam
arcanam vandanam dasyam
sakhyam atma-nivedanam*

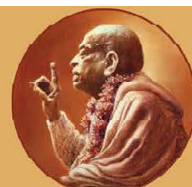
"Hearing and chanting about Vishnu, remembering Him, serving His lotus feet, worshiping Him, offering Him prayers, becoming His servant, becoming His friend, and offering everything to Him." These nine processes of Krishna consciousness are being pushed forward by the members of the Krishna consciousness movement all over the world. We have opened a center here in Bombay, the most important city of India. So we request you all to come every day and try to understand the philosophy of Krishna consciousness, based on *Bhagavad-gita*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, *Vedanta-sutra*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*—all authentic scriptures. We are not concocting or giving false interpretations. We are presenting *Bhagavad-gita* as it is, without any deviation.

So if we take advantage of this process of understanding—*srnvatam sva-kathah krishnah punya-sravana-kirtanah*—then gradually we shall be free from the results of all our past sinful activities. *Hrdy antah-stho hy abhadrani*. *Abhadrani* means "inauspicious things accumulated within our heart." By *krishna-kirtana*—chanting about Krishna—our heart will be cleansed. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu recommends *ceto-darpana-marjanam*: The heart is like a mirror, and it can be cleansed by the chanting of Hare Krishna. As soon as the heart is cleansed we can understand what is Krishna, what I am, what my relationship is with Krishna, and how I should act in relation to Krishna. Understanding these things is the perfection of life.

Thank you very much. 🙏



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



You Are Beyond This Body

This exchange between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and some of his disciples took place in Fiji on May 1, 1976.

Srila Prabhupada: The Lord says, *mamaivamso jiva-loke jiva-bhutah sanatanah*. Find this verse.

Disciple: All right, Srila Prabhupada. That's in *Bhagavad-gita*. Fifteenth Chapter, text seven. "The living entities in this conditional world," Krishna says, "are My eternal, fragmental parts." And then He adds, *manah-sasthanindriyani prakrti-sthani karsati*: "Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind."

Srila Prabhupada: So the soul uses his mind and intelligence—his subtle senses, his subtle instruments—to manipulate his gross machine, his material body. In this way, he is just like an airplane pilot who uses his subtle electronic instruments to manipulate his gross machine, causing it to fly this way or that. Where is the difficulty in understanding this? This material body in which we are now living is simply a machine.

And *bhramayan sarva-bhutani*: "All living beings in this material world are simply wandering." *Bhramayan*—"wandering." Just as the pilot uses his airplane to wander here or there, so the soul uses his material body to wander here or there. This is going on. *Urdhvam gacchanti sattva-stha ... adho gacchanti tamasah*: Sometimes the soul goes up; sometimes, down. Just as the pilot uses his airplane's wings and other features for going up or down, so the soul uses his body's arms and other features for going up or down. Find this verse.

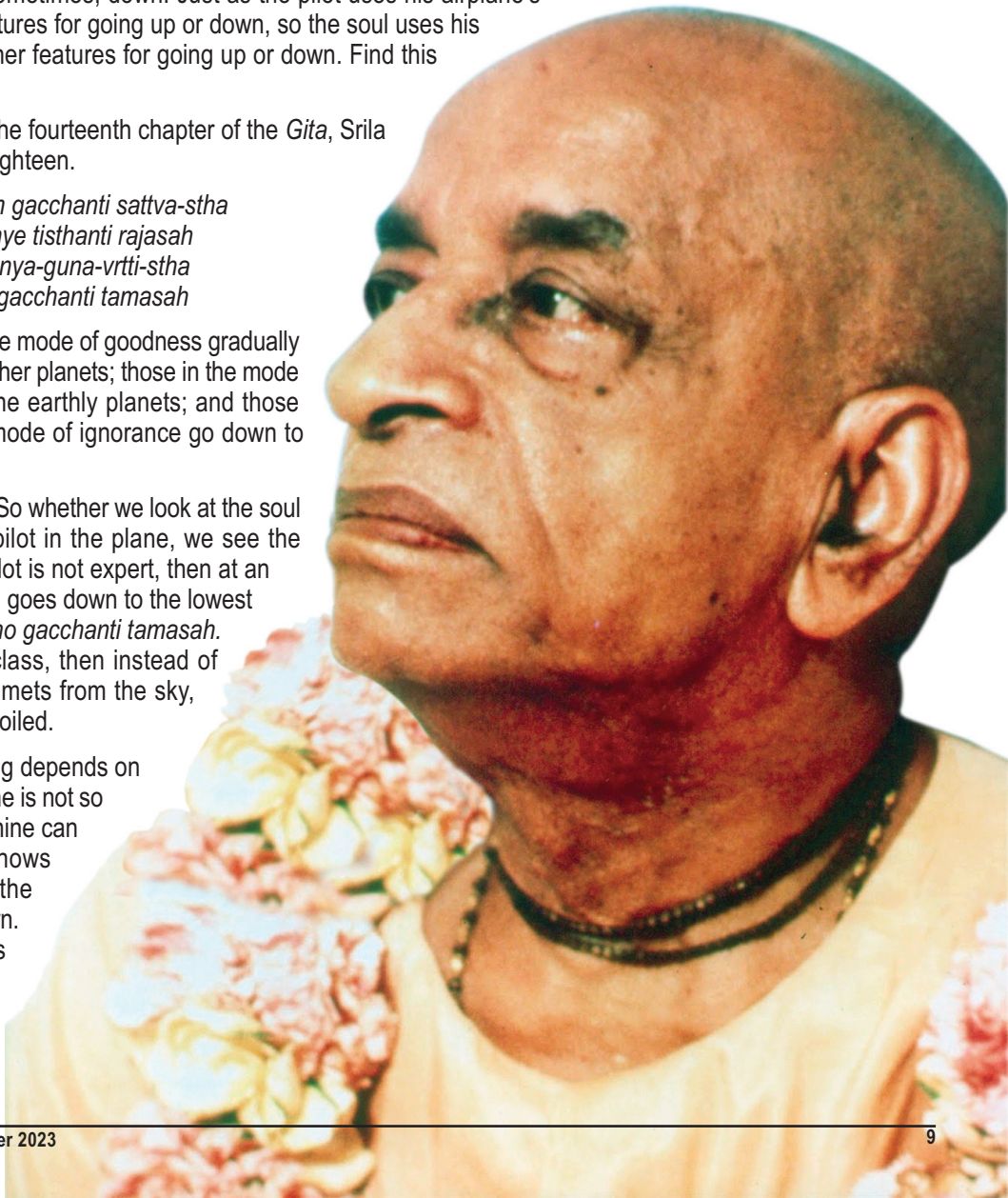
Disciple: That's in the fourteenth chapter of the *Gita*, Srila Prabhupada. Text eighteen.

*urdhvam gacchanti sattva-stha
madhye tisthanti rajasah
jaghanya-guna-vrtti-stha
adho gacchanti tamasah*

"Those situated in the mode of goodness gradually go upward to the higher planets; those in the mode of passion live on the earthly planets; and those in the abominable mode of ignorance go down to the hellish worlds."

Srila Prabhupada: So whether we look at the soul in the body or the pilot in the plane, we see the same thing. If the pilot is not expert, then at an untimely moment he goes down to the lowest place. Finished. *Adho gacchanti tamasah*. If the pilot is third class, then instead of flying high, he plummets from the sky, and everything is spoiled.

Therefore, everything depends on the pilot. The machine is not so important. The machine can go up if the pilot knows how to do it. And the machine can go down. Actually, this is happening. If the pilot cannot handle his machine very nicely, immediately it will be smashed.



That is due to the mismanagement of the pilot. At times I have seen that as soon as the flight is over, the other passengers and the crew applaud. [*Laughter as Srila Prabhupada claps.*] “The danger is over.”

Anyway, *urdhvam* and *adhah*: Depending on how you use this bodily machine, you can go up, and likewise, you can go down. And *madhye tisthanti rajasah*: If you become passionately attached to these middle planets, then for still another lifetime you can stay here.

So in this way, we must present this subject matter of self-realization. The living entity, the soul, is the important thing within this body. And just see how he’s struggling. Due to ignorance of his real identity apart from the body, he’s struggling. *Manah sashanindriyani prakrti-sthani karsati*: “On account of being entangled in this material world, the soul is struggling very hard with the six senses of the material body, which include the mind.” This is his position.

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, often you say that transmission of this knowledge of self-realization requires both the proper speaker—Lord Krishna or His pure devotee—and also the proper hearer.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Only if somebody is interested in knowing the truly important thing in life can he understand this knowledge, this science of self-realization. But if he’s an animal—simply eating, sleeping, and mating—what will he understand? An animal is not interested in knowing how the world is working. He gets his food and sex; that’s all. These are the animal’s propensities.

But when the soul receives a human body, he must come to the human platform—inquisitive. Like Sanatana Gosvami, he must ask, ‘*ke ami,*’ ‘*kene amaya jare tapa-traya*’: “Who am I? Why must I endure all these miseries, culminating in death?” Of course, the modern animalistic human is not interested in these essential questions. Instead he inquires, “How shall I develop my economic position?” But Sanatana Gosvami already had a very high-grade economic position and left it behind. He was not interested in such temporary affairs. He was interested in knowing, ‘*ke ami,*’ ‘*kene amaya jare tapa-traya*’: “Who, actually, am I? And what is my position? Why I am suffering in this material atmosphere?” That is human life.

Disciple: Returning to *Bhagavad-gita*, Srila Prabhupada, isn’t it also true that Arjuna asks these questions?

Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes. *Karpanya-dosopahata. Karpanya-dosa*. “Due to miserly weakness, my dear Krishna, I have neglected my real duty, which is to understand my actual, spiritual self and then serve You. Rather, I have been thinking about the bodily welfare of my nonsensical relatives and teachers, even though they are waging a war to usurp my kingdom.” What is this foolishness? I know that.

“After all, no matter how tender my sentiments, what benefit will these rascals get? It may be that they are going to die in this war. But sooner or later, this way or that, they are going to die. What can I do? So therefore, why am I perplexed about their bodily fate? I know that this is my defect. I cannot cause these living entities’ deaths or births, nor can I prolong their lives. All this is beyond my tiny jurisdiction. Still, I am anxious: If I kill them, then what will happen? What will happen?”

“You may kill them or not kill them, Arjuna,” says Krishna. “But rest assured, they’ll be killed, today or tomorrow. *Gatasun agatasum ca nanusocanti panditah*: A learned man knows that this material body will be finished, today or tomorrow—so why be concerned about this body?”

Concern should be for the person within the body—whether he’s going to heaven or hell, up or down, *urdhvam gacchanti* or *tamo gacchanti*. This is the issue of real concern. The material body will be finished, today or tomorrow or after a hundred years. Who can protect it? But one should be concerned about the body’s owner: where he is going—what will be his next position. And in *Bhagavad-gita* Lord Krishna clearly delineates this issue. *Urdhvam gacchanti sattva-stha, madhye tisthanti rajasah, ... adho gacchanti tamasah*: According to the modes of nature in which you are living your present life, you are deciding whether, in your next life, you will go up or down or remain in the same status. Three outcomes are possible: up, down, or the same status.

Disciple: Today, though, Srila Prabhupada, people may say, “I have a soul,” but they live pretty degradedly, as if “Really, I am this material body—that’s all there is.” They live as if they’ll have no next life. Or they think in the next life they’re automatically going upward, because, they say, they’ve accepted God or Jesus or Muhammad into their heart. Meanwhile, they go on breaking God’s laws all over the place and just generally catering to their bodily whims. Just living a low-grade life.

Srila Prabhupada: Therefore, they’re rascals. And for the rascals, *Bhagavad-gita*’s teaching is there. *Learn*. People are giving far too much emphasis on the material body: “When this current body is finished, everything is finished.” They do not know anything beyond the body. But real knowledge begins when we learn, “No—you are beyond this body.” This is real knowledge. This is the beginning of knowledge. Any other knowledge except this—that is ignorance. People are accepting ignorance as knowledge. ☪

Best Friends

*In the broken remnants of a beautiful relationship,
a young woman discovers the real meaning of friendship.*

By Dvarakadhisha Devi Dasi

Joni lived in the house across the street. She had long blonde hair and could roller-skate better than anyone in the neighbourhood. We spent our childhood together, clattering down the pavement on our steel roller-skates, dragging our dolls and their trappings from one house to the next, racing her four turtles on the back patio. We played long, involved games of make-believe that could continue for weeks. In summer Joni and I luxuriated for endless hours in backyard wading pools. In winter we tramped through the woods surrounding our neighbourhood, careful to avoid the haunted house. We constantly plotted to escape our little sisters, and loyally stuck together when the big girls picked on us.

In high school Joni got a bright-orange Mustang convertible. Her blonde hair came from a bottle by this time, but no one knew except me. We shared clothes, double-dated, and got part-time jobs scooping ice cream together. No one in the world knew me better than Joni did. Our friendship seemed so deeply ingrained in the pattern of my life that it never occurred to me it might someday end.

But it ended quickly when we graduated from high school. She got married, I went to college, and the comfortable rhythm of our friendship broke. The backdrop of shared experience disappeared, leaving us struggling to think of polite things to say to each other. When I saw her a few years ago, I didn't even recognize her.

And yet, when I hear the phrase "best friend" I can't help but think of Joni. I think of the time she refused to go to a party I was not invited to. I remember the way I sobbed when her boyfriend dumped her. I remember all the bowls of popcorn we shared in her basement, fueling serious conversations that sorted through the complex issues of our lives. No experience was complete until we discussed it thoroughly, no emotion too burdensome to be shared. The memory of the friendship and the comfort it brought has long outlived the friendship itself.



Fond Remembering

This is a common experience, this fond remembering of a lost friendship. Friendships fuse under many circumstances, but circumstances are predictably unpredictable. We lose our friends when they move away, or when our interests drag us apart, or when misunderstanding or betrayal blocks our heart connection. And there is the ultimate separation of death. But the comfort of friendship is so deep and so restoring we continually seek the intimacy we have repeatedly found and lost.

Srila Prabhupada compares friendship in this world to a drop of water in the desert. Friendship is something we crave, yearn for, search after. It's there, but in such a tiny quantity that our thirst for it cannot be satisfied.

"The idea of society, friendship, and love is not at all false," Srila Prabhupada explains, "but the place where we search for it is false."

Yes, there is someone who can understand your deepest emotions, who cares about you through thick and thin, who sees your intrinsic beauty even in your darkest times, and who will never, ever leave you. That person is Krishna.

This may seem a disappointment to those of us who have forgotten how dear we are to God. In our state of forgetfulness, we are blind to Krishna's loving presence, and the idea that Krishna is our best friend seems a lonely conclusion. When jocular companionship portrayed in beer commercials shapes our conception of friendship, understanding how friendship applies to the creator of the universe is difficult. But when we understand that Lord Krishna is seated within our hearts, lifetime after lifetime, we get a better sense of true friendship. He is there whether we're embodied as kings or as dogs. Never giving up, never leaving us in disgust, He waits patiently for us to become frustrated with our search for pleasure in a world of falsity. He tolerates our blasphemy and our stubborn refusal to acknowledge His omnipresence. He forgives every atrocity. His love is unconditional. Who wouldn't want a friendship like that?

Glimpses of Krishna's Friendship

I have known some wonderful moments when I could catch a glimpse of Krishna's eternal friendship. Some of those moments were deeply personal, times when each breath was choked with pain and yet somehow I could feel the presence and solace of my dear, dear friend in my heart. Some of those moments were twisted with a private irony that could only be shared with someone who has witnessed my every thought. Sometimes I have seen Krishna take away the proverbial keys to the car when I have been in no condition to drive. And other times I have felt Him pushing me past fears and regrets with the supreme encouragement of a most confident friend.

Understanding that Krishna is our best friend doesn't mean we no longer feel any friendship for other living beings. Rather, that understanding intensifies our connection with everyone, because we know that our wonderful friend loves everyone deeply. No one was more loving and compassionate than Srila Prabhupada, the perfect example of a fully realized soul. People who cared nothing for God were attracted to Srila Prabhupada because he exuded genuine warmth and concern toward them. These are the natural qualities of a pure devotee.

So when we hear from the Vedic literature that there is no love in this world, that's not a cause for lamentation but an affirmation of what we already know in our hearts. Love and friendship simply cannot endure without the empowering central force of love for the Supreme Lord. In the same way that sunlight dwarfs the illuminating power of a tiny candle, our true loving relationship with God dwarfs our very best memories of material friendship. As Srila Prabhupada promises, "If we make our friendship with Krishna, it will never break." 🌸

Fasting		Festivals	
Sep 11	Ekadashi	Sep 6 & 7	Sri Krishna Janmashtami
Sep 12	<i>break fast</i>		<i>Fasting till midnight on Sep 7</i>
Sep 26	Ekadashi	Sep 8	Sri Vyasa Puja: Appearance of Srila Prabhupada
Sep 27	<i>break fast</i>		<i>Fasting till noon</i>
		Sep 10	Vyasa Puja Smaranam (in ISKCON Bangalore)
		Sep 23	Radhashtami: Appearance of Srimati Radharani
			<i>Fasting till noon</i>
		Sep 26	Vamana Jayanthi: Appearance of Lord Vamanadeva
			<i>Fasting till noon today in addition to regular ekadashi fasting</i>
		Sep 30	Third month of Chaturmasya begins
			<i>Fasting from milk for one month</i>

The magnificent splendour

Thothadri Vanamamalai Temple (Part 3)

by Sampatkumara Ramanuja Dasan (Adv. Ashwin.S)

We may use the findings of prominent Hindu architecture academics to determine the temple's probable period by surveying its architectural style. The Pallavas built constructions using rocks in the 6th or 7th century.

Famous examples of this architectural style are at Mahabalipuram. Temples made of granite and mortar appeared in the 7th century. South Indian temples were built in metropolitan areas or on their peripheries and plains, and decorated with granite and mortar. These buildings have often grown so large that the sanctuary is hard to find.

Grandiose *mantapams* and *gopurams* have covered the modest structure identifying the sanctuary without consideration for symmetry or practicality. At Thiruchendur, a tower on one side of the temple is an always unused entrance. The Nanguneri temple shows the evolution of architectural styles from the early Hindu period through the Nayak dynasty. Its hallowed inner sanctuary is cut from a rock and located on its face. The Supreme Personality of Godhead Thothadrinath and His Deities are hewn from the rock. A single stone encompasses the Gods, sanctum, platform area and Garuda shrine. Naturally, the sanctuary ceiling is granite stones arched over the rock on one side and buttressed by walls on the other three sides. The front *mantapam* is stone. Thus, this temple combines rock-carved and partly structural construction, a common form in the third century A.D.

The following donors, the Travancore Kings and Nayaks, built dominating constructions in their architectural style to commemorate their generosity in this temple. Later conversations will expand on them. The architecture of the sanctuary and *mantapam* preceding it can only indicate this temple's age. According to respected architectural specialists, the temple of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Thothadrinath was likely built in the 8th century A.D.

The inner shrine and *vimanam* are surrounded by several inscriptions. The late Sri.Gopinath Rao transcribed an area on the front wall, which he cleaned to remove *chunam* and grease. The temple caretakers care about these

Gopuram of Vanamamalai Temple



inscriptions and help scholars transcribe them. If translated and interpreted, these ancient inscriptions will reveal the temple's early history and building date.

The highest Personality of Godhead Thothadrinath rules this temple. The sanctum of Thothadrinath was carved from a rock on a water tank's bed. The sanctum's Deities are all sculpted from one rock. One side of the sanctuary is rock, while the other three are stone walls. The ceiling has hewn stones, rock, and stone walls. The distance between the rock's face and Garuda's shrine may be one stone block.

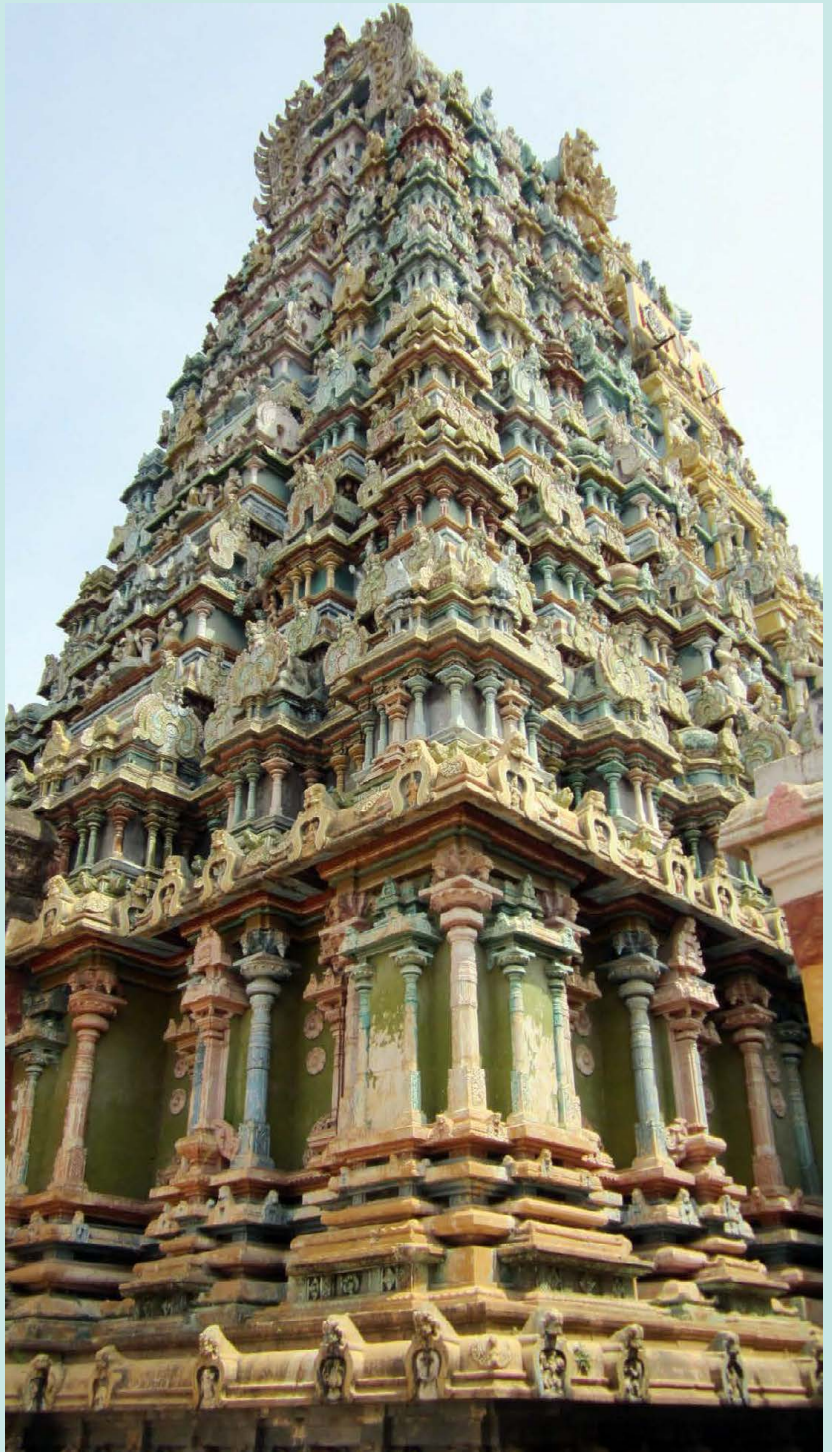
The Supreme Deity Thothadrinath is prominently positioned, with Sri Devi and Surya on His right and Urvashi behind them, *chamara* in hand. Bhu Devi and Chandra are on Thothadrinath's left, with Thilottama behind Them carrying a *chamara*. Under this arrangement, Bhrgu and Markanda Rishis flank each other. Adishesha covers Thothadrinath's head with His golden hood. *Nitya utsavar* (Selvar) sits to one side of the sanctuary.

A gold-plated platform with a gold-covered *mantapam* and gold-plated pillars supports the mantapam in front of the sanctuary. Srivaramangai Nachiar and Sri Andal, Deivanayaka's consorts, reside on this platform. The Deivanayaka Deity is a masterpiece of iconography. The *vighraha's* golden *kavacham* is embossed with gems and other adornments, making Him look bejewelled even without jewels. On Deivanayaka's right seat is Srivaramangai Nachiar, another superb exemplar. Andal ends this group to Deivanayaka's left. The diamonds on these Deities are so well-crafted and beautiful that they are a feast for the eyes and the heart.

Srivaramangai Nachiar wears a diamond Makarakanti with emerald pendants, a crown with huge, beautifully shining emeralds, diamond earrings, and other treasures, and gorgeous *pitambaram* on important days. Deivanayaka wears a ruby Makarakanti with excellent pendants, many other precious gems and silks, and a gorgeous crown adorned with rubies, emeralds, and diamonds on these occasions. Lord Deivanayaka has gold hands and legs with precious jewels.

Four times a year, on Vaikunta Ekadashi, Kanuvu, Chitrai, and Purattasi Punarvasu, large crowds gather for these events.

There are excellent Deities in other temples, but what is impressive, is the refined taste shown in



The *rajagopuram* of Vanamamalai Temple



Deivanayaka Perumal of Vanamamalai

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vanamamalai Perumal

decorating the Deities and the studied beauty obtained in the gem composition. The Deities in many temples often took refuge in larger, better-protected temples during an extra-terrestrial invasion or persecution. This may have happened to these Deities.

We have another *mantapam* in front of the *utsava* Deities. Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana are *utsava* Deities on one side of this *mantapam*. These Deities and Their moolavigraham were originally placed in the Rama shrine adjacent to Vadakku Nachiar shrine in the second *prakaram*.

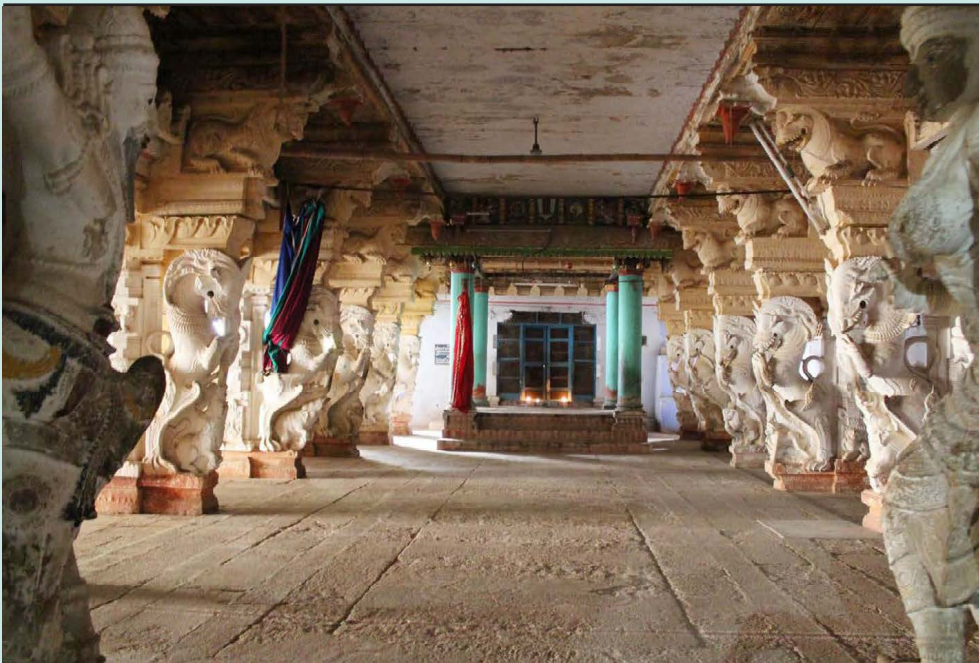
To protect *utsava vigrahas* from Muhammadan abuse, They were transferred. This ancient narrative may be accurate since the Nawab's men camped near the temple during his rule over Kalakad. Misdeeds of Chanda Sahib's soldiers at Sucheendrum and Thirunelveli may have frightened this temple's administrators, who may have taken precautions to protect their Deities. Once removed, these Deities new places are permanent.

The shrine where these Deities are situated seems transitory since just part of the open *mantapam* is surrounded by brass railings. The Vishwaksenar shrine borders the Rama shrine. The *mantapam* has shrine of Garuda in the centre. On the southern side of this *mantapam* lies Chakrathalwar shrine. The goddesses' silks and *pitambaram* were formerly stored in the chamber next door.

The walls around the *vimanam* and inner *mantapam* feature many antique Tamil inscriptions. *Chunam* coating and oil deposits have destroyed most of them. The late Sri Gopinath Rao copied a section of them on the front wall but did not publish them. The epigraphical department should shortly replicate these inscriptions.

Dwarapalakas on both sides of this *mantapam's* doorway and the sanctum's entrance are excellent, although they show signs of wear and tear from age. Their foreheads are disfigured by chiselling *tilaks* where none existed.

The large *mantapam* in front of the top one is Kulashekara. Kulashekara Perumal Rajah of Travancore built this large edifice. Next to Virappa Nayak Mantapam is the largest and most prominent *mantapam* in the temple. The



festivals, everyday *sevas*, and *Sahasranama japas* happen there. The Friday swing Utsavam is held at this *mantapam*. One pillar of this *mantapam* has a statue of Lakshmi Narasimha and another has Sri Nataraja.

This *mantapam* has two pillars with lifelike monarch and minister figures.

The inner *prakaram* follows

The large *mantapams* with intricate *yali* sculptures are a magnificent feature of this temple with walls containing intriguing sculptures. The first set depicts Vighneshwara surrounded by Pandya-era men and women playing drums and other instruments.

Damsels encircle a female divinity in the second group. The third category is Lakshmi Narayana. The fourth is a scene of women dancing. The fifth shows Nataraja dancing with odd ancient instruments.

The sixth group includes Venugopalaswami, His cow, and the cowherds. Garuda dances with Hanuman on the elephant and other male and female musicians playing various instruments in the eighth. There is a social dance with men and women and musical instruments. The ninth depicts a monarch comforting his queen surrounded by armed guards before a war or hunt. The ninth is of Thrivikrama. The tenth signifies Thothadrinath and the associated Deities. The twelfth is Deivanayaka, revered.

There is a depiction of *kolattam* on the thirteenth. The fourteenth shows Parvathi and other deities. All figures in this category are mutilated. The fifteenth shows Subramanya with deer and women. Parvathi and Thirunageshwara are in the sixteenth. The local Shaiva temple is presided over by Thirunageshwara. The sixteenth is a male-female social dance. The nineteenth is a fascinating religious dance with disfigured characters. The twentieth depicts Valli and Devasena worshipping Subramanya. The twenty-first shows Vishnu riding a lion and Vighneshwara dancing to ancient and new instruments.

The aforementioned sculptures are impressive. They are Shaivite and Vaishnavite worship artefacts. One



The *prakarams* in the temple are long corridors

account states that the first *jeer* built the inner *prakaram* and north Lakshmi and the little *gopuram* and south Lakshmi shrines. He could not have built the *prakaram's* outside walls and placed these Shaivite items there. He may have built the Vadakku Nachiar, Terku Nachiar, and tiny *gopuram*. The *mantapams* and placements of the two Nachiar shrines show they have been jammed into an existing square and battle for room.

Under the little *gopuram* and in the *mantapam* of Vadakku Nachiar's shrine are kingly benefactor figures. The same king's figure from the Terlu Nachiar's shrine has been deleted and placed under the new Manavala sannidhi. This monarch probably built such buildings under the *jeer's* influence.

His figure is placed beneath the *mantapam* in front of the Nataraja shrine at Papanasam, proving he governed a large area. These figures have tall conical hats, plenty of jewels and a short sword, the *bichua*. This nation was under the royal sponsor, who may have been a Travancore monarch or viceroy. Further research is needed.

The Rama shrine, Lakshmana, and Sita Deities are located in the inner *prakaram* adjacent Vadakku Nachiar's shrine. Azhwar shrine stands on the eastern extremity of this *prakaram*. The *utsavar* and *moolavar* are here. Next to it are Udayavar and Koorathalwar shrines. The *moola* and *utsava vigrahams* are at the Pillailokacharya shrine nearby.

The Paramapada gate on the northern side of this *prakaram* opens only on Vaikunta Ekadashi.

Lord Padmanabha and His attendants are sculpted on the Chinna Gopuram ceiling. This proves that a Travancore monarch built the lesser *gopuram* and Nachiar shrines during the first *jeer's* period.

The outer *prakaram* has the Sri Balimantapam. A huge rectangle comprising four *mantapams* of enormous proportions built for over a lakh rupees, a large amount for ancient times. It was created by Periapattabiramswami.

Next to the aforesaid *mantapam* is Virappa Nayak. An architectural marvel in the Nayak style, it resembles hundreds of pillared *mantapams* at Kanchipuram, Madurai and other temples. The pillars have beautiful sculptures with several smaller pillars and realistic figures made from one stone. The figurines have many tiny features, including little beads, and the muscles and limbs are so nicely sculpted that they resemble humans. Particularly one depiction is an intriguing *mantapam* pillar. Rama embraces Hanuman and thanks him for completing his task and for bringing



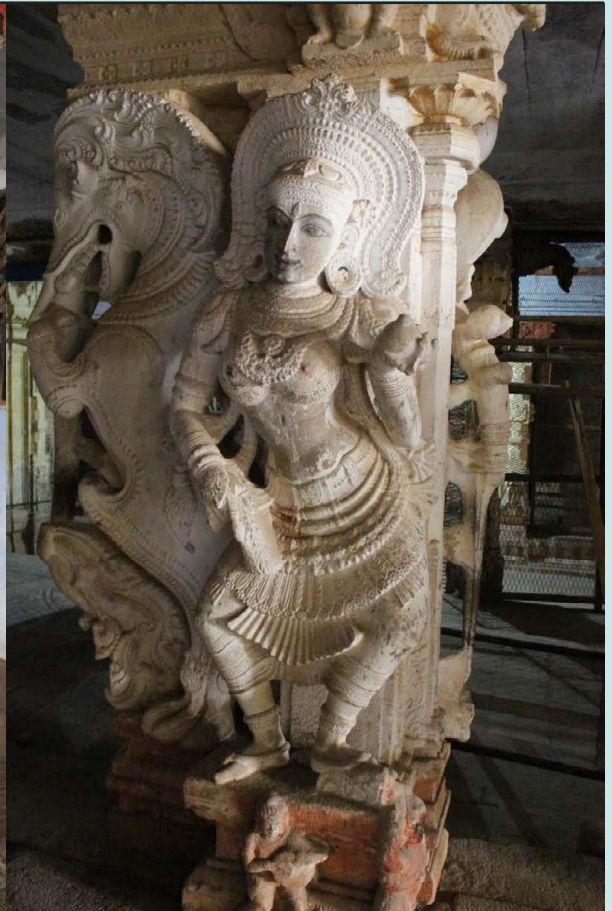
Dwarapalaka painting in the temple



Garuda painting in the temple



Magnificent *yali* sculptures constructed by Travancore royals



One of the many sculptures in the temple

Sita's Anguliyam (ring) in recognition of his discovery of her in Lanka. Another terrifying figure is in a pillar. It depicts a ferocious warrior crushing a crouching lady, sharp sword in hand. The pillar *yalis* are beautiful and have stone balls in their jaws that roll without falling. Madurai's Nayak monarch Virappa Nayak built this *mantapam*, and his figure is near the Venugopala Swami shrine's entrance. This Deity was initially housed in a little *mantapam* in the midst of a large one. It was transferred to the Venugopala Swami shrine entrance and replaced with a large brick and mortar *mantapam*. One pillar of Virappa Nayak *mantapam* has an equestrian figure of Virappa. The oil Thirumanjanam (Ennaikappu) of Sri Varamangai Nachiar occurs during this *mantapam* Margali month.

Lakshmi-Narayana and Thakshmiravaha shrines flank the Virappa Nayakan *mantapam*. The Venugopala shrine borders Virappa Nayakan *mantapam*. The shrine has Deities of Venugopala, Rukmini and Satyabama. The Venugopala Deity is exquisite.

Dashavatarar shrine is adjacent to it, while Manavalar shrine is in front. One pillar of the little *mantapam* in the middle of this shrine has a king's divinity. This figure resembles the *mantapam* in front of Vadakku Nachiar shrine and beneath the little *gopuram*.

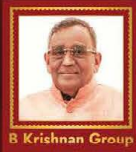
Between the *dvajastamba* and the temple's main entryway lies the Jevanti *mantapam*. Next in line is a huge building like Virappa Nayak *mantapam*. The Lord's procession begins at this *mantapam* and frequently alights here on festivals. This *mantapam* was erected by Jayanti Rajah. Two *yalis* near the *mantapam*'s entrance have two stone balls in their jaws. The stone balls roll when we put our fingers in the mouth of the *yalis*. This art is also found in the Virappa Nayak *mantapam*, suggesting it was built during the Nayak era.

This Jayanti *mantapam* has a *prakaram*. One side of this *prakaram* has a platform for the Lord's vehicles. This platform has iron-bar and zinc-sheet doors. The previous swami created these doors. The *mantapams* surrounding this *prakaram* were built by Thirunagari Thiruvankataswami, whose figure is sculpted on the front *mantapam* ceiling.

Under a pillar is a Marwa chieftain or *poligar* god. The Marwa chieftain may have built the *mantapam* during the swami's period.

The fourth *jeer* erected the temple's outer and larger *gopuram*, which has his Deities on both sides. 🙏

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam



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Abhisheka (above) and Jhulan seva of Sri Sri Radha Krishnachandra (below)





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Land Route

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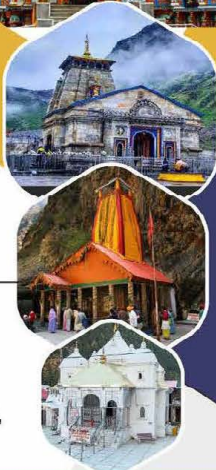
Travel Dates & Amount

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Sept. 15 - 25, 2023 Oct. 15 - 25, 2023 ₹40,000/- per person	Oct. 1 - 12, 2023 ₹66,000/- per person

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Chardham-Dodham Pilgrimage

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(4 Days/7 Days)

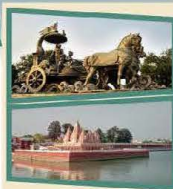
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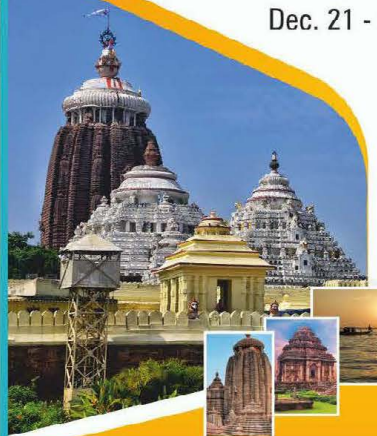
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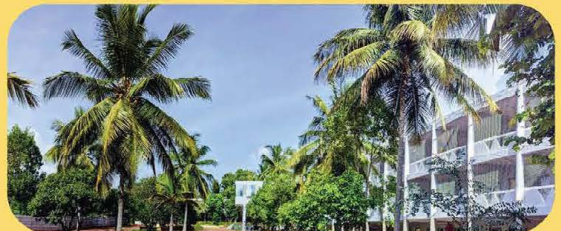


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