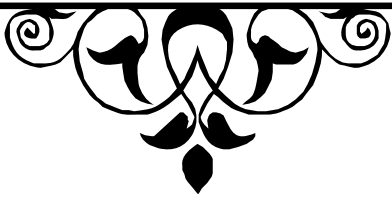


Positive Transformation



This course book belongs to _____

FOLK-Id _____

Foreword

No matter who we are, where we are, what we do or what we dream of – there is one common denominator in all our lives – we all seek happiness. Generally, all of us seek to become attractive, rich, well known, successful and so on. While our aspirations may seem many, our real aim is one – to become a happy and content person.

But still, we find many who haven't achieved this happiness despite having achieved their dreams and fulfilled their aspirations. If our happiness was the sole result of fulfilment of our aspirations, then it is only rational to expect that achievement of one would lead to attainment of the other. And yet, we see a reality that is glaringly different from our rational expectation. All this only points to the fact that we either have an incomplete, or worse, maybe even an incorrect understanding of how to create happiness in our lives.

Our plans for becoming happy are by and large based on our own experience, which is quite limited. In addition, we also fail to even recognize, what to speak of consider, *all* the factors that contribute to our happiness or distress. Just like we fail to get the expected result in a scientific experiment when we do not provide all the required inputs or when we do not follow the proper procedure, we fail to achieve the ultimate goal of our endeavours when we do not consider all the factors we ought to. In other words, we cannot expect to find true happiness when the plan making business to achieve it is being made on a doddering platform.

So what are these factors and how does one go about taking them into consideration? All of us have been in situations where things have just not been in our control despite our best efforts – accidents, broken or hurting relationships, natural calamities and so on. No matter how well we plan, there will be many factors beyond our control which will disrupt or destroy the perfect implementation of our plans. The result – we are left pained, distraught and unhappy.

Since life is all about such ups and downs, is there a way to remain happy and self content despite all this? Even after centuries of contemplation, man has not been able to answer this question by experience, speculation or intellectual probing. The only way to find an answer is to accept from a higher source that has complete knowledge. The Vedic scriptures are the only such source available to mankind. The *Vedas* can be compared to user manuals that come along with a gadget – they provide all the information to get the best experience in the world while we are in it and also reveal to us the presence of a higher realm where we can experience uninterrupted happiness. We can therefore hope to find the perfect blueprint for a happy life in the scriptures.

The great *ācāryas* or spiritual masters have made things easy for us by extracting the essence of the scriptures and presenting it to us in a concise, easily comprehensible form. Following the instructions of such authorities is bound to bring an undeniable positive transformation in our lives, by which we can find true happiness and contentment. This course intends to serve as an introduction to the teachings that can bring about a truly measurable, positive and permanent transformation in the lives of the participants.

Hare Kṛṣṇa

Introduction to FOLK

“India Young” scream the billboards wherever you look. These are exciting times for the youth as India makes rapid advancement in the field of technology and is recognized the world over for its vast and untapped resources, especially human resource. With 55% of the population in the age group of 18-25, the future seems bright. Or does it?

Along with this euphoria, there is also a darker side to this reality - one that finds today's youth battling with drug and alcoholic addictions, pre- and post-marital infidelities and mental depressions, and so on, all of which have risen to frightening proportions. How many examples have we come across in life wherein a person has come to the brink of life and has not had the desire to stop and jump off a cliff?

History repeats itself

What India is going through with its youth is not something new. This is exactly what America went through in the 1960s. The youth, frustrated with the lives led by their parents, rejected and rebelled against the set standards of the society and formed rules of their own, discarding and disowning their connections with their families and experimenting with drugs, alcohol and other dangerous addictions.

The youth, however, never got the answers to their questions and they went deeper and deeper into a blind, dark alley. It was there that they suddenly saw light in the form of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, a distinguished scholar and a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who had stepped on to the shores of America. Over the next decade, he went about transforming the lives of these very youngsters, who were on the precipice of sunset to a new world of joy, happiness and devotion. This he did by revealing the ancient and timeless knowledge of the highly civilized Vedic society, thereby also quashing theories that the *Vedas* were meant for people of a particular time, place and nationality.

Youth development

Based on the teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, we at ISKCON Bangalore have been making a humble attempt to systematically present this treasure house of knowledge to youth through the FOLK (Friends of Lord Kṛṣṇa) initiative since 1997. What began as a small group of interested youngsters has now grown into hundreds of youngsters adopting and practicing a pure lifestyle.

To guide and encourage them, we have regular classes, music, dance, and not to forget, *prasādam* - delicious food offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Our programs are highly interactive with sessions handled by experienced faculty who have graduated from premier institutes such as the IITs and IIMs; individuals who have dedicated their lives for over 20 years towards sharing the spiritual joy they have themselves experienced in their lives. A typical session consists of Vedic wisdom being imparted with its practical application in the current world scenario. Solutions are provided to difficult problems that youth have to encounter in their daily lives such as how to manage stress, improve memory and concentration, get rid of bad habits, excel in life, so on and so forth.

State-of-the-art facilities in terms of the classroom infrastructure, multimedia and teaching aids, etc. ensure that there is never a dull moment for the spirited youngsters and every opportunity is provided to them to showcase their talents and skills for the pleasure of the Lord. The youngsters are also taken through personality enrichment courses that explore their deeper selves and make them more reflective and introspective – a real need in current chaotic times.

There is a variety of opportunity where youth can practically involve themselves, such as taking up some services for the pleasure of the Lord. By this one can experience the truth not just theoretically but in reality too. More and more enthusiastic youngsters take up book distribution, as they are keen to share this wonderful knowledge with other people who are unaware of this treasure.

Sometimes people ask, “Aren’t these youngsters too young to take to spirituality? Shouldn’t they experience life fully before coming in touch with such peripherals?” To appreciate the reason behind this, we must first understand that nobody comes with a sealed guarantee that we might live up to a particular age. What is done in life earlier, especially if misguided becomes impossible to be undone later in life. Just as the ship cannot suddenly change course, one’s life too needs a lot of time and energy to change course. Our preaching programme has provided youngsters with an opportunity to literally transform their lives.

We invite you to come and experience for yourself this inexpressible joy that will last you a lifetime.

FOLK Team

Introduction to Śrīla Prabhupāda

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda was born in 1896 in Calcutta, India. He first met his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, in Calcutta in 1922. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, a prominent devotional scholar and the founder of sixty-four branches of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, liked this educated young man and convinced him to dedicate his life to teaching Vedic knowledge in the Western world. Śrīla Prabhupāda became his student, and eleven years later (1933) at Allahabad, he became his formally initiated disciple.

At their first meeting in 1922, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura requested Śrīla Prabhupāda to broadcast Vedic knowledge in the English language. In the years that followed, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote a commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* and in 1944, without assistance, started an English fortnightly magazine.

Recognizing Śrīla Prabhupāda's philosophical learning and devotion, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Society honoured him in 1947 with the title 'Bhaktivedanta'. In 1950, at the age of fifty-four, Śrīla Prabhupāda retired from married life, and four years later he adopted the *vānaprastha* (retired) order to devote more time to his studies and writing. Śrīla Prabhupāda travelled to the holy city of Vṛndāvana, where he lived in very humble circumstances in the historic medieval temple of Rādhā-Dāmodara. There he engaged for several years in deep study and writing. He accepted the renounced order of life (*sannyāsa*) in 1959. At Radha-Damodara, Śrīla Prabhupāda began work on his life's masterpiece: a multivolume translation and commentary on the 18,000-verse *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*). He also wrote *Easy Journey to Other Planets*.

After publishing three volumes of *Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Prabhupāda came to the United States in 1965 to fulfil the mission of his spiritual master. In the next twelve years, His Divine Grace wrote over sixty volumes of authoritative translations, commentaries and summary studies of the philosophical and religious classics of India.

In 1965, when he first arrived by freighter in New York City, Śrīla Prabhupāda was practically penniless. It was after almost a year of great difficulty that he established the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (ISKCON) in July of 1966. Under his careful guidance, the Society grew within a decade to a worldwide confederation of almost one hundred *āśrams*, schools, temples, institutes and farm communities.

In 1968, Śrīla Prabhupāda created New Vṛndāvana, an experimental Vedic community in the hills of West Virginia. Inspired by the success of New Vṛndāvana, then a thriving farm community of more than one thousand acres, his students founded several similar communities in the United States and abroad.

In 1972, His Divine Grace introduced the Vedic system of primary and secondary education in the West by founding the *Gurukula* school in Dallas, Texas. The school began with three children in 1972, and by the beginning of 1975 the enrolment had grown to one hundred fifty.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also inspired the construction of a large international center at Śrīdhām Māyāpur in West Bengal, India, which is also the site for a planned Institute of Vedic Studies. A similar project is the magnificent Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Temple and International Guest House in Vṛndāvana, India. These are centres where everyone can live to gain firsthand experience of Vedic culture.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's most significant contribution, however, is his books. Highly respected by the academic community for their authoritativeness, depth and clarity, they are used as standard textbooks in numerous college courses. His writings have been translated into many languages. The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT) was established in 1972 exclusively to publish the works of His Divine Grace. It has since become the world's largest publisher of books in the field of Indian religion and philosophy.

In the last ten years of his life, in spite of his advanced age, Śrīla Prabhupāda circled the globe twelve times on lecture tours that took him to six continents. In spite of such a vigorous schedule, Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to write prolifically. His writings constitute a veritable library of Vedic philosophy, religion, literature and culture.

Getting the best out of the course

This course attempts to systematically introduce the participant to spirituality in an authorized and scientific way. To this end, the course has been divided into three broad streams:

- Main Course Work
- Vaiṣṇava Etiquette
- Video Sessions

To get the best out of the course, it is recommended that the participant adopt the following approach:

Main Course Work

This section is designed to build a strong spiritual foundation for the participant. It is replete with activities, videos, etc. to convey spiritual ideas systematically. There is ample scope for the participant to learn the basics of the philosophy in an interactive way and build a strong foundation for his spiritual life.

Vaiṣṇava Etiquette

Lessons on Vaiṣṇava etiquette are intended to inculcate Vaiṣṇava behaviour in the participants. This section contains four lessons on Vaiṣṇava etiquette that gives the basics of Vaiṣṇava behaviour for the novice. The participants are intended to not just learn the behaviour, but also understand the essence behind the same.

Video Sessions

The video sessions attempt to teach while entertaining. Interesting videos that introduce ISKCON and its founder, Śrīla Prabhupāda, encourage the participants to learn more about what it means to get involved with us.

In addition, there are also three quiz sessions that are intended to reinforce the philosophical ideas taught during each session. The participants are expected to answer these questions based on which they will be accessed.

It has been our attempt to make the course interesting, interactive and fun throughout. The onus now lies on the participants to get the most out of it by their active involvement.

FOLK Team

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SECTION ONE
MAIN COURSE WORK



Śrīla Prabhupāda Uvāca



In the absolute world there is no distinction
as me, or he, and I. Kṛṣṇa and
His representative is the same. Just like
Kṛṣṇa can be present simultaneously
in millions of places. Similarly, the
Spiritual Master also can be present wherever
the disciple wants. A Spiritual Master is the
principle, not the body. Just like a
television can be seen in thousands
of places by the principle of relay monitoring.
(Letter to Malati, Allston, 28 May, 1968)



CHAPTER ONE

Definition of God

<p><i>aiśvaryasya samagrasya vīryasya yaśasaḥ śrīyaḥ jñāna-vairāgyayaś caiva śaṅṅām bhaga itīṅganā</i></p> <p>“One who possesses all the riches, strength, wisdom, fame and beauty and yet is all renunciate is called <i>bhagavān</i> or the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (<i>Viṣṇu Purāṇa</i> 6.5.47)</p>	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>The Vedic scriptures define God in terms not found in any other religious text in the world – as one who is replete in six opulences – riches, strength, wisdom, fame, beauty and renunciation.</p>
	<p><u>A Description of Kṛṣṇa’s Opulences</u></p> <p>Kṛṣṇa’s unlimited opulences are described in detail.</p>
	<p><u>Different Forms of Godhead</u></p> <p>Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, expands into millions of forms, each as potent as Himself. These forms are called incarnations and descend periodically to the material world.</p>
	<p><u>False Incarnations of God</u></p> <p>Apart from the scheduled incarnations mentioned in the scriptures, nobody should be accepted as God.</p>

1. Introduction

The idea of a higher controlling power has intrigued mankind from time immemorial. Conceptions of a higher force that is understood to have sovereignty over humans can be found in every major civilization in history. While the most primitive civilizations understood this power to be that of nature and worshipped it in one form or another, the more developed ones attributed it to a higher being with absolute flawless superiority – God.

The subject of who God is, what His attributes and qualities are and how He exercises His authority over His creation has fascinated thinkers, religionists, philosophers and even scientists throughout the ages. It has also generated volumes of philosophical and theological literature. Unfortunately though, most such writings have fallen short of describing God completely and accurately as they are usually based on the imperfect, illusionary sensual experiences in the world and speculative power of the frail human intelligence.

To understand God as He is, we have to turn to the Vedic literature, which gives an accurate and authorized description of God. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Parāśara Muni, father of Vyāsadeva, defines God as follows:

*aiśvaryasya samagrasya vīryasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ
jñāna-vairāgyayaś caiva ṣaṇṇām bhaga itīṅganā*

“One who possesses all the riches, strength, wisdom, fame and beauty and yet is all renunciate is called *bhagavān* or the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”
(*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 6.5.47)

In other words, He who is the richest, strongest, wisest, most famous, most beautiful and the most renounced of all simultaneously can be called God. The next question would naturally be: Who is this person who fits the above description? The scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be that Supreme Lord, replete with the above described opulences. This fact has also been confirmed by all major Vedic authorities:

- The greatest Vedic scholar, Śrīla Vyāsadeva says, “All the lists of the incarnations of Godhead submitted herewith* are either plenary expansions or parts of the plenary expansions of the Supreme Godhead, but Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.28)
* in the *Bhāgavatam*
- Lord Brahma, the foremost Vedic authority, states, “Kṛṣṇa who is known as Govinda is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternal blissful spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin and He is the prime cause of all causes.” (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.1)

- After hearing the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Arjuna said to Kṛṣṇa, “You are the Supreme Brahman, the ultimate, the supreme abode and purifier, the Absolute Truth and the eternal divine person. You are the primal God, transcendental and original, and You are the unborn and all-pervading beauty. All the great sages such as Narada, Asita, Devala, and Vyasa proclaim this of You, and now You Yourself are declaring it to me.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 10.12)

Further, Kṛṣṇa Himself declares in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, “There is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.7)

Kṛṣṇa, therefore, is *Bhagavān*, the ultimate form of the Supreme Lord.

2. A Description of Kṛṣṇa’s Opulences

Let us now try to understand Kṛṣṇa’s opulences in a little more detail. Take a moment and list down the people you admire. Also write down what you admire about them. You’ll find that all these people are well endowed with one or more of the following: wealth, valour, fame, beauty, knowledge or renunciation. And with a little more thought, you’ll realize that these people have made it to your list of favourites because of their ability to acquire these opulences.

In other words, every one of us is attracted to these six opulences. In the material world, every one of us possesses traces of these opulences, and the one who possesses them to a greater degree is looked upon as an achiever by people. But it is not possible to find anybody who possesses all these opulences simultaneously, that too to an unlimited degree. It is, however, possible to find this in Kṛṣṇa – which is the reason He is hailed to be the Supreme Lord by all the scriptures.

The following sections describe each of Kṛṣṇa’s opulences in detail.

2.1. Kṛṣṇa’s Immeasurable Wealth

In the material world, wealth is the most sought after opulence, perhaps because it capacitates the possessor to acquire other opulences such as power, fame and beauty. And for this reason, rich people are amongst the most celebrated in society.

But Kṛṣṇa’s wealth is so ample that even the cumulative wealth of all the rich men in the world is inadequate to compete against even a fraction of His wealth. Actually, the wealth of all these people also really belongs to Kṛṣṇa – Kṛṣṇa is the proprietor, controller and enjoyer of the entire universe, and therefore everything in it actually belongs to Him. And unlike the rich in the material world who have to work hard to maintain their fortune, Kṛṣṇa does not have to worry about working to maintain His wealth – He can create unlimited wealth simply by desiring to do so. Also, while in the material world, no one can become wealthy without being favoured by the Goddess of Fortune – but Kṛṣṇa does not have to worry about seeking Her favour – the *Brahma-saṁhitā* states that not one, but millions of Goddesses of Fortune reverentially serve Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world – such is the unlimited opulence He possesses.

Kṛṣṇa on His Wealth

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa describes His wealth thus:

aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate

“I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me.”
(*Bhagavad-gītā* 10.8)

Kṛṣṇa Displays His Wealth

When He was present on this planet, Kṛṣṇa displayed glimpses of His unlimited wealth on numerous occasions. For instance, the city of Dwārakā has been described as follows in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

“In the construction of that city could be seen the full scientific knowledge and architectural skill of Viśvakarmā. There were wide avenues, commercial roads and courtyards laid out on ample plots of land; there were splendid parks, and also gardens stocked with trees and creepers from the heavenly planets. The gateway towers were topped with golden turrets touching the sky, and their upper levels were fashioned of crystal quartz. The gold-covered houses were adorned in front with golden pots and on top with jeweled roofs, and their floors were inlaid with precious emeralds. Beside the houses stood treasury buildings, warehouses, and stables for fine horses, all built of silver and brass. Each residence had a watchtower, and also a temple for its household deity. Filled with citizens of all four social orders, the city was especially beautified by the palaces of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the Yadus.

There were as many as 900,000 great palaces built of first-class marble, with gates and doors made of silver. The pillars of the houses and palaces were bedecked with jewels such as touchstone, sapphire and emerald, and the floors gave off a beautiful luster. The pillars were made of coral and the ceilings were bedecked with jewels. The walls as well as the arches between the pillars glowed from the decorations of different kinds of sapphires. Throughout the palace were many canopies made by Viśvakarmā that were decorated with strings of pearls. The chairs and other furniture were made of ivory and bedecked with gold and diamonds, and jeweled lamps dissipated the darkness within the palace.”

(*Description from KṚṢṆA, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*)

No one, not even the richest man in the world, can claim to possess such opulence. Kṛṣṇa therefore is the master of all wealth.

2.2. Kṛṣṇa’s Indefatigable Strength

Man’s instinctive desire for dominance through displays of physical prowess have marred the pages of history with innumerable (and often unnecessary) acts of valour. The immense popularity of fictional superheroes capable of extraordinary physical feats also stand testimony to man’s insatiable hunger for physical strength.

Kṛṣṇa’s strength, however, is far superior to that of any superhero the tiny human brain can conceive of. The feats Kṛṣṇa performed when He was present on this planet prove beyond doubt that He is the strongest person to have ever walked the earth. And more astonishing than these feats themselves is the fact that Kṛṣṇa performed all these actions with an effortless, almost sporting ease – something which no human is capable of. Kṛṣṇa, therefore, is the strongest of all.

Kṛṣṇa on His Strength

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa declares that He is the source of all strength:

.... *sattvaṁ sattvavatām aham*

“...I am the strength of the strong.”

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 10.36)

Kṛṣṇa Displays His Strength

When He was present on earth, Kṛṣṇa displayed His immense strength on innumerable occasions. Some prominent pastimes include:

- Killing hordes of demons (like Pūtānā, Tṛṇāvarta, Bakāsura, Aghāsura, Keśi, etc.) in His childhood.
- Performing acts of astonishing strength such as felling the *Yamalārjuna* trees, lifting the Govardhana Hill, etc. when He was a little boy.
- Defeating the most prominent kings of His time (Kāṁsa, Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla, etc.).

2.3. Kṛṣṇa’s Eternal Fame

The charm of fame is so great that people sometimes risk everything they have to obtain it. And yet, such fame in the material world is fleeting – nobody has been successful in holding on to his fame for more than a few decades, or a few centuries at best.

The case of Kṛṣṇa, however, is different. Being the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa is eternally famous all over the universe due to His unparalleled qualities and activities. Kṛṣṇa is so revered even amongst the great demigods that they came to offer Him prayers when He was in the womb of Devakī. And even later, when He was unfolding His manifest pastimes, great devotees and demigods from all over the universe regularly came to offer their prayers to Him. And even today, Kṛṣṇa continues to be worshipped as the Supreme Lord all over the universe.

Kṛṣṇa on His Fame

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa describes Himself to be the most famous person in creation:

*yasmāt kṣaram atīto ’ham akṣarād api cottamaḥ
ato ’smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ*

“Because I am transcendental, beyond both the fallible and the infallible, and because I am the greatest, I am celebrated both in the world and in the *Vedas* as that Supreme Person.”

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 15.18)

Kṛṣṇa Displays His Fame

When He was present on this planet, Kṛṣṇa was famous all over the world. Everyone knew Him to be the performer of extraordinary feats and the speaker of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He was also famous all over the universe as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As mentioned, famous demigods and devotees constantly visited Kṛṣṇa and glorified His position when He was present on the planet. Great demigods like Brahma, Śiva, Indra, Varuṇa, etc. glorified Kṛṣṇa with choice poetry and sought His mercy. Pure devotees like Nārada, the Pāṇḍavas, Bhīṣmadeva, etc. all praised Him and described His unlimited glories.

And Kṛṣṇa’s fame continues to expand even today, five thousand years after His disappearance. Today, more than at any other time in modern history, people are becoming acquainted with Him through the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. And more people than ever are admiring and following Him. Kṛṣṇa, therefore, is the most famous personality the world has known.

2.4. Kṛṣṇa's Stunning Beauty

We live in a world enamoured by beauty. Aesthetic attraction to the opposite sex is one of the most prominent features of modern civilization. The hard truth, however, is that in the material world, beauty is transient – even the most charming looks give way to shriveled skin, graying hair and an expanding waistline with time.

Unlike our beauty, however, Kṛṣṇa's beauty is not only astounding, it is also eternal. Kṛṣṇa's face is so attractive that He not only attracts human beings but also the birds, beasts, plants, rivers – in short, the entire creation – by His beauty. Kṛṣṇa's beauty is said to defeat the beauty of a million Cupids. Kṛṣṇa also remains eternally youthful. When He was present on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, Kṛṣṇa looked no more than twenty two, although He was a hundred and twenty five years old. Such are the attributes of His stunning beauty.

Kṛṣṇa on His Beauty

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa says that He is the source of all beauty in the world:

*yad yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā
tat tad evāvagaccha tvaṁ mama tejo-'mśa-sambhavam*

“Know that all beautiful, glorious, and mighty creations spring from but a spark of My splendor.”
(*Bhagavad-gītā* 10.41)

Kṛṣṇa Displays His Beauty

When He was present on this planet, Kṛṣṇa attracted everyone by His beauty. Great sages and demigods have described Kṛṣṇa's exquisite features. Kṛṣṇa possesses special features that distinguish Him from all other living beings. His bodily hue is that of a blackish rain cloud. He has a beautiful face with eyes like blooming lotus petals, lips like a *bimba* fruit, a prominent nose, teeth like jasmine buds rendered rosy by the splendor of his lips, arched eyebrows and a smile like a blossoming jasmine flower. He is adorned with a peacock feather on His head and a flute in His hands. He wears a garland of wild flowers around His neck and is dressed in dazzling yellow coloured garments. He has a charming threefold bending form and the toenails on His beautiful lotus feet resemble dazzling rubies. By His transcendental beauty, He brings joy to everyone who beholds Him.

2.5. Kṛṣṇa's Perfect Knowledge

An old saying goes, ‘Knowledge is power’. The advancement of human civilization shows the transforming power of knowledge. Through knowledge, man has been able to achieve many things that were previously considered impossible. But despite all the advancement, man's knowledge about the world around him remains paltry and imperfect and is unable to completely satisfy his intellectual thirst.

Kṛṣṇa's knowledge, however, is complete and perfect. And it is fully capable of satisfying mankind's intellectual appetite. This is because Kṛṣṇa is the original source of all knowledge and is the perfect knower of everything. He confirms that He is the compiler of the *Vedānta* and the original knower of the *Vedas*, which is considered to be a treatise that perfectly explains all branches of knowledge. He also says that He knows everything in the past, present and future and the minds of all the living entities – a claim no mortal can make. Kṛṣṇa's erudition, therefore, is unmatched.

Kṛṣṇa on His Knowledge

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa describes the depth of His knowledge in the following verses:

*...mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanam ca
vedaś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo vedānta-kṛd veda-vid eva cāham*

"...from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. By all the *Vedas*, I am to be known; indeed, I am the compiler of *Vedānta*, and I am the knower of the *Vedas*."
(*Bhagavad-gītā* 15.15)

*vedāham samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna
bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni mām tu veda na kaścana*

"O Arjuna, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, I know everything that has happened in the past, all that is happening in the present, and all things that are yet to come. I also know all living entities; but Me no one knows."
(*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.26)

Kṛṣṇa Displays His Knowledge

When He was present on the planet, Kṛṣṇa displayed His perfect knowledge by His perfect practice of Vedic principles. He also spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā* to Arjuna and the *catuḥ-śloki Bhāgavatam* to His cousin Uddhava, confirming His expert understanding of the essence of the *Vedas*. His sublime words are considered to be the guiding force for humanity for all time. He is therefore the most knowledgeable person of all time.

2.6. Kṛṣṇa's Matchless Renunciation

Renunciation is the hardest and least commonly practiced of virtues in the world today. To the common man, renunciation entails becoming detached from everything one possesses. And the more one possesses, the harder it is to give up attachment for them. For this reason, even a partial display of renunciation is looked upon with veneration by people in general. And those who have given up all attachment are naturally held in high esteem in society.

By the same standard, Kṛṣṇa is the most renounced person the world has known. Despite being the richest, strongest, smartest, most beautiful and most famous person in creation, Kṛṣṇa is completely unattached to His own opulences. And unlike the typical renunciant who struggles hard with material allurements before overcoming them, Kṛṣṇa's renunciation is completely natural and effortless. He is therefore the greatest of all renunciants.

Kṛṣṇa on His Renunciation

Kṛṣṇa confirms His non-attachment to His creation in the *Bhagavad-gītā* as follows:

*na ca mām tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanañjaya
udāsīna-vad āsīnam asaktam teṣu karmasu*

“O Dhanañjaya, all this work cannot bind Me. I am ever detached, seated as though neutral.”
(*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.9)

Kṛṣṇa Displays His Renunciation

When He was present on earth, the Lord displayed His renunciation in two principal pastimes – when He left the battlefield during His fight with Jarāsandha and when He disappeared from the scene during the *rāsa* dance with the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana. He is also stated to have remained completely unattached to His sixteen thousand one hundred and eight queens in Dwārakā. Such a great degree of renunciation is inconceivable for the common man. Kṛṣṇa, therefore, is the greatest of all renunciants.

3. Different Forms of Godhead

Kṛṣṇa is commonly thought to be one of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu. But from the Vedic literature, we learn that it is *Viṣṇu* who is a plenary expansion of Kṛṣṇa and not vice-versa. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states:

ete cāmśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam

“All of the above-mentioned incarnations are either plenary portions or portions of the plenary portions of the Lord, but Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead.”
(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.28)

In other words, all the forms of the Lord, be they Lord Viṣṇu, Lord Rāma, Lord Narasimha, etc. are plenary expansions of Kṛṣṇa. This means that although all forms of the Lord are full in six opulences, Kṛṣṇa is the Original Personality of Godhead. When Kṛṣṇa incarnates, all the features of other incarnations are already present within Him.

To understand this better, we can take the example of a candle from which many other similar candles are lit. Although each candle is as powerful as the original candle, the original is still the original. Similarly, from Kṛṣṇa millions of Viṣṇu forms expand, and each Viṣṇu form is as good as Kṛṣṇa, but Kṛṣṇa remains the original.

4. False Avatāras of God

Another common question that arises in the mind of a neophyte is related to the claims made by men posing themselves to be God. The fact that most such 'Gods' have their own special appeal adds to the confusion – most have a following of their own, some can even display superhuman feats to prove their claim to Godhood. Some others go a step further and promise to turn any willing soul into God for a fee. Do the scriptures allow one to put his faith in such 'Gods'?

Certainly not. The *Bhāgavatam* clearly states that no one should be accepted as God unless he meets all the criteria to justify such a claim. Such criteria are clearly mentioned in the *Bhāgavatam*:

- A true incarnation of God can display fully the above mentioned six opulences.
- An incarnation can display the universal form of God, which Kṛṣṇa showed Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra.
- The name, place and time of appearance, names of the father and mother and the extraordinary pastimes to be performed by an incarnation are clearly mentioned in the *śāstras*.
- The identity of an incarnation is confirmed by bona fide *sādhus* and *guru*.

Anyone else claiming to be God should be accepted as nothing more than an impostor. While such conmen can fool the gullible masses with some tricks and word jugglery, one in knowledge of the transcendental science does not get carried away by them.

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CHAPTER TWO

What is Kṛṣṇa Consciousness?

<p style="text-align: center;">“God is great, I am His part and parcel; it is my duty to love Him. When you develop this consciousness, it is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Śrīla Prabhupāda in a lecture at The Family Dog Auditorium, 7th July, 1969, San Francisco)</i></p>	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>The term Kṛṣṇa consciousness refers to awareness of the position of the Supreme Lord and our relationship with Him.</p>
	<p><u>The Principles of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness</u></p> <p>The principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness deal with the nature of the living entity, his relationship with the Supreme Lord, his cause of suffering in the world and the way to find a permanent solution to the suffering.</p>
	<p><u>The Practice of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness</u></p> <p>The practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness involves moulding our lives in a way that helps us always remember Kṛṣṇa. This can be achieved by following the rules and regulations given by a bona fide spiritual master.</p>
	<p><u>Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: The Real Peace Formula</u></p> <p>Kṛṣṇa consciousness has the potency to solve all the world’s problems and usher in an era of peace and prosperity.</p>

1. Introduction

Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, derived from the Sanskrit word *kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā*, was the term used by Śrīla Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (ISKCON), to describe the awareness of our relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda taught that in reality, we are all eternal servitors of Kṛṣṇa, whose real business is to serve Him in love and devotion. We have, unfortunately, forgotten this truth about ourselves and are currently serving other causes. Re-enlightenment about our relationship with the Lord and reinstatement to our original position in His service constitutes the subject matter of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

One may naturally wonder about the need for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in our lives. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the panacea humanity is searching for. It has the potency to solve all the world's problems, both at an individual and collective level. It is also capable of bringing much sought after peace and happiness. Prabhupāda simplified the teachings of this wonderful philosophy and presented it to us in a simple, easy-to-follow manner. This chapter attempts to introduce the reader to these teachings.

The History of the Hare Kṛṣṇas

Popularly called the Hare Kṛṣṇas, the members of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (ISKCON) are the most well known proponents of the Kṛṣṇa conscious movement. Although Kṛṣṇa consciousness became a worldwide phenomenon fairly recently, it has existed for thousands of years – the same teachings were imparted to Lord Brahma at the time of creation of the universe, Vivasvān a hundred and twenty million years ago and Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

The recent history of the Kṛṣṇa conscious movement, however, dates back to around 500 years, when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, an incarnation of the Supreme Lord, re-popularized its teachings in India. At that time, He predicted that these teachings would one day reach every town and village in the world.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, an *ācārya* descending from Lord Caitanya, began to work towards fulfilling this prophecy of the Lord. He was the first *ācārya* to propagate the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the English-speaking world. His son, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, continued his work. In 1918, he established the Gauḍīya Math Institute for teaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which subsequently expanded into sixty-four centers within India. He even sent some of his disciples to London to preach.

Finally, in 1965, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swamī Prabhupāda, a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, went to the United States to continue the work of his spiritual master. In 1966, he founded the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (ISKCON) in New York City. Within the next twelve years, ISKCON grew into a confederation of hundreds of temples, communities, farms and schools worldwide. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote more than 90 volumes of books to explain the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda continue to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness across the globe today, taking the great message of Lord Caitanya to every town and village, and bringing much needed peace and stability to thousands around the world.

2. The Principles of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

The principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness deal with the nature of the living entity, his relationship with the Supreme Lord, his cause of suffering in the world and the way to find a permanent solution to the suffering.

- **Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and we are His eternal servants.**
Central to the Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy is the position of the Lord and the living entities (or *jīvas*) as master and servant. In the *Gītā*, the Lord reveals His spiritual nature and explains that He is the proprietor of all there is, the enjoyer of everything and the real friend of all living entities. The *jīvas*, like the Lord, are spiritual entities who share a relationship of confidential loving servitude with the Lord. To nurture this relationship is the only duty of the *jīvas*.
- **The root cause of all suffering is the forgetfulness of our relationship with the Lord.**
The living entity, by constitution, seeks pleasure and finds it only by acting to please the Lord. In his pure state, when he is conscious of this, he automatically acts to please the Lord and becomes happy in the process. But in a conditioned state, when he forgets this, he begins to erroneously believe that he is capable of independently finding happiness outside of the Lord's pleasure. He therefore begins to act of his own accord, discordant with the Lord's will. As a result, he becomes responsible for his own actions and his own happiness and distress. He thus moves from one condition of life to another and from one form of life to another, seeking but never finding the peace and joy that he originally enjoyed. Forgetfulness of the Lord, therefore, is the cause for a living entity's suffering.
- **The purpose of human life is to revive our loving relationship with the Supreme Lord.**
Human life is an opportunity for a living entity suffering in this world to find a permanent solution to his problems. In the human form of life, the living entity can, by virtue of his developed consciousness and access to Vedic knowledge, understand his real position and his forgotten relationship with the Lord. The scriptures declare that the purpose of human life is to understand this and reinstate ourselves in the loving service of the Lord.
- **All our activities should be done for the pleasure of the Lord.**
As stated, the conditioned soul tends to act for his own pleasure. But after having understood the folly of such actions, he should again start acting for the Lord's pleasure. The activities which help a conditioned soul do this constitute spiritual activities. The scriptures recommend one to start the process through *yajñā* (performing sacrifices for the Lord's pleasure), which helps one purify his desires for sense gratification and progressively dovetail himself in the Lord's service. In the age of Kali, *saṅkīrtana yajñā* is deemed to be the most potent form of *yajñā*.
- **The easiest way to revive our relationship with the Lord is by chanting His holy name under the instructions of a bona fide guru.**
The easiest process of *yajñā* in this age is to chant the holy name of the Lord. Such chanting is effective when done under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. Simply by chanting and following the regulative principles enunciated by the spiritual master, one can achieve complete spiritual success.

3. The Practice of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

In essence, the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness involves moulding our lives in a way that helps us always remember Kṛṣṇa. One should follow the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. The various aspects of the simple and highly potent program given by Śrīla Prabhupāda to incorporate Kṛṣṇa conscious principles in our daily lives are listed below.

- **Chanting the holy name of the Lord**

Chanting is the most important aspect of practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Being of an absolute spiritual nature, the holy name of the Lord is non-different from His personal Self. Chanting, therefore, helps us directly connect to the Lord. One can perceive the direct presence of the Lord in His holy name as he advances spiritually. Śrīla Prabhupāda has recommended that one should chant at least sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* everyday.

- **Worshipping the Lord in His Deity form**

The Deity of the Lord in the temple is an authorized spiritual form, non-different from His personal Self. Worshipping the Deity is especially recommended for beginners, since it is the easiest way to appreciate the Lord's presence. Through the Deity, the Lord also gives an opportunity to the devotee to render personal service to Him. Deity worship is therefore a powerful aspect of devotional service.

- **Hearing about the Lord from authoritative sources**

Hearing about the Lord from authoritative sources helps us easily revive our dormant love for Him. The more we hear, the more we begin to appreciate the Lord's position and greatness. By continuous hearing, this appreciation at first matures into attachment for the Lord, and eventually into love and surrender to Him. Hearing about the Lord, therefore, is a potent devotional activity.

- **Following the regulative principles of *sādhana-bhakti***

By following the principles of *sādhana-bhakti* (practical devotional service), such as the four regulative principles, *maṅgala-ārati*, *japa*, etc., one quickly progresses in spiritual life. *Sādhana-bhakti* helps cultivate pure habits and spiritual regulation which are essential for spiritual life. It also helps stop sinful activities and increase one's commitment to spiritual life.

- **Leading a simple, natural way of life**

By leading a simple, natural way of life, one reduces one's material needs, rids himself of hankering, greed and lust. Śrīla Prabhupāda recommended that it is best to live the agrarian way, which is sufficient to fulfil our basic needs and saves time for spiritual development. He also recommended that since this may mostly not be possible, one should at least lead a simple life, focusing on spiritual development and regulating eating, sleeping and recreation and work.

- **Working for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure**

The purpose of all spiritual activities is to ultimately learn how to work for the Lord's pleasure. All the above mentioned practices are intended to bring about the purification necessary to develop a natural inclination to work for the Lord's pleasure. In a conditioned state, however, an individual may please the Lord by following the above mentioned principles and by working directly for His mission or by offering the result of his work to Him.

4. Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: The Real Peace Formula

As already explained, Kṛṣṇa Consciousness is neither a different, simplified way of life nor merely an abstract philosophy of no practical value. It is a powerful panacea that has the potency to solve all the world's problems and usher in lasting peace and happiness. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Lord confirms this when He declares that knowledge about Him is the only way to attain real peace:

*bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasāṁ sarva-loka-maheśvaram
suhṛdaṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ jñātvā māṁ śāntim ṛcchati*

"The sages, knowing Me as the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attain peace from the pangs of material miseries."

(Bhagavad-gītā 5.29)

In other words, the formula for peace is to be conscious that Kṛṣṇa is the

- real proprietor of everything
- real enjoyer of everything
- real friend of all living entities

Although it may seem incredible that one can solve all problems at an individual and collective level simply by understanding this, kingdoms that have moulded themselves on this understanding have long flourished peacefully. Vedic kingdoms headed by saintly kings such as Yudhiṣṭhira, Parikṣit and Pṛthu are classic examples.

In the next part of the session, we will try to understand how nearly perfect kingdoms were established based on Kṛṣṇa conscious principles and how Kṛṣṇa consciousness brought peace to society. After that, your facilitator will help you understand how the same principles can make a difference to our lives and modern society.

Understanding the Kṛṣṇa Conscious Vedic Scenario

Kṛṣṇa conscious understanding that was prevalent	How and why is this true?	How did Vedic proponents act with this understanding?	What results did they reap?
Kṛṣṇa is the supreme proprietor	<p>Kṛṣṇa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is the creator of the spiritual and material worlds • is the knower of everything in creation • is also the controller of the entire creation • is the creator of the living entities 		
Kṛṣṇa is the supreme enjoyer	<p>Kṛṣṇa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being the creator of everything, is the <i>only</i> authorized enjoyer of everything • has an unlimited capacity to enjoy • has also created the living entities solely for His enjoyment 		
Kṛṣṇa is the supreme friend	<p>Kṛṣṇa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knows all our hearts as He is present as the Supersoul within us • is present with us all the time, never leaving us alone even for a moment • supplies all our needs in the material world • fulfils all our desires • speaks the <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> and sends His representatives to remind us of His intimate relationship with us 		

Analyzing the non-Kṛṣṇa Conscious Modern Scenario

Kṛṣṇa conscious understanding that is absent	Understanding that has replaced it	How it has affected the society at large	How it has affected individuals
Kṛṣṇa is the supreme proprietor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world has come into existence without a proprietor. • Human beings, being independent in their actions and free to do as they choose, have a right to exploit nature's resources for their benefit. • There is nothing wrong with the lording tendency because it is naturally present in everyone, but it is the fittest who survive. 		
Kṛṣṇa is the supreme enjoyer	The world is created for the enjoyment of human beings.		
Kṛṣṇa is the supreme friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our own endeavour or those of our loved ones can save us from danger. If the inevitable happens, we should understand that nature takes its own course and deal with it maturely. • Our needs are being supplied by nature, which came into existence on its own and has nothing to do with God. 		

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CHAPTER THREE

Vedic Literatures

<p>The word ‘Vedic’ is derived from the Sanskrit word <i>Veda</i>, literally meaning ‘knowledge’.</p> <p>The word <i>Veda</i> can also be stated to mean ‘knowledge that leads one to the Lord’.</p> <p>Thus the Vedic literatures are primarily made just to revive the forgotten consciousness of the conditioned souls.</p> <p>(<i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> 2.5.15, Purport)</p>	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>The term ‘Vedic Literatures’ refers to the literature of the great Vedic civilization and are the oldest texts known to mankind.</p>
	<p><u>Divisions of Vedic Literatures</u></p> <p>Vedic literatures consist of a systematic collection of works that include the <i>Vedas</i>, <i>Upaniṣads</i>, <i>Itihāsas</i>, <i>Vedānta-sūtras</i>, <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> and <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i>.</p>
	<p><u>Acquiring Vedic Knowledge</u></p> <p>Vedic knowledge is acquired by hearing attentively from bona fide authorities.</p>
	<p><u>The Essence of All Vedic Literatures</u></p> <p>Because they contain knowledge about the Lord and His pure devotees, knowledge in the <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> and <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> is considered to be the essence of all Vedic knowledge.</p>

1. Introduction

The term ‘Vedic Literatures’ refers to the literature of the Vedic civilization and are the oldest texts known to mankind. These literatures are considered to contain perfect and complete knowledge related to all known branches of human understanding. In addition to material scientific knowledge, the Vedic literatures also contain spiritual knowledge, which sets them apart from all other known treatises of their kind.

Broadly speaking, Vedic literatures comprise of the 4 *Vedas*, 108 *Upaniṣads*, *Itihāsas* (which include the 18 *Purāṇas*, 18 *Upa-purāṇas*, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*) and 560 aphorisms of the *Vedānta-sūtras*. The essence of this vast body of literature, however, has been condensed in two scriptures – the *Bhagavad-gītā* (which is part of the *Mahābhārata*) and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In the present Kali-yuga, therefore, one may attain perfection in human life simply by realizing the knowledge contained in these two books under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master.

This chapter gives an overview of the Vedic literatures and attempts to help the reader understand the proper process of receiving Vedic knowledge.

2. Divisions of Vedic Literatures

As mentioned, Vedic literatures consist of the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Itihāsas*, *Vedānta-sūtras*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Although this vast body of literature appears to be an unsystematic collection of rituals and mythological tales to the untrained eye, a careful study reveals just the opposite. Vedic literature, in actuality, is a systematic collection of knowledge that accommodates and helps streamline the uncontrolled desires of everyone and slowly raises them to a platform where they can execute the ultimate goal of life.

Crudely, the systematic arrangement of Vedic knowledge can be compared to the organized knowledge imparted through the educational system, where students are progressively taught more complicated concepts as they move from a lower to a higher grade. Similarly, in the Vedic literatures, there are numerous prescriptions for enjoyment for a soul who is materially inclined (i.e. in the lower state of consciousness), and there is also knowledge about the ultimate goal of life for souls who desire spiritual knowledge (those who have progressed to a higher state of consciousness).

The portions of the *Vedas* that deal with ways for material enjoyment encourage the practice of *dharma* (prescribed religious duties) to attain *artha* (the means to enjoy) for the purpose of *kāma* (material enjoyment entailing the fulfillment of sense demands). For the soul who is through with such material enjoyment, Vedic literatures also give information about attaining liberation (*mukti*). And for the pure transcendentalists, who are above the desire for even liberation, there is information about pure devotional service to the Supreme Lord (*bhakti*).

The following paragraphs briefly describe the contents of the principal Vedic literatures.

- **The Vedas**

Originally split from a single *Veda*, there are four *Vedas* – *Ṛg*, *Yajur*, *Sāma* and *Atharva*. The *Ṛg Veda* contains procedures for demigod worship, *Yajur Veda* describes how to perform the rituals, *Sāma Veda* contains many *mantras* along with the rules to chant them to obtain proper results and *Atharva Veda* contains details of different kinds of worship and invocations in addition to knowledge about different branches of material knowledge. The purpose of these teachings is to make human beings realize that they are under the control of higher forces and are not all-in-all.

- **The Upaniṣads**

The *Upaniṣads* move one step higher and teach that material existence is not all-in-all, that material energy is but a manifestation of a higher truth. They indicate oneness behind the variety and encourage people to go after that higher goal rather than temporary material goals.

- **Itihāsas**

The term '*Itihāsas*' collectively refers to various treatises that contain historical narrations – the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇas* and *Upa-Purāṇas*. These narrations are meant to expand a seeker's understanding beyond the impersonal truth referred to in the *Upaniṣads* and introduce the personal nature of the ultimate truth. This nature is further explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

- **Vedānta-sūtras**

The content of all the literature described above is condensed into 560 short aphorisms, the *Vedānta-sūtras*. The abstraction rendered by such condensing makes the *sūtras* open to interpretation by followers of different schools of Vedic thought based on different portions of the literature described above. All philosophical schools, therefore, have their own commentary on these *sūtras*.

- **Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam**

The essence of all Vedic knowledge is available in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The *Gītā* was spoken by the Supreme Lord Himself. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, described as the mature fruit of the tree of Vedic knowledge, is a natural commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras* by the same author, Vyāsadeva, and hence reveals the highest knowledge. Study of both these scriptures in itself is adequate to know the essence of all Vedic knowledge.

Vedic Literature: Busting the Myth of Aryan Invasion Origins

The general understanding about the origin of Vedic literatures is that it is a set of concocted writings by the Aryans*, invaders from Central Asia who conquered India around 1500 B.C., and it therefore has no scientific or historical relevance or continuity. This theory of a superior Aryan race conquering the native Indian race culturally and politically and creating reams of fictional Vedic literature is called the 'Aryan Invasion Theory' in scholarly circles. Systematic propagation of the Aryan Invasion Theory, especially through the educational system over a period of two centuries, has resulted in devaluing of Vedic literature and the culture it represents.

Recently, however, historians and archaeologists have come to question the Aryan Invasion Theory. New evidence that has emerged over the past few decades seems to suggest that the theory had its roots not in some authentic scientific findings, but in the political ambitions of European invaders of the 17th century who wanted to colonize India. They therefore instigated their scholars to systematically misrepresent Vedic culture to its natives, so that with time, they would lose faith in their own culture and accept the foreign European culture as superior. By such judicial tactics, India was eventually brought under British control. Although India has gained political independence since, it has been unable to retract the misrepresentation of its glorious culture to its own people.

In addition to this historical evidence, scientific and archaeological evidence that has emerged over the past few decades has further weakened the credibility of the Aryan Invasion Theory. The findings, in the form of satellite imagery of archaeological sites, linguistic analysis of scripts on artifacts found at the sites, carbon and thermo-luminescence dating of fossils, scientific verification of scriptural statements, etc. all prove that Vedic literatures contain knowledge that is scientific and far superior to the knowledge of modern science.

As we learn from the Vedic literatures itself, the knowledge contained in them was spoken by the Supreme Lord Himself and has existed for thousands of years. It was, however, documented only in the beginning of Kali-yuga – about 5000 years ago – and is being passed on in disciplic succession since.

* not the same Aryans referred to in the Vedic scriptures

3. Acquiring Vedic Knowledge

Just like scientific knowledge, Vedic knowledge is also passed down from an expert practitioner to his followers, who in turn gain expertise themselves and pass it on to *their* followers. The difference between Vedic knowledge and scientific knowledge, however, is in the way the knowledge is acquired – modern science acquires knowledge by an ascending process (by perception and analysis), while Vedic science acquires knowledge by a descending process (by hearing from authoritative sources).

When acquiring knowledge through the ascending process, one tries to get a direct understanding of the world through observable phenomena, accepts what one is able to directly or indirectly perceive or experience and rejects everything else. The problem with this method is that the acquired knowledge is tainted by four major human defects – limited perceptive power of the senses, the tendency to make mistakes, the tendency to be illusioned and the tendency to cheat. As a result, at no point can one accept a certain theory as absolutely correct. In addition, one is unable to conceive of or pass objective judgment on phenomena that defy direct perception. Modern science acquires knowledge by the ascending process.

In the descending process, however, one simply hears the knowledge from authoritative sources, accepts it and practices it. Although in the beginning one has to invest some faith in the perfect nature of the knowledge, such faith is not blind – it is based on the tested and proven scientific nature of the knowledge. The revealed result one obtains from the practice of the knowledge solidifies the practitioner’s faith in it. By this process, the practitioner gets to understand and experience truths that are both within and beyond the reach of his limited sense perception. Vedic knowledge, which is understood to have directly descended from the Supreme Lord, is acquired by the descending process.

Put in another way, there are three ways to acquire knowledge – by direct perception (*Pratyakṣa pramāṇa*), by induction and analysis based on perceived phenomenon (*Anumāna pramāṇa*) and by hearing from authoritative sources (*Śabda pramāṇa*). As explained, Vedic knowledge is acquired by hearing (*Śabda*), while modern science relies on perception and analysis (*Pratyakṣa* and *Anumāna*).

Seeking Perfect Knowledge

The following activity attempts to analyze the different ways of acquiring knowledge and find the perfect method. With the help of your facilitator, fill out the columns in the tables below and write down your conclusions.

Process of acquiring knowledge	What is it?	How can we test for correctness of knowledge?	Test Procedure	Test findings	Conclusion
Pratyakṣa pramāṇa	Knowledge gained by direct sense perception	By checking whether the knowledge acquired is always correct	Conduct the Correctness Test in Table No. 1 and the Four Defects Test		
Anumāna pramāṇa	Knowledge gained by induction and analysis of observable phenomenon	By checking whether the knowledge deduced from observation is always correct	Conduct the Correctness Test in Table No.2 and the Four Defects Test		
Śabda pramāṇa	Knowledge gained by authoritative hearing	By verifying whether the knowledge heard from authoritative sources is always correct	Conduct the Correctness Test in Table No. 3 and the Four Defects Test		

Table No 1: Correctness Test for Pratyakṣa Pramāṇa

Cite examples where 'Perceiving is believing'	
Examples where this does not hold true	
Has this method passed the Four Defects Test?	
Has this method passed the Correctness Test?	

Table No 2: Correctness Test for Anumāna Pramāṇa

Cite examples where 'Analyzing or deducing is believing'	
Examples where this does not hold true	
Has this method passed the Four Defects Test?	
Has this method passed the Correctness Test?	

Table No 3: Correctness Test for Śabda Pramāṇa

Cite examples where 'Authoritative hearing is believing'	
Examples where this does not hold true	
Has this method passed the Four Defects Test?	
Has the method passed the Correctness Test?	

The Four Defects Test

The table below lists the four human defects and verifies if the knowledge gained by each method is affected by them. You may conclude that the method has passed the test only if the knowledge gained through it is unaffected by all the four defects.

Human Defect	Everyday example of this tendency	Is Pratyakṣa pramāṇa affected?	Is Anumāna pramāṇa affected?	Is Śabda pramāṇa affected?
Defective and limited senses				
Tendency to make mistakes				
Tendency to be illusioned				
Tendency to cheat				

Straight from the Scientists and Sages

As we saw, Vedic literatures are not random baseless ramblings of an amalgamated set of tribes who migrated to India a few centuries ago, but are compilations of wise, self-realized souls of the great Vedic culture. These sages formed the intelligentsia of Vedic society and were held in the same esteem as modern scientists. The difference, however, was that these sages acted as transparent mediums to understand, assimilate and transmit perfect knowledge of the *Vedas*, while modern scientists themselves are groping in the dark for perfect and complete knowledge.

The following table contains a comparative study of the knowledge acquired through the scientific and Vedic systems. Quotes from authorities in the respective fields i.e. the scientists and the sages respectively, have been used to create the study. In the space provided below each quote, write down in your own words what you understand from the quote. At the end of the study, write down your conclusions about both the systems of knowledge after a class discussion.

Point of Comparative Study	What scientists say about modern science	What sages say about Vedic knowledge
What is this system of knowledge?	<p>"I think that we shall have to get accustomed to the idea that we must not look upon science as a 'body of knowledge', but rather as a system of hypothesis, or as a system of guesses or anticipations that in principle cannot be justified, but with which we work as long as they stand up to tests, and of which we are never justified in saying that we know they are 'true' ". (Karl R Popper in 'The Logic of Scientific Discovery')</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>"I shall now declare unto you in full this knowledge both phenomenal and noumenal, by knowing which there shall remain nothing further to be known." (Bhagavad-gītā 7.2)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>
What kind of phenomenon does it study?	<p>"...Science casts the spotlight which it uses to search for knowledge very selectively; in other words, what scientists choose to look at, to try to explain in scientific terms, is rather restricted, rather biased. And the content of science is biased in a materialistic direction. This applies to almost all the sciences, the physical sciences as well as the biological sciences.</p> <p>The reason is largely due to the fact that it is easier to study quantitatively the behaviour of matter and the grosser aspects of behaviour (both animal and human) than it is to study higher human behaviour where the influence of God might be significant." (B. D. Josephson, Nobel Laureate in Physics)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>"Complete knowledge includes knowledge of the phenomenal world and the spirit behind it. " (Bhagavad-gītā 7.2, Purport)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>
How is knowledge acquired in this system?	<p>"Equipped with his five senses, man explores the universe around him and calls the adventure Science." (Edwin Powell Hubble in 'The Nature of Science')</p> <p>"Every great advance in science has issued from a new audacity of imagination." (John Dewey in 'The Quest for Certainty')</p>	<p>"The Vedic system of acquiring knowledge is the deductive process. The Vedic knowledge is received perfectly by disciplic succession from authorities." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.9.18, Purport)</p> <p>"The Vedic knowledge is authorized and is acquired not by experiment but by authentic statements of the Vedic literatures explained by bona fide authorities. Simply by</p>

	<p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>becoming an academic scholar one cannot understand the Vedic statements; one has to approach the real authority who has received the Vedic knowledge by disciplic succession, as clearly explained in the <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> (4.2)." (<i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> 2.2.27, Purport)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>How perfect and complete is the knowledge?</p>	<p>"We and our models are both part of the universe we are describing. ... One might therefore expect it (any physical theory) to be either inconsistent or incomplete. The theories we have so far are both inconsistent and incomplete." (<i>Stephen Hawking, theoretical physicist (currently holds Newton's chair at Cambridge)</i>)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>"All Vedic knowledge is perfect because it is received directly from God by the <i>paramparā</i>, disciplic succession." (<i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> 4.26.7, Purport)</p> <p>"Vedic knowledge is complete because it is above all doubts and mistakes, and <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> is the essence of all Vedic knowledge." (<i>Bhagavad-gītā</i>, Introduction)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Is the knowledge subject to any deficiencies/shortcomings?</p>	<p>"Even if we photograph stars eventually we have to take in by our senses what the photo shows. Furthermore, without our senses we cannot handle a camera. Even if we amplified/refined by instruments the knowledge is no more perfect than our imperfect senses." (<i>Eugene Wigner, Nobel Laureate in Physics</i>)</p> <p>"Science, with all its dramatic successes, has from its beginnings also generated wildly incorrect accounts: stars as pinpricks in a crystal globe, electricity and heat as fluids, the brain as an organ to cool the blood. ... These are dramatic deviations from what we now see as truth; and when invented they were deviations from what then appeared true." (<i>Dr. R.L. Gregory, Director of the Brain and Perception Laboratory at the University of Bristol, England</i>)</p>	<p>"Vedic knowledge is infallible because it comes down through the perfect disciplic succession of spiritual masters, beginning with the Lord Himself. Since He spoke the first word of Vedic knowledge, the source of this knowledge is transcendental. The words spoken by the Lord are called <i>apauruṣeya</i>, which indicates that they are not delivered by any mundane person." (<i>Śrī Īsopaniṣad, Mantra 1, Purport</i>)</p> <p>"The knowledge of the Vedas is knowledge received directly from God, and there is</p>

	<p>"If the twentieth century has not been the century of fraud, it was surely the century of its exposure. Work of some of the greatest scientists has come into question. Isaac Newton, Gregor Mendel, Charles Darwin, Louis Pasteur, Sigmund Freud, Robert Millikan... They suggest how understanding of fraud – more generally, of norms of scientific behaviour – has evolved over three centuries.</p> <p>The recent list reads differently....The Office of Research Integrity, in the Department of Health and Human Services, made fourteen determinations of scientific misconduct in 2001...In 2002, forty-one new cases were opened, the most since 1995, and a number of these were still under review at the end of the year; of cases closed, misconduct was found in thirteen, all fabrication and/or falsification. In 2003, the figure was much the same, with twelve findings of misconduct posted."</p> <p>(Horace Freeland Judson In 'The Great Betrayal: Fraud in Science')</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>consequently no question of illusion, cheating, mistakes or imperfect senses." (<i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> 4.26.7, <i>Purport</i>)</p> <p>"We accept Kṛṣṇa as our <i>guru</i>. If He is perfect in knowledge, our knowledge is also perfect. As far as we're concerned, we do not have to be perfect in ourselves, but if we receive knowledge from the perfect, our knowledge is perfect." (<i>Science of Self Realization, Chapter 6g: The Tiny World of Modern Science</i>)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Are there any proofs to support the above conclusions?</p>	<p>There are many instances where science has proven itself wrong:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The earth was thought to be flat • Liver was thought to be the organ that pumped blood • The earth was thought to be at the center of the universe • Objects were thought to fall at different speeds when thrown up based on their weight • Atom was thought to be the smallest particle • Plants were thought to have no life <p>There are many more such examples where scientific conclusions have proven incorrect with newer discoveries and findings.</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>There are many branches of Vedic knowledge that are proven correct beyond doubt. Eg: <i>Āyur-veda</i>, Vedic metallurgy, Vedic aeronautics etc.</p> <p>In addition, there are many Vedic assertions that are being found to be true by modern science only now:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of the embryo in the womb • The fact that plants have life • The purity and antiseptic nature of cow dung <p>My Understanding:</p> <hr/> <hr/>

What can we finally conclude about knowledge acquired by this system?		
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4. The Essence of All Vedic Literatures

As stated, the essence of the vast body of Vedic knowledge is contained in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to enable the souls of Kali-yuga to easily study and assimilate Vedic knowledge. These two books contain knowledge about the worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is to be ultimately known by the study of the scriptures.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* is directly spoken by Kṛṣṇa and briefly explains the position of the Lord, the living entity and his relationship with Kṛṣṇa, the reason for the living entity's suffering and the way to get out of the suffering. He explains the processes of *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* and declares *bhakti*, or devotion to the Lord, to be the summum bonum of Vedic knowledge.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, on the other hand, is a more elaborate text dealing with the science of *bhakti*. It is described to be the ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic knowledge. It contains more detailed knowledge about the Lord and is full of descriptions of His dealings with His pure devotees.

The spiritual practices in ISKCON are practical renderings of the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and are in themselves adequate to help the practitioner reach the ultimate goal of life – to attain attachment to the lotus feet of the Lord.

References

Bhagavad-gītā
Introduction, Chapter 7 (Verse 7.2)
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam
Canto 1 (Verse 1.9.18); Canto 2 (Verse 2.2.27); Canto 4 (Verse 4.26.7) Canto 7 (Verse 7.5.23)
Other Books of Śrīla Prabhupāda
Science of Self Realization, Chapter 6g: The Tiny World of Modern Science Rāja-Vidyā: The King of Knowledge, Chapter 5: Paramparā: Knowledge Through Disciplic Succession Śrī Īsopaniṣad (Verse 1)
Other resources
Back to Godhead #31-05, 1997, Divine Nature The Great Betrayal: Fraud in Science (Horace Freeland Judson) The Logic of Scientific Discovery (Karl R Popper) The Nature of Science (Edwin Powell Hubble, 1954) The Quest for Certainty (John Dewey, 1929) http://www.krishna.com/en/node/525 (Article ‘What are the Vedas?’)

CHAPTER FOUR

The Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-mantra

<p>Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare</p> <p>“My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, my dear Lord Rāma, O energy of the Lord, Hare, kindly engage me in Your service.” (From Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Purport to the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra)</p>	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>In essence, the Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mahā-mantra</i> is a prayer to the Supreme Lord to engage us in His loving service.</p>
	<p><u>Why Chant?</u></p> <p>The scriptures say that in the age of Kali, which is characterized by spiritual dullness, the only way to attain perfection is by chanting the holy name of the Lord.</p>
	<p><u>The Practice of the Holy Name</u></p> <p>Chanting the holy name of the Lord is practiced in two ways – <i>saṅkīrtana</i> and <i>japa</i>.</p>
	<p><u>Benefits of Chanting</u></p> <p>Unlike other processes where the benefits are either slow or hard to perceive, many of benefits of chanting can be immediately and easily experienced.</p>

1. Introduction

The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is a prayer to the Supreme Lord to engage us in His loving service. Generally, we pray to the Lord for fulfillment of material desires. But when one takes to the spiritual path, one is more interested in giving the Lord whatever he has rather than asking things from Him. In other words, one wants to become free from all selfish motives and engage in the Lord's service. The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is a humble appeal to the Lord to grant us His service.

The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is a spiritual sound vibration i.e. it carries the potency to release one's mind from all self-centered and mundane thought processes. The chanting of the *mahā-mantra* is performed directly on the spiritual platform, transcending an individual's mental and intellectual inadequacies. Chanting, therefore, is considered the most potent spiritual practice.

The Transcendental Seeds of the Mahā-mantra

The words 'Hare', 'Kṛṣṇa' and 'Rāma' which make up the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* are called its transcendental seeds.

The Meaning of 'Kṛṣṇa'

The name Kṛṣṇa means "all-attractive". God attracts everyone; that is the definition of God. We have seen many pictures of Kṛṣṇa, and we see that He attracts the cows, calves, birds, beasts, trees, plants, and even the water in Vṛndāvana. He is attractive to the cowherd boys, to the *gopīs*, to Nanda Mahārāja, to the Pāṇḍavas, and to all human society. Therefore if any particular name can be given to God, that name is "Kṛṣṇa".

(The Science of Self Realization, Chapter 1c: A Definition of God)

The Meaning of 'Rāma'

"Rāma" means spiritual enjoyment: Those who are actually *yogīs* truly enjoy, but how do they enjoy? *Ramante yogino 'nante*—their enjoyment is unlimited, that unlimited enjoyment is real happiness, and such happiness is spiritual, not material. This is the real meaning of Rāma, as in the chant Hare Rāma. Rāma means enjoyment through spiritual life. Spiritual life is all pleasure, and Kṛṣṇa is all pleasure.

(The Perfection of Yoga, Chapter 4: Yoga as Body and Mind Control)

The Meaning of 'Hare'

When we are chanting the *mahā-mantra*, we are actually addressing the Lord and His energy, Hara. Hara is Kṛṣṇa's internal potency, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Thus the Vaiṣṇavas worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa and Sītā-Rāma. In the beginning of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* we first address the internal energy of Kṛṣṇa, Hare. Thus we say, "O Rādhārāṇī! O Hare! O energy of the Lord!"

(Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti, Chapter 14: Bhakti as Ultimate Liberation)

2. Why Chant?

The present age of Kali (the Iron Age) is characterized by spiritual dullness. People in general are neither inclined nor properly equipped to execute austere spiritual practices. Spiritual life, therefore, has been simplified in this age – the scriptures state that one can achieve all perfection simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Some of the most important reasons to chant are discussed below.

Chanting is the yuga-dharma (the prime religious practice) in Kali-yuga.	
<p><i>kṛte yad dhyāyato viṣṇuṁ tretāyām yajato makhaiḥ dvāpare paricaryāyām kalau tad dhari-kīrtanāt</i></p> <p>“Whatever result was obtained in Satya-yuga by meditating on Viṣṇu, in Tretā-yuga by performing sacrifices and in Dvāpara-yuga by serving the Lord’s lotus feet can also be obtained in Kali-yuga simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mahā-mantra</i>.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.3.52 [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 20.345])</p>	<p><i>nāma vinu kali-kāle nāhi āra dharma sarva-mantra-sāra nāma, ei śāstra-marma</i></p> <p>“In this age of Kali there is no other religious principle than the chanting of the holy name, which is the essence of all Vedic hymns. This is the purport of all scriptures.” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.74)</p>
<p>Unlike other religious practices, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is very simple – it does not need any elaborate paraphernalia or specific religious expertise – it can be chanted by anyone, anywhere, anytime. Also, the benefits of chanting are immense and obtained quickly compared to other processes. It is, therefore, the topmost religious practice for this age.</p>	

Chanting is the easiest method of self realization in the age of Kali.	
<p><i>kaler doṣa-nidhe rājann asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya mukta-saṅgaḥ paraṁ vrajet</i></p> <p>“My dear King, although Kali-yuga is full of faults, there is still one good quality about this age. It is that simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mahā-mantra</i>, one can become free from material bondage and be promoted to the transcendental kingdom.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.3.51)</p>	<p><i>harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam kalau nāsty eva nāsty evanāsty eva gatir anyathā</i></p> <p>“In this age of Kali there is no alternative, there is no alternative, there is no alternative for spiritual progress than the holy name, the holy name, the holy name of the Lord.” (Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa 38.126)</p>
<p>Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is the simplest method for spiritual progress mentioned in the scriptures. One can chant anywhere, anytime. There are no specific rules to chant, nor is there a need to accrue any previous spiritual merit. It is also practical for everyone. It is, therefore, the easiest means of self realization for this age.</p>	

Chanting enables us to directly connect to the Lord, who is non-different from His holy name.

<p>...yajñānām japa-yajño 'smi...</p> <p>"...Of sacrifices I am the chanting of the holy names..." (<i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> 10.25)</p>	<p><i>nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ...</i></p> <p>"The holy name of Kṛṣṇa bestows all spiritual benedictions, for it is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. Kṛṣṇa's name is complete, and it is the form of all transcendental mellows. It is not a material name under any condition, and it is no less powerful than Kṛṣṇa Himself." (<i>Padma Purāṇa</i> [cited: <i>Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā</i> 17.133])</p>
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Just like we can easily connect to someone through the telephone or the web, we can easily connect to the Lord by chanting His holy name. This is because unlike an ordinary person, the Lord's holy name, being spiritual, is non-different from His personal Self. This means that the presence of His holy name is non-different from His personal presence.

One may, however, not perceive this in the beginning. But as one continues to chant, the Lord reveals this absolute nature of His and the devotee begins to experience blissful connection with the Lord.

Chanting is the most effective way to quickly purify our hearts in the age of Kali.

<p><i>hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare iti śoḍaśakam nāmnām kali-kalmaṣa-nāśanam nātaḥ parataropāyaḥ sarva-vedeṣu dṛśyate</i></p> <p>"Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare – these sixteen names composed of thirty two syllables are the only means to counteract the evil effects of Kali-yuga. In all the <i>Vedas</i> it is seen that to cross the ocean of nescience there is no alternative to the chanting of the holy name." (<i>Kalī-santarāṇa Upaniṣad</i> [cited: <i>Śrī Caitanya- caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā</i> 7.76])</p>	<p><i>ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni- nirvāpaṇam...</i></p> <p>"Let there be all victory for the chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which can cleanse the mirror of the heart and stop the miseries of the blazing fire of material existence..." (<i>Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka</i> by Lord Caitanya (Verse 1) [cited: <i>Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā</i> 20.12])</p>
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Purification of the heart refers to cleaning the material desires in the heart and replacing it with the spiritual desire to serve the Lord. By continuously chanting the *mahā-mantra*, which is a prayer to the Lord to engage us in His service, we progressively achieve this purification. With such purification also comes mental peace and happiness. The *mahā-mantra*, therefore, helps us easily purify ourselves.

3. The Practice of the Holy Name

Chanting the holy name of the Lord is practiced in two ways – *saṅkīrtana* and *japa*.

Saṅkīrtana refers to the congregational chanting of the Lord's holy name. It usually consists of a group of devotees singing and dancing together to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The rules and regulations for performing *saṅkīrtana* have been explained in the chapter 'Behaviour and *Kīrtana*' in the section 'Vaiṣṇava Etiquette'.

Japa refers to the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* by oneself softly and repetitively, usually keeping count on beads. The members of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement chant at least sixteen rounds of *japa* daily (chanting the *mantra* 108 times constitutes one round). One may, however, begin by chanting a smaller number of rounds and progressively chant more. This section discusses *japa* meditation in more detail.

3.1. Japa Meditation

Chanting on Beads

Some important rules to be followed while chanting *japa* are mentioned below.



Hold the *japa* beads between the middle finger and thumb when you chant.



Chant the Pañca-tattva *mantra* on the head bead before you begin chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.



Chant the entire Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* loudly and distinctly on each bead.



Flip the beads and continue chanting at the end of every round. Do not chant Hare Kṛṣṇa on the head bead.

Some Dos and Don'ts

Dos

When performing *japa*, one should:

- set aside time everyday exclusively for *japa* (early morning is best)
- choose a quiet and peaceful place to chant
- sit in a proper posture. If sleepy, one can walk and chant
- chant preferably in the association of devotees
- chant the entire *mantra* clearly and distinctly
- bring the mind back to the sound vibration whenever it wanders

Don'ts

When performing *japa*, one should not:

- perform any other activity (reading newspapers, perform chores, etc.) when chanting prescribed rounds
- chant prescribed rounds inattentively or when excessively sleepy or tired
- take calls (except in emergencies) or indulge in unnecessary talk (*prajalpa*)
- attempt to finish the prescribed rounds in a rush

Mood to be Maintained

In His *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers, Lord Caitanya says that only one who is humbler than a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly (*Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka*, Verse 3). One should, therefore, chant the holy name of the Lord in full faith with humility.

4. Benefits of Chanting

Unlike other processes where the benefits are either slow or hard to perceive, the benefits of chanting can be immediately and easily experienced. Some discernable effects are:

- A calmer, more peaceful inner self
- Improved concentration and memory
- A heightened level of consciousness
- Reduced stress levels
- Greater sense of happiness in life

Study after study has shown that chanting has the above effects. The most prominent studies that have been done in this regard are those of Dr. Herbert Benson (who studied the effects of *mantra* meditation in general), Dr. Allan Gerson and Dr. Ronald Huff, and Dr. David Wolf (all of whom researched the effect of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa).*

* Refer Appendix V

In addition to these noticeable effects, the *śāstras* mention some benefits that are imperceptible in our current condition:

- Chanting burns away the reactions to one's past sinful activities.
- Chanting cleanses one's material contamination, bringing about the purification required to understand one's relationship with God.
- Chanting raises one to the spiritual platform.
- Chanting helps one gain the ultimate treasure of love of Godhead.

References

Bhagavad-gītā Chapter 10 (Verse 10.25)
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Canto 4 (Verse 4.24.69)
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā (Verse 7.74, 7.76 [cited from Kalisantarāṇa Upaniṣad]) Madhya-līlā (Verse 17.133 [cited from Padma Purāṇa]) Antya-līlā (Verse 20.12 [cited from Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka by Lord Caitanya])
Other Books of Śrīla Prabhupāda Science of Self Realization, Chapter 1c: A Definition of God Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahūti, Chapter 14: Bhakti as ultimate liberation The Perfection of Yoga, Chapter 4: Yoga as Body and Mind Control
Other resources Back to Godhead #34-01, 2000, The Mahā-mantra Research Project Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa (Verse 38.126)

CHAPTER FIVE

FAQ on the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-mantra

<p><i>harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam kalau nāsty eva nāsty evanāsty eva gatiḥ anyathā</i></p> <p>“In this age of Kali there is no alternative, there is no alternative, there is no alternative for spiritual progress than the holy name, the holy name, the holy name of the Lord.”</p> <p><i>(Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa 38.126)</i></p>	<p><u>The Hare Kṛṣṇa FAQ Puzzle</u></p> <p>The following game tries to address the most commonly asked questions about the Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mahā-mantra</i>. As you play, pay attention to the FAQ and try to appreciate the wonderful nature of the <i>mahā-mantra</i>.</p>
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The Hare Kṛṣṇa FAQ Puzzle

What is the Hare Kṛṣṇa FAQ Puzzle?

The Hare Kṛṣṇa FAQ Puzzle is a game which attempts to answer the most frequently asked questions about the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* in a fun, interactive manner.

How do I play this game?

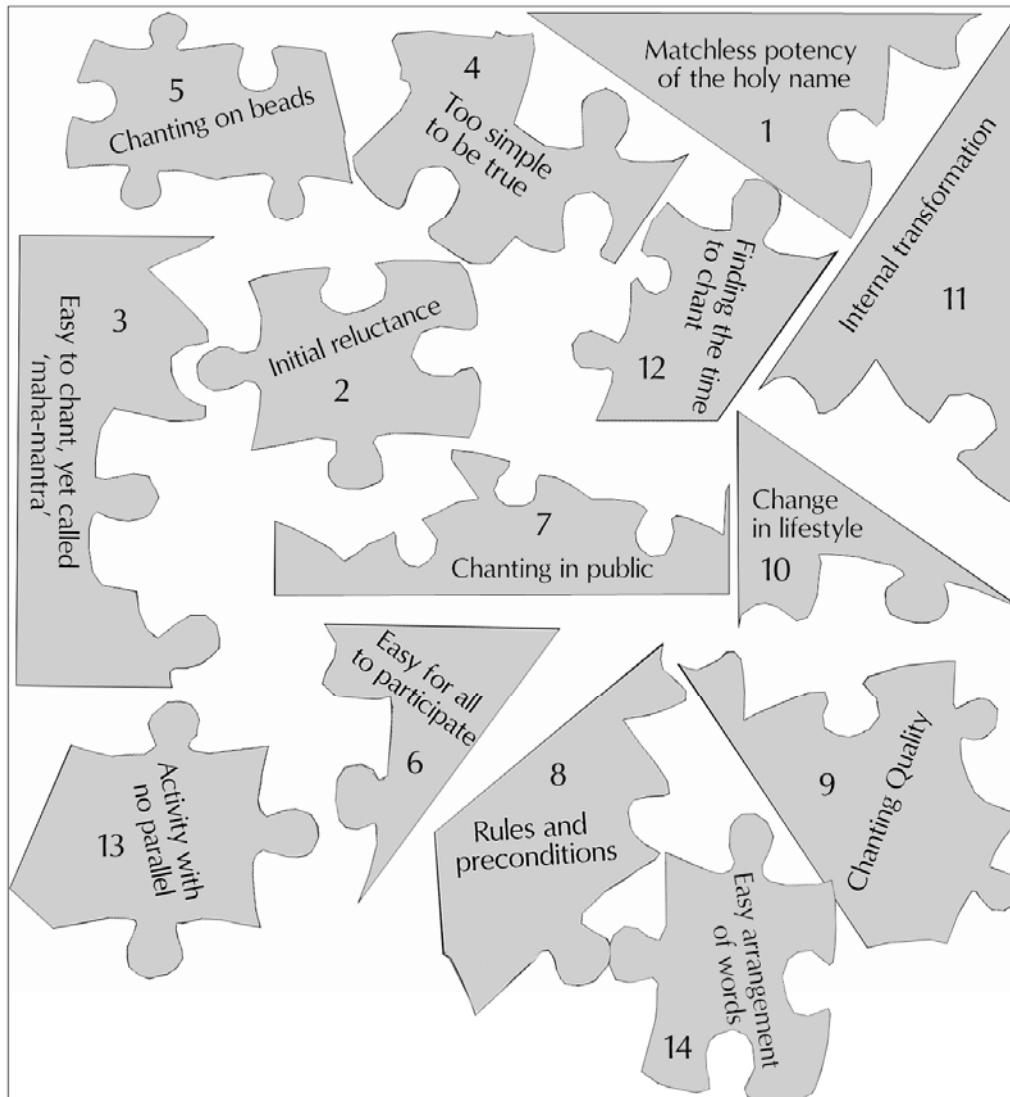
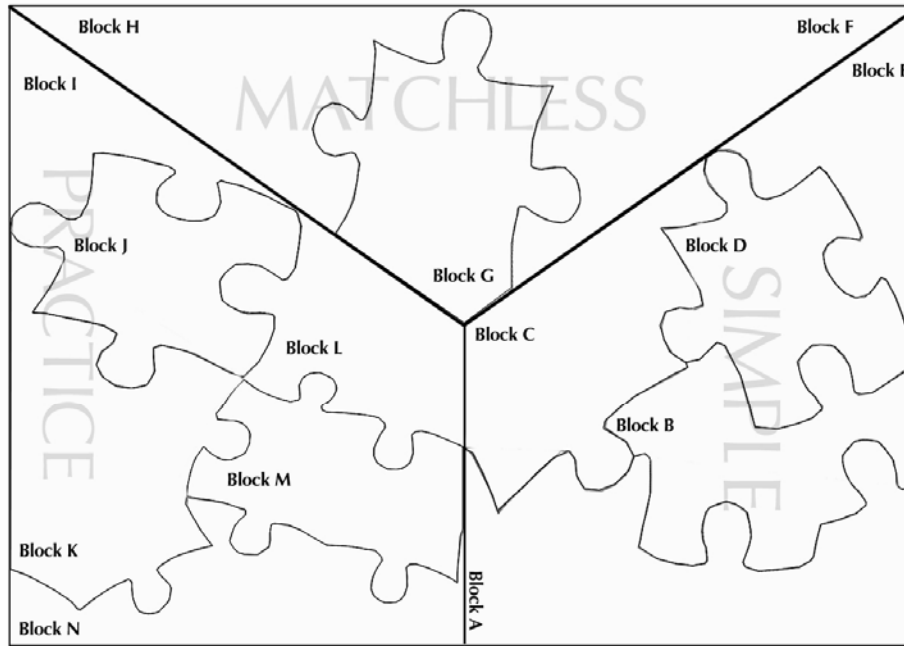
The Hare Kṛṣṇa FAQ Puzzle is played as a class game. You are required to solve the jigsaw puzzle on the following page.

- The puzzle contains pieces which are classified into three types: Simple, Matchless and Practice. The 'Simple' pieces describe the simple nature of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, the 'Matchless' pieces describe the matchless potency of the *mantra* and the 'Practice' pieces describe some commonly encountered problems in chanting the *mahā-mantra*.
- Each piece of the jigsaw puzzle is also associated with one of the tables that follow. Each of these tables contains the most frequently asked questions about the topic printed on the jigsaw piece. You are expected to answer the questions with the help of your facilitator.

To solve the puzzle, sequentially fit in the pieces under the Simple, Matchless or Practice sections. Start from block 'A' of the puzzle and move sequentially towards block 'N'. As you fit in each piece, call out the corresponding piece number and go to the table that contains that number. Answer the questions therein with the help of your facilitator. Once you have finished discussing all the listed questions, you may bring up and discuss any other questions you may have regarding chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

The first block (Block A) has been solved as an example.

BLOCKS



BLOCK PIECES

1	Block:	Piece:	Type:
		Why are only the names of 'Rāma' and 'Kṛṣṇa', and not other names of Viṣṇu, chosen for the <i>mantra</i> ?	
		Will chanting the name of any demigod give the same benefit as chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa?	
		If <i>japa</i> is a form of sound meditation, can I chant any name or word (say 'one' or 'Pepsi' or even 'God') and get the same benefit?	
		How does chanting make you self-realized?	

2	Block:	Piece:	Type:
		I have heard that chanting is the first step of the 'brainwashing' they do in ISKCON. I am afraid I don't want to chant if this is true.	
		I am scared of facing the wrath of my family and friends if I start chanting. Is there any way I can chant without irking them?	

<p>Why do you chant for almost two hours everyday? Isn't thinking of God for some time everyday is good enough?</p>	
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3	Block: A	Piece: Easy to chant, yet called ' <i>mahā-mantra</i> '	Type: Simple
<p>Why is Hare Kṛṣṇa called the '<i>mahā-mantra</i>'?</p>			
<p>Are there any other <i>mahā-mantras</i> mentioned in the <i>śāstras</i> that give the same benefit as Hare Kṛṣṇa?</p>			

3	Block:	Piece:	Type:
<p>How can the greatest of all <i>mantras</i> be so simple?</p>			
<p>It's hard to believe that one can derive such great benefit simply by chanting such a simple <i>mantra</i>. How is this possible?</p>			

5	Block:	Piece:	Type:
		Do I have to chant my prescribed rounds only on beads?	
		How can I keep count when am not able to use beads?	
		If I chant when I am doing other activities, is it considered part of my prescribed rounds?	
		What do I do when the phone rings or there is a knock on the door when I am chanting? Can I interrupt and attend? Do I have to restart my round or can I start from the bead after which I stopped?	
		Can my mother and sister chant during their periods?	

6	Block:	Piece:	Type:
		Can anyone participate in chanting?	
		Do plants and animals also benefit from chanting? Can you give me any instances where this has happened?	

7	Block:	Piece:	Type:
Can I chant when I am travelling, waiting somewhere, running errands, etc.? Do these count for my rounds?			
I feel a little embarrassed to chant in public. Can I do something to overcome it?			
How do I handle it if people make fun of my chanting?			

8	Block:	Piece:	Type:
Do I have to know the meaning of the <i>mantra</i> to get the benefit of chanting?			
Are there any rules to follow to get the benefit of chanting?			

9	Block:	Piece:	Type:
		What should I focus on – the number of rounds or the quality?	
		Can I chant in the mind if I can focus while chanting?	
		I currently chant 8 rounds, but mostly mechanically and only to finish the number. Sometimes I wonder if I am deriving any benefit at all – would it not be better if I reduced the number of rounds and focussed on quality?	
		I stay in a hostel and my chanting often disturbs my roommates. How can I chant quality rounds without disturbing them?	

10	Block:	Piece:	Type:
		Do I have to give up my studies or job to chant?	
		Do I have to change my life in any other way if I chant?	

I am a smoker. I also occasionally drink. Do I have to quit before I start chanting?	
I eat non-veg regularly. Do I have to first become a strict vegetarian before I start chanting?	

11	Block:	Piece:	Type:
		How exactly does the <i>mahā-mantra</i> work?	
		Isn't chanting some kind of self-hypnotism? How can it bring about a change in me?	
		How can I know that the holy name is bringing about a transformation in me?	
		How can the holy name stop me from falling prey to bad habits?	
		I have heard that chanting cleanses you from within. But I know of many 'clean' and good people who don't chant, and I have met people who are not that 'clean' but who regularly chant. How can I understand this?	

12	Block:	Piece:	Type:
		I'd like to increase my rounds, but am too busy. How do I find time?	
		I know that the best time to chant is in the morning, but I work on a night shift and return only at 5 A.M. What do I do?	
		Can I catch up on my rounds over the weekends if I don't find time to chant everyday (especially when I have exams/ tight schedules in office etc.)?	

13	Block:	Piece:	Type:
		Is there any other process that is as potent as chanting the holy name?	
		If chanting is a form of meditation, can I not derive the same benefit from meditating any other way (like say sitting silently)?	
		I know of several other groups who chant Hare Kṛṣṇa amongst other <i>mantras</i> . What is the difference between them and ISKCON?	

14	Block:	Piece:	Type:
Is there any particular reason for the arrangement of letters?			
At ISKCON, you chant 'Hare Kṛṣṇa' first. Many groups I know chant the 'Hare Rāma' line first. Is there a difference?			

Other Questions

Question	Answer

CHAPTER SIX

The Four Regulative Principles

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>sūta uvāca</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>abhyarthitas tadā tasmai sthānāni kalaye dadau</i> <i>dyūtaṁ pānaṁ striyaḥ sūnā yatrādharmas̐ catur-vidhaḥ</i></p> <p>Sūta Gosvāmī said: “Mahārāja Parīkṣit, thus being petitioned by the personality of Kali, gave him permission to reside in places where gambling, drinking, prostitution and animal slaughter were performed.” <i>(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.17.38)</i></p>	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>The four regulative principles uphold the four principles of religion and constitute one of the most important aspects of Kṛṣṇa conscious practice.</p>
	<p><u>The Four Regulative Principles</u></p> <p>The four regulative principles – no meat eating, no intoxication, no illicit sex and no gambling – are prohibitions on activities that are unnecessary, even disturbing, to human existence.</p>
	<p><u>Regulative Principles: Secret Doors to a Higher Realm</u></p> <p>Practice of the regulative principles is not an end in itself, but is the key to the door that opens up higher realms of existence for the practitioner.</p>

1. Introduction

The four regulative principles – no meat eating, no intoxication, no illicit sex and no gambling – are called the sub-religious principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are the second most important set of rules to be followed in the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness after chanting the holy name of the Lord. By practicing the regulative principles, one restrains himself from committing sinful activities and creates for himself an atmosphere where he can succeed better in his spiritual endeavors.

Although the regulative principles seem to restrain our freedom to enjoy, a proper understanding will reveal that they are only prohibiting activities that are unnecessary, even disturbing, to human existence. They also help the practitioner taste a higher pleasure which is precluded for one who is addicted to the sinful activities.

This chapter deals with the four regulative principles and their relevance to spiritual life in detail.

2. The Four Regulative Principles

The practice of four regulative principles is meant to nurture the four pillars of religion – mercy (upheld by abstinence from meat), austerity (upheld by abstinence from intoxicants), cleanliness (upheld by refraining from illicit sexual activity) and truthfulness (upheld by refraining from gambling). By cultivating these traits, one creates an internal atmosphere conducive to understanding spiritual subject matters. This section examines the four principles and their relation to spiritual life in more detail.

2.1. Abstinence from Meat

What is the regulative principle?	No meat eating
What should one refrain from?	Meat, fish, eggs and other animal flesh Vaiṣṇavas also refrain from vegetarian food in the mode of ignorance (onion, garlic, etc.)
Why should one refrain from meat eating?	Abstinence from meat is advocated for a spiritualist since meat eating destroys the quality of compassion.
How does meat eating destroy compassion?	According to the <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> , all living entities in all species of life are souls in different bodies – one in internal quality, but different in external appearance. Troubling or slaughtering animal forms of life for their flesh exposes the killer's lack of knowledge that all living entities in all species of life are children of God. It also shows his lack of respect for their right to existence and compassion for their suffering.
What consequences do the <i>śāstras</i> list for one who eats meat?	Meat eating creates dreadful karmic reactions that implicate not only the eater, but also the killer, the seller, the buyer, the cook and the server of the meat. It is stated in the scriptures that one who kills an animal for its flesh will himself attain an animal form in a future life and be killed for his flesh. It has also been stated in <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> that such defaulters are put into a hell called Kumbhīpāka after death where they are boiled in hot oil.
What are the other known facts that point to a no-meat diet?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As mentioned, it makes a human being indifferent to another's suffering. • It destroys any chance for spiritual progress, since one will never reach the correct understanding about the soul by continuing to murder other living entities to simply satisfy one's palate. • It makes one harsh, angry and morose easily, all of which create a psychological situation that is unconducive for spiritual progress. • It increases the risk of a host of diseases such as heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis etc. • World problems such as hunger, global warming, etc. are mainly rooted in the world's preference for a meat-based diet.
How has meat eating affected modern society?	The indifference to the suffering of slaughtered animals has extended towards human suffering. Such apathy to suffering has taken the form of unnecessary acts of violence, terrorism, wars, crime, etc. in human society.

2.2. Abstinence from Intoxicants

What is the regulative principle?	No intoxication
What should one refrain from?	Drugs, liquor, cigarettes, coffee, tea, any other substance that contains chemicals such as tobacco, nicotine, caffeine, etc.
Why should one refrain from intoxication?	Because intoxicants destroy the quality of austerity which is very important to one's spiritual progress.
How does intoxication destroy austerity?	Intoxication encourages self-indulgence, which is just the opposite of austerity. By using intoxicants, one injects a host of chemicals that are not actually required for bodily maintenance, but cause stimulating, depressing or hallucinating effects. The addictive nature of such intoxicants ultimately makes one dependent on them, destroying one's faculty to exercise self-restraint, which is necessary to achieve sense control and eventually spiritual progress.
What consequences do the <i>śāstras</i> list for one who takes intoxicants?	The <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> states that one who is addicted to intoxicants is sent to a hell called <i>Ayaḥpāna</i> after death where the agents of <i>Yamarāja</i> stand on his chest and pour hot melted iron into his mouth.
What are the other known ills of intoxication?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As mentioned, intoxicants destroy one's power to exercise self-control. • Intoxicants usually result in loss of physical health causing brain damage, deterioration of nervous system, premature aging, etc. They also affect an individual's mental well being by influencing one's mood, attentiveness and thinking process through manipulation of brain functions. • Intoxicants over-stimulate the senses and cloud the mind, creating a psychological situation that is unconducive to receive spiritual knowledge. • Intoxicants cause dependence (and in extreme cases addiction) on substances that are actually unnecessary for bodily functioning. • Cultivation of cash crops that yield intoxicants has usurped huge amounts of land that could be used to feed the world's hungry.
How has intoxication affected modern society?	Addiction to intoxicants (both mild and strong) is rapidly increasing and resulting in deterioration of individual and social health. It is fast creating a society that, by making the use of many of these intoxicants acceptable, is actually creating a generation of individuals who are callous to their responsibilities. It is also leading to increase in crime committed under the influence of intoxicants.

2.3. Refraining from Illicit Sexual Activity

What is the regulative principle?	No illicit sex
What should one refrain from?	Extra-marital sex, sex for any reason other than procreation, watching pornography, talking or thinking about sex
Why should one refrain from illicit sex?	Abstinence from illicit sexual activity is advocated for a spiritualist since it destroys internal and external cleanliness.
How does illicit sex destroy cleanliness?	Excessive desire for sexual indulgence is often a consequence of excessive indulgence in meat and intoxicants. Indulgence in these habits makes one negligent about personal cleanliness. Excessive indulgence in sex also leads to excessive thinking about sex, which destroys internal cleanliness and prevents one from thinking about finer (spiritual) subject matter.
What consequences do the <i>śāstras</i> list for one who indulges in illicit sex?	The <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> states that one who indulges in illicit sex is sent to a hell called Taptasūrmī after death where he is beaten with whips and forced to embrace a red hot iron form of a member of the opposite sex.
What are the other known ills of illicit sex?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As mentioned, illicit sex leads to destruction of cleanliness. It also renders one incapable of practicing austerity due to excessive submission to bodily urges. • Illicit sex also hinders spiritual advancement due to the energy it saps, both physically and mentally. • Illicit sex tends to increase the chances for transmission of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) such as AIDS, syphilis, chancroid, genital herpes, etc., many of which can turn out to be fatal. • It encourages foetal killing (abortion). • It leads to degradation of morals in society and creates a generation of individuals who place their own needs higher than those of their dependents or society.
How has illicit sex affected modern society?	Modern society, with its permissive attitude towards sex, has elevated sex to the level of a religion. It has consequently devalued the importance of sexual abstinence, which is one of the most glorious spiritual virtues. This has resulted in general degradation of social morals, increase in promiscuity, adultery, breakdown of families and STDs.

2.4. Refraining from Gambling

What is the regulative principle?	No gambling
What should one refrain from?	Betting in games or sporting events, etc., gambling in casinos, speculative business dealings (such as investing in lotteries, shares, etc.), dishonest or illicit business dealings
Why should one refrain from gambling?	Because gambling destroys the virtue of truthfulness.
How does gambling destroy truthfulness?	That dishonest or illicit business dealings destroy one's truthfulness is obvious. Activities such as betting, casino games and share markets often induce one to amass money by dishonest means. It therefore destroys the virtue of honesty.
What consequences do the <i>śāstras</i> list for one who gambles?	The <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> states that one who is mad after amassing more wealth this way is put into a hell called Sūcīmukha and inflicted with various sufferings.
What are the other known ills of gambling?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As mentioned, gambling destroys truthfulness. • Gambling creates undue material attachment, cultures qualities such as greed, avarice, dishonesty, etc. and induces anxiety, stress, insomnia, etc. – in short, it creates a mental situation where one cannot think of spiritual life. • It decries the need for spiritual life or God by encouraging ideas of self proprietorship and randomness in the world. • It also degrades the society by triggering enmity and even violence due to excessive greed.
How has gambling affected modern society?	Gambling (in a small or big way) is quickly becoming an epidemic that is affecting virtually everyone in society. This has led to an increase in dishonesty, cheating, avarice, etc. It has also led to a general increase in gambling related suicides, stress and anxiety and related physical ailments, etc.

3. Regulative Principles: Secret Doors to a Higher Realm

Although the regulative principles seem restrictive at first, a little thought will quickly reveal what they forbid us from indulging in is not actual enjoyment, but in artificial sensual stimulation and unnecessary mental diversions. Due to our ignorance of real happiness, we are accustomed to think of happiness in terms of satisfying the temporal cravings of the body and mind. But actually, such activities only give some pleasant bodily or mental sensations for the time being, or at best temporarily make us forget the existence of miseries – they do not actually mitigate the miseries or bring lasting happiness. The doors of real happiness open when we abandon these illusionary and unnecessary activities and seek higher pleasure that can be enjoyed only in the human form of life.

The existence of this higher happiness can be proved only by an individual's experience of it. The first step towards this is to realize the triviality of the pleasure derived from the four sinful activities described above and decide to abstain from them. Next, one should practice the four regulative principles in conjunction with other spiritual practices (such as chanting, hearing, deity worship, etc.). As one progresses in such practice, he begins to experience a higher bliss and loses taste for temporary sensual pleasure and becomes fixed in spiritual consciousness. Once thus elevated, one does not risk fall down, just like a poor man who has gotten accustomed to a luxurious lifestyle does not miss his past poverty-stricken life. Lord Kṛṣṇa also confirms this in the *Gītā*:

*viṣayā vinivartantenirāhāsyā dehinaḥ
rasa-varjaṁ raso 'py asya paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate*

“The embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness. “

(Bhagavad-gītā 2.59)

In conclusion, following the regulative principles is imperative to spiritual progress and can easily be done when one practices other regulative principles of *bhakti-yoga*.

References

Bhagavad-gītā
Chapter 2 (Verse 2.59)
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam
Canto 1 (Verses 1.7.37, 1.7.38, 1.17.38); Canto 5 (5.26 Summary, Verse 5.26.20)
Other resources
The Four Principles of Freedom (Satyaraja Dasa)

CHAPTER SEVEN

Kṛṣṇa and Devatās

<p><i>na me viduḥ sura-gaṇāḥ prabhavaṁ na maharṣayaḥ aham ādir hi devānāṁ maharṣiṇāṁ ca sarvaśaḥ</i></p> <p>“Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin or opulences, for, in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and sages.”</p> <p><i>(Bhagavad-gītā 10.2)</i></p>	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>Vedic literatures establish the monotheistic nature of its religious and spiritual culture by clearly explaining who God is and who the other powerful living entities who are worshipped through Vedic ceremonies are.</p>
	<p><u>Who are these ‘multi-Gods’?</u></p> <p>The ‘multi-Gods’ described in the <i>Vedas</i> are not ‘Gods’ but demigods, headed by one powerful leader, God (Kṛṣṇa).</p>
	<p><u>Understanding the Position of the Demigods</u></p> <p>The demigods are empowered servants of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, and vastly differ from Him in both position and power.</p>
	<p><u>Honouring the Demigods</u></p> <p>One must properly honour the demigods as Vaiṣṇavas, since they are all devotees of Kṛṣṇa.</p>

1. Introduction

A famous author on a book on world religions once commented on Hindu religion as ‘a religion with a high God-to-man ratio’. Considering the number of deities worshipped by the Hindus, he calculated that there is one God to every three Hindus! Indeed, the presence of so many ‘Gods’ in a single religion is bewildering to the followers of the religion itself.

Why does Vedic religion, which we have seen to be so rational, recommend the worship of so many deities? Are all of them different forms of the same God? Does one require to worship all of them? Or is it sufficient to worship any one of them? Are all of them on an equal level or are some of these ‘Gods’ more powerful than the others?

These questions are natural in the mind of a novice to the Vedic tradition. Vedic literature, however, clearly answers these questions and establishes the monotheistic nature of its religious and spiritual culture. This chapter attempts to present these teachings and quell all doubts on the subject matter in the minds of the participants.

2. Who are these ‘multi-Gods’?

To state it plainly, Vedic religion describes one God and multi-demigods. In other words, these ‘multi-Gods’ are not ‘Gods’ but demigods, headed by one powerful leader, God. Vedic literature further says that Kṛṣṇa is that powerful God, while all the other worshipable deities mentioned are the demigods.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* clearly describes how Kṛṣṇa is the source of all the demigods. In the Third Canto, there is a description of how the demigods manifest and assume their powerful positions. It is stated therein that Kṛṣṇa, in His form as Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, is the source of the topmost demigod, Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma in turn takes care of manifesting the other demigods (who are thirty three crores in number) through his creative energies and empowered agents.

The position of Kṛṣṇa and the demigods can be crudely likened to the position of a prime minister and his cabinet ministers in a government. Kṛṣṇa, being the chief of all the demigods, is like the Prime Minister; and the demigods, being His servants, are like cabinet ministers who manage different portfolios of universal affairs. But Kṛṣṇa’s position is far superior to a prime minister in the material world because unlike an ordinary prime minister, He is in every sense the origin and source of power of the demigods.

3. Understanding the Position of the Demigods

As stated, the demigods are empowered servants of the Supreme Lord. The *Puruṣa-sūkta* confirms that the demigods are bodily limbs of the Supreme Lord in His universal form, and therefore they are His parts and parcels. There is, therefore, a great deal of difference between the demigods and the Supreme Lord, which Kṛṣṇa Himself explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. His teachings have been presented in this section.

Kṛṣṇa is the source and master of the demigods. Demigods are empowered servants of Kṛṣṇa.	
<p><i>amī hi tvām sura-saṅghā viśanti kecid bhītāḥ prāñjalayo gṛṇanti svastīty uktvā maharṣi-siddha-saṅghāḥ stuvanti tvām stutibhiḥ puṣkalābhiḥ</i></p> <p><i>rudrādityā vasavo ye ca sādhyā viśve 'śvinau marutaś coṣmapāś ca gandharva-yakṣāsura-siddha-saṅghā vikṣante tvām vismitāś caiva sarve</i></p> <p>“All the demigods are surrendering and entering into You. They are very much afraid, and with folded hands they are singing the Vedic hymns. The different manifestations of Lord Śiva, the Adityas, the Vasus, the Sādhyas, the Visvedevas, the two Asvis, the Maruts, the forefathers and the Gandharvas, the Yakṣas, Asuras, and all perfected demigods are beholding You in wonder.” (Arjuna to Kṛṣṇa on seeing His universal form, <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> 11.21-22)</p> <p><i>na me viduḥ sura-gaṇāḥ prabhavarīm na maharṣayaḥ aham ādir hi devānām maharṣiṇām ca sarvaśaḥ</i></p> <p>“Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin, for, in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and the sages.” (<i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> 10.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The demigods, being subordinate to Kṛṣṇa, surrender unto Him and always glorify Him with prayers. • Kṛṣṇa is the source of all the demigods and great sages who inhabit the universe. • Kṛṣṇa’s position is so superior to all the demigods that even they, despite being very great souls, cannot understand His glories completely.
<p>In the <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i>, Kṛṣṇa declares Himself to be the source and master of all the demigods. How He is the source of the demigods and their power is described in the <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i>. Further, in the Third Chapter of the <i>Gītā</i>, Kṛṣṇa declares that as the master of the demigods, it is He who has empowered them to carry out the maintenance of universal affairs by accepting sacrifices from human beings and awarding them appropriate results.</p> <p>The demigods also declare their subordination to Kṛṣṇa in their prayers to Him. The <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> especially contains prayers by great demigods such as Brahma, Śiva, Indra, Varuṇa, etc. to Lord Kṛṣṇa, where they glorify Him and accept Him to be their master. Kṛṣṇa, thus, is the source and master of the demigods in every sense.</p>	

Kṛṣṇa is the chief object of worship, primary enjoyer of all sacrifices and primary bestower of the results of sacrifices.

Demigods are secondary objects of worship, secondary enjoyers of sacrifices and secondary bestowers of the results of sacrifices.

*bhoktaram yajña -tapasam sarva-loka-mahesvaram
suhṛdam sarva-bhutanam jnatva mam santim rcchati*

“The sages, knowing Me as the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attain peace from the pangs of material miseries.”

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 5.29)

*ye 'py anya-devatā-bhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ
te 'pi mām eva kaunteya yajanty avidhi-pūrvakam*

“Whatever a man may sacrifice to other gods, O son of Kuntī, is really meant for Me alone, but it is offered without true understanding.”

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.23)

*sa tayā śraddhayā yuktas tasyārāadhanam ihate
labhate ca tataḥ kāmān mayaiva vihitān hi tāt*

“Endowed with such a faith, he seeks favors of a particular demigod and obtains his desires. But in actuality these benefits are bestowed by Me alone.”

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.22)

- In any kind of *yajña* or religious practice, Kṛṣṇa is always the chief beneficiary.
- Even by worshipping the demigods, one cannot derive benefit unless one worships the *yajña-puruṣa*, Kṛṣṇa. In other words, demigod-worship is indirect worship of Kṛṣṇa.
- It is Kṛṣṇa only who actually bestows the performer the result of his sacrifice or austerity. The demigods cannot independently bestow the results of *yajña*.

The Vedic literatures prescribe the performance of various *yajñas*, or sacrifices, to please the demigods. But they also say that the actual purpose of performing *yajña* is to satisfy the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa reconciles both these statements by declaring that even those who worship demigods worship only Him, but indirectly.

It is also stated in the scriptures that the demigods are bodily limbs of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu. Therefore, simply by worshipping Lord Viṣṇu (or Kṛṣṇa), one automatically worships all the demigods. Kṛṣṇa therefore says that one can satisfy all the demigods simply by directly worshipping Him. This is like pouring water to the root of a tree or like providing food to the belly – when the root is watered, all the other parts of the tree receive it and are automatically satisfied. Similarly, when we feed the stomach, all parts of the body receive food and are nourished. In the same way, by worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa directly, we are automatically worshipping all the demigods who are His bodily limbs and are satisfying them.

**Kṛṣṇa's body is transcendental and He Himself is above the laws of material nature.
Demigods' bodies are material and they are governed by the laws of material nature.**

ajo 'pi sann avyayātma

"I am unborn and My transcendental body never deteriorates."

(Bhagavad-gītā 4.6)

*na tad asti prthivyām vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ
sattvaṁ prakṛti-jair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ*

"There is no being existing, either here or among the demigods in the higher planetary systems, which is freed from the three modes of material nature."

(Bhagavad-gītā 18.40)

- Kṛṣṇa is *Viṣṇu-tattva* while the demigods (with the exception of Lord Śiva) belong to the category of *jīva-tattva*.
- Kṛṣṇa's body is transcendental i.e. not made of material elements, and is therefore not subject to material transformations (birth, death, old age, disease). The bodies of the demigods (with the exception of Lord Śiva), on the other hand, are material and subject to these transformations.
- Kṛṣṇa, being the master of material nature, is above its laws. But the demigods are ruled by material laws just like the other mortals in the universe.

One of the most important differences between the demigods and Kṛṣṇa is their nature – Kṛṣṇa is of the category of *Viṣṇu-tattva*, while the demigods are of the category of *jīva-tattva*. In other words, Kṛṣṇa is always the Supreme Lord, one who can never be equalled or surpassed, while the demigods are living entities who have been bestowed with immense power by dint of their past piety.

The demigods are subject to material transformations of birth, old age, disease and death, although their life spans are inconceivably longer and immeasurably happier than ours. At the end of their lives, they have to relinquish their positions and make way for other living entities who have qualified themselves to occupy them. Kṛṣṇa, on the other hand, neither undergoes such transformations, nor needs to relinquish His position at any time – He is eternally the Supreme Lord.

**Kṛṣṇa can award both material and spiritual benedictions.
Demigods can award only material benedictions.**

*catur-vidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino 'rjuna
ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bharataṣabha*

“O best among the Bhāratas [Arjuna], four kinds of pious men render devotional service unto Me – the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute.”
(*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.16)

*kāṅkṣantaḥ karmaṇām siddhiṁ yajanta iha devatāḥ
kṣiprām hi mānuṣe loke siddhir bhavati karma-jā*

“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-gītā* 4.12)

- Demigod worship is purely on a fruitive platform i.e. they can award material benedictions based on the powers invested in them. But Kṛṣṇa can not only award any kind of material benediction to His devotee, He can also purify the devotee of material propensities by such a transaction.

- Only Kṛṣṇa can award spiritual benedictions of *mukti* (liberation from material bondage) and *bhakti* (devotion to the Supreme Lord), which are considered the highest of all benedictions. Demigods themselves seek these boons and are incapable of awarding them.

There is a great deal of difference between the results obtained from demigod worship and Kṛṣṇa worship.

Demigod worship is transactive – the worshipper worships a particular demigod as per the injunctions of the *Vedas* and if he is successful in pleasing the demigod, he gets the result he desires. He is allowed to enjoy the result only as long as his accrued pious credit allows him, after which he has to again perform *yajña* to gain pious credit. In other words, worship of demigods is like a business transaction where piety is earned by regulated worship and the results are limited and temporary. Also, since demigod worshipers do not get purified of material propensities by their worship, they do not come to the point of realizing that there is a goal more important to human life than the temporary enjoyment they are seeking.

Worship of Kṛṣṇa, on the other hand, is reciprocative. Whether a devotee approaches Kṛṣṇa with material or spiritual desires, Kṛṣṇa takes charge of His life. Even when He is fulfilling a devotee's material desires, Kṛṣṇa's benedictions are neither limited nor temporary, for in the process He gains permanent purification and enlightenment about the higher goal of life. Thus he soon realizes that the highest benediction that can be sought is *bhakti*, or devotion to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Kṛṣṇa then kindly gives the devotee shelter at His lotus feet, thus bestowing upon him unending peace and happiness.

Kṛṣṇa's abode is spiritual, attaining which one never returns to the mortal planets again. Demigods' abodes are material, from where one returns to the earthly planets once his accrued pious credit is exhausted.

devān deva-yajo yānti mad-bhaktā yānti mām api

"Those who worship the demigods go to the planets of the demigods, but My devotees ultimately reach My supreme planet."

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.23)

*ā-brahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ punar āvartino 'rjuna
mām upetya tu kaunteya punar janma na vidyate*

"From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode, O son of Kuntī, never takes birth again."

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 8.16)

*te tarṇ bhuktvā svarga-lokaṁ viśālaṁ
kṣīṇe puṇye martya-lokaṁ viśanti
evaṁ trayī-dharmam anuprapannā
gatāgataṁ kāmā-kāmā labhante*

"When they have thus enjoyed heavenly sense pleasure, they return to this mortal planet again. Thus, through the Vedic principles, they achieve only flickering happiness."

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.21)

*worshippers of demigods

- Kṛṣṇa's abode is spiritual i.e. it exists eternally in the spiritual sky and is never destroyed. Demigods' planets, however, are within the material world and are subject to destruction at the time of universal annihilation.

- One who worships Kṛṣṇa ultimately attains the spiritual planets and rises above the material miseries of birth, death, old age and disease. One who worships the demigods attains the planet of the demigods, but returns again to the earthly planet once his pious credit is exhausted.

Kṛṣṇa resides in His various forms in innumerable planets in the spiritual sky, called *Vaikuṇṭha*. The nature of these planets has been described as eternally existing and full of living entities who are all-knowledgeable and blissful. *Śāstras* say that the ultimate goal of human life is to reach these planets, from where one never returns to the material world (where one is subjected to birth, death, old age and disease) again.

The planets of the demigods, on the other hand, have been described as being situated in the material sky, in the heavenly regions of the universe. By worshipping a particular demigod, one can reach his planet, but one is not allowed to stay there for ever. One has to return to earth once his pious credit is exhausted. The benediction of reaching the planets of the demigods is therefore temporary, just like all their other benedictions.

The Special Trinity – Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva

It is sometimes misunderstood that Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva are at an equal level since they are in charge of creation, maintenance and destruction of the material world. The *śāstric* version, however, is different.

The *śāstras* explain that these three divinities are qualitative incarnations of the Supreme Lord (technically called *guṇa-avatāras*) for the purpose of creation, maintenance and destruction of the material universe. There is, however, a clear distinction in their qualitative natures.

Lord Brahma is the original created being responsible for the creation of the universe. He is of the category of *jīva-tattva*. Lord Brahma is also the head of all the demigods. It is him that the demigods approach when they are in distress, and he in turn approaches the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu. The Vedic knowledge was first imparted to Brahma by the Supreme Lord. He also has the longest lifespan in the universe – the *Gītā* mentions that his one day is 8.64 billion years long, his year comprises of 360 such days and he lives for 100 such years.

Lord Viṣṇu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, replete with six opulences. He is responsible for maintenance of the universe. He belongs to the category of *Viṣṇu-tattva* – in other words, He is not a demigod, but is a plenary portion of the Supreme Lord Himself. He always remains above the modes of material nature.

Lord Śiva is not of the category of *jīva-tattva*, but he is not of the category of *Viṣṇu-tattva* either. His position is somewhere in between. In the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, he has been likened to yoghurt, while Lord Viṣṇu is likened to milk. Although yogurt is nothing but transformed milk, yogurt cannot be accepted as milk. Similarly, although Lord Śiva holds almost all the powers of Lord Viṣṇu, and although he is far superior to all living entities (including Lord Brahma), he is not the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu. He is in charge of the material mode of ignorance and plays an important role in the destruction of the material world.

A special mention of the position of Lord Śiva's consort, Durgā Devī, can also be made here. She is the personified representation of the Lord's external potency, *māyā*. The *Brahma-saṁhitā* states that the external energy works like a shadow of the Supreme Lord, carrying out His orders in running the material world. By her activities, she keeps the living entities in ignorance of the truth about the Supreme Lord. In the *Gītā*, the Lord states that the only way to get free from her clutches and get out of the miseries she imposes on living entities is to surrender to Him.

4. Honouring the Demigods

As explained, as aspiring Vaiṣṇavas, we need only to depend on Kṛṣṇa and not the demigods for the fulfillment of our aspirations. Does this mean that we ignore the presence of the demigods, or worse still, stop honouring them?

Certainly not. One must respect the demigods as Vaiṣṇavas, since they are all devotees of Kṛṣṇa. Showing them disrespect is as good as disrespecting Kṛṣṇa. Vaiṣṇavas, therefore, honour the demigods as authorized representatives of the Supreme Lord. In fact, the demigods are very pleased to be recognized as devotees and are capable of recommending for our spiritual progress to the Supreme Lord.

One should, however, guard against glorifying them independent of Kṛṣṇa or as the Supreme, since this greatly displeases them and Kṛṣṇa. Neither should one ask for material benefits from them. One may however pray to them for mercy to progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The Demigod Dilemma

There is often a lot of confusion about the position of the demigods and their worship amongst neophyte devotees. The following contains two e-mails received by FOLK preachers in this regard. Imagine you are the preacher who received these mails. With the help of your facilitator, complete the replies below.

E-mail 1: Some Common Questions about Demigod Worship

Hare Kṛṣṇa Prabhu,
This is Vamsi Krishna from the FOLK-2 batch. I attended your session on 'Kṛṣṇa and *Devatās*' last weekend. The session was a real eye opener for me and I find myself still trying to come to terms with most of what I learnt. I have a few doubts and would be obliged if you could clarify them for me.

Firstly, I am still trying to assimilate the fact that the *devatās* are *servants* of Kṛṣṇa. Does it not in a way demean their position? Also, I have heard that in many places in the *Vedas*, Lord Śiva is called the Supreme Lord – is this true? If so, how do I understand Kṛṣṇa's statements in the *Gītā* and on what basis do I accept Him to be superior to Lord Śiva?

You also said that demigods have to leave their positions and make way for others to occupy them at the end of their terms. Does this mean that demigods also die (it's a concept rather hard to conceive for me!)? And if they *do* die, what kind of body will they get next? Also prabhu, what kind of living entities occupy their positions?

Prabhu, I am currently worshipping a few demigods (Lord Gaṇeśa, Lord Śiva and Goddess Durgā) at my altar along with pictures of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa (which I added after starting the FOLK-2 course). Would it not be wrong to just remove the pictures of the demigods even if they are not supreme? I mean, will it not be offensive to them? Frankly prabhu, I am personally not fully convinced that I should worship *only* Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa – what do you suggest I do?

Thank you prabhu,
Vamsi Krishna

Preacher's Reply:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Vamsi,
I am happy to know that you have regularly been attending FOLK-2 sessions. I understand that the concepts in the *Gītā* about the position of Kṛṣṇa and the *devatās* sound new, almost unbelievable to many – but they become easy to accept if you understand the position of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa and His sublime teachings. I am sure you will have a certain level of conviction already if you have been attending the sessions.

Coming to your questions now. You have asked if it is not demeaning to call the demigods 'servants of Kṛṣṇa'. Much to the contrary, I'd say,

You have asked if there are verses in the Vedic scriptures that declare Lord Śiva to be the Supreme Lord. This is one of the most frequent questions I encounter. While you will find some verses that glorify Lord Śiva's position as

The scriptures *do* however glorify him as the greatest devotee of Lord Viṣṇu –

There is ample evidence in the Vedic literature itself for you to accept Kṛṣṇa's superiority over Lord Śiva. For one thing,

You may also be aware of the pastime where Lord Śiva took shelter of Lord Kṛṣṇa

All these prove beyond doubt that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

You have also asked me the basis on which you should accept Kṛṣṇa's words in the *Gītā*. I'd like to remind you that Kṛṣṇa is

You should, therefore, accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead based on His own statements in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

And do the demigods die? Where do they go after death? Who occupies their positions? I remember addressing these questions in class.

I can understand that you find it pretty difficult to believe that demigods do not eternally occupy their posts – but since we get this information from the scriptures, we should accept it. But this does not mean that we simply take them to be ordinary beings like us, perhaps a little more powerful – we should always remember that we can never match their position or calibre.

Regarding the demigods you are currently worshipping at your altar, I suggest you do not remove them, especially if you are worshipping them with your family. You may end up hurting the feelings of your family. As I had said,

If you are staying separately, I'd request you to worship Kṛṣṇa exclusively. Since you say that you are not fully convinced about this, I'd suggest

Be assured that the demigods will not be offended by the change in your object of worship. They will, on the contrary,

I implore you to study the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* carefully, wherein the Lord reveals the truth about Himself and the demigods. By carefully understanding these teachings, you will be able to appreciate Kṛṣṇa's position and will develop your conviction. You will then be convinced that Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship is sufficient.

Regards,
Rādhā-Dāmodara Dāsa

E-mail 2: Visiting Demigod Temples while Travelling

Dear Prabhu,

Hare Kṛṣṇa.

I will be going to Udupi next week with my family. My parents and brother are not devotees and are keen to visit demigod temples also on the way – is there anything wrong if I visit demigod temples prabhu? Also, what should I do if they force me to have *prasādam* and *caraṇāmṛta* from these temples?

Regards,

Shridhar

Preacher's Reply:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Shridhar,

I am happy to hear about your Udupi trip.

If I remember correctly, you had discussed your parents' staunch faith in the demigods with me some time ago. I again repeat what I had told you then – do not forcibly try to convince them.

There is nothing wrong in visiting the temples of demigods, so long as you don't make that the mission of your trip.

As far as the *prasādam* and *caraṇāmṛta* are concerned,

Have a Kṛṣṇa conscious and enjoyable trip.

Regards,

Jagannātha Dāsa

References

Bhagavad-gītā

Introduction; Chapter 1 (Verse 1.41); Chapter 2 (Verse 2.62); Chapter 3 (Verses 3.11, 3.12, 3.14, 3.16); Chapter 4 (Verses 4.6, 4.12, 4.25); Chapter 5 (Verse 5.29); Chapter 6 (Verse 6.47); Chapter 7 (Verses 7.13, 7.16, 7.20, 7.21, 7.22, 7.23); Chapter 8 (Verse 8.16); Chapter 9 (Verses 9.3, 9.21, 9.23); Chapter 10 (Verse 10.2); Chapter 11 (Verse 11.21); Chapter 18 (Verse 18.60)

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

Canto 1 (Verses 1.2.26, 1.2.28-29, 1.3.5); Canto 2 (Verses 2.4.22, 2.6.34); Canto 3 (Verses 3.3.12, 3.9.25); Canto 4 (Verses 4.8.6, 4.12.9, 4.24.30, 4.24.28, 4.24.42, 4.30.24, 4.31.14); Canto 5 (Verse 5.20.44); Canto 7 (Verse 7.3.28); Canto 10 (Verse 10.2.40)

Other resources

Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā (Verses 5.2, 5.44, 5.45)



Śrīla Prabhupāda Uvāca



It is imperative, therefore, that one accept
a spiritual master if he at all desires
to gain the favor of the Lord. The service
of the spiritual master is essential. If there
is no chance to serve the spiritual master
directly, a devotee should serve him
by remembering his instructions.

There is no difference between the
spiritual master's instructions and
the spiritual master himself.

In his absence, therefore, his words of
direction should be the pride of the disciple.

(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.35)



SECTION TWO

VAIṢṆAVA ETIQUETTE

Vaiṣṇava Etiquette

What is Vaiṣṇava etiquette?

The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* describes Vaiṣṇava etiquette as the behaviour of a pure Vaiṣṇava. By his ideal behaviour, a pure devotee sets the standard for all of us to follow.

Why follow Vaiṣṇava etiquette?

As aspiring Vaiṣṇavas, it is not adequate to simply learn the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in theory – it is equally important to understand how to practice them. As ambassadors of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa, we should conduct ourselves in a way that draws appreciation for them. We should avoid any conduct which will bring them to disrepute. Learning the rules and regulations of Vaiṣṇava behaviour will help us do this.

Proper Vaiṣṇava behaviour will also help us progress faster in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by helping us learn how to conduct ourselves at an external level and thus create an atmosphere where purification at an internal level becomes easier.

But the purpose of following Vaiṣṇava etiquette is not merely to learn some rules and regulations. Vaiṣṇava etiquette is a practical application of the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is therefore important to understand the purpose behind following etiquette and imbibe the qualities they are trying to inculcate.

In the lessons that follow, we attempt to make you aware of the different aspects of Vaiṣṇava behaviour. The section ‘Learning the Etiquette’ is meant to acquaint the reader with different aspects of Vaiṣṇava behaviour, while ‘Understanding the Etiquette’ is meant to help the reader understand why the etiquette should be followed.

SESSION ONE

Behaviour and Kīrtana

Part I: Behaviour

The purpose of practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to revive our natural relationship with the Supreme Lord as His eternal servant. Acting in a mood of servitorship towards the Lord and all the living entities (who are His parts and parcels) is therefore the most fundamental aspect of Vaiṣṇava behaviour. The rules and regulations of Vaiṣṇava etiquette are built on this single foundational aspect.

While the fundamental aspects of Vaiṣṇava behaviour constitute the subject matter of this entire section, two basic aspects have been introduced in this session to serve as a starting point for the newcomer to begin his journey in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Dealing with Devotees

One should respectfully address all men devotees as '*Prabhu*' and all women devotees (except one's wife) as '*Mātāji*'. One should behave humbly and respectfully towards all devotees, taking special care to treat the spiritual master and seniors reverentially.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

When dealing with devotees, one should:

- submissively inquire from his seniors, carry out their instructions and aspire to be their obedient servant
- befriend, assist and encourage his equals
- serve his juniors by guiding, directing, encouraging and enlightening them

Don'ts

In course of our interactions, one should not:

- behave rudely or offensively towards others
- retort back when criticized or offended
- find fault with other devotees
- give up basic courtesies and formalities of behaviour considering them to be mundane

Understanding the Etiquette

- The word '*Prabhu*' means 'master'. Addressing a fellow Vaiṣṇava as '*Prabhu*' is an opportunity for us to remind ourselves of our eternal position as a servant of the Lord and to carry out our service in that attitude. As described above, we should aspire to serve all Vaiṣṇavas, be they our seniors, equals or juniors, in this mood.
- Addressing women devotees, be they older or younger, as '*Mātāji*' or 'mother' helps us to develop a sense of respect towards them.
- One should, however, not try to become a '*Prabhu*' himself and receive service just because he is being addressed so.

Attending Sessions

One should attend discourses on spiritual topics with a keen interest to hear and learn about the Lord. To derive proper benefit from such discourses, one should hear submissively and attentively.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

When attending sessions, one should:

- be on time for the session
- hear attentively all that is being discussed
- maintain a submissive attitude while hearing
- move to the side/end of the hall and stand up if one feels excessively sleepy or distracted
- humbly put forth enquiries and get them clarified
- clarify any especially difficult points (that may eat up a lot of the session time) with the speaker after the session if required

Don'ts

When a session is in progress, one should not:

- talk to others or distract them in any other way
- disrupt the session, start an argument or vehemently oppose the speaker
- be disrespectful in any way to the speaker or the philosophy
- move in and out of the room needlessly

Understanding the Etiquette

- In Kali-yuga, constant hearing of the name, qualities, pastimes, etc. of the Supreme Lord is the only way of self-realization deemed possible. By constantly hearing about the Lord from authoritative sources, one's mind becomes purified of all contamination and one becomes fixed spiritually.
- Discourses by experienced speakers provide the beginner with an opportunity to hear and learn transcendental subject matter. The novice should therefore make best use of the opportunity by hearing attentively and submissively about the Lord.

Part II: Kīrtana

Kīrtana, or *sankīrtana*, refers to the congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord. It was first taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (the incarnation of the Lord for Kali-yuga), who also deemed it to be the only possible method for self realization in this age. Kīrtana is performed to glorify the Lord by chanting His names to the accompaniment of musical instruments (such as *kartāla*, *mṛdaṅga*, etc.) and devotional dancing. *Kīrtana* is also performed during Deity worship (*ārati*, *ābhiṣekam*, procession, etc.).

In His *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers, Lord Caitanya explains that Kṛṣṇa *sankīrtana* has the potency to clean the heart of all impurities and is therefore the greatest benediction to humanity. He further says that purified chanting can help us taste transcendental bliss. One should therefore participate in *sankīrtana* full heartedly with an intent to glorify the Lord and purify himself in the process.

Attending Kīrtana

One should attend *kīrtana* in a mood of sincere devotion, with an intent to glorify the Lord.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

During *kīrtana*, one should:

- sing enthusiastically in chorus after the lead singer
- follow the same melody as the lead singer
- chant the entire *mantra* clearly and distinctly
- concentrate on the sound vibration at all times
- bring the mind back to the sound vibration should it wander away

Don'ts

During *kīrtana*, one should not:

- avoid the *kīrtana* due to material reasons (hall getting too stuffy, crowded, etc.)
- sing before or while the lead singer is singing
- sing out of tune with the group
- talk, make fun of others' singing or dancing, do *japa* (catch up with balance rounds) or perform any other activity (talk, discuss in a group, read in the hall, etc.)
- distract other devotees performing *kīrtana* in any way
- bring his own instruments and begin playing unless authorized to do so

Understanding the Etiquette

By the sincere performance of *kīrtana*, one

- directly associates with the Lord, since His name is non-different from Him
- gets an opportunity to glorify the Lord by two of the nine recommended processes of devotional service (hearing and chanting – *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*)
- gets an opportunity to purify himself by chanting

One should therefore participate enthusiastically in the *kīrtana*.

Dancing During Kīrtana

Devotional dancing, which accompanies *kīrtana*, is also an expression of a devotee's love for the Lord. One should learn to dance the traditional Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava way, as Śrīla Prabhupāda has taught.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

When dancing, one should:

- dance for the pleasure of the Lord
- dance the traditional Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava way, with arms raised
- dance gracefully and enthusiastically
- maintain formations when dancing in a group
- encourage others to dance, but not force them

Don'ts

When dancing, one should not:

- dance wildly
- dance with members of the opposite sex (men and women should dance separately)
- dance in a manner or with a desire to attract attention to oneself
- make fun of others' dancing
- spin around with arms outstretched
- push others excessively while moving in a group

Understanding the Etiquette

- Devotional dancing, unlike ordinary dancing, is performed on a transcendental plane and, like devotional singing, is also a way to glorify the Lord.
- When done sincerely, such dancing burns away the accumulated sinful reactions of the performer and awards him transcendental bliss.

One should therefore dance before the Lord for His pleasure and maintain a pure consciousness while dancing.



Dancing alone with arms outstretched



Dancing in line – arms outstretched

Attending Ārati

Ārati, also called *nirāñjana* or *dṛṣṭi*, refers to waving auspicious items before the Deity and is one of the main aspects of Deity worship recommended in the scriptures. *Ārati* is performed at fixed times of the day in a temple. *Kīrtana* usually accompanies *ārati*. One should follow the rules of attending *kīrtana* in addition to the ones mentioned below when attending *ārati*.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

When attending *ārati*, one should:

- carefully observe the *ārati* as it is being performed
- follow the rules and regulations for attending *kīrtana* and dancing, since chanting and dancing usually accompany the *ārati* ceremony
- accept the items offered to the Lord (*dhūpa*, *teertha*, etc.) when it is offered to the devotees
- perform *ārati* to the Lord on special occasions, such as during the month of Kārtika

Don'ts

When attending *ārati*, one should not:

- do anything to disrupt the performance of *ārati*
- distract others from viewing the *ārati*
- pass any unfavourable comments about the way in which *ārati* is performed
- accept the offered items before it is offered to the spiritual master

Understanding the Etiquette

Viewing the *ārati* of the Lord helps one burn past sinful reactions. In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, it is stated, "If someone sees the face of the Lord while *ārati* is going on, he can be relieved of all sinful reactions coming from many thousands and millions of years past."

Prema-dhvanī Prayers

The *Prema-dhvanī*, literally meaning ‘words of love’, signifies the glorification of the Lord, His associates and places connected to His pastimes. It is recited at the end of the *kīrtana* by the most senior devotee present. During the *Prema-dhvanī*, devotees offer obeisance to *guru* and Kṛṣṇa and respond to each prayer by saying, ‘Jaya!’ (‘All glories!’).

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

During the *prema-dhvanī*, one should:

- bow down before the Lord and the spiritual master
- respond with ‘Jaya!’ at the end of each *mantra*
- respond with ‘*hari haribol*’ when the leader calls out ‘*Nitāi-Gaurā-premānande!*’
- respond with ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa!’ when the leader calls ‘All glories to the assembled devotees!’
- recite Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *praṇāma mantra* at the end before rising

Don’ts

- One should not engage in any other activity when the *prema-dhvanī* is being recited.
- One should immediately bow down when the *prema-dhvanī* begins even if one is engaged in some other activity.

The Prema-dhvāṇī

*Jaya om viṣṇu-pāda paramahaṁsa
parivrājakācārya aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad
Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami
Prabhupāda ki jaya!*

*ISKCON-Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda-kī
jaya!*

*Jaya om viṣṇu-pāda paramahaṁsa
parivrājakācārya aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda-
kī jaya!*

Ananta koṭi vaiṣṇava-vṛnda ki jaya!

Nāmācārya Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura ki jaya!

*Premse kaho Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Prabhu
Nityānanda, Śrī Advaita, Gadādhara, Śrīvāsādi
Gaura-bhakta-vṛnda ki jaya!*

*Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Gopa-Gopīnātha, Śyāma-
kuṇḍa, Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Gīri-Govardhana ki jaya!*

*Gaṅgā-mayī ki jaya!
Yamunā-mayī ki jaya!
Tulasī-devī ki jaya!
Bhakti-devī ki jaya!*

Mathura-Vṛndāvana-dhāma ki jaya!

Navadvīpa-Mayapur dhāma ki jaya!

Jagannātha Purī kṣetra ki jaya!

*Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa-candra ki jaya!
Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa Balarāma ki jaya!
Śrī Śrī Nītāi-Gaurāṅga ki jaya!
Śrī Śrīnivāsa Govinda ki jaya!
Śrī Prahlāda Nṛsiṁhadev ki jaya!*

Harināma saṅkīrtana ki jaya!

Samavetā bhakta-vṛnda ki jaya!

All glories to the ācārya Om Viṣṇupāda 108 Tridaṇḍī
Goswāmī Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami
Mahārāja Prabhupāda!

All glories to ISKCON's founder Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda!

All glories to the ācārya Om Viṣṇupāda 108 Tridaṇḍī
Goswami Bhaktisiddhānta Swami Mahārāja Prabhupāda!

All glories to the unlimited millions of devotees of Lord
Kṛṣṇa!

All glories to the Nāma-ācārya, Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura!

Call out with love the names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Prabhu
Nityānanda, Śrī Advaita, Gadādhara, and all the devotees
of Lord Caitanya, headed by Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. (The Pañca-
tattva)!

All glories to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boys of
Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa as the master of the cowherd girls,
Kṛṣṇa's and Rādhā's bathing ponds (Śyāma-kuṇḍa and
Rādhā-kuṇḍa), and the sacred Govardhana Hill!

All glories to the River Ganges!
All glories to the Yamunā River!
All glories to the sacred Tulasī plant!
All glories to Bhakti-devī, the goddess of devotion!

All glories to the holy land of Vṛndāvana, the place of
Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes!

All glories to the holy land of Navadvīpa, the place of Lord
Caitanya's pastimes!

All glories to Purī-dhāma, the abode of Lord Jagannātha!

All glories to Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa-candra!
All glories to Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa Balarāma!
All glories to Śrī Śrī Nītāi-Gaurāṅga!
All glories to Śrī Śrīnivāsa Govinda!
All glories to Śrī Prahlāda Nṛsiṁhadev!

All glories to the congregational chanting of the holy
names!

All glories to the devotees!

Nitāi-Gaurā-premānande!

Chant the names of the Lord in the ecstasy of love for Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda!

All glories to the assembled devotees! (3 times)

All glories to Śrī *Guru* and Gaurāṅga!

All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda!

SESSION TWO

Appearance and Habits

An aspiring Vaiṣṇava, being an ambassador of the spiritual master and the Lord, should carry himself in a way that reminds people of Kṛṣṇa. The manner in which an aspiring devotee dresses, presents himself, behaves and lives should all be reminiscent of a devotee of the Lord. External aspects of devotional service such as appearance, personal habits and personal hygiene are instrumental in fostering important Vaiṣṇava traits such as cleanliness, simplicity, regulation, austerity, etc. Culturing these traits also helps one create a favourable atmosphere in which the finer aspects of Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be cultivated.

Dressing like a Vaiṣṇava

A Vaiṣṇava can be immediately recognized by his distinctive way of dressing. Men devotees should be dressed in *dhotī* and *kurtā* (or when not possible, in simple clothes) and should wear *tilaka* and a *kaṇṭhi-mālā*. Women devotees should be dressed in traditional clothing and should wear *tilaka* and a *kaṇṭhi-mālā*. One should avoid dressing opulently or fashionably.

Dressing:

Dos:

When dressing in traditional Vaiṣṇava clothing, one should:

- wear a freshly washed white *dhotī* and *kurtā*
- make sure that the clothes are neat and well-fitting

When it is not possible to dress in traditional clothing, one should:

- dress in simple but presentable clothing
- wear neat, well-fitting clothing
- always wash and iron clothing before wearing

Don'ts:

When dressing in traditional Vaiṣṇava clothing, one should not:

- wear clothes from the previous day
- use fashionable accessories

When it is not possible to dress in traditional clothing, one should not:

- wear clothes from the previous day
- wear flashy, opulent or fashionable clothing
- use perfumes, cosmetics or other unnecessary accessories

Tilaka:

Dos:

- *Tilaka* should be worn with *gopī-candana* immediately after taking a bath.
- *Tilaka* should be applied to the twelve parts of the body* while chanting the appropriate *mantras*.
- When it is not possible to wear *tilaka* prominently, one should mark the *tilaka* with water.

* refer Appendix I

Don'ts:

- One should not apply *tilaka* in the bathroom.
- One who is not chanting or practicing the regulative principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness should not wear *tilaka*, particularly outside the temple.

Kaṇṭhi-mālā:

Dos:

- A devotee may wear a *kaṇṭhi-mālā* in two or three rounds around the neck.
- The *mālā* should be wrapped around the base of the throat and should be clearly visible.
- The beads should ideally be made of *Tulasī* wood.
- The beads should first be offered to the Lord before wearing.

Don'ts:

- One should not wear *kaṇṭhi-mālā* as a matter of fashion.
- One who is not chanting or practicing the regulative principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness should not wear *kaṇṭhi-mālā*, particularly outside the temple.

Hair and beard:

Dos:

- A full-time devotee should maintain a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *śika* (a tuft of hair on the center of the head, not more than an inch and a half across).
- A devotee who is not dedicated full-time – such as a FOLK devotee – should maintain closely cropped and neatly combed hair.
- One should always be clean shaven and not have a beard or moustache.

Don'ts:

- One who is not chanting or practicing the regulative principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness should not maintain a *śika*.

Understanding the Etiquette

- Simplicity is one of the twenty six qualities of a Vaiṣṇava, and therefore an aspiring devotee should dress as simply (but presentably) as possible. Since gaudy dressing, fashionable hairstyles and use of flashy accessories are against the principle of simplicity, they should be avoided.
- Distinctive aspects such as the *tilaka* and *kaṇṭhi-mālā* are worn to remind the devotee and everyone around him that he is a servant of the Lord. The *Tilaka* markings (which signify the lotus feet of Lord Viṣṇu) are specifically worn to decorate the body as a temple of the Lord, while the *kaṇṭhi-mālā* is worn to indicate a devotee's surrender to the Lord.



Traditional Vaiṣṇava attire



A devotee in plain clothes



Tilaka and kanṭhi-mālā

Personal Hygiene

Cleanliness is one of the twenty six qualities of a Vaiṣṇava. An aspiring Vaiṣṇava should therefore maintain the highest level of personal cleanliness and hygiene.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

One should:

- always wear neat, fresh clothes
- take a bath after
 - rising early in the morning
 - long naps
 - excessively perspiring
 - becoming contaminated in any way
- wash hands and feet after passing water
- wash hands with soap after touching something unclean
- clip nails short and keep them clean
- throw the clipped nails into the dust bin
- keep one's home and surroundings neat and tidy

Don'ts

One should not:

- put his hands into his mouth/nose/ears/eyes
- when compelled to do so, wash hands thoroughly after touching mouth/nose/ears/eyes
- use others' personal items (such as soap, towel, brush, etc.)
- spit around or clean one's nose in public places

Understanding the Etiquette

- As mentioned, cleanliness is one of the twenty six qualities of a Vaiṣṇava. A Vaiṣṇava maintains cleanliness at two levels – internal (by chanting and hearing about the Lord) and external (by cultivating clean habits).
- A high standard of external cleanliness helps cultivate a cleaner consciousness, which in turn helps one cultivate a better level of internal cleanliness.

Personal Habits

An aspiring Vaiṣṇava should always have good personal habits. Regulated habits are especially favourable for one's spiritual practice.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

One should:

- follow a disciplined lifestyle by practicing moderation in eating, sleeping, working and recreation
- rise early in the morning, preferably during *brāhma-muhūrta* (one-and-a-half hours before sunrise)
- retire to bed early every night
- get about six to six-and-a-half hours of sleep every night
- use the right hand for eating, chanting, accepting or giving something
- spend Kṛṣṇa's resources (especially money) cautiously
- cultivate Kṛṣṇa conscious traits in the association of devotees

Don'ts

One should not:

- sleep on one's stomach
- waste Kṛṣṇa's energies like soap, toothpaste, electricity, water, etc.
- lead a lavish lifestyle

Understanding the Etiquette

An aspiring Vaiṣṇava should cultivate habits that are favourable to his devotional practice. Personal habits such as cleanliness, regulation and proper use of Kṛṣṇa's energies help one progress on the spiritual path.

- As explained, cleanliness fosters good consciousness.
- Regulation helps one slowly come to the standard of practicing the principles of spiritual life as laid down by the spiritual master. It also helps one control his senses by limiting unrestricted sense enjoyment which could destroy devotional service.
- Carefully using Kṛṣṇa's energies helps one realize that everything belongs to the Lord and should be used only for the Lord.

SESSION THREE

Temple Etiquette

The Deity of the Lord, also called the *arcā-vigraha*, is an incarnation of the Supreme Lord through which He accepts the service of His devotee. Deity worship should not be confused with idol worship.

Just as we take special care to receive a special guest, we should take special care to receive the Deity. In the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī discusses various rules and regulations that are to be followed when dealing with the Lord in His Deity form. All these rules are meant to teach us how to treat the Lord respectfully.

Entering the Temple

One should enter the temple in a mood of humility and offer respect to the Vaiṣṇavas, spiritual master and the Lord by paying prostrated obeisances.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

On entering the temple, one should:

- offer obeisance when entering and exiting the temple. One should chant '*Jai Śrīla Prabhupāda!*' when bowing down. If possible, one may also chant Śrīla Prabhupāda *praṇāma mantra*
- offer full prostrated obeisance (*sāṣṭāṅga praṇāma*) to Śrīla Prabhupāda and chant the *praṇāma mantra* – '*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya...*'*
- next, move towards the Deities and offer *sāṣṭāṅga praṇāma*, keeping the Deities to the left side, and chant the respective *praṇāma mantras**
- offer obeisance as shown in the illustrations

* refer Appendix II

Women should offer only *pañcāṅga praṇāma* (bow down before the Deity without fully prostrating – see illustration).

Don'ts

When entering the temple, one should not:

- enter with footwear on
- enter in an unclean state
- enter in the dark
- offer obeisance with one hand

Understanding the Etiquette

The above mentioned rules for entering the temple are a way to express our humility and respect for the spiritual master and the Supreme Lord.

Types of acceptable obeisance



Offering obeisance keeping the Deities to the left side



Pañcāṅga praṇāma



Sāṣṭāṅga praṇāma (to be offered only by men)

Unacceptable ways of offering obeisance



Pañcāṅga praṇāma - with one hand



Pañcāṅga praṇāma - with items in hand



Sāṣṭāṅga praṇāma – head to the side



Sāṣṭāṅga praṇāma - head facing straight, head resting on hands and not touching the ground



Half bent

Greeting the Deity

Taking *darśana* of the Lord in the temple gives us an opportunity to see the Lord in His Deity form. One should take *darśana* of the Lord with devotion, begging for His mercy to engage in His service.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

One should take *darśana* as follows:

- The process of meditating on the Lord should begin from His lotus feet and progress to His smiling face. One should first meditate upon the lotus feet, then the calves, then the thighs, and in this way higher and higher till one reaches the Lord's lotus face.
- The order of *darśana* should be from the left hand corner to the right hand corner. For example, in the Rādhā Kṛṣṇa-candra temple, this would mean taking *darśana* of the *guru paramparā*, Nityānanda Prabhu and moving rightwards towards Kṛṣṇa at the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma altar.
- One may then circumambulate the Deity three times.

Don'ts

When taking *darśana*, one should not:

- greet the Deities without first offering respect to the spiritual master
- obstruct the view of other devotees (one may stand to the side of the altar)
- directly look at the lotus face of the Lord without meditating on Him from the lotus feet upwards
- circumambulate in front of the Deity

Understanding the Etiquette

- One should always be conscious that the Deity is the Supreme Lord personally standing before us. With this understanding, one should take *darśana* of the Deity with devotion, in a mood of humility and servitorship.
- Taking *darśana* of the Lord from the lotus feet, meditating on every part of His body and gradually moving towards His lotus face helps us gradually appreciate the personal and transcendental nature of the Lord's body.
- Circumambulating the Lord is a way to worship Him with our whole body and thus show our respect to Him. It also helps us burn past sinful activities.

Talking before the Deity

One should behave reverentially towards the Lord when taking *darśana*. One should avoid any talk that does not glorify the Lord.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

- One may speak in front of the Deities to guests and devotees if it helps in preaching or enhancing their Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- One may glorify the Lord and spiritual master before the Deity.

Don'ts

When in front of the Deity, one should not:

- talk loudly
- quarrel
- chastise anyone
- speak harshly of others or speak angrily
- praise anyone else
- speak ill names
- criticize the demigods
- indulge in *prajalpa* (gossiping)
- speak lies
- talk in the vicinity of devotees who are chanting the holy name

Understanding the Etiquette

- Following the above rules before the Deities is again a sign of showing respect to the deity of the Lord.
- One of the qualities of a Vaiṣṇava is that he is *maunī*, or silent. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that this does not mean that a devotee does not talk at all – it means that a devotee does not talk needlessly. Talking about material topics agitates one's mind and attracts it towards sense gratification, which is detrimental to one's spiritual progress. An aspiring devotee, therefore, should avoid talking about such topics. One should, however, cultivate the practice of discussing spiritual topics as much as possible.

Sitting in the Temple

As a mark of proper respect, one should follow the proper rules and regulations for sitting in the temple.

Learning the Etiquette

Don'ts:

When sitting in the temple, one should not:

- point one's feet to the Deities, spiritual master, Tulasī-devī, etc. (the feet should always be covered)
- sit with one's back to the Deities or the spiritual master
- spread one's legs before the Deities
- sit before the Deities holding one's ankles, elbows or knees

Understanding the Etiquette

The above mentioned regulations are to be followed as a sign of respect for the Lord, the spiritual master and the devotees.

Behaving Properly before the Deity

Following are some other aspects of behaviour before the Deity that have been listed in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*.

Don'ts:

Before the Deity, one should not:

- sleep
- eat
- cry
- pay respects to others (except the spiritual master)

Understanding the Etiquette

As explained previously, the above mentioned regulations are to be followed as a sign of respect for the Lord.

Acceptable Sitting Positions



Sitting straight before the deity –
padmāsana



Chanting before the deity, sitting
straight

Unacceptable Sitting Positions



Sitting holding one's ankle



Falling asleep before deity



Sitting holding one's knees



Sitting lazily before deity



Sitting with legs crossed

SESSION FOUR

Prasādam

Prasādam literally means ‘mercy’. Devotees generally use the word *prasādam* to refer to food sanctified by the Lord – when a devotee prepares and offers food to the Lord with love and devotion, the Lord accepts the offering by eating. The devotee then partakes of the remnants as *prasādam*.

Prasādam is a form of the Lord’s mercy in many ways – the Lord kindly allows the devotee to offer food to Him with love, thus giving him an opportunity to render service; He kindly allows the devotee to partake or distribute the remnants, thus giving him (and others who honour it) an opportunity to purify himself. Food should be offered, served and honoured meditating upon this mercy of the Lord.

Offering Food

Food should be offered to the Lord in a spirit of love and devotion, following the procedure described below.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

When offering *bhoga*, one should:

- as far as possible, offer foodstuff which has been cooked by devotees with love and devotion for the Lord
- offer food that has been made as per the rules of Vaiṣṇava cooking
- place small portions of each offering (along with a glass of water) on dinnerware that is specially set aside for the Lord's eating
- place washed Tulasī leaves on each offering
- offer the food by placing the food at the altar before the Lord and chanting the appropriate prayers*
- leave the offering for a while for the Lord to honour, ring a bell to indicate the end of the offering, remove it and immediately transfer it into the respective utensils
- wash the Lord's dinnerware before serving out the *prasadam*

* refer Appendix III

Don'ts

When offering *bhoga*, one should not:

- offer food that has been made using unofferable items (meat, fish, eggs, onion, garlic, etc.)
- offer store-bought food
- offer food that has been contaminated in any way
- taste/smell the food which is to be offered
- mentally desire to taste/smell the food that is yet to be offered
- carry the offering plate to the Deity room in full view of others (plate should be covered while taking it in and out of the Deity room)
- remain in the Deity room when the Lord is honouring the offerings
- eat out of the Lord's plate at any time (either before or after the offering)

Understanding the Etiquette

- Although Kṛṣṇa is completely self-sufficient, He states in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that if one offers foodstuff to Him in a mood of love and devotion, He lovingly reciprocates by accepting it. This loving exchange between the Lord and the devotee is the basis of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- One should also offer with an understanding that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme proprietor and is hence the supreme enjoyer of all there is – we, as loving servants, should work to please Him by our humble offerings.
- The Lord also says that only food that has been offered to Him is free from sinful reactions; therefore offering protects us from the reactions to the sins committed while cooking.

Serving Prasādam

One should serve the Lord's *prasādam* to the devotees with pure consciousness, meditating on the Lord's mercy and following the rules mentioned below.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

When serving *prasādam*, one should:

- ideally dress in proper Vaiṣṇava attire
- serve all devotees as much *prasādam* as they need (except for preparations which are to be served in limited portions)
- if possible, serve the preparations hot
- always serve with a spoon (except when serving dry preparations like idly, cake, dry sweets etc.) and with the right hand
- drop the *prasādam* gently on to a free area of the plate
- serve/ offer a second serving of a preparation (except for preparations which are to be served in limited portions) to everyone, even when replenishing plates of individual devotees on request

Don'ts

When serving *prasādam*, one should not:

- call out loudly to others while serving
- touch anything impure (should this happen, one should wash his hands thoroughly before continuing)
- not contaminate the preparations in any way (such as sneeze or spit into the *prasādam*)
- not touch the eating plate personally or to the serving utensils and spoons (one should wash one's hands and the serving utensil/spoon before continuing should this happen)
- not serve into the hand of the eater unless one is serving small portions of *mahā-prasādam*
- mix sweet and salty preparations (they should be served on separate areas of the plate)
- drag the serving utensils/buckets on the floor while serving

Understanding the Etiquette

The spiritual master is very pleased when the remnants of the food offered to the Lord is distributed amongst devotees. One makes spiritual progress by meditating on the Lord's mercy in the form of *prasādam* and feeding the devotees sumptuously while serving *prasādam*. One should therefore serve with a pure consciousness with a view to please the Lord and the spiritual master.

Honoring Prasādam

One should carefully honour the Lord's *prasādam*, mentally meditating on it as being non-different from the Lord. One should also take care to follow the rules mentioned below.

Learning the Etiquette

Dos

When honouring *prasādam*, one should:

- eat at fixed times of the day
- choose a clean and peaceful place to sit (Ideally, it is best to sit on a straw mat)
- chant the appropriate prayers before honouring *prasādam**
- honour the *prasādam* with the right hand only (items such as *puris* or *chapattis* should also be torn with the right hand only)
- eat with only the fingers and not the entire palm
- wash one's left hand should it touch the *prasādam* or the mouth

After the meal, one should:

- say '*Jai mahā-prasādam!*' before rising
- mentally glorify the Lord and the *prasādam*
- wash one's hand and mouth well
- clean the eating area and the plate properly

* refer Appendix IV

Don'ts

When honouring *prasādam*, one should not:

- eat food that has not been offered to the Lord
- eat food that is spoilt
- find fault with the taste of the *prasādam*
- eat too much or too little
- eat while doing other activities (e.g. walking, working at the desk, watching TV, etc.)
- eat out of another's plate or share a plate with another devotee
- make disturbing noises while eating
- serve oneself while eating (if one needs more *prasādam*, one may request it to be served by someone who is not eating or serve oneself after washing one's hands and mouth)
- keep the *prasādam* plate on the lap
- indulge in unnecessary talk (*prajalpa*) while eating

After the meal, one should not:

- step over the eating area before cleaning it (one should wash one's feet should this happen)

Understanding the Etiquette

- The remnants of the food left behind by the Lord are considered non-different from Him and is a form of the Lord's mercy.
- The scriptures state that service to the Lord begins with the tongue, one of whose functions is to taste palatable foodstuff. By honouring the Lord's *prasādam*, one begins service to the Lord.
- One also burns away his sinful reactions and purifies himself by honouring *prasādam*.



Śrīla Prabhupāda Uvāca



Never think that I am absent from you.
Physical presence is not essential;
presence by message (or hearing)
is real touch. Lord Kṛṣṇa is present
by His message which was delivered
5,000 years ago. We feel always
the presence of our past *ācāryas*
simply by their immutable instructions.
(Letter to Students, Vṛndāvana, 2 Aug, 1967)



SECTION THREE

QUIZ

Quiz I

(Main Course Work – Chapters 1, 2 and 3)

Section I

Answer the following

(Each question carries one point)

Identify X in the following questions:

1. X is a natural commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras*.

2. X is a real friend of all living entities.

3. X gave the definition of God as He who is full in six opulences.

4. X first re-popularized the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Kali-yuga.

5. X is *Bhagavān*, the ultimate form of the Supreme Lord.

6. X is responsible for the spread of Aryan Invasion Theory in India.

7. X established the Gauḍīya Math Institute for teaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness in 1918.

Choose the right option:

1. *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* are part of _____.

- a. 108 *Upaniṣads*
- b. *Vedānta-sūtras*
- c. *Vedas*
- d. *Itihāsas*

2. Knowledge acquired by direct perception is called _____.

- a. *anumāna pramāṇa*
- b. *śabda pramāṇa*
- c. *pratyakṣa pramāṇa*
- d. *śruti-pramāṇa*

3. Why are the *Upaniṣads* said to be one step higher than the *Vedas*?

- a. Because it is more voluminous
- b. Because there are total 108 *Upaniṣads*
- c. Because it contains a variety of commentaries by various scholars
- d. Because they encourage an individual to pursue higher goals rather than temporary material goals

4. What is the primary aim of the Vedic literatures?

- a. To revive Hinduism
- b. To disseminate knowledge about demigod worship
- c. To revive the forgotten consciousness of the conditioned souls
- d. To provide historical narrations

5. Why is fame in the material world called as 'fleeting'?

- a. Because not everybody wants to be famous
- b. Because it is not eternal
- c. Because it enhances one's material status
- d. Because it follows wealth

Give the Sanskrit term for each of the following:

- 1. Kṛṣṇa's opulence of wealth _____
- 2. Knowledge acquired by hearing from authoritative sources _____
- 3. Kṛṣṇa's opulence of strength _____
- 4. Kṛṣṇa consciousness _____
- 5. Living entities in the material world _____
- 6. Kṛṣṇa's opulence of beauty _____
- 7. Knowledge acquired by direct perception _____
- 8. Knowledge acquired by induction and analysis based on perceived phenomenon _____

Fill in the blanks:

- 1. _____ was the first *ācārya* to propagate the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the English-speaking world?

2. The portions of the *Vedas* that deal with ways for material enjoyment encourage the practice of _____.
3. _____ is the hardest and least commonly practiced of virtues in the world today.
4. As per Śrīla Prabhupāda, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the _____ that humanity is searching for.
5. The practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness involves moulding our lives in a way that helps us always remember _____.
6. The word “Vedic” is derived from the Sanskrit word *Veda*, literally meaning _____.
7. Vedic knowledge is understood by _____ process of acquiring knowledge.
8. The term _____ collectively refers to various treatises that contain historical narrations.
9. Lord Kṛṣṇa has revealed the scientific nature of Vedic knowledge in the _____ chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*.
10. ‘*Vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo vedānta-kṛd veda-vid eva cāham*’ - This verse represents Lord’s opulence of _____.

Fill in the appropriate answer that has a similar relation to the other:

1. Arjuna: *Bhagavad-gītā*:: _____: *catuḥ-ślokī Bhāgavatam*
2. Valmiki: *Rāmāyaṇa*:: _____: *Mahābhārata*
3. Śrīla Prabhupāda:ISKCON:: _____: Gauḍīya Math
4. *Pratyakṣa pramāṇa*:: _____: *Śabda pramāṇa*: authoritative hearing
5. Kṛṣṇa: Kāṁsa:: _____: Keśī
6. *Yajur Veda*: _____: *Purāṇas*: *Itihāsas*

Section II

Answer the following

(Each question carries 2 points)

1. Why have most literatures failed to describe God completely and accurately?

2. What is the difference between material beauty and Kṛṣṇa's beauty with respect to time?

3. To a greater or lesser degree everybody possesses traces of various opulences such as fame, knowledge, wealth, etc. what is unique about God possessing it?

4. What are the main divisions of the Vedic literatures?

5. *bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasāṁ sarva-loka-maheśvaram
suhṛdaṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ jñātvā māṁ śāntim ṛcchati*

Write down the actual peace formula derived from this verse.

6. What is the central point of the Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy?

7. What is the key to achieving complete success in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

For Evaluator's Use Only:

Total points obtained: ____ /50

Evaluation points awarded: ____ /10

Authorized signatory: _____

Quiz II

(Main Course Work – Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7)

Section I

Answer the following questions

(Each question carries 1 point)

Identify X in the following questions:

1. In the *Gītā*, the Lord states that the only way to get free from X's clutches and get out of the miseries she imposes on living entities is to surrender to Him.

2. X composed the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers.

3. X is a personified representation of the Lord's external potency, *māyā*.

4. X is not actually a living entity, but he is not the Supreme Personality of Godhead either.

5. X is the first demigod.

6. X is above the laws of material nature.

Fill in the blanks:

1. The _____ principles uphold the four principles of religion and constitute one of the most important aspects of Kṛṣṇa conscious practice.
2. The presence of the Lord's holy name is non-different from His _____ presence.
3. The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is a _____ sound vibration i.e. it carries the potency to release one's mind from all self-centred and mundane thought processes.
4. The demigods are empowered _____ of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa.
5. A _____ is the religious principle that is meant to be followed by everyone in that particular age, and is not restricted to a particular set of people.
6. The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is composed of _____ syllables.
7. Demigod worship is transactive; worship of Kṛṣṇa, on the other hand, is _____.

8. Abstinence from meat is advocated for a spiritualist since meat eating destroys the quality of _____.
9. Śrīla Prabhupāda more specifically called the Hare Kṛṣṇa *maha-mantra* as 'the great chant of _____'.
10. It is stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that Kṛṣṇa, in His form as _____, is the source of the topmost demigod, Lord Brahma.
11. Swapnil regularly indulges in watching porn movies and thinking about the opposite sex. He is breaking the regulative principle of no _____.

State true or false:

1. Demigods' planets are within the material world and are subject to destruction at the time of universal annihilation.
2. Chanting the Pañca-tattva *mantra* is optional.
3. The *japa* beads should be held between the first finger and the thumb while chanting.
4. Chanting the name of any demigod gives the same benefit as that of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.
5. There is a great difference between chanting 'Hare Kṛṣṇa' first as compared to chanting 'Hare Rāma' first in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.
6. One should begin by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* on the head bead.
7. Demigods can award both material and spiritual benedictions.
8. One should chant the entire Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* loudly and distinctly on each bead.

Choose the right option

1. Match each regulative principle with the pillar of religion it upholds

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| i) No meat eating | i) Cleanliness |
| ii) No intoxication | ii) Mercy |
| iii) No illicit sex | iii) Austerity |
| iv) No gambling | iv) Truthfulness |

- a. i-ii, ii-iii, iii-i, iv-iv
- b. i-iii, ii-iv, iii-ii, iv-i
- c. i-i, ii-iii, iii-ii, iv-iv
- d. i-iv, ii-iii, iii-ii, iv-i

2. Match which hell one goes to for indulging in each of these prohibited activities

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| i. Intoxication | i) Ayaḥpāna |
| ii. Meat eating | ii) Kumbhīpāka |
| iii. Gambling | iii) Taptasūrmī |
| iv. Illicit sex | iv) Sūcīmukha |

- a. i-ii, ii-iii, iii-i, iv-iv
b. i-iii, ii-iv, iii-ii, iv-i
c. i-i, ii-ii, iii-iv, iv-iii
d. i-iv, ii-iii, iii-ii, iv-i

3. The prime purpose of performing *yajña* is to satisfy _____

- a. the demigods
b. Lord Kṛṣṇa
c. material nature
d. both a and b

Fill in the appropriate answer that has a similar relation to the other:

1. *jīva-tattva*:demigods:: _____ Kṛṣṇa
2. Smoking:_____:: Casino: Sūcīmukha
3. Betting: gambling:: coffee: _____
4. _____: root:: demigods : leaves

Section II

Answer the following questions

(Each question carries 2 points)

1. How does chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* make one self-realized?

2. The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* encompasses a prayer. What is that prayer?

3. The Lord states in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that four kinds of pious men begin to render devotional service to Him. Who are these four kinds of people?

4. Lord Kṛṣṇa has said that one can satisfy all the demigods simply by directly worshipping Him. Give anyone analogy used to explain this.

5. Ranjib is a staunch worshiper of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Whenever he sees a temple of any demigod he does not pay them any respect and ignores them considering them to be subordinate to Kṛṣṇa. As a Vaiṣṇava, is his approach towards demigods correct?

6. Does the karmic reaction of meat eating apply only to the one who eats meat? Explain

7. Hiranyakaśipu underwent severe type of penances for becoming immortal, but his worshipful deity Brahma could not satisfy him with such blessings. Why was it not possible for Lord Brahma to grant immortality?

8. Kali-yuga is full of faults, there is still one good quality about this age. What is that good quality?

9. How does meat eating destroy any chance for spiritual progress?

For Evaluator's Use Only:

Total points obtained: ____/50

Evaluation points awarded: ____/10

Authorized signatory: _____

Quiz III

(Vaiṣṇava Etiquette)

Section I

Answer the following

(Each question carries 1 point)

Fill in the blanks:

1. Vaiṣṇava etiquette is a practical application of the science of _____.
2. When it is not possible to wear *tilaka* prominently, one should mark the *tilaka* with _____.
3. Viewing the *ārati* of the Lord helps one burn past _____ reactions.
4. The *kañṭhi-mālā* is worn to indicate a devotee's _____ to the Lord.
5. The remnants of the food left behind by the Lord are considered _____ from Him and is a form of the Lord's mercy.
6. During *kīrtana* one should dance the traditional _____ Vaiṣṇava way, as taught by Śrīla Prabhupāda.
7. The *tilaka* markings signify the _____ of Lord Viṣṇu.
8. When having *darśana* one should not greet the Deities without first offering respect to the _____.
9. *Kīrtana* or *sankīrtana* was first introduced by _____.
10. Regulation helps control one's senses by limiting unrestricted sense _____ which could destroy devotional service.
11. In the _____, Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī has discussed various rules and regulations that are to be followed when dealing with the Lord in His Deity form.
12. When taking *darśana* one should not directly look at the _____ of the Lord without meditating on Him from the lotus feet upwards.

Give the Sanskrit term for each of the following:

1. Indulge in gossiping _____
2. Food that is not offered to the Lord _____
3. One who maintains silence _____
4. The correct posture of sitting straight before the Deity _____
5. Offering full prostrated obeisance _____

6. The Deity of the Lord _____
7. A tuft of hair on the center of the head _____
8. Food offered to the Lord _____
9. The process of waving auspicious items before the Deity _____
10. Congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord _____

State true or false:

1. *Prema-dhvānī* prayers can be recited by anyone present in the *kīrtana*.
2. One can eat *prasādam* with whichever hand one feels comfortable.
3. Old women can offer *saṣṭāṅga* praṇāma.
4. Devotees generally use the word *prasādam* to refer to food sanctified by the Lord or any demigod.
5. The order of *darśana* should be from the right hand corner to the left hand corner.
6. When having *darśana* one should not circumambulate in front of the Deity.
7. One should offer obeisance keeping the Deities to the right side.
8. Only food that has been offered to the Lord is free from sinful reactions.
9. When honouring *prasādam* one can eat out of another's plate if he/she is a devotee.
10. An aspiring Vaiṣṇava need not concentrate much on personal cleanliness since it drags one to the bodily concept of life.
11. One makes spiritual progress by meditating on the Lord's mercy in the form of *prasādam*.
12. Only elderly women devotees should be addressed as '*Mataji*'.

Section II

Answer the following

(Each question carries 2 points)

1. In the course of having *darśana* of Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa-candra, Ritish was explaining to his friend how one should have *darśana* starting from the Lord's lotus feet. All of a sudden Pankaj barged in and yelled at Ritish that he should not talk before the deities. In this context who has broken the Vaiṣṇava etiquette and how?

2. One of the qualities of a Vaiṣṇava is that he is '*maunī* or silent', does this mean a devotee should not talk at all?

3. *Prasādam* is a form of the Lord's mercy in many ways. Write down two ways.

4. What does 'dressing the Vaiṣṇava way' mean? And what is the significance in doing so?

5. What is the realization with which the devotees use the Lord's resources?

6. How is honouring the Lord's *prasādam* also a form of service?

7. As per Vaiṣṇava etiquettes, one should address fellow Vaiṣṇavas as '*Prabhu*' and vice versa. But what should one be cautious about when others address him as '*Prabhu*'?

8. What is the difference between mundane dancing and singing viz a viz dancing and singing in *kīrtana*?

For Evaluator's Use Only:

Total points obtained: ____/50

Evaluation points awarded: ____/10

Authorized signatory: _____

APPENDIX

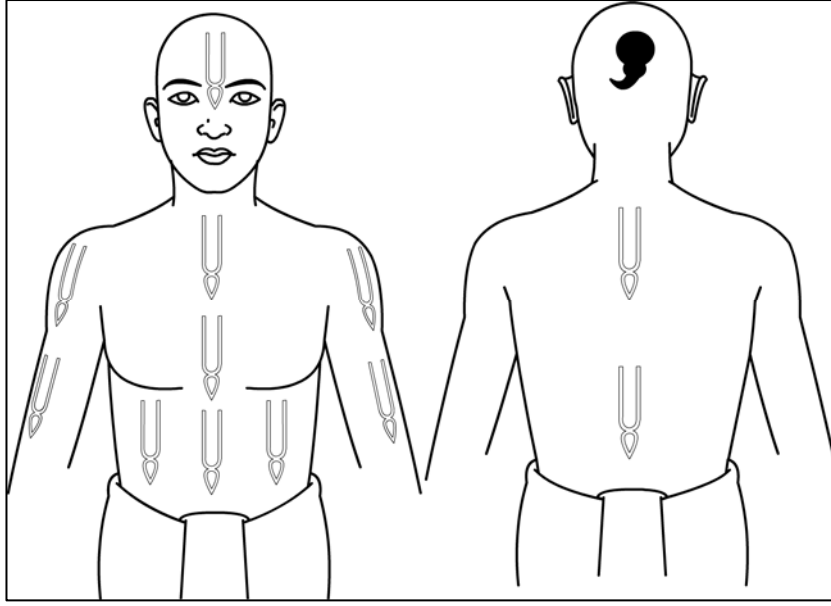
APPENDIX I

Marking the Body with Viṣṇu-Tilaka (ūrdhva-puṇḍra)

Tilaka refers to marks placed on the body using various substances. *Ūrdhva-puṇḍra* refers to the two vertical marks placed on the forehead and other parts of the body to indicate surrender to Lord Viṣṇu. The *Padma Purāṇa* and *Yajur Veda* state that *ūrdhva-puṇḍra* symbolizes the lotus foot of Viṣṇu. The twelve parts of the body on which we place the *ūrdhva-puṇḍra* marks are not arbitrary points. They are sensitive points that easily absorb the spiritual energy generated by reciting the names of Viṣṇu and mentally placing the Lord in those positions.

The *tilaka* is applied to twelve parts of the body — that is, on the forehead, navel, heart, throat, sides of the abdomen, arms, shoulders, nape of the neck, and lower back. Applying *tilaka* on these places and reciting Viṣṇu's names sanctifies and dedicates the body to the Lord's service.

While decorating the body with *tilaka*, a devotee gives protection to the body by chanting different names of Viṣṇu. *Tilaka* is applied to the other parts of the body in the same fashion as it is applied to the forehead. One should mix *tilaka* in the palm of one's left hand (or premix it in a small container) and apply it with the ring finger of the right hand. When applying *tilaka* to the right side of the body, one should transfer it from the ball of the right ring finger onto the ball of the left ring finger. One should apply *tilaka* to twelve places on the body while chanting the *mantras* on the following page.



The forehead	<i>Om Keśavāya namaḥ</i>
The abdomen	<i>Om Nārāyaṇāya namaḥ</i>
The chest	<i>Om Mādhavāya namaḥ</i>
The throat	<i>Om Govindāya namaḥ</i>
The right side of abdomen	<i>Om Viṣṇave namaḥ</i>
The right arm	<i>Om Madhusūdanāya namaḥ</i>
The right shoulder	<i>Om Trivikramāya namaḥ</i>
The left side of abdomen	<i>Om Vāmanāya namaḥ</i>
The left arm	<i>Om Śrīdharāya namaḥ</i>
The left shoulder	<i>Om Hṛṣīkeśāya namaḥ</i>
The upper back	<i>Om Padmanābhāya namaḥ</i>
The lower back	<i>Om Dāmodarāya namaḥ</i>

Whatever *tilaka* is left over should be wiped in the region of the *sikhā* after reciting ‘*Om Vāsudevāya namaḥ*’.

APPENDIX II

Praṇāma Mantras

Śrīla Prabhupāda Praṇāti

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāmin iti nāmine
namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa on this earth, having taken shelter at His lotus feet. Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Sarasvatī Gosvāmī. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanya-deva and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism.”

Śrī Vaiṣṇava Praṇāma

*vāñchā-kalpatarubhyaś ca kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca
patitānām pāvanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Lord. They are just like desire trees who can fulfil the desires of everyone, and they are full of compassion for the fallen conditioned souls.”

Śrī Gaurāṅga Praṇāma

*namo mahā-vadānyāya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

“O most munificent incarnation! You are Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You have assumed the golden color of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and You are widely distributing pure love of Kṛṣṇa. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Praṇāma

*he kṛṣṇa karuṇā-sindho dīna-bandho jagat-pate
gopeśa gopikā-kānta rādhā-kānta namo 'stu te*

“O my dear Kṛṣṇa, ocean of mercy, You are the friend of the distressed and the source of creation. You are the master of the cowherdmen and the lover of the *gopīs*, especially Rādhārāṇī. I offer my respectful obeisances unto You.”

Śrī Rādhā Pranāma

*tapta-kāñcana-gaurāṅgi rādhe vṛndāvaneśvari
vṛṣabhānu-sute devī praṇamāmi hari-priye*

“I offer my respects to Rādhārāṇī, whose bodily complexion is like molten gold and who is the Queen of Vṛndāvana. You are the daughter of King Vṛṣabhānu, and You are very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa.”

Pañca-tattva Mahā-mantra

*(jaya) śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda
śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*

“All glories to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Lord Nityānanda, Advaita Ācārya, Gadādhara Paṇḍita Prabhu, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura and all those devotees who follow in their footsteps.”

Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-mantra

*Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*

“My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, my dear Lord Rāma, O energy of the Lord, Hare, kindly engage me in Your service.”

APPENDIX III

Prayers for Offering Food to Kṛṣṇa

Prayer to Śrīla Prabhupāda

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāmin iti nāmine
namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa, having taken shelter at His lotus feet. Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanyadeva and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism.”

Prayer to Lord Caitanya

*namo mahā-vadānyāya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

“O most munificent incarnation! You are Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You have assumed the golden color of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and You are widely distributing pure love of Kṛṣṇa. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You.”

Prayer to Lord Kṛṣṇa

*namo brahmaṇya-devāya go-brāhmaṇa-hitāya ca
jagad-dhitāya kṛṣṇāya govindāya namo namaḥ*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the worshipable Deity for all *brāhmaṇas*, the well-wisher of the cows and the *brāhmaṇas*, and the benefactor of the whole world. I offer my repeated obeisances to the Personality of Godhead, known as Kṛṣṇa and Govinda.”

APPENDIX IV

Prayers for Honoring Prasādam

Prasādam Sevaya

*mahā-prasāde govinde nāma-brahmaṇi vaiṣṇave
svalpa-puṇyavatām rājan viśvāso naiva jāyate*

“O king! A person with little piety can never develop faith in Lord Govinda, His mercy, His holy name, or His pure devotees.”

(From Mahabharata, Skanda Purana)

Honoring Prasādam

*bhāi-re!
śarīra abidyā-jāl, joḍendriya tāhe kāl, jīve phele viśaya-sāgore
tā’ra madhye jihvā ati, lobhamoy sudurmati, tā’ke jetā kaṭhina saṁsāre*

“O brothers! this material body is a place of ignorance, and the senses are a network of paths to death. Somehow, we have fallen into this ocean of material sense enjoyment, and of all the senses the tongue is most voracious and uncontrollable; it is very difficult to conquer the tongue in this world.”

*kṛṣṇa baro doyāmoy, koribāre jihvā jay, swa-prasād-anna dilo bhāi
sei annāmṛta pāo, rādhā-kṛṣṇa-guṇa gāo, preme ḍāko caitanya-nitāi*

“O brothers! Lord Kṛṣṇa is very merciful and He has given us the remnants of His own food, just to control the tongue. Now please eat these nectarean grains while singing the glories of Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and in love call out “Caitanya! Nitāi!”

(From Gītāvalī by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura)

APPENDIX V

Benefits of Chanting: Research Findings

The following scientifically proven results of *mantra* meditation support the perceivable benefits of chanting.

1. The Herbert Benson Relaxation Response

Dr. Herbert Benson, a Harvard cardiologist, has proved beyond doubt that meditation that involves repetition of a particular word or combination of words (such as the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*) has a therapeutic reaction on the body. He pioneered a similar meditation technique based on this response, which he called the 'relaxation response'. It is characterized by reduction of the body's heart and breathing rate, blood pressure and muscle tension; and an increase in the level of alpha waves in the brain – all of which are typical characteristics of physiological relaxation. Dr. Benson also found that the therapeutic effects of such meditation had a much better effect if the practiced it in conjunction with some religious faith.

2. Findings of Dr. Allan Gerson and Dr. Ronald Huff

Dr. Allan Gerson and Dr. Ronald Huff have conducted studies on the psychological effects of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa. They find chanters "are more keenly aware and have sharper mental cognitions." Also, "chanters have a clear sense of identity. They know who they are in relationship to the universe, where they're going, and how they can improve themselves and the world around them." And Gerson and Huff describe Hare Kṛṣṇa meditators as "friendly, warm, and outgoing as a group, as well as individually."

3. The Mahā-mantra research project by Dr. David B Wolf (Florida State University)

Objective: An experiment was conducted to determine the effects of chanting the *mahā-mantra* on stress, depression, and the three *guṇas sattva* (enlightenment), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (inertia)—described in the *Vedas* as the basis of human psychology. Primary hypotheses of the study were that the *mahā-mantra* group would increase *sattva* and decrease stress, depression, *rajas*, and *tamas* significantly more than the other groups.

Method: Participants were tested at pretest, posttest, and follow-up, with testing times separated by 4 weeks. Participants were randomly assigned to a *mahā-mantra* group, an alternate *mantra* (placebo) group, and a control group.

Results: MANOVA results supported these hypotheses from pretest to posttest at $p < .05$ for all dependent variables except *rajas*.

Conclusions: The authors suggest that the *mahā-mantra* has potential in addressing problems related to stress and depression and that it be considered as one possible component of a spiritual approach to social work practice.

Test Groups	Experiment conducted on the group	Stress and depression	Mode of ignorance (tamas)	Mode of passion (rajas)	Mode of goodness (sattva)	Method
Mahā-mantra Group	Chanted the 3 rounds of Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mantra</i> for 28 days	Significant decrease	Significant Decrease	decrease	Significant Increase	Post test
		Effect diminished	Effect diminished	Effect diminished	Effect diminished	Follow up
Alternate Mantra Group	Chanted an alternate <i>mantra</i> similar in metre to the Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mantra</i>	decrease	decrease	decrease	increase	Post-test
		Effect diminished	Effect diminished	Effect diminished	Effect diminished	Follow up
Control Group	Did not chant any <i>mantra</i>	-	-	-	-	Post test
		-	-	-	-	Follow up

Vedic theory describes the mode of passion as the intermediate mode between goodness and ignorance. So it was hypothesized that for the *mahā-mantra* chanters some of the passion converted into goodness, and some of the ignorance became passion, and thus the overall passion level did not change. We can also understand from the *Vedas* that the positive effects of the *mahā-mantra* would diminish when the *mahā-mantra* group had not chanted for 28 days. That explains the less significant results at follow-up.



Śrīla Prabhupāda Uvāca



Reporter: Who will succeed you when you die?

Prabhupāda: I will never die!

Devotees: *Jaya! Haribol!*

Prabhupāda: I will live forever from my
book and you will utilize
(*Interview, Berkely, 1975*)



ANSWER KEYS TO MAIN COUSE WORK ACTIVITIES

CHAPTER TWO

What is Kṛṣṇa Consciousness?

Understanding the Kṛṣṇa Conscious Vedic Scenario

Kṛṣṇa conscious understanding that was prevalent	How and why is this true?	How did Vedic proponents act with this understanding?	What results did they reap?
Kṛṣṇa is the supreme proprietor	<p>Kṛṣṇa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is the creator of the spiritual and material worlds • is the knower of everything in creation • is also the controller of the entire creation • is the creator of the living entities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders ruled with a consciousness of being a representative of the Lord and implemented His will in the kingdom • Knowledge about God's supremacy was disseminated by the leaders to society at large • Everybody respected the proprietorship of the Lord and didn't try to encroach upon His property to misuse it (they used His property – earth, natural resources, etc. as ordained by Him only) • Everybody respected and followed the orders of the Lord, knowing Him to be their real master 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A peaceful, stable state where there was harmony between rulers and citizens (both working for the same purpose) • No misuse of natural resources • No elements who tried to control the world for their own needs – and hence no unnecessary wars, social/political factions, artificially created economic divides, etc.
Kṛṣṇa is the supreme enjoyer	<p>Kṛṣṇa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being the creator of everything, is the <i>only</i> authorized enjoyer of everything • has an unlimited capacity to enjoy • has also created the living entities solely for His enjoyment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everybody accepted Lord's position as the enjoyer and worked for His pleasure • Material energy was also dovetailed by the people in the service of the Lord • People in general, being thus spiritually conscious, were not interested in over-endeavouring for self-centered and extended sense enjoyment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society where all citizens (and the ruler) were free of human vices – greed, lust for more, hankering, self-centred motives, over-ambition, etc. and were happy and peaceful • Virtual absence of crime, exploitation, etc. • Society followed the 'Simple living, high thinking' policy, due to which there was no unnecessary economic divide (or economic collapse!)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People were satisfied with the enjoyment they got by <i>yajña</i> – working for the Lord 	
Kṛṣṇa is the supreme friend	<p>Kṛṣṇa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knows all our hearts as He is present as the Supersoul within us • is present with us all the time, never leaving us alone even for a moment • supplies all our needs in the material world • fulfils all our desires • speaks the <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> and sends His representative to remind us of His intimate relationship with us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People obeyed the orders of the Lord knowing His good intentions for them • They depended on the Lord for all their needs naturally • They tried to cultivate spiritual consciousness to revive their intimate friendship with the Lord 	<p>A society where natural love and respect for the Lord was prevalent, due to which the citizens hardly experienced any miseries</p>

Analyzing the non-Kṛṣṇa Conscious Modern Scenario

Kṛṣṇa conscious understanding that is absent	Understanding that has replaced it	How it has affected the society at large	How it has affected individuals
Kṛṣṇa is the supreme proprietor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world has come into existence without a proprietor. • Humans, being independent in their actions and free to do as they choose, have a right to exploit nature's resources for their benefit. • There is nothing wrong with the lording tendency because it is there in everyone, but it is the fittest who survive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political: fight for supremacy and power at every level – and consequently, failure of all political systems (democracy, communism, etc.) and result – political instability, wars, terrorism (for religious superiority), creation of more mass and nuclear weapons • Social: human rights violations – exploitation of human beings on the basis of race, religion, caste, sex etc., domestic violence, abuse of children and women, breakdown of social structure (everyone wants to control his own circle with no one willing to be subordinate) • Economic: Rise of systems like capitalism that has created a social divide • Environmental: exploitation of natural resources, climate change, extinction of species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivation of a feeling of ownership and unrestricted desire to increase one's influence/possessions, etc. • Desire for encroachment on another's property • Frustration, depression, anger and other such emotions that follow when one's attempts to lord over fail
Kṛṣṇa is the supreme enjoyer	The world is created for the enjoyment of human beings.	Corruption, encouragement for unrestricted sense enjoyment, degradation of moral standards in society, crime, environmental issues listed above, increase in illicit activities	Lack of respect for another living entity's right to exist and enjoy the world, degradation and almost complete lack of moral values, lower standard of life based on materialism and sense enjoyment resulting in over-ambitious, over-endeavouring individuals, lack of vision of a higher purpose of life

<p>Kṛṣṇa is the supreme friend</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our own endeavour or those of our loved ones can save us from danger. If the inevitable happens, nothing could have been done anyway. • Our needs are being supplied by nature, which came into existence on its own and has nothing to do with God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of God consciousness amongst members of society, society not being governed on Vedic principles, atheistic way of working of civilization in general 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of God-conscious values, lack of surrender to the Lord • Ignorance, unhappiness, lack of direction in life
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CHAPTER THREE

Vedic Literatures

Seeking Perfect Knowledge

Process of acquiring knowledge	What is it?	How can we test for correctness of knowledge?	Test Procedure	Test findings	Conclusion
Pratyakṣa pramāṇa	Knowledge gained by direct sense perception	By checking whether the knowledge acquired is always correct	Conduct the Correctness Test in Table No. 1 and the Four Defects Test	Knowledge acquired is defective	Not the best way to acquire knowledge
Anumāna pramāṇa	Knowledge gained by induction and analysis of observable phenomenon	By checking whether the knowledge deduced from observation is always correct	Conduct the Correctness Test in Table No.2 and the Four Defects Test	Knowledge acquired is defective	Not the best way to acquire knowledge
Śabda pramāṇa	Knowledge gained by authoritative hearing	By verifying whether the knowledge heard from authoritative sources is always correct	Conduct the Correctness Test in Table No. 3 and the Four Defects Test	Knowledge acquired is not defective when the mentioned conditions are satisfied	Is the best way to acquire knowledge

Table No 1: Correctness Test for Pratyakṣa Pramāṇa

Cite examples where ‘Perceiving is believing’	Presence of things around us, presence of people, etc.
Examples where this does not hold true	<p>You see it, but its not true: Mirage, refracted pencil, images in a concave/convex mirror</p> <p>You don’t see it, but its true: presence of air, x-rays, ultra violet rays etc., existence of historical figures, places, planets</p>
Has this method passed the Four Defects Test?	No
Has this method passed the Correctness Test?	No, because what we perceive need not always be true and what we don’t perceive through the senses need not always be non-existent

Table No 2: Correctness Test for Anumāna Pramāṇa

Cite examples where ‘Analyzing or deducing is believing’	Solution to a mathematical problem, logical analysis based when all parameters to a problem are correctly known
Examples where this does not hold true	Creating/ adding to a theory by speculation and imagination, working without knowing all the parameters involved in a problem
Has this method passed the Four Defects Test?	No
Has this method passed the Correctness Test?	No, because we are limited by the imaginative and intellectual power of the mind. Also, analysis with data acquired from observation maybe defective as the observation itself maybe defective

Table No 3: Correctness Test for Śabda Pramāṇa

Cite examples where ‘Authoritative hearing is believing’	Hearing to a person speaking before us, hearing the news (from authoritative sources)
Examples where this does not hold true	Gossip, information that has been distorted during transmission
Has this method passed the Four Defects Test?	Yes
Has this method passed the Correctness Test?	<p>Yes</p> <p>As mentioned, the knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• should be acquired from an authorized source• should be received from a bona fide transmitter from the source

The Four Defects Test

Human Defect	Everyday example of this tendency	Is Pratyakṣa pramāṇa affected?	Is Anumāna pramāṇa affected?	Is Śabda pramāṇa affected?
Defective and limited senses	Eyes can see only between 400-700 millimicron, ears can hear only between 20 Hz and 20K Hz, etc.	Yes	Yes (when deducing /analyzing from observation)	No
Tendency to make mistakes	Self explanatory	Yes	Yes	No
Tendency to be illusioned	Optical illusions, magic tricks, same water when touched with warm hands appears cool and when touched with cool hands appears warm	Yes	Yes (when deducing /analyzing from observation)	No
Tendency to cheat	Self explanatory	Yes	Yes	No

Straight from the Scientists and Sages

Point of Comparative Study	What scientists say about modern science	What sages say about Vedic knowledge
What is this system of knowledge?	<p>"I think that we shall have to get accustomed to the idea that we must not look upon science as a 'body of knowledge', but rather as a system of hypothesis, or as a system of guesses or anticipations that in principle cannot be justified, but with which we work as long as they stand up to tests, and of which we are never justified in saying that we know they are 'true' ". (Karl R Popper in 'The Logic of Scientific Discovery')</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Science is not an absolute body of knowledge, but a system of hypothesis and verification</u></p>	<p>"I shall now declare unto you in full this knowledge both phenomenal and noumenal, by knowing which there shall remain nothing further to be known." (Bhagavad-gītā 7.2)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Vedic literature is a scientific body of knowledge that propounds the highest science, that of discriminating between matter and spirit (a science unknown to modern man)</u></p>
What kind of phenomenon does it study?	<p>"...Science casts the spotlight which it uses to search for knowledge very selectively; in other words, what scientists choose to look at, to try to explain in scientific terms, is rather restricted, and rather biased. And the content of science is biased in a materialistic direction. This applies to almost all the sciences, the physical sciences as well as the biological sciences.</p> <p>The reason is largely due to the fact that it is easier to study quantitatively the behaviour of matter and the grosser aspects of behaviour (both animal and human) than it is to study higher human behaviour where the influence of God might be significant." (B. D. Josephson, Nobel Laureate in Physics)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Science studies only material, observable phenomenon</u></p>	<p>"Complete knowledge includes knowledge of the phenomenal world and the spirit behind it. " (Bhagavad-gītā 7.2, Purport)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Vedic science studies both matter and spirit</u></p>
How is knowledge acquired in this system?	<p>"Equipped with his five senses, man explores the universe around him and calls the adventure Science." (Edwin Powell Hubble in 'The Nature of Science')</p>	<p>"The Vedic system of acquiring knowledge is the deductive process. The Vedic knowledge is received perfectly by disciplic succession from authorities."</p>

	<p>"Every great advance in science has issued from a new audacity of imagination." (John Dewey in 'The Quest for Certainty')</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Science acquires knowledge by sensual experience and logical, imaginative reasoning (Pratyakṣa and Anumāna Pramāṇa)</u></p>	<p>(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.9.18, Purport)</p> <p>"The Vedic knowledge is authorized and is acquired not by experiment but by authentic statements of the Vedic literatures explained by bona fide authorities. Simply by becoming an academic scholar one cannot understand the Vedic statements; one has to approach the real authority who has received the Vedic knowledge by disciplic succession, as clearly explained in the <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> (4.2)." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.2.27, Purport)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Vedic system acquires knowledge by hearing perfect knowledge from authoritative sources (Śabda Pramāṇa)</u></p>
<p>How perfect and complete is the knowledge?</p>	<p>"We and our models are both part of the universe we are describing. ... One might therefore expect it (any physical theory) to be either inconsistent or incomplete. The theories we have so far are both inconsistent and incomplete." (Stephen Hawking, theoretical physicist (currently holds Newton's chair at Cambridge))</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Scientific theories are not always perfect</u></p>	<p>"All Vedic knowledge is perfect because it is received directly from God by the <i>paramparā</i>, disciplic succession." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.26.7, Purport)</p> <p>"Vedic knowledge is complete because it is above all doubts and mistakes, and <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> is the essence of all Vedic knowledge." (<i>Bhagavad-gītā</i>, Introduction)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Vedic knowledge is perfect, authoritative and complete</u></p>
<p>Is the knowledge subject to any deficiencies/ shortcomings?</p>	<p>"Even if we photograph stars eventually we have to take in by our senses what the photo shows. Furthermore, without our senses we cannot handle a camera. Even if we amplified/refined by instruments the knowledge is no more perfect</p>	<p>"Vedic knowledge is infallible because it comes down through the perfect disciplic succession of spiritual masters, beginning with the Lord Himself. Since He spoke the</p>

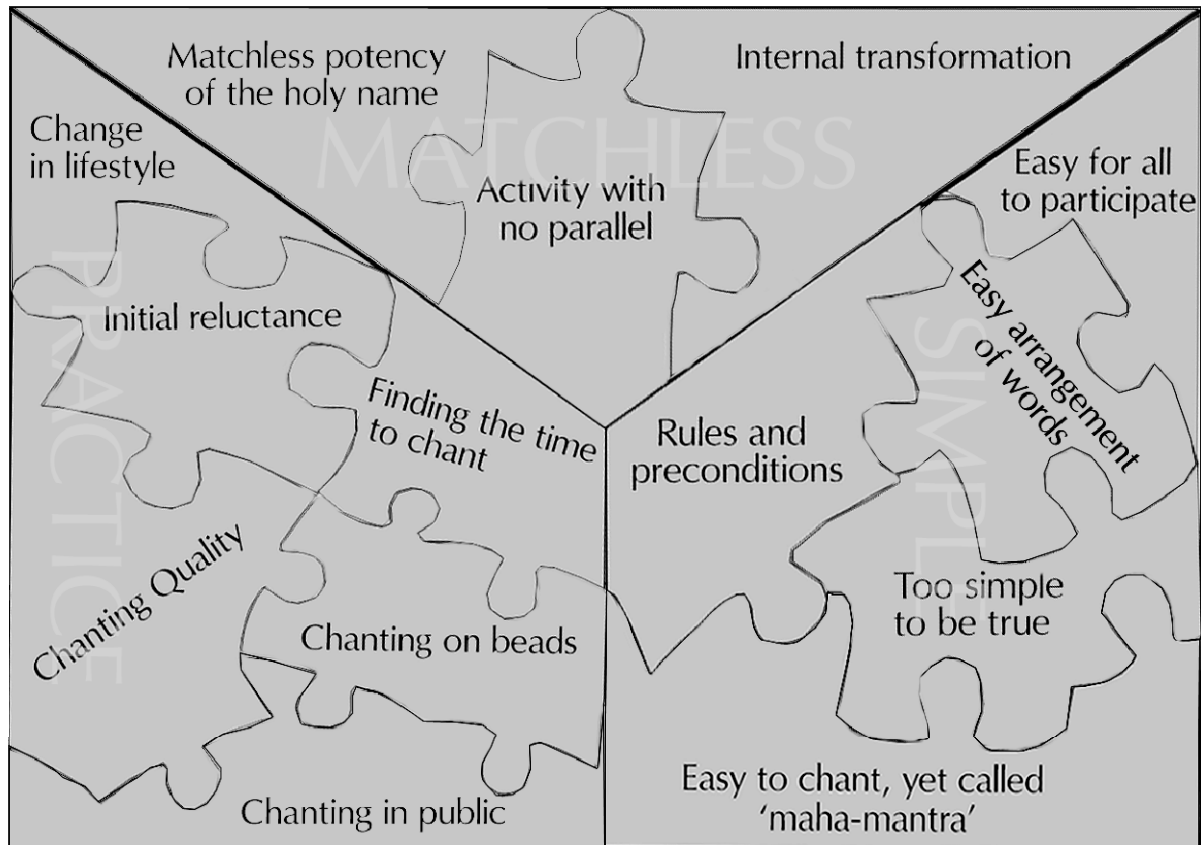
	<p>than our imperfect senses.” (Eugene Wigner, Nobel Laureate in Physics)</p> <p>“Science, with all its dramatic successes, has from its beginnings also generated wildly incorrect accounts: stars as pinpricks in a crystal globe, electricity and heat as fluids, the brain as an organ to cool the blood. ...These are dramatic deviations from what we now see as truth; and when invented they were deviations from what then appeared true.” (Dr. R.L. Gregory, director of the Brain and Perception Laboratory at the University of Bristol, England)</p> <p>“If the twentieth century has not been the century of fraud, it was surely the century of its exposure. Work of some of the greatest scientists has come into question. Isaac Newton, Gregor Mendel, Charles Darwin, Louis Pasteur, Sigmund Freud, Robert Millikan...They suggest how understanding of fraud – more generally, of norms of scientific behaviour – has evolved over three centuries.</p> <p>The recent list reads differently....The Office of Research Integrity, in the Department of Health and Human Services, made fourteen determinations of scientific misconduct in 2001...In 2002, forty-one new cases were opened, the most since 1995, and a number of these were still under review at the end of the year; of cases closed, misconduct was found in thirteen, all fabrication and/or falsification. In 2003, the figure was much the same, with twelve findings of misconduct posted.” (Horace Freeland Judson In ‘The Great Betrayal: Fraud in Science’)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Scientific knowledge is tainted by the four defects</u></p>	<p>first word of Vedic knowledge, the source of this knowledge is transcendental. The words spoken by the Lord are called <i>apauruṣeya</i>, which indicates that they are not delivered by any mundane person.” (Śrī Īsopaniṣad, Mantra 1, Purport)</p> <p>“The knowledge of the Vedas is knowledge received directly from God, and there is consequently no question of illusion, cheating, mistakes or imperfect senses.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.26.7, Purport)</p> <p>“We accept Kṛṣṇa as our <i>guru</i>. If He is perfect in knowledge, our knowledge is also perfect. As far as we’re concerned, we do not have to be perfect in ourselves, but if we receive knowledge from the perfect, our knowledge is perfect.” (Science of Self Realization, Chapter 6g: The Tiny World of Modern Science)</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Vedic knowledge is above all defects, deficiencies and inconsistencies</u></p>
<p>Are there any proofs to support the above conclusions?</p>	<p>There are many instances where science has proven itself wrong:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The earth was thought to be flat • Liver was thought to be the organ that pumped blood • The earth was thought to be at the center of the universe • Objects were thought to fall at different speeds when thrown up based on their weight • Atom was thought to be the smallest particle 	<p>There are many branches of Vedic knowledge that are proven correct beyond doubt. Eg: <i>Āyur-veda</i>, Vedic metallurgy, Vedic aerodynamics etc.</p> <p>In addition, there are many Vedic assertions that are being found to be true by modern science only now:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plants were thought to have no life <p>There are many more such examples where scientific conclusions have proven incorrect with newer discoveries and findings.</p> <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Scientific knowledge should be accepted with caution and should not be taken as absolute always</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of the embryo in the womb The fact that plants have life The purity and antiseptic nature of cow dung <p>My Understanding:</p> <p><u>Vedic knowledge is perfect and should be accepted to be true in totality, even when we can't directly verify them with our limited ability to create appropriate conditions to verify the knowledge</u></p>
<p>What can we finally conclude about knowledge acquired by this system?</p>	<p>Scientific knowledge, being of human origin, is imperfect, limited and incomplete. It should be accepted cautiously</p>	<p>Vedic knowledge which originates from the Lord and is transmitted perfectly by Vedic authorities is perfect and complete and should be accepted in totality</p>

CHAPTER FIVE

FAQ on the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-mantra

Solution to the Jigsaw Puzzle



Answer Key to the ‘Simple’ Blocks

4	Block: B	Piece: Too simple to be true	Type: Simple
		How can the greatest of all <i>mantras</i> be so simple?	<p>Because the Lord wills it to be. Considering our fallen condition in the age of Kali, when we are bestowed with such poor memories, the Lord has decided to make the greatest of all <i>mantras</i> both simple and easy to remember. In fact, the Lord Himself came down as Lord Caitanya to distribute the Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mahā-mantra</i>. Hare Kṛṣṇa, although the greatest of <i>mantras</i>, is therefore the simplest as well.</p>
		It’s hard to believe that one can derive such great benefit simply by chanting such a simple <i>mantra</i> . How is this possible?	<p>It is possible because the Supreme Lord has made it possible.</p> <p>In His <i>Śikṣāṣṭaka</i> prayers, Lord Caitanya describes the potency of the holy name thus:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālāḥ</i></p> <p>“My Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, in Your holy name there is all good fortune for the living entity, and therefore You have many names, such as Kṛṣṇa and Govinda, by which You expand Yourself. You have invested all Your potencies in those names, and there are no hard and fast rules for remembering them.” (<i>Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka</i>, Verse 2)</p> <p>In other words, the Lord’s name, being non-different from Him, has been invested with unlimited spiritual potency – more than that of any Vedic <i>mantra</i>. Simply by chanting His name, therefore, one can derive immense benefit.</p>

8	Block: C	Piece: Rules and pre-conditions	Type: Simple
Do I have to know the meaning of the <i>mantra</i> to get the benefit of chanting?			Hare Kṛṣṇa, the ‘spiritual medicine’ will act whether or not you know what it means, similar to how a mundane medicine acts irrespective of the consumer’s knowledge about it. It will, however, greatly enhance your prayer if you know what the <i>mantra</i> means and chant reverentially.
Are there any rules to follow to get the benefit of chanting?			<p>Yes and no, depending on how much benefit you are interested in getting. Actually, Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mantra</i> is so wonderful that it will act under any condition – so in that sense you don’t have to follow any other rules to derive benefit from chanting.</p> <p>But if you are interested in chanting seriously, there are a few rules you should follow to get the most from your chanting (these are mentioned under the section ‘Practice of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness’ in the chapter ‘What is Kṛṣṇa Consciousness?’). These rules are meant to help you lead a cleaner and simpler life, which is when the fruits of chanting can be reaped best.</p>

3	Block: A	Piece: Easy to chant yet called ' <i>mahā-mantra</i> '	Type: Simple
<p>Why is Hare Kṛṣṇa called the '<i>mahā-mantra</i>'?</p>			<p>The word <i>mantra</i> means 'spiritual sound vibration'. The word <i>mahā-mantra</i> is used to denote a greatly potent spiritual sound vibration. Śrīla Prabhupāda more specifically called the Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mahā-mantra</i> 'the great chant of deliverance'.</p> <p>Hare Kṛṣṇa is the greatest of all <i>mantras</i> for many reasons: Firstly, the scriptures specifically declare Hare Kṛṣṇa to be the greatest of all <i>mantras</i>. The <i>Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad</i> states:</p> <p><i>hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare iti ṣoḍaśakam nāmnām kali-kalmaṣa-nāśanam nātaḥ parataropāyaḥ sarva-vedeṣu dṛśyate</i></p> <p>"Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare – these sixteen names composed of thirty two syllables are the only means to counteract the evil effects of Kali-yuga. In all the <i>Vedas</i> it is seen that to cross the ocean of nescience there is no alternative to the chanting of the holy name."</p> <p>Secondly, unlike other <i>mantras</i>, which usually require the chanter to follow some rules before chanting, Hare Kṛṣṇa can be chanted anytime, anywhere, by anyone.</p> <p>Thirdly, when the Supreme Lord came down as Lord Caitanya to reclaim the fallen souls in the age of Kali, it was the Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mantra</i> He specifically distributed.</p> <p>Hare Kṛṣṇa is therefore the greatest of all <i>mantras</i>.</p>
<p>Are there any other <i>mahā-mantras</i> mentioned in the <i>śāstras</i> that give the same benefit as Hare Kṛṣṇa?</p>			<p>While there are other <i>mahā-mantras</i> also mentioned in the scriptures, Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mantra</i> is especially deemed as the most potent <i>mantra</i> for Kali yuga for the above mentioned reasons.</p>

14	Block: D	Piece: Easy arrangement of words	Type: Simple
Is there any particular reason for the arrangement of letters?			<p>This particular arrangement of letters has been mentioned in the <i>Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad</i>:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare iti śoḍaśakam nāmnām kali-kalmaṣa-nāśanam nātaḥ parataropāyaḥ sarva-vedeṣu dṛśyate</i></p> <p>“Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—these sixteen names composed of thirty-two syllables are the only means to counteract the evil effects of Kali-yuga. In all the <i>Vedas</i> it is seen that to cross the ocean of nescience there is no alternative to the chanting of the holy name.”</p>
At ISKCON, you chant ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa’ first. Many groups I know chant the ‘Hare Rāma’ line first. Is there a difference?			<p>Not really, because the syllables of the <i>mahā-mantra</i> don’t change. There are some <i>Purāṇas</i> that mention the ‘Hare Rāma’ line first, but mostly the scriptures mention the ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa’ line first. The <i>Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad</i>, specifically meant for Kali yuga, mentions the ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa’ line first (the verse has been quoted the previous answer). And that is how we have received it from our spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda. That is the reason we chant the ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa’ line first. But actually, there is no difference.</p>

10	Block: E	Piece: Easy for all to participate	Type: Simple
Can anyone participate in chanting?			<p>Yes. Chanting is the <i>yuga-dharma</i>. A <i>yuga-dharma</i> is the religious principle that is meant to be followed by everyone in that particular age, and is not restricted to a particular set of people.</p>
Do plants and animals also benefit from chanting? Can you give me any instances where this has happened?			<p>Yes. Because plants, animals, you and me have the same thing in common – all of us are essentially spirit souls, currently residing in different kinds of bodies. And Hare Kṛṣṇa is a sound that touches the spirit, irrespective of whether it is residing in a plant, animal or human being.</p> <p>The stimulation they get from it is, however, not as much as you do – because they don’t have a consciousness that is as developed as yours. Human form of life, therefore, is very valuable – because only in this body can you chant (plants and animals can’t do that on their own!), hear, understand about the Lord and go back to Godhead.</p> <p>There are instances available in the <i>Caitanya lilā</i> where animals have benefited from chanting – when the Lord was passing through the <i>Jhārikhaṇḍa</i> forest, Lord Caitanya is said to have chanted to the wild animals and made them dance together in ecstasy.</p>

Answer key to the ‘Matchless’ Blocks

1	Block: H	Piece: Matchless potency of the holy name	Type: Matchless
		Why are only the names of ‘Rāma’ and ‘Kṛṣṇa’, and not other names of Viṣṇu, chosen for the <i>mantra</i> ?	<p>Because this specific combination of the Lord’s names has been mentioned in the scriptures. Such a recommendation in the scriptures can be likened to the prescription of a physician – a specific prescription is used to cure a specific disease. Similarly, the <i>Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad</i>, which recommends the religious practices to be followed in the age of Kali, recommends the chanting of these specific names of the Lord.</p> <p>It should be noted, however, that this does not reduce the importance or the potency of the other names of the Lord.</p>
		Will chanting the name of any demigod give the same benefit as chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa?	<p>No, because no demigod can equal Kṛṣṇa in potency. As we will see in a later session, demigods are empowered servants of Kṛṣṇa and are not on an equal level as Him. Therefore, demigod worship and Kṛṣṇa worship also do not stand at equal levels.</p> <p>In fact, equating the demigods to Kṛṣṇa is considered an offence – of the ten offences in chanting the holy name, the second offence is to consider the names of Lord Śiva or Lord Brahma (or any other demigod) to be equal to or independent of the name of Lord Viṣṇu. One should, therefore, not misunderstand the holy name of the Lord to be at the level of anyone else’s name. The chapter ‘Kṛṣṇa and Devatās’ deals with this in more detail.</p>
		If <i>japa</i> is a form of sound meditation, can I chant any name or word (say ‘one’ or ‘Pepsi’ or even ‘God’) and get the same benefit?	No, for the same reasons mentioned in the above answer.
		How does chanting make you self-realized?	‘Self realization’ means to realize who you are. Chanting helps you do that – it helps you realize that you are an eternal servant of the Lord and teaches you how to act in His service – it therefore helps you become self-realized.

13	Block: G	Piece: Activity with no parallel	Type: Matchless
Is there any other process that is as potent as chanting the holy name?			No, none are mentioned in the scriptures. In fact, all scriptures repeatedly assert that chanting is the <i>only</i> potent spiritual process for our age.
If chanting is a form of meditation, can I not derive the same benefit from meditating any other way (like say sitting silently)?			<p>If you sit silently, you'll derive the benefit of sitting silently; and if you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, you'll derive the benefit of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.</p> <p>In this regard, one needs to first understand what processes will give you any spiritual benefit at all. Processes like sitting silently, staring at a candle, doing yoga gymnastics, etc. are not bona fide processes for spiritual realization – they are not mentioned anywhere in the scriptures as authorized processes and are mostly inventions of self-styled 'holy' men. While they can at best provide some mental relaxation, they have no real spiritual merit.</p>
I know of several other groups who chant Hare Kṛṣṇa amongst other <i>mantras</i> . Is there a difference between them and ISKCON?			<p>Yes – for a start, we don't chant Hare Kṛṣṇa 'amongst other <i>mantras</i>' – Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mantra</i> is the sole foundation of our movement.</p> <p>There are several other differences – we strictly chant in <i>guru paramparā</i>, while most societies may not. We also don't believe that 'all paths lead to the same destination' and so it's 'ok' to chant anything – we have a solid philosophical basis for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Our practice is based on the teachings of the <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> and <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i>, while this may not be the case with most societies you are talking about.</p>

11	Block: F	Piece: Internal transformation	Type: Matchless
How exactly does the <i>mahā-mantra</i> work?			<p>To sum it up in one word, wonderfully!</p> <p>In His <i>Śikṣāṣṭaka</i> prayers, Lord Caitanya explains how the Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mantra</i> works as follows:</p> <p><i>ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇam śreyaḥ-kairava-candrikā-vitarāṇam vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam</i></p> <p>“Glory to the <i>śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana</i>, which cleanses the heart of all the dust accumulated for years and extinguishes the fire of conditional life, of repeated birth and death. This <i>saṅkīrtana</i> movement is the prime benediction for humanity at large because it spreads the rays of the benediction moon.” (<i>Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka</i>, Verse 1)</p> <p>In other words, the Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mantra</i> cleanses the mind of all material impurities and slowly spiritualizes it. Lord Caitanya also described how exactly this happens:</p> <p><i>ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu- saṅgo ‘tha bhajana-kriyā tato ‘nartha-nivṛttiḥ syāt tato niṣṭhā rucis tataḥ athāsaktis tato bhāvas tataḥ premābhyudañcati sādhakānām ayaṁ premṇaḥ prādurbhāve bhavet kramāḥ</i></p> <p>“In the beginning there must be faith. Then one becomes interested in associating with pure devotees. Thereafter one is initiated by the spiritual master and executes the regulative principles under his orders. Thus one is freed from all unwanted habits and becomes firmly fixed in devotional service. Thereafter, one develops taste and attachment. This is the way of <i>sādhana-bhakti</i>, the execution of devotional service according to the regulative principles. Gradually emotions intensify, and finally there is an awakening of love. This is the gradual development of love of Godhead for the devotee interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” (<i>Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta</i>, <i>Madhya</i>, 23.14-15)</p> <p>In other words, as one chants with faith in the association of devotees under the instructions of a bona fide spiritual master, one’s material propensities are washed away and one becomes fixed in the service of the Lord. Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mantra</i>, therefore, works by cleansing the heart of material propensities.</p>

<p>Isn't chanting some kind of self-hypnotism? How can it bring about a change in me?</p>	<p>There is no study that proves that chanting is a form of self-hypnotism. In fact, if you compare the processes of chanting and self-hypnotism, you'll realize that they have little in common – one doesn't have to get into a hypnotic trance to chant, nor is a believer induced into the faith by hypnotizing him. Chanting is a self-conscious process where the chanter is in a normal state of mind and is well aware of his actions.</p> <p>In this context, Śrīla Prabhupāda says that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not an artificial imposition on the mind, but is the original natural energy of the living entity. This consciousness is revived by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. It, therefore, has nothing to do with self-hypnotism.</p>
<p>How can I know that the holy name is bringing about a transformation in me?</p>	<p>By seeing the transformation happening and experiencing the refreshing changes it brings about in your life. To cite an analogy, chanting is not like a post-dated cheque – it's not that you have to chant today and keep waiting for a tomorrow that never comes to see the results. Chanting is more like an immediate encashment cheque – you chant and you see the transformation it brings about in you right away. This is what makes chanting a practical and joyful process.</p> <p>Just a few words of caution though. One should not assume that there is no transformation happening just because one cannot immediately perceive it. Neither should one lose faith in the process and stop chanting because of this. Mostly, we are not even aware of the level of contamination within us and therefore, we cannot completely perceive the transformation Hare Kṛṣṇa is bringing about. This is especially true in the beginning stages. One should simply continue to chant patiently – with time, the changes will surely become perceptible.</p>
<p>How can the holy name stop me from falling prey to bad habits?</p>	<p>By becoming the anchor of your life. As you become serious about chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, you will naturally develop a desire to follow the other rules and regulations as well. Now, since many of the other rules forbid you from committing sinful activities – in your words 'bad habits' – you will naturally not indulge in them. In addition, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and getting involved in other devotional activities is so relishable that you will lose your taste for bad habits once you experience the real joy of such activities. Like Kṛṣṇa says in the <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i>:</p> <p><i>viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ rasa-varjaṁ raso 'py asya paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate</i></p> <p>"The embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness." (<i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> 2.59)</p>

	<p>In other words, <i>only</i> chanting and devotional activities give you the experience of a higher happiness which will help you rid yourself of all bad habits permanently.</p>
<p>I have heard that chanting cleanses you from within. But I know of many ‘clean’ and good people who don’t chant, and I have met people are not that ‘clean’ but who regularly chant. How can I understand this?</p>	<p>By seeing things in proper perspective. First, look at what the <i>śāstras</i> are saying – that if you chant, you have started the process of cleansing your mind – and put your faith in this.</p> <p>Next, think about this – finding someone ‘nice’ is a matter of individual perspective and experience with the person – it is not an objective verdict. But it <i>will</i> become objective when you see through the eyes of the <i>śāstras</i>.</p> <p>Now, try to answer your question – measure both the devotee and the non-devotee objectively. You’ll have to consider two parameters here – the past propensities of each and the methods they are employing to get better.</p> <p>A devotee, surely, is going on the right path – he is chanting and trying to cleanse himself. That is, he is employing the right process even though (looking from your perspective) he is not so nice because of the propensities he has cultivated in the past. But from the words of the <i>śāstras</i>, he is sure to become pure sooner or later. In the <i>Gītā</i> also, the Lord says that a devotee, even if seen doing something bad due to past tendencies should be accepted as a <i>mahātmā</i>, a great soul, because he is situated rightly (<i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> 9.30). It is therefore considered offensive to see the faults of the devotee and get judgemental about it.</p> <p>Now to the ‘clean person’ who doesn’t chant. In all likelihood, he is someone who has cultivated good propensities in the past – which is why he seems to be better than a devotee who has had a more unimpressive past. But he (the non-devotee) stands little chance of becoming ‘cleaner’ because he is not trying to clean his heart of material propensities – his endeavour is probably concentrated on acquiring material success which can, at some point, carry him away and lead him to commit sin. Moreover, the <i>śāstras</i> say that unless he cultivates spiritual life, he will, in a sense, remain ‘unclean’ because he has been doing nothing that will purify him permanently.</p> <p>With time, you will find that the non-devotee will not turn out to be better than a devotee who is undergoing such permanent purification.</p>

Answer Key to the 'Practice' Blocks

7	Block: N	Piece: Chanting in public	Type: Practice
		Can I chant when I am travelling, waiting somewhere, running errands, etc.? Do these count for my rounds?	<p>Yes, you can chant when doing these activities; but no, you cannot count them as part of your prescribed rounds. Chanting prescribed rounds is an exclusive activity, for which quality time has to be set aside everyday.</p> <p>One can chant anytime, anywhere, while engaged in any kind of activity. Lord Caitanya recommended that ideally one should chant twenty four hours a day – <i>kīrtaniya sadā hariḥ</i> (<i>Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka</i>, Verse 3). We can, therefore, at least try to chant as much as possible.</p>
		I feel a little embarrassed to chant in public. Can I do something to overcome it?	<p>Rather than being embarrassed, you should be happy to chant in public. Doing <i>saṅkīrtana</i> in public renders a chance for everyone to hear the all-auspicious name of Kṛṣṇa and therefore benefits them. You should be grateful and in a sense even proud to be a part of such an event rather than embarrassed.</p> <p>We should not be embarrassed to chant <i>japa</i> in public either. We should be happy if a stranger recognizes us as a devotee of the Lord and chants His holy name in the process.</p> <p>It is rather common for a new devotee to feel pangs of embarrassment, so one should not worry too much about it. As one advances in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he starts feeling the joy of chanting everywhere and such feelings stop bothering him.</p>
		How do I handle it if people make fun of my chanting?	<p>By not shying straight away in response. One should continue to calmly chant in such a situation to the best possible extent, remembering that the scoffer is accruing pious credit by hearing you chant, and is maybe even chanting the holy name himself in the process of ridiculing you.</p> <p>If the scoffer seems little interested or receptive, you should try to encourage him also to chant. If however, he seems unfavourable and mocks at the holy name offensively, it is best to avoid chanting before him.</p>

5	Block: M	Piece: Chanting on beads	Type: Practice
		Do I have to chant my prescribed rounds only on beads?	<p>Just like hearing engages the ears and chanting engages the tongue in the service of the Lord, counting on beads engages the sense of touch in His service. Beads also help us keep count and cultivate chanting discipline. Chanting on a set of <i>tulasī</i> beads is therefore highly recommended.</p> <p>A devotee may sometimes face situations where chanting his rounds on beads may not be possible. Under such circumstances, he may chant as explained in response to the next question.</p> <p>There is, however, no restriction on chanting when doing other activities – one may chant without using beads too.</p>
		How can I keep count when am not able to use beads?	One may count on one's fingers or use a clicker to keep count. This should be done only in compelling situations and not as a habit.
		<p>What do I do when the phone rings or there is a knock on the door when I am chanting?</p> <p>Can I interrupt and attend? Do I have to restart my round or can I start from the bead after which I stopped?</p>	<p>It is best to keep the phone in silent mode and leave the door to be answered by someone else (unless you are alone). It is even better if you can chant during <i>brāhma-muhūrta</i> which is not only the best time to chant, but is also the time when you are least likely to encounter any such external disturbance.</p> <p>One should take care to minimize all environmental disturbances when chanting and respond only in case of emergency. If feasible, one can choose a place free of disturbances to chant.</p> <p>If, however, you <i>do</i> have to interrupt your chanting for some reason, you can keep track of the bead at which you stop by pulling it out of the bead bag and marking it (any devotee can show you how). You can then resume from where you stopped.</p>
		Can my mother and sister chant during their periods?	Yes, but they should wash the beads and bead bag after their periods before using them again.

2	Block: J	Piece: Initial reluctance	Type: Practice
		<p>I have heard that chanting is the first step of the ‘brainwashing’ they do in ISKCON. I am afraid I don’t want to chant if this is true.</p>	<p>The brainwashing accusation is perhaps the most classical accusation against ISKCON. Back in the 1970s, when it made the rounds for the first time, Śrīla Prabhupāda responded to it by saying, “Yes, it is brainwashing, <i>ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam</i> [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya 20.12], cleansing the core of the heart, (of) all mistaken ideas.... Actually it is brainwashing, but for the good.” And to date, this is the <i>only</i> brainwashing business ISKCON has ever been involved in.</p> <p>The term ‘brainwashing’ technically refers to strong psychological methods forcibly applied to individuals within an intention to keep them bound strongly (even unwillingly) to a particular group or set of ideas. At ISKCON, you will not find anyone being subjected to any such mind control techniques. Everyone we speak to is free to accept or reject our teachings.</p> <p>Chanting is the first step, not in ISKCON’s non-existent brainwashing propaganda, but in the devotional process, which is meant to wash the brain of all dirty contamination.</p> <p>It is best not to believe anything you hear from unauthorized sources and let go of the wonderful opportunity to chant that has been given to you. When in doubt, clarify from <u>authorized devotees</u> in the temple.</p>
		<p>I am scared of facing the wrath of my family and friends if I start chanting. Is there any way I can chant without irking them?</p>	<p>Most of us also have faced the social fire at some point or the other – so first of all, be relieved that you aren’t the only one. The best thing to do is to bring things out in the open rather than hide it (you won’t be able to do it forever anyway!).</p> <p>Facing your family is more important than facing your friends. Try to explain to your family about chanting and the other rules of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If they seem unfavourable, do not perform your spiritual practices around them, at least for the time being. With time, they will eventually come to accept your devotional life.</p> <p>As far as friends go, it’s a much smaller battle you have to win. As explained, do not be embarrassed or scared of ridicule. Explain to your friends, and if you have someone who’s willing to listen, encourage them – otherwise just ignore any absurd behaviour that comes your way (but do not at any time behave absurd with them yourself). Implore them to understand your change in interest and priorities (like not going to the pub or the movies) and respect it. Ask them to give you the space you need. But in any case, do not worry – they too will eventually accept you.</p>

	You should also constantly take guidance from devotees authorized by the temple to deal with specific situations or problems you maybe facing.
Why do you chant for almost two hours everyday? Isn't thinking of God for some time everyday good enough?	No, it isn't – and what <i>is</i> good enough is to think of the Lord twenty four hours a day. Lord Caitanya, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself, recommended that we should constantly chant the holy name of the Lord – <i>kīrtaniya sadā hariḥ</i> (Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka, Verse 3). Seeing our fallen condition, however, Śrīla Prabhupāda has recommended a <i>minimum</i> of sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa <i>mantra</i> everyday – which takes about two hours. This is the reason devotees chant for at least two hours everyday.

12	Block: L	Piece: Finding the time to chant	Type: Practice
I'd like to increase my rounds, but am too busy. How do I find time?			<p>If you really want, it's not tough to find the time – where there is a will, there is a way as well. The Lord is also more than eager to help a devotee engage more and more in His service – which means if your desire is sincere, you already have the Lord on your side.</p> <p>Try to manage your time well – seek guidance from authorized devotees if required to streamline your life and make time for devotional activities. Also, try to climb one step at a time – increase not more than two to four rounds at one time, so that you feel more comfortable fitting it into your life. And always remember – chanting is the most important activity of human life – and is therefore more worth becoming 'busy' with in comparison to any other activity.</p>
I know that the best time to chant is in the morning, but I work on a night shift and return only at 5 A.M. What do I do?			Chant when you can. Although morning is certainly the best time to chant, it is also certainly not the <i>only</i> time to chant. Unlike when chanting other <i>mantras</i> , there are no restrictions about the time when Hare Kṛṣṇa should be chanted. Take care, however, to choose a time when your focus and ability to chant attentively is best.
Can I catch up on my rounds over the weekends if I don't find time to chant everyday (especially when I have exams/ tight schedules in office etc.)?			<p>Yes, if you can also skip all your weekday meals and eat them together on the weekend!</p> <p>Śrīla Prabhupāda strongly discouraged carrying rounds over to even the next <i>day</i>, not to speak of the next <i>weekend</i>. As far as possible, one should chant one's prescribed rounds on the same day and not carry them over (one should understand that chanting is the food for the soul and the 'meal' cannot be skipped or postponed – the soul tends to suffer the same way the body suffers when we skip or postpone a meal). And chanting during exams or other such times is even more important – after all, we cannot succeed in any important endeavour without praying to the Lord. Under genuinely compelling conditions, however, when one may not be able finish his prescribed rounds, one may carry them over to the next day, but one should never make carrying over a habit.</p>

6	Block:I	Piece: Change in lifestyle	Type: Practice
		Do I have to give up my studies or job to chant?	No. On the contrary, you should take it more seriously. For one thing, Lord Caitanya has recommended that one should continue to remain in his position and practice devotional service. The Lord has also recommended that one should work and offer the results to Him. So by remaining in your position as a student or professional and working for the Lord, you are in complete harmony with the Lord's desire. And for another thing, by beginning to chant, you have, in a sense, become an ambassador of <i>guru</i> and Kṛṣṇa. Society is bound to judge not just you, but also the Lord Himself, based on what <i>you</i> are – your sincerity and success in your material endeavours can also help you glorify the Lord.
		Do I have to change my life in any other way if I chant?	Like we mentioned, in a strict sense, there are no preconditions for chanting to work. You can, however, make quicker progress if you follow the other tenets of devotional service like the regulative principles, reading of scriptures, attending the morning <i>sādhana</i> regularly, etc. But take it one step at a time – for start, begin chanting sincerely, then slowly increase your devotional practice, taking constant guidance from authorized devotees.
		I am a smoker. I also occasionally drink. Do I have to quit before I start chanting?	Frankly, the faster you quit, the better you can progress in your spiritual life. Smoking, drinking, drugs, etc. all constitute <i>anarthas</i> or impurities which impede devotional progress, so it would be best to give them up at the earliest (the chapter 'The Four Regulative Principles' talks about this in detail). But you don't have to do it all of a sudden or in any artificial way. Simply by chanting, you will be able to give it up – as thousands before you have been able to. That is the potency of chanting.
		I eat non-veg regularly. Do I have to first become a strict vegetarian before I start chanting?	You will progress in spiritual life faster if you do. There are no preconditions for chanting to work – the <i>mantra</i> will act whether or not you follow the other rules. But the more you stop sinful activities, the better it will act on you. It is certainly good for you to give up eating meat because of the karmic consequences it has. But again, don't artificially force yourself – simply chant and pray for the Lord's mercy to help you in this regard.

9	Block: K	Piece: Chanting quality	Type: Practice
		What should I focus on – the number of rounds or the quality?	Frankly, on both. But the priority is to finish the prescribed number of rounds daily. This, however, is not a license to compromise on the quality – it only means that one should, at any cost, take care of the quantity. There may be some situations where one may not be able to take utmost care of the quality, but that is pardonable (such situations are extremely rare). Quantity should never be compromised on.
		Can I chant in the mind if I can focus while chanting?	No you may not. Because the mind can only focus (rather, try to focus) when it is concentrating on something concrete, like an <i>audible</i> sound vibration – else, even if it ‘focuses’ on something – even the ‘mental sound’ of Hare Kṛṣṇa – it is sure to wander on to something else equally quickly.
		I currently chant 8 rounds, but mostly mechanically and only to finish the number. Sometimes I wonder if I am deriving any benefit at all – would it not be better if I reduced the number of rounds and focussed instead on quality?	<p>You certainly are deriving benefit for your sincere effort and commitment, have no doubts about that. And at any cost, do not decrease the quantity. If you do, you will probably be tempted to decrease the number of rounds <i>again</i> in a while for the same reason – and then again – till you probably come down to zero.</p> <p>It would be best for you to trace the reasons for your poor quality of chanting (especially if it has been so for a while now) and work on it (the usual reasons are chanting in a rush, inattention, not dedicating proper time for chanting, a busy lifestyle, etc.). Take guidance from authorized devotees if required.</p>
		I stay in a hostel and my chanting often disturbs my roommates. How can I chant quality rounds without disturbing them?	<p>If your college/workplace is close to a FOLK hostel, try moving in. And even here, try to chant your rounds at a time when others will not get disturbed; or in a room where you are unlikely to disturb anyone.</p> <p>If you cannot move into a FOLK hostel and cannot chant where you live, try to find a proper place (either at college/office or a nearby park or temple) where you can chant your rounds well without disturbing anyone.</p>

CHAPTER SEVEN

Kṛṣṇa and Devatās

The Demigod Dilemma

E-mail 1: Some Common Questions about Demigod Worship

Preacher's Reply:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Vamsi,

I am happy to know that you have regularly been attending FOLK-2 sessions. I understand that the concepts in the *Gītā* about the position of Kṛṣṇa and the *devatās* sound new, almost unbelievable to many – but they become easy to accept if you understand the position of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa and His sublime teachings. I am sure you will have a certain level of conviction already if you have been attending the sessions.

Coming to your questions now. You have asked if it is not demeaning to call the demigods ‘servants of Kṛṣṇa’. Much to the contrary, I’d say. Far from being insults, these are terms of high praise. According to the *Rg Veda*, to be subordinate to the Supreme Lord is the glorious qualification of the gods (*orṁ tad viśnoḥ paramaṁ padam sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ* – *Rg Veda* 1.22.20). As conditioned souls, we are insubordinate – rebellious against the Lord – whereas the demigods always humbly consider themselves subordinate and always look towards His lotus feet. Calling them servants, therefore, is showering them with immeasurable praise.

You have asked if there are verses in the Vedic scriptures that declare Lord Śiva to be the Supreme Lord. This is one of the most frequent questions I encounter. While you will find some verses that glorify Lord Śiva’s position as the supreme being in charge of destruction of the universe (which is often misunderstood to mean that he is God), they do not glorify him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The scriptures do however glorify him as the greatest devotee of Lord Viṣṇu – *vaiṣṇavānām yathā śambhu* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.13.16). Lord Śiva may therefore correctly be considered the greatest devotee of the Lord.

There is ample evidence in the Vedic literatures itself for you to accept Kṛṣṇa’s superiority over Lord Śiva. For one thing, Lord Śiva himself has accepted the superiority of Kṛṣṇa over him in many places in the Vedic literatures. I quote for your reference one such verse from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

“Any person who is surrendered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, the controller of everything – material nature as well as the living entity – is actually very dear to me.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.24.28)

Like you can see, Lord Śiva is accepting Kṛṣṇa to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead here. There are many other such verses in the Vedic scriptures.

You may also be aware of the pastime where Lord Śiva took shelter of Lord Kṛṣṇa to save himself from the demon Vrkāsura (you can read Kṛṣṇa book, Chapter 88). On that instance, Lord Śiva was unable to save himself from a boon he gave Vrkāsura. Knowing that only Lord Viṣṇu, being more powerful than him, could save him, he took shelter of Viṣṇu. There are many more such narrations in the *Purāṇas* where Lord Śiva is seen to be a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu.

All these prove beyond doubt that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

You have also asked me the basis on which you should accept Kṛṣṇa’s words in the *Gītā*. I’d like to remind you that Kṛṣṇa is Himself the supreme Vedic authority. His words and His position need no other proof.

Many Vedic authorities have confirmed His position as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You may remember them from the first session of the course. You should, therefore, accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead based on His own statements in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

And do the demigods die? Where do they go after death? Who occupies their positions? I remember addressing these questions in class. Yes, the demigods leave their bodies at the end of their tenure. They are given different bodies based on the deeds they perform in their lives. And other living entities who have qualified themselves to occupy their posts are given a chance to be the new set of demigods.

I can understand that you find it pretty difficult to believe that demigods do not eternally occupy their posts – but since we get this information from the scriptures, we should accept it. But this does not mean that we simply take them to be ordinary beings like us, perhaps a little more powerful – we should always remember that we can never match their position or calibre.

Regarding the demigods you are currently worshipping at your altar, I suggest you do not remove them, especially if you are worshipping them with your family. You may end up hurting the feelings of your family. As I had said, you can worship as Vaiṣṇavas and pray for your spiritual progress.

If you are staying separately, I'd request you to worship Kṛṣṇa exclusively. Since you say that you are not fully convinced about this, I'd suggest you don't remove the pictures of demigods from your altar, but worship them after offering your first worship to Kṛṣṇa always. As you gradually develop conviction about the position of Kṛṣṇa (which you surely will if you continue chanting sincerely), you can transition to exclusive Kṛṣṇa worship.

Be assured that the demigods will not be offended by the change in your object of worship. They will, on the contrary, be happy because you have recognized that the real object of worship is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa.

I implore you to study the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* carefully, wherein the Lord reveals the truth about Himself and the demigods. By carefully understanding these teachings, you will be able to appreciate Kṛṣṇa's position and will develop your conviction. You will then be convinced that Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship is sufficient.

Regards,
Rādhā-Dāmodara Dāsa

E-mail 2: Visiting Demigod Temples while Travelling

Preacher's Reply:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Shridhar,
I am happy to hear about your Udupi trip.

If I remember correctly, you had discussed your parents' staunch faith in the demigods with me some time ago. I again repeat what I had told you then – do not forcibly try to convince them. You have to remember that just like you have *your* faith, they have *theirs*. And since they have held on to their beliefs for very long now, it is hard to change their ideas. Try and talk to them with reasoning, but if they are not open to your ideas, do not push them. Pray to the Lord that they accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness some day and quietly carry on with your own spiritual practices.

There is nothing wrong in visiting the temples of demigods, so long as you don't make that the mission of your trip. If you, however, come across demigod temples in course of your travel, pray to them for progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Being Vaisnavas, the demigods can certainly recommend to the Supreme Lord for your spiritual progress.

As far as the *prasādam* and *caraṇāmṛta* are concerned, you can honor it if you are sure it has been offered to Lord Viṣṇu and has been accepted by the demigod. If you are not sure of this, it would be best to avoid it. If, however, you find yourself compelled, you may take a small portion after chanting 'Śrī Viṣṇu' three times.

Have a Kṛṣṇa conscious and enjoyable trip.

Regards,
Jagannātha Dāsa

Scoring Pattern and Score Sheet

The participants will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Attendance
- Quiz Sessions
- Practical service rendered
- Book distribution
- Final test at the end of the course

A final course grade will be given based on the candidate's performance.

Concept of Evaluation Points (EP)

Participants will earn Evaluation points for each of the above mentioned criteria. The following table explains how the scores earned for each of the above mentioned criteria will be translated to evaluation points:

Criteria	Points per session	Scaling factor to calculate EP	Max EP per session	Max EP throughout the course
Attendance	1	1	1	16
Attendance combined class	1	1	1	4
MC quiz score	50	0.2	10	20
VE quiz score	50	0.2	10	10
Practical service				10
Book distribution				10
Final test	30	1	30	30
Total EP for the course				100

As indicated, a maximum of 100 EP has been allotted for the entire course.

Minimum Requirements

The point-wise break-up of the score and the minimum criteria set forth are as follows:

- A participant will be eligible to sit for the final test only if he has attended at least 12 of the 16 sessions.
- Before the final test, the candidate is expected to finish all the quizzes and render the required amount of service. The table below lists the minimum expected requirements.

Criteria	Minimum requirement
Attendance	12 classes
Service and book distribution	4 hours each
Final course grade	Grade C or above

- In case a candidate fails to attend the session on the day of a quiz, he is expected to complete the quiz on an alternative date that will be announced by the facilitator.
- Only a candidate who meets the minimum requirement in terms of attendance and service and scores an overall of 55 EP or above will be announced to move to the next level.

Final Course Grade and Promotion

- The grades will be arrived at based on the final EP earned and are as follows:

EP earned	Grade
85 and above	A
70-84	B
55-69	C
40-54	D
Below 40	E

A candidate is allowed to move to the next level only if he scores grade C or higher.

Score Sheet

Attendance Record

Session No.	Session details	Date	Time in	Preacher Sign.	Accommodation
1	Defn. of God				
2	VE -1: Behaviour and Kirtana				
3	What is KC?				
4	Video session 1				
5	Vedic Literatures				
6	Quiz 1 – Ch 1, 2 & 3				
7	Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-mantra				
8	VE -2: Appearance and Habits				
9	FAQ on the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-mantra				
10	Video session 2				
11	The Four Regulative Principles				
12	VE -3: Temple Etiquette				
13	Kṛṣṇa and Devatas				
14	Quiz 2 – Ch 4, 5, 6 & 7				
15	VE - 4: Prasādam				
16	Quiz 3 – VE 1, 2, 3 & 4				

Quiz scores

Session No.	Date	Max EP	Points obtained	Sign.
1		10		
2		10		
3		10		
Total		30		

Special Sessions

Type of Session	Date	Sign.
Combined Class		
Combined Class		
Nagar Sankirtan		
Combined Class		
Combined Class		

Practical Devotional Service (Min. 4 hours)

Date	Service rendered	Assigned by	Hours	Sign.

Book Distribution Service (Min. 4 hours)

Date	Assigned by	Hours	Sign.

Final Evaluation

	MC Quiz score	VE Quiz score	Attendance	Attendance Special sessions	Service points	Final test	Total
Max marks	20	10	16	4	20	30	100
Obtained							
Sign.							

FOLK Hostel Addresses

SN	Hostel	Address	House Lead/Preacher	Cell No.
1	Gopal Niwas	No. 104, 4 th cross, 4 th main, Further Extension Mahalakshmi Layout, Bangalore-560086	Yuvaraj.A Mayank Saini AGLD	9342928017 8970154944
2	Mathikere-MSR	Sneha Shilpa, No.199, 3rd Main, 3rd Cross AGS Layout, RMV 2nd stage, New BEL Road Bangalore-560094	Vivek Vinayaka Sakre ANKD	9880556482 8147031908
3	Indiranagar	No 444, "Sri Krishna", 6th West Main Road Amar Jyothi Layout, Domlur, Bangalore-560071	Srinivas Krishna Sagar NL GNRD	9241529941 9972739116
4	ITPL Cosmos	No. 164, Dream Meadows, Near Ryan School, Brookfields, Kundalahalli, Bangalore - 560037	P.Phani Kumar Keerthi Rasajna Dasa	7760529516 9916954517
5	Kengeri	Flat No 003, MBM Omkar Heights Near JSS College of Engineering, Omkar Nagar, Off Kengeri Uttaralli road, Bangalore-560060	Preetam Singh Alok B GNRD	9731500442 9902222975
6	Yelahanka	No 1433, 3cross, 1st main, Neharu nagar, yelahanka, Bangalore 560064	Soumik Hemant Kumar Saini ANKD	8095274658 8951017969
7	Kormangala	No,200. 3rd avenue 3rd main. Teachers colony. Kormangala Bangalore-560034	M Arun Kumar Mayank Agrawal KKTD	9901052314 9741008535
8	Marathahalli	No.194, Ferns Habitat, Doddanakundi, Opp EMC-2 Mahadevpura, Bangalore - 560037	Varaprasad Mallikarjun KSCD	9731288556 9880926188
9	Hessarghatta	#283, 5 th main, AGB Lay Out, Opp. Saptagiri Hospital, near Saptagiri Engg. College Boys Hostel, Bang-90	Jijin J Nair Binay Kumar Sah MHCD	9901927972 9986125784

SCHEDULE OF POSITIVE TRANSFORMATION (FOLK-2)

Session Number	Content	Temple AV Hall ISKCON Bangalore 4.00 pm - 6.00 pm
Session 1	Ch 1 - Definition of God	Sunday, April 01, 2012
Session 2	Vaishnava Etiquette - Part-1	Sunday, April 08, 2012
	BRAHMOTSAVA CELEBRATIONS Churna Abhisheka SUNDAY April 15th	
Session 3	Ch 2 - What is KC?	Sunday, April 22, 2012
	C O M B I N E D C L A S S SUNDAY April 29th @ 4.00 pm in ENG LECTURE HALL ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY	
Session 4	Video Session -1	Sunday, May 06, 2012
Session 5	Ch 3 - Vedic Literatures	Sunday, May 13, 2012
Session 6	Quiz: Ch 1 & 2 & 3	Sunday, May 20, 2012
	C O M B I N E D C L A S S SUNDAY May 27th @ 4.00 pm in ENG LECTURE HALL ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY	
Session 7	Ch 4 - Chanting H K (Part-1)	Sunday, June 03, 2012
Session 8	Vaishnava Etiquette - Part-2	Sunday, June 10, 2012
Session 9	Ch 5 - Chanting H K (Part-2)	Sunday, June 17, 2012
	NAGAR SANKIRTAN SUNDAY June 24th ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY	
Session 10	Video Session -2	Sunday, July 01, 2012
Session 11	Ch 6 - 4 Reg Principles	Sunday, July 08, 2012
Session 12	Vaishnava Etiquette - Part-3	Sunday, July 15, 2012
Session 13	Ch 7 - Krishna & Devatas	Sunday, July 22, 2012
	C O M B I N E D C L A S S SUNDAY July 29th @ 4.00 pm in ENG LECTURE HALL ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY	
Session 14	Quiz: Ch 4,5 ,6 & 7	Sunday, August 05, 2012
	C O M B I N E D C L A S S SUNDAY August 12th @ 4.00 pm in ENG LECTURE HALL ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY	
Session 15	Vaishnava Etiquette - Part-4	Sunday, August 19, 2012
Session 16	Quiz: VE 1,2,3 & 4	Sunday, August 26, 2012
	COMBINED CLASS SUNDAY September 2nd @ 4.00 pm in ENG LECTURE HALL ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY	
	COMBINED CLASS SUNDAY September 9th @ 4.00 pm in ENG LECTURE HALL ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY	
	FOLK DAY (JAGRUTHI) SUNDAY September 16th ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY	