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OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- To expose the faults of

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement



FOUNDER

(under the direction of His Divine Grace
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī
Prabhupāda) His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

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UNIVERSAL EXPANSION

According to the Vedic model of the universe, the universe is egg shaped. But how does this account for expansion of the universe according to the Big Bang theory? Second question: If consciousness is the symptom of the soul, then why does a paralytic patient lose some part of his consciousness while the soul is still present? Does that mean any disorder for the soul?

Ghanesh, Vellore, TN

OUR REPLY: When the cosmic creation starts to manifest, the universe in a seed form emerges from the pores of the cosmic primeval person, Mahā-Viṣṇu. It then expands during the period that Mahā-Viṣṇu exhales, contracts during the period of His inhalation, and re-enters into His body at the time of cosmic destruction. Simply stating, the egg expands.

Consciousness (which comes from the soul) exists independent of the body and its condition, but the manifestation of the consciousness through the body to our vision depends on the body, especially the brain, being functional. A crude example: Time exists independent of the clock, but its manifestation to our vision depends on the clock being functional. If the brain is partially damaged as in paralysis, the instrument through which the soul manifests its consciousness being damaged, the consciousness is manifested partially. Paralysis in the body does not mean that the soul is affected, just like the power house is not affected if there is short-circuit in a remote factory. The soul cannot be damaged by anything (Bg. 2.23-24). In cases of paralysis the beating of the heart and brain's activity denote the pres-

ence of life and an intact soul.

HOW FAR IS THE MOON?

I read the interesting article on the moon landing (June '09), but had a doubt. You said there that the distance between the earth and moon according to Śūryasiddhānta is almost same as given by modern science. But I have heard that according to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the moon is further away from the earth than the sun. How can both be simultaneously true?

Śrī Caitanya Candra Dāsa

OUR REPLY: The *Bhāgavatam* cosmology includes a vertical dimension that is often not known to those familiar only with the modern approach to cosmology. Thus, when the *Bhāgavatam* talks about the distances of different celestial bodies from the earth, it is actually talking about their distances in the vertical dimension, that is, their heights, above the earthly plane. Let us understand this with an example.

An apartment on the 10th floor is further from the ground floor than a flat on the sixth floor in terms of height. But if the apartment on the 10th floor is in a building 100 feet away and the apartment on the sixth floor is in a building 1000 feet away, the tenth floor apartment is now closer than the sixth floor apartment in terms of horizontal distance.

Similarly, the moon is further away from the earth than the sun in terms of its height above the earthly plane, but the sun is much further away from the earth than the moon in terms of horizontal distance. This is how both are simultaneously true.

Replies to the letters were written by Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa.

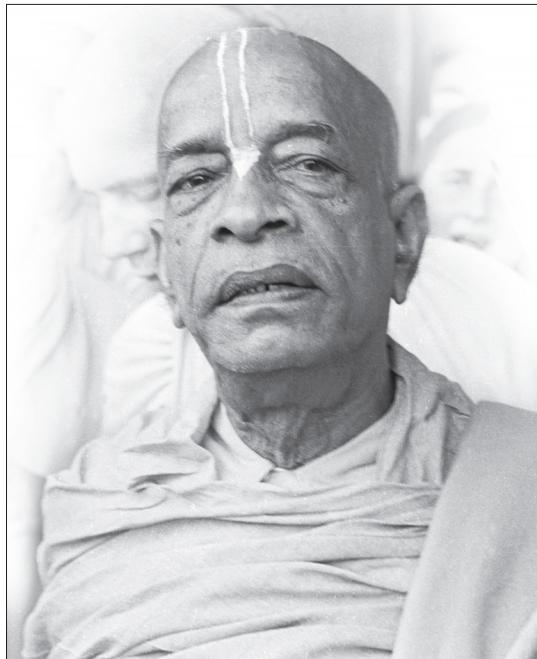
DO IT FOR KRISHNA

Bhakti means we should simply accept and do that which is favorable to Kṛṣṇa.

by His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Pradyumna: (reading) Originally in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, the ocean is divided like the watery ocean into east, west, north, and south, while the sub-sections within these different divisions are called waves. As in the ocean, there are always different waves, either on the eastern side, the western side, the northern side, or the southern side, so similarly *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* has different waves. In the first part there are four waves, the first being a general description of devotional service. The second concerns the regulative principles for executing devotional service and the third wave is de-



votional service in ecstasy. In the fourth is the ultimate goal, love of God. These will be explicitly described, along with their different symptoms. The authorized description of *bhakti*, or devotional service."

ETERNAL RELATION

Prabhupāda: When Caitanya Mahāprabhu was speaking to Rūpa Gosvāmī, He said, "Bhakti is just like an ocean. I'll take a drop of it, and you taste it, and you'll understand what this ocean is." Just like by tasting one drop of sea water we can understand the taste of the whole ocean, similarly Caitanya



Mahāprabhu described a small portion of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. *Bhakti rasa amṛta*. In *bhakti*, devotional service, there is a *rasa*, taste, and the taste is *amṛta*, eternal.

Here also, we have got a taste for any relationship. Just like we have our relationship with master and servant, this relationship is a perverted reflection of the real master and servant. Here it is perverted because the master does not love the servant, and the servant also does not love the master. The servant serves the master so long as there is payment. If the payment is stopped, then the servant will not be available anymore. But in the spiritual world, Kṛṣṇa's servants are eternal; that is eternal, without any payment. *Mama janmani janmanīśvare bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī* [Śikṣāṣṭaka 4]. *Ahaitukī*. The servants of God, or Kṛṣṇa, they serve Kṛṣṇa not for any material gain. *Ahaitukī*, without any cause of motive. This is real *bhakti*. Therefore this *bhakti* word is applicable only in relationship with God, or Kṛṣṇa. In the material world, there cannot be any use of the word *bhakti*, because here the so-called devotional service is motivated. So this *bhakti* word is monopolized by Kṛṣṇa, and nobody else. Go on.

FIRST CLASS

DEVOTIONAL SERVICE

Pradyumna: "The authorized description of *bhakti*, or devotional service, following in the footsteps of previous *ācāryas* can be summarized in the following statement of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī: 'First-class devotional service is known by one's tendency to be fully engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, serving the Lord favorably.'

Prabhupāda: Yes.

*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-
śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*
[Brs. 1.1.11]

This is the first statement of *bhakti* given by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. "First class devotional service is known by one's tendency to be fully engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, serving the Lord favorably." Not unfavorably. *Ānukūla, prātikūla*. *Ānukūlyasya saṅkalpa*

prātikūlyasya varjanam. Bhakti means we should simply accept what is favorable to Kṛṣṇa. That which is not favorable to Kṛṣṇa, we shall not accept.

Just like Arjuna, in the beginning he declined to fight. He was thinking favorably to his own senses, "If I kill my brother, grandfather, nephews, who are on the other side...they have come to fight with me so I can kill them. I can own victory over them, but what is the profit? If my relatives, friends,



In the beginning of war Arjuna declined to fight.

and all others die, then what is the use of my becoming victorious?" That means he was thinking in his favor. But Kṛṣṇa wanted: "You must fight. You are a kṣatriya. It is your duty to fight. You are My friend. If you go away, from this battlefield, what will people say? That 'Kṛṣṇa's friend has gone away.' So this is not good." When Arjuna was not convinced, Kṛṣṇa spoke the whole *Bhagavad-gītā*. After speaking *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa inquired from Arjuna, "What is your decision now? Are you going to fight or not?" Arjuna said, "Yes, my illusion is over." *Naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvat-prasādān mayācyuta...kariṣye vacanāṁ tava:* "Yes, I shall fight." [Bg. 18.73] This is favorable to Kṛṣṇa.

We have to see what is favorable to Kṛṣṇa, not see sense gratification—"not favorable to me, or to my country, or to my society." No self-interest; only Kṛṣṇa's interest. That is *bhakti*. So by fighting, Arjuna became a great devotee. *Bhakto 'si priyo 'si me* [Bg. 4.3]. Kṛṣṇa certified, "You are My greatest devotee. You are My very confidential friend." But what did he do? He did not read *Vedānta* philosophy. He was a *grhaṇtha*, a king, engaged in fighting. He knew how to fight only. He did not know what is *Vedānta* philosophy. But still he became a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa. *Bhakto 'si*. So what is the criterion? That he fought favorably.

LUST ISN'T LOVE

The difference between *kāma* and *prema* is described in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. *Prema* is love, and *kāma* is lust. They appear similar. In the material world, lust is going on in the name of love. A boy loves a girl, a girl loves a boy, but actually the boy wants sense gratification and the girl also wants

sense gratification. That is not love. As soon as there is any difficulty in sense gratification, immediately there is divorce. So there is no love in the material world. There is only lust. Therefore the author of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* has distinguished between love and lust. He says, *ātmendriya-prīti-vāñchā tāre bali kāma*. When you want to satisfy your senses it is called lust. *Kṛṣṇendriya-prīti vāñchā dhare prema nāma*: when you want to satisfy the senses of Kṛṣṇa, that is love. [Cc. Ādi 4.165]

preaching, 'You surrender unto Kṛṣṇa.' What is the difference? There is no difference. We Hare Kṛṣṇa people preach the same thing that was spoken five thousand years ago by Kṛṣṇa personally. We don't change. We present, therefore, *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. Kṛṣṇa says that everyone should surrender unto Him. We are preaching the same philosophy that 'You surrender to Kṛṣṇa.' Kṛṣṇa says *man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī mām namaskuru* [Bg. 18.65]. We say the same thing. We

A boy loves a girl, a girl loves a boy, but actually the boy wants sense gratification and the girl also wants sense gratification. That is not love.

Just like Arjuna, in the beginning he wanted to satisfy his own senses. "I shall not fight because if the other party, my brothers and grandfathers live, I shall be happy." So that is *kāma*. That is not *prema*. But then he agreed to fight because Kṛṣṇa wanted it... *Nimitta-mātram bhava savya-sācīn*: "O Arjuna, you can be but an instrument in the fight." So that is *prema*. So *kṛṣṇa-prema* can be executed in so many ways. Simply Kṛṣṇa should be satisfied. That is *prema*. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So at the present moment, Kṛṣṇa, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* wanted: *sarva-dharmāṇ parityajya mām ekām śaraṇām vraja* [Bg. 18.66]. Kṛṣṇa wanted Arjuna—meaning everyone—to surrender to Kṛṣṇa and be engaged in the service of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is propagating to serve Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa demanded, "You surrender unto Me," and we are

ask everyone that 'You become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. You think of Kṛṣṇa constantly. You worship Kṛṣṇa. You offer you obeisances unto Kṛṣṇa.' So this is favorable. If we preach what Kṛṣṇa said five thousand years ago, that is favorable. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. To act in favor of Kṛṣṇa means Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Thank you very much. 

IN YOUR OWN WORDS QUESTION FOR THE FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Who is your favorite devotee in *Śrīmad Bhagvatam* and why?

Deadline for submission is Aug. 20.
Answers will be published in October.

Word limit: 150 words

E-mail:
ed.btgindia@pamho.net



God Is Great and Sweet

Scriptures like the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* reveal that God is not only the omnipotent creator and stern judge, but a delightfully innocent child as well.

by Caitanya Carana Dasa



Krsna dances on the hoods of the venomous serpent Kaliyā (above); and the darling butter thief (right)

I would believe only in a god who could dance," wrote German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. During his times, God was generally portrayed as a frozen perfection—remote, static, and wholly unsociable. No wonder Nietzsche was disillusioned.

He might have been pleasantly surprised to hear about Kṛṣṇa, the God who dances with spell-binding expertise on the hoods of the venomous serpent Kāliyā; the God who dances to the tune of His mother just to get butter; the God who dances with the gopis during the *rāsa-līlā*, a celebration of divine love; the God known as *Vṛndāvana-naṭabara*, the best dancer in the pastoral paradise of Vṛndāvana.

Kṛṣṇa is a mesmerizing blend of greatness and sweetness. All theistic traditions assert that God is great. Kṛṣṇa graphically demonstrates that greatness. In the 11th chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa gives Arjuna a glimpse of His awe-inspiring greatness by displaying His universal form, one of the greatest mystical visions in world literature. Arjuna

saw within the universal form—within Kṛṣṇa—everything and everyone in existence. He saw all the planets, stars, and universes as well as all living beings, whether celestial, terrestrial, or subterranean. When Kṛṣṇa was on earth He also exhibited His omnipotence by effortlessly conquering numerous powerful demons who were the scourges of the universe.

Most endearingly, Kṛṣṇa delights, not in the magnificence of godhood, but in the sweetness of uninhibited love. This brings us to a concept unique to Vedic theology, that of *līlā*, or transcendental pastimes, as well as to a related concept: *māyā*.

THE MYSTERY OF MĀYĀ

“Māyā is one of the most beautiful concepts in the history of religion.” This remark by Indologist Daniel H. H. Ingalls is intriguing because *māyā* is generally considered the illusory energy that tempts and misleads us into forms of enjoyment that end in suffering. How could *māyā* be considered beautiful? The answer involves unraveling the mystery of the dual aspects of *māyā*—*yoga-māyā* and *mahā-māyā*.

The word *māyā* means “energy,” but it can also mean “that which is not” (*mā*, “not”; *yā*, “this”). *Mahā-māyā*, the Lord’s illusory energy, makes “that which is not” seem real. She deludes those who want to enjoy independent of God into forgetting their true identity as souls, as eternal servitors of God. She allure them with various proposals for material enjoyment until they become fed up and finally turn back to God and His loving service.

And for those who want to love God purely, there is another kind of illusion, a divine illusion that enhances their loving exchanges

with God. The word *yoga* means “to connect” or “to unite,” so *yoga-māyā* refers to the energy of God that makes possible our loving union with God.

Let’s see how.

God is often imagined as a judge who rewards the pious and penalizes the impious. If that’s all God had to do eternally, His life would be quite boring. But devotional scriptures like Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam explain that being a judge is only a tiny part of God’s multifaceted, omni-faceted, personality. Kṛṣṇa has His own life of eternal love with His devotees in His kingdom. There, He delights, not in exhibiting His godhood, but in reciprocating His devotees’ love.

In Kṛṣṇa’s pastoral paradise, Vṛndāvana, *yoga-māyā* covers the devotees so that they are no longer conscious that Kṛṣṇa is God; they see Him only as the most special, sweet member of their village. And He plays that role to perfection. For example, with those devotees who love Him in *vātsalya-rasa* (parental affection), He becomes an endearing naughty child who steals butter from their houses. The women complain to Kṛṣṇa’s mother, Yaśodā, Kṛṣṇa artfully feigns innocence, and Yaśodā is mystified until telltale butter on Kṛṣṇa’s lips incriminates Him.

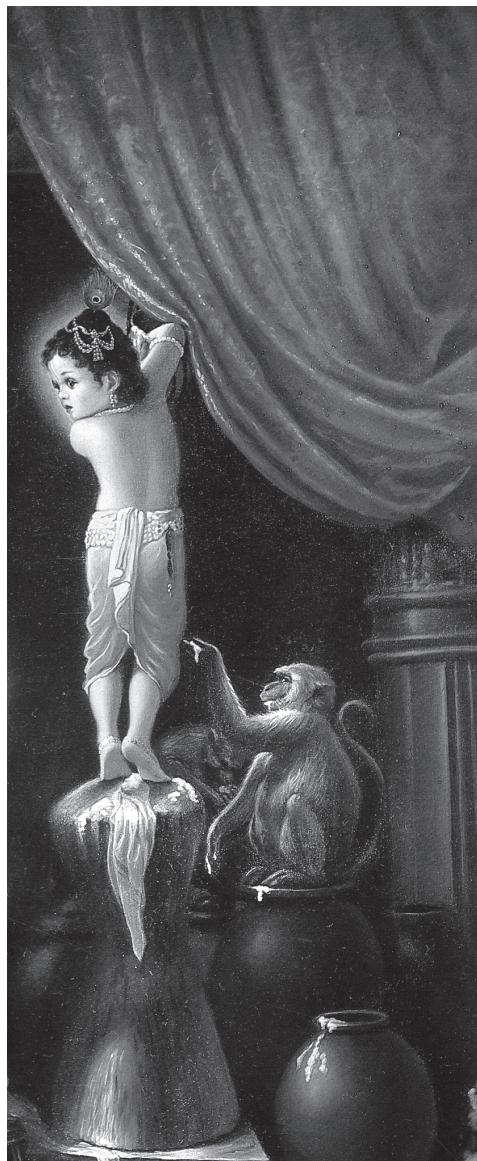
So celebrated are Kṛṣṇa’s Vṛndāvana *līlās* that hundreds of sweet songs have been composed about them and millions of Kṛṣṇa’s devotees delight in singing them. Indeed the great Vaiṣṇava poet Bilvamangala Ṭhākura glorifies Lord Kṛṣṇa as the ultimate thief: “My dear Lord, O best of thieves, You who are celebrated as a butter thief in the glorious land of Vṛndāvana, please steal away all my sins that

have accumulated over many lifetimes.

Skeptics who ask why God steals miss the essence of *līlā*: love. Besides being God, Kṛṣṇa owns everything, so there’s no question of His stealing anything. Yet Kṛṣṇa “steals” to have fun-filled loving exchanges with His devotees.

LĪLĀ DYNAMICS

Though like a drama, Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā* is real. It is the highest reality, the reality of the intimate love between the Lord and His devotees. In the eternally real drama of *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, *Yoga-māyā* is the director and Kṛṣṇa



is the hero. But the special twist is that Kṛṣṇa is also the scriptwriter and *yoga-māyā* directs Kṛṣṇa according to His own script. Thus in His *līlā* Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously in control, as the scriptwriter, and not in control, as the perfect actor who forgets Himself while playing His role.

This is Kṛṣṇa's extraordinary world. *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* reveals the import of the saying "God is love."

GREATNESS AND SWEETNESS

For most people, and especially for the demoniac, Kṛṣṇa's greatness hides His sweetness. Kṛṣṇa went as a peace messenger with sweet words to dissuade Duryodhana from the *Mahābhārata* war. But when the arrogant prince tried to arrest Kṛṣṇa, He foiled the attempt by revealing His gigantic universal form.

For the purest devotees, Kṛṣṇa's greatness gives way to His sweetness. During the *rāsa-līlā*, Kṛṣṇa disappeared and then reappeared before the *gopīs* in His majestic four-armed Viṣṇu form. When Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa's most beloved consort, bowed before Viṣṇu and asked Him where Kṛṣṇa had gone, Kṛṣṇa as Viṣṇu tried to artfully point in a false direction. But seeing Rādhā's selfless love and Her intense anxiety caused by separation, Kṛṣṇa could no longer keep up His guise. His two extra hands disappeared, and Rādhā beheld before Her the sweet Lord of Her heart.

As Kṛṣṇa's sweetness surpasses His greatness, so too does His love supersede His laws. The laws of karma impartially and unerringly deliver everyone their karmic dues sooner or later. But if we turn to Kṛṣṇa with devotional love, He displays His sweetness as a forgiving father. His unequivocal promise in

a concluding verse of the *Gītā* (18.66) shows that His mercy transcends His justice: "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear."

We can easily surrender to Kṛṣṇa by chanting His holy names, which reveal both His greatness and His sweetness. The holy name has a great power that even nuclear weapons don't have—the power to destroy all our negative habits and tendencies. And the holy name is so irresistibly sweet that saints desire thousands of mouths to relish its taste. Not only that, the holy name softens our heart and redirects our love to Kṛṣṇa. When our heart becomes soft with love for Kṛṣṇa, soft like butter, then *mākhana-cora* (butter-thief) Kṛṣṇa

will come and steal it. Devotees pray and long for that ultimate love-theft.

THE ULTIMATE DANCE

Kṛṣṇa and His devotees express divine love not only through humanly inconceivable ways such as thievery, but also through human-like ways such as dancing. Spiritual servants consider the celebrated *rāsa* dance the culmination of divine love. Although this dance appears similar to an ordinary dance involving boys and girls, we can understand its supra-mundane nature when we hear about it from faithful, learned devotees like Śrīla Prabhupāda, who has explained it in his book *Kṛṣṇa: The Supreme Personality of Godhead*. Indeed the *rāsa* dance is so spiritually exalted that those advanced devotees who



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu popularized *sankirtana* all over India. Chanting and dancing devotees are now a familiar sight all over the world. (right)

have absolutely no interest in mundane pleasures—like the celebrated six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana—cherish and worship it in the innermost core of their hearts.

While we aspiring devotees can't yet take part in the *rāsa* dance, we can relish divine dance in the form of *saṅkīrtana*, the congregational chanting of the holy names of Kṛṣṇa. The exuberant singing and dancing of *saṅkīrtana* are a profound and potent form of meditation. The purpose of meditation is to experience spiritual reality. Silent meditation tries to achieve this by negating the material, by deactivating the body and the mind. But

Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. This quickly and efficaciously transports our consciousness to the joyful realm of divine love.

Thus *sankīrtana* acts like spiritual-music therapy to heal the soul in the current Iron Age, Kali-yuga. Just as iron burdens the person carrying it, negative thoughts and emotions burden most people in the present age. *Sankīrtana* floods the heart with positive, precious, golden emotions like love, faith, and joy and flushes away negative, burdensome emotions like hatred, anxiety, and sorrow.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who

Akbar, who lived half a century later: "Hail Thee, O Caitanya, the victor of my heart. Mark the rhythm of this mystic dance, in lofty ecstasy quite alone. Merrily sounds the tabor, and the cymbals' notes keep time... O my heart's Lord, how can I express the love I have for Thee? Shah Akbar craves a drop from the sea of Thy love and pity." (Quoted by D. C. Sen in *Caitanya and His Age*.)

These verses composed by a Muslim emperor in glorification of one who is commonly considered a Hindu saint illustrate the universal appeal of the divine love Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personified and propagated.

As a spiritual master in Caitanya Mahāprabhu's line, Śrīla Prabhupāda, through his ISKCON, popularized the divine dance of *saṅkīrtana* in our times. Chanting and dancing devotees are now a familiar sight in major cities all over the world.

Given the deep

theology and intense devotion that lies at its heart, this simple-looking dancing can well be called the ultimate dance. ♣

Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa holds a degree in electronics and telecommunications engineering and serves full-time at ISKCON Pune. To subscribe to his free cyber magazine, visit thespiritualscientist.com

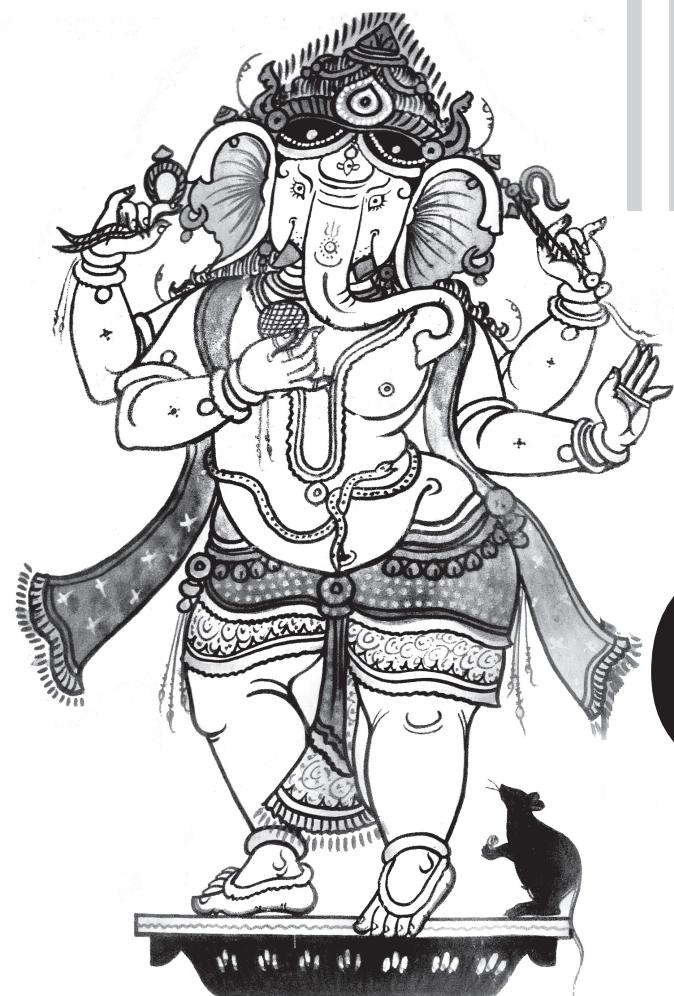


since we're habituated to physical and mental activity, wouldn't it be easier and more natural if somehow the body and the mind could be used to raise ourselves to spiritual levels of consciousness? That is precisely what *saṅkīrtana* does: engaging the body in graceful dance for the pleasure of the Lord, and the mind in prayerful contemplation on the sound of His holy names, especially the *mahā-mantra* Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa,

appeared some five hundred years ago, revived and popularized *saṅkīrtana* all over India. As the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa for Kali-yuga, Lord Caitanya displayed divine dance so enchantingly that His golden complexion, graceful gait, and intense devotional emotions charmed everyone—from aristocrats like the king of Orissa down to crime-hardened lowlives.

Indeed, Śrī Caitanya's dance charmed even the Muslim emperor





Birth of GANEŚA

A little known account of the divine origin of Lord Ganeśa

This description of the appearance of Lord Ganeśa is given in Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa of Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa. The popular story of how Mother Pārvatī created Lord Ganeśa from her cosmetics is given in Rudra-samhita, Kumāra Khaṇḍa of Śiva Purana, where Lord Brahmā confirms the version presented below. The different versions mentioned in the Purāṇas are due to variation in pastimes that took place in different yugas.

Srīla Nārada Muni inquired Lord Nārāyaṇa about Ganeśa's birth and his qualities.

Lord Nārāyaṇa explained that after the birth of Kārtikeya—the commander-in-chief of the demigods—mother Pārvatī requested

Lord Śiva for one more son. On the request of his beloved wife, Mahādeva asked her to perform a puṇyaka ceremony (vrata) to Lord Kṛṣṇa. The procedures include singing kīrtana, offering bhoga, flower garlands, Tulasī lamps to Lord Hari.

After explaining the details, Lord Śiva, who can award the fruit of penances, went to perform meditation on Lord Hari.

Following the order of Lord Śiva, Mother Pārvatī arranged for all the paraphernalia required to be used in the ceremony, with Sanatkumāra the head priest of the ceremony. On the day beginning a year long observance, everyone arrived on Mount Kailāsa, including Lord Viṣṇu, to greet and offer their blessings upon Mother

Pārvatī for the successful completion of the ceremony. The host Lord Śiva made comfortable arrangements for the guests.

After satisfying the guests, Lord Śiva requested Lord Viṣṇu to sit on the elevated throne and inquired: "O all cognizant Lord Śrinivāsa, kindly instruct us on the performance of this ceremony." Smiling gently, Lord Viṣṇu replied: "O master of Pārvatī, the essence of performing any activity or any ceremony is devotion to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa which is very rare. It is by His devotees' mercy only one can get devotion to Him. A devotee becomes qualitatively equal with the Lord, he never perishes even after annihilation of this world and returns back to the Lord's abode Goloka Vṛndāvana. O Śiva, you

devastate the whole world, but you cannot harm My devotee, nor does powerful illusory energy delude them because of My mercy upon them."

"Your wife is mother of all living entities in this material world. By the influence of this ceremony, Pārvatī will beget the child who will be the partial representative of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He will be known as Gaṇeśa (master of all *devagaṇa*), Vighnanighan (remover of obstacles), Lambodara (whose belly is

Pārvatī fell unconscious. When brought back to consciousness she said, "Just like the worship of a tree is useless without worship to Mother earth, who is the cause of tree, similarly, what is the use of any benediction to me, if my husband is taken away from me?"

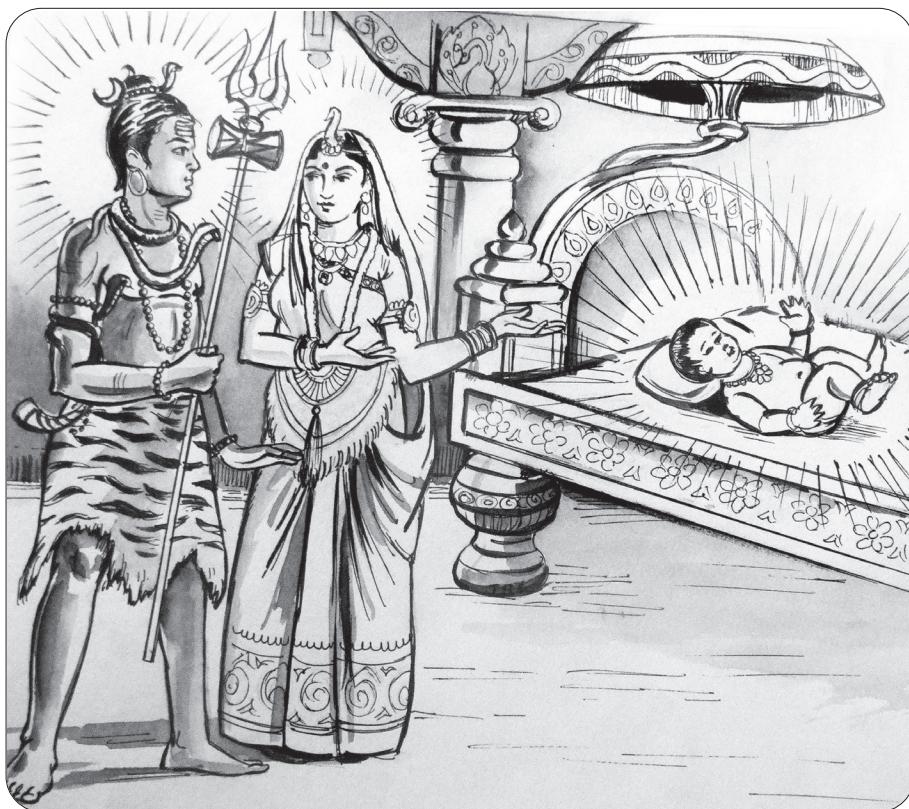
While this argument was going on, Lord Nārāyaṇa descended from the sky. His beautiful form was seen by everyone assembled. The Lord cannot be seen by anyone who does not have devotion to Him, even af-

LORD KRŚNA APPEARS

At that time a brilliant globe of light appeared there which was brighter than crores of suns. All the present demigods glorified that effulgence of Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. After Mother Pārvatī's prayers, Lord Kṛṣṇa became pleased with her and revealed to her His charming, eternal, youthful form, holding a flute, decorated with a forest flower garland, peacock feather on his head, yellowish garments, and an enchanting smiling face. His beauty defeated the beauty of millions of Cupids. Seeing this form, Mother Pārvatī desired a son like Him. Instantly granting that boon Lord Kṛṣṇa disappeared.

Then Mother Pārvatī distributed immense charity, and after the ceremony, she and Lord Śiva spent time together at their residence. When they were engaged in union, a brāhmaṇa knocked on the door desperately calling for food. His body was emaciated by penances, and he was very hungry. Both Śiva and Pārvatī received the untimely guest. The brāhmaṇa explained his condition and asked for food which was prepared in the *punyaka* ceremony. Lord Śiva and Mother Pārvatī went to bring the foodstuff, but suddenly the brāhmaṇa disappeared. Shocked, they lamented for not being able to serve him. At that time, a divine voice spoke from the sky, "O Pārvatī. Do not lament. Go inside the residence and see the new-born child that has appeared there. The brāhmaṇa was none other than Lord Janārdana."

Pārvatī rushed inside and to her amazement a beautiful child had appeared on the bed. Delighted, her heart filled with joy just like a poverty-stricken person becomes happy after getting a big treasure house, or like people suffering from



Lord Śiva and Mother Pārvatī became overjoyed on seeing the child

stretched out due to offerings made in ceremony), Gajānana (elephant-faced) and Ekadanta (one who has only one tooth). And by My blessing, he will receive the first worship in any auspicious occasion."

After completion of the sacrifice, the head priest Sanat-kumāra requested Mother Pārvatī to give Lord Śiva as his remuneration. On hearing this demand Mother

ter millions of births. He told Mother Pārvatī that for the completion of ceremony and to obtain the result of it, she should fulfill the desire of sage Sanat-kumāra. She should give Lord Śiva in charity, but then exchange her husband with the offering of a cow to the sage. Mother Pārvatī did as instructed and her husband was returned.



drought become happy upon the arrival of rain. She called for Lord Śiva to see the child and both of them embraced the child heartily.

SANIDEVA'S ARRIVAL

Lord Śiva, then distributed charity to the *brāhmaṇas*. Hearing the news of a new-born baby in the home of Lord Śiva, all the sages, demigods, Gandharvas, and Kinnaras arrived at their residence to see the child and offered their blessings upon him.

Amongst them was the son of the sun-god, Śanideva. As he arrived he offered his obeisances to Lord Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Śiva, Sūryadeva, Yamarāja and asked permission to see the child. His face was gently bowed down, eyes were half closed in meditation, his mind was fixed on Lord Kṛṣṇa and in-

ternally and externally he was remembering Lord Kṛṣṇa. He went in the chambers where Mother Pārvatī was sitting with her child, Gaṇeśa but did not glance at them. Mother Pārvatī asked him, "What is the matter? Why have you lowered your head instead of seeing the new born child?"

Śanideva replied: "Everyone in this world suffers the reactions of his own activity (*karma*), by either enjoying or suffering. These activities decide one's birth as the king of demigods, Indra, or an insignificant insect. One gets a beautiful attractive body or an ugly one based on his activities performed."

"Since my childhood, I was a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and was always engaged in his meditation. Once, my wife desired to have a union with me while I was in medi-

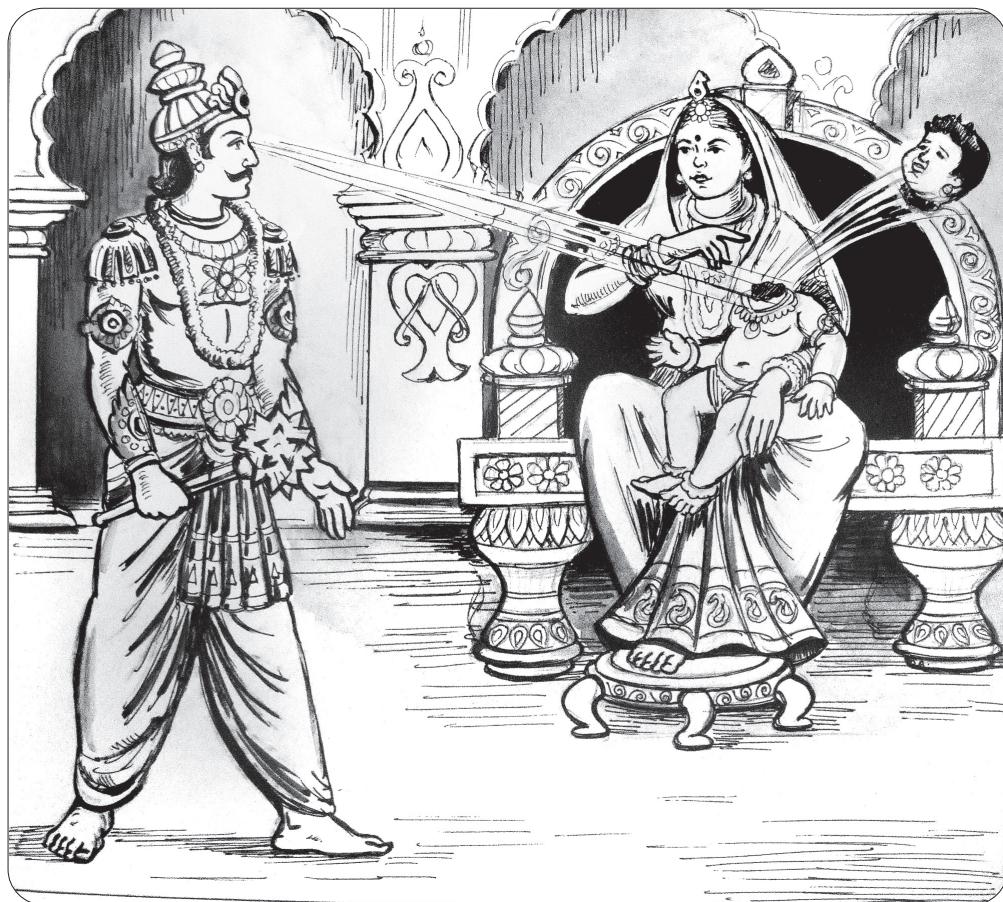
tation on the Lord's lotus feet. Being oblivious to the surroundings I could not respond to her desire and she cursed me, saying that whenever I glance at will be destroyed. To avoid violence now I don't glance at anyone."

Mother Pārvatī remembered Lord Hari, "Everyone is controlled by the Lord's desire," she replied, and asked Śanideva to look at her and her son. Confused, Śanideva hesitated. Avoiding the mother, he just glanced on the child from the corner of his left eye. At once, the child's head got separated from his trunk and went back to Goloka, where it merged into Lord Kṛṣṇa. As Mother Pārvatī saw her dead son, she fell unconscious. Everyone stood stunned, including Lord Śiva.

Seeing this condition, Lord Hari went to the northern side of the bank of the River Puṣpabhadra where an elephant was resting in the forest facing north. The Lord immediately cut off its head with Sudarśana *cakra* and brought it back to Mount Kailāsa. He placed that head on the trunk of the dead child and revived his consciousness.

Seeing the child alive, the whole atmosphere filled with joy and bliss. In this way, the child became known as Gajānana.

Lord Viṣṇu said to Pārvatī, "Everyone has to face the result of his own karma. Only Lord Kṛṣṇa is the bestower of the results of karma, the controller of death, time, the supreme protector and ultimate shelter. We Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva are His expansions. In that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Vīnayaka situated. ♣"



As soon as Śanideva glanced at the child his head got separated from the trunk.

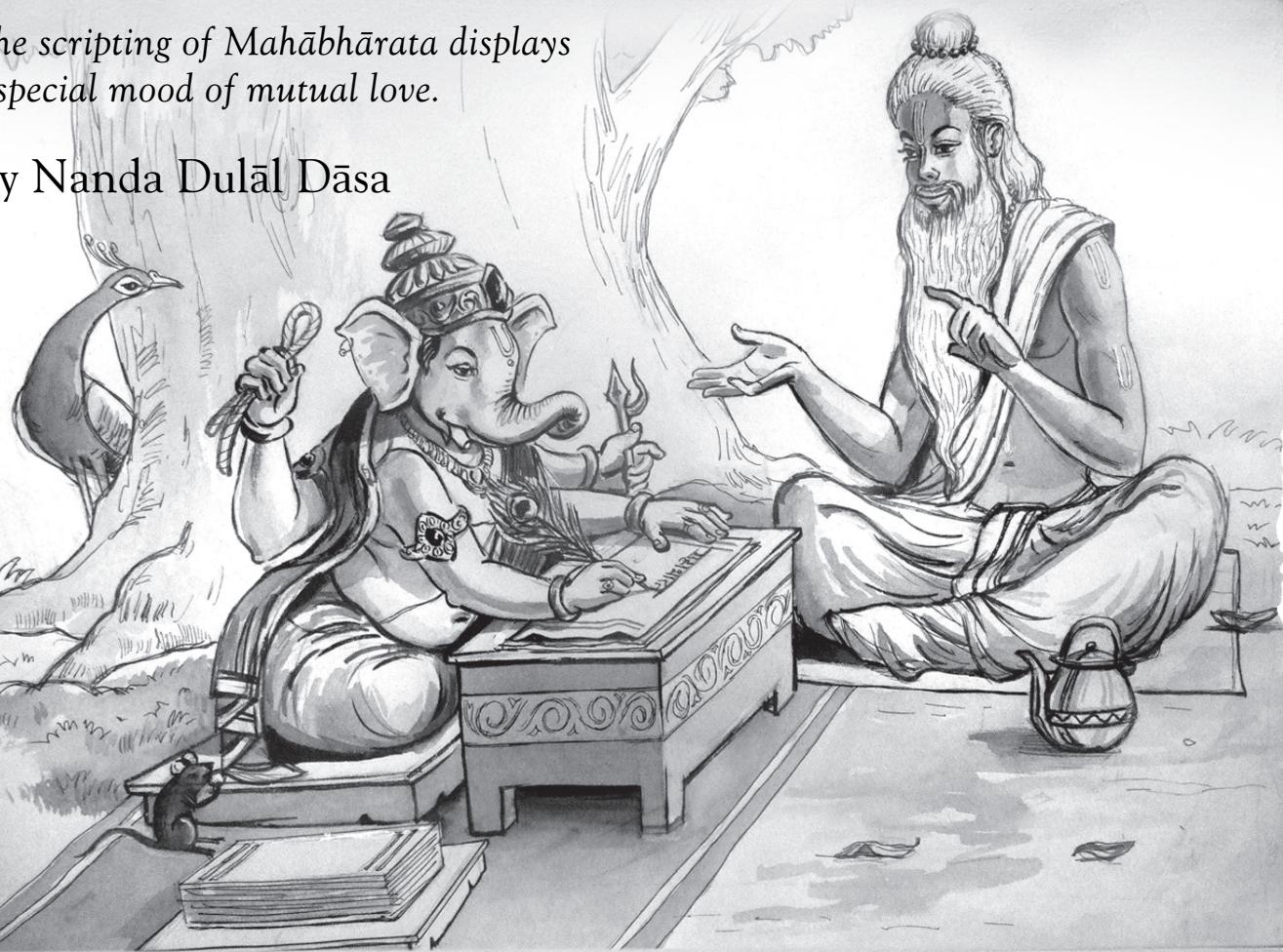
GANEŚA agrees to WRITE

The scripting of Mahābhārata displays a special mood of mutual love.

by Nanda Dulāl Dāsa

Vedic deities are very popular in and around the Indian subcontinent. It is not uncommon to find ancient deities such as Lord Gaṇeśa and Lord Rāma even in distant lands like Malaysia and Indonesia. Try as he might, the modern man finds it difficult to abandon his affinity for them. Sometimes, however, this multitude of deities seems to create an idea of pantheism in the immature minds of the uninformed. Some even go to the extent of imagining some form of rivalry between these deities. To understand the reality better, let us examine a pivotal incident from time bygone.

We have to travel back in time around 5,000 years. The end of Dvāpara-yuga loomed ahead on



the horizon of time. Śrīla Vyāsadeva, impelled by compassion for the masses of the future, thought of putting down in writing all knowledge that was available at that time in sound form. The advanced people of his time, described as śrutidhara, remembered for posterity all that was heard even once during their lifetimes. Foreseeing the world of Kali-yuga, Vyāsadeva envisaged the next age as an age of diminishing competence. Human capabilities would dwindle and frailties would rise. Intelligence and memory would decline. Many other limitations would become prominent. To help the needy, Vyāsadeva compiled the Veda and then divided it into four, viz. Sāma, Yajur, R̥g and Atharva. After this, he further explained the text in histories called *Purāṇas*. At this point he felt that these texts would be difficult for the common man of Kali-yuga to comprehend. He wished to compile for them something that would explain the same subject matter of the Vedas in a simple, attractive and lucid form, easily understandable by ordinary man. At this point he thought of compiling the *Mahābhārata*, the epic narration of the activities of the greatest dynasty of Bhārata-varṣa.

Wanting to express his approval, Lord Brahmā gave his blessings to Śrīla Vyāsadeva by mentioning, *asya kāvyasya kavayo na samarthā viśeṣane* (*Mahābhārata*, Adi, 1.73): the greatest poets of this world will not be able to compose a better composition than this one. He then advised Vyāsa to take help from Lord Gaṇeśa for the purpose of writing the composition.

Even though Vyāsadeva had a son of the caliber of Śrīla Sukadeva Gosvami and disciples like Vaiśampāyana, Lord Brahmā's selection for this valuable task was

Gaṇeśa. It is also interesting to note that Vyāsa himself is an incarnation of Nārāyaṇa and whenever anyone chants the Vedic literature, one offers obeisances to him. Before reaching this point, Śrīla Vyāsadeva had already compiled the Vedas and had even summarized it in the form of the *Vedanta-sutras*. Clearly, there is no doubt about the capabilities of the compiler himself or his followers in the form of his son or his disciples. Yet, Lord Brahmā ordered Vyāsa to commission Lord Gaṇeśa for this important service. Clearly Lord Gaṇeśa is a personality specially chosen for this important service.

Following the great authority Lord Brahmā, when Śrīla Vyāsadeva called upon Gaṇeśa, the text was ready in the mind of Vyāsadeva, but as advised by Lord Brahmā, he requested Gaṇeśa to help him write it down. It is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* (Adi Parva, 1.78-79)

śrutvaitat prāha vighneśo
yadi me lekhanī kṣaṇam
likhato nāvatiṣṭheta tadā
syām lekhako hyham

"Hearing this Lord Gaṇeśa said, 'O Vyāsa! I shall agree on one condition—while writing, my pen shouldn't stop even for a moment."

Vyāsa replied, *vyāso 'py uvača tam devama-buddhvā mā likha kvacit omityuktvā gaṇeśo 'py babhuva kila lekhakah*: "You too may not write a single alphabet without properly understanding its meaning." Lord Gaṇeśa gave his assent by replying with the 'Om' sound and thus agreed to write.

The counter-condition put forward by Vyāsa is another striking feature of this whole episode. The *Mahābhārata* primarily follows the lives of the Pāṇḍavas, who as

staunchn and unshakeable devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa faced many difficulties in their lives. Yet in the face of reversals, their devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa never wavered. The culmination of this poetry is in the great war. The best of all instructions, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, was spoken by Lord Kṛṣṇa just before the start of this war to guide His dear devotee Arjuna. The *Bhagavad-gītā* is glorified as a succinct spiritual textbook taking its hearer(or reader) from the basics to the advanced levels of spirituality. For this, it is highly respected throughout the world.

The text clearly explains how the pantheism that is alleged by modern man against the Vedic conception of authority is not true, and establishes clearly Lord Kṛṣṇa's position and His relationship with other deities (Bg. 7.20-23 and 9.20-24). It is clear and transparent for the student to understand that there is no such thing as rivalry even in a subtle form between the different Vedic deities. The Vedic texts certainly do not promote pantheism of any sort. And if this was written by Gaṇeśa, then as per Vyāsa's condition, he must have understood these concepts clearly before writing them down. If these words would have explained anything contradictory to the real understanding, Lord Gaṇeśa wouldn't have put it down in writing. Thus, this simple incident proves that the Vedic deities are in harmony with each other and Lord Gaṇeśa is happy to render service of glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa, by glorifying His words that form a part of the *Mahābhārata*.

Nanda Dulālā Dāsa has a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering. He is a part of the editorial team of Indian English BTG. He stays at ISKCON Mumbai where he teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness to college students.



THE JEWEL OF AUSPICIOUSNESS

*Hearing and reciting a special story on
Ganeśa Caturthī awards great benediction*

(Based on Skanda Purāṇa)

There was a city called Candra Jyoti. It was reigned by a king Dharmakānta, who was very much involved in religious activities. He was very kind to all the subjects and animals. Dharmakānta had a splendid queen called Svarṇakāntā. She was intently devoted and loyal to her husband and was very sober and polite.

Once, the queen was sitting in the private apartments of the king and hearing the glories of Gaurī from a brāhmaṇa. King Dharmakānta entered the private place, but at that time the queen Svarṇakāntā was so engrossed in hearing the Purānic stories that she did not no-

tice the arrival of the king. King Dharmakānta saw his wife in the company of the brāhmaṇa and misunderstood the situation, and immediately left the palace.

A long time passed, but the king never returned. The queen was upset and struck by the loneliness, so she took shelter and refuge in Gaurī.

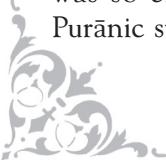
MOTHER PĀRVATĪ APPEARED IN A DREAM

Gaurī appeared in a dream of queen Svarṇakāntā and said: "Don't fear. Your husband will return soon and make you happy. I know the reason why your husband is not returning to you. Once you

were sitting with a brāhmaṇa in your apartment and hearing stories about me. At that time, your husband came and saw both of you. You were totally engrossed in the devoted stories and so did not notice the king, and he, misunderstanding the situation, left abruptly.

"O my dear! I will tell you the reason why although innocent you were misunderstood by the king. You had seen the moon on the day of Bhādrapada month, Śuklapakṣa, Caturthī day. Because of this act, the king has doubts about your character. Let me explain the reason why one should not see the moon on this day."

Then mother Pārvatī narrated



the story of the birth of Gaṇeśa, his preventing Lord Śiva from entering the house, Lord Śiva cutting Gaṇeśa's head, Pārvati's lamentation and Lord Śiva's bringing back Gaṇeśa to life after replacing his cut head with an elephant's.

She continued, "That day was Bhādrapada month, Śukla-pakṣa, Caturthī day, and so my husband Lord Śiva gave the boon that my son Vināyaka would fulfill all the desires of one who worshiped him on this day. Then Vigneśvara, on

the Caturthī day, keeping me as the witness to all the happenings earlier, visited all the places and received the *pūjā* offered to him and ate all the offerings on that holy day.

"In the night, Vigneśvara ate a large quantity of food and mounted a small rat. He was traveling when suddenly a snake came before them. On seeing the snake, due to great fear, the rat became unconscious and fell down and so did Gaṇeśa and his belly exploded

and all the sweet balls fell out. Gaṇeśa picked up all the sweets from the ground and put them back into his belly tying it up with the very same serpent which was moving there. Seeing this, Candra began to laugh.

"This disrespectful laughter greatly infuriated Vighnarāja, and he cursed Candra, saying 'You insulted me by laughing; I curse you that in the future no one will be able to see you.'

"Then, pulling out one of his tusks, Gaṇeśa hit Candra and cursed him to decrease day by day.

"When cursed, Candra immediately fell before Gaṇeśa and begged for mercy. Gaṇeśa diluted the original curse and said that Candra should decrease day by day in *kṛṣṇapakṣa* (the dark fortnight of the month) and that no one should see the moon at least on one day—Bhādrapada Śukla Caturthī—as punishment for the offence committed by him. After cursing Candra, Gaṇeśa left for his abode."

Gaurī continued. "O dear wife of the king, you have actually seen the moon on that prohibited day and as a consequence, all this happened. But there is a verse of the *Purāṇas*, which when heard with devotion, the sin gets liquidated."

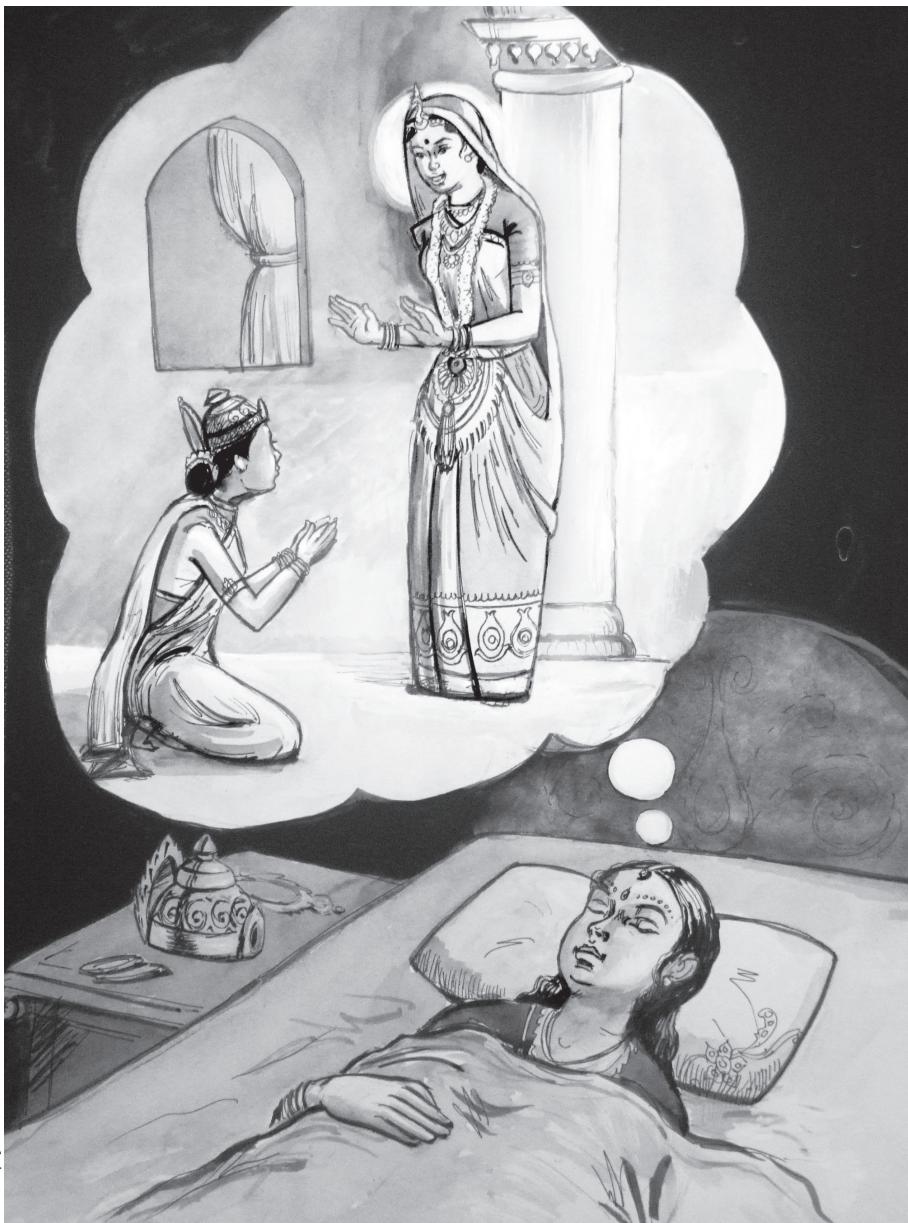
"Tell me please," Svarṇakānta begged. "Kindly tell me that verse so that not only me, but the entire world would be blessed."

THE STORY OF THE SUPREME THIEF

Gaurī replied:

*simhaḥ prasenam avadhīt
simhaḥ jāmbavatāhataḥ
sukumāraka mārodiḥ
tavahi esa śamantakah*

Translation: A lion killed the king Prasena; Jāmbavān killed the



Gaurī appeared in the dream of the queen Svarṇakānta

lion. Dear and beautiful child, don't cry; this Syamantaka jewel has been brought for you only. (Text 46)

*etat ślokasya śravaṇāt
krṣṇe nindāpahāritā
tat-kathā sumahāpuṇyā
śrotavyā krṣṇa-saṁśrayā*

Translation: By hearing this verse, Lord Kṛṣṇa got rid of the criticism leveled against Him. That story relating to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is of great piety and by hearing it one attains His shelter. (Text 47)

Note: *Kṛṣṇe nindāpahārita*—this is only for the benefit of the world. Lord Kṛṣṇa is above all these.

Queen Svarṇakānta asked: "What is that Syamantaka jewel told by you? Who is that Prasena? Who is Lord Kṛṣṇa? Which is the story which when heard, clears off all sins? Please narrate to me all this entirely. Kindly crush and destroy all my sins."

Saying this, the queen Svarṇakānta waited for the sweet words of Pārvatī Devī.

Gaurī spoke:

*vakṣyāmi śṛṇu bhadram
te sā kathā pāpa-hāriṇī¹
sarvā-nindāpahantrī ca
śrotavyā tad-dine naraiḥ*

Translation: My dear, I am narrating to you that story which will destroy all sins. Please hear the same. Hearing this story will clear all the unwanted gossip and censure on the listeners.

All people should hear this story on the particular day of Vināyaka Caturthī, without fail. Mother Pārvatī then recited to Queen Svarṇakānta the story of Syamantaka Jewel, as mentioned in

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Canto ten. The same story is translated beautifully by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Kṛṣṇa book, and is reproduced briefly in the end. As mentioned by mother Pārvatī, everyone should hear this story on the day of Gaṇeśa Caturthī for the complete pleasure of Lord Gaṇeśa and our supreme benefit.

It is also said that because Lord Kṛṣṇa had seen the moon that

Courtesy: Vedic Arts Classics



Jambavān killed the lion and took the Syamantaka Jewel

Caturthī day in Bhādrapada month, He also had to face criticism. This fact has to be understood very cautiously. The curse of Gaṇanātha cannot bring any effect on the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is beyond all this. But Lord Kṛṣṇa decided to obey such a curse just to set an example as mentioned in Bhagavad-gītā (3.21):

*yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas
tat tad evetaro janah
sa yat pramāṇam kurute
lokas tad anuvartate*

Translation: Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.

Here Lord Kṛṣṇa, being the supreme in all respects set His own

example for others to follow. Lord Kṛṣṇa further says:

*iti taiḥ prārthitaḥ krṣṇah
proktavān yādavān vacaḥ
śamantakasya haranaṁ
mama nindāpahārakam*

Translation: Whoever accidentally sees the moon on this day will be redeemed of all the sins by hearing with devotion My story related



to the Syamantaka jewel. (Text 75)

Translation: He will be cleared of all obstacles and grief. He will get all happiness and joy of supreme order.

Therefore, it is mandatory that all should hear this sacred story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa on that day without fail. Thus Gaurī told the Queen to hear that story of Lord Kṛṣṇa devotedly. "If you hear that story, then definitely, without doubt, your hus-

Dharmakānta thought calmly again and again about his hasty action. The king sent for the brāhmaṇa and heard his version of the incident and learnt about the perfect conduct of both the queen and the brāhmaṇa. The king's doubts were removed and he again developed great love for his wife. He happily gifted lots of clothes and ornaments to that brāhmaṇa

accusation of Lord Kṛṣṇa with theft (Syamantaka jewel story), for them all troubles and hurdles will be destroyed by the virtue acquired by hearing the sacred story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Text 86: All desires will be fulfilled and they will be victorious in all endeavours. Merely by hearing this story all sins will be removed.

Text 87:

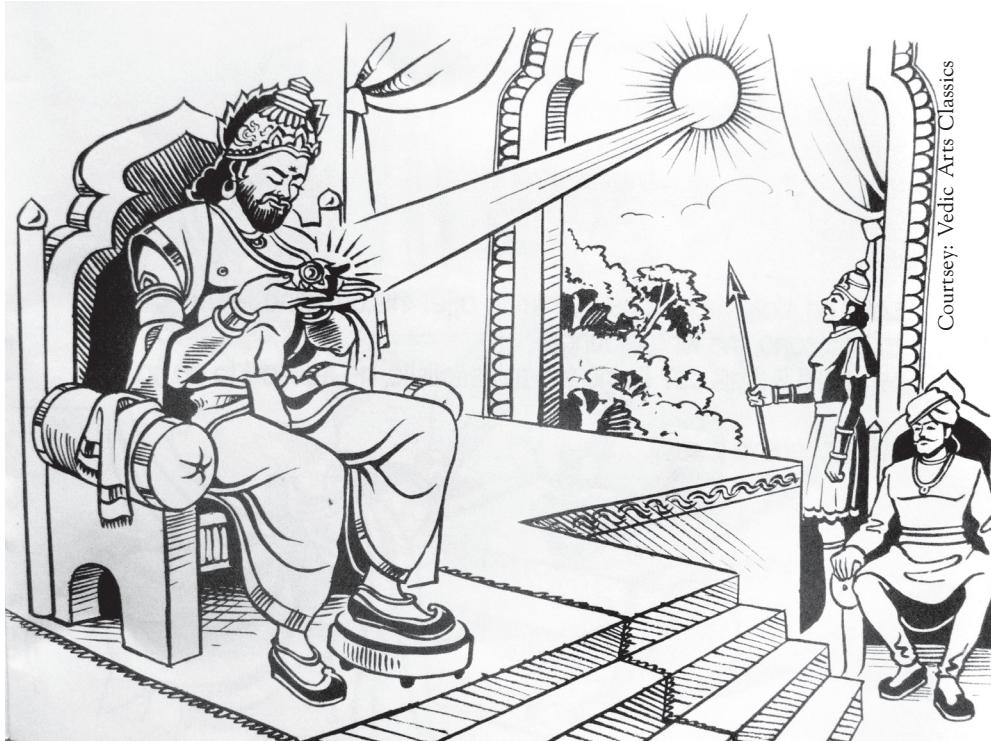
*vidyārthī labhate vidyām
dhanārthī ca labhet
dhanam
kanyārthī ca labhet kanyām
sukhārthī ca labhet sukham*

Translation: By devotedly hearing the story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whatever is aspired for is obtained. Those who want education, wealth, wife happiness—they will get everything as per their wish.

Text 88: Therefore by making all attempts to the maximum extent, this Syamantaka-maṇi story related to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa should be heard by all on that Caturthī day. That will remove all blemishes and sins in the devoted bearers.

Text 89: Those who always hear this story and those who always read it, all of them will be totally free from all sins and achieve the supreme abode (*parama gati* or *mokṣa*).

Note: *Satataṁ* means always. Therefore this story should always be heard and always be spoken. Its hearing and recital should not be confined to Vināyaka Caturthī day only. Such reading, preaching, hearing of this story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa will lead ultimately to *mokṣa*. 



Courtesy: Vedic Arts Classics

King Satrājit received the Syamantaka jewel from the sun-god Sūrya.

band will join you and will show all love and mercy upon you." Saying this, Gaurī left for her abode, Kailasa, to serve Lord Śiva. Queen Svarṇakānta gladly woke up the next morning. That day being Vināyaka Caturthī, she worshiped Gaṇeśa and devotedly heard the story of the Syamantaka jewel connected with Lord Kṛṣṇa.

and lived happily with his queens.

Sūta Prāṇika said: So if anyone sees moon on that Caturthī day, then due to the curse, people would hoist the fault of adultery and theft on such person.

Text 85:

*kathām cora prasāgām hi
krṣṇasyāsyā mahātmānah
śrīvanti ye narāḥ bhaktyā
teṣām vighna vināśanam*

Translation: Those who hear with great devotion this incident of

RESULTS OF HEARING THE SYAMANTAKA JEWEL STORY

After some time, the king

STORY OF SYAMANTAKA JEWEL

Satrājit was a great devotee of Sūrya, the sun-god, and out of great affection Sūrya gave him the Syamantaka jewel. Each day the gem would produce eight *bhāras* of gold, and the place in which it was kept and properly worshiped would be free of diseases and calamities. When Satrājit entered Dvārakā wearing the jewel, he looked as brilliant as the sun-god, and all residents, except Lord Kṛṣṇa, mistook him to be Sūrya himself. By possessing the jewel, Satrājit became so greedy that when Lord Kṛṣṇa once requested him to give the jewel to King Ugrasena, Satrājit refused.

Once Satrājit's brother, Prasena, went hunting to the forest wearing the jewel. A lion killed Prasena and his horse and took the jewel. But when the lion entered a mountain cave he was killed by Jāmbavān, who wanted the jewel. Within the cave Jāmbavān let his young son have the Syamantaka jewel as a toy to play with. Meanwhile Satrājit, not seeing his brother return, became deeply troubled. He said, "Kṛṣṇa probably killed my brother, who went to the forest wearing the jewel on his neck." The general populace heard this accusation and began whispering it in one another's ears. When Lord Kṛṣṇa heard this rumor, He

wanted to remove the stain on His reputation. So He took some of Dvārakā's citizens with Him and set out to retrace Prasena's path. In the forest they found Prasena and his horse, both killed by the lion. Further on they found the lion dead on a mountainside, slain by Jāmbavān. The Lord stationed His subjects outside the terrifying, pitch-dark cave of the king of the

ward the Lord. Unaware of His true position and thinking Him an ordinary man, Jāmbavān angrily began fighting with the Supreme Lord, his master. The two fought furiously in single combat, each determined to win. The fight went on without rest for twenty-eight days. Finally Jāmbavān understood that his opponent was not an ordinary mortal. He surrendered to the Lord realizing that Kṛṣṇa was the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He begged forgiveness by offering Him his maiden daughter, Jāmbavatī, together with the jewel.

After returning to Dvārakā, Lord Kṛṣṇa in the presence of King Ugrasena, announced the recovery of the jewel and then formally presented it to Satrājit. Hanging his head in shame, Satrājit took the gem and returned home, all the while feeling remorse for his sinful behavior. The best to beg forgiveness, he thought, was to hand over the jewel and also his daughter to the Lord in marriage. The Lord then married Satyabhāmā in



Jāmbavān offered Kṛṣṇa his daughter Jāmbavatī together with the jewel.

bears, and then He entered alone. Inside the cave the Lord saw the little child playing with the jewel. Determined to take it away, He approached the child. The child's nurse cried out in fear upon seeing that extraordinary person standing before them. When Jāmbavān heard her cries, he angrily ran to

proper religious fashion. Lord Kṛṣṇa told Satrājit, "We do not care to take this jewel back, O King. You are the sun-god's devotee, so let it stay in your possession. Thus We will also enjoy its benefits."

(Based on Śrīmad Bhagvatam, Canto 10, Ch. 56)



Remover of Obstacles

Lord Gaṇeśa is well known for removing obstacles from the path of pure hearted souls.



Rāvaṇa gave the linga to Gaṇeśa, who came in disguise of a brāhmaṇa boy. (Details from a sculpture in Gokarṇa)

Gokarṇa, a temple town in Karnataka, also known as Gokarṇa Mahābaleśvara, is famous for the presence of one of the twelve jyotirlingas of Lord Śiva. Lord Gaṇeśa is said to have established this liṅga. The glories of the deity of Vināyaka Gaṇeśa of Gokarṇa are described by Śrī Vādiraja Mahan in *Tīrtha prabandhaḥ, paścima prabandhaḥ*:

duṣṭānāṁ vighnakartā sucarita
sujanastoma vighnāpahartā
tasmād vighnādhipo ‘ham mata iti
sudhiyām spaṣṭam ājñāpanāya ।
paulastyecchāntarāyah
suramuninikarārthāṣṭa samprāptyupāyah
śroyovighnādhirājah pradiśatū
satataṁ bhūri gaurī tanujah ॥

Duṣṭānāṁ vighnakartā—Vināyaka states: “I spoil the intentions of the bad, wicked and evil-minded people.”

sucarita sujanastoma vighnāpahartā—“I am the destroyer of the hurdles on the path of sādhus, pious people.”

Tasmād vighnādhipo ‘ham—“Therefore I am called the king of hurdles.”

The truth is that Gaṇeśa removes all obstacles on the path of pious, sātvik souls, and creates hurdles on the path of evil persons. There is an interesting story in this regard which is related to the establishment of Gokarṇa. Here Gaṇeśa helped the demigods overcome a great obstacle.

Once Rāvaṇa, the great atheistic king, went to Lord Śiva’s abode, Kailāsa. On reaching there, he began to shake it violently with his mighty hands. This created a great disturbance among the various planetary systems of the universe. On seeing this, Lord Śiva pushed Kailāsa downwards thus trapping Rāvaṇa’s hands underneath. In great distress,

Rāvaṇa cried for help and begged forgiveness.

Lord Śiva is also known as Āśutoṣa, one who is easily pleased. On hearing Rāvaṇa's desperate pleas, Lord Śiva forgave him. Rāvaṇa then offered prayers glorifying Lord Śiva, and Lord Śiva then gave him a *siva-liṅga* and blessed him by saying that as long as he possessed this *liṅga*, he would be invincible. Śiva, however, also warned him not to place this *liṅga* on the ground until he reached Laṅkā because once he placed it on the ground, the *liṅga* won't move. Rāvaṇa then immediately proceeded toward Laṅkā.

When the demigods learned about the benediction Rāvaṇa had received, being fearful they requested Gaṇeśa for help. Gaṇeśa agreed. When Rāvaṇa was on his way, he stopped to take a bath at Gokarṇa. Gaṇeśa, in the disguise of a *brāhmaṇa* boy, appeared before him and offered to hold the *liṅga* until Rāvaṇa finished his duties. So Rāvaṇa gave the *liṅga* to Gaṇeśa. As soon as Rāvaṇa went to take his bath, Gaṇeśa installed the *liṅga* at that place.

When Rāvaṇa came back, he tried his best with all his might to lift the *liṅga*, but failed. While trying to lift the *liṅga*, it took the shape of an ear of the cow and so it is known as "Gokarṇa" and as Rāvaṇa exercised all his might to lift it up it is also called Mahābaleśvara.

This story is narrated in the *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Brahmottara Khaṇḍa*, chapter 202.

The *Brahmā-saṁhitā* (5.50) explains how Gaṇeśa derives his power to remove obstacles from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Govinda:

yat-pāda-pallava-yugam vinidhāya kumbha-
dvandve praṇāma-samaye sa gaṇādhirājaḥ
vighnān vihantum alam asya jagat-trayasya
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi

Translation: "I worship the primeval Lord, Govinda. Gaṇeśa always holds His lotus feet upon the pair of *tumuli* protruding from his elephant head in order to obtain power for his function of destroying all obstacles on the path of progress in the three worlds."

A devotee who is aspiring to obtain pure devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead may pray to Gaṇeśa to remove all impediments on the path of spiritual progress.

vakratuṇḍa mahākāya sūryakoṭi samaprabha
nirvighnam kuru me deva sarvakāryeṣu sarvadā

Translation: "Vināyaka (Gaṇeśa) is effulgent like millions of suns. In all our matters, we pray to him to remove all our hurdles and impediments." ☺

SPECIAL PRAYERS ON GAÑEŚA CATURTHI

Śrīla Madhvācārya describes in his *Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya*, chapter 20, that Gaṇeśa was born to Rukmiṇī Devi and Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Cāruḍeṣṇa.

Lord Kṛṣṇa married 16,108 queens and settled in Dvārakā. Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā and Jāmbavatī were among the principal queens. Each of the 16,108 queens gave birth to ten sons and a daughter. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.61.8-13) lists the names of the sons born to the main queens.

cāruḍeṣṇaḥ sudeṣṇaś ca cāruḍehaś ca vīryavān
sucāruś cāruguptaś ca bhadracārus tathāparaḥ
cārucandro vicāruś ca cāruś ca daśamo hareḥ
pradyumna-pramukhā jātā rukmiṇyāṁ nāvamāḥ
pitūḥ

Translation: The first son of Queen Rukmiṇī was Pradyumna, and also born of her were Cāruḍeṣṇa, Sudeṣṇa and the powerful Cāruḍeha, along with Sucāru, Cārugupta, Bhadracāru, Cārucandra, Vicāru and Cāru, the tenth. None of these sons of Lord Hari was less than his father. Cāruḍeṣṇa mentioned here is an incarnation of Gaṇeśa or Vināyaka.

bhānuḥ subhānuḥ svarbhānuḥ prabhānur
bhānumāṁś tathā
candrabhānur bṛhadbhānur atibhānus
tathāṣṭamāḥ
śrībhānuḥ pratibhānuś ca satyabhāmātmajā daśa
sāmbāḥ sumitraḥ purujit chatajic ca sahasrajit
vijayaś citraketuś ca vasumān draviḍāḥ kratuḥ
jāmbavatyāḥ sutā hy ete sāmbādyāḥ pitṛ-
sammataḥ

Translation: The ten sons of Satyabhāmā were Bhānu, Subhānu, Svarbhānu, Prabhānu, Bhānumān, Candrabhānu, Bṛhadbhānu, Atibhānu (the eighth), Śrībhānu and Pratibhānu. Sāmbā, Sumitra, Purujit, Satajit, Sahasrajit, Vijaya, Citraketu, Vasumān, Draviḍā and Kratu were the sons of Jāmbavatī. These ten, headed by Sāmbā, were their father's favorites.

One who recites the above verses describing the sons of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and understandes that Vināyaka was born to Rukmiṇī Devi and Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Cāruḍeṣṇa, will acquire great virtue. ☺

When ŚRĪ Rādhā worshipped GĀNEŚA

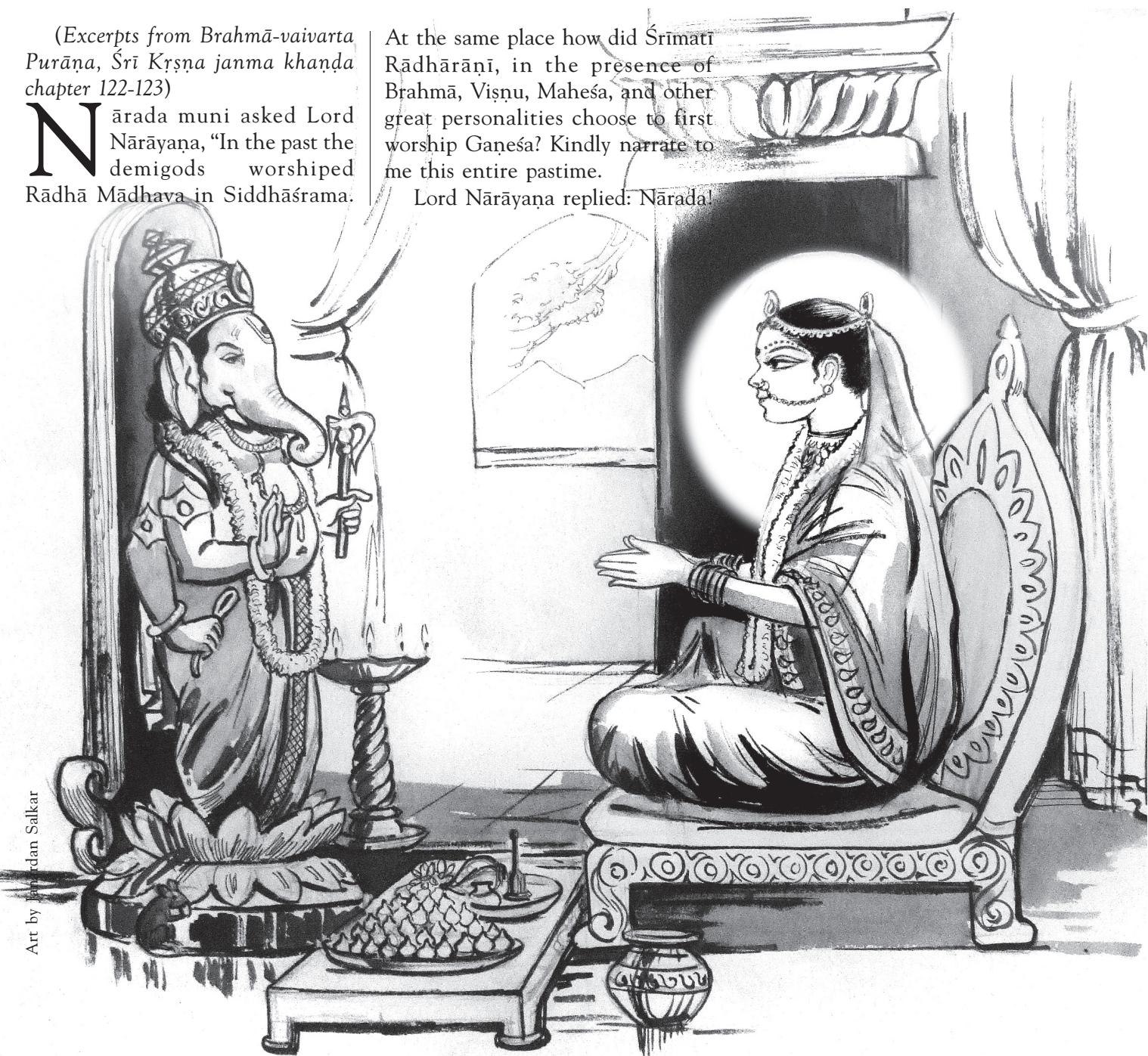
*In the presence of all the demigods
Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī offered worship to Śrī Ganeśa.*

(Excerpts from Brahmā-vaiavarta Purāṇa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa janma khaṇḍa chapter 122-123)

Nārada muni asked Lord Nārāyaṇa, "In the past the demigods worshiped Rādhā Mādhava in Siddhāśrama.

At the same place how did Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, in the presence of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa, and other great personalities choose to first worship Ganeśa? Kindly narrate to me this entire pastime.

Lord Nārāyaṇa replied: Nārada!



In the three worlds, the earth is auspicious. On that earth Bhārata is the bestower of auspicious result of actions. In that Bhārata there is a great, auspicious place, Siddhāśrama, that bestows fame and liberation. Brahmā, Sanat-Kumara, Kapila, Mahendra and many others performed austerities here and achieved perfection. Gaṇeśa eternally resides here and there is a beautiful deity of Gaṇeśa made of priceless jewels, which is worshipped on Vaiśālī Pūrṇimā by all men, demigods, demons, Gandharvas and sages. On that occasion Pārvati, Śiva, Kārtikeya, Brahmā, Śeṣanāga, Lord Kṛṣṇa, Nanda and even Rādhā reached there with a happy heart. Then Śrīmati Rādhā who possesses beautiful teeth, bathed and dressed in fresh clothes. Then Rādhārani, who purifies the earth, washed Her feet, fasted and controlled Her senses and entered the maṇimandapa. With a desire to obtain Lord Kṛṣṇa, She bathed Gaṇeśa with Ganges water. Then, She, who is the mother of the four Vedas, Vasus, all the worlds, and the *jñānīs*, the personification of beauty, that Supreme Rādhā, taking white flowers and reciting prayers, began to meditate on Gaṇeśa who is just like Her son. She then offered various articles and chanted *stotra* and mantra in praise of Gaṇeśa.

Lord Nārāyaṇa said: "Nārada! The chaste Rādhā offered ornaments made of precious jewels to Gaṇeśa. Seeing Śrī Rādhā's worship and hearing Her prayers, the peaceful Gaṇeśa spoke to the peaceful natured mother of the three worlds, Śrīmati Rādhārāṇī."

Śrī Gaṇeśa said: "O universal Mother! This worship of Yours is to teach the world. O auspicious one, You are the personification of Brahman and reside at the chest of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Brahmā, Śiva, *jñānīs*, and

demigods, Sanak and other sages, liberated devotees, Lord Kapila—all of them meditate on Your beautiful and rare lotus feet. You are the life of that Lord Kṛṣṇa, and more dear to Him than His own life. You have originated from His left side. Mahālakṣmī has come from Your left side. You have given birth to Vasu. You are the chief Goddess, the controller of the Vedas and the world, the original *prakṛti*. O Mother! All the natural females in this creation are Your expansion. You are the cause of the universe. During the annihilation when Brahmā disappears, that is one *nimeśa* of Śrī Hari. At that time the intelligent yogi who first recites Rādhā and then Kṛṣṇa's name (chants Hare Kṛṣṇa) he easily enters Goloka.

"You are the mother of the universe and Śrī Hari is the father; but mother is more worshipable than the father. In this pious land of Bhārata, if any dull-headed person worships the cause of all causes Lord Kṛṣṇa or some other demigod but disrespects Rādhā then he ob-

tains misery and pain in this world, his family is destroyed, and he resides in hell.

"When a living entity in each of his life chants the names of demigods, he achieves devotion to the rare lotus feet of Durgā. When he takes shelter of the mantra of Śambhu, the cause of material world, then he attains Your (Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's) extremely rare lotus feet. And having once possessed them, that pious soul never even for a moment lets go of them. One who receives both of Your mantra from a Vaiṣṇava and with full-devotion chants it, he delivers thousands of generations."

Then Gaṇeśa requested Rādhārani to gift all the offerings to the *brāhmaṇas*, and Rādhārani did so, thus extremely pleasing Gaṇeśa. Mother Pārvatī met Śrīmati Rādhārani and embraced Her while talking sweet words. All the demigods including Brahmā, and Mahādeva, Ananta, Manus, and other sages humbly prayed and glorified Śrīmati Rādhārani. 

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare



The Real Obstacle

by Yugāvatara Dāsa

In 2001 I shifted to a house near a Gaṇeśa Temple, and witnessed the crowd of devotees of Gaṇeśa. Thousands of people stood in a queue that ran in kilometers especially on Tuesdays. As I walked back from my office to home I would watch the queue carefully. I knew Gaṇeśa is the demigod in charge of removing obstacles. So I used to scrutinize and ponder what kind of obstacles the worshipers want to get rid off?

The word *obstacle* first comes in our life during our school days as the “obstacle race” on sports day. We have a target of 110 meters to run and there are ten obstacles on the track which we have to jump over. This race is very difficult compared to a normal 110 meter running race. But as we leave school and enter the obstacle race of professional life, the obstacles of the 110 meter race appear easy. That is probably why we have kilometers of queues before the Gaṇeśa temple.

I remember as a school going child I used to pray to Gaṇeśa to remove the obstacle called examination. I have also prayed to come first in the obstacle race in the next day's sports event. As student of 12th standard I remember praying to Gaṇeśa to help me remember Darwin's theory of evolution that denies the existence of God. As an unmarried boy I prayed for removal of the obstacles in getting

married. And after marriage we prayed for a child. Other parents pray to remove obstacles in the children's progress, and grandparents pray that they may be cared by their children. Sometimes I feel perhaps some of those who gathered might even be the cause of each other's obstacles. For us, we have a 110 meter obstacle race, but for Gaṇeśa it is an obstacle removing kilometers long queue.

END TO PROBLEMS

There is no end to problems. Every time we face a new problem we are thoroughly convinced that we will be happy if this problem is solved. But the real problem is that we do not know what our ultimate problem is. The reality is that a conditioned soul is exposed to so many problems so that he makes a plan to make a permanent exit from this problematic world by taking up devotional service. This is what Gaṇeśa, the first official scribe of the Vedas, writes in the *Gītopaniṣad*.

People are scared that if they leave this queue of kilometers and take up the selfless path of devotion, Gaṇeśa will be angry with them and will cast them into more obstacles. No, in fact Gaṇeśa himself is born in a family of devotees. His father,

Lord Śiva, is the greatest Vaiṣṇava who constantly chants the name of Lord Rāma. Our *Upaniṣads* mention the story of how compassionate mother Pārvatī requested the Lord to distribute his mercy and



devotional service to every one. Gaṇeśa himself holds the lotus feet of Lord Nṛsiṁha Deva on his Head as described in the *Brahma-saṁhitā*. Our taking up to devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Rāma will definitely make Gaṇeśa happy because devotional service will put a full stop to the real problem of birth, old age, disease, and death. Gaṇeśa will be happy because he is our real well wisher. He feels sad when we approach him with our petty problems, and He is thrilled when we request him to remove the obstacles on the devotional path. 

Ganeśa worship in 21ST CENTURY

A look at the modern trends shows that we have much to gain by sticking to the traditional practices

By Murāri Gupta Dāsa

Devotion, like love, is eternal—a natural inclination to worship the Lord with deepest heartfelt offerings and with the sole motivation of pleasing Him. Along with our pure emotions we also present suitable articles: incense, lamp, scent, flowers, fans, and clothes etc., that the Lord likes. The Lord is a person like all of us, and has His tastes. By satisfying the transcendental senses of the Lord, by offering fitting gifts coupled with our love, we achieve supreme happiness, much more than what we can get by fulfilling our selfish desires.

Although the principles of Supreme Lord, devotee, and devotional service are eternal, the details of serving the Lord may vary according to time, place, and circumstances. For example when Nārada Muni advised the child Dhruva about the practice of devotional service, he made some adjustments because Dhruva was located in a forest, where all the paraphernalia for elaborate Deity



Offerings to the Lord

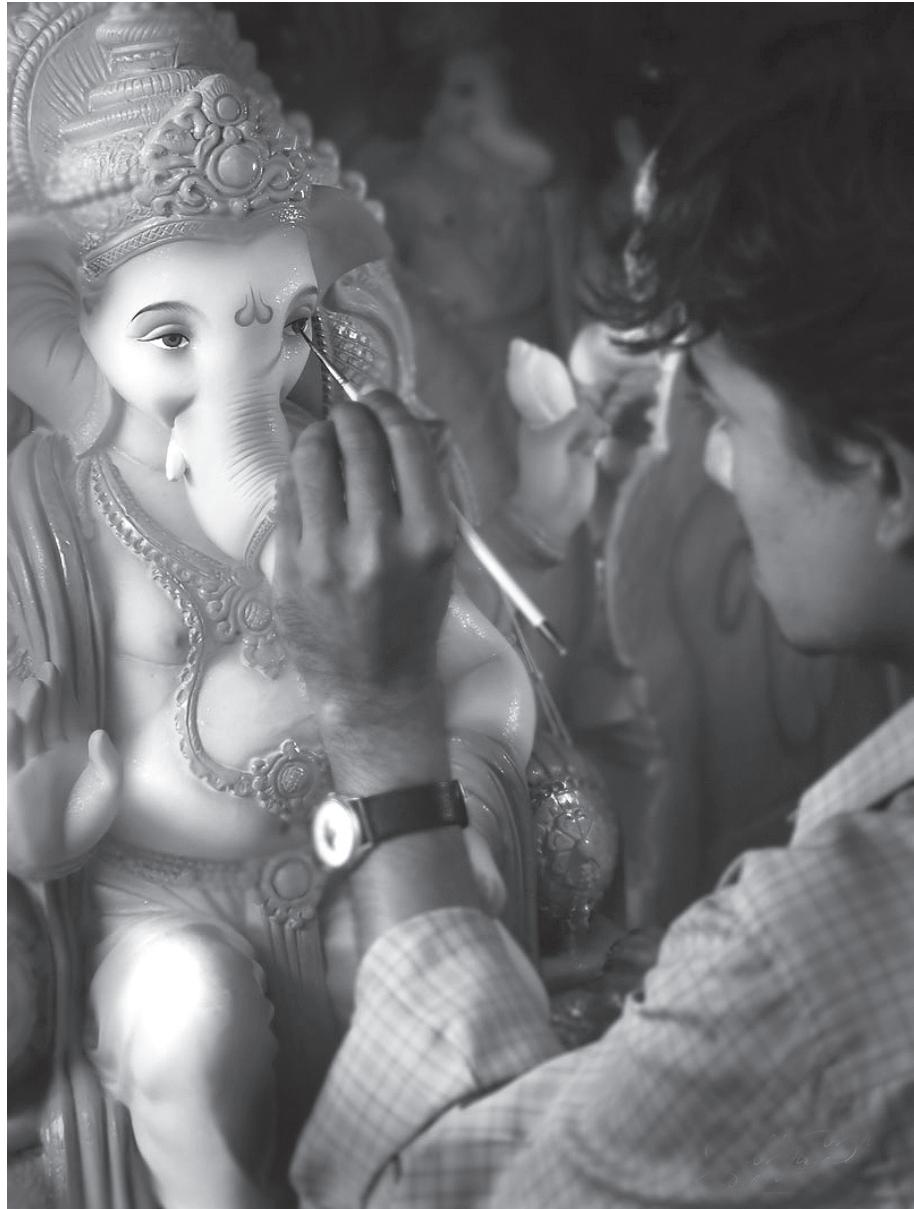
worship was impossible to obtain [Bhāg 4.8.54]. Śrila Prabhupāda writes in the purport of this verse: “One has to consider the particular time, country and conveniences. What is convenient in India may not be convenient in the

Western countries...it might be that there are changes in the manner of worship, but that is not at all faulty according to śāstra.”

Still in the name of liberalism we cannot whimsically change the principles, a common occurrence



that eventually drains the practice of its sanctity leaving behind just a body of ritual, much bedecked, but dead without any spirit. Such a ritual may appear like the original act of devotion, but with purity of the tradition missing, it simply boils down at best to another obligation that has to be fulfilled or at worse to a selfish perversion in the name of religion. The latter, unfortunately, is the trend that is gradually creeping into modern day Gaṇeśa worship.



Scriptures mention specific guidelines for making a form of Lord and worshiping him.

THE FORM OF GANEŚA
Tantrasāra-sangṛhā, chapter 4, verse 91 mentions the form of Gaṇeśa as:

*mahodro gajamukhah
paṣadantakuṣabhye
bibhrayeyo vighnaharah
kāmdastvarayā hyayam*

Translation: This Vighneśa is big-bellied, with the face of an elephant and holds in his hands a rope, a tooth, a hook, and *abhaya*

mudrā. One should contemplate that he removes all obstacles and speedily grants our desires, as supported by authorities.

It also says:

*raktāmbaro raktatanu
raktamalyanulepanah*

Translation: Vigneśa wears red garments, has a red body and wears red garlands with a body anointed with sandal and *kumkuma*. (Text 90)

These verses tell us about the form of Lord Gaṇeśa and also the objects that he holds. The deity therefore should be made according to this direction. One should not reduce the sacred science of deity sculpting to a platform of expressing creativity and whimsically sculpt a form of Gaṇeśa. Unfortunately nowadays we have people using the Gaṇeśa festival as opportunities to depict Gaṇeśa as some kind of comic book hero who can metamorphosise into a new *avatāra* to cater to his devotees in modern times. So now we have Gaṇeśa with a peacock feather, holding a flute, or a *viṇā*, or a cricket bat, or wicket-keeper's gloves, or sitting in a yogic pose, posing like a popular god-man. Why speculate?

SUBSTANCE OF THE FORM

In Śiva Purāṇa Lord Śiva describes that the deity of Gaṇeśa should be made of metal, coral, white *arka* flowers or clay. (Rudrasaṁhitā, chapter 18, text 42-43) Lord Kṛṣṇa also describes to Uddhava the substances that are used to make a Deity. "The Deity form of the Lord is said to appear in eight varieties—stone, wood, metal, earth, paint, sand, the mind or jewels." (Śrīmad Bhagvatam 11.12.27)

The traditional way of worshiping deities made of clay and painted with natural dyes perfectly harmonizes with modern day feeble ecological conditions; it is so eco-friendly. Clay dissolves quickly, a mere two or three dips of the deity are enough for melting down and submersion, and the colors are of vegetable origin and easily bio-degradable without any toxic residue. On the other hand, the statues that are made presently with Plaster of Paris(PoP) and painted with chemical dyes are ecological disasters. They take more than a month to melt in sweet, stationary waters. Often the cut parts of the deity float offshore to the horror of the worshiper. In Mumbai the giant PoP statues have to be cut into pieces by mechanized saws, right before the devotees, which is so distasteful. The need of the current century, therefore, is to shift to the age-old tradition.

SIMPLICITY OF TRADITION

Rudrasamhitā, Śiva Purāṇa mentions about Gaṇeśa worship as follows: "The Gaṇeśa deity should be worshiped with all purity, with divine scents of various kinds, sandal paste, and flowers. After the first *prahar* of the night, one should take bath and worship with *druva* grass. Then worship with incense, lamps, different kinds of food-offerings,

betel and eulogize with hymns and then worship the crescent moon."

The mood is of devotion.

The current trend of Gaṇeśa worship, however, is something like an all-night party. Loud film music, drinking, and gambling, and anti-social elements, especially during the submersion parade, play a



major role. Now the trends are in favor of mega festivities sponsored by corporate giants with huge banners everywhere that are full of advertisements (often of derogatory products using garish images) but a small Gaṇeśa depicted in a tiny corner. Devotion pales in an atmosphere surcharged with commercialism.

OFFERINGS TO LORD GAÑEŚA

Lord Gaṇeśa wrote Bhagavad-gītā after fully understanding the meanings of the words of Śrīla Vyāsadeva. There in chapter 3 text

13 Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions that the devotees of the Lord accept food that is offered in the *yajña* or sacrifice. Food should be offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa and then eaten by the devotees. Lord Gaṇeśa is a natural devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa and he will be pleased to accept the *mahā-prasāda* of Lord Kṛṣṇa and offer it his own devotees. The worshippers in Madhvā-sampradāya who celebrate Gaṇeśa festivals, therefore first make all the offerings to a Saligrāma śīla, which is Lord Kṛṣṇa's Deity form, and then offer the *mahā-prasāda* to Gaṇeśa. The same practice can be followed by everyone.

In conclusion, we should try to keep the mood of sincere, selfless devotion while worshiping the Lord and see that the traditional practices are upheld and followed in true spirit. Earnest heart-felt dedication should take precedence over a gaudy show with commercial

interest foraging in the background. We should simply aspire for pure, unmotivated devotion to the Supreme Lord, and pray to Him to remove all obstacles in the path of our devotion and guide us to the ultimate shelter. *

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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—Editor



In your own words ...

Describe one incident in your life where you clearly felt the presence of Kṛṣṇa?

I AM A COMMERCE STUDENT BUT weak in accounts. Recently, I appeared for my second year B-com exams, and it was predicted that only 30% of the university students would pass. My papers were horrible. If I failed I would have to join tuitions and spend whole days there neglecting my service to the Lord. So I prayed, "O Lord I want to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness but if I fail I cannot fulfil this desire for some period. If You wish You can make me pass so I can increase my chanting, reading, and hearing. Still it is Your wish, whatever You will give me, I will happily accept it as Your mercy."

The results came—and I passed! It was the biggest surprise as the result was so tough that many scholars had failed. I knew that it was only due the mercy of Lord Hari; otherwise it was just impossible.

Mala Sharma, Baroda.

I'M A 22 YEAR-OLD STUDENT, AND although I don't really consider myself a devotee yet, I feel strongly for Kṛṣṇa. I love to read about Him, listen to *bhajanas*, and play songs about Him on my guitar. Last Janmāṣṭamī I finally decided to go to a Kṛṣṇa temple for the first time. On that special day, my friend and I visited the jam-packed ISKCON Mumbai temple. For crowd control, there were only two ways to enter. I couldn't afford the first, which was for special donors only, and the second required a pass, which I didn't have. I didn't try to slip in, opting instead to take

the Lord's blessings from outside. I focused my mind on Kṛṣṇa. Suddenly a couple approached my friend and I and told us we could use their passes. Thanking them profusely, we entered and soon found ourselves in front of the Lord and surrounded by devotees. I was shocked, as I had thought it would be impossible for a stranger like me to get in. I knew then that Kṛṣṇa had touched my life and helped me gain His audience.

Vikram Shekhawat, Mumbai

ON A RECENT VISIT TO GUYANA, I was travelling in a van full of devotees. Everyone was in an ecstatic mood as one devotee was speaking of her first visit to Vṛndāvana *dhāma*. None of us had ever been there. We were running late, and our driver was speeding. Suddenly, he lost control of the vehicle. The van skidded and fell into a roll. It flipped over three times before crashing into a river. Everyone's first reaction was to start screaming, but my mother shouted, "No, chant!"

We began to chant Kṛṣṇa's name loudly. Our driver managed to force open the door, because luckily it was the dry season and the river was not full. Local villagers came running, expecting to count the dead bodies, but one by one, all the devotees emerged unharmed. It was a terrible accident, but because we had been hearing about Kṛṣṇa's holy abode and chanting His name, we were all saved without even a scratch. Still trembling, we understood that Lord

Kṛṣṇa had protected us all.

Rādhā Govinda Dāsī,
Panama, USA

SOME YEARS AGO, I WAS WALKING past a sweet shop when I spotted a display of huge *rasgullas*, white juicy sweets full of syrup. My taste buds became rampant with excitement. I could almost feel the taste of a *rasgulla* in my mouth, so I bought one. But it was Sunday and I was on my way to the Śrī Śrī Gaura Rādhā Kṛṣṇa temple, so I decided I must first offer the *rasgullas* to the Lord. I took the *rasgullas* to the temple, and to my utter surprise, the moment it was being offered by the temple priest to the Lord, I felt a deep satisfaction. And I never again craved for *rasgullas* so much. I now understand that if we satisfy the Lord, we also become satisfied.

Prem Prakash Pathak, Lucknow

I WAS RETURNING FROM FARIDABAD in my car, after a program with few other devotees. Suddenly, I realized that the brakes were not working! I lost my senses. Can you imagine driving without brakes on the roads of Delhi? Somehow, I drove for an hour, and then we started singing Nṛsiṁha prayers. Believe it or not, as soon as we ended the prayers, the brakes began to work! It was Kṛṣṇa who saved us on that day.

Nandagopāla Jīvana Dāsa
Delhi

ONE DAY IN 1974, BARELY OUT OF my teens, I was hitchhiking home for the weekend. I stood

on the side of the road for hours, not helped by a particularly bad case of stomach cramps. Finally, a young man about my age picked me up. As I got into his car, George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord" began playing on the car radio. Soon we were discussing spiritual life, and for the next hour we shared spiritual realizations. When he dropped me off, I suddenly felt the terrible cramps again. I realized that discussing topics of Kṛṣṇa had lifted me clean out of my bodily conception. I had been interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for some time, but now I was even more convinced that this was real transcendental life. Four weeks later, I joined the ISKCON temple in Ottawa.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Dāsa
Toronto, Canada

WHY AM I BORN AS A HUMAN BEING amongst the 8.4 million species of living beings in this universe? Having been born as such, how I am getting myself detached gradually from material bondage and attracted to the Supreme Lord? Why should I be driven to visit my son at Detroit in USA, where he took me to the ISKCON temples in Detroit and Wheeling? Among the places I visited such as Hollywood, Disney Land, Grand Canyon, casinos at Las Vegas, the Niagara Falls, etc., why should I be attracted towards the ISKCON temples alone? How did I desire to chant the *mahā-mantra*, beginning with a few rounds daily to twenty rounds everyday? How did I get the shelter of my spiritual master, His Holiness Romapāda Swami Mahārāja? How did my home become a temple with installed Deities? Aren't these signs of Kṛṣṇa's direct involvement in my life?

R.M.Manoharan
Chennai, TN



An Appeal to ŚRĪMATI RĀDHĀRĀṇĪ

O sweet sister of Anaṅga Mañjarī,
O the pride of Śrī Vṛṣabhānu,
O the friend of the gopīs,
O the queen of Vṛndāvana,
O the beloved of Śrī Gopinātha
O the Goddess of the devotees,
O Śrī Rādhe!
This low servant of Your devotee's
servant,
Cries for Your mercy and grace.

I am the poorest person in this world,
For I do not possess the wealth of Your name.
I am the most ignorant in this world,
For I do not possess the knowledge of Your greatness.
I am the ugliest in this world,
For I do not possess the cosmetics of Your devotional service.

O! Śrīmati Rādhārāni, indeed I am a very low beggar,
For I have wasted the most precious treasure
of this human birth in sense gratification.
I had forgotten You, O! Supreme Goddess,
and I had served my senses for so long.

Śrī Radhe! O! Śrī Radhe!!!
I now place the begging bowl in front of You.
O! Merciful Goddess, whose heart is as soft as butter,
which melts at a small cry made by the devotees,
I only ask for Your mercy.
O! Dearmost beloved of Śrī Shyamsunder!
O! MadanMohan Mohini!!!
Please do not consider me an outsider.
If You do not give me shelter at
Your lotus feet I have no other shelter.
Please accept this materialistic fool as Your maid-servant.

O! Most compassionate Śrīmati Rādhārāni,
Let my very fickle mind now get fixed
at Your most beautiful lotus feet
and may You and You alone
remain the object of my worship birth after birth.

- by Rādhā Dāsī



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Correct
as of
31 July
2009

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Jhansi, U.P. — Inside Saiyar Gate, Near Kali Badi/ Tel. (0510) 2443602.

Kanpur, U.P. — Sri Sri Radha Madhav Mandir, Maimawati Marg, Bithur road, Nawabganj, 208002/ Tel. 09307188117, E-mail: iskcon.kanpur@pamho.net

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Mumbai, Maharashtra — 7 K. M. Munshi Marg, Near Babulnath Temple, Chowpatty, 400 007. Tel. (022) 2366-5500/ Fax: (022) 2366-5555/ radha-krishna.rns@pamho.net

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Nasik, Maharashtra — Behind Poornima Bus stop, Vrindavan colony, General Vaidya nagar, Dwarka, Nasik 422 011/ Tel. (0253) 6450005/ 9850071227/ siksastakam.rns@pamho.net

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Vaiṣṇava Calendar 1 Aug - 15 Sept 2009

- 1 AUG: Rādhā Govinda Jhulana Yātrā begins
- 2 AUG: Fasting for Pavitropāñā Ekādaśī, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī – Disappearance, Śrī Gaurīdāsa Pañḍita – Disappearance
- 3 AUG: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:16 am - 10:35 am
- 5 AUG: Jhulana Yātrā ends, Lord Balarāma – Appearance (Fasting till noon), Second month of Cāturmasya begins (Fast from yogurt for one month)
- 7 AUG: Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure for the USA
- 14 AUG: Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī: Appearance of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (Fasting till midnight)
- 15 AUG: Nandotsava, Śrīla Prabhupāda – Appearance (Fasting till noon)
- 17 AUG: Fasting for Annadā Ekādaśī
- 18 AUG: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:21 am - 10:35 am
- 24 AUG: Śrīmatī Sītā Ṭhākurāṇī (Śrī Advaita Ācārya's consort) – Appearance
- 25 AUG: Lalitā Śasṭhi
- 27 AUG: Rādhāṣṭamī: Appearance of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī (Fasting till noon)
- 31 AUG: Fasting for Parśvā Ekādaśī
- 1 SEP: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:24 am - 10:34 am, Appearance of Lord Vāmanadeva (Fasting till noon on Ekādaśī, feasting today.), Śrīla Jiva Gosvāmī Appearance
- 2 SEP: Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura – Appearance (Fasting till noon)
- 3 SEP: Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura – Disappearance
- 4 SEP: Śrī Viśvarūpa Mahotsava, Acceptance of sannyāsa by Śrīla Prabhupāda, Third month of Cāturmasya begins(Fast from milk for one month.)
- 11 SEP: Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival in the USA
- 15 SEP: Fasting for Indirā Ekādaśī

How to worship more than 9,00,000 gods every day?

In order to help individuals having different propensities and qualifications, the great sage Vyāsadeva, the compiler of *Vedas*, suggested various means of achieving transcendental realization. Thus he described *karma-kānda* activities (like donating food, clothes, medicines, performing rituals etc.), speculative knowledge (scrutinizing study of the *Upaniṣads*), mystic powers (*hatha-yoga*), and finally pure devotional service (*bhakti*). In various *Purāṇas* he recommended worship of different demigods.

To many people Hinduism's strength lies in its emphasis on choosing ANY particular deity of your choice—there is no coercion. This contrasts with other faiths, who feel that their religion is monotheistic while Hinduism is polytheistic. This puts Hinduism in the same category as some ancient form of paganism.

Is this true?

Just take the case of the newly elected government in India. There are many ministers (too many, according to some political pundits), but there is only ONE Prime Minister. In fact because he is alone he can be called 'Prime'. Also, all corporations have a CEO (Chief Executive Officer), and if we can compare a country or a company with the cosmos we can safely deduce that the cosmos too requires systematic management. So how is it possible to have that kind of management if every manager is the BOSS? Obviously some managers are extremely powerful personalities but nonetheless they obey the command of their superior.

Srīmad-Bhāgavatam explains the position of the multifarious demigods and the Supreme Personality of Godhead with the analogy of the root and the tree, or the stomach and the other limbs of the body. We do not water all the individual parts of the tree but simply pour water on the root. Similarly we only feed the stomach and do not worry about nutrition reaching other parts of the body.

A frequently asked question goes like this: Isn't it true that when someone worships the demigods he also worships Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord? And there is no need for any separate worship of the Supreme.

Well, although it is not untrue, this kind of worship is called *avidhi-pūrvakam* or worship performed in a wrong way, according to the *Bhagavad-gītā*. It is almost like bribing a doorman to enter the room of a great person. These demigods display a fraction of Lord Kṛṣṇa's opulence, but ultimately He is much more than any of His creations.

Lord Kṛṣṇa clearly wants all of us to surrender to Him alone. Kṛṣṇa derides demigod worship, and He says, in effect, that trying to satisfy material desires—by worshiping the demigods or by any other method—is like pouring fuel on fire. Sensual gratification is not the path of liberation

but the path of bondage.

Although we are indebted to the demigods for the necessities of life they provide, the demigods are never independent of Lord Kṛṣṇa in supplying these necessities. We can pay our debts to them by worshiping Lord Kṛṣṇa, as He requests.

Since we can get the highest knowledge from the *Gītā*, why should we cling to a lower level of knowledge? From the *Gītā* we learn that full satisfaction—material and spiritual—comes from worshiping Lord Kṛṣṇa. Why should we turn to the demigods?

Besides, worshiping Kṛṣṇa is easier than worshiping the demigods. Especially in the present age, by the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, we don't need any prior spiritual qualifications to begin practicing *bhakti-yoga* and thereby attain Kṛṣṇa. We simply have to chant the holy names: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Because chanting connects us with Kṛṣṇa, the reservoir of all pleasure, it will satisfy all our desires and awaken our original love for Kṛṣṇa.

Srīmad-Bhāgavatam (5.7.6) gives the complete understanding of demigod worship through the sterling example of Mahārāja Bharata: "After performing the preliminaries of various sacrifices, Mahārāja Bharata offered the results in the name of religion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vāsudeva...Mahārāja Bharata expertly understood how the offering made to different demigods was simply an offering to the different limbs of the Lord. For instance, Indra is the arm of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and Sūrya [the sun] is His eye. Thus Mahārāja Bharata considered that the oblations offered to different demigods were actually offered unto the different limbs of Lord Vāsudeva."

Śrīla Prabhupāda further illustrates in the purport to this verse: "All the demigods are different parts of the Lord, and if we offer service to them, we actually serve the Lord Himself...We should worship the demigods in that spirit. Because the goddess Durgā satisfies Kṛṣṇa, we should therefore offer respects to goddess Durgā. Because Lord Śiva is nothing but Kṛṣṇa's functional body, we should therefore offer respects to Lord Śiva. Similarly, we should offer respects to Brahmā, Agni, and Sūrya."

To conclude, Hinduism (or Vedic *Sanātana Dharma*) is not polytheistic (all forms of God are equal), nor is it narrow-minded (my way or the high-way), but it requires knowledge coming down in *paramparā* to understand this issue.

Else you may end up having to worship more than 9,00,000 forms everyday, to finish worshiping 33 crores demigods in one year!?

—Śyamānanda Dāsa

