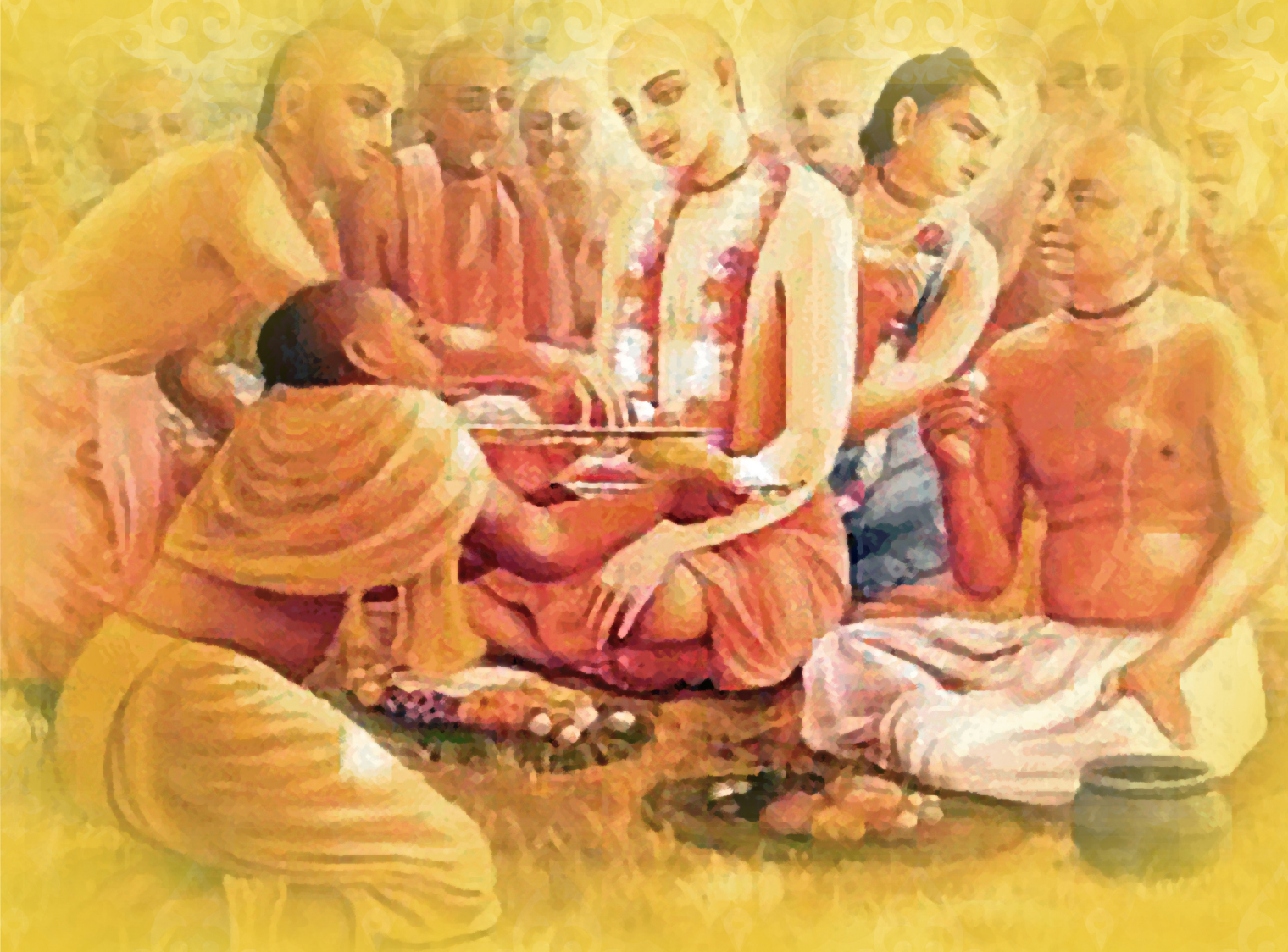


International Society for Krishna Consciousness

# Vaishnava Etiquette and Lifestyle Manual



ISKCON Founder Acarya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



International Society for Krishna Consciousness  
Founder Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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## INTRODUCTION

This book is about Vaiṣṇava behaviour or sadācāra, a Sanskrit word Śrīla Prabhupāda often translated as 'etiquette.' Originally a French expression then later borrowed by the English, the term 'etiquette' means: 'A code of behaviour that delineates expectations for social behaviour according to contemporary, conventional norms within a society, social class or group.'

The Sanskrit word maryādā – originally meaning a 'boundary line between fields,' as also translated as 'etiquette' by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Again, the word indicates the separation between two things: that which is to be done, and that which is not to be done.

Etiquette and 'expected social behaviour' can also be linked with the notion of morality, a more common English word that includes the concept of having the ability to make the right choices in a personal or social situation and then exercising that right. Here's how one dictionary defines it:

Morality (from the Latin moralitas "manner, character, proper behaviour") is the differentiation of intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are good (or right) and those that are bad (or wrong). A moral code is a system of morality (for example, according to a particular philosophy, religion, culture, etc.) and a moral is any one practice or teaching within a moral code. The adjective moral is synonymous with "good" or "right." Immorality is the active opposition to morality (i.e. good or right), while amorality is variously defined as an unawareness of, indifference toward, or disbelief in any set of moral standards or principles.

### **Essentials Unchanged**

The modern understanding of morality is that it is a system of behaviour which varies according to the expectations of the society of which one is a member. As a particular branch of society differs from another in values, so do the expected norms. One group considers an action to be moral, and another does not. Morals also change over time as values change. What is morally normal today may be not regarded as normal after ten years.

In contrast to this understanding, Vaiṣṇava behaviour – morality and etiquette – is based upon a value system that does not fluctuate according to popular opinion. It is predicated upon the idea that God is real, personal, eternal, and that the ultimate aim of human life is to be reunited with Him in loving service; and that the same God has provided codes for human interaction that will assist in the ultimate aim of life. The essentials of Vaiṣṇava theology have remained unchanged for thousands of years, and so too have the principal behaviours that serve to achieve the very goal of Vaiṣṇavism, the spiritual culture based upon Vaiṣṇava theology. The daily life of a Vaiṣṇava, whether in ancient times, mediaeval or modern, has therefore not varied much at all. Mantras, prayers, ritual and imagery are the same, and so is the manner in which Vaiṣṇavas interact with each other and with the world.

This book describes the way in which devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, can cultivate virtuous qualities within, and relate amicably to their fellow Vaiṣṇavas. As such, this book is important in the formation and greater development of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness that Śrīla Prabhupāda founded less than fifty years ago.

### **Vaiṣṇava Codes**

The codes of Vaiṣṇava behaviour can be traced from the ancient Pañcarātra literature and the Purāṇas, through the rituals and practise of the four sampradāyas and down to the instructions of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that the observance of Vaiṣṇava etiquette is the ornament of a devotee (Antya Līlā 4.129 - 130) and he asked his beloved disciple Śrīla Sanātana Goswami to compile a guide book on the subject:

yadyapio tumi hao jagat-pāvana  
tomā-sparśe pavitra haya deva-muni-gaṇa  
tathāpi bhakta-svabhāva—maryādā-rakṣaṇa  
maryādā-pālana haya sādharma bhūṣaṇa

“My dear Sanātana, although you are the deliverer of the entire universe and although even the demigods and great saints are purified by touching you, it is the characteristic of a devotee to observe and protect the Vaiṣṇava etiquette. Maintenance of the Vaiṣṇava etiquette is the ornament of a devotee.”

maryādā-laṅghane loka kare upahāsa

iha-loka, para-loka—dui haya nāśa

Cc Antya 4.131

“If one transgresses the laws of etiquette, people make fun of him, and thus he is vanquished in both this world and the next.”

The Lord gave his disciple detailed instructions of what he wanted to be included in such a book and the result was the Hari Bhakti Vilāsa. Finally, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave detailed commentaries on Vaiṣṇava etiquette and the challenges of applying it in the modern world. He wrote extensively, both books and correspondence; conversed with his followers and corrected their behaviour, all the while setting them a perfect example.

Preservation of ISKCON into the future factually depends on each and every one of us playing our part to develop a society where there is a spirit of enthusiastic and selfless service amongst trusting and affectionate friends. It also means that we make careful and thoughtful choices to refrain from speech and actions that would challenge such a noble purpose. Sometimes though, even with the best intentions, we speak or act in a way that is not in keeping with our highest values. This book examines some of the details of Vaiṣṇava behaviour so that, at the very least, as practitioners we always know what to do - and what not to do - in any given situation. First, let's have a closer look at the relative importance of morality.

## Primary and Secondary Principles

Adherence to the principles of morality is essential for a sustainable and balanced spiritual life, yet collectively such principles, just by themselves, are regarded by the Vaiṣṇava ācāryas as *gauṇa-vidhi bhakti* or ‘secondary principles of bhakti.’ This is in contrast to primary principles of bhakti such as chanting the names of Kṛṣṇa, reading the words of Kṛṣṇa, worshipping the Deity of Kṛṣṇa and so on.

To give an example: having a shower and dressing in clean clothes is a preparatory principle to worshipping the Deity on the altar. You cannot perform puja without being clean. If you are taking a shower with a view to performing puja, then puja is the reason for your cleanliness. Thus puja is the primary principle, and having a shower and dressing in clean clothes are the secondary principles. Since you cannot worship without being clean, the secondary principle acts as a supportive or foundational principle, for the primary one. They are both required but have their relative importance.

If someone simply takes a shower and wears clean clothes – but does not worship the Deity – the desired spiritual benefit will not be achieved. Many millions of people shower each morning and dress in fresh, clean clothes, but they do not awaken their dormant consciousness of Kṛṣṇa by those actions alone. That can only be done by acts of bhakti. In the same way, there are many people in the world who are vegetarian, or who refrain from drinking alcohol. This is no doubt good for them and will contribute to their physical health and mental peace. It will also prevent them from building up even more karmic debt.

## “Even the pigeons are vegetarian...”

But simply being an abstinent vegetarian will not bring a person closer to Kṛṣṇa. Only devotional service – bhakti – can do that. For this reason, Śrīla Prabhupāda did not encourage moral observances without devotion to Kṛṣṇa, labelling them ‘mundane.’ “After all,” he reasoned, “even the pigeons are vegetarian.” By speaking in this way, he created for his followers a clear distinction between activities that support bhakti, and bhakti itself.

Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda was himself an active promoter of vegetarianism to the general public, and even expressed it as being one of the ‘purposes of ISKCON.’ He encouraged his followers to open restaurants for that purpose, regularly spoke strongly against animal slaughter, and argued with passion that slaughterhouses should be closed down. But he did this together with the primary principle of bhakti: that all food should be offered to Kṛṣṇa before we eat. In this way the food – and only vegetarian food – becomes sacred by being blessed by Kṛṣṇa, and the eater of such sacred food or prasādam comes closer to God.



Śrīla Prabhupāda also spoke regularly on what he termed ‘the four regulative principles,’ - abstinence from non-vegetarian or impure foods such as meat, fish, eggs; refraining from alcohol and other intoxicants; gambling and ‘illicit sex,’ and said that abstinence from all four was essential for any genuine spiritual life. He even went so far as to include the declaration of abstinence as part of the vows made at the time of spiritual initiation.

That is because each immoral activity serves to destroy a corresponding moral activity and thereby the moral foundation which would otherwise serve to promote the conditions helpful to bhakti. Meat-eating, for instance, has obvious connections with cruelty, violence, exploitation and killing of innocent creatures – souls residing temporarily in animal bodies. Since cultivation of bhakti is supported by development of compassion and mercy towards others, it is a required principle to actively practice compassion and to refrain from actions that destroy it. In this way, all of the ‘four regulative principles’ are linked to the development of finer human qualities which are factually the inherent qualities of the soul. As negative impulses such as excessive desire, greed, frustration, anger and other toxic pollutants are reduced within the practitioner, the qualities of the soul will shine for all to see. Such qualities as cleanliness, austerity, truth and mercy are some of the good personal qualities that develop as unhelpful desires and habits are reduced and then abandoned.

## Four Main Rules

These four good qualities can be found in any genuine religion anywhere in the world. They are universal spiritual principles as they spring from the soul and not from any particular religious denomination. Of course, there are many more principles of moral living to be found in the Vaiṣṇava scriptures. Yet all of them, in some way or another, are expansions and permutations of the cardinal four, which are: internal and external cleanliness and purity; voluntary acceptance of austerity for a higher purpose, honesty and truth in thought, speech and conduct; and compassion and mercy for other living things.

Finally, there are two kinds of morality: personal and social. The first deals with your choices of personal discipline, regulation and relationship with God; the second has more to do with your interaction with others. Of course, they are intertwined and, particularly within the Vaiṣṇava community, how you conduct yourself in relationship to other Vaiṣṇavas has a bearing on your relationship with God, since the Vaiṣṇavas are dear to Him. For many reasons, therefore, it is important for devotees of Kṛṣṇa to reflect on the details of moral principles from time to time, and to examine whether they are being maintained in their own lives.

Throughout history there have been those who tried to practice spiritual life without the all-important moral foundation. Like building a house without adequate foundations, or trying to take off in a plane without taxiing down the runway first, their attempts have been unsuccessful. Scholars in the west have identified a type of philosophical thought by which a religious leader or group professes a lofty devotion to God while simultaneously ignoring the need to follow any moral codes. This is known as antinomianism, a fatal calculation of one’s own imagined transcendence of ordinary morality. Teaching others about God while breaking His laws for human behaviour has not only confused the innocent mass of followers, it has led them astray into deviant behaviour in the name of religion.

Sadly, the Vaiṣṇava community has not been immune from this tendency, and that is why our predecessor spiritual masters have all spoken of it. Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thakur, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, and our own Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda all felt compelled to speak about it regularly as a matter of urgency. In British India of the 1860s Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thakur described a total of thirteen apa-sampradāyas or ‘blind religious communities’ wherein immoral or unprincipled teachers and priests were leading their followers into deviant behaviour. Deviant, that is, even from the generally accepted Hindu dharma of the day.

Thus history has given us gurus who danced with other men’s wives, religious leaders with no compassion for animals, and muddled, angry priests with unclean habits.

In the following pages is a helpful list of personal and social moral principles together with a few notes of how they apply in daily life today. The list is by no means exhaustive, but the principles described can help build the foundations for healthy and progressive growth individually and collectively, so that together we can serve Lord Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotee Śrīla Prabhupāda.

## Foundational Moral Principles Yama and Niyama

By following these foundational principles you can have balance in your life and increase your health, mental peace, wealth, and harmony in the home. You will generate good feelings, prosperity, and higher consciousness in

the world around you. You'll also avoid some of the major disturbances to your spiritual life. There are so many principles of good living but the essential ones are mentioned here for simplicity. If you notice any repetition it means it's important!

The first ten are personal restraints known as **Yama** and they are meant to harness the instinctive nature of the mind and senses whose restlessness keeps us on the material platform of life. They help to govern the impulses of fear, anger, jealousy, selfishness, greed and lust. The second ten are ethical observances or **Niyama** that help to cultivate and bring out the qualities of the soul. By engaging in these dutifully, even without full enthusiasm, we can lift our consciousness to the level of compassion, tolerance, and the giving of ourselves in love to others. Spirituality is also included in the second section because in Vedic culture it is considered essential to have awareness of God in order to be good and to do good for others.

## **Yama – Personal restraints**

1. **Ahimsā – Non-violence.** Do not injure anyone in thought, word or deed. Do not subject or allow others to experience pain or unnecessary anxiety. Let go of the fear and insecurity that causes you to hurt others. Do not harm animals, large or small, or the natural environment.
2. **Satya – Truth.** Refrain from lying or breaking promises. Speak the truth without distortion or deviation. Speak only that which is true, kind, helpful and necessary, but do so in a manner which is pleasing and respectful. Choose the right time and place to speak. Be fair, accurate and frank in discussions. Do not engage in slander or gossip. Do not be a false witness. Earn money honestly.
3. **Asteya – Non-stealing.** Do not use or take anything that does not belong to you – except with permission. Do not be grasping, possessive, or greedy. Avoid envy of others possessions. Refrain from theft or prolonged debt. Save money if possible, borrow only when necessary, spend wisely, and pay back what you have borrowed. Do not use another's name, words, resources or rights without permission and acknowledgement.
4. **Brahmacarya – Divine Conduct.** Practise celibacy, or restraint, whenever possible. Avoid those writings and images that provoke lust. Dress and speak modestly. Be faithful in marriage – in actions, words and even in thoughts.
5. **Kṣamā – Patience.** Be tolerant with people, their words and actions, and with circumstances you cannot control. Let others behave according to their nature without adjusting to you. Don't be in a hurry. Be patient with children and the elderly.
6. **Dhṛti – Steadfastness.** Overcome fear, indecision, procrastination, and persevere, even in difficult circumstances or with challenging persons. Achieve your goals with purpose, plan, and persistence. Avoid laziness. Develop willpower, courage and industry. Do not let opposition or fear of failure result in changing strategies.
7. **Dayā - Compassion.** Overcome insensitivity to others. Feel sympathy for others and extend yourself to them, even when they give no thanks in return. Be kind to people, animals, plants, and Mother Earth herself. Forgive those who show remorse and who apologise to you. Honour and assist those who are weak, impoverished, aged or in pain.
8. **Ārjavam – Honesty.** Be straightforward and renounce deception. Be honest with yourself. Take note of your faults and unhelpful thoughts and deeds without blaming them on others, but don't forget to acknowledge your good thoughts and accomplishments too. Act honourably, even in hard times. Obey the law of the land and pay your taxes. Be straightforward in business and do an honest day's work. Do not bribe or accept bribes. Do not cheat or deceive to achieve an end.
9. **Mitāhāra – Moderate Appetite.** Regulate your diet by eating at the same time every day. Do not over-eat. Eat only food that has been made sacred by offering to Kṛṣṇa. Drink plenty of water.
10. **Śaucam – Cleanliness.** Keep your body, mind and speech pure. Eat clean, fresh food. Take a bath or shower every morning. Finish with cold water if you can. Keep a clean, uncluttered home and workplace. Avoid unnecessary newspapers, magazines and television. Choose your music carefully. Avoid swearing and impure language.

## Niyama - Ethical Observances

1. **Hṛi – Remorse.** Allow yourself to experience remorse. Verbalise any regret in prayer, by keeping a spiritual journal, or in private conversation with someone you trust. Sincerely apologise to those hurt by your words or deeds. Seek out and correct your faults and bad habits. Welcome correction as a means of bettering yourself. Do not boast of your achievements. Shun pride and pretension.
2. **Santoṣa – Contentment.** Be satisfied with that which is available without severe endeavour. Live simply and minimise your material needs. Live in constant gratitude for your health, your friends, and your belongings. Don't complain about what you don't possess, and don't lament over what you once had. Identify with the eternal you, rather than your mind, body and emotions. Live in the present. Be happy, smile and uplift others.
3. **Dāna – Giving.** Be generous, giving liberally without thoughts of reward. Offer a portion of your income to those who serve God and who help others to learn about God. Come to the temple with offerings. Donate religious literature. Feed others, and give to those in need. Share your time and talents without seeking praise. Treat your guests as God. Offer hospitality and practical support to sadhus.
4. **Āstikya – Faith.** Cultivate an unshakeable faith. Believe firmly in your path. Trust the words of the guru, the saints, and the scriptures. Be positive as you strive to meet your spiritual goals. Avoid those who try to break your faith by argument and accusation. Avoid doubt and despair.
5. **Svādhyāya – Study of scripture.** Read scripture every day when you are peaceful and reflective. Discuss with others as often as you can. Hear, study, and listen to wise devotees. Listen to recorded classes if possible. Note your questions that arise and ask them later. Memorize the words of Kṛṣṇa so that your mind returns to them.
6. **Mati – Cognition.** Develop spiritual intellect through Śrīla Prabhupāda's guidance. Discover the hidden lesson in each experience to develop a deeper understanding of life and yourself. Cultivate intuition. Remember and take careful note of moments of enlightenment, and any spiritual realisations you may have. Share them with others.
7. **Vrata – Sacred Vows.** Follow regular and occasional observances such as fasting and pilgrimage faithfully. Honour vows as sacred contracts between you, your community, your guru and God. Uphold your vows and ask others for their witness and support. Take vows with others for strength.
8. **Japa – Chant your sacred mantra daily.** Bathe first, quiet the mind and concentrate fully. Allow the mantra to purify and uplift you. Turn to japa to prevent negative emotions and still the rivers of thought.
9. **Tapasyā – Austerity.** Do things you don't like doing for the sake of your spiritual progress. Make constant efforts to focus your mind on your spiritual practises. Read or chant more. Fast on the holy days. Tell others about the path of dharma or give scriptures to them – even strangers who may not immediately welcome you.
10. **Īśvara-praṇidhāna -Surrender to God.** Always think of Kṛṣṇa, offer everything you have to Him, and talk about Him with others. Understand that He is the Creator of everything; the Owner of everything, and that He is your best friend. Perform daily worship and meditation. Set aside part of one room in your home as an altar. Learn simple puja and standard prayers. Have darśana before leaving home in the morning.

As a personal 'ornament', Vaiṣṇava etiquette makes a devotee of Kṛṣṇa beautiful in the eyes of both God and the world. Vaiṣṇava etiquette cultivates humility, respect for others, and gratitude. It helps to foster purity in one's external environment and within one's heart.

Most importantly, its practise directly helps in protecting the two essential rules of Vaiṣṇava life: *to always remember Krishna and to never forget Him*

This manual is largely based on a compilation by devotees serving at the ISKCON Śrī Śrī Rādhā Gopīnātha Mandira in Mumbai, India and has been reproduced with their kind permission. They used several sources in writing this book and have contributed their experiences of applying rules of Vaiṣṇava etiquette in today's world. While some items of Vaiṣṇava behaviour may only apply within temples, the majority of them can be used in any situation, in any country. There may be some details that require adjustment in different circumstances, but the principles and most of the practises are universal. As always, discussion with other devotees helps to answer any questions.

This book is intended to be both a guide and the basis of discussion in our groups so please do study it. Please inform us if you feel any additions or alterations are required by sending your comments to [mentorship@krishnatemple.com](mailto:mentorship@krishnatemple.com)



We would like to thank the BBT for the quotes of Srila Prabhupada.

All glories to Śrī Guru and Śrī Gauranga.

Your servants,

**Bhaktivedanta Manor Mentorship Committee**

## PART I ETIQUETTE WITHIN THE TEMPLE

### OFFERING OBEISANCES

Before entering the temple one should either knock gently on the temple room door, or gently ring the bell which is just inside the temple room near the entrance. Devotees should be mindful that they do not disturb a class etc that may be going on in the temple room; in such situations it would be better to gently knock on the door instead of ringing the bell.

Upon entering the temple, one should first offer obeisances to Śrīla Prabhupāda, keeping him on our left, and chant aloud his *praṇati mantra* (initiated devotees should chant their Guru's praṇām mantra just before Śrīla Prabhupāda's mantra). One should then move towards the Deities and offer obeisances, keeping the Deities on one's left hand side and chant their respective names.

We take darshan beginning with guru paramparā. The 'darśana' should continue, as we face the Deities, from the left-hand corner and move progressively, Deity by Deity, to the right-hand corner. For example at the Kṛṣṇa Balaram Mandir in Vrindavan, Śrīla Prabhupāda would pay obeisances first at Gaura Nitai's Altar then go to Kṛṣṇa Balaram's Altar and then to Śrī Śrī Rādhā Syamsundara.

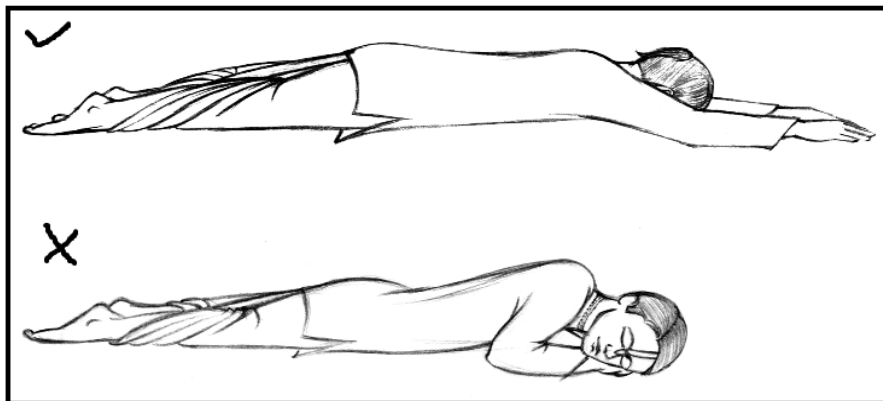
Men may perform either type of praṇāma, but women traditionally perform only pañcāṅga-praṇāma.

#### Aṣṭāṅga Praṇāma

The Hari-bhakti-vilāsa tells us how to offer aṣṭāṅga praṇāma, also known as daṇḍavat-praṇāma:

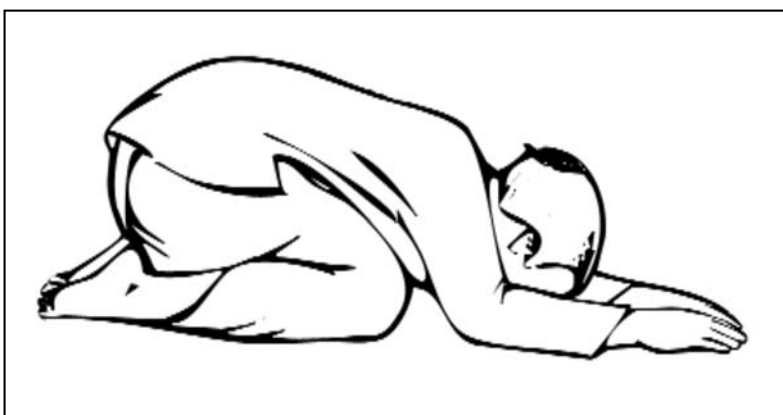
Offer obeisances with eight aṅgas – your feet, knees, chest, hands, head, sight, mind and words. With your two feet, knees, chest, hands and head touching the ground and with your eyes downcast and half open, recite a suitable prayer while meditating that your head is under the Lord's lotus feet.

Your hands should be extended out in front of your head, not next to your head or tucked in next to your chest.



#### Pañcāṅga Praṇāma

To make pañcāṅga praṇāma, offer obeisances with five aṅgas – knees, arms, head, intellect and words. The chest does not touch the ground.



While offering obeisances, first recite your own spiritual master's praṇāma-mantra, then Śrīla Prabhupāda's and then the praṇāma mantras for the Deities on the altar.

## SRILA PRABHUPĀDA’S PRANĀTI

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale  
śrīmate bhaktivedānta-svāmin iti nāmine  
namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe  
nirviṣeṣa-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, having taken shelter at His lotus feet. Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Goswāmī. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanyadeva and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism.”

It is an offense to offer obeisances with only one hand, for example with one hand extended in front of the head while the other holds a bead bag or other sacred item off the floor. So before offering obeisances, set down anything you are holding. Both hands should support the body while bowing down and both hands should be outstretched. Śrīla Prabhupāda cupped his hands to hold his bead bag off the floor whilst offering obeisances. Devotees should not place their japa bags, or any other personal items, on Śrīla Prabhupāda's arati table.

In the early morning or whenever visiting the temple one should offer obeisances to the Deities only after waking Them, because it is enjoined in śāstras that one should not disturb the Lord by offering obeisances when the Lord is resting or bathing; nor should one circumambulate the Lord at these times.

One should offer obeisances just outside the Deity room, never inside, since it is enjoined to offer obeisances from a respectful distance. Within the Deity room offer praṇāmas with joined palms, by mantra and with the mind.

## MEDITATING UPON THE DEITY

After offering obeisances to the Deities one should take ‘darśana’ with great devotion and beg for Their mercy.

One should not, however, immediately look upon the Deities’ faces. The proper manner in which one should take ‘darśana’ of the Lord is described in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 2.2.13:

“The process of meditation should begin from the lotus feet of the Lord and progress to His smiling face. The meditation should be concentrated upon the lotus feet, then the calves, then the thighs, and in this way higher and higher. The more the mind becomes fixed upon the different parts of the limbs, one after another, the more the intelligence becomes purified.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in the purport that such meditation will help us get detached from sense gratification. The mood of the devotee taking ‘darśana’ is “Sir, I am your eternal servant. Please let me know how can I serve You?”

While taking ‘darśana’ one may stand at the side so that we do not obstruct the ‘darśana’ of the devotees or guests who are sitting.



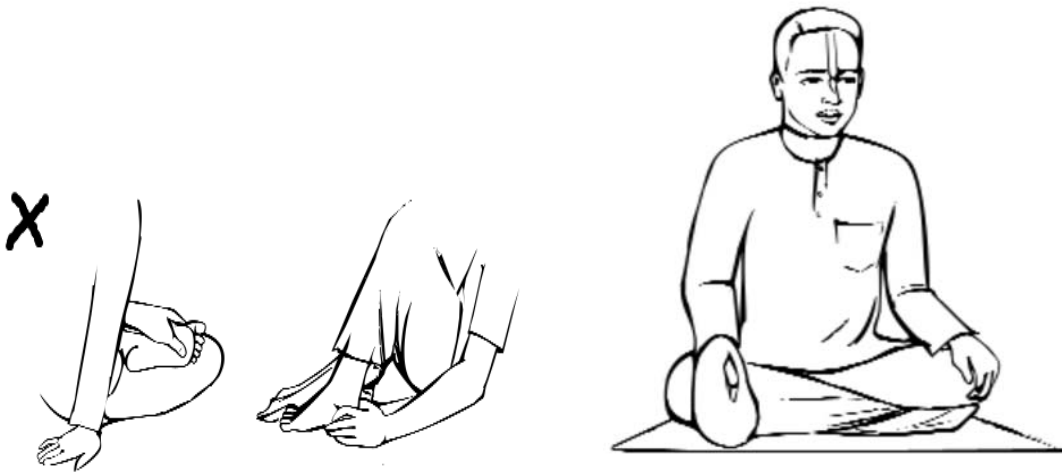
### SITTING

There are several regulations regarding one’s sitting posture in the temple:

While sitting one should not expose one’s feet to the Deities or point them at the spiritual master, Tulasī-devī etc. The feet should always be covered. One



should not spread one's legs before the Deities nor sit before the Deities holding one's ankles, elbows or knees.



One should as far as possible, avoid sitting with one's back to the Deities or the vyāsāsana; however the layout of the temple may at times restrict us in following this principle.

One should not fall asleep while sitting before the Deities.

Ladies and men should sit in separate areas of the Temple room during programmes and classes.

## TALKING

In front of the Deities one should not:

- talk loudly
- quarrel
- chastise anyone
- speak harshly to others or speak angrily
- praise anyone else
- speak ill names
- criticise the demigods
- indulge in 'prajalpa' or mundane talk
- speak a lie
- talk near to devotees who are chanting the holy name of the Lord

One may speak in front of the Deities to guests and devotees if it helps in preaching or enhancing their Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but all other talks should be conducted outside the temple room.

## CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE WITHIN THE TEMPLE

“....Another thing I request is that everything in the Temple should be kept nice and clean. Everyone should wash hands before touching anything of Kṛṣṇa's. We should always remember that Kṛṣṇa is the purest and similarly only the pure can associate with Him. Cleanliness is next to Godliness....”

SP Letter to Nandarāṇī, Kṛṣṇa Devī, Subala das and Uddhava (October 3, 1967)

We must maintain Śrīla Prabhupāda's good name by being clean in all our dealings; this includes everything from eating to changing money.

- After one takes prasādam the area where the plate was kept must be cleaned. One should not step over the area where prasādam was taken, because it is considered contaminated, and if one steps on that spot, then feet must be washed. Because the temple must be very clean, we should be careful that we do not unnecessarily contaminate the temple.
- One should not enter the temple room without having washed at least one's hands and mouth after eating. Feet should be washed if possible.
- One should avoid putting one's fingers in one's mouth, ears or nose especially whilst in the temple. When one is compelled to do this (even in private) one's hands must be washed immediately thereafter.
- Pushchairs should not be brought into any areas of the temple where shoes are not allowed, including reception room and corridors. There is obviously no restrictions to wheelchairs.
- Slippers should not be worn in any areas of the temple where shoes are not allowed since slippers are not washed daily; instead a double layer of socks can be worn.
- One should not pass air or belch within the temple room.
- One should not enter the temple after visiting a crematorium or after touching a dead body; one must first have a shower, including washing one's hair, and then enter. One should wait until twenty four hours have passed after a death in the family before entering the temple.

## PART II OTHER ETIQUETTE

### HONOURING NIRMĀLYA AND OTHER SACRED ITEMS

Kṛṣṇa is non-different from His paraphernalia and treating Kṛṣṇa's paraphernalia badly means to treat Kṛṣṇa badly. True bhakti will then not appear in our hearts. We have to be conscious at all times that all these different items are not ordinary items, they are to be used in Kṛṣṇa's service and therefore are worshipable.

- When receiving mahā-prasāda, nirmālya flowers, caraṇāmṛta and Tulasī leaves, to avoid spillage, hold your left hand under your right hand.
- If a sacred object falls to the ground, or one's foot touches it, one should quickly pick it up and touch it to one's head.
- If one touches one's hands to the floor, or anything unclean, one should wash one's hands before touching Deity paraphernalia again.
- One should not step over any sacred articles.
- All sacred articles should be kept in a neat, clean place and handled with care. They should not be tossed about but carefully handed over from person to person.

### NIRMĀLYA

Nirmālya refers to the garlands, flowers, candana, bath water (Caraṇāmṛta), ghee lamp and Tulasī leaves that the pūjāri has offered to the Lord during the pūjā. After the pūjā is completed, the devotees should accept these items on their heads, saying "jaya mahā-prasādam".

#### i) Flowers and garlands

After being properly respected, nirmālya such as garlands and flowers can be collected and disposed in a river, lake or ocean, or in a spot where they will be undisturbed e.g. in part of one's garden where they are unlikely to be stepped on. They should NOT be hung on trees.

Devotees accept prasāda flower garlands by touching them to the head, wearing them and smelling them. They accept prasāda Tulasī garlands simply by touching them to the head and smelling them, but not wearing them.

#### ii) Caraṇāmṛta

"Drinking the bath water of Viṣṇu is powerful enough to destroy the effects of one million sins such as the killing of other living entities. However, the person who lets even one drop of the sacred bath water fall on the ground must suffer eight million such sinful effects." (Hari-bhakti-vilāsa)

Caraṇāmṛta should be distributed to the devotees, who may chant the following verse while drinking and placing it on their heads:

akāla-mṛtyu-haraṇam sarva-vyādhi-vināśanam  
viṣṇoḥ pādodakam pītvā śirasā dhārayāmy aham

"Having drunk the water from the lotus feet of lord Vishnu which destroys all disease and takes away the chance of dying untimely, I hold that water on my head."



### iii) Ghee Lamp

In traditional temples the lamp is brought first to Garuḍa, who stands at the back of the temple. In ISKCON temples the lamp is brought first to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON, as he is the Vaiṣṇava-śreṣṭha, the leader of the assembled Vaiṣṇavas. The lamp is not meant to show respect or honour to us, but rather we are meant to offer respect to the lamp as the Lord's prasāda by placing both hands above the fire and then touching our forehead with both hands and saying 'jaya mahā-prasādam'.

### iv) Deities' Clothing

Another type of nirmālya used is clothing from the Deity. Deity clothing which is distributed as prasāda of the Lord should be respected. We may respect prasāda cloth by keeping it with other worshipable paraphernalia, or even by keeping it in a picture frame and hanging it on a wall as we would a painting. One may also wear it but strictly speaking it is best not to cut and re-sew the cloth as is a widespread custom. However cloth used to cover Deities during abhisheks may be cut and distributed. Avoid wearing any prasāda cloth below your waist.

### v) Mahā-prasādam

Devotees respect maha-prasādam outside the temple room so as not to be in front of the Deities while eating. prasad should NOT be honoured in the temple room when the Deities' curtains are open.

## OTHER SACRED ITEMS

- Books, beads, karatals, drums etc. should not be kept on the floor, or in unclean places, and should be respected as worshipable paraphernalia.
- Sacred items like beads, books, tilak etc. should not be taken into the toilet.
- One should be very careful and respectful in handling pictures of Guru and Kṛṣṇa.
- Special mention may be made of Hari-Nama chaddars. Since the holy name is printed on the cloth, it is a sacred object and should not be touched to the floor. Hari Nama chaddars or any similar apparel should not be worn below the waist.
- One should be very careful in handling Deities' paraphernalia like their clothes, jewellery, vessels etc. For instance clothes and towels should be nicely folded. The vessels should be placed in a proper place and so on.

## KIRTANA

Leading Kīrtana is an honour as one is representing the whole congregation before the Deities. Therefore one should be conscious of this and lead only when one is asked to.

Devotees should only sing songs and mantras authorised by the previous acaryas and approved by Srila Prabhupada.

If ISKCON devotees want to give some special emphasis or attention to the glorification of Srimati Radharani, beyond chanting of the maha-mantra, they should do so by chanting mantras or bhajans which are authorized by Srila Prabhupada and our disciplic line. An example of this is the chanting of Sri Radhika-stava from the Stava-mala of Srila Rupa Goswami.

On Radhastami, devotees may chant Srimati Radharani's holy name in isolation of Sri Krishna's name to a limited degree, not more than two or three minutes.

The prema dhvani prayers at the end of the kīrtana should be recited by the senior most devotee present e.g. sannyāsīs or Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples.

## PREMA DHVANI PRAYERS

jaya om Viṣṇu-pāda Paramahansa Parivrājakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī  
Śrīmad A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja Śrīla Prabhupāda — kī jaya.

All glories to the ācārya Om Viṣṇu-pāda 108 Tridaṇḍī Gosvāmī A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who travels everywhere, preaching the glories of Hari, and who is situated on the highest platform of sannyāsa.

ISKCON - BBT Founder-Ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda — kī jaya.

All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness.

jaya om Viṣṇu-pāda Paramahansa Parivrājakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī  
Mahārāja Śrīla Prabhupāda kī Jaya.

All glories to the ācārya Om Viṣṇu-pāda 108 Tridaṇḍī Gosvāmī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, who travels across the earth, preaching the glories of Hari, and who is situated on the highest platform of sannyāsa.

ananta koṭi vaiṣṇava-vṛnda — kī jaya.

All glories to the unlimited millions of Vaiṣṇavas.

nāmācārya śrīla haridāsa ṭhākura — kī jaya.

All glories to the Nāmācārya Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura.

prem-se kaho śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī advaita, gadādhara, śrīvāsādi gaura-bhakta-vṛnda — kī  
jaya.

Call out with love the names Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Prabhu Nityānanda, Śrī Advaita, Śrī Gadādhara, Śrīvāsa and all the devotees of Lord Caitanya.

śrī śrī rādhā-kṛṣṇa, gopa-gopīnatha, śyāma-kunḍa, rādhā-kunḍa giri- govardhana — kī jaya.

All glories to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boys and girls, the cows, Śyāma- kunḍa, Rādhā-kunḍa and Govardhana Hill.

Note: there is a slight problem here. Although all of ISKCON says ‘gopa-gopinatha’ the actual wording is ‘go-gopa-gopi’ meaning exactly what it says in the English translation: ‘cows, cowherd boys and cowherd girls.’ What we all say translates as: “All glories to the cowherd boys and Gopinatha!” We can leave it as it is though...

(One may glorify the Deities of the temple at this time.)

śrī māyāpur dhāma — kī jaya.  
All glories to Śrī Māyāpur-dhāma.

śrī vṛndāvana dhāma — kī jaya.  
All glories to Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma.

śrī jagannātha puri dhama — kī jaya.  
All glories to Śrī jagannatha puri dhāma

gaṅgā-mayī — kī jaya.  
All glories to Gaṅgā-devī.

yamunā-mayī — kī jaya.  
All glories to Yamunā-devī.

tulasī-devī — kī jaya.  
All glories to Tulasī-devī.

bhakti-devī — kī jaya.  
All glories to Bhakti-devī.

śrī hari-nāma saṅkīrtana — kī jaya.  
All glories to the congregational chanting of the holy name of Hari.

samaveta bhakta-vṛnda — kī jaya.  
All glories to the assembled devotees.

gaura-premānande — hari-haribol.  
All glories to the assembled devotees. [three times]

All glories to Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga.

Only the standard prema-dhvani prayers should be recited except on special occasions like appearance days when the appropriate glorification may be made additionally.



There are standard melodies to be sung at specific times of the day. In particular in the morning programme the samñsāra-dāvā prayers and Hare Kṛṣṇa mahāmantra should be sung in the morning melody.

Kīrtana should be simple and led in a way that can be followed and repeated easily by the congregation.

All devotees should enthusiastically sing in chorus after a lead singer.

All devotees should follow the same melody that the lead singer is singing. Therefore devotees should pay careful attention at all times.

Mṛdaṅga and kartāla players should be close to the lead singer and should watch him carefully, and adjust their speed according to his. Therefore the kartāla and mṛdaṅga players should be extra attentive.

Where there are two or more kartāla players, they must play in harmony. Similarly for mṛdaṅga players. They should play the instruments carefully so that the words of the kirtan can be clearly heard.

Kīrtanas should be sweet and melodious and not simply loud.

The general pattern of the morning kīrtana should be guru-astaka, Śrīla Prabhupāda pranam, pañca-tattva mantra, Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra and perhaps hari harāye namaḥ kṛṣṇa yādavāya namaḥ.

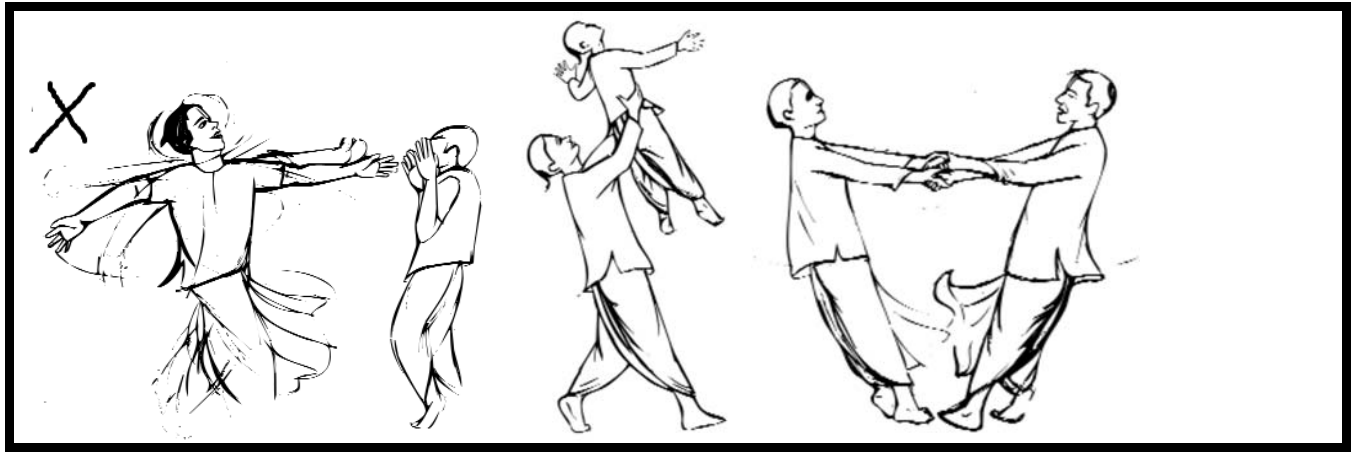
## DANCING

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī states that one should learn to dance in front of the Deities.

- Dancing should be graceful and enthusiastic but not violent and wild! Dancing in the traditional Gaudiya way as demonstrated by Śrīla Prabhupāda should be the standard. In addition, dancing can take place in various formations for example:



- rows of devotees rhythmically approaching each other and then receding.
- devotees forming rows one behind the other and while continuing to face the Deities, moving towards and then away from Them rhythmically.
- devotees moving in a circle.  
Devotees should take care to see that the formations are maintained and that they are in line.
- While dancing in formation devotees should raise hands, hold hands etc. as may be required for that particular formation.  
This dancing is not a “spectator sport” and devotees should not simply stand and watch. All should participate. However, those who are unwilling (particularly guests and newcomers or those who are sick) should not be forced.
- Dancing in ways that can cause injury to devotees should be avoided:



- Two devotees clasping hands and spinning, because it may be harmful to other devotees.
- Spinning alone with arms outstretched.
- Tossing children (and even grown-ups) in the air or lifting them.
- Pushing excessively while moving in the circle.
- Men and women should dance in separate portions of the temple.
- One should watch the lead dancer always and synchronise.

The perfect dancing is in Lord Caitanya's style with arms raised or folded hands with enthusiasm and devotion.

## GENERAL BEHAVIOUR

A devotee, one who is actually humble, doesn't look for faults in others.

"....So in your letter you are not finding fault with anyone. So you are good Vaiṣṇava. You do not find fault with anyone. This is the qualification. We should always think ourselves very humble and meek. This you must know.

So we all have to cooperate amongst ourselves, otherwise what will people think if we ourselves fight with one another? A devotee is always ideal in behaviour...."

SP Letter to Patita Uddhāraṇa (December 12, 1974)

One should always remember that one is a devotee and is representing Guru and Kṛṣṇa. Whether in the temple or at home, at work in the office or out on the street, one should conduct oneself in such a way that draws appreciation to Guru and Kṛṣṇa and should avoid all conduct that will bring Guru and Kṛṣṇa into disrepute.

yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas

tat tad evetaro janaḥ

sa yat pramāṇaṁ kurute

lokas tad anuvartate

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

As far as possible devotees should avoid using any items made of leather, such as shoes, bags, wallets and watchstraps, knowing them to be the result of animal slaughter.

Even (and particularly) when one is criticised or offended, one should conduct oneself with dignity.

Always remember that everyone, including Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is watching you. Never lose your temper in public. Humility and tolerance will always win over anger and frustration.

“....The slamming of doors, although seemingly a minor fault, greatly disturbed Śrīla Prabhupāda. It symptomized carelessness and misuse, and Prabhupāda said the sound cracked his heart. One time Prabhupāda came out of his room and called out, "Who is that slamming the doors? No one knows from where this building has come. You take it for granted that it is here. But no one cares." ....”

SP Līlāmṛta V 5 p.1

- While one may certainly take precautions against being cheated, or take action where necessary, one should be careful to avoid picking quarrels, indulging in useless argumentation, and so on.
- A devotee must be particularly careful in dealings with the opposite sex.
- Śrīla Rupa Goswāmī says that a devotee must not be neglectful in ordinary dealings. In other words, one should not give up basic courtesies and formalities considering them to be mundane (and one-self to be transcendental).
- Devotees should take care to leave any facilities they have used in the same, or even better/cleaner, state than what they found them in.
- Borrowed items should be taken care of and returned in a better/cleaner state to their owners.
- One should not touch one's feet to anything sacred or use one's feet to do what could be done with one's hands.
- To touch someone with one's foot is offensive. If one has to walk past seated devotees in the temple, for example, one should extend one's hand to indicate that one wishes to go by and so that they may move their knees to let one pass (see illustration).



If by accident one touches a devotee with one's foot, one should touch the devotee's body gently with one's right hand and then touch one's right hand to one's head; this nullifies the offense. If the devotee is of the opposite gender then one should not touch them but may just seek forgiveness by folding one's palms.

- We should be conscious not to disturb classes/seminars by for example ensuring we do not have conversations just outside the temple room/seminar room.
- As a courtesy to fellow devotees, children should sit in classes/seminars so long as they remain quiet. They should be cared for in an area which would not disturb the classes/programme.
- Devotees should be considerate and make calls and send text messages before 8.30pm. Only add others to mobile phone groups with their permission.
- DEVOTEES SHOULD ALWAYS TRY THEIR BEST TO BE KIND TO OTHERS.

## PREACHING

- Our actions and behaviour are our best form of preaching because actions speak louder than words. As the saying goes “Your actions speak so loud that I cannot hear what you are saying.”
- Preaching means to change the heart, not simply to defeat someone intellectually. This does not mean, of course, that we should not present our philosophy properly. All devotees must endeavour to study Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and understand them thoroughly and try to present faithfully what one has submissively read and heard.
- There is no need to read other books or go to other philosophers to learn how to preach. The humble servant of the spiritual master is the best preacher.
- The principle of preaching is nicely described by Śrīla Rupa Goswāmi in the Bhakti Rasāmrita Sindhu:

yena kena prakāreṇa manañ kṛṣṇa niveśayet

“Somehow or other, one must think of Kṛṣṇa.”

- Ultimately what will change people’s heart is not simply the philosophy that we are speaking but mainly to what extent we have imbibed the philosophy in our lives and realised that knowledge practically.
- Our preaching should generally be done in a humble attitude and not in the attitude of superiority.
- When preaching we should simply repeat the words of the spiritual master and deliver his message like a postman and we should never think that we know more than the previous ācāryas. We are empowered to the degree we are submissively preaching their words.
- One must show compassion and concern for the person one is preaching to. One may need to pay attention to his material problems.
- One must speak the truth, but according to deśa, kāla and pātra i.e. place, time and people. Our goal is to make people Kṛṣṇa conscious and we should preach keeping this in mind and do what is needful.
- One should have a balanced approach while preaching. A good preacher will always understand the need for the devotees in different categories. Just as in material life there are bankers, lawyers, doctors and so on, in spiritual life too there is a need for (and there will always be willing candidates) the renounced order and also for those in the householder or professional category. Varieties of devotees are necessary and valuable.
- While preaching to a particular person, our approach should be to advise what is best for his Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- There is a need for qualified brahmacāris, qualified gr̥hastas, qualified vānaprasthas and qualified sannyāsīs and we should encourage a person according to where he can make best spiritual advancement and serve Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission.
- Basic etiquette must be followed when another devotee is preaching. He should not be suddenly interrupted unless there is something urgent.
- Basic courtesies must be followed e.g. wishing with a smile, being helpful if someone needs help or guidance.
- New people should be made to feel at home and should be given great abundance of love and hospitality.
- Particularly on Sundays at the temple, devotees should first associate with the guests and newcomers and then with the regular devotees.
- While we preach to new people, we must always remember that preaching to devotees is equally, if not more, important. So while we make newcomers feel at home, regular devotees should not be neglected either.
- At outside programmes newcomers and guests may be given preference for asking questions after the lecture, particularly when time is limited. Regular devotees may ask pertinent questions to create an atmosphere in which newcomers would be encouraged to put forth their questions, or when newcomers have finished with their queries and there is still time left for more questions.
- We should not advocate/preach breaking of the laws of the land in the name of doing something for Kṛṣṇa. Devotees should adhere to these laws too.

- We should not be sectarian. We should respect all bonafide religious and spiritual paths. In particular we may show special respect for other Vaiṣṇava Sampradāyas.

When asked by an interviewer how he could recognise a true follower of ISKCON, Srīla Prabhupāda replied:

"Yes, yes. He will be a very perfect gentleman. That's all...."

Sanātana Gosvāmī speaks to Haridāsa Ṭhākura:

āpane ācare keha, nā kare pracāra  
pracāra karena keha, nā karena ācāra

"Some behave very well but do not preach the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whereas others preach but do not behave properly."

'ācāra', 'pracāra',—nāmera karaha 'dui' kārya  
tumi—sarva-guru, tumi jagatera ārya

"You simultaneously perform both activities in relation to the holy name by your personal behavior and by your preaching. Therefore you are the most advanced devotee in the world."

Cc Antya-līlā 4.102-103

## SPEECH

The urge to speak is very strong and as soon as we get an opportunity we begin speaking. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that if we do not speak Kṛṣṇa kathā then we speak all sorts of nonsense.

Such talk is called 'prajalpa' and is born of our material identification. Thus devotees must refrain from it.

All mundane literatures are also practical exhibitions of the urge to speak. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in the "Nectar of Instruction" that materialistic people read heaps of newspapers, magazines and novels, solve crosswords and do many nonsensical things. In this fashion, people simply waste their valuable time and energy. In the Western countries old men retired from active life play cards, fish, watch television and debate about useless socio-political schemes. All these and other frivolous activities are included in the prajalpa category. Intelligent people interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness should refrain from these activities.

Śrī Rupa Gosvāmī advocates the process of Kṛṣṇa kathā which is talk of all subjects connected to Lord Kṛṣṇa as a means to counteract the urge to speak. Therefore, if we must talk, we should talk Kṛṣṇa kathā.

Before we speak we should ponder:

- Is it necessary?
- Is it kind?
- Is it right?

Devotees should avoid speech that offends, particularly blasphemy of devotees which is the first offence against the holy name. 'Vaiṣṇava aparādha' will surely choke our tender devotional creeper very quickly.

## BLASPHEMY TO A VAIṢṆAVA

Quotes from Hari-bhakti-vilāsa:

1. When one blasphemes a Vaiṣṇava he loses his religiosity, wealth, fame and children. (10.310)
2. If one beats a Vaiṣṇava, blasphemes a Vaiṣṇava, shows disrespect to a Vaiṣṇava, gets angry upon a Vaiṣṇava or does not express joy in seeing a Vaiṣṇava, he goes to hell. (10.310)

Four Kinds of Blasphemy to a Vaiṣṇava:

1. To find fault with a Vaiṣṇava for his apparent low birth.
2. To blaspheme him for his previous faults.
3. To blaspheme him for his accidental fault.
4. To blaspheme him for the faults that are almost rectified.

If one commits Vaiṣṇava aparādha then he must beg forgiveness from the Vaiṣṇava very earnestly holding his feet. A Vaiṣṇava is very merciful so he will immediately embrace him and forgive him for all his offenses.

“...This is actually a devotee's business that everyone should appreciate the value of other devotees. Nobody should criticize anyone....”

SP Letter to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa (August 19, 1968)

“...you are always alert to see whether you are committing some offense. This is a very nice attitude. In rendering service to Lord Kṛṣṇa and His representative, the spiritual master, we should always maintain this fearful attitude which means careful attention. This attitude will advance you progressively in Kṛṣṇa consciousness....”

SP Letter to Gopāla Kṛṣṇa (April 21, 1970)

“...Devotee means he is able to tolerate all kinds of discomfort and whims of the material nature, and because he is too much absorbed in serving Kṛṣṇa, he takes no time to become angry or take offense with others or find out some fault, no. Devotee means very liberal and kind to everyone, always gentleman under all kinds of conditions of life....”

SP Letter to Hamsadūta (December 10, 1972)

“...If there is some incident and I claim that no one is cooperating with me or no one will work with me, that is my defect, not theirs. The Vaiṣṇava devotee must think like this. We should not find fault with others and criticise and go away, that is not the Vaiṣṇava way. Better we should always be willing to offer all respects to others and consider them as our superiors always....”

SP Letter to Gaurasundara (August 26, 1972)

## CORRECTING DEVOTEES AND ACCEPTING CORRECTIONS

### CORRECTING DEVOTEES

There is a difference between criticism and correction. A devotee realizes that criticizing a Vaiṣṇava pollutes the heart and impedes spiritual advancement.

To correct a devotee one must be:

- (a) non-envious
- (b) desirous to practically assist the devotee in his Kṛṣṇa consciousness



(c) in a position spiritually or managerially which justifies and/or necessitates such intervention  
OR be personally requested by the devotee to help him in his difficulty.

The devotee offering correction must be practicing what he preaches.

“....Regarding some misbehaviour, that we have to check by training peacefully. Your attitude of tolerance and kindness is very nice, so train them in this way....”

SP Letter to Bhavānanda (October 28, 1970)

“....Yes, a new man may commit blunders in the beginning, but that does not mean we may be too impatient with him. After all, training means the man does not know, so you should train him nicely. A Vaishnava is expected to be humbler than the blade of grass, so when you train some new man you should not get agitated with him. After all, we are preachers, and we do not expect our audience or candidates completely respondent to our call. If everyone is trained [already] then what is the use of our preaching....”

SP Letter to Upendra (March 11, 1969)

### **Methods of Correction:**

(a) Correct by personal example and association.

(b) Guide the devotee to the shelter of a more advanced devotee.

(c) A junior devotee should not personally attempt to correct another devotee. He should reveal his heart to a senior devotee whom he feels at ease with and seek his assistance/advice to adjust the situation.

Harsh words and actions have no place in correcting a sincere devotee. We want to destroy the ignorance in the heart of a devotee, and not the devotee himself.

### **ACCEPTING CORRECTIONS**

If there is some sincere and honest criticism offered we should be grateful, not upset. To react negatively to well-intentioned correction is to manifest false ego. An advanced Vaiṣṇava will see each and every correction offered as the mercy of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Prevention is better than cure. If all devotees take up the responsibility to develop proper awareness in their devotional behaviour the need for correction will be minimized.

“....You have mentioned about some criticism made by Jayagovinda which upset you. I do not know exactly what is the point, but if there is some honest criticism, there should be no cause of becoming upset....”

SP Letter to Vṛndāvanēśvarī (July 28, 1969)

"....So we have to all cooperate amongst ourselves, otherwise what will people think if we ourselves fight with one another? A devotee is always ideal in behaviour....”

SP Letter to Patita Uddhāraṇa (December 12, 1974)

## PART III APPEARANCE

### TILAKA

One should always decorate the body with tilaka at twelve places after taking a bath. Water tilak may be applied if for any reason it would be difficult to wear visible tilak.

Śrīla Prabhupāda glorifies tilaka in the following Śrīmad Bhagavatam purport:

“....In Kali-yuga one can hardly acquire gold or jewelled ornaments, but the twelve tilaka marks on the body are sufficient as auspicious decorations to purify the body....”

SB 4.12.28 Purport

After putting on clean cloth, sit on a purified āsana (preferably a kuśa-grass mat) and apply ūrdhva-puṇḍra or Viṣṇu-tilaka on twelve parts of the body. Do not apply tilaka in the toilet.

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. Śrīla Prabhupāda always used gopichandan clay which has a light yellow colour.

The Padma Purāṇa and Yajur Veda state that ūrdhva-puṇḍra symbolizes the lotus feet 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.

If a devotee applies the marks of the Lord and chants His Name, the Lord becomes pleased and resides with him. In this way the material body becomes a sanctified temple of the Lord.

The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa states that a devotee who applies his tilaka with great care while looking in a mirror or looking at his reflection in water goes to the Lord's supreme abode.

By applying tilaka on these places and reciting Viṣṇu's Names one sanctifies and dedicates the body to the Lord's service.

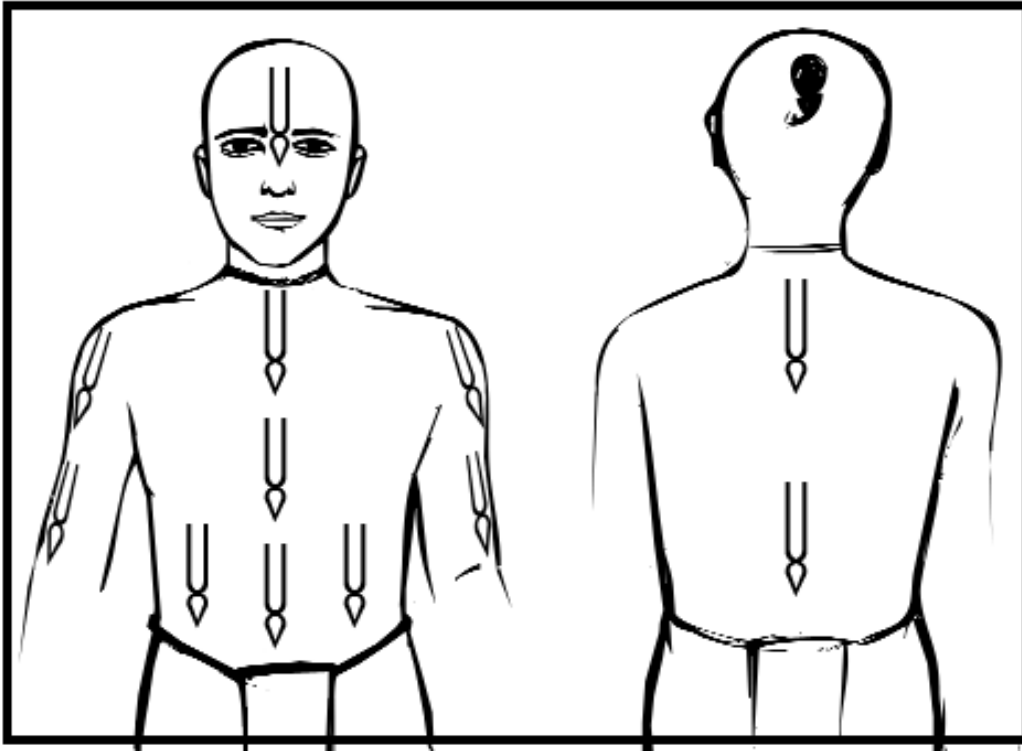
The Hari-bhakti-vilāsa mentions that the ūrdhva-puṇḍra tilaka may vary in shape, colour and material according to a devotee's Sampradāya, but other features are shared. It should not be crooked, uneven, uncentered, dirty or bad smelling. Followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda use the yellow gopi-candana for making tilak, not the grey clay from Rādhā kunda.

On the forehead, the centre position between the two lines should be open from the eyebrows to the hairline, but should be joined at the bottom. The solid portion (tulasī) may extend three quarters of the way down the nose. While applying tilaka two vertical lines which represent the lotus feet of the Lord are drawn first, then the tulasī leaf is drawn. The vertical lines begin at the root of the nose. Lord Viṣṇu is said to reside in the central portion, while Brahmā resides on the left and Śiva on the right.

Śrīla Prabhupāda advised devotees in New York to try to avoid spilling liquid gopi-candana while mixing it in the palm of the hand, “Do not waste it. It is precious.” If it is fallen on the ground, immediately clear the area.

Chant the following verses (A) while rubbing gopi-candana in your left palm. Then, while applying tilaka and clearing the middle space, chant the name of the appropriate form of the Lord (B).

Alternatively, chant the verses given below one line at a time while applying the tilaka to the indicated places on your body. After each line of the verse, while clearing the space in the middle (where the Lord resides), chant the name of the appropriate form of the Lord.



Example: Chant *lalāṭe keśavam dhyāyen* and apply tilaka to your forehead; then chant *om keśavāya namaḥ* and clear the space in the middle.

(A)	
1) The forehead:	<i>lalāṭe keśavam dhyāyen</i>
2) The belly (above the navel):	<i>nārāyaṇam athodare</i>
3) The chest:	<i>vakṣaḥ-sthale mādhamam tu</i>
4) The throat:	<i>govindam kaṇṭha-kūpake</i>
5) The right side of the belly:	<i>viṣṇum ca dakṣiṇe kuṣṇau</i>
6) The right arm:	<i>bāhau ca madhusūdanam</i>
7) The right shoulder:	<i>trivikramam kandhare tu</i>
8) The left side of the belly:	<i>vāmanam vāma-pārśvake</i>
9) The left arm:	<i>śrīdharam vāma-bāhau tu</i>
10) The left shoulder:	<i>hṛṣīkeṣam tu kandhare</i>
11) The upper back:	<i>prsthe tu padma-nabham ca</i>
12) The lower back:	<i>katyām dāmodaram nyaset</i>

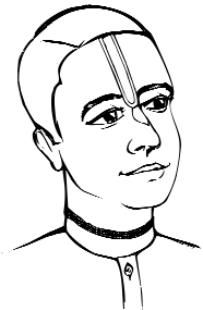
(B)	
1) The forehead:	om keśavāya namaḥ
2) The belly (above the navel):	om nārāyaṇāya namaḥ
3) The chest:	om mādhavāya namaḥ
4) The throat:	om govindāya namaḥ
5) The right side of the belly:	om viṣṇave namaḥ
6) The right arm:	om madhusūdanāya namaḥ
7) The right shoulder:	om trivikramāya namaḥ
8) The left side of the belly:	om vāmanāya namaḥ
9) The left arm:	om śrīdharāya namaḥ
10) The left shoulder:	om hr̥ṣikeśāya namaḥ
11) The upper back:	om padmanābhāya namaḥ
12) The lower back:	om dāmodarāya namaḥ

The śikhā area is not marked with tilaka; rather, after washing the right hand, wipe the remaining water on your śikhā while chanting om vāsudevāya namaḥ.

## TULASĪ NECK BEADS

Devotees who are initiated traditionally wear kaṇṭhi-mālā in a triple strand. The mālā should be wrapped around the base of the throat and should be clearly visible unless circumstances prevent it.

Those who are not initiated may wear kaṇṭhi-mālā in a single round only.



Tulasī beads worn around the neck indicate a devotee's surrender to the Lord, and therefore a person wearing Tulasī beads around his neck is dear to the Lord.

Some devotees also wear other kinds of auspicious mālās made of lotus seeds, rope from Jagannātha's ratha, or silk pavitras, while performing pūjā, japa or other sacred functions. These should be removed when bathing or leaving the temple or house, and while going to the toilet.

The kaṇṭhi-mālā is worn permanently, for the beads protect one from bad dreams, accidents, attack by weapons and the servants of Yamarāja. Upon seeing the Tulasī-mālā, the Yamadūtas flee like leaves scattered by the wind.

## DRESS AND GENERAL APPEARANCE

### DRESSING LIKE A VAIṢṆAVA

A devotee's clothing must be simple, clean and distinctive so as to remind people of Kṛṣṇa. When coming to the temple (particularly for the morning programme, festivals and on Sundays) devotees are encouraged to dress as follows:

**Men:** dhotī and kurtā

**Women:** saree (head covered at least in the presence of the Deities and sanyassis)

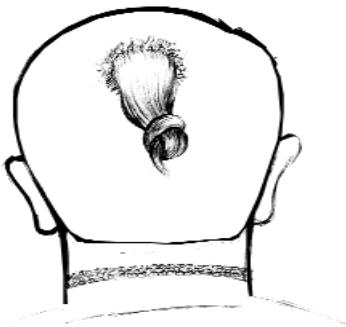
Dhoti, kurta and saree are the first preference; however if these can't be worn then devotees can wear clothing that is comfortable for them and which covers the body decently and is not tight fitting. For both men and women, clothing should be simple and not excessively fashionable or opulent; yet the clothes must be neat and presentable. Unnecessary items like perfumes and various forms of cosmetics and make-up should ideally be avoided. Refer to the section on guidance for suitability for vegetarians regarding cosmetics; devotees who are doing services directly related to the Deities should be especially careful regarding this. Simplicity in dress is very important for a Vaiṣṇava, whether in the temple or outside. Particularly for morning programmes and for temple programmes in general fresh clothes should be worn.

1. We are representatives of Śrīla Prabhupāda. We should aim to be first class representatives.
2. We need to be aware of the bonafide standard of appearance, maintain it and preach it. In the age of Kali deviations easily become the standard. We should be alert to this.
3. Proper Vaiṣṇava dress helps us maintain proper consciousness regarding our identity and responsibility in service to Śrīla Prabhupāda and the Vaiṣṇavas.
4. Vaiṣṇava appearance is attractive and will facilitate our preaching. The first impression, which is most often formed from visual stimuli, is the most longstanding.
5. Just by seeing a Vaiṣṇava the conditioned soul is purified.

Hence, all devotees must be particular in regard to tilak, hair style and neck beads which mark one out as a Vaiṣṇava.

### HAIR

**Men:** Brahmacāris and sannyāsīs should shave their heads and beards generally once a fortnight or at least once a month and keep a śikhā. Gṛhastās may do the same. However, according to their service, they may keep hair short and neat and if possible, a small śikhā.



Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas traditionally keep the śikhā about the size of a calf's hoof print, approximately 1.5 inches in diameter.

The śikhā may be any length, but it should be kept tightly knotted. The śikhā should not be braided (traditionally only women braid their hair), nor should it be kept long and dishevelled. If the śikhā is too short to be tied, it is all right to leave it open but it should not be dishevelled.

The śikhā can be untied when you are washing, cleaning or oiling it. Also when going to sleep, attending funeral rites, or observing a period of mourning, you should keep the śikhā untied. Since an untied śikhā is a sign of a death in the family, it is inauspicious to go about one's daily duties with an untied śikhā. It is also said that if one keeps the śikhā untied, the body may become weak.

Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned in a conversation with some of his disciples in Hawaii:

“...Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava śikhā is an inch and a half across – no bigger. Bigger śikhā means another Sampradāya.....And they have to be knotted....”

May 6th 1972, Hawaii, SPL V, page 93

While tying your śikhā after bathing chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra or, if initiated with Gāyatrī mantras, silently chant the Brahma Gāyatrī (first line of Gāyatrī).

Devotees who are initiated, or preparing to be initiated, should not have a moustache or a beard. Our standard is to shave on regular basis with the odd exception of yatras or for some other justifiable reason.

**Women:** It is preferable for women to keep long hair tied behind.

## PART IV PERSONAL HABITS AND HYGEINE

### PERSONAL HABITS

Personal cleanliness should be maintained always.

After waking up, first drink water kept overnight in a copper vessel then brush your teeth. Hands should be washed properly with soap after using the toilet, touching the flush or toilet lid etc. Only the left hand is used to clean oneself after passing stool. Where possible devotees use water, rather than toilet paper, after passing stool. When flushing the toilet lower the toilet lid first as bacteria travel almost two metres into the air when flush is used! Toilet lid and toilet door should be kept closed always. It's good practice to keep, just inside the toilet, a pair of slippers for use solely in the toilet as many people wear socks when entering the toilet; in warmer countries where socks are not worn then feet should be washed after entering the toilet. Clean clothes and other items should not be kept on the toilet lid!

One should then bathe in water that is not too hot. A cold splash to conclude one's bath is healthy and refreshes body and mind for meditation. Sannyāsīs should bathe three times a day, gr̥hasthas and brahmacārīs at least twice a day.

Bath should be taken after:

- rising in the morning
- long naps of more than an hour
- passing stool
- shaving
- copulating
- excessively perspiring, or being contaminated in any way (for example after visiting crematorium or cleaning the toilet).

NB: If a bath cannot be taken after passing stool, for instance whilst at work, then at least one's arms should be washed up to the elbows and mouth rinsed.

Then after wearing fresh clothes begin the day's sādhana.

Hands and mouth should be washed after passing water. Hands should always be washed with soap after touching any unclean parts of the body, especially any of the openings of the body, or body fluids. Washing hands with water alone is sufficient after touching hair, tears and exudations from the eyes.

Nails should be kept clean and clipped short approximately every four days, before having one's bath. Nails should be flushed down sink or toilet.

Brāhmaṇa initiates should wrap their sacred threads around their right ear while using the toilet and while bathing.

Wash hands before honouring prasādam; wash hands and mouth after honouring prasād. Wash hands after drinking water if vessel is touched to the lips. Do not spit while eating. Do not spit on water. Devotees should eat carefully so not to spill prasād.

One should take rest for about six to six and a half hours every night. Too much sleep or too little sleep is not good for our Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One should try to sleep on the floor or on a hard surface. Luxurious soft beds should be avoided. Sleeping with one's head pointing east or south is helpful. It is best to sleep on one's left side, if not possible then on one's back, but never on one's stomach.

One should not waste Kṛṣṇa's energy like electricity, water etc. One should turn off the lights and taps whenever and wherever they are not required.

One should spend Kṛṣṇa's money carefully and responsibly, asking oneself if this expenditure is really necessary for enhancing Kṛṣṇa's service.

Only the right hand should be used for eating, chanting on beads, offering something, accepting something etc.



Generally pets should not be kept by devotees. They create unnecessary attachments and we are warned of this in scriptures in the story of Bharat maharaj. It is also unhygienic to keep pets. Pets do not bathe after passing stool and cats for example would be eating other animals while wandering outside. They are also a nuisance to others as they pass stool in others' gardens. If devotees already have pets then only vegetarian items/feeds should be fed to them until the pet can be responsibly handed over to another caring keeper.

## **MENSTRUATION**

Generally during a woman's menstrual cycle she is considered ritualistically impure and there are many things that she should avoid doing. The guidance below is general guidance and may need to be adjusted according to time, place and circumstance. It applies for the first 72 hours of menstruation, or ideally until bleeding has completely stopped.

### **Temple**

1. She should not enter into any of the Deity areas, poojari room, tulsi house and kitchens. She may enter the temple room, ideally staying towards the back half of the temple room.
2. She should not touch any of the devotees who are, or who will be, performing Deity worship or related services.
3. She should not touch anything which will be used directly in the service of the Deities.
4. She should not make garlands nor stitch Deities' clothes etc.
5. She should not water Tulasi nor circumambulate her.
6. She should not take part in Yajnas or offer oblations to the fire.
7. She should not serve prasad to devotees.

### **Home**

As far as one's home is concerned, mātājīs should try to maintain the above standard where possible. In some cases it may not be practical and possible to do that, as there may be no one else available to do the cooking etc. In such cases, mātājīs may do the needful to fulfil their domestic obligations and at the same time also see that their household Deities are taken care of. Other members of the family, as far as possible, should help in this regard.

### **Programs**

One should not serve prasad at programs and should avoid cooking for others if possible.

### **Chanting and reading**

During this period chanting on japa beads and reading of Srila Prabhupada's books should continue. There can be no material impediment to the chanting of the holy name!

### **Cleansing**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day of the cycle i.e. after 72 hours, or ideally once bleeding has completely stopped, the woman should take a full bath which includes the washing of hair. She should wear clean clothes. Bedsheets, towels and all other linen should be changed. The husband should change his sacred thread after the wife has completed her period of impurity. After her bath she should first visit the temple and pay obeisances to the Deities.

## PART V BHOGA, COOKING and PRASĀDAM

### GUIDANCE FOR SUITABILITY FOR VEGETARIANS

It has been noticed that devotees are not fully aware of how to check if a product is vegetarian. Many devotees read the list of ingredients and assume the item is vegetarian just because it doesn't list anything they recognise as derived from an animal/fish. This leads to them consuming non-veg items and they may offer others those items or use the item in cooking bhoga for the Deities. The FAQs below have been compiled to avoid the common misconceptions.

We should point out though that Srila Prabhupada wanted us to avoid precooked items including those in packets and tins. His original teachings included an instruction to avoid any foods which are precooked. Although this is somewhat difficult to maintain, since this is his instruction we are including it here.

There are three reasons why devotees do not eat certain products:

- Because there is death of, or violence towards, a living entity to obtain it
- Item is impure - such as eggs and mushrooms (mushrooms are impure if they have been grown on chicken droppings)
- Item disturbs meditation - garlic, onions and mushrooms

#### **How can I tell if a product is suitable for vegetarians and is egg free?**

In essence it's quite simple, all you have to do each time you buy a product is make sure the product doesn't list egg and make sure that it **indicates** that it is vegetarian. Shellac is a secretion of insects so devotees may want to look out for this in addition to checking for garlic, onions and mushrooms.

Note that manufactures are always changing their products' ingredients so check for vegetarian suitability **each time** you buy the item. Most common signs indicating suitability for vegetarians are the Vegetarian Society logo, manufacturers' own sign (usually a "V"), and wording that reads "suitable for vegetarians". If you already have items at home without such signs you can call the manufacturer directly to enquire.

#### **If a product made in the UK has a label indicating it is vegetarian, can I assume the same item if made in another country is also vegetarian?**

NO! Manufacturers in different countries use different ingredients for the same branded product. Even if the ingredients are the same, they may get them from a different source which may not be vegetarian.

#### **Can I just check the list of ingredients on the product, as I know which E numbers etc. are not vegetarian?**

You can **NOT** tell if a product is vegetarian by only checking its ingredients because some ingredients, if they make up less than 2% of the final product, do not have to be listed. As far as we are aware eggs, if in the product, do have to be mentioned on the label of prepacked foods.

#### **Surely there can't be anything non-vegetarian in fruit juices? Do I still need to look for a vegetarian sign on things like this even?**

YES! Some juices and drinks contain fish extracts which are NOT mentioned on the label. Even bread may contain animal based emulsifiers and those innocent looking colourful sweets are often made with crushed beetles.

#### **What about cross contamination?**

Manufacturers, retailers and caterers are only allowed to label a product as vegetarian if they are able to demonstrate that foods presented as 'vegetarian' or 'vegan' have not been contaminated with non-vegetarian or non-vegan foods during storage, preparation, cooking or display.

## What else should devotees be aware of?

- Chips may have been fried in animal fat.
- Bristles made of stiff animal hair are used to make brushes for painting, shaving and cooking.
- Capsules are usually made from gelatine, but vegetarian alternatives are becoming widely available.
- Bone is used in bone china, cutlery handles and chalk.
- Cosmetics, nail polishes, perfumes, hairsprays, soaps, shower gels, creams, toothpastes etc usually contain animal/fish derived ingredients for example perfumes are made from intestines of whales. Branded toiletries widely and cheaply available in discount stores such as Poundland, that at present state they are suitable for vegetarians, are most of the “Simple” range and the “Original Essence” range. Radharani’s Bakery also sells a selection of other brands.

## What if someone tells me it’s vegetarian?

Most people, including devotees, are not aware of the above details so, unless you know they have checked as indicated above, you could politely ask to see the packaging and then call the manufacturer if it’s not specifically labelled as suitable for vegetarians.

## COOKING

The kitchen is an extension of the altar because whatever is cooked there will be offered to the Deities. So whatever one is doing in the kitchen should be done with care and attention for the Deities. Where the Deities are formally installed as in the temple, standards expected are quite high and strict. In comparison, **some degree of concession may be offered in respect of household Deities where it is not possible to maintain the same standard.** For example, it is a rule that one should not eat in the kitchen or in front of the Deities. However, in many homes the altar, kitchen and dining table are all in one room so it may not be possible to follow the above rules. If eating in front of the Deities is unavoidable, then the altar curtains should be drawn.

Householders should keep the ideal standard in mind and try to **come as close to it as possible in their particular situation.** One should always remember that one is cooking for Kṛṣṇa. The more careful one is in regard to these small rules, the more one can become conscious that one is not cooking for oneself, but for Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself.

Only clean, uncontaminated clothes must be worn in the kitchen. Clothes that have been used in the toilet cannot be used. One should not enter the kitchen after passing stool unless one has taken a bath. In one’s home this may be especially difficult to follow for those with young children.

Fingernails should be clean and very short. Hands must be washed thoroughly with soap upon entering the kitchen before beginning cooking. Hands must also be washed after touching any unclean surfaces whilst cooking such as dustbins, the floor, phones or the lower part of one’s body, or one’s hair, face, mouth, nose etc.

It is best not to sit children on kitchen work surfaces as their clothes will transfer germs to the counter top; if it is unavoidable then keep an area for them to sit and then ensure you clean it afterwards. Refrain from leaning your back against your kitchen counter tops as again germs are transferred from clothes to the cooking area and also there is possibility of hair falling on the counter top.

One should not put anything in one’s mouth whilst cooking. One should not rinse one’s mouth in the kitchen sink. In particular, one should not ‘taste’ or ‘smell’ a preparation to ‘test’ it.

A separate cloth should be kept for use whilst cooking; this should not be used by others for drying hands after eating. The vessels in which bhoga is cooked for the Deities in particular, and the plates and the cups in which bhoga is offered, should be kept and washed separately from the plates, cups and glasses in which others eat or drink. A separate sponge should be kept to wash the Deities plates.

The cooking platform, cooker, sink etc. should be cleaned up before and after cooking. It is an interesting fact that the kitchen sink sometimes harbours more bacteria than the toilet! Cloths for wiping surfaces should themselves be washed well. Anything that has fallen to the floor should be washed before it can be used. If a vegetable falls on the floor it may be washed and then used.

If one has an infectious disease one should not work in the kitchen area as one may contaminate the bhoga and the vessels.

One should work carefully but efficiently and avoid cluttering. There should be no unnecessary talking in the kitchen.

VERY IMPORTANT: Devotees must be absolutely careful that no hair falls in and contaminates the offerings. Absolute caution must be exercised in this regard. Devotees must keep their hair well covered while cooking.

If we remember we are cooking for Krsna then these points of hygiene will be easy to practise.

## PRAYERS FOR OFFERING BHOGA

After all the items of bhoga have been placed properly in the Deities' plates and cups, they should be placed on the altar.

While ringing a bell with the left hand (holding the bell above waist level), chant the pranama prayers to your spiritual master three times, begging permission to assist him in serving the Deities:

nama om vishnu-padaya krishna-preshthaya bhu-tale

srimate (spiritual master's name) iti namine

I offer my respectful obeisances unto (spiritual master's name), who is very dear to Lord Krishna, having taken shelter at His lotus feet.

Then chant the pranama prayers to Srila Prabhupada three times, begging permission to assist him in serving the Deities:

nama om visnu-padaya krsna-presthaya bhu-tale

srimate bhaktivedanta-svamin iti namine

I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who is very dear to Lord Krsna, having taken shelter at His lotus feet.

namas te sarasvate deve gaura-vani-pracarine

nirvisesa-sunyavadi-pascatya-desat-tarine

Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Sarasvati Gosvami. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanyadeva and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism.

Then chant the following prayer to Lord Caitanya three times, requesting His mercy:

namo maha-vadanyaya krishna-prema-pradaya te

krishnaya krishna-caitanya-namne gaura-tvishe namah

O most munificent incarnation! You are Krishna Himself appearing as Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu. You have assumed the golden color of Srimati Radharani, and You are widely distributing pure love of Krishna. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You.

[Cc. Madhya 19.53]

Then chant the following prayer three times, offering respect to Lord Krishna:

namo brahmanya-devaya go-brahmana-hitaya ca

jagad-dhitaya krishnaya govindaya namo namah

Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto Lord Krishna, who is the worshipable Deity for all brahminical men, who is the well-wisher of cows and brahmanas, and who is always benefiting the whole world. I offer my repeated obeisances to the Personality of Godhead, known as Krishna and Govinda. (Vishnu Purana)

The offering should be left on the altar for a few minutes (ideally at least five minutes) and then removed after offering obeisances. After transferring the prasād to another plate and washing the plate, the prasād can be served to the devotees.

## SERVING PRASĀDAM

How the prasādā is served and how it is honoured are important concerns in Vaiṣṇava culture. Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master are very pleased not only when food is properly cooked and offered but also when the resulting prasādā is graciously served and respectfully honoured.

Ideally, prasādā should be served by initiated Vaiṣṇavas. One should be pure in mind, body, habits and dressed respectfully. Hands should be washed and then prasād should be served quietly and efficiently. As much as possible, loud talking and disruptive noises should be avoided.

One must ensure that preparations meant to be served hot are actually hot, and that all preparations to be served are either present or will arrive for serving at the proper time. Microwaves should be avoided due to health reasons.

Neither the server nor the serving utensils should ever touch the plates or hands of those who are eating, for this will contaminate the server and the serving utensil. If this happens, one should wash one's hands and the contaminated utensil before continuing to serve the prasāda. The prasādā may be gently dropped on an empty area of the plate, taking care not to mix salty preparations with sweet preparations. Prasādā should not be served directly into the hand of the person eating, unless one is serving only morsels of mahā-prasādā. Except when serving dry sweets or dry items, one should serve prasādā with a spoon, even for salt.

Only one's right hand must be used to serve prasādā and one should not touch anything impure (for example one's mouth, nose, feet, hair or lower body) nor should one yawn, sneeze or spit. The serving vessels should not touch anyone's feet.

Mahā-prasādā should not be eaten directly from the Deities' plate but it should be transferred to another vessel or plate before being eaten. The temple standard is that one should not begin eating until the Deities' plates have been washed.

The proper order of serving the various preparations is:

- ❖ Water should be served first.
- ❖ Rice and capātis should be offered from the very beginning and replenished as required, until those honouring the prasādā have finished all sabjīs. If possible, capātis should be served hot.
- ❖ When Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas serve prasādā, they begin the main meal with bitter foods, such as śukta and spinach.
- ❖ This is followed by dāl and savouries such as pakaurās and fried potatoes.
- ❖ Then come other vegetable sabjīs, progressing from lighter sabjīs to richer sabjīs from wet to dry.
- ❖ Then richer wet sabjīs are served again.
- ❖ Followed by rāitās and chutneys.
- ❖ Finally sweets progressing from less to more sweet.

Servings may be small, but when the devotees finish an item one should be alert to replenish the preparation. One should be generous in giving the devotees as much of an item as they desire. One should not be miserly and hold anything back because one wants to take it later. Prasādā is meant for distribution. The devotees should never be left with an empty plate except at the end of the meal.

The server or the host may describe the wonderful qualities of an item as it is offered. Except where necessary for preaching one should maintain silence. Some devotees can read Kṛṣṇa book or Śrīla Prabhupāda Lilāmṛta or otherwise a recorded lecture can be played.

When a group of persons take prasādam together, no one should be offered anything that is not offered to everyone else; the devotee who is serving prasādam should not make any distinction while serving. If possible those with special diets should eat separately.

The prasādam may be served from serving buckets. The buckets should not be dragged along the floor nor should clanging noises be made with pot handles or utensils.

Guru's mahā-prasādam should not be distributed in the presence of newcomers.

After everyone has finished honouring prasādam, the place must be cleaned immediately. Also devotees can collect the remnants fallen around the plate and put them in the compost container.

## PRASĀDAM PRAYERS

These prayers should be sung before honouring the Lord's prasādam:

1) The Glorification of the Lord's Prasāda:

mahā-prasāde govinde  
nāma-brahmaṇi vaiṣṇave  
sv-alpa-puṇya-vatām rājan  
viśvāso naiva jāyate

“O King! For those who have amassed very few pious activities, their faith in mahā – prasādam, Śrī Govinda, in the holy name and in the Vaiṣṇava is never born.” – Mahābhārata

2) Prasāda-sevāya:

śarīra avidyā-jāl, jadendriya tāhe kāl  
jīve phele viṣaya-sāgare  
tā'ra madhye jihvā ati-, lobhamay sudurmati,  
tā'ke jetā kaṭhina samsāre  
kṛṣṇa baḍa dayāmay, karibāre jihvā jay,  
sva-prasādānna dila bhāi  
sei annāmṛta pāo, rādhā-kṛṣṇa-guṇa gāo,  
preme ḍāko caitanya-nitāi

“O Lord, this material body is a lump 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. But You, dear Kṛṣṇa, are very kind to us and have given us such nice prasādam, just to control the tongue. Now we take this prasādam to our full satisfaction and glorify Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and in love call for the help of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda.”

## HONOURING PRASADAM

First and foremost, one should eat only prasādam i.e. food that has been offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa with devotion.

One should try to come as close to the below ideal standard as is practically possible given the limitations of city life and needs of preaching.

Ideally one should eat food that is:

- cooked by devotees
- offered to the Lord by devotees
- served by the devotees

Unless necessary for preaching or service, food cooked by non-devotees should be avoided. If possible items like chocolates, ice creams, chips, biscuits, cold drinks, bread etc. can be made at home. To devotee guests one may offer home-made foods and natural drinks like lemon water, fruit juice etc.

Commercial items may be selectively had while travelling or in other such circumstances. Where the Prasādam one is carrying with oneself is not sufficient or as an addition, uncooked and raw foods like fruits, nuts, milk etc. are preferable to commercially cooked items.

Sometimes while travelling or in the course of some preaching, service or professional work, or on the request of one's young children, one may be compelled to eat in a restaurant. One should select a restaurant which is purely vegetarian and even then be careful to order items which are without egg, onion and garlic.

One should eat prasādam which is sattvik in nature and avoid foods that are rājasik i.e. foods which are very spicy, oily and rich.

Prasādam should not be wasted. Excess prasādam should be put on another plate before eating.

Before beginning a meal, one should glance over the prasādam and pay one's respects to it, remembering that it is the mercy of the Lord. Prasādam must be honoured with the consciousness that it is Kṛṣṇa's mercy and is non-different from Him. Therefore, except where necessary for preaching one should maintain silence. Hearing a lecture at this time is also beneficial.

When guests visit the house, the bhoga that has been offered to the home Deities becomes mahā-prasādam which should be distributed to all present in small quantities. Fresh, hot prasādam should be served out as per requirements to all the guests, including Guru and sannyāsīs.

When senior Vaiṣṇavas are present we should patiently wait till they have begun eating and only then we should begin eating (unless we are told otherwise).

One should eat in a clean, spacious, peaceful place. If possible one should avoid eating in a vehicle, however during yātrās this may be unavoidable. One should not take prasādam in view of the general public or while walking down the streets, or while in procession. As far as possible, prasādam should be honoured either in a private place or where everyone else is taking prasādam.

One should be clean during meals, having washed one's hands, feet and mouth. Also, one's śikhā should be bound, the head uncovered (for men) and ideally feet bare. Prasādam should be eaten only with the right hand; the left hand is for touching other parts of the body. After one has begun eating prasādam, one should not touch anything else with the right hand.

One may eat with legs crossed, but not spread. Keeping the plate in one's lap is not proper. Āyurveda recommends sitting on the floor (with an āsana) to take prasādam, with the legs crossed to ease digestion. Anyone who is unable to sit on the floor may eat while seated at a table.

One should not eat at the sandhyās (sunrise, noon or sunset), before bathing, or before performing Gāyatrī japa or your morning Deity worship. Also, it is not proper to eat until the food from the previous meal has been digested.

One should eat prasādam in moderation and preferably at fixed times of the day. Overeating causes disease and decreases one's life span. It also stops one's spiritual advancement, generates sin and makes one an object of criticism. Controlling our diet will help us control our tongue and this will help us in turn to control our senses. Ideally one should eat so that half one's stomach is filled with food, one quarter with fluid and the remainder with



air. Drink a glass of water one hour before eating. For some time after eating, don't drink; if you at all have to drink, drink something hot.

While eating or drinking, do not make disturbing noises or find fault with the taste of the prasādam.

Use only the five fingers of the right hand to touch and place food in the mouth. Eating with the fingers is recommended because the digestive process begins with the sensation of food touching the fingers.

Tear large items such as capātis and purīs with the fingers of the right hand and then place the small pieces in the mouth. Do not use your left hand or your teeth to tear capātis, purīs etc.

When the right hand is clean (before a meal), one may use it to hold the cup and pour the water into the mouth so that the cup does not touch the lips. During a meal one's right hand touches one's mouth, so one should take the cup in one's left hand and pour the water into one's mouth without touching one's lips. The left hand should be used only for lifting a water cup, and then only if one can pour the water into the mouth without touching the cup to the lips. If the cup cannot pour properly, one may hold it in one's right hand and drink using one's lips.

It is appropriate to chant the prema-dhvani at the end of a meal, before rising to leave. After finishing a meal and while waiting for others to finish, one may chant aloud various ślokas and prayers glorifying the Lord. Out of respect for others who are still eating, all persons in a row should wait for others in the same row to finish before rising (except with the permission of senior Vaiṣṇavas present); however this may not always be practical.

After rising from the meal one should wash one's hands without delay, and then rinse one's mouth at least three times and finally one may wash one's feet. Do not take rest or perform any strenuous labour directly after a meal. One should maintain a tranquil frame of mind, as one did during the meal, by remembering the Lord, chanting His Name and discussing His pastimes. After the meal, the eating area should be thoroughly cleaned with water.

After everyone in the family has eaten, any excess prasādam may be retained for honouring later or distributed to friends or neighbours.

## **PART VI DEALINGS WITH VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF PERSONS**

ISKCON is a spiritual organization personally established by Śrīla Prabhupāda. We must take care that it doesn't become material. Anything, husband-wife relationship, Deity worship, even prasādam, can turn material by one's consciousness.

In any Society, there must be some organization and management, otherwise there will be chaos. Even in the spiritual world, Kṛṣṇa's friends are subdivided and supervised, Lord Balarāma is group leader for his cowherd boy friends, Candravālī and Rādhārāṇī head up left-wing and right-wing gopīs, etc. ISKCON is no different. In order for people to interact in a harmonious fashion, dealings and activities must be regulated and orchestrated.

Śrīla Rupa Goswāmī says in the Nectar of Instruction that one should mentally honour the devotee who chants the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, one should offer humble obeisances to the devotee who has undergone spiritual initiation, and associate and faithfully serve a pure devotee who is advanced in undeviated devotional service and whose heart is completely devoid of propensity to criticise others.

### **DEALINGS WITH THE SPIRITUAL MASTER**

"Not knowing why Mādhavendra Purī was crying, Rāmacandra Purī tried to become his advisor. Thus he committed a great offense, for a disciple should never try to instruct his spiritual master."

Cc Antya 8.21 Purport

In the presence of a higher personality one should not be very eager to impart instructions, even if one is competent and well versed.

- One should humble oneself submissively and render service to the spiritual master.
- One should take the orders of the Guru as one's life and soul.
- In the presence of Guru, one should not instruct others without receiving his permission.
- In the presence of the Guru, one should not take one's own disciples without receiving his, and the GBC's, permission.
- One should simply obey the instructions of the Guru and should not question. We should not disobey the instruction thinking that we know his "real inner" feelings.
- One should never instruct one's own Guru. Even if one wants to present something to one's Guru thinking that this information may be helpful, one should always present it in a very humble spirit.
- One should never argue with one's spiritual master.
- One should never present one's qualification to the Guru and should always remain in a very humble position.
- One should never sit on the same level as the spiritual master unless one receives his permission.
- Just like Lord Kṛṣṇa is non-different than His Name or picture, similarly there is no difference between the spiritual master and his name and picture hence one should keep pictures of Guru and Kṛṣṇa in a proper place.

One should not read books apart from those written by the Guru and the paramparā unless one has permission and blessings.

### **DEALINGS WITH SENIORS**

Sometimes senior Vaiṣṇavas may offer respect to a junior Vaiṣṇava due to their humility, but a junior Vaiṣṇava should never think that he deserves that respect from all senior Vaiṣṇavas. On the other hand when a senior

Vaiṣṇava offers him respect then the junior Vaiṣṇava should feel extremely embarrassed, and repeatedly pray to Kṛṣṇa that He receives the respect.

- Within a Vaiṣṇava tradition, it is an important expression of our humility to respect those who are in a more senior position to ourselves.
- In the chain of seniority the senior most Vaiṣṇava is the Guru who is to be respected as a representative of God so he must be given the same respect as Kṛṣṇa Himself.
- Next are the sannyāsīs. Among the sannyāsīs themselves, seniority is considered on the basis of who had taken sannyāsa initiation earlier.
- Next are the Guru's Godbrothers. They should be respected as one respects the spiritual master.
- Devotees who have undergone Brāhmaṇa dīkṣā should be respected. Again seniority is determined on the basis of who has been initiated earlier.
- Devotees who have accepted dīkṣā before us should be given due respect.
- Special respect must be offered to the devotees who are senior in age. It is cultural also to address someone who is older to us, by more than a couple of years, by adding mataji or prabhu after their name.
- One should not instruct another person in the presence of a senior Vaiṣṇava without first receiving his permission.
- When ghee lamp is being offered to devotees after āratī, seniority must be taken into account.

## DEALINGS WITH GODBROTHERS

“...Yes, to call one another prabhu is all right, but not to become prabhu. To accept others as prabhu, and remain as servant is the idea. But because somebody is calling you prabhu, one should not become a prabhu and treat others as servants. In other words, everyone should feel himself as servant, and not to think himself prabhu because he is being called prabhu. This will make the relationship congenial....”

SP Letter to Himāvatī (June 14, 1968)

- Godbrothers should call one another “Prabhu”. One should, however, not try to become Prabhu because we are being so addressed. One should simply remain a servant and accept others as Prabhu.
- From our senior Godbrothers, we should inquire submissively, carry out their instructions and aspire to be their obedient servant. To those who are equal, we should serve them by befriending them, assisting them and encouraging them. To those who are junior to us, we should serve them by guiding them, directing them, encouraging them and enlightening them.
- When we meet another Godbrother we should bow down and offer the prayer:

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

- We should never accept regular service from a Godbrother unless we have the permission or order of the spiritual master.
  - We must never allow the saying “familiarity breeds contempt” to enter into the relationships between devotees. Dealings between devotees should be respectful and without offence and duplicity. Devotees must not address one another by their former, or civil, names.
  - One should not praise oneself or boast one's achievements or qualifications to the other devotees. One should know that actually one has no qualifications. Whatever we are able to do is simply due to the mercy of Guru and the Vaiṣṇavas.
  - If a Godbrother or a Godsister is undergoing some difficulties on account of sickness or bereavement in the family and/or is in emotional turmoil due to some reason, one must help in word and deed. As the saying goes, “A friend in need is a friend indeed.” The bonds between devotees will be tested at the time of difficulty. We cannot ignore such developments as being ‘material’.
- If a devotee has strayed away from devotional service, and has not been in the association of devotees for a considerable period, he or she must not be chastised for being in ‘māyā’ or reprimanded in a way that will

push him or her further away from the lotus feet of the spiritual master. One must offer love, encouragement and friendship and make him or her feel once again at home in the company of devotees.

## DEALINGS WITH LADIES

In the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness segregation of the sexes is essential.

A woman should be given all respect, particularly if she is a Vaiṣṇavi, and addressed as such.

A brahmacāri should see every woman as his mother and a gr̥hastha should see every woman except his wife as his mother. Brahmacāris should associate with women only so far as required to execute devotional service and no more.

The word "mother" generates a mood of respect and sobriety. When we advise that women should be seen as mothers, we mean that our dealings with women should be reserved and respectful. Such conduct will minimize offensive mentality.

Women should behave as mothers.

## DEALINGS BETWEEN DEVOTEES WHO ARE CONSIDERING MARRIAGE

Devotees who are considering marriage should seek guidance on courting. It is the responsibility of our entire community to ensure girls are protected and hence we expect that girls and boys associate according to our Vaishnava culture.

It is also strongly advised that before courting one attends the marriage seminar which is organised at the temple by the College of Vedic Studies. In some Christian communities a boy and girl are only allowed to court after attending a year-long course on marriage. We hope that in the near future we can also develop such a protective system which families would be happy to support.

Those who get married after coming to ISKCON should understand that marriage means Vedic ceremony and that according to Vedic culture one is not considered properly married by the registry marriage alone. So they should be mindful of this in their dealings with each other.

Couples should also be aware of the Garbhodhan samskara which is to be followed before a couple unite to bring a child into this world.

## RECEPTION OF GUESTS – ATITHI-SEVĀ

When guests come to our temple and homes, it is Vaiṣṇava etiquette to treat them with great respect and love. They should be welcomed with sweet words, a seat, water and prasādam according to our means.

The Sanskrit word 'atithi' means 'not scheduled'. An 'unscheduled' or unexpected guest is considered a representative of the Supreme Lord, since his arriving unannounced is just what the Lord might do to test His devotee and see how ready he is to serve Him in any situation. With this understanding, one should serve the guests. The Lord's temple, whether open to the public or in one's home, should be a place where visitors can take part in temple activities as far as possible.

**As followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Founder- Ācārya of ISKCON, we should consider any guest in the temple to be his guest.**

In the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, the proper reception of guests is very important, since the society is a preaching mission. Proper reception of a guest can make the difference between a person coming once

to the temple and never returning or becoming a regular visitor and ultimately becoming a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Regular visitors, invited guests, life members, visiting Vaiṣṇavas, relatives of Vaiṣṇavas, all should be treated in such a way that they will feel comfortable and want to come again.

Every devotee should learn how to take care of guests, but temple devotees who regularly worship the Deity should especially be expert in this matter, for they directly represent the Proprietor of the temple. Even the most first-class, opulent Deity worship will fail to attract a guest if the temple residents neglect him.

Proper reception of guests is the special duty of the grhastha. If the grhastha does not receive an unexpected guest warmly, no matter who he is, he commits a great sin. Not only grhasthas, however, but everyone in every āśrama and varṇa should properly receive guests.

The main elements in receiving guests are the offering of proper respect and conveniences, including food and water, a place to sit, kind words, any services for the comfort of the guest such as bathing facilities, and a place to rest. When the guest first arrives, you should go out to meet him and when the visitor departs, you should accompany him, at least out of the premises or the yard.

According to the *Pañcarātrika-vidhi* one shows respect by:

- Rising from one's seat when a superior approaches.
- Identifying oneself by name and offering greetings.
- Offering obeisances.
- Offering simple or elaborate worship. For practical purposes you may worship the guests with two articles, sandalwood paste and flowers or garlands or a seat and water for washing the feet.
- Giving gifts such as cloth, gold, money or grains.

One should respect elders, parents and teachers by rising from a sitting position, identifying oneself and offering obeisances. Worship and gifts are reserved for the spiritual master.

## RECEPTION OF VAISNAVAS

You should give great attention to receiving senior Vaiṣṇavas, sannyāsīs and especially your spiritual master. Before the Vaiṣṇava guest arrives, his living quarters should be arranged, cleaned and equipped with necessities such as pañca-pātra, mirror, tilaka, towels, drinking water and fresh bedding. If possible, provide a set of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. The guest's quarters may also be decorated with flower vases, devotional pictures and so on.

When a Vaiṣṇava guest arrives, you should go out to greet him, preferably with a kirtana, garlands and sandalwood paste (unless it is cold outside). You should offer obeisances and kind words and should direct the guest to a seat. If you are receiving your spiritual master, you should worship him at this time, with his permission, by offering him āratī, offering flowers at his feet and paying obeisances. You should be prepared to offer the guest prasādam immediately, but you should first inquire whether the guest wishes to first bathe or rest before accepting prasādam.

When appropriate, you should introduce the guest to other residents of the temple or household and should inquire if there is some service you may render. You may also ask the guest how long he intends to stay taking care not to give the impression that you are looking forward to his departure. Rather, you should encourage your guest to stay longer than he had planned.

Serving guests, especially devotee guests, is such an important part of grhastha life and Vaisnava/Vedic culture but is often under-emphasised. Our modern nuclear family set up and our lifestyles, however, make the activity of serving guests not attractive to most people today, devotee or otherwise. After all, it calls for considerable sacrifice in terms of energy, time, health, expense and loss of privacy. This is something that people, in general, today are reluctant to do.

But the benefits are enormous. What a beautiful culture it is. It helps developing a vision of the world being one family, 'vasudhaiva kutumbakam', at least the devotee community being one family. It brings devotees closer

together, and enhances love and trust; and this is what a community is all about, ultimately. It gives more happiness to serve than to be served.

And, importantly, the children see their parents serving guests and they then imbibe this culture.

## PROPER BEHAVIOUR AS A GUEST

A Vaiṣṇava guest should behave ideally, whether his host is another Vaiṣṇava or a well-wisher of Vaiṣṇavas. What follows are a few commonly accepted points of etiquette for Vaiṣṇava guests:

- If you are an invited guest, you should not overstay your invitation. For example, if invited for a meal, you may rest a short time after the meal to aid your digestion, but do not burden your host by staying and conversing for several hours, unless encouraged to do so.
- Do not bring your own guests on the strength of your invitation. If you wish to invite other guests, ask your host's permission; however best not to ask as host may feel obliged to agree!
- If you ask your host to arrange transport, or purchase goods or tickets for you, then expect to reimburse them the expenses.
- When planning to visit a friend or acquaintance uninvited, try to let your prospective host know when you will arrive and how long you intend to stay.
- Unless you have been invited or have informed your host, try to avoid arriving at your host's house at meal times or evenings if the householders, or their children, go to bed early.
- If you stay for some days at your host's house, it is appropriate to give token gifts to the household residents as a gesture of gratitude.

## DEALINGS WITH OTHER VAISNAVAS

We may offer respect to, but one should not associate with the following categories:

- ❖ Vaiṣṇavas of bad or doubtful character
- ❖ Sahajiyas
- ❖ Vaiṣṇavas of Sampradāyas of doubtful bona fides
- ❖ Māyāvādi sannyāsīs

## OFFERING RESPECT / OBEISANCES TO VAIṢṆAVAS

Śrīla Prabhupāda is addressed as “His Divine Grace”, a sannyāsī as “His Holiness” and a God Brother as “His Grace”. The guru should be addressed according to his wishes. When speaking in public about one's guru, the full form of address is preferred.

A Godbrother's name may be prefixed as “Śrīmān”. A Brahmācārī's name is suffixed by the term “Brahmācārī” for example Kṛṣṇa dāsa Brahmācārī, a gṛhastha by the term “Adhikārī” and a Sannyāsī by the term “Mahārājā”, “Swāmi” or “Goswāmi”.

Śrīla Rupa Goswāmi says in the ‘Nectar of Instruction’ in regard to the Vaiṣṇava:

“Such a devotee should not be seen from materialistic point of view. Indeed, one should overlook a devotee's having a body born in a low family, a body with a bad complexion, a deformed body, or a diseased or infirm body.”

In other words one should overlook all bodily defects of bad appearance, low birth, low education etc. Any Vaiṣṇava serving the Lord should be considered holy.

It is stated in the sāstras that it is a hellish mentality to consider a Vaiṣṇava to be born of a certain caste or creed or to consider him to be an ordinary person.

The Bṛhan-Nāradya Purāṇa forbids us to offer obeisances to a Vaiṣṇava while he is bathing, collecting wood for a sacrifice, picking flowers, carrying water, or honouring prasādam. If you are in an impure state, for example if you are eating, bathing or wearing shoes or if your head is covered, you should neither offer nor receive obeisances physically.

Sometimes we should refrain from offering a Vaiṣṇava obeisances physically because doing so might inconvenience him. You should instead offer respects in your mind and then take the next opportunity to offer physical obeisances.

These rules apply when offering respects to any superior person; whether a Vaiṣṇava or non-Vaiṣṇava. A further point is that there are two times when we should offer obeisances to a superior, namely first when we see the superior person and again when he or she sees us.

The body of a Vaiṣṇava is to be seen as a temple of Vishnu. Therefore while offering obeisances to a Vaiṣṇava we should remember that we are also offering obeisances to lord Vishnu within the heart. Therefore we should never walk over the body of a Vaiṣṇava.

## ASSOCIATING WITH DEVOTEES

One must associate with devotees REGULARLY. ‘Regularly’ means as often as one possibly can in one’s given situation.

- The more one associates with sincere devotees, the faster the progress one will make in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- ‘Satsanga’ does not mean that the devotees simply gather together physically. What is done in that association is important. The basis for satsanga is sankīrtana, Kṛṣṇa-kathā and sevā. Prajālpā (mundane talk) should be avoided.
- One should humble oneself in satsanga to submissively hear and one should not be eager to simply speak.
- Association of devotees is our most prized possession, without which our life becomes dry and meaningless. One is sure to drift from Kṛṣṇa consciousness if one does not regularly associate.
- Association may be in person, VAPU i.e. the physical presence of the Guru and the Vaiṣṇavas, or in words, VĀNĪ i.e. the instruction of the Guru and the Vaiṣṇavas; both are important.
- Satsanga will be meaningful when one tries sincerely to practice in one’s life what one has carefully heard.

Those devotees who are chanting four or more rounds of japa should accept a mentor who can be a friend and a guide. For more information visit [www.krishnatemple.com](http://www.krishnatemple.com) where you will find details on the Mentorship System under the departments section.

Śrīla Rupa Goswāmī explains in the Nectar of Instruction that there are six loving exchanges between Vaiṣṇavas:

- ❖ offering gifts in charity,
- ❖ receiving gifts in charity,
- ❖ revealing one’s mind in confidence,
- ❖ inquiring confidentially,
- ❖ accepting prasādam,
- ❖ offering prasādam.

When one comes to the temple one should accept prasādam from Vaiṣṇavas. For gr̥hasthas it is their duty to invite the Vaiṣṇavas to their homes to offer prasādam. Gr̥hasthas should try to call devotees of the renounced order for preaching at their homes. The most precious gift we can give or receive is the gift of Kṛṣṇa kathā, the transcendental knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

## DEALINGS WITH NON-DEVOTEES

In as much as satsanga is required for maintaining a vibrant spiritual life, avoiding asatsanga (i.e. association of non-devotees) is equally important. One should minimise association with non-devotees as such association contaminates our consciousness. One should associate with non-devotees only to the barest minimum extent for fulfilling professional or business duties, and fulfilling basic social obligations for immediate relatives, neighbours, colleagues, etc.

The Bhāgavatam says that by such association one loses all good qualities such as truthfulness, cleanliness, mercy, gravity, intelligence, etc. and all opulence that are automatically obtained by a devotee. A man is never so degraded as when he comes into such unholy association.

Lord Caitanya taught Sanātana Goswāmī that the sum and substance of a devotee's behaviour is that he stays aloof from unholy association. There are two kinds of unholy association:

1. Association with one who is too much attached to the opposite sex and material opulence.
2. Association with one who is not a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Caitanya says, quoting scripture, that one should rather be locked in a cage filled with fire rather than associate with non-devotees. One should not allow non-devotees to touch our feet. But if they insist on doing it and there is no other way to avoid it, one can simply remember the predecessor ācāryas and spiritual master, and accept them and return the namaskāra with folded hands.

There are two categories of non-devotees, the innocent and the atheist. To the innocent we should be the well-wisher. With respect we should try to enlighten them and give them the association of senior devotees. But we should not take their association by engaging in activities that give them pleasure in life i.e. in materialistic activities. As regards the atheist, we should avoid them. It is an offense against the holy name to preach to such people. We may however preach if they are willing to submissively hear from us.

When greeting non-devotees, if the non-devotee is a friend, we can say “Hare Kṛṣṇa” and with folded hands touch our forehead. If the non-devotee is a superior relative then we should say “Hare Kṛṣṇa” and bow down to him or her.

If one encounters a person who is criticising Guru, Vaiṣṇavas or śāstra, then one must either soundly defeat him in argument or leave the place immediately. Hearing such offenses is one of the greatest obstacles to one's spiritual development.



## PART VII SĀDHANĀ

One who is serious about spiritual life should rise early in the morning, preferably before the ‘brāhma-muhurta’ hour i.e. one and a half hours before sunrise.

It is said in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 3.20.46 Purport:

“The time early in the morning, one and a half hours before sunrise, is called brāhma-muhurta. During this brāhma-muhurta, spiritual activities are recommended. Spiritual activities performed early in the morning have a greater effect than in any other part of the day.”

In the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness one has to accept and follow sincerely regulative principles, both negative and positive. Śrīla Rupa Goswāmi has listed 64 such regulative principles, five of which are considered most important:

- ❖ Worshipping the Deity
- ❖ Hearing Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,
- ❖ Association with devotees of the Lord,
- ❖ Chanting the holy name and
- ❖ Residing in a holy dhāma (or worshipping Tulasī-devī)

## JAPA

### WHAT, WHY, WHEN AND HOW

#### Single Most Important Activity

Chanting the holy name of the Lord is the single most important activity in the life of a devotee. Chanting japa is an essential process given by all the great ācāryas for the purification of the heart; it is the first vow the devotee takes before the spiritual master at the time of dikṣā. Therefore chanting at least the prescribed sixteen rounds of Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā Mantra daily, without fail, is an absolute must for every serious devotee.

#### Source of 99% of our Spiritual Advancement

Śrīla Prabhupāda says that 99% of our spiritual advancement comes from chanting the holy name. Thus a devotee who sincerely and regularly chants at least sixteen rounds every day, avoiding offences, will make quick progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

#### An Exclusive Activity

When we attach importance to some activity, we keep aside some time exclusively for that activity. Similarly, every devotee must spend the time required for chanting his or her prescribed rounds exclusively for japa and for no other activity, even if it is some form of devotional service. For example while chanting one’s sixteen rounds one should not be reading newspapers or talking to others or even hearing kīrtans. Japa is an activity that demands our complete undivided attention. During japa, telephone calls should not be entertained; let them leave a message on your phone unless you suspect it may be an emergency. When we chant the holy name we are in direct communion with the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, because Kṛṣṇa is non-different from His Name. In the form of His Name, Kṛṣṇa, the most important Personality in all creation, is giving us an audience. Therefore, nothing should be allowed to interrupt this holy “meeting”. Remember: Where there is a will, there is a way.

## Intense Desire

The foundation of our spiritual life is intense desire. Our strong desire and eagerness to chant the holy name is the most pleasing to Kṛṣṇa and is the fundamental requirement of good japa. Strong desire must manifest in firm determination to chant one's prescribed quota of rounds everyday even in the midst of adverse and trying circumstances and also in the firm endeavour to improve one's quality of japa. One must, therefore, be determined to do every act necessary to come to the standard of good japa qualitatively and quantitatively, and avoid every act that can spoil one's japa. And how does one increase the intensity of one's desire and determination? By the process of "nityam bhāgavata sevayā" - regularly serving the devotees and submissively hearing Kṛṣṇa-kathā.

## Attentive Hearing

Our japa is as good as the quality of our hearing, therefore attentive hearing is the most important aspect of japa. Without attentive hearing our japa will become mechanical and tasteless.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "...Concentrate fully on the sound vibration of the mantra, pronouncing each name distinctly...Do not worry so much about chanting fast, more important is hearing...."

SP Letter to Radhaballabha das (January 6, 1972)

Again, "...As you chant, try to hear each word very carefully...."

SP Letter to Tosana (February 20, 1972)

## Firm Faith in the Holy Name

"...What one should do is chant the Holy Name of the Lord with faith, enthusiasm, and firm conviction on the statement of Lord Caitanya that simply by chanting the Mahā Mantra one can be gradually elevated to the highest platform of spiritual perfection...."

SP Letter to Kanupriya (January 15, 1969)

## Understanding the Meaning of the Maha-mantra

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains: "...Our prayer of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra means addressing Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa for being engaged in Their service. Hare Kṛṣṇa means, "Oh Hare! Oh Rādhārāṇī! Oh Kṛṣṇa! Please engage me in Your service so that I can get relief from the service of Māyā."...."

SP Letter to Subala das (July 8, 1969)

Since the Mahā-mantra is the transcendental sound vibration, it will act whether one knows the meaning of the mantra or not. Yet we must know what exactly we are praying when we chant the Mahā-mantra.

## Prayerful Mood

Since the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-mantra is a prayer we must, with full understanding of the meaning of the mantra, chant in a prayerful mood. Our chanting must be like the desperate cry of a lost child crying out for its mother. The mood must be one of helplessness and utter dependence on Kṛṣṇa.

## No Material Motivation

In a letter, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives an idea of how to offer our own prayers: "Simply our prayer should be, "My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, please remind me to always chant Your holy name. Please do not put me into forgetfulness... even if you send me to hell, it does not matter, just so long as I am always chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.""

In our bhakti-mārga, we are trained to proceed towards the goal of unmotivated, uninterrupted, pure devotional service to the Lord. Therefore we should not seek material benefits or facilities for sense enjoyment through our chanting. The only bona fide favour to ask from the Lord is His service and the ability and opportunity to chant holy name Name always.

## Humility

Lord Caitanya says in his Śikṣāṣṭakam prayers that unless one is humbler than a blade of grass (tṛṇād api sunīcena) one cannot chant the holy name always. While humility comes naturally and automatically in the

course of one's progress in bhakti, one should also consciously attempt to be humble in our behaviour and in all dealings, particularly with devotees. One must guard against false pride and take action to subdue it the moment it raises its ugly head. Pride and the holy name can never go together.

### Suitable Environment

One should select an environment that is conducive to good japa. As far as is possible in a city like London, it should be an isolated, quiet place where there are no distractions. Sitting on one's veranda and doing japa while watching life pass by on the street, for example, is not a good way of doing japa. Many devotees have to travel a long way by public transport to their place of work; by all means devotees may chant while commuting, but such chanting should ideally be considered bonus chanting and not a part of the prescribed quota of sixteen rounds as the quality of chanting is unlikely to be good.

### Posture - Sitting, Standing and Walking



exceptionally restless, it is good if the body is still

If one is alert in the mind the sitting posture makes for very good quality japa. It is recommended that one sit cross legged, with back erect. Leaning one's back against the wall or slouching one's back, or resting one's elbows on one's knees or thighs, should be avoided as they induce sleep very quickly. Worse still, being sprawled out in the chair or lying in bed are surely ways of inviting sleep.



If one is feeling very sleepy or if the mind is advisable to stand or walk for japa. After all, what but the mind is moving fast here and there?



While standing one should avoid the temptation to lean against a support in case one falls asleep. The conditioned mind is always looking for ways to cheat us from relishing Kṛṣṇa's names.

Many devotees prefer to do japa while walking. While this is certainly authorised by the ācāryas, one should be careful to avoid looking here and there or to get distracted by objects or people along the way. One helpful suggestion is to walk with one's head slightly inclined downwards.

## Vigilance

One must be vigilant to maintain mental alertness at all times during japa. If one feels sleepy while sitting down, one should immediately stand up or walk. As and when the mind wanders, one should immediately drag it back to focus on hearing the holy name.

## Japa is not a Race

Sometimes it may be tempting to try to beat the clock, to rush through one's japa to finish sixteen rounds in even lesser time than yesterday; this must be avoided. Clear, attentive chanting should always be the emphasis and one may adjust to a speed that one is naturally comfortable with. The words of the Mahā-mantra must not be 'swallowed'. At no cost should the quality of japa be compromised. For many devotees sixteen rounds take a little under two hours.

## Always Discuss

Japa is so important that devotees should regularly discuss this subject and emphasise its importance and share realisations.

## Japa Best in Association of Devotees

While japa is an individual spiritual discipline, it is advisable to do japa in the association of devotees. While chanting alone we may become a little lax, neglectful or sleepy. In association of devotees we are always under scrutiny and there is always someone to check that we are not "spacing out". When devotees chant japa together, it sets up strong vibrations and it is wonderful to chant in such an environment. Devotees can attend the morning japa at the local temple. Alternatively, devotees staying at home can meet at a common local place on as many days as possible and chant together; this is highly recommended.

## Japa Early Morning

Japa should be done early in the morning, ideally during the Brāhma-Muhurta time. If that time is not possible, it should be done at the earliest thereafter. Rising early is mandatory for all devotees and there should be no compromise in this regard. It is desirable to have a fixed time for one's morning japa. Discipline about timings is an important element of sādhanā bhakti. One should try to finish at least ten to twelve rounds before leaving home for work. It is good if at least eight rounds are completed before 10am; however the more the better.

## Loudness

Japa may be done softly to oneself or aloud. Good japa does not necessarily mean loud japa. What is important is not how loudly we are chanting, but how attentively we are hearing. When chanting amongst other devotees we should be sensitive to not disturb their concentration.

## Holy Name or Pastimes

One question that is sometimes asked by devotees is whether they can think of pastimes of Kṛṣṇa while doing japa.

Let's see what Śrīla Prabhupāda says about this:

"...So you cannot make any distinction between listening to the sound and thinking of the pastimes. But the process is to hear, and then Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, form, qualities etc. will automatically come to mind..."

SP Letter to Satsvarupa (April 10, 1969)

"...Generally it is the process to simply chant and hear, but if Kṛṣṇa's līlā comes into remembrance, that is very good. It should come automatically. Not that you are remembering artificially....."

SP Letter to Prahladananda (June 17, 1971)

## OFFENCES AGAINST THE HOLY NAME

One should avoid the ten offences against the holy name. Śrīla Prabhupāda says that ‘quality’ chanting means avoiding the ten offences.

The ten offenses against the holy name are:

1. To blaspheme the devotees who have dedicated their lives for propagating the holy name of the Lord.
2. To consider the names of demigods like Lord Śiva or Lord Brahmā to be equal to or independent of the name of Lord Viṣṇu.
3. To disobey the orders of the spiritual master.
4. To blaspheme the Vedic literature or literature in pursuance of the Vedic version.
5. To consider the glories of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to be an imagination.
6. To give some interpretation on the holy name of the Lord.
7. To commit sinful activities on the strength of the holy name of the Lord.
8. To consider the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa as one of the auspicious ritualistic activities which are offered in the Vedās as fruitive activities (Karma-kāṇḍa).
9. To instruct a faithless person about the glories of the holy name.
10. To not have complete faith in the chanting of the holy name and to maintain material attachments, even after understanding so many instructions on this matter. It is also an offense to be inattentive while chanting.

Every devotee who claims to be Vaiṣṇava must guard against these offenses in order to quickly achieve the desired success – Kṛṣṇa prema.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PAÑCA-TATTVA MANTRA

After chanting the Guru Praṇāma mantra (and the pranam mantra for one’s guru if applicable) one should chant the Pañca-tattva mantra before beginning to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-mantra:

(jaya) śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda

śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is always accompanied by His plenary expansion Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, His incarnation Śrī Advaita Prabhu, His internal potency Śrī Gadādhara Prabhu, and His marginal potency, Śrīvāsa Prabhu. He is in the midst of them as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One should know that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is always accompanied by these other tattvas. Therefore our obeisances to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are complete when we say, śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda. As preachers of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we first offer our obeisances to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by chanting the Pañca tattva mantra and then we say,

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare

Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare

There are ten offenses to the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, but these are not considered in the chanting of the Pañca-tattva mantra. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is known as mahā-vadānyāya avatār, the most magnanimous incarnation, for He does not consider the offenses of the fallen souls. Thus to derive the full benefit of the chanting of the mahā-mantra *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare* we must first take shelter of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, learn the Pañca-tattva mantra, and then chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. That will be very effective.

## GAYATRI MANTRA

Devotees who have second (Brāhmaṇa) dikṣā should strictly chant the Gāyatrī mantra three times a day during the sandhya periods, which are sunrise, midday and sunset. During the height of summer when, in some countries, it is difficult to observe the morning sandhya, an adjustment may be made. During British Summer Time, 'midday' is at 1.00 pm.

Brahmin initiates should learn the principles and practice of Deity worship and, wherever possible, regularly perform Deity related services at the temple and/or engage in preaching.

## ATTENDING CLASSES AND READING

“...The idea is everyone should try to pace himself as if he doesn't know anything. His position is secure. But as soon as he says that I know everything, and I was previously such and such, actually he is rascal. So I know that you are trying to know things from the real source, and you are not puffed up like the other fools who think that they know everything. Your humility is very much appreciated by me....”

SP Letter to Janārdana (January 21, 1968)

- While attending discourses one should be very attentive and silent. A talkative or sleepy devotee has a discouraging and distracting influence on the speaker and on the assembled devotees. Also it does not project a good image of our mission. If one feels excessively sleepy one should move to the side of the room and stand up. Guidance regarding sitting in the temple, mentioned earlier, should be followed.
- One should avoid moving in and out of the temple or room where the discourse is taking place as moving in such a manner causes great disturbance.
- Parents must control their children. If the children become noisy, they must be cared for a sufficient distance away from the room to ensure that other devotees are not disturbed.
- Relevant and pertinent questions may be asked in a humble spirit.
- One's intention whilst asking questions should not be to try to impress others with one's knowledge.

Devotees should read daily the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda. One may begin with the smaller books like Nectar of Instruction, Perfect Questions Perfect Answers, Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: Matchless Gifts. Books by authors not within ISKCON should be avoided. Reading must be done in a serious, attentive and systematic way and not casually like one would read a novel. It is advisable to take notes as one reads and to memorise important ślokaś. **Reading is necessary to improve our philosophical understanding. It strengthens our conviction, faith and determination and is very important for a preacher. 'Reading' is also 'hearing'.**

One should also take advantage of the vast collection of lectures that are on [www.ISKCONdesiretree.com](http://www.ISKCONdesiretree.com).

Devotees should try to contemplate on what they have read/heard and apply it their daily lives, rather than just hearing one lecture after another.

## DEITY WORSHIP

- It is very necessary for all the gṛhastās who live at some distance from the temple to perform worship of the Deities in their homes. The Deities may be pictures, or made of wood, clay, marble, metal etc. The altar may be designed and arranged according to one's means.

- One may take assistance of other devotees in regard to details of setting up the altar, procedures and standard of worship, paraphernalia required etc.
- Worship of Gaur-Nitāi as the presiding Deities has great benefit for homes. Standard altar is Guru, Param Guru, Gaur-Nitāi or Pañca-tattva.
- It is a serious proposition to begin worship of Radha-Krishna and this should be undertaken by brahmanas only when they are sure they can maintain it, and perform it regularly without it adversely affecting any of the other aspects of their sadhana. This should be thoroughly discussed with one's mentor; those living within easy travelling distance to the temple would generally not need to keep Radha-Krishna Deities at home.
- It is not expected that the standard of Deity worship at homes will be like that for installed Deities in the temple. Yet efforts must be made to ensure regularity of worship according to one's schedules and circumstances.
- Coming to the temple is always the priority. We may put our home Deities to rest for this purpose.
- Certain minimum requirements are, for example, that everything cooked in the house should be offered to the Deities.
- While the family is away from home for example whilst attending parikrams the Deities may be put to rest.
- Children may also be engaged in the worship of the Deities. Taking care of the Deities, preparing offerings for Them, stitching clothes and making jewellery for Them is a very nice purifying engagement and all members of the family may be involved.
- Where possible the Tulasī plant may be kept in the house. Proper exposure to sunlight and watering are required. Artificial sunlight lamps may be used in climates that are not conducive. Her leaves may be put into each offering for Kṛṣṇa and also at His Lotus Feet. It is to be noted that Tulasī leaves should not be placed at the lotus feet of Guru or even Sṛīmatī Rādhārāṇī or in the offerings to the Guru. Tulasī leaves may, however, be placed in Rādhārāṇī's hands. Tulasīdevī is Kṛṣṇa's favourite plant; it is said that Kṛṣṇa does not accept the offerings unless Tulasī is present. If possible worship of Tulasīdevī may be performed.

Special care should be taken while stitching Deity outfits and making garlands; for threading the needles, saliva should not be used. Flowers, clothes etc. should not be placed on the floor but on a special cloth for this purpose. Only fragrant and uncontaminated flowers should be offered.

## ARATI

Ārati is also called nīrāñjana or dṛṣṭi, which means waving auspicious items before a person in order to dispel inauspicious influences or elements, as a means of protection. The various items offered are all representative of the material elements in their pure form and their corresponding sense objects i.e. sound, form, touch, etc. They are considered to be auspicious and purifying.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

There must be regular maṅgala-ārati in the temple during the early morning, an hour and a half before the sun rises.

(Cc. Madhya 24.334, Purport)

Śrīla Prabhupāda further emphasizes in Nectar of Devotion, the benefit of seeing the ārati performed:

In the Skanda Purāṇa there is the following description of the result of seeing ārati (worship) of the Deity: 'If someone sees the face of the Lord while ārati is going on, he can be relieved of all sinful reactions coming from many, many thousands and millions of years past. He is even excused from the killing of a brāhmaṇa or similar prohibited activities.'

(The Nectar of Devotion, Ch. 9)

Thus all āratī ceremonies offered to the Lord are auspicious (maṅgala) but the first āratī of the day, in the early morning, is considered particularly auspicious for all who participate.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, who appeared in the middle of the seventeenth century, is a great spiritual master in the Kṛṣṇa conscious chain of gurus and disciples. He wrote a song in praise of the spiritual master and comments “One who, with great care and attention, loudly recites this beautiful prayer to the spiritual master during the brāhma-muhūrta obtains direct service to Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Vṛndāvana, at the time of his death.”

At home arati should be performed at least once a day accompanied by kīrtana. **If the full āratī is not possible, a condensed āratī may be performed, wherein only the following three items could be offered: Incense, flowers and camara fan.**

The following items should be set up on a plate and kept at the left side of the altar:

- Incense (agarbatti)
- Ghee lamp with one or five wicks
- Conchshell for putting water in
- Small vessel containing water
- A fine cloth or napkin
- Fragrant flowers on a small plate

The other items that should already be there near the altar are:

- cāmara fan
- peacock feather fan
- bell
- pañcapātra (for performing ācamana)
- blowing conchshell
- āsana (i.e. mat) to stand/sit on while offering arati

## ĀCAMANA

Ācamana is performed to purify oneself before commencing worship. The water for ācamana is placed in the small vessel (pañcapātra) meant for this purpose. One should place one spoonful (special spoon for this purpose called kusi) of water from the pañcapātra in the palm of the right hand and, after saying “om keśavāya namaḥ”, one should sip that water. Then after placing one more drop on the hand, throw the water to the side.

This process should be repeated twice as before, first substituting the mantra “om nārāyaṇāya namaḥ”, and then the mantra “om mādhavāya namaḥ”.

Finally, one should place one spoonful of water in the palm as earlier and throw the water away to the side, chanting the mantra “om govindāya namaḥ”. One should then offer obeisances and request the spiritual master for permission to begin worship.

**The sequence of āratī is as follows:**

- The conchshell is blown three times to signify the commencement of the āratī. The conchshell is then rinsed off with water from the pañcapātra.
- Before offering each article, purify both your right hand and the article by sprinkling them with water from the pañcapātra. You can purify the article by taking the spoon in your right hand and sprinkling water on the article directly from the spoon. The article is then offered with the right hand while one rings the bell with the left hand. The bell and the articles for worship are held above waist level. One must remember to ring the bell whilst each item is being offered.
- The incense should be offered to each Deity seven times to all the limbs of the body (by making a circle around the body of the Deity).
- Then the ghee lamp is offered to each Deity by making circles four times to Their lotus feet, twice to the waist, three times to the face and seven times around the body.



- Then water is poured into the small conchshell. The conchshell is then offered by circling three times above the Deity's head and then seven times around the body of the Deity.
- The cloth should be offered seven times around the body of the Deity.
- The flowers are offered by circling seven times around the body of the Deity.
- The cāmara is then offered by carefully swinging it.
- The peacock fan is similarly offered, except in the winter months.
- The pujārī performing aratī, while offering various items as mahā-prasādam to the spiritual master and assembled Vaiṣṇavas should not offer them below their waist level or to their feet. The various items offered should be waved three times around the face.
- The conchshell should be blown three times to signify the end of āratī and then rinsed with water from the pañcapātra.
- Prema dhvani prayers must be recited.
- The altar and floor should be cleansed by separate cloths.
- There are many other detailed rules and regulations for Deity worship. Devotees who wish to know more may contact their mentor. However the most important element of Deity worship is that all the items must be offered with sincere feeling and devotion.

## PART VIII EKĀDASĪ

An important austerity for devotees is to fast on certain specified days like Ekādaśī and on important festivals and appearance/disappearance days of ācaryas. Ekādaśī is the eleventh day of both the waxing and waning moon and thus it comes twice in each month. It is a day of austerity regularly observed by Vaiṣṇavas.

The basic principle is not just to fast, but also to increase one's faith and love for Kṛṣṇa; hence all devotees should observe Ekādaśī fast. The reason for observing fasting on Ekādaśī is to minimise the demands of the body and to engage more of our time in chanting, hearing and performing devotional service. Śrīla Prabhupāda recommended that devotees can chant twenty-five or more rounds of japa on Ekādaśī. It is advised that one may also try to remember the pastimes of the Lord.

Śrīla Prabhupāda usually observed Ekādaśī fast in the simplest manner prescribed in scripture, by refraining from eating grains, beans, peas, legumes and dahl. If one can follow complete fasting known as Nirjala-vrata (i.e. abstaining from both food and water) and still perform one's duties and responsibilities, then one may do so. However, ours is a preaching mission and if complete fasting impedes our service or preaching, it should not be followed. One may then consume the minimum food and drink essential to maintain one's service. A special effort should be made to try to observe complete fast on Nirjala (Bhīma) Ekādaśī.

All devotees must avoid the following foods on Ekādaśī:

grains (wheat, rice, etc.)

dahl

peas

bean type vegetables

mustard seeds and their derivatives (wheat flour, mustard oil etc.)

food items containing above products

Be careful in using powdered spices as some, such as asafoetida (hing), are mixed with flour. Sesame seeds are also to be avoided except on Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī, when they may be offered and eaten. One who is very strictly observing Ekādaśī should avoid all spices except pepper, rock salt and cumin.

Do not use any cooking ingredients that might be mixed with grains, such as ghee that has been used to fry purīs, or spices touched by hands dusted with capāti flour.

Shaving and cutting nails is forbidden on Ekādaśī.

Ekādaśī fast is broken the next day (Dvādaśī), by taking prasādam prepared with grains. The fast must be broken within a specific time. For the dates of Ekādaśīs and the times for breaking fast, consult the Vaiṣṇava calendar, which is available from any ISKCON centre.

## PART IX FOUR REGULATIVE PRINCIPLES

Let's take a look at some of Srila Prabhupada's words regarding the four regulative principles:

"....The formalities are as follows: You should take a vow not to have any illicit sex life. That means sex life should be accepted only by married couples..... You should not accept any kind of intoxication, including drinking coffee, tea, or smoking cigarettes, chewing pan, etc. Finally, you should not take part in any gambling, including so-called sports, cinema, theatre, or any such entertainment...."

SP Letter to Mr. Kair (July 8, 1969)

"....we don't drink tea, don't drink liquor. We don't smoke. This is our process, no illicit sex, no meat eating, no intoxication, no gambling. Unless one is married, there is no sex. And unless one is going to beget child, there is no sex. Not for pleasure. This is our regulative principle....."

SP Television Interview (July 9, 1975)

"....When you are initiated, you promise "No illicit sex, no intoxication, no meat-eating, no gambling." And if you do privately all these things, then what kind of man you are? Don't be cheater. Be plain. When you promise that "We shall not do these things," don't do it again. Then you remain in goodness. That's all. Nobody can disturb you.....But if you cheat yourself, cheat your spiritual master, cheat God, then you will be cheated by maya...."

Lecture on SB 1.3.26 Los Angeles (October 1, 1972)

In addition to following the four regulative principles, devotees should avoid the below activities as they will simply contaminate our consciousness and encourage us to violate the regulative principles:

- watching commercial films
- watching television and non-devotional videos
- reading novels and other non-devotional works
- reading magazines that deal with films, sports, politics, sex, social affairs etc.

Non-devotional movies and literature, which are genuinely of use in one's preaching or other service, may be seen but only as much as is needed.

### NO MEAT EATING

This includes fish and eggs and any product that contains them.

See the section on *Guidance on Suitability for Vegetarians* to help ensure you are following this principle.

"....So far foodstuffs offered do the needful. Whatever is available and also very nice, that is offerable, as long as no meat, fish, eggs, garlic, onions, or other very objectionable foodstuffs are there....What matters is that everything is very nicely prepared and offered with great loving devotion, that is wanted...."

SP Letter to Upendra (February 19, 1972)

### NO INTOXICATION

Intoxication includes alcohol, liquor, tea, coffee, tobacco in any form, betel nut (paan), paan masala etc. Some devotees do drink decaffeinated tea and coffee; for health reasons devotees are advised to check they select brands that are not

decaffeinated by chemicals. Fizzy drinks such as Coke have 32mg of caffeine in a 330ml can, which is a little more than one third of the amount of caffeine in the same volume of tea so they should not be taken regularly; they are also not good for health.

## NO GAMBLING

Gambling includes any speculative game of chance or the taking of excessive risk in the outcome of sports or investments. Although there is an element of risk in every endeavour, particularly investments, taking an increased or dangerous level of risk means a much greater concern over the outcome, and less mental attention for one's spiritual life. Gambling is detailed as the following:

- Direct gambling such as in casinos.
- Betting on football matches, races and political events etc.
- Lottery tickets or any high risk, speculative enterprise which is very greed based, and which is undertaken with the expectation of a large return in a short time or with minimum effort. These types of activities may be legal but it's still considered as gambling.
- Any high risk business or investment such as the quick selling of currencies for profit. In such activity, one's mind becomes fully absorbed in the foreign exchange rates and in such circumstances it's very hard to concentrate on devotional practice.

Money invested with the *intention* of keeping the investment over a long term, where you reap benefits in terms of dividends, is **not** considered as gambling. Speculation is where the *intention* is to get the maximum increase of capital and sell when it reaches a high within a short period of time.

## NO ILLICIT SEX

This means no sex outside of marriage, and no sex within marriage that is not for procreation. Within marriage sex is allowed once a month to conceive a child by following the Garbhadhana samskara.

**According to the Srimad Bhagavatam 3.31.1, conception has taken place when the sperm successfully unites with the egg and the specific soul destined for that body enters.** Fertilisation and conception are therefore understood to occur at the same time.

Anything that prevents egg and sperm uniting during sexual intercourse is classed as a contraceptive. Anything that impedes the growth of the embryo after conception has taken place, or otherwise prevents the natural consequences of fertilisation, is an abortive agent. There are tablets and devices etc. which are described as 'contraceptives' that are, in fact, abortive agents. Examples of this are the so-called 'morning-after pill' and implants that prevent the already-fertilised egg from attaching itself to the uterus wall.

Methods of preventing pregnancy are not all 100% effective, and one should be prepared to accept the responsibility of raising children that result from such unplanned pregnancies.

At the time of initiation, Srila Prabhupada asked his disciples to follow the regulative principle of 'no illicit sex life,' and he expected them to follow it, even though he knew it might be difficult for them. In doing this, he was simply giving his disciples one more element of the personal discipline necessary to develop Krishna consciousness within one lifetime.

Although devotion to Krishna is the dormant inclination in every soul, not every human being wants to develop pure Krishna consciousness within one lifetime, so for them the Vedas prescribe marriage as a way they can religiously channel their sexual inclination and be satisfied and peaceful. And when interactions between men and women are governed by marriage, society itself can be peaceful. The Vedic law book Manu Samhita suggests that sex outside marriage can never be tolerated by an ordered society. Most civilised cultures of the world therefore have either religious restrictions or legal prohibitions regarding sexual activity. So the term 'illicit sex' is usually

taken to mean ‘sex outside of religious marriage’ or sex that is contrary to the laws of society. Yet within the Vaishnava sampradaya, the community dedicated to Krishna, the term ‘illicit sex’ has an additional meaning. According to the teachings of Krishna, the sexual organs have a specific function, and that is procreation – giving a soul an opportunity to come into the world. Since Krishna, through the agency of Brahma, creates the world, He knows the unique purpose of everything, and He therefore has the prerogative to describe those purposes.

Sexual desire is one of the major pushing agents of the human being such as the need to breathe, the desire to eat, and the quest for shelter. Yet the perceived need for sex is not ultimately identical to the need for oxygen, food and shelter. It is quite possible to live without sex, but not without oxygen. The pleasure of sex makes it easier and more likely that procreation will take place, but is not meant to be pursued without this intention.

In the Srimad Bhagavatam Lord Krishna speaks to His good friend Uddhava. As He describes the path of the saintly householder or grihasta to him, Krishna says:

Brahmacaryam tapah saucam santoso bhuta-sauhrdam

Grhasthasyapy rtau gantuh sarvesam mad-upasanam

“A householder may approach his wife for sex only at the time prescribed for begetting children. Otherwise, the householder should practise celibacy, austerity, cleanliness of mind and body, satisfaction in his natural position, and friendship toward all living entities. Worship of me is to be practised by all human beings, regardless of social or occupational divisions.”

SB 11.18.43

Therefore sexual desire is meant to be used and channelled appropriately, and in accord with the divine arrangement. Everyone should be married, and within marriage should regulate their enjoyment of sex to those times most conducive for pregnancy. By doing this, the residual desire for material enjoyment gradually diminishes and Krishna consciousness naturally increases.

Even in the very beginning of his teaching in the western world, when Srila Prabhupada was confronted with young Americans from decidedly licentious backgrounds, he was determined to simply repeat Lord Krishna’s words. In this he had great faith, that if he just acted as a representative for his Lord Krishna, neither adding anything nor removing anything from His teaching, he would ultimately be successful. He writes to a young disciple in some detail:

“....So the householder is allowed to have sex life once in a month, just after the menstrual period. The menstrual period prolongs at least for five days, so after these five days, one can have sex life provided he desires to get a child. And as soon as the wife is pregnant, no more sex life until the child is born and is grown up at least for six months. After that one may have sex life on the same principle. If one does not want more than one or two children, he should voluntarily stop sex life. But one should not strictly use any contraceptive method and at the same time indulge in sex life. That is very much sinful.

If the husband and wife can voluntarily restrain by powerful advancement of Krishna consciousness, that is the best method. It is not necessary that because one has got wife, therefore you must have sex life. The whole scheme is to avoid sex life as far as possible. And if one can avoid it completely then it is a great victory for him. Married life is a sort of license for sex life on condition of raising children. So you should try to understand these principles of married life and use your discretion”

Anticipating that his disciples may want to become simultaneously advanced devotees and the parents of many offspring, through the principle of regulated sex life – as in the case of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur, who had a dozen children, Srila Prabhupada continues:

“You should not imitate great personalities like Bhaktivinode Thakura, but you must follow his footprints. But it is not always possible to have the same success as great personalities like Bhaktivinode Thakura achieved. So in all circumstances you should try to follow the footprints of authorities but never to imitate them. Unless Jadurani (the correspondent’s wife) develops a better health and strength, I do not advise her to become pregnant. I think you will understand the instruction as I have given and try to follow it as far as possible.”

SP Letter to Satsvarupa (September 20, 1968)

With the words 'as far as possible' Srila Prabhupada seems to voice his confidence that his disciple will understand what is being explained, and apply the instructions in his life, but he also anticipates that it will not be entirely possible for him at all times. The giving of an instruction by the spiritual master expresses faith in the disciple's ability to follow it if he or she applies themselves with sincerity. Yet the spiritual master also understands that life presents unexpected challenges and that disciples may sometimes struggle to follow the guru's orders.

It doesn't seem that Srila Prabhupada regularly asked his disciples if they were specifically following this particular principle within their marriages. But understanding that due to youth and conditioning they would sometimes struggle with it, or that sometimes they would, in their weakness or defiance, seek to abandon it, he spoke accordingly. With those who were struggling he offered compassion and understanding; with those who had become unregulated or over-indulgent he would sometimes speak sharp words of reproof to bring them back to their vows.

He wanted his disciples to stay on the path of Krishna consciousness and not abandon it due to once again becoming implicated in material sense gratification, but he also wanted to encourage them for the efforts they were making. So whilst he encouraged his young disciples to become married, he also felt the need to issue words of caution. To one sannyasi he said: "See that you and other sannyasis speak about illicit sex, otherwise it will become a fire that will destroy our Society."

In the history of disciples following these vows, it has been seen that a healthy balance is not always achieved. Damage has been done by an uncompromising application of the rules, and in some extreme cases, marriages have failed due to the partner looking for satisfaction outside the marriage. On the other hand, disciples have been lost due to not following the restrictions at all. The marriage is a success, but sexual indulgence has progressively reduced the spirituality of both husband and wife with the result that they drifted away from the path of bhakti. Balance is required.

Where after marriage only one partner decides to be initiated, understanding and a certain degree of compromise may be required, but always in the spirit of finding spiritual progress within a healthy and harmonious marital compatibility. For those who are initiated, or wishing to be initiated in the future, and not yet married, the commitment and ability to follow the four regulative principles should be thoroughly discussed with one's prospective marriage partner within the first few meetings with them so as to avoid having to compromise one's vows to one's guru in the future.

"....Don't beget children if you have no responsibility. But they think that "We'll have sex life, but we shall avoid this responsibility. So then let us use contraceptive." This is greatest sinful life. Greatest sinful life. You are killing, murderer. Now in the Western countries they are actually killing. They have made law. So if the society has become so awfully sinful, how they can expect peace and prosperity? That is not possible...."

Bg Lecture (February 25, 1974)

"....Women are supplied pills, and they are allowed to go to a clinical laboratory to get assistance for abortions. This is going on as a result of sense gratification. Actually sex life is meant for begetting a good child, but because people have no control over the senses and there is no institution to train them to control the senses, the poor fellows fall victim to the criminal offenses of sense gratification, and they are punished after death as described in these pages of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam."

SB Purport 3.30.21

"Sometimes, as if blinded by the dust of a whirlwind, the conditioned soul sees the beauty of the opposite sex, which is called pramadā. Being thus bewildered, he is raised upon the lap of a woman, and at that time his good senses are overcome by the force of passion. He thus becomes almost blind with lusty desire and disobeys the rules and regulations governing sex life. He does not know that his disobedience is witnessed by different demigods, and he enjoys illicit sex in the dead of night, not seeing the future punishment awaiting him.

In Bhagavad-gītā (7.11) it is said: dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo 'smi bharatarṣabha. Sex is allowed only for the begetting of children, not for enjoyment. One can indulge in sex to beget a good child for the benefit of the family, society and world. Otherwise, sex is against the rules and regulations of religious life. A materialistic person does

not believe that everything is managed in nature, and he does not know that if one does something wrong, he is witnessed by different demigods. A person enjoys illicit sex, and due to his blind, lusty desire, he thinks that no one can see him, but this illicit sex is thoroughly observed by the agents of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore the person is punished in so many ways, presently in Kali-yuga there are many pregnancies due to illicit sex, and sometimes abortions ensue. These sinful activities are witnessed by the agents of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and a man and woman who create such a situation are punished in the future by the stringent laws of material nature (daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā (BG 7.14)). Illicit sex is never excused, and those who indulge in it are punished life after life. As confirmed in Bhagavad-gītā (16.20):

āsurīm yonim āpannā  
mūḍhā janmani janmani  
mām aprāpyaiva kaunteya  
tato yānty adhamām gatim

"Attaining repeated birth among the species of demoniac life, such persons can never approach Me. Gradually they sink down to the most abominable type of existence."

The Supreme Personality of Godhead does not allow anyone to act against the stringent laws of material nature; therefore illicit sex is punished life after life. Illicit sex creates pregnancies, and these unwanted pregnancies lead to abortion. Those involved become implicated in these sins, so much so that they are punished in the same way the next life. Thus in the next life they also enter the womb of a mother and are killed in the same way. All these things can be avoided by remaining on the transcendental platform of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In this way one does not commit sinful activity. Illicit sex is the most prominent sin due to lusty desire. When one associates with the mode of passion, he is implicated in suffering life after life."

SB 5.14.9 Translation and Purport

"Queen Kṛtyadyuti's co-wives, who had poisoned the child, were very much ashamed, and they lost all their bodily luster. While lamenting, O King, they remembered the instructions of Aṅgirā and gave up their ambition to bear children. Following the directions of the brāhmaṇas, they went to the bank of the Yamunā, where they bathed and atoned for their sinful activities.

In this verse the word bāla-hatyā-hata-prabhāḥ is to be particularly noted. The practice of killing children has existed in human society for a long time—since time immemorial—but in the days of yore it was very rarely performed. At the present moment, however, in this age of Kali, abortion—killing of the child within the womb—has become very common, and sometimes a child is even killed after birth. If a woman performs such an abominable act, she gradually loses all her bodily luster (bāla-hatyā-hata-prabhāḥ). It is also to be noted that the ladies who had committed the sinful act of administering poison to the child were very much ashamed, and according to the directions of the brāhmaṇas, they had to undergo atonement for killing the child. Any woman who has ever performed such an infamously sinful act must atone for it, but no one now is doing that. Under the circumstances, the women responsible must suffer in this life and the next. Those who are sincere souls, after hearing this incident, should refrain from such child-killing and should atone for their sinful activities by taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness very seriously. If one chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra without offenses, all of one's sinful actions are surely atoned for immediately, but one should not commit such deeds again, for that is an offense."

SB 6.16.14 Translation and Purport

"...There is practically no more family life, and the union of man and woman is gradually degrading to the standard of sexuality. I understand it from reliable sources that people are trying to get Your Holiness' sanction for contraceptive method, which is certainly against any religion of the world.

In the Hindu religion, such contraceptive method or abortion is considered equivalent to murder. Therefore, in the matter of sex, the human society is gradually degrading even less decent than the animals. As a result of unrestricted sense gratification, even in ordinary dealing, a man cannot trust another man, because the cheating

propensity of a man has increased beyond imagination. Attraction of young boys for young girls is no more as a matter of love, but such attraction is only on the basis of sexual potency. As soon as there is slackening of sex life, there is immediately the divorce petition....”

SP Letter to Pope Paul VI (August 3, 1968)

“...Just like in sexual intercourse, if there is no soul there is no conception, no pregnancy. Contraception means to make the womb deteriorated so that it no longer is a good place for the soul. That is against the order of God. By the order of God a soul is sent to a particular womb and by this contraceptive, he is denied that womb and has to be placed in another. That is disobedience of the Supreme. Just as a man who is supposed to live in a particular apartment. If the situation there is so disturbed that he cannot enter the apartment then he is put at a great disadvantage. That is illegal interference and is punishable....”

SP Letter to Dr. Bigelow (January 20, 1971)



## **PART X DEVOTIONAL SERVICE**

“Better than the brāhmaṇa who knows the purpose of the Vedas is he who can dissipate all doubts, and better than him is one who strictly follows brahminical principles. Better than him is one who is liberated from all material contamination, and better than him is a pure devotee, who executes devotional service without expectation of reward.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.29.32

One should try to engage in some specific sevā for the mission of the spiritual master. One may consult one’s mentor in this regard. There are also different kinds of sevā that may be performed in the temple and in various temple projects.

One should not begin any significant venture in one’s life without first receiving the blessings of Vaiṣṇavas. One must always feel oneself dependent on the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas.

One should give up one’s mentality of being the Lord and master, whatever one’s qualifications, abilities and social position. Amongst the devotees particularly in the temple, one’s only designation is ‘SERVANT OF THE SERVANT’.

### **Favourable Principles and Unfavourable Principles**

Śrīla Rupa Goswāmī says in Nectar of Instruction (verses 2 and 3):

atyāhāraḥ prayāsaś ca  
prajalpo niyamāgrahaḥ  
jana-saṅgaś ca laulyaṁ ca  
ṣaḍbhir bhaktir vinaśyati

“One’s devotional service is spoiled when he becomes too entangled in the following six activities:

1. eating more than necessary or collecting more funds than required,
2. over endeavouring for mundane things that are very difficult to obtain,
3. talking unnecessarily about mundane subject matters,
4. practising the spiritual rules and regulations only for the sake of following them and not following regulations of the scriptures and working independently or whimsically,
5. associating with worldly minded persons who are not interested in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness,
6. being greedy for mundane achievements.”

utsāhān niścayād dhairyāt  
tat-tat-karma-pravartanāt  
saṅga-tyāgāt sato vṛtteḥ  
ṣaḍbhir bhaktiḥ prasidhyati

“There are six principles favourable to execution of devotional service:

1. being enthusiastic,
2. endeavouring with confidence,
3. being patient,
4. acting according to regulative principles (such as śravaṇam, kīrtanam, viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam - hearing, chanting and remembering Kṛṣṇa),
5. abandoning the association of non-devotees, and

6. following in the footsteps of the previous ācaryas.

These six principles undoubtedly assure complete success of pure devotional service.”

- Every moment of human life is very precious. So we should not waste a single moment.
- We should make every endeavour to see that we are engaged as much as possible in the devotional service of the Lord.
- The great benediction we have received should not be wasted.

## PART XI HOLY PLACES

### VISITING HOLY PLACES/RETREATS

“In the holy dhāma, if one of my disciples drinks from a jug and contaminates that jug, everyone will notice it. Don't be criticized for this uncleanliness or I will be criticized. It is the duty of the disciples to follow these etiquette habits very austerely.”

Līlāmṛta V, p. 17

Travelling together in pilgrimage to the various holy places is an important and eagerly awaited element of Vaiṣṇava lifestyle. One should plan well and tie up loose ends in one's domestic and official responsibilities so that worrisome thoughts during the yātrā/retreat can be minimised. The idea is that one should prepare oneself for completely immersing the mind in the holy name and Kṛṣṇa-kathā. Yātrās and retreats are meant for spiritual purification and thus there should be no 'prajalpā' or frivolous behaviour. There should be only Kṛṣṇa-kathā and the holy name.

Devotees should freely and lovingly associate with one another avoiding the tendency to form groups according to prior acquaintance. The spirit should be to eat and live together as one family.

Devotees should willingly comply with any rules and discipline that may be set for the yātrā/retreat. This will make the organising easier and will also create a better atmosphere. Particularly, devotees should cooperate regarding timings for re-assembling after breaks and staying together i.e. not dispersing here and there. Devotees should never lag behind but should be together at all times.

One must be willing to bear austerities and inconveniences without complaining. Suggestions regarding the arrangements may be submitted humbly to the proper persons; criticism and complaints simply spoil the atmosphere of the yātrā/retreat.

One should not try to join the yātrā/retreat at the last minute; announcements are made well in advance and one should submit one's name and the fee by the stipulated date. One should stay with the devotees for the whole yātrā/retreat. No independent plans should be made to travel to other places or do other jobs during the yātrā/retreat.

Every single devotee should contribute to maintain a high spiritual mood. Even one unenthusiastic or lazy devotee has a disturbing influence on the mood of the yātrā/retreat. One should be eager to lend a helping hand in serving the devotees and simply be content with receiving a chance to render service. It is important to come to the dhāma in a service mood rather than an enjoying mood. Then our visit will be successful.

If during the yātrā/retreat, the devotees visit any ISKCON or Gaudiya Maṭha temples, we must very carefully respect the principles and the policies of the temple. For instance, in ISKCON temples we should not chant any Guru's name except Śrīla Prabhupāda's. We should avoid any form of argumentation.

Animals are also residents of the dhāma. We should neither befriend them nor make them our enemies. It is best to maintain a neutral position.

One should be careful not to commit offences against the holy dhāma.

## THE TEN OFFENCES AGAINST THE HOLY DHĀMA

1. Contempt and disrespect towards the Guru who is the revealer of the dhāma to his disciple.
2. To think that the holy dhāma is temporary.
3. To commit violence towards any of the residents of the holy dhāma or to any of the pilgrims who come there, or to think that they are ordinary mundane people.
4. Performing mundane activities while living in the holy place.
5. Earning money by making a business of Deity worship and the chanting of the holy name.
6. To think that the holy dhāma belongs to some mundane country or province such as Bengal, or think that the dhāma of the Lord is equal to a holy place connected with some demigod, or to attempt to measure the area of the dhāma.
7. To commit sinful acts while residing in the dhāma.
8. To consider Vṛndāvana and Navadvīpa to be different.
9. To blaspheme the śāstras which glorify the dhāma.
10. To be faithless and think that the glories of the dhāma are imaginary.

Let us remember Lord Caitanya's instructions to Raghunātha Dāsa Goswāmī in the Caitanya Caritāmṛita:

"Do not talk like people in general or hear what they say. You should not eat palatable food, nor should you dress very nicely."

"Do not expect honour, but offer all respect to others. Always chant the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa and within your mind render service to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana."

Supreme indeed is the path of devotional service!

All Glories to Śrī Guru and Sri Gaurāṅga!

Your servants,

Bhaktivedanta Manor Mentorship Committee.

[mentorship@krishnatemple.com](mailto:mentorship@krishnatemple.com)

“My dear Sanatana, although you are the deliverer of the entire universe and although even the demigods and great saints are purified by touching you, it is the characteristic of a devotee to observe and protect the Vaishnava etiquette. Maintenance of the Vaishnava etiquette is the ornament of a devotee”

Caitanya Caritamrita. Antya 4.129 - 130



“Devotee means he is able to tolerate all kinds of discomfort and whims of the material nature, and because he is too much absorbed in serving Krishna he takes no time to become angry or take offense with others or find out some fault. No. Devotee means very liberal and kind to everyone, always gentleman under all kinds of conditions of life”

Srila Prabhupada letter to Hamsaduta (December 10, 1972)