



**His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada**  
*Founder-Acarya of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness*  
(Swami B.V. Tripurari visible in background)



## Krishna Consciousness

### Founding Archarya

Most of the emails I receive from Krishna devotees begin by asking obeisances from Shrila Prabhupada often appending an honorific acknowledging his role in establishing the Krishna Consciousness movement. It is certainly true that without this one small Indian gentleman's trip from India to the United States Vaishnavism would likely not have become such an influence as a movement in the West.

Shrila Prabhupada was born in Calcutta, India in 1896. He took initiation from his spiritual master Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati in 1932 and formally dedicated his life to teaching Vedic wisdom. In 1944 he started publishing an English-language magazine *Back to Godhead*, which continues to be produced by his disciples to this day. Shrila Prabhupada entered the renounced order of sannyas in 1959.

In 1965, he sailed for America landing nearly penniless in Boston on his way to New York City. He began preaching on the Bowery and uptown. He eventually found his way to the Lower East Side and the youth revolution that was beginning there. By the first anniversary of his arrival he had opened a storefront temple at 26 Second Avenue sandwiched between a Laundromat and a warehouse. It was there that he founded the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).

By his death in 1977, he had tirelessly translated numerous volumes of Vedic literature into English and thousands had joined his quickly growing movement.

### Gaudiya Vaishnava

Gaudiya-Vaishnava is one of five Vaishnava schools that emerged in India during the middle ages. Gaudiya-Vaishnavism stems from the teachings of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, born in Mayapura during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Lord Chaitanya is considered to be an actual incarnation of Shri Shri Raddha and Krsna, the Divine Couple. He traveled and taught simply the love of God extending particular attention to those peoples shunned or neglected by the religious institutions of his day.

Chaitanya taught pure devotion to God (*prema-dharma*) emphasizing the chanting of God's holy name, known as the *maha mantra*:



“Hare Krishna Hare Krishna  
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare  
Hare Rama Hare Rama  
Rama Rama Hare Hare”

Lord Chaitanya left only eight written instructions contained in eight *slokas* (verses) known as *Siksastaka*. His teachings were carried on by his closest followers known as the six Gosvamis and their successors in unbroken lines to the present day in such figures as Shрила Prabhupada and his godbrothers.

“Glory to the Sri Kṛṣṇa *sankirtana*, which cleanses the heart of all the dust accumulated for years and extinguishes the fire of conditional life, of repeated birth and death. This *sankirtana* is the prime benediction for humanity at large because it spreads the rays of the benediction moon. It is the life of all transcendental knowledge. It increases the ocean of transcendental bliss, and it enables us to fully taste the nectar for which we are always anxious.” first *sloka* of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu



Jagannatha, his brother Balaram and sister Subhadra (Rama Kesava dasa)



### The Four Regulative Principles

Central to Shрила Prabhupada’s teachings are four basic admonitions, known as the “four regulative principles.” The first: a vegetarian diet based on Vedic knowledge avoiding meat, eggs, fish and certain other items such as onion, mushrooms and garlic. The second: No gambling as this induces unhealthy excitement, elevates passions and increases anxiety. The third: Avoidance of intoxicants such as drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine. The fourth: Avoidance of illicit sex, generally understood to be sex outside of marriage or committed relationships.

These four core instructions do not represent the notion of “sin” as understood by Western religious systems. They instead present an understanding that certain activities increase one’s identification and attachment to the body and the empty, deluding pleasures of the material world.

### Devotional Service

“Renunciation means not to try to give up this world but to work in this world and give the fruits of our work to the service of Krsna.” Shрила Pabhupada (Dharma 34)

In addition to the four regulative principles, noted above, devotees observe other important aspects of their spiritual life. Important among these is the notion of devotional service, the understanding that all positive activities one engages in are undertaken for the benefit of Krishna. Work is performed to acquire the minimum necessary for the devotee to sustain himself/herself and provide for his/her continued service to Lord Krishna. All excess beyond that necessary for the devotee’s life is given over to Krishna. Like Arjuna in his chariot on the battlefield, the devotee of Krishna does not simply drop out of the world. He instead performs his work within the material world in accord with his nature, ability and circumstance, dedicating all the fruits of that work to the Lord.

“Work done as a sacrifice for Visnu [Krishna] has to be performed. Otherwise work binds one to the material world.” *Bhagavad-gita* 3.9



### **Prasadam**

“When a devotee distributes *prasada*, remnants of food offered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in order to maintain our spirit of devotional service we must accept this *prasada* as the Lord’s grace received through the pure devotees. We should also invite pure devotees to our home, offer them *prasada* and be prepared to please them in all respects.” (Nectar 39)

Many devotees’ first introduction to Krishna has been at the meals, known as *prasada*, served at the Sunday feasts held at Krishna temples and at larger festivals throughout the world. These feasts continue to attract the young and counter-cultural just as they did when Shрила Prabhupada began offering *prasada* in the Lower East Side in 1966.

The food, prepared by devotees in accord with Vedic knowledge, is first served to Lord Krishna and consort. After the Lord is given time to partake of the offered food, it is then offered to the guests gathered in the house that Shрила Prabhupada built—his temples and larger community of devotees.

### **Chant & Be Happy**

“One in Krsna consciousness is truly learned, and thus he sees cats and dogs and human beings equally. He doesn’t see outward dress of the body but sees the spirit soul. ‘Here is a spirit soul,’ he thinks ‘part and parcel of Krsna.’ That kind of vision is the basis of universal brotherhood.” (Dharma 94)

The most important practice taught by Lord Chaitanya and carried to the West by Shрила Prabhupada is the simple chanting of the Lord’s name contained in the form of the *Maha Mantra* (above). This chanting when performed alone is known as *japa* and when done in a group is *kirtana*.

*Japa* is chanted in rounds of 108 counting each mantra recitation on a string of prayer beads, known as a *mala*, usually made of the sacred plant Tulsi. A set of attached counter beads allows one to keep track of completed rounds.

When Shрила Prabhupada first introduced the practice of *japa* to his early disciples in New York, they thought it impossible to chant the number of rounds he proposed as a minimum for daily practice. After some discussion, Prabhupada ultimately stated that 16 was the absolute minimum number of daily rounds.



**Further Introductory Reading:**

*Bhagavad Gita As It Is*, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

*Krsna: The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

*Dharma: The Way of Transcendence*, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

**Sources**

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Dharma: The Way of Transcendence*.  
Bhaktivedanta Book Trust: Los Angeles, 1998.

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *The Nectar of Instruction*, translation of Shrila  
Rupa Gosvami's *Sri Upadesamrta*. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust: Los Angeles, 1997.

Mahatma dasa, "Krishna Consciousness at Home." in *Dharma: The Way of  
Transcendence*, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust: Los  
Angeles, 1998, pp. 113-125.

Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, *Prabhupada: He Built a House in Which the Whole World  
Can Live*. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust: Los Angeles, 1983.

