

Devotional Practices

(Part - 1)

Hare Krishna Sunday School
International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Founder Acarya : His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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Name _____

Class _____

Devotional Practices

(Part - 1)

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Hare Krishna Sunday School



*This book is dedicated to
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada,
the founder acarya of the Hare Krishna Movement.
He taught us how to perform pure devotional
service unto the lotus feet of
Sri Sri Radha & Krishna.*

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Lesson 1

Chanting Hare Krishna

A. Introduction

Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, an incarnation of Krishna who appeared 500 years ago, taught the easiest method for self-realization - chanting the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra.



These sixteen words make up the Maha-mantra. Maha means "great." Mantra means "a sound vibration that relieves the mind of all anxieties". We chant this mantra every day, but why?

B. Chanting is the recommended process for this age.

As you know, there are four different ages: Satya-yuga, Treta-yuga, Dvapara-yuga and Kali-yuga. People in Satya-yuga lived for almost 100,000 years whereas in Kali-yuga they live for 100 years at best.

In each age there is a different process for self-realization or understanding God. They are as follows:

1. **Satya-yuga:** By severe tapasya (meditation). Vishvamitra Muni performed tapasya for 60,000 years but was still not successful.

2. **Treta-yuga:** By performing huge fire sacrifices.
3. **Dvarpara-yuga:** By performing opulent Deity worship.
4. **Kali-yuga:** By chanting the Holy names of Krishna, especially the Hare Krishna Mahamantra. It is said in the Puranas that in this age of Kali, this is the only way to be delivered.

Let's learn this verse that tells us about the importance of chanting:

*harer nama harer nama
harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nastyeva nastyeva
nastyeva gatir anyatha*

"In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy (Kali-yuga) the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way."

This is an appeal to the Lord, a prayer which means, "O Lord, O energy of the Lord, please engage me in Your service."

Krishna and His name are nondifferent. When you call Krishna's name, He is there. So when you chant Hare Krishna, Krishna is dancing on your tongue!

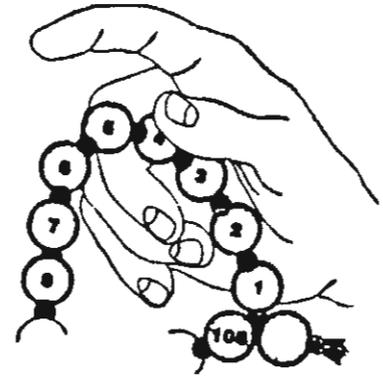
हरेकृष्ण हरेकृष्ण कृष्णकृष्ण हरे हरे
हरेराम हरेराम रामराम हरे हरे

C. Different types of chanting

There are two ways to chant.

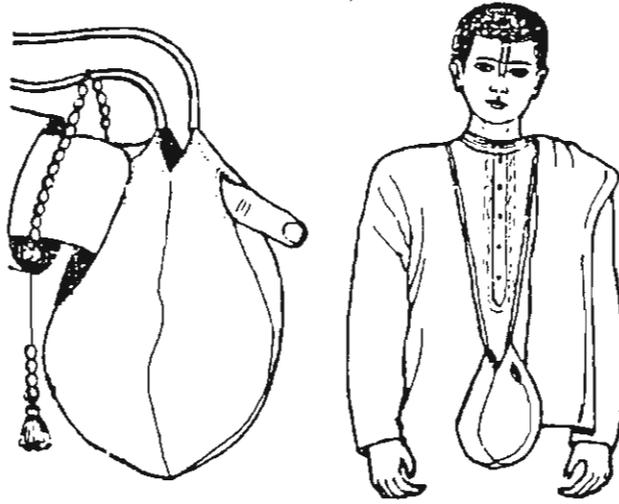
1. Japa, which is soft chanting only for yourself to hear. This is done on japa mala, a string of 108 beads. The 108 beads represent the 108 principal gopis and the 108 Upanishads. Here is how we chant japa:

Take the japa-mala in the right hand, holding it between the thumb and the middle finger (see diagram). The first finger is not used, as it is considered contaminated. Start at the bead next to the head bead. Before chanting Hare Krishna maha-mantra japa chant the Panca-tattva maha-mantra: "sri-krishna-caitanya prabhu nityanada sri-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-vrinda."



Chanting these names of Lord Caitanya and His principle associates helps us become free from offenses in chanting.

Now chant the maha-mantra: "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare." Then move onto the second bead. In this way after chanting the maha-mantra fully each time, move onto another bead. After chanting 108 times, you will again reach the head bead and will then have completed one mala, or round. Now turn the beads around without crossing the head bead and start another round by again chanting "sri-krishna-caitanya prabhu nityanada sri-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-vrinda."



The japa mala is best kept in a bead bag, a special bag made for this purpose. The bead bag has a small hole for keeping the second finger outside and away from the beads. Bead bags are made with a strap so that they may be worn around the neck and thus carried everywhere when not in use (see diagram). Devotees carry their beads with them everywhere so that whenever they get an opportunity they can chant japa. Care should be taken to keep beads and bead bag clean and pure. Bead bags and beads are not worn or taken into the bathroom.

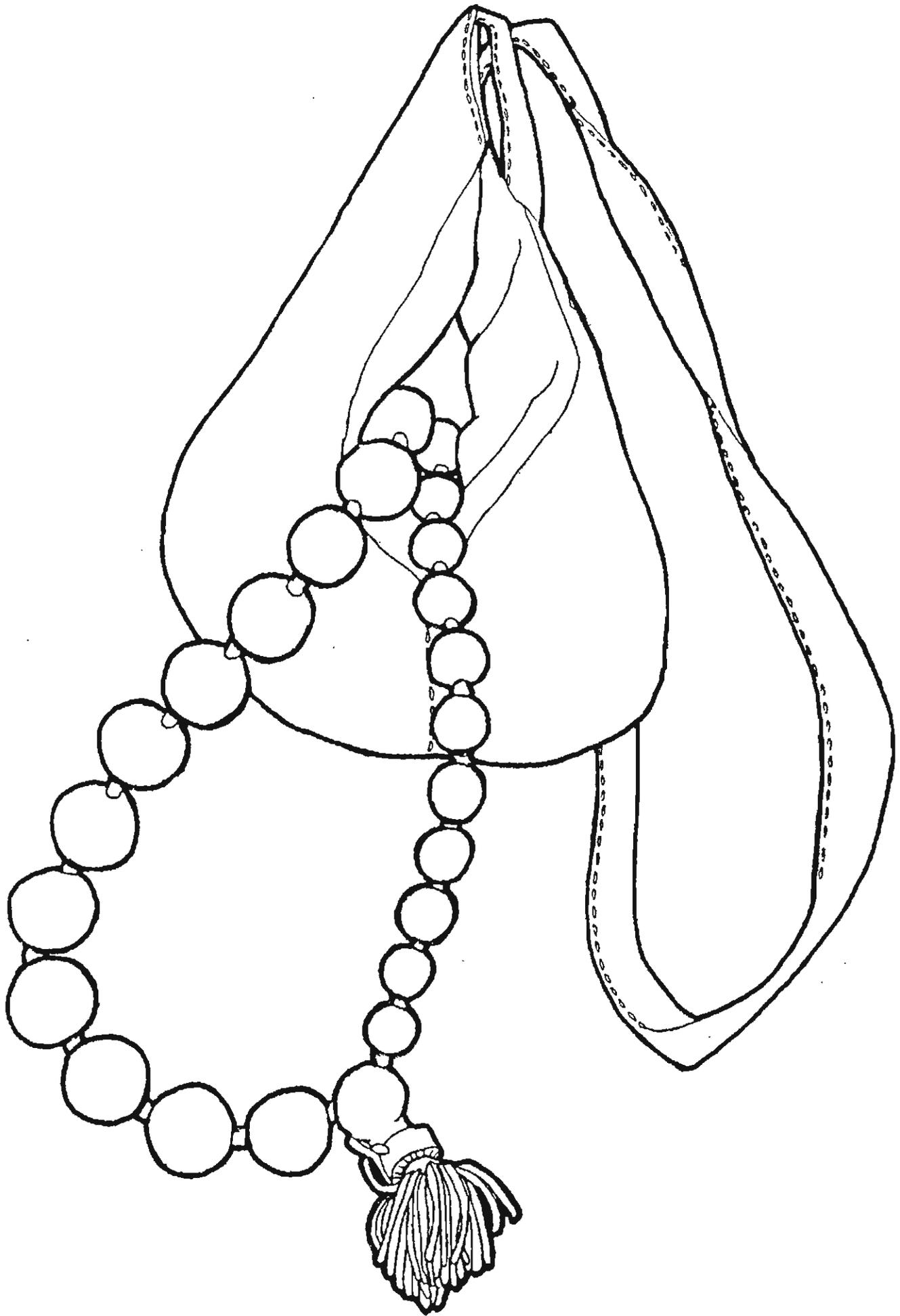
We may be busy with many duties such as school, chores and homework, but we must put aside some time every day to chant Hare Krishna.

2. Kirtan. We can also sing the same mantra with other people. This is called kirtan. We can use kartalas, drums and other musical instruments when we chant in a kirtan.

So, however you choose to do it, chant, chant, chant! And your life will be sublime.



Do you know how valuable the Mahamantra is? Is it worth a dollar, a thousand dollar, a million dollars? The following story will give you a clue.



The Story of Sanatana Goswami's Touchstone

Lord Krishna appeared five hundred years ago on this earth in a very special form -- in the form of His own devotee. He was called Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He spread the chanting of the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra all over the world.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu had many exalted disciples. The six Goswamis of Vrindavana are the most famous of them. Sri Sanatana Goswami was the oldest of the six Goswamis.

Even though Sri Sanatana Goswami had a very good job as the prime minister of Bengal, he left his job and went to Vrindavana on Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's order. There he established temples and wrote many books on Krishna consciousness.

The six Goswamis would stay under a different tree everyday. Sometimes they would also stay at one place and perform bhajan-sadhana. Once Sri Sanatana Goswami was staying in a small hut in Vrajamandala. Sri Sanatana Goswami had a touchstone. Do you know what a touchstone is? It's a stone that can turn iron into gold.

Somehow a thief came to know about the touchstone. He thought, "If I can somehow get that touchstone, then all my problems will be solved. I'll become a very, very rich man and I will never have to steal again." Thus he decided to go to Sri Sanatana Goswami's hut and steal the touchstone.

When he entered Sri Sanatana Goswami's little hut, he saw him sitting in one corner, quietly chanting "*Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna.....*". He started looking around for the



touchstone. He searched and searched but could not find it. So finally he spoke in a loud voice :

"Hey, sadhu baba, tell me where have you hidden the touchstone? "

Sri Sanatana Goswami opened his eyes and said in a humble, sweet voice, "Yes sir, what can I do for you?"

"I have come to steal your touchstone. Tell me where have you hidden it. Tell me or I will kill you," the thief said.

Sri Sanatana Goswami smiled and pointed towards the opposite corner of the hut and said, "It's kept there."

The thief looked in that direction but all he saw was a garbage can. "Where is it?" he asked.

"There in that garbage can", Sri Sanatana Goswami replied. Then he closed his eyes and started chanting, "*Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare , Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*".

The thief ran to the garbage can and started looking through it eagerly. He saw a beautiful, shiny stone -- yes, it was the precious touchstone. He immediately picked it up and ran outside. He ran as fast as he could. He was very, very happy. He would now become the richest person on the Earth!

When he reached his home he started touching all the iron items with the touchstone. Then, wow!!! All of them magically turned into pure gold. The thief became crazy with joy.

Next day in the morning, one of his best friends dropped in for a visit. When his friend saw that the house was full of

gold utensils, in great amazement he asked the thief, "Hey! It seems you robbed the king's treasury today." The thief then explained how he stole the touchstone.

After listening to the whole story, his friend said, "Well, I think you are a big fool."

"A fool -- why?" the thief asked in surprise.

"Well, you said that the touchstone was lying in his garbage can, is that correct?"

"Yes, it was. So?"

"Well, why would someone keep a touchstone in the garbage can?"

"I don't know."

"Because for him it is not something precious."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, it means that the sadhu has something much more precious than this touchstone."

"Hmmm! I never thought of that."

"That's why I said you are a big fool. That sadhu has made a fool of you. He has very cunningly cheated you."

"Humh! I'll go and kill him," the thief said in anger and at once set out for the cottage of Sri Sanatana Goswami. He entered the hut and in great anger shouted, "Hey, sadhu! you cheater....."

Sri Sanatana Goswami, who was quietly chanting his rounds, opened his eyes and very lovingly asked, "What is the matter, my dear sir? Why are you so angry?"

Seeing the peaceful, effulgent face of Sri Sanatana Goswami and hearing his sweet, nectarean voice, the thief calmed down and spoke a little more respectfully. "Sir, I stole a touchstone from your cottage yesterday."

"Didn't that make you happy?", Sri Sanatana Goswami asked.

"No, because it seems that you have something more precious than the touchstone. Otherwise, why would you have kept it in the garbage can?"

"Yes, I have something much more precious," Sri Sanatana Goswami said.

"Then give it to me."

"Of course, but first of all, you will have to throw this touchstone into the Yamuna River."

"Then will you give that more precious thing to me?"

"Yes, if you throw away this touchstone and then take your bath in the Yamuna River. After that, come back to me and I will give you that valuable thing."

Hearing this the thief immediately ran to the Yamuna River and threw the touchstone in it. After taking a bath in the river, he came back to Sri Sanatana Goswami's cottage. As he entered the cottage, he felt very blissful and happy. When he saw the effulgent, transcendently blissful face of Sri Sanatana Goswami, he all of sudden felt very purified. His heart became

filled with a great respect for him. He quietly approached Sri Sanatana Goswami and bowed down before him. Then he humbly said, "O, greatest amongst all saintly persons, I have followed your instructions. Now please give me that valuable thing."

Sri Sanatana Goswami smiled and asked him to come closer. Then Sri Sanatana Goswami spoke the following in his sweet, transcendental voice into the thief's ear, "*Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.*"

Hearing the transcendental sound vibration of the *Hare Krishna* maha-mantra from the lotus lips of Sri Sanatana Goswami, a pure devotee of the Lord, the thief's heart became completely purified. Tears started flowing down his eyes and he felt great ecstasy in his heart. He fell down at Sri Sanatana Goswami's feet and cried and cried and asked for forgiveness.

Then with great humility and love he requested Sri Sanatana Goswami to accept him as his disciple. Sri Sanatana Goswami kindly blessed him and initiated him.

Now the ex-thief became very happy and jubilantly started chanting the *Hare Krishna* maha-mantra and exclaimed, "I've finally obtained the most precious thing in this entire creation. Jai! All glories to my beloved Guru Maharaja! All glories to Sri Sri Radha and Krishna!"

What was the most precious thing that the thief got? Why was it so precious? Can you estimate the value of the Holy Names of Krishna now?

QUESTIONS

1. What does the Hare Krishna mantra mean?

2. What is japa?

3. What is kirtan?

4. How many beads are on a mala? _____

Lesson 2

Wearing Tilak

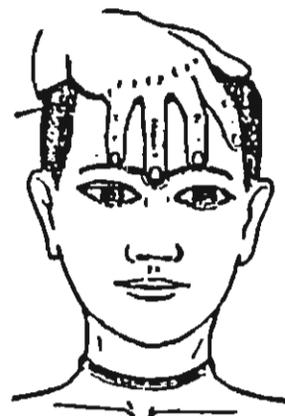
A. Introduction

"What's that stuff on your forehead?" "What does that mark on your face mean?" "Why do you have paint on your nose?" These are some questions that you might hear if you wear tilak. In India wearing tilak is very common but in America hardly anyone knows what it means.

Who are you? Are you your body? Your head, arms, legs, shoulders? Or are you a soul? Yes, we are souls and the presence of the soul makes the body alive. When the soul leaves, the body dies. So what is more important - the body or the soul? (I hope you said the soul.)

B. Why do we apply tilak?

Our body is like a house, or a temple, for the soul. You can identify churches by their tall steeples. Temples often have chakras on the top of their roofs. They are clearly marked as houses of God.



Applying tilak to the forehead

Similarly, we mark our body in twelve places to show that it is a temple for the soul. When we see tilak it reminds us that the soul is what is important. And when other people see tilak on our faces, they are reminded of Krishna. And whenever someone thinks of Krishna they make spiritual advancement. In this way we can help people.



C. What does the Tilak signify?

The two straight lines represent the two lotus feet of Lord Krishna. The leaf-like shape at the bottom represents the "tulasi" leaf. Tulasi is a great devotee of Lord Krishna and is always placed on His lotus feet.

Thus, when we put tilak on our forehead it signifies that we are eternal servants of Lord Krishna and our duty is to always serve His lotus feet.



Correct tilak design

D. What do we use for applying Tilak?

Tilak is made from the clay of the holy rivers - the Ganges or Yamuna. They are rivers in which Krishna had many pastimes and their waters and soil are very purifying. The clay that the Vaishnavas use for applying tilak is called 'Gopichandan'. Do you know why is it called Gopichandan and why we use it for applying tilak? Read the story at the end of this lesson and you will get the answer !!!

If you are unable to wear tilak to school, you can apply tilak water. Instead of using the clay, just say the mantras and make invisible tilak marks with water.

As we mentioned before, the tilak is applied at twelve places on the body. The diagram on Page 17 shows where to apply the tilak.

While applying tilak we chant some mantras. There is a specific mantra for applying tilak at a specific place on the body. Let's now learn a song that will help you learn these mantras!

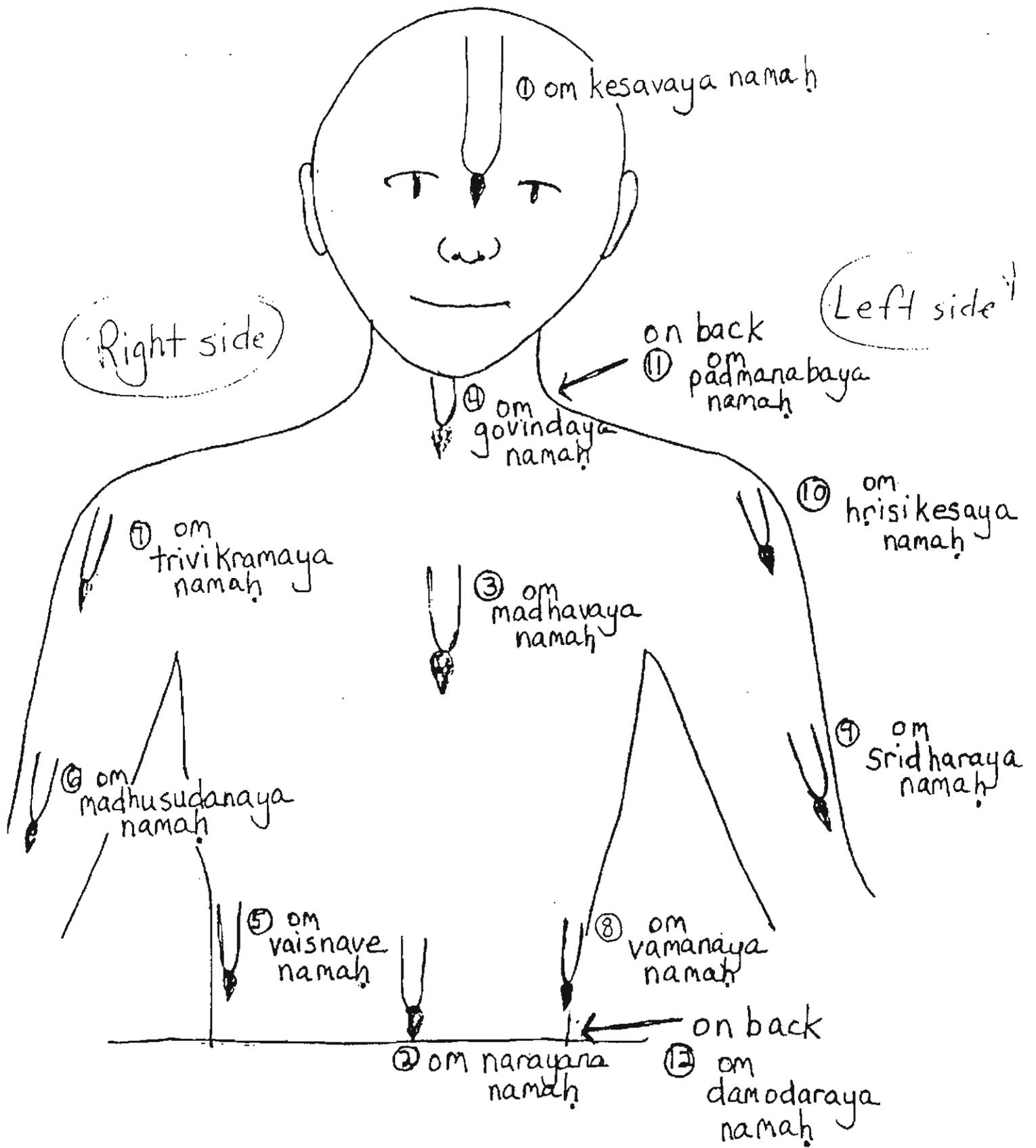
TILOK SONG

- (1) The body is a temple of
Visnu, who's the Supreme Lord
Tilok is his sitting place
We mark our own body and face.

- (2) Om Kesavaya on the forehead
Om Narayanaya on the abdomen
Om Madhavaya on the chest
Om Govindaya on the neck
Om Visnavaya on the right side
Om Madhusudanaya on the right arm
Om Trivikramaya on the right shoulder
Om Vamanaya on the left side
Om Sridharaya on the left arm
Om Hrsikesaya on the left shoulder
Om Padmanabaya back of the neck
Om Damodaraya on the back

- (3) Om Vasudevaya top of the head
We mark with clay as each
Name's said.
Tilok is His sitting place
We mark on our body and face.
(repeat 1st verse)

- (4) Hare Krsna Hare Krsna
Krsna Krsna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare
(repeat 2x)



APPLYING TILAK

The Story of Gopichandan

Do you know why we use the gopichandan for putting tilak on our foreheads? Do you know which place in India it comes from? There is an interesting pastime of Lord Krishna behind the origin of Gopichandan.

Once the great devotee, Sri Narada Muni, had a desire to find out who was the greatest devotee of Lord Krishna. He thought and thought but was unable to come to any conclusion. So he decided to approach Lord Krishna with this question. You know that Sri Narada Muni has a boon that he can travel to any place in the entire creation of the Lord. While traveling through the universe he plays on his vina and in a sweet voice chants, "Jaya Sri Radhika Ramana, Jaya Sri Radhika Ramana".



Sri Narada Muni finally reached the Lord's residential palace and went inside to have His darshana. He saw the Lord lying on a couch and holding His head in His hands. Sri Narada paid his obeisances to the Lord and inquired, "My dear Lord, what is the matter? Are You alright?"

The Lord looked at him and said, "O my dear Narada, I have a severe ache in my head."

"A headache!" Sri Narada Muni was a little amazed. He said, "Let me massage Your head, my Lord."

"No thank you, Narada. This headache will not go away so easily."

"Then how can it be cured? Please tell me, my beloved Lord."

"If a devotee of mine gives me some dust from his feet and if I put that dust on my head, only then will this headache subside," Lord Krishna said.

"Dust from the feet of a devotee!"

"Yes, Narada, can you please go and get for Me some dust from the feet of one of My devotees?"

" Yes, my dear Lord. But I came here to ask You a question" "

"I'll answer your question later. First of all, kindly help Me get rid of this terrible headache."

"Yes, yes. As you order, I will go right away and get some dust." Saying this Sri Narada left the Lord's palace to get some dust from the feet of one of His devotees. He was wondering who would agree to give the dust from his feet.

On his way, he saw some devout brahmanas worshipping Lord Krishna with great devotion in a temple. Seeing Sri Narada Muni, they inquired, "O respected Naradaji, how is our dearest Lord Krishna today?"

"Oh! He is alright..... but He has a severe headache today," Sri Narada Muni replied.

"A headache!", exclaimed the brahmanas, "Let us perform some yajnas and kirtan. Let us also engage in strict austerities to relieve the Lord of His headache."

"No, all this will not cure His headache," Sri Narada said.

"Then what will cure Him?"

"If you will give some dust from your feet and the Lord places it on His head, then He will be relieved."

"Dust from our feet!" the brahmanas exclaimed, "Naradaji, have you gone mad? Do you want us to commit this great offense and so to hell? No! No! we cannot do this."

Hearing this Sri Narada Muni left that place.

On his way he saw the five Pandava brothers. They are all considered personal friends and great devotees of Krishna. So Narada Muni approached them and requested some of the dust from their feet. The Pandavas were shocked at Narada Muni's request. They refused to oblige him. Even Arjuna refused.

They said, "Don't you know that Krishna is the Supreme Lord? Even though He very kindly treats us as His friends, He is actually none other than the Supreme Personality of Godhead. How can we commit this sin? No, no, please forgive us."

Having been refused by the Pandavas, Srila Narada Muni continued his search for the dust from a devotee's feet. As he entered Dwaraka, he met Uddhava and Akura. Uddhava is a very very close friend and adviser of Krishna and Akura is His maternal uncle.

When Uddhava and Akura saw Sri Narada Muni, they immediately paid obeisances to him. Srila Narada Muni

blessed them and informed them of the Lord's headache. He then requested them to give some dust from their feet. However, both Uddhava and Akura politely refused.

Then Srila Narada Muni went to the queens of Lord Krishna in Dwarka. Lord Krishna had 16,108 queens. They paid their respectful obeisances to Srila Narada Muni and offered him a seat of honor. When he told them about the Lord's headache, they all became very worried. Queen Rukmini almost began crying. "O! What has happened to my beloved Lord?! How did he get this headache?"

"Well, that I do not know," Srila Narada Muni replied, "but I know how it can be cured."

"How?" all the queens asked at once.

"If you can give me some of the dust from your feet and Krishna puts it on His head, then His headache will be cured," Srila Narada Muni said.

"What? The dust from our feet?" the queens exclaimed.

"Yes, some dust from your feet," Srila Narada Muni said.

"No, Naradaji, how can we do this? Lord Krishna is our husband and we are His caste wives. How can we do something like this?"

"But this is the desire of the Lord," Srila Narada Muni urged.

"Whatever it may be, but we cannot commit this mahaparada." Saying this the queens left that place.

Srila Narada Muni left Dwarka and decided to go to Vrindavana. Vrindavana is the place where Krishna spent His childhood. . . Everyone in Vrindavana loves Krishna very much. So Srila Narada Muni hoped that he would have some luck there.

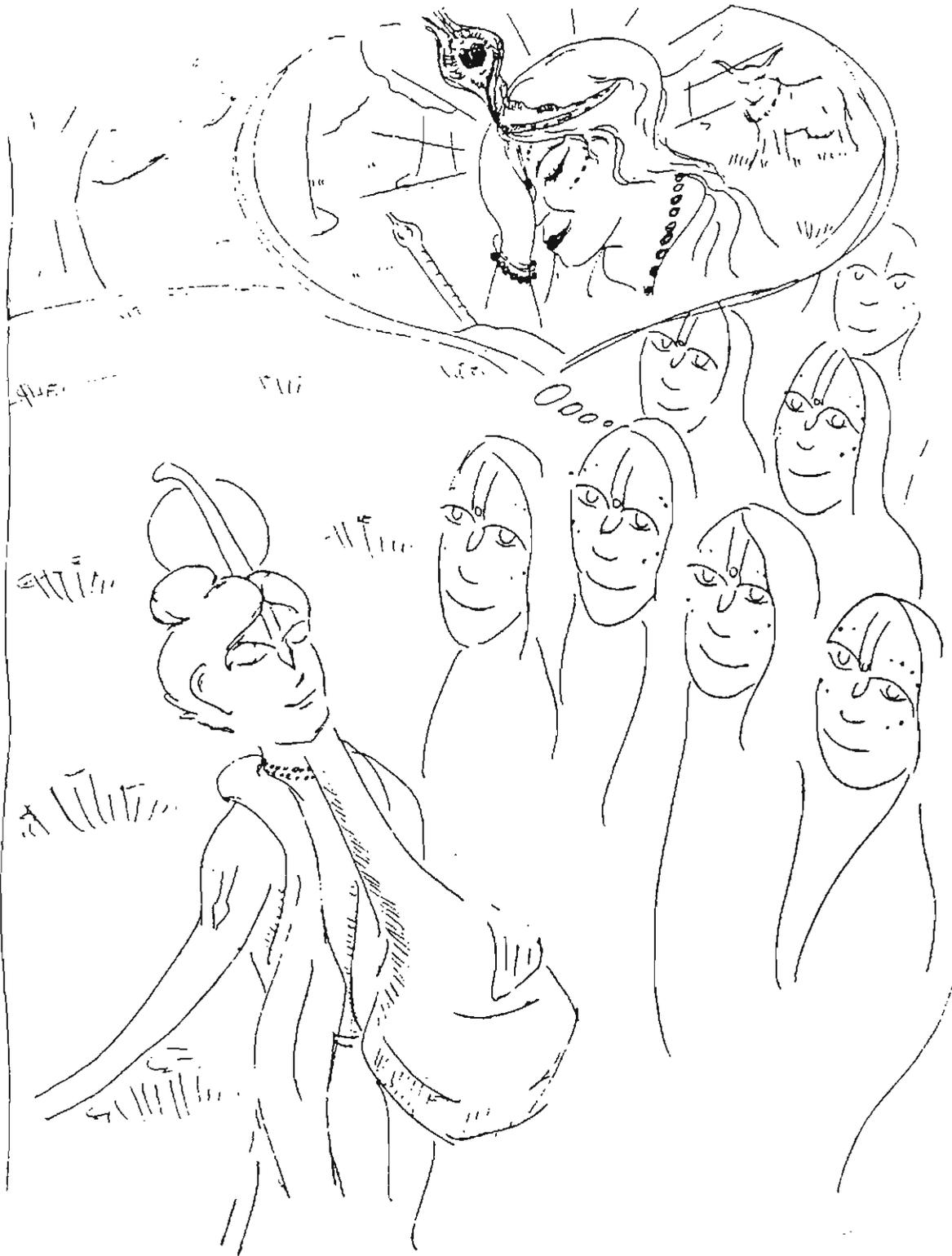
But he was also not very successful there. Most of the residents of Vrindavana refused to give dust from their feet. Even the cowherd friends of Krishna refused. They all love Krishna very much and, of course, they were all very concerned about His headache. They offered to massage His head with nice oils or do anything else, but they refused to give dust from their feet.

Now Srila Narada Muni felt very, very helpless.

Srila Narada Muni was about to leave Sri Vrindavana dham when he passed by a kunjia (a garden full of flowers). He saw thousands of gopis in the kunjia. They were all talking about Krishna and remembering His sweet pastimes. Sometimes they would laugh and sometimes they would start crying thinking of their beloved Krishna.

When the gopis saw Srila Narada Muni they paid their obeisances. Then they inquired how their dear Krishna was? Sri Narada Muni informed them about the Lord's headache. Hearing this the gopis were very much disturbed and inquired what could be done to relieve the Lord of His headache.

Sri Narada Muni stayed quiet. He had told so many devotees about the cure for Krishna's headache. But he had always been refused. So he was not very hopeful this time. The gopis asked again if something could be done. They were very anxious to relieve their beloved Krishna of the headache. When they insisted for some time, Srila Narada Muni finally replied, "If you give me some dust from your feet



and Krishna puts it on His head, then His headache will be cured."

"Will that cure His headache?" the gopis asked.

"Yes, it will."

"Are you sure, Naradaji?"

"Yes, that's what the Lord told me."

"Okay. Then let's go to the banks of the Yamuna. We can walk on the dust on the Yamuna's bank. You should fill many huge bags with that dust and take it to Krishna," the gopis said.

Hearing this Sri Narada Muni was extremely surprised. He could not believe it. "Aren't you afraid of going to hell?" he asked.

"Why?"

"Because.....because Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If you let Him put the dust from your feet on His head, then you will have to go to hell for this sinful act," he replied.

"Well, we don't really care if we go to hell. All that we know is that Krishna is our most beloved. He is our life and soul. We are ready to do anything that will give Him happiness. Even if it means that we have to go to the most horrible of hells." Srila Narada Muni was wonder struck at the depth, purity and sincerity of their devotion to Sri Krishna. Within his mind he paid prostrated obeisances to all the gopis and prayed that he may be blessed with the same mood of selfless devotion.

"What are you thinking, Naradaji?" The gopis said, "Let's hurry up. Krishna must be feeling so much pain! Please take the dust to Him immediately."

Thus they all went to the banks of the Yamuna. Thousands of gopis walked over miles and miles of dust along the Yamuna's banks. Then Narada Muni took all the dust and left for Dwarka.

On reaching Dwarka, he immediately went to see Krishna. Krishna was of course, waiting for him. "Did you bring some dust, Naradaji?"

"Yes, my Lord." Naradaji opened one of the huge bags he had brought with him. Krishna took a lot of that dust and placed it on His head. He immediately felt very happy and satisfied.

"Who gave you so much dust, Naradaji?" he asked.

"The gopis, my Lord."

Then he narrated his entire adventure. Krishna was very pleased to hear all this. He then asked, "Narada, is your question answered now?"

"Yes, my Lord." With tears in his eyes, Sri Narada Muni paid obeisances to his beloved Lord Krishna. The dust that he had brought from Vrindavana became "Gopi-chandan." The Gaudiya Vaisnavas still use this dust to apply tilak on their bodies and pray for the mercy of the gopis. This is how "Gopi-chandan" came into existence.

Can you answer these:

1. What was the answer to Sri Narada Muni's question?
2. What important lesson did you learn from this pastime?

QUESTIONS

1. What is tilak made from?

2. Give at least two reasons why we wear tilak.

3. If you can not wear tilak in public, what can you do?

tilak

A A V I A H M A Y Y A Y A A I
R A D A M O D A R A Y A Y A D
H R S I K E S A Y A Y Y Y N
N E R N A E A V N A A P A A
A V A M P A A R V Y N S A M Y
V A A R Y T A A A A M R D R A
A H S M K A N D D Y A I M V M
I A V A M S N U A A D D A A A
A I M Y I I S A S N H H N M R
N A A V V U S D A A A A A A K
A A R O H D A A Y R V R E N I
A D G D A A M N Y A A A A A V
A P A A A M I A A N Y Y Y Y I
A M Y Y A V A U A A A A A R
A A A V A A A Y A V A S E K T

KESAVAYA
MADHUSUDANAYA
PADMANABAYA

VISNAVAYA
HRSIKESAYA
GOVINDAYA

SRIDHARAYA
MADHAVAYA
VAMANAYA

NARANAYA
TRIVIKRAMAYA
DAMODARAYA

Lesson 3

Vaisnava Dress and Appearance

A. Introduction



Anywhere in the world, England, Africa, America, Spain, Russia, you can step into an ISKCON temple and see people wearing saris, dhotis and kurtas. It almost seems as though you are in India.

Why do the devotees dress that way? Why not just wear skirts, jeans, etc.? Have your American friends ever questioned you about your traditional dress (sari, dhoti etc.) ?

B. "Simple living, high thinking"

Our motto is "Simple living and high thinking." We want our lifestyle to be simple so that we have more time to perform spiritual activities. Fashions are constantly changing in today's world. You always have to buy new clothes to stay in fashion. This takes a lot of time and costs a lot of money. But saris have been worn in India for thousands of years and are still beautiful and fashionable. Dhotis, also.

Both dhotis and saris are simply lengths of cloth that are wrapped around the body in different ways. They are easy to keep clean, cool and comfortable.

Dressing in a sari or dhoti also reminds others about Krishna. Just as a policeman is recognized by his uniform, a devotee shows his commitment to Krishna by dressing like a devotee. In the spiritual world you'll find all of Krishna's associates dressed in dhotis and saris.



Brahmacaris and sannyasis (unmarried men who dedicate their lives completely to Krishna) wear saffron (orange colored) cloth. Married men wear white.

C. Why do male devotees shave their heads?

You may also see some men with shaven heads. Why in the world would anyone want to shave their hair off? It is a sign of renunciation of the body. Again, people spend so much time on their hair styles. Much of our beauty depends on our hair. As Krsna conscious devotees, we want to spend less time thinking about our bodies and more time thinking about Krishna. So, a man may shave his head as a way of becoming less attached to his body.

A devotee keeps his body, clothes, possessions, residence and everything else always neat, clean and tidy. Devotees wear freshly washed clothes every day and take bath or shower at least once a day.

On the following page there is an article that appeared in the Back to Godhead magazine. It was written by a teenage girl explaining why she wears a sari.

Why I Wear a Sārī

A graduate of Kṛṣṇa conscious schools tells why she chooses to wear the traditional Vedic dress.

by Madirekṣanā Devī Dāsi



Yamena Das

matters of dress. Although our religions are different, there was an immediate bond between us because we recognized each other as people of God.

Hare Kṛṣṇa women don't have to wear a sārī, but I choose to wear one because it forces me to constantly prove myself as a religious person—to other people, to other Hare Kṛṣṇas, and to myself.

My sārī makes people want to know why I don't conform. People ask me what my purpose is in life and why I have to wear a sārī to fulfill that purpose. This is what I tell them:

The thrust of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is to dedicate one's life to God (Kṛṣṇa) by acting piously and by thinking about Him as much as possible. Acting piously starts with giving up

gambling, intoxicants, meat-eating, and illicit sex. We think about Kṛṣṇa by, among other things, reading scriptures and singing Kṛṣṇa's name. That's why the favorite pastime of Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees is singing Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Wearing a sārī helps me stay pious and remember Kṛṣṇa because it helps keep me away from sinful activities. It helps remind me and others that I'm a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, in the same way a policeman's uniform helps him remember his service and reminds citizens he's an agent of the law. While in uniform, he must be especially careful to follow the codes of conduct for a policeman.

Being constantly aware of my purpose in life makes me always try to act carefully so as not to make my religion look bad. When I'm in a sārī I

have to remember that I represent the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Everything I do or say will reflect on my religion. If one police officer gets out of line, the entire police force becomes embarrassed and is often held to blame.

Occasionally, I've done something foolish in public while wearing a sārī and have felt embarrassed not only for myself but for all Hare Kṛṣṇas.

My sārī tells other Kṛṣṇa devotees I'm a serious practitioner. Many devotees wear their religious dress only for ceremonies at the temple. By wearing my sārī everywhere, I show other devotees I'm serious about my religion and won't stray.

It's easy to be a Hare Kṛṣṇa around other Hare Kṛṣṇas, but to be one around people who may be doubtful, intolerant, unconcerned, or even antagonistic will make me a stronger devotee. The test of a true religious person is the internal determination, not the external dress. I'm not the Hare Kṛṣṇa I want to be unless I'm one in all circumstances, good or bad—in sickness or health, in wealth or poverty.

By staying Kṛṣṇa conscious in all circumstances, I can prove to myself that I'm a serious devotee of Kṛṣṇa. So, except for the occasional fear that I might trip on my sārī and fall down the administration building stairs, I proudly and cheerfully wear sārīs to college. After all, I'm a Hare Kṛṣṇa whether I'm wearing a sārī or not. Might as well warn people! ☺

Madirekṣanā Devī Dāsi, age 19, attended Kṛṣṇa conscious schools for all but one year of her education. She took many college courses by independent study and has begun attending the University of North Carolina as a sophomore. After graduation, she plans to teach at a Kṛṣṇa conscious high school.

WHY DO THEY cover their heads?" the small Catholic girl asked of the nun holding her hand.

The girl was unabashedly pointing at me across the room of the glass blower's cabin at colonial Greenfield Village in Michigan. She was with her Catholic school, and I was with my Hare Kṛṣṇa school. My girlfriends and I were all wearing colorful sārīs, our heads covered.

The nun looked at me, probably because I was the oldest girl there, and smiled. I returned the smile and heard her tell the girl, "For the same reason I do."

I was flattered and amazed that she had instantly understood that I was a religious woman just as she was, trying my best to follow God's laws even in

QUESTIONS

1. Give two reasons why we dress in Vaisnava clothes.

2. Draw a picture of someone in Vaisnava clothes. (Don't forget tilak, neck beads, etc.)

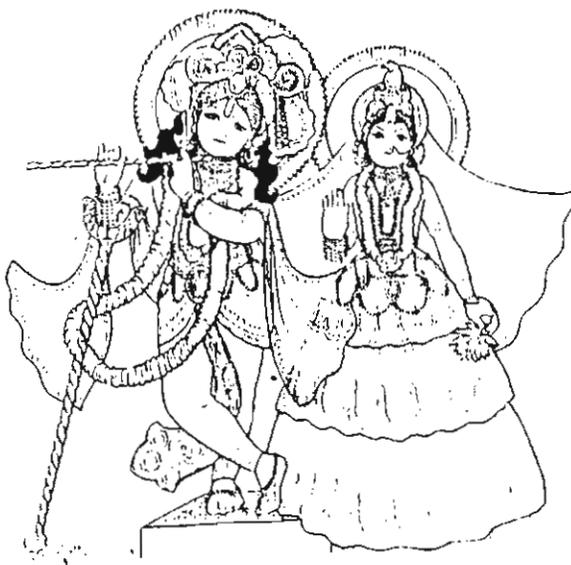
Lesson 4

Deity Worship

A. Introduction

When you enter a Hare Krishna temple (or some other Hindu temple), you will usually see Deities on an altar. What are Deities? Are They statues just to remind us of Krishna? Can the stone Deities be God ?

Deities are not just any ordinary statues. They are much more than that. Actually, They are non-different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.



B. What are Deities?

The Supreme Lord can manifest Himself in many forms. From time to time, He appears in the form of different incarnations. But He also appears in the form of His Holy name, His dham and in the form of His Deity. So a Deity properly established by pure devotees according to the Vaishnava principles is non - different from Krishna Himself.

But how can one be sure that God or Krishna looks like the Deity that you see in the temple? First of all, a Deity must be made properly. We have never seen Krishna so how would we know how to carve His features? Can we just imagine what He might look like and make that into a Deity form? No, we can't do that. But there are great, pure souls who have seen Krishna and have recorded His appearance in the scriptures. Scriptures such as the Brahma-samhita describe how Krishna looks. And only certain materials can be used to make the Deity. So the Deity must be authorized or made in accordance with the Vedic scriptures.

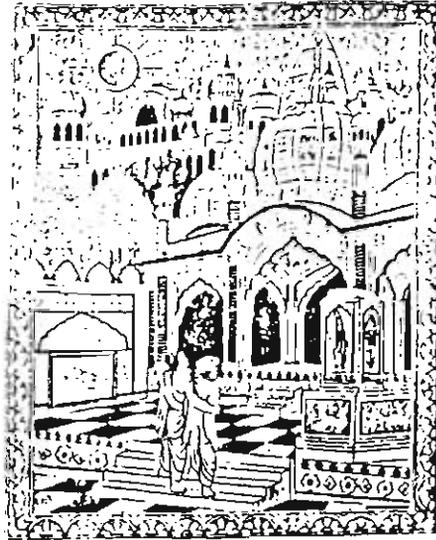
Because we can only see material things, Krishna kindly appears in these forms so He can accept our worship. We don't have to wait until we go back to the spiritual world to serve Krishna. We can serve Him now, as the Deity, by offering food, sewing clothes, offering arati and meditating on Him. By worshipping the Deities, our material desires gradually go away and we develop our relationship with the Lord. There are many instances where the Deity spoke, walked or changed form. The following story of Saksi Gopal shows how the Deity is really Krishna, not just a statue.

Sakshi Gopal: A witness for the Wedding

Once, two brahmins from Vidyanagar, south India, went on a pilgrimage. One brahmin was young and poor and he served the other who was old and wealthy.

They visited Gaya, Kashi, Prayag and Mathura. From there they went to Vrindavana where they visited the temple of Gopal. The beauty of the Deity of Gopal made them stay in Vrindavana for several days. The old brahmin was so

pleased with the young man's services that he promised to give him his daughter in marriage. The young brahmin replied that he only rendered him service to please Lord Krishna, who likes to see His devotees serving the brahmins. He also argued that the elderly man's family would not be pleased with his decision since he was uneducated and poor.



The old man insisted that no one could make him change his mind, so the young brahmin asked him to make his offer in front of the deity. They both went in the temple and the old brahmin made his promise. Then the young brahmin spoke, "Dear Lord, I may call for you to testify as my witness." The two men then returned to Vidyanagar.

Some days later, the old brahmin told his family and friends about his promise. Everyone said that he should not give his daughter to the poor man and urged him to break his promise. They did not realize that a poor man can be the best husband if he is a devotee of the Lord. The brahmin argued that, if he broke his promise, the young man would call the Deity as his witness and Gopal would be very displeased with him. The relatives threatened to commit suicide if the daughter was given away to the young brahmin. The brahmin's oldest son advised him to say that he doesn't remember anything. He added that the Deity lives far away in Vrindavana. How could He come to Vidyanagar?

The father prayed to Gopal, "Dear Gopal, please help me keep my promise and still save my family from killing themselves."

The next day, the young brahmin came to ask about the marriage but the elderly brahmin remained silent. His son screamed at the young man, threatening to beat him. The young brahmin ran away, but the next day he gathered the villagers and told them about the old brahmin's promise. When the villagers questioned him, the brahmin said that he did not remember making such a promise. His son stood up and said, "This boy is a thief. He stole my father's money while on pilgrimage and now he is claiming that my father promised him his daughter."

The villagers did not know whom to believe. The young brahmin told them about the witness Gopal. Then the old man admitted that the young man was telling the truth. He said that if Gopal came there as the witness, he would give away his daughter. He was sure Gopal would help him keep his promise. Everyone liked the idea of inviting Gopal, even the brahmin's son, who believed that the Deity could not walk or talk.



The young brahmin left for Vrindavana and as soon as he reached the holy village, he went to see Gopal. "Dear Lord," he said, "I am not interested in marrying the brahmin's daughter. I only feel pain that he broke his religious principle

of truthfulness. Please be merciful to us and save us from sins by acting as my witness."



The Gopal Deity spoke and argued that he has never heard of a Deity walking from one place to another. The young brahmin replied, "If you can talk, you can walk. You are not a statue. You are Krishna Himself, the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

Gopal smiled and said, "I shall go with you. I shall walk behind you, but do not try to see Me by turning around. If you look at Me, I will remain fixed in that very spot.

You will know that I am walking behind you by the sound of My ankle bells. Cook rice daily and offer it to Me."

They started their journey the next day and walked for one hundred days. Finally, they arrived at Vidyanagar. The young brahmin turned around and looked into the smiling face of Gopal. "Now you can go home," Gopal said. "I will stay here."

The young brahmin ran to the village and told everyone of Gopal's arrival. All were struck with wonder. The old brahmin fell at the feet of Gopal. Thus, Gopal bore witness that the old brahmin had indeed offered his daughter in

marriage to the young brahmin. The wedding ceremony was then held at the very spot. Afterwards, Gopal told both brahmins that He was pleased by their truthfulness and He offered them any blessing they desired. The brahmins begged the Lord to remain in Vidyanagar to prove how merciful He is to His devotees.

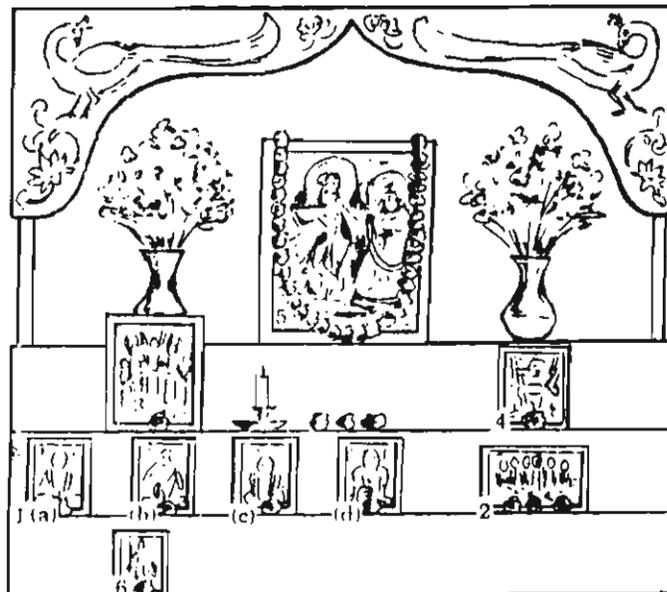
Gopal agreed to stay in Vidyanagar and to this very day He is worshipped there by truthful brahmins. People from many countries came to see Gopal and at last the king also came and built a beautiful temple for the Lord. That temple is known as the temple of Sakshi Gopal, the witness Gopal.

The End

C. Make an altar at your home

What happens if you live far away from a temple and can not go to see the Deities every day? You can have a temple at home and change your ordinary house into a sacred place.

PROJECT : Make an altar in your room



How nice it would be if you had an altar in your room. Well, it is very easy. The picture on the previous page is a diagram that shows what pictures you will need and at what level you should place them. If that is too difficult, you can put a nice table cloth on a table and put the pictures on it.

From the list below, check the pictures that you already have. You can purchase the other ones from the Gift shop at the temple. Or you can cut them out from some book and put them in nice frames.

1. *The sampradaya acharyas* : (a) Srila Prabhupada, (b) Srila Bhaktisiddhnata Saraswati Thakur, (c) Srila Gaur Kishor das Babaji, (d) Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, (e) Srila Jagannatha das Babaji.
 2. *The Six Goswamis of Vrindavan*
 3. *The Panca Tattva* : Lord Caitanya and His four principle associates.
 4. *Lord Nrisimhadeva,*
 5. *Sri Sri Radha Krishna*
 6. Picture of *the spiritual master* from whom you may want to take initiation in the future.
 7. *A Tulasi plant* or its picture.
-

D. Care of Sacred Items

Sacred items (such as spiritual books, puja paraphernalia, beads and bead bags, mridangas, kartals and pictures of the Supreme Lord and His devotees) should all be kept carefully and respectfully. They should be kept neatly and never put in a bathroom or dirty place. After use they should be put away tidily. They should never be put on the floor or stepped over.

altar-temple

H S R A A R L H A G I H S
N L L B A N A A C H A N G
D N N I A T Y I E A B S A
A Y I A A I N I N I D R R
I A T R I G S L H I A I J
A A Y A I Y I S R T N I Y
D A A B S A S R A D Y B C
E A N T I A Y T I E D Y A
R S A Y R K E N E R E A D
R Y N B M D R A A I A S I
A A D Y H A B I A R A J K
D H A S S A R A S Y S D A
H I A E A H R B A H N E E
A Y N A T I A C L R N M I
A R N A A S A A N E I A R

DEITY
BRASS

NITYANANDA
GIRIRAJA

MARBLE
CAITANYA

RADHA
KRISHNA



QUESTIONS

1. What are some things that you can do for the Deities ?

2. Is the Deity same as Krishna Himself ? How can you realize that ?

3. What lesson did you learn from the story of 'Sakshi Gopal' ?

4. What are the different forms in which the Supreme Lord can manifest Himself ?

Lesson 5

Offering Arati

A. Introduction:

In the last lesson you studied about Deity worship. You also learned how to set up an altar at your home. Well, now that you have an altar, you should also learn how to offer arati.

You must have observed at the ISKCON temples, arati is done very systematically and on time. This is important. Vaisnava scriptures such as "Hari Bhaktivilas," "Narada Pancaratna," etc. elaborately describe the process for offering arati. However, we will only briefly describe it here.

B. Preparing for Arati

The most important thing is cleanliness. Everything in the Deity room and all the paraphernalia for worship should be kept spotlessly clean.

Before offering arati one should take a bath and put on clean, fresh clothes. It is best to wear cotton or silk clothes only. One should wear Vaisnava style dress, not western style. Once you are ready the following items should be collected and placed on the arati plate specifically kept for this purpose [see diagram]. The numbers correspond to the items:

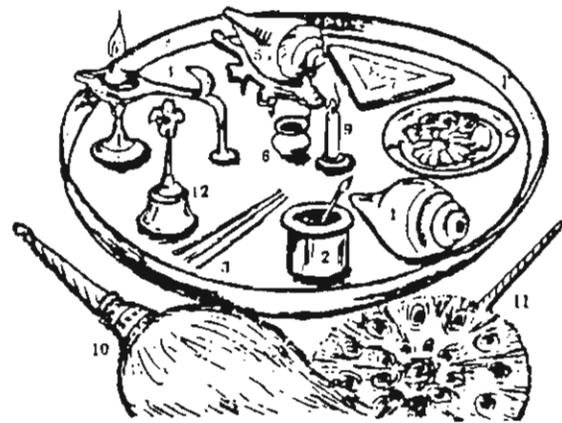
1. A conch for blowing
2. A cup filled with fresh water and a spoon (acamana cup).
3. Incense - at least three sticks.
4. A ghee lamp with five wicks (a ghee lamp with one wick may be used instead).

5. A conch for offering water and a stand to rest it on.
6. A container of water for offering.
7. A small piece of cloth. Clean handkerchiefs are commonly used.
8. A small plate of flowers.
9. An oil wick or candle (& matches).
10. A camara (whisk)
11. Peacock fan
12. A bell

There is a short song you can learn that will help you to remember what goes on an arati tray:

Incense, camphor, ghee and water,
 Hankie, flower, fan and yak.
 Krishna gives us everything
 And now we learn to give it back.

Blow the conchshell, ring the bell
 Wash each item for the Lord.
 Offer with love and devotion.
 Pleasing Krishna's our reward.



C. Offering Arati

Once you have all the items for puja on the arati tray you should do the following:

1. *Pay obeisances* outside the Deity room or in front of the altar (if you are at home).
2. *Perform acamana* as follows:
 Take the spoon from the acamana cup in your left hand and place a few drops of water on your right hand. Sip it and say "*om keshavaya namah.*" Then wash the right hand by

putting a few drops of water on it and shaking it off (repeat this three times). Again sip a few drops of water from your right hand this time saying, "*om narayana namah.*" Wash the right hand as before and repeat the third time saying, "*om madhavaya namah.*"

3. *Purify the conchshell* by putting a few drops of Ganges water on it. Then blow the conchshell. (Do you know how to blow it?)

4. Each arati item should be purified before offering. Each item is offered by circling it in a clockwise direction around the picture or the Deity. Then the items are offered to various worshipable personalities in the following sequence:

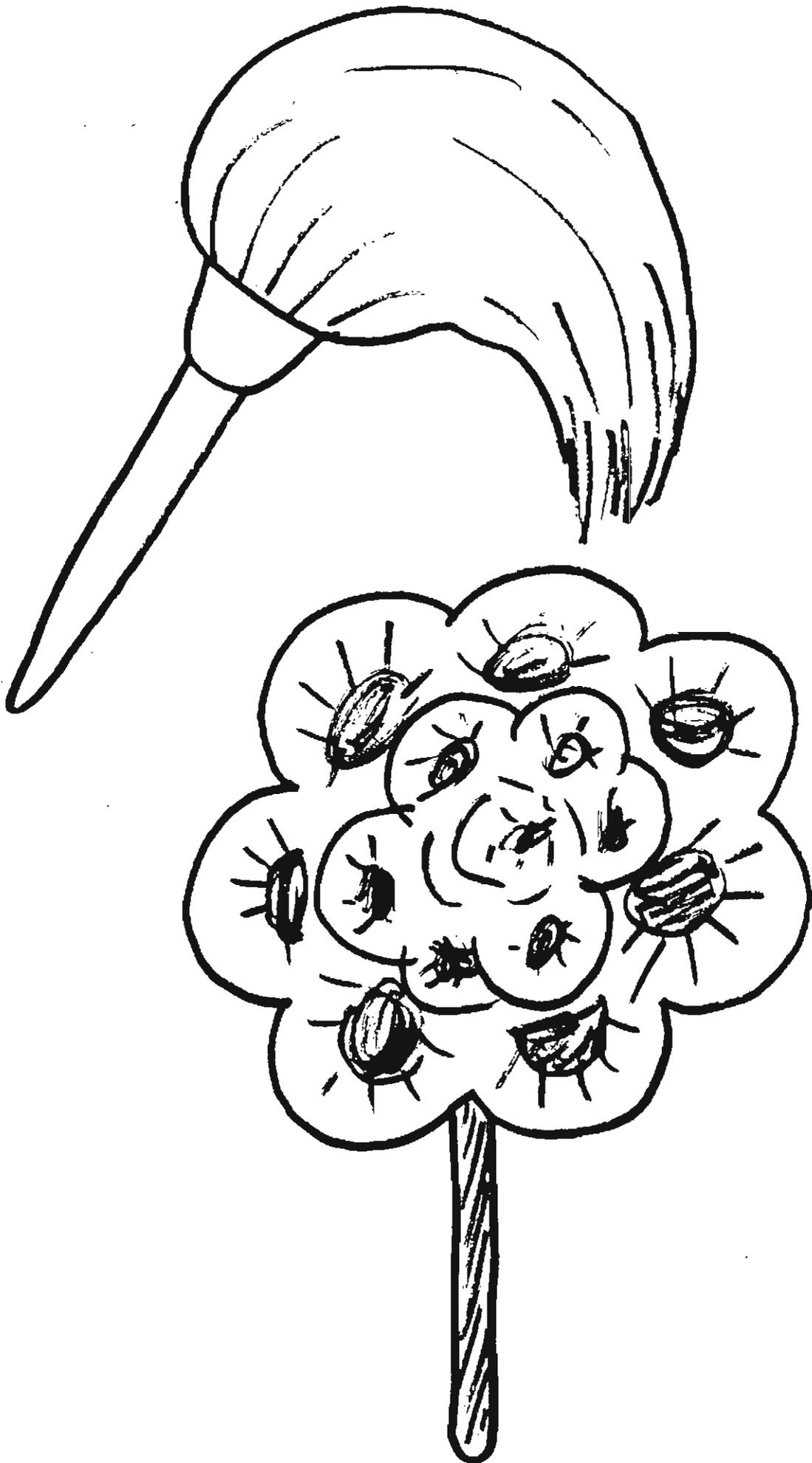
- a) Guru
- b) Param Guru
- c) Lord Nityananada
- d) Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu
- e) Srimati Radharani
- f) Lord Krishna

The understanding is that the worshipper feels himself unworthy to offer anything directly to Krishna so he offers everything first to his guru, the guru offers everything to his guru and in this way everything is offered up through the parampara to Krishna.

5. Each item should be offered by making circles **7 times** around the entire *vighraha* (body) of the Deity.

Activity: The next page has drawings of all the arati paraphernalia. Cut them out and use them for doing a 'mock' arati.





Lesson 6

Offering Obeisances

A. Introduction

Do you remember your parents taking you to a temple when you were a small child? Did they ask you to bow down before the Deities? Did you wonder why on earth you have to take so much pain for bowing down?

B. Why do we offer obeisances?

You have learned before that we are not this body but spirit souls. We are eternal part and parcels of the Supreme Lord, Krishna. He is the Supreme Creator and our Supreme father. Everything in this world is provided by Him. Thus we need to acknowledge His Supremacy. Just as you pay respects to your parents and elders, similarly we should pay respects to the eldest of all: the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In the Vedic tradition the best way to pay respects is by offering obeisances.

Offering obeisances is an important part of devotional service by which the devotee confirms his attitude of submission. Obeisances are especially meant to be offered to the Supreme Lord and His devotees.

The picture on the adjacent page shows Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu paying full prostrated obeisances to Lord Jagannatha in Sri Jagannatha Puri. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu felt great ecstasy on seeing the beautiful Deities of Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra.

You may want to color this picture.



C. Types of Obeisances

1. Obeisances are offered by fully prostrating on the ground, head down. (In technical terms it is called 'sashtanga dandavat')



2. Obeisances are offered by placing the head, lower legs and forearms only, on the ground (see diagrams).



While offering obeisances our left side should be towards the Deities. It is also necessary to offer specific prayers out loud while bowing down. When entering and leaving the temple room obeisances are offered to the Deities. When we enter the temple we should first offer obeisances to Srila Prabhupada and then to the Deities.

D. What should you say while offering obeisances?

Some people pray for a lot of material things when they bow down before the Deities. But that is not a very good thing to do. Do you know why?

It is better to chant prayers glorifying the Lord while paying obeisances.

1. When offering obeisances to Srila Prabhupada one should chant the following mantras:

*nama om visnu-padaya krsna-presthaya bhutale
srimate bhaktivedanta svamin iti namine*

*namaste sarasvate deve gaura-vani-pracarine
nirvisesa-sunyavadi pascatyā-desā-tarine*

2. When offering obeisances to Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai one should chant: "*sri-krishna-caitanya prabhu nityanada sri-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-vrinda.*"

3. When you offer obeisances to Sri Sri Radha Krishna you should chant Srila Prabhupada's pranati mantra (see above) and then the "*Hare Krishna Maha-mantra.*"

4. In addition obeisances should be offered -
a) to one's spiritual master (guru)
b) to sannyasis and other senior devotees
c) to the tulasi plant
d) also when fellow devotees visit they offer obeisances to each other. They chant the following verse:

Memorize this verse.

*vancha-kalpa tarubhyas ca
krpa-sindhubhya eva
patitanam-pavanebhyo
vaisnavebhyo namo namah*

"Let us offer our respectful obeisances to all the Vaisnava devotees of the Lord, who are just like desire trees. They can fulfill the desires of all living entities and are full of compassion for the fallen conditioned souls."



**HARE KRISHNA
HARE KRISHNA
KRISHNA KRISHNA**

**HARE HARE
HARE RAMA
HARE RAMA
RAMA RAMA
HARE HARE**