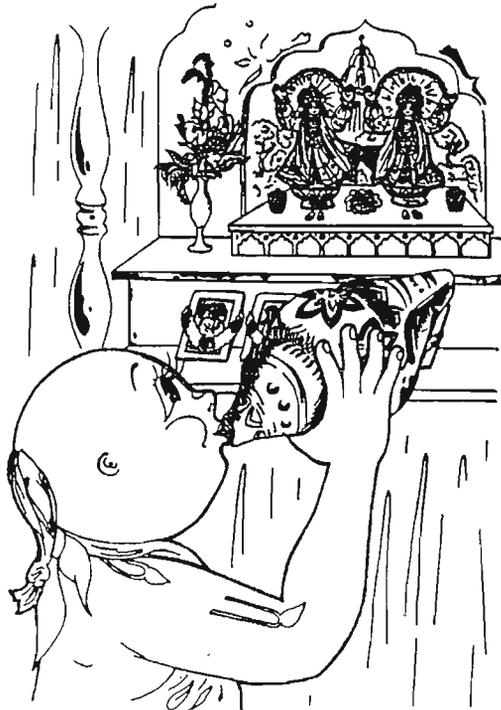


Name _____

Devotional Practices



Hare Krishna Sunday School

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Founder-acharya. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Devotional Practices

(Madhava Class)

Compiled by Tapasvini devi dasi



A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA

January, 1960

This book is dedicated to His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada who taught us the necessary devotional practices we needed to become closer to Krishna.

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Introduction

Many things that we do at the temple seem unusual, especially to someone seeing them for the first time. We wear tilak and saris or dhotis; some men shave their heads; we do different ceremonies in the temple room; we sing songs in a different language. Are we just trying to see how different we can be?

No, there is a reason, a good reason, for everything we do at the temple. Sometimes we are so used to it we don't even know **why** we are doing a certain thing. But we should know the reason. Sometimes other people will ask you why you do this or that. If you just say, "I don't know, I don't know," all the time, they might start to think you are not too bright.

In this session we will meet Jimmy and Raj, two friends who help each other in Krishna consciousness. Jimmy lets us see how our temple practices look to someone who is new. Could you answer Jimmy's questions?



*vrndayai tulsi-devyai
priyayai kesavasya ca
krsna-bhakti-prade devi
satyavatyai namo namah*

Translation: I offer my repeated obeisances unto Vrinda, Srimati Tulasi Devi, who is very dear to Lord Kesava. O goddess, you bestow devotional service to Lord Krishna and possess the highest truth.

Chapter One

Jimmy Offers Arati

Jimmy Jensen is in the second grade. He lives in a big green house with his two sisters in Detroit, Michigan. Jimmy came to the temple with his friend, Raj Parikh, for the very first time last Sunday. Hmm... It was a lot different here than at the church he usually goes to.



“I like your temple,” Jimmy told Raj. “It’s fun to sing and clap. I never danced in church before, so I *really* liked that!”

“Good,” said Raj. “We come here every Sunday and I always have fun. Wait until you taste the vegetarian feast they fix for us!”

“Some things I don’t understand,” Jimmy said. “Why does that man wave fire and flowers and smoky sticks in a circle? Why does he throw water on everyone? I would get in trouble if I did that. Why does he flap peacock feathers in the air?”

At first Raj wasn’t sure what Jimmy was talking about. But then he figured out that he was asking about the arati ceremony in the temple. Do you think you would be able to answer his questions? Well, Raj did his best. And we think his answers were pretty good.

Raj went on to tell Jimmy that arati is performed in the temple about 8 times each day. At certain times of the day, Krishna is offered more items than at other times.

“Eight times a day?” exclaimed Jimmy. “Do you come to watch all the R. T.’s, I mean aratis?”

“No, I live too far away to come to the temple everyday,” replied Raj. “But we do an arati at our home every night. We have an altar in our den.”

Jimmy was surprised to hear this. “You do arati! You don’t have to be a grown-up or a pu-, pu-, umm....?”

“Pujari,” Raj finished for him. “No, you can learn to do arati too if you like. I saw a sheet by the temple room that tells you how to do it.”

The two excited boys raced to the hallway by the temple room. There were papers on a rack that explained different things about devotional service. There was a paper teaching how to chant Hare Krishna. There was a paper teaching how to offer your food. There was even a paper telling how to put on tilak.



Raj and Jimmy searched through several papers until they found what they were looking for.

“Here it is!” Raj shouted. He held up a paper to show his friend. “**Offering Arati at Home**” was the title written on top.

The boys read the instructions together. Jimmy realized that there were a few things that he needed for arati that he didn't have at home. Raj helped him solve that problem, too. He took Jimmy to the temple gift shop to buy the items. Raj showed him the right things to get.



Jimmy could hardly wait to get home to try offering arati on his own. He had a picture of Krishna that he could use since he didn't have an altar. This is a copy of the paper he had telling him how to perform the arati ceremony:

Offering Arati at Home

To offer arati you will need the following items:

- *1 stick of incense*
- *1 flower*
- *a chamara fan (yak-tail whisk fan)*
- *a bell*
- *an achman cup with water in it (a small cup with a spoon for purifying the items)*

Put these items on a tray and place them near your altar or picture.

Wash your hands before you begin. Follow the steps below:

1. *Bow down and offer your obeisances to the Lord first.*
2. *Perform achman like this: With your left hand, put a few drops of water into your right hand and sip it. Say "om keshavaya namah." Put a few more drops in your right hand and sip it again. Say "om narayan namah." Put a few more drops in your right hand and sip it for the third time. Say "om madhavaya namah." Now wash both hands by putting a drop of water into the right hand and into the left. Just shake the water off.*
3. *Light the incense. Put a few drops of water on the incense to purify it.*
4. *Put a few drops of water onto the bell to purify it. Pick the bell up with your left hand and start ringing it.*
5. *Pick up the incense with your right hand. Offer it by circling it around your picture or your Deity. Make seven circles.*
6. *Now put a few drops of water on the flower. Offer it by circling it around the same way seven times.*
7. *Put a few drops of water on the chamara fan. Swish the chamara near the picture or Deity 7 or more times.*
8. *Your arati is finished after you offer the chamara. Bow down and offer obeisances when you are done.*

Jimmy performed his first arati at home on Monday night. He had to call Raj twice while he was doing it. But Tuesday night he did it all by himself. He called Raj after that to tell him that he knew how to do it.



“My whole family watched me do the arati,” he said proudly. “My mom liked the way the incense smelled in the house and my sister put one of the flowers in her hair afterwards. My baby sister giggled when she heard the bells ring and started clapping. It was fun.”

“Yeah, but you know what?” said Raj. “The best thing of all is that Krishna saw you offer all that to Him. He’s the happiest because you took the time to show Him that you love Him.”

That made Jimmy feel really good -- to know that you made the Supreme Lord, the creator of the entire universe, happy is a pretty special feeling. He went to bed that night feeling that he had done something very wonderful.

Check-up

Color the items you need to perform arati.



Chapter Two

Early Morning Gurupuja

Jimmy wanted to go to the temple with Raj the next Sunday but he was at his grandmother's. He got lucky though. Monday was a school holiday so Raj and his family were going to the morning program at the temple. Jimmy was invited to come along. You can guess what his answer was!

Now that Jimmy knew how to perform arati, he wanted to see that ceremony at the temple again. He wanted to see the way the pujari circled the flaming ghee lamps (which he didn't have). He wanted to watch the way the peacock fan fluttered up and swooshed down.

"There are some different things we do in the morning at the temple," Raj explained. "Just watch everything and you can ask me questions later."

Jimmy did just that. He watched, with eyes as wide as saucers, as the altar curtains opened and Krishna and Radha stood with fresh flowers and fancy clothes on. They seemed to be looking at him. He sipped some of the charinamrita water and liked the creamy, smooth, sweet flavor.



Then everyone moved over to a statue of an older man and began singing. A lady was offering arati to the statue. Jimmy could hardly keep from pulling Raj out of the temple room to ask him questions. But he kept quiet and watched.

When the arati and the kirtan were over, the two boys walked outside to play for awhile. Jimmy was practically bursting with curiosity by now.

Jimmy began firing his questions at Raj. "Who was that statue? Is that Krishna when He gets older? How come everyone offered flowers and bowed down to him? Is he alive? How can he sit so still?"



"Slow down, slow down!" exclaimed Raj. "One question at a time! First of all, that person is not Krishna. He is Srila Prabhupada, our guru. He isn't in this world anymore; that is a *murti*, or a statue, that looks just like him."

"What is a guru?" Jimmy wondered.

"A guru is a teacher," Raj said. "We have teachers in school that teach us different subjects, like math and science, right? Well, a guru teaches us about Krishna. He teaches us how to serve God and

how to go back to the spiritual world. You must have a guru to learn to serve Krishna the right way.”

Jimmy thought that made sense. After all, you don't get to be anything in this world without having good teachers. A doctor learns from teachers, a lawyer must go to school and learn from teachers, a fireman has to be taught how to put out fires...

“OK, but why the arati for him? I thought arati was just for God.” Jimmy asked.

“No, an arati can be performed for any great soul. We offer arati to our guru to show our respect and worship. Because he leads us back to Krishna, he is as important to us as Krishna is. Did you notice that we sang a different song? It is a special song that praises the guru, or spiritual master.”

“I sure wish I could understand the words to those songs. I don't know that language,” sighed Jimmy.

“The songs are in Sanskrit but you can read what it means in English. We have song sheets by the temple room that explain.” Raj grabbed Jimmy's hand and they ran back to the temple hallway again to see if they could find the song sheet.



Jimmy found it first and quickly began reading the translation. “...by his grace one can cross the ocean of material suffering... obtain the mercy of Krishna... he fills my heart with transcendental knowledge... he is the ocean of mercy... friend of the poor... lord and

master of the devotees...” He thought this described a very special and powerful person. Jimmy could see that a guru like this really deserves your respect and worship. It isn't just anybody that can help you go back to the spiritual world.

Raj explained that the guru has students, or disciples, that teach the same thing. They can later become gurus themselves. He told Jimmy that most devotees at the temple had gurus that were students of Srila Prabhupada. They offer arati and sing the same song to their guru.

“If Srila Prabhu-, Prabhu, um...”

“Prabhupada!” finished Raj.

“Right. If Srila Prabhupada isn't your guru, why do you offer flowers to him and do arati for him?”



“He is the one who brought this knowledge to the West. He translated the scriptures into English so we could learn them. He started many temples, so it's because of his hard work that we are here now. He is called the founder because he started this organization. Prabhupada is like our spiritual grandfather.”

Jimmy thought this over. He started thinking about how much more he could learn about arati and the Sanskrit songs if he had a guru. Raj was pretty good at teaching, but Jimmy didn't think he knew everything. He decided that if he had any important questions, he would write them down and ask a guru.

Check-up

Circle the things that you do during gurupuja.

Offer arati

Give the Deities a bath

Take prasadam

Offer a flower to the guru

Sing songs

Cook rice and vegetables

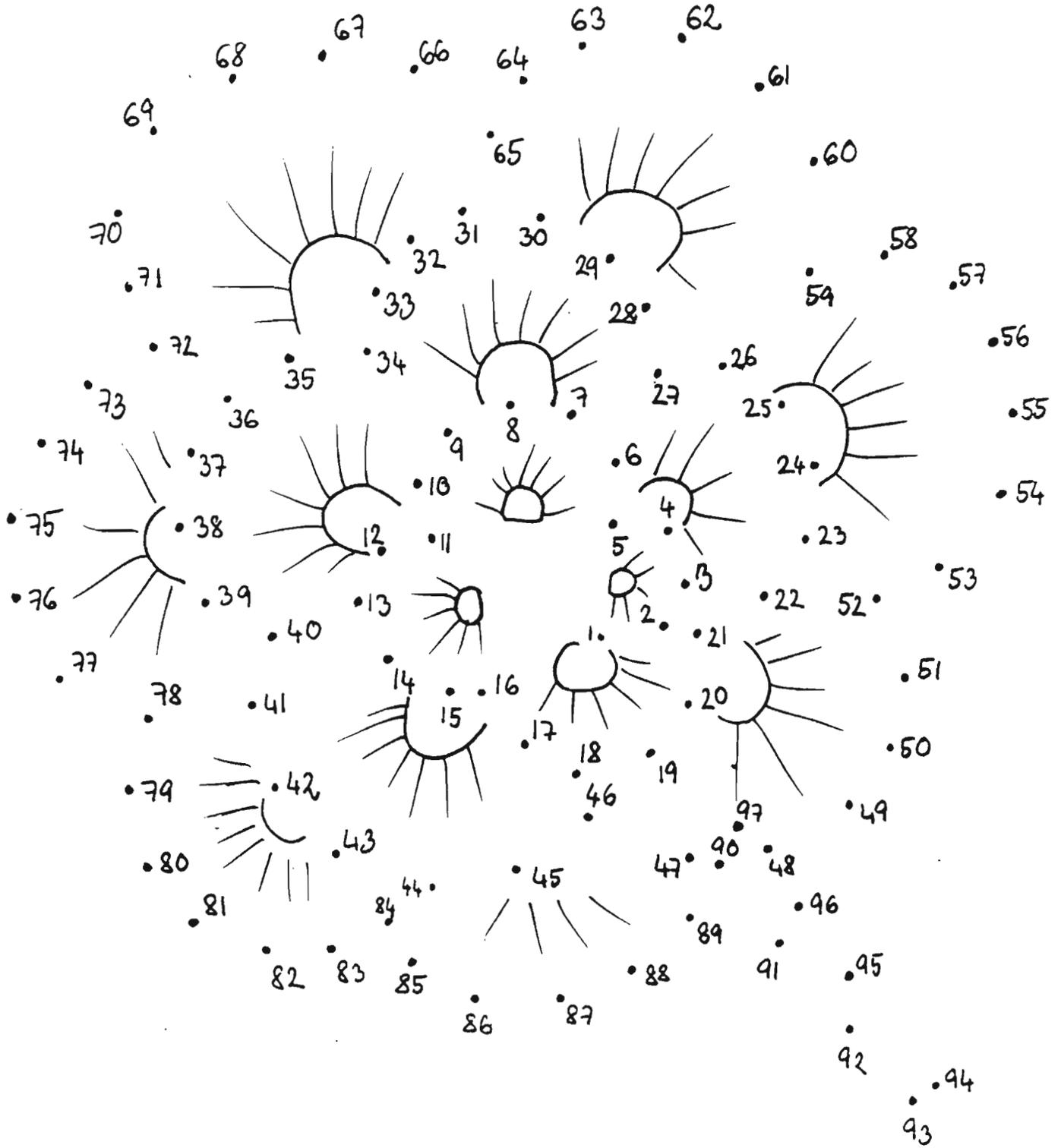
Bow down and offer obeisances

Stand on your head

Offer a garland to the guru

Chant and dance

Connect this picture dot-to-dot, and
Krishna and Prabhupada won't feel so hot!



Chapter Three

Worshipping Tulasi

On the way home from the temple Jimmy and Raj sat in the back seat of the station wagon. Jimmy asked Raj what other ceremonies they do at the temple. Has he seen it all yet? Did he miss anything?

“Well, one ceremony that we missed this morning is Tulasi Puja. In Tulasi Puja we offer arati to and sing a special song to a plant called Tulasi.”



Jimmy couldn't believe his ears. “A plant! Why in the world would you offer arati and bow down to a plant? I thought arati was only for Krishna and special devotees!”

Raj said, “Tulasi *is* a special devotee. I know it sounds weird, but she is Krishna's favorite plant. She pleases Krishna very much. He won't even accept food unless a tulasi leaf is on each item.”

Jimmy just couldn't get this idea into his head. How can a plant be a devotee of the Lord? It's not like plants can talk or walk!

Raj's mother, Mrs. Parikh, was in the front seat of the car and overheard the boys. She could tell that Jimmy didn't understand what Raj was saying.

“Let me tell you two about the story of Tulasi. You see, Jimmy, she has a very interesting background and is not an ordinary plant. Listen closely and you will see why she is so special to Krishna.”

Raj and Jimmy sat back and relaxed as Mrs. Parikh started to tell the tale. Jimmy gazed out the window, watching the cars, vans and trucks speed by. Billboards and buildings flashed by and he soon closed his eyes so that he could concentrate on the story.

“It all began up in the spiritual world,” began Mrs. Parikh, in her soft voice. “One of the cowherd boys, named Sudama, was very attracted to one of the gopis and wanted to marry her. But this particular gopi only wanted Krishna for her husband.

“For some reason or other, both of them were cursed to take their births in the material world. Sudama even had to come as a demon. His name became Sankarchuda. The gopi’s name became Tulasi. Sankarchuda could remember all that happened to him in his past life. He remembered the gopi he loved and so he performed great austerities to get her as his wife.



“Although Tulasi was a most beautiful and qualified girl, she still had no other desire than to have Krishna as her husband. She also performed great austerities for thousands of years to have this desire fulfilled.”

Jimmy had a confused look on his face. “If Sankarchuda wanted to marry Tulasi but she wanted to marry Lord Krishna, how could each of them get their wish?” he asked.

“Keep listening and you’ll find out,” said Mrs. Parikh. “Lord Brahma appeared to Tulasi and told her that she would have her wish fulfilled. But first, Sankarchuda would have *his* wish fulfilled and get married to Tulasi. After some time, they met and Tulasi fell in love with Sankarchuda.

“He was a great warrior, fighting many battles. He even fought with the demigods. But he was also a kind and affectionate husband and Tulasi loved him dearly. She was a good, faithful wife and served her husband selflessly, and Sankarchuda was very happy that he married Tulasi.

“Sankarchuda was preparing to leave to fight an important battle with the demigods. Tulasi was worried that he might be killed and was sorry to see him go. But she really didn’t have to be worried. Sankarchuda had a boon that he could not be killed unless Tulasi accepted another man as her husband. It didn’t seem like there was much chance of that. But Tulasi got tricked.

“Sankarchuda was such a great warrior that it seemed no one could stop him. The demigods thought that the universe would be destroyed if Sankarchuda kept on. Lord Narayana figured it was time to step in and help.

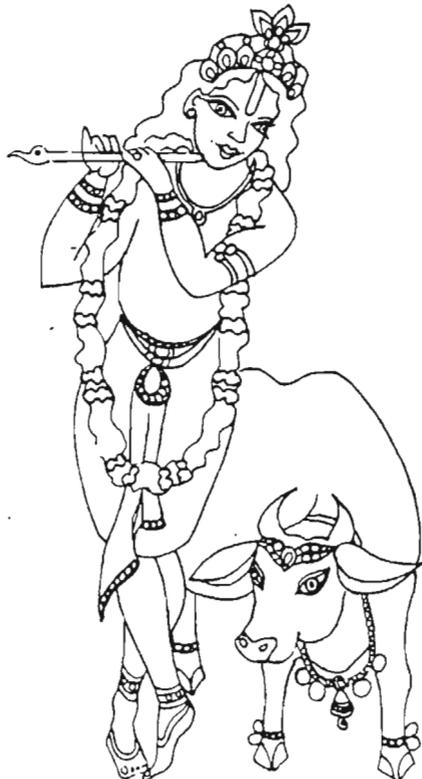
“He dressed Himself up and changed His form so that He looked exactly like Sankarchuda. He returned to Sankarchuda’s place and called for Tulasi. Tulasi was overjoyed! Here was her beloved husband home again, safe and sound. She shed many tears of

happiness and couldn't take her eyes off him (although it was really Lord Narayana). She accepted Him as her husband, Sankarchuda, because she didn't know any better.

"This meant that the real Sankarchuda could now be killed. And he was. A weapon was hurled at him on the battlefield. He simply knelt down, folded his hands and thought of Krishna. As the weapon struck him, he regained his spiritual form, as Sudama, and returned to the spiritual world.



"In the meantime, Tulasi noticed that her husband seemed a little different than usual. She began to suspect that it wasn't really her husband at all. She spoke up to Sankarchuda, 'Who... who... who are you? Who has tricked me like this?'



"The Lord dropped his disguise of Sankarchuda and showed His real form to Tulasi. When she saw His smiling face and lotus eyes and His deep blue complexion decorated with gems and jewels, she fainted.

As she woke up she said, 'You have insulted me and cheated me! You are not my husband! Your heart must be as hard as stone. Therefore, I curse you to become a stone! Why have you done this to me? Why? Why?' She began crying.

"When the Lord saw how upset she was He tried to make her feel better. 'My dear Tulasi,' He said, 'you did many austerities to get Me as your husband. And Sankarchuda performed many austerities to get you as his wife. It is time for your desire to be fulfilled. That is why I did what I did.

"Now you will leave your earthly body and get a spiritual body and be married to Me. Your body will become a famous holy river named Gandaki. Your hairs will turn into holy trees and since they came from you, they will be called Tulasi trees. Whoever worships the Lord will use your leaves and flowers. You will be the best among trees and flowers. But you will always be by my side in the spiritual world, just like Laxmi."



Jimmy interrupted once more. "Tulasi cursed Krishna to become a stone. Did that come true?"

“Yes, Jimmy, it did,” said Mrs. Parikh. “Because of that curse, Krishna appears as a special stone called salagram sila. These salagram silas are found near the Gandaki river and are worshipped just like the Krishna Deities.”

“Wow!” exclaimed Jimmy. “Who would have thought that a plant could have such an fascinating history!”

“Anyone who wears a tulasi necklace, drinks tulasi water, eats a tulasi leaf, and offers tulasi to Krishna gets so many spiritual benefits,” added Raj. “Just watering the tulasi plant and walking around her frees you from all your sins.”



By now Jimmy had become so interested in the story of tulasi that he wanted to see a tulasi puja, too. Mrs. Parikh promised that on the next school holiday she would bring the boys to the temple early in the morning to worship tulasi.

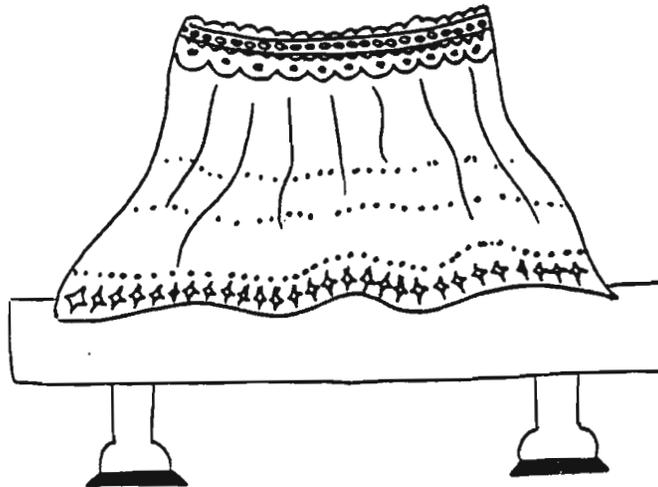
Tulasi Word Search

Circle the words below that you find in the word search puzzle. The words may go up, down, across, backwards or diagonally.

tulsi	water	circle	arati
skirt	leaves	branches	bow down
incense	flower	plant	manjaris

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E L I I R E S N R L I N I P S
A I T A A A I S C I S N S N E
R J A W N J N L A I R L I W W
I C R U E F W T N F E R U E
N C A C E T O T A E T R A D I
A I E E S N E C N I A E J W I
L B T N U B I M A C W O N O U
F R N W E E R W I N O L A B I
W A N N L I I O I S T E M N I
W N U R C F L O W E R A H C W
R C I A R N S K I R T U L S I
A H V R I N A M T R S R E B L
E E S V C E E S T I L T E J W
S S W T A V D V R N E T A I A
R N D E F R L E A V E S N M E
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Give Tulasi Devi nice branches.



Lesson Four

A Very Special Day

Jimmy tagged along with Raj to the next Sunday Feast. They both chanted and danced in the temple during the kirtan. A devotee with a beautiful voice led the kirtan, singing lively tunes, and no one could resist jumping and dancing. Jimmy was hot, tired and as hungry as a bear when the kirtan finished.



He and Raj got in line behind some other boys for the feast. When it was Jimmy's turn, the servers put many preparations on his plate. He didn't recognize a single one.

"Aren't there any puris?" asked Jimmy.

One of the other boys, named Anish, heard him. "Don't you know it's Ekadasi?" he said (not too nicely).

"Oh, yeah," said Jimmy, pretending to know. "But what about halava? That's my favorite."

Anish looked at his cousin, Vinoj, and rolled his eyes. "I already said it's Ekadasi. Are your ears plugged up? Can't you hear?"

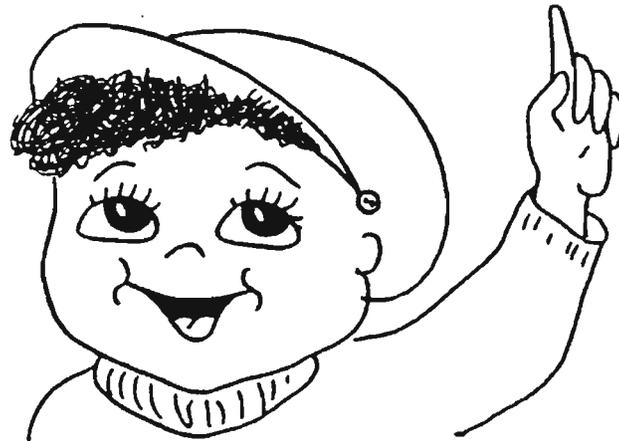
Vinoj whispered in Anish's ear, "Maybe he doesn't *know* what Ekadasi is!"

Jimmy was embarrassed because he really *didn't* know what Ekadasi was. These boys might make fun of him if he admitted that. But, how was he going to learn if he didn't say anything?

He decided to just keep quiet and ask Raj about it while they were eating. He waited for Raj to get his plate filled with food. Then he followed Raj as he picked a place to sit. To Jimmy's dismay, it was right next to Vinoj and Anish.

"Well," thought Jimmy, "here goes! What's Ekadasi?" he asked.

"I knew you didn't know!" chortled Anish.



"So what?" said Vinoj to his cousin. "Don't forget, we only learned about it last year when our other cousin brought us to the temple. It's not like we know everything now."

Raj began to explain. "Ekadasi is a special day that we fast from grains and beans. It comes two times each month. We don't eat anything that has grains or beans in it. That's why the prasadam at this feast is different than last Sunday."

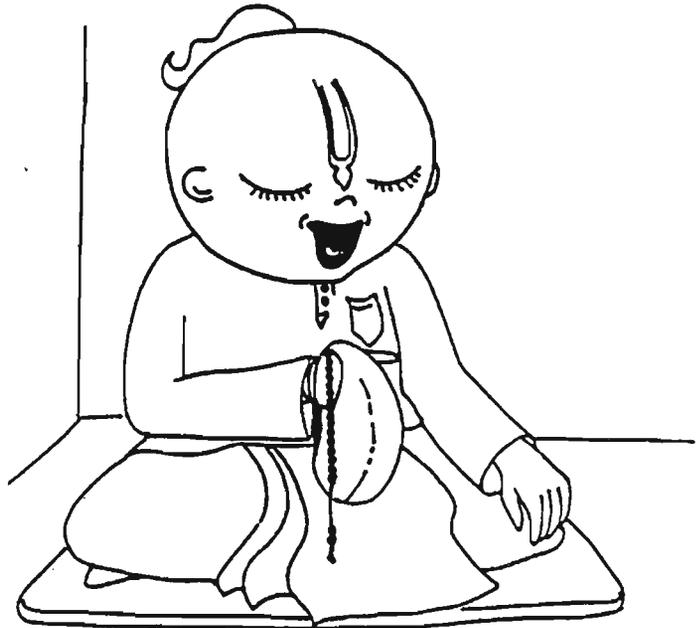
Jimmy started thinking about all the things made from grains and beans. "Why do you have to fast?" asked Jimmy. He couldn't think

of any good reason that there should be two days a month that no cookies, cake or corn chips are allowed.

Anish helped explain. “We make Ekadasi day a chance to do more things for Krishna. Think of how much time we spend eating and cooking every day. On Ekadasi, we spend less time cooking and eating so we have more time to chant Hare Krishna and pray. At our house, our whole family reads stories about Krishna for one hour after dinner.”

Raj continued, “Some people fast from *all* food and water. They might even stay up all night, chanting and singing about Krishna.”

“My mom did that once,” said Vinoj. “I didn’t think I could stay up all night, so I just chanted 2 extra rounds on my japa beads. My mom was tired and hungry the next day, but she said she was really glad to be able to concentrate on Krishna.”



As Jimmy listened, he ate his unusual dinner. When he started thinking about how many things are made with grains and beans, he was surprised that such delicious prasadam could be made without them. But it was very, very tasty. He made up his mind right then and there that he was going to do his best to follow Ekadasi.

On the ride home, he told Mr. and Mrs. Parikh about his decision. They thought it was great that he was willing to do that.

“I’ll tell you what, Jimmy,” said Mrs. Parikh. “The next Ekadasi is on a Saturday. Why don’t you invite your whole family over and we can make an Ekadasi dinner. You and your mother can come early and learn how to cook some of the things.”

Well, if you know Jimmy, you know that he loves learning new things. You bet he was there -- paper and pencil in hand, learning how to be a good Ekadasi cook. What would you make for an Ekadasi dinner?

Foods I can eat on Ekadasi

Foods I shouldn't eat on Ekadasi

Check-up

Circle the things that are good to do on Ekadasi. Draw an X through the things that are NOT good to do on Ekadasi.

Spend more time praying to Krishna

Eat cereal for breakfast

Remember Krishna through the day

Offer arati

Cook spaghetti

Chant Hare Krishna

Eat fruit

Watch television as much as possible

Read stories about the Lord and His devotees

Have popcorn for a snack

Have milk for lunch

Come to the temple

Chapter Five

Fire in the Temple Room!

Jimmy came with Raj almost every Sunday now. He was learning some of the words to the songs they sang in the temple. He even told his mother about Ekadasi and had her fix a special lunch for him those days. He was starting to feel pretty comfortable around the temple.

One Sunday they were a little bit late getting started because Raj's father got a long distance phone call from India. When they finally arrived at the temple, Jimmy ran on ahead into the temple room. Raj and his parents were getting a few bags of fruit out of the car that they had brought as a gift for the Deities.

No sooner had Jimmy run in the door than he was running back out the door, flapping his arms and shouting wildly, "Raj, Mr. Parikh, there's fire in the temple room! Quick! Call 911! There's a fire!"



Mr. Parikh, seeing Jimmy so frantic, hurried toward the temple. "What in the world..." he said. He poked his head in the door and saw the fire that scared Jimmy. He quickly shut the door and walked back to the boys.

"Calm down, Jimmy. It's OK," he said, trying to hide his smile. "There *is* a fire in the temple room but it's supposed to be there. There is a special ceremony today. Part of the ceremony is a fire sacrifice, or yajna."

Jimmy wasn't quite ready to believe him. "But the whole temple will burn down by the time it's over!" he wailed.

"No, no. We would never let that happen," Mrs. Parikh said. "There is a special pit that the fire is in; there's no danger. Raj, take Jimmy in and let him see the rest of the fire sacrifice."

Raj took his friend by the elbow and guided him into the temple room. They found a place to sit where they had a good view of the fire arena. The pujari was lighting incense and pouring a liquid over the fire to make it burn better.

"Is that gasoline?" whispered Jimmy.

"No, silly. It's ghee. Ghee is made from butter. It's a pure item and it helps the fire burn nicely."

There were 4 other people sitting around the fire. They all had on new saris and dhotis and bright, pretty garlands.

Raj explained, "These people are getting initiated. That's usually when we have a fire sacrifice. You see, having a fire sacrifice is very purifying. Special prayers are said and the fire is actually Lord Vishnu."



“Lord Vishnu is the fire?” Jimmy repeated, his mouth hanging open. “How can He become the fire?”

“Well, God can do anything,” Raj said. “He appears as the fire in a fire sacrifice and accepts the offerings of grains that are thrown into the fire.”

Just at that moment, the people around the fire sang, “Swaha...” and tossed a handful of grains into the flames. The fire sputtered and crackled as the grains caught fire and burned.

Raj went on, “The grains represent their karma. Vishnu will burn up all their past karma as they take initiation.”

The boys watched as the flames leaped higher. The initiates stood up and placed a banana into the fire. Two men got up to open the windows as the smoke got thicker. Soon everyone got up and walked around the fire while singing Hare Krishna. Jimmy thought it looked like a dream, singing and swaying as they drifted through the smoky room. A small, chubby woman put a dot of the ashes on their foreheads as they floated by.

When the kirtan ended and everyone shouted, “Jaya!!” the boys went outside to get some fresh air. “That was really different,” said a happy Jimmy. “It sure scared me at first though.”

Mr. and Mrs. Parikh met the boys and they talked about the sacrifice a bit. “Now Jimmy,” teased Mrs. Parikh, “if you ever come to a wedding here, don’t be afraid. There will be a fire in the temple room for that, too.”

“Weddings, too, huh?” asked Jimmy.

“Yes, the couple getting married make their vows in front of Lord Vishnu in the sacrificial fire. They promise in front of the Lord to stay together as man and wife for the rest of their lives. Having a fire sacrifice is auspicious. That means that it brings good fortune.”

Jimmy dragged Raj back into the temple room to get one more look at the fire arena. It had been so colorful with all the fruits and vegetables around it that he wanted to see it again. He was thinking that it would make a good drawing for an art project he had to do for school. He was pretty sure that no one at his school had seen anything like a fire sacrifice before.



Ram marries Sita in front of the sacrificial fire.

Check-up

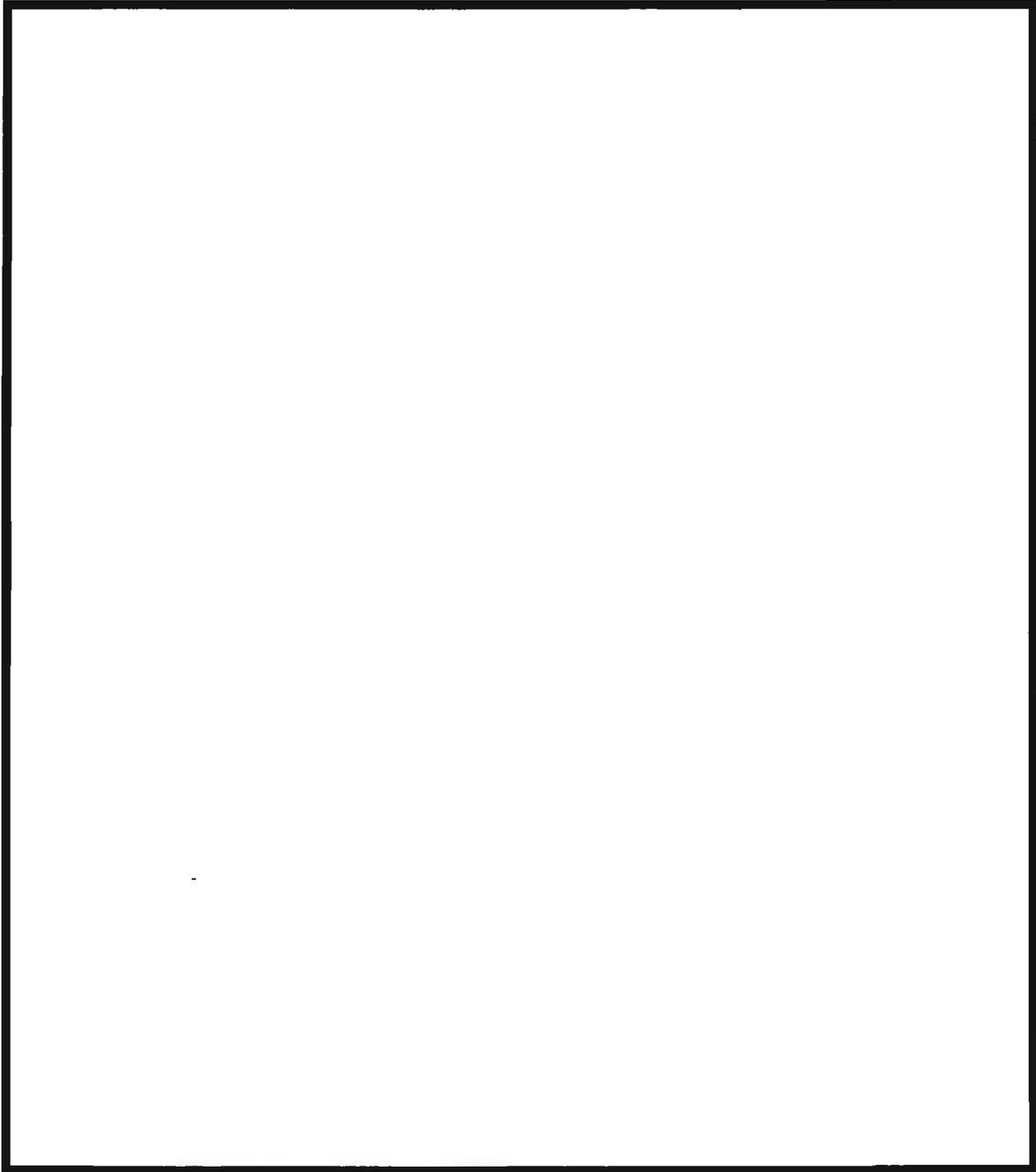
1. What are two events at the temple where a fire sacrifice will be performed?

2. Who is present in the fire?

3. Name at least two different things that happen during a fire sacrifice.

4. Have you ever seen a fire sacrifice at the temple?

Draw a picture of the design you would make for the bottom of your fire arena. Then color it or glue colored sand or colored rice on the design.



Chapter Six

Let Me Tell You About Krishna...

Raj and Jimmy spent Saturday at Jimmy's grandmother's house out in the country. They played basketball and helped his grandmother clean up her yard. She had an old brown dog with white whiskers named Scooter. They took Scooter for long walks down the road and brushed his wavy brown fur.

Jimmy's father picked them up Saturday evening and took them over to Raj's house. Jimmy spent the night with Raj so they could play on Sunday and then go to the Sunday feast again.



When Jimmy, Raj and his family got in the car and began driving to the temple, they started talking about how much Jimmy had learned in the last few months.

“You’ve learned words to the song, you dance, you even know how to offer your own arati,” Mrs Parikh was saying. “You know what kinds of food to eat on Ekadasi and now you know when to expect a fire in the temple room. Remember how surprised you were when you first saw a fire sacrifice?”

They all laughed as they remembered Jimmy dashing out of the temple screaming at them to call the fire department. Nobody would ever forget that day!

“Yeah,” said Jimmy. “I know the story about Tulasi, too. The best thing was meeting some of the other kids at the temple and making new friends.” He was glad now that he didn’t feel out of place. He didn’t mind asking the other kids questions if he didn’t understand something. He found out that they really liked to talk to him about Krishna and to teach him things.

“You’ve come a long way, Jimmy,” said Raj’s father. “I’d say that you’re ready to do some preaching.”

“Preaching? You mean stand up in front of everyone at the temple and tell them things about Krishna? I don’t think I’m ready for that yet,” said Jimmy nervously. That idea made his knees shake.

Mrs. Parikh explained that there are many different ways to preach. “Lord Chaitanya said that whoever you meet, you should tell them about Krishna. Some people give books to people and tell them to read about Krishna. Others teach classes. Some give prasadam to poor, hungry people. Giving prasadam to *anyone* is preaching.”



Jimmy asked Raj, "Do you preach?"

Raj replied, "I do my best to try to teach some people about Krishna. I gave your mom and one of my teachers a temple cookbook. And I brought you here, didn't I?"

Jimmy realized that if Raj hadn't wanted to preach, Jimmy may never have gotten to come to the temple in the first place. He was glad that didn't happen. Mr. and Mrs. Parikh and the boys talked a bit more and then they pulled into the temple.

Mr. Parikh laid his hand on Raj's shoulder and said, "Son, why don't you take Jimmy around the temple and show him the different ways people preach."

Raj and Jimmy wandered into the temple room together. The kirtan was ending and they were getting ready to start the class. Raj pointed to a devotee.

"See him? That's Gopal das. He's going to give the class tonight. That's good preaching. A lot of new people come on Sundays and he can teach them about Krishna in his class."

He pointed to another devotee, a woman wiping up the floor near the altar. "That's Mohini. She dresses the Deities every morning."

"That's preaching?" asked Jimmy. "How is that telling anyone about Krishna?"

"Mohini dresses the Deities so nicely that everybody *wants* to come to the temple everyday to see Them," Raj explained. "Nobody

can resist. She puts beautiful jewelry and flowers on Them, and somehow, Mohini makes Radha and Krishna look like They are really dancing. That's preaching because it makes more people come to the temple to appreciate Krishna."

They bowed down and went out of the temple room. They walked slowly down the hallway and peeked into the kitchen. "Are they preaching, too?" asked Jimmy, seeing 5 or 6 people cooking and filling pots with food.

"Yep," said Raj. "They're making the prasadam for the feast tonight. Did you know that if you give prasadam to people, even if they don't know it's prasadam, that it's good for them spiritually? Nimai is the main cook and she cooks so well that some people come just to take prasadam."

Raj pointed out one of the men. "That tall man with the apron on is named Neal. He cooks special meals that we give to poor people. They don't know it, but Neal is preaching to them because they are eating spiritual food." Neal looked like he was a good cook, too. He was cutting carrots for the vegetable *subji*.



The boys moved on down the hallway. They passed a young, blond man carrying a heavy bag like a mailman. "Is that mailman preaching somehow?" asked Jimmy.



"He's not a mailman, he distributes books. Books about Krishna. He is definitely a preacher because he gives out books so people can read about spiritual life. Sometimes people have never heard of our temple and don't know anything about Krishna. A

book distributor can change all that. He teaches a lot of people about Krishna that may have never come to the temple otherwise."

They went outside and sat on the grass. Some children were playing tag nearby. An older man was sitting alone at one of the picnic tables. His lips moved slowly as he chanted softly on his beads.

Jimmy pointed at the old man. "It looks like he's one of the only ones who's *not* preaching," he said.

Mr. and Mrs. Parikh had just walked up and overheard Jimmy's remark. "Oh, you're wrong about that one, my boy," said Mr. Parikh. "That elderly gentleman is Haridas and he is a great preacher."

"What does he do?" asked both boys at the same time.

"He is a wonderful example. He is preaching by his good example. He never speaks badly about anyone. He is polite and

kind. He is always satisfied with whatever Krishna gives him and he doesn't waste anything. Haridas is always happy to speak to anyone about Krishna. In his spare time, you will always find him chanting. I don't believe I've ever seen him get angry or cross with anyone."

Jimmy had never thought that there were so many different ways to tell people about Krishna. He began to see that he could preach too. Not yet, though. He didn't feel quite ready. The two boys walked slowly around the temple until it was time for the feast.

Raj and Jimmy got in line for prasadam. They had their plates filled with the tasty prasadam that Nimai, Neal and the others had cooked. As he and Raj went to find a place to sit, they passed a group of kids that Jimmy had made friends with. Mukesh was sitting with his friend, Zina, who was at the temple for the first time.



"Why was there a plant on the altar?" she was asking him. "The plant had a skirt on."

"Umm... er.... well..." Mukesh stuttered.

Jimmy hesitated. Maybe he didn't feel quite ready to preach but it seemed like Krishna was asking him to do it anyway. "Mind if I sit with you?" he asked Mukesh. He sat between Mukesh and Zina. Raj followed and sat with the group, too.

"I think I can answer your question," said Jimmy. "You see, Krishna has a favorite plant..."



After the feast Jimmy, Raj and his parents began their drive home. Jimmy and Raj were talking quietly in the back seat.

Raj said, "You did a good job telling Zina about Tulasi. You told the story just like my mom did."

"Thanks," replied Jimmy. "You know, you're right. It was really exciting telling the other kids things they didn't know about Krishna. They asked me a lot of questions and I knew the answers."

The boys made a vow that they would try to do more preaching. They were going to think on their own about how to do it and then talk more later in the week.

The Parikhs dropped Jimmy off at his house. As the car backed out, he waved at his friends and darted into his house. "How to preach, preach, preach," he was saying in his mind. He headed right upstairs to his room to think about it more.

A thought came to his mind when he was on the stairs. "Hey, Mom!" he shouted. "Can Beth come to the temple with me next week?" Beth was his little sister.

"It's OK with me," his mother called back. "As long as you take care of her there."

Jimmy thought about his little sister and all the questions she usually asks. He knew she'd have a million questions about the temple if she saw it. He'd be busy preaching to her all night!

He jumped up the stairs to his room, happy that he already had thought of one preaching idea. He grabbed a pad of paper and a pencil, kicked off his shoes and sat down on his bed. He began his list of preaching ideas that he would share with Raj. Here is what he came up with:

WAYS I CAN PREACH

1. GIVE A BOOK TO MY TEACHER
2. BRING A FRIEND TO THE TEMPLE
3. GIVE SOME PRASADAM TO MY FRIENDS AT SCHOOL
4. ACT NICELY SO I WILL BE A GOOD EXAMPLE
5. GIVE MY ART TEACHER A PICTURE OF KRISHNA
6. TEACH MY GRANDMOTHER HOW TO OFFER HER FOOD
7. TEACH MY SISTERS TO CHANT HARE KRISHNA
8. LET MY FRIEND, PAUL, BORROW MY KRISHNA BOOK TO READ
9. TALK TO NEW KIDS AT THE TEMPLE - MAYBE THEY HAVE QUESTIONS.

Jimmy thought until he was so tired he started to doze off. He shook himself awake, got up and got ready for bed. Tomorrow was going to be a big day for him. Tomorrow was the day that he would put his preaching ideas into action.

What about you? You have been learning about Krishna now for some time. Can you think of some ways to preach like Jimmy? You can use a page like Jimmy's for your ideas.

<u>WAYS I CAN PREACH</u>	
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