

New Vrindaban's Guide to
**Who's Who &
What's What**



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS
FOUNDER-ACHARYA HIS DIVINE GRACE A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA



Welcome to the Temple of the Lord!

The temple is a holy place of worship and is like a portal to the spiritual realm. When you enter, you leave your troubles behind and are soothed by peace and divine vibrations that touch the soul.

Please join us in discovering the inner peace, love, and divine power you possess by connecting with God in the temple.

We understand that a different culture and tradition like that of New Vrindaban poses many questions. Who is Krishna? Who are the Hare Krishnas, what is their lifestyle like, and what have they to offer the world?

We hope that this guidebook will give you a head-start in exploring a Krishna-focused life and the deep, rich teachings and culture that support it.

Origins



His Divine Grace Srila A.C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Our society is commonly known as the Hare Krishna Movement (also known as ISKCON: International Society for Krishna Consciousness) and has its roots in ancient India, in the Vedas (oldest sacred scriptures of India), and in the saints and sages of Vaishnavism dating back more than five thousand years. So we are certainly not a new or modern religious group; we are following the deep ancients and the primeval scriptures, which are still relevant in this modern world. We want to share with you this ancient knowledge, from the manuals of mankind, that reveal the innermost secrets to spiritual awakening.

A contemporary saint, His Divine Grace Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, affectionately called “Srila Prabhupada,” brought this timeless Vedic knowledge to the United States in 1965 from where it blossomed and spread throughout the world. Srila Prabhupada founded ISKCON, and in twelve years circled the globe fourteen times, met scholars and statesmen, and inspired men and women from all walks of life to adopt the Hare Krishna lifestyle—a life centered in devotion to God called bhakti-yoga. Temples, schools, restaurants, and farm communities developed under his guidance. New Vrindaban is one such community that was born from Srila Prabhupada’s divine vision and inspiration.

Let’s Embrace the Guiding Principles from the Bhagavad-gita (sacred “Song of God”):



Equal Vision

(Sama Darshana)

As spiritual souls we are all equal in the eyes of God, irrespective of the external covering of the body. This soul-vision removes the cataracts of illusion, and we are able to see all equally, from man to plant to beast. Thus, we treat every living being with dignity. With this equal vision, there can be social cohesion and unity in diversity.



Without cruelty

(Natihimsa)

Our happiness may be important but not at the cost of anyone else’s. Therefore, we cultivate compassion that leads to kindness for all living beings. We follow a vegetarian diet, live in harmony with God’s creation, and work for the spiritual welfare of all beings.



Right Action

(Dharma)

Dharma is the soul’s purpose, which is to be a loving servant of God and to act for the benefit of others. When we find our purpose, we are fulfilled and happy.



Choice

(Iccha)

Free will is a gift of God; He has given us the independence and power to choose our thoughts and actions. When we follow His instructions and choose to love Him, our free will is properly utilized.



Humility

(Amanitva)

Humility is not an easy pill to swallow and seldom sought after, but when we recognize that we have a lot more to learn and experience and we are servants of God, we become humble and have God’s greatness behind us. We then give respect to others without expecting any in return.



Affection

(Prithi)

Love is a verb. When we learn who God is and why it is impossible not to love Him, we will naturally serve and love all in His creation.



Every Day is Sacred

It's time to greet the sunrise. At 5am the temple comes to life, and the temple bells call us to join the morning prayers. The *arati* ceremony begins, a colorful and vibrant worship of God in His personal form of the Deity.

Idol Worship or Deity Worship?



Why worship God as the Deity, if He is all pervading, the greatest of the great, and beyond our sense perception?

You may even perceive this kind of worship as idol worship. However, the Vedic scriptures give another view. God is certainly spiritual, all pervading, without a beginning or end, the source of all knowledge, an embodiment of divine bliss, and beyond our mind's perception. But He also has a divine personal form and can relate to us personally. And since He is all pervading, why can't He manifest in the Deity made of stone or marble and transform it to spirit? Unlike an idol, which is concocted from imagination, Krishna's form is described in detail in the scripture. Thus, the Deity is carved to replicate Krishna's original form, and we offer Him personal service and worship to ignite our love. How much easier it is to relate to God if we can see Him and personally serve Him.

Please see the FAQ section of this booklet on more about the arati worship ceremony.

Let's Enter the New Vrindaban Temple

First, let us remove our shoes and leave all our external identities with them. We enter as spirit souls. We bow, a natural reaction to the all-loving super power. Be prepared to be fascinated.



You may ask, "Why so many forms of God? I thought you worshiped only Krishna."

That is true; we are monotheists, meaning that we worship only one God—the creator of the universe, the Supreme Lord of all mankind—irrespective of faith, religious background, race, or culture. But Krishna, the same all-powerful, all-attractive God, assumes different forms in His different roles or features—just as a man who plays different roles, as a father at home and a professional businessman in the office. Krishna's different roles or incarnations, however, fulfill a universal purpose and are meant to attract us to Him. His loving associates and devotees also accompany Him. So in the temple you will see the Deities of Lord Krishna and His different forms, together with devotees who love and serve Him the best.

The foreign words or names in this booklet are of the Sanskrit language. Sanskrit, meaning "perfected" or "refined" is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, language in the world, belonging to the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European family. The oldest form of Sanskrit is Vedic Sanskrit, in which our sacred scriptures are written, dating back even before the second millennium BCE.

Main Altar



His Divine
Grace Srila
Prabhupada

Chota
Gaura
Nitai

2
Sri Sri
Gaura Nitai

Radha
Vrindaban
Nath

1
Sri Sri Radha
Vrindaban
Candra

Radha
Vrindaban
Madhava

Tulasi Devi

3
Sri Gopalnathji

4
Sri Giriraj
Govardhana



Sri Sri Radha Vrndaban Chandra

You are looking at the handsome smiling face of Lord Krishna, who is holding a flute to His lips and glancing at everyone with large attractive eyes. He is also known as Vrndaban Chandra, meaning “the moon of Vrndaban,” shining His moonlike grace on Vrndaban, His holy land. On His left is His divine consort and most intimate devotee, Radha, who embodies Krishna’s compassion and love. As the presiding Deities, they are worshiped regally as the king and queen of New Vrndaban.



Sri Sri Gaura Nitai

In the sixteenth century, two divine personalities graced the earth: Lord Chaitanya (known as Gaura) and Lord Nityananda (known as Nitai) from the town of Navadvipa in West Bengal, India. The scriptures predicted that Krishna and His brother Balarama would incarnate in this world as these two effulgent personalities, who were compared to the sun and the moon. They came to freely distribute love of God through the chanting of Krishna’s holy names. They initiated the sankirtan movement (“sanga” meaning group or community, and “kirtan” meaning chanting of God’s names) to encourage people to come together to glorify the Lord. Through his campaigning efforts and desires to propagate God’s message, Lord Chaitanya was able to transform the lowest of men into servants of God. In fact, all kinds of people from different backgrounds followed His teachings and recognized him to be an incarnation of the Lord called the Golden Avatar.



Sri Gopalnathji

Lord Krishna, who came to Earth five thousand years ago to exhibit His love for His devotees, possessed an attractive blackish complexion. Known as Gopalnath, the Lord of the cows, Krishna lifted Govardhana Hill, a gigantic mountain, on the small finger of his right hand for seven days and nights to protect his devotees from a devastating rainstorm. Therefore, His hand is lifted in a pose.



Sri Giriraj Govardhana

When Krishna lifted Govardhana Hill with the little finger of His left hand for seven days and nights to protect His devotees from a torrential rainstorm, Govardhana Hill was jubilant to serve, for he was a personality dedicated to making Krishna happy. He is simultaneously Krishna Himself in the form of a hill. As a devotee of Krishna, he witnessed Krishna’s intimate pastimes and activities with Radha and the other cowherd girls and boys. Even today, more than five thousand years later, you can see Govardhana Hill in Vrindavan, India, with its beautiful rocks and stones. It is said that every stone is imbued with a certain mood of love, depending on which pastime of Krishna it has witnessed. Giriraj Govardhana on the altar is one such stone from Govardhana Hill who has come all the way from India to grace us with his presence and blessings.

Jagannatha's Altar



Baladeva

Subhadra

Jagannatha

Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subhadra

Jagannatha (meaning “Lord of the Universe”) is a form of Lord Krishna who appears with His brother Balarama (Baladeva) and His sister Subhadra. When they heard about the deep love of Krishna’s devotees in Vrindavan, they became stunned in bliss. Their eyes and smiles widened and their legs and arms retracted within their bodies. In Jagannatha Puri, in India, the famous Ratha-yatra (chariot festival) of Lord Jagannatha has been celebrated for hundreds of years where millions of pilgrims gather to behold these merciful forms of the Lord. The New Vrindaban temple, like hundreds of Hare Krishna centers throughout the world, worship similar carved Deities and host their own chariot festivals.

Sri Nrsimhadeva's Altar



Sri Nrsimhadeva

Prahlada
Maharaja

Sri Nrsimhadeva

Sri Nrsimhadeva (Nara meaning “man,” simha meaning “lion,” and deva meaning “god”) assumed the form of a half-man half-lion to protect His devotee Prahlada Maharaja. Prahlada was the son of an evil king who wreaked havoc in the world and who was inimical to God and His devotees. Prahlada, however, was a devoted believer of God, which enraged his father to the point of his trying to kill his own son. Sri Nrsimha appeared from a pillar to protect Prahlada from the wrath of his father. The Lord was so pleased with Prahlada’s devotion and faith that He manifested in this unusual form to reciprocate with his love. Similarly, we seek the blessings and divine protection of Sri Nrsimhadeva.

Please see Nrsimhadeva Pranama—Prayers to Sri Nrsimhadeva in songbook.



The Six Goswamis

The Six Goswamis of Vrindavan were renounced mendicants who lived in Vrindavan, India, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As disciples of Lord Chaitanya, they dedicated their lives to writing volumes of commentaries and books on bhakti-yoga, devotion to God, and extensively preached its glories. They exemplified simplicity, austerity, and complete dedication to the Lord's mission.



Srila Prabhupada Deity

Srila Prabhupada made incredible sacrifices and underwent severe challenges to bring the message of Krishna to the West. As a 70-year-old man with no belongings but the timeless teachings of the holy Vedic texts and a heart full of compassion and love, he formed the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, bringing the Vedic culture and India's spiritual heritage to Western soil. Therefore, his followers offer their gratitude and honor and worship him. He is worshiped as the representative and intimate servant of the Supreme Lord.

Please read more under the "Srila Prabhupada" section at the end of this booklet.

Morning and Evening Programs

** Please refer to the Temple Songbook to follow the songs and prayers indicated.*

"A Spiritual Sandwich"

Srila Prabhupada described the daily morning and evening temple routine as "a spiritual sandwich"—the two spiritual programs which support and nourish the middle of our day. These programs invigorate and enthuse us to perform our daily duties with focus and love.

Mangal Arati

Starting again at the beginning of the day which is most auspicious (mangal), the temple bells and conch shells resound, inviting us for the morning prayers. Let us enter the temple, bow down, and gaze upon the Deities in the temple room. We free our minds of all thoughts and take in the beauty of the Deities and the serene sublime atmosphere.

5:00am

The Spiritual Master, Our Guiding Light

Gratitude is a wonderful way to begin our day. We offer our gratitude and prayers to the guru, our spiritual preceptor and guide Srila Prabhupada, who has enlightened us with spiritual knowledge and who continues to guide us through his books and instructions. With appreciation and love, we sing the **Sri Gurvastakam* while an *arati* (worship) ceremony is performed to the Deities.

Prema Dhvani Prayers (Offering Salutations)

After every prayer or song, we bow down to the Deities and the spiritual master and respond with "Jaya" (meaning "all glories") to the names of the spiritual masters and the Deities.

5:25am

Nrsimhadeva Pranama

We sing the **Nrsimhadeva Pranama* and pray to Lord Nrsimhadeva to protect us from the evil influences and disasters of this world and to remove the impurities from our hearts.

5:35am

Tulasi Puja

Tulasi is the sacred basil plant, which we worship as Lord Krishna's intimate devotee. She manifests as a plant in this world, and by her grace we can receive Krishna's grace. We sing the **Tulasi Puja* song, confidential prayers, while worshipping and circumambulating her.

Offering Respects to One Another

We seek the blessings, guidance, and love of the Lord's devotees by reciting the **Sri Vaishnava Pranama*. We offer our gratitude and respect by bowing down to one another, reminding ourselves to treat one another with respect, humility, and kindness throughout the day. Placing our head to the ground reminds us of our position as humble servants of Krishna's devotees.

5:45–
7:30am

Japa (Chanting on Beads)

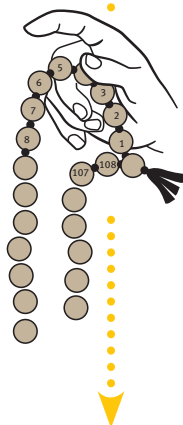
Japa, or chanting God's names softly on beads, is our personal time with the Lord and a means to connect with Him through mantra or sacred sound. His names purify our hearts, allowing us to perceive the inconceivable Lord. Since the Lord is nondifferent from His names, when we chant, we instantly connect with Him, which fills our hearts with divine bliss, peace, and love. Try it and see for yourself!

How to Practice Japa

Sit erect, holding the japa beads with your right hand. Beginning with the bead next to the head bead, gently hold the bead between the thumb and middle finger of your right hand while chanting the maha-mantra. Then move to the next bead and repeat the mantra until you have moved through all 108 beads.

Maha-mantra:

**Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare**



7:30am

Greeting the Deities

Imagine meeting God every day, gazing at Him in His new dress for the day and absorbing His sweetness. This is what we do while we glorify Krishna with the following prayers from **Brahma Samhita*, Verses 4 and 6 (original poetry of God's existence).

7:40am

Guru-Puja – Worship of the Guru

For the second time in the morning, we honor our spiritual master (guru), offering fragrant flower petals at His feet while singing the **Sri Guru Vandana* prayers.

8:00am

Srimad-Bhagavatam Class

Let us listen to the wise words of the Srimad-Bhagavatam, the cream of all Vedic literatures and our primary scripture, which dates back many thousands of years. It consists of 10 cantos (18 volumes in all) and is a treatise on spiritual thought and awakening. A Sanskrit verse from Srimad-Bhagavatam is usually recited every morning, and a speaker elaborates on the verse.

12:30pm

Midday Arati

4:30pm

Afternoon Arati

7:00pm

Evening Worship Ceremony

After a day of activity and different service engagements, we are called to the temple again by the resounding echo of the conch shell. We drink in the Lord's form, which revitalizes us for the evening, and sing the **Gaura Arati* song to glorify Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Vrindavan or Vrindaban? And why is this place named New Vrindaban?

Vrindavan is Lord Krishna's holy land in Northern India where He spent most of His days in the company of His loving devotees. Even now, thousands of pilgrims from around the world flock to Vrindavan to worship and glorify Lord Krishna. When Srila Prabhupada visited West Virginia, he saw this fertile land in the lush countryside as a perfect place to replicate the holy land of Vrindavan in the West. Thus, New Vrindaban was born with the aim of propagating the culture and lifestyle of ancient India: living in harmony with nature and the land, protecting and nurturing Krishna's cows, giving spiritual education, offering a place of pilgrimage to the world, and loving God (Krishna).

What is an "incarnation" of God?

God is one but takes on different forms when He descends to Earth. The Vedic scriptures describe different incarnations of God who come in different forms for various purposes. His birth and activities in this world are otherworldly and not bound by material constraints.



KURTA AND DHOTI



SARI



What is the strange clothing you wear?

We use traditional Indian Vedic dress, which originated thousands of years ago. The *sari*, usually worn by Indian women, is a 6-foot piece of various fashionable cloth and is draped around the waist and shoulders. The men wear a similar cloth, called a *dhoti*, around the waist and is tied to resemble the Western counterpart of pants. They also wear a *kurta*, a loose-fitting cotton shirt. Orange robes are worn by celibate monks who usually live in the temple, and white robes are worn by married men. Our dress distinguishes us as devotees of Lord Vishnu (Vaishnavas), or Krishna.

How do you address each other?

We call each other by a spiritual name, which ends with "Das" or "Dasi," and we also address each other as "Prabhu." "Das" (for males) and "Dasi" (for females) mean "servant." We practice and aspire to be loving servants of God. In this world, a servant is usually a low and undesirable position, but in spiritual exchanges and relationships, to humbly serve God and others is an honorable position and gives the greatest joy and fulfillment. Consequently, we address each other as "Prabhu," which means "master," as we see every devotee of the Lord entitled to respect and service.

Why do you remove your shoes before entering the temple and then bow down in the temple?

We leave our shoes outside so that we "Leave No Trace" (our motto to keep the temple complex clean) of anything but our good heart and intentions. Being barefoot also indicates our mood in approaching the temple of the Lord, in complete humility, as spiritual souls. We bow down to show our respect and submissiveness to God.



TILAK

What is that drawing on your forehead?

It is a clay marking called *tilak*, a sacred marking to remind us that our body is a temple of God and is a sacred tool to connect with Him. A wet clay mixture from a holy place is applied to the forehead in the shape of two vertical lines, which represent the feet of Lord Vishnu, and ends in a leaf shape, which represents the Tulasi leaf, a mark of devotion. *Tilak* sanctifies the body, it acts as an armor to protect the body, and its symbol inspires us to fall at the feet of God with love.



SHIKHA

Why do the men have shaved heads and a pony tail?

As in other cultures, the shaved head is a symbol of renunciation, for the hair is one of our biggest attachments. The *shikha*, or tuft of hair at the back of the head, indicates the body as a temple, and according to the science of yoga and spirituality, it is the point of contact with the brain-centre of intellect and emotions that connects to God. The *shikha* also symbolizes the presence of discerning intellect, farsightedness, and the deity of knowledge upon our head. It is a flag of human culture. It reminds us of the religious principles of morality, righteousness, responsibility, and dutiful awareness.

What is that sweet liquid that is served in the palm of the hand?

We offer all our visitors to taste the sweet yogurt, milk, and honey liquid that bathes the Deities of the Lord every day. These ingredients become sacred when they touch the Deity and is called *charanamrita*, (*charana* meaning “lotus-like feet” and *amrita* meaning “nectar”), the nectar from the Lord’s lotus-like feet.



CHARANAM-
RITA

ARATI



What is the worship ceremony that the priest does on the altar? And what is the significance of the lamp, water, and other items?

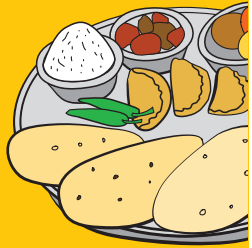
The ceremony is called *arati*. As Krishna is a person, He desires our service. So just as we would entertain and serve a guest who visits our home, we offer different items for Krishna’s pleasure. **Incense** offers a sweet scent and purifies the atmosphere; a **ghee lamp** signifies spiritual knowledge and enlightenment that removes darkness and ignorance and purifies our minds and hearts; **flowers** offers a pleasant fragrance for the pleasure of the Lord and symbolizes our love; **water** refreshes and rejuvenates; and a **peacock fan** cools the Lord. **The conch** that is blown at the beginning and end of the *arati* calls others to the *arati* ceremony and drives away stray thoughts that may impede our prayer and meditation on the Lord. The conch sound also represents the primeval spiritual sound Aum.

Do you change the Deity dresses every day?

Yes. Because God is a person, He can reciprocate with our service and offerings of love. God is not in need of anything; He is the supplier and maintainer of all creatures and the creator of the material universes, yet He craves our personal service and acts of devotion, which give us opportunities to develop a personal relationship with Him.

As offerings of love, beautiful intricate clothing is designed and sewn for the Deities, and They wear a different dress every day, which is stored in a special room.

At the back of the altars, we also have the Deity kitchen where devotees prepare special meals that are offered to the



MAHA- PRASADA

Deities with love. This food is then distributed to everyone as *maha-prasada*, or the great mercy of the Lord. Since it is considered sacred, when eaten it purifies our minds and hearts.

As we cook only for Lord Krishna's pleasure, we do not taste the food during or after the cooking. We also only cook and offer pure (*sattvika*) vegetarian food in the quality of goodness, for what we eat affects our minds and consciousness.

Many of us also adopt the Indian way of eating with the hands, which has been practiced in the traditional Vedic culture for thousands of years.

What is that plant on the altar, and why do you worship her every morning?

It is a sacred basil plant called Tulasi. The plant is actually a personality, a manifestation of a pure devotee of Krishna, Vrinda Devi, who serves Him in the spiritual world. The Vedic literatures describe that by her blessings one can get the blessings of Krishna, so we worship and pray to her for her guidance and favor.

Please feel free to address your questions to one of our resident devotees or write us at mail@newvrindaban.com



TULASI



A monk performing Tulasi puja



Who Is Srila Prabhupada

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, affectionately called Srila Prabhupada, is the Founder-Acharya (spiritual master) of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). He set out from India in 1965 at the age of 69, with only meager belongings and a few volumes of ancient Vedic texts, ready to transmit its timeless spiritual teachings to the West. Soon, from a small storefront temple in New York City, a movement blossomed all over the world. In twelve years, Srila Prabhupada circled the globe fourteen times, met with scholars and statesmen, and inspired men and women from all walks of life to take to Krishna Consciousness. Hundreds of temples and many schools, restaurants, and farm communities on all continents developed under his guidance. New Vrindaban is the first farming community that was born from Srila Prabhupada's divine vision and inspiration. It embodies the sublime Vedic culture and heritage and Srila Prabhupada's desire of propagating simple living with God in the center. Srila Prabhupada visited New Vrindaban four times, and many years after he departed from this world, New Vrindaban remains his home, and one can still feel his presence here.

What Is ISKCON

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a worldwide movement founded by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and dedicated to the philosophy and practice of Krishna Consciousness, which is also known as Bhakti-yoga. In this ancient monotheistic practice, dating back thousands of years, the Absolute Truth, the source of all life, is understood to be a person. He is one, but in different faiths He is known by different names. One of His many names is Krishna, meaning "all attractive." The foundational tenets of Bhakti-yoga are that we are spiritual beings, infinitesimal parts of Krishna, who are meant to connect with Him in love and devotion. Chanting God's names connects us with Him, as described in all scriptures of the world. This understanding and practice awaken our true self and allows us to develop our personal, loving relationship with God, Krishna.



NEW VRINDABAN

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