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## THE JOURNEY TO PREMA

~ Guide to Vaiṣṇava Holy Days ~

Lesson 5

**Please Chant:**

**Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa - Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare**  
**Hare Rāma Hare Rāma - Rāma Rāma Hare Hare**

### IN THIS LESSON:

- How To Use This Guide
- A Look at Appearance and Disappearance Days
- Observing Holy Days
- The Appearance Days of the Lord
- Lord Caitanya and the Vaiṣṇava of His Era
- Later Day and Modern Day Vaiṣṇavas
- Ekādaśī — Glossary — Guide Listings

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His Divine Grace

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja  
(Affectionately called Śrīla Gurudeva)



**THE JOURNEY TO PREMA – LESSON 5**  
**GUIDE TO VAISNAVA HOLY DAYS**

Dear servant of God,

Please accept our sincere respects as we humbly offer them to you. All glories to Śrīla Gurudeva!

Before we begin to get into the main body of this “Guide to Vaisnava Holy Days”, let us all join together to sing the praises of all the true gurus in our lineage that have delivered spiritual truths to us. Let us thank them for their mercy and their guidance, and, even more importantly, let us be sure to do all we can to follow the teachings they have shared with us.

This guide is basically a “Special Edition” of the regular lessons in our Journey to Prema course, so for this month you will receive it instead of a monthly lesson.

Now that we have begun to provide you with calendars that mark the Vaisnava holy days that are celebrated throughout the year, we have decided to put together a guide to tell you about the majority of these days.

The purpose of this guide is to give you an understanding of why these days are celebrated and to provide you with some information on the personalities that we honor. We ask you to please keep this guide so that you can refer back to it as these days arrive, and as these personalities appear in the lessons of our course as well. This will allow you an opportunity to begin to appreciate these personalities and the roles they played in our spiritual heritage.

In the first section below we will explain how to use this guide, then we will give you some information on why we celebrate certain days, and how these days are celebrated, and we will follow that with the descriptions of the personalities we honor.

Due to space considerations, we will not cover all of the personalities that will appear on your calendar, but we will try to cover a majority of the most celebrated ones.

After that we will share some information on a very special fast day that we observe on a regular basis throughout the year.

Finally, we will provide you with a glossary that includes all of the unfamiliar terms you will find in this guide. When you find a word inside of [square brackets] you will know that the meaning and pronunciation of this word is given in the glossary. For words that appear many times, like [Vaisnava], we will only use the brackets the first few times that they appear.

Since those who receive this guide will have already received the first four lessons of the Journey to Prema Course, words and names covered in those lessons will not be given special attention here. Also, as with the lessons, a “plus sign” +, will indicate a pronunciation aide. If you find a pronunciation aide given, where no meaning for the word appears, then you will know that this word is someone’s name.

Observing holy days is very important part of practicing bhakti–yoga. We receive spiritual benefits by observing these days, so we ask you to please honor these days as you travel along on your journey to prema.

**How to Use this Guide**

On the last page of this guide you will find a list of all the personalities and other holy days that are covered in this guide. All of these listings will appear alphabetically.

In front of each listing you will find a number (enclosed in parenthesis). You will use this number to locate the description this person or holy day inside of the guide. How this is done will be explained below.

Inside of the guide you will find that these personalities and holy days are arranged into a variety of different groups. They will not appear alphabetically. We arranged them into these groups because this allowed us to better explain how these personalities and holy days are related to each other. This should give you a better chance to understand how they fit into the overall picture of the Vaisnava lineage and tradition. Inside of the guide, these personalities and holy days will be listed numerically, in order, starting from number 1 on page 6, and

continuing until the last description on page 12.

**To use this guide**, simply look up a person or holy day on the alphabetical list at the rear of the guide, then, using the number given, look up that person or holy day in the numerically sequenced listings inside of the guide.

Another feature that we have used to help you understand how all of these personalities are related is this: If we refer to one personality while describing another, we will give the numerical listing of that person. This will allow you to refer back and forth between these personalities until you have a clear understanding of their relationships.

It may be tough at first, but in time you will be able to get a full understanding of the information provided in this guide.

Also, as we mentioned at the outset, this guide is basically another lesson in itself. For this reason, we will at times include new teachings to further expand your knowledge of bhakti–yoga and other subjects that are covered in the Vedas.

We have provided this guide to you in hopes that it will become a valuable tool for you. If, through the use of this guide, you begin to understand and observe these important holy days, then our efforts will have produced some very valuable fruits.

**A Look at “Appearance” and “Disappearance” Days.**

For some of you, the use of these terms, “appearance” and “disappearance” may be a bit confusing. We could simply tell you that they refer to what we usually think of as “birthdays” and the days that we “die”, but this would leave some important spiritual understandings unexplored, so let us take a deeper look at why these terms are used.

The spiritual truths behind these terms are very deep. If we limit our investigation into these truths to those things that can be easily understood by the limited mind, or grasped by our faulty senses, or if we rely only on logic or reasoning, we will be barred from entry in these truths.

And yet, these truths can be grasped, and in fact, we can use a very simple example to help you begin to understand the use of these terms.

Imagine yourself sitting in a chair looking out a window. Your view of all that exists outside of the window is very limited. The only things that you will be able to see are those things that are within that window frame. Now picture a person walking into your view from the left hand side of the window frame. They walk across your field of view, and then the exit on the right side of the window frame. This person existed before you could see them, and they continued to exist after they left your vision. It was only from your limited perspective that they “appeared” and then “disappeared”. Using this example, we can begin to investigate what really happens when those whose appearance and disappearance days we celebrate, enter into and exit this world.

**The great [Vaisnavas] that we will discuss in this guide are all eternally liberated beings. They were not, are not, and never will be, bound to this world in any way. In Lesson 1 of our course, we discussed how all of those souls who are bound to this world become entrapped here when they made a choice to turn away from the Lord. This situation never existed for these great gurus in our line.**

**They reside eternally in the totally pure and perfect spiritual world. Upon the desire of the Lord they “appear” in this world in order to carry out various missions that the Lord has entrusted to them.**

Our very limited senses may only be able to perceive that they were “born” into this world, and that they “died” before they left, but these two terms have no factual basis here.

**These exalted personalities simply come into our view. Like the person who entered our view from the window, they “appear” for however long the Lord needs them to, and then, when their pastimes are complete, they leave our view, they “disappear.”**

Although these truths are in some ways similar to how we, the

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fallen souls who are bound to this world, enter and exit this world, as we look closer at the situation we will discover the differences that set us apart from these holy men (and women).

To examine these differences we need to look into a subject that is one of the basic foundational truths of the Vedas, the subject of **karma**. By its Sanskrit spelling, this word is pronounced **kur-muh**, but it is seldom pronounced that way. The most common way you will hear this word pronounced is **kar-muh** (kar like car).

This word, **karma**, has a very basic meaning, **action**, however, from that basic meaning comes quite a variety of meanings and shades of meanings.

For many of us, when we think of karma, we think not of action, but of reaction. When something good or something bad happens to a person, it is common to hear someone say, "That was karma", meaning that whatever took place happened as a result of some action that person had previously carried out.

In one of the most famous books of the Vedas, the Lord gave a definition for karma that includes both of these aspects, action and reaction. He said that karma is **every action that we perform which leads to the creation of more material bodies**. In other words, all of the activities which will cause us to remain trapped in the material worlds.

This is only the very basic idea of what the Vedas tell us about karma, but this will be enough for us to continue our discussion on the difference between the appearance and disappearance of the great Vaiṣṇavas and the reasons that we come and go in this world.

While we live in this world we are pushed and pulled about, roaming here and there as we try to fulfill the desires of our senses. In order to fulfill these desires, we engage in karma, actions or activities.

**When the time comes for us to "die", when our soul departs the material body, we are forced, by the laws that God has created, to accept another material body. Some would even call these the laws of karma.**

**However, the type of body that we will receive depends not just upon our actions in our past lives, but also upon our desires.** The formula involved in making the determination of our next body is surely vast and complex, and the exact details of it are not specified in the Vedas, but a general idea is given.

Using some general examples we find that if a person is very lazy and loves to sleep, he may be given the body of a bear, where he can hibernate away months of his life at a time. If a person is kind and devotes his time, energy, and resources to helping others, he may receive a beautiful, strong, and healthy human body. Of course, there are an uncountable number of variations within these laws.

In Lesson 4 of our course, we discuss how the idea of "births" and "deaths" are based upon things that never truthfully take place. This is because, **in truth, we are eternal souls who can never be "born" or "die."** But still, for souls like us, who are under the control of the laws of karma, we are forced to seemingly be born, and to die, time after time, after time. And this cycle will go on endlessly, unless and until we develop a spiritual consciousness that will allow us to escape the material prison house.

**Until we come under the guidance of the Vedas, and the sādhus and gurus who teach us the truths that are contained in them, our birth in this world and our departure from it are entirely regulated by the laws of karma.**

**On the other hand, the great [Vaiṣṇavas] that we discuss in this guide never have been, and never will be under the control of these laws.**

**Since they have never had any desires that were driven by their senses, and since they have never carried out any material activities, their appearance in this world, and the bodies they appear in, cannot possibly be the results of their**

**karma. Their appearance, their activities, and their disappearance all take place under a superior set of spiritual laws that override the laws of material karma, the laws that control what happens to souls like us.**

Some of these teachings may seem to be a bit far afield from our subject of celebrating holy days, but we ask you to keep in mind that all we present to you is part of our desire to put you on a path that leads to prema, and to help you to continue to make progress on your journey. So all of these teachings should be considered and acted upon.

With that in mind, let us share another related truth with you. To some of you, it may have sounded strange when we said that these great [Vaiṣṇavas] never performed any material activity. You may have thought, "Didn't they eat? Didn't they ever have a job?" The answer to both of these questions is yes, but by understanding the difference between the activities they perform, and the activities we normally perform, we can begin to understand how we can break the cycle of karma.

**When we carry out an act with an entirely spiritual motive, it is not a material activity; it is not karma (as in an action). Therefore we will not have to face any karma (as in a reaction) for that act.**

When we offer our food to God, and we only eat the remnants of that offering in order to keep the body fit for God's service, our acts are not karma. If we have a job, but we offer the actions we perform to the Lord and we use the wages we earn only to serve the Lord, then our actions produce no karma.

If however, our reasons for eating, or our reasons for going to work, are mixed with desires to satisfy our own senses, then our service becomes mixed with karma. While this mixed service is superior to actions meant solely to satisfy our senses, it is not pure enough to ensure that it will keep us from creating karma and being forced to accept another material body. We should keep all of these truths about karma in mind as we walk the path of bhakti-yoga.

Earlier we mentioned that the type of body that we receive is based upon our karma and our desires. So, if great Vaiṣṇavas have no karma or material desires, what determines the type of body they receive?

The answer is this: **The bodies that the great Vaiṣṇavas appear in are exact replicas of one of the forms that they eternally exist in while residing in the spiritual world. In truth, even while they are here in this world, even while their bodies appear to be as material as ours, they are not. They may seem to be born, to get sick, to age, and to die, but these are all just illusions, they are all disguises worn by these great Vaiṣṇavas as they play a role in this world.**

Most of us have seen movies where an actor appears to be of different ages at various points in the film. In one scene, he may be a man in his forty's, but in another he may appear much older, with grey hair and a deep set of wrinkles. Thanks to movie magic, he appears to age right before our eyes.

But of course, all of this is simply done with makeup. When the actor washes the dye out of his hair and removes the false wrinkles, his youth reappears.

In a similar way, these great Vaiṣṇavas may appear to look different, at different times, but in truth, in their eternal forms, without makeup, they always remain the same.

These are just some of the truths that the Vedas give us about the forms/bodies of these great Vaiṣṇavas. As the lessons in our course progress, we will share even more truths about the unique characteristics of their forms.

All of the facts that we have shared with you so far should help you to understand why we use the terms appearance and disappearance days. So let us move on now and examine just why it is that we celebrate the disappearance of these great personalities.

### The Special Qualities of Disappearance Days

For most people in this world, birthdays are days for celebration, even after people “pass away”, others may continue to celebrate their birthdays. Until recently, the birthdays of both George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were celebrated.

Sometimes we may have memorial services on the day that a person “died”, such as those we see held on November 22, the day that President Kennedy was shot. However, these occasions tend to be very somber and serious, so much so, that to say we “celebrate” this day would probably be considered the wrong thing to say. After all, who wants to celebrate a person’s death?

So why do we, who greatly admire the Vaiṣṇavas who have come before us, celebrate the disappearance days of our gurus? Let us take a look at why we follow this tradition.

In the Vedas, the science of astrology is very well understood and extremely accurate. You may recall, from Lesson 3, that Lord Caitanya’s grandfather was an astrologer who, at the time of the Lord’s birth, accurately predicted some things about the Lord and His future.

Even still, such predictions tend to be somewhat general. Therefore, when a person appears in this world, we do not have detailed information about what they will accomplish in their lives, nor do we know exactly whose lives they will touch.

In contrast to this, **upon a person’s disappearance from this world, we are able to take a full tally of their activities and accomplishments. This is one of the reasons that we celebrate the disappearance days of the great Vaiṣṇavas.**

On these days, those that knew them, and those whose lives were touched by their mercy or their teachings, and especially those who received instructions directly from them, will gather together. **The memories of these great Vaiṣṇavas will join these people’s hearts together and they will all want to celebrate the beauty of these personalities and the wonderful ways they touched their lives.**

Will these celebrations be all smiles and fun? Definitely not. In fact, it is the tears that will be shed in memory of these great devotees, and the reasons for these tears, that we will look at next, as they are a part of another reason to celebrate these disappearance days.

When we explained the meaning of *yoga* in Lesson 1, we said that its basic meaning is “**to connect**”. Someone who is properly engaged in practicing *yoga* is connected to the Supreme Lord. There is another Sanskrit word, **ayoga + uh-yo-guh** (like up/yo/gum) which means **disconnected. This is the state that most of us are in. We are disconnected from the Lord.**

There are two other Sanskrit words that further expand on this same idea. These words translate as meeting and separation.

All of these words automatically imply that there must be two separate objects being discussed, two things that meet, or connect, or two things that are separate, or disconnected.

When these words are used to discuss relationships between two people, they automatically imply a variety of moods or emotions that will arise in the hearts of those who are meeting or separated from each other. **If we are together, if we are meeting with someone we like we will experience joy. The more we like, or love that person, the greater that joy will be.**

On the other hand, **if we are in the company of someone we do not like we will be unhappy, again, to varying degrees, depending on how much we dislike or detest them.**

These same truths apply to being separate from the people, only in a reverse way. **The more we like or love someone, the greater we will miss them when we are separated from them, and, if our love is deep, this separation will actually cause us pain.**

**When it comes to spiritual moods, this mood of separation is far and away the most powerful mood or emotion that we can enter into when it comes to removing the desires and illusions that cover our consciousness, and the dirt that covers the prema that is buried in our hearts.**

Even if we practice all of the other teachings that we will share

with you, it will be difficult for us to fully uncover and taste the joy of prema until we are able to enter into this mood. We may get a slight taste of the pleasures that lie inside our hearts, but it will be hard for us to fully experience what prema really is.

On the other hand, **if we are able to enter into this mood, if we can become so deeply absorbed in the feeling of being separated from the Lord that we are able to cry tears of pain that are brought on by this mood, then we will find that the keys to the treasure chest of prema will quickly fall into our hands.** (Or, and this point is a key itself, if we can feel this type of separation from the Lord’s pure devotees, this treasure will also become available to us.)

We will continue to discuss this mood throughout our course, but for now let us return to our current topic, the disappearance days of the great Vaiṣṇavas. In order to further help us understand why these days are so glorious, let us compare them to the disappearance days of other people in our lives that we may become attached to.

Most of the relationships that we build in our lives are based on our material bodies and our wanting to fulfill personal desires. If we look closely at these types of relationships we will find that they have some very weak points, weaknesses that do not exist when we are properly connected to devotees of the Lord.

First off, all bodily relationships are temporary. And secondly, if we are totally honest with ourselves, we will almost always find that the suffering that we experience when we become separated from those we are connected to in this way is mainly due to the fact that these people will no longer be there to fulfill our desires, and to give us various forms of material pleasures.

When it comes to properly built relationships with Vaiṣṇavas, neither of these drawbacks exists. **Although these Vaiṣṇavas may depart from our physical presence, they are all permanent residents of the spiritual world. If we follow the guidance they have given us we will remain connected to them. This connection will exist both as we live out the remainder of material lives, and when we move into the spiritual world to become permanently reunited with them.**

Although members of other faiths may also like to believe that they will be reunited with their loved ones in the afterlife, there is little to no specific information in their scriptures to support these hopes. There may be talk of an afterlife, but the details of exactly what takes place there, what their activities will be and what types of relationships they will have with God, or with others, are very vague.

On the other hand, the Vedas are full of details about exactly what takes place in the afterlife, and they describe how, by properly executing our bhakti practices, we can reunite with these great Vaiṣṇavas and engage in very specific and eternal pastimes with them.

When we look at the second fault of material relationships, that they are usually based on selfish concerns and desires, we will again find that our relationships with pure devotees are entirely different.

**Proper relationships with Vaiṣṇavas are built on one thing, service.** The reason we want to spend time with in their company is because this provides us with an opportunity to serve them. And it is through this service, even when we are not in their physical presence, that we build our strongest connection to them.

Since our relationship with them is based upon our desire to serve them, instead of on a desire to serve our own senses, their disappearance will not sever our connection to them. In fact, **if our love and dedication to them is strong enough, their disappearance will only increase our desire to serve them, and we will become even more dedicated to following the teachings they have left us.**

We should also understand that although our relationships with devotees are not based on selfish desires, we will still feel a sense of personal loss. The closer our relationship was, the greater our

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sense of loss will be.

And yet, even if our relationship with them never contained personal interactions, we can still feel a sense of loss, if we focus on how their life, their teachings, or the example they set for us have given us blessings that cannot be matched.

The difference between these feelings of loss and the loss we feel when material relationships end is that the memories and emotions we feel will be directed toward a pure devotee who is in a permanent and personal relationship with the Lord. Therefore, when we remember them, or feel a loss of their presence in our lives, we connect our thoughts and our hearts to someone who can help us cut the chains that keep us from joining them in the spiritual world.

If we are a bit fortunate, we will be able to develop feelings of separation in our hearts. If we are wise and blessed we will do all we can to fan the flames of these painful feelings, causing them to burn hotter, and stronger, and brighter, until the pain becomes almost unbearable. Then if we are extremely fortunate, we will actually be able to cry for the fact that we are separated from these incredible sources of mercy, love, and affection.

**The emotions that come into our hearts from such intense spiritual separation are not of this world. They lie in a dimension that is entirely beyond the boundaries and limitations of any feelings that can arise from our material body or from the mind.**

**Tears that come from such emotions can wash away all of the coverings on our heart and they can purify our consciousness in ways that no other substance can. In fact, our gurus have even gone so far as to state that such tears are the price we must pay for a ticket to enter the Kingdom of God.**

**By disappearing from our sight, these great Vaiṣṇavas provide us with valuable benefits. By departing, they help us increase our desire to serve them and follow them. And by leaving our presence they draw our hearts into the mood of separation. This then gives us a chance to shed a river of tears for them.**

**If we can cry hard enough, if we can make this river of tears run strong enough, it will rapidly carry us along, and it will deliver us into the ocean of prema.**

We know this explanation of the reasons why we celebrate the disappearance days of the great Vaiṣṇavas has been lengthy and that we stretched it a bit thin at times, bringing in other topics and spiritual truths, but still, if we have helped you understand why we celebrate these days, it was well worth our efforts and your time spent reading it. And perhaps, if you are lucky, you will have gotten a glimpse of the strength, the beauty, and the glories of the mood of separation as well.

As a final note on celebrating disappearance days, we want to share a very simple, yet very profound teaching with you. Even after all we have said, if you still begin to wonder why we honor and glorify the Vaiṣṇavas as much as we do, this teaching should put all of your questions to rest.

If you can grasp the significance of this teaching, you will be very anxious to learn all you can about these Vaiṣṇavas, you will want to share their stories and their glories with others, and you will look forward to every opportunity to honor them. We ask you to meditate on this teaching and to try to bring it into your heart.

**“All spiritual perfections can be easily achieved by one who receives the mercy of a Vaiṣṇava”**

### **Celebrating Appearance Days**

When we look at a calendar of Vaiṣṇava holy days we will find that the appearance days of some Vaiṣṇavas are listed. After all we just told you, you might well ask, “Why is this done?” In order to explain this, we will once again have to bring in some other subjects and information.

In Lesson 2, we discussed the qualities of a true guru. Under this general heading there are various types of true gurus, each with their own unique Sanskrit name. We do not plan to fully explore this subject here, but we will share some basic teachings so that we can discuss two of these types of gurus in a bit more detail.

**In any life, where we are fortunate enough to come into contact with the path of bhakti-yoga, the first person who speaks to us about any of the truths on this path, sparking our interest to learn more, is one type of guru.**

Later, when we become somewhat serious about following this path, we may decide to accept a guru in a more formal way. This is often done during a specific type of ceremony. However, even without this ceremony we can accept this type of guru because the main focus of the ceremony is for the guru to officially give us a mantra to use in our spiritual practices.

The English word that has been given to this process is “initiation”. Once we are initiated by a guru, we become his “disciple”, and we commit our lives to following the instructions he gives us.

This **guru who gives us a mantra and initiates us** is referred to as our **dīkṣā +deek-shā** (shā like shop) guru. In a deeper sense however, it is not simply by speaking a mantra into our ear that our dīkṣā guru completes his task. Our dīkṣā guru will ultimately be **the guru who gives us spiritual knowledge of the Lord, of His form, and of the specific relationship that we have with the Lord.** This is a gradual process and many more details on this subject will be given in our course.

When we receive initiation from a dīkṣā guru, we establish a permanent relationship with them. Even if we do not attain perfection/prema in this lifetime, a true dīkṣā guru will find the means to eternally guide us until we eventually join Him in the spiritual world.

There is another type of guru that is known as the **śikṣā + shik-shā** (shā like shop) guru. **Anyone who gives us spiritual knowledge that helps us progress on our journey to prema** becomes one of our śikṣā gurus.

There are other types of gurus as well, and much more can be said about dīkṣā and śikṣā gurus, but we will save those discussions for the lessons in our course. For now, we have shared enough information to discuss our current topic.

The appearance day or our dīkṣā guru is a very special day. Since different devotees will have different dīkṣā gurus, you will find the appearance day of more than one Vaiṣṇava listed in calendars of holy days. It is not that we cannot, or should not celebrate the appearance days of other Vaiṣṇavas; it is just that we are specifically instructed to celebrate the appearance day or our own dīkṣā guru.

There is even a special name given to this day, **Vyāsa-pūjā + Vyā-suh Poo-jā** (Vyā like yacht/ jā like job) This day is named after the sādhu who compiled the Vedas into a written form some five thousand years ago. His name is **Śrīla Vedavyāsa + Vay-duh-vyā-suh**. He is also known as **Śrīla Vyā-suh-dave**. The word **pūjā** means “worship”.

**Since he brought the Vedas to us, all true gurus who deliver these teachings, without changing them in any way, are all considered to be his representatives. Therefore, when we worship our dīkṣā guru on his appearance day, by conducting a Vyāsa-pūjā celebration we are also worshipping all of the gurus who share and follow the teachings given to us by Śrīla Vedavyāsa.**

**On this day, while we honor our dīkṣā guru, it is his responsibility to honor, and to teach us to honor, all of the gurus in the chain of gurus that we are connected to, thus encouraging us to respect and appreciate our spiritual lineage.**

In a related note, we want to inform you that when two devotees are initiated by the same dīkṣā guru, they also become eternally linked, and they are then referred to as god brothers or

god sisters. **If you see a person listed as “the god brother” of any given devotee, this simply means that they were both disciples of the same dīkṣā guru.**

Uniting these god brothers and god sisters together in their worship of their common dīkṣā guru is another one of the benefits of celebrating His appearance day. On this day, all of his disciples will try to gather together in groups to honor and remember their dīkṣā guru and inspire each other to continue to serve him.

**The other type of appearance days that we celebrate are the appearance days of the Lord and His expansions.** All of these personalities are manifestations of God Himself, so their appearances are such incredible events that we celebrate these days, while **we do not celebrate the disappearance days of the Lord.**

Now that we have covered both appearance and disappearance days, let us move on to discuss a little bit more about the days we celebrate and what we have presented in this guide.

### General Information

Observing holy days is an important part of our religious tradition. By learning about the personalities and events that we honor, we gain a broader understanding and a deeper appreciation for the history of our faith.

As we have mentioned, the list of personalities that we have covered in this guide is not complete. We will try to cover those we have missed in future lessons and newsletters. We wish to beg the forgiveness of all those we have failed to mention.

Some of the personalities we have included are discussed in the lessons we’ve completed so far. In order to make room for as many as possible in this guide, we have given extremely short descriptions of those personalities and we have referred you to the lessons where they are discussed in more detail. We know you have not yet received some of the lessons we will mention, but you will get them in time. We apologize for any faults in the decision to follow this pattern.

Since some of these personalities are mentioned throughout the lessons, we will only refer you to the lessons where they are first introduced and to those where they are discussed in more detail.

We also want to mention that **the dates in a Vaiṣṇava calendar are based upon lunar months. Therefore, the corresponding date on a solar calendar will change from year to year.** A day that falls on May tenth one year may fall on May twentieth in another. For this reason we will try to provide you with the proper dates each year.

We would also like to review a point that we have covered in the lessons because it applies to some of the teachings in this guide as well.

Many of the events you will find described here, especially in the section on the appearance days of the Lord, may be a bit difficult to understand, or to accept as being actual historical events. This is perfectly understandable and you should not feel that you are in any way “wrong” for feeling that way.

In the lessons of our course, especially in Lesson 11, we will discuss the fact that our limited minds are not always able to grasp things, even if they are true, and especially if they are beyond the boundaries of the belief system that we have ourselves have established. One of the best ways to expand these boundaries is to accept the following simple truths.

God has unlimited power. He can create anything, and He can do anything that He chooses to do. With these facts in mind we can begin to accept many things.

We can sum up the unlimited abilities of God with this statement: **The only thing that is impossible, is for something to be impossible – because God can do anything.**

Reflecting on and absorbing these simple truths will help us overcome any doubts that arise as we learn about the amazing things He does.

As you begin to pay attention to the Vaiṣṇava holy days, you will find that many do not require us to perform any type of

specific activity, such as a fast. However, when a fast is mentioned, we highly recommend that you observe it.

**All of the gurus in our line personally observe these fasts, and they have instructed us to do so as well.** In Lessons 7 and 8, we explain that it is offensive for us to disobey the orders of our gurus. When we commit offenses such as these our bhakti practices become weak, and even those practices that we do perform lose a great deal of their spiritual potency and effectiveness.

Although there are many good reasons to observe the Vaiṣṇava holy days, perhaps the best one of all is this: **When we celebrate these days, we follow the number one rule of bhakti–yoga: Always remember the Lord (and His pure devotees).**

### Observing Holy Days

As we mentioned just above, in many cases there are no specific activities for us to perform on some of the Vaiṣṇava holy days. On the other days, such activities are recommended. For instance, on one of the holy days, the Deity forms of the Lord that are usually worshipped in the temple may be brought out for a public procession, or They may be given a boat ride, or other such activities. These festivals are always related to the various pastimes of the Lord.

Unfortunately, while you remain in prison, you will likely be unable to partake in these types of ceremonies, however, as time goes on, we may be able to provide you with DVD’s showing some of these festivals, and for those of you who have internet access now, you may be able to find videos of these festivals at [www.purebhakti.tv](http://www.purebhakti.tv) or at other Vaiṣṇava sites.

**A very common part of celebrating these holy days is too fast for a portion of the day, and then, even when you do eat, to limit your diet to certain foods.** These will be the foods that are allowed on Ekādaśī, which is regular fast day that will be discussed later in this guide. Whenever a fast is recommended, you should begin your fast at sunset of the previous day and you should not break it until the times that will appear on the calendars that we send out in our newsletters.

When Śrīla Gurudeva was present in a visible form, he would often give a lecture on these holy days, discussing the personality that was being honored. By his example, we can see that **even if there is no specific fast or activity suggested for that day, we can honor this person by thinking of them and thanking them for the contributions they made.**

As you begin to receive books from the vast collection of Vaiṣṇava literature, you will come across books and commentaries written by many of those mentioned in this guide. If you have such works available, perhaps you could set aside some time to study any works you have by the person being honored, and, if you choose, you may also fast for some or all of that day.

Another aspect of the celebrations that take place on these days, is the distribution of **prasāda + pruh-sād** (sād like rod). While this word directly translates as “mercy”, it is used to represent **things that are first offered to the Lord, and then taken by us.** This can refer to things such as flowers, but it is most common usage is in reference to food.

Lord Caitanya Himself would often distribute food to His followers, and the tradition of distributing prasāda at festivals continues to this day.

**One of our gurus has even said that no celebration of any holy day is complete if it does not include the distribution of prasāda.**

With these facts in mind, and for those of you who are able to, we will also suggest that you could purchase something from the canteen, even something small like a bag of candy, then, after offering it to the Lord or to the Vaiṣṇava who you are honoring, you could distribute that prasāda as a way to honor that personality.

Staple

As time goes on, we hope to include more information in our newsletters, to supplement what is given in this guide, so that we can help you to better understand and to celebrate these holy days.

### Vaisnava Holy Days

The time has finally come for us to begin our descriptions of the personalities we honor. We are going to start off with most of the appearance days of the Lord. Some of these will be included in later groupings because of the role they play in that group.

After that, we will cover the great Vaisnavas whose disappearance days we celebrate, and then we will tell you about the special fast days that we observe throughout the year.

## The Appearance Days of the Lord

### (1) Janmāṣṭamī – Lord Kṛṣṇa’s Appearance Day

+ Jun–māsh–tuh–mee (māsh like gosh)

Janmāṣṭamī is the Sanskrit word which refers to the appearance day of Lord Kṛṣṇa, The Supreme Personality of God. The word “janma” means “birth”, and “aṣṭa”, means “eighth”, which refers to the fact that Kṛṣṇa appeared on the eighth day of the moon, and to the fact that He was the eighth child born to His mother. Our course will make it very clear; beginning in Lesson 7, why it is that **Lord Kṛṣṇa is referred to as the Supreme Personality of God**. Until we reach that point, we will simply say this. For many different reasons the Lord Himself descends to this planet and the other planets in the material worlds. And although these various avatārs of the Lord may take on many forms (as discussed below) and perform many pastimes, **there is only one God, and Kṛṣṇa is His original form, from which all other forms expand**.

In addition to this, later in this guide we will discuss the specific type of bhakti-yoga that is practiced by those within our line of gurus, and in those practices it is absolutely essential for us to narrow our focus down to worshipping only one of the Lord’s forms, and that form is Lord Kṛṣṇa.

### (2) Rādhāṣṭamī

#### Śrīmatī Rādhārānī’s Appearance Day

+ Shree-muh-tee Rād-hā-rā-nee (rād/hā/rā like rod/hot)

In Lesson 7, we begin introducing you to Śrī Rādhā. The spiritual truths contained within the personality of Śrī Rādhā are in and of themselves a vastly deep and shoreless ocean.

**Śrī Rādhā is Kṛṣṇa’s dearly beloved**. Although eternally expanded as Her own separate self, She is also simultaneously eternally one with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. And, like Kṛṣṇa, **She is a central part of the specific bhakti path that is walked by the followers of Lord Caitanya**.

Like Kṛṣṇa, She possesses qualities that are not possessed by anyone else, amongst which is an unmatched, super excellent level of prema that is experienced by Her and Her alone. These unique characteristics, along with Her ability to capture Kṛṣṇa’s heart in ways that no one else can, all combine to give Her a unique loveliness that shines with unequalled brilliance.

As the Journey to Prema course continues, Śrī Rādhā will be focused on more and more, in both the teachings that we share and in the practices that we recommend.

### (3) Lord Varāha-The Boar Form

In this very special form, **Lord Kṛṣṇa takes on the body of a boar in order to enact certain pastimes**. There are actually at least five different boar like forms of the Lord that descend to accomplish feats that can be carried out in such a form.

In some of those pastimes, the earth becomes submerged in the universal ocean, which is a vast body of water which all earthly planets are situated above. Lord Varāha + Vuh-rā-huh (rā like rod) dives into this ocean to rescue the earth planet and to place it back in its proper position.

The specific day that we celebrate relates to one of these earth

saving appearances. In this pastime, He was attacked by a great demon that had searched the universe seeking an opponent that was strong enough to put up a worthy battle. Finding Lord Varāha, the demon challenged Him to fight, and after a great and fierce struggle, the Lord defeated this powerful demon.

### (4) Lord Vāmana-The Dwarf Form

**In this pastime, the Lord descended in the form of a dwarf and accomplished several tasks at the same time.**

For a variety of reasons, the demons had taken control of the universe away from the [demigods]. Seeing the distress that her sons were in, the mother of the demigods strictly worshipped the Lord in ways that caused Him to appear before her. Knowing that her worship was driven by her desire to see her sons regain control of the universe, the Lord decided to appear as her son and assist her.

When He first appeared it was in His majestic four armed form, but soon, as if He was an actor changing costumes, He assumed the form of a dwarf, and in this seemingly harmless form He went before the demon’s king.

Since Lord Vāmana + Vā-muh-nuh had also come dressed as a sādhu, the demon king granted Him a gift of charity, and yet the Lord only requested a tiny piece of land, just as much as He could cover in three steps.

Recognizing the Lord’s disguise, the king’s guru advised him not to grant the Lords request, but since he felt it was his duty to honor the request of a sādhu he agreed to the three steps of land, even though he knew it could be a costly mistake.

The Lord then expanded into a giant form, and in just two steps, He covered the entire universe. He then returned to His dwarf form, and since there was no place left for Him to place His third step, He had the king arrested for breaking his vow of a three step gift.

The king then offered his head as a spot for the Lord’s final step, saying that he did not mind losing his kingdom, but he feared breaking his vow. Due to his humility, and his unwavering desire to please the Lord, Lord Vāmana told him that in the next cycle of ages he would be installed as ruler of the universe, but in the meantime he could peacefully reside on a planet, surrounded by his friends and relatives, and that, in order to ensure that his heart would remain fixed on the Lord, the Lord Himself would also reside there as his doorman.

Through this pastime, the Lord established the exalted position of those who sacrifice everything they have to please Him, and He also showed His own humility and compassion when He took the position of a doorman.

### (5) Lord Nṛsimha-The Half Man-Half Lion Form

As with Lord Varāha, the boar incarnation, there are multiple forms of Lord Nṛsimha + Nri-sing-huh. **His name is derived from two words which mean “man” and “lion”, in the most famous of His Nṛsimha forms, He descended in a form that has the body of a man with the head and paws of a lion**. He came in that form in order to do something that He especially loves to do — protect His devotees.

In this case, the devotee was a five year old boy named Prahlād + Pruh-lād (lād like mod). Prahlād’s father was a great demon, who, by the worshipping one of the [demigods], had become almost immortal. Believing he could not be killed he had gained control of the universe. Then, driven by his power and his ego, he had ordered that all of his subjects were to worship him, which all of them did, except his own son.

When he became angry at Prahlād for refusing to worship him, he tried to have his own son killed, but when all his attempts failed, he prepared to kill him himself.

Challenging his son to tell him where the God that he worshipped was at, the demon struck a stone pillar with his sword because Prahlād had told him that God was everywhere, even within the pillar. When he did this, Lord Nṛsimha appeared from the pillar. And after battling with the demon, He killed him and

installed Prahlād, His devotee, as the new ruler.

Due to space considerations we will have to leave out the twist to why the demon was only almost immortal, but it is a great one, so we will be sure to share it with you later in the course.

### **(6) Lord Rāmacandra-The Perfect King**

+ Rā-muh-chun-druh/also known as Lord Rāma, like drama.

**This avatār of the Lord has a form resembling that of a human. In this pastime, He played the role of a great warrior king who faced many trials.**

Lord Rāma's father had more than one wife, and due to the intrigues of one of these wives, Lord Rāma was forced to go into exile. The anguish of being separated from his son caused Lord Rāma's father to pass away, thus compounding the loss the citizens were suffering due to Lord Rāma's exile.

During His exile, His wife was kidnapped by a great demon. Unable to find her, He enlisted the help of one of His greatest devotees, who just happened to be a monkey. When His monkey friend and servant found Her, Lord Rāma attacked the demon's island fortress, rescued Her, and killed the demon and all his troops.

Lord Rāma then returned to His kingdom, but the gossip of the citizens, who said that He was now living with an impure wife (although She had never been touched by the demon), caused Him to send Her away, again breaking the hearts of the righteous citizens.

There are many more details to this great story of the king who never transgressed any religious principles. His tale is one of the most famous in all of India, especially in the areas where His adventures took place. To this day, Lord Rāma, His wife, His brother, and His devoted monkey supporter are all worshipped, as one group, by a large number of Vaiṣṇavas, however followers of Lord Caitanya are generally more devoted to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

On a side note, we will mention that although Lord Rāmacandra is called Lord Rāma, the mantra that appears at the bottom of each page of your lessons does not refer to Him. As used in this mantra, Rāma refers exclusively to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

### **(7) Lord Balarāma-Lord Kṛṣṇa's Brother**

+ Bah-luh-rām (rām like mom) this avatār of the Lord will be discussed in quite a bit of detail in Lesson 11. He is known as Lord Kṛṣṇa's "pastime expansion" as He is always present where Lord Kṛṣṇa is in order to assist and serve Him in carrying out His activities.

**Although Lord Balarāma is God, He always has the mood of being Kṛṣṇa's servant and that of being His older brother as well.**

In Lesson 11, we will discuss how Lord Balarāma further expands to fulfill many other roles as well.

### **Some Final Notes on Avatārs**

Before we move on to discuss the many great Vaiṣṇavas that we honor, we want to share a few final points about the Lord's avatār forms with you.

The first is that, as with the pure devotee, **the forms that the Lord appears in eternally exist. They come down from their own personal abodes in the spiritual worlds to enact pastimes, and then they return there, where they are worshipped by pure souls who are attracted to those forms.**

Another point we would like to mention here is that **the ability to "truly see" the Lord is totally dependent on one's faith.** For example, in the following quote, which was spoken by a great devotee of Lord Caitanya, he tells us that even though the demons whom the Lord slays in His various forms may be seen by them, instead of experiencing great bliss, they only experience anger, and thus they are slain by the Lord.

While praising Lord Caitanya, **Mukunda Prabhu** teaches us:

*When You appeared from the ocean below the material universe in the form of a boar (Lord Varāha) and picked up the*

*earth between your tusks, the demon who was battling with You saw this brilliant form. All of the [demigods] are constantly praying to see Your form, but, because this demon has no love and devotion to You, he was simply killed. This demon's brother also saw You, in Your terrible and mighty form of the half-man and half-lion (Lord Nṛsiṃha), a form which is rarely seen by anyone and which is unparalleled, but his life was squashed with ease because he was a non-devotee whose entire life was centered on sense pleasures.*

When responding to this praise, the Lord states the point that we want to share with you, **Lord Caitanya** says:

***All that you have said is absolutely true. One cannot perceive Me as I truly am, even if he sees Me with his material eyes. One can only see Me as I truly am through the eyes that are purified by devotion and love for Me.***

These truths can also help us understand why so many people doubt and reject the true historical accounts of the Lord's appearances. Lacking love and faith, and trusting their faulty senses, they choose not to accept the Lord in His various forms. Knowing this can also assist us in overcoming any doubts that we may have, for by placing our love and trust in the Lord we can become blessed with purified vision and we can someday truly see Him.

And our final note relates to our use of the word "pastimes" when we refer to the Lord's activities, and also when we refer to the activities of His pure devotees. The English definition of **pastimes is "something that occupies the time pleasantly"**.

**Whenever the Lord or His pure devotees descends to the material worlds, they always do so in order to conduct missions of mercy, and all such missions are carried out by His own desire.** Although the circumstances may at time seem to require Him to descend, in truth, He could always accomplish His mission in other ways as well, such as by empowering another person to carry it out. And yet He chooses to make personal appearances in order to give His mercy and His association to the fallen souls of this world.

**Since all of these activities are "pastimes", they are all enjoyable and pleasant for Him. He never faces any distress,** although again, He may seem to. For example, when fighting demons, He may even be struck by them, and He may even bleed from the blows He receives, but since one of the reasons for these types of pastimes is to display His heroic nature and fighting spirit, instead of feeling suffering, He enjoys these events.

These are all points that we should keep in mind whenever we hear about or remember the wonderful pastimes that He performs.

### **Lord Caitanya and His Associates**

#### **(8) Lord Caitanya**

+Chie-tun-yuh (Lesson 3, 11) Lord Caitanya appeared in the province of Bengal, in Eastern India, in the year 1486 and He disappeared in 1534. He preached and personally practiced the chanting of the Holy Names as the principle religious practice for this age, explaining that this is the most valuable tool we can use in our efforts to uncover the prema that is hidden in our hearts.

Lord Caitanya also brought teachings related to a special form of bhakti that we will discuss at number 15 below, when we introduce you to the associate of His who He entrusted these teachings to. Knowing that He is the original guru and founder of this type of bhakti will help us to understand why He is a major focal point in our practices and style of worship.

#### **(9) Gaura purnima**

Lord Caitanya was born on a full moon night. The Sanskrit word for **full moon** is **purnima**, and **gaura** refers to His **golden** complexion. Therefore, **Lord Caitanya's appearance day is called Gaura purnima.**

Gaura purnima, along with Janmāṣṭamī (1) and Rādhāṣṭamī (2) are the most celebrated holy days for the followers of Lord Caitanya.

Staple

**(10) Lord Nityānanda**

+ Nit-yā-nun-duh (yā like yacht) (Lesson 4, 11)

When Lord Kṛṣṇa is in His form of Lord Caitanya, Lord Balarāma (7) takes on the form of Lord Nityānanda in order to serve Lord Caitanya and engage in pastimes with Him.

Lord Caitanya's love for Lord Nityānanda is very deep, so much so that He considers Him to be His second self (which, in truth, He is). Lord Caitanya states that if we receive the mercy of Lord Nityānanda, we automatically receive His mercy as well, but if we disregard Lord Nityānanda or fail to receive His mercy, Lord Caitanya will withhold His mercy from us. But we should not let such a consideration worry us, for Lord Nityānanda is known to be even more merciful than Lord Caitanya.

**(11) Advaita Ācārya**

+ Ud-vie-tuh (Lesson 4, 11) Although he was much "older" than Lord Caitanya, Advaita [Ācārya] was one of the Lord's dear most friends and greatest devotees.

Feeling great compassion for the fallen souls He set out to worship the Lord in a way that would entice Him to descend and deliver His mercy to one and all. By making steady offerings, and calling out with a lion like voice, he attracted the Lord's attention, and later, Lord Caitanya confirmed that this was one of the reasons for His descent.

**(12) Śrīvās**

+ Shree-vās (vās like wasp) (Lesson 4, 11) A dear friend of both Lord Caitanya and of His parents, Śrīvās was present in their home on the night of the Lord's birth.

He remained close to the Lord throughout His life and it was in his home that Lord Caitanya first began to conduct the loud chanting parties that He and His followers would become famous for.

**(13) Gadādhara Paṇḍit**

+Guh-dād-hur Pun-dit (dād like rod) (Lesson 4, 11) Although Lord Kṛṣṇa has an unlimited numbers of devotees, one of them reigns supreme. Her name is Śrīmatī Rādhārānī (2).

**When Kṛṣṇa is in His form of Lord Caitanya, Śrī Rādhā appears in a male form as Gadādhara Paṇḍit.** There are several reasons for this, one of which is that Lord Caitanya was to spend the second half of his life as a celibate renounced preacher, who would be under a vow to have no contact whatsoever with women. Thus, by appearing in a male form, Śrī Rādhā was able to remain in close association with the Lord.

Gadādhara Paṇḍit knew the Lord from His earliest days. He grew up with Him, attended school with Him, and joined Him in His later pastimes as well.

**The Vaiṣṇavas of Lord Caitanya's Era**  
**The Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndavāna**

When Lord Caitanya was on this planet in a visible form, from 1486 to 1534, He had millions of followers. Amongst that multitude was a very select group of highly advanced devotees who became known as the six [gosvāmīs] of **Vṛndavāna+ Vrindā-vun** (dā like dot) **Vṛndavāna** is the rural village where Lord Kṛṣṇa (1) spent the early years of His pastimes when He visited this planet some 5000 years ago.

After Lord Kṛṣṇa and His associates left the planet, the holy land of Vṛndavāna became almost lost under the sands of time. Wishing to reestablish this most sacred of all places, Lord Caitanya sent some of His most devoted followers there with instructions to find the places of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, so that the glories of this sacred village would be restored in this world.

The first six Vaiṣṇavas we will discuss below were the leaders amongst those who were assigned to this mission.

**(14) Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī**

+ Roo-puh Go-swā-mee (swā like swan). In lesson 3, in a section on the life and teachings of Lord Caitanya, we mention two brothers who, by receiving special mercy from the Lord, were empowered to write about His teachings. Śrīla Rūpa [Gosvāmī] is one of those brothers.

**We have specifically chosen to start our list of great Vaiṣṇavas with Rūpa Gosvāmī because of the incredibly important position he holds in our chain of gurus.**

Lord Caitanya appeared for several reasons, one of which was to introduce a new system of bhakti-yoga that focuses in large part on the emotions - the "moods"- that are experienced by the closest associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Out of His incredible mercy, He desired to share these emotions, which all stem from prema, with as many of us as He could. To accomplish this, He also had many of His eternal associates, who best understand these moods; descend to this planet with Him. All of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndavāna are among those dear associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

**Many of the followers of Lord Caitanya were empowered to write about the Lord's teachings, but Rūpa Gosvāmī was given a special task. He was to write about the emotions, the moods of prema, about those who experience these moods, and about other details of the new system of bhakti-yoga that Lord Caitanya had come to give.**

Thus, it is through the books, songs, and prayers of Rūpa Gosvāmī that even fallen souls like us can begin to get a glimpse, and, if we are fortunate, we may even get a taste of these amazingly sweet moods. In fact, one of the goals of our Journey to Prema course is to introduce you to these teachings and to help you taste these moods.

**It is impossible to taste the highest levels, the purest, and the sweetest of these emotions without following the path that Rūpa Gosvāmī has laid out for us, therefore everyone who wants to attain these moods must become a follower of Rūpa Gosvāmī.**

There is even a special Sanskrit term that describes those who walk this path. All of the Vaiṣṇavas in this line are known as **rūpānugas + roo-pā-noo-guhs**, which translate as "followers of Rūpa".

To be a rūpānuga means to follow a guru who is directly linked to Lord Caitanya, and to have, as part of one's goals, a desire to learn about, and to someday experience the elevated spiritual emotions that Rūpa Gosvāmī described for us.

**Although there are other types of Vaiṣṇavas, it is only by becoming a rūpānuga that we can ever hope to someday performing the types of services that provide Lord Kṛṣṇa with His greatest pleasures.**

These are the reasons we chose to start our list of great Vaiṣṇavas with a short discussion on Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. You will also find some additional information on him as we introduce you to others in this guide.

**(15) Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī**

+ Suh-nā-tun (nā like not) Śrīla Sanātana [Gosvāmī] is the other brother we referred to in Lesson 1. He was Rūpa's older brother, and, like Rūpa, he was empowered to write about the teachings of Lord Caitanya.

The topics that Sanātana Gosvāmī wrote about overlap those covered by his brother in some ways, but they cover some other areas as well. To simplify this we could say Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote more about the essence of our goal, which is the moods of prema, while Sanātana wrote more about what practices we need to follow to reach that goal, but again, no clear line can be drawn between what they have given us in their works.

In keeping with the example given to us by Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī, most of the gurus in our line have written books, translated books, or published and distributed books on the bhakti-yoga system given to us by Lord Caitanya. Increasing the

availability of such literature is an important part of our spiritual heritage and another one of the activities carried out by most rūpānuga Vaiṣṇavas.

Both Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī gave up high ranking government positions, along with vast quantities of wealth, in order to live the simple life of a sādhu. With no settled residence, they would wander the holy land of Vṛndavāna, sleeping mostly under trees. Dedicating every moment of their lives to following the instructions of Lord Caitanya, they set the highest standards of how a pure devotee should live.

Having risen far beyond material life and its concerns, these two stalwart Vaiṣṇavas lived without any income whatsoever. Accepting only the smallest donations of food, they would hardly eat at all, and they slept very little as well. Surviving on pure spiritual substance, they dove ever more deeply into the ocean of emotions that such pure devotees swim in.

Along with reestablishing the holy sites of Vṛndavāna, and compiling advanced literature, Lord Caitanya also asked them to establish the highest of all forms of temple worship — the worship of the Divine Couple, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa + Rād-hā (like rod/hot) (see Lessons 4, 7).

Though penniless, they were both able to complete this task in miraculous ways. For example, the Lord manifested Deity forms for them to worship, and He sent wealthy contributors to them to finance the construction and maintenance of magnificent temples. But Rūpa and Sanātana never took any personal benefits from this wealth or from the fame that grew up around them.

These two true ācāryas, these perfect living examples, have left us with a legacy that still shines as a guiding beacon of light for those whose sights are set on completing their own walks on the path to prema.

### (16) Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī

+ Jee-vuh Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī was the nephew of Rūpa (14) and Sanātana (15) Gosvāmī, but, even more importantly, he was given dikṣā initiation by Rūpa Gosvāmī, after being sent to Vṛndavāna to study Vaiṣṇava teachings under the guidance of his uncles.

By studying under them, and receiving their mercy and blessings, Jīva Gosvāmī became one of the greatest scholars in our line. Following their lead, he became an extremely prolific author, penning over 400,000 Sanskrit verses.

Displaying his vast learning, he carefully combed through the Vedas in order to fully establish, based on scriptural evidence, that all of Lord Caitanya's teachings were supported by the ancient texts.

Along with composing this amazing volume of works, he also acted as the śikṣā guru for three great Vaiṣṇavas who would become the leaders of the next generation or rūpānugas. (See numbers 24, 25, and 26 below).

### (17) Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī

+ Rug-hoo-nāth dāsa (nāth/dās like not/dot) Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī spent many years living in close company with Lord Caitanya, and he received teachings on the advanced emotions and moods of prema from one of the Lord's most exalted devotees, Svarūpa Dāmodara (21).

Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī stayed near Lord Caitanya for most of the Lord's final years, then, when the Lord departed, he went to Vṛndavāna to join the other gosvāmīs who had gathered there.

Although he had been initiated by another guru, he accepted Rūpa Gosvāmī (14) as his śikṣā guru, in order to receive advanced instructions from him. **Raghunātha Dāsa became such a devoted follower of Rūpa Gosvāmī, that he is considered to be the first of all rūpānuga Vaiṣṇavas.**

He did not write a large number of books, but the works that he did compose are cherished as being among the most emotional books in our lineage, wherein the moods of the rūpānugas are

expressed in ways that sink directly into the heart.

Fully immersed in the ocean of prema, he vividly described the waves of emotions he encountered there.

Along with these writings, he also composed a diary that covered the time that he spent in the company of Lord Caitanya. This diary became a prime source of information for one of the authors who wrote a biography about the Lord.

Like Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs (14, 15), he also gave up a life of great riches and comfort to follow the bhakti path. Coming from a wealthy family, he abandoned all his connections to material life, including both his rights to inheritance and a beautiful young wife. This decision was very wise, for he left temporary riches behind, while he gained the unmatched and eternal riches of prema.

Śrīla Gurudeva (33) would often sing the prayers of Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, and he has instructed us to also use these prayers in our practices, for by doing so, we will give ourselves an opportunity to taste the sweetness of the emotions that they express.

### (18) Śrīla Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī &

### (19) Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī

+ (see # 17 for Raghunātha) B-hut-tuh + Go-pāl (pāl like tall)

Śrīla Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī was a dedicated follower of Lord Caitanya. Twice he stayed in the Lord's company, performing services like cooking for the Lord. Lord Caitanya gave him great mercy and bestowed the ultimate gift on him, prema for Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa (see Lessons 4, 7).

Eventually Lord Caitanya sent Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī to Vṛndavāna, instructing him to take shelter of Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī (14, 15). He also entrusted him with the mission of teaching the glories of the purest devotional scriptures.

Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī met Lord Caitanya during the Lord's preaching tour across India. At that time Gopāla Bhaṭṭa was only child, but still, he sold his heart to the Lord.

He later travelled to Vṛndavāna and became the close companion of the other Gosvāmīs who resided there. Lord Caitanya gave him two missions. The first was to preserve the highest of all teachings, those that concerned the relationship between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His female admirers, from being distorted; and secondly, he was to make sure that the rules of proper Vaiṣṇava behavior were not neglected.

**Even today, these six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndavāna are worshipped by the followers of Lord Caitanya and respected for the important roles they played in developing the teachings that the Lord wanted us all to have. It would in many ways be reasonable to give them the title of “the founding fathers” of Lord Caitanya's movement.**

### Other Vaiṣṇavas of Lord Caitanya's Era

### (20) Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja Gosvāmī

Krish-nuh-dāsa Kuh-vee-rāj (dāsa/rāj like dot/dodge) Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja Gosvāmī never met Lord Caitanya in person. He was sent to Vṛndavāna by Lord Nityānanda (10). After arriving there, he became deeply devoted to the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndavāna, considering them all to be his śikṣā gurus.

Upon the request of the followers of Lord Caitanya, he composed the scholarly biography of the Lord that we mentioned in Lesson 3. To do this, he relied on firsthand accounts of those who knew the Lord, and upon the personal diaries written by two of the Lord's closest followers (17, 21).

This great account of the Lord's life is filled with references to the Vedas. Like the works of Jīva Gosvāmī (16) this book also showed how the Lords teachings were fully supported by the scriptures. He also showed, based on the Vedas, that Lord Caitanya was indeed Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of God.

We should all feel a great sense of gratitude to these saintly Vaiṣṇavas authors, for leaving us such a legacy of works on the life and teachings of Lord Caitanya.

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**(21) Svarūpa Dāmodara &  
(22) Rāya Rāmananda**

+Swuh-roop Dā-moe-dar (dā/dar like dot/dart)  
+Rā-yuh Rā-muh-nun-duh (rā like rod) (Rāya is sometimes pronounced Rāi like rye)

We have grouped these two associates of Lord Caitanya together because they both provided a special service to the Lord during the latter part of His pastimes.

After leaving home at age twenty-four, and completing six years of travel, Lord Caitanya remained in one city for the majority of His last eighteen years on this planet. During these final years, the Lord became ever more absorbed in the emotions of prema. The moods He would experience were so deep that only a few of His closest devotees could understand what He was going through.

When the Lord was seemingly lost in these emotions, Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāya Rāmananda could understand what He was feeling in His heart. In order to help the Lord dive ever more deeply into these moods, these two close friends of His would sing verses from the Vedas that helped Him taste these moods.

At other times, if the Lord was feeling some painful emotions, like the mood of separation, they might sing verses to console Him and to help Him change His mood to a more peaceful one.

Another aspect of this mysterious relationship was that both of these associates of the Lord would, at times, act as the Lord's guru. One may ask— Can anything be unknown to the Lord? The answer to this mystery will be explored in our course.

Before meeting the Lord, Rāya Rāmananda was the governor of the province where Lord Caitanya stayed in His final years, but once these two eternal friends met, Lord Caitanya asked him to give up his family, his wealth, and his high government position, so that they could remain together and spend their time discussing spiritual topics, which Rāya Rāmananda gladly did.

Svarūpa Dāmodara knew the Lord during His early life and during His final years as well. He wrote a diary about the Lord that was used in writing His biography.

Rāya Rāmananda was also a writer, but his works were plays that depicted the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He also trained the actors to play these dramatic roles and directed their performances as well.

Both of these great Vaiṣṇavas had such advanced knowledge of the highest of all spiritual truths that Lord Caitanya would send His other followers to them for instructions. In this way, Lord Caitanya demonstrated the exalted positions they hold in our heritage.

**(23) Haridās Thākura**

+ Huh-ri-dās/Huh-ree-dās (dās like dot) (see Lessons 7, 11) Śrīla Haridās [Thākura] is famous for being the greatest chanter of all time. He was so fully absorbed in chanting the Holy Names that Lord Caitanya gave him the title “**nāmācārya**” + nā-mā-chār-yuh (nā/mā/chār like not/mop/car). **This title expresses the fact that he taught others to chant by his own example.**

Haridās Thākura had taken a vow to chant the Lord's names ten million times per month, over three hundred thousand times per day, and he never failed to fulfill this vow, until old age prevented him from doing so. He also possessed complete knowledge of all the spiritual truths related to the Holy Names of the Lord.

Haridās was also one of the first two preachers that Lord Caitanya sent out on door-to-door preaching missions, where their only request from the people was to worship Lord Kṛṣṇa, and to chant His Holy Names.

Since Haridās Thākura both practiced and preached the chanting of the Holy Names, he is to be remembered and honored by all who hope to become true followers of Lord Caitanya's teachings.

**The Second Generation of Rūpānuga Gurus****(24) Śrīnivās Ācārya****(25) Narottama dāsa Thākura****(26) Svāmananda Paṇḍit**

+ Śrī-ni-vās (vās like wasp) Nuh-rote-tum dāsa (dās like dot) Shyā-muh-nun-duh (Shyā like shop)

These three great Vaiṣṇavas were the leaders of the second generation of Lord Caitanya's followers. They were all very close in age, being born just before, and shortly after the disappearance of Lord Caitanya.

Although they each had a different dīkṣā guru, all were sent to Vṛndāvana to study rūpānuga Vaiṣṇavism under the guidance of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī (16) where they each attained perfection in this style of worship.

One of the wives of Lord Nityānanda (10) was a leading figure in the Vaiṣṇava community of this time. While visiting Vṛndāvana, she had become aware of the great works that were being compiled by the six Gosvāmīs (14 thru 19).

Knowing these works needed to be shared with the world, she inspired these three friends to set out on a preaching mission. Their journey was filled with trials, including the theft and recovery of these priceless works, but in the end each became a great guru with hundreds of disciples. Establishing temples and preaching centers across India, they attracted followers from all walks of life, from common men to kings.

Along with their preaching, they played a critical role in clarifying exactly what Lord Caitanya taught, and how the advanced bhakti-yoga system that He gave us was to be practiced. They dispelled many misconceptions and solidified the doctrine that is still followed by the rūpānugas of today.

Although, from a material viewpoint, these three great gurus appeared to be separated by time from Lord Caitanya and His direct associates, in the eternal time of spiritual world, they all exist together as the greatest of friends.

**Later Day Vaiṣṇavas****(27) Śrīla Viśvanātha [Cakravartī]**

+ Vish-vuh-nāt-h (nāt like not) (see number 17 for the pronunciation of the “t-h” sound) Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī was a leader of the rūpānugas from the mid sixteen hundreds until his disappearance in 1754.

Although he was separated from Narottama dāsa Thākura by a few generations, Viśvanātha Cakravartī still considered him to be his śikṣā guru. This illustrates how we can accept Śrīla Gurudeva as our śikṣā guru, even if we never have his physical association.

Viśvanātha became a great writer, compiling about fifty books. In some of these works, he would present the works of the previous rūpānuga gurus in simpler and condensed forms. Śrīla Gurudeva was especially fond of his works and he has translated some of them for us, and given us extensive commentaries on others.

Like many of our gurus, Viśvanātha had the ability to enter into deep devotional meditations. In these trance like states he could witness the eternal pastimes of the Lord. And like others who attained these states, he sometimes wrote books and passages that described what he saw, thus expanding our opportunity to understand how the Lord interacts with His direct associates.

Over the course of time, in the two hundred years since Lord Caitanya departed the planet, some detractors had begun a dispute that challenged the teachings of Lord Caitanya. Facing these challengers in open debate, one of Viśvanātha's top students soundly defeated these challengers of the truth, and he firmly established the validity of the rūpānuga doctrine amongst the leading religious thinkers of the time.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī is honored, even today, for the leadership role he played in this monumental victory.

**(28) Śrīla Bhaktivinoda [Thākura]**

+ B-huk-tee-vi-node. **The accomplishments of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura are so incredible that he was given the title of “The Seventh Gosvāmī”, in honor of his role as a later day “founding father”.**

As we mentioned just above (27), the rūpānuga doctrine had faced a challenge in the mid seventeen hundreds, and it had emerged victorious. However, over the next hundred years or so, more challenges arose.

The earlier challengers were direct. They claimed that Lord Caitanya’s teachings were not supported by the Vedas, thus giving the rūpānugas an open chance to defeat them by directing them to the scriptures that supported the truth of their doctrine.

The challenge faced by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda was a bit trickier because the bogus gurus he faced had simply distorted what Lord Caitanya taught. These perverted teachings came in many forms and they had caused a lot of people to turn away from Lord Caitanya, thinking these false doctrines were really His teachings.

Starting at the amazing age of just twelve years old, and continuing for the next fifty years, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wrote over seventy five books and commentaries along with many other articles and essays. His clear, understandable, and logical arguments and his use of scripture to support what he wrote, won the admiration of the leading thinkers of his time, and by his mercy, many who had accepted these false teaching turned away from their distorted practices.

He also wrote in simple words, and in his local language, which further increased the range of those whose lives he touched.

Appearing in 1858, and disappearing in 1907, he left us with a legacy of Vaiṣṇava literature that clarified and preserved the rūpānuga doctrines.

### **(29) Śrīla Gaura Kīśora Dāsa [Bābājī]**

+ Gow-ruh-ki-shor Dāsa Bā-bā-jee (shor like show with an “r”/bā like bob) This great Vaiṣṇava represents an interesting link in our chain of gurus, but the reason that we say this will not become clear until we discuss the Vaiṣṇava below (30).

Śrīla Gaura Kīśora dāsa received spiritual instructions from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda (28), and, although he was unable to read or write, he was able to fully absorb these teachings. With these profound truths in his heart, he spent his life immersed in the deepest meditations and moods of the rūpānuga style of bhakti-yoga.

He never engaged in any material affairs, and yet with zero material wealth, lacking even a fixed residence, he attained life’s greatest treasure, prema. Fully dedicated to chanting the Holy Names and to relishing the moods of prema, he lived in an advanced state of consciousness that is rarely achieved.

His spiritual accomplishments are a testament to the fact that we reach our goal not by studying books that fill our minds with material thoughts and knowledge, but instead by controlling the mind and filling our hearts with love for the Lord.

### **Vaiṣṇavas of the Twentieth Century – and Beyond**

#### **(30) Śrīla [Bhaktisiddhānta] [Sarasvatī] Gosvāmī [Mahārāja]**

+ B-huk-tee-sid-hān-tuh Suh-ruh-svuh-tee Muh-hā-rāj (hān like gone/rāj like dodge) To help you understand this great Vaiṣṇava we will first return you to (28) above.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda was a highly educated court magistrate, who carried on his spiritual life even while maintaining this high government post.

Being a prolific writer himself, and understanding the power of the written word, he came to realize that the printing press could be a valuable tool in spreading the message of Lord Caitanya. Having a strong desire to further this mission on a world wide scale he prayed for a son who could help him achieve this goal.

In 1874, his son, who was to become Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī appeared. From early on in life, he displayed incredible

intelligence. By the age of seven, he had memorized the seven hundred verses of the [Bhagavad-Gītā], and he could give commentaries on their meanings as well.

Knowing that his prayers had been answered, his father trained him in printing and proofreading. At the age of twenty-six, having already established himself as a topmost scholar, he was given an illustrious title for a treatise that he had written on Vedic astronomy.

Never taking a wife, he remained a lifelong celibate. At the age of thirty-one, he accepted Śrīla Gaura Kīśora (29) as his dīkṣā guru. This interesting link connected a highly educated father to his highly educated son by way of an advanced Vaiṣṇava who was illiterate, but who could easily transmit the highest spiritual truths.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta became a very successful preacher who gathered many serious followers. He opened more than sixty temples throughout India to act as centers for his preaching activities.

Although born in the nineteenth century, we chose to list him as the first twentieth century Vaiṣṇava because of the way he fully embraced the changing times. He was the first guru in our chain to allow [sannyāsīs] to wear western style clothes as a part of their preaching efforts, and to allow them to travel by modern means, as opposed to relying solely on walking.

He disappeared in 1937, but before doing so he had inspired many other Vaiṣṇavas to carry on the mission of Lord Caitanya, a mission that he had dedicated his entire life to.

#### **(31) Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja**

+B-huk-tee Pruh-gyun-Kay-shuh-vuh. This great Vaiṣṇava was one of the dear most followers of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta (30). Deeply dedicated to carrying out the orders of his guru, he provided us with a living example of how we are to give everything in service to our guru. As part of his efforts to glorify and spread the teachings of his guru, he started a program to publish all of the articles and essays that his guru had written, and to ensure that they would be widely distributed.

During one period of unrest, when groups of uneducated trouble makers were causing disturbances and questioning the teachings of his guru, two separate incidences took place that both stand as shining examples of his incredible dedication to his guru.

On one occasion, when the views of his guru were being questioned, he firmly stated that the only correct interpretation of the Vedas was the one given by his own guru, and that all other opinions were useless.

At another time, the level of unrest had risen to a point where his guru’s life was threatened by an angry crowd. In order to ensure the safety of his guru, he switched clothes with him and passed through the crowd, literally putting his life on the line for his guru.

Of course, as we mentioned earlier, all such incidents in the lives of our gurus are merely pastimes they carry out for our benefit. His guru, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta never feared for his life, but he engaged in this pastime in order to showcase the incredible devotion of his disciple.

Before his disappearance, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta also selected Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja to receive all of his books, which again showed how special Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja is to his guru.

#### **(32) Śrīla A.C. [Bhaktivedānta] [Svāmī]**

+ B-huk-tee-vay-dun-tuh Swā-mee (Swā like swan) (Lesson 6) Like Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja above, this great Vaiṣṇava was also a dīkṣā disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta (30).

He appeared in 1896, and he first met his future guru in 1922. At this very first meeting, he was given the task of preaching Lord Caitanya’s message in the English language, even though he was not yet an official disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta. He was however, so impressed by the talk that was given, that he did

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eventually accept him as his guru in 1933.

While maintaining his family, he began to write articles in English, and in 1944, he began to publish a magazine called “Back to Godhead”, as a part of his early preaching efforts.

In 1950, he retired from married life and he began to compile more works in English. In 1959, he accepted the order of [sannyāsa] from his god brother, Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja (31). It was at this time, that he received the title of Bhaktivedānta Svāmī.

Finally, in 1965, after spending many years preparing to carry out the mission he had received from his guru at their very first meeting, he set out for the United States. In 1966, he opened the first temple ever established in America by a follower of Lord Caitanya. His preaching was very successful, and Lord Caitanya’s prediction, which He had made almost five hundred years before, began to be fulfilled, for He had foretold that the chanting of the Holy Names would one day be heard in every town and village in the world.

His followers gave him the title that he is most recognized by “Śrīla Prabhupāda” + prub-hoo-pād (pād like rod). This title comes from two Sanskrit words which mean “master” or “teacher” and “feet”, and it indicates one who has many disciples gathered at his feet.

In Lesson 6, we will briefly discuss how he engaged vast amounts of wealth and resources in the service of his guru, while never accepting any for himself, thus demonstrating by his own example how to observe the concept of proper attachment.

Before disappearing in 1977, he had translated some of the most important books of the Vedas into English, and he had written additional books and commentaries as well, thus leaving this world with a great contribution toward making the message of Lord Caitanya available to all.

**(33) Śrīla [Bhaktivedānta] Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja**

+ B-huk-tee-vay-dān-tuh Nā-rā-yan (dān, nā, rā like don, not, rod) This great Vaiṣṇava appeared in 1921 in a deeply religious family. As was the custom in India, he was named by the family’s guru. After consulting the astrological chart of the newborn child, he was given the name Nārāyaṇa, which is one of the Lord’s names.

One of the meanings of this name is, “He who provides shelter for all of humanity”, thus we can see, that even from his earliest days, it could be detected that he would become a great guru who would give guidance, shelter, and mercy to many fallen souls.

In the days of his youth, he also began to chant the Lord’s Holy Names, and he dearly loved to read about the Lord’s pastimes. Along with his father, he would serve the Vaiṣṇavas and celebrate holy day festivals with them.

He became an expert in Sanskrit, and his attraction to the Vaiṣṇava way of life continued to grow. He was a fine athlete, and he became a member of the police force, but his heart was not in material affairs. Although he had been married at an early age, he gave up his wife and family in order to dedicate his entire life to serving his guru and to practicing bhakti yoga.

Seeing his sincerity, Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja (31) accepted him as his disciple, giving him dīkṣā initiation in 1947. Then, in 1952, at the young age of thirty one, he accepted the order of sannyāsa from his guru.

He learned Hindi, which is the national language of India, upon the request of his guru, and he began to translate the Vedas and the works of the great Vaiṣṇavas into Hindi, thus making them available to an even larger audience.

He was a dear friend of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī (32), who, just before his disappearance, had requested Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, whom we affectionately call Śrīla Gurudeva, to give further instructions to his disciples. Since Śrīla Gurudeva considered Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī to be one of his śikṣā gurus, he wholeheartedly embraced this request, and in his efforts

to do so, he spent the final years of his life travelling around the globe many times, while he shared both basic and advanced teachings with those who were wise and fortunate enough to hear him speak.

He delivered his mercy in many ways, one of which was by translating books and giving lectures on the elevated moods and practices of the rūpānuga (14) Vaiṣṇavas, and by encouraging us to follow this path.

He left us with many books that cover the entire science of bhakti-yoga, from the basic truths to the highest, sweetest teachings of all, the pastimes of the Divine Couple, Lord Kṛṣṇa (1) and Śrī Rādhā (2).

Considered to be one of the most highly advanced Vaiṣṇavas of our time, he was awarded the title of Yugācārya + Yoo-gā-chār-yuh (gā, chār like got, car). A yuga is a great age of time, so this title means that he is to be a great teacher by example for all of those who wish to follow the path he gave us, both now, and throughout the rest of this great age. He is also highly respected for his ability to convey, directly into the heart, the moods of bhakti to those who would hear him speak, and for us, if we sincerely follow his teachings, he can still do the same for us as well.

He disappeared in 2010, but before leaving the physical plane he told us that his legacy was his books, and that these books would be appreciated even more after he departed, which is proving to be true.

All of us at the International Pure Bhakti Yoga Society prison outreach program feel great separation from Śrīla Gurudeva, and we are striving to someday become qualified to become his eternal servants.

Our heartfelt prayer is that each of you may also become attached to him and his teachings, for by his mercy, he can help us complete our journey to prema.

**Respecting All True Gurus**

Every Vaiṣṇava in this guide can be accepted as one of our śikṣā (instructing) gurus. Over time, if we develop a personal relationship with either a dīkṣā (initiating) guru or one specific instructing guru, we may feel a special sense of love or attachment for them. This however, in no way lessens the high regard we must hold for all true gurus.

This point is explained by Śrīla Gurudeva:

*If one thinks he should only know his own guru, and that there is no need to know Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (28), Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura (30), or Gurudeva, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja (31), Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī (27), Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (14), or Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī (15) in order to know Kṛṣṇa, this is offensive thinking.*

The equal position of our gurus, and the value of hearing from a variety of them, especially from the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndavāna, is also expressed by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

*The word guru is equally applicable to the śikṣā and dīkṣā gurus. When offering our respects, the word guru is used in plural form because anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a guru. Although others may also give help in showing the way to beginners, the guru who first initiates one with the mahā-mantra is known as the initiator (dīkṣā guru) and the saints who give instruction for progressive advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are called instructing gurus (śikṣā). The initiating and instructing gurus are equal manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings. Their function is to guide the conditioned souls back home, back to Godhead. (Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta — Purports)*

*In order to understand Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, worship Them, and engage in Their service, one must be guided by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Nityānanda Prabhu, and the six Gosvāmīs, Lord Caitanya’s direct disciples. (ibid)*

These instructions of our ācāryas should be taken into our hearts, and by absorbing these truths we should learn to have the

greatest respect for all true gurus and we should develop a strong desire to study their works and learn from them.

### **The Glories of the Lord's Devotees**

The truths that we will present in this section could just as easily have been included much earlier in this lesson. In fact, we could have shared them very early on in our explanation of why we celebrate the disappearance days of our ācāryas, but we chose to take a different approach.

We have waited until the end of our descriptions on these sādhus that we have presented in this guide because we want to be absolutely sure to take special note of these truths.

The “worship” of anyone other than GOD! May be a foreign idea to many people, but, as these following quotes will show you, the Vedas clearly explained both the reasons why this is done and the benefits of doing so. Therefore, we humbly ask you to please take a moment and pray to all of our true gurus, asking them to bring the essence of these truths into your heart.

The first quote comes from the author of one of Lord Caitanya's biographies. He too is considered one of our gurus and his words are absolutely pure and filled with the highest truths. **Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura** teaches us:

*Our beloved Lord Caitanya is very proficient in expanding the glories of His devotees. He will say or do anything to glorify or protect His devotees. He will even willingly swallow fire for His devotees and willingly become their slave. Lord Kṛṣṇa recognizes only His devotees and knows nothing else. Two Kṛṣṇa, there is no one who is equal to His pure devotees. All offenders who are antagonistic toward His pure devotees are all devoid of all good fortune.* (Śrī Caitanya Bhāgavata)

Earlier in this lesson we made a statement that may have slipped by you (it was even given in parentheses at the end of a rule we've shared with you many times). We are going to point this out to you now, and then we'll share a quote with you that explains why we've covered this again here.

Just before the section, “Observing Holy Days,” we said this:

Although there are many good reasons to observe Vaiṣṇava holy days, perhaps the biggest one of all is this: When we celebrate these days we follow the number one rule of bhakti-yoga: Always remember the Lord (and His pure devotees).

Did you catch the last part of this statement the first time we shared it with you?

When we remember the Lord's pure devotees, those great sādhus like the ones we've covered in this guide we are actually performing bhakti-yoga. This is confirmed by one of the greatest of all our gurus, **Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī**, who teaches us:

*Most of the activities that one performs regarding the Supreme Lord during the practice of bhakti-yoga may also be practiced in regards to His devotees. This is confirmed by learned scholars who know the esoteric truths of bhakti.*”

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.219)

This point is further expanded upon by **Lord Śiva**, who is a direct manifestation of the Supreme Lord. He tells us:

*The worship of the Supreme Lord is the highest of all different types of worship. But even superior to that is the worship of His devotees.*” (Padma Purāna)

This next quote also instructs us of the incredible benefits of serving the Lord's devotees, for by this activity we can't even attain the highest goal of life.

*By serving the devotees of the Supreme Lord, the highly concentrated, pure prema that eternally exists in the heart develops for Śrī Kṛṣṇa; and, as a concomitant result, one obtains everlasting deliverance from the bondage of material existence.*” (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 3.17.20)

These truths are also confirmed by the Lord Himself. While instructing **Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī** on the various processes of the bhakti path, the Lord listed 60-4 various practices. At the end of this list, **Lord Caitanya** teaches us:

*one should taste the meaning of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam in the Association of pure devotees, and one should associate with*

*devotees who are affectionate and more advanced than oneself, and who are also endowed with a similar type of affection for the Lord.*

Staple

*The power of this principle is very wonderful and hard to understand. Even without faith in this truth, a person who is free from offenses can awaken his dormant love for Kṛṣṇa simply by being a little connected with them.* (Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta: Madhya 22.131, 133)

And to close out the section on the glories of Kṛṣṇa's pure devotees we will share a quote from **Śrīla Gurudeva** with you.

*We should always consider ourselves to be the devotee, of the devotee, of the devotee, and then Kṛṣṇa will be made more pleased with us. He has said, “One who says that he is My devotee is not really My devotee. But he who says that he is the devotee of My devotee is more dear to Me.”* (Bhakti-rasāyana)

We ask you to please reread, study, and deeply meditate upon these truths, for if we can understand them, then we will surely see while learning about, remembering, and celebrating the lives of these great Vaiṣṇavas is such a wonderful and valuable thing to do. We pray these truths enter your heart.

**(34) Ekādaśī — It Is Not Just Another Day — It Is Kṛṣṇa** +Ay-kā-duh-shee (Ay like day/kā like cob). All of the holy days that we have discussed so far appear just once per year. Ekādaśī on the other hand appears many times. **Ekādaśī is observed twice in each lunar month, for a total of twenty six times per year. And although it appears more often, it is one of the most important days on the Vaiṣṇava calendar.** In fact, it is so important that we are going to devote quite a bit of time to discussing this holy day, and why, and how to observe it. Our sincere hope is, that by the time we are done, you will have gained some understandings of this day. In other words, you will begin to act on these teachings.

The importance of Ekādaśī has been pointed out to us by the highest authority, the Lord Himself. Lord Caitanya spoke of the necessity of properly fasting on this day, and Lord Kṛṣṇa tells us that He Himself has become this Ekādaśī.

There are various levels, or standards that can be considered when it comes to how we are to observe this day. The highest standard involves taking only water, on both the day before, and the day after, and taking nothing at all on Ekādaśī itself. However, our gurus have shown us their mercy and given us their blessings by setting standards that are a bit easier for most of us to follow. But this does not mean we should follow as low a standard as we can, in fact the opposite is true, as **we should always follow as high a standard as we are able to**, and along with this consideration, we should never fall below the minimum standard or intentionally fail to observe this day.

For us, **a very high standard** is to begin our Ekādaśī fast at sundown on the day before, then to totally fast on Ekādaśī, avoiding even water, and breaking our fast the following morning, during the times shown on the calendar, or as close to those times as we can. This standard also includes fasting from/giving up all activities that are designed to give pleasure to our senses, including all conversations about material things. We also must avoid association with non-devotees.

In addition to this, **every standard** includes spending as much of our time as we can engaged in bhakti practices. This includes avoiding unnecessary sleep. (The highest standard includes no sleep at all!) These practices can include such activities as chanting the Holy Names (Lesson 4, 6, 7), studying bhakti literature, worshipping the guru, and so on.

We understand that inmates lead very controlled lives, and that this may affect their ability to follow Ekādaśī properly. If this affects you, you should know that the Lord knows this as well. If you are required to associate with non-devotees on Ekādaśī, then do so, however you should still do your best to keep your interactions with them, and your conversations about material things, to as low a level as possible.

## Staple

This consideration of your circumstances will also apply to the diet restrictions that we are about to discuss, and, in a similar way, such considerations also apply to those who are not in prison. For example, if your job, whether in prison or not, requires you to work very hard all day, in the hot sun, then you are not expected to go without food, and surely not without water. As long as you are honestly and sincerely following to the best of your ability, considering your circumstances, you have followed Ekādaśī. If however, you use your circumstances to intentionally create reasons not to follow, the Lord will know.

Below you will find a list of foods that we cannot eat on Ekādaśī, to follow, this list must be observed. Along with this, the next consideration is that we are to eat as little as possible. If we eat, we should try to eat only once and not more than twice. Our meals should also be small, where we never fill the stomach more than halfway. You may feel a bit hungry, but that is fine. Instead of thinking about your hunger for food, focus on the needs of your spiritual life and try to develop your hunger for the treasure of prema.

Now we will share some lists of food with you, starting with those we cannot eat, followed by those we should not eat, and finally those that we can eat if we are unable to completely fast. Again, we know inmates have little or no control over the foods they receive, so if you cannot fully fast, if you feel you must eat, then at least try not to eat any of the foods on the bold print, do not eat list.

**DO NOT EAT any of the following foods: meat (all types, including chicken and fish), animal parts (all types, including pork skins), eggs, onions, garlic, carrots, mushrooms, grains (all types, including oatmeal, corn, rice), products made from grain (including bread, pasta, baking soda, corn syrup (be careful as this sweetener is in many processed foods)), oils made from grains (be careful about foods like potato chips, which may contain corn oil), beans and oils made from beans (all types, watch for soybean oil).**

We should not eat any of the following foods: tomatoes, eggplants, cauliflower, broccoli, bell peppers, beets, peas, chickpeas, leafy vegetables (spinach, lettuce, cabbage, and greens), certain spices (cumin, mustard, and sesame seeds), and honey.

If we must eat, the **only fully permissible foods** are: all fruits, all nuts (including peanuts), oils made from nuts, potatoes, pumpkins, cucumbers, radish, squash, avocado, olives, coconut, sugar (except corn syrup), milk and milk products.

As we mentioned earlier, there are specific reasons why Ekādaśī falls on the eleventh day of the moon cycles. From a physical stand point, the mood is closer to the earth on these days. The gravitational pull of the moon causes water, even the water in our bodies, to be pulled upwards. If we eat grains they will act like sponges, absorbing the water in our bodies. Then, when this is drawn upward, it will cause an increase of sickness and other physical ailments. A review of hospital records will prove the validity of this truth, as more people die on these days.

There is also a more subtle reason why we fast on Ekādaśī. There are ten physical senses/tools in the material body. The eyes, ears, nose, skin, and tongue, which are known as the knowledge acquiring, or information gathering senses, and the hands, feet, mouth (voice box), genitals and anus, which are known as the tools of action. If we add the subtle sense of the mind, we have a total of eleven senses to draw us closer to God, instead of focusing them away from Him.

And then of course, on top of these reasons, we have the best reason of all to observe Ekādaśī, the Lord has asked us to.

**Ekādaśī is known as “the mother of bhakti”. If we faithfully observe it, it will help us awaken, or “give birth” to our love for the Lord.**

If we want to **observe Ekādaśī, THE ABSOLUTE**

**MINIMUM we must do is this:** eat no more than two small meals avoiding all the foods on the DO NOT EAT list, spend more time on our bhakti practices than we normally would, and do our best not to engage in activities designed to give pleasure to the senses.

As mentioned above, Lord Caitanya Himself has given us very clear instructions on how to observe Ekādaśī according to the highest standards. The following quote comes from a book that was written by one of His very close associates. Here, we find one of the Lord Caitanya’s devotees asking Him about how one is to honor the prasāda that comes from the temple.

Normally, such secret food, which has been offered to the Deity, is to be consumed right away, so this devotee was concerned about how prasāda was to be honored on Ekādaśī.

**Lord Caitanya’s devotee** asks:

*Ekādaśī is considered to be the most important of all vows. It is to be observed by maintaining complete fast and not sleeping at night. We also know that the prasāda of the Deity is to be respected at all times. It should be honored by eating it immediately upon receiving it. Therefore we find ourselves in a dilemma as to how to honor prasāda on Ekādaśī. Please clarify the exact conclusions of the Scriptures, for this will eliminate all our concerns.*

**Lord Caitanya** replied:

*To not observe complete fasting on Ekādaśī will greatly endanger one’s spiritual life. When it comes to the Deity’s prasāda, you should only honor it by bowing down to it and then eating it the next day. In this way one can easily cross the material ocean. Anyway, the fast is over on the following day.*

*All Vaiṣṇavas are very pleased when Ekādaśī is properly observed by simply relishing the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s Holy Names. One should not taste anything or should any material topics be discussed on Ekādaśī. All physical pleasures should be given up. It is Vaiṣṇava’s duty to daily honor and eat only prasāda, for he never consumes un-offered food. On Ekādaśī he observes complete fasting, and the next day he breaks his fast with prasāda that has been offered to the Deity. And if, for some reason, one has to eat on Ekādaśī, then let the Vaiṣṇava take a light meal consisting only of fruits, or roots, or milk, without grains or beans or other prohibited vegetables.*

*The non-Vaiṣṇava, who has no control, and who is only concerned with satisfying his tastes, will eat on Ekādaśī by offering the lame excuse that they are simply honoring the Lord’s prasāda. They do this because they are engrossed, day and night, in gratifying the senses. They enjoy grains and rice on Ekādaśī and thereby eat the sins that enter grains on such days, disregarding the sanctity of the vow to fast on Ekādaśī. You must diligently execute devotional service and respect the path of bhakti. Then you will surely receive the blessings of Bhakti-devī Herself. Avoid the Association of non-devotees and properly observe the vow of fasting on Ekādaśī by constantly chanting the Holy Names.*

*Try to realize in your heart that there is no offense or contradiction in refusing to eat the Deity’s prasāda on Ekādaśī or any other important fast day. It makes no sense to believe that certain spiritual vows would require you to neglect others, therefore the honoring of prasāda clearly can be done by bowing down to it and offering it respects on Ekādaśī. Earnestly observe the vows that are followed on designated days in the appropriate devotional manner. Srī Kṛṣṇa is the Lord, and the ultimate goal of all vows and devotional practices is to gain His service and association, so observe all spiritual vows for His satisfaction alone. Therefore, remember to abstain from eating, drinking and sleeping on Ekādaśī, and on the next day you may honor prasāda with full relish.*

*The devotees who were present were experiencing intense joy from hearing the Lord speak. They chanted, “Govinda! Govinda!” [One of Kṛṣṇa’s names] in blissful appreciation. Svarūpa Dāmodara, Raya Rāmananda and other stalwart*

devotees, felt ineffable exultation.

The author, Śrīla Jagadanānda Paṇḍita then tells us:

***O my dear brothers! Lord Caitanya is the most valuable treasure of my heart. Worship Him while freeing yourself from all duplicity. This will help you to easily cross this otherwise insurmountable ocean of sufferings and allow you to experience everlasting peace, beyond the reach of anxiety and death.***

***Chanting the Holy Names and observing fasting on Ekādaśī are both eternal spiritual activities, hence they are on the same devotional platform, which is entirely spiritual and beyond the material dimension. Therefore, becomes sincerely fixed on executing these activities.*** (Prema-vivarta)

While we have all of these instructions and words of encouragement that were spoken by the Lord Himself and recorded by a devotee who personally heard them, and they included the warning that **the non-observance of this fasting will “greatly endanger one’s spiritual life,”** there will still be those who fail to understand the importance of taking and keeping this vow. With this in mind, we want to share a bit more on this subject with you.

In various lectures that he gave on Ekādaśī, Śrīla Gurudeva shared some of his instructions on Ekādaśī. Although they may cover some of the points that we have already shared, they are also special, being his words, so we want to share some of these with you.

In this first quote, he gives us another one of the more physical reasons why we should observe Ekādaśī; Śrīla Gurudeva:

***Fasting is helpful for our health. We should try to rest our digestive system for at least a day, so that the next day, everything will work again with more energy.***

Next he speaks about making a firm vow to observe Ekādaśī, the standards we should follow, and the reasons to follow as well.

Śrīla Gurudeva says,

***We should try to observe Ekādaśī in this way. Not that we will take water, juice, milk, and so many foodstuffs. If you are young and healthy you can fast the whole day and night without even water. If you cannot do this, you can take something once; either in the afternoon or in the evening. If you are very sick and weak you can take something then you can chant-Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa.***

In this same lecture he also spoke about the importance of following high standards and of the dangers of failing to observe Ekādaśī; Śrīla Gurudeva instructs:

***During Ekādaśī, we do not take certain vegetables like tomatoes and loki (an Indian vegetable) because there are qualities of corn wheat and other grains in them. For those who are very weak, it is said that they can take some fruits and some types of vegetables. In the [Vedas] it is never said that you can take subji, vegetable preparations. Concession is given for Western devotees, but somehow you should not take grains. In India, concessions have also been given for weak persons.***

***We should never take all these things... If you do not observe Ekādaśī, then all kinds of sins will come and your bhakti will be destroyed. We should try to observe Ekādaśī properly. If you are weak, you may take something. My request is that you should not be weak... We want to [be able to personally meet with] Kṛṣṇa, therefore Kṛṣṇa has come in the shape of Ekādaśī, in the shape of [His Name], but you are not respecting them.***

You should take note of the fact that in both of the last two quotes Śrīla Gurudeva says that we should break Ekādaśī only if we are “very sick” or “weak”. In the first of these two quotes “weak” refers to physical weakness, as it is mentioned along with sickness and maintaining your life. But in the next quote, he speaks of a different type of weakness when he says, “my request is that you should not be weak”.

Here he indicates mental weakness, a weakness of our will power. We should consider this if we ever feel like breaking Ekādaśī, and we should show the strength of our will by

observing Ekādaśī properly.

Another point we need to share regarding the last quote is his referral to a concession being given for Western devotees and that they should somehow not take grains.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda (32) came to the West to preach, he made many, many concessions. Knowing that those who he was preaching too had no background or training in proper behavior, he set standards that he felt they could live with. But at the same time, he told his followers that if he ever told them all of the rules they would have to follow, they would faint.

With such considerations in mind, the standards he set for his disciples were very basic. For Ekādaśī, all he asked was that they avoid beans and grains, and it was in reference to this that Śrīla Gurudeva spoke of not eating grains.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also gave instructions in his books that we are not to remain at the lower levels of bhakti, and he asked Śrīla Gurudeva to give more instructions to his disciples. Thus we can see that the higher standards requested by Śrīla Gurudeva are in line with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desire for his disciples to rise to higher standards of practice.

As we close out this section on Ekādaśī, we wish to share one final quote with you. In this quote, Śrīla Gurudeva speaks of some of the reasons to observe Ekādaśī and of the benefits we will receive for doing so, Śrīla Gurudeva says:

***We should utilize at least one day in two weeks to be closer to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Lord Kṛṣṇa, in that way you will not lose your bhakti. Your bhakti will certainly increase by Their association, and therefore Kṛṣṇa has arranged this opportunity — He Himself has become Ekādaśī. In the form of Ekādaśī, He invites us: “Today you give your eleven senses to Me.” This is very good thing — Kṛṣṇa has become Ekādaśī — so we should try to observe it.***

We ask you to please accept the Lords invitation. Please make the observance of Ekādaśī a part of your bhakti-yoga practices.

### **Some Final Notes**

Well we have almost completed our “Guide to Vaisnava Holy Days”. We hope you have learned a lot and that this guide will continue to help you gain an understanding of both our practices and our lineage.

As we mentioned at the outset, there are many names that will appear on your calendar that are not included here, and for this we apologize to both you and those who are not included. We do however feel that we have shared enough to improve your understandings, perhaps even of those not covered, because what we have provided may help in knowing a little about them as well.

For example, should the calendar mention that someone is “a god brother of Śrīla Gurudeva”, or “a follower of Lord Caitanya”, you can use what we have shared to get an idea of who these personalities are.

Also, some of the holy days that we have failed to mention will be clearer. For instance, both the marriage of Lord Rāmacandra is celebrated, and the day that He defeated the demon and returned to His kingdom. This guide should help you understand those types of days as well.

We pray that all of you continue to take an interest in and to study and learn about all of the personalities and other teachings contained in this guide.

**We are, the servants of God’s servants,  
The IPBYS Prison Program Service Team  
All glories to Śrīla Gurudeva!**

## Staple

## Glossary

NOTE: several of the words in this glossary will be identified as “A title of honor”. As with our discussion of the title of guru, which we covered in Lesson 2, the fact that a person goes by one of these titles does not always mean he is qualified to hold it. We must always judge a person by their activities, and not simply by the name they use.

**Pronunciation note:** Sanskrit words can be difficult to pronounce. We will give you a standard pronunciation, but you may hear them spoken differently.

**Ācārya** + ā-chār-yuh (ā/chār like odd/car) One who teaches by example. An ācārya’s behavior is proper in every way, conveying that he understands the highest truths

**Bābājī** + bā-bā-jee (bā like bob) A title of honor and respect. It is given to highly advanced Vaiṣṇavas who have given up all connection to society in order to fully engage in chanting the Holy Names. They absorb themselves in deep meditations wherein they directly serve the Lord in their spiritual bodies.

**Bhagavad-Gītā** + B-huh-guh-vud Gee-tā (tā like top) (Lesson 6) Literally “The Song of God”. This is a section of one of the books in the Vedas. It contains a conversation between Lord Kṛṣṇa and a devotee, wherein the Lord gives instructions on many truths.

**Kavirāja** A title of honor and respect. It refers to one who can establish the philosophy of bhakti by words and deeds.

**Bhaktivedānta** A title of honor and respect. It refers to one who has complete knowledge of the Vedas.

**Cakravartī** + Chu-kru-vur-tee. A title of honor and respect. The word “cakra” refers to a wheel, or a circle, or an assembly of devotees (who are gathered in a circle). Cakravartī refers to that person around whom this assembly turns, the person to whom the other devotees turn to for guidance.

**Demigods** – These personalities are not God, with a capital “G”. In the Vedas, there is only one God. The demigods are beings who have been empowered by the Lord to oversee various aspects of material affairs, such as the weather.

**Gosvāmī**+ Go-swā-mee (swā like swan) A title of honor and respect. This term comes from two root words: “go” which, as used here, means “the senses”, and “Svāmī”, which means “master”. A Gosvāmī is someone who has mastered all of his senses, meaning he has total control of them and he never falls under their influence.

**Mahārāja** + Muh-hā-rāj (hā/rāj like hot/dodge) A title of honor and respect. This term comes from two words: “mahā” which means great; and “rāja” which means king. When used in a spiritual sense, it refers to someone who is a great soul, who is great in spiritual knowledge or spiritual strength.

**Paṇḍit** + pun-dit. A title of honor and respect. It refers to one who is a great scholar, especially of the Vedas.

**Sannyāsa** + Sun-yās (yā like yacht) The highest social order (see below)

**Sannyāsī** + Sun-yā-see (yā like yacht) One who gives up all family connections and dedicates their entire life to the practice of one of the yoga systems.

**Sarasvatī** + Suh-ruh-swuh-tee. A title of honor and respect. Sarasvatī is the name of the demigoddess of learning. This title is given to one of great learning and intellect.

**Svāmī** + Swā-mee (Swā like swan) A title of honor and respect. It means essentially the same thing as Gosvāmī (see above)

**Ṭhākura** + T-hā-kur (hā/kur like hot/poor) A title of honor and respect. It refers to an advanced Vaiṣṇava who is as worshipable as the Lord, due to his being completely dedicated to Him.

**Vaiṣṇava** + Viesh-nuv (nuv like love) (often pronounced nov like novel) This term is derived from one of Gods names-Vishnu + Vish-noo. One meaning of this word is “one who has the characteristics of the Lord”. This does not in any way mean that a Vaiṣṇava is God; it only means that some of God’s qualities

can be seen in him, because his thoughts and actions are fully absorbed in serving the Lord.

When translated in another way it means “related to Vishnu”. In other words, Vaiṣṇavas are God’s property and there only purpose is to act as His agent in delivering fallen souls to Him by teaching them the science of bhakti-yoga.

## Numerical Guide Listings

(Arranged Alphabetically)

Note: All personalities listed as “Lord”, such as Lord Kṛṣṇa, are listed without the word Lord: All listed as “Śrīla” are listed without the word Śrīla.

- 32: A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī (Śrīla Prabhupāda)
- 11: Advaita Ācārya
- 7: Balarāma (Kṛṣṇa’s brother)
- 31: Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī
- 30: Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī
- 33: Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī (Śrīla Gurudeva)
- 28: Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
- 8: Caitanya
- 34: Ekādaśī (Special Fast Day)
- 13: Gadādhara Paṇḍit
- 29: Gaura Kīśora dāsa Bābājī
- 9: Gaura purnima (Caitanya’s Appearance Day)
- 19: Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī
- 23: Haridās Ṭhākura
- 1: Janmāṣṭamī (Kṛṣṇa’s Appearance Day)
- 16: Jīva Gosvāmī
- 20: Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja Gosvāmī
- 25: Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura
- 10: Nityānanda
- 5: Nṛsiṃha (The half man-half lion form of the Lord)
- 2: Rādhāṣṭamī (Rādhārānī’s Appearance Day)
- 17: Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī
- 18: Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī
- 6: Rāmacandra (The perfect king)
- 22: Rāya Rāmananda
- 14: Rūpa Gosvāmī
- 15: Śaṅātana Gosvāmī
- 24: Śrīnivās Ācārya
- 12: Śrīvās
- 21: Svarūpa Dāmodara
- 26: Śyāmananda Paṇḍita
- 4: Vāmana (The Boar Form of the Lord)
- 3: Varāha (The Dwarf Form of the Lord)
- 27: Viśvanātha Cakravartī

**NOTE:** If possible, please keep this guide, as we will be referring to it throughout this course. When the personalities discussed herein appear in later lessons, we will refer you to this guide, using the above numbers, so that you will continue to learn about the role they play in our lineage.

**Correspondence Course:** There are not any questions for this month’s lesson. The correspondence course will resume next month.



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This powerful painting depicts the embodied soul as it continually passes from boyhood to youth to old age, and similarly passes into another body at death. Being engaged in materialistic activities, the living soul entangles himself in this cycle. This entails the chain of birth and death in the various species of life: the aquatics, the vegetables, the reptiles, the birds, the beasts, the uncivilized man, and then again the human form, which provides the only chance for getting out of the cycle of action and reaction. This human form of life is a most valuable asset for the living entity who can utilize it for solving the problems of life and understanding the science of bhakti-yoga.

When one takes advantage of this opportunity, he is assured of a human form of life in the next birth, or he may be liberated completely and go back home, back to God. By impious activities or by misusing this opportunity, one is degraded to lower species of life in which he is punished by the laws of nature.

The skeleton in a black dress represents death and the woman next to him is birth. The man whose back is facing us has just passed through all the species of life to finally become a human, but he is putting his toe in the water, which represents the ocean of material existence, seeing if he will want to dive in again.

The sun represents the soul, who is not shining as brilliantly as it can shine, due to it being behind the cloud of improper attachments. The infinity symbol at center represents the fact that this change of body and wandering through the various species has been going on for countless billions of years, since beginningless time. The stars and planets within the infinity sign represents the fact that we are receiving bodies in the various countless universes.

If that conditioned soul takes shelter of Kṛṣṇa, through a bona fide guru, he becomes free.



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Lord Kṛṣṇa standing upon a lotus flower.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa - Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare - Hare Rāma Hare Rāma - Rāma Rāma Hare Hare