

Offering Food to Lord Krishna

The process of making an offering of foodstuffs to Krishna will evolve for everyone. The basic principle is to acknowledge that the Lord has given so many nice ingredients, and that we have prepared them in a way to reciprocate with Krishna. The offering itself can be very simple. The Lord's offering plates are kept separate and are never eaten from by any other household member. A sample of each preparation is placed on the offering plate, and also a cup of fresh water. The plate is placed in front of a photo of the disciplic succession and the Divine Couple, Śrī-Śrī Rādhā and Krishna, or Lord Chaitanya and Nityānanda or the Pañca-tattva. Some households may have deity forms of the Lord.

Our prayers can be simple, asking the Lord to please accept our humble offering. We can chant the Hare Krishna mahāmantra (Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare) and beseech the Lord to accept our humble offering, or we may learn and chant the more traditional prayers of offering foodstuffs to the Lord, which I will mention soon. The key is to offer with love and devotion, and only a devotee of the Lord can do that, for no one else will be able to recognize and enter into the personal exchange and reciprocation with the Lord. The plate should remain on the offering space or the altar about 15 minutes, and then be nicely transferred and washed before the family takes prasādam. What is actually on the offering plate is called "mahā-prasādam," or great prasādam, and it can either be honored separately in that way or stirred back into the quantity pots.

However we choose to make our offerings, it is traditional to have a small hand bell and to ring it while the offering is being made, while the prayers are being said.

We can also choose to learn the following offering prayers and utilize them in the making of our food offerings to the Lord. There are two prayers to

Śrīla Prabhupāda, one to Lord Chaitanya, and one to Lord Krishna. The 4 prayers are said one after another, and the set of 4 is repeated three times.

nama om visnu-padaya krishna-presthaya bhutale,
Śrīmate bhaktivedanta-swami iti namine

namas te sarasvati deve gaura-vani-pracharine,
nirvishesha sunyavadi paschyatya desha tarine

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is very dear to Lord Krishna, having taken shelter at His lotus feet. Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and delivering the western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism."

namo maha-vadanyaya, krishna-prema-pradaya te
krishnaya krishna-chaitanya, namne gaura-tvishe
namah

"O most munificent incarnation! You are Krishna Himself appearing as Śrī Krishna Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. You have assumed the golden color of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and You are widely distributing pure love of Krishna. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You."

namo brahmanya-devaya go-brahmana-hitaya ca
jagad-dhitaya krishnaya govindaya namo namah

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto Lord Krishna, who is the worshipable Deity for all brahmanas, the well-wisher of the cows and the brahmanas and the benefactor of the whole world. I offer my repeated obeisances to the Personality of Godhead, known as Krishna and Govinda."

Krishna prasādam is honored, not just chowed down or eaten without consciousness. It is a sacred practice. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us a brief poem

composed by Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura, the father of our Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master. This is to be recited before honoring prasādam, the sacred food remnants of the Lord.

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Thakur wrote in the Bengali-

sarira abidya-jal, jodendriya tahe kal,
jibe phele bisaya-sagore
taar madhye jihva ati, lobhamoy sudurmati
taake jeta kathina som sare
Krishna baro doyamoy, karibare jihva jay,
swa-prasād-anna dilo bhai
sei annamṛta khao, Rādhā-Krishna-guna gao,
preme dako caitanya-nitai

“This material body is a lump of ignorance, and the senses are a network of paths leading to death. Of all the senses, the tongue is most voracious and difficult to control; it is very difficult to conquer the tongue in this world. Lord Krishna is very kind to us and has given us such nice prasāda, just to control the tongue. Now let us take this prasāda to our full satisfaction and glorify Their Lordships, Śrī-Śrī Rādhā and Krishna and, in love, call for the help of Lord Chaitanya and Prabhu Nityānanda.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that taking only Krishna prasādam was a vaccination against the modes of material nature. There has been so much vaccination conversation going on for several months, but whatever the relative truth is concerning vaccinations, we have Śrīla Prabhupāda's guarantee that to take only Krishna prasādam is the most valuable vaccination and will keep us properly aligned in our devotional goals.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā, chapter 17, text 136, states-

“...material senses cannot appreciate Krishna's holy name, form, qualities and pastimes. When a conditioned soul is awakened to Krishna consciousness and renders service by using his tongue to chant the Lord's holy name and taste the remnants of the Lord's food, the tongue is purified, and one gradually comes to understand who Krishna really is.”

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