

Sri Lord Chaitanya

Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (February 27, 1486 to 1534 A.D.) was born in Navadvipa, Bengal, on a full moon night during a lunar eclipse. It is typical for people to bathe in the Ganges during an eclipse and chant the Lord's holy names for spiritual purification. So, everyone in the area was chanting the holy names when He was born. His parents, Jagannatha Misra and Sachidevi, gave Him the name of Vishvambhara, meaning the support of the universe, because astrologers had predicted His super human qualities and that He would deliver the people of the world. He was also nicknamed Nimai because He had been born under a nima tree.

During His childhood He exhibited extraordinary qualities, even having philosophical discussions with His mother. While growing, His brilliant intelligence began to become apparent. While still a child, He mastered Sanskrit and logic to the point of defeating local pundits, and established the truth of His spiritual and Vedic philosophy. Thus, Sri Chaitanya established the authority of the Vaishnava tradition through the process of debate and logic.

Then, when Sri Chaitanya went to Mayapur on the pretext to perform ceremonies for the anniversary of His father's death, He received Vaishnava initiation from Srila Ishvara Puri. Thereafter, He absorbed Himself in chanting and singing the names of Lord Krishna in devotional ecstasy. Upon returning to Navadvipa, He gathered a following with whom He would engage in congregational singing of the Lord's holy names. Thus, He started the first sankirtana (congregational devotional singing) movement, and established the importance of chanting the names of God in this age as the most elevated of spiritual processes, and the prime means for liberation from material attachments.

He emphasized the devotional chanting of the Lord's holy names, using the Hare Krishna mantra (Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare) which can bring out the natural loving sentiments for God.

It was at the age of 24 when He took the order of sannyasa, the renounced stage of life, when He accepted the name of Krishna Chaitanya from Srila Keshava Bharati during the initiation. He then spent four years traveling through South India, and also visited Vrindavana and Varanasi. During this time He also gave special instructions to Rupa and Sanatana Gosvamis,

who then also spread the glories of the Divine Love for Radha and Krishna. They settled in Vrindavana where they spent their years in writing many books elaborating the instructions of Lord Chaitanya and the glories of bhakti for Radha and Krishna. They also revealed the places where Radha and Krishna performed many varied pastimes in that land of Vrindavana, which have remained special spots where devotees can become absorbed in the bliss of love of Radha and Krishna.

Lord Chaitanya spent His remaining years in Jagannatha Puri. During this time He was absorbed in ecstatic devotion to Krishna in the loving mood of Radharani, in which He would lose all external consciousness. He freely distributed the divine nectar of this love for Krishna to everyone and anyone, day and night. Even His presence or mere touch could transform everyone that came near Him into the same devotional mood. He remained like this until He finally left our vision at the age of 48.