



# FRIENDS OF LORD KRISHNA

## FOLK 2

### Krishna and Devatās

#### LESSON NOTES

#### 1. Is Hindu religion pantheistic/polytheistic?

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- 1.1. **Polytheism is belief in or worship of multiple gods or deities.** The word comes from the Greek words *poly theoi*, literally "many gods." Ancient Greek and Roman religions were polytheistic, holding to a varied number of traditional deities. In polytheistic belief, gods are perceived as superior beings having greater or lesser status, with individual skills, needs, desires and histories. For polytheists, gods may have multiple forms, each with its own significance in specific roles, and have dominion or authority over specified areas of life and the cosmos example-Indra is the chief demigod of the heavenly planets, Varuṇa is the demigod of water, Vāyu the wind god etc.
- 1.2. According to our Hindu conception, **there are thirty-three crores of demigods**, Indra, Candra, Varuṇa, so many. So the chief of them is Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, Lord Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Gaṇapati. In the Hindu world, somebody may worship Viṣṇu, somebody may worship Śiva, Brahmā, and somebody worships the sun.  
(Lecture, *Bhagavad-gītā* 7.3, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1974, Bombay)
- 1.3. Once a man was drowning, he called out for help, "Oh Gaṇeśa! please save me", by the time Lord Gaṇeśa could come and rescue him, the man called out for Lord Shiva, "O Lord Shiva please save me". Hearing this, Lord Gaṇeśa assumed that now he is calling out my fathers name so I need not go. Lord Shiva got delayed and just as he was about to go that man's rescue, he started praying "O goddess Durga, please save me". Lord Shiva assumed that now he is praying to my wife, so I need not go. Finally when goddess Durga reached for his rescue he had drowned.

John Walters has made a sarcastic comment on this in his book 'World Religion', that **Hindu religion has high god to man ratio. One god for every 3 men. The worship of so many gods causes confusion.**

Let's have an in depth analysis of the position of the *devatās* and the roles they play.

## 2. Who are the *devatās*?

2.1. **Just like in our country there is one prime minister & so many ministers, likewise the demigods are empowered administrators of material affairs.** The supply of air, light, water and all other benedictions for maintaining the body and soul of every living entity is entrusted to the demigods, who are innumerable assistants in different parts of the body of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

(Purport, *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.11)

2.2. There is a great misconception about the gods or demigods of this material world, and men of less intelligence, although passing as great scholars, **take these demigods to be various forms of the Supreme Lord. Actually, the demigods are not different forms of God, but they are God's different parts and parcels. God is one, and the parts and parcels are many.** The Vedas say, *nityo nityānām*: God is one. *Īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ*. The Supreme God is one—Kṛṣṇa—and the demigods are delegated with powers to manage this material world. These demigods are all living entities (*nityānām*) with different grades of material power. They cannot be equal to the Supreme God—Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa. **Anyone who thinks that God and the demigods are on the same level is called an atheist, or *pāṣaṇḍī*.** Even the great demigods like Brahmā and Śiva cannot be compared to the Supreme Lord. In fact, the Lord is worshiped by demigods such as Brahmā and Śiva.

(Purport, *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.12)

2.3. The demigods are authorized supplying agents on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu. Therefore, they must be satisfied by the performance of prescribed *yajñas*. In the Vedas, there are different kinds of *yajñas* prescribed for different kinds of demigods, but all are ultimately offered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. **For one who cannot understand what the Personality of Godhead is, sacrifice to the demigods is recommended.** According to the different material qualities of the persons concerned, different types of *yajñas* are recommended in the Vedas. Worship of different demigods is also on the same basis—namely, according to different qualities. For example, the meat-eaters are recommended to worship the goddess Kālī, the ghastly form of material nature, and before the goddess the sacrifice of animals is recommended. But for those who are in the mode of goodness, the transcendental worship of Viṣṇu is recommended.

(Purport, *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.12)

## 3. Worshipping *devatās*- Is it essential?

3.1. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said that generally people worship demigods for some material profit. *Kāmais tais tair hr̥ta jñānāḥ*. **Driven by material lust, they worship demigods.** Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures. **Less intelligent people who have lost their spiritual sense take shelter of demigods for immediate fulfillment of material desires.** Generally, such

people do not go to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because they are in the lower modes of nature (ignorance and passion) and therefore worship various demigods. Following the rules and regulations of worship, they are satisfied. The worshipers of demigods are motivated by small desires and do not know how to reach the supreme goal. Because in Vedic literature there are recommendations for worshipping different gods for different purposes (e.g., a diseased man is recommended to worship the sun), those who are not devotees of the Lord think that for certain purposes demigods are better than the Supreme Lord.  
(Purport, *Bhagavad-gītā* 7.20)

### 3.2. Case Study- Muñgerilāl and Gopal

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3.3. **Persons who are engaged in the worship of demigods are not very intelligent, although such worship is offered to Me indirectly," Kṛṣṇa says. For example, when a man pours water on the leaves and branches of a tree without pouring water on the root, he does so without sufficient knowledge or without observing regulative principles.** Similarly, the process of rendering service to different parts of the body is to supply food to the stomach. The demigods are, so to speak, different officers and directors in the government of the Supreme Lord. **One has to follow the laws made by the government, not by the officers or directors. Similarly, everyone is to offer his worship to the Supreme Lord only.** That will automatically satisfy the different officers and directors of the Lord. The officers and directors are engaged as representatives of the government, and to offer some bribe to the officers and directors is illegal. **This is stated here as *avidhi-pūrvakam*. In other words, Kṛṣṇa does not approve the unnecessary worship of the demigods.**

(Purport, *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.23)

3.4. Devotional service to the Supreme Lord and the worship of a demigod cannot be on the same platform, because worship of a demigod is material and devotional service to the Supreme Lord is completely spiritual.

Some commentators on the *Bhagavad-gītā* say that one who worships a demigod can reach the Supreme Lord, but here it is clearly stated that the **worshipers of demigods go to the different planetary systems where various demigods are situated, just as a worshiper of the sun achieves the sun or a worshiper of the demigod of the moon achieves the moon.** Similarly, if anyone wants to worship a demigod like Indra, he can attain that particular god's planet. **It is not that everyone, regardless of whatever demigod is worshiped, will reach the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is denied here, for it is clearly stated that the worshipers of demigods go to different**

**planets in the material world but the devotee of the Supreme Lord goes directly to the supreme planet of the Personality of Godhead.**

Foolish people (*hṛta-jñāna*) worship the demigods because they want immediate results. They get the results, but do not know that results so obtained are temporary and are meant for less intelligent persons. The intelligent person is in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he has no need to worship the paltry demigods for some immediate, temporary benefit.

(Purport, *Bhagavad-gītā* 7.23,4.12)

#### 4. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead

4.1. **As confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.2), *aham ādir hi devānām*: Kṛṣṇa is the *ādi*, or beginning, of the *devas* of this material world—Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara.** Therefore He is described here as *bhagavate bṛhate*. Everyone is *bhagavān*—everyone possesses opulence—but Kṛṣṇa is *bṛhān bhagavān*, the **possessor of unlimited opulence**. *Īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ* (Brahma-Saṁhitā. 5.1). Kṛṣṇa is the origin of everyone. *Ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavaḥ*. Even Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara come from Kṛṣṇa. *Mattaḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti dhanañjaya*: (*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.7) **there is no personality superior to Kṛṣṇa. Thus by general conclusion Lord Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate source of all energies, and the word Kṛṣṇa means that. He is the root cause of all causes**

(Purport, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.3.17)

4.2. The Supreme Lord is the controller of all other controllers, and He is the greatest of all the diverse planetary leaders. Everyone is under His control. **All entities are delegated with particular power only by the Supreme Lord; they are not supreme themselves.** He is also worshipable by all demigods and is the supreme director of all directors. Therefore, He is transcendental to all kinds of material leaders and controllers and is worshipable by all. There is no one greater than Him, and He is the supreme cause of all causes.

(Purport, *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.22)

4.3. There is the story of Vṛkāsura, a demon who practiced severe austerities and then asked Śiva for a boon—the power to kill at once any living being whose head Vṛkāsura would merely touch. Śiva granted the boon, but was soon to regret his decision, for Vṛka came after him to try out the newfound power. Lord Śiva ran to all parts of the universe to escape this power-mad devotee and finally ended up at the door of the kingdom of Viṣṇu.

Hearing the words of a frightened Śiva, Viṣṇu devised a plan to help him. Viṣṇu appeared directly before Vṛkāsura and told him Śiva was not to be trusted. “Śiva is fond of joking and even lying,” said Viṣṇu. “I am sure he is not telling you the truth. He was just teasing you. Touch your own head, and you will see that nothing will happen.”

Vṛka, of course, touched his own head and died. But the point of this story, in the present context, is Viṣṇu’s superiority over Śiva, who could not resolve the problem

on his own. After racing through the entire material cosmos to escape Vṛkāsura, Śiva sought refuge in Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments, “Lord Śiva is important because he is holding on his head the holy Ganges water, which has its origin in the footwash of Lord Viṣṇu.

(Purport, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.88)

- 4.4. **Both the living entity and the demigods are subordinate to the will of the Supreme Personality of Godhead;** therefore the living entity cannot worship the demigod by his own desire, nor can the demigod bestow any benediction without the supreme will. As it is said, not a blade of grass moves without the will of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Generally, persons who are distressed in the material world go to the demigods, as they are advised in the Vedic literature. A person wanting some particular thing may worship such and such a demigod. For example, a diseased person is recommended to worship the sun-god; a person wanting education may worship the goddess of learning, Sarasvatī; and a person wanting a beautiful wife may worship the goddess Umā, the wife of Lord Śiva. In this way there are recommendations in the *śāstras* (Vedic scriptures) for different modes of worship of different demigods. And because a particular living entity wants to enjoy a particular material facility, the Lord inspires him with a strong desire to achieve that benediction from that particular demigod, and so he successfully receives the benediction. The particular mode of the devotional attitude of the living entity toward a particular type of demigod is also arranged by the Supreme Lord. The demigods cannot infuse the living entities with such an affinity, but because He is the Supreme Lord, or the Supersoul who is present in the hearts of all living entities, Kṛṣṇa gives impetus to man to worship certain demigods. **The demigods are actually different parts of the universal body of the Supreme Lord; therefore they have no independence.**

(Purport, Bhagavad-gītā 7.21)

- 4.5. The demigods cannot award benedictions to their devotees without the permission of the Supreme Lord. The living entity may forget that everything is the property of the Supreme Lord, but the demigods do not forget. So the worship of demigods and achievement of desired results are due not to the demigods but to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by arrangement. The less intelligent living entity does not know this, and therefore he foolishly goes to the demigods for some benefit.

(Purport, Bhagavad-gītā 7.22)

## 5. Surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa

- 5.1. Complete surrender is desired by Kṛṣṇa, as He indicates in the last chapter of (*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.66): *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekam śaraṇam vraja*. There are many so-called devotees, but actually they are only *karmīs* and *jñānīs*, for they are not directly devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa. **The *karmīs* sometimes offer the results of their activities to Lord Vāsudeva,** and this offering is called *karmārpaṇam*. These are considered to be fruitive activities, for the *karmīs* consider Lord Viṣṇu to be one of the demigods like Lord Śiva and Lord Brahmā. Because they consider Lord Viṣṇu to be on

the same level with the demigods, they contend that surrendering to the demigods is as good as surrendering unto Vāsudeva.

This contention is denied herein because if it were true, Lord Śiva would have said that surrender unto him, Lord Vāsudeva, Viṣṇu or Brahmā is the same. However, **Lord Śiva does not say this because he himself surrenders unto Vāsudeva**, and whoever else surrenders unto Vāsudeva is very, very dear to him. Even Lord Śiva affirms that liberation can be achieved only by the mercy of Viṣṇu. Lord Śiva says, *mukti-pradātā sarveṣāṁ viṣṇur eva na sarṁśayaḥ*: "There is no doubt that Viṣṇu is the deliverer of liberation for everyone."

(Purport, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.24.28)

- 5.2. Anyone who has taken shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, the giver of liberation, giving up all kinds of obligation, and has taken to the path in all seriousness, **owes neither duties nor obligations to the demigods, sages, general living entities, family members, humankind or forefathers.**" Such obligations are automatically fulfilled by performance of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Since all such classes of living entities are part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, one who has surrendered to the Lord's service has no need to serve such persons separately. *prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇām*: **food must be placed in the stomach, from where it is automatically distributed to all of the limbs of the body.** It is foolish to try to nourish the whole body by rubbing food separately on all the bodily limbs. Similarly, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is the source of all existence. Everything is emanating from Kṛṣṇa, everything is maintained by Kṛṣṇa, and at the end, everything will merge to rest in Kṛṣṇa. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is the **supreme benefactor, friend, protector and well-wisher of every living entity**, and if He is satisfied, then automatically the whole world will become satisfied, just as all of the bodily limbs are strengthened and satisfied when food is duly remitted to the stomach.

(Purport, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.5.41)

- 5.3. The example can be given that **a man who is working as the personal secretary to a great king has no further obligation to petty minor kings.** Undoubtedly an ordinary person has many obligations within this material world. But according to *Bhagavad-gītā*, *mayaiva vihitān hi tān*: it is actually the Supreme Lord who is giving all benedictions. The demigods are also not independent. The words *parihṛtya kartam*, "giving up other duties," indicate that one should give up any concept that the demigods are separate from Kṛṣṇa. It is clearly stated in Vedic literature that the demigods are different limbs of the universal body of the Supreme Lord. Further, it is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* that the Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart and that He only is giving intelligence and memory. Thus, our **forefathers who carefully preserved cultural traditions were acting with intelligence provided by the Supreme Lord.** They certainly were not acting with their own independent intelligence. No one can be intelligent without a brain, and it is only by Kṛṣṇa's mercy that we receive a human brain. Therefore, if **we carefully analyze all of our multifarious obligations toward different classes of living entities, we shall find that in each and every case it is ultimately by the mercy of the Supreme Personality of**

**Godhead that we have received a particular benediction in life.** So although an ordinary person must methodically fulfill all of his various obligations by executing different types of sacrifices and charitable activities for the satisfaction of those who have benefited him, **one who is directly serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, at once fulfills all such obligations** because all benedictions ultimately have come from the Lord through the agency of family, forefathers, demigods, etc.

(Purport, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.5.41)

- 5.4. Those who are after material concessions go to different demigods. They take something from Śiva, Durgā, Kālī, Gaṇeśa, Sūrya and whomever. However, it was the goddess Pārvatī who asked Lord Śiva, "What is the best type of worship?" Lord Śiva advised, **ārādhanaṁ sarveṣāṁ viṣṇor ārādhanaṁ param** (*Padma Purāṇa*). "My dear Pārvatī, of all kinds of worship, worship of Lord Viṣṇu[Kṛṣṇa] is the best."  
(Chapter 9, Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers)

## 6. Respecting *devatās*

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- 6.1. One should not neglect to offer due respect to the demigods. One may not be a devotee of demigods, but that does not mean that he should be disrespectful to them. For example, a *Vaiṣṇava* is not a devotee of Lord Śiva or Lord Brahmā, but he is duty-bound to offer all respects to such highly positioned demigods. According to *Vaiṣṇava* philosophy, one should offer respect even to an ant, so then what is there to speak of such exalted persons as Lord Śiva and Lord Brahmā?

In the *Padma Purāṇa* it is said, "Kṛṣṇa, or Hari, is the master of all demigods, and therefore He is always worshipable. But this does not mean that one should not offer respect to the demigods."

(*Nectar of devotion, Chapter 7*)

- 6.2. **It is said, *vaiṣṇavānāṁ yathā śambhuḥ*: Lord Śiva is the best of all devotees.**

Therefore all devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa are also devotees of Lord Śiva. In *Vṛndāvana* there is Lord Śiva's temple called *Gopīśvara*. The *gopīs* used to worship not only Lord Śiva but Kātyāyanī, or Durgā, as well, but their aim was to attain the favor of Lord Kṛṣṇa. A devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa does not disrespect Lord Śiva, but worships Lord Śiva as the most exalted devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Consequently whenever a devotee worships Lord Śiva, he prays to Lord Śiva to achieve the favor of Kṛṣṇa, and he does not request material profit.

(Purport, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.24.30)

6.3. Gaṇeśa is a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*Brahma-saṁhitā*, 5.50), and we can pray to him to remove obstacles on the road to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Whenever a devotee worships Lord Śiva, he prays to Lord Śiva to achieve the favor of Kṛṣṇa, and he does not request material profit. Sometimes mundane *sahajiyās* suppose that the *gopīs* visited the temple of Kātyāyanī in the same way mundane people visit the temple of Devī. However, the *gopīs* prayed to Kātyāyanī to grant them Kṛṣṇa as their husband, whereas mundaners visit the temple of Kātyāyanī to receive some material profit. **That is the difference between a Vaiṣṇava's visit and a nondevotee's visit.** (*Purport, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.9*)

## 7. Question and answer

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## 8. Recap

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