

TEACHING KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

for ages 4–16

Once a week schools
After school programs
Academic schools
Home schools

SAMPLE PROTOTYPE — TWO WEEKS OF LEARNING

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WHAT IS THIS SAMPLE?

This booklet is a very small sample of a hoped for, planned curriculum, a yet-to-be-funded curriculum, to teach children and youth about Krishna consciousness. These sample lessons are only to give some idea about how that curriculum would look and how it would be structured.

We created this sample just to give a tiny peek at what is possible.

What's yet to be funded and therefore missing from this sample:

- ♦ A list of the scope and sequence of the whole curriculum
- ♦ Dozens of lessons before and after these on the same topic
- ♦ Hundreds of lessons on different topics
- ♦ Songs related to the lessons
- ♦ Guidance on kirtana, japa, and slokas teaching and learning
- ♦ Lists of suggested slokas
- ♦ Additional teacher guidance
- ♦ Comprehensive lists of resources
- ♦ Links to academic subjects
- ♦ A full training program for the teachers
- ♦ And more!

The final curriculum will be for teachers and parents in:

- ♦ Once a week schools
- ♦ Afternoon and weekend schools
- ♦ Classes in regular academic devotional schools
- ♦ Classes in home schools with a full academic program

SUGGESTED BASIC PROGRAM

2 hours each class (for example, for one day a week)

- ♦ 10 minutes kirtana
- ♦ 10 minutes japa
- ♦ 10 minutes learning and discussing the sloka of the week
- ♦ 20 minutes slokas recitation
- ♦ 1 hour theme program from these lessons
- ♦ 5 minutes announcements

Sample Lesson: Govardhana and Holy Places, 1 hour

Teachers aim to: inspire pupils with appreciation for the general concepts of holy places and pilgrimages to them, and Govardhana Hill in particular, and knowledge of how to be a respectful pilgrim to a holy place.

By the end of this lesson, pupils will be able to: explain the definition and value of a holy place, demonstrate activities of a pilgrim, and discuss their own experiences with holy places.

With the whole group

Ask pupils to think about how different places make them feel. Ideally, you can actually take them to physical places, such as a place for worship, a kitchen, or a garbage area. Or you can show them pictures of physical places and ask them how they might feel there.

If you have time to research before the class, you can present the pupils with information about how exterior and interior architectural design affects not only how a place is used, but also our emotional reactions to that place and how we relate to others there. Such information can help pupils understand that the concept of a holy place affecting people is not simply a matter of blind faith.

Ask the pupils to describe what they know about the concepts of a pilgrim and pilgrimage to holy places. Possible ways to do this: 1) ask for volunteers to come to the front of the group and speak for 1–3 minutes, 2) have them talk among themselves in small groups, or 3) call on a few pupils to speak from their seats.

Inform the pupils that many people make a pilgrimage to Govardhana Hill, going there not only from the local places in India but also from around the world. Discuss, showing the photos on the following pages, of what people do on a pilgrimage to Govardhana Hill (walking around the hill barefoot with the hill on their right side, going around the hill by offering prostrated obeisances, building rock structures to represent their desire to live there, saying prayers at various places, hearing about Krishna's pastimes at the appropriate places, etc.). For each photo, you can ask what the pupils understand is happening, and what is the meaning of what people are doing. Ask if any pupils have visited Govardhana.

Note: there are activities in this section regarding the pilgrimage practices of other faiths. While some evaluation of other faith practices may be unavoidable, the focus should be on appreciation and commonality.

Separate the pupils into groups of ages 4–7, 7–11, and 11–16. The pupils aged 11–16 may need access to the internet to do their own research. Assign an older and more competent child in each group to be a leader. You will need clay, cardboard, and chairs for the 4–7 year-old group. Ensure that the instructions are clear to the younger members of the 11–16 year-old group.

Ages 4–7: The children categorize pictures of various places to visit. They then make a clay Govardhana Hill and practice doing parikrama. Then they discuss plans to visit Govardhana.

Ages 7–11: Ask the children to list special places they have gone with their family and the reasons they go to those places (fun, learning, being with family, etc.) Ask them why someone might want to travel to a holy place and discuss what is the same and what is different about travel to a holy place versus travel to other places. Introduce the words and concepts of “pilgrim” and “pilgrimage.”

Ages 11–16: Have each child write a poem or essay about their experience with visiting a holy place that could include a sacred space in their home or school. Or give the children information about one or more holy places outside of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and have the children, individually or in groups, compare and contrast that place with Govardhana Hill in terms of history and pilgrimage practices. The children can present their conclusions in some type of graphic organizer such as Venn diagram, table, or types of graphs. Pupils aged 15–16 in this group can compare that place with Govardhana Hill in terms of the way the sacredness of the place was established, the nature of the stories connected with the place, the spiritual benefits said to accrue from visiting, procedures pilgrims follow when visiting, and any other interesting areas. Pupils present their findings in a paper, an oral presentation, or a graphic design.

Provide books and toys for pupils and groups who finish early. If these can be related to the lesson, that is ideal.

Govardhana through photos



Govardhana through photos



Govardhana through photos



Govardhana through photos



Govardhana through photos



Govardhana and Holy Places: Categorize pictures (ages 4–7)



Bring pictures of various places to visit: temple, park/playground, holy river, library, Govardhana Hill, kirtana, devotee restaurant, zoo, home program, shopping mall, museum, etc. Have the children put the pictures into as many of the category circles as they fit into. Then talk about your choices.

Govardhana and Holy Places: Making a clay hill (ages 4-7)



Make a Govardhana Hill out of clay and put it on a piece of cardboard on a chair. Put some chairs on either side. Practice doing parikrama or dandavat parikrama while singing the Hare Krishna mantra or songs about Govardhana.

Talk about what it would mean to go to Govardhana and how you would plan the trip. If possible, bring suitcases and items one might pack for a trip. The children can be asked the previous week to bring these items themselves. Do pretend packing and discuss what could be packed for different types of journeys, especially what could be packed for a pilgrimage to Govardhana.

Govardhana and Holy Places: Favorite places (ages 7-11)

What special places have you gone with your family or friends? Write the names:

What did you like best about your favorite place?

- ☐ fun
- ☐ learning new things
- ☐ being with my family
- ☐ being with my friends
- ☐ something else:

Draw or describe your favorite place or places that you have gone to:

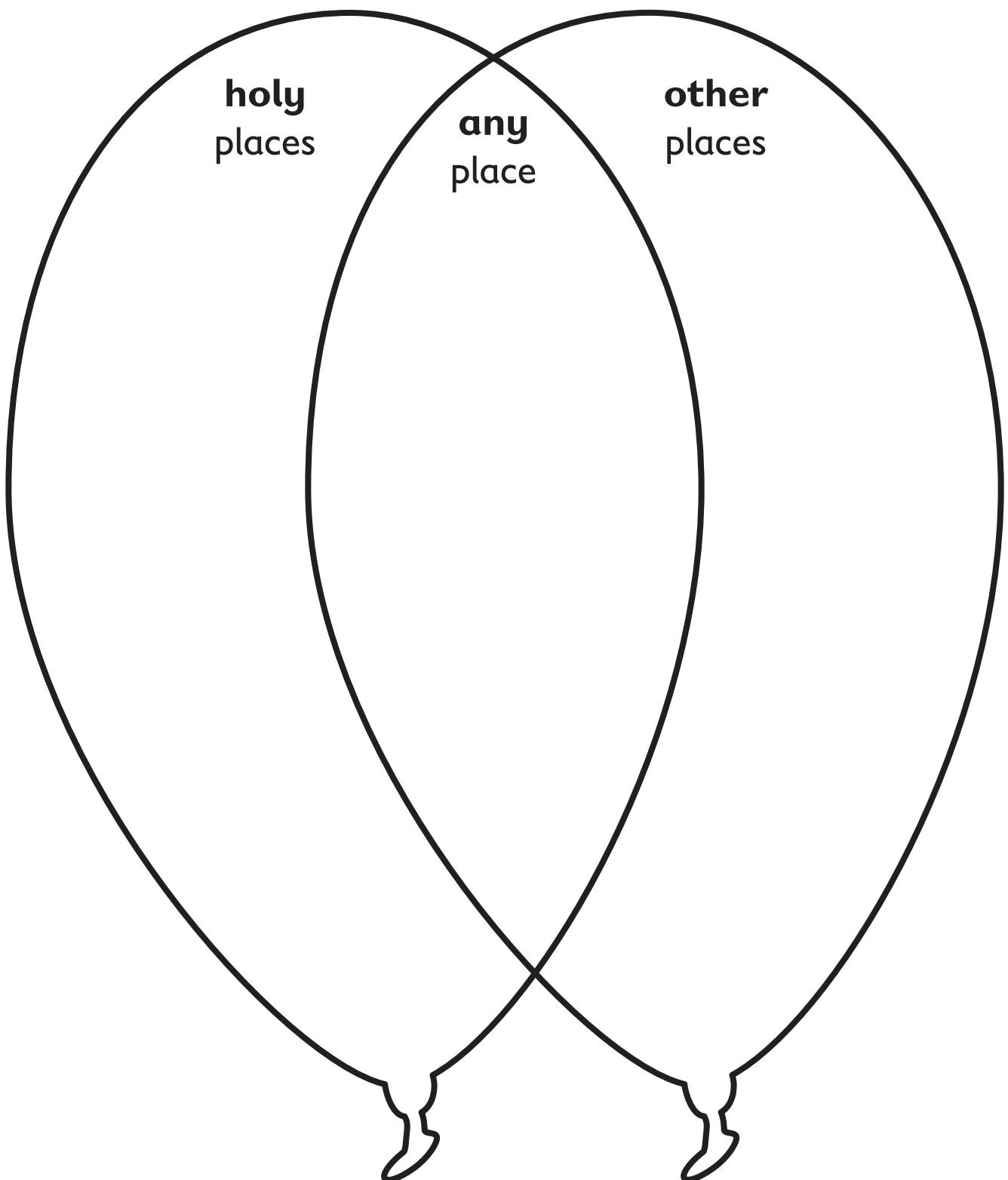
Ask the children to list special places they have gone with their family and the reasons they go to those places (fun, learning, being with family, etc.).

Govardhana and Holy Places: Why holy places? (ages 7–11)

Why would someone go to a holy place? Think of as many reasons as you can. Write your answers or draw pictures to answer. You may work in groups or on your own.

Ask the children why someone might want to travel to a holy place and discuss what is the same and what is different about travel to a holy place versus travel to other places. Introduce the words and concepts of “pilgrim” and “pilgrimage.”

Govardhana and Holy Places: Venn diagram (ages 7-11)



Have the children use this Venn diagram to sort things that are the same or different about visiting holy places and visiting other places. In the overlapping section, write what is true of visiting either type of place. In the other sections, write what is unique about visiting that type of place.

Write a story or poem using “pilgrim” and “pilgrimage.”

[illegible]

Govardhana and Holy Places: Your experiences (ages 11-16)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Govardhana Hill, Mathura Dist, India

Govardhana Hill is a place as part of Krishna's Vrindavana pastimes. Krishna held Govardhana with the little finger of his left hand to use as an umbrella when Indra sent devastating storms. At its highest point today, Govardhana is 30 meters (100 feet), and it is about eight kilometers long and 150 meters wide. Much of the hill is now underground.

Visitors to Govardhana Hill like to go to the various places associated with Krishna's pastimes. There is a place where he asked the cowherd girls for taxes, and a place where Indra apologized for his terrible storm. There is the place where Uddhava read Krishna's letter to the cowherd girls after Krishna left Vrindavana. People visit those places, offer obeisances, put some water from the ponds on their heads, and discuss what pastime of Krishna happened there.

Just as in a temple, where people often walk around the Deity (circumambulation or *parikrama*), keeping the Deity to their right, people walk around all of Govardhana Hill as he is also a Deity. Generally people walk barefoot, and the whole walk takes five to ten hours. There is an outside path, and another inner path closer to the hill. Some people go around Govardhana by offering full *dandavat* obeisances, rising and falling each time. Doing a *dandavat parikrama* takes many days—often about a week. Some people do 108 *dandavats* in each place, and it takes months to go around like that.

Western Wall, Jerusalem, Israel

It is all that remains of the Second Temple of Jerusalem, held to be uniquely holy by the ancient Jews and destroyed by the Romans in 70 ce. As it is seen today, the Western Wall measures about 50 metres (160 feet) long and about 20 metres (60 feet) high; the wall, however, extends much deeper into the earth. Jewish devotions there date from the early Byzantine period and reaffirm the rabbinic belief that “the divine presence never departs from the Western Wall.” Jews lament the destruction of the Temple and pray for its restoration. Such terms as Wailing Wall were coined by European travelers who witnessed the mournful vigils of pious Jews before the relic of the sacred Temple. Visitors to the wall have long followed the practice of wedging small slips of paper, upon which prayers and petitions are written, into the cracks between the stones.

Because the wall now forms part of a larger wall that surrounds the Muslim Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jews and Arabs have frequently disputed control of the wall and, often, right of access to it. That conflict has been particularly heated since the Israeli government took full control of the Old City in the wake of the Six Day War of June 1967.

(from: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-Wall>)

Govardhana and Holy Places: Compare & contrast (ages 11–16)

Make a graph, table, or chart to compare and contrast Govardhana Hill and the process of pilgrimage with a holy place of another tradition. You can use the Western Wall, or if you can do some research, you can find some information on a different holy place and use that. Here are some possible other holy places you can research: 1) the Kaaba in Mecca, 2) Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, 3) Mary's Well in Nazareth, 4) Al-Maghtas in Jordan, and 4) Buddha's Bodi Tree, India.

In your chart or graph, include something of the history, the religious significance, what is involved in making a pilgrimage, how people worship, respect, or pray at that place, and how the surrounding country affects making a pilgrimage. For those aged 14–16, you can compare that place with Govardhana Hill in terms of the way the sacredness of the place was established, the nature of the stories connected with the place, the spiritual benefits said to accrue from visiting, procedures pilgrims follow when visiting, and any other interesting areas. Present your findings in a paper, an oral presentation, or a graphic design.

Sample Lesson: Lord Caitanya Deity Worship, 1 hour

Teachers aim to: give pupils direct experience of worship of the Deity of Lord Caitanya and meditation on the form of Lord Caitanya.

By the end of this lesson, pupils will be able to: describe Lord Caitanya's form and demonstrate service to Lord Caitanya's form.

Preparation: There are a lot of resources to gather for this lesson. A week in advance, the older group (ages 11–16) should be asked to interview full-time pujaris (locally or over the Internet) to ask about their daily schedule.

With the whole group: Ask pupils to discuss their experience with Deity worship in general, and with Deities of Lord Caitanya in particular. Explain how all energy is Krishna's, and how he can therefore use his energies for material or spiritual purposes. Have Deities (or a picture) of Lord Caitanya (and Lord Nityananda) along with articles of worship. Ask the pupils to list the order of offering (incense, lamp, water, cloth, flowers, fans) and how one does *acamana*. Ask who can ring a bell with their left hand while offering with the right hand? Have pupils of various ages come and demonstrate offering the various items. Discuss the importance of mental worship—how one should be mentally offering the item to the person one is worshipping and not just moving the body. Ask pupils of various ages to suggest how they do this.

Set up each group with their activities and circulate among the groups. Ages 7–11 may need some help finding the verses, and ages 4–7 may need some help with the glue and with making the offerings to their finished pictures.

Ages 4–7: Supplies needed: coloring tools (paint, colored pencils, crayons, or markers), glue, small craft pieces (sequins, paper flowers, beads, pieces of cloth, etc.), cardboard, scissors, and string. You can use the picture here or any other picture of

Lord Caitanya. Have pupils color or paint the picture. If using paint, there has to be enough time for the paint to dry. Have them decorate the picture by gluing on the various items. Then, they should glue the picture to cardboard and set it up like a frame that stands up. Help then offer water, cloth, flowers, and fan, while ringing a bell. Practice *acamana* first.

Ages 7–11: Read descriptions of the various forms of Lord Caitanya that he showed to his devotees as described in *Caitanya Caritamrita* or *Caitanya Bhagavata* (such as Radha-Krishna, four-handed Narayana, Varaha, Nrisimha, Sad-bhuja). Ask them to choose which of the stories they like best, and to create an illustration for that story or to act out that story.

Ages 11–16: They can choose one of the following: 1) Plan for a festival for Lord Caitanya, with an emphasis on worship of his Deity form. Work as a group to write down a plan for: the place, the activities and schedule, the cooking and menu for the feast, how everyone could participate in the Deity worship, how it would be advertised, how to fundraise, the clean-up afterwards, and all aspects. Each member of the group can work on some different aspect of planning. Don't forget to show your plan to those who actually plan local festivals! 2) Write down the typical schedule for a full-time *pujari* of Gaura Nitai Deities based on compiling of information from interviews 3) Pretend you are Krishnadasa who traveled with Lord Caitanya in South India (or Balabhadra who traveled with Lord Caitanya to Vrindavana) and describe how you would take care of the Lord's clothes and food. Their descriptions can be given orally, written, acted out dramatically, or shown in an original drawing.

Provide books and toys for pupils and groups who finish early. If these can be related to the lesson, that is ideal.

Lord Caitanya Deity Worship: Making an offering (ages 4-7)



Pick one of the forms of Lord Caitanya described in these verses from *Caitanya Caritamrita*:

- ◆ Form of Radha and Krishna: *Madhya-lila* 8.268–289
- ◆ Various forms: *Adi-lila* 17.12–19, 91–94, 115–119
- ◆ Four-armed and Krishna form: *Madhya-lila* 6.201–204

The group can choose to act out that story of showing a particular form to the whole group (or part of the group can do this, if it's a large group). Or each individual can decide which description they like best, and then write about that form in their own words or make their own drawing of that form. You can also ask the students how they would respond to seeing that form themselves.

Lord Caitanya Deity Worship: Making a plan (ages 11–16)

Chose one of the following:

- ♦ Plan for a festival for Lord Caitanya, with an emphasis on worship of his Deity form. Work as a group to write down a plan for: the place, the activities and schedule, the cooking and menu for the feast, how everyone could participate in the Deity worship, how it would be advertised, how to fundraise, the clean-up afterwards, and all aspects. Each member of the group can work on some different aspect of planning. Don't forget to show your plan to those who actually plan local festivals!
- ♦ Write down the typical schedule for a full-time *pujari* of Gaura Nitai Deities based on compiling of information from interviews.
- ♦ Pretend you are Krishnadasa who traveled with Lord Caitanya in South India or Balabhadra who traveled with Lord Caitanya to Vrindavana, and describe how you would take care of the Lord's clothes and food. Your descriptions can be given orally, written, acted out dramatically, or shown in an original drawing. Refer to *Caitanya Caritamrita, Madhya-lila*, chapters 7 and 9, especially these verses: 7.39, 7.93, 7.155, 9.226-234, 9.338.