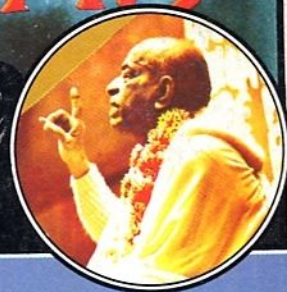


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

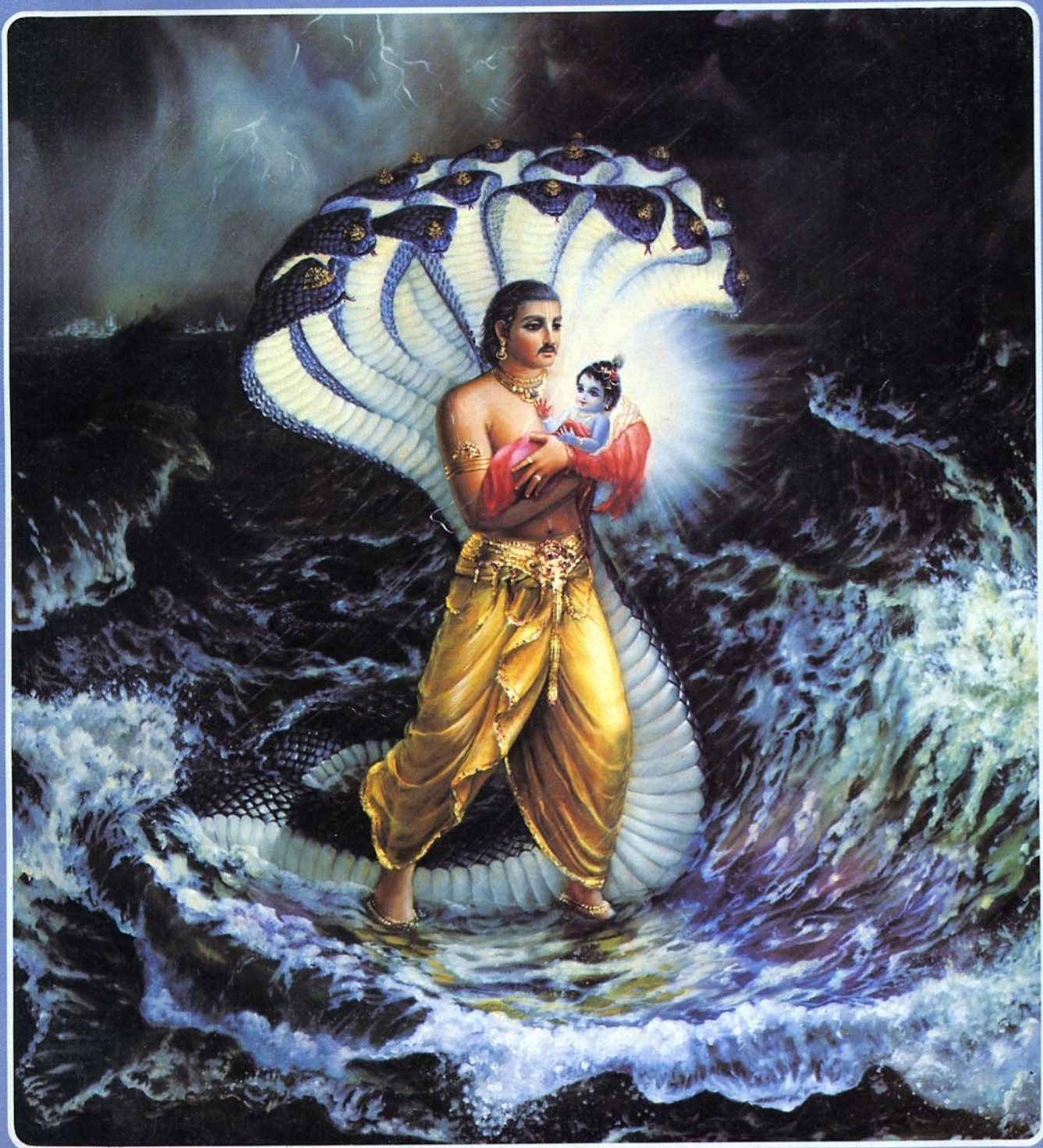


BACK TO GODHEAD



Vol. 14 No. 8

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



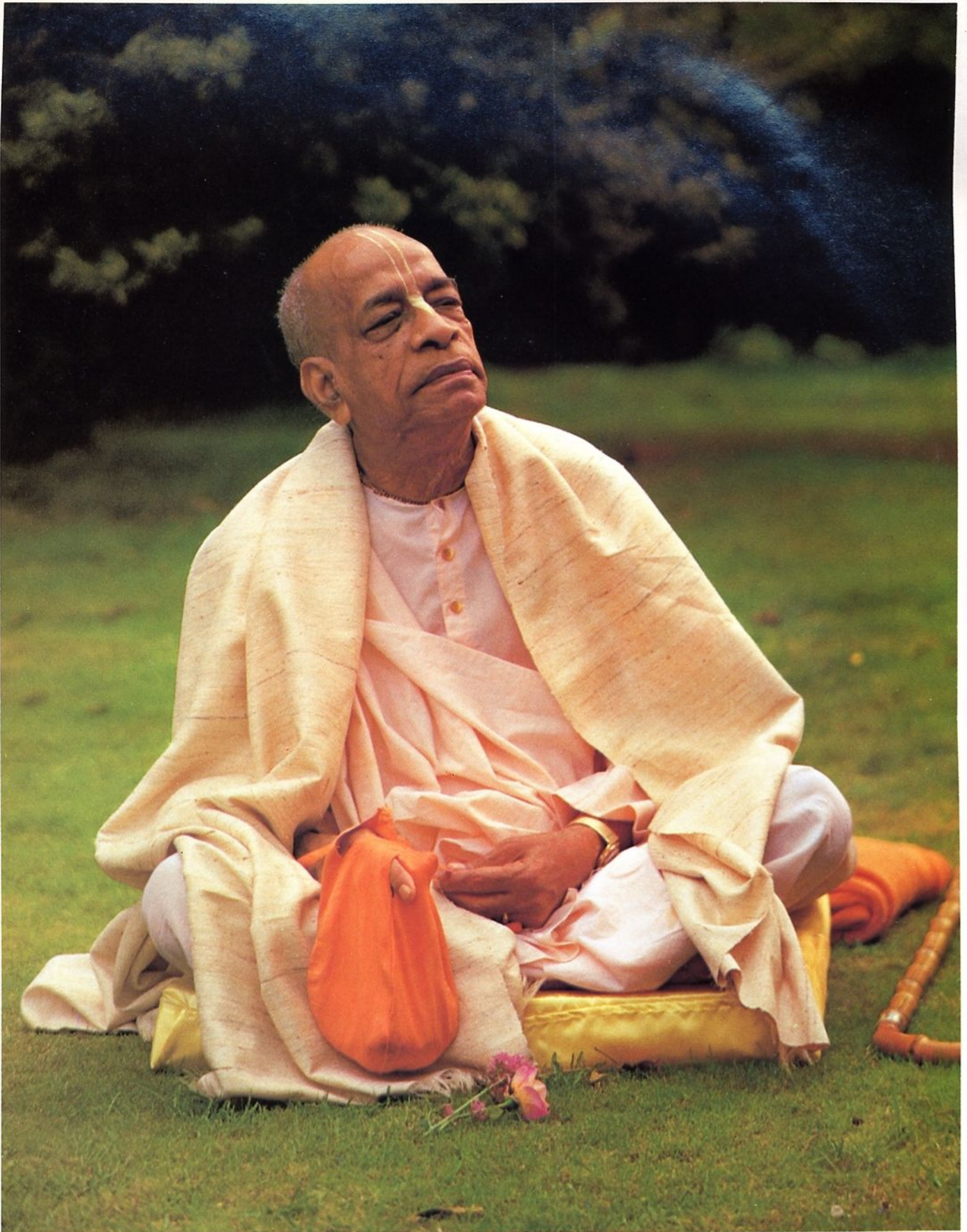


PHOTO: BHARGAVA DASA

His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

BACK TO GODHEAD

VOL. 14, NO. 8

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

FOUNDED 1944

FOUNDER

(under the direction of His Divine Grace
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)
His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION of Sanskrit words and names.
BACK TO GODHEAD follows the international
scholarly standard. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in **but**,
long **ā** like the **a** in **far** (and hold it twice as long as the
short **a**.) Pronounce **e** like the **a** in **evade**, long **ī** like the **i**
in **plique**. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **rim**, and **e**
like the **ch** in **chair**. Pronounce the aspirated consonants
(**ch**, **jh**, **dh**, etc.) as in **staunch**-heart, **hedge**-hog, and **red**-
hot. Finally, pronounce sibilants **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**, and **s** like
the **s** in **sun**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, and for *Caitanya*
say CHAITANYA.

ABOUT SANSKRIT NAMES in by-lines, credits, and
text. Members of the International Society for Krishna
Consciousness receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His
great devotees, combined with *dāsa* (*dāsi* for women),
meaning "servant." For instance, the name *Kṛṣṇa dāsa*
means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

◀ His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami
Prabhupāda came to America in 1965, at age seventy, to
fulfill his spiritual master's request that he teach the
science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the English-
speaking world. In a dozen years he published some
seventy volumes of translation and commentary on
India's Vedic literatures, and these are now standard in
universities worldwide. Meanwhile, traveling almost
nonstop, Śrīla Prabhupāda molded his international
society into a worldwide confederation of *āśramas*,
schools, temples, and farm communities. He passed
away in 1977 in India's Vṛndāvana, the place most sacred
to Lord Kṛṣṇa, and his disciples are carrying forward the
movement he started.

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COVER: Lord Kṛṣṇa's Father Carries Him Across the River Yamunā. During the journey, Kṛṣṇa protected Vasudeva by expanding as the divine serpent Ananta-nāga. Today just as fifty centuries ago, Kṛṣṇa's pure devotees are pleased to carry Him, to carry His teachings. Again this year, people will celebrate both Lord Kṛṣṇa's coming and, a day later, the coming of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, who has carried Kṛṣṇa's teachings to the world by founding the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. (Cover art: Rāmadāsa Abhirāma dāsa.)

ABOUT BACK TO GODHEAD: "Godhead is light" has always been BACK TO GODHEAD's byword—"Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience." Godhead means the source of everything, and this journal is meant to assist readers in cultivating practical, scientific realization of Godhead. To this end BACK TO GODHEAD explores the ideas presented in ancient India's Vedic literatures, especially *Bhagavad-gītā*. As the *Gītā* itself informs us, "When one is enlightened with the knowledge by which nescience is destroyed, then his knowledge reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime."



WHY KRṢṢNA COMES TO THIS WORLD

August 1973 at the Bhaktivedanta Manor, in the countryside near London. Several thousand guests (including the Indian High Commissioner) listen to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda speak about the day Lord Kṛṣṇa made His appearance on earth.

Your Excellency the High Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for your coming here and participating in this ceremony—Janmāṣṭamī, the advent of Kṛṣṇa. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* [4.9] Kṛṣṇa says,

*janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma
naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*

“One who knows the transcendental nature of My advent and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode.”

It is a fact that we can stop our repeated births and deaths and achieve the state of immortality. But the modern civilization—our great philosophers, great politicians, and great scientists—they have no idea that it is possible to attain the stage of *amṛtatvam*, immortality. We are all *amṛta*, deathless, immortal. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* [2.20] it is said, *na jāyate na mriyate vā kadācit*: we living entities—we never die and never take birth. *Ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yaṁ purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*. Every one of us—we are primeval and eternal, without beginning and without end. And after the annihilation of this body, we do not die. But when the body is finished, we will have to accept another body.

The science of immortality. Fifty centuries ago, on India's Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, Lord Kṛṣṇa taught it to Arjuna. Though Kṛṣṇa is the oldest, He stays ever young. And so can we.

*dehino 'smin yathā dehe
kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā
tathā dehāntara-prāptir
dhīras tatra na muhyati*

“As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change.” [Bg. 2.13]

At the present moment, all over the world people are lacking knowledge of this simple thing: that all of us living entities are part and parcel of Lord Kṛṣṇa—that like Kṛṣṇa, we are eternal, we are blissful, and we are cognizant. Kṛṣṇa is described in the Vedic literatures:

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
śac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ
sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*

“The supreme controller, the uncaused cause of all causes, is Kṛṣṇa, whose transcendental form is full with eternity, knowledge, and bliss.” [Brahma-samhitā 5.1]

Kṛṣṇa—when I say Kṛṣṇa, that means “God.” It is sometimes said, “God has no name.” That's a fact. But God's name is given by His activities. For instance, Kṛṣṇa accepted sonship to Mahārāja Nanda and Yaśodāmayī and also to Vasudeva and Devakī. Of course, no one is actually the father or mother of Kṛṣṇa, because Kṛṣṇa is the original father of everyone. But when Kṛṣṇa comes here, when He makes His advent, He accepts certain exalted devotees as His father, as His mother. Kṛṣṇa is

ādi-puruṣam, the original. *Adyaṁ purāṇa puruṣaṁ nava-yauvanaṁ ca*: He is the original person.

Then must Kṛṣṇa be very old? No. *Nava-yauvanaṁ ca*: always a fresh youth. That is Kṛṣṇa. When Kṛṣṇa was on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra—you have seen the picture—He was just like a boy of twenty years or, at most, twenty-four years. But at that time He had great-grandchildren. So Kṛṣṇa is always a youth. These are the statements of the Vedic literatures.

But if we simply read the Vedic literatures as a formality, it will be very difficult to understand what Kṛṣṇa is—although all the *Vedas* are meant for understanding Kṛṣṇa. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* [15.15] Kṛṣṇa says, *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*: “By all the *Vedas* it is I who am to be known.” What is the use of studying the *Vedas* if you do not understand Kṛṣṇa? The ultimate goal of education is to understand the Supreme Lord, the supreme father, the supreme cause. As it is said in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*: “Now—in the human form of life—is the time to discuss the Supreme Absolute Truth, Brahman.”

And what is this Brahman? *Janmādy asya yataḥ*. Brahman is the one from whom everything emanates. So science and philosophy mean finding out the ultimate cause of everything. And this we are getting from the Vedic literature—that Kṛṣṇa is *sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*, the cause of all causes.

Just try to understand. For instance, I am caused by my father; my father is caused by his father; *he* is caused by *his* father, who is caused by *his* father . . . In

this way if you go on searching, then you'll ultimately come to someone who is the cause that has no cause. *Anādir ādir govindaḥ*: the cause that has no cause is Govinda—Kṛṣṇa. I may be the cause of my son, but at the same time I am the result of another cause (my father). But the Vedic literatures say that Kṛṣṇa is the original person; He has no cause. That is Kṛṣṇa.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa says, "Just try to learn about the transcendental nature of My advent and activities." The advent of Kṛṣṇa—it is a very important thing. We should try to understand Kṛṣṇa, why He makes His advent, why He comes down to this material world, what His business is, what His activities are. If we simply try to understand Kṛṣṇa, then what will be the result? The result will be *tyaktvā dehaṃ punar janma naiti mām eti so'ṛjuna*: we will get immortality.

The aim of life is *amṛtatvāya kalpate*, to achieve immortality. So today, on the advent of Kṛṣṇa, we shall try to understand the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa.

"If we are anxious for peace . . ."

His Excellency was speaking of peace. The peace formula is there in the *Bhagavad-gītā*—spoken by Kṛṣṇa. What is that?

*bhoktāraṃ yajña-tapasāṃ
sarva-loka-maheśvaram
suhṛdaṃ sarva-bhūtānāṃ
jñātvā mām sāntim ṛcchati*

"The sages, knowing Me as the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attain peace from the pangs of material miseries." [5.29] The politicians and diplomats are trying to establish peace in the world. We have the United Nations and many other organizations. They are working to establish real peace and tranquility, to eliminate misunderstanding between man and man and nation and nation. But that is not happening. That is not happening. The defect is that the root is wrong. Everyone is thinking, "It is my country," "It is my family," "It is my society," "It is my property." This "my" is illusion. In the Vedic literatures it is said, *janasya moho yaṃ ahaṃ mameti*: this "I-and-my" philosophy is *māyā*—illusion.

So if you want to get out of this *māyā*, this illusion, then you have to accept Kṛṣṇa's formula. *Mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṃ taranti te*: whoever surrenders to Kṛṣṇa can easily cross beyond all illusion. Everything is there in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, for our guidance. If we

accept the philosophy of the *Bhagavad-gītā*—as it is—everything is there. Peace is there, prosperity is there. That is a fact.

Unfortunately, we do not accept it; or we misinterpret it. This is our misfortune. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* [9.34] Kṛṣṇa says, *man-manā bhava mad-bhaktō mad-yājī mām namaskuru*. Kṛṣṇa says, "Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer obeisances unto Me." Is it a very difficult task? Here is Kṛṣṇa's Deity. If you think of this Deity, is it very difficult?

"No understanding of what God is and what His word is— that is modern civilization's defect. So where is the possibility of peace?"

You come into the temple, and just as a devotee would do, you offer your respect to the Deity. As far as possible, try to worship the Deity.

Kṛṣṇa does not want your property. Kṛṣṇa is open to the poorest man for being worshiped. What is He asking? He says, *patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyam yo me bhaktiṃ prayacchati*: "With devotion, if a person offers Me a little leaf, a little fruit, a little water, I accept it." [Bg. 9.26] Kṛṣṇa is not hungry, but Kṛṣṇa wants to make you a devotee. That is the main point. *Yo me bhaktiṃ prayacchati*: "Offer something to Me—with devotion." That is the main principle. Offer Kṛṣṇa some little thing. Kṛṣṇa is not hungry; Kṛṣṇa is providing food for everyone. But Kṛṣṇa wants your love, your devotion. Therefore He is begging a little water or fruit or a flower. In this way *man-manā bhava mad-bhaktō*: you can think of Kṛṣṇa and become His devotee.

There is no difficulty in understanding Kṛṣṇa and accepting Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But we'll not do it—that is our disease. Otherwise, it is not difficult at all. And as soon as we become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, we understand the whole universal situation. Our *bhāgavata* philosophy, our God

conscious philosophy, is also a kind of spiritual communism, because we regard Kṛṣṇa as the supreme father and all living entities as sons of Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-loka-maheśvaram*: He is the proprietor of all planets. Therefore whatever there is, either in the sky or in the water or on the land, it is all Kṛṣṇa's property. And because we are all sons of Kṛṣṇa, every one of us has the right to use our father's property. But we should not encroach upon others. This is the formula for peace. *Īśāvāsyam idaṃ sarvaṃ . . . mā gṛdhaḥ kasyavid dhanam*: "Everything belongs to God, and since you are sons of God, you have the right to use your father's property. But do not take more than you need. This is punishable." [Īśopaniṣad 1] If anyone takes more than he needs, then he's a thief. *Yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra loko 'yaṃ karma-bandhanaḥ* [Bg. 3.9]: whatever we do, we should do it for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa. We should act for Kṛṣṇa; we should do everything for Kṛṣṇa.

That is what we are teaching here. In this temple we are all residing happily. Americans, Indians, Englishmen, Canadians, Africans—people from all different parts of the world. You know that. It is like that not only in this temple, but wherever people are Kṛṣṇa conscious, throughout the world. Kṛṣṇa makes His advent to teach this lesson.

When we forget this philosophy—that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme father, Kṛṣṇa is the supreme proprietor, Kṛṣṇa is the supreme enjoyer, and Kṛṣṇa is the supreme friend of everyone—when we forget this, then we come into this material world and struggle for existence, fight with one another. This is material life.

Nor can we get any relief through our politicians, diplomats, philosophers. They have tried so much, but actually nothing they have tried has become fruitful. Take the United Nations. It was organized after the second great war, and they wanted, "We shall now settle everything peacefully." But there is no such thing. The fighting is going on, between Pakistan and India or between Vietnam and America or this and that. Mundane politics and diplomacy and philosophy—this is not the process. The process is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Everyone has to understand this point—that we are not proprietors. The actual proprietor is Kṛṣṇa. That's a fact. Take America, for example. Say two hundred years ago, the European immigrants were not the proprietors. Somebody else was the proprietor, and before that somebody else was the proprietor, or it was vacant land. But the actual proprietor is Kṛṣṇa. Artificially we are claiming, "It is my property." This is called *māyā*, illusion. So Kṛṣṇa makes His advent to give us this lesson. Kṛṣṇa says, *yadā yadā hi dharmasya*

glānir bhavati bhārata: "My dear Arjuna, I come when there are discrepancies in the process of religious life." [Bg. 4.7]

And what is real *dharma*, real religious life? The simple definition of *dharma* is *dharmaṁ tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṅgtam*: "Real religious life is that which is enunciated directly by the Supreme Personality of Godhead." [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.19] For instance, what do you mean by civil law? Civil law means the word given by the state. You cannot make civil law at home. That is not possible. Whatever the government gives you—"You should act like this"—that is law. Similarly *dharma*, religious life, means the direction given by God. That is *dharma*. Simple definition. If you create some *dharma* or I create some *dharma* or another man creates another *dharma*, these are not *dharma*.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa ends the *Bhagavad-gītā* by saying, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*: "Just give up all your concocted ideas about *dharma* and surrender to Me." [Bg. 18.66] This is *dharma*—surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Any other "*dharma*" is not *dharma*. Otherwise why does Kṛṣṇa ask, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*—"Give it all up"? He has already said, "In every age I make My advent to establish the principles of religion." And at last He says that we should give up all the so-called religious principles that we have manufactured. All these man-made principles are not actually religious principles. Real *dharma*, real religious life, means what is given by God. But we have no understanding of what God is and what His word is. That is modern civilization's defect.

But the order is there, God is there—it is simply that we won't accept. So where is the possibility of peace? Everything is there, ready-made. But we won't accept. So what is the remedy for our disease? We are searching after peace, but we won't accept the very thing that will actually give us peace. This is our disease. Therefore, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to awaken the dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness in everyone's heart. Just consider: four or five years ago, these Europeans and Americans had never even heard of Kṛṣṇa—so how are they now taking Kṛṣṇa consciousness so seriously? Kṛṣṇa consciousness is already there in everyone's heart. It simply has to be awakened. And this awakening process is described in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. [Madhya 22.107]:

*nitya siddha kṛṣṇa-prema 'sādhyā' kabhu naya
śravaṇādi-śuddha-citte karaye udaya*

Love for Kṛṣṇa, devotion for Kṛṣṇa, is within everyone's heart, but we have for-

gotten. So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is simply meant for awakening that dormant love, by giving everyone the chance to hear about Kṛṣṇa. This is the process.

For instance, when you are sleeping, I have to call you loudly. "Mr. Such-and-such! Such-and-such! Get up! You have to tend to this business." No other senses will act when you are sleeping. But the ear will act. Therefore in this age, when people are so fallen that they will not listen to anything, if we chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* they'll be awakened to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is practical. So if we are actually anxious for peace and tranquility in society, then we must be very serious about understanding Kṛṣṇa. That is my request. Don't take the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement lightly.

This movement can solve all the problems of life, all the problems in the world. Social, political, philosophical, religious, economic—everything can be solved by Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, we request those who are leaders—like His Excellency, who is present here—"You

should try to understand this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement." It is very scientific and authorized. It is not a mental concoction or a sentimental movement. It is a most scientific movement. So we are inviting all leaders from all countries, "Try to understand." If you are sober, if you are actually reasonable, you'll understand that this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is the most sublime movement for the welfare of the whole human society.

The Unlimited, Endless Pleasure

Anyone may come—we are prepared to discuss this subject matter. The ultimate goal of human life is to achieve immortality. *Tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti*. This is our mission, but we have forgotten this. We are simply leading the life of cats and dogs, without any knowledge that we can achieve that perfection of life where there will be no more birth, no more death. We do not even understand that there is the possibility of *amṛtatvam*, immortality. But it is totally possible. Nobody wants to

(continued on page 34)

TRANSCENDENTAL SOUNDS

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PHOTO: ANITA PARIJAAT, BANGALORE

LORD KṚṢṆA'S ADVENT

THE TRANSCENDENCE COMES INTO VIEW

“Our dear Lord, You have appeared in Your original unalloyed form, the eternal form of goodness, for the welfare of all living entities within this material world. Taking advantage of Your appearance, all of them can now very easily understand the nature and form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

— *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Tenth Canto, Chapter Two

by JAYĀDVAITA SWAMI

The Supreme Lord is not formless or impersonal. When we speak of Kṛṣṇa, we speak of the Supreme *Personality* of Godhead. What this means, essentially, is that the Godhead, the Supreme Truth, the source of everything, is ultimately the supreme individual person.

According to the Vedic literatures, God has three features. First, He has His all-pervading, impersonal aspect. In this feature, He is the great light from which everything shines forth, the great primordial truth from which all other truths arise. Beyond this, however, He also has His aspect of Paramātmā, the supreme knower who lives within the heart of everyone and gives everyone knowledge, memory, or forgetfulness. And ultimately God also has an independent personal aspect, His original eternal form of bliss and knowledge.

In this personal aspect, the Lord has not only a form but also a name, an abode, personal qualities, an eternal entourage, and spiritual activities.

Yet all these are beyond our direct sensory perception. Through sensory perception we can neither confirm nor deny God's existence; all we can say is that He is not within the reach of our senses. Nor can we know God merely by speculation. The mind and intelligence are limited. So if God is unlimited, our minds and intelligence will prove too small to grasp Him.

The unlimited, if He is truly unlimited, can reveal Himself (as He does even now, along with His eternal consort, at the Kṛṣṇa temple in Los Angeles, left).



But the unlimited, if He is truly unlimited, can reveal Himself and His unlimited nature, even in this material world. This is the purpose of Kṛṣṇa's appearance. As *Bhagavad-gītā* explains, Kṛṣṇa appears in this world from time to time (to favor His devotees, subdue the ungodly, and reestablish universal religious principles for the benefit of all living beings).

So although Kṛṣṇa is the supreme absolute, the ultimate existence, the Supreme Lord of all creation, He also appears within this mundane world as a visible, historical person. When He does

so, He enlightens us by showing us His eternal nature and His eternal transcendental form.

Janmāṣṭamī is what could be called Kṛṣṇa's birthday. But it's not called that, because Kṛṣṇa never takes birth like an ordinary man. An ordinary man takes birth in this world because he is forced to by the laws of nature. But Kṛṣṇa's "birth" is a transcendental drama staged by the Lord Himself. In this drama, the Lord allows certain exalted devotees to play the roles of His father and mother, and others appear as His friends and other associates.

From the very beginning, Kṛṣṇa's activities on earth were extraordinary. At the time of His so-called birth, He appeared before His parents as the majestic, four-armed Lord Nārāyaṇa. While still a child on his mother's lap, He slew the great demon Pūtanā. Throughout His 125 years on earth, Kṛṣṇa performed wonderful superhuman activities. He exhibited the unlimited strength, beauty, wealth, fame, knowledge, and renunciation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In particular, He imparted sublime spiritual knowledge to His friend and devotee Arjuna, knowledge that endures in the sacred text *Bhagavad-gītā*.

According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, we can achieve freedom from the pangs of material suffering and return to the kingdom of God simply by understanding the transcendental birth and activities Lord Kṛṣṇa enacts when He appears in this material world.

Yet, the *Gītā* goes on to say, hardly anyone knows God as He is. In the



PHOTO: MIRALIVADANA DAS

Kṛṣṇa in Paris . . . With His eternal consort Rādhā (above) and His brother Balarāma (right), Kṛṣṇa serves notice to all that He isn't vague or enigmatic or intangible.

absence of a clear understanding, we describe God negatively, in terms of what He is not, or in terms vague, enigmatic, and intangible. But when God personally descends to earth, He reveals His eternal form and His eternal transcendental qualities.

But even though God personally appears, one cannot understand Him merely by blunt materialistic vision. Even when Kṛṣṇa was present, less intelligent men, unable to appreciate His transcendental superexcellence, thought Him an ordinary person of this material world. Similarly, unintelligent men in the present age think Kṛṣṇa nothing more than a mythological hero. Yet great saints and sages throughout history have consistently accepted Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Godhead. The sage Vyāsadeva was the compiler of the Vedic literature and the author of *Vedānta-sūtra*, perhaps the most demanding logical treatise on spiritual inquiry ever written. Yet after completing *Vedānta-sūtra*, Vyāsadeva felt that his life's work would be incomplete if he failed to write one book devoted exclusively to describing the transcendental form, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Would such a sage have suddenly abandoned his rigorous pursuit of truth to indulge in spinning whimsical mythological tales?



PHOTO: MIRALIVADANA DAS

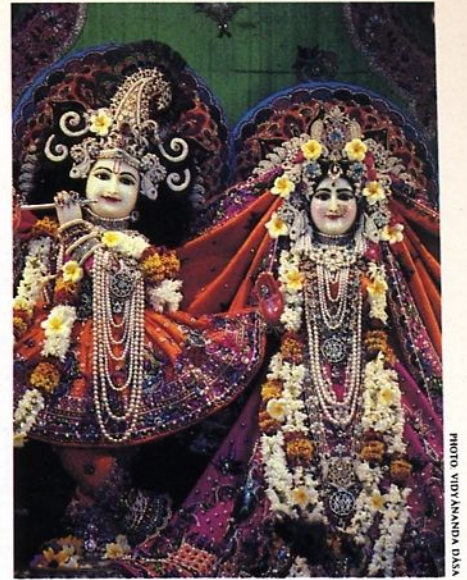
Lord Kṛṣṇa is neither mundane nor mythological, but one can understand Him only by pure devotion. Indeed, this is the central theme of *Bhagavad-gītā*, for this is the supreme principle of religion that Lord Kṛṣṇa appears in this world to teach: that one should abandon all other forms of religion and simply surrender to Him in devotion. Pure devotion to God, pure love for God, is the ultimate goal of all religious principles.

From a historical point of view, Kṛṣṇa appeared within this material world for 125 years and then left. But from a

broader philosophical viewpoint we can understand that Kṛṣṇa is always present everywhere, although sometimes He is visible and sometimes not.

When Kṛṣṇa descended on earth five thousand years ago, He briefly made Himself visible to all. And from the Vedic literature it is understood that those whose eyes have been anointed with the ointment of pure devotion can see Lord Kṛṣṇa in their hearts perpetually. Such exalted souls, however, are very rare.

How then are the rest of us to know God and develop our love for Him? The



Vedic authorities have conclusively decided that in the present age the most effective means for developing our love for God is to chant His holy names, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Because God is absolute, there is no difference between God and God's name. So when we chant the holy name of the Lord, the Lord Himself is dancing on our tongue. As we continue to chant sincerely, we associate directly with the Lord, and thus we advance in spiritual life.

Just as there is no difference between the Lord and His holy name, so also we cannot separate Kṛṣṇa from His transcendental form. When Kṛṣṇa's form is present, Kṛṣṇa Himself is present. The Vedic scriptures therefore recommend that one worship Kṛṣṇa's *mūrti*, His transcendental form in the temple. Although the *mūrti* appears to mundane eyes to be a mere statue, to the eyes of a pure devotee He appears as Kṛṣṇa Himself. Of course, metal and stone and wood are material elements, but Kṛṣṇa is present in these elements, for He is present everywhere. And when these elements are molded into Kṛṣṇa's form, the same Kṛṣṇa who was present all along becomes visible to our eyes.

The pictures on these pages, therefore, are pictures of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who appears in this world for our benefit. And if we devote ourselves to Kṛṣṇa and chant Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy name, under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master, our consciousness will be purified, and we will be able to perceive Kṛṣṇa's presence directly—while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, while seeing the form of Kṛṣṇa, and ultimately at every moment.



... and in Bombay (top right), London (left), and Fiji (above). Kṛṣṇa may dress in silk and jewels or in garments made of flowers, or He may dance atop the hoods of a serpent named Kāliya, but one thing is certain: wherever Kṛṣṇa's form is present, Kṛṣṇa Himself is present.

The Biography of a Pure Devotee

ENLIGHTENMENT ON SKID ROW

by ŚRĪLA SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI

Now that Śrīla Prabhupāda had left Seventy-second Street and had moved downtown, it wasn't long before new people were coming to see him. "After a few minutes . . . the sound of the cymbals and the incense . . . we weren't in the Bowery any longer. We started chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. . . I remember it was relaxing and very interesting to be able to chant, and I found Swamiji very fascinating. . ."

One of the first women to take an interest in Śrīla Prabhupāda was twenty-year-old Carol Bekar. She came from an immigrant Catholic background, and she immediately associated Catholicism with the philosophy of *bhakti-yoga*. She was divorced and was now living with the brother of Carl Yeagens.

I had just come out of a marriage that failed [Carol relates], and I was trying to make some kind of a life for myself. Then I met Carl, and the Swami came. I think I was the first woman who approached his movement. The Swami's attitude toward women was not difficult, but his teachings were difficult for some women. It wasn't

easy, especially in that era when things were so confused and highly political in this country. I think the major problem for the small group that went to see him on the Bowery was how we were going to translate his ideas into the context of New York City, 1966. He didn't seem to think there needed to be much adjustment.

One time there was discussion of Arjuna deciding to go to war. It was difficult for Arjuna to decide, because war meant taking life. But Kṛṣṇa convinced him that if it is in the service of God it is allowed. People found that idea very difficult to accept, because the controversy in Vietnam was beginning to heat up. People wanted to know the political ramifications of his religious doctrines. But he wasn't interested in that. Of course, everyone was very reverential to him, but none of us had the background in the scriptures and the philosophy.

It was a very interracial, music-oriented scene. There were a few professional musicians, and a lot of people who enjoyed playing or just listening. Some people were painting in some of the lofts, and that's



basically what was going on. We had memorable kīrtanas. One time there was a very beautiful ceremony. Some of us went over early to prepare for it. There must have been a hundred people who came that day.

Whenever he had the chanting, the people were fairly in awe of the Swami. On the Bowery, a kind of transcendence came out of the ringing of the cymbals. He used the harmonium, and many people played hand cymbals. Sometimes he played the drum. From the very beginning, he stressed the importance of sound and the realization of Godhead through sound. That was, I suppose, the attraction that these musicians found in him—the emphasis on sound as a means for attaining transcendence and the Godhead. But he wanted a serious thing. He was interested in discipleship.

Chanting and Cooking

Almost all of Prabhupāda's Bowery friends were musicians or friends of musicians. They were into music—music, drugs, women, and spiritual meditation. Because Prabhupāda's presentation of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra was both musical and meditative, they were automatically interested. But they were interested in it more

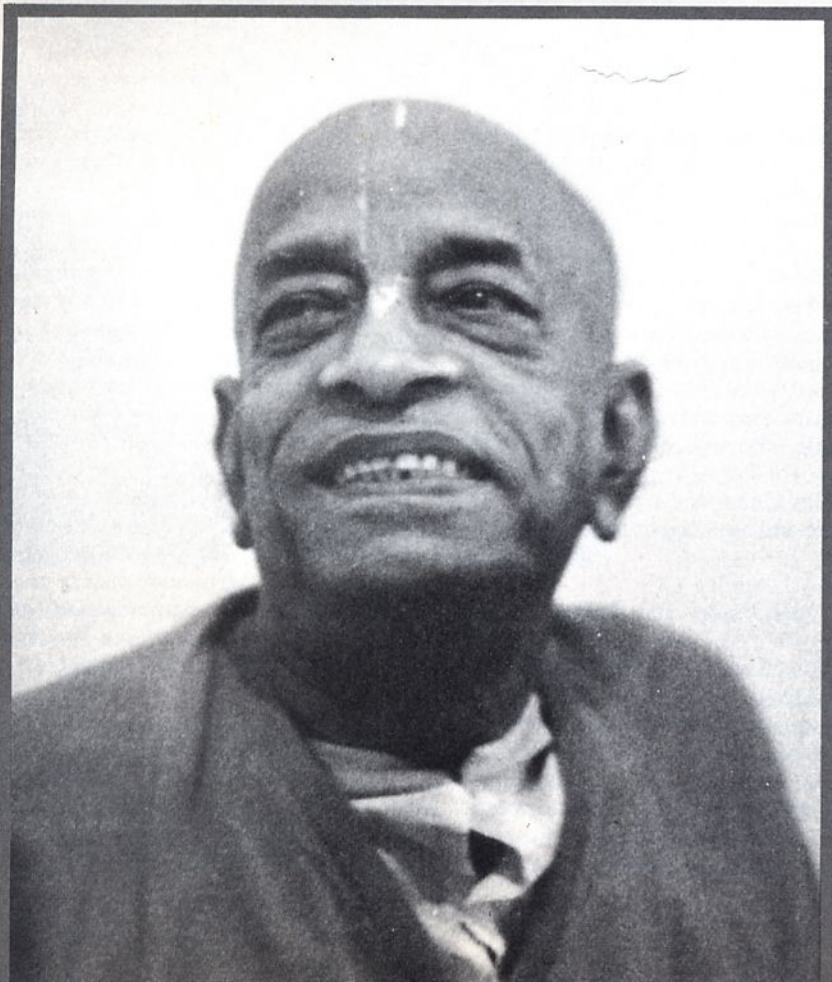
as Indian meditation music than as a way of worshiping God as the Supreme Person by chanting His name. Prabhupāda stressed that all the Vedic mantras (or hymns) were sung—in fact, the words *Bhagavad-gītā* meant “the Song of God.” But the Vedic songs had words, and these words were sound incarnations of God in the form of His name. The musical accompaniment of hand cymbals, drum, and harmonium was just that—an accompaniment—and had no spiritual purpose independent of the chanting of the name of God. Prabhupāda allowed any instrument to be used, as long as it did not detract from the chanting.

For the Bowery musicians, sound was spirit and spirit was sound, in a merging of music and meditation. But for Prabhupāda music without the name of God wasn't meditation at all; it was sense gratification, or at most a kind of stylized impersonal meditation. But he was glad to see the musicians coming to play along in his *kīrtanas*, to hear him, and to chant responsively. Some, having stayed up all night playing somewhere on their instruments, would come by in the morning and sing with the Swami. He did not dissuade them from their focus on sound; rather, he gave them sound. In the *Vedas*, sound is said to be the first element of material creation; the source of sound is God, and God is eternally a person. Prabhupāda's whole emphasis was on getting people to chant God's personal, transcendental name. Whether they took it as jazz, folk music, rock, or Indian meditation made no difference, as long as they began to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Sometimes Carol Bekar would go shopping with Śrīla Prabhupāda in nearby Chinatown, where he would purchase ingredients for his cooking. He would cook and at the same time teach and supervise others.

He used to cook with us in the kitchen [Carol Bekar continues], and he was always aware of everyone else's activities in addition to his own cooking. He knew exactly how things should be. He washed everything and made sure everyone did everything correctly. He was a teacher. We used to make capātīs by hand, but then one day he asked me to get him a rolling pin. I brought my rolling pin, and he appropriated it. He put some men on rolling capātīs and supervised them very carefully.

I made a chutney for him at home. He always accepted our gifts graciously, although I don't think he ever ate them. Perhaps he was worried we might put something that wasn't allowed in his diet. He used to take things from me and put



them in the cupboard. I don't know what she finally did with them, but I am sure she didn't throw them away. I never saw him eat anything that I had prepared, but he accepted everything.

Serious Newcomers

Most of the Swami's visitors would call in the evening. The loft was quite out of the way, and it was on the Bowery. A cluster of sleeping derelicts regularly blocked the street-level entrance, and visitors would find as many as half a dozen bums to step over before climbing the four flights of stairs. But it was something new; you could go and sit with a group of hip people and watch the Swami lead *kīrtana*. The room was dimly lit, strange, and impressive; and Prabhupāda would burn incense. Many casual visitors came and went. One of them—Gunthar—had vivid impressions.

You walked right off the Bowery into a room filled with incense [Gunthar relates]. It was quiet. Everyone was talking in hushed tones, not really talking at all. Swamiji was sitting in front of the room, in meditation. There was a tremendous feeling of peace which I had never had before in this context. I'd happened to have studied for two years to become a minister and was into meditation, study, and prayer. But this was my first time to do anything Eastern or Hindu. There were lots of pillows around and mats on the floor for people to sit on. I don't think there were any pictures or statues. It was just Swamiji, incense, and mats, and obviously the respect of the people in the room for him.

Before we went up, Carl was laughing and saying how Swami wanted everyone to use the hand cymbals just correctly. I had never played the cymbals before, but when it began I just tried to follow Swamiji, who was doing it in a certain way. Things were building up, the sound was building up, but then someone was doing it wrong. And Swamiji just very, very calmly shook a finger at someone, and they looked, and then everything stopped. He instructed this person from a distance, and this fellow got the right idea, and they started up again. After a few minutes... the sound of the cymbals and the incense... we weren't in the Bowery any longer. We started chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. That was my first experience in chanting—I'd never chanted before. There's nothing in Protestant religion that comes even close to that. Maybe Catholics with their Hail Mary's, but it's not quite the same thing. I remember that it was relaxing and very interesting to be able to chant, and I found Swamiji very fascinating.

The loft in the Bowery was more open than Prabhupāda's previous quarters and

Prabhupāda had lost some of his privacy. Now some of the visitors were skeptical and even challenging, but everyone found the Swami confident and joyful. Some of them could see that he had a far-reaching plan for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He knew what he wanted to do and was singlehandedly carrying it out. "It is not one man's job," he would say. But Prabhupāda went on doing all he could, depending on Kṛṣṇa for the results. David was beginning to help, and more people

"He would always have such a serene look on his face. He would just be taking his afternoon jaunts, walking along, sometimes stepping over the drunks."

were coming to visit him.

One of the most serious newcomers was a boy named Michael Grant. Mike was twenty-four. His father, who was Jewish, owned a record shop in Portland, Oregon, where Mike grew up. After studying music at Portland's Reed College and at San Francisco State, Mike, who played the piano and many other instruments, moved to New York City, along with his girlfriend, hoping to get into music professionally. But he quickly became disenchanted with the commercial music scene. Playing in nightclubs and pandering to commercial demands seemed particularly unappealing. In New York he joined the musicians' union and worked as a music arranger and as an agent for several local groups.

"He Wasn't in a Hurry"

Mike lived on the Bowery in an A.I.R. loft on Grand Street. It was a large loft where musicians often congregated for jam sessions. But as he turned more and more to serious composing, he found himself retiring from the social side of the music scene. His interests ran more to the spiritual, quasi-spiritual, and mystical

books he had been reading. He had encountered several *svāmīs*, *yogīs*, and self-styled spiritualists in the city and had taken up the regular practice of *haṭha-yoga āsanās* (sitting postures). From his first meeting with the Swami, Mike was interested and quite open, as he was with all religious persons. He thought all genuinely religious people were good, although he did not care to identify with any particular group.

There was a little bit of familiarity [Michael Grant relates] because I had seen other svāmīs. The way he was dressed, the way he looked—older and swarthy—weren't new to me. But at the same time there was an element of novelty. I was very curious. I didn't hear him talk when I first came in—he was just chanting—but I mainly was waiting to hear what he was going to say. I had heard people chant before. I thought, why else would he put himself in such a place, without any comforts, unless the message he's trying to get across is more important than his comfort? I think the thing that struck me most was the poverty that was all around him. This was curious, because the places that I had been before had been just the opposite—very opulent. There was the Vedānta center in upper Manhattan and others. They were filled with staid, older men with their leather chairs and pipe tobacco—that kind of environment. But this was real poverty. The whole thing was curious.

Prabhupāda looked very refined, which was also curious—that he was in this place. When he talked, I immediately saw that he was a scholar and that he spoke with great conviction. Some statements he made were very daring. He was talking about God, and this was all new—to hear someone talk about God. I always wanted to hear someone I could respect talk about God. I always liked to hear religious speakers, but I measured them very carefully. So when he spoke, I began to think, "Well, here is someone talking about God who may really have some realization of God." He was the first one I had come across who might be a person of God, who could feel really deeply.

I went up to him afterwards. I had the same feeling I'd had on other occasions when I'd been to hear famous people in concerts. I was always interested in going by after concerts to see musicians and singers just to meet them and see what they were like. I had a similar feeling after Prabhupāda spoke, so I went up and started talking. But the experience was different from the others in that he wasn't in a hurry. He could talk to me, whereas with others all you could do was get in a few words. They were always more interested in something else. But he was a



Prabhupāda liked to take walks. Directly across the street from his doorway at 94 Bowery was the Fulton Hotel, a five-story flophouse. Surrounding him were other lower Manhattan lodging houses, whose tenants wandered the sidewalks from dawn till dark. An occasional flock of pigeons would stir and fly from one rooftop to the next or down to the street. Traffic was heavy. The Bowery was part of a truck route to and from Brooklyn by way of the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges.

The Bowery sloped gently downhill toward the north, and Prabhupāda could see the street lights and traffic signals as far up as Fourth Street. He could see Con Edison with its prominent clock tower, and—on a clear day—the top of the Empire State Building on Thirty-fourth. There were signboards and a few scraggly Manhattan trees.

Prabhupāda would walk alone in the morning through the neighborhood. May 1966 saw more rain than normal, and he carried an umbrella. Sometimes he walked in the rain. He was not always alone; at times he walked with one of his new friends and talked. Sometimes he shopped. Bitter melon, *dāl*, hing, chick-pea flour, and other “specialty foods” common in Indian vegetarian cuisine were available in Chinatown’s nearby markets.

On leaving the loft, Śrīla Prabhupāda would walk south a few steps to the corner of Bowery and Hester Street. Turning right on Hester, he would immediately be in Chinatown, where the shops, markets, and even the Manhattan Savings Bank were identified by signs lettered in Chinese. Sometimes he would walk one block further south to Canal Street, with its Central Asian Food Market and many other streetside fruit and vegetable mar-

kets. In the early morning the sidewalks were almost deserted, but as the shops began to open for business the streets became crowded with local workers, shopkeepers, tourists, and aimless derelicts. Parked cars lined both sides of the street; the crowds of pedestrians and lanes of traffic passed tightly; the winding side streets of Chinatown were lined with hundreds of small stores. A brass Confucius, discolored with age and suffering from neglect, stood on Chatham Square.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s walks on Hester would sometimes take him into Little Italy, which overlaps Chinatown at Mulberry Street. In this neighborhood, places like Chinese Pork Products and the Mee Jung Mee Supermarket stood alongside Umberto’s Clam House and the Puglia Restaurant, advertising *capucino a la puglia*, coffee from Puglia.

His walks west of Bowery, in Chinatown and Little Italy, were mainly for shopping. Yet on occasions he walked in the opposite direction as far as the East River and the Brooklyn Bridge. It was a dangerous neighborhood, however, and when a friend warned him about a sniper who had been firing at strollers along the river, Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped going there.

Despite the bad neighborhood where Śrīla Prabhupāda lived and walked, he was rarely disturbed. Often he would find several Bowery bums asleep or unconscious at his door, and he would have to step over them. Sometimes a drunk, simply out of inability to maneuver, would bump into him, or a derelict would mutter something unintelligible or laugh at him. The more sober ones would stand and gesture courteously, ushering Prabhupāda into or out of his door at 94 Bowery. Prabhupāda would pass among them, acknowledging their good manners as they cleared his path.

Certainly few of the Bowery men and others who saw him on his walks knew much about the small, elderly Indian *sādhu*, dressed in saffron and carrying an umbrella and a brown grocery sack.

Sometimes Śrīla Prabhupāda would meet one of his new friends on the street. He met Janet, Michael Grant’s wife, on several occasions.

I would see him [Janet relates] in the midst of this potpourri of people down there, walking down the street. He always had an umbrella, and he would always have such a serene look on his face. He would just be taking his afternoon jaunts, walking along, sometimes stepping over the drunks. And I would always get sort of nervous when I would meet him on the sidewalk. He would say, “Are you chanting?” And I would say, “Sometimes.” And then he would say, “That’s a good girl.”

person who was actually showing some interest in me as a person, and I was so overwhelmed that I ran out of things to say very quickly. I was surprised. Our meeting broke off on the basis of my not having anything further to say. It was just the opposite of so many other experiences, where some performer would be hurrying off to do something else. This time, I was the one who couldn’t continue.

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

The Absurd Dialectic

This exchange between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and an existentialist-socialist priest took place in Los Angeles during December of 1973.

Priest: Now, finally, we're beginning to grasp the real, inner meaning of Christianity and of religion generally: God sharing in the sufferings of man; man learning to live with the inevitability of his pain.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is rascaldom—why should God have to share the sufferings of man?

Priest: That way man can more readily accept suffering as an inseparable part of reality.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Very good priest. People are trying to become happy, and your theory is that they should accept suffering. The very proposition is rascaldom. As spirit souls, part and parcel of the Supreme Spirit, we are naturally trying to minimize suffering and reach His spiritual abode, where suffering is nil. Everyone is trying to be perfectly happy. That is our struggle; that is the meaning of human civilization. We are not submitting to suffering. *We don't want suffering.* So if you actually believe in God, if you are actually a theist, then why are you talking like a rascal and saying that we must suffer—that even God must suffer?

Priest: Well, I'm what you might call an "atheist-theist."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Hmmm?

Priest: An atheist-theist.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Atheist-theist? What is this?

Priest: My thinking is that God is essentially our own invention . . . an idea.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You think God is an "idea"?

Priest: Yes, though quite a necessary one. The idea of a supreme being or a supreme authority is something we have imposed upon ourselves, apparently because we find it consoling, comforting. Most people are ignorant. And so they need God, like Marx said, as their opiate . . . their assurance of a happy ending, their cure-all and cover-up for hopelessness and frustration.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You say God is just an idea. I say God is *not* just an idea—God is a fact. Can you prove otherwise?

Priest: Well, as I see it, there's no absolute necessity for a supreme being.

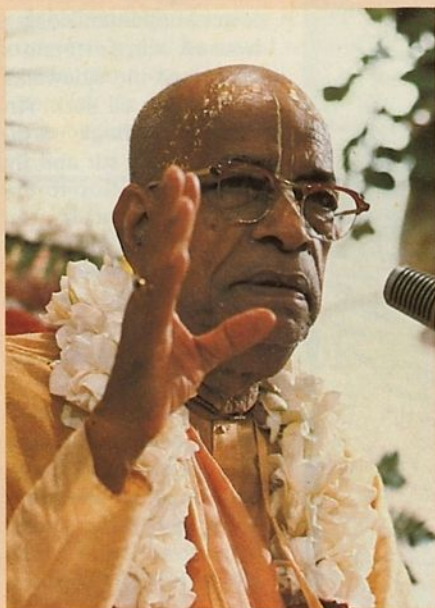
Śrīla Prabhupāda: But even your Lenin accepted the necessity of a supreme authority. The only thing was, *he* wanted to become that supreme authority. Lenin wanted to become God.

Priest: Yes, and he was. For a time he was.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, he could not become God. He was under the laws of God—he died. *He died.* He could not save himself from death. Therefore, he was not the supreme authority. Lenin was forced to die, so that means there must be some other supreme authority.

Priest: Well, everything is ultimately meaningless, anyway. So ultimately death is meaningless.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Why do you say "meaningless"? If death is meaningless, then why are you so afraid of it? If right now I were coming to kill you, you would be afraid. Why?



Priest: Well, that it's meaningless doesn't mean I can't place some value on it at any given point.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But still, why do you say "meaningless"? Earlier you said you are fighting for "the revolution" and "social change." Why are you fighting so hard to spread your meaning if ultimately everything has no meaning?

Priest: Take numbers. They can be useful, but they have no meaning except what we put into them. Actually they're meaningless.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: If everything is actually meaningless, then what you are doing is meaningless.

Priest: Yes, because ultimately everything is meaningless.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then you are less than a rascal. If I called you a rascal I would be giving you some honor. You are working for meaningless things.

Priest: I'm saying everyone can introduce their own meaning . . . whatever they want.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then why are you trying to recruit so many followers? Why not let people do whatever they want?

Priest: Well, doing whatever you want may include proliferating your own meaning.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, no, no. You've got your own meaning—be *satisfied* with your own meaning. Don't bother me.

Priest: Part of my meaning may be to bother you.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then my meaning may be to beat you over the head with my shoes!

Priest: But take Lenin. No one ever beat him. He simply was not beaten.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, no. Lenin was also beaten. By death. He was beaten, but he would not admit it. He was such a rascal that even though he was being beaten at every moment—even though he was becoming old and diseased, even though he was dying—still he felt, "I am not being beaten." That means he was Rascal

Number One. A sane man admits, "Yes, I am being beaten." And a rascal will not admit it.

Priest: Well, we have to look at things existentially. As long as something exists, we can place value on it, but when it ceases to exist there is no remorse, nothing to lament.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: If there is nothing to lament, why are you struggling so hard to live a long life and exist as long as possible? Why not simply let yourself die?

Priest: It's like . . . if you have some money in your hand, then as long as you have it you can utilize it, but if you lose it, don't worry. Nothing to worry about. That's how I feel about death.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You may talk big words like that, but in practice you worry. You cry.

Priest: Well, I may just fall short of my philosophy. But the philosophy is ideal.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: These are no arguments. No sane man will accept this philosophy. It is *not* philosophy—it is simply frustration. But frustration is not life. Frustration is frustration.

Priest: Perhaps frustration is the only reality. That's what Albert Camus felt. He made it one of the main themes in his writings. Frustration, no meaning. And one night he was driving along in his car and reportedly just drove over a cliff. He may have been thinking that if life has no meaning, why not just drive my car over a cliff. Finished himself off.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Madman. He had to be mad, because he did not know who he is—an eternal soul, part and parcel of God. He went mad because he didn't know what is to be known.

Priest: Well, millions and millions of people accept his books as practically gospel.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: What is the subject matter?

Priest: The subject matter of his books is that life is ultimately absurd. There is no real meaning to it. We place our own meanings on it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then why was he trying to make sense out of the absurdity? If everything is absurd, why write books?

Priest: Yes, that's what Camus seems to have realized . . . that if everything's absurd, there is no use speaking or writing or even living.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The thing is, you are saying that life is absurd, and I am saying that life is not absurd. Who will settle this? Who will settle it—whether you are right or I am right?

Priest: I don't think it can ever be settled.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It will be settled at death. That's all. A rascal may think foolishly that life is absurd—but death will not be absurd. *Mṛtyuḥ sarva-harāś cāham:* Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "Everyone must finally accept Me—as death." Both of us will have to accept death. You don't want to die, and I don't want to die; but both of us have to accept that supreme authority. That is God.

Priest: But speaking of Camus . . . he didn't care. He died willingly. He wanted to die.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: He did not want to die, but he may have let himself die in that way just to keep his prestige, that's all.

Priest: I think he wanted to die.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: If you also want to die, then let me kill you now and you'll be happy. 🌸

The Beautiful Story of the Personality of Godhead

ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

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Second Canto: "The Cosmic Manifestation"

CHAPTER THREE

Pure Devotional Service: The Change in Heart

As our serialized presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam continues, we learn of demigods who are to be worshiped for material benefits. The demigods are powerful servants of the Supreme Lord, who empowers them to grant fulfillment of various materialistic desires.

TEXTS 2-7

ब्रह्मवर्चसकामस्तु यजेत् ब्रह्मणः पतिम्	
इन्द्रमिन्द्रियकामस्तु प्रजाकामः प्रजापतीन्	२
देवीं मायां तु श्रीकामस्तेजस्कामो विभावसुम्	
वसुकामो वसुन् रुद्रान् वीर्यकामोऽथ वीर्यवान्	३
अन्नाद्यकामस्त्वदिति स्वर्गकामोऽदितेः सुतान्	
विश्वान्देवान् राज्यकामः साध्यान्ससाधको विशाम्	४
आयुष्कामोऽदितिनो देवीं पुष्टिकाम इलां यजेत्	
प्रतिष्ठाकामः पुरुषो रोदसी लोकमातरौ	५
रूपाभिकामो गन्धर्वान् स्त्रीकामोऽप्सर उर्वशीम्	
आधिपत्यकामः सर्वेषां यजेत् परमेष्ठिनम्	६
यज्ञं यजेद् यज्ञस्कामः कोशकामः प्रचेतसम्	
विद्याकामस्तु गिरिशं दाम्पत्यार्थं उमां सतीम्	७

brahma-varcasa-kāmas tu
yajeta brahmaṇaḥ patim
indram indriya-kāmas tu
prajā-kāmaḥ prajāpatīn

devīm māyāṁ tu śrī-kāmas
tejas-kāmo vibhāvasum
vasu-kāmo vasūn rudrān
vīrya-kāmo 'tha vīryavān

annādyā-kāmas tv aditīm
svarga-kāmo 'diteḥ sutān
viśvān devān rājya-kāmaḥ
sādhyān saṁsādhako viśām

āyus-kāmo 'śvinau devau
puṣṭi-kāma ilān yajet
pratiṣṭhā-kāmaḥ puruṣo
rodasī loka-mātarau

rūpābhikāmo gandharvān
stri-kāmo 'psara urvaśīm
ādhipatya-kāmaḥ sarveṣām
yajeta paramēṣṭhinam

yajñam yajet yaśas-kāmaḥ
kośa-kāmaḥ pracetasam
vidyā-kāmas tu girīśam
dāmpatyārtha umāṁ satīm

brahma—the absolute; varcasa—effulgence; kāmaḥ tu—but one who desires in that way; yajeta—do worship; brahmaṇaḥ—of the Vedas; patim—the master; indram—the King of heaven; indriya-kāmaḥ tu—but one who desires strong sense organs; prajā-kāmaḥ—one who desires many offspring; prajāpatīn—the Prajāpatīs; devīm—the goddess; māyāṁ—unto the mistress of the material world; tu—but; śrī-kāmaḥ—one who desires beauty; tejaḥ—power; kāmaḥ—one who so desires; vibhāvasum—the fire-god; vasu-kāmaḥ—one who wants wealth; vasūn—the Vasu demigods; rudrān—the Rudra expansions of Lord Śiva; vīrya-kāmaḥ—one who wants to be very strongly built; aitha—therefore; vīryavān—the most powerful; anna-adya—grains; kāmaḥ—one who so desires; tu—but; aditīm—Aditi, mother of the demigods; svarga—heaven; kāmaḥ—so desiring; aditeḥ sutān—the sons of Aditi; viśvān—Viśvadeva; devān—demigods; rājya-kāmaḥ—those who hanker for kingdoms; sādhyān—the Sādhyā demigods; saṁsādhakāḥ—what fulfills the wishes; viśām—of the mercantile community; āyus-kāmaḥ—desirous of long life; aśvinau—the two demigods known as the Aśvinī brothers; devau—the two demigods; puṣṭi-kāmaḥ—one who desires a strongly built body; ilām—the earth; yajet—must worship; pratiṣṭhā-kāmaḥ—one who desires good fame, or stability in a post; puruṣaḥ—such men; rodasī—the horizon; loka-mātarau—and the earth; rūpa—beauty; abhikāmaḥ—positively aspiring for; gandharvān—the residents of the Gandharva planet, who are very beautiful and are expert in singing; stri-kāmaḥ—one who desires a good wife; apsaraḥ urvaśīm—the society girls of the heavenly kingdom; ādhipatya-kāmaḥ—one who desires to dominate others; sarveṣām—everyone; yajeta—must worship; paramēṣṭhinam—Brahmā, the head of the universe; yajñam—the Personality of Godhead; yajet—must worship; yaśas-kāmaḥ—one who desires to be famous; kośa-kāmaḥ—one who desires a good bank balance; pracetasam—the treasurer of heaven, known as Varuṇa; vidyā-kāmaḥ tu—but one who desires education; girīśam—the lord of the Himalayas, Lord Śiva; dāmpatya-arthāḥ—and for conjugal love; umāṁ satīm—the chaste wife of Lord Śiva, known as Umā.

TRANSLATION

One who desires to be absorbed in the impersonal brahmajyoti effulgence should worship the master of the Vedas [Lord Brahmā or Bṛhaspati, the learned priest], one who desires powerful sex should worship the heavenly King, Indra, and one who desires

good progeny should worship the great progenitors called the Prajāpatīs. One who desires good fortune should worship Durgādevī, the superintendent of the material world. One desiring to be very powerful should worship fire, and one who aspires only after money should worship the Vasus. One should worship the Rudra incarnations of Lord Śiva if he wants to be a great hero. One who wants a large stock of grains should worship Aditi. One who desires to attain the heavenly planets should worship the sons of Aditi. One who desires a worldly kingdom should worship Viśvadeva, and one who wants to be popular with the general mass of population should worship the Sādhya demigod. One who desires a long span of life should worship the demigods known as the Aśvini-kumāras, and a person desiring a strongly built body should worship the earth. One who desires stability in his post should worship the horizon and the earth combined. One who desires to be beautiful should worship the beautiful residents of the Gandharva planet, and one who desires a good wife should worship the Apsarās and the Urvaśī society girls of the heavenly kingdom. One who desires domination over others should worship Lord Brahmā, the head of the universe. One who desires tangible fame should worship the Personality of Godhead, and one who desires a good bank balance should worship the demigod Varuṇa. If one desires to be a greatly learned man he should worship Lord Śiva, and if one desires a good marital relation he should worship the chaste goddess Umā, the wife of Lord Śiva.

PURPORT

There are different modes of worship for different persons desiring success in particular subjects. The conditioned soul living within the purview of the material world cannot be an expert in every type of materially enjoyable asset, but one can have considerable influence over a particular matter by worshipping a particular demigod, as mentioned above. Rāvana was made a very powerful man by worshipping Lord Śiva, and he used to offer severed heads to please Lord Śiva. He became so powerful by the grace of Lord Śiva that all the demigods were afraid of him, until he at last challenged the Personality of Godhead Śrī Rāma-candra and thus ruined himself. In other words, all such persons who aspire after gaining some or all of the material objects of enjoyment, or the gross materialistic persons, are on the whole less intelligent, as confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.20). It is said there that those who are bereft of all good sense, or those whose intelligence is withdrawn by the deluding energy of *māyā*, aspire to achieve all sorts of material enjoyment in life by pleasing the various demigods, or by advancing in material civilization under the heading of scientific progress. The real problem of life in the material world is to solve the question of birth, death, old age and disease. No one wants to change his birthright, no one wants to meet death, no one wants to be old or invalid, and no one wants diseases. But these problems are solved neither by the grace of any demigod nor by the so-called advancement of material science. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, as well as in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, such less intelligent persons have been described as devoid of all good sense. Śukadeva Gosvāmī said that out of the 8,400,000 species of living entities, the human form of life is rare and valuable, and out of those rare human beings those who are conscious of the material problems are rarer still, and the still more rare persons are those who are conscious of the value of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which contains the messages of the Lord and His pure devotees. Death is inevitable for everyone, intelligent or foolish. But Parikṣit Mahārāja has been addressed by the Gosvāmī as the *manīṣṭ*, or the man of highly developed mind, because at the time of death he left all material enjoyment and completely surrendered unto the lotus feet of the Lord by hearing His messages from the right person, Śukadeva Gosvāmī. But aspirations for material enjoyment by endeavoring persons are condemned. Such aspirations are something like the intoxication of the degraded human society. Intelligent persons should try to avoid these aspirations and seek instead the permanent life by returning home, back to Godhead.

TEXT 8

धर्मार्थं उत्तमश्लोकं तन्तुः तन्वन्पितृन् यजेत् ।
रक्षकामः पुण्यजनानोजस्कामो मरुद्गणान् ॥ ८ ॥

*dharmārtha uttama-ślokaṁ
tantuḥ tanvan pitṛn yajet
rakṣā-kāmaḥ puṇya-janān
ojaś-kāmo marud-gaṇān*

dharmā-arthāḥ—for spiritual advancement; *uttama-ślokaṁ*—the Supreme Lord or persons attached to the Supreme Lord; *tantuḥ*—for offspring; *tanvan*—and for their protection; *pitṛn*—the residents of Pitṛloka; *yajet*—must worship; *rakṣā-kāmaḥ*—one who desires protection; *puṇya-janān*—pious persons; *ojaś-kāmaḥ*—one who desires strength should worship; *marud-gaṇān*—the demigods.

TRANSLATION

One should worship Lord Viṣṇu or His devotee for spiritual advancement in knowledge, and for protection of heredity and advancement of a dynasty one should worship the various demigods.

PURPORT

The path of religion entails making progress on the path of spiritual advancement, ultimately reviving the eternal relation with Lord Viṣṇu in His impersonal effulgence, His localized Paramātmā feature, and ultimately His personal feature by spiritual advancement in knowledge. And one who wants to establish a good dynasty and be happy in the progress of temporary bodily relations should take shelter of the Pitās and the demigods in other pious planets. Such different classes of worshipers of different demigods may ultimately reach the respective planets of those demigods within the universe, but he who reaches the spiritual planets in the *brahmajyoti* achieves the highest perfection.

TEXT 9

राज्यकामो मनुत् देवान् निर्वृतिं त्वभिचरन् यजेत् ।
कामकामो यजेत् सोमकामः पुर्वं परम् ॥ ९ ॥

*rājya-kāmo manūn devān
nirvṛtiṁ tv abhicaran yajet
kāma-kāmo yajet somam
akāmaḥ puruṣaṁ param*

rājya-kāmaḥ—anyone desiring an empire or kingdom; *manūn*—the Manus, semi-incarnations of God; *devān*—demigods; *nirvṛtiṁ*—demons; *tu*—but; *abhicaran*—desiring victory over the enemy; *yajet*—should worship; *kāma-kāmaḥ*—one who desires sense gratification; *yajet*—should worship; *somam*—the demigod named Candra; *akāmaḥ*—one who has no material desires to be fulfilled; *puruṣaṁ*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *param*—the Supreme.

TRANSLATION

One who desires domination over a kingdom or an empire should worship the Manus. One who desires victory over an enemy should worship the demons, and one who desires sense gratification should worship the moon. But one who desires nothing of material enjoyment should worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

PURPORT

For a liberated person, all the enjoyments listed above are considered to be absolutely useless. Only those who are conditioned by the material modes of external energy are captivated by different types of material enjoyment. In other words, the transcendentalist has no material desires to be fulfilled, whereas the materialist has all types of desires to be

fulfilled. The Lord has proclaimed that the materialists, who desire material enjoyment and thus seek the favor of different demigods, as above mentioned, are not in control of their senses and so give themselves to nonsense. One should therefore not desire any sort of material enjoyment, being sensible enough to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The leaders of nonsensical persons are still more nonsensical because they preach openly and foolishly that one can worship any form of demigod and get the same result. This sort of preaching is not only against the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, or those of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but is also foolish, just as it is foolish to claim that with the purchase of any travel ticket one may reach the same destination. No one can reach Bombay from Delhi by purchasing a ticket for Baroda. It is clearly defined herein that persons impregnated with different desires have different modes of worship, but one who has no desire for material enjoyment should worship the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead. And this worshipping process is called devotional service. Pure devotional service means service to the Lord without any tinge of material desires, including desire for fruitive activity and empiric speculation. For fulfillment of material desires one may worship the Supreme Lord, but the result of such worship is different, as will be explained in the next verse. Generally the Lord does not fulfill anyone's material desires for sense enjoyment, but He awards such benedictions to worshipers of the Lord, for they ultimately come to the point of not desiring material enjoyment. The conclusion is that one must minimize the desires for material enjoyment, and for this one should worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is described here as *param*, or beyond anything material. Śrīpāda Śāṅkarācārya has also stated, *nārāyaṇaḥ paro 'vyaktāt*: the Supreme Lord is beyond the material encirclement.

TEXT 10

अकामः सर्वकामो वा मोक्षकाम उदारधीः ।
तीव्रेण भक्तियोगेन यजेत पुरुषं परम् ॥१०॥

*akāmaḥ sarva-kāmo vā
mokṣa-kāma udāra-dhīḥ
tivreṇa bhakti-yogena
yajeta puruṣam param*

akāmaḥ—one who has transcended all material desires; *sarva-kāmaḥ*—one who has the sum total of material desires; *vā*—either; *mokṣa-kāmaḥ*—one who desires liberation; *udāra-dhīḥ*—with broader intelligence; *tivreṇa*—with great force; *bhakti-yogena*—by devotional service to the Lord; *yajeta*—should worship; *puruṣam*—the Lord; *param*—the supreme whole.

TRANSLATION

A person who has broader intelligence, whether he be full of all material desire, without any material desire, or desiring liberation, must by all means worship the supreme whole, the Personality of Godhead.

PURPORT

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is described in the *Bhagavad-gītā* as *puruṣottama*, or the Supreme Personality. It is He only who can award liberation to the impersonalists by absorbing such aspirants in the *brahmajyoti*, the bodily rays of the Lord. The *brahmajyoti* is not separate from the Lord, as the glowing sun ray is not independent of the sun disc. Therefore one who desires to merge into the supreme impersonal *brahmajyoti* must also worship the Lord by *bhakti-yoga*, as recommended here in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Bhakti-yoga* is especially stressed here as the means of all perfection. In the previous chapters it has been stated that *bhakti-yoga* is the ultimate goal of both *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, and in the same way in this chapter it is emphatically declared that *bhakti-yoga* is the ultimate goal of the different varieties of worship of the different demigods. *Bhakti-yoga*, thus being the supreme means of self-realization, is recommended here.

Everyone must therefore seriously take up the methods of *bhakti-yoga*, even though one aspires for material enjoyment or liberation from material bondage.

Akāmaḥ is one who has no material desire. A living being, naturally being the part and parcel of the supreme whole *puruṣam pūrṇam*, has as his natural function to serve the Supreme Being, just as the parts and parcels of the body, or the limbs of the body, are naturally meant to serve the complete body. Desireless means, therefore, not to be inert like the stone, but to be conscious of one's actual position and thus desire satisfaction only from the Supreme Lord. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has explained this desirelessness as *bhājanīya-parama-puruṣa-sukha-mātra-sva-sukhatvam* in his *Sandarbhā*. This means that one should feel happy only by experiencing the happiness of the Supreme Lord. This intuition of the living being is sometimes manifested even during the conditioned stage of a living being in the material world, and such intuition is expressed in the manner of altruism, philanthropy, socialism, communism, etc., by the undeveloped minds of less intelligent persons. In the mundane field such an outlook of doing good to others in the form of society, community, family, country or humanity is a partial manifestation of the same original feeling in which a pure living entity feels happiness by the happiness of the Supreme Lord. Such superb feelings were exhibited by the damsels of Vrajabhūmi for the happiness of the Lord. The *gopīs* loved the Lord without any return, and this is the perfect exhibition of the *akāmaḥ* spirit. *Kāma* spirit, or the desire for one's own satisfaction, is fully exhibited in the material world, whereas the spirit of *akāmaḥ* is fully exhibited in the spiritual world.

Thoughts of becoming one with the Lord, or being merged in the *brahmajyoti*, can also be exhibitions of *kāma* spirit if they are desires for one's own satisfaction to be free from the material miseries. A pure devotee does not want liberation so that he may be relieved from the miseries of life. Even without so-called liberation, a pure devotee is aspirant for the satisfaction of the Lord. Influenced by the *kāma* spirit, Arjuna declined to fight in the Kurukṣetra battlefield because he wanted to save his relatives for his own satisfaction. But being a pure devotee, he agreed to fight on the instruction of the Lord because he came to his senses and realized that satisfaction of the Lord at the cost of his own satisfaction was his prime duty. Thus he became *akāma*. That is the perfect stage of a perfect living being.

Udāra-dhīḥ means one who has a broader outlook. People with desires for material enjoyment worship small demigods, and such intelligence is condemned in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.20) as *hṛta-jñāna*, the intelligence of one who has lost his senses. One cannot obtain any result from demigods without getting sanction from the Supreme Lord. Therefore a person with a broader outlook can see that the ultimate authority is the Lord, even for material benefits. Under the circumstances, one with a broader outlook, even with the desire for material enjoyment or for liberation, should take to the worship of the Lord directly. And everyone, whether an *akāma* or *sakāma* or *mokṣa-kāma*, should worship the Lord with great expedience. This implies that *bhakti-yoga* may be perfectly administered without any mixture of *karma* and *jñāna*. As the unmixed sun ray is very forceful and is therefore called *tīvra*, similarly unmixed *bhakti-yoga* of hearing, chanting, etc., may be performed by one and all regardless of inner motive.

TEXT 11

एतावानेव यजतामिह निःश्रेयसोदयः ।
मगत्वचलो मावो यद् भागवतसंगतः ॥११॥

*etāvān eva yajatām
iha niḥśreyasodayaḥ
bhagavaty acalo bhāvo
yad bhāgavata-saṅgataḥ*

etāvān—all these different kinds of worshipers; *eva*—certainly; *yajatām*—while worshipping; *iha*—in this life; *niḥśreyasa*—the highest

benediction; *udayaḥ*—development; *bhagavati*—unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *acalaḥ*—unflinching; *bhāvaḥ*—spontaneous attraction; *yat*—which; *bhāgavata*—the pure devotee of the Lord; *saṅgataḥ*—association.

TRANSLATION

All the different kinds of worshipers of multidemigods can attain the highest perfectional benediction, which is spontaneous attraction unflinchingly fixed upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead, only by the association of the pure devotee of the Lord.

PURPORT

All living entities in different statuses of life within the material creation, beginning from the first demigod, Brahmā, down to the small ant, are conditioned under the law of material nature, or the external energy of the Supreme Lord. The living entity in his pure state is conscious of the fact that he is a part and parcel of the Lord, but when he is thrown into the material world on account of his desire to lord it over material energy, he becomes conditioned by the three modes of material nature and thus struggles for existence for the highest benefit. This struggle for existence is something like following the will-o'-the-wisp under the spell of material enjoyment. All plans for material enjoyment, either by worship of different demigods as described in the previous verses of this chapter or by modernized advancement of scientific knowledge without the help of God or demigod, are illusory only, for despite all such plans for happiness, the conditioned living being within the compass of material creation can never solve the problems of life, namely birth, death, old age and disease. The history of the universe is full of such planmakers, and many kings and emperors come and go, leaving a planmaking story only. But the prime problems of life remain unsolved despite all endeavors by such planmakers.

Actually human life is meant for making a solution to the problems of life. One can never solve such problems by satisfying the different demigods, by different modes of worship, or by so-called scientific advancement in knowledge without the help of God or the demigods. Apart from the gross materialists, who care very little either for God or for the demigods, the *Vedas* recommend worship of different demigods for different benefits, and so the demigods are neither false nor imaginary. The demigods are as factual as we are, but they are much more powerful due to their being engaged in the direct service of the Lord in managing different departments in the universal government. The *Bhagavad-gītā* affirms this, and the different planets of the demigods are mentioned there, including the one of the supreme demigod, Lord Brahmā. The gross materialists do not believe in the existence of God or the demigods. Nor do they believe that different planets are dominated by different demigods. They are creating a great commotion about reaching the closest celestial body, Candra-loka, or the moon, but even after much mechanical research they have only very scanty information of this moon, and in spite of much false advertisement for selling land on the moon, the puffed-up scientists or gross materialists cannot live there, and what to speak of reaching the other planets, which they are unable even to count. However, the followers of the *Vedas* have a different method of acquiring knowledge. They accept the statements of the Vedic literatures as authority *in toto*, as we have already discussed in Canto One, and therefore they have full and reasonable knowledge of God and demigods and of their different residential planets situated within the compass of the material world and beyond the limit of the material sky. The most authentic Vedic literature, accepted by the great Indian *ācāryas* like Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Viṣṇusvāmī, Nimbārka and Caitanya and studied by all important personalities of the world, is the *Bhagavad-gītā*, in which the worship of the demigods and their respective residential planets are mentioned. The *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.25) affirms:

*yānti deva-vratā devān
pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ*

*bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā
yānti mad-yājīno 'pi mām*

“The worshipers of demigods reach the respective planets of the demigods, and the worshipers of forefathers reach the planets of the forefathers. The gross materialist remains in the different material planets, but the devotees of the Lord reach the kingdom of God.”

We also have information from the *Bhagavad-gītā* that all the planets within the material world, including Brahmāloka, are but temporarily situated, and after a fixed period they are all annihilated. Therefore the demigods and their followers are all annihilated at the period of devastation, but one who reaches the kingdom of God gets a permanent share in eternal life. That is the verdict of Vedic literature. The worshipers of the demigods have one facility more than the unbelievers due to their being convinced of the Vedic version, by which they can get information of the benefit of worshiping the Supreme Lord in the association of the devotees of the Lord. The gross materialist, however, without any faith in the Vedic version, remains eternally in darkness, driven by a false conviction on the basis of imperfect experimental knowledge, or so-called material science, which can never reach into the realm of transcendental knowledge.

Therefore unless the gross materialists or the worshipers of the temporary demigods come in contact with a transcendentalist like the pure devotee of the Lord, their attempts are simply a waste of energy. Only by the grace of the divine personalities, the pure devotees of the Lord, can one achieve pure devotion, which is the highest perfection of human life. Only a pure devotee of the Lord can show one the right way of progressive life. Otherwise both the materialistic way of life, without any information of God or the demigods, and the life engaged in the worship of demigods, in pursuit of temporary material enjoyments, are different phases of phantasmagoria. They are nicely explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā* also, but the *Bhagavad-gītā* can be understood in the association of pure devotees only, and not by the interpretations of politicians or dry philosophical speculators.

TEXT 12

ज्ञानं यदाप्रतिनिवृत्तगुणोर्मिचक्र-
मात्मप्रसाद उत यत्र गुणेष्वसङ्गः ।
कैवल्यसम्मतपथस्त्वथ भक्तियोगः
को निर्वृतो हरिकयासु रतिं न कुर्यात् ॥१२॥

*jñānam yad āpratinivṛtta-guṇormi-cakram
ātma-prasāda uta yatra guṇeṣu asaṅgaḥ
kaivalya-sammata-pathas tu atha bhakti-yogaḥ
ko nirvṛto hari-kathāsu ratim na kuryāt*

jñānam—knowledge; *yat*—that which; *ā*—up to the limit of; *pratinivṛtta*—completely withdrawn; *guṇa-ūrmi*—the waves of the material modes; *cakram*—whirlpool; *ātma-prasādaḥ*—self-satisfaction; *uta*—moreover; *yatra*—where there is; *guṇeṣu*—in the modes of nature; *asaṅgaḥ*—no attachment; *kaivalya*—transcendental; *sammata*—approved; *pathaḥ*—path; *tu*—but; *atha*—therefore; *bhakti-yogaḥ*—devotional service; *kaḥ*—who; *nirvṛtaḥ*—absorbed in; *hari-kathāsu*—in the transcendental topics of the Lord; *ratim*—attraction; *na*—shall not; *kuryāt*—do.

TRANSLATION

Transcendental knowledge in relation with the Supreme Lord Hari is knowledge resulting in the complete suspension of the waves and whirlpools of the material modes. Such knowledge is self-satisfying due to its being free from material attachment, and being transcendental it is approved by authorities. Who could fail to be attracted?

PURPORT

According to *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.9) the characteristics of pure devotees are wonderful. The complete functional activities of a pure devotee are always engaged in the service of the Lord, and thus the pure devotees exchange feelings of ecstasy between themselves and relish transcendental bliss. This transcendental bliss is experienced even in the stage of devotional practice (*sādhana-avasthā*), if properly undertaken under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. And in the mature stage the developed transcendental feeling culminates in realization of the particular relationship with the Lord by which a living entity is originally constituted (up to the relationship of conjugal love with the Lord, which is estimated to be the highest transcendental bliss). Thus *bhakti-yoga*, being the only means of God realization, is called *kaivalya*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī quotes the Vedic version (*eko nārāyaṇo devaḥ, parāvarānām parama āste kaivalya-samjñitāḥ*) in this connection and establishes that Nārāyaṇa, the Personality of Godhead, is known as *kaivalya*, and the means which enables one to approach the Lord is called the *kaivalya-panthā*, or the only means of attainment of Godhead. This *kaivalya-panthā* begins from *śravaṇa*, or hearing those topics that relate to the Personality of Godhead, and the natural consequence of hearing such *hari-kathā* is attainment of transcendental knowledge, which causes detachment from all mundane topics, for which a devotee has no taste at all. For a devotee, all mundane activities, social and political, become unattractive, and in the mature state such a devotee becomes uninterested even in his own body, and what to speak of bodily relatives. In such a state of affairs one is not agitated by the waves of the material modes. There are different modes of material nature, and all mundane functions in which a common man is very much interested or in which he takes part become unattractive for the devotee. This state of affairs is described herein as *pratinivṛtta-guṇormi*, and it is possible by *ātma-prasāda*, or complete self-satisfaction without any material connection. The first-class devotee of the Lord attains this stage by devotional service, but despite his loftiness, for the Lord's satisfaction he may play the voluntary part of a preacher of the Lord's glory and dovetail all into devotional service, even mundane interest, just to give the neophytes a chance to transform mundane interest into transcendental bliss. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has described this action of a pure devotee as *nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe yuktaḥ vairāgyam ucyate*. Even mundane activities dovetailed with service to the Lord are also calculated to be transcendental or approved *kaivalya* affairs.

TEXT 13

शौनक उवाच

इत्यभिव्याहृतं राजा निशम्य मरत्तर्षमः ।
किमन्यत्प्रष्टवान् भूयो वैयासकिर्मृषिं कविम् ॥१३॥

śaunaka uvāca
ity abhivyāhṛtam rājā
niśamya bharatarṣabhaḥ
kim anyat prṣṭavān bhūyo
vaiyāsakim ṛṣim kavim

śaunakaḥ uvāca—Śaunaka said; iti—thus; abhivyāhṛtam—all that was spoken; rājā—the King; niśamya—by hearing; bharata-ṛṣabhaḥ—Mahārāja Parikṣit; kim—what; anyat—more; prṣṭavān—did he inquire from him; bhūyah—again; vaiyāsakim—unto the son of Vyāsadeva; ṛṣim—one who is well versed; kavim—poetic.

TRANSLATION

Śaunaka said: The son of Vyāsadeva, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, was a highly learned sage and was able to describe things in a poetic manner. What did Mahārāja Parikṣit again inquire from him after hearing all that he had said?

PURPORT

A pure devotee of the Lord automatically develops all godly qualities, and some of the prominent features of those qualities are as follows: he is kind, peaceful, truthful, equable, faultless, magnanimous, mild, clean, nonpossessive, a well-wisher to all, satisfied, surrendered to Kṛṣṇa, without hankering, simple, fixed, self-controlled, a balanced eater, sane, mannerly, prideless, grave, sympathetic, friendly, poetic, expert and silent. Out of these twenty-six prominent features of a devotee, as described by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, the qualification of being poetic is especially mentioned herein in relation to Śukadeva Gosvāmī. The presentation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by his recitation is the highest poetic contribution. He was a self-realized learned sage. In other words, he was a poet amongst the sages.

TEXT 14

एतच्छ्रुषतां विद्वन् सत नोऽर्हसि माषितुम् ।
कथा हरिकथोदकाः सतां स्युः सदसि ध्रुवम् ॥१४॥

etac churūṣatām vidvan
sūta no 'rhasi bhāṣitum
kathā hari-kathodarkāḥ
satām syuḥ sadasi dhruvam

etat—this; śurūṣatām—of those eager to hear; vidvan—O learned; sūta—Sūta Govāmī; naḥ—unto us; arhasi—may you do it; bhāṣitum—just to explain it; kathāḥ—topics; hari-kathā-udarkāḥ—result in the topics of the Lord; satām—of the devotees; syuḥ—may be; sadasi—in the assembly of; dhruvam—certainly.

TRANSLATION

O learned Sūta Gosvāmī! Please continue to explain such topics to us because we are all eager to hear. Besides that, topics which result in the discussion of the Lord Hari should certainly be discussed in the assembly of devotees.

PURPORT

As we have already quoted above from the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* of Rūpa Gosvāmī, even mundane things, if dovetailed in the service of the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are accepted as transcendental. For example, the epics or the histories of *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*, which are specifically recommended for the less intelligent classes (women, *sūdras* and unworthy sons of the higher castes), are also accepted as Vedic literature because they are compiled in connection with the activities of the Lord. *Mahābhārata* is accepted as the fifth division of the *Vedas* after its first four divisions, namely *Sāma*, *Yajur*, *Rg* and *Atharva*. The less intelligent do not accept *Mahābhārata* as part of the *Vedas*, but great sages and authorities accept it as the fifth division of the *Vedas*. *Bhagavad-gītā* is also part of the *Mahābhārata*, and it is full of the Lord's instruction for the less intelligent class of men. Some less intelligent men say that *Bhagavad-gītā* is not meant for householders, but such foolish men forget that *Bhagavad-gītā* was explained to Arjuna, a *grhastha* (family man), and spoken by the Lord in His role as a *grhastha*. So *Bhagavad-gītā*, although containing the high philosophy of the Vedic wisdom, is for the beginners in the transcendental science, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is for graduates and postgraduates in the transcendental science. Therefore literatures like *Mahābhārata*, the *Purānas* and similar other literatures which are full of the pastimes of the Lord, are all transcendental literatures, and they should be discussed with full confidence in the society of great devotees.

The difficulty is that such literatures, when discussed by professional men, appear to be mundane literature like histories or epics because there are so many historical facts and figures. It is said here, therefore, that such literatures should be discussed in the assembly of devotees. Unless they are discussed by devotees, such literatures cannot be relished by

the higher class of men. So the conclusion is that the Lord is not impersonal in the ultimate issue. He is the Supreme Person, and He has His different activities. He is the leader of all living entities, and He descends at His will and by His personal energy to reclaim the fallen souls. Thus He plays exactly like the social, political or religious leaders. Because such roles ultimately culminate in the discussion of topics of the Lord, all such preliminary topics are also transcendental. That is the way of spiritualizing the civic activities of human society. Men have inclinations for studying history and many other mundane literatures—stories, fiction, dramas, magazines, newspapers, etc.—so let them be dovetailed with the transcendental service of the Lord, and all of them will turn to the topics relished by all devotees. The propaganda that the Lord is impersonal, that He has no activity and that He is a dumb stone without any name and form has encouraged people to become godless, faithless demons, and the more they deviate from the transcendental activities of the Lord, the more they become accustomed to mundane activities that only clear their path to hell instead of return them home, back to Godhead.* *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* begins from the history of the Pāṇḍavas (with necessary politics and social activities), and yet *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is said to be the *Pāramahansa-saṁhitā*, or the Vedic literature meant for the topmost transcendentalist, and it describes *param jñānam*, the highest transcendental knowledge. Pure devotees of the Lord are all *paramahansas*, and they are like the swans, who know the art of sucking milk out of a mixture of milk and water.

TEXT 15

स वै मागवतो राजा पाण्डवेयो महारयः ।
बालक्रीडनकैः क्रीडन् कृष्णक्रीडां य आददे ॥१५॥

sa vai bhāgavato rājā
pāṇḍaveyo mahā-rathah
bāla-kṛīḍanakaiḥ kṛīḍan
kṛṣṇa-kṛīḍām ya ādade

saḥ—he; vai—certainly; bhāgavataḥ—a great devotee of the Lord; rājā—Mahārāja Parikṣit; pāṇḍaveyaḥ—grandson of the Pāṇḍavas; mahā-rathah—a great fighter; bāla—while a child; kṛīḍanakaiḥ—with play dolls; kṛīḍan—playing; kṛṣṇa—Lord Kṛṣṇa; kṛīḍām—activities; yaḥ—who; ādade—accepted.

TRANSLATION

Mahārāja Parikṣit, the grandson of the Pāṇḍavas, was from his very childhood a great devotee of the Lord. Even while playing with dolls, he used to worship Lord Kṛṣṇa by imitating the worship of the family Deity.

PURPORT

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.41) it is stated that even a person who has failed in the proper discharge of *yoga* practice is given a chance to take birth in the house of devout *brāhmaṇas* or in the houses of rich men like *kṣatriya* kings or rich merchants. But Mahārāja Parikṣit was more than that because he had been a great devotee of the Lord since his previous birth, and as such he took his birth in an imperial family of the Kurus, and especially that of the Pāṇḍavas. So from the very beginning of his childhood he had the chance to know intimately the devotional service of Lord Kṛṣṇa in his own family. The Pāṇḍavas, all being devotees of the

Lord, certainly venerated family Deities in the royal palace for worship. Children who appear in such families fortunately generally imitate such worship of the Deities, even in the way of childhood play. By the grace of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we had the chance of being born in a Vaiṣṇava family, and in our childhood we imitated the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa by imitating our father. Our father encouraged us in all respects to observe all functions such as the Ratha-yātrā and Dola-yātrā ceremonies, and he used to spend money liberally for distributing *prasāda* to us children and our friends. Our spiritual master, who also took his birth in a Vaiṣṇava family, got all inspirations from his great Vaiṣṇava father, Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda. That is the way of all lucky Vaiṣṇava families. The celebrated Mīrā Bāī was a staunch devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa as the great lifter of Govardhana Hill.

The life history of many such devotees is almost the same because there is always symmetry between the early lives of all great devotees of the Lord. According to Jīva Gosvāmī, Mahārāja Parikṣit must have heard about the childhood pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa at Vṛndāvana, for he used to imitate the pastimes with his young playmates. According to Śrīdhara Svāmī, Mahārāja Parikṣit used to imitate the worship of the family Deity by elderly members. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī also confirms the viewpoint of Jīva Gosvāmī. So accepting either of them, Mahārāja Parikṣit was naturally inclined to Lord Kṛṣṇa from his very childhood. He might have imitated either of the above-mentioned activities, and all of them establish his great devotion from his very childhood, a symptom of a *mahā-bhāgavata*. Such *mahā-bhāgavatas* are called *nitya-siddhas*, or souls liberated from birth. But there are also others, who may not be liberated from birth but who develop a tendency for devotional service by association, and they are called *sādhana-siddhas*. There is no difference between the two in the ultimate issue, and so the conclusion is that everyone can become a *sādhana-siddha*, a devotee of the Lord, simply by association with the pure devotees. The concrete example is our great spiritual master Śrī Nārada Muni. In his previous life he was simply a boy of a maidservant, but through association with great devotees he became a devotee of the Lord of his own standard, unique in the history of devotional service.

TEXT 16

वैयासकिश्च मगवान् वसुदेवपरायणः ।
उरुगायगुणोदारः सतां स्युर्हि समागमे ॥१६॥

vaiyāsakiḥ ca bhagavān
vāsudeva-parāyaṇah
urugāya-guṇodārāḥ
satām syur hi samāgame

vaiyāsakiḥ—the son of Vyāsadeva; ca—also; bhagavān—full in transcendental knowledge; vāsudeva—Lord Kṛṣṇa; parāyaṇah—attached to; urugāya—of the Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is glorified by great philosophers; guṇa-udārāḥ—great qualities; satām—of the devotees; syuḥ—must have been; hi—as a matter of fact; samāgame—by the presence of.

TRANSLATION

Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the son of Vyāsadeva, was also full in transcendental knowledge and was a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, son of Vasudeva. So there must have been discussion of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is glorified by great philosophers and in the company of great devotees.

PURPORT

The word *satām* is very important in this verse. *Satām* means the pure devotees, who have no other desire than to serve the Lord. Only in the association of such devotees are the transcendental glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa properly discussed. It is said by the Lord that His topics are all full of spiritual significance, and once one properly hears about Him in the association of the *satām*, certainly one senses the great potency and so automatically attains to the devotional stage of life. As already described,

*Even fifty years ago, the social structure of all Indians was so arranged that they would not read any literature that was not connected with the activities of the Lord. They would not play any drama not connected with the Lord. They would not organize a fair or ceremony not connected with the Lord. Nor would they visit a place that was not holy and sanctified by the pastimes of the Lord. Therefore even the common man in the village would talk about *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, *Gītā* and *Bhāgavatam*, even from his very childhood. But by the influence of the age of Kali, they have been dragged to the civilization of the dogs and hogs, laboring for bread without any sense of transcendental knowledge.

Mahārāja Parikṣit was a great devotee of the Lord from his very birth, and so was Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Both of them were on the same level, although it appeared that Mahārāja Parikṣit was a great king accustomed to royal facilities whereas Śukadeva Gosvāmī was a typical renouncer of the world, so much so that he did not even put a cloth on his body. Superficially, Mahārāja Parikṣit and Śukadeva Gosvāmī might seem to be opposites, but basically they were both unalloyed pure devotees of the Lord. When such devotees are assembled together, there can be no topics save discussions of the glories of the Lord, or *bhakti-yoga*. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* also, when there were talks between the Lord and His devotee Arjuna, there could not be any topic other than *bhakti-yoga*, however the mundane scholars may speculate on it in their own ways. The use of the word *ca* after *vaiyāsakiḥ* suggests, according to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, that both Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Mahārāja Parikṣit were of the same category, settled long before, although one was playing the part of the master and the other the disciple. Since Lord Kṛṣṇa is the center of the topics, the word *vāsudeva-parāyaṇaḥ*, or “devotee of Vāsudeva,” suggests devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the common aim. Although there were many others who assembled at the place where Mahārāja Parikṣit was fasting, the natural conclusion is that there was no topic other than the glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa, because the principal speaker was Śukadeva Gosvāmī and the chief audience was Mahārāja Parikṣit. So *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, as it was spoken and heard by two principal devotees of the Lord, is only for the glorification of the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

TEXT 17

आयुर्हरति वै पुंसामुद्यन्तं च यन्नसौ ।
तस्यते यत्क्षणो नीत उत्तमश्लोकवार्तया ॥१७॥

āyur harati vai puṁsām
udyann astam ca yann asau
tasyate yat-kṣaṇo nīta
uttama-śloka-vārtayā

āyuh—duration of life; harati—decreases; vai—certainly; puṁsām—of the people; udyan—rising; astam—setting; ca—also; yan—moving; asau—the sun; tasya—of one who glorifies the Lord; rte—except; yat—by whom; kṣaṇaḥ—time; nītaḥ—utilized; uttama-śloka—the all-good Personality of Godhead; vārtayā—in the topics of.

TRANSLATION

Both by rising and by setting, the sun decreases the duration of life of everyone, except one who utilizes the time by discussing topics of the all-good Personality of Godhead.

PURPORT

This verse indirectly confirms the greater importance of utilizing the human form of life to realize our lost relationship with the Supreme Lord by acceleration of devotional service. Time and tide wait for no man. So the time indicated by the sunrise and the sunset will be uselessly wasted if such time is not properly utilized for realizing identification of spiritual values. Even a fraction of the duration of life wasted cannot be compensated by any amount of gold. Human life is simply awarded to a living entity (*jīva*) so that he can realize his spiritual identity and his permanent source of happiness. A living being, especially the human being, is seeking happiness because happiness is the natural situation of the living entity. But he is vainly seeking happiness in the material atmosphere. A living being is constitutionally a spiritual spark of the complete whole, and his happiness can be perfectly perceived in spiritual activities. The Lord is the complete spirit whole, and His name, form, quality, pastimes, entourage and personality are all identical with Him. Once a person comes into contact with any one of the above-mentioned energies of the Lord through the proper channel of devotional service, the door to perfection is immediately opened. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.40) the Lord has explained such contact in the following words: “Endeavors in devotional service are never baffled. Nor is there failure.

A slight beginning of such activities is sufficient even to deliver a person from the great ocean of material fears.” As a highly potent drug injected intravenously acts at once on the whole body, the transcendental topics of the Lord injected through the ear of the pure devotee of the Lord can act very efficiently. Aural realization of the transcendental messages implies total realization, just as fructification of one part of a tree implies fructification of all other parts. This realization for a moment in the association of pure devotees like Śukadeva Gosvāmī prepares one’s complete life for eternity. And thus the sun fails to rob the pure devotee of his duration of life, inasmuch as he is constantly busy in the devotional service of the Lord, purifying his existence. Death is a symptom of the material infection of the eternal living being; only due to material infection is the eternal living entity subjected to the law of birth, death, old age and disease.

The materialistic way of pious activities like charity is recommended in the *smṛti-sāstras* as quoted by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. Money given in charity to a suitable person is guaranteed bank balance in the next life. Such charity is recommended to be given to a *brāhmaṇa*. If the money is given in charity to a non-*brāhmaṇa* (without brahminical qualification) the money is returned in the next life in the same proportion. If it is given in charity to a half-educated *brāhmaṇa*, even then the money is returned double. If the money is given in charity to a learned and fully qualified *brāhmaṇa*, the money is returned a hundred and a thousand times, and if the money is given to a *veda-pāraṅga* (one who has factually realized the path of the *Vedas*), it is returned by unlimited multiplication. The ultimate end of Vedic knowledge is realization of the Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, as stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (*vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*). There is a guarantee of money’s being returned if given in charity, regardless of the proportion. Similarly, a moment passed in the association of a pure devotee by hearing and chanting the transcendental messages of the Lord is a perfect guarantee for eternal life, for returning home, back to Godhead. *Mad-dhāma gatvā punar janma na vidyate*. In other words, a devotee of the Lord is guaranteed eternal life. A devotee’s old age or disease in the present life is but an impetus to such guaranteed eternal life.

TEXT 18

तरवः किं न जीवन्ति मल्लाः किं न भ्रसन्त्युत ।
न खादन्ति न मेहन्ति किं ग्रामे पशवोऽपरे ॥१८॥

taravaḥ kiṁ na jīvanti
bhastrāḥ kiṁ na śvasanty uta
na khādanti na mehanti
kiṁ grāme paśavo 'pare

taravaḥ—the trees; kiṁ—whether; na—do not; jīvanti—live; bhastrāḥ—bellows; kiṁ—whether; na—do not; śvasanti—breathe; uta—also; na—do not; khādanti—eat; na—do not; mehanti—discharge semen; kiṁ—whether; grāme—in the locality; paśavaḥ—beastly living being; apare—others.

TRANSLATION

Do the trees not live? Do the bellows of the blacksmith not breathe? All around us, do the beasts not eat and discharge semen?

PURPORT

The materialistic man of the modern age will argue that life, or part of it, is never meant for discussion of theosophical or theological arguments. Life is meant for the maximum duration of existence for eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, making merry and enjoying life. The modern man wants to live forever by the advancement of material science, and there are many foolish theories for prolonging life to the maximum duration. But the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* affirms that life is not meant for so-called economic development or advancement of materialistic science for the hedonistic philosophy of eating, mating, drinking and merrymaking. Life is solely meant for *tapasya*, for purifying

existence so that one may enter into eternal life just after the end of the human form of life.

The materialists want to prolong life as much as possible because they have no information of the next life. They want to get the maximum comforts in this present life because they think conclusively that there is no life after death. This ignorance about the eternity of the living being and the change of covering in the material world has played havoc in the structure of modern human society. Consequently there are many problems, multiplied by various plans of modernized man. The plans for solving the problems of society have only aggravated the troubles. Even if it is possible to prolong life more than one hundred years, advancement of human civilization does not necessarily follow. The *Bhāgavatam* says that certain trees live for hundreds and thousands of years. At Vr̥ndāvana there is a tamarind tree (the place is known as Imlitala) which is said to have existed since the time of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the Calcutta Botanical Garden there is a banyan tree said to be older than five hundred years, and there are many such trees all over the world. Svāmī Śāṅkarācārya lived only thirty-two years, and Lord Caitanya lived forty-eight years. Does it mean that the prolonged lives of the above-mentioned trees are more important than Śāṅkara or Caitanya? Prolonged life without spiritual value is not very important. One may doubt that trees have life because they do not breathe. But modern scientists like Bose have already proved that there is life in plants, so breathing is no sign of actual life. The *Bhāgavatam* says that the bellows of the blacksmith breathes very soundly, but that does not mean that the bellows has life. The materialist will argue that life in the tree and life in the man cannot be compared because the tree cannot enjoy life by eating palatable dishes or by enjoying sexual intercourse. In reply to this, the *Bhāgavatam* asks whether other animals like the dogs and hogs, living in the same village with human beings, do not eat and enjoy sexual life. The specific utterance of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in regard to "other animals" means that persons who are simply engaged in planning a better type of animal life consisting of eating, breathing and mating are also animals in the shape of human beings. A society of such polished animals cannot benefit suffering humanity, for an animal can easily harm another animal but rarely do good.

TEXT 19

श्विङ्गराहोष्ट्रखरैः संस्तुतः पुरुषः पशुः ।
न यत्कर्णपथोपेतो जातु नाम गदाग्रजः ॥१९॥

*śva-vid-varāhoṣṭra-kharaiḥ
saṁstutaḥ puruṣaḥ paśuḥ
na yat-karṇa-pathopeto
jātu nāma gadāgrajaḥ*

śva—a dog; *viḥ-varāha*—the village hog who eats stool; *uṣṭra*—the camel; *kharaiḥ*—and by the asses; *saṁstutaḥ*—perfectly praised; *puruṣaḥ*—a person; *paśuḥ*—animal; *na*—never; *yat*—of him; *karṇa*—ear; *patha*—path; *upetaḥ*—reached; *jātu*—at any time; *nāma*—the holy name; *gadāgrajaḥ*—Lord Kṛṣṇa, the deliver from all evils.

TRANSLATION

Men who are like dogs, hogs, camels and asses praise those men who never listen to the transcendental pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the deliverer from evils.

PURPORT

The general mass of people, unless they are trained systematically for a higher standard of life in spiritual values, are no better than animals, and in this verse they have particularly been put on the level of dogs, hogs, camels and asses. Modern university education practically prepares one to acquire a doglike mentality with which to accept the service of a greater master. After finishing a so-called education, the so-called educated persons move like dogs from door to door with applications for some service, and mostly they are driven away, informed of no vacancy. As dogs are negligible animals and serve the master faithfully for bits of

bread, a man serves a master faithfully without sufficient rewards.

Persons who have no discrimination in the matter of foodstuff and who eat all sorts of rubbish are compared to hogs. Hogs are very much attached to eating stools. So stool is a kind of foodstuff for a particular type of animal. And even stones are eatables for a particular type of animal or bird. But the human being is not meant for eating everything and anything; he is meant to eat grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, sugar, etc. Animal food is not meant for the human being. For chewing solid food, the human being has a particular type of teeth meant for cutting fruits and vegetables. The human being is endowed with two canine teeth as a concession for persons who will eat animal food at any cost. It is known to everyone that one man's food is another man's poison. Human beings are expected to accept the remnants of food offered to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and the Lord accepts foodstuff from the categories of leaves, flowers, fruits, etc. (Bg. 9.26). As prescribed by Vedic scriptures, no animal food is offered to the Lord. Therefore, a human being is meant to eat a particular type of food. He should not imitate the animals to derive so-called vitamin values. Therefore, a person who has no discrimination in regard to eating is compared to a hog.

The camel is a kind of animal that takes pleasure in eating thorns. A person who wants to enjoy family life or the worldly life of so-called enjoyment is compared to the camel. Materialistic life is full of thorns, and so one should live only by the prescribed method of Vedic regulations just to make the best use of a bad bargain. Life in the material world is maintained by sucking one's own blood. The central point of attraction for material enjoyment is sex life. To enjoy sex life is to suck one's own blood, and there is not much more to be explained in this connection. The camel also sucks its own blood while chewing thorny twigs. The thorns the camel eats cut the tongue of the camel, and so blood begins to flow within the camel's mouth. The thorns, mixed with fresh blood, create a taste for the foolish camel, and so he enjoys the thorn-eating business with false pleasure. Similarly, the great business magnates, industrialists who work very hard to earn money by different ways and questionable means, eat the thorny results of their actions mixed with their own blood. Therefore the *Bhāgavatam* has situated these diseased fellows along with the camels.

The ass is an animal who is celebrated as the greatest fool, even amongst the animals. The ass works very hard and carries burdens of the maximum weight without making profit for itself. The ass is generally engaged by the washerman, whose social position is not very respectable. And the special qualification of the ass is that it is very much accustomed to being kicked by the opposite sex. When the ass begs for sexual intercourse, he is kicked by the fair sex, yet he still follows the female for such sexual pleasure. A henpecked man is compared, therefore, to the ass. The general mass of people work very hard, especially in the age of Kali. In this age the human being is actually engaged in the work of an ass, carrying heavy burdens and driving *thelā* and rickshaws. The so-called advancement of human civilization has engaged a human being in the work of an ass. The laborers in great factories and workshops are also engaged in such burdensome work, and after working hard during the day, the poor laborer has to be again kicked by the fair sex, not only for sex enjoyment but also for so many household affairs.

So *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*'s categorization of the common man without any spiritual enlightenment into the society of dogs, hogs, camels and asses is not at all an exaggeration. The leaders of such ignorant masses of people may feel very proud of being adored by such a number of dogs and hogs, but that is not very flattering. The *Bhāgavatam* openly declares that although a person may be a great leader of such dogs and hogs disguised as men, if he has no taste for being enlightened in the science of Kṛṣṇa, such a leader is also an animal and nothing more. He may be designated as a powerful, strong animal, or a big animal, but in the estimation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* he is never given a place in the category of man, on account of his atheistic temperament. Or, in other words, such godless leaders of dogs and hoglike men are bigger animals with the qualities of animals in greater proportion.

(continued in next issue)

Can Faith Be Reasonable?

Sometimes, but it hardly ever is.

by ŚRĪLA JAYATĪRTHA MAHĀRĀJA

Our modern society, with its emphasis on science and technology, would certainly seek to view itself as being rooted in reason rather than in faith. Faith, after all, connotes unquestioning belief and seems at variance with the "scientific method." If we are to be sure about our conclusions, it would seem wise to base them only on that which we can observe, measure, and verify by our own sensory perception.

Yet although this course would certainly seem rational, it has one inherent and major defect: our sensory perception is limited and imperfect, so even if we take the maximum care to reduce the errors we make in our observations, we will ultimately be able to observe only a most limited range of phenomena. Furthermore, even at this level we are forced to admit dependency on belief—or, to make things more clear, on faith.

As inquisitive persons, we seek to discover more about ourselves and the world around us. We decide that we shall accept as evidence only that which we can perceive directly with our senses. But the question arises, how much can we believe our senses? How much faith can we place in them? For example, we hear the phrase "I could scarcely believe my eyes" or "I could scarcely believe my ears." Our decision to accept sense perception as evidence is therefore in itself a kind of faith.

The failings of this kind of faith are twofold. First of all, as we have already pointed out, our senses are imperfect. Our observations will never be exactly correct, a point that has been upheld scientifically

in Heisenberg's famous uncertainty principle. And conclusions drawn from such imperfect perceptions will necessarily be imperfect in the same way. The second failing, however, is much more serious: there is a vast range of things that we cannot perceive with our senses at all. For example, we can hear sounds only within a limited range. Even with sophisticated instruments we are unable to perceive the full range of sounds, although to assume that beyond that range no sound can exist would be the greatest conceit.

A more striking example of something we are not able to perceive (and never will be) is "the past." Whatever occurred before our birth or before our observations began cannot possibly become known to us through direct sensory perception. Yet to presume that there was no history—simply because we did not perceive it—would be absurd. We firmly believe that there was a past, even though we never experienced it. So necessity forces us to expand the basis of our "search after the nature of things" to encompass certain things, at least, which are beyond our own sensory perception. Here we naturally become a little less sure of things, because we are now being asked not only to have faith in our own sensory perception but also to hear and believe evidence given by others. For example, to gain knowledge about ancient Grecian civilization we can turn to no contemporary source. All we can examine is a few ruined buildings. So to find out about the events of two millennia ago, we have to look into the writings of someone who lived at that time

and had the foresight to write things down. Then we shall have to decide whether these writings are factual or fictional. So here we see that we have strayed onto difficult ground. Yet still we are prepared to accept such evidence. We even compile it into "history books" and spend our valuable time studying it and trying perhaps to learn some lessons from it.

To better understand the limits of our sensory perception, let us consider the hypothetical case of an aboriginal man landing in New York City. On first examining the huge, complex metropolis, the aboriginal man will naturally marvel at how it has come to be. But he will hardly be able to answer this question through direct sensory perception. He may well believe that such a place could not have been constructed by mere men, and so he may assume that it was the direct creation of some powerful spirit, or that it has always been there, like some mountain range. Or he may simply become bewildered and frightened.

On the other hand, a European man landing in New York on a first visit will have no difficulty in understanding that the city was constructed over several hundred years by countless architects and craftsmen. Although our cultured visitor did not see the city being constructed and has not met any of the architects or craftsmen involved, no one will be able to convince him that the city has come about in any other way. His belief will be entirely reasonable, but he will have to admit that, strictly speaking, it is a type of faith, albeit an entirely *reasonable faith*.

The conclusion of the aborigine, however, must be termed *unreasonable faith*.

Thus we see that the two words "faith" and "reason" are not opposites, as we sometimes suppose, but rather are inter-related concepts. We may be safe in having reasonable faiths, such as the faith that New York City has been built by intelligent craftsmen, but we must be wary of unreasonable faiths or faiths based only on superstitions.

Now let us suppose further that upon landing at John F. Kennedy Airport, our European meets a wild-eyed man who hands him a book propounding the doctrine that New York City was not constructed in any of the aforementioned ways; rather, some one hundred years ago there was an explosion in the Hudson Bay region, and after the smoke cleared, the entire city (complete with skyscrapers, subways, and telephone system) was standing in place. Although by direct sensory perception the European will not be able to prove this doctrine false (since he has not personally observed the construction of the city), nonetheless he will conclude that the young man is a nut.

Now, from scientific observation we learn that the physical structure of a living cell is more complex than that of the entire city of New York (complete with telephone lines, electrical circuits, and plumbing, and what have you) and that the human body has more than thirty trillion of these cells. Furthermore, unlike New York City, the human body works smoothly and with amazing precision. Even more amazing, these complex cells have the ability to regenerate themselves—a concept that the city's planning commissioners could not even begin to conceive of (though understandably they could envy it).

Now, if we were to conclude that the human body has also been planned and constructed by some highly intelligent person or persons, then we would be possessed of what might be called reasonable faith. But so-called scientific people who propose that the human body arose from a chance combination of molecules originally set into action by some tremendous explosion—these people can only be compared to the wild-eyed fanatic claiming that New York City came from an explosion in Hudson Bay. It will not even do to call such a hypothesis "unreasonable faith." It is nothing short of insanity.

Therefore, the basic conclusion of theism, namely that this highly complex universe has been conceived of and constructed by a highly intelligent being—in fact by a being possessed of genius beyond our imagination—is altogether reasonable. Although we may label it a conclusion based on faith, it is based on an altogether

reasonable faith.

Someone may object at this point that although we may verify beyond reasonable doubt that the city of New York was designed and fashioned by intelligent men, we cannot use the same method to verify our conclusion that the universe has been designed and fashioned by a Supreme Being. But we may reply that in the first place, no one will take the trouble to verify that the city was built in that way, because it is a self-evident fact that does not really

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require verification. Yet if someone is moved for some reason to seek verification, he can inquire from city records, from older citizens who have themselves witnessed parts of the construction, and so on. If he agrees to have faith in the authenticity of these people's words or the city's records, then he may surely satisfy himself beyond a reasonable doubt.

In much the same way, God's existence is not at all without a means for verification. It is simply that no one takes the trouble to seek verification. We choose instead, it seems, to accept the pseudo-rationality of modern scientists and philosophers who reject faith in God as unreasonable. Yet by the scientific practice of *yoga* (especially *bhakti-yoga*) we can verify the existence of God, just as by experimentation we can verify physical laws. The difficulty is simply our unwillingness to conduct the experiment.

Our modern society has drifted toward the assumption that God does not exist, or that if He does exist, His existence is of no fundamental importance in developing our civilization. As so-called rationalists, we

have found it impossible to take seriously a Being we cannot perceive directly with our senses, because to accept such a Being would require a commitment of faith. But in fact every conclusion we come to requires faith, even if it is the simple faith that our sensory perceptions are accurate. So the real task is to discriminate between reasonable faith and unreasonable faith.

Since we can have reasonable faith that this universe and its contents, including ourselves, are the creation of an eminently intelligent, powerful, and expert Being, it is a rather foolish if not outright dangerous assumption that this Being no longer has any relevance to our existence and to our civilization. Instead, it would seem clear that we should apply considerable thought to the task of better understanding who this Being is, what the nature of His existence is, how He has come to create this universe (and ourselves), what continuing interest He may have in His creations, what our relationship with Him is, what our residual obligations to Him are, and a host of other relevant inquiries that His existence naturally raises.

Space does not permit us to examine the answers to the questions posed above. However, we can recommend to our readers that they undertake a serious study of the works on scientific theism that have been left to us by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. These works comprise exacting translations and authoritative commentaries on great classics of ancient wisdom—*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and others. Altogether, more than fifty full volumes are available, and with impeccable logic and clarity each volume answers questions about God and the origin and duties of man. These books bring the subjects of religion and faith out of the cloudy region of dogma and superstition and clearly into a realm of supramundane rationality. Men who are thoughtful and who seek to obey the ancient command "Know thyself" will find the greatest delight in these works. We will consider our purpose in attempting this short article completely fulfilled if it moves our readers to make a further investigation of this literature. 



His Divine Grace Jayatīrtha Mahārāja is one of eleven spiritual masters whom ISKCON's founder-ācārya Śrīla Prabhupāda selected to initiate new disciples. He is ISKCON's director for Detroit,

Great Britain, South Africa, and East Africa. He is also a trustee of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.



Every Town and Village

A look at the worldwide activities of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Acclaim for Neo-Vedic Exhibition



"Canvases full of freshness and sensitivity" was the consensus among guests.



"The Incarnation of Dhanvantari" depicts the divine personality who gave rise to medicine.

Editorial Correspondence

Address letters to:
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BACK TO GODHEAD
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New York—Recently gallery owners and art agents, writers, and publishers converged on the Indian consulate for the first exhibit of the Bhaktivedanta Trust Collection of paintings, photos, and sculpture.

Attracting the most attention on opening night was Yadurāṇī-devī dāśī's *Bad Karma*, a canvas that shows human beings degrading themselves toward future lives as animals or plants. (For instance, someone is stuffing his face and transforming it into that of a pig.)

Notable as well was a life-size diorama called *Changing Bodies*. The piece shows the inner, spiritual self remaining unchanged as the outer, material body passes through the stages of infancy, childhood, youth, adulthood, old age, death, and rebirth.

Photos of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's new Bombay cultural center highlighted its synthesis of Indian styling and Western technology, a form that some have called neo-Vedic. The designer of the Bombay cultural center is Surabhir-abhipālayantam Swami.

Also on view was a photographic collection by Bhārgava dāśa, of BACK TO GODHEAD. The product of four years in the field, the collection pointed up the

treasures of India's spiritual culture, specifically her many Kṛṣṇa temples.

Additionally, guests watched showings of *Vṛndāvana: The Land of Kṛṣṇa*, a feature film by Yadubara dāśa that had just placed as a finalist at the New York Film Festival.

The eminent Indian artist Śrī S.N. Swamy made this assessment of the paintings of the Bhaktivedanta Trust Collection:

"In my opinion, the young artists of the Trust are exceeding our own best Indian artists in their mastery of painting. Their canvases are full of freshness and sensitivity. Spatially, the paintings are excellently conceived and executed, and when it is required, they are full of dynamic movement. As devotees of Kṛṣṇa, these artists are able to use their talents, creativity, and devotion in such a way as to inspire similar feelings of devotion in whoever views their work. This surely is the proper role of the artist in society.

"I am certain that this new and vital school of painting will reaffirm the highest ideals of great art at a time when art, being influenced by materialism, has largely been reduced to varieties of senseless abstraction. These works of art must surely spark a great revival in realistic and God conscious art throughout the world."

At the end of the exhibit's one-week run, Consul General K. Srinivasan requested the organizer, Kīrtikā-devī dāśī of the Neo-Vedic Arts Association, to extend it for an additional week.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Calendar

Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees follow a spiritual calendar that divides the year into twelve months, each named for a different form of Kṛṣṇa. The devotees at the ISKCON center nearest you will gladly tell you about the meaning of the festivals listed here.

Year 493 Caitanya Era—Vaiṣṇava month of Hṛṣīkeṣa	
September 3	September 4
Pārśvaikāśī (fasting from grains and beans). Appearance day of Lord Vāmana and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī.	Appearance of Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoḍa Ṭhākura.
September 5	September 6
Disappearance of Śrīla Haridāśa Ṭhākura.	Śrī Viśvarūpa Mahotsava.
Vaiṣṇava month of Padmanābha	
September 17	
Indirā-ekāśī (fasting from grains and beans). His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda arrives in America (1965).	

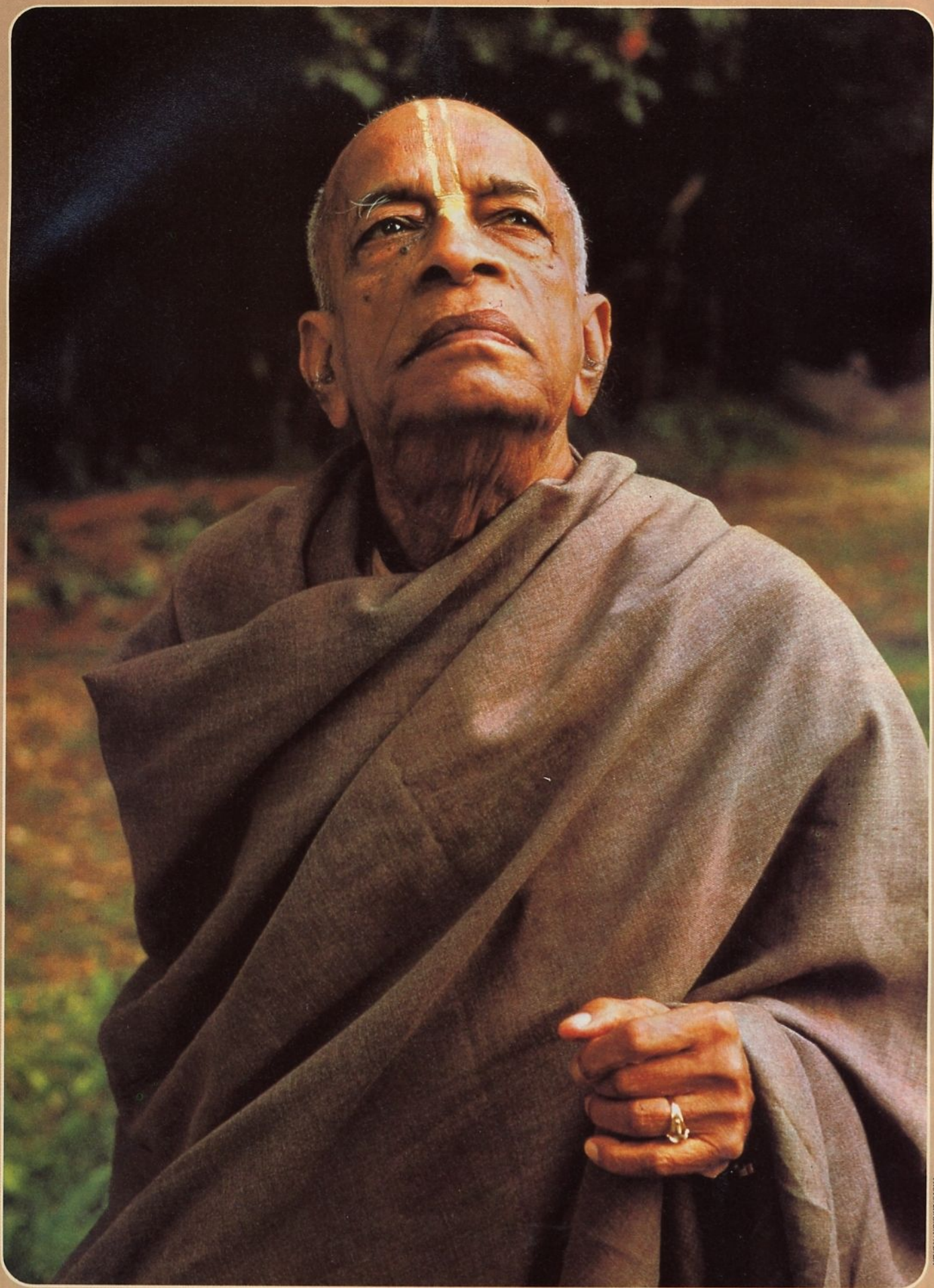


PHOTO: BHARGAVADASA

From *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*:

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you . . .

BECAUSE HE HAS SEEN THE TRUTH

An appreciation by
BRAHMĀNANDA SWAMI

For the disciple the advent of the spiritual master is the most blessed event in the world. It is even more important than Kṛṣṇa's advent, because the spiritual master gives us Kṛṣṇa. Without the spiritual master there would not be any Kṛṣṇa consciousness or love of God for the disciple. With this understanding, the disciple worships the spiritual master as a representative of God who appears in this world and lives among us to bring us to a factual appreciation of the Supreme Lord. And although the spiritual master may disappear from our sight, he leaves behind a great body of teachings and literature that through philosophy, logic, and devotion authoritatively establishes God's existence and offers the serious student an opportunity to experience that existence, both in this life and in the next.

Sometimes we consider the spiritual master more merciful than God Himself, because he so kindly comes to this world of countless inconveniences and problems. He comes just to preach the glories of God, a mission that in this "God-is-dead" age is not without its risks and tribulations. Of course, in deferring to his spiritual master, the disciple does not minimize the importance of God. Rather, he is always thankful to Lord Kṛṣṇa for mercifully sending His selfless representative with the message of Godhead, and he is ever thankful to Kṛṣṇa that he himself has had the good fortune to meet his spiritual master, to surrender to him, and to enter into the blissful association

of Kṛṣṇa conscious souls.

The disciple is ever mindful of the well-known Vedic statement, "By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa one gets a bona fide spiritual master." The spiritual master increases the disciple's devotion for Kṛṣṇa, the all-merciful Lord. And this, of course, is the very meaning of being a spiritual master; it is he who awakens and continually increases our love for God. Thus the second half of the Vedic statement is realized: "And by the mercy of the spiritual master one gets Kṛṣṇa." It is significant that Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared in this world on the day after Janmāṣṭamī, the birthday of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's devotee are always side by side, together.

The spiritual master is the center of the disciple's life. No one is more important; not his wife, his friend, his teacher, the leader of his country, his mother, his father, or even his own self. Sometimes it is considered that the mother and father are the most important persons in our life, because they have given us birth; without them we would not have a body in which to live. But the spiritual master is considered the most significant father, and the knowledge he presents is considered the most significant mother, because they give the disciple spiritual life. Our physical father and mother provide us with a body for living and all the requirements for maintaining the body, such as food, shelter, clothing, education, protection, and a religion to follow. But the spiritual master

and spiritual mother show us how to live happily. Our physical mother and father give us life, but the spiritual master and spiritual mother teach us how to live.

Furthermore, the body that our physical mother and father give us is subject to birth, disease, old age, and death. Thus they have given us a situation that is fraught with difficulties and problems. But the spiritual father and spiritual mother relieve these fourfold miseries. The spiritual master teaches the disciple how to get out of bodily existence, so that this material body will be his last.

Liberation is the real goal of human life and is what the human body is meant for. We can see that the human body is not meant for sense gratification, because the animal body is much better suited for this. Animals can variously eat all day without stopping or sleep for six months or have sex several times an hour, and they carry their own bodily facilities for instant fighting and defense. The human body alone has a developed consciousness, manifested by philosophical introspection and religious inclination. Although a human being can't do everything an animal can do, he alone has philosophy and religion. So successful human life means developing our God consciousness. And it is the spiritual master who gives us this God consciousness; it is he who makes us into human beings.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna

Consciousness, has done more than anyone else in the world, at least since the time of his own spiritual master, to awaken within all people pure devotion to the Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission goes beyond that of a religious worker who opens a home for unwed mothers or a *svāmī* who opens an eye clinic or a priest or minister who holds a high post in a church.

There is a great difference between the transcendental self-knowledge taught by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the pious formulas spoken by the world's religious dignitaries. Generally, the highest principle we hear of is love of our fellow man. But sublime as it may sound, this philosophy is not effective—because as long as we see others on the gross bodily platform, we cannot completely love them. Why? Because others' bodily designations will prove either attractive or repulsive. Black, white, young, old, healthy, sick, rich, poor, male, female, child, adult . . . sad to say, most religious representatives convey the false notion that we are our bodies. "You are Christian" means that you are a Christian body, and "You are Jewish" means that you are a Jewish body. And so, because of the influence of the false ego it becomes difficult, if not impossible to love people with bodies different from our own. Bodily designations mean there must be some distinction, some preference, even some value judgment—and finally some aversion.

But Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to identify all living entities as spirit souls, distinct from the body, which is just an outer covering like a shirt or coat. The person is the soul, not the body. Despite bodily differences, as spirit souls we are all equal. And further, we are all equal emanations from the one same Supreme Lord. Our common identity is based on our common Lord, and therefore a Kṛṣṇa conscious person sees himself and others spiritually, in relation to God. Since God is our father, we are His inseparable sons, and therefore we are all brothers. The natural result of such consciousness is brotherhood, but this brotherhood can come about only because of the fatherhood of God. In a natural way Kṛṣṇa consciousness brings us to love humanity: one who loves the father will easily come to love the brother.

If we water the root of a tree, then we automatically water all the branches and buds. But if we try to water each and every bud separately, that will make the whole tree dry up and die. Sentimental humanism—mere love for fellow man—doesn't work, but Godism, Kṛṣṇa-ism, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, does. This is what Śrīla Prabhupāda taught—how to water the root of the universal tree.

Śrīla Prabhupāda often exposed so-called humanism as deficient in another way. We cannot expect love and harmony and good will toward men if we human beings exploit and destroy other beings. Just because we human beings are superior, what right do we have to kill the inferior? For example, if a child is deaf and dumb and his brothers tell his father, "We want to kill our useless brother," will the father be pleased? He'll warn the

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stronger sons that if they harm their weaker brother he'll punish them. Naturally the father has special affection for his weaker son.

Furthermore, not only will the brothers suffer the father's punishment, but once having killed a brother who was weaker, the stronger brothers will become blood-thirsty and start making plans to kill one another. It is not difficult to apply this analogy to the world situation. In a planned and organized way, human beings are slaughtering many thousands of animals daily, and all the religious denominations say it isn't a sin because "the animals have no souls." All this despite God's commandment that man shall not kill. No wonder we have no relief from strife, crime, and war.


Śrīla Prabhupāda never compromised the truth. He exposed the sham of the politicians, the sham of the scientists, the sham of so-called religious leaders, and the sham of materialistic society, friendship, and love. No one that his disciples had ever met was as forthright as Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Lord's pure devotee. No one could both expose the problems and offer real solutions. His utter humility and dedication to the mission of his spiritual master, even in his old age, was what attracted us to him. To fulfill that mission he was prepared to undergo any hardship

and take any risk, even to journey alone by freighter from Vṛndāvana, India's most sacred and serene village and the site of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, all the way to New York City, the iron city of the Age of Quarrel and Hypocrisy. A mendicant, he did not have anything to take with him but his faith, his translations of the Vedic literatures, and a pair of hand cymbals. This was his greatness, and we cynical sixties rebels (with and without causes) could not help but be attracted.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was dignified and scholarly, humble and serene, an artist and a scientist, a true teacher, and yet he was totally without any means. So how could we be blamed for offering whatever we had to him? First we purchased his books and read them, then we gave some service (the first service I did was to wash his dishes). Then we gave some things that were needed (I gave him my typewriter and my desk lamp). Then we gave money (I put a hundred-dollar bill into the collection basket he used to pass around after class, just to get the pleasure of seeing his face light up with appreciation). By that time he had taken possession of our hearts. We loved him sincerely, and he loved us in return and devoted every ounce of energy within his frail frame to one thing only—seeing to it that we became fixed in spiritual life, Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

This love just grew and grew as we worked together with him—trying to keep up with his energy, enthusiasm, and intelligence—until we surrendered and became loving instruments to be used by him in his mission of saving the world from godlessness, sense gratification, and mental speculation.

In his final days Śrīla Prabhupāda made a heroic effort to return from India to the West and see us, although he could journey only as far as London. He actually was our servant, even though it was we who bowed our heads at his feet and did anything he told us.

Now the responsibility for this mission lies with us. And we who are nothing compared to him will fulfill that mission, rest assured, because each of us has vowed this in his heart. We shall do it by working together as a spiritual family, because although we all know what we are separately, together we are strong. Together we are him and we will do as he did. "He lives forever by his divine instructions, and the follower lives with him" is how Śrīla Prabhupāda dedicated his first book to his spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda is not dead. You can see him in us, because we are trying to follow his instructions. On his birthday anniversary we can rejoice, because Śrīla Prabhupāda lives. All the world can take heart in this. This is the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. 

MY IMPRESSIONS OF ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA

A historical and personal view by Dr. J. Stillson Judah.

Dr. J. Stillson Judah recently retired from the faculty of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, where for many years he was Professor of the History of Religions and Director of the Library. After an exhaustive study of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in the late 1960's and early 1970's he published Hare Krishna and the Counterculture, still considered the definitive scholarly study of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. In the course of his research, Dr. Judah several times met and conversed informally with the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's founder and spiritual preceptor, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. In the following discussion between Professor Judah and Śubhānanda dāsa Brahmācārī, a member of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, Dr. Judah speaks in a personal and revealing way about Śrīla Prabhupāda the scholar, the religious leader, and the saintly person.

Śubhānanda dāsa: When did you first meet Śrīla Prabhupāda?

Dr. Judah: Well, the first time I met him was in Berkeley, in 1969, when the ISKCON temple was on Durant Street. This was right after I'd decided to write a book on the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. I'd been attending *kīrtanas* regularly for quite some time, and when Prabhupāda came there for a visit I was, of course, quite anxious to meet him. There were various theological and philosophical questions that I was concerned about. I don't recall

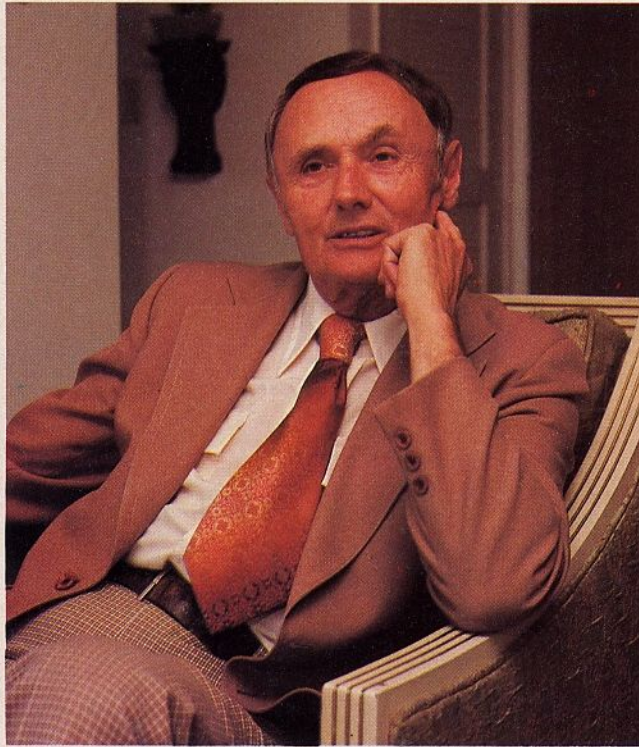


PHOTO: BHARGAVA DASA

at present precisely what questions I had, but we talked principally on the philosophy of the great sixteenth-century Bengali saint Śrī Caitanya, and that of Śāṅkarācārya, who taught Advaita Vedānta, nondevotional monism. And I was rather impressed with Prabhupāda at that particular time, impressed by the comprehensive philosophical knowledge which he obviously had. I was particularly impressed by his knowledge of Sanskrit, since I had studied Sanskrit myself for about six years in college. I was rather awed by the fact that about half of his part of the conversation was in Sanskrit, followed, always, by his English translation, which was something I wasn't able to do. Although I was able to read Sanskrit, I certainly had never been able to memorize great quantities of Sanskrit and

call it up at will to punctuate particular philosophical or theological points appropriately the way he did.

Śubhānanda dāsa: You're referring to his citation of scriptural texts?

Dr. Judah: Yes. This certainly impressed me very greatly. I was impressed not only by his Sanskrit scholarship, but by his exhaustive knowledge of Indian philosophy, particularly the philosophy of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, about which we talked quite extensively. And so I had a very favorable impression, certainly, of his knowledge at that particular time.

Śubhānanda dāsa: What impressions did you have, during that first encounter, of Śrīla

Prabhupāda as a person?

Dr. Judah: I have to say that I was struck by his humility. Although I wasn't a devotee, I did not at all get the feeling that he was speaking down to me. Although he certainly was worthy of my reverence, not only for his scholarship, of course, but for his obvious holiness, he treated me, you might say, on an equal level, with gentlemanly respect. Although I had had a relatively extensive education in Indian philosophy, I came, eventually, to understand that it is ultimately only through the eyes of faith produced by serious and prolonged spiritual discipline that spiritual philosophy can be clearly discerned. In spite of my academic training, therefore, I was not really a proficient conversation partner for Śrīla Prabhupāda. In spite of this, however, he treated me with brotherly

respect and affection. His humility was very apparent.

Śubhānanda dāsa: Any other impressions?

Dr. Judah: I was also very much impressed, even at that first meeting, and have been subsequently impressed, that he lived his life in the same way that he expected his disciples to. This is quite different from so many other *gurus* who come to the West and take up drinking a few cocktails and the like. Prabhupāda really lived a strict life. He was the perfect example for his disciples. And I think this is certainly part of the great power of the man—that he did preach a very severe disciplined life, but he followed it himself, right down to the letter. His popularity among his disciples owes much to the fact that his own life was so truly exemplary, to the highest degree of the holy and disciplined life he demanded of them.

Śubhānanda dāsa: Could you elaborate?

Dr. Judah: Although he certainly was exalted by his disciples, he did not put himself on a plane above them. He ate what they ate, lived in the same kind of building. He didn't want a palace to live in. He followed the same life as his disciples, strictly. The example he gave was a very good one, one that certainly impressed the devotees. I too was very impressed.

Śubhānanda dāsa: Those disciples who, for brief or long periods, were in proximity to Śrīla Prabhupāda consistently vouch for the fact that he was very strict in his personal habits and practices, that he fully practiced what he preached. Even dedicated skeptics could not detect any hypocrisy.

Dr. Judah: That's very true.

Śubhānanda dāsa: How would you view Śrīla Prabhupāda's achievements from a historical point of view? What was his unique contribution?

Dr. Judah: In reality, he was the first to bring devotional, theistic Hinduism—Vaiṣṇavism—to the Western world. Until that time, the West had become acquainted with Hindu philosophy mainly through Emerson and Thoreau and the other nineteenth-century Transcendentalists, whose reading of the Vedic literatures had been limited to nondevotional translations and commentaries representing the nondualistic, pantheistic interpretation. This limited, one-sided Western view of Vedic culture was further solidified by Swami Vivekananda when he visited America in 1893 and spoke at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Since that time, there have been countless *gurus* that have come to the West representing the pantheistic, nondevotional side of the Indian tradition.

In studying the history of Indian phi-

losophy and religion, one has to distinguish between this Advaita ["no-difference-between-God-and-man"] philosophy and the religion practiced by the mass of people. One of the things that one is impressed with when one goes to India is the extraordinary number of temples there. And these temples are not built to an impersonal God. They're constructed for the glorification and worship of a personal God. So the theistic side of

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worship is *very* important in India, predominantly so. But you never get that impression from the teachings of Vivekananda and other impersonalist teachers. In this context, I recently came across an interesting reference to an article published in a popular religious journal in India in the 1890's, in which the author said that it was a shame that Vivekananda is bringing to America this Advaita philosophy, instead of the actual religion that India itself believes and practices. The writer of this article goes on to suggest that Vivekananda should be teaching the Americans the religion of Śrī Caitanya—devotional service to the Supreme Lord—and that that would be a real contribution to the American people.

Actually, it's interesting . . . when I interviewed one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrothers, he told me that he had visited America in the 1930's.

Śubhānanda dāsa: Where did you interview him?

Dr. Judah: In Vṛndāvana, India. He told me that he had been here in the 30's and had traveled around the United States, but he spoke only to the university crowd,

in university classes. He never got down, you might say, to the grassroots, to the people themselves. So his attempts at spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the teachings of Śrī Caitanya, had absolutely no impact at all. It was just a lecture, and then he was gone. He was not able to start any actual movement. When Śrīla Prabhupāda came to America he went directly among the people, especially the people who needed him the most—the countercultural protesters on the Lower East Side of New York and in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. And from there the movement grew and expanded all over the world. So, in effect, Śrīla Prabhupāda introduced theistic Hinduism, Vaiṣṇavism, which has always been very popular in India, to the West for the first time.

Śubhānanda dāsa: I appreciate what you said about Śrīla Prabhupāda's liberality in going among the people, as you put it, to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Ultraconservative, caste-conscious *brāhmaṇas* in India have sometimes criticized Śrīla Prabhupāda's transplantation of traditional Vedic culture to the West, whose inhabitants they feel are unfit for brahminical life.

Dr. Judah: This is an important point. This is another important achievement of Śrīla Prabhupāda's from the historical point of view: he introduced Śrī Caitanya's highly liberal view of *varṇāśrama*, the so-called caste system. While recognizing natural distinctions between people on the basis of social occupation, it cuts through discriminatory distinctions based on birth. In Śrī Caitanya's teaching, anyone, regardless of his station by birth, is not only capable of reaching the highest spiritual position—even to that of a spiritual master—but also can practice his faith with all others in one community, regardless of birth, social position, creed, or color. Kṛṣṇa calls all alike, without distinction, to seek Him.

Śubhānanda dāsa: Dr. Judah, in the context of your comments concerning Śrīla Prabhupāda's scholarship and his introduction of theistic Hinduism to the West, could you comment on the significance of his writings?

Dr. Judah: I certainly honor Śrīla Prabhupāda as one of India's pre-eminent scholars. As a translator of many of India's important religious texts, he gave special attention to the spirit and beauty of the texts. I have seen, of course, many self-consciously literal translations of Indian philosophical and religious classics. These very literal translations are generally very barren—void of the intended religious sense of the text. But Śrīla Prabhupāda, in his translations, really captured their



"As we were walking by the seashore, Śrīla Prabhupāda [at left, above] was speaking of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. He said this was a belief which he also held."

essential spirituality. A literal translation which lacks sympathetic reverence for the text itself can obscure rather than elucidate its profound inner meaning. I find that Śrīla Prabhupāda's translations bring these works to life.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* is widely acknowledged as essentially a devotional, theistic work. The *Gītā* has, unfortunately, been commented upon almost exclusively by advocates of the nontheistic school who have obscured the deeply devotional nature of the work. So I feel that Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation and interpretation represent the true meaning and intention of the *Gītā*. Due to his unstinting and diligent labors, the whole world now has been made aware of the devotional essence of the Indian spiritual tradition, as well as of one of India's great saints, Śrī Caitanya, and of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, whereas before they were scarcely known outside India except by specialists in Hindu religious traditions.

Subhānanda dāsa: Besides that first encounter with Śrīla Prabhupāda that you've already spoken about, did you have any subsequent meetings?

Dr. Judah: I met Prabhupāda again in Berkeley at the time of the Ratha-yātrā festival in 1971. I had a brief interview with him at that time. Our discussion was more in connection with the book I was working on, *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture*. I had some questions, but it was a brief meeting. The third encounter, which took place in 1974, was perhaps the most significant. This was after my book was published and I'd sent him a copy of it.

Subhānanda dāsa: Wasn't this the same occasion as when I accompanied you to see Śrīla Prabhupāda in his private quarters at the L.A. temple?

Dr. Judah: Yes, I believe it was. He had written me a very nice letter about my book, praising it very highly. And I thought it rather amazing that he would feel this

strongly about the book, because although it turned out sympathetic to the movement, it was written not from a devotional but from a critical-objective historical and sociological viewpoint.

Subhānanda dāsa: I vaguely recall the dialogue, but perhaps you remember better than I.

Dr. Judah: Well, we just talked mostly about the book at that time. But the more significant thing is that the next morning he invited me to go for a walk with him on Venice Beach at around 6 a.m. During our conversation, while strolling on the beach, he revealed something very important to me—something that clarified a confusion I had had. In my research on the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, I could not understand at first the answers some devotees had given to one question in my questionnaire. It concerned the age at which they felt their natal religions had lost their meaning for them. Although some gave precise years when that had occurred, many others answered that they had not given up their Christianity and still considered themselves to be Christians. Needless to say, this seemed rather strange to me. As we were walking together by the seashore with the tide rushing in, he was speaking of Christianity and of its belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. He said this was a belief which he also held. Mindful of the orthodox Christian belief in the Trinity, he questioned me: "If Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then who is the Father?" And of course he was referring to Kṛṣṇa, God, the Father.

Then it dawned on me. Of course! Being unable to identify with the mainline churches because of their association with a culture they had opposed as materialistic, Prabhupāda's disciples had been given by him instead a culture and way of life that were consonant with their protests. He taught them the Vedic tradition of India, which underscored their anti-materialistic views and confirmed that material pleasures are fleeting and illusory. Prabhupāda taught his disciples to adopt the view of the sixteenth-century saint Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, whose message has roots in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and thus predates Christianity. For those devotees who still profess their Christianity, this meant not only acceptance of the Vedic culture as taught by Prabhupāda, but also the identification anew of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, while God the Father was revealed to them as having the personal name of Kṛṣṇa. According to their view, the Holy Spirit is identical with the *Paramātmā*, the Supersoul, the form of Kṛṣṇa that resides in each person as the divine witness and guide.

Subhānanda dāsa: Do you see the devo-

teens' transfer of interest from Christianity to Kṛṣṇa consciousness as a negative step, that is, one of mere rejection of the apparent materialism they find in modern Christianity, or as a positive step, one of spontaneous attraction to the teachings and the life-style of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Dr. Judah: Both, of course, but I'd say the move was motivated by mainly a positive interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda taught a pure Vaiṣṇava philosophy which emphasizes so many things that Jesus taught, but which so many of us Christians have either forgotten or ceased to practice in our search for materialistic pleasures. Certainly few Christians today would be willing to really take up the cross of Jesus, to follow Him in a sacrificial life that places the love of God and His service above material pleasures rather than to lay up impermanent the injunction of Jesus to the rich young ruler in Matthew 9:21—to give up all one's possessions and to follow Him. Nor would many care to abide by Christ's command in Matthew 6:19-21—to seek spiritual treasures rather than to lay up impermanent material ones. In their search for a tangible, vital spiritual life-style, many devotees came to reject the hypocrisy of much of contemporary Christianity and search further and eventually find Kṛṣṇa consciousness, where they felt they discovered a life of genuine renunciation and spiritual discipline.

Subhānanda dāsa: Why did Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings appeal primarily to young people, as evinced by the relative youth of most of his disciples?

Dr. Judah: Śrīla Prabhupāda gave meaning to many whose lives had become meaningless during the countercultural revolution. In a time of prosperity, many American youth have felt a disdain for the materialistic goals of the established culture. They have not felt that earning more money to spend on sensual pleasures has given an abiding happiness to their parents. They have come to believe that there must be a more valuable transcendental reality which they have yet to find. Therefore, they have not found direction toward a goal in our established culture, nor have they found meaning in the mainline religions that have supported this culture. For these people, Śrīla Prabhupāda has provided a meaningful place which bears witness to quite different objectives, and he has provided a strict discipline by means of which one may achieve them. So this, I think, was one of his greatest contributions.

Subhānanda dāsa: Some commentators, especially those speaking from a sociological perspective, have suggested that

Śrīla Prabhupāda performed something near a miracle in extricating large numbers of young people from the drug culture and violence of the 60's and 70's.

Dr. Judah: Yes, this is very true. In periods of rapid cultural change, as we say especially in the 60's, we have great periods of violence and turmoil, because people are desperate to find something that's meaningful to them and tend to want to break down what appears to them as meaningless or corrupt. They hadn't found direction in

**“He sacrificed all
personal comfort
for teaching . . .
through his own
example . . .
transcendental
love that extends
to God, to plants
and animals, and
to all humanity.”**

their lives, and so Prabhupāda gave them tangible direction, and as a result they were able and willing to accept radical changes in their personal life-style. And I think not enough appreciation has come from those who are against the so-called “cults” in America, for what Prabhupāda gave these young people. He transformed these individuals in the most positive way. He took them away from their drugs; he took them away from crime. You know, I've talked to a number of devotees—like Dharma, for example, who was in SDS—who had been involved in all kinds of, you might say, violent demonstrations. You yourself had been involved in those days, as you've mentioned. A lot of devotees had been. So many of the violent elements of our country in periods of cultural change are due to these very factors, and when they find something that is healing, such as what Prabhupāda gave them, then their whole lives are transformed. He transformed them through a discipline of strict morality. They gave up the drug abuse, the crime, and they made great changes in their personal lives. I think this is very important, and I think this is one of the great contributions he made, just from

the sociological point of view. This is very important and something that, as I say, the critics rarely recognize. It was Prabhupāda who changed the hearts of many from hatred of society to love—to a love of God and a love of all people through the deep spiritual recognition of God within each one of us as the Supersoul. Unfortunately the world is slow to recognize such contributions.

Subhānanda dāsa: Is there anything else that comes to mind about Śrīla Prabhupāda, either about Prabhupāda personally or his achievements?

Dr. Judah: Yes . . . I was always impressed by the great sacrifices he made. Here was a man who had been raised and educated in India, who had been a householder, had raised a family, had managed a chemical company and who finally decided to give his full time and energy to the religious mission which his *guru*, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, had asked him to execute—to teach the message of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya in the West. True to the highest tradition of India's holy men, he forsook the material comforts of retiring to his own beloved personal family. Instead, like the Galilean master before him, he was willing to abandon his personal family for a greater mission. He came penniless to America to begin a new life of sacrificial work at an advanced age. And I think that not enough attention has been given to the difficulty that this must have entailed—to come over here without any money at all. This is a *tremendous* thing, a *tremendous* sacrifice. Instead of retiring and living with the family and just enjoying life, he gave all that up. You know, that takes an awful lot. And he did this just because he'd been requested to by his spiritual master. As one thinks about this—meditates on it—one sees what a *tremendous* sacrifice that really is. Without ever going back, without ever retiring and saying, “I've done everything I can do now, the thing is going now, so I'm going to retire and go back to my family,” he carried on that sacrifice right to his dying day.

Subhānanda dāsa: Those of us who were with Śrīla Prabhupāda in India in the last days preceding his departure were witness to his unyieldingly sacrificial spirit. Even when he had become so physically weak that he was virtually unable to move his own body without assistance, he continued to dictate his translation and commentary on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, practically up until his last breath, and with perfect clarity of thought and expression.


Dr. Judah: Perhaps he would have lived even longer had he not traveled as extensively as he did. He came to the U.S. every

year, to San Francisco for the Ratha-yātrā festival and to many other cities, looking after the management of the movement, traveling back and forth around the world, at his age. Of course, this has to be very tiring and has to take an awful lot of energy out of a person, and yet he still did this right up until the very last, and that's just remarkable.

Śubhānanda dāsa: Generally at that age a person is taking it easy.

Dr. Judah: Yes, taking it easy, that's right, instead of rising early in the morning, working, and doing that prodigious amount of translating. We can see that Śrīla Prabhupāda sacrificed all personal comfort for teaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Leaving India, alone and penniless, he came to America, where he established a new family consisting of thousands whom he loved as his own. To them he gave the commission of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world. Through his own example they learned of that transcendental love that extends to God, to plants and animals, and to all humanity.

Śubhānanda dāsa: Professor Judah, I want to thank you very much for being so generous with your time and speaking so feelingly and eloquently about Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Dr. Judah: You're quite welcome. 

*Śrī Kṛṣṇa's feet are tinged with pink
That darkens into rose;
And rosebuds, we can say, I think,
Are hued just like His toes.*

*Further up, graceful ankles turn
Like vines after a rose,
And Beauty must her lessons learn
From His style and pose.*

*Śrī Kṛṣṇa's chest is Fortune's rest,
And fragrantly adorned
With garlands: starting at His neck,
They fall in love around His form.*

— Akṣobhya dāsa

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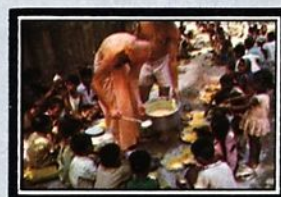
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WHY KṚṢṆA COMES

(continued from page 5)

die. Nobody wants to become an old man; nobody wants to become diseased. This is our natural inclination. Why? Because originally, in our spiritual form, there is no birth, no death, no old age, no disease. So after moving through the evolutionary process, up through the aquatics, plants, trees, birds, when at last we come to this

human form of body—then we should know what the goal of life is. The goal of life is *amṛtatvam*, to become immortal.

Immortal you *can* become—simply by becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious. Kṛṣṇa says it. It is a fact. We simply have to understand. *Janma karma ca me divyam evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ*. If you try to understand Kṛṣṇa in truth, then *tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti*: after giving up this body, you won't have to accept any more material bodies.

And as soon as you don't accept any more material bodies, that means you have become immortal. The thing is, by nature we *are* immortal. So Kṛṣṇa makes His advent, Kṛṣṇa comes to teach us this lesson:

*mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke
jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manaḥ-śaṣṭānīndriyāṇi
prakṛti-sthāni karṣati*

“You are immortal by nature. As spirit soul, you are part and parcel of Me. I am immortal, and so you are also immortal. Unnecessarily, you are trying to be happy in this material world.” [Bg. 15.7]

You have already tried and tried to find happiness in sensuous life, through so many bodies—as cats, as dogs, as demigods, as trees, as plants, as insects. So now that you have a human body, with its higher intelligence, don't be captivated by sensuous life. Just try to understand Kṛṣṇa. That is the verdict of the Vedic literatures. *Nāyaṁ deho deha-bhājāṁ nṛloke kaṣṭhān kāmān arhate viḍ-bhujāṁ ye* [Bhāg. 5.5.1]: to work very hard like dogs and hogs for sense gratification is not the ambition of human life; human life is meant for a little austerity. *Tapo divyaṁ putrakā yena sattvaṁ suddhyet*: we have to purify our existence; that is the mission of human life. Why shall I purify my existence? *Brahma-saukhyāṁ tv anantam*: because then you will get spiritual realization, the unlimited, endless pleasure and happiness. That is real pleasure, real happiness.

*ramante yogino 'nante
satyānanda-cid-ātmani
iti rāma-padenāsau
paraṁ brahmābhīdhiyate*

“The mystics derive unlimited transcendental pleasures from the Absolute Truth, and therefore the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, is also known as Rāma.” [Padma Purāṇa]

All the great saintly persons of India have cultivated this spiritual knowledge so nicely and fully. Formerly, people used to go to India to find out about spiritual life. Even Jesus Christ went there. And yet we are not taking advantage of it. It is not that these literatures and directions are meant only for the Indians or for the Hindus or for the *brāhmaṇas*. No. They are meant for everyone, because Kṛṣṇa claims, *ahaṁ bija-pradaḥ pitā*: “I am everyone's father.” Therefore, He is very anxious to make us peaceful, happy. Just as an ordinary father wants to see that his son is well situated and happy, similarly Kṛṣṇa wants to see every one of us well situated and happy. Therefore He comes sometimes. This is the purpose of Kṛṣṇa's advent. Thank you very much.

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Hare Kṛṣṇa
Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa
Hare Hare
Hare Rāma
Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma
Hare Hare

WHAT IS A MANTRA? In Sanskrit, *man* means "mind" and *tra* means "freeing." So a *mantra* is a combination of transcendental sounds that frees our minds from the anxieties of life in the material world.

Ancient India's Vedic literatures single out one *mantra* as the *mahā* (supreme) *mantra*. The *Kali-santarāṇa Upaniṣad* explains, "These sixteen words—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—are especially meant for counteracting the ill effects of the present age of quarrel and anxiety."

The *Nārada-pañcarātra* adds, "All *mantras* and all processes for self-realization are compressed into the Hare

Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*."

Five centuries ago, while spreading the *mahā-mantra* throughout the Indian subcontinent, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu prayed, "O Supreme Personality of Godhead, in Your holy name You have invested all Your transcendental energies."

The name *Kṛṣṇa* means "the all-attractive one," the name *Rāma* means "the all-pleasing one," and the name *Hare* is an address to the Lord's devotional energy. So the *mahā-mantra* means, "O all-attractive, all-pleasing Lord, O energy of the Lord, please engage me in Your devotional service." Chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, and your life will be sublime.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

“If This Were My Last Column...”

On sitting down to write this column, I am suddenly struck by the question: “What if I were to die tomorrow and these were my last words—what would I say?” And a similar question: “What if the world were to end soon and this were my last column—what would be the most urgent and relevant message I could deliver?” If this were my final editorial, should I perhaps analyze the gasoline shortage? Criticize the advertising industry? Or should I devote my last lines to naming a favorite for president of the United States in 1980? Surely I should speak the most helpful and essential message I could possibly utter:

Please chant these names of God: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Now I can almost hear some of my readers responding, “Is that all you have to say—just that we recite the prayer of your religious sect?” So I must explain that the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant is not a sectarian practice but a *mantra*, which delivers to the chanter life’s highest perfection. There are so many problems in the world today, and ultimately all come from our lack of God consciousness. Stopgap political, social, and economic measures are just that; they don’t reach the underlying disease. But if we chant God’s name and obey His laws, that will be a practical therapy for civilization in this era when God consciousness is neglected by the leaders of nations. Our leaders will attempt anything in the way of diplomacy or force to achieve their short-sighted materialistic ends, but they have no vision for actually solving the world’s problems. A solution is possible only through the education and unification of all people on the spiritual—and nonsectarian—platform of chanting God’s name and obeying His laws. Although our atheistic planmakers would have us think that turning to God is unrealistic or impractical, it’s not so. Even Napoleon, as worldly-minded a leader as he was, admitted, “The sword will always be conquered by the spirit.”

We don’t advertise it much, but in times of distress most of us, even avowed atheists, turn to God. A few years ago in Atlanta, when a Kṛṣṇa devotee ran for mayor on a platform of God consciousness, the editor of a noted newspaper carped that chanting God’s names couldn’t solve man’s problems. Then one day it happened that the editor was kidnapped,

locked into a car trunk, and held for ransom. When finally he had been freed and reporters asked him what he’d been thinking about during his confinement, he said, “I prayed to God.”

And this is natural. If a man at all believes in the Supreme Lord (and a Gallup poll says 94 percent of us do), then he will call upon Him at least in a crisis. But why wait until the last gasp? Sometimes a person near death prays to God to let him go on living for just a few more years . . . in defiance of God’s laws. But this is not God consciousness. A Hindi proverb says man prays to God in difficulty, but if he would only pray to God when he is well situated, then he wouldn’t fall into difficulty. Of course, in this material world we’re *always* in difficulty, whether during this present life or the next. But the Vedic literatures (for that matter, all the scriptures of the world) explain that in both this life and the next, we can solve our problems by becoming devotees of the Supreme Lord.

So all devotees, regardless of their particular religious faith, have to teach people about glorifying God and obeying His commandments. Granted, gross materialists may be absorbed in their material, patchwork solutions; but at least professed men of God have to teach the authorized principles of God consciousness. They should never abandon the simple method of pure devotional service to the Supreme. Yet they are doing exactly that.

Once I was invited to a symposium on a Dallas T.V. show. About thirty priests, ministers, rabbis, and monks spoke, successively, and almost uniformly about the glories of welfare work. I suggested that the highest kind of welfare work is to tell people about glorifying God and obeying His laws, and that spiritual leaders should urge people specifically to avoid killing, adultery, gambling, and intoxication. Once people start glorifying God and obeying His laws, they won’t be so much in need of ordinary, mundane welfare work. The Supreme Lord will more than provide for our necessities, if only we’ll recognize our relationship with Him. Even when people don’t strictly follow spiritual codes, still their spiritual leaders have to engage them in chanting God’s names. This is the essence of religion. One can choose to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa or Allah or Jehovah; but calling upon God’s names is recommended in all the world’s scriptures.

The Vedic scriptures say that all of us are spiritual souls, originally God conscious entities; but due to our association with matter since time immemorial, our consciousness is now adulterated. And the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is a sublime method for reviving our transcendental consciousness. We are living in illusion, trying to master nature, although actually we are under the grip of her stringent laws. By working to exploit the resources of nature, we have become more and more entangled in her complexities. Despite our hard struggle to conquer nature, we are ever more dependent on her. This illusory struggle against material nature can at once be stopped when we revive our eternal Kṛṣṇa consciousness; and the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant is the transcendental process for reviving this original, pure consciousness. By chanting the transcendental vibration, we cleanse our hearts of the false mentality “I am the lord of all I survey.”

Because Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the original, natural energy of the living being, when we hear the transcendental vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s names, our original consciousness is revived. Of all forms of religious meditation or study, chanting God’s name is both the simplest and most effective. Even in the beginning, we can feel transcendental ecstasy beyond the material concept of life. Calling on the names of God does not require that we change our religion or nationality or social status. Anyone can take it up, provided he is properly guided.

With proper guidance, we can live in accord with the proverb “simple living and high thinking,” satisfying our material needs without artificial industries and complicated urbanized life, saving time and energy for understanding our eternal relationship with God; and at the time of death we can return to the spiritual world.

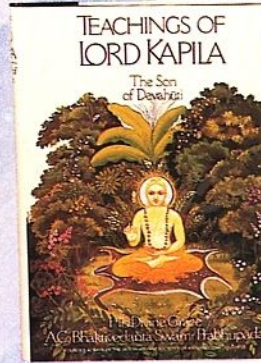
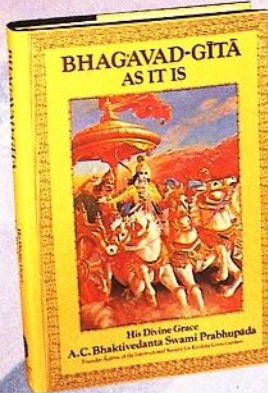
So this is my message: Please chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. I hope I’ll live quite a few more years to write more Kṛṣṇa conscious messages. But even if not, I have delivered the most urgent message. We should always give the world our best, most helpful contribution, and we should live each day in the shelter of the Absolute Truth, as if it were our last day. So why wait for the deathbed or doomsday? Please chant these names of God:

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

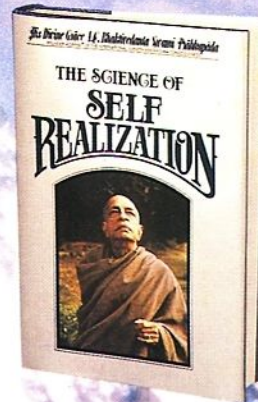
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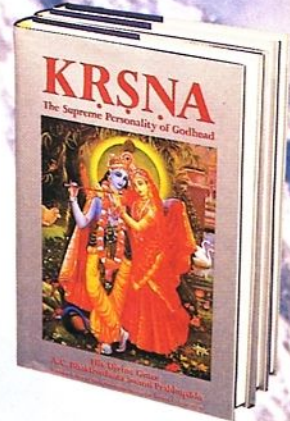
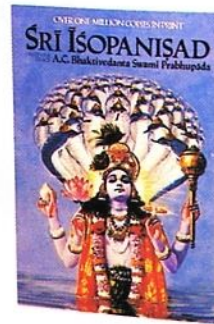
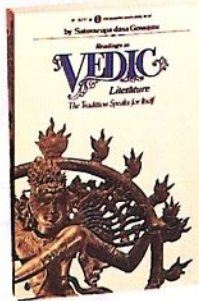
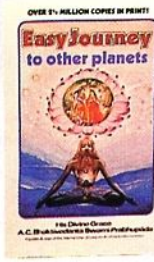
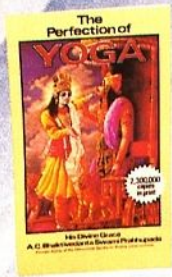
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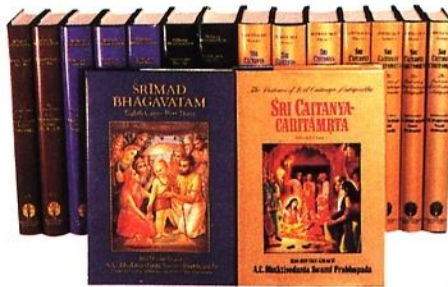
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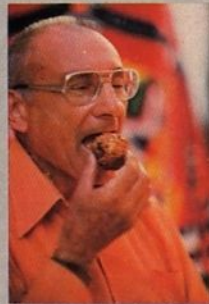
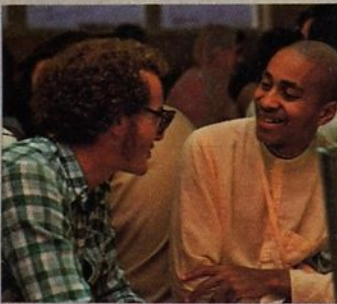
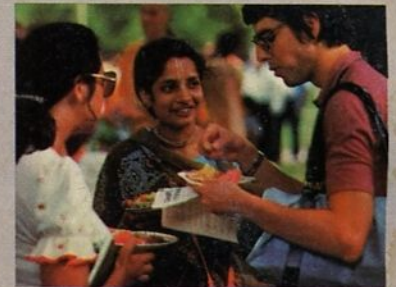
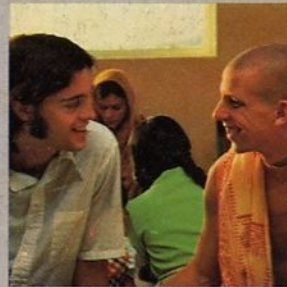
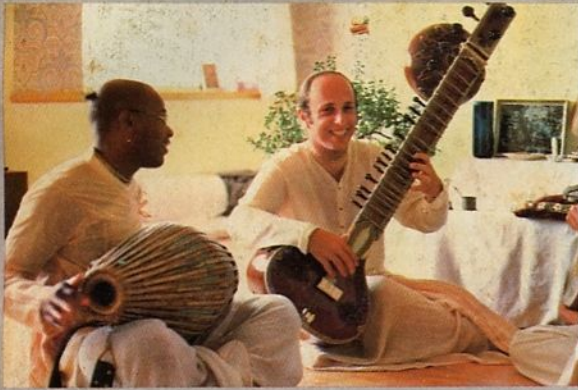
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