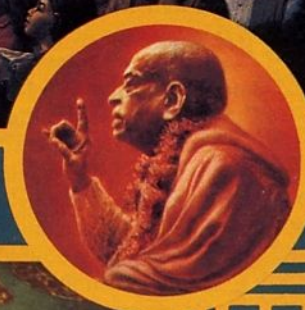


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

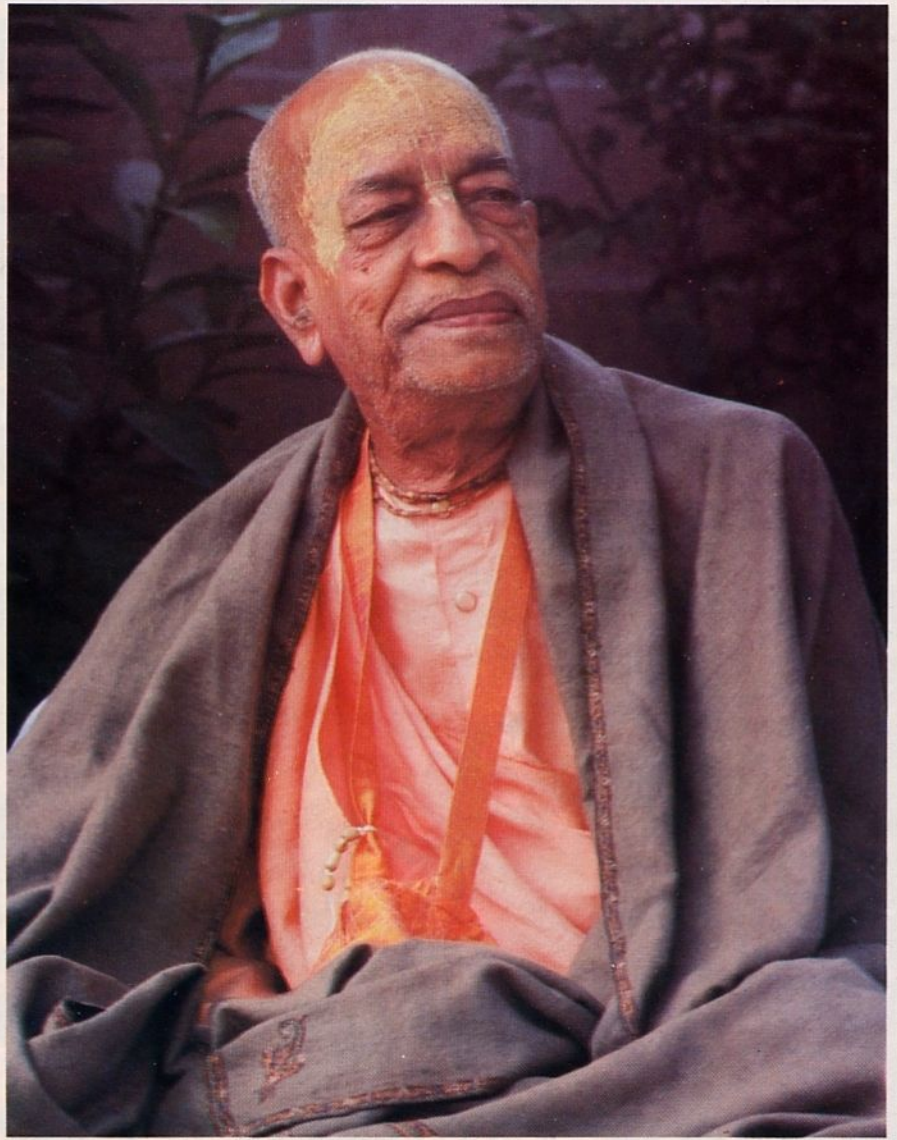
# BACK TO GODHEAD

Vol.23 No.9

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



**His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda,**  
 Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, came to America in 1965, at age sixty-nine, 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 literature, 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 Vṛndāvana, India, the place most sacred to Lord Kṛṣṇa. His disciples are carrying forward the movement he started.



BACK TO GODHEAD is the monthly journal of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. When Śrīla Prabhupāda began the Society (in New York City, in 1966), he put into writing the purposes he wanted it to achieve. They are as follows:

1. To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and to educate all peoples in the techniques of spiritual life in order to check the imbalance of values in life and to achieve real unity and peace in the world.
2. To propagate a consciousness of Kṛṣṇa, as it is revealed in *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.
3. To bring the members of the Society together with each other and nearer to Kṛṣṇa, the prime entity, thus developing the idea within the members, and humanity at large, that each soul is part and parcel of the quality of Godhead (Kṛṣṇa).
4. To teach and encourage the *saṅkīrtana* movement, congregational chanting of the holy names of God, as revealed in the teachings of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
5. To erect for the members and for society at large a holy place of transcendental pastimes dedicated to the personality of Kṛṣṇa.
6. To bring the members closer together for the purpose of teaching a simpler, more natural way of life.
7. With a view toward achieving the aforementioned purposes, to publish and distribute periodicals, books, and other writings.

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

# BACK TO GODHEAD

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**SPIRITUAL NAMES.** 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."

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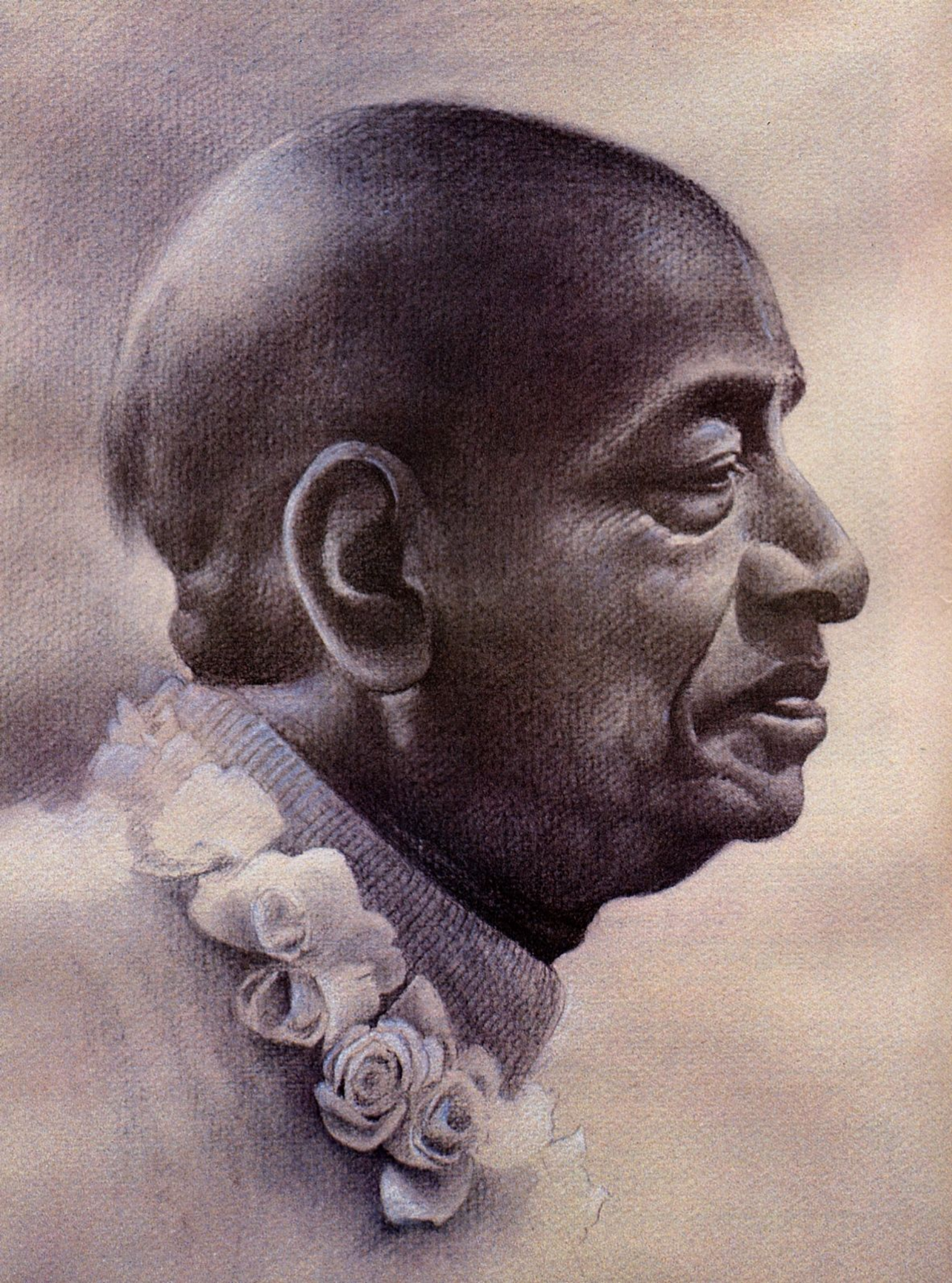
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**COVER:** Lord Kṛṣṇa's devotees will observe several important festivals this month: September 3—Janmāṣṭamī, Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance day; September 4—Vyāsa-pūjā, the appearance day of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda; September 19—Rādhāṣṭamī, the appearance day of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort; and September 23—Vāmana-dvādaśī, the appearance day of Lord Vāmana, the famous incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who strode the universe in three steps. Lord Vāmana appeared first as the four-armed Personality of Godhead Lord Nārāyaṇa and then assumed the form of a *brāhmaṇa*-dwarf and a *brahmacārī* (celibate student of Vedic knowledge). At the time of the Lord's acceptance of the sacred thread according to Vedic tradition, great sages, demigods, and their wives presented Him with the auspicious paraphernalia for His role in this incarnation. (Painting by Parikṣit dāsa.)



# “This Is Perfect Knowledge”

Real knowledge begins with freedom from identification with the body—the source of all our suffering.

A lecture in London, England, on August 20, 1973

by HIS DIVINE GRACE

A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya  
śtoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ  
āgamāpāyino 'nityās  
tāḥs titikṣasva bhārata*

“O son of Kuntī, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bhārata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.”

(*Bhagavad-gītā*, 2.14)

This is a very important verse. In the previous verse Kṛṣṇa said, *dehino 'smin yathā dehe*: “The living entity, the soul, is within the body.” So the bodily pains and pleasures are not the pains and pleasures of the soul within. And when we think the bodily pains and pleasures are ours, this is simply due to our misidentification with the body.

For example, suppose you are sitting in a nice motorcar, and a man in front of you is pulling a ricksha. I have seen this in India. So, the ricksha has come in front of the nice motorcar, and the driver of the car is shouting to the man drawing the ricksha, “O ricksha, make way!” The man sitting in the motorcar is thinking that he has become a motorcar and that the man drawing the ricksha has become a rick-

sha. Actually, the man drawing the ricksha is a human being, and the man sitting in the nice Rolls Royce car is also a human being. But because the rascal is sitting in a Rolls Royce car, he is thinking, “I am a Rolls Royce, and he is a ricksha.” This is the material conception of life—to adopt a designation according to the body instead of the soul.

So, when we get out of this bodily conception of life, that is real knowledge. Then we become a *pañḍita*, or *brāhmaṇa*. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [5.19], *vidyā-vinaya-sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini/śuni caiva śva-pāke ca pañḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*: “One who is actually a *pañḍita*, a learned man, sees a *brāhmaṇa*, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater equally, because he sees that each of them is a spirit soul, not the body.”

An actually learned man knows, *aham brahmāsmi*—“I am Brahman, spirit.” And he also knows that the individual Brahman, the spirit soul, is part and parcel of the Supreme Brahman. One must come to know, “I am not this body; I am spirit soul.” Knowledge begins from there. If one does not reach that point—*aham brahmāsmi*—then he is an animal. The animals think, “I am a cat,” “I am a dog,” “I am this,” “I am that.” And an animallike man thinks, “I am a ricksha,” “I am a motorcar.” That is animalistic thinking.

But a learned person thinks, “I am not

this body; I am part and parcel of the Supreme Brahman.” And when you are further advanced, you can understand, “I am an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa.” This is perfect knowledge.

But the beginning is to know, “I am not this body; I am spirit soul.” In this modern world many rascals are passing as spiritual leaders, but they do not know the very first lesson of spiritual knowledge—that I am not this body. These so-called leaders are doing so many sinful acts for the satisfaction of the body, and still they are passing as religious or spiritual. Nobody can be spiritual or religious unless he understands his spiritual identification.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* the last instruction of Kṛṣṇa is *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*: “You rascals and fools have created so many religious systems simply on the basis of bodily differences. That is not religion. Real religion is to know that I, Kṛṣṇa, am the Supreme Soul, Parabrahman, and that you are My parts and parcels. So we have an intimate relationship, like that between a father and son. It is the son’s duty to obey the father; therefore you should surrender to Me, and I will protect you. That is the perfection of life.”

The bodily concept of life is so strong that even big, big learned so-called religionists say that the animal has no soul. Because the human body is very much

advanced and has the power to kill animals, these so-called religionists speak this nonsense—that the animals have no soul. Why do animals have no soul? What is the symptom of possessing a soul? Consciousness. So if I am a conscious spirit soul within this body, why does the poor animal have no soul? He also has consciousness. So what is the essential difference between the human being and the animal that makes you say the animal has no soul?

It is very easy to understand the existence of the soul within the body. As Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhāgavad-gītā*, *yena sarvaṁ idaṁ tatam*: “The soul spreads its influence all over the body.” Just as the sun spreads sunshine all over the universe, so God, the Supreme Soul, spreads His consciousness all over the creation. Similarly, since I am part and parcel of God, I am also soul, and like the sun I spread my “shining,” my consciousness, all over the body (*yena sarvaṁ idaṁ tatam*).

Therefore, the proof of the soul’s existence is that consciousness is spread all over my body. As soon as I pinch any part of my body, I feel pain. Therefore it is to be understood that the soul is there. When a man is going to die, the doctor examines the pulse or the heart, and if he finds that they are still beating, that is the sign the man is still living. Similarly, the proof that the soul is within my body is that I can feel pain and pleasure in my body.

So, the body in touch with consciousness feels pain and pleasure. Otherwise, what is this body? It is simply a lump of matter. Earth, water, fire, air—a combination of material elements. Suppose you make a doll out of earth and water and then dry it in the sunshine. That is fire. So, the doll is made of earth, water, and fire, but there is no soul. That is the difference between the doll and my body. You can prepare a doll with earth, water, air, fire—all kinds of material elements—but you cannot give it a soul. That is not possible. Only Kṛṣṇa can provide the soul: *aḥaṁ bīja-pradaḥ pitā*.

The same principle is there when a man and woman engage in sex. The man gives the seed, and the woman gives the ingredients for developing the body of the child. Could a woman produce a child without the aid of a man? No, that is not possible, because with his seed comes the soul. And when the soul is situated in the womb of the mother, she can assist by supplying the ingredients to develop the body.

By nature’s process, when one gives up this gross material body, the subtle body of mind, intelligence, and ego remains. The subtle body carries the soul to his next gross body. But where will the soul go? That is explained in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [3.31.1]: *karmaṇā daiva-netreṇa*

*jantur dehopapattaye*. The calculation is made by superior judgment to determine the soul’s assets and liabilities, and according to this judgment he receives his next body. It is just like when a man in a business concern for some time has his record reviewed. Then his superiors judge, “Yes, this man has done nicely, so give him a promotion.” But if he has not done nicely, they will say, “Oh, no, don’t give him a promotion. He should be fired.”

Similarly, we are getting different types of bodies according to our *karma*. Otherwise, why don’t all living entities have the same bodily features? Why are there differences? This is common sense. Varieties of body, varieties of position, are due to one’s previous activities, or *karma*. Again the example of the ricksha and the Rolls Royce: The poor man has only a ricksha because that is all he could purchase, but

**O**ut of ignorance, the rascal is thinking he has become a Rolls Royce, and if the Rolls Royce is broken in some accident, he becomes overwhelmed: “Oh, I am lost!” This is going on.

the rich man has a Rolls Royce because he has paid more. Similarly, if your activities are nice, you will be promoted to a higher standard of life, perhaps to the heavenly planets or even to Brahmaloḳa, the highest place in this universe. But if your activities are sinful and abominable, you will be degraded to the cats and dogs.

Our situation is based on the qualities of our body. With a first-class body you can live in the higher planetary system. With a second-class body you have to remain in the middle planetary system. And with a third-class body, you go down. In other words, you become an animal, a tree, an insect, a bird, or a beast.

All these situations of enjoyment or suffering are due to our misidentification with the body. But the soul is different from the body, and on that basis Kṛṣṇa is trying to convince Arjuna to fight: “Do your duty. Your so-called grandfather and so-called *guru* are not their bodies. So if

their bodies are killed, why should you lament? Their souls are eternal. They existed in the past, they exist at present, and they will continue to exist. Simply their bodies will change. So why are you lamenting? Because it is My desire that you fight, you will not commit any sin by killing them, and in the end you will come to Me in My spiritual abode.”

So, on the whole one has to understand that we are not this body, and that when we feel bodily pains and pleasures, they are not the pains and pleasures of the soul. It is because the soul ignorantly misidentifies with the body that it feels pains and pleasures. Otherwise, the soul has no pain or pleasure in connection with the body.

In the *Vedas* it is said, *asaṅgo hy ayaṁ puruṣaḥ*: “The soul has nothing to do with the body.” Still, out of ignorance the soul identifies himself with the body. Again the example of the Rolls Royce: Out of ignorance, the rascal is thinking he has become a Rolls Royce, and if the Rolls Royce is broken in some accident, he becomes overwhelmed: “Oh, I am lost!” This is going on.

When one becomes *brahma-bhūta*, actually self-realised, there is no more lamenting, no more hankering (*na śocati na kāṅkṣati*). Since I am not this body, why should I hanker after bodily comfort? Whatever Kṛṣṇa has given, that’s all right. But because people are absorbed in the bodily concept, they are simply seeking bodily, sensuous enjoyment. That’s all. This is the material world.

All materialists are fools and rascals, *mūḍhas*. And because they are fools and rascals, they are committing sins, becoming entangled in the transmigration of the soul in different types of bodies, and perpetually suffering. As soon as you get a material body, you suffer. Whether you have a white body, a black body, or a yellow body, a man’s or an animal’s body, it doesn’t matter: as soon as you get a material body, you must suffer. This is the punishment of nature.

At least four sufferings must be there: birth, old age, disease, and death. Whether you become a king or a dog or a cat, it doesn’t matter. Even if you become Lord Brahmā, you must suffer these four miseries.

Therefore, our problem is how to get out of this bodily entanglement. I am a spirit soul, but somehow or other I have fallen into this entanglement of bodily transformations. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says, *anādi karama-phale paḍi’ bhavārṇava-jale taribare nā dekhi upāya*: “Somehow or other I have fallen into this ocean of birth and death, and I do not know how to get out of it.” Suppose you are thrown into the middle of the ocean. However expert a swimmer you may be, you cannot be comfortable. You have to swim all day long;

otherwise, you will immediately drown. Similarly, as soon as you get yourself into this material world, you have to struggle for existence. You *have* to. So if you want to stop this struggle for existence, you must get out of the material world. That is the problem of life.

Therefore Caitanya Mahārabhu teaches us, *ayi nanda-tanuja kiṅkaraṁ patitaṁ mām viṣame bhavāmbudhau*: “My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, son of Nanda Mahārāja, I am Your eternal servant, but somehow or other I have now fallen into this material ocean.” (*Viṣame* means “very ferocious danger.” This ocean of material existence is very dangerous.) “Although I am Your servant, somehow or other I have forgotten You and have fallen down.” Then, *kṛpayā tava pāda-pankaja sthita-dhūli-saḍṣaṁ vicintaya*: “Now I am seeking Your mercy. Please pick Me up and make Me a particle of dust at Your lotus feet.” This should be our prayer, and we should have no other prayer.

Caitanya Mahārabhu also teaches, *na dhanam na janam na sundarīm kavitaṁ vā jagad-īśa kāmaya*: “O Lord, I don’t want wealth, followers, or women.” People generally pray for material benefits: “O God, give us our daily bread. Give me a nice position. Give me a nice wife.” So on and so on—praying simply for material enjoyment. My Guru Mahārāja [Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura] used to say that if we pray to God for all these nonsense things, we are just like a man who goes to a king for some benediction but doesn’t know what to ask for. The king says, “Whatever you want, you can ask from me,” and the man says, “Kindly give me a pinch of ashes.” The man could have said, “Please give me half your kingdom.” Why should he ask for a pinch of ashes?

So, praying to God for material things is foolishness. You may pray, “O God, give us our daily bread,” but the bread is already there. Why just for you? For everyone. For all living entities the “bread,” or

food, is already provided by God: *eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān*. “The Lord provides all creatures with the necessities of life.” The elephant does not go to church to pray “Give me food,” yet it is supplied food in the jungle. Similarly the tiger is supplied food, and the ant is supplied food within his hole. How are they all eating, how are they living, how are they begetting offspring? God is providing everything.

So, getting our material necessities is not the real problem. But these rascals are simply perplexed with this problem—how to eat, how to sleep, how to defend, how to mate. These things are already fixed up according to your *karma*. You should simply use your time to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is your only business. Otherwise, your life is spoiled.

You cannot improve your material situation. That is already fixed up: *prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarva-* (continued on page 35)



©The Bhaktivedānta Book Trust. Painting by Muralīdhara dāsa.

*Rādhāṣṭamī*, the anniversary of the appearance of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s eternal consort, falls this year on September 19. Devotees will observe the auspicious occasion by discussing the supreme glories of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, fasting till noon, and enjoying a sumptuous feast prepared for Her pleasure.

## Rādhāṣṭamī

by Urmilā-devī dāśī

She stands by His side, sweet  
smile entreating  
Us to worship His feet,  
soft and pinkish.

She massages them gently,  
offering *tulasī*.

Oh, won’t you please come and see  
how beautiful they are?

Rādhārāṇī, queen of worship,  
beauty supreme in female form,  
Please protect me, don’t let me slip  
from the path of *bhakti*.

Soaring through transcendental treetops  
on a swing of flowers,

Downpour of nectar never stops  
where You are queen.

Can You recommend me to Your Lord,  
O eternal goddess?

In this world I’m just restless and bored,  
forgetting Him.

Is there any chance

I could join Your pleasure dance?

Lucky circumstance

to be a flower in Your hand there.

Your hand of benediction

has its lotus palm upturned.

I wish that I could get some

of Your blissful mercy,

Glorify Your divine name,

serve you all my days, please not in vain.

Just give me the same simple gift—

servant of Your servant forever.





# The Counterfeit Of Spiritual Life

Impersonalists are essentially of two types:  
the classic and the wishy-washy.

by KUNḌALĪ DĀSA

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Once, at the hermitage of a venerated *guru*, a disciple became enlightened after years of penance and instruction at his master's feet. "O master," he said, "I realise what you have been saying all along: God and I are one. Only by the power of illusion have I have been making a distinction between myself and God. By your kindness I am awakened. I am in union with the formless, limitless, ineffable, and eternal Supreme." When the *guru* indicated that the disciple had understood rightly, the disciple asked his master's blessing to go alone on a pilgrimage.

On his way, he walked down the middle of the streets, pondering the implications of his recent enlightenment. After some time he heard an elephant driver shouting from atop his elephant, "Make way for the

PHOTO BY YAMARĀJA DĀSA

elephant! Move out of the road!" He saw pedestrians fearfully scurrying out of the elephant's path.

"If I am God," our hero reasoned, "why should I move out of the road for an elephant? That would betray my convictions. The elephant should stand aside for me."

Before long, he and the elephant came face to face. "Make way for the elephant," the mahout shrieked in panic, but the ascetic stood his ground. The elephant then lumbered up to him, grabbed him around the waist, and tossed him out of the way. The ascetic sustained a broken arm and some ugly bruises.

Early the next day he hobbled into his spiritual master's presence, where he related the incident. "O master," he cried at the conclusion, "just yesterday I thought I'd completely understood your teachings, but look what happened when I applied them. How could such a misfortune happen to me, and on the very day I realised your instructions?"

With a slight hint of annoyance, the benign master chided, "Did you not hear God on top of the elephant telling you to move out of the way?"

This little story demonstrates one of the severe flaws in the philosophy of monism, which states that there is absolute spiritual oneness—without differentiation—among all beings, including God. As the story shows, if everyone is elevated to the status of God, only calamity can result from the confusion as to who should have the right of way when a conflict of interest arises. Since we have that problem already, monism achieves nothing except to shift the burden from the mundane to the spiritual realm.

The philosophy of monism, or impersonalism, espouses the idea that on the spiritual platform there is no variety and no individuality. There is no duality—no good and bad, hot and cold, happiness and distress—no differentiation of any kind. Hence souls attaining salvation retain no individual, personal traits whatsoever. They simply merge into an amorphous entity of pure consciousness. That is the grandest moment in the impersonalist's scheme: when he merges into this ocean of spirit.

Another way of phrasing this is to say the impersonalist's goal is to become an eternal nobody, for self-annihilation is indeed the ramification of his idea. He never puts it that way, of course, but having analysed that being somebody in this material world is to endure an existence fraught with duality and suffering, he reasons that becoming a perpetual nobody is a nifty alternative to the problems of repeated birth, disease, old age, death, wars, in-laws, taxes, sexism, racism, and any other miseries we encounter here.

What could be a better solution to speeding tickets, heating and cooling bills, or jilted love affairs?

As you may have guessed, we adherents to the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness disagree with the conclusions of the impersonalists, although Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees and impersonalists do hold some things in common. We both say, for example, that living beings are not their bodies but are spiritual souls encased in material bodies. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa likens this situation to that of a driver in a vehicle. A driver might identify himself with his car, but at the end of his journey he gets out of the car, because the two identities are actually distinct. Impersonalists and devotees also agree that by nature the soul, like God, is eternal and full

*The impersonalist will say that the soul is God. You are God. I am God. Idi Amin is God. Adolph Hitler is God. Stalin is God, too. God in a severe state of illusion, to be sure, but God nonetheless. And they don't stop there. Cats and dogs are also God.*

of bliss and knowledge.

All this, a dedicated impersonalist will say, adds up to the soul being God. You are God. I am God. Idi Amin is God. Adolph Hitler is God. Stalin is God, too. God in a severe state of illusion, to be sure, but God nonetheless.

And they don't stop there. Cats and dogs are also God. And butterflies, cockroaches, fleas, clams, lobsters—"Because the one spirit that moves in you and me is the same in all of them, the same chord of joy that moves all the creation." Impersonalists like to talk like that; they think it sounds supramundane.

They also like to bandy about terms like "brahman," "ātmān," and "om," and to quote from the *Vedānta* and the *Upaniṣads*. But they don't always hail from India and use Sanskrit terms. Christian impersonal-

ists, for example, like to talk about "the Christ" within us and the "Godself" and the "I Am" and being in "the here and now" and other similar "spiritual" nomenclature. Often when they hold forth on the virtues of oneness—which some can do with wit and much apparent wisdom—they exude an aura of realisation and brilliance that can dazzle anyone not able to see through their mystique.

Impersonalists also believe that the kingdom of God is a myth. Inexplicably, they find the idea of merging into one homogeneous spiritual being—like a drop of water merging into the ocean—more attractive and far more plausible than a spiritual world of spiritual forms and unlimited variety, where the Lord and His pure devotees revel in endless pastimes and loving exchanges, as described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the *Brahma-samhitā* and hinted at in all the world's great scriptures.

The impersonalist's spiritual reality is a sort of suspended animation, where you live eternally, and maybe you are a little happy at first to get away from the tax man and the grim reaper, but *nothing* ever happens there. It's like an enormous wind tunnel—but with no wind.

Not even the simplest mind, living in the drabest of worlds (in the remotest regions of the gulag, say), could imagine a more dreadful, more humdrum existence. As a friend once put it, "If that's spiritual reality, I prefer to stay here. Giving up egoism is one thing, but who wants to become an eternal nonfunctional being? That's like asking me to become an eternal bat and hang from an eternal rafter forever." Yet impersonalists will tell you with unabashed candor that their gruesome proposal is the goal of life.

There are essentially two types of impersonalists, the classic and the wishy-washy. Classic impersonalists hold that spiritual life means to culture enlightenment by philosophical study, austerity, and renunciation. These help to dismantle the false ego and to sever the knot of material attachment within the heart, so that at the time of death one can leave the material world once and for all and merge into God's existence.

Wishy-washy impersonalists say they believe the same, but they have little inclination for philosophy, penance, and renunciation. They'll openly express conviction about the soul's existence and speak with ardent longing about the day of their deliverance. In the meantime they try to live it up as best they can—with detachment, of course.

In the West, a true classic impersonalist is rare. Wishy-washies, on the other hand, proliferate. They tend to attract celebrities to their fold, which attracts the media,

which attracts the public—which is not a bad cycle from the celebrity's accountant's point of view, as it confers tidy sums on the celebrity from instant bestsellerdom, television specials, speaking tours, and so forth. All of which, from a wishy-washy's perspective, is proof that he or she is on the right track spiritually. Otherwise, why all the wonderful bounty?

Impersonalism first gained a toehold in the West in the last century with Emerson and Thoreau. That became a foothold in this century, when, in the sixties and seventies, it became fashionable to take an Eastern philosophy and modify it to suit one's preferences, as part of the prevailing hippie ideology. While the sentimental hippie ideal of universal brotherhood and free sex didn't survive, the wily notion of absolute oneness did, and today it's going strong as a main pillar in the New Age ideology.

Actually, impersonalism is much older than Emerson and hippies and the New Age. We don't know when exactly it came into being, but in India, Śaṅkara (A.D. 788–820) was the first philosopher of note to advocate it. His ideas caught on, and his doctrine of monism replaced Buddhism, which had been the prevailing religion of India since the conversion of Emperor Ashok some centuries earlier.

That impersonalism should replace Buddhism is amusing in itself, since the difference between the two is negligible. Impersonalism is sometimes referred to as veiled Buddhism, for while the Buddhists postulate that the Absolute is *śūnya*, or void, the impersonalists say the Absolute is *nirviśeṣa*, devoid of all attributes. But to say the Absolute is something without any attributes is just a roundabout way of saying "void."

At any rate, since Śaṅkara's time many stalwart preachers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, using the words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, Himself—as recorded in the *Bhagavad-gītā*—and strong logic, have refuted the conclusions of Śaṅkara time and again. Yet monism is so alluring that it gets more attention than the far superior personalism of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And so, although it's a doctrine riddled with contradictions and supported by no direct interpretation of any scripture, and although Śaṅkara ultimately rejected it, impersonalism continues spreading around the globe.

One of the leading champions of personalism was Madhva (A.D. 1239–1319) a powerful scholar, Kṛṣṇa conscious saint, and mystic. In his *Māyāvāda-śata-dūṣaṇī* he offers one hundred scriptural arguments that shred the monistic conclusions and remove all doubt about the untenable notion of absolute oneness. In

public debates also, Madhva defeated the leading Śaṅkarites of his time.

Similarly, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu (A.D. 1486–1534) refuted the impersonalistic conclusions in numerous encounters with leading scholars of that school, most notably Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma of Jagannātha Purī, who became His disciple. Unfortunately, one rarely hears about these historical episodes.

All the same, one does not have to be a scholar of Madhva's or Śrī Caitanya's caliber to peg impersonalism for what it is. Just knowing a few basic precepts of *Bhagavad-gītā*, ones even the impersonalists agree upon, is sufficient to turn the tide of monism's bad logic.

For instance, impersonalists agree with Kṛṣṇa's description of the soul in the

**L**ord Caitanya refuted the impersonalistic conclusions in numerous encounters with leading scholars of that school, most notably Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma, who became His disciple. Unfortunately, one rarely hears about these episodes.

*Bhagavad-gītā*, where He says it cannot be cut or injured by any weapon. Yet they cannot explain how we became cleaved or separated from the Absolute One into individuals in the first place, or at least how one immense, uncleavable spiritual entity fell into the illusion of being many.

Indeed, impersonalists are at a loss to explain how God could fall into illusion at all, which is a serious matter, considering that this makes illusion superior to God.

At the same time, it would be unfair not to credit them for the kernel of truth in their doctrine: the oneness of God and the individual souls. Lord Caitanya taught that God and the individual souls are spiritual and eternal; hence there is *qualitative* oneness. He pointed out, however, that there is a *quantitative* difference as well. Individual souls are minute, or in-

finite, whereas the Personality of Godhead is infinite. That's why minute souls can sometimes be overwhelmed and fall under the spell of the illusory energy. But the Lord Himself, who is the energetic source of everything, including the illusory energy, never falls under its influence. Impersonalists stress the oneness and ignore the difference.

Lord Caitanya's teaching of simultaneous oneness and difference between God and the individual souls is called in Sanskrit *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*. He and His followers have given examples to illustrate this truth. One example is that of the gold nugget and the gold mine. Under chemical analysis, gold nuggets are seen to be qualitatively one with a whole mine of gold, but the quantitative difference is unquestionable. If one were given the choice between the two, it's inconceivable that one would choose the nugget.

Another example is that of a spark and a fire. Though both have the quality of giving off heat and light, the quantities of the energies they emit are vastly different.

Probably the most graphic example of simultaneous oneness and difference is that of sunlight and the sun. Like the Lord, the sun is the energetic source of unlimited energy. Its rays are comparable to the unlimited souls emanating from the Lord. The rays are simultaneously one with the sun and yet different from it. We may welcome a few sunrays into our room through the window, but we would never extend the same invitation to the sun itself.

The conclusion is that although God and the living souls are qualitatively one, still God is the Supreme Soul, and the infinitesimal individual souls are constitutionally different from Him, being His eternal loving servants. Unfortunately, lacking authorised knowledge about the true nature of the soul and its relationship to God, and lacking knowledge about the spiritual world, innocent people are easily victimised by impersonalism's flattering conclusion—that we're all God.

Today, it is no doubt true that systematic atheism, aided by certain theories in science, philosophy, and psychology, presents a great threat to theism. Nevertheless, it is of little or no consolation that impersonalism, with its veneer of spirituality, is on the rise. Indeed, one might argue that it is a more insidious form of atheism, since the impersonalist acknowledges and denies God in the same breath. Monism is a convenient idea for those who want the recognition of being spiritual or religious and yet still shun their obligation to surrender to the Lord and render Him service. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, on the other hand, is for those who want to go beyond such a counterfeit of spiritual life. ❏

# THE VEDIC

## Transcendental Comment

### ELECTION SCANDAL

by Mathureśa dāsa

This year both U.S. presidential candidates offer the same chicken-in-every-pot promises that have always been the mainstay of democracy. If elected, each says, economic health will reign. Even if I did eat chicken, the promises wouldn't move me, since economies appear to have minds of their own. They don't care for presidential vows.

Granting, for argument's sake, that a candidate might improve his country's, or the world's, fortunes, I've still never heard *anyone* promise an abundance of the most important economic commodity: rain. Those chickens can't eat dust, fellows. How can you pledge affluence when you can't guarantee that rowboats won't start running aground on the Mississippi?

Or the Seine, Nile, or Ganges for that matter.

Prosperity, the *Bhagavad-gītā* reminds us, consists primarily in having an abun-

dance of edible crops, and that depends on rainfall, which is not an asset controlled by politicians.

All living bodies subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains. Rains are produced by performance of sacrifice, and sacrifice is born of prescribed duties.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 3.14

There is a universal government, headed by the Supreme Lord, who asserts that the material nature works under His supervision, *mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ*. But like any powerful person, God has assistants. In that sense, the Vedic *mantras* explain, He has nothing to do: *na tasya kāryaṃ karaṇaṃ ca vidyate*. Just as the owner of an office tower doesn't mop the floors, fix leaky pipes, or even collect rent, God doesn't directly manage the universe. The heating, lighting, plumbing, irrigation, ventilation, and government of His establishment are in the hands of His empowered representatives, who are known as demigods.

Every one of us is endowed with certain individual talents, which are God's gifts,

and the demigods are no exception. The difference is that their talents dwarf ours and that they, without exception, know God and remember their duty to serve and satisfy Him.

None of the demigods is running for election this fall, which is unfortunate, because rainmaking is one of their many skills. They are, however, as agents of a greater government, responsive to the needs of human beings who themselves serve and satisfy the Supreme, such service being the essence of sacrifice. "In charge of the various necessities of life," Lord Kṛṣṇa informs us, "the demigods, being pleased by the performance of sacrifice, will supply all your necessities."

Pay your rent, in other words, and His agents will take care of you.

As rain brings prosperity, and as sacrifice brings rain, so sacrifice derives, the *Gītā* concludes, from the performance of duties prescribed by the Lord in revealed scriptures. Our principal duty for this age, Vedic literature states, is to regularly chant the names of the Supreme Lord. This will please Him, satisfy His agents, and bring lasting peace and prosperity.

The only newsworthy feature of this fall's U.S. election is that neither Bush nor Dukakis understands his responsibility, as a citizen of a universal state, to perform sacrifice. Though both of them are experienced politicians, they have a stunted, primitive conception of leadership. And one of them will win the presidency!

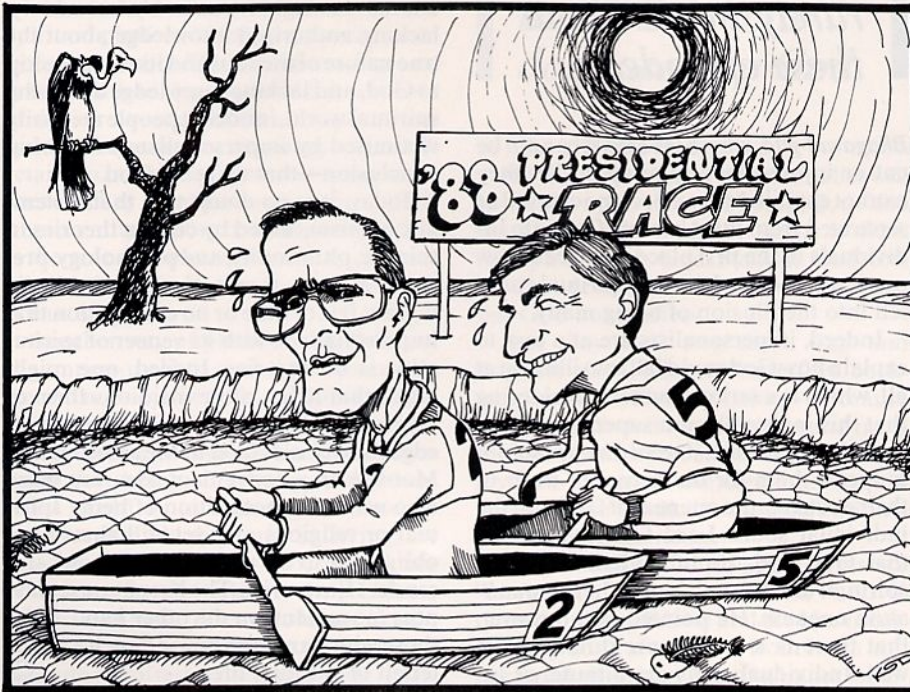
This is frightening. I'm all for the separation of church and state, but I'd prefer to live in a state that wasn't also separated from rain.

### THE TASTE OF WATER

by Rādhānātha dāsa

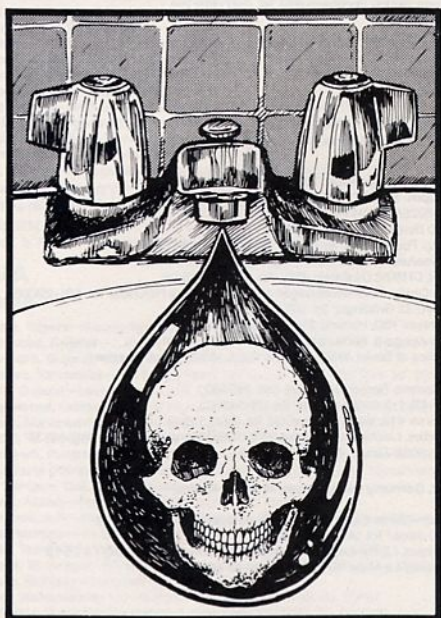
There was a time in the United States when you could drink the water without worrying about it killing you. But those were the good old days.

When Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* "I am the taste of water," He's not referring to water with all the poisons added.



# OBSERVER

ary on the Issues of the Day



The taste of that water doesn't represent Kṛṣṇa. It's not even good for us.

From 1973 to 1980 more than 55,000 cases of illness related to drinking water were reported in the United States. In 1982 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared 13,600 community wells substandard. The EPA estimates that sixty percent of the private wells in the United States contain dangerously high levels of mercury, lead, bacteria, and other contaminants. No one really knows the long-term effects of drinking contaminated water, because it generally takes twenty years or more for an effect—cancer, for example—to develop. But consumer advocate Ralph Nader says contaminated water is the number one problem of the 1980s.

Of course, the United States is not the only country with polluted water. Practically all developed countries are now faced with the same problem. Why are we ruining our environment in this way?

Because of greed for money and temporary happiness. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (16.21), "There are three gates leading to hell—lust, anger, and greed. Every sane man should give these up, for they lead to the degradation of the

soul." Because of impure consciousness and neglect for our spiritual lives, we are jeopardizing even our physical well-being.

I've traveled throughout India, where people, although poorer materially, are generally happier because of a spiritual concept of life. Unfortunately, even in India, the people are grasping the materialistic ideals of the West, with government support. They're trying to depend on modern technology instead of Kṛṣṇa for their happiness.

But all the problems in modern society stem ultimately from impure consciousness, which can be purified by *bhakti-yoga*: "The *yogis*, abandoning attachment, act with body, mind, intelligence, and even the senses, only for the purpose of purification" (*Bhagavad-gītā* 5.11). Vedic society therefore promotes simple living and high thinking, allowing people to learn about Kṛṣṇa and thus purify their consciousness. This is sensible living.

Instead of polluting our environment and our lives in the mad quest for material things, we should find satisfaction in

spiritual life—in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Why not try it? It's a lot less risky than drinking water.

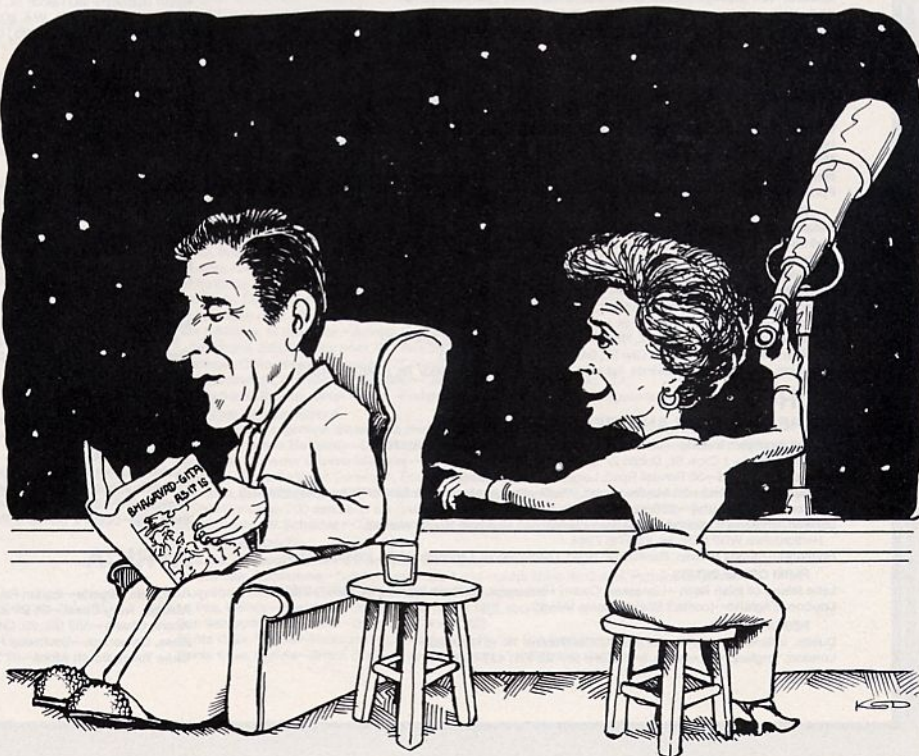
## IS IT IN THE STARS?

by Prāṇadā-devī dāśī

Though Americans like astrology—with horoscope "forecasts" in practically every newspaper—they don't seem to take it too seriously. So when they heard claims that Nancy Reagan's dependence on astrology to protect her husband reduced his effectiveness in the presidential office, they protested—"Now, that's going too far!"

Although astrology is an authentic, and therefore credible, branch of Vedic knowledge, the accuracy of modern astrology can no doubt be debated. What's significant, though, is that the First Lady instinctively turned to a source of knowledge greater than her own for direction. The

(continued on page 25)



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# Krishna Consciousness

# AND THE WORLD

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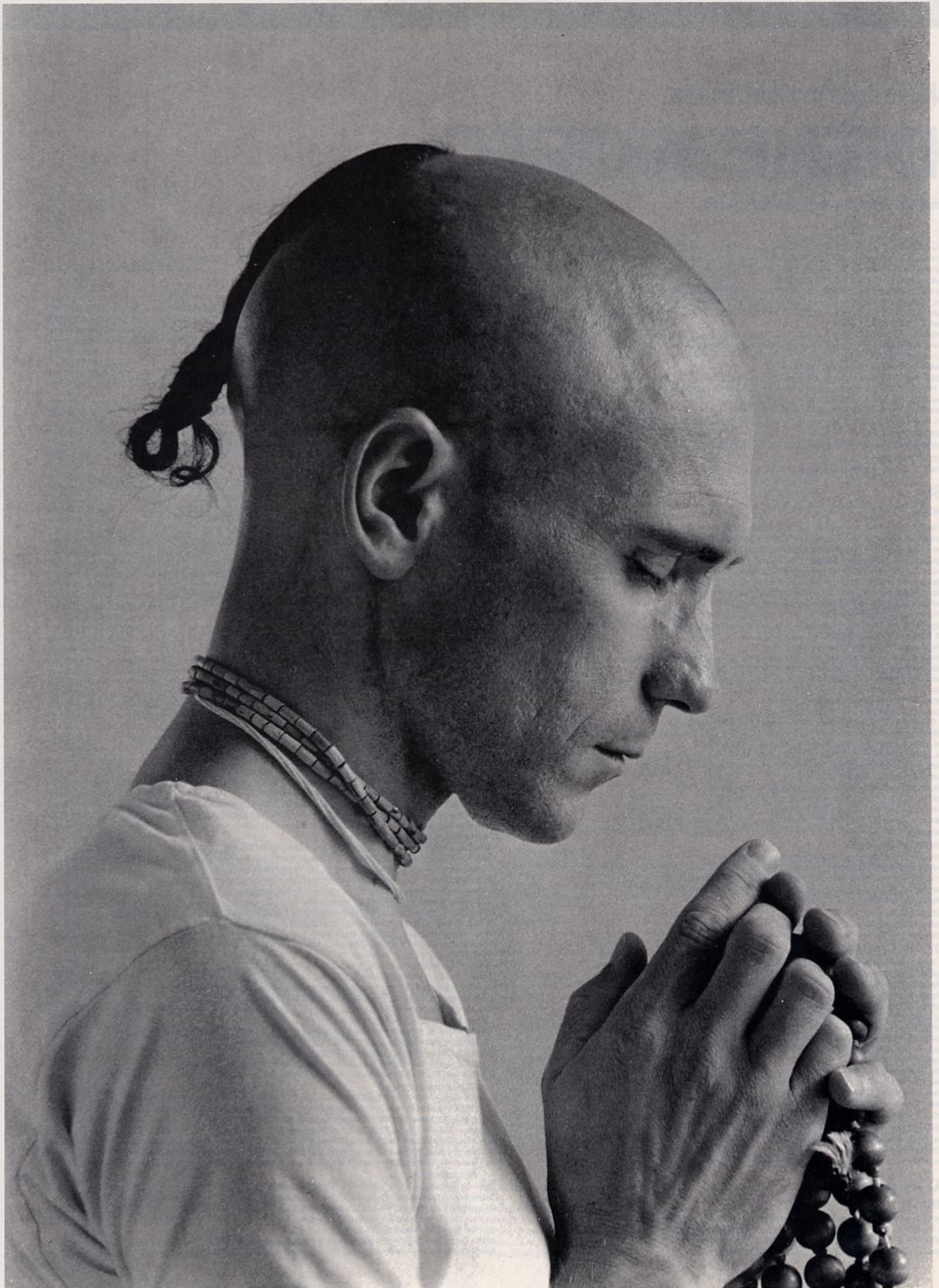
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# THE CREEPER OF DEVOTION

From Lord Caitanya's teachings—an analogy to illustrate the development of pure love for God.

by DRUTAKARMĀ DĀSA

Seeds are mysterious. When planted, these compact entities grow into complex botanical organisms that produce fruits, vegetables, nuts, flowers, and other things we value. The seed has become a potent metaphor for growth—physical, mental, and spiritual. In the sixteenth century, Lord Caitanya explained to Rūpa Gosvāmī how a spiritual seed planted in the heart can grow into a creeper of devotional service that produces the most valuable fruit—pure love for God.

Lord Caitanya explained how one receives this valuable spiritual seed: "According to their *karma*, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. . . . Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. By the mercy of both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service."

In this explanation, Lord Caitanya states that before the living entity receives the devotional seed, he moves according to *karma*, the universal law of action and reaction. Huston Smith, a professor of philosophy at MIT, has said, "Science has alerted the Western world to the importance of causal relationships in the physical world. Every physical event, we are inclined to believe, has its cause, and every cause will have its determinate effects. India extends this concept of universal causation to include man's moral and spiritual life as well."

The law of *karma* provides that one receives a particular body on a particular planet, and suffers or enjoys in material existence, according to the quality of one's previous thoughts and actions.

The Vedic literature explains that there are millions of kinds of bodies the soul can inhabit, ranging from microbes to human beings. Only in the human form do we have the chance to break out of the cycle of birth and death and attain our natural state of God consciousness.

As recounted by Lord Caitanya, the karmic

journey involves not only travel through different bodies but also different planets. The *Vedas* inform us that there are many planets beyond those we can see, all of which are inhabited.

Taking birth on earth is considered good *karma*, because the conditions here are favourable for cultivating God consciousness. On lower planets there is too much suffering, and one must struggle for bare survival. And on the upper planets, there is so much material enjoyment that one may feel no impetus for developing God consciousness. But here we find a favourable balance of comfort and distress—enough comfort to give us the peace of mind to cultivate God consciousness, and just enough suffering to make this desirable.

We are therefore good candidates for receiving the seed of devotional service. Even so, it's a rare opportunity. Lord Caitanya told Rūpa Gosvāmī that only one who is fortunate meets a bona fide spiritual master, who gives him the seed.

Who is the bona fide spiritual master? He is one who in his words and personal behaviour manifests perfect God consciousness. One important qualification of the bona fide spiritual master is that he appears in an authorised disciplic succession. He carefully repeats what he has heard from his spiritual master, who heard the message from his spiritual master, who heard from his, and so on. If you trace the message back far enough, you find that it originates with Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

For example, Lord Caitanya told the story of the creeper of devotion to Rūpa Gosvāmī five centuries ago. What Lord Caitanya said was described in the sixteenth century by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī in his biography of Lord Caitanya, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. This work was passed down through the chain of spiritual masters from Lord Caitanya, and in the seventh decade of the twentieth century Śrīla Prabhupāda translated it into English. I've read the story of the creeper of devotion in Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and now I

am passing the story on to the readers of *Back to Godhead*. And perhaps someday you in turn will be repeating it to someone.

How does one meet a bona fide spiritual master? Lord Kṛṣṇa is in everyone's heart as the Supersoul, and as such He is intimately aware of our innermost desires. When Kṛṣṇa detects that a conditioned soul desires, perhaps even unconsciously, to re-establish a loving relationship with Him, He arranges for such a soul to meet His confidential representative, the bona fide spiritual master, who gives the *bhakti-latā-bīja*, the seed of the creeper of devotional service.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has given the following explanation of that seed: "Everything has an original cause, or seed. For any idea, program, plan, or device, there is first of all the contemplation of the plan, and that is called *bīja*, or the seed. The methods, rules, and regulations by which one is perfectly trained in devotional service constitute the *bhakti-latā-bīja*, or seed of devotional service."

The question is whether or not one will actually cultivate this seed by taking up the "methods, rules, and regulations." The choice is up to each individual. But one should recognize that if one does not cultivate the seed of devotional service, one will certainly cultivate other seeds—the seeds of material ambition.

In other words, desiring different types of material gratification, one will contemplate the methods for obtaining such gratification. One will perform a certain kind of work, following certain rules and regulations. If one desires to become wealthy as a stock broker, he'll cultivate that seed of desire by, possibly, obtaining employment in a Wall Street firm and learning to do business according to the formal rules and regulations of the Stock Exchange and the SEC. But although he'll expend great effort cultivating such a seed of material desire, the fruit he obtains won't be worth the effort; the result of his work won't carry him out of the cycle of birth and death. Only devotional service can free one from this endless suffering. So it makes sense to cultivate the seed of devotional service.

Lord Caitanya told Rūpa Gosvāmī, "When a person receives the seed of devotional service, he should take care of it by becoming a gardener and sowing the seed in his heart. If he waters the seed gradually by the process of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* (hearing and chanting), the seed will begin to sprout."

"Hearing and chanting" means hearing and chanting God's holy names. God is nondifferent from His names, so Kṛṣṇa is personally present in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. By

reading the *mantra* you have just put a drop of water on the seed of devotional service in your heart. Right now you could repeat this *mantra* ten, twenty, or one hundred times. That would be very good for your seed of devotional service. If you don't water the seed, it won't grow.

Hearing and chanting are natural. Unfortunately, we all spend quite a bit of time each day hearing and talking about things that really do not help us very much spiritually. We hear the office gossip—the vice-president's getting transferred, the company's being reorganized, one of the married women is carrying on with a male co-worker. We hear family talk—Aunt Beth has cancer, Uncle Bob's retiring, your cousin got arrested for selling cocaine. We talk with our husbands and wives about all kinds of things. We talk about politics, the movies. We listen to the

*We are constantly filling our ears with all kinds of repetitious soul-deadening sounds that ultimately will not help us escape the cycle of birth and death and awaken our dormant love of Godhead.*

radio and watch television. We are constantly filling our ears with all kinds of repetitious soul-deadening sounds that ultimately will not help us escape the cycle of birth and death and awaken our dormant love of Godhead, which alone can make us permanently happy.

So somehow or other we have to make time to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, to read *Bhagavad-gītā*, and to talk about things connected with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Otherwise our creeper of devotional service will wither and die. It must be properly watered with hearing and chanting. This takes some effort and determination, which we'll get when we become convinced about how extremely important it is to water the creeper of devotion.

Undoubtedly, people tend to feel that their life is already too full, every second allocated. That means if you want to add chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to your life, you are going to have to make room for it.

How much room? First you should know that the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is chanted in two ways: quietly, on *japa* meditation beads; and loudly, to musical accompaniment. Both are recommended. Initiated disciples in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* at least 1,728 times daily on meditation beads (that's sixteen times around a string of 108 beads and takes about two hours) and spend at least an hour each day chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa congregationally, usually with *mṛdaṅgas* (drums) and *kara-tālas* (hand cymbals). If you are just starting out, however, you might wish to gradually build up to this level. Start with an amount of chanting you are comfortable with and can practice each day without fail. Regularity is important.

Probably an easy way for many people to make time for chanting is to cut back on the amount of television they watch. Is the quality of your life really going to suffer if you miss a couple of shows? Perhaps you don't watch much television. But if you analyse your daily schedule, you will certainly be able to identify some time that is not being spent very profitably. Eliminate the marginally important activities and substitute hearing and chanting, which can deliver immense transcendental benefit.

If you do make time to chant, and do so regularly, you will definitely notice results. Lord Caitanya said, "As one waters the *bhakti-latā-bīja*, the seed sprouts, and the creeper gradually increases to the point where it penetrates the walls of this universe and goes beyond the Virajā River between the spiritual world and the material world. It attains *brahmaloka*, the Brahman effulgence, and, penetrating through that stratum, it reaches the spiritual sky and the spiritual planet Goloka Vṛndāvana."

But let's be honest—these days it's difficult to commit oneself to a path of action beyond the material range. We tend to be surrounded by people not at all interested in talking or acting in a purely spiritual way. Commitment is valued, but only to things like getting a degree, attaining political office, making your mark in a material way. To be sure, most people are nominally members of some religion, but their involvement is generally materially motivated, in that their intention is to get something from God or avoid undesirable situations through God's intercession.

In general, people are extremely reluctant to discuss spiritual subjects. Conversations among friends and family tend to focus on purely mundane activities, and unpleasant matters such as the suffering of disease, old age, and death are politely avoided. Although many people do wonder about philosophical questions, such

*(continued on page 22)*

# Every Town

The worldwide activities of the International



# And Village

Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

## Jagannātha Wins in U.S. Independence Day Parade

**Washington, D.C.**—An estimated eighty thousand people lining Constitution Avenue here on July 4 for the U.S. Independence Day parade were blessed with the auspicious sight of Lord Jagannātha, Lord Balarāma, and Lady Subhadrā riding on their brilliant chariot pulled by devotees enthusiastically chanting the Lord's holy names and dancing. The transcendental spectacle so impressed the judges that they awarded the devotees a plaque for the best float in the parade, which included 105 entries.

The annual parade is seen by visitors from around the world. At least 125 devotees participated and appeared on television nationwide. Next year devotees will hold a festival after the parade, on the National Mall, where half a million people gather each year for U.S. Independence Day celebrations.

## Devotee Brings Kṛṣṇa To the Elderly

**Murwillumbah, Australia**—Satānanda-devī dāsī, a member of the New Govardhana farm community here and a part-time nurse at a Gold Coast old persons' home, has influenced many of the staff and residents of the home to accept the practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Many of the residents now wear neck beads, regularly chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra on beads, and wait anxiously for Satānanda dāsī to arrive with Deity garlands and milk sweets. At least one woman died with her neck beads on and clutching her chanting beads.

The residents of the home also like to read about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A visitor to the home will find *Back to Godhead* magazines in the magazine rack and Śrīla Prabhupāda's books on shelves and lying around on chairs and tables, where they have been

left temporarily, to again be taken up after a nap or a meal.

Satānanda dāsī has even persuaded the management to introduce a selected vegetarian diet to all residents, using recipes from cookbooks of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. It wasn't easy, because she had to win the support of both the management and the staff. The kitchen staff had to be educated in the art of vegetarian cooking.

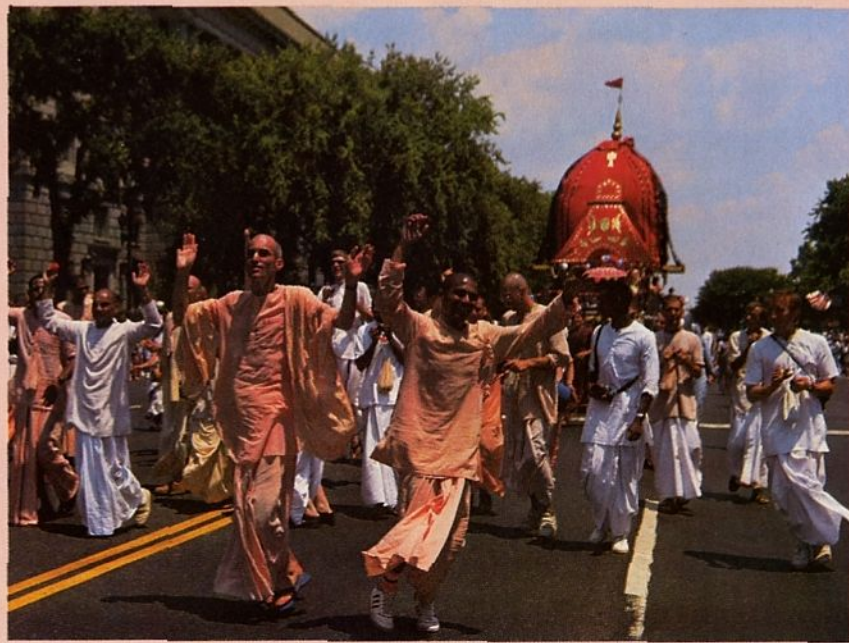
The head matron at the home and many of the staff members have visited New Govardhana for Sunday Feasts and have spent a pleasant day at the farm and at Satānanda's home. Some of them have become vegetarians and are becoming more and more interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

A group of residents organised a tour of New Govardhana and returned to the home expounding the virtues of the farm and the devotees, no doubt influencing others to appreciate Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Many of them are in their nineties and will die with fond memories of Kṛṣṇa.

## Soviet Devotees Not Free Yet

**Almviks Gärd, Sweden**—Despite official Soviet recognition of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as a state-approved religion, the Committee to Free Soviet Hare Krishnas (CFSHK) is still concerned about the precarious situation of ISKCON members in the Soviet Union. A CFSHK spokesman has described the registration as a mixed blessing that came only after the Soviet government had failed to curtail the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement by other means.

The Moscow Society for Krishna Consciousness was officially founded on June 20, but that doesn't mean the persecution is necessarily over for the Soviet devotees. "Registration actually means control," the CFSHK



During the U.S. Independence Day parade, devotees chant and dance down Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C., while pulling Lord Jagannātha's prize-winning chariot.

spokesman said. "Registered religions are always under the heavy scrutiny of the Council for Religious Affairs, and if a recognised religion violates the terms of registration, there is the ever-looming chance that registration can be revoked."

In a press release dated June 20, Soviet émigré Vedavyāsa dāsa, who spent time in a Soviet psychiatric hospital for his involvement with the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, noted that "actual freedom of religion—freedom to preach in public, print and distribute religious literatures in big quantities, travel outside the USSR for religious education and pilgrimage—these and so many other things are yet required for the Hare Kṛṣṇa followers in the Soviet Union."

Six devotees in the Soviet Union are still prisoners of conscience—one in prison, one in a labour

camp, and four under compulsory labour.

The imprisoned devotee, Vṛndāvana dāsa (Vladimir Kustrya), is ill because of poor conditions and mistreatment suffered while serving less than two years of a five-year labour-camp sentence. When Vṛndāvana's legs became swollen, making it difficult for him to walk, he refused to perform his work of cutting wood. Because of his "disobedient behaviour," he was transferred on March 25 from his labour camp in Kirovskaya Territory to a maximum security prison in Ulyanovskaya Territory, where conditions are worse. He may send one letter every two months and receive one parcel every six months.

Amala-bhakta dāsa (Yevgeny Lyubinsky) has served one and a half years of a four-year sentence in a labour camp and suffers from

tuberculosis. His case was brought to the attention of President and Mrs. Reagan when his wife, Svetlana, and their three children were invited to attend a reception during the Moscow summit talks at the end of May.

The CFSHK expresses guarded optimism for the future. A spokesman described a recent meeting between Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and Patriarch Pimen, head of the Russian Orthodox Church. "During this meeting Gorbachev talked about religious freedom in the Soviet Union and how it must be respected. We are hopeful that with Gorbachev in charge, things will continue in a progressive manner," the spokesman said.

## RESOURCES

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To find out more, get in touch with the ISKCON farm community nearest you.

## Festivals & 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 Hare Kṛṣṇa centre nearest you will gladly tell you more about the meaning of the festivals listed here.

### Month of Hṛṣīkeṣa (August 28–September 25)

**September 3**—Śrī Kṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭamī, the appearance anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Fasting till midnight. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for a schedule of events.

**September 4**—Appearance anniversary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

**September 6**—Annadā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

**September 16**—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sitā-devī, the consort of Śrīla Advaita Ācārya.

**September 17**—Anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival in the United States in 1965.

**September 19**—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

**September 22**—Parśvā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

**September 23**—Śrī Vāmana-dvādaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Vāmana-deva. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

**September 24**—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktinoda Thākura, father of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura (Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master), and a pioneer in preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness in English. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

**September 25**—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Haridāsa Thākura, the foremost teacher of the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Third month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from milk).

### Month of Padmanābha (September 26–October 25)

**October 6**—Indirā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

**October 20**—Śrī Rāmacandra-vijayotsava, the anniversary of Lord Rāmacandra's victory over the demon Rāvaṇa. Also, appearance anniversary of Śrīla Madhvācārya, a great teacher of devotional service.

## Book Section

# ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the “cream of the Vedic literatures” of ancient India. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa*, or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. The original Sanskrit text is presented here with transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

## Third Canto: “The Status Quo”

### CHAPTER TWENTY

### Conversation Between Maitreya and Vidura

*In this installment of our continuing presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the sage Maitreya begins to answer the inquiries of Vidura, a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, concerning the creation of the material world.*

#### TEXT 12

मेत्रेय उवाच

दैवेन दुर्वितर्क्येण परेणानिमिषेण च ।  
जातक्षोभाद्भगवतो महानासीद् गुणत्रयात् ॥१२॥

*maitreya uvāca*  
*daivena durvitarkyeṇa*  
*pareṇānimīṣeṇa ca*  
*jāta-kṣobhād bhagavato*  
*mahān āsīd guṇa-trayāt*

*maitreyaḥ uvāca*—Maitreya said; *daivena*—by superior management known as destiny; *durvitarkyeṇa*—beyond empiric speculation; *pareṇa*—by Mahā-Viṣṇu; *animīṣeṇa*—by the potency of eternal time; *ca*—and; *jāta-kṣobhāt*—the equilibrium was agitated; *bhagavataḥ*—of the Personality of Godhead; *mahān*—the total material elements (the *mahat-tattva*); *āsīd*—were produced; *guṇa-trayāt*—from the three modes of nature.

#### TRANSLATION

Maitreya said: When the equilibrium of the combination of the three modes of nature was agitated by the unseen activity of the living entity, by Mahā-Viṣṇu and by the force of time, the total material elements were produced.

#### PURPORT

The cause of the material creation is described here very lucidly. The first cause is *daiva*, or the destiny of the conditioned soul. The material creation exists for the conditioned soul who wanted to become a false lord for sense enjoyment. One cannot trace out the history of when the conditioned soul first desired to lord it over material nature, but in Vedic literature we always find that the material creation is meant for the sense enjoyment of the conditioned soul. There is a nice verse which says that the sum and substance of the conditioned soul's sense enjoyment is that as soon as he forgets his primary duty, to render service to the Lord, he creates an atmosphere of sense enjoyment, which is called *māyā*; that is the cause of material creation.

Another word used here is *durvitarkyeṇa*. No one can argue about when and how the conditioned soul became desirous of sense enjoyment, but the cause is there. Material nature is an atmosphere meant only for the sense enjoyment of the conditioned soul, and it is created by the Personality of Godhead. It is mentioned here that in the beginning of the creation the material nature, or *prakṛti*, is agitated by the Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu. There are three Viṣṇus mentioned. One is Mahā-Viṣṇu,

another is Carbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, and the third is Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. The First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* discusses all these three Viṣṇus, and here also it is confirmed that Viṣṇu is the cause of creation. From *Bhagavad-gītā* also we learn that *prakṛti* begins to work and is still working under Kṛṣṇa's, or Viṣṇu's, glance of superintendence, but the Supreme Personality of Godhead is unchangeable. One should not mistakenly think that because the creation emanates from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He has therefore transformed into this material cosmic manifestation. He exists in His personal form always, but the cosmic manifestation takes place by His inconceivable potency. The workings of that energy are difficult to comprehend, but it is understood from Vedic literature that the conditioned soul creates his own destiny and is offered a particular body by the laws of nature under the superintendence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who always accompanies him as *Paramātmā*.

#### TEXT 13

रजःप्रधानान्महतस्त्रिलिङ्गो दैवचोदितात् ।  
जातः ससर्ज भूतादिविचदादीनि पञ्चशः ॥१३॥

*rajaḥ-pradhānān mahatas*  
*tri-liṅgo daiva-coditāt*  
*jātaḥ sasarja bhūtādir*  
*viyad-ādīni pañcaśaḥ*

*rajaḥ-pradhānāt*—in which the element of *rajas*, or passion, predominates; *mahataḥ*—from the *mahat-tattva*; *tri-liṅgaḥ*—of three kinds; *daiva-coditāt*—impelled by superior authority; *jātaḥ*—was born; *sasarja*—evolved; *bhūta-ādīḥ*—the false ego (origin of the material elements); *viyat*—the ether; *ādīni*—beginning with; *pañcaśaḥ*—in groups of five.

#### TRANSLATION

As impelled by the destiny of the jīva, the false ego, which is of three kinds, evolved from the *mahat-tattva*, in which the element of *rajas* predominates. From the ego, in turn, evolved many groups of five principles.

#### PURPORT

The primordial matter, or *prakṛti*, material nature, consisting of three modes, generates four groups of five. The first group is called elementary and consists of earth, water, fire, air and ether. The second group of five is called *tan-mātra*, referring to the subtle elements (sense objects): sound, touch, form, taste and smell. The third group is the five sense organs for acquiring knowledge: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. The fourth group is the five working senses: speech, hands, feet, anus and genitals. Some say that there are five groups of five. One group is the sense objects, one is the five elements, one is the five sense organs for acquiring knowledge, another is the senses for working, and the fifth group is the five deities who control these divisions.

#### TEXT 14

तानि चैकैकशः स्रष्टुमसमर्थानि भौतिकम् ।  
संहत्य दैवयोगेन हैममण्डमवासुजन् ॥१४॥

tāni caikaikaśaḥ sraṣṭum  
asamarthāni bhautikam  
saṁhatya daiva-yogena  
haimam aṇḍam avāsrjan

tāni—those elements; ca—and; eka-ekaśaḥ—separately; sraṣṭum—to produce; asamarthāni—unable; bhautikam—the material universe; saṁhatya—having combined; daiva-yogena—with the energy of the Supreme Lord; haimam—shining like gold; aṇḍam—globe; avāsrjan—produced.

#### TRANSLATION

Separately unable to produce the material universe, they combined with the help of the energy of the Supreme Lord and were able to produce a shining egg.

#### TEXT 15

सोऽश्रियिष्ठाभिसलिले आण्डकोशो निरात्मकः ।  
साग्रं वै वर्षसाहस्रमन्ववात्सीत्तमीश्वरः ॥१५॥

so 'śrayiṣṭābdhi-salile  
āṇḍakośo nirātmakaḥ  
sāgraṁ vai varṣa-sāhasram  
anvavātsīt tam īśvaraḥ

saḥ—it; aśrayiṣṭa—lay; abdhī-salile—on the waters of the Causal Ocean; āṇḍa-kośaḥ—egg; nirātmakaḥ—in an unconscious state; sāgram—a little more than; vai—in fact; varṣa-sāhasram—a thousand years; anvavātsīt—became situated; tam—in the egg; īśvaraḥ—the Lord.

#### TRANSLATION

For over one thousand years the shiny egg lay on the waters of the Causal Ocean in the lifeless state. Then the Lord entered it as Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu.

#### PURPORT

From this verse it appears that all the universes are floating in the Causal Ocean.

#### TEXT 16

तस्य नाभेरभूत्पद्मं सहस्रार्कोरदीधिति ।  
सर्वजीवनिकायौको यत्र स्वयमभूत्स्वराट् ॥१६॥

tasya nābher abhūt padmaṁ  
sahasrārkoru-didhiti  
sarva-jīvanikāyauko  
yatra svayam abhūt svarāṭ

tasya—of the Lord; nābheḥ—from the navel; abhūt—sprouted up; padmam—a lotus; sahasra-arka—a thousand suns; uru—more; didhiti—with dazzling splendor; sarva—all; jīva-nikāya—resting place of conditioned souls; okaḥ—place; yatra—where; svayam—himself; abhūt—emanated; sva-rāṭ—the omnipotent (Lord Brahmā).

#### TRANSLATION

From the navel of the Personality of Godhead Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu sprouted a lotus flower effulgent like a thousand blazing suns. This lotus flower is the reservoir of all conditioned souls, and the first living entity who came out of the lotus flower was the omnipotent Brahmā.

#### PURPORT

It appears from this verse that the conditioned souls who rested within the body of the Personality of Godhead after the dissolution of the last creation came out in the sum total form of the lotus. This is called *hiranyagarbha*. The first living entity to come out was Lord Brahmā, who is independently able to create the rest of the manifested universe. The lotus is described here as effulgent as the glare of a thousand suns. This indicates that the living entities, as parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord, are also of the same quality, since the Lord also diffuses His bodily glare, known as *brahmajyoti*. The description of Vaikuṅṭhaloka, as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Vedic literatures, is confirmed herewith. In

Vaikuṅṭha, the spiritual sky, there is no need of sunshine, moonshine, electricity or fire. Every planet there is self-effulgent like the sun.

#### TEXT 17

सोऽनुविष्टो भगवता यः शेते सलिलाशये ।  
लोकसंस्थां यथापूर्वं निर्ममे संख्या ख्या ॥१७॥

so 'nuviṣṭo bhagavatā  
yaḥ śete salilāśaye  
loka-saṁsthāṁ yathā pūrvam  
nirmame saṁsthayā svayā

saḥ—Lord Brahmā; anuviṣṭaḥ—was entered; bhagavatā—by the Lord; yaḥ—who; śete—sleeps; salilā-śāyē—on the Garbhodaka Ocean; loka-saṁsthāṁ—the universe; yathā pūrvam—as previously; nirmame—created; saṁsthayā—by intelligence; svayā—his own.

#### TRANSLATION

When that Supreme Personality of Godhead who is lying on the Garbhodaka Ocean entered the heart of Brahmā, Brahmā brought his intelligence to bear, and with the intelligence invoked he began to create the universe as it was before.

#### PURPORT

At a certain time, the Personality of Godhead, Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, lies in the Kāraṇa Ocean and produces many thousands of universes from His breathing; then He enters again into each and every universe as Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu and fills up half of each universe with His own perspiration. The other half of the universe remains vacant, and that vacant region is called outer space. Then the lotus flower sprouts from His abdomen and produces the first living creature, Brahmā. Then again, as Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, the Lord enters into the heart of every living entity, including Brahmā. This is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*, Fifteenth Chapter. The Lord says, "I am seated in everyone's heart, and by Me are remembrance and forgetfulness made possible." As the witness of the activities of the individual entities, the Lord gives each one remembrance and intelligence to act according to his desire at the time he was annihilated in his last birth in the last millennium. This intelligence is invoked according to one's own capacity, or by the law of *karma*.

Brahmā was the first living entity, and he was empowered by the Supreme Lord to act in charge of the mode of passion; therefore, he was given the required intelligence, which is so powerful and extensive that he is almost independent of the control of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Just as a highly posted manager is almost as independent as the owner of a firm, Brahmā is described here as independent because, as the Lord's representative to control the universe, he is almost as powerful and independent as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Lord, as the Supersoul within Brahmā, gave him the intelligence to create. The creative power, therefore, of every living entity is not his own; it is by the grace of the Lord that one can create. There are many scientists and great workers in this material world who have wonderful creative force, but they act and create only according to the direction of the Supreme Lord. A scientist may create many wonderful inventions by the direction of the Lord, but it is not possible for him to overcome the stringent laws of material nature by his intelligence, nor is it possible to acquire such intelligence from the Lord, for the Lord's supremacy would then be hampered. It is stated in this verse that Brahmā created the universe as it was before. This means that he created everything by the same name and form as in the previous cosmic manifestation.

#### TEXT 18

ससर्जं च्छाययाविद्यां पञ्चपर्वाणमग्रतः ।  
तामिस्रमन्धतामिस्रं तमो मोहो महातमः ॥१८॥

sasarja cchāyayāvīdyāṁ  
pañca-parvāṇam agrataḥ  
tāmisram andha-tāmisram  
tamo moho mahā-tamaḥ

sasarja—created; cchāyayā—with his shadow; avidyā—ignorance; pañca-parvāṇam—five varieties; agrataḥ—first of all; tāmisram—

*tāmīra; andha-tāmīra—andha-tāmīra; tamaḥ—tamas; mohaḥ—moha; mahā-tamaḥ—mahā-tamas, or mahā-moha.*

#### TRANSLATION

First of all, Brahmā created from his shadow the coverings of ignorance of the conditioned souls. They are five in number and are called *tāmīra, andha-tāmīra, tamas, moha* and *mahā-moha*.

#### PURPORT

The conditioned souls, or living entities who come to the material world to enjoy sense gratification, are covered in the beginning by five different conditions. The first condition is a covering of *tāmīra*, or anger. Constitutionally, each and every living entity has minute independence; it is misuse of that minute independence for the conditioned soul to think that he can also enjoy like the Supreme Lord or to think, "Why shall I not be a free enjoyer like the Supreme Lord?" This forgetfulness of his constitutional position is due to anger or envy. The living entity, being eternally a part-and-parcel servitor of the Supreme Lord, can never, by constitution, be an equal enjoyer with the Lord. When he forgets this, however, and tries to be one with Him, his condition is called *tāmīra*. Even in the field of spiritual realization, this *tāmīra* mentality of the living entity is hard to overcome. In trying to get out of the entanglement of material life, there are many who want to be one with the Supreme. Even in their transcendental activities, this lower-grade mentality of *tāmīra* continues.

*Andha-tāmīra* involves considering death to be the ultimate end. The atheists generally think that the body is the self and that everything is therefore ended with the end of the body. Thus they want to enjoy material life as far as possible during the existence of the body. Their theory is: "As long as you live, you should live prosperously. Never mind whether you commit all kinds of so-called sins. You must eat sumptuously. Beg, borrow and steal, and if you think that by stealing and borrowing you are being entangled in sinful activities for which you will have to pay, then just forget that misconception because after death everything is finished. No one is responsible for anything he does during his life." This atheistic conception of life is killing human civilization, for it is without knowledge of the continuation of eternal life.

This *andha-tāmīra* ignorance is due to *tamas*. The condition of not knowing anything about the spirit soul is called *tamas*. This material world is also generally called *tamas* because ninety-nine percent of its living entities are ignorant of their identity as soul. Almost everyone is thinking that he is this body; he has no information of the spirit soul. Guided by this misconception, one always thinks, "This is my body, and anything in relationship with this body is mine." For such misguided living entities, sex life is the background of material existence. Actually, the conditioned souls, in ignorance in this material world, are simply guided by sex life, and as soon as they get the opportunity for sex life, they become attached to so-called home, motherland, children, wealth and opulence. As these attachments increase, *moha*, or the illusion of the bodily concept of life, also increases. Thus the idea that "I am this body, and everything belonging to this body is mine" also increases, and as the whole world is put into *moha*, sectarian societies, families and nationalities are created, and they fight with one another. *Mahā-moha* means to be mad after material enjoyment. Especially in this age of Kali, everyone is overwhelmed by the madness to accumulate paraphernalia for material enjoyment. These definitions are very nicely given in *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, wherein it is said:

*tamo 'viveko mohaḥ syād  
antaḥ-karāṇa-vibhramaḥ  
mahā-mohaḥ tu vijñeyo  
grāmya-bhoga-sukhaiṣaṇā*

*maraṇaṁ hy andha-tāmīraṁ  
tāmīraṁ kroḍha ucyate  
avidyā pañca-parvaiṣā  
prādurbhūtā mahātmanaḥ*

#### TEXT 19

विससर्जत्मनः कार्यं नाभिनन्दंस्तमोमयम् ।  
जगद्दुर्बक्षसि रात्रिं क्षुत्तृप्तसुद्भवाम् ॥१९॥

*visasarjātmanaḥ kāyaṁ  
nābhinandans tamomayam  
jagrhuḥ rakṣa-rakṣāṁsi  
rātrim kṣut-trṭ-samudbhavām*

*visasarja*—threw off; *ātmanaḥ*—his own; *kāyam*—body; *na*—not; *abhinandan*—being pleased; *tamaḥ-mayam*—made of ignorance; *jagrhuḥ*—took possession; *yakṣa-rakṣāṁsi*—the Yakṣas and Rākṣasas; *rātrim*—night; *kṣut*—hunger; *trṭ*—thirst; *samudbhavām*—the source.

#### TRANSLATION

Out of disgust, Brahmā threw off the body of ignorance, and taking this opportunity, Yakṣas and Rākṣasas sprang for possession of the body, which continued to exist in the form of night. Night is the source of hunger and thirst.

#### TEXT 20

क्षुत्तृड्भ्यामुपसृष्टास्ते तं जग्मुमिदुद्भवुः ।  
मा रक्षतैर्न जक्षच्चमित्युचुः क्षुत्तृडिताः ॥२०॥

*kṣut-trḍbhyām upasṛṣṭās te  
taṁ jagdhum abhidudruvuh  
mā rakṣatainaṁ jakṣadhvam  
ity ūcuḥ kṣut-trḍ-arditāḥ*

*kṣut-trḍbhyām*—by hunger and thirst; *upasṛṣṭāḥ*—were overcome; *te*—the demons (Yakṣas and Rākṣasas); *taṁ*—Lord Brahmā; *jagdhum*—to eat; *abhidudruvuh*—ran toward; *mā*—do not; *rakṣata*—spare; *enam*—him; *jakṣadhvam*—eat; *iti*—thus; *ūcuḥ*—said; *kṣut-trḍ-arditāḥ*—afflicted by hunger and thirst.

#### TRANSLATION

Overpowered by hunger and thirst, they ran to devour Brahmā from all sides and cried, "Spare him not! Eat him up!"

#### PURPORT

The representatives of the Yakṣas and Rākṣasas still exist in some countries of the world. It is understood that such uncivilized men take pleasure in killing their own grandfathers and holding a "love feast" by roasting the bodies.

#### TEXT 21

देवस्तानाह संविशो मा मां जक्षत रक्षत ।  
अहो मे यक्षरक्षंसि प्रजा यूयं बभूविथ ॥२१॥

*devas tān āha saṁvigno  
mā māṁ jakṣata rakṣata  
aho me yakṣa-rakṣāṁsi  
prajā yūyaṁ babhūvitha*

*devaḥ*—Lord Brahmā; *tān*—to them; *āha*—said; *saṁvignaḥ*—being anxious; *mā*—do not; *māṁ*—me; *jakṣata*—eat; *rakṣata*—protect; *aho*—oh; *me*—my; *yakṣa-rakṣāṁsi*—O Yakṣas and Rākṣasas; *prajāḥ*—sons; *yūyam*—you; *babhūvitha*—were born.

#### TRANSLATION

Brahmā, the head of the demigods, full of anxiety, asked them, "Do not eat me, but protect me. You are born from me and have become my sons. Therefore you are Yakṣas and Rākṣasas."

#### PURPORT

The demons who were born from the body of Brahmā were called Yakṣas and Rākṣasas because some of them cried that Brahmā should be eaten and the others cried that he should not be protected. The ones who said that he should be eaten were called Yakṣas, and the ones who said that he should not be protected became Rākṣasas, man-eaters. The two, Yakṣas and Rākṣasas, are the original creation by Brahmā and are represented even until today in the uncivilized men who are scattered all over the universe. They are born of the mode of ignorance, and therefore, because of their behavior, they are called Rākṣasas, or man-eaters.

(continued in next issue)

# CREEPER

(continued from page 16)

as the nature of the self or the nature of God, who dares to bring them up in the middle of a football game or the evening news? The pressure is always on to keep your mouth shut about such things—what to speak of the pressure against actually doing something like watering your creeper by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* for an hour or two each day.

What a statement that would be! Taking time out from all the routine stereotype activities to clear your mind and meditate on the all-powerful names of God? What on earth for? No doubt it would be difficult to do so in front of unsympathetic persons. So then you have to arrange to do so elsewhere. Perhaps you go to a room where you can be alone and chant. Back out in the television room they're wondering what you're up to. But at a certain point you have to be able to rise above the social pressure not to chant and do it, convinced that it is important and beneficial. You know that if you don't water your creeper, it's going to shrivel, and your understanding of your spiritual identity will be stunted.

Don't expect much encouragement. Unless they are also Kṛṣṇa conscious, your friends and family are not likely to push you to make spiritual progress. They generally want you to be like them—primarily concerned about economic and social and physical well-being. If you were to tell them you're going out to jog or work out, that's fine. But tell them you're going out to do some chanting to elevate your spiritual awareness, well . . .

So it would be nice to have support, but don't expect it. Pick up your beads, head out the door, and go to a park and chant for an hour. Do it every day. Others will eventually get used to it. Or maybe they won't get used to it. Some people never do. That is what makes living in a community of people who are practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness attractive—there is a lot of support and encouragement for spiritual development, instead of discouragement or begrudging tolerance. The creeper of devotional service naturally flourishes in such a friendly environment.

Lord Caitanya told Rūpa Gosvāmī: "Being situated in one's heart and being watered by *śravaṇa-kīrtana*, the *bhakti* creeper grows more and more. In this way it attains shelter of the desire tree of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, who is eternally situated in the planet known as Goloka Vṛndāvana in the topmost region of the spiritual sky. The creeper greatly expands in the Goloka Vṛndāvana planet, and there it produces the fruit of love for Kṛṣṇa. Although remaining in the material world, the gardener regularly sprinkles the

creeper with the water of hearing and chanting."

Therefore you can be moving through this world, just like everyone else, and simultaneously be experiencing your original, spiritual nature and eternal loving connection with the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The conditioned soul within the material world can neither understand nor appreciate how the devotee in the material world can render confidential service to the Lord out of feelings of ecstatic love and always engage in pleasing the Supreme Lord's senses. Although seen within this material world, the pure devotee always engages in the confidential service of the Lord." If you want to experience this, keep watering your creeper with the hearing and chanting of the holy name of the Lord. Those around you may not understand—but you will understand what's happening to

*You can be moving in this material world, just like everyone else, and simultaneously be experiencing your original, spiritual nature and eternal connection with the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.*

you as you experience increasing transcendental pleasure and satisfaction.

Beyond watering the creeper of devotion, one must protect it from disturbances. Lord Caitanya told Rūpa Gosvāmī, "If the devotee commits an offense at the feet of a Vaiṣṇava while cultivating the creeper of devotional service in the material world, his offense is compared to a mad elephant that uproots the creeper and breaks it. In this way the leaves of the creeper are dried up."

As we have seen, one obtains the seed of the creeper of devotional service from the bona fide spiritual master, who is a pure Vaiṣṇava, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual master guides one along the path of spiritual advancement. So the relationship between spiritual master and disciple is very confidential. In any intimate relationship one has to be very careful, for bad feelings may develop and poison the

entire relationship. Similarly, if the disciple behaves improperly or disrespectfully toward his Vaiṣṇava *guru*, he greatly hampers his spiritual progress. One must therefore guard against offenses, which are compared to a mad elephant. One of the chief offenses is to disobey the instructions of the spiritual master, especially the instructions to avoid the unwanted activities of illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating, and gambling. Lord Caitanya said, "The gardener must defend the creeper by fencing it all around so that the powerful elephant of offenses may not enter."

Lord Caitanya further told Rūpa Gosvāmī: "Sometimes unwanted creepers, such as the creepers of desires for material enjoyment and liberation from the material world, grow along with the creeper of devotional service. The varieties of such unwanted creepers are unlimited. Some unnecessary creepers growing along with the *bhakti* creeper are the creepers of behaviour unacceptable for those trying to attain perfection, diplomatic behaviour, animal killing, mundane profiteering, mundane adoration, and mundane importance. All these are unwanted creepers. If one does not distinguish between the *bhakti-latā* creeper and the other creepers, the sprinkling of water is misused because the other creepers are nourished while the *bhakti-latā* creeper is curtailed. As soon as an intelligent devotee sees an unwanted creeper growing beside the original creeper, he must cut it down instantly."

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments: "Sometimes these unwanted creepers look exactly like the *bhakti-latā* creeper. They appear to be of the same size and the same species. . . . A pure devotee can distinguish between the *bhakti-latā* creeper and a mundane creeper, and he is very alert to distinguish them and keep them separate."

So, progress in spiritual life is not so easy. It requires constant attention and vigilance, and most of all it requires help—the kind of help only a bona fide spiritual master can give. The spiritual master is the expert gardener who can help us properly cultivate the rare plant of the creeper of devotional service.

Lord Caitanya told Rūpa Gosvāmī what happens if proper care is taken: "Then the real creeper of *bhakti-latā-bīja* grows nicely, returns home, back to Godhead, and seeks shelter under the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. When the fruit of devotional service becomes ripe and falls down, the gardener tastes the fruit and thus takes advantage of the creeper and reaches the desire tree of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana. There the devotee serves the lotus feet of the Lord, which are compared to a wish-fulfilling tree. With great bliss he tastes the juice of the fruit of love and becomes eternally happy." ❏



Coming to Kṛṣṇa

# UP FROM THE ORDINARY

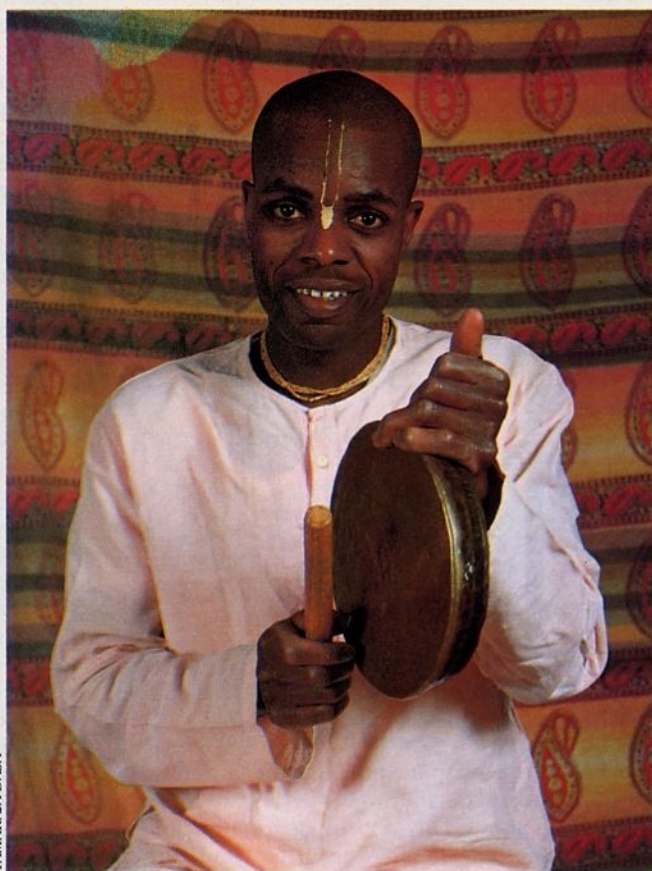
To gain fame and recognition, he wanted to become a pop music star. But he thought his ultimate perfection would come by merging into the “Supreme Oneness.”

by GAURA-NITĀI DĀSA

I was born and raised in Syracuse, a city in central New York state known for, if anything, its university. With my two older brothers—one two years older and the other thirteen years older—I was brought up in a lower middle-class environment mostly by my mother, since our alcoholic father was practically always drunk and hardly ever at home. My mother would occasionally go to church on Sunday and sometimes insist that I go with her. But as a child I was disillusioned by religion, because I noticed so much hypocrisy in so-called religious people, including my mother.

As we were growing up, my brother who was closest to my age would enjoy harassing me and making me fight with him. Naturally, he would mostly win, being bigger and stronger than me, and I would sometimes get so frustrated that I would cry to my mother or my older brother, whom I respected almost as a father. I was always rather thin and generally shorter than most of my peers in school. I was shy and reclusive and had only a few close friends. I began stuttering in the first grade and never got over it. I envied those persons who were popular and attractive. I dreamed of winning popularity by becoming a popular music star.

While I was in high school, I joined the local drum and bugle corps, the Syracuse Marauders. I had an inclination toward



YAMARAJA DĀSA

percussion instruments, but since I'd never had any formal training in playing drums or reading music, I wasn't placed on the drum line but was put on the simpler cymbal line. I remember thinking how much fun it was being with the group, traveling with them to play in parades or competitions. It was exciting to show off my skill at twirling the twenty-inch cymbals. I began to feel like I already was a music star. Since I was one of only three cymbal players in our corps of about forty young people, everyone had to notice me!

After graduating from high school in

June, 1972, I worked during the day and took a couple of college courses in the evening. Two years later, looking for a basis for some kind of solid career, I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. I worked in satellite communications.

In my spare time at the base I taught myself how to read and write music. Even as a child I had made up melodies and lyrics, dreaming of the day when I could cut a record. On one base where I was stationed overseas, a few of my friends and I formed a pop band, and we would perform in the base service club on weekends. I would sometimes sing lead while playing drums. After three and a half years I decided not to make a career of the Air Force. I still wanted to be a big music star. In May, 1978, at the end of my four-year enlistment, I was honorably discharged.

Soon after my discharge I purchased a set of drums, thinking ahead to the time when I would use them professionally. I lived with my mother then, so I was somewhat restricted in my drum practicing. But she had an old upright piano, and I would practice my songs and write new ones using this piano. Occasionally a few friends would come over and we would play music together. I knew I wasn't a great drummer, and I'd had very little practical experience with playing piano and no formal voice training, but still I was sure I was destined to “make it” in my life and

be something above the ordinary.

Besides playing music, I liked to read about unusual happenings, like UFO's, the Bermuda Triangle, ghosts, reincarnation, and so on. I had come across the word *karma* in my readings on reincarnation, and I came to the conclusion that my *karma* was OK. It didn't seem as bad as that of others I knew and admired, including pop stars. So, as I was gaining more and more confidence in myself as a singer and musician, I thought, "Why not take the big step and make a record?"

I neatly wrote down seven or eight of my best songs on professional-looking song paper and mailed them to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., to have them copyrighted. Then I went to a local recording studio and recorded the songs for an album. The studio had the usual multi-track recording system, where one could record different instruments and voices on separate tape tracks and later blend them together. It took me a month and cost \$1,000 to complete the recording.

I wasn't really satisfied with the results, but I went to New York City with some copies of my record in hopes of capturing the interest of some of the bigger record companies. The receptionists were generally rude and so busy that I couldn't even get in the door. I began to think, "There must be hundreds of guys like me in New York who are trying to do the same thing." I began to get discouraged, feeling insignificant. After a few days, I went back to Syracuse and to the student-run Syracuse University radio station to see if they would play my record. They played a couple of selections on the air, but I didn't get the recognition I was looking for.

Then I saw a music contest advertised in a popular music magazine. Among the prizes was a chance to record with a major recording company. I entered my album—along with an entry fee—and waited. I never got a reply, or even an acknowledgment. My pride was crushed.

I was still reading about things like *karma* and reincarnation, and I came to an understanding that this life wasn't the all-in-all, and that the perfection of my life was to some day, or in some future life, to merge with the "Supreme Oneness," from where we originated. I went to a meditation session where a *svāmī* was asking everyone to sit silently with eyes closed and meditate. I can't remember what we were supposed to "meditate" on, but I do remember that soon after attending the session I received an invitation to attend a weekend meditation session in the country with the same *svāmī*, but I would have to pay \$200.00 to attend it. Thinking it was too much money, I decided not to go, although I retained my interest in merging in oneness.

Soon after this I met a couple of Hare

Kṛṣṇa devotees in a parking lot as I was going to my car. They were friendly young men, and I was immediately impressed with their honesty. I was also impressed with what they were explaining about the literature they were selling. I felt I needed some genuine enlightenment, as well as some encouragement in my quest for my ultimate goal of becoming one with the Supreme, so I gave a donation and took a *Back to Godhead* magazine and a book called *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The devotees also invited me to their "Sunday Love Feast" in Manhattan.

Days after we parted I still remembered with relish and amazement my meeting with these two devotees. "Even in these modern times," I thought, "there are still people who live a God-centered life and who aren't hypocrites." I wrote a letter to

*When the devotees said they would like to visit me at my apartment, I was reluctant at first because I knew it would mean I was committing myself more than I wanted to at that time. . . . It would mean I was becoming one of them.*

their temple praising the devotees in hopes that they would get rewarded. I also expressed my sincere appreciation for the literature they had given me. I had learned from it that trying to become one with God was for less intelligent persons, because to become one with God was actually impossible anyway: we are eternally His subordinate parts.

A couple of weeks after sending the letter, I got a phone call from a devotee at the New York temple telling me that they were very happy to receive my letter and that the temple president had even read it to the assembled devotees during the morning announcements in the temple. Naturally I was very pleased to hear this news. But when my caller said that some devotees would like to visit me at my apartment in Syracuse, I was reluctant at first be-

cause I knew it would mean that I was committing myself more than I wanted to at that time. It would mean I would agree to be preached to. In other words, it would mean I was becoming one of *them*. Later I thought, "What harm could one visit do? I could always tell them not to come back if I wasn't really interested in what they were doing." So, when the devotee called back, I agreed that they could come.

Three devotees from the Manhattan temple arrived in their mobile home. Being shy, I was touched by their friendliness and boldness. I was thinking, "These people must really believe in what they teach, because they're walking around very casually with their traditional robes and shaved heads, as if it were a natural, normal thing."

On and off for a couple of years I had been trying to be a vegetarian, for health reasons only, but after tasting the vegetarian meal they cooked, I knew it was something special. They showed me how to prepare vegetarian meals and offer them to Kṛṣṇa before I ate. I distinctly remember that afterwards, as I began to offer my food as they had suggested, everything I ate really tasted better than before. They also explained a little bit about the importance of chanting Kṛṣṇa's holy names and gave me a strand of beads to chant on. They suggested that I chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* a fixed number of times every day for a while, gradually increasing the number, as I was able, up to the goal of chanting around the strand of 108 beads 16 times each day.

I enjoyed their company and looked forward to future visits. Shortly thereafter, I was visited on two occasions by different devotees from the same temple. Although they were still practically strangers, I nevertheless trusted them. I allowed them to spend the night, I went out on shopping errands for them, and when I went to work I allowed them to stay in my apartment. I could understand that these people didn't have the anxieties or the material desires that everyone else in the world has. They were satisfied with the simple things they had, and they were happy.

Of course, I was looking for happiness, but I wasn't convinced that I could taste the level of happiness and peace they had. I was thinking, "Are they happy because of some type of brainwashing, as the newspapers sometimes say? Is this really a genuine religious movement?"

Still, I was eager to tell others about what I'd learned from the devotees and their books. An acquaintance of mine at work was a member of a more popular religious organisation. He wanted me to come to their meetings and hear from them, but I felt more inclined toward associating with the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees

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# IN THE STARS?

(continued from page 11)

Vedic literature would have advised her to do the same.

Of course, learning from authorities is not a revolutionary concept; in our daily lives we routinely go to higher authorities to get knowledge—from how to fix a flat tire to how to build a bridge. The world is filled with literature and educational institutions precisely for this reason.

The President of the United States also needs authoritative guidance, and he has many sources of knowledge available to him. Yet because the President's mistakes can have immense repercussions, what he really needs is an infallible source of knowledge.

That's a difficult proposition. Infallible knowledge seems impossible to come by. The greatest thinkers and scientists throughout history haven't been able to agree on such basic points as how our personalities develop or how our minds function. And they are unable to give us conclusive knowledge on larger, universal issues, such as where we've come from,

what (or who) set the universe and its laws into motion, and so on.

Yet unerring knowledge is available—by approaching not just higher authorities, but the *absolute* authority: the creator, sustainer, and knower of everything, God, or Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa is accepted as God by the Vedic literature, great saints, spiritual teachers, and authorities in the transcendental science. Because He is unlimited, His knowledge is supreme, and He is never illusioned. His instructions are given in Vedic literatures like the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which are therefore perfect sources of information. Taking knowledge from Kṛṣṇa solves the dilemma of conflicting views, erroneous information, and general confusion, and enables us to confidently take on the weighty responsibility of guiding our own lives, or a whole nation's.

The Vedic literature is laden with explicit, practical knowledge about every field of life, including how to govern nations. Though you or the president might not find every intricate issue of your affairs addressed there, the principles of in-

fallible knowledge can be used as solid guideposts for making the right decisions at every turn. It is simply a matter of applying the principles to our lives, and cleansing our hearts and minds.

So while getting the signals straight from the stars may be risky, Kṛṣṇa's instruction through His devotees, saintly persons, and the Vedic literature will guide us safely and accurately, not only in scheduling auspicious times to carry out an activity, but in all our thoughts, speech, and behaviour, in political, social, and private life.

Relying heavily on this transcendental guidance, rather than merely on material guidance, will never reduce our effectiveness in political office or our ability to deal with any situation in this world. Rather, we will be fully equipped to guide ourselves and our dependents while here in this world, where we are in constant fear of misfortune and suffering. And we will be able to guide them far beyond the stars, to the safe, blissful shore of the spiritual world, which is full of transcendental, absolute knowledge. Now that's really going far, Mrs. Reagan. ☐

## In Memoriam

# Śrīla Bhakti-rakṣaka Śrīdhara-deva Goswami Mahārāja



Śrīla Prabhupāda's revered Godbrother and friend Śrīpāda Bhakti-rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja, the senior *sannyāsī* in the Gauḍīya Maṭha and the founder-*ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Saraswata Math in Navadvīpa, West Bengal, passed away at 5:48 A.M. on August 12 at the age of 93. He was the last remaining *sannyāsa* disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the founder-*ācārya* of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. He passed on to the spiritual world surrounded by his followers and calling on the mercy of Śrī Caitanya

Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu.

Śrīpāda Śrīdhara Mahārāja, raised in a village of Sanskrit-speaking *brāhmaṇas* in Hapaniya, West Bengal, joined the Gauḍīya Maṭha in 1927, after completing his study of law at Calcutta's Presidency College. He received the name Rāmendra Sundara from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta at the time of his initiation. Thereafter, he preached extensively throughout India, and in the 1920s he discovered the site on the banks of the Godāvarī River in South India where Lord Caitanya and Rāmānanda Rāya had held their famous conversations recorded in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta went there to install the impressions of Lord Caitanya's feet in a shrine and awarded Rāmendra Sundara with a new name, Rāmānanda dāsa, in honor of his affinity for the teachings of Rāmānanda Rāya.

In January 1928, in Allahabad, he met Śrīla Prabhupāda during the time of the Kumbha-melā festival at a program at Śrīla Prabhupāda's house. When he met Śrīla Prabhupāda again, in 1932 in Vṛndāvana, he had become Bhakti-rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had given him this name in recognition of his expertise in penetrating the essence of scriptural conclusions.

In the early 1930s, Śrīla Prabhupāda helped Śrīdhara Mahārāja establish the

Bombay branch of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. Later, while Śrīla Prabhupāda was living with his family in Calcutta, Śrīdhara Mahārāja and Bhaktisārāṅga Mahārāja lived in the same building. They would discuss *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and go out together to preach.

Many years later, when Śrīla Prabhupāda's preaching had become successful, Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja often expressed his appreciation. Once, upon Śrīla Prabhupāda's returning to India, Śrīdhara Mahārāja remarked, "Our Bhaktivedānta Swami Mahārāja has done a miracle! Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda conceived and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura began to translate this conception into action. And we find that through Bhaktivedānta Swami Mahārāja, in his last days, it has been fulfilled to such a great extent. We are happy, we are glad, we are proud."

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja established temples in Navadvīpa, Calcutta, and Hapaniya. Widely respected for his scholarship, he wrote several books in Bengali, Sanskrit, and English.

The international Vaiṣṇava community deeply regrets the passing of Śrīpāda Śrīdhara Mahārāja, but we take solace in the conviction that this pure devotee has entered the eternal pastimes of Lord Caitanya.



# KĪRTANA IN KWAZULU

“The local chief was simply too suspicious to grant us permission to enter his domain, but I knew that Lord Caitanya would not have brought us here without a reason.”

by INDRADYUMNA SWAMI

PHOTOS BY INDRADYUMNA SWAMI AND DĀMODARA DĀSA





Sitting in an office in Durban, South Africa, we anxiously awaited a message from the chief of the Zulu nation, Gutasha Bhutalezi. We had managed to contact one of his local chieftains earlier that day with our urgent request: our local chapter of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness had received a large donation of rice, beans, and vegetables the day before, and we needed permission from Chief Bhutalezi to enter the Zulu homelands and distribute it to the needy people. Devastating floods had hit the area some months ago, and we had information that many people were still struggling to survive.

Suddenly the chief minister's reply appeared on the screen of the telex machine. "Kwazulu government has no objection to distribution of food by your organization to needy people in Kwazulu. I suggest you contact the township manager at Ntuazuma and the magistrate in Ndwedwe to help you make suitable arrangements. Signed: The Secretary of the Chief Minister."

I grabbed the telex as we ran out the door; it would be invaluable in convincing local chieftains of our intent. They would naturally be suspicious because the

Zulu homelands, known as Kwazulu, are rarely visited by outsiders.

As our four-wheel-drive jeep and Hare Krishna Food for Life van pulled out of our temple grounds in Durban, bound for Ndwedwe, two days drive north toward Mozambique, my heart beat faster, eager for the adventure ahead. By Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mercy, we were taking the *saṅkīrtana* movement deep into the ancient homelands of the Zulus.

Five hundred years ago Lord Caitanya, the incarnation of God for this age, predicted that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa would go to every town and village of the world. In our small way we were helping to fulfill that prophecy by travelling to the arid lands of the Zulus. We did not know what we could expect, but we hoped they would accept our gifts of mercy: the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, and *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*.

After three days of driving, we crossed into Kwazulu, and the paved roads ended abruptly. Clouds of dust billowed in through the open windows as we slowed our pace because of the rough terrain. Though the dust soon covered us, we kept the windows open for some relief from the hot African sun that beat down mercilessly. Our party of ten devotees soon de-



In traditional Zulu dress (above left), members of the Zulu tribe pose with devotees after a village festival. At left, the *saṅkīrtana* safari heads down a dusty road in the hot African sun. Below, a typical Zulu village waits for the mercy of Lord Caitanya.



pleted the water tanks strapped to the sides of the van and jeep.

After some time the first village appeared on the horizon. Thinking it wise to send some scouts ahead, I directed two of our African devotees, Jagat Guru dāsa and Bhakta Alain, to go forward and meet the chief. After an anxious two hours, they returned with despondent faces. They had forgotten to take the telex, and, as I had suspected earlier, the local chief was simply too suspicious to grant us permission to enter his domain. Knowing, however, that Lord Caitanya would not have brought us here without a reason, I grabbed the telex, some *prasādam*, and one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and jumped back into the jeep with the two devotees. "Let's go back to the village," I said. "I want to meet the chief."

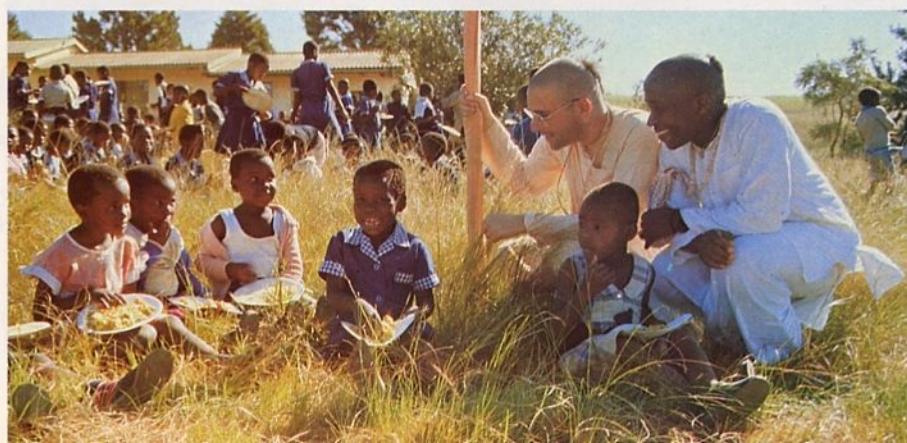
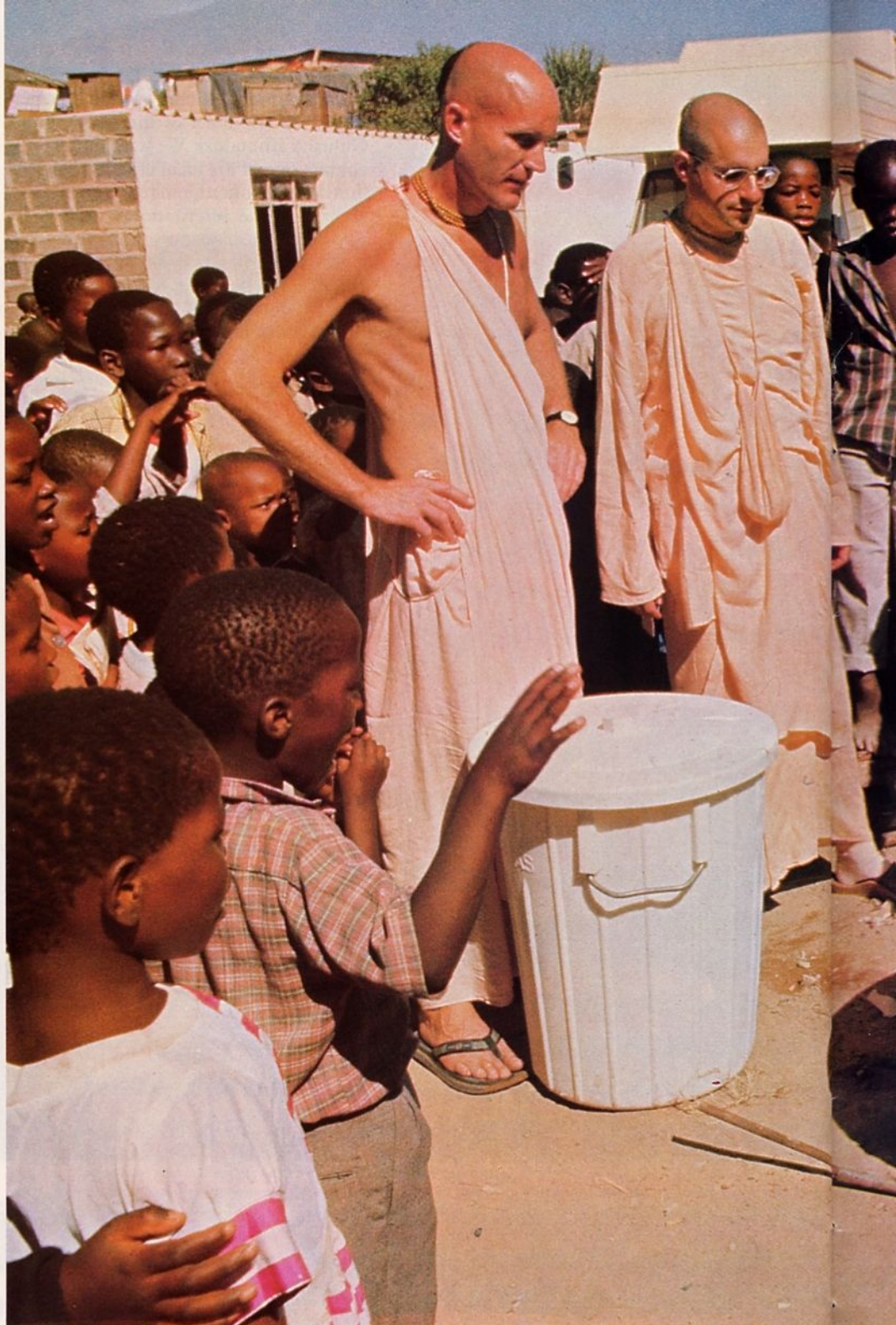
As we entered the village the simple surroundings revealed the difficult life of the people. To be sure, the Zulus had incorporated much of modern civilisation; but it wasn't evident here in this rural village. They were poor.

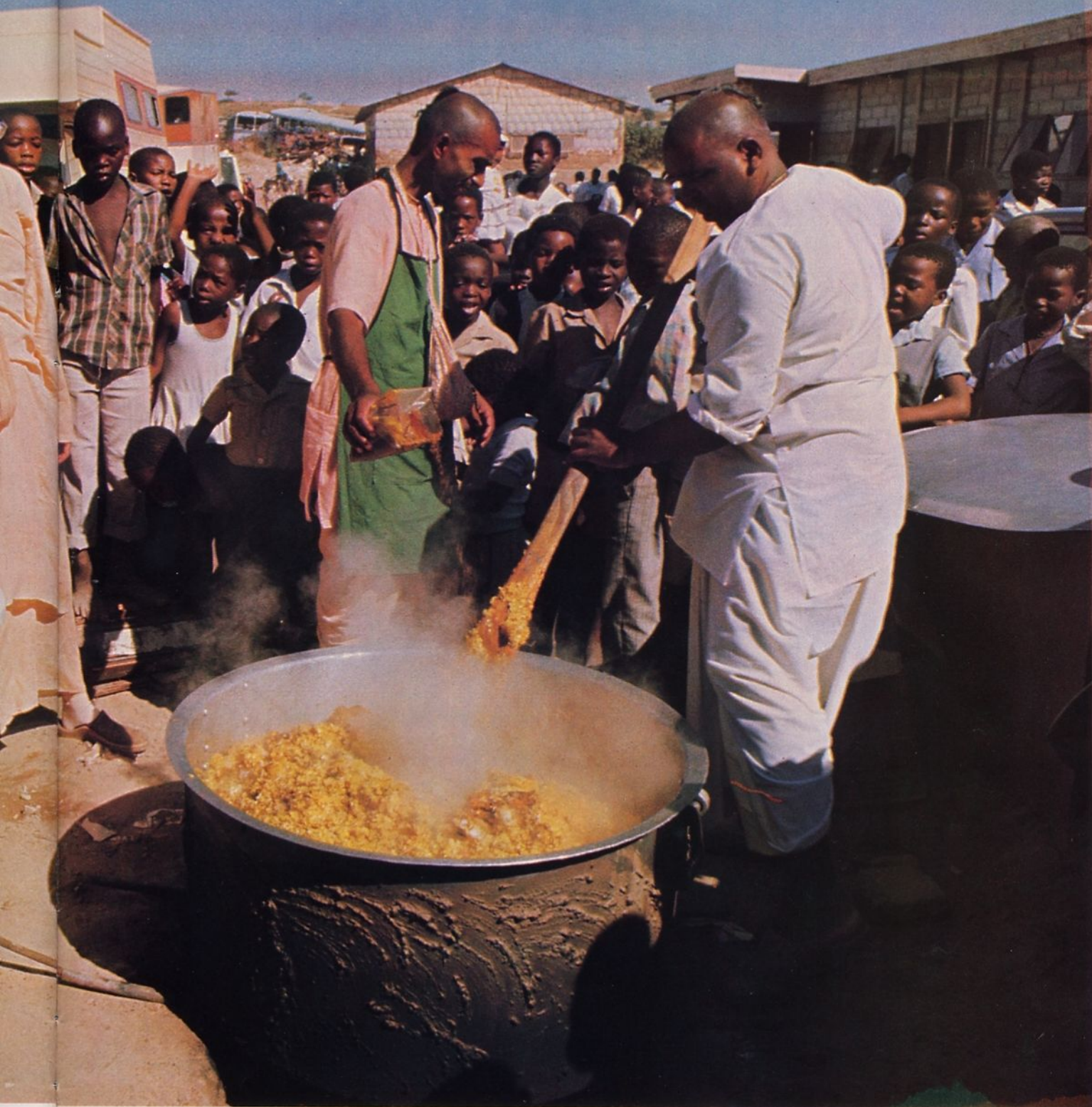
When the road ended, we proceeded to the chief's residence on foot. His guards approached us anxiously, but soon submitted to our requests to meet their leader. After some time, the chief appeared at the door and asked us to enter. When we showed him the telex and explained our proposal, he cheerfully agreed and asked his men to take us to the village school.

The headmistress was informed of our intentions and soon had all one thousand children assembled in the school courtyard. Wide-eyed boys and girls looked intently at Girirāja Swami as he stood before them to explain our presence. "We are all children of God," he said, his words being translated into Zulu by Jagat Guru dāsa. "God is great and we are very small. We are meant to glorify and serve God, and in this age the chanting of the holy names of God, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, is



A thousand plates of hearty *khichri* are served into the hands of eager schoolchildren (above). Above right, the devotees prepare a large quantity of *khichri* before the curious eyes of the village children. At right, Girirāja Swami makes friends with some of the schoolchildren and answers their questions about Kṛṣṇa consciousness.





the simplest and most sublime way of knowing Him." The children stared back with curious looks. "Therefore we would like to ask you to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa along with us."

He taught them the *mantra* word by word, and they began repeating it. Within a few minutes the assembly was resounding with the holy names. I looked on, stunned by the spontaneity of the children and their teachers in accepting the chanting so eagerly. The Zulu children, accustomed to dancing as part of their tra-

ditions, soon began to follow the flowing steps of the devotees, creating a great cloud of dust that rose into the air.

After a full hour of *kīrtana*, the teachers lined the children up as we distributed *khichrī*, a preparation of rice, beans, and vegetables, to our hungry hosts. One thousand plates were served out, and many children came back for more.

Later that evening, as we drove out of the dusty compound in the dark, hundreds of grateful children ran behind us chanting "Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!" Our first at-

tempt had been a success. I prayed that other successes would follow.

Late that night our caravan rolled into the second village, a good six-hour drive down the road into a fertile valley. As there was no electricity, the shadows danced in the flickering candlelight coming from the small huts, creating an eerie welcome to our tired party.

Soon curious faces appeared from the shadows, and a contingent of villagers came forward to meet us. This time, however, I took the initiative to explain our



program and our success earlier that day. To my great relief the local chief was more than happy to welcome us. In fact, we received VIP treatment that night by being given special quarters: two rooms with hard-packed dirt floors and two armed guards at the doors in case of trouble. Within minutes we were all sound asleep.

After rising early the next morning and bathing from the local pump, we proceeded with our morning program of *kirtana* and classes. The melodious chant-

ing of Hare Kṛṣṇa soon attracted curious onlookers, who took up the chanting along with us. I remembered an appropriate verse by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, one of Lord Caitanya's most intimate disciples:

*namo mahā-vadānyāya  
kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te  
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-  
nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

"I offer my most respectful obeisances unto Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He is the

most merciful incarnation of Kṛṣṇa because He freely bestows love of God upon everyone." Here in the homelands of the Zulus the mercy of Lord Caitanya was readily available through the process of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and the people were eagerly accepting.

Later that morning, in cooperation with the chief, we organized a *saṅkīrtana* party, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa throughout the village. Soon hundreds of people joined us, and by noon we numbered well over a





thousand. Bringing the *kīrtana* party back to the residence of the chief, we distributed *prasādam* to everyone who accompanied us. Plate after plate of *khichrī* went into eager hands. Then the chief came forward and expressed his gratitude. "You are welcome here at any time," he told us. I assured him that we would return.

And so it went, day after day, village after village. Soon, our food supplies exhausted, we were obliged to turn back and retrace our path. As we passed the numer-

ous villages we had visited, to our pleasant surprise many children would often appear on the road waving and chanting, "Hare Kṛṣṇa! Hare Kṛṣṇa!" We would be back, we told them.

How could we afford not to? They were so eager for Kṛṣṇa consciousness—and we were eager to spread the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Our *sankīrtana* safari was coming to an end, but the effects of Lord Caitanya's mercy were just beginning for the people of Kwazulu. ❧

**Drawing an enthusiastic crowd** (above), devotees chant Hare Kṛṣṇa for the first time ever in this remote Zulu village. The Zulus revealed their spontaneous attraction for *kīrtana*—they chanted and danced as they followed the devotees through their villages.

# HARE KṚṢṆA, HARE KṚṢṆA, KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA, HARE HARE HARE RĀMA, HARE RĀMA, RĀMA RĀMA, HARE HARE

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Whether we call God Buddha, Jehovah, Allah, Yahweh, or Kṛṣṇa, the names of God stand as the source of every article we can put a name on.

As the old expression goes, “What’s in a name?” Śrīla Prabhupāda gives an illustration about the use of material names compared to chanting God’s names. He explains that we can chant any name, for example “water,” but no matter how many times we repeat “water,” our thirst still won’t be quenched. We’ll just get bored—and thirstier. Yet if we chant the holy names of God, as in the *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—because God and His name are nondifferent we will achieve God.

Kṛṣṇa’s presence must remain hidden to those who rest their faith in material names. Śrīla Prabhupāda has written:

The whole material creation is a *jugglery of names* only; in fact, it is nothing but a bewildering creation of matter like earth, water, and fire. The buildings, furniture, cars, bungalows, mills, factories, industries, peace, war, or even the highest perfection of material science, namely atomic energy and electronics, are all simply bewildering names of material elements with their concomitant reactions of the three modes. Since the devotee of the Lord knows them perfectly well, he is not interested in creating unwanted things for a situation which is not at all reality, but simply names of no more significance than the babble of sea waves.—(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.2.3, purport)

Just to help establish these babblings, paid government servants assign registered trade marks and copyrights for names. Advertising firms and public relations agencies are paid to promote names and create fame for them.

But God is transcendental, and He’s not trying to get a piece of the action. He has no need to sue anyone who uses His name. He is never depleted by any infringement. Rather, because He feels sorry that we’re missing the responsibility of using our human intelligence, He appears in this age as Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu to establish the chanting of His holy names.

Lord Caitanya prayed, “O my Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings, and thus You have hundreds and millions of names like Kṛṣṇa and Govinda. In these transcendental names You have invested all Your transcendental energies.”

While we mix in this world with names like John, Ashok, Mikhail, and Suzanne, our names usually don’t reveal anything of our real identity. They’re just more material sounds to add to the babble. Yet Kṛṣṇa’s names describe His transcendental attributes and favourite activities, and we can relish His qualities and enter into His pastimes through His names.

What’s in a name? Well, if you are asking about the names of God, you won’t find the answer in any college textbook. Sure, the linguists have analysed every word ever uttered. And they have a very high regard for the use and maintenance of language. They are seeking a sort of perfection. Yet everything that they’re searching for, that we’re all searching for, is in Kṛṣṇa’s names.—*Karunā-devī dāśī*

Right: 1988 Festival of the Chariots, New York City / Photo by Yamarāja dāsa



# ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

## Is the Soul Unlimited?

*This is the conclusion of a conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and reporters in Melbourne, Australia, on June 29, 1974.*

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** So we are living beings. But we are not the Supreme Being.

**Reporter 3:** And yet God is inside us.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** God is inside, outside—everywhere.

**Reporter 6:** Your Divine Grace, who do you think Jesus Christ was?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Now, let us finish one idea at a time. Jesus Christ said that he is God's son. That's all right.

**Reporter 3:** But if you take a drop of water and you merge it back into the ocean . . . this is an example that is often given by these various masters . . . that if you take a drop of water and you put it into the ocean, that drop becomes one with the ocean.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** The drop of water becomes the ocean?

**Reporter 3:** No. But it becomes merged in that ocean.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** That's all right. Merging is different. But the ocean remains the ocean.

**Reporter 3:** Yes.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** And you remain the drop. That's all. Now, take your material body—earth, water, fire, and so on. When you pass away and this body becomes decomposed, its present form will not remain. Does this mean that your body will become the totality of universal elements?

**Reporter 3:** No. But surely the body is different from the soul.

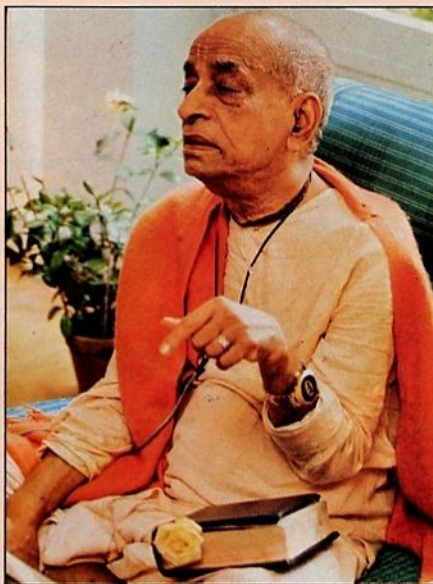
**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** So that body is a drop in the totality of material elements. That does not mean your body has become the totality of material elements. Similarly, a drop of ocean water is a drop always. It does not become the ocean. It appears that it is mixed with the ocean. But "mixed" does not mean the drop will ever become the ocean. That is not the fact.

**Reporter 6:** When they say the drop mixes with the ocean . . .

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes.

**Reporter 6:** . . . it's like the human, finite form merging with the infinite, and then it acquires the powers of the infinite.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No. "Mixes" or "merges" means something less. This example is given. Let us say a green bird enters into a



tree which is also green. So although to my eyes it appears that the bird has mixed or merged into the tree, actually that is not the fact.

Or take an airplane. You look into the sky and see an airplane flying along. Then, after some time, you look and see there is no airplane. You see only the sky. To your eyes, it may appear that the airplane has mixed or merged into the sky. But of course, the airplane has not merged. It cannot merge. The airplane is keeping its identity, just as the bird is keeping his identity.

**Reporter 3:** Your Divine Grace, is the human soul limited or unlimited?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Limited.

**Reporter 3:** Limited?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes.

**Reporter 3:** It has boundaries and . . . ?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. Because you are in fact limited; therefore you are under the control of material nature. That is being explained in these examples of the bird and the airplane. For instance, the bird is limited. Now, if he keeps his limited existence, that is nice. But if, unnecessarily, he wants to become unlimited, that is artificial. How can it be?

**Reporter 3:** I seem to remember reading a particular chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* that said . . . I can't quite remember what chapter it was, but it said that . . . Kṛṣṇa was talking to Arjuna . . . and it said that Kṛṣṇa said to Arjuna, "When you realise

Me"—or when you realise God, Kṛṣṇa—"you will see the whole creation inside Me. . . ."

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Hm?

**Reporter 3:** "You will see the whole creation within Me and within yourself." Is that a true translation?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** One of my disciples can give you the accurate translation.

**Disciple:** "You will see all beings in Me. And you will see Me in all beings."

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** So what is that? Does it mean that all beings are Kṛṣṇa?

**Reporter 3:** The translation that I read also said, "You will see Me within yourself."

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** As Paramātmā, or Supersoul, Kṛṣṇa is within everyone's heart. *Īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati*. But that does not mean everyone is Kṛṣṇa. You are in this room. That does not mean you are this room.

**Reporter 3:** So we are in God, and God is in us?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. Without God we would have no existence.

**Disciple:** Śrīla Prabhupāda, here is the exact translation of that verse in *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. "A true yogī observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized man sees Me everywhere."

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** So without God we would have no existence. That's all. That we live in Him does not mean we become Him. Constitutionally, we are His part-and-parcel servants, and we have to serve Him.

**Reporter 5:** Your Divine Grace, do you think that every human being will become liberated?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Oh, yes. When people learn this great science of God realisation and self-realisation that Kṛṣṇa has given in *Bhagavad-gītā*, then He promises they will be liberated. *Janma karma ca me divyam evaṃ yo vetti tattvataḥ/tyaktvā dehaṃ punarjanma naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*: "One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna." You see? Kṛṣṇa guarantees it.

**Reporter 3:** Your Divine Grace, thank you very much for your time.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Hare Kṛṣṇa. ❀

# ORDINARY

(continued from page 24)

because their teachings made more sense to me than the other group's teachings. The devotees' teachings seemed more rational. And, as far as I could see, the devotees were actually trying to live what their scripture taught and were not hypocritical. My acquaintance finally suggested that I pray to the Lord to give me an indication as to who He is.

I followed his suggestion, and with as much sincerity as I could muster, I prayed. I promised the Lord that I would take up very seriously the process of religion indicated by Him for the rest of my life. I didn't receive any direct answer from a super-

natural force, but I took it that God was giving me an indication by allowing me to come into contact with the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees, who seemed to be very dedicated to living a sinless life. I appreciated that they were not eating meat and justifying it in the name of religion. I had realised before that going back to God at the end of this life was not as easy as some were professing, and that one would have to actually become purified in all his heart before he would be accepted by the Lord.

As it turned out, it was only a few months from the time I met the devotees in the parking lot to when I moved into their temple in New York. I voluntarily gave practically everything I owned to the temple, including my car, my bank account,

and my drums, without any regret whatsoever. I wanted to keep the promise I had made to the Lord. By this time, I had already been daily chanting sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* on my beads and following the four regulative religious principles: no meat-eating, no illicit sex, no intoxication, and no gambling.

I have no regrets in coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, except that I didn't come sooner. Now I am able to sing and play percussion instruments every day, and the more I do these things, trying to do so with real love and devotion for Kṛṣṇa, the more He takes notice of me. And as the Lord is merciful to me in this way, I come closer to Him and become something above the ordinary. ❧

## Perfect Knowledge

(continued from page 5)

*śaḥ*. According to your lot, according to your *karma*, it has been fixed up that you will eat like this, you will sleep like this, your sex life will be like this, and you will be able to defend like this. That is destiny. By destiny these are already fixed, so don't spoil your life trying to improve these things.

As the *śāstra* [scripture] says, *tasyaiva hetoḥ prayateta kovido na labhyate yad bhramatām uparyadhaḥ*: "You have transmigrated from so many bodies—this body to that body, this body to that body. Now that you have a human body, you can read *Bhagavad-gītā*, you can learn from Kṛṣṇa what the real problem of life is. Utilise your life for that purpose. Don't be perplexed with these problems of the body."

As Kṛṣṇa says in the present verse from *Bhagavad-gītā*, *tāms titikṣasva*: "Just try to tolerate the bodily pains and pleasures." For example, the summer season comes, and it will go away. Similarly, the winter season comes, and it will go away. So just try to protect yourself as far as possible, but don't be affected by the summer season or winter season. In India the temperature is sometimes 120 degrees during the summer. Does that mean people will stop

all their work? No. Or, in the Western countries, the winter is so strong that sometimes the temperature falls below zero. Does that mean everything will be stopped? No, you have to do your duty.

Similarly, Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna, "You are afraid of the little pain that will come because you have to kill your own men. That pain is coming, and it will go, but still you have to do your duty and fight. This fight is taking place under My guidance. So you must fight. That is your duty."

Kṛṣṇa says in the present verse that we should not be bothered by this *mātrā-sparsāḥ*. *Mātrā* means "skin," and *sparsāḥ* means "touch." We should not be too much concerned with bodily pains and pleasures. But ignorant people are mad after this "skin disease," headed by sex. What is sex? Simply an itching of the skin. There is an itching of the skin, and you become satisfied by scratching it. That's all. Therefore the *śāstra* advises, *viśaheta dhiraḥ*: "Be sober and tolerate the itching of sex."

But these rascals who are very much attached to so-called family life are completely absorbed in this itching. They are known as *grhamedhīs*. *Agrhasṭha* is different. The *grhasṭha* knows the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but he is not so advanced. Therefore he lives with a wife and

children, but for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And those who are not Kṛṣṇa conscious, who simply live like animals with their children and wife—they are *grhamedhīs*. The *grhasṭha* makes the best use of a bad bargain, while the *grhamedhī* lives like an animal, for material happiness.

And what is the happiness of the *grhamedhī*? Sex pleasure, that's all. Otherwise, he has no other impetus to work day and night like an ass. His only hope is that at night he will enjoy sex. That's all.

The *śāstra* advises us to tolerate the itching of sex and in this way avoid implication in the repetition of birth and death. The best thing is to be *brahmacārī*—no sex. Tolerate this itching. You will avoid so much displeasure, so much unhappiness in life. Otherwise, if you try to satisfy the itching sensation, you may attain a little happiness, but what is that happiness? Suppose there is some itching in your body. If you scratch it, you feel some pleasure—but then again the itching becomes even stronger. Sex is like that. So, one who is sober, advanced, will tolerate that itching sensation and be happy. He will think, "Sex is not my necessity. It is only something of the skin—my 'skin disease.' But I am not this skin; I am a soul, and my duty is to serve Kṛṣṇa." ❧

Thank you very much. ❧

## NOTES

(continued from page 36)

always an inspiration for one who is aspiring to the spiritual path. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu states that personal example is the most important manifestation of religious truth: "The scriptures and great learned sages are not always in agreement with one another. Consequently there are different religious principles. But a devotee's behaviour establishes the true purpose of religious principles."

The same point is also stated in the *Mahābhārata*:

Dry arguments are inconclusive. A great personality whose opinion is not different from others' is not considered a great sage. Simply by studying the *Vedas*, which are variegated, one cannot come to the right path by which religious principles are understood. The solid truth of religious principles is hidden in the heart of an unadulterated, self-realised person. Consequently, as the *śāstras* confirm, one should accept whatever progressive path the great saints advocate.

One can associate with great saints through their writings and teachings. And although one may say that there are no great saints today, there *are* sincere devo-

tees trying to follow the path of pure devotion to God. The Vedic scriptures declare that the association of such devotees, even taken in small amounts, is very beneficial.

Some religious leaders will continue to shy away from ecumenism, and some will indulge in it only for diplomacy, but the opportunity is open for deeper and more sincere exchanges. One should not be afraid that he will lose his own faith in such exchanges, but he should try to share whatever genuine God consciousness he has realised by serving his spiritual masters and scriptures. We can use all the help we can get.—SDG

# NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

## Ecumenism—Diplomacy or Sincere Exchange?

Almost all religions pursue some sort of exchange with other religious sects. They may do it to further the aim of their own sect, to quell violence among fanatics, to cooperate in efforts for humane work, or for many other reasons. Perhaps the purest and most worthy purpose for persons of different religions to come together is to help one another in the individual attempt at attaining love of God. Having taken part recently in conversations with Christian professors and clergymen in the United States and Europe, I would like to discuss some of the more positive aspects of ecumenism, and how the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement can contribute.

According to religions scholar Huston Smith, there are two kinds of religionists, whom he calls “lumpers” and “choppers.” Lumpers find the common element in different religions and bring them together, and choppers look for differences. But even among lumpers there are different opinions as to the real purpose of ecumenism. In Frankfurt, Germany, I met Professor Edmund Weber of Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, who said, “I am not as much interested in comparative religion as cooperative religion.”

Dr. Weber spoke of the need for religionists to cooperate to help solve world problems. He gave the example that many people in the world do not have the basic necessities of daily food, clothing, and shelter. One of the main reasons for this, he said, is that nations who enjoy a higher standard of living are denying, either directly or indirectly, those who do not have enough.

So religious leaders can set the example in this regard by living simply. Certainly Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did this throughout His life, as did St. Francis of Assisi and Gautama Buddha. Although religious persons are entitled to use wealth in the service of God, the money they receive should clearly be for Him, not for the sense gratification of the churchmen. Only if the religious people act in this way can they honestly preach to others that material wealth is not the highest sign of God’s favour and that we should share what we have.

Religious representatives can also cooperate by encouraging seminars among members of the different religions. In these meetings, they can

discuss how to solve such down-to-earth problems as achieving successful matrimony, keeping faith in times of ordeal, and controlling one’s material desires. An immense amount of experience has been gathered by pastoral counselling, and religious workers of different traditions can share the viewpoints of the different scriptures.

The most important goal for a religious person is to develop love of God. This can also be a subject of ecumenical exchange. Although one must be convinced of the truth of one’s own religious path, one should be humble enough to admit the possibility of benefiting by a spiritual exchange with like-minded souls. It is in this area that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement may be able to offer its most useful service to ecumenism. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda often met in this way with representatives of different religions, and he recommended it for his followers. He stated in a letter in 1974:

Just today we spoke at a seminary in Melbourne, Australia, and the young Franciscan monks listened very respectfully. While speaking to Christians we never say that our religious system is better than theirs, but we speak of the principles of love of God, *sa vai pumsam paro dharmo*. They became convinced and pleased to hear our explanations of God consciousness based on the Vedic conclusion.

When I used to travel with Śrīla Prabhupāda as his secretary, I noticed two specific suggestions he offered to Christians. One was that they should worship God by chanting His holy name. The importance of singing and meditating on the names of God, especially in this age, is stressed in Vedic literature, and Śrīla Prabhupāda took it to be a universal principle. He suggested that Christians could either chant the names of God as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, or that they could chant the name of Jesus Christ. Śrīla Prabhupāda also pointed out an interesting etymological similarity between the names *Christ* and *Kṛṣṇa*.

Another suggestion Śrīla Prabhupāda never tired of giving was that the Bible advocates refraining from animal slaughter, and that this is the real sense of the commandment “Thou shalt not kill.” Śrīla Prabhupāda didn’t attempt to convince Christians to give up their

religion, but he made suggestions like these, as to how they could become “better Christians.” And as he indicates in his letter about the Franciscans, Christians usually liked to hear these suggestions from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Some of the practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness may seem peculiar to the Vaiṣṇava sect, such as offering all of one’s food to God before eating it, worshipping the form of Kṛṣṇa on the altar, or studying the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Sanskrit scriptures, but an intelligent “lumper” will be able to appreciate even these practices as carrying the universal essence of *bhakti*, or devotion to God. Similarly, how could a Vaiṣṇava refuse to accept the great commandment of Jesus Christ: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself”?

An in-depth study of scriptures will show that in every religion the essence is *bhakti*. Religions usually teach lesser forms of worship for those persons who are very much attached to material desires, but the scriptures always make it clear that the ultimate goal is devotion to God. The scriptures of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement promote only *bhakti*. Although the *Vedas* do give prescriptions for those on the paths of *karma* (material desires) and *jñāna* (mental speculation), scriptures such as the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā* are meant for those who are after the highest goal of life, pure love of God. Thus it is stated in the beginning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, “This scripture completely rejects all religious activities that are materially motivated.”

And in the conclusion of the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa states, “Give up all activities performed in the name of religion and just surrender unto Me. I will release you from all sinful reactions. Do not be afraid.”

Aside from the benefit religionists can gain from hearing one another’s scriptures, there is also the benefit of personal example. The symptoms of love of God have been analysed in the scriptures, and they include qualities such as humility, renunciation, kindness to all creatures, and being fixed in the Absolute Truth. To find these qualities in a devotee of God is

(continued on page 35)



# Godhead Is Light.

“The process of going back home, back to Godhead, is to hear about the Supreme Lord and His name, form, attributes, pastimes, paraphernalia, and variegatedness. Foolish people do not know this. They want to hear something about the name, form, etc., of everything temporary, and they do not know how to utilize this propensity of hearing for the ultimate good.”

—From *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.1.2, purport)  
by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

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