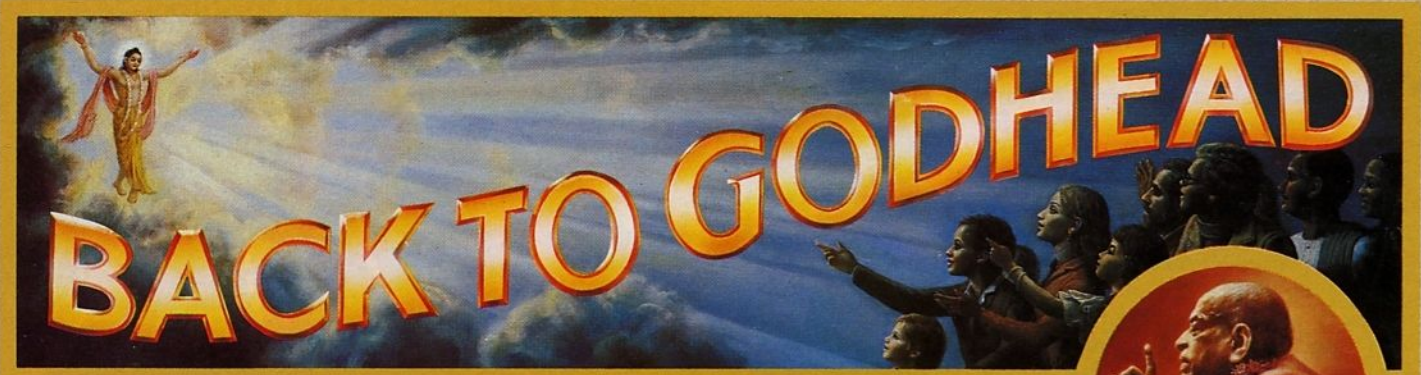


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



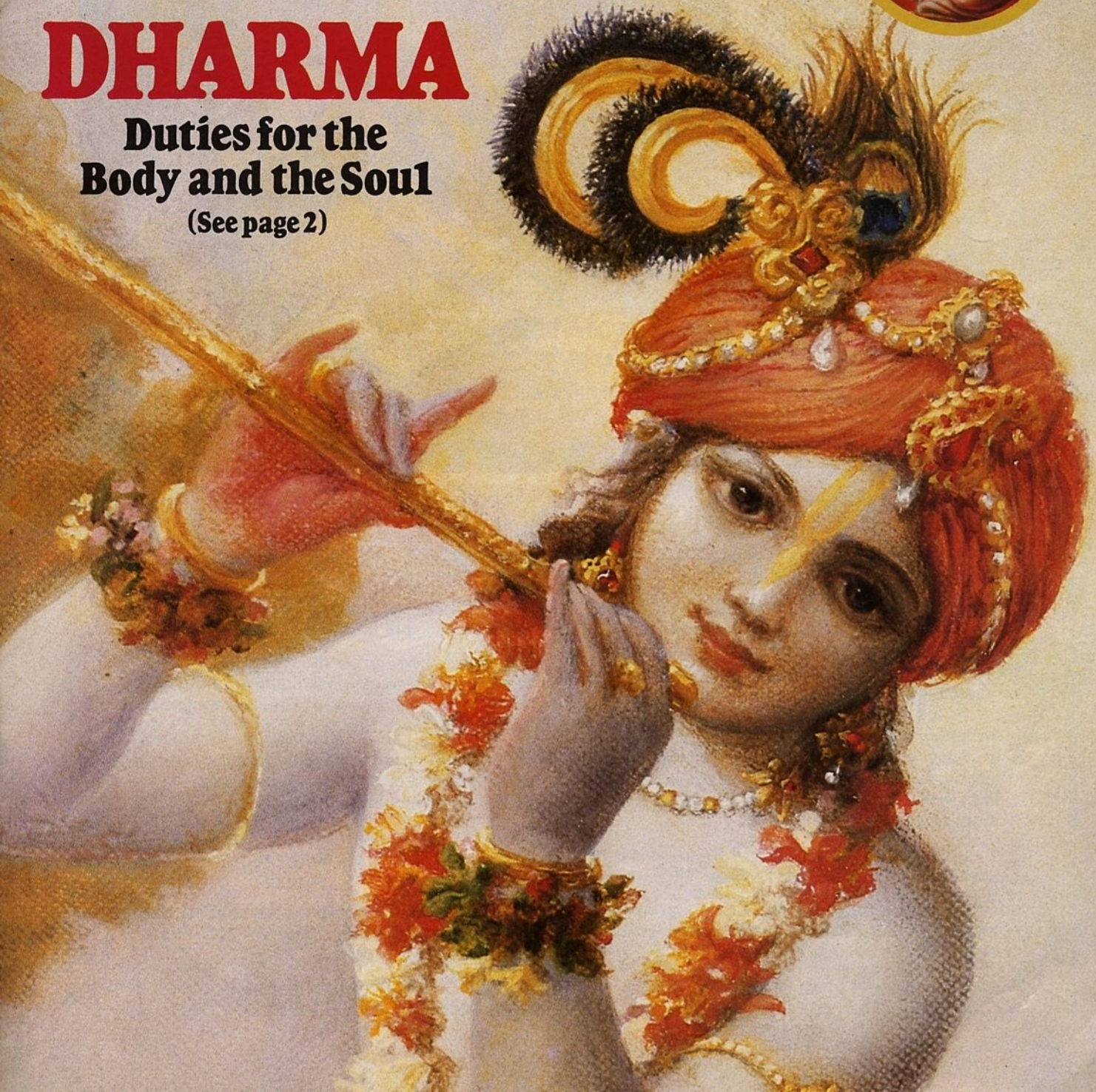
Vol.24 No.3

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

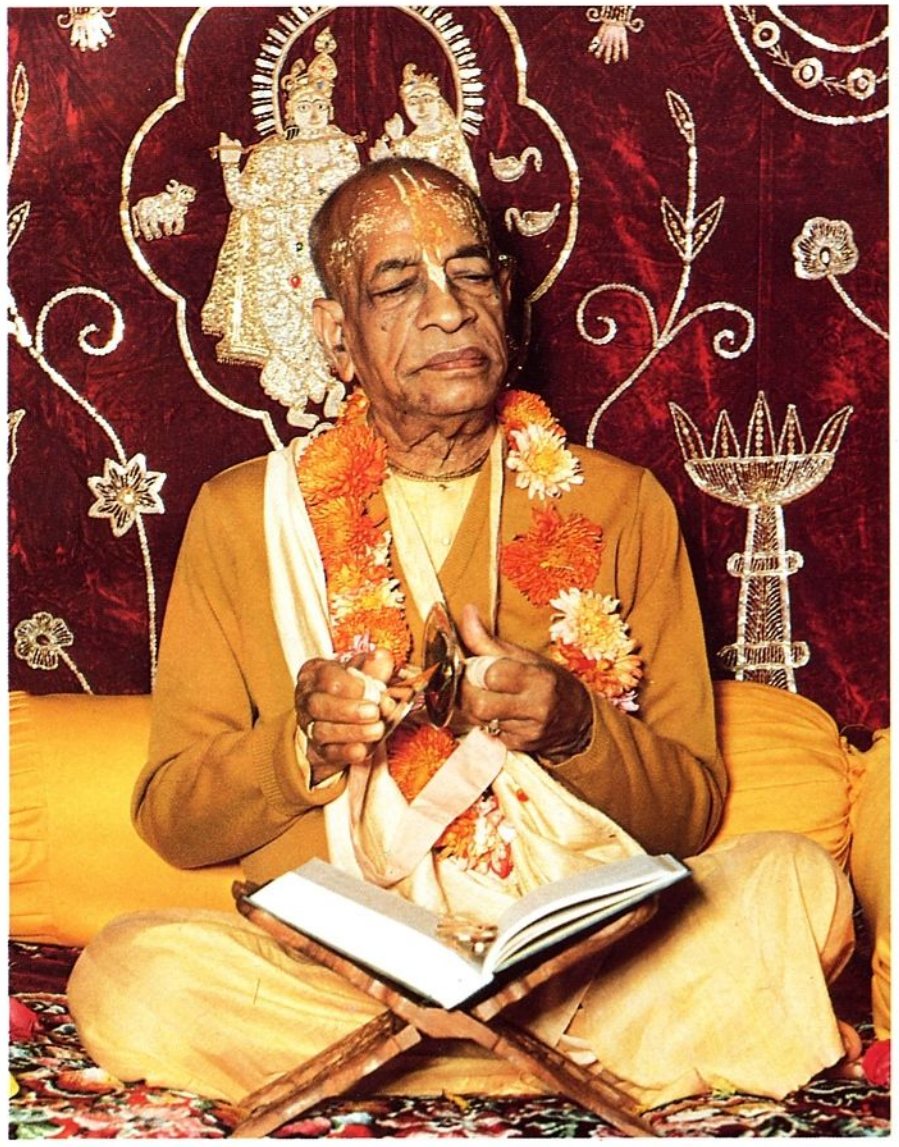
DHARMA

**Duties for the
Body and the Soul**

(See page 2)



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.



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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.

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PRONUNCIATION. We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in **but**, long **ā** like the **a** in **far** (and hold it twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in **evade**, long **ī** like the **i** in **pique**. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **rim**, and **ṛ** like the **ch** in **chair**. Pronounce the aspirated consonants (**ch**, **jh**, **dh**, etc.) as in **staunch**-heart, **hedge-hog**, and **red-hot**. Pronounce the sibilants **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say **KRISHNA**, and for *Caitanya* say **CHAITANYA**.

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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COVER: The beautiful form of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is not a form imagined by someone after seeing the beautiful things of this world. According to the Vedic literature and Vedic authorities on spiritual life, Kṛṣṇa is the source of all forms. He Himself says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, "Everything emanates from Me." And Lord Brahmā, the chief person within the universe, says, "I worship Govinda [Kṛṣṇa], the primeval Lord, whose transcendental form is full of bliss, truth, and substantiality and is thus full of the most dazzling splendor." (Detail from a painting by Dhṛti-devī dāsi.)

DUTIES FOR THE BODY AND THE SOUL

In Kṛṣṇa's instructions to Arjuna,
He emphasizes duty—both for the common man
and for the self-realized soul.

A lecture in London on September 1, 1973
by HIS DIVINE GRACE
A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*sva-dharmam api cāveksya
na vikampitum arhasi
dharmyād dhi yuddhāc chreyo 'nyat
kṣatriyasya na vidyate*

"Considering your specific duty as a *kṣatriya*, you should know that there is no better engagement for you than fighting on religious principles; and so there is no need for hesitation."

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.31)

Sva-dharmam. *Sva* means "own," and *dharmam* means "occupation." According to Vedic civilization, everyone has his *sva-dharma*. This has been misinterpreted by rascals who say that *sva-dharma* means anyone can discover his own religious principle. *Yata mata tata patha*: "Whatever you think is a religious principle, that's all right." This is going on. But that is not the meaning. *Sva-dharma* means "own occupation." Actually, *dharma* means "that which you cannot give up." You have to capture it to keep your existence.

Because we have got body and soul—two different things—we are a combination: body and soul. So *sva-dharma* means the occupation of the soul. In the material condition we do not understand what I am, whether I am this body or I am soul. Mostly, people do not know that they are soul, not this body.

The body is the dress, or outward covering, but so long as one is in the bodily

concept of life, one has a different occupational duty according to the conception of the body. Everyone's nature is being conducted by the three modes of material nature: goodness, passion, and ignorance. Therefore, according to one's nature, there is occupational duty. That is the scientific division of society. At the present moment, there is no such division. Therefore, gradually people are becoming degraded to the lowest quality: ignorance, *sūdra*. They are taking to the *sūdra* principles.

Yesterday I was presented with a paper: the Indian government's scheme to help people start small-scale industries. They want to help people start small industries for making motor parts. But the government does not know that to engage people in such industrial affairs means to bring them to the *sūdra* platform. Every government is encouraging people to become *sūdras*. But actually, human society must be divided into four parts—*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *sūdra*—just as in our body there is division: the head department, the arms department, the belly department, and the legs department.

You cannot say, "Let there be only the legs department. There is no use of head and arms and belly." Will that go on nicely? If you cut off all other parts and simply keep the legs, will that be a very nice proposal? The legs are required, but if you keep the body with legs only, then this kind of body is a dead body.



The head is especially required. If you cut off the head, then the body is dead. You can cut off the arms, you can cut off the legs, but if you cut off the head—or the belly, also—it will be a dead body.

So, *sva-dharma* means the divisions of society: the *brāhmaṇa* division, the *kṣatriya* division, the *vaiśya* division, and the *sūdra* division. Everything is required. It is not that *sūdra* is not required. The *sūdra* is required, but if you make propaganda simply to make people *sūdras*, then who will give direction? If there is no head, who will give direction?



So a *kṣatriya* has got a very difficult task. *Kṣatriya* means the governing division. The governing division has got a very important duty: to see that everyone is following his duty—that the *brāhmaṇa* is following his duty, the *kṣatriya* is following his duty, the *vaiśya* is following, the *sūdra* is following.

India nowadays has become a secular government. “Secular government” means one that is impartial to any religious system. But the government should not be so callous in religious principles that it lets people do whatever they like. No. The gov-

ernment cannot do so. The government should declare, “You are a Hindu? You execute your own system of religion. You are a Muslim? You execute your system of religion. You are a Buddhist? You follow your system of religion. You are a Christian? You follow your system of religion.”

But the government cannot be callous that whatever they may follow or whatever they may not do, the government is neutral. No. If anyone is professing that “I am a Hindu,” then it is the government’s duty to see whether he is actually executing the Hindu principles of religion. That is

As an ideal *kṣatriya*, Parikṣit Mahārāja is about to punish Kali, who, in the guise of a king, was beating the legs of a cow, the symbol of religious principles. The First Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes how Kali introduces the main vices of this age: meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling.

a secular state. If you are calling yourself a Muslim, then it is the government's duty to see whether you are actually following the Muslim principles of religion. If you are a Christian, it is the government's duty to see that you are following the Christian principles of religion. Not that "you can do whatever you like."

Similarly, if one is claiming that he is a *brāhmaṇa*, it is the government's duty to see whether he's strictly following the brahminical principles—*sama, dama, titikṣava, ārjavam*—whether he is strictly following how to become self-controlled, how to remain always pure, clean, *śuci*. Another name for *brāhmaṇa* is *śuci*, "always clean." Similarly *ārjavam*, simplicity. The *brāhmaṇas'* life should be very simple. They should not imitate the *kṣatriyas* and the *vaiśyas* and the *sūdras*.

This is the principle: the government must see whether one is actually following the brahminical principles. So here Kṛṣṇa is pointing out that "As a *kṣatriya* you must follow your principles, *kṣatriya* principles." What are the *kṣatriya* principles? *Dharmyād dhi yuddhāc chreyo 'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate*. A *kṣatriya* must be always prepared to insure—even by fighting—that people are keeping their own principles of religion. That is the *kṣatriya's* duty.

If a *brāhmaṇa* is bluffing people, saying "I am *brāhmaṇa*" but acting like a *sūdra*, immediately a *kṣatriya* should point this out and challenge him to fight—"Why are you cheating people?" Similarly, if a *kṣatriya* is declaring "I am *kṣatriya*" but he's acting as a *sūdra*, it is the *kṣatriya's* or the government's duty to challenge him: "Why are you cheating people?"

So a *kṣatriya's* business is always to fight, because if you are not acting nicely and I say, "You are not acting nicely," you'll be angry. If one is actually a *brāhmaṇa*, he must act as a *brāhmaṇa*. So if somebody says, "You are declaring yourself a *brāhmaṇa*, but you are not following the brahminical principles," he will be angry. But a *kṣatriya's* duty is that if the so-called *brāhmaṇa* is angry, he should be punished immediately. The *kṣatriya* should challenge. Challenging means *yuddhāc*—fight. So a *kṣatriya* cannot be nonviolent. It is not possible. Violence is required to keep the social system strictly in order. Just like the government has violence departments: the police department, the military department. That is required to keep the society in order.

So here Kṛṣṇa says, "You are a *kṣatriya*; your duty is to fight." *Dharmyād dhi yuddhāc*: "This fight arranged by Me on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra—because it is sanctioned by Me, it is *dharma-yuddha*, religious fighting." It is not like the political diplomats declaring war to keep the

people in ignorance. No. It is sanctioned by Lord Kṛṣṇa. Whatever is sanctioned by Kṛṣṇa, that is actually *dharma*. I have several times given you the explanation of *dharma*: *dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat praṇītam*. Whatever God sanctions, that is *dharma*.

So God, Kṛṣṇa, has personally sanctioned the Battle of Kurukṣetra. Therefore it is *dharma-yuddha*, a religious fight. It is not the ordinary fighting of diplomats and politicians. It is *dharma-yuddha*. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says, *dharmyād dhi yuddhāc chreyo 'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate*: "You are a *kṣatriya*. You are fighting for the sake of the religious system. That is your first-class duty."

When you go deep into the matter—when you understand that "I am not this body, I am soul"—that is real *sva-dharma*. And what is the occupation of that *sva-dharma*? That is to be engaged in the service of the Lord.

So the four principles must be there in the society. The *brāhmaṇa* will not be required to fight. A *brāhmaṇa* will not be required to work like a *sūdra*. A *brāhmaṇa* will not be required to work like a *vaiśya*. Therefore a *brāhmaṇa* can beg. *Pathan pāthan yajan yājan dāna pratigraha*. This is the *brāhmaṇa's* business. He must be a good scholar in Vedic literature, and he must teach others. Not that "I have learned everything; I'll not teach anything." No. A *brāhmaṇa* must be well versed in the Vedic literature, and he must preach also, make others *brāhmaṇa*. Not that "I have become *brāhmaṇa*. So there is no need of others becoming *brāhmaṇa*. There will be competition."

In India some people have become very much afraid that I am making Europeans and Americans *brāhmaṇas*, so they are very much against me. They come to fight with me. In Hyderabad they came to fight.

"Sir, you are making these Europeans and Americans *brāhmaṇas*? This is not good." I said, "And why not?" So we had some discussion.

So actually it is not that a *brāhmaṇa* is made by birth. *Cātur-varṇyam mayā-sṛṣṭam guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ*. A *brāhmaṇa* is qualified by his quality and his work. Similarly, all classifications are by quality and work. This is confirmed by Nārada Muni, *yasya yal lakṣaṇam proktam punso varṇā-bhivyañjakam/ yad anyatrāpi dṛṣyeta tat tenaiva vinirdiśet*. *Yad anyatra* means that if the brahminical qualities are visible, manifest, in a person of another class—even in a *sūdra* or *caṇḍāla* [outcaste]—*tat tenaiva vinirdiśet*: one should accept him as a *brāhmaṇa*. Similarly, if one is born in a *brāhmaṇa* family but his qualities are like those of a *sūdra*, he should be accepted as a *sūdra*. This is the injunction given by Nārada Muni, who is not an ordinary person. And upon this, Śrīdhara Svāmī, the greatest commentator on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, has written that *janma*, birth, is not the chief requirement for becoming a *brāhmaṇa*; one must be qualified with *sama, dama, titikṣava, śuci*. Then he should be accepted.

So it is the duty of the *kṣatriyas* to see that everyone is performing his religious duty according to his position. Unfortunately, the so-called government men are also *sūdras*. The so-called priests are *sūdras*. The so-called *vaiśyas* are *sūdras*. The whole world is now full of *sūdras*. You cannot expect anything very nice in this situation, because everything is being conducted by *sūdras*.

Kṛṣṇa is advising Arjuna: "This is not an ordinary fight. It is *dharma-yuddha*, and you should accept it; you should not hesitate. After all, the soul is never killed." As long as one is in the bodily concept of life, *sva-dharma* means this *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, and sūdra*. Arjuna was a *kṣatriya*; therefore his *sva-dharma*, his occupational duty, was to fight.

The real *sva-dharma* is spiritual *sva-dharma*. When you go deep into the matter—when you understand that "I am not this body, I am soul"—that is real *sva-dharma*. And what is the occupation of that *sva-dharma*? That is to be engaged in the service of the Lord. *Jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'*. Actually that is *sva-dharma*. Every soul is eternally a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa. That is spiritual *sva-dharma*. And material *sva-dharma* means this *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, and sūdra*.

Therefore the *sva-dharma* changes as soon as one is elevated to the spiritual platform. That is explained in *Bhagavad-gītā*: *sa guṇān samitīyaitān brahmbhūyāya kalpate*. One who is engaged in

(continued on page 30)

This series systematically explains some of the important philosophical concepts that form the foundation of the Vedic culture and the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

LESSON FOUR: The Law of Karma

by PAVANEŚANA DĀSA

PART I: In high school I was taught in religion class that after death good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell—for eternity in both cases. One day I asked the teacher, “What happens if a baby dies? Does he go to heaven or to hell?”

My teacher replied, “He goes to heaven, of course, because he has never committed any sins.”

I immediately perceived a rather gruesome derivation of this logic and formulated another question: “But, therefore, wouldn’t it be best to kill all the babies right away? Then they could never commit any sins and would go straight to heaven. After all, if they grow up, there is a real danger that they will become sinners and

end up going to hell.”

My impertinent inquiry was greeted with indignant silence. How dare this boy ask such a question! I knew my proposal was only academic, because it violated one of the most basic religious injunctions. But still the question remained unresolved. What does happen to the baby? My proposal was obviously out of the question, but my teacher’s answer got him into a logical dilemma.

About twenty years later, on my way to Knoxville, Tennessee, I saw a bumper sticker that reminded me of this incident: “If you died tonight, would you go to heaven or hell?”

Here it was again, the same black-and-white supposition—no alternatives, no gray area, only heaven or hell.

This time I began to reflect on the matter, and I recognized that the statement implied three things:

1. There is only one life, one chance.
2. After we die, we will be situated eternally in either heaven or hell, and there is nothing in between.
3. If we fail in life because of ignorance or circumstances, we’ll never get a chance again. We’ll burn eternally in hell.

I had the same feeling I’d had in high school twenty years before. This didn’t make sense. It wasn’t logical. Why would God create someone to grow up in the crime-ridden slums of a big city, have him fight for subsistence, just to eternally vanish into hell? I thought this bumper sticker was good advertisement for atheism.

Just a few days before my trip to Knoxville, I had watched a program on TV: *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, by Rabbi Kushner. He said that when something bad happens to a good person, there are, from the religious point of view, three assumptions generally made:

1. The person is good.
2. God is all-powerful.
3. God is all-merciful.

Rabbi Kushner proposed that out of these three options, only two at a time can go together. As soon as all three are together, a contradiction arises.

If the person is good and God is all-powerful, then God could have prevented the bad thing from happening to the good person. Consequently, God can’t be all-merciful. But Kushner rejects that solution, because it would make people hate an unmerciful God.

If God is all-powerful and all-merciful, then He would never let bad things happen to good people. Consequently, the person must be bad. But obviously bad things do happen to good, innocent people. (Kushner’s own son died of a disease at an early age.) After all, it’s bad psychology to tell good people they must have deserved whatever happened to them, because it makes them hate themselves. So

Kushner rejects that solution too.

The last possible combination is that the person is good and God is all-merciful, but He is not all-powerful. Rabbi Kushner endorses this possibility and rationalizes that bad things aren’t caused by God but rather by bad people and by the forces of nature. He concludes that God is the creator, but His creation is going on somewhat independently of Him. Therefore God can’t do much about the suffering, but He can help His children endure the unavoidable misery He can’t prevent, and in this way He is quite helpful.

This also didn’t make sense to me. If God is not all-powerful, then what is the ultimate power? If there is a power superior to God, then God is not supreme. But then, who is supreme? Who created that power God can’t control? What is the

Karma is simply the extension of Newton’s law. Instead of dealing merely with inert objects, it applies to our actions, words, and thoughts. We can understand the mechanism of these laws in detail from the Vedic scriptures.

ultimate refuge? An all-merciful but not all-powerful God defies the definition of God as the Supreme Being. Rabbi Kushner’s theory leads to concealed atheism.

Reflecting upon these three incidents, I can appreciate the tremendous benefit of having studied the ancient Vedic scriptures for over a decade. Contrary to Western culture and philosophy, the Vedic literature establishes the law of *karma*, working under God’s supervision, as the main guiding factor in our existence. *Karma* provides the only logical and spiritually sound answer to all the incidents cited above.

The word *karma* has at least three meanings:

1. any material activity that produces a reaction and therefore leads to the development of another body,

2. the reaction from a material activity,
3. material activities done according to the regulations of the Vedic scriptures.

Everyone is constantly performing activities, either physical or mental. The *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.5) confirms, “No one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment.”

We are all well aware of Newton’s law that states that every action causes a reaction. In fact, we observe the validity of this law hundreds or thousands of times every day. Without it, time would stand still—nothing could move.

Karma is simply the extension of Newton’s law. Instead of dealing merely with inert objects, it applies to our actions, words, and thoughts. We can understand the mechanism of these laws in detail from the Vedic scriptures.

Understanding *karma* begins with understanding the condition of the spirit soul in the material world. The spirit soul is originally an inhabitant of the spiritual world. But he has a certain amount of independence and can attempt to be happy without God. This material world is created by God to provide the rebellious souls with such an opportunity.

Here the spirit soul is covered by a material body and mind. He tries to reject God’s authority and attempts to control nature himself. In this process he identifies strongly with his material body and makes its gratification his goal.

Obviously, accepting the laws of *karma* and being an atheist don’t go together. A materialistic person wants to control everything, while he maintains the notion that he himself is independent.

Yet clearly we are not controlling nature; nature is controlling us. Sometimes the weather is too hot; sometimes it’s too cold. We can’t change these things. Can we stop a hurricane? Can we make it rain when there is a drought?

Nobody has any control over where or when he takes birth, what kind of body he is given, or who his parents will be. Somehow or other, nature puts every one of us in our own predicament. Obviously we are not controlling everything.

Sometimes a person treated for a minor disease will die, and sometimes after doctors give up on someone, he miraculously recovers. Where is our control?

Two children may be born in the same family, they may be given the same opportunities, but one may become successful, and the other may be a failure. Everyone is trying to become happy, but not everyone succeeds. No one is trying to become unhappy, but misery comes out of its own accord, and happiness also comes to people in ways they don’t expect or work for.

If we could actually control nature and
(continued on page 24)

THE VEDIC OBSERVER

Transcendental Commentary on the Issues of the Day

GREEN OR GREED?

by Kṛṣṇa Dharma dāsa
(Manchester, England)

At last it seems the world is waking up. Green politics are becoming quite the fashion now, and even the most adamant politicians are making overtures to ecology. "All Conservatives are conservationists," intoned Mrs. Thatcher, somewhat uncharacteristically, at her party's recent gathering. "We are committed to the environment." Well, at least it's a start to talk concerned, even if one's actions seem to evince a rather different outlook.

Certainly there is enough evidence to indicate the disastrous effects our consumer society is having upon the environment. Even in India, one of the last bastions of agrarian life, the facts are horrifying. Walter Schwarz, a well-known ecologist and journalist, says that a third of India's 266 million hectares of agricultural land is now wasteland because of erosion, waterlogging, or salinity—the grim effects of deforestation and modern irrigation. Another third is classed as "partially" degraded. The average Indian now has a quarter of the land he had in 1951.

It is none too soon for people to become aware of the absurdities being perpetrated in the name of progress—the atrocious rape of our planet, for which we must all accept some blame. Actually, blame is ours as soon as we become a part of the corrupt system that demands continuous and total exploitation of the earth's resources. The person who receives the stolen goods is as much a criminal as the thief. Even unwittingly from our very birth, we are all quickly caught up in a vicious chain of global misdemeanors—the baby's bottle made from oil-derived plastics, the leather shoes, the multifarious chemical drugs we swallow.

"But wait!" I hear you cry. "Don't blame me; I hate this crazy system. And as for my child, he has no idea what is going on out there; he's surely innocent."

Which brings us to the real point: what is the actual cause underlying the abuse of nature? Why has man not been content with his traditional piece of land and a few

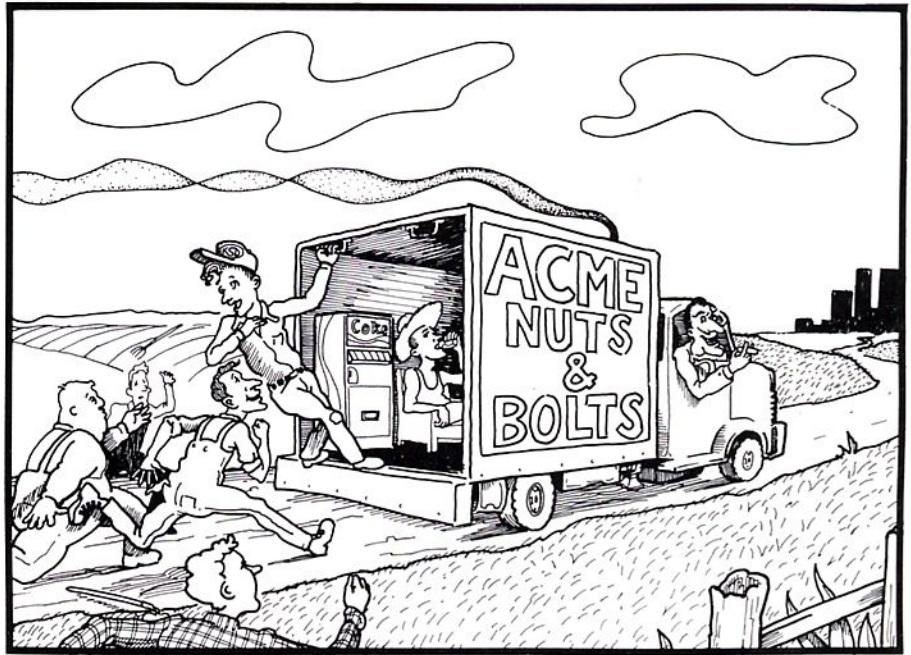
animals, gleaning just enough for his day-to-day survival?

Let's take the situation of a villager plowing over his smallholding and milking his cows. Meanwhile, elsewhere, the industrialist has set up his nuts-and-bolts factory and, in search of workers to man his enterprise, heads out to the villages. Espying our hapless villager, he promptly offers him currency to come and work for him.

Now we get to the root of the real problem. The villager is swayed by the prospect of acquiring Western-style clothes, cos-

thousands of desires."

The villager gives up producing food and sets off to manufacture metal parts or whatever. Thus those who remain working the land, now faced with producing food for those who went in search of inedible fortunes, resort to modern, assisted farming methods to better exploit the earth. If our foolish villager had resisted his lusty desires when approached by the entrepreneur, then the whole ruinous system would have halted at its outset. Thus the actual cause of the degradation discussed here is ignorance: the mistaken be-



metics, cars, and so on—the trappings of a so-called successful material life, which have all been broadly advertised as necessities by the entrepreneurs who produce them. But will these items ensure his happiness and free him from suffering? Will he ever be satisfied by any number of such possessions?

Obviously, the answer is no. He will be caught in the same upward spiral of increasing desires that grips the man who exploits him. From the *Bhagavad-gītā*, we learn that lust, the basis of all desire, "burns like fire and is never satisfied." One who attempts to satisfy lust becomes "bound by a network of hundreds and

hundreds of desires." lief that material acquisitions will bring happiness.

Of course, this greatly simplifies what has now become a "complex society," to cite a popular phrase. But is the truth so far from this simple tale? What about ourselves? What are we striving for? If we aim to increase our material happiness by adding to our possessions and bank balance, then are we not a cog in the machine that is grinding away the earth? Who among us wouldn't choose a good post carrying a substantial wage over living off the land, with no money and all the austerities such a life would entail?

(continued on page 16)



Duty calls a prince to leave his
spiritual practices in the mountains
and set an example of real
renunciation—as a king.

Renunciation In Royal Dress

by BHŪRIJANA DĀSA

Perhaps you've heard a tale of some wealthy person who renounced this world for the service of God. The Fifth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* relates another kind of story: that of an adept renunciant who becomes a king—on the order of the Supreme Lord. Can he resist the pleasures of palace life? Can he spiritually survive? What can today's man of the world learn from Priyavrata—a royal renunciant at the dawn of civilization?

Because Priyavrata was interested in spiritual truth—far beyond regality, treasures, and intrigues—he had allowed his younger brother, Uttānapāda, to become king. After Uttānapāda's death, Svayambhuva Manu, the father of Priyavrata and Uttānapāda, ascended Gandhamādana Hill to persuade Priyavrata to renounce renunciation and rule the kingdom.

As father and son met, Priyavrata's teacher, the sage Nārada Muni, listened attentively. Around them were grassy slopes dotted with blossoms of red, purple, and blue. The clear water in a nearby lake rippled as waterfalls spilled from mountain peaks. Other peaks stretched back in the distance. Soft, pleasant breezes were blowing.

PAINTING BY JĀHNAVĀ-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

Manu spoke first: "Rule the kingdom. Take charge. The scriptures reveal this as your duty. You have a grave responsibility to uphold, and none but you can do it."

As a dutiful son, Priyavrata was inclined to accept his father's order. Yet he was fearful. He knew of material life. Despite its promise of grandeur and thrills, it's doomed. So, why get involved? Why become attached? Priyavrata fully understood the folly of material attachment, yet he still feared pitting the strength of his realization against *māyā*, the potent, mystical force that rivets one to the temporary, even against one's better judgment.

Priyavrata felt himself fortunate to be in training under Nārada Muni, a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Residing peacefully with Nārada on Gandhamādana Hill, Priyavrata did not welcome exchanging his wealth of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for an insignificant kingship within a doomed world. He thus thought it wise to remain aloof, fixed in renunciation. Priyavrata, therefore, conscientiously inquired from Manu, "I foresee my spiritual life deteriorating by accepting such a great earthly responsibility. If I take up the kingship as you are requesting, might it not divert me from my devotional service to Kṛṣṇa?"

When Manu heard Priyavrata's reply—practically a refusal—he felt hopeless. Who else could rule the kingdom? Would he, in his old age, have to reoccupy the imperial throne to protect the welfare of the citizens?

As Manu sat perplexed, Lord Brahmā, a pre-eminent spiritual authority and the father of Nārada and Manu, arrived on Gandhamādana Hill. Startled, Nārada, Manu, and Priyavrata at once stood up, spontaneously joining their palms in reverence. They intoned the appropriate Vedic hymns and offered gifts. Thus, according to the facilities available on Gandhamādana Hill, they affectionately welcomed Brahmā.

Brahmā glanced benignly at Nārada and Manu to show his appreciation for their hospitality and then turned to the renunciant prince and smiled compassionately. "My dear Priyavrata, please listen carefully. I come carrying Lord Kṛṣṇa's order. For your true welfare, accept the Lord's desire as your own. You, as well as all others, are His eternal servant. Even I must carry out the orders of the Supreme Lord, as must Manu and Nārada."

How different is Brahmā from modern leaders! Instead of carrying forward injunctions of God, today's leaders hold proudly to their independent skepticism, which measures progress in skyscrapers, superconductors, and bombs. And we followers blindly submit! If we continue to heed those whose promises feed our whimsical albeit cherished fantasies, our lives, wasted, will end in emptiness and

despair. On the other hand, if we break from contemporary conditioning and act according to the authority and desires of Kṛṣṇa, our path to perfection will be set.

But today, are trustworthy spiritual authorities available? Or should each of us fathom God's desire by obeying the subtle voices within? Quite a dangerous proposition, as, after all, much disturbance and downright evil has been perpetrated upon the world by misanthropes convinced that they carry the will of the Lord. Brahmā suggests nothing so impractical to Priyavrata, as he continues to enlighten him:

"As a blind man travels best when led by a person with perfect vision or as a yoked bull pulls most effectively when commanded by his driver, one achieves the foremost benefit from life by accepting

Since when we die we leave behind all possessions, nothing really belongs to us. A true renunciant, therefore, does not "renounce" what he doesn't possess, but applies all to the service of Kṛṣṇa, the universal proprietor.

the authority of Kṛṣṇa's desire, as it is revealed through the Vedic scriptures, such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and through the words of pure spiritual masters."

Although Priyavrata readily accepted the wisdom of Brahmā's instruction to dutifully work under the authority of Kṛṣṇa as it descends through scriptures and spiritual masters, he nevertheless remained puzzled. Which authority should he follow? His *guru*, Nārada, had previously advised him to remain renounced, free from material affairs, and now Brahmā, the teacher of Nārada, was hinting that he acquire an entire kingdom with its accompanying entourage of queens, princes, and palaces.

Kṛṣṇa unravels the seemingly inherent contradiction between spiritual life and

interaction with the material world in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66). The Lord explains to Arjuna:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mam ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja
ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpēbhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

"Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender to Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear." Thus the test of whether an activity is spiritual or material, contaminating or purifying, fit to discard or worthy to continue, is simply whether that activity is congruous with Kṛṣṇa's desire. If it is, then the work is spiritual, purifying, and will draw one closer to perfection. If not, that activity, even if appearing glorious, is contaminating and will weave one tighter within the cloth of material existence.

The solution to Priyavrata's dilemma? Neglect neither authority. Nārada had taught Priyavrata to remain renounced; Brahmā instructed Priyavrata to become king. Staying renounced while interacting with the material world as a king requires spiritual intelligence. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, a great teacher in the disciplic line from Brahmā, has defined intelligence as the ability to use matter in the service of Kṛṣṇa. Since when we die we leave behind all possessions, nothing really belongs to us. A true renunciant, therefore, does not "renounce" what he doesn't possess, but rather applies all to the service of Kṛṣṇa, the universal proprietor.

"Do not use your position as king for your own pleasures," Brahmā continued, "or you'll achieve another material body and thus remain trapped within the web of material suffering. Become king, but as Kṛṣṇa's servant. Fix your mind upon pleasing Him. Become distracted neither by the kingdom's delights nor by its griefs. Tolerate their comings and goings as they appear and depart of their own course. View both the pleasures and miseries as if they were last night's dream. Remain steady in Kṛṣṇa's service."

"Beware, however," Brahmā warned Priyavrata, "of the mind and senses. If uncontrolled, they'll arouse you to explore the temporary, entice you to squander your life, and drag you from your goal. Thus, fear not the kingship, but fear the real enemies: an uncontrolled mind and senses. Even if one renounces and travels from one secluded forest to the next, such enemies will cause great danger. On the other hand, even if married, a man who controls his mind and senses will be as secure as a king safely protected within mighty fortress walls. Even a life with wife and children will not harm a self-satisfied, learned soul."

Controlling one's mind and senses, as

well as true renunciation, is automatically accomplished if one follows the rules and regulations of spiritual life and uses everything in Kṛṣṇa's service. "Therefore," Brahmā explained, "one can attain real shelter only by fixing one's consciousness with devotion at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa."

But can a king, or even a contemporary man surrounded by earthly pleasures, neglect his selfish and sensuous desires and fix his consciousness with devotion on Kṛṣṇa? Can he really use everything in Kṛṣṇa's service? Yes, if he strictly accepts the practice of chanting Kṛṣṇa's names. The key to success—love of Kṛṣṇa—will naturally develop within his heart.

*harer nāma harer nāma
harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva
nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

"In this age of quarrel, there is no other way to attain spiritual perfection than chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name of the Lord." As a plant grows when watered, our affectionate relationship with Kṛṣṇa flourishes the more we chant His names. Thus our inclination to serve Him increases, whether we, by our fate, are sitting on a royal throne, on a mendicant's woven mat, or behind a modern desk. We can thus act in pure consciousness, thinking, "I've been placed here by Kṛṣṇa. How can I please the Lord through this work?"

With the help of Kṛṣṇa, who lives within everyone's heart, all impediments to this pure consciousness will be overcome. If we are eager to hear about Kṛṣṇa, we'll learn from the scriptures how to recognize His existence everywhere. While drinking water we'll reflect that He's the taste that quenches our thirst. If we gaze upon a flock of birds in graceful flight, we'll appreciate Kṛṣṇa's artistic sense. We'll see ability as His gift, wisdom as a particle of His knowledge, and death as His unavoidable representative. All that is glorious within this world we will see as a minute fragment of Kṛṣṇa's energy, as we understand that the entire universe is sustained by His potencies.

As we hear about Kṛṣṇa, we'll also learn that as the supremely powerful controller, He has full capacity to perfectly please, maintain, and serve all His devotees. Thus we will clearly see the folly of limiting our love to the faulty relationships cramped within our workaday purview. And naturally our yearning to uncover our forgotten personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa will increase.

To further enhance our yearning, Kṛṣṇa tells us in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.68, 69),

*ya idaṁ paramaṁ guhyam
mad-bhakteṣv abhidhāsyati*

*bhaktiṁ mayi parāṁ kṛtvā
mām evaiṣyaty asaṁśayaḥ*

*na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu
kaścin me priya-kṛtamah
bhavatā na ca me tasmād
anyaḥ priyataro bhuvi*

"For one who explains this supreme secret [Kṛṣṇa consciousness] to the devotees, pure devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear."

Caitanya Mahāprabhu similarly implored, "Instruct whomever you meet to follow the orders of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as they are given in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In this way become a *guru* and liberate everyone within your

Our affectionate relationship with Kṛṣṇa flourishes the more we chant His names. Thus our inclination to serve Him increases, whether we are sitting on a royal throne, on a mendicant's woven mat, or behind a modern desk.

land. Follow this precept, and your life at home shall not obstruct your spiritual advancement." Any sincere person who preaches according to this order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu will achieve the Lord's blessings and become unaffected by the material influences.

We can preach by speaking about Kṛṣṇa, or we can incorporate our intelligence, money, ability, or time into preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If one is a scholar, scientist, philosopher, or poet, he can study the energy of the Lord and employ his learning to glorify the Lord's supremacy. If one is an administrator or politician, he can establish the Lord's supremacy through statesmanship. If one is a businessman, industrialist, or agriculturalist, he can spend his money for the cause of the Lord, thinking of money as

Kṛṣṇa's and meant for His service.

Brahmā then summarized his instructions to Priyavrata: "Seek the shelter of Kṛṣṇa through carrying out His order. Thus you will always be protected by the Lord, just as a bee caught within the closed petals of a lotus flower is guarded from the blazing summer sun."

Priyavrata's brow wrinkled as he pondered Brahmā's words. As the seconds passed, the chirps and squawks of birds suddenly seemed prominent. No one moved. At last Priyavrata raised his head, and a deep smile spread across his noble face as he bowed to Brahmā in dutiful submission. Priyavrata would be king. He had accepted Brahmā's order.

Manu first felt relief, then joy, and finally deep gratitude, as he began to worship Brahmā. Nārada and Priyavrata, satisfied and free from resentment, stood to watch Brahmā as he departed.

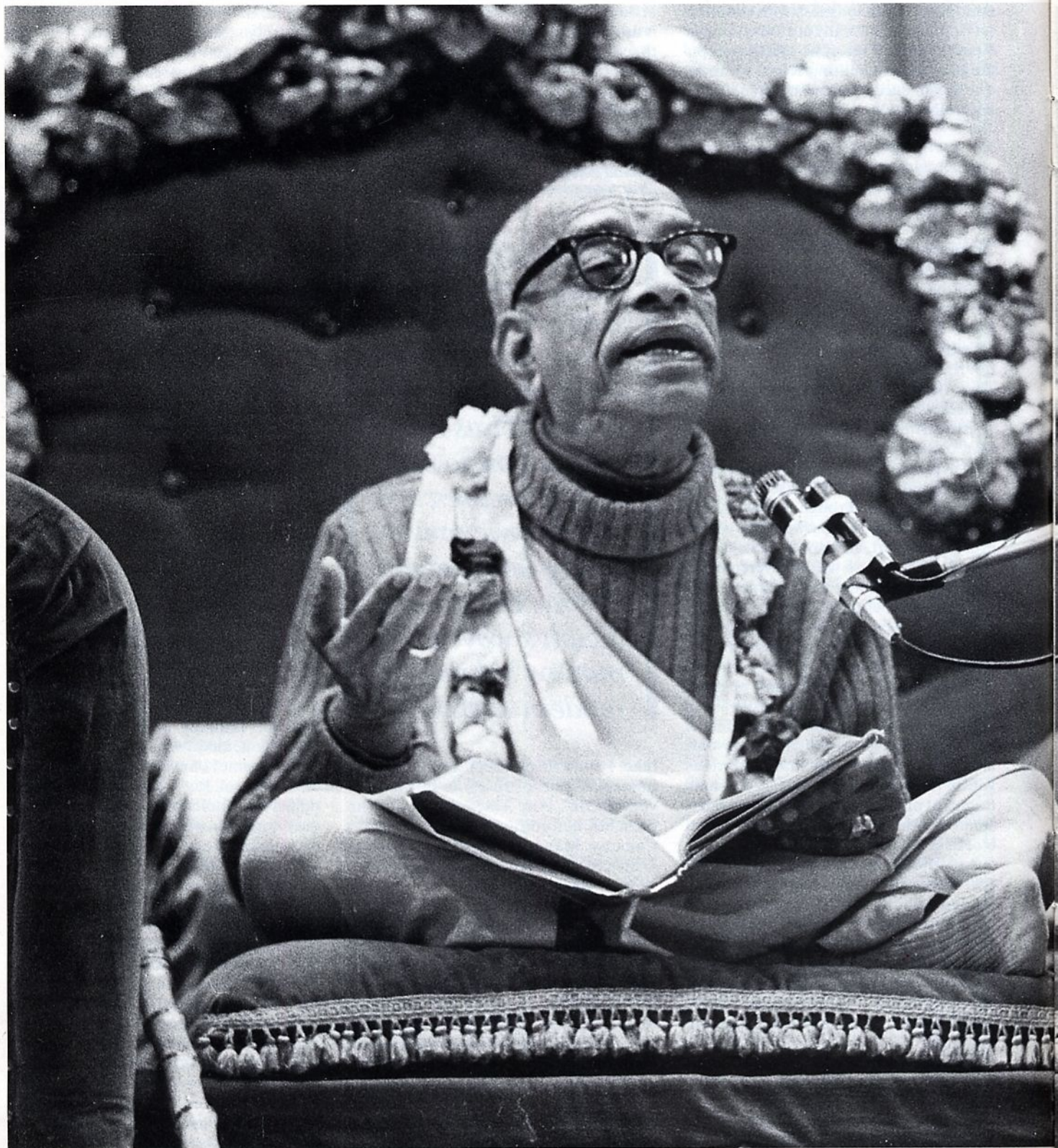
Surrendered to the desire of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, Priyavrata left the solitude and peace of Gandhamādana Hill and began governing his kingdom. He ruled according to religious principles and protected the citizens as his own begotten children. Knowing his determination, thieves and rogues fled. His piety brought abundant rain and ample grains and fruits. No excessive taxes disturbed the citizens.

Priyavrata married, begot ten children with his wife, Barhiṣmati, and trained them in pure devotional service. Externally he appeared like an exceptional, powerful king, enraptured by the beauty of Barhiṣmati and entangled within the unlimited complexities, opulences, and powers of royalty. Internally, Priyavrata remained fixed in renunciation, his consciousness lovingly fastened to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

After many years of ruling, Priyavrata, to teach us to avoid the fate of materialists who die thinking of wealth, wife, and home, lamented: "Alas, how condemned I have become! I have fallen into material enchantment. My plight is as hopeless as that of a wanderer who has tumbled into a deep, forgotten well hidden within a farmer's unplowed acres. I have been reduced to a dancing monkey in the hands of my wife. But it is finished. I have had enough!"

Thus, toward the end of his life, Priyavrata abdicated his throne. He rejected royalty and divided his opulent kingdom among his obedient sons. Freed from material aspirations and absorbed in heartfelt Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he returned to the sanctified, simple life of a renunciant. Priyavrata had triumphed. He had remained renounced and pure despite his royal position—all because he understood the essence of the ancient art of work and dedicated his work completely to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. ❧

Śrīla Prabhupāda's



Message

He began by clarifying our philosophical concept of God; then he showed us how to spiritualize our lives.

by HRIDAYĀNANDA DĀSA GOSWAMI

The following is a talk given at the ISKCON-sponsored conference on religious freedom held in San Diego, November 3-4, 1988. The conference was called "Cultures in Conflict: The Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement in America."

I'm going to concentrate on a little bit of straight philosophy. I've tried to isolate a few fundamental philosophical points or issues areas in which I think Śrīla Prabhupāda made a major contribution in helping people understand very important things in life. So I'll go through these, and then I'll relate all that to the issues at hand.

Prabhupāda makes a very important philosophical distinction in the introduction to his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He says that the concept of God is not the same as the concept of the Absolute Truth, although, he says, the concept of God is contained within the concept of the Absolute Truth. By discussing that distinction Prabhupāda makes, we can see some very important aspects of the philosophy he presented. He says that the Absolute Truth is distinguished as being the source of all emanation, the source of all that be, that by whom or by which everything is maintained, and that in whom or in which everything comes to rest at the end, whereas we may say "God" and simply mean, as the dictionary says, "the Supreme Being."

The concept of supremacy does not necessarily imply the concept of an absolute being. It can simply mean "the greatest being." And if we use it in that sense, then we may enter into a dualistic world view in which there is a Supreme Being, but there are other beings who compete with Him. So by insisting on the concept of Absolute Truth, Prabhupāda at once conceptually transcends mere dualism in his philosophy, or in his presentation of the *Bhāgavatam* philosophy. We arrive, therefore,



in the words of Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself, at the very fundamental concept of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*. This, in a phrase, is the doctrine of Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Acintya, in Sanskrit, means "inconceivable," although not "unknowable." In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, there's an interesting verse in the Second Chapter where Kṛṣṇa says that the soul is *acintya*, inconceivable. But—*tasmād evaṁ viditvānam*—once you know that soul, you will understand that inconceivability is one of its properties.

In other words, the soul is inconceivable by our own mental efforts, our own intellectual agility, but it's not unknowable. Thus the whole realm of knowledge that comes down to us from superior beings opens to us knowledge of those things we cannot attain by our own unaided efforts.

So this inconceivable but knowable truth (*acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*) is that the Absolute Truth, or God, stands in a relationship with everything else in a state of simultaneous difference and nondifference. The popular metaphor is that of the sun. Plato also uses this metaphor in *The Republic*. The idea is that we may think of the sun and its rays as one thing—it's the sun shining—or we may think of them separately, that here is the sun in a particular point in the sky, and there are the rays in sunny California. So we may talk about the sun and the rays, or the sun shining, as one thing. This is an example of oneness and difference. The sun represents Kṛṣṇa, or God, and the rays are His energy.

Kṛṣṇa states in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that the energy of God is beginningless. There is no creation from nothing. Both matter in its original form and we, the living beings, have always existed. What's accomplished by that philosophically is that one achieves the absolute harmony and unity of monism, and at the same time, one does not sacrifice our individual existence, our relationship with the Supreme, our devotion and love for God. All these very powerful ideas and experiences are not sacrificed in order to achieve an ontological unity. So the way Prabhupāda explained the oneness and difference of God and His creation, in terms of the concept of Absolute Truth over and above a mere concept of a Supreme Being, was a very significant statement.

Now, we have the very well known Vedic statement: *sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma*, that everything is *brahma*, more or less in the sense I just explained. And the *Bhāgavatam* states: *idaṁ hi viśvaṁ bhagavān ivetaro*—that

Left, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Above, Hridayānanda dāsa Goswami.

God is the universe and God is not the universe, because it's His energy and He's nondifferent from His energy. The practical implication of this philosophically in terms of our daily life, or what it means to practice spiritual life, is what Rūpa Gosvāmī called *yukta-vairāgya*, or renunciation of this material world by offering the world unto God by using it in the proper way.

To illustrate this very simply, Prabhupāda gave an example of three different reactions to money left lying in the street. The first man comes along and—no questions asked—he picks it up and takes it home. So that's an ordinary person—without too many moral dilemmas in his mind.

The second person comes along, and he wants to renounce this world. He thinks money is illusion; it's *māyā*. So he simply walks away and leaves it there and feels he's achieved a type of moral victory.

The third person picks up the money and takes it back to the owner. Prabhupāda said this is the position of the Vaiṣṇava: because this world belongs to God, he doesn't try to exploit it for his own sense gratification, nor does he try to renounce it. Logically, we can't renounce that which we don't possess. If I say, "From this day on, I renounce the Bank of America," people may say, "Well, how can you give it up? It was never yours."

So the idea is to use everything in this world for God because everything is God's energy. And Rūpa Gosvāmī puts this little note in: *yathārham*, which means, "appropriately." I remember back in the "old days," people would smoke drugs and say, "Well, I'm doing this for God." So *yathārham* means that one should use things appropriately according to ethical and spiritual principles.

What follows from Rūpa Gosvāmī's principle of *yukta-vairāgya* is that spiritual life does not become a dry renunciation of this world or a hypocritical life in which I try to enjoy this world but at the same time claim to be religious, saying that God doesn't expect us to actually follow anything. What we actually have is an opportunity to engage all of our senses in spiritual life.

And this is the sense of the word *yoga*, which comes from the Sanskrit root *yuj*: "to connect, to link up." *Yoga* means connecting all our cognitive faculties—our senses, our mind, our intelligence, our working energy—with the Absolute Truth, and by that connection, all our faculties become spiritualized. Prabhupāda's popular example in this connection was that of putting an iron bar into fire—the iron begins to act like fire. So spiritual life with Prabhupāda or under Prabhupāda becomes a very joyous affair, in which one can eat *prasādam*, one can sing, one can dance, one can see the pictures of Kṛṣṇa,

one can work to his heart's content, one can be an intellectual, a pot washer, a truck driver, a doctor, a lawyer—for Kṛṣṇa, because everything is Kṛṣṇa's, and everything can be used for Kṛṣṇa. This concept of *yukta-vairāgya*, or not simply giving everything up but giving everything up to Kṛṣṇa, is also a logical consequence of the doctrine of the Absolute Truth's being the source of all energies.

Then the result of this is that because God is *ānandamaya*, or "full of bliss," by connecting all of one's cognitive faculties with God, one experiences pleasure and joy through the senses, the mind, and the intelligence, and life itself becomes blissful. That bliss, or that spiritual ecstasy, is the basis of giving up our propensity to exploit the material world. Kṛṣṇa states in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *param dr̥ṣṭvā nivartate*, by experiencing the higher taste, or expe-

We all have the experience of giving up our toys. In the same way, by experiencing Kṛṣṇa, one can give up the lower taste of the pleasure derived by bringing the senses into contact with matter.

riencing something better, one can give up something inferior.

We all have the experience of giving up our toys; something we thought, perhaps, we'd never be able to do. But at a particular point, we all gave up our toys. In the same way, by experiencing Kṛṣṇa, one can give up the lower taste of what Kṛṣṇa calls *samsparśa-jā-bhoga*, the pleasure derived by bringing the senses into contact with matter in different ways. At that point, the devotee, or the Vaiṣṇava, no longer sees the Absolute Truth simply as an object of his pleasure, but becoming purified by contact with Kṛṣṇa—just like the iron that became fire—by that purification, one understands oneself to be the eternal servant of God.

There's a very important statement in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that Prabhupāda would often quote: *kṛṣṇa-bhakta—niṣkāma, ataeva 'śānta' / bhukti-mukti-siddhi-kāmī—sakali 'aśānta.'* That means

that all these people are not peaceful: those who still desire *bhukti*, ordinary material happiness—beautiful women, a nice house, money, and all these things; those who desire *mukti*, the salvationists, who see religion as a means to achieve one's own salvation; or those who desire *siddhi*, who want to derive mystic powers. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja said approximately five centuries ago that—*sakali*—all these people are *aśānta*: they're still not peaceful. They're disturbed by some desire to get something for themselves, even if it's such a noble desire as the desire for salvation. Whereas he said, *kṛṣṇa-bhakta—niṣkāma ataeva 'śānta'*: those who simply want to please the Lord without any personal desire—they're *śānta*. They've come to the liberated platform, because they're self-satisfied. They only want to please Kṛṣṇa without anything in return.

This leads me to another point, a very, very important statement that Śrīla Prabhupāda would frequently quote. It's the second of the eighteen thousand verses from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Vyāsadeva says, *dharmah projjhita-kaitava 'ira*: "This scripture rejects all *kaitava-dharma*, cheating religion, religion in which we approach God not out of love, not to serve Him, but to get something from Him."

This is very much like the Socratic, or Platonic, dialogue *The Euthyphro*, where Socrates asks Euthyphro what religion means, and Euthyphro says it means to worship the gods and then enjoy their rewards. Socrates correctly says, "This is more business than religion or piety."

So exactly in this sense, real religion, in Prabhupāda's statement, whether it's Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism—any bona fide tradition—has as its ultimate goal love of God, and at that point the love is selfless. One is not worshipping God to get anything in return. One has full confidence and full satisfaction in the act of serving God. In fact, there's a statement—*jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya dāsa'*—that the constitutional position of the living being is to serve God.

So what happens to someone who actually believes all this and practices it and realizes it? After we lecture, people often ask us, "What if everyone were to become like you?" To answer the question of what is the effect on a person who's successfully "brainwashed" in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, I wanted to introduce what I consider a significant analytic scheme that would be a very fruitful starting point for sociological, ethical, and psychological analysis. And that is the constant theme in the *Bhagavad-gītā* of the three modes of material nature.

Kṛṣṇa takes a lot of time talking about this. It's not overtly theological. Very
(continued on page 30)

The nationalist, the musician, the parent—the depth of their feelings hints at the power of love of God.

SOMEONE TO LOVE

by DVĀRAKĀDHĪSA-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

I could foresee during my pregnancy that I was approaching a turning point in my life. I went through those days mentally noting, “I won’t be able to do this. I won’t be able to do that.” I observed mothers struggling with hefty babies, strollers, and diaper bags. “That will be me,” I shuddered. But somehow I never expected the cadence of my life to alter dramatically. I supposed that I would remain unchanged, except for the additional baggage.

Well, I was so wrong. From the day my daughter was born I realized how superficial my previous conceptions of motherhood had been. Sure there were the well-publicized endless chores, a lot of *ga-ga*-ing, and discussions on diaper rash—things that had been totally disdainful before. But how those changes were dwarfed by the revolution in my heart as I became increasingly enamoured of the tiny girl. Those weary first days spent rocking, pacing, and pampering seemed to flow along in one great wave of affection. However tiresome the activities, they seemed so sweet because of my love for my daughter.

Having come to understand, with some chagrin, what little I knew of maternal love before becoming a mother, I can also comprehend that there are many varieties of love of which I have no experience. I can’t tell you, for instance, of the fierce patriotism that inspires someone to die for his country. Nor can I understand why anyone would spend hours a day playing the violin. From my dispassionate vantage point, I can’t penetrate the core of such heartfelt emotion.

These examples of love—for a nation or music or a child—flourish here in this world. But they are not perfect love, because they depend on circumstantial arrangements by which the lover extracts pleasure from the beloved object. I love my daughter because . . . well, because she’s my daughter. It’s a happenstance of our bodily relationship. In material love, which is dependent on the body, when the intimacy arranged by circumstance is lost, the emotion eventually evaporates.

Someone might protest that one person can love another for an entire lifetime, and that death itself cannot sever the attachment. So how can you call it

temporary, material love?

When speaking of the eternal spirit soul, we have to consider that there are many, many lifetimes. We may fondly recall our beloved even after his or her body perishes, but what about our loved ones in our previous life? Or hundreds of lives? Who can remember all those distant relationships? The spirit soul is propelled into innumerable bodies, each with its particular passions, yet all is ultimately forgotten. Such is the nature of material love.

Beyond this fundamentally ephemeral love is real, spiritual love, the natural love every spirit soul feels for the transcendent Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. Although every living entity has the potential to develop deep, eternal exchanges of love with the source of all pleasure Himself, such love is rarely seen in this world. Yet the scriptures offer a glimpse of how intimately the Lord deals with the pure-hearted souls who reserve all love and affection for Him alone.

A famous example is the five Pāṇḍava brothers. The story of their pastimes as Lord Kṛṣṇa's cousins is magnificently told in the epic *Mahābhārata*. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains their special relationship with the Lord:

Lord Kṛṣṇa is everything to unalloyed devotees like the Pāṇḍavas. The Lord was for them the Supreme Lord, the spiritual master, the worshipable Deity, the guide, the chariot driver, the friend, the servant, the messenger, and everything they could conceive of. And thus the Lord also reciprocated the feelings of the Pāṇḍavas. . . . The Pāṇḍavas were so malleable to the will of the Lord that they

could sacrifice any amount of energy for the service of the Lord, and by such unalloyed determination they could secure the Lord's mercy in any shape they desired.

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.6.16, purport)

Although such sublime love is also our own spiritual legacy, it can be regained in full only when the heart is cleansed of all conflicting lovable objects. How can we join the Lord, unhampered, in His spiritual pastimes, if we are yearning after the lesser pleasures offered in the material arena?

Furthermore, simply to announce one's love for the Lord is but a hollow declaration unless one is indeed dedicated to His glorification and service above all else. The example of the Pāṇḍavas indicates that the Supreme Lord may be served in many ways, but always in accordance with *His* will.

The scriptures show us the pure devotees' love so that we might reverently worship them, not so that we can attempt superficial imitation. We might as yet be unable to taste the sweetness of pure love for God, but we can still derive true spiritual benefit by submissively hearing of that pure love. "Simply by appreciating the dealings of the Lord with His pure devotees," Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "one can attain salvation."

Still, what is the fate of those of us deeply entrenched in temporal, illusory relationships? Should those real feelings be denied, repressed, abandoned? Well, that's hardly a realistic solution, since love is a primary nutrient of the human psyche.

And even more than that, it is intrinsic to the soul. We won't be awarded transcendental love for God simply by denying feelings of affection, or by harboring them secretly. The apparent absence of overt material attachments doesn't necessarily indicate spiritual consciousness; it may simply be material neurosis. A better choice would be to accept the feelings of love in perspective. As my love for my daughter has so enriched my life, despite the pains of self-sacrifice, how much more would love for God enhance my existence? What unimaginable magnitude of pleasure must there be in that sublime relationship with Him! We can crave that experience and strive for it earnestly. And when we and those with whom we have material relationships embrace devotion to Kṛṣṇa as a common goal, our union becomes a powerful, transcendental vehicle toward the ultimate realization of love of God.

Today I am entranced by my little girl's activities, always thinking of her needs and desires. This love of the mother for the child was cited by Śrīla Prabhupāda as the closest thing in the material world to pure love. Compared to other kinds of love in this world, it is selfless, unconditional, fulfilling. Yet even this is not the real love of the spirit soul, not the love that will free me from misery and death. That pure, spiritual love, which is infinite and eternal, is the special benediction of the Supreme Lord upon one who qualifies himself through sinless service. It is for a taste of that love that I pray. ❧

GREEN OR GREED?

(continued from page 7)

Once this has been understood, it becomes clear that no amount of scare-mongering with terrible accounts of transgressions against nature will solve the problem. Even given the solution, who is going to apply it?

Actually, Kṛṣṇa wants us to live a peaceful life, harmonious with nature. In the Third Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.9-14), He informs us that we should live by sacrifice to produce rains and thus food grains. There is no mention of industry and other modern-day anathemas that outrage the ecology-minded. The saintly queen Kuntī says in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, "The cities and villages are flourishing in all respects because the herbs and grains are in abundance, the trees are full of fruits, the rivers are flowing, the hills are full of minerals, and the oceans are full of wealth." What has brought about this desirable situation? A high GNP? A low trade deficit? Good exports? No.

She continues: "And this is due to Your [Kṛṣṇa's] glancing over them." The glance

of the Supreme Lord—all that is required to ensure prosperity.

But how does one elicit the Lord's glance? Perhaps one good way may be to try following His suggestions on how to live, as we have already mentioned. But again, who will or even can do this? Some are already, but the numbers who daily capitulate with the advance of so-called technological progress far exceed those going back to the land. We need some incentive before we can contemplate the prospect of abandoning the comfortable amenities of modern society, illusory though they may well be.

Being the supremely intelligent person, Kṛṣṇa is certainly not foolishly recommending a wholly impossible and intolerable way of life. He is completely aware that if we do not follow His edicts, we will suffer far more than if we do, a fact now being discovered by the environmentalists. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "One who does not follow in human life the cycle of sacrifice established by the *Vedas* . . . lives in vain." By following His directives, we "become free from the bondage of fruitive actions." As all suffering is due to *karma*, or reac-

tions to previous acts, freedom from *karma* means an end to suffering. The wealth accrued from industrial endeavors is never going to free anyone from *karma*, although by aspiring for a life free from suffering, the worker is in effect hoping for just that.

By developing huge capitalistic enterprises, we move away from God and His instructions and become victimized by our own greed. Life quickly becomes intolerable. In India, because of decades of power pumping for "advanced" agriculture and industry, millions of wells have dried up or become saline. Groundwater levels have fallen thirty meters in one decade. "At the national level, current patterns of agricultural development will outstrip water availability by the turn of the century," says a report by the Indian National Trust for Art and Heritage.

The need is urgent, as pointed out by many, but the answer is seen by few. We have to take note of the instructions of Kṛṣṇa and act accordingly. Then we will experience real material prosperity and actual happiness. Otherwise, the consequences are too dreadful to imagine. ❧

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

You might not think this picture shows someone practicing *yoga*. But chanting the names of God is actually the supreme form of *yoga*. Of course, devotees chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa certainly don't look much like *yogīs*. At least not the kind of *yogīs* most people think of when they hear the word. But most people, it seems, have little understanding of what *yoga* is really all about.

Yoga is a Sanskrit word meaning "union." India's ancient Sanskrit literatures, the *Vedas*, explain that the purpose of *yoga* is to purify our consciousness so that we can re-establish our eternal relationship with God. The sitting postures and breathing exercises most people associate with *yoga* are part of a certain type of *yoga* system—known as *hatha-yoga*—that was practiced thousands of years ago. By practicing *hatha-yoga*, great sages could completely withdraw their mind and senses from the material world and, after a very long time, find God within their hearts.

In this age the *Vedas* discourage us from trying to reach God through *hatha-yoga*. We just don't have the time or the determination. But in this age God, or Kṛṣṇa, has come in the form of His name. The goal of *yoga*, union with God, is easily attained through chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. And unlike other forms of *yoga*, the results come quickly. So, you too can be a *yogī*. Just try chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa—and feel yourself coming closer to God.

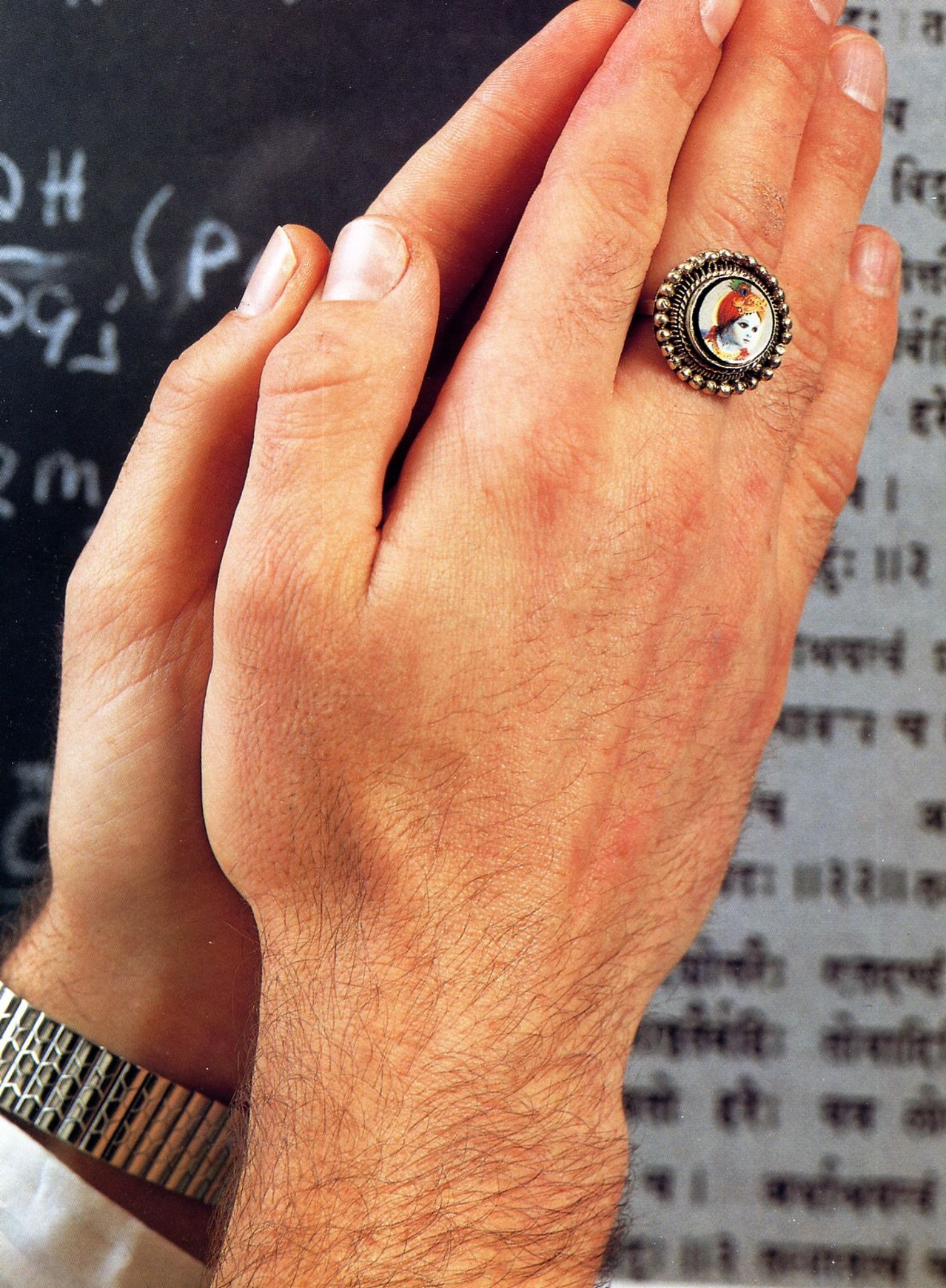




Lord Caitanya



ya's Saṅkīrtana



SCIENCE AND RELIGION

The Quest for Synthesis

The opposition between
religion and science is a modern phenomenon—
and a critical problem for humanity.

by RAVĪNDRA-SVARŪPA DĀSA

The following is Part I of a paper presented at the World Congress for the Synthesis of Science and Religion, held January 9–12, 1986, in Bombay. The paper was originally entitled 'The Contribution of Bhāgavata-dharma Toward a 'Scientific Religion' and a 'Religious Science.'

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.15), Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, says *vedaīḥ ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*. The usual English renderings go something like “By all the *Vedas* I alone am to be known.” Such translations properly take the first word, *vedaīḥ*, as denoting that collection of venerable Sanskrit works held authoritative by the ancient civilization of India. So we can correctly understand Kṛṣṇa’s assertion in this way: If you study the Vedic texts thoroughly and carefully, you will discover that He, the Supreme Person, is directly or indirectly the only subject taught.

Although our understanding thus stated is correct, it falls short of expressing the intended meaning. The text, however, offers a clue to its full understanding in the deliberate resonance between the first and last words: *vedaīḥ* and *vedyah*. They are, of course, cognates, both derived from the root *vid*, “to know.” The word *veda* simply means “knowledge,” and the writings that

expound knowledge are, therefore, called *Veda*. Thus, the full meaning of Kṛṣṇa’s statement is better conveyed in this way: “By all processes of knowledge, I alone am to be known.” And, considering that the Sanskrit *vid* has the same sense as the Latin *scire*, we can also convey Kṛṣṇa’s intention with these words: “All science is just a searching after Me.”

Here, then, we have two renderings: “By all the *Vedas* I alone am to be known,” and “By all processes of knowledge—all science—I am to be known.” There is much to be noted about the difference between them. The second, to us today, is a far more powerful, and probably far more interesting, assertion. The first falls short of conveying as much to us, for we automatically think of the *Vedas* as writings of a particular kind, namely “scripture,” relevant only to an activity of a particular kind, namely “religion,” and specifically to a religion of a particular kind, namely “Hinduism.”

But clearly those who first learned and taught *Bhagavad-gītā* did not understand themselves to be dealing with “scripture of the Hindu religion.” In their context, the *Vedas* were simply repositories of knowledge, a comprehensive encyclopedia of all ascertained truth. In our modern context, they have become “scripture”—which means something else. Similarly, for

PHOTO BY ALAN SPRECKER

Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, to follow the *Vedas* was not to “practice a religion,” as we understand the expression, but rather to live life so as to realize one’s full human potential in thought, in feeling, and in action.

Today we think of “religion” as a specialized kind of enterprise, set over against the rest of human life, a kind of addendum or extra in human culture. The development of this concept of religion is a product of modern secularization, as Wilfred Cantwell Smith has shown. The modern West has been formed by secularization, that process which has sought to convey more and more natural and human territory from the jurisdiction of the divine and annex it firmly to the sovereign operation of autonomous human reason and enterprise.

In a secular culture there can be much “religion,” but, by common consent, religion is kept in its place and does not intrude itself into the central societal concerns, such as the pursuit of knowledge or wealth. It is relatively common, for example, to hear a scientist make this pronouncement: “Yes, I believe in God, but as a scientist I cannot consider that.” This epitomizes secularization.

I think those of us gathered here to explore possibilities for the synthesis of science and religion recognize that the present estrangement between them constitutes a critical problem for the modern world. Indeed, this problem, in various guises, can be seen as the central quandary of Western culture since the Renaissance. Science sundered from religion is blind, unable to guide human life according to ultimate ends; religion sundered from science is lame, incapable of conveying its vision into the thick of our actual commerce with the world.

The religion and science of modernity, conceived in mutual disjunction, embodied in separate institutions, and grown to conscious self-definition over against one another, have both emerged historically as handicapped and unwholesome caricatures of the whole they ought to be: the single human enterprise we may call either a truly religious science or a truly scientific religion.

To appreciate the meaning, therefore, of Kṛṣṇa’s *Bhagavad-gītā* statement, we have to try to overcome our secularized consciousness and think ourselves back into a culture that possessed the unity we now lack. To us, the questions of the final conclusion of the *Vedas* and the final conclusion of science are different kinds of questions and have no bearing on each other. I would like to explore the possibility that they have a great deal to do with each other and suggest a way in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* may make an important contribution to our quest for synthesis.

We have before us two ways of understanding Kṛṣṇa’s statement, according to

whether we take *vedaiḥ* as referring to the beliefs of a particular religious tradition or to the human quest for knowledge as such. Taking this disjunction as the starting place, I will first explore what Kṛṣṇa is claiming in reference to the Vedic tradition and then see how that may bear upon the universal quest.

I will use the words “veda” and “Vedic” to refer not just to the four seminal works that go by that name (the *Rg, Sāma, Yajur*, and *Atharva Vedas*), but also to the vast and diverse supplementary literature that has grown up around them. Those who profess adherence to the *Vedas* comprise a large and bewildering array of traditions. These traditions developed into highly sophisticated, and often quite specialized, schools of thought, each with its ancient lineage of illustrious teachers; its own arsenal of special practices and techniques, in which students, through intense culti-

In a secular culture there can be much “religion,” but, by common consent, religion is kept in its place and does not intrude itself into the central societal concerns, such as the pursuit of knowledge or wealth.

vation, frequently attain stunning virtuosity; each with its own formidable library of commentaries, commentaries on commentaries, and so on, much of which, presupposing a knowledgeable reader, is composed with great compression in extremely technical, specialized vocabulary, and so remains virtually unintelligible to the uninitiated.

The *Vedas* are likened by their adherents to the *kalpa-vṛkṣa*, the celestial tree that liberally produces any sort of fruit desired, and this bountiful proliferation of diverse Vedic schools, in intense pursuit of specialized ends, shows the aptness of the metaphor. At the same time, all schools considered it axiomatic that the *Vedas* ultimately taught a single *siddhānta*, i.e., final end or purpose. This state of affairs—a multiplicity of variant traditions with a shared conviction of ultimate unity—naturally led the thinkers of ancient India to engage in the exercise that

has become so vital to the fate of the world today; to analyze diverse world views comparatively and adjudicate among them.

Viewed in this light, the *Bhagavad-gītā* can be seen as an essay in comparative religion—bearing in mind that the word *religion* here is systematically misleading. The *Bhagavad-gītā* itself uses the word *dharma*, which has been translated as “truth,” “religion,” “duty,” “path,” “righteousness,” and so on. In its broadest sense, *dharma* denotes a way or form of life that possesses its own integrity and validity by virtue of being centered on truth.

As we have seen, out of the *Vedas* there had emerged a variety of schools, each with powerful and persuasive advocates of its own *dharma*. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa surveys them: the practice of Vedic ritualistic *yajña*, or sacrifice; the disinterested performance of worldly duties; the propitiation of various *devatas*, or controlling demigods; the attainment of trance of self-realization through physiological mastery, sensory withdrawal, and mental concentration; the ascent to absolute consciousness through philosophical discrimination and world-renunciation—these are some of the main ones.

In essence, the *Bhagavad-gītā* acknowledges the truth and validity of the various Vedic *dharmas*, yet at the same time holds that the particular knowledge and realization offered in each *dharma* attains to its completion in Kṛṣṇa (*vedaiḥ ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*). Since all Vedic *dharmas* are thus but various indirect ways to Him, Kṛṣṇa accordingly offers Arjuna the opportunity to make a short work of it and come directly to the final end. *Sarva-dharmān parityajya*, He instructs: “Just abandon all other *dharmas*”; *mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*—“and come to Me alone for shelter” (18.66). In this way, *Bhagavad-gītā* teaches that the ultimate *dharma* is unalloyed loving service to the supreme personal feature of the Absolute Truth.

Now, a deep study of the way the *Bhagavad-gītā* reaches its conclusions, as undertaken by teachers of the *Bhāgavata* school of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, brings to light a certain paradigm of human spiritual and noetic development as a dialectical process consisting of three principal phases or moments. I shall call these three phases (or spiritual platforms) *karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti*.

Karma, in this context, denotes those rationally organized activities aimed at acquiring “the good things of life” for ourselves and those we identify with ourselves. Thus, we labor to gain secure and continuous possession and enjoyment of health and vitality; of land and goods and money; of grace, charm, and beauty, both animate and inanimate; of love, honor, and repute; and the like.

The section of the *Vedas* called the *karma-kāṇḍa* provides for such ends. Cen-

tral to this enterprise was an extremely highly developed activity of the sort now referred to as "ritual"—in particular, the *yajña*, or sacrifice. The Vedic *yajña* was an elaborate and painstaking endeavor in which the learned and expert performers (*ṛvij*), working according to the Vedic paradigm (*tantra*), had to arrange correctly the detailed paraphernalia (*pṛtag-dravya*) at precisely the proper place (*deśa*), and, at the right time (*kāla*), build the fire (*agni*) and conduct the sacrifice itself (*kratu*), carrying out all the prescribed procedures (*dharma*) and reciting the correct verbal formulae (*mantra*) with perfect precision. If—and only if—everything were flawlessly executed according to most exacting standards of correctness, then the benefits for which the sacrifice was performed would accrue to the patron—the sponsor—of the sacrifice (*yajamāna*).

It is easy to see how the form of life that centered itself upon the Vedic *yajña* became a cult of technique. For mastery of technique was the key to power. By constructing a microcosmic image of the cosmos, and duplicating in fine the act of creation, the properly performed *yajña* gathered, condensed, and localized the power of the cosmos itself—and so put this power into the hands of those adept at technique. Those who mastered *yajña* mastered the cosmos. This ethos of mastery through technique attained explicit expression in the writings of the *Karma-mīmāṃsā*, the philosophical school that took *yajña* as the prime Vedic *dharma*.

Now, in the *mantras* recited at sacrifice, the names of various *devatas*—controlling demigods—are invoked, and it would seem that these *mantras* summoned the favor of the gods, and the sacrifice achieved its results by propitiating them. Not so, claims the *Karma-mīmāṃsā*. The *mantras* and the procedures are potent in and of themselves, and they evoke the gods in order to compel them or their specific powers. Indeed, the gods themselves are sustained by the power of sacrifice. As for a supreme God, the *Karma-mīmāṃsā* school either denies His existence or declares His irrelevance.

Thinking of this way of life as a "religion," using terms such as "rite," "ritual," "ritual act," etc., impedes our comprehension of what is going on. But if we can view it on its own terms, then we see at once that essentially the same form of life is reincarnated, as it were, today in the culture of science and science-centered humanism.

The practice of *yajña* is science—an archaic science, but science nonetheless—i.e., an enterprise centrally concerned with acquiring mastery of practical techniques for the direct control and domination of nature for human benefit. This is not to minimize differences, of course. But the performer of the sacrifice, the *ṛvij*, is

far more like today's scientist than today's priest. We should understand, for example, that when the *ṛvij* took great pains to observe what we call "ritual purity," he was, in his own mind, establishing the required mental preconditions for the efficacy of his *mantras*. Even though we may not believe that thought can act on matter over distance (unless we are persuaded by some experiments in psychical research), the acts of the *ṛvij* are still intelligible to us as "establishing controlled laboratory conditions."

Another interesting feature of this Vedic tradition is how the fascination or obsession with the power of technique gave rise to the depersonalization or disenchantment of the world. Technique cannot give direct mastery if there are higher controlling beings—God or the gods—who stand in the way. Therefore God or the gods are denied—if not written

There are times when the karmic ethos attains particularly full development, and a cult of technical power over nature dominates human culture, defining the means and ends of life.

out of the ontology, then denied the effective exercise of any controlling power. In this, of course, we see anticipated the exact process that accompanied the rise of modern science in Europe.

The stage of spiritual development I call *karma* rises out of the natural need to maintain our physical well-being; and in every culture karmic activity is present. It is endemic to human life.

Yet there are times when the karmic ethos attains particularly full development, and a cult of technical power over nature dominates human culture, defining the means and ends of life. The karmic ethos then attains full and coherent historical self-expression, and is thus epitomized—as in the Vedic *karma-kāṇḍa* tradition and in the culture of natural science in the West.

When the cultivation of *karma* attains such complete development, in individuals or in cultures, it tends in time to en-

gender a reaction or counterculture. This antithetical moment I call *jñāna*.

The reaction springs from acute disappointment in technique. When one possesses all the goods provided by technique and yet remains unsatisfied and unfulfilled, he realizes that "the good things of life" are not good enough and what is good enough is beyond technique.

Now, such disappointment can—and often does—produce sterile and unproductive pessimism or cynicism, but within the cult of technique there also develops an impetus toward knowledge—knowledge not merely for control but for its own sake, and where this has become prominent, the encounter with the limits of technique is fruitful.

Those within the culture of technique who become drawn to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake inevitably find themselves engaged in a search for first or ultimate principles; for the one that engenders or contains the many; for the single, elegant law that explains everything explicable, and so on. They become preoccupied, in short, with the Absolute Truth. This truth has its own compelling fascination for the researcher, and when he approaches that truth, he encounters a limit, a barrier, which, in principle, his knowledge cannot breach. He realizes that what lies beyond the barrier, of which he cannot in principle speak but must remain silent, is the final goal of his quest.

The simultaneous encounter of the limit of technique on two fronts—in providing both knowledge and well-being—gives the strongest impetus to the formation of a culture of *jñāna*. As the antithetical phase to world-mastering *karma*, *jñāna* becomes a search for transcendence conceived as world negating. In the noetic realm, transcendence is indicated by means of negation, by the systematic elimination of all concepts and categories of phenomenal existence—which means, ultimately, of all language, all thought itself. Western theology knows this pursuit as the *via negativa*, or apophatic theology. In the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* section of the *Vedas*, the procedure is characterized as *neti neti*, i.e., "not this, not that."

In the realm of value, *jñāna* expresses its opposition to *karma* through the culture of renunciation—a thoroughgoing rejection of the world, its activities, and its supposed goods. Thus, in both the noetic and the valuative realms, rejection or negation is the keynote.

In the Sanskrit literature of this tradition, knowledge (i.e., the *via negativa*) and renunciation are wed into a single frequently encountered compound: *jñāna-vairāgya*. Those who engaged in the intense cultivation of *jñāna-vairāgya* testify to an eventual dissolution of phenomenal selfhood and a breaking through phenomenal existence into a transcendent

state, which, although strictly beyond description, is spoken of as a total merging into absolute existence and consciousness, a unity without diversity or distinction. This state, being absolute, is the sole reality; *there is no other existence beside it*, to relate to it. Thus, the phenomenal world is denied—in philosophy, it is eliminated altogether from the ontology or granted a kind of illusory, provisional semi-existence.

The theory of illusion, in its most extreme form, sees not only the gods but also God, i.e., the Supreme Person, as products of illusion, to be employed or tolerated in practice as convenient fictions. Indeed, valid objects of worship, all ultimately factitious, can be arbitrarily many, and one's own self, any favored controlling demigod, or the cosmos itself can serve.

Another impetus toward the formation of *jñāna* is provided by a culture of *karma* that has fallen into gross excess and abuse. Thus in India, the eventual corruption of the Vedic *karma-kāṇḍa* cult of sacrifice provoked the most radical development of *jñāna* in the form of the

Buddhist reaction. Rejecting the *Vedas* altogether, the Buddha inaugurated a tradition that has produced the world's most thoroughgoing negative theology. This extreme form of *jñāna* eventually worked its way back into Vedic tradition through Śaṅkarācārya. ❏

(To be continued.)

The second part of this essay will show how the West itself has for the last two centuries been undergoing an attempt at moving from the culture of karma to the culture of jñāna. In the West, the historical establishment of a culture of karma is known to us under the name of the "Enlightenment." The "counter-Enlightenment" and the ensuing "Romantic movement" exemplify, in reaction, a culture of jñāna. Both cultures are still struggling fruitlessly with each other today. An analysis of the spiritual conditions of the West shows why progress does not take place. However, the final stage of bhakti has been introduced from the outside; and it can be embraced directly, in spite of the failed karma and jñāna of the West. This will resolve the pathological split between religion and science in our time.

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The Law of Karma

(continued from page 6)

our lives, everyone would be rich, happy, and healthy. But clearly there are forces controlling us. Therefore an intelligent person will try to find out what these forces are, how they work, and how we can benefit from them.

This is how Newton formulated his famous law. He observed the forces of nature and investigated them. He was not satisfied to know that there are forces—he wanted to know how they work. We owe to his inquisitiveness an incredible amount of technological advancement.

Similarly, if we want to find out what is beneficial for us, we have to investigate the forces that control our lives. But we have one big advantage over Newton: The universal laws we are concerned with have already been explained in the Vedic literature, and they have been confirmed by great spiritual authorities. All we have to do is study them.

Material Activity

The general definition of *karma* is that it is material activity. That means it is activity performed with attachment to the result, it is temporary, and it is done without spiritual understanding.

Material activity can be subdivided into good and bad *karma*:

Good *karma*: If the living entity acts piously, he can enjoy in this life and in future lives. The results of good *karma* are

wealth, beauty, good parentage, health, knowledge, happiness, birth on heavenly planets, and so on.

Bad *karma*: If the living entity acts impiously, violating scriptural injunctions and acting according to his own whims, he has to suffer the reactions. The results of bad *karma* are poverty, disease, ugliness, birth on lower planets or in undesirable circumstances, and so on.

We learn from *Bhagavad-gītā*, however, that all *karma*—good or bad—is always bad, because *karma* forces us to accept another material body. A material body in any situation brings with it the sufferings of birth, death, old age, and disease. The Vedic literature also categorizes other miseries we get on account of the material body:

1. Miseries inflicted on us by our body and mind, like disease, stress, anxiety, fear.

2. Miseries inflicted by other living entities: mosquitoes biting us, envious people talking badly about us, rape, mugging, wars, and so on.

3. Miseries inflicted by nature, like heat, cold, droughts, tornadoes, and floods.

Because the living entity cannot stop performing activities, he cannot stop incurring *karma*. Every activity he performs binds him in the karmic cycle.

Everything happening to us now is the cumulative effect of our past activities from either this life or previous lives. Sometimes we enjoy; sometimes we suffer. In one life we have a human body, in another an animal body. As long as we are

bound by this continuous cycle of actions and reactions, we will be forced to accept one material body after another.

Spiritual Activity

Spiritual activity is performed without attachment, on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, in full spiritual knowledge, without desire for personal sense gratification, and for the eternal benefit of the soul.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.9) defines spiritual activity thus:

Work done as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu has to be performed; otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kuntī, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage.

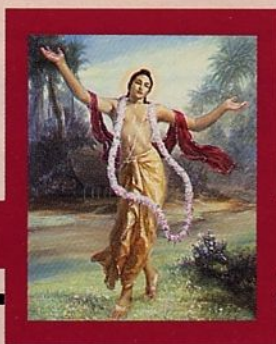
Spiritual activity does not produce karmic reactions. Rather, it results in one's not having to accept another material body, and it enables one to go back to the spiritual world at the time of death.

If a soldier kills people in a war on behalf of his government, he will not be punished for such killing, but rather he will receive a medal. But if the same soldier kills his neighbor on his own behalf, he will be convicted and sent to prison.

Similarly, if the living entity acts on behalf of the supreme authority, Kṛṣṇa, or His representative, the spiritual master, he does not incur any sinful reactions. But if he acts on his own behalf, he will be bound in the cycle of *karma*. ❏

(To be continued.)

Every Town



And Village

The worldwide activities of the International

Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

ISKCON Festival at Miami's AsiaFest

Miami, Florida—ISKCON devotees here recently participated in AsiaFest, a million-dollar exhibition to promote Asian-American tourism and trade. ISKCON's contribution to the event was organized by Yadurāṇī-devī dāsī, a long-time artist for the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust and founder of CIVA: The Cultural Institute for the Vedic Arts.

When Yadurāṇī dāsī first heard about the exhibition, which was expected to draw hundreds of thousands of people, she saw it as an ideal opportunity to exhibit CIVA's collection of Kṛṣṇa-related art. Although the participation fee for AsiaFest was \$7,000, when Yadurāṇī dāsī told organizer Burton Wolfe about the art exhibit, he waived the entire fee.

All Yadurāṇī needed was a tent, and that led her to Madhuhā dāsa, leader of ISKCON's Traveling Festival of India, which is the mainstay of most of the Rathayātrā festivals in North America. What began as a chance for a transcendental art exhibit gradually grew into a full-scale Hare Kṛṣṇa festival, including the Miami Beach temple's Gītāvalī bhajana band; Bhārata-nāṭyam dancer Deva Deva dāsa; cooking demonstrations; theater; puppet shows; Govinda's Gift Store; and the Festival of India's exhibits on reincarnation, vegetarianism, Deity worship, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and more.

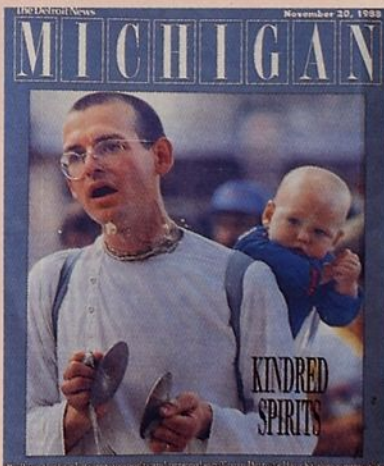
While Yadurāṇī dāsī painted at the art exhibit, where thirty-five original oil paintings were on display, many people came to get her autograph on posters of her paintings. Devotees distributed prasādam (food offered to Kṛṣṇa) and Śrīla Prabhupāda's books to thousands of people. Although the AsiaFest organizers were at first skeptical of ISKCON's partici-

pation, they were changed by the spiritual atmosphere and by witnessing festival-goers' enthusiasm for ISKCON's exhibits.

At the end of the festival, the second-in-charge (who had been the most skeptical in the beginning) told Yadurāṇī, "You were all fabulous. Thank you for your patience, your kindness, your music, your food, and everything. We couldn't have done it without you."

NEWS BRIEFS

Michigan magazine, the Sunday supplement of the *Detroit News*, printed a cover story on the Detroit devotees called "Kindred Spirits." The cover photograph shows Apūrva dāsa chanting, with his nine-month-old son, Amalapurāṇa dāsa, clapping along. The nine-page article includes sixteen full-color photographs and stresses the devotees' life of sacrifice and austerity amid the opulence of the Detroit temple.



ISKCON devotees participated in the week-long Diwali festival in Trinidad. Because half of the

population is of Asian-Indian descent, the festival is attended by tens of thousands of people. ISKCON had a stage, an exhibition tent, Gaura-Nitāi Deities, dioramas, books, prasādam, plays, and chanting. On the last day of the festival, devotees chanted from 7:00 P.M. until 2:00 A.M., with the crowd still demanding more.

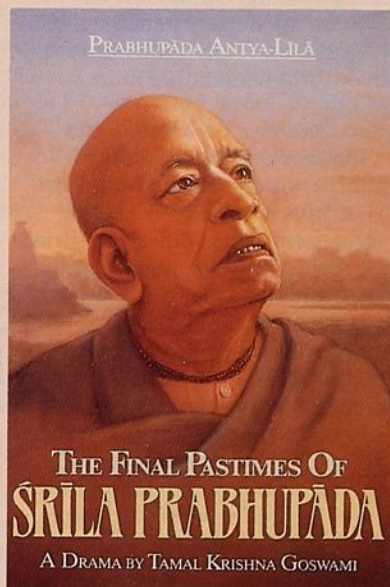
On World Food Day, the minister of agriculture for Mauritius honored ISKCON's Vedic farm there with a cash prize for their cow protection program. The farm has a bio-gas plant that was the subject of a recent program on the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation. "The cows and bulls were integral parts of the Vedic economic system," says Girirāja Swami. "The cow produces milk and the bull provides labor. Even the dung can be used, as demonstrated at the ISKCON Vedic farm."

Devotees in Guyana are bringing Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the people there with a Pada-yātrā (walking festival) along the main highway. The route stretches east to west along the coast, where most of the population lives. The people are enthusiastically receiving the devotees and attending the evening programs of chanting and distribution of prasādam and Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

ISKCON New Zealand is sponsoring cultural programs for bringing Indian artists to New Zealand. The first performance featured Bhārata-nāṭyam dancer Chandra Bhanu and sitar player Pandit Giriraja. Devotees sold prasādam and Śrīla Prabhupāda's books in the lobby. After his appearance, Pandit Giriraj said, "I am now going to make it my mission to tell people throughout the world of the excellent work

Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement is doing for our culture and spiritual philosophy."

The Final Pastimes of Śrīla Prabhupāda, a drama by Tamāla Krishna Goswami, is now available from ISKCON Dallas (write, or call 214-823-7264). The hard-bound, 120-page book includes ten original illustrations. Garuḍa dāsa, director of the Institute for Vaiṣṇava Studies, writes in the Foreword, "The present work,



which grew out of experiences recorded in the author's diary of Prabhupāda's final activities and words, captures the feelings and thoughts that went through the hearts and minds of many disciples as they struggled to take care of their spiritual master during the moments that led to his departure."

Agrāṇi Swami, ISKCON's Governing Body Commissioner for the Caribbean, says, "Devotees have successfully organized many large-scale programs in Guyana, but the spiritual impact of the Pada-yātrā exceeds them all. Wherever we go, people provide accommodations. Hindu associations invite us into their temples and attend our programs to hear Lord Caitanya's philosophy. People compete to sponsor our evening festivals, and we get many more invitations than we can accept."

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 center nearest you will gladly tell you more about the meaning of the festivals listed here.

Month of Govinda (February 21–March 22)

March 18—Āmalakī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

March 19—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master.

March 22—Śrī Gaura-pūrṇimā, the appearance anniversary of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself in the role of His own devotee. Fasting till moonrise, followed by feasting.

Month of Viṣṇu (March 23–April 21)

April 2—Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

April 10—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, a famous eleventh-century philosopher and spiritual master.

April 14—Śrī Rāma Navamī. The appearance anniversary of Lord Rāmacandra. Fasting till 2:00 P.M., then feasting.

April 16—Kāmadā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

April 21—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vasanta Rāsa. Śrī Balarāma Rāsa-yatra.

spiritual realization in the association of Kṛṣṇa's devotees.

For more information, inquire at your local ISKCON center or get directly in touch with ISKCON Bombay.

Tired of media stereotypes of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement? Want to understand who the Hare Kṛṣṇa people really are and what they're about? Then read *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna: Five Distinguished Scholars on the Krishna Movement in the West*, a collection of interviews with Harvey Cox, Larry Shinn, Thomas Hopkins, A. L. Basham, and Srivatsa Goswami conducted by the book's editor, Steven J. Gelberg, the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's director for interreligious affairs. Together, these dialogues shed much light on relevant historical sociological, psychological, and theological issues surrounding the movement. This book will help you understand the logic and appeal of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

276 pages, softbound.

Order from a bookstore or check the gift shop at the Hare Kṛṣṇa center nearest you.

Plain living, high thinking. Get out of the city—away from the noise, pollution, and the anxiety and madness of city life. Come back to a simpler, more natural way of life. Live close to the earth, close to God. The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement has thirty-four farm communities throughout the world. These are sacred places where your spirit can unfold. And at the same time, they're realistic, practical places, where you can build a sane, stable life for yourself and, if you're married, for your family.

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

Note to Subscribers. Planning to move? Let us know when and where so we can keep your BACK TO GODHEAD coming without a break.

RESOURCES

Going to Bombay?

Visit the ISKCON cultural center—Hare Krishna Land, in beautiful Juhu Beach. A short ride from the Bombay airports, Hare Krishna Land features a gorgeous traditional Kṛṣṇa temple, together with a multistory modern guesthouse, Govinda's pure vegetarian *prasādam* restaurant, musical and theatrical performances in the 425-seat auditorium, and a sublime atmosphere of

CELEBRATE!
Śrī Gaura-pūrṇimā
The Appearance Anniversary of
Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
March 22, 1989
Call your nearest Hare Kṛṣṇa
center for details.

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-ONE

Conversation Between Manu and Kardama

In this installment of our continuing presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the sage Maitreya describes to Vidura, a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord's appearance before the progenitor Kardama Muni.

TEXT 13

ऋषिरुवाच

जुष्टं बतद्यारविलसत्त्वरशेः
सासिद्धमक्षपोस्तव दर्शनान्नः ।
यद्दर्शनं जन्ममिरीह्य सद्भि-
राशासते योगिनो रूढयोगाः ॥१३॥

ṛṣir uvāca

juṣṭam batādyākhila-sattva-rāśeh
sāmsiddhyam akṣṇos tava darśanān naḥ
yad-darśanam janmabhiḥ iḍya sadbhir
āśāsate yogino rūḍha-yogāḥ

ṛṣiḥ uvāca—the great sage said; juṣṭam—is attained; bata—ah; adya—now; akhila—all; sattva—of goodness; rāśeh—who are the reservoir; sāmsiddhyam—the complete success; akṣṇoḥ—of the two eyes; tava—of You; darśanāt—from the sight; naḥ—by us; yat—of whom; darśanam—sight; janmabhiḥ—through births; iḍya—O worshipable Lord; sadbhiḥ—gradually elevated in position; āśāsate—aspire; yoginaḥ—yogis; rūḍha-yogāḥ—having obtained perfection in yoga.

TRANSLATION

The great sage Kardama said: O supreme worshipful Lord, my power of sight is now fulfilled, having attained the greatest perfection of the sight of You, who are the reservoir of all existences. Through many successive births of deep meditation, advanced yogis aspire to see Your transcendental form.

PURPORT

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is described here as the reservoir of all goodness and all pleasure. Unless one is situated in the mode of goodness, there is no real pleasure. When, therefore, one's body, mind and activities are situated in the service of the Lord, one is on the highest perfectional stage of goodness. Kardama Muni says, “Your Lordship is the reservoir of all that can be understood by the nomenclature of goodness, and by experiencing You face to face, eye to eye, the perfection of sight has now been attained.” These statements are the pure devotional situation; for a devotee, the perfection of the senses is to engage in the service of the Lord. The sense of sight, when engaged in seeing the beauty of the Lord, is perfected; the power to hear, when engaged in hearing the glories of the Lord, is perfected; the power to taste, when one enjoys by eating *prasāda*, is perfected. When all the senses engage in relationship with the Personality of Godhead, one's perfection is technically called *bhakti-yoga*, which entails detaching the senses from ma-

terial indulgence and attaching them to the service of the Lord. When one is freed from all designated conditional life and fully engages in the service of the Lord, one's service is called *bhakti-yoga*. Kardama Muni admits that seeing the Lord personally in *bhakti-yoga* is the perfection of sight. The exalted perfection of seeing the Lord is not exaggerated by Kardama Muni. He gives evidence that those who are actually elevated in *yoga* aspire in life after life to see this form of the Personality of Godhead. He was not a fictitious *yogī*. Those who are actually on the advanced path aspire only to see the eternal form of the Lord.

TEXT 14

ये मायया ते हतमेघसस्त्वत्-
पादारविन्दं भवसिन्धुपोतम् ।
उपासते कामलवाय तेषां
रासीश कामाक्षिरयेऽपि ये स्युः ॥१४॥

ye māyayā te hata-medhasas tvat-
pādāravindam bhava-sindhu-potam
upāsate kāmā-lavāya teṣāṃ
rāsīśa kāmān niraye 'pi ye syuḥ

ye—those persons; māyayā—by the deluding energy; te—of You; hata—has been lost; medhasaḥ—whose intelligence; tvat—Your; pādāravindam—lotus feet; bhava—of mundane existence; sindhu—the ocean; potam—the boat for crossing; upāsate—worship; kāmā-lavāya—for obtaining trivial pleasures; teṣāṃ—their; rāsī—You bestow; īśa—O Lord; kāmān—desires; niraye—in hell; api—even; ye—which desires; syuḥ—can be available.

TRANSLATION

Your lotus feet are the true vessel to take one across the ocean of mundane nescience. Only persons deprived of their intelligence by the spell of the deluding energy will worship those feet with a view to attain the trivial and momentary pleasures of the senses, which even persons rotting in hell can attain. However, O my Lord, You are so kind that You bestow mercy even upon them.

PURPORT

As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, Seventh Chapter, there are two kinds of devotees—those who desire material pleasures and those who desire nothing but service to the Lord. Material pleasures can be attained even by hogs and dogs, whose condition of life is hellish. The hog also eats, sleeps and enjoys sex life to the full extent, and it is also very satisfied with such hellish enjoyment of material existence. Modern *yogis* advise that because one has senses, one must enjoy to the fullest extent like cats and dogs, yet one can go on and practice *yoga*. This is condemned here by Kardama Muni; he says that such material pleasures are available for cats and dogs in a hellish condition. The Lord is so kind that if so-called *yogīs* are satisfied by hellish pleasures, He can give them facilities to attain all the material pleasures they desire, but they cannot attain the perfectional stage attained by Kardama Muni.

Hellish and demonic persons do not actually know what is the ultimate attainment in perfection, and therefore they think that sense gratification is the highest goal of life. They advise that one can satisfy the

senses and at the same time, by reciting some *mantra* and by some practice, can cheaply aspire for perfection. Such persons are described here as *hata-medhasah*, which means "those whose brains are spoiled." They aspire for material enjoyment by perfection of *yoga* or meditation. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated by the Lord that the intelligence of those who worship the demigods has been spoiled. Similarly, here too it is stated by Kardama Muni that one who aspires after material enjoyment by practice of *yoga* has spoiled his brain substance and is fool number one. Actually, the intelligent practitioner of *yoga* should aspire for nothing else but to cross over the ocean of nescience by worshiping the Personality of Godhead and to see the lotus feet of the Lord. The Lord is so kind, however, that even today persons whose brain substance is spoiled are given the benediction to become cats, dogs or hogs and enjoy material happiness from sex life and sense gratification. The Lord confirms this benediction in *Bhagavad-gītā*: "Whatever a person aspires to receive from Me, I offer him as he desires."

TEXT 15

तथा स चाहं परिवोदुकामः
समानशीलां गृहमेधधेनुम् ।
उपेयिवान्मूलमशेषमूलं
दुराशयः कामदुषाङ्घ्रिपस्य ॥१५॥

*tathā sa cāhaṁ parivodhu-kāmaḥ
samāna-śilām grhamedha-dhenum
upeyivān mūlam aśeṣa-mūlam
durāśayaḥ kāma-dughānghripasya*

tathā—similarly; *saḥ*—myself; *ca*—also; *aham*—I; *parivodhu-kāmaḥ*—desiring to marry; *samāna-śilām*—a girl of like disposition; *grha-medha*—in married life; *dhenum*—a cow of plenty; *upeyivān*—have approached; *mūlam*—the root (lotus feet); *aśeṣa*—of everything; *mūlam*—the source; *durāśayaḥ*—with lustful desire; *kāma-dugha*—yielding all desires; *anghripasya*—(of You) who are the tree.

TRANSLATION

Therefore, desiring to marry a girl of like disposition who may prove to be a veritable cow of plenty in my married life, to satisfy my lustful desire I too have sought the shelter of Your lotus feet, which are the source of everything, for You are like a desire tree.

PURPORT

In spite of his condemning persons who approach the Lord for material advantages, Kardama Muni expressed his material inability and desire before the Lord by saying, "Although I know that nothing material should be asked from You, I nevertheless desire to marry a girl of like disposition." The phrase "like disposition" is very significant. Formerly, boys and girls of similar dispositions were married; the similar natures of the boy and girl were united in order to make them happy. Not more than twenty-five years ago, and perhaps it is still current, parents in India used to consult the horoscope of the boy and girl to see whether there would be factual union in their psychological conditions. These considerations are very important. Nowadays marriage takes place without such consultation, and therefore, soon after the marriage, there is divorce and separation. Formerly husband and wife used to live together peacefully throughout their whole lives, but nowadays it is a very difficult task.

Kardama Muni wanted to have a wife of like disposition because a wife is necessary to assist in spiritual and material advancement. It is said that a wife yields the fulfillment of all desires in religion, economic development and sense gratification. If one has a nice wife, he is to be considered a most fortunate man. In astrology, a man is considered fortunate who has great wealth, very good sons or a very good wife. Of these three, one who has a very good wife is considered the most fortunate. Before marrying, one should select a wife of like disposition and not be enamored by so-called beauty or other attractive features for sense gratification. In the *Bhāgavatam*, Twelfth Canto, it is said that in the Kali-yuga marriage will be based on the consideration of sex life; as soon as there is deficiency in sex life, the question of divorce will arise.

Kardama Muni could have asked his benediction from Umā, for it is recommended in the scriptures that if anyone wants a good wife, he should worship Umā. But he preferred to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead because it is recommended in the *Bhāgavatam* that everyone, whether he is full of desires, has no desire or desires libera-

tion, should worship the Supreme Lord. Of these three classes of men, one tries to be happy by fulfillment of material desires, another wants to be happy by becoming one with the Supreme, and another, the perfect man, is a devotee. He does not want anything in return from the Personality of Godhead; he only wants to render transcendental loving service. In any case, everyone should worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for He will fulfill everyone's desire. The advantage of worshiping the Supreme Person is that even if one has desires for material enjoyment, if he worships Kṛṣṇa he will gradually become a pure devotee and have no more material hankering.

TEXT 16

प्रजापतेस्ते वचसाधीश तन्त्या
लोकः किलायं कामहतोऽनुबद्धः ।
अहं च लोकानुगतो वहामि
बलिं च शुक्लानिमिषाय तुभ्यम् ॥१६॥

*prajāpates te vacasādhiṣa tanyā
lokaḥ kilāyaṁ kāma-hato 'nubaddhaḥ
aham ca lokānugato vahāmi
balim ca śuklānimīṣāya tubhyam*

prajāpateḥ—who are the master of all living entities; *te*—of You; *vacasā*—under the direction; *adhīṣa*—O my Lord; *tanyā*—by a rope; *lokaḥ*—conditioned souls; *kila*—indeed; *ayaṁ*—these; *kāma-hataḥ*—conquered by lusty desires; *anubaddhaḥ*—are bound; *aham*—I; *ca*—and; *loka-anugataḥ*—following the conditioned souls; *vahāmi*—offer; *balim*—oblations; *ca*—and; *śukla*—O embodiment of religion; *animīṣāya*—existing as eternal time; *tubhyam*—to You.

TRANSLATION

O my Lord, You are the master and leader of all living entities. Under Your direction, all conditioned souls, as if bound by rope, are constantly engaged in satisfying their desires. Following them, O embodiment of religion, I also bear oblations for You, who are eternal time.

PURPORT

In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* it is stated that the Supreme Lord is the leader of all living entities. He is their sustainer and the awarder of all their necessities and desires. No living entity is independent; all are dependent on the mercy of the Supreme Lord. Therefore the Vedic instruction is that one should enjoy life under the direction of the supreme leader, the Personality of Godhead. Vedic literatures like *Isopaniṣad* direct that since everything belongs to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one should not encroach upon another's property, but should enjoy one's individual allotment. The best program for every living entity is to take direction from the Supreme Lord and enjoy material or spiritual life.

A question may be raised: Since Kardama Muni was advanced in spiritual life, why then did he not ask the Lord for liberation? Why did he want to enjoy material life in spite of his personally seeing and experiencing the Supreme Lord? The answer is that not everyone is competent to be liberated from material bondage. It is everyone's duty, therefore, to enjoy according to his present position, but under the direction of the Lord or the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* are considered to be the direct words of the Lord. The Lord gives us the opportunity to enjoy material life as we want, and at the same time He gives directions for the modes and processes of abiding by the *Vedas* so that gradually one may be elevated to liberation from material bondage. The conditioned souls who have come to the material world to fulfill their desires to lord it over material nature are bound by the laws of nature. The best course is to abide by the Vedic rules; that will help one to be gradually elevated to liberation.

Kardama Muni addresses the Lord as *śukla*, which means "the leader of religion." One who is pious should follow the rules of religion, for such rules are prescribed by the Lord Himself. No one can manufacture or concoct a religion; "religion" refers to the injunctions or laws of the Lord. In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says that religion means to surrender unto Him. Therefore one should follow the Vedic regulations and surrender unto the Supreme Lord because that is the ultimate goal of perfection in human life. One should live a life of piety, follow the religious rules and regulations, marry and live peacefully for elevation to the higher status of spiritual realization.

TEXT 17

लोकान्श्च लोकानुगतान् पशूंश्च
हित्वा श्रितास्ते चरणातपत्रम् ।
परस्परं त्वद्गुणवादसीधु-
पीयूषनिर्वापितदेहधर्माः ॥१७॥

lokāṁś ca lokānugatān paśūṁś ca
hitvā śritāś te caraṇātapatram
parasparam tvad-guṇa-vāda-sidhu-
pīyūṣa-niryāpita-deha-dharmāḥ

lokān—worldly affairs; ca—and; loka-anugatān—the followers of worldly affairs; paśūn—beastly; ca—and; hitvā—having given up; śritāḥ—taken shelter; te—Your; caraṇa—of lotus feet; āpatram—the umbrella; parasparam—with one another; tvat—Your; guṇa—of qualities; vāda—by discussion; sidhu—intoxicating; pīyūṣa—by the nectar; niryāpita—extinguished; deha-dharmāḥ—the primary necessities of the body.

TRANSLATION

However, persons who have given up stereotyped worldly affairs and the beastly followers of these affairs, and who have taken shelter of the umbrella of Your lotus feet by drinking the intoxicating nectar of Your qualities and activities in discussions with one another, can be freed from the primary necessities of the material body.

PURPORT

After describing the necessity of married life, Kardama Muni asserts that marriage and other social affairs are stereotyped regulations for persons who are addicted to material sense enjoyment. The principles of animal life—eating, sleeping, mating and defending—are actually necessities of the body, but those who engage in transcendental Kṛṣṇa consciousness, giving up all the stereotyped activities of this material world, are freed from social conventions. Conditioned souls are under the spell of material energy, or eternal time—past, present and future—but as soon as one engages in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he transcends the limits of past and present and becomes situated in the eternal activities of the soul. One has to act in terms of the Vedic injunctions in order to enjoy material life, but those who have taken to the devotional service of the Lord are not afraid of the regulations of this material world. Such devotees do not care for the conventions of material activities; they boldly take to that shelter which is like an umbrella against the sun of repeated birth and death.

Constant transmigration of the soul from one body to another is the cause of suffering in material existence. This conditional life in material existence is called *samsāra*. One may perform good work and take his birth in a very nice material condition, but the process under which birth and death take place is like a terrible fire. Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura, in his prayer to the spiritual master, has described this. *Samsāra*, or the repetition of birth and death, is compared to a forest fire. A forest fire takes place automatically, without anyone's endeavor, by the friction of dried wood, and no fire department or sympathetic person can extinguish it. The raging forest fire can be extinguished only when there is a constant downpour of water from a cloud. The cloud is compared to the mercy of the spiritual master. By the grace of the spiritual master the cloud of the mercy of the Personality of Godhead is brought in, and then only, when the rains of Kṛṣṇa consciousness fall, can the fire of material existence be extinguished. This is also explained here. In order to find freedom from the stereotyped conditional life of material existence, one has to take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord, not in the manner in which the impersonalists indulge, but in devotional service, chanting and hearing of the activities of the Lord. Only then can one be freed from the actions and reactions of material existence. It is recommended here that one should give up the conditional life of this material world and the association of so-called civilized human beings who are simply following, in a polished way, the same stereotyped principles of eating, sleeping, defending and mating. Chanting and hearing of the glories of the Lord is described here as *tvad-guṇa-vāda-sidhu*. Only by drinking the nectar of chanting and hearing the pastimes of the Lord can one forget the intoxication of material existence.

TEXT 18

न तेजराक्षभ्रमिराशुरेषां
त्रयोदशारं त्रिशतं षष्टिपर्व ।

पण्मेन्यनन्तच्छदि यत्त्रिणाभि
करालस्रोतो जगदाच्छिद्य धावत् ॥१८॥

na te 'jarākṣa-bhramir āyur eṣāṁ
trayodaśāram tri-śatam ṣaṣṭi-parva
ṣaṇ-nemy ananta-cchadi yat tri-nābhi
karāla-sroto jagad ācchidya dhāvat

na—not; te—Your; ajara—of imperishable Brahman; akṣa—on the axle; bhramiḥ—rotating; āyuh—span of life; eṣām—of the devotees; trayodaśa—thirteen; aram—spokes; tri-śatam—three hundred; ṣaṣṭi—sixty; parva—functions; ṣaṭ—six; nemi—rims; ananta—innumerable; chadi—leaves; yat—which; tri—three; nābhi—naves; karāla-srotaḥ—with tremendous velocity; jagat—the universe; ācchidya—cutting short; dhāvat—running.

TRANSLATION

Your wheel, which has three naves, rotates around the axis of the imperishable Brahman. It has thirteen spokes, 360 joints, six rims and numberless leaves carved upon it. Though its revolution cuts short the life-span of the entire creation, this wheel of tremendous velocity cannot touch the life-span of the devotees of the Lord.

PURPORT

The time factor cannot affect the span of life of the devotees. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated that a little execution of devotional service saves one from the greatest danger. The greatest danger is transmigration of the soul from one body to another, and only devotional service to the Lord can stop this process. It is stated in the Vedic literatures, *harim vinā na śrīm taranti*: without the mercy of the Lord, one cannot stop the cycle of birth and death. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated that only by understanding the transcendental nature of the Lord and His activities, His appearance and disappearance, can one stop the cycle of death and go back to Him. The time factor is divided into many fractions of moments, hours, months, years, periods, seasons, etc. All the divisions in this verse are determined according to the astronomical calculations of Vedic literature. There are six seasons, called *ṛtus*, and there is the period of four months called *cāturmāsya*. Three periods of four months complete one year. According to Vedic astronomical calculations, there are thirteen months. The thirteenth month is called *adhi-māsa* or *mala-māsa* and is added every third year. The time factor, however, cannot touch the life-span of the devotees. In another verse it is stated that when the sun rises and sets it takes away the life of all living entities, but it cannot take away the life of those who are engaged in devotional service. Time is compared here to a big wheel which has 360 joints, six rims in the shape of seasons, and numberless leaves in the shape of moments. It rotates on the eternal existence, Brahman.

TEXT 19

एकः स्वयं सञ्जगतः सिस्त्रयया-
द्वितीययात्मन्निधियोगमायया ।
सृजस्यदः पासि पुनर्ग्रसिष्यसे
यथोर्णनाभिर्मगवन् स्वशक्तिभिः ॥१९॥

ekah svayam saṅ jagataḥ sistrīyayā-
dviṭīyayātmann adhi-yogamāyayā
sṛjasy adah pāsi punar grasīsyase
yathorṇa-nābhir bhagavan sva-śaktibhiḥ

ekah—one; svayam—Yourself; saṅ—being; jagataḥ—the universes; sistrīyayā—with a desire to create; adviṭīyayā—without a second; ātman—in Yourself; adhi—controlling; yoga-māyayā—by yogamāyā; sṛjasi—You create; adah—those universes; pāsi—You maintain; punaḥ—again; grasīsyase—You will wind up; yathā—like; ūrna-nābhiḥ—a spider; bhagavan—O Lord; sva-śaktibhiḥ—by its own energy.

TRANSLATION

My dear Lord, You alone create the universes. O Personality of Godhead, desiring to create these universes, You create them, maintain them and again wind them up by Your own energies, which are under the control of Your second energy, called *yogamāyā*, just as a spider creates a cobweb by its own energy and again winds it up.

(continued in next issue)

Prabhupāda's Message

(continued from page 14)

briefly, Kṛṣṇa says that there are three primary qualities of life, which mix in innumerable permutations, just like the primary colors. These three fundamental qualities of life are the qualities of goodness, passion, and ignorance.

The good person is a more-or-less enlightened person. He or she is gentle, humble, kind to all creatures; works with a sense of duty, without ambition or lust or greed; works simply for the benefit of others; is very peaceful, self-satisfied, and so on—the good person.

Beneath this is the passionate person, who's very ambitious and greedy, who seeks name and fame, prestige, power, money, and all these things, but seeks them in the context of a social life, or by following the rules. But he's seeking personal aggrandizement, which, of course, is most of what's going on nowadays in this country.

Then beneath this there's the ignorant person. Kṛṣṇa gives his symptoms as being lazy, unproductive, and so on. Society has programs for such people—drug addicts, people who have a very serious psychological problem, who are suicidal, who can't really even maintain themselves. This is the mode of ignorance.

In the context of the brainwashing discussion, what I wanted to introduce is that one of the main problems in this whole discussion is that the American people, or people in general, don't really have any objective way to discuss *qualities* of life. Our civilization has produced many ways of quantifying life, but when we come to quality of life, we're a little gun-shy because we think that no one should impose

his values on anyone else. But I would suggest that Kṛṣṇa has presented here a nontheological—you may say it's metaphysical, but not strongly theological—framework in which we can evaluate the quality of life. I'd like to read in that context a description from Kṛṣṇa of the person in the mode of goodness, because it's stated that to become spiritually advanced, one at least has to come to the material quality of goodness.

These are some statements from Kṛṣṇa. He says, *vidyā-vinaya-sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini/śuni caiva śva-pāke ca paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ* [Bhagavad-gītā 5.18]. This is the definition of a learned person, a *paṇḍita*. Kṛṣṇa says, "The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle *brāhmaṇa*, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater [outcaste]." In other words, a learned person is one who sees everyone equally.

Here's Prabhupāda's purport to this verse: "A Kṛṣṇa conscious person does not make any distinction between species or castes. The *brāhmaṇa* and the outcaste may be different from the social point of view, or a dog, a cow, and an elephant may be different from the point of view of species, but these differences of body are meaningless from the viewpoint of a learned transcendentalist. This is due to their relationship to the Supreme, for the Supreme Lord, by His plenary portion as Paramātmā, is present in everyone's heart. Such an understanding of the Supreme is real knowledge."

Then we find another statement by Kṛṣṇa: *ātmapaumyena sarvatra samam paśyati yo 'rjuna/ sukhaṁ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṁ sa yogi paramo mataḥ* [Bhagavad-gītā 6.32]. Translation: "He is a perfect *yogi* who, by comparison to his own self, sees the true equality of all beings, in both their

happiness and their distress, O Arjuna!"

And finally there's Kṛṣṇa's direct statement upon knowledge in the mode of goodness, the world view of a person in the quality of goodness. Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-bhūteṣu yenaikam bhāvam avyayam iksate/ avibhaktaṁ vibhakteṣu taj jñānam viddhi sātvikam*: "That knowledge by which one undivided spiritual nature is seen in all living entities, though they are divided into innumerable forms, you should understand to be in the mode of goodness" [Bhagavad-gītā 18.20].

And Prabhupāda says, "A person who sees one spirit soul in every living being, whether a demigod, human being, animal, bird, beast, aquatic, or plant, possesses knowledge in the mode of goodness. . . . To see that one superior nature, the living force, in every body is to see in the mode of goodness. That living energy is imperishable. . . ."

What I would like to suggest here is that it is actually the quality of goodness, as Kṛṣṇa calls it, that is the real basis of the ethical life and of egalitarianism, which is certainly a metaphysical concept, empirically totally nonverifiable—the equality of human beings, and what to speak of all life. The quality of goodness leads to that state, whereas a person in passion—the ambitious, greedy, or proud person—sees people as different. There are friends, enemies, good guys, and bad guys. There's "us and them." This is the symptom of passion.

So if we want to come to an enlightened society—beyond simply making appeals to be good—there must actually be scientific or practical programs by which people can be brought to goodness. The programs Śrīla Prabhupāda instituted for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are meant for doing just that. ☐

DUTIES

(continued from page 4)

devotional service is transcendental. He has no more *sva-dharma* in the bodily concept of life, because he's neither *brāhmaṇa* nor *kṣatriya* nor *vaiśya* nor *śūdra*. Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said, "I am not a *brāhmaṇa*; I am not a *śūdra*; I am not a *kṣatriya*; I am not a *brahmacārī*; I am not a *sannyāsī*." In this way He negated all eight items of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. *Sva-dharma* means *varṇāśrama-dharma*: *varṇa* and *āśrama*. Four castes: *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*. And four spiritual orders: *brahmacārī*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa*.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu denied that He belonged to any of them—"I am not this; I am not this; I am not that." Then what are

You? *Gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānūdasaḥ. Gopī-bhartuḥ* means "the maintainer of the *gopīs* [Kṛṣṇa]." "I am the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of whoever is engaged in the service of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa."

Those who are in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, those who have decided to serve Kṛṣṇa only, are no longer in the categories of the bodily *sva-dharma* of *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*, or *brahmacārī*, *vānaprastha*, and so on. They are transcendental. That is confirmed in every *śāstra* [scripture].

But as long as our bodily concept of life is not completely eradicated, we must follow the *sva-dharma* of the body. When one is actually advanced, he is a *mahā-bhāgavata*. We should not imitate that, but as we advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we become transcendental to this bodily concept of life. Kṛṣṇa says, *mām ca yo 'vyabhi-*

cāreṇa bhakti-yogena sevate/ sa guṇān samatītyaitān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate.

So anyone who engages without any reservation in the service of the Lord is not within the eight categories of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. He is transcendental. And as a Kṛṣṇa conscious person, he can act in any category by the order of Kṛṣṇa. He can act as a *brāhmaṇa*, or he can act as a *śūdra*, because his main business is to carry out Kṛṣṇa's order. He's no longer within the category of this *sva-dharma*.

So Kṛṣṇa is leaving no option for Arjuna but to fight: "This way or that way, you must fight. If you think you are not in the bodily concept, then it is My order—"You must fight." If you think you are in the bodily concept of life, then you are a *kṣatriya*—you must fight. Both ways you must fight." This is Kṛṣṇa's conclusion.

Thank you very much. ☐

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

Rascals' Intelligence

This is the continuation of a conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples in New Vrindaban, West Virginia, on June 26, 1976.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, the *Gītā* verse we've just read is very striking. Lord Kṛṣṇa says that with their materialistic views, "the demoniac, who are lost to themselves and have no intelligence, engage in unbeneficial, horrible works meant to destroy the world."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Kṛṣṇa says *ugra-karmāṇaḥ*: these people are performing horrible works. The factory—this is *ugra-karma*, a horrible work.

In reality, only a little *karma*, a little work, is required. You simply see to it, for instance, that some wheat is growing. A little tilling—that is sufficient.

What is the use of opening a big, big factory? That is *ugra-karma*. How has it helped? How has it helped that people are kept in some factory, simply for earning their livelihood.

Just a little work will provide people's needs. Nature has given so much facility. You can grow a little food anywhere. The cows are there in the pasturing ground. Take their milk and live peacefully. Why do you open factories? What is the use? You are simply keeping yourselves in a hellish condition.

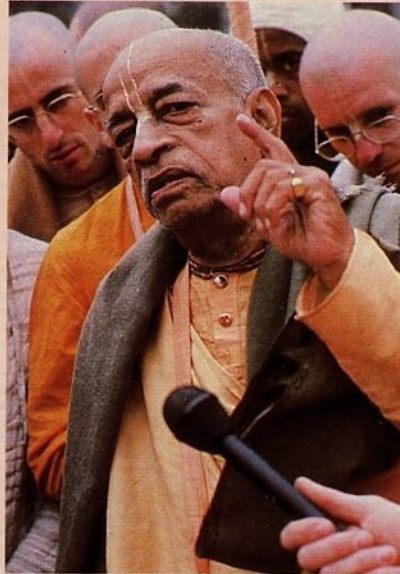
So this is the description given by Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Now discuss these points.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, Kṛṣṇa says demoniac leaders are engaging in unbeneficial, horrible works meant to destroy the world. And you said this statement anticipates nuclear weapons. These words of Kṛṣṇa are so true.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. God is speaking. Kṛṣṇa is speaking.

Disciple: In college I was studying nuclear energy and thinking it would save the world—that by nuclear energy our leaders could give us bigger corn, bigger tomatoes, and . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Bigger deaths. The ultimate result of these rascals' work is bigger deaths. Everything must be big. Formerly, during some conflict, only a few men were dying; now, many hundreds of thousands will die. Bigger deaths. During your college days, you did not consider that these big leaders



were bringing bigger deaths?

Disciple: In a way, Śrīla Prabhupāda. It was very frustrating, because from every so-called good thing these people were trying to do, so many more bad things were coming forth.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Karma jagat*. The law of *karma*, which governs this material world, is that if you want to make a house, then somewhere you have to cut trees down. Somewhere you have to destroy—only then can you make your house. You have to "adjust" things like that. So in reality, you cannot create. You create your house by destroying somewhere else. Is it not? So where is your creation? Real creation is God's creation. Without destroying anything, He has created everything. But if you want to create, then somewhere you have to destroy. That is the law of *karma*.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, as you know, in Chapter Seven of the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa describes rascals with the word *duṣkṛtina*. And as you explain in the Purport, *duṣkṛtina* indicates merit and intelligence. Misused, of course, yet very real merit and intelligence.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, intelligence. For example, after destroying a tree, you use your intelligence to construct a house. So you have intelligence. There is no doubt. A human being must have intelligence. But that intelligence is given to him for getting out of the clutches of birth, death, old age, and

disease. Unfortunately, the so-called modern man is not using his intelligence for that purpose. Therefore, he is a *duṣkṛtina*, a rascal.

Intelligence he has got. We don't say that modern man is unintelligent, that he is a complete fool. No. He has got intelligence. But he is utilizing that intelligence for *duṣkārya*, work which he should not have done.

There are *kārya* and *duṣkārya*, proper work and bad work. Man's intelligence was given so that he could get relief from these clutches of birth, death, old age, and disease. But that intelligence he's not utilizing. He's opening a factory and creating a completely different atmosphere, a bad atmosphere. Therefore, he is a rascal. To open a factory requires intelligence. All sorts of complicated machines have to be coordinated. So intelligence is there. But how is this intelligence being used? To keep people in a hellish condition of life. Therefore, modern man is a *duṣkṛtina*, an intelligent rascal.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, it's amazing. People have become so shortsighted. For instance, they open a factory for some kind of economic development, but they're not thinking of the factory's ill effects. Water pollution, air pollution, noise pollution, stress, broken families, delinquency, drugs, crime—so many things.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Therefore Kṛṣṇa calls them *duṣkṛtinas*, and then He calls them *mūḍhas*, asses.

Disciple: At the same time, Śrīla Prabhupāda, Kṛṣṇa also says, *mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam*—"Everyone's intelligence comes from Me alone." So some might criticize that Kṛṣṇa Himself is misleading people, giving people faulty intelligence.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You wanted to do something, so Kṛṣṇa gives you the intelligence to do what you wanted. If you want to manufacture a very complicated machine, Kṛṣṇa will give you that intelligence: "All right, do like this. Here is how to manufacture."

But you'll not hear Kṛṣṇa when He says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*: "You rascal, give up all this and surrender to Me." That is real intelligence. But you'll not do it.

(To be continued.)

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Kṛṣṇa Meditation

We should not be envious of Kṛṣṇa. Because He is the origin of everything, He has the unchallengeable right to enjoy in any way He likes. In Goloka Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa's home in the spiritual world, everything and everyone is an expansion of His internal potency and thus exists for His pleasure only. Kṛṣṇa eternally enjoys an unlimited variety of relationships with His devotees. Although all of Kṛṣṇa's devotees are full of love for Him, He is especially conquered by the unconditional love of the *gopīs*, the cowherd girls of Vṛndāvana. The *gopīs* are willing to give up everything to serve Kṛṣṇa, and for this Kṛṣṇa is ever indebted to them. Because their happiness comes only from serving Kṛṣṇa, they demonstrate the epitome of love of God. The loving affairs of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* are on the absolute, transcendental plane, and we can never understand them in our present impure state of consciousness. If we take pleasure in hearing of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with His devotees, however, we too will one day gain entrance into the blissful, pristine realm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. ❧





NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Reply to a Grieving Mother

A recent "Notes from the Editor" essay, "The Power of Prayer," drew a response from a grieving mother, who wrote as follows:

I read your article on prayer and sadly found no answer to a question that was plaguing me. I would not call myself a "church woman," but I have always honored God in my heart.

Six months ago my seventeen-year-old daughter died in an automobile accident, a victim of a drunken driver. Since her death I have repeatedly prayed for some understanding of why this should have happened to my child. God has been mysteriously quiet.

At the close of your article you say, "The power of prayer comes when we call to Kṛṣṇa out of desire to do His will." In my case, the power of prayer would be relief through understanding. Can relief come from desire to understand His will?

Admittedly, my thoughts are confused and perhaps my prayers are also. Perhaps you can elaborate on how to understand the death of a loved one. What could be the meaning of my daughter's dying?

Even a person with full transcendental knowledge may grieve when he is separated from a loved one. But his solace is to remember the instructions of the *Bhagavad-gītā*: "For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He is not slain when the body is slain." Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke these words not as armchair discussion but as crucial advice to the grief-stricken Arjuna, who was anticipating the mass slaughter of all his friends and relatives in warfare. The meaning is that the beloved person who has died, or who is about to die, doesn't actually face extinction. The soul is immortal, and therefore even after the demise of the body, the *ātmā*, or spirit-self, lives on in another life—either in this mortal world or in the spiritual world.

Although Lord Kṛṣṇa was very compassionate to His friend Arjuna, He also mildly admonished him for his grief and said, "While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor for the dead" (*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.11).

But perhaps hearing precepts on immortality is not enough when one is feeling the pain of loss. We want to know *why* death had to occur to *our* loved one, especially when it seems to

be a premature death. Here again, Vedic knowledge helps us with definite, nonsentimental information. A person takes birth in a particular body and family and lives for a certain duration of time based on his or her *karma*.

Karma is the law of action and reaction.

As His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda writes, "According to one's desire and activities, material nature places one in various residential quarters. The being himself is the cause of his attaining such residential quarters and his attendant enjoyment or suffering. But once placed in some particular kind of body, he comes under the control of nature." Therefore, because of sinful or inauspicious acts we committed toward others in a past life, we may have to die prematurely in our present life. But this in turn diminishes our bad *karma*, so that in the future we no longer have to suffer for our past misdeeds. The karmic results of our own actions are carried out by inexorable laws beyond our power to control.

When a person is faced with traumatic losses, his faith is tested. Those who fail the test, owing to a lack of knowledge about *ātmā*, *karma*, and the Supreme, may become agnostics or atheists. But one who knows from authorized Vedic sources the reality of life and death moves even closer to God at times of death. When we approach the death of a loved one, or when we come close to our own death, we can see it as nature's way of showing us that life is short and that soon all our attempts at happiness in the material world will be finished. Our shock at meeting death shows us that we have been living in illusion.

Our emotional confusion makes us think that God has done something wrong to us when death takes away a loved one. Actually, Lord Kṛṣṇa wants to deliver us from ever facing death again. But liberation from death can be achieved only when we revive our original God consciousness. The living entity is originally an eternal, blissful servant of God, and his residence is in the kingdom of God, the spiritual world. But because of envy of God, we have fallen to this material world, where we try to carry out our plans for self-centered, material enjoyment. Unfortunately, instead of enjoyment, we

meet with suffering and death.

Lord Kṛṣṇa does not want us to remain in a suffering condition, and so He comes to this world in different incarnations and sends His representatives, just to teach us how to go back to home, back to Godhead, where we are free of repeated birth and death. As Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.9), "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." Just as Arjuna applied these teachings in battle, so they can be applied by a grieving mother in the case of her seventeen-year-old daughter, or by any of us.

But sometimes a survivor becomes unreasonable and unable to hear good instruction. For example, one time a grieving mother asked Gautama Buddha if he could bring her young son back to life. Buddha said that he would try to help her, but first he requested her to gather some grains from all the houses in the local village. He stipulated, however, that she should bring grains only from houses in which no death had occurred. The woman became hopeful of regaining her dead son and set out to gather grains. But at each house, when she asked whether any death had occurred there, the residents said that recently or in the past death had occurred in their house. Gradually, the woman began to learn the lesson: Death occurs to all, and so we should not grieve or attempt to change the inevitable.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness similarly teaches that "One who has taken birth is sure to die, and after death one is sure to take birth again. Therefore, in the inevitable discharge of your duty, you should not lament" (*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.27). But beyond this, Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches liberation from death, through *bhakti*, or loving service to the Supreme Lord. By association with devotees and scriptures, we can learn this art. If during this present lifetime we can perfect love of God, then death will have no dominion over us. When we realize that we are not these bodies but joyful, eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa, then death itself becomes our release from suffering and our entrance into eternity, bliss, and knowledge.—SDG



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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