

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

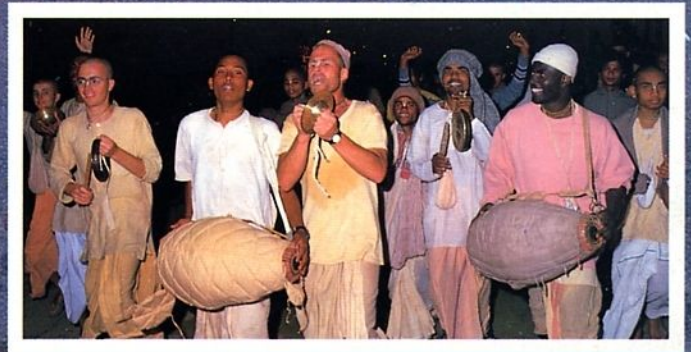


Vol.24 No.8

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

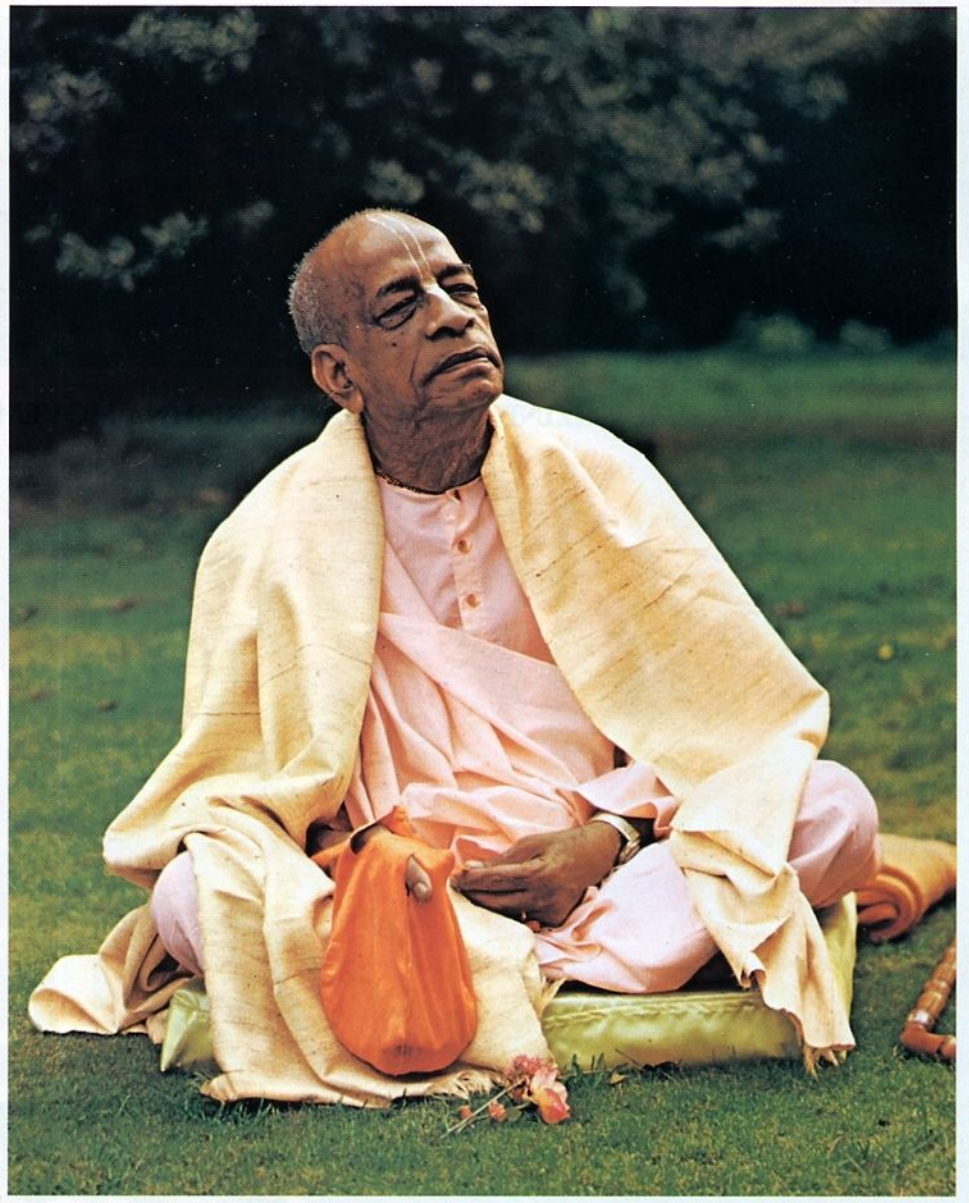


KUMBHA MELĀ



A Festival of Immortality

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 **e** 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* (dāstī for women), meaning "servant." For instance, the name *Kṛṣṇa dāsa* means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

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COVER: A temporary city at the confluence of the Ganges and Yamunā rivers accommodates the estimated sixteen million pilgrims who attended this year's Kumbha-melā at Allahabad, India. The pilgrims come to bathe at an astrologically auspicious time, seeking liberation from the sufferings of material existence. This month's issue begins with a lecture given by Śrīla Prabhupāda at the 1971 Kumbha-melā. Next are articles on the origin of the festival, some of its history, and the role of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in the festival today. (Photos by Jagannātha-Kṛṣṇa dāsa.)



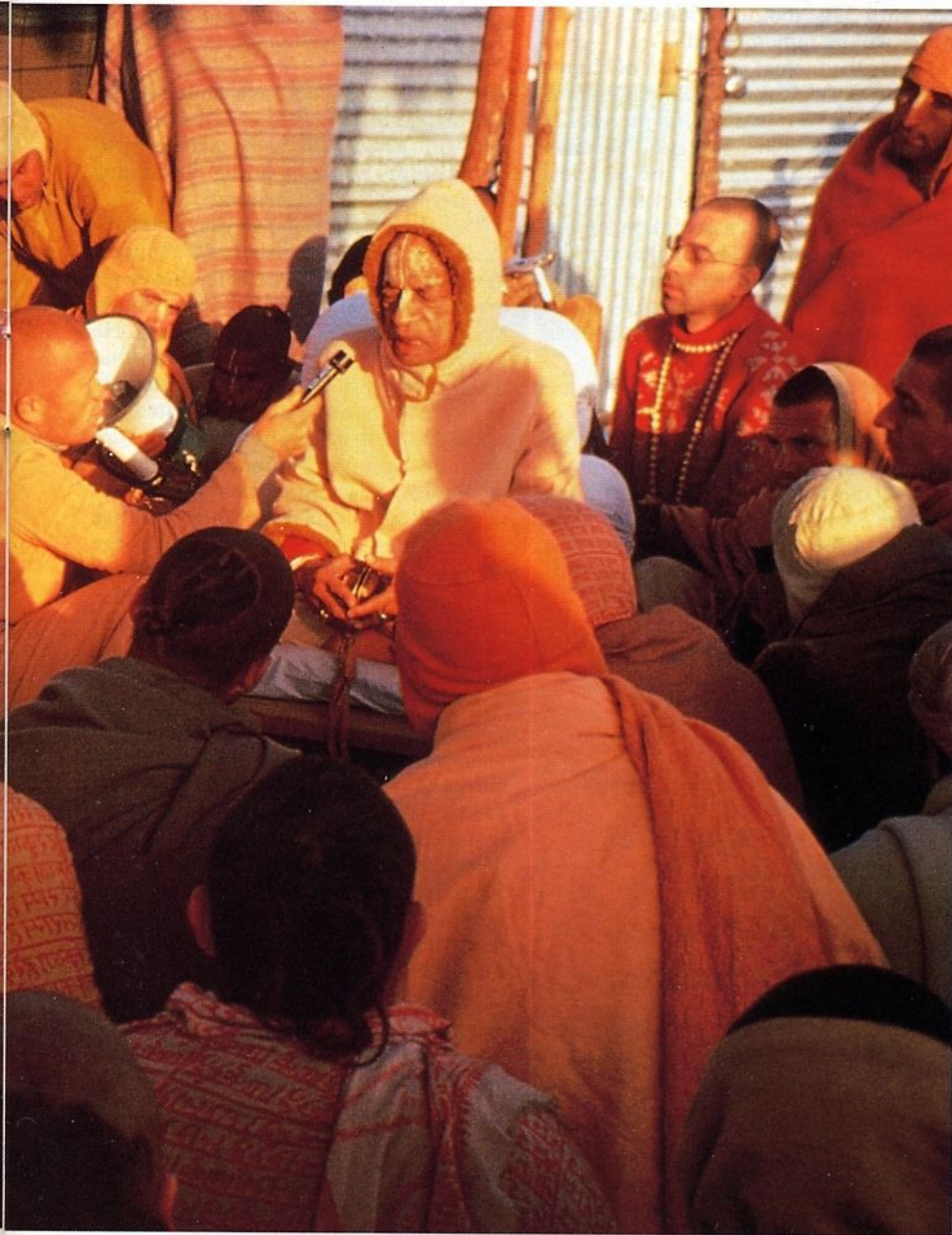
All religious scriptures prescribe pious acts,
but pious acts alone aren't enough for liberation.

PURIFICATION BEYOND RITUAL

A lecture at Kumbha-melā in Allahabad, India, on January 16, 1971
by HIS DIVINE GRACE A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness





*na niṣkṛtair uditair brahma-vādibhis
tathā viśuddhyaty aghavān vratādibhiḥ
yathā harer nāma-padair udāhṛtais
tad uttamaśloka-guṇopalambhakam*

“By following the Vedic ritualistic ceremonies or undergoing atonement, sinful men do not become as purified as by chanting once the holy name of Lord Hari. Although ritualistic atonement may free one from sinful reactions, it does not awaken devotional service, unlike the chanting of the Lord’s holy names, which reminds one of the Lord’s fame, qualities, attributes, pastimes, and paraphernalia.”

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.11)

There are twenty kinds of ritualistic religious scripture, out of which *Manu-saṁhitā* is considered to be the greatest. These scriptures prescribe many methods

for getting oneself released from the reaction of sinful activities.

Anyone who is engaged in *karma* is performing sinful activities. A *karmī* is one who is working for his own benefit. Everyone is working so hard not for others’ benefit but for his personal benefit. That is called *karma*. And whenever you perform *karma* for your personal interest, there must be some sinful activity. Therefore every *karmī* is a sinful man. This is the clear understanding. No *karmī* can live without being sinful.

Therefore how can one work and avoid sin? Take the example of the government. The government gives you license, say, for business. Every businessman is given some license: the municipality gives a license; the sales tax department gives a license. There are so many rules for obtaining licenses that a businessman has to

follow. There are rules and regulations because all these departments know it very well that any businessman or *karmī* is sure to commit sinful activities. Therefore there are so many regulations just to stop him as far as possible from sinful activities. Similarly, there are twenty kinds of *dharma-śāstra*, which tell how one can live faithfully and religiously. The directions are there in the scriptures written by Parāśara, Manu, and many other sages.

So therefore it is said here, *na niṣkṛtair uditair brahma-vādibhiḥ*. *Brahma-vādi* means those who are trying to lead persons to realize Brahman. The whole direction of the Vedic injunctions is to lead us to understand this point: “I am not this material body; I am spirit soul.” And in order to understand this factual position, there are so many directions in the *dharma-śāstra*, or religious scriptures.

You’ll find in a later chapter of this volume of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that Yamārāja will say, *dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam*: “Originally, the regulator of religious principles is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” Therefore Kṛṣṇa is sometimes addressed as *dharma-setu*. *Setu* means bridge. We have to cross over. The whole plan is that we have to cross over the ocean of nescience in which we are now situated. The material existence is an ocean of nescience, and one has to cross over it. Then one gets real life.

This present life is not real life. People are so foolish. They do not take it very seriously because they do not know that they are eternal. That is ignorance. *Bhagavad-gītā* begins from the knowledge that the living soul is eternal: *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*. But people are in ignorance. They take it as a matter of fact that this life, this body, is all in all; and after death there is no more body, so who cares for sinful activities? That is another ignorance. And in order to give them direction, there are so many religious scriptures.

Therefore it is said, *dharmeṇa hīnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*: “If one is not following the principles of religious scriptures, one is no better than an animal.” It doesn’t matter whether it is Hindu religion or Christian religion or Muslim religion. It doesn’t matter. But a civilized human being must follow some religious principles. That is the aim of human life. And anyone who does not follow any religious scripture is simply an animal. That is the position of the present world. We may claim to be Hindu or Muslim or Christian, but nobody cares for religion. They are simply *karmīs*. Therefore they are all sinful.

Now, here the Viṣṇudūta says, “The directions given in the religious scriptures

to get out of the reactions of sinful activities are not sufficient." For example, in the Christian religion there is the direction that if anyone is sinful he should go to a priest and confess that "I have committed these things." And if the priest, who is supposed to be a representative of God or Christ, excuses the sinner because of his confession, then the sinful activities become null and void. But this verse says that this direction cannot purify the sinful man because the same man who has confessed that "I have committed these sins" comes out of the church and again commits the same sins. Therefore he is not purified.

This is not only in the Christian religion. In every religion there are some prescribed methods for purification. Because it is accepted that every man is sinful, therefore in religious scriptures there are certain methods of purification. But here the Viṣṇudūta says that these prescribed methods, although they are authorized, cannot purify the heart of the follower of that religion.

You can see also in the Hindu and Muslim religions that even if they perform the ritualistic ceremonies, they do not cease from committing sins. They are just like a rascal patient. He goes to the physician, who gives him some medicine and some direction. The physician says, "You take this medicine. Do not do this. Do not eat so many things. You eat like this." So the patient takes the medicine, and for the time being he follows. But again he commits the same mistake, and again he goes to the physician—"Doctor, please give me medicine." This is going on. So this kind of treatment is not accepted by the Viṣṇudūta.

Therefore it is said here, "Such prescriptions for performing ritualistic ceremonies are not sufficient to purify a person." But if one chants the holy name of God, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, once only, one is purified. The purification of chanting *harer-nāma* [the name of Hari, or Kṛṣṇa] is that as soon as you chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, immediately you will see the form of Kṛṣṇa, you will realize the qualities of Kṛṣṇa, and you will remember the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. That is the result of pure chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has said that a pure devotee who chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* experiences immediately Kṛṣṇa's name, form, qualities, pastimes, and so on. Simply by chanting Kṛṣṇa's name, you will feel the form of Kṛṣṇa: "Here is Kṛṣṇa. Here are His qualities. Oh, Kṛṣṇa is so qualified. He is so kind. He is so magnanimous." You will remember so many of His qualities. Then you'll remember His pastimes: "Oh, Kṛṣṇa instructed Arjuna. Kṛṣṇa played with His cowherd boys. Kṛṣṇa had very nice talks with the *gopīs*

and with His mother, Yaśodā." These things will be remembered.

This is the factual perfection of chanting. Although Ajāmila became fallen in later age, in his early life he was a *brahmacārī* [celibate student]. He was being trained by his father, and he knew the pastimes, the form, the names of Nārāyaṇa. But by bad association, for the time being he forgot. Then as soon as he chanted the name of Nārāyaṇa, he remembered all these—Nārāyaṇa's form, pastimes, and so on. Therefore he was saved. Try to understand this.

One should know that offenseless chanting means remembering the form of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore Māyāvādīs, those who are impersonalists, cannot think of the form of the Lord, nor of His pastimes. They do not believe in the pastimes of the Lord. They think these pastimes are *māyā* [illusion]. Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pas-

One who is offenselessly chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra will always remember Kṛṣṇa's form, Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, Kṛṣṇa's qualities, Kṛṣṇa's entourage, and that remembering will make him liberated.

times—they think they are *māyā*. Because they are impersonalists, they think His form is *māyā*. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says, *janma karma ca me divyam*: "My birth and activities are transcendental." The rascals cannot understand the activities and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. They think they are *māyā*. But they are *divyam*, transcendental, not of this material nature. *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* is not of the material nature. Kṛṣṇa says that anyone who knows this factually, in truth, he *only* is immediately liberated.

Here it is said that simply by chanting "Nārāyaṇa, Nārāyaṇa," if immediately you remember the nature of the form of Kṛṣṇa, the nature of His pastimes, the nature of His entourage, then you immediately become liberated. That is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvataḥ*

*tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma
naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*

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

Therefore chanting is so easy and sublime. One who is offenselessly chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* will always remember Kṛṣṇa's form, Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, Kṛṣṇa's qualities, Kṛṣṇa's entourage. He will remember all these things, and that remembering will make him liberated. By offenseless chanting one is liberated.

We should therefore be very careful not to commit offenses. So long as you chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, you remain liberated. Actually, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has said that chanting is possible only by the liberated soul: *ayi mukta-kulair upāśya-mānam*. When Rūpa Gosvāmī glorifies the holy name, he says, *mukta-kulair upāśya*: "Those who are liberated can chant the pure holy name of the Lord." And Parīkṣit Mahārāja also has stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *nivṛtta-tarṣair upagīyamānāt*: "The holy name of Kṛṣṇa can be chanted by persons who are *nivṛtta-tarṣaiḥ*." *Nivṛtta* means those who have completely ceased from material desire. They can chant. The holy name of God, Kṛṣṇa, can be chanted by persons who are completely liberated from all kinds of material desire. That is the pure stage of devotional service.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī states,

*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-
śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*

"One who has become completely freed from all kinds of material desires can engage in pure devotional service." *Jñāna*, the cultivation of knowledge, and *karma*, the cultivation of pious activities, are also on the material field. To become very pious does not mean that one is liberated. A good man is also a conditioned soul. He is bound up by his good condition. A *brāhmaṇa*, for example, has acquired good qualities, but that does not mean that he is a devotee. You will find many good men, but you will rarely find a pure devotee. So a good man is not necessarily a devotee. Try to distinguish. A good man is good for this material existence, but a devotee is different from a good man.

For example, Arjuna was engaged in killing. People may think, "Oh, Arjuna is not a very good man: he is killing his grandfather; he is killing his nephews and devastating the whole family. Oh, he is not a good man." Sometimes people

(continued on page 20)



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

Due to our manipulation of material activities, a great deal of dust has collected over our mind's clear mirror, and as a consequence we are unable to see things in perspective. This vibration of transcendental sound (the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*) will cleanse away this dust and enable us to see clearly our real constitutional position. As soon as we come to understand "I am not this body; I am spirit soul, and my symptom is consciousness," we will be able to establish ourselves

in real happiness. As our consciousness is purified by this process of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, all our material miseries will disappear. There is a fire that is always blazing over this material world, and everyone is trying to extinguish it, but there is no possibility of extinguishing this fire of the miseries of material nature unless we are situated in our pure consciousness, in our spiritual life.

—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda



THE ORIGIN OF KUMBHA MELĀ

Millions of years ago, the most powerful beings in the universe, inspired by the Supreme Lord, united to perform an astounding feat.

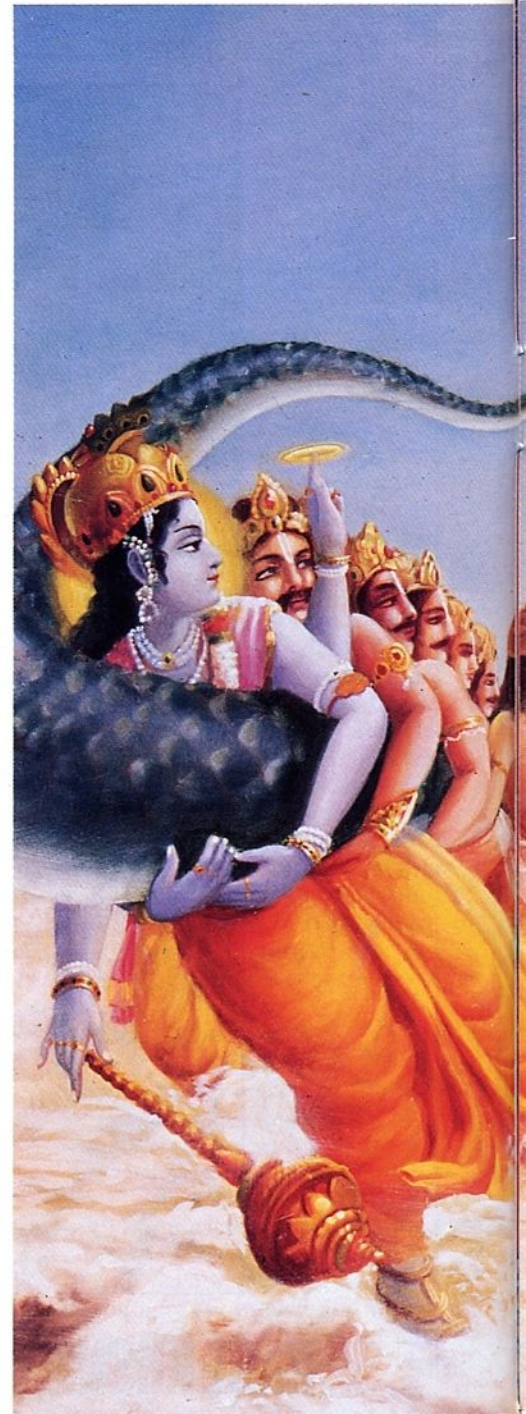
by LOKANĀTHA SWAMI

Assuming the form of a giant tortoise,

Lord Viṣṇu (far right) acts as a pivot for Mandara Mountain, which is being used as a churning rod by the demigods and demons as they churn the ocean of milk. At right, displaying his compassion for all living entities, Lord Śiva drinks the poison that was the first product of the churning.



Painting by Parikṣit dāsa



The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* relates how, many millions of years ago in the heavenly planets of this universe, a fierce battle for supremacy was raging between the *devas* (demigods) and the *asuras* (demons). The demons were headed by Bali Mahārāja, a descendant of the great demoniac king Hiraṇyakaśipu. Lord Indra, the king of the demigods, had committed an offense against the great sage Durvāsā Muni, who then cursed the demigods to become poverty-stricken. The demigods became bereft of all influence and strength, their lives lost all auspiciousness, and in due course they were defeated by the *asuras*. The demigods then ap-



pealed to Lord Viṣṇu for help.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead told them to make a truce with the demons. The Lord suggested that they work together to churn the ocean of milk to produce the nectar of immortality, which could be distributed equally among the *devas* and *asuras*.

Lord Viṣṇu always protects the righteous demigods, and He wanted to stop the demons from expanding their influence all over the creation. Lord Viṣṇu told the demigods to follow the logic of the snake and the mouse in dealing with the demons. A snake and a mouse were once caught in a basket. The snake said to the

mouse, "Look, I could eat you very easily, but it's more important for me to get out of this basket. So why don't you make a hole so that we can both escape?" The mouse agreed and started working. But as soon as the hole was big enough, the snake ate the mouse and came out of the basket.

The Lord had no intention of giving the nectar to the demons, because they were crooked and troublesome, and to distribute the nectar to such persons would be unwise.

"There are two kinds of created beings," Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. "One is called divine and the other demoniac." Śrīla Prabhupāda comments

that those who are born with divine qualities follow the injunctions of the scriptures and obey the Lord and His representatives, whereas others act according to their whims to satisfy their own senses.

Following the instructions of Lord Viṣṇu, the demigods approached the leaders of the demons, and an agreement was reached, after which they all left for the ocean of milk to start the churning. Lord Viṣṇu helped them by carrying Mandara Mountain on the back of Garuda, His eagle carrier. When they arrived at the ocean of milk, He placed the mountain in the middle of it. The mountain was

to be used as a churning rod. Then Garuḍa, because of his enmity toward snakes, was requested to leave so that Vāsuki, who is honored by the *devas* as Nāgarāja, “the king of the serpents,” could come and be used as a churning rope.

The demons insisted that they should hold the front part of the snake during the churning, while the *devas*, on the encouragement of Lord Viṣṇu, held its tail. As they began pulling the “rope” to produce nectar, smoke and blazing fire emanated from Vāsuki’s many mouths, causing great suffering for the *asuras*.

As the demons and demigods continued churning, the huge Mandara Mountain began sinking into the ocean of milk because it was without support. The Lord then took the form of a tortoise, entered the ocean, and held the mountain on His back to allow the churning to continue. It is described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that the tortoise, known as Kūrma-avatāra, accepted the turning of the mountain to scratch His back and thus felt a pleasing sensation.

The churning of the ocean first produced a poison that spread in all directions. The demigods became afraid and sought the shelter of Lord Śiva. Being compassionate, Lord Śiva gathered the poison in his palms and drank it. He held it in his throat, and his neck became



Painting by Jayarama das

Emerging from the ocean of milk, Lord Dhanvantari brings forth the jug of immortal nectar.

ALLAHABAD’S TRIVENĪ-SAṄGAM

ALLAHABAD, one of the major cities of Uttar Pradesh, the largest state in India, is situated at the confluence of three sacred rivers: the Ganges, the Yamunā, and the Sarasvatī. The present name of the city was given by Emperor Akbar. It means “the city of Allah.” In Vedic literature this city is known as Prayāga or Prayāga Rāja. *Prayāga* refers to a place at the confluence of sacred rivers where great sacrifices are held. There are fourteen *prayāgas* on the Ganges, and Prayāga Rāja, “the king of confluences,” is the most important. The *Mahābhārata* relates that Lord Brahmā once performed an elaborate sacrifice at Prayāga Rāja.

The Ganges, the Yamunā, and the Sarasvatī rivers manifest on this planet at the top of the Himalayan range. Only the Ganges and the Yamunā are visible at Allahabad. For ordinary persons, the Sarasvatī is not visible. The personification of the Sarasvatī River is the daughter of Lord Brahmā, Sarasvatī, or Vidyādevī, by whose blessings one gets *vidyā*, or knowledge. In previous ages the entire course of the Sarasvatī was visible, but because of the influence of Kali-yuga, it has become subterranean. It can still be seen in the Himalayas,

flowing for about a hundred kilometers before it goes underground. Although the Sarasvatī River is not visible at Allahabad, it is understood that she is present there as the transcendental sound that flows from the mouths of the many saints who attend the Kumbhamela to deliver spiritual knowledge for the benefit of the pilgrims.

The Yamunā, whose personification is the daughter of the sun-god, is considered to be one of the seven branches of the Ganges and is very intimately connected with Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in Vṛndāvana. Her bluish color resembles Kṛṣṇa’s complexion.

The Ganges emanates from the lotus feet of the Lord and flows through all the planetary systems. She was formerly only in the heavenly regions, but a king named Bhāgiratha requested her to descend to earth to liberate his sixty thousand ancestors. The Ganges agreed, being pleased by the king’s severe penances. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa says, *śrotasām asmi jāhnavi*: “Of flowing rivers, I am the Ganges.”

There are hundreds and thousands of places of pilgrimage on the banks of these sacred rivers, whose waters are considered to be immortal nectar.

marked with a bluish line, which is now considered an ornament of Lord Śiva, who is known as Nilakaṇṭha, “one who has a bluish neck.”

While Lord Śiva was drinking the poison, some of it fell from his hands. Various plants, scorpions, cobras, and similar creatures drank those drops of poison and thus acquired their venom.

After the poison, different opulent items were produced, and these were distributed among the members of the two churning parties. First a *surabhi* cow appeared, and she was taken by the great sages. A white horse named Uccaiḥśravā was produced, and it was taken by Bali Mahārāja. When Airāvata, the king of elephants, was generated, Indra took it for himself. The Kaustubha-maṇi, the most valuable gem, appeared and was offered to Lord Viṣṇu to decorate His chest. Then came the Parijāta tree, which was offered to the *devas*.

Next the *apsarās*, beautiful women dancers who entertain in the courts of the demigods, were produced, followed by Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune, who preferred to become the consort of Lord Viṣṇu. Then came Vāruṇī, the goddess of liquor, and the demons took possession of her. The ocean also produced Bālacandra, the crescent moon. Because of its cooling effect, Bālacandra was offered to

NOTABLE PILGRIMS

Lord Śiva to wear on his head, since he was feeling dizzy from having drunk the poison. Then a conch shell named Pāñcajanya and a bow named Haridhanu (“the bow of Hari”) appeared and were taken by Lord Viṣṇu.

Finally, a very wonderful male person appeared. His name was Dhanvantari. In his hands he carried the *amṛta-kumbha*, a jug filled to the brim with nectar. Before the appearance of the nectar, for which the demons and demigods had been working so hard, there had been no disputes. But upon seeing Dhanvantari holding the jug of nectar, their most cherished object, they all lost self-control and patience. The demons immediately snatched the pot away by force, and a fight ensued.

According the *Skanda Purāṇa*, at one point during the fight, Jayanta, the son of Indra, took the pitcher and ran away toward the heavenly planets. The demons followed him there, and the fierce fighting continued.

From time to time, over a period of twelve days of fighting, some of the nectar was spilled, and it fell on four places on earth: Nasika, in Maharashtra; Ujjain, in Madhya Pradesh; and Haridwar and Allahabad, in Uttar Pradesh. A day in heaven equals one year on earth. Therefore, to commemorate the auspicious dropping of the nectar on earth, festivals, or *melās*, are held at each of these sites once every twelve years. (e.g., Allahabad 1977, Nasika 1980, Ujjain 1983, Haridwar 1986, Allahabad 1989, etc.). The same nectar still comes to these sites during certain planetary configurations. Even today millions of people come to partake of this nectar, or *amṛta*, to become immortal by

ALLAHABAD has been visited in every age by either the Lord Himself or His pure devotees, making this holy place significantly holier. During Tretā-yuga, Lord Rāmacandra, Lakṣmana, and Sītādevī spent some time at Bharadvāja Muni’s *āśrama* near the Triveṇī-saṅgam (the confluence of the three rivers). This was the first place Lord Rāma visited after departing from His capital, Ayodhyā, to enter into exile.

It is not recorded whether or not Lord Kṛṣṇa visited Prayāga during Dvāpara-yuga. But His intimate devotees the five Pandavas (Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, Bhīma, Nakula, and Sahadeva) spent some time there. Their visit to Prayāga is mentioned in the Vanapārva section of the *Mahābhārata*, which deals with their pastimes while in exile in the forest.

Approximately five hundred years ago, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu visited Allahabad and on ten successive days bathed in the Triveṇī-saṅgam. His visit is described in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. He was there during the yearly Māgha-melā. When the Lord went to see the temple of Bindhu Mādhava, He was followed by thousands of people, all hankering for His association. It is mentioned in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that although the river was low at that time and therefore could not flood Allahabad, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu inundated the whole area with the waves of the chanting of the holy names

of the Lord: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. By performing the *sankīrtana-yajña* at this confluence, a place meant for sacrifices, He set the example for all future pilgrims coming to the Kumbha-melā. It was also here at the time of Kumbha-melā that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed Rūpa Gosvāmī.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda lived for some time in Allahabad as a married man, and he was initiated here by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura at the Rūpa Gauḍīya Maṭha. After his success in propagating the holy name of the Lord in the Western countries, Śrīla Prabhupāda returned to India with some of his Western disciples and took part in the Ardhā Kumbha-melā (six years after the Pūrṇa Kumbha-melā) in 1971. In 1977, despite his ill health, he attended Kumbha-melā again. He spent four days there, preaching to guests and encouraging his disciples to hold large chanting festivals and distribute thousands of books.

During that time, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Although most of the pilgrims come for liberation, the devotees have come only to preach. Being engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service, we are already liberated; we are not interested in liberation. We have come to preach devotional service.”

bathing in the holy rivers and drinking the sacred water. At Nasik, the pilgrims bathe in the Godāvārī River; at Ujjain, in the Kṣīpra; at Haridwar, in the Ganges; and at Allahabad, in the confluence of the Ganges, Yamunā, and Sarasvatī.

The *asuras* finally defeated the *devas* and carried off the pot of nectar, leaving the *devas* morose. The Lord told them, “Do not be aggrieved. By My own energy I shall bewilder the demons by creating a quarrel between them. In this way I shall fulfill your desire to have the nectar.”

Soon after, the demons began quarreling among themselves over who would get to drink the nectar first. While they were fighting, Lord Viṣṇu assumed the form of an extremely beautiful woman, known as Mohinī-mūrti. When the demons saw the beautiful features of Mohinīdevī, who was glancing at them and slightly smiling, they were all completely enchanted. The beauty of the form assumed by the Personality of Godhead surpassed the beauty of the goddess of fortune. The demons, completely overwhelmed by Her charm, asked Her to serve as an arbitrator. She accepted the position on the condition that no one would oppose Her or protest

against whatever She would do or say.

The *asuras* agreed and handed the *amṛta-kumbha* over to Her, requesting Her to distribute it. Although they had easily snatched the pot from Dhanvantari and were in a position to keep it for themselves, they stupidly lost it, being bewildered by the Lord’s incomparable, genuine beauty. Mohinī-mūrti Herself had even openly warned them of the trick.

Mohinī-mūrti made the *devas* and *asuras* sit in separate lines, and She delivered the nectar to the demigods while speaking sweet words to the demons. One demon, named Rāhu, understood Her trick. He dressed himself like a demigod, sat down in the line of the demigods, and received the nectar. The sun and moon detected him and disclosed his identity to Mohinī-mūrti, who immediately took up Her disc, which is razor-sharp, and severed his head before he could swallow the immortal beverage. Although his body from the neck down died, his head remained alive because of the nectar in his mouth.

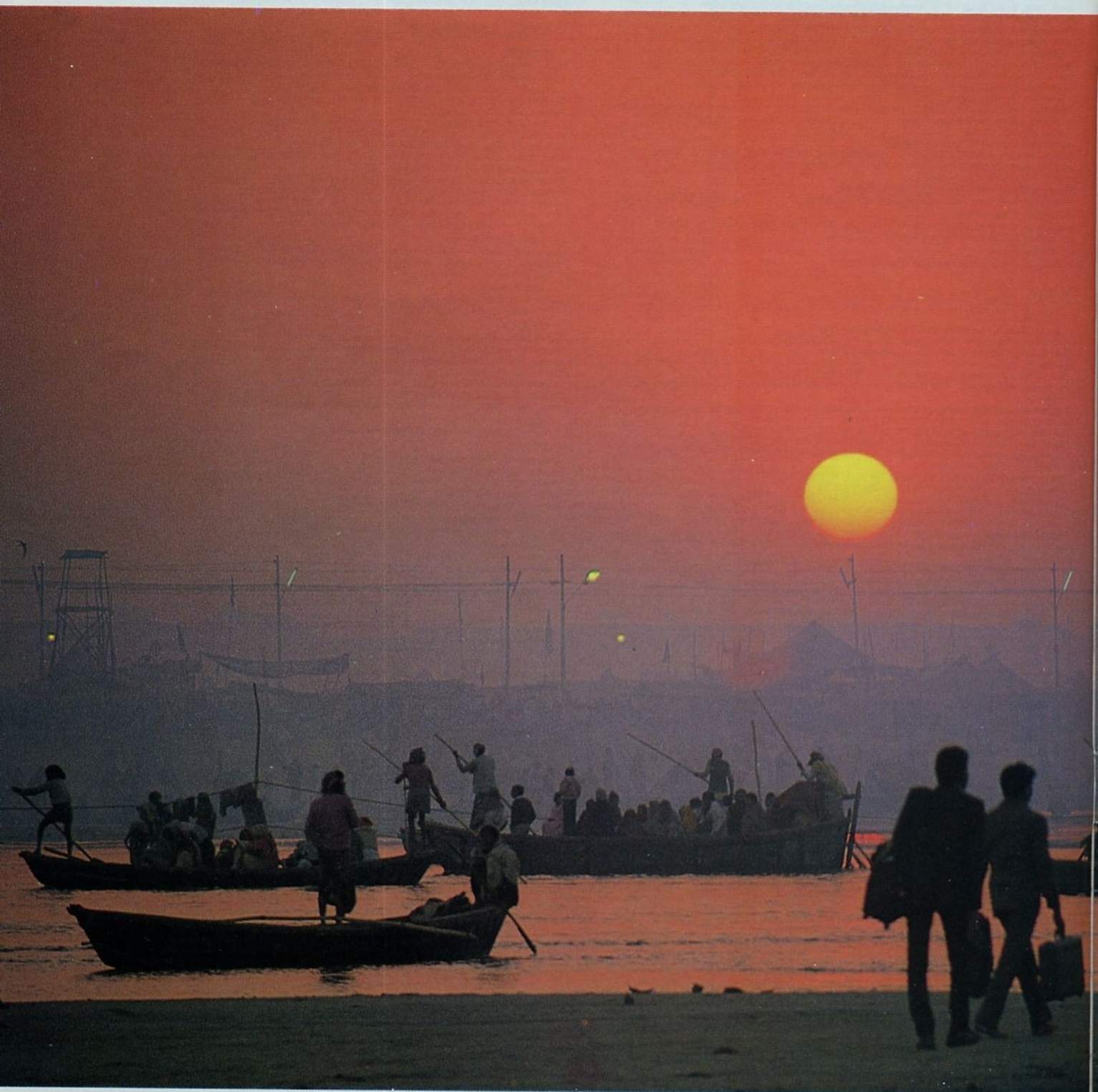
After giving the nectar to the demigods, Mohinī-mūrti revealed that She was Lord Viṣṇu. The Lord then returned to the spiritual world on the back of Garuḍa. ❏



Rahu begins drinking the nectar, but before it gets past his mouth, he is beheaded by the razor-sharp disc of Lord Viṣṇu in His female form as Mohinī-mūrti.

A Festival of

You'll see just about everything at the Kumbha-melā. But unless you see

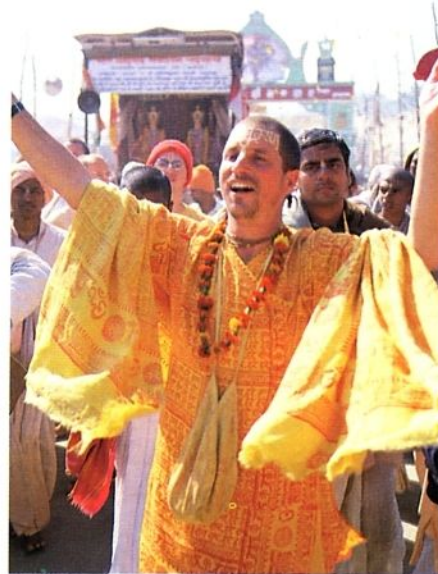


Immortality

—or hear from—a great soul, you won't be able to make sense of it all.



by JAGANNĀTHA-KRṢṂA DĀSA



Jagannātha-Kṛṣṇa dāsa

The sun rises over the Kumbha-melā city (left), as pilgrims from all walks of life make their way to the sacred site. Above, Dīnabandhu dāsa leads devotees in chanting the holy names as they enter the festival.

What could sixteen million saints and *sādhus*, *sannyāsīs* (renunciants) and businessmen, housewives and farmers, teachers and students, scientists and the superstitious, poets and politicians, mystics and beggars all have in common? The quest for immortality. What else could bring together such a multitude of individuals on one congested riverbank for forty days?

Besides being the largest gathering of human beings anywhere on earth, the Kumbha-melā can evoke the deepest spiritual sentiments of the Lord's pure devotees.

The Kumbha-melā is by far the largest

religious phenomenon in which the collective destiny and spiritual urges of the human race find expression. *Kumbha* is a Sanskrit word meaning "pot," "pitcher," or "jar," and *melā* means "festival." Kumbha-melā gets its name, therefore, from the pot of immortalizing nectar around which the festival has grown.

Held at the confluence (*saṅgam*) of the three most holy rivers in India, the Ganges, the Yamunā, and the subterranean Sarasvatī, the Kumbha-melā lures the faithful for a dip in the holy waters that relieves them of lifetimes of karmic reactions. There is a scriptural understanding that bathing on the astrologically propitious "peak" holy days extinguishes uncountable sins, relieving the pilgrim of his or her entanglement in the complex cycle of birth, disease, old age, and death. One can thus transcend the mortal world of perpetual reincarnation, of duality and suffering, and hasten one's return back home, back to Godhead.

A veritable sea of swaying bodies and heads moves inexorably to the confluence. Accompanied by the cacophonous clamor of bells, cymbals, horns, whooping, the shouting of invocations, and the constant blaring of devotional songs over a ubiquitous P.A. system, armies of ascetics and cityfolk alike cry out, "*Bolo Gaṅgā-māyī ki jaya! Śrī Yamunāmāyī ki jaya!*" [All glories to the Ganges and Yamunā!] creating a thunderous symphony of reverential incantation.

During the sacred bathing period, caste and racial divisions and the demarcations of various cults and sects dissolve, as one person assists the other in cleansing the body and the soul.

The Melā serves as a melting pot for more than eight thousand groups and religious institutions. Here they exchange philosophical ideas and share spiritual

realizations. Some say the Melā is a symbol of Hindu unity, offering a means of transmitting the spiritual and ascetic values of ancient Vedic culture to the masses of devotees.

Cornered by Buddhism, Jainism, and Islam in the eighth century, Hindu civilization (more appropriately called Vedic civilization) was thought to be in danger of extinction. Therefore Śaṅkarācārya, India's ninth-century religious reformer

(and, according to the *Purāṇas*, an incarnation of Śiva), instituted at the Kumbhamelā regular summit meetings of spiritual leaders as a buttress for the survival of Vedic theism. Some say that it was Śaṅkarācārya who started the Kumbhamelā, but scriptural references about the Melā predating Śaṅkara prove such a theory inaccurate.

The Melā has become a forum by which the saintly and self-realized impart by ex-



Yamaji Dasa

GĪTĀ-NĀGARĪ DĀSA

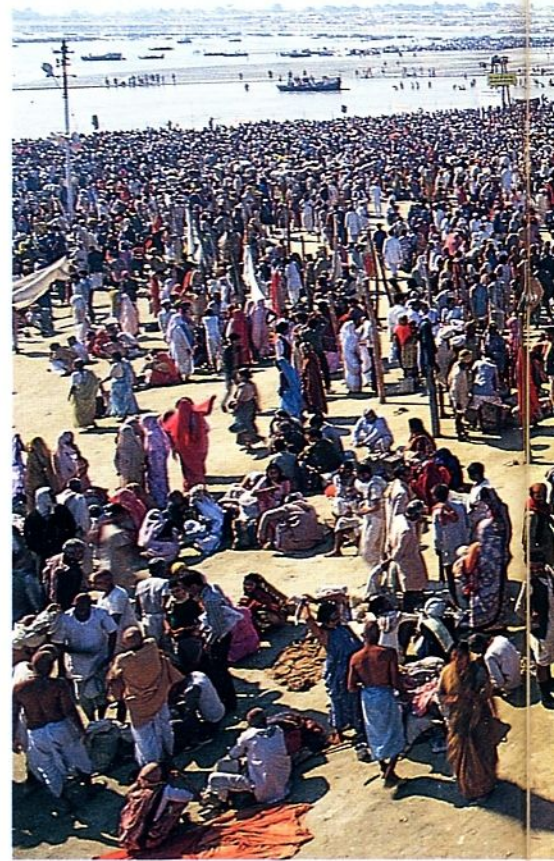
is a member of ISKCON's Gītā-nāgarī farm community in Pennsylvania.

“A festival like this definitely strengthens my faith in ISKCON and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We're distributing so much *prasādam*, maybe more than anyone here, and so many thousands of books, and holding *kīrtanas* [congregational chanting] all day long. This is tangible proof that there's real life in ISKCON. The fact that devotees from all over the world are coming together and serving so intimately and loyally is impressive. This is very dynamic preaching.”

Decorated with the markings of a Śaivite, a *yogī* (above, right) poses with a photo of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara of ISKCON Vṛndāvana. Thousands of pilgrims (above, far right) make their way toward the confluence of the sacred rivers for a purifying dip. At right, Devaraha Bābā, a highly respected saint from Vṛndavana said to be a few hundred years old, attracts large crowds all day long, even though his hut is far from the Melā city. The Bābaji praised ISKCON devotees for their chanting of the holy names. At far right, steam rises as a pilgrim takes an early-morning bath in the cool January air.



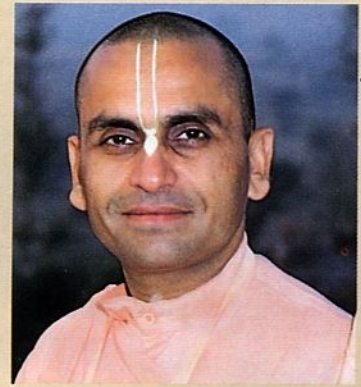
Jagannath-Kṛṣṇa dasa



Jagannath-Kṛṣṇa dasa



Jagamatha-Kṛṣṇa dāsa



Bali Maharaja dasa

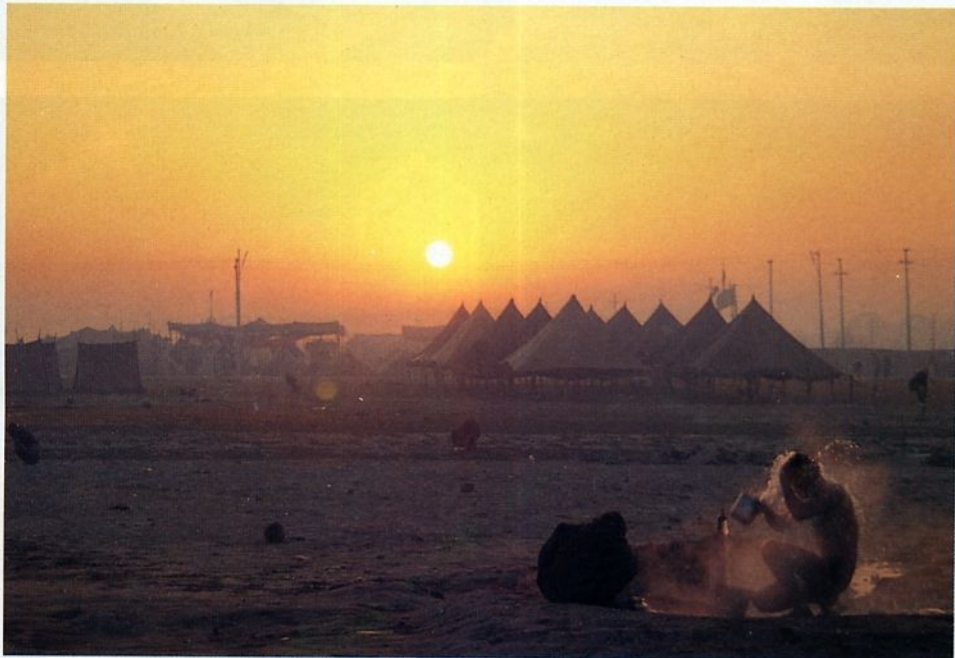
NAVA-YOGENDRA SWAMI
preaches in the Indian state of
Jammu and Kashmir.

“All of the leading devotees here, like Bhakti Rāghava Swami, Ayodhyāpati, Adridhārāṇa, and Tattva-darśana, worked day and night to organize the ISKCON *paṇḍāl*. By their sacrifice they facilitated the constant chanting of the holy names, which is the process for this age.

“I think the most significant contribution ISKCON made was to allow millions to hear the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa over the loud-speakers every day. After our half-hour morning chanting session, people from other camps would compliment us: ‘We heard your chanting. It was wonderful!’ Even though I was sick with a cold, I wanted to go to the sound station anyway, because I knew that everyone at the Mela, millions in fact, would hear the chanting and become purified by the spiritual potency of God’s names.

“The radio station owner was very happy after our first meeting. After that he invited us to chant and lecture for ten minutes airplay. After the ten minutes had passed, I noticed how he was obviously enjoying our chanting, and we continued for nearly one hour. The owner was so pleased that he invited us to come back morning, noon, and night. Finally, I saw that he was so enlivened by the devotees that I convinced him to become a life member of ISKCON.

“When the policemen at the Mela saw the devotees, they would stop and glorify the chanting and ask many sincere questions.”



Rukmanvatī-devī dāsa

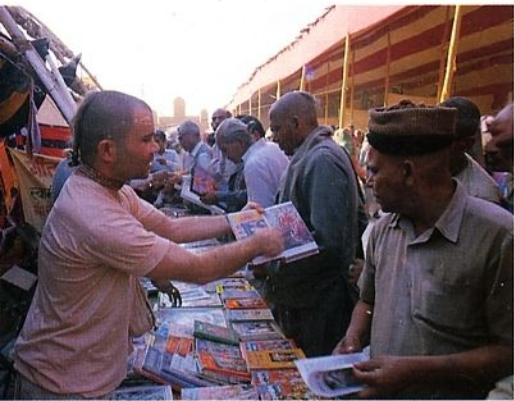
ample mystical and moral codes to the devoted. Alongside enlightened spiritual masters, however, fakes and frauds abound.

The Kumbha-mela has had a magnetism for saints and scholars for thousands

of years. As early as 302 B.C. the great Greek historian Megasthenes documented his seventy-five-day stay at Prayāga (Allahabad), during a Mela that boasted an attendance of two and a half million. Later, in the seventh century A.D., the pious em-

peror Harsha invited the eminent Chinese mendicant Hieun Tsang to join in the festivities. In his journals Tsang praised the emperor’s exemplary spiritual leadership:

“The festival concluded with Harsha’s



Jaganatha-Kṛṣṇa dāsa

The fire of preaching (above) attracts inquisitive pilgrims to the ISKCON book table, where Mahā-viṣṇu dāsa from Yugoslavia draws attention to a painting of the transmigration of the soul. The ISKCON camp (top, foreground) accommodated thousands of pilgrims during the fair. About half of the compound is visible here. At right, one of the many busy gateways into the temporary city.



lavishly distributing all of his accumulated wealth to the needy, down to his robes, and returning to his palace in clothes borrowed from his sister.”

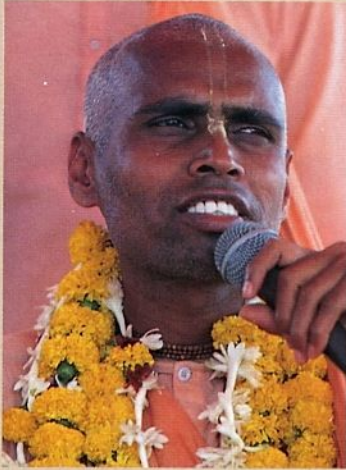
Other, more recent celebrities recorded their realizations:

Mark Twain wrote in *More Tramps Abroad* (1895):

These pilgrims had come from all over India; some of them had been months on the

way, plodding patiently along in the heat and dust, worn poor, hungry, but supported and sustained by an unwavering faith and belief. It is wonderful, that the power of faith like that can make multitude upon multitudes of the old and weak and the young and frail enter without hesitation or complaint upon such incredible journeys and endure the resultant miseries without repining. It is done in love or it is done in fear, I do not know which it is. No matter what the impulse is, the act born of it is beyond imagination, marvel-

lous to our kind of people, the cold whites. There were “facquirs” in plenty with their hair caked with cow dung. There was a holy man who sat naked by the day and by the week on a cluster of iron spikes and did not seem to mind it. And another man stood all day holding his withered arms motionless aloft and was said to have been doing it for years. All these performers have a cloth on the ground beside them for receipt of contributions, and even the poorest of the poor give a trifle and hope that the sacrifice will be



Yamajala dasa

LOKANĀTHA SWAMI

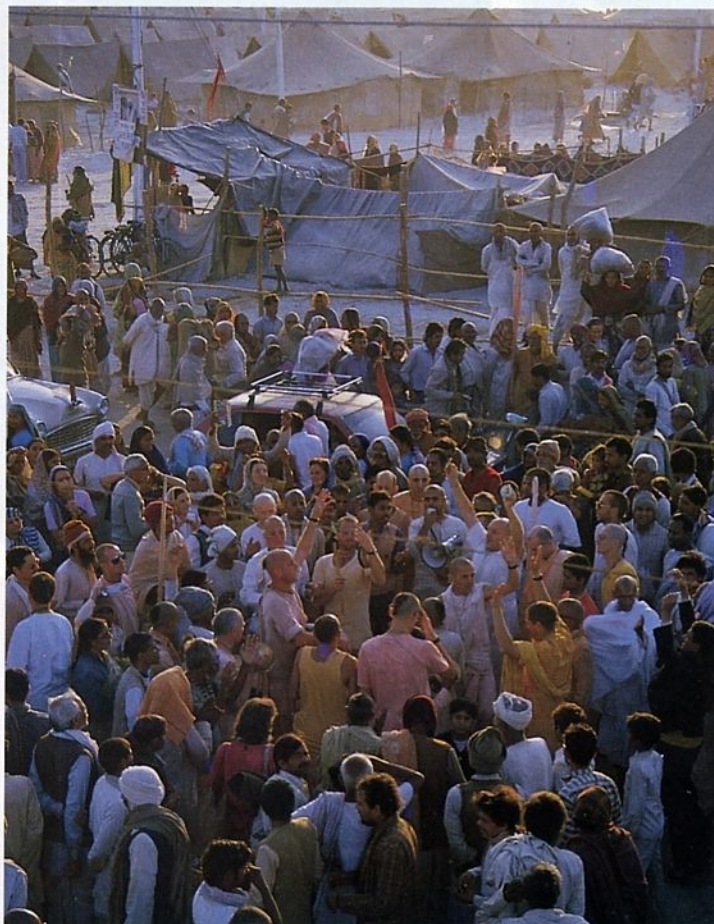
is in charge of ISKCON's Pada-yātrā, a walking pilgrimage and festival program that has toured India and is now in the U.S.

“Just by looking after the bodily needs, the individual isn't fully benefited. At the Melā site, millions are being well fed and clothed. Many institutions are financing mass food distribution, hospitalization and medical care, and the distribution of warm clothes. But more important, the soul should be benefited, and that should be a bigger investment. Nowadays too much is being spent on the body for temporary sense gratification, and too little for sense purification. The spiritual relief one derives from the Kumbha-melā is unparalleled by anything offered by secular organizations.

“This Melā is for everyone, not just Indians. There's a strong spiritual attraction that brings thousands of Westerners as well. In India they're struggling to maintain the unity of the country, as different states quarrel for independence. But a festival like this gives a big boost even to national integration. In this atmosphere people transcend bodily designations of state, sect, and creed, so the function of material welfare and the purpose of unity are both naturally satisfied.”

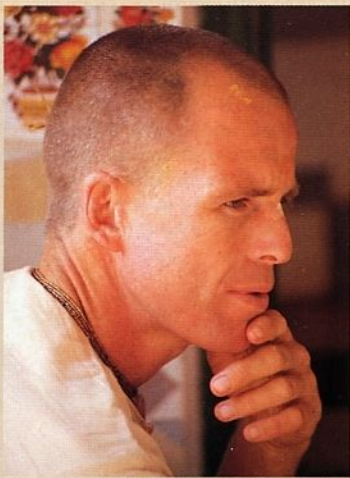


Jagamatha-Kṛṣṇa dasa



Jagamatha-Kṛṣṇa dasa

Tasting the immortal nectar of the holy names, devotees chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra in front of the main entrance to the ISKCON camp (above). Many pilgrims declared that the ISKCON devotees' chanting was one of the highlights of the festival. Besides chanting in their own compound, the devotees roamed the Melā city (left), enlivening thousands of pilgrims and encouraging them to join in.



Jagannātha-Kṛṣṇa dāsa

AYODHYĀPATI DĀSA,
of ISKCON's Kṛṣṇa-Balarām
Mandir in Vṛndāvana, was one of
the main organizers of ISKCON's
Kumbha-melā program.

"It was fulfilling to see how so many people who had come to the Melā with the desire for liberation were blessed by receiving the gift of *bhakti*—pure devotional service. The pleasure of *bhakti* far surpasses the pleasure of *mukti* [liberation]. In fact, for one who has achieved devotion to Kṛṣṇa, liberation stands at his door with folded hands, waiting for service. A devotee is never satisfied seeing anyone endeavoring if the fruit of that endeavor is anything less than pure devotional service. We understand that by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and engaging in the Lord's service, one is automatically liberated.

"Perfection isn't achieved by pouring the *saṅgam* water over one's head but by pouring into one's ears the transcendental topics of Kṛṣṇa's name, fame, form, entourage and pastimes. That's why Śrīla Prabhupāda asked his disciples to arrange festivals like these by which these purifying topics could be poured into the ears of millions of conditioned souls."

blessed to them. At last came a procession of naked holy people marching by and chanting, and I wrenched myself away. . . . The memory of that sight will always stay with me, but not by request.

Mohandas K. Gandhi, irritated over how the original zeal and pristine mood of the Melā had in some ways dissipated and given way to an exhibition of hollow spirituality, remarked in 1915, "The swarm of *sādhus* who descend seem to have been born to enjoy the good things in life."

Like any fair, the Kumbha-melā isn't



without its dangers. For some it can be a pseudo-spiritual jamboree, where money-hungry *paṇḍas* (ritualistic priests) will dance for your patronage and promise you heavenly benedictions; and where commerce confidently competes with transcendence. Boatmen navigating overloaded taxis to the *saṅgam* grab at the gullible as well as the savant, guaranteeing untold pious credits in exchange for their extortionary fees.

The Melā is an ancient crucible of rite and spectacle, of colorfully immoderate

religious pageantry, murky beliefs, and flamboyant Hindu fervor. That fervor, historically and inordinately mixed with the pandemonium of so many pilgrims, has sometimes wreaked tragedy. In 1760, in a hysterical dash for atonement at the Trivenī ("three rivers") *saṅgam* during the zenith bathing hour, the gathering exploded into a small-scale war. Maddened sects of *sannyāsīs* owing their allegiance to either Viṣṇu or Śiva clashed over the right to bathe first. Swashbuckling, ash-covered *svāmīs* brandishing iron tridents,



Jagannātha-Kṛṣṇa dāsa

maces, swords, and chains punctured and pummeled errant pilgrims infringing on their priority. Ever since then, the Nāga-bābās, or naked Śiva-worshippers known for their fiery protocol, have taken the elite position of being the first to dip.

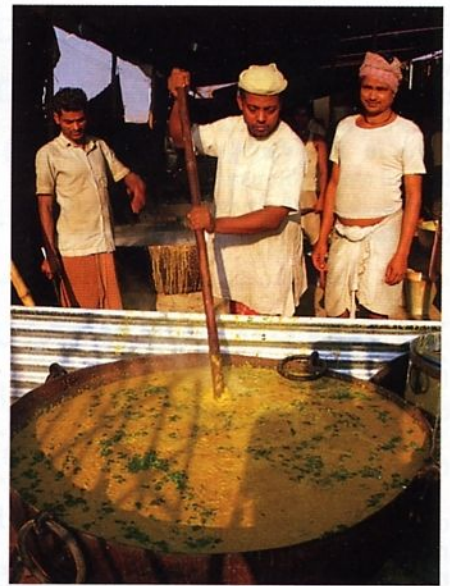
At Prayāga the celebration occurs during the month of Māgha (January-February), and the highest merit is attached to bathing on the new-moon mornings. Jupiter is then in the house of Taurus, and both the sun and moon are in Capricorn.

Years in preparation, the 1989 Pūrṇa (“full”) Kumbha-melā has been a major expense for the Indian government. Festival arrangements require a major city-planning commission to provide for an estimated sixteen million pilgrims. The government provided 1070 hectares of land (2,644 acres) to accommodate the temporary city.

Sṛīdhara Swami of ISKCON Bombay describes the elaborate construction: “Like a sand castle on the seashore that is soon to be washed away by the waves, the Kumbha-melā *purt* (city) manifests, with hundreds of thousands of residential tents, hospitals, shopping areas, 170 kilometers of drinking-water piping, and even a temporary railway station.”

Nine pontoon bridges and over a

Jagannātha-Kṛṣṇa dāsa



The Kumbha-melā city never sleeps (above, left), and throughout the night streams of pilgrims pour through the ISKCON camp (in the foreground at left). Above, right, ISKCON cooks prepare another pot of delicious *kicchari*, to be distributed to eager pilgrims as *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*. At left, one of the main attractions at the ISKCON compound: dioramas depicting the pastimes of the Lord. Here, Lord Rāmacandra slays the evil Rāvaṇa.



hundred miles of temporary roads crisscrossed the Trivenī area.

ISKCON'S Contribution

Sri J. N. Dvivedi, the official in charge of the entire Melā and an avid ISKCON supporter, allocated five acres of the choicest land to the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees. Replete with spacious stages, colorful *paṇḍāls* (circus-size tents), bathrooms, showers, kitchens, and luxury and economy residential tents, the ISKCON site was a powerful magnet for both the seasoned pilgrim and the newcomer.

The *saṅgam* was a fifteen-minute walk from camp, and the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees participated in the festival by enthusiastically chanting the Lord's holy names and distributing tens of thousands of transcendental books and more than 250,000 free plates of *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*. The cooking was done in six mammoth cast-iron woks, each four feet in diameter and weighing about four hundred pounds.

The managerial pillars of the ISKCON camp, Bhakti Rāghava Swami, Ayodhyāpati dāsa, Tattva-darśana dāsa, and Adridhāraṇa dāsa, worked tirelessly to coordinate and maintain the colossal endeavor. Hundreds of devotees were busy around the clock in different ways, joyfully cooking, distributing books, chanting, and accommodating the two thousand guests residing at the ISKCON colony.

The magnum opus of the ISKCON site was the multimedia exhibits. Eight larger-than-life museum-quality diorama sculptures depicting different pastimes of the Lord in His various incarnations attracted tens of thousands of awestruck audiences daily. By observing these artforms of Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and

Lord Rāmacandra, pilgrims witnessed the glorious nature of pure devotional service propounded by the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya, an ancient lineage of Kṛṣṇa conscious teachers.

Devotees from around the world went to great pains to share Kṛṣṇa conscious multimedia projects with the pilgrims. Kṛṣṇa-prema dāsa and his wife, Nitya-tṛptā-devī dāsi, of Italy orchestrated a nine-projector, computer-monitored visual production that showed on a thirty-foot by sixty-foot screen. Called "Kṛṣṇa Vision," it depicted the history and character of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the purpose of ISKCON. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims were mesmerized with this electrifying presentation of the wisdom of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Many pilgrims stayed in the Kṛṣṇa Vision tent nearly all day long relishing the multifaceted artistic portrayal of Kṛṣṇa consciousness created by the intense musical sensations of Kṛṣṇa-prema and the dynamism of Nitya-tṛptā's camera wizardry.

Many guests and pilgrims, and even those with their own tents, declared that the ISKCON site was the most exciting and meaningful one at the fair and that it offered the most edifying transcendental association. ISKCON's question-and-answer booth was a welcome respite for the many bewildered and curious pilgrims. One visitor remarked that the ISKCON question-and-answer booth was the only one of its kind, and that to hear the answers of Dīna-bandhu dāsa, ISKCON Vṛndāvana's temple president, was like finding water in the desert.

The all-pervading public address system never rested once throughout the six weeks of the festival. For most it was an an-

noyance that disturbed sleep and harassed the eardrums. But one intelligent ISKCON *sannyāsī*, Nava-yogendra Swami, took advantage of this surfeit to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He was able to get use of the P.A. system to broadcast the chanting of the holy names for several hours each day.

One visitor, Mrs. Jaya Srivastava, professor of mathematics at Colorado State University and a world leader in the field of statistics, remarked,

I am very pleased that ISKCON is so positively influencing India and the world. Man does not live by bread alone but by every word of God. Therefore this gathering is wonderful because it attracts the minds of millions to the spiritual side. And without that, we're just as Śrīla Prabhupāda said: "merely sophisticated animals"—eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. Material problems will always be there, so we need to do something to elevate ourselves spiritually. Therefore ISKCON is praiseworthy, organizing such an opportunity for millions to become purified. Even if I were an atheist, I would still praise ISKCON.

The ISKCON devotees who participated in the Kumbha-melā expressed their appreciations for the enthusiastic devotional service rendered by Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers. Their appreciations reveal that they were experiencing what Śrīla Prabhupāda had pointed out to be the essence of the Melā. In 1977, on hearing an ISKCON life member dispute the detailed history and alleged purpose of the Kumbha-melā, Śrīla Prabhupāda interrupted sternly—"This is not very important. The real significance of the Kumbha-melā is *sādhu-saṅga*, the association of saintly persons, devotees." ❏

PURIFICATION

(continued from page 4)

comment like that. But Kṛṣṇa says, *bhaktō 'si me sakhā ceti*: "You are My very dear friend."

Just try to understand. In the estimation of the material world, Arjuna is not a good man, because he is killing his own kinsmen. But in the estimation of Kṛṣṇa, he is a dear friend and devotee. So that is the difference between a devotee and a good man of this world. A devotee is naturally a very good man, but when he acts just like a bad man on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, he does not fall down. He still remains a pure devotee.

There is a class of persons known as *sahajiyās*. They think, "Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa-līlā* is very nice, but Kṛṣṇa's fighting with the demons and killing the demons—that is not very nice." But they do not know the Absolute Truth. Kṛṣṇa is good in any circumstance, whether He is enjoying the company of the *gopīs* or He is killing the

demons. That is the Absolute Truth.

So these things should be understood. So if you remember any *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, any of Kṛṣṇa's activities, by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, then you are liberated. Immediately you are liberated. This we learn from the authoritative description of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

On the other hand, it is said here, *na niṣkṛtair uditair brahma-vādidbhiḥ*: those who are very much anxious to realize Brahman—the Brahmvādīs—have prescribed so many ritualistic methods, but these methods are not sufficient because they cannot elevate a person to the standard of a pure devotee.

This Kumbha-melā arrangement is a prescription by the Brahmvādīs. There is a prescription that one should go during this time and live on the bank of the confluence of the Ganges and Yamunā for at least three days. Then he becomes eligible to enter into the heavenly kingdom. The people who have come here are ambitious

to enter into the heavenly kingdom. But a devotee does not care for the heavenly kingdom. A devotee doesn't care a fig for any planet within this material world. Devotees know the benefit of entering into the heavenly kingdom: There is no benefit.

Suppose I may get a life span of thousands of years and enjoy a very high standard of life, with women, money, wine, and so forth. But what is the benefit? There is no benefit.

I was very glad to read an article sent by one of my disciples in Boston. He has written, "What is this society and family? It is all hellish. We do not wish to live without Kṛṣṇa." This is a very nice statement. That is real realization: "We do not like to live without Kṛṣṇa."

So anyone who has realized, "Any amount of material happiness is to be kicked out. I don't care for it. I simply care for Kṛṣṇa, how Kṛṣṇa will be happy"—that person is a pure devotee. *Ānukūlyena*

(continued on page 34)

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

LESSON NINE: Mantra Meditation

by PAVANEŚANA DĀSA

PART II: Kṛṣṇa, or God, is absolute: there is no difference between His name, His body, His qualities, His paraphernalia, and so on. He can perform any activity with any part of His transcendental body.

We conditioned living entities are not absolute. We are spirit souls, but we now have material bodies, which are different from us. Our bodies have names, which are again different from our bodies. If someone calls your name from ten miles away, that doesn't mean you are there. You and your name are different.

Because Kṛṣṇa is absolute and He and His name are identical, when you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is actually there. You may not realize that right away, but by regular chanting

you will gradually understand that you are directly associating with God.

The *Padma Purāna* states:

The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is transcendently blissful. It bestows all spiritual benedictions, for it is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. Kṛṣṇa's name is complete, and it contains all transcendental tastes. It is not a material name under any condition, and it is no less powerful than Kṛṣṇa Himself. Since Kṛṣṇa's name is not contaminated by the material qualities, there is no question of its being involved with *māyā* (the illusory energy). Kṛṣṇa's name is always liberated and spiritual; it is never conditioned by the laws of material nature. This is because the name of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa Himself are identical.

The chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is the perfect reciprocation between the spirit soul and the supreme soul, Kṛṣṇa. Although our relationship with Kṛṣṇa is eternal, in the material world it becomes covered. It can gradually be uncovered by chanting.

Imagine pouring water into a cup full of ink. The more water you pour, the less ink will remain in the cup. Ultimately, only pure water remains. Similarly, the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is a process of gradual purification. If you keep chanting regularly, all material contamination will gradually disappear, and you will be able to perceive your original, spiritual nature, which is called *sac-cid-ānanda*, or an eternal life full of bliss and knowledge.

Chanting is not a cheap process. If you want to purchase a jewel, you can easily buy a cheap imitation. But if you want the real thing, you have to invest a lot of money. As the saying goes, you get what you pay for. To obtain anything valuable, you have to work. So don't expect any sudden, flash results. But by chanting steadily, you will make progress and ultimately attain the goal of life, pure love for God.

Although a person afflicted with jaundice tastes candy as bitter, candy is the best cure for jaundice. Once the patient is cured, he can again taste candy's sweetness. In *Upadeśāmṛta*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī gives an analogy in this regard:

The holy name, character, pastimes, and activities of Kṛṣṇa are all transcendently sweet like sugar candy. Although the tongue of one afflicted by the jaundice of ignorance cannot taste anything sweet, it is wonderful that simply by carefully chanting these sweet names every day, a natural relish awakens within his tongue, and his disease is gradually destroyed at the root.

If you chant regularly, the effects will be perceivable in your life. You'll gradually become free from negative qualities like anger, lust, greed, hatred, and envy.

And you'll develop good qualities like compassion, cleanliness, patience, truthfulness, tolerance, and peacefulness. You'll not be easily disturbed by material suc-

cess or failure, because by chanting you'll understand that real success has nothing to do with the material body, which will perish sooner or later. You'll be happy in adverse circumstances because your happiness will come not from the temporary material body but from the soul. You'll even become free from the fear of death, because you'll understand clearly that as spirit soul you are eternal.

The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is the ticket to the spiritual world and the end of the miseries of birth, death, old age, and disease. While materialistic people are willing to work hard in a desperate attempt to squeeze happiness out of matter—like chewing already-chewed gum—you can use the same energy to obtain permanent, spiritual pleasure. No one can ever take that pleasure away from you, and the only price is your sincere desire to obtain it.

While materialistic people are willing to work hard in a desperate attempt to squeeze happiness out of matter—like chewing already-chewed gum—you can use the same energy to obtain permanent, spiritual pleasure.

In the *Padyāvalī*, a collection of prayers by great devotees, we find the following statement about the effect of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa: "As the rising sun immediately dissipates all the world's darkness, so the holy name of the Lord, if chanted once without offenses, can dissipate all the reactions of a living being's sinful life. All glories to that holy name of the Lord, which is auspicious for the entire world."

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave the following explanation of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa:

This transcendental vibration of chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare is the sublime method of reviving our Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As living spiritual souls we are all originally Kṛṣṇa conscious entities, but due to our association with matter since time immemorial, our consciousness is now polluted by the material atmosphere.

In this polluted concept of life, we are try-

ing to exploit the resources of material nature, but actually we are becoming more and more entangled in her complexities. This illusion is called *māyā*—our hard struggle for existence for winning over the stringent laws of material nature.

This illusory struggle against material nature can at once be stopped by the revival of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not an artificial imposition on the mind. It is the original energy of the living entity. When we hear the transcendental vibration, this consciousness is revived, and therefore the process of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is recommended by authorities for this age.

By practical experience, also, we can perceive that by chanting this *mahā-mantra*, or "the great chanting for deliverance," one can at once feel transcendental ecstasy from the spiritual stratum. When one is actually on the plane of spiritual understanding, surpassing the stages of sense, mind, and intelligence, one is situated on the transcendental plane.

This chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare is directly enacted from the spiritual platform, surpassing all lower stages of consciousness, namely sensual, mental, and intellectual. There is no need to understand the language of the *mantra*, nor is there any need of mental speculation, nor any intellectual adjustment for chanting this *mahā-mantra*. It springs automatically from the spiritual platform, and as such anyone can take part in this transcendental sound vibration without any previous qualification and dance in ecstasy. We have seen it practically—even a child can take part in the chanting, or even a dog can take part in it.

The chanting should be heard, however, from the lips of a pure devotee of the Lord, so that the immediate effect can be achieved. As far as possible, chanting from the lips of nondevotees should be avoided. Milk touched by the lips of a serpent has poisonous effects.

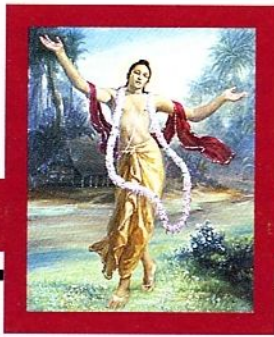
The word *Harā* is a form of addressing the energy of the Lord. Both *Kṛṣṇa* and *Rāma* are forms of directly addressing the Lord, and they mean "the highest pleasure." *Harā* is the supreme pleasure potency of the Lord. This potency, addressed as *Hare*, helps us in reaching the Supreme Lord.

The material energy, known as *māyā*, is also one of the multipotencies of the Lord. The living entities are described as an energy that is superior to matter. When the superior energy is in contact with inferior energy, it becomes an incompatible situation. But when the marginal potency is in contact with the supreme spiritual potency, *Harā*, it becomes the happy, normal condition of the living entity.

The three words—namely *Hare*, *Kṛṣṇa*, and *Rāma*—are the transcendental seeds of the *mahā-mantra*, and the chanting is the spiritual call for the Lord and His internal energy, *Harā*, for giving protection to the conditioned souls. The chanting is exactly like genuine crying by the child for his mother. Mother *Harā* helps in achieving the

(continued on page 28)

Every Town



And Village

The worldwide activities of the International

Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

Kṛṣṇa's Cafe Gains Soviet Public's Interest

Leningrad, U.S.S.R.—Cafe Sankirtana, the Soviet Union's first Hare Kṛṣṇa vegetarian restaurant, has established itself in this culturally progressive city. A broad clientele of students, artists, scientists, philosophers, and other professionals are attracted to the atmosphere of the restaurant. The devotees dress in *dhotīs* and *sārīs*,

The cafe had to overcome some obstacles in the beginning, as when the government sent Health Department inspectors to close it down. But neither they nor the fire department could find any real faults. They did, however, manage to enjoy *prasādam* and the purifying environment of the restaurant, leaving cheerfully and favorably impressed. The cafe has also drawn



Devotees hold their evening chanting session at Cafe Sankirtana in Leningrad.

and they chant devotional songs every evening. Paintings of Kṛṣṇa decorate the walls.

Keeping its prices low to accommodate the most customers, Cafe Sankirtana offers a *prasādam* menu of rice, *dāl*, sweet balls, *halavā*, *barfi*, *sabji*, *lassi*, and turmeric cookies. The cafe is open seven days a week and has become very popular with the intelligentsia. The cafe serves more than a hundred people a day, and many customers donate services and food. Guests express their appreciation by buying Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, writing favorably in the guest book, and lingering in the transcendental atmosphere to discuss spiritual philosophy.

the attention of Leningrad's TV station, which recently broadcast a positive program about the successes of Lord Caitanya's first Soviet restaurant.

Armenian Devotees Offer Food Relief to Quake Victims

Armenia, U.S.S.R.—Reaching out to quake victims here, Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees successfully organized massive food relief programs. In Yerevan, the state's capital, they established a bakery, producing varieties of bread and traditional Indian sweets to send to stricken cities such as Leninakan and Kirovakan.

Daily cooking fresh bread, *kiccharī* (rice-and-vegetable stew), and more than three hundred liters of hot soup, the devotees touched the shattered lives of thousands of survivors, bringing them spiritual and material solace from the havoc of the catastrophe. A van and a truck were donated, and the Leninakan authorities provided ISKCON with a cafeteria building located in the center of town.

For two months the devotees served residents, Soviet and foreign relief workers, police, military personnel, and even the local prosecutor. All the devotees and team members wore badges exclaiming "Hare Kṛṣṇa," and most of them wore *dhotīs* or *sārīs*, despite the relentless cold. Many recipients responded enthusiastically by accepting books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Armenian, Russian, and English.

The last Soviet Hare Kṛṣṇa prisoner of conscience to be released from a labor camp, Agvan Arutunyan, gained freedom just in time to come to the aid of his fellow Armenians.

New Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple for Italy

Milan, Italy—Devotees recently purchased property for a temple complex here. Located in the Milan region near Bergamo city, the temple compound comprises two large buildings and several smaller ones. The temple room easily accommodates three hundred guests, and two *prasādam* halls seat a hundred guests each. Besides ample office space for the Italian Bhaktivedanta Book Trust and the temple management, there are two spacious kitchens and thirty-five residential rooms.

According to temple president Madhusevita dāsa, in the near future the devotees expect to install Deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa next to Gaura-Nitāi, who are already being worshiped here. The devotees are

also planning to begin publishing a monthly Italian *Back to Godhead* to increase their already exceptional book distribution.

NEWS BRIEFS

The Hare Kṛṣṇa Pro-Life Committee participated in an anti-abortion demonstration on the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in America. The demonstration was held in front of San Diego's Twenty-Four-Hour Pain Treatment Building, which houses an abortion clinic. Eight devotees carried banners reading "Abortion is Bad Karma," "Roe v.

Wade Did Not Repeal the Law of Karma," and "The Fetus is a Person with a Right to Life."

The devotees, whose presence pleased the protest's organizers and drew media attention, chanted the holy names and distributed leaflets propounding the Vedic conclusions. Kṛṣṇa-kumārī-devī dāśī was interviewed by the *Reader*, San Diego's most popular weekly newspaper. The interview resulted in a half-page article, with subsequent dialogues in the paper's Letters to the Editor section that helped define ISKCON's position on the controversy.

Thirteen million British TV viewers will get a chance to see

"Cooking with Kūrma," the thirteen-part series on Vedic vegetarian cooking produced by ISKCON Television (ITV). The series will be aired on *London Weekend TV* and broadcast throughout the London area. Other TV networks, including South Africa's first cable network, are also purchasing broadcasting rights for the show.

"Our intention was to make Śrīla Prabhupāda's recipes available to everyone through the video medium and create interest in Vedic culture and philosophy," says Nṛsiṁhānanda dāsa of ITV, who is looking forward to marketing the video in the United States.

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 any Hare Kṛṣṇa center will gladly tell you more about the meaning of the festivals listed here.

Month of Śrīdhara (July 19–August 17)

August 5—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Raghunandana Ṭhākura and Śrīla Varṇśidāsa Bābājī, great devotees of Lord Caitanya.

August 13—Pavitararopanī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans. Jhulana-yātrā (swing festival) of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda begins.

August 14—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gauṛīdāsa Paṇḍita, an associate of Lord Caitanya.

August 17—Jhulana-yātrā ends. Appearance anniversary of Lord Balarāma. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting. Also, second month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from yogurt).

Month of Hṛṣīkeśa (August 18–September 29)

August 24—Śrī Kṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭamī, the appearance anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Fasting till midnight. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for a schedule of events.

August 25—Appearance anniversary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Con-

sciousness. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

August 27—Annadā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

September 5—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sitā-devī, the consort of Śrīla Advaita Ācārya.

September 8—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

September 11—Parśvā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans, and fasting for the appearance of Lord Vāmanadeva.

September 12—Śrī Vāmana-dvādaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Vāmanadeva. Feast at noon. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

September 13—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, father of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura (Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master), and a pioneer in preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness in English. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

September 14—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, the foremost teacher of the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

September 15—Anniversary of the acceptance of *sannyāsa* by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Third month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from milk).

RESOURCES

Become trained in brahminical knowledge, qualities, and skills. The Vṛndāvana Institute for Higher Education is offering courses in studying Śrīla Prabhupāda's books; clear thinking, speaking, and writing; Vaiṣṇava etiquette; Sanskrit for preachers; and more. For information write The Vṛndāvana Institute for Higher Education, c/o ISKCON Ministry of Education, P.O. Box 400767, Brooklyn, NY 11240.

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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 *purāna*, 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. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Third Canto: “The Status Quo”

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Marriage of Kardama Muni and Devahūti

In this installment of our continuing presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Emperor Svāyambhuva Manu praises the sage Kardama Muni, who has just welcomed the emperor to his hermitage and spoken about a king's duties in the Vedic social system, known as varṇāśrama.

TEXT 4

अतो ह्यन्योन्यमात्मानं ब्रह्म क्षत्रं च रक्षतः ।
रक्षति सात्वियो देवः स यः सदसदात्मकः ॥ ४ ॥

*ato hy anyonyam ātmānaṁ
brahma kṣatram ca rakṣataḥ
rakṣati smāvvyayo devaḥ
sa yaḥ sad-asad-ātmakaḥ*

ataḥ—hence; hi—certainly; anyonyam—each other; ātmānam—the self; brahma—the brāhmaṇas; kṣatram—the kṣatriyas; ca—and; rakṣataḥ—protect; rakṣati sma—protects; avyayaḥ—immutable; devaḥ—the Lord; saḥ—He; yaḥ—who; sat-asat-ātmakaḥ—the form of the cause and effect.

TRANSLATION

That is why the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas protect each other, as well as themselves; and the Lord Himself, who is both the cause and effect and is yet immutable, protects them through each other.

PURPORT

The entire social structure of *varṇa* and *āśrama* is a cooperative system meant to uplift all to the highest platform of spiritual realization. The *brāhmaṇas* are intended to be protected by the *kṣatriyas*, and the *kṣatriyas* also are intended to be enlightened by the *brāhmaṇas*. When the *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas* cooperate nicely, the other subordinate divisions, the *vaiśyas*, or mercantile people, and the *śūdras*, or laborer class, automatically flourish. The entire elaborate system of Vedic society was therefore based on the importance of the *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*. The Lord is the real protector, but He is unattached to the affairs of protection. He creates *brāhmaṇas* for the protection of the *kṣatriyas*, and *kṣatriyas* for the protection of the *brāhmaṇas*. He remains aloof from all activities; therefore, He is called *nirvikāra*, “without activity.” He has nothing to do. He is so great that He does not perform action personally, but His energies act. The *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*, and anything that we see, are different energies acting upon one another.

Although individual souls are all different, the Superself, or Supersoul, is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Individually one's self may differ from others in certain qualities and may engage in different activities, such as those of a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* or *vaiśya*, but when there is complete cooperation among different individual souls, the Supreme Personality of Godhead as Supersoul, Paramātmā, being one in every individual soul, is pleased and gives them all protection. As stated before,

the *brāhmaṇas* are produced from the mouth of the Lord, and the *kṣatriyas* are produced from the chest or arms of the Lord. If the different castes or social sections, although apparently differently occupied in different activities, nevertheless act in full cooperation, then the Lord is pleased. This is the idea of the institution of four *varṇas* and four *āśramas*. If the members of different *āśramas* and *varṇas* cooperate fully in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then society is well protected by the Lord, without doubt.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated that the Lord is the proprietor of all different bodies. The individual soul is the proprietor of his individual body, but the Lord clearly states, “My dear Bhārata, you must know that I am also *kṣetra-jña*.” *Kṣetra-jña* means “the knower or proprietor of the body.” The individual soul is the proprietor of the individual body, but the Supersoul, the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is the proprietor of all bodies everywhere. He is the proprietor not only of human bodies but of birds, beasts and all other entities, not only on this planet but on other planets also. He is the supreme proprietor; therefore He does not become divided by protecting the different individual souls. He remains one and the same. That the sun appears on top of everyone's head when at the meridian does not imply that the sun becomes divided. One man thinks that the sun is on his head only, whereas five thousand miles away another man is thinking that the sun is only on his head. Similarly, the Supersoul, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is one, but He appears to individually oversee each individual soul. This does not mean that the individual soul and the Supersoul are one. They are one in quality, as spirit soul, but the individual soul and Supersoul are different.

TEXT 5

तव सन्दर्शनादेवच्छिन्ना मे सर्वसंशयाः ।
यत्स्वयं भगवान् प्रीत्या धर्ममाह रिरक्षिषोः ॥ ५ ॥

*tava sandarśanād eva
cchinnā me sarva-saṁśayāḥ
yat svayaṁ bhagavān prītyā
dharmam āha rirakṣiṣoḥ*

tava—your; sandarśanāt—by sight; eva—only; chinnāḥ—resolved; me—my; sarva-saṁśayāḥ—all doubts; yat—inasmuch as; svayaṁ—personally; bhagavān—Your Lordship; prītyā—lovingly; dharmam—duty; āha—explained; rirakṣiṣoḥ—of a king anxious to protect his subjects.

TRANSLATION

Now I have resolved all my doubts simply by meeting you, for Your Lordship has very kindly and clearly explained the duty of a king who desires to protect his subjects.

PURPORT

Manu described herewith the result of seeing a great saintly person. Lord Caitanya says that one should always try to associate with saintly persons because if one establishes a proper association with a saintly person, even for a moment, one attains all perfection. Somehow or other, if one meets a saintly person and achieves his favor, then the entire mission of one's human life is fulfilled. In our personal experience we have actual proof of this statement of Manu. Once we had the opportunity to

meet Viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and on first sight he requested this humble self to preach his message in the Western countries. There was no preparation for this, but somehow or other he desired it, and by his grace we are now engaged in executing his order, which has given us a transcendental occupation and has saved and liberated us from the occupation of material activities. Thus it is actually a fact that if one meets a saintly person completely engaged in transcendental duties and achieves his favor, then one's life mission becomes complete. What is not possible to achieve in thousands of lives can be achieved in one moment if there is an opportunity to meet a saintly person. It is therefore enjoined in Vedic literature that one should always try to associate with saintly persons and try to disassociate oneself from the common man, because by one word of a saintly person one can be liberated from material entanglement. A saintly person has the power, because of his spiritual advancement, to give immediate liberation to the conditioned soul. Here Manu admits that all his doubts are now over because Kardama has very kindly described the different duties of individual souls.

TEXT 6

दिष्टया मे भगवान् दृष्टो दुर्दर्शो योऽकृतात्मनाम् ।
दिष्टया पादरजः स्पृष्टं शीर्ष्णां मे भवतः शिवम् ॥६॥

diṣṭyā me bhagavān dr̥ṣṭo
durdarśo yo 'kṛtātmānām
diṣṭyā pāda-rajah spr̥ṣṭam
śīrṣṇā me bhavataḥ śivam

diṣṭyā—by good fortune; *me*—my; *bhagavān*—all-powerful; *dr̥ṣṭah*—is seen; *durdarśah*—not easily seen; *yaḥ*—who; *akṛta-ātmanām*—of those who have not controlled the mind and senses; *diṣṭyā*—by my good fortune; *pāda-rajah*—the dust of the feet; *spr̥ṣṭam*—is touched; *śīrṣṇā*—by the head; *me*—my; *bhavataḥ*—your; *śivam*—causing all auspiciousness.

TRANSLATION

It is my good fortune that I have been able to see you, for you cannot easily be seen by persons who have not subdued the mind or controlled the senses. I am all the more fortunate to have touched with my head the blessed dust of your feet.

PURPORT

The perfection of transcendental life can be achieved simply by touching the holy dust of the lotus feet of a holy man. In the *Bhāgavatam* it is said, *mahat-pāda-rajo-'bhiṣekam*, which means to be blessed by the holy dust of the lotus feet of a *mahat*, a great devotee. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *mahātmānas tu*: those who are great souls are under the spell of spiritual energy, and their symptom is that they fully engage in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the service of the Lord. Therefore they are called *mahat*. Unless one is fortunate enough to have the dust of the lotus feet of a *mahātmā* on one's head, there is no possibility of perfection in spiritual life.

The *paramparā* system of disciplic succession is very important as a means of spiritual success. One becomes a *mahat* by the grace of his *mahat* spiritual master. If one takes shelter of the lotus feet of a great soul, there is every possibility of one's also becoming a great soul. When Mahārāja Rahūgaṇa asked Jaḍa Bharata about his wonderful achievement of spiritual success, he replied to the King that spiritual success is not possible simply by following the rituals of religion or simply by converting oneself into a *sannyāsī* or offering sacrifices as recommended in the scriptures. These methods are undoubtedly helpful for spiritual realization, but the real effect is brought about by the grace of a *mahātmā*. In Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's eight stanzas of prayer to the spiritual master, it is clearly stated that simply by satisfying the spiritual master one can achieve the supreme success in life, and in spite of executing all ritualistic performances, if one cannot satisfy the spiritual master, one has no access to spiritual perfection. Here the word *akṛtātmānām* is very significant. *Ātmā* means "body," "soul," or "mind," and *akṛtātmā* means the common man, who cannot control the senses or the mind. Because the common man is unable to control the senses and the mind, it is his duty to seek the shelter of a great soul or a great devotee of the Lord and just try to please him. That will make his life perfect. A common man cannot rise to the topmost stage of spiritual perfection simply by following the rituals and religious principles. He has to take

shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and work under his direction faithfully and sincerely; then he becomes perfect, without a doubt.

TEXT 7

दिष्टया त्वयानुशिष्टोऽहं कृतश्चानुग्रहो महान् ।
अपावृतैः कर्णैर्नैर्जुष्टा दिष्टयोऽतिगिरः ॥ ७ ॥

diṣṭyā tvayānuśiṣṭo 'haṁ
kṛtaś cānugraho mahān
apāvṛtaiḥ kaṛṇa-randhraiḥ
juṣṭā diṣṭyoṣatir girah

diṣṭyā—luckily; *tvayā*—by you; *anuśiṣṭah*—instructed; *aham*—I; *kṛtaḥ*—bestowed; *ca*—and; *anugrahaḥ*—favor; *mahān*—great; *apāvṛtaiḥ*—open; *kaṛṇa-randhraiḥ*—with the holes of the ears; *juṣṭāḥ*—received; *diṣṭyā*—by good fortune; *uṣatīḥ*—pure; *giraḥ*—words.

TRANSLATION

I have fortunately been instructed by you, and thus great favor has been bestowed upon me. I thank God that I have listened with open ears to your pure words.

PURPORT

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has given directions, in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, on how to accept a bona fide spiritual master and how to deal with him. First, the desiring candidate must find a bona fide spiritual master, and then he must very eagerly receive instructions from him and execute them. This is reciprocal service. A bona fide spiritual master or saintly person always desires to elevate a common man who comes to him. Because everyone is under the delusion of *māyā* and is forgetful of his prime duty, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, a saintly person always desires that everyone become a saintly person. It is the function of a saintly person to invoke Kṛṣṇa consciousness in every forgetful common man.

Manu said that since he was advised and instructed by Kardama Muni, he was very much favored. He considered himself lucky to receive the message by aural reception. It is especially mentioned here that one should be very inquisitive to hear with open ears from the authorized source of the bona fide spiritual master. How is one to receive? One should receive the transcendental message by aural reception. The word *kaṛṇa-randhraiḥ* means "through the holes of the ears." The favor of the spiritual master is not received through any other part of the body but the ears. This does not mean, however, that the spiritual master gives a particular type of *mantra* through the ears in exchange for some dollars and if the man meditates on that he achieves perfection and becomes God within six months. Such reception through the ears is bogus. The real fact is that a bona fide spiritual master knows the nature of a particular man and what sort of duties he can perform in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he instructs him in that way. He instructs him through the ear, not privately, but publicly. "You are fit for such and such work in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You can act in this way." One person is advised to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by working in the Deities' room, another is advised to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by performing editorial work, another is advised to do preaching work, and another is advised to carry out Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the cooking department. There are different departments of activity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and a spiritual master, knowing the particular ability of a particular man, trains him in such a way that by his tendency to act he becomes perfect. *Bhagavad-gītā* makes it clear that one can attain the highest perfection of spiritual life simply by offering service according to his ability, just as Arjuna served Kṛṣṇa by his ability in the military art. Arjuna offered his service fully as a military man, and he became perfect. Similarly, an artist can attain perfection simply by performing artistic work under the direction of the spiritual master. If one is a literary man, he can write articles and poetry for the service of the Lord under the direction of the spiritual master. One has to receive the message of the spiritual master regarding how to act in one's capacity, for the spiritual master is expert in giving such instructions.

This combination, the instruction of the spiritual master and the faithful execution of the instruction by the disciple, makes the entire process perfect. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura describes in his explanation of the verse in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ*, that one who wants to be certain to achieve spiritual success must take the instruction from the spiritual master as to what his particular function is.

He should faithfully try to execute that particular instruction and should consider that his life and soul. The faithful execution of the instruction which he receives from the spiritual master is the only duty of a disciple, and that will bring him perfection. One should be very careful to receive the message from the spiritual master through the ears and execute it faithfully. That will make one's life successful.

TEXT 8

स भवान्दुहितृस्नेहपरिक्लिष्टात्मनो मम ।
श्रोतुमर्हसि दीनस्य श्रावितं कृपया मुने ॥ ८ ॥

sa bhavān duhitṛ-sneha-
parikṣiṣṭātmano mama
śrotum arhasi dīnasya
śrāvitaṁ kṛpayā mune

saḥ—yourself; bhavān—Your Honor; duhitṛ-sneha—by affection for my daughter; parikṣiṣṭa-ātmanaḥ—whose mind is agitated; mama—my; śrotum—to listen; arhasi—be pleased; dīnasya—of my humble self; śrāvitaṁ—to the prayer; kṛpayā—graciously; mune—O sage.

TRANSLATION

O great sage, graciously be pleased to listen to the prayer of my humble self, for my mind is troubled by affection for my daughter.

PURPORT

When a disciple is perfectly in consonance with the spiritual master, having received his message and executed it perfectly and sincerely, he has a right to ask a particular favor from the spiritual master. Generally a pure devotee of the Lord or a pure disciple of a bona fide spiritual master does not ask any favor either from the Lord or the spiritual master, but even if there is a need to ask a favor from the spiritual master, one cannot ask that favor without satisfying him fully. Svāyambhuva Manu wanted to disclose his mind regarding the function he wanted to execute due to affection for his daughter.

TEXT 9

प्रियव्रतोत्तानपदोः स्वसेयं दुहिता मम ।
अन्विच्छति पतिं युक्तं वयःश्रीलगुणादिभिः ॥ ९ ॥

priyavratottānapadoḥ
svaseyaṁ duhitā mama
anvicchati patim yuktam
vayaḥ-śīla-guṇāḍibhiḥ

priyavrata-uttānapadoḥ—of Priyavrata and Uttānapāda; svasā—sister; iyam—this; duhitā—daughter; mama—my; anvicchati—is seeking; patim—husband; yuktam—suited; vayah-śīla-guṇa-āḍibhiḥ—by age, character, good qualities, etc.

TRANSLATION

My daughter is the sister of Priyavrata and Uttānapāda. She is seeking a suitable husband in terms of age, character and good qualities.

PURPORT

The grown-up daughter of Svāyambhuva Manu, Devahūti, had good character and was well qualified; therefore she was searching for a suitable husband just befitting her age, qualities and character. The purpose of Manu's introducing his daughter as the sister of Priyavrata and Uttānapāda, two great kings, was to convince the sage that the girl came from a great family. She was his daughter and at the same time the sister of kṣatriyas; she did not come from a lower-class family. Manu therefore offered her to Kardama as just suitable for his purpose. It is clear that although the daughter was mature in age and qualities, she did not go out and find her husband independently. She expressed her desire for a suitable husband corresponding to her character, age and quality, and the father himself, out of affection for his daughter, took charge of finding such a husband.

TEXT 10

यदा तु भवतः शीलश्रुतरूपवयोरुगणान् ।
अश्रुणोच्चारदादेशा त्वय्यासीत्कृतनिश्चया ॥ १० ॥

yadā tu bhavataḥ śīla-
śruta-rūpa-vayo-guṇān
aśṛṇon nāradaś eṣā
tvayī āsit kṛta-niścayā

yadā—when; tu—but; bhavataḥ—your; śīla—noble character; śruta—learning; rūpa—beautiful appearance; vayah—youth; guṇān—virtues; aśṛṇot—heard; nāradaś—from Nārada Muni; eṣā—Devahūti; tvayī—in you; āsit—became; kṛta-niścayā—fixed in determination.

TRANSLATION

The moment she heard from the sage Nārada of your noble character, learning, beautiful appearance, youth and other virtues, she fixed her mind upon you.

PURPORT

The girl Devahūti did not personally see Kardama Muni, nor did she personally experience his character or qualities, since there was no social intercourse by which she could gain such understanding. But she heard about Kardama Muni from the authority of Nārada Muni. Hearing from an authority is a better experience than gaining personal understanding. She heard from Nārada Muni that Kardama Muni was just fit to be her husband; therefore she became fixed in her heart that she would marry him, and she expressed her desire to her father, who therefore brought her before him.

TEXT 11

तत्प्रतीच्छ द्विजाग्रयेमां श्रद्धयोपहृतां मया ।
सर्वान्मानानुरूपान् ते गृहमेधिषु कर्मसु ॥ ११ ॥

tat pratīccha dvijāgryemān
śraddhayopahṛtān mayā
sarvātmanānurūpān te
gṛhamedhiṣu karmasu

tat—therefore; pratīccha—please accept; dvija-agrya—O best of the brāhmaṇas; imān—her; śraddhaya—with faith; upahṛtām—offered as a presentation; mayā—by me; sarva-ātmanā—in every way; anurūpām—suitable; te—for you; gṛha-medhiṣu—in the household; karmasu—duties.

TRANSLATION

Therefore please accept her, O chief of the brāhmaṇas, for I offer her with faith and she is in every respect fit to be your wife and take charge of your household duties.

PURPORT

The words gṛhamedhiṣu karmasu mean "in household duties." Another word is also used here: sarvātmanānurūpām. The purport is that a wife should not only be equal to her husband in age, character and qualities, but must be helpful to him in his household duties. The household duty of a man is not to satisfy his sense gratification, but to remain with a wife and children and at the same time attain advancement in spiritual life. One who does not do so is not a householder but a gṛhamedhī. Two words are used in Sanskrit literature; one is gṛhasṭha, and the other is gṛhamedhī. The difference between gṛhamedhī and gṛhasṭha is that gṛhasṭha is also an āśrama, or spiritual order, but if one simply satisfies his senses as a householder, then he is a gṛhamedhī. For a gṛhamedhī, to accept a wife means to satisfy the senses, but for a gṛhasṭha a qualified wife is an assistant in every respect for advancement in spiritual activities. It is the duty of the wife to take charge of household affairs and not to compete with the husband. A wife is meant to help, but she cannot help her husband unless he is completely equal to her in age, character and quality.

(continued in next issue)

Mantra Meditation

(continued from page 22)

grace of the supreme father Hari, or Kṛṣṇa, and the Lord reveals Himself to such sincere devotees.

Therefore no other means of spiritual realization is as effective in this age as chanting the *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Certain activities are conducive to pure chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa and therefore to one's advancement in spiritual life. There are also detrimental activities. It is important to be able to distinguish between the two; otherwise, one's attempt to make spiritual progress will be like trying to light a fire while pouring water on it.

The following are considered by Vedic authorities to be favorable for one's spiritual advancement:

1. Patient, enthusiastic determination to advance spiritually by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.
2. Living a regulated life according to spiritual principles.
3. Avoiding unnecessary material activities.
4. Associating with devotees.
5. Reading the sacred scriptures like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

6. Eating only food that's been offered to Kṛṣṇa.

7. Being clean, humble, and honest.

8. Living simply.

Unfavorable activities include:

1. Greedy endeavor for material accomplishments.

2. Engaging in unnecessary worldly talk.

3. Not following spiritual principles, or blindly following rituals.

4. Meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling.

5. Pride, lust, anger, and greed.

6. Close friendship with materialistic people.

One must also carefully avoid offenses in relation to the chanting of the Lord's holy name. The *Padma Purāṇa* lists the following:

1. To blaspheme the devotees who have dedicated their lives for propagating the holy name of the Lord.

2. To consider the names of the demigods like Lord Śiva or Lord Brahmā to be equal to, or independent of, the name of Lord Viṣṇu.

3. To disobey the orders of the spiritual master.

4. To blaspheme Vedic literature or literature in pursuance of the Vedic version.

5. To consider the glories of chanting

Hare Kṛṣṇa to be imaginary.

6. To give some interpretation on the holy name of the Lord.

7. To commit sinful activities on the strength of the holy name of the Lord.

8. To consider the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa one of the auspicious ritualistic activities offered in the *Vedas* as fruitive activities.

9. To instruct a faithless person about the glories of the holy name.

10. To not have complete faith in the chanting of the holy names and to maintain material attachments, even after understanding so many instructions on this matter.

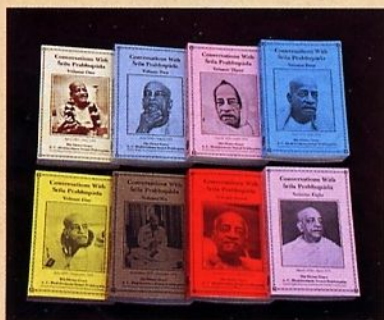
For thousands of years, persons aspiring to awaken their original, pure consciousness have practiced the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. By chanting you loosen your ties to material bondage—birth, old age, disease, and death. You prepare for the ultimate test—death—which will determine whether you have used your human intelligence to further entangle yourself in the labyrinth of karmic reactions or to leave the prison of this material world and return to your real home, the spiritual world, where innumerable spirit souls enjoy an eternal life in bliss and knowledge in the company of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. ☐

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THE VEDIC OBSERVER

Transcendental Commentary on the Issues of the Day

SOOTHING A SATANIC SOCIETY

by Ranchor dāsa
London

The trouble with saying what you really think is that you've often underestimated the strength of people's reactions. Instead of receiving congratulations for your forthright expression of the truth, you suddenly get swept into a whole fresh controversy you never intended to instigate.

Such is the case, it seems, with Salman Rushdie and his *Satanic Verses*, the year's top-selling hardback book. Reportedly Dr. Badawi, an eminently reasonable Islamic theologian and influential leader in Britain, spent most of a shared railway journey trying to convince Rushdie as a friend that it would be madness to publish the book. But the author would have none of it. He was convinced that the world was ready to hear him and made his motto "Publish and be damned." So he did, and he was. Badawi has now offered Rushdie asylum in his house.

It seems that Rushdie's offense is twofold. He has blasphemed the Prophet and other great Islamic teachers and questioned the traditional account of the founding and early days of Islam; and he has abandoned the faith of his birth, Islam, and become what everyone now knows as an apostate.

Curiously, at the recent summit of Muslim countries it was the latter offense that was stressed the most, which suggests that the writer is being held up as a ghastly warning to others who, being assailed by doubts as to the authenticity or purity of their religion, may choose to follow his path. Perhaps this added persuasion will be needed to keep all within the fold, in view of the unsavory insights into the workings of modern Islam this whole episode has afforded us.

Putting heretics to death is nothing new, of course, as a glance at English history will soon tell us. I grew up as a choirboy in Westminster Cathedral, with the salutary reminder of John Southworth's body. Pieced back together after having been hung, drawn, and quartered, it now lies resplendent in ceremonial vest-

ments inside a glass case in a side chapel dedicated to the Forty Martyrs, some of the four hundred or so men and women who were put to death for their beliefs during the sixteenth-century religious turmoil in England.

The spectacle of this historical period exercised a morbid fascination for me and my companions living at the choir school in the depths of that great establishment. Some of our favorite readings, in between angelic anthems, were the gory accounts given in pamphlets sold at the back of the cathedral of the various methods of torture and execution employed at the time.

dares say anything else.

In the face of the endless barrage of contradictory and senseless propaganda released by our latter-day mentors—the television, press, and secular education—a child of today cannot even be sure whether it is right to be good or good to be right, or, indeed, what is right itself.

Small wonder that Salman Rushdie, born and educated in modern India, transported to England in his youth, cut off from his family roots, and hailed as a great writer, was moved to question the archaic assumptions of his childhood religion. Surely those with any intelligence in



What makes the over-zealous reaction to Rushdie's book so disturbing, then, is certainly not that it represents a break with tradition. The difference is that the goal posts have moved; no longer are we living in a society where everything revolves around religion and religious authority; no longer can one grow up secure in the knowledge that God created the world in seven days and who is there to prove otherwise! or that Christianity must be the true religion because there is no other; or that Mohammed must be the true prophet of God because nobody

today's atheistic and impious world are going to be assailed by doubts as to the truth of their religion or any religion. And having decided that they *do* want to be religious, why should they feel bound by the religion of their family, the one they just happen to have been born into? And why should they not inquire into other traditions—evaluate and compare, discuss and debate, even write books about their doubts if they feel so moved? Rushdie made a tactical error in publishing *Satanic Verses*; that is indisputable. Maybe he

(continued on page 34)

Chosen People Or People Who Choose?

The rich theology of the Vedic literature can end speculative attempts to resolve the apparently contradictory concepts of predestination and free will.

by DRUTAKARMĀ DĀSA

Kimberly picks up a tape by a rock band known for its satanic image and clicks it into her Walkman. Putting on the earphones, she turns the volume way up.

"Maybe I was just made evil," says Kimberley to herself. That leads to another thought. "Maybe some people are made good. Like Heather. Everything always seems to go right for Heather. God seems to like her."

Kimberley's not a theologian, but she's contemplating something that Western theologians have discussed for centuries without reaching any definite conclusions. The question is this: Does God choose certain individuals or groups for salvation? In other words, are there chosen people? And, alternatively, are certain persons selected for condemnation?

The technical term for the matter under discussion is *predestination*, a word which implies that our final destination, be it heaven or hell, is programmed into our souls from the beginning of our existence. Thus the question of predestination is closely connected with the concept of free will.

A lot has been spoken and written about all this, but most of it is highly speculative. Not surprisingly, many of the views expressed contradict each other.

Speaking of the Judeo-Christian tradition, C. T. McIntyre writes in his article on predestination in *The Encyclopedia of*

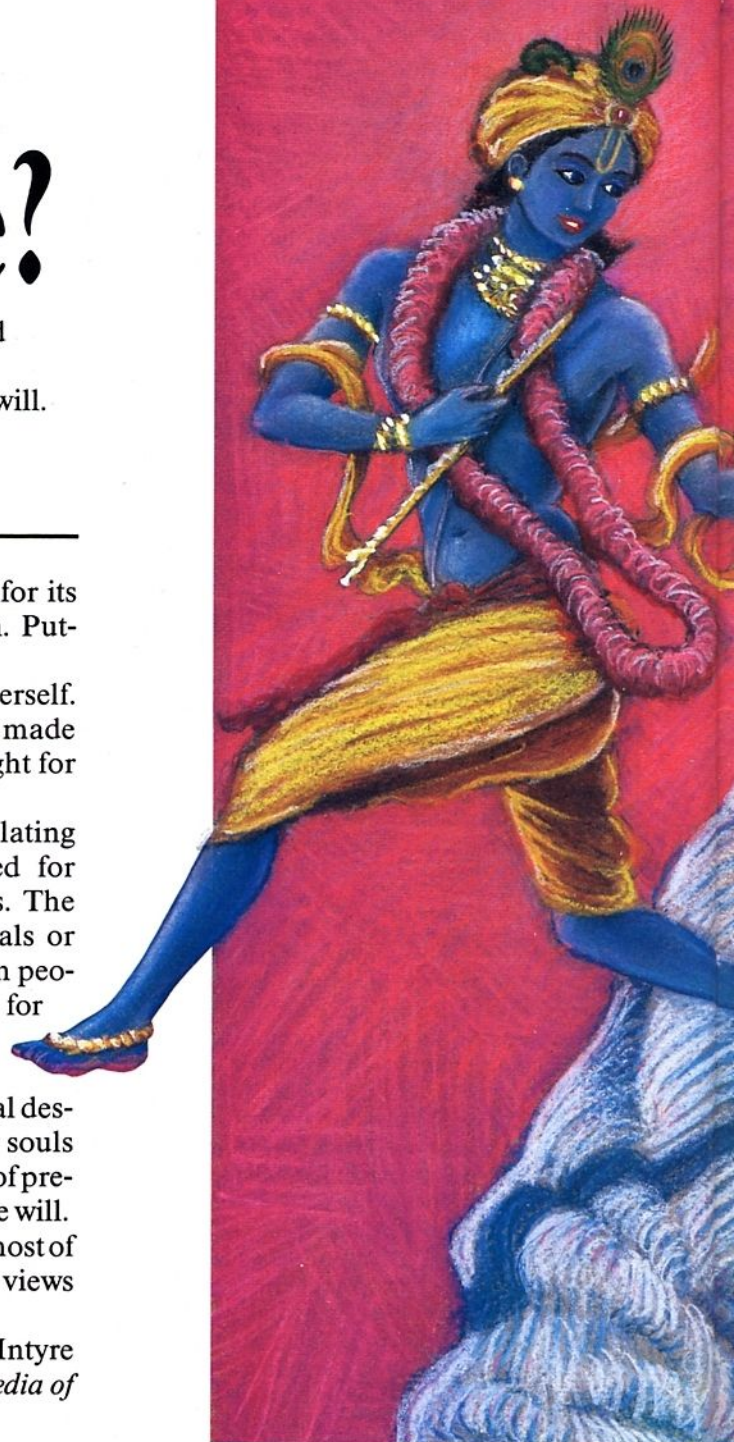


ILLUSTRATION BY KEŚĪSODANA DĀSA



Religion, "Advocates of all positions have appealed to the scriptures, although the scriptures do not contain doctrines of free will and predestination, nor even these words."

It would be too bad, however, if we had to rely on theological speculators to answer such questions. It's hard to trust them, because the human mind is so limited and prone to error. That's why God gives scriptures in the first place.

According to the sages of India, God has given different scriptures to different people at different times and places according to their level of understanding. Some scriptures therefore give more information than others. The Bible and the Koran, for example, give only very limited information about the soul and the important questions of free will and predestination. The Vedic scriptures of India, however, give more detailed information, which will help us examine these questions without going off into the insecure realm of imagination and speculation.

The basic message of Vedic literature on the question of predestination is that the choosing is done by the individual soul and not by God. We are choosing people, not chosen people.

God says He is neutral. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.29), Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, says, "I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all." We could say that God is the original equal opportunity employer.

Yet Kṛṣṇa goes on to state in that same passage of the *Gītā*, "But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him." God exhibits no special favoritism to any particular person or group. But if someone voluntarily behaves in a friendly way toward Him, He responds in kind.

Now one might object: "Ha! So if you're not friendly to God, then He zaps you, right? That's not very cool." But no, you zap yourself, so to speak.

The *Vedānta-sūtra* (2.1.34) says *vaiṣamyanairghṛṇye na sāpekṣatvāt tathā hi darśayati*: "The Lord neither hates nor likes anyone, though He appears to." He surely does *appear* to, one might be tempted to say.

The reason God appears to hate one person and like another is related to the fact that He arranges to fulfill the desires of each individual, giving each his or her justly deserved reward or punishment. A perverted desire yields a bad result. A good desire yields a good result. Mixed desires yield mixed results. Because the results come by God's arrangement, it looks like He is to blame. But He's not really.

Consider the example of a judge. One person comes before the judge and receives an award of a million dollars in a lawsuit against an insurance company.

Another person comes before the judge and is sentenced to ten years in prison for fraud. The judge is responsible for neither the award of a million dollars nor the ten-year prison sentence. The law is there, and in the final analysis the persons who come before the judge have by their own behavior determined the results they will receive. The judge is neutral—at least he should be.

One difficulty with the suggestion that God is fulfilling our desires is that we do not appear to always get from God what we consciously want. If I want a million dollars, then why don't I get it? Right away!

The reason is that the results of our desires and activities accumulate over the course of many lifetimes, as we take on one material body after another. If in a past life we unlawfully deprived others of

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wealth, we may now have to suffer for that by having unfulfilled desires for riches. In other words, what we desire is weighed against what we deserve.

Another consideration is that the desire to get rich quick by demanding large amounts of cash from God is a perverted desire. Our desires are evaluated according to a standard not of our own making. And it is according to that standard, whatever it may be, that the results of the specific desires are calculated. Maybe those results will match up with our expectations, and maybe they won't. But, as the *Bhagavad-gītā* teaches, whatever we get is exactly what we deserve, which might be the pain of poverty, or a struggling middle-class existence, or being rich but not rich enough.

So to sum up, God sets up the system but is not responsible for what we get. The re-

sponsibility lies squarely with each one of us. As Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* (4.13), "Although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the nondoer." He also says in the *Gītā* (9.9), "I am ever detached from all these material activities, seated as though neutral." And in Chapter Thirteen He says, "The living entity is the cause of the various sufferings and enjoyments in this world."

Now, if you want to criticize God for setting up the system as He did (so that we get bad results for certain desires and actions), you can. But it really doesn't do much good. Śrīla Prabhupāda says it well in his purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.2.39:

The Lord does not create this material world at anyone's request. . . . If one argues, "Why does He act in this way?" the answer is that He can do so because He is supreme. . . . The answer is that to prove His omnipotence He can do anything, and no one can question Him. If He were answerable to us concerning why He does something and why He does not, His supremacy would be curtailed.

Certain people will be satisfied with a statement like this; others will feel extreme dissatisfaction, even repulsion. Here we are getting to the heart of the whole question.

By nature we are capable of liking God or disliking Him, of obeying His orders or disobeying them. More accurately, according to the *Vedas* our natural position is to serve God with love; and if we so desire we can give up that position and attempt to serve our own selfish desires.

The Vedic literature gives reliable information about the fundamental nature of the living being. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* states:

*viṣṇu-śaktiḥ parā proktā
kṣetrajñākhyā tathā parā
avidyā-karma-samjñānyā
tṛtīyā śaktir iṣyate*

"The potency of Lord Viṣṇu is summarized in three categories, namely the spiritual potency, the living entities, and ignorance. The spiritual potency is full of knowledge; the living entities, although belonging to the spiritual potency, are subject to bewilderment; and the third energy, which is full of ignorance, is always visible in fruitive activities."

In other words, God has three main energies: the spiritual energy, the energy composed of the innumerable living entities, or souls, and the material energy. The living entities are known as the *taṭasthā-śakti*, or the marginal potency of the Lord, because they have the ability to identify with either matter or spirit, to exist in full knowledge or in total illusion.

By nature, however, the soul belongs to the spiritual potency. This is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.7), wherein Lord

Kṛṣṇa says, *mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ*: "The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts."

We have always been around. As God has always existed, we have always existed. Some theologians speculate that the soul comes into being when the present body comes into being. This is not only illogical (how can something eternal have a beginning?) but unsupported by scripture.

The Vedic scriptures further state, *vasanti yatra puruṣāḥ sarve vaikuṅṭhamūrtayah*: "In the spiritual planets everyone lives in bodies featured like the Supreme Personality of Godhead's."

So if in our original condition we were eternal beings living in the spiritual world, in spiritual bodies like God's, then what happened to us? What are we doing here, subject to birth and death?

An obvious question and a good one. Lord Kṛṣṇa tells us in *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.27),

*icchā-dveṣa-samutthena
dvandva-mohena bhārata
sarva-bhūtāni sammohaṁ
sarge yānti parantapa*

"O scion of Bharata, O conqueror of the foe, all living entities are born into delusion, bewildered by dualities arisen from desire and hate."

So one component of the reason for our being in the material world rather than the spiritual world, our real home, is that at some point we developed a desire to enjoy separately from the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. Instead of serving Him with love, we desired to serve our own false ego. Although Kṛṣṇa knows we can never be satisfied without serving Him in our natural position, He nonetheless respects our independence and free will and allows us to act out our impulses to enjoy separately from Him in the material world.

A second component of the reason for our being in the material world is our hatred for, or envy of, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One aspect of envy is the desire to usurp the position of the envied person. For example, if one envies a wealthy person, one may desire to become the enjoyer of that person's wealth. Similarly, the envious soul may desire to take the Lord's position as the supreme enjoyer. This necessarily involves partial or total forgetfulness of God's existence.

One thing to keep in mind is that no one can honestly say, "The devil made me do it." According to the *Vedas*, God has no competitor battling with Him for souls. God is described as *asamaurdhva*, "having no equal or superior." If we are apart from God, we can blame no one but ourselves, our own desire and hatred.

There is no irreversible, eternal condemnation. Each soul always has the op-

portunity to exercise its free will. If a soul is "eternally" condemned, it is only because of its own continuing unwillingness to love God. One can always turn back to God, even from the most fallen position. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead expanded Himself into many for His ever-increasing spiritual bliss, and the living entities are parts and parcels of this spiritual bliss. They also have partial independence, but by misuse of their independence, when the service attitude is transformed into the propensity for sense enjoyment, they come under the sway of lust. This material creation is created by the Lord to give facility to the conditioned souls to fulfill these lustful propensities, and when completely baffled by prolonged lustful activities, the living entities begin to inquire about their real position.

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Although the Vedic literature doesn't talk of Satan, or the devil, it does describe Māyā, the goddess in charge of the material energy. Māyā is a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa who performs the unpleasant but necessary task of creating the temporary world of illusory happiness and distress for the souls who desire to forget Kṛṣṇa and enjoy themselves apart from Him. And if a soul somehow develops a desire to return to Kṛṣṇa, Māyā is always there to test him with allurements: "So you think you love God? Well, what about this . . . ? And this . . . ?"

So if that's our position now, then what is to be done? The answer is simple. We should use our independence to re-establish a friendly relationship with the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, and thus end our unpleasant stay in the material world.

This is the most important business of human existence.

We should choose to make ourselves pleasing to God. And everyone has an equal opportunity to do that. It is not that any particular group of people has a monopoly on salvation.

Every soul has the opportunity to achieve the highest goal, pure love for God. In his introduction to *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, "The ways and the means for ultimate realization, ultimate attainment, are stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and the doors of this knowledge are open for everyone. No one is barred out. All classes of men can approach Lord Kṛṣṇa by thinking of Him, for hearing and thinking of Him are possible for everyone."

Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself says in the *Gītā* (9.32), "Those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth . . . can attain the supreme destination." It doesn't matter if one is male or female, higher or lower in social status.

The real chosen people are those who choose to endear themselves to God by their behavior. And in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (12.20) Lord Kṛṣṇa explains who is dear to Him: "Those who follow this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engage themselves with faith, making Me the supreme goal, are very, very dear to Me."

The imperishable path of devotional service begins with hearing and chanting the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Lord Caitanya taught the simple method of awakening love of God through the congregational chanting of His holy names: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Lord Caitanya was Kṛṣṇa Himself, appearing as a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. In other words, He was God showing by His own example how to please God.

Lord Caitanya prayed, "O son of Mahārāja Nanda [Kṛṣṇa], I am Your eternal servitor, yet somehow or other I have fallen into the ocean of birth and death. Please pick me up from this ocean of death and place me as one of the atoms at Your lotus feet."

When a devotee petitions Kṛṣṇa in this way, Kṛṣṇa responds. He says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (12.6-7): "Those who worship Me, giving up all their activities unto Me and being devoted to Me without deviation, engaged in devotional service and always meditating upon Me, having fixed their minds upon Me, O son of Pṛthā—for them I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death."

One can best meditate upon Kṛṣṇa and fix one's mind upon Him by chanting His holy names. In this way one can escape the cycle of birth and death and become

situated at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Lord Caitanya prayed:

O my Lord, Your holy names alone can render all benedictions to living beings, and thus you have hundreds and millions of names, like Kṛṣṇa and Govinda. In these transcendental names You have invested all Your transcendental energies. There are not even hard and fast rules for chanting these names. O my Lord, out of kindness You enable us to easily approach You by Your holy names, but I am so unfortunate that I have no attraction for them.

Here Lord Caitanya is revealing our problem. We are trapped in the material

world because we misused our independence. Even so, Kṛṣṇa has made it possible for us to return to our original position simply by chanting His holy names. The method is easy; even a child can perform it. And it is guaranteed to be effective. Yet we are so unfortunate that we are not attracted to chant. We remain reluctant, attracted to other things.

Still, Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent from His name. And in the form of His name, He is waiting for us to choose to accept Him into our hearts once more. If we can do so, we shall also enter into Kṛṣṇa's heart. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (9.4.68),

The devotees are always in My heart, and I am always in the hearts of the devotees. The devotee does not know anything beyond Me, and I also cannot forget the devotee. There is a very intimate relationship between Me and the pure devotees. Pure devotees in full knowledge are never out of spiritual touch, and therefore they are very much dear to Me.

So, although we are choosing people, in a sense there are also chosen people—the devotees—for because they have chosen God, God has chosen them. And He guarantees that their destination will be His eternal, spiritual abode. ❏

SATANIC SOCIETY

(continued from page 29)

acted insensitively. But he is not to blame for doubting, or even for criticizing; he had the courage to say openly the secret thoughts that others suppress.

Two Vaiṣṇava lessons come to mind from all of this. One is the importance of freedom of choice. Spiritual life cannot be forced. A society may force its cultural norms on its members, and those may often be quasi-religious, such as the acceptance of a particular form of religion as all-important, or, as in Britain today, the virtual lack of any meaningful religious values, both of which represent undesirable extremes. But true spiritual values cannot be compulsory: they must be freely accepted. Therefore, enshrined in the world's greatest book of spiritual instruction, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, are Kṛṣṇa's words: "Thus I have explained to you the most confidential knowledge. Deliberate on this fully, and then do what you wish to do."

Nowhere does Kṛṣṇa approve of force in religious matters. He even goes out of His way to warn that the wise should not unsettle persons addicted to inferior activities. It is said, however, that Lord Caitanya, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself on His mission of spreading the chanting of the holy names, did bring weapons with Him:

His devotees and the holy names themselves. In other words, Lord Caitanya conquers not by force but by love, and He kills not the person but his ignorance and envy.

The second lesson is that there must be sound philosophy to back up one's religious faith. As Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Religion without philosophy is sentiment, or sometimes fanaticism." Religious leaders cannot simply demand of their followers that they must believe—or else! It is the leaders' responsibility to give instruction and education that will satisfy the doubts of the people. If they cannot give satisfactory answers, then they will have to admit defeat, either because their teachings are faulty, or because they could not save their followers.

At no time has this been more of a necessity than the present day. Modern society influences everyone to challenge religion. Therefore the religious leaders of the world, whatever their persuasion, have to respond to this challenge in such a way as to convince the unfortunate people of this age of the absolute necessity of spiritual life. Moreover, they must themselves behave as spiritual examples, displaying all the qualities of true devotees of God, so as to inspire those thus convinced to find the strength of their convictions. This mood of a devotee is summarized

in Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's famous prayer:

One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor yet is always prepared to give all respect to others can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord.

Some Muslims have done a great disservice to true religionists by their display of intolerance in the name of religion, and they have certainly misrepresented much that is good in the Islamic tradition. By the arrangement of providence, however, good may yet come of their actions if people are encouraged to discriminate between what is true practice of spiritual life and what is simply religious opportunism and bigotry.

True religious life revolves around the principle of love: love for God and love for fellow man. In these times of doubt, fear, and suspicion, religious leaders could do worse than to demonstrate a little of this quality of love, taking Lord Caitanya's words as a starting point. The secrets of spiritual life in the age of Kali are clearly intimated: associate with others in a mood of humility and tolerance, and together chant the names of God. This will prove to be the solution to man's spiritual quest in these satanic times. ❏

PURIFICATION

(continued from page 20)

kṛṣṇānuśīlanam. Ānukūlyena means "favorably." We should simply try to please Kṛṣṇa favorably, not unfavorably like Kāṁsa. Kāṁsa was also Kṛṣṇa conscious, always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, but unfavorably. His business was how to kill Kṛṣṇa. He was thinking of Kṛṣṇa, but he was thinking, "How can I kill Kṛṣṇa?" That is called *prātikūla*, "unfavorable."

Prātikūla is not *bhakti*. When you think of Kṛṣṇa against His desire, against the principle of satisfying Him, that is not

bhakti, although that is also Kṛṣṇa consciousness. An enemy of Kṛṣṇa's is also thinking of Kṛṣṇa. That does not mean that he is a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. He is Kṛṣṇa conscious unfavorably. Therefore it is not *bhakti*. You have to act favorably.

So Arjuna became a devotee because he acted favorably for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa. It was not favorable to material life, but it was favorable to Kṛṣṇa. That should be your business: how Kṛṣṇa should be satisfied. And therefore naturally it is concluded that you have to satisfy his representative. Therefore we have sung just now, *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādah*: if

you satisfy Kṛṣṇa's representative, then He is satisfied.

For example, in an office the proprietor has a head of a department. If you satisfy the head of the department, the proprietor is satisfied. The report goes to the proprietor—"This clerk is working very nicely." So your promotion and increase in pay are already there.

So a pure devotee's business is how to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. And as soon as he chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, immediately he remembers the whole plan of how to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. Therefore he's liberated.

Thank you very much. Hare Kṛṣṇa. ❏

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

The Philosophy of the Soul

This conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place during a morning walk in Honolulu on May 15, 1976.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: God created everything. He created both the soul and matter.

Disciple 1: The individual soul.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Disciple 1: Śrīla Prabhupāda, someone might ask, “You say that God created the soul. How is the soul eternal if it is created, if it has a beginning?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, the soul has no beginning. Just as God has no beginning, so the soul has no beginning.

Disciple 1: No beginning.

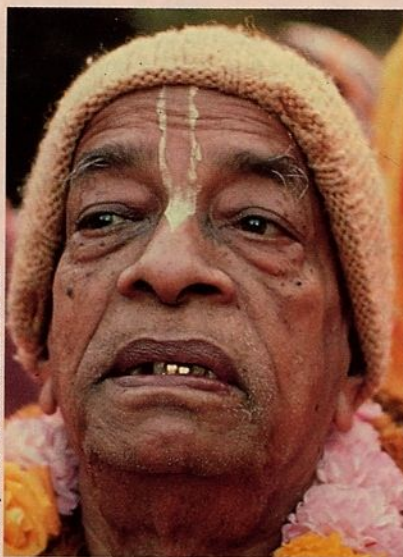
Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Na jāyate na mriyate vā*: as Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, “For the eternal soul there is neither birth nor death.” That is the distinction between matter and soul.

Disciple 2: Some people may counter that if God is all-powerful, He can do anything. So couldn't it be that God creates a soul at a point in time—and this soul is then eternal from that point? According to the Bible, some say, you have only one lifetime in this world. Of course, they cannot explain why some people are born in a pious setting and some are born in an impious setting.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: They do not know the law of *karma*. *Karmaṇā daivane treṇa*: according to one's past activities, pious or impious, he gets his next birth. That is quite reasonable. But people do not believe in *karma*.

When I was a student at Scottish Churches College, we had to attend a class for half an hour on the Bible. So Doctor Urquhart gave the argument that “If *karma* exists and I am suffering for my *karma*, who is the witness?”

But they do not know that the witness is God. The witness is Paramātmā, the Supersoul. The Christians say “Holy Ghost.” He is seeing what you are doing. So according to your actions, the Holy Ghost gives you another birth. But the Lord is present in everyone's heart, and He is observing. *Bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*: “The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart and is di-



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recting the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine made of the material energy.”

Disciple 2: Śrīla Prabhupāda, many Christians say that if a person doesn't become fully aware of God in this life, then he doesn't have another chance.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: How can you say “one life”? That is a defective theory. Therefore, this philosophy cannot be accepted. Anything which is defective is not to be accepted.

Disciple: It is simply dogma.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Mere dogma is rejected. That is the Vedic process.

Disciple 1: Actually, Christ never said that. He never said you have only one life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So that is real philosophy. That is real philosophy.

Disciple 1: This idea of having just one life came from the Church fathers. Perhaps it was a way of applying pressure. “You get only one life, so follow our direction.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is all defective. Unscrupulous.

Disciple 3: Sometimes people say, “You cannot be successful unless you accept Christ, like us.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: We accept. Rather, you do not accept. Jesus Christ said, “Thou shalt not kill.” We strictly observe that, but you kill animals. You are not a Christian.

Disciple 4: But they may say, “The Ten Commandments are just an ideal.

You're not expected to follow them perfectly.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. That is your explanation. That is your concoction. As soon as you disobey the Ten Commandments, you are not a Christian. You are a heathen.

And the thing is that we should not discuss mere religious faith. Everyone has got his own concocted faith. That is not philosophy. Faith is different. “I believe,” “You believe,” “I don't believe”—that is not philosophy.

In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa explains, *dehino 'smin yathā dehe*: “As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.”

Religion without philosophy is sentiment, and philosophy without religion is mental concoction. So religion should be combined with the philosophy of the soul. Then it is perfect.

Disciple 3: Śrīla Prabhupāda, some people argue, though, that too much philosophy takes the joy out of life. They say God has put the world here for us to enjoy, so we will please Him by enjoying it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You go at four A.M. to your place of work and come back at ten P.M. Is that enjoyment?

Disciple 3: But on the weekend we can go to the beach. And we can eat whatever we want.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, no. You can go to hell, also. *Janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhiduhkha-doṣānudarśanam*: think of the miseries of birth, death, old age, and disease. Those are there. If you are suffering from disease, where is the enjoyment? Mental discomfort, bodily discomfort—you are taking pills thrice daily for tranquillity. Is that enjoyment?

Disciple 3: They say you have to take the good with the bad.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This is nonsense enjoyment. Fool's paradise. For keeping the mind in tranquillity, one is taking pills. For sleeping he is taking a pill. Does he enjoy that?

Disciple 3: By suffering you can get a deeper appreciation of your enjoyment.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then what is your enjoyment? Suffer. Then what do you call your enjoyment? ❏

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Crows and Swans

I have not read newspapers in the last five months or so. I have been too busy with Kṛṣṇa conscious activities, trying to read and write, preach and travel.

When occasionally I became aware that I was not reading the daily news, I considered whether this was irresponsible—not to be tuned in to others' sufferings and the political events that externally shape our lives. Of course, I hear things from others. I know at least who is president of the United States; I heard of the earthquake in Armenia, the explosion of the Pan Am jet, and many other things; but I didn't read the daily newspapers to follow up on what I heard in conversations.

Every secular society, from the neighborhood to the state to the world as a whole, values the news of its own activities. In this context, an enlightened person is aware of all that seems to affect his life. To remain contentedly oblivious might smack of irresponsibility.

But I don't think it's irresponsible. What is reported daily is often very repetitious and is produced by writers whose viewpoint is limited and motivated. It's not just "the news" you get when you read a so-called factual report; you get a whole set of prejudices and a complete omission of transcendental knowledge. Without the insight of transcendental writing, the story of yesterday's events is meaningless and merely deadens the human sensibility with constant depressing proof that we are living in the dark age of Kali.

One time in India, a devotee entered Śrīla Prabhupāda's room with a daily newspaper, since at that time Prabhupāda was occasionally hearing from it. "What's the news?" Prabhupāda asked. "What are all the rascals saying? Newspapers means all the statements of the rascals."

Today I spent forty minutes with a copy of the *San Juan Star*. Am I better for it? It helped me realize that my life is sheltered in many ways, and that I am "not doing anything" about the race

riots in Miami. Seeing a picture of four muscular men handcuffed and arrested for looting, I became aware of my own physical frailty and the need for police protection.

But I didn't read a single mention of God or God consciousness in the paper. There were no direct references, and not even indirect ones. Just to be sure of this, I went through the paper a second time. Instead of finding God, I stumbled for a second time on the story of thirty-year-old Patrick Purdy, who fired an assault rifle into a California school yard, killing five children and injuring thirty, and then shot himself dead. It's not the newspapers' fault that these things happen. And one might say it's not the journalists' responsibility to moralize events or attempt to explain them.

As Patrick Purdy's grandmother said, "It's just horrible. I don't understand why, and I probably won't ever know why."

Why are one out of five pregnant women in inner-city Boston using cocaine? Why is former president Marcos dying? Why did South African president Botha suffer a mild stroke? Why did eighty-four-year-old Salvador Dali get a heart attack? Maybe it's too much to expect daily explanations of these things, but explanations are available in the *śāstra*, the holy scripture.

Therefore, if we read the *śāstra*, wherein all the causes and effects are explained, and where we are offered ultimate relief from all miseries, aren't we doing ourselves a better favor than by gorging on unexplained "news" from all over the world? And isn't distribution of *śāstra* a better service than the distribution of newspapers?

Śrīla Prabhupāda noticed how those who read newspapers soon throw them away—an indication of the journal's value. If one is fortunate to get a copy of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and to realize its value even a little bit, he will not throw it away but treasure it, and read it throughout his life. For one who is "tuned in" to higher understandings,

the business of this world reinforces the teachings of the *śāstra*—the misery, the flickering fortunes, the encroachment of old age and death. To hear again and again how these things occur becomes tiresome to one attuned to the eternal nature of the soul.

But as they say in America, "It's a free country"; you can read whatever you like. So there will always be people inclined to different kinds of reading.

As the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.10)

Those words which do not describe the glories of the Lord, who alone can sanctify the atmosphere of the whole universe, are considered by saintly persons to be like unto a place of pilgrimage for crows. Since the all-perfect persons are inhabitants of the transcendental abode, they do not derive any pleasure there.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport to this "swans and crows" verse,

Spiritually advanced men who are compared to the swans do not take pleasure in such dead literatures, which are sources of pleasure for men who are spiritually dead. . . . Social literary men, scientists, mundane poets, theoretical philosophers, and politicians who are completely absorbed in material advancement of sense pleasure are all dolls of the material energy. They take pleasure in a place where rejected subject matters are thrown. According to Svāmī Śrīdhara, this is the pleasure of the prostitute hunters.

The United States alone boasts 1,657 daily newspapers, with an aggregate circulation of 62,502,036 annually (and this neglects the Sunday papers!). So there is a vast market of curious persons eager to know "what's going on." Unfortunately, the only side of the story they hear further agitates the desire to understand, since the simple recitation of events without deep śāstric knowledge leaves the reader more befuddled than ever about the nature of the world. Things simply happen, and tomorrow more things will happen, and somewhere in all this lies the meaning of life.

I'll probably never entirely stop reading newspapers. After all, newspapers do keep us in touch with the real world. Or do they?—SDG

Come and celebrate with us!

JANMĀSTAMĪ

The Appearance Anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa

Fifty centuries ago the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, appeared on earth and displayed His eternal pastimes for all to see. Lord Kṛṣṇa regularly descends to this world for the pleasure of His devotees, who relish discussing and singing about His glorious activities. On August 27, ISKCON temples around the world will honor Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance and pastimes with festivals that climax at midnight—the auspicious moment of the Lord's appearance. Call your nearest Hare Kṛṣṇa center for details.



Dhruva 84

Soul Food.

At the Sunday Feast, you'll enjoy a delicious meal that's nourishing to the body *and* the soul. Every Sunday at hundreds of Hare Kṛṣṇa centers all over the world, devotees prepare an opulent vegetarian feast for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord. Fresh grains, fruits, vegetables, and choice spices are cooked with devotion and offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa—and then to you. Because this *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*, or mercy of the Lord, is spiritual, it's sure to uplift your spirit. Come to the Sunday Feast—for a taste of real food for the soul. See address list inside for the center nearest you.

