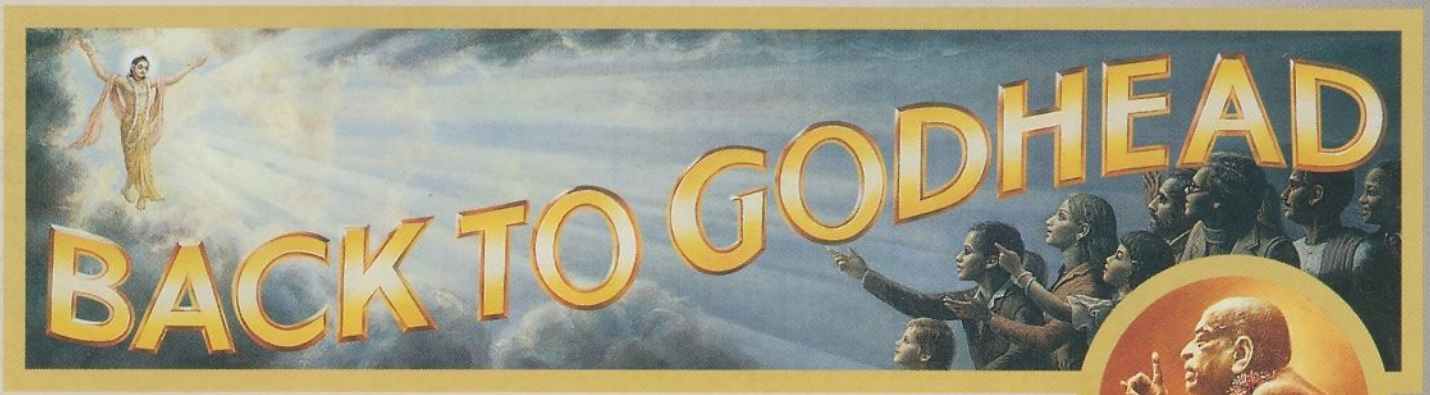


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

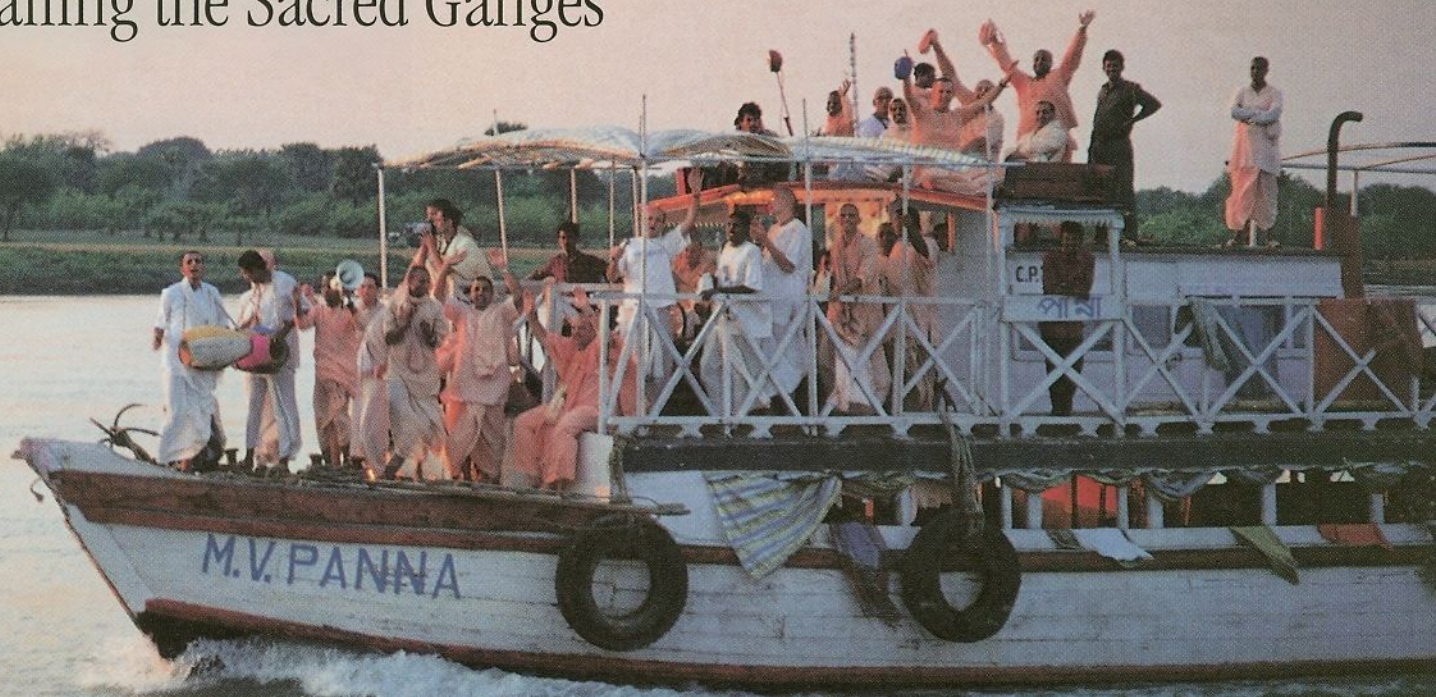


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GANGA SAFARI

Sailing the Sacred Ganges

THE VEDIC
PERSONALITY
INDEX
A Follow-Up Report



**ALSO: Women Serving the Lord
Vedānta in Varanasi • The Gītā's First Lesson
The Spiritual Basis of Vegetarianism**

Assisting you in your quest for the Absolute Truth

Back to Godh

Founded 1944 • Vol. 33, No. 2 • March/April 1999

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COVER

Pilgrims sail the sacred Ganges on their way to holy sites in West Bengal. Please see the article beginning on page 44. (Photo by Marīci Dāsa.)

WELCOME



This issue of *Back to Godhead* coincides with the annual Gaura Pūrṇimā festival, honoring the appearance five hundred years ago of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa for this age. The Vedic scriptures tell us that God regularly descends to reveal the most effective means to attain spiritual perfection in each age. As predicted in the *Vedas*, Lord Caitanya appeared in Bengal and promoted the congregational chanting of God's names, especially as found in the great mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Two articles in this issue deal specifically with Lord Caitanya and His followers. In "A Meeting in Varanasi," veteran BTG author Mathureśa Dāsa presents a short biography of Lord Caitanya in the context of the Lord's historic meeting with Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, a prominent follower of the philosophy of impersonalism. And in "Ganga Safari," Mahāmāyā Devī Dāsī, an American-born devotee living in India, tells of a pilgrimage down the Ganges to out-of-the-way holy places associated with Lord Caitanya and His followers.

We hope these article will increase your appreciation for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, known as the most merciful incarnation of the Lord.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Nāgarāja Dāsa
Editor

OUR PURPOSES

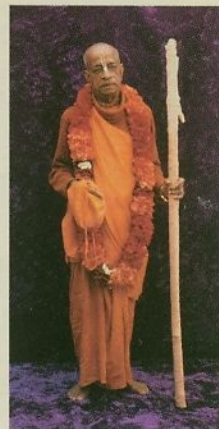
- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.



Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and source of all material and spiritual worlds



Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Kṛṣṇa's most recent incarnation, taught Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa



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

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement

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(under the direction of His Divine Grace
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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
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Letters

Renewed Interest

I have really appreciated the last few
issues of BTG. After sort of taking it
for granted, I have recently started
reading it carefully again. Thank you.
Gargaṣi Dāsa
New Vrindavan, West Virginia, USA

Stumbling Blocks

I have come across *Back to Godhead*
through a friend in Mauritius, and
most especially the correspondence
column. I like it. Now, I agree that
this movement is a very scientific
movement, and also I appreciate the
philosophical aspect of God-realiza-
tion. However, I have also studied the
main scriptures, and I have some
doubts that come as stumbling
blocks to fully surrender to Kṛṣṇa. I
am not trying to find fault, but trying
to clear my misunderstandings.

My doubts have to do with your
contention that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the
Supreme Godhead, above even Lord
Viṣṇu, Lord Śiva, and others. Here is
some evidence to the contrary.

(1) The *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma*, a
genuine book appearing in the
Padma Purāṇa, mentions that Lord
Viṣṇu is the original Supreme Lord
and He has *sahasra-nāma* ["a thou-
sand names"], of which "Rāma" and
"Kṛṣṇa" are prominent.

(2) In the *Mahābhārata*, *Udyoga
Parva*, and in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, it is
said that Lord Viṣṇu is Vāsudeva,
which means "the all-pervading
One."

(3) In the *Bhaviṣyat Purāṇa*, Lord
Śiva declares, "They who consider me
or Brahmā to be different from Viṣṇu
are endowed with crooked minds.
They are tortured in the hells below."

(4) In the *Harivaṁśa* (Kailāsa-
yātrā chapter) Lord Śiva addresses
Śrī Kṛṣṇa: "I am you, O all pervading
Lord. You are verily myself, O Janar-
dana. Between us, there is no differ-
ence, either in words or in their
import."

Mr. S. Ramsahye
Quatre Bornes, Mauritius

Kālakaṅṭha Dāsa Replies:

Śrīla Prabhupāda has proven a
consistent and logical understanding
of the scriptures based on bhakti,
surrender to Kṛṣṇa. So drawing solely
from what I have received from Śrīla
Prabhupāda, here are some answers
to your questions:

(1) To indicate the superiority of
Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes
a verse in the *Brahmānada Purāṇa*
which states that chanting the name of
Kṛṣṇa once is equal to chanting the
thousand names of Viṣṇu three times.
(See Śrīla Prabhupāda's Purports to
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā*
9.32-33.)

(2) Lord Kṛṣṇa has many incarna-
tions and expansions, and Lord Viṣṇu
is in the category of full expansions,
those that display the omnipotence of
God. So, like Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Viṣṇu
can be called Vāsudeva, or all-
pervading, but that doesn't mean He
is the origin of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

In the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.39 and
5.33), Lord Brahmā says:

*rāmādi-mūrtiṣu kalā-niyamena tiṣṭhan
nānāvātāram akarod bhuvaneṣu kintu
kṛṣṇaḥ svayaṁ samabhavat paramaḥ
pumān yo
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ
bhajāmi*

"I worship the Supreme Personality
of Godhead, Govinda [Kṛṣṇa], who is
always situated in various incarna-
tions such as Rāma, Nṛsimha, and
many sub-incarnations as well, but
who is the original Personality of
Godhead known as Kṛṣṇa, and who
incarnates personally also."

*advaitam acyutam anādim ananta-rūpam
ādyam purāṇa-puruṣaṁ nava-
yauvanam ca
vedeṣu durlabham adurlabham āma-
bhaktau
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ
bhajāmi*

"I worship the Supreme Personality
of Godhead, Govinda [Kṛṣṇa], who is
the original person—absolute, infal-
lible, without beginning. Although

expanded into unlimited forms, He is still the same original, oldest person, always appearing as a fresh youth. Such eternal, blissful, all-knowing forms of the Lord are usually understood by the best Vedic scholars, but they are always manifest to pure, unalloyed devotees.”

To further clarify Kṛṣṇa’s relationship with His incarnations, Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “There is no difference, however, among Them. This is very nicely explained in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.46): *dīpārcir eva hi daśāntaram abhyupetya*. With one candle one may light a second candle, with the second a third and then a fourth, and in this way one can light thousands of candles, and no candle is inferior to another in distributing light. Every candle has the full potential candlepower, but there is still the distinction that one candle is the first, another the second, another the third, and another the fourth. Similarly, there is no difference between the immediate expansion of the Lord and His secondary expansion.”

Kṛṣṇa appears in countless incarnations, including Lord Viṣṇu. They are all equally worshipable, and yet Lord Kṛṣṇa holds a few special distinctions. An important verse in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.28) states, *ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ pumaṣḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*: “All the above-mentioned incarnations are either plenary portions or portions of the plenary portions of the Lord, but Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead.”

(3) Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva are known as “qualitative incarnations” of Lord Viṣṇu, an expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Lord Brahmā is in charge of the mode of passion, and Lord Śiva the mode of ignorance. Brahmā and Śiva are in fact devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Viṣṇu. Lord Brahmā is the head of the *sampradāya* (disciple succession) to which ISKCON belongs, and Lord Śiva is known as the greatest devotee of Lord Viṣṇu (*vaiṣṇavānām yathā śambhuḥ*).

As great devotees and partial incarnations, Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva should not be considered different from Lord Kṛṣṇa. They are one with His purpose and desire. At the same time, they are not Kṛṣṇa. They are endowed with many of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s qualities, but they are not fully empowered (*viṣṇu-tattva*) expansions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore they are not God, but exalted demigods, empowered by the Supreme Lord to fulfill essential purposes.

(4) Lord Caitanya taught the doctrine of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, which means the inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference of the Supreme Lord and all other living beings. We are one with God because we are also spiritual by nature, but we are different from Him because He is infinite and we are small.

We can also be said to be one with God when we are one with Him in purpose, as is the case with Lord Śiva and other exalted beings. In the verse you quote, Lord Śiva says that Lord Kṛṣṇa’s words are his words. We can easily understand this statement in the context of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*. If you say something and I repeat it, your words are my words, but I have not become you.

The statements of the Vedic scriptures may sometimes seem contradictory. So we have to hear from self-realized souls like Śrīla Prabhupāda. I feel fortunate to have his guidance in understanding the Vedic conclusions. If we try to track down Kṛṣṇa through intellectual prowess, we’ll be unsuccessful. We need Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, delivered by His pure devotees, to understand Him.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. ❁

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What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on in the modern world a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five milleniums ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya’s movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

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 held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in **evade**, long **ī** like the **i** in **pique**. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **rim**, and **ṛ** like the **ch** in **chair**. Pronounce consonants like **ch**, **jh**, and **dh** as in **staunch-heart**, **hedgehog**, and **red-hot**. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean “servant.” For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means “servant of Kṛṣṇa.”



ARJUNA'S FIRST LESSON

*When Arjuna accepts his friend Kṛṣṇa as his guru,
Kṛṣṇa begins His teachings with a reprimand.*

• • •

A lecture given in Los Angeles on August 17, 1973

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*śrī bhagavān uvāca
aśocyān anvaśocas tvam
prajñā-vādānś ca bhāṣase
gatāsūn agatāsūnś ca
nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ*

“The Blessed Lord said: While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor the dead.”—*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.11



“A human being who identifies this body made of three elements with his self, who considers the by-products of the body to be his kinsmen, who considers the land of birth worshipable, and who goes to the place of pilgrimage simply to take a bath rather than meet men of transcendental knowledge there, is to be considered like an ass or a cow.”

What is the body? *Kuṇape tri-dhātuke*. It is a bag of three elements:

kapha, *pitta*, and *vāyu*, or mucus, bile, and air, or a combination of flesh, bone, blood, mucus, stool, urine, and so on. But foolish persons take this lump of bones and flesh to be the self: “I am this body.”

No learned man will think like that, but the whole world is misled under this conception. This is animal mentality. Animals think like that, not learned men. The learned man will say *ahaṁ brahmāsmi*: “I am a spirit soul. I am a servant of God.” This is learned speaking, “I am not this body.”

Arjuna has accepted Kṛṣṇa as his spiritual master. The spiritual master has the right to rebuke the disciple to give proper direction, just as the teacher or father has that right. Although Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are friends, Arjuna has accepted Kṛṣṇa as his spiritual master. The spiritual master should not speak

WHAT CAN BE LIVING or dead? The body. Kṛṣṇa chided Arjuna: “The behavior you are showing is not that of a learned man.” *Nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ*. Indirectly Kṛṣṇa said, “You do not know things as they are. You are not learned; you are a fool.” Even though Arjuna had spoken many things in support of his being nonviolent and not wanting to kill his kinsmen, Kṛṣṇa chided him for being in the bodily concept of life.

Those in the bodily concept of life can speak many learned things, but after all they are fools.

*yasyātma-buddhi-kuṇape tri-dhātuke
sva-dhīḥ kalatrādiṣu bhauma īḍya-dhīḥ
yat-tūrtha-buddhīḥ salile na karhicij
janeśv abhijñeṣu sa eva go-kharah*

Painting by Yadurāṇī Devī Dāsī

We conclude from Kṛṣṇa's words that anyone in the bodily concept of life is not learned; he's a fool.



any compromising words, as is done between friends. He must say the right things: "You are wrong. Don't talk nonsense. You are talking like a very learned man, but you do not know anything."

CONDITIONS OF THE BODY

The body exists in two conditions: when the living force is there, and when the living force is gone. The body moves because the living force is there. As soon as the living force is gone, this nice body will no longer move. And it will decompose. "Dust thou art; dust thou shall be."

Earth, water, fire, air, sky—these five gross elements are the ingredients of the body. As soon as the soul leaves the body, the earth energy goes to the earth, the water energy goes to the water, and so on. That is a scientific law, called conservation of energy. The energy is never lost. It goes back to the original stock.

Without the living force, the body is called dead; with the living force, the body is called living. A learned man does not lament for the body in either case. A learned man knows Brahman, or spirit. He has realized Brahman. *Brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā*. One on the *brahma-bhūtaḥ* stage can understand, "I am not the body; I am separate from the body."

In former ages this was common knowledge. We can see it displayed five thousand years ago, when the Battle of Kurukṣetra was fought. The *kṣatriyas*, or warriors, were fighting one another severely, but still they were not in the bodily concept of life. But Arjuna, a *kṣatriya*, was so overcome with the bodily concept of life that Kṛṣṇa chided him: "You are talking like a learned man, but you are not a learned man."

We conclude from Kṛṣṇa's words that anyone in the bodily concept of life is not learned; he's a fool. So this world, now at least, is a fool's paradise. No one is learned, because everyone is

working under the bodily concept of life.

In reproaching Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa took the first step in educating him, just as a teacher, before giving a lesson, may first tell the student, "You are writing incorrectly."

With this verse the *Bhagavad-gītā* is now actually being spoken. Kṛṣṇa states the first principle to Arjuna: "You do not know anything. Don't talk as if you are a learned man."

THE THREE QUALITIES

Each of us in the same position as Arjuna, talking as if learned. Yesterday two young men came to see me. They spoke no philosophy, only nonsense. One of them was talking about stopping starvation, as if he had taken a contract to stop starvation. But starvation is due to the laws of nature. You cannot stop it.

There are three qualities of nature—goodness, passion, and ignorance—and the natural laws go on under these three qualities. Therefore we shall always find three classes or statuses of living conditions. That will be explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Different species of life are everywhere, because the three qualities act everywhere. For example, there are some good trees, which produce nice fruits and flowers, and there are trees with no fruit and no flowers. They may live for a very long time, but they serve no useful purpose. Any tree that does not give us nice fruit or nice flowers is sinful.

There are also pious animals and sinful animals. The cow is a pious animal, and the dog is a sinful animal. Among the birds, the crow is sinful, and ducks, swans, and peacocks are pious.

Similarly, in human society there are pious men and sinful men. If one has wealth, beauty, high birth, or good education, these are signs that one was pious in the previous life. The oppo-

site of these indicates impiety in one's previous life.

So the three qualities—goodness, passion, and ignorance—are working everywhere. Therefore, there must always be three classes: high class, middle class, and low class. You cannot make anyone classless. That is not possible. As long as the bodily concept of life is present, there must be these three classes. And those who are condemned must suffer. Everyone is condemned in the material world. But there are first-class condemned, second-class condemned, and third-class condemned.

UNCHANGABLE DESTINY

You cannot stop the natural occurrence of first class, second class, and third class. For example, fifty years ago when I was in Bombay, I would see a class of men living on the footpath. Now the same class of men is still there. Today everyone is getting more money, but still the condition is the same. Even if you get more money, the other circumstances will force you to stay in the same condition you were in fifty years ago. That is called destiny. You cannot change your destiny. That is not possible.

Therefore the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* tells us not to try to change our destiny. Everyone is trying to change his destiny. "I am poor man; I must become a very rich man." But you cannot change your destiny.

In this world every one of us is bound by the laws of karma, destiny. By destiny we must get a certain amount of happiness and distress. There is always a mixture of happiness and distress. You cannot have unadulterated happiness here. Unadulterated happiness, real happiness, can be achieved in the spiritual world, not in the material world. Here we have to enjoy and suffer a certain amount of happiness and certain amount of distress. We cannot

change that. That is the law of nature in the material world.

Therefore the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says, *tasyaiva hetoḥ prayeteta kovido na labhyate yad bhramatām upary adhaḥ*. People are wandering within the material world in different forms of life under different conditions. But they are not getting information of Kṛṣṇa. That is their misfortune. So during this period of continuous wandering in different species of life on different planets, one who is fortunate—who is actually anxious to unite with the Supreme Lord—contacts a guru. How does one get this consciousness, this desire to unite with the Lord? By associating with devotees. We are holding this class, and even outsiders who come can understand something, and they can then become serious to understand God and how to go back home, back to Godhead. Then Kṛṣṇa helps at once. That is the process.

Kṛṣṇa is there within your heart. As soon as you become a little serious, Kṛṣṇa is ready. He is sitting with you as a friend, simply looking for the opportunity to help when you choose to come back to Him. That is Kṛṣṇa. He's always sitting with you. But we are not willing to go back home, back to Godhead. We want to become God in the material world. That is our position. Instead of going back home, back to Godhead, to live with God, we want to become God here. That is our position. Therefore we are suffering.

SERVANTS OF GOD

Nowhere can you be God. God is one. Nobody can be equal to Him or above Him. Everyone is subordinate to God. But those who are not learned—foolish people—try to be happy in the material world by adjustment and by trying to become God. That is atheism and the demoniac tendency. But those advanced in knowledge know, "We are eternally servants of God; we cannot become God. Better to remain servants of God. That is our happiness."

Those in the bodily concept of life cannot advance in this real knowledge—that we are eternally servants of God. That is our constitutional position. But if I deny that—"No, I am not a servant"



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Know things as they are; then talk. Otherwise, it is better not to talk.



—then I become a servant of *māyā*, the illusory energy of God. I have to remain a servant. That is my constitutional position.

One must first understand one's identity. That is the first lesson given by Kṛṣṇa: "You are lamenting for the body, but the body is not your identity. You are thinking incorrectly."

If your coat is destroyed, that does not mean you are destroyed. If your car is destroyed, that does not mean you are finished. Real knowledge is to know, "I am not the car; I am not the coat; I am not the body." Although sometimes we become a little sorry in relation to the car, coat, or body, our identity is different from these. So Kṛṣṇa says, "You are talking like a learned man, but you do not know your identity. You are not the body."

FOOLISH TALK

Anyone not in perfect knowledge should not take the position of talking like a learned man. That is cheating, and that is foolishness. First of all know things as they are; then talk. Otherwise, it is better not to talk than to talk foolishly. Therefore, sometimes in spiritual advancement there is a process called *maunam*, which means not speaking. If a disciple is too foolish, the spiritual master may order him, "Don't talk. Please remain silent." Because if he talks, he'll simply talk nonsense. Why should he spoil his energy by such nonsense talking? Better to stop talking. Meditation is also like that. If instead of talking or doing nonsense one stays silent for some time, that is good for him.

Meditation and *maunam*, silence, are not meant for devotees, but for the less intelligent. The devotees' business is to talk always about Kṛṣṇa. Why should they stop talking? *Maunam*? No. *Kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that one has to chant and talk of Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day.

Where is the question of silence? Silence is for those who are nonsense. But for those who are actually advanced, there is no such restriction. *Vācānīsi vaikuṇṭha-guṇānuvarṇane*. We should use our talking power to describe the glories of the Lord. That is *kīrtana*.

When Parīkṣit Mahārāja learned he would die in seven days, he went on hearing the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from Śukadeva Gosvāmī twenty-four hours a day, without even eating or drinking. And they both got salvation; they went back home, back to Godhead. How? One was hearing, and one was chanting. And what was the subject matter? Kṛṣṇa, that's all.

So subjects about Kṛṣṇa are so nice that you do not have to do anything but simply hear. You have your God-given ears. You can simply sit down and hear. *Satām prasaṅgān mama vīrya-samvido bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ-kathāḥ*. *Sat-saṅga* means talking about Kṛṣṇa, hearing about Kṛṣṇa—not from a paid reciter, but from the self-realized devotee, who is working for the Lord. *Satām* means "devotees," and *sat-saṅga* means "the association of devotees." *Sat* means "devotee" or "God" or "spiritual." So *sat-saṅga* means "spiritual association." The more you associate with *sat*, with devotees, the more you become liberated.

In the material world we are simply in bad association, *duḥ-saṅga*. So if we want to get rid of this bad association, we must associate with the devotees. *Sat-saṅgāt mukta duḥ-saṅga*.

Arjuna has the best opportunity. He's hearing from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He's so fortunate. He's talking with the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face, directly. Our business should be to follow the footsteps of Arjuna. How? As Arjuna understood *Bhagavad-gītā*, try to understand in that way. Arjuna accepted Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Paraṁ brahma paraṁ dhāma*

pavitram paramam bhavān: "Kṛṣṇa, You are the Supreme Person, the most pure." Even if we do not understand *Bhagavad-gītā*, if we follow Arjuna we can understand: "Arjuna has understood like this—that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Brahman, Supreme Personality of Godhead." That is called receiving knowledge in *paramparā*, or disciplic succession. We don't have to tax our brain trying to understand Kṛṣṇa. We have poor intelligence, so we cannot understand in that way. But if we simply accept what Arjuna says, then we are perfect.

If you follow the authorities, then you understand. *Dharmasya tattvaṁ nihitāṁ guhāyam*. It is very difficult to understand what is actually religion. People are puzzled. But we can understand if we follow the *mahājanas*, the great spiritual authorities. The Vedic scriptures mention twelve *mahājanas*, including Brahmā, Śiva, Manu, Kapila, the Kumāras. If we follow their footsteps, we can understand what is actually religion.

Or we can follow Arjuna: "Arjuna has understood like this, so let me understand in the same way." That's all. Then we understand *Bhagavad-gītā*. But if we want to speak in a very scholarly way without understanding Kṛṣṇa, that is simply a waste of time.

Many so-called scholars and philosophers are doing that. They do not understand Kṛṣṇa, but they talk only nonsense, and such talks are very much appreciated by others. That is described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *śva-vid-varāha-uṣṭra-kharaiḥ saṁstutaḥ puruṣaḥ paśuḥ*. These rascals—so-called scholars, so-called incarnations—are accepted by a similar class of animals. The Vedic method is to follow the footsteps of the predecessor spiritual masters, who understand things fully. Then we'll also understand, and our life will be successful.

Thank you very much. 🌸



Otherworldliness

by Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami

AT A *BACK TO GODHEAD* editorial meeting in the mid 1980s, we discussed a letter from a reader criticizing us for not being relevant. Why, if we claimed that Kṛṣṇa consciousness could solve real problems—crime, war, famine—were we keeping those solutions to ourselves? Why weren't we making our magazine the cutting edge of spiritual journalism?

As we discussed the criticism, we began to feel we needed to revolutionize *Back to Godhead*.

Suddenly, one of our staff members said, "Wait, it doesn't sound Kṛṣṇa conscious to place so much emphasis on this world. Our philosophy is otherworldly."

Otherworldly? That sounded unattractive. But he was right. Śrīla Prabhupāda did not teach us to make ourselves at home in this world, or even to worry too much about fixing it. He taught us to focus on the spiritual world. The material world cannot be fixed; it's supposed to be miserable.

"Otherworldly" has several meanings. My dictionary defines it first in a neutral way: "relating to the spiritual or imaginary world." We live in the material world but fix our minds on another world, spiritual or imaginary. The second definition is less neutral: "impractical, unworldly." An otherworldly person has no concern for material values or pursuits; he or she lacks sophistication, is perhaps naive.

In the Kṛṣṇa conscious sense, "otherworldly" means we aspire to transfer to the spiritual world when we leave the body and we learn to live in that aspiration while in the material world. Our editorial staff

decided BTG would be relevant by focusing on this unique attempt to become otherworldly.

Three basic ways to become otherworldly in the Kṛṣṇa conscious sense are to hear about the spiritual world, to practice detachment from this world, and to gradually learn to live heart and soul in the spiritual world even while residing in this one.

Hearing about the spiritual world is important because it develops our desire to go there. Śrīla Prabhupāda makes a similar statement in his *Bhagavad-gītā* commentary. After Kṛṣṇa presents a few details about the spiritual world, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "One should be captivated by this information. He should desire to transfer himself to that eternal world and extricate himself from this false reflection of reality." (Bg. 15.6) If not captivated by information of the spiritual world, we will remain captivated by what we hope to achieve in this one.

The Vedic literature is unique in that it gives so much information about the spiritual world. The more we hear from the Vedas about the spiritual world, the more attracted to it we can become, and the more otherworldly. Then we have to cultivate detachment from this world. The scriptures point out, and our experience confirms, that this world is a place of suffering. We should want to leave it. Human life is short. The attachments we have spent our life cultivating will determine what happens at the end of this life, whether we will return to the miserable world or transfer to the spiritual one.

This is what Śrīla Prabhupāda

taught. He himself was a perfect blend of down-to-earth and otherworldly. People to whom Prabhupāda spoke often tried to bring him down to what they considered a more relevant position. He seemed to speak only the ideal. But Prabhupāda wouldn't budge. He argued for the ultimate reality of the spiritual world and crashed through worldly arguments. Did they think they could help the poor? How? Did they think their peace talks would amount to anything practical? They were fools to think so. The real solution—and he asserted it again and again—was to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Yet he was no dreamer. He lived in a spiritual reality as tangible to him as our world is to us. He spoke from experience. He never taught us to hate this world, but to create love for the next. He taught us to live in the here and now, but in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That requires seeing Kṛṣṇa in this world and doing everything to attain our otherworldly goal. Prabhupāda didn't teach cold detachment, but a life of love of God.

Yes, this world is temporary, but it comes from Kṛṣṇa. Yes, we should renounce it, but we should do so by using it completely in His service. Don't form attachments here. Let worldliness grow into otherworldliness; don't live a secular, spiritually forgetful life. Live with ultimate reality.

Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami is the author of many books, including a six-volume biography of Śrīla Prabhupāda.



Purified Eating

by Ravi Gupta

AN INDIAN GUEST at our Hare Kṛṣṇa center in Boise once told us, "My father was very strict in his daily habits and spiritual practices. He would eat only food cooked by his own hands." My father, Anantarūpa Dāsa, has similar remembrances of his grandmother. She would eat only food prepared at home. Many Indians can relate similar experiences with parents, grandparents, or friends.

What is the rationale behind a practice so difficult to maintain? Why were members of previous generations so strict in what they ate?

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.13) gives us a hint: "The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food which is offered first for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin." At home, "offering food for sacrifice" usually means offering food to whatever deities one worships on one's home altar. But "offering food for sacrifice" especially means offering food to Lord Kṛṣṇa, since He is called Yajña ("sacrifice"). And Lord Kṛṣṇa tells us when He will accept our offering: "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it." (Bg. 9.26).

So what guarantee is there that the food one eats at the house of an acquaintance or in a restaurant was cooked with love and devotion for Śrī Kṛṣṇa? In fact, in many cases we cannot know, and so we often "eat only sin."

The food we eat is important in determining who we are; it influences our consciousness. For example, if we eat bread cooked at a restaurant or factory, the consciousness of those who cooked the bread enters into it

and affects us. Slowly, by repeatedly eating the bread, our mentality and desires will become like those of the people who prepared the grains.

This principle is not as esoteric as it may seem. When an artist creates a painting, he expresses his thoughts, desires, and emotions through the medium of the art, and the viewer of the painting takes in the artist's mental state. Similarly, when a computer receives information from outside

Yamarāja Dāsa



Offering food on a home altar.

sources, it may also receive a virus, which—unseen and unheard—slowly destroys the computer's software.

Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed his disciples to follow the Vedic tradition of not eating food cooked outside the home or temple. He writes, "Indeed, a devotee should be very strict in not accepting food from a nondevotee, especially food prepared in restaurants or hotels or on airplanes. An *avaiṣṇava* [nondevotee] may be a vegetarian and a very clean cook, but because he cannot offer the food he

cooks to Viṣṇu, it cannot be accepted as *mahā-prasāda*. It is better that a Vaiṣṇava abandon such food as untouchable."

But how can we maintain this ancient Vedic principle today? The modern world is one of global travel, a hectic pace of life, and large networks of friends and acquaintances. Eating outside—in restaurants, hotels, and airplanes—is a widespread social phenomenon, if not an obligation and necessity. How can we maintain our Kṛṣṇa conscious principles in the face of this?

Indeed, it would have been very difficult in ordinary circumstances. But by Śrīla Prabhupāda's mercy, it's not impossible. Let me give you an example.

My father travels frequently on business trips around the world. His company provides him with airfare, hotel rooms, and money for food. But while his colleagues may go to the nearest restaurant to have lunch, my father has to make his own arrangements. Sometimes finding a good meal is difficult, especially when *prasādam* from home runs out, so he eats only raw foods—fruits, salad, nuts. But when the need is greatest, Kṛṣṇa always helps, and somehow or other he will find the local ISKCON temple, a Govinda's Restaurant, or the home of a devotee. So he can eat *prasādam* almost anywhere he goes, and he can rest assured the food was cooked with devotion and offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Ravi Gupta, who turns seventeen in April, lives at the Hare Kṛṣṇa center in Boise, Idaho, USA. The center is run by his parents. In May, Ravi will graduate from Boise State University with a B.A. in mathematics and philosophy.



Terminator Seeds and Social Order

by Hare Kṛṣṇa Devī Dāsī

LORD KRṢṂA SAYS THAT godless materialists produce “unbeneficial, horrible works meant to destroy the world.” If you think this just means nuclear bombs, check out the latest from Monsanto, the folks who brought us Bovine Growth Hormones. On March 3, 1998, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Delta & Pine Land Co. (acquired in May by Monsanto) announced they had obtained a U.S. patent for a technique that genetically alters a seed in such a way that the crop grown from that seed will produce seeds that won’t germinate.

That could be a big problem for traditional farmers, who use seeds from their own crops. So why invent such a seed—coined “the Terminator seed”? Monsanto says the seed will benefit the hungry of the world, because if everyone has to buy new seeds every year, that will encourage seed companies to invest more money in developing improved seeds with high protein, extra vitamins, more insecticides, herbicide-resistant traits, and so on.

But Chilean agronomist Camila Montecinos expressed alarm: “It’s likely that pollen from crops carrying the Terminator trait will infect the fields of farmers who either reject or can’t afford the technology. . . . When farmers reach into their bins to sow seed the following season they would discover—too late—that some of their seed is sterile. This could lead to very high yield losses. . . . We could see . . . a general—even dramatic—decline in food security for the poorest farm communities.”

Others worry that insects and winds could bring sterilization to the fields of farmers who cannot afford

to buy seeds. “It’s terribly dangerous,” says Hope Shand, research director for RAFI (Rural Advancement Foundation International). “Half the world’s farmers are poor and can’t afford to buy seed every growing season. Yet poor farmers grow 15 to 20 percent of the world’s food, and they directly feed at least 1.4 billion people. . . . These farmers depend upon saved seed . . .”

The Terminator seed could drive hundreds of millions of farmers out of agriculture. Some countries are banning the import of the seed.

Noting that science has come up with a potentially devastating product, M. S. Swaminathan, one of India’s foremost agricultural experts, observed, “Science gives you a lot of power, and you must have an ethical code to exercise that power.”

To have a potent ethical code, society’s primary goal must be spiritual advancement, rather than material. People drunk with their quest for power and willing to create devastating products can co-opt a spiritually lame society. Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that those who believe that material advancement is the goal of civilization are demoniac.

In a *varṇāśrama* society each person serves the Lord according to his or her ability and thereby gains satisfaction. But a society not organized for spiritual goals is driven by lust, greed, and competition. Those who have the greatest intellect do not devote their intellect to understanding spiritual science, as *brāhmaṇas* would in a *varṇāśrama* society. Instead they become salaried scientific workers. And rather than providing spiritual guidance to the heads of state, they become servants of greedy merchants

and businessmen.

Unlike *kṣatriyas* in a *varṇāśrama* society, the heads of state in a materialistic society do not take guidance from *brāhmaṇas* to organize society for the spiritual satisfaction of the citizens. Rather, leaders disempower themselves, bowing down to the interests of businessmen who run large corporations—at the expense of the welfare of the common citizen.

In a spiritually lame society, farmers and businessmen do not protect cows, provide food, or support saintly persons and spiritual activities. Rather, in large agribusinesses, farm workers become dependent serfs.

Finally, neither the *brāhmaṇas* with their humility, austerity, and spiritualized intellect nor the *kṣatriyas* with their analytical skills, power, and fatherly love of their citizens control society. Rather, control goes to the merchants, the wealthy corporations, whose criteria for success is profit.

A spiritually lame society will always create products like the Terminator seed. Only a spiritual society can produce things that benefit the world, because beneficial acts are possible only when society is devoted to pleasing and understanding God. The first step in creating a harmonious spiritual society? Sincerely chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to purify our hearts and minds, so that we may gain the humility to understand the desires of the Lord. Then there will be no more Terminator seeds.

Formerly the editor of Hare Kṛṣṇa Rural Life, Hare Kṛṣṇa Devī Dāsī is currently compiling a five-volume series of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings on varṇāśrama and farm community development.

REVERENCE FOR ALL LIFE

The key is to acknowledge the origin of all life.

by Girirāja Swami

I RECEIVED A PHONE CALL from Sri Bhari B. R. Malhotra, a prominent industrialist based in Pune, India, inviting me to speak at a conference on “Reverence for All Life.” Considering the Malhotras’ relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda—he had called them “our good friends”—and wanting to present the message of Kṛṣṇa, I accepted.

The list of the conference organizers was impressive. Prominent representatives from various fields and cultures had joined together to promote vegetarianism.

The conference was held on the grounds of the most prestigious hotel in Pune. Gathered on stage were distinguished leaders from the fields of religion, politics, science, business, social work, and even the military. Thousands of delegates from around the world sat in the audience.

The program began with a representative from each religion reciting a short prayer of invocation. Then all the participants on stage joined to light a sacred lamp. One after another the distinguished speakers appealed for compassion, nonviolence, and reverence for all life. Finally my turn came:

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

“I am very pleased to be with you today and wish to express my gratitude to the organizers, especially my dear friend Sri Bhari Malhotra, his older brother, Sri S. P. Malhotra, and all the other great souls who have helped organize and make this function so successful.

“We are here to appreciate and develop reverence for all life. The *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is a scientific explanation of the supreme soul and His relationship with the
(please turn to page 38)

Painting by Yadurāṇī Devī Dāsī



“The Bhagavad-gītā explains that all life emanates from the supreme life, or God, known in Sanskrit as Kṛṣṇa. When we have reverence for God, naturally we have reverence for all life. If we love God, naturally we will love all living entities, who come from Him.”

A Meeting in Varanasi

*One of the greatest scholars of his day
is about to meet the source of all knowledge.*

by Mathureśa Dāsa

PART 1

THE CITY OF Varanasi lies four hundred miles northwest of Calcutta on the northern bank of the Ganges River. Terraced stone landings, or ghats, leading down to water's edge extend for four miles along the riverbank. Throngs of pilgrims descend to bathe in the sacred water or climb to explore narrow, winding streets and visit the city's more than 1,500 temples. While there are historical records of pilgrimages to Varanasi dating back to the seventh century, to the faithful this most sacred of destinations has existed as a bustling holy city for much longer. Many of Varanasi's temples were destroyed in the seventeenth century during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb, yet today the view from across the Ganges at Ramnagar suggests timeless splendor.

The preeminent scholar in Varanasi at the beginning of the sixteenth century was Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, a renounced priest, or *sannyāsi*, in the line of Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya. Prakāśānanda and his colleagues were masters of the *Vedas*, the Sanskrit literature that includes extensive writings in every basic field of knowledge. There are Vedic texts on law, art, medicine, mathematics, and other worldly sciences, as well as on yoga, religion, philosophy,

and mysticism. *Veda* means "knowledge," and in the broadest sense all knowledge is part of the *Vedas*.

Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī was particularly adept at analyzing the codes of the highly philosophical *Vedānta-sūtra*. The Vedic texts, divided by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the literary incarnation of God, culminate in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, in which Vyāsadeva expounds upon the eternal nature, origin, and purpose of existence. *Anta* means "end," so the *Vedānta-sūtra* establishes that all fields of knowledge are meant to reach the end, or goal, of knowledge by understanding the meaning of life.

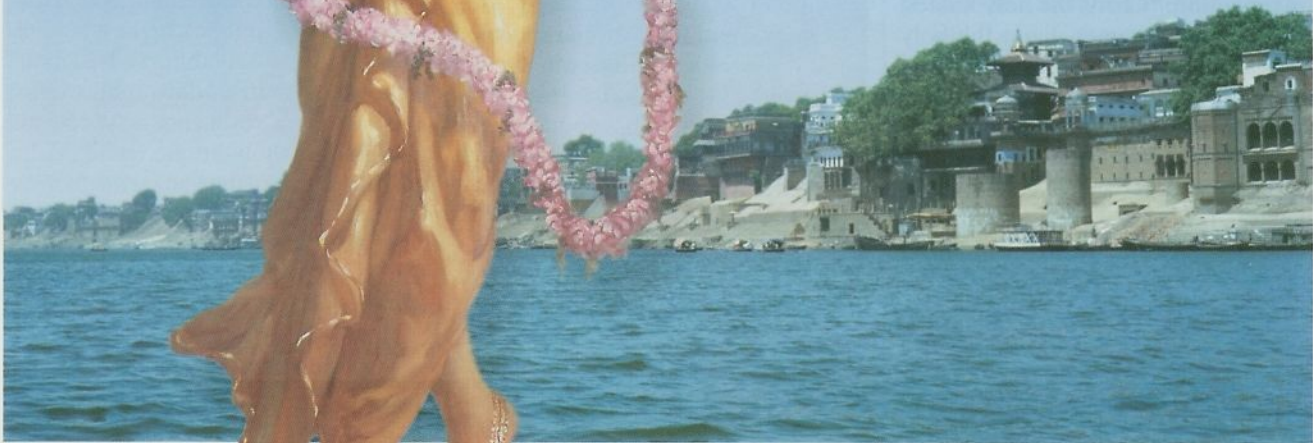
During a lecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1968 Śrīla Prabhupāda challenged his audience to explain why, with all the fields of knowledge at their university, they didn't have a department to study the difference between a living body and a dead body. We study medicine to keep our bodies healthy, politics and sociology to keep them organized, psychology to manage our minds. All these departments benefit living bodies and minds, but what is that life, that living energy we so attentively serve? Where is *that* knowledge? Or in other words, where is *Vedānta*? Lacking a *Vedānta* department, the other departments are incomplete.

There was no such lack at Varanasi. As a peerless commentator on the

Vedānta-sūtra, Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī was dean of the Varanasi scholars, who as professors of the *Vedas* were not mere dogmatists spouting creeds but genuine researchers, writers, and teachers drawn to essential truth. The city of Varanasi had long been a great center of learning and culture. With students arriving from all over India to obtain a comprehensive education in the Vedic wisdom, Varanasi was a hotbed of enlightenment. Prakāśānanda and his associates presided, enjoying their intellectual pursuits, their followings, and their tenure as leaders of an academic and cultural mecca.

The only disturbance to the peaceful academic atmosphere—a disturbance that has also surfaced today in modern college towns and other centers of enlightenment—was a noisy, enthusiastic band of Hare Kṛṣṇas chanting and dancing through the streets. With no apparent respect for even minimal academic decorum, these apparent fanatics, beating on drums and clashing hand cymbals, were gathering a following. Prakāśānanda noticed, among some of the simpler students and townspeople. Their twenty-eight-year-old leader, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who lived in Bengal, had a golden complexion and a thundering voice. Like Prakāśānanda and his colleagues, He was a *sannyāsi* in the disciplic line of Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya. But Śaṅkarācārya had

By teaching devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu enlivened the ancient city Varanasi, a great center of Vedic scholarship.



taught his followers to give up worldly pleasures like singing and dancing and to instead always study the *Vedānta-sūtra*. So who did this Kṛṣṇa Caitanya think He was, and what did He think He was doing?

Prakāśānanda began to openly criticize: “Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, although a *sannyāsī*, does not take interest in the study of Vedānta but instead always engages in congregational chanting and dancing. He is illiterate and therefore does not know his real function. Guided only by his sentiments, he wanders about in the company of other sentimentalists.” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 7.41-42)

It may have disturbed Prakāśānanda more to know that Kṛṣṇa Caitanya was far from illiterate. Before

accepting the *sannyāsa* order at the age of twenty-four, He had been known as Nimāi Paṇḍita and had run a popular Sanskrit academy of His own at Navadvīpa, in what is now West Bengal. Navadvīpa was an even more important center of learning than Varanasi. At this time in India, as in previous ages, scholarship had some of the flavor of modern sports events, with learned *paṇḍitas* challenging each other to compete in displays of erudition. While still a schoolboy, Nimāi Paṇḍita defeated many champion scholars, including Keśava Kāśmīrī, a *brāhmaṇa* from Kashmir who had won titles all over India. When Keśava Kāśmīrī came to Navadvīpa looking for some action, the local scholars hid in fear, leaving the contest to Nimāi.

NONVIOLENT PROTEST

After several years of showing His intellectual prowess, Nimāi Paṇḍita focused His energies on promoting *saṅkīrtana*, public congregational chanting and dancing in glorification of God. In Navadvīpa the loud chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s names had provoked the local Muslims to complain to Navadvīpa’s magistrate, or Kazi. The Kazi descended upon a chanting party one evening, broke a *saṅkīrtana* drum, and forbid further chanting on the streets of the city. In response Nimāi Paṇḍita organized a nonviolent protest, surrounding the Kazi’s house with thousands of chanting, dancing demonstrators. The Kazi was intimidated by the crowd, but Nimāi’s demeanor was peaceful. In a friendly exchange He convinced the

Vyāsadeva writes that in this age, simply by chanting the glories of the Lord, we can attain the highest perfection of spiritual life.



Kazi of the importance of chanting the Lord's names.

Like Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, Nimāi Paṇḍita was highly learned in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, but not for scholarship's sake. He knew well the many statements in the *Vedas* declaring that in the Kali-yuga, this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the means of self-realization (the goal of Vedānta) is to chant the names of God. A verse in the *Bṛhan-nāradiya Purāṇa* emphasizes this point by repetition: "Chant the holy names, chant the holy names, chant the holy names. In this age of quarrel there is no other way, no other way, no other way to achieve the goal of human life."

Although Nimāi chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra in particular, He taught that this "no other way" applies to any place and time, and to any recognized name of the Lord. A verse in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Vyāsadeva's own commentary on his *Vedānta-sūtra*, states that in previous ages meditation, religious rituals, or worshiping in the temple may have sufficed, but in this age these methods are effective only in conjunction with regular chanting. And again in the *Bhāgavatam*, Vyāsadeva writes that Kali-yuga is an ocean of faults with one saving quality: simply by chanting the glories of the Lord we can free ourselves of the material miseries and attain the highest perfection of spiritual life.

The *Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad* is even more specific, citing the full Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—and then asserting, "These sixteen words destroy the faults of the Age of Kali. After searching through all the *Vedas*, you will not find a better means of self-realization for this age."

With these and other verses on His lips and with the assistance of His many associates, Nimāi spread his *saṅkīrtana*

movement throughout Navadvīpa and into East Bengal. He married at an early age, but as a householder traveled frequently, leaving His young wife and elderly mother at home. *Saṅkīrtana* so absorbed him that He introduced a system of Sanskrit grammar based on Kṛṣṇa's names. Every word from His mouth was either chanting or glorification of the chanting.

On a pilgrimage to Gayā, Nimāi became a disciple of Īśvara Purī, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa in the line of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, and when Nimāi returned to Navadvīpa, his enthusiasm for the holy names grew ecstatic. It appears that Nimāi had a familiar youthful bent for loudness and all-nighters, so much so that this time it was the Hindus who complained to the Kazi:

Nimāi Paṇḍita was previously a very good boy, but since He has returned from Gayā He conducts Himself differently. Now He loudly sings all kinds of Kṛṣṇa songs, clapping, playing drums and hand bells, and making a tumultuous sound that deafens our ears. We do not know what He eats that makes him so crazy. He has made all the people practically mad by always performing congregational chanting. At night we cannot get any sleep; we are always kept awake.

(Ādi 17.206-9)

Even Nimāi Paṇḍita's students began to criticize what they considered His excessive absorption in the holy names. Although not personally bothered by the criticism, Nimāi took seriously His *saṅkīrtana* movement. He ambitiously desired to spread *saṅkīrtana* to every town and village of the world, giving everyone, whether educated or illiterate, access to Vedānta and to the perfection of life through the chanting of the holy names. If even His own students took Him lightly, how could He expand His mission?

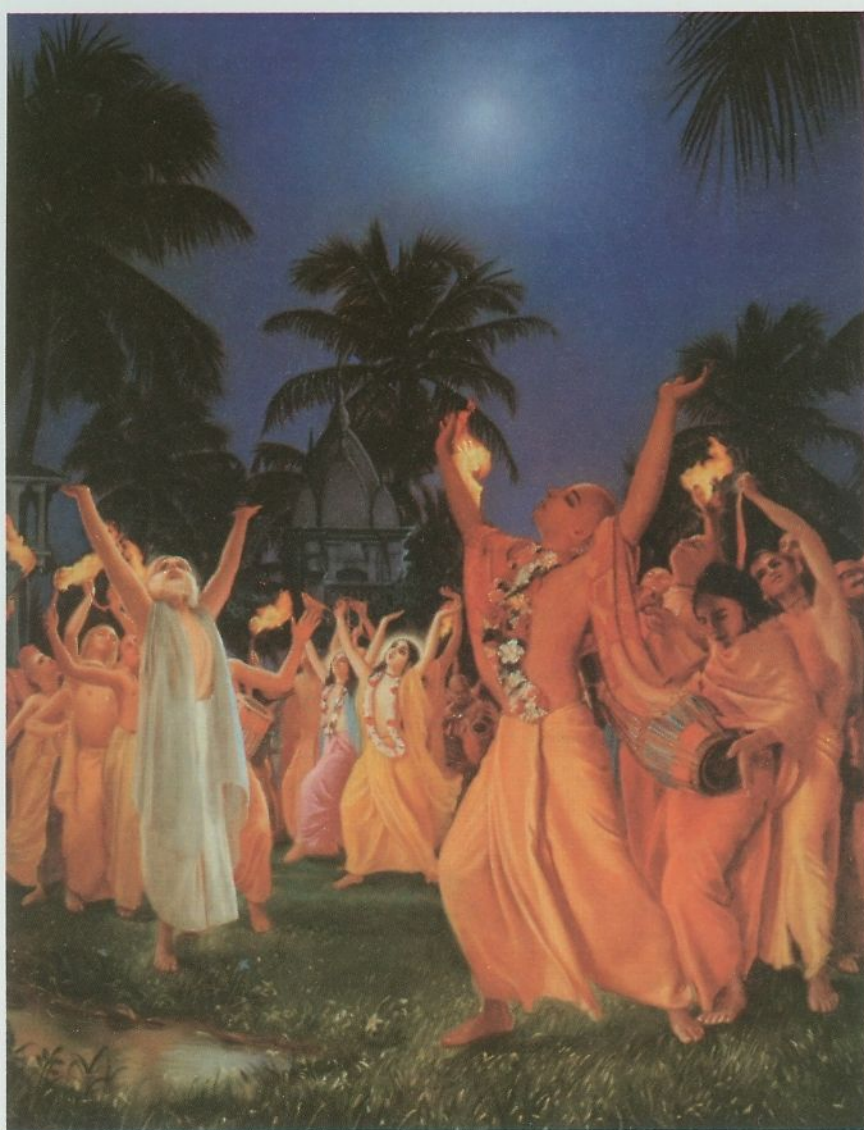
NIMĀI'S SANNYĀSA

So in the year 1510, at the age of twenty-four, leaving home for good, Nimāi traveled to the village of Katwa and accepted the *sannyāsa* order from Keśava Bhāratī, a *sannyāsī* of the Śaṅkarite school. It is still the custom in India to offer respect to a *sannyāsī*, and this was even more the case five hundred years ago. Nimāi wanted that public respect and attention for the benefit of the *saṅkīrtana* movement, which was, in turn, for the public's highest benefit. Although Nimāi abhorred Śaṅkarācārya's quasi-Buddhist philosophy, Śaṅkarācārya's influence was so strong that people thought one could accept *sannyāsa* only in the Śaṅkarite disciplic succession. So in pursuance of His mission, Nimāi took *sannyāsa* from Keśava Bhāratī, receiving the name Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī might have collected some of these details about the tall, golden *sannyāsī* now dancing and chanting through Varanasi's narrow streets had he asked around town. As dean of Varanasi's scholars he might have thus avoided his criticism of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

THE IDENTITY OF ŚRĪ KṚṢṆA CAITANYA

The fuller answer to "Who is Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, and what is He doing here in this center of quiet scholarship?" lay right under Prakāśānanda's nose in his rightly esteemed Vedic literature. In the *Mahābhārata*, the *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma-stotra* ("The Thousand Names of Viṣṇu") describes the Supreme Lord appearing as a householder with a golden complexion and an attitude of peaceful devotion and later accepting the *sannyāsa* order. The *Bhāgavatam* confirms that the Lord appears in different ages in different colors—white,



In an act of civil disobedience, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu leads a huge party of chanters to the house of the Muslim magistrate.

red, black, and yellow. White, red, and black having been accounted for in previous ages, the incarnation for the Age of Kali is yellow, or golden. The *Bhāgavatam* also states that in Kali-yuga the incarnation of God inaugurates the *saṅkīrtana* movement, always chants the name of Kṛṣṇa, and is in fact Kṛṣṇa Himself with a golden complexion:

*kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam
sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārsadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair
yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ*

“In the Age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation of Godhead

who constantly sings the name of Kṛṣṇa. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, and confidential companions.”

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is known as the *channa avatāra*, or “hidden incarnation,” because He never presented Himself as God or allowed anyone to call Him God. He always acted as God’s servant and as the servant of the Lord’s devotees. This age is so full of incarnation wannabes, so ridden with philosophies asserting that in the end we are all God, that God Himself demonstrates and relishes devotional service to Himself through the chanting of His names. As a grade-school teacher, to teach her students how to learn, sometimes pre-

tends to be learning her ABC’s, so in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya the Lord takes the role of His own devotee and demonstrates the art of His own devotional service.

Hearing of Prakāśānanda’s criticism, Lord Caitanya demonstrated how members of the *saṅkīrtana* movement should be unconcerned with their own prestige. To further *saṅkīrtana* the Lord had planned a trip to the holy city of Vṛndāvana, just south of present-day Delhi, and didn’t see any reason to alter His itinerary to defend His reputation by crossing swords with Varanasi’s elite. Intellectual tournaments were a thing of His past, of His heady school days. There was no need to interrupt His preaching for a debate. Better to push on the chanting of the holy names. There were plenty of receptive ears and many followers who needed His personal attention and instructions.

But Lord Caitanya’s followers in Varanasi were upset by Prakāśānanda’s remarks. It broke their hearts to hear their beloved Lord labeled an illiterate fool. At the same time they weren’t confident enough to confront Prakāśānanda themselves. What were they in comparison to this celebrated leader of Varanasi’s many faculties and academic departments? How could they present their case for the divinity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and for the transcendental stature of *saṅkīrtana* to a critic who could so expertly quote the Vedic scriptures, brandishing his learning and credentials?

When Lord Caitanya returned to Varanasi from Vṛndāvana, He stayed at the house of Candraśekhara, took His meals at the home of Tapana Mīśra, and spent two months instructing Sanātana Gosvāmī, the former prime minister of Bengal’s ruler, Nawab Hussein Shah, on the science of devotional service.

While Lord Caitanya in this way remained peacefully absorbed in building His *saṅkīrtana* movement, His two hosts grew increasingly unhappy, until one day both Candraśekhara and Tapana Mīśra appealed to Him: “How long can we tolerate the blasphemy of Your critics against Your conduct? We should give up our lives rather than hear such blasphemy. The local *san-nyāsīs* are all criticizing Your Holiness.

We cannot tolerate hearing such criticism, for this blasphemy breaks our hearts.”

Hearing this plea, Lord Caitanya remained indifferent to the criticism of Himself, but felt compassion for His hosts and other followers, understanding their distress. At that moment a *brāhmaṇa* came to the Lord with another appeal, this one an invitation.

“My dear Lord,” the *brāhmaṇa* said, “I have invited all the *sannyāsīs* of Varanasi to my home for lunch. My desires will be fulfilled if You also accept my invitation. My dear Lord, I know that You never mix with other *sannyāsīs*, but please be merciful unto me and accept my invitation.”

It was a long-standing custom for the *brāhmaṇas* of Varanasi to take turns inviting the local *sannyāsīs* to their homes. In this way there was a daily

gathering of *sannyāsīs*, a moveable faculty lunch. Lord Caitanya had always been absent, declining all invitations until this one, which He gracefully accepted to please Candraśekhara, Tapana Mīśra, and the *brāhmaṇa*. Here was a timely opportunity, made possible by His own omnipotent arrangement, to meet Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī in a congenial setting as fellow guests at a *brāhmaṇa*'s home.

Tapana Mīśra and Candraśekhara were overjoyed. They didn't know how to answer Prakāśānanda themselves. They didn't yet have confidence in their own learning or debating skills. But they had firm faith that their spiritual master, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, was the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He was Kṛṣṇa Himself, the author and final authority on *Vedānta-sūtra*, acting as His own devotee. In *Bhagavad-gītā*

(15.15) Kṛṣṇa declares, “I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness. By all the *Vedas*, I am to be known. Indeed, I am the compiler of *Vedānta*, and I am the knower of the *Vedas*.”

As faithful servants of Lord Caitanya, Candraśekhara and Tapana Mīśra aspired to become expert preachers of His mission who knew perfectly and could teach that *Vedānta*, the end of knowledge, is loving service to Kṛṣṇa, the supreme person, through the chanting of His names. For now, however, what they knew, giving them joy and relief in anticipation, was that Lord Caitanya, their own teacher, had agreed to meet Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, head of Varanasi's intellectual elite, for lunch. ☀

(continued in the next issue)



Kapilāśva Dāsa

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare

PRONUNCIATION: *Ha-ray, krish-na, raw-ma* (rhymes with “drama”)

Glossary

Ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

Balarāma—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.

Battle of Kurukṣetra—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.

Bhagavad-gītā—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to His friend and disciple Arjuna.

Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.

Dharma—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).

Godhead—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.

Gurukula—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally “the place of the guru”).

Hare Kṛṣṇa—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

ISKCON—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Japa—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.

Kali-yuga—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.

Karma—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.

Kīrtana—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).

Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His original transcendent form (see “Godhead”).

Mahābhārata—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.

Māyā—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.

Māyāvādī—one who regards the Absolute Truth as ultimately impersonal or void.

Modes of nature—the three qualities (goodness, passion, and ignorance) that hold sway over all action in the material world.

Nityānanda—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Prasādam—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to Him with devotion (literally “mercy”).

Purāṇas—Vedic histories.

Rādhārāṇī—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.

Rathayātrā—“chariot festival”: a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Purī, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, “the Lord of the universe”).

Sannyāsa—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.

Śrī—an honorific meaning “opulent” (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).

Śrīla Prabhupāda—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas*, which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.

Supersoul—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.

Upaniṣads—the 108 essential philosophical treatises that appear within the *Vedas*.

Varṇāśrama—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *sūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).

Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

Vaiṣṇava—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).

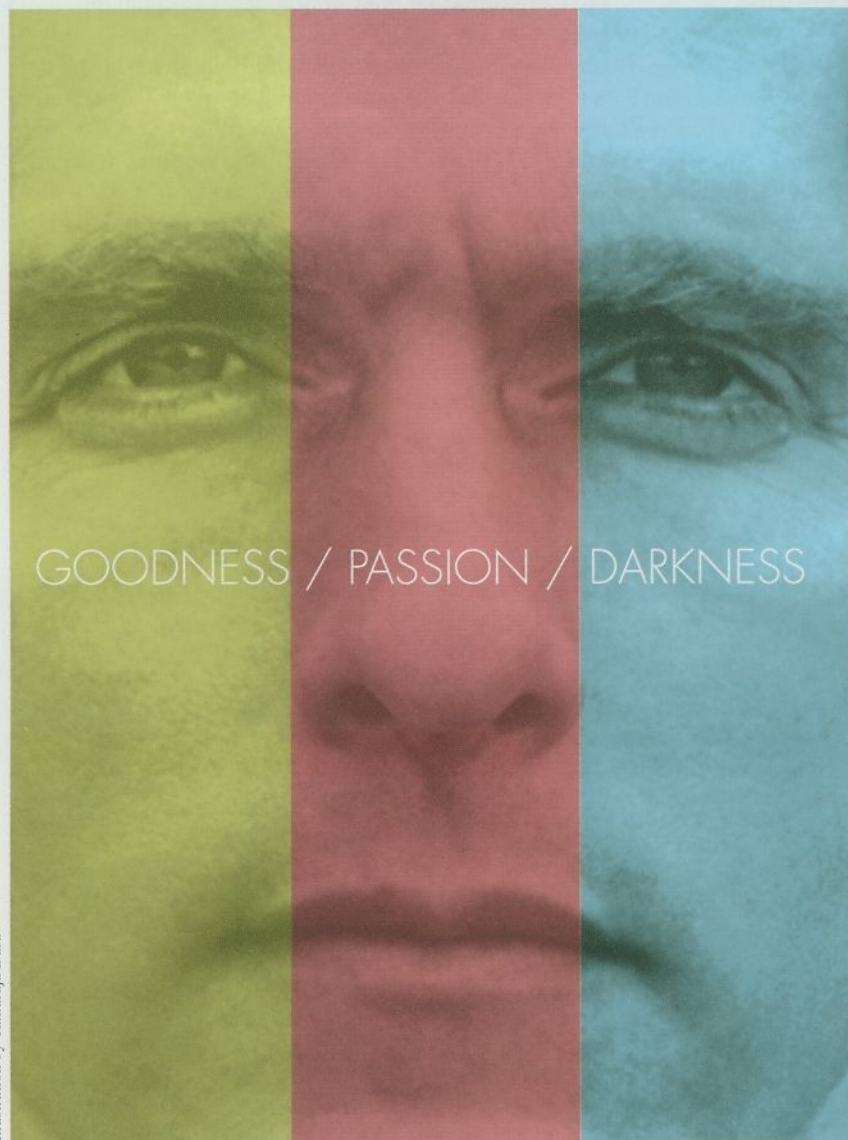
Vedas—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord Himself at the beginning of creation.

Vedic—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.

Viṣṇu—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see “Godhead”); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

The Vedic Personality Index:

by Dhīra Govinda Dāsa



Respondents to the VPI survey received a personality analysis that showed their inclinations based on the modes of goodness, passion, and darkness.

THE MAY/JUNE 1998 issue of *Back to Godhead* included an article of mine on the Vedic Personality Index (VPI). Based primarily on Śrīla Prabhupāda's translations and purports in the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, the VPI is a new tool for social and mental health scientists to measure personality traits. It uses the Vedic psychological model of the three modes of nature.

So far, social scientists have appreciated the VPI. *Back to Godhead* readers also responded well, with more than 125 readers of the U.S. edition taking the time to complete and return the VPI survey. Respondents received a personality analysis based on the modes of goodness (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*), and ignorance (*tamas*).

How did *Back to Godhead* readers score compared with others who took the survey? BTG readers recorded an average *sattva* score of 47.18. The other participants, including some 500 students, medical professionals, and others, registered a *sattva* score of 37.7. (The higher the score, the stronger the inclination to the particular mode of nature.) In the *rajas* category, BTG readers averaged 26.72; others averaged 33.15. In the *tamas* category, it was 26.1 for BTG readers, and 29.19 for others.

I'd like to thank the BTG readers who took the survey. Their results allowed me to find a significant difference between *Back to Godhead* readers and others. Such distinctions are good; we would expect that the lives of Kṛṣṇa conscious persons would reflect a stronger presence of goodness and diminished effects of passion and ignorance. Therefore, the data provided by the BTG readership strengthened the validity of the VPI.

In a broader sense a social scientist might consider that this research

A Follow-Up Report

gives some scientific basis for promoting activities in the mode of goodness, which nourish traits such as honesty, nonviolence, satisfaction, sensual restraint, mental and emotional equilibrium, non-aggressive speech, and a spiritual inclination. Sattvic people tend to be more content, and they benefit society because they're dependable and conscientious. Rajasic people tend to be more self-centered and less capable of controlling their senses and emotions, leading to mood swings, greed, and envy. Tamasic people tend toward laziness, depression, and violence.

A New Study

The VPI, which I developed and used in my Ph.D. research, has proven to be a strong and consistent measure of personality traits. For example, a person predominantly influenced by *rajas* tends to consistently choose the rajasic trait across a wide variety of questions. Consequently my professors have approved my proposal to use the VPI and several other widely recognized personality measures in my Ph.D. project, which involves the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. In this study the subjects, fewer than 10% of whom have ever chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, will be divided into three groups. Each subject will take the VPI and other personality tests at the beginning and end of the study. During the period of the study, one group will chant a concocted combination of Sanskrit syllables for a prescribed time each day. The second group will chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra on beads each day (three "rounds," or 324 mantras). The third group will not chant anything. The VPI and other tests will measure the changes, if any, undergone by subjects in each of the three groups.

As with the VPI, I hope to prepare a version of this study for future publication in Back to Godhead.

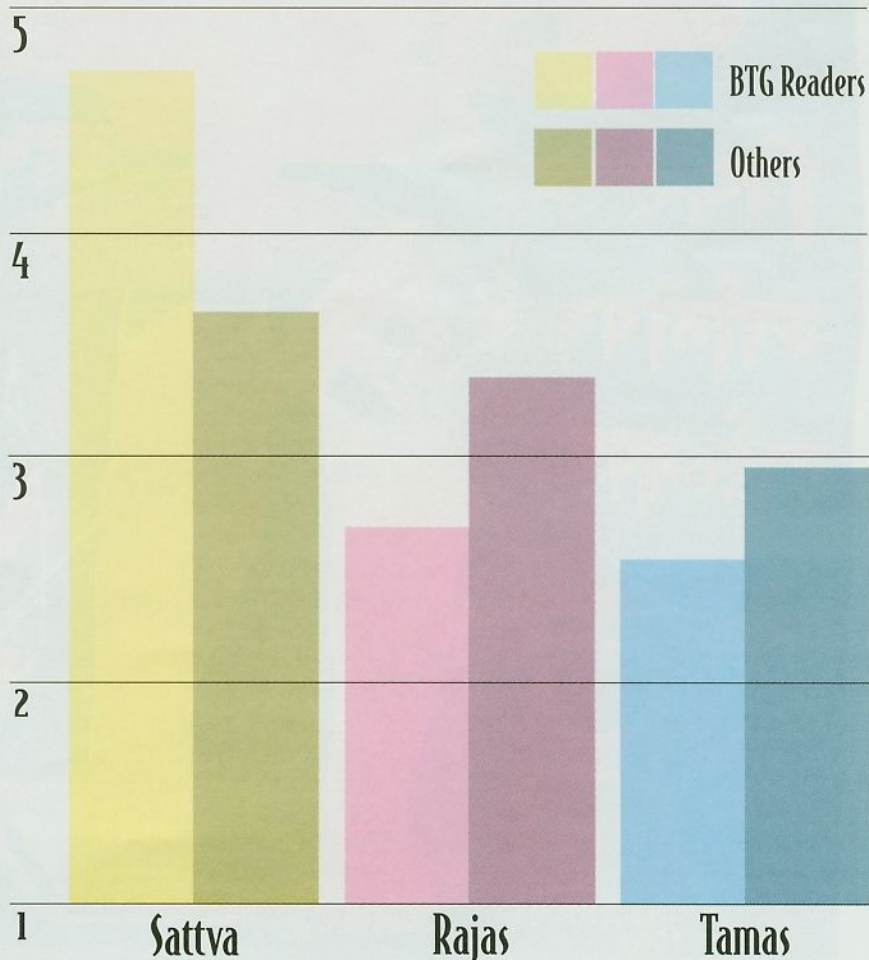
Increased Faith

The VPI study comes from Śrīla Prabhupāda's verse translations and purports in chapters 14, 17, and 18 of the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. Dovetailing my research and academic endeavors with the *Bhagavad-gītā* has been enlivening and gratifying. The VPI project has increased my faith in the Vedic literature.

The Vedic wisdom has been so refreshing and stimulating to my professors that they have asked me to

give talks about it in their classes. Undergraduates find the *Bhagavad-gītā* fascinating and ask many questions. One professor thanked me for "getting their motors running." During my research I realized how much the academic world can appreciate the comprehensive and impeccable logic of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. ❁

Dhīra Govinda Dāsa lives with his family in Alachua, Florida, where in addition to his Ph.D. studies in social work, he is employed as a social worker and serves on the board of directors for the ISKCON community and the Vaiṣṇava Day School.





विष्वक् सुभक्त
वर्गालो यथा
द्वार्य सुभाषण
नक्षत्रं गच्छेत्
ग्रहणातुरं हरि-
कुलिशाक्षत
सुदारलीला
गहा विष्णु ॥१९॥

MAHARANI
1996

MIRYEBOND

Prayer to Lord Nṛsimhadeva

Text and art by Mahārāṇī Devī Dāsī

My faith is in Your feet and the nails of Your toes, Lord Nṛsimhadeva;

Please protect me.

My faith is in Your pillar-like legs and lotus petal-like chest, Lord Nṛsimhadeva;

Please direct me.

My faith is in Your arms and Your razor-sharp claws, Lord Nṛsimhadeva;

Please destroy my obstacles.

My faith is in Your mane and roaring red mouth, Lord Nṛsimhadeva;

Please vanquish my fears.

My faith is in Your gnashing teeth and Your burning golden eyes, Lord Nṛsimhadeva;

Please give me strength.

I am confused, Lord Nṛsimhadeva;

I place myself beneath Your feet.

Please dispel my confusion.

I am sad, Lord Nṛsimhadeva;

I beg You to stamp out my sadness.

I am frightened, Lord Nṛsimhadeva;

I beg You to take me into Your lotus hands
and destroy my fears with Your all-powerful claws.

I am in illusion, Lord Nṛsimhadeva;

Please let Your glaring effulgence
Destroy my illusions.

My dear Lord Nṛsimhadeva, I am afraid;

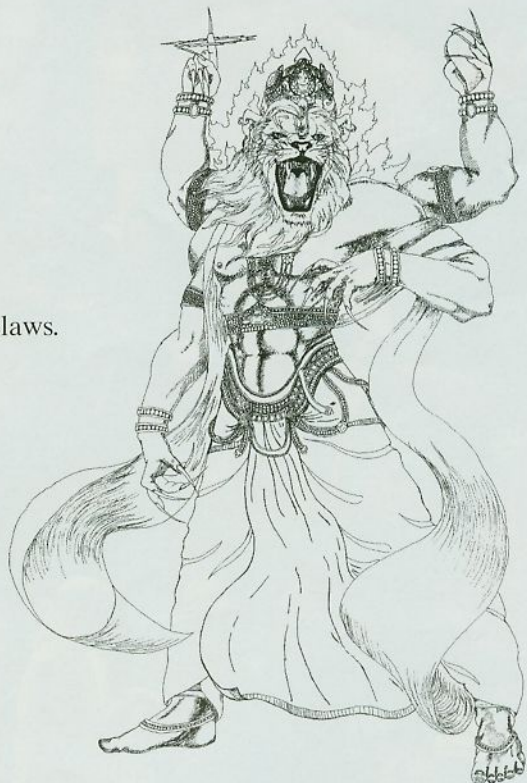
I depend upon You, I take shelter of You,
Without You I cannot exist.

Let me take shelter under Your feet,

Let Your roar tell me what I should do,
Protect me with Your slashing claws.

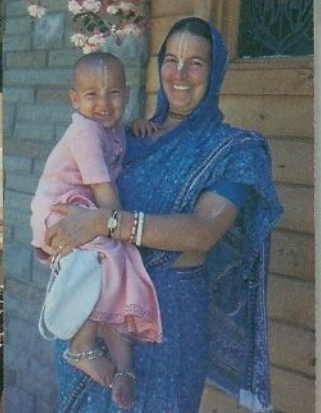
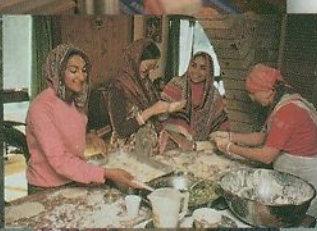
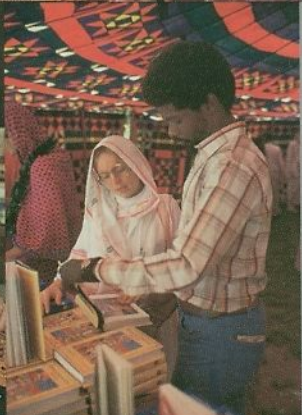
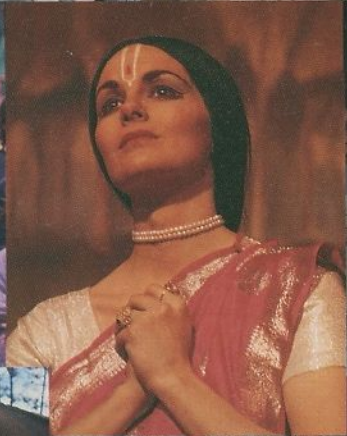
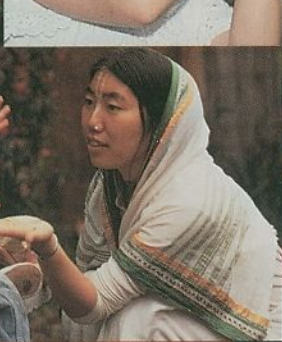
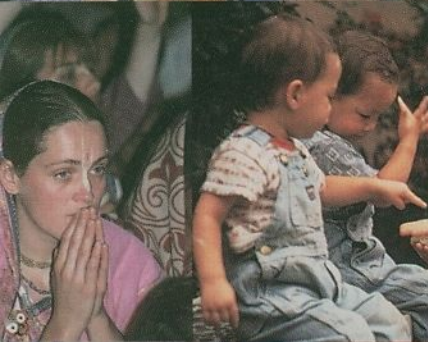
Only You can help me.

My faith lies only in You. ☸



Lord Nṛsimhadeva is Lord Kṛṣṇa's ferocious half-man, half-lion incarnation. He appeared to protect the saint Prahlāda from Hiraṇyakaśipu, Prahlāda's evil father. Although Nṛsimhadeva is feared by the demoniac, He is worshiped with love by the faithful devotees. This year, devotees will celebrate the anniversary of Lord Nṛsimhadeva's appearance on April 29.

Mahārāṇī Dāsī is the nineteen-year-old daughter of BTG columnist Hare Kṛṣṇa Dāsī. She attended the Gītā Nāgarī gurukula (school) and is currently a student at The School of Visual Arts in New York City. (The painting on the opposite page is a batik—watercolor on cloth.)



WHAT'S A WOMAN TO DO?

How may Kṛṣṇa conscious women serve the Lord?

by Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

“These women are not ordinary women. They are preachers. They are Vaiṣṇavas. By their association one becomes a Vaiṣṇava.”
(Śrīla Prabhupāda, morning walk, March 27, 1974)

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA, India's greatest emissary to the Western world, set up in the West not only āśramas and temples, but an entire spiritual society. To do this he inspired women as well as men to become devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He authorized women to live in āśramas and serve the Lord in a wide variety of ways, some of them unconventional, although exactly in line with Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings.

What is the position of women in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), the society Śrīla Prabhupāda founded? To answer, let's first look at the purposes of ISKCON. In its founder's vision, the members of ISKCON dedicate themselves to practicing spiritual life and distributing spiritual knowledge and techniques to others. Śrīla Prabhupāda taught that real spiritual life means to render transcendental devotional service to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Devotional service entails engaging all our senses in the service of the Lord, the master of the senses. That service purifies our senses and frees us from all material designations. So by teaching devotional service, Śrīla Prabhupāda showed that he wanted all his followers—men, women, and children—to become free from all material designations and regain their original pure identity.

Another way to understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's message and mission is to reflect on the Sanskrit word *dharma*. Dharma is the essential function or nature of a thing. One can say that the “dharma” of fire is heat, the “dharma” of water, liquidity, and the “dharma” of sugar, sweetness.

What is the dharma of the living being? To render service. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes,

Montage by Yamarāja Dāsa

Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings enable people to get out of the limited sphere of material bondage and meet the Supreme Lord.

• • •

We can easily see that every living being is constantly engaged in rendering service to another living being. A living being serves other living beings in various capacities. By doing so, the living entity enjoys life. The lower animals serve human beings as servants serve their master. . . . One friend serves another friend, the mother serves the son, the wife serves the husband, the husband serves the wife, and so on. If we go on searching in this spirit, it will be seen that there is no exception in the society of living beings to the activity of service . . . and therefore we can safely conclude that service is the constant companion of the living being and that the rendering of service is the eternal religion [dharma] of the living being.”

(*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*,
Introduction)

In the material world every living being dwells within a body made of material elements. Each of us is a living being (soul), now covered with a gross and subtle material body. Because of our original nature, which is spiritual, and our covering, which is material, each of us has two types of dharma: eternal (*sanātana*) dharma, our spiritual service to the Supreme spirit, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa; and our own (*sva*) dharma, the appropriate service for our particular mind, intelligence, and senses.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.13) that one's qualities and activities, not one's birth, determine one's *sva-dharma*. According to the qualities and activities of human beings, the Lord created four general types of occupation for the smooth functioning of human society: *brāhmaṇas* (learned priests, teachers, and advisors), *kṣatriyas* (government leaders and military men), *vaiśyas* (farmers, businessmen, and cow-protectors), and *sūdras* (laborers and artisans). (In our present confused age, many people don't fit

neatly into any one occupation but express their talents in several areas.)

THE HUSBAND-WIFE TEAM

Whatever one's position in this societal system, those who fill the various roles generally do not do so alone, but together, as a husband-wife team. Men and women of compatible natures and propensities marry, and the wife assists her husband and takes primary charge of the home and children. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "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." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.22.11, Purport) And the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.60.15) declares, "Marriage and friendship are proper between two people who are equal in terms of their wealth, birth, influence, physical appearance, and capacity for good progeny, but never between a superior and an inferior." So a *brāhmaṇa's* wife is like a mother for her husband's students, the queen is considered a mother by the citizens, the agricultural women are expert in using milk and other products of the cows and land, and so forth. In this way husband and wife are fully engaged, and in a society composed of such families, peace, happiness, fulfillment, and a cooperative spirit prevail.

Yet our *sva-dharma* is not complete unless also bonded with *sanātana-dharma*. "The occupational activities a man performs according to his own position are only so much useless labor if they do not provoke attraction for the message of the Personality of Godhead." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.8) In explaining this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes,

The self [soul] is beyond the gross body and subtle mind. He is the potent active principle of the body and

mind. Without knowing the need of the dormant soul, one cannot be happy simply with emolument of the body and mind. The body and the mind are but superfluous outer coverings of the spirit soul. The spirit soul's needs must be fulfilled. Simply by cleansing the cage of the bird, one does not satisfy the bird. One must actually know the needs of the bird himself.

The need of the spirit soul is that he wants to get out of the limited sphere of material bondage and fulfill his desire for complete freedom. He wants to get out of the covered walls of the greater universe. He wants to see the free light and the spirit. That complete freedom is achieved when he meets the complete spirit, the Personality of Godhead.

Śrīla Prabhupāda founded ISKCON to this end: to enable people to get out of the limited sphere of material bondage and meet the Supreme Lord. Although in the renounced order of life (*sannyāsa*), Śrīla Prabhupāda arranged and sometimes conducted the marriages of his disciples. And he engaged these young people in myriad services according to both their propensities (*sva-dharma*) and their service to the Lord (*sanātana-dharma*). Under Śrīla Prabhupāda's direction, devotee men and women served as artists, writers, typists, speakers, singers, managers, Deity caretakers, book distributors, and so on. For example, my husband, Yaduvara Dāsa, and I, both trained photographers, served in ISKCON together, my husband as a cinematographer, and I as the photographer and sound technician. We sometimes filmed and photographed Śrīla Prabhupāda, who more than once commented, "Husband and wife working together in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—this is very nice."

Another example: When three married couples successfully started a Kṛṣṇa

conscious center in London, Śrīla Prabhupāda praised their efforts. He noted that his spiritual master had wanted a center in London many years before, but his spiritual master's *san-nyāsī* disciples had been unsuccessful in starting one. Śrīla Prabhupāda's young Western Kṛṣṇa conscious householders had succeeded where mature Indian renunciants had not.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision was for his disciples to marry and serve the Lord together in harmony. He writes, "A wife is necessary to assist in spiritual and material advancement. It is said that a wife yields the fulfillment of all desires in religion, economic development, and sense gratification. If one has a nice wife, he is to be considered a most fortunate man." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.21.15, Purport) Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to see happy Kṛṣṇa conscious couples of like dispositions and proclivities offering their services to the Lord, making their home conducive for spiritual life, raising their children to be godly, and making gradual, solid spiritual advancement.

SERVICE WITH PROTECTION

While this ideal is quite attractive for most people, it also raises questions. What, if anything, can a woman do beyond assisting her husband, beyond her housework, and beyond her sacred duties as a mother? And what of women who are unmarried, widowed, married but childless, or married with grown children? Their services to their children are nonexistent or minimal, and their services in the home also minimal.

In answer, the first point is that women must always be protected. Śrīla Prabhupāda criticized the so-called woman's liberation movement, which encourages women to become unprotected and thus available to be exploited by unscrupulous men. Śrīla Prabhupāda noted how the unwanted progeny from such unfortunate combinations are an embarrassment for the government, which is obliged to provide for many husbandless mothers and fatherless children. In the culture Śrīla Prabhupāda introduced, a young man is trained to be a responsible, first-class person. He then marries a compatible, faithful

young woman. In such a culture women are protected and children grow up in a peaceful, stable, two-parent home.

Yet it is certainly possible for a woman to be protected and at the same time to serve the Lord according to her unique ability. Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged and occasionally insisted that his women disciples lead *kīrtanas*, speak in public, and distribute his books. And while Śrīla Prabhupāda disapproved of women leading a country, he found

no fault with women being leaders within his spiritual society. For example, in the late 1960s, when his movement was still quite young, he put one of his first women disciples, Yadurāṇī Devī Dāsī, in charge of all the men and women artists creating paintings to illustrate his books.

A little later, in the spring of 1970, when Śrīla Prabhupāda was forming the Governing Body Commission (GBC) as the management arm of

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ISKCON, he included women on the list of disciples he was considering for the position.

When asked if a woman could become a temple president (Chicago, July 5, 1975), Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "Yes, why not?" and then explained that a woman should remain dependent on either her first-class father, first-class husband, or first-class son. (In the final analysis, only the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is independent, but Vedic culture specifically enjoins that women should remain dependent on their intimate male relation.)

Here Śrīla Prabhupāda states that a woman may be a temple president, but he also says that she also must be dependent. Is this contradictory? To gain some insight, we can turn to a conversation between Vallabha Bhaṭṭa, Advaita Ācārya, and Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

One day Vallabha Bhaṭṭa said to Advaita Ācārya, "Every living entity is female [*prakṛti*] and considers Kṛṣṇa her husband [*pati*]. It is the duty of a chaste wife, devoted to her husband, not to utter her husband's name, but all of you chant the name of Kṛṣṇa. How can this be called a religious principle?"

Advaita Ācārya responded, "In front of you is Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the personification of religious principles. You should ask Him, for He will give you the proper answer."

Hearing this, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, "My dear Vallabha Bhaṭṭa, you do not know religious principles. Actually, the first duty of a chaste woman is to carry out the order of her husband. The order of Kṛṣṇa is to chant His name incessantly. Therefore one who is chaste and adherent to the husband Kṛṣṇa must chant the Lord's name, for she cannot deny the husband's order." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya-līlā* 7.103-7)

Similarly, under the guidance of her spiritual master, a chaste, Kṛṣṇa-conscious woman encouraged by her Kṛṣṇa-conscious father, husband, or son may render whatever service she's qualified to do, whether as a mother, a cook, a temple president, a GBC, or a spiritual master.

In a letter to Śilāvati Devī (June 14, 1969), Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "Now if you can induce all the women of Los

Angeles to place an altar in their homes and help their husbands have peaceful, happy home life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, that will be very great service for you. The actual system is that the husband is the spiritual master to his wife, but if the wife can bring her husband into practicing this process, then it is all right that the husband accepts the wife as the spiritual master. Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said that anyone who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa should be accepted as spiritual master, regardless of any material so-called qualifications, such as rich or poor, man or woman, or *brāhmaṇa* or *sūdra*."

This same point was confirmed again, years later (June 18, 1976), when Professor O'Connell of the University of Toronto asked Prabhupāda, "Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a guru in the line of disciplic succession?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "Yes. Jāhnava Devī was Nityānanda's wife. She became. [Jāhnava Devī was an initiating spiritual master who had male disciples.] If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become a guru? But not so many. Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become a guru. But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection . . . *Yeī kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya*. The qualification of the guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa. Then he or she can become a guru. *Yeī kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei guru haya*. In the material world, is there any prohibition that a woman cannot become a professor? If she is qualified, she can become a professor. What is the wrong there? She must be qualified. That is the position. So similarly, if the woman understands Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly, she can become a guru."

In spiritual circles one's sex is not a disqualification.

As being dependent and being a leader are not necessarily contradictory, so being protected and being a leader are also not contradictory. A woman can be protected (as all women must be throughout their lives) and yet be a leader also. In Śrīla Prabhupāda words, "The child must be taken care of. That is good. Similarly, woman also. And an old man like myself—I am always taken care of . . . That is civiliza-

A woman sincerely and seriously serving the Lord in whatever capacity she chooses should be honored and encouraged.



tion.” Although a topmost Vaiṣṇava, Śrīla Prabhupāda here humbly identifies himself as an “old man.” And since old men are one of the five groups society must protect (the other four being cows, women, children, and *brāhmaṇas*), Śrīla Prabhupāda sees himself as protected. Yet at the same time he was an unparalleled leader.

In the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, Śrīla Prabhupāda trained men to see all women except their own wife respectfully as “mother,” and women to see all men except their husbands respectfully as their “sons.” As the son’s duty is to protect his mother, so one of the duties of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s men is to protect Śrīla Prabhupāda’s women. A devotee-woman leader is protected by her husband and her “sons.”

THE PLATFORM OF EQUALITY

Therefore in the Lord’s spiritual society and for His pleasure, a woman may do whatever service is suited to her. While this principle may seem straightforward and clear, to some it is a point of great controversy. They believe that a woman’s birth precludes her from doing certain services for the Lord, even though she may be qualified for them. Sometimes such thinking is culturally based. For example, traditionally in India women don’t perform certain Deity services in the temple—a standard Śrīla Prabhupāda respected there. But often the thinking comes from the male ego, which Śrīla Prabhupāda identified as “the temperament of always wanting to be in a superior position.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 9.3.10, Purport).

To function successfully in such a difficult milieu, a woman spiritual leader must be astute, guileless, sensitive, soft-hearted, clear-headed, and fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, seeing herself as a servant of all. Her saving grace is her

natural, humble service attitude, as well as her gracious and urgently needed contribution to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s society.

Śrīla Prabhupāda founded ISKCON so that devotees could please the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, by serving Him with devotion. The Lord is pleased by all service sincerely rendered to Him; in one sense there are no superior and inferior services. And from the perspective of the Lord and His pure devotees, all the Lord’s servants are equal. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, “Therefore in the bhakti platform, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there is no such distinction: ‘Here is an American, here is an Indian, here is an African, here is this and that.’ No. Everyone is Kṛṣṇa conscious. So actually if we want equality, fraternity, then we must come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is the purpose of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. And actually it is becoming a fact. These boys and girls are no longer thinking they are American or European or Canadian or Australian or Indian. They are equal. So if you want equality, fraternity, friendship, love and perfection, the solution to all problems—economic, political, social, religious—then come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Come to this platform. Then all your ambitions will be fulfilled, and you will be perfect.” (Lecture on *Bhāgavad-gītā* 13.4)

Let us be enlightened by the perspective Śrīla Prabhupāda reveals in this conversation:

Śrīla Prabhupāda: In the spiritual platform there is no such distinction—man, woman, or black, white, or big or small. No. Everyone is spirit soul. *Paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ. Vidyāvinaya-sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini śuni caiva śva-pāke ca paṇḍitāḥ.* One who is actually learned is *sama-darśinaḥ*. He does not make any distinction. But as far as our material body is concerned, there must be some distinction for keeping the

society in order.

Woman: The women could become *paṇḍitas*, then?

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. *Te ’pi yānti parām gatim.* Not only become—she can also attain perfection. There is no such restriction. Kṛṣṇa said.

Woman: Do you have any *paṇḍitas* in the Western movement?

Prabhupāda: There are so many Western women, girls, in our society. They are chanting, dancing, taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Of course, because superficially, bodily, there is some distinction, we keep women separate from men, that’s all. Otherwise, the rights are the same.”

(June 18, 1976, Toronto)

To help them stay fixed on the goal of life—rendering pure, uninterrupted devotional service to Kṛṣṇa—men and women should not mix (except if they are married), but they have the same rights. What is the most important right? The right—the privilege—to serve the Lord according to their propensity, according to their heart’s desire. Ultimately the real occupational duty, dharma, of women is the dharma of all living beings: to eternally serve Kṛṣṇa. A woman sincerely and seriously serving the Lord in whatever capacity she chooses should be honored and encouraged. In his Purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.5.12, Prabhupāda writes, “Everyone should be allowed to render service to the Lord to the best of his ability, and everyone should appreciate the service of others. Such are the activities of Vaikuṅṭha [the spiritual world]. Since everyone is a servant, everyone is on the same platform and is allowed to serve the Lord according to his ability.” ❀

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī has been contributing articles and photographs to BTG for more than twenty years. She and her family live in New Dvārakā, the Hare Kṛṣṇa community in Los Angeles.

The Most Honorable Person On Earth

King Yudhiṣṭhira must decide who will be honored first at his great sacrifice.

Translated from Sanskrit
by Hridayānanda Dāsa Goswami

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The sage Vaiśampāyana is telling the history of the Pāṇḍavas to their great-grandson, King Janamejaya. As the narration continues, Vaiśampāyana describes the great Rājasūya sacrifice of King Yudhiṣṭhira, now emperor of the world.

YUDHIṢṬHIRA ROSE to receive his grandfather Bhīṣma and his teacher Droṇa, and having respectfully greeted them, he spoke these words to Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, Aśvatthāmā, Duryodhana, and Vivimśati:

“In this sacrifice you must all give me your mercy, for whatever wealth is mine in this world is yours, as am I myself. So all of you, as you desire, please encourage me in this affair without constraint.”

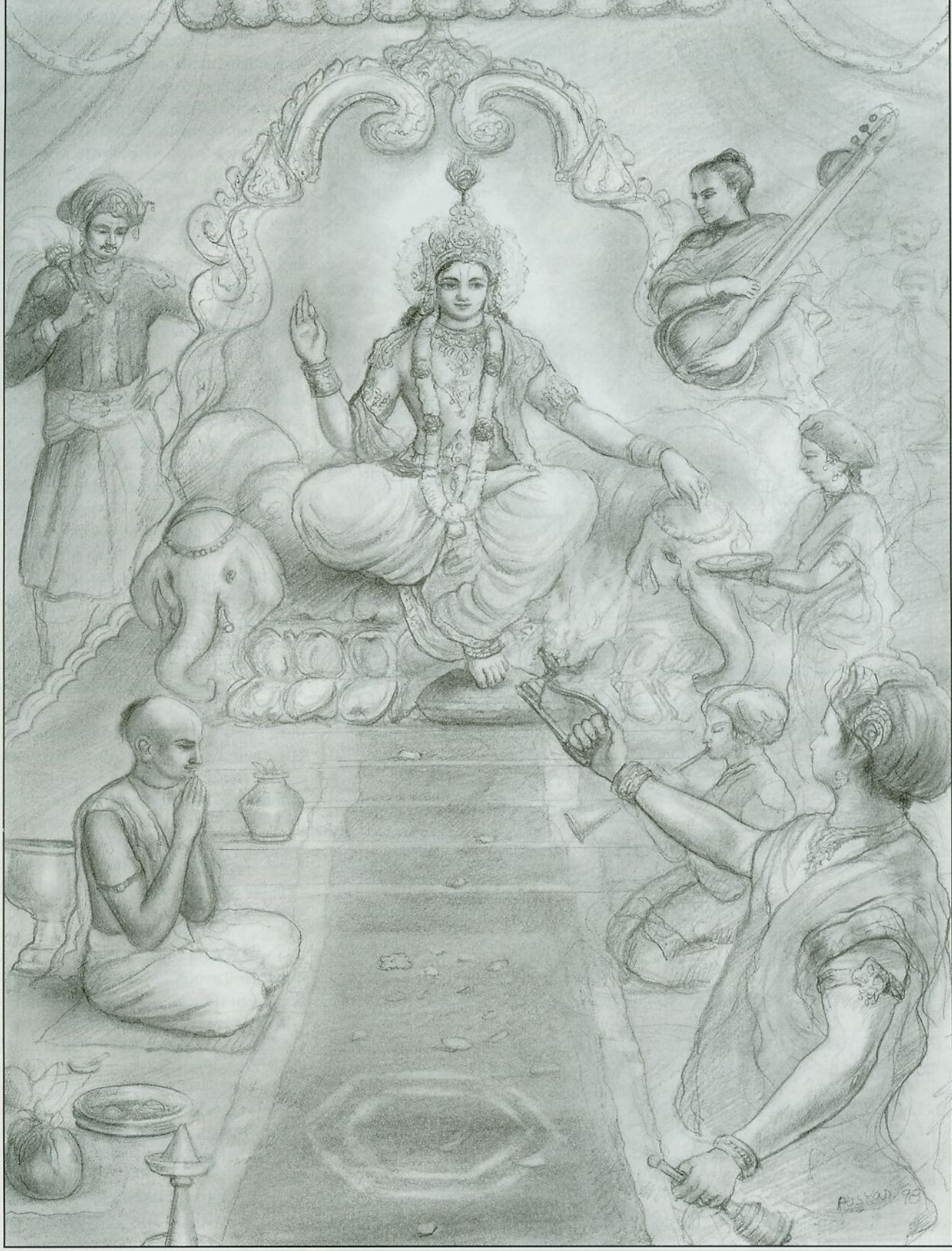
After saying this, the first-born son of Pāṇḍu was initiated for the rite, and then he engaged all his guests in fitting responsibilities. He gave Duḥśāsana responsibility for all the food, and he assigned Aśvatthāmā to the reception of *brāhmaṇas*. He completely entrusted to Sañjaya the task of wel-

coming kings, and to the great thinkers Bhīṣma and Droṇa he gave the job of discerning what was to be done and what was not to be done. King Yudhiṣṭhira had Kṛpa inspect the gold coins, bullion, and jewels and distribute priestly rewards and general charity. And in the same way he assigned the other tigerlike men various duties.

Under Nakula’s guidance, Bāhlika, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Somadatta, and Jayadratha enjoyed themselves like lords in their own estates. Vidura, knower of all righteous principles, took charge of paying all the employees the state had hired for the occasion, and Duryodhana meticulously received the precious gifts brought by guests.

All the world had come there, wishing to enjoy the ultimate reward and desiring to see the assembly hall and King Yudhiṣṭhira, the Pāṇḍava who was the king of virtue. No one brought less than a thousand presents, and with many jewels the respectable guests enriched Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira. “It is especially by my gifts of jewels that Yudhiṣṭhira will accomplish the sacrifice!” In this way,

Illustration by Puṣkara Dāsa



Lord Kṛṣṇa is worshiped at the Rājasūya sacrifice.

Characters in This Episode

Aśvatthāmā—the son of Droṇa

Bāhlika—the brother of King Śāntanu (Bhīṣma's father)

Bhīṣma—the grand-uncle of the Pāṇḍavas (though usually referred to as their grandfather)

Dhṛtarāṣṭra—the uncle of the Pāṇḍavas whose blindness disqualified him from ascending the throne

Droṇa—the military teacher of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kurus

Duḥśāsana—the second eldest Kuru (the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra)

Duryodhana—the eldest Kuru

Jayadratha—an ally of the Kuru's married to their sister, Duḥśalā

Kṛpa—a great *brāhmaṇa* who became a general in the Kuru army

Nakula—one of the five Pāṇḍava brothers (a twin)

Nārada—a liberated sage and great devotee of Kṛṣṇa who freely travels the universe

Sahadeva—one of the five Pāṇḍavas (a twin)

Sañjaya—Dhṛtarāṣṭra's secretary

Somadatta—the son of Bāhlika

Vidura—Dhṛtarāṣṭra's brother and a saintly well-wisher of the Pāṇḍavas

Vivimśati—one of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's one hundred sons

Yudhiṣṭhira—the eldest of the Pāṇḍava brothers

brant arguments into thin ones. In that gathering, brilliant sages demolished arguments well established by other sages, like eagles tearing up their sky-borne prey. There were sages of grand vows, the best of those who know all the Vedas, who took pleasure in narrating topics richly endowed with both religious principles and practical profit.

Filled with demigods, *brāhmaṇas*, and noble sages, the sacrificial ground appeared like the clear sky filled with stars. Indeed, in those sacrificial precincts, in that dwelling of Yudhiṣṭhira, there was not a single uncultured man, nor one who had broken a religious vow.

Learned Yudhiṣṭhira was a king of virtue, and the fortune of that lucky man was born of the performance of sacrifice. Seeing this, the sage Nārada was satisfied. O monarch of men, as Nārada looked upon all the royal warriors who had assembled there, he went deep into thought. He remembered the discussion that had taken place in the abode of Brahmā, the very discussion that concerned the incarnation of empowered expansions of the demigods and of the Supreme Lord Himself. Understanding that he was seeing an assembly of the demigods, he recalled the lotus-eyed Lord Kṛṣṇa, the almighty Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself. The omniscient conqueror of the cities of His enemies, and the slayer of the enemies of His appointed agents the demigods, now keeping His promise, had taken birth as a prince of the earth. He was the maker of all creatures, the Lord Himself who in the past had instructed the demigods, "Having defeated one another, you will regain your worlds."

Lord Kṛṣṇa took birth on the earth in the House of Yadu, as the best of aristocrats, in the dynasty of the Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis. He shone with supreme opulence, as the moon, sovereign of the stars, shines in their midst. Indra and all the other demigods worship the strength of His arms, and now He Himself is staying on the earth as if a human being, and He is smashing the enemies of the world.

"What an extraordinary fact this is! The self-existing Lord Himself will reclaim the royal order with all its armed might."

Thus Nārada, knower of right,

learned and skillful intonation of mantras. And as did the demigods, so did the wise *brāhmaṇas* find satisfaction in the priestly gifts of food and great riches. Indeed, all the social classes found satisfaction in that sacrifice, and they were filled with delight.

LORD KRṢṆA RECEIVES FIRST WORSHIP

Then on a fitting commencement day, the *brāhmaṇas*, all great sages, entered the sacrificial grounds with the kings to inaugurate the main rite. With Nārada at the head, the sages and saintly kings sat together within the holy arena of the exalted Yudhiṣṭhira. They all looked handsome and splendid. Assembled like the hosts of demigods in the mansion of the creator Brahmā, those godly sages of unmeasured might devotedly sat there, and during the intervals between proceedings they conversed.

"This is the way it is!"

"No, it's not like that!"

"So it is, and not otherwise!"

Thus the many sages passed the time debating. With reasons based solidly on scripture, some turned weak arguments into strong ones, and vi-

rivaling one another, the kings gave riches to Yudhiṣṭhira.

EXTRAORDINARY OPULENCE

The sacrificial area of the great soul Yudhiṣṭhira shone with splendor. For the world's rulers there were mansions guarded by armies and rising high with the most excellent palatial domes and turrets; the *brāhmaṇas*' dwellings resembled heavenly shrines, for they were endowed with assorted jewels and supreme opulence. Monarchs covered with exceeding wealth and opulence further beautified the sacrificial grounds.

Yudhiṣṭhira rivaled the god Varuṇa in opulence. With abundant gifts for the priests, he offered sacrifice with the six-flamed rite. And he fully satisfied all the people with opulent gifts that fulfilled all desires. Provided with ample food in many varieties, that vast gathering was filled with people who had dined to their satisfaction and received appropriate gifts of gems. As the great sages performed the holy rite, the demigods too were satisfied as the priests invoked them by casting refreshing streams of clear butter into the sacred fire to the accompaniment of the

thought in this way, realizing that it is the Lord, Nārāyaṇa, who is to be worshiped by all sacrifices. There in the magnificent sacrificial arena of Yudhiṣṭhira, the wise king of justice, the greatly intelligent Nārada remained. Nārada is the recipient of much honor, for he is the very best of those who know justice.

Then Bhīṣma said to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, “O Bhārata, let the worthy kings be glorified properly. Authorities say, O Yudhiṣṭhira, that the king, the teacher, the priest, the relative, the dear friend, and a *brāhmaṇa* who has completed his studies—these six are worthy of being honored with the gift of *arghya*.* When these persons have come to visit and have dwelled with their guest for one year, they then deserve such worship. These people came to us a considerable time ago. O king, let the *arghya* be brought and presented to them one by one; indeed, let it be brought at first to the very best of them.”

Yudhiṣṭhira said, “O grandfather, son of the Kurus, please tell me whom you consider best suited to receive this honorable gift, now being brought.”

At that time Bhīṣma, son of Śāntanu, reaching his conclusion with keen intelligence, concluded that Kṛṣṇa of the Vṛṣṇi dynasty was the most honorable person on the earth.

“By His splendor, strength, and heroic deeds He blazes forth among all those assembled here, like the luminous sun amidst the stars. It is certainly Kṛṣṇa who has illumined and englobed this assembly, like the sun appearing in a sunless region or a breeze blowing in a windless place.”

And so, with direct permission of Bhīṣma, the fierce Sahadeva rightfully offered the supreme honors to Lord Kṛṣṇa, who accepted them, following the procedure directed in scripture. ☪

Hridayānanda Dāsa Goswami, who holds a Ph.D. in Indology from Harvard University, occasionally teaches at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, and has been a visiting lecturer at the University of California at Los Angeles.

*A beverage made of auspicious ingredients that is offered to highly respected persons.

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How to Love Children

by Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī

CHILDREN NEED LOTS of love. Love your children, and then love them some more. It's said that every great man had a mother who gave him much love.

We often hear such glorification of love. But what does love really mean? The stereotype of a smiling parent holding a child with great care is not the complete picture of parental love. Judith Viorst, writing in *Newsweek*, says, "It didn't take me long to learn that patient, tender, loving, serene, and empathic weren't always options for the mother of three intensely physical boys."

Some adults spoil or ruin children through what appears to be lots of love. And some adults are harsh, even cruel, in the name of love.

Perhaps the dictionary will help us understand real love. Webster's first definition for love is "a strong affection for another arising out of kinship." In other words, we tend to love our family and relatives. While such love is natural for embodied, materially conditioned souls, it's imperfect for two reasons. First, it's based solely on the body, and second, it's based solely on bodies related to our own, so it's simply extended selfishness. When our love for children rests only on a selfish, material platform, we'll inevitably act in ways we feel are best for us, not necessarily for our children. Surely this love is inadequate for those aspiring for spiritual elevation.

Webster also defines love as "warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion." While devotion here could imply a sense of serving another person unselfishly, it also conjures up a picture of the doting mother who smothers her child with so much

enthusiastic care that the child never really grows up.

Webster's most applicable definition is "unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another." The dictionary's example is that of God's love for man. If we accept this as a good definition of genuine love, we can then ask, "How does Kṛṣṇa love His children, all living beings? And from Kṛṣṇa's example, what can we learn about the best way to love our own children?"

Kṛṣṇa stays with and cares for all



Visākhā Devī Dāsī

His children, the obedient and the offensive. He perfectly reciprocates with the desires and inclinations of each soul. If we are fully devoted to Him, He will appear in the form and relationship we desire. If we wish to be an independent lord, He will give us an opportunity to be Lord Brahmā, the head of a material universe.

Kṛṣṇa knows each of us completely, and He directs our wanderings from lifetime to lifetime, letting us experience enough suffering and frustration to eventually turn to Him. He also arranges for all human be-

ings to have access to scripture and saintly persons. He even comes Himself to teach the most beneficial path.

To follow the Lord's example when dealing with children, we can show love by guiding them in the best course of action and the best mentality. We can also set the best example. To some extent we can teach our children by letting them experience the natural consequences of their actions and desires. Or, better, we can help them learn without direct experience. Whenever a child shows a desire to act to please Kṛṣṇa and follow the scriptures, we can encourage and assist.

What is truly good for a child is the same as what is truly good for all beings—to realize that one is a spiritual being, not a material body, and to serve Kṛṣṇa rather than the temporary world. When we train a child in such a life, we represent Kṛṣṇa's love.

What about the small, sweet tokens of affection that materially illusioned adults show their children? Do the spiritually-minded abandon these as mere attachment and bondage? Not at all. Looking at Kṛṣṇa's example again, we can see that when He shows His love for us in small ways, we naturally feel gratitude, understanding that He cares for us fully. Similarly, the hugs, smiles, little gifts, words of endearment, and time spent playing together show our children a depth of personal concern, a complete love.

Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī and her family run a school in North Carolina. She is the major author and compiler of Vaikuṅṭha Children, a guide to Kṛṣṇa conscious education for children.



Help from the Lord

compiled by Navina Nirada Dāsa

HERE ARE SOME experiences and realizations of devotees who give people Kṛṣṇa consciousness through books by Śrīla Prabhupāda and his followers.

Two Forms of the Lord

One day in Prague in 1996 I was supposed to be distributing books, but I couldn't get up the nerve to approach anyone. After a while I became upset with myself.

"How can you just sit here while these people walking by are searching for the very books you're holding in your hands? Do something!"

At last I pulled myself together and showed a book to a young man hurrying back to work. He was interested in the books, so he invited me to his shop, an alternative gift shop, full of oriental and Indian gifts. His two colleagues also liked the books, but no one was willing to buy them.

I showed them a painting from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* of Lord Viṣṇu on the back of Garuḍa, and I began to narrate a story about Lord Viṣṇu.

Suddenly one of the shop assistants exclaimed, "Hey, He looks like ours!"

They took me upstairs to a statue covered with cloth. One of them uncovered the statue, and there He was—Lord Viṣṇu standing on the back of Garuḍa, ready to release His Sudarṣaṇa disc.

I cried out, "Viṣṇu!" and bowed down.

Someone entered the shop, and the shop assistants went down to look after him. I stayed alone with the Lord and prayed to Him for His mercy to allow me to distribute some books to these people. They returned and told me it was my last chance to

see Him, because a twelve-year-old girl had already bought Him and was picking Him up that night.

With renewed enthusiasm I showed them all the books again. This time they were really inspired. The Lord was very merciful, and they took seventeen books between them. So the young girl wasn't the only one to take the Lord home that night. The shopkeepers took Him home in His form as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the form by which He resides in millions of homes around the world.

Padmamāli Dāsa (Prague, CZ)

Never too Late

We were going from house to house in a small town, Turnov, Czech Republic. When I rang the bell of a old villa, no one answered the door, so I turned to the next house.

Then I heard, "Is someone there?"

I saw an old woman peering out the window.

She said, "I'll go to the door."

It took her five minutes to walk from the window to the door. She apologized.

"I'm almost eighty years old, and I've got Parkinson's disease."

I showed her the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and she exclaimed, "Oh, that's *Bhāgavad-gītā* and mighty Arjuna with wise Kṛṣṇa."

She told me she had read the *Bhāgavad-gītā* as a young student.

"I was always interested in these subjects but never got the opportunity to go deep into them. So now I'll take your books."

She thanked me and said, "Finally, before I die, I'll understand the Absolute Truth."

In the afternoon I brought her some *prasādam* and incense and

wished her luck in her pursuit of the Absolute Truth.

Another day, I knocked on the door of a sauna/acupuncture studio.

The door opened, and an older man asked, "So, have you brought it?"

"Of course," I answered, bewildered by his welcome.

"OK. Show me what you have."

I opened the box of books, and he at once agreed to take the whole set.

"I know it's not by chance you've knocked on my door," he said. "That's why I responded the way I did. I'm very fond of spiritual literature."

He gave a generous donation and wanted more books in the future.

Satya-kāraṇa Dāsa (Prague, CZ)

A Letter of Gratitude

For about four years now I've been curious about my existence in this world. I began asking myself numerous questions about life, such as What is the meaning of life? Why am I here? Do I have a mission to accomplish? What is God? And how are living beings related to Him? Just recently I read *Bhāgavad-gītā As It Is*, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, and many of my questions were answered. As a result, my life changed completely. I would like to take this opportunity to give my most humble thanks to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, for revealing to me the true path of man: bhakti-yoga and spirituality. Thank you!

Samuel, via e-mail

Navina Nirada Dāsa heads ISKCON's book-distribution ministry and travels worldwide to train and inspire book distributors.

Animals should be treated like our younger brothers or sisters, to be protected, not exploited.

• • •

LIFE (continued from page 14)

individual soul, explains that all life emanates from the supreme life, or God, known in Sanskrit as Kṛṣṇa. When we have reverence for God, naturally we have reverence for all life. If we love God, naturally we will love all living entities, who come from Him. Lord Kṛṣṇa states in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *mamāi-vāṁśo jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ*: 'All living entities are My fragmental parts and parcels, and they are eternal.'

"The *Bhagavad-gītā* also explains that a learned person sees all living entities equally—*pañḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ*—because he sees the same soul within the different varieties of bodies. My spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, used to say, 'We want brotherhood, but what does it mean to be brothers? It means we have the same father.' Only when we recognize God as the supreme father can we have real brotherhood. Knowing God to be the supreme father, we can understand that if we deal with God's other children nicely, God will be pleased. But if we try to exploit and commit violence upon one another, how will the supreme father be pleased? And if God is not pleased, how can we expect peace and prosperity in the world?

"Animals are also children of God, although they have less developed intelligence. They resemble human children, who also do not have developed intelligence, or developed speech. Nor can they defend themselves. But in a family the strong are meant to protect the weak. For a stronger older brother to torture or massacre a baby is a terrible crime. How upset and angry the father would be! So animals should be treated like our younger brothers or sisters, to be protected, not exploited or slaughtered so we can eat their flesh.

"By Kṛṣṇa consciousness, by realiz-

ing that God is the supreme father of all living entities, we can actually achieve brotherhood and unity among all living beings.

"Now, we have heard many wonderful talks today. I felt enlightened by hearing the noble thoughts expressed by the esteemed participants. We have heard about the need for love, for compassion, for reverence for all life. We have heard of the horrors of cruelty and violence inflicted on less fortunate living beings. But we are faced with the practical fact that so many human beings do not love as much as they should. Nor do they have compassion or reverence as they should. So how to create the love and other finer sentiments we value? There must be some process.

"*The Gītā* and other scriptures of the world advise us that to develop love for God, which naturally includes love for all living entities, we must adopt a spiritual process. And the best process recommended for the modern age is the chanting of the holy names of God. The Vedic scriptures advise:

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

'One should chant the holy names, chant the holy names, chant the holy names. There is no other means of success in the Age of Kali [the present age].' (*Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa* 3.8.126)

"Similarly the Koran advises that one should chant the names of God. For many years I had the opportunity to go to Pakistan and teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I was pleased to meet some very learned Muslim friends. Just as the Hindus have *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma* ['The Thousand Names of Viṣṇu'], the Muslims have 'Ninety-Nine Names of God.' The Koran (7.180) states, "The most beautiful names belong to God, so call on Him by them." And learned

Muslims understand that they can achieve the perfection of life by chanting the holy name of God at death. I even learned from my Muslim friends how vegetarianism is part of the teachings of the Koran, and I saw a book by a Muslim physician entitled *Vegetarianism and the Koran*.

"Similarly, the Bible enjoins that one should praise the name of the Lord with cymbals and drums. And in the teachings of Buddha, one is advised to chant the holy names of God: "All who sincerely call upon My name will come to Me after death, and I will take them to paradise." (*Buddhist Sūtras*, Vow of Amida Buddha, 18)

"So the chanting of the holy names of the Lord is a universal process recommended in all scriptures for the modern age, and unless we adopt a practical means for purifying the heart of hatred and anger and violence, our pontification or platitudes will not really bring the desired results. So I appeal to you all. Many of you are important leaders in society. Even if you are not very big leaders, you are leaders in your society, in your community, in your family. Please consider the need to chant the holy names of God to purify the heart of the sinful desire to commit violence on other living entities.

"All over the world we have practical experience of the effects of chanting the names of God. The Vedic literature explains that in the modern age, the Age of Kali, the Lord Himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, appears as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. Five hundred years ago Caitanya Mahāprabhu predicted:

*prthivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma
sarvatra pracāra hoibe mora nāma*

'In every town and village of the world, My name [the name of God] will be sung.'

"ISKCON's founder and spiritual
(please turn to page 58)

LIFE WITHIN THE WOMB

Rendered from Sanskrit into English,
with commentary,
by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda,
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society
for Krishna Consciousness

Lord Kapila, an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, is teaching His mother, Devahūti, about Sāṅkhya, the analytical study of all existence. As the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam continues, Lord Kapila describes the suffering of the unborn child.

THIRD CANTO / CHAPTER 31

6 कृमिभिः क्षतसर्वाङ्गः सौकुमार्यात्प्रतिक्षणम् ।
मूर्च्छामाप्नोत्युरुक्लेशस्तत्रत्यैः क्षुधितैर्मुहुः ॥ ६ ॥

*kṛmibhiḥ kṣata-sarvāṅgaḥ
saukumāryāt pratikṣaṇam
mūrccām āpnoty uru-kleśas
tatratyaiḥ kṣudhitair muhuḥ*

kṛmibhiḥ—by worms; *kṣata*—bitten; *sarva-aṅgaḥ*—all over the body; *saukumāryāt*—because of tenderness; *pratikṣaṇam*—moment after moment; *mūrccām*—unconsciousness; *āpnoti*—he obtains; *uru-kleśaḥ*—whose suffering is great; *tatratyaiḥ*—being there (in the abdomen); *kṣudhitaiḥ*—hungry; *muhuḥ*—again and again.

Bitten again and again all over the body by the hungry worms in the abdomen itself, the child suffers terrible agony because of his tenderness. He thus becomes unconscious moment after moment because of the terrible condition.

PURPORT: The miserable condition of material existence is not only felt when we come out of the womb of the mother, but is also present within the womb. Miserable life begins from the moment the living entity begins to contact his material body. Unfortunately, we forget this experience and do not take the miseries of birth very seriously. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, therefore, it is specifically mentioned that one should be very alert to understand the specific difficulties of birth and death. Just as during the formation of this body we have to pass through so many difficulties within the womb of the mother, at the time of death there are also many difficulties. As described in the previous chapter, one has to transmigrate from one body to another, and the transmigration into the bodies of dogs and hogs is especially miserable. But despite such miserable conditions, due to the spell of *māyā* we forget everything and become enamored by the present so-called happiness, which is described as actually no more than a counteraction to distress.

7 कदुतीक्ष्णोष्णलवणरूक्षाम्लादिभिरुल्बणैः ।
मातृभुक्तैरुपस्पृष्टः सर्वाङ्गोत्थितवेदनः ॥ ७ ॥

*kaṭu-tikṣṇoṣṇa-lavaṇa-
rūkṣāmlādibhir ulbaṇaiḥ
mātr-bhuktair upasprṣṭaḥ
sarvāṅgotthita-vedanaḥ*

kaṭu—bitter; *tīkṣṇa*—pungent; *uṣṇa*—hot; *lavāṇa*—salty; *rūkṣa*—dry; *amla*—sour; *ādibhiḥ*—and so on; *ulbanaiḥ*—excessive; *mātr-bhuktaiḥ*—by foods eaten by the mother; *upaspr̥ṣṭaḥ*—affected; *sarva-aṅga*—all over the body; *utthita*—arisen; *vedanaḥ*—pain.

Owing to the mother's eating bitter, pungent foodstuffs, or food which is too salty or too sour, the body of the child incessantly suffers pains which are almost intolerable.

PURPORT: All descriptions of the child's bodily situation in the womb of the mother are beyond our conception. It is very difficult to remain in such a position, but still the child has to remain. Because his consciousness is not very developed, the child can tolerate it, otherwise he would die. That is the benediction of māyā, who endows the suffering body with the qualifications for tolerating such terrible tortures.

8 उल्बेन संवृतस्तस्मिन्नत्रैश्च बहिरावृतः ।
आस्ते कृत्वा शिरः कुक्षौ भ्रुगृष्टशिरोधरः ॥ ८ ॥

*ulbena saṁvṛtas tasminn
antraiś ca bahir āvṛtaḥ
āste kṛtvā śiraḥ kuṣṣau
bhugna-pr̥ṣṭha-śirodharah*

ulbena—by the amnion; *saṁvṛtaḥ*—enclosed; *tasminn*—in that place; *antraiḥ*—by the intestines; *ca*—and; *bahiḥ*—outside; *āvṛtaḥ*—covered; *āste*—he lies; *kṛtvā*—having put; *śiraḥ*—the head; *kuṣṣau*—towards the belly; *bhugna*—bent; *pr̥ṣṭha*—back; *śiraḥ-dharah*—neck.

Placed within the amnion and covered outside by the intestines, the child remains lying on one side of the abdomen, his head turned towards his belly and his back and neck arched like a bow.

PURPORT: If a grown man were put into such a condition as the child within the abdomen, completely entangled in all respects, it would be impossible for him to live even for a few seconds. Unfortunately, we forget all these sufferings and try to be happy in this life, not caring for the liberation of the soul from the entanglement of birth and death. It is an unfortunate civilization in which these matters are not plainly discussed to make people understand the precarious condition of material existence.

9 अकल्पः स्वाङ्गचेष्टायां शकुन्त इव पञ्जरे ।
तत्र लब्धस्मृतिर्देवात्कर्म जन्मशतोद्भवम् ।
सरन्दीर्घमनुच्छ्वासं शर्म किं नाम विन्दते ॥ ९ ॥

*akalpaḥ svāṅga-ceṣṭāyām
śakunta iva pañjare
tatra labdha-smṛtir daivāt
karma janma-śatodbhavam*

*smaran dīrgham anucchvāsam
śarma kiṁ nāma vindate*

akalpaḥ—unable; *sva-aṅga*—his limbs; *ceṣṭāyām*—to move; *śakuntaḥ*—a bird; *iva*—like; *pañjare*—in a cage; *tatra*—there; *labdha-smṛtiḥ*—having gained his memory; *daivāt*—by fortune; *karma*—activities; *janma-śata-udbhavam*—occurring during the last hundred births; *smaran*—remembering; *dīrgham*—for a long time; *anucchvāsam*—sighing; *śarma*—peace of mind; *kiṁ*—what; *nāma*—then; *vindate*—can he achieve.

The child thus remains just like a bird in a cage, without freedom of movement. At that time, if the child is fortunate, he can remember all the troubles of his past one hundred births, and he grieves wretchedly. What is the possibility of peace of mind in that condition?

PURPORT: After birth the child may forget about the difficulties of his past lives, but when we are grown-up we can at least understand the grievous tortures undergone at birth and death by reading the authorized scriptures like *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. If we do not believe in the scriptures, that is a different question, but if we have faith in the authority of such descriptions, then we must prepare for our freedom in the next life; that is possible in this human form of life. One who does not take heed of these indications of suffering in human existence is said to be undoubtedly committing suicide. It is said that this human form of life is the only means for crossing over the nescience of māyā, or material existence. We have a very efficient boat in this human form of body, and there is a very expert captain, the spiritual master; the scriptural injunctions are like favorable winds. If we do not cross over the ocean of the nescience of material existence in spite of all these facilities, then certainly we are all intentionally committing suicide.

10 आरभ्य सप्तमान्मासाल्लब्धबोधोऽपि वेपितः ।
नैकत्रास्ते स्रुतिवातैर्विष्टाभृश्वि सोदरः ॥ १० ॥

*ārabhya saptamān māsāl
labdha-bodho 'pi vepitaḥ
naikatrāste sūti-vātair
viṣṭhā-bhūr iva sodaraḥ*

ārabhya—beginning; *saptamāt māsāt*—from the seventh month; *labdha-bodhaḥ*—endowed with consciousness; *api*—although; *vepitaḥ*—tossed; *na*—not; *ekatra*—in one place; *āste*—he remains; *sūti-vātaiḥ*—by the winds for childbirth; *viṣṭhā-bhūḥ*—the worm; *iva*—like; *sa-udaraḥ*—born of the same womb.

Thus endowed with the development of consciousness from the seventh month after his conception, the child is tossed downward by the airs that press the embryo during the weeks preceding delivery. Like the worms born of the same filthy abdominal cavity, he cannot remain in one place.

PURPORT: At the end of the seventh month the child is moved by the bodily air and does not remain in the same place, for the entire uterine system becomes slackened before delivery. The worms have been described here as *sodara*. *Sodara* means “born of the same mother.” Since the child is born from the womb of the mother and the worms are also born of fermentation within the womb of the same mother, under the circumstances the child and the worms are actually brothers. We are very anxious to establish universal brotherhood among human beings, but we should take into consideration that even the worms are our brothers, what to speak of other living entities. Therefore, we should be concerned about all living entities.

11 नाथमान ऋषिर्मतः सप्तवध्रिः कृताञ्जलिः ।
स्तुवीत तं विक्लवया वाचा येनोदरेऽर्पितः ॥११॥

nāthamāna ṛṣir bhūtaḥ
sapta-vadhriḥ kṛtāñjaliḥ
stuvīta taṁ viklavayā
vācā yēnodare 'rpitah

nāthamānaḥ—appealing; *ṛṣiḥ*—the living entity; *bhūtaḥ*—frightened; *sapta-vadhriḥ*—bound by the seven layers; *kṛtāñjaliḥ*—with folded hands; *stuvīta*—prays; *taṁ*—to the Lord; *viklavayā*—faltering; *vācā*—with words; *yena*—by whom; *udare*—in the womb; *arpitah*—he was placed.

The living entity in this frightful condition of life, bound by seven layers of material ingredients, prays with folded hands, appealing to the Lord, who has put him in that condition.

PURPORT: It is said that when a woman is having labor pains she promises that she will never again become pregnant and suffer from such a severely painful condition. Similarly, when one is undergoing some surgical operation he promises that he will never again act in such a way as to become diseased and have to undergo medical surgery, or when one falls into danger, he promises that he will never again make the same mistake. Similarly, the living entity, when put into a hellish condition of life, prays to the Lord that he will never again commit sinful activities and have to be put into the womb for repeated birth and death. In the hellish condition within the womb the living entity is very much afraid of being born again, but when he is out of the womb, when he is in full life and good health, he forgets everything and commits again and again the same sins for which he was put into that horrible condition of existence.

जन्तुरुवाच

12 तस्योपसन्नमवितुं जगदिच्छयात्त-
नानातनोर्भुवि चलच्चरणारविन्दम् ।
सोऽहं व्रजामि शरणं ह्यकुतोभयं मे
येनेदृशी गतिरदर्थ्यसतोऽनुरूपा ॥१२॥

jantur uvāca

tasyopasannam avitum jagad icchayātta-
nānā-tanoḥ bhuvi calac-caraṇāravindam
so 'haṁ vrajāmi śaraṇaṁ hy akuto-bhayaṁ me
yenedṛśi gatir adarśy asato 'nurūpā

jantuḥ uvāca—the human soul says; *tasya*—of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *upasannam*—having approached for protection; *avitum*—to protect; *jagat*—the universe; *icchayā*—by His own will; *ātta-nānā-tanoḥ*—who accepts various forms; *bhuvi*—on the earth; *calat*—walking; *caraṇa-aravindam*—the lotus feet; *saḥ aham*—I myself; *vrajāmi*—go; *śaraṇam*—unto the shelter; *hi*—indeed; *akutaḥ-bhayaṁ*—giving relief from all fear; *me*—for me; *yena*—by whom; *idṛśi*—such; *gatiḥ*—condition of life; *adarśi*—was considered; *asataḥ*—impious; *anurūpā*—befitting.

The human soul says: I take shelter of the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who appears in His various eternal forms and walks on the surface of the world. I take shelter of Him only, because He can give me relief from all fear and from Him I have received this condition of life, which is just befitting my impious activities.

PURPORT: The word *calac-caraṇāravindam* refers to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who actually walks or travels upon the surface of the world. For example, Lord Rāmacandra actually walked on the surface of the world, and Lord Kṛṣṇa also walked just like an ordinary man. The prayer is therefore offered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who descends to the surface of this earth, or any part of this universe, for the protection of the pious and the destruction of the impious. It is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* that when there is an increase of irreligion and discrepancies arise in the real religious activities, the Supreme Lord comes to protect the pious and kill the impious. This verse indicates Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Another significant point in this verse is that the Lord comes, *icchayā*, by His own will. As Kṛṣṇa confirms in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *sambhavāmy ātma-māyayā*: “I appear at My will, by My internal potential power.” He is not forced to come by the laws of material nature. It is stated here, *icchayā*: He does not assume any form, as the impersonalists think, because He comes at His own will, and the form in which He descends is His eternal form. As the Supreme Lord puts the living entity into the condition of horrible existence, He can also deliver him, and therefore one should seek shelter at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa demands, “Give up everything and surrender unto Me.” And it is also said in *Bhagavad-gītā* that anyone who approaches Him does not come back again to accept a form in material existence, but goes back to Godhead, back home, never to return.

13 यस्त्वत्र बद्ध इव कर्मभिरावृतात्मा
भूतेन्द्रियाशयमयीमवलम्ब्य मायाम् ।

आस्ते विशुद्धमविकारमखण्डबोध-
मातप्यमानहृदयेऽवसितं नमामि ॥१३॥

yaṣ tv atra baddha iva karmabhir āvr̥tātmā
bhūtendriyāśayamayim avalambya māyām
āste viśuddham avikāram akhaṇḍa-bodham
ātapyamāna-hṛdaye 'vasitam namāmi

yaḥ—who; tu—also; atra—here; baddhaḥ—bound; iva—as if; karmabhiḥ—by activities; āvr̥ta—covered; ātmā—the pure soul; bhūta—the gross elements; indriya—the senses; āśaya—the mind; mayīm—consisting of; avalambya—having fallen; māyām—into māyā; āste—remains; viśuddham—completely pure; avikāram—without change; akhaṇḍa-bodham—possessed of unlimited knowledge; ātapyamāna—repentant; hṛdaye—in the heart; avasitam—residing; namāmi—I offer my respectful obeisances.

I, the pure soul, appearing now bound by my activities, am lying in the womb of my mother by the arrangement of māyā. I offer my respectful obeisances unto Him who is also here with me but who is unaffected and changeless. He is unlimited, but He is perceived in the repentant heart. To Him I offer my respectful obeisances.

PURPORT: As stated in the previous verse, the *jīva* soul says, “I take shelter of the Supreme Lord.” Therefore, constitutionally, the *jīva* soul is the subordinate servitor of the Supreme Soul, the Personality of Godhead. Both the Supreme Soul and the *jīva* soul are sitting in the same body, as confirmed in the *Upaniṣads*. They are sitting as friends, but one is suffering, and the other is aloof from suffering.

In this verse it is said, *viśuddham avikāram akhaṇḍa-bodham*: the Supersoul is always sitting apart from all contamination. The living entity is contaminated and suffering because he has a material body, but that does not mean that because the Lord is also with him. He also has a material body. He is *avikāram*, changeless. He is always the same Supreme, but unfortunately the Māyāvādī philosophers, because of their impure hearts, cannot understand that the Supreme Soul, the Supersoul, is different from the individual soul. It is said here, *ātapyamāna-hṛdaye 'vasitam*: He is in the heart of every living entity, but He can be realized only by a soul who is repentant. The individual soul becomes repentant that he forgot his constitutional position, wanted to become one with the Supreme Soul and tried his best to lord it over material nature. He has been baffled, and therefore he is repentant. At that time, Supersoul, or the relationship between the Supersoul and the individual soul, is realized. As it is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*, after many, many births the knowledge comes to the conditioned soul that Vāsudeva is great, *He* is master, and *He* is Lord. The individual soul is the servant, and therefore he surrenders unto Him. At that time he becomes a mahātmā, a great soul. Therefore, a fortunate living being who comes to this understanding, even within the womb of his mother, has his liberation assured.

14 यः पञ्चभूतरचिते रहितः शरीरे
छन्नोऽयथेन्द्रियगुणार्थचिदात्मकोऽहम्।
तेनाविकुण्ठमहिमानमृषि तमेनं
वन्दे परं प्रकृतिपूरुषयोः पुमांसम् ॥१४॥

yaḥ pañca-bhūta-racite rahitaḥ śarīre
cchanno 'yathendriya-guṇārtha-cid-ātmako 'ham
tenāvikuṇṭha-mahimānam ṛṣim tam enaṁ
vande param prakṛti-pūruṣayoḥ pumāṁsam

yaḥ—who; pañca-bhūta—five gross elements; racite—made of; rahitaḥ—separated; śarīre—in the material body; channaḥ—covered; ayathā—unfitly; indriya—senses; guṇa—qualities; artha—objects of senses; cit—ego; ātmakaḥ—consisting of; aham—I; tena—by a material body; avikuṇṭha-mahimānam—whose glories are unobscured; ṛṣim—all-knowing; tam—that; enam—unto Him; vande—I offer obeisances; param—transcendental; prakṛti—to material nature; pūruṣayoḥ—to the living entities; pumāṁsam—unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

I am separated from the Supreme Lord because of my being in this material body, which is made of five elements, and therefore my qualities and senses are being misused, although I am essentially spiritual. Because the Supreme Personality of Godhead is transcendental to material nature and the living entities, because He is devoid of such a material body, and because He is always glorious in His spiritual qualities, I offer my obeisances unto Him.

PURPORT: The difference between the living entity and the Supreme Personality of Godhead is that the living entity is prone to be subjected to material nature, whereas the Supreme Godhead is always transcendental to material nature as well as to the living entities. When the living entity is put into material nature, then his senses and qualities are polluted, or designated. There is no possibility for the Supreme Lord to become embodied by material qualities or material senses, for He is above the influence of material nature and cannot possibly be put in the darkness of ignorance like the living entities. Because of His full knowledge, He is never subjected to the influence of material nature. Material nature is always under His control, and it is therefore not possible that material nature can control the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Since the identity of the living entity is very minute, he is prone to be subjected to material nature, but when he is freed from this material body, which is false, he attains the same, spiritual nature as the Supreme Lord. At that time there is no qualitative difference between him and the Supreme Lord, but because he is not so quantitatively powerful as to never be put under the influence of material nature, he is quantitatively different from the Lord.

(continued in the next issue)

The Vedic Definition of “Demon”

Here we continue an exchange between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples. It took place in Los Angeles, on the morning of December 13, 1973, during a walk along the Pacific shore.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Human life is meant for realizing the inner self, the soul—and for realizing the Supreme Self, Kṛṣṇa. But thanks to your scientists and politicians, this great prerogative of human life is being denied to human society. So these hindrances should be stopped, because human society is being ruined.

That is why I was inquiring, “Why has America gone to Vietnam?” You replied, “To stop communism.” But that sort of stopping will not make any solution. We have to stop this demoniac civilization. Then human society will be happy and in its normal condition.

Disciple: But, Śrīla Prabhupāda, as soon as we define what demoniac civilization is, then people will be offended. They’ll see that by the Vedic definition, people who gamble, have illicit sex, take intoxicants, and eat flesh—people like themselves—

are demons. So they’ll be offended.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Because people have themselves become demons, they cannot understand what a demon is. For instance, a Christian priest went to preach to some mine workers, and he was explaining, “If you do not worship Lord Jesus Christ, you will go to hell.”

So the mine workers asked, “What is hell?”

But when the priest explained—“Hell is wet and dark, with no sufficient air,” and so on—the mine workers could not understand how horrible hell is. Why? Because by working in the mine, they were already agreeing to be in hell. So they no longer had the discretion to realize, “Oh, always wet and dark, without enough air—that is a very horrible thing.”

Similarly, in today’s world these demons no longer have the discretion to realize what demonism is. *Āsuram bhāvam āśritāḥ*: they have already agreed to live in the mood of demonism. What is this *āsura-bhāva*, this mood of demonism? Not to accept God. This is *āsura-bhāva*.

This is the basic principle of demonism. Ignore the soul and God and God’s laws; gamble, take intoxicants, have illicit sex, and slaughter God’s other creatures and eat their flesh. So in this way, nearly all people have agreed to deny God. Therefore, they have become demons.

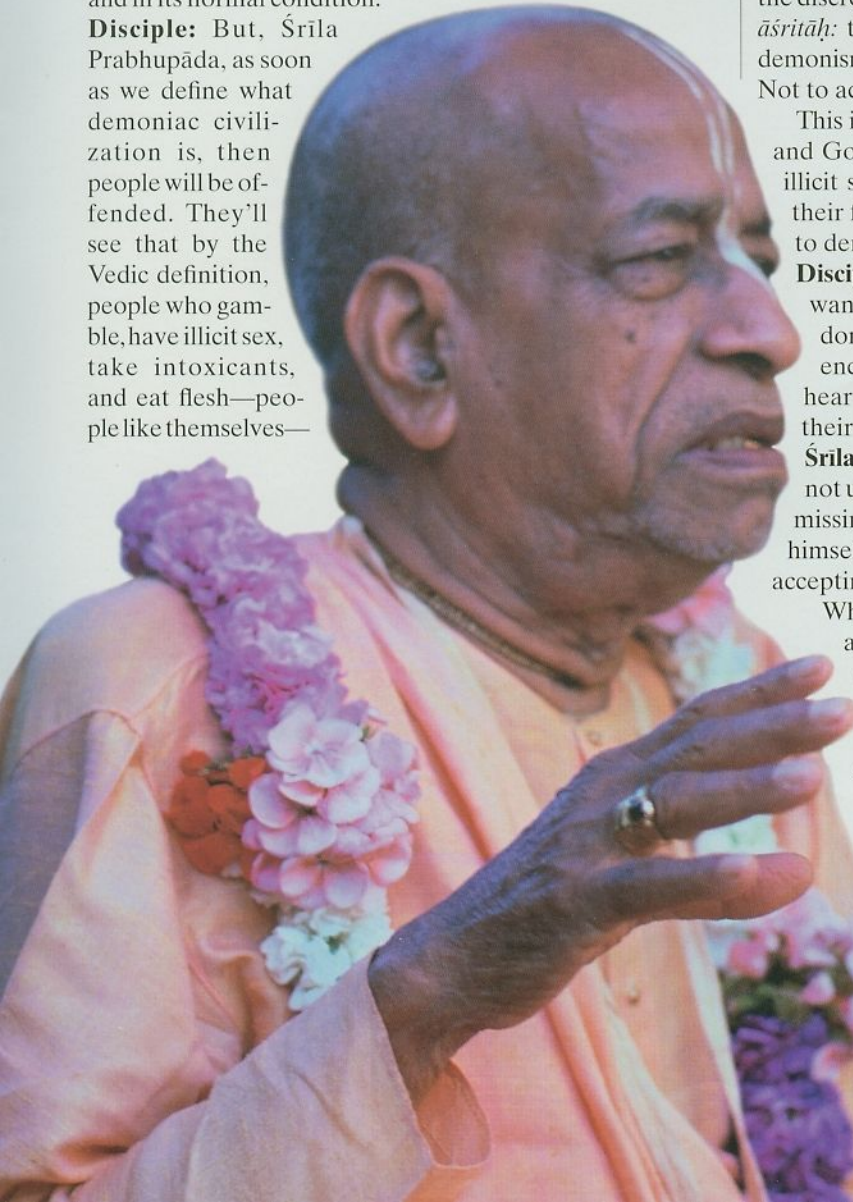
Disciple: These days, Śrīla Prabhupāda, people don’t want to hear a bona fide spiritual authority. They don’t care much about what you’re offering: the science of the soul and the Supreme Soul. Most prefer to hear some mundane, so-called scientist and make him their authority.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. But the so-called scientist does not understand, “What is that special thing which, when missing, makes this body dead?” Still, he is holding himself up as a big authority, and foolish people are accepting him as such. This is demonism.

When somebody is dying, this great scientist cannot actually explain why. He may advocate various scientific countermeasures, whether oxygen or heart massage or injections or this or that. But despite all these things, he finds that suddenly the man is dead.

When you ask the great scientist, “In spite of all your scientific countermeasures, why is the man dead?” he can say nothing. And still, he has become a great authority—even though he is so foolish that he cannot explain why, despite all his countermeasures, the man is dead. Now, what will he answer? He has seen all his scientific countermeasures

(please turn to page 56)



GANGGA SAFA

Pilgrims sail the Ganges to visit holy places of Lord Caitanya and His associates.

by Mahāmāyā Devī Dāsī

photos by Marīci Dāsa

I WAS LIVING IN Māyāpur in 1976 when Śrīla Prabhupāda inaugurated a boat—the *Nitai Pada Kamala*—on which devotees would travel the Ganges (Ganga) to bring Kṛṣṇa consciousness to Bengal villages. Though I yearned to join the tour, the boat had no quarters for women.

Now, twenty-two years later, I'm again living in Māyāpur. One day Jayapatāka Swami, one of the leaders here, announces that he and a group of devotees are about to depart on a "Ganga Safari," stopping at many holy places,* some inaccessible by road but easily reached on the Ganga. The same Deities of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda who traveled on the *Nitai Pada Kamala* will be onboard one of the three boats. Women and children are invited.

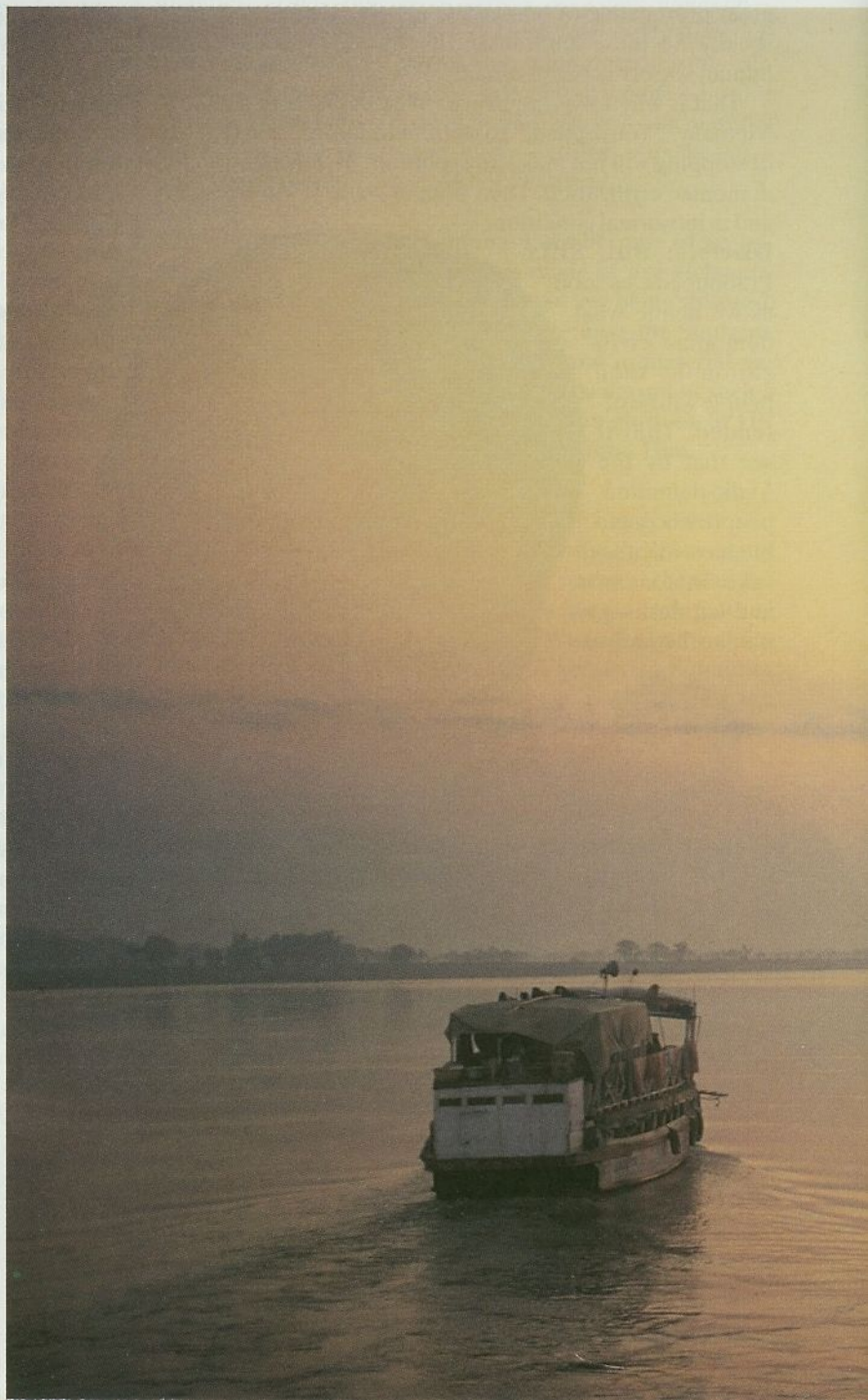
March 21, 1998

My thirteen-year-old son, two of his friends, and I depart by bus for Calcutta with about sixty other devotees from around the world. At Calcutta's Howrah Station we catch an overnight train north to the state of Bihar.

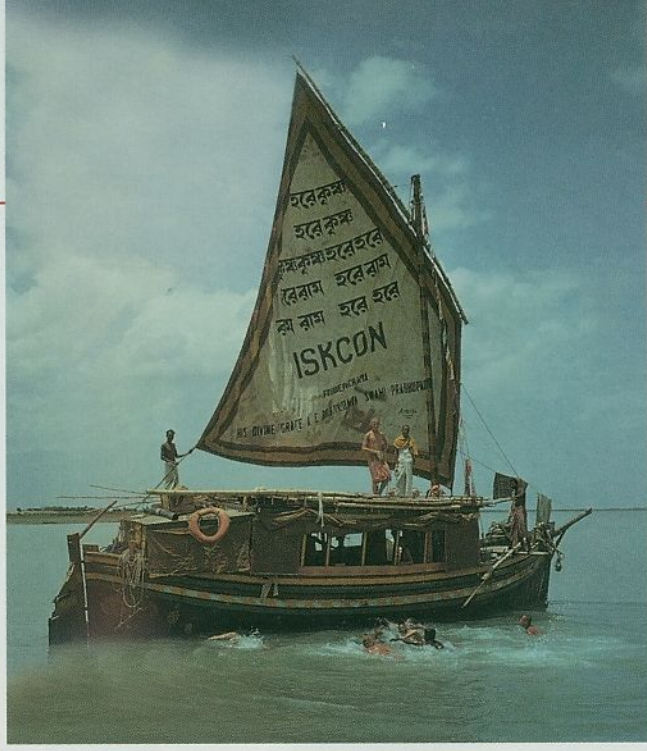
March 22

In the middle of the night the train stops at Burdwan station, where Jayapatāka Swami and ten devotees jump on. At 7:00

*The holy places mentioned in this article are all connected with eternally liberated associates of Lord Caitanya. Readers interested in learning more about these devotees should consult the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (available through The Hare Kṛṣṇa Bazaar, page 63).



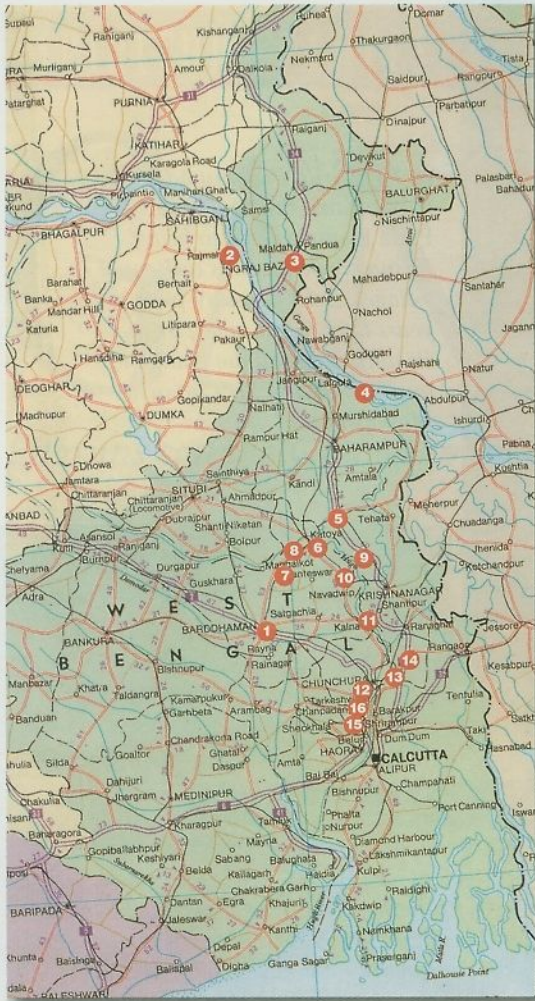
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Muralidāna Dasa

In 1976 Śrīla Prabhupāda inaugurated the boat Nitai Pada Kamala (left) to bring Kṛṣṇa consciousness to Bengal villages. Below, twenty-two years later followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda sail the Ganga to tour the land of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.





Ganga Safari Route

- 1 — Burdwan (Barddhaman)
- 2 — Kanai Natshala
- 3 — Ramakeli
- 4 — Ziya Ganj
- 5 — Uddharanpur
- 6 — Katwa (Katoya)
- 7 — Srikhanda
- 8 — Chakundi
- 9 — Agradvipa
- 10 — Pyari Ganga
- 11 — Ambika Kalna (Kalna)
- 12 — Adisaptagram
- 13 — Halisahar
- 14 — Kancharapara
- 15 — Shrirampur
- 16 — Panihati



A.M. we reach a tiny railroad station, Tala Jhari. We pile into waiting vans and small buses and drive a short distance to our first designation, Kanai Natshala.

We chant and dance our way into the strikingly clean village, nestled in a forest of mango trees. High on a hill overlooking the Ganga is an ancient temple recently donated to ISKCON. The former *pūjārī* (priest), Narasimha Bābā, was a Vaiṣṇava in the Rāmānuja *sampradāya* (disciplic succession) who had dedicated his life to serving the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in the temple. More than three hundred years ago, the former owners of the temple had handed it over to the Rāmānuja *sampradāya* with the stipulation that if the Rāmānujas were ever unable to protect the Deities, the worship should be turned over to the preeminent branch of Lord Caitanya's *sampradāya*. Unfortunately, a few years ago

the Deities were stolen. To uphold the original agreement and assure the protection of the new Deities, Narasimha Bābā turned the temple over to ISKCON, which he considered the foremost movement in carrying on Lord Caitanya's mission.

Jayapatāka Swami tells us the story from the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* of Nṛsimha Brahmācārī, who meditated on making a beautiful jeweled road for Lord Caitanya to walk to Vṛndāvana. When in his meditation Nṛsimha Brahmācārī came to Kanai Natshala, he couldn't go any farther and concluded that Lord Caitanya wouldn't go to Vṛndāvana. Later Lord Caitanya was walking to Vṛndāvana when he arrived at Kanai Natshala, followed by a large crowd of people. He announced that Kanai Natshala was a hidden (*gupta*) Vṛndāvana and decided it was the wrong time to go to Vṛndāvana after all. He didn't go any farther than Kanai

Natshala, just as Nṛsimha Brahmācārī had predicted.

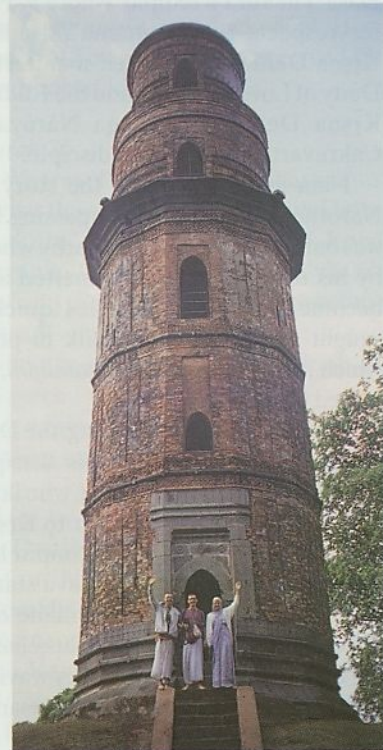
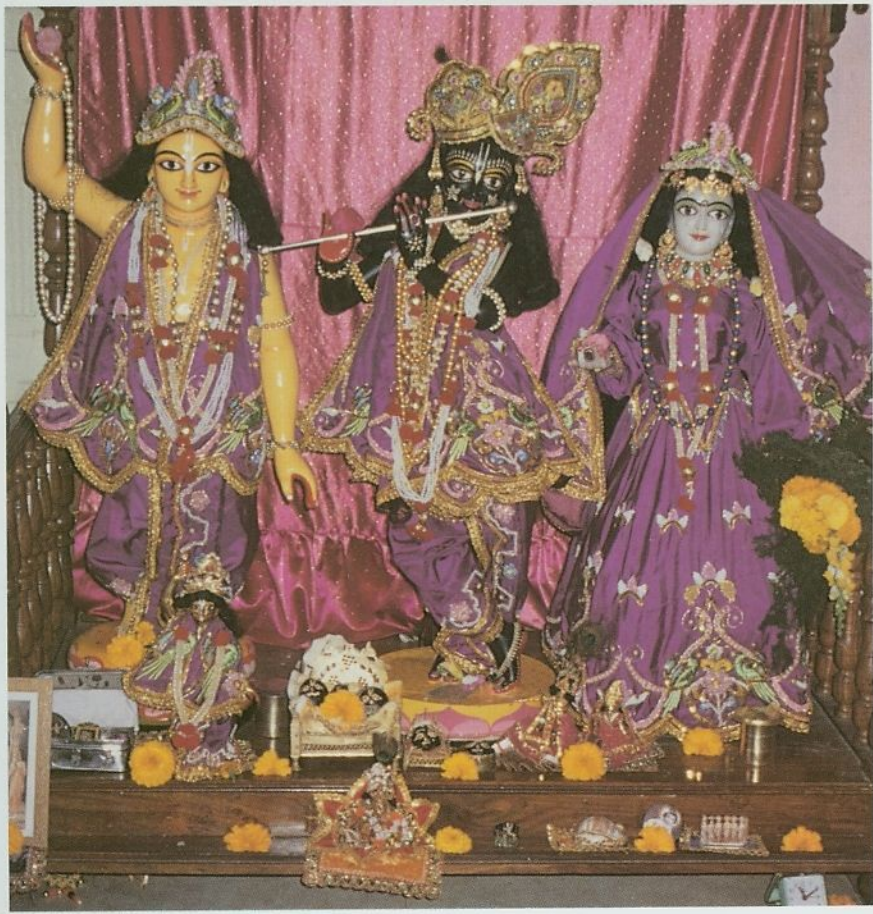
Jayapatāka Swami also explained that in the *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, Kanai Natshala is described as the place where Lord Caitanya first realized Kṛṣṇa and experienced pure love of Kṛṣṇa in separation (*viraha*).

March 23

During the morning class, Jayapatāka Swami explains that for Lord Kṛṣṇa the cows are special and for Lord Caitanya the Ganga is special. Lord Caitanya said that the Ganga is liquid *kṛṣṇa-prema*—love for Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya bathed daily in the Ganga, and when He left this world, Gaṅgā Devi, the deity of the river, felt great separation. Therefore we should remember Lord Caitanya when we bathe in the Ganga. And we should chant Hare Kṛṣṇa while we bathe, because Lord Caitanya promised Ganga



Pilgrims (left) pose outside the Chika Mosjud, where Sanātana Gosvāmī was imprisoned. Below, left, the Deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya Mahā-prabhu at ISKCON's temple in Kanai Natshala. Below, a tower designed by Sanātana Gosvāmī in the late fifteenth century.



that devotees would come and chant while bathing in her water.

March 24

This morning we all travel in one boat in the rain and then take a bus to Ramakeli. We go to a peaceful temple, the home of Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī. We tour several holy places connected with Rūpa and Sanātana, including the prison where the Shah had Sanātana Gosvāmī locked up. My favorite place is a huge cylindrical tower that Sanātana Gosvāmī designed. We ascend it by an interior circular staircase. Because of the brilliance of the design, the Shah made Sanātana Gosvāmī his prime minister. The Shah didn't want to risk having such a genius working against him. The tower was completed in 1486, the year of Lord Caitanya's birth.

In the evening we take a bus to Ziya Ganj, arriving about midnight. There are supposed to be three boats to take us across the river to our guest house, but there's only one. Carrying our luggage, we all pack in. After four hours of sitting on the boat waiting for our accommodations to be worked out, we check into our rooms.

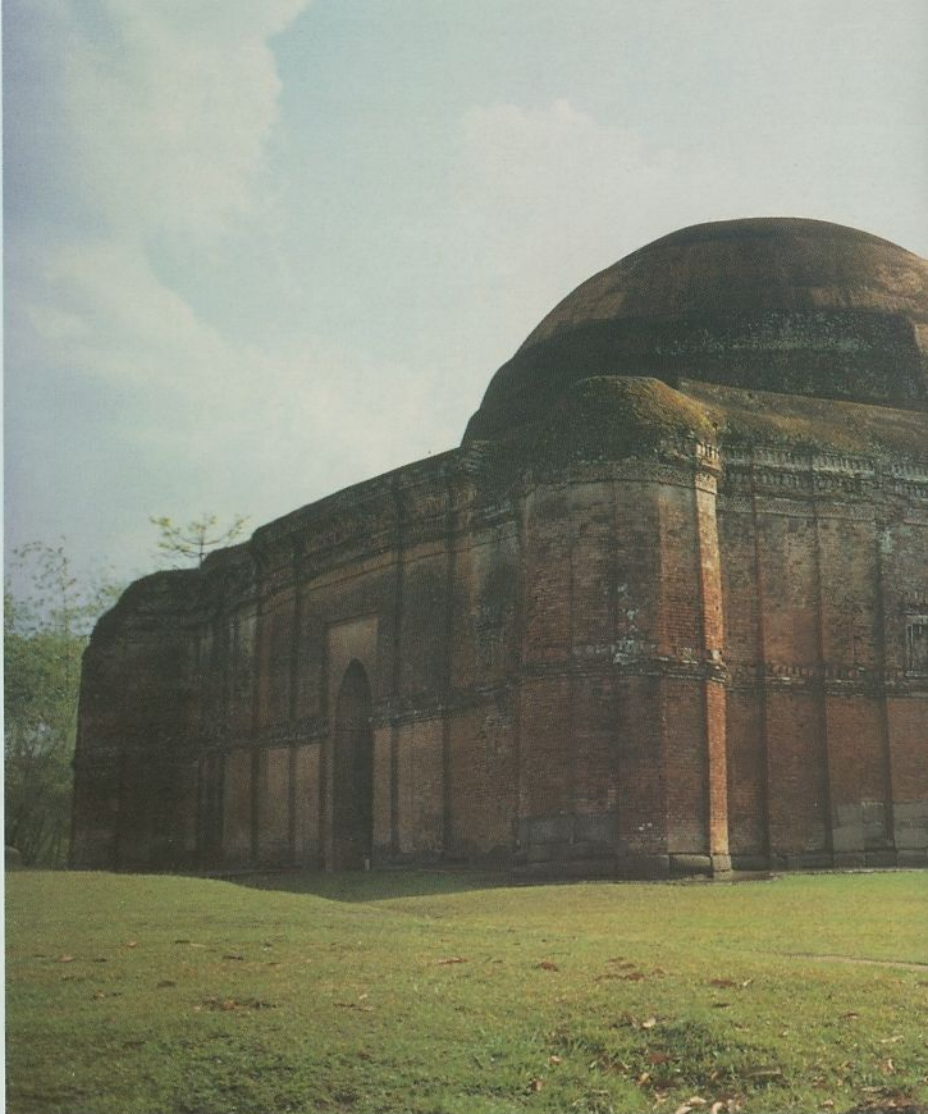
March 25

This morning we walk to Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura's temple, where we offer respects to Narottama's Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities and his self-manifested Deity of Lord Caitanya and the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities of Gaṅga Nārāyaṇa Cakravartī, Narottama's disciple.

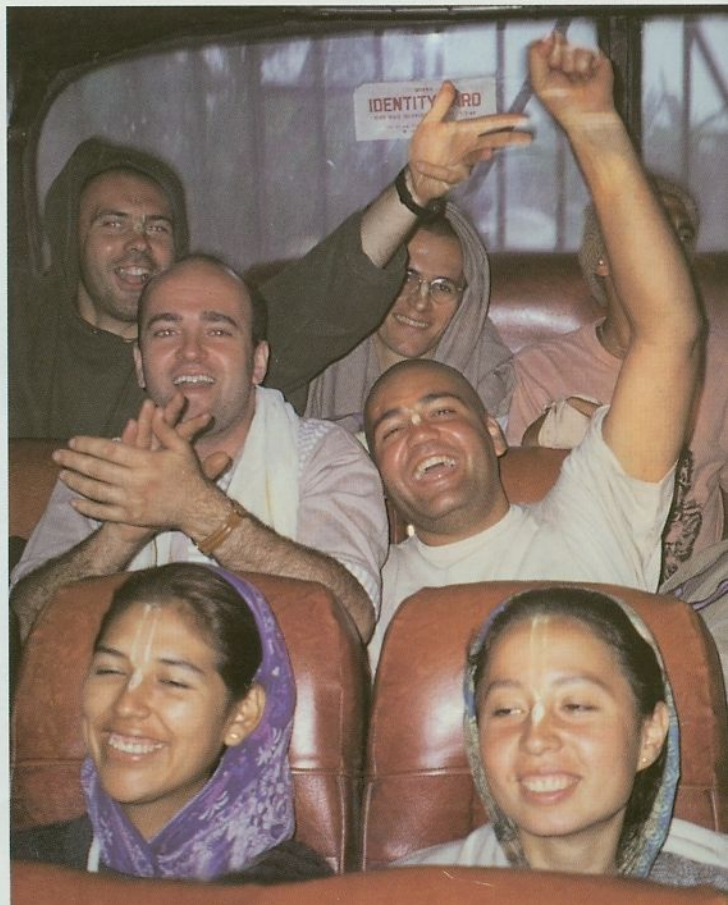
I am amazed to hear the story of Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura's passing. He was bathing in the Ganga nearby when, by his own will, his body melted and became milk. His disciples quickly caught up some of the milk in pots, which are enshrined in his *samādhi*, or sacred tomb.

After Narottama's passing, the Deities were worshiped by his disciple Gaṅgā Nārāyaṇa Cakravartī, who later brought the king of Manipur to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Since then Manipur has been a predominately Vaiṣṇava state.

In the late afternoon we made our maiden voyage in the three boats, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa as we passed by waving villagers. We saw the one-thousand-door palace of Sriraj Dulah, the last

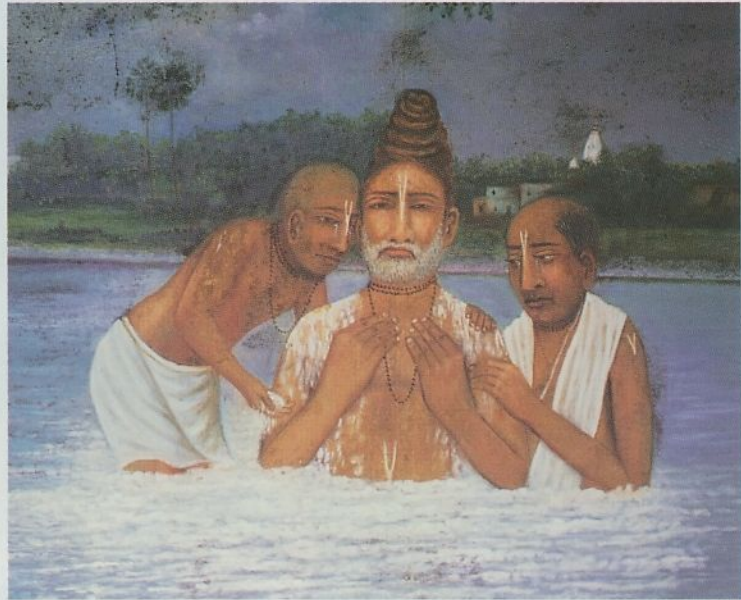


Happy pilgrims (right) live up a bus ride by chanting the holy names. In Shrirampur (far right) a priest attends the six-hundred-year old Deities of Lord Jagannātha, Lord Balarāma, and Subhadrā Devī, formerly served by Lord Caitanya's associate Kamalākara Pippalāi.





The Chika Mosjud (left), where Sanātana Gosvāmī was imprisoned, is now home to thousands of bats and is known as the Bat Mandir (“Bat Temple”). A painting in a temple in Ziya Ganj (below) shows Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura passing away while miraculously turning his body into milk.



Moghul Emperor before the British Raj. That night we docked at Berhampore Town and we’re received by hundreds of local devotees.

March 26

We travel by boat to Uddharampur to visit the shrine of Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura, a great disciple of Lord Nityānanda. It’s evening when we arrive, and there are no lights in the compound, but we chant and dance jubilantly, surrounded by hundreds of villagers.

Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura established a temple here. When he passed away, a king took the Deities to his palace to worship Them. Once a year the Deities return here for a festival.

Lord Nityānanda Prabhu came here often. His daughter, Gaṅgā Gosvāminī, lived nearby with her husband. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, the author of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, also lived nearby.

In the compound are two large trees.



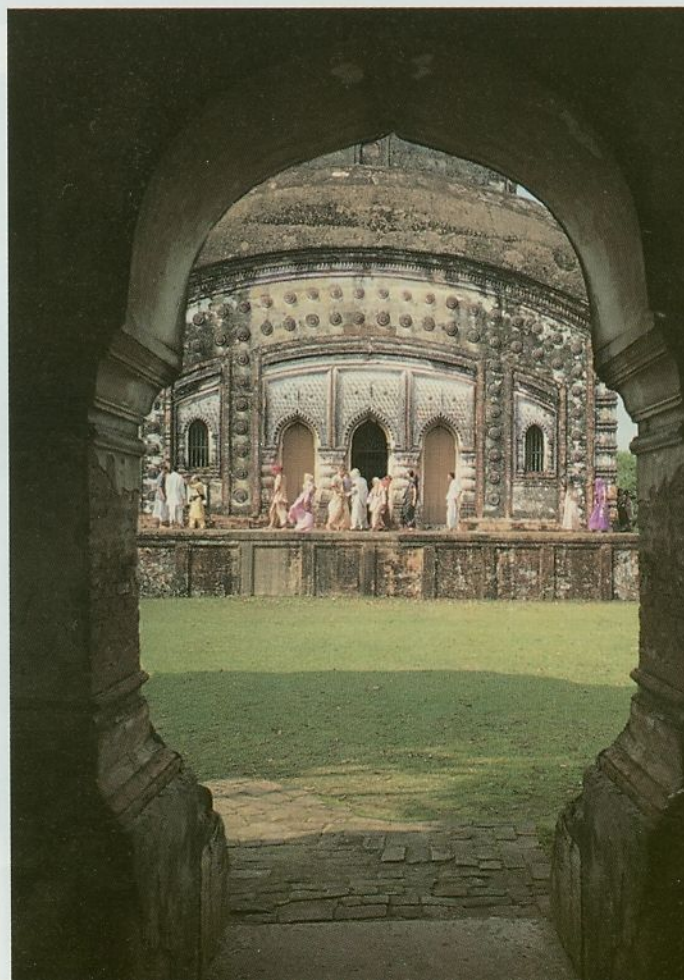
Lord Nityānanda held a *kīrtana* under one of them. As for the other tree, one day Lord Nityānanda brushed his teeth here with a neem twig. When He stuck the twig into the ground, a neem tree sprouted.

March 27

We travel a short distance to the city of Katwa, where Lord Caitanya accepted *sannyāsa*, the renounced order of life. We chant as we walk to the āśrama of Keśava Bhāratī, Lord Caitanya's *sannyāsa*-guru. The āśrama is now a temple with a large Deity of Lord Caitanya.

Lord Caitanya came here and sat under the tree with a few devotees. Caitanya Dāsa, Śrīnivāsa Ācārya's father, was on his way to see Lord Caitanya when he came to Katwa and heard that the Lord was there. Later he wrote a first-hand account of this pastime. He describes that Lord Nityānanda, Gadādhara, Mukunda, and others were present. Caitanya Dāsa maneuvered to get in the front row to

On the women's boat (above) pilgrimage leader Jayapatāka Swami reads pastimes of Lord Caitanya. At right, pilgrims respectfully circle the temple of Śivānanda Sena, a wealthy associate of Lord Caitanya.



Life on the Boat

OUR SAFARI has three boats, each with a crew of three or four and a guard. The women's boat holds twenty-eight, the family boat (ours) holds eighteen, and the men's boat holds the Deities, the kitchen, Jayapatāka Swami, and countless *brahmacāris*. The boats have two levels: the deck (about ten feet above the water) and the downstairs cabin, where we sleep on thin mattresses on the floor or on the continuous benches along the sides of the boat. The motor is also downstairs, making conversation nearly impossible.

At the back of the cabin are two WCs and a metal bucket on a long rope, used for scooping up Ganga water. To avoid offending the Ganga, we replace the boats' toilets (holes over the water) with special toilets.

Up on deck we enjoy a beautiful view of the lush tropical scenery, especially from the roof of the captain's cabin. All along the route, villagers

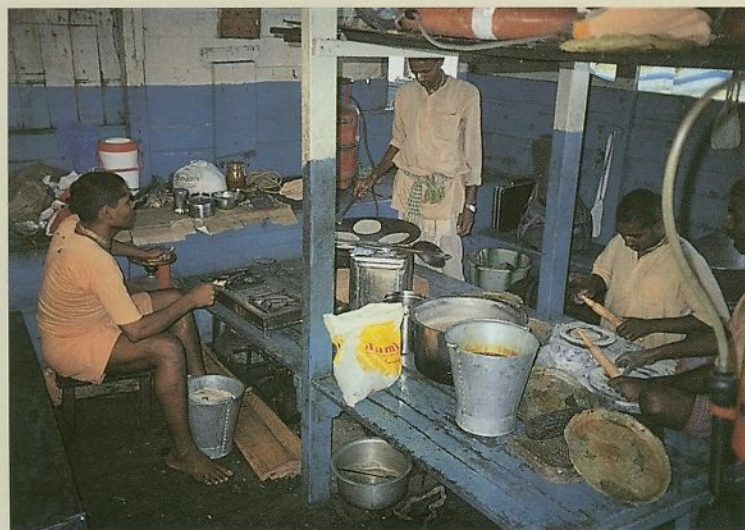
wave at us, and we wave back, yelling or chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Twice boats get stuck on sandbars hidden under the Ganga. One boat has to be towed, the other gets a hole in its side.

During a sudden rainstorm we go downstairs, only to learn that our boat is not waterproof. Water drips from the deck throughout the cabin. We move our luggage and blankets around in a vain attempt to keep them dry. The only dry area is under the captain's cabin, where, by Kṛṣṇa's mercy, I've pitched my small tent, which doubles as mosquito netting. Two young children curl up in dry bedding next to my tent.

After the rain we find the gangplank one-third in the water and covered with slippery mud.

As I return from a pilgrimage the next day, I am amazed to realize that, despite the inconveniences, nothing daunts my enthusiasm for living on the boat.



Brahmacāris (celibate students) from ISKCON's center in Māyāpur, West Bengal, prepare lunch in one of the pilgrimage boats.

The deity of Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, along with an original pair of his shoes, at his home in Adisaptagram.



see Lord Caitanya dancing and chanting in intense *kīrtana*. Tears were pouring from the Lord's eyes as if from a syringe, and people were getting wet from the tears.

Then Lord Caitanya stopped the *kīrtana* and said, "It's time to cut My hair."

Fearing their impending separation from the Lord, everyone protested, and the barber refused to cut the Lord's hair.

Lord Caitanya told him, "This is your duty; you must do it."

Finally the barber did it, and Lord Caitanya danced in great ecstasy and embraced Keśava Bhāratī. The barber became so full of bliss that he could only chant the names of the Lord. He never cut hair again.

We all touch the tree under which Lord Caitanya sat. Next to the tree we admire a painting of the hair-cutting scene, depicting Lord Caitanya with a



newly shaved head, surrounded by extremely distressed devotees. The barber is at the Lord's feet, crying in bliss while lying on the cut hair. Near the entrance we view the Kesha Samadhi, which holds Lord Caitanya's hair, as well as the *samādhi* of Gadādhara Dāsa, who established the Deity worship here.

We walk to a courtyard beside the temple to honor Keśava Bhāratī's *samādhi*, the barber's *samādhi*, and a small temple holding the footprints of Lord Caitanya and Keśava Bhāratī.

A bus takes us out of the city to a village named Srikhanda, the birthplace of Narahari Sarakāra. In a song by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Narahari is depicted as standing to Lord Caitanya's right, fanning Him with a *cāmara* fan.

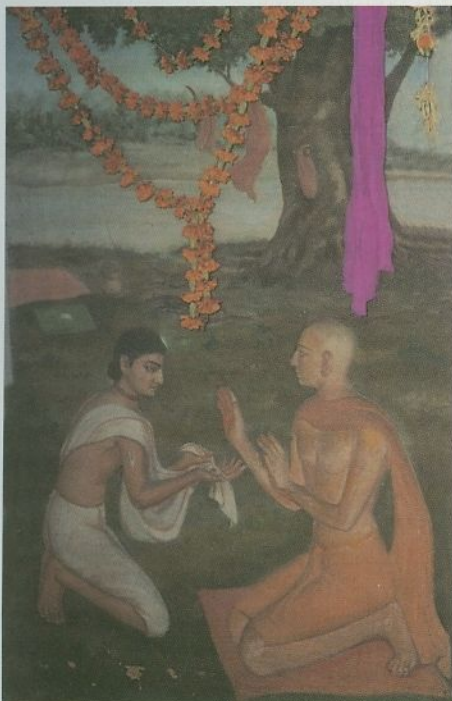
Narahari's brother Mukunda had a son named Raghunandana who was an associate of Lord Caitanya. As a young boy Raghunandana became famous for



The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities (left) at the home of Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī. At right, a painting in the Rādhā-Gopinātha temple of Govinda Ghoṣa shows Govinda Ghoṣa receiving the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.



The three boats of the Ganga Safari (left). This lake (below), at the birthplace of Ísvara Purī, was created by followers of Lord Caitanya when, following His example, they removed dirt from the holy site.



insisting that his family's household Deity eat the food He was offered. When the boy's father watched to see what was happening, he saw the stone Kṛṣṇa Deity eating a *laḍḍu* (a round sweet) from his son's hand.

Hearing the glories of Raghunandana, a devotee named Abhirāma Rāmadāsa wanted to meet him. Abhirāma traveled some distance to meet the boy. They were so happy to meet each other that they embraced and danced. Raghunandana danced so intensely that his ankle bells fell off and flew two kilometers away.

We visit a few other holy places in Srikhanda. In one temple we touch the seat where Narahari Sarakāra, a year after he'd passed away, reappeared during a festival. Everyone present could see him.

After driving a distance away, we dance and roll in the dust where Raghu-

nandana and Abhirāma Rāmadāsa danced together.

On our return to Katwa, we stop at the village of Chakundi Jajigram to visit Śrīnivāsa Ācārya's home, where his Deities of Rādhā-Madana-Mohana are located.

Jāhnava Devī, Lord Nityānanda's wife, came here and wanted to prepare a feast for all the devotees. But there was no place big enough for keeping the *dāl* (split beans). So the devotees dug a pond, and filled it with *dāl*. Now the pond is filled with water. We offer our respects to this sacred pond.

March 28

We visit the birthplace of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya at Chakundi and offer our respects to his Deities.

Further down the Ganga we stop at Agradvipa and visit the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa (please turn to page 57)

The Hare Kṛṣṇa Calendar

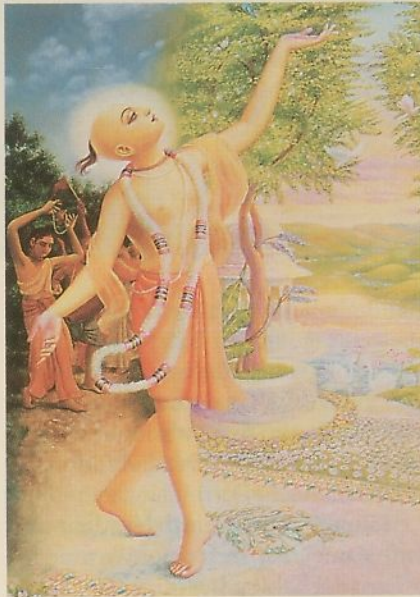
This calendar is calculated for Śrīdhām Māyāpur, West Bengal, India. Dates may vary by one day for other locations. Consult your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for the exact dates for your area.

Month of Govinda

(February 1–March 2)

MARCH

2 — Śrī Gaura Pūrṇimā, the appearance anniversary of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself in the role of His own devotee. Fasting till moonrise, followed by a break-fast of Ekādaśī *prasādam* (no grains or beans). Feasting tomorrow.



Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

Month of Viṣṇu

(March 3–March 31)

10 — Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, one of Lord Caitanya's principal associates.

14 — Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

22 — Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the eleventh century.

25 — Śrī Rāma Navamī, the appearance anniversary of Lord Rāmacandra. Fasting till sunset, followed by feasting.

27 — Kāmadā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

31 — Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vasanta Rāsa, Lord Kṛṣṇa's springtime *rāsa* dance. Balarāma Rāsa Yātrā, Lord Balarāma's *rāsa* dance. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita, a follower of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

Month of Madhusūdana

(April 1–April 30)

APRIL

11 — Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura, the author of *Śrī Caitanya Bhāgavata*, a biography on Lord Caitanya.

12 — Varūthini Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

16 — Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, one of Lord Caitanya's principal associates.

18 — Beginning of Candana Yātrā, the festival of anointing Lord Jagannātha with sandalwood pulp for twenty-one days.

24 — Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sītā Devī, the consort of Lord Rāmacandra. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Jāhnavā Devī, the consort of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Madhu Paṇḍita, a great devotee of Lord Caitanya.

26 — Mohiṇī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

27 — Rukmiṇī Dvādaśī, the appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī Devī, the consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa as Dvārakādiśa, the Lord of Dvārakā.

28 — Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jayānanda Prabhu, a dedicated follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda who helped him bring the Rathayātrā festival to the Western world.

29 — Nṛsiṃha Caturdaśī, the appearance anniversary of Lord Nṛsiṃha-deva, Lord Kṛṣṇa's half-man, half-lion incarnation. Fasting till dusk, followed by feasting.

30 — Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, a follower of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Parameśvara Purī, an associate of Lord Caitanya.

Month of Trivikrama

(May 1–15, June 14–28)

[This year, this month is divided in two by the month of Puruṣottama.]

MAY

6 — Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya, an intimate associate of Lord Caitanya.

12 — Aparā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura, the author of *Śrī Caitanya Bhāgavata*, a biography on Lord Caitanya.

Month of Puruṣottama

(May 16–June 13)

26 — Vyañjulī Mahā-dvādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans for Padminī Ekādaśī.

Gatherings

The people listed here hold Kṛṣṇa conscious gatherings regularly in their homes—or they'd like to start. You're invited. Just give a call to find out when and where. If you hold Kṛṣṇa conscious gatherings and you'd like to be added to the list, please send your name, city, and phone number to Gatherings, BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616, USA.

USA

CALIFORNIA: To find out about programs in **Anaheim Hills, Buena Park, Corona, Cerritos, Diamond Bar, Granada Hills, Laguna Niguel, Long Beach, Redlands, Santa Ana, Simi Valley**, and other southern California locations, call Svayambhuva Dāsa at (310) 837-2430. **Burlingame** — Vaiṣeṣika Dāsa & Nirākula Devī Dāsi, (650) 344-2446; **Ojai** — Māyeśvara Dāsa & Urvaśī Devī Dāsi (William & Joan Roberts), (805) 640-0405; **Placentia** — Sri Radha Raman Temple, (714) 996-7262; **Redwood Valley** — Prasanna Yoga Āśrama (Īkṣvāku Dāsa), (707) 485-5592; **San Jose / Santa Cruz** — Akṛurānātha Dāsa & Jagarīṇī Devī Dāsi, (408) 353-9099; **Santa Rosa** — Jagannātha Puri Dāsa & Tripurārī Devī Dāsi, Bus. phone: (707) 526-7211; **South Central Los Angeles** — Kṛṣṇa Bhāvana Dāsa, (213) 295-1517

COLORADO: **Boulder** — Madan Gopal Dāsa & Pancha Tattva Dāsi, (303) 402-1740

FLORIDA: **Cocoa Beach** — Bhāgavata Dharma Dāsa & Śyāmā Devī Dāsi, (407) 633-7664; **Coral Springs** — Institute for Gaudiya Vaishnavism, (954) 345-3456; ***Orlando** — Raghunātha Puri Dāsa (Ron Jermakian), (407) 291-3069; ISKCON Sunday Program Shanti Mandir, (call Dipa): (407) 788-7009; **St. Augustine** — Bhakti-yoga Center, (904) 824-5328; ***Tampa** — Kṛṣṇa Mandir, (813) 273-8744

GEORGIA: **Athens** — Guru-Gauranga Hare Krishna Center, (706) 353-8180

HAWAII: **Waimanalo Bay** — Above Heaven's Gate, (808) 259-5429

ILLINOIS: **Dekalb** — ISKCON Youth Ministry, Manu Dāsa & Jaya Rādhe Devī Dāsi, (815) 754-4563

INDIANA: **Indianapolis** — Steve W. Bausch (Śyāmasundara Dāsa), (317) 357-9051

IOWA: **Iowa City** — Dan & Sylvia Lindberg, (319) 339-7768

KANSAS: **Lawrence** — Aṅkotta Dāsa & Gopimātā Devī Dāsi, (913) 865-5080

KENTUCKY: **Lexington** — Mr. Mallela Prasad, (606) 323-2286; **Louisville** — Krishna House, (502) 683-9352

MARYLAND: ***Potomac** — Devaprastha Dāsa & Padmamālinī Dāsi, (301) 299-1326; **Silver Spring** — Mr. & Mrs. Sankhla & Jāhnavī Devī Dāsi, (301) 236-0564; Anuttama Dāsa & Rāma Tulasi Dāsi, (301) 570-6422

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MICHIGAN: **Lansing** — Pālaka Dāsa & family, (517) 484-7431

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Parsippany — Rahul Kunderan, (201) 428-8119; **New Jersey Shore** — Greg & Kristen, (908) 458-6670

NEW MEXICO: **Albuquerque** — Suresh Vyasa, (505) 833-5453; **Los Alamos** — Dr. Arvind Sharma, (505) 661-1939; **Santa Fe** — Jambavati Devī Dāsi, (505) 466-4345

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Braja Kumārī Dāsi, (513) 742-5725; contact: Krishna House, (614) 421-1661; **Cleveland** — Kṛṣṇanandini Devī Dāsi, (216) 681-2934 or Kāma-giri Devī Dāsi, (216) 761-3954; **Kent** — Regular programs at Kent State University, (contact Krishna House, [614] 421-1661); Jim Kelley, (330) 297-5353; **Wellston** — Mādhavi Devī Dāsi, (740) 384-7102

PENNSYLVANIA: **Erie** — Lilā Kumāra Devī Dāsi, (814) 676-1791; **Norristown** — Radha Krishna Mahajan, M.D. (Kaivalya Dāsa), (215) 539-3221

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VIRGINIA: **Charlottesville** — The Bhaktivedanta Center, Amitācāra Dāsa & Māyāpriyā Devī Dāsi, (804) 823-8223

WASHINGTON: **Pullman** — Rathī & Ashika Sewsunker, (509) 333-6525

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AUSTRALIA: **Tasmania** — David Gould, (03) 6228-2717 (Hobart); Malcolm Walsh, (03) 6343-2477 (Launceston)

BELGIUM: **Ghent** — Centrum voor Bhakti-yoga, (09) 238-3344

BRAZIL: **Curitiba** — Gaura-Natarāja Dāsa, +55 (041) 263-4163

BRITISH ISLES (Jersey): **St. Helier** — Jean Nicolle, (01534) 610081

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FRANCE: **Paris** — Centre Culturel Hare Krishna, (01) 40469523

GERMANY: **Hamburg** — Vedic Cultural Mission, (040) 655 23 72;

Weimar — Katharina Rauch, Am Jakobsfriedhof 1, D-99423

GREECE: **Greater Patras Area** — Pānagādī-tīrtha Dāsa, (06) 963-2930

HUNGARY: **Liter** — Torok Zoltan, Bajcsy Zs. u. 56, Liter 8196

ITALY: **Belforte del Chienti** — Centro Culturale Govinda Bhavan, Mahāvākya Dāsa & Divya Kathā Devī Dāsi, (0733) 951102;

Rome — Hare Kṛṣṇa Forum, (06) 6832660

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Osaka — Satsvartāpa Dāsa and Jalāṅgi Devī Dāsi, (06) 352-0729

MALAYSIA: **Pasir Gudang** — Narasimha Dāsa, +60 (07) 251-3822

MEXICO: **Tijuana** — Centro Cultural Hare Krishna, (66) 83-7599

NEW ZEALAND: **Hamilton** — Rāghava Caitanya Dāsa, (07) 856-7608

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*New or revised listing.

SPEAKS OUT

(continued from page 43)

applied—but the man is dead. So let him explain why the man is dead. Can he explain?

Disciple: Not to our satisfaction.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Satisfaction or no satisfaction. What will the great scientific authority answer? What he will say?

Disciple: He will say, “Counteracting death is beyond my means.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda (as if to the great scientist): Therefore, you are a fool. How can you dare to hold yourself up as an authority?

Disciple (in the role of the scientist): I have tried my best to counteract death, but I cannot.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: All right. That means you do not know. A child also tries his best to do things but cannot. This does not mean he becomes a big authority.

Disciple: Well, Śrīla Prabhupāda, the great scientist will say that for the sustenance of life, there are certain conditions.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is not an answer. What are those “certain conditions”? That answer is vague. You must tell us, Mr. Scientist: What, precisely, are those “certain conditions” that sustain life? Only then are you an authority.

Disciple (again playing the scientist):

Well, for one thing, there has to be an electrical charge in the heart.

Śrīla Prabhupāda (to the scientist): Then provide the electrical charge. *Do it.* Electricity is available.

Disciple: Well, for some persons whose hearts have stopped, medical personnel apply electrical nodes to the heart and seemingly bring the persons back to life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Back to life.” For how long?

Disciple: Life can continue.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Continue forever?

Disciple: Well, no.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So? The person will still die. This brief continuing of life—that is another thing. The person will still die.

Now, *why* will he die? What is that condition which produces death? If you say, as a chemist, “Well, death comes about because the chemical condition has changed,” then we shall reply, “Essentially, the chemical condition has remained unchanged. After all, immediately after someone’s body has died, life will still come out. So many germs and worms—they will come out.”

So how can you say, “The chemical condition that produces life has changed”? How can you say that? The thing is, the specific life we called “Mr. John” has gone away and is not coming back. That “Mr. John”—that specific

living entity—is not coming back. Therefore, that specific living entity is totally different from matter; he is a totally distinct, totally spiritual entity, a soul.

Disciple: So, Śrīla Prabhupāda, we can distinguish that the soul who goes away from the material body has nothing to do with the worms and germs that go on living in the body after death. But before the soul goes away from the material body, does he have something to do with the innumerable souls who live within the body’s cells? I think that in the past you’ve said each cell contains a distinct and individual soul.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, I said that.

Disciple: So, during the time before the “main soul” goes away from the body, could we say that these other souls living in the cell structures are supporting that one particular soul?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. They are living their own individual lives, irrespective of that particular soul. For instance, there are many germs living in some person’s, say Mr. John’s, stool. Why are those germs living there? Simply because stool is their ideal place for living; that’s all. But those germs have nothing to do with that particular soul, Mr. John.

Disciple: But it looks as if I am the proprietor of these other souls living in my body’s cells.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, no. You are not the proprietor. No one here is a proprietor. Even if your current condition may seem like that of a proprietor, you have been placed into that condition by God. So the real proprietor is God. You are simply placed into that somewhat privileged condition; that’s all. You are not the proprietor—you are dependent on the condition offered by God.

Disciple: But for example, Śrīla Prabhupāda, in an office the boss is working and there are various secretaries and clerks helping him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. But in your example, the real boss is the chief man who is assigning the work: “*You* work like that. *You* work like this. *You* work in this other way.”

Disciple: So I am the boss.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. You are not the boss. You are also one of the workers. ❁

You’re Invited! The Sunday Feast

Most Hare Kṛṣṇa centers around the world put on a special festival every Sunday—for regulars as well as newcomers. You’re invited to join in the festival of music, dance, and spiritual discourse and then share hearty plates of savories, sweets, and vegetable extravaganzas. Come by and relish the taste of the world’s oldest cultural tradition. Call your nearest center to find out the schedule for the Sunday Feast. (See “Centers,” page 59.)

GANGA SAFARI

(continued from page 53)

temple of Govinda Ghoṣa, another associate of Lord Caitanya.

March 29

After a brief halt at ISKCON Māyāpur, we stop at Samudragarh, where the Ocean came and touched Navadvīpa Dhāma—the sacred abode of Lord Caitanya—and where the great devotee king Samudra Sena met Lord Kṛṣṇa 5,000 years ago.

March 30

We float down the Ganga to Pyari Ganga. Here Lord Caitanya entered the heart of Nakula Brahmācārī, who in spiritual ecstasy seemed like a man haunted by a ghost. He laughed, danced, trembled, and made rumbling noises. He even displayed the same bodily luster as Lord Caitanya's.

We reach Ambika Kalna late in the day. Because of rain, we can't get to the site of a festival organized by local devotees.

March 31

The rain has subsided. Early in the morning we tour Ambika Kalna.

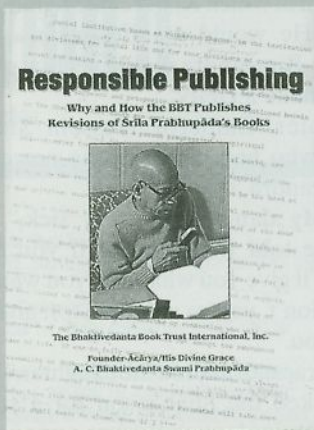
First we visit the temple of Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita and hear the story of how his large, beautiful Deities of Gaura-Nitāi (Caitanya-Nityānanda) once left the altar and joined a group of devotees chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita wanted Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda Prabhu to stay in Kalna permanently. When the Lords told him that wasn't possible, he asked if They would allow him to make Deities of Them and thus always be present there in Their Deity forms. After the wooden Deities were completed, Gaurīdāsa requested Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda Prabhu to stay and let the Deities go instead. To prove that They and their Deity forms are identical, the Lords placed themselves on the altar, raised Their arms, and became wooden Deities. And the Deities walked away out the door of the temple. Gaurīdāsa requested the mobile forms to remain, but They raised Their arms and became motionless Deities, and the Deities on the altar walked away. They repeated this a few times, until Gaurīdāsa could no longer distinguish between his Lords

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and Their Deity forms.

Nearby we visit a temple of Rādhā-Śyamāsundara. Sūryadāsa Sarakela, the father-in-law of Lord Nityānanda and elder brother of Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita, worshiped these Deities. Next stop is the *samādhi* of Bhagavān Dāsa Bābāji, a friend of Jagannātha Dāsa Bābāji. When Bhagavān Dāsa was too old to go to the Ganga, the Ganga came to him. Near his place of worship is a small stairway down to Patal Ganga, where he would bathe.

April 1

Buses take us to Adisaptagram to see the āśrama and temple of Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura, whose *samādhi* we visited a few days ago. According to the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura was born with the right to worship Lord Nityānanda. Śrīla Prabhupāda is in the family line of Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura.

Lord Nityānanda spent much time here. Once He stuck a wooden spoon into the ground here, and up popped a flowering tree, still flowering today.

Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī's birthplace, our next stop, is in a secluded spot next to the Sarasvati River, here just a stream. In the temple, we offer

respects to his *mūrti* (carved form) and touch his shoes. His house is about a mile through the jungle from here.

Next we go to Śivānanda Sena's temple, established by his son's disciple.

Our last stop is Caitanya-doba, at Halisahar. When the Lord visited this holy place and was told it was the birthplace of His spiritual master, Īśvara Purī, the Lord declared, "This spot is worshipable for Me." He picked up a clod of dirt and wrapped it in His cloth. So many devotees followed the Lord's example and removed so much dirt that they dug out a hole approximately 60 feet by 150 feet, which then filled with water. Later a brick retaining wall was built around the lake.

April 2

This morning we go to the Annapūrṇā temple, where one asks permission to enter the *dhāma*, the holy land of Lord Caitanya's pastimes. Down the street is a Rādhā-Śyamāsundara temple established by Bīracandra Prabhu, Lord Nityānanda's son. Lord Nityānanda lived here with his two wives: Jāhnavā and Vasudhā, Bīracandra's mother.

Jayapatāka Swami tells us the story of the appearance of this very beautiful

Deity. One night Bīracandra had a dream in which Kṛṣṇa came to him and said He would manifest Himself in stone. Bīracandra should get that stone and make a Deity.

Later, Emperor Hussein Shah's son, who had heard of the power of Bīracandra, sent for him.

"My daughter is very sick," the prince told Bīracandra. "If you cure her, I'll give you whatever you want. If you don't, you're an impostor, and I'll kill you."

Bīracandra cured the daughter. Then he asked the Shah's son for a stone from the palace wall.

The Shah's son protested, "But that stone is supporting everything. If you take it, the wall will collapse."

But finally he agreed. "Do whatever you want."

When Bīracandra started a *kīrtana*, the stone slid out and fell down, but nothing else moved. He wanted to take the stone to the Ganga, but no one could move it, even by using elephants. The devotees started chanting again, and then they were able to move the stone easily. Some people objected to bathing the stone in the Ganga, afraid it would sink, but when it was placed in the Ganga, it floated.

Bīracandra gave the stone to a man to carve a Deity. The first Deity he carved was too big, the second one too small, and finally the third one fit the proportions of the Deity in

Bīracandra's dream. It is this third Deity we are now seeing as Rādhā-Śyāmasundara. The first Deity carved is Rādhā-Nanda-dulāla, ten miles from here. The second Deity, Rādhā-Rādhāvallabha, is worshiped in a temple across the river.

From Rādhā-Śyāmasundara's temple we walk to Bīracandra's birthplace (Lord Nityānanda's residence) to offer respects to his *mūrti* and his Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. The *pūjārī* there tells us Bīracandra Prabhu took initiation from Jāhnavā, his stepmother. One day Jāhnavā was cooking, and her sari fell from her head. Bīracandra saw that she manifested two more arms to catch her sari.

After crossing the Ganga, we take a riksha to a temple of Lord Jagannātha. This is the place of the associate of Lord Caitanya named Kamalākara Pippalāi. Approaching the temple, we first notice the huge festival cart (*ratha*) sitting in the street. No one is worried it will be stolen, because it's made of solid iron and steel. It takes five hundred people to pull the cart on Rathayātrā day.

We are all allowed inside the Deity room of Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā. The Deities are six hundred years old. Paintings on the walls of the *kīrtana* hall depict the long story of Their appearance.

After our last stretch down the Ganga, we arrive at Panihati, where we

disembark for the last time.

Jayapatāka Swami tells us that Lord Caitanya resides wherever Lord Nityānanda dances. Once while Lord Caitanya was in South India, Lord Nityānanda danced here at Rāghava Paṇḍita's house. Lord Caitanya came to see, but only Lord Nityānanda could see Him.

"He's here, and He's wearing a garland of flowers from South India," Nityānanda Prabhu informed to his followers. "If you breathe deeply, you can smell it."

They did so and became ecstatic.

Lord Nityānanda came here to Rāghava Paṇḍita's house regularly, as He lived nearby. The devotees had such ecstatic *kīrtanas* they'd pull up palm trees and dance with them, they'd pick up bamboo rods and play them like flutes, and they'd perform other superhuman feats. Lord Nityānanda pumped everyone full of transcendental ecstasy, and Bengal was flooded with *kīrtana*.

We arrive back in Māyāpur at 9:30 P.M., blissfully singing, "Ganga! Ganga!" ❀

Mahāmāya Devī Dāsī was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in New York in 1971. She is a proofreader and the compiler of a database of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples. She and her husband and 14-year-old son live most of the year in Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana.

LIFE (continued from page 38)
master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, was instrumental in fulfilling the desire and prediction of Lord Caitanya. And what has been the consequence of chanting throughout the world? People addicted to all sorts of bad habits have given up their vicious activities and are following regulative principles: no eating meat, fish, or eggs, no intoxication, no gambling, and no illicit sex. Those who from babyhood were fed meat, without any consideration that meat-eating is wrong, have become vegetarians, or 'Kṛṣṇatarians,' who eat only sanctified food offered to the Lord. The potency of chanting of the names of God is so great. And I believe that our aspirations for rev-

erence for all life, for an end to unnecessary violence, can be successful only if people are engaged on a large scale in chanting the holy names of God. Thank you very much. Hare Kṛṣṇa."

Sri Bhari Malhotra interjected, "Why don't we all chant!"

I continued: "Actually, these names of God are not sectarian. There is no question of a Hindu God or a Muslim God or a Christian God. There is only one God, who is the supreme father of all of us. And He is not Hindu, Christian or Muslim, but He is the supreme spirit soul.

"So now we'll chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and later, if any of you want to lead the chanting of any other name of God, we will also be happy to join in."

I led the audience in chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra responsively, first two words at a time, then four, then eight, and finally all sixteen words. Eventually almost everyone in the audience—respectable ladies and gentlemen of various faiths—were standing and clapping and singing: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

I thought, "Now the conference is successful. The participants have chanted the holy names of Kṛṣṇa (God), the origin of all life." ❀

Girirāja Swami serves as an ISKCON Governing Body Comissioner for Mumbai, Mauritius, Spain, Portugal, South Africa, and several other places.

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You Can Do It!

HERE IT IS, NEW YEAR'S DAY (my deadline comes a couple of months before publication), and like so many others, I'm sitting here thinking about New Year's resolutions. Our resolutions usually involve giving up bad habits or picking up good ones. We may not stick to our resolutions, but that we make them at all tells us at least one thing: we have an innate belief that we can change, that we have at least some ability to improve ourselves.

One problem with trying to change is the reaction of our family and friends. They may discourage us by saying we'll never do it. Or they might just make us uncomfortable when we try to present our new and improved self.

Sometimes people can't understand our changes or don't want us to change. When you visit your mother after you've grown up, she might be surprised that you don't like the same food you liked as a child. "But you used to *love* carrots!"

Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes quoted the Bengali phrase *nagna-mātrika-nyāya*: "the logic of the naked mother." The point is that it's illogical to think that a grown woman will have to run around naked just because she did so as a child. In other words, people can change.

Śrīla Prabhupāda applied this expression to his disciples. Their families and friends were often shocked to see they'd given up meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling, so much a part of their youth. They thought the kids must be brainwashed, or that Kṛṣṇa consciousness, like bell bottoms, would be just another passing fad.

People are sometimes surprised to find that Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees are still around after

all these years. I was chanting downtown with some devotees recently when a man passed by and offered this comment: "Get over it."

But chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa has the power to effect real, lasting change in anyone. Self-improvement requires at least some inner strength. We fail to honor our resolutions because we lack that strength. But chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa draws out the innermost strength—the strength of the soul. It gets us in touch with our real identity.

Another reason we fail to honor our resolutions is that we aren't sure they're worthwhile. What will I ultimately gain if I quit smoking or gambling? I may solve some temporary problems, but if everything ends at death, what's the ultimate significance of denying myself immediate pleasure?

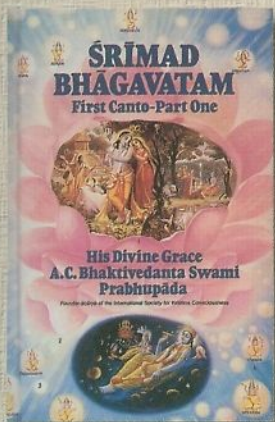
By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, we realize more and more that we're not these temporary bodies but eternal spirit souls. The soul—the "I" within the body—in its pure state has no bad habits. And it has immense power. That power comes from love—love for Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord. If we tap that love, we can do anything. In the material world we can see how powerful even a person's imperfect love can be. The soul's pure spiritual love of God is inestimably more powerful. A pure devotee of the Lord can accomplish extraordinary things. Because his motive is the pleasure of his beloved Lord, he is fortified with boundless resolve.

So here's one resolution that will help you follow all your other ones: resolve to regularly chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. — *Nāgarāja Dāsa*

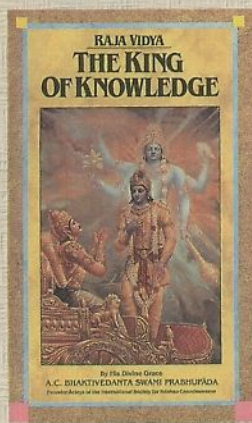
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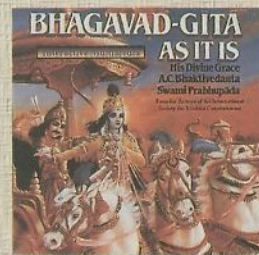


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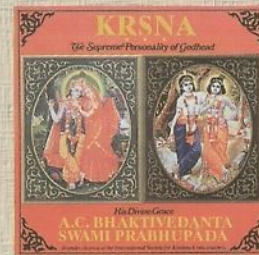
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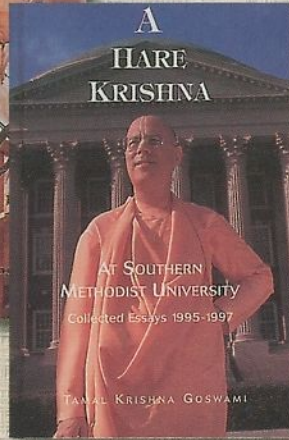
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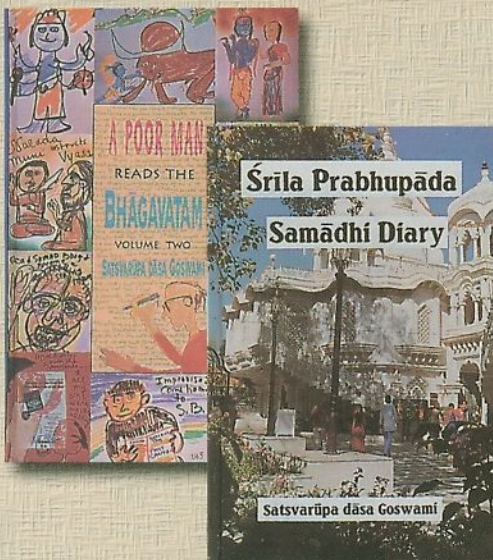
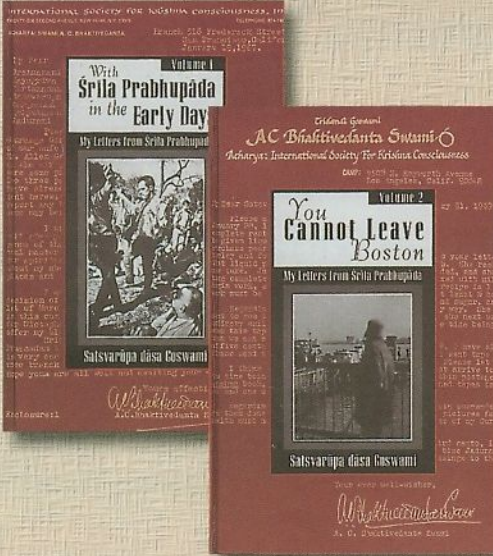
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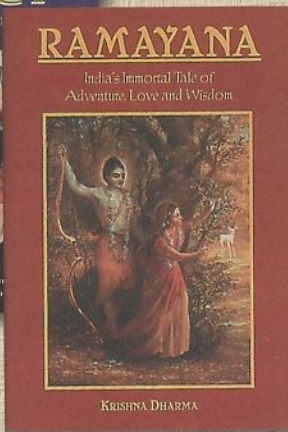
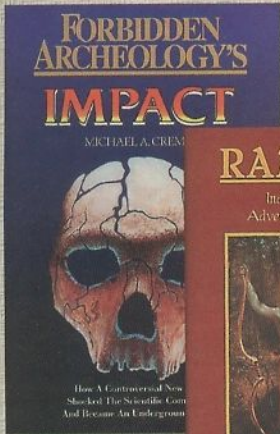
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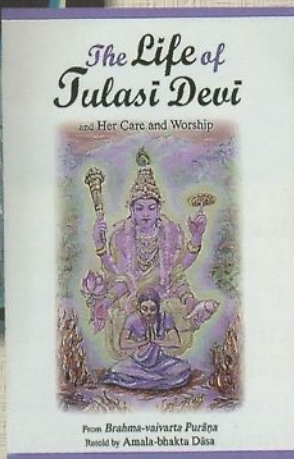
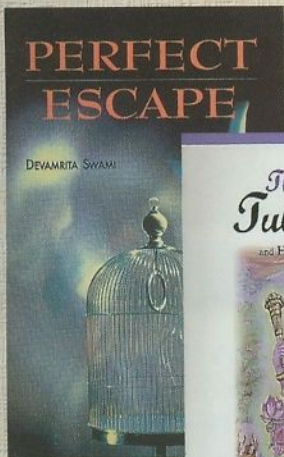
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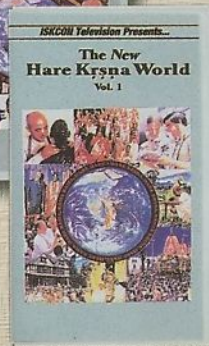


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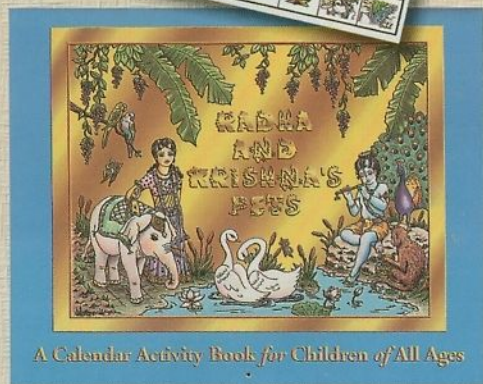
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... He is the root of the impersonal Brahman and Paramātmā; the Supersoul in every entity is His plenary portion. He is the fountainhead of everything, and everyone is advised to surrender unto His lotus feet.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda
Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 7.15, Purport

The unalloyed devotional service rendered to Me by My devotees brings Me under their control. I cannot be thus controlled by those engaged in mystic yoga, Sāṅkhya philosophy, pious work, Vedic study, austerity, or renunciation.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.14.20

What is painful for saintly persons who strictly adhere to the truth? How could there not be independence for pure devotees who know the Supreme Lord as the substance? What deeds are forbidden for persons of the lowest character? And what cannot be given up for the sake of Lord Kṛṣṇa by those who have fully surrendered at His lotus feet.

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.1.58

One who constantly sings the glories of the Lord is surely elevated to the same planet as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Lord Kṛṣṇa appreciates this singing even more than the prayers offered by Lord Śiva.

Līṅga Purāṇa

Through the association of devotees, one can engage in the service of the Lord by hearing and chanting. Thus one can revive his dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness and, sticking to the cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, return home, back to Godhead, even in this life.

Bharata Mahārāja
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.12.16

Childish fools pursue external desires and enter the wide chords of death. The sages, having comprehended the liberated condition, never pray for the temporary things of this world.

Katha Upaniṣad 4.2

For one who has given up material sense enjoyment and accepted the principles of devotional service, the opulence of Viṣṇuloka [the kingdom of God] is awaiting.

Padma Purāṇa

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