

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



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • March/April 2006 • \$4.00/£2.50

# SERVING KṚṢṂA BY SERVING TULAŚI

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# Back to Godh

Founded 1944 • Vol. 40, No. 2 • March / April 2006



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**COVER** Sanātana Rṣi Dāsa (left) and Sananda Kumāra Dāsa carry Tulasī to her new greenhouse at the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in Vancouver, Canada. Please see the article beginning on page 21. (Photo by Viśākhā Devī Dāsi.)

*“If someone has been cheated with counterfeit money, he should not conclude that there is no real money.*

*Unfortunately, people are so unintelligent that they cannot judge what is the real authority and what is unreal. They take the real to be counterfeit and then follow the blind rascals.”*

—p. 34

## WELCOME



**THE NINE** feature articles in this issue span a wide range of topics related to the philosophy and culture of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We begin, as always, with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lecture, in

which he urges us to rise above our animal drives and qualify ourselves as true human beings. Real human life, he tells us, entails inquiry into the Absolute Truth. Modern, technology-driven life tends to stifle such inquiry, as Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa explains in “Where Technology Falls Short.” And Devika Rao, in “Finding Shelter in True Identity,” describes the challenges Western society presents to a person raised with the spiritual values of Vedic culture.

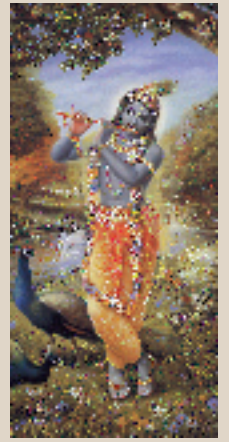
Of course, the influences of technology and Western culture are worldwide. So, in the college town of Vallabh Vidyanagara, India, Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees work hard to ensure that Lord Kṛṣṇa’s teachings are heard amid the roar of worldly subjects.

Sometimes startling evidence of Vedic culture shows up in the West. In “Serving Kṛṣṇa by Serving Tulasī,” we hear how the cherished tradition of worshiping the sacred Tulasī plant is thriving in Vancouver. And in “Beyond Vegetarianism: The Power of Prasādam,” Satyarāja Dāsa explains why the vegetarian diet of Kṛṣṇa’s devotees, rooted in Vedic wisdom, excels anything the West has to offer.

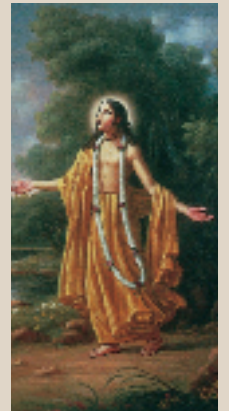
Hare Kṛṣṇa.—Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor

## OUR PURPOSES

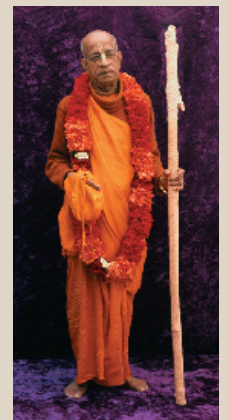
- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God 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

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Hare Krishna Movement



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# Letters

## Chanting and Material Attachments

In the November/December issue there is an article entitled “The Mood of Surrender.” In it the author, Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī, says that if chanting is done without removing material attachments, we are cheating the holy name. This seems somewhat unmerciful, since the requirements for being materially detached will certainly not be within the capacity or desire of your average recipient. Just the regulative principles alone present a radical and unprecedented change in the lifestyle of the typical Westerner. In the event that such a hearer of the holy name cannot make that change for one reason or another, should he refrain from chanting?

Ray Lanthier  
Via the Internet

**ŪRMILĀ DEVĪ DĀSĪ REPLIES:**  
You will notice that it is not an offense to *have* material attachments. As you indicate, it is expected that one coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness will come with, and even because of, material attachments. The offense is to maintain them. By attentive chanting one will get direct realization of the nature of the material world. Prabhupāda writes that we will see the “naked form” of illusion. Upon the holy name’s giving direct experience of both the wonderful sweetness of Kṛṣṇa and the ghastliness of illusion, if one knowingly chooses illusion one commits an offense to the holy name.

In his purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.31, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the mentality of an aspiring devotee who wants spiritual life yet struggles with material attachments: “But an ordinary man with firm faith in the eternal injunctions of the Lord, even though unable to execute such orders, becomes liberated from the bondage of the law of karma. In the be-

ginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one may not fully discharge the injunctions of the Lord, but because one is not resentful of this principle and works sincerely without consideration of defeat and hopelessness, he will surely be promoted to the stage of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

I hope this is more clear. You are welcome to inquire further on this topic.

## Surrendering the Fruits of One’s Labor

Two items regarding the Nov/Dec 2005 issue:

While I deeply respect Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī and her writings, I was disappointed that her article, “The Mood of Surrender,” did not mention the sacrifice of the fruits of one’s labor. I understand that the focus of the article was on chanting and that she wanted to discuss the six symptoms of surrender. Yet I’d like to call attention to a very practical progression of surrender that Prabhupāda discusses, that is, the surrender or engagement of words, intelligence, money, and life. The *Bhāgavatam* states, “It is the duty of every living being to perform welfare activities for the benefit of others with his life, wealth, intelligence, and words.”

One begins by offering words, then makes progress to offering intelligence, progresses further to offer money, and finally offers one’s life to Kṛṣṇa and the *saṅkīrtana* movement. Since Ūrmilā’s article used a hotel kitchen as an arena for surrender, presumably all of the employees as well as the hotel are operating for a salary or profit. The offering of one’s salary to Kṛṣṇa is an advanced position; however, one must indeed offer the fruits of one’s labor to the *saṅkīrtana* movement to be fully surrendered. That is Prabhupāda’s teaching.

Now the second item. You mention on page 32 that one might put

BTG in one's will. I've investigated setting up trusts. In fact when one donates a portion of one's estate to a charitable organization in the U.S., like BTG, one may well be eligible for a tax reduction during one's life. Thus, surrendered devotees should seriously consider establishing a trust that donates money or capital assets to BTG upon death, while receiving a tax write-off now, which may help balance the budget during retirement.

Dayānanda Dāsa  
New York, New York

#### ŪRMILĀ DEVĪ DĀSĪ REPLIES:

Thank you for your thoughtful observations and suggestions. These are excellent ideas. I hope to write something in the future along the lines you recommend.

For this series on offenses to chanting, I limited the articles to what Prabhupāda and *ācāryas* have written regarding each particular offense. As it was, this article covered a broad and deep area, with quite a few points in brief form. Several articles, or even a book, could be written about each point.

Of course, if one is surrendered according to the six points of surrender, that surrender will manifest in one's body, mind, words, and intelligence. I focused in the article primarily on having the proper attitude; behavior should both be a symptom of that attitude and an aid to nurturing it.

This article especially, among ones I've written over the years, has "layers." You have peeled back one of them to find the deeper meaning and implication. It is heartening to me that devotees are reading so carefully.

#### Thankful for the Love

I have just finished reading the story of my spiritual master, His Holiness Bhakti Tīrtha Swami, by Satyarāja Dāsa [Nov/Dec]. It brought

tears to my eyes because I realize I miss him physically. And I also remembered those last days at Gita Nagari. But it also brought up a surge of gratefulness. I am so thankful to have been brought to the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa and His Divine Grace Swami Prabhupāda by such a special soul this lifetime. I am so thankful for the love, the encouragement, and the instructions he gave that makes my life worth living until it is time to leave.

Indrāṇī Devī Dāsī  
Alachua, Florida

#### Knowledge and Realization

I feel that I know about spiritual things, but I am always in tension. Can you please explain why?

Shuvendu Natu  
Via the Internet

OUR REPLY: Knowledge is not enough. Realization is required. If we act according to theoretical knowledge, we will ultimately get practical experience. In theory we can understand that God and his name are identical. By practicing to chant the name of God, we can come to experience God as his name, and all our material distress will vanish.

The holy name is so powerful that even in the practicing stage, well before full realization, we can gain freedom from all distress, such as the tension you are feeling. Therefore we recommend that you chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* a fixed number of times every day. If you are already chanting, try to chant with complete attention, considering the chanting of the holy name to be by far the most important activity.

#### Why Deity Worship?

Why do we worship deities? Some say that God is invited into the deity, but does God need an invitation? (please turn to page 24)



Questions?

Answers.

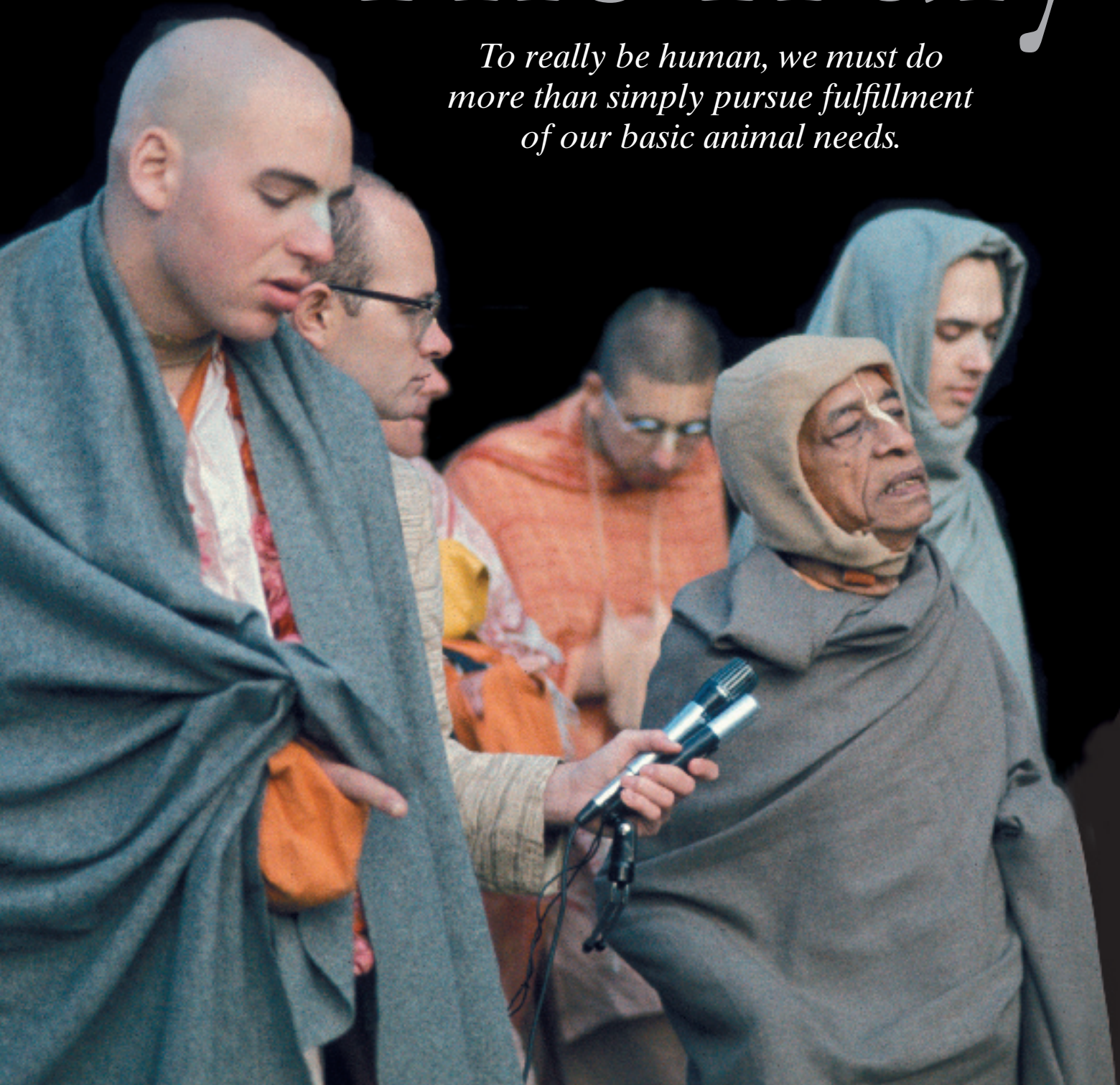
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FOUNDER'S LECTURE

Nairobi, Africa—October 29, 1975

# The Truly

*To really be human, we must do  
more than simply pursue fulfillment  
of our basic animal needs.*



---

# Human Life

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*manuṣyāṅāṁ sahasreṣu  
kaścid yatati siddhaye  
yatatām api siddhānām  
kaścin mām vetti tattvataḥ*

“Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows me in truth.”

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.3

TO UNDERSTAND Kṛṣṇa is not very easy. Kṛṣṇa says, *manuṣyāṅāṁ sahasreṣu*: “Out of many millions and millions of persons,” one tries to become perfect. Who is going to become perfect, especially in this age? Everyone is working like cats and dogs. The whole day is spent working for eating, sleeping, sex, and defense, that’s all. People are not living as *manuṣyas*, human beings.

*āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunam ca  
sāmānyam etat paśubhir narāṅām  
dharmo hi teṣām adhiko viśeṣo  
dharmeṇa hīnaḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*

“Both animals and humans share the activities of eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. But the special property of the humans is that they are able to engage in spiritual life. Therefore without spiritual life, humans are on the level of animals.” [*Hitopadeśa*] What is the difference between my eating and the dog’s? He is eating according to his taste, and I am eating according to my taste. The eating business is there in the dog also. Don’t think that your eating is differ-

ent because you are eating nice preparations on a table, with a chair and plates. It is still eating.

People say, “Because I am eating nice preparations on a table, I am civilized.” The *sāstra*, scripture, says that although your food may be different, your eating and the dog’s eating are the same. You are not civilized just by eating at a table. Similarly, the dog can sleep on the street without caring for anything, and we cannot sleep without a nice apartment, but both we and the dog are sleeping. And for sexual intercourse, the dog has no shame. It can enjoy sex on the street. We have some restrictions, but the sex is there nonetheless. And *bhaya* means defense, to take care of our fears. That is there in the dog and in you also. It does not make any difference. Because you have discovered your atomic bomb for defense, that does not mean that you are better than a dog. He defends himself according to his intelligence, and you defend yourself according to your intelligence.

Human beings and animals have these four businesses in common: eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. Then what is the special advantage of human life? That advantage is *athāto brahma jijñāsā*: You should be inquisitive to know the value of life, the Absolute Truth. The dog cannot do that. That is the distinction between a dog and a human being. In the human form of life there should be inquiry about Brahman and Parabrahman, spirit and the Supreme Spirit. When you attain *brahma-jñāna*, knowledge of the Absolute Truth, that is your perfection, not competing with the dog in eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. That is not civilization. That is not perfection of life. Foolish per-

---

*During morning-walk conversations, as well as in his books, lectures, and other communications, Śrīla Prabhupāda constantly stressed that human life is meant for inquiry into the Absolute Truth.*

***As long as we are in the bodily concept of life  
and think ourselves free to do whatever we like,  
we are in ignorance, darkness.***

• • •

sons who are animalistic, like dogs and cats, do not know the aim of life.

*na te viduḥ svārtha-gatiṁ hi viṣṇuṁ  
durāsayā ye bahir-ārtha-māninaḥ  
andhā yathāndhair upanīyamānās  
te 'pīṣa-tantryām uru-dāmnī  
baddhāḥ*

“Persons who are strongly entrapped by the consciousness of enjoying material life, and who have therefore accepted as their leader or guru a similar blind man attached to external sense objects, cannot understand that the goal of life is to return home, back to Godhead, and engage in the service of Lord Viṣṇu. As blind men guided by another blind man miss the right path and fall into a ditch, materially attached men led by another materially attached man are bound by the ropes of fruitive labor, which are made of very strong cords, and they continue again and again in materialistic life, suffering the threefold miseries.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.31]

The aim of life is to understand Viṣṇu, the Supreme Lord. People are trying to become happy in the *bahir-ārtha*, in the external energy of God, the material energy. And the so-called leaders, politicians, philosophers, and scientists are all blind. They do not know the aim of life. Still, they are leading the whole society.

*Uru-dāmnī baddhāḥ*. *Uru* means very strong, and *dāmnī* means rope. If I tie you with a very strong rope, it is very difficult to untie it, and you are put into difficulty. Similarly, we in this material world are tied very tightly by the laws of material nature. And still we declare, “I am free. I am independent. I can do whatever I like.” That is called imperfection. As long as we are in the bodily concept of life and think ourselves free to do whatever we like, we are in ignorance, darkness,

*tama*. *Tama* means darkness.

A Vedic injunction is *tamasi mā jyotir gama*: “Don’t remain in darkness; go to the light.” Darkness means thinking, “I am this body, and fulfilling the necessities of the body is the highest perfection of my life.” Everyone is trying for that, and there is competition. Everyone is trying to have a skyscraper and three Rolls Royces, and so on. They think this is the perfection of life. They do not think to ask, “How many years shall I have this skyscraper? And what is my main business? My main business is how to become perfect.”

There are many animals within the skyscraper. There are human beings, dogs, cats, worms, rats—so many things. So the right to live in a skyscraper is there even for worms, cats, and rats. Then what is the difference between these animals and me? The difference is that I can become perfect. I can ask, “What I am? Am I this body?” This should be the question.

Kṛṣṇa says here, “The ultimate goal is to understand me.” *Vetti mām tat-tvataḥ*—to understand Kṛṣṇa in fact, in truth, not superficially. That is required. *Vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyaḥ* [Bhagavad-gītā 15.15]. If you are a great scholar studying all kinds of Vedic literature, then you must know Kṛṣṇa. If you do not understand Kṛṣṇa and simply study the *Vedas*, it is a useless waste of time.

*dharmāḥ svaṇuṣṭhitaḥ purisām  
viśvaksena-kathāsu yaḥ  
notpādayed yadi ratiṁ  
śrama eva hi kevalam*

“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]

You are executing your occupational duties very nicely, honestly. That is all right. But if after executing your duties very honestly and nicely you do not awaken your dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then *śrama eva hi kevalam*: You are simply wasting your time. Useless. When you understand Kṛṣṇa, that is the highest perfection. But nobody is interested. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says in today’s verse, *manuṣyāṅām sahasreṣu . . .*: “Out of many millions of persons,” one may be interested. Otherwise all are in darkness.

What is *siddhi*, as mentioned here? *Siddhi* means to understand my constitutional position, what I am. I am trying to lord it over material nature in so many ways. Is that my position? But I am failure. I am trying to lord it over material nature as a big man—as a minister or a zamindar or a big business magnate. And when I am a failure, then I want to become God. That is another ambition.

### TRUE SELF-REALIZATION

This is not self-realization. Self-realization means to understand, “I am trying to lord it over material nature in so many ways, but my attempt is becoming baffled. Why? With great endeavor I become a head of state, and I do not wish to die, but death comes and takes away everything—my political position, my wealth, my family, everything.” *Mṛtyuḥ sarva-harāś cāham* [Bhagavad-gītā 10.34]. Who is taking? That is Kṛṣṇa.

When you realize, “I am trying to accumulate so many things but Kṛṣṇa is taking everything away,” then why don’t you surrender to Kṛṣṇa so that he may not take away your position? That is *siddhi*. “I am not independent. I am trying to be independent, but it is not possible. I am dependent. I am



an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa.”

That is self-realization. That has been taught by Caitanya Mahāprabhu. *Jivera ‘svarūpa’ haya—kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa’*: “It is the living entity’s constitutional position to be an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa.” [*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 20.108-109]. Brahman realization—*aham brahmāsmi*—is liberation from the material conception of life. “I am not matter. I am not the body, but I am spirit soul.” *Aham brahmāsmi*. That is the first step of self-realization. But that is not final. The final realization is “I am an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa.” As long as you do not come to that position—the final, constitutional position that “I am an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa”—then knowledge is lacking; there is no perfection of knowledge.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* [7.19], *bahūnām janmanām ante ... vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti*: “After many, many births, when one is actually self-realized—in awareness, fully in knowledge—then he understands that Vāsudeva [Kṛṣṇa] is everything.”

“Vāsudeva is the supreme everything. I am simply part and parcel of Vāsudeva, an eternal servant of Vāsudeva.” *Sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*. One who thinks in that way, that kind of perfect person—a *mahatma*—is very, very rare. A *mahātmā* understands, “I am an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. My only business is to serve Kṛṣṇa. That is my constitutional position. I am part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa.”

This finger is part and parcel of my body. Its business is to serve the whole body. I ask the finger, “Come here,” and immediately it comes. That is the normal, healthy condition of the part and parcel. My leg is part and parcel of my body. As soon as I ask the leg, “Please take me there,” it does so. That is normal. And if the leg cannot take me there—if I have to take help from a stick—that is not normal. It is a diseased condition that has to be treated. Similarly, as soon as we find that we do not abide by the orders of Kṛṣṇa, we must know that we are in ignorance and in an abnormal condition, madness.

To serve Kṛṣṇa is my duty. Kṛṣṇa does not require my help, and still he asks me to surrender to his order.

That is for my good. If I surrender to Kṛṣṇa, then that is my benefit. Kṛṣṇa does not require my service. He is omnipotent. But we are such rascals that we think, “Why shall I surrender to Kṛṣṇa?” That is imperfection.

## DEFYING KṚṢṆA

When you come to the point that you abide by the order of Kṛṣṇa and surrender to him, that is perfection. But people do not do that.

*na mām duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ  
prapadyante narādhamāḥ  
māyayāpahṛta-jñānā  
āsuram bhāvam āśritāḥ*

“Those miscreants who are grossly foolish, who are lowest among mankind, whose knowledge is stolen by illusion, and who partake of the atheistic nature of demons do not surrender unto me. [*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.15] Why do they not surrender? Because they are *duṣkṛtinaḥ*, always performing sinful activities, and they are *mūḍhāḥ*, rascals. They do not know their own interest. And *narādhamā* means the lowest of mankind. Kṛṣṇa says, “This human body was given to him by material nature to understand me, to surrender to me, but he will not do this. Therefore: lowest of mankind.”

Someone may object: “No, he is so educated.” No, this is nonsense. If he does not understand Kṛṣṇa, what is the meaning of education? There is no education. *Māyayāpahṛta-jñānāḥ*: his knowledge is stolen by illusion. Why? *Āsuram bhāvam āśritāḥ*: he’s defying Kṛṣṇa, defying God.

“What is God? I am God.” This is the position always of everyone in the material world, and especially in this age, Kali-yuga. In Kali-yuga, people are all first-class fools. That is described in the *Bhāgavatam* [1.1.10]:

*prāyeṇālpāyusaḥ sabhya  
kalāv asmin yuge janāḥ  
mandāḥ sumanda-matayo  
manda-bhāgyā upadrutāḥ*

“O learned one, in this iron age of Kali men have but short lives. They are quarrelsome, lazy, misguided, unlucky, and above all, always disturbed.”

## What Is the HareKṛṣṇaMovement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millenniums 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 **pike**. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **rim**, and **e** 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.”

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*We are trying to give the highest perfection of life, but people are not interested.*

• • •

Kali-yuga is a very difficult age. In ignorance people fight, quarrel. *Kali* means "fight." Therefore it is called Kali-yuga. In this age especially, the inhabitants are *manda*. *Manda* means all bad. Nobody is good. And *sumanda-matayaḥ*: Everyone has his own conception of perfection—all bogus. Why this is? *Manda-bhāgyāḥ*: because they are unfortunate. No one knows what he shall eat the next morning or in the evening. Everyone is in need. There is scarcity all over the world.

And people are disturbed. With the progression of Kali-yuga, people will be disturbed by two things especially: taxation and scarcity of food. That is stated in the *Bhāgavatam* [12.2.9]: *durbhikṣa-kara-pīḍitāḥ*. *Kara* means taxation. People will be embarrassed for want of food, and at the same time, every year there will be an increase of taxation. They will be so disturbed that they will give up their hearth and home and go away to the forest. Men will give up their money, wife, children—everything. They will be disgusted: "Now it is impossible to maintain. Let me go away."

This is the position of Kali-yuga. So five thousand years ago, when Kṛṣṇa spoke *Bhagavad-gītā*, at that time the position was *manuṣyāṅām sahasreṣu—*

"one among thousands" will try for perfection. Now, on account of Kali-yuga, it is "one among millions." The percentage has increased to one in millions and millions.

Therefore nobody is interested in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. We are trying to give the highest perfection of life, but people are not interested. They want to remain like cats and dogs and suffer the consequences. That is going on.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is very difficult to understand, but by the grace of Kṛṣṇa it has been made very easy. That is stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [12.3.51]: *kaler doṣa-nidhe rājann asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ*. Śukadeva Gosvāmī described the faults of Kali-yuga to Parīkṣit Mahārāja, but he encouraged him with one verse: "My dear king, Kali-yuga is an ocean of faults, but there is one very nice gain." What is that? *Kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya mukta-saṅgaḥ paraṁ vrajet*: "Simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra one can become free from all the troubles of Kali-yuga, become liberated, and go back home, back to Godhead." So take Kṛṣṇa consciousness very seriously and make your life perfect.

Thank you very much. ☸

## LOOKING FOR NEWS OF THE HARE KṚṢṆA MOVEMENT?

Log on to [www.ISKCON.com](http://www.ISKCON.com).

The Internet is the ideal place for timely news, and ISKCON.com, run by ISKCON Communications, maintains an active news page. So whether you want to see what's happening in ISKCON or have some news to report, log on to [www.ISKCON.com](http://www.ISKCON.com).

# 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 Kurukshetra**—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 Ṭhākura**—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.

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

**Kṛṣṇa**—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in his original transcendental 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.

**Māyāvādi**—one who regards the Absolute Truth as ultimately impersonal.

**Modes of nature**—the three qualities (goodness, passion, and ignorance) that hold sway over all actions 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 Puri, 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 *śūdras* (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.

# WHOSE NAME IS GOD'S NAME?

*God has innumerable names, but does that mean that all names are God's?*

by Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī

*This is the ninth in a series of articles on offenses to be avoided when trying to progress spiritually by chanting God's names.*

THIS ARTICLE deals with what is listed in the *Padma Purāṇa* (*Brahmā Khaṇḍa* 25.16) as the second offense in chanting the holy names:

*śivasya śrī-viṣṇor ya iha guṇa-nāmādi-sakalam  
dhiyā bhinnam paśyet sa khalu hari-nāmāhita-karaḥ*

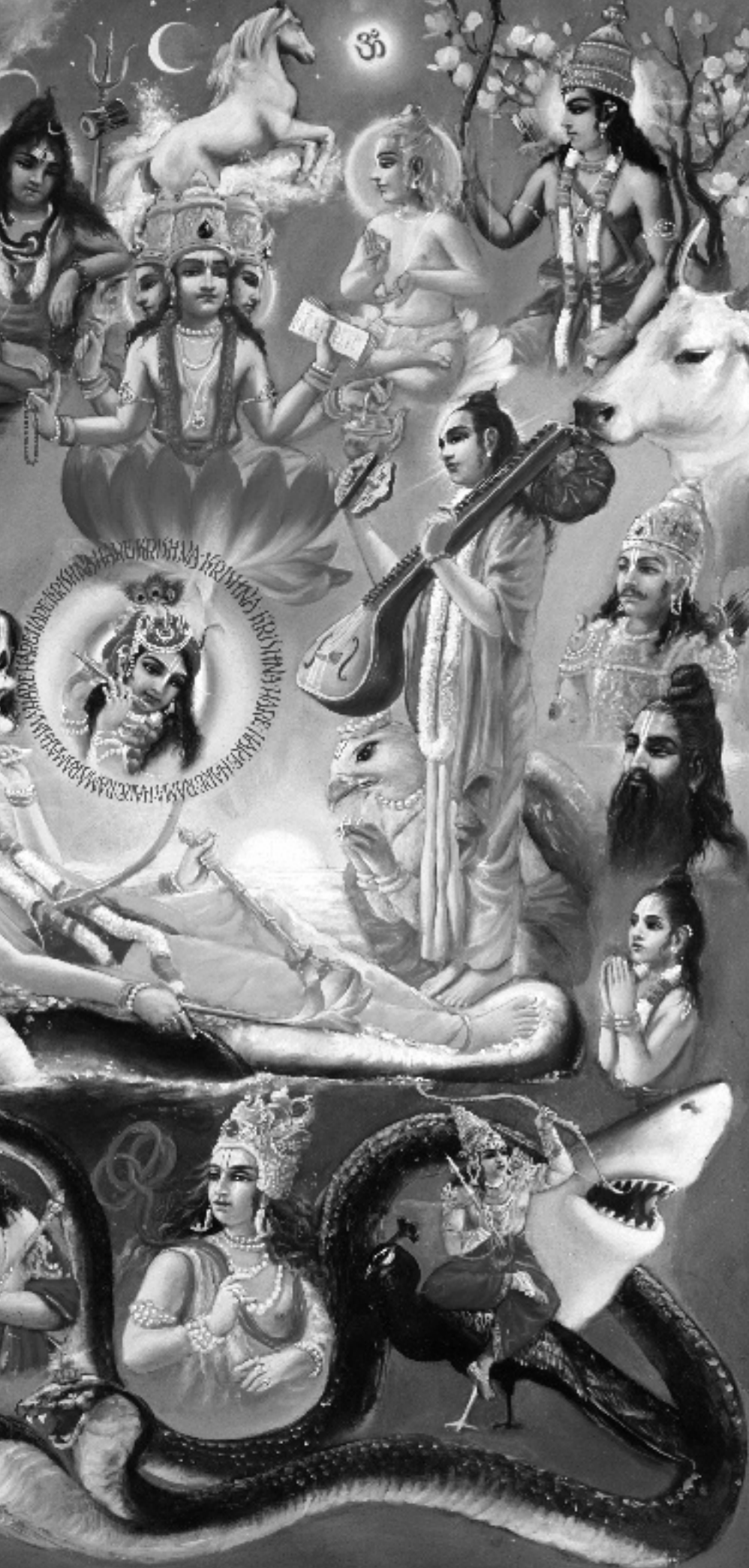
Devotees in ISKCON are familiar with this translation by Śrīla Prabhupāda: “To consider the names of demigods like Lord Śiva or Lord Brahmā to be equal to, or independent of, the name of Lord Viṣṇu.” Prabhupāda elaborates on the meaning of the verse in various places. To aid our understanding of those explanations, here is a word-by-word translation of the verse:

*śivasya*—the name of Lord Śiva; *śrī-viṣṇor*—Lord Viṣṇu; *yaḥ*—who; *iha*—in this material world; *guṇa*—qualities; *nāma*—name; *ādi-sakalam*—everything; *dhiyā*—with the conception; *bhinnam*—difference; *paśyet*—may see; *saḥ*—he; *khalu*—indeed; *hari-nāmā*—the holy name of the Lord; *ahita-karaḥ*—inauspicious or blasphemous

I'll discuss four lessons drawn from this verse that can help us avoid this particular offense in chanting the Lord's names. The first lesson is that all names of God are equally holy. The second is that while all names of God are identical with him, they reveal a variety of moods of interaction with him. The third is that names that refer to beings other than God, even demigods (*devas*), are not equal to names of God. And the fourth is to understand the relationship between Śiva and Kṛṣṇa.



Painting by Bharadrāja Dāsa



1. All names of God  
are equally holy

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: “The second offense is to see the holy names of the Lord in terms of worldly distinction. The Lord is the proprietor of all the universes, and therefore he may be known in different places by different names, but that does not in any way qualify the fullness of the Lord. Any nomenclature which is meant for the Supreme Lord is as holy as the others because they are all meant for the Lord. Such holy names are as powerful as the Lord, and there is no bar for anyone in any part of the creation to chant and glorify the Lord by the particular name of the Lord as it is locally understood. They are all auspicious, and one should not distinguish such names of the Lord as material commodities.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.1.11, Purport)

Much suffering, even up to the point of torture and war, takes place because of wrangling over the nomenclature of the Supreme Lord. If you don't like my name for God, you might call me a heretic. But it's reasonable that God, who creates and owns everything, has innumerable names. Even we ordinary people have many names, such as legal names, pet names, nicknames, and titles. Sometimes what appear to be various names for God are only the same term in different languages, including names that mean things like “the Provider,” “the Sustainer,” “the Healer,” or “the Creator.” Followers of the Vedic scriptures have long sung the thousand names of Viṣṇu in the Sanskrit tongue, and other religious systems teach ninety-nine names, fifteen names, and so forth, accord-

*God in his original form possesses all power, as do his fully empowered expansions and incarnations. But other beings possess only some of his power, and the spiritual benefits of chanting their names are less than those obtained by chanting the names of the Supreme Lord.*

## *As the Lord himself has various incarnations and expansions, his innumerable names also display different moods or flavors of spirituality.*

• • •

ing to their language and understanding.

If a devotee of God who calls on any one of his holy names perceives the other names of God in terms of worldly distinctions, the name is offended—because God is fully present in his name. He turns away from such narrow-minded self-righteousness.

### *2. Kṛṣṇa's name is Kṛṣṇa himself, full of spiritual variety*

“In this material world,” Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “the holy name of Viṣṇu is all-auspicious. Viṣṇu’s name, form, qualities, and pastimes are all transcendental, absolute knowledge. Therefore, if one tries to separate the Absolute Personality of Godhead from his holy name or his transcendental form, qualities, and pastimes, thinking them to be material, that is offensive. . . . This is the second offense at the lotus feet of the holy name of the Lord.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādilīlā* 8.24, Purport)

First we learned to respect equally all names of God. Now we learn to respect Kṛṣṇa’s name as being absolutely the same as himself. There is no mundane hierarchy in the different names of God. God is one, and his names are also one. There are not many gods. Yet, as the Lord himself has various incarnations and expansions, his innumerable names also display different moods or flavors of spirituality. For example, some names of Kṛṣṇa are more intimate than others, just as “sweetheart” is a more intimate form of address than “Your Honor”—even though they may refer to the same person.

Names like “the Creator,” “the Sustainer,” and so on, relate to God’s role in the material creation or in our lives here. Like “judge” and “Your Honor,” they tell us something of God “at work.” Focusing on Kṛṣṇa’s dealings

with *our* concerns, these names tend to be human-centered.

Other names of God concern his pastimes in his spiritual abode. While these names may also indicate Kṛṣṇa’s dealings with others, those “others” are his pure devotees, not rebellious souls.

Unfortunately, most of the world’s genuine spiritual and religious traditions know only of God’s names in relation to the material creation. There is little knowledge of Kṛṣṇa’s personal life in his own kingdom, or of his names there. When this knowledge exists, it is generally not part of the mainstream religious teaching or practice. In contrast, the Vaiṣṇava schools, and particularly Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism (including the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement), provide all members with rich, detailed information about Kṛṣṇa’s divine realm, devotees, activities, and names.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the name *Kṛṣṇa* is the supreme name because it means “all attractive.” It includes all aspects of the Lord and encompasses God’s qualities of both opulence and sweetness. Because Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead, all other names of God are included within his name.

Kṛṣṇa’s devotees distribute his name because they wish to envelop others in the divine sweetness that surpasses immersion in the Lord’s opulence and majesty. Names that express God’s functions in this world give less than the overflowing satisfaction for which the soul yearns. And the self-satisfied Lord feels much greater pleasure when addressed in relation to his dear saintly devotees than with names that glorify his role in the world.

Just as one who knows only the actions and names of God in relation to the material world should not reject the other names, so those who have the fortune of accessing Kṛṣṇa’s intimate names should not think that

superior knowledge makes the knower superior. Rather, with humility and equal vision those who chant and sing mantras such as Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare should give all respect to persons absorbed only in a secondary understanding. Thus we will please the holy name.

Even within the kingdom of God there are varieties in the intensity of intimacy with Kṛṣṇa. But these varieties are not like “higher” and “lower” in the material world. One who thinks that a particular name is inferior because it is associated with the Lord’s less intimate activities makes a worldly distinction about the name. And if one denigrates a devotee of God’s regal forms and names, one compounds the offense.

Judging whether a particular name of God is seeped in awe or intimate love is not so simple anyway. Distinctions between the reverential, intimate, or most intimate names of God can rest more on the mood and understanding of those who call on the name than on a literal definition. Even Kṛṣṇa’s most intimate devotees, his cowherd girlfriends, sometimes call him Acutya (Infallible), Ṛṣabha (Greatest Person), or Nātha (Lord).

The distinctions between God’s various forms and their corresponding names are not about potency but about relationship. Therefore, to nourish particular relationships, some forms and names of full expansions of Kṛṣṇa never display certain qualities of his. Each type of relationship with the Lord is glorious. When Kṛṣṇa descended as his own devotee, as Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he encouraged everyone to focus on God in his original form of complete sweetness and all relationships (Kṛṣṇa). But when he met persons purely devoted to  
*(please turn to page 40)*

# Freedom by Surrender

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and a reporter took place in Paris in the mid 1970s.

**Interviewer:** To me, God means freedom.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, God means freedom—provided you surrender to God. That is real freedom.

**Interviewer:** But I may not accept your idea of God. I may want to worship God, or I may not want to worship God. That is my freedom, and that's the most important thing to me.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** A child's freedom, for instance, is to live completely un-

der the protection of his parents. Then he has freedom. But without their protection, he'll have no freedom, only suffering. If the child is very rebellious, he may think he doesn't need his parents—he wants to be free. But he is just a rascal. He does not really know what freedom is. Similarly, if you don't surrender to God, then you are misusing your freedom. And you'll lose your freedom. The *Bhagavad-gītā* says, *daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā*: "Material nature is so strong that she will not allow you to get free." But, *mām eva ye prapadyante*: "If you surrender to Kṛṣṇa instead of Kṛṣṇa's māyā, then you'll become free." If you don't agree to accept the control of Kṛṣṇa, you'll be forced by Kṛṣṇa's material energy. So what is this so-called freedom? You have to surrender.

**Interviewer:** But isn't that a rather stifling kind of slave mentality?

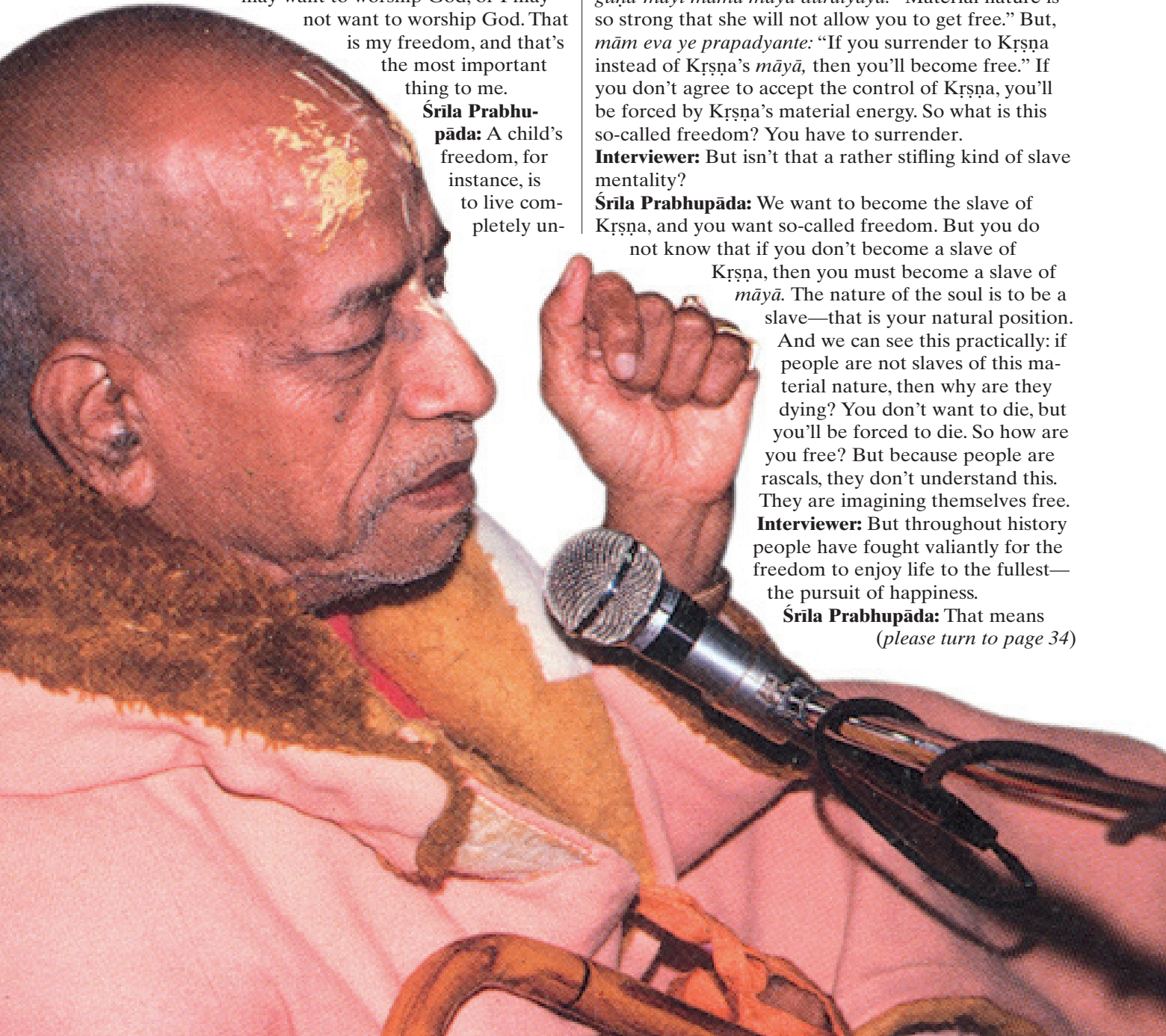
**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** We want to become the slave of Kṛṣṇa, and you want so-called freedom. But you do not know that if you don't become a slave of

Kṛṣṇa, then you must become a slave of māyā. The nature of the soul is to be a slave—that is your natural position.

And we can see this practically: if people are not slaves of this material nature, then why are they dying? You don't want to die, but you'll be forced to die. So how are you free? But because people are rascals, they don't understand this. They are imagining themselves free.

**Interviewer:** But throughout history people have fought valiantly for the freedom to enjoy life to the fullest—the pursuit of happiness.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** That means  
(please turn to page 34)



## BEYOND VEGETARIANISM

# THE POWER OF PRASĀDAM

*The Hare Kṛṣṇa diet takes full advantage of the wisdom contained in the phrase “You are what you eat.”*

by Satyarāja Dāsa

I RECEIVED an interesting call recently. One of my former English teachers from the High School of Art and Design in New York wanted to know if I could get her a cup of farina *halava*, an Indian dessert that Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees like to serve at feasts and other public programs.

“You know,” she said, “the kind you call *prasādam*.”

*Prasādam* is food prepared for and offered to Kṛṣṇa. The amazing thing was that she hadn’t tasted this spiritual delicacy—*halava prasādam*—in almost thirty years. I’d once served some to her English class during the very first years of my involvement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I hadn’t seen or thought about her since high school. But here she was, ringing me up after all this time, asking for *prasādam* in the form of *halava*. I remember her liking it, but enough to call me about it?

“I never forgot it,” she said. “Over the years I went to various Indian restaurants, trying to recapture the experience. But it just didn’t happen.”

I asked her if she ordered *halava* at these restaurants.

“Yes, always. But I guess it was the *prasādam* factor. No Indian restaurant could reproduce that same taste.”



Roger Amney

She was right. *Prasādam* is more than just the grains, fruits, spices, and vegetables; it’s a transformation of matter into spirit, in a way only God can effect.

Lord Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa himself in the form of his own devotee, glorified *prasādam* in this way:

Everyone has tasted these material substances before. However, in these ingredients there are extraordinary tastes and uncommon fragrances. Just taste them and see the differ-

Amoghā Dāsa







ence in the experience. Apart from the taste, even the fragrance pleases the mind and makes one forget any other sweetness besides its own. Therefore it is to be understood that the spiritual nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips has touched these ordinary ingredients and transferred to them all their spiritual qualities.

—Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta,  
*Antya-līlā* 16.108–112

## THE ULTIMATE VEGETARIAN DIET

Most people would view the Hare Kṛṣṇa diet as just a variation of your average vegetarian diet. And it is a form of vegetarianism. But it is really so much more. It is “Krishnarianism.” Because the food has been offered to God, the diet is not only materially wholesome but also spiritually uplifting.

Of all vegetarian diets, a lacto-vegetarian diet—a meat-free diet that includes dairy products—seems the most practical, and certainly the most healthy, for modern man. I have documented the evidence in support of this contention in my book *Diet for Transcendence*. [See the sidebar “The Health Benefits of Vegetarianism.”] But beyond being the perfect diet from a material point of view, the Hare Kṛṣṇa diet is also the best of spiritual diets, because it includes only food offered to Kṛṣṇa with love and devotion.

According to the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.27), the entire process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be summarized as follows: “All that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto me [Kṛṣṇa].” Thus, offering food to Kṛṣṇa is an integral part of the Hare Kṛṣṇa tradition. The central reason for Hare Kṛṣṇa vegetarianism is that Kṛṣṇa himself accepts only vegetarian foods and devotees do not eat anything without first offering it to him as a religious sacrifice. In other words, devotees of Kṛṣṇa naturally prefer to offer him those foods that he himself (in scripture) says he would like to eat, and then they accept the remnants as his mercy (*prasādam* literally means “mercy”). This, say an-

## The Health Benefits of Vegetarianism

\* Leading researchers are now calling for a plant-based diet to lower the risk of illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. As far back as 1961 the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that “a vegetarian diet can prevent 90 to 97 percent of heart disease.”

\* Antioxidants found in leafy green vegetables were recently shown to help protect blood vessels, and other studies have found that diets rich in fruits, vegetables, and grains significantly reduce high blood pressure.

\* Dr. T. Colin Campbell of Cornell University has reported that plant-based diets can prevent the great majority of cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and other types of degenerative diseases.

\* Dr. Dean Ornish of the University of California has demonstrated that artery blockages can be reversed with regular low-fat vegetarian fare.

\* Modern medicine identifies stress and other subtle factors as underlying causes of many physical illnesses. The *Haṭha-yoga Pradīpa* (section 58), a standard yoga text, tells of the psychological health benefits associated with vegetarianism. Practitioners of Ayurveda (a holistic medical science), yoga, and all aspiring spiritual seekers, the text tells us, should give up flesh-foods. Why? Because meat-eating creates *vyutthita-citta*, or a disturbed (literally “provoked”) mind. To practice spiritual life properly, one needs *samahita-citta*, or a calm mind. This truth, in relation to vegetarianism, is further confirmed in Patañjali's classic *Yoga-sūtra* (2.30), wherein *ahimsa*, non-aggression, is described as essential for the practicing yogi. According to the *Vyāsa-bhāṣya*, the preeminent *Yoga-sūtra* commentary, *ahimsa* is here defined as “abstaining from injuring any being, at any time, and in any manner.”

cient India's sacred texts, is “the yoga of eating.”

And Kṛṣṇa receives the food in a yogic, or mystical, way too. Since he is an absolute, spiritual entity, each part of his body can perform the functions of every other part. Thus, when the appropriate prayers are offered, they attract his attention, and then he accepts the *prasādam* by glancing at it—he eats it with his eyes! Not that this is so inconceivable: As God, he can naturally eat without actually consuming the food. Which is great, since this is why there are remnants for us.

One might wonder why we should offer food to God at all. He doesn't need our meager offerings; he sustains himself just fine without them. So what exactly is the point of *prasādam*? Our Kṛṣṇa tradition tells us that while God

does not need our food offerings, we need the intimacy and deep-rooted connection that comes from offering food to him. In most religious systems God is asked for food (for example, “Give us this day our daily bread”), but in Kṛṣṇa consciousness the devotee offers food to God as an expression of love. Even in ordinary dealings, someone might offer us a meal as a sign of warmth and affection. It isn't only the meal itself that is appreciated, but the thoughtfulness and consideration that goes into it. In the same way, the process of offering food to God is intended to help us increase our love and devotion to him.

Offering food to the Lord is at the heart of a loving exchange with him. It helps us recognize that he initially offers food to us, through nature—the

***Prasādam is fully spiritual because Kṛṣṇa is supremely powerful and anything that comes in contact with him is overwhelmed by his holy presence.***

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earth and mother cow—and that we can show our appreciation by making the gesture of offering it back to him in love and devotion. He then allows us to take in the remnants as his special mercy.

**THE EUCHARIST  
AND PRASĀDAM**

All religious adherents, East or West, recite prayers over food, and this is certainly an important component in offering *prasādam*. But a closer Western parallel would be the Christian idea of transubstantiation, in which bread and wine are mystically transformed into the (spiritual) body and blood of Christ. The notion of *prasādam* is similar, but it goes much further. *Prasādam* is the essence of the entire spiritual world. It is Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and their loving exchange. It is spirituality in edible form. Moreover, as opposed to the Eucharist, it is not merely a once-a-week wafer. It is every morsel that goes into one's mouth, making it, one might say, an all-consuming act of devotion.

While the Eucharist and *prasādam* both represent the reception of God through one's lips, offering spiritual nourishment to all who partake, only *prasādam* nourishes the body as well. This distinction is important. *Prasādam* is fully incorporated into the daily life of the devotee, promoting an acute awareness of God's mercy, through food and through nature.

*Prasādam* is fully spiritual because Kṛṣṇa is supremely powerful and anything that comes in contact with him is overwhelmed by his holy presence. By such contact, matter becomes completely pure and spiritual, just as he is. Even in the physical realm certain things can purify other substances. For instance, the sun, with its powerful rays, can distill fresh, pure water

from a lake contaminated with pollutants. If a material object like the sun can act in this way, then we can only imagine the purifying potency of the Supreme Lord, who has effortlessly created millions of suns.

Thus, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness we learn that Kṛṣṇa, by his immeasurable transcendental energies, can convert matter into spirit. The traditional example is that of placing an iron rod in fire—before long the rod takes on all the essential qualities of fire, such as heat, smoke, and light. It will burn you if you touch it. In the same way, material foodstuffs offered to Kṛṣṇa become completely spiritualized by lovingly placing them in his presence.

This is accomplished by preparing the food with a joyful heart, offering the appropriate prayers, and devotionally offering back to Kṛṣṇa the foods he mercifully bestowed upon us to begin with. When vegetarian food is thus offered back to God, it takes on a special quality, purifying all who consume it and all who share it with others. Accomplished devotees can taste the difference. And sometimes, so can some very lucky English teachers. 🌸

*Satyarāja Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is a BTG associate editor. He has written over twenty books. He lives with his wife and daughter near New York City.*



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. 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," pages 59–61.)

# Serving Kṛṣṇa by



Visakhā Devi Dāsi

# Serving Tulasī

*The luxurious growth of one of Kṛṣṇa's greatest devotees, who appears in a special form, attests to the devotion of two of her dedicated caretakers.*

by Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

SRĪLA Prabhupāda once quoted an atheist as saying, “What is the use of watering the Tulasī plant? It is better to water eggplant. By watering the eggplant one can get some fruits, but what is the use of watering the Tulasī?”

Rudrāṇī Devī Dāsī, one of Tulasī's caretakers at ISKCON Vancouver, responds to this challenge.

“Tulasī is not an ordinary plant,” she says. “Just consider even her scientific Latin name—*Ocimum sanctum*. *Ocimum* means she is related to the herb basil, and *sanctum* means ‘holy.’ She is known as Holy Basil and is recognized as uniquely auspicious in all the Vedic scriptures, by all the saints in our tradition, and by our spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

Rudrāṇī's husband, Sananda Kumāra Dāsa, who also takes care of Tulasī, says, “A skeptic may think, ‘God is fictitious. God's service is another sentiment. Do something practical,’ but a person who has some faith will not be satisfied by such so-called logic. God, Kṛṣṇa, is more than a force, light, or energy. He is a person, the Supreme Person, who is the source of all force and light and energy and is also an individual. Kṛṣṇa has his favorite place: Vṛndāvana. And his favorite animal: the cow. And he also has his favorite plant: Tulasī. Honoring Tulasī can give

us the highest attainment: devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. In India all Hindus, even those not belonging to the Vaiṣṇava group, take special care of the Tulasī tree, and every day the devotees in our Hare Kṛṣṇa movement pray to Tulasī, ‘Please give me the privilege of devotional service.’”

In a purport in his 1968 edition of *Bhagavad-gīta As It Is*, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, “Kṛṣṇa desires that one offer him either a leaf, or a flower, or fruit, or a little water—and by such an offering he is satisfied. This leaf especially refers to the Tulasī. So one can sow Tulasī and pour water on the plant.” Two years later, in the spring of 1970, Prabhupāda was delighted to introduce the worship of Tulasī in his ISKCON center in Hawaii, and today Tulasī is worshiped in almost all of the hundreds of ISKCON centers throughout the world.

In 2002 the Tulasī plants in Vancouver, which were housed in a small, well-worn greenhouse, had a crisis: Each Tulasī plant lost every one of its leaves because of a misapplication of plant medicine. As soon as Rudrāṇī, who was not active in Tulasī's service at that time, heard about this, she took steps to help, and seeing her determination, Sananda also became active. Sananda had grown up in South India, where his family was responsible



*Outside one of their new greenhouses, devotees at the Vancouver temple show a luxuriant Tulasī plant. (Rudrāṇī Devī Dāsī is third from the left, and Sananda Kumāra Dāsa is fourth from the right.)*



ISKCON Vancouver's Śrī Rādhā Madana-mohana (left). Lord Kṛṣṇa (Madana-mohana) regularly wears beautiful garlands of Tulasī mañjarīs (flowers), strung by his devotees (right). Below, devotees pick mañjarīs inside one of the new greenhouses.



Viśakhā Devi Dāsi

for providing Tulasī leaves, as well as fresh milk and flowers, to the local temple of Lord Viṣṇu. He had experience with growing Tulasī, but only outdoors in a tropical climate. Growing them indoors was quite different. Rudrāṇī, who had cared for Tulasī

in other North American ISKCON temples, knew how to grow her inside. Gradually this determined couple drew other qualified devotees to Tulasī's service.

After dozens of phone calls, Rudrāṇī found a suitable greenhouse model for

Tulasī, and she and Sananda persuaded the temple board to spend \$20,000 (Canadian) for two greenhouses with special grow lights, complete air ventilation, and controlled air and water temperatures. When all these electrical systems are running they consume thirty kilowatts per hour. Tulasī's Vancouver caretakers spend hours each day to water her, pick her leaves (Kṛṣṇa prefers that food offered to him be decorated with a leaf from Tulasī), make *mañjarī* (Tulasī flower) garlands for Śrī Madana Mohana (the deity of Kṛṣṇa worshiped in the Vancouver temple), humidify the greenhouses, and control the spider mites that occasionally attack her. As a result of their expertise and devotion, the Tulasī plants are flourishing and have grown so large that the greenhouses are now crowded.

### MIRACLE GROWTH

By coincidence, the year that Rudrāṇī and Sananda became active in Tulasī's service—2002—was the same year I planted a Tulasī seed from a bag of seeds a friend had given me. Those seeds, my friend said, were special because they were from Tulasī plants in Vrinda Kunda, Tulasī's sacred grove



Viśakhā Devi Dāsi

in Vṛndāvana, India. When that one seed didn't grow, I planted two more from the same bag, and when they didn't grow, I planted twelve more. This time six of them grew. When five of those plants were strong enough, I gave them away to neighbors and kept the sixth one until the fall. As I wasn't prepared to protect her from the winter drafts, dry air, and darkness of our Saranagati winter (Saranagati Village is a four and a half hour drive from Vancouver), Rudrāṇī and Sananda kindly agreed to take in my ten-inch Tulasī for the season. When she came back in the spring, I could hardly recognize her—she had grown more than a foot in every direction. I cared for her that summer and sent her back the next fall. Now she's too big to fit in a car seat. When I want to see her, I have to go to Vancouver. Some of my neighbors say that she couldn't have grown so much in such a short time and that someone confused my small Tulasī with some larger one. But in fact the small miracle I experienced with that Tulasī also hap-

pened almost all the Tulasī plants at the Vancouver temple.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, arguably one of the greatest spiritual scholars in the history of religion, said that one does not really accept God unless one accepts his inconceivable nature. In other words, if we try to limit God in some way, then in effect we have eliminated his true nature. In the same way, how the Lord's internal potency for performing pastimes in this world expands as the pure devotee Tulasī, an eternal consort of Kṛṣṇa, is also inconceivable. Devotees simply accept her and worship her with joy in their hearts. And if she blesses them by growing luxuriously, as she has in Vancouver, that, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, is evidence of their sincere devotion.

Two verses in the *Skanda Purāṇa* praise the Tulasī tree: "Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the Tulasī tree, which can immediately vanquish volumes of sinful activities. Simply by seeing or touching this tree one can become relieved from all distresses and diseases. Simply by of-

fering obeisances to and pouring water on the Tulasī tree, one can become freed from the fear of being sent to the court of Yamarāja [the king of death, who punishes the sinful]. If someone sows a Tulasī tree somewhere, certainly he becomes devoted to Lord Kṛṣṇa. And when the Tulasī leaves are offered in devotion at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, there is the full development of love of Godhead."

And: "Tulasī is auspicious in all respects. Simply by seeing, simply by touching, simply by remembering, simply by praying to, simply by bowing before, simply by hearing about, or simply by sowing this tree, there is always auspiciousness. Anyone who comes in touch with the Tulasī tree in the above-mentioned ways lives eternally in the Vaikuṅṭha world." ❀

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## LETTERS

(continued from page 5)

What is the need for us to make a deity to worship when Muslims and Christians don't?

Sriman  
Via the Internet

OUR REPLY: We worship the deity to develop our relationship with God. He doesn't need our invitation, but he appreciates it and accepts it. The deity helps us to understand that God has a personal form and that we can serve him in a personal way. Therefore it is better to consider deity worship a blessing that God is giving to those in the Hindu tradition rather than a burden that Muslims and Christians do not have. If you properly reciprocate with the Lord in his deity form, you can establish a very intimate relationship with him, as have many saints in the past.

### Where's God's Help?

Since childhood I have kept faith in God. Although I have faced lot of ob-

stacles, I never blame anyone. But why it is that whenever I require help from God, he never helps me? Nothing goes my way. Why I am so unlucky, whether in my education or my job?

Vishal Vengurlekar  
Via the Internet

OUR REPLY: Sometimes, to make us more dependent on him, God does not fulfill our material desires. Great saints consider this an act of God's mercy, for the more we depend on God, the more we advance spiritually. The greatest of God's devotees keep their faith in all circumstances. Look at the Pāṇḍavas. So many bad things happened to them, but they held on to their faith in Kṛṣṇa. In the end, they were blessed with a world empire and attainment of spiritual perfection.

Keep your faith in God in all circumstances, and you can become eligible to attain the kingdom of God. If you read *Bhagavad-gītā* every day and also chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, that will give you the spiritual vision to uphold your faith in such a steady

way. Also, associate with devotees of the Lord, and your faith will increase so you can see the hand of God even in apparent reverses. ❀

*Except where otherwise noted, replies to the letters were written by Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā Dāsa.*

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## CORRECTION

In my article on the holy name in the last issue, I say that Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī is successor to Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī. Thoughtless mistake. Actually, the reverse is true. The *paramparā* is like this: Vakreśvara Paṇḍita's disciple was Gopāla Guru, whose disciple was Dhyānacandra. These are all amazing personalities with well-known biographies. Both Gopāla Guru and Dhyānacandra wrote famous *Pad-dhatis* outlining intimate techniques for worshiping the divine couple of Vṛndāvana.—*Satyārāja Dāsa*



# Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Appreciation of Śrī Rāmānujācārya

*Though coming in a different succession of teachers, Śrīla Prabhupāda often cited the teachings of the great pillar of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava line.*

by Dr. A. D. Śrīraṅapriya Rāmānujadāsan

“We find great shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Rāmānujācārya because his lotus feet are the strongest fort to combat the Māyāvādī philosophy.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda letter, November 22, 1974)

SRĪLA Prabhupāda is the foremost modern representative of the Madhva-Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* (lineage). Śrī Rāmānujācārya (1017–1137) was from the Śrī Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*. Why then does Śrīla Prabhupāda revere Śrī Rāmānujācārya? Moreover, in the Age of Quarrel, what does Śrīla Prabhupāda’s attitude towards Śrī Rāmānujācārya teach us about unity and etiquette?

First, although Śrīla Prabhupāda was not a theological post-modernist who taught “anything goes,” he was not sectarian. He affirmed that God is the Supreme Person and we are his eternal servants. He appreciated such sentiments, whether expressed in Judaic, Christian, Islamic, or even existential terms. Hence he naturally appreciated them within his own broader Vedāntic tradition.

Under the umbrella of faiths known as Hinduism, however, Śrīla Prabhupāda drew a fundamental distinction between Māyāvāda and Vaiṣṇava positions. Māyāvāda is the popular name for the Advaita (absolute monism) philosophy of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya (788–820). Māyāvādis are its followers.

## *The Philosophy of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya*

While Śrīla Prabhupāda was highly critical of Māyāvāda, he did acknowledge the significant merits of Ādi



Śaṅkarācārya’s mission. Medieval India had come under Buddhist influence, and faith in a Supreme Being, an immortal soul, and the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, and *Bhagavad-gītā* had waned. Fortunately, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya revived popular faith in these elements. Unfortunately, his philosophy undermined the fundamentals of devotional theism.

Ādi Śaṅkarācārya’s philosophy rested primarily on his interpretation of three phrases from the *Upaniṣads*: *neti neti* (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 1.6.1), *tat tvam asi* (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.8.7), and *aham brahmāsmi* (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.10). His interpretation of these phrases is found in his *Śārīraka-bhāṣya*.

According to him, *neti neti* (“not this, not this”), means that

the physical universe, the plurality of individual souls, and a personal God are all illusory. Ultimate reality is without attributes and characteristics (*nirguṇa* or *nirviśeṣa* Brahman). All representations of a God with personality, form, and pastimes (*saguṇa* Brahman or *īśvara*), though essential for neophyte faith, are ultimately illusions to be transcended. The “individual” souls are ultimately identical with this undifferentiated Brahman, hence *tat tvam asi* (“That thou art”) and *aham brahmāsmi* (“I am Brahman”).

## *Śrī Rāmānujācārya’s Rebuttal*

Śrī Rāmānujācārya studied Advaita philosophy and then compiled an immense and meticulous assault against it. His *Śrī-bhāṣya*, a commentary on the same texts commented on by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, lays down the philosoph-

ical foundations of Vaiṣṇavism.

Regarding *neti neti*, Śrī Rāmānujācārya spotlighted that Ādi Śāṅkarācārya had interpreted the text out of context. The *Chāndogya* passage first describes the universe, the plurality of souls, and a Supreme Being with attributes such as glory, beauty, and softness. Then comes the phrase *neti neti*. But that is not the end of the story. The passage goes on to assign further

attributes to the Supreme Being: *na hy-etasmād iti, nety-nyat param asti* (“There is no higher, no greater, than the aforementioned Brahman”), and describes Brahman as *satyasya satyam* (“the most real among reals”).

Considering overall context, Śrī Rāmānujācārya taught that *neti neti* does not support Ādi Śāṅkarācārya of *nirviśeṣa* or *nirguṇa* Brahman; rather *neti neti* means that the Supreme

Being is indeed not equivalent to the immediately preceding description—he is much more. His glories cannot be adequately described.

When texts describe Brahman as *nirguṇa*, their intention is not to deny attributes to Brahman but to insist that his form is transcendental and devoid of the imperfections found in material things. There is nothing equal to him, nothing higher, and nothing great-

## A Salutory Parable

IN HIS PURPORT to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-lilā* 7.128, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: “The statements of the Śāṅkara philosophy, which are the teeth of the Māyāvādī philosopher, are always broken by the strong arguments of Vaiṣṇava philosophers such as the great *ācāryas*, especially Rāmānujācārya. Śrīpāda Rāmānujācārya and Madhvācārya break the teeth of the Māyāvādī philosophers, who can therefore be called Vidantīs, ‘toothless.’”

Long, long ago, the cradle of Vedic culture had become the home of atheism. People no longer believed in God, an immortal soul, or the *Vedas*. Ādi Śāṅkarācārya formulated the philosophy of Advaita with the aim of halting these unwholesome trends. Advaita served its master well, and soon the people were back on the Vedāntic track: there was a Supreme Transcendental Spiritual Being, the soul was immortal, and the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads* regained authoritative status.

However, the genie soon outgrew its bottle. Ādi Śāṅkarācārya’s commentaries on *neti neti, tat tvam asi*, and *aham brahmāsmi* became the three teeth of the genie now known as Māyāvāda. Instead of being the precursor of devotional theism, Māyāvāda had become its enemy.

Śrī Rāmānujācārya, with the club of his *Śrī-bhāṣya*, broke the three teeth of Māyāvāda and heralded a golden era of Vaiṣṇavism. Those who came after Śrī Rāmānujācārya, such as Madhvācārya, Nimbārka Svāmī, Vallabhācārya, and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, spread devotion throughout the land.

Still, Māyāvāda was down but not out. For centuries it had lain low, licking its wounds. Gradually its teeth regrew to hideous proportions, now flanked by an array of doctrines not found in Ādi Śāṅkarācārya’s original works. With the arrival of colonialism and modern transport, the world was becoming a global village. Māyāvāda saw its chance in fresh pastures. Animating an array of freelance gurus, Māyāvāda represented itself worldwide as The Vedānta.

Yet just when Māyāvāda was becoming complacent, a man was born, as brave as he was small and gentle. Armed with the works of the great Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, he hunted Māyāvāda down and exposed Māyāvāda itself to be the great illusion. First America, then Europe, Africa, Russia, Australia—everywhere people were brought back to Godhead. Perhaps especially satisfying to him was that, on seeing this global rise in Vaiṣṇavism, Indians were returning to their devotional roots. Then he returned

to his beloved Vṛndāvana, adored by Kṛṣṇa devotees of every race, color, age, and cultural background—a true United Nations.

What Śrī Rāmānujācārya had started at the beginning of the millennium, Śrīla Prabhupāda fulfilled at the end. Śrī Rāmānujācārya conquered Māyāvāda throughout India; Śrīla Prabhupāda did so throughout the world. Śrī Rāmānujācārya was backed by a battalion of staunch Vaiṣṇavas; Śrīla Prabhupāda started alone, neglected by even his own godbrothers. Śrī Rāmānujācārya liberally disseminated the holy name from a temple tower; Śrīla Prabhupāda did so in the slums of New York. Śrī Rāmānujācārya taught believers *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*: dissatisfied with ritualistic religiosity, turn to genuine spiritual enquiry; Śrīla Prabhupāda taught everyone—even bums, drug addicts, and womanizers—*athāto brahma-jijñāsā*: you’ve tried everything else, now try Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Rāmānujācārya clarified that the purpose of his philosophy was to inculcate devotion to the Lord; Śrīla Prabhupāda was the very embodiment of *bhakti* and Vedānta. Śrī Rāmānujācārya built a foundation on which all Vaiṣṇavas could confidently stand; Śrīla Prabhupāda built a society in which they all could live.

## *Śrī Rāmānujācārya stresses that even in the liberated state the soul remains distinct and forever the loving servant of God.*

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er. He has a divine personality, form, and attributes; is the abode of all excellences, such as bliss, imperishability, creative power, all-pervasiveness, eternity-knowledge-infinity, and infallible will and self-fulfillment; he is effulgent, soft as wool, and lotus-eyed. Yet however hard one tries to praise this *saguṇa* Brahman, one falls short and must concede: *neti neti!*

Regarding *tat tvam asi*, Śrī Rāmānujācārya argued that Ādi Śaṅkarācārya was too quick and selective in asserting absolute equality between the soul and Brahman. Śrī Rāmānujācārya cited many texts that distinguish between the soul and God. The identity implied by *tat tvam asi* must respect this hallowed fundamental distinction. The soul is different from God, yet one with God as part of him. All creation has come from God—*janmādyasya yataḥ* (*Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.2)—who sustains it by his indwelling presence. The *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.2.18 is pivotal:

*antaryāmyadhidaiva-(adhiloka)-ādiṣu tad-dharma-vyapadeśāt*

“The inner ruler of gods, (universes), and all other beings as mentioned in the *Upaniṣad* passage is Brahman, because the qualities apply to him.” Just as the individual soul resides in the body, unknown to the body (which is supported by the soul and exists for the soul’s purposes), so too God resides in the soul (and all else) as the Paramātmā, or *antaryāmi*. God is the very core of, and purpose for, the soul’s existence. The soul is forever inseparably related to God as his part, or *amśa*. Just as the rays are one with the sun yet dependently related to it, so too the soul is dependently one with God. In this *limited* sense: *tat* (God) *tvam* (you, the individual soul) *asi* (are).

Regarding *aham brahmāsmi*, Śrī Rāmānujācārya agrees with Ādi Śaṅkarācārya that on attaining liberation, the *ātman* manifests its essential character as one with the Supreme Being.

The soul should identify itself with God, not matter. But again, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya’s claim of absolute identity violates innumerable *Upaniṣad* texts.

Śrī Rāmānujācārya, respecting both identity and difference, explained that in the liberated state, the soul manifests the qualities of Brahman such as freedom from birth, death, impurity, ignorance, and pain, and experiences incomparable bliss. In this God-intoxicated state and endowed with spiritual vision, the soul feels God everywhere, and all nouns and pronouns (*aham*, *tvam*, etc.) are felt as referring ultimately to God. Every trace of *ahaṅkāra* (I-ness) and *mamakāra* (my-ness) is extinguished, and God alone is experienced. Hence: *aham brahmāsmi*.

The soul, while sharing in the bliss of God, remains subordinate to him. God is infinitely all-pervasive (*vibhu*), and the soul is forever minute (*aṇu*); God creates innumerable universes, and the souls do not. Most significantly, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya claims that in the liberated state the soul merges into Brahman and becomes absolutely one with it. But Śrī Rāmānujācārya stresses that even in the liberated state the soul remains distinct and forever the loving servant of God. The *Vedānta-sūtra* (4.4.9) does not say that the liberated soul has no master whatsoever, but rather has no other master: *ata eva ca ananyādhipatiḥ*. The liberated soul engages in eternal service to God alone.

The Lord alone is the means to reach this blessed state. He alone is the bridge to immortality: *amṛtasya*

*eṣa setuḥ*. Salvation cannot be earned through self-effort but stems from God’s causeless mercy:

*nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo  
na medhayā na bahudhā śrutena  
yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas  
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanuṁ svām*

“This Supreme Self cannot be reached by reasoning, intellect, or study of numerous texts. Rather, his true nature can be known only by one whom he chooses.” (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.2.23)

To summarize:

1. God is the Supreme Person, possessor of innumerable divine attributes, forms, and pastimes. The individual souls and the physical universe are real and are expressions of his glory.
2. Salvation is a gift from God.
3. Release from the material world, the soul realizes its true spiritual nature as the blissful servant of God.

*Eternal Truths*

All the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* agree with these principles, and it was Śrī Rāmānujācārya who gave them a strong scriptural and logical foundation. Śrīla Prabhupāda appreciated this scholastic achievement. Whereas Śrīla Prabhupāda considered Ādi Śaṅkarācārya’s teachings “a timely necessity but not a permanent fact,” he considered the teachings of Śrī Rāmānujācārya eternal truths to be diligently studied:

A Vaiṣṇava should study the commentaries on the *Vedānta-sūtra* written by the four *sampradāya-ācāryas*, namely Śrī Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, Viṣṇu Svāmī, and Nimbārka, for these commentaries are based upon the philosophy that the Lord is the master and that all living entities are his eternal servants. One

interested in studying Vedānta philosophy properly must study these commentaries, especially if he is a Vaiṣṇava. These commentaries are always adored by Vaiṣṇavas.

—*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*,  
Antya-līlā 2.95, Purport

Śrīla Prabhupāda's appreciation of Śrī Rāmānujācārya was also pragmatically based. The Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya regards *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the perfect commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* and *Upaniṣads*. Hence, from a purely internal viewpoint, Madhva-Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas need not study any other commentaries. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda was not like many sadhus or *bābājis* blissfully content with their personal enlightenment. He was a missionary who realized that long-lasting success required gaining public credibility for his movement. Consider his reference to a famous historical precedent:

But sometimes back, in Jaipur, there was a challenge that "The Gauḍīya-sampradāya has no commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*." So at that time

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura was requested [to produce the Gauḍīya commentary] . . . Because he was a grand scholar, grand old-man scholar, at that time living in Vṛndāvana . . . So he was very old at that time; so he authorized Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana that "You do it." There was no need, but people are demanding, "Where is your commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*?" So Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana, with the order of Govindaji at Jaipur, he wrote the commentary on *Brahma-sūtra*. That name is *Govinda-bhāṣya*. So the Gauḍīya-Brahmā-sampradāya, they have got also commentary on *Brahma-sūtra*. That is required.

—Lecture, Bombay,  
September 30, 1973

The principal authorities in Jaipur were Rāmānandī (a northern offshoot of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*), and Śrī Baladeva (early eighteenth century) realized the strategic importance of getting their approval. Śrī Baladeva's brilliant commentary was so well received by its Rāmānandī examiners that they awarded him the title Vidyābhūṣana: "adorned with knowledge."

They even wished to become his disciples. Yet Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana declined. He hailed Śrī Rāmānujācārya's *sampradāya* as the foremost adherent of *dāsyā-bhakti* (loving servitude), and considered it inappropriate for the Rāmānandīs to leave such an august heritage.

### ISKCON's Orthodoxy

Śrīla Prabhupāda dedicated his first major work—his commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā*—to Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana. Śrīla Prabhupāda too was establishing the authority of the Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya, this time in the West. He also proved that his International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was not a new cult but an orthodox movement. Śrīla Prabhupāda too showed exemplary humility in insisting he was not trying to supersede the great gurus of the past, but serving to bring their teachings to bloom:

**Dr. Patel:** Sir, I read your commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā* and Rāmānujācārya's. They are parallel.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes.

**Dr. Patel:** I think you have taken out of it . . . [laughter]

**Prabhupāda:** How can I . . .

**Dr. Patel:** I am just joking.

**Prabhupāda:** No, no. Our process is to take from the *ācāryas*. We are not manufacturing. We are not so fools and rascals that we have to manufacture. We have to take the remnants of foodstuff given by the *ācārya* and explain in the modern way so that people may. . . . That is our business.

**Dr. Patel:** Completely parallel.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. If it is parallel, then it is my success.

—Bombay, November 3, 1975

### Similarities and Differences

No doubt there are some differences between the Śrī Vaiṣṇava and Madhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāyas*. Śrī Vaiṣṇavas believe Śrīman Nārāyaṇa to be the Supreme Person and the root of all incarnations; Madhva-Gauḍīyas hold Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be Supreme, with Śrīman Nārāyaṇa and others as his incarnations. Consequently Madhva-Gauḍīyas (a) worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa



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# *Śrīla Prabhupāda, in his authoritative purports and classes, has cited Śrī Rāmānujācārya hundreds of times.*

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rather than Śrīmān Nārāyaṇa, (b) consider Goloka Vṛndāvana and not Vaikuṅṭha to be the highest heaven, and (c) consider certain devotional moods accessible only through their disciplic succession. There are also famous episodes of the “conversion” of Śrī Vaiṣṇavas to Madhva-Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda related these instances with kind sensitivity and mutual respect. Without compromising his absolute chastity to the unique Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya principles, he always stressed unity:

They are of the same conclusion, the Vaiṣṇava ācāryas. Just like our Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, and Nimbārka, and . . . Viṣṇusvāmī. They are all of the same movement.

—Lecture, Māyāpur,  
February 19, 1976

There is no difference. That is Vaiṣṇava. All the Vaiṣṇavas understand that Viṣṇu is the Supreme. There may be, sometimes, such as Kṛṣṇa is understood as incarnation of Viṣṇu, and sometimes they understand Viṣṇu as the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. That is *sampradāya*. . . . But either Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu, he is Supreme. That is accepted by all.

—Evening Discussion, Perth,  
May 6, 1975

In the Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*, some devotees worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and others worship Sītā-Rāma and Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Some also worship Rukmiṇī-Kṛṣṇa. All of these are the same, and all of the devotees are Vaiṣṇavas. Whether one chants Hare Kṛṣṇa or Hare Rāma, it is not very important. Worship of the demigods, however, is not recommended.

—*Teachings of Lord Kapila*,  
Verse 44

In text 154 [*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madya-līlā*, Chapter 9] Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu clarified this in a very lucid way: *iśvaratve bheda mānile haya aparādha*. “It is offensive for one to differentiate between the forms of the Lord.”

—*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*,  
*Madhya-līlā* 9.155, Purport

Taking a panoramic view, it is clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s regard for Śrī Rāmānujācārya was scholarly, warm, and deep. Śrīla Prabhupāda, in his authoritative purports and classes, has cited Śrī Rāmānujācārya hundreds of times. Here are some examples: when explaining ubiquitous terms such as *bhakti-vedānta*, *sanātana dharma*, and *asura*, or the unique Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya concept of the Pañcattva; defining humanity through its inquiry into the Absolute truth, or providing a correct perspective on *varṇāśrama-dharma*; explaining how this creation is real and one with God, yet subordinate to him and forever his property; stressing that the plurality of souls is an eternal fact; emphasizing the reality and transcendental nature of the Lord’s personality, form and pastimes; supporting the unique significance of scriptural knowledge; spotlighting meticulous citation of Vedantic texts; recognizing great authorities on Vedānta; providing exemplars of polemic skill; proclaiming that all scriptures ultimately glorify the Supreme Person; exalting the spontaneously relishable nature of devotional service; emphasizing that service to God continues in the liberated state; illustrating the transforming power of feminine chastity; expressing the total disgust for material pleasures felt after experiencing spiritual bliss; highlighting the morally immaculate character of a Vaiṣṇava, the need for *vairāgya*, or the bravery required in devotional service; justifying the tran-

scending of caste barriers; exemplifying broad-heartedness in the liberal dissemination of the holy name; justifying the need for temples; praising preaching power or towering spiritual prowess. Even while instructing his disciples how to proceed with the translation of his beloved *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, even in this most intimate of services, Śrīla Prabhupāda considers Śrī Rāmānujācārya a valuable ally. It is rare to find such magnanimity in great scholars anywhere during any age.

With scrupulous etiquette, Śrīla Prabhupāda always acknowledged the contribution of other *sampradāyas*, whether at a scholarly, social, personal, or institutional level. Even while the undisputed leader of a worldwide movement, he remained humble and alert to the good in others. His life was exemplary. This stemmed not just from a profoundly pure heart, but also recognition that he was an ambassador. Śrīla Prabhupāda saw himself as the gateway to Śrī Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and other spiritual luminaries. He could not, and did not, let either his followers or his august predecessors down. ☀

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## ONLINE EXTRA

This article contained eighty footnotes, omitted here because of space limitations. To read the article with footnotes, go to [www.Krishna.com/402](http://www.Krishna.com/402).

# Godly Qualities for God-Realization (PART 1)

*Lord Kṛṣṇa reveals what qualities please him and make us fit for his company.*

by Amala Bhakta Dāsa

*In both the Bhagavad-gītā and the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Lord Kṛṣṇa lists qualities that please him, decorate his devotees, and are essential for those wishing to win his favor and advance in spiritual life. In Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.75), Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, “A Vaiṣṇava is one who has developed all good transcendental qualities. All the good qualities of Kṛṣṇa gradually develop in Kṛṣṇa’s devotee.” He then lists twenty-six qualities, often cited by Śrīla Prabhupāda.*

*In this three-part series, the author discusses twenty-eight godly qualities listed by Lord Kṛṣṇa when instructing his devotee Uddhava in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.11.29–32).*

## *Merciful*

TO BE MERCIFUL means to be unable to tolerate others’ suffering. We should sympathetically feel others’ pains and thus feel driven to try to relieve them. Physical, mental, and emotional suffering is rooted in spiritual ignorance. Unaware of the laws and rules of God, people do not know what should and should not be done. Thus they make decisions that bring them immediate pleasure but ultimate mis-

ery. Feeling merciful towards them, the devotee of Kṛṣṇa feels bound to share with them liberating knowledge of self-realization so that they may finally stop suffering and really begin living.

To be merciful also means not contributing to the needless slaughter of animals and fish for food or clothing. When these creatures are killed, they suffer intensely—in the same way we would if we were similarly killed. Feeling their suffering, we should abstain from eating their flesh or wearing their skins, especially nowadays, when so many good substitutes are available. How can we consider ourselves spiritual if, at the painful expense of these helpless creatures, we unnecessarily titillate our taste buds just for sensual pleasure?

Lord Kṛṣṇa demonstrated his mercy when he freed 20,800 kings from a cave in which the demonic king Jarāsandha had callously imprisoned them. The Lord then not only had Jarāsandha killed, but also mercifully returned to the kings their kingdoms, which Jarāsandha had conquered and occupied. He also bestowed on them the gift of devotional service to him so that they would gradually return to the spiritual world.

*King Ambarīṣa displayed the Vaiṣṇava quality of forgiveness when he forgave Durvāsa, who had tried to kill him but was then chased by Kṛṣṇa’s brilliant disc weapon.*





### *Non-injurious*

Even if someone acts offensively towards us, we should not act likewise. Rather, we should understand that the offense has been committed out of ignorance. Generally a person acts offensively to increase his or her illusory sense of lordship—in other words, to feel superior to us. This is most pathetic because it is based on false-ego understanding, namely that we are our body. If we allow ourselves to feel offended and then retaliate, we expand our own false ego

and create new karmic reactions for ourselves.

Rather, we should remain calm and peaceful and deal with the matter in the most efficacious way possible. This means having no hostility or malice towards the offender, thus affirming the reality that we are the eternal soul and can be neither hurt nor killed. In this mentality, depending on what the situation requires, we may either disregard the offender or defend ourselves (or our loved ones). But such controlled behavior is based

on the spiritual, rather than the bodily, concept of life and thus brings no karmic reaction. Rather, it brings us further purification.

### *Forgiving*

Because we, as devotees of God, identify ourselves with the eternal soul rather than the material body, when someone physically hurts us we should not feel harmed or resentful. Rather, we should feel the offender's suffering as if it were our own and thus sympathize with his or her pathetic condition. Feeling our soul relationship with the offender as our brother or sister, we should inwardly forgive.

Depending on the attitude of the offender, however, we may or may not wish to express our forgiveness. If the offender apologizes, sincerely promises to not repeat his or her offense, and asks to be forgiven, then we certainly should forgive. This was clearly illustrated when the yogi Durvāsā tried to kill King Ambariṣa but was subsequently chased by Lord Kṛṣṇa's invincible, protective disc weapon. When the yogi realized his terrible mistake, he prostrated himself before Ambariṣa and begged for his forgiveness, which the king gladly bestowed.

But if the offender, instead of being repentant, remains malicious, then we should restrain from expressing our forgiveness. To do otherwise might unduly encourage the offender to persist in his or her wrongful behavior. And although we may have to deal with this matter in an aggressive way, we should never bear any grudge or vengeance towards the offender. This was exemplified in the *Mahābhārata* when King Yudhiṣṭhira declared war against his cousin Duryodhana for refusing to keep his promise to return the kingdom to the king. Yudhiṣṭhira declared war to uphold the principle of justice, yet he bore no malice or contempt for his cousin.

### *Truthful*

The devotee of God lives by being truthful, and from this he gains strength and firmness. Dishonesty often stems from fear. But when we know that the most powerful person in the universe—God—is lovingly supporting us, who or what do



Painting by Puṣkara Dāsa

*Kṛṣṇa remained even-minded when Indra apologized to him for flooding Vṛndāvana—an apology that included a celestial bath from Indra's elephant, Airāvata.*



***Being part of the Lord we naturally want to be great, but we must realize that our true greatness lies in trying to always satisfy and please him.***



we have to fear? It is only when we consider ourselves a lord and identify with our frail, destructible body that we become fearful. We fear that we may lose our body, family, business, pleasures, possessions—all the things we're attached to—and thus we may lie to keep or protect them. Such lying may eventually become habitual and, when discovered, may cause ruptures and rifts in our relationships.

Sometimes we may reveal the truth and be ridiculed, assaulted, or even killed. Still, we should not be afraid, for no one can harm us unless the omnipotent Lord allows it. And should he want this—for whatever good reason he may have—then so be it, for no one can prevent it. Whatever he wishes should be our wish. Knowing that we have spoken the truth to advance his mission and thereby pleased him, however, will keep us peaceful and happy and enable us to ultimately return to him.

Nevertheless, before we express the truth, we should carefully discriminate whether doing so may needlessly harm innocent persons. If it will, then we should consider expressing it at a different time and under different circumstances. Expressing truth for truth's sake may be just as false as outright lying if it results in causing people unnecessary suffering. The business of God's devotee is to relieve and eradicate suffering, not increase and extend it.

*Non-envious*

Since we entered this world to be superior and supreme, it is only natural for us to be envious of others. As soon as we see persons above us in rank or status, or who have possessions we don't have, we desire to excel them or to acquire what they have. If we continue to yield to this envious tendency, we will remain en-

tangled and engaged in the material world—always suffering—lifetime after lifetime. But once we realize that the only possession worth having is intense love for God, and that the only position worth having is that of his surrendered servant, our envy will disappear quite rapidly.

We can speed up this process by praising and giving gifts to persons we envy, by encouraging others to exceed our own accomplishments, by taking pleasure in others' excelling our achievements, and by praying earnestly to God to help us overcome our envy. Being part of the Lord we naturally want to be great—since he is great—but we must realize that our true greatness lies in trying to always satisfy and please him. And lastly, we should never feel happy over others' losses, injuries, or damages, for such events do not lift our own position, as we may falsely imagine.

*Even-minded*

Life is full of dualities—pleasure and pain, heat and cold, loss and gain, victory and defeat—but we have to remain even-minded when we experience them. To be even-minded means to be uninfluenced or unmoved by these opposites. For if we become happy when we experience pleasure, gain, or victory, then we will become miserable when we encounter pain, loss, or defeat. Thus it is pointless to base our happiness on external gratification, since it is so limited and temporary. What we, the soul, really want is unlimited and permanent happiness.

This state can be attained only when we revive our loving relationship with the Lord through the process of devotional service. The happiness we derive from this transcends the dualities of material nature. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.21–23) Lord Kṛṣṇa describes it as follows: “In that joy-

ous state one is situated in boundless transcendental happiness, realized through transcendental senses. Established thus, one never departs from the truth, and upon gaining this, he thinks there is no greater gain. Being situated in such a position, one is never shaken, even in the midst of greatest difficulty. This indeed is actual freedom from all miseries arising from material contact.”

As we begin to taste this sublime state, we automatically become even-minded towards dualities. But even before that time, we can program our mind to remain unexcited and undisturbed during all our dualistic encounters. By doing this, we deny their value and validity in our life and thereby open ourselves up to a much higher concept of happiness.

Lord Kṛṣṇa demonstrated his level-headedness when Indra, king of the heavenly planets, tried to flood Kṛṣṇa's village with rain. Instead of chastising King Indra, Kṛṣṇa calmly lifted a mountain and held it like an umbrella shelter for seven days above the frightened villagers. When Indra saw that he could not succeed in his mischief, he desisted and apologized to the Lord, begging for forgiveness. Even then the Lord remained equipoised, neither gloating over his victory nor sneering over Indra's submissiveness.

*Well-wishing*

We should always strive, as far as possible, for the welfare of others. This attitude helps us to overcome our selfishness and feel our connection with all beings. As our selfishness disappears and our connections multiply, we begin to feel our spiritual harmony and unity with everyone, which is our original spiritual-world mentality. However, we must under-

stand that the highest welfare work is to try to bring people from the darkness of ignorance to the light of transcendental knowledge.

When people are free of ignorance, they become forever free of disease, old age, death, and rebirth. In other words, they can finally return to the spiritual world, where these miseries do not exist, and resume their devotional service to God in eternal happiness. By helping people achieve this, we not only become their best friend, but we especially become the fast friend of God.

This attitude of wanting to help others realize the truth was expressed to the Lord very touchingly by the five-year-old prince Prahlāda. He said he did not wish to be liberated from the material world alone, leaving behind all the persons who have foolishly renounced God to try to feel like a lord.

He knew that without taking shelter of God and becoming conscious of him, they could never be happy. He therefore prayed to be able to bring them back to God.

#### *Undisturbed by Material Desires*

Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks of this quality in verse 2.70 of the *Bhagavad-gītā*: “A person who is not disturbed by the incessant flow of desires—that enter like rivers into the ocean, which is ever being filled but is always still—can alone achieve peace, and not the person who strives to satisfy such desires.” Even though we may be firmly fixed on the spiritual path, material desires may still enter our mind. But if our mind is steeped in the peace and bliss of God consciousness, it will not become disturbed. Rather, it will have the discrimination and the determination to resist and disregard

material desires.

Eventually our material desires will disappear, and only beneficial, spiritual desires will enter our mind—desires that revolve around trying to please God through loving service. When our life is totally consecrated to this sacred goal, we will clearly see the unreality and absurdity of the material world. All our energies will then be devoted to returning to, and helping others return to, our original home, the spiritual world. ❁

*Amala Bhakta Dāsa is well known for his audio recordings of Kṛṣṇa conscious books (available from the Krishna.com Store). He is also the author of four books, the most recent of which is The Supreme Mystic, a biographical novel about the early years of Lord Kṛṣṇa.*

## **FREEDOM BY SURRENDER**

*(continued from page 15)*

that they’re thinking that freedom means to become the servant of the senses. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy teaches, “Don’t become the servant of your senses.” And people think, “Oh, but this is our freedom.” They do not know that by trying to become free, they are becoming servants of their senses. Where is your freedom? To freely enjoy sense gratification means to become the servant of your senses. This is *māyā*’s illusion. You are voluntarily accepting *māyā*’s slavery and thinking, “Now I’m free.” This is illusion. Your senses are pulling you by the ear—“Come here. Do this and you’ll be happy.” Just like a dog: as soon as his master pulls the leash—“Come on! Come on!”—he has to follow. So people are becoming just like dogs, and they are thinking “free.” Because they are unintelligent rascals, they cannot understand what real freedom is. But we are teaching that real freedom comes when you surrender to God.

**Interviewer:** But how can you surrender to something you don’t know? You can’t really know God. You can’t even speak about him.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Our position is that we know God from God’s ex-

planation of himself. We don’t try to speculate about God like you. We’re not such rascals. I agree that I cannot know God, but in the *Bhagavad-gītā* God himself says, “I am like this,” and I accept it. That’s all. That is my position—this is my full surrender to God. I may not know what he is, but when he says, “I am like this,” I accept it. I never say, “I have understood God.” How can I know God? I am limited, and God is unlimited. But he says, *mattaḥ parataram nānyat*: “There is no greater truth than Me.” And I accept this. You can call it “slave mentality” or whatever you like, but I accept the words of Kṛṣṇa. Instead of endeavoring foolishly to know God by mental speculation, I submit to the statement of God that he is the Supreme Person. So which way is better: to speculate on God foolishly, or to accept the statements of God? Which is better?

**Interviewer:** To accept the statements of God.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** So, you are more intelligent than the rascals. The rascals will remain fools by speculating on God for many, many lives. And when they become actually wise, they’ll surrender to God. This is also stated by the Lord in *Bhagavad-gītā*. *Bahū-nān janmanām ante jñānavān mān*

*prapadyate*: “After many, many births of mental speculation, when one actually becomes wise he surrenders unto Kṛṣṇa.” I have already surrendered to Kṛṣṇa. Why should you wait?

**Disciple:** One problem is that they never had authorities they could surrender to. Even their parents have cheated them.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** That is a fact. The parents are also rascals. Unless you approach a person who is the representative of Kṛṣṇa, who has understood Kṛṣṇa, then the rascaldom continues. You have to find out a person who has understood the Supreme Truth. Otherwise, you’ll simply find another rascal, another rascal, another, another.

But you should not think that just because you have been cheated, there is no genuine authority. That’s simply another kind of rascaldom. If someone has been cheated with counterfeit money, he should not conclude that there is no real money. So, don’t become illusioned just because you were cheated by counterfeit authorities in the past. Unfortunately, people are so unintelligent that they cannot judge what is the real authority and what is unreal. They take the real to be counterfeit and then follow the blind rascals. ❁

Referred to as “the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature,” *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa*, or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

# LORD BRAHMĀ PRAISES LORD ŚIVA

*When the devas, headed by Lord Brahmā approach Lord Śiva  
in Kailāsa, Lord Brahmā extols Lord Śiva’s greatness.*

## CANTO 4: CHAPTER 6

38 कृत्वोरौ दक्षिणे सव्यं पादपद्मं च जानुनि  
बाहुं प्रकोष्ठेऽक्षमालामासीनं तर्कमुद्रया

*kṛtvorau dakṣiṇe savyam  
pāda-padmaṁ ca jānuni  
bāhuṁ prakoṣṭhe 'kṣa-mālām  
āsinam tarka-mudrayā*

*kṛtvā*—having placed; *ūrau*—thigh; *dakṣiṇe*—at the right; *savyam*—the left; *pāda-padmaṁ*—lotus feet; *ca*—and; *jānuni*—on his knee; *bāhum*—hand; *prakoṣṭhe*—in the end of the right hand; *akṣa-mālām*—*rudrākṣa* beads; *āsinam*—sitting; *tarka-mudrayā*—with the *mudrā* of argument.

His left leg was placed on his right thigh, and his left hand was placed on his left thigh. In his right hand he held *rudrākṣa* beads. This sitting posture is called *vīrāsana*. He sat in the *vīrāsana* posture, and his finger was in the mode of argument.

PURPORT: The sitting posture described herein is called *vīrāsana* according to the system of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* performances. In the performance of yoga there are eight divisions, such as *yama* and *niyama*—controlling, following the rules and regulations, then practicing the sitting postures, etc. Besides *vīrāsana* there are other sitting postures, such as *padmāsana* and *siddhāsana*.

Practice of these *āsanas* without elevating oneself to the position of realizing the Supersoul, Viṣṇu, is not the perfectional stage of yoga. ❶ Lord Śiva is called *yogīśvara*, the master of all yogis, and Kṛṣṇa is also called *yogeśvara*. *Yogīśvara* indicates that no one can surpass the yoga practice of Lord Śiva, and *yogeśvara* indicates that no one can surpass the yogic perfection of Kṛṣṇa.

Another significant word is *tarka-mudrā*. This indicates that the fingers are opened and the second finger is raised, along with the arm, to impress the audience with

**(1) Why is Lord Śiva called *yogīśvara*, and Kṛṣṇa *yogeśvara*?**

some subject matter. This is actually a symbolic representation.

39 तं ब्रह्मनिर्वाणसमाधिमाश्रितं  
व्युपाश्रितं गिरिशं योगकक्षाम्  
सलोकपाला मुनयो मनुना-  
माद्यं मनुं प्राञ्जलयः प्रणेमुः

*taṁ brahma-nirvāṇa-samādhim āśritam  
vyupāśritam giriśam yoga-kakṣām  
sa-loka-pālā munayo manūnām  
ādyam manuṁ prāñjalayaḥ praṇemuḥ*

*taṁ*—him (Lord Śiva); *brahma-nirvāṇa*—in *brahmānanda*; *samādhim*—in trance; *āśritam*—absorbed; *vyupāśritam*—leaning on; *giriśam*—Lord Śiva; *yoga-kakṣām*—having his left knee firmly fixed with a knotted cloth; *sa-loka-pālāḥ*—along with the demigods (headed by Indra); *munayaḥ*—the sages; *manūnām*—of all thinkers; *ādyam*—the chief; *manuṁ*—thinker; *prāñjalayaḥ*—with folded palms; *praṇemuḥ*—offered respectful obeisances.

**All the sages and demigods, headed by Indra, offered their respectful obeisances unto Lord Śiva with folded hands. Lord Śiva was dressed in saffron garments and absorbed in trance, thus appearing to be the foremost of all sages.**

PURPORT: In this verse the word *brahmānanda* is significant. ② This *brahmānanda*, or *brahma-nirvāṇa*, is explained by Prahlaḍa Mahārāja. When one is completely absorbed in the *adhokṣaja*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is beyond the sense perception of materialistic persons, one is situated in *brahmānanda*.

It is impossible to conceive of the existence, name, form, quality, and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead because He is transcendently situated beyond the conception of materialistic persons. ③ Because materialists cannot imagine or conceive of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, they may think that God is dead, but factually He is always existing in His *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*, His eternal form. Constant meditation concen-

trated on the form of the Lord is called *samādhi*, ecstasy or trance. *Samādhi* means particularly concentrated attention, so one who has achieved the qualification of always meditating on the Personality of Godhead is to be understood to be always in trance and enjoying *brahma-nirvāṇa*, or *brahmānanda*. Lord Śiva exhibited those symptoms, and therefore it is stated that he was absorbed in *brahmānanda*.

Another significant word is *yoga-kakṣām*. *Yoga-kakṣā* is the sitting posture in which the left thigh is fixed under one's tightly knotted saffron-colored garment. Also the words *manūnām ādyam* are significant here because they mean a philosopher, or one who is thoughtful and can think very nicely. Such a man is called *manu*. Lord Śiva is described in this verse as the chief of all thinkers. Lord Śiva, of course, does not engage in useless mental speculation, but as stated in the previous verse, he is always thoughtful regarding how to deliver the demons from their fallen condition of life. ④ It is said that during the advent of Lord Caitanya, Sadāśiva appeared as Advaita Prabhu, and Advaita Prabhu's chief concern was to elevate the fallen conditioned souls to the platform of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Since people were engaged in useless occupations which would continue their material existence, Lord Śiva, in the form of Lord Advaita, appealed to the Supreme Lord to appear as Lord Caitanya to deliver these illusioned souls. Actually Lord Caitanya appeared on the request of Lord Advaita. Similarly, Lord Śiva has a *sampradāya*, the Rudra-sampradāya. He is always thinking about the deliverance of the fallen souls, as exhibited by Lord Advaita Prabhu.

40 स तूपलभ्यागतमात्मयोनिं  
सुरासुरेशैरभिवन्दिताङ्घ्रिः  
उत्थाय चक्रे शिरसाभिवन्दन-  
मर्हत्तमः कस्य यथैव विष्णुः

*sa tūpalabhyāgatam ātma-yonim  
surāsuresāir abhivanditāṅghriḥ  
utthāya cakre śirasābhivandanam  
arhattamaḥ kasya yathaiva viṣṇuḥ*

*saḥ*—Lord Śiva; *tu*—but; *upalabhya*—seeing; *āgatam*—had arrived; *ātma-yonim*—Lord Brahmā; *sura-asura-īśaiḥ*—by the best of the demigods and demons; *abhivanditāṅghriḥ*—whose feet are worshiped; *utthāya*—standing up; *cakre*—made; *śirasā*—with his head; *abhivandanam*—respectful; *arhattamaḥ*—Vāmanadeva; *kasya*—of Kaśyapa; *yathā eva*—just as; *viṣṇuḥ*—Viṣṇu.

**Lord Śiva's lotus feet were worshiped by both the demigods and demons, but still, in spite of his exalted position,**

- (2) How does Prahlaḍa Mahārāja explain the word *brahmānanda*?  
(3) Why might a materialist think that God is dead?  
(4) What role did Lord Śiva play during Lord Caitanya's advent?

as soon as he saw that Lord Brahmā was there among all the other demigods, he immediately stood up and offered him respect by bowing down and touching his lotus feet, just as Vāmanadeva offered His respectful obeisances to Kaśyapa Muni.

PURPORT: Kaśyapa Muni was in the category of the living entities, but he had a transcendental son, Vāmanadeva, who was an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Thus although Lord Viṣṇu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He offered His respects to Kaśyapa Muni. Similarly, when Lord Kṛṣṇa was a child He used to offer His respectful obeisances to His mother and father, Nanda and Yaśodā. Also, at the Battle of Kurukṣetra, Lord Kṛṣṇa touched the feet of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira because the King was His elder. It appears, then, that the Personality of Godhead, Lord Śiva, and other devotees, in spite of their being situated in exalted positions, instructed by practical example how to offer obeisances to their superiors. ❸ Lord Śiva offered his respectful obeisances to Brahmā because Brahmā was his father, just as Kaśyapa Muni was the father of Vāmana.

41 तथापरे सिद्धगणा महर्षिभि-  
र्ये वै समन्तादनु नीललोहितम्  
नमस्कृतः प्राह शशाङ्कशेखरं  
कृतप्रणामं प्रहसन्निवात्मभूः

*tathāpare siddha-gaṇā maharṣibhir  
ye vai samantād anu nīlaloḥitam  
namaskṛtaḥ prāha śaśāṅka-śekharam  
kṛta-praṇāmam prahasann ivātmabhūḥ*

*tathā*—so; *apare*—the others; *siddha-gaṇāḥ*—the Siddhas; *mahā-ṛṣibhiḥ*—along with the great sages; *ye*—who; *vai*—indeed; *samantāt*—from all sides; *anu*—after; *nīlaloḥitam*—Lord Śiva; *namaskṛtaḥ*—making obeisances; *prāha*—said; *śaśāṅka-śekharam*—to Lord Śiva; *kṛta-praṇāmam*—having made obeisances; *prahasann*—smiling; *iva*—as; *ātmabhūḥ*—Lord Brahmā.

All the sages who were sitting with Lord Śiva, such as Nārada and others, also offered their respectful obeisances to Lord Brahmā. After being so worshiped, Lord Brahmā, smiling, began to speak to Lord Śiva.

PURPORT: ❹ Lord Brahmā was smiling because he knew that Lord Śiva is not only easily satisfied but easily irritated as well. He was afraid that Lord Śiva might be in an angry mood because he had lost his wife and had been insulted by Dakṣa. In order to conceal this fear, he smiled and addressed Lord Śiva as follows.

ब्रह्मोवाच

42 जाने त्वामीशं विश्वस्य जगतो योनिबीजयोः  
शक्तेः शिवस्य च परं यत्तद्ब्रह्म निरन्तरम्

*brahmovāca  
jāne tvām īśam viśvasya  
jagato yoni-bijayoḥ  
śakteḥ śivasya ca paraṁ  
yat tad brahma nirantaram*

*brahmā uvāca*—Lord Brahmā said; *jāne*—I know; *tvām*—you (Lord Śiva); *īśam*—the controller; *viśvasya*—of the entire material manifestation; *jagataḥ*—of the cosmic manifestation; *yoni-bijayoḥ*—of both the mother and father; *śakteḥ*—of potency; *śivasya*—of Śiva; *ca*—and; *param*—the Supreme; *yat*—which; *tad*—that; *brahma*—without change; *nirantaram*—with no material qualities.

**Lord Brahmā said: My dear Lord Śiva, I know that you are the controller of the entire material manifestation, the combination father and mother of the cosmic manifestation, and the Supreme Brahman beyond the cosmic manifestation as well. I know you in that way.**

PURPORT: Although Lord Brahmā had received very respectful obeisances from Lord Śiva, he knew that Lord Śiva was in a more exalted position than himself. Lord Śiva's position is described in *Brahma-saṁhitā*: there is no difference between Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Śiva in their original positions, but still Lord Śiva is different from Lord Viṣṇu. ❺ The example is given that the milk in yogurt is not different from the original milk from which it was made.

43 त्वमेव भगवन्नेतच्छिवशक्तयोः स्वरूपयोः  
विश्वं सृजसि पास्यत्सि क्रीडन्नूर्णपटो यथा

*tvam eva bhagavann etac  
chiva-śaktyoḥ svarūpayoḥ*

- (5) Why did Lord Śiva offered his respectful obeisances to Brahmā?  
(6) Why was Lord Brahmā smiling when he approached Lord Śiva?  
(7) What example is given in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* to explain the difference between Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Śiva?

*viśvaṁ sṛjasi pāsy atsi  
kṛīḍann ūrṇa-paṭo yathā*

*tvam*—you; *eva*—certainly; *bhagavan*—O my lord; *etat*—this; *śiva-śaktyoḥ*—being situated in your auspicious energy; *svarūpayoḥ*—by your personal expansion; *viśvam*—this universe; *sṛjasi*—create; *pāsi*—maintain; *atsi*—annihilate; *kṛīḍan*—working; *ūrṇa-paṭaḥ*—spider’s web; *yathā*—just like.

**My dear lord, you create this cosmic manifestation, maintain it, and annihilate it by expansion of your personality, exactly as a spider creates, maintains and winds up its web.**

PURPORT: In this verse the word *śiva-śakti* is significant. *Śiva* means “auspicious,” and *śakti* means “energy.” There are many types of energies of the Supreme Lord, and all of them are auspicious. Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara are called *guṇa-avatāras*, or incarnations of material qualities. In the material world we compare these different incarnations from different angles of vision, but since all of them are expansions of the supreme auspicious, all of them are auspicious, although sometimes we consider one quality of nature to be higher or lower than another. ⑧ The mode of ignorance, or *tamo-guṇa*, is considered very much lower than the others, but in the higher sense it is also auspicious. The example may be given herein that the government has both an educational department and criminal department. An outsider may consider the criminal department inauspicious, but from the government’s point of view it is as important as the education department, and therefore the government finances both departments equally, without discrimination.

44 त्वमेव धर्मार्थदुचाभिपत्तये  
दक्षेण सूत्रेण ससर्जिथाध्वरम्  
त्वयैव लोकेऽवसिताश्च सेतवो  
यान्ब्राह्मणाः श्रद्धधते धृतव्रताः

**(8) How can we understand that the mode of ignorance is auspicious?**

**(9) Why should the Vedic system of *varṇa* and *āśrama* never be neglected?**

*tvam eva dharmārtha-dughābhīpattaye  
dakṣeṇa sūtreṇa sasarjithādhvaram  
tvayaiḥ loke ’vasitāś ca setavo  
yān brāhmaṇāḥ śraddadhate dhṛta-vratāḥ*

*tvam*—Your Lordship; *eva*—certainly; *dharmā-arthā-dughā*—benefit derived from religion and economic development; *abhīpattaye*—for their protection; *dakṣeṇa*—by Dakṣa; *sūtreṇa*—making him the cause; *sasarjitha*—created; *adhvaram*—sacrifices; *tvayā*—by you; *eva*—certainly; *loke*—in this world; *avasitāḥ*—regulated; *ca*—and; *setavaḥ*—respect for the *varṇāśrama* institution; *yān*—which; *brāhmaṇāḥ*—the *brāhmaṇas*; *śraddadhate*—respect very much; *dhṛta-vratāḥ*—taking it as a vow.

**My dear lord, Your Lordship has introduced the system of sacrifices through the agency of Dakṣa, and thus one may derive the benefits of religious activities and economic development. Under your regulative principles, the institution of the four varṇas and āśramas is respected. The brāhmaṇas therefore vow to follow this system strictly.**

PURPORT: ⑨ The Vedic system of *varṇa* and *āśrama* is never to be neglected, for these divisions are created by the Supreme Lord Himself for the upkeep of social and religious order in human society. The *brāhmaṇas*, as the intelligent class of men in society, must vow to steadily respect this regulative principle. The tendency in this age of Kali to make a classless society and not observe the principles of *varṇa* and *āśrama* is a manifestation of an impossible dream. Destruction of the social and spiritual orders will not bring fulfillment of the idea of a classless society. One should strictly observe the principles of *varṇa* and *āśrama* for the satisfaction of the creator, for it is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* by Lord Kṛṣṇa that the four orders of the social system—*brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, and *sūdras*—are His creation. They should act according to the regulative principles of this institution and satisfy the Lord, just as different parts of the body all engage in the service of the whole. The whole is the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His *virāṭ-rūpa*, or universal form. The *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, and *sūdras* are respectively the mouth, arms, abdomen, and legs of the universal form of the Lord. As long as they are engaged in the service of the complete whole, their position is secure, otherwise they fall down from their respective positions and become degraded.

[continued in the next issue]



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## WHOSE NAME?

(continued from page 14)

Kṛṣṇa's forms such as Rāmacandra or Nārāyaṇa, he praised their attachment and love for God.

While God's descriptive names are innumerable, he doesn't "have" a name in the sense of owning an appellation that is arbitrary, temporary, and different from him. A conditioned soul is different from the mind, body, and name. Therefore, when I call my friend's name, look at her picture, or think of her qualities, I don't have direct contact with her. But Kṛṣṇa, being absolute, is identical to his form, name, and qualities. Contact with any of them is direct contact with him. While there is a simultaneous oneness and difference between the Lord and his energies, there is only oneness with his personal features, such as his name. To say and hear Kṛṣṇa's name with pure love is to be fully in his presence. This oneness of God and his name is true for all of his names, whether in relation to the creation or to the spiritual realm.

### 3. Kṛṣṇa's names and names of beings such as demigods

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "To consider the names of demigods like Lord Śiva or Lord Brahmā to be equal to, or independent of, the name of Lord Viṣṇu. . . . If someone thinks that he can chant 'Kālī, Kālī!' or 'Durgā, Durgā!' and it is the same as Hare Kṛṣṇa, that is the greatest offense." (*The Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 8)

A third lesson in avoiding this offense deals with the distinction between names of God and names of others. When we respect all names of Kṛṣṇa, we need to remember that not every name refers to him. For example, many names of the Supreme Lord, such as "the Witness," could easily refer to someone other than God. In a court there are so many ordinary human beings who can be called "the witness." If we think, therefore, that any witness is God, we offend the name.

Similarly, some powerful beings, though God's servants, have names that can also refer to him. Although Kṛṣṇa in his omnipotence and omni-

# HowtoPutBTGinYourWill

After providing for their families and loved ones, subscribers may want to put *Back to Godhead* in their wills, thus helping to assure the long-term future of this work. In the USA, bequests are free of estate tax and can substantially reduce the amount of your assets claimed by the government.\* You can give needed support for *Back to Godhead* by simply including the following words in your will: *I give, devise, and bequeath to Back to Godhead, 18024 NW 112th Blvd., Alachua, FL 32615 (insert amount being given here) to be used to support Back to Godhead and its related activities, including the Krishna.com website.*

A bequest can be a specific dollar amount, a specific piece of property, a percentage of an estate, or all or part of the residue of an estate. You can also name BTG as a contingency beneficiary in the event someone named in your will is no longer living.

It is recommended that a lawyer help in drafting or amending a will.

\*If you live outside the USA, check the estate tax laws for your country.

presence can control and maintain everything himself, out of love he engages highly realized or pure souls in his service. The Sanskrit terms for these beings are *devas* or *suras*. The English word Prabhupāda used to refer to this class of being is "demigods." They are living beings, souls like you and I and, indeed, all forms of life. Having chosen to live in goodness and purity, these souls have received bodies far more subtle, beautiful, and powerful than our earthly forms. Any soul has the potential to transmigrate into a *deva* form, or to fall from *deva* life into the human form or lower.

The chief *devas* have both titles and personal names. For example, the title of the leading administrative *deva* is "Indra," which means "chief." The current Indra is named Purandara. Sometimes a name or title can refer to either a *deva* or Kṛṣṇa. In the last mantra of the *Īsopaniṣad*, one of 108 scriptures dedicated to transcendental knowledge, the Supreme Lord is called Agni, which is also the title of the *deva* of fire. When referring to God, Agni means one who is as powerful as fire or is the source of fire. That Kṛṣṇa can be called Agni does not mean we can regard or worship the fire-god Agni as supreme.

Sometimes, in the name of following the Vedic scriptures, people wor-

ship *devas*, especially Śiva, Durgā, and Gaṇeśa, as if they were full incarnations of Kṛṣṇa. As described previously, Kṛṣṇa does not reveal himself fully in all his incarnations and expansions. It may be confusing, therefore, to learn that Rāma is the Personality of Godhead but that Gaṇeśa, for example, is not.

How to know who is God and who is a *deva*? When does a name such as *Agni* or *Sūrya* refer to a *deva* and when to God? When is someone calling on the same God by a different name, and when is someone calling to something other than God? To answer these questions in specific instances, one has to refer to the scriptures under a bona fide guru's guidance, following the examples of saintly persons.

The *devas* are Kṛṣṇa's devotees in various degrees of realization and aspiration. Like any living being in the material world, their names are temporary designations, different from themselves. We automatically worship and please them when we chant Kṛṣṇa's name and worship him, just as we satisfy our obligations to all government departments when we pay taxes to the central agency. If we approach the *devas* directly—which is not generally necessary or even recommended—it should be only to respect them as God's agents or to ask



their assistance in our service to him. The best way to worship *devas* is with food or articles first offered to Kṛṣṇa. While we should respect scriptures and traditions that encourage *deva* worship because they gradually elevate their followers, one who wants pure love of God should worship Kṛṣṇa in any ritual where *deva* worship is suggested.

#### 4. The position of Śiva

In his commentary on Sanātana Gosvāmī's *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* (1.2.86), Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa, drawing on Sanātana Gosvāmī's own commentary, writes, "The *Padma Purāṇa* includes . . . a list of ten offenses against chanting Lord Viṣṇu's names. Therein it is said, 'One who sees differences between any of Lord Śiva's qualities and names and those of Śrī Viṣṇu is an antagonist to *hari-nāma*.' Lord Viṣṇu cannot tolerate offenses against Lord Śiva, because Lord Śiva is the greatest of Lord Viṣṇu's empowered incarnations. Lord Śiva is especially empowered to distribute in the material world the elevated tastes of pure devotional service."

Lord Śiva is unique among the *devas*. He is an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, but he is somewhat different from Kṛṣṇa, as yogurt is milk but not milk. He possesses qualities beyond those of any living entity and has an eternal dominion beyond matter. But to think that the name and personality of Śiva are equal in every way to those of Kṛṣṇa is offensive. And it is also offensive to see them as different.

The perfect way to reconcile the positions of Śiva and Kṛṣṇa is to worship Śiva as a changed incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who considers himself Kṛṣṇa's devotee and servant. In his incarnation as Śiva, Lord Kṛṣṇa acts as all-destructive time and as the father of all living beings. As Kṛṣṇa, he is aloof from matter; as Śiva, he consorts with the personified material energy. When we properly worship Kṛṣṇa, Śiva is included and pleased. But if we worship Śiva other than as a Vaiṣṇava, Kṛṣṇa's devotee, then neither is Śiva fully satisfied nor is Kṛṣṇa properly revered.

#### *Conclusion: Chanting without any form of this offense*

There are many names of God and many paths to him, as well as paths and names that lead elsewhere. Various airline companies and routes may take us to Tokyo. If en route to Tokyo we think that we're flying on the only plane going there, or even with the only airline, we deceive ourselves in pride. Yet not every plane traversing the earth at this moment is headed for Tokyo, or even Japan, and some airlines don't have flights to the Far East at all. Of the airlines that do go to Tokyo, some have more direct routes, better service, or lower prices.

One who carefully studies the science of *bhakti*, devotional service to

Kṛṣṇa, which involves the practice of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, will quickly understand that this route to love of God is direct. The flight includes ample in-flight service, and the price is only sincere eagerness. For our chanting in *bhakti* to be effective, we must distinguish between worship of the Absolute and the relative, while honoring all forms and names of the Absolute. Then our chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa will quickly bring us to realization of our self and our sweet relationship with the one, all-attractive Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. ❀

*Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī* is a Back to Godhead associate editor and the major author and compiler of *Vaikuṅṭha Children, a guide to Kṛṣṇa conscious education for children*.



*Lord Śiva always acknowledges his subordination to Lord Kṛṣṇa, from whom he receives his power and authority.*

# CALENDAR

*This calendar is calculated for Māyāpur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to [www.krishna.com/calendar](http://www.krishna.com/calendar).*

*Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in his disciplic succession.*

## Month of Govinda

(February 14–March 14)

### MARCH

**10**—Amalakī-vrata Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

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

**14**—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.

## Month of Viṣṇu

(March 15–April 13)

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

**26**—Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

### APRIL

**3**—Appearance anniversary of

Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the eleventh century.

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

**9**—Kāmadā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

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

## Month of Madhusūdana

(April 14–May 13)

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

**24**—Varūthinī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

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

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

### MAY

**6**—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sitā Devī, the consort of Lord Rāmacandra. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Jāhnava

Devī, the consort of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Madhu Paṇḍita, a great devotee of Lord Caitanya.

**9**—Mohinī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans. Rukmiṇī Dvādaśī, the appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī Devī, the consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa as Dvārakādhiśa, the Lord of Dvārakā.

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

**12**—Nṛsimha Caturdaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Nṛsimhadeva, Lord Kṛṣṇa's half-man, half-lion incarnation. Fasting till dusk, followed by feasting.

**13**—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, a follower of the six Gosvāmīs. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master (Īśvara Purī).

## Month of Trivikrama

(May 14–June 11)

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

**23**—Aparā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

**24**—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura, author of *Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavata*, a biography on Lord Caitanya.



*New York Rathayātrā Festival, 2005*

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa  
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare  
Hare Rama, Hare Rama  
Rama Rama, Hare Hare

PRONUNCIATION: ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes with “drama”)

*Śrī Rādhā-Giridhārī (right) preside over the ISKCON temple in Vallabh Vidyanagar. Below, guests arrive at the temple on Janmāṣṭamī night.*



# ISKCON Vallabh Vidyanagar

## A Place to Learn About Kṛṣṇa

*Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa make sure his teachings are heard in this town dedicated to education.*

by Gaurendu Dāsa



VALLABH Vidyanagar is a small country town in the middle of the state of Gujarat, India. It owes its existence to the founding of Sadar Patel University about fifty years ago. The deities Rādhā-Giridhārī preside over a small ISKCON temple here. In 1986, a young devotee, Rājasūya Dāsa, was struggling to open a center in this town of more than 25,000 students (at that time). When Rājasūya approached a resident, Fulabhai, about renting two rooms from him, Fulabhai asked Rājasūya to return in a few days. Fulabhai had lived in the town for twenty-five years, his building serving as a boarding place for students. He had bought the building with his life savings, and it was his only means of income. He was afraid that if Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees moved in, they would disturb the students and hurt his business.

After Rājasūya Dāsa left, that night Fulabhai could hear Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana* going on in his building. He went to each room to search for the source of the sound but was unsuccessful. This continued for three days and nights. On the fourth night he heard a message in a dream: “Do not disappoint the person coming to you tomorrow morning.” When Rājasūya returned, Fulabhai proposed to donate the building to the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Rājasūya was shocked. Then Fulabhai explained what had been happening to him for the last four days. Convinced

that it was the Lord’s arrangement to appear here, Rājasūya started an ISKCON center in the building.

### NEED FOR A BIGGER SPACE

The building is bordered by a main road to the east, a four-story residential building to the south, a vacant plot to the north (which the temple owns), and, until recently, three vacant plots to the west. Needing more space for large programs, the devotees bought the plots to the west and built a three-story building to serve and feed visitors. Opened last summer, the new building, named “Srla Prabhupada Asraya,” gives a spectacular view of the town and attracts much attention. The ground floor consists of a large hall and kitchen. Besides the main function of feeding thousands of visitors and pilgrims, the hall is used for lectures and seminars. The first floor has fifteen rooms, where the temple *brahmacārīs* (celibate students) live. The top floor has rooms for guests.

### ISKCON YOUTH FORUM (IYF)

IYF, which has branches throughout India, extends valuable services to youth, especially to students in schools, colleges, and hostels. It is an integral part of ISKCON Vallabh Vidyanagar. In this age of competition, every-



*Mādhava Dāsa (at right, in the new cultural hall) is the temple's drama director. At far right, Braja Bhakti Vilāsa Dāsa, president of the ISKCON temple in Noida, near Delhi, performs a ritual during the grand opening of the cultural hall.*





*Temple vice president Savyasaci Dāsa (left) speaks to children as they hold up their prasādam tickets during an annual Diwali prasādam-distribution festival. Below: some of the cows being cared for at the temple's cow sanctuary, about eight kilometers from the temple.*



young people's talents are wasted.

IYF is helping such students face peer pressure by educating them in real, spiritual values. IYF's programs in Vallabh Vidyanagar include lectures, debates, group discussions, graded cultural and spiritual courses, and seminars and sessions—all based on the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

## **COW PROTECTION**

The cow protection project here started just after the great earthquake of Gujarat in the year 2000. ISKCON Vallabh Vidyanagar sent a team of relief workers to Kutch, the most severely affected area. The people were starving, and the animals were in the worst condition. On the request of some earthquake victims, the ISKCON relief team brought eleven starving cows back to Vallabh Vidyanagar. The temple bought a small piece of land in a village about eight kilometers away. The cow sanctuary now maintains more than fifty cows, bulls, and

calves. Guests to the sanctuary feel happiness on seeing mother cow well-maintained and protected.

### PRASĀDAM FOR ALL

A program of *prasādam* distribution started in January 1999 by serving three hundred needy people a week in Anand and Vallabh Vidyanagar, as well as visitors to the temple every Sunday. Devotees now serve *prasādam* to as many as three thousand people a week. On festivals like Janmāṣṭamī, Gaura Pūrṇimā, Govardhana Pūjā, and Makhara Sankranti, *prasādam* is served to tens of thousands of people. *Prasādam* vans regularly visit nearby slums, where needy

on that day. For this and other large festivals, congregation members come together to cook for the Lord, distribute *prasādam* to thousands of visitors, and make flower garlands to decorate the deities and the temple. They also cooperate in putting on dramas to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness in interesting and enlivening ways.

### THE FIRST RATHAYĀTRĀ

ISKCON Vallabh Vidyanagar held its first Jagannātha Rathayātrā festival last summer. The five-kilometer parade route ran from the city of Ananda to Vallabh Vidyanagar, where the festival was held. About five thou-



people always await Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Sunday feasts attract more than three hundred people.

### FESTIVALS

Festivals are an essential part of Vedic culture. They serve to remind us that we are meant to love and serve God and that all our efforts must be directed toward satisfying him. More than thirty thousand people visit the temple on Janmāṣṭamī. People wait in the queue, chanting the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa, for one hour just to behold the beautifully decorated Lord

sand people joined the procession as it moved along the busy streets. At the festival grounds in Shastri Maidan, eight to ten thousand people saw a performance of the drama "The Advent of Lord Jagannātha."

Vallabh Vidyanagar is essentially a town for multi-level material education. The ISKCON temple here gives students and other residents a chance for spiritual education and for gaining insight into Vedic culture. People can get guidance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the midst of their busy, often frustrating, lives. The spiritual education







offered by ISKCON can protect them against the danger of sliding down to physical and psychological breakdown and, most important, saving them from gliding down to the lower species of life. The center provides a great benefit by attracting people of various interests and engaging them in Lord Kṛṣṇa's service according to their potential and inclinations. ☸

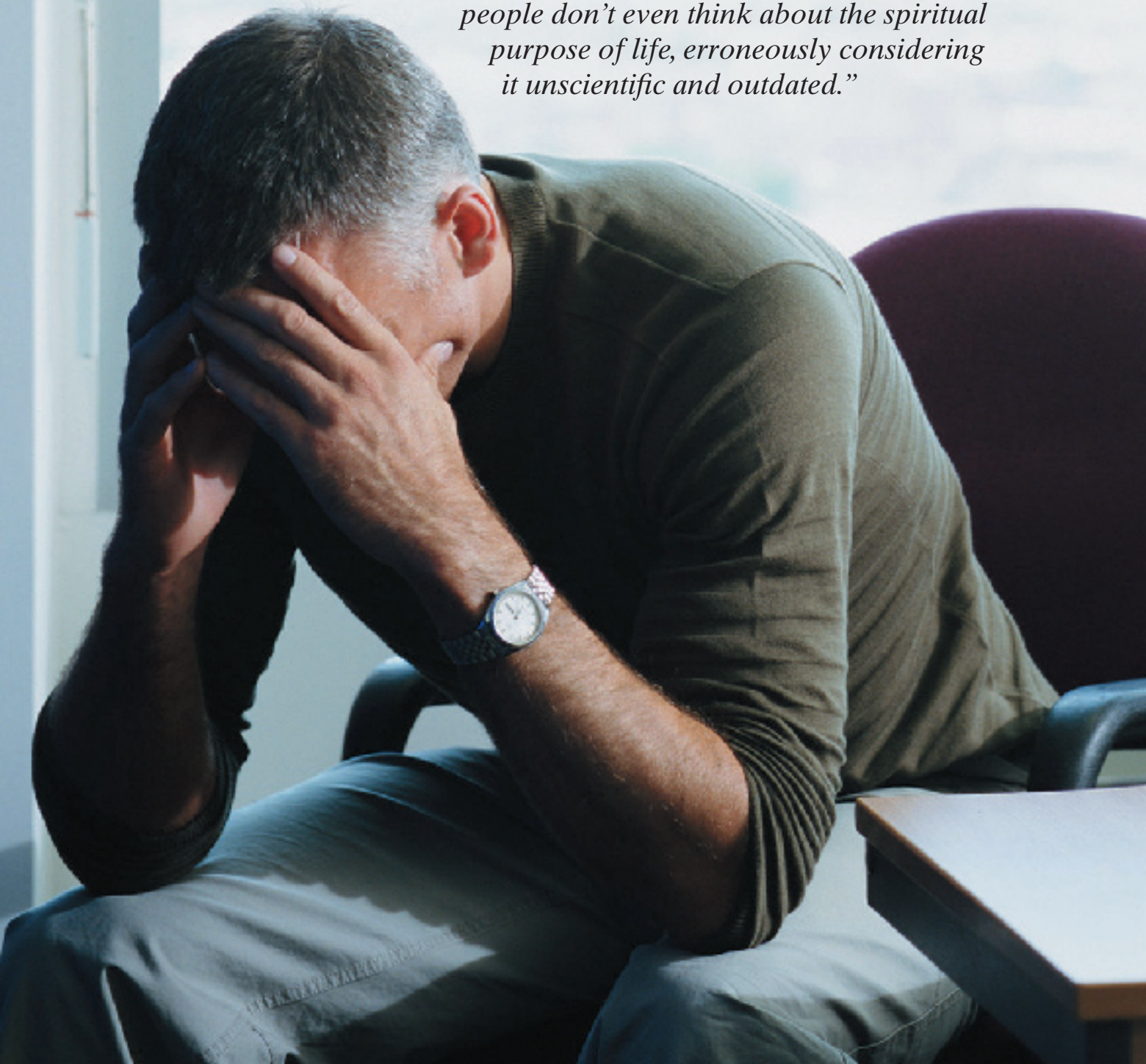
*Gaurendu Dāsa, a disciple of His Holiness Bhakti Vikāśa Swami, lives near the ISKCON temple in Vallabh Vidyanagar with his wife, Mahālakṣmī Devī Dāśī, and their two-year-old daughter. He edits and proofreads his spiritual master's books translated into Gujarati. He also edits, proofreads, and writes for the Gujarati edition of BTG, called Bhagavad Darshan.*

*Devotees perform the play "The Advent of Lord Jagannātha" (far left) during ISKCON's first Vallabh Vidyanagar Rathayātrā festival (below). At left, Savyasāci Dāsa, who holds a Bachelor of Medicine/ Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) degree, teaches a six-session course on Bhagavad-gītā at GCET Engineering College.*



# WHERE TECHNOLOGY FALLS SHORT

*“Infatuated by promises of a hi-tech paradise, people don’t even think about the spiritual purpose of life, erroneously considering it unscientific and outdated.”*



## by Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa

WE LIVE IN the age of technology. We commute by automobiles and airplanes and communicate by emails and mobile phones. The media and the Internet provide us the latest information from all over the world. Movies filled with hi-tech special effects entertain us. Central heating and air conditioning keep us comfortable despite the weather. The list goes on. Technology has transformed almost every aspect of our lives. Despite some concern about the pollution and environmental problems that technology produces, most people feel that technology has benefited us immensely.

### **WHERE IS TECHNOLOGY TAKING US?**

The razzle-dazzle of comforts, luxuries, and hi-tech gadgets make it appear that technology has led to progress in human society. But has our quality of life improved?

- In the past, people would leave the doors of their homes open without fear. Now, despite locks, bolts, chains, and alarms, we're afraid. Is that progress?
- We're proud of our posh houses, fast cars, smooth roads, and skyscraper offices, but we can't sleep without a pill. Can a society be



## *Technology intoxicates us with the feeling of being the controller.*



considered progressed if it makes its people struggle to get the simple and essential pleasure of sleeping, a pleasure that the “primitive” villager gets effortlessly?

- The technological worldview, being materialistic, gives rise to selfishness, competition, and exploitation. Despite the show of romantic love, we can't trust our own spouses, what to speak of parents and children or bosses and colleagues. Do alienated, suspicious people compose a progressive society?

- Mechanized factories can never offer as much employment as the farms of the past. So a large number of people have to suffer or fear unemployment. For subsistence some of the unemployed turn to begging, others to crime. And overall the modernized industrial environment is so agitating to the mind that self-destructive addictions become the only solace for many people. Are crime, addiction, and unemployment signs of progress?

- Technology brings comforts, but a high-speed, high-stress technology-centered lifestyle takes away the peace of mind necessary to enjoy the comforts. A software engineer has AC in his office, but still he sweats—not because of heat, but because of tension. Technology makes us comfortably miserable.

- Medical technology may have wiped out a few diseases and offers cures to more. But far more people need medical attention today than in the past because of unhealthy, congested city living, sedentary lifestyles, and polluted air, water, and food. This is evident from the ever-increasing number of clinics, hospitals, and medicine shops. Moreover, many of the sophisticated medical treatments, unlike the traditional herbal cures, are prohibitively expensive.

- Most people today can hardly imagine life without television, movies, and myriad other forms of hi-tech entertainment. And they pity their ancestors who did not have all this enjoyment. But people in the past knew how to find joy in the simple things of life, like sharing and caring in joint families, observing and learning from nature, and hearing and chanting the names and glories of God. Consequently they did not find life boring. By our infatuation with technology, we have divorced ourselves from simple, natural pleasures. And so, despite our much-touted entertainment, we still find ourselves constantly bored. The entertainment industry may use sophisticated technology, but is the dependence on entertainment—and the serious inner emptiness it reveals—a sign of progress?

- Technology intoxicates us with the feeling of being the controller. Just by pressing a switch, we can make huge machines perform complex actions. Just by clicking a keyboard, we can summon information from any part of the world. By constantly working with machines, we become habituated to controlling them and expect everything and everyone to be similarly controlled. When people refuse to be controlled like machines, we end up with all sorts of conflicts, ranging from domestic cold wars to marital ruptures, from quarrels to murders. And when things don't go the way we want them to, we end up suffering from a wide range of mental problems, including stress, anxiety, depression, and addiction.

### **TECHNOLOGY, ANCIENT AND MODERN**

We have been led to believe that we possess the most advanced technology in the history of our planet. But the pyramids of Egypt, the Stonehenge monoliths of the UK, and the

non-rusting iron pillars of India are some telltale products of an ancient technology amazingly superior to ours. In fact, the Vedic texts describe even more intriguing technologies. *Vimānas* (pollution-free airplanes), *brahmāstras* (precise and powerful missiles activated by mystical sound incantations), and astonishingly potent and swift healing techniques involving medicinal herbs, empowered mantras, and Ayurvedic surgeries are a few examples. The Vedic attitude is not opposed to technology per se. But it cautions us about infatuation with material technology, which leads to neglecting or forgetting the spiritual goal of life.

Imagine a doctor who prescribes only a painkiller to a seriously sick patient. The patient is happy because he gets relief. The doctor is happy because he gets his fees. Unfortunately, the patient's pain is not cured, but covered. Soon it will recur and worsen.

All of us are like the patient. From the moment of birth we have a death sentence on our heads. Time forces us to helplessly grow old, get diseased, and die. Our journey through life is not only doomed but also distressful. Miseries from our own bodies and minds (fever, indigestion, stress, depression), miseries from other living beings (mosquitoes, competitors, superiors, relatives), and miseries from nature (extreme heat or cold, floods, earthquakes) periodically torment us throughout our life.

The Vedic texts explain the cause and cure of our suffering. We are spiritual beings entrapped in material bodies. We belong not to this temporary and miserable material world but to an eternal and blissful spiritual realm, where we live forever in loving harmony with God. Because of our desire to enjoy independent of God, we are placed in this world, an arena for experimentation and rectification. We transmigrate through different species of life, searching for

pleasure by experimenting with matter in various ways, but getting only misery and death. In the human species, we receive advanced intelligence to recognize our unfortunate predicament. For intelligent humans, the Vedic texts offer a systematic program of spirituality that enables them to re-harmonize with and return back to eternal life with God.

This spiritual program is based on recognizing our intermediate position

in the cosmic hierarchy. As spiritual sparks we are superior to matter but subordinate to God, who is the controller of both matter and spirit. In our natural harmonious state in the spiritual world, we live in loving harmony with God and have nothing to do with matter. And when we are in the material world, the Vedic scriptures recommend that we focus on devotion and service to God. They advise us to take care of the body only as

much as is required for it to serve as an efficient vehicle for our service to God and our spiritual journey back to him. This life of simple living and high thinking will permanently free us from our present entanglement in material miseries and help us to easily and swiftly re-achieve our rightful eternal happiness. Thus spirituality offers the real cure for our suffering. In this program for spiritual reclamation, material technologies are used

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## ***The basic difference between ancient and modern technology is that the former helped people achieve the goal of life, while the latter helps people forget the goal.***



mainly to assist in achieving the ultimate goal of life.

In our modern times, human intelligence has been used primarily to develop materially, especially technologically. Technology pleases our senses, inflates our ego, and makes us feel comfortable and proud. But technology provides entertainment, not peace; comforts, not happiness; medicines, not health; cosmetics, not youth; life support systems, not life. Technology is like the painkiller that covers, but doesn't cure, our suffering in material existence. Worse still, it creates an illusory sense of well being, which makes people feel that a spiritual solution is unnecessary. Instead of simple living and high thinking, people start simply living and hardly thinking. Infatuated by promises of a hi-tech paradise, people don't even think about the spiritual purpose of life, erroneously considering it unscientific and outdated. Thus technology steals our opportunity to attain eternal life and condemns us to stay on and suffer in this world of birth and death.

Therefore the basic difference between ancient technology and modern technology is that the former helped people achieve the goal of life, while the latter helps people forget the goal of life. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the regrettable direction of modern technological advancement: Intelligence meant for solving all problems permanently is misused to convert a castor-oil lamp into an electric lamp.

A question may therefore arise, "Do we have to give up technology and return to village life?"

We don't have to give up technology, but we do have to give up the illusion that technology can make us happy. If we are diseased, we don't have to give up the painkiller, only the illusion that the painkiller can

cure our disease. We have to adopt the cure of spirituality for attaining real happiness.

And since technology pervades our modern world, we can use the Vedic principle of *yukta-vairāgya*, devotional renunciation: Without being attached to material things for personal enjoyment, use them for the service of God.

Here's an analogy to explain the application of this principle with respect to technology. Suppose a gang of thieves have robbed a bank and are fleeing in a speeding car. What should the policemen do? Stick to the speed limit and let the thieves escape? Or break the speed limit, drive faster than the thieves, arrest them, and retrieve the stolen money?

Today's high technology promotes atheism, hedonism, materialism, and consumerism, thus stealing people's wealth of spiritual knowledge. Therefore it is incumbent upon all genuine spiritual scientists to use the same technology to spread knowledge of spirituality and harmonious living and help people reclaim their wealth of spiritual wisdom and happiness. The following examples show how the principle of *yukta-vairāgya* enables us spiritualize modern technology:

- ISKCON is building splendid temples equipped with state-of-the-art animatronics, robotics, and multimedia theaters to kindle interest in the message of the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

- At many of ISKCON's major festivals, to inspire devotion to God sophisticated laser shows offer breathtaking glimpses of beautiful deities worshiped all over the world.

- ISKCON offers children a positive alternative of spiritually oriented toys,

games, and movies that engender virtue, character, and nobility, instead of the violence and sensuality of vice-producing media images.

- ISKCON's teachers give presentations using slides shows, VCDs, and other state-of-the-art technology. Even the article you are reading is an example of the *yukta-vairāgya* principle in action.

- This spiritual use of technology is attracting millions of people to the service of God, thereby helping them find inner fulfillment and achieve their right to eternal life and happiness.

But much more remains to be done. The indiscriminate adoption of technology has landed our planet in a mess. For our modern times Śrīla Prabhupāda envisioned an East-West synthesis: spreading Indian spiritual wisdom with Western material technology. The technologically advanced West has to recognize its lack of spiritual vision. And the financially crippled India has to shed its deeply ingrained inferiority complex and recognize its wealth of spiritual knowledge. If the people of India and the West acknowledge their respective endowments and deficiencies, they can help bring about an international spiritual revival. In our sadly misled modern world, this may be the only hope to usher in a new era of harmony and happiness. ❁

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# FINDING SHELTER IN TRUE IDENTITY

*A child of Indian-born parents in America discovers herself in the context of competing cultures.*

by Devika Rao



“SO, TELL ME about yourself. Where are you from?” asked the chief resident in pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh medical center, where I was interviewing for a residency position.

My answer started off something like this, “My parents are from South India, and I was born and brought up here in the U.S.”

Although his question implied that the place one is from has a central role in defining one’s identity, summing up my identity as an Indian-

American made me uncomfortable. In fact, defining myself through my Indian and American backgrounds has always been a source of anxiety, which I find is best resolved on the spiritual platform.

Though born and raised in America by loving Indian-born parents, I always felt different from others. Neither school nor home provided me with a satisfying understanding of my identity. I almost blended into American life, only to find my peers exposing my “un-American-ness.”

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I recall how during a high school basketball game an opponent would call out, "I've got the Indian girl!" This label reduced me to a mere physical being, but I felt more than just physically different.

My life at home was centered on a Vedic atmosphere that my parents created for me and my brother. I was taught to read from the *Bhagavad-gītā* every morning. I ate only *prasādam*, and we sang *bhajan*s as a family every night. But the minute I stepped outside the home, I entered the arena of an opposing culture in which my goal was to be as American as my peers. I wanted to dress and feel American, to feel comfortable in American skin. But was this possible when I knew the creator as a beautiful lotus-eyed boy named Kṛṣṇa?

When I left home to go to college, I found myself surrounded by American culture. Since I was living in a dorm, I didn't have a Vedic atmosphere to come home to. Ironically, this situation turned out to be the best formula for my future spiritual development. Outside the realm of my home, which was infused with Vedic culture, I began to investigate whether Kṛṣṇa consciousness was right for me; did it provide all the answers to questions I had regarding one's identity and the purpose of life? I liked what Śrīla Prabhupāda had to offer as an answer to these doubts:

The purpose of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to awaken man's original consciousness. At the present moment our con-

sciousness is designated. Someone is thinking, "I am an Englishman," and another is thinking, "I am an American." Actually, we do not belong to any of these designations. We are all part and parcel of God; that is our real identity. If everyone simply comes to that consciousness, all the problems of the world will be solved. (*The Science of Self-Realization*, p. 72)

Śrīla Prabhupāda's definition of identity, based on the soul's relationship with God, made me realize that the tension I had been feeling in defining myself was based on the body, a body both Indian and American. Prabhupāda suggested that I assume a higher consciousness, one that would enable me to see that I am an eternal spirit soul, beyond bodily designations. Even though caught between two worlds as an Indian-American, I felt that knowing I was part of Kṛṣṇa, who is beyond nationality or race, could bring me a sense of peace.

Śrīla Prabhupāda provided me with a solution to my struggles with identity, but I was still apprehensive about how I could apply this knowledge to my life. After all, I had chosen medicine as a career path; I was immersing myself in studying the body so that I could treat ailments of the body. How was I to reconcile the tension between my spiritual self and my need to fit into American culture as a part of my future career?

The inspiration for me to embrace Prabhupāda's message came when I learned, from *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, more about Prabhupāda's

life and how ISKCON began. I read how Prabhupāda had provided the same answers to many young Americans seeking a higher purpose in life than American culture could offer. Innumerable young Americans wholeheartedly embraced Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision in the 60's and 70's, and they didn't merely *learn* about Kṛṣṇa consciousness—they chose to change their consciousness by nurturing their eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Vedic ways became their own, ironically mirroring how my identity as an Indian girl was shaped by American bodily preoccupations.

Satyanārāyaṇa Dasa, an acquaintance of my family, joined ISKCON in Buffalo, New York, in 1969 as a college student. He explains his initial attraction to the movement:

It's what the soul actually means that is the attraction. It means that I am eternal and never die, and that there is a wonderful and exciting spiritual world that I belong to. A self-effulgent and inconceivably beautiful world in which I have the deepest personal relationships that are ever-increasing in joy and happiness, and are enriched by pure, ever-increasing knowledge.

Knowing that the soul is eternal changes one's perception of oneself and the world. The devotee feels "joy and happiness" in an eternal and coherent world filled with beauty, happiness, and knowledge. For many hippies and others of the 60's and 70's, there was no question of discarding Vedic philosophy, which provided the answer to the question "Who am I?" in a way that welcomes all nationalities. Devotees from all backgrounds confirm this universal accessibility of Vedic knowledge. They used their awakened Kṛṣṇa consciousness to understand their true self.

Many distinguished scholars have appreciated the cultural implications of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement and have cited various reasons for its appeal. In *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna: Five Distinguished Scholars on the Krishna Movement in the West*, Dr. Larry D. Shinn stated that young Americans joined ISKCON because they wanted "to turn away from materi-



# *Kṛṣṇa consciousness appeals to the most fundamental human right: the right of the spirit soul to free itself from the shackles of material existence.*



alistic self-gratification.” The philosophy allows one to “solve an identity crisis” by providing “a sense in which I can know who I really am; I am not my body. I am a spirit soul.” Kṛṣṇa consciousness provides a well-grounded and all-embracing definition of identity.

Dr. Thomas J. Hopkins explained:

The whole orientation toward a personal deity of compassion and concern, and of love, who is not just some kind of absolute, impersonal reality . . . but a Personal Being of infinite compassion, one who is concerned for those suffering in the world, appeals to something very deep within the human spirit. . . . It’s that kind of personal quality, it seems to me, that appeals to human beings across all cultural lines.

Hopkins’s analysis applies not only to Americans but also to Indians like my family and me, who have made America their home. Both groups are attracted to the “infinite compassion” and love that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, provides. Personalism and the concern for human needs are universal concepts and not culture-specific values. Kṛṣṇa consciousness appeals to the most fundamental human right: the right of the spirit soul to free itself from the shackles of material existence and feel unlimited happiness through love for God. Shinn and Hopkins both argue that the personal aspect of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is its greatest attraction.

## **KṚṢṆA’S FIRST INSTRUCTION**

By revealing our true identity, Kṛṣṇa consciousness gives peace. This principle works today, and it worked for Arjuna five thousand years ago dur-

ing the battle at Kurukshetra, when Arjuna came to understand his true position as an eternal servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Identifying himself by his relationships with kinsmen and friends, Arjuna was lamenting that he must kill his loved ones to win the battle. He told Kṛṣṇa, “I do not see how any good can come from killing my own kinsmen in this battle, nor can I, my dear Kṛṣṇa, desire any subsequent victory, kingdom, or happiness.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 1.31)

Arjuna then accepted the position of Kṛṣṇa’s disciple, and Kṛṣṇa, as the Supreme Guru, instructed him. Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna that the origin of his anxiety is that he considers his identity in terms of his kinsmen and relatives, rather than as an eternal spirit soul, part of Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa explained, “That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.17)

This key concept is fundamental in resolving Arjuna’s identity crisis. After understanding himself to be a spirit soul with the body of a *kṣatriya*, he carried out his duty as a warrior in the service of Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda refers to understanding the difference between the body and the soul as the “ABC of spiritual understanding,” or the first step in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

## **CAITANYA MAHĀPRABHU’S UNIVERSAL MOVEMENT**

The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement began five hundred years ago in West Bengal, when Lord Kṛṣṇa himself appeared as his own devotee, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. His movement eased social tensions among members of artificial castes; he taught that all are spirit souls with an eter-

nal relationship with Kṛṣṇa that’s full of eternal bliss and knowledge. Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s prediction that Lord Kṛṣṇa’s holy name would reach every town and village began to come true when Śrīla Prabhupāda planted the seed of the holy name on American soil. Consequently, thousands of Americans revived their original Kṛṣṇa consciousness, while many Indians discovered their own culture. ISKCON has offered everyone, whether encased in an American or an Indian body, a beautiful and comforting identity as Kṛṣṇa’s children.

Living within a materialistic culture, I will always have to struggle to keep my Kṛṣṇa consciousness intact. Yet many American-bodied devotees, confident and mature in their Kṛṣṇa conscious identity, have not only integrated into American society but have greatly contributed to its rich diversity. One day, I hope to serve in Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s compassionate mission, which resolves beautifully my tensions. Lord Caitanya declared:

*bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya-  
janma yāra  
janma sārthaka kari’ kara  
para-upakāra*

“One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all other people.” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 9.41)

Even though I wasn’t born in India, I’d like to take Lord Caitanya’s instruction to heart. I’m an Indian-American in touch with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s philosophy, so I feel well equipped with both cultures. That can help me in spiritual life. Prabhupāda referred to the partnership of India and America as being perfect because India is the “lame man” and the U.S.

the “blind man.” India is lame when compared to the U.S., with its material wealth and technological prowess. But India, with its Vedic heritage, can give Kṛṣṇa conscious vision to the spiritually blind U.S., which can provide material resources for spreading spiritual realization. I feel fortunate

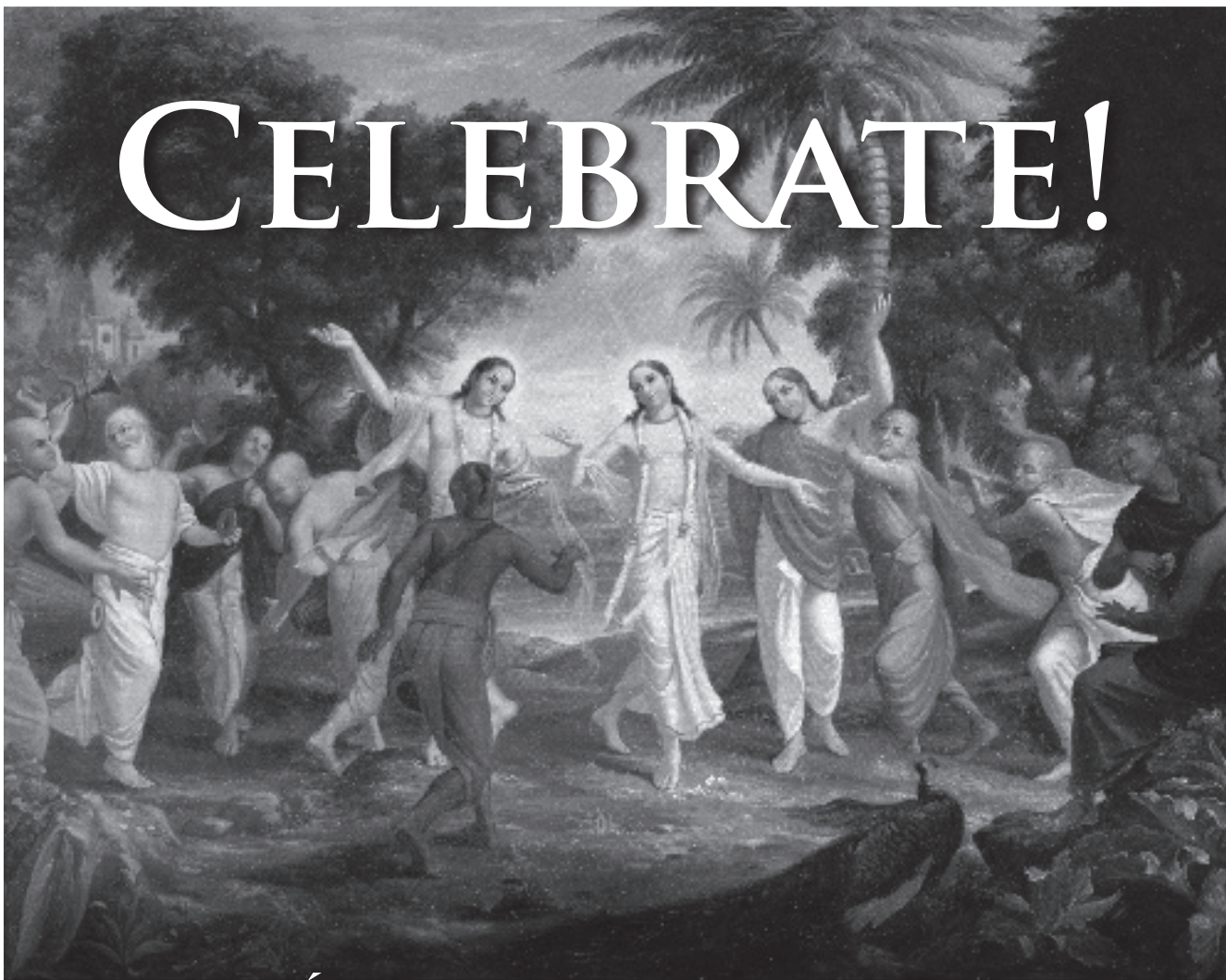
to have both the lame man’s vision and the blind man’s resources within me, helping me fully embrace my Kṛṣṇa conscious identity.

I know too that if I’m ever worried about anything spiritual or material, I can enter a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple, smell the spirituality of the

incense and *prasādam*, hear the melodious music of Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana*, and feel right at home. ☸

*Devika Rao is a fourth-year medical student at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, where she lives with her family.*

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## Looking for a Good One-Liner

WE LIVE IN the age of sound-bites, when we often have only a matter of seconds to get our point across. That's a challenge when trying to explain Kṛṣṇa consciousness. After more than thirty years, I've yet to come up with a good short answer to the question "What is Hare Kṛṣṇa?"

The question often comes up when I'm someplace—such as the check-out line in a store—that doesn't allow me time to say more than a few sentences and I don't have anything printed to hand the inquirer.

An easy answer would be "It's a branch of Hinduism," but I'm not comfortable using that reply. To most people in the West, at least, "Hinduism" means pantheism or polytheism, and Hare Kṛṣṇa is definitely neither of those. Nor is the goal of Kṛṣṇa consciousness the goal of Hinduism as it's described in most standard reference books: to become one with God. Even supposedly well-informed intellectuals will state matter-of-factly that there are only three monotheistic religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. To them, Hinduism is obviously polytheistic.

Scholars of Hinduism regard Śaivism (worship of Śiva) and Vaiṣṇavism (including Kṛṣṇa consciousness) as monotheistic traditions. And if they've studied Vaiṣṇavism closely enough, they know that Vaiṣṇavas don't want to become one with God. Unfortunately, even the majority of Hindus today don't know this. Many know, from the *Gītā*, for example, that Vaiṣṇavas, including Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees, follow the path of *bhakti-yoga*, which connects one to God through love. What they often don't understand, though, is that for the pure Vaiṣṇava, the connection with God, Kṛṣṇa, is eternal. It's not that Vaiṣṇavas choose *bhakti-yoga* as their means to become one with

God, which many Hindus consider the goal of all types of yoga. The Vaiṣṇavas' goal is to live eternally in a loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The devotee of Kṛṣṇa prefers living in hell to merging into Kṛṣṇa and losing one's unique identity and ability to reciprocate his love.

Monotheism and repulsion at the idea of merging with God don't fit most Westerner's idea of Hinduism. In fact, they don't fit most Hindu's idea of Hinduism. That's why when I'm hard-pressed for a one-liner that explains who I am, the word "Hindu" doesn't roll easily off my tongue.

Another possible way to quickly answer the question "What is Hare Kṛṣṇa" is to say, "We're servants of God, whom we know by the name Kṛṣṇa."

That's not bad. Not very informative, but not bad. One problem with that reply, though, is that people may hear "God" and "Kṛṣṇa" and think, "Oh, there's somebody named Kṛṣṇa, and you think he's God—how naïve!"

The media usually contribute to such misconceptions. They're not known for accuracy when dealing with topics like theology, and even respectful news reports on Hare Kṛṣṇa events use phrases like "their god, Krishna" or "the god Krishna," as if we're worshiping one of the many gods of the Hindu pantheon—one we just happen to like for some unexplained reason.

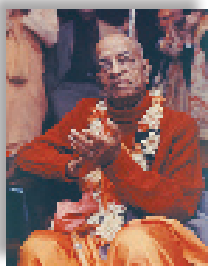
Maybe my quest for the perfect one-liner is quixotic. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is deep and vast, as are people's misconceptions. I'd be better off always having something informative at hand for the inquirer to read at leisure. Or I can direct them to the Teachings section of Krishna.com. I shouldn't expect much from a sound-bite.

—Nāgarāja Dāsa

# Śrīla Prabhupāda



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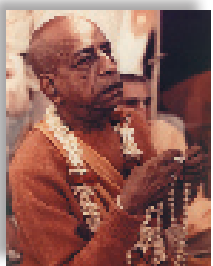
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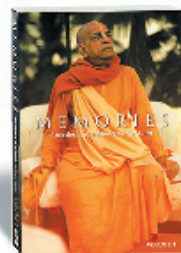
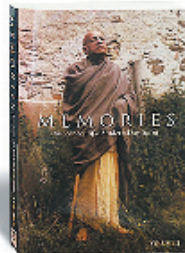
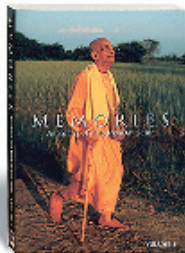
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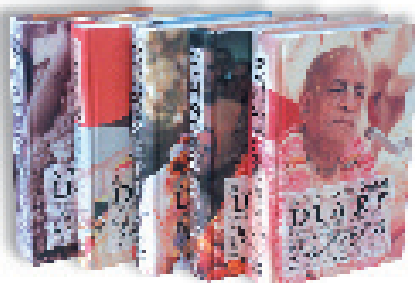
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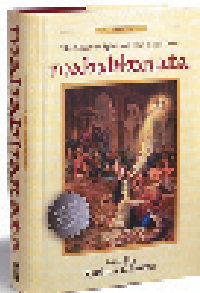
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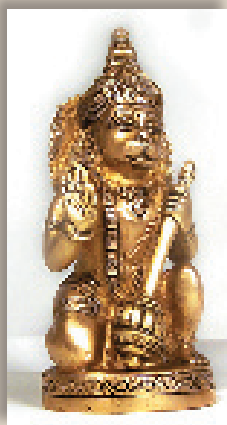


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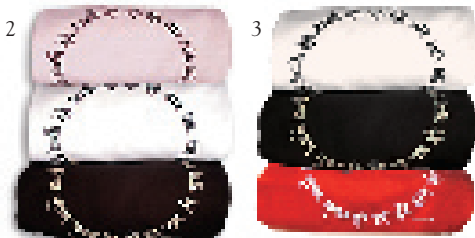
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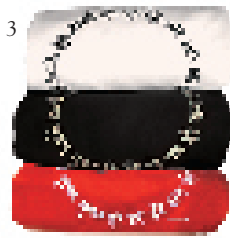




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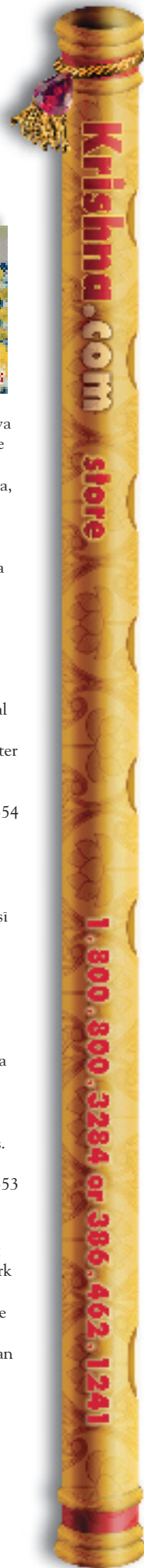
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# Vedic Thoughts

When one is mature in knowledge of the self, he must know what is the duty of the self. The impersonalists . . . are much concerned for being freed of all duties, which is not possible by the living force. The living force is always dynamic; therefore the living entity cannot stop discharging duties. Real duty begins in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The impersonalists cannot accommodate such spiritual activities of devotional service; therefore they are satisfied only by so-called knowledge of the self.

His Divine Grace  
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda  
Letter, December 12, 1967

One can attain the perfect stage of liberation from birth and death simply by knowing the Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. There is no other way to achieve this perfection.

*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.8*

As one observes a flowing river, ever-new water passes by and goes far away, yet a foolish person, observing one point in the river, falsely states, “This is *the* water of the river.” Similarly, although the material body of a human being is constantly undergoing transformation, those who are simply wasting their lives falsely think and say that each particular stage of the body is the person’s real identity.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa  
*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.22.45*

Any true devotee of Kṛṣṇa considers himself insignificant, thinking himself one of countless *jīvas* who are mere sparks of God’s splendor. The devotee is sorry for having foolishly rebelled against his creator. And reflecting on this rebellion, he thinks that his relative influence among other fallen *jīvas* means little.

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī  
*Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 1.1.44,*  
Commentary

O most munificent incarnation! You are Kṛṣṇa himself appearing as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You have assumed the golden color of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and you are widely distributing pure love of Kṛṣṇa. We offer our respectful obeisances unto you.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī  
*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līla 19.53*

O Viṣṇu, your name is completely transcendental. Thus it is self-manifest. Indeed, even without properly understanding the glories of chanting your holy name, if we vibrate your name with at least a small understanding of its glories—that is, if we simply repeat the syllables of your holy name—gradually we shall understand it.

*Ṛg Veda 1.156.3*

O Maitreyi, one should constantly follow, see, hear, and remember this supreme soul, Lord Govinda.

*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.5*

# Festival Of India 2006



## Schedule for North America

May 10–12: Ohio State University,  
Columbus, Ohio

May 20: Baltimore Rathayātrā

June 3–4: Atlanta Rathayātrā and  
Panihati Festival

June 10: New York City Rathayātrā

June 24: Chicago Rathayātrā

July 4: Washington, D.C., Rathayātrā

July 9: Montreal Rathayātrā

July 15–16: Toronto Rathayātrā

July 22: Detroit Rathayātrā

July 30: Los Angeles Rathayātrā

August 6: San Francisco Rathayātrā

August 12–13: Vancouver Rathayātrā

August 16: Vancouver Janmāṣṭamī/  
Vyāsa Pūjā Festival

August 20: Edmonton Rathayātrā

August 27: Calgary Rathayātrā

September 2–4: Seattle Rathayātrā

September 16: Newark, New Jersey,  
Rathayātrā

September 23: Philadelphia Rathayātrā

September 30: Washington, D.C.,

Śrī Rāmacandra Vijaya Festival

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**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Some of these dates are not yet confirmed. Before scheduling your travel, be sure to confirm the festival dates with the ISKCON temple in the city where the festival is to be held. Or email Festival Of India: [madhuha@festivalofindia.org](mailto:madhuha@festivalofindia.org).

*Left: First Tampa Rathayātrā, January 2006*