

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



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temple with
room to grow.*



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BACK to GODHEAD

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FEATURES

Founder's Lecture

7 Why We Must Purify Our Existence

Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks on the occasion of initiating disciples into the chanting of the holy names of the Lord.

12 Arjuna and Us

Although our problems tend to pale before Arjuna's, his method will solve our problems as well.

19 Bhaktivedanta Hospice: Aid for the Journey Home

As death nears, souls preparing for their next destination find spiritual solace in Kṛṣṇa's sacred land.

24 Is Religion the Opium of the Masses?

Or might religion be the antidote for the mental haze induced by the real drug?

34 A Texas-Sized Temple With Room to Grow

For more than forty years, Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees have introduced Kṛṣṇa to the people of Space City.

48 The Ultimate Rescue Mission

Lord Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to deliver us from our own painful folly.

52 Matchless Gifts, the Movie: A Case of Spiritual Serendipity

A nearly lost movie provides a glimpse into Hare Kṛṣṇa roots in America.

DEPARTMENTS

Letters 4

Hare Kṛṣṇa Mahā-Mantra 10

Glossary 11

Book Section: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 27

The Appearance of King Pṛthu and Queen Arci

Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out 31

Every Body Is Miserable

Calendar 33

e-Krishna 55

Centers Around the World 59

From the Editor 62

The Alarm Is Ringing

Krishna.com Store 63

Vedic Thoughts 67

COVER Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Nīla-Mādhava, the deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa worshiped in the newly opened Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in Houston, Texas. Please see the article beginning on page 34. (Photo by Pavan Kumar.)

"Many a rascal thinks that now that he has gotten a human body, he can never again be degraded to the animal species. . . . But nature will force him to accept the body of a cat or dog. The decision is not yours but that of the superior authorities – just as in the office, when you get promoted or demoted, the decision is not yours but that of the directors. You cannot say, 'No, no. I am not going to accept this new post.' No. You have to accept." – p. 32

WELCOME



The founder of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, sailed to America from India in 1965. He was on a mission

to deliver an urgent two-part message to everyone in the world: perfect your life by becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious, and give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others.

If you listen to audio recordings of Śrīla Prabhupāda's earliest *Bhagavad-gītā* lectures in New York, you'll find that right from the beginning – before he even had committed students – he was imploring his audience to spread Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings around the world for the benefit of humanity. Before long, sincere followers began to travel and open centers. Inspired by Prabhupāda's boundless devotion and conviction, they set out with no money, but with Prabhupāda's assurance that Kṛṣṇa would help them.

The earliest centers were often the most austere of quarters, where rats and storms came in on the wind. But today, thanks to the dedication of Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual pioneers, we have places like ISKCON Houston, with its spacious, gorgeous new temple. And most important, because of the Kṛṣṇa conscious roots set down in cities around the world, we see more and more souls reaping the benefits of Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission of devotion. 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.



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are together the one Supreme Absolute Truth.



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa five hundred years ago.



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



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Letters

Keats's Immortal Bird

I refer to an article of your September/October 2014 issue, entitled “Taking Shelter.” It reminded me of a poem I learnt many, many years back at school, “Ode to a Nightingale,” where the author, Keats, explores deeply the theme of the mortality of the human life. In this ode, the transience of life and the tragedy of old age, “*Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs, / Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;*” is set against the eternal renewal of the nightingale’s fluid music: “*Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!*”

At that time, I was basking in complete ignorance of the truth that we are not this body but an eternal soul. Escapism, as Keats was longing for, is just an illusion in this material world. I indeed thank Śrīla Prabhupāda for revealing the truth of self-realization to us. I am lucky to have been introduced to the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, unlike Keats, who was looking for solace and shelter in a “*draught of vintage*” in order to forget the “*weariness, the fever, and the fret*” of human life, with its consciousness that everything is mortal and nothing lasts.

Indira Manrakhan
Port Louis, Mauritius

An Appreciation

Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa has a brilliant mind. His article in the September/October issue – “Do You Still Believe in God?” – is full of depth and wonderfully presented. In general, his articles touch the heart. They are captivating and very clearly clear away doubts in devotees as well as nondevotees. It is wonderful to see ISKCON producing such erudite scholars and realized devotees.

Nijuñja Vilāsinī Dāsī
Durban, South Africa

The Post of Brahmā

I have heard that Lord Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Durgā are names of persons whereas Lord Brahmā is a position. Please educate me on this.

K. V. Rao
Via the Internet

Our reply: Yes, Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Durgā are eternal persons. Lord Viṣṇu is the Personality of Godhead. Lord Śiva is almost on the same level as Lord Viṣṇu but is in a slightly lower category because He is in touch with Durgā, who controls the material energy.

Brahmā, on the other hand, is a position occupied by a *jīva* soul – that is, a soul like you or me. We are spiritual energy but very small, and so we become covered by the material energy. When the material energy is withdrawn into Lord Mahā-Viṣṇu, then there is no Brahmā, that post being filled only when the creation exists.

Curious About Hare Kṛṣṇa

Hello. I am very interested in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. I’ve read about it, but I have a few questions. What is the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement exactly? How do you recruit members? Do you allow everyone into the movement? What evidences are there of God’s existence?

Lillie
Via the Internet

Our reply: The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is meant to help people reconnect with Kṛṣṇa (God) by offering them an opportunity to associate with likeminded people guided by the instructions of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda. The movement has temples and meetings all over the world where people get together to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, read the Vedic literature, talk about Kṛṣṇa, and cooperate to revive their loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

Anyone can be a member who is sincerely interested in taking part in the process and connecting with Kṛṣṇa. We spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in the streets, inviting people to feast and chant with us, and offering many books about the philosophy and practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

As for evidence that God exists, it is all around you. The seasons, the beauty of life and nature, the complexity of the human body and animal bodies, the order of the universe – all show that someone with incredible intelligence is behind the creation. Science may try to explain this world, but the creator of the world is far more intelligent than anyone within it. Furthermore, we can experience our relationship with God by chanting His holy name, as in this mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. If you concentrate on the sound of this mantra, you will come to experience your relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

Forget the Past

How can we forget our past deeds, which are always on our mind and troubling in our day-to-day lives? I know that chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa helps, but after a few minutes we come back to our normal thoughts that are harassing us. Please solve this problem or give me suggestions.

Radha Krushn
Via the Internet

Our reply: We must understand that Kṛṣṇa sees us from the inside out. In other words, He is in our hearts. He understands our mood of remorse and our willingness to change, and He appreciates our sincere desire to serve Him at any given moment.

Remembering our past misdeeds can help us avoid a repeat performance. When we think of the foolish and awful things we did, we become more careful to avoid those behaviors. Actually, what is harassing us is

our sense of guilt, described as the thoughts that fill the space between who we are and who we want to be. But if we can accept that we made a mistake and that Lord Kṛṣṇa is very kind and will forgive us as long as we avoid the same mistake again, then we can become stronger and more determined to pray for the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. We can move forward in spiritual life without letting memories inspire guilt that incapacitates us and prevents us from focusing on the present.

Try to keep busy in service to Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. When your mind is busy reading, chanting, and doing practical service, it won’t dwell on mistakes or material attachments, both of which prevent positive spiritual thought.

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—Vijay, Australia

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*Śrīla
Prabhupāda
hands chanting
beads to a new
disciple during
an initiation
ceremony held
in Mexico City
in 1975.*

FOUNDER'S LECTURE

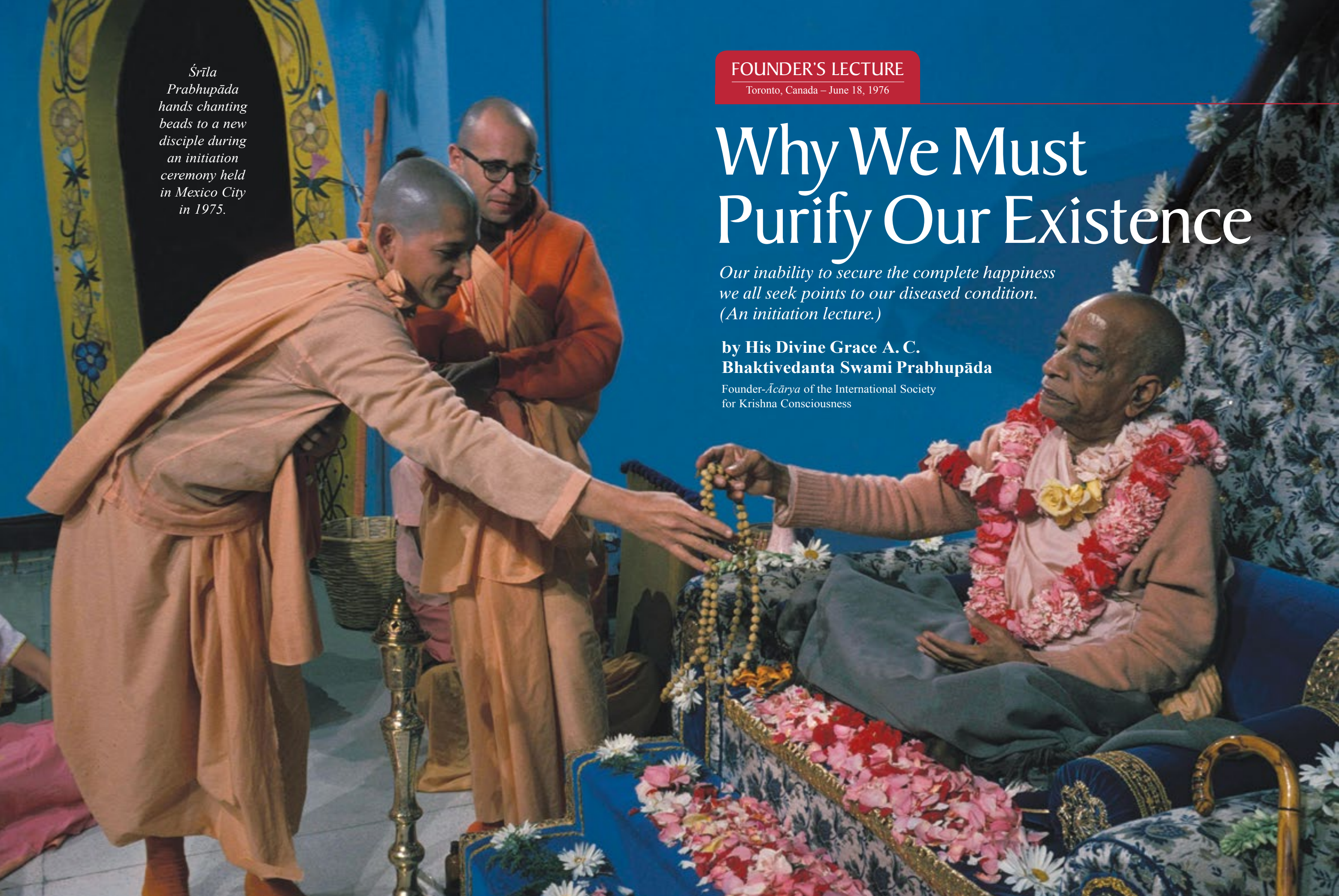
Toronto, Canada – June 18, 1976

Why We Must Purify Our Existence

*Our inability to secure the complete happiness
we all seek points to our diseased condition.
(An initiation lecture.)*

**by His Divine Grace A. C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda**

Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society
for Krishna Consciousness



THE SANSKRIT word for initiation is *dīkṣā*. As stated in an authoritative Vedic dictionary, *divya jñānam kṣapayati iti dīkṣā*: “*Dīkṣā* means to expand or reveal transcendental knowledge.”

There are two kinds of knowledge: transcendental (*divya*) and mundane. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (5.5.1) Lord Rṣabhadeva tells His sons,

*nāyaṁ deho deha-bhājāṁ nṛloke
kaṣṭhān kāmān arhate vid-bhujāṁ ye
tapo divyaṁ putrakā yena sattvaṁ
śuddhyed yasmād brahma-saukhyam
tv anantam*

“My dear boys, of all the living entities who have accepted material bodies in this world, one who has been awarded this human form should not work hard day and night simply for

Vedic culture. It was not that unless the father is shot dead he’s not going to retire. No. That was not Vedic civilization. At the present moment there is no Vedic civilization. Nobody is going to retire unless he’s shot dead. But Vedic civilization was not like that. Retirement was compulsory. There are four spiritual orders in life: *brahmacārī* (celibate student life), *gṛhastha* (married life), *vānaprastha* (retirement), and *sannyāsa* (renunciation).

Human life is meant for spiritual realization, and sense gratification is animal life. This meeting here today is for human beings, not for cats and dogs. They cannot come here, nor will they understand what is going on here. A human being has the chance to understand the philosophy of life as it was enunciated by Rṣabhadeva.

the general law of nature. *Jīvo jīvasya jīvanam*: one living entity is the life for another living entity. The four-legged animals are food for the two-legged animals. As long we remain like two-legged animals, then there is the necessity of eating meat – and taking intoxication and having sex. That is the general tendency. But when one gives these up voluntarily for a higher status of life, that is called *nivṛtti-mārga*. *Pravṛtti-mārga* and *nivṛtti-mārga*. *Pravṛtti-mārga* means to fulfill the desires for meat-eating, intoxication, and sex. But when one is trained to give up these habits, that is called *nivṛtti-mārga*. We have many *pravṛttis*, or inclinations. But when we voluntarily give up all these nonsense habits, that is called *nivṛtti-mārga* and *tapasya*.

Human life is meant for *tapasya*. Don’t be carried away by the general, menial, abominable tendencies. *Tapasya* is required. For *tapasya*, we prescribe no illicit sex, no meat-eating, no intoxication, and no gambling. We have to accept these prohibitions if we want a superior position of life.

The aim of *tapasya* is to be situated on the transcendental platform of knowledge, *tapo divyam*. This human form of life is meant for *tapasya* and transcendental knowledge. That is the purpose – not to waste this human form of life.

Analyze the body of a dog and analyze your body. What is the difference? No difference. There is blood, there is flesh, there are veins. There are so many things in common. Then what is the difference between the cat’s body and the dog’s body and your body? The human body affords opportunity for advancement in knowledge and consciousness.

For *divyam jñānam* – transcendental knowledge – one has to be initiated. *Dīkṣā* means the beginning of transcendental knowledge.

According to Vedic civilization, everyone is born a *śūdra*, a fourth-class man. But there is opportunity for the fourth-class man to become the first-class man. That is possible. *Janmanā jāyate śūdraḥ*: every-

one born by sexual intercourse of the father and mother is a *śūdra*. Then: *saṁskārād-bhaved dvija*. By *saṁskāra*, by the purificatory method or by *tapasya*, one becomes a *dvija*. *Dvi* means “twice,” and *ja* means “birth.” Second birth. One who becomes *dvija*, properly initiated, is allowed to read the Vedic literature. *Veda-pāṭha*. If you remain a *śūdra*, with no *saṁskāra*, no purification, then you have no right to understand Vedic knowledge. Either you have no right or you cannot understand. Throughout the world, everyone knows *Bhagavad-gītā*, but they have misunderstood it because they are kept as *śūdras*.

When purified, one becomes *dvija* and receives the sacred thread. That is called *upanayana*. *Upa* means “near,” and *ṇayana* means “bringing.” When one is brought nearer to the spiritual master who accepts him as his disciple, the spiritual master gives the sacred thread as a kind of badge: “This man is now *dvija*, twice-born. He’s no longer a *śūdra*. He’s a *brāhmaṇa*. So he has the right to read the Vedic literature.”

The *Bhagavad-gītā* is the summary of all Vedic knowledge. If we pass through the process of *divya-jñāna*, by *dīkṣā*, then we rightly understand what is *Bhagavad-gītā*, or we become interested to know what is the lesson of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Bhagavad-gītā is the summary of Vedic literature. You cannot read all the *Vedas* at the present moment, nor do you have the time or the capacity. In Kali-yuga, the current age, everyone is fallen.

Happiness by Purity

Human life should be utilized for understanding the Vedic knowledge, *divya-jñāna*; then one will be purified. One’s existential identity will be purified. At the present moment it is not purified. Because it is not purified, we are repeatedly dying.

People have no knowledge of how to stop death. They think death is natural. It is not natural. It is unnatural. They do not know this. But in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.20) you’ll get the information. *Na jāyate mriyate vā*

kadācit: “The soul is never born and never dies.”

“I see he has died; he is dead.” No. By seeing that the body is destroyed, don’t think the person is destroyed. He’ll get another body. *Tathā dehāntara-prāptir dhīras tatra na muhyati* (*Gītā* 2.13).

This is our position. We have accepted one body, and we live in that body for some days, and then again we give up that body – *tathā dehāntara-prāptir*. This is a disease. To get out of this disease there is the need for *tapasya*.

Don’t think that initiation is something official, a ritualistic ceremony, and that as soon as I get the initiation, I become perfect and whatever nonsense I like I can do. No. *Tapasya* must continue. To purify yourself, your existence, you have to continue the *tapasya* – no illicit sex, no meat-eating, no gambling, no intoxication, and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. If you follow these five principles, then your existence will be purified. You’ll understand Kṛṣṇa from the *Bhagavad-gītā*, you’ll know Kṛṣṇa, and you’ll know the purpose of life.

The purpose of life is to understand Kṛṣṇa. There is no other business in the human form of life. But because we have given up Kṛṣṇa, we have invented so many occupational duties. These so-called occupational duties – running here and there in a motor-car – are not the end of life. There is something more for the human being, and that is *divya-jñāna*, transcendental knowledge.

Why should you purify your existence? Because you want happiness. That is your desire. You’ll get *brahma-saukhyam*, the greatest happiness, which will never end. If you purify your existence by *tapasya*, then you will be happy eternally. There will be no end. Here in the material world any happiness is temporary – either for five minutes or five days or five years or five hundred years or five million years. It will end. But if you purify your existence, then the happiness will never end.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a very serious thing, and it is offered to the human being. Anyone can take advantage of this opportunity and make his life successful. 🌟

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

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

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

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

Pronunciation

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

Spiritual Names

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

For *divyam jñānam* – transcendental knowledge – one has to be initiated. *Dīkṣā* means the beginning of transcendental knowledge.

sense gratification, which is available even for dogs and hogs that eat stool. One should engage in penance and austerity to attain the divine position of devotional service. By such activity, one’s heart is purified, and when one attains this position, he attains eternal, blissful life, which is transcendental to material happiness and which continues forever.”

Rṣabhadeva is the father of Mahārāja Bharata, under whose name this planet is called Bhāratavarṣa. Formerly, the whole planet was called Bhāratavarṣa. Before that it was known as Ilāvṛtavarṣa. Mahārāja Bharata was the eldest son of Rṣabhadeva, an incarnation of God. Before retiring and making Bharata Mahārāja the emperor of the world, Rṣabhadeva advised His one hundred sons. That is the duty of the father. Generally, we do that also. Before retirement, the father gives instructions on how to rule over the kingdom or manage the business.

Retirement was compulsory in

Everyone has a body. Lord Brahmā has a body, and the small insect has a body. The spirit soul is encaged in the material body. There are many forms of life.


Rṣabhadeva said, “Now that you have the human form of life, don’t spoil it like the hogs and dogs simply for sense gratification.”

Sense gratification is available to the hogs and dogs. That was the instruction of Rṣabhadeva. And what is the duty of human life? *Tapasya* – voluntarily accepting some inconvenience for spiritual advancement.

The Need for Self-Control

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.5.11) the sage Nārada says, *loke vyavāyāmiṣa-madya-sevā nityā hi jantoh*: “In this material world the conditioned soul is always inclined to sex, meat-eating, and intoxication.”

Āmiṣa means meat-, fish-, egg-eating. It is the general tendency of the living being to eat meat. That is



hare kṛṣṇa
hare kṛṣṇa
kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa
hare hare
hare rāma
hare rāma
rāma rāma
hare hare

PRONUNCIATION:
ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes
with “drama”). To hear Śrīla
Prabhupāda chanting, go to
[krishna.com/hare-krishna-
maha-mantra](http://krishna.com/hare-krishna-
maha-mantra).

Photo: Yamaraṅga Dāsa

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. (Cited as *Gītā*.)
Bhakti – devotional service to the Supreme Lord.
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta 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.
Darśana – “viewing,” audience with a deity or saintly person.
Dharma – (1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one’s eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).
Godhead – the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.
Gurukula – a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally “the place of the guru”).
Hare Kṛṣṇa – the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.
ISKCON – the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.
Japa – individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.
Kali-yuga – in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.
Karma – material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.
Kīrtana – congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).
Kṛṣṇa – the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His original 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.
Māyāvādī – one who regards the Absolute Truth as ultimately impersonal.
Modes of nature – the three qualities (goodness, passion, and ignorance) that hold sway over all action in the material world.
Nityānanda – the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
Prasāda – vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to Him with devotion.
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.
Śāstra – scriptures, especially the Vedic scriptures of India.
Śrī – an honorific meaning “opulent” (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).
Śrīla Prabhupāda – His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta 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. (Cited as *Bhāg.*)
Supersoul – the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.
Vaiṣṇava – a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).
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).
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.
Vṛndāvana – the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

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Arjuna And Us

*Like Arjuna, we have attachments,
hopes, fears, guilt, and confusion.
And a similar path to happiness.*

by Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

RECENTLY, in rereading the first chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, I felt something I hadn't before – a surge of empathy for Arjuna in his plight. His problems were not unique to him. They were also my problems. And perhaps our problems.

For one, Arjuna's material attachments were clouding his knowledge and ability to act. He revealed this when he said, "I am now unable to stand here any longer. I am forgetting myself and my mind is reeling. I see only causes of misfortune, O Kṛṣṇa." (*Gītā* 1.30)

Second, due to his attachments, Arjuna was certain he wouldn't get happiness or pleasure from doing what he was supposed to do – fight and win the war. Arjuna said, "What pleasure will we derive from killing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra?" (*Gītā* 1.31–35) In other words, the result of the pending battle would cause just the opposite of his desires.

Third, Arjuna feared the sinful reactions that would ensue if he won. In his words: "Sin will overcome us if we slay such aggressors." (*Gītā* 1.36)

Following the example of Arjuna, we can turn to Lord Kṛṣṇa for the permanent solution to all our problems.



Killing his enemies, he foresaw, would result in his future suffering.

Furthermore, regardless of who won the war, two dynasties were poised to destroy each other and Arjuna felt implicated in the horrors that would ensue. “With the destruction of dynasty, the eternal family tradition is vanquished, and thus the rest of the family becomes involved in irreligion.” (*Gītā* 1.39) With the patriarchs dead, young men and women survivors would become adrift and irreligious. Then pious family traditions would not be passed on to future generations, children would be neglected, and community projects and family welfare activities would stop. In other words, society would become chaotic.

Arjuna wanted to do the right thing

said, “Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings.” (*Gītā* 2.12) In other words, when the body dies, the soul does not die but transmigrates to another body.

Arjuna’s distress was due to his attachment to the perishable bodies of his friends and relatives. Kṛṣṇa advised Arjuna to tolerate life’s inevitable distresses. He said, “O Arjuna, the person who is not disturbed by happiness and distress and is steady in both is certainly eligible for liberation.” (*Gītā* 2.15) We may think it easy to deal with happiness; distress is the problem. But in fact, if we’re elated by happiness, we will also be distraught by distress. Thus Kṛṣṇa advises us to be equipoised in both. Later on in the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa likened the body to a vehi-

cle and attain the heavenly planets, or you will conquer and enjoy the earthly kingdom.” (*Gītā* 2.37)

Arjuna thought that fighting would incur sinful reactions, but Kṛṣṇa said the opposite was true: “If you do not perform your religious duty of fighting, then you will certainly incur sins for neglecting your duties.” (*Gītā* 2.33) Moments later, Kṛṣṇa reinforced this point: “Do thou fighting for the sake of fighting, without considering happiness or distress, loss or gain, victory or defeat – and by so doing you shall never incur sin.” (*Gītā* 2.38)

Arjuna foresaw havoc if society’s leaders were killed. Again, Kṛṣṇa saw the opposite – that if Arjuna didn’t do his prescribed duty, others would follow his bad example and the fabric of society would crumble (*Gītā* 3.23–24).

Finally, after explaining the intricacies of knowledge, duty, and action, Kṛṣṇa decisively said, “O Arjuna, surrendering all your works unto Me, with full knowledge of Me, without desires for profit, with no claims to proprietorship, and free from lethargy, fight.” (*Gītā* 3.30) And to reinforce His statement, Kṛṣṇa repeated it a little later: “The doubts which have arisen in your heart out of ignorance should be slashed by the weapon of knowledge. Armed with yoga, O Arjuna, stand and fight.” (*Gītā* 4.42) Kṛṣṇa wanted to sweep away Arjuna’s confusion.

Fighting for the right cause was Arjuna’s personal dharma – his occupational duty – and there would be no sin incurred for him if he did this duty in the proper consciousness, that is, as a service to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such selfless spiritual action would bring Arjuna the highest happiness and would, in the final issue, benefit his family and friends on both sides of the battle. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, “All the soldiers and persons on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra attained their original spiritual form like the Lord after their death because by the causeless mercy of the Lord they were able to see Him face to face on that occasion.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.9.39, Purport) Kṛṣṇa only wants the highest good for everyone, and following His directives will bring about that end.

cle – it can transport us to our destination, our goal. And that goal should be spiritual, for we are spiritual beings. The soul is Kṛṣṇa’s integral spiritual part; the body His external material energy.

Arjuna thought that by saving his family members from harm – that is, by not fighting – he was expressing his love for them. But Kṛṣṇa didn’t agree. Kṛṣṇa said, “The material body of the indestructible, immeasurable, and eternal living entity is sure to come to an end; therefore, fight, O descendant of Bharata.” (*Gītā* 2.18) In the ultimate issue, the body cannot be protected. Therefore, in Kṛṣṇa’s estimation, Arjuna’s shirking his duty due to tender feelings for his relatives and friends was misdirected.

Also misdirected was Arjuna’s conviction that fighting would lead to his unhappiness. After advising Arjuna to be equipoised in material happiness and distress, Kṛṣṇa argued that even from a material perspective, the perspective Arjuna was considering, fighting would bring him happiness: “Either you will be killed on the bat-

and was trying to think through his options with logic, reason, and scriptural discernment, but despite his best intentions, he was hopelessly confused and distressed. He asked Kṛṣṇa, “How can I counterattack in battle men who are worthy of my worship? It would be better to live by begging. I do not know which is better – conquering them or being conquered by them. If I killed them I should not care to live. I am confused about my duty and have lost my composure. Please instruct me.” (*Gītā* 2.4–7, excerpts)

Arjuna’s situation was extreme, yet the material attachments, hopes for happiness, fears, guilt, and confusion he felt are feelings I and probably many of us experience and can relate to. In replying to Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa gave him transformative knowledge that can forever uplift his consciousness and ours.

The Supreme Personality Of Godhead’s Teachings

Kṛṣṇa began by explaining that the soul is eternal, the body temporary. He

Arjuna wanted to do the right thing, but despite his best intentions, he was hopelessly confused and distressed.

Tender Feelings

In my first readings of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, I couldn’t see much relationship between Arjuna’s extreme plight and what I faced in my life. Now, however, I see that beyond the vastly differing circumstances, our underlying challenges are similar.

Like Arjuna, I am materially attached to my own body and those of my family and friends. Last year, for example, when my daughter was in extreme pain from gallstones, I suffered with her vicariously. The body can give us intense pain in ways we can’t expect or even imagine. We shouldn’t ignore that pain, pretending it doesn’t exist, or be callous to suffering. How then are we to deal with material bodily attachments and the pain too often associated with them?

With Kṛṣṇa’s words in the *Gītā* as our guide, we can begin by accepting this world as a place of misery where distresses will inevitably come, as will happiness. This is simple reality, not pessimism. Kṛṣṇa said, “From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place.” (*Gītā* 8.16)

With that understanding firmly in place, we tolerate. This point – tolerating – comes up repeatedly in Kṛṣṇa’s teachings. One of His first instructions was “O son of Kuntī, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.” (*Gītā* 2.14)

Since pleasure and pain will come in this world regardless of what we do or don’t do, Kṛṣṇa wants us to be detached from this world and neutral to its extremes. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains: “Generally, when we get something desirable we are very happy, and when we get something undesirable we are distressed. But if we are actually in the spiritual position these things will not agitate us.” (*Gītā* 13.8, Purport) Being detached and equipoised when we or our loved one is suffering is not easy. But just know-

ing that it is possible and desirable helps us become free of the happiness –distress continuum. Accessing that wealth of tolerance allows us to do our duty despite discomfort and suffering, and when we do our duty for Kṛṣṇa we can advance spiritually.

Frustrated Happiness?

Arjuna thought if he did what he was supposed to do, that is, if he won the war, he’d be miserable. Kṛṣṇa corrected his thinking, putting Arjuna’s duty above his whims. Similarly, I know devotee college students who find the tomes they’re obliged to study insufferably tedious and seemingly irrelevant to their lives. They have a strong desire to leave their studies and follow their caprices. But if their sense of duty prevails and they continue their studies as a service to Kṛṣṇa, their austerities can yield a transcendental result.

In Kṛṣṇa’s words: “Arjuna, you should always think of Me in the form of Kṛṣṇa and at the same time continue your prescribed duty of fighting. With your activities dedicated to Me and your mind and intelligence fixed on Me, you will attain Me without doubt.” (*Gītā* 8.7) To deviate from our duty does not help us progress spiritually. As Arjuna shouldn’t shirk his duty, so we shouldn’t shirk ours. Prabhupāda writes, “Discharging one’s specific duty in any field of action in accordance with the orders of higher authorities serves to elevate one to a higher status of life.” (*Gītā* 2.31, Purport)

The path Kṛṣṇa was illuminating – the dutiful toleration of pain and suffering – may appear dry and grim, but in fact, our ultimate duty, devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, is the only path to lasting happiness. In Kṛṣṇa’s words, devotional service is “joyfully performed” (*Gītā* 9.2). Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates: “The process of devotional service is a very happy one (*susukham*). Why? Devotional service consists of *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ*, so one can simply hear the chanting of the glories of the Lord or can attend philosophical lectures on transcendental knowledge given by authorized *ācāryas*. Simply by sitting, one can learn; then one can eat the remnants of

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the food offered to God, nice palatable dishes. In every state devotional service is joyful.” (*Gītā* 9.2, Purport)

Far from being dry and grim, doing our duty as devotional service for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa brings the greatest fulfillment and happiness. Toward the end of *Bhagavad-gītā*, Arjuna expressed this when he said, “The world becomes joyful upon hearing Your name.” (*Gītā* 11.36) On the other hand, trying for happiness separate from Kṛṣṇa leaves us confused and entrapped in this world of misery, which is what Arjuna was experiencing as the *Gītā* opened.

Fear of the Future

Arjuna wanted to avoid the sinful reactions he foresaw in his future. But in reality, whatever our duty is, there will be some flaw in it, some unpleasant and seemingly sinful aspects to it. It’s not that we can drop our duty and think we can avoid those flaws and unpleasantnesses, because just as fire has smoke, so material activities are flawed. We can’t avoid those flaws by not doing anything, because by its

nature the soul is active. As inactivity is contrary to our nature as spiritual beings, not only is it not feasible, but it’s also sinful.

Yet activity is also problematic. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “In the business field, sometimes a merchant has to tell so many lies to make a profit. If he does not do so, there can be no profit. Sometimes a merchant says, ‘Oh, my dear customer, for you I am making no profit,’ but one should know that without profit the merchant cannot exist. Therefore it should be taken as a simple lie if a merchant says that he is not making a profit.” (*Gītā* 18.47, Purport)

We have to do something in this material world, so we act according to our nature. But whatever it is we do, from the highest position to the lowest, there will be undesirable aspects to it. That’s unavoidable. So we continue acting, knowing that if we do our prescribed duty for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure, we will not incur any reactions. Kṛṣṇa will absolve us of sin.

Prabhupāda puts it this way: “One should not give up his natural occupation because there are some disturbing

elements. Rather, one should be determined to serve the Supreme Lord by his occupational duty in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is the perfectional point. When a particular type of occupation is performed for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord, all the defects in that particular occupation are purified. When the results of work are purified, when connected with devotional service, one becomes perfect in seeing the self within, and that is self-realization.” (*Gītā* 18.48, Purport)

If Arjuna didn’t do his duty, he would be degraded due to doing the wrong activity. Our case is similar – if we act whimsically, imagining what our duty is and isn’t, it will reflect poorly on our consciousness and spiritual progress.

Guilt

We can try to do our duty for Kṛṣṇa, feel our affection for His devotees strengthened by our service, experience happiness through this selfless service, and understand it as a process for becoming purified and free of sinful reactions. But what if we foresee, as Arjuna did, future havoc in society as a result of our duty? Wouldn’t it be better to renounce such a duty?

In Arjuna’s case, no. He was Kṛṣṇa’s instrument in ridding the world of immoral, burdensome people. In our case, it may be something to consider. Not long ago I met a brilliant young devotee who worked as a biochemist in the food industry. She was part of a team that was removing the chemical in potatoes that makes them darken after they’re cut. Industrialized food companies were intending to sell the peeled, washed, and cut potatoes in packages, much like the baby carrots that have long been available. I asked this devotee what effect eating those potatoes would have on consumers’ health, and she said that since they were removing a chemical instead of adding or altering chemicals, the federal government’s health department considered them safe. But, she said, no one actually knew how eating those altered potatoes would affect people’s health long term. She also said she was looking for different work, as she felt the work she was

doing was unconscionable. I had to agree with her.

In today’s world there are many such jobs with questionable ramifications. As far as possible and practical, our work should be something we feel good about, something that will not harm the planet and the innocent living entities residing on it.

Confusion

Although a heroic and powerful general, Arjuna was so bewildered by his conflicting considerations that he became incapacitated. This may seem like a weakness and disqualification, but actually Arjuna’s considering the pros and cons of his involvement in the battle was evidence of his divine qualities. That his enemies weren’t considering these pros and cons – the suffering that would ensue from their actions, the sinful reactions they might incur, and the ramifications in society – and that they were hellbent on fighting and weren’t bewildered are signs of their disqualifications to be leaders. Kṛṣṇa wanted Arjuna to rid the world of them.

Given certain circumstances, confusion is a good sign. This world is filled with conflict and conflicting opinions, and those of us who want to act conscientiously, rather than solely for personal material profit, may find ourselves bewildered. We can take careful note of how Arjuna resolved his bewilderment: he approached a qualified person and sought guidance. We can do the same.

Prabhupāda writes, “The Lord spoke *Bhagavad-gītā*, and thereby Arjuna achieved self-realization, and even today anyone who follows the path of Arjuna can also attain the same benefit as Śrī Arjuna. The scriptures are meant for this purpose.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.7.3, Purport) Arjuna’s path was to humbly serve and respect a bona fide spiritual master, inquire from him, and follow his instructions. In doing this Arjuna found the solace also available to us. Arjuna said, “O Kṛṣṇa, I totally accept as truth all that You have told me.” (*Gītā* 10.14) And later, after Kṛṣṇa asked him, “O Arjuna, have you heard this with an

attentive mind? And are your ignorance and illusions now dispelled?” (*Gītā* 18.72) Arjuna’s answer reveals his clarity of mind and intention: “My dear Kṛṣṇa, O infallible one, my illusion is now gone. I have regained my memory by Your mercy. I am now firm and free from doubt and am prepared to act according to Your instructions.” (*Gītā* 18.73)

Similar clarity is available to us if we follow Arjuna’s path.

Conclusion

Although the concept of duty plays an important role in Kṛṣṇa’s teachings in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, it may not be a concept we know much about or are attracted to. Yet the inescapable fact

If we properly use our minute independence, we will act for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure and come under His divine protection.

is that human life comes with duties: for example, our responsibilities to our children, the work we must do to survive in this world, and our expressions of gratitude to our many benefactors. With our life comes responsibility, and responsibility entails duty.

What Arjuna confronted on the battlefield and we also sometimes confront is unpalatable duty – duty contrary to our desires and perhaps our sense of righteousness. Through the beautiful verses of the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna and all willing listeners that we should not do anything – either good or bad – on our own account, but must do everything on behalf of Him, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words, “Duties must be carried out, with dependence on Kṛṣṇa, because that is the constitutional position of the living entity. The living entity cannot be happy independent of the cooperation of the Supreme Lord, because the eternal constitutional position of the living entity is to become subordinate to the desires of the Lord.” (*Gītā* 3.30, Purport)

We carry out our duty remembering that Kṛṣṇa – not us – is the enjoyer of the results of our activity. Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna and through him all of us, “You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action.” (*Gītā* 2.47) And later: “Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform – do that, O son of Kuntī, as an offering to Me.” (*Gītā* 9.27).

In other words, we are meant to do our duty for Kṛṣṇa. Our first and foremost duty is to serve Him. To this end, we hear about Him. After hearing, we naturally want to speak about His qualities and activities, and from those sincere practices we remember Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental nature. By our hearing

about Him, speaking about Him, and remembering Him, our activities become more and more spiritualized and we increasingly feel Kṛṣṇa’s presence in our lives. Our material attachments wane along with our feelings of fear, guilt, and confusion. Our path becomes clear.

In the final verse of the *Gītā*, the narrator, Sañjaya, said, “Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, the master of all mystics, and wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there will also certainly be opulence, victory, extraordinary power, and morality.” (*Gītā* 18.78) Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that if we properly use our minute independence, we will act for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure and come under His divine protection. Then all our miseries will cease, and we will attain our “normal condition in the pleasure-giving potency” (*Gītā* 18.78, Purport).

We will be completely and lastingly happy. ☺

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī has been writing for BTG since 1973. Visit her website at our-spiritual-journey.com.



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Stills from *The Final Journey*, a film by Rasa Acharya (2)



The 23-bed Bhaktivedanta Hospice (top) in Vrindavan was founded in 2010 by Girirāja Swami (above). At right, hospice staff members examine a potential patient.



Ananta Siraha Dāsa

Aid for the Journey Home

Bhaktivedanta Hospice

Shortly before passing away in Vrindavan, a devotee requested her spiritual master to establish a “Back to Godhead” clinic there for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s followers.

by Viśākhā Priyā Devī Dāsī

IN HIS BOOK *Mathurā Māhātmya*, the great devotional scholar and *ācārya* Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī states, “They who die in the area of Mathura and Vrindavan become perfect and attain the supreme destination.” But most devotees do not reside in Vrindavan, and until

recently, even those who had sufficient notice and facility would not find a proper support system to see them through their final stages once they arrived.

One devotee who was able to pass away in Vrindavan in the best way possible was Arcā-vigraha Dāsī. Born Aileen Lipkin, Arcā-vigraha was a South African painter and sculptor of international repute. She joined ISKCON in Johannesburg in 1985 at the age of fifty-two and moved permanently to Vrindavan toward the end of 1991, when she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. According to her physician, she had only six months to live. She was already building a house in the Raman Reti area near ISKCON’s Krishna-Balaram Temple, and she soon moved and stayed there with a devoted

godsister until she passed away two and a half years later. Throughout her increasingly painful illness, she lacked neither spiritual nor material care. As a spiritually advanced soul, she attracted the company of other elevated Vaiṣṇavas, and many devotees were eager to have her association and to offer service.

Having experienced the benefits of preparing to pass away in Vrindavan, Arcā-vigraha desired that other devotees should have the same opportunity, and shortly before her departure she requested her spiritual master, His Holiness Girirāja Swami, to establish a “Back to Godhead” clinic where dying devotees could spend their last days supported by loving devotees and expert caregivers.

Originally, Girirāja Swami wanted to get a large piece of land and build cottages so that each devotee would have his or her own place, as Arcā-vigraha did. But when he and his team saw that getting enough land for an affordable price would take the hospice far from the Krishna-Balaram Temple, they decided to create the atmosphere of a home in a larger institutional setting. The team considered several plots, but when one after another the properties became unavailable, Abhirāma Dāsa – who had designed resorts in several countries and, in Vrindavan, both the MVT Guest House complex and the Kirtan Ashram for senior ISKCON women – remembered a piece of land that ISKCON had purchased in the early nineties with the idea of turning it into a

park as a Centennial offering to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The land is adjacent to the *pari-kramā* road trod by pilgrims during their devotional walks around Vrindavan. It is a sacred grove of mostly *kadamba* and *tamala* trees known as Giriraj Bhag (“Giriraj’s garden”). For five generations it belonged to the family of Sri Padmanabha Goswami, hereditary priests and caretakers of Vrindavan’s Rādhā-ramaṇa Temple. Because it was so peaceful – one of the most beautiful places in Vrindavan – Padmanabha Goswami’s great-grandfather often went there to chant. And after Śrīla Prabhupāda returned to Vrindavan in 1970 with his American disciples, he, too, would chant there in the morning.

The Rādhā-ramaṇa Goswamis agreed to sell the land to ISKCON, but only on the condition that the trees never be cut down. Since ISKCON had been planning to make a park in Prabhupāda’s name, they readily agreed, but the project had not gone forward and the land remained open. When Abhirāma Dāsa now approached the original donors for the land, they all agreed to dedicate it to the hospice, and finally, on August 6, 2010, Bhaktivedanta Hospice opened its doors.

Many devotees were involved in the purchase of the land and development of the hospice. Longtime ISKCON member and benefactor Kṛṣṇa-candra Dāsa pledged his support, and Saṅgītā Dāsī (Susan Pattinson, R.N.), the international pioneer of Vaishnavas C.A.R.E. (Counseling, Assistance, Resources, and Education for the Terminally Ill), provided knowledge and expertise. As the project progressed, however, it became clear that there was a need for local devotees who would take direct responsibility for the facility’s construction and management. Appreciating the project’s great value, His Holiness Rādhānāth Swami, spiritual advisor for Bhaktivedanta Hospital in Mumbai, explained this need to the hospital staff. Its director, Mādhavānanda Dāsa (Dr. Ajay P. Sankhe), and its deputy director in charge of spiritual care, Viśvarūpa Dāsa (Dr. Vivekanand Shanbhag), agreed to serve as hospice director and deputy director.

Realizing the Vision

The initial vision for Bhaktivedanta Hospice was that it would be for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s followers who had given their lives in his service, but as the project developed, the team concluded that the hospice could and should also serve Vraja-vasis, residents of the greater Vrindavan area. In its mission to offer a permanent solution to the essential problem of material existence – repeated birth, death, old age, and disease – the hospice would help patients think of God at the time of death and provide care for both them and their loved ones.

The hospice is sensitive to a wide



Stills from *The Final Journey*, a film by Rasa Acharya (3)

range of patient needs and desires and is committed to letting patients decide how they want to spend their last days – and to what extent they want medical interventions that might alleviate pain or extend life but also disturb their consciousness or impede their ability to remember Kṛṣṇa, chant and hear about Him, and have loving exchanges with devotees and family members.

The hospice is housed in a three-story building nestled in the remnants of the grove, a short walk from the Krishna-Balaram Temple. The ground floor includes a large reception area presided over by a *mūrti* (sculpted form) of Śrīla Prabhupāda, a temple room, consulting rooms, a pharmacy, and a conference room. French windows open onto the garden, where pink sandstone benches invite patients and visitors to sit in the shade of the centuries-old trees. A separate wing, accessed through a garden entrance, has quarters for the resident doctors, nurses, and spiritual counselors.

Some of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s devotees behind the project (left, top to bottom): Dr. D. V. Shanbhag, deputy director of Bhaktivedanta Hospice; Saṅgītā Dāsī (Susan Pattinson, R. N.), certified hospice care educator; Hrishikesh Mafatlal, project supporter and head of Arvind Mafatlal Group.



Ananta Sirmha Dāsa

An attendant shares time with a patient by helping her remember the Lord’s holy names.

The second and third floors of the hospice are reserved for patients. Each floor has a kitchen; a dining area; a “Back to Godhead” room, where patients are brought in their final hours; and eight private rooms large enough for both the patients and their caregivers to live in comfortably, each including a kitchenette and with a bathroom with enough space to accommodate the patient’s bed. Some of the rooms have additional features such as air conditioning, audio systems, desks, chairs, sofas, and refrigerators, and most have bay windows with beautiful views of the trees of Raman Reti.

All hospice patients receive free meals of *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*, and although there are charges for some medicines and for oxygen, pathology tests, and ambulance services, patients who cannot afford a private room can stay in one of two three-bed wards free of charge, and discounts are available for patients in need. No one has ever been turned away from the hospice because he or she could not pay.

An Expert Staff

The Final Journey, by Saṅgītā Dāsī, is a comprehensive, straightforward, and practical guide that explains in detail how hospice care can assist in a devotee’s departure. Saṅgītā Dāsī has been to the hospice several times to coach nurses and volunteers, and Dr. Sankhe and Dr. Shanbhag, both of whom received fellowships in Palliative Medicine and Hospice Administration from the San Diego Hospice, in California, visit regularly. Dr. Avnish Pandey (Anantasirmha Dāsa), the hospice’s resident physician, was already a specialist in Health Care and Palliative Care when, at Rādhānāth Swami’s request, he and his wife left his career and their comfortable lives in Mumbai and settled in Vrindavan to assist devotees in their final journey. All of the hospice’s nurses are qualified in GNM (General Nursing and Midwifery) and certified by the Indian Association of Palliative Care, and have at least five years’ experience in the field.

Bhaktivedanta Hospice’s medical,

nursing, social, and spiritual services are provided in two contexts: in the hospice itself, where people come for pain management and treatment of other symptoms and are either admitted or treated as outpatients; and at home, where eighty percent of terminally ill patients choose to stay until they die. Such patients are served through regular planned home visits.

The hospice also offers Respite Care for patients’ caregivers. When a caretaker becomes emotionally or physically exhausted, the staff offers fifteen days of relief, taking care of the patient at the hospice facility. End-of-Life Care provides intensified medical, nursing, social, and, especially, spiritual care for terminally ill patients who have reached the last stage, known as “active dying,” assisting them until their last breath and continuing through the ensuing funeral procedures. Bereavement Care includes social and spiritual care for the close relatives of departed souls. This takes place regularly for thirteen months after a



Still from *The Final Journey*, a film by Rasa Acharya

The Bhaktivedanta Hospice also provides home hospice care (left), a valued assistance given free to the poor. Visits may include guidance for caretakers and free medicine. Below right, a patient nearing the end has someone to turn to for comfort.

patient's death, with special emphasis on the first anniversary. Bhaktivedanta Hospice also suggests services that friends, family, and well-wishers can offer patients both in their homes and in the hospice, including cooking, cleaning, making garlands, singing, reading, and just keeping company.

A Mother's Last Years In Vrindavan

Many Vraja-vasis, devotees, and parents of devotees have already benefitted from Bhaktivedanta Hospice's services. At the hospice opening, Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple Nirguṇa Devī Dāsī spoke about her mother's last two years in Vrindavan. She and her parents had first met Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1971 in Calcutta, and in 1975 she was initiated in Vrindavan, during the opening of the Krishna-Balaram Temple. By the time she brought her mother to Vrindavan in the summer of 2008, her mother had been suffering from Alzheimer's disease for about five years and had been bedridden for the last three. She had requested that she never be taken to a hospital. When a flat became available in the MVT

complex, Nirguṇa moved there with her mother.

"Dr. Śyānavallabha and Dr. Anantasiṃha came regularly to see her, and they always answered my calls promptly," Nirguṇa said. "In addition to seeing to my mother, they also helped me to cope psychologically and emotionally, as it was so hard to see my mother starve to death, which was the reality of the situation. They arranged everything we needed to keep her as comfortable as possible – an air mattress, a device for administering measured amounts of pain medication, an oxygen cylinder, and medicines that we were sometimes unable to obtain, even after trying many places in Delhi.

"A few days before Gaura Pūrṇimā, my mother stopped taking even water. Dr. Anantasiṃha expertly outlined all that was about to occur and helped me prepare myself. Dr. Śyānavallabha was also advising me on the phone, telling me to be strong and let her go. Finally, she went very peacefully and gracefully – one day after Gaura Pūrṇimā, in the midst of devotees singing Kṛṣṇa's names.

"Thanks to Bhaktivedanta Hospice, my mother had state-of-the-art care at

home – and in sacred Vrindavan. The hospice staff was always most helpful, coming regularly to give injections and replace catheters. In short, Bhaktivedanta Hospice was God-sent, or Kṛṣṇa-sent, in every sense of the word. My brothers too were both moved by and extremely grateful for this selfless service. Through the hospice's sincere care for my mother, they saw the true Vrindavan spirit of service. The role of the hospice and of Girirāja Swami in my mother's exemplary departure onward from Vrindavan cannot be acknowledged enough. Bhaktivedanta Hospice is performing a service of utmost value. Their support for dying devotees, given with loving care, allows devotees to make their transition from this life in a dignified and peaceful way, in remembrance of Kṛṣṇa. Surely this service is most pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who instilled in us the value of living and dying in Kṛṣṇa's land."

Another Grateful Family

The hospice's first resident patient from ISKCON, Babasaheb Narayan Patil, the father of Ācārya Ratna Dāsa,

was also able to depart in an exemplary way, with support from the community. Ācārya Ratna, a *brahmacārī* serving in Kolkata, received a call from his brother informing him that their father was very ill, possibly dying. When Ācārya Ratna traveled to their village in Maharashtra, he found his father in a helpless condition, unable to sit or stand, eat, move his limbs, or talk. Babasaheb could not even recognize his son.

Ācārya Ratna thought of all the sacrifices his father had made for him – how his father had always showed him love and affection and encouraged him in his spiritual life, even when he had decided to quit his career as a software engineer and join ISKCON as a full-time *brahmacārī*. He also remembered Babasaheb's pious activities – how he had often arranged spiritual programs and served saintly people, inviting sadhus into their home, giving them charity, and seeking their blessings.

Ācārya Ratna meditated long and hard on how he could serve his father in his time of greatest need, and then he heard from the Pune temple president about Bhaktivedanta Hospice. Ācārya Ratna phoned Dr. Viśvarūpa,

who told him to bring his father to the hospice immediately.

When asked about the charges, Dr. Viśvarūpa replied, "The official charges are Rs. 2,000 per day plus medicine, but as a full-time temple devotee, you have given your life to serve Kṛṣṇa. Don't worry about the finances; just bring your father."

Family members and neighbors were apprehensive about Ācārya Ratna taking Babasaheb so far, but in the end, he, his father, and five relatives all undertook the journey from their village to Mathura, where they were met by two devotees and an ambulance to transport his father to Vrindavan.

"At the hospice," Ācārya Ratna later recounted, "the staff welcomed us, oriented us, situated my father, and arranged for our stay, *prasāda*, and all necessities. Dr. Anantasiṃha spoke confidentially with the family, guiding us on how to take care of my father in a loving, caring, and sensitive way, and Dr. Viśvarūpa spoke to us about the nature of the soul, the glories of Vrindavan, and my father's good fortune. The family's doubts were all answered; everyone felt sure that we were in the right place. His room was

very nice – sunlit, well ventilated, and spacious enough to accommodate both him and the rest of us. We could hear the sweet chirping of birds outside, and from the window we could view the surrounding shade trees and get glimpses of cows from the nearby *go-shala*. My father's bed could even be brought into the bathroom so that we could bathe him."

Before arriving, Babasaheb had developed a bedsore, but with the nurses' care and an air-circulating bed, it healed. He had been coughing, but his chest soon cleared and he could breathe normally. And as the staff tended to his physical needs, his family would give him *caraṇāmṛta*, sacred water that has bathed the deities, from Vrindavan's main temples; sprinkle him with holy waters from Radha-kunda, Syama-kunda, Manasi-ganga, and the Yamuna; and anoint his body with the sacred dust of Vraja. Devotees from the community would bring garlands and *caraṇāmṛta* from the deities of Krishna-Balaram Temple. They would come and read aloud from Śrīla Prabhupāda's book *Kṛṣṇa* and talk with the family. It was the holy month of

(please turn to page 58)



Still from *The Final Journey*, a film by Rasa Acharya



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Is Religion the Opium of the Masses?

Close examination of this old charge against religion raises the opposite question: Might atheism be the opium?

by Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa

“RELIGION IS THE opium of the masses” is the argument often used by atheists to dismiss religion without addressing the substantial issues it deals with. Though others before Karl Marx had promoted the idea, he made it famous: “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”

What does the religion-as-opium argument imply? Atheists allege that just as opium intoxicates people with illusory feelings of well-being without

offering any real relief, so does religion. Only when people shed the false hopes offered by religion will they strive for actual well-being.

The juxtaposition of religion with opium captivates many people, who start viewing religion negatively without critically evaluating the validity of its equation with opium.

The religion-as-opium argument has several unstated assumptions. Let’s look at these in the form of three questions.

1. Are the hopes offered by religion false?

- 2. Can we have real well-being without religion?
- 3. Does religion divert our energy from real well-being?

1. Are the hopes offered by religion false?

Religion usually centers on the existence of a benevolent God by whose grace we can attain a world of eternal happiness. It frequently tells us that our present world is a station, not a destination. This world is a place we pass through during our journey

towards eternal existence. By living here according to God’s guidelines, we can live fruitfully and evolve towards spiritual perfection.

Are these religious beliefs false? By material methods of observation and inference, we may not be able to conclusively prove the otherworldly truth-claims of religion. But we can definitely look at its this-worldly effects.

Unlike opium, which harms our health, religion heals us in many ways, physically and mentally. In the *Handbook of Religion and Health*, published by Oxford University Press, Harold G.

Koenig, M.D.; Michael E. McCullough, Ph.D.; and the late David B. Larson, M.D., carefully reviewed no fewer than two thousand published experiments that tested the relationship between religion and everything from blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, and stroke to depression, suicide, psychotic disorders, and marital problems. Some of their findings:

- People who attended a spiritual program at least once a week lived an average seven years longer than those who didn't attend at all.
- Religious youth showed significantly lower levels of drug and alcohol abuse, premature sexual involvement, criminal delinquency, and suicidal tendencies

cherished, not nominally held. What are we to infer from this? Is religion an illusion that somehow accidentally offers real benefits? And is it such a peculiar illusion that the greater our belief in it, the greater the benefits? That is, the more we believe something wrong to be right, the more it sets right things that are otherwise nearly impossible to set right?

Rather than swallowing such a twisted preconception, can we be open-minded enough to consider a more natural and logical inference? Could it be that religion may not be an illusion at all? Might religious belief and practice harmonize us with some deeper reality, thus benefiting us mentally and physically?

The religion-as-opium argument reflects an arrogant, intolerant faith, the faith known as atheistic fundamentalism.

than their nonreligious counterparts.

- Elderly people with deep, personal religious faith had a stronger sense of well-being and life satisfaction than their less religious peers.

The authors' conclusion? "A high SQ [Spiritual Quotient] faithfulness to God appears to benefit people of all means, educational levels and ages."

These findings are so consistent and compelling that Dr. Patrick Glynn in his book *God – The Evidence* poignantly states their implications: "If this [religious belief] is an illusion, it is, first of all, not a harmful one, as Freud and the moderns taught. On the contrary, it is mentally beneficial. It is also, more puzzlingly, physically beneficial. And strangest of all, by deliberately interacting with this illusion in a sincere spirit, through meditative prayer, one can create improvements in symptoms of disease that otherwise cannot be medically explained." His last comment refers to findings like those of Dr. Herbert Benson, reported in his book *The Relaxation Response*: the benefits of religious belief are greater when those beliefs are deeply

I hear the objection "Wait a minute – religion is the cause of so much violence and war."

Is it, really? Statistics reveal that violence has been far more prevalent in atheistic parts of the world than elsewhere. R. J. Rummel, in *Lethal Politics: Soviet Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1917*, documents that the victims of Marxist governments amounted to 95,200,000. By comparison, the battle-killed in all foreign and domestic wars in the twentieth century totaled 35,700,000.

In utter disregard of such serious analysis, the religion-as-opium argument swaggers with intellectual arrogance. It summarily dismisses religion by equating religious beliefs with opium-induced hallucinations. Aggressively dismissing ideas that contradict one's own beliefs – isn't that what intolerance is all about? The religion-as-opium argument reflects an arrogant, intolerant faith, the faith known as atheistic fundamentalism. Of course, this atheistic faith conceals its intolerance under the garbs of science, secularism, and social progress. But when we strip it of its misdirecting

jargon, it stands exposed for what it is: a fanatical belief in disbelief.

2. Can we have real well-being without religion?

Atheism assumes that the material level of existence is the only reality; whatever well-being is to be had must therefore be had at the material level alone. Atheists believe that if people stopped taking the opium of religion, then they would strive for and achieve real well-being at the material level.

Has that hope been realized by propagating atheism and relegating religion to the sidelines of intellectual and social life, as has happened in many parts of the world in recent times?

Not at all.

The material level of existence is characterized by misery and mortality. Even Marx in his religion-opium quote referred to people as "oppressed creatures."

If we reject religion as an opiate, can we free ourselves from the oppression of our inevitable mortality? No, because atheism rivets us to matter and material existence, which are temporary. Atheism implies that:

- We are material beings who will end with death. And death comes arbitrarily on anyone at any time. It knocks us all out of existence fully and forever. Period.
- Our life has no ultimate purpose or meaning. We are made of nothing but particles of matter moving about endlessly and meaninglessly.

How can such a dreary, draining, and depressing worldview foster well-being? As the theoretical physicist – and atheist – Steven Weinberg states, "The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless." With such a gloomy vision of life, many naturally doubt whether living itself has any value. Albert Camus states this explicitly at the start of his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "There is only one really serious philosophical question, and that is suicide."

A Godless, soulless worldview makes life meaningless, purposeless – worthless. It drives millions to ennui and (please turn to page 56)

BOOK SECTION: ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

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.

THE APPEARANCE OF KING PṚTHU AND QUEEN ARCI

Highly qualified brāhmaṇas and sages employ their knowledge and skill to bring forth incarnations of the Lord and His consort.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 14

42 नाङ्गस्य वंशो राजर्षेरष संस्थातुमर्हति अमोघवीर्या हि नृपा वंशेऽस्मिन् केशवाश्रयाः

*nāṅgasya vaṁśo rājarṣer
eṣa saṁsthātum arhati
amogha-vīryā hi nṛpā
vaṁśe 'smin keśavāśrayāḥ*

na – not; *aṅgasya* – of King Aṅga; *vaṁśaḥ* – family line; *rāja-rṣeḥ* – of the saintly King; *eṣaḥ* – this; *saṁsthātum* – to be stopped; *arhati* – ought; *amogha* – without sin, powerful; *vīryāḥ* – their semen; *hi* – because; *nṛpāḥ* – kings; *vaṁśe* – in the family; *asmin* – this; *keśava* – of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *āśrayāḥ* – under the shelter.

The sages decided that the descendants of the family of the saintly King Aṅga should not be stopped, for in this family the semen was very powerful and the children were prone to become devotees of the Lord.

PURPORT: The purity of hereditary succession is called *amogha-vīrya*. The pious seminal succession in the twice-born families of the *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas* especially, as well

as in the families of *vaiśyas* also, must be kept very pure by the observation of the purificatory processes beginning with *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*, which is observed before conceiving a child. Unless this purificatory process is strictly observed, especially by the *brāhmaṇas*, the family descendants become impure, and gradually sinful activities become visible in the family. Mahārāja Aṅga was very pure because of the purification of semen in the family of Mahārāja Dhruva. However, his semen became contaminated in association with his wife, Sunīthā, who happened to be the daughter of death personified. Because of this polluted semen, King Vena was produced. This was a catastrophe in the family of Dhruva Mahārāja. All the saintly persons and sages considered this point, and they decided to take action in this matter, as described in the following verses.

43 विनिश्चित्यैवमृषयो विपन्नस्य महीपतेः ममन्थुरुरुं तरसा तत्रासीद्बाहुको नरः

*viniścityaivam ṛṣayo
vipannasya mahīpateḥ
mamanthur ūruṁ tarasā
tatrāsīd bāhuko naraḥ*

viniścitya – deciding; *evam* – thus; *ṛṣayaḥ* – the great sages; *vipannasya* – dead; *mahī-pateḥ* – of the King; *mamanthuh*

– churned; *ūrum* – the thighs; *tarasā* – with specific power; *tatra* – thereupon; *āsīt* – was born; *bāhukaḥ* – of the name Bāhuka (dwarf); *narah* – a person.

After making a decision, ① the saintly persons and sages churned the thighs of the dead body of King Vena with great force and according to a specific method. As a result of this churning, a dwarf-like person was born from King Vena's body.

PURPORT: ② That a person was born by the churning of the thighs of King Vena proves that the spirit soul is individual and separate from the body. The great sages and saintly persons could beget another person from the body of the dead King Vena, but it was not possible for them to bring King Vena back to life. King Vena was gone, and certainly he had taken another body. The saintly persons and sages were only concerned with the body of Vena because it was a result of the seminal succession in the family of Mahārāja Dhruva. Consequently, the ingredients by which another body could be produced were there in the body of King Vena. By a certain process, when the thighs of the dead body were churned, another body came out. Although dead, the body of King Vena was preserved by drugs, and mantras chanted by King Vena's mother. In this way the ingredients for the production of another body were there. When the body of the person named Bāhuka came out of the dead body of King Vena, it was really not very astonishing. It was simply a question of knowing how to do it. From the semen of one body, another body is produced, and the life symptoms are visible due to the soul's taking shelter of this body. One should not think that it was impossible for another body to come out of the dead body of Mahārāja Vena. This was performed by the skillful action of the sages.

44 काककृष्णोऽतिह्रस्वाङ्गो ह्रस्वबाहुर्महाहनुः ह्रस्वपान्निम्ननासाग्रो रक्ताक्षस्ताम्रमूर्धजः

kāka-kṛṣṇo 'tihrasvāṅgo
hrasva-bāhur mahā-hanuḥ
hrasva-pān nimna-nāsāgro
raktākṣas tāmra-mūrdhajah

kāka-kṛṣṇah – as black as a crow; *ati-hrasva* – very short; *aṅgaḥ* – his limbs; *hrasva* – short; *bāhuḥ* – his arms; *mahā* – big; *hanuḥ* – his jaws; *hrasva* – short; *pāt* – his legs; *nimna* – flat; *nāsa-agraḥ* – the tip of his nose; *rakta* – reddish; *akṣah* – his eyes; *tāmra* – copperlike; *mūrdha-jah* – his hair.

- 1) What happened when the sages churned the thighs of the dead body of King Vena?
- 2) What does Śrīla Prabhupāda say was proven when a person was born by the churning of King Vena's thighs?

This person born from King Vena's thighs was named Bāhuka, and his complexion was as black as a crow's. All the limbs of his body were very short, his arms and legs were short, and his jaws were large. His nose was flat, his eyes were reddish, and his hair copper-colored.

45 तं तु तेऽवनतं दीनं किं करोमीति वादिनम् निषीदेत्यब्रुवंस्तात स निषादस्ततोऽभवत्

tam tu te 'vanatam dīnam
kiṁ karomīti vādinam
niṣīdety abruvaṁs tāta
sa niṣādas tato 'bhavat

tam – unto him; *tu* – then; *te* – the sages; *avanatam* – bowed down; *dīnam* – meek; *kiṁ* – what; *karomi* – shall I do; *iti* – thus; *vādinam* – inquiring; *niṣīda* – just sit down; *iti* – thus; *abruvan* – they replied; *tāta* – my dear Vidura; *saḥ* – he; *niṣādah* – of the name Niṣāda; *tataḥ* – thereafter; *abhavat* – became.

He was very submissive and meek, and immediately after his birth he bowed down and inquired, “Sirs, what shall I do?” The great sages replied, “Please sit down [niṣīda].” Thus Niṣāda, the father of the Naiṣāda race, was born.

PURPORT: It is said in the *śāstras* that the head of the body represents the *brāhmaṇas*, the arms represent the *kṣatriyas*, the abdomen represents the *vaiśyas*, and the legs, beginning with the thighs, represent the *śūdras*. The *śūdras* are sometimes called black, or *kṛṣṇa*. The *brāhmaṇas* are called *śukla*, or white, and the *kṣatriyas* and the *vaiśyas* are a mixture of black and white. However, those who are extraordinarily white are said to have skin produced out of white leprosy. It may be concluded that white or a golden hue is the color of the higher caste, and black is the complexion of the *śūdras*.

46 तस्य वंश्यास्तु नैषादा गिरिकाननगोचराः येनाहरज्जायमानो वेनकल्मषमुल्बणम्

tasya vaṁśyās tu naiṣādā
giri-kānana-gocarāḥ
yenāharaj jāyamāno
vena-kalmaṣam ulbaṇam

tasya – his (Niṣāda's); *vaṁśyāḥ* – descendants; *tu* – then; *naiṣādāḥ* – called Naiṣādas; *giri-kānana* – the hills and forests; *gocarāḥ* – inhabiting; *yena* – because; *aharat* – he took upon himself; *jāyamānah* – being born; *vena* – of King Vena; *kalmaṣam* – all kinds of sin; *ulbaṇam* – very fearful.

After his [Niṣāda's] birth, he immediately took charge of all the resultant actions of King Vena's sinful activities. As such, this Naiṣāda class are always engaged in sinful activities like stealing, plundering, and hunting. Consequently they are only allowed to live in the hills and forests.

PURPORT: The Naiṣādas are not allowed to live in cities and towns because they are sinful by nature. As such, their bodies are very ugly, and their occupations are also sinful. We should, however, know that even these sinful men (who are sometimes called Kirātas) can be delivered from their sinful condition to the topmost Vaiṣṇava platform by the mercy of a pure devotee. Engagement in the transcendental loving devotional service of the Lord can make anyone, however sinful he may be, fit to return home, back to Godhead. One has only to become free from all contamination by the process of devotional service. In this way everyone can become fit to return home, back to Godhead. This is confirmed by the Lord Himself in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.32):

mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya
ye 'pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ
striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās
te 'pi yānti parām gatim

“O son of Pṛthā, those who take shelter of Me, though they be of lower birth – women, *vaiśyas* [merchants], as well as *śūdras* [workers] – can approach the supreme destination.”

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 15

मैत्रेय उवाच

1 अथ तस्य पुनर्विप्रैरपुत्रस्य महीपतेः बाहुभ्यां मध्यमानाभ्यां मिथुनं समपद्यत्

maitreya uvāca
atha tasya punar viprair
aputrasya mahīpateḥ
bāhubhyām mathyamānābhyām
mithunam samapadyata

maitreyaḥ uvāca – Maitreya continued to speak; *atha* – thus; *tasya* – his; *punaḥ* – again; *viprair* – by the *brāhmaṇas*; *aputrasya* – without a son; *mahīpateḥ* – of the King; *bāhubhyām* – from the arms; *mathyamānābhyām* – being churned; *mithunam* – a couple; *samapadyata* – took birth.

The great sage Maitreya continued: My dear Vidura, thus the *brāhmaṇas* and the great sages again churned the two arms of King Vena's dead body. ③ As a result a male and female couple came out of his arms.

2 तद् दृष्ट्वा मिथुनं जातमृषयो ब्रह्मवादिनः ऊचुः परमसन्तुष्टा विदित्वा भगवत्कलाम्

tad dr̥ṣṭvā mithunam jātam
ṛṣayo brahma-vādinah
ūcuḥ parama-santuṣṭā
viditvā bhagavat-kalām

tat – that; *dr̥ṣṭvā* – seeing; *mithunam* – couple; *jātam* – born; *ṛṣayaḥ* – the great sages; *brahma-vādinah* – very learned in Vedic knowledge; *ūcuḥ* – said; *parama* – very much; *santuṣṭāḥ* – being pleased; *viditvā* – knowing; *bhagavat* – of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *kalām* – expansion.

The great sages were highly learned in Vedic knowledge. When they saw the male and female born of the arms of Vena's body, they were very pleased, for they could understand that the couple was an expansion of a plenary portion of Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

PURPORT: The method adopted by the great sages and scholars, who were learned in Vedic knowledge, was perfect. ④ They removed all the reactions of King Vena's sinful activities by seeing that King Vena first gave birth to Bāhuka, described in the previous chapter. After King Vena's body was thus purified, a male and female came out of it, and the great sages could understand that this was an expansion of Lord Viṣṇu. This expansion, of course, was not *viṣṇu-tattva* but a specifically empowered expansion of Lord Viṣṇu known as *āveśa*.

ऋषय ऊचुः

3 एष विष्णोर्भगवतः कला भुवनपालिनी इयं च लक्ष्म्याः सम्भूतिः पुरुषस्यानपायिनी

ṛṣaya ūcuḥ
eṣa viṣṇor bhagavataḥ
kalā bhuvana-pālinī
iyam ca lakṣmyāḥ sambhūtiḥ
puruṣasyānapāyini

ṛṣayaḥ ūcuḥ – the sages said; *eṣaḥ* – this male; *viṣṇoḥ* – of Lord Viṣṇu; *bhagavataḥ* – of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *kalā* – expansion; *bhuvana-pālinī* – who maintains the world; *iyam* – this female; *ca* – also; *lakṣmyāḥ* – of the goddess of fortune; *sambhūtiḥ* – expansion; *puruṣasya* – of the Lord; *anapāyini* – inseparable.

The great sages said: The male is a plenary expansion of the power of Lord Viṣṇu, who maintains the entire universe, and the female is a plenary expansion of the goddess of fortune, who is never separated from the Lord.

PURPORT: The significance of the goddess of fortune's never being separated from the Lord is clearly mentioned herein. People in the material world are very fond of the goddess of fortune, and they want her favor in the form of riches. They should know, however, that the goddess of fortune is inseparable.

- 3) What happened when the *brāhmaṇas* and sages churned King Vena's arms?
- 4) Why was the churning method adopted by the great sages and scholars perfect?

arable from Lord Viṣṇu. Materialists should understand that the goddess of fortune should be worshiped along with Lord Viṣṇu and should not be regarded separately. 5 Materialists seeking the favor of the goddess of fortune must worship Lord Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī together to maintain material opulence. If a materialist follows the policy of Rāvaṇa, who wanted to separate Sītā from Lord Rāmacandra, the process of separation will vanquish him. Those who are very rich and have taken favor of the goddess of fortune in this world must engage their money in the service of the Lord. In this way they can continue in their opulent position without disturbance.

4 अयं तु प्रथमो राज्ञां पुमान् प्रथयिता यशः पृथुर्नाम महाराजो भविष्यति पृथुश्रवाः

*ayam tu prathamo rājñām
pumān prathayitā yaśaḥ
pṛthur nāma mahārājo
bhaviṣyati pṛthu-śravāḥ*

ayam – this; *tu* – then; *prathamah* – the first; *rājñām* – of kings; *pumān* – the male; *prathayitā* – will expand; *yaśaḥ* – reputation; *pṛthuh* – Mahārāja Pṛthu; *nāma* – by name; *mahārājah* – the great king; *bhaviṣyati* – will become; *pṛthu-śravāḥ* – of wide renown.

Of the two, the male will be able to expand his reputation throughout the world. His name will be Pṛthu. Indeed, he will be the first among kings.

PURPORT: There are different types of incarnations of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. 6 In the *sāstras* it is said that Garuḍa (the carrier of Lord Viṣṇu) and Lord Śiva and Ananta are all very powerful incarnations of the Brahman feature of the Lord. 7 Similarly, Śacīpati, or Indra, the King of heaven, is an incarnation of the lusty feature of the Lord. Aniruddha is an incarnation of the Lord’s mind. Similarly, King Pṛthu is an incarnation of the ruling force of the Lord. Thus the saintly persons and great sages predicted the future activities of King Pṛthu, who was already explained as a partial incarnation of a plenary expansion of the Lord.

- 5) How can a materialist gain the favor of the goddess of fortune?
- 6) Of what feature of the Lord are Garuḍa, Lord Śiva, and Ananta expansions?
- 7) Of what feature of the Lord are, respectively, Indra, Aniruddha, and King Pṛthu incarnations?
- 8) What is the name of King Pṛthu’s queen?
- 9) To what category of avatar does King Pṛthu belong?

5 इयं च सुदती देवी गुणभूषणभूषणा अर्चिर्नाम वरारोहा पृथुमेवावरुन्धती

*iyam ca sudatī devī
guṇa-bhūṣaṇa-bhūṣaṇā
arcir nāma varārohā
pṛthum evāvarundhatī*

iyam – this female child; *ca* – and; *su-datī* – who has very nice teeth; *devī* – the goddess of fortune; *guṇa* – by good qualities; *bhūṣaṇa* – ornaments; *bhūṣaṇā* – who beautifies; *arciḥ* – Arci; *nāma* – by name; *vara-ārohā* – very beautiful; *pṛthum* – unto King Pṛthu; *eva* – certainly; *avarundhatī* – being very much attached.

The female has such beautiful teeth and beautiful qualities that she will actually beautify the ornaments she wears. 8 Her name will be Arci. In the future she will accept King Pṛthu as her husband.

6 एष साक्षाद्धरेरंशो जातो लोकरिरक्षया इयं च तत्परा हि श्रीरनुजज्ञेऽनपायिनी

*eṣa sākṣād dharer aṁśo
jāto loka-rirakṣayā
iyam ca tat-parā hi śrīr
anujajñe 'napāyini*

eṣah – this male; *sākṣāt* – directly; *hareḥ* – of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *aṁśah* – partial representative; *jātaḥ* – born; *loka* – the entire world; *rirakṣayā* – with a desire to protect; *iyam* – this female; *ca* – also; *tat-parā* – very much attached to him; *hi* – certainly; *śrīḥ* – the goddess of fortune; *anujajñe* – took birth; *anapāyini* – inseparable.

In the form of King Pṛthu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead has appeared through a part of His potency to protect the people of the world. The goddess of fortune is the constant companion of the Lord, and therefore she has incarnated partially as Arci to become King Pṛthu’s queen.

PURPORT: In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says that whenever one sees an extraordinary power, he should conclude that a specific partial representation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is present. There are innumerable such personalities, but not all of them are direct *viṣṇu-tattva* plenary expansions of the Lord. Many living entities are classified among the śakti-tattvas. Such incarnations, empowered for specific purposes, are known as *śaktyāveśa-avatāras*. 9 King Pṛthu was such a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra* of the Lord. Similarly, Arci, King Pṛthu’s wife, was a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra* of the goddess of fortune.

[Continued in the next issue.]

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

Every Body Is Miserable

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place in Rome in May 1974.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: People are doing all kinds of forbidden activities. Why? What is the purpose? *Nūnam pramattaḥ kurute vikarma yad indriya-prītaya*. The only purpose is sense gratification. The rascal does not think, “I am doing all these sinful activities for sense gratification, and as a result, I will have to accept a very low grade body.” That he does not know. He has already got one low-grade body, and so he is simply suffering. And by his present activities he is guaranteeing that he will get yet another low-grade body – more suffering. And still, he will do everything for sense gratification.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* warns him, *na sādhu manye yata ātmano 'yam*: “Oh, it is not good. This kind of activity has already covered your soul by a miserable body.”

“Well, this body is temporary. I’m not going to worry.”

“Then take another body, rascal. This body is temporary – but after this life you will get another body. Most abominable. So why are you doing this kind of nonsense? Yes, this body is temporary, but why don’t you understand that it is also *kleśada*: it is always subjected to the miserable conditions of the material world? You know this body is miserable, and any other body you

get will be miserable. So why do you keep getting these bodies? Stop these activities.”

This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But people do not know that any type of material body you accept will be miserable. For instance, they have constructed this comfortable building, but if for only a few hours there is severe cold, many people may die, even in this building. Isn't it true? So whether you remain in this or that material situation, the sufferings will be there. And just to attain the comfort of this tall building, how much misery one has to go through.

“Sir, I am not going through misery,” the owner says. “The laborers are doing that.”

“But you have to get the money to pay them. How miserable it is to acquire this money to pay the laborers.”

People are simply captivated by money. Otherwise, the whole affair is miserable. Sometimes the laborers fall to their death while constructing a skyscraper, do they not? And I have heard that in New York, many buildings have no tenants. Another misery. The owner of the place – he is also suffering. “I have spent so much money, but no tenants.” For the last six or seven years, the tallest building in London has been vacant.

Disciple: On Tottenham Court Road.

Yes, that big one.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes [laughing]. The owner's misery is that if he kept tenants, that would be still more miserable than going without tenants. Isn't it so? Yes. Therefore he remains without tenants – because he would have to pay so many taxes that it would be more miserable. So he is avoiding that. In summary, constructing the building was troublesome, and now, keeping it is also troublesome. To search out pleasure, people have manufactured so many things – this thing or that thing. But still they cannot enjoy it. For a few minutes they can enjoy it, then once again it is useless. “Let us go away.”

Disciple: Sometimes people wonder, “How can I be sure that I can actually become a bird or a dog?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Where are all these birds and dogs coming from? Let these people answer. Where are all these birds and dogs coming from?

Disciple: Well, most people say from other birds and dogs.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That you may think, but you do not know the natural law. Nature is providing these bodies, and your past activities force you to accept them. Take this apartment – either you accept it or someone else accepts it. Similarly, this body is an apartment. Nature provides it, and you

have to accept it. We are all spiritual entities, and under nature's direction we are changing material bodies. My past activities may force me to change to one kind of body. His past activities may force him to change to another kind of body. Is that unreasonable? In our next lives this person may accept my kind of body, and I may accept his kind of body. This is simply an apartment change. I may go to one kind of apartment, he may go to another kind. But anyway, nature is providing so many apartments.

You may say, “No, no. I am not going to accept that apartment.”

Nature will reply, “No, no. It is not your decision any longer. How much ‘money’ [good karma] have you accumulated, sir, to pay for your accommodations?”

“I have no money.”

“All right. Then go to this apartment.”

And you must accept that apartment. *Karmaṇā daiva-netreṇa:* by your past activities it will be decided what kind of apartment you will get. It is not your decision.

Many a rascal thinks that now that he has gotten a human body, he can never again be degraded to the animal species. That is very palatable. [Laughing.] But nature will force him to accept the body of a cat or dog. The decision is not yours but that of the superior authorities – just as in the office, when you get promoted or demoted the decision is not yours but that of the directors. You cannot say, “No, no. I am not going to accept this new post.” No. You have to accept.

Kāraṇam guṇa-saṅgaḥ asya sad-asad-yoni-janmasu: these different types of bodies are due to your past association with the different modes of material nature. Otherwise, why are there so many varieties? One person has become a crow; another person has become a sparrow; another person has become a dog; another person has become a cat; another person has become a tree; another person has become a blade of grass. Nature is so expert, though, that in spite of these different varieties of misery, she assembles them in such a nice way that they look very beautiful. 🌸

CALENDAR

This calendar is calculated for Mayapur, 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.krishnadays.com.

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 4–March 5)

MARCH

1 – Amalakī-vrata Ekādaśī

Fasting from grains and beans.

2 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master.

5 – 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.

Month of Viṣṇu

(March 6–April 4)

14 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, one of Lord Caitanya's principal associates.

17 – Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

24 – Appearance anniversary of Rāmānujācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the eleventh century.

28 – Śrī Rāma Navamī, the appearance anniversary of Lord Rāmacandra. Fasting till sunset, then feasting.

31 – Kāmadā Ekādaśī

Fasting from grains and beans.

APRIL

4 – Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vasanta Rāsa, Lord Kṛṣṇa's springtime rāsa dance. Balarāma Rāsa Yātrā, Lord Balarāma's rāsa dance. Appearance



Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

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 5–May 4)

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

15 – Varūthinī Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

18 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, one of Lord Caitanya's principal associates.

21 – Beginning of Candana Yātrā, the festival of anointing the temple deity with sandalwood pulp for twenty-one days.

27 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sītā Devī, the consort of

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

29 – Mohinī Ekādaśī

Fasting from grains and beans.

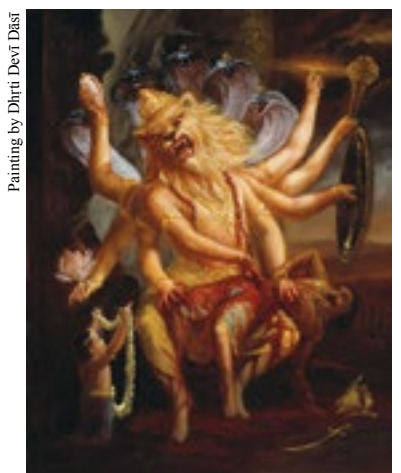
30 – Rukmiṇī Dvādaśī, the appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī Devī, the consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa as Dvārakādhīśa, the Lord of Dvārakā.

MAY

1 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jayānanda Prabhu, a dedicated disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who helped him bring the Ratha-yātrā festival to the Western world.

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

4 – 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).



Lord Nṛsimhadeva

TEMPLE OF THE VEDIC PLANETARIUM

Mayapur, West Bengal, India

The largest Vedic temple to be built in thousands of years. To learn about the project, keep track of its progress, and see how you can get involved, visit www.tovp.org, www.facebook.com/tovp.mayapur, www.youtube.com/user/tovpinfo





ISKCON's new temple in Houston (left), located about eight miles from downtown, offers the city's growing community of Kṛṣṇa devotees an ideal place to serve the Lord. Main photo: The temple's Kṛṣṇa deity, Śrī Nīla-Mādhava, plays His ever-enchanting flute.

A Texas-Sized Temple with Room to Grow

A dedicated congregation has developed the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in Houston into a vibrant center of devotion.

by Sārvabhauma Dāsa

Photos by Thejas K. Rajaram, Nāmānanda Dāsa, Ruchi Sinha, Pavan Kumar, Chaitanya Kapadia, and Abhay Joshi.

TEXAS IS A BIG state, but Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple Dīna Bandhu Dāsa recalls how the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness in Houston, Texas, began in a small way.

"When my wife [Ākuṭī Devī Dāsī] and I arrived in Houston in 1971," he says, "Prahādānanda Dāsa was the temple president at 406 Gray St. It was a dilapidated two-story wooden building just outside downtown, in a very bad neighborhood. The plaster was no longer on the walls; only the lathe was there, and the wind used to blow right through the wood siding into the temple room. We felt the place was haunted."





Dvārakānātha Dāsa (left), who has been with the temple since 1975, offers a lamp to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Nīla-Mādhava (right) during the opening-day ceremonies.



He and Ākūtī had come to Houston in the wake of the pioneering devotees who brought Kṛṣṇa consciousness to Texas – Viṣṇujana Swami and his *brahmacārī* assistant, Śrīnātha Dāsa. In 1970 the two saffron-clad monks hitchhiked west on U.S. Interstate 10 from Florida and got dropped off in Houston, sometimes called “Space City,” as it is a major NASA communications center. In February 1971 Prabhupāda wrote to Viṣṇujana in Houston to encourage him in his service there.

More than a decade later, after the devotees had moved to another building, Kālakanṭha Dāsa served as Houston’s temple president.

“In 1984,” he says, “ISKCON Houston was in a damaged building in an unattractive part of downtown on Rosalie Street. Rats were a constant problem, and our small band of devotees struggled to serve Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi nicely.”

Houston’s Indian Community

With a warm climate similar to that of India, an economy energized by an oil

boom from the late 1970s to mid-1980s, and easing U.S. immigration laws that enabled more foreign nationals to work in America, Houston’s Indian population grew. While the new arrivals came mainly to improve their standard of living, many were happy to discover the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple on Rosalie Street, simple as it was, with *prasāda*, spirited *kīrtanas*, and effulgent deities of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu – called Śrī Śrī Nitāi-Caitanyacandra.

The temple members were all non-Indians, though one of them, Brahma-tīrtha Dāsa, had been a Peace Corps volunteer in India and had had lively talks with Śrīla Prabhupāda (recorded in *Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers*). In 1975, while at a grocery store shopping for the temple, Brahma-tīrtha met young Deepak Patel and invited him to the Sunday feast. Deepak, from Gujarat, western India, was a mechanical engineering graduate who had recently started working in Houston.

Fascinated to meet an American

Vaiṣṇava in dhoti and *tilaka*, Deepak, who was not married, enjoyed the Sunday feast, moved near the temple, began coming daily, and even stayed at the temple on weekends.

“There were only five or six devotees at that time,” Deepak recalls, “and I felt at home. They taught me to wear a dhoti, and every Sunday I would go with the devotees to chant *hari-nāma* at Herman Park.”

At Brahma-tīrtha’s request, Deepak began his first temple service: every Saturday he would shop for groceries and other temple supplies. Even though he has worked fulltime since the mid-1970s (and later married and raised three daughters with his wife, Subhadrā Devī Dāsī), Deepak has continued this shopping service uninterrupted for the last forty years. In 1984 he received initiation and the name Dvārakānātha Dāsa from Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami, and for nearly thirty years he has blissfully performed temple deity worship several days a week.



On opening day (right) many guests take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about Kṛṣṇa consciousness (left).

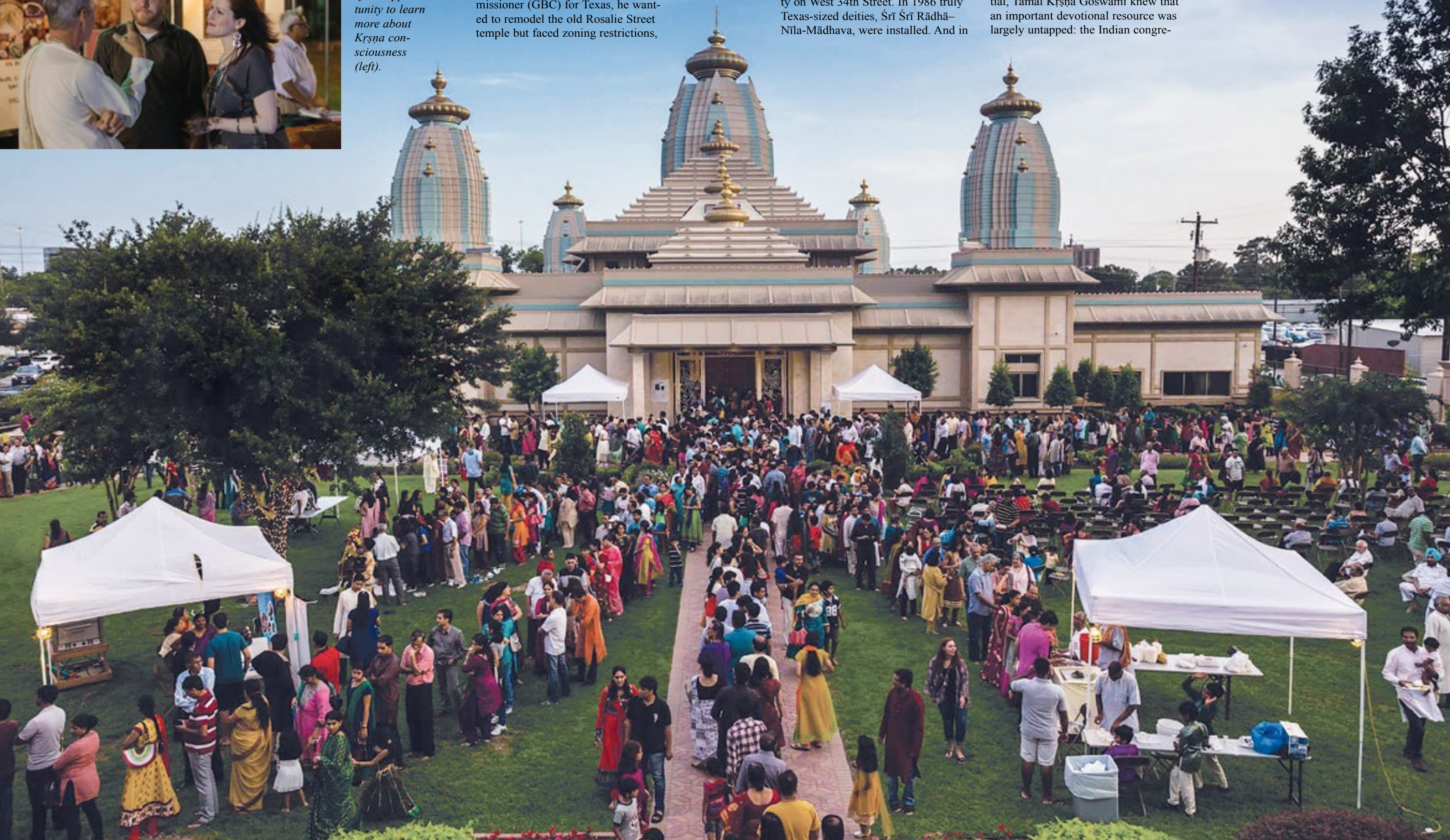
A New Temple Location

Dvārakānātha Dāsa recalls that when Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami became ISKCON's Governing Body Commissioner (GBC) for Texas, he wanted to remodel the old Rosalie Street temple but faced zoning restrictions,

scarce parking, and a declining neighborhood. When a developer offered to buy the Rosalie property in 1984, Goswami decided to move the temple to its current location, a larger property on West 34th Street. In 1986 truly Texas-sized deities, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Nīla-Mādhava, were installed. And in

1990, B. B. Govinda Swami brought an unusually large *śilā* (stone) from Govardhan Hill in Vrindavan to be worshiped on the temple altar.

Although the new place had potential, Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami knew that an important devotional resource was largely untapped: the Indian congre-





The spacious, well-stocked gift shop (top) serves as a valuable resource for devotional supplies. Śrī Śrī Nītāi-Caitanyacandra (above) are the original ISKCON Houston deities. At right, the unusually large śilā (stone deity) of Śrī Girirāja Kṛṣṇa has been worshiped on the altar since 1990.



gation. After the deity installation, Goswami asked an Indian devotee to serve as temple president, and he invited uninitiated Indian congregational members – with jobs and families – to become board members and oversee the temple finances and other matters.

Goswami encouraged the board members and their families to increase their chanting and other devotional practices. When asked to perform a particular service, if they protested, “We are not qualified,” Goswami would reply, “Become qualified.” Eventually many devotees of Indian ancestry received initiation, beginning with Caitanya Dāsa (who became the temple’s head *pūjārī* in 1993), his wife Draupadī Devī Dāsī, his father Janaka Mahārāja Dāsa, and Dīnanātha Dāsa.

In 1992 Śyāmasundara Dāsa, from Gujarat, became the temple president, a service he performed, while keeping a full-time job, until his recent retirement. He led an extraordinary effort to design, finance, and build the impressive state-of-the-art temple that recently celebrated its grand opening.

Houston’s Bhakti-ṛkṣa Group

Organized by the couple Advaitacandra Dāsa and Kālaśuddhā Devī Dāsī, once a week about two hundred devotees meet in eleven groups (known as Bhakti-ṛkṣa, or “tree of devotion”) in Houston-area residences to chant, discuss Kṛṣṇa conscious topics, and enjoy a *prasāda* dinner. Although initially Kṛṣṇa consciousness was new to many, a number have taken spiritual initiation and offer valuable services such as cooking, deity worship, book dis-

The beautiful new greenhouse (top) is the home of Śrīmatī Tulasī Devī, the intimate devotee of Kṛṣṇa who chooses to serve Him in the form of a plant (above).



Bas-reliefs depicting Kṛṣṇa's pastimes (top) grace the outside walls of the temple. Above, gardens beautify the grounds and provide a source of flowers for worship, as exemplified by the exquisite flower backdrop for Śrīla Prabhupāda on opening day (right). Above right, the spacious temple resounds with the chanting of the mahā-mantra.



tribution, management, and outreach. While most of the Bhakti-ṛkṣa participants are from the Indian community, one group consists mainly of westerners, and a Hispanic group meets intermittently.

David Garvin exemplifies the benefits of the Bhakti-ṛkṣa experience. A practitioner of Buddhist meditation for twenty years (including nearly two years in monasteries in Thailand and Japan), in 2010 he received copies of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books in Dallas and Houston. Impressed, he attended talks by a visiting ISKCON swami, and a devotee invited him to join the Friday evening Bhakti-ṛkṣa group in

Sugarland, a Houston suburb near his home.

Every Friday evening David enjoyed philosophical discussion, *kīrtana*, devotee association, and *prasāda*. Enlivened, he began to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda's books at outreach events and assist in Bhakti-ṛkṣa programs. He was asked to head the temple's Bhaktivedanta Book Trust department, and with the help of about fifteen volunteer distributors, the book sales have increased each year since 2012. Recently, David received initiation and the spiritual name Dayāla Nitāi Dāsa.

In 2000 a South Indian couple – Sāraṅga Ṭhākura Dāsa and Sevā-priyā

Devī Dāsī – were among four families in Houston's first Bhakti-ṛkṣa group, near downtown. When the families eventually moved to different suburbs, they missed the Friday spiritual get-togethers and formed new groups. Currently, Sāraṅga Ṭhākura and Sevā-priyā host a Bhakti-ṛkṣa program in their home in Katy, Texas. And while the adults meet, their fourteen-year-old son Devesh leads the kids, joined by his younger sister, Aaradita. Although Sāraṅga Ṭhākura has a full-time job, he is a member of the six-devotee temple management team and performs temple deity worship thrice weekly. Sevā-priyā homeschools her

children, yet she also cooks for and dresses the temple deities and organizes a *Bhagavad-gītā* camp attended by about sixty-five children each summer. At outreach events the whole family distributes books and serves *prasāda*, and Devesh plays the *mṛdaṅga* drum and often leads *kīrtanas*.

ISKCON Youth

A number of youth have grown up along with the temple, and they like devotional service, especially *kīrtana*. Although now busy with college or jobs, they exuberantly enhance temple *kīrtanas* and render a variety of servic-



es. Several young people who attended the temple Sunday school now teach in the Sunday school themselves.

When I first heard seventeen-year-old Anish Pillai chanting melodically on the harmonium before Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Nīla-Mādhava in 2007, I felt hope for the future of ISKCON in Houston. Now, as Nīla-Mādhava Dāsa and a recent college graduate, he works in hospital administration at Houston Medical Center. His youth *kīrtana* group, Jīva Jāgo, has recorded a CD, and they often chant at temples, festivals, and yoga centers.

New Temple School

On Rādhāṣṭamī in 2014, Goswami Academy opened for pre-kindergarten children, with plans to expand through grade four. Emphasizing both creative academics and spiritual values, the school, led by Śubra Devī Dāsī, an experienced teacher and administrator, is located in the temple's spacious Gauranga Hall.

Prasāda Distribution

For twenty years Kṛṣṇa Kṛpā Dāsa served *prasāda* to Rice University students through a vegetarian club, and in the past the temple has provided *prasāda* to Houston's SEARCH Homeless Services, the SHAPE Center, and Our Lady of Guadalupe church. In August 2005, when 150,000 New Orleans evacuees took shelter in Houston after Hurricane Katrina, devotees delivered hot *prasāda* to

Girirāja Swami worships the new deities Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Giridhārī (above). At right, Jayānanda Dāsa, ISKCON minister of deity worship for North America, performs the traditional fire sacrifice.



thousands of refugees. Currently the devotees provide extra *prasāda* to Food Not Bombs and serve thousands at outdoor festivals.

Outreach Events

On visits to Houston, Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami encouraged devotees to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness not only to Houston's Indian community but also to people of all backgrounds. In the late 1990s they brought *prasāda* and *kīrtana* to a yoga center run by a Peruvian gentleman. Intrigued, a

Hispanic yoga student decided to come to *maṅgala-ārati* at 4:30 A.M. to meditate. She loved the temple, became a devotee, received the name Mānasī Gaṅgā Devī Dāsī, and is now on the temple management team. In recent years devotees have served *prasāda* and distributed books at the Texas Yoga Association Convention and chanted at several yoga centers. Gurubhakti Devī Dāsī (Dr. Hansa Medley), a medical doctor, serves as temple outreach coordinator. Devotees set up literature tables and *prasāda* booths at many festivals, including

Houston International Festival, Summerfest, Bayou City Art Festival, White Linen Festival, and Vegfest. They also chant on a decorated vehicle in the annual Houston Art Car Parade, attended by 100,000 Houstonians each spring. The devotees perform *kīrtana* and distribute *prasāda* and books at the annual Houston observance of Earthdance, a simultaneous global dance for peace in over a hundred cities worldwide. In recent years the devotees have helped an Orissan family celebrate Jagannātha Rathayātrā at Discovery Green, a prestigious downtown Houston venue.

Interfaith Support

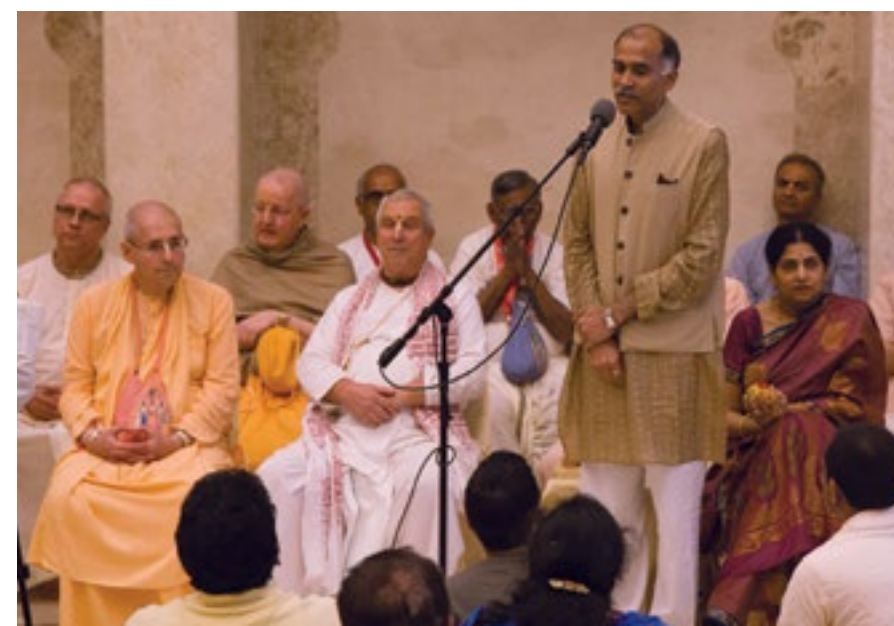
After the Kazakh government raided the Hare Kṛṣṇa community in Kazakhstan in 2006, B. B. Govinda Swami toured the West to gather support. When he and his group of chanters visited Houston, the devotees



Classical Indian dance (above) conveys devotional messages from the festival stage. At left, Rabbi Elliot Gershenson, CEO of Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston, receives a commemorative plaque from Gurubhakti Devī Dāsī. Below left, Parvathaneni Harish, Consul General of India for Houston, addresses the audience.

held a fund-raising concert and dinner attended by congregation members and representatives of temples, churches, and mosques.

Gurubhakti Devī Dāsī is on the board of advisors of Hindus of Greater Houston (HGH), which represents fifty temples and an estimated 120,000 Indo-Americans in Greater Houston. In 2010, HGH asked young devotees to perform *kīrtana* on the main stage at their Janmāṣṭamī festival at Houston's George Brown Convention Center, and HGH widely promoted a talk by Rādhānāth Swami. The temple works also with Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston (IM), which refers school and church groups for temple tours. IM's president, Rabbi Elliot Gershenson, commended the devotees at the temple opening.



Devotee Care

In 2010, when Jananivāsini Rādhā Devī Dāsī, a disciple of Bhaktitīrtha Swami, was passing away in Houston, Saṅgītā Devī Dāsī (Susan Pattinson, R.N.) visited to try to help. A professional hospice nurse and author of *The Final Journey: Complete Hospice Care for Departing Vaiṣṇavas*, she also taught a seminar on devotee care. When she encouraged Houston devotees to form a Vaiṣṇava care team, about fifteen volunteered, and they have helped several departing devotees. One of the volunteers is an elderly Bengali devotee, Kṛṣṇa Bhakti Devī Dāsī. Her husband, Dr. P. K. De, developed a water filter for tem-

ple kitchens and donated several to the Mayapur temple.

A Heavy Yet Delicate Move

Before the new temple opening, Their Lordships – 1,300-pound Śrī Nīla-Mādhava and His 900-pound consort, Śrī Rādhā – had to be safely conveyed thirty-five yards from the old temple to Their new altar. Yaśomati-nandana Dāsa, who had moved Rādhā-Nīla-Mādhava onto Their original altar twenty-eight years earlier, came from New York to help. Using a heavy-duty handcart, the devotees carefully rolled each deity up a specially built ramp, one at a time, as Nīla Mādhava Dāsa led the prayerful devotees, including

Girirāja Swami and Ṛtadhvaja Swami, in a sweet *kīrtana*. Although the devotees were concerned, the deities moved safely up the ramp and onto the altar.

The New Temple

Just before the grand opening, Allan Turner, a senior reporter for Houston’s largest newspaper, *The Houston Chronicle*, wrote, “Built on the site of a former Baptist church, Houston’s new Hare Krishna temple seems impressive by any measure.” Outside, the top of the *cakra* (disc) crowning the main temple dome is 98 feet above the ground. Inside, a massive twelve-ton canopy of eight teakwood domes



Whether the event is a grand opening or a weekly Sunday Love Feast, the temple kitchen (left) always provides plenty of opportunity for hands-on service to the Lord. Below left, Hanumatpreśaka Swami speaks to guests from the Mormon faith. Below, a meditative flute-player accompanies a kīrtana.



hangs above the altar. Seven artisans in Kerala, South India spent seven years hand carving the canopy and the matching temple doors. Marble from Spain, arrayed in ornate patterns including lotus designs, bedecks the temple floor.

and logged thousands of miles in his car. Vaibhavī Devī Dāsī advised on color schemes and the octagonal shape of the inner domes, and Keśava Bhāratī Goswami gave important aesthetic feedback. Substantial financial support came from the late Dr. Raj Dhingra.

Devotees Who Made It Happen

Congregational member Arun Kothari, a general contractor, donated time, expertise, and money over many years

The Grand Opening

On May 16–18, 2014, the celebration attracted ten thousand visitors, ten
(please turn to page 58)

THE ULTIMATE RESCUE MISSION

Out of His infinite mercy, Lord Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to deliver us from our inevitable suffering in the material world.

by Purushottam Kumar

PEOPLE IN INDIA are generally able to understand that God can appear as an incarnation. Especially among the Hindu community, people are aware of the ten famous incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu, and Lord Kṛṣṇa is counted among those ten. What people do not know is that Kṛṣṇa, although appearing as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, is the source of all incarnations. An even lesser known fact is that the same Kṛṣṇa appeared as Lord Caitanya 529 years ago on the most magnanimous mission, one that has no comparison in history.

Glorifying Lord Caitanya's magnanimity, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, quoting a verse by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, writes:

*anarpita-carīm cirāt karuṇayāvātīrṇaḥ
kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām
sva-bhakti-śriyam*

*hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-
sandīpitaḥ
sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ
śacī-nandanah*

“May the Supreme Lord who is known as the son of Śrīmatī Śacī-devī be transcendently situated in the innermost chambers of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has appeared in the age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what no incarnation has ever offered before: the most sublime and radiant mellow of devotional service, the mellow of conjugal love.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 1.4*)

Lord Caitanya: The True Savior

If, due to some calamity, people get trapped in an uninhabitable terrain, the government sends a rescue team to bring back the survivors. Lord Caitanya

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu led thousands of Benares residents in chanting the holy names, the city's leading sannyāsī, Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, joined in with his many disciples.



Painting by Locana Dāsa

also came on a save-all mission – to reclaim the suffering souls of this world. Unlike an ordinary rescue effort, however, Lord Caitanya’s task was a bit more difficult. Usually the survivors of any disaster openly welcome the rescue team, eager to accept whatever help they can get. But the people Lord Caitanya came to help cannot recognize and appreciate His help. As a result, they try to run away from Him, or even act against Him or His representatives.

People in this world are suffering from spiritual amnesia; the lost souls are not even ready to acknowledge their miserable condition and thus refuse to accept any medication.

One may challenge, “Why doesn’t God forcibly take us out of suffering?”

queue in an abattoir to get slaughtered but continues munching the tasty green grass, thinking that the bloodstained butcher’s chopper will be merciful to him.

The Holy Name: The Best Medicine

If a disease is severe, then an expert doctor is required for treatment. Lord Caitanya therefore comes as the expert physician to treat all of us. Considering the precarious conditions of the current period, He introduced the simple yet extremely effective medicine of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

The people Lord Caitanya has come to help cannot recognize and appreciate His help – they try to run away.

Although He could drag us back to the spiritual world, He prefers to wait until we want to join Him there. Till then, He allows us to continue living in the material world and enjoying illusory happiness independent of Him. Careful to not interfere with our freedom of choice, He nevertheless constantly reminds us that true happiness will elude us in the material world.

In this world a soul slowly forgets his relationship with the Lord and suffers terribly. Especially in this age of Kali, vice overshadows virtue; irreligion becomes so prominent that true saints get sidelined, hedonistic culture flourishes, and people mostly look for carnal pleasure. By flaunting atheistic ideas and sensual indulgence, people become so degraded that they fall down to the level of animals. Sense control, sex control, and self-control become herculean tasks for all. People hardly endeavor to inquire about the purpose of their existence and don’t have the intelligence to differentiate between matter and spirit. Their condition is akin to a goat that stands in

In His *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu explicates the glories of this great mantra:

Glory to the *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*, which cleanses the heart of all the dust accumulated for years and extinguishes the fire of conditional life, of repeated birth and death. This *saṅkīrtana* movement is the prime benediction for humanity at large because it spreads the rays of the benediction moon. It is the life of all transcendental knowledge. It increases the ocean of transcendental bliss, and it enables us to fully taste the nectar for which we are always anxious.

Anyone and everyone can chant, anywhere and everywhere, loudly or softly or in the mind, individually or in congregation. If done with sincerity, any chanting is effective. Śrīla Prabhupāda recommended that to purify the consciousness one should chant at least sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* daily on beads, a single round being 108 beads. This daily chanting should not be done

silently but should be loud enough so that the chanter can hear the sound. Audible chanting, whether on beads or in congregational *kīrtana*, has the added benefit that anyone who hears it will be purified by the transcendental sound.

Vedic Books Declare Lord Caitanya the Supreme God

Because Lord Caitanya hid His identity, most people are not aware of His supreme divinity. If we turn to the pages of Vedic literature, however, we will be surprised to find that they contain abundant information that proves beyond doubt that Lord Caitanya is in fact the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa Himself. Here are a few references from authentic scriptures.

The *Mahābhārata*’s *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma-stotra* (“The Thousand Names of Viṣṇu”) explains:

*suvarṇa-varṇo hemāṅgo
varāṅgaś candanāṅgadī
sannyāsa-kṛc chamaḥ śānto
niṣṭhā-śānti-parāyaṇaḥ*

“In His early pastimes He appears as a householder with a golden complexion. His limbs are beautiful, and His body, smeared with the pulp of sandalwood, seems like molten gold. In His later pastimes He accepts the *sannyāsa* order, and He is equi-poised and peaceful. He is the highest abode of peace and devotion, for He silences the impersonalist nondevotees.”

In the *Ādi Purāṇa* and the *Nārada Purāṇa*, the Supreme Lord says,

*aham eva dvija-śreṣṭho
nityam pracchanna-vigrahaḥ
bhagavad-bhakta-rūpeṇa
lokaṁ rakṣāmi sarvadā*

“I shall make My advent in the form of a *brāhmaṇa* devotee, and I shall hide my factual identity. I shall deliver all the worlds.”

The *Padma Purāṇa* mentions: “The Supreme Personality, Janārdana, who is the object of the yogis’ meditation, who saves the devotees from various sufferings, who is the master

of all yogic practices, and who is always full of divine transcendental ecstasy and bliss, will appear in His own divine form of Śrī Caitanya.”

In the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself states, “I will take birth as the son of Śacī in Navadvīpa-Mayapur. I will come in My complete spiritual form in the first part of Kali-yuga.”

Finally, while describing the incarnations of the Lord for the four ages, the sage Karabhājana states in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.5.32),

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

“In the age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the names of Kṛṣṇa. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons, and confidential companions.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda endeavored hard to spread the mission and message of Lord Caitanya all over the world. Because of his monumental efforts, today we know that to save our life we need to take shelter of Lord Caitanya. Prabhupāda wanted to make Mayapur, the birthplace of Lord Caitanya, the spiritual capital of the world. The land has tremendous spiritual potency. Scriptures and spiritual authorities reveal that every speck of dust there is laden with Lord Caitanya’s love. To fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda’s wish, ISKCON is building a magnificent temple there: The Temple of the Vedic Planetarium. It will be one of the largest Vedic temples of the world and is poised to become one of the most important Vedic centers, playing a very significant role in spreading the message of Lord Caitanya.

Spiritual Wings

Most religious traditions promise material benefits to their practitioners in return for their religious practices. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, however,

never misguided the populace and never gave any false hope to seekers. He instead explained that no one can achieve permanent peace and happiness in this world because it is designed to give us suffering (*duḥkhalāyam aśāśvatam, Gītā* 8.15). No amount of material gain can reduce our miseries. The only way to get rid of all troubles and attain unlimited happiness is to reestablish our relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa and return to the spiritual world.

If we abide by the instructions of Lord Caitanya and sincerely chant the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, we will soon develop spiritual wings to fly back blissfully to our spiritual home. Let us express our gratitude towards Him by eschewing all material desires and conscientiously using our body, mind, and words in serving, remembering, and glorifying Him. 🌟

Purushottam Kumar is a member of the congregation at ISKCON Kolkata. He works with Tech Mahindra as an associate solution designer.

LOOKING FOR NEWS OF THE HARE KṚṢṆA MOVEMENT?

Log on to www.iskconnews.org



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.iskconnews.org.

MATCHLESS GIFTS (The Movie)

A Case of Spiritual Serendipity

porated his “international society.” By this time, he had initiated almost two dozen students into his newly formed movement, which always seemed to garner good news coverage – almost as if Kṛṣṇa Himself had written the articles. Even while in Butler, shortly after Prabhupāda arrived from India, *The Butler Eagle* announced his journey and mission (September 22, 1965). Then, after a brief period in New York, *The Village Voice* ran an article on him (June 1966). A *New York Post* op-ed piece followed toward summer’s end (September 1), along with one in *The New York Times* (October 10) in the fall. Shortly thereafter, *The East Village Other* (October 15–November 1), a local underground newspaper, honored him with a cover story. [See BTG, July/August 2014.]

What is often left unsaid is that in those very early days of the movement three films emerged, seemingly out of nowhere: (1) A black-and-white project by Richard and Susan Witty,

known as *Matchless Gifts* (22-plus minutes); (2) the similar *Happiness on 2nd Avenue* (8:22 minutes), introduced by CBS news anchor Reid Collins, produced and photographed by Edmund Bert Gerard, and edited by Gloria George. This was an official CBS News presentation, broadcast on national television; and (3) a four-minute clip by Jonas Mekas, a popular figure in the American avant-garde film movement of the mid 1960s. Mekas’s film was distinguished by its quickly alternating images (psychedelic style) and its soundtrack, which featured Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky chanting “Hare Hare” throughout. The present article is about the first of those films.

Spiritual Serendipity

What were the odds that *The New York Times* would happen to have a reporter and a photographer in Tompkins Square Park when Prabhupāda and his early

disciples were there chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* outdoors, perhaps for the first time since he founded his movement? How is it that within the space of a week, one of the original editors of *The East Village Other*, which had just started publishing, also stumbled upon the chanting in the park? Whether one believes it to be divine arrangement or mere coincidence, it seems undeniable that the fates had somehow conspired to document the beginnings of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, and especially the historic first outdoor chanting sessions in the Western world.

Richard and Susan Witty, a husband-and-wife team who had recently returned from a Peace Corps mission in the Philippines, had developed a newfound interest in film and happened to be in Tompkins Square at the right time. Several months before, Richard had taken two film courses at Columbia University, and almost immediately thereafter, he and his wife landed jobs with Leacock-Pennebaker. (Donn Alan



An early film about Śrīla Prabhupāda in New York, misplaced by his first disciples, resurfaces at just the right time.

by Satyarāja Dāsa

AFTER FIRST ARRIVING in America in September of 1965, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda – soon to become the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) – stayed at the Agarwal home in Butler, Pennsylvania. A sponsor from India had made arrangements for him to stay there. Some months later, he relocated to New York, where he was given a room at a prominent yogi’s ashram in uptown Manhattan. He then moved

in with a hippie acquaintance in the Bowery, on the Lower East Side, because his small group of followers told him the young folk downtown would be more receptive to his message. By March of 1966, Prabhupāda, known then as “the Swami,” had in fact gathered regular attendees – young people who liked to hear him speak philosophy and were enamored of his *kīrtana* of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

In May, with the help of several young followers, he rented a “temple” of his own in the East Village, at 26 Second Avenue. The simple storefront had previously been a curio shop called “Matchless Gifts,” its name boldly displayed on a plaque out front. Enjoying the double entendre – for the considerable gifts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness would soon engulf the world – Prabhupāda left the sign in place, just over the main entrance.

Later that summer, Prabhupāda’s following grew and he officially incor-



Yaduvam Dāsa (2)

“D. A.” Pennebaker was a pioneer documentary filmmaker, credited as being one of the preeminent chroniclers of the 60s counterculture. Richard “Ricky” Leacock was also noted for his work in documentary films and is known as one of the founders of *cinéma vérité*.) The Wittys, between the two of them, would learn their craft well.

Brahmānanda Dāsa, an early disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, remembers how the two young filmmakers came in touch with Kṛṣṇa consciousness:

Witty and wife came to Tompkins Square Park on a whim, and they saw the devotees. Gargamuni used

Frames from Matchless Gifts (above). At left, Richard and Susan Witty.

to pass out “Stay High Forever” invitations, a leaflet that was meant to attract young hippies to the movement, and when Richard read it, he asked if he could film the Swami. It was perfect for Richard – he needed to tackle a short film project to show his employers that he and his wife could do a solid documentary on their own, and there we were: a colorful, unusual sight and the perfect subject for a documentary film. Gargamuni agreed to arrange it, but he stipulated that Witty would have to give us a copy of the end result as compensation. So the Wittys came to 26 Second Avenue and filmed a lunch, and they came back to the park to film the *kīrtana* too. He and his wife were young hipster types like us and inquisitive. Śrīla Prabhupāda was very accommodating when they interviewed him. Witty did make a copy of the finished prod-

West 55th Street in the summer of 1979, he was excited about the possibilities of conducting research for his spiritual master’s forthcoming biography of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*. One of his first orders of business as chief researcher was to make an announcement to the devotees: “We are currently looking for people in New York who may have had some interaction with Śrīla Prabhupāda. So when you go out into the streets and meet people, please ask them if they ever met His Divine Grace or if they knew him in any capacity whatsoever.” Baladeva asked them to at least get phone numbers from people, and to bring the numbers back to him.

Sure enough, a devotee met Richard and Susan in uptown Manhattan and managed to secure their number.

additional material by Australian freelance cinematographer William Kerr. He had accumulated bits and pieces from others too. But this was different. What a find! Here Yaduvara discovered excellent-quality clips of the very beginnings of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in New York – Prabhupāda chanting in the park and conveying his teachings in his own inimitable way, the early devotees speaking about the philosophy as they had learned it from him, and so much more. *Matchless Gifts* fit perfectly into Yaduvara’s film biography. He says,

At one point in time, [Richard] decided to donate his film *Matchless Gifts* to the devotees. That point in time exactly coincided with the time that we needed his film to insert in ours. Had it come a month later, our film would have already been released. Who can orchestrate such synchronicity? Certainly not me.

In regard to *Matchless Gifts*, then, we see spiritual serendipity in at least three respects: First of all, Richard and Susan happened to be in Tompkins Square as Prabhupāda’s movement was just getting off the ground. Had they been there a little earlier or a little later, they would not have seen Prabhupāda and the devotees chanting in the park, and there would be no film. In addition, years later they happened to meet a devotee on the streets of New York, who got their phone number. As a result, they gave Baladeva their *Matchless Gifts* movie at just the right time – both for the *Līlāmṛta* and for Yaduvara’s film.

The Wittys Remember Prabhupāda

Years later, Yaduvara met Richard and Susan in New York City. It was the summer of 2004, and Yaduvara had undertaken to combine all the existing footage of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his movement from 1965 to 1977, putting everything in chronological order with overlaid commentary by those who were there. The Wittys immediately expressed an interest to take part in the project.

Yaduvara took the opportunity to interview them about their film, and

Baladeva immediately called and invited them to the temple. The Wittys soon told him about the film, and he offered them free Life Membership in ISKCON in exchange for a copy and permission to use it. They were pleased to contribute their work, yet again, and the enthusiastic Baladeva naturally arranged for an intimate screening the next day. All the resident devotees *ooed* and *ahhed* upon seeing the early footage of the movement.

Puru Dāsa, then custodian of the Prabhupāda Museum at the New York temple, became caretaker of the film and would often host the Wittys at the temple restaurant, which they would now frequent. Aware that Yaduvara Dāsa and his wife, Viśākhā Devī Dāsī, were completing a movie about Śrīla Prabhupāda – *Your Ever Well-Wisher* – and that they were looking for previously unseen footage, Puru handed the Witty film over to them. Yaduvara already had some Prabhupāda movies he had shot on his own, as well as

“Witty did make a copy of the finished product for us. . . . We misplaced it; that was our tendency in those days.”

uct for us, giving us a 16mm film in a can. We misplaced it; that was our tendency in those days.

Prabhupāda’s enthusiasm about the Wittys’ project can be gleaned from a letter to disciple Kīrtanānanda Dāsa, dated Friday, February 10, 1967 (a few months after the filming): “I am glad to learn that the film taken by Mr. Richard Witty has come out very successful. It is all Kṛṣṇa’s blessings. . . .”

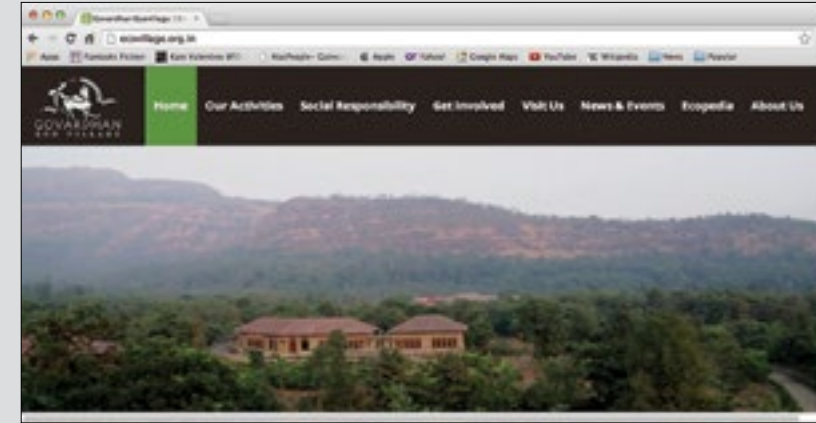
That chapter in ISKCON history quickly closed. The short film was made and shelved. Prabhupāda’s movement went on to spread around the world, and Richard and Susan produced several popular commercial documentaries, some focusing on Eastern mystics. No one in ISKCON heard from the Wittys for over a decade.

The Film Reappears

When Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa Dāsa, a disciple of Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami, arrived at the New York temple on

e-Krishna

Profiles of Kṛṣṇa-related websites



Many ISKCON farm communities around the world are fulfilling Śrīla Prabhupāda’s wish that devotees create self-sustaining rural projects. He wanted these farms to be the perfect places to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to be examples of the benefits of natural living.

Devotees have taken up the challenge of growing their own food, developing cow-protection programs, and following the simple-living/high-thinking way of life of devotional service on the farm. Some of these communities are being recognized as leaders in sustainable living based on renewable resources.

Here are the websites of a few of ISKCON’s successful rural projects.

www.navavrajadhama.hu/en
New Vraja Dhama in Hungary is 200 kilometers from the capital city of Budapest. Established in 1993,

this sustainable farm community is home to around 150 devotees. The residents grow almost all their own food.

The community has created a program called the Eco Valley Foundation to teach people about self-sufficient farm communities and economic sustainability.

www.krishnafarm.net
New Govardhana in Australia is located near Murwillumbah, in the picturesque Tweed Valley, northern New South Wales. It is nestled atop a ridge with magnificent views of the valley.

Established in 1977, the farm has a *gurukula*, a cow-protection program, and extensive organic gardens. Seventy devotees live on the property, and around five hundred live in the surrounding area and are part of the regular congregation.

New Govardhana manages a vol-

unteer program in which people come to stay on the farm, work in the organic gardens, and learn about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. At any time, the popular program has as many as forty volunteers from around the world.

www.newvrindaban.com
Located in the Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia, New Vrindaban was established as ISKCON’s first farm community in 1968. Śrīla Prabhupāda said it should develop a cow-protection program, be self-sufficient, and provide spiritual education.

Today New Vrindaban is developing an eco-village model, has large vegetable and flower gardens, and hosts the longest-running cow-protection program in the Western world. Each year thousands of people visit the farm to take part in programs and festivals.

www.ecovillage.org.in
Govardhan Ecovillage (pictured above) is a farm community and retreat center located 108 km north of Mumbai, India, at the foothills of the Sahyadri mountains. The community manages a cow-protection program, gives shelter to other animals, uses organic farming methods, and has developed renewable-energy sources, including a cow-dung-gas plant and solar-power generation.

Recently Govardhan Ecovillage won the Asian Leadership Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) award for “Best Overall Sustainable Performance.”

– Antony Brennan

they were happy to talk about these early experiences, when they had visually and audibly captured Prabhupāda and his disciples.

“With Leacock-Pennebaker,” says Richard, “I learned to edit, to tape sound, and this film that we’re talking about was my first venture as a cam-

eraman. This was entirely on our own, funding from our own pockets, and we selected this because this was a movement that was different. We liked the Eastern flavor, the otherworldly attitude – the devotees were outside the mainstream, and they had substance too. Something resonated with us.”

Susan Witty remembers the experience as well:

We went to the storefront, *Matchless Gifts*, and I’ve always been so taken with that sign. I can still remember it. It was beautifully done, so artistic, saying “*Matchless Gifts*” –

wonderful colors and swirls and everything. So we entered. It was quite a simple room, and they were eating on the floor . . . My feeling about the Swami is that I think he was in some kind of a mystical state and yet very down to earth, and I think that perhaps he passed something to us in that interview. I felt something. But at the same time, I was having a very good time. I actually thought we were onto something big. I have a journalist's instinct, but I also have . . . a spiritual instinct. After all, this was a very small little room, and the Swami was interviewed by us in the back in a smaller little room with a curtain over it. So to me, that's where it started. Now, maybe it started before in someplace else. But amazing, we were there! And for me, that's very significant.

Richard told Yaduvara that for *Matchless Gifts* he had used 16mm film and Susan had used a Nagra tape recorder, the standard recording system for motion picture and single-camera tele-

vision production at the time. But it was heavy equipment, and they lugged it all – lighting, backdrops, and so on – both to the park and to the temple at 26 Second Avenue.

Susan notes that you can see her in the film, with black turtle-neck sweater and horned-rim glasses.

"I was eating this rice preparation," she says, "and we had become accustomed to such food in the Philippines. We had also become accustomed to the basics of Eastern philosophy. It was as if we were being prepared for meeting the Swami. Also, I was a dancer, and so, seeing the devotees dance in the park – it touched me on a very deep level." Her recollection of Prabhupāda has stayed with her:

I remember [Prabhupāda's] face. I don't remember his body, it's interesting. I remember his face. We did get these wonderful close-ups of his face. That's where his power, his focus, and his calm presence were all gathered – in his face. But here it was the beginning for us for meet-

ing many spiritual masters, and it was also the beginning of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, and it was also the beginning of a trend that grew towards the appreciation of Eastern religions in America.

Richard Witty concludes: "It was rewarding for us to give this film to the devotees, so many years later. It's something we really wanted to do. In that sense, it was 'matchless gifts' for us too." 🙏

Satyarāja Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is a BTG associate editor and founding editor of the Journal of Vaishnava Studies. He has written more than thirty books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness and lives near New York City.

The Wittys' film Matchless Gifts can be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrusnxyNJs0>

OPIUM OF THE MASSES?

(continued from page 26)

despair. Millions bury themselves in pointless distractions like video games, spectator sports, and movies. Even atheists find such obsession undesirable. As American Atheists' founder Madalyn Murray O'Hair commented about contemporary society, "Marx was wrong – religion is not the opiate of the masses, baseball is." But what they often don't realize is that by labeling religion an opiate and turning people away from it, they force them to seek refuge in such opiates.

3. Does religion divert our energy from real well-being?

Atheists argue that just as taking opium distracts people from working for real well-being, so does believing in religion. Is that true?

Religion does indeed direct our vision to another world, an eternal world – the kingdom of God. Does this otherworldly hope make us indolent or impotent to work in this world? No.

This is not to deny that some religious people may neglect their worldly responsibilities. But that's because they misunderstand or misapply the teachings of religion.

What is the nature of religion's actual contributions?

Throughout history:

- Religious believers have created many of the greatest works of art, architecture, and literature. Their belief didn't cause them to reject everything of this world for the sake of God, but inspired them to do wonderful things in this world to glorify God.
- Religious beliefs have motivated millions of people to acts of charity and compassion.

In addition to looking at religion's practical contributions to the world, we also need to assess religion's conceptual attitude towards the world so that we can gauge whether it has an opiate-like effect.

No doubt, religion promises us a better world beyond this world. At the same time, it instructs us that, to attain that world, we need to act morally and responsibly in the here-and-now. This injunction contributes to making things better in this world.

The Vedic worldview informs us that our spiritual development takes us through four progressive stages: dharma (religious practice), *artha* (holistic economic prosperity), *kāma* (physical and emotional satisfaction), and *mokṣa* (liberation from material existence). Thus, it outlines a master plan that integrates both this-worldly and otherworldly well-being.

Similarly, the *Bhagavad-gītā* centers on a call for devotional activism in this world. Arjuna wanted to renounce the world, but Kṛṣṇa instructed him to engage in the world and to engage the world in devotional service by establishing the rule of morality and spirituality in the world.

The *Gītā's* teachings of *bhakti* offer a dynamic way that helps us contribute to this world while also attaining the next world. The path of *bhakti* urges us to neither romanticize nor demonize the world, but instead to utilize it and thereby realize God.

Many people, including most atheists, romanticize the world, picturing it to be the arena where they will fulfill their fantasies. When the world dashes and smashes their dreams, they sometimes oscillate to the other extreme

and demonize it; they paint it as an intrinsically evil place to be shunned at all costs.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.64) urges us to avoid attachment and aversion, thereby pointing to a balance between these two poles of romanticizing and demonizing. Further, the *Gītā* (5.29) declares that the world belongs to God, Kṛṣṇa, and so should be used for His service. When we lovingly offer the resources of the world to the Lord of the world, this devotional contact with the all-pure Lord purifies us. This purification peels away the layers of ignorance and forgetfulness that have obscured our spiritual identity for eons.

As we progressively realize who we actually are, we understand that rendering devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is our natural, eternal activity as His

That same rejuvenating potency of religion is available to us too. All we need to do is assimilate and apply the principles of *bhakti*, which the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66) indicates is the summit of religion. Thus, the true contribution of religion, especially in its highest expression of *bhakti*, is far from that of an opiate. And its contribution is far higher than merely being a source of better physical and mental health, though these may come out. It provides a lasting and fulfilling direction for our innermost longing for love. By so doing, it makes our life meaningful, purposeful, joyful. Nothing enriches our life as does *bhakti*.

Atheism, on the other hand, devalues life into a meaningless accident, a procession of dead chemicals. It offers little if any reason for compassion

Atheism offers little if any reason for compassion and all reasons to use anything and anyone for one's own pleasure.

beloved children. This understanding inspires us to continue serving Kṛṣṇa with conviction and devotion. Then, as we rise towards God-realization, we discover that all the peace and joy we were constantly searching for externally was present all along in our own hearts in the form of Kṛṣṇa, the source of all peace and joy. Helping us get that realization is the world's ultimate purpose. Thus, *Gītā* wisdom helps us steer clear of the extremes of romanticizing and demonizing in dealing with the world. By showing us the middle path of utilizing, it leads us to life's ultimate perfection: realizing Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda demonstrated this devotional dynamism in our times. Did the religion of *bhakti* make him inactive when he could have been active? Far from it, it made him super-active at an age when most people become inactive. Despite being over seventy, Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled all over the world several times, wrote dozens of books, and established more than a hundred temples. For him, religion was not an opiate, but a vitalizer.

and all reasons to use anything and anyone for one's own pleasure. For the atheist, this life is all that exists, it is meant only for enjoyment, and there's no God to oversee how we get that enjoyment. Such a worldview fosters immorality and corruption and degradation.

So, if evidence and reasoning were allowed to speak, perhaps the question would need to be turned around: might atheism be the opium of the masses? Could it be a deceptive and destructive opium that has been widely fed to people in the name of science, secularism, and social progress, while it actually erodes the foundations of our material and spiritual well-being? 🙏

Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa is a disciple of His Holiness Rādhānāth Swami. He holds a degree in electronic and telecommunications engineering and serves full time at ISKCON Pune. He is the author of eleven books. To read his other articles or to receive his daily reflection on the Bhagavad-gītā, "Gita-Daily," visit thespiritualscientist.com.

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The Alarm Is Ringing

AFTER LORD VIṢṆU CREATED the raw materials for the universe, the Vedic literature tells us, the first created being to appear was Brahmā. He didn't know who he was, where he was, or what he was supposed to do.

Sound familiar? We all start life like that. Unfortunately, it seems most people today choose to stay that way.

Brahmā, though, was what we might call a seeker. He wasn't content to sit in ignorance atop his unusual perch, the whorl of a lotus of cosmic proportions. So he decided to investigate. He climbed down and down and down the lotus stem, but after exploring for thousands of years, he could not find its source.

On returning to his lotus seat, Brahmā twice heard two syllables resounding through the sky: *ta-pa* (penance). He was being told that to discover the truth about his existence he must perform austere meditation. He obeyed the instruction and eventually received the audience of Lord Viṣṇu, the source of the instruction and the lotus. Lord Viṣṇu directed Brahmā in his task of building up the universe from the parts He'd supplied, and He disclosed His eternal abode of unlimited knowledge and happiness.

An important lesson here is that Brahmā recognized that the sound *ta-pa* was the voice of authority from beyond this world. We live in an age of great mistrust of authority, and when that mistrust makes us reject the very idea of unimpeachable spiritual guidance, we risk wasting our valuable human life.

Brahmā began his search for truth by trying to figure everything out by his own guesswork. Unsuccessful, he decided to take another approach: research. But his expedition down the lotus stem didn't work either. Eventually he knew he'd never reach the end of his experiment. And his time was

running out. He'd spent his whole life in a fruitless search.

When you're lost, the best approach to finding your way is often to find a little humility within yourself and ask someone for guidance.

For nearly fifty years now, Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees have been distributing the books of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda all over the world. Why? Because those books – mostly translations, with commentary, of Vedic texts – are equivalent to the transcendental sound Brahmā heard. Brahmā accepted that sound as coming from God, took its guidance, and realized God, himself, and his purpose.

The Vedic literature, especially the four original *Vedas*, are known as *śabda-brahma*, or spiritual sound – eternal sound that contains within it all knowledge. The *Vedas* are not created works; they coexist with God eternally. Great seers of bygone eras retrieved them through devotional meditation and transposed them for use by us everyday humans.

People today tend either to know nothing about the *Vedas* or to belittle them. And without an expert guide, even people attracted to Vedic literature give up in confusion.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's books can clear the confusion and awaken awe for the *Vedas*. The books from the Vedic library that Śrīla Prabhupāda chose to present are filled with transformative spiritual power. We're all eternal spiritual beings, but we're asleep in our material bodies, our present short life of no more eternal significance than the dream we had last night. The *Vedas* are the alarm to wake us up to reality. If we ignore that transcendental sound calling to us from our eternal home, we're like the dreamer who thinks his ringing alarm clock to be a sound within his dream. He just snoozes on, sunk in deep illusion while life passes by.

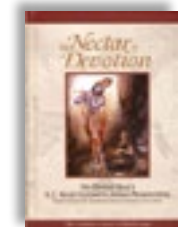
– Nāgarāja Dāsa

Śrīla Prabhupāda

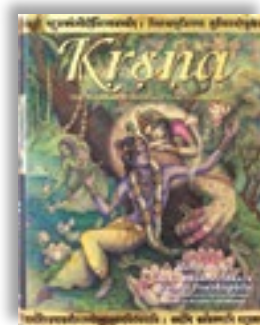
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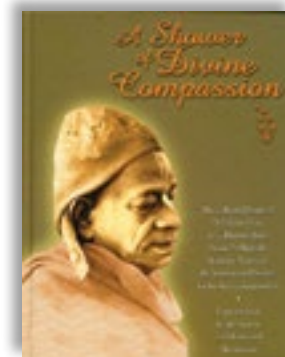
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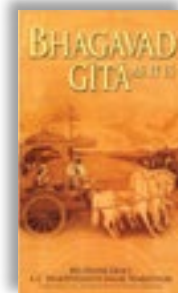
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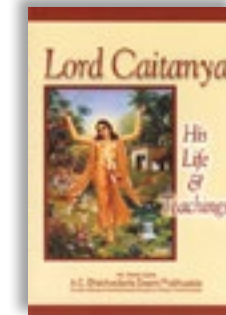


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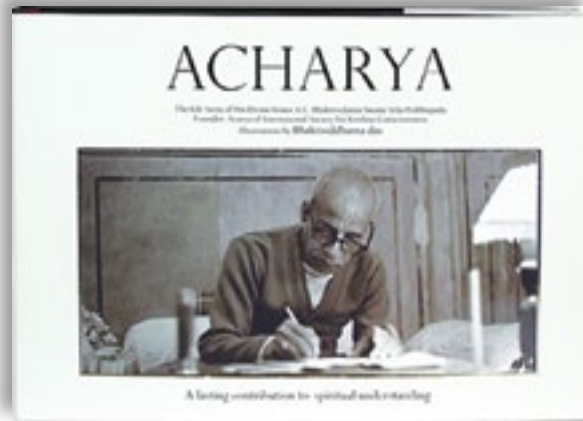
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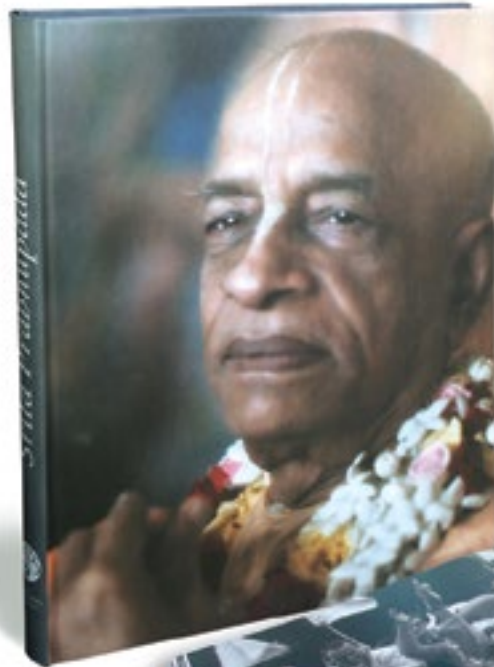


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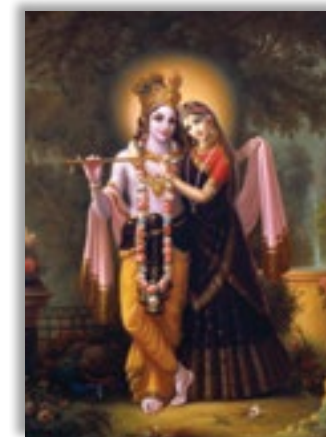
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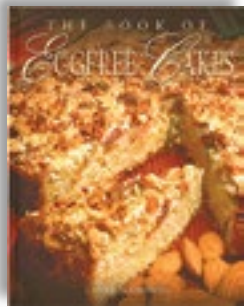
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Stainless-Steel Thali Set – This set includes a large plate, four bowls, a cup, and a spoon, all made from sturdy stainless steel. The 11" plate has a 1" rim with a lip to help prevent spills and for easy carrying. The cup is approximately 4½" deep and 3" in diameter. The bowls are 3¼" wide with a 1¼" base. All stainless steel. **\$17.95** S2WT599



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VEDIC THOUGHTS

Religious systems are meant to show the existence of God, who is then generally approached as the cosmic order-supplier. But Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's transcendental mission is to distribute love of Godhead to everyone. Anyone who accepts God as the Supreme can take to the process of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and become a lover of God. Therefore Lord Caitanya is the most magnanimous. This munificent broadcasting of devotional service is possible only for Kṛṣṇa Himself. Therefore Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 4.41, Purport

One is immediately freed from the clutches of *māyā* if he seriously and sincerely says, "My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, although I have forgotten You for so many long years in the material world, today I am surrendering unto You. I am Your sincere and serious servant. Please engage me in Your service."

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.33

When a man is sleeping, all his material assets – namely, the vital energy, the senses for recording knowledge, the senses for working, the mind, and the intelligence – cannot arouse him. He can be aroused only when the Supersoul helps him. Therefore, through devotion, detachment, and advancement in spiritual knowledge acquired through concentrated devo-

tional service, one should contemplate that Supersoul as present in this very body although simultaneously apart from it.

Lord Kapila
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.26.71–72

A faithful man who is dedicated to transcendental knowledge and who subdues his senses is eligible to achieve such knowledge, and having achieved it he quickly attains the supreme spiritual peace. But ignorant and faithless persons who doubt the revealed scriptures do not attain God consciousness; they fall down. For the doubting soul there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Bhagavad-gītā 4.39–40

The Lord has a form full of faultless qualities, which is independent. He is devoid of the qualities of lifeless, material bodies. All the parts of His body, such as hands, feet, head, and belly, are bliss alone.

Dhyāna-bindu Upaniṣad
Quoted in Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.1

Oh my dear Lord Hari [Kṛṣṇa]! If a greatly fortunate soul somehow or other gets a chance to drink just one priceless nectar-drop sprayed from the ocean of love emanating from Your lotus feet, then all of his miseries are instantly repelled to a far distant place.

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura
Śrī Gītā-mālā, Song 14

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