

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



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Of the
Hare Krishna
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BACK to GODHEAD

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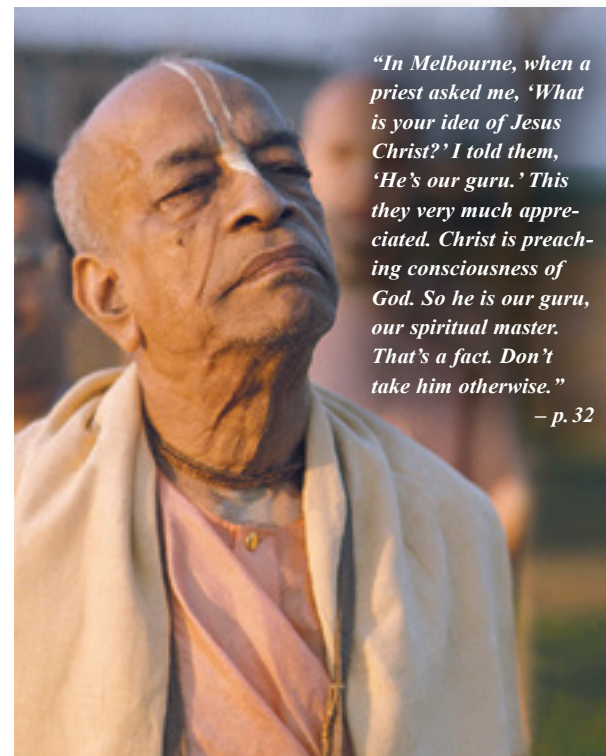
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COVER In a scene from the epic *Mahābhārata*, enacted by Kṛṣṇa devotees in the UK, the Lord protects the chastity of His dear devotee Draupadī by supplying her with an endless *sari*. Please see the article beginning on page 41. (Photo by David Crick.)



"In Melbourne, when a priest asked me, 'What is your idea of Jesus Christ?' I told them, 'He's our guru.' This they very much appreciated. Christ is preaching consciousness of God. So he is our guru, our spiritual master. That's a fact. Don't take him otherwise."
— p. 32

WELCOME



His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupāda understood the power of theater to inform and inspire, and he encouraged his disciples to deliver Kṛṣṇa consciousness

through plays. In this issue's cover story, Jaya Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, a longtime member of a UK-based acting troupe, tells his story.

Last summer, the troupe performed the *Mahābhārata*, whose cast of characters includes the tragic hero Karṇa. Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa discusses some of the issues involving this compelling figure.

The opening illustration for his article depicts Karṇa straining to free his stuck chariot, the common conveyance of the time, as well as a handy metaphor for ancient teachers. Satyarāja Dāsa's "Chariot of the Soul" presents some versions of the chariot metaphor used by Western and Vedic teachers.

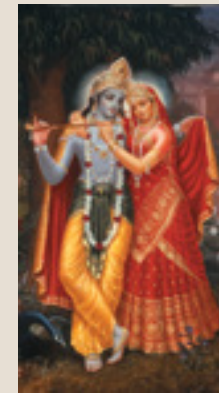
The metaphor conveys the basic truth that the soul and body are distinct entities, a firm grasp of which underpins faith in the reality of spiritual existence. Viśākhā Devī Dāsī explains the importance of faith in fueling our steady spiritual progress.

Finally, we've arrived at the fifty-year anniversary of the founding of ISKCON, and we present Part 4 of Sureśvara Dāsa's series on Śrīla Prabhupāda and a discussion of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, one of Prabhupāda's first books.

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

Help from the Demigods

If we are in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, can we worship the demigods for material boons?

Modim Verma
Guwahati, Assam, India

Our reply: The goal of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Even in the beginning of our practices, we do not pray for material boons from Kṛṣṇa or anyone else. Our conviction is that because we are serving Kṛṣṇa, He will supply all our needs. This is called *śraddhā*, or faith, as defined by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, the author of *Śrī Caitanya-caritamṛta*: “*Śraddhā* is confident, firm faith that by rendering transcendental loving service to Kṛṣṇa one automatically performs all subsidiary activities. Such faith is favorable to the discharge of devotional service.” Śrīla Prabhupāda comments: “Firm faith and confidence are called *śraddhā*. When one engages in the Lord’s devotional service, he is to be understood to have performed all his responsibilities in the material world. He has satisfied his forefathers, ordinary living entities, and demigods and is free from all responsibility. Such a person does not need to meet his responsibilities separately. It is automatically done. Fruitive activity (karma) is meant to satisfy the senses of the conditioned soul. However, when one awakens to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he does not have to work separately for pious activity. The best achievement of all fruitive activity is detachment from material life, and this detachment is spontaneously enjoyed by the devotee firmly engaged in the Lord’s service.”

And here is a verse spoken by Śukadeva Gosvāmī in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.3.10): “A person who has broader intelligence, whether he be full of all material desire, without any material desire, or desiring liberation, must by all means worship the supreme whole, the Personal-

ity of Godhead.” There is no need to worship the demigods for material boons. If you have traditionally worshiped demigods and feel uncomfortable giving that up, you can pray to them to help you develop pure love for Kṛṣṇa. After all, the demigods are Kṛṣṇa’s servants, and that’s why they have attained their elevated positions. But they have not reached perfection, which is to return to Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world. It is essential to understand that they are subordinate to Kṛṣṇa, but they can help us move closer to Him.

Chanting and Regulative Principles

Should one still chant on *japa* beads after having broken one of the four regulative principles?

Sheetal
Via the Internet

Our reply: One should continue to chant *japa* on beads whatever the circumstance. An occasional fall-down because of past bad habit does not destroy one’s progressive spiritual life. But one should not purposefully engage in sinful activity and think that chanting will be sufficient atonement. If one does so, the fall-down is elevated to *nāma-aparādha*, an offense against the holy name of the Lord, specifically the offense of “committing sinful activity on the strength of chanting.” This becomes a serious impediment that stalls one’s progress.

Kṛṣṇa Is Never Bad Luck

I had a question regarding keeping a Kṛṣṇa deity at home. I have heard a lot of people on the Internet saying that it is bad luck to have a deity at home, especially of Kṛṣṇa holding the flute. I just purchased a beautiful Kṛṣṇa statue in marble, and I want to keep it in my home, pray to the statue, light a lamp, and so on.

I know that God is omnipresent.

It even says so in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. I’m just a little set back from what I read on the Internet. Please let me know if there are problems with having a deity in the house. I personally feel that these things I heard on the Internet are myths, but I would really appreciate some clarification.

Sorooban
Via the Internet

Our reply: We’re sorry that you have heard such bad advice, which is completely wrong. Inviting the Lord into your home is most auspicious. Kṛṣṇa will enter that form by your sincere desire to serve Him and will accept your love and devotion. It is the best engagement for a householder; it is purifying and will help your family focus on the ultimate goal of life.

Please make nice arrangements for His pleasure and enjoy being in your eternal relationship as His humble servant. The Vedic scriptures, previous spiritual masters, and the Lord Himself, as you mention, all encourage us to take up this worship of His form, especially sweet when He is playing the flute. Continue on in your worship, and Kṛṣṇa will bless your home and your life.

A Ghostly Problem

After reading the *Bhagavad-gītā*, I’ve realized that Kṛṣṇa is the only goal of life. To reach His abode is the ultimate destination. I am trying to make my family (wife and three young daughters) Kṛṣṇa conscious. I started chanting every morning, and we visit the nearest ISKCON temple whenever possible.

It is my dream and wish that we are initiated devotees one day. My biggest problem is that there is always some evil spirit on my wife. She’s had this problem for the past fifteen years. We’ve tried many people to destroy it, but to no success. My children sometime see black shadows in our house, which scares them. Most of the time there’s a lot

of negativity surrounding my wife, which results in arguing amongst us, creating a very dull atmosphere at home. Sometimes when we do pray together, her facial expression changes to like that of a demon with big eyes and a grunting noise. It is very hard for me right now to convince my family to become vegetarians and take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, although I know this will help our problem and will eventually lead us to eternity. What do I do? Please advise me. Please help me, O dear Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Viron
Via the Internet

Our reply: We’re very sorry to hear about you wife’s problem and its effect on your whole family. While we can’t say for certain that the cause is an evil spirit, it might be. In principle, any of us should be able to chase away ghosts, because they do not like to stay where Kṛṣṇa’s holy names are chanted. Śrīla Prabhupāda once chased away a ghost from a house that no one would buy because of the ghost. He walked all through the house, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. The ghost left, he bought the house at a discount, and never had

any problems with ghosts there.

We recommend that you try to permeate your house with Kṛṣṇa consciousness and Kṛṣṇa vibrations as much as possible. We know it’s difficult to make changes like this, but if your house becomes filled with the sound of devotees chanting the holy names (on recordings) rather than the sound of the TV, for example, that can make a big difference. If the ghost is persistent, the only solution is to be more persistent.

Becoming a devotee of Kṛṣṇa means we have to take shelter of Him, which might require some sacrifices on our part. If the atmosphere becomes highly spiritual day and night, the ghost will not be able to tolerate it. Most important, of course, is that your wife herself chant, read Prabhupāda’s books, eat only vegetarian food offered to Kṛṣṇa, and so on. The best solution is always the spiritual one. May Lord Kṛṣṇa bless you in your attempt to fully spiritualize your home. 🙏

Replies were written by Krishna.com Live Help volunteers. Please write to us at: BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, Florida 32616, USA. Email: editors@krishna.com.

GLOSSARY with AUDIO

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Try to Hear About Kṛṣṇa

The sound of Kṛṣṇa's name and of discussions about Him is auspicious for everyone, even those who don't understand the meaning.

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

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society
for Krishna Consciousness

FOUNDER'S LECTURE

New York City – April 19, 1973



*śrī-śuka uvāca
varīyān eṣa te praśnaḥ
kṛto loka-hitam nṛpa
ātmavit-sammataḥ puṁsām
śrotavyādiṣu yah paraḥ*

*śrotavyādīni rājendra
nṛṇām santi sahasraśaḥ
apaśyatām ātma-tattvaṁ
grheṣu grha-medhinām*

“Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: My dear king, your question is glorious because it is very beneficial to all kinds of people. The answer to this question is the prime subject matter for hearing, and it is approved by all transcendentalists.

“Those persons who are materially engrossed, being blind to the knowledge of ultimate truth, have many subject matters for hearing in human society, O emperor.” – *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.1.1–2

PARĪKṢIT MAHĀRĀJA had questioned Śukadeva Gosvāmī, “Now that I am going to die within seven days, what is my duty?” Parīkṣit Mahārāja enquired about Kṛṣṇa because he was born in a Vaiṣṇava family. He was the grandson of Arjuna, who was one of the Pāṇḍava brothers. They were all Vaiṣṇavas, or devotees of Kṛṣṇa. From childhood, Parīkṣit Mahārāja had the opportunity to worship Kṛṣṇa, even playing with the household

Kṛṣṇa deity. So naturally as death approached he was inclined to hear about Kṛṣṇa.

He enquired, “What is my duty? Shall I simply hear about Kṛṣṇa, or something else?”

On hearing this question, Śuka-deva Gosvāmī is congratulating him, *varīyān eṣa te praśnaḥ*: “Oh, your question is very wonderful, very welcome.” *Varīyān* means “very welcome” or “glorious.” “Your question is glorious because you have enquired about Kṛṣṇa.”

Kṛto loka-hitam nṛpa: “My dear king, this question is all-auspicious for all the people of the world.” If you simply enquire about Kṛṣṇa or hear about Kṛṣṇa – even if you do

that storefront, simply by chanting. I did not bribe you American boys and girls to come to me. My only asset was chanting. In Tompkins Square Park, Brahmānanda Swami first danced to my chanting. He and Acyutānanda. That was the first dancing of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. I had no *mṛdaṅga* drum from India, only a little drum. I was chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa for three hours, from two to five, and so many boys and girls were coming and joining the chanting. The first photograph was in *The New York Times*. They appreciated, and people in general also appreciated. The beginning was only chanting; there was nothing more. At that time there was no pro-

Our *saṅkīrtana* movement is so nice that simply by chanting, the vibration will create an auspicious atmosphere.

not understand – that vibration about Kṛṣṇa is auspicious. We are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and we may not understand the meaning of Hare Kṛṣṇa, but still, because it is transcendental sound it is auspicious. Wherever you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, people may hear or not hear, but it is auspicious for them. So we are sending our devotees for street *saṅkīrtana*, street chanting. It doesn’t matter whether people are eager to hear it or not, but it is auspicious. It will create an atmosphere that is very, very congenial to human society. Our activities should be based on that principle.

We shall not be disappointed that we are chanting but nobody is taking notice. Our *saṅkīrtana* movement is so nice that simply by chanting, the vibration will create an auspicious atmosphere.

The Beginning in New York

I began this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement here in New York, in

gram of *prasāda* distribution. That came later on.

We should always be confident that this chanting is not a vibration of this material world. Narottama Dāsa Thākura says, *golokera premadhana hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana* – it is imported from the spiritual world. It is completely spiritual. In Bombay there is a rascal who says, “The chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and the chanting of ‘Coca-Cola’ is the same.” He is such a rascal. He does not know that Hare Kṛṣṇa is not a vibration of this material world. But one who has no knowledge will think, “What is the meaning of this chant, ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa’?” But they can see that we can go on chanting day and night and still we are not becoming tired. But any other material name, after chanting three times you will feel tired. That is the proof. You can go on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa day and night, and you will never feel tired. These poor people have no brain

to understand.

The chanting is so auspicious. Caitanya Mahāprabhu has given His benediction: *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpanam* (*Śikṣāṣṭaka* 1). We are suffering in this material world because our understanding, or our heart, is not cleansed. This chanting will help us to cleanse the heart.

*śṛṅvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
puṇya-śravaṇa kīrtanaḥ
hṛdy antaḥ stho hy abhadraṇi
vidhunoti suhṛt satām*

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramātmā [Super-soul] in everyone’s heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge to hear His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.17)

Chanting is so nice that as soon as you take to chanting, or hear about Kṛṣṇa – the chanting is also hearing about Kṛṣṇa – immediately the cleansing process begins, *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*. And as soon as our heart is cleansed, *bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpanam*, then we become free from the blazing fire of this material existence. Chanting is so auspicious.

Therefore Śukadeva Gosvāmī says here, *varīyān eṣa te praśnaḥ kṛto loka-hitam nṛpa*. In another place also, Sūta Gosvāmī says, *yat kṛtaḥ kṛṣṇa-sampraśno yenātmā suprasīdati* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.5). When the great saintly persons at Naimi-sharanya enquired about Kṛṣṇa, Sūta Gosvāmī replied, *yat kṛtaḥ kṛṣṇa-sampraśnaḥ*: “Because you have enquired about Kṛṣṇa, that enquiry will cleanse your heart, *yenātmā suprasīdati*. You will feel transcendental bliss, comfort, within your heart.”

Prime Welfare Activity

This movement is the prime welfare activity for human society, *loka-hitam*.

It is not a business. “Business” means something for my *hitam*, my benefit, only. This movement is not like that; it is Kṛṣṇa’s business. Kṛṣṇa is for everyone; therefore Kṛṣṇa’s business is meant for everyone. We therefore welcome everyone. “Come here and chant.”

A sadhu, a saintly person, should always think of *loka-hitam*, the welfare of the people. That is the difference between a sadhu and an ordinary man. An ordinary man thinks only of himself, or of himself expanded – his family, community, society, nation. These are all expanded selfishness. When I am alone, I think of my benefit only. When I am a little grown up, I think of my brothers and sisters. And when I am a little advanced, I think of my family. A little more advanced, and I think of my community. A little more advanced, and I think of my country, my nation. Or I can think of the whole human society, internationally. But Kṛṣṇa is so big that He includes everyone. Not only human society, but also animal society, bird society, beast society, tree society – everything. Kṛṣṇa says, *ahaṁ bīja-pradaḥ pitā*: “I am the seed-giving father of all these forms.” (*Gītā* 14.4) There are 8,400,000 different kinds of forms. Kṛṣṇa claims, “They, all of them, are My part-and-parcel living entities. They are now covered by different dresses, but they are living entities.”

A person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness has the vision to see beyond the different dresses to the living entities within. One who is actually Kṛṣṇa conscious does not see the outward dress; he sees the living entity encased in a particular type of body. He has no concern with the body. Therefore a sadhu always thinks of everyone’s benefit.

It is said of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan, leading followers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, *lokānām hita-kāriṇau tri-bhuvane mānyau*: because they were the benefactors for all kinds of living entities, they were honored in the three worlds, *tri-bhuvane*, or

in other words, all over the universe. A sadhu’s business is to benefit all living entities. A sadhu does not like to even cut down a tree, because he knows, “Here is a living entity. He is standing here for many years by his karma, and he has to continue for many years more. He cannot avoid this, because it is nature’s law.”

If you are put into prison for six months, nobody can save you; nobody can make your term of imprisonment one day less than six months. Similarly, we get our particular type of body, and we have to remain in that body for a certain period by the laws of nature. So if we cut down a tree, the living entity within does not die, but because we check the continuation of his period in that body, we have become sinful. We cannot even cut down a tree without Kṛṣṇa’s purpose. Without Kṛṣṇa’s purpose we cannot kill even an ant; we cannot even cut down a tree. We shall be liable for punishment. So a sadhu sees, “Here also is a living entity.”

*vidyā-vinaya-sampanne
brāhmaṇe gavi hastini
śuni caiva śva-pāke ca
paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*

“The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle *brāhmaṇa*, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater [outcaste].” (*Gītā* 5.18) A *paṇḍita* does not make any discrimination – “Here is an animal, here is a man.” No. He sees, “Though they have different bodies, both the animal and the man are part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. According to their karma, they have been put into these bodies.”

Inquiry into Ātmā

Now, *kṛṣṇa-sampraśnaḥ*, questions and answers about Kṛṣṇa. Quoting Lord Brahmā, Caitanya Mahāprabhu has recommended, *sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vān-manobhir*: “Remain in your position, but try to hear about Kṛṣṇa.” Simply come to this temple and try to hear about Kṛṣṇa.

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 **ṅ** like the **ch** in **chair**. Pronounce consonants like **ch**, **jh**, and **dh** as in **staunch-heart**, **hedge-hog**, 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.”

That will purify you. Kṛṣṇa's name is so powerful that if you simply hear "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa," you become purified.

It is not that only I am eulogizing this process. *Ātmavit-sammataḥ*. All great self-realized personalities say this. *Ātmavit* means one who knows *ātmā*. Generally people do not know *ātmā*. But *ātmavit* means one who knows *ātmā*, one who knows *aham brahmāsmi*: "I am spirit soul; I am not this body." And *ātmavit* means one who is well acquainted with *ātma-tattva*, the science of the soul.

Unless one becomes aware of *ātma-tattva*, whatever he is doing he is being defeated. Generally people are thinking, "I am now constructing this big skyscraper building. I am successful. I have become Rothschild. I have become this or that." That is not *ātma-vit*. Just because someone is materially opulent, that does not mean he is *ātma-vit*.

That subject will be discussed in the next verse, *apaśyatām ātma-*

tattvam. Those who cannot see their *ātmā* are described as *grheṣu grhamedhinām*: they are compact in this materialistic way of life. Actually this is the position of the whole world. People are not *ātma-vit*; they do not enquire into *ātma-tattvam*. Therefore they are less intelligent.

Therefore I say that our propaganda is to make people more intelligent. They might not have taken it very nicely. They thought, "This poor swami has come to make us intelligent." But actually that is the fact. The bodily concept of life is not intelligence. "I spoil my whole life for bodily comforts, and then, after giving up this body, I become a cat or a dog." What kind of intelligence is that? Is that very good intelligence? In this life you may become a very big man, a big politician, big diplomat, big businessman, but next life, after your death, your greatness in this material life will not help you. According to your activities in this life, nature will offer you a cer-

tain type of body, and you'll have to accept it. Of course, you will forget this life. That is the concession given by nature. Now, in this life, we do not remember what we were in our past life. Suppose I would remember that I was a king in my past life, and now I have become a dog. How much suffering that remembrance would bring! Therefore by nature's law one forgets. Death makes this forgetfulness.

This is a great science. People do not know it. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is very scientific, authorized, so our business is to enlighten people as far as possible, and at the same time we must remain enlightened. We may not be again covered by the darkness of *māyā*.

You can keep yourself very fit not to be covered by *māyā*. If you very strictly adhere to the principle of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then *māyā* will not be able to touch you. That is the only remedy. Otherwise *māyā* is always looking for the opportunity, the loophole, so she can capture you again. But if you remain strictly in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, *māyā* will not be able to do anything.

*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī
mama māyā duratyayā
mām eva ye prapadyante
māyām etāṁ taranti te*

"This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it." (*Gītā* 7.14) Therefore our program is to think of Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day. *Satatam* – always. That is recommended.

Even if you cannot do anything else, simply think of Kṛṣṇa. That is the highest meditational perfection. Always chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, be in touch with Kṛṣṇa in so many ways, and then you are secure. *Māyā* will not be able to touch you. And if we can somehow or other pass our days in this way and at the time of death remember Kṛṣṇa, then our whole life is successful.

Thank you very much. 🙏



YOU'RE INVITED! The Sunday Feast

Most Hare Kṛṣṇa centers around the world put on a special festival every Sunday—for regulars as well as new comers. Come by and get a taste of the world's oldest cultural tradition. Call your nearest center to find out the schedule for the Sunday Feast.

Visit <http://directory.krishna.com>.

e-Krishna Profiles of Kṛṣṇa-related websites



www.kirtanparty.com *Kīrtana*, the congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord, has long been at the heart of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). *Kirtanparty.com* aims to help you find *kīrtana* groups close to you, gives encouragement, shares best practices, and helps you improve your own *kīrtana* group.

At *kirtanparty.com* you can read about the glories and benefits of performing public *kīrtana* and watch the measured growth of *kīrtana* parties across North America. This website is a great example of how devotees, although geographically disparate, can collaborate to increase the

incidence of public *kīrtana* and in a meaningful and interesting way share data showing its growth.

On the Statistics page you can see a map showing the number of hours of *kīrtana* performed in various locations around North America. When you register your *kīrtana* group and report the number of hours of *kīrtana* it has performed, the circle connected to your location will graphically show your activity. The map will also indicate the number of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books being distributed by region. You can monitor the progress of the *kīrtana* revolution and book distribution.

On the Locations page is the *kīrtana*-party finder. Quickly and

automatically find the *kīrtana* party closest to you. From a wide view of the United States you can zoom the map to see your location, and you can mark it with a red map marker. The nearest *kīrtana* group is indicated with a blue map marker. On the left, you can click on more *kīrtana* locations and then click on More Info to see a particular location on the map. Colored seals on the map indicate the number of hours each *kīrtana* party has performed.

The Calendar page displays the *kīrtana* event calendar, so you can see when and where *kīrtanas* are occurring throughout the year. When you register, you can update your events to share with others who view the site. You can download the calendar or print it.

On the Join the Party page you can sign up and add your *kīrtana* group to the register of events. To the growing list, you can add your local temple's *kīrtana* events and details about other *kīrtanas* you attend.

When you're signed up and have your password, you can go to the Submit Stats page and update the details about how many *kīrtanas* you hold or attend. You can send images, videos, and stories from your *kīrtana* groups for others to see. You can browse through the images others have posted and find information about other *kīrtanas* in your area. All submissions are reviewed before they appear on the site.

On the Kirtana Videos page you can browse through and play the *kīrtana* videos others have uploaded. At the bottom of every page you'll find links to the most recent posts, comments, photos, and upcoming events.

— Antony Brennan

HIS MISSION'S ROOTS

From the day Śrīla Prabhupāda was born, Lord Kṛṣṇa prepared the events of his life for everyone's ultimate benefit.

by Sureśvara Dāsa

Painting by Dīrgha Devī Dāsi



To honor the fiftieth anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's incorporation of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, BTG presents Part Four of a series celebrating Śrīla Prabhupāda's unique, transcendental position in ISKCON, as well as every follower's foundational relationship with him.

FROM THE BEGINNING, signs of Abhay Charan De's divine destiny appeared: his birth¹ by the Ganges on Nandotsava, the celebration of Lord Kṛṣṇa's advent; his childhood devotion to deity worship, especially Rathayātrā, Lord Kṛṣṇa's chariot parade; his pure devotee father's constant prayer that his son become a great preacher; and his stars and palm affirming that at the age of seventy he would cross the ocean, become a powerful spiritual leader, and open 108 temples.² "One astrologer, sometimes he read my hand. He said in Hindi, *hokum chelbe* . . . "Your hand speaks that your

In 1922, Abhay meets Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī (above) and, within his heart, accepts him as his spiritual master. At right, while dutifully carrying out his family responsibilities, Abhay directly serves his guru's mission, especially by writing.

Painting by Dīrgha Devī Dāsi



order will be executed.”³

Yet when invited to meet Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the saintly person who would become his spiritual master, Abhay was reluctant to go. Growing up in Calcutta, he had seen his father host many so-called saints who were better at begging food than distributing spiritual knowledge. When at last he let a close friend drag him to an audience with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, Abhay was struck by his first words to them: “You are educated young

men. Why don’t you preach Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s message throughout the whole world?”⁴

By his own account, Prabhupāda was “Gandhi’s devotee” at the time, dressed in the white *khadi* of an Indian nationalist and boycotting all things British. Impressed by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s bold conviction, Abhay nonetheless felt compelled to test him: “Who will hear your Caitanya’s message? . . . We are a dependent country. First India must become independent. How can we

spread Indian culture if we are under British rule?”⁵

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta replied that Kṛṣṇa consciousness – the original, pure consciousness of every embodied soul – was too urgent to wait for a change in politics. Misidentifying with matter, suffering humanity was forever chasing freedom through temporary, earthbound movements, like Gandhi’s. But reconnecting everyone to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and our dearest friend, constituted the highest welfare work.

Struck again by his masterful reply, Abhay’s allegiance flew straight from Gandhi to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, whose mission would soon reignite Lord Caitanya’s divine movement throughout India. “I accepted him immediately,” Prabhupāda recalled. “Not officially, but in my heart.”⁶

Already a husband, father, and office manager at a Calcutta pharmaceutical company, Abhay was in no position to abruptly join Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s mission, though he wished he could have: “At that time I thought, ‘This great personality is asking me to preach. I [should] immediately join . . . but now I am married. It will be injustice.’”⁷

A responsible and enterprising householder, Abhay decided to start his own pharmacy, expand the business, and contribute to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s mission. In 1923 he moved his family to Allahabad and started Prayag Pharmacy, which flourished under his diligent management. His sense of mission would also flourish as he studied the writings of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta and his Gauḍīya predecessors, the disciplic lineage from Lord Caitanya.

In 1933, in Allahabad, Abhay is initiated by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and given the name Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Dāsa.

Initiation

In 1928, when senior renunciants approached Abhay for help starting a branch of the Gauḍīya Mission in Allahabad, he was delighted to contribute his contacts and resources and later became a favorite speaker and singer at the temple. As Abhay got more involved with the Mission, he shared plans with his wife to invite people to their home for sanctified meals and discussions about Kṛṣṇa. She didn’t share his enthusiasm: “My wife was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa,” Prabhupāda recalled, “but she had some other idea. Her idea was just to worship the deity at home and live peacefully. My idea was preaching.”⁸

By 1932 it had been ten years since Abhay met the saintly person he revered as his spiritual master. That autumn, when he heard that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was leading a massive pilgrimage (*parikramā*) around Vrindavan, the sacred place of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, he briefly broke free from his expanding business to join the pilgrims. Soon after he arrived at Kosi, devotees were given the choice of visiting the nearby Śeṣāśāyī Viṣṇu deity⁹ or staying to hear Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta give his final talk before leaving the party. Prabhupāda recalled: “At that time I think only ten or twelve men remained. . . . And I thought it wise, ‘What can I see at this Śeṣāśāyī? Let me hear what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī will speak. Let me hear.’”¹⁰

In 1933, while Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was visiting his mission’s new branch at Allahabad, the local leader recommended Abhay for initiation. “Yes, I shall initiate this boy,” Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta said. “He is very nice. He hears me very patiently. He does not go away.”¹¹

Although Abhay’s wife chose not to attend the ceremony, a brother and sister were present as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta gave Abhay the initiated name Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Dāsa, “the servant of one fearless

at Lord Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.” He also gave his capable disciple instructions to study deeply Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, which Prabhupāda would later summarize as *The Nectar of Devotion*, the “lawbook” for devotional service. Prabhupāda recalled, “From 1922 . . . I got the impression of preaching Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s cult. . . . That was the initiation by my Guru Mahārāja. Then officially I was initiated in 1933.”¹²

Over the next few years Abhay would meet Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta perhaps a half-dozen times, yet the talks were intimate enough to raise eyebrows. Prabhupāda: “Sometimes I would talk freely with him and the godbrothers would become angry. They would say, ‘Fools rush

greater opportunities in mind. As in Allahabad, Abhay met senior Gauḍīya renunciants who asked him to help them start a Mission branch in Bombay. His preaching increasing since initiation, Abhay soon helped them launch a successful center.

On the evening of February 25, 1935, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s sixty-first birthday, Abhay delivered an English speech and poem to the members of the Bombay branch, capturing Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta and his Mission so eloquently that a godbrother dubbed him *kavi*, “learned poet.” Especially pleasing to his spiritual master was the couplet “Absolute is sentient, thou hast proved/ Impersonal calamity thou hast moved.” When Abhay submitted the speech and poem to

“I was only a *gṛhastha* [family man], but whenever I came, my Guru Mahārāja would be very glad to talk with me.”

in where angels fear to tread.’ I thought, ‘I may be a fool, but what can I do?’ With my Guru Mahārāja we would talk so many private things. I was only a *gṛhastha* [family man], but whenever I came, my Guru Mahārāja would be very glad to talk with me.”¹³

Blessings

Although an astrologer had predicted Abhay could become one of the wealthiest men in India, in 1934 bad debtors and cutthroat competitors obliged him to turn over the debts and accounts of the Prayag Pharmacy to his supplier and former boss in Calcutta. After setting up a small pharmaceutical works to support his family in Allahabad, Abhay and a brother ventured to Bombay, seeking new sales and production opportunities.

Lord Kṛṣṇa, it turned out, had

the Mission’s English journal, *The Harmonist*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta instructed the editor, “Whatever he writes, publish it.”¹⁴

That July Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta came to install the deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa in Bombay and was pleased with the progress of the center. The leader admitted that “much of the work was due to Abhay Babu, who had collected funds and established the new branch. ‘Why is Abhay living separately?’ [he] asked. ‘He should be president of this Bombay center.’”

“Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī replied, ‘It is better that he is living outside your company. He will do. When the time comes, he will do everything himself. You don’t have to recommend him.’”¹⁵

Mystified by what he heard his spiritual master had said, Prabhupāda later reflected: “That means he was so kind that he expected



that I shall do something. That was my asset – his blessing. And I was thinking that ‘His, this Mission must be done very nicely.’ . . . So desire was there, and maybe blessing was there. Yes. There was no question of qualification.”¹⁶

November once again found Abhay with his spiritual master on Vrindavan *parikramā*, this time at the most sacred place for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, Radha-kunda.¹⁷ Walking with his intimate disciple, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta confided in Abhay grave concerns about dissension in the ranks. Since a wealthy Calcutta patron had constructed palatial headquarters for the Mission, his senior disciples had been quarreling over who would have the best room. If in his presence his leading preachers

tures were not bearing fruit. This especially disturbed Abhay’s wife, despite her husband’s reassurance he had new plans to expand. Meanwhile, Abhay tried to involve her in preaching programs at home, but whenever interested guests came, she stayed with the children in another room, sipping British tea.

The vicissitudes of family and business inspired Abhay to see events through the eyes of scripture. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.88.8), “The Personality of Godhead said: If I especially favor someone, I gradually deprive him of his wealth. Then the relatives and friends of such a poverty-stricken man abandon him. In this way he suffers one distress after another.”

Abhay showed this verse to a

I have every hope that you can turn yourself into a very good English preacher if you serve the mission to inculcate the novel impression of Lord Caitanya’s teachings in the people in general as well as philosophers and religionists.¹⁹

Little more than a fortnight after Abhay read this letter, his spiritual master passed away. The same instruction he had received at their first meeting was now confirmed. A reconfirmation followed while Abhay was reading a *Bhagavad-gītā* commentary stating that one must accept the order of the spiritual master as one’s life and soul. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s order was now the very purpose of his life.

War

The “fire” in the Mission broke out almost immediately. Although Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had clearly ordered his disciples to form a governing body and work “conjointly,” some leaders began competing to replace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta as the supreme spiritual authority and as the controller of the institution’s assets as well. The fighting ended up in the courts, but because none of the parties was authorized, the unified Mission Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had led throughout India and beyond shattered into isolated pieces.

“Living outside,” Abhay was brokenhearted by the turn of events yet determined to continue advancing Lord Caitanya’s and his spiritual master’s mission. In 1938 he dropped his Bombay ventures and moved his family back to Calcutta. To maintain, he began to produce pharmaceuticals in the front room of his flat. His sense of mission increasing, he deepened his study of his spiritual master’s books and spoke Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy to whoever would listen.

When a few renunciant godbrothers from Mayapur needed a Calcutta base, Abhay rented them his rooms

trusted godbrother, who confirmed that this may very well be how Kṛṣṇa was handling his life, preparing him to receive – and distribute – infinitely greater blessings in His service.

Confirmation

Although Abhay had already contributed much to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s Gauḍīya Mission – donating money, helping launch the Allahabad and Bombay centers, submitting excellent English offerings – in December 1936 he wrote his spiritual master a letter, asking if there was some way he could contribute more. Prabhupāda later recalled the highlights of his spiritual master’s reply:

I am fully confident that you can explain in English our thoughts and arguments to the people. . . . This will do much good to yourself as well as your audience. . . .

were becoming attached to position and opulence, what would happen in his absence?

Deeply concerned, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta said to Abhay, “*āgun jvalbe*”: “There will be fire” – one day there would be fire in the Calcutta Gauḍīya [Mission], and that fire of party interests would spread and destroy. . . .

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta then said directly to Abhay, “*āmār icchā chila kichu bai karānā*”: “I had a desire to print some books. If you ever get money, print books.” Standing by Rādhā-kunḍa and beholding his spiritual master, Abhay felt the words deeply enter his own life: “If you ever get money, print books.”¹⁸

That grave blessing mirrored a grave reality in Abhay’s plans. Although he was preparing to execute his spiritual master’s mission by becoming wealthy, his Bombay business ven-



In 1935, at Radha-kunda, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī confides to Abhay his concern for the future of the Gauḍīya Mission and his desire that Abhay print books.

to expand BTG and better situate his family, Abhay made a big capital investment. But when he asked his top assistant to come help him in Lucknow, the family wouldn’t let him leave. Indifferent to Abhay’s ambitions for preaching, and even for business, the family he was supporting was now becoming his opponent. In a letter dated November 13 to his assistant, a disgusted Abhay wrote: “What’s the point in holding you back with an excuse that there is no servant or maidservant? I tried to serve them enough by keeping servants, maidservants and cooks. But up until today they have not become attached to devotional service. So I am no more interested about those affairs.”²¹

Even before this development, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had begun appearing to Abhay in dreams, asking him to come to the renounced stage of life and preach full-time. But he felt unprepared to live as simply as his renunciant godbrothers, and, Prabhupāda would later recall, those dreams “horrified” him. Uncooperative as his family was, he dutifully continued to maintain them while looking for opportunities to advance his mission.

The Spark

Although victorious in the war, Britain would soon lose India to Gandhi’s Nationalist Movement. The triumph of his former hero gave Abhay an idea. With the roots of his mission firmly planted, in July 1947 Abhay wrote Gandhi a letter. An excerpt follows:

I am your unknown friend. . . . You should therefore take a note of warning from your insignificant

next door and seized the opportunity to discuss scripture with trusted seniors. Śrīpāda Śrīdhara Mahārāja recalled: “We did not see Abhay as working very hard for making money, nor did he seem very rich or to have a lot of liquid funds. He was attracted more to the spiritual side of affairs than to his family affairs.”²⁰

In 1939 Abhay wrote an introduction to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, signaling his intention to translate and comment on the entire text. Impressed by Abhay’s writing and preaching, his godbrothers gave him the title Bhaktivedānta, “one who knows the end of knowledge, devotion to Kṛṣṇa.”

When World War II broke out that year, England drafted India into the war. In Calcutta Abhay would endure bombs and manmade food

shortages as he and his godbrothers – survivors of the Gauḍīya Mission’s implosion – continued to study, write, and preach the cure for all suffering, Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In 1944, on Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s birthday anniversary, Abhay launched a devotional journal, *Back to Godhead*. Offering spiritual solutions to material life’s endless problems, BTG saw print only twice that year owing to the Indian government’s severe rationing of supplies, including paper. Abhay’s messages were scarcely valued.

Even less so at home. After the war ended in 1945, Abhay saw a good opportunity to expand his pharmaceutical production in Lucknow, six hundred miles northwest of Calcutta. With enough profit potential

friend like me, that unless you retire timely from politics and engage yourself cent per cent in the preaching work of *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is the real function of the Mahatmas, you shall have to meet with such inglorious deaths as Mussolini, Hitlers, Tojos . . . met with.²²

Six months later Gandhi was assassinated. Prabhupāda later recalled:

I wanted to start this movement from India. I even requested Mahatma Gandhi that “Mahatmaji, you have got some respect all over the world, and you are known as a great student of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Now you have got your *sva-rājya* – the Britishers have gone away – let us preach *Bhagavad-gītā*. . . .” My letter might have reached him or not reached him. The secretaries might have rejected. . . . But then . . . he was killed.²³

Abhay’s letter now proved prophetic. Although he had hoped to engage Gandhi to advance Lord Caitanya’s mission, Gandhi’s demise would soon spark the articulation of his mission’s plan. As Prabhupāda later reflected, “I had my plans, and Kṛṣṇa had His.”

NOTES

1. September 1, 1896.
2. *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Volume I: *A Lifetime in Preparation*; Chapter 1: Childhood.
3. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Disappearance Day Lecture, 13 December 1973, Los Angeles.
4. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Golden Avatar of Kṛṣṇa (1486–1534), who inspired the modern-day Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.
5. Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Chapter 3: “A Very Nice Saintly Person.”

6. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Disappearance Day Lecture, 13 December 1973.
7. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Appearance Day Lecture, 7 February 1969, Los Angeles.
8. Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Chapter 4: “How Shall I Serve You?”
9. Kṛṣṇa in His Viṣṇu form reclining on the divine serpent Śeṣa.
10. Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Chapter 4.
11. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Disappearance Day Lecture, 10 December 1976, Hyderabad.
12. Ibid.
13. *ISKCON in the 1970s*, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, “If You Want To Know My Secret.”
14. Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Chapter 4.
15. Ibid.
16. Conversation and Instruction on New Movie, Allahabad, 13 January 1977.
17. The bathing pond of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s greatest devotee, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.
18. Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Chapter 4.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Letter to Mahatma Gandhi, 12 July 1947, Kanpur.
23. Interview with Trans-India magazine, 17 July 1976, New York.

In the next issue: In Part Five of our series, we’ll see how the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi triggered the formulation of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission – introduced in the 1950s as the League of Devotees, then fully launched in the 1960s as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Sureśvara Dāsa joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in 1970. From 2011 to 2015, on behalf of a committee of the movement’s Governing Body Commission called “Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Position,” he traveled the ISKCON world presenting the seminar series “Śrīla Prabhupāda, Our Founder-Ācārya.”

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.vaisnavacalendar.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 Nārāyaṇa (December 26 – January 24)

JANUARY

6 – Saphalā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

11 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa known for his Bengali devotional songs.

12 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

20 – Putradā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

Month of Mādhava (January 25 – February 22)

29 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

30 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jayadeva Gosvāmī, a great spiritual master and author of *Gīta-govinda*.

31 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa known for his Bengali devotional songs.

FEBRUARY

4 – Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

13 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, a Vaiṣṇava spiritual master and author who appeared in the seventeenth century. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā Devī, the consort of Lord Caitanya.



Painting by Parikṣit Dāsa

Lord Varāha

14 – Appearance anniversary of Śrī Advaita Ācārya, an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s expansion Mahā-Viṣṇu and a close associate of Lord Caitanya. Fasting till noon.

16 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīpāda Madhvācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the thirteenth century.

17 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, an

eleventh-century philosopher and spiritual master.

18 – Bhaimī Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans. Fasting till noon for Lord Varāha’s appearance day tomorrow. Feast tomorrow.

19 – Appearance of Lord Varāha, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s boar incarnation.

20 – Appearance anniversary of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu, a close associate of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s elder brother, Lord Balarāma. Fasting till noon.

22 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, a spiritual master in the disciplic line from Lord Caitanya who composed many devotional songs in Bengali.

Month of Govinda (February 23 – March 23)

28 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the spiritual master of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Fasting till noon, then feasting.

MARCH

5 – Vijayā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

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Though Plato and Freud used this analogy, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's version is the fullest and the clearest.

Chariot Of the Soul

A Metaphor to Distinguish
Body from Self

by Satyarāja Dāsa

PLATO'S DIALOGUES, particularly *Phaedrus*, have intrigued me once again. In sections 246a–254e, the famous Greek philosopher offers an engaging allegory in which he elucidates the tripartite nature of the human being. He compares the human soul to both a chariot and its charioteer, the vehicle and its driver thus representing different parts of the soul. Two horses power this chariot. One, white and noble, represents the moral impulse; the other, dark and ignoble, the irrational passions born of lust. To make sure these contrasting steeds lead



Painting by Bharadwaj Dasa

him to heaven, the charioteer must take control.

Sigmund Freud, the founding father of psychoanalysis, expounded upon a similar chariot metaphor in his book *The Ego and the Id* (1927). He likens the id, the instinctual component that underlies our passion and sex drive, to a “horse on the chariot of the mind,” while the ego, the self’s more rational part that seeks to get the id under control, he compares to the driver of that horse. The superego, responsible for critical and moral thinking, is like the chariot driver’s father, who stands

The painting also suggests Arjuna’s lament in *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.34: “For the mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate, and very strong, O Kṛṣṇa, and to subdue it, I think, is more difficult than controlling the wind.” As Kṛṣṇa’s paradigmatic devotee, Arjuna is here responding to Kṛṣṇa’s emphasis on the importance of getting the mind under control, a requirement not only for yogis trying to achieve perfection on the path of mysticism, but also for anyone who wants peace and happiness in everyday life. Psychologists recommend we rein in the uncontrolled

his predecessor Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. R. C. Zaehner, one of the world’s most respected academic interpreters of the *Gītā*, uses the metaphor to gloss 6.34 as well; this shows that it is clearly embedded in the scholastic tradition.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

In the Vedic literature (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.3.3–4) it is said:

*ātmānam rathinam viddhi
śarīram ratham eva ca
buddhiṁ tu sārathim viddhi
manah pragraham eva ca*

KATHA UPANIṢAD’S CHARIOT METAPHOR

HORSES	We interact with the external world through ten horses, i.e., the senses (<i>indriya</i>). These are the five senses for acquiring knowledge: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and touch; and the five working senses: voice, legs, hands, anus, and genitals.
REINS	The mind (<i>manas</i>) is comparable to the reins, the proper control of which enables appropriate function of the senses.
CHARIOTEER	The intellect (<i>buddhi</i>) is the charioteer, who, ideally, grabs hold of the reins, allowing the chariot to move in the direction it should, i.e., toward God.
PASSENGER	The soul (<i>ātmā</i>) is the passenger, a neutral witness who is moving on his chariot according to conditioning, karma, and his ability to control the mind.
CHARIOT	The physical body (<i>deha</i>) is the chariot itself, the vehicle through which the soul, intellect, mind, and senses engage with the world.

behind him offering either direct or subliminal guidance.

Plato’s and Freud’s metaphors remind me of a painting found in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* in which a person on a chariot is the victim of horses that seem out of control. The painting depicts a simile: Our material body is like a chariot, says Śrīla Prabhupāda, with five horses (the senses) that take us in every direction, often against our will. The passenger on the chariot is the actual self, the soul, who can control the horses only by properly maneuvering the chariot’s reins (the mind) by giving adequate direction to the driver (the intelligence).

mind, even if the winds of conditioning, passion, and distraction make it seem impossible.

The metaphor of the chariot can help in life’s struggle by clearly defining who we are in relation to our body, mind, and senses. And there’s no need to study Plato or Freud. Long before them, the Vedic texts of ancient India gave us a chariot analogy distinct in its depth and clarity. I think Plato and Freud would have found it stimulating, and might have even used it as the basis for their own chariot theses.

Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes this original metaphor in his purport to the *Gītā* verse mentioned above, as does

*indriyāni hayān āhur
viśayāms teṣu go-caran
ātmendriya-mano-yuktam
bhoktety āhur manīṣiṇaḥ*

“The individual is the passenger in the car of the material body, and intelligence is the driver. Mind is the driving instrument, and the senses are the horses. The self is thus the enjoyer or sufferer in the association of the mind and senses. So it is understood by great thinkers.” Intelligence is supposed to direct the mind, but the mind is so strong and obstinate that it often overcomes even one’s own intelligence. Such a strong mind is supposed to be controlled

by the practice of *yoga*, but such practice is never practical for a worldly person like Arjuna. And what can we say of modern man? The simile used here is appropriate: one cannot capture the blowing wind. And it is even more difficult to capture the turbulent mind.

The *ratha kalpanā* (“the parable of the chariot”), as it is called in the Upaniṣadic tradition, is framed by a deeply philosophical dialogue between Yama, the god of death, and Nāciketā, son of the sage Vājaśravas. Nāciketā asks about the destination of the soul, and Yama responds with the chariot metaphor. Yama concludes his sermon by

Kṛṣṇa does use it later in the *Mahābhārata*, of which the *Gītā* is part. The *Mahābhārata’s Anu Gīta* (found in Book 12, *Aśvamedha-parva*) is a second conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. It takes place after the Kurukshetra war, when Kṛṣṇa has returned to His kingdom in Dwarka and the Pāṇḍavas are rightly situated. Here we read, “Having mounted the chariot that is yoked to the great elements and restrained by the *buddhi* [intellect], the soul of beings [*bhūt-ātmān*] drives about everywhere. Yoked to the assemblage of senses [as to steeds], with the *manas* [mind] indeed as the charioteer, ever restrained by the *buddhi*, is the great chariot made of *brahman* [*mahān-*

but in fact they make no progress. Pious and impious activities are the two wheels of the chariot. The three modes of material nature are the chariot’s flags. The five types of life air constitute the living entity’s bondage, and the mind is considered to be the rope. Intelligence is the chariot driver. The heart is the sitting place in the chariot, and the dualities of life, such as pleasure and pain, are the knotting place. The seven elements are the coverings of the chariot, and the working senses are the five external processes. The eleven senses are the soldiers. Being engrossed in sense enjoyment, the living entity, seated on the chariot, hankers after fulfillment of his false desires and runs after sense enjoyment life after life.

After being introduced to the chariot metaphor, one might fruitfully ask, “Who’s driving *my* chariot?” Our intelligence is generally focused on

making a living, raising a family, and pursuing various forms of sense enjoyment, leaving little time for nurturing the soul. Since we can’t fire our charioteer (intelligence) and look for another, we need to get his attention and make sure he’s doing his job.

Without him, our mind is left to its default settings, causing us to veer off into a world created by conditioning – a world of fantasy and sense pleasure in which we habitually submit to innumerable and long-cultivated desires. In the end, then, the mind will be swayed by whichever is stronger – the charioteer or the horses, the intelligence or the senses.

Taking Control

It is easy and natural to cry out for freedom, to want to revel in a life of whimsy that lacks direction and control, but the plain fact is this: when the reins are not attended to,

the horses run wild, causing disruption and pain for the self and everyone nearby.

The *Gītā* teaches us how to retrain the charioteer, which allows us to make the best possible use of our reins and stabilize our horses. Through spiritual practice we can then use these stabilized horses for their intended purpose: to glorify Kṛṣṇa with acts of devotion.

The stabilized horses of some sort

of Buddhistic stillness. Rather, the Vaiṣṇava teaching is that, properly harnessed, these horses should enthusiastically gallop toward Kṛṣṇa to take shelter in the stable of His heart.

Our charioteer has spent lifetimes in neglect and misdirection, so getting him working right again may be a long, hard task. But with the help of scriptures like the *Bhagavad-gītā*, a genuine spiritual teacher, and fellow spiritual aspirants serious about

reaching the destination, it is possible. Then we can move safely along the road to the peace, happiness, and the ultimate goal of life, which surely lie ahead. 🌟

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.

Since we can’t fire our charioteer (intelligence) and look for another, we need to get his attention and make sure he’s doing his job.

reiterating that the actual living being is the spirit soul – the entity within who uses the body, mind, and senses but who should in no way misidentify with them. Accordingly, Yama highlights the all-important distinction between the body and the soul, adding that to even mildly understand this truth of identity can have tremendous implications for a person on the path of transcendence.

“Whoever is wise,” says Yama, “will always apply his mental capacity and subdue the senses like good horses under the guide of an expert charioteer. . . . The man whose charioteer acts properly, expertly manipulating the reins of his chariot, at last attains the goal of life, the highest abode of Viṣṇu.” (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.3.9)

Lord Kṛṣṇa’s Use Of the Metaphor

Although the chariot analogy is not found in the *Gītā* directly, Lord

brahma-mayo rathaḥ.” (14.50.4–6).* The *Anu Gīta* concludes by saying, “The learned person who is consistently aware that the chariot is inhabited by *brahman*, or spirit, is wise among beings and does not become bewildered.”

Similarities between the passages from the *Anu Gīta* and the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* are obvious, although we can detect slight differences. The most lucid example of the chariot metaphor – with added details – is found in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.29.18–20):

Nārada Muni continued: What I referred to as the chariot was in actuality the body. The senses are the horses that pull that chariot. As time passes, year after year, these horses run without obstruction,

*Translation by Professor Alf Hiltebeitel, renowned *Mahābhārata* scholar and Professor of Religion at The George Washington University. I am indebted to him for this reference.

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A Pause for Prayer

Śrī Śrī Coraṣṭakam (Eight Verses to a Thief)

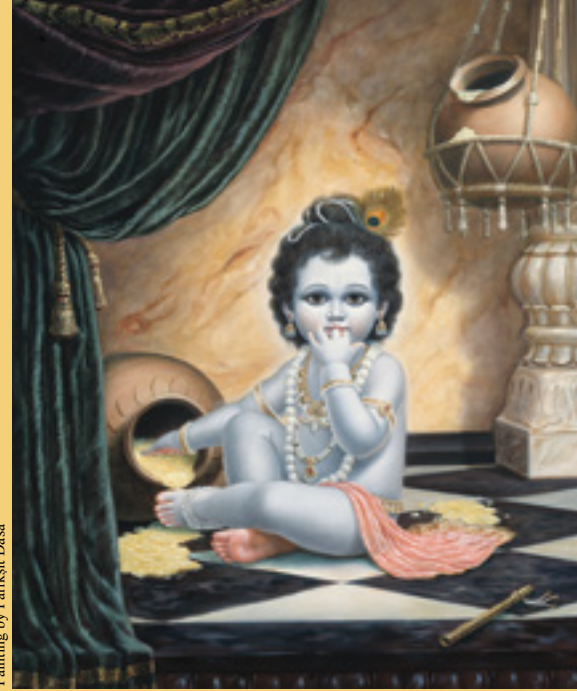
by Śrīla Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura

I offer *praṇāma* to that foremost of thieves, who is famous in Vraja as the butter-thief, who steals the *gopīs'* clothes, and who, for those who take shelter of Him, steals the sins that have accrued over many lifetimes.

I offer *praṇāma* to the foremost of thieves, who steals Śrīmatī Rādhikā's heart, who steals the dark luster of a fresh raincloud, and who steals all the sins and sufferings of those who take shelter of His feet.

He turns His surrendered devotees into paupers and wandering, homeless beggars. Oh, such a fearsome thief has never been seen or heard of in all the three worlds.

Mere utterance of His name purges one of a mountain of sins. Such an astonishingly wonderful thief I have never seen or heard of anywhere.



Painting by Parikṣit Dāsa

O thief, having stolen my wealth, my honor, my senses, my life, and my everything, where can You run to? I have caught You with the rope of my devotion.

You cut the terrible noose of Yamarāja, You sever the dreadful noose of material existence, and You slash everyone's material bondage, but You are unable to cut the knot fastened by Your own loving devotees.

O stealer of my everything, O thief, today I have imprisoned You in the miserable prison of my heart, which is very fearful due to the terrible darkness of my ignorance. There, for a very long time You will remain, receiving appropriate punishment for Your crimes of thievery.

O Kṛṣṇa, thief of my everything, the noose of my devotion remaining forever tight, You will continue to reside in the prison of my heart because I will not release You for millions of eons.



Painting by Yadurāj Devī Dās

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.

FORETELLING KING PṚTHU'S GODLIKE REIGN

Professional reciters predict the extraordinary activities of King Pṛthu, an empowered incarnation of the Lord.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 16

20 अयं भुवो मण्डलमोदयाद्रे-
गोसैकवीरो नरदेवनाथः
आस्थाय जैत्रं रथमात्तचापः
पर्यस्यते दक्षिणतो यथार्कः

*ayam bhuvō maṅḍalam odayādrer
goptaika-vīro naradeva-nāthaḥ
āsthāya jaitram ratham ātta-cāpaḥ
paryasyate dakṣiṇato yathārkaḥ*

ayam – this King; *bhuvah* – of the world; *maṅḍalam* – the globe; *ā-udaya-adreḥ* – from the mountain where the first appearance of the sun is visible; *goptā* – will protect; *eka* – uniquely; *vīraḥ* – powerful, heroic; *nara-deva* – of all kings, gods in human society; *nāthaḥ* – the master; *āsthāya* – being situated on; *jaitram* – victorious; *ratham* – his chariot; *ātta-cāpaḥ* – holding the bow; *paryasyate* – he will circumambulate; *dakṣiṇataḥ* – from the southern side; *yathā* – like; *arkaḥ* – the sun.

This King, being uniquely powerful and heroic, will have no competitor. He will travel around the globe on

his victorious chariot, holding his invincible bow in his hand and appearing exactly like the sun, which rotates in its own orbit from the south.

PURPORT (*continued from the previous issue*): Another significant word in this verse is *naradeva*. As described in previous verses, the qualified king – be he King Pṛthu or any other king who rules over the state as an ideal king – should be understood to be God in human form. 1 According to Vedic culture, the king is honored as the Supreme Personality of Godhead because he represents Nārāyaṇa, who also gives protection to the citizens. He is therefore *nātha*, or the proprietor. Even Sanātana Gosvāmī gave respect to the Nawab Hussain Shah as *naradeva*, although the Nawab was Muhammadan. A king or governmental head must therefore be so competent to rule over the state that the citizens will worship him as God in human form. That is the perfectional stage for the head of any government or state.

21 अस्मै नृपालाः किल तत्र तत्र
बलिं हरिष्यन्ति सलोकपालाः

1) Why in Vedic culture is the king honored as God?

मंस्यन्त एषां स्त्रिय आदिराजं
चक्रायुधं तद्यश उद्धरन्त्यः

*asmai nṛ-pālāḥ kila tatra tatra
balim hariṣyanti saloka-pālāḥ
maṁsyanta eṣāṁ striya ādi-rājam
cakrāyudham tad-yaśa uddharantyaḥ*

asmai – unto him; *nṛ-pālāḥ* – all the kings; *kila* – certainly; *tatra tatra* – here and there; *balim* – presentations; *hariṣyanti* – will offer; *sa* – with; *loka-pālāḥ* – the demigods; *maṁsyante* – will consider; *eṣāṁ* – of these kings; *striyaḥ* – wives; *ādi-rājam* – the original king; *cakrāyudham* – bearing the disc weapon; *tat* – his; *yaśaḥ* – reputation; *uddharantyaḥ* – carrying on.

When the King travels all over the world, other kings, as well as the demigods, will offer him all kinds of presentations. Their queens will also consider him the original king, who carries in His hands the emblems of club and disc, and will sing of his fame, for he will be as reputable as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

PURPORT: As far as reputation is concerned, King Pṛthu is already known as the incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The word *ādi-rājam* means “the original king.”² The original king is Nārāyaṇa, or Lord Viṣṇu. People do not know that the original king, or Nārāyaṇa, is actually the protector of all living entities. As confirmed in the *Vedas*: *eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān* (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.2.13). Actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead is maintaining all living entities. The king, or *naradeva*, is His representative. As such, the king’s duty is to personally supervise the distribution of wealth for the maintenance of all living entities. If he does so, he will be as reputable as Nārāyaṇa.³ As mentioned in this verse (*tad-yaśaḥ*), Pṛthu Mahārāja was actually carrying with him the reputation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead because he was actually reigning over the world in that capacity.

22 अयं महीं गां दुदुहेऽधिराजः
प्रजापतिर्वृत्तिकरः प्रजानाम्
यो लीलयाद्रीन् स्वशरासकोट्या
भिन्दन् समां गामकरोद्यथेन्द्रः

2) Who is the original king?
3) Why was Pṛthu Mahārāja carrying with him the reputation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead?

*ayam mahīm gām duduhe 'dhirājaḥ
prajāpatir vṛtti-karaḥ prajānām
yo līlayādrīn sva-śarāsa-koṭyā
bhīndan samām gām akarod yathendraḥ*

ayam – this King; *mahīm* – the earth; *gām* – in the form of a cow; *duduhe* – will milk; *adhirājaḥ* – extraordinary king; *prajā-patiḥ* – progenitor of mankind; *vṛtti-karaḥ* – providing living facility; *prajānām* – of the citizens; *yah* – one who; *līlayā* – simply by pastimes; *adrīn* – mountains and hills; *sva-śarāsa* – of his bow; *koṭyā* – by the pointed end; *bhīndan* – breaking; *samām* – level; *gām* – the earth; *akarod* – will make; *yathā* – as; *indraḥ* – the King of heaven, Indra.

This King, this protector of the citizens, is an extraordinary king and is equal to the Prajāpati demigods. For the living facility of all citizens, he will milk the earth, which is like a cow. Not only that, but he will level the surface of the earth with the pointed ends of his bow, breaking all the hills exactly as King Indra, the heavenly King, breaks mountains with his powerful thunderbolt.

23 विस्फूर्जयन्नाजगवं धनुः स्वयं
यदाचरत्क्षमामविषह्यमाजौ
तदा निलिल्युर्दिशि दिश्यसन्तो
लाङ्गूलमुद्यम्य यथा मृगेन्द्रः

*visphūrjayann āja-gavam dhanuḥ svayam
yadācarat kṣmām aviṣahyam ājau
tadā nililyur diśi diśy asanto
lāṅgūlam udyamya yathā mṛgendrah*

visphūrjayan – vibrating; *āja-gavam* – made of the horns of goats and bulls; *dhanuḥ* – his bow; *svayam* – personally; *yadā* – when; *acarat* – will travel; *kṣmām* – on the earth; *aviṣahyam* – irresistible; *ājau* – in battle; *tadā* – at that time; *nililyuh* – will hide themselves; *diśi diśi* – in all directions; *asantah* – demoniac men; *lāṅgūlam* – tail; *udyamya* – keeping high; *yathā* – as; *mṛgendrah* – the lion.

When the lion travels in the forest with its tail turned upward, all menial animals hide themselves. Similarly, when King Pṛthu will travel over his kingdom and vibrate the string of his bow, which is made of the horns of goats and bulls and is irresistible in battle, all demoniac rogues and thieves will hide themselves in all directions.

PURPORT: It is very appropriate to compare a powerful king like Pṛthu to a lion. In India, *kṣatriya* kings are still called *siṅgh*, which means “lion.” Unless rogues, thieves, and other demoniac people in a state are afraid of the exec-

utive head, who rules the kingdom with a strong hand, there cannot be peace or prosperity in the state. Thus it is most regrettable when a woman becomes the executive head instead of a lionlike king. In such a situation the people are considered very unfortunate.

24 एषोऽध्वमेधाञ्जतमाजहार
सरस्वती प्रादुरभावि यत्र
अहर्षीद्यस्य हयं पुरन्दरः
शतक्रतुश्चरमे वर्तमाने

*eṣo 'śvamedhāñ śatam ājahāra
sarasvatī prādurabhāvi yatra
ahārṣīd yasya hayam purandarah
śata-kratūś carame vartamāne*

eṣaḥ – this King; *aśvamedhān* – sacrifices known as *aśvamedha*; *śatam* – one hundred; *ājahāra* – will perform; *sarasvatī* – the river of the name Sarasvatī; *prādurabhāvi* – became manifest; *yatra* – where; *ahārṣīt* – will steal; *yasya* – whose; *hayam* – horse; *purandarah* – the Lord Indra; *śata-kratuh* – who performed one hundred sacrifices; *carame* – while the last sacrifice; *vartamāne* – is occurring.

At the source of the River Sarasvatī, this King will perform one hundred sacrifices known as *aśvamedha*. In the course of the last sacrifice, the heavenly King Indra will steal the sacrificial horse.

25 एष स्वसद्मोपवने समेत्य
सनत्कुमारं भगवन्तमेकम्
आराध्य भक्त्यालभतामलं त-
ज्ज्ञानं यतो ब्रह्म परं विदन्ति

*eṣa sva-sadmopavane sametya
sanat-kumaram bhagavantam ekam
ārādhya bhaktyālabhatāmalam taj
jñānam yato brahma param vidanti*

eṣaḥ – this King; *sva-sadma* – of his palace; *upavane* – in the garden; *sametya* – meeting; *sanat-kumaram* – Sanat-kumāra; *bhagavantam* – the worshipable; *ekam* – alone; *ārādhya* – worshiping; *bhaktyā* – with devotion; *alabhata* – he will achieve; *alam* – without contamination; *taj* – that; *jñānam* – transcendental knowledge; *yataḥ* – by which; *brahma* – spirit; *param* – supreme, transcendental; *vidanti* – they enjoy, they know.

This King Pṛthu will meet Sanat-kumāra, one of the four Kumāras, in the garden of his palace compound.

The King will worship him with devotion and will be fortunate to receive instructions by which one can enjoy transcendental bliss.

PURPORT: The word *vidanti* refers to one who knows something or enjoys something. When a person is properly instructed by a spiritual master and understands transcendental bliss, he enjoys life. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.54), *brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati*. When one attains to the Brahman platform, he neither hankers nor laments. He actually partakes of transcendental, blissful enjoyment. Although King Pṛthu was an incarnation of Viṣṇu, he nonetheless taught the people in his kingdom to take instructions from a spiritual master who represents the disciplic succession. Thus one can become fortunate and enjoy a blissful life even within this material world. In this verse the verb *vidanti* is sometimes taken to mean “understanding.”⁴ Thus when a person understands Brahman, or the supreme source of everything, he enjoys a blissful life.

26 तत्र तत्र गिरस्तास्ता इति विश्रुतविक्रमः
श्रोष्यत्यात्माश्रिता गाथाः पृथुः पृथुपराक्रमः

*tatra tatra giras tās tā
iti viśruta-vikramah
śroṣyaty ātmāśritā gāthāḥ
pṛthuh pṛthu-parākramah*

tatra tatra – here and there; *giraḥ* – words; *tāḥ tāḥ* – many, various; *iti* – thus; *viśruta-vikramah* – he whose chivalrous activities are widely reputed; *śroṣyati* – will hear; *ātma-āśritāḥ* – about himself; *gāthāḥ* – songs, narrations; *pṛthuh* – King Pṛthu; *pṛthu-parākramah* – distinctly powerful.

In this way when the chivalrous activities of King Pṛthu come to be known to the people in general, King Pṛthu will always hear about himself and his uniquely powerful activities.

PURPORT: To artificially advertise oneself and thus enjoy a so-called reputation is a kind of conceit. Pṛthu Mahārāja was famous amongst the people because of his chivalrous activities. He did not have to advertise himself artificially. One’s factual reputation cannot be covered.

27 दिशो विजित्याप्रतिरुद्धचक्रः
स्वतेजसोत्पाटितलोकशल्यः

4) What happens when a person understands Brahman?

सुरासुरेन्द्रैरुपगीयमान-
महानुभावो भविता पतिर्भुवः

*diśo vijityāpratiruddha-cakraḥ
sva-tejasotpāṭita-loka-śalyaḥ
surāsurendrair upagīyamāna-
mahānubhāvo bhavitā patir bhuvah*

diśah – all directions; *vijitya* – conquering; *apratiruddha* – without check; *cakraḥ* – his influence or power; *sva-tejasā* – by his own prowess; *utpāṭita* – uprooted; *loka-śalyaḥ* – the miseries of the citizens; *sura* – of demigods; *asura* – of demons; *indraiḥ* – by the chiefs; *upagīyamāna* – being glorified; *mahā-anubhāvaḥ* – the great soul; *bhavitā* – he will become; *patiḥ* – the lord; *bhuvah* – of the world.

No one will be able to disobey the orders of Pṛthu Mahārāja. After conquering the world, he will completely eradicate the threefold miseries of the citizens. Then he will be recognized all over the world. At that time both the suras and the asuras will undoubtedly glorify his magnanimous activities.

PURPORT: At the time of Mahārāja Pṛthu, the world was ruled by one emperor, although there were many subordinate states. Just as there are many united states in various parts of the world, in olden days the entire world was ruled through many states, but there was a supreme emperor who ruled over all subsidiary states. As soon as there were some discrepancies in the maintenance of the *varṇāśrama* system, the emperor would immediately take charge of the small states.

The word *utpāṭita-loka-śalyaḥ* indicates that Mahārāja Pṛthu completely uprooted all the miseries of his citizens. The word *śalya* means “piercing thorns.” There are many kinds of miserable thorns that pierce the citizens of a state, but all competent rulers, even up to the reign of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, uprooted all the miserable conditions of the citizens. It is stated that during the reign of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira there did not even exist severe cold or scorching heat, nor did the citizens suffer from any kind of mental anxiety. This is the standard of good government. Such a peaceful and prosperous government, devoid of anxiety, was established by Pṛthu Mahārāja. Thus the inhabitants of both saintly and demoniac planets were all engaged in glorifying the activities of Mahārāja Pṛthu. Persons or nations anxious to spread their influence all over the world should consider this point. 5 If one is able to eradicate completely the threefold miseries of the citizens, he should aspire to

5) To aspire to rule the world, what should a person or state be able to do?

rule the world. One should not aspire to rule for any political or diplomatic consideration.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 17

मैत्रेय उवाच

1 एवं स भगवान् वैन्यः ख्यापितो गुणकर्मभिः
छन्दयामास तान् कामैः प्रतिपूज्याभिनन्द्य च

*maitreya uvāca
evam sa bhagavān vainyaḥ
khyāpito guṇa-karmabhiḥ
chandayām āsa tān kāmaiḥ
pratipūjyābhinandya ca*

maitreyaḥ uvāca – the great sage Maitreya continued to speak; *evam* – thus; *saḥ* – he; *bhagavān* – the Personality of Godhead; *vainyaḥ* – in the form of the son of King Vena; *khyāpitaḥ* – being glorified; *guṇa-karmabhiḥ* – by qualities and factual activities; *chandayām āsa* – pacified; *tān* – those reciters; *kāmaiḥ* – by various presentations; *pratipūjya* – offering all respects; *abhinandya* – offering prayers; *ca* – also.

The great sage Maitreya continued: In this way the reciters who were glorifying Mahārāja Pṛthu readily described his qualities and chivalrous activities. At the end, Mahārāja Pṛthu offered them various presentations with all due respect and worshiped them adequately.

2 ब्राह्मणप्रमुखान् वर्णान् भृत्यामात्यपुरोधसः
पौराञ्जानपदान् श्रेणीः प्रकृतीः समपूजयत्

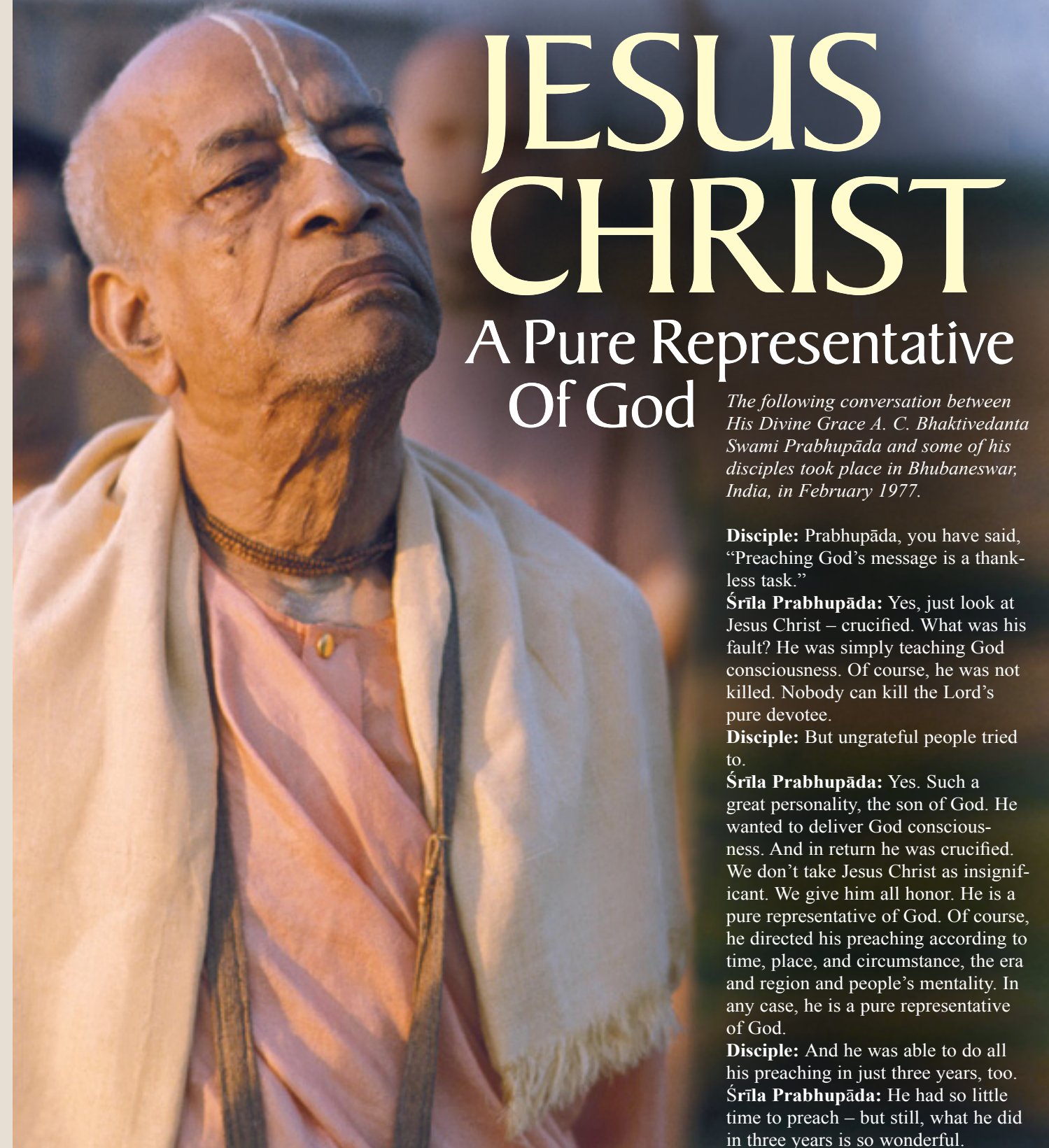
*brāhmaṇa-pramukhān varṇān
bhṛtyāmātya-purodhasaḥ
paurāñ jāna-padān śreṇīḥ
prakṛtīḥ samapūjayat*

brāhmaṇa-pramukhān – unto the leaders of the *brāhmaṇa* community; *varṇān* – to the other castes; *bhṛtya* – servants; *amātya* – ministers; *purodhasaḥ* – to the priests; *paurān* – to the citizens; *jāna-padān* – to his countrymen; *śreṇīḥ* – to different communities; *prakṛtīḥ* – to the admirers; *samapūjayat* – he gave proper respects.

King Pṛthu thus satisfied and offered all respect to all the leaders of the brāhmaṇas and other castes, to his servants, to his ministers, and to the priests, citizens, general countrymen, people from other communities, admirers, and others, and thus they all became happy.

[Continued in the next issue.]

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT



JESUS CHRIST

A Pure Representative Of God

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place in Bhubaneswar, India, in February 1977.

Disciple: Prabhupāda, you have said, “Preaching God’s message is a thankless task.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, just look at Jesus Christ – crucified. What was his fault? He was simply teaching God consciousness. Of course, he was not killed. Nobody can kill the Lord’s pure devotee.

Disciple: But ungrateful people tried to.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Such a great personality, the son of God. He wanted to deliver God consciousness. And in return he was crucified. We don’t take Jesus Christ as insignificant. We give him all honor. He is a pure representative of God. Of course, he directed his preaching according to time, place, and circumstance, the era and region and people’s mentality. In any case, he is a pure representative of God.

Disciple: And he was able to do all his preaching in just three years, too.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: He had so little time to preach – but still, what he did in three years is so wonderful.

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.



Disciple: Yes. He’s been world-famous for the last two thousand years.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, it is not a joke. Unless Christ is God’s representative, how can he be so enduringly famous? That we know – Christ represents God.

In Melbourne, when a priest asked me, “What is your idea of Jesus Christ?” I told them, “He’s our guru.” This they very much appreciated. Christ is preaching consciousness of God. So he is our guru, our spiritual master. That’s a fact. Don’t take him otherwise. He’s our guru. And Christ’s name – originally he was called “Jesus of the Christ.” Isn’t it so?

Disciple: Yes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Jesus of the Father. Jesus of the Christ. And that Father, that Christ, is Kṛṣṇa. Christa is simply another pronunciation of Kṛṣṇa. And of course, from his teachings we can understand that Jesus Christ represents God.

Disciple: Oh, yes. What he was teaching, what he was giving to his original disciples – he gave them examples like, “The birds are not worrying about their food. And yet God is supplying all their wants. So why should you worry about your food or other needs? Simply follow God’s laws and teach others to do the same. God is feeding the birds. Do you think He will not feed you?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, he said that, didn’t he? That’s a fact. That is our mission: simple living and high thinking. No need for such a big bombastic economic arrangement. Depend on God’s natural economic arrangements – the earth’s produce and the cow’s milk. And the main thing, use your priceless human life for becoming God conscious.

Disciple: So Christ was a pure devotee of God, teaching devotional principles.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. Sometimes people make propaganda that Christ may have eaten fish or even meat. But even if this were true, it would only have been because noth-

ing else was available, not because he wanted to eat such abominable things for his own personal sense gratification. If nothing else were available, what could be done?

It is not that in your America – with such bountiful grains and nuts and milk and cheese – you can keep slaughterhouses and daily kill millions of poor animals on the plea of “protein” or “Christ may have eaten this.” That is rascaldom.

Disciple: And because it wasn’t always easy to get fresh water, people in those days used to drink a very cheap wine that was hardly alcoholic at all. Really it was just mildly fermented grape juice. They used to drink this because there was often very little fresh water.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Not that they made the plea, “Now we shall drink bottle after bottle of strong wine and beer and liquor and intoxicate ourselves, since Christ may have taken some grape juice.”

Anyone who is preaching the Lord’s glories – he is a bona fide guru or spiritual master. So how can these people today take Christ so lightly? The *Vedas* say, *tad vijñān-ārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet*: “Only a bona fide spiritual master can impart the Supreme Truth.”

Now, Christ imparted the Supreme Truth to the whole world. So how could he do this unless he is a bona fide spiritual master?

Disciple: Yes. Really we have a much better appreciation of Christ than some of his nominal followers . . . **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Better. Yes. Oh, yes.

Disciple: . . . because we know that we can’t just shrug him off as “God’s sacrificial lamb” and use him as an excuse to go on sinning.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, if Christ is a bona fide representative of God, a true spiritual master, then we must strictly follow his instructions. So my disciples are the greatest Christians. We accept Christ as our spiritual master – we follow his instructions.

Now, if the Christians want to be reformed, we can help them reform. On the basis of the Bible, we can help them reform. There is no difficulty. Most of my disciples come from the Christian group. So the Christians can reform; they can return to following God’s laws. And the Bible also recommends chanting God’s holy names – the Lord’s glories. This age is most degraded. So the best way to spiritual success and happiness – live your life in the Lord’s glories. 🙏

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Weave in **F**aith, and God will find the thread.

Keep your faith, **A**nd your fears will starve to death.

Calmness **I**s the way we show that we are trusting in God.

Faith does no**T** deny the evil, but it sees around it.

If God brings you to it, **H**e will bring you through it.

An Essential Element Of Spiritual Progress

*We all have faith,
and deciding
where to direct it
demands careful
consideration.*

by Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

IN ONE OF HIS *Bhagavad-gītā* purports, Śrīla Prabhupāda makes this startling statement: “It is only by faith that one can advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” (*Gītā* 9.3) Reading this, I started thinking about faith.

Both the dictionary and our *ācāryas* offer two distinct definitions of faith. A dictionary definition of faith is “complete trust or confidence in someone or something.” In the same vein, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī defines faith as complete conviction that simply by Kṛṣṇa consciousness one will be elevated to the highest perfection of life. This is spiritual faith.

Another dictionary definition of faith is “strong belief in the doctrines of a religion.” Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Religion conveys the idea of faith, and faith may change. One may have faith in a particular process, and he may change this faith and adopt another.” (*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, Introduction) This is material faith.

Prabhupāda explains that each one of us inherently has the quality called faith: “Everyone has a particular type of faith, regardless of what he is.” (*Gītā* 17.3, Purport) Faith is originally spiritual, for the origin of faith is the Supreme Spirit, Kṛṣṇa, who says, “Everything emanates from Me.” (*Gītā* 10.8)

Kṛṣṇa also says, “There is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests on Me as pearls are strung on a thread,” “I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds,” “Everyone follows My path in all respects,” and “From

Me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness.”

In other words, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, has complete faith in Himself!

As Kṛṣṇa’s integral parts, we, as spiritual beings, have spiritual faith that’s meant to repose in Him and His unalloyed devotees. Faith in God and godly persons is an innate quality and natural inclination of the soul. Once our faith is firmly reposed in these illustrious personalities, then and only then can we legitimately have faith in ourself. Otherwise, faith in ourself is a sham – we are too small, too insignificant, too beset with flaws (imperfect senses and the tendency to cheat, to make mistakes, and to be illusioned), and too influenced by time’s devastation (birth, death, disease, and old age) to be worthy of self faith.

Types of Faith

When our original, pure faith is covered by material nature, it becomes material. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, “As long as one’s faith is not completely in purified goodness, the faith is subject to contamination by any of the modes of nature. . . . Thus we find different types of faith in this world, and there are different types of religions due to different types of faith.” (*Gītā* 17.3, Purport)

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.25.27) Lord Kṛṣṇa further explains, “Faith directed toward spiritual life is in the mode of goodness, faith rooted in fruitive work is in the mode of passion, faith residing in irreligious activities is in the mode of ignorance, but faith in My devotional service is purely transcendental.”

Faith is an invaluable and sacred quality within each of us. *Śraddhā*, the Sanskrit word for faith, etymologically means “where the heart rests” (*śrat* – heart; *dha* – place). Where we place our faith – where we want our heart to rest – is our choice, a choice we can and should make consciously. “One has to con-

sider things carefully, with intelligence, in the association of a bona fide spiritual master. Thus one can change his position to a higher mode of nature.” (*Gītā* 17.2, Purport) In modern life, people misplace their faith in their work, in money, in their family, in sports or sports heroes, in music or musicians, in politicians, in their pets, or in any number of other places where they think they’ll find happiness, including atheism or other “isms.” Not surprisingly, faith reposed in these places remains unfulfilling. One feels enveloped in a gloomy, insidious vacuousness.

The Results of Spiritual Faith

Once properly reposed, the results of faith are astonishing. From spir-

automatically revealed.” (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.23) From divine faith come wisdom, understanding, detachment, and spiritual progress: “Having some faith in me [as the guru] and in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness process is the first and only requirement for getting actual wisdom. If there is faith, understanding will follow. And as your understanding increases, so will your disgust with the spell of illusory energy. And when you voluntarily give up your entanglements in the material world, then the progress is assured.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, *Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers*, Chapter 8)

From divine faith comes divine ability: “O Lord, I am simply praying for Your mercy so that I will be able to convince them about

acted piously, and who have conquered sinful reactions can accept devotional service and gradually rise to the pure knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (*Gītā* 7.28, Purport)

But elsewhere it seems piety is not a prerequisite: “Pure devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be had even by pious activity in hundreds and thousands of lives. It can be attained only by paying one price – that is, intense greed to obtain it. If it is available somewhere, one must purchase it without delay.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 8.70)

So, is a background of piety necessary or unnecessary for spiritual faith to develop? Just as there are spiritual and material types of faith, so there are spiritual and material types of piety. “Pious activities can be divided into three categories: pious activities that awaken one’s dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness are called *bhakti-unmukhī sukṛti*, pious activities that bestow material opulence are called *bhogonmukhī sukṛti*, and pious activities that enable the living entity to merge into the existence of the Supreme are called *mokṣonmukhī sukṛti*. These last two awards of pious activity are not actually fortunate. Pious activities are fortunate when they help one become Kṛṣṇa conscious. The good fortune of *bhakti-unmukhī* is attainable only when one comes in contact with a devotee. By associating with a devotee willingly or unwillingly, one advances in devotional service, and thus one’s dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness is awakened.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 22.45, Purport)

Mundane pious acts can bring one to the mode of goodness but not to devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. To come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness one needs spiritual piety; one needs some sort of contact with Kṛṣṇa’s devotee.

Why Does Faith Wane?

Sometimes those fortunate persons who have associated with Kṛṣṇa’s

devotee and begun the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness find that their once staunch faith becomes feeble and their determination to execute devotional service founders. Why? one wonders.

A number of things can undermine spiritual faith. For one, just as faith is inspired by contact with a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, so, conversely, faith is weakened by association with materialistic persons.

Another cause of waning faith is unrealistic expectations. We may think, “After practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness for five years I’ll be a pure devotee.” After that time passes we may be disappointed with our progress and lose faith, especially if we can’t even uphold our basic initiation vows. Or we may think, “Since I’ve given so many years of service to the society of devotees, I should now receive certain benefits from that society.” When we don’t receive the facilities, privileges, or honor we

expect, we may be disgruntled and lose faith.

Similarly our faith in the process of devotional service can be shaken if we experience devotees’ being manipulative, personally ambitious, or envious.

If we become proud of what we’ve done, spiritually or materially, we may find our taste for and faith in devotional service evaporating.

If we forget that any fame, profit, and adoration we sometimes receive for our attempts at *bhakti* are due to the kindness of Kṛṣṇa and our spiritual master, we will find our faith whittled away. Opulences that come to the *bhakti* practitioner are completely due to the mercy of guru and God.

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja describes yet other causes of weakened faith: “The readers should relish this wonderful nectar because nothing compares to it. Keeping their faith firmly fixed within their minds, they should

be careful not to fall into the pit of false arguments or the whirlpools of unfortunate situations. If one falls into such positions, he is finished.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 25.279)

Another major cause of weakened faith is offenses. If we’re not conscientious, we can offend the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, His devotees, His deities, His *dhāmas*, and His living beings, and lose faith as a result.

Faithlessness, Doubt, And Faithfulness

People who have no faith in God but who place their faith in themselves and in material objectives have distinguishing characteristics. For one, they are often envious of and angry with Kṛṣṇa and disrespect His devotees. They are also dissatisfied, unhappy, and without peace of mind. And they adamantly ignore scriptural knowledge and establish their

To come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness one needs spiritual piety; one needs some sort of contact with Kṛṣṇa’s devotee.

itual faith – faith in Kṛṣṇa and His devotees – come divine blessings: “This process is very simple. One need only be firmly convinced by the spiritual master that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one decides this, he can make further progress by thinking of Kṛṣṇa, chanting of Kṛṣṇa, and glorifying Him. There is then no doubt that such a fully surrendered devotee will receive the blessings of Lord Kṛṣṇa.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 11.51, Purport)

From divine faith comes divine knowledge:

*yasya deve parā bhaktir
yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ
prakāśante mahātmanah*

“For one who has implicit faith in Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are

Your message.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, *Mārkine Bhāgavata-dharma*)

From divine faith comes incredible courage. Due to his unflinching faith, five-year-old Prahlāda defied his father, the greatest demon of the universe. With similar faith sixty-eight-year-old Śrīla Prabhupāda boarded the Jaladuta, leaving his native India for the first time, alone, with no resources and without knowing anyone in America, yet with full faith in his spiritual master’s instruction that he should give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the English-speaking people of the world.

Who can be faithful to Kṛṣṇa? Why do some people have faith in Kṛṣṇa’s words while others ignore them or become antagonistic to them? Prabhupāda explains that those who are pious can have faith: “Only those who have passed their lives in practicing the regulative principles of religion, who have

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own beliefs. For such people, Kṛṣṇa remains hidden, for, as He says to Arjuna, He makes Himself known to the non-envious: "Because you are not envious of Me, I shall impart to you knowledge and realization." (*Gītā* 9.1)

Śiśupāla, an exemplar of faithlessness, voiced his envious and disturbed nature when, on hearing of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental qualities, he became infuriated and said, "How does this cowerd boy, the disgrace of His family, deserve your worship, any more than a crow deserves to eat the sacred *puroḍāśa* ricecake?" (*Bhāgavatam* 10.74.34) And Hiranyakaśipu, the demonic father of devoted Prahlaḍa, showed his disturbed and disrespectful nature when he angrily said to faultless Prahlaḍa, "O most impudent, unintelligent disruptor of the family, O lowest of mankind . . . you are an obstinate fool." (*Bhāgavatam* 7.8.5)

Although we ordinarily think of doubt as undesirable, when atheists doubt their atheism their doubt is beneficial. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, "Doubt is one of the important functions of intelligence; blind acceptance of something does not give evidence of intelligence. In order to cultivate intelligence, one should be doubtful in the beginning." (*Bhāgavatam* 3.26.30, Purport) Often, atheists are faithless not because they've thought through and weighed all evidence and arguments about God's existence, but because they've imbibed the faithlessness of their circumstances or have been exposed to only part of the evidence and arguments about God's existence. Their faithlessness is circumstantial. As Prabhupāda didn't want his followers to be blind in their faithfulness, so he calls upon materialists not to be blind in their faithlessness. Rather, all of us are enjoined to consider things carefully, with intelligence, in the association of a clear-headed person.

Prabhupāda continues, "Doubt-

ing is not very favorable when information is received from the proper source. . . . The study to determine whether one's identity is spiritual or material begins in doubt." We should doubt until we hear from the bona fide scriptures and sages. Then we use our intelligence to grasp and realize their transcendental words.

As the faithless have certain characteristics, so faithful persons have their singular characteristics. For one, they execute the orders of their spiritual master despite all inconveniences and sacrifices. Śrīla Prabhupāda personified this quality.

The faithful know they will never be defeated, for Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, "Declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes." (*Gītā* 9.31)

Those who are faithful are satisfied, knowing they've obtained their position through their past activities, and they see God's hand behind everything, even suffering.

*tat te 'nukampām su-samīkṣamāṇo
bhuiñjāna evātma-kṛtam vipākam
hrd-vāg-vapurhbir vidadhan namas te
jīveta yo mukti-pade sa dāya-bhāk*

"My dear Lord, one who earnestly waits for You to bestow Your causeless mercy upon him, all the while patiently suffering the reactions of his past misdeeds and offering You respectful obeisances with his heart, words, and body, is surely eligible for liberation, for it has become his rightful claim." (*Bhāgavatam* 10.14.8)

Persons convinced of Kṛṣṇa's position and opulences accept Him with great faith and without any doubt and engage in serving Him with devotion. As a result, they become uninterested in material affairs, are always in a favorable mood, and are joyful. They feel privileged to serve Kṛṣṇa, and do so with great hope and gratitude.

Full Faith in Kṛṣṇa

Divine faith – unflinching trust in Kṛṣṇa – is present within us but cov-

ered. We uncover it by connecting with one who has it (Kṛṣṇa's devotee) and following that person's directives. We cover it by committing offenses. When we achieve spiritual faith, we'll experience Kṛṣṇa consciousness and, along with it, complete happiness.

The practical application of faith is surrender, as exemplified by Arjuna when he said at the end of *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.73): "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."

Prabhupāda's learned god-brother Śrīdhara Swami expressed the importance of faith in this way: "Just as the eyes see color and the ear perceives sound, only by faith can we perceive that [spiritual] world. Only faith can see and feel it. The Supreme Reality cannot be perceived with any other senses. Faith is the real function of the soul, and that is awakened by the agents of Vaikuṅṭha, the saints. By faith one's association with saints increases, and by this transaction the culture of reality takes place. . . . Perceiving spiritual reality is the function of the soul." (*Subjective Evolution of Consciousness*, Chapter 4)

The heart yearns to know why there is creation and life. Mundane reason cannot penetrate these mysteries. But faith can. Therefore divine faith is the necessity of human life. Kṛṣṇa Himself indirectly establishes this when He declares, "For the doubting soul there is happiness neither in this world nor in the next." (*Gītā* 4.40) Spiritual faith is the animating principle of spiritual life, while doubt suspends spiritual life. Thus Prabhupāda writes, "It is only by faith that one can advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness." 🌟

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

BBC Meditation

by Kṛṣṇa Dharma Dāsa



The author has been a regular British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) contributor since 1998. BBC Radio 2, where these meditations are aired, attracts from one million to eight million listeners, depending on the time of day. Thoughts from different contributors on topics assigned by the BBC are aired three or four times a day. This is the first in a series of eight meditations that we'll run in upcoming issues.

What is your favorite Shakespeare quote?

I HAVE MIXED FEELINGS about Shakespeare. Memories of my schooldays and the obligatory *Hamlet* studied from every angle left me with a bit of a jaded view. But since then I have grown a lot fonder of the Bard. His remarkable gifts aside, he made some astute moral and indeed spiritual observations. I am a great fan of his sonnets and particularly like 146, where he describes love. There he penned the immortal line "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds." He was writing about worldly love, of course, but this for me invokes an important spiritual concept. Sadly, these days it does seem that often love does tend to alter when it alteration finds, and is frequently removed by the remover, as Shakespeare put it in his sonnet. I read recently that over forty percent of marriages end in separation, and that's just the partnerships that actually got as far as marriage.

Shakespeare is describing an unswerving love that is completely unconditional, but in reality, love is rarely as straightforward as that.

Loving unions require dedication to make them last, so unfortunately when one partner no longer pleases the other there is every chance of a split. Even between parent and child we find breakdowns.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* suggests that this is because our true loving relationship is with God. It describes us as eternal souls living in temporary bodies, going on to say that bodily relations can never satisfy us, because we the person are different from the body we inhabit. We are further described as spiritual parts of the supreme spirit, or God, always seeking our loving relationship with Him. As St. Augustine said, "You have made us for Yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless till they rest in You."

I know that all of my relationships, no matter how nice they may be, must end sooner or later with the inevitable passage of time. So, as the *Bhagavad-gītā* teaches, I believe that my connection with God is the only love that can be truly unalterable – the eternal soul with his eternal beloved.



Margarita Remneva

The ensemble creates Lord Kṛṣṇa's universal form. Inset above: Actors Madhva Anderson (left) and Varshabhavani Patel apply make-up. Inset at right: Jaya Kṛṣṇa Dāsa.



David Crick

My Life As an Actor IN ISKCON

A devotee looks back on his thirty-five years of producing and acting in Kṛṣṇa conscious plays.

by Jaya Kṛṣṇa Dāsa

COME FROM a typically pious Gujarati family. My family moved from Kenya to the UK in the winter of 1969. I was seven years old and remember being greeted by snow and biting cold weather. Nonetheless, we adapted and began our new British way of life. But all that was to change in the summer of 1971. Call it fate, karma, or the guru's mercy, but my eldest brother was handed a *Back to Godhead*

Abhimanyu (Ekacakra Patel) knocks down an assailant (right). Below, Jaya Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, megaphone in hand, directs a rehearsal of the Mahābhārata in a well-ventilated agricultural building at Bhaktivedanta Manor.



Danil Premgi

magazine, and we soon found ourselves going to 7 Bury Place for the celebrated Hare Kṛṣṇa Sunday feast. Bhaktivedanta Manor opened in 1973 and became the main place my family visited over the years. Over time, I got involved in a variety of services, such as gardening and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on the streets of various towns. But one service really took hold of me, and that was drama. This was around the time when the temple actors were coming into their own as an established drama troupe. I got involved with them at the age of thirteen, when the troupe asked me and my brothers to play monkeys in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Little

David Crick

did I know that this would change my life by igniting my passion for drama. Over the past thirty-five years, I have continually learned how to transform this passion for dramatic art into a spiritual meditation and an offering of love to Lord Kṛṣṇa. In my debut, I had to attack a giant demon, played by a very tall devotee. I was tiny in comparison, and to demonstrate his awesomeness he effortlessly lifted me and flung me offstage. A handler was supposed to catch me, but I went flying into what seemed like a dark abyss – and landed in the audience. No broken bones, and (remember, I was thirteen) from then on I was hooked on

David Crick



Mārīca (Rasācārya Dāsa), right, plans to kidnap Sītā Devī. Below, during a performance at London's Royal Connaught Hall, Kalki and allies confront a creature. Bottom, demonic men torment the Earth personified as a cow.



David Crick



Danil Premgi

Vaiṣṇava Drama: Some Background

by Nandan Ray

THE VAIṢṆAVA spiritual tradition contains the deepest insights into the nature of the Absolute Truth, and with this comes a need for an appropriate vehicle to adequately convey the truths of this highly esoteric tradition to all strata of society. Time and again throughout history, the wonderful medium of drama has proven to be one such vehicle. Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami (1988) said, “The combination of literature, musical performance, and visual representation makes the dramatic art a rich and powerful source of both delight and instruction.”

Within the spectrum of Vedic culture, the Vaiṣṇava tradition has produced some of the richest dramatic literature. One of the earliest Vaiṣṇava plays is *Balcharita* (circa first century CE), which features Lord Kṛṣṇa’s childhood pastimes and is said to have been written by Bhāsa, one of India’s most celebrated early Sanskrit playwrights.

In more recent times, the most influential Vaiṣṇava dramas have been Śrīla Kavi Karpūra’s *Caitanya-candrodaya-nāṭakam* and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Lalita-mādhava* and *Vidagdha-mādhava* (all sixteenth century). Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas regard *Lalita-mādhava* and *Vidagdha-mādhava* as the most important dramatic literature in Sanskrit.

The Taste of the Divine

The main principle of Vaiṣṇava dramas is to convey *rasa*, or the taste of divine relationships in immortality. *Rasa* is indicative of spiritual experience, and Rūpa Gosvāmī, being the preeminent *rasācārya* (expert on *rasa*), delineates the many types of *rasas* devotees experience with Kṛṣṇa.

In most Vaiṣṇava dramas one type of *rasa* predominates. For example, the predominant *rasa* in *Vidagdha-mādhava* is *mādhurya rasa*, the mood of loving affection, since the play is about Kṛṣṇa’s childhood pastimes in Vrindavan, while in *Lalita-mādhava*

it is *aiśvarya rasa*, the mood of reverence, as the play concerns Kṛṣṇa’s activities as the king of Dwarka.

In effect, the main purpose of Vaiṣṇava drama is to enable humanity to access spiritual emotions. It is not just the audience going through the spiritual experience, but as Steven Rosen (1990) points out, “Religion becomes



ISKCON’s New York theater group performs a scene in dance (*Rāmāyaṇa*, 1977).

drama and *acting* becomes a way of salvation.” Thus both the actors and the audience are involved in this process of experiencing higher spiritual states of being.

Roots in Jatra

One also cannot overlook the huge contribution of the Jatra to the style in which Vaiṣṇava plays are produced. The Jatra is a popular form of folk-theater in Bengal and relates to the concept of *yātrās*, or spiritual pilgrimages. When devotees went on religious processions, they would sing and dance to devotional songs and poetry, often composed by great Vaiṣṇava poets like Caṇḍīdāsa and Jayadeva. Soon this singing and dancing evolved into theater performances on the road. The Jatra thus became a significant influence on the theatrical landscape of Vaiṣṇava culture. But with the advent of colonialism in India and the intro-

duction of the stage theater setting, the Jatra tradition adapted itself to the Western method of theater. (Dutt 2006)

It was this new hybrid style, developed in colonial Bengal, that became the popular form of Vaiṣṇava theater up to the twentieth century, and this style has certainly shaped the dramatic culture of ISKCON. Whether one is watching a Kṛṣṇa play in New York, Kolkata, or London, there’s a certain commonality in

artistic approach that is derived from the interaction of rural Bengali Jatra culture and the nineteenth-century melodramas of colonial England.

The Nāṭya-śāstra

For some modern Vaiṣṇava scholars, the current style of Vaiṣṇava plays would be considered less than ideal, and they have expressed the desire to maintain fidelity to the edicts of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, a Sanskrit classic and one of the earliest manuals on Vedic dramaturgy, compiled by the sage Bharata Muni. Foremost among such ISKCON scholars was Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami.

After studying the Sanskrit tradition of drama, Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami wrote *Jagannātha-priya Nāṭakam: The Drama of Lord Jagannātha*. When *Jagannātha-priya Nāṭakam* premiered in Mayapur and Calcutta, in 1986, it received critical acclaim and dem-

onstrated the potential for an authentic Vedic style of drama to be performed in a modern setting.

By the time Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami was experimenting with these different approaches, a few drama troupes had already established themselves within ISKCON. The most significant was the Vaikuntha Players, of New York. These actors were especially known for the drama extravaganzas they staged at the annual New York Rathayātrā festivals, from 1976 on. Before this, they performed at the New York temple, and Śrīla Prabhupāda invited them to perform in India at some annual Mayapur festivals and the Vrindavan temple opening in 1975.

In Great Britain a drama troupe called CHIT (CHaitanya’s Instant Theatre) started to get noticed in the mid-1970s. This troupe brought a real sense of refinement to the ISKCON drama scene. As the troupe got bigger, it changed its name in 1977 to the now well-known Bhaktivedanta Players.

The Bhaktivedanta Players have traveled extensively worldwide and within the UK to perform thought-provoking Kṛṣṇa conscious plays at packed venues to both devotee and secular audiences. Some devotees have even credited the Bhaktivedanta Players with giving them the inspiration to take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Over the years, the Bhaktivedanta Players have helped develop some excellent actors, and a good number of them have gone on to act professionally.

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Kṛṣṇa conscious theater.

I worked with the Bhaktivedanta Players consistently for years, learning the craft, picking up skills, and enjoying the thrills of being part of one of ISKCON’s finest drama troupes. As I grew older, I took up more responsibilities. Along with theater, I also served as a *pūjārī* and as a traveling book distributor. And nowadays I perform marriages for our congregation and conduct tours arranged by ISKCON Educational Services for the groups of school-children who visit the Manor every day throughout the school year. In 1985 I became one of the two leaders of the Bhaktivedanta Players, along with my good friend Dvārakā Purī Dāsa. He is also a lover of theater and one of the most talented and versatile actors I have met. In our thirty years together, neither of us has looked back, and the troupe has gone from strength to strength.

Tours at Home and Abroad

By touring with the Players, I had many opportunities to travel inter-

nationally. We toured in the USA ten times and have played at temples all over Western and Eastern Europe and South and East Africa. In India we performed in Mumbai and Delhi, and in Mayapur and Vrindavan.

Once we performed the *Rāmāyaṇa* to an audience who absolutely loved the show. One man was so moved that he came backstage to see us and started crying. He said the drama had touched his heart and was his first experience of sacred Vedic pastimes.

Another time, we were on a nationwide tour of schools in the UK. While we were getting ready at a school with over a thousand children, a portion of the cast phoned us to say that their car had broken down and they would not make it on time for the show. My mind filled with anxiety. How could we go on without the other actors? I tried to adjust the cast. But we were too short of actors for such a big production. With a heavy heart I decided to cancel the show and went to see the headmaster to convey the bad news.

As I walked down the hall, I saw hundreds of excited children with



While mystically creating a false sunset, Kṛṣṇa (Rishi Dhokia) commands Arjuna (Rādhā Mohana Dāsa) to shoot Jayadratha.

In 2015, the company staged the Mahābhārata. Below, Śikhaṇḍī (Jahnvi Fawcett) leads the attack on Bhīṣma. Bottom, Lord Kṛṣṇa (Varsha Patel) prepares to hurl a chariot wheel at Bhīṣma (Rādhā Mohana Dāsa), an aged white-haired warrior.



David Crick



David Crick

looks of pure anticipation to see our show. My heart now sank to my stomach. How could we let them down? I rushed back and told the actors to improvise. My adrenaline was pumping, and even though I didn't know how we would do it, I knew we had to make the show go on.

We pulled it off. Neither the students nor the teachers seemed to realize there were some actors missing. The kids and teachers were excited about the play and felt truly grateful to us. I really felt Kṛṣṇa guiding us in that production; otherwise, it wouldn't have been possible

The battle of Kurukshetra begins (left), in Redbridge Town Hall. Below, Yudhiṣṭhira (Gopa Kumāra Dāsa) and Śakuni (Satyavrata Dāsa) play a high-stakes game of dice.



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It is a magical sensation to experience the cumulative appreciation of hundreds and thousands of people for more than thirty years.

Appreciative Audiences

Some professional actors who work in London's West End have seen our plays. They have approached us

after performances and said that our plays are much better than what is produced in some West End theaters. They encourage us to get into the West End and get more exposure. But with professional theater, it's a matter of who you know and whether any investor will take a risk with you.

Nevertheless, we still reach huge audiences despite our limitations. And



Four performances in three theaters were sold out in June 2015 for the premiere of the Mahābhārata. Far left: closing night in Redbridge. Opposite page, bottom: In another production, Lord Rāma (Radha Vinod Sīvyer) slays Rāvaṇa (Jaya Kṛṣṇa Dāsa). At left, Lord Caitanya (Jīva Doyā Dāsa, in red) saddens everyone by deciding to accept the renounced order of life. Below, co-director Dvārakā Purī Dāsa (far right) and other troupe members await their flight at Mumbai's international airport.

for us to successfully complete the play.

On another occasion, our drama was in full swing. The emotions were high, and the atmosphere thick with tension. More than seven hundred children were captivated with the show, when suddenly the soundtrack shut off. There had been a power cut. The actors froze onstage. With our backing track gone, we were lost. After a moment I felt Kṛṣṇa empowering me to carry on. We were so familiar with the lines from the soundtrack that we were able to just go on. By the end



of the play all the children stood up, shouting and screaming with joy. They were elated that we carried on. The teachers were so happy that they rewarded us with extra donations for our efforts.

A particularly memorable experience took place in New Delhi while performing for ten thousand people at an outdoor public program. At the end of the drama, the audience gave us a standing ovation and shouted for an encore. What a feeling *that* was!

It is moments like these that have inspired me to continue my service.



we get due credit for our shows. Our biggest audience to date was twenty thousand spectators at an outdoor venue in the UK. Whenever we perform plays at a festival and receive feedback at the end, we invariably see our dramas ranked as one of the top three performances at the festival.

Still, some of the smaller plays are my favorites. They invoke a special sense of intimacy. You can really get into developing a tender emotional bond with the audience. One such play was a two-man show about Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura, an eleventh-century saint who struggled with heavy existential problems but ultimately conquered his demons on

the strength of his devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Although he had blinded himself, he saw Kṛṣṇa in his final days.

It's good for people to learn about spiritual culture through a medium in which they are entertained and can experience emotions. Śrīla Prabhupāda once said after seeing a drama performed by his disciples in

New York that it was "better than the book."

During the UK's millennium celebrations in 2000, we staged a two-and-a-half-hour *Rāmāyaṇa*. Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami, a playwright with two published plays to his credit, saw our play and met us backstage afterward to compliment us. He said he thoroughly enjoyed it. Despite its length, he was never bored. He said that we had expertly woven a variety of emotions into the drama and finished by creating an overall feeling of happiness. He added that the English devotees have always been blessed with the ability to produce powerful, commanding dramas. He recalled Śrīla Prabhupāda saying that drama would be pivotal in the

Kṛṣṇa conscious "cultural conquest" of the UK.

As the years have rolled on, I have been blessed with two wonderful children, Ekachakra and Varshabhanavi, who both pretty much grew up on the stage. They have been involved in many plays and have even traveled worldwide with our troupe. My daughter now wants to do acting as a profession. I wonder who she got that idea from!

Dvārakā Purī and I have been in charge of the Bhaktivedanta Players for thirty years, and last year we prepared several exciting productions in celebration of our anniversary. Our main presentation was a sumptuous dramatization of the *Mahābhārata*, which we took to venues across greater London. 🌟

In Bhaktivedanta Manor's own theater, Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva (Rādhā Mohana Dāsa) appears from a pillar to destroy the demonic Hiranyakaśipu (Jaya Kṛṣṇa Dāsa).



Appreciating ŚRĪ ĪŚOPANIṢAD

A study of one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, even a relatively small book, delivers big rewards.

by Yudhiṣṭhira Dāsa

ŚRĪLA Prabhupāda's *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* – that small book decorated with Lord Viṣṇu on the cover, benignly smiling back at any potential reader. In reality there is nothing small about this Vedic scripture. For me, a recent student of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, the book has steadily increased in size, matured you might say, especially in its importance as an authoritative scripture on the subject of the true nature of the living entity – the *jīva*, we as soul.

In my study of this Vedic *Upaniṣad*, I have several times found myself mystified by its ability to unlock unseen vaults of the heart, revealing particles of perceptions into true reality. Consequently it has ushered in a desire for me to know more, and to act more in uncovering life's true treasure, the *jīva's* eternal relationship as a servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord.

An obstacle presents itself to any *jīva* intent on discovering truth: material conditioning, sprouted from the *jīva's* oh-so-regrettable desire to enter the mundane realm of relativity. The *jīva* seeks self-appointed lordship over dull matter and bodies, a lordship he hopes will deliver gratification of the mind and senses. A *jīva* thus covered by identification with the body and mind manifested from indulgences sinks into the deepest forgetfulness of its spiritual origin and devotional heri-

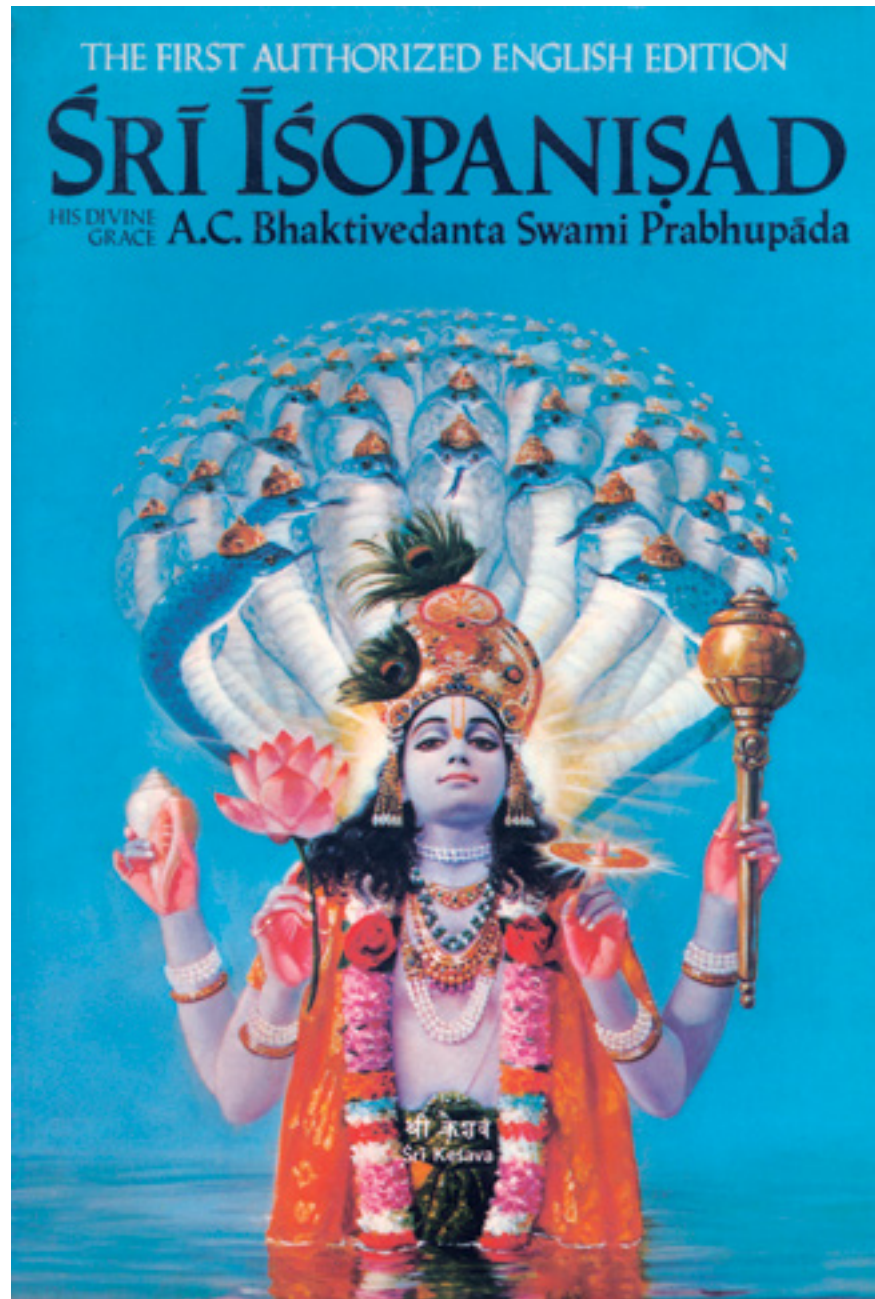
tage. In that state of false ego, eons pass like the waves in the fathomless ocean, ending seemingly in eternity, the *jīva* bound in repeated birth and death in the cycle of species.

Choices Old and New

I am such a *jīva*. That is my realization. I made this choice. My present situation is my relative reality. But now I aim to rediscover my true nature as a citizen of the spiritual world, the *jīva's* eternal home. And this book, *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, shall be my companion and guide, mostly on account of its authoritative presentation by the great hero of the modern-day Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line, Śrīla Prabhupāda. His literary voice is recorded in these pages, his self-proclaimed "written kirtans" (Letter, 1974). The book is a valuable map where X marks the spot of the treasure buried within. That treasure of the heart is dormant, lying neglected since time immemorial, yet still completely tangible and real.

The verdict of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* on the subject of the origin of the *jīva* is brought to the attention of the reader in the very invocation mantra: *pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate* (*pūrṇāt* – from the all-perfect; *pūrṇam* – complete unit; *udacyate* – is produced). The

A painting similar to this one appeared on the cover of the first edition (1969) of Śrīla Prabhupāda's presentation of Śrī Īsopaniṣad. It was part of a series depicting the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu, begun by the artist on Prabhupāda's request.



The 1974 edition

jīva is an emanation of the complete and perfect Lord, and is itself a complete unit, free in all respects to experience its completeness in its devotional relationship with the Lord. This is big news offered to any fortunate reader of this scripture.

I find shelter in these statements of eternal truths. The weary obligations of mundane society and all taxing relationships, pertaining mostly to the body only, fade away in the background as unimportant. What a relief! My heart rejoices to know of

the existence of that complete source who as the balance remains unaffected, no matter what happens on the level of relative reality. And I am connected to Him. He is that loving father in whom there is always shelter and never any embarrassment. He is that intimate friend who knows our hearts and therefore to whom we need not always express our troubled feelings or aching longings. He is that eternal guide who knows past, present, and future and is of unimaginable potency. For the benefit of

all – even me – He creates the universe and gives us temporary bodies to act in His great play.

Śrī Īsopaniṣad gives great solace to any wayward *jīva* somehow stuck in the material world of mind and misunderstood ego. And our dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, by his great mercy for conditioned souls, has the heart-warming ability to put into words the Lord’s mood and desire. “Factually, no one has to do anything more than to render devotional service to the Lord.” (Mantra 2, Purport) The simplicity of this statement is truly amazing, yet I find a deep and sublime meditation concealed beneath the surface. We live our lives as a granted experience, and this message from the spiritual world, delivered by Prabhupāda, suggests that we waste much time in the relative. And we fail to acknowledge the waste. We are like a fish in the fisherman’s net struggling to free itself, not knowing that its vigorous attempts to escape only entwine it more and more. Like the fish, we end up in a state of suspended animation, with room only for occasional breaths, and then die.

A Grave Message

This is the gravity of the message of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*. Mantra 3 speaks of *ātma-hanaḥ*, “killers of the soul.” Those demoniac beastlike beings, hands drenched in karmic blood, proclaim great advancement and deep learning. But they only sink down into the dominion of perpetual heinous suffering and intolerable existence. How lost they are to themselves! And what great need there is for the message of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*! I saw myself sliding down to some unknown destination sure to be a place of ultimate depression and wasted living energy. Now I refuse this lot. I choose the other way. I will heed the message of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*.

As a result of this choice, I engage in the devotional service of the Lord, first by hearing and chanting His names, pastimes, and glories.

Mantra 1 of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* tells us we each have an allotted quota and must not encroach on the property of others. In actuality, the opportunity to glorify the Lord is each living entity’s true quota. I will make proper use of this quota. I will, with whatever submission and thankfulness I can muster, take advantage of this chance for self-realization in the human form of life, extremely rare among the different life forms. I cannot waste this chance.

“You’ll never make it!” the mind protests, mounting a campaign of anxiety and stress. “Only fools engage in such a utopian striving, such an uphill climb for a goal on the farthest of horizons.” But in his purport to Mantra 3, Śrīla Prabhupāda reassures us. Those who sincerely try yet cannot complete the spiritual treasure hunt for life’s true meaning – the rediscovery of their relationship with the Supreme Lord – are not condemned to failure. All progress is carefully recorded and preserved. What great fortune! In the next birth they are given a “better chance for culturing self-realization on account of their sincere efforts.”

This news gives rise to great optimism in my heart. This magnanimous attitude of the spiritual realm instills in me faith in this process. I can only pray that I will persevere and keep afloat in this ever agitated ocean of miseries, the material world.

Looking back down the path I have already trodden, I can faintly recognize a pattern of events and experiences throughout this one life. I see the protective hands of my Lord and His endearing associates always there with me, invisible to my conditioned sight at times, incomprehensible to my material mind, inconceivable to the logic of my relative intellect, yet always there. I am never alone, for as soul I am connected with the Complete Whole. I can only follow in the footsteps of the greatest devotees, petitioning the Lord through the astounding set of prayers in the last mantras of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*. The concluding prayer in its opening

phrase particularly draws my attention. *Naya supathā*: “Please lead me on the right path to reach You.”

The causeless mercy of the Lord, my only beacon of hope, is His ever-kind intervention in my life, be it guidance from within the heart, authoritative scriptures to rekindle my desire to approach Him, or the spiritual master and the Vaiṣṇavas.

In the introduction to *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, Śrīla Prabhupāda comforts all readers, allaying their lamentations and feelings of inadequacy. “If you want to search out Kṛṣṇa by studying the Vedic literature, then you will be baffled. . . . But you can very easily learn about Him from His devotees. . . . His devotee can deliver Him to you. That is the potency of Kṛṣṇa’s devotee.” Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda is himself that devotee, giving the Lord freely to all who seek out

their relationship with Him, through this and Prabhupāda’s many other books.

This study of *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, this real-life treasure hunt, although performed by a conditioned living entity, a fallen *jīva* like me, has at least produced one thing I can directly experience: I have increased my desire to engage in the devotional process, especially to invest increasingly more of my heart into the service of my spiritual master. This I consider a great success. 🙏

Yudhiṣṭhira Dāsa is a disciple of His Holiness Kadamba Kānana Swami. He was born in Norway and lives there with his wife and children and supports the local temple. A nurse by education, he is also an aspiring poet and the author of half a dozen books.

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Mayapur, West Bengal, India

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Painting by Jhanjhana Dasa

KARNA'S OPTIONS

Word of Honor or Life of Honor

*A mistaken sense of loyalty drives a hero
to follow a villain instead of his greatest well-wisher.*

by Caitanya Carana Dāsa

THE *Mahābhārata* is a fascinating book, with many of its characters not clearly black or white, but multiple shades of gray. Karna, for example, is an intriguing character – virtuous, yet choosing the side of the vicious Kauravas; born as a warrior, but treated lifelong as charioteer's son; a great archer, but defeated and killed in a fight with another great archer.

Through a series of questions and answers, let's see where Karna falls on the spectrum of black to white.

Was not Arjuna's killing of Karna when Karna was chariotless unfair, being against the *kṣatriya* codes?

The unfairness had begun from the Kaurava side decades earlier when they tried to poison Bhīma and burn the Pāṇḍavas alive.

In the Kurukshetra war, at its start the commanders of the two sides had agreed upon the codes to be followed in the war. Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the Pāṇḍava commander, had declared that their

side would not break the war codes first, but if the Kauravas broke those codes first, then the Pāṇḍavas would not let themselves be held back by the war codes.

In the ensuing battles, the *kṣatriya* code that a chariotless warrior should not be attacked was violated first by the Kauravas' side. On the thirteenth day, six of their *mahā-rathas*,¹ including Karna, ganged together to kill the chariotless Abhimanyu. So, Karna simply reaped what he had sown – he violated the code first by attacking the chariotless Abhimanyu and was paid back in kind, as had been agreed at the start of the war.

And the unfair attack on Abhimanyu was not a one-off incident on the part of the Kauravas. On the fourteenth day, when Arjuna was striving to fulfill his vow to kill Jayadratha by sunset, Arjuna's horses got exhausted, and needed rest and water. While Kṛṣṇa decided to lead the horses away, Arjuna had to get off the chariot. Even on seeing him chariotless, the Kaurava forces did not stop attacking him. To the contrary, they attacked him with greater ferocity, hoping to fell him in his dangerously disadvantaged condition. Still

The end is near for Karna, as he struggles to free a chariot wheel while Arjuna prepares to attack.

Arjuna held them back with his expert archery while simultaneously using mystical weapons to arrange for shade and water for his horses. In an all-out war, quarters are rarely given, and Arjuna didn't ask for them – neither should Karṇa have asked.

Karṇa himself violated that specific code on the seventeenth day during his confrontation with Arjuna. When Karṇa sent an unstoppable mystical weapon at Arjuna's head, Kṛṣṇa forcefully pushed the chariot into the ground so that the arrow hit Arjuna's crown instead of his head. Arjuna's life was saved, but his chariot got stuck in the ground. While Kṛṣṇa jumped off the chariot to get it out of the ground, Arjuna was disadvantaged with an immobile chariot. Karṇa still attacked Arjuna, and Arjuna didn't ask to be spared, but fought back and defended himself.

So in the final confrontation, Karṇa's reminding Arjuna of the *kṣatriya* code was hypocritical. When Karṇa tried to take the high moral ground, Kṛṣṇa exposed him thoroughly by listing all the times when Karṇa had paid scant regard to morality. Kṛṣṇa's fitting riposte silenced Karṇa, whose head fell in an admission of his guilt.

Kṛṣṇa – deciding to illustrate the principle of *śatho śathyam*: with the cunning, one can be cunning – asked Arjuna to shoot Karṇa. By countering Karṇa's arguments, Kṛṣṇa had signaled to Karṇa that Arjuna would not desist from attacking. Karṇa could have taken that as a warning, remounted his stationary chariot, and resumed fighting – or he could have fought from the ground itself, as had Arjuna on the fourteenth day. Karṇa's neglecting Kṛṣṇa's warning was a monumental blunder that cost him his life.

Was Karṇa a better archer than Arjuna?

Let's look at the relevant incidents in the *Mahābhārata*.

1. The first Karṇa-Arjuna encounter was in the martial exhibition or-

ganized by Droṇa to showcase the skills of his students, the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, for the pleasure of Hastinapura's leaders and citizens. In that exhibition, Arjuna excelled all till Karṇa gatecrashed and demanded a chance to exhibit his skills. When granted that chance, Karṇa equaled the performance of Arjuna, though he had initially claimed that he would surpass Arjuna. Then Karṇa asked for a chance to duel with Ar-

juna, but while the logistics were being worked out, the sun set and the duel couldn't take place.

Result: Draw

Score: Arjuna – 0, Karṇa – 0

2. When Droṇa asked that as his *guru-dakṣiṇā*² his students defeat and arrest Drupada, the Kauravas sped off, accompanied by Karṇa. But Drupada, at the head of his forces, defeated them. Then the Pāṇḍavas, led by Arjuna, attacked

Drupada's forces, and Arjuna defeated and arrested Drupada, doing what Karṇa couldn't do.

Result: Arjuna demonstrated his superiority.

Score: Arjuna – 1, Karṇa – 0

3. During Draupadī's *svayam-vara*,³ when Arjuna, dressed as a *brāhmaṇa*, won the princess's hand, the kings felt that Drupada had insulted them by giving his daughter to a *brāhmaṇa* instead of a *kṣatriya*. So they attacked Drupada. To defend their father-in-law, Arjuna and Bhīma intervened and held the kings back till it became a face-off: Karṇa versus Arjuna, and Śalya versus Bhīma. While Bhīma bested Śalya, Arjuna more than matched Karṇa, who thereafter decided to desist from the fight, saying that he would not fight with a *brāhmaṇa*.

Result: Draw

Score: Arjuna – 1, Karṇa – 0

4. When the Pāṇḍavas were living in exile, Duryodhana, at the instigation of Karṇa, decided to rub salt into their wounds by flaunting his wealth in front of them. But some Gandharvas who were sporting in that area blocked Duryodhana. In the resulting confrontation, the Gandharvas defeated the Kaurava forces, wounding Karṇa and causing him to flee, and then arresting Duryodhana. Later, when some Kaurava soldiers appealed to the Pāṇḍavas for help, Arjuna routed the same Gandharvas who had routed Karṇa, and released Duryodhana.

Result: Arjuna again demonstrated his superiority.

Score: Arjuna – 2, Karṇa – 0

5. During the Virāṭa battle, Arjuna fought single-handedly against the entire Kaurava army and defeated all the Kaurava generals, including Karṇa. This was the greatest solo performance in the entire epic.

Some people argue that this contest did not accurately reflect their skills because Karṇa had not carried his *śakti* weapon. But who is responsible for Karṇa's not carrying the weapon? Isn't a warrior expected to carry his best weapons when going

to war? And Arjuna did not get his formidable array of weapons for free – he performed severe austerities in the Himalayas to appease the gods and painstakingly add each powerful weapon to his awe-inspiring arsenal.

Result: Arjuna won fair and square.

Score: Arjuna – 3, Karṇa – 0

So, even before their final decisive confrontation on the seventeenth day of the Kurukshetra war, Arjuna had unambiguously established his superiority.

Was Karṇa not wronged because society considered him lowborn?

1. Yes, but that caste-by-birth notion was a deviation from the Vedic norm, a deviation that is acknowledged in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

If we use the wrongs that happen to us to justify our making wrong choices, then we can never make things right.

Kṛṣṇa states in the *Gītā* (4.1, 2) that the spiritual knowledge He had given at the start of the creation had become obscured by the power of time. Due to this decline of spiritual knowledge, the social order present at the time when the *Gītā* was spoken (which is the same as the time when the *Mahābhārata* occurred, the *Gītā* being a part of the *Mahābhārata*) had deviated from the spiritual standard. One sample of this deviation was the prevalence of the caste-by-birth idea, something contrary to the *Gītā's* teaching (4.13) that caste is determined by qualities and activities. As the caste system was rigid and stratified at that time, Karṇa was often labeled by his birth instead of by his qualities and activities.

2. It could well be said that Karṇa had an unfair advantage since his birth because he was born with an impenetrable armor. When so much is said about what he lost because

of his perceived low birth as a charioteer's son, why not talk about what he gained at birth? None of the Pāṇḍavas, despite being born from celestials, had a congenital armor – Karṇa started off with a big advantage over Arjuna. If the match was fixed against Karṇa due to his low birth, then it was fixed for him due to his congenital armor. So, the net result could be said to be a level playing field. Why make such a big fuss about his being deprived due to his low birth?

Eventually, Karṇa did get a kingdom (Aṅga, given by Duryodhana), the friendship of kings (Duryodhana and his friends), and the respect of kings (he was made the commander of the Kaurava army, which included many powerful kings).

3. Additionally, who doesn't get wronged at some time or the other in life? Were the Pāṇḍavas not wronged when they had to live in the forest like fugitives after their residence in Varanavata was burnt down? It was no fault of theirs that they were born in the same dynasty as the envious Duryodhana, who made them the target of his wicked machinations.

Were they not wronged when they were dispossessed of their kingdom and exiled through a rigged gambling match? Were they not wronged when their wife Draupadī was dishonored?

Yet despite the wrongs that happened to them, they stayed on the side of virtue, whereas Karṇa chose the side of vice. If we use the wrongs that happen to us to justify our making wrong choices, then we can never make things right – we perpetuate a series of wrongs that make things worse for ourselves as well as others.



Karṇa on his chariot, as depicted by Pobsant Roockarangsarith, from his work-in-progress, Artwork Collections from the Mahabharata. Additional art may be viewed at <http://zayplay.blogspot.in/2012/06/artwork-collections-from-mahabharata.html>.

Was Karṇa not an exemplary man of honor, in that he promised Kuntī he would not kill any of her sons except Arjuna and kept that promise?

Yes, that was laudable, but better would have been to do what Kuntī had beseeched and what even his worshipable deity and actual father, Sūryadeva, had asked him to do: join the ranks of the virtuous Pāṇḍavas.

Due to his perceived low birth and the attendant lack of respect, Karṇa was forever craving for respect. This deep-seated status anxiety clouded his judgment, making him favor honor over virtue. He wrongly considered that being respected as a person who kept his word of honor was more important

him. But to honor Arjuna’s vow that he would be the one to kill Karṇa, they did not take Karṇa’s life. So he spared the lives of others, and others spared his life – score even; nothing extraordinarily great about this action of Karṇa’s.

By choosing his own reputation over the advice of his well-wishing parents to join the side of virtue, Karṇa chose the word of honor over the life of honor – a subtle but serious error of judgment.

When Kṛṣṇa offered Karṇa kingship of the Pāṇḍavas’ kingdom if he defected to their side, Karṇa refused the offer and chose to stay on Duryodhana’s side. Doesn’t this make him a glorious example of a faithful friend?

Sadly, no. It makes Karṇa a classic but tragic example of a good person becoming bad due to bad association – and then mistaking faithfulness to that bad association to be a matter of honor.

It is true that Duryodhana helped Karṇa in his time of need by giving him the kingdom of Aṅga. And it is laudable that Karṇa was grateful to him for that generosity. Yet in the larger picture, the Kauravas were immoral and evil. The way Duryodhana dishonored the Pāṇḍavas and especially their wife was heinous.

When an honorable person gets unknowingly entangled in something dishonorable, then honor requires that the honorable person come out of the mess when coming to know of it, not stay in it in the name of honor.

To illustrate with a provocative parallel, suppose a starving boy in Pakistan is offered food and shelter by the hate-spouting madrasas that

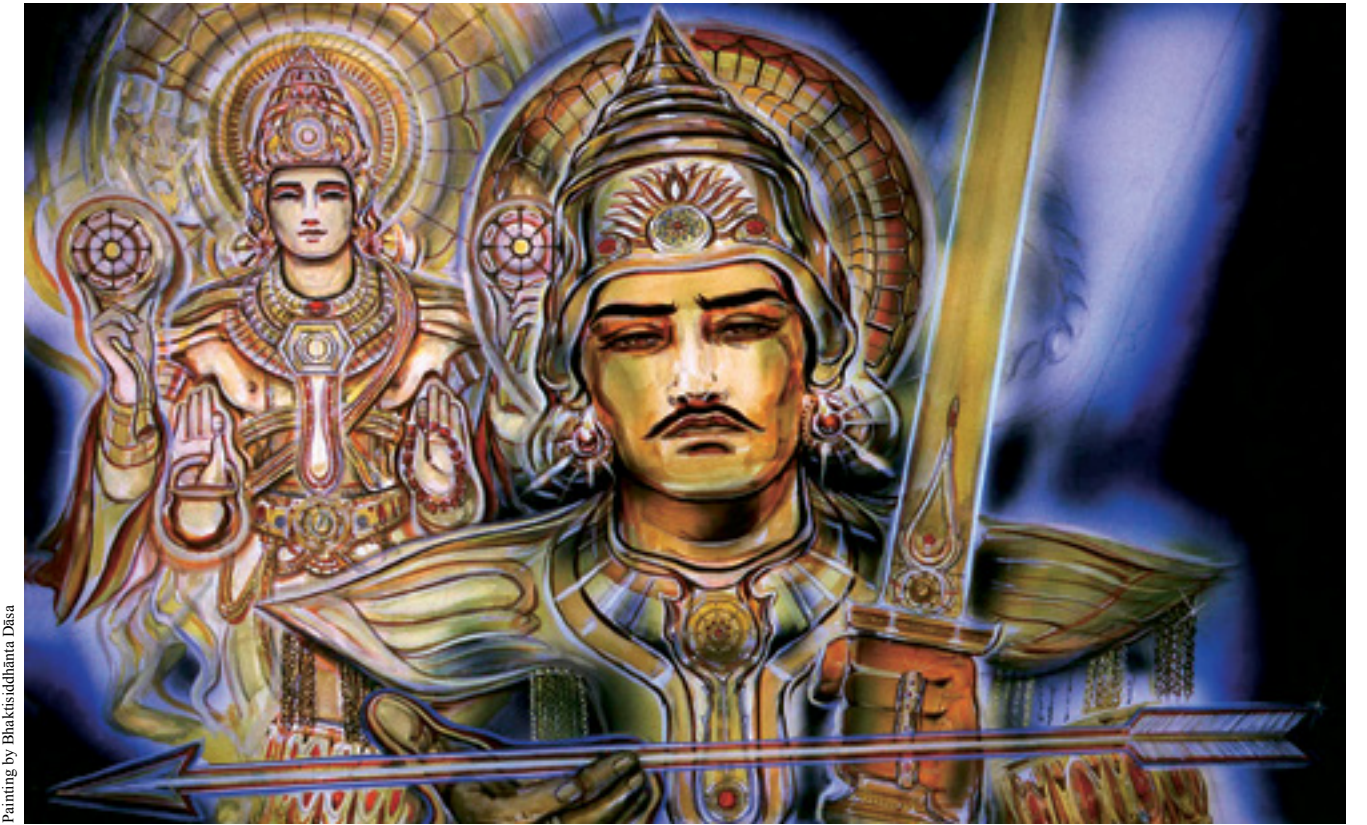
brainwash people into becoming suicide bombers. The boy may not be initially aware of the evil agenda of his helpers, but when he becomes aware, should he in the name of loyalty to those who helped him once continue lifelong to be a part of a machinery of death and destruction?

Karṇa may not initially have had any idea of the evil nature of Duryodhana, but when he came to know about it, he should have parted ways. But unfortunately, far from parting ways, Karṇa not only joined Duryodhana’s way, but also egged on the wicked Kaurava further along that way. Karṇa, in his mistaken desire to please Duryodhana, suggested the dishonoring of Draupadī. Karṇa’s joining Duryodhana emboldened the arrogant Duryodhana to become even more insolent, imagining that he could excel the military prowess of the Pāṇḍavas, thereby courting self-destruction and causing world destruction.

When Kṛṣṇa came as a peace messenger, the compromise He proposed shows His extremely accommodating nature, His willingness to go to any length to avoid or minimize bloodshed. Kṛṣṇa told Duryodhana that he could have the whole kingdom except for five villages for the five Pāṇḍavas, but that evil prince rejected the proposal.

Then Kṛṣṇa, knowing that bloodshed was inevitable, decided to try to minimize it. He knew that the various formidable Kaurava generals like Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, Aśvatthāmā, and Śalya bore no animosity towards the Pāṇḍavas – they would fight only because they were obliged to. The only formidable Kaurava general apart from the Kaurava brothers who was bent on the fight was Karṇa. If he could be won over, then that would break the back of Duryodhana’s obstinacy. It might even persuade him to agree to a peaceful settlement. If not, at least it would shorten the fight.

With this intention to minimize violence, Kṛṣṇa invited Karṇa to come on the side of the virtuous Pāṇḍavas. And when Kṛṣṇa offered Karṇa the



Painting by Bhaktisiddhānta Dāsa

Karṇa receives a celestial arrow from his father, the sun-god Sūrya.

kingdom, that offer was not as a temptation but as Karṇa’s rightful legacy as the eldest Pāṇḍava.

It was Kṛṣṇa’s accommodating nature that he not only gave Karṇa a chance to do the right thing, but also offered him an unparalleled reward for doing the right thing. After all the wrong things Karṇa had participated in or even instigated, it could well be said that he didn’t deserve such an offer. Yet Kṛṣṇa magnanimously made the offer, thereby making it as easy as possible for Karṇa to do the right thing at least at that late stage. When Karṇa refused that offer, he chose wrong instead of right – all due to a mistaken sense of honor.

From the devotional perspective, Karṇa rejected God for the world; he gave greater importance to being honored by the world than by God. He didn’t have the intelligence to recognize that whatever Duryodhana had given him ultimately belonged to God, who had given it temporarily to Duryodhana. And it was that God who was now offering him the

world’s emperors.

Even if Karṇa didn’t accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme God and so didn’t consider His word authoritative, he could at least have accepted the authority of his own worshipable god, Sūryadeva. That effulgent deity advised Karṇa that for his own well-being he should side with the virtuous family of his birth and not the vicious family that he had befriended. Yet Karṇa stuck to his own notion of what would be honorable.

What Kṛṣṇa was inviting Karṇa to was not defection, but redemption – a return to the path of virtue that Karṇa would probably have tread had he not become attached to Duryodhana.

To err is human, but for Karṇa to continue in error, in the name of loyalty, was stupidity. And when that mistaken loyalty caused the death of millions, it ceased to be mere stupidity; it became monstrous perversity. Karṇa’s mistaken loyalty was his greatest inner enemy, and it made him a puppet in the hands of the evil Duryodhana.

To conclude, Karṇa demonstrates how attachment to bad association can not only make a good person bad but can also make that person mistake bad for good. 🌟

NOTES

1. Literally “great chariot,” the phrase refers to the greatest chariot fighters.
2. A gift offered to one’s guru or teacher, such as at the time of initiation or graduation.
3. A ceremony in which a princess chooses her husband from a group of suitable princes.

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The only formidable Kaurava general apart from the Kaurava brothers who was bent on the fight was Karṇa.

than leading a life of virtue.

To compensate for the lack of respect due to his perceived low birth, Karṇa had built a reputation for being unflinchingly charitable. When Kuntī asked him to come over to the side of his virtuous brothers, his status anxiety prevented him from doing the right thing. Yet he also couldn’t brook the idea of refusing her entirely, for that would sully his reputation. So, to preserve his reputation, he gave her another charity: the promise that she would always have five sons; he would not kill any of the Pāṇḍavas except Arjuna. He honored his word – again, to preserve his reputation.

Now, his sparing the Pāṇḍavas’ lives was honorable, but a similar sense of honor among the Pāṇḍavas led to their sparing Karṇa’s life. As mentioned earlier, Abhimanyu and Bhīma had both overpowered Karṇa – and they could have killed

“This Is the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement”

TO BEGIN OUR yearlong commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, I present here excerpts from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lectures and conversations where he speaks about the philosophy and purposes of ISKCON – “the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.” This is just a sampling, and his books contain many more statements on this topic.

“Kṛṣṇa says . . . ‘Give up all other ideas of so-called dharma and surrender to Me. We don’t say of ourselves, ‘I am the authority.’ No, we say, ‘Kṛṣṇa is the authority, and you should surrender to His instruction and try to understand Him.’ This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.”

“Kṛṣṇa does not require your service to become happy. He is complete in Himself. But if you try to make Kṛṣṇa happy, then you’ll be happy. This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.”

“This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to bring everyone under the shelter of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, so that they may become free from all anxieties.”

“This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. The beginning is to hear about Kṛṣṇa in order to understand Him. We give everyone the chance to hear about Kṛṣṇa. This is our program. We are trying to construct a temple here, not for making any profit, but to give people a chance to hear about Kṛṣṇa. We are opening temples all over the world just to give people the chance to hear about Kṛṣṇa.”

“This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is nothing concocted. It is fact. Everyone is a servant, but at the present moment he’s serving *māyā*. So, instead of serving *māyā*, let him serve Kṛṣṇa, the original Personality of Godhead. This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.”

“When you take this conclusion, ‘Yes, by surrender to Kṛṣṇa, by surrendering unto the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, everything is done very nicely,’ this is called *śraddhā* [faith]. And the more you

increase this *śraddhā*, the more you become perfect. This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.”

“My Guru Mahārāja used to say, ‘Don’t try to see God.’ Just try to understand. ‘Just work in such a way that God may see you.’ This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.”

“Some way or other, if you remember Kṛṣṇa at the time of death, then your life is successful. So it doesn’t matter whether you remain outside home or inside home, . . . but do not forget your real business. This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.”

“In the human form of life, you have got all facilities given by God. Take advantage of it. Don’t put yourself again in the laws of nature. Be liberated. Go back to home, back to Godhead. This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.”

“You may become an engineer or a medical practitioner, a businessman or a worker, this or that – that doesn’t matter. Please engage yourself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and your life will be successful. This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.”

“If we take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness – that means if we understand what is God, what I am, what is our relationship, what is the ultimate goal of our life – if these things we understand, then we can get out of these clutches of illusion, the repetition of birth, death, old age, and disease. This is the sum and substance of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.”

“Why do you not come here and live with us? The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is that you come here, live with us, and produce your food, produce your milk, be happy, healthy, and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This is our movement. . . . We give you sufficient food, shelter, health, philosophy, religion, character – everything in purity.”

“Take the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and distribute it throughout the whole world. This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.”

– Nāgarāja Dāsa

Books on Kṛṣṇa Consciousness



SPANISH BOOKS

Though we’ve listed these with English titles, they all have Spanish titles. For example, the Spanish *The Perfection of Yoga* is titled *La perfeccion del yoga*.

The Hare Krishna Challenge

Softbound, 48 pages, 4 1/4" x 7". \$1.25 B7BS805

The Perfection of Yoga

Softbound, 56 pages, 8 color plates, 4" x 7". \$1.95 BLBS264

The Topmost Yoga System

Softbound, 54 pages, glossary, 4 1/4" x 7 1/4". \$1.95 KXBS319

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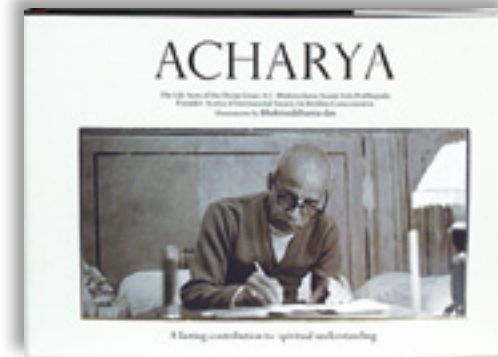
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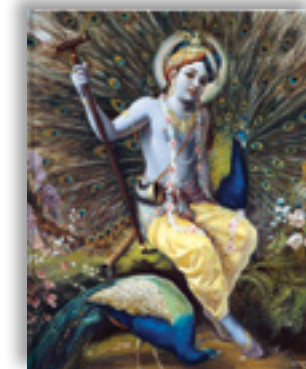
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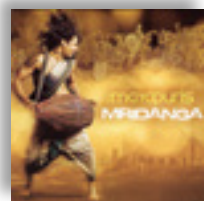
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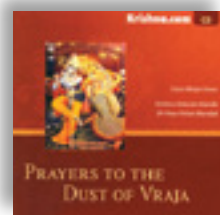


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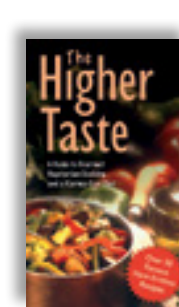
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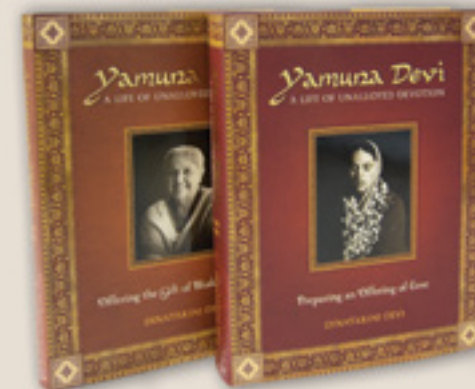
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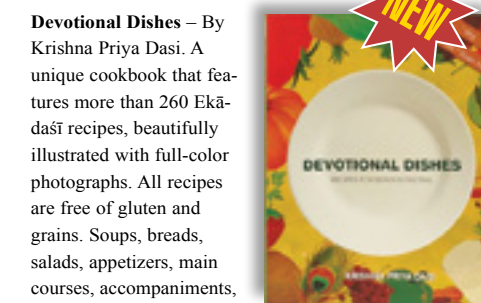


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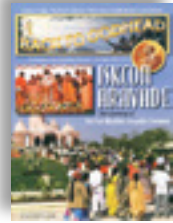
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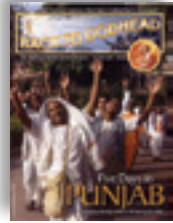
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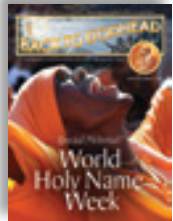
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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 2.86, Purport

Who, other than one who is not a human being, can exist in this world and not be interested in the ultimate goal of life? Who can refuse the nectar of narrations about the Personality of Godhead's activities, which by itself can deliver one from all material pangs?

Maitreya Ṛṣi
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.13.50

Obeisances to the Lord of enjoyment, who charms with the peacock-feather ornament on His head, and whose wisdom is never confounded.

Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad 2.4

Understand that *māyā* is material nature and that the magician who possesses *māyā* is the Supreme Lord. His finite expansions, the living souls, fill this entire created world.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 4.10

One who perfectly chants mantras glorifying the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whether he performs other rituals and duties or not, should be considered a perfect *brāhmaṇa*, eligible to understand the Supreme Lord.

Manu-saṁhitā 2.87

I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who lies down in the causal ocean as Mahā-Viṣṇu, with all the universes emanating from the pores of his hair on His transcendental body and who accepts the mystic slumber of eternity.

Lord Brahmā
Brahma-saṁhitā 5.47

Chanting the holy names closes the distance between our gross and subtle bodies and our perfected self. As soon as we realize our constitutional position and begin to chant the Lord's pure name, we can see the transcendental form of the Lord face to face.

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For the Supreme Lord to possess contradictory characteristics in perfect harmony is natural. In one aspect, Kṛṣṇa has the quality of self-satisfaction, and in another aspect, He manifests His opposite quality of enjoying pastimes with others.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta, Part 2

A true yogi observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the same Supreme Lord, everywhere.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Bhagavad-gītā 6.29



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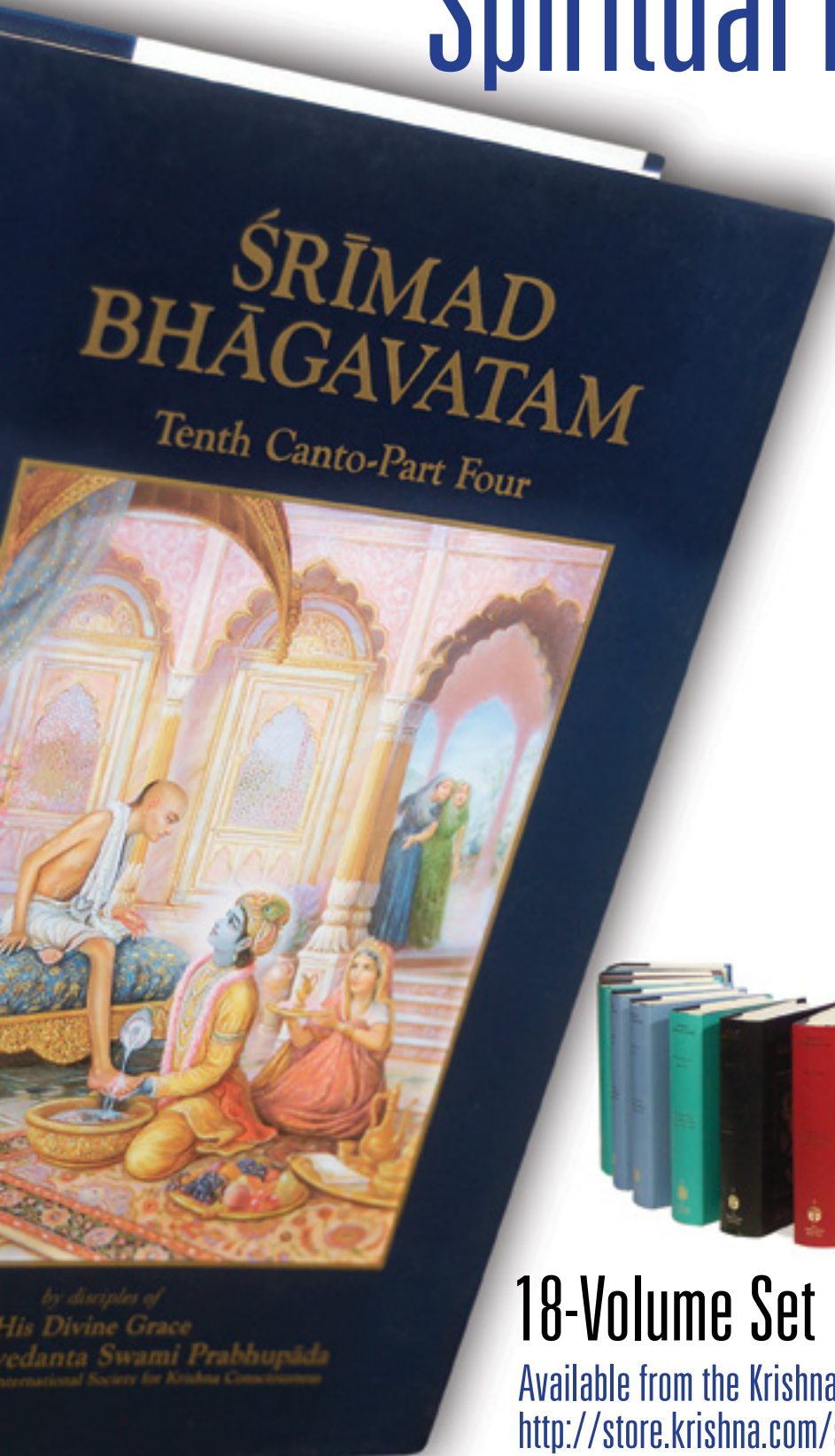
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