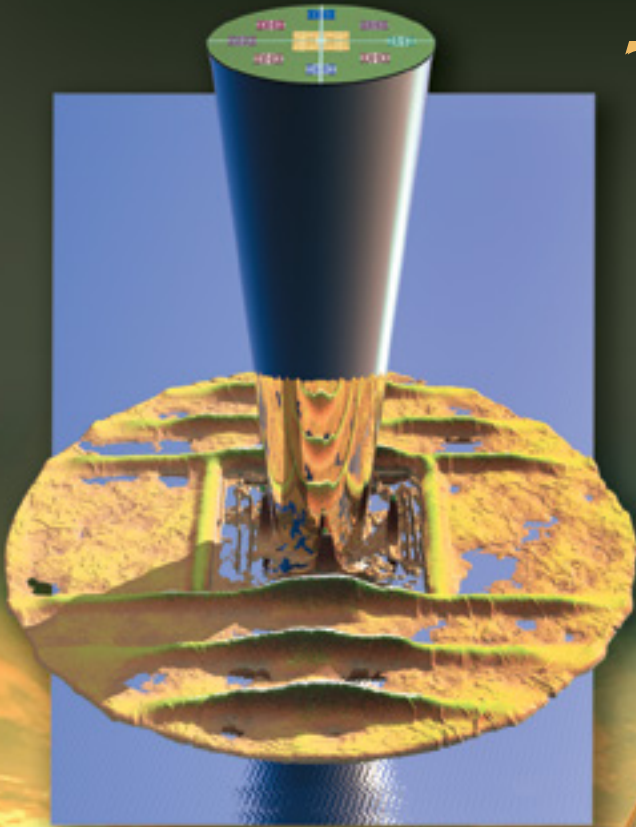


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • Jan/Feb 2017 • \$4.50



THE UNSEEN UNIVERSE

*A groundbreaking
museum of science – the
Vedic Planetarium –
seeks to reveal what the
eye cannot see.*



Assisting you in your quest for the Absolute Truth

BACK to GODHEAD

Founded 1944 • Vol. 51, No. 1 • January / February, 2017



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COVER The Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP) is taking shape, and a team is working to fulfill Prabhupāda's desire for a spectacular display of the universe according to the *Vedas*. Inset: an illustration based on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's* description of the universe. Please see the article beginning on page 20. (Illustration by Śrīśa Dāsa; inset art by Eddie Johnston.)

"Rascals may believe or not believe that they will have a next life and they must not slaughter animals. They believe or disbelieve. What is the difference? The next life is part of nature's law. Those who do not believe are mūḍhas, asses. And in their next life they will go to their room – Mother Nature will confine them in hog, dog, ass bodies." – p. 47

WELCOME



When His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda conceived the idea of the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP), now being built on the bank of

the Ganges in West Bengal, he always knew it would be something unique. As a temple it would certainly be a place for the grand worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and Their intimate associates. But it would also be a place to display the universe as seen through the eyes of pure Vedic sages of antiquity.

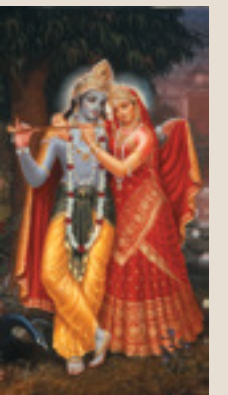
While understanding the sages' view has been a challenge, one truth comes through with force: behind the universe is a creator with a purpose. In proposing the TOVP, Prabhupāda too had a purpose, or perhaps many of them. But one was certainly to draw attention to the Supreme Person behind the cosmos.

The managers of the TOVP have put together a team of dedicated, qualified devotees to transform the planetarium aspect of the project from a dream to a reality. In this issue, team member Yogeśvara Dāsa, writing on behalf of the others, takes us on a tour of the exhibits, which are sure to inspire awe and inquiries in all who enter the 200-foot-tall left wing of the TOVP.

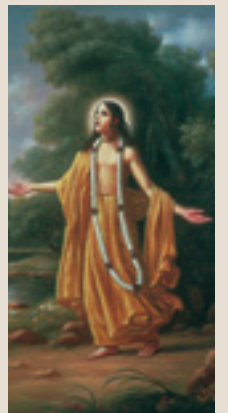
Hare Kṛṣṇa. – Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor

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

Bhakti Means Devotional Service

Can you please tell me about *bhakti-yoga*?

Vaibhava Shukla
Via the Internet

Our reply: “*Bhakti* means devotional service.” (*The Nectar of Devotion* [NOD], Preface) *Bhakti* connotes devotion, or love, and love implies service, or activity intended to please the beloved.

Love is the most fundamental drive of every living entity. We cannot be happy without satisfying the desire to love, and we will not be able to perfectly fulfill the desire without permitting its expansion to the most inclusive extent.

“In the primary stage a child loves his parents, then his brothers and sisters, and as he daily grows up he begins to love his family, society, community, country, nation, or even the whole human society. But the loving propensity remains imperfectly fulfilled until we know who is the supreme beloved.” (NOD, Preface)

Love can become all-embracing only when we understand that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme beloved, the root of all creation. By embracing Him, we successfully embrace everyone, just as pouring water on the root of a tree successfully nourishes every leaf and branch.

“*The Nectar of Devotion* teaches us the science of loving every one of the living entities perfectly by the easy method of loving Kṛṣṇa.” (NOD, Preface)

The word *yoga* means “to connect.” Though yogas are commonly used for health and fitness, the Vedic texts explain that yoga is meant to connect with God.

So *bhakti-yoga* means to practice connecting with God and reestablishing our relationship with Him through acts of love and service, or devotional service.

Ending Evil

Will Lord Kṛṣṇa ever come to earth to put an end to all the evil deeds of human beings and make this world free from sin?

Nabin Ranjan Das
Via the Internet

Our reply: There are many avatars, or incarnations, of the Supreme Being, as stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.26): “*O brāhmaṇas*, the incarnations of the Lord are innumerable, like rivulets flowing from inexhaustible sources of water.” However, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.28) states *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*: “Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.” From Kṛṣṇa come the avatars, who descend into this material world to carry out certain missions. This happens especially when miscreants and atheists dominate the planets.

In the current age, Kali-yuga, many years will go by during which constant disturbances and social upheavals will prevail, but the Vedic literature predicts that at the end of the *yuga* Lord Kalki will descend to change everything: “Thereafter, at the conjunction of two *yugas* [great ages], the Lord of the creation will take His birth as the Kalki incarnation and become the son of Viṣṇu Yaśā. At this time the rulers of the earth will have degenerated into plunderers.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.25)

Lord Kalki will destroy the wicked rulers and the rest of the demoniac population and usher in a new age of goodness. The scheduled time for Lord Kalki’s appearance is still hundreds of thousands of years away. But we don’t have to wait that long to see evil diminish. Around five hundred years ago, Lord Kṛṣṇa came as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and launched the *saṅkīrtana* movement of the congregational chant-

ing of the names of God. The Lord’s names are also an incarnation, since He and His names are identical. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading the holy names all over the world, and this will no doubt go far in diminishing the evil in the world.

Looking for Happiness

How can I get happiness and not suffering?

Santosh Kumar Bohara
Via the Internet

Our reply: Kṛṣṇa says that the material world is a place of suffering, so we can’t escape it. But we can transcend it if we are situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and not bodily consciousness. Easier said than done, but we will find some success if we take

to this science of self-realization. We need to engage in spiritual activities to revive our spiritual consciousness; then we will not be so affected by material things.

Plus, if we achieve complete absorption in our relationship with the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, we will reach the spiritual world and never return to this material world. So in this world you can become transcendental, fixed in your real identity, and next lifetime return to your real home, where there is no suffering.

That is what Kṛṣṇa offers to those who take up the process of *bhakti*, loving service to Him. For too long we have neglected our real business of pleasing Him.

You can begin the process by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, which is asking Him to accept your

service again. This will put you back in contact with Him. Take up His service and be happy, even though the body will go through suffering. You can be fixed on Him, seeing the suffering as a reminder that your real goal is transcendence. This takes a lot of practice and purification, so please take up this process seriously and as soon as possible.

Worried Parents

I am practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness and am facing a challenge by my parents. They tell me that if I practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness I will never be able to marry. They are generating fear in me about this. I wish to be a *brahmacārī* now but get married in the future. But they fear that practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness will cause me to renounce material things and wife. What can I do to convince my parents?

Keval
Via the Internet

Our reply: You can start by showing your parents married devotees. Show them that in ISKCON there are many married couples who don’t renounce married life. You can explain that *brahmacarya* is only one aspect of *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa. Of the spiritual authorities known as the twelve *mahājanas*, seven are married: Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, Manu, Prahlāda, Janaka, Bali, and Yamarāja. So married people are equally important for spiritual life as *brahmacārīs*.

It is a misconception that spiritual life means only renunciation. Educate your parents by taking them to the temple and by showing them married devotees and famous examples from scripture. And be patient. They might need a little time to change their opinion. 🙏

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.

The International
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Founder-Ācārya: His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda



New Delhi



For the complete list, go to **centres.iskcon.org**

The Technique For Universal Love

We can love everyone and everything only when we love God and know Him as He is.

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*aham sarvasya prabhavo
mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante mām
budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ*

“I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.”

– *Bhagavad-gītā* 10.8



less of your body, your health, then you don't care for your finger.

Therefore *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.8) says, *iti matvā bhajante mām*. When one has understood the fact very nicely, scientifically, that God is the origin of all emanations, then by loving God he loves everything in the universe. If you think, “God is something manufactured by my imagination,” then you cannot love the universe or God. You have to understand the position of God. In your Bible it is

said, “God said, ‘Let there be creation,’ so there was creation.” Creation is the universe. God created this universe. If you love God, then you love this universe.

That is done automatically. If I say, “I love my body” – everyone loves his body – that does not mean I do not love my finger.

The Transformed Hunter

There is a nice example of how a God-conscious person loves everything. In Sanskrit a hunter is called *vyādha*. A *vyādha* was hunting in the forest and half-killing animals, such as boars, deer, and many others. The sage Nārada was passing along the road, and he saw the suffering animals.

The devotee formerly known as Mṛgāri – “the enemy of animals” – struggles to avoid harming ants while receiving Nārada Muni (his guru) and Nārada's friend Parvata Muni.



“These half-dead animals are flapping. Who has harmed them in that way? Why not fully kill them?”

He went to the *vyādha* and asked, “Why are you doing this business? Better to kill them so that they may not suffer. What you are doing is a great sinful act.”

The hunter replied, “Oh, I do not know what is sinful or pious. My father has taught me this business. So I am doing this.”

Nārada explained to him, “It is not a very good business. You had better do another business for your livelihood. Simply half-killing – better to kill them. But that is also not very good.”

“Then I am committing sins?”

“Yes, you are committing sins.”

“Then if I give up this business, how shall I eat, how shall I earn my living?”

“All right,” Nārada said, “I shall give you your necessities of life. I shall supply you. Give up this business.”

Nārada initiated the hunter into spiritual life, and the hunter went to a sacred place to execute spiritual practices.

When villagers understood that a *vyādha*, a hunter, had become a great saint, they brought him offerings of rice, flowers, fruits, and so on. And he executed his devotional service according to Nārada’s instructions.

After some time, Nārada wanted to show that devotee to his friend Parvata Muni. As they were arriving, the former hunter went forward to receive them. While going, he was very careful that even an ant may not be killed on the path. So he was jumping. Whenever there was an ant, he was jumping.

Nārada inquired, “While you were coming here, why were you jumping?”

“Sir, there were so many ants. How can I kill an ant?”

Just see. The same man who without any kindness was half-killing so many animals has become kind even to the ants.

This is universal love. As soon as you become Kṛṣṇa conscious, as soon as you become God conscious, then your real, ideal, universal consciousness develops. Otherwise it is all simply word jugglery. There are so many doctrines of universal love, universal friendship, fraternity, but people are fighting and killing because there is no God consciousness. If you are after universal love, then how can you maintain regular slaughterhouses? How can you think that an American gentleman or lady is your countryman and not a cow, and not a goat, not a serpent? Where is your universal idea?

Unless there is development of God consciousness, universal ideas are nonsense. They are all false, a jugglery of words.

The first business is to understand your identity, God’s identity, and your relationship with God, and to reform your actions in line with that understanding. Then there can be universal brotherhood. Otherwise it is simply a jugglery of words.

Love Everyone

If you are thinking in a universal way, how can you give protection to a human being born in America and send a cow to the slaughterhouse? What is your reason?

Guest: This would be a personal love.

Prabhupāda: Universal means all. You have to love everyone.

Guest: If I don’t love the cow as equally as I love a child, then it is a personal love because I’m defining qualifications.

Prabhupāda: But how can you avoid this “personal”?

Guest: Because to love the child only, I have to exclude other things, meaning the cow.

Prabhupāda: But when you love, how can you avoid a person? What do you mean by love? In the universe there are so many men, animals, plants, beasts, and birds, and so many things. So we have to love everyone. That is universal. You cannot discriminate, “Oh, this is not universal, and this is universal.” Universal means all-inclusive. You have to love everyone. That is universal.

Guest: If I don’t do that, then I have a love with limitations, and this is false.

Prabhupāda: No. Not limitation. The point is, if you love the root, then you love everything. If you pour water on the root of the tree, then the branches, the flowers, the leaves, the fruits, and everything is nourished. You have to know the technique – how to love the whole. If somebody is loving the tree by putting water on every leaf, every branch, every flower, then he is spoiling his time. An intelligent man pours one bucketful of water on the root. Oh, it is distributed. If without knowledge of the root you want to love the branches, that is foolishness. You love your body. Why do you supply your food to the stomach? Why not to the eyes, to the ears, to the nose? Why not individually to every finger, every

hand, every part, every hair? No. As soon as you put the foodstuff into the stomach, the energy is at once distributed everywhere. Similarly, universal love means to love God.

People do not know the technique. This man, this hunter, loved God, and he became a lover of the ant automatically. There was no need of separate education. “Love this ant, love this cow, love this tree, love this country, love this man, love the white man, the black man, this man . . .” No. As soon as you love God, and you understand what God is, then you love everything.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.4) it is said,

*sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya
mūrtayah sambhavanti yāḥ
tāsām brahma mahad yonir
ahaṁ bīja-pradaḥ pitā*

“It should be understood that all species of life, O son of Kuntī, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father.” People are accepting *Bhagavad-gītā* as something Indian or Hindu, but actually it is not. It is universal. Kṛṣṇa says that there are many forms of living entities. There are 8,400,000 different types of bodies. “And all of them are My sons.” So if you love Kṛṣṇa, then you love the white man, you love the American, you love the European, you love the Indian, you love the cow, you love the dog, you love the serpent – everything.

You have to know the techniques. Simply by theoretical knowledge you cannot make any improvement. And these are practical examples. Because there is no love for God at the present moment, all this nonsense universal love, fraternity, is going to hell. Therefore we are interested in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. You have to change your consciousness, make it full with Kṛṣṇa, or God. Then everything will be all right.

Thank you. 🙏

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

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

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

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

Pronunciation

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

LOOKING FOR NEWS OF THE HARE KṚṢṆA MOVEMENT?

Log on to www.iskconnews.org



The Internet is the ideal place for timely news, and *iskcon.com*, run by ISKCON Communications, maintains an active news page. So whether you want to see what’s happening in ISKCON or have some news to report, log on to www.iskconnews.org.

MY CANCER DIAGNOSIS AS KṚṢṆA'S EMBRACE

"I am now faced with a health challenge, which I have taken to be an answer to my prayers."

by Karṇāmṛta Dāsa

EACH OF US IS the leading actor or actress in the drama of our life. In this drama there is no rehearsing, memorizing lines, or knowing the outcome. Rather, the plot unfolds as we move through life, suggesting new directions and understandings as we confront successes and reverses, or even upheavals.

After living a regular life for my first eighteen years, an existential crisis propelled me to search for the purpose of life beyond the status quo of striving for the American dream. I started looking into the realm of the soul and God. After moving into a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in 1970, I lived as a *brahmacārī*, or unmarried celibate, for ten years, and as

a temple-supported married man for four years before embarking on another life-changing quest. To help me stay the course in *bhakti-yoga*, I had to find myself materially and make peace with a turbulent upbringing.

Keeping a journal for twenty years helped me sort out my life in surprising ways. Through writing, I learned to become more thoughtful, introspective, and philosophical. Building on this, I began blogging nine years ago on Krishna.com, sharing my life's struggles and successes. I also write about lessons from working with my therapist wife in helping devotee couples prepare for marriage and remain fixed through marital and family challenges.



Moving to a wooded country setting twelve years ago in a devotee community was also life changing. I became more attuned to nature and observed practical lessons from the land and plants and in growing food. The peaceful, quiet environment has helped my writing and spiritual endeavors. While I was living the good life of spiritual practice and material peace, I was also aware of dissatisfaction in the midst of what seemed an idyllic setting. I began a habit of intense prayer for my spiritual progress, to find the root cause of my despondency, and to take appropriate action.

An Unexpected Diagnosis

I am now faced with a health challenge, which I have taken to be an

ment. You can view it here: <http://thetruthaboutcancer.com>.

There are many alternative treatments with a high success rate, often more efficacious and with fewer side effects than conventional radiation and chemotherapy. Although most of you reading this don't know me personally, this could be your story, which is one of the reasons I am sharing it. Or it might already be your story, since in the USA, cancer strikes 1 in 2 men, and 1 in 3 women, in their lifetime. In 2015 there were an estimated 1,658,370 new cancer cases diagnosed and 589,430 cancer deaths.

After an exhaustive study of treatment options we learned about from the *Truth About Cancer* series and from well-wishing friends and doctors, we were on overload with too

many choices, yet we had to make a decision. My wife, Arcana Siddhi, was understandably anxious. "What if we make the wrong decision and you die?" Eventually she took solace in the conviction that we would be guided to make the best choice, as were other people we heard from. She also came to accept that my death was one possible outcome. This acceptance helped her calm down and be at peace, as did our spiritual practices and reading scripture.

Gradually, by taking the decision to pray and being open for guidance, we were able to narrow down our options and finally decide. We agreed on an herbal treatment offered at the Biomedical Clinic in Tijuana, Mexico, and also a diet based on the best of many recommendations. This began a new phase of my life when the idea of death

became very real to me, beyond mere theory. I have been documenting my repeated visits to Tijuana for what may be a long journey of recovery. So far so good, as the visible tumor is shrinking.

More Hugs

Unfortunately, just mentioning the word cancer scares people, as if it were a death sentence, though it does foster many interesting conversations. This widespread generally negative impression about survivability from cancer adds to the stress people go through, and that isn't good for healing. At the same time, I have been moved by the outpouring of love and appreciation I have received from my friends and family. I get the most amazing hugs – as well as looks of disbelief, as if I might disappear at any moment. What a world we would have if we always appreciated one another with such feeling! Arcana Siddhi and I joke that I may be partially attracting the cancer to feel such love and appreciation.

Additionally, in a strange way, I have found my cancer diagnosis an empowerment to speak and write, as I do so with new conviction and authority. Although my friends and family are far more upset and worried than I am, I can honestly say, "It's all good." Whatever happens, I know it is for my ultimate spiritual benefit.

Many verses in the Vedic scriptures have taken on a new and more relevant meaning, such as the classic verse in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.8) for surrender and acceptance of difficult conditions or circumstances: "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."

Although I don't think it is my time to go, I have found that this diagnosis fostered some interesting meditations on death, as guided by the *Gītā*'s second chapter, and revealed all the hankering and desires in my heart. As is often my process, I take time to observe my thoughts and feelings from a third-person perspective, so I can learn as much as I can from my reactions or responses.

Here are some of my reflections: Who do I really think I am – my conditioned story, or an eternal soul? How do I define myself? What are my attachments? How much do I consider myself a servant of God, or an enjoyer of the world? Where is my faith? Where is my shelter? What is my relationship with the holy name? How much do I truly want the goal of pure devotion and love for Kṛṣṇa and everything in relationship to His service? How much do I care about others? What am I willing to give in the time I have left in my body?

One of my responses to cancer, even as I do everything possible to strengthen my immune system and avoid foods that cancer likes, is to focus on living what is truly important to me, and praying to embrace whatever lessons cancer is meant to teach. I am practicing "effortless effort," or remaining calm and open to any outcome, while trying to live what is right for me as a spiritual practitioner of *bhakti*. "In all activities just depend upon Me and work always under My protection. In such

Called to Surrender Today

There is no tomorrow.
Surrender must be now.
Acknowledging my disqualifications – laziness and material distractions – I refuse to let them define me.
My excuses are all lame, without any currency or meaning.
I can only pray for mercy and sincerity, which supersedes everything.
I must empty myself today of the unessential and superficial.
The world is a perilous mess.
All I can do is offer my soul, fulfill my need for power by connecting to our Source, which gives its illumination and love, full of spiritual nourishment.
I offer myself so I can give what is required to share Kṛṣṇa's love and kindness.
I can show a way to wholeness, the divine potential of everyone, a way to fulfill our hankering heart by using our nature and karma as an instrument of divine love – for me, the greatest blessing!

– From the Epilogue to *My Yoga of Expression*, by Karṇāmṛta Dāsa

devotional service, be fully conscious of Me." (*Gītā* 18.57). I have decided that I am not "fighting" cancer but sending it love and acceptance. Cancer is Kṛṣṇa's agent and His loving embrace meant for my good, even if it leads to the death of my body.

Valuing the Moments

My natural response to the possibility of dying is to appreciate the opportunities and gifts of life, and furthermore, Kṛṣṇa's blessings in

even tiny details, in what I used to think of as ordinary or commonplace. For example, I write notes in books to emphasize and remember points. I am so grateful for the pencil and marvel at the eraser by which I easily make corrections. And now, avocados seem to be saving my life, as there are so many foods I can't eat. I take the time to savor the taste. They have never tasted so good, and I thank Kṛṣṇa for creating them, and for making them plentiful and inexpensive.

From this standpoint, appreciating the value of each moment is a great benefit in understanding the shortness of our life, and how it can end, biologically speaking, at any moment. Thus, contemplating our death is important, and death itself is not a failure – as is sometimes thought by doctors trying to save lives – just another natural stage of life. "One who has taken his birth is sure to die, and after death one is sure to take birth again. Therefore, in the

unavoidable discharge of your duty, you should not lament." (*Gītā* 2.27)

We can also question what is good or bad from a higher spiritual perspective, which is all about our growth as persons and souls. Once we decide what we must do, we have all the time we need. The attempt itself is our offering and our success, regardless of the outcome. "'Tis better to have loved and lost/ Than never to have loved at all," wrote Tennyson. In a similar way, we can say that it is better to try to give and serve than to hold back.

There is no perfect time, only this moment. I am trying to live by this premise now, while praying to depend on Kṛṣṇa for direction. I have new motivation to follow the perfect design of my life. As we endeavor, we can also appreciate what comes to us, seeing behind it the Lord's positive intent.

Optimism

Spiritual optimism is important, even as we see the world's many miseries; and while our life endeavors are imperfect, we can take solace in many verses. "But those who always worship Me [Kṛṣṇa] with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form – to them I carry what they lack, and I preserve what they have." (*Gītā* 9.22) In light of my situation and my many shortcomings, I remember

this verse often.

Spiritual optimists are not Pollyannas. They realize the difficulties and severity of certain events, and still choose to be positive. Even though negative thinkers may be more objective about possible negative outcomes, that doesn't mean they are happier or more successful.

On our journey of self-discovery and spiritual improvement, or in dealing with a life-threatening disease or unavoidable death, at some point when we have done all we can, rather than "letting go" of something, we can "let it be" as it is, and allow "what is" to occur. My attempt and prayer is to surrender to Kṛṣṇa's embrace and plan, seeing myself as a servant and not the supreme controller, even as I try to arrange for increased service.

In this mood, as one of the many fruits of cancer, I am travel-

ing to temples to give a talk entitled, "Facing Death to Live More Fully Today." I begin my talk by saying, "I may die today," to make a point about the importance of whatever time we have, since we are all "near death." Facing death is not an idle wait for me, though it has given me a new intensity in my spiritual practice. I feel compelled to do many activities I've been procrastinating about, including publishing my new free-verse poetry book, *My Yoga of Expression*. Therefore I can unequivocally say that my cancer is Kṛṣṇa's loving embrace for me, and I am grateful for its opportunities for spiritual and personal growth. 🌱

Karṇāmṛta Dāsa lives at Prabhupāda Village, a devotee community in North Carolina. His poetry book My Yoga of Expression is available at Amazon.com.

Upcoming offerings from The Vrindavan Institute for Higher Education (VIHE)

January–March: Bhakti-sadācāra Course

Bhakti-sadācāra is a pre-Bhakti-śāstrī study and training program.

It aims to assist devotees in cultivating Vaiṣṇava qualities, a brahminical way of life, and devotional values, to impart foundational knowledge and training, to inspire the practice of *sādhana-bhakti*, and to nourish a relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

March 18–23: International Vaiṣṇavī Retreat in Govardhana

An initiative of the GBC Devotee Care Committee, this special retreat centers on the theme of celebrating Śrīla Prabhupāda's mercy. It aims to generate peer devotional support among female devotees dedicated to Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission.

Many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda attend and share their experiences in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The focus is on hearing, chanting, and developing a spirit of service.

FACILITATORS: Śacīnandana Swami, Bhūrījāna Dāsa, Jagattārīṇī Devī Dāsī, Mādhavānanda Dāsa, Ādi Puruṣa Dāsa

July–October: Bhakti-śāstrī Course

Study of *Bhagavad-gītā*, *The Nectar of Devotion*, *The Nectar of Instruction*, and *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, plus Sanskrit Pronunciation and Deity Worship overview.

July–October: Bhakti-vaibhava Course, Canto 4

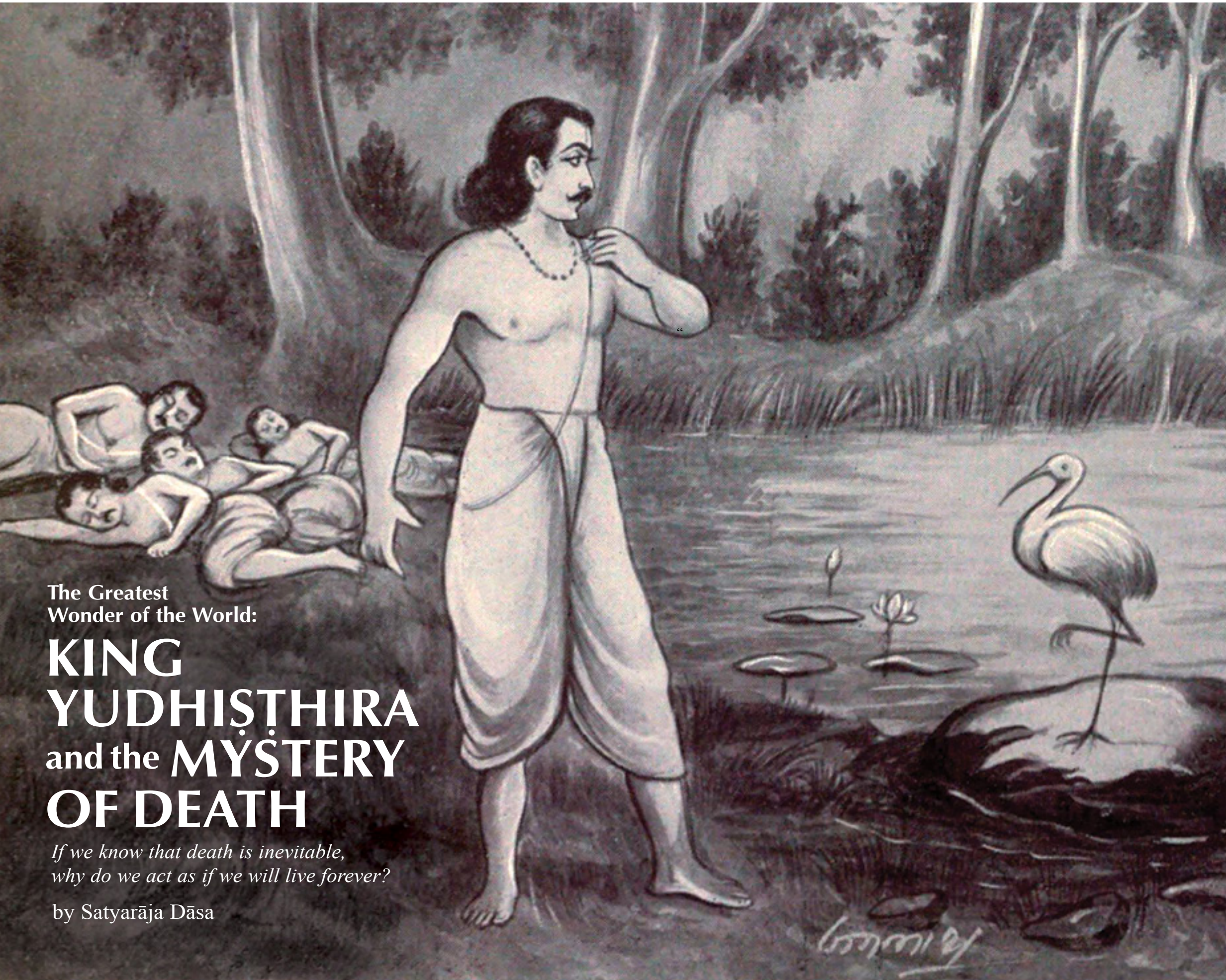
Study of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Cantos 1–6, with overviews of related commentaries and books.

For information and registration, go to www.vihe.org.



**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.



The Greatest
Wonder of the World:

KING YUDHIṢṬHIRA and the MYSTERY OF DEATH

*If we know that death is inevitable,
why do we act as if we will live forever?*

by Satyarāja Dāsa

“**T**HAT IS THE wonderful thing. *Kim āścaryam ataḥ param*. Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said. He was asked, ‘What is the most wonderful thing in this world?’ So he replied, ‘This is the most wonderful thing – that everyone sees that everyone is dying, [yet] he’s thinking, “I shall not die.” This is the most wonderful thing.’” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Morning Walk, July 11, 1976, New York City)

The ancient *Mahābhārata*, one of India’s two great epics, tells an intriguing story about death (*Vana-parva* 313). During a complex series of events leading up to the Battle of Kurukshetra, the five righteous Pāṇḍava brothers (Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva) find themselves exiled to the forest. Toward the end of their allotted banishment, Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest brother, discovers that his brothers have died after drinking water from a lake. This was instigated by Yamarāja, who wants to test Yudhiṣṭhira with a series of questions.*

Yamarāja is known as Dharmarāja because he judges and punishes those who transgress dharma, or rules of human behavior. When Yudhiṣṭhira arrives at the lake, Yamarāja challenges him to answer a hundred questions about dharma. If he answers incorrectly, he will face the same fate as his brothers. The questions and answers are presented as a *samvāda* (conversation), and each one is short, like a Vedic *sūtra*.

It is the last of these questions that concerns us here: “What is the

*After Yudhiṣṭhira answers his questions, Yamarāja brings the Pāṇḍavas back to life.

Left: Yudhiṣṭhira is questioned by Yamarāja in the form of a crane.

most wonderful thing in the world?”

Yudhiṣṭhira responds in a surprising way:

*ahany ahani bhūtāni
gacchantīha yamālayam
śeṣāḥ sthāvaram icchanti
kim āścaryam ataḥ param*

“Hundreds and thousands of living entities meet death at every moment, but foolish living beings nonetheless think themselves deathless and do not prepare for it. This is the most wonderful thing in this world.”

Why “Wonderful”?

Before commenting on the profundity of this teaching, I would like to

41, Purport), Śrīla Prabhupāda indicates that the word *āścarya* can be rendered as “amazing”: “Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said that this was the most amazing thing in the world. No one thinks that he is going to die, although everyone else is dying.”

Āścarya is generally translated as “astonishing,” “surprising,” “amazing,” and so on. Śrīla Prabhupāda translates the word in that way in *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* (2.29), where he translates *āścarya-vat paśyati kaścid* as “Some look on the soul as amazing.” He doesn’t translate the word as “wonderful” in this context, though he could have, and that would also have been an accurate translation in this verse.

We intuit that something is wrong with dying. We know, at least on a subliminal level, that it is not for us.

briefly address the troubling word *wonderful* (translation of *āścarya*), found in both the question and the answer. It is used not only in Prabhupāda’s summation of the story, but also among devotees when they talk about this verse.

Why is the word troubling? Today, when we call something *wonderful* we usually mean “exciting” or “unusually good,” and the dictionary gives these definitions. But this is clearly not how Prabhupāda and the *Mahābhārata* use the word here. *Wondrous*, on the other hand, is defined as “amazing” or “that which is to be marveled at” – this would be more to the point. Of course, the word *wonderful* can mean “full of wonder,” and no doubt Prabhupāda was using it in that way. But in modern parlance it has taken on other connotations.

Discussing this *Mahābhārata* story elsewhere, as, for example, in his *Teachings of Lord Kapila* (Text

“Remember Your Mortality”

But back to the profundity of Yudhiṣṭhira’s words. His proclamation about death is like an Eastern version of *memento mori*, a Latin phrase that means “Remember your mortality.” The idea became a staple in Christian philosophy, where it was understood that people tended to live sinfully when they forgot or neglected their mortality. Early Church fathers said that the contemplation of death – not in a morbid way, but with depth and insight – would lead to proper focus in life, directing one’s course of action in a positive way. Ernest Hemingway said that every true story ends in death. Clearly, dying is life’s one certainty.

And yet we avoid it with every fiber of our being. Why? If we know that death is coming, without doubt, why do we act as if we will live forever? This is Yudhiṣṭhira’s point, and

its implications are multifaceted.

First of all we are in denial. Death indicates the end of everything we know and love. It is the ultimate disruption. And it marks the unknown, something we generally fear. We want to abide in what is comfortable. Why take chances? Further, death is associated with pain – old age, disease, and death. Undesirable, to say the least.

There is another reason we dislike death: it is entirely unnatural to us. Because we’re spiritual beings, death feels unfamiliar. Not being self-realized, we are unaware of our eternity and our spiritual identity. Yet we intuit that something is wrong with dying. We know, at least on a subliminal level, that it is not for us. It goes against our grain.

Yudhiṣṭhira’s teaching here in the *Mahābhārata* carries some irony, which correlates well with the Sanskrit *āścarya*. We have discussed how people are foolish, not admitting to themselves that they will die, even though they know that everyone who lived before them is now dead. But one should also consider the following: On a deeper level, death cannot really touch us. Thus, Yudhiṣṭhira’s answer may indeed be referred to as wonderful or astonishing: We think we will never die, and in a spiritual sense we are correct.

From Acceptance to Action

But what to do while alive? This is the real question. Yudhiṣṭhira’s answer about death is only part of the equation. He tells us that death is inevitable and that we should simply admit that fact. Further, he intimates that since we aren’t inclined to admit the truth of death – to ourselves or others – we avoid preparing for death. We don’t act as if death is a reality.

So if we are ready to admit the truth of death, what do we do? How should we behave? What would appropriate action look like? Would we simply mope around, bemoaning our unseemly fate? Not at all.

There is a cousin verse that takes us to the next step. While Yudhiṣṭhira tells us about our avoidance of death, King Kulaśekhara, a great devotee in the Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition, suggests what to do when we’re ready to acknowledge that death is a fact of life. In his *Mukunda-mālā-stotra* (38), he writes,

*āścaryam etad dhi manuṣya-loke
śudhām parityajya viṣaṁ pibanti
nāmāni nārāyaṇa-gocarāni
tyaktvānya-vācaḥ kuhakāḥ
paṭhanti*

“The greatest wonder in human society is this: People are so incorrigible that they reject the life-giving nectar of Lord Nārāyaṇa’s names and instead drink poison by speaking everything else.” From the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust commentary: “Both King Kulaśekhara and Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira use the word *āścaryam*, ‘amazing,’ in the sense of amazingly stupid.” In other words, both kings highlight the foolishness of ignoring death and the proper action to prepare for it. Yudhiṣṭhira says we are simply avoiding this action, and Kulaśekhara tells us what that action is: embracing the holy name of Nārāyaṇa (Kṛṣṇa).

The Supreme Lord has hundreds of millions of names, including the names Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa. Scriptures and sages recommend that we chant the names of God, thus developing our spiritual body in earnest. In this way we can overcome death, but not by adopting the misguided notion that we will somehow live forever in a material body. Rather, by chanting the Lord’s names, we nourish the soul, and this allows us to taste real immortality – spiritual immortality – which is our birthright. In this world there is no greater wonder. 🌸

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.

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 seventh in a series of eight meditations.

If I Had a Time Machine

We seem to have something of a fascination for time machines, if the success of *Dr Who*, *Back to the Future*, and numerous other such shows are anything to go by. H. G. Wells started it all off many years ago, and maybe when we do finally work out how to do it, someone could pop back and tell him how well his book *The Time Machine* is still doing.

Wells sent a man one million years into the future, but if I had a time machine I think I would rather go backwards and change a few things. I would start by seeking out my former self to warn him about some ill-considered decisions I was about to make, and their painful consequences. Mind you, I probably wouldn’t listen. As Alice in Wonderland said, “I give myself very good advice, but I very rarely follow it.”

In any event, I find going back in time a rather improbable scenario. “The moving finger writes and having writ moves on, nor piety nor wit shall lure it back to change one word,” Omar Khayyam

wrote, and I agree. I really don’t think we will ever make a time machine of the *Dr Who* variety, but I do think there is a spiritual way we can go through time.

In the Vedic scriptures time is described as being a fierce form of God. “I am all-devouring time,” Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, “come to annihilate the worlds.” Oppenheimer, who invented the nuclear bomb, famously quoted this verse when he saw his terrible invention tested, foreseeing it destroying the world. Let’s hope he was wrong.

In the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa goes on to say that we are timeless beings and that only our material forms are subject to time. We are said to be mere observers of this changing world, completely apart and different from it. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says that we need only realize this truth and we will have effectively traveled right through time and reached eternity. I reckon that’s better than the Tardis.*

**Dr Who’s time machine.*



CG art by Śrīṣa Dāsa

A groundbreaking museum of science – the Vedic Planetarium – seeks to reveal what the eye cannot see.

by Yogeśvara Dāsa

(On behalf of the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium Executive Committee)

Illustrations by Alexey Klimenko, Duncan Smith, and Nina Tara

AS VISITORS to India travel north by car from Kolkata, the landscape gradually shifts from urban sprawl to pastoral farmland. High-rise housing and industrial construction sites give way to a flat horizon of villages and rice paddies. Four hours and eighty miles later, visitors enter the district of Mayapur on the banks of the Ganges River, at the point of its confluence with the Jalangi. Here at Mayapur, in the early

sixteenth century, Lord Kṛṣṇa in His form as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu popularized the public chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare / Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare as the means for achieving realization of God in the current age.

Dominating the landscape of Mayapur is the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP), a massive structure featuring three domes of steel-reinforced

concrete covered in robins-egg blue tiles. The center dome rises more than 350 feet and covers an atrium large enough to accommodate 10,000 visitors.

When the TOVP officially opens in 2022, it will be a major step toward further establishing Mayapur as the capital of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, the spiritual movement begun by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Today, His movement is known around the

The UNSEEN UNIVERSE

In 2022 the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (above) is scheduled to open in Mayapur, eighty miles north of Kolkata. The 200-foot-tall left wing of the TOVP is the Vedic Planetarium, dedicated to the cosmology of ancient India.

Forest Of Naimisha

Exhibits in the Vedic Planetarium will begin with a life-size recreation of a gathering of sages at the edge of Naimisha Forest that took place five thousand years ago. Kali-yuga, our current age of war and tragedy, had just begun, and the sages asked revered teacher Sūta Gosvāmī how humanity could be immunized against Kali's influence. What followed was Sūta's recitation of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, India's most revered Purāṇa, or history, which outlines the nature of consciousness, the purpose of life, the structure of the universe, yogic methods for ending the cycle of birth and death, and devotional practices that unite the soul with Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Being, in His eternal abode.



globe through the temples and programs of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (1896–1977). Śrīla Prabhupāda requested his followers to build the TOVP as an international attraction at the center of the ISKCON Mayapur campus. More than four million people visit the ISKCON Mayapur site each year. That number is expected to double when the TOVP opens.

The 200-foot-tall left wing of the TOVP is the Vedic Planetarium, history's first museum of ancient Indian cosmology. It will feature five levels of interactive exhibits, computer graphics, projection mapping, and on the top level a 75-foot-wide hemispherical dome theater. The Vedic Planetarium will introduce visitors to the Kṛṣṇa-centered – God-centered – vision of the cosmos described by ancient India's Sanskrit texts, in particular the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Based on the Bhāgavatam

Among India's many classical texts, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, or *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, holds a unique place for its breadth of content and public appeal. Its 18,000 verses include descriptions of the cycles of universal creation, maintenance, and destruction; an analysis of the components and functioning of material nature; biographies of men and women who have undertaken the journey to God; as well as an exposition of various yoga practices and the preeminence of *bhakti*, or devotional yoga. The *Bhāgavatam* is particularly popular for its descriptions of Kṛṣṇa – God in His ultimate personal form – and His various avatars.

While changes may occur in current plans for particular exhibits, the overall purpose of the Planetarium will remain the same: to illustrate the teachings of the *Bhāgavatam*, beginning with the foundational lesson that all living beings – plants,

fish, animals, humans, etc. – are eternal spirit souls, sparks of Kṛṣṇa, housed in material bodies. The *Bhāgavatam* describes that as sparks from a fire share the qualities of fire, living beings share Kṛṣṇa's qualities of eternity, knowledge, and bliss. Living beings also possess a degree of Kṛṣṇa's independence, or free will. Some be-

ings exercise their free will to live apart from Kṛṣṇa, and it is for these souls that the material universe comes into existence. The Supreme Being feels compassion for those who live apart from Him, and designed the universe for their spiritual benefit. The Vedic Planetarium will attempt to reveal that beneficent design and

the opportunities it affords for self-awareness and freedom from the cycle of birth and death. In his purport to 3.5.24 of the *Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The Lord wanted to create the cosmic manifestation to give another chance to the conditioned souls who were dormant in forgetfulness. The cosmic manifesta-

tion gives the conditioned souls a chance to go back home, back to Godhead, and that is its main purpose." Under the influence of the stringent laws of material nature, souls in this world reincarnate again and again, residing in one body after another, in eight million species, until at last they are born in human form.



Visions of Material and Spiritual Universes

Opposite page: Ordinary human observation, no matter how greatly enhanced by telescopes, satellites, and other instruments, cannot see past the outermost reaches of the universe. Exhibits in the Vedic Planetarium will seek to illustrate how yoga, meditation, and study of scripture, coupled with devotional practices, can reveal what lies beyond the limits of human perception.

Left: The material universe, which is the object of scientific study, represents only one-quarter of the creation. The unlimited spiritual world makes up the greater three-quarters. In that spiritual world, the topmost planet, resembling the whorl of a giant lotus flower, is called Goloka Vṛndāvana. This is the abode of Kṛṣṇa, the original Personality of Godhead. From Kṛṣṇa's spiritual body emanates an effulgence called brahmajyoti. Innumerable spiritual planets float in the brahmajyoti. Four-armed Viṣṇu expansions of Kṛṣṇa reign over each of these planets, which are home to liberated souls who live with the Supreme Being in ever-fresh exchanges of loving devotion. Collectively this expansive spiritual realm is called Vaikuṅṭha, "the place of no anxiety."

Like a cloud in the spiritual sky, the material creation exists to accommodate souls who choose to live apart from Kṛṣṇa. In this illustration, Śrīla Prabhupāda is shown translating and commenting on the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which reveals the method (bhakti-yoga) for reviving the soul's original spiritual consciousness. At the moment when their souls leave their bodies, people who have become fully Kṛṣṇa conscious (God conscious) enter Vaikuṅṭha and never return to the material world of birth and death.

At this point in the evolutionary cycle, free will begins. The *Bhāgavatam* thus describes evolution as the step-by-step progress of souls from less evolved species to human form. With the advanced intelligence afforded by the human form, conditioned souls may begin inquir-

other than self-perpetuation and the gratification of biological impulses. The *Bhāgavatam* presents a radically different definition: Consciousness is a symptom of the soul, analogous to heat or light as a symptom of fire; and the purpose of existence is to know ourselves beyond biological

sages gathered at the Naimisha Forest to question the revered teacher Sūta Gosvāmī about how to immunize humanity against Kali's influence.

"O sage," a spokesman for the sages asked, "what have you ascertained to be the ultimate good for the people of the forthcoming Age

recorded history. In India, over the generations, the teachings passed down in this lineage of teachers (*paramparā*) have inspired political leaders in their approach to law and administration, spiritual figures and philosophers in their commentaries, and artists in their performances and

lineage, coupled with wholehearted dedication to spiritual practices. It is a provocative notion: knowledge not as the product of sophisticated research, but as a gradual awakening of the soul through active devotion to God. The highest stage of this awakening is full God realization.

Visitors will be invited to position themselves in front of a mirrored wall. Looking at their own reflection, they will see themselves transform, grow older, younger, change from one sex to another, from one race to another, in a series of personalized "reincarnations" that illustrate



ing, "Who am I? Where have I come from? Where am I going?"

Underlying these fundamental inquiries is a mystery that has been pondered since ancient times. What is consciousness? Consciousness allows us to experience feelings, emotions, and desires, and know that we exist. Yet the scientific community has reached no consensus on the origin of consciousness. Current thinking suggests that consciousness emerges from complex computations among brain neurons and their synaptic connections, a spontaneous interaction of molecules and biochemical processes. By this mechanistic view, there is little purpose to life

functions, as eternal beings in loving relationship with God. It is this perspective on the indestructible nature of consciousness and life's higher purpose that will be addressed by exhibits in the Vedic Planetarium.

Setting of the Bhāgavatam

How the *Bhāgavatam* came into being will be a fascinating introductory exhibit. According to references within the text, five thousand years ago the world entered Kali-yuga, the current age of darkness, of confusion and quarrel, fourth in a cycle of ages that repeats throughout the lifespan of the universe. At the onset of Kali,

of Kali? O learned one, in the coming age lives will be short, quarrelsome, disturbed. Please tell us the essence of all wisdom by which people's hearts may be appeased. Kindly explain the teachings imparted by previous masters, which uplift by being spoken and heard."¹

What followed was Sūta's recitation of the *Bhāgavatam*, in which he outlined, among many other topics, devotion to the Supreme Being as fulfillment of the human mission. Sūta faithfully recited teachings he had heard from his teacher, Śukadeva, who in turn had imparted to Sūta what he learned from a succession of teachers dating back before

creations. Yet despite the prominence of the *Bhāgavatam* in Indian culture, there has never been, before now, a museum dedicated to its explanation of consciousness and cosmology. No matter how powerful our tools of magnification and no matter how clever our scientific theories, the *Bhāgavatam* declares, nature's deepest secrets will always remain beyond our comprehension. Limited sensory perception and intellectual conjecture cannot grasp that which can be known only through revelation. A full perception of reality can be achieved through the blessings of a self-realized spiritual master who represents the *paramparā*

Entering Naimisha Forest – And More

Visitors entering the Planetarium, as currently designed, will walk through a re-creation of the Naimisha Forest and observe sages hearing the recitation by Sūta Gosvāmī. This opening exhibit is intended to establish the historicity of what is to follow. Visitors then move by escalator to Level One, where the question addressed is "Who am I?" Exhibits for this first level will offer evidence that all living beings are imperishable sparks of the Supreme Being and that consciousness is not a byproduct of the brain.

Changing Bodies

Level One of the Vedic Planetarium addresses the question "Who am I?" and the first exhibit is designed to give visitors a visceral sense of themselves as nonmaterial beings: souls who inhabit temporary material bodies. Seeing themselves change from man to woman, from young to old, from Indian to European, or white to black, visitors will know they are seeing a computerized simulation. Yet by combining entertainment with a photo-realistic sensation of reincarnating, this exhibit is intended to prompt a rethinking of identity.



how life exists separate from the physical body. Other exhibits on this first level may use similar morphing technology to animate the process of evolution – not an evolution of bodies as proposed by current scientific theory, but an evolution of consciousness as the same soul reincarnates millions of times until at last achieving human form. Attention on this level will be given to near-death experiences and other accounts suggestive of consciousness existing

separate from the body and brain.

Level Two is dedicated to answering the question “Where am I?” Exhibits on this level will describe for visitors that, as eternal souls, we are not a part of the material creation and that our true and original home exists outside the universe. These exhibits will include a model of upper, middle, and lower planetary systems and explanations of the atmospheric conditions and forms of life found on each. As a middle planet, our

Earth contains both heavenly and hellish conditions. It is consequently well suited to the spiritual quest. Level Two exhibits will take visitors inside these planetary systems to meet their respective residents and presiding divinities.

Level Two will also outline the karmic criteria that determine a person’s destination after death. This vision of the soul’s evolution through millions of bodies emphasizes the rarity and privilege of hu-

man life, which is the opportunity to end the cycle of birth and death. If that rare opportunity is wasted, the soul risks falling down again into lower forms and repeating the evolutionary process, prolonging its imprisonment in the material world.

The Purpose Behind The Analysis

The question arises, why would the *Bhāgavatam*, a text dedicated to love

Evolution Through the Species

Level Two addresses the question, “Where am I?” One exhibit expands on the changing body experience to include birth in other than human form and on other planets. Thousands of years before Darwin, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam outlined an evolutionary process, not of bodies but of consciousness. Those souls who enter material creation move up and down this evolutionary scale, from elementary species (bacteria, plants, insects) to more advanced species (fish, birds, reptiles, mammals), and finally to human form. In human bodies, depending on the quality of their actions and behavior, souls may evolve even higher – to inhabit bodies of demigods and other elevated beings on other worlds – or devolve back down to lower-than-human species.



of God, give so much attention to an analytical description of the cosmos? The *Bhāgavatam* answers that love of God unfolds in gradual stages, and that the preliminary stage is to appreciate God in the creation we can observe. Properly guided meditation on the majestic material universe can evoke moral, intellectual, and devotional qualities that are prerequisite to realizing more personal forms of

the Supreme Being. “When the mind is fixed upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His external feature made of the material modes of nature,” the *Bhāgavatam* (5.16.3) states, “it is brought to the platform of pure goodness. In that transcendental position, one can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who in His subtler form is self-effulgent and beyond the modes of nature.”

One contemporary *Bhāgavatam* scholar suggests that studying Vedic cosmology “is a form of yoga, performed by holding a divinized vision of the cosmos in one’s mind. . . . Reading or hearing the *Bhāgavatam*’s teachings on the natural world is meant to transform the receiver of the text from a soul bound to the cycle of birth and death to a devotee infused with a sense of . . . Kṛṣṇa’s

Viṣṇu and Brahmā

Level Three asks, “Where am I going?” and contains exhibits that compare and contrast the material and spiritual worlds. The third level begins with the Bhāgavatam’s explanation of how the universe comes into being. Before the moment of creation, the Supreme Being assumes a gigantic form known as Mahā-Viṣṇu, who reclines in an ocean of gross and subtle energies. From the pores of His skin, Mahā-Viṣṇu exhales seedling universes, like bubbles that gradually inflate. Viṣṇu enters into each of these nascent universes and reclines on the body of Śeṣa-nāga, a thousand-headed serpent. In this state of repose, Viṣṇu sprouts a lotus flower from His navel. From the whorl of the lotus, Brahmā, the first created being, appears. It is Brahmā who will engineer the appearance of millions of species on planets throughout the universe. Souls will then inhabit these species according to their karmic disposition. By positioning the story of creation at the start of Level Three, the Planetarium will seek to inform visitors that the material universe, like our material bodies, is neither permanent nor our natural place of residence. As eternal souls, we belong to another, eternal nature.

beauty and power expressed in the world.”²²

Level Three of the Vedic planetarium will present a brief history of everything, from the dawn of creation to the soul’s ultimate journey out of the universe and into the eternal realm. The opening exhibit on Level Three will be a reenactment of creation, during which the Supreme Being in His gigantic form known as Mahā-Viṣṇu reclines in an ocean of creative energies. From the pores of His skin emanate tiny bubbles, which expand and become separate universes. Viṣṇu again enters each universe and reclines on waters that fill the lower half. From His navel sprouts a giant lotus. In the stem of this lotus reside the living beings who await birth in the material world. Once the universe is set in motion, Viṣṇu enters as Paramātmā, or Super-soul, the witness within, and throughout their stay in the material world, through millions of births, all

Model Chandelier

Śrīla Prabhupāda envisioned the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium as an emotionally stirring and esthetically beautiful experience. He proposed that this could be achieved by showing all the spiritual and material worlds in a giant chandelier suspended from the temple’s center dome. As currently envisioned, this cosmological chandelier will hang down more than 200 feet and weigh 10,000 pounds. To understand the many components of the chandelier, a twenty-foot replica will be incorporated into Level Three of the Vedic Planetarium. Video viewing stations positioned around the periphery of this scaled-down model will explain the chandelier’s many planetary systems along with their presiding deities and the prerequisites for living there.



conditioned souls are accompanied in their hearts by this form of God who offers direction and guidance for their ultimate liberation from birth and death.

The Sanskrit literature describes the universe in two fundamental ways. One, given in texts known as the *Siddhāntas*, corresponds to the universe as we see it. The other, given in the *Bhāgavatam*, describes regions of space imperceptible by material tools of observation. Exhibits on Level Three will compare and contrast these two perspectives, conveying the sophistication of Vedic cosmology, the limitations of empiric observation, and the excitement of alternative explanations of creation.

All of Existence Depicted In a Chandelier

Hanging from the central dome of the TOVP will be a massive computer-operated detailed model of the cosmic manifestation as described in the Fifth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The model will take the form of a chandelier depicting material and spiritual realms. This elaborate 200-foot-tall, 100-foot-wide model of Vedic cosmology, projected to weigh more than 10,000 pounds, will illustrate the orbits and movements of the stars and planets, the various Vedic divinities, and the many planetary systems, including the luminous heavenly realms of the material world, leading to the edge of the universe and then out into the vast eternal spiritual realm.

Level Three of the Vedic Planetarium will feature a 20-foot-tall replica of this elaborate chandelier, small enough to permit visitors to look more closely at its contents. Exhibits will show that calculations offered in the 5,000-year-old *Bhāgavatam* – such as the distances between planets – enable us to scientifically explain the causes of seasonal changes, eclipses, and phases of the moon. The similarity between

these ancient calculations and those of recent science are striking.

Headsets will offer visitors recorded explanations of the chandelier’s component parts, while video viewing stations will enlarge details of the chandelier such as the layout of the various worlds: Goloka-dhāma, the highest world, Kṛṣṇa’s own abode; Hari-dhāma, the vast expanse of spiritual world where Viṣṇu expansions of Kṛṣṇa reign; Maheśa-dhāma, on the border between the spiritual and material worlds, where demigod Śiva and his followers dwell; and Devī-dhāma, the material world, comprising all the material planetary systems. In each strata of creation there exist forms of life, some higher than humans and some lower, and these will also be explained in the model-chandelier exhibit.

The top floor of the Planetarium will feature a 275-seat auditorium and 70-foot-wide curved screen. Here, in a full-dome immersive cinematic experience, visitors will watch a twenty-minute special F/X film that will take them on a nonstop voyage from Earth to the edge of the universe using a single, unbroken movement created with spectacular CGI technology. This epic journey across the cosmos will escort spectators past the moon, past neighboring planets, out of the solar system, into outer space, out of the shell surrounding the universe – and into the eternal, self-effulgent sky that culminates in Goloka Vṛndāvana, the abode of Kṛṣṇa. While scientific textbook descriptions tend to portray space as empty and uninhabited, a cold mechanical wasteland, this filmed journey through the universe will depict something quite different: a miraculous universe in which every planet teems with extraordinary forms of life and purpose.

The Planetarium Team

Heading this ambitious project is a team of *Bhāgavatam* scholars working in tandem with scientists,

architects, sculptors, computer-graphics artists, and senior Vaiṣṇava devotees. In development is an institute staffed by teams of devotee-scientists with expertise in hard sciences such as physics, cosmology, astronomy, biology, biochemistry, and neurology, as well as more theoretical fields such as consciousness studies. The Planetarium theater will be dedicated to one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's first scientist-disciples, Professor Richard L. Thompson (Sadāpūta Dāsa, 1947–2008). The

dedication acknowledges Sadāpūta's groundbreaking comparative studies of the *Bhāgavatam* and contemporary scientific thought, which inform much of the background to Planetarium exhibits.

Like the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium itself, the idea for an advisory body of devotee-scientists was conceived by Śrīla Prabhupāda and outlined by him in discussions and writings between 1973 and 1977 (the year he passed away). From the outset, his thoughts on how to visu-

alize the *Bhāgavatam*'s cosmology in the physical space of a science museum were well formed. In a letter dated November 14, 1976, Prabhupāda wrote, "The [Planetarium] model will depict . . . the lower planetary systems, the earthly [middle] system . . . the upper planetary system . . . beginning from the sun, showing . . . Vishnu [and the] Garbhodaka ocean, the seven coverings of the universe . . . impersonal brahmajyoti, Vaikuntha-loka with the various Vishnu-murtis, [leading

to] Goloka Vrindavana. This model . . . will be engineered to suspend from the structure of the dome and rotate according to the real movement of the planets. . . . It will be a glorious exhibition of India's Vedic culture that will attract visitors from all over the world."

Will visitors unfamiliar with Vedic cosmology be able to relate to such fantastic displays? Prabhupāda replied that the litmus test for the project's success would be that anyone visiting the Vedic Planetarium

should conclude that the *Bhāgavatam* is an eloquent, inspiring blueprint to the wonders of God's creation and feel motivated to take up devotional service. On a morning walk in Mayapur, February 27, 1976, he said, "[Visitors] will come to see the civilization, the philosophical culture, the religious culture by practical demonstration. . . . It will be a unique thing in the world."

Prabhupāda began his translation and commentary of the *Bhāgavatam* long before leaving India, and after

his arrival in the United States in 1965 he continued to rise early each morning to write. Despite constant travel, between 1965 and 1977 he produced thirty additional volumes of the *Bhāgavatam*. During his final days, he was too weak to sit comfortably but not too ill to continue his translations and commentaries. His staff of Sanskrit scholars and editors recorded his dictations as he lay in his bed, whispering into a microphone held inches from his lips.

Prabhupāda's commentaries are filled with practical, commonsense explanations of esoteric subjects, yet there remain vast, perhaps unbridgeable differences between the *Bhāgavatam*'s perspective on the universe and that of modern science. Still, Prabhupāda's explanations clarify why those differences exist. It is primarily because most of science does not allow room for transcendent causes, and in particular how a life of devotion can lead to deeper perceptions of reality.

The Universal Form

In the Bhagavad-gīta, Śrī Kṛṣṇa poetically describes how He can be perceived in nature. "Of luminaries," He declares, "I am the radiant sun. Of heavenly bodies I am the moon, of bodies of water the ocean, of purifiers the wind. Of subduers I am time. Of secret things I am silence. . . ." In memorable language, He offers a meditation on the natural world as His virat-rūpa, or universal form. Among seasons, Kṛṣṇa adds, He is flower-bearing spring, and of stationary things the Himalayas. The Bhāgavatam says that appreciating the natural world as an incarnation of God is a prerequisite to realizing God in person, as displayed in Vaikunṭha, the spiritual world. Designers of the Vedic Planetarium have envisioned a universal form exhibit that will inspire visitors to rethink their relationship with the earth and discover that respect for nature is an essential part of devotional practice.



This approach to the quest for truth as an act of self-surrender to God radically redefines the very sense of what is “scientific.” Prabhupāda appreciated the practical side of science, but he decried those scientists who exaggerated their ability to understand consciousness or the universe through empiric experimentation. He went so far as to call such presumption “dangerous,” as it misleads people into believing that science is sufficient for knowing who and what we are and understanding the workings and purpose of the universe. The *Bhāgavatam* proposes that the universe of scientific experience, the universe of stars, planets, and galaxies, is essentially an interesting but superficial side of creation. The important parts – the soul and the eternal realm that is the soul’s ultimate destination – are inaccessible by material observation. Another perspective is required. “Kṛṣṇa consciousness,” the *Bhāgavatam* (4.29.69) states, “means constantly associating with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in such a mental state that the devotee can observe the cosmic manifestation exactly as the Supreme Personality of Godhead does.” To see the universe as God sees it: that succinctly describes the purpose of the Vedic Planetarium.

Prabhupāda never claimed exclusive credit for revealing the wisdom of the *Bhāgavatam*. With a humility that characterized his mission, he always acknowledged the teachings of his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Goswami, and those of the Vaiṣṇava sages of history. Still, he created an unprecedented plan for bringing those teachings to the attention of the world through the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium, and for that followers are justified in honoring him as an unprecedented God-realized pioneer who permanently reshaped our perceptions of the cosmos. 🌍

Yogeśvara Dāsa (Joshua M. Greene) was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1970. He retired in 2013 after nine years in the Hofstra University Department of Religion and Philosophy. Since 2007 he has led a weekly Bhagavad-gītā workshop at Jivamukti Yoga School in New York City. His latest book is Swami in a Strange Land: How Krishna Came to the West. For more information: www.atma.org.

NOTES

1. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Canto 1, Chapter 1
2. Jonathan B. Edelman, “Cosmology: Dialogues on Natural Theology,” in *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa: Sacred Text and Living Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 49

Planetarium

Exhibits on the first three floors are designed to prepare visitors for the film they will view in the top-floor Planetarium. The 200-seat amphitheater will feature a full-dome video-projection theater with ambient acoustics, intended to immerse the audience in a simulated journey out of the material world and into the eternal Vaikunṭha realm. This experience on the Planetarium’s top floor will bring together the many perspectives described in the dozens of previous exhibits, including the soul different from the body, life on other planets, and devotional service as the means of achieving liberation from birth and death in the material world. The film concludes with the soul’s entrance into the eternal Vaikunṭha realm.

Your Śrīla Prabhupāda

Let's consider how Śrīla Prabhupāda is for everyone, and then look at some ways to access and nourish our personal relationship with him, our founder-ācārya.

by Sureśvara Dāsa

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

Universal Teacher

THE YEAR was 1935. In February Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Dāsa spoke at the Vyāsa-pūjā¹ celebration of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura in Bombay. Not only was the Thākura Abhaya's spiritual master, he was the founder-ācārya of the entire Gauḍīya Mission,² which had ignited a renaissance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the Indian subcontinent. Addressing the assembly, Abhaya declared:

The Ācāryadeva to whom we have assembled tonight to offer our humble homage is not the guru of a sectarian institution or one out of many differing exponents of the truth. On the contrary, he is the Jagad-guru, the guru of all of us; the only difference is that some obey him wholeheartedly, while others do not obey him directly.

In 1971, after Prabhupāda had become ISKCON's founder-ācārya, a reporter asked him how many followers he had. "Unlimited," Prabhupāda replied, echoing his earlier homage to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta. "Some admit and some don't admit. Admit you are a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and your life will be a success."³

Global Preacher

Between 1965 and 1977 Śrīla Prabhupāda circled the globe fourteen times, establishing the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement on every major continent. He initiated nearly five thousand disciples and inspired countless more people to accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. At an age when most people wish to be comfortably retired, Prabhupāda kept up a nonstop preaching pace, tirelessly responding to his mission's demands. As he wrote one disciple:

Regarding your invitation that I attend the Rathayatra festival in San Francisco, on July 7th, it is possible that I may attend depending on when I finish my European tour. I am due to arrive in Rome on May 23, then after a week Geneva, then Paris and



possibly Stockholm, Germany and England. If there is time I can fly directly from Europe to Los Angeles and go to the festival, then as you suggest, go to Australia Rathayatra via Hawaii. This is known as jet-age parivrajak-acarya.”⁴ (Letter to Jayatīrtha Dāsa, 5 May 1974)

Astonishingly, jet-age Prabhupāda never experienced jet lag, or ignored it if he did, instantly adapting to the time at his latest destination. And though most of his disciples were young enough to be his grandchildren, they couldn’t keep up with him. As Prabhupāda once told a personal assistant, “My desire is to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness everywhere at once.”⁵

cow, I give milk anywhere. That is what I like to do.”⁶

Āvesa-avatāra

The *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Antya* 7.11) states: “The fundamental religious system in the Age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Unless empowered by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot propagate the *saṅkīrtana* movement.” Commenting on this verse in *Antya* 2.14, Prabhupāda further identifies the one who empowers the spreader of the chanting: “Unless one is empowered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one cannot spread the holy names of the Hare Kṛṣṇa

mahā-mantra throughout the world. Persons who do so are empowered. Therefore they are sometimes called *āveśa-avatāras*, or empowered incarnations, for they are endowed with the power of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.”

Once an Indian swami criticized Prabhupāda’s global preaching by saying that, if Caitanya Mahāprabhu had wanted Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Western countries, why didn’t He go there Himself? To which Prabhupāda replied: “He left the credit for me. He loves His devotee more than Himself!”⁷

Yet Prabhupāda always passed on that credit to others – to his followers, to his spiritual master, and finally to Kṛṣṇa Himself. It is a mark of Prabhupāda’s absolute transparency as an *āveśa-avatāra* that he named the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement after Kṛṣṇa, not Bhaktivedanta Swami, whom most of the world has yet to know.

ISKCON’s Founder-Ācārya

If Śrīla Prabhupāda is for everyone, he is certainly for everyone in his ISKCON. In 1994 ISKCON’s Governing Body passed its first founder-*ācārya* resolution:

- Śrīla Prabhupāda is the foundational *śikṣā-guru* for all ISKCON devotees.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions are the essential teachings for every ISKCON devotee.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are the embodiment of his teachings and should be accepted as the standard by all future generations of ISKCON.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda should be worshiped daily by every ISKCON member.
- Every spiritual master is responsible to guide his disciples to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions.⁸

More founder-*ācārya* resolutions since then have identified our foundational relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda as the sublime pivot around which all our relationships in ISKCON turn. He is the unity amid our diversity.

Your Śrīla Prabhupāda

If you were born after Prabhupāda’s time, or never knew him when he walked among us, you may be wondering, as many do, what will happen to his Society when the last “Prabhupāda disciple” has left this world. If we take “disciple” as “follower,” we can understand that as the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement continues to expand, Prabhupāda’s presence will likewise continue through his divine instructions. We may have different *gurudevas*, but since we all share the same founder-*ācārya*, generations will continue to follow Prabhupāda into and out of this world, sharing Kṛṣṇa’s mercy with suffering humanity in many ways.

Which Prabhupāda inspires you most? Prabhupāda the world *saṅkīrtana* party leader? The divine

writer? Sublime chef? Back-to-nature prophet? Cultural conqueror? Master educator? Founding father? A transcendental Renaissance man, Prabhupāda is many-sided, but to whichever side you’re attracted, there are standard ways to build your personal, foundational relationship with His Divine Grace.

By Spiritual Sound

The first and foremost way we can all connect with Prabhupāda is by becoming keen students of his spoken

and written word. Regular, attentive hearing from our founder-*ācārya* – especially in the company of like-minded devotees – grounds us in the one relationship that nourishes us all.

In August 1968 a new initiate in Montreal told Prabhupāda she felt far away from him when he wasn’t there in person. Prabhupāda replied:

Oh, that you should not think . . . There are two conceptions [of the spiritual master]: the physical conception and the vibration conception. So physical conception is temporary. The vibration

conception is eternal. Just like we are enjoying or we are relishing the vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s teachings. So by vibration He is present. As soon as we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa or chant *Bhagavad-gīta* or *Bhāgavata*, so He is present immediately by His vibration. So we should give more stress on the sound vibration, either of Kṛṣṇa or of the spiritual master. Then we’ll feel happy and no separation.”⁹

Separated from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta for decades, Prabhupāda would nonetheless say he always felt

Prabhupāda never experienced jet-lag, or ignored it if he did, instantly adapting to the time at his latest destination.

Matchless Giver

That Śrīla Prabhupāda founded over one hundred Hare Kṛṣṇa temples, schools, farms, and restaurants, all while writing and publishing dozens of translations and commentaries on foundational Vaiṣṇava scriptures, is simply superhuman. How did he do it? For one thing Prabhupāda didn’t sleep much. After going to bed at ten, he would usually rise at midnight and write through the wee hours. If he had time, he would nap for maybe a half hour after breakfast and a full hour after lunch. His days and nights were a seamless weave of selfless acts.

Another short sleeper is the cow, to whom Prabhupāda would sometimes compare himself. Guru Dāsa recalls that in Bombay he once told Prabhupāda he was concerned not enough people would come to a program the devotees had arranged. Prabhupāda replied: “No, I am like a



his spiritual master to be right by his side. How? By absolute absorption in studying and presenting Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s teachings. Likewise, in the company of sincere and serious devotees absorbed in studying and presenting Prabhupāda’s teachings, we can access and develop our core connection with His Divine Grace.

By His Mission

While some devotional groups focus on seeing Kṛṣṇa face-to-face, Prabhupāda emphasized that the best way to see Kṛṣṇa is to serve His mission under the guidance of His pure devotee, the spiritual master.

When one becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. . . . In

conclusion, if a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. . . . This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Instead of being eager to see the Lord in some bush of Vṛndāvana while at the same time engaging in sense gratification, if one instead sticks to the principle of following the words of the spiritual master, he will see the Supreme Lord without difficulty. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.51, Purport)

As Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta would say, “Don’t try to see God. You work in such a way that God will see you.”¹⁰ And when that work is done cooperatively in Prabhupāda’s mission – synergizing the efforts of many generations – Kṛṣṇa sees and blesses us manifold.

No Jumping Over

In the early 1970s, as the first ISKCON devotees started to visit India, they became attracted to reading the English works of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda. Prabhupāda was not pleased:

You cannot imagine what my spiritual master said. Or even if you read some books, you cannot understand unless you understand it from me. This is called *paramparā* system. You cannot jump over to the superior guru, neglecting the next *ācārya*, neglecting the next *ācārya*, immediate next *ācārya*.¹¹

Why, then, in his purport to the very first verse of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, does Prabhupāda invite “the serious student” to study the commentaries of great Vaiṣṇava scholars?

Within the past five hundred years, many erudite scholars and *ācāryas* like Jīva Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Vallabhācārya, and many other distinguished scholars even after the time of Lord Caitanya made elaborate commentaries on the *Bhāgavatam*. And the serious student would do well to attempt to go through them to better relish the transcendental messages.

As Prabhupāda knows, before studying others’ commentaries, his serious students will have the sense to do what naive neophytes won’t: ground themselves in the Bhaktivedanta purports, the lens through which we see all teachings. And to help us look through that lens, our initiating and instructing spiritual masters play crucial roles. Best not to jump over anyone, neither our founder-*ācārya* nor our “immediate next” *ācāryas*. We need all the help we can get.

Imbibe and Impart

The more we imbibe Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings, the more responsibility we have to impart them to

others. When Prabhupāda sees we’re sincerely following him, he blesses us with the realization to pass on his teachings in ways both faithful and fitting. Prabhupāda explains:

Personal realization does not mean that one should, out of vanity, attempt to show one’s own learning by trying to surpass the previous *ācārya*. He must have full confidence in the previous *ācārya*, and at the same time he must realize the subject matter so nicely that he can present the matter for the particular circumstances in a suitable manner. . . . *The original purpose of the text must be maintained.* [Prabhupāda’s emphasis] No obscure meaning should be screwed out of it, yet it should be presented in an interesting manner for the understanding of the audience. This is called realization. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.4.1, Purport)

To imbibe and impart Prabhupāda’s legacy is to become gurus in our own right – not to imitate or replace our founder-*ācārya*, but to follow in his footsteps: “Because people are in darkness, we require many millions of gurus to enlighten them. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mission is, He said, that ‘Every one of you become guru.’”¹²

Benefits of Deeply Understanding Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Position

In his authorized booklet *Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON*,¹³ Ravindra Svarūpa Dāsa lists the benefits of deeply understanding Prabhupāda’s unique, transcendental position, especially for all who serve his movement:

1. Generation after generation will be able to receive the special mercy offered by Śrīla Prabhupāda. The path back to Godhead he opened will be ever-increasingly traveled.
2. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s active presence will secure the unity and integrity of ISKCON,

- strengthening both the GBC and guru-disciple bonds.
3. By taking full shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda as *śikṣā-guru* in his *vāñī* manifestation, all teachers in ISKCON, on various levels of advancement, will be able to authentically convey Śrīla Prabhupāda’s real teaching, thus giving proper guidance, shelter, and protection to all.
4. ISKCON’s teachings will remain consistent over space and time.
5. Prabhupāda’s realized knowledge, endowing him with the specific potency to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, will be not only preserved but also developed.
6. His books will remain central to us, for they contain insights

- of the World.”
4. In Vedic culture, the third stage of renounced life when one travels everywhere preaching the glories of the Lord.
5. Remark by Śrīla Prabhupāda to one of his personal assistants, Hari Śauri Dāsa, as reported by Hari Śauri in his seminar “Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Living *Bhāgavatam*.”
6. *Following Śrīla Prabhupāda*, DVD 2, World Sankirtana Party Harinama, Programs.
7. *A Transcendental Diary*, Vol. 1, January 4, 1976, Hari Śauri Dāsa.
8. 1994 GBC Resolution No. 35, Founder-*Ācārya* Statement.
9. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture, 7.9.12, Montreal, 18 August 1968.
10. *Bhagavad-gītā* lecture, 8.14–15,

Inspired by “our Prabhupādas,” we can cooperate – even when we disagree – to bring the Lord’s mercy to everyone.

- and directions that await future development to be realized.
7. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s eyes will always remain the lens through which all future generations see our predecessor *ācāryas*.

All those benefits naturally accrue to devotees who realize their core identity as Prabhupāda’s followers. Inspired by “our Prabhupādas,” we can cooperate – even when we disagree – to bring the Lord’s mercy to everyone. I can’t imagine a better way to please Śrīla Prabhupāda, our founder-*ācārya*. 🙏

NOTES

1. The birthday anniversary of the spiritual master.
2. A name of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s preaching organization.
3. *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Volume 4, *In Every Town and Village*, Chapter 35: “This Remote Corner

- New York, November 16, 1966.
11. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture, 1.15.30, Los Angeles, 8 December 1973.
12. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture, 6.1.21, May 21, 1976, Honolulu.
13. ISKCON GBC Press, 2014. (<http://www.founderacharya.com/book/>)

Sureśvara Dāsa joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in 1970. From 2011 to 2016, on behalf of the GBC committee “Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Position,” Sureśvara traveled the ISKCON world presenting the seminar series “Śrīla Prabhupāda, Our Founder-Ācārya.” He plans to turn the ten BTG articles he just concluded into a small book, Śrīla Prabhupāda, Our Founding Father. He invites BTG’s readers to correspond with him about Śrīla Prabhupāda’s position at sureshvara@gmail.com.

TEMPLE OF THE VEDIC PLANETARIUM
Mayapur, West Bengal, India

The largest Vedic temple to be built in thousands of years. To learn about the project, keep track of its progress, and see how you can get involved, visit the following sites:

- facebook.com/tovp.mayapur
- youtube.com/user/tovpinfo
- tovp.org

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 14–January 12)

JANUARY

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

9 – **Putradā Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

Month of Mādhava
(January 13 – February 10)

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

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

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

23 – **Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

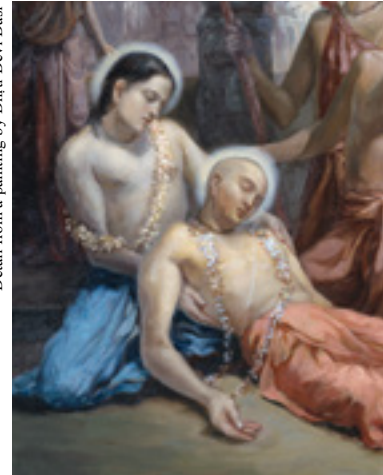
FEBRUARY

1 – 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.

3 – 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.

Detail from a painting by Dhriti Devi Dāsī



Lord Nityānanda (left) with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu

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

6 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, an eleventh-century philosopher and spiritual master.

7 – **Bhaimī Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans. Fasting till noon for Lord Varāha's appearance day tomorrow. Feast tomorrow.

8 – Appearance of Lord Varāha, Lord Kṛṣṇa's boar incarnation.

9 – 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.

Month of Govinda
(February 11 – March 12)

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

15 – Anniversary of the launch of *Back to Godhead* in 1944. 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.

22 – **Vijayā Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

23 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Īśvara Purī, Lord Caitanya's spiritual master.

25 – Śrī Śiva Rātri, a day in honor of Lord Śiva.

27 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, the great devotee in the disciplic line from Lord Caitanya who confirmed Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's discovery of Lord Caitanya's birthplace.

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.

KING PRTHU MILKS THE COW-SHAPED EARTH

Even though, as Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions here, the earth as a cow may be taken figuratively, she delivers vital lessons for the peace and prosperity of the world.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 18

8 नूनं ता वीरुधः क्षीणा मयि कालेन भूयसा
तत्र योगेन दृष्टेन भवानादातुमर्हति

nūnam tā vīrudhaḥ kṣīṇā
mayi kālena bhūyasā
tatra yogena dṛṣṭena
bhavān ādātum arhati

nūnam – therefore; tāḥ – those; vīrudhaḥ – herbs and grains; kṣīṇāḥ – deteriorated; mayi – within me; kālena – in course of time; bhūyasā – very much; tatra – therefore; yogena – by proper means; dṛṣṭena – acknowledged; bhavān – Your Majesty; ādātum – to take; arhati – ought.

Due to being stocked for a very long time, all the grain seeds within me have certainly deteriorated. Therefore you should immediately arrange to take these seeds out by the standard process, which is recommended by the ācāryas or śāstras.

PURPORT: 1 When there is a scarcity of grain, the government should follow the methods prescribed in the śāstra and approved by the ācāryas; thus there will be a sufficient production of grains, and food scarcity and famine can be checked. *Bhagavad-gītā* recommends that we perform *yajña*, sacrifices. By the performance of *yajña*, sufficient clouds gather in the sky, and when there are sufficient clouds, there is also sufficient rainfall. In this way agricultural matters are taken care of. When there is sufficient grain production, the general populace eats the grains, and animals like cows, goats, and other domestic animals eat the grasses and grains also. According to this arrangement, human beings should perform the sacrifices recommended in the śāstras, and if they do so there will no longer be food scarcity. 2 In Kali-yuga, the only sacrifice recommended is *saṅkīrtana-yajña*.

- 1) What should the government do when there is a scarcity of grain?
- 2) What is the only sacrifice recommended in Kali-yuga?

In this verse there are two significant words: *yogena*, “by the approved method,” and *dṛṣṭena*, “as exemplified by the former *ācāryas*.” One is mistaken if he thinks that by applying modern machines such as tractors, grains can be produced. If one goes to a desert and uses a tractor, there is still no possibility of producing grains. We may adopt various means, but it is essential to know that the planet earth will stop producing grains if sacrifices are not performed. The earth has already explained that because nondevotees are enjoying the production of food, she has reserved food seeds for the performance of sacrifice.

Now, of course, atheists will not believe in this spiritual method of producing grains, but whether they believe or not, the fact remains that we are not independent to produce grain by mechanical means.

As far as the approved method is concerned, it is enjoined in the *śāstras* that intelligent men in this age will take to the *saṅkīrtana* movement, and by so doing they shall worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Caitanya, whose bodily complexion is golden and who is always accompanied by His confidential devotees to preach this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world. ³ In its present condition, the world can be saved only by introducing this *saṅkīrtana*, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

As we have learned from the previous verse, one who is not in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is considered a thief. Even though he may be materially very advanced, a thief cannot be placed in a comfortable position. A thief is a thief, and he is punishable. Because people are without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they have become thieves, and consequently they are being punished by the laws of material nature. No one can check this, not even by introducing so many relief funds and humanitarian institutions. ⁴ Unless the people of the world take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there will be a scarcity of food and much suffering.

9 वत्सं कल्पय मे वीर येनाहं वत्सला तव
धोक्ष्ये क्षीरमयान् कामाननुरूपं च दोहनम्
10 दोग्धारं च महाबाहो भूतानां भूतभावन
अन्नमीप्सितमूर्जस्वद्भगवान् वाञ्छते यदि

*vatsam kalpaya me vira
yenāham vatsalā tava*

- 3) What is the only way to save the world in its present condition?
- 4) What does Śrīla Prabhupāda say will happen if people don't take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness?
- 5) How is the earth like a cow who gives milk out of affection for her calf?
- 6) What does Śrīla Prabhupāda say is the cause for the present condition of the world?

*dhokṣye kṣīramayān kāmān
anurūpam ca dohanam
dogdhāram ca mahā-bāho
bhūtānām bhūta-bhāvana
annam īpsitam ūrjasvad
bhagavān vāñchate yadi*

vatsam – a calf; *kalpaya* – arrange; *me* – for me; *vira* – O hero; *yena* – by which; *aham* – I; *vatsalā* – affectionate; *tava* – your; *dhokṣye* – shall fulfill; *kṣīra-mayān* – in the form of milk; *kāmān* – desired necessities; *anurūpam* – according to different living entities; *ca* – also; *dohanam* – milking pot; *dogdhāram* – milkman; *ca* – also; *mahā-bāho* – O mighty-armed one; *bhūtānām* – of all living entities; *bhūta-bhāvana* – O protector of the living entities; *annam* – food grains; *īpsitam* – desired; *ūrjaḥ-vat* – nourishing; *bhagavān* – your worshipable self; *vāñchate* – desires; *yadi* – if.

O great hero, protector of living entities, if you desire to relieve the living entities by supplying them sufficient grain, and if you desire to nourish them by taking milk from me, you should make arrangements to bring a calf suitable for this purpose and a pot in which the milk can be kept, as well as a milkman to do the work. Since I will be very much affectionate towards my calf, your desire to take milk from me will be fulfilled.

PURPORT: These are nice instructions for milking a cow. The cow must first have a calf so that out of affection for the calf she will voluntarily give sufficient milk. There must also be an expert milkman and a suitable pot in which to keep the milk. ⁵ Just as a cow cannot deliver sufficient milk without being affectionate to her calf, the earth cannot produce sufficient necessities without feeling affection for those who are Kṛṣṇa conscious. Even though the earth's being in the shape of a cow may be taken figuratively, the meaning herein is very explicit. Just as a calf can derive milk from a cow, all living entities – including animals, birds, bees, reptiles, and aquatics – can receive their respective foods from the planet earth, provided that human beings are not *asat*, or *adhṛta-vrata*, as we have previously discussed. When human society becomes *asat*, or ungodly, or devoid of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the entire world suffers. If human beings are well behaved, animals will also receive sufficient food and be happy. ⁶ The ungodly human being, ignorant of his duty to give protection and food to the animals, kills them to compensate for the insufficient production of grains. Thus no one is satisfied, and that is the cause for the present condition in today's world.

11 समां च कुरु मां राजन्देववृष्टं यथा पयः
अपर्तावपि भद्रं ते उपावर्तेत मे विभो

*samām ca kuru mām rājan
deva-vṛṣṭam yathā payaḥ
apartāv api bhadrām te
upāvarteta me vibho*

samām – equally level; *ca* – also; *kuru* – make; *mām* – me; *rājan* – O King; *deva-vṛṣṭam* – fallen as rain by the mercy of King Indra; *yathā* – so that; *payah* – water; *apa-ṛtau* – when the rainy season has ceased; *api* – even; *bhadrām* – auspiciousness; *te* – unto you; *upāvarteta* – it can remain; *me* – on me; *vibho* – O Lord.

My dear King, may I inform you that you have to make the entire surface of the globe level. This will help me, even when the rainy season has ceased. Rainfall comes by the mercy of King Indra. Rainfall will remain on the surface of the globe, always keeping the earth moistened, and thus it will be auspicious for all kinds of production.

PURPORT: King Indra of the heavenly planets is in charge of throwing thunderbolts and giving rainfall. Generally thunderbolts are thrown on the tops of hills in order to break them to pieces. As these pieces are spread asunder in due course of time, the surface of the globe gradually becomes fit for agriculture. Level land is especially conducive to the production of grain. ⁷ Thus the planet earth requested Mahārāja Pṛthu to level the surface of the earth, breaking up the high land and mountains.

12 इति प्रियं हितं वाक्यं भुव आदाय भूपतिः
वत्सं कृत्वा मनुं पाणावदुहत्सकलौषधीः

*iti priyam hitam vākyaṁ
bhuva ādāya bhūpatiḥ
vatsam kṛtvā manuṁ pāṇāv
aduhat sakalauṣadhīḥ*

iti – thus; *priyam* – pleasing; *hitam* – beneficial; *vākyaṁ* – words; *bhuvah* – of the earth; *ādāya* – taking into consideration; *bhū-patiḥ* – the King; *vatsam* – calf; *kṛtvā* – making; *manuṁ* – Svāyambhuva Manu; *pāṇau* – in his hands; *aduhat* – milked; *sakala* – all; *oṣadhīḥ* – herbs and grains.

After hearing the auspicious and pleasing words of the planet earth, the King accepted them. ⁸ He then transformed Svāyambhuva Manu into a calf and milked all the herbs and grains from the earth in the form of a cow, keeping them in his cupped hands.

13 तथापरे च सर्वत्र सारमाददते बुधाः
ततोऽन्ये च यथाकामं दुदुहुः पृथुभाविताम्

*tathāpare ca sarvatra
sāram ādadate budhāḥ
tato 'nye ca yathā-kāmam
duduhuḥ pṛthu-bhāvitām*

tathā – so; *apare* – others; *ca* – also; *sarvatra* – everywhere; *sāram* – the essence; *ādadate* – took; *budhāḥ* – the intelligent class of men; *tataḥ* – thereafter; *anye* – others; *ca* – also; *yathā-kāmam* – as much as they desired; *duduhuḥ* – milked; *pṛthu-bhāvitām* – the planet earth, controlled by Pṛthu Mahārāja.

Others, who were as intelligent as King Pṛthu, also took the essence out of the earthly planet. Indeed, everyone took this opportunity to follow in the footsteps of King Pṛthu and get whatever he desired from the planet earth.

PURPORT: The planet earth is also called *vasundharā*. ⁹ The word *vasu* means “wealth,” and *dharā* means “one who holds.” All creatures within the earth fulfill the necessities required for human beings, and all living entities can be taken out of the earth by the proper means. As suggested by the planet earth, and accepted and initiated by King Pṛthu, whatever is taken from the earth – either from the mines, from the surface of the globe, or from the atmosphere – should always be considered the property of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and should be used for Yajña, Lord Viṣṇu. As soon as the process of *yajña* is stopped, the earth will withhold all productions – vegetables, trees, plants, fruits, flowers, other agricultural products, and minerals.

As confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*, the process of *yajña* was instituted from the beginning of creation. ¹⁰ By the regular performance of *yajña*, the equal distribution of wealth, and the restriction of sense gratification, the entire world will be made peaceful and prosperous. As already mentioned, in this age of Kali the simple performance of *saṅkīrtana-yajña* – the holding of festivals as initiated by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness – should be introduced in every town and village. Intelligent men should encourage the performance of *saṅkīrtana-yajña* by their personal behavior. This means that they should follow the process of austerity by restricting themselves from

- 7) What did the earth request King Pṛthu to do to make the surface of the globe fit for agriculture?
- 8) How did King Pṛthu get herbs and grains from the earth?
- 9) What is the meaning of the earth's name *vasundharā*?
- 10) What three things does Prabhupāda recommend to make the world peaceful and prosperous?

illicit sex life, meat-eating, gambling, and intoxication. If the intelligent men, or the *brāhmaṇas* of society, would follow the rules and regulations, certainly the entire face of this present world, which is in such chaotic condition, would change, and people would be happy and prosperous.

**14 ऋषयो दुदुहुर्देवीमिन्द्रियेष्वथ सत्तम
वत्सं बृहस्पतिं कृत्वा पयश्छन्दोमयं शुचि**

*rṣayo duduhur devīm
indriyeṣv atha sattama
vatsam bṛhaspatim kṛtvā
payaś chandomayaṁ śuci*

ṣayaḥ – the great sages; *duduhuḥ* – milked; *devīm* – the earth; *indriyeṣu* – in the senses; *atha* – then; *sattama* – O Vidura; *vatsam* – the calf; *bṛhaspatim* – the sage Bṛhaspati; *kṛtvā* – making; *payaḥ* – milk; *chandaḥ-mayam* – in the form of the Vedic hymns; *śuci* – pure.

All the great sages transformed Bṛhaspati into a calf, and making the senses into a pot, they milked all kinds of Vedic knowledge to purify words, mind, and hearing.

PURPORT: Bṛhaspati is the priest of the heavenly planets. Vedic knowledge was received in logical order by the great sages through Bṛhaspati for the benefit of human society, not only on this planet, but throughout the universes. In other words, Vedic knowledge is considered one of the necessities for human society. If human society remains satisfied simply by taking grains from the planet earth as well as other necessities for maintaining the body, society will not be sufficiently prosperous. Humanity must have food for the mind and ear, as well as for the purpose of vibration. 11 As far as transcendental vibrations are concerned, the essence of all Vedic knowledge is the *mahā-mantra* – Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. In Kali-yuga, if this Vedic *mahā-mantra* is chanted regularly and heard regularly by the devotional process of *śravaṇam kīrtanam*, it will purify all societies, and thus humanity will be happy both materially and spiritually.

**15 कृत्वा वत्सं सुरगणा इन्द्रं सोममदूदुहन्
हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण वीर्यमोजो बलं पयः**

*kṛtvā vatsam sura-gaṇā
indram somam adūduhan*

- 11) In regard to transcendental vibration, what is the essence of all Vedic knowledge?
12) What benefits do the demigods get from drinking *soma*?

*hiraṇmayena pātreṇa
vīryam ojo balaṁ payaḥ*

kṛtvā – making; *vatsam* – calf; *sura-gaṇāḥ* – the demigods; *indram* – Indra, King of heaven; *somam* – nectar; *adūduhan* – they milked out; *hiraṇmayena* – golden; *pātreṇa* – with a pot; *vīryam* – mental power; *ojah* – strength of the senses; *balam* – strength of the body; *payaḥ* – milk.

All the demigods made Indra, the King of heaven, into a calf, and from the earth they milked the beverage soma, which is nectar. Thus they became very powerful in mental speculation and bodily and sensual strength.

PURPORT: In this verse the word *soma* means “nectar.” *Soma* is a kind of beverage made in the heavenly planets from the moon to the kingdoms of the demigods in the various higher planetary systems. 12 By drinking this *soma* beverage the demigods become more powerful mentally and increase their sensual power and bodily strength. The words *hiraṇmayena pātreṇa* indicate that this *soma* beverage is not an ordinary intoxicating liquor. The demigods would not touch any kind of liquor. Nor is *soma* a kind of drug. It is a different kind of beverage, available in the heavenly planets. *Soma* is far different from the liquors made for demoniac people, as explained in the next verse.

**16 दैतेया दानवा वत्सं प्रह्लादमसुरर्षभम्
विधायदूदुहन् क्षीरमयःपात्रे सुरासवम्**

*daiteyā dānavā vatsam
prahlādam asurarṣabham
vidhāyādūduhan kṣīram
ayaḥ-pātre surāsavam*

daiteyāḥ – the sons of Diti; *dānavāḥ* – demons; *vatsam* – the calf; *prahlādam* – Prahlāda Mahārāja; *asura* – demon; *ṣabham* – the chief; *vidhāya* – making; *adūduhan* – they milked out; *kṣīram* – milk; *ayaḥ* – iron; *pātre* – in a pot; *surā* – liquor; *āsavam* – fermented liquids like beer.

The sons of Diti and the demons transformed Prahlāda Mahārāja, who was born in an asura family, into a calf, and they extracted various kinds of liquor and beer, which they put into a pot made of iron.

PURPORT: The demons also have their own types of beverages in the form of liquors and beers, just as the demigods use *soma-rasa* for their drinking purposes. The demons born of Diti take great pleasure in drinking wine and beer. Even today people of demoniac nature are very much addicted to liquor and beer.

[Continued in the next issue.]

No Need To Kill Animals

This conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place at ISKCON's farming village in New Vrindaban, West Virginia, on June 24, 1976.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Who cares what a rascal believes or disbelieves? For instance, a child may receive some factual information and say, “I don't believe.” His mother will say, “You are a rascal. Go to your room.”

So rascals may believe or not believe that they will have a next life and they must not slaughter animals. They believe or disbelieve. What is the difference? The next life is part of nature's law. Those who do not believe are *mūḍhas*, asses. And in their next life they will go to their room – Mother Nature will confine them in hog, dog, ass bodies.

Tathā dehāntara-prāptiḥ. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa gives this simple example: Just as the soul gets new bodies in this life – first a baby body, then a child body, next a teenage body, later an adult body, and finally an aged body – so after this life, he'll get still another new body.

What is the difficulty in understanding this simple fact? We know that whatever body we have at pres-

ent, it will not remain. In the womb, the soul had a very tiny body. When he emerged, he had a considerably larger body – a new body. And as time goes on, he will get another new body, and another new body, and another new body. And if at the end of this life he remains ignorant of his real, spiritual identity, then nature will force him into another womb and yet another new material body.

So it is very difficult to deal with rascals who disbelieve in the spiritual



self – the soul. It is difficult to deal with these ignorant rascals. That's a fact. But you should also know that in their ignorance, whatever else they are doing in their lives is defeat. Defeat. They are missing the priceless opportunity of going back to the spiritual world. Instead, they will have to stay in this material world and accept more and more material bodies – more rounds of birth, old age, disease, and death. Ignorant rascals are automatically defeated, by their very own ignorance.

[To a disciple:] Your little baby here – does he believe he's going to get the body of a young man?

[To the baby:] Do you believe? [Laughs.]

Huh? What is your opinion? [Laughter.]

Now, those who are flesh-eaters are going to get obnoxious bodies in their next lives. For their wanton cruelty, nature will force them into the bodies of hogs and dogs.

So why don't you inform these unfortunate souls? Tell them, "Friend, you have no need to kill animals. When one of our cows dies, you can come here to our farm and take away the carcass. You'll have an ample supply of flesh, at no expense."

Disciple: That would be illegal. The government would not allow

it. It would be illegal.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Killing is illegal, according to the law of God. But the government does not want to follow God's law. They would rather follow their own cruel whims.

On the one side, the government prohibits the flesh-eaters from eating animals who have died a natural death. On the other side, they allow the flesh-eaters to put millions of animals to most unnatural, painful death in slaughterhouses.

These rascals are in power. But legally – according to God's law – they should permit flesh-eaters to eat only animals who have died a natural death.

In India, for example, after some animal has died, people come and take the carcass away – free. They get it without any cost to themselves. They get the skin for making shoes and so forth. They get the flesh for eating. Let them cook and eat it if they want. The farmer does not charge anything.

And we would not charge anything. "Here. You can take it. Why slaughterhouses? Take this."

Disciple: Nowadays the government objects even if you let wild animals eat the carcass.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Oh, if jackals and foxes come and eat the carcass, the government doesn't like it? They

would rather have the jackals and foxes come and eat townspeople? You see, once these wild animals have gotten their fill on some carcass, they will not attack humans. If a wild animal is not hungry, he will not attack you. Even a ferocious tiger – if his hunger is satisfied, he doesn't attack.

So some day, when the government is made up of godly men, there will be no more slaughterhouses. And you'll be able to advertise, "Here is a cow carcass – available free." Those who are butchers and tanners can take the flesh and skins free. If they had to obtain these things from some slaughterhouse, they would have to pay. But this way, they'll make more profit.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, many people may object, "We don't want to eat an aged, partially decomposed carcass. The animal has to be slaughtered fresh."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That argument is not valid. For instance, on airplanes I have seen other passengers eating lobster. It is so decomposed, it has become exactly like pus. And this is how they eat it.

Disciple: They cannot eat an animal when it is fresh. They never eat cows fresh. They age the flesh at least three weeks; otherwise, they say, it is not tasty. [Laughter.] **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. So the flesh must be partly decomposed in any case. Therefore, just as with humans, the animals should be allowed to die a natural death.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, we can point out all the benefits of this ideal spiritual civilization, but many people will say, "That's all right for you, but it's just not practical for us."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So what is not practical for you about our system of civilization? Our system: spiritual realization and compassion – kindness toward all the Lord's creatures. And your system: civilized cruelty. Your system is also not practical for us. 🌍

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HELP ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPREAD THE MESSAGE OF BACK TO GODHEAD

On the order of his guru to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the English-speaking world, Śrīla Prabhupāda started *Back to Godhead* magazine in 1944. Over seventy years later, *Back to Godhead* is still a vital tool to introduce people to Lord Kṛṣṇa's valuable teachings and to nurture the spiritual life of people already familiar with those teachings. Unsold copies of BTG accumulate over time, and we now have around 5,000 magazines, going back about five years. We feel it's a shame for those magazines to lie in our warehouse rather than in the hands of people who can benefit from everything Kṛṣṇa consciousness has to offer. To encourage you to help us distribute these leftover magazines, we're offering past issues at drastically reduced prices:

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Sprinkling Kṛṣṇa Consciousness At Work

Lord Caitanya instructed His followers to tell everyone they meet about Kṛṣṇa. Here's how one devotee is trying to take up that task.

by Meera Khurana

I WAS BORN into a Kṛṣṇa conscious family. My mother was six months pregnant with me when she and my father were initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda. So, while growing up, I was frequently informed of the extreme rarity of achieving a human birth, as stated by Prahlāda Mahārāja: *durlabhaṃ mānuṣaṃ janma (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.6.1)*. My mother often reminded me that I shouldn't let this unique and rare gift pass by wastefully.

I achieved good academic qualifications and enjoy the analytical and technical challenges of work in banking. When I was a child, my father had often said that Śrīla Prabhupāda told him to not give up working, but to add Kṛṣṇa to your life.

Even though I practiced Kṛṣṇa consciousness at home, I left it there. I wasn't telling anyone the glories of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This made me feel I was lacking in a fundamental duty. I felt it was selfish to not spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness to "whomever you meet," as instructed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu: *yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 7.128)*.

Introducing Kṛṣṇa to others at work seemed daunting to me. Prahlāda Mahārāja, a five-year-old boy,



did it at school even though the most powerful enemy imaginable, in the form of his father, was trying to stop him. Surely no one can have a stronger reason to not tell people about Kṛṣṇa consciousness than Prahlāda Mahārāja did.

I eventually decided to try to sprinkle some small elements of Kṛṣṇa consciousness at work. I thought, “Why does it need to be that different from doing it in the street?”

Admittedly, it would not be full-time, but opportunities are there in many ways. Moreover, it is easier to talk to people at work, as they already interact with you as part of the work and want to get to know you personally. Surely they are look-

offering it to God. This is a novel concept to most people, even religious people. People of other religions find this interesting and even wonder why it is not part of their religion. If you love God, why not offer Him gifts?

It is also a good way to explain why we eat only cruelty-free food. Because God is the father of everyone, a concept all faiths seem to agree with, He does not accept anything involving cruelty or the killing of His children. In this way I can introduce an argument for vegetarianism.

Prayer rooms and interfaith discussions: With the growth of diversity and the promotion of cultural aware-

ness in workplaces, faith or prayer rooms have become common. These are a natural place to leave transcendental literature, such as *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, *The Science of Self-Realization*, short introductory books, and local temple flyers for Sunday programs.

Even though many people who visit prayer rooms already follow a religion, the rooms do provide an informal way to introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness to people who may otherwise have no idea of it. I have found that people who practice the traditional monotheistic religions are interested in what Eastern religions believe, but have the common misconceptions that Hindus worship many gods, including elephants and monkeys, and have no one predominant scripture – no equivalent of the Bible or Koran. Hence, they have a somewhat negative and misleading impression to start with.

I usually give a succinct explanation to correct this misunderstanding, such as, “We believe in one God with unlimited names to reflect His unlimited potencies. The most common name is Kṛṣṇa, which means the most attractive person, because God is all-attractive. As Islam has ninety-nine names for God, we have innumerable names, as God cannot be limited in any way. “We have a predominant scripture, called *Bhagavad-gītā*, which means ‘The Song of God.’ It was spoken by God directly, not via a medium, over five thousand years ago. Vedic religion does not have a start date, as God has always existed. “What some people consider gods are actually demigods, or empowered servants of the one God.”

I have found this explanation surprises people, as it defeats their main criticisms. It is not what the common understanding of the broader term *Hinduism* is known for, but people generally seem much more able to accept it as a serious faith rather than trying to mock it. In fact, I have found that these simple, yet profound facts impress people, especially when they hear the meaning of Kṛṣṇa and *Bhagavad-gītā*, and the confidence with which we can state these: this is God and this is His scripture.

Communal book areas: Some offices provide areas where books can be swapped. I have left books, including the *Bhagavad-gītā* and Hare Kṛṣṇa cookbooks, mainly *The Higher Taste*. I’m surprised at how quickly they have been taken, sometimes within a day. Perhaps someone who would not have otherwise obtained these books has taken them home, read them, and passed them on to others. As Śrīla Prabhupāda said, his books are like time bombs waiting to transform hearts.

Hare Kṛṣṇa bookmarkers are always popular. I’ve placed ones with the *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. I place them inside the

books I leave too, and I include the address of the local temple.

Noticeboards: I place a Rathayātrā poster every year on our office noticeboard. Even if people do not go, they see the beautiful face of Lord Jagannātha on the poster, getting their first *darśana* of the Lord of the Universe. It may not have an immediate effect, but someday it will.

Chat channels: Some organizations have social chat channels that staff can join. They’re often used for clubs for sports, music, food, and other interests. Some organizations have one for each major religion. If Hinduism is missing, you can ask that it be added. On a Hinduism channel, I’ve seen people daily quoting the favorite mantra of the various demigods they worship. I write the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* on it every day. It’s a nice way for me to start my workday, and it makes people on the channel read and be reminded of the *mahā-mantra* each day. I also post links to our festivals

and what they mean, such as Gaura Pūrṇimā. Even many Hindu Indians have little awareness of this festival, one of the biggest on our Vaiṣṇava calendar. This is a way to introduce people to more aspects of Vaiṣṇavism. Gaura Pūrṇimā falls on the same day as Holi, which Hindus know about. But they are unaware of the original story of Holi from Prahlāda Mahārāja’s time and find my post on that topic enlightening.

Being exemplary with colleagues: This is in tune with *bhakti-yoga*. By showing empathy and being friendly, you’ll encourage people to want to know about the source of your inner strength and contentment. In every aspect of life, we should try to be an ambassador for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission.

Taking advantage of festivals: During festival days like Diwali, which not only Vaiṣṇavas but most Indians celebrate, I bring sweets to work. I have found that not many people know much about Diwali. They know

only that it is “The Festival of Light.” I created a “Meaning of Diwali” sheet and placed it with the sweets for people to read or take away with them. People expressed gratitude at having been given a glimpse of the richness and deep substance of Vedic culture and literature.

When colleagues are going to big music festivals, I always mention that Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees may be there and encourage them to look out for them – for the delicious food and the chanting. This gives people the opportunity to hear Kṛṣṇa’s name, maybe chant themselves, and enjoy some *prasādam*.

Exchanging gifts: If gifts are exchanged, such as during “secret Santa” events at Christmas, people always seem to appreciate receiving a Hare Kṛṣṇa cookbook. Almost everyone cooks sometimes, and the book may inspire even the occasional cook to try a recipe. When I’ve given a cookbook, I’ve seen others ask the receiver to borrow it. The introductory chapters in Hare Kṛṣṇa

People bring food treats to the office on special occasions, so I bring *prasādam*, which sows the seed of love of Godhead.

ing for Kṛṣṇa and need Kṛṣṇa just as much as every other living entity. I believe my time at work and the social interactions there can be used positively in this respect.

I’ve been trying subtle, nonintrusive ways to inject Kṛṣṇa into my day-to-day office life. Here are some of the things I do and the opportunities I take advantage of:

Sharing prasādam: People bring food treats to the office on special occasions, so I bring *prasādam*. Things like biscuits, cakes, and sweets always go well. *Prasādam* removes impurities from the heart and sows the seed of love of Godhead. It can even soften the heart of an atheist. An additional benefit of *prasādam* is that it often initiates a conversation about the food. I’ve found that this is a good way to start talking about food in the mode of goodness and the sanctification of food, or making food sinless by

ness in workplaces, faith or prayer rooms have become common. These are a natural place to leave transcendental literature, such as *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, *The Science of Self-Realization*, short introductory books, and local temple flyers for Sunday programs.

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I usually give a succinct explanation

IN MEMORIAM

His Holiness Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Swami



HIS HOLINESS Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Swami, a dynamic preacher and initiating spiritual master in ISKCON, passed away in the sacred land of Vrindavan, India, on July 20, 2016. His life reads like a story from the scriptures, much like his glorious departure from this world.

Born in a pious family in Punjab, India, His Holiness was trained by his grandfather in devotional practices from his very childhood. Armed with a lifetime of encouragement in serving his dear Lord and the philosophical training to understand the essence of human life, Mahārāja took initiation in the Brahmā *sampradāya* while simultaneously continuing with his academic studies.

Years later, as a householder in London, Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Swami's life took a dramatic turn when he

met His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. What followed was a lifetime of extraordinary service all over the world, touching the hearts of many fortunate souls who dedicated themselves to the path of *bhakti*.

Mahārāja constantly traveled and preached Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world, including India (or Bhārata, as Mahārāja would always properly refer to the land of his birth), England, Mauritius, South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Spain, Portugal, America, South America, the West Indies, and Europe. Mahārāja met and discussed Kṛṣṇa consciousness and vegetarianism with world leaders, including Dr. Nelson Mandela. He also met with leaders of the Muslim community, sharing with them the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* and developing affectionate interfaith relationships.

His Holiness was renowned for his fearless approach in preaching and his uncompromising attitude towards spiritual principles. Wherever he went and wherever he spoke, he would glorify Śrīla Prabhupāda as the savior of this material world. Mahārāja requested his disciples to memorize and live by the principles Śrīla Prabhupada taught: "Books are the basis; purity is the force; preaching is the essence; utility is the principle."

And after a lifetime of inspirational devotional practice and service, Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Swami departed from this world in the same exemplary manner: completely focused on the essence of life. Although extremely ill, Mahārāja asked that he be taken to Vrindavan. And just as he crossed into Vraja Maṇḍala Bhūmi, the most auspicious land of Śrī Śrī Rādhē-Śyāma's pastimes, Mahārāja departed from this world to continue his eternal devotional service.

— Executive Committee of ISKCON's
Governing Body Commission

cookbooks present a good, simple overview of Vaiṣṇava philosophy.

Using vegetarianism: Being in London, I suggest Govinda's Restaurant to people looking for vegetarian places to eat, or when vegetarian-

ism comes up in conversations. This is usually a good chance to explain why we do not eat meat, and to introduce the ideas of karma and reincarnation. Topics around food and diet are an excellent opportunity to bring up vegetarianism and the role of

cow as mother – an idea some may mock at first. But when I explain the reason, I find everyone appreciates the simple common-sense logic.

Using musical interests: Other examples may be more specific. An

older colleague told me he has hearing problems because he used to go to a lot of concerts and music festivals when he was young in the 1970s. I brought up the seventies pop band the Rubettes. He remembered them well. I told him I frequently see a key member of the group at Hare Kṛṣṇa events, as he has become a devotee. This encouraged him to immediately search them on the Internet, ask questions about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and research websites with information. People's musical interests can be a

good opportunity to introduce them to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Cultural opportunities: Corporate committees on diversity and cultural awareness sometimes host events involving various faiths. This can give opportunity to have a representative from Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Intranet websites on diversity and cultures are also common. They provide information or links for various cultural beliefs. A section for Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be added, along with links to Kṛṣṇa websites.

* * *

I have found these to be some simple ways to add a little bit of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to day-to-day office life. They are not intrusive, and people generally appreciate them. And there are always other ways, tailored to location, people, and local events. 🌍

Meera Khurana lives and works in London. Her parents, Manu Dāsa and Kṛṣṇa Kamala Devī Dāsī, were initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in the early 1970s.

BTG ANNIVERSARIES

(continued from page 64)

Prabhupāda disciples, followers, and admirers who don't see its relevance for their spiritual lives?

We hope that's not the case, and we'd like to hear from you, our cherished readers, about your feelings

toward BTG. What value does it provide for you? Did it change your life in some way? Did it help bring you to Kṛṣṇa consciousness? We'd like to hear your story.

We're working to increase the digital presence of BTG, with a new website and a phone app coming soon.

But our research tells us that despite the appeal of all things digital, people still like printed magazines. We hope that enough members of Prabhupāda's ever-expanding movement share that feeling and will keep his magazine rolling off the presses for many years to come. — Nāgarāja Dāsa

A Pause for Prayer

Painting by Yaśodānī Devī Dāsī



Lord Śrī Viṣṇu

The demigods said: O Lord, Your lotus feet are like an umbrella for the surrendered souls, protecting them from all the miseries of material existence. All the sages under that shelter throw off all material miseries. We therefore offer our respectful obeisances unto Your lotus feet.

O Father, O Lord, O Personality of Godhead, the living entities in the material world can never have any happiness because they are overwhelmed by the three kinds of miseries [i.e., those inflicted by nature, their own bodies and minds, and other living beings]. Therefore they take shelter of the shade of Your lotus feet, which are full of knowledge, and we also thus take shelter of them.

The lotus feet of the Lord are by themselves the shelter of all places of pilgrimage. The great clear-minded sages, carried by the wings of the *Vedas*, always search after the nest of Your lotuslike face. Some of them surrender to Your lotus feet at every step by taking shelter of the best of rivers [the Ganges], which can deliver one from all sinful reactions.

Simply by hearing about Your lotus feet with eagerness and devotion and by meditating upon them within the heart, one at once becomes enlightened with knowledge, and on the strength of detachment one becomes pacified. We must therefore take shelter of the sanctuary of Your lotus feet.

— Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.5.39–42

A Devotional Take on Mistakes

Kṛṣṇa can produce auspiciousness out of a messy situation.

by Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa

SOMETIMES WHEN we commit mistakes, we may become embarrassed, irritated, or enraged with ourselves. If we become excessively disturbed, that often becomes a second mistake. By fretting or seething, we waste the time and energy we could have used for rectification. Certainly we need to learn from our mistakes, but learning requires calmness, which is lost when we let ourselves overreact.

To calm ourselves, we can contemplate how Kṛṣṇa is always in control and how He is always our benefactor. So He can bring good out of even our mistakes, provided we let Him. That is, provided we keep our calm so that He can give us intelligence to make the best of the situation. Just as an expert musician can produce quality music even with a

poor instrument, so too can Kṛṣṇa produce auspiciousness out of a messy situation.

Kṛṣṇa Restores Arjuna's Vision – And Grants the World Vision

On the Kurukshetra battlefield, with the war about to start, Arjuna suddenly got an impulsive desire to see his opponents. So he asked Kṛṣṇa, acting as his charioteer, to take the chariot between the two armies (*Bhagavad-gītā* 1.21). When Arjuna looked at the opposing forces, he saw his venerable elders, especially his grandsire and his teacher (1.25). Overwhelmed, he lost his will to fight and broke down.

Arjuna's decision to see his opponents was imprudent, an error of judgment. First, he already knew

Arjuna is devastated by grief as a consequence of having asked Lord Kṛṣṇa to place the chariot between the two armies.



who were arranged on the opposite side, because both armies had formed their alliances openly, not covertly. Second, even if the Kauravas were planning to pull a hidden ace, competent spies would have warned the Pāṇḍavas. Third, Arjuna was well aware of his opponents' strengths and weaknesses. That had been discussed just the previous night in the Pāṇḍavas' strategy meeting. So there really was nothing for Arjuna to see. Yet he saw, and had to reap the consequences when his vision sabotaged his determination. His perception of the opposing forces changed from dispassionate to sentimental: from "the well-wishers of the evil-minded son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra" (1.23) to "my own kinsmen" (1.31).

tional tensions, Arjuna would have been wiser to resist the urge to see his opponents. Unfortunately, he not only saw his opponents; he also let his eyes and thoughts dwell on his venerable elders, specifically his grandsire and his mentor. And that proved to be emotionally devastating.

Significantly, though Arjuna did commit this mistake, he didn't compound it. He didn't let himself get further carried away by his feelings, which were impelling him to give up the fight entirely, even if such pacifism cost him his life (1.45). Instead, he pulled himself together to turn to Kṛṣṇa for guidance (2.7). He wouldn't have found it easy to shift from an emotionally wrought state to an intellectually alert state, as was

Draupadī, had taken her meal. After she finished, the plate would not supply any more food that day.

Prince Duryodhana knew the plate's limitation and saw an opportunity to exploit it when the irascible sage Durvāsā visited the Kauravas' palace. The conniving prince personally and attentively served the sage, thereby pleasing him. When offered a benediction, the wily Kaurava beseeched the sage to provide a similar chance for service to his cousins, adding the request that the sage go to them late in the day. Accordingly, Durvāsā, along with a large contingent of disciples, arrived at the Pāṇḍavas' forest hermitage in the afternoon. As Draupadī had already taken her meal, the Pāṇḍavas had no way to feed so many guests. They felt alarmed because, first, they would be failing in their duty as householders if they didn't offer proper hospitality to a guest, especially a sage; second, Durvāsā was no ordinary sage, but a powerful mystic known to give deadly curses if displeased.

Draupadī's devotional reflexes sprang into action, and she prayed to Kṛṣṇa fervently for help. He appeared promptly and told her He was famished. Kṛṣṇa's request mortified the already distraught princess; she felt she was failing doubly, unable to serve either the venerable sage or her beloved Lord. For Draupadī, praying to Kṛṣṇa seemed, temporarily, to have made things worse.

Kṛṣṇa calmed the distressed princess and told her to check if their mystical plate had any food left. To her surprise, she found a morsel. When she brought it to Kṛṣṇa, He immediately took it, and after eating it said that He felt completely satisfied. By His supreme mystic power, Kṛṣṇa arranged that this morsel also fully satisfied all the guests, who had gone to bathe before their meal. Durvāsā and his disciples found themselves belching and felt no need for any food. Thus, the Pāṇḍavas were saved from danger.

While the thrust of this story is

that Kṛṣṇa protects His devotees and that satisfying Him satisfies everyone else, it conveys another message relevant to our discussion: Kṛṣṇa's ability to bring good out of a mistake. The fact that the mystical plate had a food morsel left on it was surprising. Draupadī was a careful housewife who would not have neglected to fully clean the utensils.

Moreover, that plate was no ordinary utensil – it was a celestial gift and was vital for the Pāṇḍavas to fulfill their householder duty of hospitality. So a morsel of food lying on it was odd. And yet Kṛṣṇa expertly used that anomaly to both advance His pastime and demonstrate immortal lessons for the world's edification.

Realizing the Unfailing Nature of Kṛṣṇa's Shelter Is Never a Mistake

At a transcendental level, the actions of exalted devotees such as Arjuna and Draupadī can be said to be orchestrated by Kṛṣṇa Himself for His pleasure. Still, we can simultaneously study these actions at a practical level to learn how we should or should not act. From that perspective, we can see in these pastimes Kṛṣṇa's expertise in bringing out good from apparent mistakes as long as the devotees turned to Him for shelter.

So, when we commit mistakes, we can see them as an opportunity, indeed an impetus, to take shelter of Kṛṣṇa. Of course, it's better to be careful and avoid committing mistakes – and it's better still to take shelter of Kṛṣṇa proactively without being impelled by fear of consequences.

Nonetheless, if we do commit mistakes, we can take shelter of Kṛṣṇa instead of ranting or moping, activities that characterize the mode of ignorance (*Gītā* 18.28). Even if our mistakes have consequences that can't be mitigated by taking shelter of Kṛṣṇa, still we will at least realize that Kṛṣṇa's inner shelter – the security we feel on remembering Him – is always available to us, no matter

what goes wrong or even what we do wrong. And that realization is a priceless gain, for it deepens our conviction that Kṛṣṇa's love for us is indeed unfailing, and thus He is true to His name Acyuta ("unfailing"). The *Purāṇas* convey this point through the apt metaphor of the earth.

*tvayi vipratipathasya
tvam eva śaraṇam prabho
bhūmau skhalita pādānām
bhūmir evāvalambanam*

"O Lord, as the earth is the only shelter for those who slip and fall, You are the only shelter for misguided people." (*Skanda Purāṇa, Kumārika-khaṇḍa* of the *Maheśvara-khaṇḍa*, 7.101)

Further, with the calmness coming from finding shelter in Kṛṣṇa, we can intelligently find ways to minimize damage and correct our course. Indeed, one definition of intelligence

is to know what to do when we don't know what to do. Applying that principle, we take shelter of Kṛṣṇa and seek His guidance. So even if we have unintelligently erred, we can turn to Kṛṣṇa and thus start reclaiming our intelligence. Whenever we get worked up over a mistake, we can remind ourselves that Kṛṣṇa's assurance (18.58) that taking shelter of Him will enable us to cross over all obstacles applies also to the obstacle of our human susceptibility to mistakes. 🌟

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



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Knowing the huge stakes and emotional tensions, Arjuna would have been wiser to resist the urge to see his opponents.

Of course, both perceptions were true, but every activity requires us to cultivate the appropriate vision for doing it properly. Letting ourselves see with an alternate vision can be a mistake, especially when it triggers emotions that compromise our performance. For example, if a judge had to adjudicate a case in which his son was the defendant, he would need to adopt the appropriate vision, or in today's parlance, wear the right cap. He would have to see the person standing in the box as a defendant, not as his son.

Such vision adjustment would undoubtedly be difficult. Most judges would probably recuse themselves, or the government would tell them to do so. But recusing was not an option for Arjuna; he was the foremost fighter in his army, and he couldn't let down his comrades, who were relying on him to counter the Kauravas' formidable forces. So, knowing the huge stakes and emo-

required for hearing the *Gītā*. That he managed such a shift shows that he had already started determinedly on a corrective course.

And Kṛṣṇa with His trademark expertise brought an immense good out of Arjuna's mistake. He spoke the timeless wisdom of the *Gītā* – wisdom that not only restored Arjuna's vision and determination (18.73), but also provided all of humanity for all time to come with a vision of the path to enlightenment.

Saved Through a Mistake

The *Mahābhārata* contains another story that conveys Kṛṣṇa's expertise in bringing good out of a devotee's mistake. When the Pāṇḍavas were living in forest exile, they would feed their guests – sages and mendicants – using a mystical plate. This *akṣaya-pātra*, or "inexhaustible plate," would provide food till everyone was fed and finally the hostess,

How ASSOCIATION Can Ensure Our Spiritual Life

Keeping company with devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa guarantees a safe and secure journey back to Him.

by Puruṣottama Nitāi Dāsa

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA many times repeats the importance of association, and he even declares that success in spiritual life depends mostly on the company we keep. Association creates a strong and lasting impression in our life. Association being contagious, we unknowingly inherit the qualities of the people we spend time with. And this is why all spiritual seekers are advised to keep company with devotees who are very sincere in their devotional pursuit.

Association assures us that we aren't alone in the spiritual journey; our fellow travelers' warmth and comfort make us always feel protected. The material club of the Lord continuously reminds us that in this world it is hard to be materially happy, yet simultaneously, ephemeral allurements entice us to look for sensual pleasures. But if we choose to be led and guided by senior practitioners and associate with like-minded seekers who care for us and make us feel wanted, then the goal

of achieving love for Kṛṣṇa, which may look daunting in the beginning, can ultimately be realized.

For a child, achieving the affection of a selfless father is simple; the child just needs to reciprocate with the father's love. Similarly, being our original loving and caring father, Kṛṣṇa is always ready and willing to reciprocate with us; we just need to take a sincere step towards Him.

To develop deep attachment for Kṛṣṇa, we need to get attached to

BTG associate editor Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa conducts a seminar on Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka in Alachua, Florida.

Yamarāja Dāsa





Devotees associate in kīrtana.

Yamargita Dāsa

those who are very much attached to Him. An iron rod put into fire acquires the qualities of fire after a while; similarly if we remain in the association of Kṛṣṇa’s lovers, our heart will eventually get flooded with love for Kṛṣṇa.

Protecting Our Spiritual Life

While looking for the company of sincere souls, we need to give up the company of those whose association can drag us away from Kṛṣṇa. In a nondevotional environment our old bad habits can crop up anytime, or we may not find enough enthusiasm to sustain our devotional desire.

In *The Nectar of Instruction*, Rūpa Gosvāmī warns that “associating with worldly-minded persons who are not interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness” will spoil our spiritual life. Lord Caitanya says, *asat-saṅga-tyāga,—ei vaiṣṇava-ācāra*: Characteristically, a Vaiṣṇava is one who gives up the association of worldly people, or nondevotees.

Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura has advised that one should always live in the association of those who are sincerely practicing devotional life and following the footsteps of previous *ācāryas* – *tāndera caraṇa sevi bhakta-sane vāsa*.

Two Kinds of Association

Scripture lauds the craving for the association of great souls and says that one can look for two types of association: *vapu* and *vāñī*. *Vapu* means associating physically, and *vāñī* means associating through words. Although both are important, *vāñī* – associating with the teachings of revered saintly persons – is eulogized.

In fact, learned spiritual authorities declare that if we associate with the wise words of worthy sages and live by them, we can progress remarkably in our spiritual life. But

if we merely want to stay close to holy persons without imbibing their devotional virtues and actualizing their sage advice in our own life, then such closeness won’t help us much.

If we turn the pages of history, we will find many spiritual stalwarts who had little opportunity to associate physically with their gurus. Our Śrīla Prabhupāda met his guru, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, perhaps a dozen times, and the sage Nārada Muni associated with great Vedāntists for only a few months. But the life-transforming instructions they received were ingrained in their heart and guided them throughout their lives; they never felt bereft of the love of their

should pray for that. The Lord will surely answer our prayer and put us in their company.

Devotees’ association always positively influences us. The grit of the sincere seekers motivates us to become more resolute in our purpose. The lives and teachings of senior devotees inspire us, and when we come across those who have braved monumental difficulties in their pursuit of self-realization, we too become enthusiastic to continue with our devotional lives, tolerating all challenges and fixing ourselves firmly on the final goal of attaining Kṛṣṇa.

While associating with devotees, we must take care that our mind wholeheartedly cooperates. If not,

If we associate with the wise words of worthy sages and live by them, we can progress remarkably in our spiritual life.

spiritual guides. Underlining the importance of *vāñī*, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he would always be present with us in his books.

We can always associate with the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, with Śrīla Prabhupāda, and with all saintly people if we constantly contemplate their teachings and dovetail all our activities accordingly. Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Gītā* not just to Arjuna, but through Arjuna to all of us. After hearing the *Gītā*, Arjuna said to Kṛṣṇa, “I am prepared to act according to Your instructions.” (18.73) We can also say the same to Kṛṣṇa, and like Arjuna become Kṛṣṇa’s close friend.

To ensure our spiritual life, we should always surround ourselves with Kṛṣṇa’s genuine lovers and orchestrate our life according to their teachings. If we aren’t fortunate enough to have the opportunity to be surrounded by devotees, we

we may be in the temple, standing in front of Kṛṣṇa with several devotees amidst a mellifluous *kīrtana* of the holy names, but still be contemplating nondevotional subjects. Such association will not help us much. We should always entice or cajole or force our mind to accompany us whenever we are in devotees’ company. And when our mind starts enjoying the spiritual ambience, we can reap the maximum benefit of association.

The company of God’s messengers will help us exorcise all our insatiable worldly desires, purify our life, and take us closer to the object of our love – Lord Kṛṣṇa. ❁

Puruṣottama Nitāi Dāsa is a member of the congregation at ISKCON Kolkata. He works at Tech Mahindra as an associate solution designer. He blogs at <http://krishnamagic.blogspot.in/>.

BTG Anniversaries

ON OCTOBER 23, 1966, just a few months after Śrīla Prabhupāda incorporated the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in New York City, his disciples there began printing the first copies of *Back to Godhead* magazine in America. They'd bought a used mimeograph machine, and the "press" slowly but steadily cranked out copies in a temple alcove. Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes observed the operation, no doubt remembering his efforts to publish and distribute the magazine in India, beginning in 1944.

So, besides being the fiftieth anniversary of ISKCON, last year was also the fiftieth anniversary of BTG in the West. In just two years from now, the magazine will celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of its original launch in India. Except for one year of reorganization (1990), BTG has come out steadily since those first issues in 1966. While the look of the magazine has changed over the years, it has always stayed faithful to its founding purpose – to present the authorized philosophy and practices of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Broadly speaking, "the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement" is the movement begun by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in Bengal in the early sixteenth century. Śrīla Prabhupāda spread that movement around the world through ISKCON, and in 1969 his magazine started carrying the subtitle "The Magazine of the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement."

When Prabhupāda launched BTG in America, he wanted it widely distributed. In the early days of ISKCON, he often referred to BTG as



The first BTG printed in America.

the backbone of the movement. It was the main piece of literature the devotees distributed, and with Prabhupāda's encouragement, the quantities sold kept increasing along with the growth of the movement. In the 1970s, hundreds of thousands of copies of each monthly issue were being printed and sold to temples for street distribution by an

army of book distributors.

In the late 1970s, that started to change. New books by Śrīla Prabhupāda were arriving at a quick pace, and the book distributors now had an array of books in their bags. They also found it easier, when the person they met hesitated to accept a hardbound book, to interest him or her in a paperback. *Back to Godhead* print runs gradually diminished and never recovered.

Because of the low demand for BTG as a street-distribution magazine, it has evolved to become more relevant to readers familiar with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Because "the person on the street" is a relatively rare reader, BTG writers and editors don't have to constantly explain the basics.

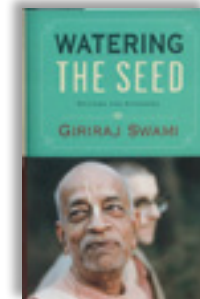
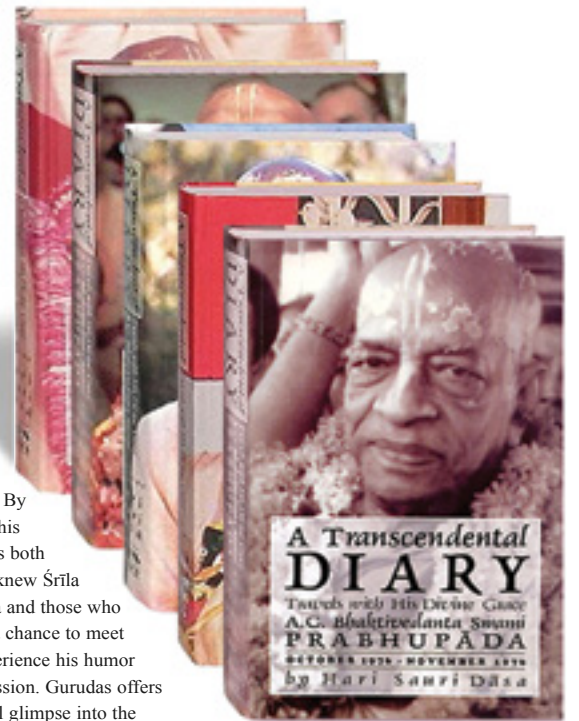
Those of us honored with the service of producing Prabhupāda's magazine for Prabhupāda's movement naturally wonder how we're doing. When *Back to Godhead* was in its heyday, it pervaded the ISKCON world. Today, it seems that many in our growing movement either hardly know of it, or don't give it much thought, taking it for granted. We'd like to change that. BTG is an important part of Śrīla Prabhupāda's legacy. Will it fade away because of too much competition, too many reading options, too many

(please turn to page 55)

50 Years: Śrīla Prabhupāda's Legacy

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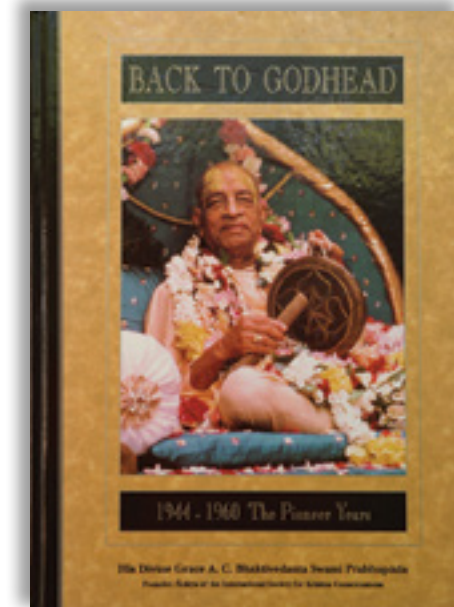


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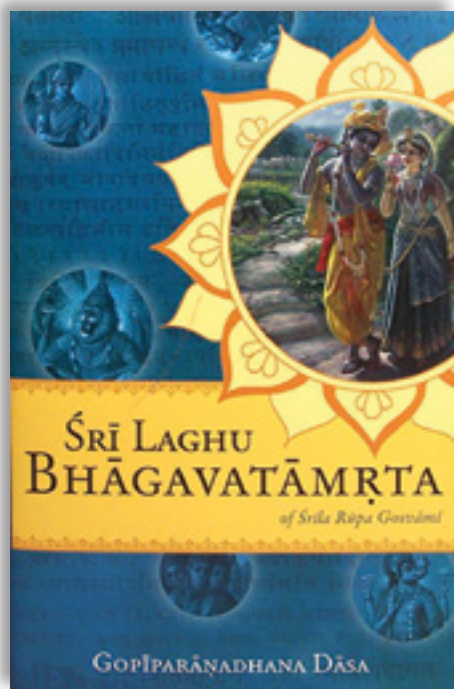
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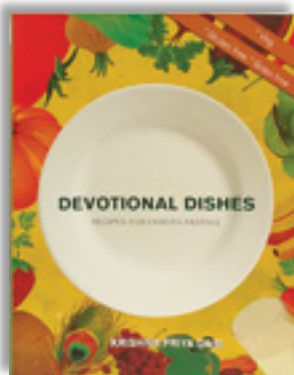
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VEDIC THOUGHTS

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

His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.31.8, Purport

After souls evolve upward through their various paths of development, they eventually will attain devotion to Kṛṣṇa in the end. Even though they aspire for the incomplete goals of various religious paths, devotion to Kṛṣṇa is always available to them, because the perception of the truth of Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate knowledge inherent within every living entity.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-mālā, Chapter 2

Pure devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the highest enlightenment, and when such enlightenment is there, it is just like a blazing forest fire, killing all the inauspicious snakes of desire.

Padma Purāṇa
Quoted in *The Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 1

The service of Truth is the function of the soul.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
Search for Truth (essay)

What learned person would approach anyone but You [Kṛṣṇa] for shelter, when You are the affectionate, grateful, and truthful well-wisher of Your devotees? To those who worship You in sincere friendship You reward everything they desire, even Your own self, yet You never increase or diminish.

Śrī Akrūra
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.48.26

For one who is meditating on sense gratification, material life, although lacking factual existence, does not go away, just as the unpleasant experiences of a dream do not.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.22.56

O Lord, I do not pray for heavenly happiness. I do not even aspire for liberation. Simply let the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes flood my ears, day after day.

Śrī Kaviratna
Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Padyāvalī*, Verse 40

[On hearing from the Vedic scriptures,] some may take the union of soul and Supersoul literally, but their understand is wrong. After all, one distinct thing never changes into another separate thing.

Viṣṇu Purāṇa 2.14.27

A devotee advanced on the spiritual platform sees everything movable and inert as the Supreme Lord. For him, everything he sees here and there is but a manifestation of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā* 8.273

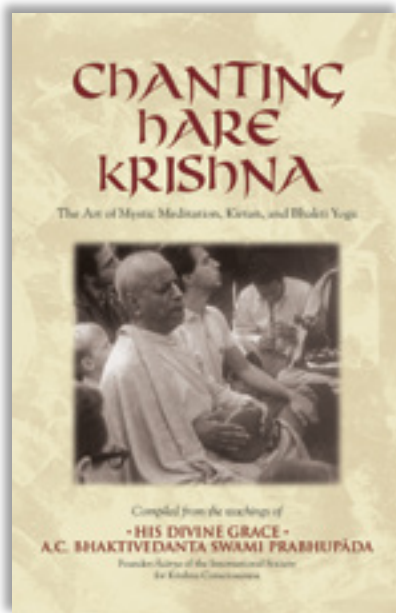
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