

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



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • May/June 2017 • \$4.50

Celebrating Śrī Narasimha's Amazing Appearance

*This extraordinary
avatar of the
Lord is ever
ready to protect
anyone who seeks
His shelter.*

Kṛṣṇa Comics

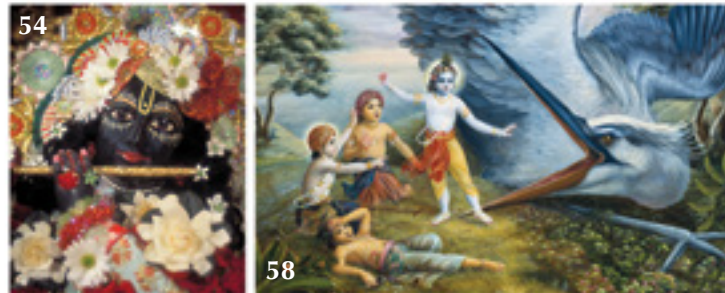
*Kṛṣṇa's avatars
emerge in
the graphic-novel
format!*

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BACK to GODHEAD

Founded 1944 • Vol. 51, No. 3 • May/June, 2017



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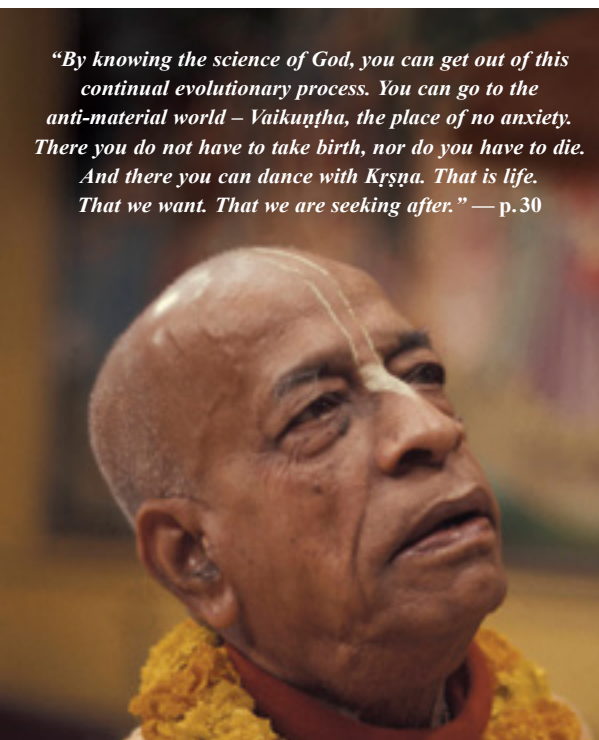
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COVER A "variant cover" published in the back pages of *Narasimha: Demon Slayer*, a graphic novel by Sunanda Productions. Please see the article beginning on page 42. (Painting by George Marnero.)

"By knowing the science of God, you can get out of this continual evolutionary process. You can go to the anti-material world – Vaikuntha, the place of no anxiety. There you do not have to take birth, nor do you have to die. And there you can dance with Kṛṣṇa. That is life. That we want. That we are seeking after." — p.30



WELCOME



As we learn from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and elsewhere, Lord Kṛṣṇa is the origin of everything, including all incarnations of God, some of them terrifying to the demonically dis-

posed. In this issue we celebrate the appearance of Lord Narasimha, the half-man, half-lion incarnation. Premānanda Gaura Dāsa, writing his first *Back to Godhead* article, relates the story of Lord's Narasimha's dramatic advent as documented in India's ancient *Purāṇas*. This awesome, intriguing avatar is also the hero of the first graphic novel by Sunanda Productions, whose writer Cārucandra Dāsa explains what they hope to achieve by introducing Kṛṣṇa-related themes to the comic-book genre. And we get a look inside their first publication.

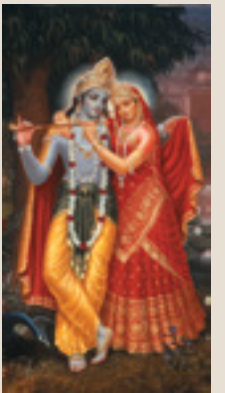
Lord Narasimha descended to protect His devotee Prahlāda from Hiranyakaśipu, his cruel, atheistic father. In *Misotheism and the Devotion of God's Adversaries*, Satyarāja Dāsa describes the modern New Atheists, who share Hiranyakaśipu's attitude but are unlikely to share his blessed destination.

Yudhiṣṭhira Dāsa, writing from Norway, contemplates another appearance of the Lord that instills fear in the demoniac: Kṛṣṇa's display of His universal form on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra. On seeing this form, "the demons are afraid," Arjuna says, "and they flee here and there."

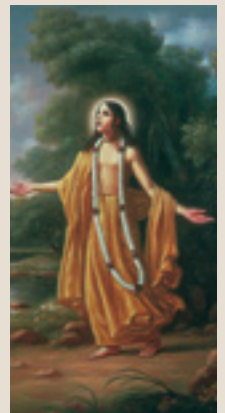
Hare Kṛṣṇa. – Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor

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

Cure for Loneliness

Does chanting the *mahā-mantra* stop loneliness?

Nigel
Via the Internet

Our reply: Yes it does, because it puts one in contact with the reservoir of all pleasure, the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. Because He is absolute, His name is the same as Him. So by chanting His name, we're never alone.

We have been on our own trying to enjoy without Him, and it can get lonely in the material world. But Kṛṣṇa is anxious for us to return to Him, and we can do that by taking up the process of *bhakti-yoga*, or loving service to Him. In the eternal spiritual world, everyone enjoys serving Kṛṣṇa together, each in his or her own unique relationship with Him.

In the meantime, one of the most important elements in practicing *bhakti-yoga* is to do so in the association of other devotees. That in itself is a cure for loneliness.

Desiring Darśana

Will chanting the name of Kṛṣṇa award me *darśana* of Lord Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa). If no, then what should I do?

Goutham M.
Via the Internet

Our reply: The great teachers and self-realized souls declare that chanting the holy names of Kṛṣṇa and engaging in His service will give you His direct audience (*darśana*). You will attract the Lord by doing these things, and He promises that He will accept you back again – even after this one lifetime. Great intelligence, money, austerity, and sacrifice will not be as pleasing to Him as chanting His names and glories and telling others about Him. So take up this simple process that He personally recommends, and try to chant with-

out offenses. Pure chanting cleanses the heart so that we can find Him there.

Gāyatrī Times

Can we chant the Gāyatrī mantra at 8:00 p.m.?

Raghunātha Caitanya Dāsa
Via the Internet

Our reply: Ideally, the Gāyatrī mantra should be chanted at sunrise, noon, and sunset, which are the three *sandhyas*, or “junctions” of the day. In *The Gāyatrī Book*, which is based on authoritative scriptures, ISKCON's Śacīnandana Swami suggests that we try to chant Gāyatrī in the forty-eight-minute period surrounding these times – in other words, not more than twenty-four minutes before or after. (Twenty-four minutes is a standard unit of time known as a *daṇḍa*.)

One of Prabhupāda's disciples recalls that he once asked Prabhupāda when to chant Gāyatrī. Prabhupāda replied, “Morning, noon, and night.” The devotee wanted something more specific, so he asked again, and Prabhupāda again replied, “Morning, noon, and night.”

Prabhupāda didn't speak or write very much about this, so it seems he didn't stress the importance of chanting at an exact time. Still, Śacīnandana Swami's view that we should chant close to the *sandhyas* seems reasonable. Therefore, for example, chanting Gāyatrī at 4:00 a.m. when the sun doesn't rise until 7:00 a.m. may not be a good practice.

At least in the middle latitudes where most devotees live, we should chant Gāyatrī according to the sun and not the clock. If the sun sets at 8:00 p.m., for example, then you chant Gāyatrī then, but if the sun sets at 5:00 p.m., as it does in some

places in the winter, then that's the time to chant Gāyatrī. One can easily find out the times for sunrise, sunset, and noon on the Internet.

Struggling with Belief

I want to believe in Lord Kṛṣṇa, but I can't believe. Why should I believe in Him? Sometimes I start believing in Kṛṣṇa only when I fear something, and that is temporary. I have many questions but no one to get answers from.

Jala Yadav
Via the Internet

Our reply: It sounds like you have read the *Gītā* and know about Kṛṣṇa. Each one of us is a part of Him, and He resides in our hearts lifetime after

lifetime. He can reveal Himself to you when you are ready. To help you get ready, He has given nice instructions in the *Gītā*, where He reveals Himself to us.

Kṛṣṇa hopes that we will take up the process of offering everything to Him, since everything is His anyway (He created everything). The mentality of giving to Kṛṣṇa will give us pleasure, which tells us that He is receiving our act of remembering Him and reaching out to Him. Love, or *bhakti*, is an act of reciprocation. When we try to please Kṛṣṇa, we feel His loving response. The simple act of chanting the names of the Lord can uplift our consciousness so we can experience Him. That is the best proof of His existence.

There is pleasure also in hearing

about Kṛṣṇa from such scriptures as the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which relate many of His activities and give much information about Him. Tasting food offered to Him with love is another joyful way to discover Him. *Prasādam* really is a different kind of food, from another world. We are from that world, and owe it to our real self to get back there. We are wasting time trying to find the highest pleasure in a temporary place like this material world. We can step into the spiritual world by contacting Kṛṣṇa all the time.

Developing *bhakti* takes practice and the guidance of advanced devotees, but the process is being offered to everyone, free of charge. ISKCON's temples and programs provide strength and enthusiasm to help everyone get closer to Kṛṣṇa. Please try to take part. We have online classes, webcams around the world, and many websites, such as Krishna.com and ISKCONdesiretree.com, which are excellent source of classes and information.

ISKCON has a lifetime of books to read, especially those of Śrīla Prabhupāda, which have convinced many, many people of the reality of Kṛṣṇa. Many projects are going on all over the world to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Spiritual life is not dry. It is very exciting, and the more you take part, the more your realization will come. Begin regularly chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and reading ISKCON books. That will help purify your mind and wash away the doubts. ISKCON members are always happy to provide answers based on the authoritative Vedic scriptures. So feel free to ask them your questions. 🙏

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.

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FOUNDER'S LECTURE

New Delhi, September 22, 1974

The Spiritual Power of Hearing

Despite our lack of spiritual qualifications, we can transcend material existence by hearing Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings.

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

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

*anye tv evam ajānantaḥ
śrutvānyebhya upāsate
te 'pi cātitarantya eva
mṛtyum śruti-parāyaṇāḥ*

“Again there are those who, although not conversant in spiritual knowledge, begin to worship the Supreme Person upon hearing about Him from others. Because of their tendency to hear from authorities, they also transcend the path of birth and death.” – *Bhagavad-gītā* 13.26

GENERALLY PEOPLE do not know the value of spiritual knowledge. They have been called *mūḍha* – “foolish” – and *duṣkṛtina*. *Duṣkṛtina* means always engaged in sinful activities. If you do not have Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then your eating or sleeping or walking, whatever you are doing, is sinful. All of it is sinful.

You do not know how you are becoming responsible for killing so many ants while you are walking. We have seen that so many ants are loitering on the street, and you are killing them by walking. That means you are responsible. You cannot kill even a single ant without repercussion.

Therefore, unless you come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whatever you are doing in your daily life is sinful. And you are becoming implicated. This world is so made that at every step you are creating some

dangerous situation. For example, Lord Kṛṣṇa says, *bhūñjate te tv agham pāpā ye pacanty ātmakāraṇāt* (*Gītā* 3.13). This means that generally people cook for themselves nice palatable foodstuffs to eat and enjoy. But they do not know that they are eating sinful reactions. What is the difference between this house and the house next door? Here we cook for Kṛṣṇa, not for ourselves. Therefore we are being saved. Otherwise, if you don't cook for Kṛṣṇa, if you cook for yourself, then you are eating sinful reactions.

These things are to be learned. People generally do not know that they are in a dangerous position in this material life. Now you may think, "I am American," "I am Indian," "I am this," "I am that," "I

am dead. Similarly, when this body, this old body, will not be workable, when the machine will not act, then I – or you, every one of us – will have to change. Suppose your car is going on then somehow or other it stops. Then you take another car and continue your journey. The car's stopping to work does not mean that the man who is in the car also stops. No. He continues.

Therefore it is said in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.20), *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*. Your work is not stopped. You are transferred to another body. The next body is not ready, but it will have to be manufactured. How? You have to enter into a particular type of mother, and the mother's material ingredients will help you to manufacture a particular

it is a very dangerous position. It is very dangerous. You do not know what will happen, but you have to know. And you *can* know that – if you follow the scriptural injunctions in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. You do not know what kind of body you are going to get next life, but you can know from *Bhagavad-gītā*. You cannot speculate, but you can know from *Bhagavad-gītā*.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.18) says,

*ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattva-sthā
madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ
jaghanya-guṇa-vṛtti-sthā
adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ*

"Those situated in the mode of goodness gradually go upward to the higher planets; those in the mode of passion live on the earthly planets; and those in the abominable mode of ignorance go down to the hellish worlds." *Ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattva-sthāḥ*: *brāhmaṇas*, who are in the mode of goodness, will be promoted to the higher planetary system. *Madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ*: those who are passionate will remain within this middle portion of the material world. And *adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ*: those in the mode of ignorance will go down. That means they'll have to accept the body of an animal, or lower than that, or in the lower planetary system.

Everything about the different destinations of the soul after death is explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. In chapter nine (9.25) Kṛṣṇa says, *yānti deva-vratā devān*: those who are attached to worshiping the demigods will go to the particular planet of Indra, Candra, Lord Śiva, Brahmā, and so on. *Pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ*: those who offer oblations to the forefathers will go Pitṛloka, the planet of the forefathers. *Bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā*: those who are ordinary materialistic persons will remain in this world. And *yānti mad-yājino 'pi mām*: "Those who are Kṛṣṇa conscious will come to Me," Kṛṣṇa says. So why not become Kṛṣṇa conscious and go directly back home,

back to Godhead? This is our mission. You have to prepare for the next life.

Hard Work and No Gain

There are so many different types of next life, beginning from Brahmaloaka, the highest planet, down to the smallest insect. So why should we try to make a better position within this material world? Why should we waste our time like that? We have seen that to occupy the post of president, Mr. Nixon had to work so much in the beginning. I was in America at that time. He was advertising, "America needs Nixon now." He had to spend millions and millions of dollars, and there were so many cliques and there was so much political intrigue. But now, somehow or other, his presidency is gone. He has been dragged down.

Similarly, to go to the higher planetary system, you have to undergo so many austerities, penances. And even if you go to the Brahman effulgence you may fall, because there is no security in any place. But Kṛṣṇa says, *yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramam mama*: "But you can go to a place wherefrom you haven't got to return. That is My *param dhāma* – My supreme abode." (*Gītā* 15.6)

Kṛṣṇa Becomes Visible to Us

So why not try for that? Kṛṣṇa has agreed to take your service even though you cannot see Him yet. But you can see Him when He's present in this *mūrti*, or deity. He's physically present because you cannot serve Him directly without His being physically present. Kṛṣṇa is everything. Because you cannot see Kṛṣṇa otherwise, He has appeared before you just like a stone statue. You cannot see Kṛṣṇa without His becoming a stone statue or a wooden statue. That is Kṛṣṇa's mercy. But that does not mean Kṛṣṇa is stone. Kṛṣṇa is everything.

To accept your worship, Kṛṣṇa is

here. Don't consider, "Here is a stone deity." No, He's Kṛṣṇa. He has agreed to be present before you in this way. Kṛṣṇa is available in this form. Kṛṣṇa is so kind. He says, "Offer Me service. I will accept it." We should worship Kṛṣṇa in that spirit. We should not think that we are worshipping a stone that cannot see and so we can do all nonsense in the deity's room. No. He is seeing. Don't be cunning. He's more cunning than you. You can see, and He can see.

You know the history of the deity named Sākṣi-gopāla. An old *brāhmaṇa* and a young *brāhmaṇa* from Orissa traveled to Vrindavan on pilgrimage. While there, the old *brāhmaṇa* offered to give his daughter to the young *brāhmaṇa* to be his wife. To confirm the offer, the young *brāhmaṇa* had the old *brāhmaṇa* make the promise before the deity of Gopāla, or Kṛṣṇa. But when they returned to Orissa, the old *brāhmaṇa*'s sons and wife pressured him to deny that he had made the promise.

So the young man returned to Vrindavan and went before the deity and asked Him, "Sir, You have to go to give witness because the old man is not keeping his promise."

Kṛṣṇa said to the young devotee, "How are you proposing that I shall go? Can a stone deity walk?"

The young *brāhmaṇa* said, "Yes, if the stone deity can speak, He can also walk."

So Kṛṣṇa had to agree. "Yes, I'll go." First of all, Kṛṣṇa wanted to avoid going. Then when He saw, "He's not an ordinary devotee," He said, "All right, I'll go." So He came from Vrindavan to Orissa.

Don't think that the deity is stone. The young *brāhmaṇa* said to Gopāla, *sākṣād vrajendra-nandana*: "You are directly Kṛṣṇa." But He is available according to our capacity to understand Him.

The deity is not different from the original Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa's name, Kṛṣṇa's form, Kṛṣṇa's qualities, Kṛṣṇa's pastimes – everything about Kṛṣṇa is absolute. You're chanting

You do not know what kind of body you are going to get next life, but you can know from *Bhagavad-gītā*.

am a big man," but after death you have to accept another body. You are not dead simply by annihilation of the body. You are *nitya*, eternal. You have no birth, no death. Birth and death are simply the change of body. We have changed so many bodies already in this lifetime. I was a child, but the child body is no longer to be seen. That does not mean I am dead. I had my body of a child. That body is now finished. There is no such body. You can see in a photograph your childhood body, but where is that body? That body is gone, but you are living. Where is the difficulty to understand this? And Kṛṣṇa says, *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*: the body being lost, the person is not lost (*Gītā* 2.20). The person is living.

I was a young man like you. I was also very beautiful at that time. But where is that body? That body is gone, but that does not mean I

type of body. The body is also a car, a machine. It is said in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.61), *bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*. The body has been described as *yantra*, a machine. It is just like a machine. And we can perceive that. As soon as some part of the machine of the body is slackened, or not in order, the body is in a diseased condition. You cannot work.

Our Insecure Position

We should not be very much satisfied or rest assured that "I am in a very secure position because I am American" or "I am this, I am that." You are not in a secure position. At any moment this car, this body, will stop functioning and you will have to change. And you do not know what kind of change it will be. It may be a very nice change, or it may be a very bad change. So therefore

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."

the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. It is not only a sound; it is Kṛṣṇa personally. You are in direct touch with Kṛṣṇa when you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This realization is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

How to Learn About Kṛṣṇa

So how can one learn about Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Those who do not know can come to this Kṛṣṇa conscious center, and they will understand by hearing from the members. We are opening so many centers. Why? Because people do not know about Kṛṣṇa and it is our duty to give them the chance to know. They'll inquire. They'll see how we are worshipping Kṛṣṇa, how we are offering *prasādam*, how we are serving. They also can go back home, back to Godhead by learning from us. It is a school. We are teaching others.

Unfortunately, people do not take the opportunity to learn this great science. They are so unfortunate. We are canvassing, we are going door to door, we are publishing books, we are flattering them, "Please come here. Take *prasādam*. Hear something from *Bhagavad-gītā*." "No." They have no time. They are working like cats and dogs. They will agree to transfer from this body to another abominable body, but they'll not try to stop the repetition of birth

and death. *Māyā* is so strong.

It is our duty to preach, to broadcast the message of *Bhagavad-gītā* as far as possible. That is our duty. It is not that it is a formality; it is our duty. We are all eternally the servants of Kṛṣṇa. That we have forgotten. Now, in this life, we have surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and accepted His service. "Kṛṣṇa, for so long I forgot You. I am Your eternal servant, but I forgot. Now, in this life, I can understand. Therefore I surrender unto You." This is our life. Kṛṣṇa consciousness means, "Kṛṣṇa, I forgot You. I forgot my relationship with You. But now I have come to know that I am Your eternal servant. Therefore engage me."

We cannot avoid serving. Everyone in the material world is serving. We are not masters here. In the material world everyone is a servant: servant of the family, servant of the community, servant of the nation. Everyone is a servant. Nobody is a master. But what kind of servant am I? Servant of my senses. I am the servant of the society, the servant of the family, the servant of so many things. The summary is that I am the servant of my senses.

Because I want sense enjoyment, I become the servant of my wife. Actually, this is the position. I accept a woman as my wife, but the real

meaning is that I accept to become her servant. If I cannot satisfy her nicely, then she'll rebel. So I want to satisfy her senses. Then I serve my sons, my daughters, even my servants. Nowadays, you pay a servant, but if he's dissatisfied, he immediately resigns. So you have to flatter him so he may not go away.

In this way we are servants; we are never the master. But by illusion we cannot understand this. Why do I take the responsibility of family life and become the servant of so many others? Because I want to satisfy my senses. Therefore I am the servant of nobody, but I am the servant of my senses. This is the position. So when I forget to become the servant of Kṛṣṇa, then I become the servant of my senses. My position as servant remains the same.

If I give up the service of my senses and accept the service of Kṛṣṇa, then I am liberated. This is the position. One who is intelligent understands, "I have been the servant of lust, anger, greed, illusion, envy, and so on, but not one of them is satisfied. Nobody is satisfied." You go on serving, but these masters are never satisfied.

Consider Mahatma Gandhi. He was serving his country, but his countrymen killed him. It is a fact. So you cannot satisfy anyone. Who can give more service to his country than Mahatma Gandhi? But what was the return? His countrymen killed him. This is the return. You go on serving your senses in the name of your country, society, and family, and they'll never be satisfied. So why should you be so serious about serving someone other than Kṛṣṇa? That is sensible.

Better to serve Kṛṣṇa. Then you surpass the jurisdiction of birth and death. You conquer the repetition of birth and death simply by this process of hearing. If you simply hear *Bhagavad-gītā* from realized souls regularly, by hearing alone you will be able to conquer birth, death, old age, and disease. This is the result.

Thank you very much. 🙏

GLOSSARY with AUDIO

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Krishna.com/glossary

**HARE KṚṢṆA
HARE KṚṢṆA
KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA
HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA
HARE RĀMA
RĀMA RĀMA
HARE HARE**

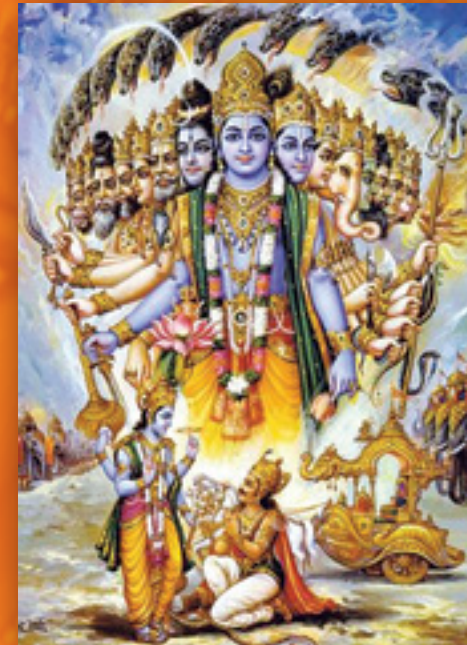
PRONUNCIATION:
ha-ray, krish-na,
ra-ma (rhymes with
"drama"). To hear Śrīla
Prabhupāda chanting,
go to krishna.com/hare-krishna-maha-mantra.

AN EVERYDAY LIFE MYSTERY

REFLECTIONS on the UNIVERSAL FORM

Looking for relevance in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavad-gītā.

by Yudhiṣṭhira Dāsa



THE SUPREME Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is the unlimited source of all that be. Throughout the *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord Himself confirms this fact. As one proceeds through the *Gītā*, the mystery of the Lord's opulence unfolds. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, presenting His universal form on the request of His pure devotee Arjuna, has the demigods trembling in fear and bewilderment. Arjuna finally submits a plea for the Lord to return to His original, attractive form – *saumya-vapuḥ* (*Gītā* 11.50) – with two hands holding the reins of the horses, and His smiling face charming all the worlds.

At this point, I, as a tiny reader and student, am baffled by the mystery of it all. What does the display of the universal form really point to? Although not desirable for meditation, how can devotees use the Lord's unique display of opulence and power? How can I, as an aspiring devotee in our modern day and age, turn this revelation in the pages of the *Bhagavad-gītā* into something perceivable and useful for my

everyday life as a Hare Kṛṣṇa *bhakta*?

In my attempt here, I will first make a simple distinction between the two forms displayed by the Lord. Then I will look at the two separately to investigate what relevance they have for my daily life.

The two forms of the Lord, as described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, invoke distinctly different emotions in Arjuna, the viewer of the Lord's display. First the Lord shows His *viśva-rūpa*, or universal form: *sarvāścārya-mayaṁ devam anantaṁ viśvato-mukham*: "All was wondrous, brilliant, unlimited, all-expanding" (11.11). The gigantic faces and weapons were countless and wonderful to behold. Scents and sights of unimaginable beauty and splendor were all-pervading. Arjuna, baffled and amazed, showing symptoms of ecstasy, offered respects and prayers in awe and reverence. Although a close, friendly associate of Kṛṣṇa, his mood shifts because of

worship, in the end asking the Lord to return to His form as the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

A Lingering Vision

The wondrous and horrible vision subsides, and the dialog between the two friends continues in the subsequent chapters. For me, the display of universal opulence lingers. I feel a need for a deeper understanding of the application of this description in my own life. Arjuna was initiated into a never-before-revealed secret. *Tvad anyena na dr̥ṣṭa-pūrvam*: "No one before you has ever seen this." (11.47) As an insignificant follower of the great Arjuna, as a descendant

forest, the great ocean. These are my revelations. This is my level of understanding. At such times I may remember Arjuna stunned in wondrous awe at the immense opulence of the Lord.

But there is another side to the world, a dark and somber reality, easily forgotten in daily affairs or a moment of enjoyment steeped in impressions of natural beauty. Time is always there, that all-devouring entity (*loka-kṣaya-kṛt pravṛddhaḥ*, 11.32), annihilating even as seconds pass. Oblivious in their ignorance, people hanker for enjoyment of sensual pleasures, all the while running headfirst into the blazing razor-lined, escapeless mouth of universal time, doomed and utterly helpless. This is a sobering warning displayed by the Lord for any aspiring devotee. This world, with all its variety and scenery, is limited and never permanent. This includes our bodies, subtle and gross. At birth, the end is near.

Action from Reflection

In my life such reflections instigate actions linked with eternity. The temporary charade of material life is unveiled, and the emergency of devotional service becomes vividly apparent. And as a natural consequence, I feel greatly fortunate to have come in contact with the devotees of Kṛṣṇa, primarily through Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, having been granted access to a process of liberation from mortal incarceration, and destined to reach realms of eternity and bliss as the ultimate goal.

Although the Lord's forms as the universe and time certainly have their instructive value for devotees, they originate from the all-attractive form of two-handed Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They are a display of opulence to prove a point about supreme divinity: Everything is connected to Kṛṣṇa; He is the source of everything. Therefore, in devotional service all focus is one-pointedly directed toward the person Kṛṣṇa. What a great relief!

The vision of the universal form was in some way an intimate moment, in that it was a favor granted by the Lord to His great devotee. And it was a favor for future generations as well, crushing the conceits of so-called incarnations and people who believe in nothingness as the ultimate reality. As the Lord showed, a Supreme Person stands behind the variety displayed in nature and universal phenomena.

To move past the wonder of appreciation and rise above the utter fear at the prospect of death and

destruction, devotion is required. The Lord gives it poetic expression, as if in response to my longing to uncover this transcendental enigma:

*bhaktiā tv ananyayā śakya
aham evaṁ-vidho 'rjuna
jñātuṁ draṣṭuṁ ca tattvena
praveṣṭuṁ ca parantapa*

"My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the

mystery of My understanding." (11.54)

With such eloquent expression, the Lord beckons us into His loving companionship. This is the real-life adventure of our spiritual rediscovery. 🙏

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

Arjuna, baffled and amazed, showing symptoms of ecstasy, offered respects and prayers in awe and reverence.

the overwhelming opulence shown, and he struggles to believe his own eyes.

Then the vision changes. He sees faces twisted with terrible teeth, helpless living beings crushed between them, as the world burns in forceful destruction and doom, unavoidable and merciless. Arjuna, the heroic warrior, now cowers in fear at this sight, staring death in the face.

*damṣṭrā-karālāni ca te mukhāni
dr̥ṣṭvaiva kālānala-sannibhāni
diśo na jāne na labhe ca śarma
prasīda deveśa jagan-nivāsa*

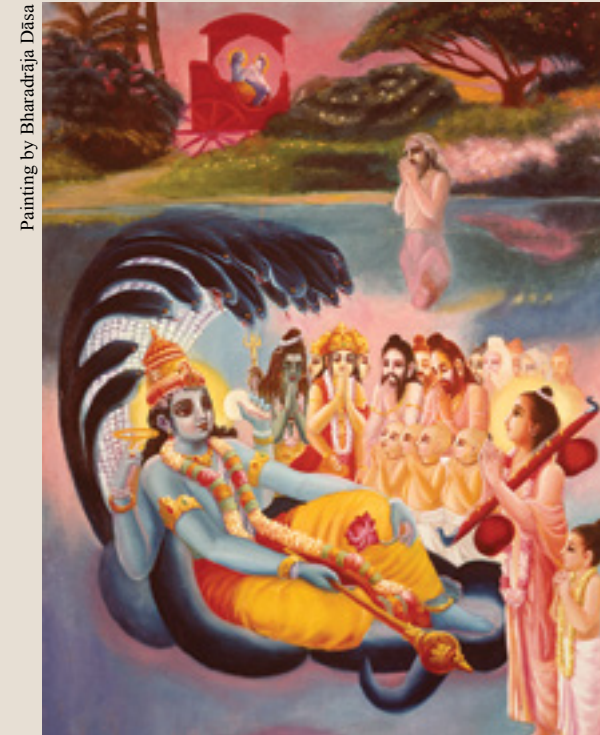
"O Lord of lords, O refuge of the worlds, please be gracious to me. I cannot keep my balance seeing thus Your blazing deathlike faces and awful teeth. In all directions I am bewildered." (11.25)

Being a devotee of the Lord, the prince submits himself before this disturbing form, offering prayers and

in devotion, I have been granted access to this same mystery by the grace of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I consider myself blessed.

But how does this miracle of the ancient world relate to my day-to-day experience in the present? I am certainly baffled by the incredible complexity and vastness of the universe. Following in Arjuna's lotus footsteps, I wonder at the marvel of divine reality – how Kṛṣṇa has His hands and eyes everywhere, how as a universal principle everyone and everything originates in Him. One is simply humbled at the incredible opulence of the Supreme Lord. My crude written endeavor here cannot justly describe a true devotee's heart in this matter. Although I do not perceive the dazzling effulgence of thousands of suns rising at once (*sūrya-sahasrasya bhaved yugapad utthitā*, 11.12), I clearly see the one sun rising every day. This is my revelation. I smell the scents of a meadow of daisies, a pinewood

A Pause for Prayer



Lord Kṛṣṇa appearing as Mahā-Viṣṇu.

O Supreme Lord, the living entities in this world are bewildered by Your illusory energy. Becoming involved in the false concepts of "I" and "my," they are forced to wander along the paths of fruitive work. I too am deluded in this way, O almighty Lord, foolishly thinking my body, children, home, wife, money, and followers to be real, though they are actu-

ally as unreal as a dream. Thus mistaking the temporary for the eternal, my body for my self, and sources of misery for sources of happiness, I have tried to take pleasure in material dualities. Covered in this way by ignorance, I could not recognize You as the real object of my love.

Just as a fool overlooks a body of water covered by the vegetation growing in it and chases a mirage, so I have turned away from You. My intelligence is so crippled that I cannot find the strength to curb my mind, which is disturbed by material desires and activities and constantly dragged here and there by my obstinate senses. Being thus fallen, I am approaching Your feet for shelter, O Lord, because although the impure can never attain Your feet, I think it is nevertheless possible by Your mercy. Only when one's material life has ceased, O lotus-navel Lord, can one develop consciousness of You by serving Your pure devotees.

Obeisances to the Supreme Absolute Truth, the possessor of unlimited energies. He is the embodiment of pure, transcendental knowledge, the source of all kinds of awareness, and the predominator of the forces of nature that rule over the living being. O son of Vasudeva, obeisances to You, within whom all living beings reside. O Lord of the mind and senses, again I offer You my obeisances. O master, please protect me, who am surrendered unto You.

– Śrī Akrūra to Lord Kṛṣṇa appearing as Mahā Viṣṇu on the Yamuna River, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.40.23–30



Yannarjia Dāsa

What Is Real Renunciation?

Yogis used to retreat to the Himalayas (some still do), but there's a better way to pursue spiritual truth.

by Akshay Gupta

WITH ALL OF life's ups and downs, it can be frustrating to live in the material world. When things get really tough, it's easy to want to retire from everything and just renounce the world. After all, you wouldn't have to deal with all the inconveniences of modern life if you just ran away to the Himalayas.

Of course, many people throughout the ages have done just that. In an attempt to escape the miseries of material existence, yogis have taken shelter in secluded places like the Himalayas to renounce the world. That would make life a lot simpler, wouldn't it? You wouldn't have to worry about the stresses of modern life, like getting a good job or paying the bills. Even Arjuna, the great warrior of the ancient Indian epic the *Mahābhārata*, was prepared to leave the battle and become a beggar instead of fighting in the bloody Kurukshetra War.

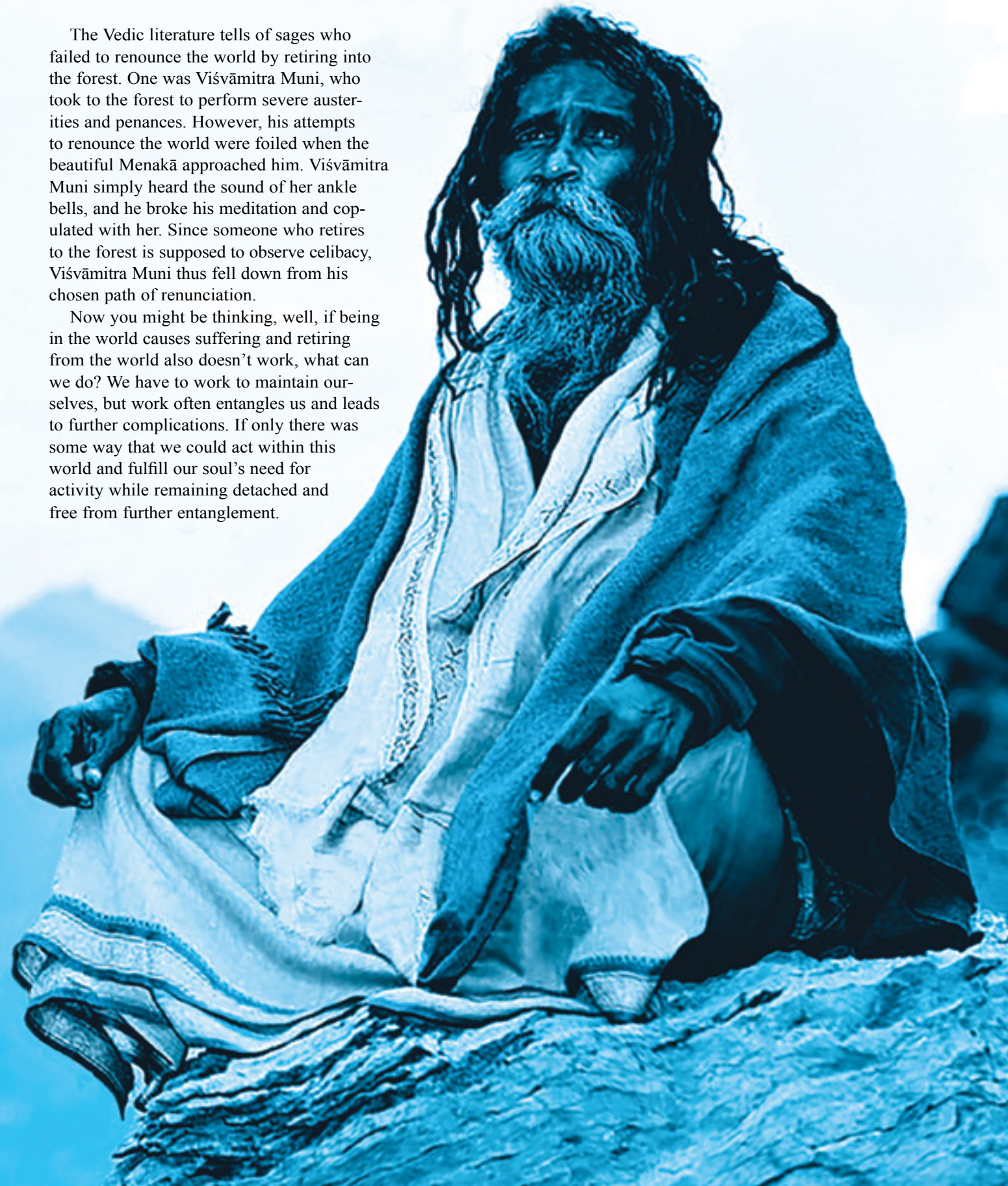
But trying to renounce the world in such a way presents a problem. As Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.6),

*karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya
ya āste manasā smaran
indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā
mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate*

“One who restrains the senses of action but whose mind dwells on sense objects certainly deludes himself and is called a pretender.” Even though we may be aloof from the world and not engaging the senses materially, we may still have material desires and will thus think about material sense objects, like food, TV, and sports. We may try to renounce the world artificially, but ultimately, because the mind is active by nature, we will simply dwell on material desires.

The Vedic literature tells of sages who failed to renounce the world by retiring into the forest. One was Viśvāmitra Muni, who took to the forest to perform severe austerities and penances. However, his attempts to renounce the world were foiled when the beautiful Menakā approached him. Viśvāmitra Muni simply heard the sound of her ankle bells, and he broke his meditation and copulated with her. Since someone who retires to the forest is supposed to observe celibacy, Viśvāmitra Muni thus fell down from his chosen path of renunciation.

Now you might be thinking, well, if being in the world causes suffering and retiring from the world also doesn't work, what can we do? We have to work to maintain ourselves, but work often entangles us and leads to further complications. If only there was some way that we could act within this world and fulfill our soul's need for activity while remaining detached and free from further entanglement.



Renouncing While Engaging

Well, luckily there is a way. Rūpa Gosvāmī, a great saint of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, speaks about *yukta-vairāgya*, or real renunciation (literally “engaged renunciation”). He describes it as follows, “When one is not attached to anything, but at the same time accepts everything in relation to Kṛṣṇa, one is rightly situated above possessiveness. On the other hand, one who rejects everything without knowledge of its relationship to Kṛṣṇa is not as complete in his renunciation.” (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.255–256) Thus, real renunciation means engaging everything in the service of God, or Kṛṣṇa, who states in the *Bhagavad-*

an unsuitable person to follow a spiritual path. But King Ambarīṣa was a very advanced transcendentalist. He was so exalted in fact, that when the sage Durvāsā cursed him, the curse backfired because King Ambarīṣa had gained the Lord’s special protection.

Though King Ambarīṣa had great wealth, he didn’t become attached to it, because he used it all for the Lord’s service. He worshiped the Lord with great opulence, and as a result he became very spiritually advanced. King Ambarīṣa was able to continue on the path of spiritual life, unlike Viśvāmitra Muni, who fell down despite leaving for the forest. Thus, one who practices *yukta-vairāgya* can remain steady in spir-

of artificial renunciation in the forest can’t satisfy the soul, because the senses need some type of engagement. But when we work to enjoy the result of our work, we can become frustrated. Kṛṣṇa describes in the *Gītā* (2.62–63) how attachment for sense objects results in frustration:

*dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsaḥ
saṅgas teṣūpajāyate
saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmāḥ
kāmāt krodho ’bhijāyate*

*krodhād bhavati sammohaḥ
sammohāt smṛti-vibhramāḥ
smṛti-bhramśād buddhi-nāśo
buddhi-nāśāt praṇaśyati*

“While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises. From anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one falls down again into the material pool.” By the process of *yukta-vairāgya*, however, and ultimately by *bhakti-yoga*, we can avoid the pitfalls of material frustration as well as inactivity.

When we adopt the principle of *yukta-vairāgya*, we also open our hearts more. By leaving everything and retreating to a solitary place, we close down our hearts and lose our innate compassion for other living beings. But instead, we can use our material assets to serve God and others. The great king and devotee Prahlaḍa Mahārāja is an exemplar of this idea. He states,

*prāyeṇa deva munayaḥ sva-vimukti-
kāmā
maunaṁ caranti vijane na parārtha-
niṣṭhāḥ
naitān vihāya kṛpaṇān vimumuḡṣa eko
nānyaṁ tvad aśya śaraṇaṁ bhramato
'nupaśyē*

“My dear Lord Nṛsimhadeva, I see that there are many saintly persons

indeed, but they are interested only in their own deliverance. Not caring for the big cities and towns, they go to the Himalayas or the forest to meditate with vows of silence [*mauna-vrata*]. They are not interested in delivering others. As for me, however, I do not wish to be liberated alone, leaving aside all these poor fools and rascals. I know that without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, without taking shelter of Your lotus feet, one cannot be happy. Therefore I wish to bring them back to shelter at Your lotus feet.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.9.44) Rather than retire from all material activities, Prahlaḍa Mahārāja used his status as a king to enlighten others in spiritual knowledge. We can learn from his example and use whatever material facilities we have to guide others along their spiritual path.

Yukta-vairāgya is not limited to gross material objects. Students or

seekers of knowledge can use their learning in the service of the Lord. Prabhupāda comments in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.22, Purport), “Therefore, all the sages and devotees of the Lord have recommended that the subject matter of art, science, philosophy, physics, chemistry, psychology, and all other branches of knowledge should be wholly and solely applied in the service of the Lord.” Thus, one does not have to abandon the pursuit of material knowledge, which can help one on the spiritual journey if applied properly.

Ultimately, by following the principle of *yukta-vairāgya* we can become detached from the distresses and disturbances of life while still acting responsibly in this world. Moreover, by using everything for Kṛṣṇa’s service we not only become detached from the material world, but we also become attached to Kṛṣṇa. Such attachment benefits us because

the soul hankers to relate intimately with Kṛṣṇa. We have an eternal loving relationship with Him, and through service we can revive this dormant love for Him and become eternally blissful. Moreover, Kṛṣṇa reciprocates with us, as He describes in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.11),

*ye yathā mām prapadyante
tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham*

“As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly.” Therefore, when we render service to Kṛṣṇa, He reciprocates with our devotion and takes a greater interest in our lives, so that we may ultimately come back to Him and enjoy a life of eternal bliss and knowledge. 🌟

Akshay Gupta is a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

A life of artificial renunciation in the forest can’t satisfy the soul, because the senses need some type of engagement.

gītā (9.10) that the material nature is one of His energies. Therefore it can be used in His service. By following the principle of *yukta-vairāgya*, someone can work honestly in the world and live a typical life, but still be more renounced than someone who has retreated to the Himalayas to withdraw his senses from the world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda demonstrated this principle effectively through the use of a dictaphone, a voice-recording machine that he used to write his books. He would record his translations and purports, and his disciples would transcribe the recording into text. Although normally a dictaphone might be seen as something material, by using it in the service of God, Prabhupāda was able to spiritualize it and use it to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world.

An example from the Vedic literature is the great King Ambarīṣa, who had tremendous wealth. You might think that a wealthy king would be

itual life even in the midst of great material opulence.

Moreover, those in the renounced order of life (*sannyāsa*) can also adopt the principle of *yukta-vairāgya*. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s spiritual master, demonstrated the principle of *yukta-vairāgya* effectively through the use of dioramas. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī created large diorama exhibits depicting the Lord’s pastimes. These exhibits attracted many people, and as a result he was able to spread his mission more rapidly. He even applied *yukta-vairāgya* to his wardrobe by dressing in suits, which was unheard of for someone in the renounced order of life. He did this so that the British would take him seriously and listen to his teachings.

Avoiding Pitfalls

Because the soul is active by nature, it can’t refrain from activity. A life

IN MEMORIAM

His Holiness Bhakti Vrajendranandana Mahārāja

ON DECEMBER 30, His Holiness Bhakti Vrajendranandana Mahārāja passed away at the ISKCON Kuala Lumpur temple, surrounded by devotees chanting the Lord’s holy names. He was in his seventy-ninth year.

Born in Malaysia, Bhakti Vrajendranandana Mahārāja traveled to the UK to study and joined ISKCON in Birmingham in 1971 when he was thirty-three years old.

Subhāga Dāsa (now Subhāga Swami)

was his inspiration at that time and remained so throughout his life. He moved to the Bury Place temple in early 1972 and served selflessly there. He was known as a simple, surrendered, hardworking *brahmacārī*.

He was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in July 1972, receiving the name Vrajendra Kumāra Dāsa. He traveled extensively throughout the UK, distributing books until his move in 1975 to India, where he took up the responsibility of temple commander at ISKCON’s Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandir in Vrindavan.

In 1979, with two other devotees, he returned to Malaysia to establish ISKCON there. In 1983 he accepted



sannyāsa from His Holiness Jayapātaka Swami. He continued to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Malaysia as well as in India and other countries. From 1983 until his departure, he served as the president of ISKCON Malaysia.

Bhakti Vrajendranandana Mahārāja’s health began declining in the late 1990s. Still, he pushed on, enthusiastically serving in whatever way he could. He faced regular health crises and several times survived against all odds.

In early December last year, he went into a coma. Although he regained consciousness, the doctors made it clear there was nothing more they could do, and he was taken back to the temple, where he passed away five hours later.

All devotees who knew him will attest that he was truly a great Vaiṣṇava free from malice, envy, lust, and greed, a completely surrendered soldier in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s great *saṅkīrtana* army. We have lost the association of a wonderful soul, but his example will stand as a beacon for many years and generations to come. — *Janānanda Goswami*



SEEKING CHANGE

For Eternal Benefit

An early yearning to change the world leads to a year-long international journey with unexpected results.

by Prabhupāda-priyā Devī Dāsī

I WAS BORN IN 1970 in upstate New York and had more or less a typical American childhood – that is, until age fifteen, when I began to perceive the shallowness of it. At that time, I started to read books on philosophy and psychology and to listen more carefully to the weekly sermons at our local Baptist church. I had a lot of questions – about God, about life – but no one seemed to have the answers.

I was dissatisfied with the state of the world and felt impelled to change it. I opted for an alternative education at the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine, where I studied Human Ecology. I experimented with alternative lifestyles

and environmental and political activism, but was not satisfied with any of my attempts to change either the world or my own life.

I entered into the field of global climate change, which in 1991 was still cutting-edge research. After an internship at New Alchemy Institute, another at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, and a third at Harvard University Department of Biological Sciences, I was offered a full scholarship to pursue a PhD at Harvard.

Though honored by the offer, I needed to see the world first. I had to get outside of America and experience other ways of living, other ways of thinking. I applied for and

won a fellowship to travel abroad and undertake a research project of my own design. I bought a round-the-world plane ticket and set as many countries as I could on my itinerary.

During this year-long journey, I encountered people from a diverse range of cultures and religions. Studying each in some depth, I was able to appreciate the common ground in all faiths. I was impressed to see how spirituality, for some of them, was not just a tiny fragment of their week, but pervaded everything they did.

During this time, someone dropped a startling piece of information on me: that the combined

nuclear weapons of all the countries of the world were enough to burn the entire planet to ashes fourteen times over.

Having grown up during the arms race between the USA and Russia, having studied the effects of nuclear fallout in school, and knowing what rash stupidity our governments were capable of, I decided to reset my priorities. After all, what use was a career in global climate change research if the globe was not going to exist? What difference would a slight increase in temperature or carbon dioxide make on a region's ecology if an H-bomb reduced the ecosystem to a lifeless pile of radioactive dust? Even if I became a

world-renowned scientist, even if I won the Nobel Prize, what difference would it make?

An Encounter in Malaysia

I realized that whatever I did in the material sphere would be temporary. If I'm going to use my life's energy to make a positive change in the world, I thought, let me do something that will have an eternal benefit. I realized that the only way to do this would be to act on the spiritual platform. But I didn't know how to do it. I prayed to God for direction.

At a cultural festival in Penang, Malaysia, I met a man from the International Society for Krishna

Consciousness and bought the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, along with two other books. That evening, I read *Coming Back*, from cover to cover. Then I started on the *Bhagavad-gītā* and read for as long as my eyes would allow me. After a few days, I set out to find the address the man had given me where the devotees have weekly meetings.

I arrived late, and *Bhagavad-gītā* class was going on, followed by *kīrtana*. There was the smell of incense, then amazing food unlike anything I'd ever tasted before. The program was a multi-sensory experience I'll never forget. It had a very

big impact on me. Although I didn't know anyone there, the devotees were very kind and friendly. I felt that they didn't want anything from me – they only wanted to give.

One young lady, Kalāvati, was particularly friendly, being very happy to meet a fellow American so far from home. She was living in London and traveling with her husband. They were only in Penang for a few days, but she gave me her address and said that if I ever came to London I must look her up. I promised her I would, though I had no plans to go to London.

I continued attending the weekly programs and each time enjoyed them more. The devotees gave me *japa* beads and showed me how to use them to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. When I packed my bag to leave Malaysia, however, I left all the books behind. In anticipation of what awaited me at my next destination, my experience in Malaysia quickly faded into a memory.

A High-Altitude Adventure Ends in a Lofty Decision

From Malaysia I flew to Kathmandu, where I spent weeks trekking in the Himalayas alone with a Sherpa guide. The Himalayas were otherworldly. Their towering peaks and majestic views made me feel insignificant. The crisp mountain air and the intense physical exercise seemed to invigorate body and soul. I spent most of my days in silent prayer, walking across God's canvas, asking Him to bring me closer to Him.

Although I'd left my *Bhagavad-gītā* behind, some of its ideas had sunk in. One of those was the concept of devotional service. This concept had seemed to call out to me from every page. Now in the mystical Himalayas it all gelled in my mind. I made a decision: I would devote my life to serving God. But which path would I choose? The *Bhagavad-gītā* had helped me so much, but at the same time it was so Eastern, so foreign to me.

My Desire Fulfilled

OVER THE YEARS, the service of book distribution has taught me many things, including determination, tolerance, and selflessness. It has given me faith in the inherent goodness of humanity and the infallible protection of God. But most importantly, it has fulfilled my desire to save the world. The problems and perils of the world are rooted in one thing: ignorance.

Without knowledge of our true identity, our purpose, and our ultimate goal, how can there be real progress? The transcendental knowledge contained within the books of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has the potency to eradicate this ignorance and transform lives. Having personally experienced this change and witnessed it in others, I realized that political, social, and environmental activism can have no lasting effect on the world. The only way to improve the human condition is to elevate people's consciousness. I was overjoyed to become a part of this spiritual revolution.

I decided to stick to what I was familiar with. I had been brought up a Christian and had attended church every Sunday and Christian summer camp every year. I even sang in the Christmas choir. When I was a teenager, some missionaries had visited our church and given a slide show about the pioneering work they were doing, spreading the gospel in some obscure country. It had looked exotic, adventurous, risky. That seemed to be the perfect example of devotional service. That was it. I would be a

Christian missionary. I would finish my travels and enroll in Bible college, get a solid basis in Christian theology, and follow God's will from there.

A Change of Plans

From Kathmandu my itinerary was to go to Frankfurt then transfer to Tel Aviv, but somehow all the flights to Europe were fully booked. The only seat available was to London. I took it.

It was early morning when I arrived at Gatwick Airport. In every other place I'd visited I had made contacts in advance, but London was not planned. Then I remembered the American girl I had met over a month before in Malaysia. I took out my address book, and there it was: Kalavati, 10 Soho Street, London. I bought a map and made my way there, expecting to arrive at their apartment. But it was not an apartment. It was the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple.

A large Belgian woman sat at the reception desk.

"Hello," I said, "I'm looking for a friend of mine, Kalāvati. Is she here?"

"Oh, yes, she works in the restaurant. She'll be coming in later. Would you like to wait? I can show you around the temple."

"Sure," I said. "Thanks."

I didn't have anything else to do, and I had never been to a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple.

"My name's Pūrṇamāsi," she said as she led me up the stairs.

She rang a small bell, and we entered the temple room. It was bright and sparkling clean. She bowed down. I stared at what I thought was A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. I recognized him from the picture on the back of my *Bhagavad-gītā*.

"I know him," I whispered. "I bought some of his books."

"That's a statue," she chuckled. "Come, let's see the deities."

We walked to the front of the

temple room, and she introduced me to three intriguing, jolly-looking wooden forms.

"These are Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā."

They looked so benevolent. Then she gestured to her right.

"And these are Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Here we call them Rādhā-London-īśvara – the controllers of London."

They were so beautiful, adorably dressed and decorated. It was all so new to me. I didn't know what to say or do.

"It's twelve o'clock," Pūrṇamāsi announced, "time for *harināma*. Would you like to go?"

"What's *harināma*?"

"It's when a group of devotees go out with musical instruments and

sing in the street.

It's fun. You'll like it."

"Okay."

The devotees assembled on the street outside the front door and started singing. I already knew the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra from Malaysia, so I was feeling more confident. Someone handed me a pair of small brass cymbals on strings, and the group started walking. It was incredibly enjoyable. Somehow it felt really good to be there.

When we got back to the temple, it was time for the lunchtime program. There was a short class, and then we all sat in rows on the floor. A young lady, Anne Marie, started serving lunch. I had been in Asia for long enough to be used to rice, dal, and vegetables, but for the past month in Nepal, I had been eating in the homes of simple mountain people, and the dal was little more than green water with salt and garlic. So when I tasted the thick, creamy, exotically spiced dal, my undernourished body brimmed with gratitude. I remember the feeling of complete satisfaction. Surprisingly, Ann Marie seemed to be even happier serving

me than I was eating.

When I finished, she told me that the temple president, Keśava Bhāratī Dāsa Goswami, was holding a question-and-answer session upstairs in the library. So far, everything at the temple had been so amazing. I decided to stick around.

As I entered the library full of people and sat down on a cushioned bench, I was greeted with an exuberant, "Hare Kṛṣṇa!"

I turned to the radiant saffron-clad monk seated at the front of the room.

"Is this your first time here?" he asked with a welcoming smile.

"Yes," I said.

He asked me where I was from, what brought me to London, and

what my plans were.

"I've decided to dedicate my life to serving God," I said confidently. He smiled in surprise.

"Oh, well, you've come to the right place."

Everyone laughed.

"And how exactly are you planning to serve God?"

"I'm going to be a Christian missionary," I told him and explained my reasoning.

"Well, do you know much about Indian religions?"

"I've read some of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, but I've never been to India."

"If you go as a missionary to India, it would be helpful for you to understand their philosophy and religion so you can better relate to the people and more intelligently respond to their arguments. You would make a deeper impact on them. Don't you think?"

"Yes, you're probably right."

"So, we have all these books

here," he said, indicating the shelf full of colorful volumes. "Why don't you stay with us for two weeks, study our philosophy, and then you can go on to Bible College with a broader background in world religions? We have a dormitory for ladies upstairs. Anne Marie can show you around. How does that sound?"

"Um, yeah, why not?" I said.

And that was it. I moved into the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple.

An Extended Stay

My invitation had been for two weeks, but the more I read the books, the more I became fascinated by the philosophy. The practices the devotees followed, such as chanting the Hare

I was impressed by the degree of philosophical understanding possessed by even the newest devotee. Every activity had deep spiritual significance.

In addition to reading on my own, I also attended classes on the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and continued going on daily *harināma*. The more I understood what the *harināma* was all about, the more ecstatic the experience became.

The happiest people in the temple, I soon discovered, were the ones who went out all day to distribute books. When they returned in the evening, they would look so blissful. Their faces were glowing, like angels, and they were full of exciting stories about the places they had gone and the people they had met.

I decided to join them. It wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. I had expected people to be as interested in spiritual knowledge as

I was, but sadly, most of them couldn't be bothered. It was a humbling experience, but I stuck with it.

Eventually, I accepted initiation from a bona fide spiritual master and received the spiritual name Prabhupāda-priyā Devī Dāsī. The guidance of my spiritual master helped me immensely to overcome various obstacles, especially in the beginning of my spiritual life. In time, I married a wonderful devotee from Brazil who gives continual support and encouragement daily. Now, twenty years later, we live with our two daughters in Mayapur, India, in a dynamic, rapidly growing community of ISKCON devotees.

No longer am I the confused person spinning in an endless stream of unanswered questions, disgusted

with materialistic culture, disappointed by superficial relationships, and lost in a seemingly pointless existence. Now I have found the answers to my questions. I have discovered a worldwide community based on spiritual culture. I have lasting relationships with amazing people. I have realized the purpose of life and the process to fulfill it, a process that has worked for me and can work for anyone, a process that can change our hearts and change our world – the process of *bhakti*, or devotional service. 🌸

This article appears as an appendix to the author's book Rising Above It All: Higher Consciousness, Happier Life, by Wendy DaSilveira, available as an ebook from Amazon.com.



FREE ONLINE COURSE

The Thematic Essence of Jīva Gosvāmī's Six Sandarbhas

This course, taught by Cārucandra Dāsa under the auspices of ISKCON Baltimore, is being presented online via video teleconferencing. It consists of six modules, each covering one of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Six Sandarbhas*. Each module is 24 weekly classes. Modules 1 & 2 (*Śrī Tattva-* and *Bhagavat-sandarbha*, respectively) have been completed, and Module 3 (*Śrī Paramātmā-sandarbha*) will be completed by July, when Module 4 (*Śrī Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha*) will begin. In *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains how Lord Kṛṣṇa is *svayam bhagavān*, the original Supreme Person, and how His eternal abode is manifest in Vṛndāvana, Mathurā, and Dvārakā, where He engages in His eternal pastimes with His ever-liberated, intimate associates.

INSTRUCTOR: Cārucandra Dāsa (Chandrakant P. Giri, PhD) is a disciple of His Holiness Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and a graduate of the Teacher Training Course taught by the Vrindavan Institute for Higher Education (VIHE). He has been teaching "Thematic Essence" courses on Śrīla Prabhupāda's books for the past thirteen years.

REGISTRATION: For detailed information and to register for the *Paramātmā-sandarbha* course, go to www.tinyurl.com/6sandarbha or bhaktishastra.com.

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 PṚTHU LEVELS AND DEVELOPS THE EARTH

After using mystic power to sustain living entities from all over the universe, King Pṛthu develops the earth for the benefit of its residents.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 18

26 सर्वे स्वमुख्यवत्सेन स्वे स्वे पात्रे पृथक्पयः
सर्वकामदुघां पृथ्वीं दुदुहुः पृथुभाविताम्

*sarve sva-mukhya-vatsena
sve sve pātre pṛthak payaḥ
sarva-kāma-dughāṁ pṛthvīm
duduhuḥ pṛthu-bhāvitām*

sarve – all; *sva-mukhya* – by their own chiefs; *vatsena* – as the calf; *sve sve* – in their own; *pātre* – pots; *pṛthak* – different; *payah* – milk; *sarva-kāma* – all desirables; *dughām* – supplying as milk; *pṛthvīm* – the planet earth; *duduhuḥ* – milked out; *pṛthu-bhāvitām* – controlled by King Pṛthu.

The planet earth supplied everyone his respective food. During the time of King Pṛthu, the earth was fully under the control of the King. Thus all the inhabitants of the earth could get their food supply by creating various types of calves and putting their particular types of milk in various pots.

PURPORT: This is evidence that the Lord supplies food to everyone. As confirmed in the *Vedas*: *eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān*. Although the Lord is one, He is supplying all necessities to everyone through the medium of the planet earth. There are different varieties of living entities on different planets, and they all derive their eatables from their planets in different forms. On the basis of these descriptions, how can one assume that there is no living entity on the moon? Every moon is earthly, being composed of the five elements. Every planet produces different types of food according to the needs of its residents. 1 According to the Vedic *śāstras*, it is not true that the moon does not produce food or that no living entity is living there.

27 एवं पृथ्वादयः पृथ्वीमन्नादाः स्वन्नमात्मनः
दोहवत्सादिभेदेन क्षीरभेदं कुरुद्वह

*evam pṛthv-ādayaḥ pṛthvīm
annādāḥ svannam ātmanah*

1) What do the Vedic *śāstras* say about life on the moon?

doha-vatsādi-bhedena
kṣīra-bhedam kurūdvaḥa

evam – thus; *prthu-ādayaḥ* – King Pṛthu and others; *prthvīm* – the earth; *anna-adāḥ* – all living entities desiring food; *su-annam* – their desired foodstuff; *ātmanaḥ* – for self-preservation; *doha* – for milking; *vatsa-ādi* – by calves, pots, and milkers; *bhedena* – different; *kṣīra* – milk; *bhedam* – different; *kuru-udvaḥa* – O chief of the Kurus.

My dear Vidura, chief of the Kurus, in this way King Pṛthu and all the others who subsist on food created different types of calves and milked out their respective eatables. Thus they received their various food-stuffs, which were symbolized as milk.

28 ततो महीपतिः प्रीतः सर्वकामदुघां पृथुः
दुहितृत्वे चकारेमां प्रेम्णा दुहितृवत्सलः

tato mahīpatih prītaḥ
sarva-kāma-dughām prthuh
duhitṛtve cakāremām
preṃṇā duhitṛ-vatsalaḥ

tataḥ – thereafter; *mahī-patih* – the King; *prītaḥ* – being pleased; *sarva-kāma* – all desirables; *dughām* – producing as milk; *prthuh* – King Pṛthu; *duhitṛtve* – treating as his daughter; *cakāra* – did; *imām* – unto the planet earth; *preṃṇā* – out of affection; *duhitṛ-vatsalaḥ* – affectionate to his daughter.

Thereafter King Pṛthu was very satisfied with the planet earth, for she sufficiently supplied all food to various living entities. ² Thus he developed affection for the planet earth, just as if she were his own daughter.

29 चूर्णयन् स्वधनुष्कोट्या गिरिकूटानि राजराट्
भूमण्डलमिदं वैन्यः प्रायश्चक्रे समं विभुः

cūrṇayan sva-dhanuṣ-koṭyā
giri-kūṭāni rāja-rāṭ
bhū-maṇḍalam idaṃ vainyaḥ
prāyaś cakre samam vibhuḥ

- 2) What type of relationship did King Pṛthu develop with the goddess of the earth planet?
- 3) How our hills and mountains generally made flat?
- 4) How did King Pṛthu make the hill and mountains flat?

cūrṇayan – making into pieces; *sva* – his own; *dhanuṣ-koṭyā* – by the power of his bow; *giri* – of the hills; *kūṭāni* – the tops; *rāja-rāṭ* – the emperor; *bhū-maṇḍalam* – the whole earth; *idaṃ* – this; *vainyaḥ* – the son of Vena; *prāyaḥ* – almost; *cakre* – made; *samam* – level; *vibhuḥ* – the powerful.

After this, the king of all kings, Mahārāja Pṛthu, leveled all rough places on the surface of the globe by breaking up the hills with the strength of his bow. By his grace the surface of the globe almost became flat.

PURPORT: ³ Generally the mountainous and hilly portions of the earth are made flat by the striking of thunderbolts. Generally this is the business of King Indra of the heavenly planets, ⁴ but King Pṛthu, an incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, did not wait for King Indra to break up the hills and mountains but did so himself by using his strong bow.

30 अथास्मिन् भगवान् वैन्यः प्रजानां वृत्तिदः पिता
निवासान् कल्पयां चक्रे तत्र तत्र यथार्हतः

athāsmiṇ bhagavān vainyaḥ
prajānām vṛttidaḥ pitā
nivāsān kalpayām cakre
tatra tatra yathārhatāḥ

atha – thus; *asmiṇ* – on this planet earth; *bhagavān* – the Personality of Godhead; *vainyaḥ* – son of Vena; *prajānām* – of the citizens; *vṛttidaḥ* – who supplies employment; *pitā* – a father; *nivāsān* – residences; *kalpayām* – suitable; *cakre* – make; *tatra tatra* – here and there; *yathā* – as; *arhatāḥ* – desirable, suitable.

To all the citizens of the state, King Pṛthu was as good as a father. Thus he was visibly engaged in giving them proper subsistence and proper employment for subsistence. After leveling the surface of the globe, he earmarked different places for residential quarters, inasmuch as they were desirable.

31 ग्रामान् पुरः पत्तनानि दुर्गाणि विविधानि च
घोषान् व्रजान् सशिविरानाकरान् खेटखर्वटान्

grāmān puraḥ pattanāni
durgāṇi vividhāni ca
ghoṣān vrajān sa-śibirān
ākarān kheṭa-kharvaṭān

grāmān – villages; *puraḥ* – cities; *pattanāni* – settlements; *durgāṇi* – forts; *vividhāni* – of different varieties; *ca* – also; *ghoṣān* – habitations for the milkmen; *vrajān* – pens for

cattle; *sa-śibirān* – with camps; *ākarān* – mines; *kheṭa* – agricultural towns; *kharvaṭān* – mountain villages.

In this way the King founded many types of villages, settlements, and towns, and built forts, residences for cowherdsmen, stables for the animals, and places for the royal camps, mining places, agricultural towns, and mountain villages.

32 प्राक्पृथोरिह नैवैषा पुरग्रामादिकल्पना
यथासुखं वसन्ति स्म तत्र तत्राकुतोभयाः

prāk prthor iha naivaiṣā
pura-grāmādi-kalpanā
yathā-sukhaṃ vasanti sma
tatra tatrākutobhayaḥ

prāk – before; *prthoḥ* – King Pṛthu; *iha* – on this planet; *na* – never; *eva* – certainly; *eṣā* – this; *pura* – of towns; *grāma-ādi* – of villages, etc.; *kalpanā* – planned arrangement; *yathā* – as; *sukham* – convenient; *vasanti sma* – lived; *tatra tatra* – here and there; *akutaḥ-bhayaḥ* – without hesitation.

Before the reign of King Pṛthu there was no planned arrangement for different cities, villages, pasturing grounds, etc. Everything was scattered, and everyone constructed his residential quarters according to his own convenience. However, since King Pṛthu plans were made for towns and villages.

PURPORT: From this statement it appears that town and city planning is not new but has been coming down since the time of King Pṛthu. In India we can see regular planning methods evident in very old cities. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there are many descriptions of such ancient cities. ⁵ Even five thousand years ago, Lord Kṛṣṇa's capital, Dvārakā, was well planned, and similar other cities – Mathurā and Hastināpura (now New Delhi) – were also well planned. Thus the planning of cities and towns is not a modern innovation but was existing in bygone ages.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 19

मैत्रेय उवाच

1 अथादीक्षत राजा तु ह्यमेधशतेन सः
ब्रह्मावर्ते मनोः क्षेत्रे यत्र प्राची सरस्वती

maitreya uvāca
athādīkṣata rājā tu
hayamedha-śatena saḥ

brahmāvarte manoḥ kṣetre
yatra prācī sarasvatī

maitreyaḥ uvāca – the sage Maitreya said; *atha* – thereafter; *adīkṣata* – took initiation; *rājā* – the King; *tu* – then; *haya* – horse; *medha* – sacrifices; *śatena* – to perform one hundred; *saḥ* – he; *brahmāvarte* – known as Brahmāvarta; *manoḥ* – of Svāyambhuva Manu; *kṣetre* – in the land; *yatra* – where; *prācī* – eastern; *sarasvatī* – the river named Sarasvatī.

The great sage Maitreya continued: My dear Vidura, King Pṛthu initiated the performance of one hundred horse sacrifices at the spot where the river Sarasvatī flows towards the east. ⁶ This piece of land is known as Brahmāvarta, ⁷ and it was controlled by Svāyambhuva Manu.

2 तदभिप्रेत्य भगवान् कर्मातिशयमात्मनः
शतक्रतुर्न ममृषे पृथोर्यज्ञमहोत्सवम्

tad abhipretya bhagavān
karmātiśayam ātmanaḥ
śata-kratur na mamṛṣe
prthor yajña-mahotsavam

tad abhipretya – considering this matter; *bhagavān* – the most powerful; *karma-atiśayam* – excelling in fruitive activities; *ātmanaḥ* – of himself; *śata-kratuḥ* – King Indra, who had performed a hundred sacrifices; *na* – not; *mamṛṣe* – did tolerate; *prthoḥ* – of King Pṛthu; *yajña* – sacrificial; *mahā-utsavam* – great ceremonies.

When the most powerful Indra, the King of heaven, saw this, he considered the fact that King Pṛthu was going to exceed him in fruitive activities. Thus Indra could not tolerate the great sacrificial ceremonies performed by King Pṛthu.

PURPORT: In the material world everyone who comes to enjoy himself or lord it over material nature is envious of others. This envy is also found in the personality of the King of heaven, Indra. As evident from revealed scriptures, Indra was several times envious of many persons. He was especially envious of great fruitive activities and the

- 5) Name three planned cities existing during Lord Kṛṣṇa's time.
- 6) What is the name of the piece of land where King Pṛthu initiated the performance of one hundred horse sacrifices?
- 7) Who was the controller of that land?

execution of yoga practices, or *siddhis*. Indeed, he could not tolerate them, and he desired to break them up. 8) He was envious due to fear that those who performed great sacrifices for the execution of mystic yoga might occupy his seat. Since no one in this material world can tolerate another's advancement, everyone in the material world is called *matsara*, envious. 9) In the beginning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is therefore said that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is meant for those who are completely *nirmatsara* (nonenvious). In other words, one who is not free from the contamination of envy cannot advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however, if someone excels another person, the devotee who is excelled thinks how fortunate the other person is to be advancing in devotional service. Such nonenvy is typical of Vaikuṅṭha. However, when one is envious of his competitor, that is material. The demigods posted in the material world are not exempt from envy.

3 यत्र यज्ञपतिः साक्षाद्भगवान् हरिरीश्वरः अन्वभूयत सर्वात्मा सर्वलोकगुरुः प्रभुः

*yatra yajña-patiḥ sāksād
bhagavān harir īśvaraḥ
anvabhūyata sarvātmā
sarva-loka-guruḥ prabhuḥ*

yatra – where; *yajña-patiḥ* – the enjoyer of all sacrifices; *sāksāt* – directly; *bhagavān* – the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *hariḥ* – Lord Viṣṇu; *īśvaraḥ* – the supreme controller; *anvabhūyata* – became visible; *sarva-ātmā* – the Supersoul of everyone; *sarva-loka-guruḥ* – the master of all planets, or the teacher of everyone; *prabhuḥ* – the proprietor.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu, is present in everyone's heart as the Supersoul, and He is the proprietor of all planets and the enjoyer of the results of all sacrifices. He was personally present at the sacrifices made by King Pṛthu.

PURPORT: In this verse the word *sāksāt* is significant. Pṛthu Mahārāja was a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra* incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Actually Pṛthu Mahārāja was a living entity, but he acquired specific powers from Lord Viṣṇu. Lord Viṣṇu,

- 8) Why was Indra envious of great fruitive activities and the execution of yoga practices?
9) What quality, mentioned in the beginning of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, is essential for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?
10) What is the significance of the phrase *harir īśvaraḥ*?

however, is directly the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and thus belongs to the category of *viṣṇu-tattva*. Mahārāja Pṛthu belonged to the *jīva-tattva*. The *viṣṇu-tattva* indicates God, whereas the *jīva-tattva* indicates the part and parcel of God. When God's part and parcel is especially empowered, he is called *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*.

10) Lord Viṣṇu is herein described as *harir īśvaraḥ*. The Lord is so kind that He takes all miserable conditions away from His devotees. Consequently He is called Hari. He is described as *īśvara* because He can do whatever He likes. He is the supreme controller. The supreme *īśvara puruṣottama* is Lord Kṛṣṇa. He exhibits His powers as *īśvara*, or the supreme controller, when He assures His devotee in *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66): “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.” He can immediately make His devotee immune from all the reactions caused by sinful life if the devotee simply surrenders unto Him. He is described herein as *sarvātmā*, meaning that He is present in everyone's heart as the Supersoul, and as such He is the supreme teacher of everyone. If we are fortunate enough to take the lessons given by Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*, our lives immediately become successful. No one can give better instructions to human society than Lord Kṛṣṇa.

4 अन्वितो ब्रह्मशर्वाभ्यां लोकपालैः सहानुगैः उपगीयमानो गन्धर्वैर्मुनिभिश्चाप्सरोगणैः

*anvito brahma-śarvābhyām
loka-pālaiḥ sahanugaiḥ
upagīyamāno gandharvair
munibhiḥ cāpsaro-gaṇaiḥ*

anvitaḥ – being accompanied; *brahma* – by Lord Brahmā; *śarvābhyām* – and by Lord Śiva; *loka-pālaiḥ* – by the predominating chiefs of all different planets; *saha anugaiḥ* – along with their followers; *upagīyamānaḥ* – being praised; *gandharvaiḥ* – by the residents of Gandharvaloka; *munibhiḥ* – by great sages; *ca* – also; *apsaraḥ-gaṇaiḥ* – by the residents of Apsaroloka.

When Lord Viṣṇu appeared in the sacrificial arena, Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva and all the chief predominating personalities of every planet, as well as their followers, came with Him. When He appeared on the scene, the residents of Gandharvaloka, the great sages, and the residents of Apsaroloka all praised Him.

5 सिद्धा विद्याधरा दैत्या दानवा गुह्यकादयः सुनन्दनन्दप्रमुखाः पार्षदप्रवरा हरेः

[Continued in the next issue.]

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

LEARN THIS SCIENCE

These are the opening remarks by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda from a conversation between him and some of his disciples that took place in Bombay on April 17, 1977.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: From the Vedic literature we learn that the fallen soul transmigrates from body to body. He “evolves” from lower material bodies to higher bodies – from fish to plant to insect to bird to beast. And then he gets the body of a human being. Full consciousness. That is the chance for understanding God.

But if the human beings are forced to remain in darkness like the animals, that is a dangerous



civilization – denying the soul his priceless chance to become God realized and return to the spiritual world.

By knowing the science of God, you can get out of this continual evolutionary process. You can go to the anti-material world – Vaikuṅṭha, the place of no anxiety. In that world you can actually live. *Na jāyate mriyate vā*: There you do not have to take birth, nor do you have to die. And there you can dance with Kṛṣṇa. That is life. That we want. That we are seeking after.

But that life of lasting happiness is not possible here in this material world. Here you have to go through the evolutionary process again and

cess. If you are really interested in science, then learn this science: how to stop changing bodies.

You may say, “Why bother? Now I have such a rich and beautiful body – an opulent, educated, American body.” Yes, but if you are so well educated, then continue in that American body forever. Why can you not? Why are you so proud of your so-called scientific education?

You are under control – in actual fact, you are under the control of God’s laws. You say you have constructed this proud skyscraper? Very good. So live here forever. Why do you have to undergo death? Why can’t you live here forever? But no, you will be kicked out.

How much time the skyscraper constructor wasted! Instead of centering his life on God, no, he centered it on some huge pile of concrete. And now, though he remains in a photograph in the lobby, actually his life is in the commode. He has become a cockroach in the commode. People are worshiping his photograph in the lobby, and he is living in the commode.

This is called ignorance. What a very misleading civilization this is. So we are trying to save everyone from this misleading civilization. We are trying ourselves to be perfect, and we are trying to teach others the perfect, spiritual way of life.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa begins His teaching from this understanding: “You are not this material body. You have had many material bodies, but you are the inner spirit. You are a spiritual being. Now realize yourself and come back home to Me.”

This civilization gives everyone a false conception. Where is the question of spiritual knowledge? Where is the opportunity to become self-realized and go back to the spiritual world? Sometimes people may talk of spiritual life, but if they remain in this false, bodily conception, all their talk of spiritual life, spiritual realization, and spiritual liberation is useless.

First of all one has to understand, *aham brahmāsmi* – “I am not this material body; I am a spirit.” And then, *athāto brahma jijñāsā*. If I am Brahman – if I am spiritual – then what is my real, spiritual nature? Thus far, I have led my life in the bodily conception, but in reality I am a spirit, part and parcel of the Supreme Spirit. So how should a spiritual being live? What is my real life, in this world and the next? Therefore, we should convince people, “Read this book, *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. You’ll get all information.” And actually, they will get all information. 🌀

Kicked out. But because you have got attachment for the skyscraper, nature may give you some slight concession. “Unfortunately, sir, you misused your human body; you ignored God and your own soul. You simply wanted to go on living in the skyscraper. All right. You can go on living in the skyscraper – as a cockroach.”

Who can check this natural process? *Dehāntara*: If you stay here in this material world, you must change out of your present body and go into another body. And after all, the cockroach body is indeed a body.

So the proprietor of the skyscraper can become a cockroach in the skyscraper. Now I am a big proprietor; next life, a cockroach. Can you check this process? Say what you will. Nature will do what she will: “Yes. Very good, sir. Rather than go back to the spiritual world, you prefer your skyscraper. Now take your skyscraper. Live here as a cockroach.”

again – body after body, birth and death, birth and death – unless you take the special human opportunity and go back to the spiritual world, back home.

If you miss this priceless opportunity, just imagine your misfortune. So this so-called modern civilization is keeping all humanity in misfortune. This civilization is cheating us out of our opportunity to understand God and surrender to Him; rather, it is keeping us trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Only in the human form of life do we get the chance to return to the spiritual world. What an opportunity! But now that opportunity is being stolen from us.

And so we are returning, lifetime after lifetime, to the miseries of birth and death: from animal to man, from man to animal – up and down. This business of *dehāntara-prāptiḥ* – accepting new material bodies – is very dangerous. But as long as you remain in this world, you have to change your body. So stop this pro-

You can get out of this continual evolutionary process. You can go to Vaikuṅṭha. And there you can dance with Kṛṣṇa.



A Succession Conflict Caused By Selflessness

Bharata’s reaction to Lord Rāma’s exile displays the ideal of sublime brotherly love.

by Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa

WHEN A WEALTHY patriarch dies, leaving behind a huge inheritance, frequently succession conflicts break out. While each conflict may have its specific dynamics, they all usually have a common denominator: selfishness. Everyone related to the deceased wants a share of the pie, with the progeny often wanting the biggest piece, if not the whole pie.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* depicts a succession conflict between two princes after the death of their father. Strikingly, however, this conflict is caused not by selfishness, but by selflessness. Rather than two brothers arguing to get the inheritance for themselves, they

Bharata, humbly bearing Lord Rāma’s shoes, beseeches Rāma to return to rule Ayodhya.

argue that the other should accept it. And no, the inheritance is not a white elephant – it is the flourishing kingdom of Ayodhya, one of the most powerful kingdoms in ancient India. The conflict is intriguing, and the resolution is endearing.

A Series of Shocks

This narrative begins in the prosperous kingdom, with its climactic conflict occurring in the forest of Chitrakuta and the denouement on the outskirts of the capital. The ageing monarch, Daśaratha, prepares for his eventual retirement by deciding to appoint his oldest son, Rāma, as the prince regent. Daśaratha's youngest wife, Kaikeyī, being misled by her maid, sees this succession as an attempt to sideline her and her son, Bharata. So using two boons the king had promised her long ago, she compels him to send Rāma into exile for fourteen years and have Bharata declared the prince regent. While the kingdom

sinks into an ocean of horror and agony, Rāma graciously departs for the forest with His wife, Sītā, and younger brother Lakṣmaṇa. Within days the heartbroken king breathes his last. Bharata, who was in a relative's kingdom while this tragedy unfolded, is summoned to perform the last rites of his father and take over the reins of the kingdom.

When Bharata returns, he is struck by a series of shocks – first, that his father is dead; second, that his brother is in exile; third, that his mother is the cause of both these horrors; fourth, that his mother has misunderstood him so much that she thinks he will be pleased by her machinations; and fifth, that many people, both courtiers and citizens, suspect him to be a co-conspirator with his mother. Steeling himself, he performs for his deceased father the elaborate funeral rites befitting a monarch, while resolving throughout to somehow set right at least some of the grievous wrongs. He decides to go

to the forest for beseeching Rāma to return and accept the throne.

Sincerity Removes Suspicion

When Bharata expresses his noble resolve to the courtiers, their lingering suspicions about his complicity are dissipated. His selflessness enlivens them, as does the possibility of their beloved Rāma's return. They desire eagerly to accompany Bharata to the forest. He consents gladly, knowing that their presence will reinforce his request. The royal priest, Vasiṣṭha, goes too, as does the chief minister, Sumantra, and the three recently widowed royal mothers: Kauśalyā, Sumitra, and Kaikeyī. Understandably, Bharata has reservations about letting Kaikeyī accompany him. But she has had a change of heart, primarily because Bharata had reproached her and rejected her scheming. Seeing that she is sincerely repentant, he allows her to come, hoping that since she had

asked for Rāma's exile, maybe her request will influence Him to end it too. When the citizens hear of Bharata's righteous resolve, they too are delighted, and many of them desire to go with him. Hoping that the gigantic show of strength will persuade Rāma to return, Bharata orders that a road be constructed to take the huge procession into the forest.

Once the road is built, Bharata strives to retrace Rāma's path, seeking the help of the tribal king Guha and the sage Bharadvāja. Both of them initially express apprehension about Bharata's going to search for Rāma with such a huge contingent. Their barely concealed suspicion about his intentions towards Rāma shreds Bharata's heart. Controlling his pain, he expresses his fealty to his older brother with disarming sincerity, not only removing their suspicion but also winning their hearts. They gladly show the way that Rāma has taken.

Normally, we feel angry when we are accused, even when we are guilty, what then to speak of when we are not. Bharata is repeatedly subjected to false accusations – and he has the royal power to silence his accusers. But far from angrily resorting to such power, he humbly wins his accusers over with his heart's power. By the sincere outpouring of his anguished heart, he fervently expresses his utter ignorance of, even revulsion at, the conspiracy against his brother and disarms those who had doubted him.

Love Wins – So Does Duty

After a long journey through the dense forest and up the scenic mountain at Chitrakuta, Bharata breaks into a clearing with a simple cottage. Seated outside are Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa. Bharata is anguished to see them dressed in tree-bark instead of the familiar royal robes. Falling at Rāma's feet, he grieves over the fate that has reduced them to such destitution. After initial greetings, Rāma

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enquires about their father's well-being, voicing the grave doubt that troubled Him on seeing the royal elephant Śatrunjaya arriving in the procession without any ruler atop it. Bharata, with a heavy heart, breaks the news of their father's demise.

Rāma is grief-struck. Somehow He stoically pulls Himself together and goes to the nearby river to offer the oblation of water to His deceased father. His shock and grief subside slowly, and His responsible royal mind turns to the problem of the empty throne, and the concomitant threat of invasions from without and disruptions from within. Seizing the moment as opportune, Bharata fervently implores his brother to return and assume kingship.

Rāma gently refuses, saying that now the only service He can render their deceased father is to honor his memory by fulfilling their father's word. Bharata has already anticipated that Rāma will not agree so easily, so he offers to stay in the forest in Rāma's place – thus, one son of Daśaratha would live in the forest, and Daśaratha's word would be honored. Seeing Bharata's astonishingly selfless offer, Rāma smiles, but replies that each person has to bear his own karma and no one can take anyone else's place. Indeed, if peo-

ple arbitrarily experimented with karmic surrogacy, they might well throw the universal order into chaos.

Their loving yet intense discussion goes on for hours, with both brothers quoting scriptural and traditional precedents in their attempts at persuasion. The citizens are amazed and proud to see the brothers' erudition, which impresses and pleases even the assembled *brāhmaṇas* and sages. Despite their prolonged discussion, both remain unrelenting: Bharata in his request, and Rāma in His renunciation.

Seeing Bharata unable to make any headway, the elders try to persuade Rāma. Vasiṣṭha, the queens, Sumantra, and the accompanying *brāhmaṇas* all give various reasons why Rāma should return. Rāma responds to their arguments with respect, but without swerving from His position.

At this point, Bharata could have been justified in giving up. He could well have said that he hadn't caused Rāma's exile and had done his best to get Him back: "If Rāma isn't ready to listen, what can I do but accept the kingdom?" Most people would have accepted a kingdom that had been providentially dropped into their laps.

But Bharata was not most people.

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Seeing his hopes of Rāma's return dissipating, he makes a last-ditch plea. He sits on the forest floor, declaring that he will sit there fasting until Rāma accepts the kingdom. Everyone watches transfixed, waiting for Rāma's response. After a momentous pause, Rāma picks up Bharata, pulls him into an embrace, and tells him that his love has won. As Bharata's face blossoms in joy, Rāma adds with a sweet smile that He accepts the kingdom, but since He wants to honor His father's word, He is now entrusting the kingdom to Bharata for the fourteen-year exile period. Thus, Rāma sagaciously resolves the dilemma, honoring both Bharata's love and His own duty.

His sandals, Bharata places them on his head. He beseeches Rāma to return as soon as the exile period ends and declares that he would be unable to maintain his life for even one day beyond that – fourteen years of separation from Rāma would be painful enough. Rāma reassures that He will return, and Bharata takes tearful leave.

On returning to Ayodhya, Bharata enthrones Rāma's sandals – a symbol of selflessness with probably few, if any, parallels in world history. What brother would ask for his brother's sandals? And if offered them, he would probably place them not on his own head, but on his brother's – to hit a blow of affronted honor.

not reclaim it. Accordingly, He sends Hanumān as a messenger and observer. The astute monkey is to deliver to Bharata the message that Rāma will return soon, and observe whether Bharata evinces any displeasure at this news. Ever eager to serve, Hanumān flies ahead, lands at Nandigram, and conveys Rāma's message. The news fills Bharata with unrestrained jubilation. His face is a study in delight. He embraces and thanks Hanumān for bringing such great news, and offers him profuse thanks and abundant gifts. Bharata's facial and verbal expressions of joy leave Hanumān in no doubt about the unreserved affection the prince has for Rāma.

Bharata rushes to arrange a majestic welcome for Rāma. Soon, a huge congregation of courtiers and citizens assembles at the outskirts of Ayodhya, eagerly awaiting Rāma's return. When they see Rāma with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa and a large number of monkey warriors high in the sky aboard the celestial airplane Puṣpaka, they gasp in astonishment and delight. As the plane descends, Bharata offers articles of worship to the airborne Rāma. After Rāma disembarks, Bharata rushes forward and falls at his brother's feet. Rāma lovingly lifts and embraces him, their hearts joined together not just by proximity but also by the intensity that comes from the love that has withstood the toughest of tests.

Place Relations Above Possessions

Valuing relations over possessions is foundational for the sustenance of family, society, and humanity. Bharata considered the affection he relished in his relationship with Rāma far more meaningful and fulfilling than the gratification of ruling the kingdom. Even if we can't be as selfless as Bharata, still a slight increase in selflessness in our relationships can significantly improve them and substantially decrease conflicts.

And the *Rāmāyaṇa's* lessons run deeper than teaching us how to improve our relationships. Rāma is not just a venerable elder brother – He is God Himself descending to play the role of an ideal human being. Emotions directed towards Him purify and elevate us, eventually granting the supreme liberation. The more we imbue our practice of *bhakti-yoga* with selflessness, the more our devotion strengthens, deepens, and sweetens, propelling us on the path to eternal spiritual fulfillment.

The evolution of selflessness thus progresses from valuing people over things to ultimately cherishing God over everything.

Selflessness Is Enriching, Not Impoverishing

A materialistic vision makes selflessness seem like self-deprivation. If matter and material things are the only source of enjoyment, then being selfless means depriving oneself of those things. Consequently, being selfless often equates with living with less.

Though materialistic people may tout the word *love* frequently, what actually goes on in the name of love is often an arrangement for mutual material gratification – when the gratification stops, the love too disappears. In contrast, a spiritual worldview helps us understand that our relationships are meant not for our material gratification, but for our spiritual evolution. That is, our relationships are meant to give us the realizations necessary for us to expand the scope of our love until it reaches the supreme spiritual reality, God. And loving Him is not an isolated activity; He is, after all, the Lord of everyone, including our loved ones. So, the more we learn to love Him, the more our love for our loved ones also becomes spiritualized and selfless – based not on the gratification they provide us, but on their connection with Him, the one we aspire to love.

Moreover, the Lord is the source

of all happiness, as the very name Rāma indicates. We can access this happiness by cultivating His loving remembrance, with the remembrance becoming increasingly relishable as our love deepens. So, we start seeing love itself as life's supreme treasure – it is the greatest source of fulfillment, a fulfillment that becomes increasingly accessible through selflessness. Thus, we understand that selflessness is not impoverishing, but enriching.

Happiness: Byproduct, Not Product, of Love

Someone may argue, "When love is offered because it provides the giver happiness, then how is it selfless? Isn't it a form of selfishness too?"

Not necessarily. Initially we may strive to love the Lord with the hope of happiness. But even such less-than-selfless connection with the Lord purifies us, thus raising our love to a higher level. And for the purest love, happiness is not the motive, but its natural result – happiness is not the product, but the byproduct. We don't love the Lord to be happy; we love Him simply because He is so lovable. And by loving Him purely, selflessly, wholeheartedly, we naturally relish the highest happiness. Pertinently, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.6) points to similar characteristics of pure love for God: because it is unmotivated and uninterrupted, it is understood to be selfless, and because it grants fulfillment to the heart, it is understood to be joyful. Thus, this sublime love is simultaneously selfless and joyful. 🌐

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For the next fourteen years, Bharata shoulders all the responsibilities of the king, but refuses all the privileges.

Sandals As Symbols Of Selflessness

Bharata is disappointed, but he knows there's nothing more he can do to persuade Rāma. Still, his selflessness finds another endearing expression.

Often our ego makes us want to appear better than what we are. For example, people may use bombastic words to sound more learned than they are, or they may claim greater intimacy with a famous person than their actual connection. Or a caretaker-ruler may commandeer all the trappings of royalty to appear like the actual ruler. In contrast, Bharata wants everyone to know his position: caretaker, not ruler. So, he requests Rāma to give him His sandals, which he will place on the throne. Bharata intends to sit below the throne on a humble seat, a position that will clearly reflect his heart's disposition: Rāma is the actual ruler, and Bharata His servitor.

After Rāma obliges by offering

For the next fourteen years, Bharata shoulders all the responsibilities of the king, but refuses all the privileges – quite the opposite of many present leaders who enjoy privileges without executing responsibilities. Bharata lives in a hut outside the city at a place called Nandigram. Indeed, Bharata adopts a diet and dress similar to what Rāma has adopted, thus performing in the kingdom the austerities Rāma is performing in the forest.

A Test Passed with Delight

Bharata's selflessness is also evident at the end of the exile, in his eagerness to welcome Rāma back. Rāma knows that time has a dangerous power to erode even the noblest of resolves. So He wants to check if over the fourteen years Bharata's feelings have changed, if he has become attached to the kingdom. If Bharata desires to stay on as its sovereign, Rāma decides that He will

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Celebrating Śrī Narasimha's Amazing Appearance

This extraordinary avatar of the Lord protected His devotee long ago and is ever ready to protect anyone who seeks His shelter today.

by Premānanda Gaura Dāsa

WHILE THE *Vedas* declare in their every breath the presence of the creator in every blade of creation, the *Purāṇas* (histories) vividly portray many occasions when the creator of the universe, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, called Paraṁ Brahman in the *Vedas*, intervened in the functioning of His creation. Kṛṣṇa does that by taking special forms and acting in special ways. Those special forms of the Paraṁ Brahman are called avatars. The avatars of Kṛṣṇa are numerous and are not just in the human form; they are in fish, animal, and even in mixed human-animal forms.

The word *avatāra* literally means one who descends. So, an avatar is Paraṁ Brahman, Bhagavān, descending upon the earth in a special form. Each avatar of Kṛṣṇa descends for a

particular purpose, to solve a particular inexplicable mess created by us humans or even the *devas*, the denizens of heaven. In each avatar, the Paraṁ Brahman decides how long He wants to stay on the mortal planet. Sometimes it is for just a few hours, and sometimes He is a supercentenarian.

While accomplishing this, Bhagavān also awakens *ānanda*, or pure joy – which constitutes His very nature – in those with whom He interacts on this planet, even His dead-set enemies. An avatar enlivens the creation with so much joy that even reading the *Purāṇas*' accounts of such interactions millenniums later brings joy to humanity.

How could a mess-salvaging operation be joyous even to those who read it ages later?

Hiranyakaśipu had thought himself immortal because of Brahmā's boons, but Lord Nṛsimha easily killed him while honoring Brahmā's word.



Painting by Saccidānanda Dāsa

Simply because Kṛṣṇa performs it as *līlā*, a transcendental drama of elegant style that is a rich tapestry of characters and pageantry. Unique to each avatar, *līlā* is what makes the history so vivid, so enlivening that its mere reading or a narration uplifts its reader's mind to an ecstatic state, in sharp contrast to the mundane world that we all experience day in and day out.

A Major Joyful Occasion

Śrī Narasimha Caturdaśī is one such major occasion of joy. It celebrates the descent of the primeval Lord Śrī Viṣṇu to restore the turmoil created by Hiranyakaśipu, often referred to as a *rākṣasa* – a being from whom one runs for *raṅkṣa*, or protection. Hiranyakaśipu sought revenge against his brother's slayer, the almighty Bhagavān Viṣṇu Himself. Hiranyakaśipu obtained powerful boons from four-headed Śrī Brahmā, the architect-in-chief of the universe, by pleasing him with his severe *tapas*, austerities. Those boons virtually eliminated any possibility of his death during a war with Viṣṇu:

*yadi tvam varadānāya pravartato
bhagavan mama
yad yad vṛṇomyaham brahman tat
tan me dātum arhasi
na śuṣkeṇa na cārdreṇa na jalena na
vahninā
na kāṣṭheṇa na kīṭena pāṣāṇena na
vāyunā*

*nāyudhena na śūlena na śailena na
mānuṣaiḥ
na surair asurair vāpi na gandhar-
vair na rākṣasaiḥ
na kinnarair na yakṣais tu
vidyādharma bhujāṅgamaiḥ
na vānarair mṛgair vāpi naiva
mātragaṇair api*

*nābhyantare na bāhye tu nānyair
maraṇa hetubhiḥ
na dine na ca naktam me tvat
prasādāt bhaven mṛtiḥ
iti vai deva deveṣam varam tvatto
vṛṇomyaham*

*After the
demigods fail
to appease
Lord Nṛsimha,
Prahāda
approaches Him
on Brahmā's
request.*

“O lord, if you are so inclined to bless me with benedictions, please bless me with these that I ask of you. May I not be killed with anything that is dry or wet, with water or fire, wood, an insect, rock, or wind. May I be not killed with any weapon, spear, or mountain; nor by men, *devatās*, *asuras*, *rākṣasas*, or Gandharvas; nor by Kinnaras, Yakṣas, Vidyādhara, or serpents; nor by monkeys, deer, and other animals, or Durgā or similar divine mothers; not inside or outside the house; nor by any other means of death. By your grace, may there not be death for me in the day or in the night. All this is the boon I ask from you, O lord of lords.” (*Narasimha Purāṇa* 40.5–9)

Blessed so by Brahmā, the invincible *rākṣasa* came upon a smart plan to take revenge on Śrī Viṣṇu. *Yajña* (Vedic sacrifice) and dharma (the Vedic way of life) are considered to be Śrī Viṣṇu's roots. *Yajña* and dharma require *brāhmaṇas*, cows, the *Vedas*, and *varṇāśrama*, the Vedic social system based on one's propensities, training, and stages of life. Destroying all these would destroy *yajña* and dharma – and Hiranyakaśipu's archenemy, Śrī Viṣṇu.

Hiranyakaśipu tormented the universe. Anyone who offered oblations to *devatās* through *yajña* or worshiped Śrī Viṣṇu invited untimely



Painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa

death at Hiranyakaśipu's hands. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.2.9, 11–12) Hiranyakaśipu tells his followers:

*tasmin kūṭe 'hite naṣṭe
kṛta-mūle vanas-patau
viṭapā iva śuṣyanti
viṣṇu-prāṇā divaukasah*

“When the root of a tree is cut and the tree falls down, its branches and twigs automatically dry up. Similarly, when I have killed this diplomatic Viṣṇu, the demigods, for whom Lord Viṣṇu is the life and soul, will lose the source of their life and wither away.”

*viṣṇur dvija-kriyā-mūlo
yajño dharmamayaḥ pumān
devarṣi-pitṛ-bhūtānām
dharmasya ca parāyaṇam*

“The basic principle of brahminical culture is to satisfy Lord Viṣṇu, the personification of sacrificial and ritu-

alistic ceremonies. Lord Viṣṇu is the personified reservoir of all religious principles, and He is the shelter of all the demigods, the great *pitās*, and the people in general. When the *brāhmaṇas* are killed, no one will exist to encourage the *kṣatriyas* to perform *yajñas*, and thus the demi-

gods, not being appeased by *yajña*, will automatically die.”

*yatra yatra dvijā gāvo
vedā varṇāśrama-kriyāḥ
taṁ taṁ janapadaṁ yāta
sandīpayata vṛścata*

“Immediately go wherever there is good protection for the cows and *brāhmaṇas* and wherever the *Vedas* are studied in terms of the *varṇ-āśrama* principles. Set fire to those places and cut from the roots the trees there, which are the source of life.”

Hiraṇyakaśipu created so much fear that Lord Śiva and the *devatās* went to appease Bhagavān Viṣṇu and seek His protection. Lord Śiva successfully pleased Bhagavān

pillar in the royal palace of Hiraṇyakaśipu. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.8.17) describes:

*satyaṁ vidhātum nija-bhrtya-
bhāṣitaṁ
vyāptiṁ ca bhūteṣv akhileṣu
cātmanaḥ
adṛśyatāyadbhuta-rūpaṁ udvahan
stambhe sabhāyāṁ na mṛgaṁ na
mānuṣam*

“To prove that the statement of His servant Prahlāda Mahārāja was substantial – in other words, to prove that the Supreme Lord is present everywhere, even within the pillar of an assembly hall – the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, exhibited a wonderful form never before seen. The form was neither that of a man

*haraye ’dbhuta-simhāya
brahmaṇe paramātmāne*

“O my Lord, full of six opulences, O Supreme Person! O Supreme Soul, killer of all miseries! O Supreme Person in the form of a wonderful lion and man, let me offer my respectful obeisances unto You.” (*Bhāg.* 7.10.10)

Bhagavān Narasimhadeva blessed Prahlāda and all those like him:

*yatra yatra ca mad-bhaktāḥ
praśāntāḥ sama-darśinaḥ
sādhavaḥ samudācārās
te pūyante ’pi kīkaṭāḥ*

“Whenever and wherever there are peaceful, equipoised devotees who are well behaved and decorated with all good qualities, that place and the dynasties there, even if condemned, are purified. (*Bhāg.* 7.10.19)

Noteworthy Temples

In Bhārata-bhūmi (India), temples of Bhagavān Narasimhadeva abound. The most famous is the Ahovilam

(or Ahobalam, literally “O Great Strength”) temple complex in the Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh. The complex has nine deities of Bhagavān Narasimhadeva, each in a particular mood and form. One is His fierce (*ugra*) form as Ahobila Nṛsimha Swami, the presiding deity. Another is the graceful (*saumya*) form of Mālola Nṛsimha Swami (the beloved [*lola*] of Lakṣmī [*mā*]), seated with His consort, Śrī Lakṣmījī on His lap. The temple complex is maintained by the Ahovilam Math.

Up in the foothills of the mighty Himalayas, over a thousand miles away, in Jyotimath (Joshimath, Uttarakhnad state), Bhagavān Narasimhadeva is the presiding deity in the Narasimha Mandir. Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, the author of the famous *Lakṣmī Narasimha Karavalamba Stotram* and *Lakṣmī Narasimha Pañcaratna Stotram*, established this temple many centuries ago. The Lord

blesses devotees with His protection as they begin their arduous travel on pilgrimage to Badrinath in the Himalayas at over three thousand meters above sea level.

Bhagavān Narasimhadeva’s basic nature is to give protection to anyone who takes His shelter. And one may need that protection either in a very inexplicable situation or simply to carry on one’s day-to-day activities. All one needs is to call upon Him with faith, like Prahlāda, who believed that the Lord was there to protect him from the sword of his own demon father.

Perhaps the best way to take Lord Narasimha’s shelter is to worship Him on the Narasimha Caturdaśī day, the day He appeared in this world. One can fast until sunset and then conduct His worship. If fasting is not possible, then one can worship Him in the evening just as Sūryadeva, the sun, is receding in the western horizon. Put a picture of Lakṣmī Narasimhadeva on your home altar and light a *dīpaka*, a lamp, in front of Him. If possible one should chant His 108 names, *Narasimha Aṣṭottara Stotra*, together with one’s family. If chanting those 108 names is not possible, just chant *om namo bhagavate narasimhāya*: “Obeisances to Lord Narasimha.”

The *Narasimha Purāṇa* (54.61) declares, *samasta puṇya phaladaṁ viṣṇoḥ prakīrtanam*: “Glorification of Viṣṇu bestows the fruits of all pious deeds.” So, come, let us celebrate Narasimha Caturdaśī and get His divine protection for all of us and for all we do. 🙏

Premānanda Gaura Dāsa (Dr. Pradeep Goel) was until recently a university professor and health advisor to the American federal and state governments. Having entered the third stage of Vedic life, vānaprastha, he spends time now on preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness and mentoring devotees. He has been with ISKCON for close to thirty years and is a senior disciple of His Holiness Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami.

Hiraṇyakaśipu created so much fear that Lord Śiva and the *devatās* went to appease Bhagavān Viṣṇu and seek His protection.

Viṣṇu by chanting His one hundred names. Hiraṇyakaśipu’s end was now finally in sight.

But there was a problem: Brahmājī’s boons to Hiraṇyakaśipu were not easy to overcome. They were so many and so comprehensive that they virtually eliminated any possibility of killing this demon. Śrī Viṣṇu, whose energy manifests as multitudes of planets ever revolving without a millisecond of error, had to think of a solution.

The Amazing Solution

On the most auspicious day of Vaiśākha Śukla Pakṣa Caturdaśī, or the fourteenth day in the waxing cycle of the moon in the Vedic month of Vaiśākha (May), such a divine solution became manifest. A strange form of Śrī Viṣṇu descended on earth. Bhagavān Narasimha – half man, half lion – appeared from a

nor that of a lion. Thus the Lord appeared in His wonderful form in the assembly hall.” That stranger was Śrī Viṣṇu, who has taken the form of Narasimha, half man and half lion. He killed the *rākṣasa* just as an eagle kills a monstrous snake, and He violated none of the boons of Brahmājī: Narasimhadeva was neither a man nor an animal, the nails He used to tear apart this snake were not weapons, the time when Hiraṇyakaśipu was annihilated was dusk, which is neither day nor night, and he was killed on the threshold of the palace, neither outside nor inside.

A tumultuous crowd of denizens from heaven sang praises to Bhagavān Narasimhadeva. Hiraṇyakaśipu’s son Prahlāda, a great devotee of the Lord, fell down at the Lord’s feet and recited this *stuti*, adulation:

*om namo bhagavate tubhyaṁ
puruṣāya mahātmāne*

BTG WAREHOUSE CLEARANCE SALE!



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:

**Orders of 10–50: \$1.00 each, 51–500: \$0.75 each,
500+: \$0.60 each. (Shipping costs are extra.)**

To order, contact the Krishna.com Store and let one of our customer service representatives know you’re interested in the “BTG Warehouse Clearance Sale.” Because our inventory includes a variety of different issues in various quantities, and because different issues may be mixed together in one carton, we are unable to fill requests for specific issues. We will send you only issues that are currently available and of our own choosing.



KṚṢṆA CŌMICS

An attempt to present characters from the Vedic literature through the popular media of comic books and graphic novels.

by Cārucandra Dāsa; artwork by George Marnero

SINCE MY YOUTH I have been interested in the concept of expressing ideas and stories through visual arts. Often it is far more effective to convey a topic with the aid of illustrations, charts, animations, and videos than to rely exclusively on words. I served a short stint at an art school in Pittsburgh after high school, and what I learned in that semester and a half was that I never wanted to do art as a career. Art, being an expression from within, works best when it is relevant and meaningful to the artist. Thus the term “starving artist” is well known because many artists prefer not to express someone else’s thoughts, visions, and so on – often opposed to their own – just so they can eat.

Fast forward ten years, and I found myself doing art as a career so that I could pay off my student loans from another university. So for the last twelve years, my art has been mostly limited to forced renditions of images meant to increase my clients’ profit, adoration, and distinction, but leaving me wanting. Since the field I have worked in does not lend itself much to spiritual artistic expression, I

have decided to change my field and begin producing graphic novels that depict Kṛṣṇa's entertaining and inspirational pastimes.

The Challenge

Before I talk about that, let me address the question of whether or not Kṛṣṇa should be presented in the medium of comic books and graphic novels. On the one hand, Kṛṣṇa, being the supreme all-pervasive Lord, is *already* present everywhere, and one who can perceive Him within everything is truly Kṛṣṇa conscious (*Gītā* 6.30). On the other hand, since comic books, with their use of science fiction and fantasy, generally stretch readers' perceptions of reality, the heroes in them, although revered as gods by many, are certainly not (nor do they generally attempt to be) accurate portrayals of the Supreme Lord.

There is no denying the immense overwhelming popularity of the comic-book industry, which is responsible for many of the highest grossing films of all time. The influence of this genre is not limited to books, television shows, and movies. Indeed, it has saturated every imaginable market out there and become greatly successful. From action figures, to clothing, to Halloween costumes, to school supplies, to limited-edition breakfast cereals, we are constantly encountering superhero paraphernalia.

Although Kṛṣṇa makes some small cameos in some popular movies, whether in a painting in the background or by the mention of His name, most of the time His vivid and colorful pastimes are not conveyed. Some contemporary books introduce the character of Kṛṣṇa into their stories, and even try to present some of His pastimes found in Vedic texts, but due to the nature of the comic-book industry, the authors take artistic liberties to



But this burden is mine alone. There is no need for my family to suffer more than they already have.

... I must first pacify their sorrow and then I will rectify this grave injustice.

Lord Hiraṇyakaśipu is about to speak.

Today is a most tragic day for us all...

My dear family!



change the details of the story to try to make it more relatable to the masses.

It is difficult to interject an all-powerful being like Kṛṣṇa into mainstream storytelling because people want to be able to relate to the heroes. Readers or viewers like to feel that under the right circumstances, they too could be mighty and heroic enough to save the world. For this reason many comic-book authors claim that a hero has to have an imperfection or weakness so that his story is more believable and more interesting. Their theory is that people will accept that a boy can climb walls and shoot webs from his wrists, but only if we humanize him by burdening him with tedious schoolwork and girl troubles.



People don't want to read a story about someone who is completely perfect, because they know that absolute perfection is unattainable for us.

Many times when a "god" is introduced in comic books, he is written off as merely a powerful alien, but with certain flaws or limitations. In that regard, it may be

awhile before we see a fully accurate portrayal of the Vedic stories we know and love hitting big in the mainstream.

Trying to Meet the Challenge

This, of course, does not mean that Kṛṣṇa's pastimes cannot be accurately depicted in comic books with-

out imposing imperfections on Him or equating Him with an alien or mythological character to accumulate an expansive fan base. In this iron age of Kali-yuga, where people care more about politics, sports, and self-aggrandizement than they do God consciousness, it is no surprise that comic books about costumed vigilantes fighting alien forces will



be more popular than their spiritual counterparts. But when it comes to transcendence, popularity does not determine value.

For that reason, we at Sunanda Productions have decided to produce graphic novels that allow readers to experience the culturally rich stories of the Vedic literature without altering their valuable messages. The first book we published tells the story of Lord Narasimhadeva from the Seventh Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam* in seventy-two full-color pages with beautiful illustrations by Bhakta George Marnero of Bulgaria.



Throughout the last two decades I have told the story of Lord Narasimha at least a hundred times to various people. From curious customers where I used to work, to family members, to budding spiritual seekers – every one of them emphat-

ically expressed their appreciation of the poetic justice this ultimate story of good versus evil conveys. Many of these eager listeners had me repeat the story multiple times so that they could get the details right when they retold it to their friends.

This story is often prompted when someone sees an illustration of Lord Narasimhadeva disemboweling the demon Hiranyakāshipu, who tried to kill his saintly son. Due to the graphic nature of this pastime, the story is often acted out in a dramatic



play or skit, which is perhaps why many devotees have experienced the story in that form rather than by reading it in a book or hearing it in a class. To make this highly appreciated and morally rich pastime more



accessible to people of all backgrounds, we have carefully adapted it to a graphic novel while preserving the spiritual message conveyed in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In this way readers can experience all of the details of this awe-inspiring pastime in a very engaging way.

The book can be previewed and bought at SunandaProductions.com, and if this first publication is well received, we will gladly continue producing other stories from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in this format. The next graphic novel we plan to publish will tell the story of Lord Varāhadeva. There is virtually no end to the number of Vaiṣṇava sto-

ries that can be produced in this medium, and I hope to continue making them available to a much wider audience. 🙏

Cārucandra Dāsa, a disciple of Rāvīndra Svarūpa Dāsa, began his practice of Vaiṣṇavism in Philadelphia in 1993. Since 2005 he has been spending half of each year in Sridham Mayapur, where he develops curriculum for the śāstric study courses such as the Bhaktivedanta course for both the Mayapur Institute and the Bhaktivedanta Academy. His remaining time is spent developing a Vaiṣṇava retreat center in Kentucky called the Bhagavat Commune.



Through Pain to JOY

*A lesson in Kṛṣṇa consciousness
learned in labor and childbirth.*

by Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī

THOUSANDS OF years ago at Kurukshetra, Aśvatthāmā was furious. His great father, who had taught military arts to the opposition, now lay dead on the battlefield, at least partially through treachery. Aśvatthāmā would avenge his father's death. Using mantras his father had taught him, he invoked the mystic Nārāyaṇa weapon, which belongs to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Soon the Pāṇḍavas' army, although devotees of Kṛṣṇa, encountered this terrifying weapon in every direction. Thousands of soldiers fell dead or injured from what looked like meteors and missiles raining throughout the expanse of sky. As the army opposed the weapon, it kept grow-



ing in strength and power. Exasperated and wanting to protect his men, the Pāṇḍava chief called for retreat and surrender.

But then Kṛṣṇa called out over the cacophony: "This is My own weapon and cannot be resisted. Put down your weapons, get down from your animals and vehicles, and lie on the ground. Do not even think of opposing it, or you will die. Fully surrender."

All the warriors but one followed Lord Kṛṣṇa's words, and that one, Bhīma, the strongest man on earth, stood firm while the full force focused on him alone. Finally Lord Kṛṣṇa, as well as Arjuna, Bhīma's younger brother, tore Bhīma's weapons from his

"I was astonished during the labor not to experience physical pain at all. I kept thinking, 'That is so interesting!' while mentally I was absorbed in Govinda's belt of beads."

hands and pushed him to the earth. The weapon retreated, and its missiles disappeared into the sky.

When I first heard this story from the sacred book the *Mahābhārata*, I immediately recognized the principle of how to conquer distress and pain, indeed, how to transform pain into joy. For I had long before learned how to get off my own war chariot and lie down weaponless rather than resist. How surprised I was to discover the secret of conquering pain and danger!

The revelation in my own life came in a form available only to women, and only in a situation where, like at Kurukshetra, the instinctual response is resistance. Yet the male half of the

population can certainly also use this technique and frame of mind when facing inexorable and otherwise unbearable life situations.

The Secret of Conquering Pain

I was excited about having our second baby, but not about the labor and the delivery. Our oldest child had been born at home with a doctor, and everything had been uneventful medically. My husband and I had spent weeks attending classes to prepare for labor, and I diligently applied the method to some effect. Still, overall it ranked near the top of unpleasant experiences, to put it mildly. I worried and wondered how

I would handle it again.

Then somewhere around the middle of my pregnancy, I read the following passage in one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books:

“My Lord, I am not suffering, for I know the art of being happy.” How is this? “Simply by hearing about You and chanting about You I am happy.” . . . Even in ordinary life it is possible for the mind to be absorbed in such a way that even a surgical operation may not disturb a man. Years ago, when Stalin had to undergo a surgical operation, he refused the use of chloroform. If this is possible even in an ordinary materialistic life, what to speak of spiritual life? One's mind should always be absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, in thinking of Kṛṣṇa. (*Teachings of Lord Kapila*, Text 23)

After reading that, I became very determined to learn the art of mental detachment. I went to a medical doctor who specialized in this art, and then every day practiced sitting quietly in our apartment while mentally I sat in the temple room, gazing intently at the deity forms of the Lord, Rādhā-Govinda. I concentrated particularly on a belt Govinda would wear, made of large beads.

I was astonished during the labor not to experience physical pain at all. I was aware of my body and how it was functioning – indeed, I could feel the actions of the muscles with clarity impossible when pain is involved. But I was as if a detached observer. In regard to my body, I kept thinking, “That is so interesting!” while mentally I was absorbed in Govinda's belt of beads.

Our third child was born the same way, and during that labor and delivery, the truth dawned on me that pain is a result of resistance – trying to control and in general working against our natural state of joyful surrender to Kṛṣṇa's will while meditating upon Him. In such a state, we

(please turn to page 63)



Rādhā-Govinda, Brooklyn, New York.

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.



Jagannatha Puri Rathayātrā.

Month of Madhusūdana (April 12–May 10)

MAY

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

6 – **Mohinī Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

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

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

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

10 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, a follower of the Six Gosvāmīs. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master (Īśvara Purī).

Month of Trivikrama
(May 11–June 9)

16 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya, an intimate associate of Lord Caitanya.

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

23 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura, the author of *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata*, a biography on Lord Caitanya.

JUNE

4 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, a prominent spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* (disciplic succession), and the author of *Govinda-bhāṣya*, an important commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras*. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāmiṇī, a prominent female spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*.

5 – **Pāṇḍava Nirjalā Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

Month of Vāmana
(June 10–July 9)

10 – Disappearance of Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita, one of the principal followers of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan.

19 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrī Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Caitanya.

20 – **Yoginī Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

24 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Caitanya. Also, disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Fasting till noon, then feasting.

25 – Lord Jagannātha's Rathayātrā in Jagannatha Puri. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara and Śrīla Śivānanda Sena, intimate associates of Lord Caitanya.

JULY

4 – **Śayanā Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

Misotheism

and the Devotion of God's Adversaries

Today's New Atheists, who decry the very idea of God, are unlikely to get the same results as the enemies fortunate enough to challenge Kṛṣṇa face to face.

by Satyarāja Dāsa

SOMETIMES, when things aren't going my way, or if I feel generally unenthused in my spiritual pursuits, I can become somewhat antagonistic toward God. "Why bother?" I wonder. "Why be devoted? What has God ever done for me?" I suspect that most people have periods of such spiritual sluggishness, or even come to resent God, especially when the fates seem to work against them. And if this mindset goes too far, it can feel like one is at war with the Supreme: "Okay, let Him be that way. He'll see – I just



Painting by Jagat-kāma Devī Dāsa



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One main reason Lord Kṛṣṇa descends to earth is to kill the demoniac, such as (left) Śaṅkhacūḍa and (top to bottom) Bakāsura, Kāmsa, and Kāliya.



won't worship Him. Let's see how He likes that!" As if we can threaten God.

In my life these moments are thankfully few and far between, and I don't want to make too much of them. But I was recently reminded of such feelings when I came across the word *misotheism*. (No, it's not God's preferred soup recipe.) It originates in ancient Greek culture, articulating the notion of wanting to "punish God or gods by ceasing to worship them." Overall, it indicates an adversarial mood toward the Supreme, or literally a hatred of God.

Today, we find a similar phenomenon in the New Atheism, an informal movement of scientists and

Lord, or ordinary souls who manage, through special mercy, to interact with Him for a specific purpose. Thus they stand a long way from the flawed proponents of the New Atheism. The demons in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* actually saw the Personality of Godhead – He was standing right in front of them – whereas the new brand of demon is merely shooting in the dark, trying to assess an entity he has absolutely no familiarity with.

The Demons in Kṛṣṇa-līlā

Just as we have various kinds of relationships in the material world, enjoying every nuance of diversity and the excitement of unexpected exchanges that come from interact-

accept a mother and father, and so on, He also has the tendency to fight. Sometimes important landlords and kings keep wrestlers with whom they practice mock fighting, and Viṣṇu makes similar arrangements. The demons who fight with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the material world are sometimes His associates. When there is a scarcity of demons and the Lord wants to fight, He instigates some of His associates of Vaikuṅṭha to come and play as demons.

Among the many kinds of relationships one can have with God, certain souls serve to engage His aggressive, combative side. These are the entities known as demons (*asuras*) in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Although demonic entities exist only in suggestion in the spiritual world, they tangibly appear when Kṛṣṇa incarnates in the material realm, as He does repeatedly throughout time.

Whether one interacts with God as His dearest friend or as His enemy, the interaction is purifying because God is absolute. For His enemies, intense absorption in thought of Him helps awaken remembrance of their eternal relationship with Him.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.1.26) tells us: "Therefore, by enmity [*vaira-anubandha*] or by devotional service [*nirvaira*], by fear [*bhaya*], by affection [*sneha*], or by lusty desire [*kāma*] – by all of these or any one of them – if a conditioned soul somehow or other concentrates his mind upon the Lord, the result is the same, for the Lord, because of His blissful position, is never affected by enmity or friendship." And further (7.1.29): "If the conditioned souls somehow or other think of Kṛṣṇa, who is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha* [a form full of eternity, knowledge, and bliss], they will become free from their sins." Therefore, the essence of *sādhana-bhakti*, devotional service in practice, is to center the mind on Kṛṣṇa.

ing with numerous people, so too does God relish interpersonal exchanges in the spiritual world. In fact, the loving kinship that exists in God's realm is the prototype of the many exchanges we have here. As it is said, we are made in the image of God. Where do demons fit in? God is complete, and so every kind of relationship must exist in Him, but in its purest form. Why should God be denied the excitement of competition or the thrill of battle, for example, even if in the end no one can really defeat Him?

As Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his commentary to the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Ādi* 5.36):

The Supreme Personality of Godhead has all the tendencies that may be found in the living entity, for He is the chief living entity. Therefore it is natural that sometimes Lord Viṣṇu wants to fight. Just as He has the tendencies to create, to enjoy, to be a friend, to

intellectuals on a mission, of sorts, to disprove the existence of God, or at least express their disapproval of Him. Writers such as Richard Dawkins and Robert L. Park, prominent spokespeople for this new movement, claim that religion "is dangerous" or "poisons everyday life." They embrace their war against the Supreme with the passion of religious revivalists, becoming obsessed and ready to set almost all else aside. Indeed, their consuming battle with God becomes a sort of inverse religion itself, as they worship at the altar of hate.

In this sense, God's modern "enemies" are reminiscent of the demons in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. These were fortunate beings who incarnated to serve God in an adversarial role when He descended to earth five thousand years ago. Such demons, the scriptures tell us, come from one of two categories: they are either eternal associates of the

The *Bhāgavatam* (7.1.32) highlights this point through the words of the great sage Nārada: "My dear king, one has to fix his mind on Kṛṣṇa by any means." Nārada then explains how Śiśupāla and Kaṁsa – two primary demons from *kṛṣṇa-līlā* – became liberated by focusing on the Lord, even though they did so out of hatred and fear, respectively. This is the supreme efficacy of remembering Kṛṣṇa. Anyone who concentrates the mind on Him, for any reason, will be purified and attain liberation.

Varieties of Liberation

According to the tenets of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, devotees in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu identify five kinds of liberation (*mukti*): *sālokya* (being promoted to God's realm), *sāmīpya* (becoming His intimate associate), *sārūpya* (attaining a form like His), *sārṣṭi* (attaining divine opulences), and *sāyujya* (merging into His body or effulgence). Although liberation from material existence is generally considered a lofty goal, Vaiṣṇavas focus squarely on developing love of God (*prema*), with liberation being a mere afterthought. In fact, for those who reach perfection on the path of devotion, *mukti* is considered anathema. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.29.13) confirms, "My devotees do not accept *sālokya*, *sārṣṭi*, *sārūpya*, *sāmīpya*, or oneness with Me – even if I offer these liberations – in preference to serving Me." (As quoted in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 19.173)

As already stated, the demons in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* have diverse ontological status: Some are eternally liberated, and some attain liberation by dint of Kṛṣṇa's holy association. As an example of the former, Jaya and Vijaya were the gatekeepers of the spiritual realm, but they came to the world of matter – ostensibly as the result of a curse – to assist in the Lord's pastimes. In a succession of births, they appeared first as Hiranyākṣa and Hiranyakaśipu, then

as Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarna; after that they came as Śiśupāla and Dantavakra, and finally as Jagāi and Mādhāi. Prabhupāda writes, "Śiśupāla and Dantavakra were not ordinary demons, but were formerly personal associates of Lord Viṣṇu. They apparently fell to this material world, but actually they came to assist the Supreme Personality of Godhead by nourishing His pastimes within this world." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.1.33, Purport)

Of those enemies of Kṛṣṇa who get liberation (not the eternally liberated souls), the *Bhāgavatam* reveals that most of them merely attain *sāyujya-mukti*, merging into the Lord's essence, whereas others, such as Kaṁsa, Aghāsura, and Pauṇḍraka, attain *sārūpya-mukti*, adopting a form similar to Viṣṇu's. Unique among the demons in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* is Pūtanā, who suckled baby Kṛṣṇa as a ruse to kill Him – with poison smeared on her breasts. Because she approached Him in a maternal way – although with a demoniac ulterior motive – He mercifully accepted her as a motherly devotee, and consequently she attained a position among His nurturers in the kingdom of God.

Bhakti As Positive Devotion

Contemplation of Kṛṣṇa as an enemy should not be mistaken for a form of *bhakti*, or devotional service to the Lord, even though medieval Sanskrit literature sometimes mentions a phenomenon known as *dveṣa-bhakti*, devotion based on hatred. The phrase is never used as an established theological category but rather only in a nontechnical sense, indicating the very devoted nature of God's adversaries. Such beings have intense dedication to their cause, misguided though it is. Consequently, they have a kind of devotion (*bhakti*) for their project of hatred (*dveṣa*). That being said, Jīva Gosvāmī refutes the idea in his *Bhakti-sandarbhā* (*Anuccheda* 324): "Some regard hatred and so on as *bhakti*, too, but this is not true." (*atra dveṣādāy api kecid bhaktitvam manyante tad asat*)

In fact, the odd compound *dveṣa-bhakti* is composed of antonyms ("hate-love"), thus making it a contradiction in terms. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, a prominent *ācārya* in our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, points out, "*Dveṣa*, enmity, is a particular

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attitude which is also known as *matsarata*, envy. . . . The attitude a person bears toward the Lord which is in direct opposition to love is known as *dveṣa*.” (*Jaiva Dharma*, Chapter Eight)

Bhakti must be enacted with a favorable attitude, not with enmity or envy. As Vaiṣṇava theologian Rūpa Gosvāmī writes,

*anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-
śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*

“When first-class devotional service develops, one must be devoid of all material desires, knowledge obtained by monistic philosophy, and fruitive action. The devotee must constantly serve Kṛṣṇa favorably, as Kṛṣṇa desires.” (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.11)

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on this verse:

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī clearly states that if anyone wants to execute unalloyed devotional service, he must be freed from all kinds of material contamination. He must be freed from the association of persons who are addicted to fruitive activities and mental speculation. When, freed from such unwanted association and from the contamination of material desires, one favorably cultivates knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, that is called pure devotional service. *Ānukūlyasya saṅkalpah prātikūlyasya varjanam (Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 11.676). One should think of Kṛṣṇa and act for Kṛṣṇa favorably, not unfavorably. Kāmsa was an enemy of Kṛṣṇa’s. From the very beginning of Kṛṣṇa’s birth, Kāmsa planned in so many ways to kill Him, and

because he was always unsuccessful, he was always thinking of Kṛṣṇa. Thus while working, while eating, and while sleeping, he was always Kṛṣṇa conscious in every respect, but that Kṛṣṇa consciousness was not favorable, and therefore in spite of his always thinking of Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day, he was considered a demon, and Kṛṣṇa at last killed him. Of course anyone who is killed by Kṛṣṇa attains salvation immediately, but that is not the aim of the pure devotee. The pure devotee does not even want to be transferred even to the highest planet, Goloka Vṛndāvana. His only objective is to serve Kṛṣṇa wherever he may be. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 11.55, Purport)

In the present context, the key word here is *ānukūlyena* (“favorable intention”). In other words, only devotees can experience authentic *bhakti-rasa* (the “taste” of *bhakti*) because only they want to serve the Lord favorably, with a mood of love and devotion. While demons in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* may focus exclusively on Kṛṣṇa, they do not serve Him agreeably or amiably and thus fall short of true *bhakti*. Nonetheless, as a result of His causeless mercy and the demons’ proximity to the purest of the pure, they attain Him in much the same way that a devotee does.

True, they ultimately please Him by responding to His desire for opposition, engaging His spirit of transcendental rivalry, but they don’t intend to please Him, and herein lies the real distinction between devotee and demon. The demons sometimes help fulfill Kṛṣṇa’s desire by giving Him an opportunity to fight with them, thus allowing Him to protect His devotees from them. This certainly pleases Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-anu-śīlanam*). But their intent is otherwise, making it obvious why Rūpa Gosvāmī explicitly includes the word *ānukūlyena* in his definition of *bhakti*. Śrīla Prabhupāda sums up,

“Great demons like Rāvaṇa, Kāmsa, and Hiraṇyakaśipu were always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, but they were thinking of Him as their enemy. This sort of thinking cannot be accepted as *bhakti*, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” (*The Nectar of Devotion*, Introduction). And further, “There is always a difference between the life of a devotee and the life of a demon, and their realizations are as different as heaven and hell.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi* 5.36, Purport)

All demons in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* are extraordinary, as shown in these two verses from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.7.34–35): “All demonic personalities like Pralamba, Dhenuka, Baka, Keśī, Ariṣṭa, Cānūra, Muṣṭika, Kuvalayāpīḍa elephant, Kāmsa, Yavana, Narakāsura, and Pauṇḍraka, great marshals like Sālva, Dvidida monkey, and Balvala, Dantavakra, the seven bulls, Śambara, Vidūratha, and Rukmī, as also great warriors like Kāmbōja, Matsya, Kuru,

Sṛñjaya, and Kekaya, would all fight vigorously, either with the Lord Hari directly or with Him under His names of Baladeva, Arjuna, Bhīma, etc. And the demons, thus being killed, would attain either the impersonal *brahmajyoti* or His personal abode in the Vaikuṅṭha planets.”

The list doesn’t mention the names of any New Atheists or any of the unlimited number of other ordinary souls who – either in isolated moments or in day-to-day life – somehow rebel against the Lord. This is because, it is safe to say, we are not among those blessed souls who associate with God directly, with mind totally fixed on Him. At least not yet. And if we ever are, we would hope to serve Him favorably, with a heart full of love.

It seems unlikely that any of the New Atheists would walk down that more positive path, and so if they were to enter *kṛṣṇa-līlā* at all, it would likely be as a demon. But

even then, the New Atheists and their ilk would have to perfect their meditation on the Supreme before their hatred would work in their favor.

Either way, Kṛṣṇa’s association is beneficial, and should be sought after by those who know the progressive values of life. As Prabhupāda writes: “Kāmsa, Śīsupāla, Dantavakra, and other demons . . . were related to Kṛṣṇa as enemies. But whether they associated with Kṛṣṇa as enemies or for sense gratification, out of fear or as pure devotees, they all got liberation. That is the result of association with the Lord.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.23.55, Purport) 🌐

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THROUGH PAIN TO JOY

(continued from page 56)

still feel the body’s marvelous mechanism that lets us know something needs attention, but we don’t interpret the message as painful. Many years later, when my godbrother Śrīdhara Swami was going through a terminal illness, he told me the saying “Pain is inevitable, but suffering is a choice.”

Ultimate Relief

While it’s true that even materially one can be temporarily free of pain by focusing the mind elsewhere, meditating on Kṛṣṇa brings both temporary and ultimate relief. As Prabhupāda explains,

Because the glories of the holy name are described here – that one can become free from the sinful reaction of life simply by chanting the holy name of the Lord – so sometimes those who are not in the line, they think, “It is too

much. It is too much.” So the next verse advises that it is not too much. You can test it. Test it. What is that test? *Patita*. When you fall down from a high place . . . Suppose from the roof you may fall down, *patitam*. *Skhalita*: you may slip and fall down. *Bhagnaḥ*: by falling down you may break your bones. Then *sandaṣṭaḥ*: you may be bitten by some animal – cats, dogs, a snake. Then *tapta*: you may be burned. And *āhataḥ*: you may be injured from others. Then during this time you can test, practical. What is that test? *Harir iti avāśena āha*. Try to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. *Pumān*. If anyone does so, *na arhati yātanāḥ*. You’ll immediately feel that from the injuries you are not feeling pain. This is seen practically. Even a snakebite, you may be saved. The author never says that you may be saved from death, but the suggestion is that you may not feel much pain. This is practical.” (Lecture, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.2.15, Vrindavan, September 18, 1975)

Ultimately, our dedication to spiritual life should not be with the aim of removing suffering, although such a motive is often the beginning of taking up the path of transcendence, as Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Gītā*. Ultimately our motive needs to be solely love for Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. The fact that pain goes away by surrendering to Kṛṣṇa in love and devotion is simply an indication that we are in harmony with the true nature of spirit – expanding bliss. As one’s love for Kṛṣṇa increases, the absence of suffering decreases in importance until it vanishes into oblivion. 🌐

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Remembering a Friend And an Inspiration

ON MAY 1, 1977, the day before the festival honoring the appearance of Lord Nṛsiṁha, Śrīla Prabhupāda's dear disciple Jayānanda Dāsa passed from this world. Shortly thereafter, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in a letter, "Jayananda's death is glorious. . . . He has left his body very wonderfully, and he has been transferred to Vaikuntha. . . . Everyone should follow the example of Jayananda. I am very proud that I had such a nice disciple. If possible Jayananda's picture should be hung in the ratha [festival chariot] of Lord Jagannatha, and in all of our temples a day may be set aside for holding a festival in his honor, just as we do on the disappearance day of the other great Vaisnavas."



Jayānanda Dāsa

Jayānanda Prabhu was one of Prabhupāda's first disciples in San Francisco, the site of ISKCON's second temple. During his years of dedicated service to Śrīla Prabhupāda, he inspired many, many people, devotees and nondevotees alike. I am one of the souls blessed to have had his guidance early in my spiritual life. I took up Kṛṣṇa consciousness after visiting the San Francisco temple in June 1974, just a few weeks before its annual Rathayātrā festival, and my first service was to help prepare for the festival. That meant spending a lot of time with Jayānanda Prabhu. Besides being part of his crew building the chariots, I also accompanied him as we drove around San Francisco procuring materials and supplies for the chariots and the festival.

My recollection of those early times with him, as well as the next few years before his passing, is that he loved to praise Śrīla Prabhupāda, who had asked his early disciples to put on the first Jagannātha Rathayātrā in the West. That was in San Francisco, 1967, and Jayānanda Prabhu was a vital member of the festival crew. From then until his passing ten years later, he spent several

months every year doing whatever was needed to make the festival a success, first in San Francisco, and later in New York and Los Angeles.

Jayānanda exemplified the devotional qualities we read about in Vaiṣṇava literature. During my early years in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I would hear how this or that senior devotee had

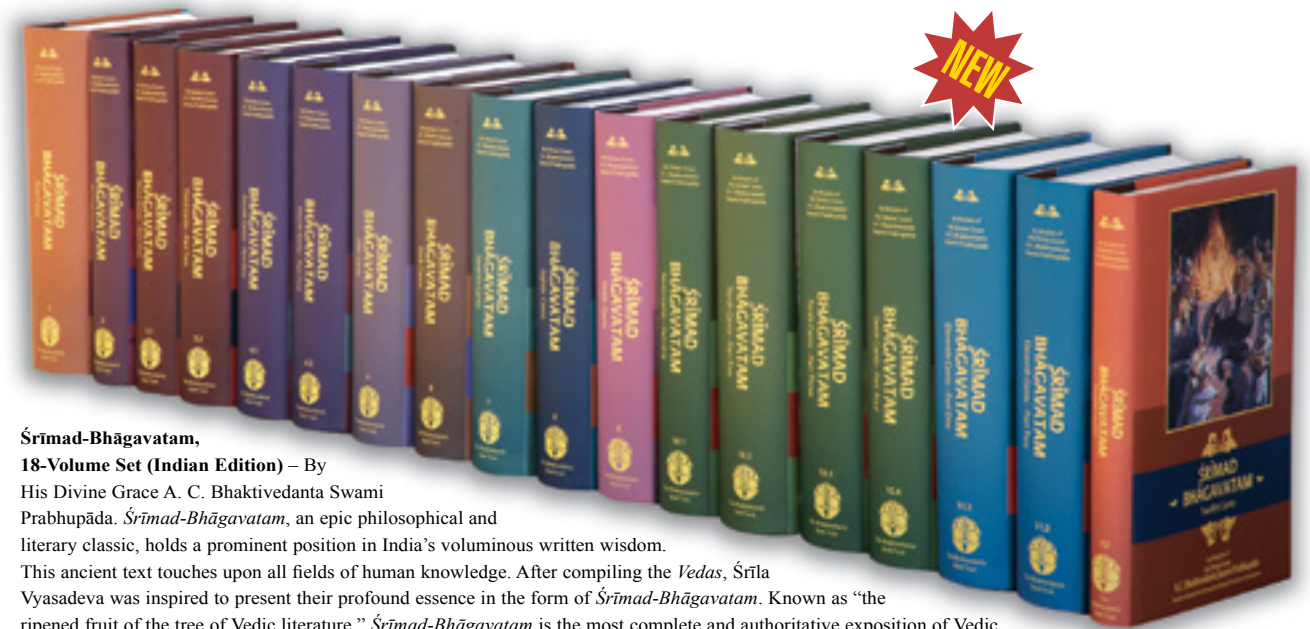
called Jayānanda "the most advanced devotee in the movement." Though respected by all, he was always humble and unassuming. One characteristic of his that has always stuck in my mind was his obvious discomfort at hearing criticism of other devotees. If someone started speaking unfavorably about a devotee, Jayānanda Prabhu would quickly change the subject, or politely leave to do some service.

It's nearly impossible to list all the types of devotional service Jayānanda performed to help Śrīla Prabhupāda spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Jayānanda was the emblem of Prabhupāda's dictum that his disciples should be ready to "do the needful" in that regard. He was a cook, janitor, fundraiser, taxi driver, temple president, chariot builder, book distributor, incense salesman, street-kīrtana leader, and more.

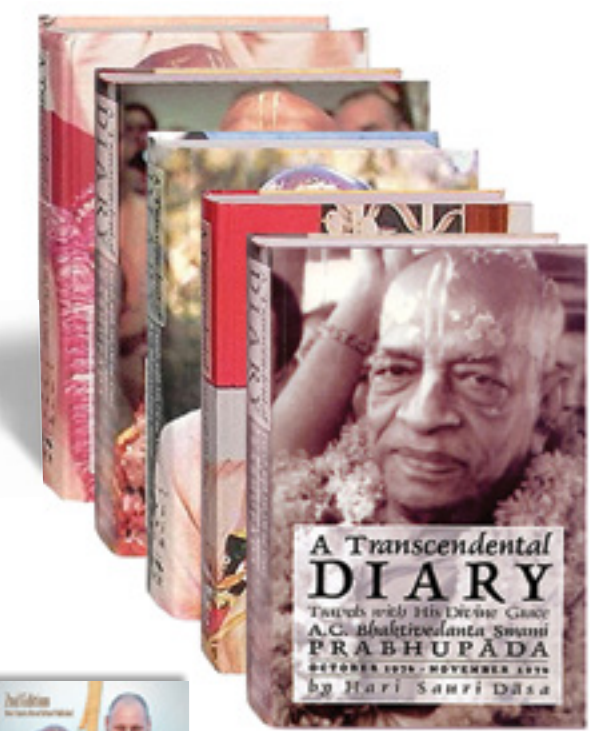
And he was a natural preacher. His friendly, down-home manner endeared him to many, and he used every opportunity to engage people in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda often noted, to actually be a Vaiṣṇava, a devotee, is not an easy thing. I hope to be one someday. In Jayānanda Prabhu I saw the qualities of someone who is already "there." Quite simply, he was a true Vaiṣṇava, and to have been in his company was a blessing and a great honor.

You can learn more about him by visiting jayanandathakur.com. – Nāgarāja Dāsa



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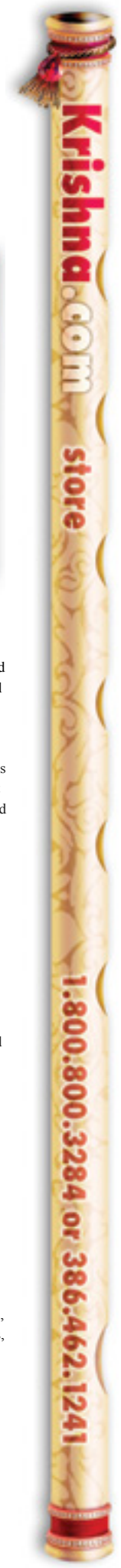


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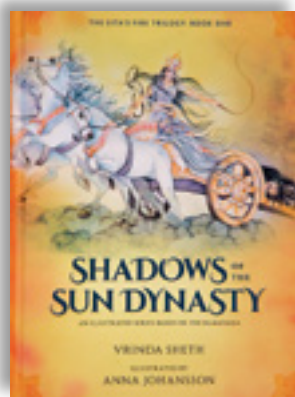


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Shadows of the Sun Dynasty – By Vrinda Sheth, Illustrated by Anna Johansson. Welcome to the royal city of Ayodhya, a realm ruled by the Sun dynasty, where peace reigns among the citizens while discord simmers behind the palace walls. A prophecy predicts that a son of the Sun dynasty will slay the immortal Ravana and defeat his demon army. But how will a mere human succeed where all the gods have failed? Meanwhile, Ayodhya’s emperor is torn between his own needs and the needs of the empire. His rebellious third wife, raised as a warrior, is haunted by

her past. A defiant servant, stigmatized by her deformity, is willing to destroy the empire to achieve her own aims. A prince, unaware of his own divine origin, falls in love with a princess so extraordinary even the all-seeing sages cannot fathom her destiny. Shape-shifting blood-drinkers from the celestial realm fill the forests around the city, and the time of prophecy is drawing near. But will the blessings of the gods be enough to fend off the darkness growing in the heart of Ayodhya? A truly original reimagining of the classic Indian epic the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as told primarily through the eyes of the women behind the throne, *Shadows of the Sun Dynasty* reveals an entirely new perspective on an ancient story. Set in a world of kings and queens, celestial battles, invisible foes, and family rivalries, this epic tale forges legends in the fires of betrayal and prophecy. Hardbound, 496 pages, numerous color illustrations, 8" x 10¼". **\$35.95 SALE \$24.99** VSBH124

About the Author and Illustrator: This book is part one of the *Sita’s Fire Trilogy*, which the mother-daughter team have worked on for over a decade. Separated by geographical distance, they nurtured their relationship through this joint artistic venture, a product of their love for each other and a dedication to their individual crafts.

Vrinda Sheth was raised in Sweden on stories from ancient India. She began writing while studying classical dance in Kalakshetra, South India. Vrinda has a degree in English from the University of Florida and lives in Florida with her husband and daughter.

Anna Johansson is a self-taught water-color artist originally from Sweden. Her artwork is inspired by the *bhakti-yoga* tradition. She presently lives with her husband in Florida.



Ocean of Mercy – By Bhakti Chāru Swami. One of the leaders of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement shares this long-awaited memoir of his childhood, spiritual quest, and meeting his guru, Śrīla Prabhupāda. A Calcutta boy’s world turns upside down when his mother dies and his family falls into poverty. Seeking adventure, friendship, education, and a better life, he manages to travel by land and sea to Europe, only to experience unexpected homesickness, which beckons him back to India on a quest for self-realization. After an arduous search for a spiritual teacher, he happens upon a copy of *The Nectar of Devotion*. He is so struck by the clarity, conviction, and erudition with which

the book presents the Supreme Person that he’s convinced beyond doubt that the author – Śrīla Prabhupāda – is the teacher he’s been looking for. Soon afterwards, he finds himself part of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s traveling retinue, serving as his cook and secretary for India and accepting responsibility for translating his books into Bengali. He is also among the fortunate few who were with Śrīla Prabhupāda to hear his final instructions before his passing from this world. *Ocean of Mercy* is for anyone dissatisfied with “life as usual,” curious about life’s higher possibilities, or hungry for genuine self-knowledge. To those already on the spiritual path, it is extremely valuable and historically significant, as it documents the last days on earth of one of the world’s greatest teachers. Published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, *Ocean of Mercy* is Bhakti Chāru Swami’s first book. Hardbound, 250 pages, 6½" x 9½". **\$19.95** BLBH125



Avatar Art – By Steven J. Rosen and Kaisori Bellach. *Avatar Art* offers a stunning panorama of the most popular figures in India’s array of avatars, demigods, sages, and demons. Explore a fascinating Vedic world portrayed by contemporary artists. Learn why Viṣṇu has four arms, why Śiva dances, and why Gaṇeśa sports the head of an elephant. Read about the curse that created a snake-bird and led to a king’s immolation, and the dishonorable treatment of a queen that ignited the famous *Mahābhārata* war. On these pages, Rāma and Rāvaṇa battle it out, and the man-lion Narasimha protects a prince. Over 100 color paintings, each with a fascinating

story. *Avatar Art* is divided into three sections: 1) Avatars, Devas, Sages and Demons; 2) The Life of Krishna, the Supreme Godhead; 3) Sri Chaitanya and His associates. Most of the paintings were originally produced for the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Śrī Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. Flexibound,* 220 pages, full color, 5½" x 8¼". **\$15.95** BLBS926

*Flexibound is a book cover that feels like a cross between hardcover and paperback. It’s more durable than paperback, and more flexible than a hardcover. Flexibound books have a hard spine that allows the book to lie almost flat when open, with flexible covers that make it easier to flip through and find information.



Narasimha: Demon Slayer
A graphic novel by Sunanda Productions (see article on page 42 of this issue). Full-color, 72 pages, 7" x 10".
SPB5203 **\$15.95**

VEDIC THOUGHTS

Since time immemorial each living entity has accumulated the various reactions of his good and bad work. As such, he is continuously ignorant of his real constitutional position. One’s ignorance can be removed by the instruction of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which teaches one to surrender unto Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in all respects and become liberated from the chained victimization of action and reaction, birth after birth.

His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 2.50, Purport

Mantra *dīkṣā* means the receipt of transcendental knowledge. Transcendental knowledge smashes down to their foundation all our seemingly beautiful philosophical mansions, built on empiricism, and erects in their place an actual foundation of eternal transcendental knowledge, cleansing the ground of all contaminations.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
Uncommon Conversations, Conversation 7

My devotees may or may not know exactly what I am, who I am, and how I exist, but if they worship Me with unalloyed love, then I consider them to be the best of devotees.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.11.33

All living beings find that the Supreme Person is sweet like nectar.

Bṛhad-āranyaka Upaniṣad 2.5.14

O Nārada, O great sage, the great thinkers can know Him [the Personality of Godhead] when

completely freed from all material hankerings and when sheltered under undisturbed conditions of the senses. Otherwise, by untenable arguments, all is distorted, and the Lord disappears from our sight.

Lord Brahmā
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.6.41

The peaceful hearts of My devotees are the homes the goddess of fortune and I like best. I reside in those homes, and I call them Vaikuṅṭha.

Lord Viṣṇu
Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya 14.57

Those who meditate on the Supreme Personality of Godhead bring destruction to their continued residence in the material world. Those who meditate on the material world bring destruction to themselves.

Nārada Purāṇa
Quoted in *Paramātmā-sandarbhā* 58.29

In Vaikuṅṭha each devotee sees the Supreme Lord Śrī Nārāyaṇa manifest as the particular Lord he worships, with a form of suitable complexion and other qualities.

Śrī Nārada Muni
Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 2.4.147

Devotional sentiments are evoked by the purifying association of advanced devotees. The *jīva* is able to come into close contact with a *śuddha-bhakta*, a pure devotee, only by accruing sufficient *sukṛti*, pious credits, for many previous births.

Bṛhan-nārādīya Purāṇa 4.33

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2017

Hare Kṛṣṇa Festival of India

Schedule for North America

Photos of 2016 Los Angeles Rathayātrā and Festival of India by Dvārakānt Devī Dāśī



- MAY 6:** Potomac, MD, Kirtana and Colors Festival
MAY 27–28: Baltimore Rathayātrā
JUNE 2–3: Atlanta Pāṇihāṭī Festival and Rathayātrā
JUNE 10: New York City Rathayātrā
JUNE 17: Chicago Rathayātrā
JUNE 18: Bloomington, IL, Rathayātrā
JULY 8–9: Montreal Rathayātrā
JULY 15–16: Toronto Rathayātrā
JULY 22: Calgary Rathayātrā
JULY 30: San Francisco Rathayātrā
AUGUST 6: Los Angeles Rathayātrā
AUGUST 15–16: Vancouver Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī
and Śrīla Prabhupāda's Vyāsa-pūjā
AUGUST 26–27: Vancouver Rathayātrā
SEPTEMBER 2–3: Seattle, Flavors of India
Festival and Rathayātrā
SEPTEMBER 7–8: Boulder, University of
Colorado Campus Program
SEPTEMBER 11–12: Chicago, Illinois Institute
of Technology Campus Program
SEPTEMBER 23: Philadelphia Rathayātrā



NOTE: Some of these dates are yet to be confirmed. Before scheduling your travel, be sure to confirm the festival date with the ISKCON temple in the city where the festival is to be held.
Or email Festival of India: madhuhadasa@gmail.com.