

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

BACK TO GODHEAD



The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement

Jul/Aug 2017 • \$4.50

Janmāṣṭamī

The Divine Advent
Of Lord Kṛṣṇa

ALSO:

A Heart Touched
By Vrindavan
Surrender to the Idea
Of Surrendering
Yoga, Bhakti, and the
Battlefield of Life

www.krishna.com



FOUNDER (under the direction of His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda) **His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda** (1896–1977)

BHAKTIVEDANTA BOOK TRUST REPRESENTATIVE Govardhana Dāsa • **EDITOR** Nāgarāja Dāsa • **GENERAL MANAGER** Prema-mañjarī Devī Dāsī • **ASSOCIATE EDITORS** Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa, Druta-karmā Dāsa, Satyarāja Dāsa, Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī, Viśākhā Devī Dāsī • **DESIGN / LAYOUT** Yamarāja Dāsa • **PROOFREADERS** Gadāgrāja Dāsa • Keśihanta Dāsa, Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā Dāsa, Mahāmāya Devī Dāsī • **ARCHIVES** Ekanātha Dāsa • **CUSTOMER SERVICE** Ijya Dāsa • **ACCOUNTS** Rañjita Dāsa

INDIA: PUBLISHER Yudhiṣṭhira Dāsa • **PRODUCTION** Sac-cid-ānanda Dāsa, Sundara Rūpa Dāsa • **GENERAL MANAGER & CIRCULATION** Pāṇḍurāṅga Dāsa • **ACCOUNTS** Sahadeva Dāsa • **SUBSCRIBER SERVICES** Mañjarī Devī Dāsī

EDITORIAL OFFICES Send editorial correspondence to BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616, USA. Phone: (386) 462-7794. Email: editors@krishna.com. Or BTG, 3rd Floor, 302, Amrut Industrial Estate, Western Express Hwy., Mira Rd. (E), Mumbai 401104, India. Phone: (022) 32556701. Email: btgindia@pamho.net

SUBSCRIPTIONS *Back to Godhead* is published six times a year. For a one-year subscription (US and Canada) send \$19.95 to BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616, USA. Or call toll-free: 1-800-800-3284. For subscriptions outside the US and Canada add \$10. Payment in US funds (payable on a US bank) must accompany your order. (Postal money orders not accepted.) In the UK send £18.99 to BTG UK Ltd., Bhaktivedanta Manor, Dharam Marg, Hilfield Lane, Watford, Herts. WD25 8EZ. In South Africa send R240 to Back to Godhead, P. O. Box 56003, Chatsworth 4030.

SUBSCRIBER SERVICE To change your address or clear up any questions about your subscription, write to BTG Service Center, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616, USA. Or call 1-800-800-3284. Or email btgsubs@krishna.com. We can answer your questions faster if you send a recent mailing label or invoice. Please allow eight weeks for changes to show on your label.

Printed in South Africa

© 2017 The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International. All rights reserved. (Trustee for The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust: Svavāsa Dāsa.) *Back to Godhead* (ISSN 0005-3643, USPS 604-170) is published bimonthly (six times a year) for \$19.95 per year by Back to Godhead, 18024 NW 112th Blvd., Alachua, FL 32615. Periodicals postage paid at Alachua, Florida, and additional mailing offices. CANADA POST AGREEMENT #: 40612608. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Back to Godhead, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616. Canada Returns to be sent to Pitney Bowes, P. O. Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2

Letters

Is Brahman Broken?

Ātmān is Brahman. Why does the eternal essence incarnate parts of itself into the material world? Is it doing so because it wants to have sensory experiences? Have some pieces of itself broken off by mistake and yearn to return home? Is this a purification process it submits itself to? If the goal is to escape the wheel of karma, why was it created in the first place?

Ted Seastrom
Via the Internet

Our reply: The fundamental assumption of your questions doesn't agree with the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Our philosophy is called *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, the “philosophy of the inconceivable oneness and difference” of God (Brahman or Parabrahman) and the *jīva* (individual soul) and the material world. While we agree that Brahman is one, on the authority of the *Upaniṣads* and other Vedic and Purāṇic texts we know that Brahman has energies. The *jīvas* constitute one of those energies (technically called the *taṭastha-śakti*). Brahman and His energies are one and different simultaneously, the traditional analogy being the sun and the sunshine. Those who propose only oneness in Brahman are neglecting the many statements of the Vedic literature that speak of the eternal distinctions between Brahman, the *jīva*, and *māyā* (the material energy).

The *Upaniṣads* say *eko 'ham bahu śyāma prajāyeya*: [Brahman said], “Let me become many and produce offspring.” Actually, we are co-eternal with God (Parabrahman), but it is stated this way (as if we were created at a certain time) for the understanding of our time-bound minds. Brahman, or God, is beyond time. The point is that God is *ānanda-maya* (constituted of bliss), and He desires to exchange in *rasa* (spiritual relationships or “tastes”) with an infinite number of souls. That's why we

exist. We are eternally part of Him, but we have our individual identities as well. Kṛṣṇa confirms this in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.12) when He says to Arjuna, “Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be.”

For some reason unknown and unknowable to us in our present condition, we long ago rejected God's invitation to have a loving relationship with Him. We seek our fulfillment in the material world. As long as we cling to the hope that we can be happy without God, we stay in the material world. Here our karma, rooted in our material desires, procures for us one body after another in a continual cycle of transmigration.

We in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement practice *bhakti-yoga* to awaken our inherent love of God. When that love matures, we'll return to God, Kṛṣṇa, and enter our eternal relationship with Him. For *bhakti-yogis*, or devotees, the proposal that perfection lies in realizing that we are in fact the one Brahman is an anathema. We want to awaken our eternal loving relationship with Brahman, Kṛṣṇa, and we have plenty of support from unassailable Vedic teachings and teachers to encourage us in this endeavor.

We have many books that explain the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in detail, and we encourage you to take advantage of them for your edification and spiritual progress.

Enjoying Work

How can one remain Kṛṣṇa conscious and do one's work? For me to do my work, I must enjoy it. But if I enjoy it, am I engaging in sense gratification? My field of work/study is jazz music.

Brennan Short
Via the Internet

Our reply: Enjoying your work is not sense gratification per se, espe-

cially if you can use your work in Kṛṣṇa's service. If you can make music for preaching or for the enjoyment of devotees, that will remind you and others about Kṛṣṇa, and that's devotional service.

That said, there is much to look out for. Generally the association and venues for this type of work are not conducive to spiritual life. So you have to be careful that your association encourages you to follow the four regulative principles (no meat-eating, no illicit sex, no intoxication, no gambling) and leads you to understand your true spiritual nature, rather than entangle you more and more deeply in material sense enjoyment.

Real enjoyment is eternal and comes from serving others. As a musician, you know that if the audience is happy with your work, that makes you happy as well. So if you can make Kṛṣṇa happy with your work, then you will become happy by making that offering to Him. It is not necessarily the work itself that will make you happy in the long run but the offering of something that makes others deeply happy. And the person

who can offer the most eternal reciprocation is Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Music is an integral part of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, so you can use your talents to promote the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa and encourage others to do the same. Some devotee groups offer a fusion of modern and traditional music to bring others closer to Kṛṣṇa.

Ultimately you have to prioritize your spiritual welfare and make choices that favor it. That may at times require sacrifice and tough decisions. There is more to life than work and immediate pleasure, and if a certain type of work does not allow you to achieve spiritual goals, you might have to set it aside for other things, which may offer less pleasure at first but greater pleasure in the long run. Try to consider the long-range goals you have and mold your life so that you can attain the highest, most lasting levels of knowledge, realization, and satisfaction. That is not available from mundane music or anything in the material world. It requires focus on the desire for a spiritual connection with Kṛṣṇa.

The Quest for Joy

What is the right way to relax mind and body? I'm a physician. How to feel joy all the time?

Dr. Devesh Pathak
Via the Internet

Our reply: The only real way to feel joy all the time is to engage in loving service to Kṛṣṇa. Everything in the material world will eventually dwindle and die. As a physician you certainly have firsthand experience that the body gets old, tired, sick, and eventually, despite the best medical care, dies.

Since the body is material, like every other combination of chemicals it has a “shelf life” and will come to an end in time. Lasting joy can never be found in that which by nature is temporary.

Since we are the spirit soul, we naturally seek eternal, lasting happiness, but that cannot be had interacting with matter. We must focus on having a relationship with that which is spiritual, and therefore eternal. That is Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Reading *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, will give you much insight into the relationship between the soul and the body, and the soul and Kṛṣṇa. Getting this knowledge will help you find the joy you are seeking. Also, chanting the *mahā-mantra* – Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare – with deep concentration will calm your mind, still your senses, and help you focus. This mantra can connect you directly to Kṛṣṇa, who is identical to His name, and that connection alone will give you great joy. The mantra costs nothing, travels easy, and is always available, so by chanting, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. 🙏

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

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

CENTERS AROUND THE WORLD

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



Baroda, India



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

JANMĀṢṬAMĪ

The Divine Advent Of Lord Kṛṣṇa

Kṛṣṇa declares that we can gain immortality simply by understanding the nature of His birth and activities.

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



HIS EXCELLENCY the High Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for coming here and participating in this ceremony, Janmāṣṭamī, the advent of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.9),

*janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma
naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*



“One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna.” This morning I was explaining this verse:

*yam hi na vyathayanty ete
puruṣaṁ puruṣarṣabha
sama-duḥkha-sukhaṁ dhīraṁ
so 'mṛtatvāya kalpate*

“O best among men [Arjuna], the person who is not disturbed by happiness and distress and is steady in both is certainly eligible for liberation.” (*Gītā* 2.15) *Amṛtatva* means immortality. In modern civilization, people have no idea – even if one is a great philosopher, a great politi-

the knowledge that we living entities, as parts of Kṛṣṇa, are eternal, blissful, and cognizant.

Kṛṣṇa is described in the Vedic *śāstra*:

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ
sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*

“Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Govinda, is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternal blissful spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin, and He is the prime cause of all causes.” (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.1) When I speak of Kṛṣṇa, I mean God. It is sometimes said that God has no name. That’s a fact. But God’s name is given by His activities. Kṛṣṇa has

will be very difficult to understand Kṛṣṇa, even though all the *Vedas* are meant for understanding Him. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.15) Kṛṣṇa says, *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*: “By all the *Vedas* I am to be known.” What is the use of studying the *Vedas* if you do not understand Kṛṣṇa? The ultimate goal of education is to understand the Supreme Lord, the supreme father, the supreme cause.

It is said in the *Vedānta-sūtras* (1.1.1), *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*: “Now inquire about Brahman, the Absolute Truth.” What is Brahman? *Janmādy asya yataḥ*: that from which everything emanates.

Kṛṣṇa is the cause of all causes. Just try to understand: I am caused by my father, my father is caused by his father, he is caused by his father – go on searching and you’ll ultimately come to somebody who is the cause but has no cause. *Anādir ādir govindaḥ*. That original cause is Govinda, Kṛṣṇa. I may be the cause of my son, but I am also the result of a cause, my father. But the *śāstra* says, *anādir ādir*: He is the original person; He has no cause. That is Kṛṣṇa.

The advent of Kṛṣṇa is very important. We should try to understand Kṛṣṇa – why He comes to this material world, what His business is, what His activities are. If we simply try to understand Kṛṣṇa, then what is the result? *Tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*: we get immortality. The aim of life is to achieve immortality.

The Peace Formula

On the advent day of Kṛṣṇa, we shall try to understand the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa. His Excellency was speaking of peace. The peace formula is there, spoken by Kṛṣṇa. What is that?

*bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasāṁ
sarva-loka-maheśvaram
suhṛdam sarva-bhūtānāṁ
jñātvā mām śāntim ṛcchati*

“A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate

beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries.” (*Gītā* 5.29) The politicians, diplomats, are trying to establish peace in the world. The United Nation is there, and there are many other organizations trying to have real peace and tranquility, with no misunderstanding between man and man, nation and nation. But that is not happening. The defect is that the root is wrong. Everyone’s thinking, “It is my country. It is my family. It is my society. It is my property.” This “my” is illusion. In the *śāstra* (*Bhāgavatam* 5.5.8) it is said, *janasya moho 'yam aham mameti*: This “I and my” philosophy is illusion.

If you want to get out of this illusion, *māyā*, then you have to accept Kṛṣṇa’s formula. Everything is there in the *Bhagavad-gītā* for guidance if we accept the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is. Everything is there. Peace is there; prosperity is there. Unfortunately, we do not accept it. That is our misfortune. Or we misinterpret it. Kṛṣṇa says, “Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer obeisances unto Me.” Is that a very difficult task?

Here is Kṛṣṇa’s deity. If you think of this deity, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, is that very difficult? Come into the temple and offer your respect to the deity. As far as possible try to worship the deity. Kṛṣṇa does not want your whole property. Kṛṣṇa is open to the poorest man for being worshiped. What is He asking for? He says, *patraṁ puṣpam phalam toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati*: “If a person offers Me with devotion a leaf, a little fruit, a little water, I accept it.” Kṛṣṇa is not hungry, but Kṛṣṇa wants to make you a devotee. That is the main point.

Kṛṣṇa is providing food for everyone. But Kṛṣṇa wants your love, your devotion. Therefore He is begging for a little fruit, flower, water.

There is no difficulty to understand Kṛṣṇa and accept Kṛṣṇa con-

sciousness. But we’ll not do that; that is our disease. Otherwise, it is not difficult at all. And as soon as we become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, we understand the whole situation.

Our philosophy, *Bhāgavata* philosophy, is also communism, because we consider Kṛṣṇa the supreme father and all living entities sons of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says that He is the proprietor of all planets, *sarva-loka-maheśvaram*. Therefore whatever there is, either in the sky or in the water or on the land, is Kṛṣṇa’s property. And because we are all sons of Kṛṣṇa, every one of us has the right to use the father’s property. But we should not encroach upon others. This is the formula of peace. Everything belongs to God. You are sons of God. You have the right to use your father’s property, but do not take more than you need. That is punishable. These things are stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

But we forget this philosophy that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme father, Kṛṣṇa is the supreme proprietor, Kṛṣṇa is the supreme enjoyer, and Kṛṣṇa is the supreme friend of everyone. When we forget this, then we come into this material world and struggle for existence, fighting with one another. This is material life.

The politicians, diplomats, and philosophers have tried so much, but actually nothing has become fruitful. The United Nation was organized after the second great war, and they wanted, “Peacefully we shall settle everything.” But there is no such thing. The fighting is going on between Pakistan and India, between Vietnam and America, and this and that. It is not the process for peace.

The process is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Everyone has to understand the fact that we are not the proprietor. The proprietor is Kṛṣṇa. That’s a fact. Two hundred years ago the European migrators who went to America were not the proprietors; other people were the proprietors. And before them, other people were the proprietors, or it was vacant land. The actual proprietor is Kṛṣṇa.

At present, people lack the knowledge that we living entities, as parts of Kṛṣṇa, are eternal, blissful, and cognizant.

cian, or a great scientist – that it is possible to attain the stage of immortality, *amṛtatva*. We are all *amṛta*, immortal. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.20) it is said, *na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit*. We living entities never die and never take birth. *Nityaḥ śāśvato yam, na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*. Every one of us is eternal: *nityaḥ, śāśvataḥ*; and *purāṇaḥ*, the oldest. After annihilation of this body, we do not die. *Na hanyate*. The body is finished, but we have to accept another body.

*dehino 'smin yathā dehe
kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā
tathā dehāntara-prāptir
dhīras tatra na muhyati*

“As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.” (*Gītā* 2.13) At the present moment people lack

certain names because of being the son of Mahārāja Nanda and Yaśodā-māyī, or Devakī and Vasudeva. Vasudeva and Devakī were Kṛṣṇa’s real father and mother. Actually, nobody is the real father or mother of Kṛṣṇa, because Kṛṣṇa is the original father of everyone. But when Kṛṣṇa comes here, He accepts some devotees as His father and mother.

Kṛṣṇa is the *ādi-puruṣam*, the original person. Then He must be very old? No. *Ādyam purāṇa puruṣam nava-yauvanaṁ ca*: He is always a fresh youth. When Kṛṣṇa was on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra, He was just like a boy of twenty years. But at that time He had great-grandchildren. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa is always a youth. *Nava yauvanaṁ ca*.

The Purpose of the Vedas

These are the statements of the Vedic literature. But if we simply read the Vedic literature as a formality, it

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

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

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

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

Pronunciation

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

Spiritual Names

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

But artificially you are claiming, “It is my property.” *Janasya moho 'yam aham mameti*. This is called *māyā*.

Lessons from Kṛṣṇa

Kṛṣṇa comes to give us lessons. He says, “My dear Arjuna, I come when there are discrepancies in the process of religious life.” *Dharmasya glānir bhavati*. And what is dharma? The simple definition is *dharmam tu sāṅśād bhagavat-praṇītam*: dharma is the laws given by God. What do we generally mean by law? Law is the word given by the state. You cannot make law at home. That is not possible. Whatever the government gives you – “You should act like this” – that is law. Similarly, dharma means the direction given by God.

Therefore, where the *Bhagavad-gītā* ends – *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja* – this is dharma: to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Any other dharmas are not dharma. Otherwise, why does Kṛṣṇa ask, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*: “Give up all other dharmas”? Earlier He said, *dharmā-saṁsthāpanārthāya sambhāvāmi yuge yuge*: “I advent to establish the principles of religion.” (*Gītā* 4.8) And at last He says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*. That means the so-called dharmas that we have manufactured, man-made dharmas, are not dharmas. Dharma means what is given by God. But we have no understanding of what God is and what His word is. That is the defect of modern civilization. God is there, His order is there, but we won't accept. Where is the possibility of peace?

When Kṛṣṇa speaks in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Vyāsadeva writes, *bhagavān uvāca*: “The Supreme Lord said.” One should know what is meant by *bhagavān*. Vyāsadeva could have written *kṛṣṇa uvāca*. No. Because one may misunderstand who Kṛṣṇa is, Vyāsadeva writes, *śrī bhagavān uvāca*.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is speaking. Kṛṣṇa is accepted as Bhagavān by the greatest *ācāryas* – Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, Viṣṇu Svāmī. And the latest is Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Even Śāṅkarācārya accepts Kṛṣṇa. He writes, *sa bhagavān svayam kṛṣṇa*: “Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān Himself.” That is the verdict of the modern *ācāryas*. And in the past, Vyāsadeva, Nārada, Asita – everyone accepted Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Arjuna, who heard from Kṛṣṇa, after understanding *Bhagavad-gītā*, said, *param brahma param dhāma pavitraṁ paramam bhavān*: “You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ultimate abode, the purest, the Absolute Truth.” (*Gītā* 10.12)

Assets for Understanding God

Especially in India, we have got so many assets for understanding God. Everything is there, ready made. But we won't accept. We are searching after peace, but we won't accept anything that is actually giving us peace. This is our disease.

This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to awaken the dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness in everyone's heart. These Europeans and Americans and other countrymen never heard of Kṛṣṇa four or five years ago. How are they taking Kṛṣṇa consciousness so seriously? Because Kṛṣṇa consciousness is there in everyone's heart. It has only to be awakened. That is described in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 22.107):

nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema 'sādhyā' kabhu naya

śravaṇādi-śuddha-citte karaye udaya

“Pure love for Kṛṣṇa is eternally established in the hearts of the living entities. It is not something to be gained from another source. When the heart is purified by hearing and chanting, this love naturally awakens.” It is awakened. Love for Kṛṣṇa, devotion for Kṛṣṇa, is there within everyone's heart, but we have forgotten.

This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is simply meant for awakening that Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is the process. When you are sleeping, I have to call you loudly: “Mr. Such-and-such, get up. You have got this business to do.” No other senses will act when you are sleeping. But the ear will act. Therefore, in this age, when people are so fallen they will not hear anything, if we chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* they'll be awakened to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is practical.

If we are anxious for peace and tranquility in society, then we must be very serious to understand Kṛṣṇa. That is our request. Don't take it neglectfully, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. This movement can solve all the problems of life, all the problems in the world – social, political, philosophical, religious, economic – everything can be solved by Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, we request those who are leaders – like His Excellency, present here – to try to understand this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. It is very scientific, authorized. It is not a mental concoction or a sentimental movement. It is the most scientific movement. We are inviting all leaders from all countries: try to understand. If you are sober, if you are actually reasonable, you'll understand that this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is the sublime movement for the welfare of the whole human society. That's a fact.

To Achieve Immortality

Anyone may come; we are prepared to discuss this subject matter. The ultimate goal of human life is to achieve immortality. We have forgotten this. We are simply leading the life of cats and dogs, without any knowledge that we can achieve the perfection of life, when there will be no more birth, no more death.

We do not understand even that there is the possibility of *amṛtatvam*, immortality. But it is possible. Nobody wants to die; that's a fact. Nobody wants to become old, to become diseased. This is our natural inclination. Why? Because originally, in our spiritual form, there is no birth, no death, no old age, no disease. So

You have enjoyed sensuous life in so many varieties of body – as cats, as dogs, as demigods, as trees, as plants, as insects. Now, in this human form of life, don't be captivated by sensuous life. Just try to understand Kṛṣṇa. That is the verdict of the *śāstra*. To work very hard like dogs and hogs for sense gratification is not the ambition of human life. Human life is meant for a little austerity. We have to purify our existence. That is the mission of human life. Why shall I purify my existence? *Brahma-saukhyam tv anantam*: because then you get unlimited pleasure, unlimited happiness. That is real pleasure.

In India formerly, all the great personalities – saintly persons, sages, and *ācāryas* – cultivated this spiri-

Now, in this human form of life, don't be captivated by sensuous life. Just try to understand Kṛṣṇa. That is the verdict of the *śāstra*.

after the evolutionary process through the aquatics, birds, beasts, and plants, when we come to this human form of body, then we should know what is the goal of life.

The goal of life is *amṛtatvam*, to become immortal. You can become immortal simply by becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious. Kṛṣṇa says so. It is a fact. We simply have to understand. If you try to understand Kṛṣṇa in truth, *tattvataḥ*, then, *tyaktvā deham punar janma naiti*: after giving up this body, you don't accept any more material bodies. And as soon as you don't accept a material body, you become immortal, because by nature you are immortal.

Kṛṣṇa comes to teach us this lesson: “You are immortal by nature. As spirit soul you are part and parcel of Me. As I am immortal, so you are also immortal. You are unnecessarily trying to be happy in this material world.”

We simply struggle unnecessarily.

tual knowledge nicely and fully. But we are not taking advantage of it. It is not that those *śāstras* and directions are meant only for the Indians or Hindus or *brāhmaṇas*. No. They are meant for everyone. Kṛṣṇa claims,

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

“It should be understood that all species of life, O son of Kuntī, are made possible by birth in this material nature and that I am the seed-giving father.” (*Gītā* 14.4) Kṛṣṇa claims, “I am everyone's father.” Therefore, He is very much anxious to make us peaceful, happy. Just as the father wants to see his son well situated and happy, Kṛṣṇa wants to see every one of us happy and well situated. Therefore He comes sometimes. This is the purpose of Kṛṣṇa's advent.

TEMPLE OF THE VEDIC PLANETARIUM
Mayapur, West Bengal, India

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

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

Taking Up Kṛṣṇa's Mission

Those who are servants of Kṛṣṇa, devotees of Kṛṣṇa, should take up the mission of Kṛṣṇa. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's version.

yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'
-upadeśa
āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei
deśa

"Instruct everyone to follow the orders of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as they are given in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In this way become a spiritual master and try to liberate everyone in this land." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 7.128) *Kṛṣṇa-upadeśa*. Just try to preach what Kṛṣṇa has said in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. That is the duty of every Indian. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says,

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

"One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India [Bhārata-varṣa] should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all other people." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi* 9.41) Indians are meant for *para-upakāra*, welfare work. Indians are not meant for exploiting others. That is not Indians' business. Indian history is all about *para-upakāra*. And formerly, people from all parts of the world used to come to India to learn what spiritual life is. But we are forgetting our own assets. How greatly callous we now are! Such a great movement, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, is going on all over the world, but our Indians are callous, our govern-

ment is callous. They do not take interest. That is our misfortune. But it is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission. He says that any Indian, if he's a human being, must make his life perfect by taking advantage of this Vedic literature and then distributing the knowledge all over the world. That is *para-upakāra*.

India can do that. These young Europeans and Americans are appreciating the greatness of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Daily I get dozens of letters saying how they are benefited by this movement. Actually, that is the fact. It is giving life to the dead.

So I shall specially request the Indians, especially His Excellency, to kindly cooperate with this movement, and try to make your life and others' lives successful. That is the mission of Kṛṣṇa and the reason for the advent of Kṛṣṇa.

Thank you very much. 🙏

A Pause for Prayer



Painting by Bharadrāja Dāsa

satya-vratam satya-param tri-satyam
satyasya yonim nihitam ca satye
satyasya satyam ṛta-satya-netram
satyātmakam tvām śaraṇam prapannāḥ

Lord, You never deviate from Your vow, which is always perfect because whatever You decide is perfectly correct and cannot be stopped by anyone. Being present in the three phases of cosmic manifestation – creation, maintenance, and annihilation – You are the Supreme Truth. Indeed, unless one is completely truthful, one cannot achieve Your favor, which therefore cannot be achieved by hypocrites. You are the active principle, the real truth, in all the ingredients of creation, and therefore You are known as *antaryāmī*, the inner force. You are equal to everyone, and Your instructions apply for everyone, for all time. You are the beginning of all truth. Therefore, offering our obeisances, we surrender unto You. Kindly give us protection.

– Demigods to Lord Kṛṣṇa within the womb of Devakī, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.2.26

CALENDAR

This calendar is calculated for Mayapur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to www.vaisnavacalendar.com.

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

Month of Vāmana

(June 10–July 9)

JULY

4 – Śayanā Ekādaśī

Fasting from grains and beans.

9 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan. First month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from green leafy vegetables).

Month of Śrīdhara

(July 10–August 7)

14 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan.

17 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Lokanātha Gosvāmī, a great devotee of Lord Caitanya.

18 – Anniversary of incorporation of ISKCON, in New York City, 1966.

20 – Dvādaśī

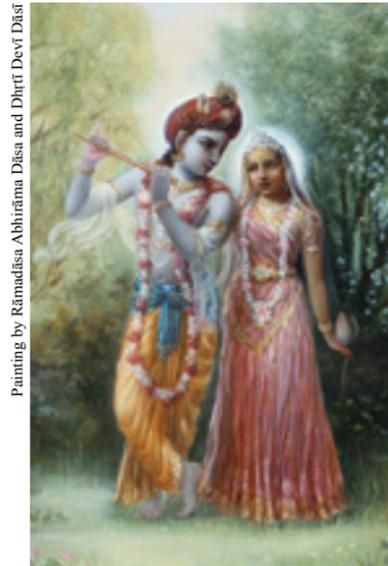
Fasting from grains and beans for Kāmikā Ekādaśī.

AUGUST

3 – Pavitropanā Ekādaśī

Fasting from grains and beans. Jhulana Yātrā (swing festival) of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda begins.

4 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita, an associate of Lord Caitanya.



Painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa and Dhīrt Devī Dāśī

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa

7 – Jhulana Yātrā ends. Appearance anniversary of Lord Balarāma. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting. Second month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from yogurt).

Month of Hṛṣīkeśa

(August 8–September 6)

8 – Anniversary of the departure of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda to the United States in 1965.

15 – Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī, appearance anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Fasting till midnight. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for a schedule of events.

16 – Appearance anniversary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

18 – Annadā Ekādaśī

Fasting from grains and beans.

26 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sītā Devī, the consort of Śrīla Advaita Ācārya.

29 – Śrī Rādhāṣṭamī, appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

SEPTEMBER

2 – Parśvā Ekādaśī

Fasting from grains and beans. (Fasting till noon today; feast tomorrow.)

3 – Śrī Vāmana-dvādaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Vāmana, Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as a dwarf *brāhmaṇa*. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.



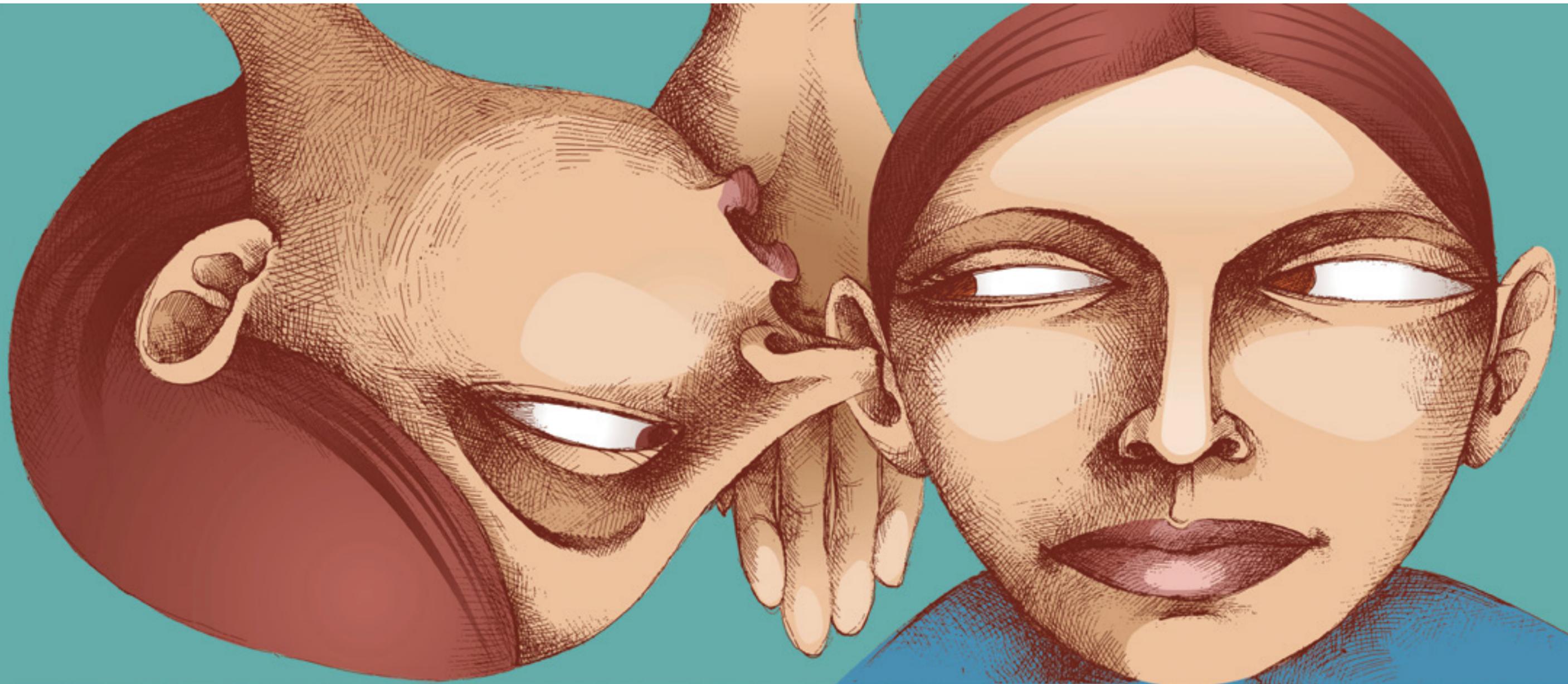
Painting by Paṅkṣit Dāsa

Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma

The Urge to Gossip

An epiphany triggers reflections on the challenges in resisting this common habit.

by Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa



CAN YOU KEEP a secret?" With this question, I prefaced a juicy tidbit of gossip I was about to share in a recent conversation with someone. I looked around furtively, moved in closer, and dropped my voice. I don't think I did any of this intentionally – it just happened.

Predictably, my friend nodded his head earnestly to

assure me, and leaned forward so he wouldn't miss even one drop of the juicy tidbit.

As I opened my mouth, suddenly I had an epiphany. Mentally observing from overhead, I saw my hypocrisy exposed. Here I was asking my friend if he could keep a secret, while showing that I couldn't.

Epiphanies often occur when we see the common in an uncommon light. "Can you keep a secret?" is a common question that is almost always rhetorical – we rarely get a negative reply. Rare are the souls who go into a confessional mode, admitting their inability to keep secrets.

When I asked the question, I "somehow" took it literally

and thereafter had the epiphany. From a devotional perspective, I can understand that the "somehow" was "by Kṛṣṇa's mercy." Kṛṣṇa was giving me an insight to help me move closer to Him. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.15) Kṛṣṇa says that He resides in our hearts and from that strategic vantage point offers guidance.

Why I Shouldn't Gossip— And Why I Still Do

What do I as a spiritual practitioner gossip about? Usually, it's about what has happened to whom or who did what. Being a part of a spiritual movement means we get placed in a social circle where the slips of others from the expected moral and spiritual standards become fodder for gossip.

The reasons to avoid gossip are many, ranging from the practical to the principled. The practical include "I will be taken to task by my spiritual guides if they come to know about my gossiping" and "If those I gossip about come to know about it, they will hit back at me in kind, or worse."

The principle-centered include the

Who knows? They may even be following my example ditto by prefacing their time under the high sky of gossip with the question "Can you keep a secret?" And the starting bit transmogrifies into a billion terabytes whose resemblance to the original bit may well take a billion years to discover. But the starting bit came from me, so I am held accountable, not just for that bit but also for all those countless bytes. And I end up with countless bites – the many complications that result from gossiping.

Despite having repeatedly learned the lesson the hard way, why do I still give in to the urge to gossip? I don't think I harbor any strong malice towards anyone. Maybe I am being too charitable to myself here. Maybe the malice is hidden so deep inside the dark dungeon of my heart

that of our hearers too. Still, until we come to that level of purity, we can spiritualize our need for attention by speaking about Kṛṣṇa. And the *bhakti* tradition offers abundant Kṛṣṇa-centered subjects for discussion.

Two Questions to Curb Gossip

Relevant to the topic of gossip is the *Bhagavad-gītā's* (17.15) guideline for speaking: Speak words that don't agitate others and are pleasing, truthful, and beneficial. Gossip is definitely agitating. And though it may seem pleasing, it is pleasing to our lower side. This is the side that offers flickering titillation while depriving us of the lasting satisfaction that comes from our higher side. Our higher side is our core – the soul. It longs for purer, nobler joys – joys that culminate in an eternal loving connection with Kṛṣṇa.

To resist the urge to gossip, I find the *Gītā's* last two points about speech especially helpful when phrased as questions: Is it true? Is it beneficial?

Is it true? What we speak while gossiping is often what we have heard from the gossip of others, who have heard it in gossip from someone else. And stuff that comes in a tradition of gossip is usually dubious. In fact, over the years of studying and writing, I have come to know that even what we hear from seemingly reliable sources may be questionable. I am not talking about overt or covert media bias and other such distorting effects, though they too contribute to the unreliability. I am talking about the generic difficulty in precisely reconstructing events.

A few years ago, when a senior devotee was embroiled in a controversy centered on an alleged ethical lapse, I tried to find out what had actually happened. Two devotees, who are my close friends and whose intelligence and integrity I trust, gave me radically different accounts. By digging deep enough, I was eventually able to reconcile those accounts. But I hardly ever do that

kind of investigation when I gossip about some similar issue.

A major challenge of living in this digital age is that anyone can gossip on a blog and anyone from any part of the world can access it through the worldwide web. While the Internet can be a convenient and valuable source of information, it can also be a morass of disinformation. Any information, especially negative information, about others from the net needs to be critically scrutinized.

Is it beneficial? Even when something is true, that doesn't make it beneficial. Any form of education requires the structuring of information for proper assimilation. English teachers don't teach first-grade students controversies about usage of certain idiomatic words; they focus on teaching the basics of the language. Similarly, while sharing spiritual knowledge, I don't need to talk about controversies that aren't relevant to those who are taking their initial steps in spiritual life.

It wasn't easy for me to acknowl-

edge the importance of ignorance. During my two decades in the movement, when I came to know of the lapses of some past leaders I felt shocked, even misled: "Why was I kept in the dark about such things?" But over time I have realized that there was no plot to blindfold me. The occasional moral lapses in the movement were just a reflection of the moral weakness of material existence itself and more specifically a reflection of the moral looseness of contemporary culture in which immorality prevails. An epidemic can victimize even doctors if they become negligent. Will the medical staff in their discussions with patients dwell on such accidental casualties instead of the treatment's process and success? No. Then why should I expect that kind of discussion from my spiritual guides? After all, they are like the medical staff in Kṛṣṇa's movement, which is like a spiritual hospital that offers the *bhakti* treatment for curing human self-centeredness.

And the treatment does work. The

Bhagavad-gītā (9.2) indicates that we can experientially verify the higher truths it teaches. While I am still a long way from seeing Kṛṣṇa or any transcendental reality, I have nonetheless had some spiritual experiences. Many times have I relished extraordinary peace, illumination, and fulfillment through absorption in Kṛṣṇa. And I haven't experienced anything similar elsewhere, certainly not in gossip. Irrespective of what happens where to whom, Kṛṣṇa still awaits me in my heart, beckoning me to savor His shelter. Instead of discussing how we can best attain His shelter, why should I discuss things that dishearten us in seeking it?

To be sure, I am not recommending deliberately covering up the truth. I am simply stressing that to be truthful I don't need to tell sordid truths about others – all the more so when I am not ready to share unpleasant truths about myself. After all, I too am a struggling seeker, and I have my challenges. The best way I can be truthful is not by washing

The *Gītā's* guideline for speaking: Speak words that don't agitate others and are pleasing, truthful, and beneficial.

socio-ethical "I should treat others as I would want them to treat me" and the spiritual "I don't want to displease Kṛṣṇa by doing what He doesn't want me to do: offend His devotees."

I have fought a long battle against the urge to gossip – and unfortunately it has been a losing one. Still, whenever I have achieved some victories, they have been more due to the practical consequences than the principle-centered concerns. I have learned the harms of gossiping the hard way. When I give in to the urge to gossip, I intend to speak just one bit. But frequently, what begins as a bit becomes a byte and maybe even a megabyte. And more often than not, my hearers follow my example instead of their words. That is, they don't keep the secret, as they had said they could. Instead, they spill it, as they have seen me doing.

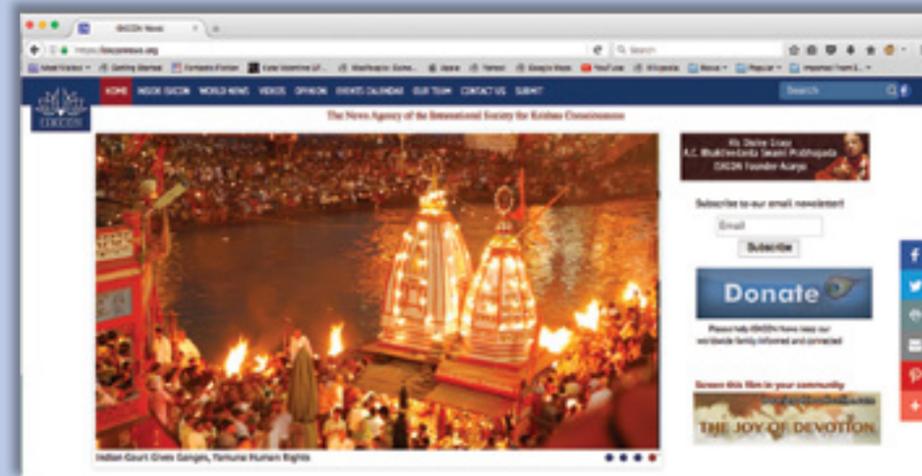
that I haven't yet detected it. But wouldn't it need to surface to make me gossip? Whenever I have introspected after a gossip relapse, I haven't noticed any strong malice towards the objects of my gossip. What I have noticed is the craving to catch attention by showing I was privy to a secret the hearer didn't know.

Human beings being what we are, we all have our weaknesses. And one such weakness is that we often pay more attention to negative things about others than positive things. The urge to gossip exploits this human weakness among hearers to make speakers speak negative things.

Thankfully, *bhakti-yoga* offers a much more positive way to gain attention: speaking about Kṛṣṇa. When we love Him purely, we speak about Him because we want Him to be the center of our attention – and

LOOKING FOR NEWS OF THE HARE KṚṢṆA MOVEMENT?

Log on to www.iskconnews.org



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

others' or my dirty linen in public, but by sharing the process that has enabled me to have my truest experiences – my experiences of my true identity.

Ultimately, we all need to subordinate our pursuit of knowledge to our purpose; otherwise that pursuit can sabotage our purpose. No one can know everything about even just one small thing, such as, say, an atom or a subatomic particle. Then I certainly can't know about everything that's happened in Kṛṣṇa's worldwide movement. My purpose in coming to Kṛṣṇa's movement is not to know what's gone wrong with whom where, but to know how I can stay right on the path to Kṛṣṇa.

Don't Prey on Others— Pray for Them

While fighting the urge to gossip about the challenges other devotees are going through, I have found prayer immensely helpful. Once during a conversation when I realized that I had gotten sidetracked into gossip, I tried to get back on course by saying, "Let's pray for him." And it changed the whole mood from condemning to commiserating. Instead of perversely enjoying another's misery, as in a horror movie, we focused, like a medical team, on the *bhakti-yoga* treatment, praying that it help the troubled devotee.

If I look for controversies in Kṛṣṇa's movement, I will find them, but if I look for Kṛṣṇa in His movement, I will find Him.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.11) Kṛṣṇa says that He reciprocates with us according to our desires. Just as He is reciprocal, so too is His movement. If I look for controversies in Kṛṣṇa's movement, I will find them, but if I look for Kṛṣṇa in His movement, I will find Him.

Even discussing true things requires caution, because of the importance of confidentiality in *bhakti*. The *bhakti* guidebook *Upadeśāmṛta* (text 4) states that speaking our heart confidentially and hearing others share their heart confidentially are integral to affectionate relationships. And affectionate relationships are foundational to *bhakti*, which centers on relating not just with Kṛṣṇa but also with those who love Him – and with those striving to love Him. So, if a devotee-seeker has privately shared with me some personal issue, by gossiping about it I violate the trust of that devotee and decrease my trustworthiness as a candidate for close relationships.

Sadly, I haven't been able to tap the power of prayer much while fighting gossip. The attitude toward the objects of gossip becomes so negative that it is tough to shift the mental gears and pray for them. Gossip makes me into a predator who feasts on others, more specifically on their lower side, which has caused their lapses. Over the years, I have understood that a prayerful attitude is not a switch we turn on or off at our convenience. It needs to be cultivated by tilling the soil of the heart with a devotional disposition towards Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.

I also try to use my daily journaling in my battle against gossip. If I gossip about someone, I try to write positive things about him and pray for him – and of course pray for myself, that I may break free from the clutches of gossip.

Certainly, all negative talk about others is not gossip. Sometimes we may need to speak about oth-

ers to caution someone about potential dangers on the spiritual path. But such cautionary talks require constant vigilance. On several occasions, I started speaking with a cautionary intention, but unwittingly ended up with a predatory disposition. I have a long way to go in my battle against gossip.

"So Can I"

When I got the epiphany about my hypocrisy, I didn't think of all this – it came later during sustained reflection. At that time, I just stopped the relapse into gossip by saying, "Let's discuss something more positive." My friend surprised me with his self-control and sensitivity: self-control in not insisting that I share the secret, and sensitivity in not pointing out that my use of "us" was incorrect – the "discussion" had been a monologue by me alone.

Will I be able to avoid gossiping in the future? I have so often initiated an unnecessary discussion with the question "Can you keep a secret?" that it has become an unconscious tool for grabbing attention. I doubt whether I will be able to stop myself from asking that question. If I can't, then I have come up with a contingency plan, a second line of defense – something that can reinforce this epiphany by stressing the literal aspect of the question. Next time, if I give in to the urge to gossip by asking, "Can you keep a secret?" and get the predictable affirmative response, I hope and pray that I will be able to stop that urge by my own affirmation: "So can I." 🙏

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

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.



Leicester Square, London

A Heart Touched by Vrindavan

“Some faraway dike in my consciousness had cracked, and a new openness to alternative notions was starting to trickle through.”

Text and photos by Visakha Dasi

CHAPTER FIVE: IMMERSION

TWO DAYS AND two nights on a dirty train and a bumpy, cramped ride on an antediluvian bus brought John and me to Vrindavan. It was past midnight, July 17, 1971. I was twenty-one.

Ashrams were locked, streets were deserted, and the only noises were the occasional soft grunts and shuffles of dozing animals. We slept on a sandstone ledge outside an ashram and woke the next morning to a symphony of birds and the common bustle of Indian village life. A woman bent low to sweep the unpaved road with a short, stiff, straw broom, raising billows of dust; a man washed his clothes by pounding them against a large flat rock; a girl coaxed flames from a small cow-dung fire, preparing to cook breakfast for her family;

a salesman pushing a cartful of fruits meandered by, shouting about his goods; a boy on a clunky farmer’s bullock cart lumbered past; men balancing milk jugs on both ends of a long stick that straddled their shoulders struggled by, looking down and bouncing the weight as they walked; school children in dark blue uniforms gleefully ran to their classes along sunlit roads.

• • •

Yet there was something different about Vrindavan. The air, sweet and caressing, carried song – the washerman’s lilting tenor, the sweeper woman’s warbling soprano. The mo-

ment I stepped into the street, the chant “Jaya Radhe!” was directed toward me from a smiling, elderly woman. She walked past in a white sari, her right hand in a small white cotton bag. I didn’t know what either “Jaya” or “Radhe” meant, or how to return this friendly greeting.

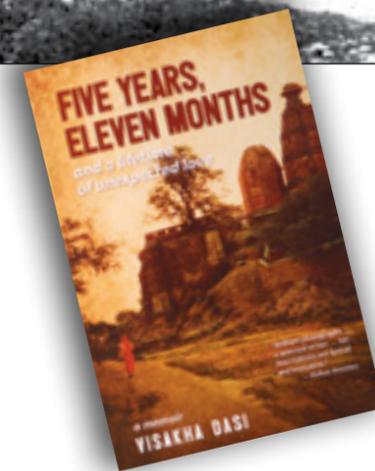
Using sign language and broken Hindi, John and I found an elderly resident who spoke English.

“We’d like to rent a place to stay in Vrindavan,” John told him.

“Yes, yes, I can arrange, I can arrange,” he said with a wiry grin.

A couple of hours later, with our loaded backpacks on our backs, John and I walked with him along the dusty, cobbled streets to a rental.

“I have traveled all over India,” he told us as we went. “And I see Vrindavan is the best place. Best place.”



From *Five Years, Eleven Months and a Lifetime of Unexpected Love: A Memoir*. Copyright 2017 Jean Griesser (Visakha Dasi). Available from the Krishna.com Store and Amazon.com. This selection retains the book’s style for dealing with Sanskrit words and other considerations.



I glanced at John, who was listening politely.

"In other places," the old man continued, "in the cities, in the ordinary towns, the people's hearts are heavy. So many responsibilities they have, so much worry, pressures. They cannot escape. Prisoners – all the men, women – they're life's prisoners. Here, in this place, you will find the people are more free. Not so burdened by family, job, endless duties." He looked from John to me, smiling, "You will see."

After turning enough corners to make me lose my sense of direction we finally stopped walking. "Here it is," he said. "This is a good location – just a couple of minutes from the river," and he pointed down the street to our left, "and only a few steps from the Radha Raman temple!" and he pointed to our right, where I could see a sign announcing the entrance to the famous Radha Raman temple.

By that afternoon we'd rented it, a fine, three-story house for fifty rupees (about seven U.S. dollars) monthly. The house's one drawback was its pitch-dark bathroom and the bat family that lived in it. I thought bats avoided crashing into things by using ultrasonic echolocation, but these Vrindavan bats didn't. After a couple of them had flown into my face, I noticed their flying altitude was four feet and higher, so I began crawling into the bathroom, remaining crouched while in there, and crawling out. If I accidentally stood up, a bat would inevitably dash into my head. To feel those furry, bony, muscled lumps hit, be momentarily stunned, recoup and then fly off was absolutely spooky.

The top floor of our new home was hotter than the average outdoor temperature of 110 degrees Fahrenheit, but since any hint of a breeze only reached the top floor, John and I stayed there. The day after we moved in, we both got pinkeye from the soot that had poured into the train windows

during our trip. Our elderly friend got us some medicated eye drops.

"I'm going to bathe in the Yamuna and wash my eyes in it too," John, ever the experimenter, said. The Yamuna, a holy river that flowed around Vrindavan, was supposed to be purifying.

"I'll keep up with the eye drops," I said, and put a couple more drops in each eye. As fate would have it, John's eyes cleared up before mine.

Pinkeye made my eyes tear continuously, acute hay fever made me sneeze often, my nose ran continuously, and the heat made me sweat profusely. For three days, between sneezes, I lay motionless on my back under a mosquito net – which stopped

friend had explained that I should return the oft heard "Jaya Radhe!" with a "Jaya Radhe!" of my own, which I did with caution at first, like dipping a tentative toe in a swimming pool. One morning while John was shopping for our fruits, vegetables, and yogurt, I tagged behind a few "Jaya Radhe!" women to a temple where 150 widows in white saris sat for three hours chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Half the women listened as the other half chanted, and then the roles reversed. Their feeling for the song more than made up for any lack in melody or harmony. They sang like this,

Our elderly Vrindavan friend had explained that I should return the oft heard "Jaya Radhe!" with a "Jaya Radhe!" of my own.

swarms of flies from reaching me but also stopped any vestige of a breeze.

An incapacitated mess, I wondered, "Why is garbage and rubble strewn throughout this crooked and crumbling town? Who would ever think with longing of this place with its fetid stench from the open sewers that line the streets and the dust so thick it catches in your throat? Who would want to cohabit with bats, mice and rats, or dwell in the dismal, stale rooms with their chipped plaster and tyrannical heat or bathe in the filthy brackish water of the river? Who could be inspired by the scores of sullen, sneering young men lolling in the streets? Who would even want to visit this place?"

• • •

When I was mobile again, though, in the relative cool of the mornings and evenings, camera in hand, I took to the streets and alleys of Vrindavan, a Mecca for Vaishnavs – followers of Vishnu. Our elderly Vrindavan

I learned, every morning throughout the year. I wondered at the softness and satisfaction in their faces, at their concentration.

In the afternoons, I saw these same women scattered throughout the town, giving water to pilgrims, cooking rice, begging from shopkeepers, cleaning with those absurdly short brooms, offering prayers in temples, talking with friends, drying or gathering dry cow-dung patties. They seemed secure in their apparently impoverished lives. Decades later, I learned that estranged families sent their widowed, childless women to Vrindavan; even "modern" families abandoned these burdensome women on God's doorstep. But the widows I observed in those early years seemed grateful to be in Vrindavan. At least some of them appeared to have declared their independence from the rigid caste hierarchy and petty family squabbles that often pervade Indian society, and from ambition and its complexities.

It was clear to me, even with my nascent spiritual senses, that some had even reached a rare point of satiation with material things and had moved into a more transcendent world. As I saw them serving their sister widows, they seemed angelic to me. None of the grasping neediness often seen in the poor was visible; they really seemed selfless. I even saw some of these widows giving portions of their rations to hungry dogs and cows. And they seemed spontaneously joyful, having embraced the humility of their circumstances. I was inspired as I watched them, these few evolved human beings, and I was not alone; other Vrindavan residents seemed exceptionally fond of them.

know that I mattered, just as, it seemed, these widows knew they mattered. They mattered not from gathering attention of any kind but by living and mining a rich tradition. Perhaps, freed of smugness and self-approval, I too could be at ease with life and perhaps even my death one day. I could learn to be amiable, mellow, disciplined, restrained, honest, tolerant. I could put my being in order. Such rumination, sparked by the Vrindavan widows, challenged me: perhaps they had something I was unaware I lacked. Perhaps I was missing something.

• • •

The Vrindavan residents' sincere devotion and the atmosphere of ser-

– faith – was nearly palpable. She was present in the services in the temples (there were five thousand temples, from five to five hundred years old, from vest-pocket to palatial, from simple to ornate). She was present in the evening worship on the banks of the sacred Yamuna, in the shops selling devotional paraphernalia, and especially in the reverence of the town's residents. These people, as a community, had set their hearts on divinity. I saw that, although they were at the mercy of the sweltering heat, or the pains of aging

or poverty, they could tolerate these because their faith gave them the hope of being united in spirit with a supernatural presence.

I still denied that presence. My denial, I was realizing, was my armor; it allowed me

to deflect a barrage of difficult questions. But it didn't answer those questions. It protected me from charlatans, yes, but it didn't fill my emptiness or give me direction. Doubt served a purpose, but it also prevented me from trusting anyone or anything. Without trust, how could I ever be happy?

• • •

One night, after an argument with John about some green beans that I hadn't cooked to his liking, I left the house where we were staying, walked the short distance to the Yamuna and sat alone on the bank. It was then that I felt how much affection I had for this place. Just its ether was soothing. The soft night breeze, the silky river, the gentle sounds and exotic smells, the devoted people, all felt rarefied and all embraced me.

• • •

Prabhupada's students had established centers in Calcutta, Delhi

and Bombay. When they traveled between them, Vrindavan, ninety miles south of Delhi, was a natural stopping point. Since John and I knew which ashram they would stay in during their visits, we'd go over regularly to see who'd come. One day Brahmananda Swami, a burly young man in the renounced order, was there. Brahmananda invited us to join him for parikrama – a walk on the path that encircles

Vrindavan. While John, who didn't enjoy walking, stayed back to photograph Vrindavan's downtown area, I joined Brahmananda. As we went I asked him about a Bhagavad-gita verse where Krishna says to Arjuna, "Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these things."

Brahmananda said, "No, no, that's not how it goes. Krishna says, 'Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these



I had come as a removed photographer to observe and document, as one might observe and document dolphins in the wild.

Like the monks in Nepal, these widows opened me up to an alien paradigm. Perhaps social status – through academic accomplishment or a prestigious position (or a position gained through one's husband) – wasn't necessary. Perhaps things weren't what mattered. Instead, perhaps like these widows, I could learn to have the strength to live in a place of "enough" – a place no one in my world knew existed let alone desired. It was a place I wanted to explore. If I felt complete within myself, greed and envy would have no place in me, and ambition would become meaningful only when I strove to better myself in the moment, doing whatever I did in the best possible way each time I did it, conscious and focused on making it of value. Fame would become irrelevant, I wouldn't use knowledge to prove myself, and power would be used solely to help others.

In that place of enough, I would

vice and worship that permeated their town affected me deeply. I had come as a removed photographer to observe and document, as one might observe and document dolphins in the wild, but inside I was lurching about in an ocean of uncertainty searching for landmarks. Some far-away dike in my consciousness had cracked, and a new openness to alternative notions was starting to trickle through.

Who was the elegant, graceful woman who danced carefree through the streets and alleys of Vrindavan, who peeked at me from among the fervent, singing widows or the sincere supplication of pilgrims or from the children playing in temple courtyards or who sat among the mystical and alluring rites? She was a stranger my mind distrusted but my heart yearned to know – a sublime confidence who vanished before skepticism, suspicion, and disbelief.

In Vrindavan, that elusive person

kings – not things.”

“What does that mean?”

“Bhagavad-gita was spoken on a battlefield where kings had assembled to fight. Krishna was telling Arjuna that he, Krishna, was eternal, and that Arjuna and all the warriors on the battlefield were also eternal.”

“They’re eternal in the sense that the soul never dies?”

“Yeah.”

“But I think that things are also eternal – their form may change but

a million dollars if he would leave, but Giriraj was not allured. He remained firmly convinced about his path.

The gaunt Subal Swami was a distant, dour, taciturn twenty-year-old who avoided company and had a wide-eyed stare that seemed to harbor some secret fear. I kept a distance from him.

One especially hot day, Yamuna Devi and I sat like water buffalo in the cool waters of the Yamuna River. With heartfelt gratitude, Yamuna

a divine spark is present? Have you ever seen it? Has anyone ever seen it? What’s the evidence?”

But this day, with only our heads bobbing over the broad expanse of the clear, dark water, as temple bells and gongs sounded in the distance and scents of dinners cooking over open cow-dung fires drifted past and a few merry children ran along the riverbank flying small paper kites, I let it go. Yamuna, next to me, broadly smiling, straightforward, expressive and earnest, coaxed a laugh out of me – she somehow made me laugh at my own reluctance. “When all was said and done,” I thought, “what do I know, anyway?” Oddly – very oddly – it felt good to say, “I don’t know, I just don’t know.” I hardly knew what I thought about anything.

One afternoon, Yamuna, John, and I were together in Loi Bazaar, Vrindavan’s shopping center, when Yamuna, smiling sweetly, shamelessly (her word) said to John, “I saw gorgeous little deities in a shop; could you buy them for me?”

Without much hesitation, John benevolently said, “Okay.”

“Wait a minute,” I thought, “how much do they cost? What do we get in return? Are we being taken advantage of?” But before I could say anything, Yamuna had taken John to a deity shop a few steps away and brought out the deities she’d chosen and set aside. In another few seconds, they were Yamuna’s and she was so gleeful that I didn’t find the heart to voice my concerns. 🙏

Visakha Dasi has been writing for BTG since 1973. Visit her website at our-spiritual-journey.com.



The author with John (soon to become Yadubara das) in Nepal, 1971.

the elements that made them are never lost,” I said, more to save face than to argue philosophy.

“That’s another point,” Brahmananda said. “In the verse you’re talking about, Krishna’s talking about the existence of the soul beyond the demise of the body.”

“Oh, okay.”

Another of Prabhupada’s students who visited was Giriraj das, who had a childlike simplicity that belied his intelligence. After graduating cum laude from Boston’s Brandeis University, Giriraj had joined the Hare Krishna movement, much to his parents’ dismay. His parents had offered him

spoke of Prabhupada and his teachings – how a spark of divine presence was within every living entity and how understanding this presence unified all beings, breaking barriers caused by gender, race, religion, nationality, economic status, and species. Spiritual life, she said, was inclusive. Yamuna spoke of how Prabhupada was complex yet simple and how he embraced unity along with diversity. Prabhupada, she said, loved Krishna.

At another time and in another place, on hearing such a rhapsody I would have countered with severe questions: “But how do you know

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’S VEDIC SACRIFICES

Maitreya Ṛṣi, the current narrator, speaks about King Pṛthu’s sacrifices, attended by great personalities, including Lord Viṣṇu Himself.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 19

5 सिद्धा विद्याधरा दैत्या दानवा गुह्यकादयः सुनन्दनन्दप्रमुखाः पार्षदप्रवरा हरेः

*siddhā vidyādharaḥ daityā
dānavā guhyakādayaḥ
sunanda-nanda-pramukhāḥ
pārṣada-pravarā hareḥ*

siddhāḥ – the residents of Siddhaloka; *vidyādharaḥ* – the residents of Vidyādhara-loka; *daityāḥ* – the demoniac descendants of Diti; *dānavāḥ* – the *asuras*; *guhyaka-ādayaḥ* – the *Yakṣas*, etc.; *sunanda-nanda-pramukhāḥ* – headed by Sunanda and Nanda, the chief of Lord Viṣṇu’s associates from *Vaikuṅṭha*; *pārṣada* – associates; *pravarāḥ* – most respectful; *hareḥ* – of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The Lord was accompanied by the residents of Siddhaloka and Vidyādhara-loka, all the descendants of Diti, and the demons and the Yakṣas. He was also accompanied by His chief associates, headed by Sunanda and Nanda.

6 कपिलो नारदो दत्तो योगेशः सनकादयः तमन्वीयुर्भागवता ये च तत्सेवनोत्सुकाः

*kapilo nārado datto
yogeshāḥ sanakādayaḥ
tam anvīyur bhāgavatā
ye ca tat-sevanotsukāḥ*

kapilaḥ – Kapila Muni; *nāradaḥ* – the great sage Nārada; *dattaḥ* – Dattātreya; *yoga-īśāḥ* – the masters of mystic power; *sanaka-ādayaḥ* – headed by Sanaka; *tam* – Lord Viṣṇu; *anvīyur* – followed; *bhāgavatāḥ* – great devotees; *ye* – all those who; *ca* – also; *tat-sevana-utsukāḥ* – always eager to serve the Lord.

Great devotees, who were always engaged in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as well as the great sages named Kapila, Nārada, and Dattātreya, and masters of mystic powers, headed by Sanaka-kumāra, all attended the great sacrifice with Lord Viṣṇu.

7 यत्र धर्मदुग्धा भूमिः सर्वकामदुग्धा सती दोग्धि स्माभीप्सितानर्थान् यजमानस्य भारत

*yatra dharma-dughā bhūmiḥ
sarva-kāma-dughā satī
dogdhi smābhīpsitān arthān
yajamānasya bhārata*

yatra – where; *dharma-dughā* – producing sufficient milk for religiosity; *bhūmiḥ* – the land; *sarva-kāma* – all desires;

dughā – yielding as milk; *satī* – the cow; *dogdhi sma* – fulfilled; *abhīpsitān* – desirable; *arthān* – objects; *yajamānasya* – of the sacrificer; *bhārata* – my dear Vidura.

My dear Vidura, in that great sacrifice the entire land came to be like the milk-producing kāma-dhenu, and thus, by the performance of yajña, all daily necessities for life were supplied.

PURPORT: In this verse the word *dharmadughā* is significant, for it indicates *kāma-dhenu*. *Kāma-dhenu* is also known as *surabhi*. *Surabhi* cows inhabit the spiritual world, and, as stated in *Brahma-saṁhitā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa is engaged in tending these cows: *surabhīr abhīpālayantam*. ① One can milk a *surabhi* cow as often as one likes, and the cow will deliver as much milk as one requires. ② Milk, of course, is necessary for the production of so many milk products, especially clarified butter, which is required for the performance of great sacrifices. Unless we are prepared to perform the prescribed sacrifices, our supply of the necessities of life will be checked.

Bhagavad-gītā confirms that Lord Brahmā created human society along with *yajña*, the performance of sacrifice. *Yajña* means Lord Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, ③ and sacrifice means working for the satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In this age, however, it is very difficult to find qualified *brāhmaṇas* who can perform sacrifices as prescribed in the *Vedas*. ④ Therefore it is recommended in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyaiḥ*) that by performing *saṅkīrtana-yajña* and by satisfying the ⑤ *yajña-puruṣa*, Lord Caitanya, one can derive all the results derived by great sacrifices in the past.

King Pṛthu and others derived all the necessities of life from the earthly planet by performing great sacrifices. Now this *saṅkīrtana* movement has already been started by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. People should take advantage of this great sacrifice and join in the

- 1) What is a special characteristic of the *surabhi* cow?
- 2) Why is milk important for Vedic sacrifices?
- 3) What is Śrīla Prabhupāda's definition of "sacrifice"?
- 4) In this age, by what sacrifice can one derive all the results derived by great sacrifices in the past?
- 5) Who is the *yajña-puruṣa* (Lord of sacrifice) for this age?
- 6) How can we assure that everything will run peacefully and smoothly in all spheres of life?
- 7) Why is the living entity's prime business to satisfy the Lord?

Society's activities; then there will be no scarcity. ⑥ If *saṅkīrtana-yajña* is performed, there will be no difficulty, not even in industrial enterprises. Therefore this system should be introduced in all spheres of life – social, political, industrial, commercial, etc. Then everything will run very peacefully and smoothly.

8 ऊहुः सर्वरसान्द्यः क्षीरदध्यन्नगोरसान् तरवो भूरिवर्ष्माणः प्रासूयन्त मधुच्युतः

*ūhuh sarva-rasān nadyaḥ
kṣīra-dadhy-anna-go-rasān
taravo bhūri-varṣmāṇaḥ
prāsūyanta madhu-cyutaḥ*

ūhuh – bore; *sarva-rasān* – all kinds of tastes; *nadyaḥ* – the rivers; *kṣīra* – milk; *dadhi* – yogurt; *anna* – different kinds of food; *go-rasān* – other milk products; *taravaḥ* – trees; *bhūri* – great; *varṣmāṇaḥ* – having bodies; *prāsūyanta* – bore fruit; *madhu-cyutaḥ* – dropping honey.

The flowing rivers supplied all kinds of tastes – sweet, pungent, sour, etc. – and very big trees supplied fruit and honey in abundance. The cows, having eaten sufficient green grass, supplied profuse quantities of milk, yogurt, clarified butter, and similar other necessities.

PURPORT: If rivers are not polluted and are allowed to flow in their own way, or sometimes allowed to flood the land, the land will become very fertile and able to produce all kinds of vegetables, trees, and plants.

The word *rasa* means "taste." Actually all *rasas* are tastes within the earth, and as soon as seeds are sown in the ground, various trees sprout up to satisfy our different tastes. For instance, sugarcane provides its juices to satisfy our taste for sweetness, and oranges provide their juices to satisfy our taste for a mixture of the sour and the sweet. Similarly, there are pineapples and other fruits. At the same time, there are chilies to satisfy our taste for pungency.

Although the earth's ground is the same, different tastes arise due to different kinds of seeds. As Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.10), *bījaṁ mām sarva-bhūtānām*: "I am the original seed of all existences." Therefore all arrangements are there. And as stated in *Īsopaniṣad*: *pūrṇam idam*. Complete arrangements for the production of all the necessities of life are made by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. People should therefore learn how to satisfy the *yajña-puruṣa*, Lord Viṣṇu. ⑦ Indeed, the living entity's prime business is to satisfy the Lord because the living entity is part and parcel of the Lord. Thus the whole system is so arranged that the living entity must do his duty as he is constitutionally made. Without doing so, all living entities must suffer. That is the law of nature.

The words *taravo bhūri-varṣmāṇaḥ* indicate very lux-

uriantly grown, big-bodied trees. The purpose of these trees was to produce honey and varieties of fruit. In other words, the forest also has its purpose in supplying honey, fruits, and flowers. Unfortunately in Kali-yuga, due to an absence of *yajña*, there are many big trees in the forests, but they do not supply sufficient fruits and honey. Thus everything is dependent on the performance of *yajña*. The best way to perform *yajña* in this age is to spread the *saṅkīrtana* movement all over the world.

9 सिन्धवो रत्ननिकरान् गिरयोऽन्नं चतुर्विधम् उपायनमुपाजहुः सर्वे लोकाः सपालकाः

*sindhavo ratna-nikarān
girayo 'nnaṁ catur-vidham
upāyanam upājahruḥ
sarve lokāḥ sa-pālakāḥ*

sindhavaḥ – the oceans; *ratna-nikarān* – heaps of jewels; *girayaḥ* – the hills; *annaṁ* – eatables; *catur-vidham* – four kinds of; *upāyanam* – presentations; *upājahruḥ* – brought forward; *sarve* – all; *lokāḥ* – the people in general of all planets; *sa-pālakāḥ* – along with the governors.

King Pṛthu was presented with various gifts from the general populace and predominating deities of all planets. The oceans and seas were full of valuable jewels and pearls, and the hills were full of chemicals and fertilizers. Four kinds of edibles were produced profusely.

PURPORT: As stated in *Īsopaniṣad*, this material creation is supplied with all the potencies for the production of all necessities required by the living entities – not only human beings, but animals, reptiles, aquatics, and trees. The oceans and seas produce pearls, coral, and valuable jewels so that fortunate law-abiding people can utilize them. Similarly, the hills are full of chemicals so that when rivers flow down from them the chemicals spread over the fields to fertilize the four kinds of foodstuffs. ⑧ These are technically known as *carvya* (those edibles which are chewed), *lehya* (those which are licked up), *cūṣya* (those which are sucked) and *peya* (those which are drunk).

Pṛthu Mahārāja was greeted by the residents of other planets and their presiding deities. They presented various gifts to the King and acknowledged him as the proper type of king by whose planning and activities everyone throughout the universe could be happy and prosperous. It is clearly indicated in this verse that the oceans and seas are meant for producing jewels, but in Kali-yuga the oceans are mainly being utilized for fishing. *Sūdras* and poor men were allowed to fish, but the higher classes like the *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas* would gather pearls, jewels, and coral. Although poor men would catch tons of fish, they would not be equal in value to one piece of coral or

pearl. In this age so many factories for the manufacture of fertilizers have been opened, but when the Personality of Godhead is pleased by the performance of *yajñas*, the hills automatically produce fertilizing chemicals, which help produce edibles in the fields. Everything is dependent on the people's acceptance of the Vedic principles of sacrifice.

10 इति चाधोक्षजेशस्य पृथोस्तु परमोदयम् असूयन् भगवानिन्द्रः प्रतिघातमचीकरत्

*iti cādhokṣajēśasya
pṛthos tu paramodayam
asūyan bhagavān indraḥ
pratighātam acīkarat*

iti – thus; *ca* – also; *adhokṣaja-īśasya* – who accepted Adhokṣaja as his worshipable Lord; *pṛthoḥ* – of King Pṛthu; *tu* – then; *parama* – the topmost; *udayam* – opulence; *asūyan* – being envious of; *bhagavān* – the most powerful; *indraḥ* – the King of heaven; *pratighātam* – impediments; *acīkarat* – made.

King Pṛthu was dependent on the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is known as Adhokṣaja. Because King Pṛthu performed so many sacrifices, he was superhumanly enhanced by the mercy of the Supreme Lord. King Pṛthu's opulence, however, could not be tolerated by the King of heaven, Indra, who tried to impede the progress of his opulence.

PURPORT: In this verse there are three significant purposes expressed in the words *adhokṣaja*, *bhagavān indraḥ*, and *pṛthoḥ*. Mahārāja Pṛthu is an incarnation of Viṣṇu, yet he is a great devotee of Lord Viṣṇu. Although an empowered incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, he is nonetheless a living entity. As such, he must be a devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although one is empowered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead and is an incarnation, he should not forget his eternal relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In Kali-yuga there are many self-made incarnations, rascals who declare themselves to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The words *bhagavān indraḥ* indicate that a living entity can even be as exalted and powerful as King Indra, for even King Indra is an ordinary living entity in the material world and possesses the four defects of the conditioned soul. King Indra is described herein as *bhagavān*, which is generally used in reference to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. ⑨ In this case, however, King Indra is addressed as *bhagavān* because

- 8) What are the four kinds of foodstuffs?
- 9) Why is King Indra addressed as *bhagavān*?

he has so much power in his hands. Despite his becoming *bhagavān*, he is envious of the incarnation of God, Pṛthu Mahārāja. The defects of material life are so strong that due to contamination King Indra becomes envious of an incarnation of God.

We should try to understand, therefore, how a conditioned soul becomes fallen. The opulence of King Pṛthu was not dependent on material conditions. As described in this verse, he was a great devotee of Adhokṣaja. 10 The word *adhokṣaja* indicates the Personality of Godhead, who is beyond the expression of mind and words. However, the Supreme Personality of Godhead appears before the devotee in His original form of eternal bliss and knowledge. The devotee is allowed to see the Supreme Lord face to face, although the Lord is beyond the expression of our senses and beyond our direct perception.

11 चरमेणाश्वमेधेन यजमाने यजुष्पतिम् वैन्ये यज्ञपशुं स्पर्धन्नपोवाह तिरोहितः

*caramēṇāśvamedhena
yajamāne yajuṣ-patim
vainye yajña-paśum spardhan
apovāha tirohitah*

caramēṇa – by the last one; *śva-medhena* – by the *śvamedha* sacrifice; *yajamāne* – when he was performing the sacrifice; *yajuṣ-patim* – for satisfaction of the Lord of *yajña*, Viṣṇu; *vainye* – the son of King Vena; *yajña-paśum* – the animal meant to be sacrificed in the *yajña*; *spardhan* – being envious; *apovāha* – stole; *tirohitah* – being invisible.

When Pṛthu Mahārāja was performing the last horse sacrifice [śvamedha-yajña], King Indra, invisible to everyone, stole the horse intended for sacrifice. He did this because of his great envy of King Pṛthu.

PURPORT: King Indra is known as *śata-kratu*, which indicates that he has performed one hundred horse sacrifices (*śvamedha-yajña*). 11 We should know, however, that the animals sacrificed in the *yajña* were not killed. If the Vedic mantras were properly pronounced during the sacrifice, the animal sacrificed would come out again with a new life. That is the test for a successful *yajña*.

When King Pṛthu was performing one hundred *yajñas*, Indra became very envious because he did not want anyone to excel him. Being an ordinary living entity, he became

10) What does the word *adhokṣaja* indicate about the Personality of Godhead?

11) How is it that the animal sacrifice in a Vedic sacrifice was not killed?

envious of King Pṛthu, and, making himself invisible, he stole the horse and thus impeded the *yajña* performance.

12 तमत्रिर्भगवानैक्षत्त्वरमाणं विहायसा आमुक्तमिव पाखण्डं योऽधर्मे धर्मविभ्रमः

*tam atrir bhagavān aikṣat
tvaramāṇam vihāyasā
āmuktam iva pākhaṇḍam
yo 'dharme dharmā-vibhramah*

tam – King Indra; *atriḥ* – the sage Atri; *bhagavān* – most powerful; *aikṣat* – could see; *tvaramāṇam* – moving very hastily; *vihāyasā* – in outer space; *āmuktam iva* – like a liberated person; *pākhaṇḍam* – imposter; *yaḥ* – one who; *adharme* – in irreligion; *dharmā* – religion; *vibhramah* – mistaking.

When King Indra was taking away the horse, he dressed himself to appear as a liberated person. Actually this dress was a form of cheating, for it falsely created an impression of religion. When Indra went into outer space in this way, the great sage Atri saw him and understood the whole situation.

PURPORT: The word *pākhaṇḍa* used in this verse is sometimes pronounced *pāṣaṇḍa*. Both of these words indicate an imposter who presents himself as a very religious person but in actuality is sinful. Indra took up the saffron-colored dress as a way of cheating others. This saffron dress has been misused by many imposters who present themselves as liberated persons or incarnations of God. In this way people are cheated. As we have mentioned many times, the conditioned soul has a tendency to cheat; therefore this quality is also visible in a person like King Indra. It is understood that even King Indra is not liberated from the clutches of material contamination. Thus the words *āmuktam iva*, meaning “as if he were liberated,” are used. The saffron dress worn by a *sannyāsī* announces to the world that he has renounced all worldly affairs and is simply engaged in the service of the Lord. Such a devotee is actually a *sannyāsī*, or liberated person. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.1) it is said:

*anāśritaḥ karma-phalam
kāryaṁ karma karoti yaḥ
sa sannyāsī ca yogī ca
na niragnir na cākriyaḥ*

“One who is unattached to the fruits of his work and who works as he is obligated is in the renounced order of life, and he is the true mystic, not he who lights no fire and performs no work.”

[Continued in the next issue.]

Seeing by Hearing

This conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place on April 17, 1977, in Bombay.

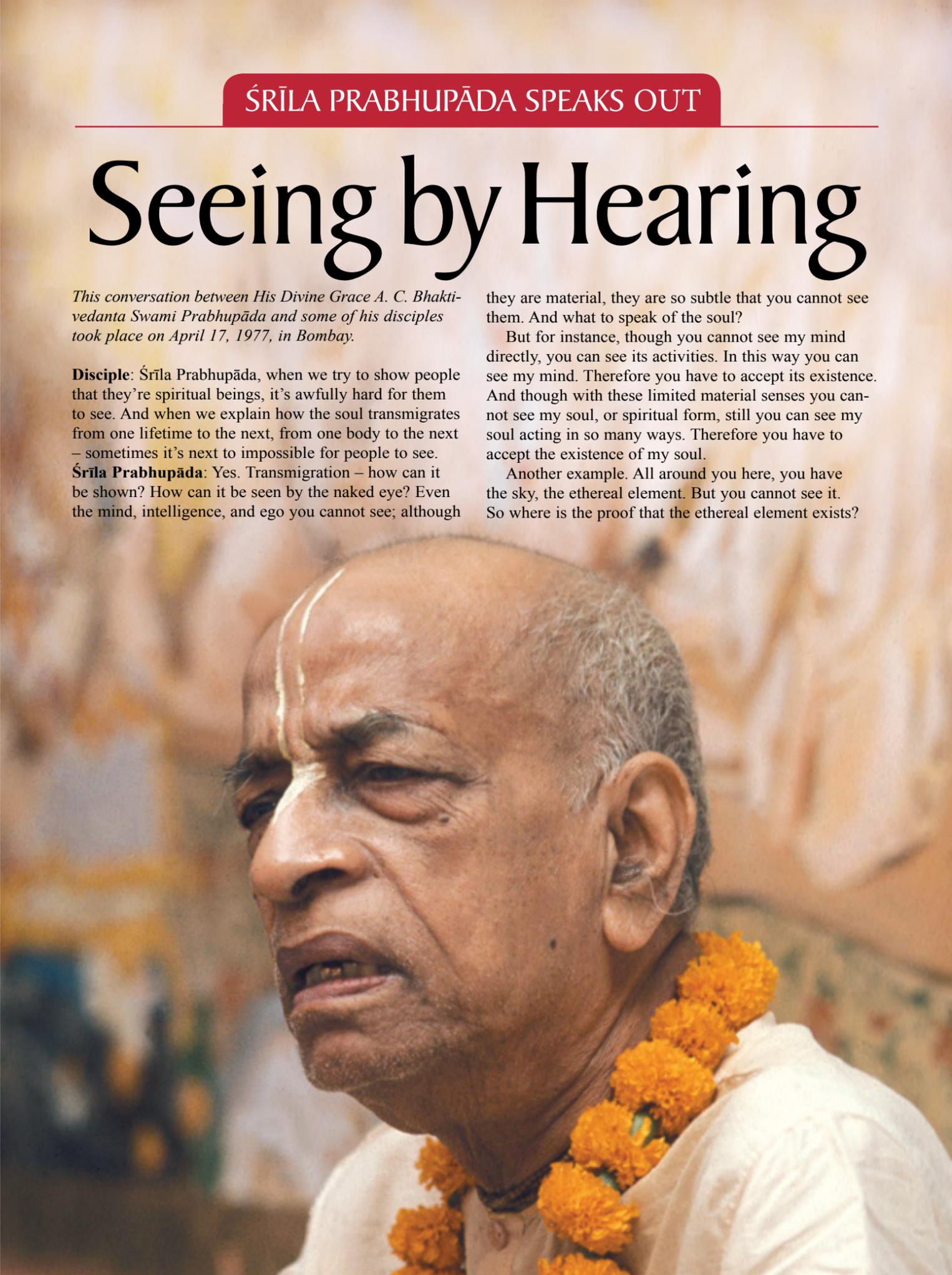
Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, when we try to show people that they're spiritual beings, it's awfully hard for them to see. And when we explain how the soul transmigrates from one lifetime to the next, from one body to the next – sometimes it's next to impossible for people to see.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Transmigration – how can it be shown? How can it be seen by the naked eye? Even the mind, intelligence, and ego you cannot see; although

they are material, they are so subtle that you cannot see them. And what to speak of the soul?

But for instance, though you cannot see my mind directly, you can see its activities. In this way you can see my mind. Therefore you have to accept its existence. And though with these limited material senses you cannot see my soul, or spiritual form, still you can see my soul acting in so many ways. Therefore you have to accept the existence of my soul.

Another example. All around you here, you have the sky, the ethereal element. But you cannot see it. So where is the proof that the ethereal element exists?



[Claps.] That you cannot see with your eyes. But you can hear it with your ears. *Śabda*, sounds – sound is the proof of the existence of the ethereal element. You cannot see the ethereal. But it is there.

Sound is the proof for the presence of the ethereal element. And to prove the presence of the soul – which is much, much more subtle than the ethereal element – again you must rely on sound. You need to hear from spiritually realized persons and authoritative scriptures.

Disciple: So with these limited material senses, we can perceive the soul only indirectly?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That's all. To perceive the soul – which is far, far beyond your perceptive power – you

to hear. That's the proof. And the proof of the soul's existence is *śruti*, what you hear from the spiritually realized authorities.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, wouldn't another proof be that everyone can, say, look at his hands and recall years earlier, when he had the hands of a baby or a young child? So everyone can figure out, "Now that my body is so totally different, my feeling of still being the same person has to be coming from my soul." In other words, what stays the same is your soul.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. And here is yet another example. You cannot see scent, but still, you know whether the scent is nice or not very nice. Let us say a rose scent is being carried

his body cremated, we may mistakenly think that he is finished, that everything, including the soul, is finished.

The atheists will talk like this. *Bhasmī-bhūtasya dehasya kutaḥ punar āgamano bhavet:* Once your present body is burnt to ashes, where is the question of your having come from a previous life or of your going to a next life? You are finished.

The atheists will talk like this, but Kṛṣṇa does not talk like this. No. He says, *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre:* "Even when the material body is destroyed, the soul cannot be destroyed."

So whom will you follow – the atheists? Why not follow Kṛṣṇa? That is our proposal.

The atheists will say, "Just see. The body has been burnt to ashes. There – where is the person? The person is dead."

Kṛṣṇa says, "No. He is not dead. He has gone on to another body." And *dhīras tatra na muhyati:* "Those who are sober are not disturbed by the outward show of the body's death. They know the soul who lived within has now gone to his next life." The real person is still living. He has simply gone from one dwelling place to another.

But who can understand this fact? Only the sober, Kṛṣṇa says. We have to become sober, cool-headed, and mature.

Take the example of a restless child. Now, how can you convince this restless child about higher philosophy, the science of the soul? It is not possible. But a sober person, a cool-headed person – he can be convinced. So this is a childish civilization. It is not a sober civilization.

We have to become sober, spiritually intelligent, cool-headed – not identifying with the outer body and restlessly rushing about, driven by bodily whims. But these so-called modern men – these restless rascals – have built their whole civilization on rushing about and being driven by bodily whims. 🌸

You have to get your perception of the soul by hearing from the bona fide spiritual authorities. That is knowledge.

need the *śruti*, the authoritative scriptures. *Śruti* means "what is heard" – from the Lord and from spiritually realized sages who know about the existence beyond matter.

So you have to get your perception of the soul by hearing from the bona fide spiritual authorities. That is knowledge. Otherwise, who has seen the soul with these paltry eyes? These modern rascals – who among them has seen the soul? They are educated so grossly.

But everything can be perceived. Not that everything has to be seen with these eyes. We often give this example: as a newborn infant, you cannot determine who is your father simply by your eyes. You have to hear your mother reassuring you, "Here is your father." That's all. You cannot make some experiment through your seeing power. You simply have to hear from your mother, the bona fide authority on the subject of who is your father. You have

by a breeze. You cannot see the rose scent or how it is being carried. But you can smell it and know without a doubt, "Ah, this is a rose scent."

Similarly, the soul is being carried along through this material world on the subtle breeze of his materially conditioned mind and intelligence and his false ego, his misidentification with matter. But you cannot see the soul directly. You have to learn to see the soul by hearing from the authorities, such as Lord Kṛṣṇa. *Apareyam itas tv anyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām:* "Beyond this material nature, there is another *prakṛti*, another nature." That is the spiritual nature, in which *na jāyate mriyate vā* – "There is no birth or death."

But at present the soul, who is a tiny spark of that undying spiritual nature, is being carried along by his materially covered mind and intelligence, and by his false ego. Now, when our gross material eyes see

Surrender To the Idea of Surrendering

On making the choice to trust and obey God.

by Kṛṣṇanandinī Devī Dāsī

WE WERE FINISHING up our weekly *Bhagavad-gītā* class, and I asked for comments and questions from the congregation.

A young lady raised her hand and said quietly, "For me, it means surrendering to the idea of surrender to God. That's what I will take away from this class."

When asked to repeat her comments, she said the same thing more loudly. Her remarks struck a chord with the rest of the congregation and prompted some energetic discussion on the topic.

The all-merciful Lord wants to give us shelter, wants to protect us.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66) Lord Kṛṣṇa concludes His instructions to Arjuna with His most emphatic instruction: "Abandon all varieties of religion and just

surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” In other words, the all-merciful Lord wants to give us shelter, wants to protect us.

It would seem simple: surrender to God and we don’t have to worry. Everything will be all right. Just what is the difficulty? Why don’t we just surrender? Most thoughtful people will agree that surrender to the all-powerful, all-knowing God is a good idea, that surrender to the merciful God is the surest way to peace, wisdom, love, and eternal life. Yet we struggle with surrendering.

What does surrender mean?

The dictionary defines surrender as “to give up possession of some-

Surrender to Kṛṣṇa is glorious.

Generally, surrendering to someone means to accept defeat, and has negative connotations. To give in or acknowledge one’s helplessness or powerlessness is seldom viewed as a positive thing. Sometimes, surrender is even considered shameful. But surrender to Kṛṣṇa is glorious. Surrender to Kṛṣṇa means taking shelter of the supreme lover of us all, who is willing and able to protect us.

Usually, in material circumstances, when a person surrenders to his opponent or a stronger foe he is embarrassed, mistreated, or imprisoned. But surrender to Kṛṣṇa is not like that. Kṛṣṇa is not our enemy. He is our best well-wishing friend, and to submit to Him is natural.

Surrender to Kṛṣṇa means taking shelter of the supreme lover of us all, who is willing and able to protect us.

thing; to declare yourself defeated; to give in or relinquish, to submit.” So how do we surrender? By relinquishing the false sense of self, the false ego, by declaring our defeat by Kṛṣṇa’s material energy and submitting to His superior energy, or love personified. This of course is easier said than done. Actually, surrender to God is an expression of faith or trust in God, which culminates in love. Surrender means we accept God’s words and His instructions coming through His pure servants and the bona fide scriptures.

A preliminary step is to just give in to, or agree to, the idea of surrendering to God, to the idea of taking shelter in Him, to just accept that surrendering to Him, accepting His protection, is in our best interest and is the most significant thing we can do. I should acknowledge that God loves me and that surrender to Him is good for me and everyone else.

Surrender to the idea of accepting God’s shelter.

We can do things to help us surrender to the idea of surrendering to God. They include:

- Accepting, at least theoretically, the truth that “I am not this material body. I’m not black or white, man or woman, rich or poor, fat or skinny, old or young. I am an eternal spiritual spark of God. *Aham brahmāsmi*: I am spirit soul.”
- Engaging in practices of devotional service, which cleanse the heart, especially chanting the holy names of God sincerely, regularly, and increasingly.
- Taking everything as Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. The scriptures repeat often that adverse conditions do not disturb a mature devotee, who takes whatever happens, good or bad, as a gift from Kṛṣṇa. As Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “A devotee is not disturbed by any adverse condition. He takes that this is a gift of Kṛṣṇa. *Tat te anukampām*.

‘It is Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. Although I am put into difficulty, it is Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.’ So anyone who takes in that way – *mukti-pade sa daya-bhāk*: his going back to home, back to Godhead, is guaranteed. Because he takes everything as Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.” (Lecture, Vrindavan, September 11, 1976)

- Obeying God’s words and agreeing to follow His instructions.
- Preparing for initiation by a qualified guru and then keeping the vows one makes during initiation.
- Not being bewildered by changing material bodies, including our own. Factually, material bodies deteriorate – they get old and they die. With a sober mind we should note that every day we are surrounded by death. Our forefathers have died, our friends and neighbors are dying, and we too will die.
- Choosing to take shelter of God, to trust and obey Him. We ask ourselves what we can practically do with our life and abilities to live in a way that pleases Him.
- Looking within to find opportunities to grow. Here is an excerpt from *Surrender: The Key To Eternal Life*, by Bhakti Tīrtha Swami:

If we fully understood our faults, then we would not be in the material world in the first place. Kṛṣṇa, in the heart and through *sādhu*, *sāstra* (sacred scriptures), and guru, constantly shows us what it is we need to adjust in ourselves. Humility is so significant that its presence or absence indicates perfectly the degree of a devotee’s advancement. One who constantly looks within to see what has to be eliminated will quickly advance.

Elimination is essential because we are already internally connected with Kṛṣṇa. We are pure, but this purity is covered over. Our spiritual life basically involves uncovering. It is that simple and that difficult. When our faults are revealed, what do we do? Some people who are sleeping will become angry; when you wake them up, they want to be left alone. For this reason, when Kṛṣṇa comes, most

people do not know his real identity. They miss out because they do not want to accept that they are prisoners in a world of illusion.

What are the obstacles to our surrendering?

Time and again we are reminded that (1) we make mistakes, (2) our senses are imperfect, (3) we’re sure to be in illusion, and (4) we have a tendency to cheat or pretend that we know something we don’t, or that we are someone we aren’t.

Remember the wizard in the classic story of *The Wizard of Oz*? He was fooling everyone, convincing them that he was knowledgeable and powerful when he was just a puny man like the rest of the citizens in Oz. He was a cheater.

These four defects are universal, common to everyone, but we erroneously consider our choices, our decisions, correct and worth adhering to even though they are based on defective information and received from defective senses.

So what are the traps? What prevents us from surrendering?

One is our dogged obstinacy, our stubbornness to yield, to concede the truth that we are not the ultimate doer, enjoyer, or proprietor. We cling to the idea that by our own endeavors we will be happy, wealthy, and famous. We don’t like to acknowledge our ignorance or our powerlessness or our smallness. We want to be the master. We don’t want to surrender to anyone. We are attached to our misconceptions and illusions and don’t want to let them go.

Another trap is that we associate with people who are not surrendering to God. We naturally reflect the activities and thoughts of those we are primarily in contact with, so association is ninety-nine percent of who we are in this life and will be in the next. Regular grateful association with devotees will help us surrender because associating with God’s sincere servants strengthens faith in Him.

Why is surrendering to God so necessary and so important?

Kṛṣṇa is infinite, and we are infinitesimal. Kṛṣṇa is the macrocosm, and we are the microcosm. Kṛṣṇa is the one, and we are the many. Kṛṣṇa is huge and unlimited, and we are tiny and limited.

If we, at least in principle, accept that we are spiritual beings somehow existing in a nonspiritual, temporary environment, then surrendering to God, accepting His shelter, is the way to return to our original, joyful, eternal position. Surrender to Kṛṣṇa is mandatory for our ultimate success and freedom. As Śrīla Prabhupāda would say, “God is great. We are small. The business of the small is to serve the great.”

Serving the great is done under the guidance of the guru. “Caitanya Mahāprabhu made one condition: ‘You have committed so many sinful activities. I shall excuse them immediately, provided you promise that you’ll not commit again.’ This is called initiation – that to the spiritual master or Kṛṣṇa we surrender.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture, Mayapur, March 19, 1976)

From the date of initiation by the spiritual master, the connection between Kṛṣṇa and a person cultivating Kṛṣṇa consciousness is established. Without initiation by a bona fide spiritual master, the actual connec-

tion with Kṛṣṇa consciousness never takes place.

The scriptures help us surrender.

Studying the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and other authorized scriptures will help us surrender. “All Vedic literatures advise us to approach a bona fide spiritual master to get free from the perplexities of life, which happen without our desire. They are like a forest fire that somehow blazes without being set by anyone.” (*Gītā* 2.7, Purport)

What are the benefits of surrendering to Kṛṣṇa?

We will have everything we need and our pure desires will be fulfilled. In his book *By His Example* (Second Edition), Guru Das quotes Śrīla Prabhupāda:

Your offering is love. And if God accepts your offerings, then what more do you want? He becomes your most intimate friend. If you make God your intimate friend, then there is nothing wanted. You will be fulfilled. You will find that “I have got everything.” And if we become convinced that Kṛṣṇa is my protector, then how much happier and peaceful we will be. Offer something. Just be in love and appreciate Him. Then just see (please turn to page 47)

How to Put BTG in Your Will

After providing for their families and loved ones, subscribers may want to put *Back to Godhead* in their wills, thus helping to assure the long-term future of this work. In the USA, bequests are free of estate tax and can substantially reduce the amount of your assets claimed by the government.* You can give needed support for *Back to Godhead* by simply including the following words in your will: *I give, devise, and bequeath to Back to Godhead, 18024 NW 112th Blvd., Alachua, FL 32615 (insert amount being given here) to be used to support Back to Godhead and its related activities, including the Krishna.com website.* A bequest can be a specific dollar amount, a specific piece of property, a percentage of an estate, or all or part of the residue of an estate. You can also name BTG as a contingency beneficiary in the event someone named in your will is no longer living. It is recommended that a lawyer help in drafting or amending a will.

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

BOOK EXCERPT

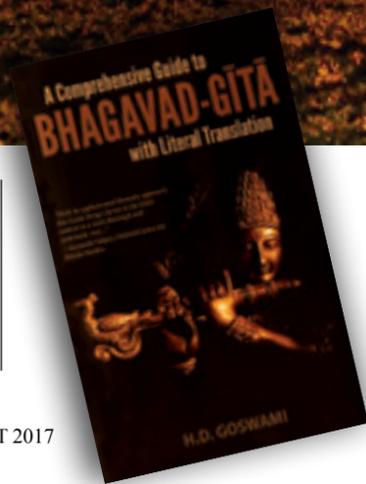
ETERNAL PERSONS UNDER NATURE'S MODES

A guide to two fundamental teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā.

by Hridayānanda Dāsa Goswami



From *A Comprehensive Guide to Bhagavad-gītā with Literal Translation*, Parts II and III. Copyright 2015 by H.D. Goswami (Howard J. Resnick). Available at the Krishna.com Store and elsewhere. (The citations in brackets here refer to *Gītā* verses.)



Individual Eternal Persons (Puruṣas)

EVERY LIVING BEING in this world is an eternal soul encased in a temporary material body. Each soul has always existed and will always exist as a personal individual being [2.12].

Only the material body begins and ends [2.18], for the soul is never born and never dies [2.16–21]. The soul is God's superior living energy [7.5], a part of God, Kṛṣṇa [15.7]. And God is kindly disposed toward every soul [5.29].

Spiritual liberation entails neither giving up our individual existence nor merging into anything impersonal. Rather

we shed layers of illusion and uncover our true self. Throughout *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa refers to the soul as a *person* (*puruṣa*).¹

An ever-changing material body covers the soul. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus is reputed to have said that one cannot step twice into the same river,

BACK TO GODHEAD

Subscriber Service Information

Your satisfaction is our highest priority.

LET OUR BTG SERVICE CENTER HELP YOU WITH:

Renewing:

We will automatically notify you by mail when it's time to renew. If you prefer, you can even renew your subscription by calling us toll-free.

Gift Subscriptions:

An easy way to send a thoughtful gift! You can send a gift subscription of BTG to friends and family any time of the year. We'll also include an attractive gift card announcing your gift.

Change of Address:

If you are moving or taking a vacation, we'd be happy to change your address or suspend service temporarily.

Other Questions:

We'll gladly help you with these and any other questions you may have concerning your BTG subscription.

CONTACT US:

1-800-800-3284

BTG Service Center
P. O. Box 430
Alachua, FL 32616, USA

E-mail: btgsubs@krishna.com



<http://btg.krishna.com/subscriber-services>

since its waters are constantly flowing. We might also say that one cannot breathe twice in the same body, since it is ever in biological flux. The body is the field on which we play out our life; we souls are the witnesses of that field [13.2].

Just as material objects exist in space but can never taint or transform it, so the body, though affecting our consciousness in many ways, can never alter the soul's eternal nature [13.33]. Simple reflection reveals that when we say "I was a child" or "I was an adolescent" or "I am an adult," the fundamental "I" (the core self) is the same constant person, even as body and mind change in so many ways [2.13]. That enduring "I" is the soul, and is not an illusion. Illusion occurs, rather, when we identify the "I" with a changing mortal body instead of with our true eternal self.

Completing our tenure in one body, we enter another, just as one gives up worn clothes and puts on new ones [2.22]. Only an excessively fashion-conscious person anguishes over the loss of a mere shirt or dress. So in illusion, we lose ourselves in grief over the inevitable change of body, forgetting that the body merely garbs an eternal soul.

The irony of mundane life is that for all our vanity, we drastically underestimate ourselves. We think ourselves mortal, when we are truly immortal. We endure painful limits to our knowledge and joy, yet as eternal parts of God, Kṛṣṇa, each one of us is entitled to innate and limitless awareness and joy. We need only claim them appropriately [6.20–22].

As we forget our eternal nature and cling to fleeting material objects, selfish desires drag us into illusion. Hundreds of "desire-chains" imprison souls who seek lordship of this world [16.12]. Even pious souls are bound by the mundane work born of their nature [14.6, 18.60].

Chasing the materially pleasant and fleeing the unpleasant, we fall into "duality-illusion," as desire and

aversion overcome us [7.27]. Kṛṣṇa cautions us not to rejoice at the materially pleasant or grieve for the unpleasant [5.20]. Rather we should tolerate both, for both come and go, being mere products of sense perception [2.14].

Kṛṣṇa cites many examples of mundane dualities that arouse desire and aversion: cold and heat, joy and sorrow [2.14, 6.7, 12.18], gain and loss, victory and defeat [2.38], honor and dishonor [6.7, 12.18, 14.25], success and failure [2.48, 4.22, 18.26], love and hate² [2.64, 3.34, 18.23, 18.51], dirt, stone and gold [6.8, 14.24], friend and foe [6.9, 12.18, 14.25], saints and sinners [6.9], weal and woe, lamenting and hankering [12.17], slander and praise [12.19, 14.24], the pleasing and displeasing [5.20, 14.24], thrill and misery [18.27]. For those entrapped in them, all these dualities are but other names for joy and sorrow [15.5].

Throughout the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa explains that even in this life, within our present body, we can rise to pure consciousness, know God and live in a state of spiritual liberation. At present, our material desires conceal our true awareness [3.39]. Thus, by our decision to embrace or reject spiritual life, we act as our own friend or enemy; we alone elevate or degrade ourselves [6.5–6]. Kṛṣṇa emphasizes that we are responsible for our own condition. The Lord does not force us to do good or evil, and thus is not responsible for the joy and sorrow we create in our lives [5.14–15]. We have *free will*.

Speaking on a historical battlefield that is also pregnant with symbolic meaning, Kṛṣṇa repeatedly tells Arjuna to conquer not only the military foes, but also illusion, the greedy senses and the impulsive mind. If we are to follow Arjuna and conquer the illusion that keeps each of us from enjoying the unlimited life we crave, we must learn more about material nature and exactly how it seduces and imprisons us through its modes or qualities.

Nature's Three Modes (Guṇas)

Kṛṣṇa defines the primary material elements, physical and cognitive,³ as His inferior nature [7.4]. As clothes cover the body, these temporary physical and cognitive elements cover the eternal soul [2.22], who is Kṛṣṇa's superior nature or energy [7.5].

All material objects, whether bodies or planets, are ever in flux [8.4], endlessly transforming into different forms and qualities. Yet material energy itself, the substance underlying nature's protean forms, is beginningless and permanent [13.20].⁴

Importantly, material nature manifests with primary perceptible qualities. The *Gītā* frequently uses the Sanskrit word *guṇa* to refer to nature's three basic qualities or modes: goodness, passion and darkness. Indeed, the entire fourteenth chapter focuses on these material modes.

As human color vision is trichromatic, based on three primary colors, so worldly life exists within a trimodal system of goodness, passion and darkness. Just as we seldom find natural objects in pure primary colors, so the things of this world seldom embody pure primary modes. People and objects tend to show complex mixtures of the modes. Thus a person has a *good side*, but also a *passionate side*, and even a *dark side*. The material modes permeate every object, emotion, act and ambience in this world, including food, faith, work, worship, charity, philosophy, bodies and buildings. Indeed every free choice we make is a mode choice: good, passionate or dark – with infinite combinations.

Kṛṣṇa declares that nothing on earth or among gods in heaven is free of nature's modes [18.40]. How does this work in practice? Consider our attraction to other human bodies. Mere atoms or molecules do not

send us swooning, for every physical body basically contains the same types of atoms and molecules. Rather when we see a body that exudes the modes that are *right* for us, we fall in lust. Conversely, opposing modes arouse our hatred. Thus bodies that are biologically the same but that exude different modes either bewitch or disgust a given observer.

Similarly, many houses are built of the same basic materials: wood, stone, cement, etc. But a house with a certain *style* or *feel* – i.e., a certain *mode* – either attracts, repels or leaves us unmoved, depending on the mode of consciousness we have cultivated in life.

In choosing friends, spouse, music,

are all habit-forming. As we choose friends, places, music, food, work, etc. in various modes, we give those modes power over our lives [13.22]. Virtuous acts beget virtue; passion engenders passion; and dark behavior such as addiction, wanton violence, etc., traps one in darkness.

Our mode choices also shape our perception of reality. Thus consciousness in goodness perceives a deep spiritual unity within all differences of race, gender, species, etc. [13.31, 18.20], whereas passionate perception sees such differences as fundamental and final, with no ultimate unity [18.21]. Finally, cognition in darkness sees no truth at all in the world, and lacks any power of

The modes reflect and condition the moral quality of our acts, and also govern how, and to what extent, we understand the world and ourselves.

career, food, neighborhood, movies, recreation and everything else, we choose and attach ourselves to particular combinations of modes. Thus we either reinforce or transform the quality of our life.

For example, when we give charity for a good cause, solely to help others, and with no desire for return, we give charity in goodness [17.20]. When we help others, but also seek fame or profit through our gifts, we give in passion [17.21]. And giving that does more harm than good is in darkness [17.22], such as a gift that enables one with clear criminal intent to harm the innocent. Thus the quality or mode of our giving affects the quality of our life.

Kṛṣṇa gives a similar modal analysis of faith, food, sacrifice, austerity, renunciation, knowledge, action, the doer, reason, determination, happiness and vocation, explaining how each mode binds us, leading to varieties of future lives.⁵

Good, passionate and dark acts

abstract thought [18.22].

Thus the modes are both moral and epistemic. That is, they reflect and condition the moral quality of our acts, and also govern how, and to what extent, we understand the world and ourselves. A passionate person may read piles of books, perform many experiments and contribute vastly to our material knowledge, but only the virtuous soul rises to the clear consciousness by which is seen the ultimate purpose and meaning of life.

Rising or falling in the universe, or staying where we are, depends on the mode we cultivate in life – the quality that motivates us and shapes our perception [14.18]. Nature's modes are not mere passive qualities, but rather active powers that force us to act [3.5]. Thus the passion mode gives rise to lust and anger, which compel us, even against our rational will, to act badly [3.36–37] or even wickedly [17.5–6].

When we falsely see ourselves as ephemeral flesh, bodily cravings shroud our pure cognition [3.39], just as smoke covers fire, dust covers a mirror, or a womb covers an embryo [3.38]. Indeed lust, anger and greed are “gateways to darkness that ruin the soul” [16.21–22].

As we try to enjoy nature’s modes, and cling to them, we take birth in good and bad wombs, based on the quality of our acts and choices [13.22]. By conditioning us to act materially, the modes bind us to this world [14.5]. Goodness, for example, fosters worldly joy and wisdom; but a good person clings to these [14.6] and thus cannot transcend *temporary* goodness to reach eternal life.

Our troubles begin when we *meditate* on a material sense object, attracted by its qualities. Attachment (*saṅga*) arises and the mind clings to that object, be it another person, a fancy car, a big house, a prestigious position, intellectual power or whatever. If we continue to contemplate that object, our clinging attachment turns into intense longing (*kāma*) – we lust for that object. When we do not achieve our wish or obtain the object of our lust, anger (*krodha*) arises; and even when we do, anger comes anyway, since no material object can satisfy the soul. In cases of intense desire, anger bewilders us and we forget what is truly important in life.

Once we forget, we lose our reason and our real spiritual identity vanishes from our mind. Kṛṣṇa describes this entire sequence [2.62–63].

Saṅga, “attachment, clinging,” is the mental glue that fastens us to objects embodying this or that mode. Thus we rotate through high and low bodies [13.22].

One might conclude that the mode-driven soul has no free will; but, in fact, the modes act upon us *only* when, and to the extent that, we try to exploit them. Consider this example: once we purchase a ticket, board a commercial flight and take off, we must accept the consequence of our act – we must fly to our destination. Yet even aboard the plane, we still have free will. We may chat, sleep, watch a movie or even cause a disturbance that will lead to legal difficulties.

The Sanskrit word *vaśa* means “control,” and the opposite, *a-vaśa*, means “without control, against one’s desire or will.” Repeatedly, Kṛṣṇa uses this word *a-vaśa* to show that our attempts to exploit nature cause us to fall helplessly under nature’s control.⁶ On the other hand, by spiritual practice one achieves real control over one’s life.⁷ Similarly, the law imprisons precisely that person who tries to live above the law. One who obeys just law, lives in freedom.

The modes bind us to this world,

and in that bound state we cannot fix our mind on our eternal existence. Again and again we compulsively try to enjoy the world, regardless of what our pure reason, in the form of muffled, gagged conscience, tries to tell us about true self-interest. To transcend this illusory state, we must change our association. By associating with spiritual energy, spiritual people, etc., we revive our spiritual nature. We then easily, spontaneously, naturally act for our highest self-interest.

We do have free will, but we cannot avoid the consequences of our choices. The cosmic system that responds to our mode choices and delivers their consequences is called *karma*. ☸

NOTES

- 1) 2.15, 2.21, 2.60, 3.4, 9.3, 13.1 (Arjuna), 13.20–22, 13.24, 17.3.
- 2) Here love and hate indicate a passionate dualistic mentality in which one emotion feeds the other: we adore one person and neglect or denigrate others. Kṛṣṇa does not refer here to pure or spiritual love.
- 3) The primary elements of nature are earth (solids), water (liquids), air (gases), fire (radiant elements), ether (space), mind (the seat of emotions and senses), reason (our analytic faculty), and ego (our full material identity).
- 4) This notion of matter is somewhat analogous to Aristotle’s *substance*.
- 5) 17.2–4, faith; 17.8–10, food; 17.11–13, sacrifice; 17.14–19, austerity; 18.7–9, renunciation; 18.20–22, knowledge; 18.23–25, action; 18.26–28, the doer; 18.30–32, reason; 18.33–35, determination; 18.37–39, happiness; 4.13, 18.41–44, vocation; 14.5–8, bondage; 14.14–15, 18, our next life.
- 6) 3.5, 3.34, 8.19, 9.8, 18.60.
- 7) 2.61, 2.64, 5.13, 6.26, 6.35–36.

Hridayānanda Dāsa Goswami accepted sannyāsa from Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1972. He has a PhD in Sanskrit and Indian Studies from Harvard University and is currently developing Krishna West, a project dedicated to making Bhagavad-gītā’s ancient spiritual wisdom accessible and user-friendly in Western countries.

THE THREE MODES of MATERIAL NATURE

A Tabular Overview

	GOODNESS (Sattva)	PASSION (Rajas)	IGNORANCE (Tamas)
General Qualities	Purer than the others, illuminating, frees one from all sinful reactions, conditions one by a sense of happiness and knowledge (14.6). Mind and sense control, tolerance, discrimination, sticking to one’s prescribed duty, truthfulness, mercy, careful study of the past and future, satisfaction in any condition, generosity, renunciation of sense gratification, faith in the spiritual master, being embarrassed at improper action, charity, simplicity, humbleness, and satisfaction within oneself (11.25.2–5)	Born of unlimited desires and longings, binds the embodied living entity to material fruitive actions (14.7). Material desire, great endeavor, audacity, dissatisfaction even in gain, false pride, praying for material advancement, considering oneself different and better than others, sense gratification, rash eagerness to fight, a fondness for hearing oneself praised, the tendency to ridicule others, advertising one’s own prowess, and justifying one’s actions by one’s strength (11.25.2–5)	Deludes all embodied living entities resulting in madness, indolence, and sleep, which bind the conditioned soul (14.8). Intolerant anger, stinginess, speaking without scriptural authority, violent hatred, living as a parasite, hypocrisy, chronic fatigue, quarrel, lamentation, delusion, unhappiness, depression, sleeping too much, false expectations, fear, and laziness (11.25.2–5)
Conditioning	Conditions one to happiness (14.9)	Conditions one to fruitive action (14.9)	Covering one’s knowledge, ignorance binds one to madness (14.9)
Manifestation	All the gates of the body illuminated by knowledge (14.11)	Great attachment, fruitive activity, intense endeavor, and uncontrollable desire and hankering (14.12)	Darkness, inertia, madness, illusion (14.13)
Destination At Death	The pure higher planets of the great sages (14.14); the heavenly planets (11.25.22)	Birth among those engaged in fruitive activities (14.15); the world of human beings (11.25.22)	The animal kingdom (14.15); hell (11.25.22)

(continued) →

The numbers in parentheses refer to verses in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. For an introduction to the concept of the three *guṇas*, please see the previous article *Eternal Persons Under Nature’s Modes*, beginning on page 36.

GLOSSARY with AUDIO

For help with the meaning and pronunciation of Sanskrit words, visit our online Glossary of more than 1,200 words.



Krishna.com/glossary

	GOODNESS (Sattva)	PASSION (Rajas)	IGNORANCE (Tamas)
Qualities Developed	Real knowledge (14.17)	Greed (14.17)	Foolishness, madness, illusion (14.17)
Object Of Worship	Demigods (17.4)	Demons (17.4)	Ghosts and spirits (17.4)
Faith	Directed toward spiritual life (11.25.27)	Rooted in fruitive work (11.25.27)	Residing in irreligious activities (11.25.27)
Foods	Increase the duration of life, purify one's existence, and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction; juicy, fatty, wholesome, and pleasing to the heart (17.8); pure, and obtained without difficulty (11.25.28)	Too bitter, too sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry, and burning; cause distress, misery, and disease (17.9); gives immediate pleasure to the senses (11.25.28)	Prepared more than three hours before being eaten; tasteless, decomposed, and putrid; remnants and untouchable things (17.10); unclean and causes distress (11.25.28)
Sacrifice	Performed according to the directions of scripture, as a matter of duty, by those who desire no reward (17.11)	Performed for some material benefit or for the sake of pride (17.12)	Performed without regard for the directions of scripture, without distribution of <i>prasādam</i> , without chanting of Vedic hymns and remunerations to the priests, and without faith (17.13)
Austerity	Performed with transcendental faith by those not expecting material benefits but engaged only for the sake of the Supreme (17.17)	Performed out of pride and for the sake of gaining respect, honor, and worship; neither stable nor permanent (17.18)	Performed out of foolishness, with self-torture or to destroy or injure others (17.19)
Charity	Given out of duty, without expectation of return, at the proper time and place, and to a worthy person (17.20)	Performed with the expectation of some return, or with a desire for fruitive results, or in a grudging mood (17.21)	Performed at an impure place, at an improper time, to unworthy persons, or without proper attention and respect (17.22)

	GOODNESS (Sattva)	PASSION (Rajas)	IGNORANCE (Tamas)
Prescribed Duty	Performed only because it ought to be done, while renouncing all material association and all attachment to the fruit (18.9)	Given up as troublesome or out of fear of bodily discomfort; never leads to the elevation of renunciation (18.8)	Given up because of illusion (18.7)
Knowledge	One undivided spiritual nature is seen in all living entities, though they are divided into innumerable forms (18.20); absolute (11.25.24)	One sees that in every different body there is a different type of living entity (18.21); based on duality (11.25.24)	One is attached to one kind of work as the all in all, without knowledge of the truth; very meager (18.22); materialistic (11.25.24)
Action or Work	Regulated and performed without attachment, without love or hatred, and without desire for fruitive results (18.23)	Performed with great effort by one seeking to gratify his desires, and enacted from a sense of false ego (18.24)	Performed in illusion, in disregard of scriptural injunctions, and without concern for future bondage or for violence or distress caused to others (18.25)
Result of Action	Pure result (14.16)	Misery (14.16)	Foolishness (14.16)
Worker	Performs duty without association with the modes of material nature, without false ego, with great determination and enthusiasm, and without wavering in success or failure (18.26); free of attachment (11.25.26)	Attached to work and the fruits of work, desiring to enjoy those fruits, greedy, always envious, impure, and moved by joy and sorrow (18.27); blinded by personal desire (11.25.26)	Always engaged in work against the injunctions of the scripture; materialistic, obstinate, cheating, and expert in insulting others; lazy, always morose and procrastinating (18.28); has completely forgotten how to tell right from wrong (11.25.26)
Understanding	Knows what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, what is binding and what is liberating (18.30)	Cannot distinguish between religion and irreligion, between action that should be done and action that should not be done (18.31)	Considers irreligion to be religion and religion to be irreligion, under the spell of illusion and darkness, and strives always in the wrong direction (18.32)

(continued) →

	GOODNESS (Sattva)	PASSION (Rajas)	IGNORANCE (Tamas)
Determination	Unbreakable, sustained with steadfastness by yoga practice, controls the activities of the mind, life, and senses (18.33)	One holds fast to fruitive results in religion, economic development, and sense gratification (18.34)	Cannot go beyond dreaming, fearfulness, lamentation, moroseness, and illusion; unintelligent (18.35)
Happiness	In the beginning may be just like poison but at the end is just like nectar; awakens one to self-realization (18.37); derived from the self (11.25.29)	Derived from contact of the senses with their objects; appears like nectar at first but poison at the end (18.38); based on sense gratification (11.25.29)	Blind to self-realization, delusion from beginning to end, arises from sleep, laziness, and illusion (18.39); based on delusion and degradation (11.25.29)
Worship Of Kṛṣṇa	Worships Kṛṣṇa with loving devotion, offering his or her prescribed duties unto Kṛṣṇa without material attachment (11.25.10)	Worships Kṛṣṇa by prescribed duties with the hope of gaining material benefit (11.25.11)	Worships Kṛṣṇa with the desire to commit violence against others (11.25.11)
Result	Happiness, virtue, knowledge, and other good qualities (11.25.13)	Performed out of pride and for the sake of gaining respect, honor, and worship; neither stable nor permanent (17.18)	Covers one's consciousness and makes one foolish and dull; lamentation and illusion; excessive sleep, false hopes, violence (11.25.15)
Symptoms	Consciousness clear, senses detached from matter, fearlessness within the material body; detachment from the material mind; opportunity to realize Kṛṣṇa (11.25.16)	Distortion of the intelligence because of too much activity, inability of the perceiving senses to disentangle themselves from mundane objects, unhealthy condition of the working physical organs, and unsteady perplexity of the mind (11.25.17)	Higher awareness fails and finally disappears; unable to concentrate the attention; the mind is ruined and manifests ignorance and depression (11.25.18)
Entity Strengthened	The demigods (11.25.19)	The demoniac (11.25.19)	The most wicked (11.25.19)
State of Consciousness	Alert wakefulness (11.25.20)	Sleep with dreaming (11.25.20)	Dreamless sleep (11.25.20)

	GOODNESS (Sattva)	PASSION (Rajas)	IGNORANCE (Tamas)
Residence	Forest (11.25.25)	Town (11.25.25)	Gambling house (11.25.25)
Generated At the Time Of Creation	The mind, the ten demigods controlling bodily movements (2.5.30)	The intelligence, the senses, the living energy (<i>prāṇa</i>) (2.5.31)	The subtle element sound, from which sense object arise (3.26.32)

TRANSCENDENTAL

Consciousness
The fourth state of consciousness; pervades the other three (11.25.20)

Destination
Kṛṣṇa (11.25.22)

Knowledge
Based upon Kṛṣṇa (11.25.24)

Residence
Wherever Kṛṣṇa resides (11.25.25)

Worker
Has taken shelter of Kṛṣṇa (11.25.26)

Faith
Faith in Kṛṣṇa's devotional service (11.25.27)

Happiness
Happiness found within Kṛṣṇa (11.25.29)

Some Verses from the Bhagavad-gītā Dealing with the Three Guṇas in General

Everyone is forced to act helplessly according to the qualities he has acquired from the modes of material nature; therefore no one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment. (3.5)

The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature. (3.27)

The work of a man who is unattached to the modes of material nature and who is fully situated in transcendental knowledge merges entirely into transcendence. (4.23)

The embodied spirit, master of the city of his body, does not create activities, nor does he induce people to act, nor does he create the fruits of action. All this is enacted by the modes of material nature. (5.14)

Know that all states of being – be they of goodness, passion, or ignorance – are manifested by My energy. I am, in one sense, everything, but I am independent. I am not under the modes of material nature, for they, on the contrary, are within Me. (7.12)

Deluded by the three modes [goodness, passion and ignorance], the whole world does not know Me, who am above the modes and inexhaustible. (7.13)

This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it. (7.14)

The living entity in material nature thus follows the ways of life, enjoying the three modes of nature. This is due to his association with that material nature. Thus he meets with good and evil among various species. (13.22)

One who understands this philosophy concerning material nature, the living entity, and the interaction of the modes of nature is sure to attain liberation. He will not take birth here again, regardless of his present position. (13.24)

Those with the vision of eternity can see that the imperishable soul is transcendental, eternal, and beyond the modes of nature. Despite contact with the material body, O Arjuna, the soul neither does anything nor is entangled. (13.32)

Material nature consists of three modes – goodness, passion, and ignorance. When the eternal living entity comes in contact with nature, O mighty-armed Arjuna, he becomes conditioned by these modes. (14.5)

When one properly sees that in all activities no other performer is at work than these modes of nature and he knows the Supreme Lord, who is transcendental to all these modes, he attains My spiritual nature. (14.19)

When the embodied being is able to transcend these three modes associated with the material body, he can become free from birth, death, old age, and their distresses and can enjoy nectar even in this life. (14.20)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: O son of Pāṇḍu, he who does not hate illumination, attachment and delusion when they are present or long for them when they disappear; who is unwavering and undisturbed through all these reactions of the material qualities, remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the modes alone are active; who is situated in the self and regards alike happiness and distress; who looks upon a lump of earth, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is equal toward the desirable and the undesirable; who is steady, situated equally well in praise and blame, honor and dishonor; who treats alike both friend and enemy; and who has renounced all material activities – such a person is said to have transcended the modes of nature. (14.22–25)

One who engages in full devotional service, unflinching in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman. (14.26)

SURRENDER TO THE IDEA (continued from page 35)

how much peaceful you feel, how much tranquility you feel, and how you are protected by Kṛṣṇa, how you avoid insufficiency, how you become pure, and how you make progress in spiritual life.

One of my godsisters, Ākutī Devī Dāsī, states it very simply: “We have many opportunities to surrender and shouldn’t let them pass us by, because if we do, we’ll regret it later.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, “There is no need of strenuous effort to free oneself from sinful reactions. One should unhesitatingly accept Kṛṣṇa as the supreme savior of all living entities. *With faith and love, one should surrender unto Him.*” (Gītā 18.66, Purport, italics mine)

One of the greatest benefits of surrendering to God is happiness.

The great Vaiṣṇava author and guru Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains this happiness in his song about surrender. He says to the Lord, “I have become supremely happy by surrendering myself at Your lotus feet. Sorrow has gone far away, and there are no more cares. All I see is joy in the four directions. Your two lotus feet are reservoirs of immortal nectar that grant freedom from both sorrow and fear. Resting in them I have found peace, and have completely given up the fear of worldly existence.” (From *Śaraṅgātī*)

When we make a conscious choice to surrender to Kṛṣṇa, to accept His shelter, we become more and more aware of His protection. He gives the surrendered soul all protection. That is His infallible word. 🙏

Kṛṣṇanandinī Devī Dāsī, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is a Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE), a licensed minister of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the state of Ohio, president of ISKCON’s Grihastha Vision Team, and co-director, along with her husband, Tariq Saleem Ziyad, of the Dasi-Ziyad Family Institute in Cleveland, Ohio.

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.

Yoga, Bhakti, And the Battlefield Of Life

Bhakti-yogis reject outward violence
while fighting the battle within.

by Satyarāja Dāsa

AS A YOUNG seeker in the 1960s, I quickly developed an aversion to violence of any kind. Somehow I realized early on that all people have their own cross to bear and that compassion is at the heart of the spiritual pursuit. I disavowed war, became a pacifist, and experimented with vegetarianism – all by the age of sixteen. And yet, I knew there was another kind of violence that I would never eschew: I was committed to destroying my own illusory worldview and its concomitant ignorance. Although this violence was metaphorical, I knew the enemy could be as wicked and barbarous as any other.

I remember reading *The Teachings of Don Juan* (1968), where the wise Yaqui Indian sorcerer Don Juan Matus instructs Peruvian-American student Carlos Castaneda in the secrets of life. In one of Don Juan's first teachings, he tells the enthusiastic Castaneda that the true seeker is without question a spiritual warrior, who to rise above the ordinary must fight the illusions that plague most people. "The average man acts only if there is a chance for profit," taught Don Juan. "Warriors say they act not for profit but for the spirit."

I romanticized how I too would become such a warrior, and would continue to be one even if people

If one man conquers in battle
A thousand men,
And if another conquers himself,
The latter is the greatest of conquerors

– *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu



Painting by Puskara Dasa

misunderstood or ridiculed me because of it. I soon learned that in Buddhism, too, the adept is known as a spiritual warrior, who fights the universal enemy self-ignorance (*avidyā*). Even Islam, I learned, sees the ultimate holy war as the one we fight within ourselves. Though there are various opinions within the tradition, the common Muslim understanding is as follows: "The Prophet has told us of two kinds of *jihad* – the greater *jihad* and the lesser *jihad*. The greater *jihad* is the spiritual struggle to conquer one's own selfishness, lust, or greed. The lesser *jihad* is the struggle with external forces, where necessary." The "greater" kind of war resonated with me. I could never engage in external harm; I could only be a peaceful warrior.

The Yogic Warrior

My next stop was yoga, which I started to explore just prior to my involvement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. By *yoga* I mean various techniques approximating what is traditionally known as *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, including sitting postures (*āsana*) and breath control (*prāṇāyāma*). The idea was to master the body and mind. To what end, I wasn't sure. But it seemed clear that having a clean and disciplined bodily vehicle would aid my spiritual pursuits. Here I also learned the importance of meditation: The mind tends to fluctuate and lose focus. If I wanted success in my inner battle, I had to learn to focus the mind (*yogaś-citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*, Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtras* 1.2).

I found myself buying every possible book on meditation and experimenting in various ways. To be a true yogi, I realized, I had to restrain the senses (*yuktamān*) and purify my conditioned existence (*viśuddhātmān*). In pursuit of this goal, I started to lead a more *sāttvika* (mode of goodness) life.

That is, I began following certain practices (*niyama*) and avoiding certain things as well (*yama*). This involved practicing celibacy, developing a stronger commitment to nonviolence, and avoiding the damaging acts of intoxication and various forms of frivolity.

Yoga fit right in with my image of the spiritual warrior, and its practice, I was convinced, would certainly lead me to victory, or to the inner transformation I was looking for. I became particularly interested in several classic *āsanas* named after the warrior Vīrabhadra in the Śaivite tradition, as well as in several others related to the art of battle, such as *dhanurāsana*, "the bow." These poses are intended not only to bestow physical benefits, but also to develop esoteric warrior qualities, leading to spiritual fulfillment. Although I never became adept at these practices, I did the best I could, studying under various teachers and picking up pointers along the way. Fact is, I was not particularly inclined to postural yoga. I was more of an intellectual, a bookworm. For me, it was difficult to be a physical yogi. Few, I am sure, were as unphysical as I. But what could I do? This was the path delineated by the sages.

The Yoga Link

In addition to practice, I started to study yoga historically. I learned that the Sanskrit word *yoga* means "yoke" or "joining" or "harness." In the ancient *Ṛg Veda* it's the name of the device that connected an ox to a plow or a warhorse to a chariot. In the *Mahābhārata*, too, it is often used in this way, describing the harnessing of horses and elephants in the deployment of weapons and infantry. This idea reinforced for me that, in its genesis, yoga had some connection with a long and honorable tradition of warriors. Later, by way of

extension, it came to mean “the harnessing of the mind.” In the *Upaniṣads*, the senses are compared to wild horses, and through yoga – or controlling the mind – one can tame them. In this way, the word came to mean the more abstract “link” or “union,” as in the idea of linking with or harnessing to the Divine. I found it interesting that the word *religion* comes from a Latin root that means much the same thing, “to bind fast.”

Initially, I just thought of yogic linking as a way to get in touch with my higher self, to become reacquainted with the person within. It seemed evident to me that my real existence is spiritual, and that my body is just an outer shell. Thus, I saw my inner battle as one that included getting to know my real self

didn’t. And others couldn’t help you, nor could you help them. Oh, you could go to a teacher or a guide, but they had their path and you had yours. In the end, everyone had to fly his own plane. And so, it seemed the path of the warrior was necessarily a lonely one. This didn’t sit right with me. Even conventional military methods stressed the importance of association, of being a team player. The “Soldier’s Creed,” recited by members of the United States Army, begins, “I am an American Soldier. I am a Warrior and a member of a team.” I wanted the association of like-minded souls (*sādhu-saṅgha*). There are obvious advantages to this: Teams create an environment of support, propelling people toward accomplishment. They boost confi-

the chanting far and wide around the world. I wanted to be a spiritual warrior, and the best of all generals – Śrīla Prabhupāda – was right within sight. All I needed to do was heed his command.

I decided to make an experiment with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Almost immediately I found it edifying in ways that postural yoga never was. Years later I became aware of a conversation in Geneva (May 31, 1974) where Prabhupāda spoke to a hatha-yogi named Monsieur Roost. Prabhupāda put his finger on exactly what dissatisfied me about yoga:

Generally, the *jñānīs*, yogis, they are thinking that they can do something by their own endeavor. Our process is different. [We consider] that “I am limited. My endeavor is limited. My knowledge is limited. So I cannot realize the unlimited by these limited resources.” This is our first submission, *jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā* – “I am limited; I am not unlimited.” That’s a fact. So how can I know the unlimited by my limited activities? This is our first submissiveness.

Just like in the Vedic literature it is stated that Mahā-Viṣṇu, the plenary expansion of Govinda [Kṛṣṇa], from His breathing innumerable universes are coming and going. *Yasyaika-niśvasita-kālam athāvalambya jīvanti loma-vilajā jagad-aṇḍa-nāthāḥ*. So we cannot conceive even of this universe. And innumerable universes are coming and going during the breathing period of Mahā-Viṣṇu. And that Mahā-Viṣṇu is the plenary expansion of Govinda. So this is the position of Govinda.

So therefore our process is not to try by our limited endeavor to understand the unlimited. This is our first proposal. Better be submissive and hear from the Lord, or from the representative of the Lord, about Him.

As I look back on it, I felt a lack of humility in the entire yogic enterprise. Of course, there have been great yogis who could be considered the very embodiment of humility.

I wanted to be a spiritual warrior, and the best of all generals – Śrīla Prabhupāda – was right within sight.

– before you know your enemy, you have to know who *you* are! And so I asked, just who am I in relation to the universe, in relation to God? If there is a God, would yoga bring me closer to Him? It seemed like it would, but I just wasn’t sure. When I look back on it, yoga and meditation ultimately saddled me with more questions than answers. But one thing was clear: I had to battle distraction and conditioning to free myself of lesser desires. Only by doing so would I be able to whittle down to who I really am, beneath the facade, beyond external appearances. Yoga seemed to afford me a preliminary method for doing this.

A Lonely Path

But something gnawed at me: In yoga, I always felt like I was on my own. It all came down to individual mastery – you either had it, or you

dence, encouraging participants to do their best. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I would learn, the greatest progress occurs in the association of devotees, a paramount principle in the *bhakti* tradition.

As a young yogi, I intuitively knew this to be true, and so I looked for others, a community, with similar interests. But this was the early 1970s, and I was the odd man out. It wasn’t the twenty-first century, when yoga is as common as cell phones. I also looked for teachers, but none were satisfying. And then I met the disciples of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

I later found out that *Caitanya-maṅgala*, a sixteenth-century Bengali text in the Vaiṣṇava tradition, mentions a “commander-devotee” (*senapati-bhakta*) who would lead the inhabitants of Kali-yuga, our present age, in the chanting of the holy names of God; he would spread

But the process as a whole smacks of self effort, of highlighting individual endeavor, of neglecting the importance of grace. Prabhupāda’s point is that real transcendental knowledge begins with the realization that I am not all that is, and that while effort is necessary in pursuance of self-realization, it must be augmented by the Lord’s mercy. In the end, God will, as He says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.22), carry what we lack and preserve what we have. And we’d better hope that He does – our limitations are all too glaring.

Now, it might be said that Patañjali in his *Yoga-sūtras* mentions *īśvara-praṇidhāna*, or devotion to God, and this is certainly true. But his entire notion of God is uncomfortably amorphous, and in any case it is virtually ignored, at least by modern yogis in the West. Who is this *īśvara* – the Supreme Controller – of the *Yoga-sūtras*, and what does He mean to the yogic process? Most practitioners would be hard pressed to offer an answer. So much has the *īśvara* of the *Yoga-sūtras* been minimized that today people debate whether yoga is theistic or not, with a large contingent saying that one can practice yoga without any reference to God whatsoever.

The Bhakta Warrior

It wasn’t until I met the devotees of Kṛṣṇa that my identity as a warrior really started to take shape. Initially, I found many of the same truths I had previously encountered in yoga, but now they became more tangible. I read in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.43), for instance: “Thus knowing oneself to be transcendental to the material senses, mind and intelligence, O mighty-armed Arjuna, one should steady the mind by deliberate spiritual intelligence [Kṛṣṇa consciousness] and thus – by spiritual strength – conquer this insatiable enemy known as lust.” So the enemy became clear. It’s my own senses run amok, craving things that will not help in my pursuit of the Absolute Truth.

It’s not that the Vaiṣṇava tradition belittles the value of the senses. Indeed, the whole point of *bhakti* is to learn how to use the senses in the service of the Lord. This is achieved, first of all, by getting them under control, so we can focus them on what we want, which is ultimately God and the spiritual element. “For him who has conquered the mind,” the *Gītā* (6.6) tells us, “the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy.” This is the same teaching found in the *Yoga-sūtras*. But here we learn just why we need to conquer the mind – to focus it on Kṛṣṇa. As the *Gītā* says in the concluding verse of its sixth chapter: “And of all yogis, the one with great faith who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me – he is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all. That is My opinion.”

Indeed, Prabhupāda gave texture and color to fundamental truths I had found in the *Yoga-sūtras*. Again, take the principle of *īśvara-praṇidhāna*. Prabhupāda put a face on *īśvara*,

whereas Patañjali left it up to the practitioner’s imagination. The Supreme Controller, we learn, is Kṛṣṇa, Reality the Beautiful. As Prabhupāda often quoted,

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindah
sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*

“Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Govinda, is the Supreme Controller [*īśvaraḥ*]. He has an eternal blissful spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin and He is the prime cause of all causes.” (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.1)

It’s not that the *Yoga-sūtras* are wrong; it’s just that they don’t go far enough. This is why Viśvanātha Cakravartī (1638–1708), one of the primary theologians and commentators of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, does not recommend yoga for practitioners of theistic science. According to Viśvanātha, the person who has no taste for the “sweetness of meditation” (*dhyāna-mādhurīm*) on Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa – even if accomplished in yoga – should be considered the lowest of practitioners

Can't chant at the temple every day?

For more information and instructions on how to join the conference, go to www.everydaychant.com and click on the About tab.

Join a *japa* tele-conference and chant with other devotees. The *japa* session is followed by a class, discussion, or reading.

(*yogiṣv atinikṛṣṭa eva*) and cheated out of the mood of *bhakti* (*bhakti-rasa-vañcita eva*). Moreover, when discussing Kṛṣṇa's final instruction in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66), where the Lord says that the goal is to surrender completely to Him alone (*mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*), Viśvanātha argues that "to Me alone" (*mām ekam*) means to not take shelter of anything else, such as duty, knowledge, other gods, and, yes, yoga.

These ideas are brought further by Viśvanātha's nineteenth-century successor Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura in his novel *Prema Pradīpa* ("The Lamp of Divine Love"). According to Bhaktivinoda's narrative, a wise Vaiṣṇava yogi (Yogī Bābājī) in Vrindavan approaches the right teachers and gradually learns the limitations of yogic practice as a consummate spiritual discipline. In the end, the novel's protagonist takes to full-on *bhakti-yoga*, undiluted by other processes.

Significantly, Bhaktivinoda Thākura portrays the conventional yoga system as "dangerous," for it can distract one from the ultimate goal of life. Moreover, in his novel he teaches that by cultivating yogic powers, natural by-products of sustained practice, one can become consumed by one's own perfection, forgetting that it is God who is the Supreme Controller, that He, and not our own effort, is in control of the outcome of our practice. By cautioning practitioners against the yogic perfections, Bhaktivinoda echoes the words of Patañjali himself. In his *Yoga-sūtras* (3.37), Patañjali refers to these perfections as "obstacles to *samādhi* [perfect absorption in the Supreme]" (*te samādhāv upasargā*).

Arjuna's Choice

When I first came to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, I heard a story from the *Mahābhārata* (*Udyoga-*

parva, Chapter 7) that seemed to highlight this idea, bringing home for me just how one can become sidetracked by power, mistaking it for something more important than God Himself, the ultimate goal of the yoga process. A summary of that story runs as follows:

Soon after Kṛṣṇa left Hastinapura for Dwarka, Arjuna followed him to formally seek His help if the Kurukshetra war were to take place. The Kaurava prince Duryodhana also set out for Dwarka to enlist Kṛṣṇa's support, and he arrived before Arjuna.

Finding Kṛṣṇa asleep, Duryodhana placed himself at the head of the bed, waiting for Him to awaken. Arjuna arrived soon thereafter, and stood at the foot of the bed, reverentially looking at his Lord in a prayerful mood. When Kṛṣṇa arose from His transcendental slumber, He saw Arjuna by His feet. Turning His head slightly, He saw Duryodhana anxiously standing by His head.

The two princes told Kṛṣṇa the purpose of their visit. Duryodhana argued that because he had arrived first, Kṛṣṇa should give him His support.

Kṛṣṇa responded, "You are both very important to me, and I would like to help you both. Here is My decision: One of you can have my vast infantry known as Nārāyaṇī Sena, with soldiers numbering in the hundreds of thousands. The other can have Me by his side, without My troops, and I will not lift My bow or fight."

Kṛṣṇa looked at Duryodhana and added, "Custom has it that the younger should always be given the first choice. Besides, I saw Arjuna first, so he should choose first."

Arjuna lovingly and without hesitation chose to have Kṛṣṇa on his side. Duryodhana sighed in relief and excitedly accepted Kṛṣṇa's army. Having gotten what he wanted, he rushed out.

Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna, "What made you choose Me? How will I be useful to you if I don't fight?"

"Kṛṣṇa, I know your skills well – no one can defeat You in battle, even if You don't lift a finger. Besides, I can handle the Kauravas singlehandedly if I want to. It is simply to be with You, my sweet Lord, that I made my choice. In addition, I have long wanted You to drive my chariot, in a mood of loving exchange. I am now blessed to have that opportunity."

Although not expressed in the context of yoga versus *bhakti*, the lesson is palpable. Duryodhana was calculating materially, thinking he could win merely by his own endeavor, without the mercy of God. Arjuna, by contrast, knew the value of Kṛṣṇa's presence, carefully marking the virtues of having Him on his side. Conventional yoga, with its underlying premise of mastering body and mind, is like trying to go it alone, on one's own qualifications. Noble, no doubt. But also naive. What *are* our qualifications, anyway? Even if we could practice yoga for hundreds upon thousands of years, would we ever reach perfection? At the end of the

day, the body is temporary and limbed, and it will ultimately succumb to planned obsolescence. Duryodhana should have known this.

In fact, Duryodhana's armies were already greater in both numbers and strength than Arjuna's. Yet still he wanted Kṛṣṇa's troops. His calculation, again, was material. He hoped to win the war by physical prowess, by making his side undefeatable. In terms of yoga, he mastered body and mind – to perfection. He was unconquerable. And yet he lost the war. Arjuna, on the other hand, knew his limitations. Although one of the greatest warriors of his day, he knew that in the ultimate analysis, there are other considerations, other factors that outweigh personal mastery. In

Kṛṣṇa on our side. This was Arjuna's realization, and it should also be ours.

And the great thing about *bhakti-yoga* is that, without much effort, you can help others progress and they can help you. This is less common in other yoga systems. Hatha-yogis, for example, can share knowledge of postures or read texts together, but in the end, you only have your own physical frame to work with, and it either responds to *prāṇāyāma* and *āsana* or it doesn't. *Bhakti-yoga* is different. Even a child can practice it and can share it in a simple way. Consider, for example, *kīrtana*, call-and-response chanting. Not only does the chanter make spiritual progress, but so do all within earshot. Thus, others can benefit from *kīrtana*, even those not ostensibly

In the peaceful war known as *bhakti-yoga*, we will necessarily emerge victorious, because we have Kṛṣṇa on our side.

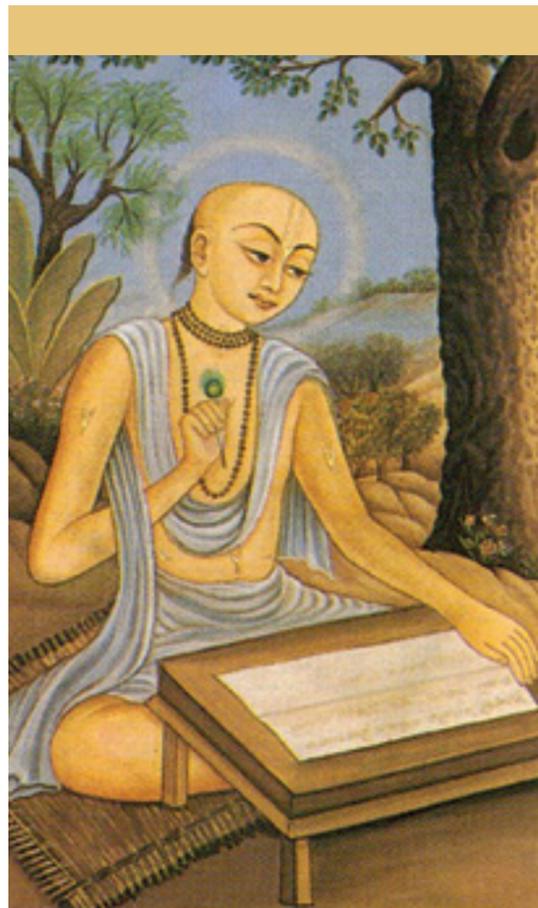
terms of *bhakti*, the ultimate factor is love and the relationship borne of that love. Our many accomplishments, Arjuna knew, are just like so many zeroes, and Kṛṣṇa is like the "one" in front of those zeroes. Left on its own, a zero is always a zero, and it will remain a zero as long as it stands alone. But when love for Kṛṣṇa – the ultimate *īśvara* – is placed in front of those zeroes, they take on new meaning, with a value that can reach infinity.

In the realm of the spirit, we are eternal (*sat*), full of knowledge (*cit*), and brimming with bliss (*ānanda*). The process of *bhakti* draws on this underlying spiritual nature, even though enacted in the material world. More, it allows us association with Kṛṣṇa – by serving His deity form, chanting His name, tasting His *prasādam*, and so on – thus spiritualizing us so we are fully prepared for battle. In the peaceful war known as *bhakti-yoga*, we will necessarily emerge victorious, because we have

practicing the process themselves. The same holds true with offering people *prasādam* – they progress on the path even without trying.

Clearly, *bhakti-yoga* is a battle of love, with all combatants advancing on the path by helping each other get closer to Kṛṣṇa. It's a war in which all living beings are ultimately on the same side, and the only enemy is our own illusion and ignorance. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura, Śrīla Prabhupāda's guru, encourages us in this ontological skirmish when he describes Kṛṣṇa consciousness as "totalitarian war against illusion." On his say so, this is a war I am more than willing to fight. 🙏

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



FREE ONLINE COURSE

The Thematic Essence of Jīva Gosvāmī's Six Sandarbhas

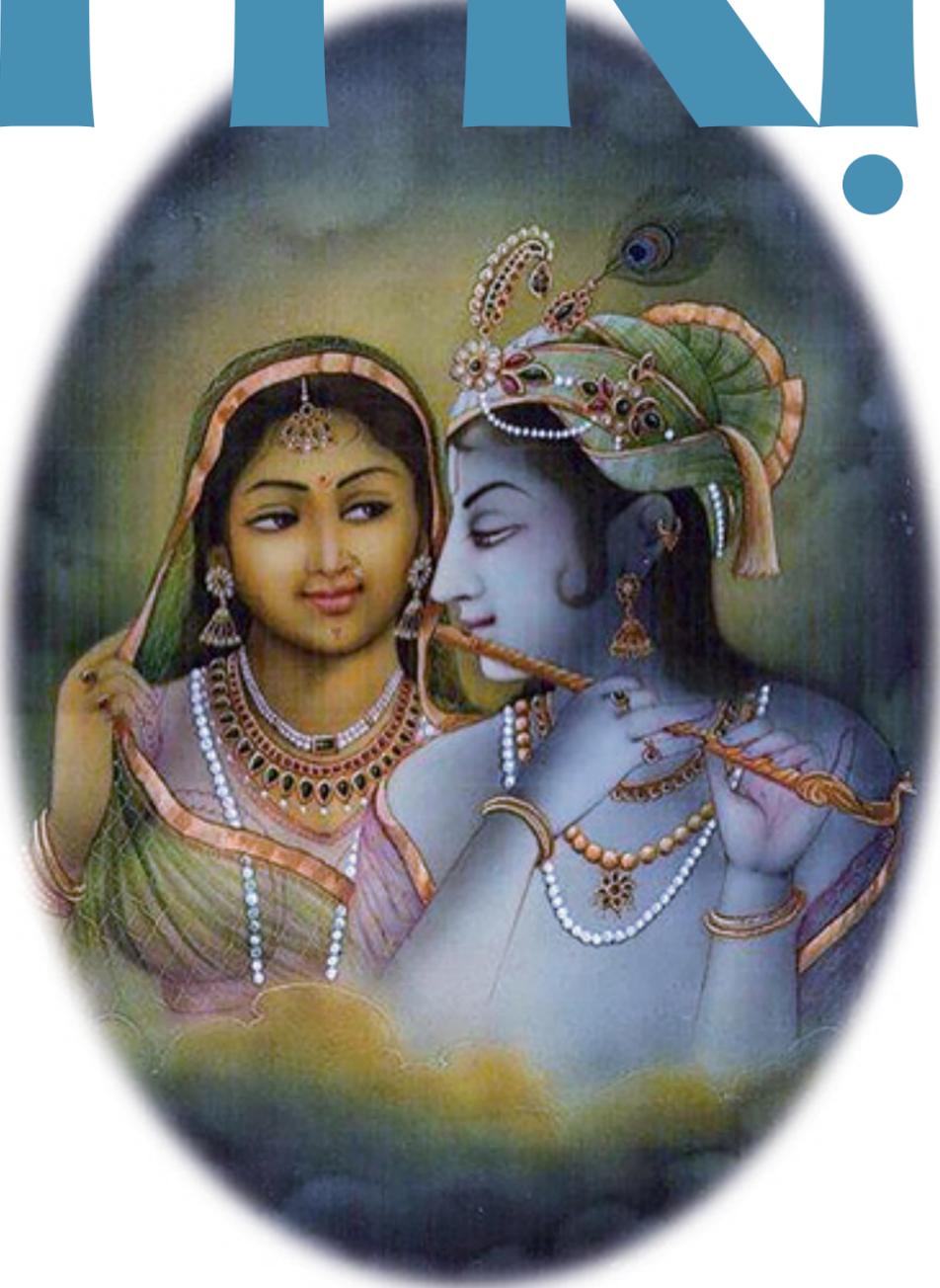
This course, taught by Cārucandra Dāsa under the auspices of ISKCON Baltimore, is being presented online via video teleconferencing. It consists of six modules, each covering one of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Six Sandarbhas*. Each module is 24 weekly classes. Modules 1 & 2 (*Śrī Tattva-* and *Bhagavat-sandarbha*, 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 *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha* course, go to www.tinyurl.com/6sandarbha or bhaktishastra.com.

Marching Swiftly Towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa

When we hear about the Lord's sweet reciprocation with His devotees, that generates a feeling in our heart that "the Lord is mine."



by Kṛṣṇa Dhana Dāsa

DEVELOPING single-pointed focus is the key to success in any field, including spiritual life. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.41):

*vyavasāyātmikā buddhir
ekeha kuru-nandana
bahu-śākhā hy anantās ca
buddhayo 'vyavasāyinām*

"Those who are on this path are resolute in purpose, and their aim is one. O beloved child of the Kurus, the intelligence of those who are irresolute is many-branched." To be focused in devotional service we need to find out what will impede our focus. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentions two main obstacles:

*bhogaiśvarya-prasaktānām
tayāpahṛta-cetasām
vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ
samādhau na vidhīyate*

"In the minds of those who are too attached to sense enjoyment and material opulence, and who are bewildered by such things, the resolute

determination for devotional service to the Supreme Lord does not take place." (*Gītā* 2.44) The two primary obstacles delineated by Lord Kṛṣṇa in this verse are *bhoga* (material enjoyment) and *aiśvarya* (opulence). When we consider ourselves to be our material body, we naturally give prominence to material enjoyment (*bhoga*). This deeply rooted material "I" consciousness leads to "mine" consciousness (opulence): "These things belong to me." *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.25.16) tells us that these two – *aham* ("I") and *mama* ("mine") – are the roots of all other unwanted things (*anarthas*) in the heart.

*aham mamābhimānotthaiḥ
kāma-lobhādibhir malaiḥ
vītam yadā manaḥ śuddham
aduḥkham asukham samam*

"When one is completely cleansed of the impurities of lust and greed produced from the false identification of the body as 'I' and bodily possessions as 'mine,' one's mind becomes purified. In that pure state he transcends the stage of so-called material

happiness and distress."

If we can somehow get rid of these two primary *anarthas*, then according to *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.44) we can develop single-pointed focus, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.25.16) tells us the benefit we will obtain: we will be purified and able to transcend material so-called happiness and distress.

Let us see how devotional service helps us get rid of these two *anarthas*. When we start performing devotional service, the first ingredient is to hear about Lord Kṛṣṇa, by which we come to know about two aspects of the Lord: His greatness and His sweetness. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is full of information about these two attributes of the Lord. When we hear about the Lord's greatness, we not only come to know how God is great but also how insignificant we are in front of Him. Here our material "I" consciousness (*aham*) transforms into the spiritual consciousness "I am God's servant." Thus our first obstacle in developing focus is removed.

When we hear about the sweetness of the Lord – His sweet reciprocation with His devotees and how great devotees consider the Lord their property – that generates a feeling in our heart that "the Lord is mine." Here our "mine" consciousness (*mama*) transforms into the spiritual consciousness "the Lord is mine."

In understanding the greatness of the Lord, we need our head, and in understanding the sweetness of the Lord, we need our heart. When our material "I" consciousness and "mine" consciousness transform into spiritual "I and mine" consciousness by the process of hearing, then we also use our hands – to serve the Lord. Thus by engaging this triplet of head, heart, and hands in devotional service, we develop single-pointed focus and march swiftly towards the supreme destination of life, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. 🙏

Kṛṣṇa Dhana Dāsa is the president of ISKCON Nasik, Maharashtra, India.

IMAGINE YOU HAD to take care of a bird. Wouldn't it be a little silly to polish and take care of the bird's cage but forget to feed and care for the bird inside? Neglecting the needs of the soul is a lot like taking care of a bird's cage but neglecting the bird within. But the soul isn't satisfied if we simply take care of the body. The soul needs a deeper fulfillment and a higher purpose. *Bhakti-yoga* is the means by which we can nourish the soul and awaken our blissful nature.

Many people are familiar with yoga as physical exercise, but *bhakti-yoga* is different. The Sanskrit word *yoga* means "to connect," and in *bhakti-yoga* we reconnect with our original source, God, through *bhakti*, or devotion, and fully awaken the great love that lies dormant within us.

We all have the inclination to love. But when we direct it towards our family, friends, pets, society, country, nation, and so on, the reciprocation we seek is never fully satisfying, and we find ourselves frustrated. Our desire to love can be fully satisfied only when we direct it towards God, our original source. When we do so, we can experience the limitless love and ecstasy that comes from reconnecting with Him.

The Vedic literature of India teaches us how to practice *bhakti-yoga* and nourish our connection with the Supreme Being, Kṛṣṇa. One of the primary means to connect with God is through the chanting of the *mahā-mantra*, which consists of some of His names: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma. Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Just as sound can awaken someone who's asleep, the sound of the *mahā-mantra* can awaken our dormant love for God. Simply by chanting this mantra, one can realize one's spiritual identity and ecstatic relationship with God.

Bhakti-yoga

Fulfilling Our Need to Love

Loving is essential to our identity as spiritual beings, and we can learn to direct our love for complete satisfaction.

by Akshay Gupta

The *Bhagavad-gītā* explains that we are eternal spiritual beings but material nature now covers our spiritual identities, causing us to consider our temporary body to be our actual self. Just as dust on a mirror blocks our ability to see our reflection, the covering of our material body blocks our ability to see our true spiritual nature. By chanting the *mahā-mantra*, however, we can clear the “dust” from the mirror of our consciousness, which has been recording material impressions for many, many years. When the dust is removed, we can see our true selves clearly and experience the boundless love we have for God and for all other living beings.

Chanting the *mahā-mantra* also cleanses the heart of negative qualities like lust, anger, greed, illusion, pride, and envy. When these are

removed, we begin to discover a sense of freedom, because our lower desires gradually lose their power over us. We also come closer to the true nature of the soul: eternity, knowledge, and bliss.

Transformed Activities

While chanting God’s names is central to *bhakti*, there’s much more to the practice. In fact, we can transform all of our activities through *bhakti-yoga*. By doing everything to please Kṛṣṇa, we spiritualize our life and increase our love and devotion for Him at every step.

Because we can serve God according to our own natures, we can serve Him in endless ways. We can write for Kṛṣṇa, sing for Kṛṣṇa, cook for Kṛṣṇa, eat for Kṛṣṇa, teach for Kṛṣṇa, drive for Kṛṣṇa, design build-

ings for Kṛṣṇa, write computer software for Kṛṣṇa . . .

Also, *bhakti-yoga* is not a solitary practice. Like many other endeavors that benefit from the company of like-minded people, *bhakti-yoga* practiced with other *bhakti-yogis* nourishes one’s spiritual life. To stress the importance of spiritual fellowship, the great *bhakti* teacher Rūpa Gosvāmī, in his *Upadeśāmṛta* (“The Nectar of Instruction”), listed six ways *bhakti-yogis* can enhance their relationships with one another:

1. Give gifts
2. Accept gifts
3. Give *prasādam* (food offered to Kṛṣṇa)
4. Accept *prasādam*
5. Reveal one’s mind confidentially
6. Inquire confidentially

Of course, in our hectic modern world, pursuing the path of *bhakti-yoga* can be difficult at times. Luckily, to make rapid spiritual advancement we can take instruction from spiritual mentors who can help our dormant love for the Supreme flow through our hearts. Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.34),

*tad viddhi pranīpātena
paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānam
jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.” Here Kṛṣṇa implies that reading books on *bhakti-yoga* is not enough; one requires guidance from someone more experienced. This principle applies in other fields, of course. For example, to become a doctor, one doesn’t simply study medical textbooks and then jump into operating on patients. One has to follow the standard process of going to the university and postgraduate school, all while following the instructions of professors.

Moving Steadily Forward

By learning from and following the instructions of a spiritual mentor, one can cleanse the heart and make steady progress on the path to pure devotion. One develops a taste for the activities of *bhakti-yoga* and grows more and more attached to Kṛṣṇa. Ultimately, one starts to feel incredible ecstasy in one’s relationship with God, and this fully matures when one achieves pure love of God.

This progression may take some time, but that shouldn’t discourage us from taking up the process. God’s grace is unlimited, and we can receive it if we are willing. When we try to reconnect with God, He reciprocates with us so that we may come closer to Him. Kṛṣṇa states in the *Gītā* (4.11), *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham*: “As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly.”

Many people approach God as if He were their order-supplier. Now, Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* that anyone who approaches Him for material gain should be considered pious. But the devotee who comes to Him simply out of love is greater, and enjoys a more intimate exchange.

Dhruva’s Example

The history of a prince named Dhruva, told in the Vedic literature, exemplifies these principles. Dhruva’s father was a king who had two wives, Sunīti and Suruci. Dhruva was Sunīti’s son, but unfortunately, his father preferred Suruci. One day, five-year-old Dhruva wanted to sit on his father’s lap, but Suruci forbade him to do so, claiming that exclusive privilege for her son. She said that if Dhruva wanted to sit on the throne, he would have to worship God. Disappointed and angry, Dhruva went to his mother, who told him not to wish anything bad for others. She also confirmed Suruci’s statement that Dhruva would have to worship God to sit on his father’s throne.

Hearing this, Dhruva set out for the forest with great determination to worship God. He wanted to acquire a kingdom even greater than his father’s. Along the way, he encountered the sage Nārada, who gave him a mantra to meditate on. After chanting the mantra and undergoing severe austerities, Dhruva saw God within his heart, and shortly after, he saw Him face to face. Dhruva experienced such intense bliss that he lamented having approached God for material gain. He said that he had wanted a few pieces of broken glass, but instead came upon a diamond. In other words, though Dhruva had set out for material opulence, he soon considered it as significant as broken glass in comparison to a diamond. He realized that the real treasure was

to love God and thus experience the far greater bliss and satisfaction of the soul.

Dhruva’s story shows that while we can approach God to fulfill our desires, we can derive even greater pleasure – and fulfill our heart’s real longing – by approaching Him out of pure love.

We should not neglect to take care of our soul, our real self. While the body is important, nourishing the needs of the soul will make us truly happy. Through *bhakti-yoga* we can develop the endless love for God we have lying within us and become eternally blissful. 🌟

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

STAY INFORMED & INSPIRED

Sign up for these free newsletters and email services from Krishna.com

“Krishna.com Newsletters”

Weekly verses, Sanskrit words and meanings, Kṛṣṇa conscious pictures, Vedic thoughts, and more.

“Srila Prabhupada Meditations”

Weekly meditations on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings, wisdom, and legacy, including Prabhupāda quotes, photos, audio, video, and remembrances.

“Digital Media Newsletter”

Stay up-to-date with the latest digital offerings from Krishna.com and the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

“Vaishnava Festivals and Events”

Go to www.krishna.com/emailnews to sign up. It’s easy!



YOU’RE INVITED!

The Sunday Feast

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

Visit: centres.iskcon.org

*The most important topic in life
is the one no one wants to think about.*

THE ART OF LIVING:
**Master the Art
Of Dying**

by Śrī Caitanya Candra Dāsa

THE LAST THING people want to discuss or even think about is death. And, ironically, they often don't live long enough to do so. We've made so much innovation in technology that we can control satellites thousands of miles away. We've managed to put so much complexity into a small electronic chip that we can work wonders. But death challenges all human achievements. Death is an affront to the genius of modern human beings.

Nobody wants to die, but everyone has to. Death is beyond our control. Much research has gone into eliminating death, but the wonder is that no one has escaped cruel death,

including the researchers themselves. The death rate is the same everywhere: one hundred percent.

In my childhood I used to deliberate often about death. The more I did it, the more befuddled I became, as there seemed no solution to this enigma. I used to cry at night thinking that one day I would have to leave my loved ones. "How can I never be separated from them?" was my relentless anxiety.

I used to ponder that when we come into this world, attachments grow around us. And those attachments – for mother, father, friends, and so on – give us a boost to struggle in this



hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare hare rāma har

world. Without attachments, rarely can one survive. But the paradox is that at the time of death all attachments are abruptly severed. How ghastly! How painful! Death means the end of everything, perpetual separation from loved ones, never to

meet again – ever! How horrifying is the idea! We are like the leaves on a river that come together and with a surge of a wave are separated forever. Thinking thus, I would cry the whole night.

One who thinks profoundly about

death cannot afford to bear attachments for anyone and anything in this world. But people don't want to think about death; rather, they want to forget it so they can cultivate attachments for their loved ones because attachments are a source of pleasure. It is like when we are ailing and we know something is wrong with the body and we take medication. In this world we can't live without attachments, but death brusquely severs our attachments and makes us suffer bitterly. Hence we can conclude that we are in the wrong place. This world is not meant for anyone who wants to be happy.

Once when the Pāṇḍavas, great devotees of the Lord, were in exile, they were extremely thirsty while roaming in the forest. Yudhiṣṭhira asked his brothers to search for water. When they didn't return after a long time, he went in search of them and found them dead beside a lake.

A voice called out, "Your brothers didn't care to answer my questions before drinking water from my lake; hence their current state. If you too don't answer, you will follow them." Yudhiṣṭhira nodded solemnly.

One of the many questions asked by the supernatural voice was "What is the most astonishing thing in this world?"

Yudhiṣṭhira impeccably replied, "One sees death everywhere around, but he thinks he is an exception. This is most astonishing."

Later, after Yudhiṣṭhira had perfectly answered all the other questions, the brothers were resurrected.

So the most astounding thing is not the Seven Wonders of the World, but the attitude that I will never die in spite of seeing death all around. Everyone who has died has thought like that. Nobody likes to die.

In Light of the Scriptures

While voyaging throughout 8,400,000 species of life, we encountered death every time. We were in the species of dog, ant, tree, snake, fish, tiger, elephant, eagle,

demigod, pigeon, spider, scorpion, lion, whale, shark, bacteria . . . Thrilling! But surely not fun. Every animal species is filled with immense angst for survival. Even the kings of the jungle have to famish for weeks to catch their prey. It's not a tranquil life.

If we deliberate deeply, we can observe that nature facilitates every kind of desire we may have. If someone desires to fly freely in the air, a bird's body is available; if someone desires to swim, an aquatic's body is available; if someone desires to eat a lot, an elephant's body is available; if someone desires excessive sex, a pigeon's body is available; if someone desires to sleep a lot, a bear's body is available; if someone desires to be naked, a tree's body is available; if someone desires to eat flesh, a tiger's body is available. And so forth. God has provided the facility to fulfill every kind of desire. You just think of it, and nature fulfills it. (Of course, we need to deserve the fulfillment of the desire. That depends on our karma.)

Now, the desire for living eternally is present in everyone without exception. No one wants to die. So is there any facility for that in nature? Yes. Hence the quest for the supernatural is natural. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.6) Lord Kṛṣṇa describes a supernatural place where one doesn't die and can live happily eternally.

*na tad bhāsayate sūryo
na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ
yad gatvā na nivartante
tad dhāma paramam mama*

"That supreme abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by fire or electricity. Those who reach it never return to this material world."

A Devotee's Death

Vedic texts explain that we are not the body but spirit soul and that

the body dies, not the soul. So we don't die. Good news! And a relief. Although the body is destructible, the soul is indestructible.

The soul is the driving force for the body. A transcendentalist understands this fact and goes further to know the source of the soul. The original home of the soul is the kingdom of God. Somehow the soul has landed in this foreign land and is suffering like an orphan. Hence the duty of the living entity is to go back to his original home, where there is eternity, bliss, and complete knowledge in the association of God.

Death terrifies materialists, but devotees welcome it as God's loving embrace as He calls them back

ciency. Death is the time when we can change our body from an inferior one to a superior one.

An End to Crying

My crying for my loved ones came to an end when I understood that if we perform *bhakti-yoga* and achieve perfection, then we can all meet again in the spiritual world, never to be separated. (In regard to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, Śrīla Prabhupāda once wrote in a letter that when its members go back to the spiritual sky, "We will have another ISKCON there.")

Bhakti-yoga is the best welfare activity we can perform for our family

The soul is the driving force for the body. A transcendentalist understands this fact and goes further to know the source of the soul.

home. An example: For a rat, being carried in a cat's teeth is terrifying, but for a kitten, it is a loving embrace.

Another example: When two prisoners are escorted out of a jail into a van, it may seem they are heading to the same destination. But one is being released because of his good behavior, while the other is moving on to more rigorous imprisonment because of his impish conduct. So death may appear to be the same for materialists and transcendentalists, but what happens after death is completely different.

So a devotee practices *bhakti-yoga*, which is more powerful than death. Even death cannot check progress on this path. The best way to practice is to chant God's names: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. One who practices sincerely and seriously will surely at the time of death acquire a spiritual body absolutely free of any defi-

members because we can deliver them by its performance. The holy pages of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Fourth Canto, tell the story of Dhruva Mahārāja. His mother guided him to practice *bhakti-yoga* in the forest to achieve the Lord. When Dhruva attained perfection and was about to leave for the spiritual world, he asked that his beloved mother be taken along even though she hadn't practiced *bhakti-yoga*. He then saw that she was boarding a spiritual airplane just as he was.

So if I practice seriously enough, when the time comes for soaring back to the spiritual world I shall take my loved ones along. Then we shall live happily together with God in His eternal kingdom. 🙏

Śrī Caitanya Candra Dāsa has been a brahmacārī at the ISKCON Pune, Maharashtra, temple since 2007. He currently serves as a temple manager at the New Vedic Cultural Center (NVCC), Pune.

GOVARDHANA RETREAT 2017

NOVEMBER 27 – DECEMBER 4

Conducted by the Vrindavan Institute for Higher Education (VIHE)



Started in the year 2000, the Govardhana Retreat was conceived by Bhūrījāna Dāsa and His Holiness Śācīnāndana Swami as a program for hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā* with the aim of increasing attraction to Kṛṣṇa and the holy land of Vrindavan. It takes place in Jatipura, near Govardhana, the village where Śrī Mādhavendra Purī established the temple of Śrī Gopāla, now worshiped in Nathdwara, Rajasthan, as Śrī Nāthjī. The gathering is for eight days. Each day includes the morning prayers and *japa*, four classes, and evening *kīrtanas*, all set in a peaceful garden at the foot of Śrī Girirāja.

In this sublimely devotional atmosphere, absorption in the enchanting world of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in the association of all the eager devotees attending becomes natural. On one of the days, participants split into small groups to go to various locations around Govardhana to hear yet other *kathās*, walk on the *parikramā* path, chant *japa*, or do *kīrtana*. The retreat takes place every year right after Kārttika, when the weather is mild and the atmosphere pleasant. It is a unique opportunity to enliven one's personal devotional life with unforgettable experiences in Vraja.

With His Holiness Śācīnāndana Swami, Bhūrījāna Dāsa, Jagattārīṇī Devī Dāsī, Mādhavānanda Dāsa, and Ādi Puruṣa Dāsa.

To register, write to vihe.retreats.registrations@pamho.net, or visit vihe.org.

Doubly Blessed

FOR MEMBERS OF THE International Society for Krishna Consciousness the annual celebration of Janmāṣṭamī, the advent of Lord Kṛṣṇa, is the first day of a two-day festival, the next day being the birth anniversary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the Society’s founder-*ācārya*. That these two blessed days occur together is apt: Lord Kṛṣṇa sent us Śrīla Prabhupāda, and Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us Kṛṣṇa. While I must be cautious in trying to surmise Kṛṣṇa’s motives, it seems fair to imagine that Kṛṣṇa arranged the precise day for Prabhupāda to arrive in this world.

Most of us outside India knew nothing about Kṛṣṇa before Prabhupāda left Vrindavan for the West. Saturated with pure devotion, Prabhupāda carried Kṛṣṇa, in his books and in his heart. He always intended to present Kṛṣṇa and His teachings directly, without camouflage or compromise. Despite a friend’s advice that he use the term “God Consciousness” in naming his Society, Prabhupāda insisted on “Krishna Consciousness.”

Though most people today may be unfamiliar with the title “The International Society for Krishna Consciousness,” many know of “the Kṛṣṇas” or the “the Hare Kṛṣṇas.” Śrīla Prabhupāda was delighted when people started calling his early disciples “the Hare Kṛṣṇas.” His mission was to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and the phenomenon of average Westerners uttering Kṛṣṇa’s names showed that great progress was being made.

As an emissary of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda can legitimately be considered directly Kṛṣṇa Himself. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi 1.45) Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī writes, “According to the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of the spiritual master delivers His devotees.” In his commentary, Śrīla Prabhupāda clarifies: “A spiritual

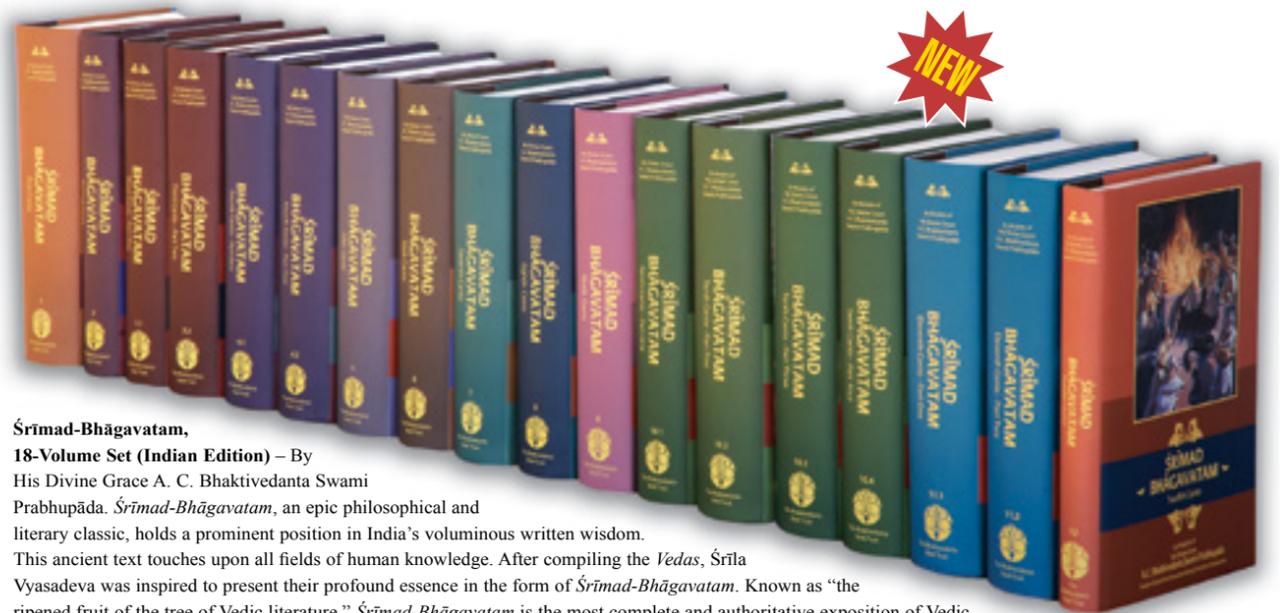
master always represents himself as the humblest servitor of the Personality of Godhead, but the disciple must look upon him as the manifested representation of Godhead.”

Prabhupāda exemplified these instructions by insistently and consistently teaching that the guru is never God, but the servant of God; and by crediting his spiritual master for all that Prabhupāda himself accomplished in Kṛṣṇa’s service.

The Vedic scriptures say that the most powerful evidence for spiritual truths is the testimony of self-realized souls. Everything Prabhupāda spoke, wrote, and did was in glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa, evidence of his fully realized conviction about the reality of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, Prabhupāda could – and still does – awaken the faith and love for Kṛṣṇa lying deep within us.

When we celebrate Lord Kṛṣṇa’s appearance on the earth, we honor not only His “birth” but everything else about Him. Especially important for us is that while present here Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā*, a key component of His mission to reestablish dharma. Prabhupāda began introducing Kṛṣṇa in New York City by chanting His names and teaching His *Bhagavad-gītā*. In Prabhupāda’s lectures on the *Gītā* and in his publication of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, he delivered Lord Kṛṣṇa’s message with complete fidelity.

Here’s an anecdote that exemplifies Prabhupāda’s relationship with Kṛṣṇa: Prabhupāda’s attendant Śrutakīrti Dāsa tells of Prabhupāda’s looking at a newly arrived copy of *Back to Godhead*, which included a photo of him offering the first *ārati* to the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa deities in Paris. “Śrīla Prabhupāda looked at the picture in a meditative gaze as if entering into it for just a fraction of a second. In the next moment, he returned to us and with twinkling eyes and a broad smile, he innocently revealed, ‘Just see! Kṛṣṇa is looking at me, and I am looking at Kṛṣṇa!’” – *Nāgarāja Dāsa*



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 18-Volume Set (Indian Edition) – By His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, an epic philosophical and literary classic, holds a prominent position in India’s voluminous written wisdom. This ancient text touches upon all fields of human knowledge. After compiling the *Vedas*, Śrīla Vyasadeva was inspired to present their profound essence in the form of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Known as “the ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic literature,” *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge – covering everything from the nature of the self to the origin of the universe. The first verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* makes clear that because the book is intended for people serious about spiritual progress, it will not deal with sectarian religious ideas, philosophical conjecture, or worldly concerns. The second text promises that anyone who reads the book systematically will achieve the spiritual success meant for all human beings. Published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT). Hardbound, 15,000 pages, index, dust-jackets, bookmarks, 6" x 9". Printed in India. ~~\$399~~ SALE: \$275 BLBM803 (Email store@krishna.com to get an accurate shipping quote.) **Note on this Edition:** This is the only English BBT edition currently in print. The content is unchanged from the previous edition. The books are slightly smaller, with redesigned dust-jackets and a new typeface. The paper and binding are good quality.

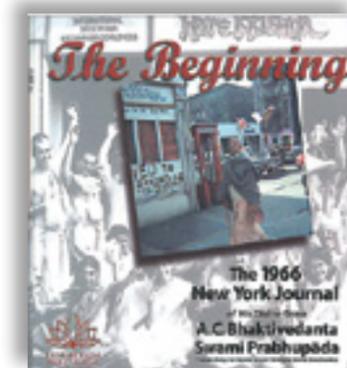


A Transcendental Diary (Volumes 1–5) – By Hari Śauri Dāsa. This personal series recounts Śrīla Prabhupāda’s journeys and activities in detail through an intense part of his life. He traveled around the world, opened temples, spoke with celebrities and supporters, and corresponded with followers and disciples by the hundreds.

Volume 1 (Nov. 1975 – Apr. 1976): Softbound, 614 pages, index, numerous photos, 5½" x 8½". ~~\$12.95~~ B6BS281
Volume 2 (Apr. 1976 – Jun. 1976): Softbound, 521 pages, index, numerous photos, 5½" x 8½". ~~\$12.95~~ B6BS282
Volume 3 (Jun. 1976 – Aug. 1976): Softbound, 582 pages, index, numerous photos, 5½" x 8½". ~~\$12.95~~ B6BS283
Volume 4 (Aug. 1976 – Oct. 1976): Softbound, 630 pages, index, numerous photos, 5½" x 8½". ~~\$12.95~~ B6BS284
Volume 5 (Oct. 1976 – Nov. 1976): Hardbound, 647 pages, index, numerous photos, 6½" x 9". (The softbound Volume 5 is out of print, and there is a limited quantity of the hardbound edition left.) ~~\$16.95~~ B6BH285



By His Example – By Gurudas. This book allows both those who knew Śrīla Prabhupāda and those who never had a chance to meet him to experience his humor and compassion. Gurudas offers a wonderful glimpse into the early days of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement as Śrīla Prabhupāda guided his first Western disciples. New Edition. Softbound, 283 pages, 6" x 9". ~~\$16.95~~ GDBS916

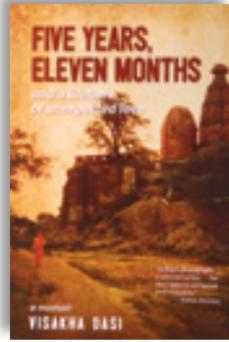


The Beginning – In the very early days of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s work in the USA, he kept a journal and recorded his lectures. *The Beginning* is Prabhupāda’s diary from his first year in America, along with notes, photos, letter excerpts, and transcriptions of recordings from that time period. Hardbound, 240 pages, 8 color plates, 35 b&w photos, 9¾" x 10¼". ~~\$24.95~~ SALE \$9.99 B6BH272

Find many more books by and about Śrīla Prabhupāda by going to www.krishna.com/store



New Books and CDs



Five Years, Eleven Months, and a Lifetime of Unexpected Love

By Visakha Dasi.

In 1971, the author, an American photojournalist disillusioned by the pressures and mindlessness of Western education and consumerism, traveled to the East looking for fun and adventure. In India, she met Śrīla Prabhupāda, read his *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, and, though a lifelong atheist, became his disciple. His love conquered

her skepticism, and over the next several years, she traveled with and photographed Prabhupāda in India, Europe, and the United States.

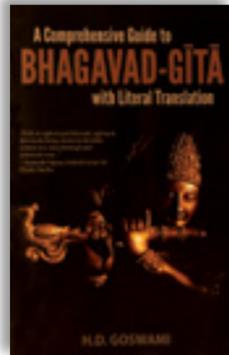
“A joy to read.” – Jayadvaita Swami

“A splendid book! Especially engaging is her running account of the tension within herself between her spiritual path and, on the other side, her persistent doubts, her skepticism, and a rational mind always on guard against being spiritually duped.”

– Satyarāja Dāsa

“She explains her path well, not only because she is a good writer – no, a GREAT writer – but because she lived what she writes, and is truly living it.” – Ainsley Bresnahan

Softbound, 280 pages, black and white photographs interspersed throughout the text, 6" x 9". \$17.95 JGBS223



A Comprehensive Guide To Bhagavad-gītā with Literal Translation

By H.D. Goswami

For some, the elegant, highly readable *Gītā* translation contained herein will be their first encounter with the text, while others may already have a frequently read version waiting at home. In either case, this *Comprehensive Guide*, with its systematic analysis of major themes and its hundreds of *Gītā* references, represents

a one-of-a-kind companion for beginners, advanced students, and experienced scholars alike. With encyclopedic knowledge and an insider's understanding of the text, the author, Hridayānanda Dāsa Goswami, guides us in simple accessible prose to the very heart of the *Gītā*'s sublime conclusions. Thus this *Comprehensive Guide* not only constitutes a first-rate book of reference, but also proves a thoroughly engaging and illuminating read.

“With its sophisticated thematic approach, this *Guide* brings clarity to the *Gītā*'s content in a most thorough and systematic way.”

– Kenneth Valpey, Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies

H.D. Goswami's *Comprehensive Guide with Literal Translation* provides readers with unique insight into the core elements and essential meanings of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, offering succinct, carefully crafted explications of complex philosophical themes.”

– Graham Schweig, Christopher Newport University

“The Sanskrit mastery, philosophical precision and theological depth of this *Comprehensive Guide* reflect the training of a Harvard doctorate and the deep insight of a widely experienced spiritual teacher.” – Edwin Bryant, Rutgers University

Softbound, 224 pages, 6" x 8½". \$9.95 HGSB410



Prayer to the Lotus Feet of Lord Krishna

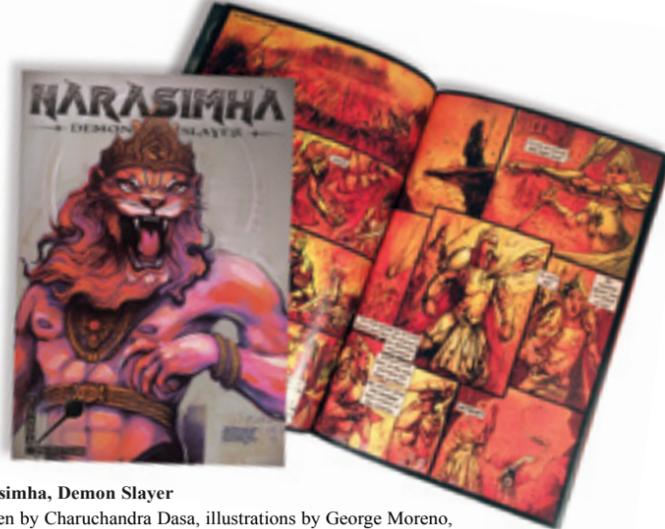
By Agnideva Das and Friends

Traditional Bengali songs of prayer, accompanied by harmonium, *mṛdaṅga*, *karatālas*, flute, violin, cello, and backing vocals. These timeless prayers of the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* are rendered with devotion by Agnideva Das, whose life is dedicated to sharing these songs and spreading the joy of *kīrtana* throughout the world. At the heart of the album is

the prayer written by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1965 during his epic ocean journey from Calcutta to New York. Originally from Trinidad, Agnideva Das joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in New York City in the early 1970s. He notes: “This album has truly been a globally collaborative effort. It was seeded in Johannesburg, sprouted in Alachua, Florida, and finally bloomed in London. I am particularly grateful to all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's grandchildren – ISKCON's second generation – who joined in with great enthusiasm to lend their voices and musical accompaniment.”

Songs: *Emona Durmati* (Song of Humility), *Saranagati* (The Process of Surrender), *Kali Kukkura* (Glorious Names of Sri Chaitanya), *Atma Samarpane* (Confidence in the Lord's Protection), *Krishna Tava Punya Habe Bhai* (Prayer to the Lotus Feet of Lord Krishna), and *Radha Krishna Prana Mora* (Service to the Divine Couple).

One audio CD in a deluxe folding case with album liner notes and anecdotes. Approximately 69 minutes. \$11.95 PKCD308

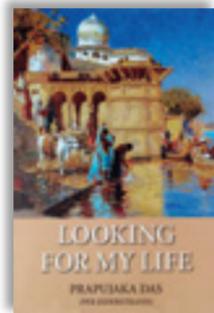


Narasimha, Demon Slayer

Written by Charuchandra Dasa, illustrations by George Moreno, cover painting by Kardami Kapila Dasa

A masterfully illustrated graphic novel depicting the story of how Kṛṣṇa appeared as the half-man, half-lion Narasimha to protect His devotee Prahlāda from the ruthless demon Hiranyakaśipu. Includes several pages of bonus art by various graphic artists depicting Narasimha, the hero of the story.

Published by Sunanda Productions. Flexibound, 76 pages, 7" x 10". \$15.95 SPBS203



Looking for My Life

By Prapujaka Das (Per Jäderstrand).

A disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Prapujaka Das describes himself as “just an ordinary guy” who joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in 1973 in Sweden. This book is a reflection about his life and his many years of searching for a deeper understanding of reality.

The book is a fascinating piece of history that gives us an insight into what it was like to grow up in a tumultuous political time when radical leftist ideas mixed with influences of the hippie culture. He hopes that his story will inspire other ordinary people to set their goals on achieving the extraordinary.

In his previous book, *A Spiritual Journey*, he wrote about his experiences on the Radha Damodara Traveling Sankirtana Party, 1974–1977.

Softbound, 265 pages, 10 color drawings, 5½" x 8¼". \$12.95 PJBS217

VEDIC THOUGHTS

Time is a representation of the Lord, and it reminds us also that we must surrender unto the Lord. The Lord speaks to every conditioned soul as time. He says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that if someone surrenders unto Him, then there is no longer any problem of birth and death. We should therefore accept the time factor as the Supreme Personality of Godhead standing before us.

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.26.16, Purport

When the living entity passes from the present body to the next body, which is created by his own karma, he becomes absorbed in the pleasurable and painful sensations of the new body and completely forgets the experience of the previous body. This total forgetfulness of one's previous material identity, which comes about for one reason or another, is called death.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.22.39

The one Supreme Lord lives hidden inside all created things. He pervades all matter and sits within the hearts of all living beings. As the indwelling Supersoul, He supervises their material activities. Thus, while having no material qualities Himself, He is the unique witness and giver of consciousness.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.11

It is not logical to say that the Supreme Personality of Godhead does not have inconceivable potencies that can arrange for Him to possess mutually contradictory qualities, for no one has the power to understand the Lord completely.

The Lord must have inconceivable potencies, for that is logical and confirmed by Vedic revelation.

Therefore the idea that the Lord does not have powers that can give Him mutually contradictory qualities is illogical and should be thrown far away.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī

Paramātmā-sandarbhā 58.6

Many agents and messengers come to this world, but that most powerful messenger sent by God to suit the adaptability of each recipient – the name of that sole agency is *guru*. Revelation is made possible through that expert. He can free us of mental speculation and bring about within us a revolution of natural spiritual propensity.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura

Uncommon Conversations, Conversation 7

Kṛṣṇa is fixed in the highest truth, and truth is fixed in Him. Because all truth arises from Him, Govinda is respected as truth, or *satya*.

Mahābhārata 5.68.12

When those in hell chant the name of the Lord, they develop *bhakti* to the Lord and go to the spiritual world.

Nṛsimha Purāna

Quoted in Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary on *Bhāgavatam* 2.9.36

Sweeter than all other sweet things, more auspicious than all other auspicious things, the greatest purifier of all purifying things – the holy name of Śrī Hari [Kṛṣṇa] alone is everything.

Anonymous

Śrī Kevalāṣṭakam 1



2017

Hare Kṛṣṇa Festival of India

Schedule for North America

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



- 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 19–20:** Vancouver Rathayātrā
- AUGUST 26–27:** Kamloops, British Columbia, Festival of India
- SEPTEMBER 2–3:** Seattle, Flavors of India Festival and Rathayātrā
- SEPTEMBER 6–7:** Boulder, University of Colorado Campus Program
- SEPTEMBER 9–10:** Phoenix Rathayātrā
- SEPTEMBER 13–14:** Chicago, Illinois Institute of Technology Campus Program
- SEPTEMBER 23:** Philadelphia Rathayātrā
- OCTOBER 1:** Charlotte, NC, Rathayātrā
- OCTOBER 8:** Morrisville, NC, 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.