

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



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • May/June 2018 • \$4.50

MANY GODS OR ONE?

*Five Prominent Deities
And Their
Universal Meaning*

ALSO:

Action
Without Reaction
In Defense of
The Vedic View
The Most Practical
Scientific Understanding
The Reliable Way
To Gain Knowledge
The Uniqueness
Of Transcendental Hunger
BOOK EXCERPT: Bearer of
Light for the West
Lessons from
Lord Viṣṇu

Assisting you in your quest for the Absolute Truth

BACK to GODHEAD

Founded 1944 • Vol. 52, No. 3 • May/June, 2018



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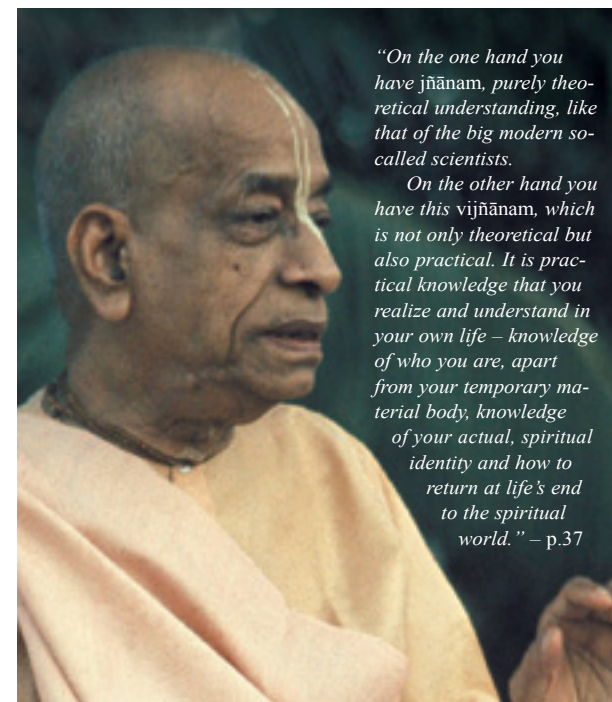
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COVER Lord Viṣṇu is worshiped by those who follow the practice known as *pañcopāsanā*. In this form, Lord Kṛṣṇa rules the spiritual Vai-kunṭha planets, creates, maintains, and destroys the material world, and is present as the Super-soul within the heart. Please see the article beginning on page 47. (Detail from a painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa)



“On the one hand you have jñānam, purely theoretical understanding, like that of the big modern so-called scientists.

On the other hand you have this vijñānam, which is not only theoretical but also practical. It is practical knowledge that you realize and understand in your own life – knowledge of who you are, apart from your temporary material body, knowledge of your actual, spiritual identity and how to return at life's end to the spiritual world.” – p.37

WELCOME



Śrīla Prabhupāda occasionally used the term “Hindu” when referring to his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, but he tended to avoid doing so. One reason is that most people associate Hinduism with polytheism, and Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or Vaiṣṇavism, is definitely not polytheistic. In “Many Gods or One?” Satyarāja Dāsa addresses the topic of polytheism in relation to Vaiṣṇavism.

Two articles in this issue deal with the challenge of answering questions about ultimate reality: “In Defense of the Vedic View,” by Badrinarayan Swami, and “The Reliable Way to Gain Knowledge,” the first *Back to Godhead* article by Girirāja Govinda Dāsa, a scientist by profession.

Longtime contributor Viśākhā Devī Dāsī's “Joy of Devotion” and first-time author Osho Raman's “The Uniqueness of Transcendental Hunger” discuss the natural happiness of the soul's relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

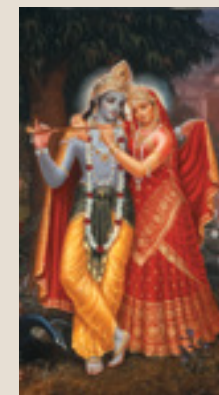
Nikuñja Vilāsinī Devī Dāsī's “From One Percent to a Hundred” presents Kṛṣṇa conscious insights on death and danger, and Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa's “Intention in Tension?” points out the need to think before we speak.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's lecture opens the issue with important lessons related to the subtle law of karma. And in “Bearer of Light for the West,” Yogeśvara Dāsa tells of Prabhupāda's historic voyage to America.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. – Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.



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



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



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

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement



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, Mahāmāyā Devī Dāsī, Vegavatī 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.

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Printed in South Africa

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Letters

The Position of Lord Brahmā

I know you specialize in Kṛṣṇa, but I was wondering why Hindus don't worship Brahmā and if it is bad to do so.

Evan Dean
Via the Internet

Our reply: Actually, it is not that we “specialize in Kṛṣṇa,” but rather, Kṛṣṇa is Lord Brahmā's “boss.” There are some wonderful prayers written by Lord Brahmā, called the *Brahma-saṁhitā*. In those prayers Lord Brahmā himself says that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the source of everything, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govinda
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.” Many other prayers follow this prayer, each glorifying the power of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and acknowledging Him as the Supreme Lord. Brahmā is the secondary creator, as the contractor of a building project is the secondary creator in relationship to whoever commissioned the building.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is the creator and maintainer of everything. He has various subordinates, known as demigods, who are responsible for different cosmic tasks. Lord Brahmā is the chief of those demigods, and he is the secondary creator of the universe. He works under the direction of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and when things happen in the universe that he is unable to handle, he goes to Lord Kṛṣṇa for advice and assistance. This is shown in many of the events described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In fact, a primary catalyst for Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance on earth fifty centuries

ago was that the demigods were in distress and went to Lord Brahmā for help. He in turn went to Lord Kṛṣṇa's expansion Lord Viṣṇu to ask for His help. And then Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared on earth.

To connect with the person in charge is more efficient and direct than going through secondary persons, and so we worship Lord Kṛṣṇa.

We also recognize Lord Brahmā as a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa and as someone with great responsibility in the material sphere. But Lord Brahmā is subject to death, unlike Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is eternal and full of knowledge and bliss.

Kṛṣṇa's Seeming Indifference

Why is Kṛṣṇa indifferent to me while at the same time He expects prayer from me?

Vishal
Via the Internet

Our reply: Lord Kṛṣṇa is not indifferent. He offers many ways for us to get to know Him, but as in developing a relationship with anyone else, we have to make some effort. He gives us His holy name, through which we can get in touch with Him. He gives us temples where we can come to see Him, and holy books to read about Him. He gives us air, water, food. Sometimes He gives us what we need rather than what we want, a common practice for a parent. Children often want things that are not good for them and may often resent it when their parents don't fulfill their desires. But out of love, the parents decide not to give what will, in the long run, make their children ill or unhappy.

If we go to Kṛṣṇa just to ask for things, He will not automatically give us whatever we want, but that is not indifference. If we pray to Him and try to understand

His intentions, we can find again and yet again that He has our welfare in mind. We just need to try to understand things from different angles of vision, and sometimes that takes maturity and patience.

You ask why He wants your prayers. But He doesn't want just any type of prayers. If you are always asking your parents for things, they won't be able to satisfy your every desire, especially if you don't earn or deserve what you are asking for. People go to God all the time and ask for things, even things that will hurt them and others. He decides what is best and doesn't just dole out everything we ask Him for. He would rather have us pray by glorifying Him and by asking Him to help us serve Him. If we go to our parents or others we love and offer service, then we will find they will reciprocate with love and affection. Lord Kṛṣṇa wants us to have a loving relationship with Him. He is even willing to become the loving servant of those who truly love Him.

Kṛṣṇa knows that if we serve Him rather than our own sensual desires, we can get to know Him in a loving exchange. This will truly make us happy. But we think that other things will make us happy, so we ask for so many things. They leave us disappointed or never satisfied or satisfied for a short time and then unsatisfied again, so we keep desiring, keep asking, and keep feeling frustrated that we are not happy.

As children get older and want their independence, the parents will eventually allow it. Then the children enjoy and suffer on their own. But because they are acting on their own desires, they can't expect to have their independence without any responsibility. That is immature.

If we develop a loving relationship with God and render service to Him, He will reciprocate. Kṛṣṇa says that if we offer Him even a leaf or a fruit with love and devotion, He will

reciprocate. He doesn't need anything from us – not prayers, not anything. It is we who need to return to our natural loving relationship with Him. That return is not an intellectual pursuit; it has to be done with love and faith, and little by little the relationship will become clear.

Association with persons who have that faith will help. If you associate with persons who are not inclined toward God, that will have a negative effect. If you want to know Kṛṣṇa, choose your association carefully and try to get to know Him through loving service and chanting His holy names.

Anxiety Free

How can I drive away anxiety?
Sanchez
Via the Internet

Our reply: According to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, you can drive away anxiety by

giving up attachment to the fruit of your work. You are anxious because you have expectations from the work you do, from people, from your family, from everyone. You are attached to your expectations.

Try to reduce your expectations and your attachment to them. Do your duties, and dedicate your work to Kṛṣṇa. Whatever money, intelligence, skills, or resources you have, use them for Kṛṣṇa. If you do this, your anxiety will reduce. It may take time. You have to get training, which you can get by associating with devotees in ISKCON's temples. If you go to the temple regularly and practice *bhakti* regularly, you will gradually become free of anxiety. 🌍

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

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Arjuna's killing, done under the order of Lord Kṛṣṇa, incurs no karmic reaction, but rather gains him the highest spiritual result.

FOUNDER'S LECTURE

New Delhi – November 3, 1973

ACTION WITHOUT REACTION

Lord Kṛṣṇa reveals the secret to escaping the bondage of karma.

by His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of
the International Society for
Krishna Consciousness

*yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra
loko 'yam karma-bandhanaḥ
tad-arthaṁ karma kaunteya
mukta-saṅgaḥ samācara*

“Work done as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu has to be performed; otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kuntī, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage.” – *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.9

GOD HAS VARIOUS names, and one of them is Yajña-pati, “the Lord of *yajña*, sacrifice.”

You have to act for *yajña*. The example is that a soldier is fighting and killing many enemies, but he is not responsible for killing. The same man, when he is not fighting for the country or for the government, if he kills one man he is hanged. Because he is fighting or killing on the order of higher authority, the government, he is not responsible for all those killings. Rather, sometimes he is recognized by receiving a medal: “Oh, you

have killed so many enemies. Very good.” But if he kills outside the war field, at home, he will be hanged. If he argues in the court, “In the battlefield I killed so many enemies, and I was given recognition. But at home I have killed only one enemy, and for that I am going to be hanged. What is this law?” this argument will not stay.

If you do something under higher authority’s order, you are not responsible. Take Arjuna, for example. In the beginning he was not willing to fight. He was considering in terms of his personal satisfaction. But later on, the same Arjuna wanted to satisfy Kṛṣṇa, and he fought and became a great devotee.

Unless one has attained the brahminical qualifications, it is very difficult to understand what spiritual life is, what spiritual success is. That is explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.54):

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā
na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām*

“One who is thus transcendental-situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires to have anything. He is equally disposed toward every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me.” Brahman real-

of the politicians and administrators are called the *kṣatriya* division. The activities of the mercantile people are called the *vaiśya* division. And ordinary workers who get some salary for serving the master are called *śūdras*. In this way everybody has his duty. The *brāhmaṇa* has his duty, the *kṣatriya* has his duty, the *vaiśya* has his duty, and the *śūdras* have their duty.

Similarly, the *brahmacārī*, celibate student, has his duty; the *gṛhasthas*, householders, have their duties; the *vānaprasthas*, retired persons, have their duties; and the *sannyāsīs*, those in the renounced order of life, have their duties. The first division is called *varṇa*:

*brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya,
vaiśya, śūdra*. And the second division is called *āśrama*. Vedic civilization means *varṇa* and *āśrama* – human society divided into *varṇas* and *āśramas*. Everyone has his particular duty. And the con-

sideration of whether you are perfect in discharging your duty is whether you have satisfied the Supreme Personality of Godhead by your duty.

It is very easy to understand. In any office or any place, there is the supreme man. In big, big offices there is a record of one’s service. What kind of service an employee is rendering to the establishment or to the government is recorded, and he is recognized. So this is the system in our ordinary life. Similarly, everyone has to do something, even for keeping the body and soul together. But after doing something, the activities should be tested by whether the Supreme Lord is satisfied by such activities. If the Supreme Lord is satisfied, then one is freed from the reactions to those activities.

There are two kinds of reaction for every activity, pious or impious. Both pious and impious activities bind us under the law of karma. But above pious or impious activities is another activity, called devotional

activity. If one performs devotional activities, he is above the control of this material nature.

The material nature is being controlled by three qualities: *sattva-guṇa, rajo-guṇa, tamo-guṇa* – goodness, passion, and ignorance. But one who acts for the Supreme Personality of Godhead becomes freed from the reaction of these qualities. That is called *karmany akarma*. Although a devotee is seen to be very active, his activities are not like material activity, which produces either a pious result or an impious result. Both of them – pious and impious – are bondage.

If we become bound by pious or impious activities, then we’ll have to accept another material body. That is called *karma-bandhana*. And as soon as you accept a material body, you are under the laws of material nature, especially birth, death, old age, and disease. You become bound up. Therefore this human form of life is especially meant to get freedom from this bondage of birth, death, disease, and old age.

Like Animals Being Led to Slaughter

People do not understand this. Their brains are so packed up with material things that they have become just like animals. They cannot understand. But unless one understands the spiritual significance of life, he is just like an animal. *Śāstra*, Vedic scripture, has said *go-kharaḥ*. *Go-kharaḥ* means animal. *Go* means cow, and *khara* means ass. Anyone who is acting in the bodily concept of life, without any spiritual understanding, is no better than an animal.

But he is satisfied. The animal is being sent to the slaughterhouse, but still he is satisfied. He does not know that “I am going to be slaughtered. I am going with this herd, but I am simply waiting to be slaughtered.”

As the animals are being slaughtered, so everyone without spiritual consciousness, without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is to be slaughtered by the laws of material nature. They do not know that. Just like the animal – even if he is to be slaughtered, he is

not sorry. That is the position of the present human society.

So there is a great need of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. People are so fallen that they are reluctant to even to hear about *Bhagavad-gītā*, where everything is explained. They are living like animals. It is our duty to awaken them. That is the Vedic injunction. They are sleeping in ignorance. When a man sleeps, he is ignorant of everything going on outside. He is sleeping, deep sleeping. So the Vedic injunction says, *uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata*: “Please get up. You have this human form of body. Now get up and get out of these clutches of the cycle of birth and death.” (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.3.14) Unfortunately, they have become so dull that they cannot understand.

People should be trained how to live conscientiously, especially in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That will solve the problems of life. Otherwise one is committing suicide. That is the verdict of the *śāstra*.

Thank you very much. 🙏

We are all part and parcel of the Supreme Lord; therefore our business is to act in such a way that He is satisfied. That is the success of life.

This is the secret of all activities. We are all part and parcel of the Supreme Lord; therefore our business is to act in such a way that He is satisfied. That is the success of life. That is described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.13):

*ataḥ pumbhir dvija-śreṣṭhā
varṇāśrama-vibhāgaśaḥ
svanuṣṭhitasya dharmasya
saṁsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam*

“O best among the twice-born, it is therefore concluded that the highest perfection one can achieve by discharging the duties prescribed for one’s own occupation according to caste divisions and orders of life is to please the Personality of Godhead.” This was spoken by Sūta Gosvāmī in the assembly of great saintly persons and *brāhmaṇas*. He addressed the *brāhmaṇas* as *dvija-śreṣṭhāḥ*, “the best of the *brāhmaṇas*.” He was especially addressing the *brāhmaṇas*.

ization means understanding “I am not this body; I am spirit soul, part and parcel of God.” When we understand this position, then we are liberated from the reactions of karma, or material activities.

“The best of the *brāhmaṇas*” means the Kṛṣṇa conscious person, one who knows the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A *brāhmaṇa* is one who can distinguish spirit from matter. *Brahma jānāti iti brāhmaṇaḥ*. But when he understands the Supreme Brahman – Para-brahman, Kṛṣṇa – then he actually becomes a *brāhmaṇa* Vaiṣṇava. A *brāhmaṇa* should advance further to become a Vaiṣṇava. Therefore one who is a Vaiṣṇava is already a *brāhmaṇa*. This is to be understood.

Social and Spiritual Divisions

In human society there should be divisions of work. Activities for the most intellectual persons are called the *brāhmaṇa* division. The activities

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INTENTION IN TENSION?

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Reflections on how to avoid launching unintentional verbal attacks on others and how to weather such attacks from others | by Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa

STICKS AND STONES may break my bones, but words will never harm me.” This saying urges us to become thick-skinned and not let people’s harsh words hurt us. It is an expression of a conscious intention, a rallying call to steel oneself against painful words, whose power to injure is conveyed in another aphorism: “Words hurt more than swords.”

The Sinister Shapeshifter

The dynamics underlying these two paradoxical sayings can be understood from a pastime in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. When Rāma was living in the forest with His wife, Sītā, and His younger brother Lakṣmaṇa, they became the target of a conspiracy by the demon king Rāvaṇa, who wanted to abduct Sītā. He instructed one of his demon associates, a shape-shifting wizard named Mārīca, to assume the form of a spellbindingly

beautiful deer. It danced and pranced near Rāma’s forest cottage, captivating the tenderhearted Sītā. She desired the deer as a pet to alleviate the austerity of forest life. Further, when their exile ended and they returned to Ayodhya, she could gift it as a memento to her mother-in-law Kauśalyā.

Pointing to the deer, Sītā requested Rāma to get it for her. Lakṣmaṇa, who was by Rāma’s side, peered at the deer. Where Sītā saw disarming beauty, Lakṣmaṇa saw disconcert-

ing peculiarity. Remarking that the deer looked too beautiful to be real, he pointed out that other animals were staying away from it. Given that deer are not predators, such fear of the deer among other animals was suspicious.

Lakṣmaṇa inferred that the deer was actually a demon. Sītā, however, was so captivated that she neglected Lakṣmaṇa’s inference and beseeched Rāma again. Rāma didn’t have the heart to say no. She had given up much for His sake in following Him

to the forest, and He, being bereft of all royal resources, had been able to give her little in return. So He decided to fulfill this small desire of hers by catching the deer.

On seeing Rāma approaching, the deer took off into the forest. Rāma gave chase, and soon they both disappeared deep into the wilderness. Rāma pursued the deer for nearly an hour. Whenever He closed in on it, it would escape by taking a giant leap, far bigger than what any deer would be capable of. Or it would just mys-

tically disappear and then reappear at a distance, as if teasing Rāma. Tiring of its many tricks, Rāma concluded that Lakṣmaṇa had been right: the deer was definitely a demon in disguise. Angered at its deception and wary of the danger it posed, He abandoned His plan to catch it alive and decided to kill it. Taking careful aim, He shot an arrow at the deer. Pierced mortally, the deer fell. The demon’s shape-shifting abilities deserted him, and he relapsed into his normal form

as Mārīca. Despite being fatally wounded, he summoned whatever residual abilities he had and imitated Rāma's voice, calling to Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā for help. His loud call resonated for several miles all around.

The Terrible Accusation

On hearing the call, Sītā became overwhelmed by anxiety and agony. Lakṣmaṇa remained undisturbed, having full faith in Rāma's ability to deal with any danger. He reassured Sītā that the voice was not Rāma's but that of a demon impersonating Rāma.

But because the impersonation was so good, Sītā didn't feel reassured by Lakṣmaṇa's words. Instead, she felt agitated by his actions – or, more precisely, by his inaction. Fearing that Rāma might be in danger, which might degenerate into disaster if He was not helped, she urged and begged Lakṣmaṇa to go to Rāma. On seeing her brother-in-law unmoved and unmoving, she felt desperately driven to somehow trigger him into action. In a frenzy of anxiety, she uttered words that cut Lakṣmaṇa deeper than had the sharpest arrows of the fiercest demons in the toughest battles he had fought. Sītā insinuated that he had lusty designs towards her; he had come to the forest just to wait for an opportunity to act on those designs; and he was refusing to go to Rāma's help so that, with Rāma eliminated by the demon, he could have his way with her. Shrieking that his evil designs would never succeed, she declared that she would rather die than be touched by Lakṣmaṇa.

Sītā's words shocked Lakṣmaṇa. Since he had always venerated Sītā like his mother, to be accused of having lusty intentions towards her was horrifying. Further, he had the heart of a warrior who loved a good fight. Yet on Rāma's instruction he

Sītā Devī asks Lord Rāma to capture the alluring deer, as Lakṣmaṇa looks on.

Painting by Sreedharmada Dīsa



had subordinated his martial instinct and accepted the role of a passive guard for Sītā away from the scene of action while Rāma played the role of the heroic warrior who bested demons. Despite having exhibited such dutiful subordination again and again, to be accused of doing nothing – and doing nothing so as to further his lusty desires – was excruciating. Most of all, Lakṣmaṇa loved his brother so much that he would have without even a moment’s hesitation laid down his life for Rāma’s sake. To be accused of knowingly and intentionally staying passive while Rāma was being killed was totally unbearable.

Lakṣmaṇa knew that Rāma was in no danger and that Sītā would be put in danger by being left alone. Yet he

a conspiracy was afoot. The demon’s taking on a deer form to captivate Sītā, its evasive flight into the forest to take Rāma far away from Sītā, and its final cry in Rāma’s voice to get Lakṣmaṇa away from Sītā had all been parts of a scheme to render Sītā alone and defenseless in the cottage. Her harsh words to Lakṣmaṇa had unwittingly furthered the conspiracy, as had Lakṣmaṇa’s reaction to them. Realizing the great danger Sītā would be in, they both rushed back to the cottage. But it was too late; she had already been abducted.

The Battle Between The Head and the Tongue

Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa are transcendental, being intimate associates of

no matter how nice we are to people, they will sometimes speak hurtful words. When such words come from our loved ones, they often hurt much more than when they come from our antagonists. Pain is often a function of expectation and preparation. When we expect a punch, we steel ourselves against it – the punch still hurts, but the hurt is decreased by our preparedness. However, when we expect a pat and receive a punch instead, the punch catches us unawares and hurts us more. Similarly, when we are with our antagonists, we expect hurting words and steel ourselves against them. But when we are with our loved ones, we expect kind words. When we receive harsh words instead, they sting intolerably, as happened with Lakṣmaṇa on hearing Sītā’s accusatory words.

Still, we can prevent passing words from causing lasting ruptures in our relationships by considering that words spoken in tension seldom reflect intention. Tension often makes our head lose the battle with our tongue. And we end up speak-

ing hurting words without really meaning what we are saying. Just as we are prone to this human weakness, so are others. Just as we would want others to excuse us for such lapses, we too should excuse others’ similar lapses.

A question may surface: “Even if someone – my brother, let’s say – speaks to me when in tension, should I ascribe absolutely no intention to his words?” No matter how stressed he might have been, doesn’t the very fact that he spoke certain things suggest he must have thought something in that direction earlier? After all, if there is smoke, shouldn’t there be some fire somewhere?

A more pertinent question is, Should we be judging others based on the contents of the smokiest chambers of their heart? We wouldn’t want others to judge us by that standard. We all are contaminated by many past negative impressions, and

we live in a culture that further contaminates us. So dark thoughts may surface within us even against our intentions. The *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.36) mentions that within our psyche exists something that impels us towards actions that are against our intentions. If people were to be judged and condemned for the dark thoughts that might pass through their minds – thoughts that occasionally come out as words – then we would probably have to condemn ourselves first. So if someone who is usually kindhearted suddenly speaks something harsh, we needn’t let that one outburst overshadow the past track record. Why let a potentially lasting relationship become a hostage of one verbal lapse?

By the arrangement of nature and ultimately of God, we can see others’ expressions and actions but not their thoughts. This barrier in perception serves as an essential protector of all relationships. If everyone could see everything that passed through everyone else’s mind, everyone would be shocked by the incidental unworthy thoughts of others, thereby making any relationship almost impossible to sustain. The barrier between our thoughts and our words and actions provides us room for self-regulation, for restraining our lower side and expressing our higher side. Thus we can attain self-mastery and gradually bring out the best within us.

If we are on the verge of speaking without thinking, we can create a pause button for ourselves by, say, counting to ten or, better still, chanting the holy names of God ten times. If anger keeps choking us internally, we can vent it in a journal, thus getting it out of our system without scorching others. Getting the anger out of our system will calm us down. Then we can revisit what we have written and use our intelligence to evaluate whether our anger is justified. If it is, we can determine the most appropriate way to express it so that we can help clarify any misconception and rectify any misdemeanor.

The Divine Center For Relationships

The point of relationships is not mutually destructive condemnation, but synergistic elevation. We are not here to see through each other; we are here to see each other through. Keeping this cooperative focus in mind can make our relationships symbiotic, not antagonistic.

Such a vision of relationships based on mutual cooperation is easier to sustain when we study scripture and internalize a spiritual vision of life. When we understand that we are eternal spiritual beings on a multi-life journey towards God, we see others as co-pilgrims on this journey. We will be together for a brief lifetime, and we don’t know what our destination will be thereafter. From this long-term perspective, we can see others’ occasional harsh words as accidental – something like an unintentional elbow jab while traveling in a crowded train.

No doubt, harsh words from loved ones cut far deeper than does an elbow jab. And overlooking them is far tougher because the doubt lingers that some ill intention might have been lurking somewhere. When we have been badly hurt, we may need to convey in an appropriate way the magnitude of the wound and the gravity of the wounding words. Further, healing our emotions and restoring our trust may need time – time during which the hurting party demonstrates the absence of any ill intention through consistent actions. Depending on the situation, the specific measures we take to help heal the relationship may vary. But underlying these varying specifics is the common denominator of the willingness to let go of the past.

By holding on to something that someone might have unintentionally spoken during a tense situation, we poison our consciousness and paralyze our capacity for loving interactions. By choosing instead to focus on the good side of our loved ones

(please turn to page 63)

For Lakṣmaṇa, to be accused of knowingly and intentionally staying passive while Rāma was being killed was totally unbearable.

could see no other way to stop Sītā from hurling any more unbearable accusations at him, so he left her and went to search for Rāma. Before departing, he drew a circle around the cottage, invested it with mystic protective power, and requested Sītā to stay within it. Then he departed, following his brother’s trail deep into the forest.

Soon he met Rāma, who was rushing back towards the cottage. On seeing Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma reproached him for having left Sītā alone and unguarded. Lakṣmaṇa explained the words with which Sītā had goaded him to leave. But Rāma brushed them aside, telling Lakṣmaṇa he shouldn’t have taken so seriously her sentimental words spoken in anxiety. Put another way, Rāma essentially stated: Don’t ascribe ill intention to what is spoken in tension.

Rāma’s words helped Lakṣmaṇa calm down. They both realized that

Rāma – by their actions they assist Him in His pastimes according to His divine plan. So rather than judging whether Sītā was wrong in speaking those hurtful words or whether Lakṣmaṇa was wrong in taking those words too seriously, we can focus instead on how we can carefully choose our words and our responses to others’ words.

In the backdrop of this pastime, let’s revisit the two sayings about the power of words. “Words will never harm me” can be seen as an exhortation to the injured party to not take hurting words too seriously. “Words hurt more than swords” can be seen as an exhortation to a potential injurer, the person about to lash out verbally. At different times amidst life’s vicissitudes, we can be either the injured or the injurer. So, depending on context, both these sayings can guide us.

Life’s unpalatable reality is that,

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.”

IN DEFENSE OF THE VEDIC VIEW

“Both the Vaiṣṇava theists and the materialists each present their own set of amazing stories. The choice is . . . which set of amazing stories to believe.”

by Badrinarayan Swami



IT IS THE GRAND CONCEIT of the materialistic world-view that “man is the measure of all things.” When we dig a little deeper, we find that this premise is based on a profoundly arrogant presumption, namely, that all reality can ultimately be subordinated to our sense perception and intellect.

At the same time, many of us have experienced being in a location free from artificial light – say on top of a mountain or in the desert. Gazing up at the night sky and seeing the vast array of stars and planets, we feel how they

“A full explanation of the process [of how energy and information could escape from a black hole] would require a theory that successfully merges gravity with the other fundamental forces of nature. But that is a goal that has eluded physicists for nearly a century. The correct treatment remains a mystery.”

— Stephen Hawking

Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s associates Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī exemplify the Vaiṣṇava way of accessing ultimate reality – by hearing from God Himself. Scientists like Stephen Hawking rely on their own intelligence.

are both very close and yet very far away. To a reflective person, the sense of our place in the universe becomes dwarfed. Take one of the many virtual excursions offered online from our location on earth out to the Milky Way. Perhaps we are not as significant as we think we are.

Let us imagine Christopher Columbus Ant. He is sent out of his colony to explore new worlds. Suppose that in the course of his expedition he crawls over me – up my arm, across my ear, navigating his way through the hairs on my head, back down my other arm to *terra firma*. He will report to his queen: “I have discovered vast lands, canyons, forests – all uninhabited.”

that we missed each other?

Add a building at that northwest corner. In two dimensions, length and breadth, we were in the exact same place, but if you add the third dimension of height – say you were on the ground floor and I was on the fifth floor – and lo and behold, we don’t see each other. In one sense we were in two different worlds.

According to the *Vedas*, we do in fact live in a multidimensional universe. The Vedic yogis and mystics have access to dimensions beyond our level of perception. Thus, what cannot be measured or experienced by the layman is commonplace for them.

As you sit in a room reading this article, there are unseen realities all

No Free Lunch

The Vaiṣṇava theists accept that Kṛṣṇa is the cause of all causes, the source of all existence. The materialists ask us to believe that existence is “the original free lunch,” that everything arose spontaneously from a single point, or “singularity.”

“The most common belief is that all the laws of nature were completely fixed at the moment of the Big Bang. Modern science is based on the principle ‘Give us one free miracle and we’ll explain the rest.’ The one free miracle is the appearance of all the matter and energy in the universe and all the laws that govern it from nothing, in a single instant.” (Rupert Sheldrake, TED talk, January 13, 2013)

The Vaiṣṇavas have confidence in intelligent design. The materialists ask us to believe that everything in our complex and interdependent universe is driven only by random chance.

The materialists ask us to accept “dark matter,” the 84% of the total mass in the universe that is missing or beyond our perception. Dark matter is a “fudge factor,” a speculative concept added into cosmological models because without it, according to current theories, the cosmos would either spin out to oblivion or implode. It is like adding an imaginary number to make your checkbook balance. We are asked to accept the concept of “dark matter,” though your bank would certainly not accept payment in “dark dollars.” Try telling your bank, “Don’t worry, the money I owe is actually there. You just can’t see it.”

Unconscious Computers

The Vaiṣṇavas present that consciousness is due to the presence of the soul. The materialists ask us to believe that consciousness is only a brain function. They present that in due course computers will become

conscious – we can hope that they may keep humans around as pets.

The idea is that one day computers will become sophisticated enough to have that existential “aha moment” – there will eventually come a point where a computer is conscious – feeling emotion and having a sense of self.

But let’s consider this idea for a moment. Look at a pocket translator. You can type in a phrase in English and get the Chinese translation. Is there a tiny Chinese/English speaker inside the pocket translator? Of course not. All that is inside are circuits firing pluses and minuses. These in turn are used for computer code of zeros and ones. By careful design (not by chance, it is worth noting) that carefully-crafted code will provide the Chinese translation.

Now let’s take a stadium full of 100,000 people. In theory, you could work that crowd like the circuits in our pocket translator. You could

draw up a set of rules that dictate if person A receives a “1” from person B, then person A gives a “0” to person C. When person C receives a “0” from person B, then person C should give a “1” to person D. In this way, extending a written set of code throughout the stadium, you would have your living computer. In theory, you could submit your English phrase at one goalpost and receive your Chinese translation at the other goalpost, at the far end of the field.

Here’s our question: Did any of our stadium attendees learn a word of Chinese? Did any of them even know that they were translating Chinese? Rather, the level of perception, the level of consciousness, was simply the shuffling of zeros and ones. Why, therefore, is it believed that if we design a sophisticated enough computer it will one day become conscious, feel emotion, and have a sense of self? Instead, no matter how

complex a code is written, it will still be only the routing of pluses and minuses, the shuffling of ones and zeros. There will be no creation of consciousness, just as no one became conscious of a single word of Chinese in our stadium.

Existence from nothing, an intricately-balanced universe happening by chance, dark matter, consciousness as merely a brain function – the list of amazing stories we are asked to believe goes on and on. Once again, both the Vaiṣṇava theists and the materialists each present their own set of amazing stories. The choice is not whether or not to believe amazing stories. Rather, the choice is which set of amazing stories to believe – which side of the scale is more logically balanced?

We often encounter a condescending tone from the materialists, steeped as they are in faith in the power of research based on sense perception. Let me offer a few

The materialists ask us to believe that everything in our complex and interdependent universe is driven only by random chance.

He is crawling on me, and yet, due to his limited perception, to him I don’t even exist as a person. It is worth considering that our scope of perception and experience may also have limits like those of our ant explorer.

Einstein postulated that we live in a multidimensional universe. Let’s go with that concept for a moment. Suppose you and I agree to meet downtown at the corner of Fifth and Main at 10 a.m. tomorrow. To be quite certain, we agree to meet on the northwest corner of the intersection. Being a responsible person, you arrive at the designated spot by 9:45 a.m. You wait until 10:30 a.m. without seeing me. Having other obligations, you have to leave. We meet the next day and I ask you, “Where were you? I was there from 9:30 a.m. until 10:30 a.m., but no sign of you.” You assure me that you were also there at the right time, right day, and right location. How is it possible

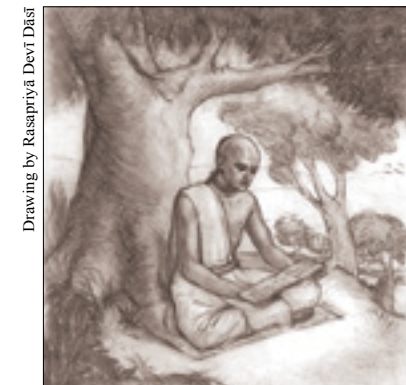
around you. Turn on a radio and you can experience a ball game. Open up your computer and you can explore faraway worlds. Have a police scanner with you and you can visit a crime scene. There are many worlds hovering around us at all times, which we can perceive only if we have the means to access them. Those who know the science and have the right devices can easily access these unseen realities. In the same way, the *Vedas* present higher dimensions and descriptions of them.

We do not hide from the fact that Vaiṣṇava theists describe an amazing universe. But the other side of the equation is the fact that the materialists have their own set of amazing stories. Thus, the question is not whether or not to believe in amazing stories; the question is which set of amazing stories to believe – the Vaiṣṇava theists’ or the materialists’?

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.vaisnava.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.



Drawing by Rasprīyā Devī Dāśī

Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa

Month of Trivikrama

(May 1–15, June 14–28
[split by Puruṣottama Month])

MAY

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

11 – Aparā Ekādaśī

Fasting from grains and beans.

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

Month of Puruṣottama-adhikā
(May 16–June 13)

25 – Padminī Ekādaśī

Fasting from grains and beans.

JUNE

10 – Paramā Ekādaśī

Fasting from grains and beans.

Month of Trivikrama (continued)

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

24 – Dvādaśī

Fasting from grains and beans for Pāṇḍava Nirjalā Ekādaśī.

examples that should invoke caution regarding this conviction. Maybe the materialists are not on as solid ground as they present to the public.

- “Microwave oven baffled astronomers for 17 years” / At Parkes Observatory in Australia, their world-renowned radio telescope was picking up strange signals thought to be generated from the outer limits of space. Peer-reviewed papers were published in respected science journals speculating as to the cosmic cause. Turns out that the source was the microwave oven in the staff cafeteria. “If you set it to heat and pulled the door open a little early, it sent a burst of energy that was read by our telescope,” said Simon Johnson,

results are replicable and that high standards are maintained by anonymous peer review. These pillars are crumbling.” From *Nature* magazine, September 1, 2015.

- “Stephen Hawking changes his mind on black holes” / “The world-famous author of *A Brief History of Time* said he and other scientists had gotten it wrong. In doing so he lost one of the most famous bets in recent scientific history.” (BBC, July 16, 2004)

Sufficient to say that if we are honest, we must concede that we are limited. People often say, “As far as I can see . . .” That is the point – how far can we actually see? Some will counter, “But we have electron microscopes, the Hubble telescope,

limited and fallible senses and intellect. Such knowledge will grow, but only within a certain range, only up to a finite degree.

Two Paths to Knowledge

The *Vedas* outline two processes for gathering knowledge. One is known as *āroha-panthā*, or “the ascending method,” while the other is known as *avaroha-panthā*, or “the descending method.” The ascending process is the method of empiric research and speculation. The descending process is the process of accepting revealed knowledge coming down to us via the Vedic scriptures and sages.

The essential question is “How can the finite understand that which is infinite?” Suppose you are sitting eight feet from me. Suppose some mischievous person has put glue on my seat and now I cannot leave my chair. Due to my moored position, I can only stretch my arm out to three feet. Can I shake your hand? By my own efforts, the answer is “no.” But what if you take the initiative and come to me? Then our shaking hands is easily accomplished. The point is that the finite is not be able to reach the infinite by personal endeavor, but if the infinite comes to us, then only does it become possible for us to understand the infinite. The only viable process for understanding the Absolute is revelatory – if the Absolute chooses to reach out to us.

Conclusion

The Vaiṣṇavas are not anti-science. After all, I am writing this article on a computer. I have a pacemaker to keep my heart ticking. We recognize and appreciate the achievements of modern research. The problem comes when our scientist friends go beyond the scope of their actual knowledge and falsely claim to have disproved the Vedic version of reality.

The Vaiṣṇavas honestly recognize humankind’s inherent limitations.

(please turn to page 63)

The only viable process for understanding the Absolute is revelatory – if the Absolute chooses to reach out to us.

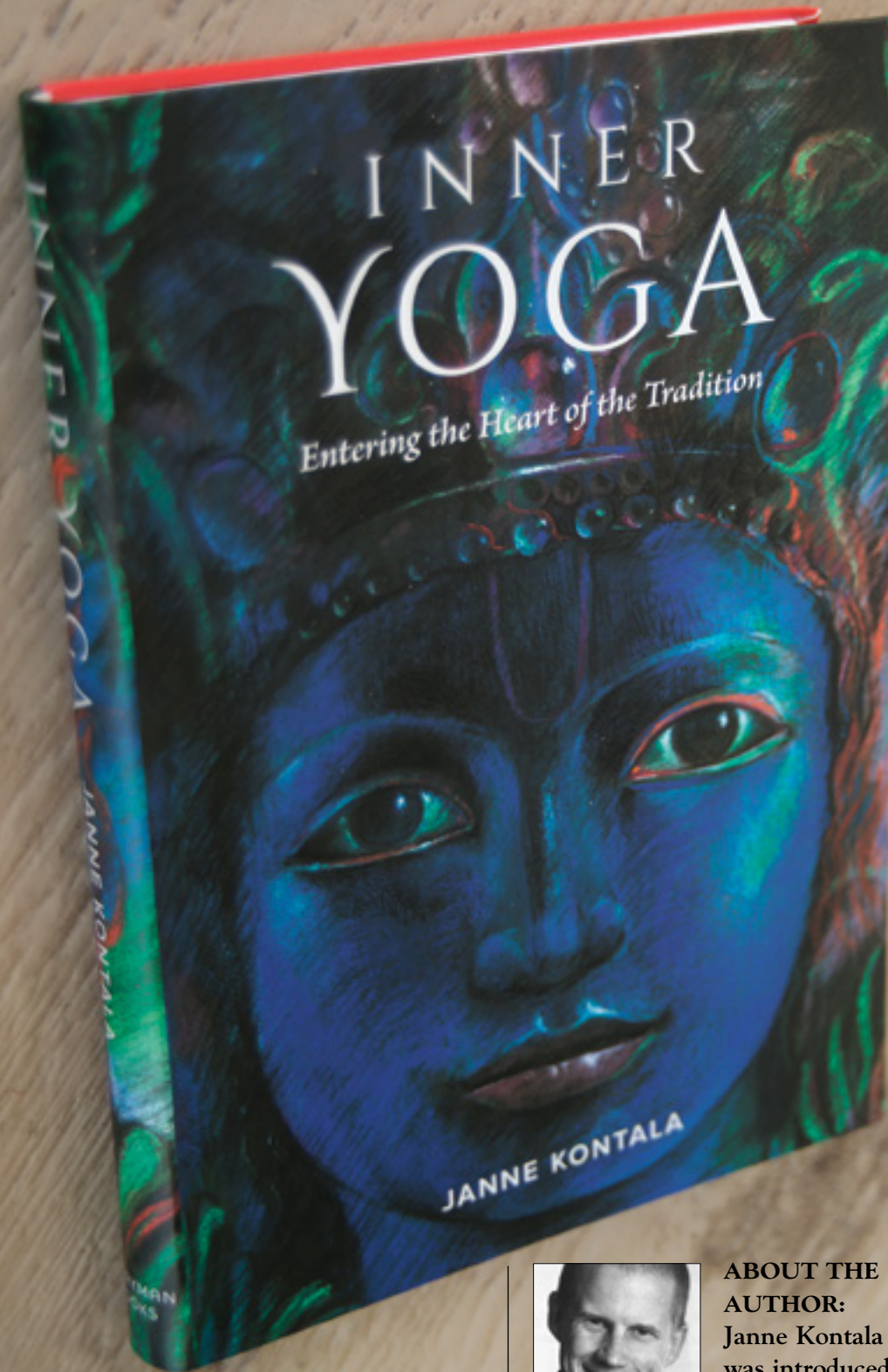
head of astrophysics at the scientific research agency CSIRO. (*Wired UK*, May 5, 2015)

- “A crisis in physics? If supersymmetry does not pan out, scientists will need a new way to explain the universe.” / From the cover of the May 2014 issue of the magazine *Scientific American*. They will need a new way to explain the universe? But the glitzy computer animations in National Geographic, Nova, etc. present to the public that they have the cornerstone questions about the universe all nailed down.

- “The replication crisis” / “Scientists have found that the results of many scientific studies are difficult or impossible to replicate on subsequent investigation, either by independent researchers or the original researchers themselves. The world of science is in the middle of unprecedented soul-searching at present. The credibility of science rests on the widespread assumption that the

and the Large Hadron Collider [the most powerful atom smasher].” Try as we might to extend the process of perception by sophisticated instruments, the principle remains the same: our senses and the machines created by them are limited and fallible. We are using our imperfect senses, extended by imperfect machines, to try to find perfection. However, imperfection times imperfection still equals imperfection.

We often hear this challenge: “By continued exploration we are building on our current base of knowledge. Over time we will unlock all the secrets of the universe.” In 1912 the world’s record for pole vaulting was 13’ 2¼”. By improved equipment and training, the record now stands at 20’ 2½”. But will anyone ever be able to pole vault to the moon? In other words, improvement over time is to be expected, but only within a certain range. The same is true of exploratory science using our



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Janne Kontala was introduced to the ashtanga-vinyasa yoga tradition in

1992. During five years training in India and Finland, he developed an interest in yoga philosophy and mantra meditation. He currently teaches yoga in Helsinki and Stockholm.

The Reliable Way To Gain Knowledge

Some considerations about the two primary means of acquiring knowledge: induction and deduction.

by Girirāja Govinda Dāsa



Above: Saṅkarṣaṇa Dāsa speaks on the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam at the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple in Vrindavan.

EVERYWHERE LIFE means questions and answers,” Śrīla Prabhupāda said. We have so many questions in our lives, and we seek satisfactory answers for them. While most of us busy ourselves with questions about our day-to-

tential questions,” questions about our existence. At some point these questions cross our minds. They are serious. They are perplexing.

The world has changed considerably with the advent of modern science and technology. Until a couple

an answer with a scientific touch. With both scriptures and science at our disposal, we can acquaint ourselves with the nature of the conclusions they reach. For that, we should know the two processes for acquiring knowledge: inductive and deductive.

day survival, job, family, and so on, the Vedic literature urges us to inquire beyond these things, to ask far deeper questions – about our existence, God, the secrets of birth and death. “Who am I?” “Does God exist?” “Why do we die?” “What is the soul?” “What is the meaning of life?” Philosophers call these “exis-

of centuries ago, any responsible person pondering over the above questions would get answers from the sacred scriptures. Now, of course, the situation appears different. With the development of modern science, people have explored the depths of the sea and the vastness of the sky. Now existential questions demand

The Inductive Approach

This is a bottom-up approach. In Sanskrit it is called *āroha-panthā*. We all have sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, skin, and tongue, and we use them to perceive the world and gather information. In the inductive approach, we observe the world



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through our sense organs and then use our mind and intellect to infer conclusions about the observations. Modern science emphasizes this approach and uses it to propound theories about the origin of the universe, the origin of life, and so on. We all know that our sense organs have limitations. For example, our ears can hear only in the frequency range of twenty hertz to twenty kilohertz. We cannot see objects on earth beyond a few kilometers. Our sense of smell is also limited. Scientific instruments help us to some extent, compensating for the deficiencies of our senses.

We use the instruments to observe the world, and then we speculate to reach conclusions we hope to be correct. For example, scientists use powerful telescopes to study celestial objects near and far. They classify and name them. In my school days, I happily learned that our solar system has nine planets: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. The last one is special. Pluto was discovered in 1930 and was considered the smallest planet and the farthest from the sun. The year 2006 was somewhat bad for Pluto. The International Astronomical Union (IAU), the sci-

entific body responsible for naming and classifying objects in the cosmos, redefined the term *planet*, and according to them Pluto did not fit in the category. Its planet status was revoked after seventy-five years. They demoted Pluto to “dwarf planet,” reducing the number of planets in our solar system to eight. This upset the public and several planetary scientists, who questioned the new definition of a planet.

A team of NASA scientists is planning to make Pluto a planet again. The group, led by Alan Stern, the principal investigator for the New Horizons mission to Pluto, has submitted a proposal to the IAU suggesting a new definition of a planet. Mr. Stern’s team argues that the definition employed by the IAU is technically flawed. Under the new definition offered by the NASA team there would be at least 110 known planets in our solar system. Imagine the plight of students with all this yo-yo science.

The above narration gives us a glimpse of the inductive approach along with its shortcomings. In general, any inductive undertaking is time consuming and leads to imperfect conclusions. For example, a man inductively observing many

people die around him may not conclude that he might also die one day.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The essential fault of the so-called scientists is that they have adopted the inductive process to arrive at their conclusions. For example, if a scientist wants to determine whether or not man is mortal by the inductive process, he must study every man to try to discover if some or one of them may be immortal. The scientist says, “I cannot accept the proposition that all men are mortal. There may be some men who are immortal. I have not yet seen every man. Therefore how can I accept that man is mortal?” This is called the inductive process. (*The Science of Self-Realization*, chapter 6)

The Deductive Approach

The deductive* approach is a top-down scheme. In Sanskrit it is called *avaroha-panthā*. Imagine that our friend Mr. A. does not know who his father is and wants to find out for himself. If he chooses to employ an inductive approach, then he will have to conduct scientific research – most probably genetic fingerprinting or DNA paternity testing. Who would be the candidates under research? Ideally Mr. A. has to collect DNA samples from all the eligible, potent men on earth who could have fathered him whatever time ago. Of course, that would be a lot of men. We could narrow down the sample set to men in his city. Still it is a huge number. Some of them might be alive; some might have died. Since fathering is a private act, some candidates might feel offended and refuse to give their samples. Some people’s DNA composition might have mutated over the years. The tests take time because all the sam-

*In this article I’m using the term *deductive* in the way Śrīla Prabhupāda used it (i.e., received from authority), rather than as the dictionary defines it: “based on deduction from accepted premises.”

ples must be tested. Samples risk being contaminated, creating erroneous results. The DNA tests provide a probability of parentage against each sample, where a probability value of 99.99% is considered the most “likely” father. After this entire ordeal, we are not sure if Mr. A. would still be alive. If alive, he’d probably be bankrupt by funding the project. Worse, would his heart be satisfied with the whole enterprise?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Therefore our speculative knowledge, intellectual platform, is not helpful. We must receive knowledge from a superior source, a perfect source. That knowledge is perfect. Just like we give generally this example, that to find out who is my father, my research will not help me, but if my mother says, “Here is your father,” that is perfect knowledge because she’s the authority. Therefore, for perfect knowledge, we have to take it from the perfect authority, not by our speculative intellectual gymnastics. No, that will not help. Because our intellectual jurisdiction is very limited. . . . The Vedic process is not to acquire knowledge by the ascending process, the inductive process. Vedic knowledge is to receive knowledge by the descending process, knowledge coming from authority. (Conversation with Professor, December 9, 1973, Los Angeles)

Accepting knowledge coming from perfect authority is called the deductive approach. In this approach, an eternal, infallible, absolute authority is accepted at the top level. The knowledge received from the authority serves as a primary beacon with which we acquire subsequent knowledge. In the deductive approach, the limitations of sensory observations and mental speculations are honestly acknowledged and hence subordinated to an authoritative knowledge. So if Mr. A. consults his mother, his question is answered conclusively, decisively, and reliably. She is the authority. Her words

can be accepted. A simple and effective method.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: We have to accept things which are accepted by authorities. That is our education. We go to a teacher. We go to school. We learn from father, mother. They’re all authorities. And our nature is to learn. “Father, what is this?” In childhood. Father says, “This is a pen. This is a spectacle. This is a table.” . . . So similarly, if we get information from the authority, and if the authority is not a cheater, then our knowledge is perfect, and very easy. Just like, the father, mother never cheats. When the son inquires from the parents, the parents give exact information, right information. Similarly, if we get right information from the right person, that is perfect knowledge. If you want to reach the conclusion by speculation, that is imperfect – inductive process. That will never become perfect. It will remain imperfect for all the time. (Lecture, July 20, 1971, New York City)

Each of us starts getting knowledge through the deductive process right from our childhood. We get guidance from our parents, teachers, and well-wishers in making sense of the world and using our intelligence judiciously. This process of placing our implicit faith in the authority

seems innate and natural. It is only after we have acquired (deductively) a basic theoretical understanding that we can begin an inductive process. Nonetheless our instinctive inclination to the deductive approach remains lifelong. For example, scientists deductively accept axioms as authoritative truths while they continue with their inductive process. In our day-to-day life also, we accept the authority of doctors, judges, traffic police, and so on. Either willingly or unwillingly, we accept authorities; the deductive approach is inescapable.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: From the beginning of your life, when you were a child, you asked your parents, “Mother, father, what is this?” Why? That is the beginning of life. You cannot go even a step without authority. You are governed by authority. You are running your car by authority – “Keep to the right.” Why? Why don’t you defy it? So authority we have to obey. But the difficulty is: who is the authority? That we require to learn – who is actually the authority. (Lecture, June 15, 1968, Montreal)

The Authoritative Trio

The Vedic processes prescribe what should be the nature of the authority.

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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.* 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.

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It is not that we accept any arbitrary person as an authority based on some dogma. The authority is expected to be perfect, scientific, sensible, intuitively appealing, and self-evident. Such an authority is the trio *guru-sādhu-śāstra*. They are like the three legs of a tripod, together supporting the knowledge of the Absolute Truth. A guru is a bona fide spiritual master, like Śrīla Prabhupāda, coming in an unbroken disciplic succession from Lord Kṛṣṇa. *Sādhus* are others in such bona fide disciplic successions, including great spiritual preceptors like Rāmanujācārya. A *śāstra* is a scripture, such as the *Bhagavad-*

gītā, *and so on*. These experiences are closer to the bone, and we grapple to make sense of them in a satisfactory way. To subject these important aspects of life to the time-consuming trial-and-error method of inductive research seems a misplaced choice. The inductive approach may have its uses, but we should remember that its conclusions may not be perfect. This imperfection makes a big difference.

The deductive approach of the *guru-sādhu-śāstra* system provides a solid framework that can be used to seek answers to existential questions in a meaningful way. Guru,

doubts and mistakes, and *Bhagavad-gītā* is the essence of all Vedic knowledge.

Modern science tries its best to discover (inductively) in a rather slow way – in bits and pieces, with trial and error – to reach a conclusion that a Vedic scripture might have simply stated (deductively) a long time ago. We should be cautious about induction-based criticism of the authority of the deductive method. We should carefully consider the relative merits and demerits of the inductive approach and use it as the situations demand. The inductive approach is speculative and may be helpful in certain areas, but for much of life – love, God, purpose, soul, morality, and so on – a deductive approach would do a reliable and satisfactory justice.

Therefore it is wise for us to embrace the deductive approach. How do we

begin? Speaking to Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa describes the first step:

*tad viddhi pranipātena
pariprasnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānam
jñāninas tattva-darśinah*

“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.” (*Gītā* 4.34) In the purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: “One should not only hear submissively from the spiritual master; but one must also get a clear understanding from him, in submission and service and inquiries.” Here we see that the deductive approach includes questions and answers – clarification of doubts with an open mind. It is not dogmatic. It involves using the faculties of the senses, mind, and intelligence, but with a proper understanding of their powers and limitations.

To subject the important aspects of life to the time-consuming trial-and-error method of inductive research seems a misplaced choice.

gītā and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Each member of the *guru-sādhu-śāstra* system speaks the same truth without contradictions. They provide a perfect authority because they are free from the four defects: (1) imperfect senses, (2) the cheating propensity, (3) the tendency to be illusioned, and (4) the tendency to commit mistakes. Such is the high standard of the accepted authority in the Vedic process. It is a serious business.

How serious should we be in our pursuit to seek answers to the existential questions? Quite serious. The *guru-sādhu-śāstra* system addresses such questions primarily. These questions are not on the same level as deciding whether some distant, cold, icy place called Pluto is a planet or not. For most of us, that question is irrelevant. Real life is quite different from isolated scientific laboratories. The day-to-day experience of life is a dynamic interplay of emotions, relationships, values, ethics, death, love, anger, passions, pur-

sādhu, and *śāstra* reinforce one another, providing a stable reference for our lives.

Sometimes contradictions may seem to appear in the deductive approach. Śrīla Prabhupāda often addressed this with the example of cow dung. In his introduction to *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, he writes:

All Vedic knowledge is infallible, and Hindus accept Vedic knowledge to be complete and infallible. For example, cow dung is the stool of an animal, and according to *smṛti*, or Vedic injunction, if one touches the stool of an animal he has to take a bath to purify himself. But in the Vedic scriptures cow dung is considered to be a purifying agent. One might consider this to be contradictory, but it is accepted because it is Vedic injunction, and indeed by accepting this, one will not commit a mistake; subsequently it has been proved by modern science that cow dung contains all antiseptic properties. So Vedic knowledge is complete because it is above all

Broadening the Scientific Perspective

Several great scientists understood the limitations of the inductive method. Who does not know Sir Isaac Newton, the father of mechanics? Even today, after three hundred years, we use Newton’s laws of motion to launch rockets and satellites into space. We use his theory of optics to make telescopes and study the properties of light. We use calculus, his invention, a special branch of mathematics. His contributions to modern science are profound. But he said, “Gravity explains the motions of the planets, but it cannot explain who sets the planets in motion.” Although Newton mathematically formulated the laws of motion, he was aware that the origin of such laws could not be explained. Why the gravitational force is the way it is continues to amaze the best scientific brains even today. Newton took a spiritual perspective alongside the material perspective. He marveled, “This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being.”

This intuition of one of the greatest scientists should inspire us to keep an open mind and welcome spiritual considerations. Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged such a thought process. He desired that a magnificent Vedic planetarium be built in Mayapur, showcasing the elaborate astronomical model given in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Let us hope many modern space scientists visit this place and get inspired to know the scientific topics included in the great classic *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. 🌟

Girirāja Govinda Dāsa is a disciple of His Holiness Jayapatāka Swami Mahārāja and a śikṣā disciple of His Holiness Bhakti Vinoda Swami. He works as a scientist in the field of digital signal processing and is interested in exploring scientific aspects of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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The Uniqueness of Transcendental Hunger

It is up to us to decide which cuisine we want to feast on.

by Osho Raman

TO RELISH dream delicacies is a fantasy that most fascinates the tongue. Even a flash of the thought of, say, fragrant fried rice layered with chunks of paneer and fresh peas, mingled in a rich, seductive, creamy tomato sauce with a sublime coriander garnish, set out exquisitely on an elegant plate, instantly renders one's tongue salivating, belly hungering, and mind becoming restless. Now consider having an actual experience of being served such a plate. You will pounce on it in no time.

A Contemplation Worth Contemplating

Clearly, to have one's hunger satisfied means to have successfully accessed and enjoyed the object of one's hunger. But to have one's hunger satisfied also means to have one's longing for the object of the hunger nullified. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.5.30) boldly defines this nature of material enjoyment as *punaḥ punaś carvita carvaṇānām*. That is, trying to enjoy material pleasures is like repeatedly chewing

what has already been chewed.

Suppose in the scenario cited above, the server enthusiastically asks you, "Would you like more? There's an unlimited banquet available especially for you."

Having feasted enough, you cry, "No, please! My hunger is satisfied. I've had enough. I'm done. I beg you, please don't serve me any more food!"

Hence, having one's dire hunger for the alluring delicacy satisfied, the very next moment one astonishingly despises the very same object



of hunger. This is the nature of material hunger. Once satisfied, one's material hunger no longer longs for the very same object of hunger thereafter.

Why does one finally say, "I've had enough"? Because the pleasures derived from the material sense objects, for which one heavily salivates initially, gradually fade with time, and then finally fade away completely. Consequently, to try to further enjoy the material sense objects is "chewing the chewed." Material pleasures are limited by nature and at some point fail to offer further pleasure.

"Is there any way I can enjoy unlimited, unending pleasure?" Yes,

and service to Kṛṣṇa is easy and joyful, as confirmed by Kṛṣṇa Himself (*Gītā* 9.2). One can do so by soaking one's consciousness in the foundational process of hearing and chanting the pure and purifying glories of Kṛṣṇa's name, fame, qualities and pastimes (*Bhāgavatam* 7.5.23–24), henceforth dwelling deep within the nectarean happiness of pleasing Kṛṣṇa. Essentially, the object of one's transcendental hunger is this unique nectarean, everlasting happiness.

Kṛṣṇa's Boundless Sweetness

The *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.32) expounds Kṛṣṇa's defining characteris-

tic as *ānanda-cinmaya-sad-ujjala-vigrahasya*: "His form is full of bliss, truth, and substantiality, and is thus full of the most dazzling splendor." In fact, everything in relation to Kṛṣṇa is so sweet (*madhuram*) that once the "tongue" that is our heart gets to relish His sweetness, that tongue just can't help but voraciously salivate for more. Unlike one's material hunger, which gradually gets satiated and mitigated in proportion to each morsel of the paneer-rice dish, one's transcendental hunger gets further aggravated with every morsel of Kṛṣṇa's sweetness. This is the uniqueness of transcendental hunger.

Everything about Kṛṣṇa is everlastingly both fresh and sweet and thus has the special capacity to everlastingly offer us unlimited pleasure. Once experienced and relished, that supremely intoxicating bliss renders one's heart helplessly addicted to continue demanding it more and more.

The Oceanic Pleasure-Sauce of Kṛṣṇa's and His Devotees' Glories

This ever-increasing transcendental hunger is sustained by dissatisfaction derived from satisfaction. For example, when a bona fide devotee tells of Kṛṣṇa's pastime with His dear school friend Sudāmā, one hears how despite being the esteemed ruler of Dwarka, Kṛṣṇa humbly bent down and washed the feet of His poor friend Sudāmā out of pure love (*Bhāgavatam* 10.80.20). One thus derives immense joy at hearing of Kṛṣṇa's astounding humility, love, and renunciation. And one delights in realizing how glorious Kṛṣṇa's devotee Sudāmā is, for the supreme reality, Kṛṣṇa, is so bound by Sudāmā's pure love that He is compelled to bend down and wash Sudāmā's feet.

Thus hearing Kṛṣṇa's and Kṛṣṇa's devotees' nectarian pastimes, one gains the glorious opportunity to rejoice in the profound dynamics of pure love and selflessness flowing and floating in those pastimes. One can then feast on the sweetness and purity of the pure services exchanged between Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotees, services garnished with the infused nuggets of pure love and selflessness. The resulting joy renders such sublime satisfaction that one cannot resist hearing more and more about Kṛṣṇa. Consequently, one feels dissatisfied if unable to hear more about Him. Hence the satisfaction derived from hearing about Kṛṣṇa becomes the source of dissatisfaction, and to mitigate that dissatisfaction one wants to hear more about Kṛṣṇa. The cycle continues, and one everlastingly rejoices in his ever-increasing transcendental hunger.

Aggravated Transcendental Hunger

This is the uniqueness of our heart's innate transcendental hunger: it can never be satisfied. Once tasted, Kṛṣṇa's everlasting sweetness is irresistible.

One can never say, "Thank you. My heart's innate transcendental hunger is now satisfied. I am done with it. I no longer long for Kṛṣṇa. I beg of you, please – no more of Kṛṣṇa's love!" Transcendental hunger for Kṛṣṇa compels pure devotees to breathtakingly long for hearing and chanting His name, fame, qualities, and pastimes ad infinitum (*Gītā* 9.14).

One Tongue and Two Ears Not Enough

"Are there real-life examples to prove these points?" Yes, there are many.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu's disciple Rūpa Gosvāmī was an erudite scholar and an inspirationally staunch Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee. He relished the boundless sweetness from hearing and chanting Kṛṣṇa's sweet holy names. In his *Vidagdha-mādhava*, he intensely craves millions of tongues and ears to relish that sweetness.

Parīkṣit Mahārāja, another staunch Kṛṣṇa devotee, dove into the magnanimous sweetness of hearing the magnificent Vedic literature *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He heard it continuously for the last seven days of his life, fasting from food and water. Throughout its recitation, he desperately begged to be able to hear it more and more.

Kṛṣṇa's Sweetness Tasted By Kṛṣṇa's Sweet Mercy

One final question may arise: "How to unlock, access, taste, and relish that supreme sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's boundless love?" *The Nectar of Instruction* mercifully reveals the answer, just as a waiter might render guidelines on how to best realize and relish the flavors captured in the delicacy being served. In verse seven it says that Kṛṣṇa's holy name, character, pastimes, and activities are all "transcendentally sweet like sugar candy." Why then can't everyone taste that supreme sweetness? Because we are afflicted by the jaundice of *avidyā* (ignorance). Essentially, because of ignorance, our

diseased tongue salivates only for material sense objects in general and material delicacies in particular. It consequently fantasizes about diving deep into the inferior tomato sauce of material delicacies, being completely ignorant of the incomparable oceanic relish encapsulated in the superior pleasure sauce of Kṛṣṇa's boundless sweet love.

The verse then mercifully shines a ray of hope by educating us about the easy prescription to cure the tongue's disease: by carefully chanting Kṛṣṇa's sweet holy names regularly, a natural relish awakens within one's tongue, and one's disease of ignorance is gradually destroyed at the root, by Kṛṣṇa's mercy.

Having thus reawakened and reactivated its potency to taste and relish the supreme flavor of Kṛṣṇa, one's tongue then realizes that all the material sense objects are absolutely tasteless and inferior in comparison to Kṛṣṇa's supremely relishable sweetness (*Gītā* 2.59).

Which Cuisine Do You Want?

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.41) further nourishes our intelligence by giving knowledge of the ultimate source of all tongue-charming delicacies, Kṛṣṇa. By revealing that everything opulent, beautiful, and glorious (*yad yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam*

eva vā) has originally sprung from a spark of Kṛṣṇa's splendor (*mama tejo-'mśa-sambhavam*), the *Gītā* encourages us to redirect our search for all the opulences, beauty, and glory to their original source, Kṛṣṇa. This can be understood as follows.

Anything within the arena of our experience or imagination that we conceive of as opulent, beautiful, or glorious, even the alluring paneer-peas-rice delicacy, offers a few tiny droplets of pleasure, delight, and relish only because it has inherited its minute, limited pleasure-giving capacity from the everlasting boundless ocean of unlimited pleasure, Kṛṣṇa. Hence a dazzling coriander garnishing spellbinds one's eyes because it has inherited its minute spellbinding capacity from its supremely spellbinding source, Kṛṣṇa.

The material sources of infinitesimal pleasure thus silently echo the existence of their original source, Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual source of infinite pleasure. A bowl of the limitedly relishable paneer and peas thus points to Kṛṣṇa, the original supreme reservoir of unbounded relish.

The explicit use of the word *evāvagaccha* ("certainly know") in *Gītā* 10.41 serves to draw our focus, attention, and consciousness towards this fact of life. Desiring and impelling us to "certainly know" that Kṛṣṇa is the original source of all that

The process to express our love and service to Kṛṣṇa is easy and joyful, as confirmed by Kṛṣṇa Himself (*Gītā* 9.2)

the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness awakens a special type of hunger called "transcendental hunger," the hunger for an object capable of furnishing unlimited, unending pleasure.

The Heart's Innate Hunger

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.7) nourishes our intelligence with the highest education – that the highest, everlasting, factual reality is Kṛṣṇa. As loving parts of the supreme reality, Kṛṣṇa (15.7), as pure spirit souls, we are meant to delight in everlasting happiness at its perfection (*Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.12). Our heart's deepest hunger for that supremely fulfilling everlasting happiness will be satisfied only by rendering everlasting loving service to the everlasting reality, Kṛṣṇa. Transcendental hunger is essentially this deepest hunger of one's heart, i.e., the deepest innate hunger for loving and serving Kṛṣṇa.

The process to express our love



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charms and mesmerizes our mind and senses, the verse thus motivates us to reconsider and reformulate our pursuit of pleasure and happiness, from the droplets-like pleasure-giving material sense objects to their original oceanic source, Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa, being the sole original eternal means of fulfilling the heart's deepest hunger for pure pleasure at its perfection, is factually the heart's final goal (*Gītā* 15.15). Unless this goal is aspired for and realized, one's heart is bound to be helplessly lost in its perpetual pursuit of perfect pleasure in the deluding material sources of imperfect, insignificant, inferior pleasure, rather than in its original source, Kṛṣṇa.

Food, clothing, and shelter are the core needs of the body, while pleasing Kṛṣṇa is the core need of the conscious living entity residing within that body. Both kinds of need must be attended to. The process of pleasing Kṛṣṇa rests on the foundation of the supremely pleasurable service of

hearing and chanting about Him and His devotees, under the guidance of a bona fide practitioner of the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The *Gītā* (10.41) hence encourages us to not end up getting hooked on running after the inferior paneer-peas-rice of seductive material sense objects. Erroneously considering them to be all in all, we unfortunately deprive ourselves of the real superior pleasure-sauce of their original oceanic source, Kṛṣṇa.

The *Gītā*'s wisdom uplifts our consciousness to allow our intelligence to choose to delight and relish in the ecstatic bliss of hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's devotees. Paradoxically, we can feast on our hunger – on the supremely satisfying dynamics of our heart's innate transcendental hunger to love, serve, and please Kṛṣṇa.

The *Gītā* (7.3) encourages and inspires us to be one of those rare intelligent human beings who aspire for pleasure at its perfection.

And *Gītā* 10.41 offers us a restaurant menu-card, allowing us the free will to choose from two food options. Option one is inferior, short-lived material sense objects, and option two is everlasting transcendental sweet love for Kṛṣṇa. The cost of option one is exhausting hard work in, say, academics or a job, and the cost of option two is the easy process of the daily attentive chanting and hearing of Kṛṣṇa's sweet holy names under the guidance of a bona fide practitioner of the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is up to us to be intelligent enough to decide which cuisine we want to feast on. 🍽️

Osho Raman serves at the Remuna Yoga Center in Rourkela, Odisha. The Center, a youth-outreach project run by Rādheśyāma Dāsa, temple president of ISKCON Pune, is a spiritual hostel for practicing devotees, mostly engineering students from the National Institute of Technology Rourkela.

A Pause for Prayer

OFFER MY RESPECTFUL obeisances unto Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, the source of all power. O my Lord who possesses nails and teeth just like thunderbolts, kindly vanquish our demon-like desires for fruitive activity in this material world. Please appear in our hearts and drive away our ignorance so that by Your mercy we may become fearless in the struggle for existence in this material world.

May there be good fortune throughout the universe, and may all envious persons be pacified. May all living entities become calm by practicing bhakti-yoga, for by accepting devotional service they will think of each other's welfare. Therefore let us all engage in the service of the supreme transcendence, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and always remain absorbed in thought of Him.

– Prahlāda Mahārāja to Lord Nṛsiṃha
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.18.8–9



Detail from a painting by Saichandanā Dāsa

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. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

LESSONS FROM VIṢṆU

Lord Viṣṇu is giving Pṛthu Mahārāja fundamental knowledge about God and the countless living entities, who are His servants.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 20

7 एकः शुद्धः स्वयंज्योतिर्निर्गुणोऽसौ गुणाश्रयः
सर्वगोऽनावृतः साक्षी निरात्मात्मात्मनः परः

*ekah śuddhaḥ svayaṁ-jyotir
nirguṇo 'sau guṇāśrayaḥ
sarva-go 'nāvṛtaḥ sāksī
nirātmātmāmanaḥ paraḥ*

ekah – one; *śuddhaḥ* – pure; *svayaṁ* – self; *jyotiḥ* – effulgent; *nirguṇaḥ* – without material qualifications; *asau* – that; *guṇa-āśrayaḥ* – the reservoir of good qualities; *sarva-gaḥ* – able to go everywhere; *anāvṛtaḥ* – without being covered by matter; *sāksī* – witness; *nirātmā* – without another self; *ātma-ātmanaḥ* – to the body and mind; *paraḥ* – transcendental.

The individual soul is one, pure, self-effulgent, and, though devoid of material qualities, the reservoir of all good qualities. All-pervading, not covered by matter, that witness of all activities is completely distinct from other living entities and transcendental to all embodied souls.

PURPORT: In the previous verse two significant words are used: *asamsaktaḥ*, meaning “without attachment,” and *budhaḥ*, meaning “fully cognizant of everything.” ❶ By full cognizance it is meant that one should know about his own constitutional position as well as the position of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. According to Śrī

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura, in this verse Lord Viṣṇu is describing Himself, or the Paramātmā. The Paramātmā is always distinguished from the embodied soul as well as the material world. Therefore He has been described as *para*. That *para*, or Supreme Personality of Godhead, is *eka*, meaning “one.” The Lord is one, whereas the conditioned souls embodied within the material world exist in many varieties of form. There are demigods, human beings, animals, trees, birds, bees, and so forth. Thus the living entities are not *eka* but many. As confirmed in the *Vedas*: *nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām* (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.2.13).

The living entities, who are many and who are entangled in this material world, are not pure. However, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is pure and detached. Due to being covered by the material body, the living entities are not self-effulgent, but the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Paramātmā, is self-effulgent. ❷ The living entities, being contaminated by the modes of material nature, are called *saguṇa*, whereas Paramātmā, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is *nirguṇa*, not being under the influence of the material modes. The living entities, being engaged in material qualities, are *guṇāśrita*, whereas the Supreme Personality of Godhead is *guṇāśraya*. The conditioned soul's vision is covered by material contamination; therefore he cannot see the cause of his actions, and he cannot see his past lives. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, not being covered by a material body, is the witness of all

- 1) What is meant by “full cognizance”?
- 2) What does it mean that the living entities are *saguṇa* and the Lord is *nirguṇa*?

the activities of the living entity. But both of them, the living entity and the Paramātmā, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, are *ātmā*, or spirit. They are one in quality, yet they are different in so many ways, especially in regard to the six opulences the Supreme Personality of Godhead has in full. Full knowledge means that the *jīva-ātmā*, the living entity, must know both his position and the Supreme's position. That is full knowledge.

8 य एवं सन्तमात्मानमात्मस्थं वेद पूरुषः नाज्यते प्रकृतिस्थोऽपि तद्गुणैः स मयि स्थितः

*ya evaṁ santam ātmānam
ātma-stham veda pūruṣaḥ
nājyate prakṛti-stho 'pi
tad-guṇaiḥ sa mayi sthitaḥ*

yaḥ – anyone who; *evam* – thus; *santam* – existing; *ātmānam* – the individual *ātmā* and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Paramātmā; *ātma-stham* – situated within his body; *veda* – knows; *pūruṣaḥ* – person; *na* – never; *ajyate* – is affected; *prakṛti* – in material nature; *sthaḥ* – situated; *api* – although; *tad-guṇaiḥ* – by the material modes of nature; *saḥ* – such a person; *mayi* – in Me; *sthitaḥ* – situated.

Although within the material nature, one who is thus situated in full knowledge of the Paramātmā and ātmā is never affected by the modes of material nature, for he is always situated in My transcendental loving service.

PURPORT: When the Supreme Personality of Godhead appears in this material world, He is not affected by the modes of material nature. Similarly, those who are always connected with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, even though they be within the material body or the material world, are not affected by the material qualities. That is explained very nicely in *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.26):

*mām ca yo 'vyabhicāreṇa
bhakti-yogena sevate
sa guṇān samatīyaitān
brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*

“One who is unflinchingly engaged in the devotional service of the Lord surpasses the material qualities and attains Brahman realization.”³ In this connection Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says that if a person is always engaged in the service of the Lord with his body, words and mind, he

3) According to Rūpa Gosvāmī, how can a person be liberated even while living in the material world?

4) What activity does the *Bhagavad-gītā* confirm to be *karma-yoga*?

is to be considered liberated, although living in the material world.

9 यः स्वधर्मेण मां नित्यं निराशीः श्रद्धयान्वितः भजते शनकैस्तस्य मनो राजन् प्रसीदति

*yaḥ sva-dharmeṇa mām nityam
nirāśīḥ śraddhayānvitaḥ
bhajate śanakais tasya
mano rājan prasīdati*

yaḥ – anyone who; *sva-dharmeṇa* – by his occupational duties; *mām* – Me; *nityam* – regularly; *nirāśīḥ* – without any motive; *śraddhayā* – with faith and devotion; *anvitaḥ* – endowed; *bhajate* – worships; *śanakaiḥ* – gradually; *tasya* – his; *manaḥ* – mind; *rājan* – O King Pṛthu; *prasīdati* – becomes fully satisfied.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu, continued: My dear King Pṛthu, when one situated in his occupational duty engages in My loving service without motive for material gain, he gradually becomes very satisfied within.

PURPORT: This verse is also confirmed by the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. Occupational duties are known as *varṇāśrama-dharma* and apply to the four divisions of material and spiritual life – namely, *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*, and *brahmacarya*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa*. If one works according to the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system and does not desire fruitive results, he gets satisfaction gradually.⁴ Discharging one's occupational duty as a means of rendering devotional service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the ultimate goal of life. *Bhagavad-gītā* confirms this as the process of *karma-yoga*. In other words, we should act only for the satisfaction and service of the Lord. Otherwise we will be entangled by the resultant actions.

Everyone is situated in his occupational duty, but the purpose of material occupations should not be material gain. Rather, everyone should offer the results of his occupational activities. A *brāhmaṇa* especially should execute his occupational duties not for material gain but to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra* should work in a similar way. In this material world everyone is engaged in various professional and occupational duties, but the purpose of such activities should be to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Devotional service is very simple, and anyone can adopt it. Let one remain what he is; he need only install the Deity of the Supreme Lord in his house. The Deity may be Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa or Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa (there are many other forms of the Lord). In this way a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, or *śūdra* can worship the Deity with the results of his honest labor. Regardless of one's occupational

duty, one should adopt the devotional means of hearing, chanting, remembering, worshiping, offering everything to the Lord, and engaging in His service. In this way one can very easily engage himself in the service of the Lord.⁵ When the Lord is pleased with one's service, one's mission in life is fulfilled.

10 परित्यक्तगुणः सम्यग्दर्शनो विशदाशयः शान्तिं मे समवस्थानं ब्रह्म कैवल्यमश्नुते

*parityakta-guṇaḥ samyag
darśano viśadāśayaḥ
śāntim me samavasthānam
brahma kaivalyam aśnute*

parityakta-guṇaḥ – one who is disassociated from the material modes of nature; *samyak* – equal; *darśanaḥ* – whose vision; *viśada* – uncontaminated; *āśayaḥ* – whose mind or heart; *śāntim* – peace; *me* – My; *samavasthānam* – equal situation; *brahma* – spirit; *kaivalyam* – freedom from material contamination; *aśnute* – achieves.

When the heart is cleansed of all material contamination, the devotee's mind becomes broader and transparent, and he can see things equally. At that stage of life there is peace, and one is situated equally with Me as sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha.

PURPORT: The Māyāvāda conception of *kaivalya* and that of the Vaiṣṇava community is different.⁶ The Māyāvādī thinks that as soon as one is free from all material contamination, he is merged into the existence of the Supreme.⁷ The Vaiṣṇava philosopher's conception of *kaivalya* is different. He understands both his position and the position of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In the uncontaminated condition, the living entity understands that he is the eternal servitor of the Supreme, and that is called Brahman realization, the spiritual perfection of the living entity. This rapport is very easily achieved. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, when one is engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord, he is immediately situated on the transcendental platform of *kaivalya*, or Brahman.

11 उदासीनमिवाध्यक्षं द्रव्यज्ञानक्रियात्मनाम् कूटस्थमिममात्मानं यो वेदाप्नोति शोभनम्

*udāsīnam ivādhyakṣam
dravya-jñāna-kriyātmanām
kūṭa-stham imam ātmānam
yo vedāpnoti śobhanam*

udāsīnam – indifferent; *iva* – simply; *adhyakṣam* – the superintendent; *dravya* – of the physical elements; *jñāna*

– knowledge-acquiring senses; *kriyā* – working senses; *ātmānam* – and of the mind; *kūṭa-stham* – fixed; *imam* – this; *ātmānam* – soul; *yaḥ* – anyone who; *veda* – knows; *āpnoti* – gets; *śobhanam* – all good fortune.

Anyone who knows that this material body, made of the five gross elements, the sense organs, the working senses, and the mind, is simply supervised by the fixed soul is eligible to be liberated from material bondage.

PURPORT: This verse describes how one can become liberated from material bondage. The first point is that one must know that the soul is different from his body.⁸ The soul is called *dehī*, or one who possesses the body, and the material body is called *deha*, or the embodiment of the soul. The body is changing at every moment, but the soul is fixed; therefore the soul is called *kūṭa-stham*. The change of body is enacted by the reactions of the three modes of nature. One who has understood the fixed position of the soul should not be disturbed by the incoming and outgoing interactions of the modes of material nature in the form of happiness and distress. In *Bhagavad-gītā* also, Lord Kṛṣṇa recommends that since happiness and distress come and go due to the interaction of the modes of nature on the body, one should not be disturbed by such external movements. Even though one is sometimes absorbed in such external movements, he has to learn to tolerate them. The living entity should be always indifferent to the action and reaction of the external body.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that the body, made of the gross physical elements (earth, water, fire, air, and sky) and the subtle elements (mind, intelligence, and ego), is completely different from the soul proper. One should therefore not be disturbed by the action and reaction of these eight gross and subtle material elements. The practical process to attain this stage of indifference is to execute devotional service. Only one who constantly engages in devotional service twenty-four hours a day can be indifferent to the action and reaction of the external body. When a man is absorbed in a particular thought, he does not hear or see any external activities, even though they are enacted in his presence.⁹ Similarly, those who are fully absorbed in devotional service do not care what is going on with the external body. That status is called *samādhi*.

- 5) When is our mission in life fulfilled?
- 6) What does the Māyāvādī think happens as soon as one is free from all material contamination?
- 7) What is the Vaiṣṇava philosopher's conception of *kaivalya*?
- 8) What is the meaning of the words *dehī* and *deha*?
- 9) What is the status called *samādhi*?

One who is actually situated in *samādhi* is understood to be a first-class *yogī*.

12 भिन्नस्य लिङ्गस्य गुणप्रवाहो
द्रव्यक्रियाकारकचेतनात्मनः
दृष्टासु सम्पत्सु विपत्सु सूरयो
न विक्रियन्ते मयि बद्धसौहृदाः

*bhinnasya liṅgasya guṇa-pravāho
dravya-kriyā-kāraka-cetanātmanah
dṛṣṭāsu sampatsu vipatsu sūrayo
na vikriyante mayi baddha-sauhrdāḥ*

bhinnasya – different; *liṅgasya* – of the body; *guṇa* – of the three modes of material nature; *pravāhaḥ* – the constant change; *dravya* – physical elements; *kriyā* – activities of the senses; *kāraka* – demigods; *cetanā* – and the mind; *ātmanah* – consisting of; *dṛṣṭāsu* – when experienced; *sampatsu* – happiness; *vipatsu* – distress; *sūrayah* – those who are advanced in knowledge; *na* – never; *vikriyante* – become disturbed; *mayi* – unto Me; *baddha-sauhrdāḥ* – bound in friendship.

Lord Viṣṇu told King Pṛthu: My dear King, the constant change of this material world is due to the interaction of the three modes of material nature. The five elements, the senses, the demigods who control the senses, as well as the mind, which is agitated by the spirit soul – all these taken together comprise the body. Since the spirit soul is completely different from this combination of gross and subtle material elements, My devotee who is connected with Me in intense friendship and affection, being completely in knowledge, is never agitated by material happiness and distress.

PURPORT: The question may be raised that if the living entity has to act as the superintendent of the activities of the bodily combination, then how can he be indifferent to the activities of the body? The answer is given here: these activities are completely different from the activities of the spirit soul of the living entity. A crude example can be given in this connection. A businessman riding in a motorcar sits in the car, supervises its running, and advises the driver. He knows how much gasoline is used up, and he knows everything about the car, but still he is apart from the car and is more concerned with his business. Even while riding in the car, he thinks of his business and his office. He has no connection with the car, although he is

10) What lesson does Śrīla Prabhupāda draw from the example of a businessman riding in his car?

sitting there. ¹⁰ As the businessman is always absorbed in thoughts of his business, so the living entity can be absorbed in thoughts of rendering loving service to the Lord. Then it will be possible to remain separate from the activities of the material body. This position of neutrality can be possible only for a devotee.

The word *baddha-sauhrdāḥ* – “bound in friendship” – is particularly used here. *Karmīs*, *jñānīs*, and *yogīs* cannot be bound in devotional service. *Karmīs* fully engage in the activities of the body. Their aim of life is to give comfort to the body only. *Jñānīs* try to get out of entanglement by philosophical speculation, but they have no standing in the liberated position. Because they do not take shelter under the lotus feet of the Lord, they fall down from the exalted position of Brahman realization. *Yogīs* also have a bodily concept of life – they think that they can achieve something spiritual by exercising the body through *dhāraṇā*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, etc. A devotee’s position is always transcendental because of his intimate relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore, to remain always aloof from the actions and reactions of the body and engage in one’s real occupation, namely rendering service to the Lord, can be possible only for devotees.

13 समः समानोत्तममध्यमाधमः
सुखे च दुःखे च जितेन्द्रियाशयः
मयोपकृप्तखिललोकसंयुतो
विधत्स्व वीराखिललोकरक्षणम्

*samaḥ samānottama-madhyamādhamah
sukhe ca duḥkhe ca jitendriyāśayah
mayopakṛptākhila-loka-sāmyuto
vidhatsva vīrākhila-loka-rakṣaṇam*

samaḥ – equipoised; *samāna* – all equal; *uttama* – one who is greater; *madhyama* – one who is in an intermediate position; *adhamaḥ* – one who is in a lower standard of life; *sukhe* – in happiness; *ca* – and; *duḥkhe* – in distress; *ca* – also; *jita-indriya* – having controlled the senses; *āśayah* – and mind; *mayā* – by Me; *upakṛpta* – arranged; *akhila* – all; *loka* – by people; *sāmyutaḥ* – being accompanied; *vidhatsva* – give; *vīra* – O hero; *akhila* – all; *loka* – to the citizens; *rakṣaṇam* – protection.

My dear heroic King, please keep yourself always equipoised and treat people equally, whether they are greater than you, in the intermediate stage or lower than you. Do not be disturbed by temporary distress or happiness. Fully control your mind and senses. In this transcendental position, try to execute your duty as king in whatever condition of life you may be posted by My arrangement, for your only duty here is to give protection to the citizens of your kingdom.

[Continued in the next issue.]

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

The Most Practical Scientific Understanding

This conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and biochemist Thoudam Singh, PhD, took place in Bhubaneswar, India, on February 3, 1977.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This spiritual science is not beyond science. It is the ultimate science – *vijñānam*, the most practical scientific understanding.

On the one hand you have *jñānam*, purely theoretical understanding, like that of the big modern so-called scientists. They theorize how matter is working and how the material body is working, but they do not know how the soul is working, how he is living in the material body and controlling the material body. They do not even know their own selves.

On the other hand you have this *vijñānam*, which is not only theoretical but also practical. It is practical knowledge that you realize and understand in your own life – knowledge of who you are, apart from your temporary material body, knowledge of your actual, spiritual identity and how to return at life’s end to the spiritual world.

Therefore in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa affirms, *jñānam te ’ham sa-vijñānam idam*

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.



Photo by Yamarāja Dāsa

vakṣyāmy aśeṣataḥ: “I shall now declare unto you in full this knowledge, both phenomenal and numinous. This being known, nothing further shall remain for you to know.”

So this spiritual science is not beyond science. It is the ultimate science. Explain it nicely. Then the Americans and the whole world will understand. **Dr. Singh:** Yes. Honest, fair-minded scientists can help in this effort. **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Oh, yes. You can go to the universities and talk with them. Present this spiritual science through scholarly writing and debate.

Formerly, learned scholars used to travel and do that. In Sanskrit it is called *dig-vijaya*. The scholar makes it known, “I have this knowledge.” Then he challenges, “Come on. You defeat me, or I defeat you.” And whoever is defeated becomes a student of the one who is victorious.

In any event, in India this was the system. You go out and travel all over the world, and if you are qualified to speak, those with opposing views must come forward to defeat you. Or, if they are defeated, they must become followers; they must make proper acknowledgment. At the present moment the world needs strong spokesmen for this spiritual science who can go forth and convince skeptics.

Dr. Singh: A few months ago several of us who feel strongly about what you’re saying visited MIT.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Oh, MIT. Shortly after my arrival in America I went there and challenged them [*laughs*]: “You have so many departments of technology. Where is the department that teaches this technology – how to bring someone from death back to life?”

Dr. Singh: At MIT they have a big department of artificial intelligence. So we went just to see what they were doing. First they weren’t going to allow us in. They didn’t want us there.

Then we beseeched them, “We’ve come from far away, and we are interested in mathematics and computer science. We’d simply like to know

a bit about this artificial intelligence you are pursuing.”

Finally they allowed us to come in, and a PhD candidate in computer science showed us all the various labs they had.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: A huge arrangement.

Dr. Singh: Yes. Then we started talking about intelligence – what intelligence actually is. We had a roundtable discussion, and this PhD candidate was telling us that by “artificial intelligence” they mean that in the future they will have cars and airplanes driven without drivers or pilots. That kind of thing. We pointed out that for true intelligence there must be consciousness. There must be a spirit soul.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. That autopilot business can be done; they have been doing it for some time already. For instance, for years they have been launching satellites, and those satellites operate at great distances from earth, often largely with automatic mechanisms, with a kind of artificial intelligence.

So the satellites have no actual intelligence. The actual, working intelligence is to be found in the people who design and control the satellites. Not in the satellites themselves, but in the laboratories and control rooms, in these various people – these conscious, spiritual beings.

Dr. Singh: Yes. That is precisely

the point. So we told the PhD candidate, “This expression ‘artificial intelligence’ – the expression itself – is wrong. A misnomer. It shouldn’t be used. ‘Intelligence’ implies consciousness, a soul. No consciousness – no soul – no intelligence.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is correct.

Dr. Singh: These people have many plans. And they have many dollars to spend – perhaps millions on a department with only thirty-five professors and twenty-two graduate students. Finally, this graduate student admitted that they had been trying to do so many things but they are mostly failing in so many ways.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: [*Laughs.*]

Dr. Singh: And then I said, “Why are you spending so much time like this?”

The graduate student said, “We do some work, but it’s mostly for fun. To get money.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Just see what rascals they are!

Dr. Singh: They have to keep themselves busy doing something. Otherwise they’ll have no income.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is their position – “artificial intelligence.” They do not even know who they are, and they are keeping the whole world in darkness. They have no intelligence. Still, they pose themselves as intelligent and draw money. That’s all. Posing themselves as intelligent amongst the fools and taking money from them. This is what is going on. 🌐

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Bearer of Light For the West

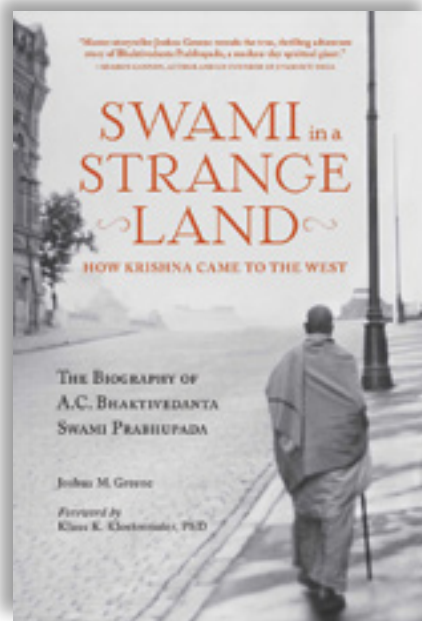
What did Krishna have in store for A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami as he embarked, essentially penniless, on his voyage to America?

by Yogeśvara Dāsa

"I am victory and adventure."
— Sri Krishna in Bhagavad Gita, 10.36

FOR THIRTY YEARS, the Swami had attempted to launch his mission inside India but nothing had worked. Contracts for properties fell through, pleas for financing failed, letters to heads of state went unanswered. He had even walked the streets of Delhi with a self-published newspaper, approaching strangers seated at outdoor cafes and politely entreating them to purchase a copy.

Here he was, finally on his way to America and maybe Sumati Morarjee was right. It was foolish for a man his age to pursue a dream with no money or contacts. He was a strict vegetarian. What would he eat? Winter was coming. How would he survive the cold? Teachers who had gone West before him, Swami Vivekananda, Paramhansa Yogananda, Rabindranath Tagore and others were all younger and more experienced travelers. Swamiji was about to turn sixty-nine and he had never

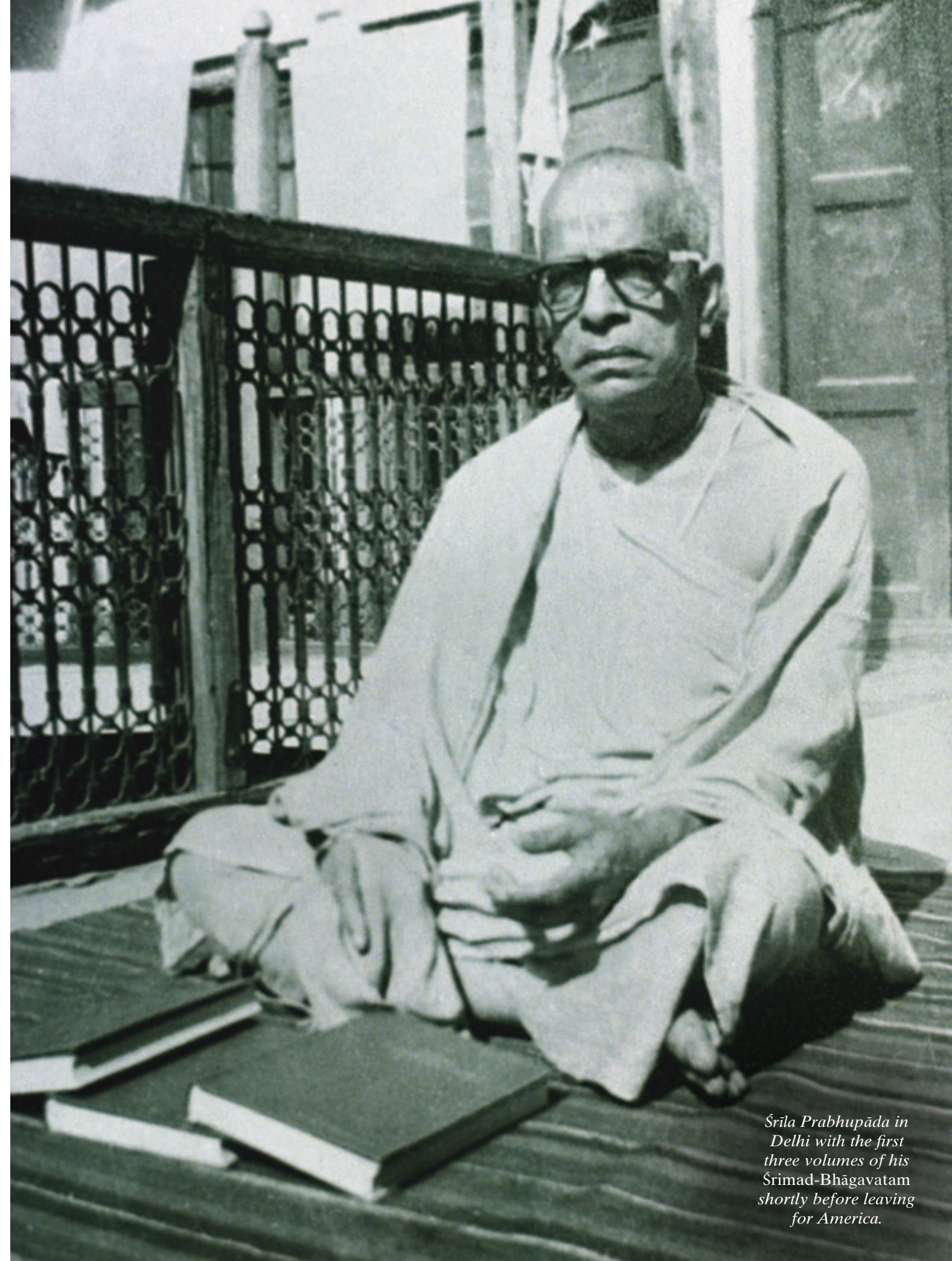


been outside India. He had written to his middle son, Mathura Mohan, letting him know that he was at last leaving on his mission and asking for his help. He offered Mathura Mohan a monthly salary of 100 rupees if he would agree to oversee future printings of his books and magazines in India while he was in

America. Mathura Mohan had not forgiven his father for renouncing their family. He refused the offer of employment and declined to show up at the pier when his father boarded the Jaladuta.

The Swami placed a call to his youngest son, Vrindavan Chandra. Please come, he asked, and take me to the ship. Twenty-six-year-old Vrindavan Chandra arrived by taxi at the Scindia residences in North Calcutta around 5 a.m. on August 13, 1965. The Scindia freight office had taken responsibility for loading onto the Jaladuta 200 sets of the Swami's three-volume *Srimad Bhagavatam* packed in metal trunks, and Vrindavan Chandra found that his father was not carrying much: a small suitcase, an umbrella, a trunk for personal items and a bag of dry cereal. If the West provided nothing acceptable to eat, he could soak the cereal in water and live on that. They loaded everything into the taxi and drove off.

The Jaladuta's gangplank was down, ready to receive its crew. Bhaktivedanta embraced his son,



Srila Prabhupada in Delhi with the first three volumes of his Srimad-Bhagavatam shortly before leaving for America.

Excerpted from *Swami in a Strange Land*, by Joshua M. Greene (Yogeśvara Dāsa). Copyright 2016 Joshua M. Greene. Available from the Krishna.com Store and Amazon.com. This excerpt retains the book's style for dealing with Sanskrit words and other considerations.



Drawing by Locarna Dasa

father's cows and delivering metal containers of fresh milk to village residents. As a boy in the early 1960s, he watched Bhaktivedanta Swami go house to house begging alms. On days when the elder *sadhu* came to the Sharma home, dressed in his tattered *dhoti* and wearing dusty sandals on his feet, Swamiji held out a metal cup and Kishanlal's father filled it with fresh milk. They spoke for some time, of the sad shape of the world, of how fortunate they were to live in Krishna's land and of the Swami's plans to share Krishna with the West. Mr. Sharma smiled indulgently, marveling at how consistently an old *sadhu* could nurse a dream.

Sometimes Mr. Sharma sent his son, Kishanlal, to bring milk to Swamiji's room in nearby Radha Damodar Temple. One day, with the metal container swinging back and forth on his handlebars, young Kishanlal biked to the temple but

turned and boarded the ship.

"I took it calmly," Vrindavan Chandra remembered, "but psychologically, after all, he was my father. As a child, I had accompanied him on trips to Mayapur and Navadwip. I had stayed with him also in Chhipiwada, Delhi, in 1964, but to be very frank, the family had an extremely hard time when he took *sannyasa*. We suffered from that. And now, going to America—I was simply crying. I was going to miss him."

The crew of the *Jaladuta* knew what lay ahead. They had made the crossing before and were prepared for violent storms and gale force winds. The trip across treacherous waters was scheduled to take more than a month. They had heard about their sole passenger and watched as the elderly *sannyasi* with his umbrella and sack of cereal walked up the gangplank, ready to chase an impossible dream. Yet weren't all great journeys just that: impossible dreams? Climbing to the top of the world's tallest mountain, diving in a tin bucket to the bottom of the ocean, riding a giant firecracker into outer space—was it so different to travel half-way round the globe through storms and blackness with nothing but a determination to respiritualize the human race? There were only two possible outcomes to such folly.

He would do the impossible, or he would die trying.

YOUNG KISHANLAL SHARMA grew up in Vrindavan. At age ten, his duties included caring for his



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	Yrs.	Mths.				
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2						
3						
4						
5 <u>(Complimentary Ticket with Food)</u>						
6						
7						

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the gates to Swamiji's rooms were locked. Kishanlal knocked on the door of the *pujari*, the temple priest.

"Where's Swamiji?" he asked.

"Swamiji is gone," the *pujari* replied. "He has gone to the West."

On board the Jaladuta, August 1965

THE FIRST HEART ATTACK occurred just days after the *Jaladuta* left port. "The Sea Messenger" crossed the Bay of Bengal, sailed out into the Indian Ocean and from there into a foreboding Arabian Sea where high waves buffeted the 13,000-ton ves-

sel. From the moment the *Jaladuta* left port, the Swami kept a diary. The entry on August 24 noted, "Rain, seasickness, dizziness, headache, no appetite, vomiting." At the height of the storm, a jolt of pain exploded in his heart and his legs gave way. He staggered back to his bunk where he collapsed, shivering with fever. He put his right hand in a cloth bag that held his prayer beads and turned the wooden beads between first and third fingers, reciting the Krishna mantra, "*Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama,*

were no waves. The Atlantic was smooth as glass, placid as a lake. The crew whispered. Their passenger was no ordinary *sadhu*.

"This kind of quiet Atlantic I've never seen in my life," the *Jaladuta*'s captain marveled.

"It is only by Krishna's mercy," the Swami told him, thinking that if there had been a third attack he would surely have died. There was no choice now but to continue on to whatever Krishna had in store. His guru had inspired him to become a warrior like Arjuna, the hero of India's sacred text *Bhagavad Gita*. If

Hare Hare." A second heart attack struck three days later. The pages of his diary for the following week were blank. He went without food and had no energy to write.

Darkness at sea brought a brittle cold and the Swami wrapped himself in a regulation steamship company blanket. When the pain in his chest finally began to abate, he slept. In his diary, he wrote that Krishna appeared in a dream, rowing him in a boat toward a distant shore.

Over the next week, the storm dissipated. Sunlight emerged from behind dark clouds and the waters calmed. The *Jaladuta* steamed into the Atlantic Ocean under clear skies and a crisp breeze. On August 31, the Swami wrote in his diary, "Passed over a great crisis in the struggle for life and death." This was hurricane season, yet there

he was going to die, better to die on the battlefield. So he reached into his small battered suitcase and pulled out an edge-worn copy of *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, the seventeenth-century biography of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the *avatar* who had sung the sacred names of Krishna in the streets of Bengal. Mahaprabhu predicted that one day the names of Krishna would be sung around the world. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami passed his remaining days at sea meditating on a prediction he hoped to make come true.

Thirty-six days later, after traveling 12,000 miles, the Jaladuta arrived in Boston harbor. The Swami took out his pen and composed a poem in his native Bengali. “My dear Lord Krishna,” he wrote, “I

copies, he would use the money to cover expenses for however long he stayed in America. Then, with nothing but his tiny suitcase, bag of cereal and an umbrella tucked under his arm, and holding the railing as firmly as his recovering muscles would allow, he stepped off the Jaladuta and into the future.

THE AGARWALS HAD ARRANGED for a representative from Traveler’s Aid to meet the Swami on his arrival, and together with the agent he set out for Port Authority Bus Terminal. The Swami had sold a set of his books for twenty dollars to the Jaladuta’s captain, enough to purchase a ticket for Butler, Pennsylvania, where the Agarwals lived with their infant son. Along with a letter

through mountains and urbanize vast tracts of land. They spent fabulous sums constructing coast-to-coast highways, soaring skyscrapers and dense cities that concentrated millions of people into vertical mazes of concrete and glass. Inspired by advances in technology, they evolved a new ethos. Americans were no longer caretakers of the earth but its masters, competing with one another for profits and goods. They turned their backs on covenants with the natural world, gouged the ground for oil, pillaged forests, built slaughterhouses, churned out weapons, conquered foreign lands and made of the world one huge market. Money was their God—the same one India now worshiped.

The Swami looked at the vista of this strange land whizzing past his window and knew there would be a reckoning. Once the Americans exhausted their fantasies about finding contentment in material things, they would emerge from their offic-

es, clubs, shopping malls and restaurants and wonder what went wrong. When the veil of illusion fell away, when the reality of old age and disease and the sad brevity of a lifetime at last penetrated, the meagerness of their lives would become clear—and that would be the moment for Krishna consciousness, the lifeline that could save them from drowning in an ocean of repeated births and deaths. He had come for this purpose, to make the message available. Wake up, the Vedas declared. Don’t remain in darkness.

Come up to the light! 🌟

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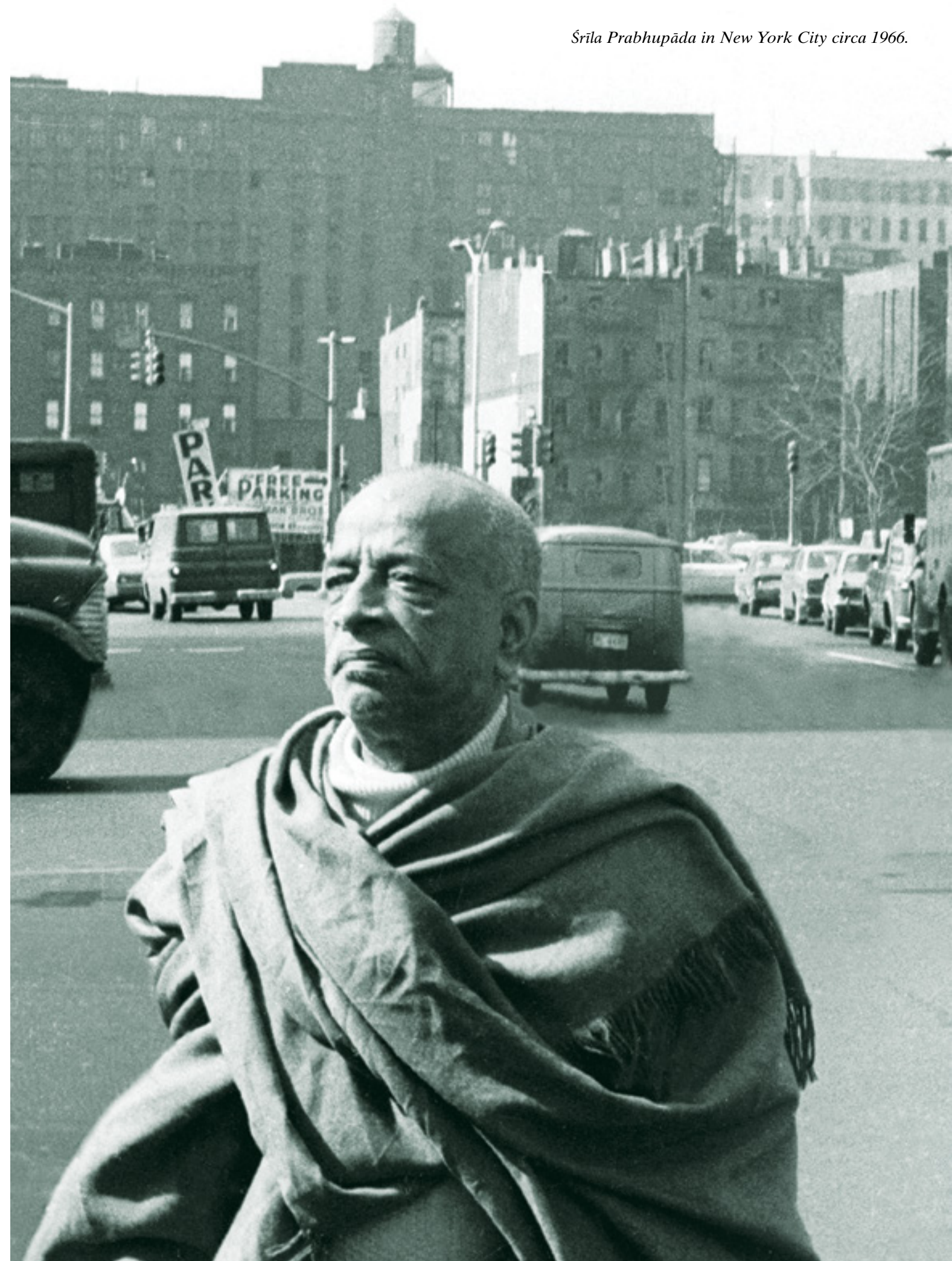
“My dear Lord Krishna,” he wrote, “I guess you have some business here, otherwise why would you bring me to this terrible place.”

guess you have some business here, otherwise why would you bring me to this terrible place? Now it is up to you to make me a success or failure, as you like. I am just like a puppet in your hands. So if you have brought me here to dance, then make me dance—make me dance, O Lord. Make me dance as you like.”

The following day the ship departed for New York. At noon on Sunday, September 19, 1965, Swamiji stared out at skyscrapers lining the New York horizon like giant concrete teeth. From his bag, he chose a *dhoti*—a three-yard length of cotton cloth dyed saffron, the color of a Vaishnava monk—and put on white rubber shoes and dressed with care. He said goodbye to the captain and crew and thanked them for their hospitality. Then he arranged for the two hundred sets of his books to be stored in the Scindia warehouse. If somehow he were able to sell a few

of sponsorship, the Agarwals had extended an invitation to stay for a few weeks in their Pennsylvania home as a way of adjusting to life in America. On the bus, the Swami watched an endless stream of cars fill the highways exiting New York City. He traveled past skyscrapers and slums, past billboards and blackened industrial zones and miles of factories that lay between New York and Pennsylvania.

America’s four-hundred-year history revealed itself to him with every passing mile. Pioneers had made their way across the Atlantic seeking religious freedom in a land of their own. They crafted homes of wood cut and carved with their own hands, plowed the earth, offered prayers of thanks and built a nation like none other in human history. Generations came and went, and their descendants swapped their ancestors’ noble purpose for the chance to bore



Many Gods or **ONE?**

Five Prominent Deities And Their Universal Meaning

*Is Kṛṣṇa consciousness polytheistic?
A discussion of pañcopāsanā
provides a clear answer that also helps us
understand all religions.*

by Satyarāja Dāsa

AT FIRST BLUSH, Vaiṣṇavism may seem polytheistic, given the various gods associated with the Vedic pantheon. But if we look slightly beneath the surface, we see there is more to this so-called polytheism than meets the eye.

The concept of monotheism – that there is only one God – tends to be associated with the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), but it is found elsewhere as well. So the first point to be acknowledged is that monotheism is more pervasive than is commonly understood.

Also, due to monotheism's association with biblical religion, it is often seen as necessarily opposed to pantheistic and polytheistic points of view. But all is not so simple. In fact, monotheism overlaps with

Indic monism – the idea that everything is, in some sense, God. And standard monotheistic religions too sometimes include a plurality of “gods.” For example, certain Christian groups see God as the Trinity, or three eternal persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this way both pantheism and polytheism sometimes interpenetrate monotheism, and vice versa.

Indeed, the following Vedic aphorism is sometimes recommended as a meditation for all who wish to understand such higher realities: “Truth is one, though the wise refer to it in various ways.” (*Rg Veda* 1.164.46)

This verse, found in one of the world's oldest religious scriptures, hints at the mystery and diversity of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Since its focus is “the one and the many,” it overlaps with ideas of monotheism and



True Vaiṣṇavas consider the worship of Lord Viṣṇu in the pañcopāsanā process unorthodox because in that system He is mistakenly considered equal to the other four deities being worshiped.



Śiva

polytheism, and it should be explored in terms of our present discussion. Just prior to this verse, one may note, the *Rg Veda* praises an exotic pantheon of gods, and only then are we told that God, or Truth, is ultimately one, though known variously. What does this mean? It points to a monotheistic idea of Deity, surely, but to what else? And how does it relate to the Vaiṣṇava tradition, with its many gods and goddesses?

People know that adherents of

Indian religions believe in many divinities – Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, the Goddess, and so on – and because of this the overall tradition is commonly understood to be polytheistic. Yet it simultaneously acknowledges the existence of one supreme God, known as Bhagavān (All-Opulent One), Paramātmā (Supreme Self), Parameśvara (Supreme Controller), and so on. The philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness agrees that God is one, but adds that He is many as well.

God reveals Himself in innumerable forms and shapes and further expands into lesser divinities, and even into the entire perceivable world.

This hierarchical series of divine manifestations, of spiritual separateness as opposed to oneness, is often neglected in Western scholarship (and even within modern-day Hinduism), where it is generally taught that these manifestations are all the same and somehow coalesce in a higher reality.

When people born in the West are confronted with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or even Hinduism in general with its many “gods,” their minds generally resort to preconceived notions of polytheism in non-Abrahamic cultures worldwide. The idea of one Supreme Godhead appears very far away, and reconciliation seems impossible. What most people don’t know is that the various religious traditions of the world can be categorized with-

in the divisions of *pañcopāsanā*, or the worship of five types of gods: Durgā, Sūrya, Gaṇeśa, Śiva, and Viṣṇu. These five represent all the rest, and there are millions. It is this hierarchical categorization that we will explore in the remainder of this essay.

Five Primary Gods

The five primary gods of *pañcopāsanā* and their numerous varia-

tions may be seen in three ways. First, they are alternate faces of one absolute reality who assist in the administration of the universe. Second, in this service they are separate beings performing cosmic functions. Third, they also represent categories of religious practice that indicate specific levels of spiritual understanding, as mentioned above.

This third, lesser-known perspective was the insight of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thakura (1838–1914),¹ the great nineteenth-century Vaiṣṇava reformer. His view of Indic polytheism and how it interrelates with the standard monotheistic traditions with which we are more familiar is enlightening.

According to Śrīla Bhaktivinoda, the initial quest for spirit, or Brahman, is a form of *śāktadharmā* (worship of *śakti*, or energy), for it recognizes nature as divine. For the *śākta*, “There is more to what we see than meets the eye.” Mother Nature is alive and fundamentally spiritual. In its most basic form, *śāktadharmā* consists of worshiping *prakṛti*, or material nature, but it can develop to the more sophisticated forms of Durgā worship existing in India from time immemorial. Nonetheless, it is still a rudimen-

tary form of spiritual awareness, with practitioners often still given to meat-eating and other low-grade materialistic activities. It is a beginning, a dawning of spiritual awareness.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda writes, “The practices of śāktism are fit to give rise to the first transcendental aspi-

rations of man. People engrossed in sensual development and apathetic towards seeking the Absolute Truth may be enticed by the practices and way of life of a *śākta*, and in this way may be drawn closer to the highest object of life.”

When one’s spiritual inclinations



Durgā

mature, one understands that there is heat at the center of all we see, feel, taste, touch, and smell. The sun (Sūrya) gives us life, nurturing us with warmth and light. Our digestion is a kind of fire that ignites our bodies with gusto, allowing us to move about in the world. This is *saura-dharma*. According to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, “When God consciousness grows stronger, the realization that heat is the preeminent power effecting all activities in the material world comes, and one rises to the second stage: the worship of the source of all heat, the sun (Sūryadeva).”

After this one realizes that even this magnificent energy, great though it may be, is still just a mundane force, generated from and subsisting in the material world. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura calls this higher realization *gāṇapatya-dharma*, wherein one realizes that living beings hold the secret to higher spiritual reality. At this stage, an awareness evolves that animated living entities are more important than energetic abstractions, and gods such as Gaṇeśa and other creatures of nature rise to prominence as the object of one’s worship. Such realization often manifests itself as the first seeds of humanism.

But this evolves further, and one realizes that all creatures reach their pinnacle in man. As Śrīla Bhakti-



Sūrya

vinoda writes, “The fourth stage is the worship of purely human consciousness in the form of Śiva – *śaiva-dharma*.” Here one looks for an empowered personality, a more humanlike divinity with whom one can identify. The idea of becoming one with this divine embodiment becomes desirable, and spirituality

here consists of “unitary recognition” – seeing one’s identity with all that is and with the Supreme. In this way *śaiva-dharma* puts forward a non-theistic spirituality, often focusing on monism, or even enhanced humanism, if with definite spiritual underpinnings. Thus the *śaiva-dharma* level of spirituality affords one a

glimpse into the actual nature of the divine.

But there is a higher reality still. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda reveals the culmination of the spiritual quest: “Coming to the fifth stage, an individual particle of consciousness – *jīva* (the soul) – serves the Personality of Supreme Consciousness. This stage is called *vaiṣṇava-dharma*, or Vaiṣṇavism.”

He further informs us that all of the world’s major religions fall into one of these five categories, and that this is what *pañcopāsanā*, or the worship of various “Hindu gods,” is really all about.

Examples Around The World

Pantheism, Shamanism, Neopaganism, Gaianism, Shintoism, Goddess worship, Earth religion, and most folk religions are in the category of *śākta-dharma*, as such traditions essentially recognize the divine in nature.

Solar religion, or various manifestations of *śaura-dharma*, was popular in many ancient cultures, from India to Egypt, and still is. The earliest deities associated with the sun are Sūrya, Wadjet, Sekhmet, Hathor, Bast, Bat, and Menhit. The Aztecs of Mexico, as well as certain tribes of Africa, made sun worship famous.

Gaṇeśa worship is an in-between stage, not as basic as *śākta-dharma* and *śaura-dharma*, but not yet theism proper. This level of realization can be found throughout the world as well, often in

the form of humanism, wherein a spark of divinity is detected in one’s fellow man. It is the seed of divine awareness and reaches its most mature form, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes, in religions like Buddhism and Jainism, for they are akin to *śaiva-dharma*, with a greater emphasis on psychological empowerment and fully awakened humanism, along with a type of philosophical monism. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, he further explains, are similar to Vaiṣṇavism, since worship of the Supreme Godhead is the fo-

cus of these traditions.

Yet Śrīla Bhaktivinoda is quick to point out that there is a “mundane” Vaiṣṇavism and a “spiritual” Vaiṣṇavism as well. The first is called *bhār-avahī* (“those who carry the burden of external rituals”), and the second is called *sāragrāhī* (“those who drink the essence”). It is this latter form of Vaiṣṇavism, naturally, that is lauded as the culmination of the religious quest. The former is merely a variety of Hinduism, on a par with other sectarian religions. *Sāragrāhī* Vaiṣṇavism is



Gaṇeśa

the eternal function of the soul and the science of spirituality, and it is this that the great spiritual masters throughout history have encouraged devotees to embrace.

Reaching Maturity in Kṛṣṇa

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura sums up *pañcopāsanā*:

Therefore, those who are simply astonished by the powers of anything in the creation of the Lord, without any factual information of the Lord Himself, are known as *śāktas*, or worshipers of the great powers. The modern scientist is also captivated by the wonderful actions and reactions of natural phenomena and therefore is also

The *Brahma-saṁhitā* has refuted *pañcopāsanā*. . . . The worship of Viṣṇu as found in *pañcopāsanā* does not please Viṣṇu; it is heterodox and highly improper. . . . The worship of Viṣṇu as one of the five deities makes His highest dignity, which is without any equal, similar to that of the other deities, and [in that system] His Lordship is counted as one of several deities, which is a great spiritual offense. . . . It is the eternal duty of all *jīvas* to serve Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of all Lords. All other deities are His servitors. Their function is only to carry out His commands. They will never acquire liberation who conceive of the deities as the different names and bodies of Viṣṇu instead of knowing them as His servitors. Thus five *ślokas*

Lord Govinda, who manifests Himself as Viṣṇu in the same manner as one burning candle communicates its light to another candle which, though existing separately, is of the same quality as the first.”²

The many gods associated with Kṛṣṇa consciousness are individual living beings in their own right. They are cosmic administrators, and they have an accessible, down-to-earth function as representatives of universal religious categories. Through Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s lens, they offer a hierarchical understanding of how one gradually evolves in consciousness from the dawn of spiritual awakening to the perfection of spiritual life. 🕉

NOTES

1. All quotations from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in this article are from the essay “Sri Bhagavata Dharma Vichar.” The

ideas first appeared in his book *Śrī Krishna-saṁhitā* (Calcutta: Isvarchandra Basu, 1879), pp. 7–8.

2. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī here quotes his own commentary on the *Brahma-saṁhitā* while replying to questions by Pandit Shyamasundar Chakravarty, a leader in India’s independence movement. The exchange was published in *The Harmonist*.

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Right: In his authoritative Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā, Lord Brahmā states definitively that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the origin of all deities, the Lord of all lords.

“It is the eternal duty of all *jīvas* to serve Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of all lords. All other deities are His servitors. Their function is only to carry out His commands.”

a type of *śākta*. These lower-grade persons gradually rise to become *śauriyas* (worshipers of the sun-god) or *gāṇapatyas* (worshipers of the mass of people as *janata janārdana* or *daridra-nārāyaṇa* and so on, in the form of Gaṇapati) and then rise to the platform of worshiping Lord Śiva in search of the ever-existing soul and its identity with the Lord. After this one may graduate to the stage of worshiping Lord Viṣṇu, the Supersoul, whose highest form is that of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

To highlight Kṛṣṇa’s supremacy and indicate the secondary status of the demigods, Lord Brahmā, who creates the material cosmos on behalf of Lord Viṣṇu, composed the treatise known as the *Brahma-saṁhitā*. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the son of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, writes in his commentary on this great work:

[verses] of the *Brahma-saṁhitā* have described the natures of the five deities. . . . (1) “I (i.e., Brahmā) adore the primeval Lord Govinda [Kṛṣṇa], in pursuance of whose order the sun-god [Sūrya], the king of the planets and the eye of this world, performs his journey, mounting the wheel of time. (2) I adore the primeval Lord Govinda, whose lotuslike feet are always held by Gaṇeśa on his head in order to obtain power for his function of destroying all the obstacles of the three worlds. (3) I adore the primeval Lord Govinda, in accordance with whose will Durgā, His external potency, conducts her function as the creating, preserving, and destroying agent of the world. (4) I adore the primeval Lord Govinda, who transforms Himself as Śambhu [Śiva] for performing the work of destruction, just as milk is transformed into curd, which is neither the same as, nor different from, milk. (5) I adore the primeval



From One Percent to a Hundred

A little connection to Kṛṣṇa can save us from the greatest fear.

by Nikuñja Vilāsinī Devī Dāsī

THE PAST YEAR and a half in my circle of family and friends was fraught with tears and valuable lessons in the face of danger and death, but during that difficult time, a pattern emerged. Whoever was in touch with Kṛṣṇa – in whatever way – benefited from His presence in their life. Kṛṣṇa did not forsake anyone striving to come closer to Him.

It all started at the deathbed of my grandmother Dayāvatī Devī Dāsī, as she lay in a comatose condition. I had always imagined death to be a dark, ominous creature waiting to squeeze out life's breath and rip the soul from the body. Now I saw death as a kind benefactor waiting to release my grandmother from her suffering.

But was she really suffering? I remembered the past few months when death had almost taken her. Yet each time that her body collapsed in the throes of agonizing pain, her mind became sharper, her meditation on the Lord more intense. Even when she had suffered from a locked jaw and had not eaten in days, she was able to read the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* loudly for hours at a time without signs of weakness or fatigue. She told me that the holy name was like a soothing balm to her pain, that prayers to Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva gave her new life, and that the words of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the spotless *Purāṇa*, were giving her joy through her intense bodily suffering.

I remembered how I had lain beside her the day before her departure, stroking her head and singing



prayers to Nṛsiṁha. She was too weak to speak or open her eyes, but as soon as she heard the song, her voice returned, and she sang along loudly. Recognizing her imminent departure, I was hopeful for her next destination as I remembered the words of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (12.6–7) in which Kṛṣṇa says that for those who have fixed their minds upon Him and have devoted their lives to Him, He is the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death.

But now that she had lost external consciousness, I wondered, would she still be able to remember Kṛṣṇa and be delivered by His hand instead of the hand of menacing death? Would Kṛṣṇa abandon her now when she needed Him the most? All we

described in the *Mathura-māhātmya* as being the perfect place to depart from this world. Living and dying in Vrindavan would secure a glorious next life in Kṛṣṇa’s own abode. But time was cheating them. Mahārāja could barely hold on after years of fighting as Śrīla Prabhupāda’s spiritual warrior. Would Kṛṣṇa fulfill his final wish to die in the holy *dhāma*?

We celebrated with tears of joy and heartache when we heard that Mahārāja had breathed his last amid the chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s holy names just as he had entered the outskirts of Vraja-maṇḍala. Again I was encouraged by Kṛṣṇa’s intervention. He had kept to His word that His devotees will never perish. (*Gītā* 9.31)

Mahārāja breathed his last amid the chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s holy names just as he entered the outskirts of Vraja-maṇḍala.

could do was surrender to Kṛṣṇa’s plan and continue chanting His holy names, which would invoke all auspiciousness.

When the chanting had reached a crescendo, my grandmother suddenly sat up, lifted her arms, and uttered Hare Kṛṣṇa as she took her final breath. Seeing the beautiful smile on her face, I remembered Kṛṣṇa’s promise in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.22): “Those who always worship Me with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form – to them I carry what they lack, and I preserve what they have.”

Kṛṣṇa Intervenes For His Devotee

Months later, my grandmother’s spiritual master, Śrīla Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Swami, was in a similar position, ready to leave this world after heart failure. His disciples rushed him in an ambulance to Vrindavan, which is

But what about those who are not as fortunate, who are not able to dedicate their lives in the same way and get the same result? Are all their endeavors in vain? Lord Kṛṣṇa reminds us: “In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear.” (*Gītā* 2.40) I was soon to discover the import of these words.

Blessed Animals

One Monday morning, just before Mahārāja’s departure, we discovered that Priya, our pet cat, was missing. For days we frantically searched for her and waited to see her sweet black-and-white face in the doorway. We remembered the way she would dash across the garden when we called her name at mealtimes; the way she enjoyed her favorite *halava prasāda*; the way she would quietly sit and listen to us chant Lord

Kṛṣṇa’s names every morning. But then we discovered that Priya had been hit by a car and had died. If only we had found out earlier and had at least cremated her and given her a proper farewell, we would have been consoled. But it was not meant to be.

Did Kṛṣṇa forget the *ajñāta-sukṛti* (unconscious spiritual advancement) she had attained in her short lifetime? I remembered the wonderful pastime of how Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had delivered the dog of His devotee Śrī Śivānanda Sena. The dog had wandered from Śivānanda Sena and his traveling party that was on its way from Bengal to Jagannath Puri to meet Caitanya Mahāprabhu. When the party arrived in Mahāprabhu’s presence, the devotees saw the Lord eating some green coconut pulp and throwing the remnants to the dog. He told the dog to chant the names “Rāma,” “Kṛṣṇa,” and “Hari.” As the dog began to relish the *prasāda*, the merciful remnants of the Lord, he danced and chanted in bliss. The devotees were astounded. The next day they discovered that the dog had assumed a spiritual form and had gone to the Lord’s spiritual realm.

We were reminded of the glorious effects of *mahā-prasāda* and the holy name when, two weeks later, my daughter had a dream. Priya appeared to her as a beautiful girl with black hair and thanked her for all we had done for her. Whatever the dream meant, we were comforted and reassured that Kṛṣṇa had given her better opportunities to progress in the next life.

Spiritual Efforts Preserved Forever

My mind immediately drifted to all those devotees who had died in recent years – through terminal disease, numerous horrifying crimes in our country, and horrendous accidents. Surely Kṛṣṇa has protected all these devotees who had been endeavoring for spiritual perfection.

Even though He may or may not protect the material body, He protects the soul from its ensnarement in illusory happiness, from its wandering further from Him, and ultimately from repeated birth and death. These devotees’ spiritual journeys would continue from where they had left off. Sometimes a devotee’s advancement is accelerated in the last moments of life, opening the door to the spiritual world.

Whatever the case, the results of spiritual efforts are never lost, unlike material efforts, which are thwarted by failure. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that if you end this life with one percent of effort towards Kṛṣṇa, you begin in the next life from two percent. It is a continuous progression of consciousness until, by Kṛṣṇa’s help and reciprocation, we reach a hundred percent – when we are finally in Kṛṣṇa’s loving embrace in His spiritual abode.

But what about those who are not directly linked to Kṛṣṇa, who are connected to Him through others or through family members? Does Kṛṣṇa reciprocate with them too?

Fortunate Father Of a Devotee Son

About a month ago we received a call that my father-in-law had collapsed in his home and had died from a heart attack. My husband rushed to Portugal for the funeral, regretting that he had not seen his father before his death and had not helped him more in his final days. My father-in-law had no contact with Kṛṣṇa and spiritual practices except through us. He had always lived alone in the Portuguese countryside with his dogs as his only companions. In his young days, when his son wanted to leave work at his printing press to join Śrīla Prabhupāda’s movement, he readily agreed. And when the devotees had asked him to print Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books in Portuguese, he eagerly served. And now, more than thirty years later, when it was

time for him to leave this world, he was surrounded by old paintings of Kṛṣṇa and framed renditions of the *mahā-mantra* that he had kept for us. The *Bhagavad-gītā* in Portuguese, although apparently untouched, sat nearby on his table. Surely the Lord did not forget his small service.

As my husband mourned his father’s passing, Girirāja Swami, our spiritual master, reminded us of Kṛṣṇa’s kindness by referring us to the following conversation (July 5, 1975, Chicago):

Disciple 1: We are giving these books to so many common men. Then the books will perhaps attract them to chanting and following the regulative principles.

Prabhupāda: Yes, if they read. Even if they touch. That is the difference between this book and an ordinary book. Even if they touch and they read one line. If he says, “Oh, it is very nice,” he makes a step forward. If he simply says this word, “Oh, it is very nice,” that is sufficient to bring him. . . . Therefore we are trying to push. At least let him say, “It is very nice.”

Kārtikeya’s mother – practical

experience. Kārtikeya, when he used to go to see his mother, she used to go out. The same mother gradually, in the association of her son, became Kṛṣṇa conscious. So at the time of death she asked Kārtikeya, “Is your Kṛṣṇa here?” and she died immediately. This is the effect. . . . She remembered Kṛṣṇa, so her life was successful. . . . So she got the benefit of her son’s Kṛṣṇa consciousness. . . .

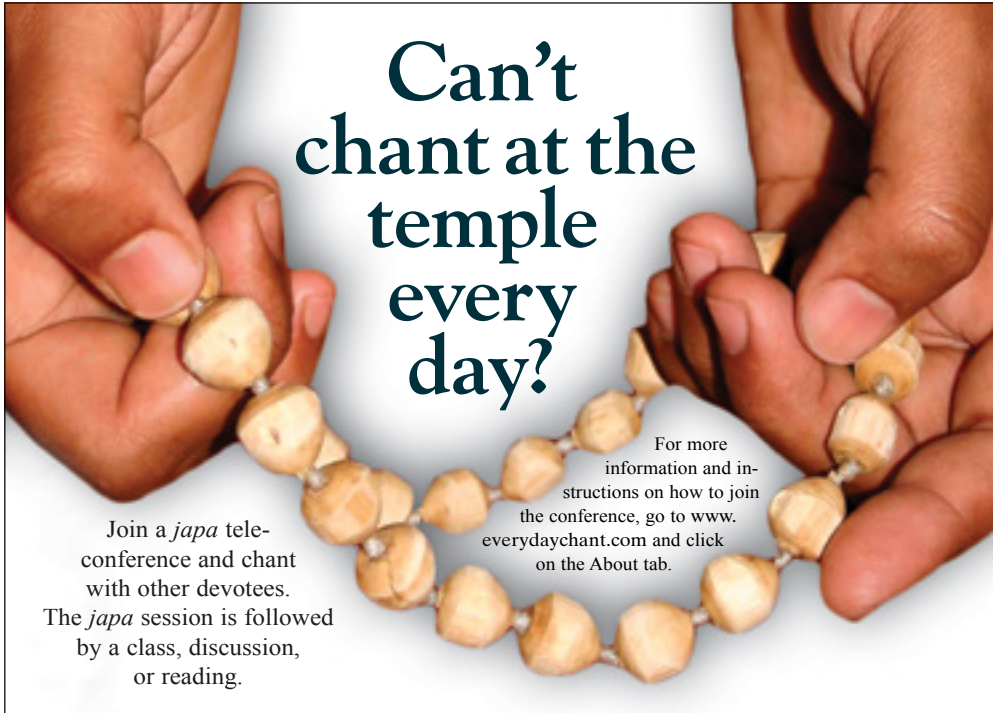
So all the mothers of my disciples, they will get salvation because she has got a nice son. . . .

Disciple 2: What about the fathers?

Prabhupāda: Father also. Both the father and mother. Because they are the father and mother of a Vaiṣṇava devotee, so they will be taken special care of. You’ll find from Prahāda Mahārāja’s description, even a father like Hiranyakaśipu, he got salvation because Prahāda was his son.

Disciple 3: Śrīla Prabhupāda, it seems strange that so many parents who are engaged in meat-eating and illicit sex and intoxication and gambling could have a son who would become a Vaiṣṇava.

Prabhupāda: Therefore they will get the advantage of the son. Somehow or other they have produced a son, Vaiṣṇava, so the



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son's activities will react upon the life of the parents. Because naturally the sons think of the father and mother, that is beneficial for them. However one may be renounced, he cannot get rid of family affection. That is natural. So the Vaiṣṇava son sometimes thinks of the father and mother. So they are getting the benefit.

Prabhupāda's words lightened our sorrow and deepened our hope and faith. Later my father-in-law's ashes were placed in the holy Yamuna River in Vrindavan, and thus he received blessings for his onward journey.

Given More Time

A few days ago, Kṛṣṇa again showed us His kindness, demonstrating that

Him, He takes twenty towards us. As a result, my sister doesn't see life the same way now.

"Facing death and coming back changes you forever," she told us. "I see life for this moment and not for tomorrow. I judge no one and expect nothing. I see life as to live and love for now and that all of us are beautiful beings of Kṛṣṇa. When death stares you in the face, resentment and fear disappear, and all you see is that you wish you had the chance for a single moment again, and I have that now. I see this incident as a miracle that created wonderful realizations for us all. Such is the beauty of life and the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa."

Kṛṣṇa showed us that if He saves the material body, it is meant for a

should finish it up now. However, if we need more time, Krishna will add more years to our life. If we are sincere and serious, Krishna will add more years to our life so we can finish it in this very lifetime."

Kṛṣṇa Fans a Spark

But Kṛṣṇa's mercy doesn't stop there. He even reciprocates with those who have a small interest in Him. This morning our twelve-year-old neighbor friend, Kaydi, knocked on our door. She hadn't come to eat her favorite *prasāda* or offer our Kṛṣṇa deity new flowers from her garden. She hands me an obituary booklet with her aunt's picture on the cover. Her favorite aunt has just died from cancer, and Kaydi is still distraught after returning from the funeral yesterday. I read the obituary messages in Afrikaans. They are full of heartfelt appreciations and touching remembrances of someone dearly loved.

I place her aunt's picture on our altar under the deities of Rādhā-Śyāmasundara and Girirāja Govardhana, right next to my father-in-law's. Kaydi's face lights up like a hundred stars. She knows that Kṛṣṇa's blessings are meant for everyone. I bid her farewell, telling her that we'll offer a lamp to Kṛṣṇa tonight on her aunt's behalf.

As I glance at the altar pictures of those who have recently left us, and as I watch our new dachshund puppy scampering for *prasāda* biscuits in the garden, I marvel at how there is no loss in even a small awakening of spiritual consciousness – even a small connection to Kṛṣṇa will save us when it matters most. 🌸

Nikuṅja Vilāsinī Devī Dāsī (Nirvana Kasopersad) is a disciple of Girirāja Swami and is from Durban, South Africa. She is married, has two children, and works as a freelance writer and editor (<https://nirvanaediting.wordpress.com>).

My father-in-law's ashes were placed in the holy Yamuna River in Vrindavan, and thus he received blessings for his onward journey.

He takes special care of those who turn to Him. My sister Yamunā Devī Dāsī had thought she was staring death in the face when she suddenly had severe chest pains. Knowing that she would pass out, she cried out to the Lord, chanting His holy names. She placed a deity of Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva on her chest, ready to leave her body, and then lost consciousness. Our dad, who arrived on the scene just in time, desperately did CPR to revive her, pleading to the Lord to save her. But her body was already cold and her pulse too faint to recognize. He tried over and over again to resuscitate her until finally she coughed and regained consciousness.

When I reflect on this incident, I see how Kṛṣṇa sometimes pushes us to increase our taking shelter of Him. He doesn't calculate spiritual advancement by material means. In fact, when we take ten steps towards

purpose too – it is meant for us to take many more steps towards Him and not risk getting another life in mundane consciousness.

We see Śrīla Prabhupāda validating this point in the following excerpt from *TKG Memories, Volume 2* (2005), a compendium of recollections about Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami. Under the heading "Conveyor of Prabhupada's Encouragement," an unidentified devotee is speaking:

In the early days in Los Angeles, before the devotees moved to Watsika Avenue, they were staying in a little church on La Cienega Boulevard. Tamal Krishna Goswami was the temple president, and he was always eager to pass on inspiration and encouragement from Srila Prabhupada. One day he said, "Prabhus, Srila Prabhupada just said that we should go back to Godhead in this lifetime. We should not waste another birth. We

Joy of Devotion

"To be blissful – to be joyful – is our birthright. It's part of who we are; it's our natural constitutional nature."

by Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

TO SOME PEOPLE, "devotion to God" may conjure grave activities: prayer, worship, and religious observances. They may not associate joy with devotion. Yet in fact, joy is a natural result of devotion.

One of Kṛṣṇa's primary teachings in the *Gītā* is that we are not the body

that we inhabit but we are a soul. He says, "As the sun alone illuminates all this universe, so does the soul, one within the body, illuminate the entire body by consciousness." (*Gītā* 13.34) That soul is not some ran-

dom, foreign particle but is part of Him, of Kṛṣṇa, as Kṛṣṇa Himself declares: "The souls in this conditioned world are My eternal fragmental parts." (*Gītā* 15.7)

Just as a drop of ocean water has



Photo by Yamarāja Dāsa

the qualities of the vast ocean, so as part of Kṛṣṇa, we, as spiritual entities – souls – have His qualities. Kṛṣṇa, for example, is eternal, and we (as spirit souls) are too, as Kṛṣṇa explains: *na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin*, “For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time.” (*Gītā* 2.20)

Besides being eternal, Kṛṣṇa is also blissful (*ānanda*). (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.1) And as part of Him, we are also blissful by nature. To be blissful – to be joyful – is our birthright. It’s part of who we are; it’s our natural constitutional nature. And we revive that nature when, with an attitude of devotion, we come in touch with Kṛṣṇa or His devotees.

In the words of Barbara Holdrege, Professor of Religious Stud-

ies at the University of California in Santa Barbara, “The joy of bhakti is actually Krishna’s own bliss. What the bhakta is tasting when the bhakta experiences joy is actually just a reflection of Krishna’s own nature that they are partaking of.”

Perhaps we can feel an ember of joy lying beneath our daily weighty problems and stresses. Perhaps when we’re chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa or serving Kṛṣṇa in any one of a myriad of ways, we can feel the dichotomy between our deepest identity as a joyful being and what we tend to experience in daily life. In other words, maybe we can occasionally glimpse the fact that this world is not offering us the happiness that’s our birthright; it’s not giving us everything we seek.

Not Getting What We Seek

Govinda Dāsī, one of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s early disciples, relates that

when she first met Prabhupāda he asked her about her life.

When she told him that she’d traveled extensively in Europe, he said, “Oh, you are so young and you’ve traveled so much?”

“Yes,” she said. “But none of it made me happy.”

Prabhupāda smiled beautifully and said, “Ah yes, that is required.”

In other words, what can propel us toward devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is the understanding that this world does not and never will give us what we seek – lasting joy. In Kṛṣṇa’s words: “Four kinds of pious men begin to render devotional service unto Me – the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowl-

ished in the heart, the effects of nature’s modes of passion and ignorance, such as lust, desire, and hankering, disappear from the heart. Then the devotee is established in goodness, and he becomes completely happy.”

Another symptom of pure devotional service that Rūpa Gosvāmī mentions is that it automatically puts one in transcendental pleasure. Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates:

It is stated that as the personal attendants and maidservants of a queen follow the queen with all respect and obeisances, similarly the joys of religiousness, economic development, sense gratification and liberation follow the devotional service of the Lord. In other words, a pure devotee does not lack any kind of happiness derived from any source. He does not want anything but service to Kṛṣṇa, but even if he should have another desire, the Lord fulfills this without the devotee’s asking. (*The Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 1)

Multidimensional Joy

There is, however, much more dimension to the joy a devotee experiences than the joys of religiousness, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation. There’s even more than the external joy that’s so clearly present in the minds and hearts of the devotees when they’re smiling, dancing, and laughing as they chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and do other services for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure.

For example, in the pastime of Kṛṣṇa’s chastising Kāliya, when Kṛṣṇa understood that the multi-headed serpent was poisoning the water of the Yamuna River, He jumped into the river and swam around in it, challenging Kāliya. Kāliya grabbed Kṛṣṇa in his thick black coils and apparently trapped Him there. Seeing this, Kṛṣṇa’s friends, the cowherd boys, who were on the riverbank, became overwhelmed with grief. They’d devoted their activities, affection, thoughts,

and lives to Kṛṣṇa and knew no one but Him. When the other residents of Vrindavan heard what was happening, they rushed to the riverbank and on seeing Kṛṣṇa in that condition were, like the cowherd boys, overcome with anxiety and fear and grief. Kṛṣṇa’s mother, Yaśodā, tried to enter the water but, restrained by the others, fainted. Kṛṣṇa remained seemingly trapped in Kāliya’s grip for two hours, and by that time His friends and relatives on the shore were practically dead from grief. Seeing their condition, Kṛṣṇa freed Himself, danced on Kāliya’s many hoods, and soundly defeated him.

The fear, anxiety, grief, dread, and near-death state these devotees felt are not what we usually identify as joy, but in the transcendental understanding, these emotions are not just joy, but are *extreme* joy. They are not due to any material cause, nor are they tinged with anything material. They are purely in relation to Kṛṣṇa and are therefore ecstatic.

Another example of the absolute nature of emotions in the transcendental realm is when Kṛṣṇa left His dear girlfriends, the *gopīs*. Their overwhelming sorrow at separation from Him is understood to be the highest of all ecstasies, *vipralambha-bhāva*, the feeling of being apart from their most beloved.

Emotions Beyond Duality

This material world that we know is a relative one. It’s full of dualities: pleasure and pain, enjoyment and suffering, honor and dishonor, good and bad, young and old. In Kṛṣṇa’s world, however, the absolute world, there are no dualities. Whatever is in relation to Kṛṣṇa is all good, however it appears externally.

What can we, who are still in the grip of the relativities of this world and have not yet reunited with Kṛṣṇa enough to feel any sort of ecstasy in relation to Him, do with this knowledge of the absolute nature of spiritual emotions? Caitanya Mahārabhu

gives us a hint when He prays, “I know no one but Kṛṣṇa as My Lord, and He shall always remain so, even if He handles Me roughly by His embrace or makes Me brokenhearted by not being present before Me. He is completely free to do anything and everything, yet He is always My worshipful Lord, unconditionally.” (*Śikṣāṣṭaka* 8)

This attitude of “Whatever happens, my dear Kṛṣṇa, whether apparently good or apparently bad, I am Yours” is pleasing to Kṛṣṇa and pleasing to us, too. It’s a commitment and resolve we can strive for. It means we give ourselves over to Kṛṣṇa and depend on Him for shelter, knowing that in the final analysis, whatever happens, there is no other shelter anywhere in the creation. By remembering Kṛṣṇa in good times, those times become better. By remembering Him in diffi-

cult times, those times become less difficult.

After Kṛṣṇa had saved Queen Kuntī and her sons from constant dangers – poisoning, arson, cannibals, a vicious assembly, sufferings during their exile in the forest, the great battle of Kurukshetra, and a nuclearlike attack – Queen Kuntī prayed, “I wish that all those calamities would happen again and again so that we could see You again and again, for seeing You means that we will no longer see repeated births and deaths.” (*Bhāgavatam* 1.8.25)

This is a world of calamities, and chief among them are the inevitable dwindling, suffering, and demise of the body that we’re in. But Kṛṣṇa is more powerful than those calamities, and by remembering Him we overcome material calamities and associate with Him.

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*abhyāsa-yoga-yuktena
cetasā nānya-gāminā
paramaṁ puruṣaṁ divyaṁ
yāti pārthānucintayan*

“He who meditates on Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his mind constantly engaged in remembering Me, undeviated from the path, he, O Pārtha, is sure to reach Me.” (*Gītā* 8.8)

I, for one, can’t pray as Queen Kuntī does; I don’t want calamities in my life. But I can appreciate her mood of complete dependence on Kṛṣṇa and her implicit faith that by seeing Him we will no longer experience birth, death, old age, and disease. I can appreciate that her mood is the result of becoming detached from this world and taking full shelter in Kṛṣṇa.

In the Innermost Core Of Our Hearts

There’s a fascinating verse toward the end of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Antya* 4.176):

*‘dvaite’ bhadrābhadrā-jñāna,
saba—‘manodharma’*

*‘ei bhāla, ei manda’,—ei saba
‘bhrama’*

“In the material world, conceptions of good and bad are all mental speculations. Therefore, saying ‘This is good’ and ‘This is bad’ is all a mistake.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on this point in a letter (May 20, 1976):

In this material world, to say this is good and this is bad has no value. To us, everything material is bad as it is lacking Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Just like wet stool and dry stool. Stool is stool, but somebody is saying that wet stool is better than dry stool. What is this good and bad? The top side of some stool is dry and the bottom side is wet, but anyway that you take it, the material world is stool, and it must be given up. Therefore, we are trying to get out of the material world and go back to home, back to Godhead. In this world of duality, this is good and this is bad has no meaning, it is called manodharma, mental concoction. However, the real truth is that Kṛṣṇa says that dukkhalayam asavvatam [*Gītā* 8.15], the world is a place of misery wherein repeated

birth and death take place. Now is this good misery or bad misery? Misery is misery; and you have to die, good die or bad die. So to us everything material, without connection to Kṛṣṇa, is to be rejected as stool, otherwise we will waste valuable time needed to solve the real problems of life, namely, birth, death, disease, and old age.

Joy is our birthright because we are part of God and He is joyful. Since joy is inherent to us, we are driven to search for it, but we spend our lives searching in the wrong place – in the material world – having forgotten that we’re spiritual beings. Lasting joy, however, cannot be found anywhere within the material world. It’s there within each of us in the innermost core of our hearts; it’s in our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, with His devotees, and with everything related to Him. Joy is amply available to us, but we need guidance to access it. When we receive that guidance, the direction of a qualified spiritual teacher, we find there are unimagined facets of joy.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda founded ISKCON, he created seven purposes for it, the third of which is “To bring the members of the Society together with each other and nearer to Krishna, the prime entity, and thus to develop the idea, within the members and humanity at large, that each soul is part and parcel of the quality of Godhead (Krishna).”

And what do the members of the Society – the devotees – do when they come together? Kṛṣṇa Himself explains: “The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me.” (*Gītā* 10.9) Simply by keeping the company of and serving Kṛṣṇa’s devotees we can experience the joy of devotion. And that joy is meant for everyone. 🌸

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī has been writing for BTG since 1973. Visit her website at OurSpiritualJourney.com.

INTENTION IN TENSION

(continued from page 15)

and overlooking any uncharacteristic lapse, we can preserve the steady relationship that can help bring out our higher side – and the higher side of others too.

Further, by practicing *bhakti-yoga* regularly, we can bring God into the center of our lives and our relationships. Then we can see others as connected with God and see all interactions as opportunities to grow in spiritual devotion. Sometimes, we may want a God-centered relationship, but the other party may not want to be God-centered or may not act in a godly way. Still, if we center our heart on God by taking fervent shelter of Him, we can get the solace and strength necessary to endure the disappointment in that relationship. Then we will understand that we are acting in our relationships not so much to serve the other people as to serve God through them – so our behavior with them should be determined not just by how they behave but by how God would want us to behave in that situation. Such a meditation can empower us to respond to insensitivity with maturity.

Acting with this vision, we can not only improve our relationships with others but can also increasingly relish our supremely fulfilling relationship with God. By focusing on God and how to best serve Him, we can choose words and actions that help us grow.

Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, despite their distressing interaction, were centered on the service of Rāma. And by keeping His service at the center of their



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Below: Orlando Rathayatra, 2014

lives, they were able to put aside this terrible interaction and move on in their relationship. Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa met again at the end of the climactic war against Rāvaṇa’s vicious hordes. Neither Sītā nor Lakṣmaṇa mentioned their traumatic parting. Even before that, neither of them blamed the other for what had happened. Lakṣmaṇa recognized that what Sītā had spoken was out of trepidation,

not suspicion – and let her words pass. So can we. 🌸

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

VEDIC VIEW

(continued from page 20)

We understand that it is impossible to “take the kingdom of God by storm.” Rather, the Vaiṣṇavas astutely practice the Vedic process of realizing truth by descending revelation.

As it has since time immemorial, the Vedic process continues to deliv-

er on its promise: to award sublime knowledge and pure love of God to its serious practitioners.

*teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ
bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ
yena mām upayānti te*

“To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I

give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 10.10) 🌸

Badrinarayan Swami joined ISKCON in 1970 and has been a member of ISKCON’s Governing Body Commission since 1987. Based in San Diego, California, he accepted sannyāsa, the renounced order of life, in 2014.

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REGISTRATION: For detailed information and to register for the *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbhā* course, go to www.tinyurl.com/6sandarbhā.



Pleasing God

IN HIS COMMENTARY on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.17.24, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “The Supreme Personality of Godhead exists everywhere. . . . Therefore when one chants His transcendental names – Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare – the Supreme Personality of Godhead is automatically pleased by such *saṅkīrtana*. It is not that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is absent; He is present there. And when a devotee utters the transcendental name, it is not a material sound. Therefore, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is naturally pleased. A devotee knows that the Lord is present everywhere and that one can please Him simply by chanting His holy name.”

Most theists would agree with the first point here: God is everywhere. But Prabhupāda characteristically builds on this point and presents valuable insights into the nature of God. Not only is He everywhere, but He has names. And those names are personal names, as Prabhupāda indicates by quoting the *mahā-mantra*. Of course, Prabhupāda has already referred to God as “the Supreme Personality of Godhead,” his standard term for God. It is a clear expression of God’s personhood, unlike the term *God*, which many people use when speaking of something impersonal.

What does Śrīla Prabhupāda say here about this Supreme Personality of Godhead, addressed by names like Kṛṣṇa and Rāma? He is pleased when we chant His names.

Prabhupāda would often point out that we can learn things about God by studying ourselves. Because God is a person, He has all of the characteristics of personhood that we have. In fact, He’s the source of them. As every sales-

person knows, people like to be addressed by their name. So does Kṛṣṇa, especially, again like us, when He’s called upon with love.

The idea that we can please Kṛṣṇa by chanting His names implies another important theological point: we have the power to please God. This is not a given for someone speculating about God. God might be so aloof that anything we do has no effect on Him. Maybe He couldn’t care less about whatever we countless insignificant souls do to gain His favor.

But we learn from the Vedic literature that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is not like that. He cares about what each of us does, and, as He says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.11), He responds in kind.

But not in degree. Śrīla Prabhupāda stated it simply: If you please Kṛṣṇa, then you will be pleased, and because Kṛṣṇa has unlimited resources at His disposal, there’s no limit to His ability to reward you many times over for anything you do that pleases Him.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the science of pleasing God. If you can do that, what more do you need? He’ll fulfill all your desires.

People tend to approach God with material desires, and to get what they want they might like to know how to please Him. In traditional Vedic culture, people with material desires were encouraged by religious guides to worship God through various sacrifices, the idea being that their faith in God would increase when their sacrifices to Him produced tangible results. But God wants more from us than childish requests for material things. He wants our love and devotion. That’s what really pleases Him.

– Nāgarāja Dāsa

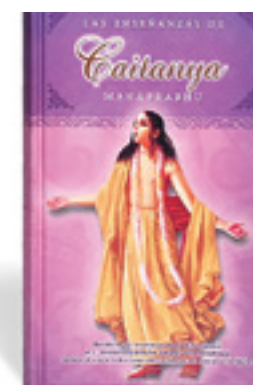
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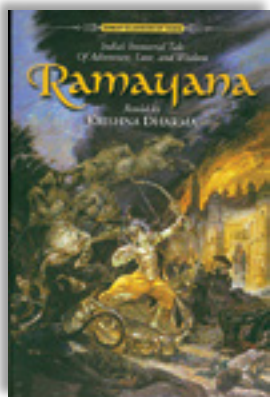
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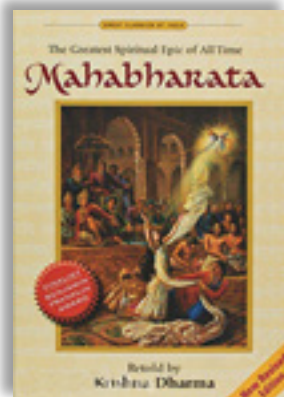
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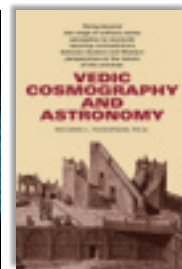
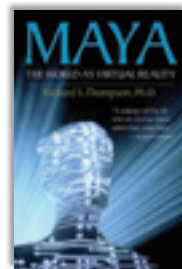
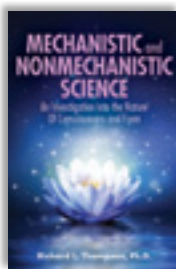


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VEDIC THOUGHTS

As long as a person is fully in cooperation with the wishes of the Lord, guided by the bona fide *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas and strictly following religious principles, one has no cause for despondency, however trying the circumstances of life.

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.9.12, Purport

Pure devotees manifest spiritual bodily symptoms of ecstatic love simply by remembering and reminding others of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, who takes away everything inauspicious from the devotee. This position is attained by rendering devotional service according to the regulative principles and then rising to the platform of spontaneous love.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.31, quoted in

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā* 25.140

In all revealed scriptures, beginning with the *Vedas*, the central point of attraction is Kṛṣṇa. When complete knowledge of Him is realized, the bondage of *māyā*, the illusory energy, is automatically broken.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā*, 20.144

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

The names of this world are not different from Him. All names in this world are names of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. All names refer to Him, Lord Viṣṇu, whom the wise declare is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Bhālvaveya-śruti

May we always fix our hearts on Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the final goal taught by all the *Vedas*, who is the master of unlimited and inconceivable transcendental potencies, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and who in His own pastimes creates, maintains, and destroys the material universes.

Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa

Commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.4.28

Who is that person without whom the living entities cannot feel happiness? That is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who delights the individual spirit souls.

Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.7

The residents of Vaikuṅṭha transcend everything material. For persons within the material creation, the manifold glories of those residents and the glories of the Vaikuṅṭha world and its master are beyond analogy and beyond the power of words to describe.

Śrī Gopa-kumāra

Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 2.4.40–41

My dear child, continue dancing, chanting, and performing *saṅkīrtana* in association with devotees. Furthermore, go out and preach the value of chanting *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, for by this process You will be able to deliver all fallen souls.

Śrīla Īśvara Purī to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

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and Rathayātrā

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