

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



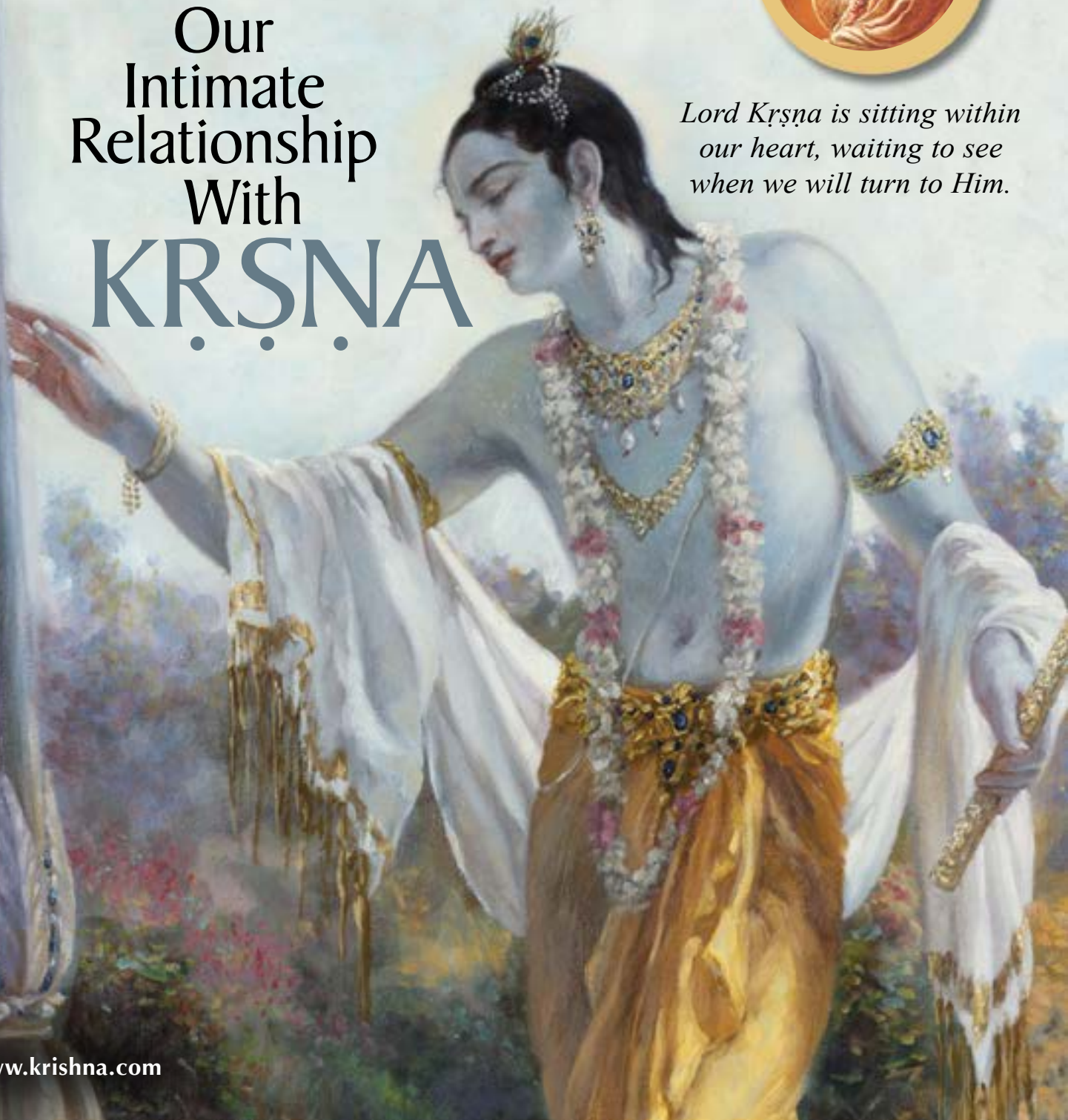
# BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • July/Aug 2018 • \$4.50



## Our Intimate Relationship With KṚṢṆA

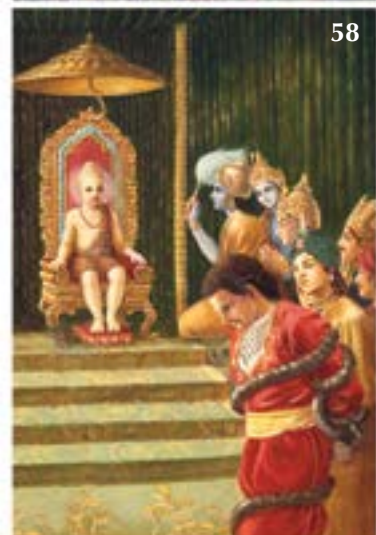
*Lord Kṛṣṇa is sitting within  
our heart, waiting to see  
when we will turn to Him.*



Assisting you in your quest for the Absolute Truth

# BACK to GODHEAD

Founded 1944 • Vol. 52, No. 4 • July / August, 2018



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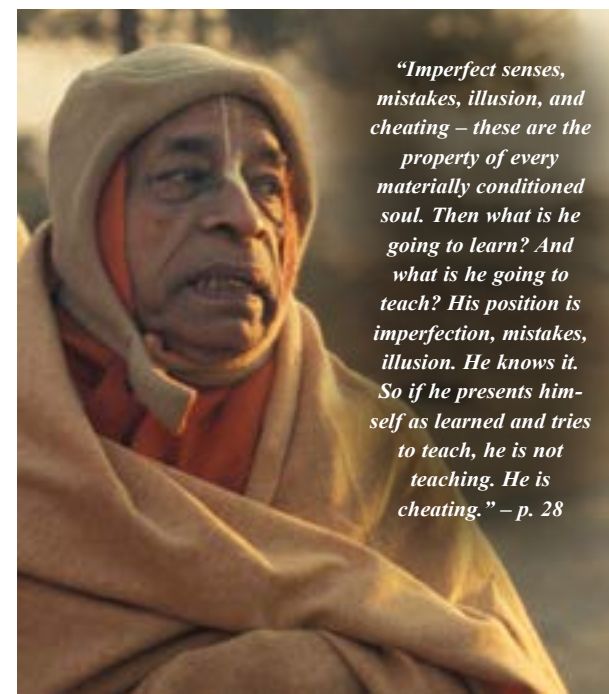
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**COVER** Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The essential message of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is that each of us has an eternal relationship with God – Kṛṣṇa – and rediscovering that relationship is the purpose of human life. Please see the article beginning on page 6. (Detail of a painting by Dhṛtī Devī Dāsī.)



"Imperfect senses, mistakes, illusion, and cheating – these are the property of every materially conditioned soul. Then what is he going to learn? And what is he going to teach? His position is imperfection, mistakes, illusion. He knows it. So if he presents himself as learned and tries to teach, he is not teaching. He is cheating." – p. 28

## WELCOME



The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in India is ever growing, and in this issue we present another new temple built by Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers.

When Prabhupāda

introduced Kṛṣṇa to the West, he encountered the notion that Kṛṣṇa is a "foreign god." So right from the beginning he taught that not only is Kṛṣṇa the same Supreme Being worshiped in other traditions, but that we all have an eternal relationship with Him. Kṛṣṇa seems foreign to us only because we've forgotten our most intimate friend. In his lecture leading off this issue, Prabhupāda speaks of our unknown longing to be with Kṛṣṇa again.

Introducing people to Kṛṣṇa is the purpose of the book *Wise-Love*, from which we present an excerpt in this issue. The author, Prāṇadā Devī Dāsī, has written it especially for modern yoga enthusiasts, with the hope that they'll discover the glory of *bhakti-yoga* and its goal, Lord Kṛṣṇa.

This issue has two biographical articles. Māyāpur-śaśī Dāsa writes about Sanātana Gosvāmī, one of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's leading disciples, and Satyarāja Dāsa presents a "biography" of the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

*A Sadhu in Red Square*, by Kāśīśvara Dāsa, is another article with a historical slant, focused on an unforgettable moment during Prabhupāda's visit to communist Moscow.

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

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Hare Krishna Movement



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# Letters

## Changing Our Fate

Is there any chance of changing our fate? If we can change our fate, what do we need to do?

Meghana  
Via the Internet

*Our reply:* What you are calling “fate” is karma, or reactions to our actions. Everyone is facing both good and bad karma for their self-centered activities, performed both in this life and in previous lives. At every moment we generate new karmic reactions if we are engaged in activities simply for personal sense enjoyment. And if our activity causes suffering to others or is contrary to the laws of nature, then there are particularly undesirable consequences.

But karma can be changed by devotional, spiritual activity. Activities done for God or His devotees rather than for one’s own sense gratification generate no karma, and Kṛṣṇa, God, is pleased by these devotional acts. When the Lord is pleased by the devotee’s engaging in selfless service, He intervenes in that devotee’s life, eliminates all good and bad karmic reactions, teaches the devotee the lessons needed to be learned in this life to stop the cycle of repeated birth and death, and ultimately directs the devotee toward His service, which is also karma-free. So any spiritual act of devotional service offered for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa will change your fate, or karma, and also prevent you from generating any further karmic entanglement.

Chanting God’s names, reading scriptures such as the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, offering your food to Kṛṣṇa, going to the temple, offering prayers, and many other devotional activities can alter your karma and prevent further karmic reactions.

## Miracles for Faith

Will it be good to go to the Himalayas and see yogis performing miracles with mystic powers so that we can get a very strong conviction that something

exists above matter and the subtle mind can be used to control matter?  
Anant Saraswat  
Via the Internet

*Our reply:* If you have the time and energy to go there, it might strengthen your faith in something beyond the material. On the other hand, you can strengthen your faith in easier ways because with some logical consideration, some reading of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and some spiritual practice of your own, you can make your own miracles. Even now you can see miracles all around you, such as nature’s wonders and the complexity of the living cell. And you can find miracles in your own life. Carefully examine your life experiences with an open heart, and you will see God’s hand in many places. Honor Lord Kṛṣṇa’s name by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, and you will experience miracles in your heart and mind by connecting to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Dance before the deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the temple with sincere devotees. That will convince you that miracles are all around us.

## Why No Meat?

I told my friend, “Why are you eating meat?” He replied, “Why are you cutting plants to eat? The *jīva* [soul] is present there.” Please convince me according to our scriptures that we cannot eat meat.

Paras  
Via the Internet

*Our reply:* Every living entity is a spiritual being and has an eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.26) that if one offers Him a leaf, a fruit, or some water with love and devotion, He will accept it. He does not mention animal flesh. A devotee does not want to harm even an ant, as is

evidenced by Jaḍa Bharata’s avoiding the ants that crossed his path (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Canto 5, Chapter 12).

If a devotee does not want to unnecessarily kill anything, and if eating meat is not essential to one’s life, then why would a devotee eat meat? It is not good for the body, and it is violent.

One might ask, “If you had to kill the animal yourself and prepare it for your dinner, would you do it?”

Lord Kṛṣṇa does not want to eat it, so it cannot be offered to Him; therefore the killing is full of bad karma as well. Slaughtered animals are filled with chemicals of fear and anger, resulting in the loss of mercy and compassion in those who eat them, as is quite obvious in modern society.

On the other hand, we have to eat, so we choose to take what causes the least harm to the least conscious living entity. Most grains are harvested after the plant dies. Fruits and vegetables are generally picked from the plant without causing harm to the plant. They will fall to the ground and rot if not picked. And the plants are often annuals, which means they grow, flower, fruit, and then die anyway.

Since we are human beings, we can choose what to eat, so devotees choose to eat what is easily available, most healthy, suitable to offer to Kṛṣṇa, elevating to our consciousness, and karma-free when offered to the Lord.

In the Vedic rituals where animals were offered in sacrifice, the mantras guaranteed the animals a higher birth in their next life. But we are not able to do that. If we cannot provide the proper reciprocation for taking a living entity’s life, then we create serious karmic repercussions if we do so. As intelligent human beings, we need to make decisions that are good for us karmically, physically, mentally, and sensually. If we act mainly for sensual pleasure, then we act on the level of animals, who cannot make intelligent decisions but just do what feels good or attracts them instinctually. We have to make choices about what to do, including what to eat, and

the reactions to our choices will be ours to reap.

## The Source of Love

Is Kṛṣṇa love? Also, what is the purpose of Gaura Hari?

Subhendu Bagchi  
Via the Internet

*Our reply:* Kṛṣṇa is the source of love, or the source of the reciprocation of intense eternal love between Himself and His loving devotees. He creates us, the living souls, to fulfill His desire to enjoy wonderful relationships. So without Him, there is no love.

On the material platform, we desire to enjoy relationships for our own benefit. But real love is love without expectation of a result and motivated only by the desire to please God, Kṛṣṇa. That is the highest love. It is selfless, not selfish. Kṛṣṇa is the fountainhead of all the loving relationships we hanker for but can’t find in the material

world. If we take up His service, we will become purified and begin to revive that eternal relationship of love again.

Regarding your second question, Gaura Hari is a name for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who appeared about five hundred years ago to introduce the chanting of the holy names of God as the means of self-realization in this age. He is Kṛṣṇa Himself playing the part of a devotee. He is the most merciful incarnation because He allows us to easily approach Kṛṣṇa through His name and to engage in a simple process of serving Him and pleasing Him. You can read the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* to learn more about His role in starting this Kṛṣṇa consciousness revolution. 🌐

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

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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FOUNDER'S LECTURE

New York City – November 29, 1973

# Our Intimate Relationship with KṚṢṆA

*Lord Kṛṣṇa is sitting within our heart, waiting  
to see when we will turn to Him.*

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*sūta uvāca  
evam kṛṣṇa-sakhaḥ kṛṣṇo  
bhrātrā rājñā vikalpitaḥ  
nānā-śaṅkāspadaṁ rūpaṁ  
kṛṣṇa-viśleṣa-karṣitaḥ*

Sūta Gosvāmī said: Arjuna, the celebrated friend of Lord Kṛṣṇa, was grief-stricken because of his strong feeling of separation from Kṛṣṇa, over and above all Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira's speculative inquiries.

– *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.15.1

ONE OF ARJUNA'S names is Kṛṣṇa Sakha, "the friend of Kṛṣṇa." And he is also sometimes called Kṛṣṇa because his bodily features were similar to Kṛṣṇa's. Arjuna had just returned from Dwarka, where he had gone to visit Kṛṣṇa. He was morose, being separated from Kṛṣṇa. His elder brother Yudhiṣṭhira had yet to learn that Kṛṣṇa had left this world, so he was suggesting whether Arjuna was morose for this reason or that reason. Actually, Arjuna was unhappy on



account of being separated from Kṛṣṇa.

Similarly, not only Arjuna – all of us. Like Arjuna, each of us is also a living entity. So we are also unhappy because we are separated from Kṛṣṇa. Modern philosophers or scientists may go on thinking otherwise – that they can improve the world situation in their own way – but that is not possible. We are unhappy on account of being separated from Kṛṣṇa. They do not know that. We are like the child who is crying. Nobody can say why he is crying, but actually a child is generally crying because of being separated from the mother.

So it is not a question of only Arjuna being unhappy. Every one of us is unhappy. In the *Śvetāśvatara*

except Kṛṣṇa. This is our position.

We want to be happy, with so many ideas. Everyone is making his own idea. But the rascals do not know the actual process for getting happiness. That process is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They do not know that. You can see in your country how they are trying so many things – so many skyscraper buildings, so many motor-cars, so many big, big cities – but there is no happiness, because they do not know what is missing. That missing point we are giving. “Take Kṛṣṇa, and you will be happy.” This is our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Kṛṣṇa and the living entity are very intimately connected, like father and son, or friend and friend, or master and servant. We are very intimately connected. But because

we are not the enjoyer but the enjoyer is Kṛṣṇa. In this whole body, the enjoyer is the stomach, and the hands and legs and eyes and ears and brains and everything should be engaged to find enjoyable things and put them in the stomach. This is natural. Similarly, we are part and parcel of God, or Kṛṣṇa, and we are not the enjoyer.

In every religion this is accepted. In the Christian religion it is said, “O God, give us our daily bread.” We cannot manufacture bread. It must come from God. That is the Vedic version also. God, or Kṛṣṇa, gives all the necessities of life, but if you accept your enjoyable things as you like, then you’ll become entangled. If you accept things to be enjoyed by you as Kṛṣṇa offers them to you, then you’ll become happy. If a diseased patient wants to enjoy life in his own whimsical way, he’ll continue his disease. But if he accepts the modes of life according to the directions of the physician, then he becomes free from the disease.

There are two methods, *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*. *Pravṛtti* means “I have the inclination to eat this or to enjoy this. Why not? I shall do it. I have got my freedom.” “But you have no freedom, sir.” You have no freedom. We have that experience. Suppose there is very nice palatable food. If I think, “Let me eat as much as possible,” then the next day I’ll have to fast because I’ll have dysentery or indigestion.

You cannot violate the laws of Kṛṣṇa, or the laws of nature. That is not possible. You are not at all independent. The rascals will not understand this. They are always thinking they are independent. That is the cause of all unhappiness. Nobody is independent. How can you be independent? Nobody is independent. That is factual. Who is independent? Here you are sitting, so many boys and girls. Who can say, “I am independent of everything”? No. Nobody can say that. This is our mistake, and

by misusing our independence we are suffering in this material world in so many ways. That has to be reformed. That has to be checked. That is the purpose of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

### The Illusion Of Independence

Caitanya Mahāprabhu has preached, *jīvera ‘svarūpa’ haya—kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa.’* We living entities are eternally servants of Kṛṣṇa. That is our position. But if we deny this position – “Now, why shall I become the servant of Kṛṣṇa? I am independent” – then suffering begins. Immediately. As soon as you desire to enjoy independently, you are captured by *māyā*, the illusory energy.

It is very easy to understand. If you don’t care for the government laws, if you want to live independently, immediately you are in the clutches of the police force.

Our position is that we are always dependent on God. We should understand this. This understanding is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura writes in a song, *mānasa, deho, geha, jo kichu mor, arpiluñ tuwā pade, nanda-kiśor:* “Mind, body, family, and whatever else may be mine, I have surrendered at Your lotus feet, O youthful son of Nanda!”

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.1.4) it is said:

*dehāpatya-kalatrādiṣv  
ātma-sainyeṣv asatsv api  
teṣāṃ pramatto nidhanam  
paśyann api na paśyati*

“Persons devoid of *ātma-tattva* [knowledge of the self] do not inquire into the problems of life, being too attached to the fallible soldiers like the body, children, and wife. Although sufficiently experienced, they still do not see their inevitable destruction.” Our mistake is to think that we are independent. “I am independent, and my soldiers or my

society, community, or family will protect me.” Hitler declared war, and so many wars are declared. Everyone is thinking, “I am independent.” And we are thinking that we have got so many soldiers, so many atomic bombs, and so many airplanes, and we shall come out victorious. Similarly, each and every one of us is thinking, “I am independent, and my wife, my children, my society – they are my soldiers. If I am in danger, they will help me.” This is going on.

This is called *māyā*. Because we have become mad after this so-called independence, independence from God, we are thinking these things will help us, will protect us, but that is *māyā*. *Teṣāṃ nidhanam:* everyone will be destroyed. Nobody will be able to give us protection.

If real protection is wanted, we will have to take the protection of Kṛṣṇa. That is the instruction of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66):

*sarva-dharmān parityajya  
mām ekaṃ śaraṇam vraja  
ahaṃ tvāṃ sarva-pāpebhyo  
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

“Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” Kṛṣṇa is saying, “You rascal, you are thinking that so many things will give you protection. That will not be possible. You will be finished, and your so-called protector and friends and soldiers will be finished. Don’t depend on them. Just surrender unto Me. I’ll give you protection.” This is real protection.

Everyone is falsely thinking he is independent, but he is dependent. He is depending on a false platform. That is the mistake of this material civilization. They are thinking of protection from a tilting platform, the material world.

We have to take shelter of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is very friendly to all of us. Therefore He comes down from Vaikuṅṭha to inform us of the real situation. That information is given in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and elaborately

## The living entity wants to do something out of his own whims, and Kṛṣṇa gives good consultation: “This will not make you happy.”

*Upaniṣads* (4.6) it is said that Paramātmā, or Kṛṣṇa, and the living entity are sitting on the same tree, *samānam vṛkṣam*. One living entity is eating the fruit of the tree, and the other living entity is simply witnessing, *anumantā*. Kṛṣṇa is situated in everyone’s heart. Without His sanction the living entity cannot do anything. The living entity wants to do something out of his own whims, and Kṛṣṇa gives good consultation: “This will not make you happy. Don’t do this.” But he is persistent that he will do it. Then Kṛṣṇa as Paramātmā sanctions: “All right, do it – at your risk.” This is going on.

Every one of us is very intimately connected with Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa is sitting in everyone’s heart. Kṛṣṇa is so kind that He is simply waiting. “When will this rascal turn his face towards Me?” He is so kind. But we living entities are such rascals that we turn our face to everything

we have forgotten our intimate relationship with Kṛṣṇa and are trying to become happy in this material world, we have to undergo so many tribulations. This is our position.

“Why are you in the material world and not in the spiritual world?” In the spiritual world nobody can become the enjoyer, *bhokta*. That is the position of only the Supreme. In the spiritual world there are also living entities, but they know perfectly well that the real enjoyer, the real proprietor, is Kṛṣṇa. That is the nature of the spiritual kingdom. Similarly, even in this material world, if we understand perfectly well that we are not the enjoyer and that Kṛṣṇa is enjoyer, then it becomes the spiritual world.

### The Enjoyer Is Kṛṣṇa

This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to convince everyone 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.”

explained in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It is the only thing.

### The Solution Is Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

People are faced with so many crises, problems. In the airport the reporter asked me, “What is the solution of this crisis?” The solution is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is already there, but you will not take it. If the Arabians think that this oil is Kṛṣṇa’s property and the others, the purchasers, also think that it is Kṛṣṇa’s property, then they agree. America also must agree that this land of America is Kṛṣṇa’s property. If you think that the Arabian oil is Kṛṣṇa’s property, God’s property, and that you shall take it by force, then why should the Arabians not be allowed to come from the desert and live in America? They have got the United Nations. But the United Nations means simply committing mistake, mistake, mistake, mistake. That’s all. That is their business. Why don’t you unite? Yes, this Arabian oil is Kṛṣṇa’s property, as is the Australian land, or the African land,

or this American land, so vast a tract of land. But “No, you cannot come here. *Yow! Yow!*” They say – the immigration department. You see. *Yow-yow* department.

These rascals, all these politicians, are spoiling the situation, but they are such big rascals that they will not accept the solution. Take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and everything will be solved. That’s a fact.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says,

*na mām duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ  
prapadyante narādhamāḥ  
māyayāpahṛta-jñānā  
āsuram bhāvam āśritāḥ*

“Those miscreants who are grossly foolish, who are lowest among mankind, whose knowledge is stolen by illusion, and who partake of the atheistic nature of demons do not surrender unto Me.” (*Gītā* 7.15) *Mūḍhā* – they’re such rascals; *duṣkṛtina* – full of sinful activities; and *narādhamā* – the lowest of mankind. Always remember that our preaching work is dealing with these kinds of men. *Duṣkṛtina* means full of sinful activities. *Mūḍhā*, rascals. *Narā-*

*dhamā*, the lowest of mankind. *Māyayāpahṛta-jñānā*, and they’re thinking they are very much advanced in education, but they are fool number one because *māyā* has taken away their real knowledge.

Why all these things? Because they are godless. Their only fault is godlessness. *Āsuram bhāvam āśritāḥ*. They have taken the position that there is no God. These big, big scientists are trying to prove there is no God. They are putting forward all kinds of foolish theories, and they are getting the Nobel Prize. This is the position.

In today’s verse the elder brother is making various suggestions about the cause of Arjuna’s unhappiness. These rascal scientists are taking the position of our elder brother, and they’re suggesting, “This is the cause of . . .,” “This is the cause of . . .,” “This is the cause of . . .,” “This is the cause of . . .” But the only cause is forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa. That they do not know.

*kṛṣṇa bhulīya jīva bhoga vāñchā kare  
pāśate māyā tāre jāpaṭiyā dhare*

“When an individual soul forgets his eternal relationship with God and tries to lord it over the material nature or resources, that condition, that forgetful condition, is called *māyā*, or illusion.” (*Prema-vivarta* 6.2) This is the cause.

So try to preach this philosophy. Not everyone will accept it, but a few percent, or one percent of the whole population may accept. In the sky there is one moon only, and there are millions of stars. What is the value of the millions of stars? But one moon, oh, it can dissipate the whole darkness of night. Similarly, at least those of you who have taken to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, each of you become a moon and enlighten the world. These glowworms will not be able to do anything. That’s a fact. Don’t remain a glowworm. Just become a sun or moon. Then people will be happy, and you will be happy.

Thank you very much. 🙏

# 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-calendar.com](http://www.vaisnava-calendar.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.



Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s bathing ceremony.

### Month of Vāmana (June 29–July 27)

#### JULY

##### 9 – **Yoginī Ekādaśī**

Fasting from grains and beans.

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

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

##### 23 – **Śayanā Ekādaśī**

Fasting from grains and beans.

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

### Month of Śrīdhara

(July 28–August 26)

#### AUGUST

2 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan.

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

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

##### 8 – **Kāmikā Ekādaśī**

Fasting from grains and beans.

##### 22 – **Pavitropanā Ekādaśī**

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

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

26 – Jhulana Yātrā ends. Appearance anniversary of Lord Balārāma. Fasting till noon, followed

by feasting. Second month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from yogurt).

### Month of Hṛṣīkeśa

(August 27–September 25)

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

#### SEPTEMBER

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

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

##### 6 – **Annadā Ekādaśī**

Fasting from grains and beans.



## YOU’RE INVITED! The Sunday Feast

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

Visit: [centres.iskcon.org](http://centres.iskcon.org)

*Bhajahū re mana śrī-nanda-nandana-  
abhaya-carāṇāravinda re  
durlabha mānava-janama sat-saṅge  
taroko e bhava-sindhu re\**

Don't Identify with the Mind . . .

# Identify the Mind

*Four strategies to deal with our not-always-helpful thoughts.*

by Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa

**T**O IDENTIFY WITH the mind means to accept its desires as our desires and act according to them. To identify the mind means to recognize that the desires popping up inside us are the mind's desires – “Aha! That's the mind speaking” – and to evaluate them intelligently before deciding what to do with them.

“Don't identify with the mind; identify the mind” can be a contemporary English rendition of the key call of *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.5: Elevate yourself with the mind; don't degrade yourself. When we identify with the mind, we act according to its shortsighted, self-defeating desires, thereby degrading ourselves. When we identify the mind, we check its desires and

choose to act only on those desires that are worthy, thereby elevating ourselves.

## **Redefining External and Internal**

Suppose you had a house with a large courtyard, a fence, and a security gate. One day, while you approached your house after being out, you saw from a distance a man in the courtyard. You wouldn't assume that just because he was inside your premises he belonged there, that he was related to you. You would investigate who he was and then decide how to interact with him.

We need to respond with similar caution whenever a thought pops up inside us. We often think of things outside us as external



\*“O mind, just worship the lotus feet of the son of Nanda (Kṛṣṇa), which make one fearless. Having obtained this rare human birth, cross over this ocean of worldly existence through the association of saintly persons.”

– Verse 1 from *Bhajahū Re Mana Śrī Nanda-nandana*, by Govinda Dāsa Kavirāja

*Songs of Vaiṣṇava poets often contain instructions to the mind, entreating it to give up its fickle ways and focus on devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.*

and thoughts inside us as internal. This external-internal differentiation is based on identifying ourselves as our bodies. However, the fundamental teaching of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.13) is that we are souls. The mind is made of matter, although subtle matter. So the mind is external to us, as are its thoughts.

We usually think of the thoughts inside us as being our thoughts, but they are like intruders who have slipped through the security gate and entered the premises. Just as people residing in the house are especially vulnerable to intruders, we too are especially vulnerable to the inimical thoughts that have penetrated our mind. We misidentify with such thoughts and let them grow into

“He’s rash.” “She’s vain.” This labeling tendency is undesirable because people are complex, having both a good side and bad side. But our label often reduces them simplistically to just one of their traits. If we are to develop meaningful and deep relationships with people, we need to overcome this labeling tendency.

Nonetheless, we can use that tendency productively by labeling our own mind. When we find ourselves in an irritable mood, we can say, “Today, my mind is irritable.” Many devotional songs employ this strategy of labeling the mind. The philosopher-saint Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, in his song “Duṣṭa Mana,” labels the mind as wicked. He reflects on how it

behaves as a part of their default nature, not as something done intentionally to irritate us. We don’t want people to be grumpy. We would much prefer that they be jolly; and we can and should try to help improve their mood. But when they just aren’t cordial, the label helps us understand the context and not get too worked up about it.

The same point applies to labeling our own mind. Our life would be so much easier if – to continue the example – the mind were not grumpy. But since the mind is the mind, we can better manage its grumpiness by identifying it as such and preparing ourselves to tolerate its less-than-pleasant phase. Instead of cursing our fate for having a grumpy mind, we can find ways to work amidst or around its grumpiness – for example, by neglecting it.

Neglecting the mind doesn’t mean we don’t try to change it. Change, in fact, is what the next strategy is all about.

### Advising

There are few things we give as freely as advice. And when it comes to behavior, we often give advice quite expertly. When others come to us and tell us about their problems, we often counsel them to act in ways that we ourselves would do well to remember and apply.

We can use our advising propensity to advise our mind – it needs good advice much more than the world does. Or, put more precisely, our advising the world won’t benefit us as much as our advising our own mind.

Devotional songs use this strategy of advising the mind too. For example, the poet-saint Govinda Dāsa in his song “Bhajahū Re Mana” urges his mind to stay fixed in Kṛṣṇa, for such focus will grant sublime peace.

The mind is fickle, but not incorrigible; it can be reformed. Vital for reforming is reformulating. Reformulation means revising one’s under-

standing of things in the light of new knowledge. We need to reformulate our mental conceptions in the light of spiritual knowledge.

For example, the mind has its pet conceptions of what worldly things will bring happiness. But such worldly things usually provide just a little happiness in the beginning, followed by a long wake of misery (*Gītā* 18.38). To advise the mind where it can find real happiness, we need to reformulate our understanding of life and its purpose by studying scripture regularly. This will help us understand that real happiness is found in higher spiritual reality: in loving remembrance of Kṛṣṇa and in purposeful devotional service to Him. We need to not just study scripture, but study it regularly because the mind is remarkably amnesiac; it has an outstanding capacity to forget. It forgets both how worldly pleasures are superficial and short-lived and how devotional fulfillment is substantial and sublime.

When we keep advising the mind regularly, it learns. Though it is a

slow learner, it does learn. However, for change based on learning, it needs not just education but also purification. That brings us to the next strategy.

### Purifying

The mind is a creature of habit. It acts according to its habitual patterns, even when we want to break those patterns. A common word to refer to our innate patterns of thinking and acting is *inclinations*. This is a particularly apt word; its other meaning serves as a good metaphor for the mind’s mode of functioning. Inclination also refers to the tilt of a physical structure, such as a floor. If the floor is inclined towards the south, whatever water falls on it will naturally flow south. If we want the water to flow north, just our intention to make it flow that way will not be enough; that intention has to be coupled with reconstruction. Only when we make the floor inclined the other way will water flow naturally towards the north.

Inclination determines flow – this principle applies to our thoughts too. Our mind’s inclinations naturally direct our thoughts. For example, when people are addicted to alcohol, their minds have become inclined towards alcohol. Even if they resolve to break free from the addiction, they will still find their thoughts naturally going towards alcohol. Just the intention, or even the resolution, to abstain from alcohol won’t change their mind’s inclination. To change that inclination, they need to rejig their mental flooring. Such reshaping is the essence of purification.

In the context of the earlier example of happiness, purification would mean changing our subconscious definitions of happiness. *Bhakti-yoga* is the most potent process for purifying ourselves because it brings us in contact with God, Kṛṣṇa, who is all-pure and all-purifying. The more we connect with Kṛṣṇa in the mood of devotional service, the more we access spiritual happiness that makes worldly pleasures seem pale and

## Vital for reforming is reformulating. We need to reformulate our mental conceptions in the light of spiritual knowledge.

desires, intentions, and eventually actions. For example, we may have decided to diet for health. But then a thought to binge might pop up within us. If we think of that thought as our thought and let it grow, we eventually end up bingeing.

Whenever any thought comes up within us, one way to avoid identifying with it is to ask the question “Would I do this if someone else asked me to do it?” For example, if someone else asked us to binge, we would most likely refuse, remembering our resolution to diet.

Overall, how can we identify the mind instead of identifying with the mind? Let’s discuss four strategies: labeling, advising, purifying, and persisting.

### Labeling

When we interact with people repeatedly, we gradually form labels for them: “He’s lazy.” “She’s fussy.”

misleads, but he also says that it can be led back onto the right path.

The point of labeling is not to condemn others, but to caution ourselves about their natures. People are what they are, and aren’t likely to change overnight. Once we understand their nature, we learn how to best deal with them. For example, some people are grumpy when they wake up in the morning. If we have to live with them, we learn to accept them for what they are and don’t take what they say in the morning too seriously.

Similarly, the mind is going to be the mind – it’s not going to change overnight. By observing ourselves, we can find phases when our mind is, say, grumpy. Instead of letting its grumpiness make us grumpy, we can steel ourselves internally to not take its mood too seriously.

The point of labeling is not to perpetuate the behavior but to contextualize it, that is, to see the be-

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stale. And the more we relish higher happiness, the more our mental flooring gets reshaped. When our mind becomes naturally inclined towards Kṛṣṇa instead of worldly things, our inner struggle ceases. The *Gītā* (6.27) points to this state while outlining how purification brings pacification of the mind and satisfaction of the soul.

### Persisting

Purification takes time. To press on during the interim period, we need to persist in our devotional practices. The *Gītā* (6.34) uses the word *cañcala* (restless) to refer to the mind. *Cañcala* is a describer often used for children – they are by nature restless. For dealing with such restlessness, the *Gītā* (6.26) urges us to refocus the mind whenever it wanders. While refocusing, we need to treat the mind

the way a mother treats her child. When she tells, say, her young daughter to study, she knows that the child won't stay focused. Because of her restless nature, her daughter will start doing something else, so the mother will gently but firmly direct her back to her studies.

Similarly, we need to become like a mature mother to deal with the child-like mind. Instead of getting exasperated when the mind gets distracted, we need to expect its restlessness. Whenever it wanders off from important things to unimportant things, we need to determinedly and untiringly refocus it, as the *Gītā* (6.26) enjoins.

As the child grows up, she understands the importance of studying. Similarly, when we persist in the practice of *bhakti-yoga*, the mind grows up and understands what is truly important.

Additionally and far more conse-

quentially, our persistence in practicing *bhakti-yoga* pleases Kṛṣṇa. He appreciates our intention, even if we can't always translate it into action. By His omnipotent grace, He progressively empowers us to first rein in the mind and then reform it.

Ultimately, to identify the mind instead of identifying with the mind, we need to identify with Kṛṣṇa, as His eternal parts. When we become situated and satisfied in serving Kṛṣṇa, we use the mind to elevate ourselves. 🙏

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## A Pause for Prayer

Painting by Rāma Prasadā Dāsa



*Mārkaṇḍeya Rṣi prays to Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as the sages Nara and Nārāyaṇa.*

I offer my humble obeisances to Him, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is the all-pervading and all-inclusive form of the universe, as well as its spiritual master. I bow down to Lord Nārāyaṇa, the supremely worshipable Deity appearing as a sage, and also to the saintly Nara, the best of human beings, who is fixed in perfect goodness, fully in control of his speech, and the propagator of the Vedic literatures.

A materialist, his intelligence perverted by the action of his deceptive senses, cannot recognize You at all, although You are always present within his own senses and heart and also among the objects of his perception. Yet even though one's understanding has been covered by Your illusory potency, if one obtains Vedic knowledge from You, the supreme spiritual master of all, he can directly understand You.

My dear Lord, the Vedic literatures alone reveal confidential knowledge of Your supreme personality, and thus even such great scholars as Lord Brahmā himself are bewildered in their attempt to understand You through empirical methods. Each philosopher understands You according to his particular speculative conclusions. I worship that Supreme Person, knowledge of whom is hidden by the bodily designations covering the conditioned soul's spiritual identity.

– *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.8.47–49



**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](http://krishna.com/hare-krishna-maha-mantra).

# THE LIFE OF A TEXT: BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ THROUGH THE CENTURIES

*Lord Kṛṣṇa's words made their way to us after a long historical journey.*

by Satyarāja Dāsa

**T**HIS YEAR marks the fiftieth anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. Although many articles have been written about the *Gītā* as a philosophical poem, exploring its meaning and theological implications, and although both devotees and nondevotees have written elaborate studies of Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation, few articles deal with the text as a historical phenomenon, something that came to us after a long journey of commentary and explication.

In the very beginning of the *Gītā*'s fourth chapter, the text itself provides its own explanation of its prehistoric unveiling: Kṛṣṇa says that He revealed the teachings to the sun-god Vivasvān, who in turn instructed Manu, the father of mankind, who then conveyed this same knowledge to Ikṣvāku. (*Gītā* 4.1) In other words, a disciplic succession was established early in mankind's history. Prabhupāda elaborates in his commentary on this text:

Herein we find the history of the *Bhagavad-gītā* traced from a remote time when it was delivered to the royal order, the kings of all planets. . . . At the present moment we have just passed through five thousand years of the Kali-yuga, which lasts 432,000 years. Before



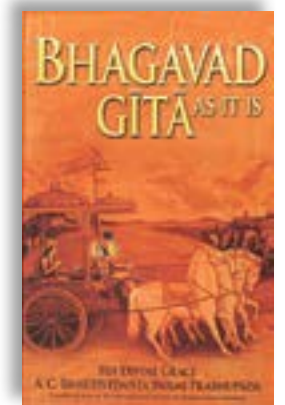
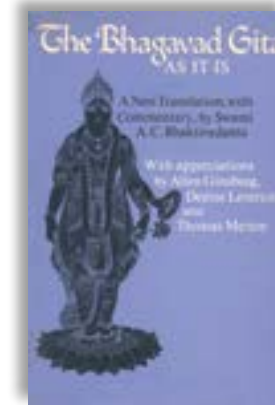
Painting by Ramanātha Dāsa

this there was Dvāpara-yuga (800,000 years), and before that there was Tretā-yuga (1,200,000 years). Thus, some 2,005,000 years ago, Manu spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā* to his disciple and son Mahārāja Ikṣvāku, the King of this planet earth. The age of the current Manu is calculated to last some 305,300,000 years, of which 120,400,000 have passed. Accepting that before the birth of Manu, the *Gītā* was spoken by the Lord to His disciple, the sun-god Vivasvān, a rough estimate is that the *Gītā* was spoken at least 120,400,000 years ago; and in human society it has been extant for two million years. It was respoken by the Lord again to Arjuna about five thousand years ago. That is the rough estimate of the history of the *Gītā*, according to the *Gītā* itself and according to the version of the speaker, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The more "recent" history of the *Gītā* is nicely summarized by my good friend Richard Davis, a prominent scholar of South Asian Studies currently teaching at Bard College, north of New York City. In his new volume, *The Bhagavad Gita: A Biography*, which is part of a series published by Princeton University Press called *Lives of Great Religious Books*, he outlines the *Gītā*'s later journey in the material world. Davis's work is thorough, and, ap-

ropos of that, he naturally devotes an entire section to Prabhupāda's edition. Here is a small sample:

For Bhaktivedanta, also known as Swami Prabhupada, the essential fact about the Bhagavad Gita is its speaker. The Gita contains the words of Krishna, and Krishna is "the Supreme Personality of Godhead." Just as Arjuna accepts Krishna as the divine Absolute during their conversation, so Swami Prabhupada accepts Krishna. In his view, all readers of his translation should do so, too. . . . Prabhupada sees his task as passing on the "mission" or presenting the "will" of Krishna. Other translations, he writes, are not authoritative because the translators have expressed their own opinions in them. By contrast, Prabhupada's translation presents the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. . . . [His] work was the first English translation of the Gita to supply an authentic interpretation from an Indian devotional tradition. And thanks to the indefatigable efforts of his ISKCON followers, the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* has become by far the most widely distributed of all English Gita translations. The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust estimates that twenty-three million copies of Prabhupāda's translation have been sold, including the English original and secondary translations into fifty-six other languages.



Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* (from left): the first (abridged) edition, published by Macmillan in 1968; the full Macmillan edition, 1972; a current Bhaktivedanta Book Trust English edition. Left: As Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Gītā*, He instructed the science of yoga to Vivasvān (the sun-god), who instructed Manu (the father of mankind), who instructed his son Ikṣvāku.

Davis goes on to devote several pages to Prabhupāda's accomplishments, and he largely gets it right. Pleased with his understanding of my spiritual master's contribution, I decided to comply when he asked me for a promotional quote:

The Bhagavad Gita was initially cradled in the pages of the Mahabharata and then weaned and suckled by traditional commentaries, initiated by Shankara and a host of Vaishnava sages. Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbarka and others took her in their arms and nurtured her, making sure that she grew tall and strong, as did luminaries of the Shaiva tradition. When she was mature enough to stand on her own two feet, Indian nation-

### Three Stages of Development

It becomes clear from Davis's book that the *Gītā* went through three important stages, culminating in Prabhupāda's presentation. Even though the *Gītā* originally appears in the sixth book of the *Mahābhārata* (*Bhīṣma-parva*, chapters 23–40), it is recapitulated eight books later, in the *Aśvamedha-parva* (chapters 16–19). This latter text is called the *Anu-gītā*, and though it differs considerably from Kṛṣṇa's famous song, it is often considered its first commentary. Similarly, many *Purāṇas* elaborate upon various *Gītā* verses, so that its central message of devotion to Kṛṣṇa became clear for the tradition as a whole.

The next step, or the second stage, was to enhance the *Gītā's* reach by taking it beyond the borders of its original language.

alists used her for their purposes. People like Gandhi and Tilak conscripted her into the service of Mother India, showing just how far her reach would go. Indeed, she reincarnates from generation to generation, and even displays a mellifluous voice in the modern era. From Wilkins and the Transcendentalists to Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the *Gītā's* staying power has proven formidable, embodying relevance and substance to the present day. Richard Davis has done an admirable job in writing her "biography," virtually allowing us to accompany her on her personal sojourn through life. From infancy to modernity, he highlights her maturation and the profound significance of her very being.

Seeing the *Gītā* as a living entity with a biographical narrative can be useful, allowing us to more deeply appreciate her various dimensions and the personalities who broadened her reach.

Oddly, the first major commentary after direct scriptural elaboration belongs to Śaṅkara (788–820 CE),\* who tries to show that the *Gītā* favors an impersonal Absolute. His arguments, however, are forced, and great *ācāryas* arose to make that clear. Rāmānuja (1017–1137), some two centuries later, was the first to explain the truth of Kṛṣṇa's personhood, thus indirectly addressing Śaṅkara's one-dimensional and limited view of reality. He was followed by Madhva (1238–1317), who took the notion of Kṛṣṇa's personhood further, showing that devotional service (*bhakti*) is the ultimate teaching of the *Gītā*. There were others as well, including Śrīdhara Svāmī in the 1400s. His important work is entitled *Subodhinī*. These were the major commentators

\*All dates of predecessor *ācāryas* in this article are approximations based on the latest scholarly research and traditional literature.

before the time of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (1486–1533), the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and they represent the first stage of the *Gītā's* historical development.

Śrī Caitanya and His Six Gosvāmīs did not write new *Gītā* commentaries as such. Rather, they honored earlier work, especially that of Rāmānuja, Madhva, and Śrīdhara Svāmī. That being said, both Rūpa Gosvāmī and Jīva Gosvāmī quote the *Gītā* extensively in their work, with Jīva devoting many verses to Kṛṣṇa's words in his *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhā*.

With the rise of consequential Gauḍīya *ācāryas* such as Viśvanātha Cakravartī (c.1626–c.1708) and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa (c.1700–1793), we find *Gītā* commentaries that would be pivotal for the tradition – the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī-tīkā* and the *Gītā Bhūṣaṇa*, respectively – bringing out inner Vaiṣṇava teachings. But these texts, like the work of their Gosvāmī predecessors, belong to the first developmental stage of the *Gītā's* journey, since it is confined to Sanskrit.

### The *Gītā* Beyond Sanskrit

The next step, or the second stage, was to enhance the *Gītā's* reach by taking it beyond the borders of its original language. This initially occurred contemporaneously with Madhva, sometime during the thirteenth century. It was then that Jñāneśvara (1275–1296), a Maharashtra devotee influenced by the Varkari Movement (devoted to the Kṛṣṇa deity Viṭṭaleśvara) and the teachings of Śaṅkara, wrote his version of the *Gītā* (*Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*) in Marathi. Given the *nirguṇa-bhakti* (worship of the formless) predilection of his forebears, his text follows the impersonalistic slant of Advaita Vedānta. Additionally, he reconfigures the *Gītā's* verses, rewriting and elaborating upon them rather than merely presenting them. Other *Gītā* translations would follow, including Abu'l Fazl's (1551–1602) Persian

edition and Francisco Benci's (1542–1594) Latin one.

Then, in the nineteenth century, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (1838–1914) composed four Bengali books on the *Bhagavad-gītā*. This began in 1886, when he released a commentary known as *Rasika-rañjana* based on the work of Viśvanātha Cakravartī. Five years later he released another (*Vidvān-rañjana*), based on Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's work. In 1898 he published Madhva's commentary, and, posthumously, his estate released one of his earlier, shorter works, called *Bhagavad-gītā-daśa-mūla*, or "Ten

Essential Principles of the *Gītā*."

Years later, in 1914, his son Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura (1874–1937) republished Viśvanātha's commentary on the *Gītā*, and throughout the 1920s and 1930s he would periodically publish Bhaktivinoda's various editions. Although Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, like his Six Gosvāmī predecessors, did not elucidate the *Gītā* with a formal commentary, he frequently quoted or explained it in his writing. Eventually, in the 1930s and 1940s, his disciples wrote a series of English commentaries, though these are largely out of print.



At the Bhaktivedanta Research Center in Kolkata, India, Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gīta As It Is* is displayed in multiple languages.

All of the above set the table for the *Gītā's* third development: proliferation in European languages, reaching a zenith in Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. Sir Charles Wilkins (1749–1836) translated the *Gītā* into English for the first time in 1785. This led to an interest by luminaries no less prestigious than the American Transcendentalists, people like Emerson and Thoreau, who wrote about it and shared it with their contemporaries. Soon German translations followed, notably those of Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) and Richard von Garbe (1857–1927). As a result, European countries opened up to Indian wisdom, and numerous editions of the *Gītā* eventually flooded the market.

Enter the countercultural 60s and the hippie movement. By now the *Gītā* had become more popular than ever. The Beats, precursors to the hippies, followed the cue of the Transcendentalists, enthralled as they were by the *Gītā's* message. Edwin Arnold, Juan Mascaró, Christopher Isherwood, and others brought forth popular *Gītā* paperbacks too numerous to mention, including those by prominent Sanskrit scholars such as Barbara Miller and R. C. Zaehner. These could be found on nearly every spiritual seeker's bookshelf. And then there was Śrīla Prabhupāda.

### Prabhupāda's Special *Gītā*

Something peculiar happened when Prabhupāda's edition was released in 1968. Seekers transformed into devotees. Lives were changed. Reading the *Gītā* was no longer a mere intellectual exercise. It was a life-altering experience.

Moreover, Prabhupāda's edition, almost miraculously, was initially published by Macmillan, one of the largest international presses in America. They had agreed to publish a four-hundred-page version, sight unseen, but his original manuscript was well over a thousand pages. Consequently, he had his disciples edit the manuscript down to a severely

abridged edition, the version released in 1968. Wanting his readers to have the full effect of his message, however, Prabhupāda pushed for the eventual release of his complete text. Thus, in 1972, instigated by his urging but no less by substantial sales, Macmillan published his “Complete Edition,” now again nearly a thousand pages.

Prabhupāda’s 1972 version was arguably the most thorough and exhaustive of all English editions, even just from a literary point of view. Each verse was treated in the same comprehensive way: the Devanagari script was followed by its Roman transliteration, a word-by-word translation, and finally a full and original English rendering of the verse. Additionally, nearly all the verses included

dedication notwithstanding, is guilty of offering a metaphorical interpretation of the *Gītā* to help authorize and popularize his philosophy of *satyāgraha*, passive resistance. While virtuous from a material point of view, this teaching misses the heart of the *Gītā*’s message: “My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding.” (*Gītā* 11.54)

In the *Gītā*’s ninth chapter, Lord Kṛṣṇa categorically advises Arjuna to surrender to Him and to love and worship Him. Kṛṣṇa uses the word *mām*, meaning “unto Me.” Yet, as Prabhupāda would often remind his

single-minded goal of distributing love for Kṛṣṇa. Significantly, therefore, he entitled his *Gītā* “As It Is,” and he called his comments “Purports” (purport = meaning), not “Interpretations.” In these purports he gives the actual significance of the verses, the direct meaning coming in a line of perfect masters from Kṛṣṇa Himself – who all taught that the *Gītā*’s real message is devotion to Kṛṣṇa.

Who can truly understand this truth? The answer becomes clear from Kṛṣṇa’s statement to Arjuna in the fourth chapter: “That very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend and can therefore understand the transcendental mystery of this science.” (*Gītā* 4.3). Kṛṣṇa discloses in that same chapter that the *Gītā* can be understood only by those in a line of authorized devotees known as a *paramparā*, or disciplic succession. Of the four such successions recognized by the Vedic literature, the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya is flourishing, and Śrīla Prabhupāda is the thirty-second teacher in that line, his students carrying on the message even today. Those who understand the *Gītā* by reading his edition can also consider themselves coming in this same prestigious lineage.

According to the *Gītā*, spiritual truths reach the most sincere students by a descending process, from the scriptures themselves, the great sages, and through a genuine, qualified spiritual teacher who guides one on the path of devotion. Thus the real import of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is not to be had by incessant wrangling and a dazzling display of philosophical interpretation, but by filling one’s heart with devotion and learning the art and science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. 🌟

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**Prabhupāda’s edition stands as a challenge to all armchair philosophers who depart from the *Gītā*’s central teaching.**

Prabhupāda’s clarifying commentary based on traditional Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava works, including those of Śrīdhara Svāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, making the *Gītā*’s confidential message accessible and user-friendly. Prabhupāda also formed an art department to create works that would adorn his books, and some of the paintings appeared in his *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*.

Today the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust publishes Prabhupāda’s *Gītā* and his other books in more than eighty languages, including French, German, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Hungarian, Russian, Kazakh, Japanese, Vietnamese, Hebrew, Arabic, Swahili, and sixteen Indian languages.

Most of all, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s edition is significant in that it stands as a challenge to all armchair philosophers who depart from the *Gītā*’s central teaching of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. Even Mahatma Gandhi, his

students, one famous Indian commentator wrote otherwise: “It is not to Kṛṣṇa that we have to surrender, but to the unborn within him.” But the *Gītā* is clear that the essence of reality involves embracing Kṛṣṇa’s personal form with heart, mind, and soul. All aspects of Godhead are contained in Him.

This truth, says Prabhupāda, is not meant to be taken metaphorically. The *Gītā* (18.75) carefully records this with the words *kṛṣṇāt sākṣāt kathayataḥ svayam*, which clearly indicate that Kṛṣṇa was directly (*sākṣāt*) in front of Arjuna articulating these teachings personally (*svayam*). Thus, given that this was Prabhupāda’s emphasis, his *Gītā* may be considered the most accurate and true to the original text.

Interpretations that differ do so for ulterior motives – political, financial, religious, and so on. But Śrīla Prabhupāda’s motive, as is evident from his life and commentary, was pure – the

## BOOK SECTION: ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Referred to as “the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature,” *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa*, or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR RULERS

*Lord Viṣṇu tells King Pṛthu how he should rule for the all-around benefit of the citizens.*

## CANTO 4: CHAPTER 20

### 13 समः समानोत्तममध्यमाधमः

सुखे च दुःखे च जितेन्द्रियाशयः  
मयोपकृताखिललोकसंयुतो  
विधत्स्व वीराखिललोकरक्षणम्

*samaḥ samānottama-madhyamādhamaḥ  
sukhe ca duḥkhe ca jiteन्द्रियाśayaḥ  
mayopakṛtākhila-loka-samyuto  
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; *jīta-indriya* – having controlled the senses; *āśayaḥ* – and mind; *mayā* – by Me; *upakṛta* – arranged; *akhila* – all; *loka* – by people; *samyutaḥ* – 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, 1 for your only duty here is to give protection to the citizens of your kingdom.**

PURPORT: Here is an example of receiving direct instruction from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu. One has to execute the order of Lord Viṣṇu, whether receiving it directly from Him or from His bona fide representative, the spiritual master. Arjuna fought the Battle of Kurukṣetra under the direct order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, here Pṛthu Mahārāja is also being given orders by Lord Viṣṇu regarding the execution of his duty. We have to stick to the principles stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. *Vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ*: every man’s duty is to receive orders from Lord Kṛṣṇa or from His bona fide representative and take these orders as his life and soul, without personal considerations. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states that one should not care very much whether he is going to be liberated or not, but he should simply execute the direct order received from the spiritual master. 2 If one sticks to the principle of abiding by the order of the spiritual master, he will always remain in a liberated position. A common man must execute the rules and regulations of *varṇāśrama-dharma*

- 1) What did Lord Viṣṇu tell King Pṛthu was his only duty?
- 2) How does one remain in the liberated position?

by working in his prescribed duty according to the caste system (*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*) and the spiritual-order system (*brahmacarya*, *grhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa*). If one simply executes regularly and strictly the injunctions given for the different divisions of life, then one satisfies Lord Viṣṇu.

As a king, Pṛthu Mahārāja was ordered by Lord Viṣṇu to keep himself always aloof from the activities of the bodily situation and to engage always in the service of the Lord and thus keep himself in the liberated stage. The word *baddha-sauhrdāḥ* in the previous verse is explained herewith. One can fully remain in intimate connection with the Supreme Lord directly or receive orders from His bona fide representative the spiritual master and execute the orders sincerely when one keeps aloof from the activities of the body. The Lord helps us by giving us directions how to act in devotional service and thus advance on the path back home, back to Godhead. He instructs us outwardly in the form of the spiritual master. Therefore, one should not accept the spiritual master as an ordinary human being. <sup>3</sup> The Lord says, *ācāryam māṁ vijānīyān nāvamanyeta karhicit*: one should not treat the spiritual master as an ordinary human being, for he is the substitute for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One should treat the spiritual master as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and never be envious of him or consider him to be an ordinary human being. If we follow the instruction of the spiritual master and execute devotional service to the Lord, we will remain always free from the contamination of bodily and material activities, and our life will be successful.

#### 14 श्रेयः प्रजापालनमेव राज्ञो यत्साम्पराये सुकृतात्षष्ठमंशम् हर्तान्यथा हृतपुण्यः प्रजाना- मरक्षिता करहारोऽघमत्ति

*śreyah prajā-pālanam eva rājño  
yat sāmparāye sukṛtāt ṣaṣṭham aṁśam  
hartānyathā hrta-puṇyah prajānām  
araksitā kara-hāro 'gham atti*

- 3) Why should one not treat the spiritual master as an ordinary human being?
- 4) How must the king act in order to share one sixth of the result of the citizens' pious activities?
- 5) What happens to a king or executive head of state who simply collects taxes from the citizens but does not give them proper protection?
- 6) What is the royal duty or the duty of the head of state?

*śreyah* – auspicious; *prajā-pālanam* – ruling over the general mass of people; *eva* – certainly; *rājñah* – for the king; *yat* – because; *sāmparāye* – in the next birth; *sukṛtāt* – from the pious activities; *ṣaṣṭham aṁśam* – one-sixth part; *hartā* – collector; *anyathā* – otherwise; *hrta-puṇyah* – being bereft of the results of pious activities; *prajānām* – of the citizens; *araksitā* – one who does not protect; *kara-hārah* – tax collector; *agham* – sin; *atti* – receives or suffers.

<sup>4</sup> To give protection to the general mass of people who are citizens of the state is the prescribed occupational duty for a king. By acting in that way, the king in his next life shares one sixth of the result of the pious activities of the citizens. <sup>5</sup> But a king or executive head of state who simply collects taxes from the citizens but does not give them proper protection as human beings has the results of his own pious activities taken away by the citizens, and in exchange for his not giving protection he becomes liable to punishment for the impious activities of his subjects.

PURPORT: The question may be raised here that if everyone engaged in spiritual activities to attain salvation and became indifferent to the activities of the material world, then how could things as they are go on? And if things are to go on as they ought to, how can a head of state be indifferent to such activities? In answer to this question, the word *śreyah*, auspicious, is used here. The division of activities in society as arranged by the Supreme Personality of Godhead was not blindly or accidentally created, as foolish people say. The *brāhmaṇa* must do his duty properly, and the *kṣatriya*, the *vaiśya*, and even the *śūdra* must do the same. And every one of them can achieve the highest perfection of life – liberation from this material bondage. This is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.45). *Sve sve karmaṇy abhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate narah*: “By executing one's prescribed duties, one can attain the highest perfection.”

Lord Viṣṇu advised Mahārāja Pṛthu that a king is not enjoined to give up his kingdom and the responsibility of protecting the *prajāś*, or citizens, to instead go away to the Himalayas for liberation. He can attain liberation while executing his royal duties. <sup>6</sup> The royal duty or the duty of the head of state is to see that the *prajāś*, or the general mass of people, are doing their respective duties for spiritual salvation. A secular state does not necessitate a king or head of state who is indifferent to the activities of the *prajāś*. In the modern state the government has many rules and regulations for conducting the duties of the *prajāś*, but the government neglects to see that the citizens advance in spiritual knowledge. If the government is careless in this matter, the citizens will act whimsically, without any sense of God realization or spiritual life, and thus become entangled in sinful activities.

An executive head should not be callous to the wel-

fare of the general mass of people while he simply goes on collecting taxes. The king's real duty is to see that the citizens gradually become fully Kṛṣṇa conscious. Kṛṣṇa conscious means completely free from all sinful activities. <sup>7</sup> As soon as there is complete eradication of sinful activities in the state, then there will be no more war, pestilence, famine, or natural disturbances. This was actually prevailing during the reign of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. If a king or head of the government is able to induce the citizens to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, then he is worthy to rule over the mass of people; otherwise, he has no right to levy taxes. If the king looks after the spiritual interests of the citizens, he can levy taxes without difficulties. In this way both the subjects and the king will be happy during this life, and in the next life the king will be able to share one sixth of the pious activities of the citizens. Otherwise, by levying taxes on the sinful citizens, he will have to share the reactions of their sinful activities.

This same principle can be applied to parents and spiritual masters as well. If parents simply give birth to children like cats and dogs but cannot save their children from imminent death, they become responsible for the activities of their animalistic children. Lately, such children are turning into hippies. Similarly, if a spiritual master cannot direct his disciples to become free of sinful activities, he becomes responsible for their sinful acts. These subtle laws of nature are unknown to the present leaders of society. Since the leaders of society have a poor fund of knowledge and the citizens in general are rogues and thieves, there cannot be an auspicious situation for human society. <sup>8</sup> At the present moment the whole world is full of such an incompatible combination of state and citizens, and therefore there is constant tension, war, and anxiety as an inevitable result of such social conditions.

#### 15 एवं द्विजाग्र्यानुमतानुवृत्त- धर्मप्रधानोऽन्यतमोऽवितास्याः ह्रस्वेन कालेन गृहोपयातान् द्रष्टासि सिद्धाननुरक्तलोकः

*evam dvijāgryānumatānurvṛtta-  
dharma-pradhāno 'nyatamo 'vitāsyāḥ  
hrasvena kālena grhopayātān  
draṣṭāsi siddhān anurakta-lokaḥ*

*evam* – thus; *dvija* – of the *brāhmaṇas*; *agrya* – by the foremost; *anumata* – approved; *anuvṛtta* – received by disciplic succession; *dharma* – religious principles; *pradhānah* – he whose chief interest is; *anyatamah* – unattached; *avitā* – the protector; *asyāḥ* – of the earth; *hrasvena* – short; *kālena* – in time; *grha* – to your home; *upayātān* – having come personally; *draṣṭāsi* – you will see; *siddhān* – perfected personalities; *anurakta-lokaḥ* – being loved by the citizens.

**Lord Viṣṇu continued: My dear King Pṛthu, if you continue to protect the citizens according to the instructions of the learned brāhmaṇa authorities, as they are received by the disciplic succession – by hearing – from master to disciple, and if you follow the religious principles laid down by them, without attachment to ideas manufactured by mental concoction, then every one of your citizens will be happy and will love you, and very soon you will be able to see such already liberated personalities as the four Kumāras [Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana, and Sanat-kumāra].**

PURPORT: Lord Viṣṇu advised King Pṛthu that everyone should follow the principles of *varṇāśrama-dharma*; then, in whatever capacity one remains within this material world, his salvation is guaranteed after death. In this age, however, since the system of *varṇāśrama-dharma* is topsy-turvy, it is very difficult to strictly follow all the principles. The only method for becoming perfect in life is to develop Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As *varṇāśrama-dharma* is executed from different positions by different men, so the Kṛṣṇa consciousness principles can be followed by everyone in every part of the world.

There is a specific purpose in mentioning herein that one should follow the *dvijāgryas*, the most prominent *brāhmaṇas*, like Parāśara and Manu. These great sages have already given us instructions on how to live according to the principles of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Similarly, Sanātana Gosvāmī and Rūpa Gosvāmī have given us rules and regulations for becoming pure devotees of the Lord. It is essential, therefore, to follow the instructions of the *ācāryas* in the *paramparā* system, who have received the knowledge as passed down from spiritual master to disciple. In this way, although living in our material condition of life, we can get out of the entanglement of material contamination without leaving our positions. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu advises, therefore, that one does not have to change his position. One simply has to hear from the perfect source (this is called *paramparā*) and follow the principles for practical application in life; thus one can attain the highest perfection of life – liberation – and go back home, back to Godhead. In other words, the change required is a change in consciousness, not in the body. Unfortunately, in this fallen age, people are concerned with the body, not with the soul. They have invented so many “isms” pertaining to the body only, not to the soul.

In the modern age of democracy there are so many government representatives voting for legislation. Every day

- 7) What would be the result of complete eradication of sinful activities in the state?
- 8) What is the inevitable result of current social conditions?

they bring out a new law. 9 But because these laws are only mental concoctions manufactured by inexperienced conditioned souls, they cannot give relief to human society. 10 Formerly, although the kings were autocrats, they strictly followed the principles laid down by great sages and saintly persons. There were no mistakes in ruling over the country, and everything went perfectly. The citizens were completely pious, the king levied taxes legitimately, and therefore the situation was very happy. At the present moment the so-called executive heads are more or less selected from materially ambitious persons who simply look after their own personal interests; they have no knowledge of the śāstras. In other words, the executive heads are fools and rascals in the strict sense of the terms, and the people in general are sūdras. This combination of fools and rascals and sūdras cannot bring about peace and prosperity in this world. Therefore we find periodic upheavals in society in the forms of battles, communal riots and fratricidal quarrels. Under these circumstances, not only are the leaders unable to lead the people toward liberation, but they cannot even give them peace of mind. In Bhagavad-gītā it is stated that anyone who lives on concocted ideas, without reference to the śāstras, never becomes successful and does not attain happiness or liberation after death.

16 वरं च मत्कञ्चन मानवेन्द्र  
वृणीष्व तेऽहं गुणशीलयन्त्रितः  
नाहं मखैर्वै सुलभस्तपोभि-  
र्योगेन वा यत्समचित्तवर्ती

varam ca mat kañcana mānavendra  
vṛṇīṣva te 'haṁ guṇa-śīla-yantritaḥ  
nāhaṁ makhair vai sulabhas tapobhir  
yogena vā yat sama-citta-varī

varam – benediction; ca – also; mat – from Me; kañcana – whatever you like; mānava-indra – O chief of human beings; vṛṇīṣva – please request; te – your; aham – I; guṇa-śīla – by elevated qualities and excellent behavior; yantritaḥ – being captivated; na – not; aham – I; makhair – by sacrifices; vai – certainly; su-labhaḥ – easily obtained; tapobhir – by austerities; yogena – by practice of mystic yoga; vā – or; yat – because of which; sama-citta – in one who is equipoised; varī – being situated.

**My dear King, I am very captivated by your elevated qualities and excellent behavior, and thus I am very favorably inclined toward you. You may therefore ask**

- 9) Why do new laws fail to give relief to human society?  
10) How were kings formerly able to not make mistakes in ruling over the country?

**from Me any benediction you like. One who does not possess elevated qualities and behavior cannot possibly achieve My favor simply by performance of sacrifices, severe austerities or mystic yoga. But I always remain equipoised in the heart of one who is also equipoised in all circumstances.**

PURPORT: Lord Viṣṇu was very pleased with Mahārāja Pṛthu's good character and behavior and offered him a benediction. The Lord openly says that performing great sacrifices or undergoing the austerities of mystic yoga practice cannot satisfy Him. He is pleased only by elevated character and behavior. But these cannot develop unless one becomes a pure devotee of the Lord. Anyone who has developed unalloyed, unflinching devotional service unto the Lord develops his original good qualities as spirit soul. The spirit soul, as part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, has all the good qualities of the Lord. When the spirit soul is contaminated by the material modes of nature, one is considered good or bad with reference to the material qualities. But when one is transcendental to all material qualities, all the good qualities come out.

These qualities of a devotee, twenty-six in number, are listed as follows: (1) kind to everyone, (2) does not quarrel with anyone, (3) fixed in the Absolute Truth, (4) equal to everyone, (5) faultless, (6) charitable, (7) mild, (8) clean, (9) simple, (10) benevolent, (11) peaceful, (12) completely attached to Kṛṣṇa, (13) has no material hankering, (14) meek, (15) steady, (16) self-controlled, (17) does not eat more than required, (18) sane, (19) respectful, (20) humble, (21) grave, (22) compassionate, (23) friendly, (24) poetic, (25) expert, (26) silent. The Lord is satisfied by development of the transcendental qualities of the living entity and not by artificial performance of sacrifices and mystic yoga. In other words, unless one is fully qualified to become a pure devotee of the Lord, one cannot expect to be liberated from material entanglement.

मैत्रेय उवाच

17 स इत्थं लोकगुरुणा विष्वक्सेनेन विध्वजित्  
अनुशासित आदेशं शिरसा जगृहे हरेः

maitreya uvāca  
sa itthaṁ loka-guruṇā  
viṣvakṣenena viśva-jit  
anūśāsita ādeśaṁ  
śirasā jagṛhe hareḥ

maitreyaḥ uvāca – Maitreya said; saḥ – he; itthaṁ – thus; loka-guruṇā – by the supreme master of all people; viṣvakṣenena – by the Personality of Godhead; viśva-jit – the conqueror of the world (Mahārāja Pṛthu); anūśāsitaḥ – being ordered; ādeśaṁ – instructions; śirasā – on the head; jagṛhe – accepted; hareḥ – of the Personality of Godhead.

[Continued in the next issue.]

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

# Research Honestly

*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.*

**Dr. Singh:** What you're saying about the scientists' simply bluffing and taking people's money – this is actually true. They are getting a lot of money from the government. The politicians tax the people very heavily and then funnel much of their money to the scientists. So the people have to work very hard, while the scientists enjoy "the good life."  
**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. Fat salaries. Especially in America.  
**Dr. Singh:** In America, research is one of the top industries.  
**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Then let them research honestly. When they become failures in their research, they must study the information in the Vedic literature. Let them study the information given by Lord Kṛṣṇa and His authorized representatives – all about the nature of the self, the universe, and the Supreme Self. The scientists can test this information experimentally. Put it to the test and put it to practical use. Let this be their research. Then they will be successful.

But first, the scientists must admit their failure, and you have to prove that they are a failure. Help them see that, on balance, their research is not a success; it is a failure. They know nothing of the soul. They do not know who they are or, when this life ends, where they shall go. Simply wasting time.

How can they say their research is anything but a failure?

**Dr. Singh:** Unfortunately, everything you're saying is true. It can all be proved just from their own results, or lack of results. Any levelheaded scientist, anyone who is aware of the spiritual dimension, can use the modern scientists' own findings to prove that their understanding of reality is quite . . . fragmented at best. Dwarfed, shriveled. And wrong.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, there is no doubt. They are a failure.

**Dr. Singh:** There are many genuine scientific facts they don't even report. Whatever things they cannot explain – they just keep those hidden. There are many facts like that. Honest scientists have written whole

*pāṭava*, and *vipralipsā* – mistakes, illusion, imperfect senses, and this propensity to cheat.

With his imperfect senses and mind he must make mistakes – and fall prey to illusion, based on his many mistakes. Then, to hide his mistakes and illusion, he must cheat. “Oh, yes, I'm a very accomplished and knowledgeable scientist. You should heed me and pay me a fat salary.”

**Dr. Singh:** Yes. And when someone brings out these defects – these hidden defects that usually go unexposed – these scientists become practically dumbfounded. They become very quiet.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** They know they are cheating, so they must become

itate: “With these imperfect senses and mind and this propensity to make mistakes and become illusioned and cheat, what can I teach?”

But one who is not a devotee – he'll go on with these four assets – rascal assets – imperfect senses, mistakes, illusion, and cheating. This is the modern scientists' position. Falsely they want to pose themselves as very learned scholars. But a sensible person will ask, “You may want to keep up your false prestige, but what right have you to mislead others?”

**Dr. Singh:** That is so true. Someone has to step forward and poke them. “You are extrapolating much, much more than you should. You are saying much, much more than you really know.”

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Oh, yes. “You are going beyond your capacity.” It is like the old saying – “a dwarf grasping for the moon.”

**Dr. Singh:** Yes. As you have pointed

out, for instance, there is no foundation to these scientists' claim that life can come out of chemicals. No one has ever seen such a bizarre thing actually happening. And if we analyze from a purely scientific and logical angle, there is no way anyone can make such a silly claim.

But within their tiny little spoonful of knowledge, they are hoping to find the vast sea of reality. They know just a tiny bit, but they extrapolate very widely and draw grandiose – and false – conclusions.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Simply speculation.

**Dr. Singh:** So I think what we're saying is, “As we study reality, let's be humble and honest. First let's be honest.”

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Certainly. “How can you be dishonest and at the same time call yourself a scientist? How is that?”

quiet. *Maunam sammati lakṣaṇam*: as soon as they become quiet, that means they admit, “Yes, I cheated.” Otherwise, they would immediately make a refutation. But they know, “Yes, on this point I have cheated.” So when somebody catches them – “Here you have cheated” – then if they keep quiet, that means they admit, “Yes, I cheated.”

So you are performing a great public service simply by exposing the scientists' defects. Imperfect senses, mistakes, illusion, and cheating – these are the property of every materially conditioned soul. Then what is he going to learn? And what is he going to teach? His position is imperfection, mistakes, illusion. He knows it. So if he presents himself as learned and tries to teach, he is not teaching. He is cheating.

Anyone in this material world is like this. A cheater. Only one who is a devotee of the Lord – he will hes-

volumes on the errors and defects in modern science. Whole books on all the errors and cheating.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** All this can alert the people. We want people to look critically at all this nonsense: “Life comes from matter . . . Matter evolves from lower forms to higher forms . . . No need for an intelligent Supreme Spirit . . . Matter has intelligence.” Rubbish.

**Dr. Singh:** As Dr. Richard Thompson, a mathematics PhD from Cornell, has discovered, even Sir Isaac Newton cheated in his scientific work. Newton himself cheated.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Any materially conditioned soul must cheat. He must cheat, because he's not perfect. So to keep his prestige, he must cheat.

After all, the conditioned soul is under the sway of the material modes, especially ignorance and passion, and he is burdened by the four material defects: *bhrama*, *pramāda*, *kāraṇā-*

We want people to look critically at all this nonsense: “Life comes from matter . . . No need for an intelligent Supreme Spirit . . .” Rubbish.

# Sanātana Gosvāmī

## The Teacher of Devotional Service

July 27 marks the anniversary of the passing of this great devotee, the senior member of the group known as the Six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan.

by Māyāpur-śaśi Dāsa

THE HERO TURNING his back on great riches and privilege to follow a life of complete spiritual devotion, only to be thrown into jail to prevent his leaving, then finding a way to escape, fleeing cross country to meet his (spiritual)

hero – it all sounds like the plot to some blockbuster film, but such was the life of Sanātana Gosvāmī.\*

Sanātana became a principal disciple of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and wrote several very important books. He was the most senior of

the influential Six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan. The Six Gosvāmīs were an unrivalled and influential group who did much to establish the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* (lineage) of devotion to Kṛṣṇa, which accepts Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu as an incarnation

\*My main sources for this article were *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Gopīparādhana Dāsa's introduction to *Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, and discussions with my spiritual master.

of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. Sanātana's younger brother Rūpa (originally named Santoṣa) and their nephew Jīva Gosvāmī also became very influential figures in Vaiṣṇavism. Sanātana's youngest brother, Vallabha (originally Anupama), Jīva's father, was devoted to Lord Rāmacandra.

The person we now know as Sanātana Gosvāmī was given the name Amara after his birth in 1488 in Jessore, now in modern-day Bangladesh. Some claim he was born in southern India, but the evidence suggests that while his ancestors originated in southern India, they had moved north to Jessore sometime before Sanātana's birth.

To understand the world into which Sanātana was born, we need to consider that the area in which his family lived saw a succession of Indian empires, with Buddhism and Hinduism vying for dominance. There were plenty of struggles for power, both religious and secular. From the thirteenth century the area had been under the control of the Bengal Sultanate. Then the expansion of the Mughal Empire saw the whole area fall under its control, and with that the conversion of the majority of the populace to Islam. In fact the region became the wealthiest in the whole Mughal Empire.

It was in this context that Sanātana was born and brought up.

### Religious Childhood

Sanātana and his brothers were from childhood attracted to devotional service. Sanātana and Rūpa were especially attracted to Kṛṣṇa, Vallabha to Lord Rāmacandra. Sanātana had an affinity for the study of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In his boyhood he once dreamed that a *brāhmaṇa* presented him a copy of it. The next morning, that same *brāhmaṇa* came to his house and gave him the book. From that time on Sanātana was always immersed in *bhāgavatāmṛta*, "the nectar of the *Bhāgavatam*." He and his brothers studied rhetoric and the *Vedānta-sūtras* under the tutelage of the famous logician Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya. They also studied under Sārvabhauma's brother, Madhusūdana Vidyāvācaspati, and it was he who initiated Sanātana in his childhood. Later they made their wealthy estate a suitable place for remembering Kṛṣṇa by planting groves of *kadamba* and other trees that grow in Vrindavan, the site of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, and by building replicas of Kṛṣṇa's favorite ponds, the sacred Radha-kunda and Syama-kunda. The brothers also hosted many learned

*paṇḍitas*, and discussions of the *Bhāgavatam* and other *śāstras* went on constantly in their assembly.

### Government Service

Sanātana's father, Mukunda, had been the private secretary of the Sultan of Bengal, Jalaluddin Fateh Shah, until Jalaluddin was assassinated by one of his own presidential guards in 1487, the year before Sanātana's birth. This event marked the end of the Ilyas Dynasty of Bengal.

Both Sanātana and Rūpa were well-known intellectuals and quickly came to the attention of the new ruler of Bengal, Alauddin Hussein Shah, who ruled between 1493 and 1519. The fact that their father, Mukunda, had worked for the previous sultan helps explain why the sons' scholarly expertise might have become well known to the new shah. Perhaps in an attempt to influence local Bengalis, after their father died Alauddin Hussein Shah somewhat forcibly persuaded Sanātana to accept appointment as prime minister. Rūpa became the chief assistant minister, and Vallabha the state treasurer.

Despite their youth, the brothers had privileges and wealth heaped upon them. They built several mansions in Ramakeli.

It was at Ramakeli that the three brothers first met Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, in 1514. Despite his privileged position of influence and wealth, Sanātana was still only twenty-five years old. The brothers approached the Lord with great humility, but with determination. In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 1.206) the two brothers say:

*bhavantam evānucaran nirantaraḥ  
praśānta-niḥśeṣa-mano-rathāntaraḥ  
kadāham aikāntika-nitya-kiṅkaraḥ  
praharṣayiṣyāmi sanātha-jīvitam*

"By serving You constantly, one is freed from all material desires and is completely pacified. When shall I engage as Your permanent eternal

servant and always feel joyful to have such a fitting master?" This is in fact a verse from the *Stotra-ratna* (43) of the South Indian devotee Śrī Yāmunācārya.

The Lord tells the two older brothers that they are His eternal servants and gives them the names Śrīla Sanātana and Śrīla Rūpa. The youngest brother became known as Anupama. The brothers were so touched and amazed by what Caitanya Mahāprabhu told them that they became determined to somehow follow Him and dedicate their lives to spiritual devotion. They knew that their powerful positions in the government meant nothing compared to the spiritual wealth Lord Caitanya could bestow upon them. But first they would have to find ways to leave their lucrative employment with the Shah's government.

### Escaping for Service

For reasons that are unclear, Rūpa was allowed to resign from his post but Sanātana was not. This did not deter Sanātana's determination, and his mind was constantly fixed on how he could renounce his position and follow Lord Caitanya as soon as possible. He stopped attending court and claimed that sickness prevented him from leaving home, but in fact he only wanted to study the *Vedas*, especially *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and to share with others what he learned. Rumors reached the Shah, who thought of Sanātana almost as a family member, and he sent his personal physicians to assess Sanātana's health. They found him in perfect fitness.

When Sanātana showed a strong intention to resign, the Shah, feeling familial affection, essentially said, "While engaged in this destructive business [of military campaigns], I am hoping that you will tend to the administration of the state. Since I, your elder brother, am engaged in such a destructive business, you, be-

ing my younger brother, should look after the state management. If you do not, how will things continue?"

Seeing Sanātana's resistance, the Shah made an alternative request.

The Shah was going to attack the province of Orissa, and he told Sanātana Gosvāmī, "Come along with me."

Sanātana Gosvāmī replied, "You are going to Orissa to give pain to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. For this reason I am powerless to go with you."

Having already released Rūpa from his duties, the Shah reached the end of his patience and had the elder of the two brothers thrown into jail to prevent him from leaving.

Hearing of Sanātana's fate, Rūpa wrote to him and told him that Caitanya Mahāprabhu had left Puri and

The Shah reached the end of his patience and had the elder of the two brothers thrown into jail to prevent him from leaving.

intended to go to Vrindavan, and that Rūpa and their younger brother, Anupama, had decided to travel there to meet Him. Rūpa also informed Sanātana of the location of a stash of gold coins he had deposited.

Śrīla Prabhupāda summarizes these events in the purport to *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā* 10.84:

Sanātana Gosvāmī took advantage of this money to bribe the jail keeper and get free from detention. Then he left for Benares to meet Caitanya Mahāprabhu, bringing with him only one servant, whose name was Īśāna. On the way they stopped at a *sarāi*, or hotel, and when the hotel keeper found out that Īśāna had some gold coins with him, he planned to kill both Sanātana Gosvāmī and Īśāna to take away the coins. Later Sanātana Gosvāmī saw that although the hotel keeper did not know them, he was being espe-

cially attentive to their comfort. Therefore he concluded that Īśāna was secretly carrying some money and that the hotel keeper was aware of this and therefore planned to kill them for it. Upon being questioned by Sanātana Gosvāmī, Īśāna admitted that he indeed had money with him, and immediately Sanātana Gosvāmī took the money and gave it to the hotel keeper, requesting him to help them get through the jungle. Thus with the help of the hotel keeper, who was also the chief of the thieves of that territory, Sanātana Gosvāmī crossed over the Hazipur mountains, which are presently known as the Hazaribags. He then met his brother-in-law Śrīkānta, who requested that he stay with him. Sanātana Gosvāmī refused, but before they

parted Śrīkānta gave him a valuable blanket.

So Sanātana cleverly managed to bribe the jailer, telling him to say that he had escaped while performing his ablutions at the river. Sanātana then crossed the river – the sacred Ganges – and began the long journey to Vrindavan, but along the way he received an urgent message informing him that Lord Caitanya had already departed Vrindavan and was now in Benares. Sanātana changed his destination and at last succeeded in meeting up with Lord Caitanya there.

### Student of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

Over a period of two blissful months Sanātana received detailed spiritual knowledge from Mahāprabhu. He learned *sambandha-jñāna* (knowledge of the self and one's relationship



The Six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan.



with the Supreme) and how one's true natural position as a spirit soul is to be an eternal servant of the Lord. Lord Caitanya passed on detailed instructions regarding how to revive that relationship (*abhidheya*) and attain the ultimate goal of life (*prayojana*).

This is all beautifully described in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, with detailed purports by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Here is one example (*Madhya* 20.108–109), in which Lord Caitanya begins to answer Sanātana's enquiries:

*jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—kṛṣṇera  
'nitya-dāsa'  
kṛṣṇera 'taṭastha-śakti'  
'bhedābheda-prakāśa'*

marginal potency. There are two worlds – the spiritual world and the material world – and you are situated between the material and spiritual potencies. You have a relationship with both the material and the spiritual world; therefore you are called the marginal potency. You are related with Kṛṣṇa as one and simultaneously different. Because you are spirit soul, you are one in quality with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but because you are a very minute particle of spirit soul, you are different from the Supreme Soul. Therefore your position is simultaneously one with and different from the Supreme Soul. The examples given are those of the sun itself and the small par-

ticles of sunshine and of a blazing fire and the small particles of fire." Another explanation of these verses can be found in *Ādi-līlā*, Chapter Two, verse 96.

The Lord told Sanātana to go to the sites of Kṛṣṇa's Vrindavan pastimes. This he did, but later he traveled to Puri to meet Mahāprabhu once again, and he received four clear instructions. He was told to spread the philosophy of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism through the written word; to establish correct forms of deity worship; to search for and unearth the sacred places related to Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vrindavan; and to write a book that would clearly describe the correct protocols and behavior of devotees.

After returning to Vrindavan, Sanātana knew his mission was clear, and he tackled it without rest. He located various sacred places and directed their excavation. He also established the correct worship of the deity Madana-mohana and

arranged for a suitable temple that would become one of the seven most important temples in this most holy of places, Vrindavan.

### Literary Contributions

Fulfilling Mahāprabhu's order to spread Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy with the written word, Sanātana Gosvāmī wrote many great works, of which four are noted as being of exceptional importance.

The *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, which is in 2,514 verses and presented in two parts, explains much of Vaiṣṇava philosophy. He also wrote his own commentary on this work, called the *Dig-darśinī*.

Another key work, written jointly with Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, is the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* ("Performance of Devotion to Hari"). By Lord Caitanya's request, this book focuses on the rituals and conduct of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.

The third key work was Sanātana Gosvāmī's *Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava* ("Glorification of the Pastimes of Kṛṣṇa"), the shortest of the four works. Written in 432 verses, it is an inspiring offering of praise to Kṛṣṇa's Vrindavan pastimes as told by Śukadeva Gosvāmī in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

The fourth major work is the *Bṛhad-vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* ("That Which Brings Great Joy to the Devotees of Kṛṣṇa"), also known as *Daśama-tippaṇī*. It is an extensive commentary on the Tenth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

### Life in Vrindāvan

Sanātana passed forty-three years traveling around the Vrindavan area, fulfilling the mission Mahāprabhu had given to him. He became very popular and loved by all the villagers because of his humbleness, compassion, and spiritual knowledge.

Even in his mid-sixties he kept his vow of offering 1,008 obeisances

to Govardhana Hill and completing the Govardhana *parikramā* (walk-around) daily.

Śrī Madana-mohana (Kṛṣṇa) appeared before him one day and said, "Bābā! You are too old. Don't take so much trouble to walk around Govardhana Hill every day."

Sanātana replied, "This is one of the daily activities of my *bhajana*. I must maintain it."

Madana-mohana responded, "Since you are old you may now give up this vow."

But Sanātana replied, "I will never give up my religious principles."

On seeing the deep-rooted determination in His perfect devotee, the Lord stood on a large, flat stone (*śilā*) from Govardhana Hill and played captivating tunes on His beautiful flute until the *śilā* melted in ecstasy around His lotus feet. The Lord then gave the stone, now showing the impression of His lotus feet, to Sanātana and told him that if he circumambulated it every day it would be the same as circumambulating Govardhana Hill, and hence his vows would not be broken.

Unable to argue with the Lord, Sanātana Gosvāmī agreed.

Sanātana Gosvāmī departed from this world in 1558. His *samādhi* (memorial tomb) was built next to his beloved Madana-mohana temple in the town of Vrindavan.

In his purport to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi* 5.203, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī Prabhu, the teacher of the science of devotional service, wrote several books, of which the *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* is very famous; anyone who wants to know about the subject matter of devotees, devotional service, and Kṛṣṇa must read this book. Sanātana Gosvāmī also wrote a special commentary on the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* known as the *Daśama-tippaṇī*, which is so excellent that by reading it one can understand very deeply the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in His exchanges of loving activities. Another famous book by Sanātana Gosvāmī is the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, which states the rules and regulations

for all divisions of Vaiṣṇavas, namely, Vaiṣṇava householders, Vaiṣṇava *brahmacārīs*, Vaiṣṇava *vānaprasthas*, and Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsīs*. This book was especially written, however, for Vaiṣṇava householders. Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has described Sanātana Gosvāmī in his prayer *Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*, verse six, where he has expressed his obligation to Sanātana Gosvāmī in the following words:

*vairāgya-yug-bhakti-rasaṁ prayatnair  
apāyayan mām anabhīpsum andham  
kṛpāmbudhir yaḥ para-duḥkha-duḥkhī  
sanātanas taṁ prabhum āśrayāmi*

"I was unwilling to drink the nectar of devotional service possessed of renunciation, but Sanātana Gosvāmī, out of his causeless mercy, made me drink it, even though I was otherwise unable to do so. Therefore he is an ocean of mercy. He is very compassionate to fallen souls like me, and thus it is my duty to offer my respectful obeisances unto his lotus feet." Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī also, in the last section of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, specifically mentions the names of Rūpa Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and offers his respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of these three spiritual masters, as well as Raghunātha dāsa. Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī also accepted Sanātana Gosvāmī as the teacher of the science of devotional service.

Many more details of the life of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī may be read in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Bhakti-ratnākara*. *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava* and *Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* are available through the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. 📖

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## Fulfilling Mahāprabhu's order to spread Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy with the written word, Sanātana wrote many great works.

*sūryāṁśa-kiraṇa, yaiche  
agni-jvālā-caya  
svābhāvika kṛṣṇera tina-prakāra  
'śakti' haya*

"It is the living entity's constitutional position to be an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa because he is the marginal energy of Kṛṣṇa and a manifestation simultaneously one with and different from the Lord, like a molecular particle of sunshine or fire. Kṛṣṇa has three varieties of energy."

### PURPORT

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains these verses as follows: Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī asked Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, "Who am I?" In answer, the Lord replied, "You are a pure living entity. You are neither the gross material body nor the subtle body composed of mind and intelligence. Actually you are a spirit soul, eternally part and parcel of the Supreme Soul, Kṛṣṇa. Therefore you are His eternal servant. You belong to Kṛṣṇa's



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# The Gītās of The Bhāgavatam

*Like the Bhagavad-gītā, some special sections of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam are traditionally considered gītās (songs) in their own right.*

by Gaurāṅga Darśana Dāsa

ŚRĪMAD BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ is the greatly enlightening philosophical song sung by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to instruct bewildered Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra. The *Bhagavad-gītā* systematically presents knowledge of the soul, karma-yoga, *jñāna-yoga*, *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga*, the modes of material nature, the *virāṭ-rūpa*, and so on. The five truths that embody the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* are *īśvara* (the Supreme Lord), *jīva* (the living entities), *prakṛti* (material nature), *kāla* (time), and karma (activities). Studying and understanding the *Gītā* is considered foundational to one's spiritual life.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there are also many beautiful *gītās*, or songs, sung by various illustrious personalities that inspire and enlighten us with various levels of spiritual knowledge. The following is a brief summary of the popular *gītās* found in the *Bhāgavatam*, along with the context in which they appear.

## Rudra-gīta: The Song of Lord Śiva

(4.24.33–68)

The Pracetās, upon being instructed by their father, King Prācīnabarhi, set out to perform devotional austerities to please Lord Kṛṣṇa before taking charge of the kingdom. Knowing this, Lord Śiva arrived before them to guide them in the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa and thus taught them the song now known as the *Rudra-gīta*.

In the *Rudra-gīta*, for the Pracetās' self-purification Lord Śiva first offers prayers to the Supreme Lord in the form of the *catur-vyūha* (Kṛṣṇa's expansions as Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha) and the presiding deities of the physical elements. He then describes the beautiful form of the Supreme Lord that is

*Just before ending His time on earth, Lord Kṛṣṇa instructs His dear devotee Uddhava, who is accompanied by the sage Maitreya.*

very dear to the devotees and also the glory of seeing and rendering devotional service unto Him. Śiva praises the unalloyed devotees of the Lord and prays for their association. He concludes his prayer by describing the relationship between the Lord and the material creation.

After chanting this *Rudra-gīta* for ten thousand years underwater, the Pracetās attained the *darśana* of Lord Viṣṇu, who blessed them in various ways.

### Venu-gīta: The Song Of Kṛṣṇa's Flute

(10.21.7–19)

In the autumn, Lord Kṛṣṇa enters the forest with the cows and the cowherd

umbrella for Kṛṣṇa and shower cooling drizzles.”

The *gopīs* also glorify the fortune of Vṛndāvana, which has attained the opulence of Kṛṣṇa's direct footprints, and of Govardhan Hill, the best of Kṛṣṇa's servants, which offers many services to Kṛṣṇa, His cows, and His friends.

### Gopī-gīta: The Gopī's Song of Separation

(10.31.1–19)

During the full-moon night of autumn (*śarat-pūrṇimā*), Lord Kṛṣṇa played His flute and attracted the minds of the Vraja *gopīs*. Leaving aside their household chores, relatives, and so on, the *gopīs* immediately rushed into the forest to meet

The *Gopī-gīta* contains nineteen verses, alternatively accusing and praising Kṛṣṇa. Each verse is spoken by a different *gopī* expressing her own mood, but all of them are united in their single purpose of meeting Kṛṣṇa. The *gopīs* glorify the land of Vṛndāvana, where Kṛṣṇa appeared, and accuse Kṛṣṇa of cheating them, yet acknowledge His earlier protection. They express their desire for the blessings of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, lotus hands, and lotus face, glorify *kṛṣṇa-kathā* (topics about Kṛṣṇa), remember Kṛṣṇa's entering the forest in the morning and returning to the village in the evening, express their intense separation, which makes a moment like a millennium, and pray for His favor again.

Thus as all the *gopīs* wept loudly, Kṛṣṇa returned to enliven them and reciprocate their love.

### Yugala-gīta: The Gopīs' Song as Kṛṣṇa Wanders In the Forest

(10.35.2–25)

Although the *gopīs* relished direct association with Kṛṣṇa at night in the *rāsa* dance, during the day they felt separation from Him when He went to tend His cows in the forest. As Kṛṣṇa played His flute to announce His coming to the trees, creepers, birds, and beasts suffering in separation, the *gopīs*' love increased on hearing that sound. In separation, they sang about Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes, in the form of the *Yugala-gīta*, which consists of twelve pairs of verses sung at various times as the *gopīs* stood in small groups here and there in Vṛndāvana, some in front of Mother Yaśodā. As their mood of separation became ever more intense, Kṛṣṇa's names, forms, qualities, and pastimes began spontaneously manifesting in their hearts.

Thus the *gopīs* sang as follows: “The beauty of Kṛṣṇa attracts the minds of all. When He stands in His threefold-bending form and plays upon His flute, the Siddhas [a type

of demigod] become attracted to Him. The bulls, cows, and other animals become stunned in ecstasy and look like figures in a painting. Rivers stop flowing. When Kṛṣṇa calls the cows' names by blowing on His flute, even the trees and creepers erupt, and their sap pours down like a torrent of tears. Kṛṣṇa's flute causes the birds to close their eyes in meditation, the clouds in the sky to gently rumble, and even such great authorities of music as Indra, Śiva, and Brahmā to become astonished. And just as we *gopīs* are anxious to offer everything we have to Kṛṣṇa, so are the wives of the black deer, who follow Him, imitating us. When Kṛṣṇa is returning to Vraja, He plays His flute while His young companions chant His glories.”

### Viraha-gīta: The Gopīs' Song as Kṛṣṇa Leaves Vṛndāvana

(10.39.19–31)

Ordered by Kaiṁsa, Akrūra went to Vṛndāvana to take Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to Mathurā. And the elders of Vṛndāvana, headed by Nanda Mahārāja, although reluctant, prepared to send Them. However, the young *gopīs* were extremely upset hearing this. The *gopīs*, who can't bear even a moment's separation from Kṛṣṇa, were now devastated, thinking about this impending lengthy separation. Meeting in different groups, they began conversing with tears in their eyes, and that conversation is called the *Viraha-gīta*.

In their *Viraha-gīta*, the *gopīs* condemn the creator for separating them from Kṛṣṇa after showing them His beautiful face. They say that Akrūra did not deserve his name, which means “not cruel,” since he was so cruel (*krūra*) in taking their dearest Kṛṣṇa away, without even consoling them. Then they lament their own fate and blame Kṛṣṇa, who breaks loving relationships easily. They say that the dawn is going to be auspicious for the residents of Mathurā, for they will be seeing

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Kṛṣṇa, the reservoir of all transcendental qualities. Because the elders of Vraja were not forbidding Kṛṣṇa to leave, the *gopīs* decided to try to stop Him themselves, keeping aside their shyness.

The *gopīs* loudly cried out, “Govinda! Dāmodara! Madhava!” But even as they wept, Akrūra began taking Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to Mathurā in his chariot, followed by the cowherd men of Gokula. The *gopīs* also walked behind for some distance, but then they became pacified by Kṛṣṇa's glances and gestures that said, “I will return.”

With their minds completely absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, they stood as still as figures in a painting until they could no longer see the chariot's flag or the dust cloud being raised. Then, chanting Kṛṣṇa's glories, they despondently returned to their homes.

### Bhramara-gīta: The Song of the Bee

(10.47.12–21)

After going to Mathurā, Lord Kṛṣṇa once sent Uddhava to Vṛndāvana with a message for the *gopīs*. When the Vraja *gopīs* saw lotus-eyed Uddhava, who resembled Kṛṣṇa and even wore clothes and ornaments like His, they curiously approached and encircled him. Realizing that Kṛṣṇa had sent him, they brought him to a secluded place and spoke confidentially.

The *gopīs* remembered Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, and, putting aside their shyness, they loudly wept in separation. One *gopī*, deeply meditating on Kṛṣṇa, noticed a bumblebee (*bhramara*). Imagining it to be a messenger of Kṛṣṇa, She indirectly rebuked

After chanting the *Rudra-gīta* for ten thousand years underwater, the Pracetās attained the *darśana* of Lord Viṣṇu.

boys while playing His flute. At that time the *gopīs* gather in groups and glorify the transcendental song of Kṛṣṇa's flute and the reactions of various beings to that enchanting sound. The *gopīs*' loving discussion is called the *Venu-gīta*.

The *gopīs* say, “The flute is more fortunate than us for it constantly takes the nectar from Kṛṣṇa's lips. When Kṛṣṇa plays on His flute, moving beings become stunned and nonmoving entities tremble, the peacocks dance ecstatically, bucks and does worship Him, the wives of the demigods are attracted, the cows drink that vibration with their upraised ears as vessels, the calves stand still and embrace Him within their hearts, the birds get absorbed like sages with closed eyes, the currents of the rivers break, and the arms of their waves embrace His feet, presenting lotus offerings. Even the summer clouds construct an

Kṛṣṇa. However, upon their reaching Kṛṣṇa, He gave them several reasons why they should return home, although deep within His heart He wanted them to stay. Blinded by their attachment to Him, the *gopīs* heard only His external words and became heartbroken. They fervently requested Him to accept them as His maidservants. (Some scholars call this appeal of the *gopīs* the *Pranaya-gīta*, or the song of love.) Hearing their plea, the self-satisfied Kṛṣṇa reciprocated with them by initiating the *rāsa* dance.

Induced by the *līlā-śaktī* (pastime potency) of the Lord, the *gopīs* felt proud for having received such special attention from Kṛṣṇa. Noticing this, Kṛṣṇa disappeared immediately. The *gopīs*, maddened by separation from Kṛṣṇa, searched for Him all over the forest. They enacted His various pastimes and sang their song of separation, called the *Gopī-gīta*.

Kṛṣṇa. The *ācāryas* in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu explain that She is Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who expressed Her supreme love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa through ten kinds of impulsive speech. Her song is called the *Bhramara-gīta*.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī said, “Just as bees wander from flower to flower, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has abandoned the Vraja *gopīs* and developed affection for others.”

She contrasted Her own supposed ill fortune with Her rivals’ good fortune, all the while glorifying the names, forms, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. She then declared that although Kṛṣṇa may have abandoned the *gopīs*, they could not possibly stop remembering Him even for a moment.

Uddhava was astonished to see in the *gopīs* the highest degree of pure devotion, and he tried to console them, who were so anxious to see Kṛṣṇa again. Uddhava then related to them the Lord’s message.

### Mahiṣī-gīta: The Song of the Queens (10.90.15–24)

After leaving Vṛndāvana, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa resided with His queens in His

opulent capital of Dvārakā. Among other pastimes, He would enjoy sporting with His wives in the ponds. With His graceful gestures, loving words, and sidelong glances, He enchanted their hearts, and the queens would become totally absorbed in thoughts of Him. The transcendental madness (*unmāda*) of the queens filled them with such ecstasy that they saw their own mood reflected in everyone and everything else.

Ten verses that express their ecstatic mood are called the *Mahiṣī-gīta*. The queens addressed various creatures – *kurarī* and *cakravāka* birds, the ocean, the moon, a cloud, a cuckoo, a mountain, a river, and so on – declaring their own great attachment to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, on the pretext of empathizing with them.

### Uddhava-gīta: Kṛṣṇa’s Teachings to Uddhava (11.7–29)

Uddhava is a dear devotee of Kṛṣṇa, who considers Uddhava as good as Himself. When Kṛṣṇa was about to disappear from the vision of this world, Uddhava was overwhelmed with intense feelings of separation and desired to accompany Kṛṣṇa. However, Kṛṣṇa wanted Uddhava to

go to Badarikāśrama and enlighten the sages there on His behalf. At that time Kṛṣṇa gave Uddhava His final teachings in the form of the *Uddhava-gīta*, the longest philosophical section of the *Bhāgavatam*.

The *Uddhava-gīta* is more elaborate than the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which Kṛṣṇa spoke to Arjuna. The *Uddhava-gīta* comprises a wide range of topics, including detachment from this world, the twenty-four gurus, the symptoms of conditioned and liberated souls, the Supreme Lord’s opulences, the *varṇāśrama* system, pure devotional service, the Sāṅkhya philosophy, *jñāna-yoga*, deity worship, the three modes of material nature, and Vedic paths, along with fitting examples and references to historic incidents. After hearing Kṛṣṇa’s final instructions, Uddhava departed for Badarikāśrama.

### Bhikṣu-gīta: The Song Of the Avantī Brāhmaṇa (11.23.42–57)

The story of a *brāhmaṇa* from Avantī appears as part of the *Uddhava-gīta*. Kṛṣṇa narrates this story to teach how one should tolerate disturbances from evil persons. Harsh words pierce the heart more severely than arrows, yet the Avantī *brāhmaṇa* considered them simply the consequence of his own past deeds and tolerated them soberly. He had been a greedy, angry, and miserly agriculturalist and merchant. However, in due course of time, he lost his wealth and was abandoned by everyone. Thus he developed a deep sense of renunciation and could see Kṛṣṇa’s hand in his life.

Remaining fixed in his spiritual practice, the Avantī *brāhmaṇa* sang a song renowned as the *Bhikṣu-gīta*: “Neither the mortals, the demigods, the soul, the planets, the reactions of work nor time are the causes of one’s happiness and distress. Rather, the mind alone makes the soul wander in the cycle of material life. The real purpose of all charity, religious-

ity, and so forth is to bring the mind under control. The false ego binds the transcendental soul to material sense objects. I shall cross over the insurmountable ocean of material existence by rendering service to the lotus feet of Lord Mukunda with perfect faith, as exhibited by the great devotees of the past.”

Thus the Avantī *brāhmaṇa* became determined in his renunciation and *bhakti*, and his example is adored by even Lord Caitanya, who sang his verse after accepting the renounced order.

### Aila-gīta: The Song of Purūravā (11.26.7–24)

The *Aila-gīta* also is part of the *Uddhava-gīta*. To explain how unfavorable association is a threat to one’s position in devotional service, Lord Kṛṣṇa gave the example of the emperor Purūravā (also called Aila). Aila was bewildered by the association of the heavenly beauty Urvaśī, and later became renounced after being separated from her. Expressing his contempt for undue attachment to the opposite sex, he sang a song called the *Aila-gīta*:

“Persons who are attached to the body of a woman or a man – which is simply a mass of skin, meat, blood, bones, and so on – are not much different from worms. When one’s mind is stolen away by the opposite sex, what is the worth of education, austerity, renunciation, Vedic knowledge, and so forth? Learned men should distrust their six mental enemies, headed by lust, and thus avoid degrading association.”

Thus Purūravā was freed from illusion and eventually attained peace by realizing the Lord.

### Bhūmi-gīta: The Song Of Mother Earth (12.3.1–13)

The *Bhūmi-gīta* is a song sung by mother earth, who lamented for

the foolishness of the kings who are bent upon conquering her. Great kings, who are actually just playthings of death, desire to subdue their six internal enemies – the five senses and the mind – and then they imagine that they will go on to conquer the earth and all its oceans. Seeing their false hopes, mother earth simply laughs, for eventually they all must leave this planet, as all the great kings of the past have done. Moreover, after they have usurped some part of the earth – which is actually unconquerable and must be given up – their fathers, sons, brothers, friends, and relatives quarrel over it. The study of the history of so many kings naturally leads one to the conclusion that all worldly achievements are temporary, and this conclusion should give rise to a sense of renunciation. Ultimately, the highest goal of life for any living entity is pure

devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Thus the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* presents various *gītas*, some with profound philosophy, some with heartfelt spiritual emotions, and yet others with the deep realizations of various personalities, all for our enlightenment and inspiration. It is not possible to present the expanse and depth of these great *gītas* in this short article, yet a humble attempt has been made to give just a glimpse of them. 🌸

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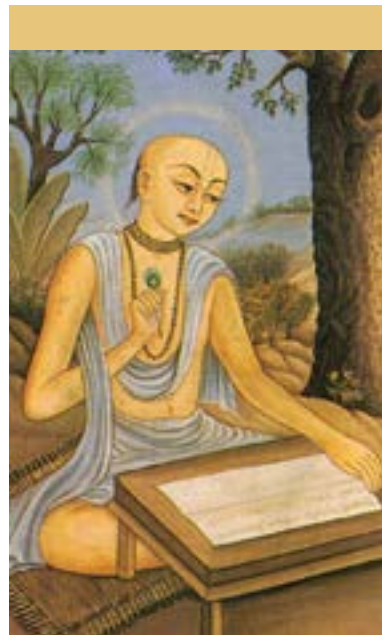


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# A Sadhu at RED SQUARE



*One visit behind the  
iron curtain that  
changed the course  
of history.*

by Kāśīśvara Dāsa

MOSCOW, USSR, the early morning of June 21, 1971. The first rays of the sun brightly illuminate the ruby stars on the towers of the Kremlin, the ancient citadel of Russian tsars. Its medieval red brick walls cast long shadows on the cobblestone pavement below. Vast, plain Red Square, the heart of Soviet Moscow, still empty, will soon fill up with visitors and tourists. At dawn there are only a few lonely passers-by. And some street cleaners, mostly older women, sweep the ground with their brooms. Small flocks of grey and motley pigeons, typical residents of Soviet cities, are swiftly taking wing. A water truck is lavishly flooding the pavement to keep down the city dust. The morning freshness is in the air. The big city is waking up.

The central object of Red Square is Lenin's Mausoleum, the sacred shrine of the communist leader. The sanctuary resembles the Babylonian pyramid, the ziggurat. On great holidays, such as the days commemorating the October Socialist Revolution, WW2 Victory Day, and May Day, mass parades are organized in front of the memorial. On those occasions, Red Square shakes from the march of the numerous columns of Soviet laborers, the countless regiments of the Soviet Army, and the rumbles of military heavy equipment

*Śyāmasundara Dāsa took this photo on June 26, 1971, across the Moscow River from the Kremlin, near St. Sophia quay. Behind Śrīla Prabhupāda are the Cathedral of the Annunciation (left), the Cathedral of the Archangel (center), and the 250-foot Ivan the Great Bell Tower (right). Inset: At St. Basil's Cathedral, Red Square.*

such as tanks, howitzers, and inter-continental ballistic missiles. The leaders of the USSR have welcomed them all from the rostrum of the Mausoleum. Stalin, Khrushchev, and others often stood here. On this June day in 1971, inquisitive tourists in a long queue will wait here to see the embalmed body of the great Lenin.

Red Square is still quiet. The chimes of the Spasskaya Tower strike five times, 5:00 a.m. Along the Kremlin Wall Necropolis, decorated with flowerbeds of yellow and red tulips and filled with marble tombstones covering the graves of eminent Bolsheviks, three young honor guards, coming from the direction of

sees an elderly Indian flanked by two young men. The Indian gentleman looks aristocratic – short, with golden skin, long earlobes, and a shaved head. The radiance he emanates makes him look like Buddha. He walks a wide step, gracefully throwing his bamboo cane forward. The group stops in front of the Mausoleum, and one of them takes several pictures. These three look too bright for the gray Soviet everyday life, too unusual, like aliens who have landed at Red Square. Before they continue walking, the elderly Indian looks at the boy, and his face lights up with a broad, bright smile. The boy watches them, fol-

lowing them with his eyes until they disappear from his vision.

lowing them with his eyes until they disappear from his vision.

lowing them with his eyes until they disappear from his vision.

lowing them with his eyes until they disappear from his vision.

We talked with one big professor, Mr. Kotovsky, and Syamasundara talked with many great writers and musicians. Two boys are working with us, one Indian and one Russian. So there is good prospect for opening a center, although the atmosphere is not very good. The Embassy was no help. So our visit to Moscow was not so successful, but for the future, it is hopeful.

In five days Prabhupāda was able to sow the seeds of *bhakti* and lay the foundation for a powerful movement, which years later widely spread across the vast territory of the former Soviet Union and attracted thousands of sincere followers.

### Russia's Hare Kṛṣṇa Explosion

The real expansion of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in Russia occurred during the 1990s, when thousands of Russian-speaking followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda preached on a mass scale in many cities and towns. Thus “Hare Kṛṣṇa” became a household word. Around that time, even President Vladimir Putin, on being offered a glass of champagne at an official event, joked: “I do not drink alco-

hol because I am a Hare Kṛṣṇa!” This episode was broadcast to millions of viewers via Russian television.

But more astonishing is the story of Kārttikeya Dāsa. During the late 1990s he worked for the personal security service of the first president of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin. He often accompanied the president during trips and attended various official events. Once, while on duty, he went to Yeltsin’s private office in the Kremlin, and to his surprise he found a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* on the president’s desk. The book lay open. On its pages were many penciled notes made by the president’s hand. Obviously, President Yeltsin was studying the book deeply.

### The Sentry's Eternal Fortune

Returning to our sentries on the Red Square: The one Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled at was so impressed by the unexpected encounter that he began searching everywhere for information about the unusual trio. He made inquiries, looked through newspapers, asked his colleagues and friends, but all in vain. Nobody knew anything about an Indian yogi visiting Moscow. Several times he encountered Śrīla Prabhupāda in his dreams. But to his disappointment, he never managed to uncover his identity.

Twenty-seven years passed. The cadet later became a military officer who served and later retired from the army. He lived with his family in a small town in the south of Ukraine. One day in December 1998, a devotee named Veṅupāṇi Dāsa was distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books door to door in that town, and he rang the doorbell of the former cadet.

Seeing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s photograph on the cover of one of the books, he exclaimed, “I know this man! I saw him many years ago, on Red Square! Who is he? A guru, a real yogi, a saint? I know nothing about him. Tell me, please!”

The man was very happy, as if he

had met an old friend. He invited Veṅupāṇi to come in, and Veṅupāṇi told him about Śrīla Prabhupāda and introduced him to the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, the devotees, the temples, and the philosophy of *bhakti*. They spent several hours in profound conversation.

At the end, the man bought all the books Veṅupāṇi had brought and told him, “I want every one of my relatives to have a copy of these books. They all know how often I remembered this Indian yogi, and no one believed me at that time. He appeared so unexpectedly, like a genie fleeing out of a bottle, and just as quickly he disappeared. But now I have all the evidences. And, of course, I’ll study his books myself.”

The *śāstras* state that even one eleventh of a second (*lava-mātra*) with a saintly person may change a person’s destiny:

‘sādhu-saṅga’, ‘sādhu-saṅga’—  
sarva-śāstre kaya  
lava-mātra sādhu-saṅge  
sarva-siddhi haya

“The verdict of all revealed scriptures is that by even a moment’s association with a pure devotee, one can attain all success.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 22.54) This moment is even faster than the blink of an eye. Because of their purity, great saints can affect the heart of an ordinary person and awaken a

strong aspiration to search for spiritual truths. This resembles the contraction of an infectious disease – by coming in contact with its carrier, you may get sick and show the same symptoms. Similarly, devotion to God can be transmitted as a “transcendental infection” received from a saint.

This is called the causeless mercy of the Supreme Lord. In this way He manifests His sweet will upon ordinary people through His pure devotees. If you happen to meet such a pure devotee in your life, then you are considered to be very fortunate. Your life will never be the same, as happened with a former cadet who met a real sadhu, Śrīla Prabhupāda, on Red Square in Moscow.

**Prabhupāda:** “Now the time is favorable. The Russians are ordering our books. And there is a prediction – the Russians will be first-class theists.” (Conversation, April 2, 1977, Bombay) 🌐

*Kāśīśvara Dāsa is a disciple of His Holiness Indradyumna Swami. He joined ISKCON in 1990 and for many years has been serving the saṅkīrtana movement in post-Soviet countries. He lives in New York City, where he is developing a local community of Russian devotees.*

*This article comes from the author’s upcoming memoir about the history of book distribution in the former Soviet Union. Interested readers may visit his Facebook page: Kaśīśvar Ids.*

## Anatoli would play a key role in the revolutionary spreading of the mission of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Soviet Union.

the Spasskaya Gate, march toward the Mausoleum. Wearing dress uniform, with rifles on their shoulders, they make their way in 210 steps (as is done every hour), exactly in 2 minutes 35 seconds. The three boys replace the current honor guards and stop in front of the Mausoleum’s entrance, where, sprung to attention, the young cadets with ruddy faces stand motionless and speechless. This is the number one post of the country, the most honorable place and their fulfilled dream.

For these military cadets, this day should pass as usual, a daily routine service, but not this time. A sleepy glance from one of them remarks the movement of some bright spots at a distance. He can’t turn his head to look carefully, but his mouth opens in amazement. From beside the State Historical Museum, three strangely dressed people are approaching. One is dressed in bright peach-colored clothes, while the other two are wearing white swaying robes. When the group comes close to him, he

### A Short Visit with Profound Results

The Indian monk was His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder and spiritual leader of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. After strenuous efforts he had obtained a five-day tourist visa and arrived in the USSR, accompanied by two of his American students – Śyāmasundara Dāsa and Aravinda Dāsa. His official purpose was to meet with a Soviet Indologist of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Professor G. G. Kotovsky. But his real purpose was to preach the teachings of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the Soviet Union.

Śrīla Prabhupāda sincerely believed that Kṛṣṇa’s teachings are universal, designed for all lands and capable of solving all the problems of modern society. He also believed that chanting of the holy names of



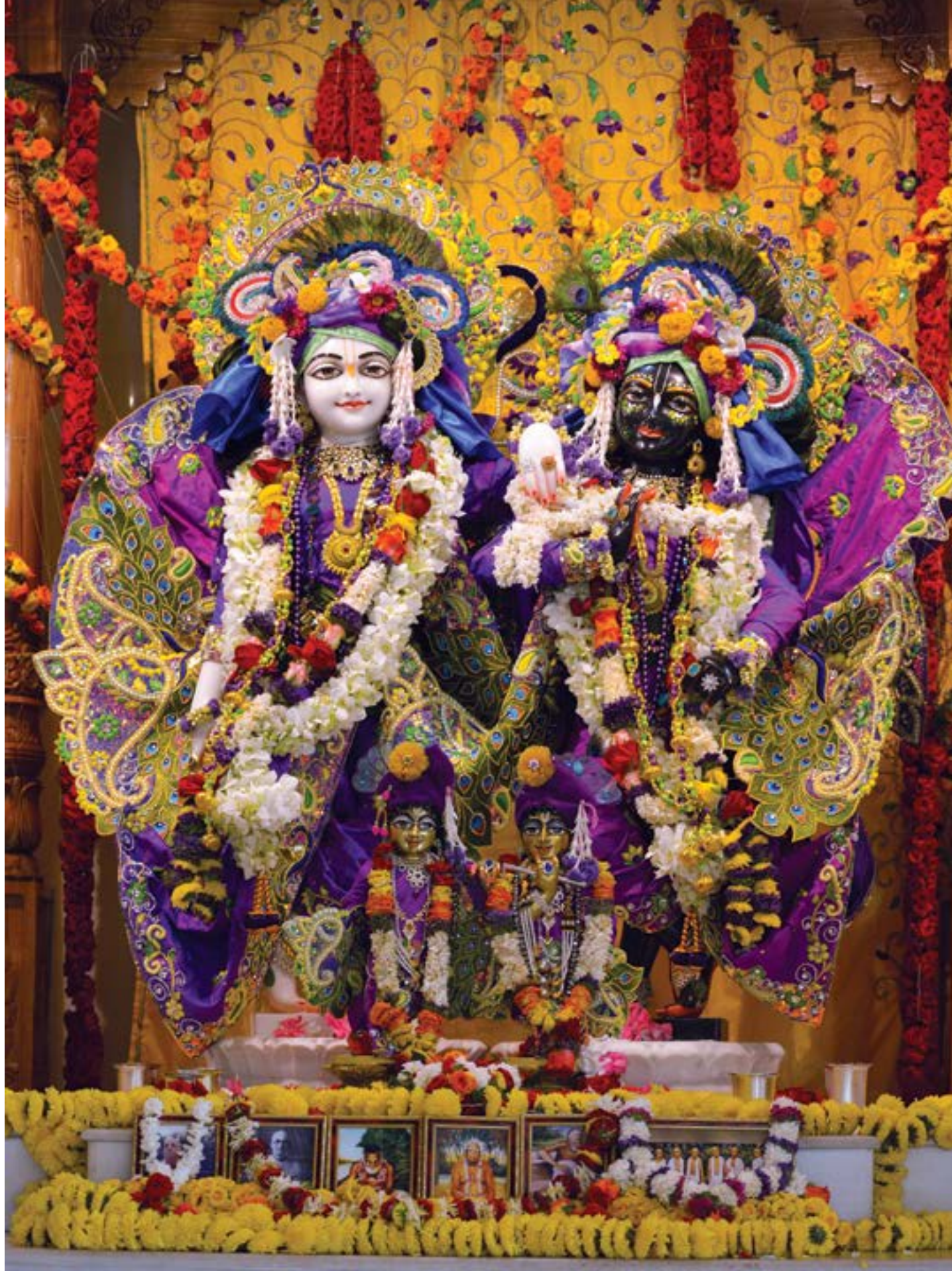
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## SPIRITUAL PLACES

# Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma In the Abode of The Reclining Viṣṇu

*ISKCON devotees have built a new temple in this South Indian city well known for its ancient temple visited by Caitanya Mahāprabhu.*

by Nārāyaṇa Dāsa

**T**RIVANDRUM, the capital of the state of Kerala, is a city of about a million inhabitants located on the southwest coast of India. Overshadowing its political importance is the city's spiritual heritage, represented by its places of worship – temples, mosques, and churches that have existed over the centuries in remarkable harmony. By far the most famous of these is the Śrī Ananta Padmanābha Svāmī temple, which is at least a millennium old. This temple caught international attention in 2011 when an inventory of its treasures revealed their present-day value to be about \$22 billion. The collection is made up of gold ornaments and numerous jewelry items set with precious stones, representing offerings over several centuries to the presiding Viṣṇu deity Ananta Padmanābha, the Lord reclining on the divine serpent



*Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma (opposite page). An artist's rendition of Śrī Ananta Padmanābha Svāmī (left), Trivandrum's famous ancient reclining Viṣṇu deity. Below: the front of ISKCON's new temple in Trivandrum.*





Ananta Śeṣa. According to Wikipedia, the treasures would make the temple the wealthiest institution among places of worship in the world. The temple was already prominent in India's spiritual circuit and figured on the world tourist circuit as well. The 2011 discovery has enhanced this importance.

The city's original name, Thiruvanthapuram (Trivandrum is the Anglicized version), translates as the "Abode of Śrī Ananta Padmanābha." There is a history behind the special importance of this Viṣṇu deity for this city and the accumulation of the temple wealth. Trivandrum was long the capital of the former principality of Travancore, which, after India gained independence, became part of Kerala. In A.D. 1750 the ruler (Maharaja) surrendered his whole domain to Śrī Ananta Padmanābha and took on the title Śrī Padmanābha Dāsa – "servant of Lord Padmanābha." According to records of that event, the ruler placed his crown at the feet of the deity to signify his subservience. His successor rulers of Travancore retained the title and ruled as trustees on behalf of the Lord.

Within an hour's driving distance to the south of Trivandrum, at a

placed called Thiruvattar – accessible from the highway connecting the city with India's land's end at Kanyakumari – is the Ādi Keśava temple, also of great antiquity. This Viṣṇu temple is of special significance for ISKCON devotees as it was here that Caitanya Mahāprabhu during His South India travels five centuries ago retrieved the only surviving fragment manuscript of the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, containing Brahmā's glorification of Lord Govinda. A recording of the singing of verses from this ancient text is played daily in all ISKCON temples.

A rendering of Mahāprabhu's



A devotee addresses the congregation in the new temple (above). Above left, deities of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu (Gaura-Nitāi) stand to the right of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma on the altar. B. V. V. Narasiṁha Swami (far left), the author's spiritual master, took part in the temple inauguration. At left, devotees perform Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma's sacred installation bath.





Manohara Gaura Dāsa teaches a seven-day seminar on the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (above). Members of the temple's women's preaching group meet to discuss their plans (right). At an old Kṛṣṇa temple in Thiruvalla now run by ISKCON, local devotees hold a traditional deity procession (far right).



lotus feet, installed within the Ananta Padmanābha Swāmī temple compound fifteen years ago, commemorates His visit to the temple during His tour of South India. The thread was picked up in the last century by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who visited Trivandrum twice, first in January 1931 and again in June 1932, as part of his successive South India tours. On both occasions he was honored as a state guest. On the second visit, the Maharaja personally guided Śrīla Siddhānta Sarasvatī around the temple and heard from him about the teachings of Mahāprabhu in relation to those of the Vaiṣṇava ācāryas of South India.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī is known to have observed after his South India travels – with particular reference to the difficulties faced by the Gaudiya Math he had set up in Madras (now Chennai) – that in the south people knew *arcana* (deity worship) but not *kīrtana*. They were familiar with the Viṣṇu form of the Lord but not Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and it was Śrīla Siddhānta Sarasvatī's desire to preach extensively in these parts to revive the teachings of Lord Caitanya.

### ISKCON's Beginnings In Trivandrum

This wish of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Guru Mahārāja took tangible shape in Trivandrum three decades ago, initially on a very small scale as an ashram

for a few *brahmacārīs* doing preaching and book distribution, and later as a properly consecrated small temple with Gaura-Nītāi deities, housed in rented premises close to the city's main railway station. The temple's initiated devotees now number 120; the regular congregation is about twice that number and growing steadily. Satellite centers have come up in the city's suburbs and nearby towns. It is a measure of public recognition of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's presence and activities that three years ago a centuries-old Kṛṣṇa temple located 120 kilometers to the north was handed over to ISKCON.

An ambitious plan to set up a new temple was conceived in 2007. A year later the devotees bought a plot of land, drawing on funds built up mainly through book distribution



## A Note on Temple Activities

OVER THE years, ISKCON Trivandrum has promoted several satellite centers in the city's suburbs and outlying areas. All these centers conduct regular weekly classes, outreach programs, and book sales, apart from contributing resources for festivals at the main temple. Half a dozen such centers are now functional. One center – at Parassala, about ten kilometres south of the new temple – observes the standard ISKCON daily *pūjās* to the Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā deities installed there and also conducts annual Rathayātrās. This center also has a small goshala.

The article mentions the old Śrī Kṛṣṇa temple at Thiruvalla, about a hundred kilometers north of Trivandrum, now run by ISKCON on a ninety-nine-year lease. Apart from ISKCON festivals and outreach programs, this temple also observes its own longstanding traditions, like the annual Utsavam, in the way common to temples in Kerala.

### Traditions Special to Kerala

Major temples in Kerala – Viṣṇu temples and those dedicated to demigods – have the practice of conducting weeklong Bhāgavata Saptāhams in which invited speakers narrate histories from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Leaders of ISKCON Trivandrum are regularly invited to conduct these programs, allowing them to spread the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Another local tradition is the annual observance of a Rāmāyaṇa Māsa in July-August (roughly corresponding to the month of Śrāvaṇa in



the traditional Hindu calendar), a season of heavy rains and consequently a break in farming, the main source of income in the past. Farming has receded in importance in recent decades, but the old tradition of families observing austerities and prayers during this period and devoting themselves to reading of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and other Purāṇic texts remains in vogue. Building on this tradition, ISKCON has been successful in conducting group programs in homes over this period in the last couple of years, attracting new devotees in fair numbers.

### Other Notable Initiatives

**Prison Counseling:** In a unique breakthrough, ISKCON devotees have been allowed to conduct spiritual counseling in the Central and Open prisons in Trivandrum over the last four years. Prison authorities have appreciated the beneficial effects on the participating prisoners.



Clockwise from left: A temple-organized pilgrimage led by temple president Jagat Sāksī Dāsa; Gopal School, a regular Sunday event; a session at the Trivandrum central prison; distributing a Back to Godhead magazine.

**Television Program:** A local TV network (Janam TV) has been telecasting weekly lectures by the ISKCON Trivandrum temple president for the last four years, enabling the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to reach a large number of homes.

**Gopal School:** Started on an experimental basis during school vacations, this is now a regular Sunday feature popular with children and their parents.

**Common ISKCON Activities:** These include public chanting (*nāma-saṅkīrtana*), youth programs in colleges, and a prominent local Information Technology Park, which employs a large number of well-educated youth. Tours are also arranged once or twice a year for groups of devotees to pilgrimage centers such as Dwarka, Badrinath, and Ahobilam (associated with Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva).

**Book Marathon:** Book distribution is a regular activity of the temple. A special effort to mobilize devotees for last year's ISKCON-wide December "Book Marathon" saw a twenty-percent increase in



books sold over the previous year – more than six thousand sets of *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and several hundred small books.

Kāśī Viśvanātha temple in Varanasi, in north India. Work on the tower above the deity altar of the new temple began in March 2016. The main Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma deities, crafted by expert artisans in Jaipur, had arrived in the meantime.

The completion of the temple

Devotees pull the Lord's chariot at ISKCON's Rathayātrā (right). Below: the temple of Śrī Ananta Padmanābha Svāmī.

within ten months of starting work on the temple tower involved tremendous effort on the part of the temple management and the congregation. The logistics of getting delivery of construction material like cement and steel was a challenging task in itself. Consignments of marble for the flooring, as well as red stone slabs that were engraved and used to frame the windows of the deity hall, came all the way from Rajasthan.

About three thousand ISKCON devotees and a large number of local well-wishers gathered for three days at the end of January 2017 to mark the grand inauguration of the new Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple. The inauguration formed part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the founding of ISKCON.

Two weeks before the date set for the function, some major work was pending, slowed by a shortage of funds. But the organizers and devotees believe that Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma took over the reins, and things started falling into place. Their belief is supported by seeming minor miracles that helped clear problems as they arose. These included unexpected acts of goodwill on the part of officials that smoothed the movement of material like red stone urgently needed to meet the announced deadline.

In another instance, occupants of several houses in the temple's vicinity moved out for a week to help accommodate visitors and personnel engaged in completing the project. About 150 hired laborers cooperated by working round the clock over the last fortnight.

Virtually the entire congregation took one week off from their regular



work to complete the abode for Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma. Devotee contributions accounted for about seventy percent of the total amount spent on the temple structure and land.

The inauguration, held at the end of January 2017, was graced by the presence of senior ISKCON *sannyāsīs* and disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Public dignitaries, including a minister of the Indian government, participated. A major attraction leading up to the event was a *saṅkīrtana* party of Indian and foreign devotees who chanted in various parts of the city in the week before the inauguration.

and supplemented by donations and loans.

Kerala, promoted by the tourist industry as "God's Own Country," is famous for its backwaters and greenery. The new temple plot is set in the midst of verdant coconut plantations. This picturesque location in

a designated green belt raised some initial legal problems that delayed civic-authority approvals to build the temple, in turn delaying the start of construction. After overcoming these hurdles and raising the initial corpus of funds, devotees held the *bhūmi-pūjā* (ground-consecration cere-

mony) in April 2012. The concrete temple foundation was built by the end of that year, and by March 2015 the construction of the deity room was taken up.

The temple design borrows from the well-recognized temple-tower architecture of the famous



very small. The fact is that Māyāvāda philosophy (impersonalism) and demigod worship are strong in these parts, added to which is a prominent atheist presence. (Kerala is currently ruled by a government led by India's main communist party.) ISKCON has undoubtedly made an impact, however, and the annual Janmāṣṭamī celebrations held in recent years have been a big draw. Devotees believe that the arrival of Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma will further boost the growth of the congregation and the *saṅkīrtana* movement and help realize Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's vision. 🙏

*Nārāyaṇa Dāsa is a disciple of His Holiness B.V.V. Narasimha Swami and an ISKCON Life Member since 2004. He lives in Trivandrum with his wife, Prema Kamala Devī Dāsī, and their daughter, Sugīta-Vāṇī Devī Dāsī.*



### A Fitting Place To Serve the Lord

The temple building has three floors, which include the deity hall at the top; offices, deity and general kitchens, a small conference room, a *prasādam* hall, and a well-equipped suite for visiting *sannyāsīs* on the floor below, at ground level; and a basement with storerooms and living quarters for *brahmacārīs*. Each floor is about five hundred square meters. In an innovation unique for these parts, a glass sheet at the entrance to the marble-floored deity hall lets in sunlight to the floor below.

Along with the temple, a housing complex comprising fourteen apartments near the temple was built and

handed over to devotee owners. To meet demand, ten more apartments are planned.

The Gaura-Nitāi temple that existed for two decades was initially popularized locally as a temple of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, forms of the Lord better known locally. This accounts for the choice of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma deities for the new temple, a choice approved by ISKCON's Governing Body Commission as an exception to the normal pattern. The state of Kerala has innumerable Kṛṣṇa temples, but the new ISKCON temple is the first with Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma deities.

Temple authorities are conscious that for a city of a million people, the present congregation strength is



*Devotees chant and dance in a large tent during a temple festival (top left). Top right: architectural elements above the temple entrance. Left: the spire above the deities' altar. Above left: residential quarters for devotees associated with the temple. Above right: the temple lit up for a festival.*



Yamrajita Dasra

BOOK EXCERPT

# The Path Of Heartfulness

*“Bhakti is the yoga of spiritual relationships that flies love to its highest perch.”*

by Prāṇadā Devī Dāsī

## CHAPTER 15: *The Yoga of Love*

Bhakti reveals that our inherent, perfect state is as a lover. As a yoga practice, bhakti is the path of evolving the heart and is known as the yoga of love. I think of bhakti as the path of heartfulness.

Given our current propensity for loving impurely and partially, how do we approach perfect love? By definition, such perfect love is possible only when we repose our love on the perfect object of love.

In the prologue we saw that



Shuka was experiencing boundless peace in loving the self. He was so satisfied in the self that nothing material held any sway over him; thus he transcended death. Even so, his father's *Bhagavata* poetry, which revealed the relationship

of the self with its primordial root, the Ultimate Being, drew Shuka out of the forest to seek the higher

Excerpted from *Wise-Love: Bhakti and the Search for the Soul of Consciousness*, by Pranada Comtois. Copyright by the author. Available from amazon.com. This concise handbook introduces *bhakti-yoga* to spiritual seekers and western yogis. We've retained the book's style for dealing with Sanskrit and other considerations.

experience. Sure, I can be satisfied in loving myself, but how much more expansive is love shared with another?

Within Vedanta, the word *yoga*, which means “to yoke” or “to connect,” refers to making a connection with our essence/source. The word *bhakti* comes from the Sanskrit root *bhaj*, “to give and receive,” and indicates the type of giving that includes a full receiving. The love of this giving and receiving is centered on the Supreme Being and developed through the yoga practice of heartfulness.

Bhakti is the yoga of spiritual relationships that flies love to its highest perch. The poet and sixteenth-century saint Rupa Goswami states:

Supreme Person, transform into resolute spiritual emotions and spiritualize our body, mind, and senses. When our culture of bhakti becomes continuous and fully mature, love condenses into wise-love and we’re transported, even before death, to the homeland of consciousness.

In summary, bhakti means unadulterated, loving responsiveness to the Supreme Person expressed through the faculties of body, mind, and speech.

In English, we use the word *love* as a synonym for other feelings. We speak of loving our pets, our friends, our families, our children and yet use the same word, *love*, to speak of things that simply please us – the latest movie, our favorite dish, a

preme and still experience the full expression of love, and without wise-love we’ll never be completely happy.

It was with interest that I learned that wise-love can only manifest when reposed in the perfect object of affection. I knew that for love to be perfect, for my selfless giving to actually become receiving (and fully satisfying), the object of my affection must be able to reciprocate all my love. Love, after all, is measured by how it is reciprocated. As my love increases, this person’s love for me must also increase; otherwise love is hindered. The only person capable of unending love and unmatched reciprocation is the Supreme Being. Therefore, the full manifestation of wise-love is only possible when our beloved is the Supreme.

If we invest our love, our being, however, in fallible objects of love, our giving will be stunted by the inability of our object of affection to reciprocate fully. Yes, my love and my being are limited, but so are his or hers. Many of us

have probably had the experience of being in a relationship where the other was not willing or able to contain or reciprocate what we offered. Those persons were deficient in their ability to understand our hearts and needs, or even if they weren’t, they left us at death. Perhaps we too have been that incapable person for others. Such imperfect giving may help us grow, but not always without psychological scars and heartbreaks, and certainly imperfect love can’t deliver to us the full experience of unconditional, pure spiritual love.

Wise-love develops when we entrust ourselves to the infallible object of love, that source of ourselves, our Divine Other. He is both undeterred by time – he will never leave us by dying – and wholly capable of accepting what we offer and reciprocating with us beyond what we can give.

Yet we have to begin our grand wise-love project from where we are:

new piece of clothing, a breathtaking landscape. Doing this makes us lose the subtle emotional characteristics inherent in the word *love*.

By contrast, Sanskrit has specific words for the kinds of love we feel – what we might feel for a friend or what a mother feels for her child or a lover for her/his beloved. And there’s a term for the love exchanged between the self and the Supreme Beloved: *prema-bhakti*, or wise-love. *Prema-bhakti* is a river of the most enchanting sweetness running into an ocean of unparalleled experience. *Prema-bhakti* is the comprehensive, sophisticated expression of pure spiritual love.

These two lovers – the Supreme Person and the finite self – are the recipients and givers of wise-love. Wise-love can only reach its ecstatic peak, its absolute joy, in the union between the Supreme Beloved and the lover. Therefore we, a finite self, can’t remain separate from the Su-

**Wise-love can only reach its ecstatic peak, its absolute joy, in the union between the Supreme Beloved and the lover.**

*anyabhilashita-shunyam  
jnana-karmady-anavritam  
anukulyena krishnanu-  
shilanam bhaktir uttama*

“The highest category of bhakti is that which exclusively pleases Krishna and is devoid of any desire apart from his service. It is not covered by the action of daily or customary duties (karma), nor by the knowledge that searches for the nonpersonal aspect of the Absolute (jnana), nor by the meditational attempt to become one with the Supreme.”

(*Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu* 1.1.11)

Rupa Goswami uses words and phrases like “friendly” and “favorable,” “without selfish desires or ulterior motives,” and “perpetual, ardent endeavor” to define the characteristics of pure bhakti. Our love will be friendly, unselfish, unmotivated, and constant. These sentiments and the actions that they give rise to, when expressed in relation to the

with this body-mind, in this world. We begin to glimpse wise-love when we learn to extend ordinary love unconditionally.

To encourage wise-love to root and blossom, we move our hearts in the direction of our ideal by attempting to love everyone unconditionally, starting with those around us. The unconditional love of others is a standard of excellence of being in the world. By regularly interacting with others with the intent to love them unconditionally, we soften our hearts. As we experience the heart softening, we’ll also see the ways in which our hearts remain hard. So this simple yet powerful practice of giving unconditional love – love without any expectation of return – will teach us just how extraordinary wise-love is, and how much the heart must melt and be spiritualized in order to reach the highest love of the Supreme.

And if we want more than a glimpse of wise-love, then, at the same time, we’ll water the seed of bhakti by hearing about, remembering, and serving our Divine Other. Then wise-love can mature and the petals of its flowers unfurl to show their beauty.

In the process of stretching our hearts to make them flexible, useful qualities that support wise-love, such as humility and compassion, begin to eclipse our less worthy qualities. And as we use our heads (reason) to soften our hearts, we’re brought to the threshold of wise-love, the doorway at which the self meets its Source. From there, we can enter the house of spiritual emotion, which transcends mundane love and, in time and with cultivation, reaches an unconditional, uninterrupted love, or love as a state of being.

Rupa Goswami, the saint whose definition of *bhakti* we considered at the beginning of this chapter, states that wise-love is like a million suns whereas mundane love is like a single candle. Both give light, but the illumination, intensity, purity, and joy of one cannot be compared to

the other. It’s difficult to imagine the brilliance of the sun and the gorgeousness of the world it reveals by looking at the flickering movement of a small candle flame in the dark.

Wise-love can satiate our need for interminable, absolute love, but to achieve it we’re first asked to develop new eyes with which to look at light.

#### CHAPTER 17: *Seeing with Your Ears*

Ears are crucial wherever eyes cannot help. We can’t see someone trapped in a storm drain, a coalmine, or under the debris of a collapsed building, but we can hear them. When we’re asleep – and our eyes are closed – a way to know we’re in danger is for someone to appeal to our ears with a loud “Wake up!”

We tend to equate knowledge with our ability to see. We use our eyes to learn, to read, to discern between one thing and another. But hearing contributes more to our knowledge than sight does. The majority of the knowledge we gleaned through schooling was gathered, yes, by reading books with our eyes, but more so by hearing the texts and the subjects they discussed interpreted by our teachers and reflected on by fellow students. In a similar way, transcendental knowledge is acquired by hearing. To see properly, open your ears.

*The Upanishads, Gita, Bhagavata,*

and other texts are sacred sound that existed prior to being set down in writing. These sounds are not human-made but are inherent in and underlying nature. This understanding is similar to the conclusion of some mathematicians that mathematical formulas always exist and are revealed or discovered rather than invented by the human mind.

We may recoil from the idea of revelation. We’ve heard speakers cite books to make their points only to misunderstand or misuse the text. And from revealed books of knowledge, we’ve also seen people form rigid rules or state that everything in the book being cited is applicable at all times and in all circumstances. This sort of interpretation of revelation is unappealing, so we step away.

Illuminating sound that appears from the Supreme and enters the ears and hearts of those connected with him through wise-love is attractive and relevant. Such sound rises up from the hearts of the devoted, dances on their tongues, and finds its way into our ears. If we allow this sound to further enter our hearts, we’ll live with heartfulness and move into the realm of wise-love.

We might contemplate a question about how to pursue this insight: would a conscious person respond openly to us if we probed and cut and measured and stole in search of his or her secrets? A better way to

*(please turn to page 63)*

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**W**HEN THE younger of my two daughters recently passed her final college exam, she was, as she said, “Ecstatic!” To reach the number of credits required to graduate, she had to pass that test, and all the preparation, tension, and drama surrounding it made me think of how tests and spiritual life are intertwined.

### Test the Guru

According to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures, the human form of life is meant for becoming God conscious and to become God conscious we must accept the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. But how do we know who is a bona fide spiritual master? For any serious spiritual candidate, that’s a crucial question.

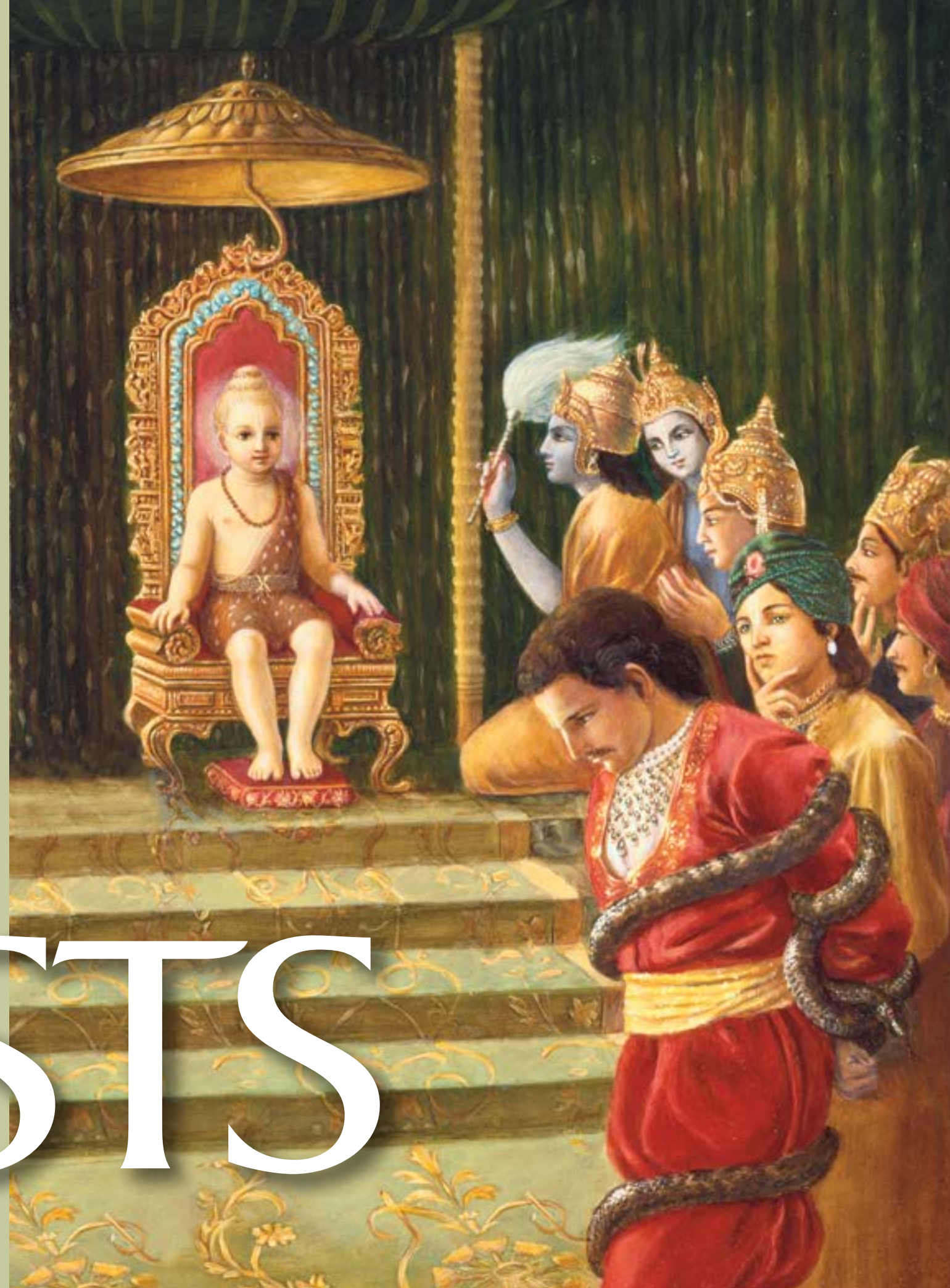
When an interviewer asked Śrīla Prabhupāda that question, he replied, “Just like when you go to the market to purchase something, you test it whether it is genuine or not. Similarly, you have to test who is genuine.” (Press Conference, August 5, 1971, London)

At another time, Prabhupāda said that before accepting a spiritual master, we must test that person for at least one year. In that year, it’s our responsibility

*Like academic tests, spiritual tests require careful preparation to ensure a successful result.*

by Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

# TESTS



Detail from a painting by Durgā Devī Dāsī

to learn about the qualities and qualifications of a bona fide guru. In Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words, the guru must “know the science of Kṛṣṇa. . . . This is the test. To become guru it doesn’t matter that one has to come out from a *brāhmaṇa* family or high family or Hindu family or this family or that family. No. Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, *yei kṛṣṇa-tattva*. Never mind what he is. He may be European, he may be American, he may be *sūdra*, he may be whatever. That is past. That is his past life. Now, when one has become *kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā*, really Kṛṣṇa conscious, he comes to the transcendental position.” (Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.2, March 7, 1972, Calcutta)

In other words, before one accepts initiation from a guru, one should be confident that the guru knows the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness (*kṛṣṇa-tattva*). One also wants to see that the guru is in a bona fide disciplic succession, that there’s no difference between the instructions of the guru and those of the Lord, and that the guru always engages in unalloyed devotional service to the Lord and never says, “I am God” or “I will make you God.” Rather, the real guru says, “I am a faithful servant of God, and I will make you a faithful servant of God as well.” And, as we hear from the prospective guru and begin to follow that person’s directives, another test of the bona fide guru is that we will find our anxiety and confusion decreasing.

*Lord Vāmana, an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, tested the forbearance of His devotee Bali Mahārāja, whom He rewarded with His constant association by serving as Bali’s gatekeeper.*

We need to be confident that we can surrender to and be guided by that guru. If we think, “No, I know better; I am more learned and more advanced,” then we shouldn’t accept a guru, for a disciple does not argue with or challenge the guru. So once we’re initiated, we focus on submissive inquiries and on applying what we’ve learned; our testing stops. “If somebody goes to challenge the guru,” Prabhupāda said, “the real guru will say, ‘What is the use of talking with this nonsense? Better say that ‘You know better than me.’ That’s all. ‘Go away.’ . . . Neglect him, because he has no intention to learn. He has come to simply waste time.” (Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.1.22, May 22, 1976, Honolulu)

esty, he gave simple tests to find God. “Don’t accept any bogus, so-called God. Just try to put him to the test whether he is actually God. This is the test, that nobody should be greater than Him; nobody shall be equal to Him. Then He is God.” (Sunday Feast Lecture, January 19, 1969, Los Angeles)

He gave other tests as well: If a person is controlled by somebody else, he is not God, for God is the supreme controller. God’s characteristics are mentioned in the scriptures and confirmed by genuine sadhus and gurus. No living being can perform God’s extraordinary feats. God possesses complete wealth, strength, reputation, wisdom, beauty, and renunciation.

There is, however, an inherent

### Test Ourselves

There are myriad ways in which we can test our own progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Those who are advancing in spiritual life become detached from material enjoyment and give up bad habits such as illicit sex, intoxication, gambling, and meat-eating. They also give up their erroneous concepts of life. Prabhupāda says, “By chanting we shall see how much we are making progress, how much I am free from these two concepts of life, that ‘I am this body, and anything belonging to this body is mine.’ This is the test – how we are becoming free from these two concepts of life. If there is still the concept that ‘I am this body, and anything belonging to this body is mine,’ then you have to chant very cautiously to make progress.” (Initiation Lecture, December 1, 1968, Los Angeles)

When we actually realize that we are spirit soul, then the symptoms will be that we are free of lamentation and hankering and are happy. Prabhupāda says, “If I am not jolly, if I am not *prasanna-manasa*, that means *māyā* has attacked me. A *bhagavad-bhakta* [devotee of God] shall never be *aprasanna*, not joyful. Always joyful. If he is actually in contact with Kṛṣṇa, how he can become morose? No. If he is morose, if he is unhappy, that means *māyā* has attacked him. This is the test.” (Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.20, October 31, 1972, Vrindavan)

Not only is the devotee joyful, but he or she wants to see others joyful: “*Sarve sukhino bhavantu*. This is the test. A devotee wants to see that everyone is happy. It doesn’t matter whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian. It doesn’t matter. We want to see that everyone is happy.” (Ceremony Speech, August 18, 1974, Vrindavan)

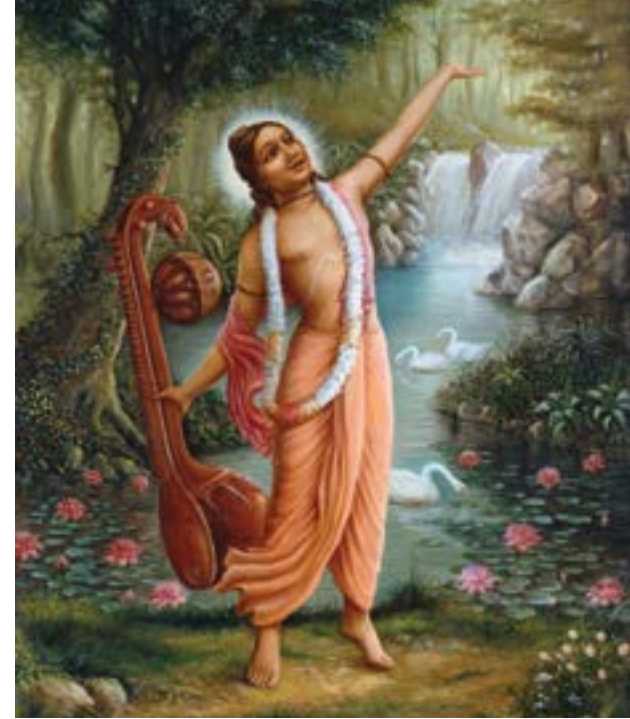
As we give up our bodily concept of life, all material activities, both impious and pious, automatically become distasteful to us for

we have no aspirations to achieve material happiness. Even if put into very trying circumstances, we are not troubled. We do not want to mix with materialistic persons, and we have no taste for unnecessary sporting or cinema because we understand that these are simply a waste of time. Our misgivings dissipate, and we feel some satisfaction in spiritual activities. At that time we are no longer servants of our senses and thus no longer directed by the dictation of the senses; we control the senses according to our plan.

Other tests of self-realization are that we don’t become angry even when attacked for no apparent reason, we don’t become enlivened when glorified or worshiped, the process of devotional service becomes progressively clearer and more encouraging, and our faith doesn’t waver.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gives still other ways in which we can test our spiritual progress:

Those who are jealous and envious are within this material world, and those who are not are in the spiritual world. Therefore, we can test ourselves. If we are jealous or envious of our friends or other associates, we are in the material world, and if we are not jealous we are in the spiritual world. There need be no doubt of whether we are spiritually advanced or not. We can test ourselves. *Bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir anyatra ca* [*Bhāgavatam* 11.2.42]. When we eat, we can understand for ourselves whether our hunger is satisfied; we don’t have to take a certificate from others. Similarly, we can test for ourselves whether we are in the material world or the spiritual world. If we are jealous or envious, we are in the material world, and if we are not we are in the spiritual world. Then you can serve Kṛṣṇa very nicely if you are not jealous. (Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.8.23, April 15, 1973, Los Angeles)



Painting by Sudhā Bhakta Dās

*One test of a devotee of the Lord is that the devotee is always happy. Here Nārada Muni feels such ecstasy on remembering Kṛṣṇa that his body expands and breaks his sacred brahminical thread.*

Similarly, if we are lusty or greedy we are in the material world. Prabhupāda explains: “To become Kṛṣṇa conscious means immediately – that is the test – immediately he will become free from lust and greediness. If he’s not free from lust and greediness, he is making a show; he’s not Kṛṣṇa conscious. This is the test.” (Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.19, August 22, 1972, Los Angeles)

On the positive side, devotees develop a taste for executing the instructions of the spiritual master and by doing so feel their devotion to the Lord grow and their love broaden. “On the spiritual platform, the learned person not only gives up the duality of man and woman, but also gives up the duality of man and animal. This is the test of self-realization. One must realize perfectly that the living being is spirit soul but is tasting various types of material bodies. One may theoretically understand this, but when one has practical realization, then he actually becomes a *paṇḍita*, one who knows.” (*Bhāgavatam* 7.12.10, Purport)

Those who have developed Kṛṣṇa

consciousness see Govinda everywhere, even in every atomic particle, and out of love for Him they are eager to serve Him. Such devotees, even while in this material world, manifest godly qualities. This is not some inaccessible ideal, but a tangible fact.

Devotees have an intense desire to hear about Kṛṣṇa, and, after hearing, they naturally want to speak to others about Him. The Lord reciprocates

with such devotees, showing them special favor by enlightening them from within so they can defend themselves from opposing arguments.

Those who are engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service feel enlivened and do not want anything in exchange. Rather, they want to encourage others. Prabhupāda writes, “One test is that all the devotees should be satisfied. They have given their lives to Krishna, so we should see they are always happy. Their service is voluntary. It is not that we can force anyone to do anything. If we do they will go away and that is a great loss. Everyone must be encouraged to do what he likes to do for Krishna.” (Letter, November 20, 1971)

Another test is that a devotee doesn’t stop trying:

Sometimes there may be disagreement and quarrel but we should not go away. These inebrieties can be adjusted by the cooperative spirit, tolerance and maturity, so I request you to kindly remain in the association of our devotees and work together. The test of our actual dedication and sincerity to serve the spiritual master will be

## The guru tests the prospective disciple to ensure that he or she is qualified and has a genuine desire for spiritual life.

### The Guru Tests Us

Just as a disciple does not blindly accept a guru, so the guru does not blindly accept a disciple. Rather, the guru tests the prospective disciple to ensure that he or she is qualified and has a genuine desire for spiritual life. “It is the duty of the spiritual master to test the disciple to see how seriously he desires to execute devotional service. Then he may be initiated.” (*Bhāgavatam* 4.8.32, Purport) “One must be able to pass the test of the spiritual master, and when he sees the genuine desire of the disciple, he automatically blesses the disciple with genuine spiritual understanding.” (*Gītā* 4.34, Purport)

### Test God

Śrīla Prabhupāda didn’t want us to accept as God someone who wasn’t. To prevent such a trav-

problem in testing who God is, namely that God is *adhokṣaja*, beyond the perception of our mind and senses. God is transcendental and not subject to our examination or test. Responding to this challenge, Prabhupāda says, “We accept God, not by blind faith, but by testing. Although we cannot test, but *śāstra* gives us the chance of testing. (Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.15, August 18, 1972, Los Angeles) Despite our imperfect senses and mind, we can understand who is and who is not God based on the words of the scriptures (*śāstra*), the genuine saintly persons, and the bona fide gurus.

Once we come to love God, Kṛṣṇa, we stop testing Him. Pure love for Kṛṣṇa means that whatever He may be, He is our lovable object and He alone, no one else, is the worshipable Lord of our hearts. Our only business is to love Him.

in this mutual cooperative spirit to push on this movement and not make factions and deviate. (Letter, December 9, 1973)

You are doing solid work, even alone, and I am very pleased. This is the test for a sincere devotee. Simply by depending on the mercy of the Lord and carrying out the order of the spiritual master, one's success in spiritual life is guaranteed. I thank you for your endeavor. (Letter, November 4, 1975)

### God's Tests

Besides our own tests for ourselves, there are God's tests for us.

Because we are weak and *māyā*, God's material energy, is strong, when we try to get out of *māyā*'s clutches by advancing spiritually, *māyā* becomes more stringent and tests our sincerity by sending allurements. In Prabhupāda's words:

*Māyā* will test us to see how firmly we are fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Because she is also an agent of Kṛṣṇa, she does not allow anyone the freedom to disturb Kṛṣṇa. Therefore she tests very rigidly to see whether we have taken to Kṛṣṇa consciousness to disturb Kṛṣṇa or are actually serious. . . . But if we follow the rules and regulations and chant

regularly as prescribed, then we shall remain steady. If we neglect these principles, *māyā* will capture us immediately. *Māyā* is always ready." (Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.8.20, April 12, 1973, New York)

At first we may be tested by *māyā*, Kṛṣṇa's external energy, and later we may be tested by Kṛṣṇa directly. Prabhupāda gives many examples of such testing. "For devotees there is test. We see from the devotee's life, Prahlāda Mahārāja, how much severe test he had to pass through. Bali Mahārāja, Nārada Muni. After you pass the examination, there is no more test. But before coming to the post of recognized devotee, Kṛṣṇa tests very severely. That one has to pass." (Morning Walk, August 11, 1976, Tehran)

In a purport of the Eighth Canto, Prabhupāda writes about one such test:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead sometimes puts a devotee to severe tests that are almost unbearable. One could hardly even live under the conditions forced upon Bali Mahārāja. That Bali Mahārāja endured all these severe tests and austerities is the mercy of the Supreme Lord. The Lord certainly appreciates the devotee's forbearance, and it is recorded for the

future glorification of the devotee. . . . The Supreme Personality of Godhead not only tested him [Bali Mahārāja] but also gave him the strength to tolerate such adversity. The Lord is so kind to His devotee that when severely testing him the Lord gives him the necessary strength to be tolerant and continue to remain a glorious devotee. (*Bhāgavatam* 8.22.29–30, Purport)

By being fixed in our determination we can pass Kṛṣṇa's tests. Prabhupāda explains:

Faith means that you are meant for giving some service to Kṛṣṇa. You should stick to that service, that path, in spite of all impediments. That is the passing of the test. . . . Just like we are meant for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So there may be severe test, but still we shall remain determined. That is wanted. There may be so many impediments, punishment; still you should do that. That is wanted. That is the test. Not that as soon as there is some difficulty I give it up. There may be severe test, but still we shall not give it up. We must go on. That is determination. . . . One has to take the order from the spiritual master and execute it, despite all impediments." (Morning Walk, August 11, 1976, Tehran)

### Our Final Test

After four years of study, my daughter passed her final exam. But for her, for me, and for all of us there's another final exam coming at the end of our lives. "In the subject of life, if we prepare for the examination at the time of death and pass it, then we are transferred to the spiritual world. Everything is examined at the time of death." (*Easy Journey to Other Planets*, Chapter 2) We prepare for that final exam by following Prabhupāda's and Kṛṣṇa's instructions now, in our everyday lives. 🌟

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### HEARTFULNESS

(continued from page 57)  
know something of our lover is to earn his or her trust. Trust opens the door to a lover's innermost secrets. Trust finds full expression in love: a loving approach is the way the Infinite, who is fully capable of revealing himself to the finite, responds to us.

True revelations guide us past obstacles and toward our highest self-interest. The inner life, although subtle, is deep, rich, and broad, layered with meaning and knowing not available to those who remain focused on the external world and the methods of taking and demanding.

Sages, mystics, and seers show how internal perceptions can be honed and refined until we can see and speak directly to the supreme Sentient Being. The more often we head in the direction of our inner home through habit and attention, the quicker we can return fully present there, and the more profound our insights become. The inner journey is made by repeated and regular excursions inward. These refine our spiritual sensibilities and cognition. Our spiritual faculties – mind, intelligence, and a full set of senses – can perform all the functions of the mundane mind and senses.

We have practical experience how the external senses of perception can be developed when there's a need. The blind describe that their hearing, smelling, and touching become acutely sensitive, for example. Similarly, those who are practiced at meditation become more aware of physical and psychic states than they were prior to learning to control the mind. Speak with pain management specialists who use breathing exercises and meditation in their practice, and you'll learn how chronic pain sufferers can change their levels of pain by controlling the mind. These are just some of the ways we can evolve our sense perception. There are subtler ways, too.

The *Gīta* was captured through

an inner spiritual vision. Krishna and his warrior friend Arjuna were speaking as they drew their chariot onto a battlefield between opposing armies. They were about to wage a world war. Neither Krishna nor Arjuna wrote down their conversation. It was Sanjaya, a mystic in a king's court, who had the yogic ability to see the scene and hear the conversation in his heart even though he was distant from the battlefield. The king, who was blind and who also had sons on the battlefield, heard the details of each day's fighting from Sanjaya. He had the capacity to see and hear what was transpiring at a distance, just as, in a similar fashion, an antenna, when rightly made and positioned, can

I have an inherent ability to perceive everything in the land of consciousness, and books of revelation serve as outlines to guide me there. The bhakti texts are love letters from the kind heart of the Divine Person, written about his life, which invite us to the homeland of our hearts.

As poignant as Bhakti Vedantic texts are, many are abstract, and because they are so voluminous, making sense of them requires assistance from one who has assimilated and harmonized them in his or her practical life. Homeward-bound teachers help us tease out the meanings and applications of revealed sound.

Do we really need scriptures? Do we really need a guide? Not if

Seers show how internal perceptions can be honed and refined until we can see and speak directly to the supreme Sentient Being.

deliver sound and images to the viewing instrument.

Untethered from matter, the self's capacity of perception and expression far outreaches the mind's and can probe the most secret of secrets. In the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna, Krishna says, speaking, really, to all souls:

*mayy asakta-manah partha  
yogam yunjan mad-ashrayah  
asamshayam samagram mam  
yatha jnasyasi tac chrinu*

"Now hear, O son of Pritha [Arjuna], how by practicing yoga in full consciousness of me, with mind attached to me, you can know me in full, free from doubt." (*Gīta* 7.1)

Seers explain that sounds of revelation form a bridge between matter and spirit. These sounds activate and enable the spiritual heart and senses to perceive things that are beyond the world of matter. In other words,

we listened to the world that always speaks to us. But we don't listen, usually, and even when we do, we don't listen like seers. We're not always sure what we're hearing. We don't always have enough context to understand what's being revealed to us. We purposely or helplessly talk and take and pillage and then ignore all the grieving sounds others make as they suffer at our hands. *After all*, we think, *I'm inherently good. What can be done?*

Keeping company with someone who is listening, whose ears, eyes, and heart attend to the Absolute, opens us to how we too can hear and see revelation. A saint listening to the song of the Supreme in her or his heart can help us hear. A seer can help us see. 🌟

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



# How God Spends His Time

LIKE MOST PEOPLE, I had only a vague idea about God before I learned about Kṛṣṇa. I was raised in a religious family and spent ten years in a school run by Catholic nuns. Religion class was the first class of the day. We learned that God is “the Supreme Being who made all things,” but a fuller picture of His personality seemed unavailable. I imagined an old man who spends His time dealing with human beings while they’re alive and judging them when they die.

Because we’re absorbed in concerns about our life in this world, it’s natural for us to think of God in terms of His relationship with us in our current situation. We think His attention is focused solely on all of us. We tend not to consider that He might have other things to do. Religiously inclined people pray to Him for help in facing life’s challenges, but only the rare soul asks, “What else does God do?”

When we’re introduced to Kṛṣṇa, we meet God as a multifaceted person with His own distinct personality, His own likes and dislikes and ways of doing things. First and foremost He’s the charming cowherd boy who spends His days frolicking with His young friends and enchanting everyone in His rural village. Simultaneously, in His majestic form as Lord Viṣṇu, He’s ruling each of the innumerable Vaikuṅṭha planets, where everyone bows to Him in awe. And “with a single fragment” of Himself, as He says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, He creates, sustains, and ultimately demolishes the inestimably vast material world. In other words, He’s enjoying at home and “working” somewhere else at the same time.

Kṛṣṇa can do countless things simultaneously because He’s not bound by our limitations. He reveals His Godhood in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and that revelation is corroborated throughout the Vedic literature.

Many years ago I wrote an article for *Back to Godhead* titled “Is Kṛṣṇa God?” I was a BTG staff member, and at the editorial meeting where my submission came up for consideration, one of the editors, remarking on the title, said with a smile, “I think I know the answer.” I wrote the article because people encountering Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the first time don’t always understand right away that, yes, we’re saying that this beautiful bluish flute-playing boy is in fact the one and only God you’ve been hearing about (vaguely) your whole life.

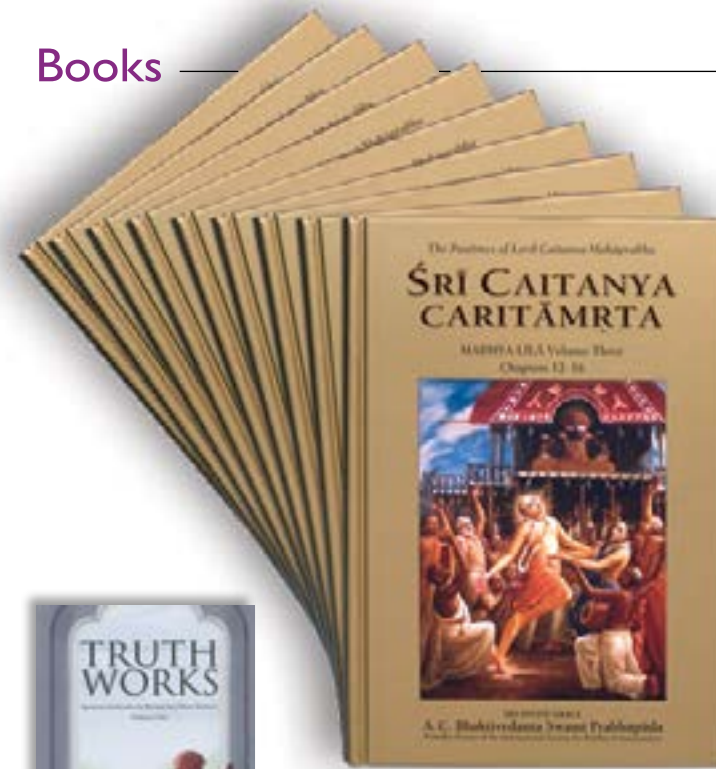
Kṛṣṇa’s biography is so expansive that to appreciate it requires a lifetime – or many lifetimes – of study. His activities are infinitely varied. And they take place in transcendence, where things inconceivable to us in our space- and time-bound condition are ordinary affairs.

From the *Purāṇas*, the histories of events occurring on a cosmic time-scale, we learn about Kṛṣṇa’s avatars, who show clearly that He can do anything and assume any form He chooses, each with its own unique mood. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, describes four facets of Kṛṣṇa’s own personality that contain seemingly contradictory qualities. For example, as a *dhīrodātta* person, He’s gentle and forgiving, but when He shows His *dhīroddhata* side, He’s proud and easily angered. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “If one asks how a personality can be beheld in four quite opposing ways, the answer is that the Lord is the reservoir of all transcendental qualities and activities.”

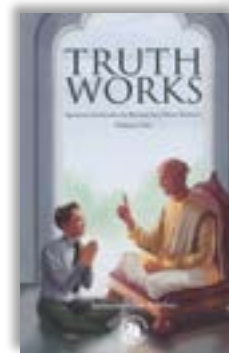
Kṛṣṇa performs an unlimited variety of acts, and by hearing about them we gain insight into the all-attractive Supreme Person, whose days fill even Him with wonder.

– Nāgarāja Dāsa

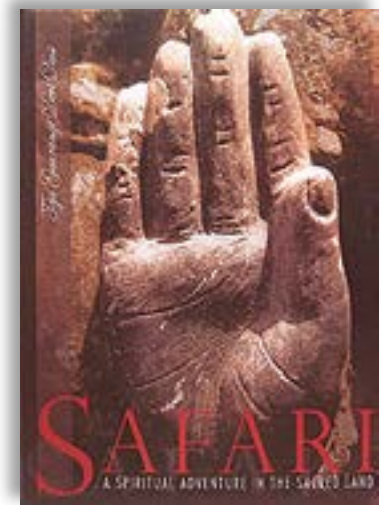
## Books



**Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, 9-Volume Set** – By Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, translation and commentary by Śrīla Prabhupāda. The definitive biography of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa for the current age. Printed in India. Hard-bound, 9 volumes, 7,379 total pages. 6" x 9". ~~\$139.95~~ BLBM804

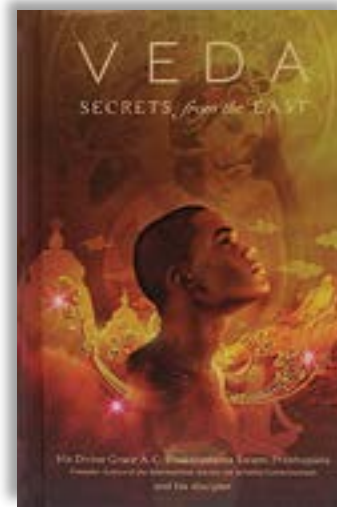


**Truth Works** – By Sankarshan Das Adhikari. A collection of questions and answers from Sankarshan Das Adhikari’s online Ultimate Self Realization Course from 2003 through 2007. He offers insights based on Vedic wisdom on a wide variety of subjects, including reincarnation, demigods, gurus, spiritual food, and how to lead a spiritual life in the material world. Hardbound, 314 pages, 16 color photos, keyword index, 5½" x 8½". ~~\$19.95~~ SALE \$12.99 S9BH780

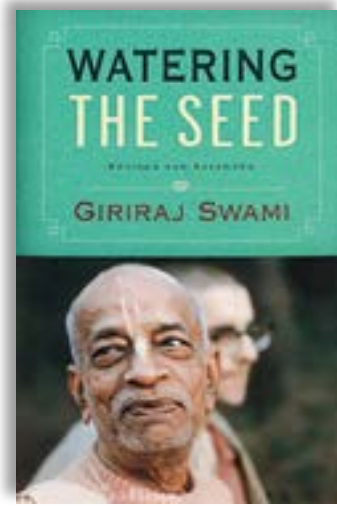


**Safari: A Spiritual Adventure in the Sacred Land** – By Teja Gaurāṅgī Devī Dāśī, with lectures by Jayapatāka Swami. This book takes the reader on a journey to many sacred sites and temples visited during four safaris led by Jayapatāka Swami: the 2003 Ganga safari, the 2004 Nṛsiṁha safari, the 2005 North India safari, and the 2006 South India safari. Hardbound, 362 pages, 8 pages of color photos, 15 lectures by Jayapatāka Swami, dust-jacket (may have wrinkles in the protective finish), 6" x 8". First published 2007. Printed in India. ~~\$12.95~~ SALE \$7.99

**Veda, Secrets from the East: An Anthology** – *Veda* explores the secrets of spirituality found in the ancient writings of India. Probing into topics such as the soul, karma, reincarnation, and meditation, this book will help awaken within you the spiritual insights great teachers have spoken of for thousands of years. In this book, Śrīla Prabhupāda and his followers address the most crucial questions of our existence. Hardbound, 459 pages, glossary, 5" x 7¼". ~~\$18.95~~ SALE \$10.99



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**Diet for Transcendence: Vegetarianism and the World Religions** – By Steven Rosen (Satyārāja Dāsa). This book offers reinforcement and inspiration for the 86% of the American population who are making a conscious effort to improve their diets by consuming more fruits and vegetables. Following an introductory overview of the physiological, environmental and economic reasons for adopting a vegetarian diet, Mr. Rosen considers vegetarianism in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The results of his research will come as a surprise to many religious adherents. He explains how vegetarianism is an ideal shared by all religions which teach mercy and respect for all creatures. Softbound, 144 pages, 6" x 9", ~~\$11.95~~ T3BS771



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## VEDIC THOUGHTS

The desire to merge into the impersonal Brahman is the subtlest type of atheism. As soon as such atheism, disguised in the dress of liberation, is encouraged, one becomes completely unable to traverse the path of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

His Divine Grace  
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda  
*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi 1.92, Purport

If we want to follow the path of true auspiciousness, we should give up the countless opinions of people and only hear the words of the *Vedas*.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura  
*64 Principles for Community*, Principle 13

Desire, anger, greed, bewilderment, intoxication, and pride are six enemies that wait on the path of a soul’s journey of life. They have lassoes which pull that soul so he slips from righteousness and performs unscrupulous activities. These enemies pull tightly to drag away one’s life.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura  
*Manah-śikṣā Bhāṣā*, Song Five

When one understands that the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the individual spirit souls are eternally distinct entities, then he may become qualified for liberation and for living eternally in the spiritual world.

*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 1.6

Simply by material birth, human beings become attached within their minds to personal sense gratification, long duration of life, sense activi-

ties, bodily strength, sexual potency, and friends and family. Their minds are thus absorbed in that which defeats their actual self-interest.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa  
*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.21.24

Therefore, my dear King, the living entity, who has a subtle mental covering, develops all kinds of thoughts and images because of his previous body. Take this from me as certain. There is no possibility of concocting anything mentally without having perceived it in the previous body.

Śrī Nārada Muni  
*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.29.65

Caught in the grip of ignorance, self-proclaimed experts consider themselves learned authorities. They wander about this world befooled, like the blind leading the blind.

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.2.5

The essence of all Vedic knowledge – comprehending the three kinds of Vedic activity [*karmakāṇḍa*, *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, and *upāsana-kāṇḍa*], the *chandās*, or Vedic hymns, and the processes for satisfying the demigods – is included in the eight syllables Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa. This is the reality of all Vedānta. The chanting of the holy name is the only means to cross the ocean of nescience.

*Nārada Pañcarātra*  
Quoted in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi 7.76, Purport

Dearer to the Lord than even His own beautiful form, His easily worshiped holy name benefits the entire world. Indeed, nothing is as full of nectar as the holy name of the Lord.

The Vaiṣṇava-dūtas  
*Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* 2.3.184

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# 2018

## Hare Kṛṣṇa Festival of India

*Remaining Schedule for North America*

**July 4** / Washington, D.C., Rathayātrā

**July 7–8** / Montreal Rathayātrā

**July 14–15** / Toronto Rathayātrā

**July 18** / Winnipeg, Manitoba,  
Festival

**July 21** / Calgary Rathayātrā

**July 28** / Edmonton Rathayātrā

**August 5** / Los Angeles Rathayātrā

**August 11–12** / Vancouver, BC,  
Rathayātrā

**August 19** / San Francisco Rathayātrā

**August 25** / Kamloops, BC, Festival

**September 1** / Seattle Rathayātrā and  
Flavors of India Fest

**September 3–4** / Vancouver, BC,  
Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī and Śrīla  
Prabhupāda's Vyāsa-pūjā

**September 8–9** / Kalowna, BC, Festival

**September 12** / Boulder, CO,

University of Colorado Festival

**September 22** / Philadelphia Rathayātrā

**September 29** / Morrisville, NC,  
Rathayātrā

**October 6** / Nashville Rathayātrā

**October 14** / Bloomington, IL, Śrī  
Rāmacandra Vijayotsava Festival

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



2017 Philadelphia Rathayātrā