

# BACK TO GODHEAD



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS, INC.



B A C K T O G O D H E A D

Godhead is Light, Nescience is darkness.  
Where there is Godhead there is no Nescience.

God appears, and God is Light,  
To those poor souls who dwell in Night;  
But does a Human Form display  
To those who dwell in realms of Day.

--William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence"



HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA-KRISHNA KRISHNA-HARE HARE

HARE RAMA HARE RAMA-RAMA RAMA-HARE HARE

Blessings of Krishna! BACK TO GODHEAD is a bi-monthly publication issued by the International Society For Krishna Consciousness. This publication is principally concerned with promulgating through the medium of essays, poems and articles the truths expounded by Lord Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita. Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta, our spiritual leader, stresses that although Krishna and Rama took their births in India, they are not solely the "property" of India or Indians any more than Christ is the "property" of the Middle East. God and His truths know neither boundaries nor nationalities. Narrow sectarianism and ethnocentrism are only pitfalls on the path to



liberation. God is neither Christian nor Jew, neither Moslem nor Buddhist nor Hindu-- He is beyond all such designations. He is, in the Gita, Krishna, the Knower Who is not known, the Enjoyer, Who, in His spiritual Kingdom, enjoys Bliss-Knowledge-Absolute.

True devotees of Krishna neither reason nor argue about Him. "He who replies to words of Doubt, Doth put the Light of knowledge out," wrote Blake. For the devotees, Krishna is an established fact. The devotees do, however, spread "Krishna-consciousness" to others, to convince them of Krishna's existence through the "science of devotion." Devotion to God is a "yoga," a science, and it is to teach this science that Swami Bhaktivedanta has come to America. His method is simple: the chanting of the Holy Name of God, "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare," a sixteen word chant prescribed by Lord Sri



Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the 15th and 16th centuries as being especially effective in this age of "Kali," an age characterised by atheism, ignorance, chaos, and disagreement.

Spiritual foods, dancing, singing and chanting the praises of the Supreme Lord, study of the Bhagavad-Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam are all parts of this bhaktiyoga method. This method boasts such illustrious adherents as Brahma, Shiva, Luxmi, Kumara, Narada, Vyasadeva, Madhya, Chaitanya, Bhakti-siddhanta and Swami Bhaktivedanta in the East, and, in the West, many of the Christian saints, St. Augustine, Meister Eckhart, Socrates, Plotinus, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, William Blake and Whitman. Now in the West, with a sudden resurgence of interest in God-consciousness, spiritual education is needed more than ever. As a confused mankind begins to enter into its third global war in this century, it is the duty of those advanced in bhaktiyoga to speak out and educate the unenlightened.



It is partly with such quixotic intentions that Back To Godhead is being issued. Following the orders of his spiritual master, His Divine Grace Sri Srimad Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada, Swami Bhaktivedanta began the initial publication of Back To Godhead in 1944. This bi-monthly, published from 1944 to 1956 in Vrindaban, India (Vrindaban, 90 miles Southeast of Delhi, was Krishna's playground during His stay on earth.) established Swami Bhaktivedanta as the leading Personalist in India. This issue marks the first publication of Back To Godhead in the West. The editors welcome suggestions, essays, poems, letters, and articles concerned with Krishna katha (topics).

-- Hayagriva Das Brahmachary  
(Howard Wheeler)

Rayarama Das Brahmachary  
(Raymond Marais)



## FROM THE LECTURES OF SWAMI A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA

Notes transcribed by Woomapati Das Brahmachary (Wallace Sheffey)  
From lectures given Sept. 5th and 17th, 1966.

There are different yoga systems, but they all have the same goal: realization of the Absolute Truth and re-establishment of our eternal relationship with Krishna. We have forgotten this relationship due to our association with material energy. Beginners in yoga should engage themselves in work for Krishna. It is difficult to keep the mind concentrated on the Super-soul without work. If a beginner tries to practice sitting in meditation, his mind will wander.

This is the age of Kali-- an age of conflict. In this age, meditation is not recommended. Meditation was recommended for past ages when people were more virtuous and more religious. With each succeeding age, people have become less virtuous and



less religious. This does not mean that nobody should practice meditation. If one is able to sit perfectly still and keep his mind completely concentrated on the Absolute Truth, he can successfully practice meditation. However, this is not possible for most people today.

Nowhere in the Bhagavad-Gita does Krishna tell Arjuna to sit idly while He works. Arjuna was Krishna's friend. We can also be Krishna's friends if we work for Him and keep our minds always fixed on Him. We should cease working for our own profit and always work for Krishna. We should be thinking of things to do for Krishna twenty-four hours a day. When our minds are fixed on Krishna, we become silent. In this way, whenever we sit still, we will be practicing perfect silent meditation because our minds will remain fixed on Krishna.

Work requires a purpose. We are always working, either for our own sense gratification or for Krishna. Practicing yoga



means working without thought of personal interest, but solely for the mission of Krishna. What is this mission? To tell people about Krishna-consciousness, or God-consciousness. Lord Chaitanya told His disciples, "Preach this gospel that I teach. Whomever you meet, just try to inform him about the message of the Bhagavad-Gita." We should inform the world about the message of the Gita. One who does this is on the platform of real yoga.

Man has the choice to elevate himself or to lower himself, in the spiritual realm as well as the material. We are the cause of our own happiness or suffering. If I try to elevate myself, I am a friend of myself. If I put myself into Hell, I am my own worst enemy. Other people can instruct us, but it is up to us to decide whether or not we want to follow the instructions. Heaven or Hell is our own choice. If I drive a car on the wrong side of the road, it is my own fault if I get into trouble.



The spell of illusion is strong. Even Arjuna balked at following Krishna's instructions. Arjuna knew that only Krishna could enlighten him, but still he hesitated. Krishna never insists that we follow His instructions. He says that this is the way to happiness, but He does not insist. The choice is ours.

My mind is my friend when I can control it. It has been said that when we wake up and when we go to sleep, we should beat our minds a thousand times with a shoe. When the mind says things like, "Why sing 'Hare Krishna?' Why not take LSD?" we should beat it with the same shoe. However, if we always think of Krishna, no beating will be necessary. The mind will be our best friend.

Everything we have should be used for Krishna. We should use our tongue to speak of Krishna and to eat food properly prepared and offered to Krishna. We should use our eyes to look at pictures of Krishna, and our ears to hear a master speak of



Krishna. We can use our feet to walk to Krishna's temple, and our hands to hold the broom that sweeps the temple floor. We can use our nose to smell flowers offered to Krishna. We can use our genitals to produce children whom we will raise in Krishna-consciousness. Even if we cannot follow these suggestions, we can always chant, "Hare Krishna, Hare Rama." We must divert the mind from its material engagements and put it into Krishna-consciousness. It is not recommended to meditate on formless void. The mind should be focused on Krishna.

The mind is restless, so we should chant the Name of the Lord. The sound vibration of the chant is not different from the Lord Himself. In the material world, the name of a person is not the same as the person. If I need Mr. Jones it will not do any good to go into a room and simply chant his name. Krishna, however, is not a material person like Mr. Jones. Krishna's Name and Krishna are the same. Krishna stays with the devotee



who chants His Name. He dances on the tongue that chants "Hare Krishna, Hare Rama."

It does no good to absent-mindedly chant the Name of Krishna while your thoughts are elsewhere. Chanting will bring an uncontrolled mind under control. A yoga system is a process for bringing the mind under control, not a system for letting the mind wander unrestricted. We can control our minds by always concentrating on Sri Krishna. It is not necessary to go off to some lonely place and engage in difficult meditative practices. Not only is this unnecessary-- it is impossible in this age. But chanting is easy and can be performed anywhere. Everyone can take part in it-- women, children, scholars, black people, white people-- everyone. Simply concentrate on Krishna. Listen to Krishna's words with the ears and chant His name with the tongue.

We are Brahman, but not the Supreme Brahman. It is within



our capability to become as good as the Supreme, but we can never become the Supreme Himself. We are Brahman, but we are covered. We must take the cover off. It is not a case of becoming Brahman; we are already Brahman, but we are entangled by illusory energy. The Supreme Lord is never caught up in illusion. A cloud cannot cover the whole sky. Even if the sky appears to be completely covered, we know that the covered part is only a small fraction of the entire sky. Similarly, the Supreme Lord cannot be covered by the cloud of illusion. When we are free from material entanglements we discover our real identity.

Living entities are in a marginal position. They can remain in the material world or they can realize their true identity and go to the spiritual world. People think that they can be happy in the material world, but they struggle day and night. They struggle on account of their perverted minds. The yoga



systems are for purifying the mind. Meditation is too difficult. It is easier to be a devotee of Sri Krishna and to be always engaged in His service. One who continues in such bhaktiyoga becomes free from material contamination. As soon as he is free he knows that, "I am not this matter. I am Brahman." As soon as he realizes this he feels the highest pleasure. He is filled with joy. Others may see him as poor and penniless, but he knows that he is the happiest man in the world. This realization has nothing to do with material wealth. A man in Krishna-consciousness can cheerfully accept poverty. One who is not in Krishna-consciousness suffers even if he is wealthy. If one is in Krishna-consciousness, he is always happy. Poverty means nothing to him. In Krishna-consciousness, life is so blissful that any condition is a happy condition. This happiness is so great that nobody could ask for anything more.

Spiritual happiness is eternal; material happiness is tem-



porary. For this reason, one who wants spiritual happiness must not eat too much nor indulge in unrestricted sex. When one feels this spiritual happiness, he has no need of material happiness. Material life is diseased life. Seeking material happiness is like seeking to prolong a disease because you think that you will enjoy the disease more than good health.

Spiritual life is full of knowledge and bliss, and is above death and ignorance. The spiritual man sees the Supreme Lord everywhere and in every living being. Because he loves Krishna, he sees Him everywhere. Every living being is situated in Krishna and Krishna is in every living being. The spiritual man does not see cows or men or women or fools; he only sees the Supreme Lord. A man in Krishna-consciousness does not walk around in a fog but does his work well, and with the touch of an expert. When one enters Krishna-consciousness he becomes a poet and writes hymns to God. A man of true learning is one



who  
/sees every woman except his own wife as his mother and treats her accordingly. He sees other peoples' property as garbage, and he has unlimited compassion for all living creatures.

Krishna says, "He who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me; I am not lost to him, nor is he lost to Me." (Gita,vi/30)  
A person in Krishna-consciousness sees everything in relation to Krishna. If I use a tape recorder for sense pleasure, it is a material object; but if I use it to record a speech about Krishna, it is spiritual. Krishna-consciousness means seeing everything in relation to Krishna and using everything for Him. Even money is spiritual if it is used for Krishna's purpose.

Krishna says that when the yogi re-establishes his relationship with Him, then, "I will never leave his sight." The perfection of yoga is to see Krishna everywhere. Even though the spiritual man sees Krishna everywhere, he still worships His form in the temple. He does not think that because Krishna is



everywhere, it is of no use to go to the temple to worship. If Krishna is everywhere, He is also in the temple. Krishna is very kind to us. He lets us see Him everywhere and He lets us worship Him in the temple. The real yogi sees Krishna everywhere and still worships Him at the altar. The real yogi also spreads his happiness to others. Because he has become happy through Krishna-consciousness he tells others about it so they can become happy too. This is the true meaning of spiritual socialism. This gives the maximum benefits to the most people. Krishna Himself said that no man is dearer to Him than one who helps others.

When one enters the Kingdom of God he will know how unhappy he was in the material contamination. He will not want to go back. Returning to Krishna does not mean becoming Krishna. When a son returns home to his father he does not become his father. We can even become the father of Krishna, but we can



never be equal to Him. We will always be subordinate to Him.

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O Savior of the Lotus Eye,  
I am unworthy of Thy Form Divine;  
Whisper but Thy Name sublime,  
Govinda, Govinda, Govinda.

O Krishna of the Lotus Breast,  
Where compassion complete doth rest,  
Just one embrace is all I ask,  
That is enough for me.

O Lover of the Lotus Lips,  
Press to my heart Thy tongue;  
Enfold Thyself about myself,  
Then shall we two be one.

Sprinkle the dust from Thy Lotus Feet  
Over my mortal head;  
Trample my flesh to pieces,  
Then only Thou will be.      --Kirtanananda Das Brahmachary

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Krishna the dew of morning,  
Krishna the flower of noon,  
Krishna the star of evening,  
Krishna the all in all.

Krishna the Knower,  
Krishna the Known,  
Krishna the Subject and Object,  
Krishna is All I know.

--Kirtanananda Das Brahmachary  
(Keith Ham)



## FLIP OUT AND STAY

by Hayagriva Das Brahmachary  
(Howard Wheeler)

Life is a succession of flashes. It is difficult for man, at any time in his history, to see himself as he really is. Events fall upon events with stunning rapidity, and from this vantage point, so arbitrarily designated as "America, 1960's." we can see that these events have been tumbling from century to century with a snowballing effect and without any direction. Today we sense that the universe is truly explosive. Uni-verse. Etymologically the word means "one turning," or "one revolution." Poetically it is easier to think of "universe" as meaning "one song," or "The Song of the One," "Song of Myself," "Bhagavad-Gita," or "The Song of the Lord." The universe has been described by Pascal as a sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. Each individual certainly feels this



to be so, as it is the nature of each living entity to feel that the whole of life is revolving about him and that he is the measure of all things. So thinks the President in the Presidency, the laborer in his shop, the ant in his anthill. To quote Whitman, "There is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd universe." This is the case, and, paradoxically, it is not the case. We constantly have glimpses of a larger Self, a Knower Who is not yet known and Who hints at being the center from which all things emanate, an Intelligence that omnipresently pervades creation, yet has, as an observer, His supreme eternal abode in a superior realm.

At this moment in history we may be inclined to wish that man would only stop-- stop all his activities-- and just look at himself. It would be much like the ant in the anthill suddenly becoming aware of itself as an ant in an anthill. It would be like stopping the camera of life and focusing on one of



the frames of that great film, of capturing briefly one of those elusive succession of flashes, or somehow managing, as William James once cited, "to kiss your own lips." Many of us know that those lips will stay there till we reach the other side. Perhaps some men-- at this stage in their evolution-- feel that the whole process would be too embarrassing. It would be like a government dignitary being caught naked in a harsh light, or being suddenly surprised in the bathroom. After all, evolution is not symmetrically progressive. Some entities seem trapped in the lower cellars for millenniums while others, with one birth, zip to the top and flip over the ledge. That final flip has been called liberation by the Hindus, nirvana by the Buddhists, and salvation by the Christians. Though concepts differ as to what the "flip" is to, the end result seems pretty much the same. There's no return. Or, to use the language of the American LSD "hippies": "no more bring-downs."



How to flip and flip completely is the question. It is certainly not nobler in the mind to suffer those "slings and arrows" of contemporary misfortune. Not at this point at least. If a man does stop and take that long look-- catch himself between breaths as it were and feel the immensity of the past (decillions of exhausted winters and summers) pushing him into the unknown, eternity pushing him into eternity, toward the final merge he always seems to resist (if not always, why is he still struggling on the material plane?)-- then man can easily see that the sound and the fury is robbing him of the best that is in him, that he is actually selling out his happiness for one thing or another (a loaf of bread, family honor, social standing, national prestige, or something else illusory) and that in reality, like the ant on the anthill, he doesn't know who he is, what he is, where he is, where he's been, where he's going, or-- most pathetically-- who's in charge.



Who is in charge?

Well, we can pretty much conclude that man isn't. He can't even affect his own destiny as history. In this century alone he hasn't been able to keep from killing himself in two major wars. Now he's undoubtedly beginning a third in Vietnam and is already unable to stop it. He certainly can't affect the rotation of the earth on its axis, the rising and falling of the tides, the fire of the sun or the balance of the solar system and its motion within the galaxy. His "progress" is a sham-- automobiles and planes only accelerate his deterioration-- mass murder by bombs, suicide by speed. Birth, old age, disease and death join hands as firmly now as in prehistoric times. How has man made progress? Certainly none in this age of spiritual malnutrition. The word-pictures Hart Crane, the American poet, gives in "The Tunnel" section from The Brooklyn Bridge are most graphic depictions of life in contemporary New York:



Some day by heart you'll learn each famous sight  
 And watch the curtain lift in hell's despite . . . .  
 Our tongues recant like beaten weather vanes . . . .  
 The phonographs of hades in the brain  
 Are tunnels that re-wind themselves, and love  
 A burnt match skating in a urinal.

Daemon, demurring and eventful yawn!  
 Whose hideous laughter is a bellows mirth  
 --Or the muffled slaughter of a day in birth--  
 O cruelly to inoculate the brinking dawn  
 With antennae toward worlds that glow and sink;--  
 To spoon us out more liquid than the dim  
 Locution of the eldest star, and pack  
 The conscience navelled in the plunging wind,  
 Umbilical to call-- and straightway die!

O caught like pennies beneath soot and steam,  
 Kiss of our agony thou gatherest;  
 Condensed, thou takest all-- shrill ganglia  
 Impassioned with some song we fail to keep.  
 (From Hart Crane's The Brooklyn Bridge)

Such is the cry given by "the Shelley of our age" over the rooftops of the "world's most modern city." The "Shrill ganglia" is contemporary civilization and the "song we fail to keep" is the Song Divine, the Song of God. Yet New York is the city other cities about the globe seek to emulate. One look at the



faces of the occupants of this city tell us they are not of the "golden Manahatta" Whitman celebrated. No, these are the inhabitants of "the back forks of the chasms of the brain," the dwellers of the "interborough fissures of the mind." These are men who've never stopped to look at themselves and their position. These are the lost. Lost in the anthills. Lost in the firey mazes of space. Lost in the chaos of the radio static of propaganda. Lost to the archpriests of Moloch. Buddha declared two thousand years ago that everything in the material universe is "on fire." Yet man still persists. He wants to be God. He wants to lord it over "his" little planet. He wants to control. He wants power. That is his karma. That is his illusion. That is his golden vanity. That is his habit. That is his hangup. And he trains his children to mimic him. "The sins of the fathers are visited on the children to the third and fourth generations." (Exodus) No wonder so many young collegiates are try-



ing to flip our permanently on super drugs. Perhaps they see that a creation, which is essentially beautiful, is being misused. Perhaps they sense a part of the truth: that man is not proprietor and lord of the creation, but is a custodian and servitor. Perhaps this is their way of saying, "We don't want any part of this hell you've made for yourselves." So they use psychedelics as a springboard to propel themselves into different realms, into realms previously only known to mystics. But the drug "flip" is only temporary. It is temporary because it is artificial. "Oh, satori," one young LSD user was heard to say. "Yes, I've had that. It wasn't all that great." One really begins to wonder where all these "trips" are leading. And one thinks of old Whitman: "That I walk up my stoop, I pause to consider if it really be, / A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books. / Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy." ("Song of Myself," Sec.24)



This is cosmic consciousness. This is being awake to ourselves and to the Divine. This is realization.

Realization is not something we learn in a book or hear in a lecture. Realization is living the life for which man is intended. Realization does not imply withdrawal; realization is leading life and meeting destiny with opened eyes. Man does have an integral place in the universe, a unique and perfect place. If a leaf of grass is the "journeywork of the stars," how much moreso is man? But man must begin to accustom himself to "the dazzle of the Light," to wake up and see himself in his position-- his constitutional position. This is not "void." The creation is not void. It is filled with light, motion, and an infinite number of forms and objects. Buddha does not say it is void. "Emptiness IS form," he says. Each moment we are being shown something by God who is eternally revealing Himself to us. If we would only let Him! We must listen to what He is



telling us, to turn off to mankind and tune in to Him. We must learn our lesson well and learn to surrender to Him that He may teach and guide us. It is not necessary to close our eyes and try to think of void in our attempts to "reach" God. God is not so hard to reach. He tends to our every need without our asking Him. We can be in samadhi, or highest union with God, every moment of our lives, and while performing the most menial tasks. Our morning breakfast can be an ecstasy-- without penance or meditation or drugs or laborious study. The best method in this "Age of Kali," an age characterized by chaos, disagreement, ignorance and quarrel, is the simple chanting of the praises and the Holy Name of God-- continuously.

"Krishna" (the Name of God appearing in the Gita) "kirtan" (singing, chanting) is the simplest method for this age, introduced in America by this Society For Krishna Consciousness. This is the quickest way to flip out without coming down: "Hare



Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare Hare! Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare Hare!" Your associates will think you mad. That is the first sign of progress. Just let others be mad for maya, the old ephemeral lures of women and gold. One doesn't have a choice of being mad in this madhouse society--most are already mad for the illusion, for the sham, the cheap, the tawdry, the counterfeit, and are being buffeted by the waves of lust, power, sensual pleasures, etc. But be mad instead for the Reality. First of all you will begin to notice how beautiful the creation is. Then you will progress into the eternal realms of the Creator, Krishna, Who is Bliss-Knowledge-Absolute. Allow Him and He will reveal things to you that have confounded the wise for centuries. Then you will find your eternal abode in Him, an abode in which there is no life or death to escape, but only the bliss of the Kingdom to enjoy. Is this such a mean pursuit for a man?



Thy Name, Dear Krishna, is music.  
 Thy Name is holy food.  
 Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,  
 Krishna, Krishna, Hare Hare,  
 Hare Rama, Hare Rama,  
 Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Jehovah, Jesus, Buddha too,  
 All are Thy Names and are blessed too.  
 Many Thy Names I know not yet--  
 What does it matter when I know You.

--Kirtanananda Das Brahmachary  
 (Keith Ham)

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