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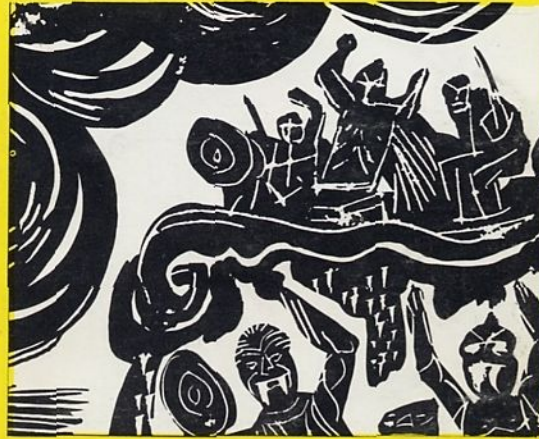
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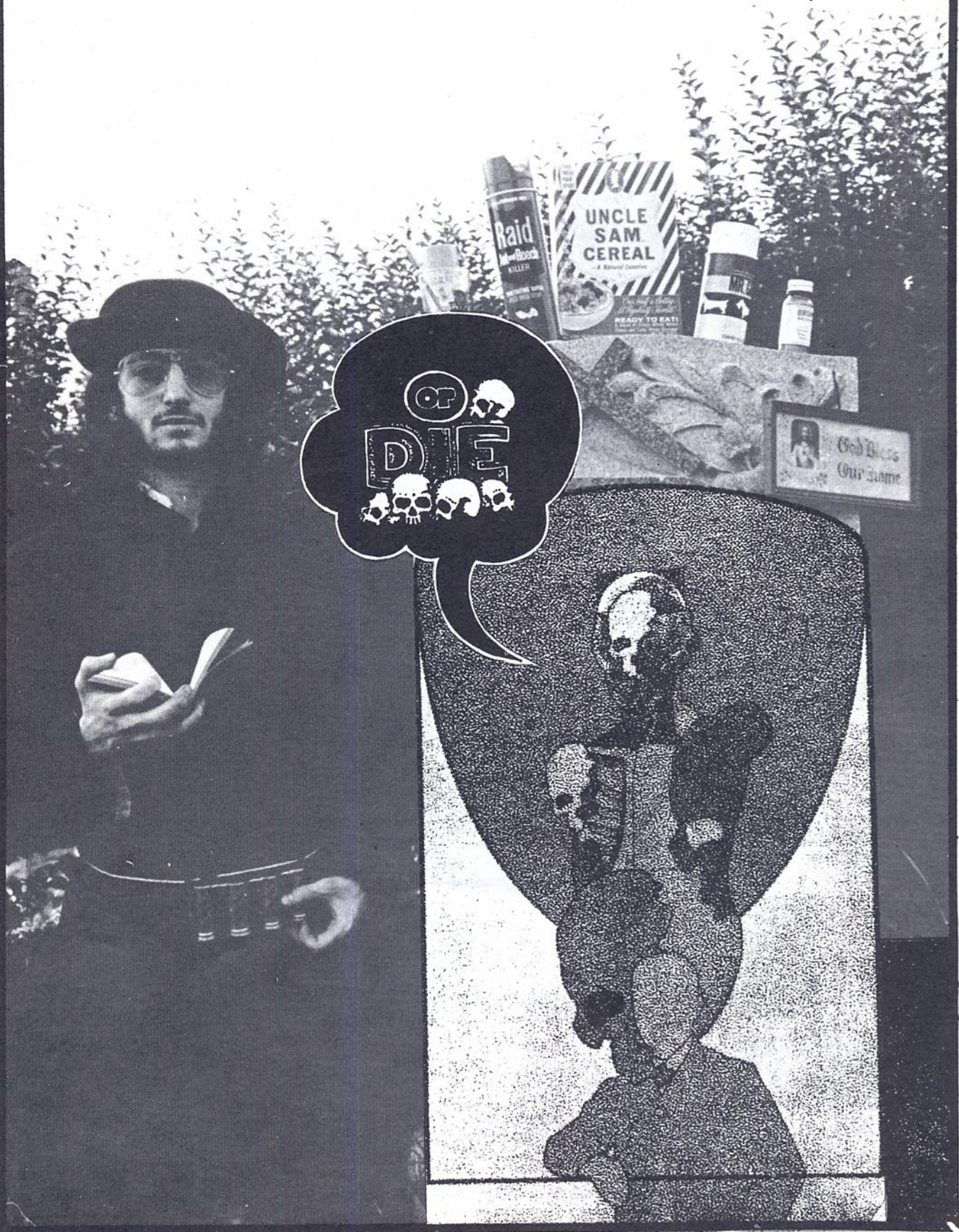


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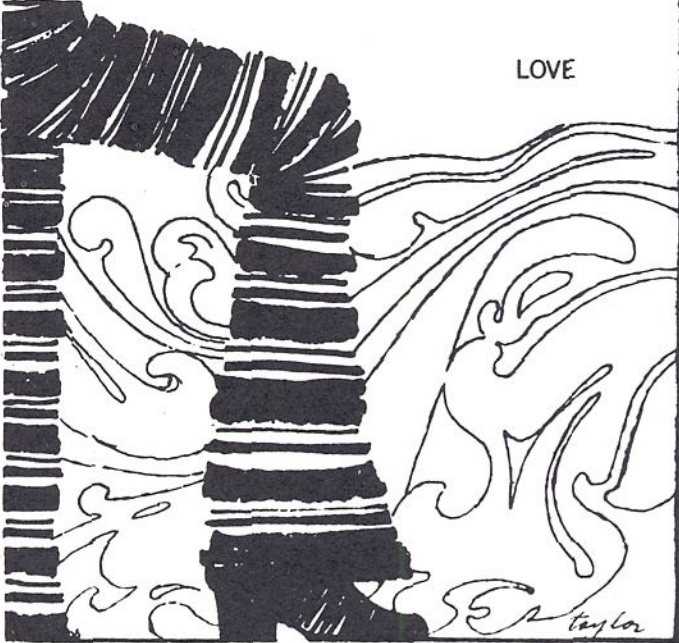
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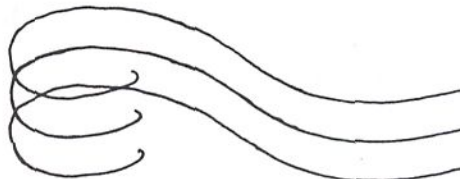
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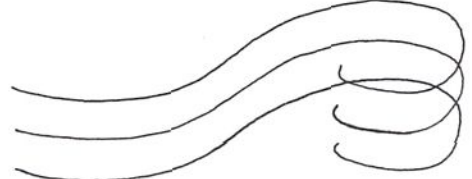


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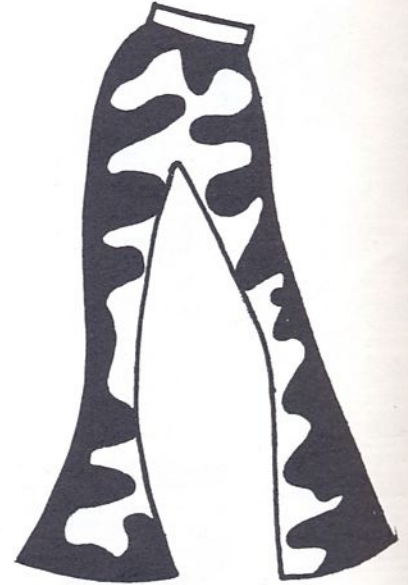
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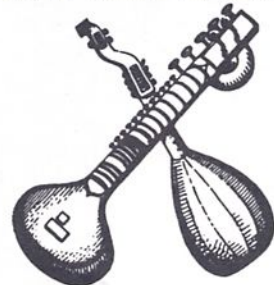
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"The recommended process for God realization in this Age is chanting of the Hare Krishna Mantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare."

—A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

BACK TO GODHEAD

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Editorial

2001: A Credibility Gap

Do them there scientists have the right to play God? In the November 16 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*, there is an article entitled "We Scientists Have the Right to Play God," in which Dr. Edmund R. Leach of King's College, Cambridge, says they do.

First off, Dr. Leach dispatches the original God with a few deft strokes of the pen: "Our idea of God is a product of history." "Everyone now knows that the cosmology that is presupposed by the language of Christian utterance is quite unrelated to any empirical reality." And: "The God of Judeo-Christianity is, in all His aspects...anthropomorphic."

In the latter two sentences, however, the Doctor displays the usual fault of the modern atheist, in that he attacks the somewhat limited presentations of Judaeo-Christianity, but ignores the far more comprehensive, systematic and scientific approach to spiritual reality found in the Vedic writings of India. These writings, as we have frequently tried to demonstrate in *BACK TO GODHEAD*, not only do not contend with most of the findings of modern science (e.g., evolution and nuclear physics) but outline these concepts in great detail, and then go far beyond them into realms which today's researcher would dare to look upon only as "speculative." Furthermore, they bridge the gap between science and faith, and emphatically support the basic teachings of all the world's great religions.

Of course, in his eagerness to play God, Dr. Leach has no time for anything as troublesome as an exhaustive examination of more Scriptures. He wants to get on to the much more serious business of Dreaming Up Tomorrows, which is about all our scientists today can do to justify themselves, what with The Bomb and chemical-biological warfare—not to mention the industrial ghetto—representing past and present achievements.

Dr. Leach makes two very fundamental errors in the course of his article, and these are well worth looking into: First, he assumes that scientists can, if they choose, create a new morality by which civilization will be benefitted. Second, he concludes that man—that life itself—is no more than an organic, material "mechanism."

In regard to the first error, we should recognize the fact that scientists need money from outside their own community in order to carry on their researches. And this money can only come from industry and government, sometimes through the medium of the university, sometimes not. In any case, the fact is that our present world economic systems—in both Russia and the West—have proved themselves unable to remain healthy and stable without resort to imperialism and other means of exploitation to stimulate them. For example, even as this is being written, the bombing halt in North Viet Nam is causing slowdowns at a number of American plants. Total peace will lead, inevitably, to a state of widespread unemployment with which our economic policymakers are unable to contend—short of involvement in another crisis situation.

Now, as the governments and industries of the world

continued on page 8

Editorial—continued

must, under the present system, commit themselves to war and exploitation in order to survive, we cannot deny the fact that their wealth is going to be channelled toward that end in the future as much as in the past. And our scientists are by no means likely to leave their fold in any sizable numbers, to starve in, perhaps, the manner that artists in the past have starved. In the case of the scientists, this would make work itself impossible.

Even when it does turn to projects of peace, however, the value of modern science to man remains highly questionable. Take, for example, the enormous amounts of wealth that our nations are throwing away today in order to place a few experimenters on the admittedly barren wastes of the Moon.

As to the second error—the concept of life as a “machine”—we suggest that if this is so, morality as an independent function of the human mind, which Dr. Leach asserts it is, cannot exist. Unless something lies outside the machine, all is mechanical, is it not? Our moralizing, our thinking, our very being must all be geared and determined.

The failure of science to inquire further in this direction

—into the nature of pure consciousness and its distinction from matter—is, we strongly urge, the reason why men like Dr. Leach continue to offer us all the rosy tomorrows we could ever hope to ask for, while presenting in reality such things as nuclear weapons and fallout, chemical and biological devices of incredible horror, defoliates, napalm and far more (remember where LSD began?) as the practical results of their endeavors. If we were scientists ourselves—psychologists, that is—we might put forward some rather sharp hypotheses as to why such a gap between promise and performance exists.

But this might be more easily explained by recognizing the fact that scientists have done nothing but “play” God for two hundred years and more. It’s nice for Dr. Leach, of course, to urge the scientific community to look for a moral code to govern itself. It’s only high time—if not too late—for these men to rejoin the human race. We only wish to suggest that such an endeavor begin, however, by discarding the narrow-minded anti-religious prejudice which has so long held science back from a serious study of spiritual life and values. END

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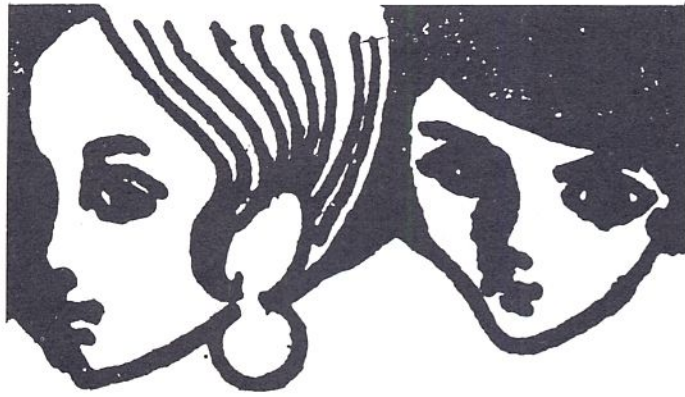


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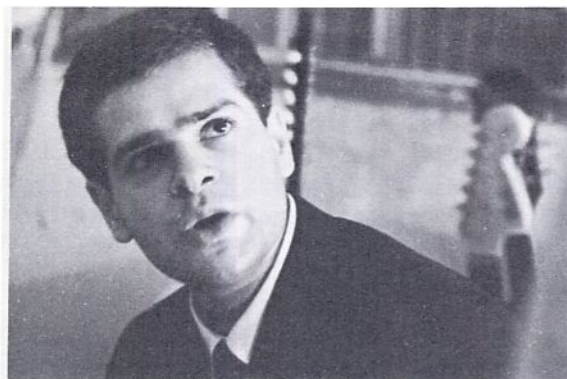
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The Beach Boys Talk About Transcendental Meditation

At left, Carl Wilson discusses his first encounter with transcendental meditation. Below left, Purushottam questions the Beach Boys. Below right, Mike Love sniffs at a rose as he listens to the conversation.



Backstage at New York's Fillmore East, Purushottam and Gargamuni, two students of the Krishna Consciousness Yoga system, met Carl Wilson, his brother Dennis, and Mike Love—three members of the critically acclaimed Beach Boys rock group. The discussion, taped for BACK TO GODHEAD Magazine, went like this:

PURUSHOTTAM: I'd like to discuss transcendental meditation with you. First of all, are you practicing any form of meditation now?

CARL: Yes, I am.

PURUSHOTTAM: How did you first get into meditation practice?

CARL: Well, I was introduced to transcendental meditation, and I found it to be a great thing for me. You know, nowadays we don't really have a feeling of well being as much as they did at other times. Of course, it isn't something that we really know about, you know. You just meditate, and through a long period of time you develop something, a state of awareness that is really good. It's really just natural. But I definitely feel the influence and the help of it when I do meditate. And when I don't, I miss it. I stopped meditating for about a month, a month and a half, and then I really noticed it. I really did.

PURUSHOTTAM: Do you have any special object of meditation? What do you consider to be the goal in meditation, the supreme state?

CARL: Bliss consciousness. I'm sure that all forms of meditation are really designed to do the same thing. To bring you to a higher state of awareness. Something above the everyday life. To bring you closer to God and like that.

PURUSHOTTAM: Do you believe that the power of a mantra could actually bring you to a supreme realization?

CARL: Well, I know that it's worked for others. For myself I don't know. Because I haven't—I'm not at that state

right now. And I certainly wouldn't say so if I didn't experience it for myself. But I know that if I were to stay with meditation a long time, just to meditate—I think that I could reach a state like that. Yes. Because I've always felt the Divine Power running through me. And I felt the love a lot. And, you know, that's the thing—that I've always felt things like that for a long time. And I never really tried to categorize them or try to pin them down. And when I found meditation I felt it more, and I felt it all the time. It wasn't just a once-in-awhile thing. That's an important thing. That you can feel it whenever you want.

PURUSHOTTAM: What part do you think the Spiritual Master or Guru plays in bringing the disciple to this point? Is he essential, or is he—

CARL: I think he's an important instrument. He can be a great help.

PURUSHOTTAM: In what way?

CARL: Well, because he's teaching somebody to be like that. He can bring you up to his level. That's his position. I mean, if he knows and you don't, then you've got to listen to him or else how are you going to learn? He should be able to guide you, right? And know all about the spirit. Like what you read about in Scriptures.

PURUSHOTTAM: Do you hold as valid authority the words of the saints and sages in the Scriptures?

CARL: Yes, I do. One thing I do think is that a lot of them are grossly misinterpreted, though. Just like the Bible, for instance. The grossest misinterpretations. It's hard to believe! Like we were singing a song the other day, "Didn't It Rain." Do you know that one?

PURUSHOTTAM: Yes.

CARL: It's a spiritual, you know. An old Negro spiritual. And it was about it raining and flooding and all that. In the song they make it into just a story, I guess. I don't know why they have to misinterpret it. I don't know what made them think of it the way they did. But, you know, of course, we could experience the same thing. I think that maybe now people would try to...to say it like it is. To say simply that, well, you know, people were treating the earth bad, and they were abusing it and putting a lot of pressure on the earth in different places. Like in Manhattan, and like in Los Angeles for example. It's just, you know, it's just a bad thing to do to Nature. It's sinful, really.

PURUSHOTTAM: How do you think one can tell if a Scripture is being interpreted correctly or incorrectly? How would you judge it?

CARL: It's hard to say. I wouldn't know for myself, but I think that the spiritual master could help you with this if you want to know what it's saying exactly. I mean if he knows then he can tell you where it's at. Do you agree?

PURUSHOTTAM: Definitely.

CARL: Actually, I've never really gotten into the Bible that much, or any Scripture. I'll tell you, I did read THE PROPHET, and I think that that is a beautiful thing. I haven't yet been into any of the things that your Guru has written. I'd like to, though. You know, even before meditation and the whole thing, I was really inclined to...to feel things, and feel things deep. And...I would have feelings that something was or wasn't real, you know. And to myself I knew it. I don't know why. But I just felt that. You can't explain it. Cause, possibly, from a different incarnation, you just know, you retain knowledge. And it gets through to you.

PURUSHOTTAM: You believe in reincarnation?

CARL: Definitely.

PURUSHOTTAM: And that the soul is an eternal part of God?

CARL: Oh, yes. Of course.

PURUSHOTTAM: If you accept that you are not just a body but are spirit soul, what do you think is the purpose of your taking births in the material world? Have you ever thought about that?

CARL: Yeah, I've thought about it. I'm sure there are a lot more reasons than we would ever dream about. I don't really know, though.

PURUSHOTTAM: Do you think that meditation could help you in someday realizing this?

CARL: Sure.

PURUSHOTTAM: In what way?

CARL: Well, I think that it would help, you know, that you could rediscover yourself. A lot of the point is to get out of illusions of forgetting about the spirit. I know then you would become evenly balanced, you know, and gain greater happiness and peace. At that point I think you would know more about who you are and why you're here. And, I mean, in a lot of cases, if you balance yourself, you can only go straight ahead. It takes control, though.

PURUSHOTTAM: Do you try to control your mind?

CARL: Well, at this stage I don't know if I can control my mind or not. I don't think I can control what I think. I can't help it, you know. That's just the way it is, so I don't get hung up about it. But I do know people think too much about things that turn out to be just not worth thinking of. I know meditation can get you more on the right track of forgetting illusions and thinking of the spirit and things like that. Of course, I'm not in that state. I don't control my mind. I wouldn't want to try to say what it would be like. I haven't been there, you know. If I find out at some point that I'm able to control it, and that I would be happier, or that I could get along better, you know, and it'd be a better atmosphere, I suppose I'd always try it. But nobody's ever laid that on me, so I don't know.

PURUSHOTTAM: Do you feel that the people who are in the youth movements which are trying to change the world, do you think that if they had a better understanding of what life is, and what truth is, that this understanding would help them achieve better results?

CARL: Definitely. But the problem is people are gonna be on different levels all the time. So you can't tell them all what it's gonna be because a lot just aren't ready to listen. It's an individual thing, isn't it? For instance, not everybody's at the same place at the same time, so you can't say, "OK kids, uh, let's do this!" cause that's not the way it is, and it's never gonna be that way. I mean, there've been a lot of writings saying that there's going to be a holocaust, and then there'll be only the good souls left. I guess that's their karma, those that are worth it probably will be around after this kind of thing happens. But you can't plan it. Maybe Scriptures know it, but I don't.

PURUSHOTTAM: Do you have any special feelings about any particular Scripture? Do you regard any one with special reverence?

CARL: Well, I've always felt that Christ was a really great person. A great spiritual leader. I think that, you know, people misinterpret, and they...people blew it... they're not doing what he wanted. He probably said to worship and get to know about God and Truth. Like in Yoga you get into that. Of course, I can't say what the right interpretation of the Bible should be, right? Because I haven't really read it enough, so I wouldn't be dumb enough to say, "Now, like here. It's like this." Because I really don't know.

PURUSHOTTAM: In your meditations, have you ever chanted the Hare Krishna Mantra?

CARL: No, I never have. Is it a thing you have to be initiated into?

PURUSHOTTAM: No. It's for everyone.

CARL: [pointing to Purushottam's bead bag] Are these things here something to...

GARGAMUNI: They're prayer beads.

CARL: Oh, prayer beads. You keep your beads in them.

GARGAMUNI: Yes. The idea is to engage all of the senses in the process of meditation. To help us to engage the mind on the chanting, we use the sense of touch. Incense helps us to engage the sense of smell. For the eyes we look at pictures of Krishna. So in that way, every sense becomes engaged. To engage the sense of taste, we eat food that we offer. We offer our food to the Lord. We cook vegetarian meals that come out of the Vedic Scriptures.

CARL: Are you vegetarian?

GARGAMUNI: Yes.

CARL: How do you like it?

GARGAMUNI: Oh, it's great!

CARL: You know, I got on a vegetarian thing, and sometimes I...like I had meat tonight, you know, and it was, you know, it was...I don't know. (laughs) It's hard to know what to think about things like that. It's kind of confusing, isn't it?

PURUSHOTTAM: You discussed before the spirit soul being reincarnated. Wouldn't you say that it's wrong to kill animals because they're spirit souls also?

CARL: Certainly! I think it's wrong to kill a flea, or a fly or anything. A plant or a...you know. Everything is part of Nature. I don't like to kill anything. Sometimes I really think it's wrong to eat meat. Yeah, see now, that's a thing that I think about a lot.

DENNIS: [entered a few minutes before, and now joined in the discussion] Hey man, a piece of wheat growing in the field has just as much right to be alive as a rabbit.

GARGAMUNI: Yes, that's true.

CARL: I guess everything's relative. How does your Guru look at that?

PURUSHOTTAM: Well, we learn from The Bhagavad Gita that everything is here for Krishna and is created by Him just for His pleasure. So we use everything in serving His pleasure. We offer all of our food to Him before we eat it and that absolves us from the sin of killing plants. Krishna doesn't like to eat meat, so we don't offer it, and therefore we don't eat it.

CARL: Is Krishna...He was here on the Earth, wasn't He? Is He still here now?

PURUSHOTTAM: Krishna's actually always here, but He was visible to everyone on this planet 5,000 years ago. In the Vedic Scriptures the process is described where we can realize Krishna as the Supreme Person and Creator. At that stage you can see that Krishna is always in everything.

CARL: Oh, I see. Yeah.

PURUSHOTTAM: Were you ever religious, in the usual sense of the word?

CARL: I don't know if I could say I was religious at all, but, you know, I...I always knew that there was a Supreme Being, and I always had a lot of peace of mind about that. And I've always thought of God as the Protector. I've always known little stupid things, like I'd never get hurt doing this or that, and I'd never...I've always known that nothing would ever happen like in a car or a plane or something, you know. Something on that level. I've always known that inside. I know that meditation can probably make someone feel it more.

DENNIS: So why are we in this situation? Why is it like that?

CARL: Because we deserve it. Because you get EXACTLY what you deserve, no matter what happens at any time. You're always gonna get exactly what comes to you. Because you reap exactly what you sow. Is that what your Swami says?

PURUSHOTTAM: Well, yes. He says that if we desire material life then we have to accept the dualities of the material world. And there has to be death and competition for living. But Krishna is waiting for us, and as soon as we turn to spiritual life we can transcend and be free of the



At left, Dennis Wilson dances to the chanting of Hare Krishna. At right, Carl and Purushottam discuss the chant.

material miseries.

CARL: Yeah, well, I'd like to see how your meditation goes. It's Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, right?

[Little cards were given to Carl and Dennis, on which were written the Maha Mantra. For about five minutes everyone chanted together. Dennis danced, while Carl sat on the couch concentrating on his card.]

CARL: You do that over and over again?

PURUSHOTTAM: Yes.

CARL: What do the words mean?

PURUSHOTTAM: "Hare" means the energy of God. Krishna and Rama are different names for God. This chant is described in Vedic Scriptures as the most perfect means of God realization, because it can be done anytime or anyplace.

DENNIS: Don't you know you are God? You don't ever have to do nothing! You're IT! You've always been here. There's only one thing happening and its right now. And you'll never do nothing else. Never, really. Everything IS for a purpose. Everything just IS, you know. And then that's all there is to it. Everything IS, right? So...

CARL: But what he's saying, Dennis, is like people are waiting around and thinking, "Well, something is going to happen here," right? And so I think that's the point they're trying to make. I think—of course I may not understand...

DENNIS: There's only one thing wrong, man, and it's right now. This sound you hear right here...[claps]...it's the most important thing you've ever heard, because the sound

is right now.

PURUSHOTTAM: The sound is gone but you're still here, you know.

DENNIS: Why do I want to know something? I'm here! Hallelujah! The only thing that's happening is right now, you know, and that's why this is here—sound, music, your thing that you're doing! What's important? Everything is the same. It's all important. God's in everything!

PURUSHOTTAM: Do you really see that?

DENNIS: Everyone does, man. It's like that. You don't have to do anything. It's already there. That's the beauty.

GARGAMUNI: Then why are so many people unhappy in the world?

DENNIS: Because that's what they want to be. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and if someone sees sorrow and bitterness and all that crap, you know—well, you have to stay clear!

CARL: The point they're making, Dennis, is helping people like that out of it. Like, in other words, good will towards men. I mean, it just is true that God is all great, and there's no such thing as unfairness, because that just doesn't happen. Really. Because that's impossible. Either that, or the whole thing about a Supreme Being is a hype. Right?

DENNIS: You are the Supreme Being. You got to see it. You are what you see. Right?

PURUSHOTTAM: It may sound nice to say that I am God, but it's not what God Himself says, and what realized souls



say in the Scriptures. Christ didn't say that we ARE God but that we should worship God. The Vedic Scriptures say that the spirit soul has the same nature as God qualitatively, but not in the same quantity. In other words, we have the same qualities of bliss, eternity and all knowledge as God. But in the material world, we've fallen into illusion, and God can never fall into illusion and suffering. Or else how can you call Him God?

CARL: Yeah, but you see, I can't picture it. I'm not there yet, where I really know that. I think you'd have to be very advanced.

MIKE LOVE: [entering and seeing the interviewer's bead-bag] What's that?

CARL: Those are his prayer beads.

DENNIS: Is this bag just a thing to protect them?

GARGAMUNI: Yes.

MIKE: It doesn't matter what it is, then?

GARGAMUNI: No. It's just a tradition, over thousands of years. This is just a kind of bag...

DENNIS: Is there any importance in that tradition?

GARGAMUNI: Well, yeah. Tradition helps us to become more God conscious. Not that it's a tradition that we have to abide by, but it's a means of helping.

CARL: They're just there to help anyway.

DENNIS: Suppose somebody came up with a bag that was just a little bit better? I mean, if that's just a function, it

could be a little more subtle.

GARGAMUNI: Right, right. There's no set rules.

CARL: You know, there are lots of people trying to be happy, trying to turn other people on to good things. Like there are people taking acid, people doing this, people doing that. Everybody...everybody wants the same thing really.

PURUSHOTTAM: Would you say that drugs would ultimately be a help or a hindrance for someone who's seeking realization?

CARL: Well, I know that grass helped me. You know, I smoked grass.

PURUSHOTTAM: At the ultimate stage of realization, do you think that grass will still be necessary?

CARL: In some way, I think it helped me. But I didn't say anything about realization. I know drugs aren't natural like a chant can be. They can't be really where it's at. It's really actually upsetting your nervous system to take drugs and stuff like that. They are unnatural to have in your nervous system. That thing of karma...Maybe some people don't really think they should be happy, or maybe somewhere in their soul they know that they're supposed to be, because everybody knows what's happening. It's probably hidden somewhere. Anyway, we're all from the same place, really. We all know the same thing, I think, if we know anything. I mean, we're all from the Universe, right? Like I said before, right now I can't see anything. I'm not going to tell anybody where it's at, because I wouldn't want to say I know.

[Showtime ended the discussion at this point.]

Book Review

AVOID FANATICISM— BELIEVE IN NOTHING

THE TRUE BELIEVER by Eric Hoffer; Harper & Row, 1966, 151 pps; \$.60.

Eric Hoffer, a self-made man, a longshoreman-philosopher, has been chosen by President Johnson to serve on a committee studying violence in the United States. No doubt this book, written just prior to the outbreak of the Korean War, served as one of his qualifications. Anyway, LBJ "likes" Hoffer and the feeling is mutual; and so it appears that Hoffer has been accepted by the Establishment as a reasonable man. Even though he gives a first impression of fierce independence, to be sure, he ends up supporting the political powers that be every time. His attitude, reminiscent of the Objectivism of Ayn Rand, another popular rough-and-tough individualist, might be labelled Cynicism. To take up Cynicism, all we have to do is profess belief in this ultimate value: our own individual self-interest. The subject of THE TRUE BELIEVER is Mass Movements, and more particularly, the kind of persons who attach themselves to large-scale revolutionary, nationalistic, or religious uprisings. Hoffer calls such men fanatics, and he doesn't like 'em. They are "ruthless, self-righteous, credulous, disputatious, petty and rude." True Believers are anti-present and pro-future: they can't stand reality and are ready to give themselves to an impossible dream. They are anti-self, and only want to dissolve their existence in a larger corporate identity. A mass movement's program is not important. Any cause will do for the fanatics.

Hoffer's favorite adjective for the villains of his piece is "frustrated"—the assumption being they aren't strong enough to face themselves and make a go of it in the world, so in their weakness they are driven to chasing illusions.

But—and this is a crucial exception to his main trend of thought—he admits that, given the heroic efforts of fanatics, "Things which are not' are indeed mightier than 'things that are.'" Now, to Hoffer, this must be a terrifying prospect: could it be that these misfits really obey a law higher than the status quo he defends? Is that apparent illusion actually a more fundamental reality? Again, near the end of the book, he says, "A genuine popular upheaval is often an invigorating, renovating and integrating

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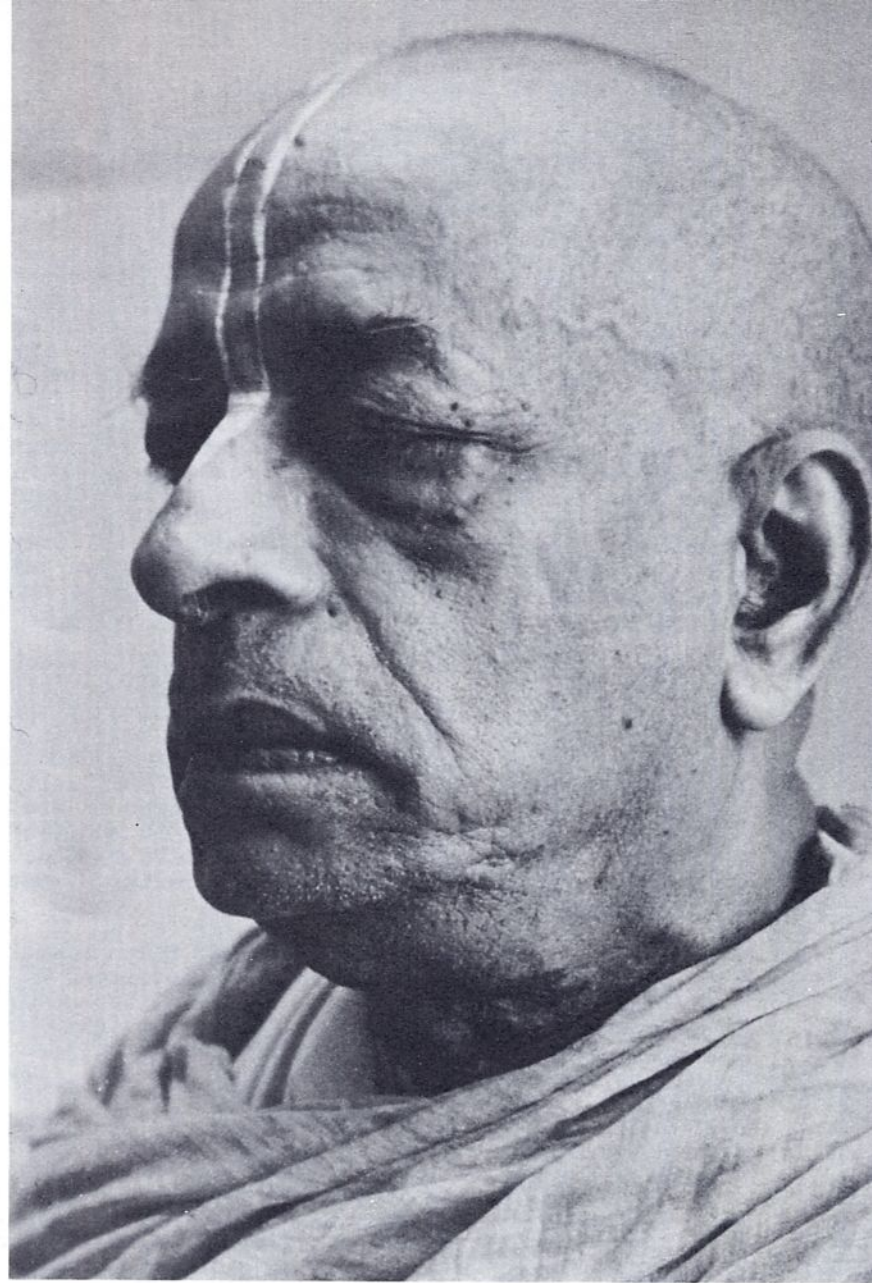
AN OPEN LETTER TO POPE PAUL VI

FROM A.C.
BHAKTIVEDANTA
SWAMI

His Holiness Pope Paul VI
Vicar of Jesus Christ
State of Vatican
Rome, Italy

Your Holiness:

Please accept my respectful humble obeisances at your Lotus Feet. I beg to introduce myself as an Indian monk, following the Vedic principles of religious life. At the present, I am in the renounced order of Sannyas, aged 72 years, and am preaching God consciousness all over the world. I came to America in 1965, and since then I have many followers belonging to both Christian and Jewish faiths. And I have established a number of Krishna Consciousness temples in the USA and Canada. In the coming months, I am scheduled to go to London on this mission, and maybe I can visit



ISKCON RADHA KRISHNA TEMPLE
3720 Avenue Du Parc
Montreal 18
Quebec, Canada
December, 1968

other cities of European countries.

My mission is in the line of Lord Chaitanya, Who is personified Love of Godhead, and Who advented Himself 482 years ago in India, and preached God consciousness all over the country. His mission is to revive God consciousness all over the world, on the basis of Srimad Bhagwatam (The Science of God). The principle of Srimad Bhagwatam is that any religious faith which helps a man to develop love of God, without any motive, and without being hampered by any material condition, is transcendental religion. And the best process or the easiest process, in this age especially, is to chant the Holy Name of God. From this definition of religion as we find it in the Srimad Bhagwatam, the criterion of religion is how it helps people to develop their dormant love of God. This is not artificially invoked, but it is aroused from within, due to bona fide association with devotees, and by hearing about God.

The human form of life is especially meant for this purpose, namely, to invoke the dormant love of God, because a higher development of consciousness is found in the human body. Animal propensities for sense gratification are equally found in both man and animals. But the special significance of human life is to achieve love of God as the prime perfection of life. Unfortunately, at the present moment people are more concerned about the principle of sense gratification, or the animal part of human life, and they are gradually declining in God consciousness. This tendency is very much increasing, and because Your Holiness is the head of a great religious sect, I think we should meet together and chalk out a program for cooperation.

Human society cannot any longer be allowed to continue a Godless civilization at the risk of decreasing truthfulness, hygienic principles and mercifulness. Because, on account of the decline of these principles at the present moment, the duration of life, strength and memory of the human being is decreasing. Human society is gradually devolving in the matter of religiousness and justice; and "might is right" is gradually taking the place of morality and justice. There is practically no more family life, and the union of man and woman is gradually coming to the standard of sexuality. I understand it from reliable sources that people are trying to get Your Holiness' sanction for the contraceptive method, which is certainly against any religion of the world. In the Hindu religion, such contraceptive method and abortion are considered equivalent to murder.

Therefore, in the matter of sex, the human society is gradually becoming even less than the animals. As a result of unrestricted sense gratification, even in ordinary dealing a man cannot trust another man, because the cheating propensity of man has increased beyond imagination. The attraction of young boys for young girls is no longer even a matter of love, but exists only on the basis of sexual potency. And as soon as there is a slackening of sex life, there is immediately a divorce petition.

In India, which was once the land of religion and Brahminical culture, things have deteriorated to such an extent that a man in a higher caste is recognized simply by putting a piece of thread on his body as a sign of sanctity. The so-called Swamis are cheating the public because the public wants to be cheated by some cheap method of self-realization. They are practicing so-called Yoga for the matter of reducing fat and keeping the body fit for sense gratification. And today, if someone has no sufficient money, it is very hard for him to get justice from the court. And if anyone can simply bluff by so-called advancement of knowledge, he is offered the doctorate degree. If a man is falsely proud, he is accepted as civilized.

By frustration, people are gradually becoming communists and hippies, and the guardians of society must now take up the situation very seriously, without further delay.

The Krishna Consciousness movement is meant for overhauling the whole situation. We are creating men of character, and we are training our disciples to become lovers of God, or Krishna. From the very beginning, they are trained to refrain from the following four principles of degradation: 1) sex life outside of marriage, 2) meat eating, or the eating of any animal food, 3) all forms of intoxication, and 4) gambling and idle sports. Our teachings are based on the authorized movement of Lord Chaitanya: on the principles of The Bhagavad Gita, as the beginning, and Srimad Bhagwatam as the graduation.

I do not wish to prolong the body of this letter further, but if you think that my meeting with you will be beneficial for human society at large, I shall be very much pleased if Your Holiness will grant me an interview. Thanking you in anticipation of an early reply, I am

Yours in the service of the Lord,



A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

the
GLO
RIES
LORD of
Rama
chandra
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by Satsvarupa
Art by Ric Estrada

Millions of years ago, according to Vedic sources, the Supreme Lord appeared on this planet as the Warrior Rama Chandra, in order to execute His Will and display the Pastimes of the Personality of Godhead. As is stated in The Bhagavad Gita, "From time to time I come, in order to vanquish the demons and rescue the devotees."

The Pastimes of Lord Rama are revealed in the famous Vedic Scripture called The Ramayana, written by Sri Valmiki. Before being empowered to write The Ramayana, Valmiki had been a plunderer; but, by the grace of the great saint Narada, he became a Vaishnava—that is, a worshipper of the Personality of Godhead. Narada had first asked Valmiki to please chant the Name of the Lord, but Valmiki had replied that he would not. He was a murderer, and so what had he to do with chanting God's Name? Narada then asked him to meditate on his murders, by saying the name of "Mara," which means Death. Valmiki agreed to this, and meditated on "Mara." By rapid repetition of the word—Mara, Mara, Mara—he found himself saying Rama, Rama, Rama, and by the power of reciting the Holy Name of God his heart became purified.

The Ramayana is written down as an historical epic, but it contains all the information of the original Vedas. Vedic literature such as The Ramayana and The Mahabharata (of which the famed Bhagavad Gita is a chapter), are especially recommended for this age, even more so than the highly intricate Vedas, or the philosophical theses of The Vedanta Sutra—all of which are prone to misinterpretation by the fallen mentality of this Age of Quarrel.

So diminished is the capacity for receiving God consciousness in this age that The Bhagavad Gita, which was set down 5000 years ago and was especially intended for the less intelligent, is today not understood by the greatest so-called scholars. These men generally attempt interpretations of The Gita leaving out the importance of the Personality of Godhead, Krishna, Who is the essence, Speaker, and Goal of The Gita.

Lord Rama Chandra appeared on this Earth as a man. This means that he actually walked the Earth. What is written in The Ramayana, we should note here, is best understood as it is. When the Pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are narrated, there can be no question of allusion to a higher principle. Allegory means that there is a truth higher than the literal sense of a given text. But the highest realization of spiritual perfection is that the Absolute Truth is a Person—which precludes any possibility of going beyond Him. God means the Highest Reality. He is the One from Whom everything emanates. Although he appeared as a man out of kindness to His devotees, Rama Chandra is the Supreme Lord. His history is, therefore, very marvellous and filled with wondrous feats, as we'll see.

Rama Chandra was the son of King Dasarath, in the line of King Ikshaku, the first ruler of Earth, and an early recipient of the Bhakti Yoga system of The Bhagavad Gita. Lord Rama was the darling of His father and mother, Queen Kausalya, as well as the hero and darling of all Ayodha, the capital of what was then the single world kingdom.

Rama had all the admirable qualities of leadership, even from earliest youth. Rama Chandra possessed all physical strength, all beauty, religious wisdom in submission to Truth, fame for prowess with weapons, royal wealth, and complete renunciation. He played the part of a human, and yet His stature as a human was praised by all His contemporaries as being worthy of the gods.

Inseparable from Rama was Lakshman, His younger brother. Lakshman was born of Sumitra, one of the 350 queens of King Dasarath. His position is like that of Rama's Own Self, and nothing is dearer to Rama than Lakshman. Together, the two Brothers appeared on Earth to vanquish the almost invincible atheist King Ravana and his numberless host of Rakshasa (man-eating) warriors.

Rama Chandra is described as being of greenish hue, His bodily lustre like fresh green grass. And Lakshman is golden-hued. Lakshman is as attractive and as formidable a warrior as Rama Himself. During the course of one of the blood-drenched battles against Ravana's army, Lakshman was rendered unconscious by Rakshasa magic, and at that time Rama gave vent to a spontaneous expression of love for Lakshman: "If I lose kingdom—that I can bear, but I could not bear the loss of Lakshman! I cannot go on if Lakshman is lost to Me!" Lakshman was likewise dedicated to the service of his Brother, and had no other

pleasure than to do the bidding of Rama Chandra.

RAMA'S FIRST CAMPAIGN

While Rama was still a Boy of 16, the famous yogi, Viswamitra, approached King Dasarath and asked that the Boy be allowed to travel on a military campaign against two Rakshasas who were attacking the hermitages of saintly persons, interrupting the performance of sacrifice. Why did the sage Viswamitra ask for the Boy Rama? Because no one was equal to Him, even though He was as yet untrained in the use of the principal weaponry, bow and arrow. After some hesitance by Dasarath, who was loathe to have his Son part for a dangerous mission, Rama Chandra went forth.

If we take military history as an evolution of progressively more deadly weapons, we may slight the figure of Rama, possessing no more than a bow and arrow. But the enemies of Rama were allowed no such miscalculation as to His ability to destroy. He stood before them like a hill of nuclear missiles. He discharged His feathered arrows in sheets which blotted out the blue of the sky and which entered the hearts of the enemy in unlimited numbers at incredible velocity. So we shouldn't think of Rama the Archer as quaint or dated. His bow, a gift from the demigod Indra, was a supreme Army and Air Force in itself. His arsenal included many varieties of deadly arrows, charmed by the Science of Mantra, or sound vibration. Once released, those arrows could not be turned back, no matter where the adversary fled for shelter.

In the final battle against Ravana, Lord Rama Chandra resorted to a nuclear weapon, the Brahmastra fire weapon, whose released heat is said to frighten the denizens of the uppermost planets of the material universe. And this Brahmastra, too, was a winged arrow affixed to a bowstring. "Among the weapon wielders, I am Rama," Lord Krishna says in The Gita. God is the greatest Warrior, and He possesses the means to release the ultimate weapon.

On this boyhood military campaign against "the Rovers of the Night," Rama discharged two wind weapons, killing one Rakshasa and landing the other a few thousand miles away in the ocean.

Viswamitra, being pleased with young Rama and Lakshman, narrated many wonderful things to them, about the Appearance of the Lord as the Dwarf Vamana, about the origin of the sacred River Ganges—and about a worshipable bow kept by King Janaka, the father of Sita. This Janaka is mentioned in The

Bhagavad Gita as having attained perfection by carrying out his occupational duties as a Kshatriya King. Once, for his part in ameliorating the anger of Lord Shiva the Destroyer, Janaka was presented with a most formidable bow. The bow was so mighty, in fact, that no one could even bend it in order to string it. Janaka made offerings of flowers and prayers before the bow given him by Lord Shiva, acknowledging that the personality who could string the sacred bow must be an extraordinary power. In view of which, King Janaka offered the hand of his daughter Sita to the man who would come and bend the bow.

Sita, of course, had many suitors, and all failed to win her. Her dowry was valor. Of all chaste and beautiful young women, she was the topmost jewel, and was very dear to Janaka. Viswamitra brought Rama and Lakshman to Janaka's palace just to show them the bow given by Shiva. A large assembly of people were gathered to see the weapon, as Rama Chandra took it up in His hand, and asked Janaka, "What would you have Me do with it? Shall I string it now?"

"Yes," Janaka assented.

At once, Rama easily bent the bow until it cracked in two pieces, making a thundering explosion which rendered all present unconscious, except for Viswamitra, Rama and Lakshman! At that time the gods showered flowers from the sky upon Rama Chandra, and there was cheering in the heavens. King Janaka then agreed, with great pleasure, that his daughter should be married to the mighty Rama Chandra.

SITA AND RAMA

Sita, the wife of Rama, is not considered an ordinary being. It is understood that, as Lord Rama Chandra was Vishnu, the Supreme Lord Himself, so Sita was actually Lakshmi, the Goddess of Fortune, who serves eternally at the Feet of Vishnu in the spiritual sky. Being the daughter of the royal saint Janaka, she is also sometimes called Janaki. Actually, Janaka found Sita when she was a baby. He had been plowing a field, and he upturned her in a clod of earth. It is stated in The Ramayana that Sita came to Earth for the destruction of Ravana, who was a villifier of married women. As Rama Chandra was the greatest Warrior and Expounder of religion and morality, so Sita was the greatest beauty among women, and the most chaste.

How can the Infinite Lord be sufficiently praised? And who can completely describe the loveliness, in every feature, of His chaste wife, the Goddess of Fortune?

We shouldn't think that, as we desire a woman, so Rama Chandra desired a woman, and thus married one with the desires of an ordinary husband. Sita is Lakshmi, the Goddess of Fortune, and Rama is Lord Vishnu, the Personality of Godhead, and we cannot understand His transcendental position by judging Him on the plane of inebriated sex desire. Sex desire, lust, is the characteristic condition of the ordinary mortal who is at the mercy of the laws of Nature. He is put under these stringent laws out of his wish to enjoy as a lord rather than render service to the Supreme Enjoyer.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, however, is transcendental to the material laws. What we have here in the material world as sex desire is indeed a reflection of the Lord's desire to enjoy loving affairs. But His loving affairs have no taint of contamination, no limitations of cheating, of old age, or of death. Here, sex pleasure is false in that it is merely a counteraction to the usual condition of misery, and it is temporary. But when the Lord enjoys loving affairs it is in a state of continual bliss in mutual service, and this expands unendingly into greater and greater bliss, each party exhibiting selfless devotion to the other. It is understood that by the process of purification in devotional service, we too can reciprocate transcendental love with God, and that is the perfection of human life.

The impersonalist philosophers whose propaganda is so rampant in this age cannot appreciate the Divine Couple or the Lord's loving affairs. These are displayed in the Persons of Radha and Krishna, Lakshmi and Narayana, and in Sita and Rama. The position of the impersonalist is necessarily loveless. Love means persons. No one can love the Void or a non-person. Therefore, impersonal philosophy is merely the negative side of reality, the denial of material inebriety. The impersonalists accept neither sex as being absolute, but the Vaishnava or Personalist has two sexes, Radha and Krishna, or Sita and Rama. Without understanding the real situation of the Supreme Person and His Transcendental Nature—His Activities and His devotees—such an impersonalist yogi or philosopher is forced to come down from his temporary suspension in the impersonal Void, and again he may enter into entanglement with the material inebrieties which he only theoretically declares to be false.

Valmiki compares the sight of Rama and Sita together to the moon and the brightest star. The Rama Chandra worshipper, therefore, never makes the mistake of thinking Sita an ordinary wife. Throughout The Ramayana, the poetry

again and again turns to images of the various moods of natural beauty in the jungle, in the sky, and in the night with its wonderful galaxies for comparisons to the loveliness of Sita. And always the worshipper addresses first Sita, and then Rama—Sita-Rama.

Growing old, King Dasarath decided to confer the kingdom on his eldest son, Rama. On the release of this news, the Kingdom of Ayodha turned to joyous preparation for the coronation of the beloved prince. The Ramayana (Ayodha Kandam) states:

The streets were crowded with men. People were going in mobs and there were constant shouts of joy, like the roar of the sea. All the places were filled to their utmost capacities. All the highways were swept and watered, garlands hung on every gate, and flags streamed from every house. The whole city was anxiously waiting for the morning of the coronation ceremony.

The night before, Janaki and Rama Chandra were initiated into the observance of a fast, and were given mantras to recite. They worshipped Narayana, and lay down on a bed of grass within Vishnu's shrine.

THE BANISHMENT OF RAMA

The Ramayana goes on to relate fateful events: "Queen Kaikeyi had brought up an orphan girl named Manthara, who served Kaikeyi as a maidservant." Kaikeyi was one of King Dasarath's wives, and Manthara was her hunch-backed maidservant. It was she who sowed the evil seed of the great personal ordeals related in The Ramayana. Amidst universal joy, Manthara alone heard the news of Rama's coronation with a feeling of rage. With malicious intent she entered the room of Queen Kaikeyi and proposed to her that the coronation of Rama Chandra was a calamity to the Queen. Kaikeyi was the mother of Dasarath's next oldest son, noble Bharat. Manthara cunningly outlined how Dasarath had recently sent Bharat away on a visit to his uncle, in order to install Rama Chandra. And, after installation, Rama Chandra would surely see that Bharat was killed. With crooked logic, Manthara predicted all the grief ahead for Kaikeyi, and in this way implanted evil wrath into the Queen's heart.

Queen Kaikeyi was now convinced that Rama Chandra must be eliminated. She was very dear to Dasarath, and she

was able to strike tellingly by binding him to a promise. Once Dasarath had fallen badly wounded on a battlefield, in a clash between Indra and some Asuras (demons), and Queen Kaikeyi had nursed him as he lay unconscious. At that time he had promised her two boons, but she had said she would ask for them at a later time. By that service rendered by her, and by the oath of Dasarath, Kaikeyi wrought long and bitter grief upon Ayodha.

Lying down in a room in her palace, called "the chamber of wrath," Kaikeyi awaited Dasarath, and when he came and found her there, she infected the coronation day, like a snake biting a calf, by demanding the following two boons: 1. Let Rama Chandra be banished to the forest for 14 years, and 2. Let Bharat be installed as king. Dasarath fell unconscious at her words. He soon regained his senses, understood what she was saying, and again fainted away.

Awakening a second time, he cried out in torment: "Oh how sad! How painful! I suffer from your words, being oath-bound to you! I suffer now as a man does for misdeeds committed in a previous birth!"

We may think, what is this "truth," what is this "promise," if it wreaks such evil? Why didn't Dasarath simply say, "No! Never! I will not banish Rama. Rama is dearer than truth!" But he did not. He had made a promise, and as a Kshatriya (warrior) he must stand by it. His religion was truth. Because he had promised Kaikeyi a boon at a time when she had saved his life, therefore he must now grant her promise, whatever it might be—in this case a fate worse than death.

There are other examples in the Vedic literature of extreme sacrifices to truth, and Kaikeyi mercilessly cited them for Dasarath: A King named Saiyya once promised a pigeon who had flown into his arms that he would protect him from a pursuing hawk. The hawk, who was actually a demigod in the form of the predator, demanded flesh from the king's body as substitute for the pigeon, and King Saiyya agreed, cutting the flesh from his own body.

But was that the same as banishing Rama Chandra? How could Dasarath banish the rightful heir to the throne? For what offense? Rama was the absolute darling of every living entity in Ayodha. He was the outright Destroyer of the demons. He and His wife were comparable to the moon and the brightest star! When the people came to say, "Where is Rama Chandra?"—what then? In short, Dasarath was ruined, and the Kingdom of Ayodha with him. Dasarath lamented bitterly, and prepared himself

to be condemned by his peers and by the future. Still, he was bound to the truth of his promise.

Rama Chandra was called to court by Dasarath. Rama was about 26 years old, and it was His Coronation Day. He rode in His chariot to answer His father's call. The Ramayana states that Rama Chandra came out from His palace surrounded with an effulgence of glory, just as the moon emerges from behind the dark blue clouds. Lakshman stood by Him with a chowri fan. Elephants and horses followed His chariot; and music, shouts and cheers were continually heard. As He passed the windows of beautiful women, they rained flowers on His Head. Some of them praised Kausalya, the mother of Rama Chandra, and others said that Sita was the gem of all women, and must have practiced great penances in former births or she would not have had such a husband as this king-to-be.

But on entering His father's presence, Rama found the old King looking miserable and sad, seated on a sofa with His Queen Kaikeyi. She personally delivered the cruel message to Rama Chandra. Dasarath fainted away in grief at hearing again the wish of Kaikeyi, but he could not deny it.

Magnanimous Rama Chandra, however, was not a bit pained to hear her shameful words. He only replied: "Very well. I shall go from here and proceed to the Dananka Forest for 14 years with an unwavering mind."

Rama Chandra proceeded to inform all those gaily preparing for His Coronation that He was at once leaving for a mendicant's life in the forest. His natural cheerfulness did not leave Him, but He was troubled to have to tell His mother, and He thought both parents might die at His separation from them.

The fateful news soon spread. It spread to the women in Rama's palace, and they began to cry bitterly. The queens and other royal ladies wailed, for He Who used to serve them and Who looked on them as His mothers, and Who never grew angry with them but had sweet words for all—that Rama was going to the forest!

"No! Dasarath should never have forsaken Him!"

When He approached His mother Kausalya, she was still informed only of the Coronation, and she fell at His Feet and offered Him a seat and some refreshment.

Rama Chandra, with clasped hands, said to her, "Mother, you don't know what a great calamity is descending upon you and Janaki and Lakshman. I don't require a seat anymore, for I am now bound for the forest, and shall live there

for 14 years on fruits and herbs. Father has ordered My exile, and Bharat's installation."

Kausalya fainted on the ground like a tree felled by an axe. Valmiki describes how, with difficulty, she told Rama that He must fight to win the crown. But Rama Chandra told His mother that it was beyond His power to disobey His father's orders. He could not follow any desire which went beyond righteousness. Similarly, Lord Jesus Christ once taught: "If you gain the whole world, but lose your immortal soul, what have you gained?"

Rama Chandra said to Kausalya: "Father is our preceptor. Who, having any regard for righteousness, will disobey his orders, even though they may be given from anger, joy, or lust? I cannot act against My father's vows. This life is not everlasting, and so I would not wish to acquire even the world by an unjust means."

Lakshman was not consoled. He was brooding and overwhelmed with grief at this turn of events. Lakshman argued that Rama Chandra must not submit; he suspected, in fact, that the whole story of promised boons was just a plea by the King in order to install Bharat, and thus satisfy the lust of his Queen Kaikeyi. Lakshman was prepared to hack to pieces with his sword the King and his whole army. He was ready to bring the whole world under the sway of Rama Chandra. Rama replied that he thought the best course for Himself was to obey His father's orders. Rama's mother gradually, with great sorrow, offered her blessings and prayed that she would someday see Him coming back.

Rama Chandra then took leave of His mother and went to Janaki's quarters.

She also knew nothing of Rama Chandra's exile. She was in a state of joyfulness over His installation as King. She was worshipping the deities when He entered with His head hanging down in shame. On telling Sita of His exile, Rama Chandra said that she must stay behind and live under the rule of Bharat. Janaki, who was always sweet in speech, replied to Him with an offended air. How could He say such infamous, unworthy things, especially as He was a hero versed in Vedic science?

"If You repair to the forest, I shall go in front of You and make smooth the path by crushing the thorns under my feet. I shall not leave Your company, nor will You be able to dissuade me. I shall feel no sorrow in passing a long time with You."

But Rama Chandra, thinking of the factual hardships of forest life, told her about the reality of the situation: Prowling animals, sharks, crocodiles in muddy rivers, sometimes no drinking

water, no bed, hunger appeased by fruits fallen on the ground, matted locks, bark for clothes, observance of the rules of asceticism, three baths daily, flowers offered on the sacred altar by picking them with your own hand, blasts of wind, reptiles roaming free, great pythons, scorpions, mosquitos, penance, the necessity for bold action—this is the business of forest life.

Rama Chandra said it was too dangerous, but Sita entreated Him that, as a devoted wife, she was happy in His happiness, and sorry only in His sorrow. With Rama, she assured Him, she would find the hardships heavenly. Rama Chandra finally relented and admitted that He was by no means unable to protect her in the forest. And, formerly, many royal saints had repaired to the forest with their wives. So He would follow their example. He advised her to at once give away her beautiful clothes and valuables, and to be ready to leave.

Lakshman, who had been there while Rama Chandra spoke with Sita, caught hold of his Brother's Feet, as it was unbearable for him to be separated from Rama. Rama tried to dissuade him from joining Him. He asked him to stay in the kingdom and keep an eye on the court. But nothing could turn Lakshman. He replied that Bharat would maintain the kingdom, but he must be given leave to join Rama Chandra. He would go before Sita and Rama Chandra as their guide, and would procure Their foods; and they could enjoy while he would do everything else required, whether Rama was asleep or awake. Rama was pleased, and ordered Lakshman to prepare for departure at once.

Unfortunately, the whole kingdom could not join Rama Chandra in exile. But the people were sorely distressed. Indeed, they proposed to join Him by the thousands, but Kaikeyi would not allow it: If everyone went with Him, it would be no exile at all. No, Rama Chandra must go with only Sita and Lakshman. But the people lamented that the city would become deserted without Him, all religious institutions would be destroyed and dirt and filth would cover the yards, and rats would roam free. Rama Chandra, hearing them carry on, was not moved.

Shortly after Rama Chandra's departure, his father died of grief. He could not live with Rama in exile, and with his last breath he cried the Names of Rama, Lakshman and Sita. Young Bharat was at once called back from his uncle's house by special messengers, who told him no more than to come at once. Bharat arrived before his mother, Queen Kaikeyi, and learned first that his father was dead, and then that his Brother was

exiled on the wish of his mother. Bharat was shaken with remorse, and called Kaikeyi a murderess. To Bharat there was no question of assuming the throne without Rama Chandra and Lakshman. After performing the funeral rites for his father, he set out without delay, with an army behind him, to bring Rama back and himself take the place of the Exile in the forest. Only in that way could he hope to remove the stain of his mother's action.

SITA AND RAMA IN THE JUNGLE

Forest life for a royal prince was supposed to be an abominable insult, but Rama Chandra managed to cheer Sita by pointing out to her the beauty of the natural setting. A jungle is generally supposed to be a place in the mode of goodness, just suitable for the cultivation of spiritual life.

The Shastras, or Scriptures, describe life in the liquor shop as being in the mode of ignorance; residence in the city is said to be in the mode of passion; and residence in the forest is in goodness. But even the so-called mode of goodness is not transcendental to material consciousness. Only a temple of God is specifically helpful for the purpose of transcendental consciousness, or linking with the Personality of Godhead. The forest is actually suitable for material habitation, and for the exploitation of raw resources such as trees and plants. Of course, when the Personality of Godhead was in the forest, it was the most perfect temple and shrine. Picking a leaf, or roaming with Janaki, Rama is in perfection, as He is the Supreme Lord, even though acting as a human.

We are cautioned not to think that if we repair to the jungle we will be like Rama Chandra, or that we will become renounced and saintly by such an act. The forest, in other words, is in itself not conducive to thoughts of the transcendental Lord. It is a place of monkeys and trees and good areas for making material habitation. Spiritual life, however, does not mean to become neatly situated in natural surroundings which may or may not be more pleasant than the shops and streets of the city. Spiritual life means to serve and please the will of the Supreme Lord. To be thinking of the activities of the Supreme Lord, and to hear authorized information like The Ramayana and The Bhagavad Gita—about His inconceivable greatness and His loving intentions toward the living entities—is not attained by automatically putting on rough clothing and plying through the jungles with difficult steps.

Even to sit alone in a yogic posture in the jungle, with forced concentration on the spirit soul, may not be successful if the heart is still impure and the mind roaming to objects of the senses. Lord Krishna has said that He is not to be found in the jungle or in the hearts of the yogis in meditation, but there where His devotees are chanting His Name: Hare Krishna, Hare Rama—"I am there."

So-called holy men who go to the forests to become sannyasis, renunciators, and do not actually follow the authoritative paths for becoming God conscious are therefore called "monkey sannyasis." Simply living like a monkey in a tree is not holiness.

Rama Chandra was actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Anything He did was perfect, because He is the Person Who is the Source of all perfection. We simply have to offer a submissive hearing of His activities, and we will ourselves be situated in transcendental meditation. He is the Lord, as Rama Chandra the Ideal King, and His life is an example of the rigid morality by which we can find the way back to home, back to our original loving relationship with God. Rama Chandra is Himself full spirit, portraying activities on Earth for the vanquishment of Ravana, and we have only to fully comprehend any Pastime of His in order to contact the honey of God consciousness.

Once Sita and Rama were resting on a rocky ledge after straying through the hills, and a bold crow came at Sita and threatened to strike her with its claws. She chased him but he came again and again, tearing at her until, Valmiki describes, "her cheeks were glowing with rage and her lips quivering in anger. Frowns darkened her lovely brow." Rama Chandra tried chasing the bird but it paid no heed and flew at Sita even more. Then He fixed an arrow with mantras, and aimed it at the crow. The bird sprang up and flew, but the arrow followed wherever the bird went. The crow then flew back to Rama and pleaded for its life. Rama Chandra was always prepared to protect the surrendered entity, but since He had already released his fatal weapon, the crow was asked to give up some part of its life so that the weapon would not go in vain. The crow gave up an eye and the arrow struck at once.

After some time, Bharat and his army arrived in the vicinity. One soldier climbed a tree and saw smoke issuing from a cottage. Bharat and a few others then went forward on foot, and Bharat beheld Rama's cottage. Valmiki

describes it:

He found there the formidable bow plated with gold. The quiver was full of sharp arrows flaming like the sun. There were swords in golden sheathes, and gloves span-gled with gold. There stood a spacious altar, and fire was burning at its northeast. Bharat found there Lotus-eyed, Fire-like, Effulgent Rama, seated on a hide with bark and a black deerskin, and with matted locks on His head.

The brothers embraced. Bharat told of Dasarath's death and pleaded for Rama Chandra to return and take the kingdom. Rama Chandra replied to His younger brother that none of us have an independent existence, just to do as we please. We are subject to death, all of us. Rama told him to note how people are pleased to see the seasons change, though they do not realize it means their life duration is shortening. And on any walk a person takes, and when he returns, death is with him, and walks with him and rests with him. So in all circumstances, intelligent people subdue grief. He told Bharat to return and take charge, because that was the wish of their father.

Rama Chandra said, "Let me pursue My duties here."

Bharat pleaded that he was only a boy, and Rama must rule over him. But Rama was firm in keeping His father's pledge. He cited to His brother a Vedic proverb: He who saves his father from the hell named "Put," and he who saves his father from all sorts of difficulties, is "Putra," or the true son. Bharat relented, but took back with him Rama Chandra's sandals, promising to dedicate the kingdom to the sandals of Rama, and to wait in ascetic observance for the expiration of the 14-year exile.

THE WAR WITH RAVANA

The first clash with Ravana took place through his sister, Surpanakha. She was a hideous monster who wandered across the cottage of Rama, and was struck with lust on seeing the Lord. She delivered some low insults to Sita, and for that Lakshman cut off her ears and nose. Running back to the camp of Ravana, she howled for revenge, and the death-struggle thus commenced.

Ravana had almost everything. Through long performance of austere penances he had gained great power; he had received specific boons from Lord Brahma, the topmost demigod, so that he would never be vanquished by any race of demigods, or any power or per-

sonality except man. But, of course, no mere man could stand against his onslaught. For the sake of war-mongering he had conquered the demigods Kuvera and Indra. He reigned in a vast island kingdom called Lanka, and possessed all material opulence. He and his "Rovers of the Night" roamed about killing and eating the flesh of solitary hermits engaged in spiritual practices in the forest.

Ravana made a career of violating beautiful women wherever he found them, and had a large harem of hundreds who had surrendered to his material effulgence of wealth and strength.

Ravana believed himself unvanquishable. He did not care for God. Perfect materialist that he was, he challenged even the existence of God. He had a plan where he wanted to deport men to the heavenly planets by means of a staircase structure reaching to Indra's Paradise, so that people could go there without qualifying themselves by performing pious works. He challenged anything and everything good, and listened to no cautious counsel about the bad reaction which follows sinful activities. Valmiki says that Ravana's mentality was such that he was living for death. In challenging Rama by the abduction of His wife Sita, Ravana surely chose death, and raced headlong towards his inevitable meeting with it. Therefore, there was no fear of sin in Ravana: until such time as he was actually cut down by a superior power, he would violate the authority of the Lord as far as possible.

We can understand, therefore, that for all his highly developed intelligence, Ravana was ignorant of the soul. By such ignorance one thinks that this one lifetime is all, and that death is the finish of everything. And so one may beg, borrow, or steal if one wishes. And if someone tells him that there will be a reaction in the next life, based on his present behavior, he will disregard that. This is the ignorance by which the conditioned living entity is covered over, and by which he cannot realize his original situation of Sat-chit-ananda—transcendental eternal bliss, and full knowledge in the loving service of the Lord.

As soon as anyone, from the tiny ant up to the conqueror Ravana, takes the attitude that he is the lord and the center, then the material Nature awards him this bodily covering, by which he can go on acting in illusion, ignorant of his real dependence on the Soul of souls, God. Under the illusion that he is independent, he then engages in a futile struggle to conquer the material Nature. Ravana's case is extraordinary because, in defiance of the Supreme Personality of

Godhead, he actually did conquer a significant part of the universe. But, as we shall see, his victory, like that of all the worldly conquerors of history, was fleeting, and his every step was actually a step on the path towards his ultimate destruction.

From Ravana's kingdom, 14,000 Rakshasa warriors poured forth to slay Rama and Lakshman. En route, Ravana's troops experienced a downpour of evil omens from Nature. Blood showered upon them with dreadful noise. The beautiful horses pulling their chariots suddenly tumbled. Vultures attacked their royal flags. Birds, beasts and jackals howled.

The demigods situated in the sky prayed amongst themselves: "May victory attend the cows, Brahmins and those who are held in high regard by Him. Let Rama conquer just like Vishnu with His disc."

Valmiki writes that, "As the planets move towards the sun and the moon, so the fierce Rakshasa army rushed towards Rama and Lakshman, in lust of battle." Rama was informed of their coming. While doom was presaged to the Rakshasas by dark clouds and raining blood, the shafts of Rama Chandra were flaming in war-delight, and His gold-plated bow throbbed with ruthless energy.

The 14,000 warriors were demolished by Rama Chandra, alone and on foot. His arrows, resembling fire with smoke, covered the whole sky, and He discharged them and fired more with a speed that the enemy could not follow. One man-eater survived, and ran back to Ravana with the news that Rama Chandra had devoured them with shafts like a five-mouthed serpent. He said that, wherever they had fled, they had found Rama Chandra stationed before them.

Ravana was outraged, and reminded the lone survivor of 14,000 that Vishnu Himself couldn't be safe by doing injury to Ravana. But the survivor who had been through the hell of slaughter pleaded that his Lord Ravana just listen to him with attention regarding Rama Chandra's valor as he had experienced it. He humbly submitted to his chief that Rama Chandra could bring down the stars and planets and raise the submerged Earth by His arrows, and could destroy all creatures and create them anew. Rama Chandra was simply unslayable.

The survivor also offered to Ravana that he had seen the beautiful wife of Rama, called Sita. He said that no woman could be equal to her in beauty. She was in the bloom of youth, and most graceful. Her beauty struck one with such deep wonder, the Rakshasa con-

cluded, that if Ravana could somehow enchant Rama into the forest and take her away, it would be the one way to vanquish Him, for He surely could not survive separation from His wife.

THE KIDNAPPING OF SITA

To implement the abduction of Sita, Ravana called on his warlord, Maricha. This Maricha was the same Rakshasa who had been carried 1000 miles through the air and thrown into the ocean by the wind arrow of the inexperienced 16-year-old Rama on His first military expedition. Ravana asked Maricha to take the form of a golden deer, to frisk in front of Sita. When Sita should wish to have the deer for her own, Rama and Lakshman could be induced to follow it and, at that time, Sita might be carried off.

Maricha was filled with alarm on hearing such talk from Lord Ravana. He reported to his chief that the proposal was impossible. For one thing, "as Indra is the king of the gods, so Rama Chandra is King of all." Nobody should dare to take Sita away, as she was protected by chastity and devotion. Maricha knew that Rama Chandra was death-like, and he advised Ravana to desist from his thoughts of crossing the Lord. The King of the Rakshasas, irritated that his subordinate had even attempted to dissuade him, told Maricha that he must perform this service or be killed.

Then Maricha, in the form of a wonderful deer with silver spots and the sheen of jewels, appeared before Sita in the forest. His hoofs were made of blue stones, and he had a little tail that shone like the rainbow. He walked this way and that, browsing on creepers and sometimes galloping. In so many ways, he drew the mind of Sita, who asked Rama Chandra to catch him for her. Rama Chandra was, of course, cognizant that this might be the Rakshasa magic of Maricha, but He decided to go after the deer, and if it was actually Maricha, He would kill him. Rama firmly ordered Lakshman to stay behind with Sita. Then He pursued the deer. It became elusive, and even invisible. Rama resolved to kill it. He shot one deadly shaft which entered Maricha's heart like a flaming snake.

His counterfeit guise gone, Maricha, in the hideous form of a huge Rakshasa bathed in blood now rolled upon the ground. But with his last breath, he remembered the advice of Ravana, and cried out loudly, "Alas Sita! Alas Lakshman!"

Waiting with Lakshman in their cottage, Sita heard the cries and believed it was Rama, and that He was in some

danger. She told Lakshman to go at once and help Him. Lakshman dismissed the idea that Rama Chandra could be in danger. Besides, he knew his duty was to remain and protect Sita. But Sita, in great anxiety over Rama, began to speak very strangely. She told Lakshman that she knew he was not going to help Rama out of lust for her, and that in fact he had long been waiting to be separated from Rama so that he could fulfill his own desire for enjoying Sita. Lakshman could not bear to hear such unfair words, and he took his leave of Sita to seek out Rama Chandra. In that way, Ravana was able to find Sita alone, and he carried her off by force.

It may be asked, how could two invincible heroes be tricked by the magic of illusion into leaving Sita alone? How could Sita, with the purity of her chaste insight, accuse Lakshman of being lustful? And, as Rama Chandra is God Himself, how could it come to pass that Ravana carried off Sita by force in his chariot, and was able to cause bitter lamentation for Sita and Rama? These are not very easy questions, it would seem. The aggregate is: how can someone under the direct protection of the Supreme Lord come under any illusion, or fare badly?

If we take it from The Bhagavad Gita, we can know that the pure devotee is never under the power of illusion. The Lord promises that one who surrenders to Him is straightway delivered from illusion. Maya, the illusory energy, cannot act upon one who is surrendered to the Person of the Absolute Truth. This Maya is the external energy of the Lord, intended as a reformatory measure for those souls still desirous of lording it. As its source is divine, this Maya cannot be overcome by any amount of scholarship, technology, or material intelligence. But, as stated in the Seventh Chapter of The Gita, he alone who surrenders to the Lord is released.

A pure devotee is attached to service of the Supreme Person, and is therefore no longer falsely identifying his perishable body as his self, or claiming material possessions as his own. The devotee is under the internal, spiritual energy of the Lord, called Yogamaya. This means that he is being personally cared for by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, due to his constant association by word, thought and deed with the Yogamaya energy. This is just like sunshine. The sunshine is there for everyone, but it cannot benefit one who stays hidden indoors. One who partakes of the sunshine experiences no darkness, because darkness cannot exist where the sun is.

So, if the devotee is freed from all contamination and darkness, why was

Rama Chandra banished from His kingdom? Why was Sita, who is Lakshmi the Goddess of Fortune, kidnapped by Ravana? Why was Lord Jesus Christ crucified? Why was the pure saint Thakur Haridas beaten? Why was Lord Krishna shot in the foot by a hunter? And why did Krishna's devotees, the Pandavas, have to undergo so many ordeals? These things, the devotee understands, are working according to some plan of the Lord's Will, to facilitate His mission in this world.

This example was given by Rama Chandra when He responded with even mind to His banishment: "I must obey My father in this. Who are We to try to get control for self interest over what is being sent to Us by the law of God? We must accept what is sent by God."

Surrender means that the Lord can do with us as He likes. The surrendered soul is waiting for the Lord's Will. He will go back to Godhead at the time when the Lord is pleased to take him. He knows that there must be some plan of the Lord behind what is happening and, as far as he's concerned, the devotee will never be removed from his position of unconditional loving service unto the Personality of Godhead. In this case of Rama's banishment and Sita's abduction, we can understand that these activities had to be carried out in order to fulfill the mission of Lord Rama in coming to Earth—the slaying of the demon Ravana for the relief of the faithful demigods.

Similar occurrences of a devotee in a position of mundane frustration are explained by Goswami A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami as the basis for the presentation of great transcendental literatures like Srimad Bhagwatam and The Bhagavad Gita. In the case of Srimad Bhagwatam, the Emperor Parikshit, who was usually a man of irreproachable behavior, delivered an insult to a brahmin, and was sentenced to death within 7 days. This death curse brought about his revival of God consciousness, and made possible his meeting with the sage Sukadeva Goswami, who narrated the entire Srimad Bhagwatam to him, filled as it is with the Pastimes of Lord Krishna. In this way all humanity was benefitted.

Again, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami writes, "By placing Arjuna and the Pandavas in a position of frustration through the intrigues of their cousins, the Battle of Kurukshetra was engineered by the Lord in order to incarnate the sound representative of the Lord, The Bhagavad Gita."

In short, we should understand that these unusual circumstances of the apparent distress of Rama and Sita are ordained and serve the Lord's purposes.

On a chariot pulled by asses, Ravana of ten heads and twenty arms flew through the sky with his arm around Sita. Sita was protected from gross sexual violation by her power of chastity. Also, Ravana had at one time in his career received a fell curse from the yogi father of a girl he had violated: if Ravana ever attempted to again enjoy a woman by physical force, his head would split into pieces.

By this act of abduction Ravana completely sealed his doom beyond a doubt. Not only would he die for capturing another's wife, but he would not even be able to enjoy her in the meantime, not for a moment. Goswami A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami nicely explains the relationship between Sita and Ravana: "The Goddess of Fortune is called Chanchala. Chanchala means that she is not steady. Ravana took away Lakshmi, Sitaji, to his place and instead of being happy by the grace of Lakshmi, his family and his kingdom were vanquished. So Lakshmi in the house of Ravana is Chanchala, or not steady. The Ravana class of men want Lakshmi only, without her husband, Narayana [or Rama Chandra]. Therefore they become unsteady by Lakshmi. And so materialistic persons find fault on the part of Fortune. Of course, in the spiritual sky Lakshmi is fixed in the service of the Lord, and in spite of her being the Goddess of Fortune, she cannot be happy without the grace of the Lord." From this we can also understand that Sita's essential beauty is that she is associated with the Personality of Godhead.

Unable to forcibly have his lust satisfied, Ravana gave Sita a tour of opulent Lanka. He showed her the swans and ponds, and his harem. He showed her how thousands of mighty Rakshasas awaited his word. And he described Rama Chandra as a weak outcaste who would never be able to come to Lanka. He asked Sita to rule over Lanka, and he would become her slave. Though she was weighted down with sorrow and deeply absorbed in anxious thoughts, Sita seared Ravana by telling him that for this reckless outrage he would be destroyed by Rama and Lakshman.

In the face of his lion-like ferocity, she told him, "How can the consort of a swan, one who sports with her mate amidst lotuses, favor with her glance a water crow, who is straying amongst weeds and bushes? This body is now useless to me. You may chain it or destroy it. I shall not preserve it any more, nor will I ever bear the stigma of unchastity. I am the devoted wife of Rama, and you will never be able to touch me."

Ravana could only threaten Sita that

if after twelve months she did not favorably turn to him, he would cut her into pieces and have his cooks serve her to him for a feast.

ALLIANCE WITH THE MONKEYS

In the absence of Sita, Rama Chandra was plunged into unalloyed grief. He was crazed, and His understanding appeared clouded. He was going through the forest asking the flowers and trees if they had seen His love. He feared she had been eaten by the Rakshasas. He and Lakshman searched everywhere. Rama questioned the sun: "Where has My darling gone?" He asked the wind if she were dead or alive or stolen, or had he seen her on any path?

Lakshman attempted to draw off Rama Chandra's despair by sensible words, but he was paid no attention. Finally the brothers found signs of Sita, pieces of clothing torn while resisting Ravana, and ornaments which had fallen from her as she rose up in his chariot. They also found the bloodied dying body of Jayatu, the ancient King of Birds, who had made a valiant attempt to stop Ravana's flight. Frothing in his last blood, Jayatu informed Rama Chandra that it was Ravana, the King of the Rakshasas, who had taken Sita. The brothers got further information that they could obtain the help needed to find Ravana's kingdom by making alliance with Sugriva, the King of the Vanaras, a monkey race who lived in the Pampas region of rivers and lakes.

This chief of the monkeys, Sugriva, beholding Rama Chandra and Lakshman within his province, was at once fearful. The Vanaras were taking refuge from their enemy Vali, who was the chief's brother, and Sugriva thought that Rama and Lakshman had come to do some harm, as they appeared so formidable with their weapons. The monkeys ranged from peak to peak, and joined their leader for a conference on what to do about the two mighty young men who were walking amongst the trees and lakes. The chief counsellor to the King, named Hanuman, assured Sugriva that their enemy Vali had no access to the Pampa region. Therefore, why should they fear these two godlike warriors?

Hanuman approached Rama and Lakshman on behalf of the king, and with eloquent words invited them to meet with the monkey chieftain. Rama was at once delighted with the eloquent speech and appearance of Hanuman, and a meeting was arranged. Seated on giant Sala leaves, Rama, Hanuman, Lakshman and Sugriva spoke out their hearts and concluded a pact of honorable friendship.

Sugriva narrated how he had become

confined to this region of the Pampas in fear of his life, having been deprived of his kingdom by his brother Vali. Rama Chandra acknowledged that the expression of friendship is good service, and He agreed to kill Vali, who had also abducted the wife of Sugriva. Rama accepted the hand of Sugriva in embrace, and the monkey chief promised to aid Rama in His search for Sita by employing his vast, worldwide army of Vanaras.

Sugriva, however, had some doubts that Rama could actually subdue Vali. In order to assure him, Rama Chandra shot one arrow which traversed through seven palm trees, a rock, through the innermost region of the Earth and in a minute returned to Rama Chandra's quiver! He then set out, and soon met Vali, and slew him.

After some delay, while Sugriva tasted the sensual pleasures of his regained kingdom, he mobilized his forces and sent them out to all quarters in search of Lanka, where Sita was imprisoned. But after months of futile searching, the armies began to lose hope. Some returned, and some dispersed in foreign lands. It was Hanuman alone who received information that the Kingdom of Lanka was an island far across the Indian ocean.

Hanuman is eulogized by all sages and scholars of the Vedic Science of God, for Hanuman is the ideal servitor. He simply wanted to carry out the order of Rama Chandra effectively. His career in finding Sita and battling the Rakshasas on behalf of Rama Chandra sets the highest spiritual standard, surpassing all mechanical yogic practitioners and speculative philosophers and scholars in search of the Absolute Truth.

It is clearly stated in the Teachings of Lord Chaitanya, by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, that at the last stage the highest spiritual perfection is favorable service unto the Personality of Godhead. The exact example of Hanuman is not to be imitated, but his service attitude is to be followed. That is, each of us has some capacity. Hanuman had the capacity of enormous physical strength and agility. He used every ounce of that strength, not in pursuit of sense gratification or for conquering some land or women, but in humble devotional service to the Lord of the Senses, Whom he worshipped exclusively as Lord Rama Chandra. We should do likewise.

There cannot be any exaggeration in praising the stature and exploits of this formidable monkey warrior. He is not great because he was wonderfully powerful, but because he used all his strength—even his anger—in discharging service unto the Personality of God-

head in the matter of vanquishing Ravana.

Hanuman resolved to travel through the air in search of Janaki. He was the son of the wind god, Vayu, and thus had the facility for flight. Passage across the ocean is arduous, even for one who can fly like the wind, but Hanuman made it in one leap. His monkey brothers had gathered to watch him off. With a great contraction of strength, Hanuman stood at the edge of the sea and grasped a mountain in his arms. He held his breath and tightened all his limbs. He then spoke these words to his brothers: "I shall reach Lanka with the velocity of the wind, just like an arrow shot by Rama, and if I do not find Janaki there I shall at the same speed go to the region of the gods. And if I do not meet with success even there, then I shall uproot Lanka itself and bring Ravana here in bondage."

With these words he sprang up with ease. Like Garuda, the Eagle of Vishnu, Hanuman flew over the water, raising great waves by his speed, and exposing the aquatics below, who fled in fear. At times Rakshasas rose from the sea for his destruction, but he was not deterred in his mission. Sri Valmiki says that when Hanuman landed in Lanka and went over the city wall, it appeared as if he had planted his left foot on the crown of Ravana.

The perfection of Hanuman in action is open to anyone who will use to the full his own personal capacities in serving the Lord. There is a nice story that occurred at the time Rama Chandra and the monkeys were building a bridge across the ocean to reach Lanka. Hanuman and the other Vanaras were hefting huge boulders and throwing them into the sea. In the course of such tremendous labor, Hanuman spied an insignificant spider, who appeared to be brushing some specks of dust into the water with its back legs. "What are you doing, worthless?" Hanuman asked of the spider. "I am helping Rama Chandra build His bridge," the spider replied.

Hanuman was about to move the spider out of the way of his own serious work, when Rama Chandra interposed, saying, "What are you doing, Hanuman? This spider is worth as much as you are by doing his utmost for Me."

The gist of this is that the topmost position of loving service unto God is made manifest by directly applying whatever you have in the way of words, thoughts and energy. And that will be accepted by the Lord as first class devotion.

HANUMAN IN LANKA

Hanuman was delighted to observe the City of Lanka. For protection, he reduced himself to the size of a cat, and then proceeded to walk into the city, taking careful note of how everything was situated. As a servitor, he was very concerned at every moment, lest he be caught and ruin the project. Hanuman reflected that, "Emissaries proud of their education or intelligence sometimes become the cause of failure." The taking of the city of Lanka and the vanquishing of Ravana appeared to be nearing success, but it could be marred by such an agent as himself.

"If I lose my life," thought Hanuman, while walking down the populated way amidst the nightlife of Lanka, "great obstacles will crop up for the fulfillment of my Master's object."

Still no more than the size of a cat, he walked along the roof of a seven-storied building and saw at a short distance the palace of Ravana, surrounded by a glittering wall. The palace was guarded by armed Rakshasas, whom Valmiki describes as "never shrinking from anything on account of moral principles." Treading past noisy drinking parties and quiet gatherings, past big mansions with spacious halls, Hanuman gained access at last to the inner chamber of Ravana.

The time was past midnight, and the monkey warrior observed a virtual sea of beautiful women, sleeping under the influence of drink. Hanuman was looking for the one woman described to him as Sita, and there was no question of his being moved by a harem full of disheveled beauties. Hanuman's agitation was, rather, that time was passing, and he had not yet found Sita. In the center of the chamber, on a crystal dais, he saw an elaborately decorated bedstead, and upon the bed lay Lord Ravana himself. Ravana was spread out in intoxication, "like an elephant in sleep." Lying like that, his body smeared with red sandal, and wearing bright cloth, he presented the perfect spectacle of a sensualist in royal power.

But where was Sita?

Hanuman paced up and down the city wall. He began to think that his leap across the ocean had been in vain. This is the frustration of the transcendental servant. He does not see all indifferently as One, as the impersonalist philosophers would have it. When engaged in the transcendental service of the Lord, any obstacle unfavorable to the discharge of that service is a source of frustration and even anger, until it is removed. Hanuman was proceeding with the work of Rama Chandra. He was prepared to

go to any lengths, and in Hanuman's case the wish of his heart was not mere bravado. He had been blessed with the most intense individual yearning for actual service of the Lord. Actually, there is no impediment in serving the Lord, and once we decide that we belong to God we cannot be stopped from serving Him. We can always chant His Holy Name. God, being omnipotent, is truly in no need of our services, but He is most pleased by the individual who makes an effort on His behalf.

Finally the noble monkey found Sita in the heart of the dense Asoka forest, seated under a tree. Wracked with grief, but still radiantly beautiful, with tears flowing down her face, she is described as "Lakshmi without the Lotus." She was seated on the ground like an ascetic, wane, and sad for the absence of Rama Chandra. She was undergoing a continual, harrowing nightmare of separation from Rama. Hideous Rakshasa monsters of misshapen form danced in a ring around her, telling her rumor's of Rama's weakness and death.

Hanuman's first step was to communicate with Sita and assure her. He was certain this was her because of the information he had received about her appearance. He had to approach her, gain her confidence that he was not another Rakshasa, and convey to her that Rama and the Vanaras would soon be on their way to her rescue, so that she must not give up her life.

Hanuman began to speak to her from his place, concealed within the branches of the tree. Janaki was delighted to hear him. She had some doubt, but Hanuman was very sweet of speech, assuming a large form, reddish and clothed in white. And he recited to her the history of King Dasarath and Rama Chandra and Lakshman and Sita.

Listening to this being who so cheerfully pronounced the Name of Rama, Sita began to shake off her ascetic firmness. She was becoming convinced that she was beholding Rama Chandra's messenger, and that was as good as seeing Rama Himself! She thought for a time that Hanuman might be another mirage, but the monkey told her things too treasured to be Rakshasa deceit. Rama Chandra had given to him the utmost confidence.

With folded palms, Hanuman approached Sita and gave her a ring from Rama. In blissful exchange, Sita offered that Hanuman should ask Rama, "Do you remember the time We were wandering in the Dananka Forest and a crow was disturbing me, and You shot him with an arrow?" Sita then received all of Hanuman's speech like honey. When, however, he related Rama Chandra's

grief at her separation, she received it like poison. Assuring her that she would soon be re-united with Lord Rama, Hanuman finally left. In parting, Sita told him that she could only live one more month like this, and then she would give up her life.

Before heading back with his message, Hanuman decided to gauge the enemy's power. He understood that he had been given no direct order to do this, but he reflected in his mind that there is no guilt if the servant, while accomplishing the main objective, does something else in addition. Thereupon, in a miraculous display of prowess, Hanuman broke down all of the trees in the Asoka forest except the one under which Sita was seated.

He then sat upon the main gate of Lanka and, uprooting a bolt, shouted out that he was Hanuman, a Vanara, and the servant of Rama Chandra! Frightened Rakshasas rushed out to see him expanding himself to gigantic size, ranging the sky, determined to fight. Hanuman single-handedly destroyed thousands of Rakshasa warriors and top military personalities, and set fire to every house in the city, declaring again and again: "None of you will survive when you make an enemy of Rama Chandra!" Then he flew back across the ocean, and landed with a great noise upon a mountain peak.

THE SIEGE OF LANKA

Without delay, the Vanaras under Sugriva mobilized, and built the miraculous bridge of stones across the ocean. In this connection, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami has written that, as the Supreme Lord floats countless planets in space as though they were no more than little cotton swabs, certainly He can float one bridge of stones upon an ocean.

In millions, with all military equipment, the army marched across the ocean and into Lanka under the very nose of the Lord of the Rakshasas. Even up to the last moment Ravana was oblivious to the warning that he didn't have a chance in his plan to keep Sita and oppose the wish of Rama Chandra.

In hand-to-hand combat, great heroes from both sides fought to the death day after day, with thousands of fatalities among the troops. Finally, one by one, the great Rakshasa chieftains, such as Kumbhkrana, Narantaka and Indrajit, the son of Ravana, fell before the unlimited powers of heroes like Hanuman, Lakshman, Sugriva and Rama Chandra. At the last, Rama Chandra slew Ravana with a Brahmastra released from His bow.

Valmiki tells of the origin of this



weapon: It was handed down by Lord Brahma, and passed from sage to sage. The Brahmastra was smeared with fat and blood, and smoked like doomsday fire. It was hard and deep sounding, and when shot by Rama Chandra it cleft Ravana's heart in two, depriving him of life.

THE TRIAL OF SITA

Immediately after the victory, with Lanka under the control of Rama's party, Sita was brought before Him for a joyful reunion. Before the thousands of people gathered, however, Rama Chandra said that He could not take her back because she had lived with Ravana in his house, and had been touched by him. Janaki was

mortally ashamed of her own existence, hearing Lord Rama make such an accusation before the multitude. Speaking in defense of her chastity, Sita asked Lakshman to prepare a funeral pyre. As the flames leaped up to a great height, she approached the pyre and bowed down, praying to the fire god, Agni, that if she was actually devoted to Rama the fire might protect her. Then she leaped into the blaze.

At once, Lord Brahma himself, foremost of all the demigods, descended from the sky and demanded of Rama, "Why have You done this to Sita?" And Brahma addressed Rama Chandra as Vishnu Himself, the Omnipresent and Omniscient, Who had descended for the destruction of Ravana.

Agni then appeared from the fire, carrying Sita, who was completely unharmed, even her garland and dress being unburnt due to her purity. And thus all those present could be satisfied that Sita had retained her sanctity even though long in subjection to Ravana.

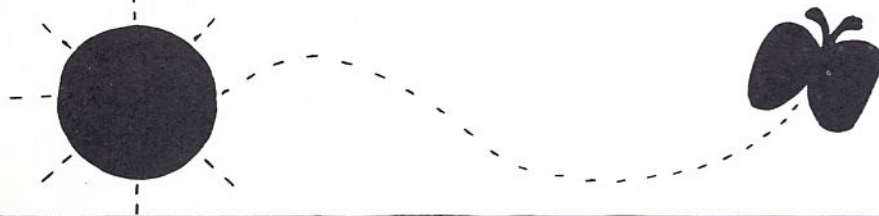
Years later, however, after the happy end of the ordeal, when Rama Chandra was ruling over a joyous Ayodha, He chose to banish His wife again. His subjects had begun speaking against Sita—of the time she had spent with Ravana. And so Rama sent her away in order to prove Himself an ideal king, Who wanted to make His subjects always happy.

Lord Rama Chandra's whole program was based on the concept of the ideal king, and it is in that light that we can best understand Him. As the perfect ruler, Rama Chandra followed the principles of morality and ethics just as they should be followed by the perfect human king or ruler. Rama Chandra submitted Himself to those principles, though He was actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and not subject to any moral code. And in this instance He showed that a good leader must think only of the welfare of his people, setting aside his entire life for that purpose, with no private pleasures withheld.

Goswami A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami explains the mood of the Lord in His Appearance as Rama Chandra thusly: "The comparative studies on the life of Krishna and Rama Chandra are very intricate, but the basic principle is that Rama Chandra appeared as an ideal king, and Krishna appeared as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, although there is actually no difference between the Two. A similar example is that of Lord Chaitanya. He appeared as a devotee and not as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, although He is Krishna Himself. So we should accept the Lord's mood in His particular Appearance, and we should worship Him in that mood. Our service should be compatible with the attitude of the Lord. Therefore, in the Shastras, there are specific injunctions, such as: To worship Lord Chaitanya, the method is chanting Hare Krishna."

Sri Valmiki declares that he who always listens to this epic becomes absolved from sins. He who listens with due respect meets with no obstacles in life. He will live happily with his near and dear ones, and get his desired boons from Rama Chandra, the eternal Vishnu, the Personality of Godhead. END

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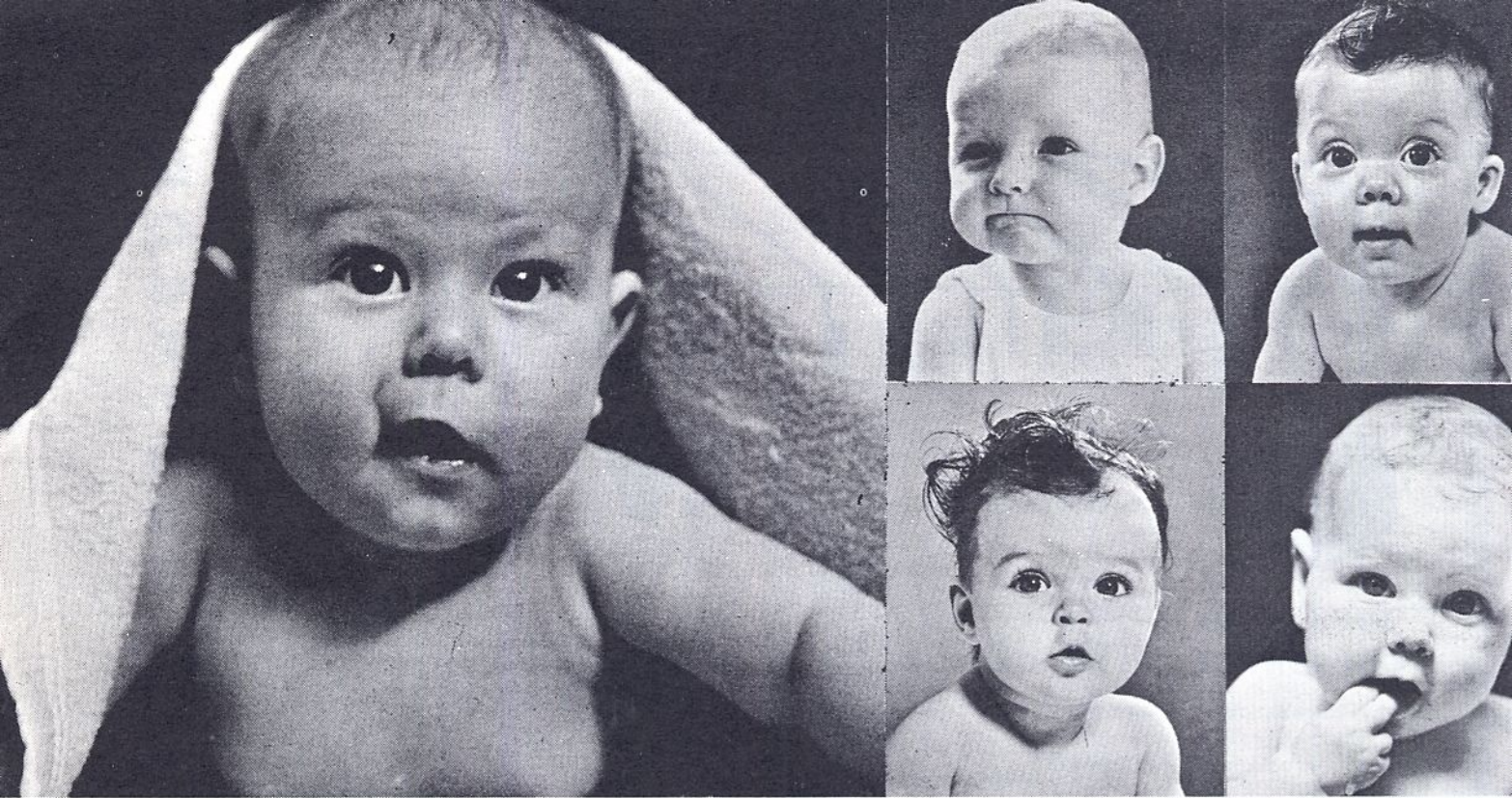
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COCONUT HONEY BALLS

1 lb. grated coconut	8 oz. cream cheese
1/3 lb. butter	8 oz. cottage cheese
1 small pinch camphor	1/2 cup finely chopped figs
3/4 cup honey	1/2 cup finely chopped walnuts

Melt butter in frying pan. Add a very small pinch of camphor and stir. Add coconut and fry over low heat, stirring constantly till coconut is light brown. Mix in figs and walnuts. Mix in honey and set aside. When cool fold in cream cheese and cottage cheese. Roll mixture into little balls and refrigerate overnight. Makes about 72.

CHOODY NOODLES

2 cups chick-pea flour	1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
1/3 cup water	1 qt. vegetable oil
1 tsp. salt	

Mix all dry ingredients thoroughly. Mix in water to make a thick dough. Heat oil in large 2-qt. sauce pan. Just before oil begins to smoke, squeeze some of the dough through a ricer into the hot oil. Cook for about 5 minutes. Noodles should be a very light brown color. Repeat this process until all the dough is used up. Makes a large bowl of noodles.

PAKORA

3 cups chick-pea flour	massala:
1/2 tsp. baking soda	1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
1/2 tsp. salt	1/2 tsp. coriander
1 large cauliflower	1/2 tsp. ground cumin seeds
1/2 tsp. turmeric	1/4 tsp. cloves
2 qts. vegetable oil	1/4 tsp. ginger
	1/4 tsp. cinnamon
	1/2 tsp. turmeric

Make massala by mixing dry ingredients together in a cup. Break cauliflower into large thumb-sized chunks. In 1 qt. of water add turmeric. Boil cauliflower in the turmeric water until tender, but NOT mushy. Drain and allow to cool. In a separate bowl, mix together chick-pea flour, baking soda, salt, and massala. Add enough water to make a thick batter. Beat batter for two minutes. Heat 2 qts. oil in large heavy pot or deep fryer until smoking. Dip pieces of cauliflower into batter, coating them completely. Allow excess batter to drip off. Carefully and gently place these in the hot oil and turn to cook all around. Pakora is done when it is hard. Hardness may be tested by tapping one to see if it is firm. Remove to drain on paper towel. Makes about 40-50.

POPPERS

Heat 1 quart of oil in a frying pan. Place popper into oil making sure it submerges completely. Poppers take about 3 seconds to cook. Remove immediately with tongs. Popper will expand to about twice original size. Let excess oil drip off.

NOTE:

Poppers, known also as poppadam, or paparh, may be purchased at most Oriental spice shops, or Krishna Consciousness temples in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

KRISHNA'S HOLIDAY SNACKS



Food for Krishna

This year instead of the usual holiday treats, you can enjoy a few of the very special dishes we students of Krishna Consciousness Yoga prepare on feast days in our kitchens. First, the delicate flavor of Coconut Honey Balls will fill your mouth with bliss and leave a clean refreshing after-taste besides. Next, when you're relaxing, try a few handfuls of Chooky Noodles. These crunchy little morsels can be the hit of your holiday season. The famous "tempoura" of Japan actually originated in India as Pakora. Be careful to make a liberal portion of this dish. You'll understand why with the first bite. Poppers, our final treat, are the fastest cooking preparation in the world. They're completely done in about three seconds, which is how quickly your guests will want to eat them, once they get a taste. Remember, all these foods are made entirely with vegetable products.

by
Rayarama



WHOSE GOD IS

On the morning of Friday, July 3, 1187 A. D., Guy of Lusignan, crowned King of Jerusalem, led his army of Frankish Crusaders out from their camp at Sephoria and marched eastward to the relief of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, then under siege by the forces of Saladin, Sultan of Egypt. This was the greatest army the Christians of the East had ever assembled, consisting of 1200 knights, about 2,000 light native cavalry, and close to 10,000 infantry. Saladin, camped at Kafr Sebt somewhat south of Guy's line of march, had likewise the greatest army he had so far commanded—a mainly mounted force slightly more numerous than the Franks.



Though by our nation-in-arms standards of today these were minute quantities of men, they were nevertheless about to fight one of the decisive battles of world history, a battle with significance to the student of spiritual enlightenment as much as to the student of military or political affairs. For this was a "religious" war, as indeed the entire Crusading movement was a "religious" phenomenon; and the uses and misuses of religion in this context are important to us in enquiring into the nature of relations between God and man.

THE BATTLE OF HATTIN

Had the Christian leaders possessed the least regard for strategy, they could not have chosen to move as they did on this day, for the road before them was devoid of water—except for one well which proved to be empty—and almost devoid of shade. It was the hottest part of the year, and the heavily armored knights almost at once began to suffer the pangs of thirst, quickly exhausting their drinking supplies. Yet Tiberias lay near, not twenty miles forward, and the very thought of Eschiva Countess of Tripoli, who was alone commanding the defense of the castle there, fired them with enthusiasm.

Saladin, who had learned of his enemies' movement along the northern road, had meanwhile brought his camp to the village of Hattin in their path, and joyfully sent out swarms of skirmishers to hamstring the Crusaders. This they did by riding in upon the vanguard, which was commanded by Raymond Count of Tripoli, Eschiva's husband, loosing sheets of arrows, and then riding off before the Christians

could close upon them in counter-attack. They pursued the same tactics upon the flanks and rear, thus pinning Guy's mighty cavalcade down in the merciless heat of the desert.

By afternoon the harried, desperate Frankish force reached the plateau above Hattin, Saladin's headquarters which barred the way to Tiberias. Between the Crusaders and the village lay a hill with two peaks, called the Horns of Hattin. The northern summit was believed to be the Mount of Beatitudes mentioned in the New Testament, from which Jesus Christ had delivered his message of blessed peace to the world. It was soon to be a scene of carnage and agony for those who wore his emblem.

About this time Count Raymond rode in from the van to urge King Guy forward, asserting that, unless they reached the Sea of Galilee or the River Jordan that day, all would be lost. Guy agreed, but then received word from his rear-guard, commanded by Gerard of Ridfort, Grand Master of the Knights Templars, that the troops in that quarter could go no farther. Guy now reversed his previous decision, and ordered his men to camp below the Horns. Hearing this, Raymond rode back from the front crying, "Ah, Lord God! The war is over! We are dead men, and the kingdom is fallen!"

The Sultan of Egypt was of the same mind. He had long prayed for the opportunity to catch his opponents out in the open, away from their impregnable castles, and now at last his moment had come. He exploited it to the full, offering the Franks no rest throughout the night. His men set fire to the brush on the hillside, thus sending billows of fumes into the camp of the already thirst-choked Christians. They kept up a constant bombardment of arrows, and rent the night air with cries of "Allah Akbar!" (God is most great!) and "La ilaha il Allah!" (There is no other god but God!)

In the morning the Crusaders found themselves utterly surrounded. Though Count Raymond was able to fight his way some distance forward with his knights in the vanguard, the infantry panicked in the face of Saladin's relentless archers, and fled up the Horns. Guy, unable to draw them down, at last pitched his tent near them, on the summit of the northern peak. He now made use of one of the most potent stimulants to morale any commander ever possessed: he raised as his standard the True Cross, the very one on which Jesus Christ had been crucified. Inlaid with gold and jewels, it had long been the sacred trust of the kings of Jerusalem, and had more than once before accompanied these fierce men of the West in battle. Today it was nearly



all they had left in the way of strategies.

The sight of the Cross sent a shiver of hope through the heartsick Christians, and they rallied round Guy's red tent, supplicating the sacred object, begging for a miracle to save them. While the rank and file thus turned to the God they claimed to serve, Guy turned to Count Raymond, and asked him what to do. Almost alone among the Frankish leaders, the Count of Tripoli had from the start opposed the dangerous expedition to relieve Tiberias, but jealous and headstrong counsels had turned Guy from his advice. Now the fate of the army was placed in his hands.

Raymond at once organized his knights as best he could and charged against the Moslem ring that encircled them. Taki ed-Din, the Saracen commander of that section, gauging the fury and desperation of this attempt, ordered his forces to part before the Christian onslaught. After the breakout had been accomplished, he moved his men back into place. Thus Raymond escaped, but the bulk of the Christian army, along with its leaders, remained pinned down on the Horns of Hattin. Unable to even consider a rear attack upon the enemy with his meager and exhausted forces, Raymond rode on, while Saladin mounted assault after assault upon the Frankish camp.

Terrific fighting took place at this point, the cornered Crusaders battling with such ferocity that we are told the Sultan himself once blanched and pulled at his beard in dismay. But in the end the triumph was his, an almost unqualified triumph, which entailed the annihilation of Christian military power in the Holy Land. Furthermore, the True Cross had fallen into the hands of the Moslem.

To many Christians this was a disaster not only of exterior political importance, it was a personal calamity of the soul, for Christian men had fought under the shadow of the Holy Cross in the Christian cause—and lost to the infidel. Was its power, then, less than the power of the worldly sword? To many, this seemed the case. More than any other single event, the Battle of the Horns of Hattin marks the point at which secular power began its ascendancy over the Church in the West, for it marked the point at which Popes, divine decrees, miracles and faith had failed. Unable to conceive that Islam might be "right" and Christianity "wrong," people preferred to think that men were suddenly on their own in the world, with God on no one's side.

THE QUESTION OF THE CRUSADES

And yet, even the least discerning of readers will have wondered if there wasn't more to the story of the True Cross' failure than appears on the surface. And there was. A close examination of events leading up to this epic confrontation reveals several interesting and significant facts:

1. Guy had been made king in violation of sacred oaths taken by all the leading barons and churchmen of Jerusalem, including himself. They had promised the dying leper-king, Baldwin IV, that they would leave the choice of a successor in the hands of the rulers of Europe, while Raymond was to act as regent.

2. Saladin had gathered his army to attack the Christians only after they repeatedly violated truces made with him

in good faith. It was their practice to attack the rich caravans which passed along the road between Damascus and Mecca, plundering and slaughtering without conscience.

3. The great army which opposed the Saracens at Hattin had originally been gathered not for that purpose, but to destroy Raymond of Tripoli, the rightful ruler (as regent) of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Only last minute developments forced these two factions into alliance against the Moslem threat.

4. The Holy Cross, whose loss so bereaved all Christendom, seems to have been less highly regarded before the battle. Heraclius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, had declined to bring it on the campaign when ordered to do so by Guy, because he preferred to remain in the Holy City with his mistress, the fabulous Paschia de Riveri. Therefore he sent the holy relic in the care of the Prior of the Sepulchre instead.

More could be said, but I think the point is made. The "Christian" cause was hardly Christian. The Crusaders, whatever their original motives may have been, had by 1187 devolved into little more than merciless robber barons who covered their vicious activities with a cloak of religious sanctity. Yet calling oneself a Christian, and even sporting the relics of Christianity, is not the same thing as being a follower of Christ, as Christ himself declared in his Gospels.

Generally speaking, all people tend to accept the faith into which they are born as "true," and use that faith as a symbol of personal superiority and, when pressed—as the Crusaders at Hattin were pressed—they will expect the God Who nominally leads their sect to protect them. This sort of religious consciousness is, of course, hypocritical to a fine degree. It makes God the servant of man, which is the reverse of what is actually taught in the great Scriptures of the world. And, when God fails to sanctify our actions, fill our pockets, and protect us when retribution for our misdeeds arrives, our faith is broken like a fragile bubble. This sort of faith, the sort which was defeated in 1187 by the loss of the True Cross, is not real faith to begin with. It is, more correctly, a social convention meant to justify our personal desires, a tool and not an honest belief in the supremacy of God.

Still, the whole question of the Crusades remains. Why are there different faiths in the first place if, as all civilized religions agree, there is only one God? And, granted that different faiths represent different ways of worshipping the same God, why do the various devotees of that God come from time to time to swords' points?

In considering the second question, we should remember that Saladin, like all good Moslems, thought the Christians no more than pagans because of their worship of the Virgin Mary, a clear instance of demigod worship in the eyes of the Arabs. And the Christians, of course, held the Saracens to be infidels simply because they revered Lord Jesus as a prophet and not as the only Son of God. Yet members of the two faiths, with all the grim and pitiless hatred between them, never doubted that both were ultimately following the same God. This is the great madness of the Crusades, and it has been to many a skeptic proof positive of the harmfulness and senselessness of strong religious convictions.

The present writer suggests that the solution to the riddles indicated by the Crusades cannot be found in the standard teachings of Christianity or Islam, nor in those of

Judaism. No faith which holds itself as "true" to the exclusion of all others can adequately explain co-existing religions. In the Vedic writings of India, however, the enquirer may be surprised to find that all religions and forms of worship are explained and, what's more, accepted; while the basic teaching of love of Krishna, the Supreme Godhead, is maintained as "true."

The Vedic religious viewpoint has generally been regarded by scholars as bewilderingly liberal. In the words of one writer, "It affirms almost everything and denies almost nothing." This, however, does not so much indicate how blindly superstitious the people of India have been as it shows the truly universal scope of the Vedic writings. And it is because of their scope, as well as the systematic and scientific approach to spiritual wisdom which they present, that these writings offer us the hope of solving our religious riddles, both old and new.

There is a Vedic analysis, for example, of the stages of consciousness possessed by worshippers of God. The least developed devotee recognizes only two principles in existence: himself and God. All else is excluded, or condemned. Of course, his identification of God as, more or less, his own private possession extends to his family, his society, his nation and culture. He and his belong to God, and God belongs to them—exclusively. It is not difficult to see that this rudimentary worship of God, held to be highly imperfect by the Vedic standard, is the sort typified in the men of the Crusades. And this sheds some light upon their actual position, for they did truly worship God, but their understanding of Him, of His ways and His will and service, were imperfect.

It is not a far step from this narrow, elementary concept of God to the point of outright hypocrisy. First of all the Lord is the ruler and protector of one's life and community; next He becomes the symbol of their special superiority, and at last He is an excuse for their inebrieties—the servant rather than the master. For this reason the elementary stage of God consciousness, though it is surely transcendental and entails "salvation"—that is, release from the bondage of material Nature—can be seen to be a dangerous, unsteady platform. In this position, the risk of falling into unabashed hypocrisy is always present.

ADVANCED CONSCIOUSNESS

The next stage of devotion recognizes four principles: God, His devotees, those who hate or oppose Him, and the innocent, who can be swayed either way. The man who has advanced to this stage of consciousness is held to be highly beneficial to society. He is sane in the surest sense, capable of distinguishing right from wrong, and is able to preach the philosophy of God consciousness to the world without mangling or perverting it, as tends to happen with devotees in the less advanced stage. He does not hold a Moslem to be different from a Christian, but judges men on the basis of their love for God, and not on the specific way they go about developing that love.

While making it a point to oppose the atheistic section of human society, the devotee in the second stage of advance-

ment attempts to bring the innocent—generally the greater portion of humanity—to an awareness of spiritual life and values. This is his primary endeavor, and is held in all the world's great scriptural texts to be the most elevated form of service to the Godhead.

The final or most advanced form of devotional awareness is very, very rare, and is known as the stage of pure, unadulterated love of God. At this point, the devotee sees all beings of whatever shape or form or position—human and non-human alike—as servants of the Supreme Godhead. Even the atheist, even the inanimate objects of Nature are visible to him as instruments of the will of God, aspects of the Lord's perfect plan of Creation.

Such a pure devotee is considered fully merged in transcendental love for God, and in this position he is unable to preach or to chastise, for he sees no ill or harm, no opposition to the supremacy of God. Yet his association, the very sight of him, is enough to awaken the spiritual emotions of love which lie dormant in every being. And this applies not only to humans but to all creatures, as was exhibited by Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Perfect Devotee, Who drew even the beasts of the jungle into the service of God.

The worshipper who reaches this platform of pure consciousness is, therefore, the most miraculous of men, for he offers to others—by his very existence—the hope of ultimate perfection, and the taste of true spiritual bliss.

GOD AND DEMIGOD

The Vedas further explain why it is that different religions worship God in different ways, and why the various religions often have distinctly different concepts of God. This is an extremely valuable contribution to our religious understanding, for these seeming inconsistencies have been the greatest unsolved problems of theologians in modern times. Many thinkers have, of course, tended to gloss over them by embracing monism, the concept that God is really a blank, featureless light or state of unity, and that our concepts of Him are ours alone, and do not actually describe the Absolute. But this is contrary to the direct teachings of our Scriptures, for the God of the Bible, of the Koran and of at least the larger portion of the Vedic writings is a Person. We can, if we like, simply reject these Scriptures, or any sections of them that don't fit our needs, but this course inevitably leads away from knowledge of the Absolute. The Absolute cannot, by definition, be relative, and once the wisdom which is coming from the Absolute is cast aside, only relativity—each man conjuring up a God of his own—remains.

The Vedic wisdom offers the religionist a third alternative between monism and narrow sectarian prejudice. It states that, though all standard Scriptures come to man from the Absolute, the presentation which is made depends upon three things: the time in history at which this knowledge is delivered, the place of delivery, and the character of the people to whom it is delivered. An example of this may be found in the question of meat-eating. In the first chapter of the Holy Bible, Adam is told by God, "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all

(continued)

the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." This, of course, was at the time when Adam was in Eden, where there was no lack of fruits and herbs to keep him healthy.

Later in the Bible, after the Flood, we read:
And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand they are delivered.

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all these things.

When living conditions had changed, man was permitted to live by eating meat. However, in the earlier, abundant state, this was not allowed. Likewise in the Vedic texts, which were presented in the generally affluent lands of India, meat-eating is forbidden except under special circumstances. The like ought to apply, as well, to our affluent contemporary civilization.

Although the rituals and methods of devotion change, however, the Vedic writings state that the essence of all forms of religion is the same: to develop love of God. Even Buddhism, which preaches ultimate nihilism, cannot dispense with devotion to the Buddha. And in the theistic religions, of course, this principle is always paramount.

At this point the question arises: Whose God is really God? We can agree that love for God is the universally true core of religion, but to which of the many distinct forms of God should our love be directed? Lord Rama Chandra, Lord Sri Krishna, the Buddha, Allah, Jehovah, the Father of Christianity, Vishnu, the Lord of Light adored in Zoroastrianism—these are clearly distinct concepts. And by our normal methods of reasoning we cannot elude the fact that, if only one of them is "true," the others must be false.

We return, then, to that Vedic viewpoint which "affirms almost everything and denies almost nothing." The Vedic view is that, though there is one Godhead, and though that Godhead has a specific form, He remains unlimited. And, because of His absolute or unlimited nature, He expands Himself into limitless other forms. And all of these forms of God, by the Vedic standard, are equally God. None is false, and none are in opposition to the others. They offer various aspects of the inconceivable varieties of opulence, beauty, power, splendor and wisdom of the One God.

This is not, it should be noted, polytheism. Nor is it demigod worship, for these direct expansions of Godhead are carefully distinguished from the agencies of material Nature. They are not temporary—born at some time and meant to die at some time—and they are not restricted as to power or place.

What this view of the limitless forms and opulences of God presents us with is a system of thought leading to actual realization of the full nature of the Absolute through love, without making it a matter of faith to disparage other worshippers of God. And it is, further, the only view of the Absolute which actually affirms its "absoluteness"—all others impose limitations upon God which, in the final

analysis, must be seen as inappropriate.

TOWARD UNIVERSAL RELIGION

The writer, then, suggests that it is possible to resolve the quandaries into which religious man has fallen by reference to the Vedic sources, the oldest and most comprehensive Scriptures existing in the world today. I would further state that without such a broad-minded reference, religion in this age of intensive analysis and comparison is doomed to become the province solely of crackpots, fanatics and scholars—a realm apart from the life of the common man. These Vedic Scriptures do not reject, but rather uphold all the great, civilized religions of the world. And it is by this reference that contemporary man can hope to reach a true, consistent and workable understanding of the Absolute Truth.

A byproduct of such an understanding is tolerance, but not the sort of tolerance which is based on ignorance, the sort of tolerance which amounts to no more than a practical rejection of the supremacy of God. The tolerance which this more enlightened understanding gives us is the tolerance of knowledge, the tolerance of the man who has advanced beyond the elementary stage of devotional consciousness, and can see that all who worship God are devotees—that God is pleased by love and not by rituals.

And, further, the most elevated state of consciousness, in which all things are bathed in the aura of transcendental service, though more difficult, is also entirely achievable through the proper pursuit of the wisdom of the Vedic way.

It is, therefore, by the purification of consciousness through devotional service to God—by strengthening rather than by weakening faith—that true religious tolerance is achieved. And, for the purpose of this purification, the Vedic sources recommend the chanting of the sacred Names of God. The Hare Krishna Mantra—Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare—is, of course, the standard mantra, or hymn, for this purpose. But other standard Names of God—Allah, Jehovah, etc.—are also quite acceptable for the same purpose. By chanting in this way, the devotee will arrive at a state of pure bliss in the loving association of God, and will be able to rise up to a clear and positive comprehension of the nature of the Absolute.

This, we must realize, is the way to universal religion. Universal religion, which implies a harmony and love among men that quite dizzies the imagination, does not consist of codifying or standardizing ritual, nor even of getting everyone to accept the same exact Scripture, or the same form of God. It consists, in the final analysis, of a comprehension of the truly infinite, unbounded and all-attractive nature of the Supreme Lord, a comprehension that can only come to man through loving service in purified consciousness.

Such a universal religion would not by any means entail the dissolution of Islam, of the Christian Church, of the Parsi community, of Hinduism or of Judaism. It would, in fact, uphold and strengthen them, and provide them with something more than mere negative exclusiveness as a cohesive force. And it is exactly this kind of universal religion which the world today must have if sanity, not to speak of human fulfillment, is to be attained.

END

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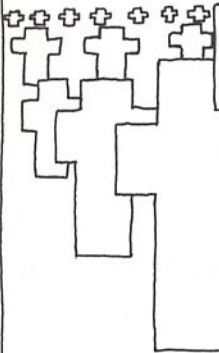
We are the living graves of murdered beasts,
Slaughtered to satisfy our appetites.
We never pause to wonder at our feasts,
If animals like men could possibly have rights.

We pray on Sunday that we may have light,
To guide our footsteps on the paths we tread.
We are sick of war, we do not want to fight,
The thought of it now fills our hearts with dread,
And yet we gorge ourselves upon the dead.

Like carrion crows we live and feed on meat,
Regardless of the suffering and pain
We cause by doing so.
If thus we treat
Defenceless animals for sport or gain,
How can we hope in this world to attain

The Peace we say we are anxious for?
Thus cruelty begets its offspring—War.

—George Bernard Shaw



process... a miraculous instrument for raising societies and nations from the dead—an instrument of resurrection.” It’s hard to think that all these religious terms are lost on Hoffer. Elsewhere he states that “religiofication” is necessary for a movement to be successful—and, through all the psychological and political reasoning, this chord sounds most strongly.

When he decides to praise movements, Hoffer usually prefaces his sentences with “Strangely enough,” or “It is strange to think...” So, putting them all together, he sees that radicals can cause an invigorating and strangely miraculous resurrection for the sake of things which do not exist.

Yes; very strange that so much energy can be motivated by illusions and come out creating things positive. Without True Believers, the world becomes stagnant. But, for Hoffer, the only reason men become fanatics is their own individual stagnation—this is the main point of the book.

He doesn’t mince around here. For example: “People with a sense of fulfillment think it is a good world and would like to conserve it as it is, while the frustrated favor radical change.” In another place he points to “men of outstanding achievement” and “people who live full, worthwhile lives” as the opposite numbers of the man-with-a-cause.

Exactly who is “outstanding” is not clearly stated, but there is certainly a suggestion that it is the financially comfortable middle class, which fears change the most. Why are they being praised? Ah, but here Hoffer chooses to employ the “objectivity” of the social scientist. Though he gives no end of examples to bolster his use of the words “frustrated misfits” for the extremists, he gracefully declines from giving affirmative examples for the “worthwhile” folks who made his book a best-seller. Apparently he doesn’t want to sway our opinion. As a matter of fact, he gives only the most unflattering motivations for the conservatism of the “Inert Mass,” indicating a certain lack of respect for them; but he certainly is affectionate toward their respectability as such, their contentment with “things as they are.”

Anyway, in a group called The Worst, part of a social structure of Hoffer’s design, he gathers all those who are an easy mark for a mass movement’s recruiting program: “failures, misfits, outcasts, criminals, and all those who have lost their footing, or never had one, in the ranks of respectable humanity.”

These unfavorable prospects “join a mass movement to escape individual responsibility... to escape from an intellectual self... to seek refuge from the anxieties, barrenness and meaninglessness of an individual existence.” The message is clear. And the fanatic becomes dangerous, building a program of hate based on “the delight of the frustrated in chaos and the downfall of the fortunate.”

THE TRUE BELIEVER is studded with examples, most of them, on the face of it, quite convincing. It seems, for instance, that Martin Luther often found it easier to concentrate on his prayers if he thought about his enemies rather than his friends; Hitler originally had plans to be a painter and architect, but felt himself to be a failure; and so on.

Hoffer’s bias is not his alone. Whenever one dissenter decries a deplorable situation, many others, eager to protect their hard-earned gains, will point out the critic’s personal

failings and assert his cause to be simply a cover-up, a means of escaping the ugly reality of his own existence. It’s an old trick. And it’s one of the main reasons why so many people saw in Robert and John Kennedy the hopes of changing our world. Being in so many ways favored, they seemed to stand above the suspicions elucidated so clearly in THE TRUE BELIEVER.

This general assumption is all too often extended to mean that there are no causes worth fighting for, that there is no reality transcending the most mundane aspects of materialistic living. “Ordinary” life is indeed boring, but the cynic must affirm it, idolizing those who have somehow beat the game “in commerce or industry,” as Hoffer puts it. The ideal, like that of the Practical Organization he speaks of, is always one’s own self: self-interest, self-reliance, self-advancement.

The Cynic believes that the fanatic is actually just as interested in himself, but can’t admit it because he’s afraid of himself. Such thinking reveals a conception of “self” infinitely less vital than that revealed in the True Believer’s activities. Certainly, most people—conservative and radical alike—are unwilling to ask the question, “Who am I?” But to limit the driving force behind those who would change the world to a simple neurotic deficiency doesn’t begin to explain, for instance, why mass movements are necessary in human history as an “invigorating, renovating, integrating process.” Aren’t there, after all, worthy causes?

Given these attitudes, the Cynic is doomed to a dull, secular, middle-of-the-roadism. Any established institution is OK. An army, for instance: Hoffer says an army might be like a mass movement, except that it “deals mainly with the possible.” Whereas a mass movement runs on “passion and enthusiasm,” an army depends on “unimpassioned mechanism” in a “sober atmosphere.” Since an army is a practical organization, then it must be sober. But I doubt Vietnam GI’s, shooting methedrine into their veins before they go out to drop napalm on people would agree. Furthermore, few commanders would be likely to tell you that the morale of their troops means nothing; and morale is no more than the intensity of passion and enthusiasm which the men feel in pursuing victory.

If a person is disgusted with the social situation around him, and I think it only reasonable to say that many human societies have had the gravest faults, he is naturally going to try to find a means to change it. So he might first go to the Communists, then to the Nazis, then to the Christians. Trial-and-error is involved. So, as Hoffer points out (with a quite different argument in mind), the Nazis found it easier to recruit from the ranks of young Communists than from the uncommitted youth. But wasn’t this because the Communists were already convinced that a radical step was necessary—and not, as Hoffer would have it, because they were willing to join any cause, no matter what its program?

The “frustrated” person’s analysis of things might be shared by a number of groups; he wants to find the one group whose solution he agrees with. And he wants to find a group, because if you want change, that’s the way to do it—you can’t change the world by yourself. To pass this off as a desire to lose real, “individual” identity in a fog of false group identity is absurd. It’s quite easy to retain one’s own personality even though political or religious convictions are shared with others. I do not doubt that Mr. Hoffer has

managed to remain unsubmerged in his service to Lyndon Johnson, for example.

Also, if the fanatic is frustrated, if he has never had a firm footing, if he seeks refuge, he is really no different from anybody else in these respects. Why single him out as unique? Or does our middle-class tranquilizer epidemic have no place in Mr. Hoffer's thinking?

Now, where is Eric Hoffer himself in all this? Probably he would like to be found in a group he calls the Creative Poor. As such, he would be free from the siren song of mass movements because "Nothing so bolsters our self-confidence and reconciles us with ourselves as the continuous ability to create; to see things grow and develop under our hand, day in, day out." Self-interest becomes self-glorification. The longshoreman becomes the Sunday painter, playing God, watching things grow and develop under his hand. And what is it that distinguishes the creative man? How does he hold his own? It's "his critical faculty." Mr. Hoffer doesn't elaborate on Criticism, but something tells me it's close to that Cynicism he also holds so dear. How it differs from the sort of criticism which inspires mass movements of revolution is, however, unclear.

Another name for democratic man, in Hoffer's jargon, is "the gentle cynic." You know the type: he accepts no truth as absolute, he always keeps a skeptical attitude, his only frame of reference is his own panoply of ever-shifting desires. He's good for business.

Creativity amounts to nothing more than watching his thoughts change, day in, day out. There is no desire to reach a goal. Nor does he care about answers: this book "does not shy away from half-truths so long as they seem to hint at a new approach and help to formulate new questions." New questions. But no answers.

Lastly, who is the "self" who's so important to this philosophy? Here is the crux of the problem. It is "our true transitory self" which is real, according to Hoffer, and not "the eternal self we are building up." We live within "the overwhelming reality of life and death." Another term for self, as he uses it, is, when you get right down to it, body. Who am I? Hoffer says, I am this body. What is my self-interest? My bodily interest; namely protecting myself from attacks, keeping my stomach full, getting enough sleep, and having sex.

Man is, however, bound to get frustrated by such a belief. He is bound to run away from a concept of self that admits only the most gross and ultimately dissatisfying of pleasures. If his culture teaches him that he is just a blob, just a combination of chemicals, only a body—hold onto your hats. He's going to explode. That's one good reason why there's violence in the United States today. Most of the population is laboring under the conception that they are no more than body. And that isn't natural. So, yes, people do get very frustrated. And they certainly do try very hard to escape from that kind of self. They'll do anything to change the material conditions that go along with that gross bodily view of life.

But, of course, all there is to turn to in most cases, is more materialism. Therefore, Hoffer has good reason to be cynical. Monarchies, representative democracies, socialist dictatorships, welfare states—all have, in their turn,

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claimed to be the only proper form of government, but still the people are in revolution. Nations have formed, split up and recombined, but still people cannot find their sense of completeness.

On this planet there are three and a third billion humans, and countless billions of other living beings. And we're all trapped—in the limited consciousness so well typified by Eric Hoffer's book; trapped by its view, and by the views of the radicals it criticizes as well—we're all trapped until a truly liberating movement is undertaken, a movement of liberation from materialism, and deliverance into the higher reality of spiritual consciousness.

Now, Hoffer spends a great deal of time criticizing

religious movements, along with all others. Yet he sees that for any great change to take place in society, "religion is an indispensable factor." And, as explained previously, the upheavals themselves are "miraculous resurrections." Mass movements are religious inasmuch as they express man's desire for an end to material suffering. But they fall short of their goal if they cannot propose a positive plan for spiritual activity, a plan that cuts through the limitations of man's puny speculative abilities. Such a plan must come, not from man, but from God. Of course, only a fanatic would say such a thing. But then, if there is a God—and for all his cynicism, Hoffer never tries to say there isn't—then maybe it's the cynics and skeptics who are the fanatics, trying as they do to escape that ultimate Reality.

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Foolish and so-called civilized men are claiming proprietary rights on the property of God because they have now become Godless. You cannot be happy and peaceful in a Godless society. In The Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says that He is the factual Enjoyer of all activities of the living entities, that He is the supreme Lord of all universes, and that He is the well-wishing Friend of all beings. When the people of the world know this as the formula for peace, it is then and there that peace will prevail.

Therefore, if you want peace at all, you will have to change your consciousness into Krishna Consciousness—both individually and collectively—by the simple process of chanting the Holy Name of God. This is a standard and recognized process for achieving peace in the world. We therefore recommend that everyone become Krishna conscious by chanting: HARE KRISHNA, HARE KRISHNA, KRISHNA KRISHNA, HARE HARE/ HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA, RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE.

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When a person becomes incompatible with the rest of society, he either remains unhappy in that society, or he seeks to escape to a life of greater freedom. This is what is happening in the Western world today. People who become frustrated by living under the unnatural restrictions of the material world have tried to escape these bonds and to achieve a freer life. But then, inevitably, as soon as an intelligent man gets tired of the transitory pleasures gained by some new material endeavor, he is again at a loss, and is forced to wonder about the nature of real happiness.

Many people are under the illusion that they were really happy in their youth. But once the fourfold miseries of material life—birth, disease, old-age and death—manifest themselves, the evanescence of that previous happiness becomes apparant to them. For some the illusoriness of life becomes so obvious that they try to subjugate the mind, to avoid being bothered with thoughts of their hopeless condition, by the use of intoxicants and other means.

According to the teachings of the Vedic sages and Scriptures, all the miseries that we experience are due to our false conception of: "I am this body." We are not this body, but pure spirit souls—divine sparks of living energy. The gross material body is similar to an automobile. The automobile runs very nicely with a driver, but once the driver has left it, there is no movement. It is just dead matter. We are the drivers, and our bodies are just dead matter, machines which we as living forces are activating.

God has given man the choice, however, to be God conscious, and thus unaffected by material Nature, or to be matter conscious, and thus subject to the fourfold miseries of material life.

What is our eternal position? We can see on this earth that our principal occupation is serving: The administrator

serves the citizens, the employee serves the employer, a man serves his senses, his dog, his wife, his children, his car, etc. It is worthwhile for us to ask here: What satisfaction is gained from all this service? And the answer can only be: Transitory happiness at best. It is therefore not surprising that people are frustrated, that they don't treat one another kindly, or with sincerity. We are all servants, but we have nothing to serve in the material world which will give us the happiness we are looking for.

Therefore, we should not look to the material world for real, much less eternal peace, love, bliss and knowledge. Whatever you may have gained materially will not do you any good at death. And since we are all going to die, to leave this body, we must consider what there is which will transcend death itself. This sort of reasoning brings us to realize that the only person who can give us everything we want is God, because He is the Supreme source of everything. He has everything to give, and He is all-attractive. We all have an eternal relationship of love with Him, which we have simply forgotten due to material attachment.

The easiest and fastest way of reviving our original relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, is by chanting His Holy Names: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. This chaat is the sublime method for achieving full God consciousness, and it quickly brings one to a state of ecstasy and bliss. It can be practiced by anyone, regardless of age, race, religion or nationality, and therefore offers a real basis for the brotherhood that men have so long been seeking. What's more, by delivering us to the platform of pure, unconditioned consciousness, the chanting of Hare Krishna sets us free to act in terms of spiritual reality. END



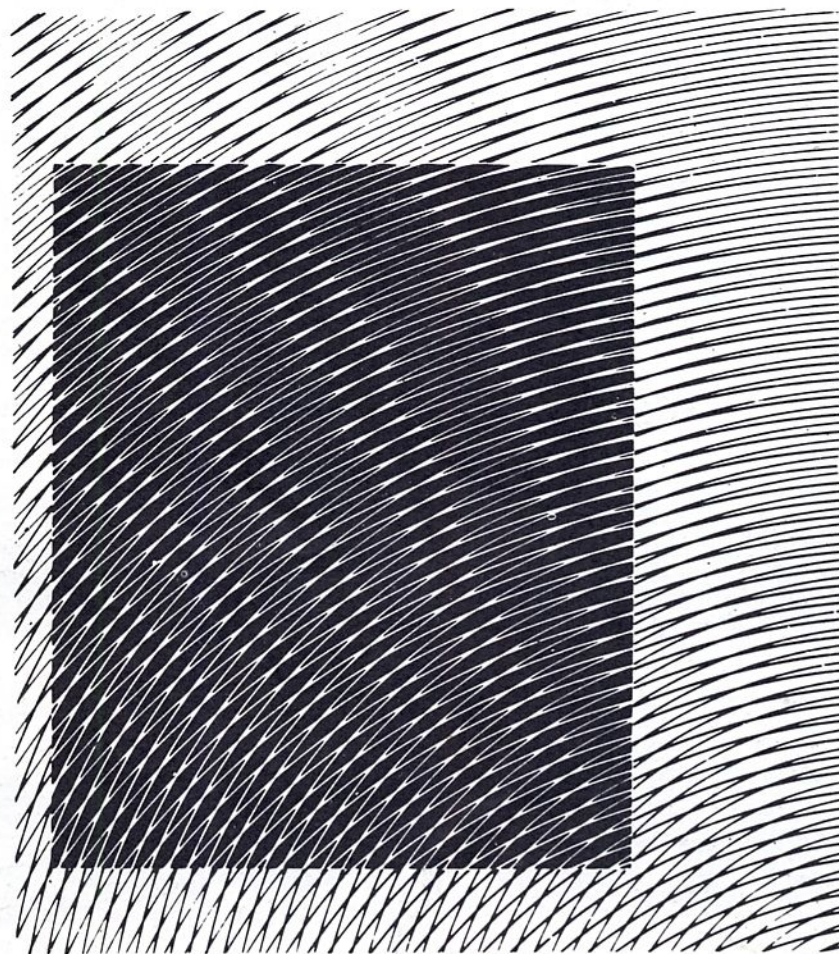
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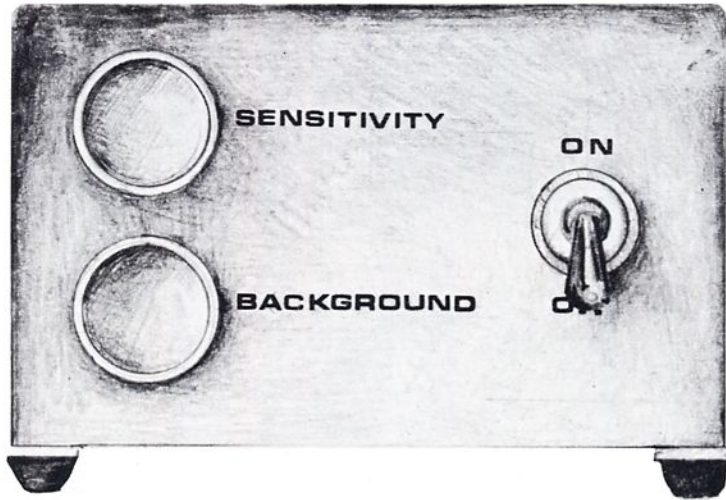
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