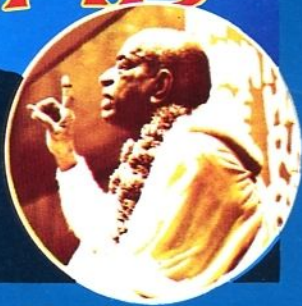


GODHEAD IS LIGHT. NESCIENCE IS DARKNESS. WHERE THERE IS GODHEAD THERE IS NO NESCIENCE.



# BACK TO GODHEAD



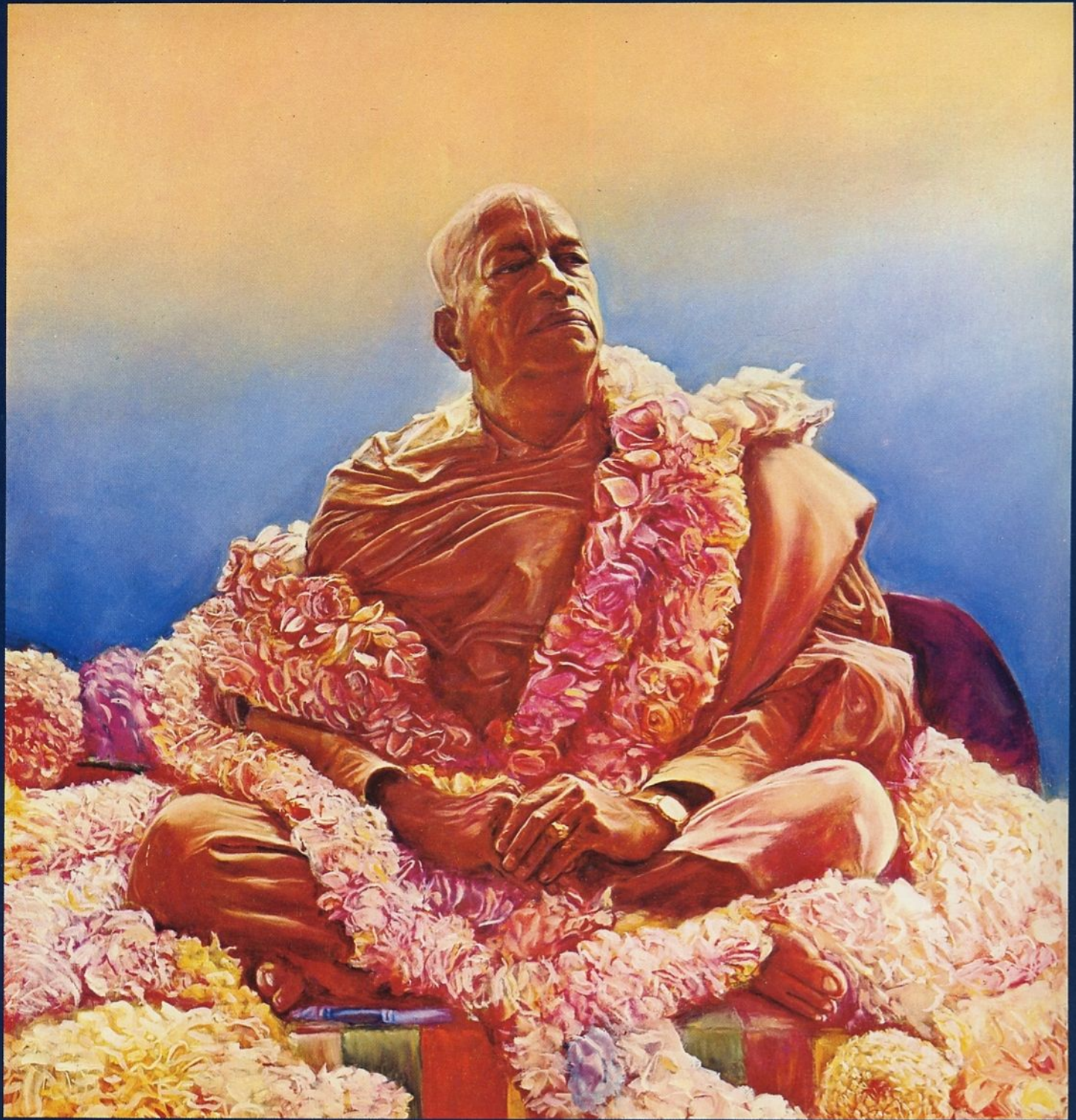
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No. 48



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REFERENCE





His Divine Grace  
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami  
Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



Hare Kṛṣṇa  
Hare Kṛṣṇa  
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa  
Hare Hare  
Hare Rāma  
Hare Rāma  
Rāma Rāma  
Hare Hare

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is now being increasingly recognized throughout the world as a spiritual force of great potency, purity and importance to human society. With the simultaneous publication of the first two cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the complete 1,000-page edition of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, the public is becoming increasingly aware that the boys and girls whom they see chanting and dancing on their city streets are students of a most serious discipline of God consciousness which is established on the basis of a philosophical system of considerable completeness, consistency and depth.

The chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—is the sublime method for this age for the attainment of God consciousness, and its effectiveness is practically demonstrated by the joyfulness, sincerity and pure character of its adherents. These are manifestations of genuine God consciousness. As stated in the Vedic scriptures, "When one is factually engaged in the service of the Supreme Lord, he automatically develops all Godly qualities."

Kṛṣṇa is a name of God, and "Kṛṣṇa consciousness" means, simply, consciousness of God in His supreme eternal form. The particular distinction of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is that it is presenting authoritative knowledge about God in a scientific manner unparalleled by any religious, cultural or philosophical system in the world. Furthermore, due to this scientific background, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is able to present a simple and universally appropriate process for the attainment of God consciousness that can be practiced by anyone and everyone, regardless of his race, religion, nationality or social position. This process is called *bhakti-yoga*, and it may be adopted without the need for one to renounce the activities and responsibilities of his daily life. One must simply learn the science of how, while performing one's activities, he can remain constantly absorbed in God consciousness. It is this science that is explained by the ancient Vedic scriptures and that is now being introduced in a practical manner by the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness on a global scale.

(continued on page 2)





(continued from page 1)

Historically, the background of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement can be traced back 5,000 years to the time when Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appeared on earth and explained to His personal friend Arjuna the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*. The practical application of the philosophical ideas of *Bhagavad-gītā* was later clarified and simplified, 500 years ago, by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is pictured on the front cover of this month's *Back to Godhead*. Lord Caitanya is understood from Vedic scriptural evidence to be an incarnation of God Himself who appeared on earth to teach the people of the modern age of quarrel and hypocrisy how to develop love of God. This Lord Caitanya did by introducing the *saṅkīrtana* movement, or the congregational chanting of the holy name of God.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda is the world teacher of the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as originally expounded by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and propagated by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Speaking from the most elevated platform of complete God consciousness, Śrīla Prabhupāda is offering us a simple, sure and direct method by which we can revive our dormant loving relationship with the Supreme Lord and thus attain perfection in this lifetime. It is this perfectional process that is described in the pages of *Back to Godhead*.



Founder (under the direction of His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda) His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

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## PRONUNCIATION Of Sanskrit Words

Sanskrit words and names in *Back to Godhead* are spelled according to a system accepted by scholars throughout the world which indicates the exact pronunciation of each word. Vowels in Sanskrit are pronounced almost as in Italian. The sound of the short *a* is like the *u* in *but*, the long *ā* is like the *a* in *far* and held twice as long as the short *a*, and *e* is like the *a* in *evade*. Long *ī* is like the *i* in *pike*. The vowel *ṛ* is pronounced like the *re* in the English word *fibre*. The *c* is pronounced as in the English word *chair*, and the aspirated consonants (*ch*, *jh*, *dh*, etc.) are pronounced as in *staunch-heart*, *hedge-hog*, *red-hot*, etc. The two spirants *ś* and *ṣ* are pronounced like the English *sh*; *s* is pronounced as in *sun*. Thus *Kṛṣṇa* is pronounced *KRISHNA*, *Caitanya* is pronounced *CHAITANYA*, etc.

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# Freedom in Kṛṣṇa

His Divine Grace  
A.C. Bhaktivedanta  
Swami Prabhupāda

*vande rūpa-sanātanau raghuuyugau  
śrī-jīva-gopālakau.*

We are following in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu in order to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is said in *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* to be very far away from us yet at the same time to be very near. *Īśvara*, the supreme controller, is situated in everyone's heart, not only in the hearts of human beings, but also within the beasts, birds, aquatics, and even within the atoms themselves. We simply have not realized Him. Actually anyone, however, can find Kṛṣṇa within his heart.

The process of finding Kṛṣṇa is called *yoga*. There are many types of *yoga*. In the Western countries people are generally familiar with the process of

*haṭha-yoga*. This is an approved method and is described in the Sixth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*. At the present moment, however, people are short-lived, they are not very fortunate, and they are always disturbed by many external affairs, and therefore it is not possible to properly execute this *haṭha-yoga*. Even five thousand years ago when Kṛṣṇa advised His friend Arjuna to accept the *haṭha-yoga* process, Arjuna said, "Kṛṣṇa, this practice is impossible." He further said that to control the mind is as difficult as to control the wind. The mind flickers from one engagement to another and changes so swiftly that it is very difficult to control it in this age. Therefore Arjuna said that for him this process of *haṭha-yoga* was not possible.

In order to encourage Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa said that the *yogī* who always thinks of Him with love and faith is the topmost *yogī*. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is attempting to teach the people in general this process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which is the topmost *yoga*. In order to succeed in this process, we have to accept the bona fide method for this age, and that is the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, as enjoined by Lord Caitanya: *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam/ kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*. "Chant the holy name, chant the holy name, chant the holy name. In this age of Kali there is no other alternative, no other alternative, no other alternative for God realization."



## Simple Truth

This age is called Kali-yuga. It began five thousand years ago, after the Battle of Kurukṣetra, or after the death of Mahārāja Parīkṣit. The full duration of Kali-yuga is 432,000 years, so there is a balance of 427,000 years facing us. As this age progresses, everything becomes degraded—people's life span, memory and the quality of mercy become diminished. In the *sāstras* it is pointed out that in this age people are very slow to engage in spiritual realization. This was apparent to me when I met a professor in Moscow whose claim was that with the annihilation of the body, everything is finished. At the present moment people have fallen into such a degraded state, into such ignorance, that they do not know the difference between spirit and matter. Even great philosophers and scientists, who claim to be very great leaders of society, have no knowledge of the spirit which exists beyond this body. *Bhagavad-gītā* goes into considerable detail in its description of the body and soul, of the body and the owner of the body. The individual living entities are owners of these bodies, and they change bodies just as they change dress. This simple truth is practically unknown to modern civilized man. Contemporary civilization stresses the body only, and consequently this type of civilization is described as suicidal in Vedic literatures.

The living being evolves from aquatic life to plant life, to insect life, to animal life and to human life. Amongst human beings there are civilized and uncivilized forms. Those who are advanced in civilization should take advantage of their position by advancing in their spiritual consciousness, which means advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Originally we are all Kṛṣṇa conscious because we are all part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, just as a finger is part and parcel of a body. The consciousness of the living entity is spread throughout the entire body, and according to *Bhagavad-gītā*, that consciousness is indestructible. As long as the finger is attached to the body it has use and I



will spend thousands of dollars in order to keep it, but as soon as that finger is detached, it is worth nothing. Similarly, when we are detached from the totality, Kṛṣṇa, we are useless and have no value. As soon as we dovetail our desires to Kṛṣṇa, then we have value. That is real life—*bhakti-yoga*.

## The Spiritual World

*Bhakti* may be defined as devotional service. When one renders devotional service he becomes free from all designations. One may be born an American, an African, an Indian or whatever, but on the absolute platform of rendering service to Kṛṣṇa, devoting the senses to engagement in the work of Kṛṣṇa, and spreading Kṛṣṇa's message through this society for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one can transcend all these designations of nationality, birth, species, etc.

In working for Kṛṣṇa the individual living entity forgets his designation, which in actuality only belongs to the body. Devotees of Kṛṣṇa only think of themselves as servants of Kṛṣṇa and consider themselves in different categories of servitude. Someone may write for Kṛṣṇa, or paint for Kṛṣṇa, or

wash dishes for Kṛṣṇa—whatever the activity is, the purpose is satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, and therefore all engagements are on the same platform. In this way when one works in Kṛṣṇa consciousness he can become free from all designations.

This may sound very difficult, but Kṛṣṇa, who is sitting in everyone's heart, will give the living entity all facility as soon as He sees that the person is sincere. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme, and if He likes He can give the living entity whatever he desires. The goal should be to become a sincere servitor of Kṛṣṇa, and if we sincerely desire this position, Kṛṣṇa will grant it to us. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa enjoins Arjuna and all men to engage in His service, to abandon all other engagements and simply surrender unto Him. Kṛṣṇa then vows to take charge of the living entity and give him all protection. We all suffer from our sinful activities, but Kṛṣṇa assures us that He will protect those who are devoted to Him from the resultant actions of their sinful activities. Except for those who are devoted to serving Kṛṣṇa, everyone is engaged in sinful activities more or less. That is a fact. Consequently in the



material world there are so many varieties of bodies, so many species of life. In *Vaikuṅṭha*, the kingdom of God, there is only one variety of living entity—the four-handed *Nārāyaṇa* form of the Lord. Everyone is a servant of *Nārāyaṇa* or God, but everyone in His transcendental abode has the same features—the features of God. In our present position we cannot understand what the situation is in the *Vaikuṅṭhas*, the transcendental world, but it is surely different from what we experience here. The *Bhagavad-gītā* gives some hint of what the *Vaikuṅṭhas* are like—there is no need of sunlight, moonlight or electricity because everything is illumined by the effulgence of the Almighty.

Beyond this manifested and unmanifested material nature there is another nature, which is called *sanātana*, or eternal. Everything in this material world has a certain date of birth or manifestation, a certain duration of life—everything grows, gets old, dwindles and then vanishes. In the spiritual world there is no question of birth, death, growth or diminution or death. Everything there is eternal. We get information about the spiritual world from *Kṛṣṇa* via Vedic literature or from His line of disciplic succession. There are many differences between the material and spiritual worlds, but the primary difference is that the material world is temporary and the spiritual world is eternal. Therefore if we want eternal, blissful life, full of knowledge, we must take to this *Kṛṣṇa* consciousness process. It is recommended by the great sages, by the disciplic succession stemming from Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and from Lord Śrī *Kṛṣṇa* Himself in *Bhagavad-gītā*.

## Wonderful *Kṛṣṇa*

Lord Brahmā, the first in the line of disciplic succession, concluded each verse of his *Brahma-saṁhitā* with the words *govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*, which translates as “I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord.” Similarly, in the *mahāmantra*, we repeat the words Hare *Kṛṣṇa*, Hare *Kṛṣṇa*, *Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa*, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.



गोविन्दमादिपुरुषं तमहं भजामि





What is the purpose of this repetition? The more we repeat, the more we learn to love. That is required. We cannot repeat that which we do not love, for it will soon become disgusting. If we take any word and repeat it over and over again, we will soon become disgusted with it. Sometimes those who are not in the disciplic succession feel that this repetition of Hare Kṛṣṇa is hackneyed and disgusting. This is because they have not developed a love of Kṛṣṇa. Rūpa Gosvāmī says, "Of what use is this one tongue, and what do I expect to hear with two ears only? If I only had billions of tongues, then I would be able to chant a little of the glories of the Supreme Lord." Rūpa Gosvāmī and other great *ācāryas* feel this way about the holy names of Kṛṣṇa because they have love for Kṛṣṇa. They taste the nectar of chanting and so cannot give it up. Even in the material world, when we love a person, we will repeat his name over and over. The real point is that this love should be developed for Kṛṣṇa. In Vṛndāvana, Nanda Mahārāja, Mother Yaśodā, Rādhārāṇī, the *gopīs* and the cowherd men and boys and even the calves, trees and cows all love Kṛṣṇa.



They do not know that Kṛṣṇa is God, and when Kṛṣṇa does something wonderful, they simply take Him to be a wonderful child or boy. Yet despite this the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana do not know anything but Kṛṣṇa. That is

because of their love for Him. That is what is wanted in this present society. We should not be bogged down with so much philosophy, debating whether Kṛṣṇa is God or not, whether the symptoms of God are there or not. The inhabitants of Vṛndāvana did not care for any of this. As far as they were concerned, be Kṛṣṇa a God or man or whatever, they simply loved Him. That is the standard to which we must aspire. We have to increase our love for Kṛṣṇa by engaging in His service. When one does service to Him, his love naturally develops. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that *prema*, love for Kṛṣṇa, love for God, is the highest achievement in human life. This should not be confused with religion or religiosity, for they are different. Generally people go to a church or temple with some material purpose, asking God to give daily bread. Of course to go to God to pray for something material is better than not going at all. In the Communist countries, for instance, they say, "Why should we go to God at all? We shall create bread." Thus propaganda to make people godless is waged. But our relationship with God is permanent, and it is not possible to artificially erase it. Being atheistical, not believing in God, is simply an artificial and temporary state for the living entity. When a godless person is actually in danger, he thinks of God. It is not natural for the living entity to remain godless, for loving God is the natural life for the living entity.

## Freedom to Choose

People are very fond of claiming to be free, and in the name of freedom they are prepared to have sex in the street. Such illusioned living entities do not know that there is no freedom at all as long as we are under the grip of material nature. One may claim to have freedom, but nature will soon contradict this claim. We are all conditioned, and we are simply thinking that we have freedom, yet this is all illusion. No one wants to die, and yet no one is free from death. No one wants to become old, yet no one is free from old age unless he dies young.

No one wants to be in bondage to sexual desires, but the desires keep up, even in old age, for old men and old women try to remain young by cosmetic help. One would like to be free and to remain good-looking, but where is that freedom? Nature forces one to become old and wrinkled. So actually there is no freedom; freedom in this material world is simply false. No one wants to die, but death is certain. No one wants to become old, but old age is certain. No one wants to get sick, but disease is certain. At a higher stage, the living entity does not even want to take birth, but according to *Bhagavad-gītā* birth is also certain. One cannot be free to stop death or birth unless he comes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Unless one comes to the position of love of Kṛṣṇa, there is no question of freedom. That is nature's law. In our present state of illusion we have forgotten Kṛṣṇa, and instead of loving Him we have developed a love for the things of material nature. This is symptomized in love of dog instead of love of God. In America there is a popular saying to the effect that a dog is man's best friend. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says that He, God, is the friend and well-wisher of all living entities, but those in forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa have replaced God's position with the dog's position. The living entity thinks that he will be free from love of God by embracing material nature, but actually he is trapped into loving a dog. That is nature. Indeed, it is our nature to love something. There is no freedom, therefore. If we do not love Kṛṣṇa, we will then be forced to love dog. We do have freedom, however, to make the choice, to choose the object of our love.

The human form of life in particular is meant for inquiring after the Absolute Truth. Currently it has become fashionable to glide down into animal life. When one becomes degraded or slides down to animalistic living, he cannot understand the Absolute Truth. At the present moment human society has become thus degraded. In the course of the evolutionary process, material nature gives the living entity the chance to come out of her clutches.



## Devotion Beyond Death

Nature, or material energy, has clasped us very tightly and is loathe to let us get away, yet she gives us another chance in the human form of life. The

unfortunate fact is that although trapped in material nature, the living entity does not consider himself trapped. Consequently, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, upon being asked what the most wonderful thing in the world was, replied, "Every moment thousands of living

entities are being delivered into the hands of cruel death, but those who are alive are thinking, 'I shall not die.'" Thus everyone is thinking that he has a permanent settlement. What could be more wonderful than this in the face of a changing universe? Everyone knows that death is sure—everyone sees his friends, parents and relations dying—but he is at the same time thinking, "I will live a long time." This is nature. The actual fact is that the living entity thinks that he will not die because by nature he is eternal. Unfortunately he has lost his spiritual identity and in the material entanglement, in the body, will be forced to undergo the death of the material body. *Bhagavad-gītā*, however, describes the living entity as separate from the body and not dissolving with the body at death.

The process of gaining real freedom from the body and from the miseries of the body, which ultimately result in death, is this process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says that His devotee never perishes. At death, the living entity who has devoted his life to Kṛṣṇa does not have to return to the cycle of birth and death, as Kṛṣṇa promises innumerable times in *Bhagavad-gītā* and as the sages remark throughout the Vedic literatures. The conclusion then is that real freedom is in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, in the realization of one's real identity as a functioning part of the Supreme Whole. Once that identity is realized, the living entity will not have to undergo the frustration of being lost in a world of death and ignorance. By the rendering of devotional service, he is catapulted out of the darkness of the material world into the light of Kṛṣṇa's effulgence. END





# The Disciplic Succession

His Holiness Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī



Many times, when people inquiring about Kṛṣṇa consciousness hear from us about the importance of disciplic succession, they are not able to grasp what we are talking about. We say, “Kṛṣṇa consciousness is coming down in disciplic succession. The Absolute Truth was first spoken by the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa Himself, and He taught it to the first living entity, Lord Brahmā, who taught it to his pupil Nārada, who taught it to Vyāsadeva.” To one who is already a student of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, just the mention of the names of these great personalities is enough to bring great pleasure; just in the sound of their names there is reassurance of Absolute Truth and complete authority. But this is not conceivable to a person who doesn’t know these spiritual masters as anything more than names which are difficult to pronounce. I would therefore like to speak to you in terms of myself, a thirty-two year old American who is not different in qualification or upbringing than the average reader to whom the concept “disciplic succession” is foreign. Let me relate to you my own experience with the disciplic succession.



By the grace of Kṛṣṇa, I have been in association with His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda since 1966 as one of his initiated students. I can recall the first night I heard His Divine Grace. He spoke of disciplic succession and the name Lord Caitanya, which sounded foreign to me, and he said that the knowledge that he was speaking was to be taken as Absolute Truth. I remember thinking, "How can he presume that what he says is the Absolute Truth?" When he answered questions after his lecture, he answered only on the basis of what the previous spiritual masters had said and what was originally recorded in *Bhagavad-gītā*. He even said at one point, "I am not speaking myself. I am a mouthpiece." He claimed to be speaking perfectly, and yet he said that he was personally doing nothing at all. He said that the only thing to his credit was that he was repeating, without change, what was perfect and was recorded thousands of years ago. He compared his perfection to the perfection of a mailman who simply delivers the mail but does not change the message by opening the letter and making additions. He stated that if he could deliver this message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness unchanged, it would be perfect, since it was originally spoken by the perfect source.

Although I was accustomed to reading many different literatures and speculating on their relative truths, I was nevertheless impressed that His Divine Grace did not care to show off his own thinking power or say something that the audience would like to hear; he simply presented the view of the disciplic succession for everyone's benefit. It gave me a feeling of awe to think of sages speaking in ages long, long past and of this same ancient knowledge coming down fresh and intact just for the benefit of the present audience. "Just imagine," I remember telling my friend as we left the little storefront temple where His Divine Grace had spoken. "That person who was speaking was saying the same thing that was spoken by sages thousands of years ago. It's all coming down in the vibration of his voice. If the scriptures are really the recorded word of God, then his pure vibration is coming from infinity itself.



It's as if God is speaking to you. He can speak and cut through temporary time with eternal truth." My friend, however, was more impressed with the immediate time and place, regardless of Absolute Truth, and he said that there were many different ways for different people to communicate.

The presentation of the spiritual master was for those who wanted the truth. He had nothing else to offer but the Absolute Truth, and he personally endorsed it as beneficial for all. He did not tell lies or indulge in flattery. He was convinced. He had surrendered to Kṛṣṇa through his spiritual master and had become a surrendered devotee, spending all his time delivering the message of the *Gītā* to the devotees. I began to attend the classes and to take them seriously, and gradually I inquired, accepted and studied, served and practiced, to the point where he accepted me as his initiated disciple. I accepted him as a representative of God, and I accepted the Vedic literature as speaking the Absolute Truth.

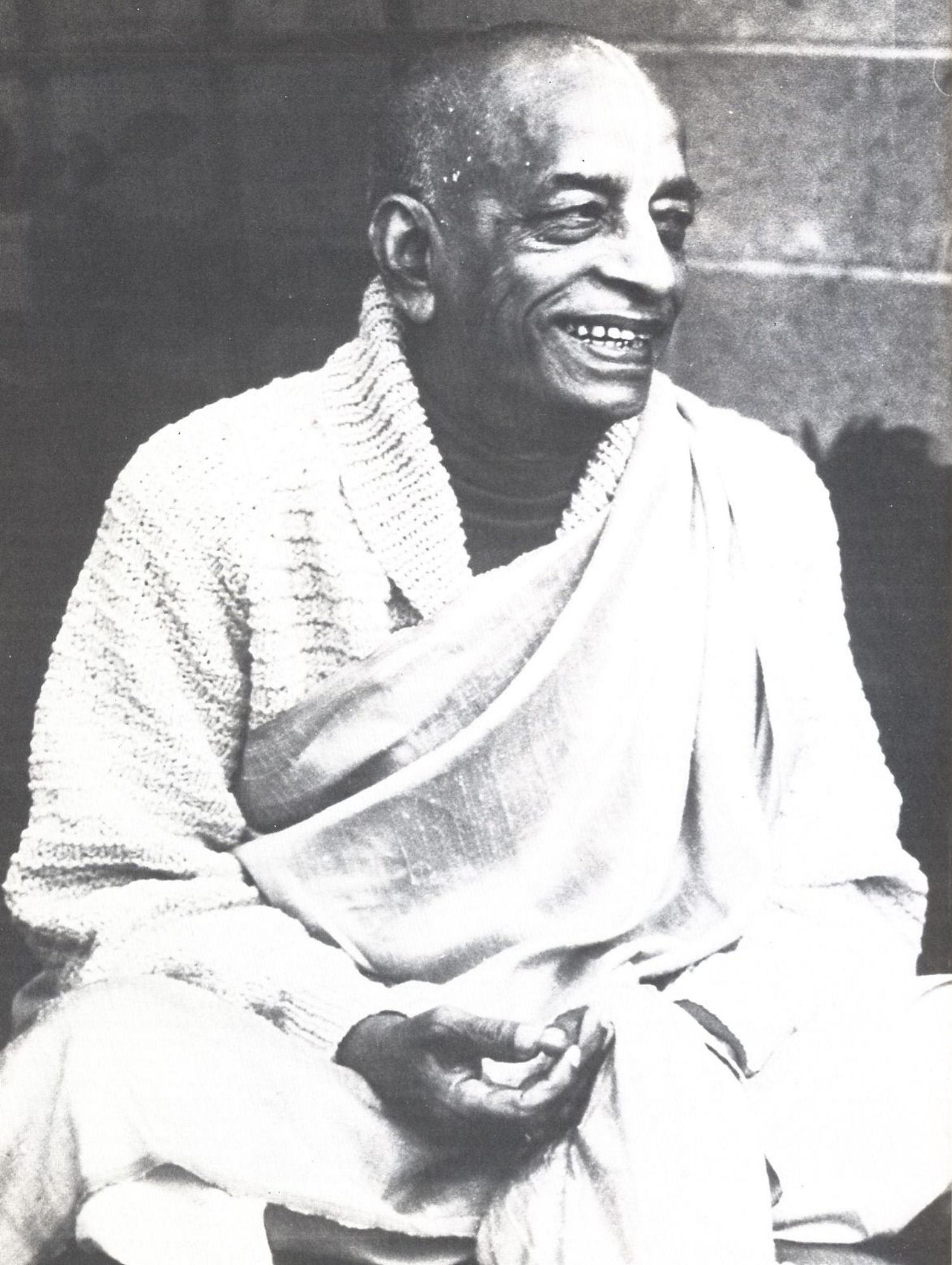
Then quite suddenly His Divine Grace had to leave to open another temple in San Francisco, and we new students were left to manage the New York temple and attend to the many visitors who used to come to his evening classes. What would we do when they came and he was not present? And how could we live without our spiritual master? The first question had to be answered right away because the night after he left, the visitors came as usual to hear his lecture.

He had instructed us how to lecture in his absence, so on the first night one of his more advanced pupils gave a

talk. He cited in his talk the same examples that our *guru* gave, and it was satisfying. He simply tried to present the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā*: "We have all forgotten Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is God. He is the eternal spiritual person, and everything is coming from Him. He is all-pervading. Our real place here is not to try to struggle for enjoyment and happiness in a temporary world filled with miseries of birth, death and old age and ending in inevitable death. Our real business is to go back to Godhead, our eternal home. This we can do by the grace of Lord Caitanya, who is the form of Kṛṣṇa for this age, by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare." After the boy's talk, when we chanted, it was just as transcendently satisfying as if Śrīla Prabhupāda were there. In fact, it was more poignant for his students; there was ecstasy in the feeling of separation.

On another night, I was chosen to speak. I remember looking at the people who had gathered and praying to God for the courage to be able to say something pure and effective and not let down my spiritual master and my assembled Godbrothers and Godsisters—and to actually impart the Absolute Truth to the audience. After all, we students knew the great value of these teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But all the others did not. So it was up to me to present them. I prayed to cast off all desire to show off my own learning; I wanted just to say what my spiritual master was actually teaching. This left me no room at all to speculate or to concoct. I attempted to remember what







# The spiritual master is the personal representative of God.

Pictured here are spiritual masters in the disciplic chain of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.



Śrī Jagannātha dāsa Bābāji



Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

he had said. For me personally, it was a very grave occasion. As I spoke, I said, “Kṛṣṇa can be compared to the sun. The sun is a planet, a material thing in one place in the sky, and its energy, the sunshine, is diffused, spread out all over the universe. This is a material example. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa is the source of all energies and all emanations and creations. That is the definition of the Absolute Truth—that from which everything is coming. The Absolute Truth is intelligent and conscious, and according to the Vedic literature, He is a person, the Supreme Person, God, Kṛṣṇa. Just as the sun has form and is local, so Kṛṣṇa has form. But His form has inconceivable energies, like the sun. All spiritual and material existence is His energy. We say that God is great, but how great He is is inconceivable. But we can study this in the Vedic literature to get some idea of the greatness of the Supreme Person.” As I spoke, I became somewhat reassured and tried to remember more. But I felt very inadequate and understood that I was not a very good disciple. I was not able to speak more than five or six minutes before I was unable to go on. So I stopped.

The advanced disciples who heard my talk said that it was very nice, especially because I had not deviated from what the spiritual master had said or hadn’t made anything up. This made me happy, and yet, at the same time, I could not think that I had done anything at all because actually I had not. It was not

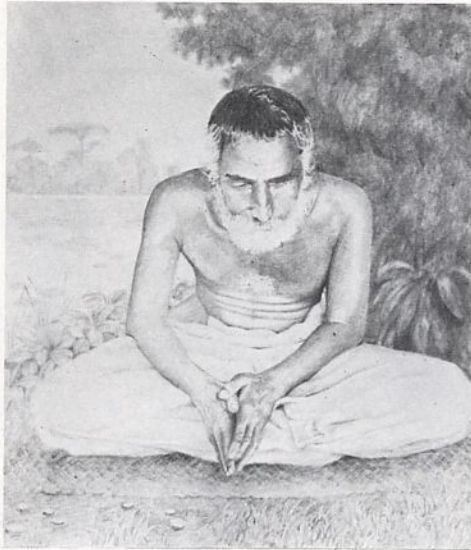
my wonderful additions, or my brainpower, good looks or speaking ability, that had made my little talk acceptable; it was not within my power to make people begin to think about Kṛṣṇa and to take the philosophy seriously—but it was the power of His Divine Grace, and I had transmitted some of it. After the talk, there was a question. Someone asked, “How do you know that Kṛṣṇa is God?” Remembering what Śrīla Prabhupāda had said in answer to that question, I answered, “How do you know who is the President of the United States? By his credentials. He can show you that he actually has that position. In the same way, all the Vedic literatures describe that Kṛṣṇa, who appeared as the son of Devakī and performed many wonderful acts, is actually the Supreme Brahman, or the Personality of Godhead. It is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* by Kṛṣṇa’s disciple Arjuna that not only did Arjuna accept Kṛṣṇa as God, but He is accepted by all the great spiritual masters in disciplic succession, such as Nārada and Vyāsadeva. Also, when Kṛṣṇa appeared on this earth, He displayed all the opulences of the Personality of Godhead—that is, full strength, beauty, knowledge, fame, wealth and renunciation.” After the question, I invited the audience to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. I had preserved the format and the words of my spiritual master, which are the words of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Although one feels lowly when taking on the work assigned to him by a

pure devotee or a spiritual master, he cannot check the bliss that comes when he acts as an agent for the disciplic succession. Giving up false prestige and just serving brings untold joy and satisfaction. No one can know it unless he acts in this line. All it takes is a faithful serving attitude; by living a life of pure principles, one can qualify to speak on behalf of his spiritual master. It is a fact that we are all intended to act in this disciplic succession. It is not that just a few priests or preachers are required to take this on, but everyone is supposed to faithfully follow the words of the Supreme Lord as transmitted by the bona fide spiritual master.

There is a prayer in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* which states: “By regularly hearing the *Bhāgavatam* or rendering service unto the pure devotee, all that is inauspicious in the heart of a candidate is practically destroyed, and thus loving service unto the Personality of Godhead, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact.” Hearing is the most important part of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or *bhakti-yoga*, which is the most powerful *yoga*, far beyond standing on one’s head, practicing sitting postures and breath control, or trying to think that one is God by mystic meditation. These other methods are not intended for this age, and no bona fide teacher is teaching them. The most important method in this age is to hear from a genuine authority. The





Śrī Gaurakīśora dāsa Bābājī



Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta  
Sarasvatī Gosvāmī



His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta  
Swami Prabhupāda

Absolute Truth is beyond our sensual experience. We cannot confront it with our present senses or intellect, so we have to hear from someone who is an authority. Kṛṣṇa says to His disciple in *Bhagavad-gītā*, "You are not this body. You are spirit soul." If one can accept this, he has knowledge; if one listens to the presentation of the spiritual masters of Kṛṣṇa with submissive inquiry, he will know the truth.

It is definitely necessary that one associate with devotees or spiritual masters who can personally present spiritual books and instructions. These should not be understood just by reading them alone. If one reads presentations by unauthorized commentators not in disciplic succession, the whole study will be ruined, and he will get the wrong idea. It is necessary to see and experience the pure message in the living example of the spiritual master and hear from the lips of one who is realized. Lord Caitanya said that the spiritual master should teach by the example of his life, not merely by precepts. If one does not hear from such a person, Kṛṣṇa will be no more than fiction to him, and the *Gītā* will remain a mysterious philosophy. The greatest havoc is caused by those who misrepresent the scriptures and destroy the import of the disciplic succession which is coming down from Kṛṣṇa. One should never hear from such unauthorized persons. To know who is authorized, one should hear and study the science of

God as presented in books like *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, *The Nectar of Devotion*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which are presented by the ISKCON movement as a service to humanity. Otherwise he may be cheated.

The disciplic succession is compared to a ladder of different men sitting in the branches of a tree and passing down, from top to bottom, a nice, ripe mango fruit. If carefully passed from hand to hand, the fruit can be given intact to the man at the bottom, without damage.

Disciplic succession has a kind of potency which comes down through one who repeats what he has heard in that succession. One who hears receives the potency. The material example is given of sexual intercourse. When a man and a woman come together in sexual intercourse, if the man is potent and healthy and other conditions are right, then there will be conception. In the same way, if a willing and sincere student hears from an authorized speaker in disciplic succession, he will be injected with devotion to God. The quality has to be genuine on both sides—the hearer must be sincere, and the speaker must be spiritually potent.

The knowledge given has to be authoritative. This is guaranteed by the disciplic system, which is unbreakable. The knowledge has been compared to a family secret passed from generation to generation. The difference is that this secret is not material. Once there was a group who claimed to be followers of

Lord Caitanya's chief associate, Lord Nityānanda. They said that they were the family descendants of Lord Nityānanda and claimed to be the only ones who could understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness. However, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the great spiritual master of our spiritual master, completely smashed their idea. He pointed out that the real succession goes on spiritually, from spiritual master to student. It has nothing to do with the seminal succession of father to son, which is based on the material body. Spiritual potency is not like material semina; it is passed down by the spiritual master to the qualified disciple who is dependent on the master. The spiritual master blesses the student who shows that he is sincere and eager to serve and who presents submissive inquiry. Such a student can speak on behalf of an expert spiritual master. The spiritual master is compared to an expert engineer who has with him an assistant who does exactly what he says. If by the instructions of the engineer the student can turn a screw with a screwdriver just as he is asked to do, then he is functioning as an expert himself. In this way, if one can carry out the orders of the expert spiritual master, he can act as a representative of God. To do this, one must lead a pure life, following the regulative principles, and must not indulge in intoxication, illicit sex, meat eating or gambling.

When His Divine Grace first left us students in order to open another





The great sage Nārada Muni appearing before his disciple Vyāsadeva, the compiler of the *Vedas*, to offer him enlightenment.

“... just the mention of the names of these great personalities is enough to bring great pleasure...”



temple, we wrote to our spiritual master, and he wrote back, "I understand that you are feeling my separation." But he described that for us to serve him in the absence of his physical presence was even greater than to be with him. If one follows the instructions, a link is set up not just with one's own spiritual master but with the entire disciplic succession of spiritual masters—including Lord Caitanya and going all the way back to Brahmā and Kṛṣṇa. His Divine Grace once wrote to all his students, "You are all helping me in pushing forward this mission of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu which has come down by disciplic succession to my spiritual master. So whatever you have spoken in praise of me, it is simply due to them. I am simply the via medium to receive your words of praise on behalf of my *guru mahārāja* [spiritual master], His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja Prabhupāda." The disciple's immediate link is his own spiritual master, who is the transparent via medium to the whole disciplic succession and back to Kṛṣṇa.

Going back in history, only eleven spiritual masters before our own is the appearance of Lord Caitanya, who is described in the scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to be the form of Kṛṣṇa Himself who comes in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy. He will be known, it states, by the fact that He always chants Hare Kṛṣṇa with His associates, and those who have sufficient brain substance will worship the Supreme Lord in this age by chanting the holy names of God. Lord Caitanya especially taught that the best name of God is Kṛṣṇa, and for the deliverance of all people He taught the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Lord Caitanya said that these names of God would be heard in every town and village in the world, and now, on the order of his own spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda has factually spread that teaching and fulfilled the prophecy of Lord Caitanya by teaching throughout the whole world this authorized instruction of the Hare Kṛṣṇa chanting.

Spiritual greatness is attained by carrying out the orders of the spiritual master. One of the Godbrothers of our spiritual master recently gave testimony that His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda is the most prominent spiritual master today in carrying out the instructions which come from Kṛṣṇa through Brahmā and the disciplic succession. Doctor Kapoor, of the Gauḍīya Matha, made the following statement in a speech in Vṛndāvana, India, where Śrīla Prabhupāda was welcomed by the mayor of Vṛndāvana. (Vṛndāvana is the place in India where Kṛṣṇa performed His transcendental pastimes when He appeared in the world 5,000 years ago.) Dr. Kapoor said of His Divine Grace: "He has inherited the mantle of Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. He alone has fulfilled the mission of our spiritual master, taking it to every nook and corner of the world. And it is in the hands of *his* disciples in the future to reap a rich harvest of devotion all over the world." To he who has faith in the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa, and to no one else, all the meaning of the scriptures is revealed. The science of God cannot be learned by academic knowledge or by study in comparative religion. It is transcendental, beyond material knowledge, and can be received only by the mercy of the spiritual master. To speak as a representative of the disciplic succession is not a casual thing but is full of gravity, and one must gradually qualify to do this great work for all mankind. Recently, in a conversation with U.S. Ambassador to India Kenneth Keating, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Send me all your American boys, and I will save them. That is not a bluff." The spiritual master can speak like this because he is authorized to give shelter to all humanity by virtue of the purity of the disciplic succession.

To go back to the first meeting when I met His Divine Grace, the question that arose in my mind may arise in yours also. How can we say that what the spiritual master is speaking, even if it is carried in disciplic succession, is Absolute Truth? First, let us look at the stature of the spiritual masters themselves, who are carrying this message as links in a chain. If you

study the writings of the stalwarts in the disciplic succession—Lord Brahmā, author of *Brahma-saṁhitā*, Vyāsadeva, the author of all the Vedic scriptures, Nārada Muni, the author of *Nārada-pañcarātra*, Lord Caitanya, author of *Śikṣāṣṭakam*—you will find that they are great learned scholars in the transcendental science. They are powerful sages who are able to see past, present and future. They are not interested in anything mundane or in telling fiction stories. Proof of the perfection of the great sages is given in the symptoms which they possess. These symptoms of a person who has attained transcendental life are given in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Steadily controlling his senses, he fixes his consciousness on Kṛṣṇa and is not bewildered or disturbed by desires. Thus he is able to be fixed in consciousness. *Bhagavad-gītā* further states that one should approach such a sage, a spiritual master who can impart knowledge because he has seen the truth. In other words, there exists a check and balance system whereby the spiritual master is confirmed by the scripture and the scripture is exemplified in the life of the saintly person. A saintly person or spiritual master is one who speaks only what is in the scripture. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*, "Surrender to Me," and the spiritual master says, "Surrender to Kṛṣṇa." So there is no difference between scripture and the spiritual master. In this way, the Absolute Truth is mercifully available in age after age to all persons in all places.

The more we reflect on it, the more we see that persons who are impartial and serious will accept this. It is not a question of this or that religion but a philosophy of living. The disciplic succession makes Kṛṣṇa consciousness most authoritative. Lord Caitanya appeared within everyone's memory, only 500 years ago. He is cited in the Vedic literature as Kṛṣṇa Himself. Thus the movement is most authoritative because God Himself has come as a teacher in this fallen age. He has presented a life of spiritual realization in the very attractive form of chanting, dancing and eating foods offered to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is coming to save the world by the disciplic succession, and everyone should take advantage of this great opportunity.

END



# A New Look at Lord Kṛṣṇa



(Reprinted, by permission, from the *Sunday Guardian*, Trinidad, West Indies)

Suraśreṣṭha dāsa is a 22-year-old devotee of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness who is now in Trinidad helping to establish a centre here.

Coming from an American Jewish family, Suraśreṣṭha—his former name was Arthur Swers—gave up his studies at a university in Vermont to become a disciple of Lord Kṛṣṇa, whose teachings, he claims, were handed down intact through 5,000 years.

Suraśreṣṭha is interviewed by Sunday Guardian Writer Andrew Dopson.

**DOPSON.** When did the society start?  
**SURAŚREṢṬHA DĀSA.** The name of the society—that is, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness—was given in 1966, but the teachings have been going on for many thousands of years. We are in a line of direct succession from Lord Kṛṣṇa, who appeared 5,000 years ago.

**Q.** Who gave the society its name?

**A.** His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa—in other words, a teacher who shows us how to develop pure love for God because that is the purpose of our human form of life.

## THE QUALITIES

Kṛṣṇa is a name for God. It is a Sanskrit word that means “the all-attractive one.” In other words, God is the one who has created all the qualities that we think of as being attractive. He has all these qualities unlimitedly, so He is the all-attractive one.

**Q.** What are you doing in Trinidad?

**A.** I am here with my Godbrother—we call each other Godbrothers and Godsisters—to spread the teachings and



Suraśreṣṭha dāsa

(ISKCON—Trinidad)

to set up a centre like those we have all over the world.

At present we are staying in Cunupia, but we have been moving from village to village. We have been in San Fernando, Marabella, Princes Town and St. James. Now we are about to come to Port of Spain.

I have been here for two months, but the society’s work was started sixteen months ago by my Godbrother Vaikuṅṭhanātha dāsa and his wife, who are now in India.

Different organizations are sponsoring us in Trinidad. Many Hindus take an interest in our teachings because we study from the same scriptures. But we are not Hindus.

**Q.** Why aren’t you Hindus?

**A.** Because the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa are not limited to one group of people. To be a devotee of the Lord is to be in the service of God, in loving relationship with Him.

## DESIGNATIONS

But we have put up all kinds of false designations. We call ourselves Trinidadians, Americans, Hindus, Christians. All these designations are temporary and false because they are only in relation to a particular time and family situation.

The actual designation of the spirit soul is eternal. So that is what we must strive for—an understanding of that eternal nature—because as long as we identify with the bodily designation, we will have a tendency to fight with one another, to have prejudices against one another and things like that.



One set of people think that they are from one country and another group from another country; some think they are black and others white—all these designations cause disagreement and hostility.

Q. What then do the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa offer?

A. We can see all over the world that people are looking for some mode of true satisfaction, for a true sense of happiness and peace, but who is finding it?

We must sincerely ask ourselves, if we are not finding this, how can we find it? What is the purpose of life? Who am I? Who is God, and what is my relation with Him?

### HIS ENERGIES

The Vedic teachings—the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Bhāgavata Purāna* and all the different corollaries and supplementary literature—give us the knowledge not only that God is great but of how great He actually is, who is God, what are His energies, in what way are they working and what is our relationship to these different energies.

Many religionists are talking about developing a love of God, but where is the possibility of developing actual love of God unless we have some knowledge of the Lord's personality and activities?

For example, in this world when one person loves another, this love develops after an understanding of each other's character and personality. You cannot actually love someone you don't know.

Q. How then do you view the teachings of other spiritual leaders?

A. We can understand that there have been many great teachers on devotional activities in relation to the Lord, such as Lord Jesus, Son of God, and Lord Muhammad, but they taught according to a particular time and circumstance. They, of course, were perfect.

We can see this in the example of Lord Jesus, who told his disciples, "There is so much that I have yet to tell thee, but you cannot bear to hear it now."

According to that particular time and circumstance, the people to whom Lord Jesus spoke were not very accepting in spiritual knowledge.

### APPEARANCE

Only a very small minority of the population took an interest in his teachings. And we can see, as a result, what they did to him.

But the Vedic literature, such as the *Bhagavad-gītā*, was written down around the time of the appearance of the Lord Himself when there were many devotees. This enabled Him to give the teachings in all their completeness for the benefit of all human beings in this age.

Q. You say that the Vedic literature written some 5,000 years ago offers a complete guide to spiritual perfection. And you say that Lord Jesus Christ, who came roughly three thousand years later, was a perfect teacher. Yet Jesus never referred to the Vedic teachings. One wonders why.

A. Lord Jesus Christ taught exactly the same things contained in the Vedic literature—that is, performing activities that would help one develop a love for God.

It was not necessary for him to refer by name in order to identify any particular teaching. Lord Jesus Christ appeared quite obviously at a time when the world was lacking in spiritual guidance.

The people of those times studied the Old Testament and the Torah. The intelligent devotee who wants to make knowledge palatable to the people must speak in a language they will understand. The time has come about when there are many people all over the world, particularly young people, who are seriously endeavouring to search out the truth.

My *guru*, my spiritual teacher, by the mercy of the Lord, has made the original teachings available to everyone.

Q. Isn't the Bible available to everyone, and does it not also offer a complete guidance to salvation?

A. If someone seriously follows the teachings of Lord Jesus as contained in the Bible, he will certainly advance spiritually.

The main difficulty is in translation and change. By nature everyone has a tendency to interpret what they see and hear and read. In order for spiritual knowledge not to be interpreted, it must pass down in a line of teachers with-

out change, without addition, without subtraction.

Q. How do you know that the Vedic literature has not changed over 5,000 years?

A. The idea is that my *guru* is in a line of disciples coming directly from the appearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa. His teachings have not changed one iota from when Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the knowledge 5,000 years ago. Therefore the potency remains.

Q. How well documented is this line of succession? Are the disciples of Kṛṣṇa recorded in history?

A. We have a list of names. They are in Vedic history. But the greatest evidence of the potency of the spiritual path is the results of the activity. Are the disciples becoming purified? Are they stopping their nonsense activity? Are they developing a love of God?

### SENTIMENTAL

And this must not be based on sentimental feelings but upon realization. We must see how the disciples are acting. Are they taking their knowledge to the people? How many of them are doing this?

Q. How worldwide is the International Society for Krishna Consciousness?

A. We have about 90 centres on all the continents. We have centres all over America, Canada, Australia, Asia, Africa and Europe.

Last week we were supposed to open a centre in Puerto Rico. This is the information I received in a letter.

Q. Do your teachings have any commandments; in other words, practical guidelines by which to live?

A. Yes, There are four regulative principles which we follow in order to become actual devotees of God. They are (1) no intoxication, and this includes all forms of alcohol, drugs, coffee and cigarettes; (2) no illicit sex life, meaning that if one is not married then he should have no sex life, and if one is married then only for the purpose of propagation; (3) no meat eating, including fish and eggs; and (4) no gambling or frivolous sports.

Hardly anyone is observing these principles; that is why life has become so degraded in this age. These four principles, if followed, are the pillars of religiosity, and neglect to follow is the pillar of irreligiosity.





Q. When did you become a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa?

A. Fourteen months ago when I moved into the centre in New York.

Q. Since then what have you been doing?

A. Since then I have been studying under the instructions of my *guru* and my elder Godbrothers. I have been to different temples in America, to our farm community in West Virginia called New Vṛndāvana and from there to Columbus, Ohio, and now here.

Q. So you have not been to India?

A. No. I have found that many young Americans interested in spiritual life have gone to India and returned very disillusioned because by the nature of this age, which is called Kali-yuga—meaning the age of quarrel—every place, including India, has become degraded.

Q. Are there any prophetic concepts in your teachings?

A. Yes. The *Bhagavata Purāṇa* and many of the other *Purāṇas* have explained this age of Kali-yuga. These books were written down about 5,000 years ago, and they explain that this age will become much more degraded, with people becoming more atheistic in tendency.

During this age, of which we are only at the beginning, there will be advancement in spiritual life for a certain segment of the population. But towards the end, spiritual life will practically disappear for the great majority of people, who will then be living like animals. Man will become three feet tall, his material intelligence—his scientific and philosophical knowledge—will disappear. He will live

a life very similar to what we understand of the cave man. And then at the end of this age, which is 427,000 years from now, there will be a partial devastation, and then a new age will start.

There are four ages of time. Satya-yuga is the golden age, where people are generally in the mode of goodness. Satya is a pious and religious age.

This is followed by Treta-yuga, which is still a great age, but already things begin to deteriorate. Then there is Dvarpara-yuga, which is also a great age, but things are degraded even more.

And finally comes Kali-yuga, which is the actual degraded age. Kali-yuga began 5,000 years ago; it is 432,000 years long, but it is the shortest of the four ages, which are in constant cycle.

Q. If everything is a cycle, what then is the ultimate destiny, the ultimate purpose of life?

A. The ultimate purpose of life is to understand first of all: I am not this body; I am a spiritual entity in direct personal relationship to the Supreme Lord.

#### REAWAKENING

Therefore I must perform those activities, which reawaken my dormant state of original consciousness, my devotional relationship with God.

In this way I will become purified in this life and can go back to the kingdom of God which is our home. This place is not our home because no one is satisfied here.

But we can work in the world following our particular abilities, propensities and responsibilities and at the same time develop towards spiritual perfection.

Q. Hindus believe in reincarnation. Do you?

A. We can understand from Vedic scriptures that life does not mean just one life.

The spirit soul transmigrates from body to body—though all the various 8,400,000 species of life—and on reaching the human form, he is then able to culture his spiritual development.

Q. Do you mean that there is a spirit soul in trees and plants?

A. Yes, not only plants but in all forms of life, animals, birds and aquatics. But the human form, which covers the last 400,000 on the list, is not classified with beasts. Even monkeys and apes are considered lower groups of human life, but only in the higher groups can spiritual life be cultivated.

Q. By what force then does the spirit soul progress from plant and animal life to human life?

A. By nature the spirit soul advances from one form of life to the next until he reaches the human form. That is the true process of evolution, spiritual evolution.

Q. What about Darwin, then? Do you agree with him?

A. The Darwin theory attempts to account for the evolution of the human form of life, and it does not enter into any relation with the soul. But the body does not endure; the spirit soul transmigrates from one form of life to another, and the change is determined by the activities of the living entity in a past body. That is the law of *karma*—action and reaction. Lord Jesus said, “As you sow, so shall you reap.”

END





# Liberation of the Cave Dwellers



It is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that whoever understands beyond doubt that the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa is the origin and proprietor of everything is undeluded and free from all taint, although he is among those who are subject to death. Of course every living being in the material creation, from the great Brahmā whose life span encompasses aeons and aeons to microscopic bacteria that endure only for a fraction of a second, is subject to old age, degeneration and death. Countless entities in multimillions of species of life are born into darkness and nourished in darkness, and after briefly fumbling in the caverns of the senses, are dying in darkness. And yet their minds remained attached to this darkness and to the things of the caves, and so they take bodies according to their propensities to enjoy. This taking on and shuffling off of bodies is like so many changes of dress.

In Book III, Chapter 25, of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates uses the allegory of the cave to illustrate the nature of man's attachment to the illusory things of this material universe. He tells of men living in the depths of an underground cave, the entrance of which is open to the light. There is a long passage leading from the entrance to a chamber where the men sit in darkness. They have been sitting in this chamber from their very childhood, chained by the leg and also by the neck. They cannot move, and they can see only what is in front of them because the chains will not let them turn their heads. Behind them a fire burns, and between the prisoners and the fire is a parapet like a screen at a puppet show which hides a number of puppet masters who manipulate their puppets at the top. These puppet masters hold up various objects made of

wood and stone shaped in the figures of men and animals and other natural phenomena. And these objects are projected on the wall before the prisoners. The prisoners see nothing of themselves or of one another. They are wholly enchanted by the shadows thrown by the firelight on the wall of the cave, and thus since their early childhood they have been watching the false show on the wall of the cave and thinking those shadows of artificial objects to be reality.

Socrates then requests his listeners to imagine what would happen if suddenly these prisoners were released from their chains (though not stated, possibly by the grace of *guru* or the *mahāmantra*, the mind releaser that breaks the shackles of material illusion) and set free and forced to stand up, turn their heads and walk with their eyes lifted to the light. For the prisoners, all these movements would be very painful, and they would be too dazzled to perceive the objects whose shadows they are accustomed to seeing. And what would they think, asked Socrates, "if someone told them that what they had formerly seen was meaningless illusion? Would not such men be pained and confused? And would they not question the reality of these new objects which they suddenly behold, and maintain the reality of the illusions which they are accustomed to seeing? For them the flickering shadows on the side of the cave constitute the reality of existence. The eyes of such men would ache to look at the light, and they would try to turn back to see those things which they could see distinctly, the shadows to which they are accustomed, being convinced that these are really clearer than the new objects being shown them."

Then Socrates goes further to ask what would happen if someone were to drag one of these prisoners forcibly through the rugged passageway of the cave and haul him out into the sunlight. Would he not suffer great pain and be very angry and vexed? And when finally he is out in the sunlight, would he be able to see a single one of the objects which he is suddenly being told are real? No. Such a quick transition would necessitate his becoming accustomed to this new and brilliant environment. At first he would only be able to make out shadows in the upper world and gradually images of men and things. Then when he finally becomes accustomed to the things of day, Socrates says, he would surely think himself happy and be thankful for the change. He would also feel sorry for his fellow prisoners who still remain in the chambers of the cave. And imagine what would happen if such a man suddenly went down again to take his former seat in the cave. Coming out of the sunlight, his eyes would be full of darkness, and when he joins his fellow prisoners he would be asked to make comments on the puppet pantomime in the cave, and having difficulty readjusting, he would be the object of ridicule for his fellow prisoners. They would laugh at him and say that he went up out of the cave only to return with his sight ruined, and they would conclude that it is worth no one's time to even attempt the ascent. Indeed, if they could lay hands on the man who would try to set them free and lead them out of the cave, they would kill him.

At this point it is easy to see that the prisoners in the cave are conditioned souls bound by material desires, lust and anger. Originally, these souls sport-

# HAYAGRĪVA DĀSA

(ISKCON—New Vr̥ndāvana)



ed in the clear daylight outside, but being attracted to the cave and the things of the cave they left the environment of light and plunged into the darkness of the body where they sit shackled by desire. The puppet pantomimes perceived on the wall of the cave represent other living entities and the various objects the soul perceives while in the body. These are but flicks and specks that come and go. They have no substantiality. Each imprisoned soul takes the shadows of these puppets to be the real objects of the universe. Although the prisoners are seated next to one another and although they exchange opinions about the show they are watching, they neither see themselves nor one another, for they are bound by their passions. Indeed, their real bodies are there hidden in darkness, just as the spiritual body is hidden to one who can perceive only through the material senses. The poet Coleridge must have been influenced by this Socratic allegory when he wrote:

For all that meets the bodily sense  
I deem  
Symbolical, one mighty alphabet  
For infant minds; and we in this  
low world  
Placed with our backs to bright  
Reality,  
That we may learn with young un-  
wounded ken  
The substance from its shadow.

This phenomenal universe, a “mighty alphabet for infant minds,” reflects a bit of the Supreme, although pervertedly. But the prisoners of the cave cannot perceive this.

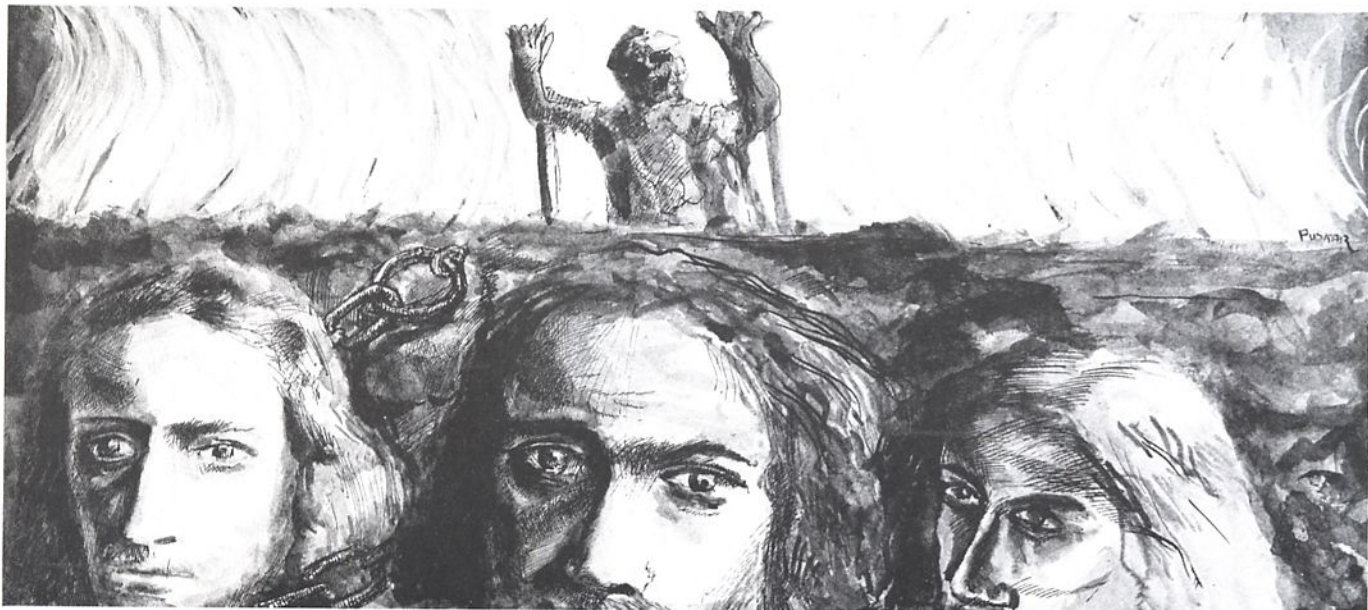
The puppet masters in the cave are the demigods in charge of material nature. They are agents of *māyā*, and they conduct the show which fascinates the prisoners. They are the goddess of wealth, the god of sex, the god of fame, the god of war, and so on.

It is only by the mercy of one who is unshackled, of a liberated soul, a *bhāgavata* or spiritual master, that a prisoner can be released from his chains. The cave dwellers cannot release themselves nor one another. They are dependent on someone coming from the outside. And so the spiritual master comes from outside the cave, from the realms of light, and descends into the chambers to release the prisoners who are in no way deserving of his mercy.

Socrates points out that the transition from bondage to freedom is very painful for a prisoner. At first he has difficulty moving once he is released from his chains. Then the light of the fire within the cave blinds him. And surely the ascent out of the cave is very difficult. In the same way in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa states that for the neophyte the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the beginning is like poison but in the end is like nectar. Therefore at first the prisoner who is being led out of the cave

sometimes struggles against the *guru*, but it is the patience, perseverance and compassion of the *guru* that sees him through this transition period and out the entrance of the cave into the sunlight. This represents the ascent of the soul out of material engagement into spiritual engagement. At first the soul is dazzled by his new environment and activities. One can imagine that if he is blinded by the fire in the cave, how much more he is blinded by the light of the sun itself.

After relating this allegory, Socrates explains that the chambers of the cave correspond to the region revealed to us through the sense of sight and other gross material senses. The fire within the cave corresponds to the sun that is perceived within the material world. The ascent out of the cave into the upper world represents what Socrates calls the “upward journey of the soul into the region of Absolute Intelligence.” Once in the realms of Absolute Intelligence, Socrates says that the soul has the most difficulty perceiving the source of light itself, which he calls “the essential Form of goodness.” “Once this form is perceived,” he says, “the conclusion must follow that for all things this is the cause of whatever is right and good; in the visible world, it gives birth to light and to the lord of light, while it is itself sovereign in the world of intelligence and is the parent of intelligence and truth.” Here, Socrates is





talking about the absolute source of all light and goodness, which is Kṛṣṇa. It is interesting that he refers to the essential form of goodness. That is to say he does not accept the impersonal light as the ultimate but indicates a source of this light which has form. He further states, "Without having had a vision of this Form, no one can act with wisdom either in his own life or in matters of state."

Once a prisoner has reached the heights of the upper worlds and has become accustomed to them, it would be very strange indeed if he wanted to return to the cave. Therefore Socrates says that those who have attained the upper world are reluctant to become involved in the affairs of men. Their souls simply long to spend all their time in that upper world. Those who are in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are reluctant to become politicians or fruitive laborers of any sort. Indeed, what rewards could the cave offer them, and how could they become absorbed again in the pantomime of puppets once they have seen the reality of the upper world? A man would sooner return to the toys of his childhood and try to play with them. It is interesting that Arjuna, a soul in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, did not want to fight in the battle of Kurukṣetra. But it was only when he was told by Kṛṣṇa to fight, not for the sake of the puppet battle but for the sake of the Supreme Himself, that Arjuna consented to go into the cave of battle and fight against other puppets. Those liberated souls who descend out of the upper regions into the cave of the material universe are called *avatāras*, or "those who descend." When an *avatāra* does descend into the cave and mingles in the darkness with blind *asuras*, demons, literally "those opposed to light," he may often encounter unpleasant situations. Socrates notes this: "Nor again is it all strange that one who comes from the contemplation of the Divine to the miseries of human life should appear awkward and ridiculous when, with eyes still dazed and not yet accustomed to the darkness, he is compelled, in a law court or elsewhere, to dispute about the shadows of justice or the images that cast those shadows, and to wrangle over the notions of what is right in the

minds of men who have never beheld justice itself." Notably we have the example 500 years after Socrates of Lord Jesus Christ who descended into the material world to lead the gross materialists to the light of the kingdom of God, but being so absorbed with the shadows of their puppet play they could not understand him. They were especially confused whenever he mentioned the relationship between himself and his Father, the source of light. And not understanding, being confounded and angered, they finally crucified him. There is also the example of Lord Nityānanda and Jagai and Madhai. Thus the *avatāra*, descending from the realms of light to lead the prisoners out of the cave of darkness, runs great risks. Because of this, Kṛṣṇa says that no servant in the world is more dear to Him than one who delivers His message of freedom to others. "For anyone who explains this supreme secret to the devotees, devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear." (Bg. 18.68-69)

Obviously there is a gulf of difference between one dwelling in the upper worlds of light and one dwelling in the darkness of the cave. The transition from darkness to light or from light to darkness confuses the eyes. But Socrates observes that the man coming from the light is different, and his transition is not as painful, for when he enters the darkness of the cave he realizes that his vision is obscured by the darkness. He is not really confused because he knows that his constitutional position is established in the light of happiness, and he feels compassionate toward those who are accustomed to darkness and who identify their happiness with flickering shadows. "Indeed if he were inclined to laugh at them," Socrates points out, "that would be less ridiculous than to laugh at the soul who has come down from the light."

From this allegory Socrates concludes that the soul of every man possesses the power of learning the Absolute Truth, but he must be turned around in order to see the light. It is not that the prisoners in the cave are blind. Their vision is already there, but it is obscured.

We are all originally Kṛṣṇa conscious entities, and we have the ability to partake in the light of devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa consciousness, love for Kṛṣṇa, is innate in all of us. We simply need to be turned around. And this is the role of the *guru*. He directs the soul away from the flickering temporalities of this material world to the contemplation of the Divine. Socrates says, "Just as one might have to turn the whole body round in order that the eyes should see light instead of darkness, so the entire soul must be turned away from this changing world till its eyes can bear to contemplate reality and that supreme splendor which we have called the Good."

This Supreme Good, or Kṛṣṇa, is the ultimate destination of all souls conditioned or unconditioned, and the process for realizing Him is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a science and an art to be studied and practiced under one who has actually seen the realms of day. Socrates hints at such an art whereby the Divine may be perceived: "Hence there may well be an art whose aim would be to effect this very thing, the conversion of the soul, in the readiest way; not to put the power of sight into the soul's eye, which already has it, but to insure that, instead of looking in the wrong direction, it is turned the way it ought to be."

Regarding this spiritual rectification, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: "Even if you are considered to be the most sinful of all sinners, when you are situated in the boat of transcendental knowledge, you will be able to cross over the ocean of miseries. As the blazing fire turns wood to ashes, O Arjuna, so does the fire of knowledge burn to ashes all reactions to material activities." (Bg. 4.36-37) To attain this knowledge, Kṛṣṇa enjoins the conditioned soul to approach a spiritual master. "Inquire from him submissively and render service to him." (Bg. 4.34) The spiritual master, who has descended into the cave for the purpose of liberating conditioned souls, can "impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth."

In fact, it is the duty of one who has seen the truth to impart it to others. Socrates warns that those souls who have





keen visions must not remain in the cave, for if their intelligence is perverted they will be much more evil than those of dull vision. He says, "They must be made to ascend to the vision of Ultimate Goodness which we call the

highest Object of Knowledge; and, when they have looked upon it long enough, they must not be allowed, as they now are, to remain on the heights refusing to come down again to the prisoners, or to take any part in their labors and

rewards, however much or little these may be worth." Similarly, Kṛṣṇa sets the guideline for the man of vision: "As the ignorant perform their duties with attachment to results, similarly, the learned may also act, but without attachment, for the sake of leading people on the right path. Let not the wise disrupt the minds of the ignorant who are attached to fruitive action. They should not be encouraged to refrain from work, but to engage in work in the spirit of devotion." (Bg. 3.25-26) So those in Kṛṣṇa consciousness should not withdraw to forests to simply chant in solitude or meditate. Rather, they should engage in action and teach others the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They will then indeed be the best citizens of the state, and they will be leaders, as Socrates says, like "king bees in a hive." Once one has seen the light of reality he must descend to the cave of temporalities and work for the spiritual welfare of all conditioned souls. "Therefore without being attached to the fruits of activities, one should act as a matter of duty; for by working without attachment, one attains the Supreme." (Bg. 3.19) Socrates further instructs those who know the truth in this way: "You must go down, then, each in his turn, to live with the rest and let your eyes grow accustomed to the darkness. You will then see a thousand times better than those who lived there always; you will recognize every image for what it is and know what it represents because you have seen justice, beauty and goodness in their reality, so to live in such a commonwealth [of Kṛṣṇa conscious men] will be no mere dream, as it is in most existing states, where men live fighting one another about shadows and quarrelling for power, as if that were a great prize."

Therefore this country, this world, this universe requires *mahātmās*, great souls who have left the darkness of material existence and have seen Kṛṣṇa, the source of all light. Such *mahātmās* can lead all of the millions and millions of living entities who are wandering aimlessly in the darkness of countless species of life out the cave of their material desires and back to Godhead.

END



# The Perfection of Renunciation

Reprinted from *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* (Chapter Eighteen, Text 66)

by

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

अहं त्वां सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥६६॥

*sarva-dharmān parityajya  
mām ekam śaraṇam vraja  
aham tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo  
mokṣayisyāmi mā śucaḥ*

*sarva-dharmān*—all varieties of religion; *parityajya*—abandoning; *mām*—unto Me; *ekam*—only; *śaraṇam*—surrender; *vraja*—go; *aham*—I; *tvām*—you; *sarva*—all; *pāpebhyah*—from sinful reactions; *mokṣayisyāmi*—deliver; *mā*—not; *śucaḥ*—worry.

## TRANSLATION

Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.

## PURPORT

In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord has described various kinds of knowledge, processes of religion, knowledge of the Supreme Brahman, knowledge of the Supersoul, knowledge of the different types of orders and statuses of social life, knowledge of the renounced order of life, knowledge of nonattachment, sense and mind control, meditation, etc. He has described in so many ways different types of religion. Now, in summarizing *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Lord says that Arjuna should give up all the processes that have been explained to him; he should simply surrender to Kṛṣṇa. That surrender will save him from all kinds of sinful reactions, for the Lord personally promises to protect him.

In the Eighth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā* it was said that only one who has become free from all sinful reactions can take to the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus one may think that unless he is free from all sinful reactions he cannot take to the surrendering process. To such doubts it is here said that even if one is not free from all sinful reactions, simply by the process of surrendering to Śrī Kṛṣṇa he is automatically freed. There is no need of strenuous effort to free oneself from sinful reactions. One should unhesitatingly accept Kṛṣṇa as the supreme savior of all living entities. With faith and love, one should surrender unto Him.

According to the devotional process, one should simply accept such religious principles that will lead ultimately to the devotional service of the Lord. One may perform a particular occupational duty according to his position in the social order, but if by executing his duty one does not come to the point of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, all his activities are in vain. Anything that does not lead to the perfectional stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be avoided. One should be confident that in all circumstances Kṛṣṇa will protect him from all difficulties. There is no need of thinking how one should keep the body and soul together. Kṛṣṇa will see to that. One should always think himself helpless and should consider Kṛṣṇa the only basis for his progress in life. As soon as one seriously engages himself in devotional service to the Lord in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, at once he becomes freed from all contamination of material nature. There are different processes of religion and purificatory processes by cultivation of knowledge, meditation in the mystic *yoga* system, etc., but one who surrenders unto Kṛṣṇa does not have to execute so many methods. That simple surrender unto Kṛṣṇa will save him from unnecessarily wasting time. One can thus make all progress at once and be freed from all sinful reaction.

One should be attracted by the beautiful vision of Kṛṣṇa. His name is Kṛṣṇa because He is all-attractive. One who becomes attracted by the beautiful, all-powerful, omnipotent vision of Kṛṣṇa is fortunate. There are different kinds of transcendentalists—some of them are attached to the impersonal Brahman vision, some of them are attracted by the Supersoul feature, etc., but one who is attracted to the personal feature of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and, above all, one who is attracted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead as Kṛṣṇa Himself, is the most perfect transcendentalist. In other words, devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, in full consciousness, is the most confidential part of knowledge, and this is the essence of the whole *Bhagavad-gītā*. *Karma-yogīs*, empiric philosophers, mystics, and devotees are all called transcendentalists, but one who is a pure devotee is the best of all. The particular words used here, *mā śucaḥ*, “Don’t fear, don’t hesitate, don’t worry,” are very significant. One may be perplexed as to how one can give up all kinds of religious forms and simply surrender unto Kṛṣṇa, but such worry is useless. By surrender unto Kṛṣṇa one’s perfection is assured.



# अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा

athāto brahma-jijñāsā

"Now, therefore, in this human form of life,  
it is time to inquire about spiritual realization"

*Vedānta-sūtra*

Because it is the human being only who after millions of years of progressive evolution has obtained the keenly developed intelligence which can probe the mysteries of existence, the Vedic writings urgently advise us to turn our attention to the questions of spiritual life. "Who am I? Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life?" These are questions that must arise in the mind of every intelligent human being. It is to give us the knowledge to answer these questions that the Vedic scriptures were first compiled by the sages of ancient India and are now being presented in English by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Now is the time to examine this timeless science of spiritual realization.





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HARE KṚṢṂA  
HARE KṚṢṂA  
KṚṢṂA KṚṢṂA  
HARE HARE

HARE RĀMA  
HARE RĀMA  
RĀMA RĀMA  
HARE HARE

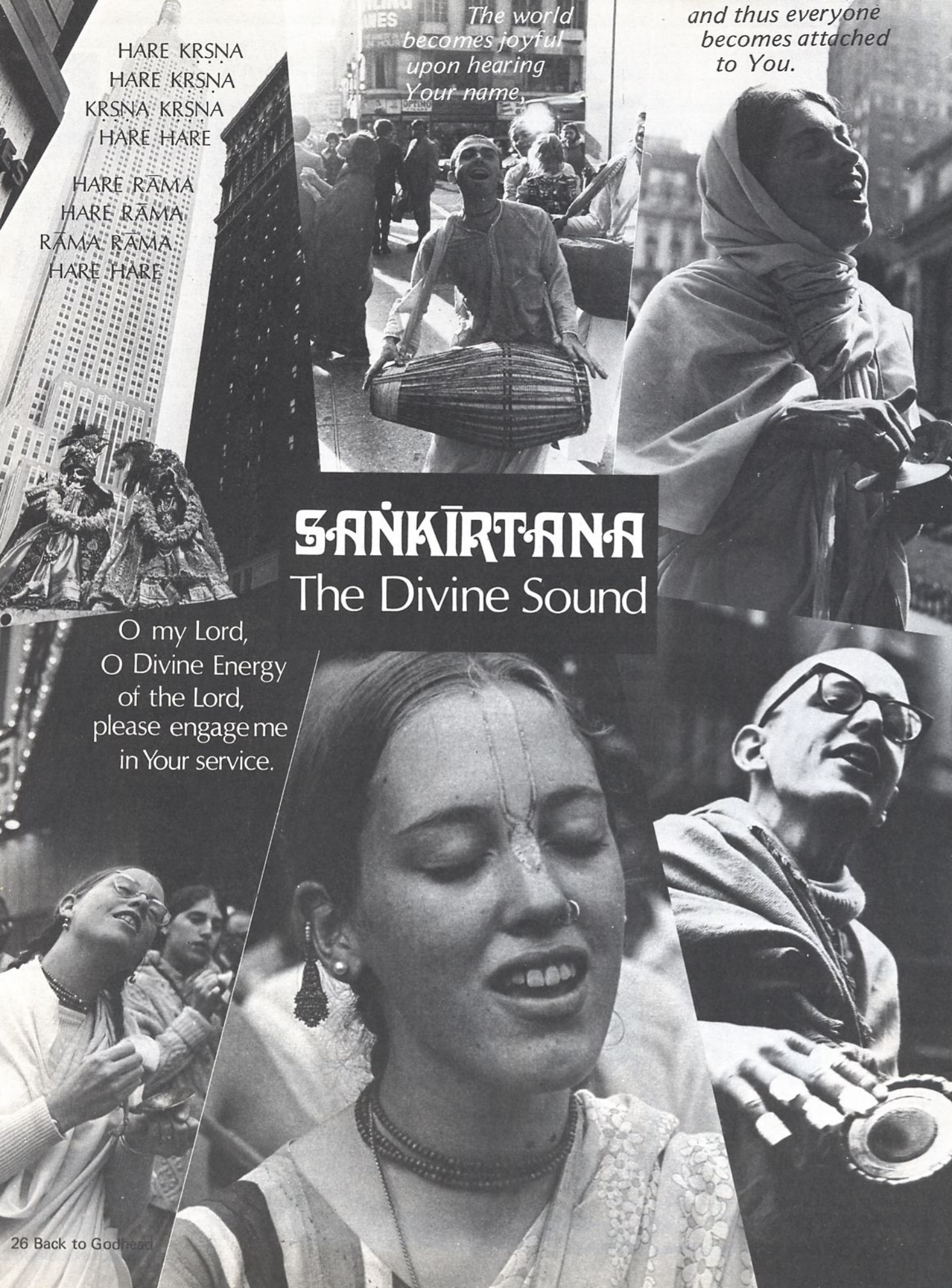
*The world  
becomes joyful  
upon hearing  
Your name,*

*and thus everyone  
becomes attached  
to You.*

# SANKĪRTANA

The Divine Sound

O my Lord,  
O Divine Energy  
of the Lord,  
please engage me  
in Your service.







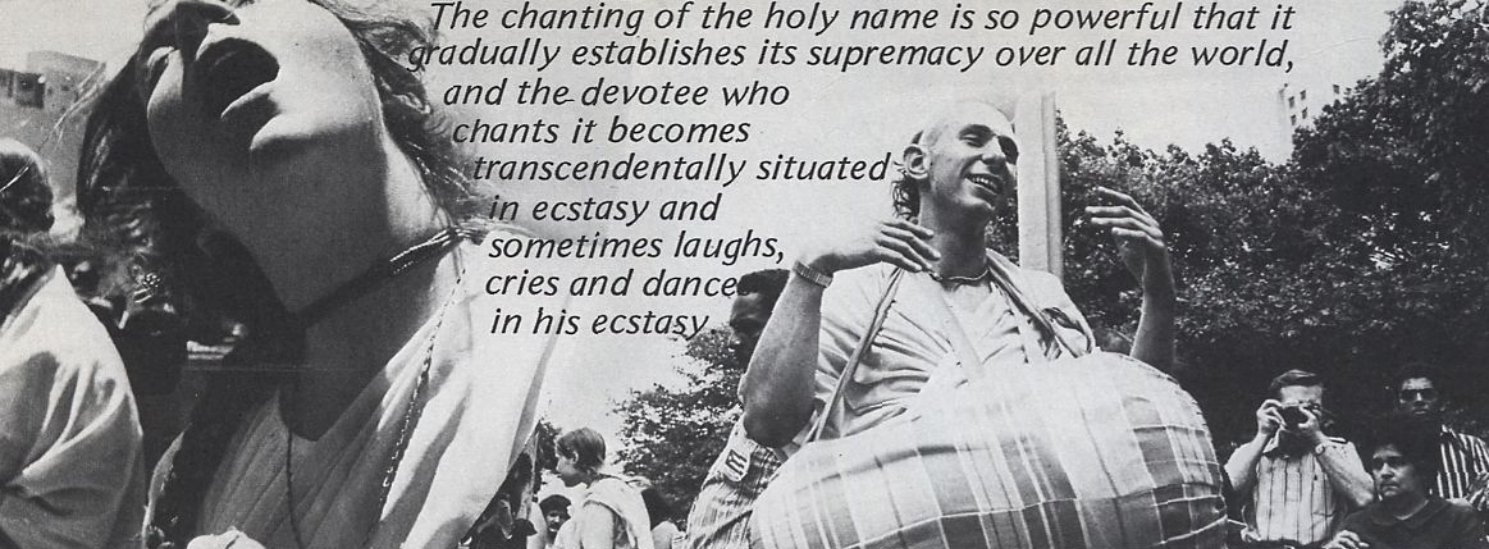
**B**ecause there is no difference between Kṛṣṇa and His name, the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is as pure and as perfect as Kṛṣṇa Himself. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa will release one from his designated condition in the gross and subtle bodies.

Anyone who sincerely chants the holy name is actually elevated very soon unto the platform of love of Godhead. This love of Godhead is above all perfections of life. Love of Godhead is the eternal nature of the soul. It is unchangeable. It is without beginning, and it has no end.

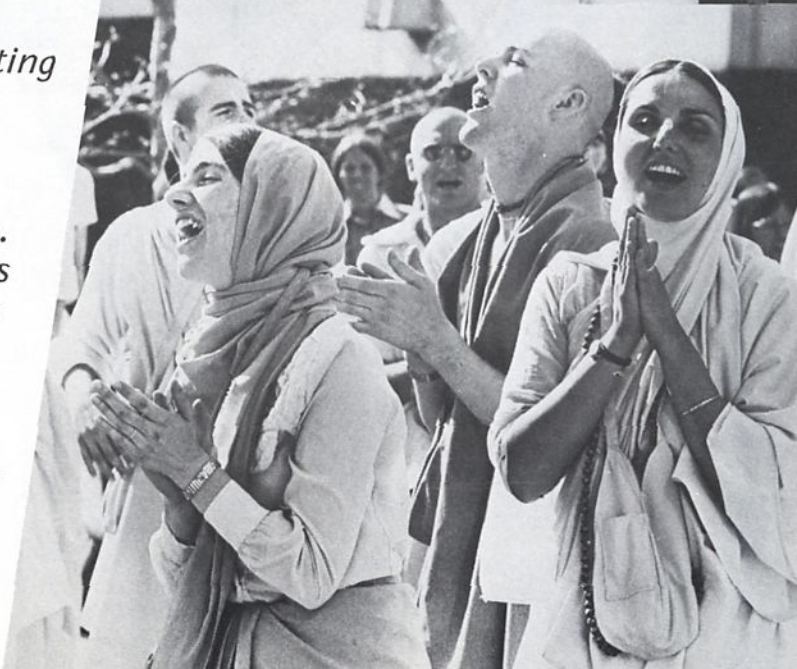




*The chanting of the holy name is so powerful that it gradually establishes its supremacy over all the world, and the devotee who chants it becomes transcendently situated in ecstasy and sometimes laughs, cries and dances in his ecstasy*



*Lord Caitanya invites: dance, sing and propagate this sañkīrtana movement, and by instructing people about Kṛṣṇa, try to deliver them from nescience. Lord Caitanya's path is just like nectar, and it holds whatever you need. The best way to take to this path is to follow.*

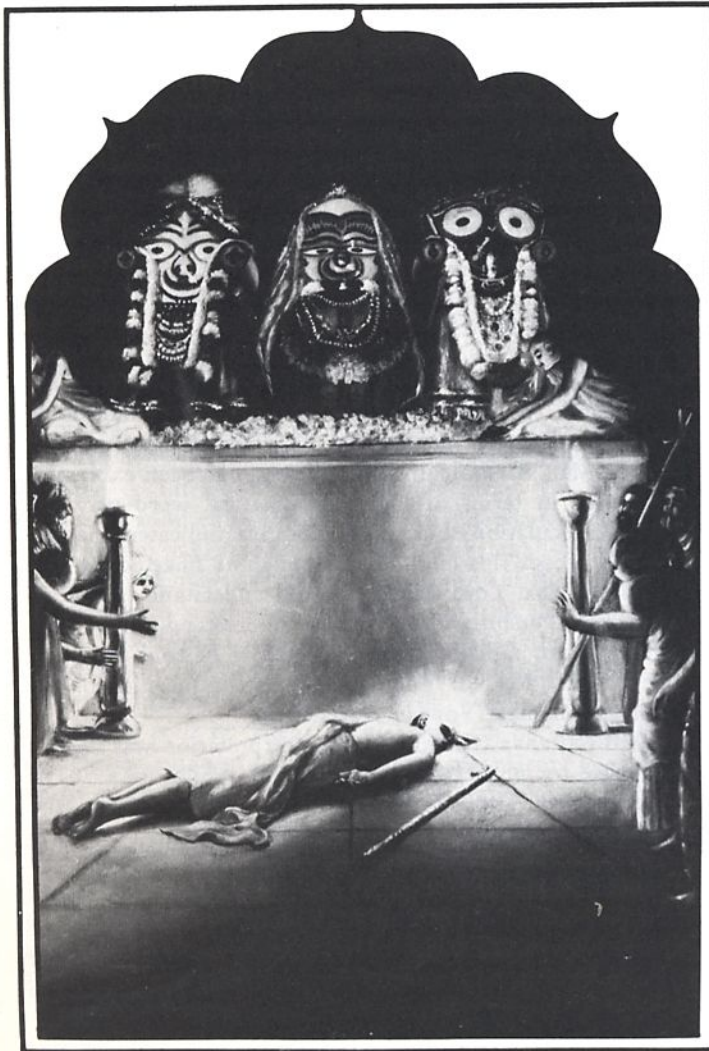




# The Logician and Lord Caitanya

Jayādvaita dāsa  
Brahmacārī

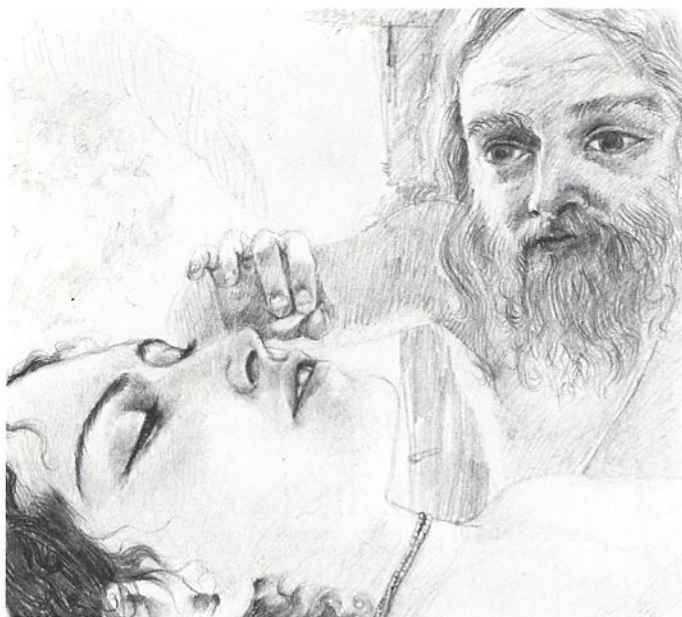
(ISKCON—New York)



At the age of twenty-four years, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu accepted *saṅnyāsa*, the renounced order of spiritual life, and soon thereafter He set out for the holy city of Jagannātha Purī. Jagannātha Purī is a transcendental city ruled by Kṛṣṇa Himself in the Deity form of Lord Jagannātha. In temples of Kṛṣṇa the Lord is always worshiped in His various forms, which are represented in wood, metal, stone, etc. To one who is untrained in the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, such forms appear to be mere statues or idols, but one who knows the science sees Kṛṣṇa Himself in these forms, not material elements like stone or wood. Thus when Lord Caitanya entered the temple of Lord Jagannātha, He was immediately filled with ecstasy upon seeing the transcendental form of the Deity. He was thinking, "Oh, Kṛṣṇa! For so long I have wanted to see You, and now I can see You." Lord Caitanya was so saturated with transcendental bliss that He could not even say the name of Lord Jagannātha but could only call out, "Jaga. . . Jaga. . . Jaga. . ." and in a trance of ecstasy He fell unconscious on the temple floor.

The custodians of the temple were bewildered by the actions of Lord Caitanya, but there was a greatly learned scholar present named Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya who from his studies in scriptural literature could understand that the Lord's losing consciousness was not an ordinary event but was a rare symptom exhibited only by the most elevated devotees. He therefore asked the custodians of the temple not to disturb Lord Caitanya but to bring Him instead to his home. As a scientist and a scholar, the Bhaṭṭācārya wanted to study the entranced condition of the Lord in a systematic way to determine whether His ecstatic symptoms were genuine. He was not the type of man to be influenced by a display of physical symptoms, for he knew that unscrupulous persons may imitate such symptoms in order to gain personal notoriety.





Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya tested the transcendental condition of the Lord in the light of authentic scriptures. He checked His pulse, heartbeat, stomach movements, etc., and found that His bodily functions were all in complete suspension. But when he put a small cotton swab before the Lord's nostrils, he could see that the cotton fibers moved slightly. Thus he could understand that Lord Caitanya's trance was indeed genuine, and he began to treat Him in a standard manner. Lord Caitanya, however, did not respond to standard treatment. The only way that He could be revived was by the loud chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra by His disciples, and since Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya had never before met Lord Caitanya, this fact was unknown to him.

Soon, however, some of the companions of Lord Caitanya came to know of the wonderful events that had transpired in the temple of Jagannātha, and when they learned that Lord Caitanya had been taken to the home of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, they went there, and by their chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, the Lord was immediately revived. Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya then requested that the Lord and His companions become his guests of honor.

At this point there was a hot discussion between Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya and his brother-in-law Gopinātha Ācārya regarding the divinity of Lord Caitanya. The devotees of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement accept that Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu is not an ordinary human being but is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa Himself in the disguised form of a devotee. This was the point of contention between Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya and Gopinātha Ācārya. Gopinātha Ācārya, who had met Lord Caitanya previously, wanted to convince his brother-in-law that this young *sannyāsī* was actually the Supreme Lord Himself, whereas the Bhaṭṭācārya maintained that Lord Caitanya

could not have been God but must certainly have been a great devotee of the Lord. The two brothers-in-law did not, however, argue simply on the basis of sentiment. Each cited evidence from the revealed scriptures to support his point of view. There are many bogus imposters who claim to be God and who are acclaimed as God by their followers on the basis of their emotions, but no man can become God by popular vote. The genuine incarnations of God are described in revealed scriptures, and it was with reference to such scriptures that this discussion took place.

Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, as the greatest logician of his day, was the professor of many *sannyāsīs*. He was an elderly gentleman, about the age of Lord Caitanya's father, and so he felt some paternal affection for Lord Caitanya. He was also greatly struck by the personal beauty of the Lord, and he thought that it would be very difficult for such a beautiful young man to follow the strict rules and regulations of the renounced order of life. He therefore desired that Lord Caitanya hear from him the teachings of the *Vedānta-sūtras*, the elevated philosophical codes which summarize the essential spiritual truths of all the Vedic literatures. Lord Caitanya tacitly agreed to this proposal.

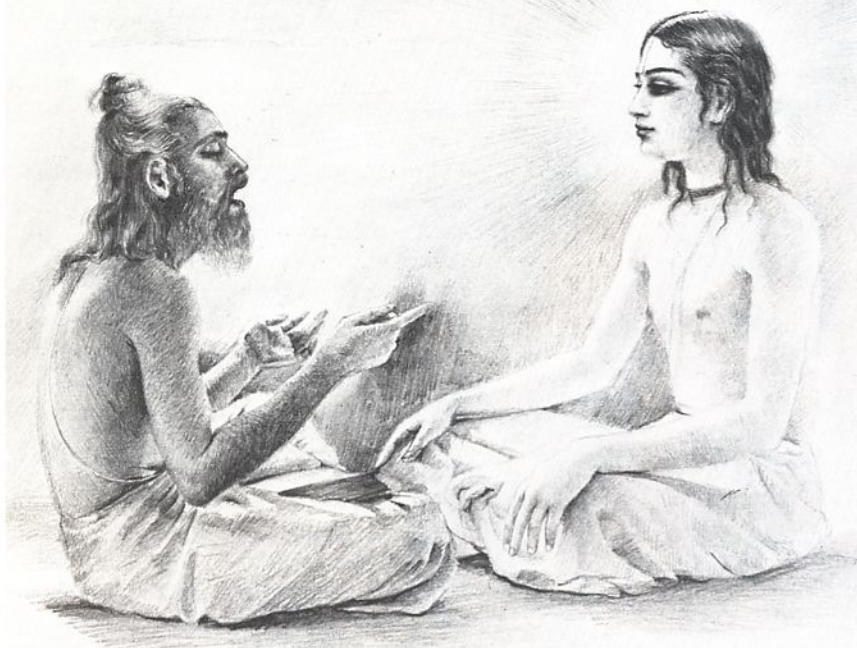
In the holy temple of Lord Jagannātha, Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya instructed Lord Caitanya continuously for seven consecutive days. For seven days Lord Caitanya listened with full attention, never speaking even a word, and so on the eighth day the Bhaṭṭācārya exclaimed, "Kṛṣṇa Caitanya! I don't think You understand what I've been saying. I've been instructing You for the past week, but You haven't asked any questions or said anything about my explanations."

To this Lord Caitanya replied, "Yes. I am a great fool. But since you asked Me to hear you, I've been trying to hear you as a matter of duty, although I cannot follow what you have been saying."

When Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya then asked why Lord Caitanya did not question any point which He could not understand, the Lord replied, "Actually, I can understand the *Vedānta-sūtras* very clearly; it's your explanations that confuse Me." Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya had been explaining the *sūtras* in terms of logic, grammatical word play and mental speculation, but Lord Caitanya indicated that He did not accept this method. Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya was astonished that Lord Caitanya could understand the meaning of the *Vedānta-sūtras* without understanding the commentary that explained them. Therefore he told the Lord, "Very well, then. If You understand the meaning of the *sūtras*, let me have Your interpretation."

Lord Caitanya replied that no interpretation was needed in order to understand the Vedānta philosophy. "The *Vedānta-sūtras* are as bright and clear as the sun," He said. "But if someone tries to interpret them by mental speculation and give his own meaning, he covers this sun with the cloud of his imagination." He stated that since the *sūtras* were already perfect, there was no need to adjust their meaning. This is the standard way of accepting Vedic literature. The scriptures themselves are considered to be





in His personal form who is the Absolute Truth, the cause of all causes.

The effectiveness of Lord Caitanya's explanation is described by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, the spiritual great-grandfather of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, in his classic book *Caitanya Mahāprabhu—His Life and Precepts*: "The keen understanding of Sārvabhauma saw the truth, beauty and harmony of arguments in the explanations given by Caitanya and obliged him to utter that it was the first time that he had found one who could explain the *sūtras* in such a simple manner. He admitted that the commentaries of Śaṅkara [the head of the impersonalist school] never gave such natural explanations of the *Vedānta-sūtras* as he had obtained from Mahāprabhu." Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya was so overwhelmed by Lord Caitanya's explanations that he could not even speak; he simply looked at Him with awe and wonder. To

perfect, and the scriptural statements are accepted as perfect evidence. For example, it is stated in the *Vedas* that if one touches the stool of any animal, he becomes contaminated and has to take a bath. But elsewhere in the Vedic literature it is stated that cow dung is purifying. It can even purify a contaminated place. This appears to be contradictory, but the followers of the *Vedas* accept this statement as fact, and by doing so they do not make a mistake; actually, cow dung has all antiseptic properties, and this has been verified by modern chemical analysis.

Lord Caitanya stated that there are two ways to accept the Vedic literature—the direct method and the indirect method. The direct method is to accept the Vedic literatures as factual and accept their statements as authoritative and true. The other method is to interpret what is stated in the scriptures. This indirect method was condemned by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu as worthless and misleading. There is no need to interpret what is already clear. The indirect method is adopted by those who have independent theories of no actual value in order to lend respectability to their ideas. They do not have the courage to present their theories on their own merit, so they resort to the unscrupulous method of trying to show that these concocted ideas are authorized by the *Vedas*. Lord Caitanya condemned this.

Lord Caitanya said that the Vedic wisdom has to be understood *as it is*. Then the meaning can be very simply and clearly understood. The mental speculators generally try to show that the supreme truth is impersonal or void, but in His explanations to Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, Lord Caitanya completely defeated these ideas. He explained all the *sūtras* in a clear and simple way, and with extensive quotations from the Vedic literature He conclusively proved that in all the Vedic literatures the supreme truth is held to be Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is Kṛṣṇa

encourage him, Lord Caitanya said, "My dear Bhaṭṭācārya, there is nothing wonderful in My explanations. Please take it from Me that devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead is the highest goal of human life." He then quoted a famous verse called the *ātmārāma* verse to prove this point.

Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya was eager to hear Lord Caitanya's explanation of the *ātmārāma* verse, but the Lord said, "First you explain it, and then I will explain it." Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya then explained the verse in nine different ways, using his method of logic and grammar. Lord Caitanya thanked him for his scholarly presentation, and then He explained the same verse in sixty-four different ways, never even touching upon the nine explanations of the Bhaṭṭācārya. Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya was stunned, for he realized that no earthly creature could possibly give such explanations. Previously his brother-in-law Gopinātha Ācārya had been unable to convince him that Lord Caitanya was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but now the Bhaṭṭācārya was unable to avoid the conclusion that Lord Caitanya was indeed the Supreme Lord. He began to think himself very offensive for not having admitted the identity of the Lord, and he fell at the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya in full surrender. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu was very pleased that such a great scholar had humbly surrendered in this way, and therefore, out of His causeless mercy, He revealed Himself to Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya as the Supreme Lord. He first revealed His four-handed form as the opulent Nārāyaṇa, the ruler of the spiritual Vaikuṅṭha planets; then He revealed a wonderful six-armed form called *ṣaḍbhujā-mūrti* and ultimately His beautiful two-handed form as Kṛṣṇa with a flute in His hands. Lord Caitanya personally manifested these forms before Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya.



It is said that Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya then spontaneously composed one hundred verses in praise of the activities of Lord Caitanya. These very important verses are so perfect that even the poetry of Bṛhaspati, the spiritual master of the demigods, cannot compare to them. Of the verses of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, two are the most important, for they explain the essence of the mission of Lord Caitanya in appearing on this earth:



(1) *Let me surrender unto the Personality of Godhead who has appeared now as Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He is the ocean of all mercy and has come down to teach us material detachment, learning and devotional service to Himself.*

(2) *Since pure devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead has been lost in the oblivion of time, the Lord has appeared to renovate the principles, and therefore I offer my obeisances unto His lotus feet.*

In the words of our spiritual master, “These two important verses are taken by the devotees of the Lord in disciplic succession as the most important jewels, and Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya has become highest amongst the devotees because of these famous verses.”

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu appreciated these verses so much that He embraced Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, who at once became filled with even greater ecstasy. His ecstasy became so great that he practically became unconscious, and he was sometimes crying, sometimes dancing, sometimes trembling, and sometimes singing. Thus he fell at the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya.

In this way Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, the great logician and grammarian, became a great devotee of the Lord, and as news of this spread, people came in hundreds to surrender to the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Gopīnātha Ācārya was especially pleased, and he expressed his gratefulness before Lord Caitanya. “My dear Lord,” he submitted, “it is only by Your mercy that such a stonelike person has become a great devotee.” Lord Caitanya, however, attributed the transformation to the mercy of Gopīnātha Ācārya. He stated that because Gopīnātha Ācārya had sincerely desired that his brother-in-law become a devotee, the Lord had fulfilled his desire. In other words, a devotee is more merciful than the Lord Himself because it is only by the mercy of a pure devotee that the Lord agrees to bestow the supreme gift of devotional service. Therefore, the first step in spiritual life is to take shelter of a genuine spiritual master who is a pure devotee. By the mercy of a devotee, a stonelike man can become a flowerlike devotee of the Lord. **END**

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INSIDE BACK COVER:  
*ṢAḌBHUJA-MŪRTI*

This transcendental form was manifested before Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu to reveal His identity as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although Godhead is one, He has innumerable forms. As a jewel may at different times appear to be of various colors, so the Lord appears at different times with different features and performs His varieties of pastimes. For example, in a previous age the Lord appeared as Lord Rāmacandra. At that time His complexion was greenish, and He performed pastimes as a perfect king and warrior. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa Himself appeared 5,000 years ago in His original form, with bluish complexion, and enlivened His devotees by playing His flute. By exhibiting the form of *ṣaḍbhujā-mūrti*, Lord Caitanya revealed that He was the same Supreme Lord who had previously appeared as Lord Rāmacandra and Lord Kṛṣṇa. ▶







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