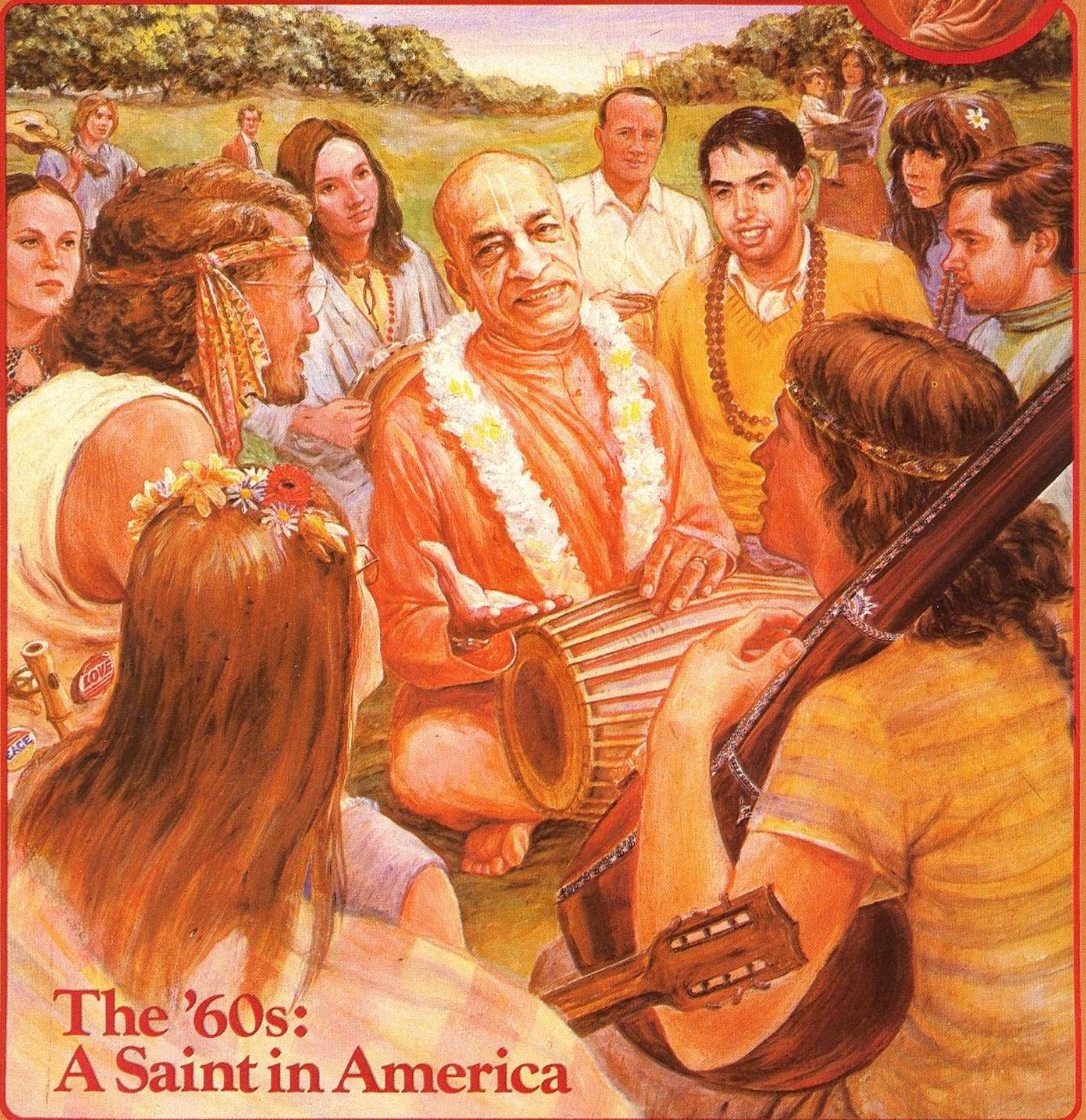
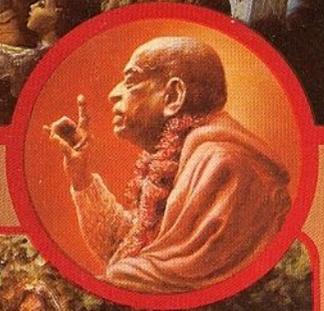


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

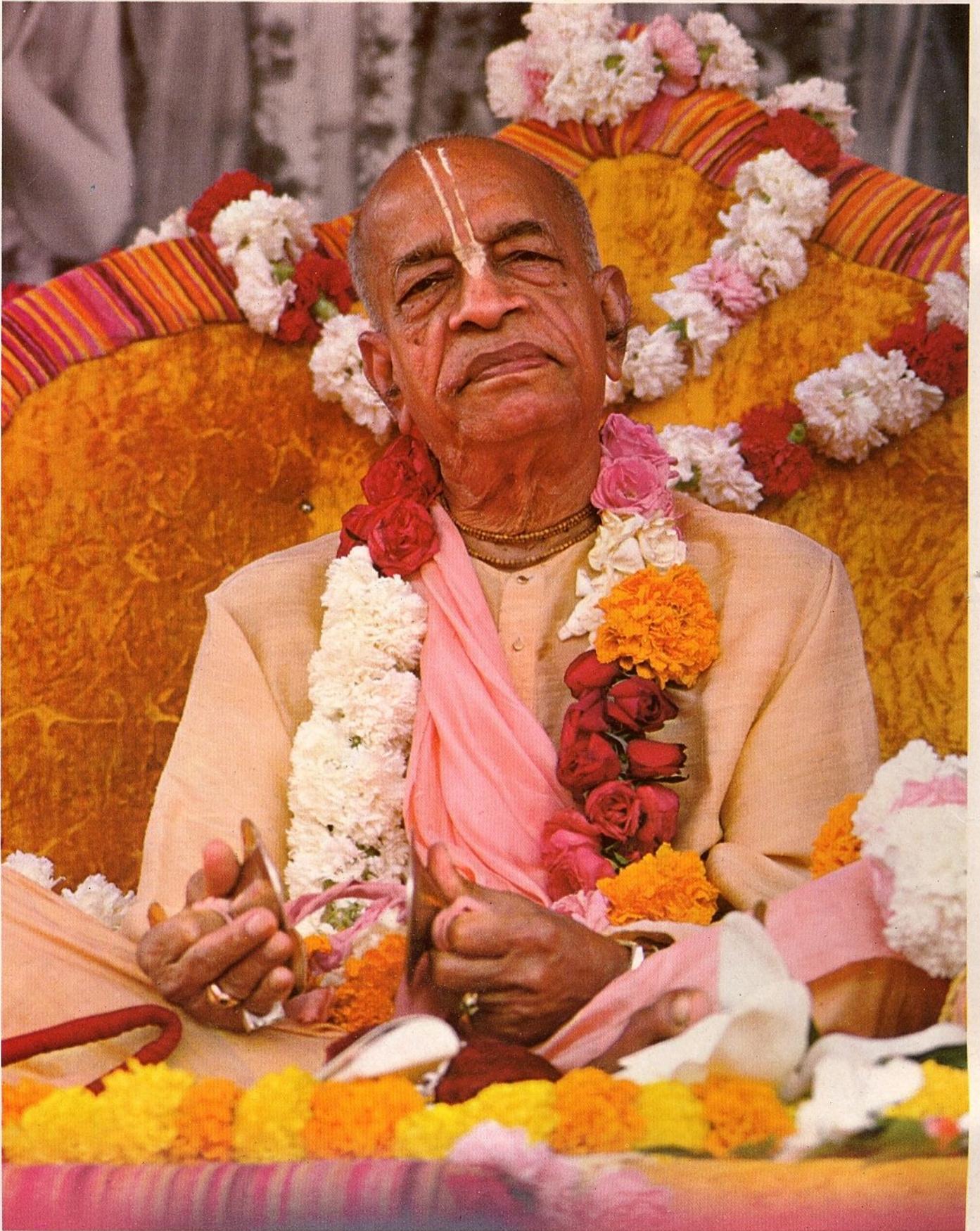
BACK TO GODHEAD

Vol.16 No.9

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



**The '60s:
A Saint in America**



VISAKHA DEVI DAS

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

VOL. 16, NO. 9

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

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Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)
His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION of Sanskrit words and names. BACK TO GODHEAD follows the international scholarly standard. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in **but**, long **ā** like the **a** in **far** (and hold it twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in **evade**, long **ī** like the **i** in **pique**. Pronounce the aspirated consonants (**ch**, **jh**, **dh**, etc.) as in **staunch**-heart, **hedge**-hog, and **red**-hot. Finally, pronounce the sibilants **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**, and **s** like the **s** in **sun**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, and for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

ABOUT SANSKRIT NAMES in by-lines, credits, and text. Members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His great devotees, combined with *dāsa* (*dāsi* for women), meaning "servant." For instance, the name *Kṛṣṇa dāsa* means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

◀ His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda came to America in 1965, at age sixty-nine, to fulfill his spiritual master's request that he teach the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the English-speaking world. In a dozen years he published some seventy volumes of translation and commentary on India's Vedic literatures, and these are now standard in universities worldwide. Meanwhile, traveling almost nonstop, Śrīla Prabhupāda molded his international society into a worldwide confederation of *āśramas*, schools, temples, and farm communities. He passed away in 1977 in India's Vṛndāvana, the place most sacred to Lord Kṛṣṇa, and his disciples are carrying forward the movement he started.

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San Francisco, 1967. "The hippies needed all the help they could get, and they knew it. And the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple was certainly a kind of spiritual haven."

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COVER: It was the spring of 1967 in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Thousands of young people had begun pouring into the city, searching for some sort of alternative to the life from which they had come. For many the search ended when they met His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, who gave them his love and compassion—and the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. (Painting: Locana dāsa)

ABOUT BACK TO GODHEAD: "Godhead is light" has always been BACK TO GODHEAD's byword—"Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience." Godhead means the source of everything, and this journal is meant to assist readers in cultivating practical, scientific realization of Godhead. To this end BACK TO GODHEAD explores the ideas presented in ancient India's Vedic literatures, especially *Bhagavad-gītā*. As the *Gītā* itself informs us, "When one is enlightened with the knowledge by which nescience is destroyed, then his knowledge reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime."



THE RELIGION BEYOND ALL RELIGIONS

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

In June 1976 at New Vrindaban, the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's farm community in West Virginia, Śrīla Prabhupāda fields questions sent to him from the editors of Bhavan's Journal, one of Bombay's leading cultural and religious periodicals.

Devotee: Here is the first question: "It is said that the greatest strength of Hinduism is its catholicity, or breadth of outlook, but that this is also its greatest weakness in that there are very few religious observances that are obligatory for all, as in other religions. Is it necessary and possible to outline certain basic minimum observances for all Hindus?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: As far as Vedic religion is concerned, it is not for the Hindus; it is for all living entities. That is the first thing to be understood. Vedic religion is called *sanātana-dharma*, "the eternal occupation of the living entity." The living entity is *sanātana* [eternal], God is *sanātana*, and there is *sanātana-dharma*. *Sanātana-dharma* is meant for all living entities, not

just the so-called Hindus. Hinduism, this "ism," that "ism"—these are all misconceptions. Historically, *sanātana-dharma* was followed regularly in India, and Indians were called "Hindus" by the Muslims. The Muslims saw that the Indians lived on the other side of the River Sind, and the Muslims pronounced *Sind* as *Hind*. Therefore they called India "Hindustan" and the people who lived there "Hindus." But the word *Hindu* has no reference in the Vedic literature, nor does so-called *Hindu dharma*. Now that *sanātana-dharma*, or Vedic *dharma*, is being distorted, not being obeyed, not being carried out properly, it has come to be known as Hinduism. But that is a freak understanding; that is not a real understanding. We have to study *sanātana-dharma*; then we'll understand what Vedic religion is. [To a devotee] Read from the Eleventh Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, eighteenth verse.

Devotee: [Reads.]

*tvam akṣaraṁ paramaṁ vedītavyaṁ
tvam aśya viśvasya paraṁ nidhānam
tvam avyayaḥ śāśvata-dharma-goptā
sanātanas tvam puruṣo mato me*

"O Lord Kṛṣṇa, You are the supreme primal objective; You are inexhaustible, and You are the oldest; You are the maintainer of religion, the eternal Personality of Godhead."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This understanding is wanted. Kṛṣṇa is eternal, we are eternal, and the place where we can live and exchange our feelings with Kṛṣṇa—that is eternal. And the system that teaches this

eternal process of reciprocation—that is *sanātana-dharma*, which is meant for everyone.

Devotee: So what would be the daily prescribed religious observances followed by one who is aspiring for this *sanātana-dharma*? What would he do? The complaint is that within Hinduism—or, let's say, *sanātana-dharma*—there is such a breadth, there is so much variegatedness in different types—

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Why do you go to variegatedness? Why don't you take the real purpose of religion from Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa says [Bg. 18.66], *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*: "Give up all other so-called *dharmas* and just surrender to Me." Why don't you take that? Why are you taking up variegated practices under the name of so-called Hinduism? Why don't you take the advice of the *sanātana*, Kṛṣṇa? You refuse to accept *sanātana-dharma*—what the *sanātana*, God, says—but you say, "How can we avoid so many varieties and come to the right point?" Why accept varieties? Take to this one consciousness: *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*. Why don't you do that?

Devotee: How can people do this practically, on a daily basis?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: How are we doing it? Is what we are doing not practical? People will manufacture their own impractical way of religion, but they won't take our practical system. What is that? *Man-manā bhava mad-bhaktō mad-yājī mām nama-kuru*: simply think of Kṛṣṇa, become His

The perfect socio-religious system is explained by Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*. (This system differs from the prejudicial system of caste by birth.) In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord defines four natural classes in society according to their qualities and work. They are the *brāhmaṇas* (priests and intellectuals), the *kṣatriyas* (political leaders and military men), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and merchants), and the *sūdras* (manual laborers). It is only when the members of all these classes worship the Lord with the fruits of their work that social harmony, material prosperity, and spiritual felicity are assured.

devotee, worship Him, and offer obeisances to Him. Where is the difficulty? Where is the impracticality? Kṛṣṇa says, "This is your duty. If you do this you will come to Me without any doubt." Why don't you do that? Why remain Hindu? Why remain Muslim? Why remain Christian? Give up all this nonsense. Just surrender to Kṛṣṇa and understand, "I am a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, a servant of Kṛṣṇa." Then everything will immediately be resolved.

Devotee: But the Hindus would say, "There are so many other aspects to Hindu dharma."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Real dharma is defined in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam*. "What God says—that is dharma." Now, God says, "Give up all other dharmas and just surrender unto Me." So take that dharma. Why do you want to remain a Hindu? And besides, what Hindu does not accept the authority of Kṛṣṇa? Even today, if any Hindu says, "I don't care for Kṛṣṇa and *Bhagavad-gītā*," he will immediately be rejected as a madman. Why don't you take Kṛṣṇa's instruction? Why go elsewhere? Your trouble is that you do not know what religion is and you do not know what *sanātana-dharma* is. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness society there are many who were formerly so-called Hindus, so-called Muslims, and so-called Christians, but now they don't care for "Hindu" or "Muslim" or "Christian." They care only for Kṛṣṇa. That's all. If you follow a false religious system, you suffer; but if you follow a real religious system, you'll be happy.

Unfortunately, the Indian people gave up the real religious system—*sanātana-dharma*, or *varṇāśrama-dharma*—and accepted a hodgepodge thing called "Hinduism." Therefore there is trouble. Vedic religion means *varṇāśrama-dharma*, the division of society into four social classes and four spiritual orders of life. The four social classes are the *brāhmaṇas* [priests and intellectuals], the *kṣatriyas* [political leaders and military men], the *vaiśyas* [merchants and farmers], and the *sūdras* [manual laborers]. The four spiritual orders are the *brahmacārīs* [celibate students], the *gṛhasthas* [householders], the *vānaprasthas* [retired persons], and the *sannyāsīs* [renunciants]. When all these classes and orders work harmoniously to satisfy the Lord, that is real religion, or dharma.

Devotee: The next question is this: "In the Kali-yuga, the present Age of Quarrel, *bhakti* [devotional service to God] has been described as the most suitable path for God realization. Yet how is it that Vedāntic teachings, with their accent on *jñāna* [knowledge, or intellectual speculation], are emphasized by noted savants?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The so-called Vedāntists are cheaters; they do not know what

vedānta is. But people want to be cheated, and the cheaters are taking advantage of them. The word *veda* means "knowledge," and *anta* means "end." So the meaning of *vedānta* is "the ultimate knowledge," and the *Vedānta-sūtra* teaches this. (A *sūtra* is an aphorism: in a few words, a big philosophy is given.) The first aphorism in the *Vedānta-sūtra* is *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*: "Now, in the human form of life, one should inquire about Brahman, the Absolute Truth." So the study of the *Vedānta-sūtra* begins when one is inquisitive about the Absolute Truth. And what is that Absolute Truth? That is answered in a nutshell in the second aphorism. *Janmādy asya yataḥ*: "Brahman is the origin of

This impersonalistic "knowledge" is all nonsense. If one does not know who God is, who Kṛṣṇa is, then where is one's knowledge?

everything." So Brahman is God, the origin of everything. And all *veda*, or knowledge, culminates in Him. This is confirmed by Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* [15.15]. *Vedaīs ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*: "The purpose of all the *Vedas*, all books of knowledge, is to search out God."

So the whole *Vedānta-sūtra* is a description of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But because in this Kali-yuga people will not be able to study *Vedānta-sūtra* nicely on account of a lack of education, Śrīla Vyāsadeva personally wrote a commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*. That commentary is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*bhāṣyām brahma-sūtrāṇām*). *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the real commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, written by the same author, Vyāsadeva, under the instruction of Nārada, his spiritual master. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* begins with the same aphorism as the *Vedānta-sūtra*, *janmādy asya yataḥ*, and then continues, *anvayad itarataḥ cārtheṣv abhijñāḥ svarāt*.

So, actually, in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the *Vedānta-sūtra* is explained by the author of the *Vedānta-sūtra*. But some rascals, without understanding the *Vedānta-sūtra*, without reading the natural commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, are posing themselves as Vedāntists and misguiding

people. And because people are not educated, they're accepting these rascals as Vedāntists. Actually, the so-called Vedāntists are bluffers; they are not Vedāntists. They do not know anything of the *vedānta*. The *Vedānta-sūtra* is explained in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and if we take *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the real explanation of the *Vedānta-sūtra* we can understand what *vedānta* is. But if we take shelter of the bluffers, then we will not learn *vedānta*. People do not know anything, so they can be bluffed and cheated by anyone. But now they should learn from the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement what *vedānta* is and what the explanation of *vedānta* is. Then they will be benefited.

Devotee: Generally, those who follow the impersonalistic commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* are concerned with liberation from the miseries of the material world. Does *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* also describe liberation?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Since *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the real commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, we find this verse describing liberation in this age:

*kaler doṣa-nidhe rājann
asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ
kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya
mukta-bandhaḥ param vrajet*

In this Kali-yuga, which is an ocean full of faults, there is one benediction. What is that? One can become liberated simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. This is real *vedānta*, and actually it is happening.

Devotee: Are you saying that the conclusion of the *Vedānta-sūtra* and the conclusion of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are one and the same—*bhakti*?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Devotee: But how does *bhakti* tie in to the conclusion of Vedāntic knowledge or wisdom? Here it says that *bhakti* is the most suitable and easiest path of God realization, but it also says that the Vedāntic teachings stress *jñāna*, or knowledge. Is that a fact?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: What is *jñāna*? That is explained by Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* [7.19]: *bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate*. "After many, many births, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me." So unless one surrenders to Kṛṣṇa, there is no *jñāna*. This impersonalistic "*jñāna*" is all nonsense. The impersonalists are passing themselves off as *jñānīs*, but they have no knowledge at all. *Vedānta* means "the ultimate knowledge." So the subject matter of ultimate knowledge is Kṛṣṇa, God. If one does not know who God is, who Kṛṣṇa is, then where is one's knowledge? But if a rascal claims, "I am a man of knowledge," then what can be done?

In the same verse we just mentioned,
(continued on page 14)

TICKET TO A WORLD WITHOUT DEATH

An ancient science provides the perfect vehicle
for the ultimate journey.

by GIRI-YĀDAVA DĀSA

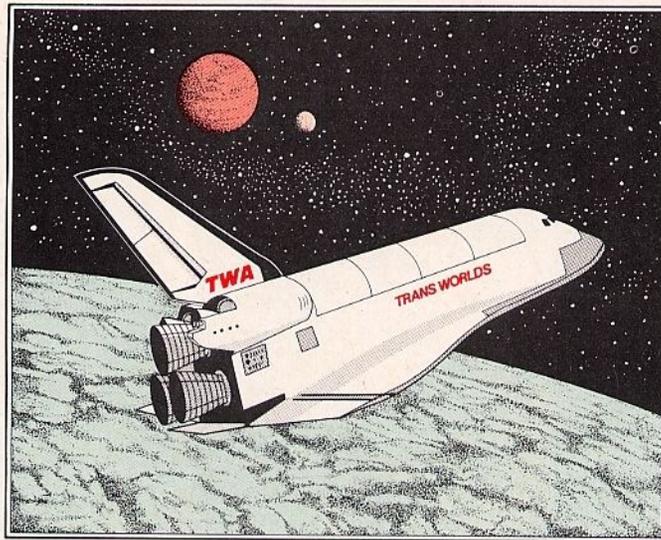
If TWA were selling tickets for a flight to a newly discovered planet where no one grew old, no one suffered disease, and no one ever died, who wouldn't want to purchase a ticket to go there, at any cost?

We all long to live forever, but have you ever stopped to wonder why? If death is natural, why does everyone just as naturally try to avoid death?

In *Bhagavad-gītā*, one of the Vedic literatures, the ancient Sanskrit texts of India, Lord Kṛṣṇa addresses this very question: "For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He does not come to be, has not come to be, and will not come to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain." (Bg. 2.20)

The Vedic writings define *God*—or, more precisely, the *Absolute Truth*—as "that from which everything has emanated." God is eternal and full of knowledge and bliss, and we living entities, being part and parcel of God, have qualitative oneness with Him. As a drop of ocean water has the same qualities as the rest of the ocean but in a smaller quantity, we all have a minute quantity of God's qualities. Therefore, since God is eternal, we are also eternal, and thus we do not wish to die.

At the present moment, however, we are under the false impression that we are the temporary material body. Everyone is thinking, "I am Canadian," or "I am American," or "I am black," or "I am white," or "I am Christian," or "I am Hindu." In reality we, the eternal conscious self, have nothing to do with these temporary external identities. Lord Kṛṣṇa eluci-



dates this point in *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.22): "As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones." To clarify this point further, let us consider the expression "This is my hand." The word *my* is a possessive pronoun denoting that the object, the hand, belongs to me. But let us reflect upon the word *me*. Who am I? I am obviously something other than my hand, because I am observing my hand. Then who am I? I am that which is aware, the conscious perceiver within the body: the self.

Now, the special facility we have in the human form of life is that we can realize our true self, understand the relationship between the individual self and the Supreme Self, and ultimately develop love for Him.

To achieve these goals, we must be trained by a self-realized person. Why people today refuse spiritual training has always puzzled me. To become an expert cook, painter, dancer, mechanic, technician, lawyer, or doctor, one must approach an experienced teacher and take instruction from him. Nevertheless, when it comes to the most important subject—

the science of God realization—we stubbornly insist, "I don't need anyone's help." This false pride limits us to an incomplete understanding of the Absolute Truth. Because we are imperfect, our senses are limited, and we tend to make mistakes. How, then, can we possibly expect to attain liberation on our own? If I am bound hand and foot, how can I free myself? I need help from someone who is free.

Out of his causeless mercy and kindness, the Lord sends His ambassador, the liberated spiritual master. Though in the material world, he is not in material consciousness, because he is in constant touch with the Lord in his heart. Just as a fish in an aquarium is in a room but simultaneously in a world apart, the water, so the spiritual master is in this material world but simultaneously in a world apart—the kingdom of God.

If one takes shelter of the instructions of such a bona fide spiritual master, one's deliverance from the material world is guaranteed by Lord Kṛṣṇa: "Just try to understand the truth by approaching a bona fide spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth." (Bg. 4.34)

The liberated, self-realized spiritual master is like the TWA airplane pilot who knows the bearings of the spiritual destination. The spiritual master, by imparting the knowledge contained in revealed scripture and by his own undaunted example, trains his disciples to render unconditional devotional service to Lord

(continued on page 21)

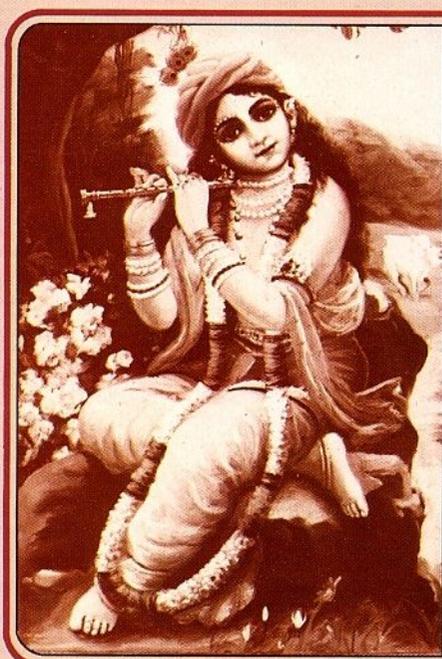
You Don't Need a Guru—Or Do You?

Questions at Harvard Divinity School

powers to perceive it. So we think that no one can achieve perfect realization of Truth. We accept the idea of “teacher” only in a limited sense. One person, we think, may be able to tell us something of his own relative insights about relative truths. But anyone who reportedly possesses perfect knowledge of truth has to be immediately written off as a charlatan. We see this skepticism in the media’s stereotypes—“the *guru*”: a skinny old fellow wearing long flowing hair and a beard, dispensing cryptic aphorisms and cosmic riddles, and milking his followers for all they’re worth.

Student: I think that—perhaps out of pride—some people dislike the very idea of submission.

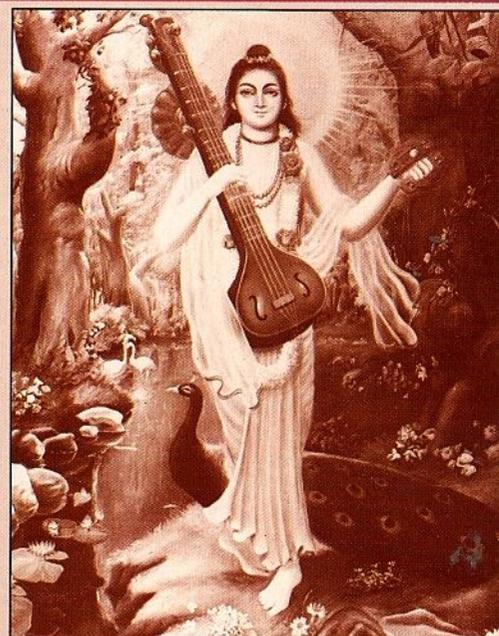
Śubhānanda dāsa: Yes. We’d rather be in the position of teacher than that of student. Submission to a teacher implies an admis-



Lord Kṛṣṇa



Lord Brahmā



Nārada Muni

Recently Professor Harvey Cox of Harvard University invited Śubhānanda dāsa, a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee, to give three talks on the traditional role of the guru. Later the talking went on, between Professor Cox and his divinity students and their guest.

Student: The idea of “spiritual guide” or “spiritual master” is not exclusive to the Indian spiritual tradition, as you know. It’s found, in varying degrees of formality, in a wide spectrum of religious and cultural contexts: the Christian abbot or prior, the Jewish rabbi, the Zen *roshi*, and so on. Yet most people in the West seem apprehensive about the idea of submission to a spiritual guide. Why would you say this is?

Śubhānanda dāsa: It’s due to a lack of interest in spiritual life. We live in a society that is materially oriented, so most people simply aren’t interested. This lack of inter-

est in spirituality comes from our modern skepticism—our disbelief in the very notion of an absolute, perfect Truth. Most people—if they have any interest in philosophy or religion at all—tend to be relativists: “Everyone has his own truth.” So if there’s really no ultimate, objective, absolute Truth—if all is relative and subjective—then the idea of a *guru*, one who teaches Truth, becomes meaningless. And so we view *gurus* as merely people propagating their own or someone else’s relative concept of truth or reality.

Student: Also, most people are reluctant to accept the premise of human perfectibility. Even though there may be objective truth, they say, human nature is so terribly fallible—and therefore no one person can perceive truth in full.

Śubhānanda dāsa: Yes. Absolute Truth, or God, appears so infinite, transcendent, or esoteric that it must be beyond our human

vision that I need instruction and guidance. And this is humbling. Most of us will submit to another person for guidance only as a last resort, when all our own wisdom has failed.

Student: But then, we all know that authority figures can become corrupt. All of us have, I suppose, experienced disappointment with authority figures—parents, teachers, politicians, clergy. I think we’re leery of any *guru* because he may be corrupt.

Śubhānanda dāsa: Unfortunately, that fear is well founded. For every genuine *guru*, there are plenty of others who are not qualified, not genuine, whose motives are questionable. And for sure, some are outright charlatans and con men. Often the problem is, “Power corrupts.” And when a *guru* is invested, whether by tradition or by self-pronouncement, with absolute power, too often, “Absolute power corrupts absolutely.” If a person’s motives in becoming

someone else's spiritual mentor are even slightly tainted with self-serving, quite likely he'll turn into an exploiter. So one has to be wary. There are bona fide *gurus*. But to find a bona fide *guru* one has to be a genuine seeker.

Student: Why do so many people seem to fall in with *gurus* of such questionable qualifications or motives?

Śubhānanda dāsa: It's because most self-styled seekers don't really want a genuine traditional *guru*. They don't want spiritual life strongly enough to make the necessary sacrifices. A genuine *guru* will require real personal surrender and real renunciation of worldliness. Most people simply don't want to go that far. They want a *guru* who will make few demands and provide a cheap artificial "high."

Another thing is that hardly any *gurus* on

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Under the banner of "experience" they imagine that analytical thinking is a waste of time—and so they have no grasp of any spiritual realities other than vague concepts like "the light," "the spirit," "love," "the One," and so on. You may consider this a bit of an exaggeration. If you do, go and see for yourselves. Talk with the followers of some *gurus*. You'll be surprised.

Student: I think what you've said about inauthentic *gurus* has been helpful. I'd like to hear you speak a little more about the concept of *guru* in the ideal, as articulated in your own tradition.

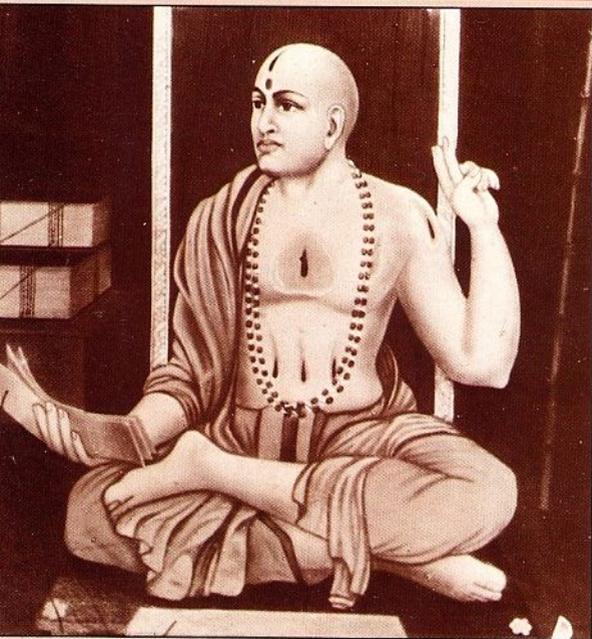
Śubhānanda dāsa: Well, the basic thing about a *guru* is that he is fully conversant with the science of the Absolute Truth. Also, a genuine *guru* is a fully self-realized soul. He is free from illusion. He knows himself as an eternal, spiritual being, and

There are, of course, many interpretations of the nature and function of the *guru*, even within the Indian spiritual tradition. But rather than try to provide a survey, I'm speaking from the viewpoint of India's chief and most influential theistic tradition, that of Vaiṣṇavism, represented by such seminal thinkers as Rāmānuja, Madhva, and Śrī Caitanya.

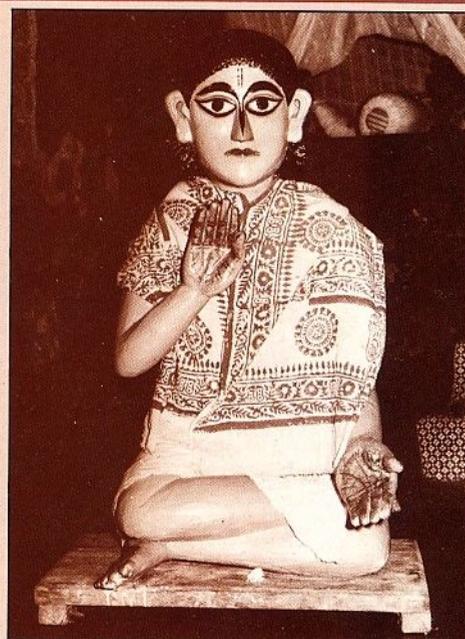
Student: Earlier you spoke of the *guru's* asceticism . . .

Śubhānanda dāsa: Yes. This is another classical characteristic of a genuine *guru*. He has renounced the desire for material acquisition and gratification. Because he is free of *ahaṅkāra*, false ego, he isn't physically or mentally self-indulgent. In other words, it's not enough for one to know oneself to be different from one's material body merely in theory. One has to under-

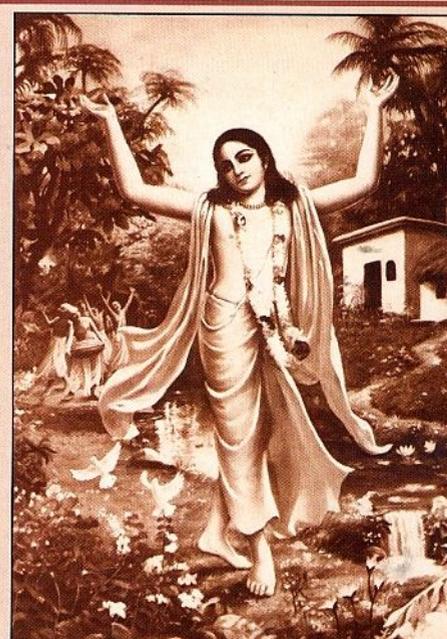
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Śrīla Madhvācārya



Śrīla Īśvara Purī



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

the American scene talk about the traditional texts that provide criteria by which would-be followers could judge a teacher's authenticity. In many cases, I'm sure, the *gurus* do this quite consciously. Some teachers go so far as denying the importance of the traditional texts and arguing that they themselves can provide the spiritual experience that the scriptures can only describe. This is a ploy to save themselves from being exposed. The followers are left with no criteria for judging the authenticity of their *guru*—except, of course, the *guru's* own criteria. Anyone who knows the Indian spiritual tradition through the texts of the tradition can see through all this. But many followers are spiritually illiterate, ignorant of the depth and richness of the traditions their *gurus* claim to represent.

thus he no longer identifies himself with materiality. He knows the Absolute Truth as the source and essence of everything. And his knowledge isn't theoretical or speculative; it's based on direct perception of reality. He *experiences* truth directly, not merely in theory. He isn't just a philosopher or theologian, but a mystic. He has experienced, and is experiencing, that of which he speaks.

And not only does the realized *guru* know the truth. He *loves* the truth. In its original sense, the term *philosopher* means "one who loves truth." So one might say that the spiritual master is the ideal philosopher. Nor is it a mere concept or idea, however grandiose or sublime, that he loves. It is the Personal Truth, God, who elicits his deepest devotional sentiments.

stand his spiritual identity through direct realization.

And one who directly realizes his spiritual identity renounces those objects, those pleasures, that have to do with the temporal body. He realizes that just as the body is temporary, so its possessions and its pleasures are also temporary and therefore of no real, ultimate significance. Compared to the sublime pleasure he gets from his devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, all mundane pleasures appear dull and lifeless. This renunciation or asceticism can come only from real spiritual advancement. That's why Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī tells us, "Only a spiritually advanced person who can tolerate the urge to speak, the mind's demands, the actions of anger, and the urges of the tongue, the belly, and the

Perfect knowledge of the Absolute Truth originates with Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa enlightens Brahmā, the first created being, who in turn enlightens Nārada. The knowledge then continues through a chain of teachers, some of whom are shown on this and the following pages.

genitals is qualified to take the position of *guru*." If someone has taken the position of *guru* and yet we see he's still attached to materialism, this should give us pause.

Student: So practice is at least as important as precept?

Subhānanda dāsa: Yes. If the *guru* himself is not renounced—if he is still addicted to worldly activities and gratification—how will he succeed in freeing others from egoism and illusion? He himself must set the highest example. The *guru* is also called *ācārya*—one who teaches by personal example. In other words, he himself lives by the knowledge he teaches. His actions, his words, his entire disposition reflect the sublime truth of which he speaks. His actions set an example for others to follow. His very presence can, if one is a little sensitive, soften the heart, elevate the feelings,

magical feat whereby he magically injects spiritual knowledge into his disciple as if surcharging him with an electrical current. In reality, the *guru* explains everything to the disciple in accordance with logic and reason, as well as scriptural authority and tradition.

Student: Earlier, you were speaking about how to be sure of the validity of the knowledge the *guru* teaches, and you were tying that in with historical disciplic succession.

Subhānanda dāsa: This is a crucial point. There has to be a test for validity. Nowadays, everyone considers himself a *guru*, in the sense that everyone instinctively assumes that he's seeing things as they really are. We draw upon the vast and murky data of our ordinary daily sense perceptions and mental impressions, and we form broad conclusions about the nature of things. But

after generation. In other words, the *guru* has the sacred duty to transmit Vedic knowledge *as it is*, without subjective taint or speculative interpretation.

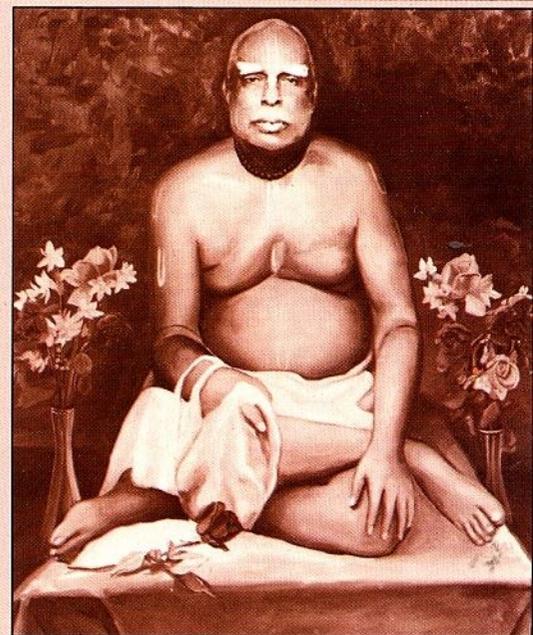
Professor Cox: I'd like to raise in a friendly way what I think might be an interesting contrast—not in this case, I think, between the Hindu tradition and the Christian, but between what might be referred to as the lineage and the antilineage elements within any particular religious tradition. I think that in Christianity one finds examples of both lineage and antilineage, or disciplic and antidisciplic, understandings. There's the concept of apostolic succession, which the Pope is said to represent, and many churches are based on this notion of disciplic succession.

There are, however, and I think also stemming from Jesus, antilineage, anti-

N.O.D.



The Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana



Śrīla Bhaktivinoḍa Ṭhākura

and inspire sublime action.

Student: The qualifications for the *guru* that you've discussed so far—that he must be spiritually realized, that he must be materially renounced, and that he must set a high example—sound like general criteria for holiness. What uniquely distinguishes a person as a *guru* over and above a holy man?

Subhānanda dāsa: The obvious distinguishing factor is that the *guru* teaches. Not only is he a holy man, but he also makes others holy. This means compassion. He isn't content with his own spiritual advancement, liberation, or salvation. He desires these things for others. In fact, this compassion is the real symptom of spirituality.

It's important to note *how* the *guru* transmits knowledge to his disciple. There's a popular misconception that the *guru*'s enlightenment of his disciple is a kind of

because one person's sensory and mental impressions differ vastly from any other person's, we come to vastly differing conclusions. A multitude of individuals, a multitude of weltanschauungs. We all think we're our own *guru*. But clearly anyone who thinks he's his own *guru* has a fool for a disciple.

The idea of a *guru* presumes the existence, the reality, of perfect objective knowledge—knowledge that can be directly perceived, if only we have the eyes to see it. Within the broad tradition that I'm taking part in, perfect and infallible knowledge is called *veda*—divine, eternal wisdom, preserved through oral tradition and later compiled in the form of the Vedic scriptures. Traditionally, Vedic knowledge is transmitted through what is called *paramparā*, disciplic succession. The knowledge is carefully preserved and passed down from master to disciple, generation

disciplic visions of truth. The underlying thought here is that a lineage can become corrupt and often is corrupt. In fact, many of them have within their very structure the possibility of corruption. And therefore God sometimes appears in human society as a critic of lineage rather than its perpetuator. When Jesus criticizes the existing lineage of his time, he says, "You say you have Abraham as your father, but I tell you that God is able to raise up out of the stones children of Abraham." He affiliates himself with John the Baptist, who founded what you might call an antilineage movement. And also, interestingly enough, we have the example of St. Paul, who was a kind of epitome in the early Christian period of the antilineage disciplic notion. That is, he had a direct revelation from God and Christ and carefully did not seek legitimization from the early disciples. So, maybe you'd like to respond to this theme—the

tension between the disciplic transmission and the . . . let's call it the charismatic or visionary revelation of truth, which is often antidisciplic.

Śubhānanda dāsa: You're certainly correct in pointing out that a lineage can and does become corrupt. Lineages become weak or cease to function altogether. Religious history provides many examples of this, for sure. But it is important to understand Vaiṣṇava disciplic succession as not merely historical but revelatory. That is, it by no means precludes charismatic or visionary revelation of truth. Succession does not necessarily imply merely mechanical transmission of dogma. The *guru* is no mere pedantic functionary. With each link in the disciplic chain, the eternal Vedic knowledge comes to life. It becomes real and dynamic through the *guru's* own spiritual

was criticizing was not the notion of lineage per se, but the corruption of lineage, or the decadence or misuse of lineage, or simply the limitations of a particular lineage. Catholics, at any rate, would argue that Jesus himself established a new lineage, that of the apostolic succession, although, as you imply, Protestant thinking would tend to be antilineage in that respect. In Vaiṣṇava understanding, the Lord can and does intercede historically when a tradition has been corrupted or lost, or is in need of revitalization. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself explained to Arjuna that with the ancient disciplic succession now broken, the eternal science of *yoga* had become lost, and therefore it was necessary for Him to personally present again this science to His disciple, Arjuna, through the *Gītā*. Disciplic successions can degrade into

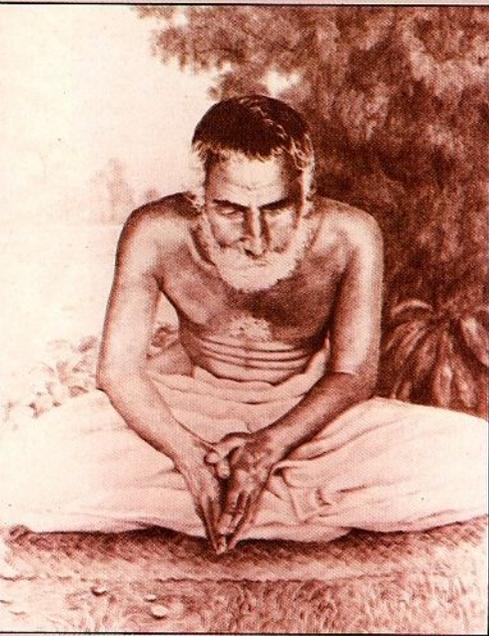
Second, the spiritual aspirant benefits from the personal example of a perfected soul. Because the *guru* personally exemplifies Vedic wisdom, that wisdom becomes a tangible, real thing for the disciple.

Further, it's not by the disciple's own efforts, in the ultimate sense, that he advances on the spiritual path. It is by divine grace. The Lord's blessings are delivered by the Lord's representative, the spiritual master. A verse in the *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* states, "Only unto those great souls who simultaneously have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of the Vedic knowledge automatically revealed."

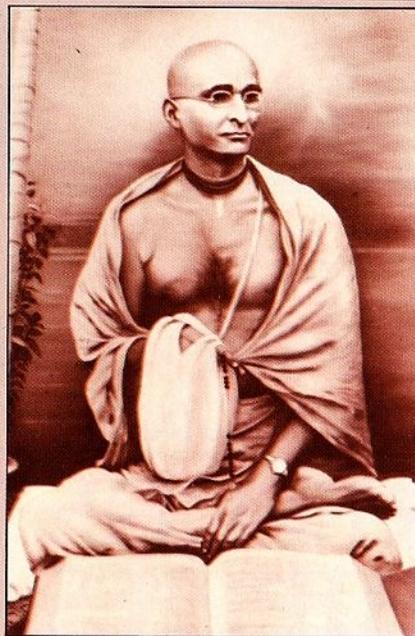
Student: I wonder if you could explain again the *guru's* emissary function—what you referred to as his being an "external manifestation" of God?

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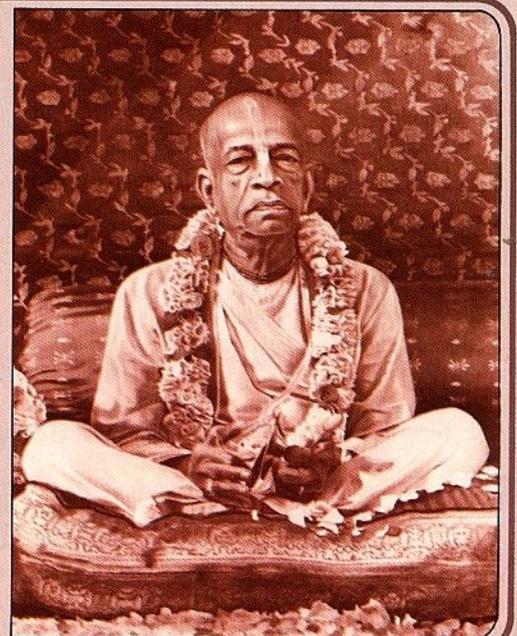
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Śrīla Gaurakīṣora dāsa Bābāji



Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura



His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

vitality. He realizes truth and he transmits the fruits of that realization, including the very *process* through which his disciple can himself achieve realization. Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna in the *Gītā*, "The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has *seen* the truth." It is further understood that the Lord, in His form as the indwelling witness and guide, the Supersoul, the Paramātmā, is forever revealing spiritual understanding within the heart of His pure devotee. So disciplic succession *is* a revelatory function, although that function remains intact only so long as the links of the chain are strong.

But, because for one reason or another a disciplic succession may be corrupted or lose its spiritual vitality, God *will* intercede, either personally or through an agent. You gave the example of Jesus Christ, who criticized the lineage existing in his time. But it seems to me that what he

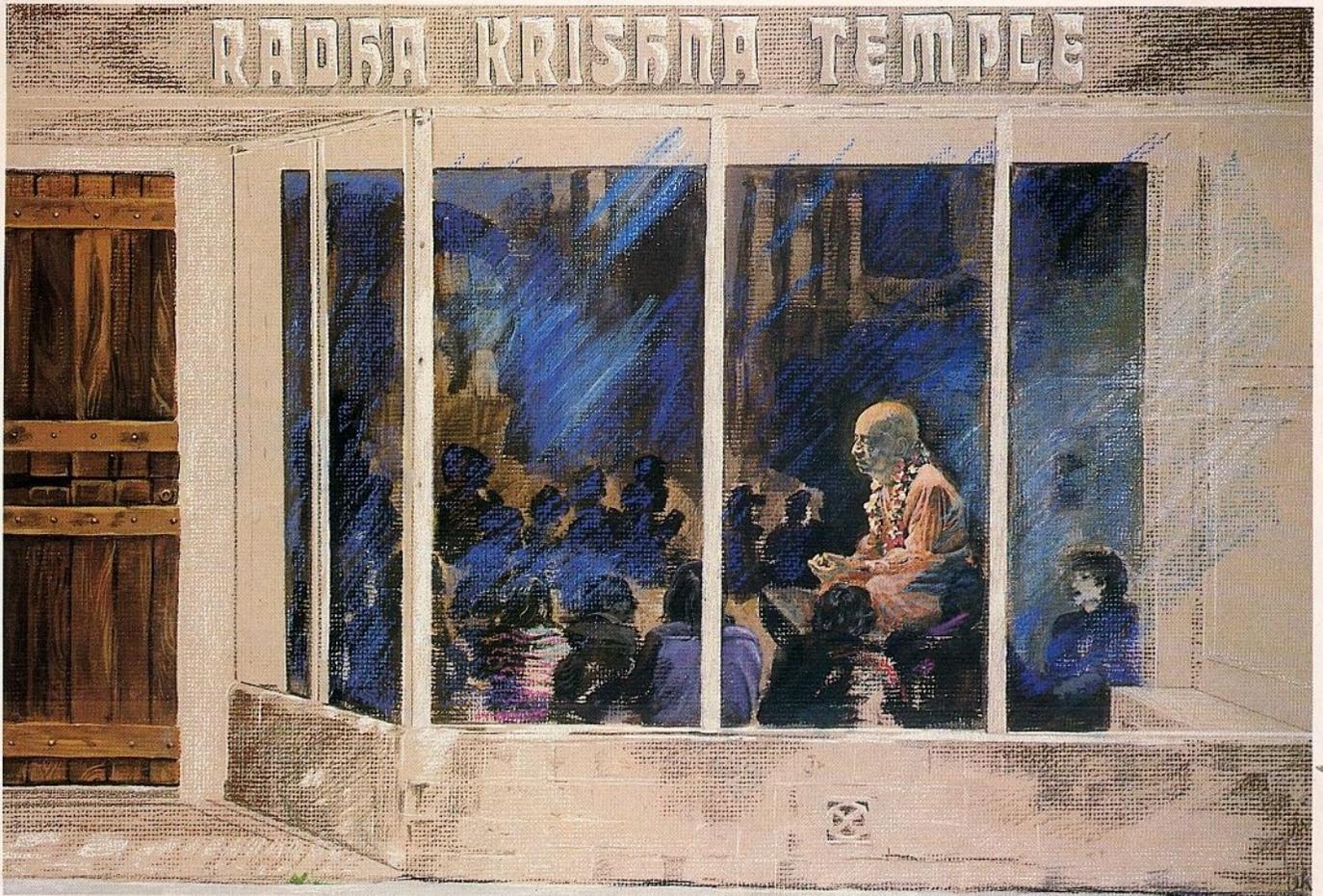
archaic orthodoxy, but they don't have to.

Student: If the *guru* is primarily a transmitter of Vedic knowledge, can't one simply guide one's life in terms of that scriptural knowledge, without having to associate himself with a *guru*? Why can't one deal directly with the scripture?

Śubhānanda dāsa: Adherence to Vedic scripture without the direct, practical guidance of a spiritual master is insufficient for spiritual advancement for a few reasons. First, Vedic literature describes the Absolute Truth from various angles and prescribes a variety of paths to that Truth. The spiritual master knows the particular mentality of each disciple and instructs him personally, in a manner appropriate to his mentality. The example is given that a pharmacy may contain thousands of medicines, but one requires a doctor who can prescribe the appropriate medicine for the particular ailment.

Śubhānanda dāsa: The authentic *guru* is God's representative. He acts as the intermediary between the spiritual aspirant and God. The *guru* does not obstruct the soul's approach to God. He facilitates it. While under the influence of *māyā*, illusion, the unaided soul can neither perceive nor approach God directly. He makes this approach through the spiritual master. The disciple sees God, you might say, *through* his spiritual master—and this vision is really still direct. You may view a tree *through* your bedroom window, but your perception of the tree is still direct. What this means is that the *guru* must be "transparent"—a transparent medium for the disciple's approach to God. The *guru* doesn't take the disciple's worship as his own, but he passes it on to God. God appears, as it were, through the agency of the *guru* to liberate the seeking soul.

(To be continued.)



The Biography of a Pure Devotee

A REFUGE FOR THE HIPPIES

Winter-spring, 1967: San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district.
"It was like opening a temple in a battlefield."

by ŚRĪLA SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to San Francisco from New York just when the hippie movement was reaching its height. Now he found that his small temple on Frederick Street, in the heart of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, was becoming a spiritual haven for troubled, searching, and sometimes desperate young people.

Prabhupāda's thoughtful followers felt that some of the candidates for initiation in San Francisco did not intend to fulfill the exclusive lifelong commitment a disciple owes to his *guru*. "Swamiji," they would say, "some of these people come only for their initiation. We have never

seen them before, and we never see them again." Śrīla Prabhupāda replied that that was the risk he had to take. One day in a lecture in the temple, he explained that although the reactions for a disciple's past sins are removed at initiation, the spiritual master remains responsible until the disciple is delivered from the material world. Therefore, he said, Lord Caitanya warned that a *guru* should not accept many disciples.

One night in the temple during the question-and-answer session, a big, bearded fellow raised his hand and asked Prabhupāda, "Can I become initiated?"

The brash public request annoyed some

of Prabhupāda's followers, but Prabhupāda was serene. "Yes," he replied. "But first you must answer two questions. Who is Kṛṣṇa?"

The boy thought for a moment and said, "Kṛṣṇa is God."

"Yes," Prabhupāda replied. "And who are you?"

Again the boy thought for a few moments and then replied, "I am the servant of God."

"Very good," Prabhupāda said. "Yes, you can be initiated tomorrow."

Śrīla Prabhupāda knew that it would be difficult for his Western disciples to stick to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and attain the goal of pure devotional service. All their lives they had had the worst of training, and despite their nominal Christianity and philosophical searching, most of them knew nothing of the science of God. They did not even know that illicit sex and meat-eating were wrong, although when he told them they accepted what he said. And they freely chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa. So how could he refuse them?

Of course, whether they would be able to persevere in Kṛṣṇa consciousness de-

Excerpted from *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, by Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami. © 1981 by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.



spite the ever-present attractions of *māyā* would be seen in time. Some would fall—that was the human tendency. But some would not. At least those who sincerely followed his instructions to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and avoid sinful activities would be successful. Somehow or other, Śrīla Prabhupāda would say, people should be engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And this was the instruction of Lord Caitanya's chief follower, Rūpa Gosvāmī, who had written, *tasmāt kenāpy upāyena manah kṛṣṇe niveśayet* . . . : "Somehow or other, fix the mind on Kṛṣṇa; the rules and regulations can come later."

Inherent in this attitude of Śrīla Prabhupāda's and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's was a strong conviction about the purifying force of the holy name; if engaged in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, even the most fallen person could gradually become a saintly devotee. Śrīla Prabhupāda would often quote a verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* affirming that persons addicted to sinful acts could be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord. He knew that every Haight-Ashbury hippie was eligible to receive the mercy of the holy name, and he saw it as his duty to his spiritual master to distribute the gift of Kṛṣṇa consciousness freely, rejecting no one.

The morning and evening *kīrtana* (chanting) had already made the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple popular in Haight-Ashbury, but when the devotees began serving a daily free lunch, the temple became an integral part of the community. Prabhupāda told his disciples simply to cook and distribute *prasādam*—that would be their only activity during the day. In the morning they

would cook, and at noon they would feed everyone who came—sometimes 150 or 200 hippies from the streets of Haight-Ashbury.

Before the morning *kīrtana*, the girls would put oatmeal on the stove, and by breakfast there would be a roomful of hippies, most of whom had been up all night. The cereal and fruit was for some the first solid food in days.

But the main program was the lunch. Mālatī would go out and shop, getting donations whenever possible, for whole-wheat flour, garbanzo flour, split peas, rice, and whatever vegetables were cheap or free: potatoes, carrots, turnips, rutabagas, beets. Then every day the cooks would prepare spiced mashed potatoes, buttered *capātīs*, split-pea *dāl*, and a vegetable dish—for two hundred people. The lunch program was possible because many merchants were willing to donate to the recognized cause of feeding hippies.

Harṣarāṇī: *The lunch program attracted a lot of the Hippie Hill crowd, who obviously wanted food. They were really hungry. And there were other people who would come also, people who were working with the temple but weren't initiated. The record player would be playing the Swamiji's record. It was a nice family atmosphere.*

Haridāsa: *The people would just all huddle together, and we would really line them wall to wall. A lot of them would simply eat and leave.*

But we were welcoming everybody. We were providing a kind of refuge from the tumult and madness of the street scene. So it was in that sense a hospital, and I think a lot of people were helped and maybe even

saved. I don't mean only their souls—I mean their minds and bodies were saved, because of what was going on in the streets that they just simply couldn't handle. I'm talking about overdoses of drugs, people who were plain lost and needed comforting and who sort of wandered or staggered into the temple.

Some of them stayed and became devotees, and some just took prasādam and left. Daily we had unusual incidents, and Swamiji witnessed it and took part in it. The lunch program was his idea.

Larry Shippen: *Some of the community of loose people cynically took advantage of the free food. They didn't appreciate the Swami, because they said he was, in his own way, an orthodox minister and they were much more interested in being unorthodox. It was a fairly cynical thing.*

Those who were more interested and had questions—the spiritual seekers—would visit Swamiji in his room. Many of them would come in complete anxiety over the war in Vietnam or whatever was going on—trouble with the law, bad experiences on drugs, a falling out with school or family.

There was much public concern about the huge influx of youth into San Francisco, a situation that was creating an almost uncontrollable social problem. Police and welfare workers were worried about health problems and poor living conditions, especially in Haight-Ashbury. Some middle-class people feared a complete hippie takeover. The local authorities welcomed the service offered by Swami Bhaktivedanta's temple.

Master Subramuniya: *The young people at that time were searching and needed somebody of a very high caliber who would take an interest in them and who would say, "You should do this, and you should not do that." The consensus was that no one could tell the young people what to do, because they were completely out of hand with drugs and so forth. But Swamiji told them what to do, and they did it. And everyone was appreciative, especially the young people.*

Harṣarāṇī: *Just from a medical standpoint, doctors didn't know what to do with people on LSD. The police and the free clinics in the area couldn't handle the overload of people taking LSD. The police saw Swamiji as a certain refuge.*

Michael Bowen: *Bhaktivedanta had an amazing ability through devotion to get people off drugs, especially speed, heroin, burnt-out LSD cases—all of that.*

Haridāsa: *The hippies needed all the help they could get, and they knew it. And the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple was certainly a kind of spiritual haven. Kids sensed it. They were running, living on the streets, no place where they could go, where they could rest, where people weren't going to*

hurt them. A lot of kids would literally fall into the temple. I think it saved a lot of lives; there might have been a lot more casualties if it hadn't been for Hare Kṛṣṇa. It was like opening a temple in a battlefield. It was the hardest place to do it, but it was the place where it was most needed. Although the Swami had no precedents for dealing with any of this, he applied the chanting with miraculous results. The chanting was wonderful. It worked.

Śrīla Prabhupāda knew that only Kṛṣṇa consciousness could help. Others had their remedies, but Prabhupāda considered them mere patchwork. He knew that ignorantly identifying the self with the body was the real cause of suffering. How could someone help himself, what to speak of others, if he didn't know who he was, if he didn't know that the body merely covered the real self, the spirit soul, which could be happy only in his original nature as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa?

Understanding that Lord Kṛṣṇa considered anyone who approached Him a virtuous person and that even a little devotional service would never be lost and could save a person at the time of death, Śrīla Prabhupāda had opened his door to everyone, even the most abject runaway. But for a lost soul to receive the balm of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he would first have to stay awhile and chant, inquire, listen and follow.

As Allen Ginsberg had advised five thousand hippies at the Avalon Ballroom, the early-morning *kīrtana* at the temple provided a vital community service for those who were coming down from LSD and wanted "to stabilize their consciousness on reentry."

On occasion, the "reentries" would come flying in out of control for crash landings in the middle of the night. One morning at two A.M. the boys sleeping in the storefront were awakened by a pounding at the door, screaming, and police lights. When they opened the door, a young hippie with wild red hair and beard plunged in, crying, "O Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa! Oh, help me! Oh, don't let them get me. Oh, for God's sake, help!"

A policeman stuck his head in the door and smiled. "We decided to bring him by here," he said, "because we thought maybe you guys could help him."

"I'm not comfortable in this body!" the boy screamed as the policeman shut the door. The boy began chanting furiously and turned white, sweating profusely in terror. Swamiji's boys spent the rest of the early morning consoling him and chanting with him until the Swami came down for *kīrtana* and class.

As for challengers, almost every night someone would come to argue with Prabhupāda. One man came regularly

with prepared arguments from a philosophy book, from which he would read aloud. Prabhupāda would defeat him, and the man would go home, prepare another argument, and come back again with his book. One night, after the man had presented his challenge, Prabhupāda simply looked at him without bothering to reply. Prabhupāda's neglect was another defeat for the man, who got up and left.

One morning a couple attended the lecture, a woman carrying a child and a man wearing a backpack. During the question-and-answer period the man asked, "What about my mind?" Prabhupāda gave him philosophical replies, but the man kept repeating, "What about my mind? What about my mind?"

With a pleading, compassionate look, Prabhupāda said, "I have no other medicine. Please chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa. I have no other explanation. I have no other answer."

But the man kept talking about his mind. Finally, one of the women devotees interrupted and said, "Just do what he says. Just try it." And Prabhupāda picked up his *karatālas* and began *kīrtana*.

One evening while Prabhupāda was sitting on his dais, lecturing to a full house, a fat girl who had been sitting on the window seat suddenly stood up and began hollering at him. "Are you just going to sit there?" she yelled. "What are you going to do now? Come on! Aren't you going to say

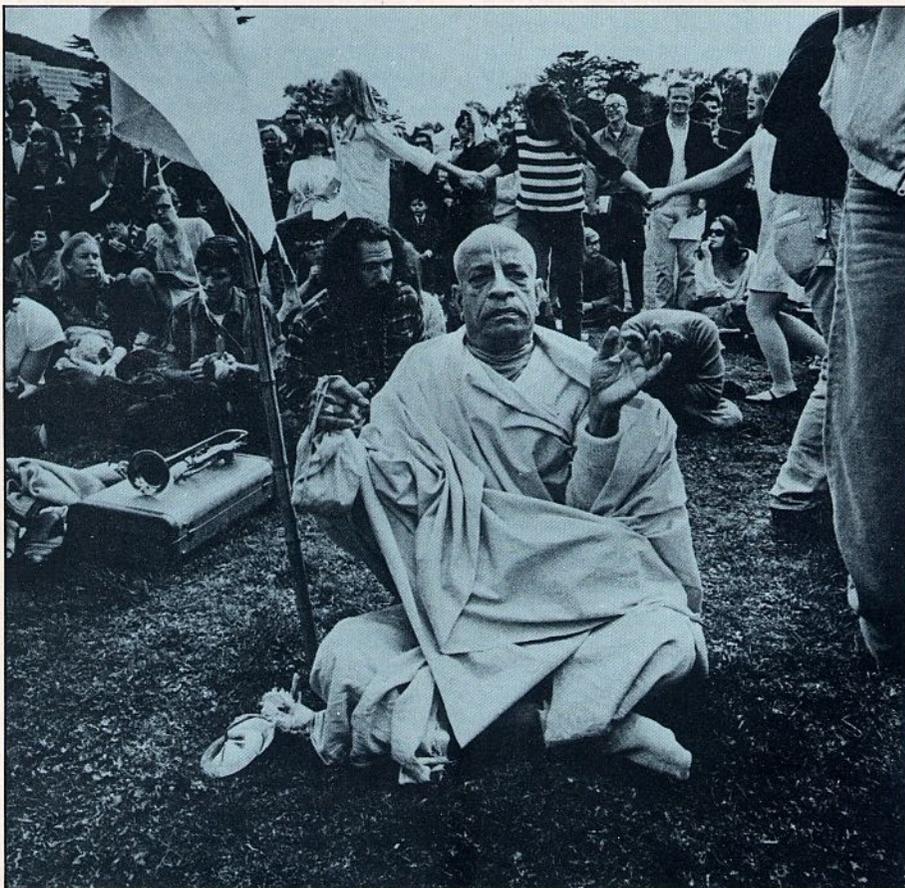
something? What are you going to do now? Who are you?" Her action was so sudden and her speech so violent that no one in the temple responded. Unangered, Prabhupāda sat very quietly. He appeared hurt. Only the devotees sitting closest to him heard him say softly, as if to himself, "It is the darkest of darkness."

Another night while Prabhupāda was lecturing, a boy came up and sat on the dais beside him. The boy faced out toward the audience and interrupted Prabhupāda: "I got something to say. I want to say what I have to say now." The devotees in the audience looked up, astonished, while the boy began talking incoherently.

Then Prabhupāda picked up his *karatālas*: "All right, let us have *kīrtana*." The boy sat in the same place throughout the *kīrtana*, looking crazily, sometimes menacingly, at Prabhupāda. After half an hour the *kīrtana* stopped.

Prabhupāda cut an apple into small pieces, as was his custom. He then placed the paring knife and a piece of apple in his right hand and held his hand out to the boy. The boy looked at Prabhupāda, then down at the apple and the knife. The room became silent. Prabhupāda sat motionless, smiling slightly at the boy. After a long, tense moment, the boy reached out. A sigh rose from the audience as the boy chose the piece of apple from Prabhupāda's open hand.

Haridāsa: *I used to watch how Swamiji*



would handle things. It wasn't easy. To me, that was a real test of his powers and understanding—how to handle these people, not to alienate or antagonize or stir them up to create more trouble. He would turn their energy so that before they knew it they were calm, like when you pat a baby and it stops crying. Swamiji had a way of doing that with words, with the intonation of his voice, with his patience to let them carry on for a certain period of time, let them work it out, act it out even. I guess he realized that the devotees just couldn't say, "Listen, when you come to the temple you can't behave this way." It was a delicate situation there.

Often someone would say, "I am God." They would get an insight or hallucination from their drugs. They would try to steal the spotlight. They wanted to be heard, and you could feel an anger against the Swami from people like that. Sometimes they would speak inspired and poetic for a while, but they couldn't sustain it, and their speech would become gibberish. And the Swami was not one to simply pacify people. He wasn't going to coddle them. He would say, "What do you mean? If you are God, then you have to be all-knowing. You have to have the attributes of God. Are you omniscient and omnipotent?" He would then name all the characteristics that one would have to have to be an avatāra, to be God. He would rationally prove the person wrong. He had superior knowledge, and he would rationally explain to them, "If you are God, can you do this? Do you have this power?"

Sometimes people would take it as a challenge and would try to have a verbal battle with the Swami. The audience's attention would then swing to the disturbing individual, the person who was grabbing the spotlight. Sometimes it was very difficult. I used to sit there and wonder, "How is he going to handle this guy? This one is really a problem." But Swamiji was hard to defeat. Even if he couldn't convince the person, he convinced the other people in the crowd so that the energy of the room would change and would tend to quiet the person. Swamiji would win the audience by showing them that this person didn't know what he was talking about.

So Swamiji would remove the audience rather than the person. He would do it without crushing the person. He would do it by superior intelligence, but also with a lot of compassion. He had the sensitivity not to injure a person psychologically or emotionally, so that when the person sat down and shut up, he wouldn't be doing it in defeat or anger—he wouldn't be hurt. He would just be outwitted by the Swami. When I saw the Swami do these things, then I realized he was a great teacher and a great human being. 

(To be continued.)

Śrīla Prabhupāda: A Modern Saint

Among the hippies in San Francisco were many young people who were sincerely searching for spiritual enlightenment—and who found it when they met His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

As recently as 1965, Śrīla Prabhupāda, at age 69, had been living as a renounced ascetic in the holy town of Vṛndāvana, India, where he was regarded as a pure, saintly devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He had lived there in simple quarters in a famous medieval temple, working tirelessly to translate ancient Sanskrit scriptures into English.

In 1921, Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master had requested him to spread the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West. So in 1965, after a lifetime of preparation, Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to America to do it.

In the whole history of Indian spiritual life, no one had ever attempted something as bold and seemingly impossible—to transform Westerners into full-fledged devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa. But by his intense spiritual energy and compassion Śrīla Prabhupāda was successful beyond his own expectations, thus earning recognition as a great spiritual figure of the modern age.

In the *Encyclopedia Britannica Book of the Year* for 1975 we read: "His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda astonished academic and literary communities worldwide by writing and publishing fifty-two books on the ancient Vedic culture. . . . The International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which he had established in 1966, had expanded by the end of 1975 to seventy-eight temples on five continents."

But in 1966, when Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to San Francisco, he had brought only himself. It was by his own qualities of spiritual warmth, humor, mercy, knowledge, friendliness, and love that Śrīla Prabhupāda had charmed and won over the hippies of the Haight.

One of Śrīla Prabhupāda's early disciples, Mukunda dāsa, tells how it was in San Francisco. "We would just say to people, 'You have to come and meet the Swami.' They would come, and their lives would be transformed in some way, great or small."

ISKCON's Anti-Drug Programs Win Worldwide Praise

From its very beginnings, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness has been active in helping young people become free from drug abuse. Through a well-structured program including a vegetarian diet, *yoga* techniques, and meditation on the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, ISKCON has succeeded in giving thousands of young people the self-confidence and inner satisfaction that enable them to willingly reject all forms of intoxication. Here are a few of the many appreciations ISKCON has received for its work.

"Krishna consciousness is close to 100% successful in stopping drug use among those who voluntarily enter the program."

Addictions Magazine
Washington, D.C., Area Council
on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse, Inc.

"Mayor Lindsay is most appreciative of the work that your Society is doing, especially in the realm of combating drug addiction."

Woody Klein
Press Secretary
Office of the Mayor
City of New York

"The combination of our medical care and the spiritual care from the Hare Krishna philosophy has resulted in a very powerful tool indeed for the treatment of drug addiction, and for this we are very grateful."

Fraser McDonald
Medical Superintendent
Carrington Hospital
Auckland, New Zealand

"You have done good work in establishing a workable alternative to the problem of drug addiction and alienation."

Morris Jeff
New Orleans Welfare Director

RELIGION

(continued from page 4)

Kṛṣṇa concludes, *vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhah*: “When one understands that Vāsudeva, Kṛṣṇa, is everything, one is in knowledge.” Before that, there is no knowledge. It is simply misunderstanding. *Brahmeti paramātmēti bhagavān iti śabdyate*. One may begin by searching out impersonal Brahman by the speculative method, and then one may progress to realization of Paramātmā, the localized aspect of the Supreme. That is the secondary stage of realization. But the final stage is understanding the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. So if you do not understand Kṛṣṇa, where is your knowledge? Halfway knowledge is no knowledge. We want complete knowledge, and that complete knowledge is possible by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, through *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Devotee: Can I ask the next question, Śrīla Prabhupāda? “Is a *guru* essential for one to enter the spiritual path and attain the goal? And how does one recognize one’s *guru*?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, a *guru* is necessary. That is explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. When Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were talking as friends, there was no conclusion. Therefore Arjuna decided to accept Kṛṣṇa as his *guru*. [To a devotee] Find out this verse: *kārpanya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ . . .*

Devotee: [Reads.]

*kārpanya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ
pṛcchāmi tvām dharma-sammūḍha-cetāḥ
yac chreyāḥ syān niścitam brūhi tan me
śiṣyas te ’ham śādhi mām tvām prapannam*

“Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me clearly what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me.” [Bg. 2.7]

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Not only Arjuna but everyone is perplexed about his duty. Nobody can decide for himself. When a physician is seriously sick, he does not prescribe his own treatment. He knows his brain is not in order, so he calls for another physician. Similarly, when we are perplexed, bewildered, when we cannot reach any solution—at that time the right person to search out is the *guru*. It is essential; you cannot avoid it.

So, in our present state of existence we are all perplexed. And under the circumstances, a *guru* is required to give us real direction. Arjuna represents the perplexed materialistic person who surrenders to a *guru*. And to set the example Arjuna decided on Kṛṣṇa as his *guru*. He did not go to anyone else. So the real *guru* is Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is *guru* not only for Arjuna but for everyone. If we take instruction from Kṛṣṇa and abide by that instruction, our life is successful. The mission of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to get

everyone to accept Kṛṣṇa as *guru*. That is our mission. We don’t say, “I am Kṛṣṇa.” We never say that. We simply ask people, “Please abide by the orders of Kṛṣṇa.”

Devotee: Some of these so-called *gurus* will say some things that Kṛṣṇa says, but they’ll give other instructions also. What is the position of such persons?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: They are most dangerous. Most dangerous. They are opportunists. According to the customer, they give some teachings so he will be pleased. Such a person is not a *guru*; he’s a servant. He wants to serve his so-called disciples so that they may be satisfied and pay him something. A real *guru* is not a servant of his disciples; he is their master. If one becomes a servant, if he wants to please the disciples by flattering them to get their money, then he is not a *guru*. A *guru* should also be a servant, yes—but a servant of the Supreme. The literal meaning of the word *guru* is “heavy”—heavy with knowledge and authority, because his knowledge and authority come from Kṛṣṇa. You cannot utilize the *guru* for satisfying your whims.

Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*: “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me.” And we say the same thing: “Surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Give up all other ideas of so-called *dharma*, or religiosity.” We don’t say, “I am the authority.” No, we say, “Kṛṣṇa is the authority, and you should try to understand Kṛṣṇa.” This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. ❀

We welcome your letters. Write to
BACK TO GODHEAD
51 West Allens Lane
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19119

LETTERS

Once again, your latest edition of BACK TO GODHEAD was a smasher. I read it through with tear-filled eyes. Especially, the article “Impressions of India” was a most moving and accurate account of “Indian” attitudes toward life.

Although an Indian myself, I’ve never been to India and yet I hope to go (I’m just 18). The spirit within me pulls me strongly toward India, not because it is “my” country but because Kṛṣṇa, the essence of life itself, is perfectly understood in that country, where so much time and energy are spent for Him even now. Please don’t misunderstand me when I say “perfectly understood.” Of course not everyone in India understands Kṛṣṇa, but practically everyone at least makes an effort to understand Him.

I have a question. Since we are all part and parcel of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, why were we separated from Him in the first place? In the

beginning, why did God create the universe—and then separate the souls and let them loose in the material world?

Once again, thanks for your wonderful magazine. It helps me dream of a time when all the world will be at peace, there will be no cow-slaughtering, no nuclear horrors or political haggling or wars—just a little piece of land for everyone, a few cows, and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra to chant!

Arti P.
London, England

Kṛṣṇa has complete independence, and because we are small parts of Kṛṣṇa, we have partial independence. That independence consists of the freedom to choose whether or not we want to serve Kṛṣṇa. Most living entities eternally serve Kṛṣṇa, and they are ever-liberated souls who reside in the spiritual world. But a small number of us misuse our independence by choosing to neglect

Kṛṣṇa rather than serve Him. Instead of desiring to give enjoyment to Kṛṣṇa, we desire to be the center of enjoyment ourselves. In this way we separate ourselves from Kṛṣṇa, by our own desires. Because all living beings are constitutionally Kṛṣṇa’s servants, our desire to enjoy separately from Kṛṣṇa is unnatural. Nonetheless, when we want to enjoy in this way, Kṛṣṇa Himself reluctantly fulfills our desires by placing us in the illusion that we are fully independent and can do whatever we like. The Lord creates the material universe to provide a place where those of us who want to forget Him can seemingly do as we please, without Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But for our benefit the Lord gives us His instructions in the Vedic literature and sends us His representatives, the pure devotees, to try to persuade us to give up our separatist mentality and return to our natural position as His servants. Separation from Kṛṣṇa is only an illusion, but we are now in that illusion, because we desire it. As soon as we desire to be Kṛṣṇa conscious, Kṛṣṇa withdraws that illusion and helps us make progress back to our real life of devotional service in eternity, knowledge, and bliss. ❀

ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the "cream of the Vedic literatures" of ancient India. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa*, or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. The original Sanskrit text is presented here with transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Second Canto: "The Cosmic Manifestation"

CHAPTER SEVEN

Scheduled Incarnations with Specific Functions

As our serialized presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam continues, Lord Brahmā tells his son and disciple Nārada that the science of Godhead cannot be understood by a person who thinks the material body is the self.

TEXT 42

येषां स एष भगवान् दययेदनन्तः
सर्वात्मनाश्रितपदो यदि निर्व्यलीकम् ।
ते दुस्तरामतितरन्ति च देवमायां
नैषां ममाहमिति धीः श्वशृगालभक्ष्ये ॥४२॥

*yeṣāṃ sa eṣa bhagavān dayayed anantaḥ
sarvātmanāśrīta-pado yadi nirvyalikam
te dustarām atitaranti ca deva-māyām
naiṣāṃ mamāham iti dhīḥ śva-śrgāla-bhakṣye*

yeṣāṃ—unto those only; *saḥ*—the Lord; *eṣaḥ*—the; *bhagavān*—the Personality of Godhead; *dayayet*—does bestow His mercy; *anantaḥ*—the unlimited potential; *sarva-ātmanā*—by all means, without reservation; *āśrīta-padaḥ*—surrendered soul; *yadi*—if such surrender; *nirvyalikam*—without pretention; *te*—those only; *dustarām*—insurmountable; *atitaranti*—can overcome; *ca*—and the paraphernalia; *deva-māyām*—diverse energies of the Lord; *na*—not; *eṣāṃ*—of them; *mama*—mine; *aham*—myself; *iti*—thus; *dhīḥ*—conscious; *śva*—dogs; *śrgāla*—jackals; *bhakṣye*—in the matter of eating.

TRANSLATION

But anyone who is specifically favored by the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, due to unalloyed surrender unto the service of the Lord, can overcome the insurmountable ocean of illusion and can understand the Lord. But those who are attached to this body, which is meant to be eaten at the end by dogs and jackals, cannot do so.

PURPORT

The unalloyed devotees of the Lord know the glories of the Lord in the sense that they can understand how great the Lord is and how great is His expansion of diverse energy. Those who are attached to the perishable body can hardly enter into the realm of the science of Godhead. The whole materialistic world, based on the conception of the material body as the self, is ignorant of the science of God. The materialist is always busy working for the welfare of the material body, not only his own but also those of his children, kinsmen, communitymen, countrymen, etc. The materialists have many branches of philanthropic and altruistic activities from a political, national and international angle of vision, but

none of the field work can go beyond the jurisdiction of the misconception of identifying the material body with the spirit soul. Unless, therefore, one is saved from the wrong conception of the body and the soul, there is no knowledge of Godhead, and unless there is knowledge of God, all advancement of material civilization, however dazzling, should be considered a failure.

TEXTS 43-45

वेदाहमङ्ग परमस्य हि योगमायां
यूयं भवश्च भगवानथ दैत्यवर्यः ।
पत्नी मनोः स च मनुश्च तदात्मजाश्च
प्राचीनवर्हिर्ऋषभुरङ्ग उत ध्रुवश्च ॥४३॥
इक्ष्वाकुरैलमुचुकुन्दविदेहगाधि-
रध्वम्बरीषसगरा गयनाहुपाद्याः ।
मान्धात्रलर्कशतधन्वतुरन्तिदेवा
देवव्रतो बलिरमूर्तरयो दिलीपः ॥४४॥
सौभर्युतङ्कशिविदेवलपिप्पलाद-
सारस्वतोद्भवपराशरभूरिषेणाः ।
येऽन्ये विभीषणहनुमदुपेन्द्रदत्त-
पार्याधिषेणविदुरश्रुतदेववर्याः ॥४५॥

*vedāham aṅga paramasya hi yoga-māyām
yūyam bhavaś ca bhagavān atha dāitya-varyaḥ
patnī manoḥ sa ca manuś ca tad-ātmajāś ca
prācinabarhir ṛbhur aṅga uta dhruvaś ca*

*ikṣvākur aila-mucukunda-videha-gādhi-
raghv-ambarīṣa-sagarā gaya-nāhuṣādyāḥ
māndhātṛ-alarka-śatadhanv-anu-rantidevā
devavrato balir amūrtarayo dilipāḥ*

*saubhary-utaṅka-śibi-devala-pippalāda-
sārasvatoddhava-parāśara-bhūriṣeṇāḥ
ye 'nye vibhīṣaṇa-hanūmad-upendradatta-
pārthārṣiṣeṇa-vidura-śrutadeva-varyāḥ*

veda—know it; *aham*—myself; *aṅga*—O Nārada; *paramasya*—of the Supreme; *hi*—certainly; *yoga-māyām*—potency; *yūyam*—yourself; *bhavaḥ*—Śiva; *ca*—and; *bhagavān*—the great demigod; *atha*—as also; *dāitya-varyaḥ*—Prahāda Mahārāja, the great devotee of the Lord born in the family of an atheist; *patnī*—Śatarūpā; *manoḥ*—of Manu; *saḥ*—he; *ca*—also; *manuḥ*—Svāyambhuva; *ca*—and; *tad-ātma-jāḥ ca*—and his children like Priyavrata, Uttānapāda, Devahūti, etc.; *prācinabarhiḥ*—Prācinabarhi; *ṛbhuh*—Ṛbhu; *aṅgaḥ*—Aṅga; *uta*—even; *dhruvaḥ*—Dhruva; *ca*—and; *ikṣvākuḥ*—Ikṣvāku; *aila*—Aila; *mucukunda*—Mucukunda; *videha*—Mahārāja Janaka; *gādhi*—Gādhi; *raghu*—Raghu; *ambarīṣa*—Ambarīṣa; *sagarāḥ*—Sagara; *gaya*—Gaya; *nāhuṣa*—Nāhuṣa; *ādyāḥ*—and so on; *māndhātṛ*—Māndhātā; *alarka*—

Alarka; *śatadhanu*—Śatadhanu; *anu*—Anu; *rantidevāḥ*—Rantideva; *devavrataḥ*—Bhīṣma; *baliḥ*—Bali; *amūrttarayaḥ*—Amūrttaraya; *dilīpaḥ*—Dilīpa; *saubhari*—Saubhari; *utaṅka*—Utaṅka; *śibi*—Śibi; *devala*—Devala; *pippalāda*—Pippalāda; *sārasvata*—Sārasvata; *uddhava*—Uddhava; *parāsara*—Parāsara; *bhūriṣeṇāḥ*—Bhūriṣeṇa; *ye*—those who; *anye*—others; *vibhīṣaṇa*—Vibhīṣaṇa; *hanūmat*—Hanumān; *upendra-datta*—Śukadeva Gosvāmī; *pārtha*—Arjuna; *ārṣiṣeṇa*—Arṣiṣeṇa; *vidura*—Vidura; *śrutadeva*—Śrutadeva; *varyāḥ*—the foremost.

TRANSLATION

O Nārada, although the potencies of the Lord are unknowable and immeasurable, still, because we are all surrendered souls, we know how He acts through yogamāyā potencies. And, similarly, the potencies of the Lord are also known to the all-powerful Śiva, the great king of the atheist family, namely Prahlāda Mahārāja, Svāyambhuva Manu, his wife Śatarūpā, his sons and daughters like Priyavrata, Uttānapāda, Ākūti, Devahūti and Prasūti, Prācinabarhi, Rbhu, Aṅga the father of Vena, Mahārāja Dhruva, Ikṣvāku, Aila, Mucukunda, Mahārāja Janaka, Gādhi, Raghu, Ambarīṣa, Sagara, Gaya, Nāhuṣa, Māndhātā, Alarka, Śatadhanve, Anu, Rantideva, Bhīṣma, Bali, Amūrttaraya, Dilīpa, Saubhari, Utaṅka, Śibi, Devala, Pippalāda, Sārasvata, Uddhava, Parāsara, Bhūriṣeṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa, Hanumān, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Arjuna, Arṣiṣeṇa, Vidura, Śrutadeva, etc.

PURPORT

All the great devotees of the Lord, as mentioned above, who flourished in the past or present, and all the devotees of the Lord who will come in the future, are aware of the different potencies of the Lord along with the potency of His name, quality, pastimes, entourage, personality, etc. And how do they know? Certainly it is not by mental speculation, nor by any attempt by dint of limited instruments of knowledge. By the limited instruments of knowledge (either the senses or the material instruments like microscopes and telescopes) one cannot even fully know the Lord's material potencies, which are manifested before our eyes. For example there are many millions and billions of planets far, far beyond the scientist's calculation. But these are only the manifestations of the Lord's material energy. What can the scientist hope to know of the spiritual potency of the Lord by such material efforts? Mental speculations, by adding some dozens of "if's" and "maybe's," cannot aid the advancement of knowledge—on the contrary, such mental speculations will only end in despair by dismissing the case abruptly and declaring the nonexistence of God. The sane person, therefore, ceases to speculate on subjects beyond the jurisdiction of his tiny brain, and as a matter of course he tries to learn to surrender unto the Supreme Lord, who alone can lead one to the platform of real knowledge. In the *Upaniṣads* it is clearly said that the Supreme Personality of Godhead can never be known simply by working very hard and taxing the good brain, nor can He be known simply by mental speculation and jugglery of words. The Lord is knowable only by one who is a surrendered soul. Herein Brahmāji, the greatest of all material living beings, acknowledges this truth. Therefore, the fruitless spoiling of energy by pursuing the path of experimental knowledge must be given up. One should gain knowledge by surrendering unto the Lord and by acknowledging the authority of the persons mentioned herein. The Lord is unlimited and, by the grace of the *yogamāyā*, helps the surrendered soul to know Him proportionately with the advance of one's surrender.

TEXT 46

ते वै विदन्त्यतितरन्ति च देवमायां
स्त्रीशूद्रहूणशवरा अपि पापजीवाः ।
यद्यद्भुतक्रमपरायणशीलशिक्षा-
स्तिर्यग्जना अपि किमु श्रुतधारणा ये ॥४६॥

*te vai vidanty atitaranti ca deva-māyām
strī-śūdra-hūṇa-śabarā api pāpa-jivāḥ*

*yady adbhuta-krama-parāyāṇa-śīla-śikṣās
tiryak-janā api kim u śruta-dhāraṇā ye*

te—such persons; *vai*—undoubtedly; *vidanti*—do know; *atitaranti*—surpass; *ca*—also; *deva-māyām*—the covering energy of the Lord; *strī*—such as women; *śūdra*—the laborer class of men; *hūṇa*—the mountaineers; *śabarāḥ*—the Siberians, or those lower than the *śūdras*; *api*—although; *pāpa-jivāḥ*—sinful living beings; *yadi*—provided; *adbhuta-krama*—one whose acts are so wonderful; *parāyāṇa*—those who are devotees; *śīla*—behavior; *śikṣāḥ*—trained by; *tiryak-janāḥ*—even those who are not human beings; *api*—also; *kim*—what; *u*—to speak of; *śruta-dhāraṇāḥ*—those who have taken to the idea of the Lord by hearing about Him; *ye*—those.

TRANSLATION

Surrendered souls, even from groups leading sinful lives, such as women, the laborer class, the mountaineers and the Siberians, or even the birds and beasts, can also know about the science of Godhead and become liberated from the clutches of the illusory energy by surrendering unto the pure devotees of the Lord and by following in their footsteps in devotional service.

PURPORT

Sometimes there are inquiries as to how one can surrender unto the Supreme Lord. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66) the Lord asked Arjuna to surrender unto Him, and therefore persons unwilling to do so question where God is and to whom they should surrender. The answer to such questions or inquiries is given herein very properly. The Personality of Godhead may not be present before one's eyes, but if one is sincere in wanting such guidance the Lord will send a bona fide person who can guide one properly back home, back to Godhead. There is no need of material qualifications for making progress on the path of spiritual realization. In the material world, when one accepts some particular type of service, he is required to possess some particular type of qualification also. Without this one is unfit for such service. But in the devotional service of the Lord the only qualification required is surrender. Surrendering oneself is in one's own hand. If one likes, he can surrender immediately, without delay, and that begins his spiritual life. The bona fide representative of God is as good as God Himself. Or, in other words, the loving representative of the Lord is more kind and more easy to approach. A sinful soul cannot approach the Lord directly, but such a sinful man can very easily approach a pure devotee of the Lord. And if one agrees to put himself under the guidance of such a devotee of the Lord, he can also understand the science of God and can also become like the transcendental pure devotee of the Lord and thus get his liberation back to Godhead, back home for eternal happiness.

So realization of the science of Godhead and relief from the unnecessary, useless struggle for existence are not at all difficult for the willing candidate. But they are very difficult for persons who are not surrendered souls but only simple, profitless speculators.

TEXT 47

शश्वत् प्रशान्तमभयं प्रतिबोधमात्रं
शुद्धं समं सदसतः परमात्मतत्त्वम् ।
शब्दो न यत्र पुरुकारकवान् क्रियार्थो
माया परैत्यभिमुखे च विलज्जमाना
तद् वै पदं भगवतः परमस्य पुंसो
ब्रह्मेति यद् विदुरजससुखं विशोकम् ॥४७॥

*śaśvat praśāntam abhayaṁ pratibodha-mātrāṁ
śuddhaṁ samam sad-asataḥ paramātma-tattvam
śabdo na yatra puru-kāra-kavān kriyārtho
māyā paraity abhimukhe ca vilajjamānā*

*tad vai padam bhagavataḥ paramasya puṁso
brahmeti yad vidur ajasra-sukhaṁ viśokam*

śaśvat—eternal; *praśāntam*—without disturbance; *abhayam*—without fear; *pratibodha-mātram*—a consciousness opposed to the material counterpart; *suddham*—uncontaminated; *samam*—without distinction; *sat-asataḥ*—of the cause and effect; *paramātma-tattvam*—the principle of primeval cause; *śabdaḥ*—speculative sound; *na*—not; *yatra*—where there is; *puru-kāravān*—resulting in fruitive action; *kriyā-arthah*—for the matter of sacrifice; *māyā*—illusion; *paraiti*—flies away; *abhimukhe*—in front of; *ca*—also; *vilajjamānā*—being ashamed of; *tat*—that; *vai*—is certainly; *padam*—ultimate phase; *bhagavataḥ*—of the Personality of Godhead; *paramasya*—of the Supreme; *puṁsaḥ*—of the person; *brahma*—the Absolute; *iti*—thus; *yat*—which; *viduḥ*—known as; *ajasra*—unlimited; *sukham*—happiness; *viśokam*—without grief.

TRANSLATION

What is realized as the Absolute Brahman is full of unlimited bliss without grief. That is certainly the ultimate phase of the supreme enjoyer, the Personality of Godhead. He is eternally void of all disturbances and fearless. He is complete consciousness as opposed to matter. Uncontaminated and without distinctions, He is the principle primeval cause of all causes and effects, in whom there is no sacrifice for fruitive activities and in whom the illusory energy does not stand.

PURPORT

The supreme enjoyer, the Personality of Godhead, is the Supreme Brahman or the *summum bonum* because of His being the supreme cause of all causes. The conception of impersonal Brahman realization is the first step, due to His distinction from the illusory conception of material existence. In other words, impersonal Brahman is a feature of the Absolute distinct from the material variegatedness, just as light is a conception distinct from its counterpart, darkness. But the light has its variegatedness, which is seen by those who further advance in the light, and thus the ultimate realization of Brahman is the source of the Brahman light, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the *summum bonum* or the ultimate source of everything. Therefore, meeting the Personality of Godhead includes the realization of the impersonal Brahman as realized at first in contrast with material inebriety. The Personality of Godhead is the third step of Brahman realization. As explained in the First Canto, one must understand all three features of the Absolute—Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān.

Pratibodha-mātram is just the opposite conception of material existence. In matter there are material miseries, and thus in the first realization of Brahman there is the negation of such material inebrieties, and there is a feeling of eternal existence distinct from the pangs of birth and death, disease and old age. That is the primary conception of impersonal Brahman.

The Supreme Lord is the Supreme Soul of everything, and therefore in the supreme conception affection is realized. The conception of affection is due to the relationship of soul to soul. A father is affectionate to his son because there is some relationship of nearness between the son and the father. But that sort of affection in the material world is full of inebriety. When the Personality of Godhead is met, the fullness of affection becomes manifested because of the reality of the affectionate relationship. He is not the object of affection by material tinges of body and mind, but He is the full, naked, uncontaminated object of affection for all living entities because He is the Supersoul, or Paramātmā, within everyone's heart. In the liberated state of affairs, the full-fledged affection for the Lord is awakened.

As such, there is an unlimited flow of everlasting happiness, without the fear of its being broken as we have experienced here in the material world. The relationship with the Lord is never broken; thus there is no grief and no fear. Such happiness is inexplicable by words, and there can be no attempt to generate such happiness by fruitive activities by arrangements and sacrifices. But we must also know that happiness,

unbroken happiness exchanged with the Supreme Person, the Personality of Godhead as described in this verse, transcends the impersonal conception of the *Upaniṣads*. In the *Upaniṣads* the description is more or less negation of the material conception of things, but this is not denial of the transcendental senses of the Supreme Lord. Herein also the same is affirmed in the statements about the material elements; they are all transcendental, free from all contamination of material identification. And also the liberated souls are not devoid of senses; otherwise there cannot be any reciprocation of unhampered spiritual happiness exchanged between them in spontaneous unbroken joy. All the senses, both of the Lord and of the devotees, are without material contamination. They are so because they are beyond the material cause and effects, as clearly mentioned herein (*sat-asataḥ param*). The illusory, material energy cannot work there, being ashamed before the Lord and His transcendental devotees. In the material world the sense activities are not without grief, but here it is clearly said that the senses of the Lord and the devotees are without any grief. There is a distinct difference between the material and spiritual senses. And one should understand it without denying the spiritual senses because of a material conception.

The senses in the material world are surcharged with material ignorance. In every way, the authorities have recommended purification of the senses from the material conception. In the material world the senses are manipulated for individual and personal satisfaction, whereas in the spiritual world the senses are properly used for the purpose for which they were originally meant, namely the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord. Such sensual activities are natural, and therefore sense gratification there is uninterrupted and unbroken by material contamination because the senses are spiritually purified. And such satisfaction of the senses is equally shared by the transcendental reciprocators. Since the activities are unlimited and constantly increasing, there is no scope for material attempts or artificial arrangements. Such happiness of transcendental quality is called *brahma-saukhyam*, which will be clearly described in the Fifth Canto.

TEXT 48

सद्भ्यङ् नियम्य यतयो यमकर्तृहेति
जह्युः स्वराडिव निपानखनित्रमिन्द्रः ॥४८॥

*sadhryaṁ niyamy yatayo yama-karta-hetiḥ
jahyuḥ svarād iva nipāna-khanitram indraḥ*

sadhryak—artificial mental speculation or meditation; *niyama*—controlling; *yatayah*—the mystics; *yama-karta-hetim*—the process of spiritual culture; *jahyuḥ*—are given up; *svarāt*—fully independent; *iva*—as; *nipāna*—well; *khanitram*—trouble for digging; *indraḥ*—the controlling demigod supplying rains.

TRANSLATION

In such a transcendental state there is no need of artificial control of the mind, mental speculation or meditation, as performed by the *jñānis* and *yogīs*. One gives up such processes, as the heavenly King, Indra, forgoes the trouble to dig a well.

PURPORT

A poor man in want of water digs a well and undertakes the trouble of digging. Similarly, those who are poor in transcendental realization speculate on the mind or meditate by controlling the senses. But they do not know that such control of the senses and achievement of spiritual perfection are simultaneously made possible as soon as one is factually engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Supreme Person, the Personality of Godhead. It is for this reason that the great liberated souls also desire to be associated in hearing and chanting the activities of the Lord. The example of Indra is very appropriate in this connection. King Indra of heaven is the controlling deity or demigod for arranging clouds and supplying rains in the universe, and as such he does not have to take the trouble to dig a well for his personal water supply. For him, digging a

well for a water supply is simply ludicrous. Similarly, those who are factually engaged in the loving service of the Lord have attained the ultimate goal of life, and for them there is no need of mental speculation to find out the true nature of God or His activities. Nor do such devotees have to meditate upon the imaginary or real identity of the Lord. Because they are factually engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord, the Lord's pure devotees have already achieved the results of mental speculation and meditation. The real perfection of life is therefore to be engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord.

TEXT 49

स श्रेयसामपि विभुर्भगवान् यतोऽस्य
भावस्वभावविहितस्य सतः प्रसिद्धिः ।
देहे स्वधातुविगमेऽनुविशीर्यमाणे
व्योमेव तत्र पुरुषो न विशीर्यतेऽजः ॥४९॥

sa śreyasām api vibhur bhagavān yato 'sya
bhāva-svabhāva-vihitasya sataḥ prasiddhiḥ
dehe sva-dhātu-vigame 'nuviśīryamāṇe
vyomeva tatra puruṣo na viśīryate 'jah

sah—He; śreyasām—all auspiciousness; api—also; vibhuḥ—the master; bhagavān—the Personality of Godhead; yataḥ—because; asya—of the living entity; bhāva—natural modes; sva-bhāva—own constitution; vihitasya—performances; sataḥ—all good work; prasiddhiḥ—ultimate success; dehe—of the body; sva-dhātu—forming elements; vigame—being vanquished; anu—after; viśīryamāṇe—having given up; vyoma—sky; iva—like; tatra—thereupon; puruṣaḥ—the living entity; na—never; viśīryate—becomes vanquished; ajah—due to being unborn.

TRANSLATION

The Personality of Godhead is the supreme master of everything auspicious because the results of whatever actions are performed by the living being, in either the material or spiritual existence, are awarded by the Lord. As such, He is the ultimate benefactor. Every individual living entity is unborn, and therefore even after the annihilation of the material elementary body, the living entity exists, exactly like the air within the body.

PURPORT

The living entity is unborn and eternal, and as confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.30), the living entity is not exhausted even though the material elementary body is vanquished. As long as the living entity is in material existence, actions performed by him are rewarded in the next life, or even in the present life. Similarly, in his spiritual life also actions are rewarded by the Lord by the five kinds of liberation. Even the impersonalist cannot achieve the desired merging into the existence of the Supreme without being favored by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.11) that the Lord awards similar results, as one desires, in one's present life. The living entities are given freedom to make their choice, and the Lord awards them accordingly.

It is the duty of everyone, therefore, to worship devoutly only the Personality of Godhead to achieve his desired goal. The impersonalist, instead of speculating or meditating, can directly execute the routine devotional service of the Lord and thus easily obtain the desired goal.

The devotees, however, are naturally inclined to become associates of the Lord and not merge in the spiritual existence, as conceived by the impersonalist. The devotees, therefore, following their constitutional instincts, achieve the desired goal of becoming servitors, friends, fathers,

mothers or conjugal lovers of the Lord. The devotional service of the Lord involves nine transcendental processes, such as hearing and chanting, and by performing such easy and natural devotional services the devotees achieve the highest perfectional results, far, far superior to merging into the existence of Brahman. The devotees are therefore never advised to indulge in speculating upon the nature of the Supreme or artificially meditating on the the void.

One should not, however, mistakenly think that after the annihilation of this present body there is no body by which one can associate with the Lord face to face. The living entity is unborn. It is not that he is manifest with the creation of the material body. On the other hand, it is true that the material body develops only by the desire of the living entity. The evolution of the material body is due to the desires of the living being. According to the desires of the living being, the material body develops. So from the spirit soul the material body comes into existence, generated from the living force. Since the living being is eternal, he exists just like the air within the body. Air is within and without the body. Therefore when the external covering, the material body, is vanquished, the living spark, like the air within the body, continues to exist. And by the direction of the Lord, because He is the ultimate benefactor, the living entity is at once awarded the necessary spiritual body befitting his association with the Lord in the manner of *sārūpya* (equal bodily feature), *sālokya* (equal facility to live on the same planet with the Lord), *sārṣṭi* (equal possession of opulence like the Lord), and *sāmīpya* (equal association with the Lord).

The Lord is so kind that even if a devotee of the Lord cannot fulfill the complete course of devotional service unalloyed and uncontaminated by material association, he is given another chance in the next life by being awarded a birth in the family of a devotee or rich man so that without being engaged in the struggle for material existence the devotee can finish the remaining purification of his existence and thus immediately, after relinquishing the present body, go back home, back to Godhead. This is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

In this connection detailed information is available in the *Bhagavat-sandarbha* of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī Prabhupāda. Once achieving the spiritual existence, the devotee is eternally situated there, as already discussed in the previous verse.

TEXT 50

सोऽयं तेऽभिहितस्तात भगवान् विश्वभावनः ।
समासेन हरेर्नान्यदन्यस्तात् सदसच्च यत् ॥५०॥

so 'yaṁ te 'bhihitas tāta
bhagavān viśva-bhāvanah
samāsenā harer nānyad
anyasmāt sad-asac ca yat

sah—that; ayam—the same; te—unto you; abhihitah—explained by me; tāta—my dear son; bhagavān—the Personality of Godhead; viśva-bhāvanah—the creator of the manifested worlds; samāsenā—in brief; hareḥ—without Hari, the Lord; na—never; anyat—anything else; anyasmāt—being the cause of; sat—manifested or phenomenal; asat—noumenal; ca—and; yat—whatever there may be.

TRANSLATION

My dear son, I have now explained in brief the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is creator of the manifested worlds. Without Him, Hari, the Lord, there are no other causes of the phenomenal and noumenal existences.

(continued in next issue)

Every Town and Village

A look at the worldwide activities of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



His Holiness Gopāla-kṛṣṇa Goswami (center, wearing garland and glasses), who oversees the affairs of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in western India, lays the cornerstone of a cultural center the movement is constructing in Baroda, near Bombay.

100,000 in Gujarat Inaugurate Cultural Project

Baroda, India—The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement has begun constructing a new cultural center in the heart of Baroda, an elegant old city in Gujarat (a state on India's west coast that is home for more than five million devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa). The center, situated on five acres of land, will in-

clude a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple surrounded by a tropical garden, a theater, a restaurant, a guesthouse, an *āśrama*, and a *guru-kula* school for primary education. More than 100,000 guests attended the three-day festival to dedicate the project, which the movement plans to complete by 1985.

Vedic Culture Now Taught in German University Town

Heidelberg, West Germany—Nestled in the green valleys along the River Neckar, the town of Heidelberg, famous as a center of education since medieval times, has now added a new feature to its long cultural tradition: The Center for Vedic Studies.

Just a fifteen-minute walk from the university, the Center is the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's way of presenting the ancient philosophical, cultural, and religious experience of India to Heidelberg's residents and visitors who have an educated interest—or just simple curiosity.

The Center sponsors films, slide presentations, art exhibits, lectures on Vedic philosophy, and a daily program of lunch, devotional music, and brief talks about the

Vedic experience. The Center also includes a shopping annex, offering Indian clothes, handicrafts, and devotional items, and it houses the publishing offices for the German-language counterpart of BACK TO GODHEAD.

Hare Kṛṣṇa In the Holy Land

Haifa, Israel—The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement now has a rural *āśrama* near this Israeli port and industrial center. The ten-acre community, called Neve Hemed, "the Oasis of Sweetness," lies in Israel's most fertile valley, the Emeq Yisrael, and is surrounded by many kibbutzim (communal farms).

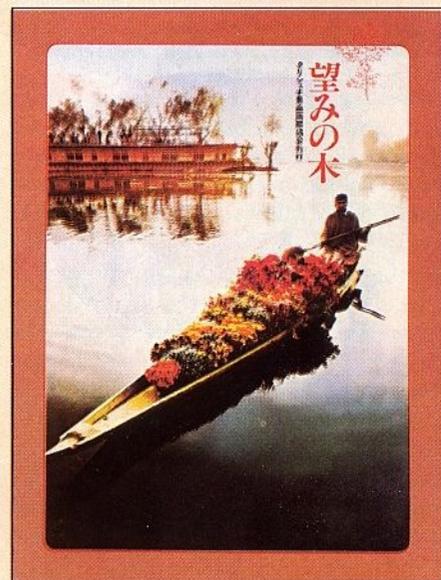
Hare Krishna— You Can Look It Up

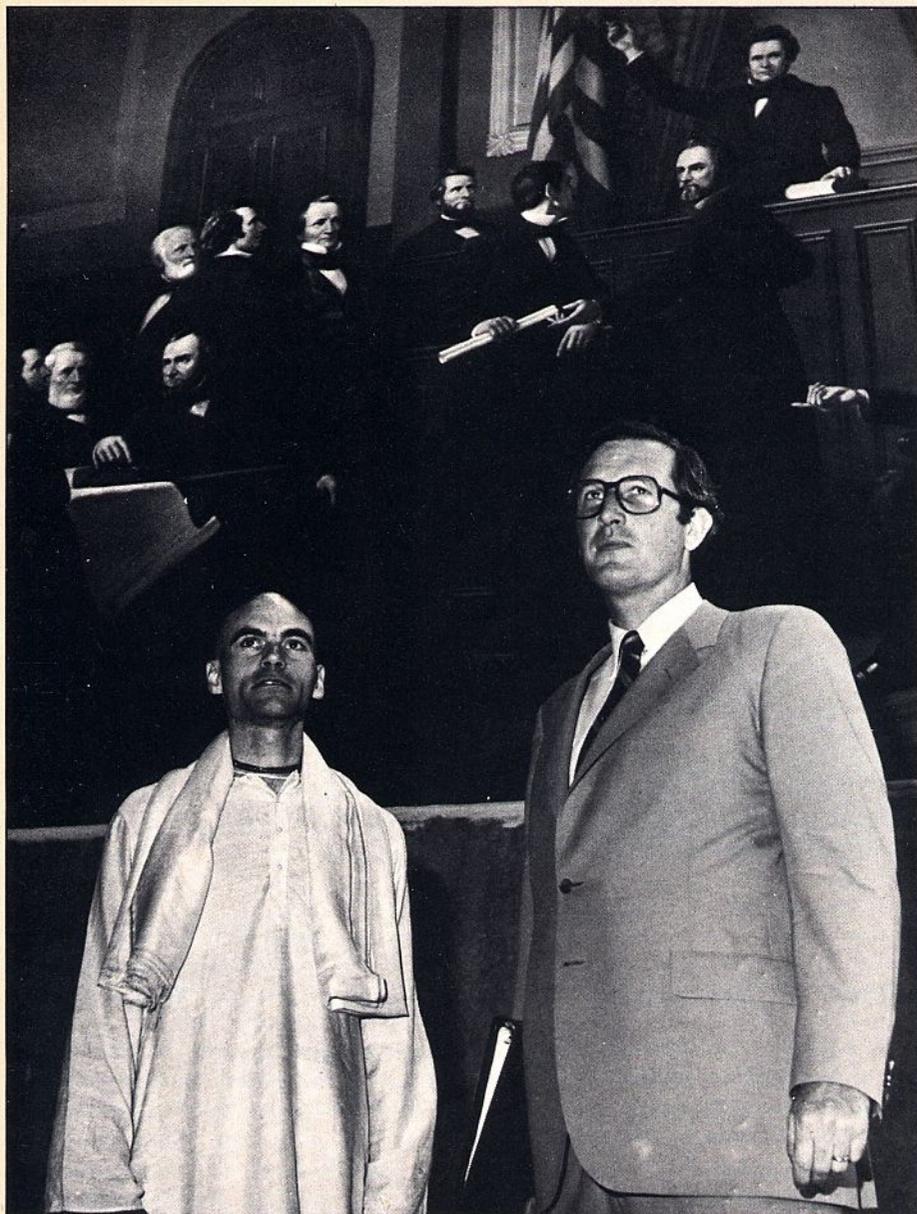
Hare Krishna is now a dictionary word. While browsing through the most recent edition of *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, we were pleased to find this entry: "*Hare Krishna*. A religious sect based on Vedic scriptures, whose followers engage in joyful congregational chanting of God's name: founded in the U.S. in 1966. [from part of the chant]"

Of course, *Hare Krishna* was part of the Sanskrit lexicon before English even existed. But in the short time since His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda brought Hare Krishna to the West, these ancient Sanskrit words have become an accepted part of the modern English language.

"Desire Tree" Offers Japanese the Fruit of Vedic Knowledge

Tokyo—The Japanese branch of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust has just published the first full-color Kṛṣṇa-conscious magazine in Japanese. Called *Nozomi no ki* (*Desire Tree*), the twenty-four-page magazine contains articles on Buddhism (and its roots in Vedic culture), reincarnation, and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.





Governor Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia stands with Muralidhara dāsa, a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee, before a historical mural Muralidhara painted for the Wheeling Civic Center. Muralidhara is artistic director for New Vrindaban, the nearby Hare Kṛṣṇa farm community.

Rockefeller Praises Work of Kṛṣṇa Devotee

Wheeling, West Virginia—Jay Rockefeller, Governor of West Virginia, recently came to the Wheeling Civic Center to dedicate two historical murals, one of them painted by Muralidhara dāsa, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Appreciating Muralidhara's work, which the Governor praised as "beautiful" and "extraordinary," the Wheeling newspaper said that the Ohio Valley (of which Wheeling is a part) is "fortunate to have an individual of his caliber." Muralidhara is the artistic director for Prabhupāda's Palace of Gold, the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's memorial to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda at the nearby New Vrindaban Community. Muralidhara donated for the

Palace the \$5,000 fee he received for the mural.

150,000 Celebrate "Festival of the Chariots"

Bombay—The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement recently sponsored Bombay's first Jagannātha Ratha-yātrā, "The Festival of the Chariots." Some 150,000 people took part in the eight-mile procession from Shivaji Park to Chowpatty Beach, where the movement held a week-long festival of Hare Kṛṣṇa chanting, devotional dramas, lectures on Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy, and feasting on food offered to Lord Jagannātha—Kṛṣṇa, Lord of the Universe.

Kṛṣṇa Philosophy "En Español"

Los Angeles—The Spanish Division of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust has now shipped more than fourteen million Spanish books of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy and culture to sixteen countries, including Spain, Mexico, and the United States. Last year alone, the division printed more than 2,700,000 books. Among the books in print are illustrated hardbound editions of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and the multi-volume *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, as well as numerous paperbacks.

Indian Associations Award Drama Prize To Hare Kṛṣṇa Troupe

New York City—A drama troupe from the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement recently won first prize at an Indian drama festival held at the Columbia University School of International Affairs. The troupe, the Brijbasi Players, came from the movement's New Vrindaban community in West Virginia. They performed a dramatization from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, an ancient Indian classic that is one of the movement's principal scriptures. The festival was sponsored by the Federation of Indian Associations.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Calendar

Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees follow a spiritual calendar that divides the year into twelve months, each named for a different form of Kṛṣṇa. The devotees at the ISKCON center nearest you will gladly tell you about the meaning of the festivals listed here.

Year 495 Caitanya Era—Month of Hṛṣīkeśa		
August 23	August 24	
Sri Kṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭami-vrata, appearance of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa (fasting till midnight)	Sri Nandotsava. Appearance of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (fasting till noon)	
August 25	September 3	September 4
Annadā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans)	Appearance of Srimati Sitādevī, consort of Sri Advaita Prabhu.	Appearance of Srimati Lalitā-devī.
September 6	September 10	September 11
Sri Rādhāstami-vrata, appearance of Srimati Rādhārānī (fasting till noon)	Pārsvā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans)	Sri Vāmana-dvīdāśī. Appearance of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī.
September 12	September 13	September 14
Appearance of Śrīla Bhaktivēda Thākura (fasting till noon)	Disappearance of Śrīla Handāsa Thākura	Begin third month of Cāturmāsya-vrata (fasting from milk). Sri Visvānātha-mahotsava.
Vaiṣṇava Month of Padmanābha		
September 17	September 24	October 8
Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival in United States, 1965.	Indirā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans)	Sri Rāma-vijayotsava. Lord Rāmacandra's victory celebration. Appearance of Śrīla Madhvācārya.
October 9	October 10	
Pāsāṅkusā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and	Disappearance of Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. Śrīla Raghunātha Bhatta Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī.	

TICKET

(continued from page 5)

Kṛṣṇa despite all material difficulties.

The Vedic literature declares that because God is absolute, there is no difference between the Lord and His name. In other words, one can associate with God by associating with His name. Thus the contamination of bodily misconceptions is cleansed away by the antiseptic power of associating with the Lord's holy name. This axiomatic principle is given in the Vedic literature, and those who are scientifically minded should make a spiritual experiment by chanting the Lord's holy names: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The Vedic literature recommends this chanting process as the most potent means of devotional service in this age.

Lord Kṛṣṇa further reveals, "To those who are constantly devoted to Me and who worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance." (Bg. 10.10-11)

Thus the disciple's genuinely humble service attitude brings him to the point of firm conviction and steadiness in devotional service. Next, his taste for chanting the Lord's holy name and glories increases. Then he comes to the stage of spontaneous service, and finally he reaches the culmination of spiritual life: devotional service in pure love of God.

If one stays aboard the airplane of devotional service, one is sure to reach his destination. "After attaining Me, the great souls, who are *yogis* in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection." (Bg. 8.15) This process of devotional service is scientific and authorized because we receive it directly from Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*. We should not manufacture any new method; the old method is perfect.

Everyone who has stepped into the boxing ring of human life has been pulverized by the blows of death. Death is guaranteed. If there is even the slightest hope of escaping death and rebirth in this material world, why not take it? If your house is on fire and you see a door leading to safety, do you stop and look around for other possible exits? No! You take the first sure door to safety. That is intelligence.

Why not set aside your doubts (at least temporarily) and make a scientific spiritual experiment? Chant the Lord's holy names. What Ponce de Leon searched for and never found—the fountain of eternal youth—can be tasted by anyone who purchases the ticket of the nectarean names of Kṛṣṇa.

THE YOGA DICTIONARY

The Sanskrit language is rich in words to communicate ideas about spiritual life, yoga, and God realization. This dictionary, appearing by installments in *BACK TO GODHEAD*, will focus upon the most important of these words (and, occasionally, upon relevant English terms) and explain what they mean. (For a guide to proper pronunciation, please see page 1.)



Ātmā. The word *ātmā* means "self." The *ātmā* is what we really are, as distinct from what we falsely think we are.

Generally we think of ourselves in terms of the various labels we've pinned on ourselves or had pinned on us—American, English, Christian, Hindu, white, black, liberal, conservative, father, mother, Jones, Smith, or whatever. But these are only temporary tags. Time unpins them and replaces them with new ones. After all, the label is different from the merchandise.

Therefore, although *ātmā* sometimes refers to one's temporary body, mind, or intelligence, the *ātmā* is ultimately the eternal consciousness (the spirit, or soul) that is present within the body of every living being.

This *ātmā*—higher than the senses, the mind, and even the intelligence—is most mysterious and subtle. The *Bhagavad-gītā* describes it in this way: "For the *ātmā* there is neither birth nor death at any time. He does not come to be, has not come to be, and will not come to be. He is unborn, eternal, undying, and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain. . . . The *ātmā* can never be cut to pieces by any weapon, nor burned by fire, moistened by water, nor withered by the wind. This individual *ātmā* is unbreakable and insoluble, and can be neither burned nor dried. He is everlasting, all-pervading, unchangeable, immovable, and eternally the same."

One who realizes this eternal *ātmā* within himself—that is, one who recognizes himself to be the eternal consciousness or soul within the body—becomes a perfectly self-realized person.

There are innumerable *ātmās*, all in essence the same yet each eternally distinct. And above all these *ātmās* is the Param-*ātmā*, or supreme *ātmā*—God. God, too, is distinct from all other living beings, and this distinction is eternal. God, the supreme infinite, is the complete spiritual whole, and all other living beings are infinitesimal parts of God. A living being can never "become God" any more than a drop of water can become the entire ocean.

Avatāra. An *avatāra* is an incarnation of God who descends to the material world. As the president of a country may enter a prison to oversee its management or bestow clemency on prisoners, the Supreme Lord, from time to time, enters the material world to oversee the workings of the material creation and bestow His mercy on fortunate souls.

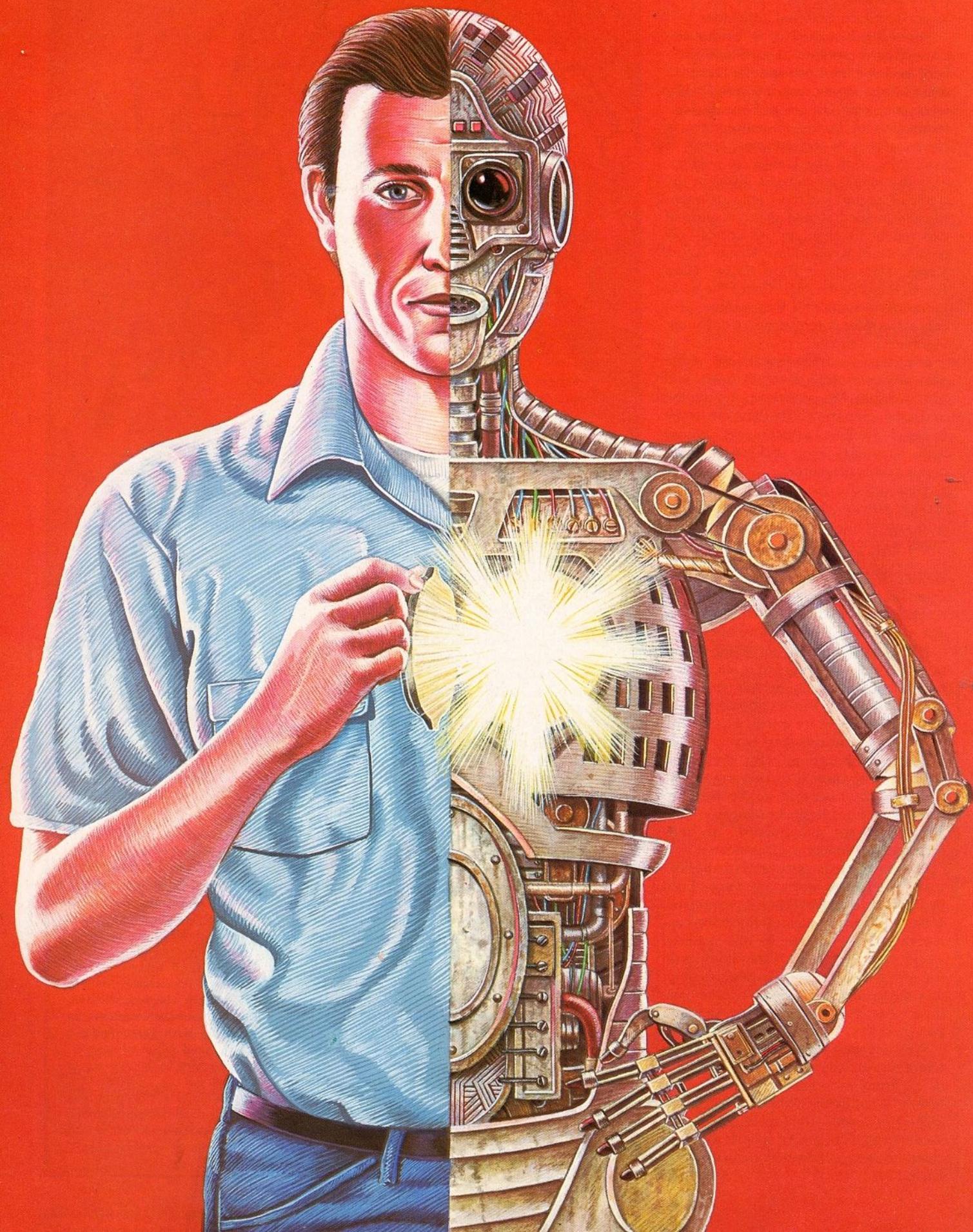
The purpose or mission of *avatāras* is explained in a famous passage from *Bhagavad-gītā* in which Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice and a predominant rise of irreligion—at that time I descend Myself. To deliver the pious and annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium."

Although the Supreme Lord eternally resides in His own abode, beyond the material world, He has the power to appear within the material world. He can do this by His spiritual potency. The Lord is beyond the restrictions of time and space. An ordinary living being can work in only one place at any one time, but the Lord, by His unlimited spiritual capabilities, can appear in many places simultaneously, in an unlimited number of forms, and perform unlimited activities.

An *avatāra* may resemble an ordinary human being, but He performs extraordinary acts. Lord Kṛṣṇa, for example, lifted a mountain when a mere child, killed demons like Pūtana and Kamsa, and gave the world the immortal teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā*. An ordinary person is born by the force of nature, according to the laws of *karma*, but God's birth as an *avatāra* takes place by His own choice, as a supernatural event, transcendental to nature's laws. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, one who understands the transcendental birth and activities of the Lord's *avatāra* becomes free from birth and death and returns to the kingdom of God in the spiritual world.

The genuine *avatāras* of the Lord are all described in revealed scriptures, which give details of the *avatāra*'s physical appearance and His specific activities and purpose. An *avatāra* never invents a new method of self-realization, but upholds the eternal methods set forth in authentic scriptures. One whose teachings contradict those of the scriptures cannot be a genuine *avatāra*.

One should be wary of fraudulent incarnations—cheap self-proclaimed Gods who preach their own concocted philosophies, imitate the Supreme Lord, and swindle the naive. Recent years have seen such frauds in abundance, and people who lack scientific knowledge of God consciousness offer them honor. Scientific knowledge about God and His *avatāras* is at hand in *Bhagavad-gītā*, and one who understands the science of *Bhagavad-gītā* will not be cheated. One should not be gullible. The president may enter a prison to favor the inmates, but it's useless to seek favors from a prisoner who claims to be president.



Science

A Dialogue on “THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE”

Is the existence of the soul
merely a myth propagated by fuzzy-minded fanatics—
or a fact verifiable by a nonmechanistic science?

by SADĀPŪTA DĀSA

The prevailing view among modern scientists is that a human being is in essence a complex machine. According to this view, our life and consciousness have their source in the interactions of our bodily parts—neurons in the brain, organelles in the cells, and so on. Mechanistic scientists scoff at the idea that a transcendental entity—the self, or soul—could be the source of life and consciousness. “The ghost in the machine” is a favorite epithet they use to turn thumbs down on the idea of the soul and attempt to dismiss it from serious consideration.

What follows is an excerpt from Mechanistic and Nonmechanistic Science, a forthcoming book that explores in depth the question of the origin and nature of life and consciousness. Dr. Avaroha expresses the views of the author; Drs. Kutark and Shunya are composite characters who express views widely held by members of the modern scientific community.

Dr. Avaroha: The *Bhagavad-gītā* states that each individual organism consists of an irreducible conscious entity riding in a physical body composed of gross material elements. The body is insentient—a complicated machine, according to *Bhagavad-gītā* [18.61]. In contrast, the conscious entity, or *jīvātmā*, is the actual sentient self of the living being, and it cannot be explained in mechanistic terms [Bg. Ch. 2]. Each *jīvātmā* possesses all the attributes of a person, including consciousness, intelligence, and innate sensory faculties. These

attributes cannot be reduced to the interplay of some underlying impersonal entities that we might hope to describe by a mechanistic theory. In a sense, we can compare the *jīvātmās* to the hypothetical fundamental particles sought by physicists. Just as these particles are envisioned as having certain irreducible material properties, the *jīvātmās* can be thought of as fundamental units of conscious personality endowed with certain irreducible personal traits.

Dr. Kutark: So you are proposing a theory that features a transcendental soul as a primitive element. A priori, I suppose there’s no reason why we can’t propose such a thing. But are there any experiments proving the existence of the soul?

Dr. Avaroha: To answer this question, let’s consider how physical experiments are conducted. In physics we can show that an entity exists only by performing an experiment that takes advantage of that entity’s mode of interaction with other matter. Take for example the cloud-chamber tracks made by charged particles such as electrons. These tracks result from the ionization of atoms near the path of the particle, and this ionization is caused by the electromagnetic interaction between the particle and the electrons in the atoms. Neutral particles do not interact in this way and thus leave no tracks. The neutrino, for example, is famous for interacting with matter in a very weak way—by what is known as the weak force, in fact—and thus it is very hard to detect experimentally.

Dr. Kutark: So to detect the soul in an experiment we would have to take advantage of the soul’s particular mode of interaction with matter. That’s reasonable. But what is that mode of interaction? At present, physicists know of four basic types of

forces: strong, weak, electromagnetic, and gravitational. You are suggesting, I gather, that the soul does not interact in any of these modes?

Dr. Avaroha: That’s correct, and so we can’t hope to detect the presence of the *jīvātmā* directly with any of our usual physical instruments. The *jīvātmā* does interact with matter, but in a very indirect and subtle way. As a result of the *jīvātmā*’s primary interaction, secondary electromagnetic interactions are induced in the body, and these affect the nervous system in particular [*Srīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.26.34]. These electromagnetic effects are detectable in principle, but they are very complex. Therefore, it would be very difficult to unambiguously single out the influence of the *jīvātmā* on the body by analyzing physical measurements.

Dr. Shunya: This makes it seem very implausible that you could ever verify the existence of this hypothetical *jīvātmā*. But I would like to make another, more fundamental point. Suppose you could demonstrate from experimental data that some new fundamental law of nature was needed to explain the functioning of the brain. A theory incorporating this law would still be mechanistic. All our scientific statements—and, in fact, all valid statements of any kind—refer to patterns in measured data, and they are therefore necessarily mechanistic, even though we may not always try to express them in formal mathematical language. Since you are describing consciousness and personality as nonmechanistic, you are in effect saying nothing at all. It is meaningless even to talk about verifying such statements experimentally.

Dr. Avaroha: You are partly right. It is indeed true that we cannot study consciousness per se by examining its influence on

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the motion of matter. Of course, we can make indirect inferences about consciousness by such methods. But to make a real study of consciousness, we have to take advantage of the higher cognitive potencies of the *jīvātmā* itself. To understand consciousness and deal with it in a practical way, we need to enter a domain of discourse and experience that goes beyond the mechanistic world view. If we were simply machines, then this would not be possible. But, according to *Bhagavad-gītā* our own existence transcends the mechanistic realm.

When the *jīvātmā* is embodied, its innate senses are linked up with the information-processing system of the physical body, and thus the normal sensory perceptions of the *jīvātmā* refer almost exclusively to the physical states of machines, including the machine of the brain [Bg. 15.7]. Only the embodied *jīvātmā*'s direct perception of its own internal sensory and cognitive activities involves something that cannot be described in terms of mechanical configurations. For this reason, there is a strong tendency for the *jīvātmā* to overlook its own nature and view the world in an entirely mechanistic way.

But the inherent senses of the *jīvātmā* are not limited to observing the states of the physical body. The *jīvātmā* is capable of direct reciprocation with other *jīvātmās* and the Paramātmā, or Superconsciousness. Since this mode of interaction directly involves the use of all personal attributes and qualities, it cannot be described in mechanistic terms. But it can be understood and meaningfully discussed by persons who have attained to this level of experience by direct realization.

Dr. Shunya: Such "realization" is purely subjective! Anyone can claim to have all kinds of remarkable realizations and mystical visions, and in fact there are many thousands of such people, and thousands of conflicting sects composed of their gullible followers! But science is limited to knowledge that can be verified objectively. For an observation to be considered objective it must be possible for several different people to make the observation independently and then correlate their results.

Dr. Avaroha: Two persons able to function on a higher level of consciousness would certainly be able to recognize each other as realized souls, and they could also meaningfully discuss their realizations with other similarly endowed persons. We can partially illustrate this situation by the analogy of two seeing persons discussing a sunset in the presence of a congenitally blind person. The blind person would not be able to appreciate their statements, and he might take the skeptical viewpoint that talk about sunsets is simply meaningless.

Nonetheless, the seeing persons would go right on discussing the sunset, and each would feel confident that the other was sharing his experience and understanding what he was talking about.

Another point is that realized persons are able to perceive themselves and others directly with their innate transcendental senses. Such persons are not restricted to external observations of behavior. Thus, confirmation of higher states of consciousness is not limited simply to the subjective perception of each individual.

You are certainly correct in pointing out that there are many people who delude

**Just as we can
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the Supreme Being.**

themselves and others by claiming to have attained various kinds of mystical realizations. But the existence of such cheating does not imply that a genuine science of higher consciousness is impossible. Such a science must indeed be based on verification of crucial observations by more than one person, but such verification is possible by realized persons.

Bhagavad-gītā outlines a practical system for attaining higher realization. In this system the seeker of knowledge must take instruction from a realized soul [Bg. 4.34]. By following these instructions, the person's higher cognitive faculties awaken by the grace of the Supreme [Bg. 10.10]. His realizations, however, can readily be evaluated by his teacher, who is fully capable of detecting mistakes and illusions. Furthermore, one can check the conduct of both teacher and disciple by consulting other self-realized souls and by referring to a standard body of authoritative literature. This system is like modern science in that the findings of individuals are scruti-

nized by their peers and evaluated in the context of standard knowledge.

Dr. Kutark: You have referred to the Supreme and to Superconsciousness. What do you mean by these terms? Also, just what does one realize by "awakening his higher cognitive faculties"? Can this realization be conveyed to a person whose experience is limited to the ordinary functioning of the five senses?

Dr. Avaroha: *Bhagavad-gītā* explains that consciousness exists in two aspects, the infinite and the infinitesimal. The infinite consciousness is the very basis of reality and the ultimate source of all phenomena. According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, this absolute consciousness is the Supreme Person, who is fully endowed with all personal attributes—such as senses, will, and intelligence—and who is known in the Vedic literature by many names, such as Kṛṣṇa and Govinda. This is, of course, the same Supreme Being known as God in the Judeo-Christian tradition, or as Allah in Islam.

The infinitesimal aspect of consciousness consists of the innumerable atomic selves called *jīvātmās*. We can illustrate the relation between atomic and infinite consciousness by a simple analogy. In classical physics we can fully characterize an electron as a minute charged particle that interacts in a certain way with an electromagnetic field. Similarly, we can understand the true character of the *jīvātmā* in terms of its natural interaction with the Supreme Person. Just as we can think of the electron as being defined by its interaction with an electromagnetic field, we can understand the *jīvātmā* as being defined by its personal interaction with the Supreme Conscious Being.

Thus, the final goal of self-realization is to attain this state of natural reciprocation with the Supreme. This mode of interaction is entirely personal, being based on the exchange of loving service. We get some hint of the quality of this exchange from the following characterization of the Supreme Person in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* [5.38]:

*premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena
santaḥ sadaiva hṛdayeṣu vilokayanti
yaṁ śyāmasundaram acintya-guṇa-
svarūpaṁ
govindam ādī-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ
bhajāmi*

"I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is Śyāmasundara, Kṛṣṇa Himself, with inconceivable, innumerable attributes. The pure devotees see Him in their heart of hearts with the eye of devotion tinged with the salve of love." Of course, we can attain full understanding of what this description means only by direct experience, just as we can understand the taste of a fruit only by actually eating it. 🍎



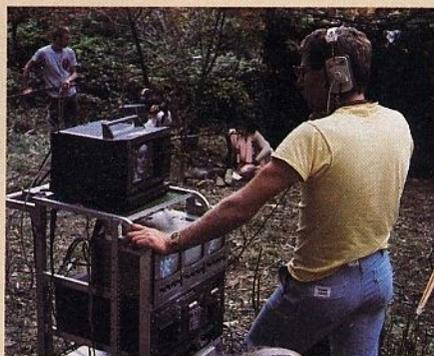
The Saga of Lord Rāma

A classic Indian epic of the eternal war between Good and Evil comes to the television screen.

by DRAVIDA DĀSA

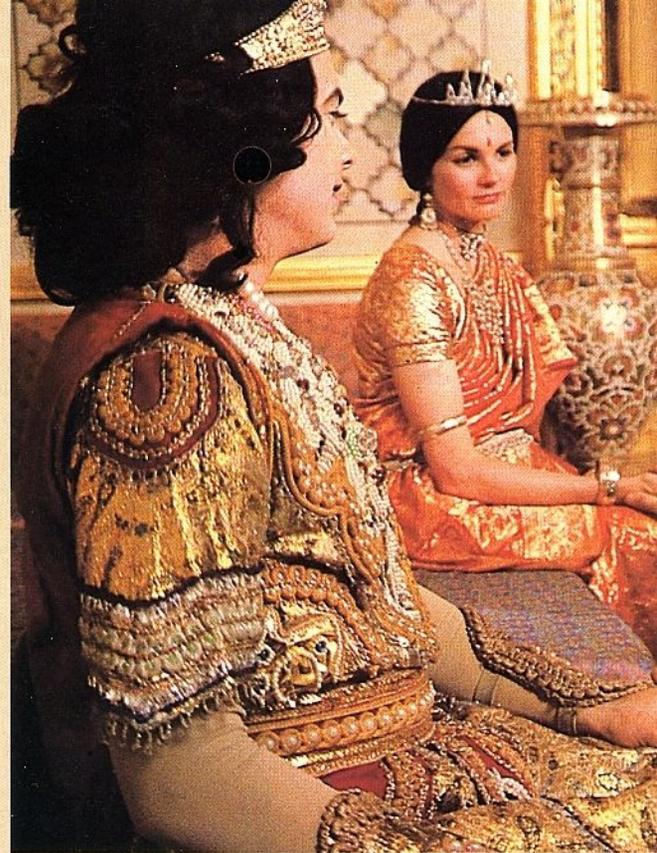
The Vedic literature describes how Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appears in the material world throughout history to eradicate evil, establish the principles of religion, and enliven His devotees. Sometimes He comes Himself, but more often He expands as an incarnation who manifests a certain portion of His supreme glories. Among these incarnations, one of the best known and most revered is Lord Rāmacandra, the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, a Sanskrit epic written by the great sage Vālmīki.

Recently ISKCON Television, the team of devotees that produces television programs on Kṛṣṇa conscious topics, shot a



On location at the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's New Vrindaban community in West Virginia, Nṛsiṃhānanda dāsa monitors TV screens during the shooting of *The Saga of Lord Rāma*.

video version of Lord Rāma's pastimes. Under the direction of Nṛsiṃhānanda dāsa, who has worked extensively with professional TV studios in Hollywood, ITV staged an all-devotee *Rāmāyaṇa* at the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's New Vrindaban farm community in West Virginia. Śrīla Prabhupāda's Palace of Gold (see BACK TO GODHEAD Vol. 16, No. 7) and the woody New Vrindaban landscape provided the perfect setting. Nṛsiṃhānanda adapted a script condensed from the original *Rāmāyaṇa* by Nanda-kīśora dāsa, a seasoned Kṛṣṇa conscious director and actor. What follows is a synopsis of the plot, with highlights of the ITV production.



Millions of years ago a king named Daśaratha ruled the world from his capital city, Ayodhyā, which lies about midway between present-day Calcutta and New Delhi. By his queens Daśaratha had many sons, but the jewel among them was Rāmacandra, the Personality of Godhead Himself.

Even from His youth Rāma possessed all the qualities of a leader. His magnanimity was unrivaled, as were His religious wisdom, prowess in fighting, and freedom from greed for the privileges of power. His strength knew no limit: He won the hand of Sītā-devī, the goddess of fortune herself, by breaking a huge bow His rival suitors couldn't even lift.

When the time came for King Daśaratha to retire, he naturally chose as his successor his eldest and most qualified son, Rāma. All Ayodhyā rejoiced at hearing the news and prepared for the coronation of the beloved prince.

But the coronation was not to be. Kaikeyī, one of Daśaratha's queens, was incited by a malicious maidservant to block Rāma's ascendance to the throne. Some time before, Daśaratha had promised Kaikeyī two boons, but she had asked that they be deferred. Now, blinded by envy, Kaikeyī held Daśaratha to his word and forced him to fulfill two wishes: first, she wanted Rāma exiled to the forest for fourteen years; and second, she wanted her own son, Bharata, crowned King of Ayodhyā.

Daśaratha felt Kaikeyī's demands to be like a thunderbolt striking his head. How could he banish his most beloved son, Rāma, on the eve of His coronation! What would become of Ayodhyā? What would become of Sītā? Daśaratha saw only calamity on all sides—yet his word was his very life, and he yielded to Kaikeyī's will.

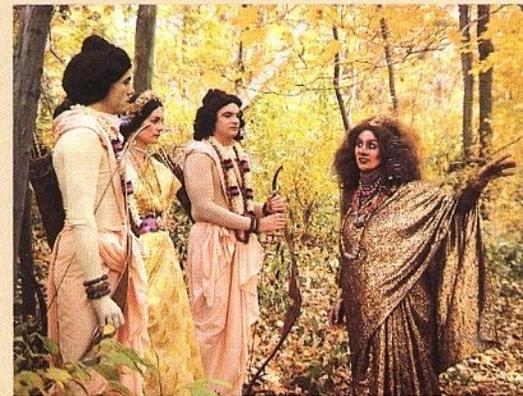
Rāma accepted His exile cheerfully, but He worried that His father and mother might die of grief. (His father did, in fact, die of despair soon after Rāma left Ayo-

Lord Rāma's coronation as King of Ayodhyā is blocked when a maidservant (in background, upper left) goads Queen Kaikeyī into betraying Rāma. Above, King Daśaratha hears Kaikeyī's ultimatum: "Exile Rāma to the forest for fourteen years, or break your sacred word."

At right, Rāma agrees that Lakṣmaṇa (foreground) and Sītā may join Him in exile.

dhyā.) Nonetheless, Rāma was determined to follow His father's order, come what may. When Rāma told Sītā and His brother Lakṣmaṇa of the impending exile, they insisted on accompanying Him. Thus Lord Rāma, the personification of righteousness, Sītā-devī, the personification of faithfulness, and Lakṣmaṇa, the personification of fraternal devotion, entered the Daṇḍaka Forest for the fourteen-year ordeal.

Of course, since Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are none other than the Personality of Godhead and His first expansion, Their stay in the Daṇḍaka Forest proved no ordeal at all. For some time They and Sītā lived peacefully and happily, enjoying nature's gifts and making friends with many sages who had repaired to the forest for seclusion and meditation. But then came a fateful turn of events . . .



Rāvaṇa, king of the man-eaters, sits on his throne in his island kingdom of Laṅkā (right). Arrogant, deceitful, vile, and insatiable, Rāvaṇa commits every imaginable atrocity in his attacks on the pious and the innocent. His favorite sport is raping other men's wives and dragging them back to his huge harem on Laṅkā. When Rāvaṇa's sister Śūrpaṅakhā (right, above) comes across Rāma and His companions in the forest, she tries to seduce Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and devour Sītā. Lakṣmaṇa lops off Śūrpaṅakhā's nose and ears and sends her screaming into the forest, vowing revenge.



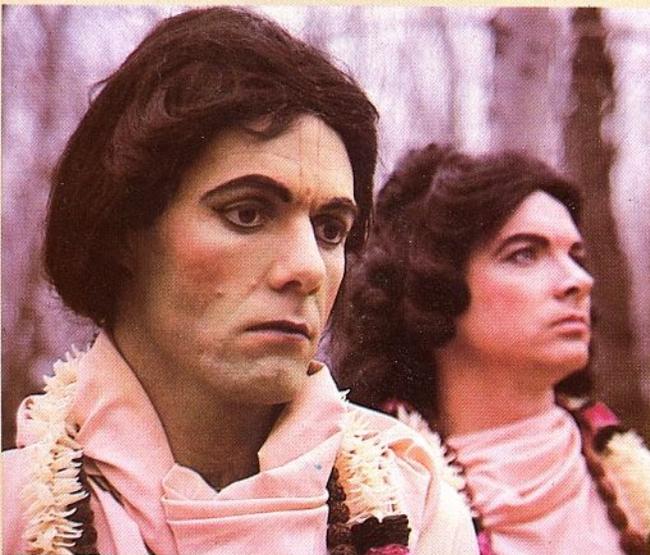
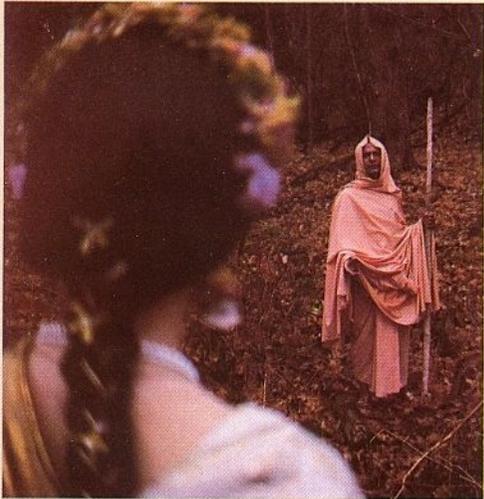


One day a hideous man-eating demoness named Sūrpanakhā came upon Rāma's cottage. Overwhelmed with lust at seeing Rāma's handsome figure, she attempted to seduce Him. When that failed she turned to Lakṣmaṇa, but both He and Rāma ridiculed her. Infuriated, Sūrpanakhā rushed toward Sītā to devour her. Rāma stopped Sūrpanakhā and had Lakṣmaṇa cut off her nose and ears to teach her a lesson. Then the demoness ran into the forest, screaming in agony and vowing that her brother Rāvaṇa would avenge her humiliation.

Rāvaṇa was the king of the man-eaters. By practicing severe austerities, he had won from Lord Brahmā, the chief demi-

god, several boons that gave him near-invincibility. From his kingdom on Laṅkā, the island off the southern tip of India, the fearsome Rāvaṇa and his man-eating minions would roam the earth and the heavens, pillaging, raping, and devouring at will. Rāvaṇa cared for neither God nor law nor morality. Always intoxicated by pride and arrogance, as well as by strong drink, Rāvaṇa was sin incarnate.

Rāvaṇa had several brothers who were equal to him in vileness. One of these, named Khara, lived in a part of the Daṇḍaka Forest near Rāma's cottage and led an army of man-eaters who fed on the flesh of saintly hermits. From Rāma's cottage Sūrpanakhā fled to Khara, and



With Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa absent, Sītā is easy prey for Rāvaṇa (left, above), who comes before her disguised as a renunciant. At left, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, distraught at not finding Sītā in the trio's forest cottage, search for her (left) and finally come upon the dying Jaṭāyu (above). With his last breath the huge bird tells Rāma that he tried to stop Rāvaṇa from making off with Sītā, but that he was no match for the ferocious demon.

when he saw what Lakṣmaṇa had done to his sister he flew into a rage and sent out 14,000 of his formidable warriors to slay Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. But Khara didn't realize with whom he was dealing. Rāma's arrows, like shafts of fire, flew from His golden bow with unerring accuracy, annihilating Khara and his army. A lone survivor escaped to Laṅkā to tell Rāvaṇa of the disaster wrought by the supernatural valor of Rāma.

Hearing of Rāma's exploits, Rāvaṇa thought it wise to adopt a devious tactic. Rather than confront Rāma directly, Rāvaṇa would kidnap Rāma's beloved Sītā so that Rāma would die of a broken heart. Not only would this plan avenge the humiliation of Sūrpanakhā and the slaughter of Khara and the 14,000

warriors, but it would also provide Rāvaṇa with the consummate object for his lust: the chaste and beautiful Sītā.

Rāvaṇa paid a visit to his warlord, Mārīca. Like many other demons, Mārīca could change his form at will. Rāvaṇa ordered him to take the form of an irresistibly charming deer and then to frisk before Sītā. When the deer would run into the forest, Rāvaṇa hoped, Sītā would insist that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa capture it for her. Left alone, Sītā would then be easy prey for Rāvaṇa.

When flattery and sweet words fail, Rāvaṇa, obsessed with the beautiful Sītā, tries to enjoy her by force (below). A demigod's curse prevents him from violating her outright, and she spurns all his advances and warns of Rāma's revenge. At right, Hanumān, Rāma's devoted monkey servant, prepares to return from Laṅkā to Rāma's encampment with a pearl Sītā has given him—proof he has found her. Meanwhile, Vibhīṣaṇa (below right), a pious brother of Rāvaṇa's, decides at last that the only honorable thing for him to do is defect to Rāma.



YAMARAJA DASA

The ruse worked, and Rāvaṇa came before the lone Sītā disguised as a robed renunciant. Sītā welcomed him into the cottage and offered him refreshment, but suddenly Rāvaṇa cast off his disguise and declared his purpose. Despite Sītā's piteous entreaties and prophetic warnings, Rāvaṇa abducted Sītā and carried her off toward Laṅkā.

Along the way Rāvaṇa met and mortally wounded Jaṭāyu, a huge bird who was a lifelong friend of King Daśaratha's. Jaṭāyu tried to stop Rāvaṇa, but was no match for the world-conquering demon.

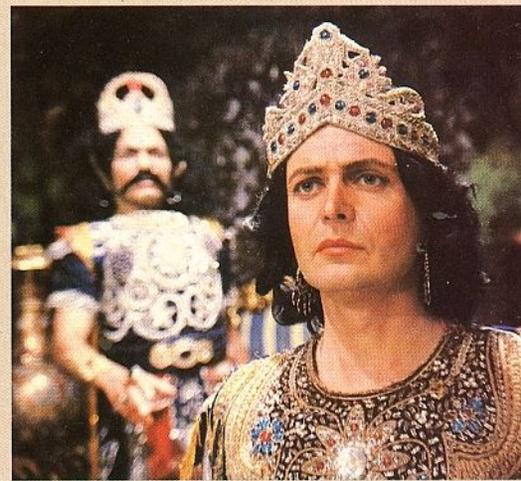
When Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa discovered that Sītā had been kidnapped, they were overcome with grief. In anguish they searched everywhere, finally coming upon the dying Jaṭāyu, who told them with his last breath that it was Rāvaṇa who had made off with Sītā. Later Rāma learned that a certain tribe of monkey warriors, headed by Hanumān and Sugrīva, could find Rāvaṇa's kingdom and help Rāma regain Sītā.

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa sealed an alliance

with the monkey warriors and found them to be fiercely devoted followers. Among them all, Hanumān stands as the very emblem of the faithful, dedicated servant. Being the son of the wind-god, Hanumān could fly, and when he learned that Rāvaṇa's kingdom lay on the island of Laṅkā, he used his prodigious strength to leap over the sea. All he knew was that he must find Sītā and help retrieve her for Rāma.

Shrinking himself down to the size of a cat, Hanumān walked freely through the fabulous city of Laṅkā, reconnoitering its defenses. Finally, he found Sītā in the heart of a dense forest of Aśoka trees. She was wan and weak, wracked with grief at her separation from her beloved Rāma. Because of a demigod's curse, Rāvaṇa had been unable to force himself upon her, and she had resisted all his advances. Though the torment had taken its toll, she was still radiant with beauty.

Hanumān gave Sītā one of Rāma's rings to prove he was a messenger, not a man-eater. Then the noble monkey soothed



Sītā with sweet remembrances of her Lord. Hanumān assured her that Rāma would soon rescue her, and she sent him forth with one of her pearls so that Rāma would know that Hanumān had indeed found her. Before leaving Laṅkā, the jubilant Hanumān set fire to large sections of the city and slew thousands of Rāvaṇa's soldiers.

Upon hearing Hanumān's report, Rāma

at once prepared to invade Laṅkā. He led the army of monkey warriors to the sea and told Sugrīva to build a bridge of boulders across to Laṅkā. The faithful monkeys had no idea how such a feat could be accomplished, but they dutifully began heaving huge rocks into the ocean—and Rāma made them float, by His divine energy!

Rāma's legions of monkey warriors

marched across the miraculous bridge to Laṅkā, and soon the great siege began. Rāvaṇa's men were trained in the art of war and armed with bows and arrows, swords, lances, tridents, and other such weapons. The untrained monkeys had only boulders and tree trunks for weapons. But they had one insuperable advantage: they were empowered by Lord Rāma, the Personality of Godhead Him-



self. For some days the two armies fought ferociously, with heavy casualties on both sides, and finally Rāma's forces routed the man-eaters.

At last Rāvaṇa himself had to confront Rāma. Even now the demon wouldn't believe his power could be cut down. Rāma rebuked Rāvaṇa for cravenly kidnapping Sītā in His absence, and the demon in turn cast low insults at the Lord. The furious battle that then ensued between Rāma and Rāvaṇa lasted for days without letup. The earth, the seas, and the heavens were disturbed by the sheer force of their combat, and various astronomical events portended the imminent defeat of Rāvaṇa. Finally, the Lord released an arrow from His bow that struck Rāvaṇa's heart like a nuclear bomb. The demon tumbled to the ground, vomiting blood. Having at last rid the world of the curse of Rāvaṇa, Rāma installed Vibhīṣaṇa, Rāvaṇa's pious brother, as King of Laṅkā.

Rāma went at once to the Aśoka grove to find Sītā. Joyously reunited, they flew back to Ayodhyā in a glorious airplane bedecked with flowers. At last Lord Rāmacandra had retrieved Sītā, the fourteen-year exile was over, and the long-awaited coronation could take place.

The climatic confrontation (above left). All of Rāvaṇa's formidable henchmen have been annihilated by Rāma and His allies, and now He and Lakṣmaṇa stand face to face with Rāvaṇa. After a furious battle, Rāvaṇa is struck in the heart by one of Rāma's invincible arrows (above). Having killed Rāvaṇa and regained Sītā, Rāma returns to Ayodhyā for His triumphal coronation (left).



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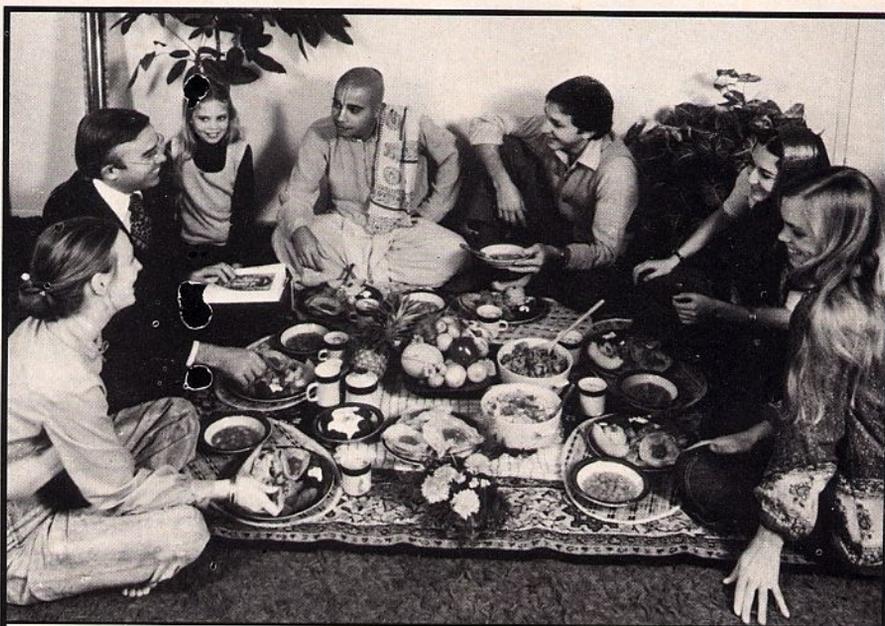
WHAT IS A MANTRA? In Sanskrit, *man* means "mind" and *tra* means "freeing." So a *mantra* is a combination of transcendental sounds that frees our minds from anxiety.

Ancient India's Vedic literature singles out one *mantra* as the *mahā* (supreme) *mantra*. The *Kali-santarāna Upaniṣad* explains, "These sixteen words—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—are especially meant for counteracting the present age of quarrel and anxiety."

Five centuries ago, while spreading the

mahā-mantra throughout India, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu prayed, "O Supreme Lord, in Your name You have invested all Your transcendental energies."

The name *Kṛṣṇa* means "the all-attractive one," the name *Rāma* means "the all-pleasing one," and the name *Hare* is an address to the Lord's devotional energy. So the *mahā-mantra* means, "O all-attractive, all-pleasing Lord, O energy of the Lord, please engage me in Your devotional service." Chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and your life will be sublime.



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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Reincarnation and the Holy Name

Is there life after death? If so, what is the nature of that life?

These questions have always been with us, and the search for their answers is an intrinsic function of the human psyche. In recent years interest in reincarnation has grown, with new advocates, theories, and discoveries. Testimonies by persons who have returned from the verge of death after supposedly glimpsing the hereafter have intrigued modern parapsychologists, as well as researchers like Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, author of *On Death and Dying*, and Raymond Moody, author of *Life After Life* and other bestsellers.

The original source-books on reincarnation, however, are the Sanskrit Vedic literatures. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, for example, gives a fascinating account of the near-death experience of a man named Ajāmila. Unlike modern investigations, the case of Ajāmila lets us study the near-death experience not from the viewpoint of the dying person but from the viewpoint of higher beings present at the time of the soul's passing out of the body.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam relates how the messengers of Death and the messengers of Lord Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, disagreed over where Ajāmila should reincarnate in his next life. Being deathless, the *ātmā*, or self, must take birth in another body when the present body ceases to function. And that next body is determined by one's individual *karma*: "As you sow, so shall you reap."

In the case of Ajāmila, the messengers of Death wanted to drag the soul to hell because of his life of sin. Although Ajāmila lay in a coma, he was conscious of the messengers of Death preparing to transfer him to the lower regions. But suddenly the beautiful, effulgent messengers of Viṣṇu arrived and intervened. The messengers of the Lord said the messengers of Death had misjudged the soul of Ajāmila and had no right to take him.

Incensed, the messengers of Death explained why Ajāmila should be taken and punished. Judging a person's *karma*, they said, is a relatively simple thing. At the time of death, when a soul is ready to enter another body, the superintendent

of Death arranges for a future body in accordance with the particular soul's past sinful and pious acts. Because Ajāmila had led a sinful life, he was now due to be punished.

The messengers of Death gave an analogy: As springtime in the present indicates the nature of springs in the past and future, so this present life of happiness or distress indicates one's activities in the past, and one's present activities are an index of one's future incarnations. In other words, on the basis of the activities a person performs in his present life, the higher authorities determine his destiny in the next life.

Since most people incur at least some bad *karma*, it is the duty of the messengers of Death to transfer them to a lower position. Most people act without any understanding of the law of *karma* and thus commit all kinds of abominable acts for the pleasure of the present body. They do not know that their present suffering is a result of past sins, nor are they able to understand that their present sins will cause them future suffering. Acting in the darkness of ignorance, most people are unable to know their past or future lives. And even when they hear from the Vedic literature about transmigration of the soul and the law of *karma*, they refuse to accept that there is anything beyond this present life of sense gratification.

Such an ignorant person was Ajāmila. And because of his life of sin, the messengers of Death saw no reason why the messengers of the Lord should obstruct their work of awarding him his just *karma*.

The messengers of Lord Viṣṇu, however, asked the messengers of Death on what basis they had judged Ajāmila. The messengers of Death replied that they had judged him according to the religious scriptures. They then read a long list of criminal, violent, irresponsible, irreligious, and perverted acts Ajāmila had committed. At this, the messengers of Viṣṇu admitted that hellish punishment would ordinarily await such a sinner; but in the case of Ajāmila, this did not apply.

The extraordinary circumstance in Ajāmila's case was that at the last

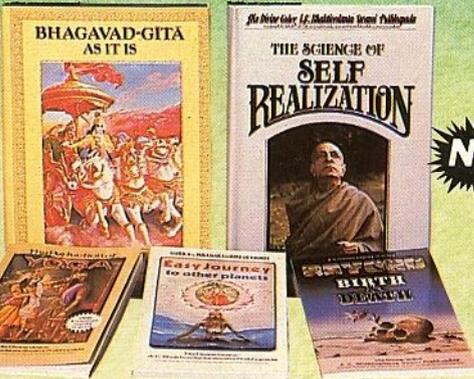
moment of his life he had called out the name of God, Nārāyaṇa. Although he was not thinking of God but of his son Nārāyaṇa, he had nevertheless called out, "Nārāyaṇa!" This had neutralized all Ajāmila's bad *karma* and had saved him.

The messengers of Viṣṇu explained that Ajāmila's uttering the name Nārāyaṇa had absolved him of all his sins—not only those of his present life but those of millions of past lives. He had chanted without offense and was therefore purified and eligible for liberation. The messengers of Viṣṇu explained that even if a person chants the name of God indirectly (to indicate something else), jokingly, for musical entertainment, or even neglectfully, the holy name will still free him from the reactions of all sins. No matter how sinful a person may be, the holy name of God has the power to absolve him and save him from hellish punishment.

Unable to oppose the higher authority, the messengers of Death released Ajāmila. The supernatural beings vanished, Ajāmila awakened from his coma, and by the grace of the Lord he was able to spend his remaining days in devotional meditation on the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

This account from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* gives us valuable information about the soul, the next life, the laws of *karma*, and the potency of the holy name of the Lord. For those interested in reincarnation, the Vedic literatures are worth investigating. Rather than limit oneself to empirical data from modern researchers, one should consult *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā* for a clear understanding of reincarnation and the specific importance and responsibility of the human form of life. As Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." And an essential part of one's life to examine is one's death. What happens at this critical time? Is there a next life? If so, how can we assure the best next life for ourselves? Certainly any introspective, openminded investigation into the subject of reincarnation would be incomplete without careful study of Vedic writings like *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*.—SDG

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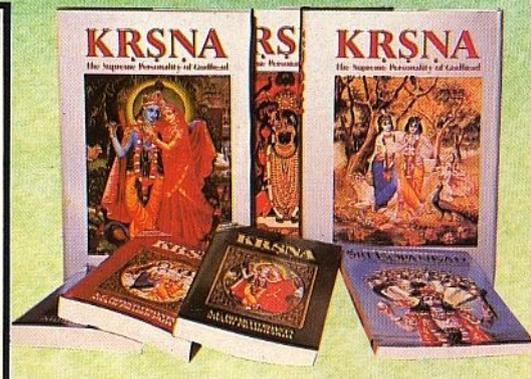
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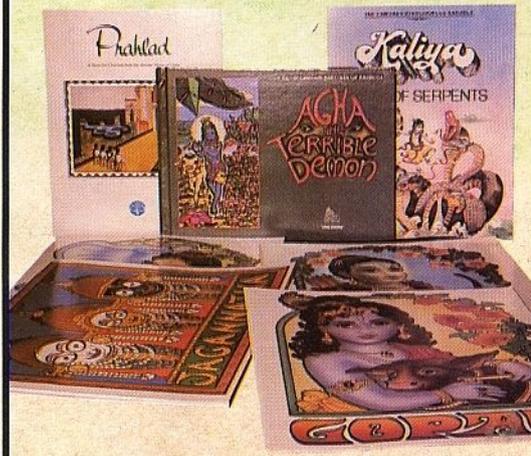
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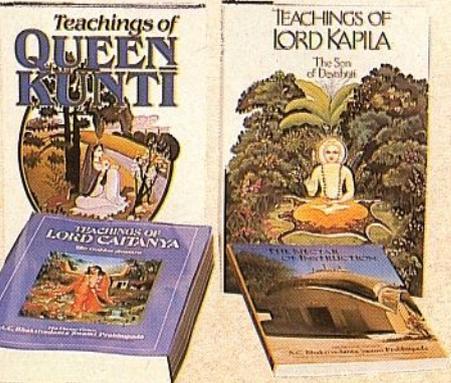
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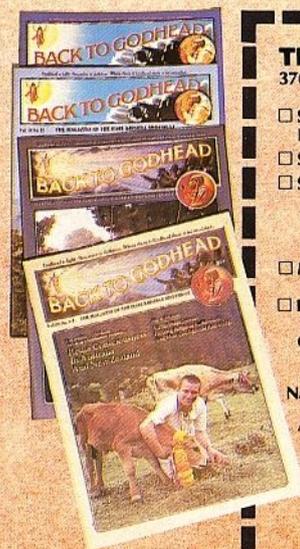
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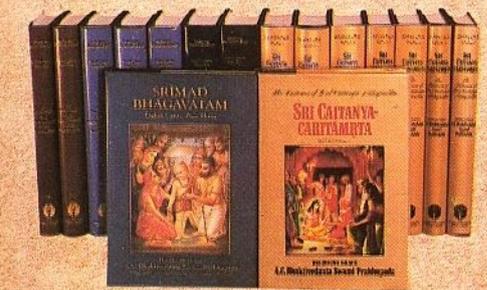
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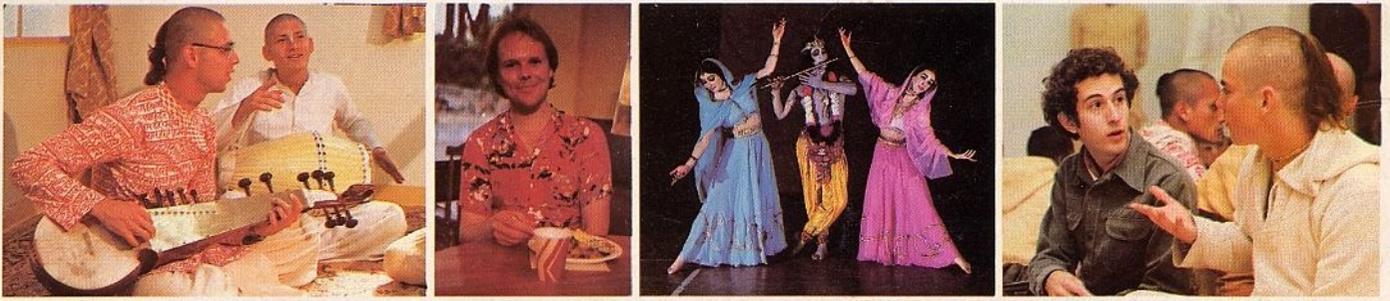
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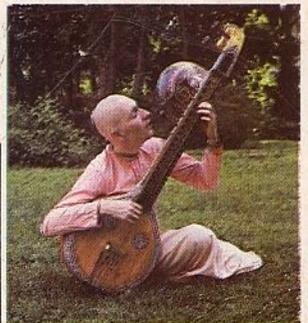
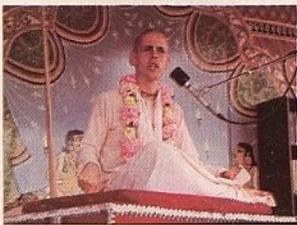
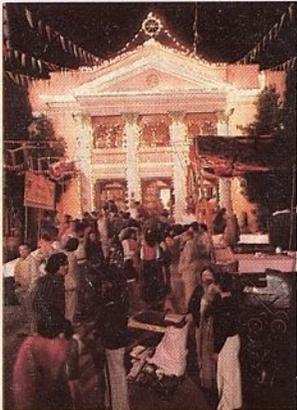
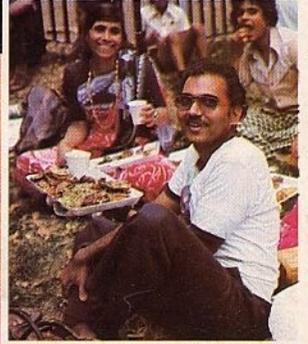
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