

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

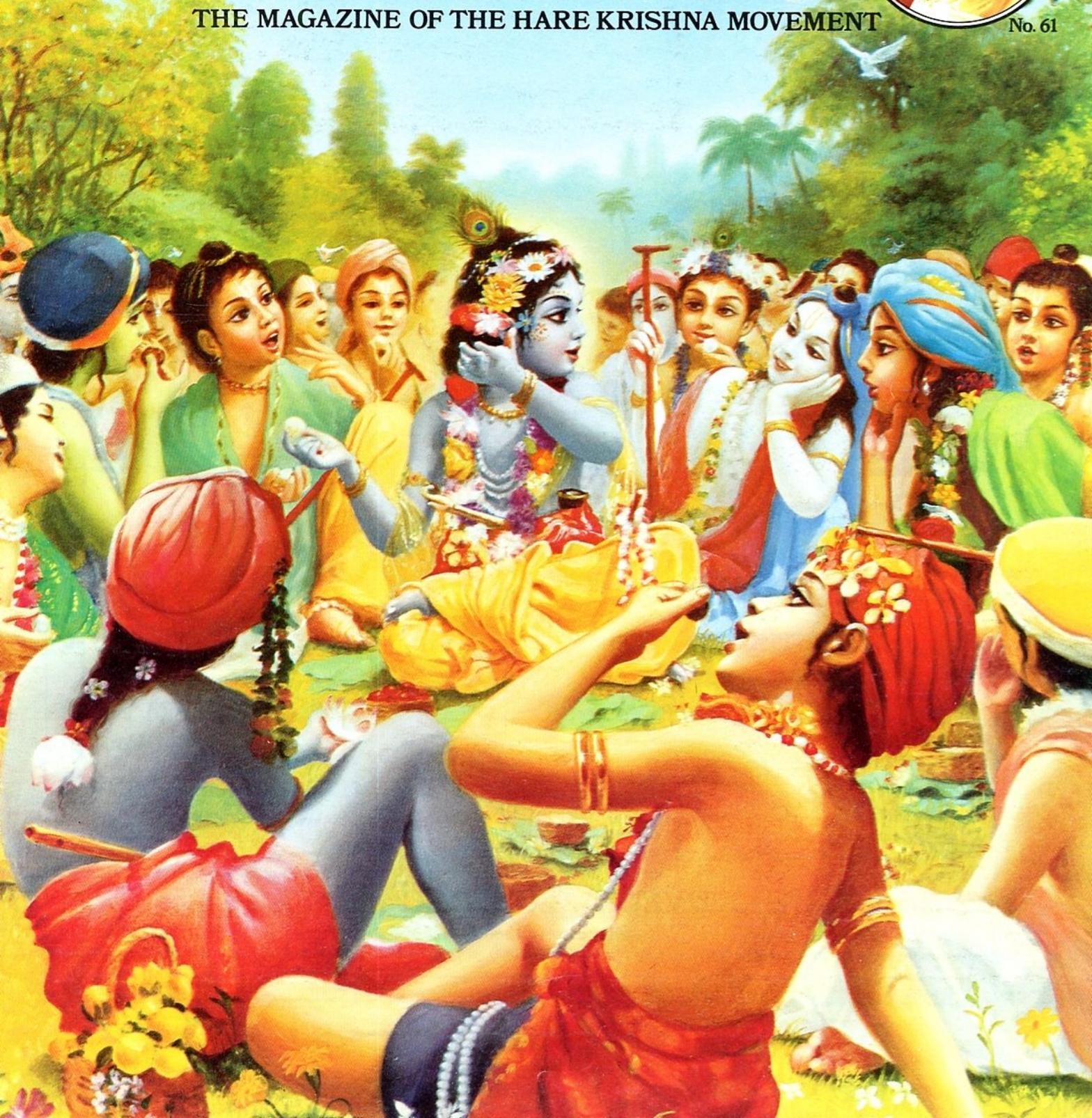


BACK TO GODHEAD



THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

No. 61





His Divine Grace

A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

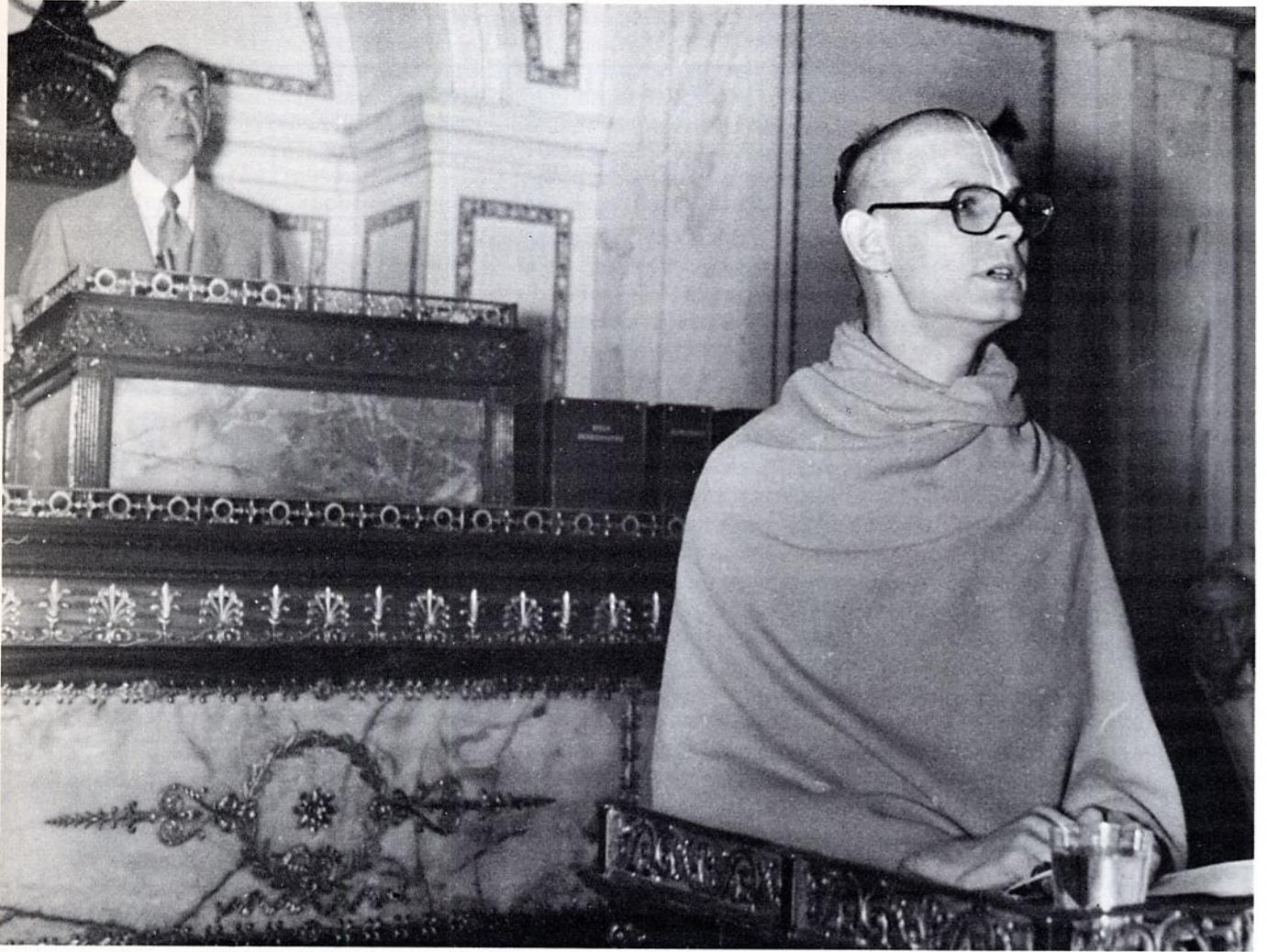


Photo by Philadelphia Daily News

INVOCATION

Delivered before the Philadelphia City Council by Ravindra Svarūpa dāsa, President of the Philadelphia Center of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*

This is the great chanting for peace. It means: "O my Lord, O energy of the Lord, please engage me in Your service." This is the one true universal and eternal religion: service to the Lord, who is known as Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Jehovah, Allah, and many

other names. We must become conscious of our relation with that Supreme Person, call Him as you will—this religion is preached by all prophets, in all scriptures, in all lands. No one can safely ignore this teaching—not even the so-called "secular state"—because without morally sound, law-abiding citizens, no institution, religious or secular, can endure. We have seen the thousands who have taken to chanting "Hare Kṛṣṇa" become first-class citizens, giving up the destructive habits like unrestricted sex and indulgence in intoxicants that are now destroying

the moral fiber of those who will lead us in the future. It is not sufficient to provide for the bodily welfare of the citizens: if they simply eat, sleep, mate and defend like polished dogs, hogs, camels and asses, how have we done our duty? Shall we take such expense and effort to train a person to read, but then disclaim responsibility when that skill is exercised only on the most vile and degrading literature? The state may not favor any particular faith, but it cannot ignore the general principles of religion. Invoking the names of God "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma" reminds us of this fact.



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(under the direction of His Divine Grace
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)
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ON THE COVER

Sometimes when Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, performed His pastimes as a cowherd boy in the forest of Vrndavana, His friends would fan Him, massage Him, collect flowers for Him and play songs on their flutes for His transcendental pleasure. (This is an illustration from *The Nectar of Devotion*, by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda.)

PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

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

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For many years, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the spiritual master of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, has every day customarily taken an hour-long early morning walk with some of his disciples wherever in the world he is then preaching. Sometimes His Divine Grace says little; he simply chants Hare Kṛṣṇa on his beads and walks. Sometimes, however, he holds animated discussions or even arguments, challenging disciples to defend materialistic viewpoints so that he can defeat them with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The following dialogue was recorded on an inspired morning walk at Venice Beach, Los Angeles. Walking with Śrīla Prabhupāda were two of his disciples, Karandhara dāsa and Svarūpa Dāmodara dāsa, a chemist working on his Ph.D. in Physical Organic Chemistry at the University of California.

The Tiny World of Modern Science

a dialogue with His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

(Los Angeles, April 16, 1973)

Photos by Muralīvadana dāsa

Svarūpa: Scientists are worried about energy sources, and now they are working to utilize solar energy for cooking, lighting and various other purposes. They are hoping that when they exhaust all other energy sources, they will be able to use solar energy.

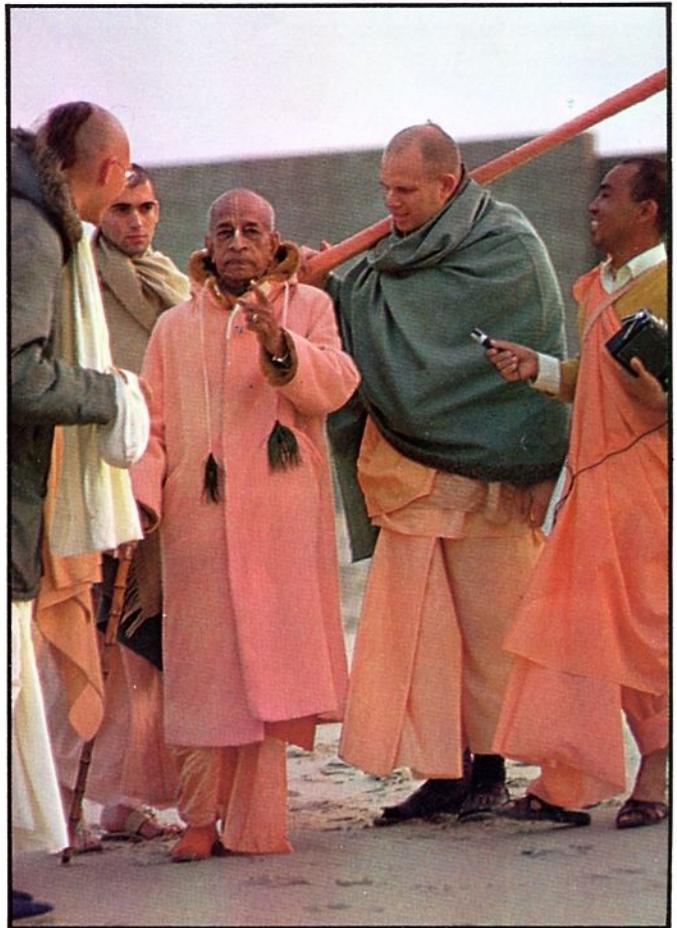
Śrīla Prabhupāda: This is not a very new theory. Everyone knows that because the roots of trees store the sun's energy, it is possible to get fire from a tree. These scientists are tiny creatures, but they are very proud. We don't give them credit, because they are simply stating what everyone knows. As soon as you cut a tree, you cannot get fire from it. It has to be dried in the sun. When the energy is gathered from the sun, the tree can be utilized for fire. Actually everything is being maintained by the sun's energy, but the scientists don't know where the sun's energy comes from. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says:

*yad āditya-gataṁ tejo jagad bhāsayate 'khilam
yac candramasi yac cāgnau tat tejo viddhi māmakam*

"The splendor of the sun, which dissipates the darkness of this whole world, comes from Me. And the splendor of the moon and the splendor of fire are also from Me." [Bg. 15. 12]

Again, Kṛṣṇa says, *jyotiṣāṁ ravir aṁśumān*: "Of lights I am the radiant sun." [Bg. 10.21] Also in the Eleventh Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna tells Kṛṣṇa, *śaśi-sūrya-netram*: "The sun and moon are among Your great unlimited eyes." [Bg. 11.19] This knowledge is contained in *Bhagavad-gītā*, but scientists cannot attain this knowledge by their speculation. Can they?

Svarūpa: It is not possible.



Śrīla Prabhupāda: And what is their knowledge? The scriptures say that even if you can count all the grains of sand on earth, you still would not be able to understand God. All this material counting does not mean that you have the capacity to understand the unlimited. But it is even beyond their capacity to count all the material things. Why are the scientists so proud of their energy and capacities? They do not even know of the material things, and what to speak of the spiritual. As far as scientists and other living entities are concerned, their knowledge is limited. But this is not so for Kṛṣṇa. If we receive knowledge from Kṛṣṇa, that knowledge is perfect. In



the scriptures we receive information that there are 900,000 species of life existing within the ocean. The information given in the scriptures is exact because it comes from Kṛṣṇa, and as Kṛṣṇa Himself says: “As the Supreme Personality of Godhead, I know everything that has happened in the past, all that is happening in the present, and all things that are yet to come.” [Bg. 7.26]

Svarūpa: We have to take knowledge from the supreme knower.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: For perfect knowledge we have to approach a superior person, a *guru*. One may try to learn a subject by reading books at home, but he can learn much better by going to college and approaching a professor. In the same way, we have to approach a *guru*. Of course, if we encounter a false *guru*, our knowledge is false. But if our *guru* is perfect, our knowledge is perfect. We accept Kṛṣṇa as our *guru*. If He is perfect in knowledge, our knowledge is also perfect. As far as we’re concerned, we do not have to be perfect in ourselves, but if we receive knowledge from the perfect, our knowledge is perfect. We cannot say that we understand that there are 900,000 species of life in the ocean because we have studied the entire ocean. Rather we say that we take this information from scriptures and therefore it is perfect. This is the Vedic process.

Scientists may carry out much research work, but however great a scientist may be, his senses are imperfect. Therefore he cannot have perfect knowledge. What is the value of our eyes? We cannot see without sunlight, nor can we see small things without a microscope. Our eyes are imperfect, and the instruments our eyes have discovered are also imperfect. How, then, is it possible to get perfect knowledge? Because the living entity is limited, his knowledge is limited. A child may know that two plus two equals four, but when he speaks of higher mathematics, we do not take

him seriously. The senses through which a scientist acquires knowledge are limited and imperfect; therefore his knowledge is limited and imperfect. In his ignorance he may claim to know everything, but that is simply nonsense.

A blind man may lead another blind man, but what does it avail them when they both fall into a ditch? The laws of nature bind us hand and foot, yet we think we are free to speculate. This is illusion. Although conditioned by so many of nature’s laws, the rascals think they are free. Yet if there is a cloud, they cannot see the sun. What power have we to see? Only when nature’s laws give us some facility are we able to see. Indeed, we can only experiment under certain conditions, and if the conditions are not favorable, our experiments fail. Why then, are we so proud of experimental knowledge?

Why experiment? Things are already there. The sun’s energy is there, given by God for us to use. What else is there to know? So many apples fall from trees. What further need is there to explain the law of gravity? Actually the scientists are lacking in common sense. They are simply concerned with “scientific” explanations. They say the law of gravity works only under certain conditions, but who has made these conditions? When Kṛṣṇa appeared as Lord Rāmacandra, He threw stones on the water, and the stones floated. The law of gravity did not work in that case. Therefore the law of gravity works only under the direction of the Supreme Lord. The law in itself is not final. A king may give a law, but he can change that law immediately. The ultimate law-giver is Kṛṣṇa, and a law will only work by His will. Scientists try to explain God’s will in so many ways, but because they are conditioned by *māyā*, illusion, they can only talk like a person haunted by ghosts. Tell me, what is the scientific explanation that accounts for all the varieties of trees?

Karandhara: They say that nature mutates and makes these varieties.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then it must be nature’s will. And what is that will? Does the land have any will?

Karandhara: Well, they are very vague on that point.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That means that they do not have perfect knowledge. They do not know that behind nature is the will of Kṛṣṇa.

Svarūpa: They explain that the chemical composition of these different plants is different.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That’s all right, but who made these chemical compositions? As soon as you say “chemical composition,” you immediately require a God.

Karandhara: They say there is no need for a God because if you mix two chemicals together—

Śrīla Prabhupāda: God or not, there must be some will. There must be some consciousness. Two chemicals mix and produce such and such. Who mixes them? Consciousness is there. Well, that consciousness is Kṛṣṇa. There is consciousness everywhere, and as soon as you accept that consciousness, you must accept consciousness as a person. Therefore, we speak of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated that consciousness is all-pervading. You may have consciousness, and I may have consciousness, but there is another consciousness, which is all-pervading. My consciousness is limited to my body, and your consciousness is limited to yours, but there is another consciousness that is within you, me, and everyone. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Actually everything in the world is relative. That is a scientific fact. Our bodies, lives, intelligence and everything else are all relative. To us an ant may seem to have a very short life, but for the ant his life is about a hundred years in duration. That hundred years is relative to the body. Similarly, Brahmā, who lives fantastically long from our point of view, only lives a hundred years from his point of view. This is relativity.

Karandhara: Then the relativity is based upon our individual situation.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Therefore it is said that what is food for one is poison for another. People are thinking that because they cannot survive on the moon, no other living entities can. Everyone thinks of things in a relative way, in his own terms. This is the meaning of frog philosophy. The frog

Śrīla Prabhupāda and disciples (Karandhara dāsa is on the far left, Svarūpa Dāmodara dāsa on the far right, holding the tape recorder.)

“However great a scientist may be, he cannot have perfect knowledge.”

is always thinking of things in relation to his well. He has no power to conceive of the Atlantic Ocean because his well is his only experience. God is great, but we are thinking of God's greatness in our own terms, in terms of relative greatness. Some insects are born at night; they grow at night, have their children at night and die at night. They never see the sun; therefore they conclude that there is no such thing as day. If you asked the insect about the morning, he would say, "There cannot be any morning." Similarly, when people hear of Brahmā's long duration of life from the scriptures, they do not believe it. They say, "How can anyone live for such a long time?" In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa states:

*sahasra-yuga-paryantam
ahar yad brahmaṇo viduḥ
rātriṁ yuga-sahasrāntām
te 'ho-rātra-vido janāḥ*

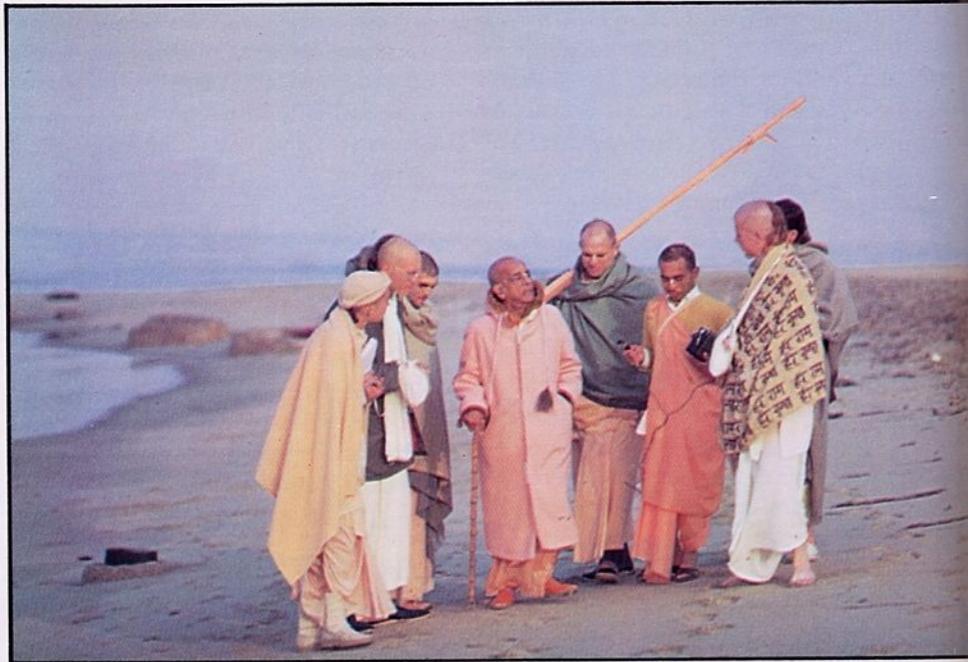
"By human calculation, a thousand ages taken together is the duration of Brahmā's one day. And such also is the duration of his night." [Bg. 8.17]

Thus Brahmā, by these calculations, lives for so many millions and trillions of years. We cannot believe this, although evidence is given in the scriptures. In other words, we conclude that Kṛṣṇa talks nonsensically while we speak as authorities. Even great scholars say that these scriptural statements are all mental speculations. Although these men are nothing but rascals, they pass for reputable scholars. They place themselves above God's position by attempting to refute or deny the statements of God in the revealed scriptures. In this way so many fools in the guise of scholars, scientists and philosophers are misguiding the whole world.

Svarūpa: Of course so much is being written about Darwin's theory. In any library there are hundreds of books on his theories.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Do they accept or reject them?

Svarūpa: Generally they accept him, but there are some who are very critical.



Śrīla Prabhupāda: Darwin speaks about the evolution of the species of life, but he has no real information about spiritual evolution. He knows nothing about the progress of the spirit soul from lower forms of life to higher forms. He claims that man has evolved from monkeys, but we can see that the monkey is not extinct. If the monkey is the immediate forefather of man, why is he still existing?

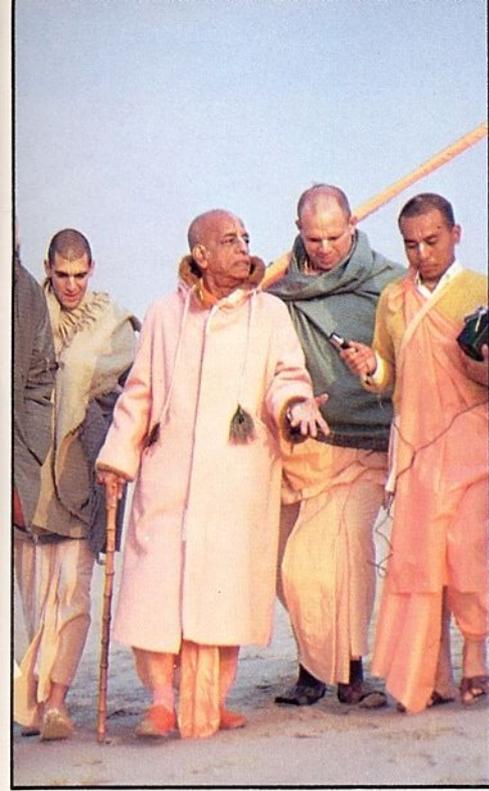
Svarūpa: Darwin says that the species are not created independently but are descended from one another.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: If there is no question of independence, how can he abruptly begin with a certain species? He must explain how the original species came into existence.

Karandhara: Scientists claim that the earth was created by biological chemistry, and they refuse to teach God created the earth because they think everyone will consider them fools.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: If their biology and chemistry are so advanced, why don't they create something? They claim they may be able to create life in the future, but why in the future? Life is already created. Is science based on the future? We should trust no future, however pleasant we may think it will be. This is the world, and it is given



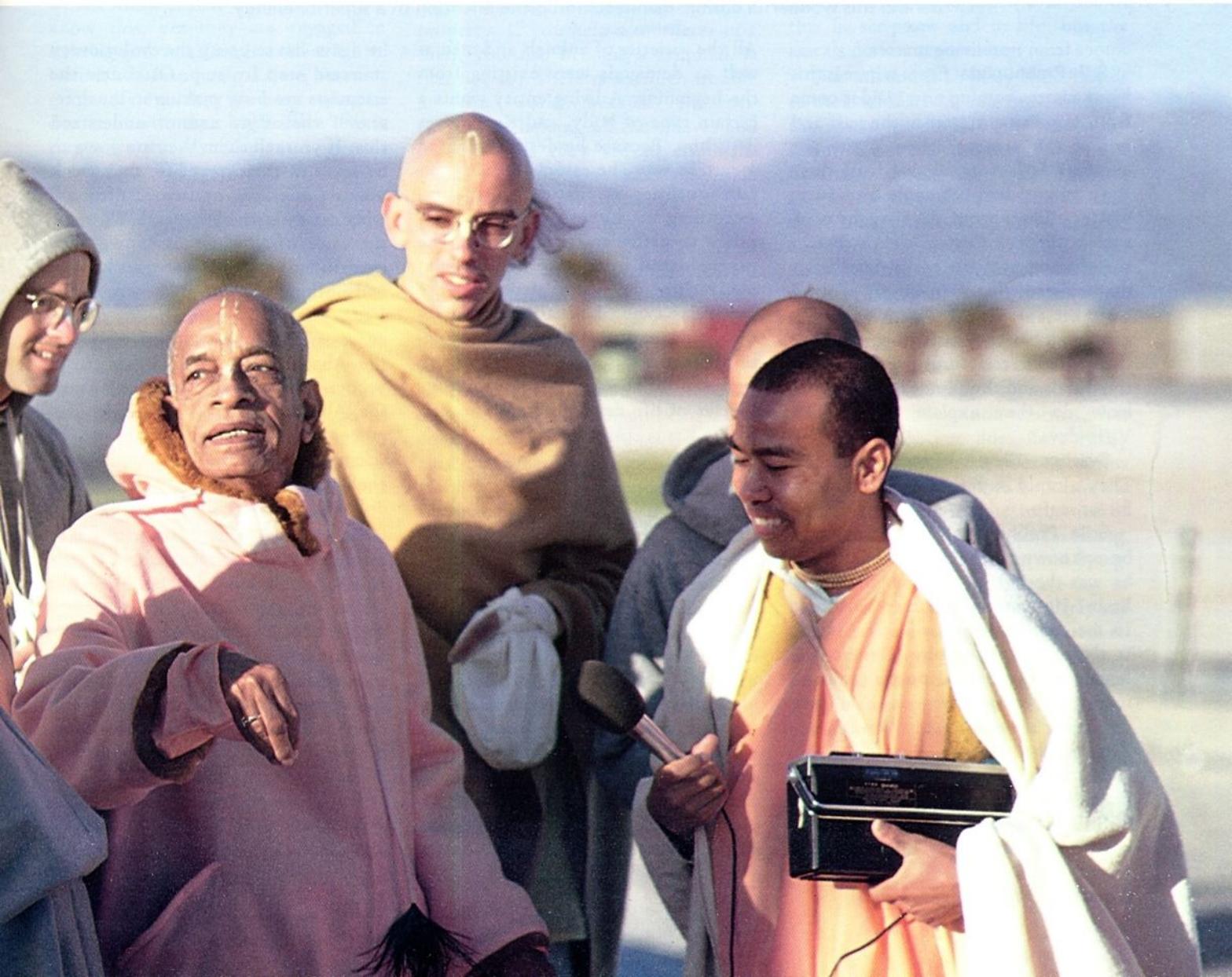


now. Everyone is thinking the future will be very pleasant, but what assurance do we have of this? They have to accept that they do not know what the truth actually is. They say that they are expecting to arrive at the truth in the future, but that is simply proof that their knowledge is imperfect. This is something like a bankrupt man giving a postdated check. What is the value of the man's check if he has no money? Who will accept such a check? He may talk of having money in the future, but there is no assurance of this. They are claiming that their scientific method is perfect, and at the same time when a practical

example is needed, they simply post-date the example. They claim to have millions of dollars worth of knowledge, but if you ask them a question, they simply give you a post-dated check. Why should we accept it? They cannot even produce a spear of grass through their biological or chemical experiments. Nonetheless they are claiming that the creation is produced by some chemical or biological method. Why does no one question all this nonsense?

Svarūpa: In the ultimate analysis, when they consider the origin of life, they say that everything started from matter. In other words, living matter

“They are claiming that this creation is produced by some chemical or biological method. Why does no one question all this nonsense?”





“Behind this wonderful cosmic manifestation is the direction of a superior energy.”

comes from non-living matter.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: From where is this living matter coming now? Did it come from non-living matter in the past and not at the present? How is the ant coming? Is it materializing from dirt? Even an ant does not come from inert matter. What proof do they have of such a theory? Darwin claims that in the distant past no really intelligent man existed, that man simply evolved from the apes. If there were no intelligent brain in the past, how is it that these Vedic scriptures were written thousands and thousands of years ago? How do they explain a sage like Vyāsadeva?

Svarūpa: They have no explanation. They simply say these are unknown forest sages.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Vyāsadeva may be unknown to them, but nonetheless he was there. How is it he got such a brain? He may be unknown to you or to me, but nonetheless his brainwork is there, his philosophy is there, his language, linguistics, poetic arrangements and verbal strength. You may not know the person, but you can understand the brain.

Svarūpa: Weren't all the varieties of animals existing from the beginning?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Simultaneous creation is verified by *Bhagavad-gītā*.

All the varieties of animals and men as well as demigods were existing from the beginning. A living entity wants a certain type of body, and Kṛṣṇa gives it to him. Because he desires things in a certain way, he associates with certain qualities of nature in matter. According to his association, he receives a particular type of body. The psychological forces, the mind, thinking, feeling and willing determine the particular type of situation and body the living entity receives. The evolutionary process is there, but it is not an evolution of species. It is not that one species of life develops from another, for, as Kṛṣṇa states:

*avyaktād vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ
prabhavanty ahar-āgame
rātry-āgame pralīyante
tatraivāvyakta-samjñāke*

“When Brahmā’s day is manifest, this multitude of living entities comes into being, and at the arrival of Brahmā’s night they are all annihilated.” [Bg. 8.18]

The evolution is the spiritual evolution of the individual living entity through the various species of life. If one enters into the body of a fish, he has to undergo the evolutionary process step by step. If one is on the top of the stairs and somehow falls down,

he again has to go up the evolutionary staircase step by step. Of course the scientists are busy making so much research that they cannot understand this. If you tell them they are going to be trees in their next life, they think you are speaking nonsense. After all, what can we learn by research? When the cause of all causes is known, then everything knowable becomes known, and nothing remains unknown. As the *Vedas* state: *Yasmin vijñāte sarvam evaṁ vijñātaṁ bhavanti*. If we know the Absolute Truth, all other truths become known, but if we don’t know the Absolute Truth, we are in ignorance. One may not be an official scientist or philosopher, but he may challenge anyone and talk boldly if he only knows one thing—Kṛṣṇa.

This contemporary civilization is so proud of its independence, but actually it is so much dependent on oil. If the oil supply is stopped, then what will these rascal scientists do? They cannot do anything. Let them try to manufacture oil in their test tubes, enough oil to run their civilization on. At present there is a scarcity of water in India. What can the scientists do about this? They may know the chemical composition of water, but they cannot produce it when there is a great scarcity. They require the help of clouds, and all

that is God's manipulation. Actually they cannot do anything. They have gone to the moon, but for all their labor they have simply taken away some dust and rocks. The rascal government exacts taxes and spends money unnecessarily. This is their intelligence. It is a state of asses, that's all. The politicians have no sympathy or compassion. They do not consider that the hard-earned money is coming from the public and that they are spending it by shooting big rockets off to other planets. All they do is promise to bring back more dust. First they may get a handful of dust, then they promise to bring back tons of dust. What is the meaning of all this?

Karandhara: They believe that there may be life on Mars.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: They may believe or not believe—what is the gain? What we do know is that life is here. They know this, yet they are engaged in fighting and in killing life. Here is life. Here is a human being. Life is here undoubtedly. But they are busy trying to destroy it with their big bombs. This is their scientific advancement.

Svarūpa: They are very curious to know what is going on on other planets.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That means that for their childish curiosity they are spending so much money. They can spend so much to satisfy their curiosity, but when so many poverty-stricken countries ask them for help, they say there is no money. They are very proud to go to the moon, but why don't they take information how to go to Kṛṣṇa's Goloka Vṛndāvana? If they go there, all their curiosity will be satisfied. They will learn that beyond this inferior energy there is indeed a superior, spiritual energy. This material energy cannot work independently. The spiritual energy has to join it. Material elements are not created of themselves. It is the soul that is creative. We may try to make something with matter, but matter does not create itself. Hydrogen and oxygen will only come in contact when moved by the superior energy. Only fools can expect the entire cosmic manifestation, which is only matter, to come into being automatically. We may have a nice car, but if there is no driver,

what is its use? Unless a man knows how to work a machine, unless a man pushes a button, the machine does not work. Similarly, without the superior energy, the material energy cannot act. Behind this wonderful cosmic manifestation is the direction of a superior energy. All this information is given in the scriptures, but still people will not believe it.

Actually everything is God's property, but people are claiming this property to be theirs or their country's. Now they are talking about the problem of overpopulation, but the fact is that God has supplied enough. Actually there is enough land and enough food if it is properly used. People are artificially creating problems, and the scientists are helping them by giving them so many destructive devices. They simply encourage the rascals and rogues who are trying to use up God's property. If you help a murderer or a thief, you also become a criminal. Is that not so? There is so much trouble in the world because the scientists are helping all the thieves and rogues. Thus they are all criminals. *Stena eva sah.* One who does not recognize the proprietorship of the Supreme Lord is a thief.

Once we accept the mystic power of the Supreme Lord, everything is solved. The scientists may claim that life starts from dull matter, but we are saying that life starts from life. We can actually see that birds are begetting birds, beasts are begetting beasts, and human beings are begetting other human beings. Life comes from life, and we have proof of this, but where is the proof that life starts from dull inert matter? Just give one instance of life arising from matter. The scientists may claim that life began with some chemical, but they cannot tell us where this chemical comes from. If there were such a chemical, it came from God, the Supreme Life. That is our answer to the scientist. What do you think his reply will be?

Svarūpa: The scientist will reply that he cannot believe it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is nonsense. You can see that ordinary life, a tree, for instance, produces so many chemicals. How can one say that he does not believe this? An ordinary fruit like an

orange produces so many chemicals. One can actually see this. An ordinary tree, which is a living being, produces so many chemicals. The Supreme Lord is the supreme living being. Whatever we have in minute quantity, God has in infinite quantity. That is the difference between God and the living entity. Man can produce a little water in the form of perspiration, but God's perspiration can produce unlimited seas. We have the same potencies as God, but we can only produce a little. God can produce things in enormous, unlimited quantity. We are limited, and He is unlimited. We may have some powers, even some mystic powers, but the storehouse of all power is God. God is full of all mystic power. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*: "With a single fragment of Myself I pervade and support this entire universe." [Bg. 10.42] There is so much evidence of this in scripture and in life, but the rascals do not accept it.

Our mission is to bring these rascals to their senses. Now one must find out the means to do this. The rascals are suffering but because they are sons of God they should not suffer. They do not know that there is God or that there is happiness. They know nothing of bliss or of eternal life. They are carrying on so much research and living for fifty, sixty or seventy years. After that they do not know what is going to happen. They have no knowledge that life is eternal. Actually their position is like that of an animal. An animal does not know what is after death, nor does he actually contemplate death. He does not know why he is here, nor does he know the value of life. Under the influence of *māyā*, the animal simply goes on eating, sleeping, defending, mating and dying. That's all. People are endeavoring so hard, but for what purpose? They say that they are struggling so hard to make provisions for the next generation, but what are the provisions for? They cannot reply to that. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant to give real purpose to life by establishing Kṛṣṇa, God, as the center of everything. It is therefore to the scientist's benefit to understand this important movement. ❏

“TO ME” MEANS TO

KṚṢṆA

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the natural occupational duty of the spiritual soul. Religions, sects, denominations and faiths exist on the mental and intellectual platforms, but every creature, from demigods down to insects, has a true spiritual identity as a loving devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

by His Holiness
ACYUTĀNANDA SVĀMĪ

WHEN WE SPEAK OF a Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee, we do not refer to a person born in a family of devotees or someone wearing two white lines on his forehead. Since “Kṛṣṇa” refers to the Supreme Lord, *every living creature is naturally a Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee*. Because our false egos cover our Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however, we think that we are Christians, Hindus, Indians, Americans or Russians, or that we are tall, short, brown, white and so on.

We should understand the term “Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee” to be identical to the word *jīva*, “soul.”

jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'
kṛṣṇera 'taṭasthā-śakti,' 'bhedaḥbheda-prakāśa'
(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 20.108*)

The real nature of the living entity is to be the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. The living entities constitute the marginal potency of the Lord, which although different from Him is not different from Him. In his true form, the soul is a person, a person who has a romantic relationship with Kṛṣṇa. When purified of material illusion's limita-

tions, this loving energy will bloom in our consciousness. If it does not, this indicates imperfect realization.

Bhagavad-gītā and all Vedic literatures clearly establish these points, but we always meet people who get the whole message backwards. To understand why they do is not easy, for the scriptures themselves explain the process of knowing the Lord: loving devotion alone. The *Gītā's* verses affirm repeatedly that only through devotion, not merely by studying speculative doctrines or contemplating a formless void, can one attain perfection. Kṛṣṇa reveals to Arjuna the *gīta-rahasya*, or secret of the *Gītā*, not because Arjuna is a *yogī*, Vedāntic scholar or monk, for he is not. Arjuna is a worldly householder, soldier and politician. What, then, qualifies him to receive the *Gītā's* secret? What is it in Arjuna that draws from Śrī Kṛṣṇa the secret of the *Gītā*? Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, *bhaktō 'si me sakhā ceti rahasyaṁ hy etad uttamam*: “Because you are My devotee and intimate friend, I reveal this secret to you.” (Bg. 4.3) As a label's instructions explain how to take a medicine, so this verse explains the process for understanding the *Gītā*: one should simply become a friend and devotee of Kṛṣṇa, and He will then reveal everything.

After Śrī Kṛṣṇa thoroughly explains *haṭha-yoga* and meditation, Arjuna refuses to follow these processes. “My mind is too unstable to control,” he says. “It would be easier to control the wind.” Does Lord Kṛṣṇa then chastise Arjuna for being a cowardly disciple and not taking up such *yoga*? Does He encourage Arjuna in any way to follow the *haṭha-yoga* path? No. He tells Arjuna, “Of all yogis, he who worships Me with faith and devotion I consider the best.” (Bg. 6.47) In the Third Chapter the Lord discusses *karma-yoga* and then *jñāna* and *haṭha*, but of all *yogīs*, Kṛṣṇa considers the devotee supreme.

In the Eighth Chapter Kṛṣṇa says that one can reach the Supreme Lord only by *bhakti*: *bhaktiḥ labhyaḥ tv ananyayā* (Bg.8.22). *Ananyayā* means “in no other way.” This Eighth Chapter abounds with verses directing us to accept the path of devotion rather than any other. In the seventh verse Kṛṣṇa urges us, “Always think of Me and at the same time carry out your duty with your activities dedicated to Me and your mind and intelligence fixed upon Me.” Again in the fourteenth verse, the Lord stresses the same exclusive devotion. “For one who remembers Me unflinchingly, and who constantly engages in devotional service, I am easy to obtain.”

In the Ninth Chapter the Lord describes the specific character of a *mahātmā*, a broad-minded great soul, as being that of a devotee. Beginning with the thirteenth verse, the Lord extolls *bhakti*, emphasizing again that it is *ananya*, the only path:

*mahātmānas tu mām pārtha
daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ
bhajanty ananya-manaso
jñātvā bhūtādīm avyayam*

“O son of Pṛthā, those who are not deluded, the great souls [mahātmās], are under the protection of the divine na-

His Holiness Acyutānanda Svāmī, an American devotee in the renounced order of life, has been actively preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness in northern India for the last five years. He is the editor of a book of Kṛṣṇa conscious songs written by great spiritual masters, soon to be published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.



Lord Kṛṣṇa instructing Bhagavad-gītā to His friend and disciple Arjuna. If one becomes a devotee of the Lord, He will then reveal everything.

ture. They fully engage in devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible." (Bg. 9.13) The term *ananya* indicates that no other way is at all acceptable. What are the characteristics of these *mahātmās*?

*satataṁ kīrtayanto mām
yatantaś ca dṛḍha-vratāḥ
namasyantaś ca mām bhaktyā
nitya-yuktā upāsate*

"Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion." (Bg. 9.14)

The Lord then lists nondevotional practices performed by *anye*, "others." Who are these others? Since the *mahātmās* glorify and worship Kṛṣṇa, those who cultivate speculative knowledge, meditate upon the universal form, or worship the abstract one, diverse in many, are not *mahātmās* but merely "others."

The famous twenty-second verse assures devotees that if they reject all other engagements and single-mindedly concentrate upon Kṛṣṇa, they need not bother for their personal needs, for the Lord says, "I personally maintain one who engages in My service." Special words in verses twenty and twenty-one also note that the heavenly planets are not the ultimate goal and that one should not worship as equal to Kṛṣṇa the demigods who preside there. Many common readers of the *Gītā* think that all gods are equal and that it therefore does not matter whom one chooses as his *iṣṭa-deva* (worshipable deity). But in verse twenty-five the Lord says otherwise. *Yānti mad-yājino 'pi mām*: Other devotees achieve other destinations, "but only those who worship Me will live with Me." And how should one worship the Lord?

*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati*

One may worship Him even by offering only "a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, with love and devotion." (Bg. 9.26) Certainly it is not the value of the leaf, flower or fruit that attracts the mercy of the Lord; it is the *bhakti*, love. This *bhakti* should enter every aspect of one's life, for the Lord says:

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi
yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya
tat kuruṣva mad arpanam*

"All that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me." (Bg. 9.27)

The Ninth Chapter ends by describing *bhakti*'s astounding purificatory quality of being able to turn *sūdras* into saints. The Lord declares, *na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*: "My devotee will never perish." (Bg. 9.31) In the final verse, whose words are again repeated in the Eighteenth Chapter, the Lord enjoins:

*man-manā bhava mad-bhaktō
mad-yājī mām namaskuru
mām evaiṣyasi yuktvaivam
ātmanāṁ mat-parāyaṇaḥ*

"Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, offer obeisances and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me." (Bg. 9.34) Lord Kṛṣṇa does not have much time to talk to Arjuna, for the battle cries have already been heralded. He teaches Arjuna in the most concise words. Therefore anything the Lord repeats is most significant.

The Tenth Chapter contains four of the strongest verses stressing the importance of *bhakti* (verses 8-11).

*ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo
mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante mām
budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ*

"I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts." (Bg. 10.8)



Lord Kṛṣṇa revealing His four-armed and then His two-armed form.

*mac-cittā mad-gata-prāṇā
bodhayantaḥ parasparam
kathayantaś ca mām nityam
tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca*

How do devotees behave? What always engages their minds? **“The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are surrendered to Me, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss enlightening one another and conversing about Me.” (Bg. 10.9)**

Then:

*teṣāṁ satata-yuktānām
bhajatāṁ prīti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ
yena mām upayānti te*

“To those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” (Bg. 10.10)

And finally:

*teṣāṁ evānukampārtham
aham ajñāna-jaṁ tamaḥ
nāśayāmy ātma-bhāva-stho
jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā*

“Out of compassion for them, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.” (Bg. 10.11)

An intimate friend always knows deeper truths about someone than those who gather information from outsiders. Indeed, no one can say more about you than you yourself. Similarly, no one can tell more about Kṛṣṇa than Kṛṣṇa Himself, and He chooses to reveal such knowledge to His intimate devotees.

After revealing the universal form to Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa shows His four-armed form and then His humanlike two-armed form and says:

*nāhaṁ vedair na tapasā
na dānena na cejyayā
śakya evaṁ-vidho draṣṭum
dṛṣṭavān asi mām yathā*

“This form which you are seeing with your transcendental eyes cannot be understood simply by studying the Vedas, nor by undergoing serious penances, nor by charity, nor by worship. It is not by these means that you can see Me as I am.” (Bg. 11.53)

How is it, then, that Arjuna can see the transcendental form of the Lord?

The next verse echoes the answer given in the previous chapters:

*bhaktyā tv ananyayā śakya
aham evaṁ-vidho 'rjuna
jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena
praveṣṭum ca parantapa*

“My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding.” (Bg. 11.54) The *Brahma-samhitā* mentions this same point. *Vedeṣu durlabham adurlabham ātma-bhaktāu*: “The Lord is rarely known through Vedic study but easily known through self-surrender.” (Bs. 5.33)

The Twelfth Chapter is entirely devoted to steering us away from the difficult path of impersonalism. Arjuna puts the question clearly: “Which *yogī* do you consider the higher—the one who contemplates Your formless aspect or the devotee who worships Your form?” Lord Kṛṣṇa’s answer is just as direct and clear as the question:

*śrī bhagavān uvāca
mayy āveśya mano ye mām
nitya-yuktā upāsate
śraddhayā parayopetās
te me yuktatamā matāḥ*

“The Blessed Lord said: He whose mind is fixed on My personal form, always engaged in worshiping Me with great and transcendental faith, is considered by Me to be the most perfect.” (Bg.12.2)

In the fifth verse the Lord totally discourages mental speculation on formless, attributeless Brahman, and, in the chapter’s remaining fifteen verses, He totally supports *bhakti-yoga*.

The following chapters of the *Gītā* give an analytical description of Lord Kṛṣṇa, His supremacy over the material modes of nature, and His presence as the Supersoul and the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The conclusion of the Fifteenth Chapter is *bhakti*:

*yo mām evam asamūdho
jānāti puruṣottamam
sa sarva-vid bhajati mām
sarva-bhāvena bhārata*

“Whoever knows Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, without doubting, is to be understood as the knower of everything, and he therefore engages himself in full devotional service, O son of Bharata.” (Bg. 15.19)

The conclusion of the Eighteenth Chapter, the *Gītā*’s last, and therefore the conclusion of the entire *Gītā*, says, *bhaktyā mām abhijānāti*: “Through devotion am I to be known.” (Bg. 18.55) And the repetition of *man-manā bhava mad bhakto* (“Thinking of Me, become My devotee”) leads us to the *Gītā*’s final statement—*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*: “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me.” (Bg.18.66) There is no room for challenging or misunderstanding these statements.

The purpose for the above summary of the *Gītā* is to reveal over forty-five verses exclusively supporting the path of *bhakti*.

“TO ME” MEANS TO KṚṢṆA

Mām, mad, asmi, man, mama and *aham* (all forms of the words “I,” “Me,” and “I am”) when spoken by Kṛṣṇa Himself refer to Kṛṣṇa Himself. Any other interpretation simply hides Kṛṣṇa and His real identity. By trying to interpret the name Kṛṣṇa to mean “black,” “dark,” “unknown” and so on, nondevotees simply want to say that Kṛṣṇa is not a worshipable person, but something with no personality and therefore not worshipable. This point breeds complete rejection of true *bhakti*, and a complete misunderstanding of the *Gītā*. Since love must be exchanged between two persons—the lover and the beloved—an impersonal, abstract, formless objective cancels the possibility of devotion. But the *Gītā*, in the above forty-five verses, emphatically declares that *bhakti* is the way—and *ananya*, the only way.

One should not waste time trying to concoct twisted interpretations of Vedic statements. For example, *hari om tat sat* means that Hari, Kṛṣṇa, is the Absolute Truth. Now, Hari can mean “snake,” “thief,” “lion” or

“Kṛṣṇa.” But are we to understand that the Absolute Truth is a snake? A lion? A thief? Are we to build temples to snakes, lions and thieves? Of course not. Therefore, one must understand the word *hari* from the definition of the scriptures. The Absolute Truth is Kṛṣṇa. One cannot expect to fix one’s mind and intelligence on snakes, lions or thieves and surrender everything to them, nor can one surrender one’s services and the fruits of all activities to

“the dark,” “the black,” or “the unknown.” How can there be love if there is no knowledge of the beloved? The recipient of *bhakti* must be a person, and that person must be the Supreme Absolute Truth. If one considers Kṛṣṇa less than the impersonal Absolute, one does not understand Kṛṣṇa. One’s show of devotion is then only symbolic and therefore useless. Real love is not symbolic; it comes from the spiritual platform:

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā
na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām*

“After fully realizing his spiritual identity, one does not hanker for any attainment nor lament for any loss. Seeing all beings with an equal eye, the soul develops supreme devotion.” (Bg. 18.54)

Bhakti exists even after *mukti*, liberation. A devotee will never allow anything to obstruct the soul’s passionate love for the Lord, and therefore although other *yogīs* forget their personal independence when they approach liberation, a devotee does not. He continues his devotion beyond liberation. That is real love. Not that one loves Kṛṣṇa until one achieves liberation, and then love ends. No. Love for Kṛṣṇa is *sanātana*, eternal.

The *Gītā* mentions three truths as *sanātana*: Lord Kṛṣṇa is *sanātana*, the transcendental realm is *sanātana*, and the living being is *sanātana*. The joining of these three is called *sanātana-dharma*, or the eternal engagement, and that is *bhakti*, devotional service.

People often think that the ultimate is a formless spirit and that from that spirit pour Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu, Śiva and thirty-three million other demigods. At the ultimate end, they think, all will merge again into voidness. But the *Gītā* states just the opposite. The Lord says, *ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavaḥ*: “I am the source of all.” (Bg. 10.8) Furthermore, *ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā*: “I am the creator and destroyer of this entire universe.” (Bg. 7.6) These statements prove that Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Truth. But is the Lord referring to His void aspect or His personal aspect? The answer is very strong:

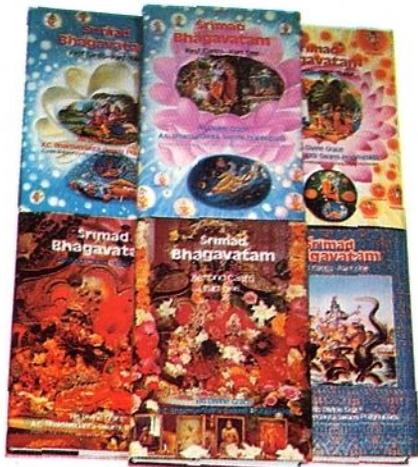
*avyaktaṁ vyaktim āpannam
manyante mām abuddhayaḥ
paraṁ bhāvam ajānanto
mamāvayam anuttamam*

“Unintelligent men, who know Me not, think that I have assumed this form and personality. Due to their small knowledge, they do not know My higher nature, which is changeless and supreme.” (Bg. 7.24) Kṛṣṇa’s form does not change, evaporate, dissolve or merge into nonexistence, for it is not a material body. Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes are going on eternally, unobstructed by the creation, maintenance and destruction of this world. His form is not material; it is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*, an embodiment of eternity, knowledge and bliss. That such a form of spiritual qualities exists beyond the three modes of nature is inconceivable to a mind overpowered by these modes, but it is completely clear to the minds of His devotees, for by *bhakti* and no other way can one understand the Lord. The Lord says, *brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham*: “I am the basis of Brahman [the impersonal Absolute].” (Bg. 14.27) The impersonal Absolute (Brahman) is subordinate to the Lord’s personal feature (Bhagavān), just as sunlight is subordinate to the sun.

The scriptures are like a grand algebraic equation. One side of the equation describes the Absolute’s qualities but does not give His identity. For example, *raso vai saḥ*: “He, the Absolute, is the source of all loving tastes [rasas].” This gives the idea of a person but keeps His identity hidden. In algebra the equation would look like this:

$x = \text{the source of rasa}$

The four *Vedas*, the *Purāṇas*, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Vedānta-sūtra* give the left side of the equation, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, on the right, gives the identity of x . *Kṛṣṇas caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ*: “Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of all rasas.” Therefore, $x =$ Kṛṣṇa. Who is the Supreme Lord? Who is the Absolute Truth? Whenever the scriptures speak of the Supreme, the Lord, or the Absolute, if we understand Kṛṣṇa, the speaker of *Bhagavad-gītā*, to be this unknown Supreme Person, our knowledge is perfect and complete. ❏



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

IS THE LITERARY
INCARNATION OF GOD

It is all-successful, all-blissful
and all-perfect. It is as
bright as the sun. Thus persons
who have lost their vision
due to the dense darkness of
ignorance in the age of
quarrel shall get light from it.”

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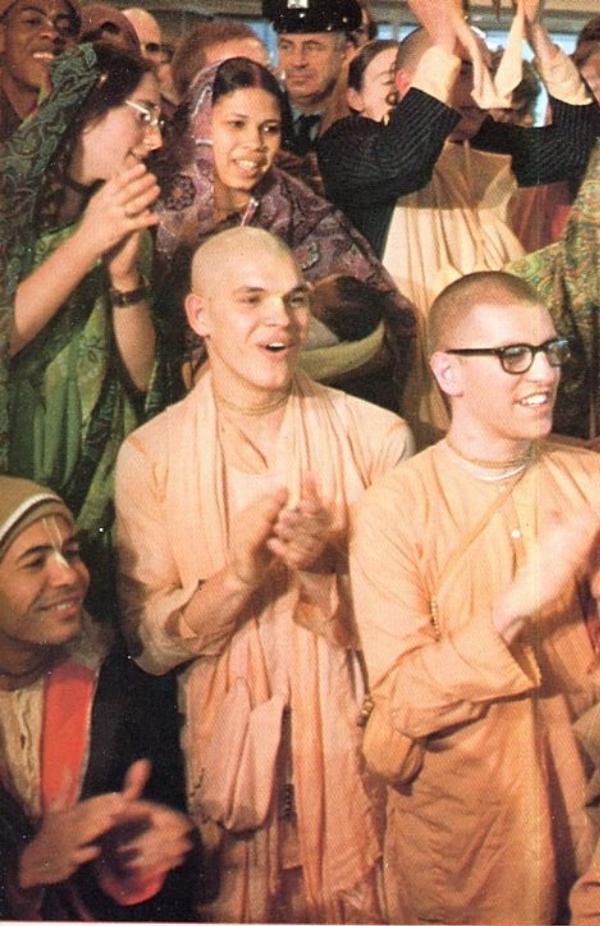


Photo: Viśākhā-devī dāśī

by Viśākhā-devī dāśī

New York: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder and spiritual master of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), stopped here for a few days recently as part of his continuing tour of ISKCON centers around the world. At JFK International Airport, as more than one hundred disciples royally greeted him and curious reporters thronged around him, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained, in clear language and with fixed conviction, the Kṛṣṇa-conscious philosophy of a God-centered society in which "everything animate and inanimate is recognized to be controlled and owned by the Lord."

"Will this solve the energy crisis?" one reporter asked. "Yes, why not?" Śrīla Prabhupāda immediately responded. "The only lack in the world today is the lack of God consciousness."

Viśākhā-devī dāśī is now traveling around the world with her husband to produce a documentary film about the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

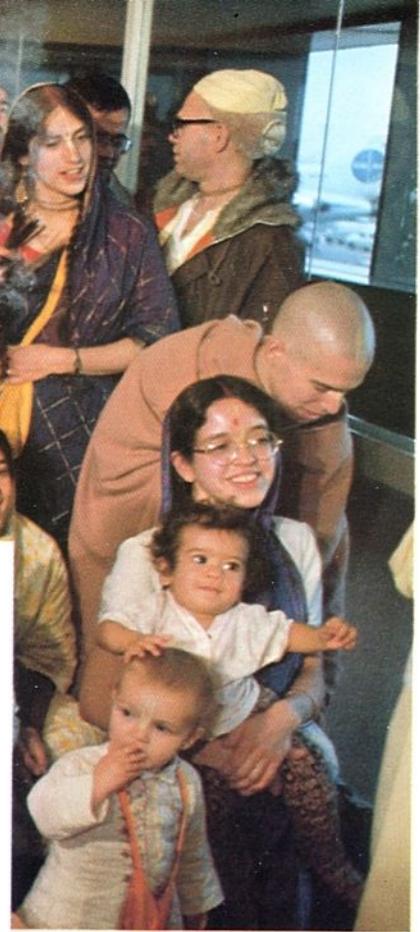


Photo: Muralīvadana dāśa

The Arrival of a Pure Devotee

Photo: Bhārgava dāśa

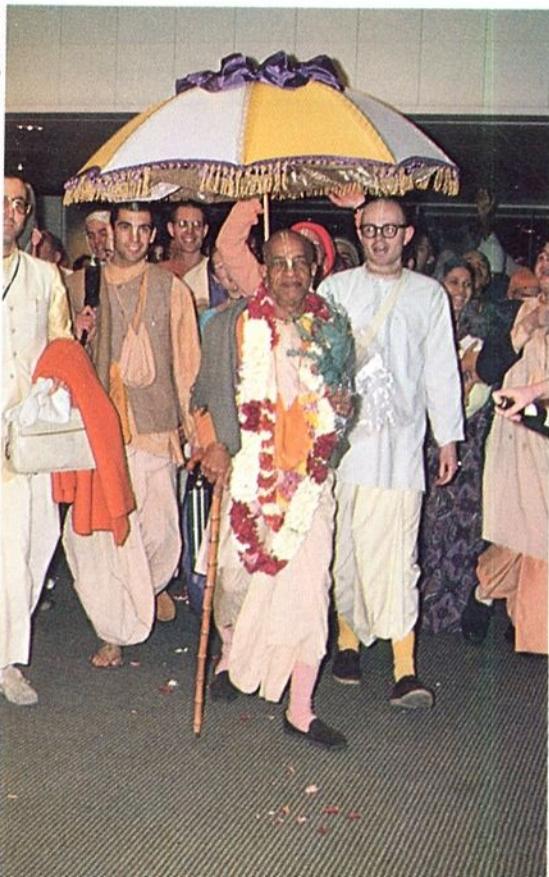


Photo: Vīlāsa-vīgraha dāśa

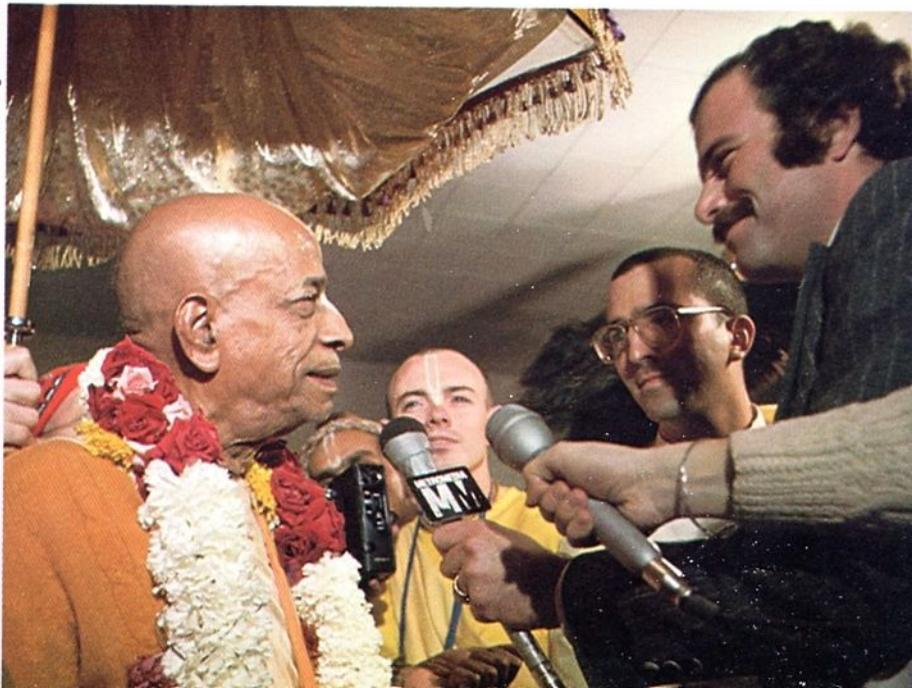


Photo: Bhārgava dāsa



Later, Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples went to the New York ISKCON center, where devotees had made preparations for feasting and festivities during their spiritual master's brief stay.

Entering the temple, Śrīla Prabhupāda first offered his obeisances to the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities who preside there (*below*). To allow devotees to approach Him easily, Lord Kṛṣṇa appears in the form of the Deity. Although the Deity is apparently made of metal or stone, a pure devotee understands that the form of the Lord is non-different from the Lord. Thus the Lord, by His inconceivable potency, appears as the Deity to enable devotees to serve Him and become attracted to Him.

For Śrīla Prabhupāda's pleasure, one group of disciples enacted a play, "Kṛṣṇa Kidnaps Rukmiṇī," taken directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda's book *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*. Complete with transcendental humor, romance, drama, a fight scene and Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy, the performance greatly pleased His Divine Grace (*left and right*), who declared that seeing the play was even better than reading the book.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's stay in New York, though ecstatic, was brief. Satisfied by the high standard of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the New York temple, Śrīla Prabhupāda, after two days, left for the ISKCON World Headquarters in Los Angeles. Devotees of a genuine spiritual master, however, strive never to allow their beloved spiritual master to leave their minds. Thus even in his absence, Śrīla Prabhupāda, though traveling throughout the world, remains present for his disciples, who joyfully continue to remember and follow his pure instructions on the science of devotional service.

Photo: Vilāsa-vigraha dāsa



Photo: Muralīvadana dāsa





Photo: Vilāsa-vigraha dāsa

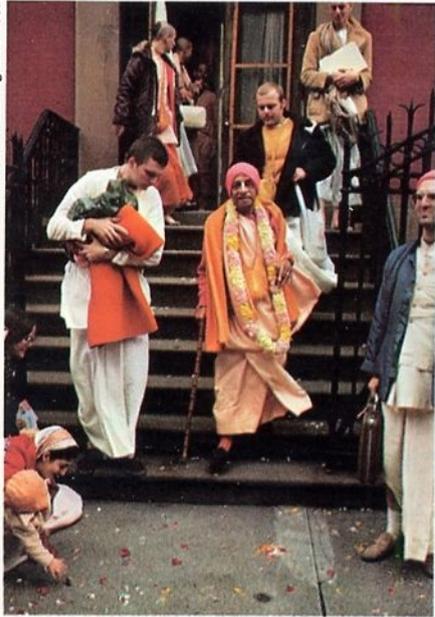


Photo: Vilāsa-vigraha dāsa





The Great Devotee Nārada Muni

THE NĀRADA-BHAKTI-SŪTRA

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE OF GOD

[The *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* is a treatise on the fundamentals of *bhakti*, or devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, composed by Nārada Muni, one of Lord Kṛṣṇa's greatest eternal devotees. Aeons ago, Nārada received Vedic knowledge from his father and spiritual master, Lord Brahmā, the first created living entity, who received the Vedic science of God from Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself at the dawn of creation. Each of Nārada's *sūtras*, or codes, therefore, is a highly concentrated expression carrying great meaning. The following is an excerpt from Śrīla Prabhupāda's as yet unpublished translation and commentary of this important work.]

HIS DIVINE GRACE

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

CODE 1

athāto bhaktim vyākhyāsyāmaḥ

atha—now; *ataḥ*—therefore; *bhaktim*—devotional service; *vyākhyāsyāmaḥ*—we shall try to explain.

TRANSLATION

Therefore I shall now try to explain the process of devotional service.

PURPORT

Devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead is explained in *Bhagavad-gītā*, wherein the Lord says that a self-realized person is always in the transcendental state known as *brahma-bhūta* and is characterized by joyfulness. When one is self-realized, he becomes joyful; in other words, he is free from the material contamination of lamentation and hankering. As long as we are in material existence, we lament for losses in our life, and we hanker for what we do not have. A self-realized person is joyful because he is free from material lamentation and hankering. After attaining self-realization, one sees all living entities equally. He sees no distinction between

the higher and lower species of life. A learned man does not distinguish between a *brāhmaṇa* and a dog because he sees the soul within the body. He does not consider the external bodily features. Such a perfected, self-realized person is eligible to understand *bhakti*, devotional service.

Devotional service to the Lord is so sublime that only through *bhakti* can one understand the constitutional position of the Lord. *Bhagavad-gītā* clearly states, *bhakti-yā māṃ abhijānāti*: one can understand the Supreme Lord through devotional service and by no other process (Bg. 18.55). There are different processes of understanding the Absolute Truth, but if one wants to understand the Supreme Lord as He is, he has to take to the process of *bhakti-yoga*. There are other processes—such as *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga*, *dhyāna-yoga* and other mystic methods—but it is not possible to understand the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, except through His devotional service. This is confirmed in the Fourth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, wherein we learn that Kṛṣṇa wanted to instruct *Bhagavad-gītā* to Arjuna simply because Arjuna was a

devotee and a friend of the Lord (Bg. 4.3). *Bhagavad-gītā* teaches the process of *bhakti-yoga*, and therefore Kṛṣṇa explained it to Arjuna because he was a great devotee. As far as spiritual life is concerned, devotional service is the highest perfection.

People are generally misled by the spell of material nature's illusory energy. There are innumerable living entities within material nature, and only some of them are in human bodies. According to Vedic literature there are 8,400,000 species of life. In the *Padma Purāṇa* it is said that there are 900,000 species of aquatics, 2,000,000 species of plants, 1,100,000 species of insects, 1,000,000 species of birds, 3,000,000 species of animals, and only 400,000 species of human life in the universe. The human species are the least numerous of all.

All living entities can be divided into two divisions: some of them are moving, and some of them, like trees, are unable to move. These two divisions are further divided into many subdivisions. Some species are meant for life in the air, some for life in the water, and some for life on the ground. Among the living entities that move on

the ground, only 400,000 are human species. Of these 400,000 species of human beings, many are uncivilized or unclean. From the Vedic historical point of view it is understood that the “Āryans” (those who believe in advancing in spiritual life) are the most civilized of human beings. Among the Āryans, the Indians are especially cultured, and among the Indians, the *brāhmaṇas* are most expert in knowledge of the *Vedas*.

The Vedic culture, or Vedānta (the science of God), is respected all over the world, and there are people everywhere anxious to understand its purport. The highest perfectional stage of Vedic cultural understanding is explained in *Bhagavad-gītā*, in the Fifteenth Chapter, wherein the Lord says that the purpose of all the *Vedas* is to understand Him (Lord Kṛṣṇa). (Bg. 15.15)

Fortunate are those attracted to Vedic cultural life. The Hindus call themselves followers of the *Vedas*. Some say they follow the *Sāma Veda*, and some say they follow the *Ṛg Veda*. There are different followers of different sections of the *Vedas* who more or less declare that they are Vedic followers. Factually, however, they are not followers of the *Vedas* because they do not follow the rules and regulations of the *Vedas*. Therefore Lord Caitanya says that since the so-called followers of the *Vedas* perform all kinds of sinful activities, the number of the actual followers of the *Vedas* is very small; and even in this small, exclusive number, most are addicted to the process of *karma-kāṇḍa*, the process by which one can elevate himself to the perfectional stage of economic development. Most strict followers of the Vedic system of life are attached to *karma-kāṇḍa*, or the sacrificial portion of the *Vedas* for worship of different demigods. They are attached to particular portions for particular material results. Out of many millions of such followers of the *karma-kāṇḍa* process, some actually engage in the process of understanding the Supreme, the Absolute Truth. They are called *jñānīs*. Perfection for a *jñānī* lies in

attaining the stage of *brahma-bhūta*, or self-realization. Only after self-realization is attained does the stage of understanding devotional service begin. The conclusion is that one can begin the process of devotional service, or *bhakti*, when one is actually self-realized. One entangled in the bodily concept of existence cannot understand the process of devotional service.

“Therefore,” the First Code states, “I shall now try to explain the process of devotional service.” This indicates that this process of devotional service is for the already liberated and self-realized. In the *Vedānta-sūtra* the first aphorism is *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*. This *brahma-jijñāsā*, or inquiry into the Supreme Absolute Truth, concerns those who have been elevated to the position of *jñāna-kāṇḍa* (philosophical speculation) from the lower stage of *karma-kāṇḍa* (pious fruitive work). Only when a man is perfectly situated in the realization that he isn’t body but pure spirit soul can he begin the process of *bhakti*, or devotional service.

CODE 2

sā tv asmin parama-prema-rūpā

SYNONYMS

sā—devotional service; *tu*—but; *asmin*—in this description of *bhakti*; *parama*—highest stage; *prema-rūpā*—love of Godhead.

TRANSLATION

But in this description of devotional service, the highest stage is love of God.

PURPORT

As stated before, after attainment of the highest stage of self-realization, one becomes situated in the devotional service of the Lord. The perfection of devotional service is the attainment of love of God. Love of God involves the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the devotee, and the process of devotional service. Self-realization (*brahma-bhūta*) is the beginning of spiritual life; it is not the perfectional stage of complete spiritual realization. One may understand that he is not this body and has nothing to do with this material world.

That realization is his freedom or liberation from material entanglement, but that is not the perfectional stage. The perfectional stage begins with the activities of the self-realized position. One must act in the understanding that a living entity is eternally the subordinate servitor of the Supreme Lord—otherwise there is no meaning of *bhakti*, or self-realization. If one is puffed up with the idea that he is the Supreme Brahman, or that he has become one with Nārāyaṇa, or that he has merged into the supreme *brahmajyoti* effulgence, he has not grasped the perfection of life. The self-realized may be highly learned and have understanding, but that is not the perfectional stage. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is stated that persons who are falsely puffed up and who think they have become liberated by understanding their constitutional position as Brahman, or spirit soul, are factually still contaminated. Their intelligence is not purified because they have no understanding of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

According to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there are three levels of transcendentalists. There are the self-realized transcendentalists who are knowers of the impersonal Brahman feature of the Absolute Truth; there are the knowers of the localized position of the Supreme as Paramātmā, as understood by the process of yogic mysticism; and there are *bhaktas*, persons who are already in knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and who engage in the devotional service of the Lord. Those who simply understand that man is not matter but spirit soul and who desire to merge into the Supreme Spirit Soul are in the lowest transcendental position. Above them are those mystics who, by meditation, can see within themselves the four-handed Viṣṇu within the heart. They are on the second level. But persons who actually associate with the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa are the highest among all transcendentalists. In the Sixth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says:

*yoginām api sarveṣāṃ
mad-gatenāntarātmanā*

*śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām
sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*

“And of all *yogīs*, he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in *yoga* and is the highest of all.” (Bg. 6.47) That is the beginning in the attainment of the highest perfectional stage, *prema*, or love of God.

Rūpa Gosvāmī, the most authorized devotee in the devotional line, said that there are different stages in coming to the point of love of Godhead. The first requirement is that one should be sufficiently faithful about attaining love of Godhead. *Bhagavad-gītā* teaches that one should give up all other processes of self-realization and fully surrender unto the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. That is faith. One who has full faith in Kṛṣṇa and surrenders unto Him is eligible to be raised to the highest perfectional stage of *prema*. Lord Caitanya taught that *prema* is the highest perfectional stage of human life. Some persons are addicted to the processes of religion, and others are addicted to economic development, sense gratification or the idea of salvation from material existence. But *prema*, or love of Godhead, is above all these stages; this highest stage of love is above religion, above economic development, above sense gratification and above liberation or salvation. It begins with firm faith that one who engages in full devotional service has attained perfection in all of these processes. This faith is the beginning in the attainment of love of Godhead.

If one continues to be elevated more and more, he realizes his association with persons already situated in the highest perfection of love of Godhead. Simply by mental speculation or so-called meditation, one cannot rise to the perfection of love of Godhead. But if one associates with pure devotees or an elevated devotional society, the next step is *bhajana-kriyā*, acceptance of the regulative principles for worshiping the Supreme Lord. When one associates with a pure devotee of the Lord, he naturally accepts such a

person as his spiritual master, and when one accepts a pure devotee as spiritual master, the duty of the spiritual master is to train the neophyte devotee in the principles of regulative principles of devotional service, or *vaidhi-bhakti*. The regulative principles of devotional service are based on one's capacity to serve the Lord. The expert spiritual master engages his followers in work that will gradually develop their consciousness of service to the Lord. Therefore the preliminary step in understanding *prema*, love of Godhead, is to approach a proper pure devotee and accept him as the spiritual master.

The next stage is reached when one regularly performs the primary principles of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master. Then, gradually, all the misgivings of material life are vanquished. There are many habits we acquire in the association of material contamination, chief of which are illicit sex relations, meat eating, intoxication and gambling. One who engages in the regulative principles of devotional service is first of all restricted by the expert spiritual master to abstain from these four principles of sinful life. One cannot rise to the highest perfectional stage of love of Godhead unless he is purified, for God is pure. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, when Arjuna accepted Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Lord, he said, “*pavitram paramam bhavān.*” *Pavitram paramam* means the purest. The Lord is the purest, and if one wants to serve the Supreme Lord, he must also be pure. Unless one is pure, he cannot understand what the Personality of Godhead is, nor can he engage in His service in love, for devotional service, as stated before, begins from the point of self-realization, when all misgivings of materialistic life are vanquished.

After following the regulative principles and purifying the material senses, one next attains *niṣṭhā*, which is firm faith in the Lord. When one attains this stage, he has firm faith in the personal conception of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. No one can persuade him to deviate to the understanding that God is impersonal and has no form, or that any form created by imagination can be accepted as God.

These more or less nonsensical conceptions of the Supreme Lord cannot dissuade him from firm faith in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord has stressed in practically all the verses that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but there are many scholars and many commentators who, despite Lord Kṛṣṇa's stressing this point, deny the personal conception of the Lord. Even some great scholars who have written commentaries on *Bhagavad-gītā* say that one does not have to surrender unto the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, and that one should not even accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead but should accept instead that which is within Kṛṣṇa as Supreme. Such fools do not know what is within and what is without. They comment according to their own whims. Such persons cannot be elevated to the highest stage of love of Godhead. They may be scholarly, and they may be elevated in other departments of knowledge, but they are not even neophytes in the process of attaining the highest perfection, love of Godhead. *Niṣṭhā* indicates acceptance of the words of *Bhagavad-gītā*, the words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as they are, without deviation and without commentary.

If one is fortunately able to rise to the stage of *niṣṭhā*, after vanquishing all misgivings wrought by material existence, he can then rise to the stage of attachment, which is the beginning of love of Godhead. By progressing, one attains a more advanced stage of relishing a reciprocal exchange between the Lord and himself. Every living entity is eternally related to the Supreme Lord, and this relationship is in one of many different transcendental relationships. At the stage called *āsakti*, or attachment, one can understand his relationship with the Supreme Lord. Understanding one's position in relationship with the Lord is the beginning of reciprocation. By constant reciprocation between the Lord and the devotee, one is elevated to the highest stage of love of Godhead.

THE BEST FRIEND OF EVERYONE IS A BOOK

The best friend of all living beings is Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for He is the Supreme Lord who resides in everyone's heart. He is the surpeme all-attractive person, the reservoir of all beauty, knowledge, wealth, fame, strength and renunciation. He appears in this world, age after age, to invite us to revive our eternal relationship with Him. Now He has appeared as a book.

KṚṢṂA, The Supreme Personality of Godhead

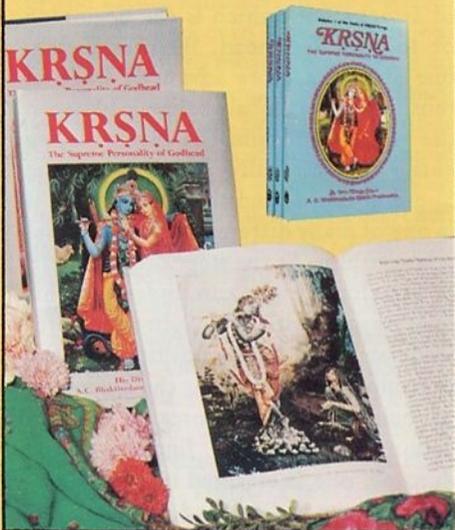
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CODE 3

amṛta-svarūpā ca

SYNONYMS

amṛta—eternal; *svarūpā*—character;
ca—also.

TRANSLATION

This stage of devotional life is eternal.

PURPORT

When one attains the perfectional stage of love of Godhead, he becomes immortal even in his present body. In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says that any person who simply understands His transcendental activities and His appearance and disappearance in this material world becomes liberated, and after quitting his present body, he at once reaches His abode. Therefore it is to be understood that one who has attained this love of God has perfect knowledge, and even if he falls short of perfect knowledge, he has the preliminary perfection of life that a living entity can attain. The greatest misconception of self-realization is to think of oneself as being one with the Supreme. Persons under this misconception cannot be raised to the highest stage of love. Therefore one who has attained the highest stage of loving service to the Lord has understood his subordinate position.

Although the Lord and the living entities are qualitatively one, the living entities are limited, and the Lord is unlimited. This understanding is called *amṛta-svarūpā*, and it makes one eligible to be eternally situated. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there is a prayer: "O Supreme Eternal, if the living entities were equal with You and were all-pervading and all-powerful like You, there would be no possibility of their being controlled by the external energy, *māyā*." Therefore, the living entities should be accepted as fragmental portions of the Supreme. This is also confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*, wherein

the Lord says, "The living entities are My fragmental portions." As fragmental portions, they are qualitatively one with the Supreme, but they are not unlimited.

One who is convinced that he is eternally a servitor of the Supreme Lord is called immortal. Unless one can understand that as a living entity he is eternally a servitor of the Supreme, there is no question of immortality. One who accepts this position, however, becomes immortal. In other words, those under the misconception that the living entity and the Supreme Lord are equal in all respects, both qualitatively and quantitatively, are mistaken, and they are still bound to remain in the material world. They are not elevated to the position of immortality.

Upon attaining love of God, one immediately becomes immortal and no longer has to change his material body. Even if he is not perfected in love of Godhead, his devotional service in this line is considered immortal. Any action in *karma-kāṇḍa* or *jñāna-kāṇḍa* will be finished with the change of body, but devotional service, even if not rendered perfectly, will continue into the next life, and the living entity will be allowed to make further progress. The constitutional position of the living entity as a fragment of the Supreme Lord is confirmed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as well as in the *Upaniṣads*. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* states that if the tip of a hair were divided into one hundred parts and then again one part were divided into another one hundred divisions, that one ten-thousandth part of the tip of a hair would be the size of the living entity. This fragmental position of the portions of the Supreme Lord is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* to be eternal; it cannot be changed. One who understands his constitutional position as a fragmental part and parcel of the Supreme Lord and engages himself in devotional service with all seriousness at once becomes immortal. ❧

HOLY MEN & HYPOCRITES

A beginner's guide to contemporary spiritual life

by His Holiness REVATĪNANDANA SVĀMĪ
and JAYĀDVAITA DĀSA

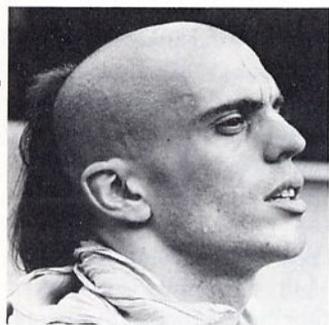


Photo: Bhārgava dāsa

WE SOMETIMES HEAR the complaint that there are so many religious and spiritual groups with so many different teachings that it has become difficult to distinguish among them. People sometimes throw up their hands and drop spiritual life altogether, protesting, "How can I decide what's true and

what's not? It's too confusing!" The revealed scriptures of the world, however, confirm that by the grace of God one who seeks a true spiritual life will find it. But to avoid confusion, one must use careful intelligence to discriminate between the saints and the swindlers, the incarnations and the imposters, the holy men and the hypocrites.

Perhaps the revealed scriptures of the world will afford us some help in this matter, if we can find some common ground among them. After all, they are the ancient, accepted sources of understanding about God and spiritual life for countless millions of people, and they may provide us with at least a beginning.

His Holiness Revatīnandana Svāmī, a frequent contributor to Back to Godhead, is traveling throughout Great Britain lecturing about Kṛṣṇa consciousness to college audiences.

Jayādvaitya dāsa is Associate Editor of Back to Godhead

All the world's major scriptures, such as the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Holy Bible and the Koran, agree that God, or the Supreme Truth, is one, and that He is the cause or creator of everything that exists. This simple information in itself will help one settle the confusion about whether God is a void, God is a divine light, we are all God ourselves, or just who or what God is. Let us therefore examine these different philosophical ideas according to logic and according to scriptures

IS GOD A LIGHT? A VOID? IS EVERYONE GOD?

Is God a void? Some think He is. For them, the highest truth is nothing. But nothing, of course, is nowhere to be found. Even outer space is an ethereal ocean of waves, rays and particles. All over the universe we find light, sound and innumerable planets with rivers, mountains, trees, birds and, of course, people. On this planet at least (and, according to the Vedic scriptures, on all planets), people are the most prominent beings—people with ideas, with feelings, with creativity. And since God, by definition, is the source of all that exists, our conception of God must be adequate to explain how He has caused all these manifestations. But how could so many people and things come from a void nothing? Because it cannot answer this question, we must consider voidism a mistaken idea.

Is God a divine light? The idea that God is a light elevates us only slightly above the idea that He is void. God is not nothing, the advocates of this philosophy tell us, but He is an all-pervading spiritual effulgence. The Vedic scriptures call this effulgence Brahman, and they agree that it is an aspect of the Absolute Truth. But Brahman must be a

subordinate aspect of the Truth, for, again, if the ultimate reality is an impersonal light, where do all the universe's varied forms and living beings come from? If the original truth is impersonal, how could it be the source of people? And what about love of God? If God were zero or an impersonal light, love of God would be meaningless because love cannot be impersonal. Therefore those who speak of love of God and yet call God impersonal are contradictory in their ideas. We must therefore reject their philosophy.

Is each of us God? Although religion generally teaches that we are all eternal, all the world's scriptures make the distinction between the infinite greatness of God and the infinitesimal nature of His eternal parts and parcels. If you, I and everyone else are as good as God, why can we not create entire universes? How has the Supreme forgotten He is supreme, and why does He have to suffer miseries like old age, disease and death? Any person in such a limited and fallible position who nevertheless thinks himself God must certainly face grave doubts about his sanity.

CHEAP GODS, BIG TALK

Then there are some men who teach that not everyone is God but at least they themselves are divine incarnations. Again, determining whether there is truth in these claims is not a matter of sentiment. One may again determine the truth through logic and reason, assisted by scriptural guidance. Generally, however, modern self-proclaimed incarnations either reject the scriptures as being "just words," or else interpret the scriptures according to their own purposes. For them, this is a strategic necessity. As long as there is no authority concerning the symptoms of a genuine incarnation and a genuine process of spiritual realization, anyone can claim to be God or a *guru* by concocting his own means of self-realization. A few *mantras*, perhaps a few chemicals, and a little dash of slick advertising, and—presto!—you too can be God in only six months. But to hoodwink gullible followers one must minimize the scriptural authorities, for one who reads the scriptures may discover the truth, and one who knows the truth has no need for a fly-by-night Lord. Therefore a symptom of bogus incarnations is that they generally minimize the scriptures by saying they are outdated, allegorical, only partially correct, improperly recorded, or simply wrong.

The revealed scriptures predict the genuine incarnations of God well in advance of their earthly appearances. For instance, the Old Testament predicted the appearance of Lord Jesus Christ, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* predicted the appearance of Lord Buddha, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and even Lord Kalki, who will not appear for another 400,000 years. Without reference to such bona fide scriptural predictions, no incarnation of the Lord can be bona fide. Indeed, the scriptures warn that in this age there will be many false incarnations. Lord Jesus Christ cautioned his followers that in the future many imposters would claim to be him. Similarly, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* also warns of false incarnations, describing them to be just like glow-worms imitating the moon. Modern imposters often claim

that their ideas represent the same teachings taught by Christ or Kṛṣṇa, but anyone truly familiar with the teachings of Christ or Kṛṣṇa can easily see that this is just nonsense.

When a genuine incarnation appears, He performs many wonderful activities. For example, when Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared on earth He exhibited His strength by lifting a mountain with His pinky. He exhibited His beauty by attracting not only the most beautiful girls in the universe but also the minds of the greatest Vedic sages. He exhibited His knowledge by speaking *Bhagavad-gītā*, one of the world's most profound and respected spiritual texts. Similarly, when Lord Jesus came he walked on water, cured the incurably ill, and even rose from the dead. What wonderful activities do the modern so-called incarnations offer us? Big talk. Period. Their glorious pastimes consist of being smacked by cars, hospitalized for ulcers, or splattered in the face by cream pies. After cleaning his suit of such a pie, thrown by a skeptical onlooker, one so-called incarnation defended his divinity by explaining that Jesus Christ also had to endure many sufferings at the hands of the ignorant. This is the position of such false incarnations. They cannot walk on water, they cannot cure the sick, they cannot rise from the dead, and they cannot even properly preach God consciousness, but when they get the insults they deserve, they have the audacity to compare themselves to Jesus Christ. We have nothing further to say about such incarnations. Anyone who wants a God like that is welcome to have him.

THE SUPREME AND HIS SERVANTS (Genuine and Otherwise)

For those who are more intelligent, however, *Bhagavad-gītā* directs: "One who discards scriptural injunctions and acts according to his own whims attains neither perfection, nor happiness, nor the supreme destination. Therefore one should understand what is duty and what is not duty by the regulations of the scriptures. Knowing such rules and regulations, one should act so that he may gradually be elevated." (Bg. 16.23-24)

Spiritual life, then, need not be confusing. It can be quite simple to understand, but one must understand spiritual life from reliable authorities. Specifically, to understand the Supreme one should accept the instructions of the Supreme as found in revealed scriptures. If we examine the various scriptures of the world, we will indeed find agreement among them, for the Bible, the Koran, and not only *Bhagavad-gītā* but all Vedic literatures agree that the Supreme Truth is ultimately the Supreme Person. In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Personality of Godhead affirms, *ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavaḥ*: "I am the origin of everything." Similarly, in the Bible, Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly refers to the Supreme as "the Father," a personal form of address. Logic also supports the same conclusion. The universe is full of people, and where but from a person could they have come? The intelligent order of the universe indicates the existence of a supremely intelligent person.

Understanding God as the Supreme Person, we may next rightly question, "What is our position?" Good sense

will tell us, as will the scriptures, that if God is the Supreme Person and we are also people, although definitely not supreme, we should be His servants. Lord Caitanya, the scripturally foretold incarnation of Kṛṣṇa (God) who began the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement five hundred years ago, summarized all the Vedic scriptures in the conclusion *jīvera 'svarūpa' haya-kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'*: "The eternal position of a living being is that of Kṛṣṇa's servant."

Accepting the Lord's supremacy and one's own subordinate position, one can understand that the best spiritual process is that which most fully develops one's desire to render loving service to the Lord. But to avoid still another pitfall in recognizing genuine spiritual life, one must discriminate between those who factually engage in the Lord's service and those who merely talk about it. In other words, one should not be a hypocrite who talks about love of God but does not follow the instructions of God. One should not live a day-to-day life of materialism and yet claim to be God conscious. Nevertheless, many such hypocrites say they accept God as the Supreme Father and say they have love for God, yet they do not follow His instructions, and they level narrow, sectarian criticisms at those who do, denouncing them with quotations taken out of context from scriptures they themselves do not live by. In different parts of the world they call themselves Christians, Muslims, Hindus and so on, but in fact their own scriptures condemn them as the lowest of rascals.

But even if one is sincere in wanting to practice devotion to God, most scriptures do not tell us much about Him. The Bible, for example, says that God is great, but it does not tell us in detail of His greatness. We may accept our position, which is to serve the Supreme Great, but unless we know who He is and unless we have a practical process for offering our service to Him, advancement in faith and love will be difficult. Does God have a residence? Is He alone? What does He do? What does He look like? And how may we go on living and working in the world and yet devote all our actions in service to Him? May we inquire about Him at all, or is He too great for us to know more about Him than "God is spirit"? These are all legitimate questions, and to dedicate oneself to the Absolute Truth as the Personality of Godhead, one must have the answers.

Not having received such transcendental information about God, even though they acknowledge Him as the Supreme Father, people often suppose that ultimately He has no face or personality they can relate to or know anything about. This scarcity of knowledge exists because the world's great scriptures limit their teachings according to time, place and the ability of people to understand them. For example, an important principle in the Koran's teachings is that no one should have sex with his mother. Since Mohammed gave stress to such a principle, we can understand that the people to whom he was speaking, to be in need of such instruction, must have been quite degraded. Similarly, Lord Jesus Christ taught the people of his time, "Do not kill." In other words, people who had to be instructed not to have sex with their mothers or not to kill

or murder were not told the complete glories of the personal pastimes of the Supreme Person, Kṛṣṇa, because they could not appreciate them.

But in *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Vedic literatures Kṛṣṇa reveals confidential and scientific knowledge of God to His intimate devotees, and through them all mankind can benefit. Thus the Vedic literature is like a complete, unabridged dictionary among scriptures, whereas other scriptures, like pocket dictionaries, are equally valid but less informative. Through the Vedic literature, therefore, one can not only become a more learned scholar in the techniques of the science of God, but also gain a personal understanding of God.

Unless one understands God as the Supreme Transcendental Person, with whom one can exchange love through devotional service, one will not be able to defend himself against the attacks of cheaters and impersonalists. The Vedic literature therefore champions personalism on behalf of all true devotees. Those who truly seek love of God should turn to the Vedic literature to receive strength in transcendental knowledge and learn how to practice devotional service (*bhakti-yoga*) unto the Personality of Godhead.

THE NECTAR OF IMMORTALITY

The Vedic scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes the personal features of God. Not that God is an old man with a beard, as some speculate, but an eternal youth, Kṛṣṇa. Envious people, flabbergasted to hear that Kṛṣṇa is eternally youthful and beautiful, surrounded by friends in His own transcendently pleasing abode, resent that so much information about God is available in the Vedic scriptures. But Kṛṣṇa, by His descent into the material world 5,000 years ago, revealed His pastimes and form and banished all imaginary ideas about God. This is all described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

One should not expect to see Kṛṣṇa immediately, while still in impure material consciousness. In this age, hearing is more important than seeing. The *Bṛhan-nāradya Purāna* states: "Chanting of the holy name of the Lord is the most successful method for God-realization in the age of Kali [the present age of quarrel and hypocrisy]." Lord Caitanya declared that one may chant any name of God he finds in his religion, but Lord Caitanya Himself chanted the name "Kṛṣṇa," accepting it as the original name of God. Such chanting, He taught, can clear the mind of all hazy conceptions of God and enable one to see and understand Kṛṣṇa everywhere.

Therefore, avoiding both false doctrines and hypocrisy, one should somehow develop his love of God. The purpose of this analysis is not merely to find faults or criticize others, but to clear up some popular misconceptions about spiritual life and offer authorized Vedic information. As explained in the *Īsopaniṣad*, by discriminating between knowledge and ignorance one can transcend the confusion of material consciousness and enjoy the nectar of immortality. ❧



KṚṢṆA'S SUPREME GLORY



BY KARANDHARA DĀSA

I MIGHT BE A PAUPER and enjoy coming to talk with you, but even if I were the richest man in the world, I might still enjoy a simple talk. Especially if I were a very great man, it would not be difficult for me to spend a little time with my own chosen friends. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa's being the Supreme Lord, infinite and inconceivably great in every way, does not inhibit His wanting to enjoy simple relationships. Although the greatest person, He likes to enjoy a little sport, some friends, a bit of affection. Kṛṣṇa is not different from us in this respect; He is the Supreme Great, but this does not mean He cannot enjoy relationships with His pure devotees such as Bhīṣma, or Arjuna, or the *gopīs*, who are simple village girls, or His mother Yaśodā. Impersonalists or atheists may consider these transcendental loving pastimes of Kṛṣṇa proof that Kṛṣṇa is mundane, but to devotees who follow the authorized directions of revealed scriptures, Kṛṣṇa's affectionate dealings are proof of His supreme glory.

Kṛṣṇa has created millions of universes, and on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra He revealed all these universes to His friend Arjuna within His personal form. *Bhāgavad-gītā* records the awesome magnificence of that universal form of the Lord, spreading unlimitedly in all directions. What Kṛṣṇa has done, and what He is capable of doing, is beyond measure. It is inconceivable. But, most wonderfully, the Lord wants to share affectionate exchanges with His devotees. The devotees relish this transcendental aspect of the Lord's magnificence above all else.

Impersonalists assume that since God is the Supreme Great, He cannot have distinctive qualities. But if He were completely impersonal, with no qualities, how could He be

great? Impersonalist philosophers say Kṛṣṇa's form and personality are material and therefore cannot be absolute. They think that to be spiritual the Absolute must have no qualities or variety like those of the material world. But the Vedic literature informs us that Kṛṣṇa's name, form and personality are all transcendental and that He is the source of all material and spiritual variety.

The ultimate understanding of the Absolute Truth is that He is the Personality of Godhead, with a form of eternity, bliss and knowledge. To say that God cannot have a distinctive form or qualities denies His being inconceivably great, for although God is the supreme controller, the creator of everything that be, with power and glory beyond comprehension, by His unlimited potencies He can nevertheless be medium sized and stand in your room. Understanding this personal aspect of the Lord is much greater than thinking Him simply an impersonal, obscure power, pushing everything but never to be known or seen.

The true greatness of God is that He is a person, hardly bigger than you or I, who can sit down and engage in simple talk. He is so great that He is not preoccupied with creation, maintenance and destruction. Rather, Kṛṣṇa's various potencies carry on all the cosmic affairs, while He simply relishes the joy of playing in the forests with His friends, the young village girls and cowherdboys of Vṛndāvana. He is the master of all energy, both spiritual and material, yet He takes pleasure in simple, reciprocal, sportive play with His devotees. He simply likes to be with His loved ones.

Although Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord, He acts as a personal friend towards a devotee like Arjuna.



We should never think of God cheaply, however, comparing His loving exchanges to those of an ordinary man. As soon as we understand who God is, the potency of His supreme position overwhelms us, as the Lord's universal form overwhelmed Arjuna. In that form, Arjuna could see everything being created, maintained and annihilated, all under the influence of time, and he could not keep his composure.

Those who have a callous or abusive attitude can never understand God's unlimited greatness and power. And unless one understands Kṛṣṇa as the omnipotent Supreme Lord, he cannot be purified enough to enter loving relationships with Him. One cannot enter the association of the Lord prematurely, while still retaining the desire to lord it over others. Were Kṛṣṇa to appear before us as an ordinary boy while we are still in the conditioned state, we might try to exploit Him, compete with Him, steal from Him, or somehow or other subvert His position. But Kṛṣṇa would not want to associate with us in this way. If we want to fight with Kṛṣṇa, why should He want to come? Kṛṣṇa does not want to mix with anyone inimical towards Him, nor is He forced to do so.

We are forced into a cycle of action and reaction, birth and death, in the association of imitation Kṛṣṇas who struggle against one another in the pool of material existence. But Kṛṣṇa is not forced into such association. As long as we remain in a conditioned state of mind, Kṛṣṇa stays away. He simply desires to enjoy pure love and affection with His friends in the forest of Vṛndāvana.

Besides being the Supreme Great, Kṛṣṇa is also the Supreme Pure. When we see someone pure, his qualities are obvious. He has no malice and no greed, he is kind to everyone, and he has no desire to exploit or subvert. He simply wants to be friendly. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Person in that way. He wants to be very gentle and kind and not encounter inimical feelings. He therefore does not allow those who have inimical attitudes to come into His direct association. He allows them to have those attitudes, but He does not want to associate with them.

To associate with the Lord on a personal basis, one must first develop a desire to serve Him and surrender to Him. It is difficult to do this simply by thinking of the Lord as the supreme great, the supreme controller, or the all-pervading God. We have no affinity for the all-pervading because we are not all-pervading. Although it is quite logical that there is all-pervasiveness and all-greatness, we cannot identify with that. We can identify with someone with whom we can speak, with whom we can have a relationship, with whom we can talk and play. We cannot identify with a force or power beyond our conception. But if that perfect being, that supreme object of love, can come before us in a transcendental form, we can then identify with Him and have actual pleasure in that relationship.

By practicing pure devotional service under the guidance of a spiritual master, one can become completely Kṛṣṇa

conscious in this lifetime and at the time of death go to Kṛṣṇa's abode in the spiritual world. There Kṛṣṇa engages in the same transcendental relationships with His pure devotees that He enjoys when He descends to Vṛndāvana within the material world. Both within the material world and within His eternal and original abode, Kṛṣṇaloka, far beyond the material universes, Kṛṣṇa is always surrounded by loving friends, elders, cows, *gopīs* and cowherd boys.

Kṛṣṇa's relationships with His devotees are all unique, not stereotyped. For example, Bhīṣma is a famous devotee of the Lord in the sporting relationship of a military fighter. Bhīṣmadeva, a warrior, always considered himself a servant of the Lord but by Kṛṣṇa's arrangement, when the Battle of Kurukṣetra came about, Bhīṣma was on the opposing side. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes that by the influence of inevitable *kāla*, or time, Bhīṣma was face to face with Kṛṣṇa on the battlefield, for Kṛṣṇa desired to have such sport. Bhīṣmadeva had a military spirit, and Kṛṣṇa, driving the chariot of Arjuna, was also manifesting His chivalry. Bhīṣmadeva's duty was to try to kill Arjuna in battle. Kṛṣṇa, therefore, driving Arjuna and facing the arrows of Bhīṣma, very much enjoyed the battle's challenge, accepting the arrows' wounds simply as bites, like those of lovers, for they were not inimical but affectionate.

Thus one may render loving service to the Lord even as His opponent. Just as we enjoy challenging, jousting, sporting, fighting, running and competing in chivalry, Kṛṣṇa, the supreme enjoyer, also takes pleasure in it. There was no question of Kṛṣṇa's actually being injured in this fighting, for He is unlimited and omnipotent. But only the devotees of the Lord are able to understand the pastimes He displays. Those who are rebellious against Him merely consider these pastimes proof that He is mundane.

Kṛṣṇa wants to appear before His devotees in the way the devotees want to serve Him. Kṛṣṇa appears before the *gopīs*, His cowherd girl friends, always as a cowherd boy. To the *gopīs* Kṛṣṇa is not a warrior; to them He is always a boy of the Vṛndāvana Forest. Years after Kṛṣṇa left Vṛndāvana, when He was the King of Dvārakā, He met with the *gopīs*, coming before them with many chariots, elephants, soldiers, maidservants, and all the pomp and paraphernalia of the king of the most opulent land in the world. But when the *gopīs* saw Kṛṣṇa attired as a royal warrior, they simply thought of the Kṛṣṇa of Vṛndāvana. They could not see Kṛṣṇa as the King of Dvārakā or the warrior of Kurukṣetra. They could see Kṛṣṇa only in Vṛndāvana, as their youthful loving friend. No matter what He was doing, they saw Him as He was in Vṛndāvana because this was their relationship with Him.

Each and every living entity in creation has an eternal, unique relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Now we have forgotten God and our relationship with Him, for we are in the material world, trying to enjoy the illusion that we ourselves are the central enjoyers and proprietors. But human life is meant to revive our dormant love for Kṛṣṇa. This should be the goal of all our endeavors. ❧

Five thousand years ago on an ancient battlefield in India, Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the words of Bhagavad-gītā to His friend and disciple Arjuna. That holy discourse, spoken in a mere thirty minutes, can awaken and refine our eternal consciousness.

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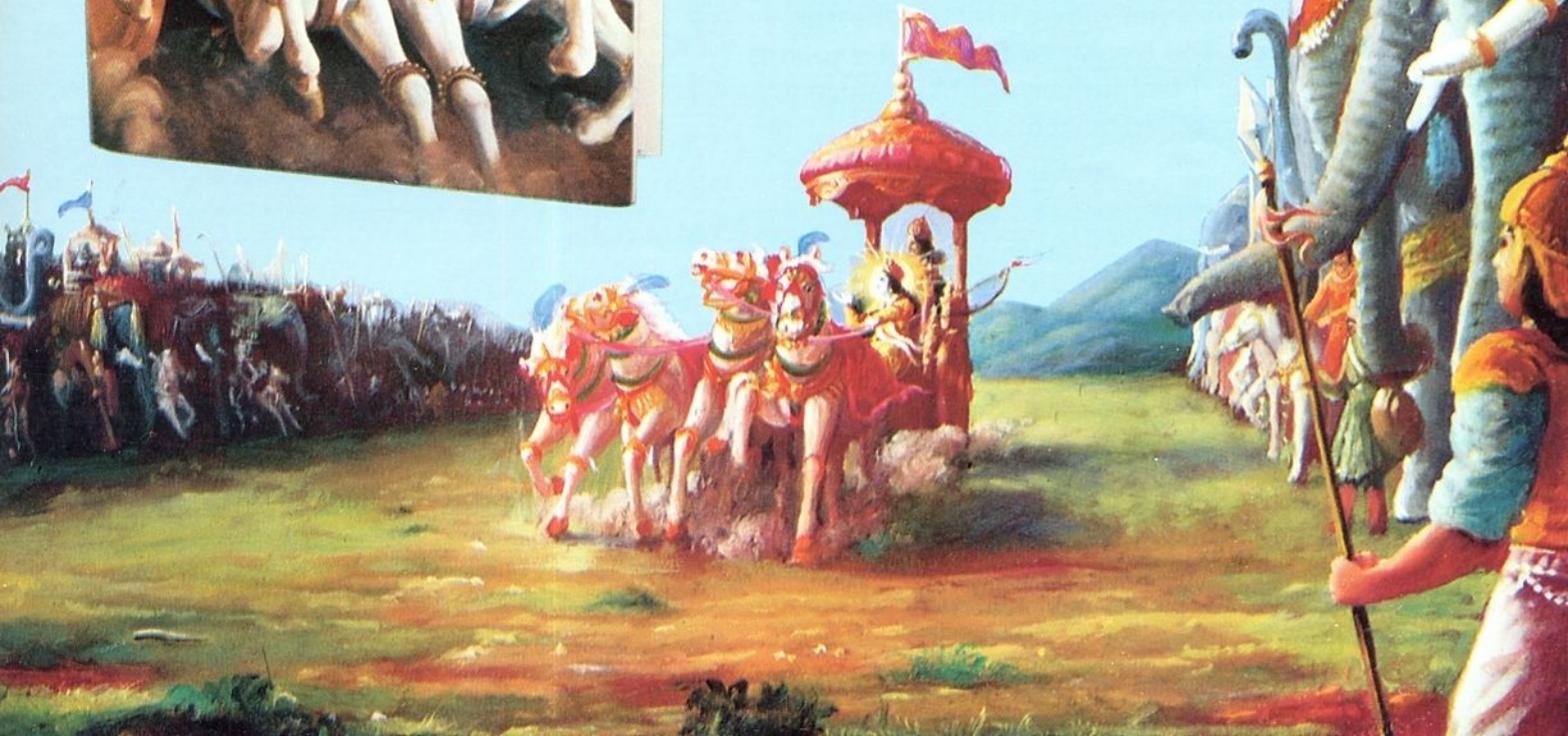
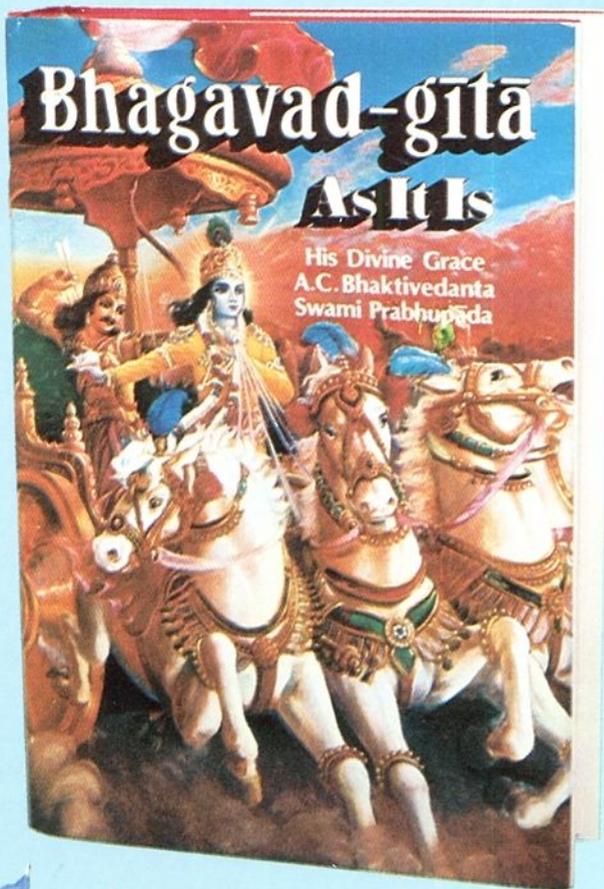
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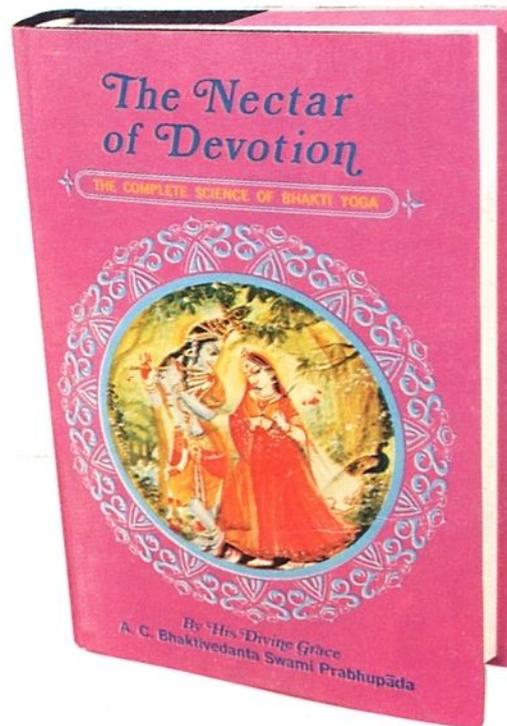
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