

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



BACK TO GODHEAD



Vol.10 No.1

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT





His Divine Grace
A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

IN THE GURUKULA SCHOOL IN DALLAS, TEXAS
AND AROUND THE WORLD. . .

**HARE KṚṢṆA HARE KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA HARE RĀMA RĀMA RĀMA HARE HARE**



A self-realized person must know what is matter, what is spirit, and who is the controller of both. Matter consists of things that have no independent life, like stones, machines and even our very bodies. Spirit is the living force. And the controller of both is God Himself, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The children at Gurukula ("the place of the spiritual master") are cultivating self-realization by engaging in practical service to Kṛṣṇa. Gurukula, the

children's school of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, has one hundred children, ages 3-13, and thirty well-trained teachers. They rise early, bathe and attend early-morning worship of the Lord in the Gurukula temple. And later, during the day, the children study English, math and Sanskrit.

Love of Kṛṣṇa is dormant in the heart of everyone. So when a child comes in touch with a natural way of life, full of good association, intelligent direction and worthwhile activity—in other words, when he comes in touch with Kṛṣṇa consciousness—his dormant love awakens. He becomes strong, self-controlled, honest and satisfied. And when he grows up, he can become qualified to lead the world away from materialistic peril and into secure service to the Lord. Thus Gurukula is producing spiritual leaders for the world of tomorrow.

Through Kṛṣṇa consciousness, anyone, of any age, can be as satisfied as the children of Gurukula. One need only chant the holy names of God, as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—and get to know one's eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

Gurukula is one of more than eighty worldwide centers of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which was established in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. This magazine, *Back to Godhead*, will tell you about the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement and the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As you look through it, on page 18 you'll find an article telling you more about Gurukula.

BACK TO GODHEAD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

FOUNDER

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

His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

Sanskrit words and names in *Back to Godhead* are spelled according to a system that scholars throughout the world use to show how to pronounce 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 *i* is like the *i* in *pieque*. The vowel *ī* is pronounced like the *er* in the English word *fiber*. The *c* is pronounced as in the English word *chair*. The aspirated consonants (*ch*, *jh*, *dh*, etc.) are pronounced as in *staunch*, *heart*, *hedge*, *hog* and *red-hot*. The two aspirants *ś* and *ṣ* are like the English *sh*, and *s* is like the *s* in *sun*. So pronounce *Kṛṣṇa* as KRISHNA and *Caitanya* as CHAITANYA.

MEMBERSHIP

For information on how you can become a registered member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, please write to the Society's secretary at 3764 Watseka Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90034.



ON THE COVER

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appears in the spiritual world with His eternal consort, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. This is an illustration from Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (the Pastimes of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu), a classic spiritual text that has recently been translated from Bengali into English, with elaborate purports, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

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A discourse on the Holy Bible
by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Delivered on June 14, 1974, in Paris, France

"In the BEGINNING was the WORD"

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for kindly participating in this *saṅkīrtana* movement, which is a movement for the vibration of transcendental sound. Sound is the origin of all creation. That is admitted in the Bible also. We are reading a passage from the Bible:

[A disciple reads] The Gospel According to Saint John. Chapter 1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

This same principle is explained in the Vedic literature. Here it is said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Because God is the Absolute Truth, there is no difference between God and God's form, His qualities and His word. Everything related to God is also God. In the material world, name and substance are different. For example, when you are thirsty, if you simply utter the words "water, water, water," that will not quench your thirst. But in the spiritual world the name of God, or Kṛṣṇa, and the Supreme Personality of Godhead are the same.

I shall quote one Sanskrit verse from the *Vedas*, which parallels this Biblical passage:

*nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś
caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ
pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto
'bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ'*

The purport of this verse is that the name of God is as powerful as God Him-

self. It is called *pūrṇa*, which means "complete," *śuddha*, which means "free from all material contamination," and *nitya*, which means "eternal." *Abhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ* means that there is no difference between the name and the person whose name we are chanting. Thus when we chant the holy name of God, like the name Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is personally present. One need not chant the name Kṛṣṇa; one may chant any name that he knows is God's. God has many names, which may be chanted with the same effect in different languages and in different countries.

The Father of Everyone

Actually God has no name, but names are given to Him according to His activities. For example, we are chanting God's name "Kṛṣṇa" because "Kṛṣṇa" means "all-attractive." How is God all-attractive? We can get some idea from our conception of attractiveness in this material world. One is attractive in this material world if he is very rich, very powerful, very wise, beautiful, famous or renounced. Thus one may become attractive in six ways. The Vedic literature states:

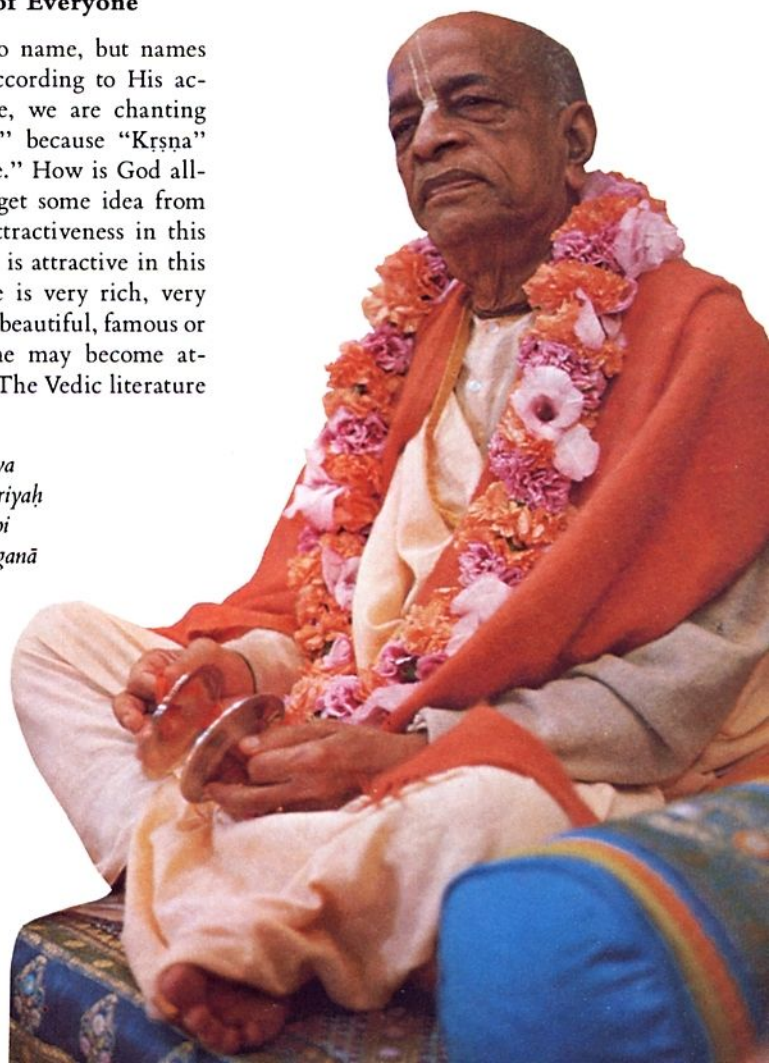
*aīśvaryaśya samagrasya
vīryasya yaśasaḥ śrīyaḥ
jñāna-vairāgyayoś cāpi
saṅgān bhaga itiṅganā*

This verse indicates that God is all-attractive because He is the richest of all, He is the strongest, the most beautiful, the most wise, the most renounced and the most famous.

Our position—we human beings who are sitting in this hall, as well as all other living beings—is that we are all sons of God. Kṛṣṇa states in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya
mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ
tāsāṁ brahma mahad yonir
ahaṁ bija-pradaḥ pitā*

"It should be understood that all the





A blissful devotee
on a Paris street
advertises Śrīla Prabhupāda's
forthcoming lecture.

A crowd of 20,000 filled the Salle Pleyel,
the largest public hall in Paris,
to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda speak.
The picture at the far left of the stage
shows devotees chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa
beneath the Eiffel Tower.

species of life, O son of Kuntī, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father.” [Bg. 14.4] Thus according to the Vedic conception, all living entities in all forms of life are parts and parcels of God. Your Bible says that in the beginning there was only the Word and that the Word was God. Therefore, God existed before the creation. And where did all the created creatures come from? They came from God. Thus all of the 8,400,000 species of creatures were made by God.

He who creates must be the father, for even in the material sense, it is the father who creates his children. How can we deny that this is so? Here in the Bible it is said that all things were created by Him. One cannot whimsically deny the authoritative statements of the *Vedas* or the Bible. Therefore, He is the father of everything. When you go to the church, you pray, “Father, give us our daily bread.” This indicates that He is the father of everyone. Therefore here it is clearly said, “All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” This is perfect knowledge.

In the Image of God

The same ideas are also stated in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, the most perfect philosophy presented in the Vedic language. The *Vedānta-sūtra* says, *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*: “Human life is meant for inquiring about God.” This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, therefore, is meant to enable one to understand God. This movement has been active in the Western countries only for the last six or seven years, but it has been on this planet for the last five thousand years. When I say “Kṛṣṇa consciousness,” this means God consciousness. Human life is meant for understanding God and becoming God conscious. An animal cannot possibly understand God. Our advertisements have invited everyone to this meeting to discuss something about God, but only human beings have come, not cats and dogs. The human life is a chance given by nature with which to understand God, but if one does not fulfill this opportunity, his next life may not be that of a human being. The soul is within the body, and it is a part and



parcel of God. If you can understand the soul, therefore, you can partially understand God. Indeed, if you study yourself, to some extent you study God because you are a sample of God. In the Bible it is also said that man is made in the image of God. Therefore if you study yourself—that study is called meditation—then you can understand God.

For those who are in the bodily concept of life, the *yoga* system and meditation are very important for self-realization. In fact, however, if you want to understand yourself, you can do it very easily by a very simple method. Just consider your finger and ask yourself whether you are your finger. The answer will be no. I am not the finger; it is my finger. Everyone, even a child, will say, "This is my finger, this is my hand, this is my leg, my head." No one will say, "I finger, I head, I leg." Therefore the conclusion should be that I, the soul, am different from this material body.

The material body changes because of the presence of the soul. For example, a child changes his body and gets a different body—that of a young boy. Then

the boy changes his body and gets a different body—that of a young man, who in turn gets the body of an old man. Every one of us can consider himself in this way: "I had the small body of a child, I had the body of a small boy, I had a youthful body, and now I have an old body." By this simple study I can understand that I am different from the body. And I can also understand that because I am eternal, I was existing within all these bodily forms. Therefore in *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said, *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*: after the destruction of this body, I, the soul, am not destroyed but continue to live." As described in *Bhagavad-gītā*, the soul is eternal.

*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin
nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yaṁ purāṇo
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*

"For the soul there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain." [Bg. 2.20]

Life After Death

Death is but the destruction of this outer, gross material body. We all have experience that although every night our body lies in bed, with my subtle body, which consists of mind, intelligence and ego, by dreaming I leave my bedroom and go elsewhere. Thus we all have experience of leaving our gross bodies and taking our subtle bodies to do something else while the gross bodies are still here. Therefore, I, the soul, am changing back and forth between gross and subtle bodies. I dream with the subtle body, and when the dream is over I return to the gross body. And the change that takes place when the subtle body carries the soul from one gross body to another is called death.

The subtle body of mind, intelligence and false ego carries one to another body according to the nature of his mind. The mind is always full of thoughts, and at the time of death, according to those thoughts in which his mind is absorbed, the soul is given another gross body. This is explained in *Bhagavad-gītā*:



yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ
 tyajaty ante kalevaram
 taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya
 sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitāḥ

“Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail.” [Bg. 8.6] Thus *bhāva*, the attitudes of the mind, carry one to the next gross body at the time of death.

Bhagavad-gītā says that after death the soul gets another body (*tathā dehāntara-prāptiḥ*). What kind of body will one get? It is necessary to prepare oneself. Now, we can see that there are so many kinds of bodies. In the water there are 900,000 species, in the vegetable kingdom, among the trees and plants, there are 2,000,000 kinds of bodies, and there are also 11,000 species of insects, 1,000,000 types of birds and 3,000,000 types of beastly bodies.

There are 400,000 human species, and the civilized man is considered to be in the perfect bodily situation because nature gives us this human form of body to enable us to understand God. In other forms of life, there is no chance of understanding Him. Therefore, the duty of each of us, before our next death comes, is to understand God. If we simply misuse this body to live like cats and dogs, we are missing our greatest chance.

Because we are completely under the control of material nature, we cannot possibly say that we are free. That is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni
 guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
 ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmanā
 kartāham iti manyate

“The bewildered spirit soul, under the influence of the three modes of material nature, thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by nature.” [Bg. 3.27] There are three modes of material nature, namely goodness, passion and ignorance. When we are under the control of material nature, we associate with these modes, or qualities. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattva-sthā
 madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ
 jaghanya-guṇa-vṛtti-sthā
 adho gacchanti tāmasāḥ



“Those who associate with the mode of goodness are promoted to the higher planetary systems, those in the mode of passion remain in the middle planetary systems, and those in the mode of ignorance descend to the lower planetary systems.” [Bg. 14.18] Therefore, although we may like to think that we are independent, these three modes of nature have been carrying us from one planet to another and from one body to another since time immemorial. We are all eternal, but because our consciousness has been polluted by these three qualities of nature, we have to undergo repeated birth and death in the material world. Therefore, we should take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the human form of life to become free from these material qualities and rise to the spiritual platform of God consciousness, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Getting in Touch with God

“In the beginning was the Word.” This

indicates that before creation, transcendental sound existed. That word or transcendental sound is not like material sound, for if we associate with the transcendental sound Hare Kṛṣṇa, we become purified and thus become transcendental. To give a crude example, if we put an iron rod into a fire, it will gradually become warmer and warmer until it becomes red hot. When it is red hot, it will no longer be iron; it will be fire. How has it become fire? By association with the fire. Therefore if you simply keep yourself in touch with God through the transcendental sound, gradually you will become godly, and as soon as you become godly, you will become the same in quality as God—full in riches, full in power, full in knowledge and everything else. Therefore the Vedic instruction is, “Don’t keep yourself in darkness. Come to the light.” At the present moment, the entire world, for want of godly understanding, is in darkness. But since we have the privilege of



As youthful American and European disciples listen intently, Śrīla Prabhupāda delivers his message in English, and a French disciple, Jyotirmayī-devī dāśī, translates his words into French.

In the Vedic literature it is said, *dharmaṁ tu sāṅśād bhagavat-praṇītam*: "Dharma, or religion, consists of the codes given by God." To give a practical example, if one abides by the laws of the state, then he is a good and peaceful citizen. You may not like the laws of the state, but if you do not follow them you will be punished. Similarly, if you do not follow the laws of God, you will be punished. You may declare independence, but there is no possibility of such independence.

Surrendering to the Supreme Person

Therefore, in conclusion, there is God, and God's word indicates that God is a person. As soon as we accept the word of God, we have to conclude that God is a person. You are vibrating words and I am vibrating words, and this shows that we are persons. The word of God and God Himself are not different, yet God is a person, and He speaks. If He can speak, then He can also hear, smell, eat and perform all other sensual activities. If He could not hear, then our prayers to Him—"O God, please give us our daily bread"—would be useless. Therefore from the statements of the scriptures—whether the Bible or *Bhagavad-gītā*—it is understood that God is a person like you.

As stated in the *Vedas*, *nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām/eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān*. This verse indicates that God is the Supreme Being. Even in the dictionary it is stated that "God" refers to the Supreme Being. We are all beings, but God is the supreme being. Just as in every state there are citizens but there is one chief citizen or chief executive, so among the many living beings there is one supreme living being. Just as we are living beings, God is also a living being, and just as we are eternal, God is also eternal. But God is one, whereas we are many. And what is significant about that

one? *Eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān*: that one—God—is maintaining all the other living beings. He is a person and we are persons, but because He is the one who maintains us, we therefore go to God to beg for our daily bread. By constitutional position, therefore, we are predominated, and God is the predominator; we are very small, and God is very great.

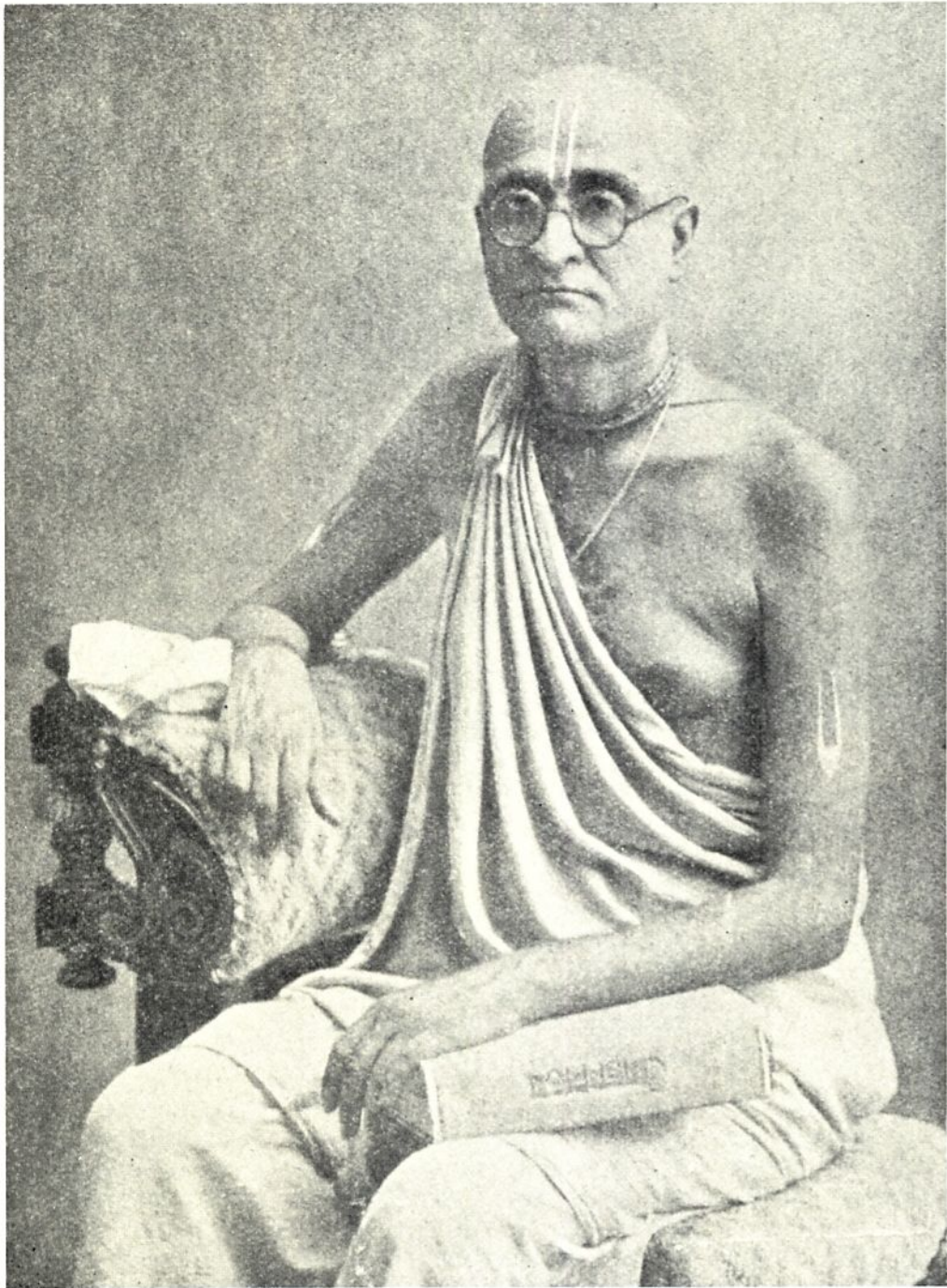
At the present moment, however, we are defying this position, and that is why we are in trouble. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, therefore, is educating people to understand that since they are always subordinate to Kṛṣṇa, if they surrender to Kṛṣṇa they will be happy. Do not remain in a rebellious condition of life. Just surrender to God and you will be happy. That is the final conclusion of *Bhagavad-gītā* (*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*). We are making so many plans to become happy and they are failing, but if we take this plan, if we surrender to God, then all our problems will be solved. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement does not try to make Hindus into Christians or Christians into Hindus. That is not our purpose. Our only request to you is this: every one of you, try to understand God, love Him and be happy.

The final conclusion of *Bhagavad-gītā* is that if you want your mind to be peaceful, you should understand three things: that God is the supreme enjoyer, that He is the proprietor of everything, and that He is the friend of everyone. If you very scientifically understand only these three things, then your life will be successful.

You can understand these simple truths by chanting God's name: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. *Hare* is an address to the energy of God, *Kṛṣṇa* means God, who is all-attractive, and *Rāma* is also a name of God. So in this verse—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—there are only three words: Hare, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. Therefore anyone can chant these three names—Hare, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma—and make his life perfect. I hope that you will join us in chanting this Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.

this human form of life, we should not stay in darkness, without knowledge of the soul and God.

As long as I think that I am this body, I am in darkness. One who has a material body has four needs—eating, sleeping, sexual intercourse and defense. Cats and dogs also eat, sleep, have sex and defend, but a human being should not be educated only in these four principles of animal necessities. The real need of humanity is the need to understand God. Therefore in every civilized human society there is some system of religion. Whether it is Christianity, Mohammedanism, Hinduism or whatever, in civilized society there must be some form of religion, and a human being is supposed to follow the religious principles to have complete knowledge of God and himself, to know the relationship between God and himself, and to know the goal of life. It doesn't matter whether one is Christian, Hindu or Muslim; the real purpose of life is to know God.



ŚRĪLA BHAKTISIDDHĀNTA SARASVATĪ GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

How the Teachings of Lord Caitanya Came to the Western World

(PART 3)

by His Holiness **Brahmānanda Svāmi**

[Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself in the form of His own pure devotee, appeared 500 years ago in Bengal, India, to teach—by His own example—how one can become fully Kṛṣṇa conscious. The teachings of Lord Caitanya were recorded and transmitted by many faithful disciples, but they were virtually unknown in the West until 1896, when Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, a great spiritual master in the discipic line from Lord Caitanya, published a short book entitled *Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu—His Life and Precepts* and sent copies to the Western world. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda foresaw a time when Easterners and Westerners would join in a universal method of spiritual realization by chanting the holy name of God. Moreover, he predicted, "A personality will soon appear to preach the teachings of Lord Caitanya and move unrestrictedly over the whole world with His message."

After the disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, his son, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a great scholar and pure devotee, continued to expand the mission of Lord Caitanya. He wrote many books and established printing presses and sixty-four temples dedicated to preaching the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The following is the third of three articles depicting the pioneering efforts of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, and those who have followed them in spreading the benediction of Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world.]

Instead of having his disciples retire to remote holy places, Bhaktisiddhānta sent them out to preach in the crowded cities, where the need was greatest. This required the introduction of some revolutionary practices, such as allowing his *sannyāsīs*, his disciples in the renounced order, to ride in automobiles. Until Bhaktisiddhānta's time, holy men were restricted to walking or riding in animal-drawn carts; automobiles were too extravagant. But if the preaching of Lord Caitanya's message could be furthered by using automobiles, why should they be rejected? Here was a practical application of Bhaktivinoda's philosophy of renunciation, in which nothing was to be used for sense gratification but everything could be employed for Kṛṣṇa's service. Bhaktisiddhānta also allowed his *sannyāsīs* to wear sewn clothing. A *sannyāsī* is discouraged from wearing sewn clothing, to prevent attachment to women, but this concession was made to enable his men to preach in respectable society in the big cities.

In 1933 Bhaktisiddhānta sent out several teams of preachers to London and Berlin. He even managed, with great difficulty, to send them money from India to finance their preaching. Bhaktisiddhānta was eager to fulfill Bhaktivinoda's prophecy that

Westerners would embrace Lord Caitanya's movement. But he would not live to see it, for his disciples were unable to establish anything substantial in Europe. Even before leaving India on their mission, the *sannyāsīs* were doubtful about attracting Europeans to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. After all, Europeans were inveterate meat-eaters, whereas they themselves were strict vegetarians. Yet Bhaktisiddhānta instructed that the mission of Lord Caitanya could be executed in all circumstances. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, therefore, was an actual *ācārya*. An *ācārya* is "one who teaches by his example." In this world there are many supposed teachers, but invariably their private lives are quite at variance with their teachings. Therefore a genuine *ācārya*, or ideal teacher, cannot be adjudicated or selected. "*Ācārya*" is not a material designation or title, like president, chairman or professor; an *ācārya* must have spiritual qualifications. An actual *ācārya* must be spiritually empowered by the previous *ācārya* because of his total surrender to his spiritual master. This is illustrated in *Bhagavad-gītā*: among many candidates, Arjuna alone received the ability to understand the mystery of God from Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa—simply because he alone was Kṛṣṇa's unalloyed devotee and friend.



**LORD ŚRĪ KṚṢṆA CAITANYA
MAHĀPRABHU**

His Holiness Brahmānanda Svāmi served for several years as the first president of the first ISKCON temple in the United States (while at the same time working as a teacher in the New York City public school system). He later became director of ISKCON Press and in 1970 accepted the renounced order of life. He was the first devotee to introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Africa.

In 1936, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura received a letter written by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, inquiring how he could be of service. Bhaktisiddhānta's reply may be considered crucial to the mission of Lord Caitanya. Rather than suggest something new, Bhaktisiddhānta reiterated the order he had given to Bhaktivedānta Swami at their first meeting: "Preach the teachings of Lord



Caitanya in English. You will be benefited, and everyone who hears you will be benefited." Obviously this instruction, given first in 1922 and again after fourteen years, was very important.

A fortnight later, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja Prabhupāda departed from this earth. The stage had now been set for that great personage who would actually fulfill the prophecy of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura by expanding the vigorous initial efforts of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and boldly preaching the teachings of Lord Caitanya all over the world.

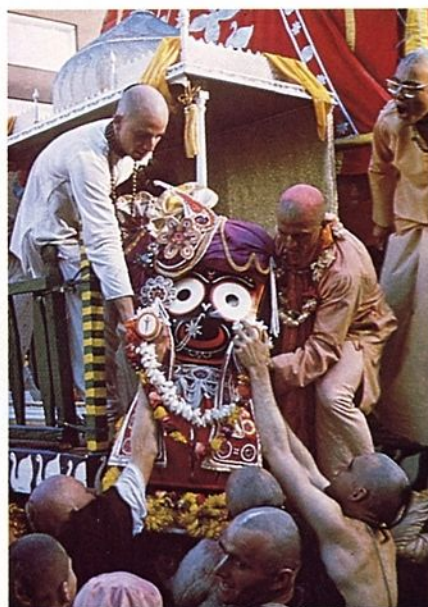
The Pure Devotee

One of the signs of a great devotee, a *mahā-bhāgavata*, is that he is generally born into a family of devotees. Śukadeva Gosvāmī was such a *mahā-bhāgavata*, for his father was Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the literary incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who compiled all the Vedic literature. Another was Mahārāja Parikṣit, whose grandfather was Arjuna and whose grandmother was Subhadrā, Lord Kṛṣṇa's sister. The great benefit for a child born in such a family is that he gets spiritual education right from birth. The early lives of great devotees are often similar. Just as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was trained

from birth by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Bhaktivedānta Swami was also fortunate to be trained in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by his own father.

Even in childhood, Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed the perfection of transcendental devotion. Like Mahārāja Parikṣit, he worshiped the Deities his father had given him. He simply imitated the worship of Rādhā-Govinda he used to see in the nearby family temple. (Those early Deities of Śrīla Prabhupāda's are still worshiped today by his sister in Calcutta.) As a child, Bhaktivedānta Swami would often spend his time studying the

Rathayātrā. Left: The festival in San Francisco. Below: Devotees lift Lord Kṛṣṇa, in His form as Lord Jagannātha, to His place on His float.



Indian Railways Timetable. He would see what trains were going from Calcutta to two other places: Vṛndāvana, the abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and Purī, where Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu had resided. After calculating the fares, he would then scheme up different ways of raising the money to go.

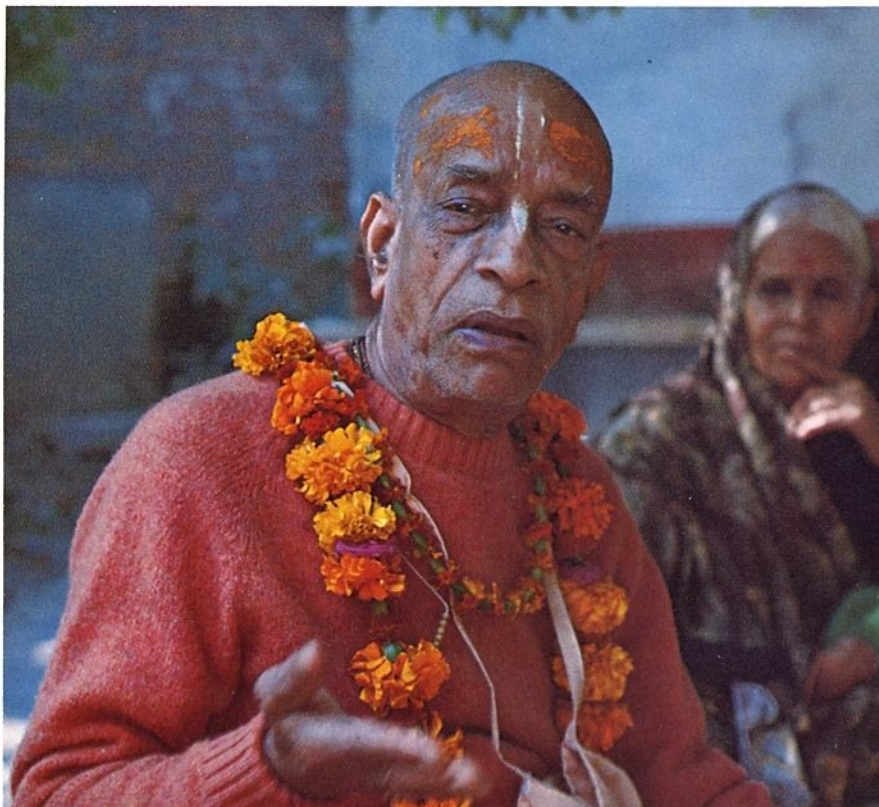
Even as a boy, Śrīla Prabhupāda showed a proclivity for preaching. In Jagannātha Purī, India, there is a yearly festival called Rathayātrā, in which the Deity of Lord Jagannātha (Kṛṣṇa) goes on procession in a huge *ratha*, or float. So, with a miniature *ratha*, Śrīla Prabhupāda would hold neighborhood processions, invite all his family members and friends and distribute lots of *prasāda*. To

this day Śrīla Prabhupāda has instructed his disciples to do just what he was doing as a child—to worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities and stage Rathayātrā festivals all over the world.

His Divine Grace dedicates his book *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*, as follows: "To my father, Gour Mohan De (1849-1930), a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa who raised me as a Kṛṣṇa conscious child from the very beginning of my life. In my boyhood ages he instructed me how to play the *mṛdaṅga* [a drum for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa]. He gave me Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *vigraha* [Deities] to worship, and he gave me Jagannātha *ratha* to duly organize the festival as my childhood play. He was kind to me, and I imbibed from him the ideas later on solidified by my spiritual master, the eternal father."

As a member of one of Calcutta's aristocratic families, Śrīla Prabhupāda was given the best education. He attended Scottish Churches College, run by British missionaries, where he studied economics, philosophy and history. As a follower of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement, however, Śrīla Prabhupāda refused to accept his university degree. He married in 1918. An astrologer foretold that Śrīla Prabhupāda would in time become as wealthy as the wealthiest man in India. Soon afterward, though still a young man, he was selected to manage a well-known pharmaceutical laboratory.

The all-important meeting with Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī occurred in 1922. [For a description of that meeting, see Part 2 of this article, in *Back to Godhead* No. 68.] Śrīla Prabhupāda has remarked that although others would ask many questions of the spiritual master simply to make an impression, he asked only one: "How may I serve you?" After that initial meeting, Śrīla Prabhupāda spent several years developing his firm into a very successful business, but he never forgot Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. He offered financial support to Bhaktisiddhānta's Gauḍīya Mission and introduced some of Bhaktisiddhānta's *sannyāsīs* to his business associates. Śrīla Prabhupāda would sometimes visit Bhaktisiddhānta's mission and discuss devotional philosophy with his disciples, but when the devotees



Śrīla Prabhupāda in Vṛndāvana. Preaching in Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy city.

urged him to take initiation from Bhaktisiddhānta, Śrīla Prabhupāda avoided it, admitting that he just liked to come and associate with the devotees. Bhaktisiddhānta was very pleased with this remark. Thus Śrīla Prabhupāda never took a very active part in the activities of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. At one point, the disciples, understanding Śrīla Prabhupāda's sincerity, encouraged him to become a full-time member and even to live with them, but then Bhaktisiddhānta prophetically declared that it would be better for Śrīla Prabhupāda to remain apart. "One day he will join fully and do wonderful things," Bhaktisiddhānta said. Then in 1933 in Allahabad, where Śrīla Prabhupāda was living with his family, he became an initiated disciple of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

Following the Master's Orders

In 1933 Śrīla Prabhupāda delivered an address to a Gauḍīya Maṭha convocation honoring the appearance day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. In that speech Śrīla Prabhupāda explained the meaning of *ācārya*, and he also expressed his deep devotion to his spiritual master as follows:

"Personally, I have no hope of having any direct service [to Kṛṣṇa] for the coming crores of births of the sojourn of my life, but I am confident that some day or other I shall be delivered from the mire of delusion in which I am at present so deeply sunk. Therefore let me with all my earnestness pray at the lotus feet of my Divine Master to let me suffer the lot for which I am destined for all my past misdoings, but to let me have this power of recollection, realized through the unflinching mercy of my Divine Master, that I am nothing but a tiny servant of the Almighty Absolute Godhead. Let me therefore bow down at His lotus feet with all the humility at my command."

In 1944, after Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's demise, Śrīla Prabhupāda pursued his spiritual master's order by founding *Back to Godhead*, a fortnightly English paper that he himself wrote, edited and published. He was also its sole distributor. His Divine Grace preached actively, using his home for frequent small functions consisting of congregational chanting and authoritative discourses from the Vedic scriptures. But Śrīla Prabhupāda's wife was of a different bent. She did not like these meetings and even prevented

her husband from instructing their children in devotional principles. Then came some unavoidable business reverses, and so finally in 1959 Śrīla Prabhupāda took *sannyāsa* (the renounced order of life) from one of his *sannyāsi* Godbrothers and left home. He went to the holy village of Vṛndāvana, fulfilling his childhood desire. There he commenced writing and publishing several important books, in preparation for his voyage to America in 1965, which was to be the fulfillment of his spiritual master's order. [For a background description of Śrīla Prabhupāda's writing and his work in Vṛndāvana, see "The Books of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda," in *Back to Godhead* No. 52, by the author of this article.]

Pointing Out What America Had Missed

Once in America, Śrīla Prabhupāda indefatigably preached the teachings of Lord Caitanya. This was, of course, the first time that we Americans had ever heard of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. I will always remember the way Śrīla Prabhupāda would look at a picture of Lord Caitanya he had brought with him from Vṛndāvana. He had it high on the wall opposite his sitting place in his tiny New York apartment, and as he would unfold the glorious teachings of Lord Caitanya, he would regard that picture with an expression of deep transcendental love. It was that sublime feature of Śrīla Prabhupāda's that inspired me to broaden my understanding of Mahāprabhu's teachings.

Coming from the East at the age of 70, Śrīla Prabhupāda had a great deal to say to us space-age Americans. He spoke the truth. For example, here is what he wrote in his introduction to *The Nectar of Devotion*:

"As far as material necessities are concerned, the human civilization at the present moment is very much advanced in living comfortably, but still we are not happy because we are missing the point. The material comforts of life alone are not sufficient to make us happy. The vivid example is America: the richest nation of the world, having all facilities for material comfort, is producing a class of men completely confused and frus-

trated in life. I am appealing herewith to such confused men to learn the art of devotional service as directed in *The Nectar of Devotion*, and I am sure that the fire of material existence burning within their hearts will be immediately extinguished. The root cause of our dissatisfaction is that our dormant loving propensity has not been fulfilled despite our great advancement in the materialistic way of life. *The Nectar of Devotion* will give us practical hints how we can live in this material world perfectly engaged in devotional service and thus fulfill all our desires in this life and the next. *The Nectar of Devotion* is not presented to condemn any way of mate-

Kṛṣṇa go together simultaneously. For example, seeing oneself in the morning means seeing the sunrise also; without seeing the sunshine no one can see himself. Similarly, unless one has realized Kṛṣṇa there is no question of self-realization."

Challenging the Bogi Yogis

Śrīla Prabhupāda was a blunt critic. His targets were all the things sacrosanct to us young American materialists: sense gratification, mental speculation, sex, meat-eating, skyscrapers, fast cars, the United Nations, nationalism, science, space exploration, family and love, impersonal spirituality and other *gurus*. He was against the entire modern civilization. He even discouraged us from eating in restaurants. One thing difficult for us to accept in the beginning was his unreserved criticism of other *gurus*. As student-aged youths, we were skeptical of those who claimed to monopolize anything, what to speak of the truth. We were tired of those who said that theirs was the only way. Our idea for eliminating all the hatred in the world was simply to accept everything as good. Let everyone do his own thing, we thought; you can follow or not, but you should not criticize, especially in spiritual matters. Śrīla Prabhupāda swept away all this. He showed us how to discriminate sensibly between true and false spirituality. Like Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, who had courageously defeated a *yogī* imposter who was imitating Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda would not let us be misguided by the "*bogī yogis*," as he called them. To this day Śrīla Prabhupāda has continued to chide so-called *gurus* who mislead their followers from the path of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, or God. Here is a recent article from *Time* (Feb. 11, 1974):

"Trouble is stirring in Nirvana. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami of the Hare Krishna movement, at a news conference in Hong Kong last week, denounced a rival *guru*: self-styled divinity Maharaj Ji, 16, now counseling his disciples in California. The ascetic Swami, whose followers constitute a kind of saffron-robed Hindu version of the Salvation Army, began by saying, 'You've got to decide whether he is God, or a dog.' Noting the young leader's lux-

urious life style, the Swami declared rather ominously, 'He is cheating people, but he will be cheated in a bigger way. When God meets cheats, he can be a better cheat than they.'"

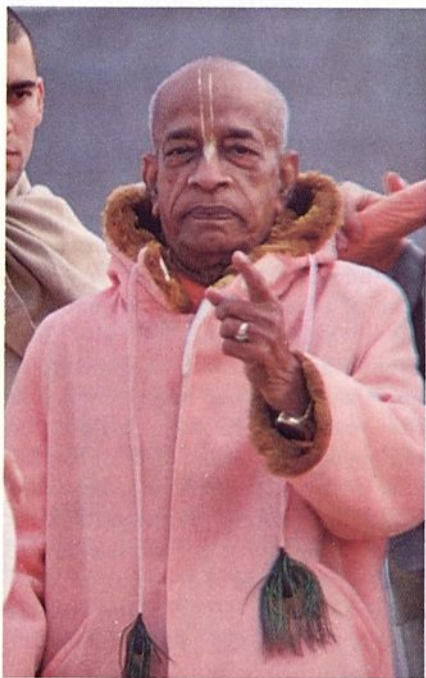
Śrīla Prabhupāda did not come to America as a beggar. "I have come to teach you what you have forgotten," he told reporters. "It is love of God." He chose America of all places in the West because the entire world is following her example of economic development. If he could succeed in making Americans take up spiritual life, then the rest of the world would follow. This was his master plan for fulfilling his spiritual master's order.

The Hare Kṛṣṇa Explosion

Seeing the potential for spreading Vedic culture in America, Śrīla Prabhupāda requested his Godbrothers in India to help him. But they were not interested, so Śrīla Prabhupāda founded his own society in July of 1966. He called it the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, or ISKCON. There was some discussion among his first students that "Krishna" was too sectarian a name for the title of the Society—"the International Society for God Consciousness" would be more readily acceptable. But Prabhupāda wanted Kṛṣṇa's name. "God" is the position, but God has a name, and His name is Kṛṣṇa. We know who God is, so we want to call Him by His name," he explained.

After opening the first ISKCON center, in New York, Śrīla Prabhupāda was invited by some students to come to the West Coast. He entrusted the responsibility for publishing *Back to Godhead* to his disciples, a number of whom he had trained to go preach the teachings of Lord Caitanya themselves and establish centers. These early disciples were not very adept in quoting Sanskrit, nor in the procedures of Deity worship, nor even in following all the practices of devotional life—but they were convinced. They opened several more centers—in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle; then in Montreal and Vancouver; and soon in Buffalo, Washington, D.C., and Boston.

Then Śrīla Prabhupāda sent a group of disciples to London. Whereas the advanced Indian *sannyāsīs* sent by Bhakti-



Śrīla Prabhupāda in America. A blunt critic.

rialistic life, but the attempt is to give information to religionists, philosophers and people in general how to love Kṛṣṇa. One may live without material discomfort, but at the same time he should learn the art of loving Kṛṣṇa. At the present moment we are inventing so many ways to utilize our propensity to love, but factually we are missing the real point, Kṛṣṇa. We are watering all parts of the tree but missing the tree's root. We are trying to keep our body fit by all means, but we are neglecting to supply foodstuffs to the stomach. Missing Kṛṣṇa means missing one's self also. Real self-realization and realization of

siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura were unable to accomplish anything in London for years, three American householder couples soon opened a thriving Kṛṣṇa consciousness center in the heart of downtown London. It has since expanded to include a temple and āśrama on a stately seventeen-acre manor just outside the city. With the world-famous musician George Harrison, the English disciples have recorded several records of Hare Kṛṣṇa that have become hits all over Europe and even in Japan, and that have financed the publication of one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. No wonder Śrīla Prabhupāda proudly declared that these householders were far greater than many big *sannyāsīs*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples have now opened almost fifty centers in America, and another fifty in half a dozen European countries, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Japan, Africa and South America. In these centers, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities are very opulently worshiped, and there are feasts and Rathayātrā festivals, with as many as 25,000 people attending. There are also classes for the public and all-important book distribution. This has all been accomplished solely by the effort of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who maintains close contact with the administrators of all his temples. He writes up to twenty-five letters daily, both to give spiritual guidance and to see to the Society's management. In 1970 Śrīla Prabhupāda formed amongst his senior disciples a Governing Body Commission (GBC), consisting of twelve zonal secretaries to administer Kṛṣṇa conscious affairs in twelve different sections of the world and to cooperate in spreading the teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This is exactly how Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, who coined the title GBC, wanted his Gauḍīya Maṭha administered after his departure.

Innovations by a Dynamic Ācārya

Not only do Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrothers refuse to help Śrīla Prabhupāda spread the teachings of Lord Caitanya, but they unfortunately criticize his accomplishments. In the very beginning they wrote from India that it simply wasn't possible to make devotees out of *mlecchas* (heathens who do not

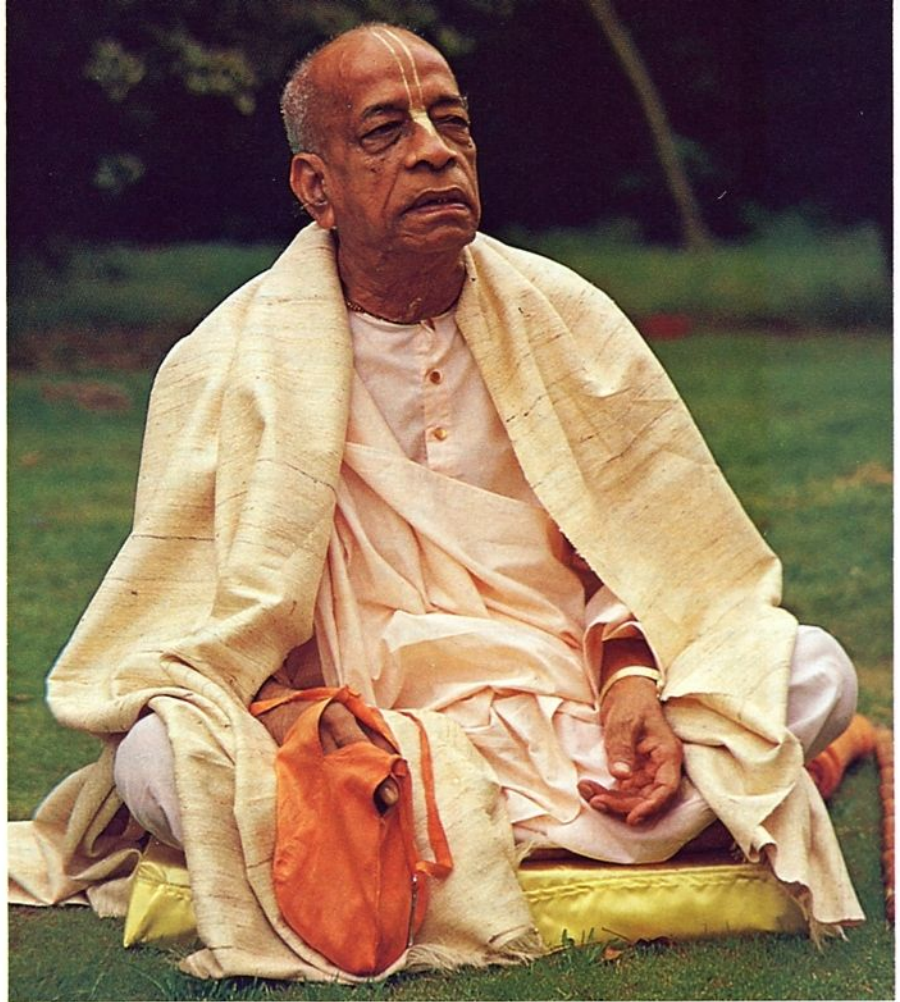


Photo: Bhāṅgava dāsa

Śrīla Prabhupāda in London. Fulfilling his master's desires.

follow the four Vedic prohibitions against meat-eating, illicit sex, gambling and intoxication). Their conclusion was exactly opposite to the teachings of Lord Caitanya and the historic mission of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Thus Śrīla Prabhupāda found himself having to preach the teachings of Lord Caitanya to his own Godbrothers, as if they were the same caste conscious *brāhmaṇas* who have continuously opposed Lord Caitanya's mission.

They criticized Śrīla Prabhupāda's being addressed as "Prabhupāda." They maintained that only Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī deserved to have that title and that His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda was being disrespectful by proclaiming himself Prabhupāda. Actually, however, the term "Prabhupāda" came to be used because some of Prabhupāda's disciples wanted to address their beloved spiritual master with a term more respectful than "Swamiji" or "Guruji," which are used to address an ordinary *sannyāsī*. Then an article appeared in an early *Back to God-*

head to settle the matter: "PRABHUPĀDA. The word Prabhupāda is a term of the utmost reverence in Vedic religious circles, and it signifies a great saint even among saints. The word actually has two meanings: first, one at whose feet (*pāda*) there are many *prabhus* (a term meaning 'master,' which the disciples of a *guru* use in addressing each other). The second meaning is one who is always found at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa (the supreme master)."

"In the line of disciplic succession through which Kṛṣṇa consciousness is conveyed to mankind, there have been a number of figures of such spiritual importance as to be called Prabhupāda. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda executed the will of his master, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and therefore he and his associate Gosvāmīs are called Prabhupāda. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura executed the will of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and therefore he is also addressed as Prabhupāda. Our Spiritual Master, Om Viṣṇupāda 108 Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Swami Mahārāja, has, in the same

way, executed the will of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda in carrying the message of love of Kṛṣṇa to the Western world, and therefore we American and European humble servants of His Divine Grace, from all the different centers of the *saṅkīrtana* movement, have followed in the footsteps of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, and prefer to address His Grace our Spiritual Master as Prabhupāda, and he has kindly said "Yes."

Next, the Godbrothers audaciously claimed that Śrīla Prabhupāda was mixing boys and girls together, especially on the chanting and preaching parties. Vedic culture rigidly controls the relations between men and women. If a girl even goes out of home alone at night, she is immediately rejected by her family members. A *saṁnyāsī* cannot even speak to a woman in a secluded place nor be alone with even his mother or sister. Lord Caitanya would not allow a woman to come near Him, even to offer obeisances, nor would He allow Himself to hear the female temple attendants (*dāsīs*) singing religious songs. However, what Śrīla Prabhupāda found when he came to the U.S.A. was quite a different style of life. Co-ed dormitories, legalized abortions and free distribution of contraceptives are all part of the modern permissiveness of Western materialistic civilization. Understandably, Śrīla Prabhupāda thought that as soon as he would introduce the four prohibitions, all the early students would go away. Americans were too accustomed to unrestricted mixing of the sexes for them all to become *saṁnyāsīs* (lifelong celibates) and to follow all strictures. Śrīla Prabhupāda thought it better for their spiritual life for them to marry and restrict themselves to one husband or wife. But who would arrange for them to marry? Being a *saṁnyāsī* himself, Śrīla Prabhupāda was forbidden to have anything to do with household life. But he was alone in America, so he overstepped the rule and personally performed the marriage ceremonies for his students according to Vedic rites. (Now that disciples are qualified, all marriages are performed by ISKCON's temple presidents.)

Śrīla Prabhupāda modified other devotional practices to introduce the

teachings of Lord Caitanya abroad. For instance, he has set the minimum number of "rounds" to be chanted on the meditation beads at sixteen (approximately two hours of time) rather than the sixty-four rounds Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had set for his disciples. This is because Americans are generally not inclined to lengthy periods of meditation. This genius for adopting new ways to extend the teachings of Lord Caitanya is the very qualification of a real *ācārya*. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* describes how Lord Caitanya devised many methods and even tricks, in particular His *saṁnyāsa*, just to get all opposition to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. An *ācārya* does not follow hackneyed methods; he introduces dynamic ways to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Unfortunately, however, those who do not have the conviction or spiritual potency to spread the teachings of Lord Caitanya beyond their dutiful circle of pious widows just plod along in the same stereotyped way and jealously criticize the real achievement.

The Great Personality

Innovation by an *ācārya* does not adulterate the teachings of Lord Caitanya. The goal remains the same, but only the means are modified to suit the time, place and circumstances. This enthusiasm for preaching is the very essence of the teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who Himself even preached to the animals in the forests. Śrīla Prabhupāda's success in doing what no other spiritual master has ever done is simply due to his unflinching dependence on Lord Kṛṣṇa and the previous *ācāryas*. The evidence is found on page after page of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. For example, he writes in his preface to *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*:

"Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is genuine, historically authorized, natural and transcendental due to its being based on *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. It is gradually becoming the most popular movement in the entire world, especially amongst the younger generation. It is becoming more and more interesting to the older generation also. Older gentlemen are becoming interested, so much so that the fathers and grandfathers of my disciples are en-

couraging us by becoming life members of our great society, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. In Los Angeles many fathers and mothers used to come to see me to express their feelings of gratitude for my leading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement throughout the entire world. Some of them said that it is greatly fortunate for the Americans that I have started the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in America. But actually the original father of this movement is Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, since it was started a very long time ago but is coming down to human society by disciplic succession. If I have any credit in this connection, it does not belong to me personally, but it is due to my eternal spiritual master, His Divine Grace Oṁ Viṣṇupāda Paramahansa Parivṛājākācārya 108 Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja Prabhupāda."

Now Śrīla Prabhupāda has brought many of his disciples to India so that his Godbrothers can see the results of his preaching for themselves, and a few of them are beginning to recognize that he is actually the successor to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

While this article was first being written, preparations for the first great Māyāpur pilgrimage were in full swing. On land purchased at the birthsite of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Prabhupāda has initiated a project to build the tallest and most majestic temple in India, as well as a Vedic University for students from all over the world. Already one building has been completed. For this year's festival, devotees from ISKCON centers throughout the world will have gathered for nine days of chanting, processions, lectures, films, exhibitions, organizational meetings and *prasāda* feasting, as well as the bliss of associating with their beloved spiritual master and each other. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that His devotees like very much to be together.

*mac-cittā mad-gata-prāṇā
bodhayantaḥ paraspāram
kathayantaś ca mām nityaṁ
tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca*

"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)

It cannot be disputed that the great personality predicted by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is none other than His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. He has traveled and preached around the world almost 10 times, he has opened centers in America, Europe, South America, India, the Far East, Australia and also Africa, and he has written a score of best-selling books on the teachings of Lord Caitanya. It is quite understandable why Śrīla Prabhupāda dedicates one of those books (aptly entitled *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*) as follows:

DEDICATED TO

The Sacred Service
of

ŚRĪLA SACCIDĀNANDA
BHAKTIVINODA ṬHĀKURA

Who Initiated The Teachings of
Lord Caitanya
in

The Western World
(McGill University, Canada)
in 1896

The Year Of My Birth

The Legion of Pure Devotees

Bhaktivinoda's philosophy of using material things in the loving service of God has been fully implemented by Śrīla Prabhupāda. He purposely came to America because America has more at its disposal than any other country in the world. Instead of wasting time and money going to the moon to collect rocks, that same organizing talent can be used to send souls back home, back to Godhead. Whereas Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī first used automobiles and printing presses, his foremost disciple has enlisted Americans to use their boundless wealth and technology to spread the teachings of Lord Caitanya, thus fulfilling the 89-year-old prophecy of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Now, for the first time, the world is so eager for the teachings of Lord Caitanya that Śrīla Prabhupāda's foreign students are building a memorial to Lord Caitanya at His birthsite. The effect on native Indians

has been a revival of interest in their own Vedic culture. India will only be respected by the rest of the world if it spreads this spiritual culture. If India neglects this responsibility and tries only to mimic Western materialism, India will be an inveterate beggar nation. Thus, Śrīla Prabhupāda should be recognized as his country's foremost ambassador.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is the successor in the disciplic line from Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura because he has dedicated his entire life to fulfilling his spiritual master's command. He has raised the most unqualified candidates to a position higher than those born in the families of *brāhmaṇas*. To be able to follow and learn from such a rare transcendental personality is an invaluable opportunity. Disciples from all over the world, therefore, repeatedly offer their obeisances to His Divine Grace as follows:


*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya
kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-
svāmin iti nāmine*

“I offer my humble obeisances to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who is the most dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa on this earth because he has taken complete shelter at the Lord's lotus feet.”

Then they offer their obeisances with another, even more telling verse.

*namas te sārāsvate deve
gaura-vāṇī pracāriṇe
nirvīṣeṣa-śūnyavādi-
pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe.*

“I offer my humble obeisances to you, O spiritual master, servant of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanya and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism.”

The opportunity is now presented to everyone, whether an ordinary *karmī* or a learned *saṁnyāsī*, a *brāhmaṇa* or a *śūdra*, American or Indian, to stand up and be counted in the Lord's legion of pure devotees, with Śrīla Prabhupāda as the commander-in-chief. Let us give up all hesitation, discard impure sectarian designations and surrender ourselves at the lotus feet of the Lord's pure representative. As the great sages of Naimiṣāranya prayed to their spiritual master, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, let us also pray: “We think that we have met Your Grace by the will of providence, and thus we accept you as the captain of the ship for those who desire to cross the dangerous ocean of Kali [the modern age of materialism], which destroys all the good qualities of a human being.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 1.1.22) Who among us is so foolish as to hesitate needlessly and thus risk missing the boat of transcendental perfection, Kṛṣṇa consciousness? 

Kṛṣṇa Conscious Calendar

Here are upcoming holidays and festivals for Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. Devotees at the ISKCON center nearest you will gladly tell you more about the meaning of these festivals.

December 25	December 30	January 1	
Ekādaśī (Mokṣadā-ekādaśī) (fasting from grains and beans).	Beginning of the Vaiṣṇava month of Nārāyaṇa.	Disappearance day of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.	
January 8		January 10	January 13
Ekādaśī (Saphalā-ekādaśī) (fasting from grains and beans). Disappearance day of Śrīla Devānanda Paṇḍita.		Disappearance day of Śrīla Maheśa Paṇḍita and Śrīla Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura.	Appearance day of Śrīla Locana dāsa Ṭhākura.
January 23	January 27	January 28	January 30
Ekādaśī (Putradā-ekādaśī) (fasting from grains and beans).	Puṣyābhīṣeka-yātrā of Lord Kṛṣṇa.	Beginning of the Vaiṣṇava month of Mādhava.	Appearance day of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī and disappearance day of Śrīla Rāmacandra Kavirāja.

The Basic Scientific Guidebook of Spiritual Realization

BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ AS IT IS

by Ruci dāsa

Bhagavad-gītā is the transcendental science of God spoken by the father of religion Himself, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is the essence of all Vedic knowledge. By receiving *Bhagavad-gītā* through the proper system, one can become cleansed of all sinful reactions and attain perfection in spiritual life.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ proktavān aham avyayam
vivasvān manave prāha manur ikṣvākave 'bravīt*

"I instructed this imperishable science of *yoga* to the sun-god, Vivasvān, and Vivasvān instructed it to Manu, the father of mankind, and Manu in turn instructed it to Ikṣvāku." (Bg. 4.1)

Śrīla Prabhupāda, the author of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, says that the *Gītā* was spoken to Vivasvān approximately 120,400,000 years ago and has been extant in human society for two million years. It was spoken again to Arjuna 5,000 years ago because in course of time the succession was broken and the science appeared to be lost. Detecting that the purpose of the *Gītā* had been scattered by demoniac commentators, Kṛṣṇa reestablished the disciplic succession 5,000 years ago by speaking the *Gītā* to Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra. Arjuna's qualification for receiving *Bhagavad-gītā* was that he was Kṛṣṇa's devotee and friend (*bhakto 'si me sakhā cetī*).

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda translated the *Gītā* into English with authorized purports to convey its meaning straightforwardly because almost every commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā* was the work of a self-motivated scholar, *yogī* or politician who did not accept Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such interpreters think that they can separate Kṛṣṇa's body, soul and mind, for they do not know that Lord Kṛṣṇa is absolute. He is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*: His body, soul and He Himself are one.

Kṛṣṇa spoke *Bhagavad-gītā* to Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra just before Arjuna was to take part in a civil war. Kṛṣṇa wanted Arjuna to fight, for it was his duty as a service to the Lord. But Arjuna did not want to kill his relatives and teachers who faced him on the battlefield. Arjuna, being thus confused, then accepted Lord Kṛṣṇa as his spiritual master:

*kārpaṇya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ
prcchāmi tvāṁ dharma-saṁmūḍha-cetāḥ
yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṁ brūhi tan me
śiṣyas te 'haṁ śādhi mām tvāṁ praṇnam*

"Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all com-



Illustration: Bharadrāja dāsa

Lord Kṛṣṇa instructed the science of *yoga* to the sun-god.

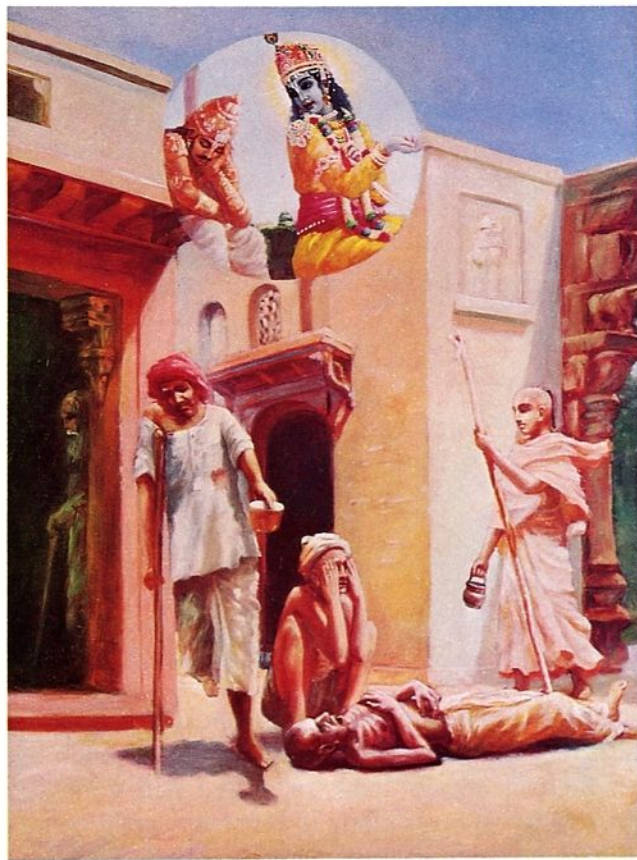
posure because of weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me clearly what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me." (Bg. 2.7)

Actually, we should all come to this stage of understanding that we are confused and that our best interest lies in accepting a bona fide spiritual master who is in the line of Śrī Kṛṣṇa so that we may solve the problems of life—namely birth, death, old age and disease—and go back home, back to Godhead. The problems of life appear without our wanting them. Is that not a fact? For example, no one wants to get old, become diseased or die, and if people fully understood the miseries of birth, they would be terrified of accepting rebirth. Yet these miseries are forced upon us. Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi-duḥkha-doṣānudarśanam*: one should be aware of the evils of birth (*janma*), death (*mṛtyu*), old age (*jarā*) and disease (*vyādhi*). The Vedic wisdom recommends that to become free from these fourfold miseries, one should approach a bona fide, Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual master in the line from Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. Otherwise, if one fails to use his human intelligence to try to solve these problems, one is a miserly person (*kṛpāṇa*) and meets his death just like cats and dogs.

Throughout *Bhagavad-gītā*, and very elaborately in the Second Chapter, the Lord gives many examples to explain that one is not the body but an eternal spiritual soul who is a part and parcel of God. He says that the soul existed always, and



The warrior Arjuna, confused about his duty, accepted Lord Kṛṣṇa as his spiritual master.



One should be aware of the material miseries and use intelligence to become free from them.

always will exist. The soul is traveling from boyhood to youth, then to old age, and so, similarly, the soul passes into another body at death. The eternal (spirit) has no cessation, and the temporary (the body) has no endurance (*nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ*). The soul can never be killed by anyone (*vināśam avyayaśyāsa na kaścit kartum arhati*). The soul never takes birth and never dies (*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit*). He is unborn (*aja*), eternal (*nitya*) and ever-existing (*śāśvat*). He is undying and primeval. The soul is not slain when the body is slain (*na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*).

In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* and mystic *yoga* system, but his final conclusive instructions are as follows:

<i>man-manā bhava mad-bhakto</i>	<i>sarva-dharmān parityajya</i>
<i>mad-yājī mām namaskuru</i>	<i>mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja</i>
<i>mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te</i>	<i>aham tvām sarva-pāpebhyo</i>
<i>pratijāne priyo 'si me</i>	<i>mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ</i>

"Always think of Me and become My devotee. Worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend. Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear." (Bg. 18.65-66)

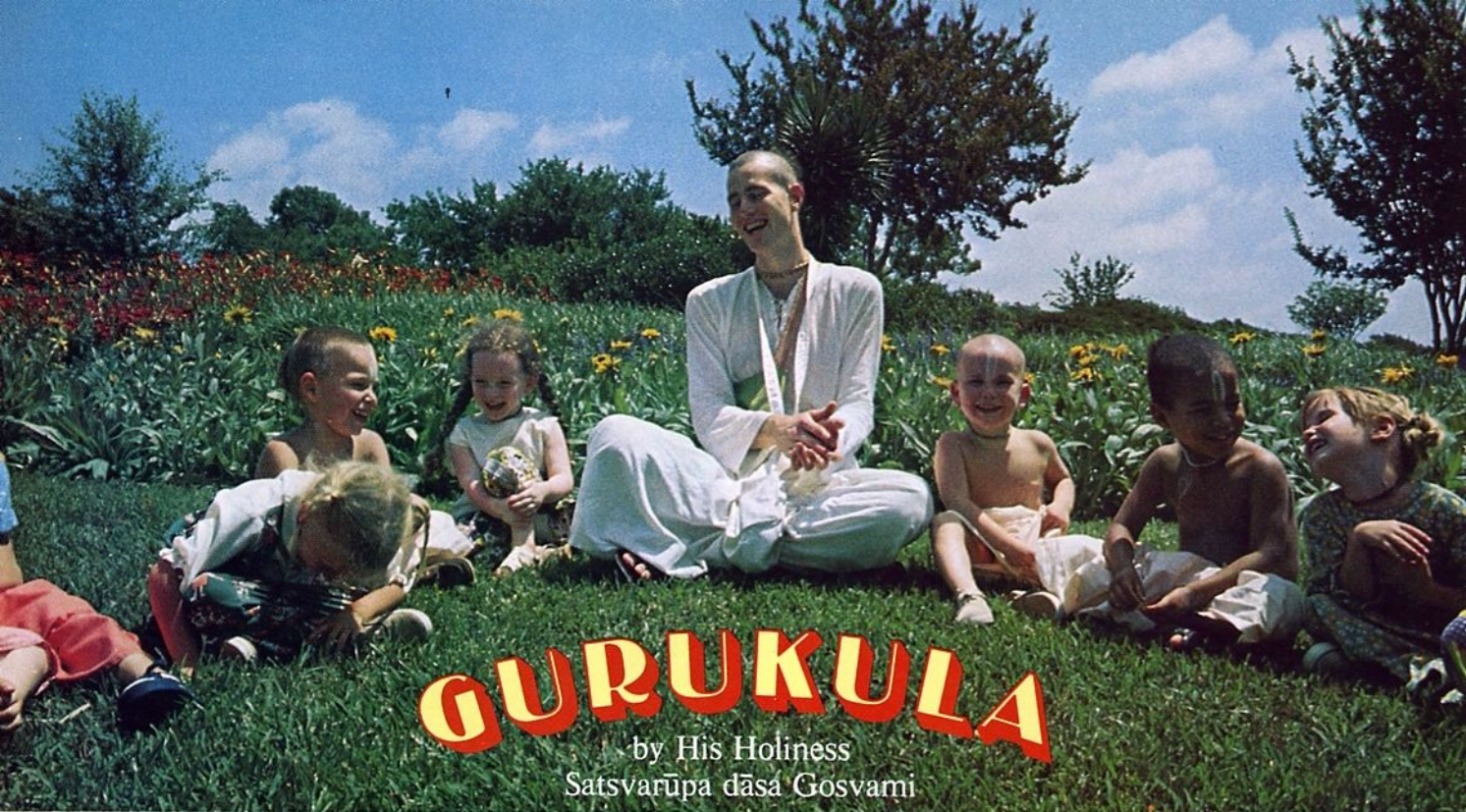
By surrendering unto the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, we can become free from material bondage. Why, then, don't the philosophers, scientists, administrators and leaders of society

surrender to Kṛṣṇa? The *Gītā* answers this quite frankly. Those who are actually learned leaders of society—great figures in history like Brahmā, Śiva, Vyāsa, Devala, Madhvācārya, Rāmānujācārya, Śrī Caitanya and many others—surrender unto Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. But those who are only dressed like scientists, philosophers and leaders of society for material gain do not accept the plan and path of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Therefore, let us all worship Lord Kṛṣṇa and be happy and go back to Godhead, for He is the cause of all causes (*sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*). He is the source of all spiritual and material worlds, and everything emanates from Him (*aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate*). He is the master and friend of every living entity.

To understand these ideas more fully, one may acquire a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, with its translations and elaborate purports by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. His Divine Grace is an unalloyed devotee of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa who strictly follows the principles of disciplic succession through which *Bhagavad-gītā* has been handed down over the centuries. Therefore he presents the spiritual knowledge of the *Gītā* simply and clearly, without personally motivated interpretations. Please read *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, with its true devotional purports by Śrīla Prabhupāda. And chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Your life will become sublime.





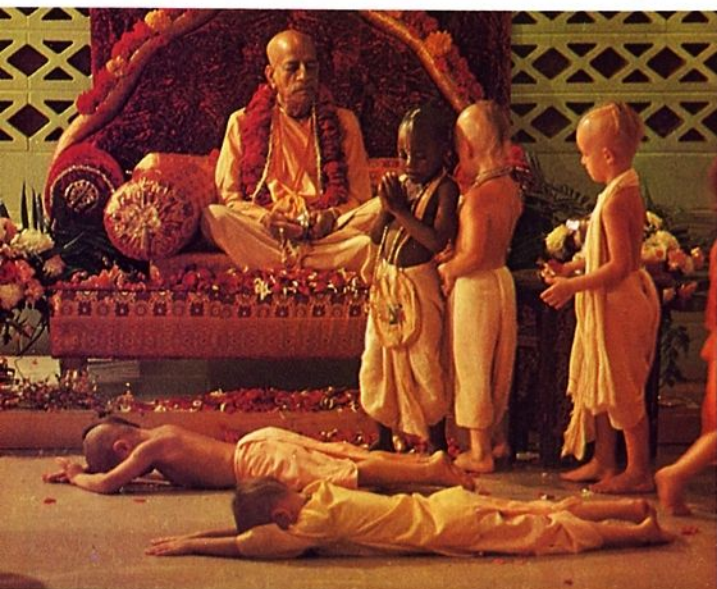
GURUKULA

by His Holiness
Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvami

Whenever I see pictures of the Gurukula school in Dallas, Texas, or whenever I am fortunate enough to visit there, I always think, "I wish I had gone to Gurukula when I was a boy; I wish every child could go there." When we first disciples joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in 1966, there was no children's school; and besides, even then we were too old for Gurukula. Gurukula, a school for children ages five to fifteen, was founded by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in 1971. Why should we wish that every child could attend Gurukula? Because Gurukula is the only school teaching how to live ac-

cording to the Vedic scriptures, which teach one how he can know himself to be eternal, blissful and full of knowledge.

There have been many favorable news articles written about this new educational project, but one criticism sometimes given is that Gurukula indoctrinates children who are too young to resist its spiritual philosophy. In answer, we may note that any method of raising children is a kind of indoctrination,



Dvārakādhīśa dāsa offers a lamp to Kṛṣṇa. A child develops his natural love of God by caring for small Deities of the Supreme Personality. Many of the children have Sanskrit names, which are all different ways of saying "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

Honoring a saintly person. Gurukula children take pleasure in offering flowers and respect to Śrīla Prabhupāda during one of his visits to the school.

even letting your child do and think whatever he likes. Whatever parents or instructors teach by their example, a child will take very seriously. In the impressionable, formative years, therefore, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is training children in the perfection of religion. This training is hardly reprehensible. Indeed, it's what the world needs.

So what goes on at Gurukula? First of all, as in no other school, there is chanting of the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, dancing in ecstasy, and eating of *prasāda*, food offered to Kṛṣṇa. In all these activities the children have the company of many wonderful friends their own age, who are all devotees of the Supreme Lord. *Bhagavad-gītā* tells us that if one seriously pursued spiritual consciousness in his past life but did not perfect his progress, in the next life he may take birth in a family of devotees or advanced transcendentalists. Therefore, the children at Gurukula are not ordinary, or they wouldn't have been born as the sons

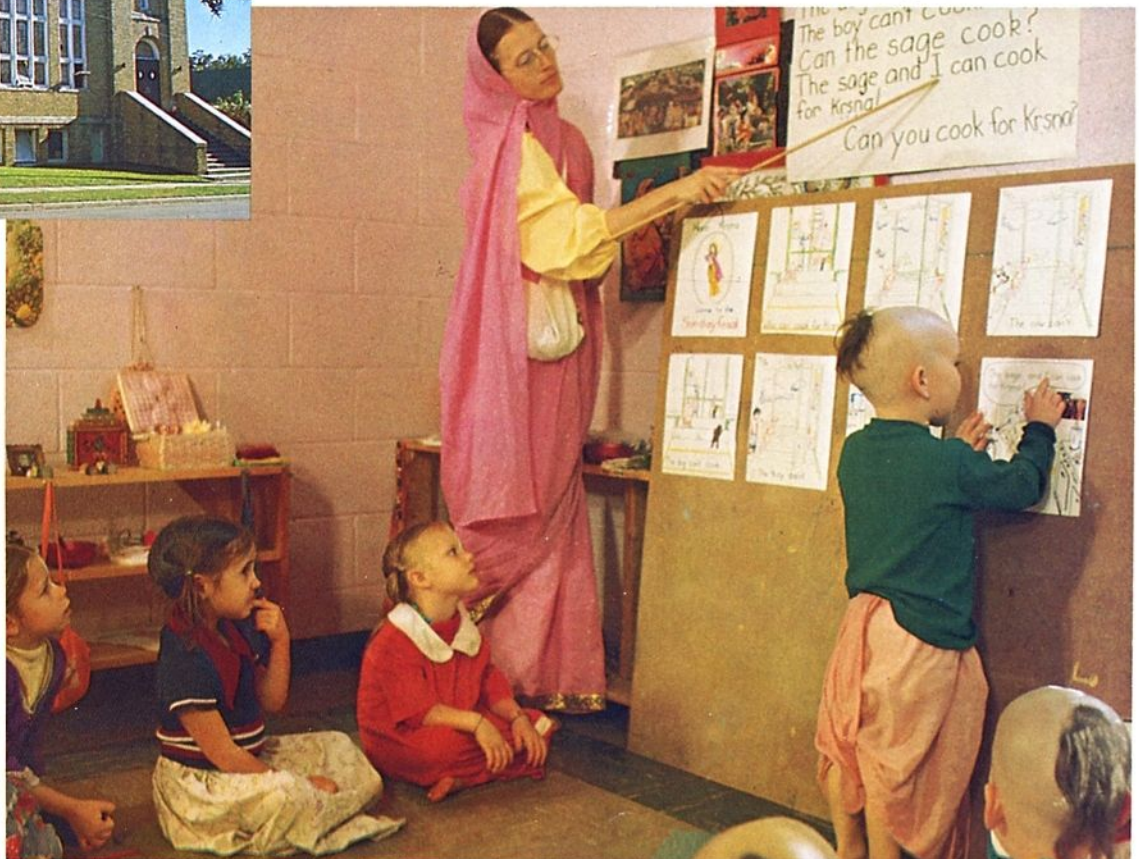
and daughters of devotees who want their children to be brought up in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are extraordinary children because their parents want them to be liberated from further suffering and to become eligible to enter the kingdom of God. Of course, Gurukula is open to all children, regardless of race, creed or financial position, but the fact remains that the children attending Gurukula are actually elevated souls in the bodies of children. The great sage Jīva Gosvāmī said, "If a child is properly trained, he can become a great devotee of the Lord." Therefore, any child who goes to Gurukula has the best of friends—playmates who are always chanting about and glorifying Kṛṣṇa and eating *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*.

The academic curriculum at Gurukula includes English, math, history and geography, but the children also learn to read Sanskrit so that they can understand the Vedic literature in its original language. Also, Gurukula stresses practical instruc-



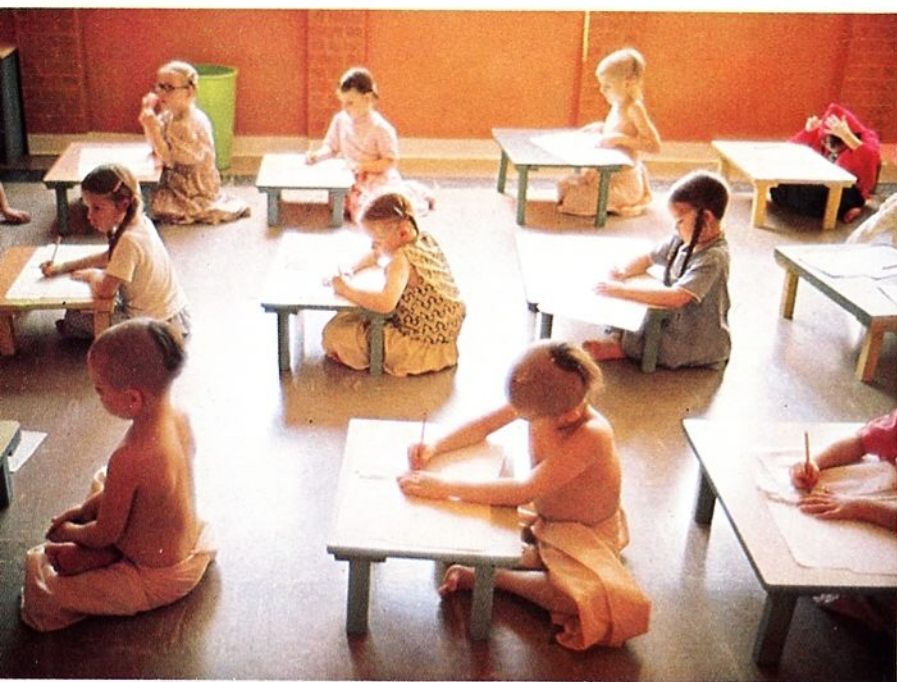
The Gurukula auditorium. This is one of two main buildings. The school also has an inner courtyard and a large open playground. One hundred children and forty adults live at Gurukula.

A God-centered English lesson. Children at Gurukula simultaneously learn about reading and the Absolute Truth.

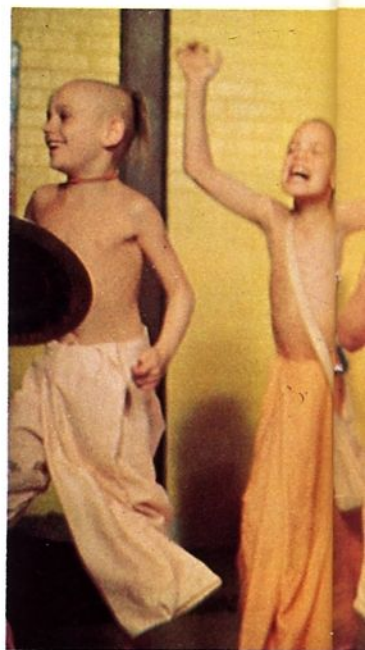


Gurukula awakens a child's true inner potential—the potential for spiritual enlightenment. Gurukula, commented *Newsweek* magazine, is "a most convincing sign that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is here to stay."

Bhaktin Lisa Marie practices writing the Sanskrit alphabet. Sanskrit, the original language of the *Vedas*, is the key to a vast treasurehouse of spiritual wisdom.



Ideal teacher, ideal student. The teachers at Gurukula teach by example as well as precept.



Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is blissful! Shining with spiritual happiness, Gurukula children spontaneously chant the holy names of God.

tion in personal cleanliness. The teachers, who all live with the students at Gurukula, follow four rules: no illicit sex, no meat eating, no intoxication and no gambling. Thus they are real teachers, and because of their dedication to Kṛṣṇa consciousness they can offer real love and guidance to the children by helping them revive their dormant love for God.

Someone may say that Gurukula is a very specialized school, but when the Vedic civilization was current, thousands of years ago, the spiritual values taught at Gurukula were inherent in every educated person. So a Gurukula education is not a sectarian creed or an artificial imposition on the

mind. It is nothing less than *bhakti-yoga*, the revival of the individual's loving relationship with God, which has now been all but totally forgotten by the world's great civilizations.

Where I went to school, and maybe where you went to school—or where your child goes to school now—the other kids were simply concerned with enjoying material life and didn't much care about spiritual realization. Drugs and illicit sex were the norm, even in the grammar schools. Of course, I learned many things in the schools and colleges I attended, but if I had not met His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda, I would have wasted my life. Human



Swinging the Deity of Kṛṣṇa.

Through such God-centered festivals, the children come to think of God as their best friend.



Starting early in spiritual life. Vaiṣṇava dāsa, age 4-1/2, came to Gurukula from Paris, France, where his father is president of the ISKCON center.



Playing for Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda has said, "They have a playful nature. Let them play and run."



Nandini dāśī waters the tulsi, Lord Kṛṣṇa's favorite plant. The Vedic scriptures say, "If someone sows a *tulsi* tree somewhere, certainly he becomes devoted to Lord Kṛṣṇa."

A specimen of Gurukula art.



life is actually meant for realizing oneself as a spiritual soul, and realizing one's eternal relationship with God as His servant. Unless one learns who he is in relation to the Absolute Truth, whatever he does is simply a waste of time.

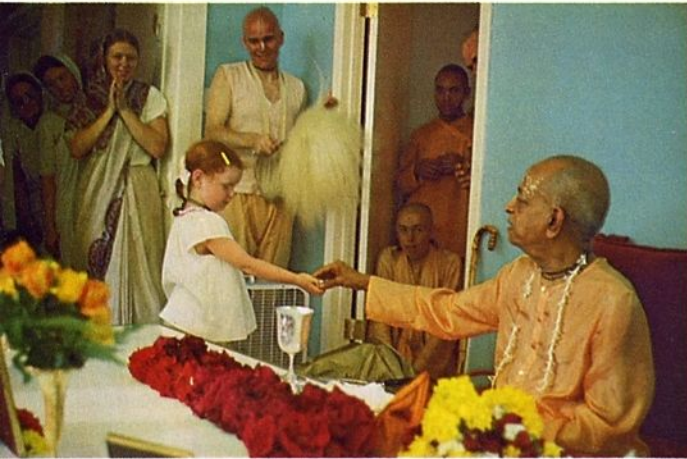
The science of God, learned in a nonsectarian way, as taught by Kṛṣṇa conscious teachers, books, and life practices, takes years to mature. Those of us who have come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness at a late stage, too late to become proficient in Sanskrit and with so many bad habits, are still fortunate, because Kṛṣṇa consciousness acts so quickly. Anyone can see this,

for the Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees who are now the older members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement have indeed broken away from all the contaminating activities of materialism. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so pure that a devotee soon becomes very hopeful of complete success, no matter what his past history. But we wish we had begun earlier, and naturally we wish others to have the chance.

We should be glad that in America such a pure spiritual force is present to counteract the failures of materialism. Gurukula should be encouraged, and indeed every parent should consider, "Why don't we send our child there?" One who is beyond sectarianism and who sees the ultimate good for his child as spiritual happiness will be hard-pressed to find a better school than Gurukula.



His Holiness Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī, one of the leaders of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, is traveling throughout the United States to introduce Kṛṣṇa conscious literature in major schools and libraries. He frequently visits the Gurukula school in Dallas.



Benediction. Śrīla Prabhupāda, on a visit to Gurukula, hands out sweets to the students.

Gurukulas around the world. Using the successful Dallas school as a model, ISKCON is starting several other Gurukulas in America, Europe and India. Here Gargamuni Svāmī leads Bombay Gurukula students in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and dancing.



Gratitude for Enlightenment

My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

May I take this opportunity to thank you for presenting Kṛṣṇa consciousness so nicely. We are the most fortunate generation in history, to be present when the gate to Enlightenment is thrown open in a simple way in which all may benefit—Service and Love of God.

Your students are setting the standard in worship, and your lucid books have become the epitome of Transcendental Philosophy in this age.

So I would like to inform you that I too am entering into Devotional Service by participating in *saṅkīrtana*. In this way the prediction of Lord Caitanya will be fulfilled and the name of Kṛṣṇa will be heard in every town and village.

Everyone will agree that this movement is presenting the purest form of *bhakti*, and thanks to you it is daily inspiring thousands in pure love of God.

I am taking the advice of your disciple Kīrtanananda Svāmī, who so graciously answered my question "How does one begin Devotional Service?" "By chanting the names of God."

Richard White
Clyde, Texas

Are Men and Women Equal in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness?

To the Editor:

I have just finished reading another *Back to Godhead*, and I enjoy the publication greatly. I have thought of entering a temple and becoming a full-time devotee, but there is one major question in my mind in regard to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I feel as though woman is regarded as lesser than man within Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I have heard that she is regarded as lesser in the temple. I believe that we are equal. Please tell me if I am wrong in my assumption.

Bill Oliver
Marshallberg, North Carolina

Dear Mr. Oliver:

According to the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*, upon which Kṛṣṇa consciousness rests, a living being is not the material body, but is the spiritual soul within the body. The distinctions between man and woman, however, are simply material; they have nothing to do with the spiritual soul within. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person sees no difference between the spiritual soul in the body of a woman and that in the body of a man. In fact, he sees that even within animals

Letters

The editors of *Back to Godhead* welcome correspondence pertaining to spiritual enlightenment. All letters will receive personal replies, and correspondence of general interest will be published regularly.

the same type of spiritual soul is present. There are 8,400,000 species of life, according to the Vedic knowledge, but there is only one type of spiritual soul in all these different bodily forms. Therefore, as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā, pañditāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*: "A learned person sees all living entities equally." (Bg. 5.18)

However, in one's personal dealings one must generally observe some practical bodily distinctions. For instance, a self-realized devotee may wish to marry and raise a family. But unless he recognizes the obvious bodily differences between male and female, how could he possibly do so?

Men and women have different physical and psychological talents and capabilities, and one should not artificially try to ignore or negate them. Rather, all these talents and capabilities should be engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service. For example, women are capable of bearing children, whereas men are not. Where, then, is the question of equality? Although there is spiritual oneness, the bodily differences exist. Therefore the principles of the Vedic civilization prescribe different duties for men and women, according to their respective natures. By executing these duties in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, both men and women can become spiritually happy and spiritually perfect.

Kṛṣṇa specifically says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.32) that a woman who surrenders to Him in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is fully eligible to go back to Godhead. There are many great women devotees, such as Kuntīdevī, Draupadī, Yaśodā-māyī and many others, whose glories are described in the Vedic literatures. Similarly, some of the most advanced devotees in our present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are women, and they are all respected and appreciated for their spiritual advancement.

According to the Vedic literature,

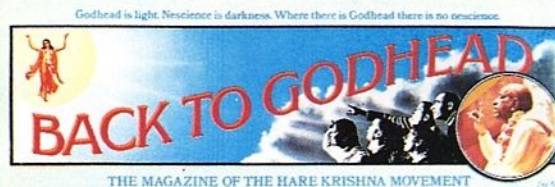
women have many good qualities. In some respects, they are even superior to men. For example, women are generally understood to be more soft-hearted and therefore more receptive to religious and spiritual ideas. However, the Vedic literature warns that women, more than men, are prone to be misguided by desires for sense gratification. The Vedic system, therefore, prescribes that a woman should always be protected. In her childhood her father should protect her, in her youth her husband should protect her, and in her old age her grown children or another guardian should protect her. In this way she will remain pure in consciousness and be eligible to participate in a society based on spiritual principles. If women are not protected in this way, they will become the unfortunate victims of unscrupulous men who will exploit them for sense gratification. We can see this actually happening in modern society.

You will find that our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement restricts the association between men and women. This is not because of a hatred of women. Such control is necessary for a society of smooth progress in spiritual realization. The *Vedas* say that a man is like butter and a woman is like fire. The butter must melt in the association of fire, and therefore they must be brought together only when necessary. The basic principle of material existence is attachment for sexual enjoyment. When a man and woman unite, the knot of material attachment tightens, and thus one becomes tied down to home, family, society, bank balance and so on, and forgets the importance of self-realization. Therefore, sexual enjoyment and self-realization go ill together.

In India our spiritual master is sometimes criticized because he allows both men and women to participate fully in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. According to his critics, this violates the Hindu social system. But the purpose of this movement is not to establish the Hindu social system. The purpose is to give everyone the opportunity to become perfect in self-realization and devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such devotional service is fully spiritual, and therefore everyone is equally eligible to participate, regardless of race, nationality or any other temporary material designations.

Yours sincerely,
Jayādvaīta dāsa

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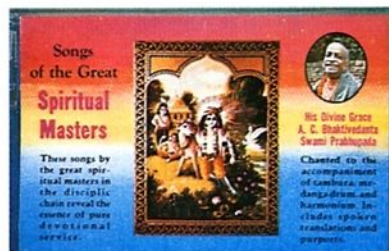
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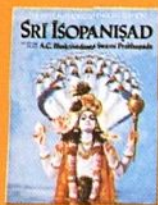
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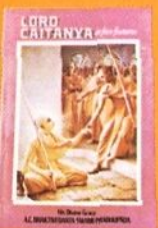
FREEDOM IN KNOWLEDGE

"In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge. Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism. And one who has achieved this enjoys the self within himself in due course of time."—*Bhagavad-gītā*

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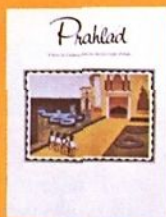
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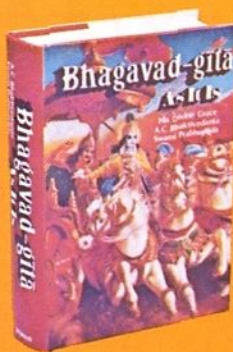
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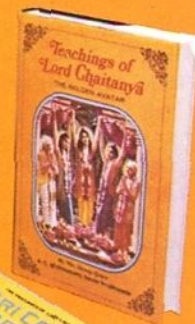


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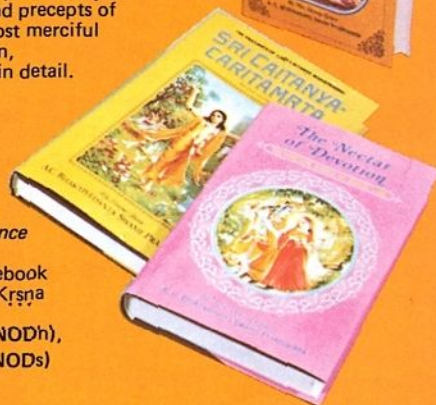
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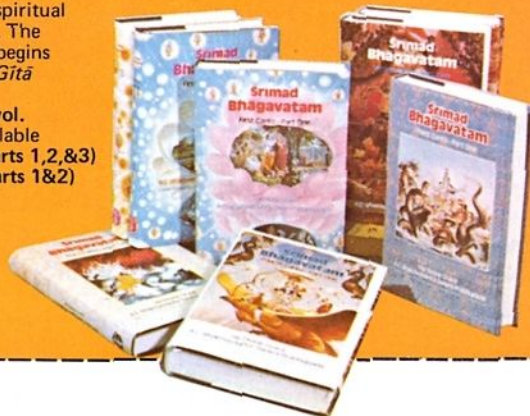


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BACK TO GODHEAD

Begins Its Tenth Year In The West

WITH THIS ISSUE, we mark with pleasure the beginning of the tenth year that BACK TO GODHEAD is being published in the West. BACK TO GODHEAD is a unique spiritual journal because it is fully devoted to *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, or topics related to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

To understand Kṛṣṇa, however, first we must know ourselves. For many, the very question "Who am I?" seems absurd. "Why, of course I know who I am," we say. All right, then. Who are you? I reply that I am Mr. Such and Such, I am a citizen of America, I'm married and have two kids. I tell how old I am, what my religion is, what corporation I work for and so on. In other words, I circle around the point. I know many things *about* myself. But who am I? That I cannot say.

BACK TO GODHEAD, therefore, begins at this point. Before we can know what is important to us or what will make us happy, first we must know who we are. BTG, therefore, is a philosophical magazine, for this is the beginning of philosophy. Indeed, it is the very beginning of human life because only human beings can inquire about their identity; animals cannot. Animals can only eat, sleep, mate and defend. In fact, many animals do these things better than we do. A pigeon, for example, cannot read *Playboy*, but it has sexual intercourse hundreds of times a day. A pig cannot read *Gourmet*, but although we would not agree with the pig's choice of delicacies, it knows how to eat with gusto. To inquire about one's real identity, however, and about the purpose of life, is the special prerogative of a human being. Human life truly begins, therefore, when one asks himself, "Who am I?" Because BTG deals with this essential question, it is therefore more important than magazines concerned only with the affairs of the material body.

The purpose of BACK TO GODHEAD is to train the mind so that one can understand the self. How? BTG is not a magazine of speculative theories, opinions and mental concoctions. It is intended to be a magazine of knowledge, and knowledge cannot be invented, but only discovered. What is the best way to discover who we are? BACK TO GODHEAD rests on the principle that the best way is to learn from a qualified authority.

Now, this may seem stuffy or dogmatic, but actually it is simple common sense. The quickest, surest way to get knowledge even about commonplace mundane affairs—to say nothing of self-realization—is to get it from someone who already knows. For example, if I want to know who my father is, the easiest way is to ask my mother. I could speculate or perform some research, but the quickest, most certain and most direct way—indeed, the only way to be sure—would be to ask my mother. Similarly, to know something about calculus or chemistry we may consult a professor, to know the price of goods we consult a salesman, or to know the time we ask someone with a watch. In this way, we very naturally rely upon authorities to get knowledge.

But where shall we find a genuine authority on spiritual life? We accept that the most reliable authority on spiritual truth is the ancient literature of India, the Vedic scriptures, especially *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Since time immemorial, the world has looked toward India as a center of spiritual culture. Long before the birth of Christ, Socrates or even Moses, the great *yogis* and mystics of India were exploring the territory of inner consciousness. And even then, these explorers used the *Vedas* as their maps. The Vedic literatures were committed to writing only 5,000 years ago, when they were compiled by the great sage Vyāsa, but actually they have no beginning, for they consist of eternal transcendental knowledge. BACK TO GODHEAD, therefore, contains no speculations

or theories about spiritual life, but only ideas authorized by the Vedic scriptures.

The first point of Vedic knowledge is that all living beings are different from their material bodies. The body is compared to a suit of clothing, and the spiritual spark of consciousness within the body is like the person wearing the clothing. Just as we change our clothing, we are also changing bodies. We see that a child grows up and becomes a boy and then an old man, and finally he dies. Actually, however, the spiritual spark of consciousness never changes. What we see changing is the body. The soul within is constant. Thus death, which to us appears final, is actually only another change. When the body becomes old and worn out, the soul changes to a new body, and thus the cycle of birth and death begins again. However, by understanding oneself to be different

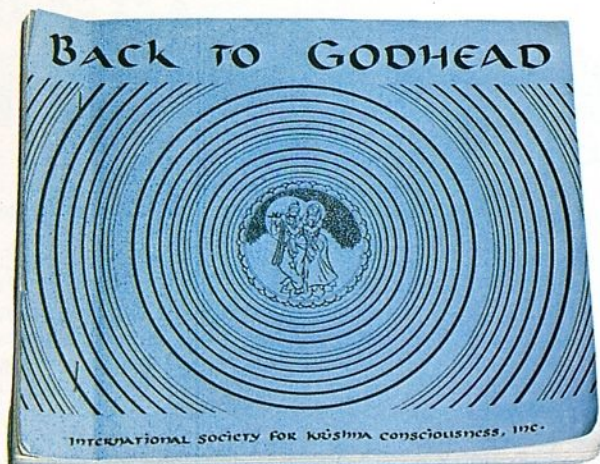


One of the original issues of Back to Godhead published by Śrīla Prabhupāda in India (Delhi, July 1960).

from the body, and by understanding the Supreme Self, or Kṛṣṇa, one can become free from the repetition of birth and death and return to his natural home in the spiritual world. The need for such transcendental realization—and the science of how to achieve it—is explained in BACK TO GODHEAD.

The founder and original editor of BACK TO GODHEAD—and its eternal guide as well—is His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the author of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, *Kṛṣṇa, Teachings of Lord Caitanya* and many other English translations and summary studies of the ancient Vedic scriptures. Śrīla Prabhupāda first started BACK TO GODHEAD in India in 1944, and later he continued it in the West.

Śrīla Prabhupāda first came to the United States in September of 1965, and by October of 1966 he and his first American students had begun the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in a small storefront in New York City. Then, within only a few months, Śrīla Prabhupāda spent almost the entire treasury of the new temple (and a tiny treasury it was) to buy two second-hand



A copy of the first issue of *Back to Godhead* published in the United States (New York City, October 1966).

mimeograph machines. His spiritual master had always stressed the importance of Kṛṣṇa conscious literature, and therefore within a short time the first American issue of *BACK TO GODHEAD* appeared. It was a crudely mimeographed affair, hand-stapled by the devotees, but it conveyed the transcendental message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Godhead is light," it announced. "Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience."

From its very start, the only purpose of *BACK TO GODHEAD* was to present *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, topics concerning Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. "Blessings of Kṛṣṇa!" began an introduction from the editors in the first issue. "BACK TO GODHEAD is a bi-monthly publication [now it is monthly] issued by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. This publication is principally concerned with promulgating through the medium of essays, poems and articles the truths expounded by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*." The article then went on to explain that Kṛṣṇa is the same Supreme Lord who is worshiped by different people throughout the world by different names, for God is one and one only.

After the introduction came the text of a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Everything we have should be used for Kṛṣṇa," he said. "We should use our tongue to speak of Kṛṣṇa and to eat food properly prepared and offered to Kṛṣṇa. We should use our eyes to look at pictures of Kṛṣṇa, and our ears to hear a master speak of Kṛṣṇa. We should use our feet to walk to Kṛṣṇa's temple, and our hands to hold the broom that sweeps the temple floor. We can use our nose to smell flowers offered to Kṛṣṇa. We can use our genitals to produce children whom we will raise in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even if we cannot follow these suggestions, we can always chant, 'Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma.' We must divert the mind from its material engagements and put it into Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is not recommended to meditate on formless void. The mind should be focused on Kṛṣṇa."

With Śrīla Prabhupāda's constant encouragement, the devotees managed to put together a new BTG more or less monthly. The humble little magazine gradually grew more refined. Soon it was being printed by offset, and when a young art student became one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's first disciples, simple illustrations began to grace its pages.

His Divine Grace has often called BTG "the backbone of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement." He described its importance in a letter to his disciples in June of 1968. "I have entrusted *BACK TO GODHEAD* into your hands," he wrote, "because this paper is the beginning of my spiritual life. During the time of my *guru mahārāja's* [spiritual master's] passing away, his last instruction to me was, 'You try to preach whatever you have learned from me in English. That will do good to you and the people who hear you.' This instruction was given to me in 1936, and I started this paper in

1944. So during my householder life I was printing this paper and distributing it almost free—some [subscribers] were paying, and some of them were not. But I was trying my best at my cost."

The old Indian BTG appeared in newspaper form, twice a month. It contained English translations and purports of verses from important books like *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and it also featured incisive articles dealing with current scientific, political and economic news in a Kṛṣṇa conscious way. Now, in the West, BTG continues to present articles taken from *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, as well as news of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and spiritual perspectives on current affairs. BTG has gradually grown in popularity, and it is being recognized as a unique journal of spiritual enlightenment.

There is no room in *BACK TO GODHEAD* for mundane subjects. So many magazines deal with politics, economics, sports, electronics, fiction, sex, movies, cars and so on, but because they have no relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, they simply create a polluted atmosphere. Although they may be expertly written in language decorated with similes and metaphors, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* condemns them as being no better than refuse, suitable only for men who are no better than crows.

*na yad vacaś citra-padaṁ harer yaśo
jagat-pavitrāṁ pragṛīta karhicit
tad vāyasaṁ tīrtham uśanti mānasā
na yatra haṁsā niramanty uśikṣayāḥ*

"Those words which do not describe the glories of the Lord, who alone can sanctify the atmosphere of the whole universe, are considered by saintly persons to be like unto a place of pilgrimage for crows. Since the all-perfect persons are inhabitants of the transcendental abode, they do not derive any pleasure there." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 1.5.10)

BACK TO GODHEAD, therefore, deals only with topics of spiritual value. Anything unrelated to Kṛṣṇa and the service of Kṛṣṇa is rejected.

The purpose of *BACK TO GODHEAD* is to create a revolution—not a mundane political revolution, but a revolution in consciousness, a revolution based upon the spiritual pleasure of understanding our relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa and using everything in His service.

*tad-vāg-visargo janatāgha-viplavo
yasmin prati-ślokaṁ abaddhavyatī api
nāmāny anantasya yaśo 'hkitāni yat
śṛṇvanti gāyanti gṛṇanti sādhaḥ*

"That literature which is full of descriptions of the transcendental glories of the name, fame, forms and pastimes of the unlimited Supreme Lord is a different creation, full of transcendental words directed toward bringing about a revolution in the impious lives of this world's misdirected civilization. Such transcendental literatures, even though imperfectly composed, are heard, sung and accepted by purified men who are thoroughly honest." (*Bhāg.* 1.5.11)

Despite materialistic advancement, we have failed to create a world society of peace, amity and satisfaction only because we have neglected the primary importance of a spiritual atmosphere of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The living being is a spiritual soul, and therefore material advancement alone cannot make him happy. But in the pure atmosphere that can be created by *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, topics related to Kṛṣṇa, the good qualities of humanity will certainly flourish.

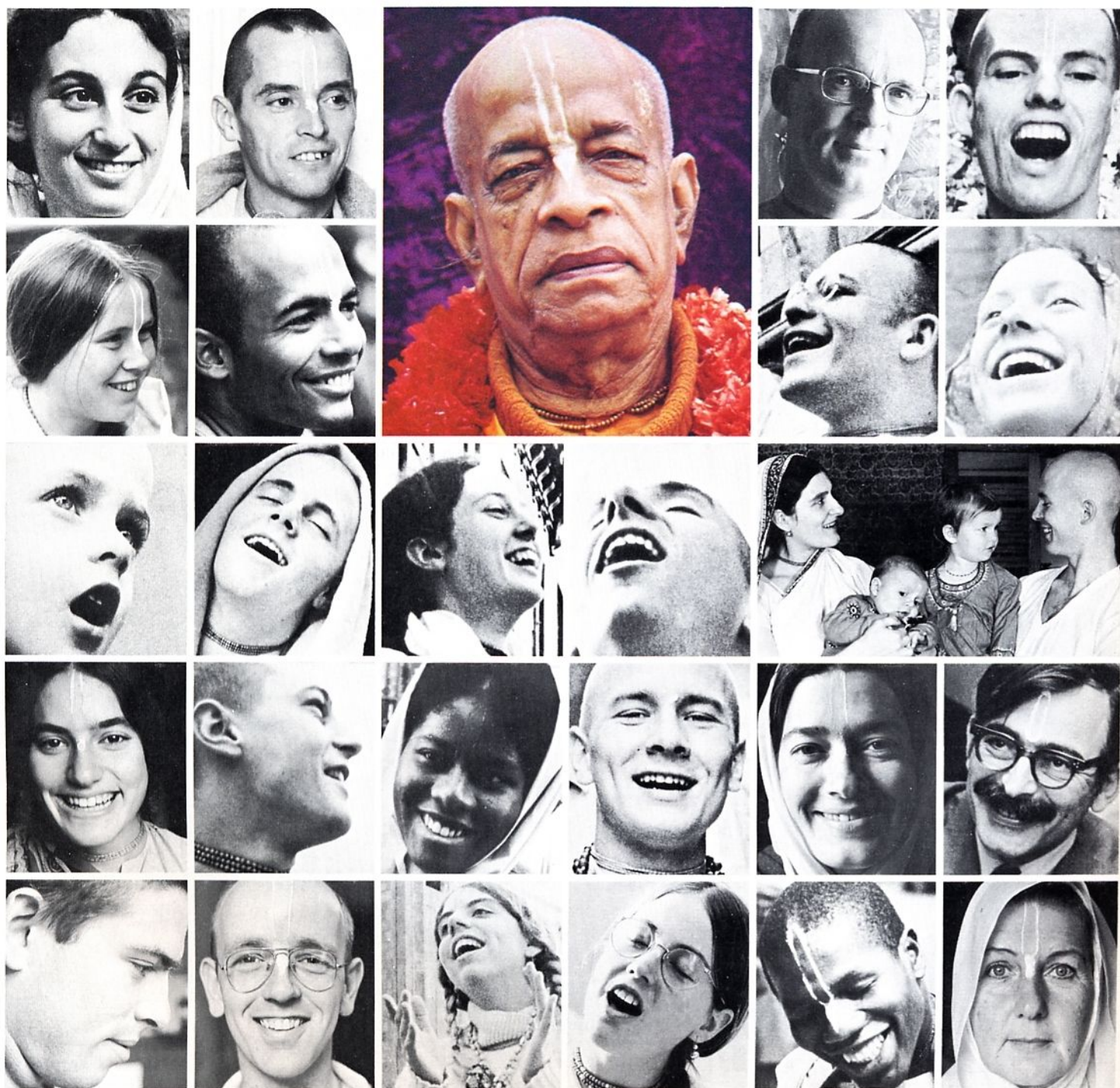
Whatever the leaders of society do, common people follow. Therefore, since America and the other highly developed Western nations are now leading the world in material advancement, we are hopeful that the honest and pure-hearted intelligentsia of these nations will recognize the need for the proper spiritual balance and will therefore attune their minds to spiritual realization by reading *BACK TO GODHEAD* regularly.

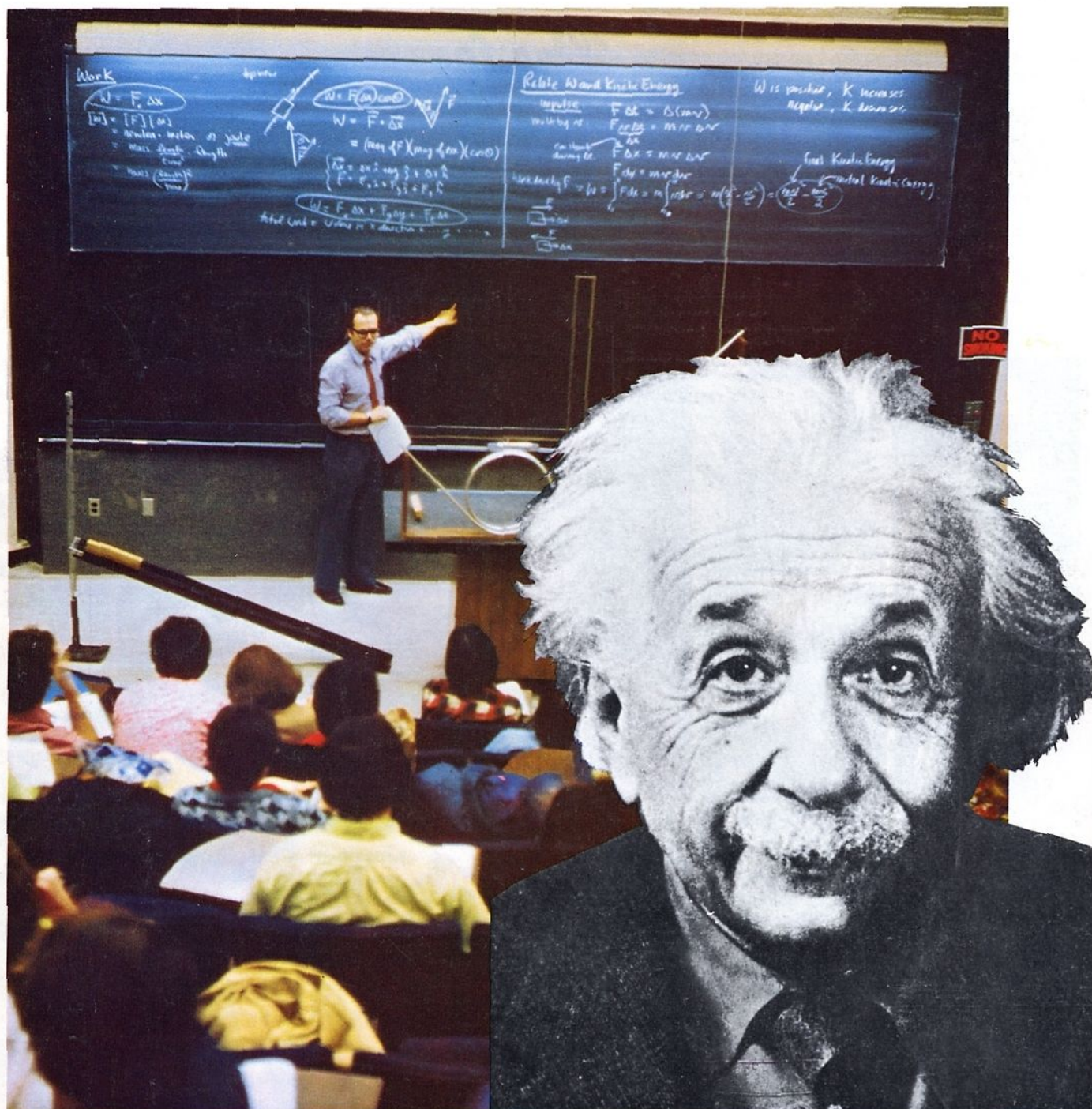
The face is the index of the mind.

Meet the bright faces of the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement.

By the practice of *bhakti-yoga* one's mind is completely freed from material mental activities. In that joyous state, one is situated in boundless transcendental happiness and enjoys himself through transcendental senses.

Experience the nectar of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda invite you to visit any of the Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temples around the world. They are listed on page 2 of this magazine.





**"When I read the Bhagavad-gītā,
I ask myself how God created the universe.
Everything else appears to be superfluous."**

—Albert Einstein

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