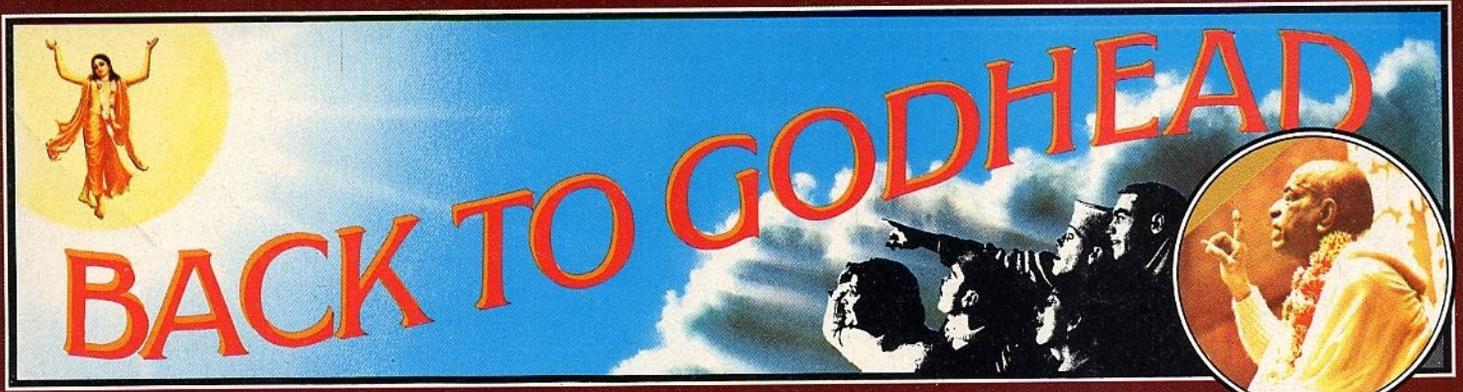


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



Vol.11 No.8

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



# A short statement of the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

*The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a worldwide community of devotees practicing bhakti-yoga, the eternal science of loving service to God. The Society was founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, a pure devotee of God representing an unbroken chain of spiritual masters originating with Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. The following eight principles are the basis of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.*

*We invite all our readers to consider them with an open mind and then visit one of the ISKCON centers to see how they are being applied in everyday life.*

1. By sincerely cultivating a bona fide spiritual science, we can be free from anxiety and come to a state of pure, unending, blissful consciousness in this lifetime.
2. We are not our bodies but eternal spirit souls, parts and parcels of God (Kṛṣṇa). As such, we are all brothers, and Kṛṣṇa is ultimately our common father.
3. Kṛṣṇa is the eternal, all-knowing, omnipresent, all-powerful, and all-attractive Personality of Godhead. He is the seed-giving father of all living beings, and He is the sustaining energy of the entire cosmic creation.
4. The Absolute Truth is contained in all the great scriptures of the world. However, the oldest known revealed scriptures in existence are the Vedic literatures, most notably the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is the literal record of God's actual words.
5. We should learn the Vedic knowledge from a genuine spiritual master—one who has no selfish motives and whose mind is firmly fixed on Kṛṣṇa.
6. Before we eat, we should offer to the Lord the food that sustains us. Then Kṛṣṇa becomes the offering and purifies us.
7. We should perform all our actions as offerings to Kṛṣṇa and do nothing for our own sense gratification.
8. The recommended means for achieving the mature stage of love of God in this age of Kali, or quarrel, is to chant the holy names of the Lord. The easiest method for most people is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*:  
Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare  
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

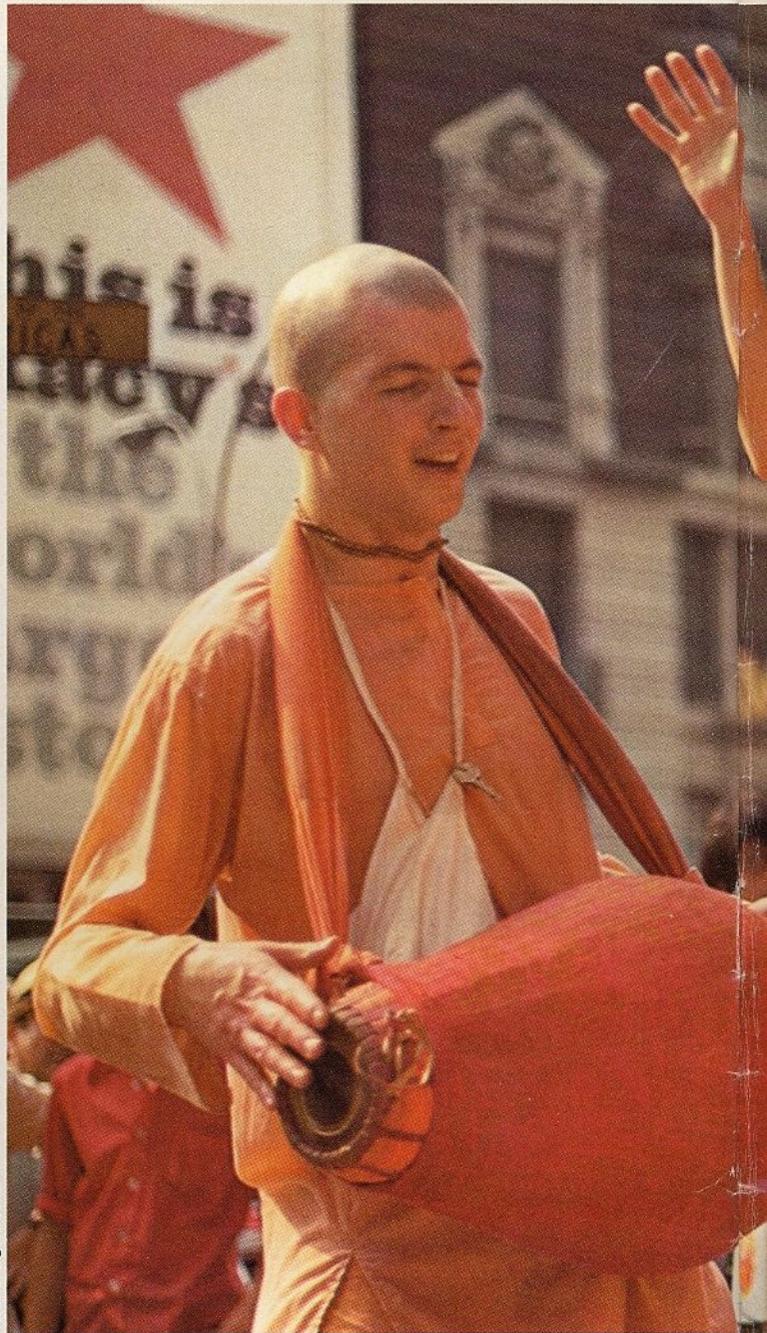


Photo: Bhāgavata dāsa

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



God has an unlimited variety of names. Some of them—Jehovah, Adonai, Buddha, and Allah—are familiar to us, while the names Kṛṣṇa and Rāma may be less so. However, whatever name of God we may accept, all scriptures enjoin us to chant it for spiritual purification.

Muhammad counseled, “Glorify the name of your Lord, the most high” (Koran 87.2). Saint Paul said, “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13).

Lord Buddha declared, “All who sincerely call upon my name will come to me after death, and I will take them to Paradise” (*Vows of Amida Buddha* 18). King David preached, “From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised” (Psalms 113:3). And the world’s oldest scriptures, the *Vedas* of India, emphatically state, “Chant the holy name, chant the holy name, chant the holy name of the Lord. In this age of quarrel there is no

other way, no other way, no other way to attain spiritual enlightenment” (*Bṛhan-nāradya Purāna*).

The special design of the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant makes it easy to repeat and pleasant to hear. Spoken or sung, by yourself or in a group, *Hare Kṛṣṇa* invariably produces a joyful state of spiritual awareness—Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Find out more about Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this issue of BACK TO GODHEAD magazine.

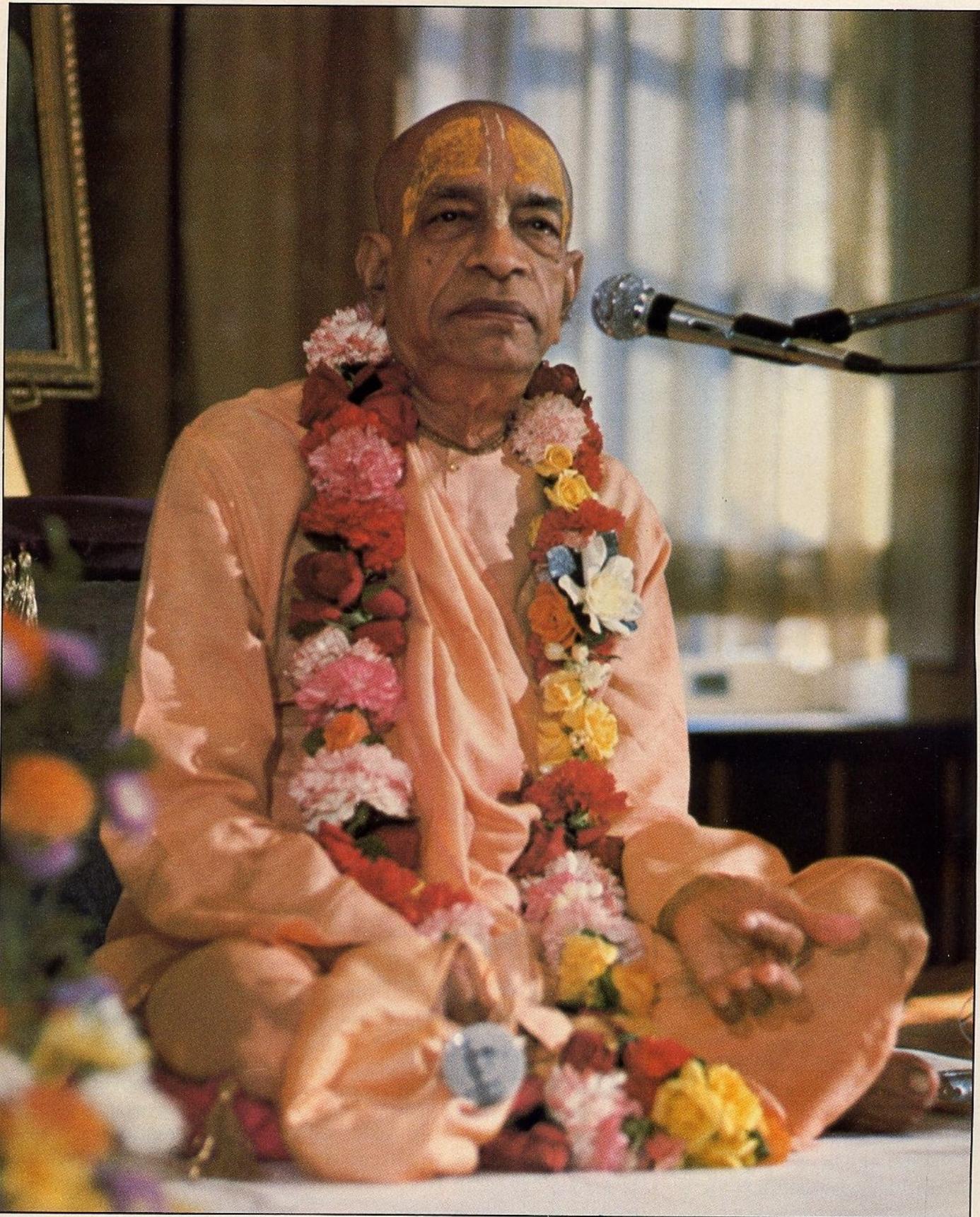


Photo: Muralivadana dāsa

His Divine Grace

**A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA**

*Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness*

# BACK TO GODHEAD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

Vol. 11 No. 8

## FOUNDER

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

His Divine Grace

**A. C. Bhaktivedānta 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 *ī* is like the *i* in *pique*. The vowel *ī* is pronounced like the *ri* in the English word *rim*. The *ci* is pronounced as in the English word *chair*. The aspirated consonants (*ch*, *jh*, *dh*, etc.) are pronounced as in *staunch-heart*, *hedg-hog* and *red-hot*. The two spirants *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.

## ◀ The founder and original editor

of BACK TO GODHEAD is His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda first came to the United States in September of 1965, and by July of 1966 he had begun the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in a small storefront in New York City.

From the beginning, BACK TO GODHEAD magazine was an integral part of ISKCON. In fact, it has often been called "the backbone of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement" by Śrīla Prabhupāda, who began writing, printing and distributing it himself in 1944. Over the years, BACK TO GODHEAD has changed in many ways, but its purpose has remained one: to present topics concerning Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for the spiritual enlightenment of its readers.

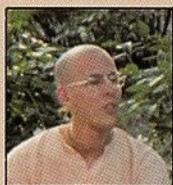
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When an incarnation of God appears in the material world, it's undoubtedly a wonderful event. And it's even more wonderful when Lord Kṛṣṇa, the original Personality of Godhead Himself, appears. An account from the five-thousand-year-old *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

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## ON THE COVER



When the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, comes to this world, He invites all of us to live in the spiritual world with Him. Kṛṣṇa can make this invitation because His very name means "the all-attractive": He's all-wealthy, all-famous, all-powerful, all-wise, all-renounced, and all-beautiful. When the Lord appeared five thousand years ago in India's Vṛndāvana, the village girls were among His many devotees. This year people throughout the world will celebrate Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance day on August 18. (An original oil painting by Parīkṣit dāsa.)



# Separating the Saints from the Swindlers

*Every day the number of people interested in practicing yoga and meditation increases by the thousands.*

*Unfortunately, a person looking for a suitable teacher is likely to encounter a bewildering array of "gurus," mystics, and self-made gods. In an interview with the London Times, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda explains how a sincere seeker can tell the difference between a cheater and a genuine teacher.*

**Reporter:** Your Grace, it seems that more people than ever are seeking some kind of spiritual life. I wonder if you could tell me why this is so.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** The desire for spiritual life is an absolutely natural hankering. Because we are spirit souls, we cannot be happy in the material atmosphere. If you take a fish out of the water, it cannot be happy on land. Similarly, if we are without spiritual consciousness, we can never be happy. Today, so many people are after scientific advancement and economic development, but they are not happy because these are not the actual goals of life. Many young people are realizing this, and they are rejecting materialistic life and are trying to search for spiritual life. Actually, this is the proper search. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the proper goal of life. Unless you take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you cannot be happy. That is a fact.

Therefore, we invite everyone to study and understand this great movement.

**Reporter:** What frankly worries me is that since the arrival in Britain some time ago of an Indian *yogī*, who was the first "guru" that most people ever heard of, a lot of "gurus" have suddenly appeared out of nowhere. Sometimes I get the feeling that all of them are not as genuine as they ought to be. Would it be right to warn people who are thinking of taking

up spiritual life that they should make sure that they have a genuine guru to teach them?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. Of course, to search out a guru is very nice, but if you want a cheap guru, or if you want to be cheated, then you will find many cheating gurus. But if you are sincere, you will find a sincere guru. Because people want everything very cheaply, they are cheated. We ask our students to refrain from illicit sex, meat eating, gambling, and intoxication. People think that this is all very difficult—a botheration. But if someone else says, "You may do whatever nonsense you like, simply take my mantra," then people will like him. The point is that people want to be cheated, and therefore cheaters come. No one wants to undergo any austerity. Human life is meant for austerity, but no one is prepared to undergo austerity. Consequently, cheaters come and say, "No austerity. Whatever you like, you do. Simply pay me and I'll give you some mantra and you'll become God in six months." All this is going on. If you want to be cheated like this, the cheaters will come.

**Reporter:** What about the person who seriously wants to find spiritual life, but who happens to finish up with the wrong guru?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** If you simply want an ordinary education, you have to devote so much time, labor, and understanding to it. Similarly, if you are going to take to spiritual life, you must become serious. How is it that simply by some

wonderful mantras, someone can become God in six months? Why do people want something like that? This means that they want to be cheated.

**Reporter:** How can a person tell he has a genuine guru?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Can any of my students answer this question?

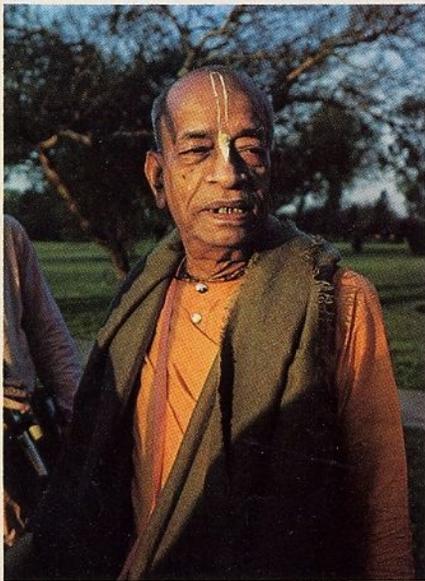
**A disciple:** Once I remember John Lennon asked you, "How will I know who is the genuine guru?" And you answered, "Just find out the one who is most addicted to Kṛṣṇa. He is genuine."

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. The genuine guru is God's representative, and he speaks about God and nothing else. The genuine guru is he who has no interest in materialistic life. He is after God, and God only. That is one of the tests of a genuine guru: *brahma-niṣṭham*. He is absorbed in the Absolute Truth. In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* it is stated, *śrotṛiyam brahma-niṣṭham*. "The genuine guru is well versed in the scriptures and Vedic knowledge, and he is completely dependent on Brahman." He should know what Brahman [spirit] is and how to become situated in Brahman. These signs are given in the Vedic literature. As I said before, the real guru is God's representative. He represents the Supreme Lord, just as a viceroy represents a king. The real guru will not manufacture anything. Everything he says is in accordance with the scriptures and the previous *ācāryas*. He will not give you a mantra and tell you that you will become God in six months. This is not a guru's business. A guru's business is to canvass everyone to become devotees of God. That is the sum and substance of a real guru's business. Indeed, he has no other business. He tells whomever he sees, "Please become God conscious." If he canvasses somehow or other on behalf of God and tries to get everyone to become a devotee of God, he is a genuine guru.

**Reporter:** What about a Christian priest?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Christian, Muhammadan, Hindu—it doesn't matter. If he is simply speaking on behalf of God, he is a guru. Lord Jesus Christ, for instance. He canvassed people, saying, "Just try to love God." Anyone—it doesn't matter who—be he Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, is a guru if he convinces people to love God. That is the test. The guru never says, "I am God," or "I will

make you God.” The real guru says, “I am a servant of God, and I will make you a servant of God also.” It doesn’t matter how the guru is dressed. As Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “Whoever can impart knowledge about Kṛṣṇa is a spiritual master.” A genuine spiritual master



*“If you want to be cheated, you will find many cheating gurus. But if you are sincere, you will find a sincere guru.”*

simply tries to get people to become devotees of Kṛṣṇa, or God. He has no other business.

**Reporter:** But the bad gurus—

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** And what is a “bad” guru?

**Reporter:** A bad guru just wants some money or some fame.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Well, if he is bad, how can he become a guru? [Laughter.] How can iron become gold? Actually, a guru cannot be bad, for if someone is bad, he cannot be a guru. You cannot say “bad guru.” That is a contradiction. What you have to do is simply try to understand what a genuine guru is. The definition of a genuine guru is that he is simply talking about God—that’s all. If he’s talking about some other nonsense, then he is not a guru. A guru cannot be bad. There is no question of a bad guru, any more than a red guru or a white guru. *Guru* means “genuine guru.” All we have to know is that the genuine guru is simply talking about God and trying to get people to become God’s devotees. If he does this, he is genuine.

**Reporter:** If I wanted to be initiated into your society, what would I have to do?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** First of all, you’d have to give up illicit sex life.

**Reporter:** Does that include all sex life? What is illicit sex life?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Illicit sex is sex out-

side of marriage. Animals have sex with no restrictions, but in human society there are restrictions. In every country and in every religion, there is some system of restricting sex life. You would also have to give up all intoxicants, including tea, cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana—anything that intoxicates.

**Reporter:** Anything else?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** You’d also have to give up eating meat, eggs, and fish. And you’d have to give up gambling as well. Unless you give up these four sinful activities, you could not be initiated.

**Reporter:** How many followers do you have throughout the world?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** For anything genuine, the followers may be very few. For something rubbish, the followers may be many. Still, we have about five thousand initiated disciples.

**Reporter:** Is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement growing all the time?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, it is growing—but slowly. This is because we have so many restrictions. People do not like restrictions.

**Reporter:** Where is your following the greatest?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** In the United States, Europe, South America, and Australia. And, of course, in India there are millions who practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

**Reporter:** Could you tell me what the goal of your movement is?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** The purpose of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to awaken man’s original consciousness. At the present moment our consciousness is designated. Someone is thinking, “I am an Englishman,” and another is thinking, “I am an American.” Actually, we do not belong to any of these designations. We are all part and parcel of God; that is our real identification. If everyone simply comes to that consciousness, all the problems of the world will be solved. Then we shall come to know that we are one—the same quality of spirit soul. The same quality of spirit soul is within everyone, although it may be in a different dress. This is the explanation given in *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is actually a purificatory process (*sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam*). Its purpose is to make people free from all designations (*tat-paratvena nirmalam*). When our consciousness becomes purified of all designations, the activities we carry out with our purified senses make us perfect. Eventually, we reach the ideal perfection of human life. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is also a very simple process. It is not necessary to become a great philosopher, scientist, or whatever. We need only chant the holy name

of the Lord, understanding that His personality, His name, and His qualities are all absolute.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a great science. Unfortunately, in the universities there is no department for this science. Therefore we invite all serious men who are interested in the welfare of human society to understand this great movement and, if possible, take part in it and cooperate with us. The problems of the world will be solved. This is also the verdict of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the most important and authoritative book of spiritual knowledge. Many of you have heard of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Our movement is based on it. Our movement is approved by all great *ācāryas* in India. Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, Lord Caitanya, and so many others. You are all representatives of newspapers, so I ask you to try to understand this movement as far as possible for the good of all human society.

**Reporter:** Do you think your movement is the only way to know God?

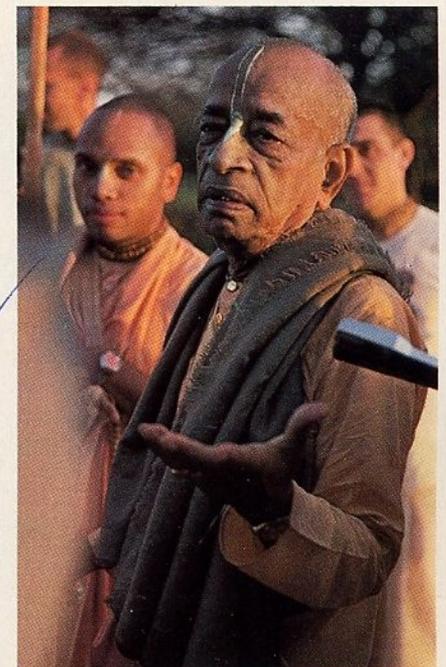
**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes.

**Reporter:** How are you assured of that?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** From the authorities and from God, Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya  
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja  
ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo  
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā sucaḥ*

“Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.” [*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.66].



*“The genuine guru is God’s representative, and he speaks about God and nothing else.”*

**Reporter:** Does “surrender” mean that someone would have to leave his family?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No.

**Reporter:** But suppose I were to become an initiate. Wouldn't I have to come and live in the temple?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Not necessarily.

**Reporter:** I can stay at home?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Oh, yes.

**Reporter:** What about work? Would I have to give up my job?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No, you'd simply have to give up your bad habits and chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra on these beads—that's all.

**Reporter:** Would I have to give any financial support?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No, that is your voluntary wish. If you give, that's all right. And if you don't, we don't mind. We do not depend on anyone's financial contribution. We depend on Kṛṣṇa.

**Reporter:** I wouldn't have to give any money at all?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No.

**Reporter:** Is this one of the main things that distinguishes the genuine guru from the fake guru?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, a genuine guru is not a businessman. He is a representative of God. Whatever God says, the guru repeats. He does not speak otherwise.

**Reporter:** But would you expect to find a real guru, say, traveling in a Rolls Royce and staying in a penthouse suite in a classy hotel?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Sometimes people provide us with a room in a first-class hotel, but we generally stay in our own temples. We have some one hundred temples around the world, so we don't require to go to any hotels.

**Reporter:** I wasn't trying to make any accusations. I was merely trying to illustrate that I think your warning is a valid one. There are so many people interested in finding a spiritual life, and at the same time there are a lot of people interested in cashing in on the “guru business.”

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Are you under the impression that spiritual life means voluntarily accepting poverty?

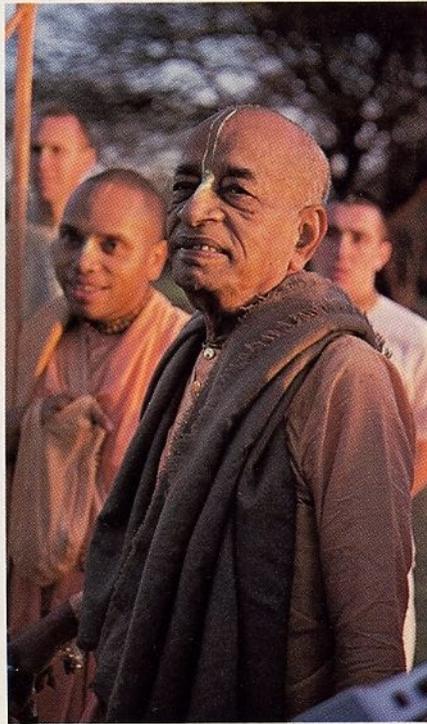
**Reporter:** Well, I don't know.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** A poverty-stricken man may be materialistic, and a wealthy man may be very spiritual. Spiritual life does not depend on either poverty or wealth. Spiritual life is transcendental. Consider Arjuna, for instance. Arjuna was a member of a royal family, yet he was a pure devotee of God. And in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *evam paramparā-prāptam imam rājarṣayo viduḥ*: “This supreme science was received through the chain of disciplic

succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way” [Bg. 4.2]. In the past, all kings who were saintly understood spiritual science. Therefore, spiritual life does not depend on one's material condition. Whatever a person's material condition may be—he may be a king or a pauper—he can still understand spiritual life. Generally people do not know what spiritual life is, and therefore, they unnecessarily criticize us. If I asked you what spiritual life is, how would you answer?

**Reporter:** Well, I'm not sure.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Although you do not know what spiritual life is, you still say, “It is this,” or “It is that.” But first



*“Whatever God says, the guru repeats. He does not speak otherwise.”*

you should know what spiritual life is. Spiritual life begins when you understand that you are not your body. This is the real beginning of spiritual life. By seeing the difference between your self and your body, you come to understand that you are a spirit soul (*aham brahmāsmi*).

**Reporter:** Do you think this knowledge should be a part of everyone's education?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. People should first be taught what they are. Are they their bodies, or something else? That is the beginning of education. Now everyone is educated to think he is his body. Because someone accidentally gets an American body, he thinks, “I am an American.” This is just like thinking, “I am a red shirt,” just because you are

wearing a red shirt. You are not a red shirt; you are a human being. Similarly, this body is like a shirt or coat over the real person—the spirit soul. If we recognize ourselves simply by our bodily “shirt” or “coat,” then we have no spiritual education.

**Reporter:** Do you think that such education should be given in schools?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes—in schools, colleges, and universities. There is an immense literature on this subject—an immense fund of knowledge. What is actually required is that the leaders of society come forward to understand this movement.

**Reporter:** Have you ever had people come to you who had previously been involved with a fake guru?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, there are many.

**Reporter:** Were their spiritual lives in any way spoiled by the fake guru?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No, they were genuinely seeking something spiritual, and that was their qualification. God is within everyone's heart, and as soon as someone genuinely seeks Him, He helps that person find a genuine guru.

**Reporter:** Have the real gurus like yourself ever tried to put a stop to the false gurus—that is, put pressure on them to put them out of business, so to speak.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No, that is not my purpose. I started my movement simply by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. I chanted in New York in a place called Tompkins Square Park, and soon people began to come to me. In this way, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement gradually developed. Many accepted, and many did not accept. Those who are fortunate have accepted.

**Reporter:** Don't you feel that people are suspicious because of their experience with fake gurus? If you went to a quack dentist and he broke your tooth, you might be suspicious about going to another dentist.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. Naturally, if you are cheated, you become suspicious. But this does not mean that if you are cheated once, you will always be cheated. You should find out someone genuine. But to come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you must be either very fortunate or well aware of this science. From the *Bhagavad-gītā* we understand that the genuine seekers are very few: *manuṣyāṇāṃ sahasreṣu kaścīd yatati siddhaye*. Out of many millions of people, there may be only one who is interested in spiritual life. Generally, people are interested in eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. So how can we expect to find many followers? It is not difficult to notice that people have lost their spiritual interest. And almost all those who



## *Light of My Life*

*a tribute to Śrīla Prabhupāda  
—by Prapanna dāsa*

*My Gurudeva, light of this dark universe,  
My only hope is to glorify you.  
In this attempt  
I call upon your intelligence  
To light my intelligence.  
Let your words guide my pen, and  
Let your eternal presence,  
With its brightness,  
Illumine my way in the night  
Of this existence.*

*From the eternal abode of the Lord  
You have come to this filthy mire,  
Where hoggish men roll about,  
And the most defamed you've chosen.  
This is your mercy.*

*Your words, your glances,  
Like a miraculous rain,  
Wash away the filth,  
The arid crust of lust;  
And the fever of wanting  
To be owners and lords—  
This also they extinguish.*

*Fulfilling Lord Gaurāṅga's wish,  
Without discrimination you distribute  
The contents of the storehouse  
Of transcendental love.*

*Who could imagine?  
Erasing the image  
Of the aged and vengeful God,  
You give us Kṛṣṇa, Govinda,  
The youthful cowherd boy,  
The naughty son, the transcendental lover.  
And you teach us the perfection  
Of remembering Him moment by moment.*

*Actually,  
I know less than nothing about you,  
For your heart is surely  
An endless treasure chest  
Full of the Lord's beautiful pastimes.  
The only thing I know, O Gurudeva,  
Is that the cooling shine  
Of your lotus feet  
Can alone make a blind man see.*

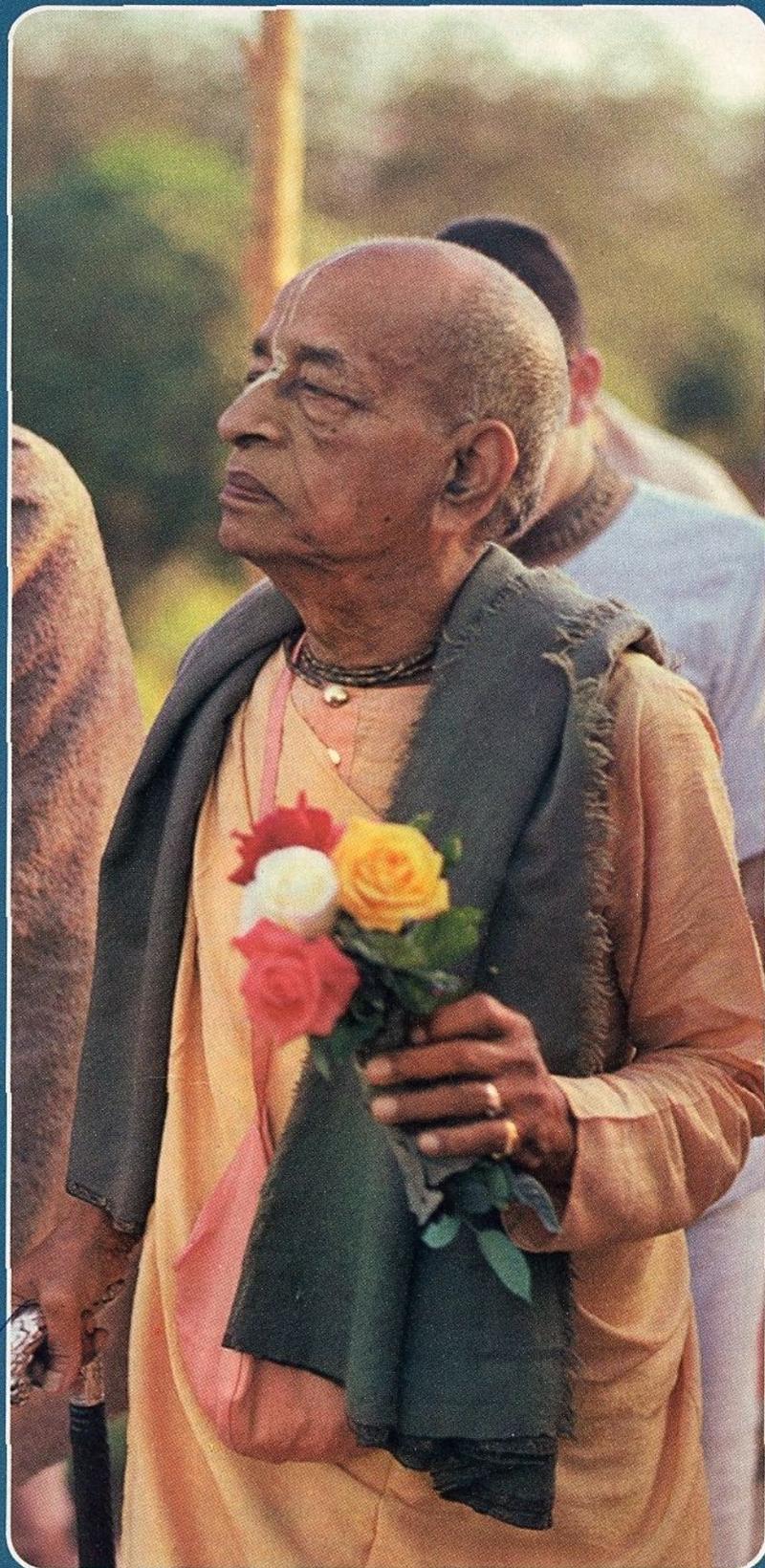


Photo: Bhārgava dāsa

# Finding a Genuine Guru

*In talking about spiritual life with college students, BACK TO GODHEAD contributor Jayādvaita dāsa often explains why a person who wants genuine spiritual life needs a genuine spiritual master.*

I remember that, before I met my spiritual master eight years ago, I had always hoped I would meet someone who could guide me to a higher truth. It wasn't a clearly formulated idea—more like a secret wish. I would read books by people I thought had some higher understanding, and I would take some ideas from this author, some from that. But there wasn't anyone I could respect as really *knowing*. No doubt, they had their insights, ideas that seemed fresh and brilliant. But there wasn't anyone about whom I could say, "This man truly has knowledge. Let me approach him and ask him to be my teacher."

Then, in 1968, I met my spiritual master—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. And after I had studied and tested his teachings, and after my doubts (my protectors!) were satisfied, I decided to become his disciple. Now, as a student of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I travel to colleges throughout the central United States, speaking with people about Kṛṣṇa consciousness and trying to answer their questions according to what my spiritual master has taught me. Many of the students I talk to want answers to the same questions I once struggled with—questions like, "To live a spiritual life, is it necessary to accept a spiritual master?" "Is there only one spiritual master, or can there be more than one?" "Where does the spiritual master get his knowledge?" and "How can I find my spiritual master?"

A student at a university in Michigan recently asked me, "If I'm a spiritual person, why can't I find spiritual truth on my own? Why go to someone else? Why can't I just reach the truth by my own experience?" The image is familiar: a sincere seeker, gleaning clues to the truth wherever he can find them, putting the pieces together by his own intuition and sensitivity until finally he solves the puzzle of life. Noble, is it not?

Yes, but how naive! When I want knowledge about any material subject (be it chemistry, physics, mathematics, geography, grammar, or even how to make a wristwatch),

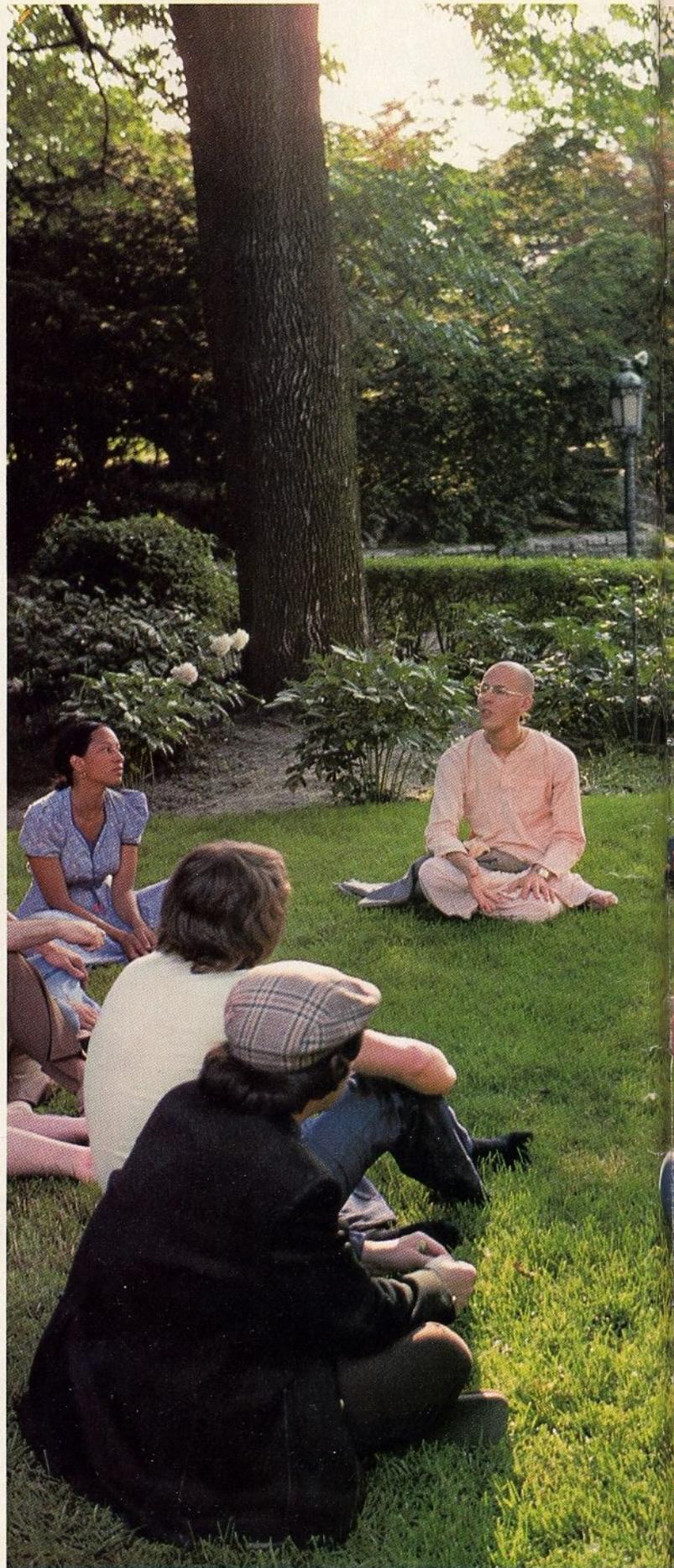




Photo: Viśākhā-devī dāsi

the quickest, surest, easiest way is simply to find someone who knows and ask him. Imagine yourself in a big city you've never been in before. Suppose you want to find the post office. How would you do it? Would you start walking around and try to guess which way to go? You might. But if you were really serious about mailing your package, you'd approach a policeman or postman, get yourself a clear set of directions, and then go straight to your destination.

Spiritual life is like trying to find a post office in a strange city. We can waste our time speculating, trying to follow our hearts, or we can get serious and admit that we don't know where we're going, and that we need to follow someone who knows what's what. This is the first step in factual spiritual life.

Question: "But if I'm sincere, why can't I become self-realized just on the strength of my sincerity?" You can, but only by sincerely following the right process. Suppose you sincerely want to become a doctor. That sincerity is the first thing you need. But if you're genuinely sincere, you won't try to become a doctor by buying some medical textbooks in the college bookstore and studying at home. No. You'll go to medical school, study under qualified experts, and in this way gradually become a qualified doctor yourself. In the same way, if you're sincere about becoming self-realized, you should sincerely try to find a bona fide spiritual master and study under him.

Question: "But isn't it higher to find the truth on your own, to struggle for it and finally achieve realization?" You have to decide which you'd rather be—noble or self-realized. If you're serious about self-realization, you should welcome all the help you can get. To put off finding the truth just to enjoy the romance of being a "perpetual seeker" would be ludicrous.

Question: "But I've read the *Bhāgavad-gītā*, among other spiritual books, and it seems to me that I can understand them and practice spiritual life on my own." Then you haven't understood the *Bhāgavad-gītā*, because near the end of the Fourth Chapter Lord Kṛṣṇa clearly says, "Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth" (Bg. 4.34).<sup>1</sup>

#### For what reason should I accept a spiritual master?

You shouldn't accept a spiritual master merely as a matter of fashion—because all the big rock stars have spiritual masters, or because yoga and meditation

are "in." Nor should you approach a spiritual master to find out how to get better grades, how to relax, or how to improve your sex life. These things have nothing to do with self-realization, the goal of real spiritual life. Of course, if you want something else, there are many so-called *yogis* and gurus who, for a modest fee, will be happy to oblige you. That may be big business, but spiritual life is another thing entirely.

The age-old Vedic literature of India tells us clearly how to enter into spiritual life: "One must approach a spiritual master if he desires spiritual realization" (*Mundaka Up.*, 1.2.12).<sup>2</sup> Also, "The aspirant should surrender to a spiritual master if he is genuinely inquisitive about the highest goal of life" (*Bhāg.* 11.3.21).<sup>3</sup> And in the *Purāṇas*, a more recent part of the Vedic literature, it is said, "There are many so-called gurus who are very expert in plundering the money of their disciples, but rarely can one find a spiritual master who can free his disciples from all material anxieties."

The highest goal of life, self-realization, puts you beyond the happiness and distress, the pleasure and pain, of this material world. Life in this material world is full of perplexities, and a person who sincerely wants to find a solution to the perplexities of life should search out a genuine spiritual master.

In approaching the genuine spiritual master, a person should show the same submissiveness as Arjuna did in the *Bhāgavad-gītā*, where he said to Lord Kṛṣṇa, "Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me clearly what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me" (Bg. 2.7).<sup>4</sup>

#### Who is the spiritual master?

No one can have greater knowledge than God in any subject matter—spiritual or mundane—because He knows everything. Therefore, the original spiritual master is Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But if we are seeking to revive our spiritual consciousness, or God consciousness, we must now be out of touch with God. So how can we take direction from God? The great spiritual master Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī answers this question: "The conditioned soul [a person who is not self-realized] cannot revive his Kṛṣṇa consciousness by his own effort. But out of his causeless mercy, Lord Kṛṣṇa compiled the Vedic literature and its supplements, the *Purāṇas*" (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 20.122).<sup>5</sup> Thus, by

hearing the Vedic literature with great faith and attention, we *can* actually take spiritual direction from God.

When we talk about the Vedic literature, we're talking about the oldest, most comprehensive, most scientific spiritual literature in the world. The Vedic literature includes the *Upaniṣads*, the *Vedānta-sūtra*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Purāṇas*, and (most importantly) the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Where do these great books of wisdom come from? Not from imperfect thinkers of this world. They come from the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa; He spoke the Vedic knowledge to the first created being, lord Brahmā. Lord Brahmā then passed down this same knowledge to his sons and disciples, who did the same for their own followers. Then, five thousand years ago, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself again appeared in this disciplic succession as His literary incarnation, Vyāsadeva, and wrote down that same Vedic knowledge.

Now, the main idea is this: to know whether someone is a bona fide spiritual master, we have to check the Vedic literature, because the characteristics of the bona fide spiritual master are specifically described there. For thousands upon thousands of years, seekers have reached perfection by following the Vedic directions on the path of perfection.

Question: "But what if I want to follow the Bible instead of the Vedic literature?" There's no use arguing the merits of the Bible over the Vedic literature. Both the Bible and the Vedic literature are scripture, and therefore they are in agreement, not opposition. The only difference is that the Vedic literature contains much more specific information about God than you'll find in the Bible. They're like dictionaries. The small desk dictionary and *Webster's Third International* are both valid authorities, and they are in agreement. Yet the big dictionary has more information. The Vedic literature is like the big dictionary.

Question: "What if I don't accept the Vedic literature?" Then you're unfortunate, because you won't be able to take advantage of the knowledge it contains. For example, if you want to know who your father is, you have to find out from your mother. She's the authority. If you don't want to take her word for it, that's your privilege. But then you'll never know for sure. In the same way, if you don't accept the Vedic literature, you'll never grasp the time-tested spiritual wisdom it contains.

Question: "But can't someone meet a genuine spiritual master without having studied anything?" Certainly. A fortu-



Illustration: Jadurāṅgi-devī dāsi

*A person should approach the genuine guru just as Arjuna (right) approached Lord Kṛṣṇa.*

nate person might meet a perfectly bona fide spiritual master just by the will of providence. But then again, that fortunate person might not be you. You might meet a cheater instead. How will you know? Suppose you're looking for a good mechanic. Even if you don't know anything about cars or mechanics, you still might be lucky enough to find a mechanic who's expert and honest. But if you know the qualifications of the man you're looking for, your chances are much better. The same goes for finding a spiritual master. Knowledge is reliable; luck isn't. And surrendering to a spiritual master is too important a decision to leave to luck. You have to surrender to the spiritual master, but not blindly or sentimentally. First you should study him carefully to find out whether he has the qualifications spelled out in the Vedic literature.

### What are the qualifications of the spiritual master?

The qualifications of the bona fide spiritual master can be summed up in two words: *śrotriyam* and *brahma-ṇiṣṭham*. The word *śrotriyam* means that the spiritual master must have received the revealed Vedic knowledge from his spiritual master, who in turn received it from his, and so on in a line of spiritual masters extending back to the original spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa Himself. This is called the disciplic succession. To be bona fide, a spiritual master has to

belong to this disciplic succession coming from the Lord.

The bona fide spiritual master does not invent anything new. He's a messenger, not an inventor. His duty is to transmit the Vedic knowledge as the Lord originally spoke it and as the disciplic succession has handed it down. Just as a postman delivers your letters without subtracting anything or adding anything of his own, so the spiritual master delivers the spiritual message of Vedic knowledge *as it is*, without adding or subtracting anything.

How can you tell whether the spiritual master meets this qualification? Very easily. The words of Kṛṣṇa are recorded in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and you merely have to compare. For example, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "Always think of Me and surrender to Me" (Bg. 9.34).<sup>6</sup> So the bona fide spiritual master instructs his disciples to think always of Kṛṣṇa and surrender to Kṛṣṇa. If a so-called guru advises his disciples to think of something impersonal or void instead of Kṛṣṇa, or to surrender to someone other than Kṛṣṇa, how can he be bona fide? We should immediately reject him as worthless.

Nor can the spiritual master advertise that he himself is God. The bona fide spiritual master always presents himself as a humble servant of God, never as God Himself. Any so-called guru who claims to be God, or who tells his disciples that they can become God, is a charlatan. The bona fide spiritual master acts as a humble servant of the Lord and instructs his disciples to do likewise.

Now we come to the genuine spiritual master's second qualification: *brahma-ṇiṣṭham*. The word *brahma-ṇiṣṭham* means that the spiritual master has full faith in the Supreme (in Kṛṣṇa) and is always absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The spiritual master must be free from all material attachments. He must be the master of his senses, not their servant. For instance, if someone is addicted to liquor, women, or cigarettes, there is no question of his being a guru. There are so many examples of so-called gurus and swamis who advertise themselves as being on the platform of eternity, bliss, and knowledge, but who fall down from their yoga practice to have sex with their disciples. Thus, they fail to meet the standard of *brahma-ṇiṣṭham*.

To be truly *brahma-ṇiṣṭham*, the spiritual master must be a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, "Always think of Me. Become My devotee. Worship Me and offer homage to Me" (Bg. 9.34). So the bona fide spiritual master always thinks of Kṛṣṇa, he is a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, and he always wor-

ships and glorifies Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that no one is dearer to Him than one who preaches His glories. Therefore, another qualification of the bona fide spiritual master is that he glorifies Lord Kṛṣṇa all over the world. Such a spiritual master is directly empowered by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. Even other devotees and transcendentalists offer respect to such an exalted personality and honor him with the title “prabhupāda,” meaning “one at whose feet sit many masters.”

### How can I find a bona fide spiritual master?

First, let’s see why so many seekers fail to find a bona fide spiritual master. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa says, “I am in everyone’s heart, and from Me come knowledge, remembrance, and forgetfulness” (Bg. 15.15).<sup>7</sup> In other words, as long as we want to forget Kṛṣṇa, He will help us forget Him. We can easily see how so many imitation gurus can cheat their disciples. Because most people want material sense pleasure instead of genuine spiritual life, Kṛṣṇa sends them to a cheater. But as soon as we sincerely desire to revive our eternal loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa will send us to a bona fide spiritual master.

### If I find a bona fide spiritual master, what should I do?

Surrender to him. The *Bhagavad-gītā* advises, “Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth” (Bg. 4.34).<sup>1</sup> If you find a qualified spiritual master, in whom you have full confidence, you should surrender to him wholeheartedly and render service to him. If you approach the spiritual master with a submissive attitude and ask him sincere questions about spiritual life, he will certainly bless you with enlightenment.

### How does the spiritual master give knowledge?

Sometimes we hear folk tales in which a spiritual master enlightens his disciple by touching him, by transferring his power through some kind of electric shock. There are others who supposedly impart enlightenment by their twinkling glances, by talking in riddles, or by whispering secret mantras into the disciple’s ear. None of these methods has anything to do with the genuine Vedic process of spiritual enlightenment.

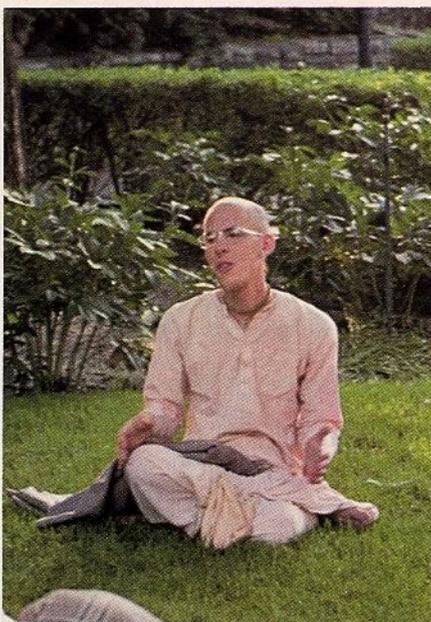


Photo: Viśākhā-devī dāśī

*“The bona fide spiritual master does not invent anything new. He’s a messenger, not an inventor.”*

The Vedic method is simply this: The spiritual master is a self-realized soul, and by hearing and following the spiritual master’s instructions, the disciple can also become self-realized. No secret mantras. No magic mushrooms or cactus buttons. No mystical hocus-pocus. The spiritual master simply imparts to his disciple the instructions he has heard from his own spiritual master, and the disciple becomes self-realized by hearing these instructions in a humble mood.

The disciple places his sincere questions before the spiritual master, and the spiritual master answers these questions authoritatively (with reference to the authorized scriptures and his predecessors in the disciplic succession).

### What does it mean to be a servant of the spiritual master?

The disciple should think of himself as a menial servant of his spiritual master. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, a great spiritual master of the late nineteenth century, prayed to his guru: “O pure devotee, O spiritual master, please accept me as your dog.”<sup>8</sup> A dog always depends on his master’s mercy and stays ready to carry out his master’s order. In the same way, a bona fide disciple places himself in the position of a dog before his spiritual master and tries to satisfy him by carrying out his orders. In fact, the bona fide disciple respects his spiritual master as much as God Himself.

Question: “But why do I have to treat the spiritual master like God? Didn’t you say he’s a humble servant of God?”

Exactly. The spiritual master is a humble servant of God, and he tries to bring everyone back to the humble service of God. But there is no way to become Kṛṣṇa’s servant directly. You have to become a servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa. The guru serves Kṛṣṇa by acting as His representative in this material world. Therefore, as we have said, the guru is as good as God.

The spiritual master doesn’t accept our service on his own behalf, any more than the President’s representative (such as the Secretary of State) accepts service on his own behalf. Rather, the spiritual master thinks, “Because I have accepted the responsibility of acting as Kṛṣṇa’s representative, it is my duty to accept service from my disciples and to offer that service to Kṛṣṇa.” In this way, through the genuine Vedic system of spiritual discipline, the spiritual master revives our natural spiritual consciousness by training us to act as eternal servants of the Supreme Lord.

Question: “Still, it all sounds so dry and austere.” Spiritual life requires a little austerity. But it’s not dry austerity. The spiritual master’s orders are called “the regulative principles of freedom.” In other words, although we may feel (especially at first) that the spiritual master’s instructions are just giving us trouble, by following these instructions we wash away material contaminations and enjoy transcendental bliss from within—and not just in some afterlife, but here and now.

In this age especially, the sacrifices that the disciple must undergo are very simple. In previous ages, the disciple had to perform rigorous physical exercises and adhere to strict vows of renunciation. But in this age the most important “austerity” is simply to chant and hear the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The *Purāṇas* confirm, “Chant the holy name, chant the holy name, chant the holy name of the Lord. In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, there is no other way, no other way, no other way to achieve self-realization” (*Bṛhan-nāradya Purāna*).<sup>9</sup> This chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is easy and enjoyable, and it can make your life sublime.

The science of devotional service is full of transcendental potency, and we can realize this potency if we hear from a bona fide spiritual master and render service to him in a humble, submissive mood. Then we are sure to receive spiritual understanding and to advance on the path that leads out of material perplexity and back to home, back to Godhead. (References on next page.)

# Finding a Genuine Guru

## References:

1. *tad viddhi pranipātena paripraśnena sevayā upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*
2. *tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*
3. *tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya-uttamam*
4. *kārpaṇya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ pṛcchāmi tvām dharma-sammūḍha-cetāḥ yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṁ brūhi tan me śiṣyas te 'haṁ sādhi mām tvām prapannam*
5. *māyā-mugha jīvera nāhi svataḥ kṛṣṇa-jñāna jīvere kṛpāya kailā kṛṣṇa veda-purāṇa*
6. *man-manā bhava mad-bhaktō mad-yājī mām namaskuru*
7. *sarvasya cāhaṁ hr̥di sanniviṣṭō mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanam ca*
8. *vaiṣṇava thākura, tomāra kukkura baliyā jānaha more*
9. *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

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## First Canto "Creation"

### CHAPTER SEVEN

#### The Son of Droṇa Punished

(continued)

#### TEXT 18

तमापतन्तं स विलक्ष्य दूरात्  
कुमारहोद्विग्नमना रथेन ।  
पराद्रवत्प्राणपरीप्सुरुच्यं  
यावद्रमं रुद्रभयाद्यथाकः ॥१८॥

*tam āpatantam sa vilakṣya dūrāt  
kumāra-hodvigna-manā rathena  
parādravat prāṇa-parīpsur urvyam  
yāvad-gamam rudra-bhayād yathārkaḥ*

*tam*—him; *āpatantam*—coming over furiously; *saḥ*—he; *vilakṣya*—seeing; *dūrāt*—from a distance; *kumāra-hā*—the murderer of the princes; *udvigna-manāḥ*—disturbed in mind; *rathena*—on the chariot; *parādravat*—fled; *prāṇa*—life; *parīpsuḥ*—for protecting; *urvyām*—with great speed; *yāvad-gamam*—as he fled; *rudra-bhayāt*—by fear of Śiva; *yathā*—as; *kaḥ*—Brahmā (or *arka-Sūrya*).

#### TRANSLATION

Aśvatthāmā, the murderer of the princes, seeing from a great distance Arjuna coming at him with great speed, fled in his chariot, panic-stricken, just to save his life, as Brahmā fled in fear from Śiva.

#### PURPORT

According to the reading matter, either *kaḥ* or *arka*, there are two references in the *Purāṇas*. *Kaḥ* means Brahmā, who once became allured by his daughter and began to follow her, which infuriated Śiva, who attacked Brahmā with his trident. Brahmāji fled in fear of his life. As far as *arka* is concerned, there is a reference in the *Vāmana Purāṇa*. There was a demon by the name Vidyumali who was gifted with a glowing golden airplane which travelled to the back of the sun, and night disappeared because of the glowing effulgence of this plane. Thus the sun-god became angry, and with his virulent rays he melted the plane. This enraged Lord

Śiva. Lord Śiva then attacked the sun-god, who fled away and at last fell down at Kāśī (Vārāṇasī), and the place became famous as Lolarka.

#### TEXT 19

यदाशरणमात्मानमैक्षत श्रान्तवाजिनम् ।  
अत्रं ब्रह्मशिरो मेने आत्मत्राणं द्विजात्मजः ॥१९॥

*yadāśaraṇam ātmānam  
aikṣata śrānta-vājinam  
astram brahma-śiro mene  
ātma-trāṇam dvijātma-jaḥ*

*yadā*—when; *āśaraṇam*—without being alternatively protected; *ātmānam*—his own self; *aikṣata*—saw; *śrānta-vājinam*—the horses being tired; *astram*—weapon; *brahma-śiraḥ*—the topmost or ultimate (nuclear); *mene*—applied; *ātma-trāṇam*—just to save himself; *dvija-ātma-jaḥ*—the son of a *brāhmaṇa*.

#### TRANSLATION

When the son of the *brāhmaṇa* [Aśvatthāmā] saw that his horses were tired, he considered that there was no alternative for protection outside his using the ultimate weapon, the *brahmāstra* [nuclear weapon].

#### PURPORT

In the ultimate issue only, when there is no other alternative, the nuclear weapon called the *brahmāstra* is applied. The word *dvijātma-jaḥ* is significant here because Aśvatthāmā, although the son of Droṇācārya, was not exactly a qualified *brāhmaṇa*. The most intelligent man is called a *brāhmaṇa*, and it is not an hereditary title. Aśvatthāmā was also formerly called the *brahma-bandhu* or the friend of a *brāhmaṇa*. Being a friend of a *brāhmaṇa* does not mean that one is *brāhmaṇa* by qualification. A friend or son of a *brāhmaṇa*, when fully qualified, can be called a *brāhmaṇa* and not otherwise. Since Aśvatthāmā's decision is immature, he is purposely called herein the son of a *brāhmaṇa*.

#### TEXT 20

अथोपस्पृश्य सलिलं संदधे तत्समाहितः ।  
अजानन्नपिसंहारं प्राणकृच्छ्र उपस्थिते ॥२०॥

*athopaspr̥śya salilam  
sandadhe tat samāhitaḥ  
ajānann api saṁhāraṁ  
prāṇa-kṛcchra upasthite*

*atha*—thus; *upaspr̥śya*—touching in sanctity; *salilam*—water; *sandadhe*—chanted the hymns; *tat*—that; *samāhitaḥ*—being in concentration; *ajānan*—without knowing; *api*—although; *saṁhāraṁ*—withdrawal; *prāṇa-kṛcchra*—life being put into danger; *upasthite*—being placed in such a position.

## TRANSLATION

Since his life was in danger, he touched water in sanctity and concentrated upon the chanting of the hymns for throwing nuclear weapons, although he did not know how to withdraw such weapons.

## PURPORT

The subtle forms of material activities are finer than grosser methods of material manipulation. Such subtle forms of material activities are effected through purification of sound. The same method is adopted here by chanting hymns to act as nuclear weapons.

## TEXT 21

ततः प्रादुष्कृतं तेजः प्रचण्डं सर्वतोदिशम् ।  
प्राणापदमभिप्रेक्ष्य विष्णुं जिष्णुरुवाच ह ॥२१॥

*tataḥ prāduṣkṛtaṁ tejaḥ  
pracaṇḍam sarvatodiśam  
prāṇā-padam abhipreṣya  
viṣṇuṁ jiṣṇur uvāca ha*

*tataḥ*—thereafter; *prāduṣkṛtam*—disseminated; *tejaḥ*—glare; *pracaṇḍam*—fierce; *sarvataḥ*—all around; *diśam*—directions; *prāṇā-padam*—affecting life; *abhipreṣya*—having observed it; *viṣṇuṁ*—unto the Lord; *jiṣṇuḥ*—Arjuna; *uvāca*—said; *ha*—in the past.

## TRANSLATION

Thereupon a glaring light spread in all directions, and it was so fierce that Arjuna thought his own life in danger, and so he began to address Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

## TEXT 22

अर्जुन उवाच  
कृष्ण कृष्ण महाबाहो भक्तानामभयंकर ।  
त्वमेको दक्षमानानामपवर्गोऽसि संसृतेः ॥२२॥

*arjuna uvāca  
kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa mahā-bāho  
bhaktānām abhayaṅkara  
tvam eko dahya-mānānām  
apavargo'si saṁsṛteḥ*

*arjunaḥ uvāca*—Arjuna said; *kṛṣṇa*—O Lord Kṛṣṇa; *mahā-bāho*—He who is the Almighty; *bhaktānām*—of the devotees; *abhayaṅkara*—eradicating the fears of; *tvam*—You; *ekaḥ*—alone; *dahya-mānānām*—those who are suffering from; *apavargaḥ*—the path of liberation; *asi*—are; *saṁsṛteḥ*—in the midst of material miseries.

## TRANSLATION

Arjuna said: O my Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, You are the almighty Personality of Godhead. There is no limit to Your different energies. Therefore only You are competent to instill fearlessness in the hearts of Your devotees. Everyone in the flames of material miseries can find the path of liberation in You only.

## PURPORT

Arjuna is aware of the transcendental qualities of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as he had already experienced them during the Kurukṣetra War, in which both of them were present. Therefore, Arjuna's version of Lord Kṛṣṇa is authoritative. Kṛṣṇa is almighty and is especially the cause of fearlessness for the devotees. A devotee of the Lord is always fearless because of the protection given by the Lord. Material existence is something like a blazing fire in the forest, which can be extinguished by the mercy of the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual master is the mercy representative of the Lord. A person, therefore, burning in the flames of material existence, may receive the rains of mercy of the Lord through the transparent

medium of the self-realized spiritual master. The spiritual master by his words can penetrate into the heart of the suffering person and inject knowledge transcendental, which alone can extinguish the fire of material existence.

## TEXT 23

त्वमाद्यः पुरुषः साक्षादीश्वरः प्रकृतेः परः ।  
मायां व्युदस्य चिच्छक्त्या कैवल्ये स्थित आत्मनि २३

*tvam ādyaḥ puruṣaḥ sāksāḍ  
īśvaraḥ prakṛteḥ paraḥ  
māyām vyudasya cicchaktyā  
kaivalye sthita ātmani*

*tvam ādyaḥ*—You are the original; *puruṣaḥ*—the enjoying personality; *sāksāḍ*—directly; *īśvaraḥ*—the controller; *prakṛteḥ*—of material nature; *paraḥ*—transcendental; *māyām*—the material energy; *vyudasya*—one who has thrown aside; *cicchaktyā*—by dint of internal potency; *kaivalye*—in pure eternal knowledge and bliss; *sthitaḥ*—placed; *ātmani*—own self.

## TRANSLATION

You are the original Personality of Godhead who expands Himself all over the creations and is transcendental to material energy. You have cast away the effects of the material energy by dint of Your spiritual potency. You are always situated in eternal bliss and transcendental knowledge.

## PURPORT

The Lord states in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that one who surrenders unto the lotus feet of the Lord can get release from the clutches of nescience. Kṛṣṇa is just like the sun, and *māyā* or material existence is just like darkness. Wherever there is the light of the sun, darkness or ignorance at once vanishes. The best means to get out of the world of ignorance is suggested here. The Lord is addressed herein as the original Personality of Godhead. From Him all other Personalities of Godhead expand. The all-pervasive Lord Viṣṇu is Lord Kṛṣṇa's plenary portion or expansion. The Lord expands Himself in innumerable forms of Godhead and living beings, along with His different energies. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original primeval Lord from whom everything emanates. The all-pervasive feature of the Lord experienced within the manifested world is also a partial representation of the Lord. *Paramātmā* is, therefore, included within Him. He is the Absolute Personality of Godhead. He has nothing to do with the actions and reactions of the material manifestation because He is far above the material creation. Darkness is a perverse representation of the sun, and therefore the existence of darkness depends on the existence of the sun, but in the sun proper there is no trace of darkness. As the sun is full of light only, similarly the Absolute Personality of Godhead, beyond the material existence, is full of bliss. He is not only full of bliss, but also full of transcendental variegatedness. Transcendence is not at all static, but full of dynamic variegatedness. He is distinct from the material nature which is complicated by the three modes of material nature. He is *parama*, or the chief. Therefore He is absolute. He has manifold energies, and through His diverse energies He creates, manifests, maintains and destroys the material world. In His own abode, however, everything is eternal and absolute. The world is not conducted by the energies or powerful agents by themselves, but by the potent all-powerful with all energies.

## TEXT 24

स एव जीवलोकस्य मायामोहितचेतसः ।  
विधत्से स्वेन वीर्येण श्रेयो धर्मादिलक्षणम् ॥२४॥

*sa eva jīva-lokasya  
māyā-mohita-cetasah  
vidhatse svena vīryeṇa  
śreyo dharmādi-lakṣaṇam*

*saḥ*—that Transcendence; *eva*—certainly; *jīva-lokasya*—of the conditioned living beings; *māyā-mohita*—captivated by the illusory energy; *cetasah*—by the heart; *vidhatse*—execute; *svena*—by Your own; *vīryeṇa*—influence; *śreyah*—ultimate good; *dharmādi*—four principles of liberation; *lakṣaṇam*—characterized by.

## TRANSLATION

And yet, though You are beyond the purview of the material energy, You execute the four principles of liberation characterized by religion and so on for the ultimate good of the conditioned souls.

## PURPORT

The Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa out of His causeless mercy descends on the manifested world without being influenced by the material modes of nature. He is eternally beyond the material manifestations. He descends out of His causeless mercy only to reclaim the fallen souls who are captivated by the illusory energy. They are attacked by the material energy, and they want to enjoy her under false pretexts, although in essence the living entity is unable to enjoy. He is eternally the servitor of the Lord, and when he forgets this position he thinks of enjoying the material world, but factually he is in illusion. The Lord descends to eradicate this false sense of enjoyment and thus reclaim conditioned souls back to Godhead. That is the all-merciful nature of the Lord for the fallen souls.

## TEXT 25

तथायं चावतारस्ते भुवो भारजिहीर्षया ।  
स्वानां चानन्यभावानामनुष्यानाय चासकृत् ॥२५॥

*tathāyaṁ cāvatāras te  
bhuvō bhāra-jihīṛṣayā  
svānām cānanya-bhāvānām  
anudhyānāya cāsakṛt*

*tathā*—thus; *ayam*—this; *ca*—and; *avatārah*—incarnation; *te*—Your; *bhuvah*—of the material world; *bhāra*—burden; *jihīṛṣayā*—for removing; *svānām*—of the friends; *ca ananya-bhāvānām*—and of the exclusive devotees; *anudhyānāya*—for remembering repeatedly; *ca*—and; *asakṛt*—fully satisfied.

## TRANSLATION

Thus You descend as an *avatāra* [incarnation] to remove the burden of the world and to benefit Your friends, especially those who are Your exclusive devotees and are rapt in meditation upon You.

## PURPORT

It appears that the Lord is partial to His devotees. Everyone is related with the Lord. He is equal to everyone, and yet He is more inclined to His own men and devotees. The Lord is everyone's father. No one can be His father, and yet no one can be His son. His devotees are His kinsmen, and His devotees are His relations. This is His transcendental pastime. It has nothing to do with mundane ideas of relations, fatherhood or anything like that. As mentioned above, the Lord is above the modes of material nature, and thus there is nothing mundane about His kinsmen and relations in devotional service.

## TEXT 26

किमिदं खिल्कुतो वेति देवदेव न वेद्म्यहम् ।  
सर्वतोमुखमायाति तेजः परमदारुणम् ॥२६॥

*kimidaṁ svit kuto veti  
deva-deva na vedmy aham  
sarvato-mukham āyāti  
tejaḥ parama dāruṇam*

*kim*—what is; *idam*—this; *svit*—does it come; *kutaḥ*—wherefrom; *veti*—be either; *deva-deva*—O Lord of lords; *na*—not; *vedmi*—do I know; *aham*—I; *sarvataḥ*—all around; *mukham*—directions; *āyāti*—coming from; *tejaḥ*—effulgence; *parama*—very much; *dāruṇam*—dangerous.

## TRANSLATION

O Lord of lords, how is it that this dangerous effulgence is spreading all around? Where does it come from? I do not understand it.

## PURPORT

Anything that is presented before the Personality of Godhead should be so done after due presentation of respectful prayers. That is the standard procedure, and Śrī Arjuna, although an intimate friend of the Lord, is observing this method for general information.

## TEXT 27

## श्रीभगवानुवाच

वेत्थेदं द्रोणपुत्रस्व ब्राह्ममस्त्रं प्रदर्शितम् ।  
नैवासाँ वेद संहारं प्राणबाध उपस्थिते ॥२७॥

*śrī bhagavān uvāca  
vetthedaṁ droṇa-putrasya  
brāhman-astraṁ pradārṣitam  
nāvāsau veda saṁhāraṁ  
prāṇa-bādha upasthite*

*śrī bhagavān*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *uvāca*—said; *vettha*—just know from Me; *idam*—this; *droṇa-putrasya*—of the son of Droṇa; *brāhman astraṁ*—hymns of the *brāhma* (nuclear) weapon; *pradārṣitam*—exhibited; *na*—not; *eva*—even; *asau*—he; *veda*—know it; *saṁhāram*—retraction; *prāṇa-bādhe*—extinction of life; *upasthite*—being imminent.

## TRANSLATION

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: Know from Me that this is the act of the son of Droṇa. He has thrown the hymns of nuclear energy [brahmāstra], and he does not know how to retract the glare. He has helplessly done this, being afraid of imminent death.

## PURPORT

The *brahmāstra* is similar to the modern nuclear weapon manipulated by atomic energy. The atomic energy works wholly on total combustibility, and so the *brahmāstra* also acts. It creates an intolerable heat similar to atomic radiation, but the difference is that the atomic bomb is a gross type of nuclear weapon, whereas the *brahmāstra* is a subtle type of weapon produced by chanting hymns. It is a different science, and in the days gone by such science was cultivated in the land of Bhāratavarṣa. The subtle science of chanting hymns is also material, but it has yet to be known by the modern material scientists. Subtle material science is not spiritual, but it has a direct relationship with the spiritual method, which is still subtler. A chanter of hymns knew how to apply the weapon as well as how to retract it. That was perfect knowledge. But the son of Droṇācārya, who made use of this subtle science, did not know how to retract. He applied it, being afraid of his imminent death, and thus the practice was not only improper but also irreligious. As a son of a *brāhmaṇa* he should not have made so many mistakes, and for such gross negligence of duty he was to be punished by the Lord Himself.

## TEXT 28

न ह्यस्यान्यतमं किञ्चिदस्त्रं प्रत्यवकर्शनम् ।  
जहत्तेज उच्यते जज्ञो ह्यस्त्रतेजसा ॥२८॥

*na hy asyānyatamaṁ kiñcid  
astraṁ praty avakarśanam*

*jahy astra-teja unnaddham  
astra-jñā hy astra-tejasā*

*na*—not; *hi*—certainly; *asya*—of it; *anyatamam*—other; *kiñcit*—anything; *astram*—weapon; *prati*—counter; *avakarṣanam*—reactionary; *jahi*—subdue it; *astra-tejaḥ*—the glare of this weapon; *unnaddham*—very powerful; *astra-jñāḥ*—O expert in military science; *hi*—as a matter of fact; *astra-tejasā*—by the influence of your weapon.

#### TRANSLATION

O Arjuna, only another brahmāstra can counteract this weapon. Since you are expert in the military science, subdue this weapon's glare with your own weapon.

#### PURPORT

For the atomic bombs there is no counterweapon to neutralize the effects. But by subtle science the action of a brahmāstra can be counteracted, and those who were expert in the military science in those days could counteract the brahmāstra. The son of Droṇācārya did not know the art of counteracting the weapon, and therefore Arjuna was asked to counteract it by the power of his own weapon.

#### TEXT 29

सूत उवाच

श्रुत्वा भगवता प्रोक्तं फाल्गुनः परवीरहा ।  
स्पृष्ट्वापस्तं परिक्रम्य ब्रह्मं ब्राह्मन्ने संदधे ॥२९॥

*sūta uvāca  
śrutvā bhagavatā proktaṁ  
phālgunaḥ paravīrahā  
sprṣṭvāpas taṁ parikramya  
brāhmaṇ brahmāstraṁ sandadhe*

*sūtaḥ*—Sūta Gosvāmī; *uvāca*—said; *śrutvā*—after hearing; *bhagavatā*—by the Personality of Godhead; *proktaṁ*—what was said; *phālgunaḥ*—another name of Śrī Arjuna; *paravīrahā*—the killer of the opposing warrior; *sprṣṭvā*—after touching; *apaḥ*—water; *taṁ*—Him; *parikramya*—circumambulating; *brāhmaṇ*—the Supreme Lord; *brāhmāstraṁ*—the supreme weapon; *sandadhe*—acted on.

#### TRANSLATION

Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī said: Hearing this from the Personality of Godhead, Arjuna touched water for purification, and after circumambulating Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he cast his brahmāstra weapon to counteract the other one.

#### TEXT 30

संहत्यान्योन्यमुभयोस्तेजसी शरसंवृते ।  
आवृत्य रोदसी खं च ववृधातेऽर्कवह्निवत् ॥३०॥

*sāṁhatyānyonyamubhayos  
tejasī śara-saṁvṛte  
āvṛtya rodasī khaṁ ca  
vavṛdhāte 'rka-vahṇivat*

*sāṁhatya*—by combination of; *anyonyam*—one another; *ubhayoḥ*—of both; *tejasī*—the glares; *śara*—weapons; *saṁvṛte*—covering; *āvṛtya*—covering; *rodasī*—the complete, firmament; *khaṁ ca*—outer space also; *vavṛdhāte*—increasing; *arka*—the sun globe; *vahṇivat*—like fire.

#### TRANSLATION

When the rays of the two brahmāstras combined, a great circle of fire, like the disc of the sun, covered all outer space and the whole firmament of planets.

#### PURPORT

The heat created by the flash of a brahmāstra resembles the fire in the sun globe which is exhibited at the time of cosmic annihilation. The radiation of atomic energy is very insignificant in comparison to the heat produced by a brahmāstra. The atomic bomb explosion can at utmost blow up one globe, but the heat produced by the brahmāstra can destroy the whole cosmic situation. The comparison is, therefore, made to the heat at the time of annihilation.

#### TEXT 31

दृष्ट्वास्त्रतेजस्तु तयोर्लोकान् प्रदहन्महत् ।  
दह्यमानाः प्रजाः सर्वाः सांवर्तकमर्मसत ॥३१॥

*drṣṭvāstra-tejas tu tayos  
trī lokān pradahan mahat  
dahyamānāḥ prajāḥ sarvāḥ  
sāṁvartakam amaṁsata*

*drṣṭvā*—thus seeing; *astra*—weapon; *tejaḥ*—heat; *tu*—but; *tayoḥ*—of both; *trīn*—three; *lokān*—planets; *pradahat*—blazing; *mahat*—severely; *dahyamānāḥ*—burning; *prajāḥ*—population; *sarvāḥ*—all over; *sāṁvartakam*—the name of the fire which devastates during the annihilation of the universe; *amaṁsata*—began to think.

#### TRANSLATION

All the population of the three worlds was scorched by the combined heat of the weapons. Everyone was reminded of the sāṁvartaka fire which takes place at the time of annihilation.

#### PURPORT

The three worlds are the upper, lower and the intermediate planets of the universe. Although the brahmāstra was released on this earth, the heat produced by the combination of both weapons covered all the universe, and all the populations on all the different planets began to feel the heat excessively and compared it with that of the sāṁvartaka fire. No planet is, therefore, without living beings, as less intelligent materialistic men think.

#### TEXT 32

प्रजोपद्रवमालक्ष्य लोकन्यतिकरं च तम् ।  
मतं च वासुदेवस्य संजहारार्जुनो द्वयम् ॥३२॥

*prajopadravam ālakṣya  
loka-vyatikaraṁ ca tam  
matam ca vāsudevasya  
sāñjahārārjuno dvayam*

*praja*—the people in general; *upadravam*—disturbance; *ālakṣya*—having seen it; *loka*—the planets; *vyatikaram*—destruction; *ca*—also; *tam*—that; *matam ca*—and the opinion; *vāsudevasya*—of Vāsudeva, Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *sāñjahāra*—retracted; *arjunaḥ*—Arjuna; *dvayam*—both the weapons.

#### TRANSLATION

Thus seeing the disturbance of the general populace and the imminent destruction of the planets, Arjuna at once retracted both brahmāstra weapons, as Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa desired.

#### PURPORT

The theory that the modern atomic bomb explosions can annihilate the world is childish imagination. First of all, the atomic energy is not powerful enough to destroy the world. And secondly, ultimately it all rests on the supreme will of the Supreme Lord because without His will or sanction nothing can be built up or destroyed. It is foolish also to think that natural laws are ultimately powerful. Material nature's law works under the direc-

tion of the Lord, as it is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The Lord says there that natural laws work under His supervision. The world can be destroyed only by the will of the Lord and not by the whims of tiny politicians. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa desired that the weapons released by both Drauṇi and Arjuna be withdrawn, and it was carried out by Arjuna at once. Similarly, there are many agents of the all-powerful Lord, and by His will only can one execute what He desires.

## TEXT 33

तत आसाद्य तरसा दारुणं गौतमीसुतम् ।  
बन्धामर्षताम्राक्षः पशुं रशनया यथा ॥३३॥

*tata āsādyā tarasā  
dāruṇam gautamī-sutam  
babandhāmarṣa-tāmrākṣaḥ  
paśum raśanayā yathā*

*tataḥ*—thereupon; *āsādyā*—arrested; *tarasā*—dexterously; *dāruṇam*—dangerous; *gautamī-sutam*—the son of Gautamī; *babandha*—bound up; *amarṣa*—angry; *tāmrā-akṣaḥ*—with copper-red eyes; *paśum*—animal; *raśanayā*—by ropes; *yathā*—as it were.

## TRANSLATION

Arjuna, his eyes blazing in anger like two red balls of copper, dexterously arrested the son of Gautamī and bound him with ropes like an animal.

## PURPORT

Aśvatthāmā's mother, Kṛpī, was born in the family of Gautama. The significant point in this *śloka* is that Aśvatthāmā was caught and bound up with ropes like an animal. According to Śrīdhara Svāmī, Arjuna was bound to catch this son of a *brāhmaṇa* like an animal as a part of his duty (*dharma*). This suggestion by Śrīdhara Svāmī is also confirmed in the later statement of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Aśvatthāmā was a bona fide son of Droṇācārya and Kṛpī, but because he had degraded himself to a lower status of life, it was proper to treat him as an animal and not as a *brāhmaṇa*.

## TEXT 34

शिविराय निनीषन्तं रज्जवत्त्वद्ध्वारिपुं बलात् ।  
ग्राहार्जुनं प्रकुपितो भगवानम्बुजेक्षणः ॥३४॥

*śibirāya ninīṣantam  
rajjavā baddhvā ripum balāt  
prāhārjunam prakupito  
bhagavān ambujekṣaṇaḥ*

*śibirāya*—on the way to the military camp; *ninīṣantam*—while bringing him; *rajjavā*—by the ropes; *baddhvā*—bound up; *ripum*—the enemy; *balāt*—by force; *prāha*—said; *arjunam*—unto Arjuna; *prakupitaḥ*—in an angry mood; *bhagavān*—the Personality of Godhead; *ambuja-ikṣaṇaḥ*—who looks with His lotus eyes.

## TRANSLATION

After binding Aśvatthāmā, Arjuna wanted to take him to the military camp. The Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, looking on with His lotus eyes, spoke to angry Arjuna.

## PURPORT

Both Arjuna and Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa are described here in an angry mood, but Arjuna's eyes were like balls of red copper whereas the eyes of the Lord are like the lotus. This means that the angry mood of Arjuna and that of the Lord are not on the same level. The Lord is Transcendence, and thus He is absolute in any stage. His anger is not like the anger of a conditioned living being within the modes of qualitative material nature. Because He is absolute, both His anger and pleasure are the same. His anger is not exhibited in the three modes of material nature. It is only a sign of His bent of mind towards the cause of His devotee because that is

His transcendental nature. Therefore, even if He is angry, the object of anger is blessed. He is unchanged in all circumstances.

## TEXT 35

मैनं पार्थाहसि त्रातुं ब्रह्मबन्धुमिमं जहि ।  
योऽसावनागसः सुप्तानवधीन्निशि बालकान् ॥३५॥

*mainam pāthārhasi trātum  
brahma-bandhum imam jahi  
yo 'śavanāgasaḥ suptān  
avadhīn niśi bālakān*

*mā enam*—never unto him; *pārtha*—O Arjuna; *arhasi*—ought to; *trātum*—give release; *brahma-bandhum*—a relative of a *brāhmaṇa*; *imam*—him; *jahi*—kill; *yaḥ*—he (who has); *asau*—those; *anāgasaḥ*—faultless; *suptān*—while sleeping; *avadhīt*—killed; *niśi*—at night; *bālakān*—the boys.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: O Arjuna, you should not show mercy by releasing this relative of a *brāhmaṇa* [brahma-bandhu], for he has killed innocent boys in their sleep.

## PURPORT

The word *brahma-bandhu* is significant. A person who happens to take birth in the family of a *brāhmaṇa* but is not qualified to be called a *brāhmaṇa* is addressed as the relative of a *brāhmaṇa*, and not as a *brāhmaṇa*. The son of a high court judge is not virtually a high court judge, but there is no harm in addressing a high court judge's son as a relative of the Honorable Justice. Therefore, as by birth only one does not become a high court judge, so also one does not become a *brāhmaṇa* simply by birthright but by acquiring the necessary qualifications of a *brāhmaṇa*. As the high court judgeship is a post for the qualified man, so also the post of a *brāhmaṇa* is attainable by qualification only. The *sāstra* enjoins that even if good qualifications are seen in a person born in a family other than a *brāhmaṇa*, the qualified man has to be accepted as a *brāhmaṇa*, and similarly if a person born in the family of a *brāhmaṇa* is void of brahminical qualification, then he must be treated as a non-*brāhmaṇa* or, in better terms, a relative of a *brāhmaṇa*. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the supreme authority of all religious principles, the *Vedas*, has personally pointed out these differences, and He is about to explain the reason for this in the following *ślokas*.

## TEXT 36

मत्तं प्रमत्तमुन्मत्तं सुप्तं बालं स्त्रियं जडम् ।  
प्रपन्नं विरथं भीतं न रिपुं हन्ति धर्मवित् ॥३६॥

*mattam pramattam unmattam  
suptam bālam striyam jaḍam  
prapannam viratham bhītam  
na ripum hanti dharmavit*

*mattam*—careless; *pramattam*—intoxicated; *unmattam*—insane; *suptam*—asleep; *bālam*—boy; *striyam*—woman; *jaḍam*—foolish; *prapannam*—surrendered; *viratham*—one who has lost his chariot; *bhītam*—afraid of; *na*—not; *ripum*—enemy; *hanti*—kill; *dharmavit*—one who knows the principles of religion.

## TRANSLATION

A person who knows the principles of religion does not kill an enemy who is careless, intoxicated, insane, asleep, afraid or devoid of his chariot. Nor does he kill a boy, a woman, a foolish creature or a surrendered soul.

## PURPORT

An enemy who does not resist is never killed by a warrior who knows the principles of religion. Formerly battles were fought on the *principles of religion* and not for the sake of sense gratification. If the enemy happened to be intoxicated, asleep, etc., as above mentioned, he was never to be killed. These are some of the codes of religious war. Formerly war was never declared by the whims of selfish political leaders, but it was carried

out on religious principles free from all vices. Violence carried out on religious principles is far superior to so-called nonviolence.

## TEXT 37

स्वप्राणान् यः परप्राणैः प्रपुष्पात्यघृणः खलः ।  
तद्वदस्तस्य हि श्रेयो यद्दोषाद्यात्यघः पुमान् ॥३७॥

*sva-prāṇān yaḥ paraprāṇaiḥ  
prapuṣṭāty aghṛṇaḥ khalaḥ  
tad-vadhas tasya hi śreyo  
yad doṣād yāty adhaḥ pumān*

*sva-prāṇān*—one's own life; *yaḥ*—one who; *paraprāṇaiḥ*—at the cost of others' lives; *prapuṣṭāti*—maintains properly; *aghṛṇaḥ*—shameless; *khalaḥ*—wretched; *tad-vadhaḥ*—killing of him; *tasya*—his; *hi*—certainly; *śreyo*—well-being; *yat*—by which; *doṣāt*—by the fault; *yāti*—goes; *adhaḥ*—downwards; *pumān*—a person.

## TRANSLATION

A cruel and wretched person who maintains his existence at the cost of others' lives deserves to be killed for his own well-being, otherwise he will go down by his own actions.

## PURPORT

A life for a life is just punishment for a person who cruelly and shamelessly lives at the cost of another's life. Political morality is to punish a person by a life sentence in order to save a cruel person from going to hell. That a murderer is condemned to a life sentence by the state is good for the culprit because in his next life he will not have to suffer for his act of murder. Such a life sentence for the murderer is the lowest possible punishment offered to him, and it is said in the *smṛti śāstras* that men who are punished by the king on the principle of a life for a life are purified of all their sins, so much so that they may be eligible for being promoted to the planets of heaven. According to Manu, the great author of civic codes and religious principles, even the killer of an animal is to be considered a murderer because animal food is never meant for the civilized man, whose prime duty is to prepare himself for going back to Godhead. He says that in the act of killing an animal, there is a regular conspiracy by the party of sinners, and all of them are liable to be punished as murderers exactly like a party of conspirators who kill a human being combinedly. *He who gives permission, he who kills the animal, he who sells the slaughtered animal, he who cooks the animal, he who administers distribution of the foodstuff, and at last he who eats such cooked animal food are all murderers, and all of them are liable to be punished by the laws of nature.* No one can create a living being despite all advancement of material science, and therefore no one has the right to kill a living being by one's independent whims. For the animal eaters, the scriptures have sanctioned restricted animal sacrifices only, and such sanctions are there just to restrict the opening of slaughterhouses and not to encourage animal killing. The procedure under which animal sacrifice is allowed in the scriptures is good both for the animal sacrificed and the animal eaters. It is good for the animal in the sense that the sacrificed animal is at once promoted to a human form of life after being sacrificed at the altar, and the animal eater is saved from grosser types of sins (eating meats supplied by organized slaughterhouses which are ghastly places for breeding all kinds of material afflictions to society, country and to the people in general). The material world is itself a place always full of anxieties, and by encouraging animal slaughter the whole atmosphere becomes polluted more and more by war, pestilence, famine and many other unwanted calamities.

## TEXT 38

प्रतिश्रुतं च भवता पाञ्चाल्यै शृण्वतो मम ।  
आहरिष्ये शिरस्तस्य यस्ते मानिनि पुत्रहा ॥३८॥

*pratiśrutam ca bhavatā  
pāñcālyai śṛṇvato mama*

*āhariṣye śiras tasya  
yas te mānini putra-hā*

*pratiśrutam*—it is promised; *ca*—and; *bhavatā*—by you; *pāñcālyai*—unto the daughter of the king of Pāñcala (Draupadī); *śṛṇvataḥ*—which was heard; *mama*—by Me personally; *āhariṣye*—must I bring; *śiraḥ*—the head; *tasya*—of him; *yaḥ*—whom; *te*—your; *mānini*—consider; *putra-hā*—the killer of your sons.

## TRANSLATION

Furthermore, I have personally heard you promise Draupadī that you would bring forth the head of the killer of her sons.

## TEXT 39

तदसौ वध्यतां पाप आतताय्यात्मबन्धुहा ।  
मर्तुश्च विप्रियं वीर कृतवान् कुलपांसनः ॥३९॥

*tad asau vadhyatām pāpa  
ātatāyī ātma-bandhu-hā  
bhartuś ca vipriyam vīra  
kṛtavān kula-pānsanaḥ*

*tat*—therefore; *asau*—this man; *vadhyatām*—will be killed; *pāpaḥ*—the sinner; *ātatāyī*—assaulter; *ātma*—own; *bandhu-hā*—killer of sons; *bhartuḥ*—of the master; *ca*—also; *vipriyam*—having not satisfied; *vīra*—O warrior; *kṛtavān*—one who has done it; *kula-pānsanaḥ*—the burnt remnants of the family.

## TRANSLATION

This man is an assassin and murderer of your own family members. Not only that, but he has also dissatisfied his master. He is but the burnt remnants of his family. Kill him immediately.

## PURPORT

The son of Droṇācārya is condemned here as the burnt remnants of his family. The good name of Droṇācārya is very much respected. Although he joined the enemy camp, he was still held always in respect, for the Pāṇḍavas and Arjuna saluted him before beginning the fight. There was nothing wrong in that way. But the son of Droṇācārya degraded himself by committing acts which are never done by the *dvijas* or the twice-born higher castes. Aśvatthāmā, the son of Droṇācārya, committed murder by killing the five sleeping sons of Draupadī, by which he dissatisfied his master Duryodhana, who never approved of the heinous act of killing the five sleeping sons of the Pāṇḍavas. This means that Aśvatthāmā became as assaulter of Arjuna's own family members, and thus he was liable to be punished by him. In the *śāstras*, he who attacks without notice or kills from behind or sets fire to another's house or kidnaps one's wife is condemned to death. These facts are reminded by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna so that he might take notice of them and do the needful.

## TEXT 40

सुत उवाच  
एवं परीक्षता धर्मं पार्थः कृष्णं चोदितः ।  
नेच्छदन्तुं गुरुसुतं यद्यप्यात्महनं महान् ॥४०॥

*sūta uvāca  
evam parikṣatā dharmam  
pārthaḥ kṛṣṇena coditaḥ  
naicchadd hantum guru-sutaṁ  
yadyapy ātma-hanaṁ mahān*

*sūtaḥ*—Sūta Gosvāmī; *uvāca*—said; *evam*—this; *parikṣatā*—being examined; *darmam*—in the matter of duty; *pārthaḥ*—Śrī Arjuna; *kṛṣṇena*—by Lord Kṛṣṇa; *coditaḥ*—being encouraged; *na icchat*—did not like; *hantum*—to kill; *guru-sutaṁ*—the son of his teacher; *yadyapi*—although; *ātma-hanam*—murderer of sons; *mahān*—very great.

## TRANSLATION

Sūta Gosvāmī said: Despite being instructed in his duty and encouraged to kill the son of Droṇācārya, Arjuna, a great soul, did not like the idea of killing him, although he was a heinous murderer of his family members.

## PURPORT

Arjuna was a great soul undoubtedly, which is proved here also. He is encouraged herein personally by the Lord to kill the son of Droṇa, but Arjuna considers that the son of his great teacher should be spared, for he happens to be the son of Droṇācārya, even though he is an unworthy son. He had done all sorts of heinous acts whimsically for no one's benefit.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa encouraged Arjuna outwardly just to test Arjuna's sense of duty. It is not that Arjuna was incomplete in the sense of his duty, nor was Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa unaware of Arjuna's sense of duty. But Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa put to test many of His pure devotees just to magnify the sense of duty. The *gopīs* were put to such tests as well. Prahlāda Mahārāja also was put to such a test. All pure devotees come out successful in the respective tests by the Lord.

## TEXT 41

अथोपेत्य स्वशिविरं गोविन्दप्रियसारथिः ।  
न्यवेदयत् प्रियायै शोचन्त्या आत्मजान् हतान् ॥४१॥

athopetya sva-śibiram  
govinda-priya-sārathīḥ  
nyavedayatam priyāyai  
śocantya ātma-jān hatān

atha—thereafter; upetya—having reached; sva—own; śibiram—camp; govinda—one who enlivens the senses (Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa); priya—dear; sārathīḥ—the charioteer; nyavedayat—entrusted to; tam—him; priyāyai—unto the dear; śocantya—lamenting for; ātma-jān—own sons; hatān—murdered.

## TRANSLATION

After reaching his own camp, Arjuna, along with his dear friend and charioteer [Śrī Kṛṣṇa], entrusted the murderer unto his dear wife, who was lamenting for her murdered sons.

## PURPORT

The transcendental relation of Arjuna with Kṛṣṇa is of the dearest friendship. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord Himself has claimed Arjuna as His dearest friend. Every living being is thus related with the Supreme Lord by some sort of affectionate relation, either as servant or as friend or as parent or as an object of conjugal love. Everyone thus can enjoy the company of the Lord in the spiritual realm if one at all desires and sincerely tries for it by the process of *bhakti-yoga*.

## TEXT 42

तथाऽऽहृतं पशुवत् पाशबद्ध-  
मवाङ्मुखं कर्मजुगुप्सितेन ।  
निरीक्ष्य कृष्णापकृतं गुरोः सुतं  
वामस्वभावा कृपया ननाम च ॥४२॥

tathā "hṛtam paśuvat pāśa-baddham  
avāṅ-mukham karma-jugupsitena  
nirīkṣya kṛṣṇāpakṛtam guroḥ sutam  
vāma-sva-bhāvā kṛpayā nanāma ca

tathā—thus; ahṛtam—brought in; paśuvat—like an animal; pāśa-baddham—tied up with ropes; avāṅ-mukham—without a word in his mouth; karma—activities; jugupsitena—being heinous; nirīkṣya—by seeing; kṛṣṇā—Draupadī; apakṛtam—the doer of the degrading; guroḥ—the teacher; sutam—son; vāma—beautiful; sva-bhāvā—nature; kṛpayā—out of compassion; nanāma—offered obeisances; ca—and.

## TRANSLATION

Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī said: Draupadī then saw Aśvatthāmā, who was bound with ropes like an animal and silent for having enacted the most inglorious murder. Due to her female nature, and due to her being naturally good and well-behaved, she showed him due respects as a brāhmaṇa.

## PURPORT

Aśvatthāmā was condemned by the Lord Himself, and he was treated by Arjuna just like a culprit, not like the son of a brāhmaṇa or teacher. But when he was brought before Śrīmatī Draupadī, she, although begrieved for the murder of her sons, and although the murderer was present before her, could not withdraw the due respect generally offered to a brāhmaṇa or to the son of a brāhmaṇa. This is due to her mild nature as a woman. The woman as a class is no better than a boy, and therefore, they have no discriminatory power like a man. Aśvatthāmā proved himself to be an unworthy son of Droṇācārya or of a brāhmaṇa, and for this reason he was condemned by the greatest authority Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and yet a mild woman could not withdraw her natural courtesy for a brāhmaṇa.

Even to date, in a Hindu family a woman shows proper respect to the brāhmaṇa caste, however fallen and heinous a brahma-bandhu may be. But the men have begun to protest against brahma-bandhus who are born in families of good brāhmaṇas but by action are less than sūdras.

The specific word used in this śloka is *vāma sva-bhāvā*, mild and gentle by nature. A good man or woman accepts anything very easily, but a man of average intelligence does not do so. But anyway, we should not give up our reason and discriminatory power just to be gentle. One must have good discriminatory power to judge a thing on its merit. We should not follow the mild nature of a woman and thereby accept that which is not genuine. Aśvatthāmā may be respected by a good-natured woman, but that does not mean that he is as good as a genuine brāhmaṇa.

## TEXT 43

उवाच चासहन्त्यस्य बन्धनानयनं सती ।  
मुच्यतां मुच्यतामेष ब्राह्मणो नितरां गुरुः ॥४३॥

uvāca cāśahanty asya  
bandhanānayanam satī  
mucyatām mucyatām eṣa  
brāhmaṇo nitarām guruḥ

uvāca—said; ca—and; aśahantī—being unbearable for her; asya—his; bandhanā—being bound up; ānayanam—bringing him; satī—the devoted; mucyatām—just get him released; eṣaḥ—this; brāhmaṇaḥ—a brāhmaṇa; nitarām—our; guruḥ—teacher.

## TRANSLATION

She could not tolerate Aśvatthāmā's being bound by ropes, and being a devoted lady, she said: Release him, for he is a brāhmaṇa, our spiritual master.

## PURPORT

As soon as Aśvatthāmā was brought before Draupadī, she thought it intolerable that a brāhmaṇa should be arrested like a culprit and brought before her in that condition, especially when the brāhmaṇa happened to be a teacher's son.

Arjuna arrested Aśvatthāmā knowing perfectly well that he was the son of Droṇācārya. Kṛṣṇa also knew him to be so, but both of them condemned the murderer without consideration of his being the son of a brāhmaṇa. According to revealed scriptures, a teacher or spiritual master is liable to be rejected if he proves himself unworthy of the position of a guru or spiritual master. A guru is called also an ācārya, or a person who has personally assimilated all the essence of śāstras and has helped his disciples to adopt the ways. Aśvatthāmā failed to discharge the duties of a brāhmaṇa or teacher, and therefore he was liable to be rejected from the exalted position of a brāhmaṇa. On this consideration, both Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were right in condemning Aśvatthāmā. But to a good lady like

Draupadī, the matter was considered not from the angle of *śāstric* vision, but as a matter of custom. By custom, Aśvatthāmā was offered the same respect as was offered to his father. It was so because generally the people accept the son of a *brāhmaṇa* as a real *brāhmaṇa*, by sentiment only. Factually the matter is different. A *brāhmaṇa* is accepted on the merit of qualification and not on the merit of simply being the son of a *brāhmaṇa*.

But in spite of all this, Draupadī desired that Aśvatthāmā be at once released, and it was all the same a good sentiment for her. This means that a devotee of the Lord can tolerate all sorts of tribulation personally, but still such devotees are never unkind to others, even to the enemy. These are the characteristics of one who is a pure devotee of the Lord.

## TEXT 44

सरहस्यो धनुर्वेदः सविसर्गोपसंयमः ।  
अस्त्रग्रामश्च भवता शिक्षितो यदनुब्रह्मन् ॥४४॥

*sa-rahasyo dhanur-vedaḥ*  
*sa-visargopasaṅyamah*  
*astra-grāmaś ca bhavatā*  
*śikṣīto yad-anugrahāt*

*sa-rahasyaḥ*—confidential; *dhanur-vedaḥ*—knowledge in the art of manipulating bows and arrows; *sa-visarga*—releasing; *upasaṅyamah*—controlling; *astra*—weapons; *grāmah*—all kinds of; *ca*—and; *bhavatā*—by yourself; *śikṣītaḥ*—learned; *yat*—by whose; *anugrahāt*—mercy of.

## TRANSLATION

It was by Droṇācārya's mercy that you learned the military art of throwing arrows and the confidential art of controlling weapons.

## PURPORT

*Dhanur-veda* or military science was taught by Droṇācārya with all its confidential secrets of throwing and controlling by Vedic hymns. Gross military science is dependent on material weapons, but finer than that is the art of throwing the arrows saturated with Vedic hymns, which act more effectively than gross material weapons like machine guns or atomic bombs. The control is by Vedic *mantras*, or the transcendental science of sound. It is said in the *Rāmāyaṇa* that Mahārāja Daśaratha, the father of Lord Śrī Rāma, used to control arrows by sound only. He could pierce his target with his arrow by hearing the sound only, without seeing the object. So this is a finer military science than that of the gross material military weapons used nowadays. Arjuna was taught all this, and therefore Draupadī wished that Arjuna feel obliged to Ācārya Droṇa for all these benefits. And in the absence of Droṇācārya, his son was the representative. That was the opinion of the good lady Draupadī. It may be argued why Droṇācārya, a rigid *brāhmaṇa*, should be a teacher in military science. But the reply is that a *brāhmaṇa* should become a teacher, regardless of what his department of knowledge is. A learned *brāhmaṇa* should become a teacher, a priest and a recipient of charity. A bona fide *brāhmaṇa* is authorized to accept such professions.

## TEXT 45

स एष भगवान् द्रोणः प्रजारूपेण वर्तते ।  
तस्यात्मनोऽर्धं पत्न्यास्ते नान्वगाद्वीरखः कृपी ॥४५॥

*sa eṣa bhagavān droṇaḥ*  
*prajā-rūpeṇa vartate*  
*tasyātmano 'rdham patny āste*  
*nānvagād vīrasūḥ kṛpī*

*saḥ*—he; *eṣaḥ*—certainly; *bhagavān*—lord; *droṇaḥ*—Droṇācārya; *prajā-rūpeṇa*—in the form of his son Aśvatthāmā; *vartate*—is existing; *tasya*—his; *ātmanaḥ*—of the body; *ardham*—half; *patnī*—wife; *āste*—living; *na*—no; *anvagāt*—undertook; *vīrasūḥ*—having the son present; *kṛpī*—the sister of Kṛpācārya.

## TRANSLATION

He [Droṇācārya] is certainly still existing, being represented by his son. His wife Kṛpī did not undergo a *satī* with him because she had a son.

## PURPORT

The wife of Droṇācārya, Kṛpī, is the sister of Kṛpācārya. A devoted wife, who is according to revealed scripture the better half of her husband, is justified to embrace voluntary death along with her husband if she is without issue. But in the case of the wife of Droṇācārya, she did not undergo such a trial because she had her son, the representative of her husband. A widow is so called if there is a son of her husband existing. So in either case Aśvatthāmā was the representative of Droṇācārya, and therefore killing Aśvatthāmā would be like killing Droṇācārya. That was the argument of Draupadī against the killing of Aśvatthāmā.

## TEXT 46

तद् धर्मज्ञ महाभाग भवद्भिर्गौरवं कुलम् ।  
शृजिनं नार्हति प्राप्तुं पूज्यं बन्धमभीक्ष्णशः ॥४६॥

*tad dharmajña mahā-bhāga*  
*bhavadbhir gauravaṁ kulam*  
*vṛjinaṁ nārhati prāptum*  
*pūjyaṁ vandyam abhīkṣṇaśaḥ*

*tat*—therefore; *dharmajña*—one who is aware of the principles of religion; *mahā-bhāga*—the most fortunate; *bhavadbhir*—by your good self; *gauravam*—glorified; *kulam*—the family; *vṛjinaṁ*—that which is painful; *na*—not; *arhati*—does deserve; *prāptum*—for obtaining; *pūjyam*—the worshipful; *vandyam*—respectful; *abhīkṣṇaśaḥ*—constantly.

## TRANSLATION

O most fortunate one who knows the principles of religion, it is not good for you to cause grief to glorious family members who are always respectable and worshipful.

## PURPORT

A slight insult for a respectable family is sufficient to invoke grief. Therefore, a cultured man should always be careful in dealing with worshipful family members.

## TEXT 47

मा रोदीदस्य जननी गौतमी पतिदेवता ।  
यथाहं मृतवत्साऽऽर्ता रोदिम्यश्रुमुखी मुहुः ॥४७॥

*mā rodīd asya janani*  
*gautamī patidevatā*  
*yathāham mṛta-vatsā 'rtā*  
*rodimya śru-mukhī muhuḥ*

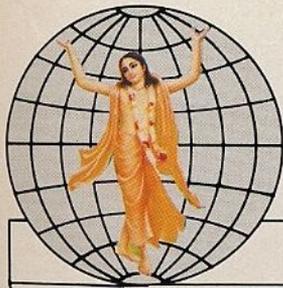
*mā*—do not; *rodīd*—make cry; *asya*—his; *janani*—mother; *gautamī*—the wife of Droṇa; *patidevatā*—chaste; *yathā*—as has; *aham*—myself; *mṛta-vatsā*—one whose child is dead; *artā*—distressed; *rodimi*—crying; *śru-mukhī*—tears in the eyes; *muhuḥ*—constantly.

## TRANSLATION

My lord, do not make the wife of Droṇācārya cry like me. I am aggrieved for the death of my sons. She need not cry constantly like me.

## PURPORT

Sympathetic good lady as she was, Śrīmatī Draupadī did not want to put the wife of Droṇācārya in the same position of childlessness, both from the point of motherly feelings as well as from the respectable position held by the wife of Droṇācārya. (continued in next issue)



# ISKCON NEWS

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

## Śrīla Prabhupāda Begins Tour



At 9:00 P.M. on June 1, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda stepped from a plane at Los Angeles International Airport and began his summer tour of the United States. Greeting him were hundreds of his disciples from the many West Coast Kṛṣṇa conscious communities. Śrīla Prabhupāda stayed ten days at the Los Angeles Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple (the most populous of the more than eighty centers throughout the world) and then flew on to centers in Toronto, Pittsburgh, New Vr̥ndāvana (West Virginia), Washington, and New York.

While in Los Angeles, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained his broad vision of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to

reporter Richard Dalrymple, religion writer for the Los Angeles *Herald Examiner*: "Just as in my body there are different parts, but the most important part is the brain, so the important section of society is made up of those who are fully God conscious. You can cut off my hands or my legs and I shall live. But if you cut off my head, I must die. At the present moment there are big scientists and skilled technologists; they are society's hands and legs. But there is no brain. Therefore, in one sense it is a dead society. So we are trying to bring America back to life by supplying the brain. If America takes Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously, other nations will follow. Makē a 'United Nations' for God consciousness and all people will be benefited."

## New Temple Under Way in Fiji

On May 9, Śrīla Prabhupāda laid the cornerstone for a majestic temple in Lautoka, Fiji. The new facility will be known as the Kṛṣṇa-Kāliya temple, in commemoration of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastime of punishing the great serpent Kāliya, during His advent five thousand years ago.

Before the ceremony, ISKCON devotees chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa and danced in a large procession through Lautoka's main street.

At the stone-laying ceremony, hundreds of leading Fijians (including

Lautoka's Mayor Hari Punja) listened attentively as Śrīla Prabhupāda explained what principles the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement upholds, and how it is working to propagate those principles throughout the world.

## Psychologists Praise Bhaktivedanta Book Trust Publications

There's one science that nearly all of us want to know about: the science of the self. The Eastern counterpart of what Westerners call psychology is yoga, the science of linking the self with the Supreme Self—a treasure long "locked away" in the Sanskrit language of ancient India's Vedic literatures. No wonder, then, that His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda's word-for-word translations and clear-cut explanations of the Vedic literatures have won the acclaim of psychologists.

Dr. James N. Mosel, Emeritus Professor and Chairman of the Department of Psychology at the George Washington University, says this about Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*: "To the psychologist, the *Bhagavad-gītā* is of great interest because it is perhaps the most ancient account on record of a remarkable psychotherapeutic session, administered to a 'patient' suffering from what today some would call 'ontological anxiety.' Swami Bhaktivedanta's translation is most useful in gaining an understanding of the psychological doctrine involved. . . . The translation affords the reader a rare and most welcome balance between the document's literal psychological content and its philosophic import."

Garry Gelade, Professor of Psychology at England's Oxford University, makes this appraisal of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: "This is a book to be treasured. . . . The clarity and precision of his commentaries on the text can rarely have been equalled. No one of whatever faith or philosophical persuasion who reads this book with an open mind can fail to be both moved and impressed."

## Kṛṣṇa Conscious Calendar

Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees follow a spiritual calendar that divides the year into twelve months, each named for a different form of Kṛṣṇa. The year is full of Kṛṣṇa conscious festivals, and some of the upcoming ones are listed here. The devotees of the ISKCON center nearest you will gladly tell you about the meaning of these festivals.

August 6	August 7	August 10	August 18	August 19	August 21
Jhulana-yātrā begins. Pavitrārōpanī Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans).	Break-fast after sunrise, before 7:31 A.M. Disappearance of Rūpa Gosvāmī and Gauridāsa Paṇḍita.	Appearance of Lord Baladeva (fasting till noon). End of Jhulana-yātrā. Full moon.	Janmāṣṭamī (fasting till midnight).	Nandotsava (the birth ceremony of child Kṛṣṇa performed by Nandā Mahārāja). Vyāsa-pūjā.	Annadā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans).
August 22	August 30	September 1	September 4	September 5	September 6
Break-fast after sunrise, before 9:30 A.M.	Appearance of Sītā Thākuraṇī (Advaitācārya's wife).	Rādhāṣṭamī (appearance of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī).	Paśva Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans).	Break-fast after sunrise, before 9:30 A.M. Appearance of Jīva Gosvāmī.	Appearance of Thākura Bhaktivīnodā.

# An Age-old Tradition Comes to the Western World

*In India, people have worshiped the Lord's form for centuries, and now the practice is flourishing in the West.*

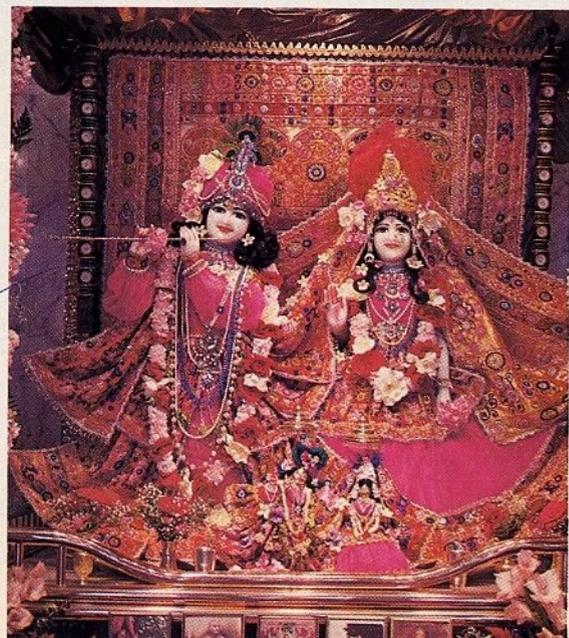
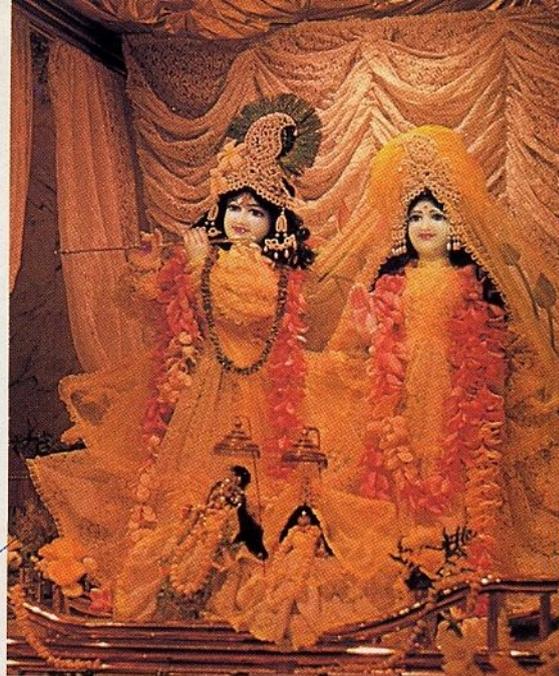
*Photographs by Viśākhā-devī dāsī.*

When Kṛṣṇa the Supreme Lord appeared five thousand years ago to enact His pastimes (*see p. 24*), good people rejoiced to be in His presence, to live on the same earth with Him. Yet, when Lord Kṛṣṇa no longer visibly walked the earth, how did these people, His devotees, react? We'd expect that they were unbearably lonely. But for thousands of years devotees in India have known that we can personally see and serve the Lord in His Deity form. Now, to the Western mind this idea may seem unfamiliar, but it's easy to understand. For instance, the post office may be far from our homes, so the postal officials install authorized mail boxes around the city for our convenience. Those boxes are as good as



the post office itself. Similarly, the authorized form of the Lord is as good as the Lord Himself, and the Lord, in His form as the Deity, accepts the service we offer Him. Although the average person might suppose that the Deity only represents the Lord, the mature devotee understands that the Deity is the Supreme Lord Himself. For that reason, he worships the Deity with respect and love.

Since 1966, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness has started more than eighty temples worldwide to share the open secret of Deity worship. The Deities pictured at right stand on the altar of the temple at ISKCON's Los Angeles community, New Dvārakā. (Dvārakā is a city in India where the Lord performed many heroic activities during His advent on earth five thousand years ago.) The Deity on the left is *Dvārakādhīśa*, "The Lord of Dvārakā." Just like royalty, Lord Dvārakādhīśa and His queen, Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī-devī, enjoy the best of everything: a gorgeous room, an elaborate wardrobe of morning, evening, and nighttime clothes, and all kinds of personal service.





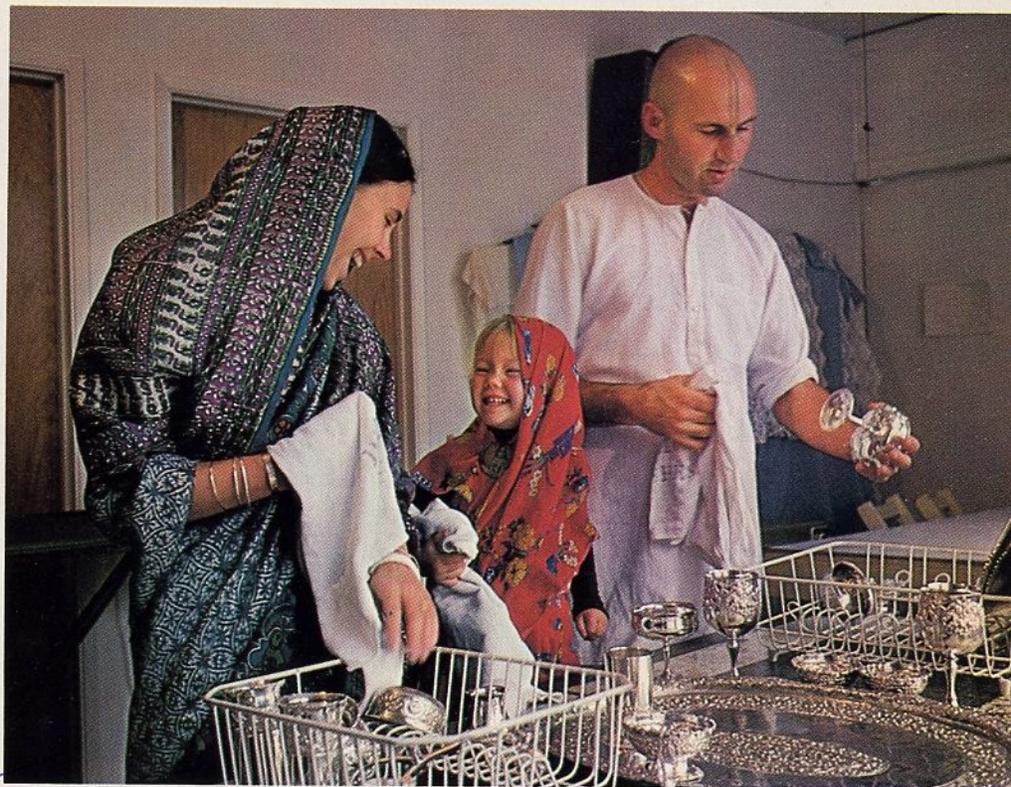
Every morning at 4:15 A.M., Labaṅgalatikā-devī dāsī (*above and right*) gently places on the marble altar a silver plate laden with milk sweets and slices of fruit. Then she offers the food to the Lord by reciting prayers. (The devotees make seven such offerings throughout the day.) “It’s not that God becomes hungry,” Labaṅgalatikā explains. “Kṛṣṇa is complete in Himself. He doesn’t require anything from us. But if we serve the Lord in some way, if we please Him, then by His grace we can understand Him.”

From 8:45 to 11:00 A.M., the doors to the Deities’ room remain open so that anyone can come, offer respects, and perhaps offer some fruit or flowers for the Lord’s pleasure (*bottom center*). By 11:00 A.M., the largest offering of the day is ready. Generally, this offering consists of twenty-five dishes (including succulent vegetables, thick creams, breads, sweets, rice, soup, and cheese), and on special days there may be as many as three hundred savory items. After the noontime offering, the Lord “rests” until 3:45 P.M., when the devotees greet Him with prayers and incense and



frosted cakes, cakes floating in milk, rice pudding, nectar drinks, cheese pies, cookies, honey, and other things. Preparing all this food requires a team of ten devotees working nearly ’round the clock, seven days a week (*upper right*). Seven full offerings a day also means a lot of dishwashing, and Racitāmbara-devī dāsī and





her family help out (above).  
“When I first came to the temple, Deity worship didn’t attract me,” she says, “but now it’s my favorite work. Sometimes nondevotees argue with me, ‘God is everywhere. Why must I come to the temple to worship Him?’ I explain that

God is everywhere—the entire creation is His energy—but it’s very difficult to see God everywhere, and it’s impossible to serve Him like that. Therefore, the Lord kindly appears as the Deity, so that we can serve Him with our body, mind, and words.”

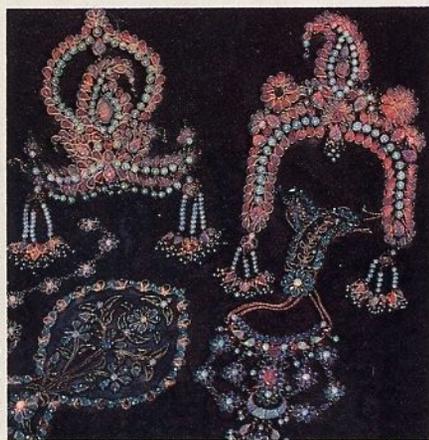


Photo: Nityatpā-devī dāśī

“After decorating the Deities with store-bought jewelry for two years,” says Lāl Kṛṣṇa dāsa (*top*), “I got an inspiration and a desire to personally handcraft Their jewelry. I didn’t have any experience; so I got a book and some basic tools, and Kṛṣṇa provided the intelligence.” At first a part-time experiment, Lāl Kṛṣṇa’s jewelry-making soon turned



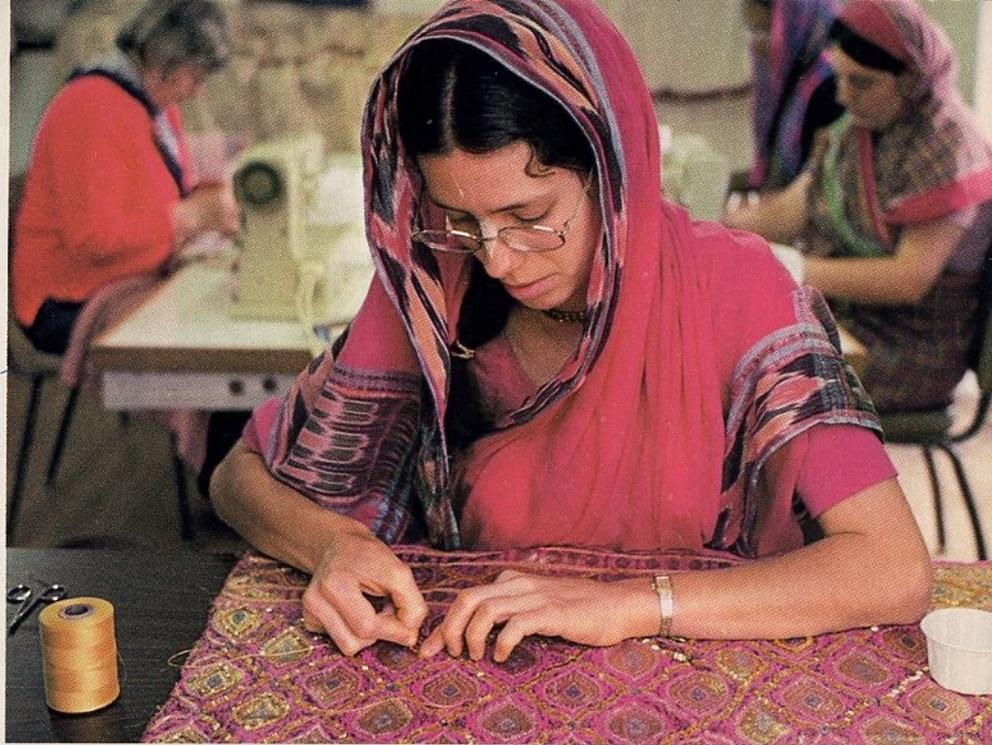
into a full-time engagement. One necklace takes three or four days of designing and crafting, and a whole set of jewelry (including crowns, necklaces, chokers, bracelets,

foot-bells, and earrings) might take a month. But Lāl Kṛṣṇa’s determination and devotion are unswerving. “High-class people have everything custom-made,” he reasons,

“and Kṛṣṇa’s the highest-class person of all.”

Along with a few other devotees, Tuṅgabhadrā-devī dāsī (*right*) spends her whole day making the Deities’ beautiful clothing. The elaborate outfits of silk, satin, velvet, and chiffon reveal expert designing and exquisite hand-tailoring. Even so, the seamstresses never feel complacent. “Spiritual life is never stagnant or static,” Tuṅgabhadrā explains. “We’re always trying to improve the quality of our service.”

Flowers add a fragrant dimension to Deity worship. The devotees use artistic combinations of mums, roses, gardenias, and carnations to decorate the altar and garland the Deities. Dīneśvara-devī dāsī (*right*), a newly initiated devotee from Paris, spends her afternoons polishing the vases, arranging the flowers, and making the Deities’ garlands. “Since I started doing things for the Deities,” she says, “It’s easy for me to understand that God is not a threatening, foreign force—He’s a person.”



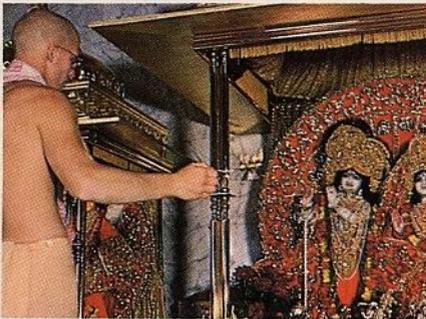
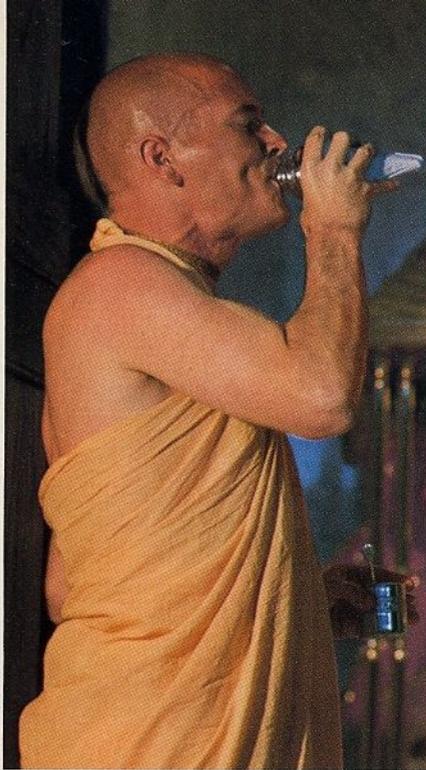


Photo: Nityatpita-devi dāsi

*Ārati* is a celebration of welcoming the Lord. Just as we would help a guest feel at home by offering him gifts and refreshment, so the devotees offer the Lord incense, camphor, clarified butter, water, a napkin, a flower, and cooling fans. As the *ārati* ceremony begins, a *pūjārī*, or priest, steps to the edge of the Deity room and sounds a conchshell heralding the celebration (*top*). Then he offers the incense sticks, the lamps of flaming camphor and butter (*above*), the water (in a conchshell), the napkin, the flower, the peacock fan, and

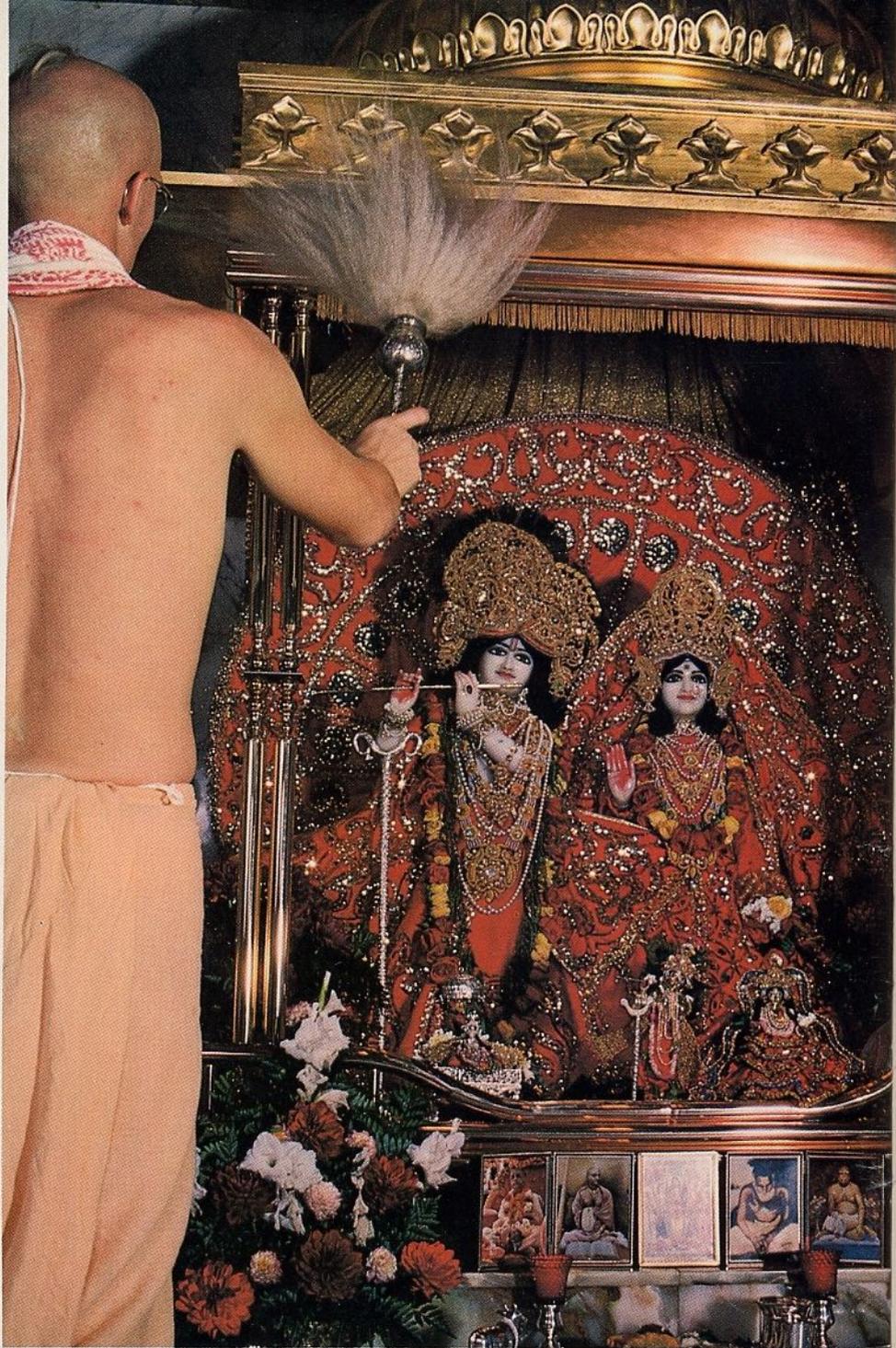


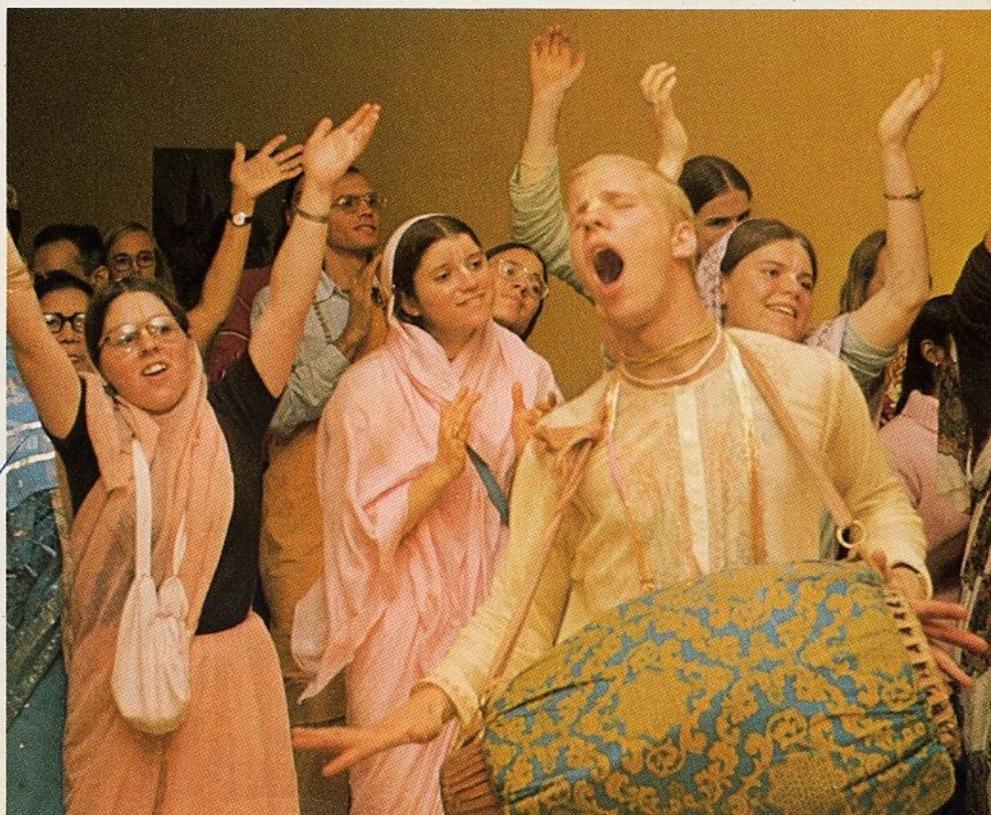
Photo: Nityatpita-devi dāsi

the yak-tail whisk, in that order. The *pūjārī* presents the first five items to the Deities with graceful, circular hand motions. Then he sends pleasant breezes over Their Lordships with the fan and whisk (*above*). In the Los Angeles temple the devotees make seven such offerings at regular times each day.

In contrast with the quietly reverent *pūjārī*, the devotees in the temple room (*opposite page*) are exuberant. As the half-hour *ārati* starts, the lead singer chants prayers and the congregation joins in responsively, all to the accompaniment of rhythmically ringing hand cymbals and pulsating *mṛdaṅgas* (oblong clay drums



struck from both ends). At first the group simply sways from side to side, in time with the singing. But soon the pace quickens, and some people start dancing as the music moves them. In a moment others have caught up the mood. The joy is contagious. Even a newcomer watching the bright-faced devotees (as they laugh, clap, jump, and whirl with arms upraised) can see that here is another dimension, where Kṛṣṇa is the heart of everything and transcendental bliss prevails. 🙏





*The Birth of  
Lord Kṛṣṇa*



Vasudeva, many of Kāṁsa's friends and relatives approached him and begged him to stop his atrocities. But instead of complying, by the force of his personality Kāṁsa moved these supplicants to bow down and worship him.

Then, when Devakī became pregnant for the seventh time, a plenary expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa known as Ananta appeared within her womb. Devakī was overwhelmed with both jubilation and lamentation. She was happy that the Lord had taken shelter in her womb, but at the same time she was afraid that as soon as she gave birth, Kāṁsa would kill the child.

At that time Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, ordered His internal potency (Yogamāyā) to descend to the earth. Yogamāyā cast a spell over Devakī and another wife of Vasudeva's, Rohiṇī, who was across the Yamunā River living with King Nanda and Queen Yaśodā in the village of Gokula. Frightened away by Kāṁsa's atrocities, Rohiṇī and many others from the Yadu dynasty were living outside Mathurā.

When Yogamāyā had cast her influence over Devakī and Rohiṇī, Lord Kṛṣṇa transferred His primary expansion from Devakī's womb to Rohiṇī's womb. Thus, people thought that Devakī's seventh pregnancy was a miscarriage. But actually the baby, a boy, was born to Rohiṇī in Gokula. He was to be known as Balarāma, the brother and constant companion of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Now the time had arrived for the birth of the fateful eighth child of Vasudeva and Devakī. From the spiritual world, Lord Kṛṣṇa entered by His mystic power into the heart of Vasudeva, who thus appeared just like the glowing sun. Then Lord Kṛṣṇa passed from the heart of Vasudeva into the heart of Devakī, exactly as the setting sun's rays transfer to the full moon rising in the east. The Lord did not appear within Devakī by seminal discharge; rather, He appeared independently, by His own energy.

In this way, Devakī became the residence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is one without a second and the cause of all creation. Because she was within the prison walls of Kāṁsa's palace, no one but Kāṁsa could see her transcendental beauty, which appeared like fire contained within a pot. When Kāṁsa saw his sister's extraordinary beauty, he at once understood that God had indeed taken shelter in her womb, and he became distraught. At first he decided to kill Devakī, but then he changed his mind, fearing public outrage at the murder of a pregnant woman.

As the days went by, an ocean of animosity against the Lord swelled in



*In the darkness of night, during a thunderstorm, the Lord appeared in Kāṁsa's jail.*

Kāṁsa's heart. He patiently awaited the child's birth, expecting to kill him as he had killed Devakī's other sons. He was obsessed with the thought of Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day. While sleeping, eating, working, sitting, or walking, all he could see around him was Kṛṣṇa.

As the time drew near for the appearance of the Lord, auspicious constellations and stars moved to influential positions in the heavens. In all directions, peace and prosperity spread over the earth. Rivers flowed full of water, and lakes were decorated beautifully with lotus flowers. Peacocks and other

beautiful birds in the forest danced with their consorts and sang with sweet voices. The wind blew pleasantly, carrying the aroma of many flowers, and the sensation of bodily touch was very pleasing. At the seashore, the mild sound of lapping waves mingled with the gentle thunder of the clouds above. On the heavenly planets, angels and their wives danced, Gandharvas and Kinnaras sang, and the Cāraṇas offered prayers to the Personality of Godhead. The great sages and demigods showered flowers down upon the earth.

Then, in the darkness of night, as a

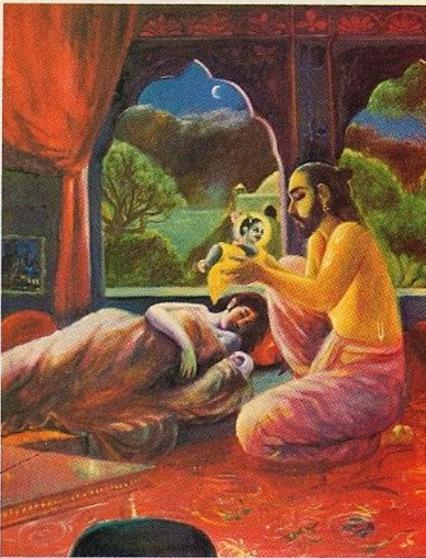
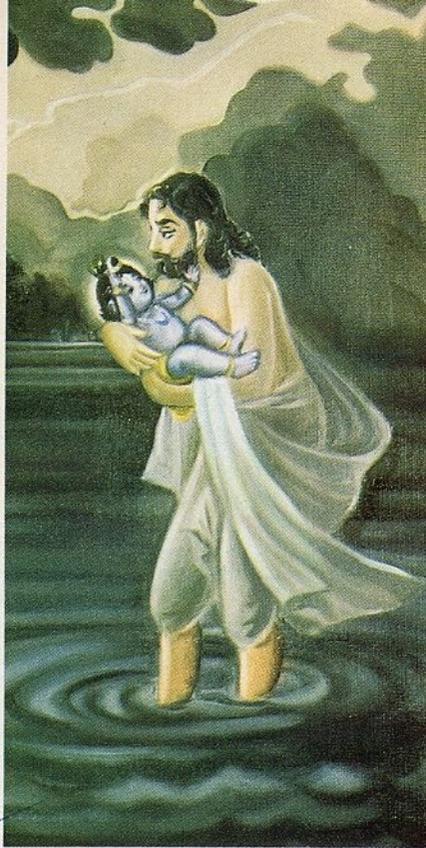
thunderstorm brought heavy rains to Mathurā, the Lord appeared before Vasudeva and Devakī within the jail of Kāṁsa. Vasudeva was struck with wonder when he saw the newborn child. The baby had four arms, and He held a conchshell, a club, a disc, and a lotus flower in His hands. He was decorated with the special mark of Śrīvatsa on His chest, and around His throat hung the jeweled necklace of *kaustubha* stone. He was dressed in yellow silk, and he wore valuable bracelets, earrings, and other ornaments all over His body. On His head, which was abundantly covered with hair, He wore a helmet bedecked with a *vaidūrya* stone. Shedding His effulgence within the room, the child appeared as dazzling as a bright, blackish cloud.

Convinced that the newborn child was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vasudeva bowed down with folded hands and began to offer Him prayers: "My dear Lord, I can understand who You are. You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Supersoul of all living entities and the Absolute Truth. I can understand that You have appeared before us in Your own eternal form just to deliver us from our fear of Kāṁsa. You have appeared to kill the uncivilized Kāṁsa and his followers. But, knowing that You were coming to kill him, he has already murdered six of Your elder brothers, and now he is simply awaiting the news of Your birth. As soon as he hears of it, he will immediately come here with all kinds of weapons to kill You."

Then Devakī offered her prayers. "My dear Lord, all Your eternal forms in Your millions of incarnations are original forms, because They are outside the material world and existed before the creation of this cosmos. They are eternal, all-pervading, self-effulgent, changeless, and uncontaminated by material qualities. Your eternal forms are ever-cognizant and situated in transcendental goodness, and They always perform blissful pastimes. They are also self-sufficient, and I can thus understand that You are the Supreme Lord.

"But I am afraid for You because of my brother Kāṁsa. My Lord, Kāṁsa may already know that You are born. Therefore, I request You to conceal Your four-armed form holding the conchshell, disc, club, and lotus flower."

On hearing their prayers, the Lord replied, "I have appeared in this Viṣṇu form just to convince you that I am the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I could have appeared as an ordinary child, but then you wouldn't have believed that I am the Supreme Lord.



*To protect his son Kṛṣṇa, Vasudeva carried Him across the River Yamunā and left Him in place of Yaśodā's daughter.*

My dear mother and father, you have accepted Me as your child with great affection, and I am very pleased with you. You shall go back to home, back to Godhead, because you have perfected your mission. Now I order you to take Me immediately to Gokula and exchange Me for the daughter who has just been born to Yaśodā." Having spoken thus, the Lord transformed Himself into an ordinary child and remained silent.

Exactly at that time, a daughter was born to King Nanda and Queen Yaśodā, in Gokula. She was Yogamāyā, who had

previously cast her spell so that Balarāma could transfer to the womb of Rohiṇī. Now, even as she lay as a newborn baby beside Yaśodā in Gokula, she spread her influence to Mathurā. All the people in Kāṁsa's palace, including the doorkeepers, fell asleep. And the palace doors automatically opened, although they had been barred and shackled with iron chains. When the door of the jail opened, Vasudeva lifted up baby Kṛṣṇa and walked outside. Severe rain was falling and the night was very dark, but by Kṛṣṇa's influence Vasudeva could see as clearly as if the sun were shining. The plenary expansion of Kṛṣṇa known as Lord Ananta appeared in the shape of a serpent, and He spread His hoods over Vasudeva's head to protect him from the downpour.

On arriving at the bank of the Yamunā, Vasudeva saw that the river was roaring with waves and that the whole span was full of foam. Still, in that furious feature, the river gave passage to Vasudeva, just as the Indian Ocean once made a path for Lord Rāma when he was bridging the gulf to Laṅkā.

On the other side, Vasudeva went to the house of Nanda in Gokula. All the cowherd men were fast asleep, and Vasudeva took the opportunity to slip into Yaśodā's room. Without difficulty he exchanged the two babies. Then he returned to Mathurā, went back into the prison, and silently placed the girl on the lap of Devakī. So that Kāṁsa would not know that anything had happened, Vasudeva then adjusted all the doors and gates and again clamped the shackles on himself.

The gatekeepers awoke to the newborn child's crying and rushed into Kāṁsa's bedroom to tell him the news. Kāṁsa jumped out of bed and exclaimed, "Now the cruel death of my life is born!" So perplexed that his hair stood on end, Kāṁsa proceeded to the jail.

On seeing her brother approaching, Devakī prayed to him meekly, "My dear brother, please do not kill this female child. I promise she will be your son's wife. Don't kill her. You are not to be killed by a girl. That was not the omen. You are to be killed by a male child. So please, do not kill her. My dear brother, even though you have killed so many of my newborn children, that was not your fault. You were advised by demoniac friends. But now I beg you to excuse this girl. Let her live as my daughter."

However, Kāṁsa was so cruel that he did not listen to the beautiful prayers of his sister. He forcibly grabbed the newborn child, raised her over his head, and attempted to dash her mercilessly on

the stone floor. But the child slipped from his hands and flew up into the sky! Hovering there, she revealed herself as the goddess Durgā, decorated with a fine dress, flower garlands, and ornaments. In her eight hands she held a bow, a lancet, arrows, a bell, a conchshell, a disc, a club, and a shield. Demigods prayed to her and offered her gifts. She looked down at Kāṁsa and addressed him, "You rascal, how can you kill me? The child who will one day kill *you* has already been born, and is elsewhere. Don't be so cruel to your poor sister." Then Durgā departed.

Overwhelmed with fear after hearing Durgā's words, Kāṁsa released Vasudeva and Devakī from their shackles. Addressing them politely, he said, "My dear sister and brother-in-law, completely neglecting our intimate relationship, I have acted just like a demon in killing my own nephews. I don't know what will be the results of these acts of mine. Probably I shall be sent to the hell where *brāhmaṇa*-killers go.

"My dear sister Devakī, you are so gentle and kind. Please forgive me. Don't be aggrieved by your children's death, which I have caused. Actually, they were not killed by me at all. Their death was predestined. Everyone has to act according to destiny, even un-

willingly. Please forgive the atrocities I have committed against you. I am very poor-hearted, and you are so great-hearted, so take compassion on me and forgive me." With tears flowing from his eyes, Kāṁsa fell down at their feet.

When Devakī saw her brother's repentance, she was pacified and forgave all his atrocious activities. Vasudeva also forgave all past incidents and, smiling, addressed Kāṁsa, "My dear fortunate brother-in-law, every living entity is born ignorant, thinking that this material body is his self. And on the basis of this ignorant conception, we create enmity and friendship. Lamentation, jubilation, fearfulness, envy, greed, illusion, and madness are different features of our material concept of life. When these things influence us, we engage in acts inimical to others and forget our eternal relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

When Vasudeva spoke to Kāṁsa in such an illuminating way, Kāṁsa became very pleased, and his guilt for killing his nephews subsided. With the permission of his sister and brother-in-law, he then returned home in great relief.

Meanwhile, across the river in Gokula, Yaśodā was fast asleep. Because she was exhausted by the labor of

childbirth, she could not remember whether she had given birth to a boy or a girl.

The next day, King Nanda declared that Yaśodā had given birth to a male child, and Nanda celebrated the birth of his son very joyfully. He called for learned astrologers and *brāhmaṇas* to perform the birth ceremony according to Vedic custom. Wearing fine dress, ornaments, and garlands, Nanda and his relatives sat down in front of what they thought was Kṛṣṇa's birthplace. The *brāhmaṇas* then chanted auspicious mantras, and astrologers read a horoscope of the child's future. Everyone worshiped Lord Viṣṇu and the demigods and also the forefathers of the family. Finally, King Nanda distributed to the *brāhmaṇas* both hills of grain and 200,000 well-ornamented cows.

As Nanda worshiped Lord Viṣṇu, he desired only that his newborn child would be happy. He prayed to Viṣṇu to protect the child, not knowing that his son Kṛṣṇa was Himself the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the origin of Viṣṇu and the origin of all material and spiritual worlds. In this way, Lord Kṛṣṇa began His earthly pastimes, in which He would annihilate the demons and deliver His devotees back to His own abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana.

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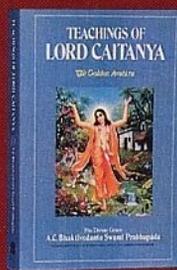
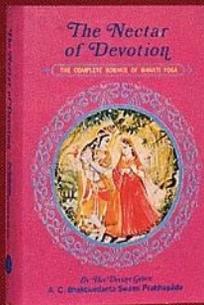
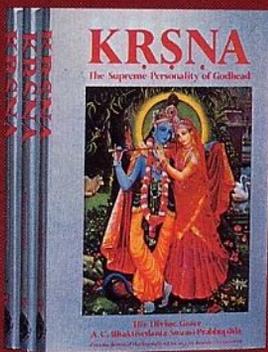
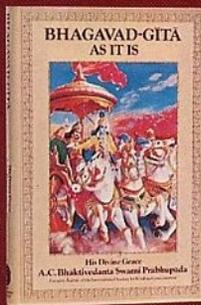
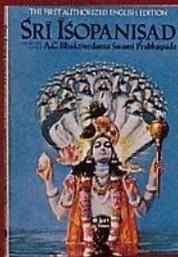


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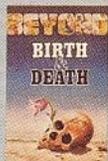
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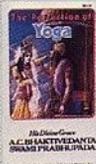
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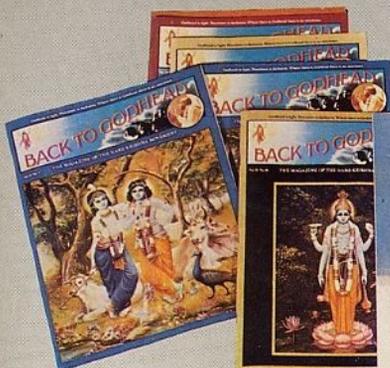
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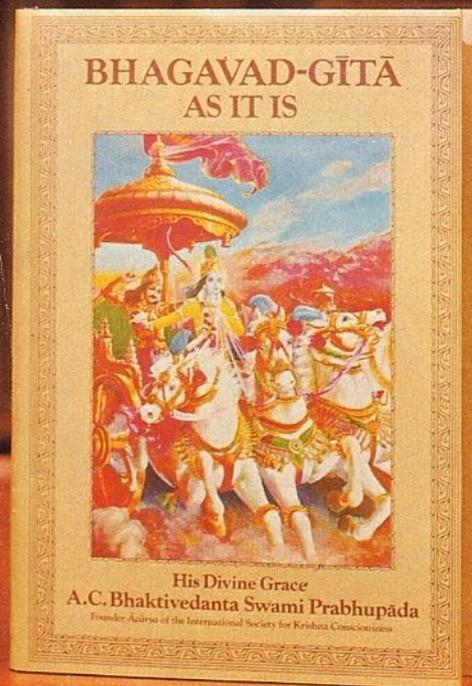
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