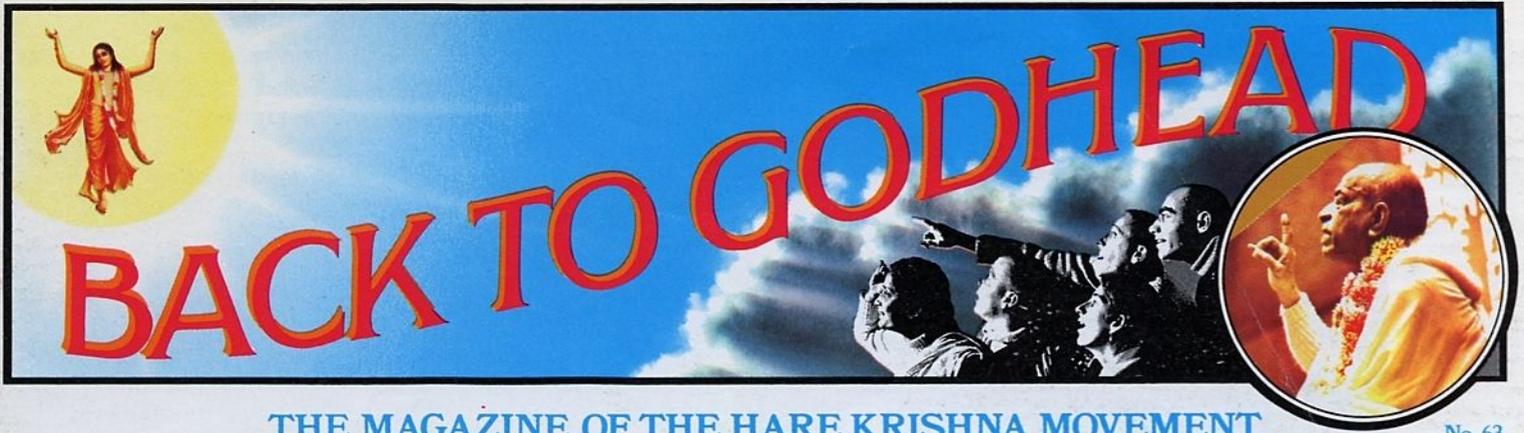


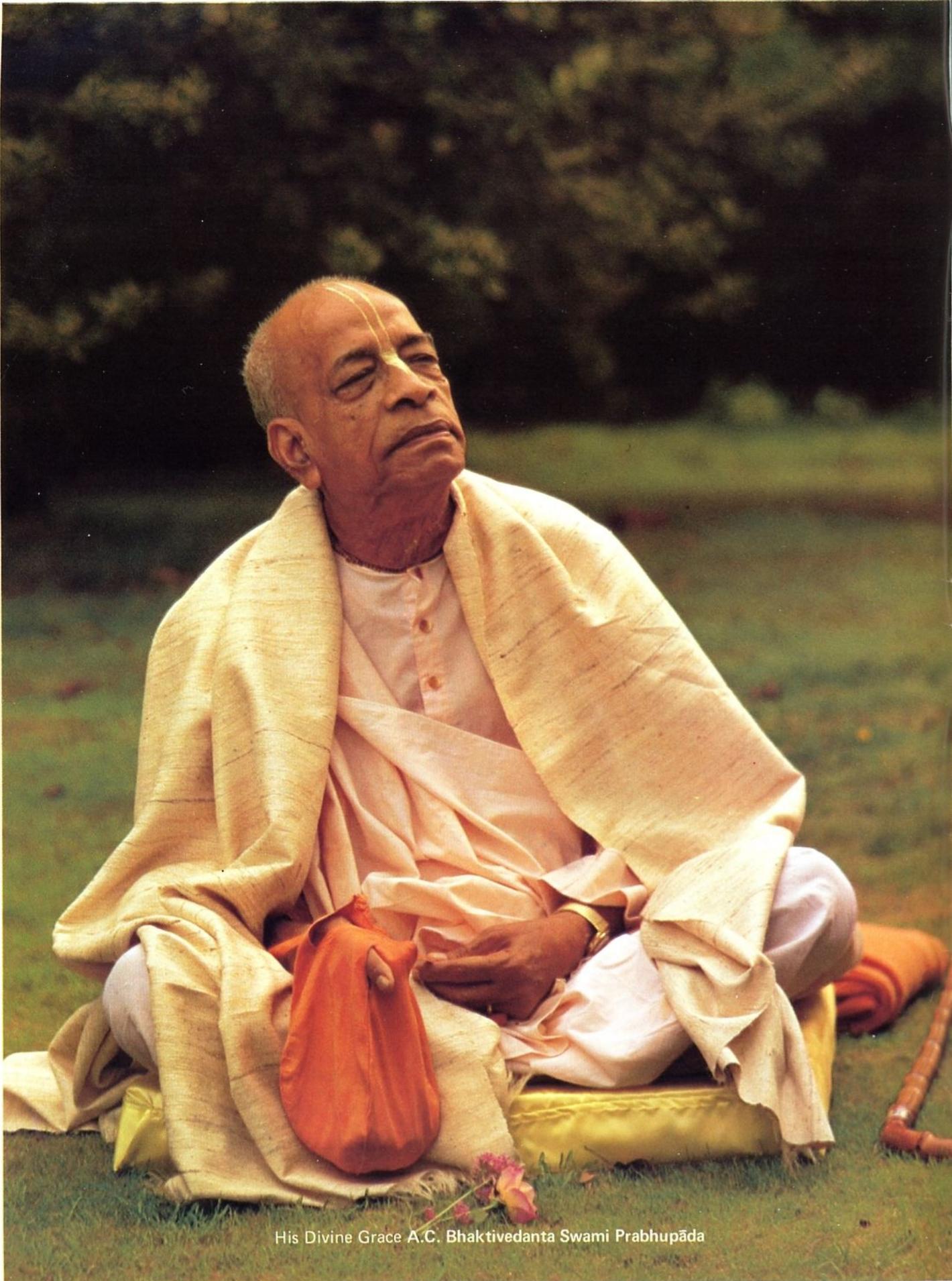
Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

No. 63





His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Photo on the lawn of Bhaktivedanta Manor by Bhārgava dāsa.



Photo: Bhargava dasa

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

Bhaktivedanta Manor, European headquarters for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, is a model community that exemplifies the principle of plain living and high thinking. Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or God consciousness, is the center of all activity at Bhaktivedanta Manor. Despite its tranquility, however, the Manor is a challenge to the destructive thrust of modern civilization, for it offers a spiritual vantage point from which to see clearly the inconsistencies of modern human society.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda often speaks of the imbalance caused by today's artificial civilization. He writes in his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* purports, "It is understood that in the past people depended on nature's gifts of fruits and flowers without industrial enterprises promoting filthy slums for residential quarters. Advancement of civilization is not established on the growth of mills and factories to deteriorate the finer instincts of the human being; it rests on developing the potent spiritual instincts of humanity."

Bhaktivedanta Manor is dedicated to this essential spiritual development. Our beautiful estate, with its Tudor buildings, fertile gardens and orchards, dairy cows, lakes, paths, footbridges and greenhouses, could provide an ideal home or business opportunity for a materialist. But our spiritual master, following the Vedic injunction that everything in truth belongs to God, has sanctified the Manor—Kṛṣṇa-ized it—by dedicating it to the service of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. By pleasing Kṛṣṇa, one can bring pleasure to the entire world. Therefore every square inch of Bhaktivedanta Manor is dedicated to the service of Kṛṣṇa.

At Bhaktivedanta Manor, therefore, and in centers around the world, the Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees are living spiritually purified lives, guided by the ideas presented here in *Back to Godhead*. We therefore take great pleasure in offering you this transcendental journal of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy and inviting you to our international centers to see how this philosophy actually works.

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

EDITOR

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī

**BHAKTIVEDĀNTA BOOK TRUST
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Jayādvaita dāsa

SANSKRIT EDITOR

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PRODUCTION MANAGER

Rādhāvallabha dāsa

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Muralīdhara dāsa, Yadurāṇī-devī dāśī,
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PHOTOGRAPHERS

Bhārgava dāsa, Muralīvadana dāsa,
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PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNICIANS

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TYPE COMPOSERS

Rāgātmikā-devī dāśī, Nara-devī dāśī,
Duḥkhanantri-devī dāśī

Published monthly, \$6.00 per year (\$7.00 outside USA), by the
Bhaktivedānta Book Trust, 3764 Watseka Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.
90034. Editorial Offices: 38 Tiffany Place, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11231

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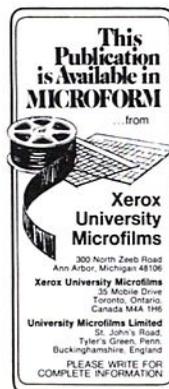
Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, a scripturally predicted incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared 500 years ago in India, showed by His personal example how to develop love for Kṛṣṇa by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and dancing in ecstasy. (Original oil painting by Bharadrāja dāsa.)

PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

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

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Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers

*Conversations about spiritual life
between Bob Cohen, a young Peace Corps worker in India,
and His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Recorded at the ISKCON International Center
at Lord Caitanya's Birthplace, Māyāpur, India*

Photo: Bhārgava dāsa



"God." "Spiritual life." These were such vague terms to me before I met Prabhupāda. I have always been interested in religion, but before I met the

devotees, I did not have the intelligence or proper perspective needed to inquire fruitfully about spiritual life. I had been to Hebrew School and had studied Oriental philosophy, but I could never get satisfying answers to my questions.

After graduating college with a B.S. in Chemistry, I joined the Peace Corps and went to India as a science teacher. In India I inquired about the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. I was curious about its authenticity. Attracted by the chanting and intrigued by the philosophy, I had visited the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in New York several times before going to India, but I did not consider the seemingly austere life of a devotee for myself.

In India I first met the Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees in Calcutta during October of 1972. The devotees could clearly explain to me the purpose of yoga and the need to inquire about spiritual life. I began to feel that the rituals and ceremonies they practiced were not dull, sentimental obligations, but a real, sensible way of life.

At first, however, it was very difficult for me to understand the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In so many subtle ways, my Western upbringing prevented me from seeing things that were as plain as the nose on my face! Fortunately, the devotees convinced me of the need to practice some few basic austerities, and thus I was able to gain the intelligence and desire to understand spiritual life.

I can now recall how distant and tenuous my concepts of spiritual and transcendental existence were. I met Prabhupāda briefly at this time, and shortly thereafter I decided to become a vegetarian. (I was proud of being a vegetarian, but later Prabhupāda reminded me that even pigeons are vegetarians.)

In February I met some devotees in Calcutta, and they invited me to a festival in Māyāpur (a holy island ninety miles

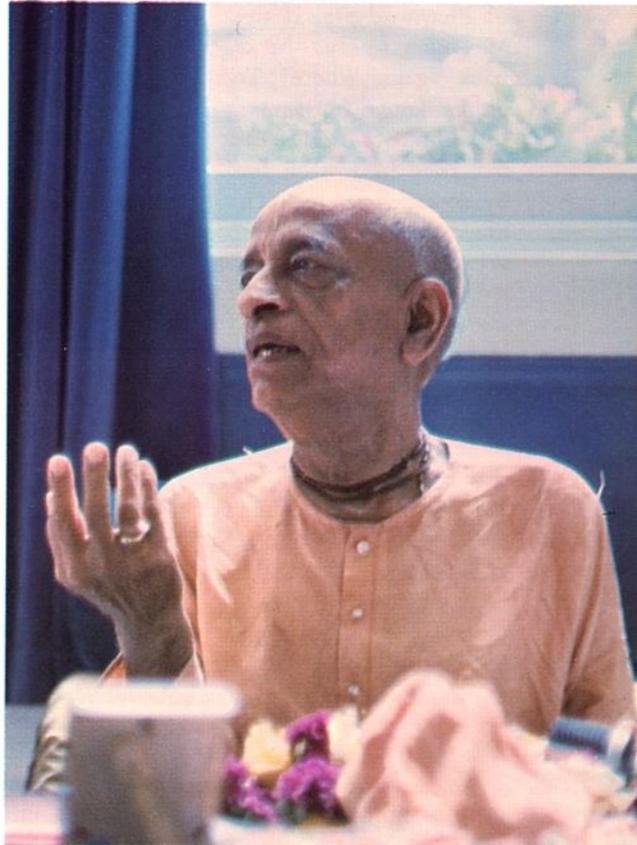
north of Calcutta) in honor of the appearance day of Lord Caitanya, who is considered an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa Himself. I left for Māyāpur planning to stay two days at the most, but ended up staying a week. There I met Prabhupāda again. I was the only Western nondevotee on the island, and since I was living with the devotees on their land, this was a unique opportunity to learn intimately about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When I met Prabhupāda, he asked me how I was and if I had any questions. The devotees had explained to me that Prabhupāda could answer any questions about spiritual life because he represents a disciplic succession of spiritual masters. I thought that Prabhupāda might really know what is going on in the world. After all, his devotees claimed this, and I admired and respected his devotees. So with this in mind I began to ask my questions. Inadvertently, I had approached a spiritual master (*guru*) in the proper manner, submissively asking questions about spiritual matters.

Prabhupāda was pleased, and over the next several days he answered my questions. I asked them mostly from an academic point of view, but Prabhupāda always gave me personal answers so that I would take to spiritual life. Prabhupāda was patiently trying to help me understand that Kṛṣṇa (God) is the supreme enjoyer, supreme friend and supreme proprietor. I put forward many impediments to accepting the obvious: that I would have to become serious about God consciousness to understand God. But Prabhupāda relentlessly yet kindly urged me on.

Now I am back in the United States working for my master's degree in geology at Rutgers, sponsoring Kṛṣṇa conscious activities on the campus, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa myself every day, and associating with the devotees at the temple in New York. Gradually, I am overcoming material impediments. Due to the kindness of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I have realized the importance of inquiring about spiritual life from a genuinely self-realized person. Spiritual life has thus become more real to me and less sentimental.

Bob Cohen

Photo: Bhārgava dāsa



Śrīla Prabhupāda: This movement is especially meant to enable a human being to reach the real goal of life.

Bob: The real goal—?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The real goal of life.

Bob: Is the real goal of life to know God?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. To go back home, back to Godhead. That is the real goal of life. Just like the water that comes from the sea—it forms clouds, the clouds fall down as rain, and the actual goal is to flow down the river and again enter the sea. So, we have come from God, and now we are embarrassed by this material life. Therefore, our aim should be to get out of this embarrassing situation and go back home, back to Godhead. This is the real goal of life.

*mām upetya punar janma
duḥkhālayam aśāsvatam
nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ
sāmsiddhiṁ paramām gatāḥ*

[“After attaining Me, the great souls, who are *yogīs* in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfec-



tion. (Bg. 8.15)] That is the version of *Bhagavad-gītā*. If anyone comes to Me—*mām upetya*—he does not come back again. Where? To this place—*duḥkhālayam aśāsvatam*. This place is the abode of miseries. Everyone knows, but they have been fooled, befooled by so-called leaders. This is miserable life, material life. Kṛṣṇa says, God says, that this place is *duḥkhālayam*—it is a place of miseries. And it is also *aśāsvatam*, temporary. You cannot make a compromise: “All right, let it be miserable. I shall remain here as an American or Indian.” No! That also you cannot do. You cannot remain an American. You may think that, having been born in America, you are very happy. But you cannot remain an American for long. You will have to be kicked out of that place. And your next life you do not know! Therefore, it is *duḥkhālayam aśāsvatam*—miserable and temporary. That is our philosophy.

Bob: But when you have some knowledge of God, then life is not so miserable?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No! *Some* knowledge will not do. You must have perfect knowledge.

*janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo veti tattvataḥ*
[Bg. 4.9]

Tattvataḥ means “perfectly.” Perfect knowledge is being taught in *Bhagavad-gītā*. So, we are giving human society a chance to learn *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is and make their lives perfect. That is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

 | The Science | 
of the Soul

Śrīla Prabhupāda: What does your science say about the transmigration of the soul?

Bob: I think...that science...cannot deny or affirm it. Science does not know it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Therefore I say that science is imperfect.

Bob: Science may, though, say some-

thing. It is said in science that energy is never destroyed; it is just changed.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That’s all right. But how the energy is working in the future—that science does not know. How is the energy diverted? How, by different manipulations, is the energy working differently? For instance, electrical energy. By different handling it is operating the heater, and it is operating the refrigerator. They are just the opposite, but the electrical energy is the same. Similarly, this energy—living energy—how is it being directed? Which way is it going? How is it fructifying in the next life? That they do not know. But in *Bhagavad-gītā* it is very simply stated.

vāsāṁsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
[Bg. 2.22]

You are covered by a dress, by a shirt. When this shirt is unusable, you change it. Similarly, this body is just like a shirt and coat. When it is no longer workable, we have to change it.

Bob: What is the “we” that has to change? What is constant?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is the soul.

Bob: From one life to the next?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is the soul—I. What “you” is speaking? You! What “I” is speaking? Identity: *ātmā*, or soul.

Bob: My soul is different from your soul?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. You are an individual soul, I am an individual soul.

Bob: You have removed yourself from karmic influences. If I was to remove myself from karmic influences, would our souls be the same or different?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The soul is of the same quality in all. You are under a certain conception of life at the present moment, and these countrymen of yours [the Kṛṣṇa consciousness

devotees] were under a certain conception of life, but by training they have taken to another conception of life. So the ultimate training is how to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is perfection.

Bob: If two people are Kṛṣṇa conscious, is their soul the same?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The soul is always the same.

Bob: In each person? In each person is it the same?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Ah, yes.

Bob [pointing to two devotees]: If these two are Kṛṣṇa conscious, are their souls the same?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The soul is the same but always individual, even if they are not Kṛṣṇa conscious. For instance, you are a human being, and I am a human being. Even if I am not a Christian, even if you are not a Hindu, still we are human beings. Similarly, the soul may not be Kṛṣṇa conscious, or he may be Kṛṣṇa conscious—it doesn’t matter. But the soul is the soul.

Bob: Can you tell me more about this?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Soul—as pure spirit, all souls are equal. Even in an animal. Therefore it is said [Bg.5.18], *pañditāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*: those who are actually learned do not see the outward covering, either in a human being or in an animal.

 | Feeling | 
God Inside

Bob: If I may ask another question on this?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Bob: I have considered the soul somewhat as part of God. At times I think I feel God. I’m here, and you may say God is here. So if the soul is inside me, then should I be able to feel God inside me? Not all of God, I mean, but a...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Part of God.

Bob: But I don’t feel God in me, but God may be here, separate—separate from me. But should I be able to feel

God inside me, since my soul is part of God?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. God is inside also. God is everywhere. God is inside and outside also. This is to be known.

Bob: How do you feel God inside you?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Not in the beginning, but you have to know from the *śāstras* [scriptures], by the Vedic information. For example, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said, *īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati*: God is there in everyone's heart. [Bg. 18.61] *Paramāṇu-cayāntara-stham* [*Brahma-saṁhitā*, 5.35]: God is also within every atom. So this is the first information. And then, by the yogic process, you have to realize it.

Bob: Yogic process?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Bob: Is chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa such a yogic process?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, it is also a yogic process.

Bob: What kind of yogic process must I do to find out—to feel this information—to feel the soul inside?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, there are many different yogic processes, but for this age this process is very nice.

Bob: Chanting.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Bob: Through this I can feel not only God outside but God inside?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You'll understand everything of God—how God is inside, how God is outside, how God is working. Everything will be revealed. By this attitude of service, God will reveal Himself. You cannot understand God by your endeavor. Only if God reveals Himself. Just like—when the sun is out of your sight at night, you cannot see it by your torchlight, or any light. But in the morning you can see the sun automatically, without any torchlight. Similarly, you have to create a situation—you have to put yourself in a situation—in which God will be revealed. It is not that by some method you can ask God, "Please come. I will see You." No, God is not your order carrier.

Bob: You must please God for Him to reveal Himself. Is that correct?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

❀ | Finding | ❀ A Spiritual Master

Śyāmasundara [Śrīla Prabhupāda's secretary]: How do we know when we are pleasing God?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: When we see Him. Then you will understand. Just as, when you eat, you do not require to ask anyone whether you are feeling strength or your hunger is satisfied. If you eat, you understand that you are feeling energy. You don't need to inquire from anyone. Similarly, if you actually serve God, then you will understand, "God is dictating to me. God is there. I am seeing God."

A devotee: Or God's representative.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Devotee: It comes easier.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You have to go through God's representative.

yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādah

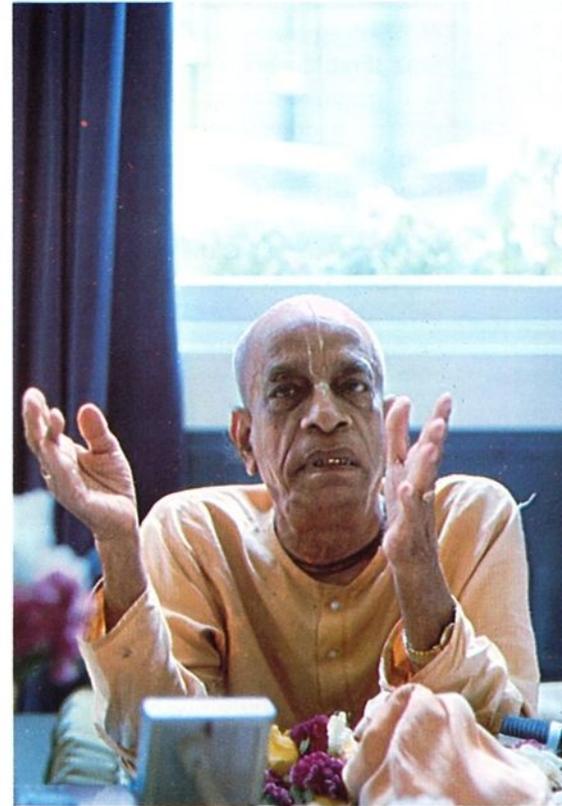
"By the mercy of the spiritual master one is benedicted by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa." [Śrī Gurv-aṣṭakam] If you please God's representative, then automatically God becomes pleased, and thus you can directly see Him.

An Indian gentleman: How to please God's representative?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You have to carry out his orders, that's all. God's representative is the *guru*. He asks you to do this, to do that—if you do that, that is pleasing.

yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi

"Without the grace of the spiritual master one cannot make any advancement." If you displease him, then you are nowhere. Therefore we worship the *guru*.



"You'll understand everything of God—how God is inside, how God is outside, how God is working. Everything will be revealed."

*sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair
uktas tathā bhāvayata eva sadbhiḥ
kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

["The spiritual master is to be honored as much as the Supreme Lord because of his being the most confidential servitor of the Lord. This is acknowledged by all revealed scriptures and is followed by all authorities. Therefore I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master, who is a bona fide representative of Lord Kṛṣṇa." (Śrī Gurv-aṣṭakam)] The *guru* should be accepted as God. That is the injunction of all *śāstra*.

Bob: The *guru* should be accepted as a representative of God?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, the *guru* is God's representative. The *guru* is the external manifestation of Kṛṣṇa.

Bob: But different from the incarnations of Kṛṣṇa that come?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Bob: In what way is the external manifestation of the *guru* different from the external manifestation of, let us say, Kṛṣṇa or Caitanya when They come to earth?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The *guru* is the representative of Kṛṣṇa. So there are symptoms of who is a *guru*. The general symptoms are described in the *Vedas*.

*tad vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum
evābhigacchet*

samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham
[*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1.2.12]

A *guru* must come in a disciplic succession, and he must have heard thoroughly about the *Vedas* from his spiritual master. Generally a *guru*'s symptom is that he is a perfect devotee, that's all. And he serves Kṛṣṇa by preaching His message.

Bob: Lord Caitanya—He was a different type of *guru* than you are?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, no. *Gurus* cannot be of different types. All *gurus* are of one type.

Bob: But He was—was He also an incarnation at the same time?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, He is Kṛṣṇa Himself, but He is representing the *guru*.

Bob: I . . . I see.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Bob: And then . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Because Kṛṣṇa was God, He demanded:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*

“Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me.” [Bg. 18.66] But people misunderstood Him. There-

fore Kṛṣṇa again came as a *guru* and taught people *how* to surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

Śyāmasundara: Doesn't He say in *Bhagavad-gītā*, “I am the spiritual master”?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, He is the original spiritual master because He was accepted as spiritual master by Arjuna. So what is the difficulty? *Śiṣyas te 'haṁ sādhi mām tvām prapannam*. Arjuna told the Lord, “I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me.” [Bg. 2.7] So unless He is a spiritual master, how does Arjuna become His disciple? He is the original *guru*. *Tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye*: “It is He only who first imparted Vedic knowledge unto the heart of Brahmā, the first created being.” [Bhāg. 1.1.1] Therefore He is the original *guru*.

Bob: Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. He is the original *guru*. Then His disciple Brahmā is a *guru*, then his disciple Nārada is a *guru*, then his disciple Vyāsa is a *guru*—in this way there is a *guru-paramparā* [disciplic succession of *gurus*]. *Evaṁ paramparā-prāptam*. [Bg. 4.2] The transcendental knowledge is received through the disciplic succession.

Receiving Knowledge From Kṛṣṇa

Bob: So a *guru* receives his knowledge through the disciplic succession, not directly from Kṛṣṇa? Do you receive some knowledge directly from Kṛṣṇa?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Kṛṣṇa's direct instruction is there: *Bhagavad-gītā*!

Bob: I see, but . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But you have to learn it through the disciplic succession, otherwise you will misunderstand it.

Bob: But presently you do not receive

information directly from Kṛṣṇa? It comes through the disciplic succession from the books?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: There is no difference. Suppose I say that this is a pencil. If you say to him, “This is a pencil,” and if he says to another man, “This is a pencil,” then what is the difference between his instruction and my instruction?

Bob: Kṛṣṇa's mercy allows you to know this now?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You can take Kṛṣṇa's mercy also, provided it is delivered as it is. Just as we are teaching *Bhagavad-gītā*. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*

“Just give up all other forms of religion and simply surrender unto Me.” [Bg. 18.66] Now we are saying that you should give up everything and surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, there is no difference between Kṛṣṇa's instruction and our instruction. There is no deviation. So if you receive knowledge in that perfect way, that is as good as receiving instruction directly from Kṛṣṇa. But we don't change anything. **Bob:** When I pray reverently, faithfully, does Kṛṣṇa hear me?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Bob: From me to Him?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, because He is within your heart He is always hearing you—whether you are praying or not praying. When you are doing some nonsense, He is also hearing you. And when you pray, that is very good—welcome.

Bob: To Kṛṣṇa's ear, is praying louder than nonsense?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. He is all-perfect. He can hear everything. Even if you don't speak, even if you simply think, “I shall do it,” then He hears you. *sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi sanniviṣṭaḥ*: Kṛṣṇa is seated in everyone's heart. [Bg. 15.15]

Bob: But one should pray—is that so?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is his business—praying.

Bob: Whose business?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Every living entity's. That is the only business. *Eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān* [*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.2.13]. That is the statement of the *Vedas*.

Bob: What does that mean?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: He supplies everything to everyone. He is supplying food to everyone. So He is the Father. So why should you not pray, "Father, give me this"? Just as in the Christian Bible there is, "Father, give us our daily bread." That is good—they are accepting the Supreme Father. But grown-up children should not ask from the father; rather, they should be prepared to serve the father. That is *bhakti* [devotion].

Bob: My questions you solve so nicely.

[Everyone laughs with affection.]

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Thank you very much.

Bob: So, should I ask you another question now?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. Yes!

Sex and Liberation

Bob: I've asked devotees about how they feel towards sex in their relations, and I see the way they feel, but I can't see myself acting the same way. See, I'll be getting married at the end of this summer.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Hmm?

Bob: I'll be getting married at the end of this summer, in September or August when I return to America. And the devotees say that the householders only have sex to conceive a child, and I cannot picture myself at all in such a position, and—um—what kind of sex life can one lead, living in the material world?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The Vedic principle is that one should avoid sex life altogether. The whole Vedic principle is to get liberation from material bondage. There are different attach-

ments for material enjoyment, of which sex life is the topmost enjoyment. The *Bhāgavatam* says that this material world. . .

puṁsaḥ striyā mithunābhāvam etam
[*Bhāg.* 5.5.8]

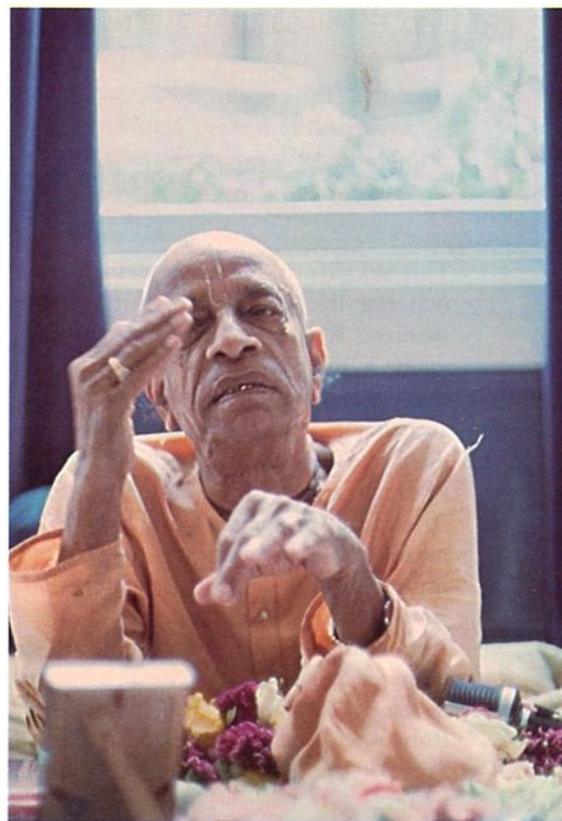
Man is attached to women, and woman is attached to man. Not only in human society—in animal society also. That attachment is the basic principle of material life. So, a woman is hankering or seeking after the association of a man, and a man is hankering or seeking for the association of a woman. All the fiction novels, dramas, cinema and even ordinary advertisements that you see simply depict the attachment between man and woman. Even in the tailor's shop you will find in the window some woman and some man.

pravṛttir eṣāṁ bhūtānām nivṛttis tu mahāphalām [*Manu-saṁhitā*]

So this attachment is already there.

Bob: Attachment between man and woman?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Man and woman. So if you want to get liberation from this material world, then that attachment should be reduced to nil. Otherwise, simply further attachment—you will have to take rebirth, either as a human being or as a demigod or as an animal, as a serpent, as a bird, as a beast. You will have to take birth. So, this basic principle of increasing attachment is not our business, although it is the general tendency. *Gṛha*, *kṣetra*, *suta* [home, land, sons]. But if one can reduce and stop it, that is first class. Therefore our Vedic system is to first of all train a boy as a *brahmacārī*—no sex life. The Vedic principle is to reduce attachment, not to increase it. Therefore the whole system is called *varṇāśrama-dharma*.



"The whole Vedic principle is to get liberation from material bondage."

The Indian system calls for *varṇa* and *āśrama*—four social orders and four spiritual orders. *Brahmacarya* [celibate student life], *gṛhastha* [married life], *vānaprastha* [retired life] and *sannyāsa* [renounced life]—these are the spiritual orders. And the social orders include *brāhmaṇas* [intellectuals], *kṣatriyas* [administrators], *vaiśyas* [merchants and farmers] and *śūdras* [ordinary workers]. So under this system, the regulative principles are so nice that even if one has the tendency to enjoy material life, he is so nicely molded that at last he achieves liberation and goes back home, back to Godhead. This is the process. So sex life is not required, but because we are attached to it, therefore there are some regulative principles under which it is maintained.



The Bodily Conception of Life



Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that—

*puṁsaḥ striyā mithunībhāvam etaṁ
tayor mitho hṛdaya-granthim āhuḥ
ato grha-kṣetra-sutāpta-vittair
janasya moho 'yam ahaṁ mameti*
[Bhāg. 5.5.8]

This sex life is the basic principle of material life—attachment for man or woman. And when they are united, when a man and woman are united, that attachment becomes increased, and that increased attachment will induce one to accumulate *grha* (a home), *kṣetra* (land), *suta* (children), *āpta* (friendship or society) and *vitta*. *Vitta* means money. In this way—*grha-kṣetra-sutāpta-vittair*—he becomes entangled. *Janasya moho 'yam*: this is the illusion. And by this illusion he thinks, *ahaṁ mameti*: “I am this body, and anything in relationship with this body is mine.”

Bob: What is that again?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This attachment increases. The material attachment involves thinking, “I am this body, and because I have this body in a particular place, that is my country.” And that is going on: “I am American, I am Indian, I am German, I am this, I am that—this body. This is my country. I shall sacrifice everything for my country and society.” So in this way, the illusion increases. And under this illusion, when he dies he gets another body. That may be a superior body or inferior body, according to his *karma*. So if he gets a superior body, then that is also an entanglement, even if he goes to the heavenly planets. But if he becomes a cat or dog, then his life is lost. Or a tree—there is every chance of it. So this science is not known in the world—how the soul is transmigrating from one body to another, and how he is being entrapped in different types of bodies. This science is unknown. Therefore when Arjuna was speaking—“If I kill my brother, if I kill my grandfather on the other side. . . .”—he was simply thinking on the basis of the bodily concept of life. But when his problems could not be solved, he surrendered to

Kṛṣṇa and accepted Him as spiritual master. And when Kṛṣṇa became his spiritual master, He chastised Arjuna in the beginning:

*aśocyān anvaśocas tvam
pajñā-vādāṁś ca bhāṣase
gatāsūn agatāsūṁś ca
nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ*
(Bg. 2.11)

“You are talking like a learned man, but you are fool number one because you are talking about the bodily concept of life.” So this sex life increases the bodily concept of life. Therefore, the whole process is to reduce it to nil. **Bob:** To reduce it over the stages of your life?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Reduce it. Just as a boy is trained up as a student up to twenty-five years, restricting sex life. *Brahmacārī*. So, some of the boys remain *naiṣṭhika-brahmacārī* [celibate for life]. Because they are given education and they become fully conversant with spiritual knowledge, they don't want to marry. But one who has no such restraint is allowed to marry. That is also restricted—he cannot have sex life without being married. Therefore in human society there is marriage, not in animal society.



Spiritual Culture in a Degraded Society



Śrīla Prabhupāda: But people are gradually descending from human society to animal society. They are forgetting marriage. That is also predicted in the *śāstras*. *Dam-patyē 'bhirucir hetuḥ*: In the Kali-yuga [the present age of quarrel], eventually there will be no marriage performances; the boy and the girl will simply agree to live together, and their relationship will exist on sexual power. If the man or the woman is deficient in sex life, then there is divorce. So, for this philosophy there are many Western philosophers like Freud and others who have written so many books. But according to Vedic culture, we are interested in sex only for begetting children, that's all. Not to study the psychology of sex life. There is already natural psychology for that. Even if one does not read any philosophy, he is sexually inclined. Nobody is

taught it in the schools and colleges. Everyone already knows how to do it. [He laughs.] That is the general tendency. But education should be given to stop it. That is real education.

[There is a long pause, filled with the sound of bicycle horns, children playing, and throngs of people calling to one another.]

Bob: Presently, in America, that's a radical concept.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Well, in America there are so many things that require reformation, and this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will bring that. I went to your country and saw that the boys and girls were living like friends, so I said to my students, “You cannot live together as friends; you must get yourselves married.”

Bob: Many people see that even marriage is not sacred, so they find no desire to marry. Because people get married, and if things are not proper, they get a divorce so very easily. . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, that also.

Bob: . . . that some people feel that to get married is not meaningful.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, their idea is that marriage is for legalized prostitution. They think like that, but that is not marriage. Even that Christian paper—what is that? *Watch*—?

Śyāmasundara: *Watchtower*?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Watchtower*. It has criticized that one priest has allowed a marriage between two men—homosexuality. So these things are all going on. They take it purely for prostitution, that's all. So therefore people are thinking, “What is the use of keeping a regular prostitute at such heavy expenditure? Better not to have this.”

Śyāmasundara: You use that example of the cow and the market.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes—when the milk is available in the marketplace, what is the use of keeping a cow? [Everyone laughs.] It is a very abominable condition in the Western countries—I have seen it. Here also in India, gradually it is coming. Therefore we have started this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to educate people in the essential principles of spiritual life. It is not a sectarian religious movement. It is an essential cultural movement for everyone's benefit.

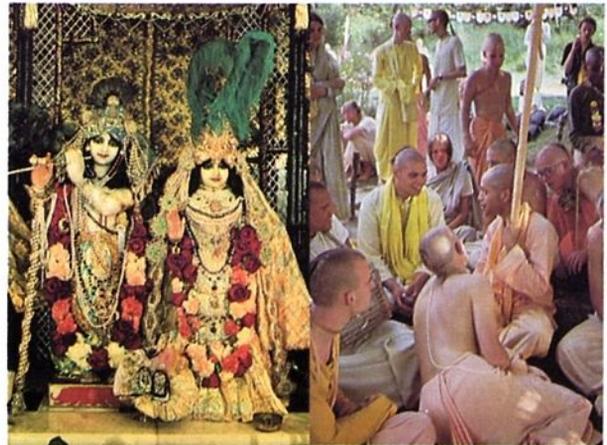




THE NEXT FESTIVAL, Janmāṣṭamī, marks the Appearance Day of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is what we might naturally call His “birthday,” except that Kṛṣṇa does not take birth like an ordinary human being. His so-called birth is a transcendental pastime He performs through His mystic potency. In the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* it is said, “My Lord Kṛṣṇa, please let us know the date when Your mother, Devakī-devī, gave birth to You. If You kindly inform us about this, we shall observe a great celebration on this date. We are souls one hundred percent surrendered unto Your lotus feet, and we wish only to please You with our ceremonies.” Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees, therefore, hold great celebrations on the Appearance Day of Lord Kṛṣṇa, especially in Vṛndāvana, India, where the Lord appeared on earth, and in New Vṛndāvana, a Kṛṣṇa conscious community in the hills of West Virginia that is a transcendental replica of Kṛṣṇa’s original abode. This year, Janmāṣṭamī occurs on the 11th of August.

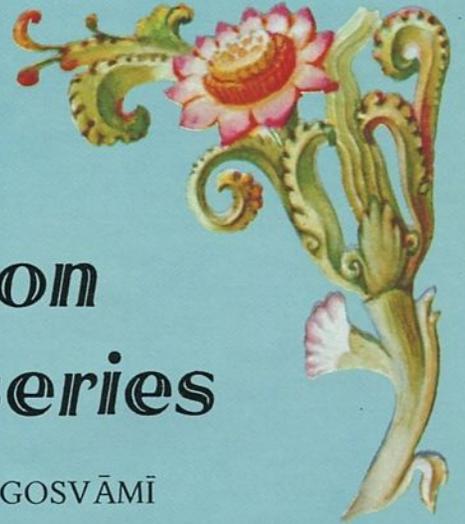
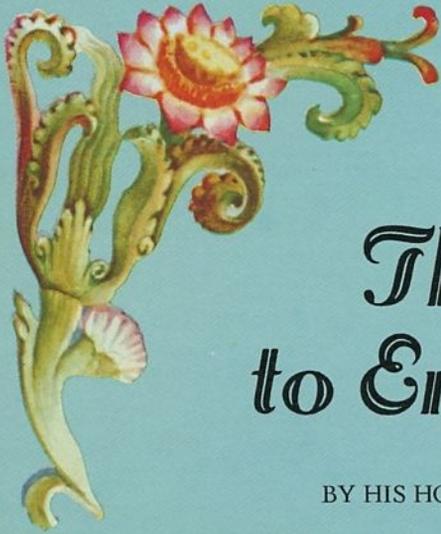
THE NEXT FESTIVAL, Vyāsa-pūjā, celebrates the Appearance Day of the spiritual master. According to all the revealed Vedic scriptures, one should honor the spiritual master as much as one honors the Supreme Lord because he is a confidential representative of the Lord. The Appearance Day of our spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, is the day after Janmāṣṭamī. Thus the devotees observe Janmāṣṭamī, as Vedic scriptures enjoin, by fasting all day and hearing and chanting Lord Kṛṣṇa’s glories; then on the next day, Vyāsa-pūjā, the devotees glorify the spiritual master by offering prayers, flowers and ceremonies in his honor, and then an opulent feast. Since the service of the spiritual master is the life and soul of a sincere disciple, all the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement observe Vyāsa-pūjā with great devotion. In New Vṛndāvana, almost one thousand people gather annually for celebrations of Janmāṣṭamī and Vyāsa-pūjā that extend for an entire week. The many advanced devotees who attend give special discourses about *bhakti-yoga*, and, except on Janmāṣṭamī, there is opulent feasting daily throughout the week of the festival.

FINALLY, Rādhāṣṭamī, the Appearance Day of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, takes place after the Appearance Day of Lord Kṛṣṇa, on September 23. Rādhārāṇī is Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure



potency, and She appears as His eternal consort. She is the symbol of devotional service in the highest degree. Because Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, it is very difficult to approach Him. But devotees take advantage of His compassionate nature, represented by Rādhārāṇī, by always praying to Rādhārāṇī for Kṛṣṇa’s compassion. Again, devotees celebrate this festival by chanting and feasting in great ecstasy.





The Education to End All Miseries

BY HIS HOLINESS SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSVĀMĪ

EVERYONE WILL AGREE that a human being needs some kind of education. Some teachers stress preparing oneself for an occupation, while others assert that the quest for knowledge itself sufficiently justifies an education. But unless one's vocational education or search for knowledge can reveal to him his own identity, the purpose of life, his relationship with God and the universe, and the path of freedom from material miseries, whatever else he learns is but a waste of time.

The well-known incident of the unduly proud scholar and the boatman illustrates this point. A scholar once engaged a ferryboat man to row him across a river. Observing that his boatman was quite uneducated, the scholar began to show off his own learning and simultaneously criticize the boatman.

"My good boatman," the scholar said, "just see how the first stars are appearing in the sky. We may observe the juxtapositions of planets and stars to a degree that is marvelous. Tell me, do you know the science of astronomy?"

"No sir," the boatman replied, adding that he knew little beyond rowing.

"You don't know astronomy?" the scholar said. "Poor fellow! Then your

life is twenty-five percent wasted."

Some time passed, and the scholar began commenting upon the various land formations around them, boasting that he was also a master of geology. "Do you know the science of geology?" he asked. When the boatman said he did not, the scholar declared, "Oh, then fifty percent of your life is wasted." Then the scholar next launched into a dissertation on psychology, and when the boatman admitted he knew nothing about it, the scholar announced, "Indeed, seventy-five percent of your life is wasted!"

Suddenly black clouds began pouring rain, and a squall rocked the little ferryboat. Within minutes the storm became so serious that waves broke over the ferry's sides, and the ferryman, seeing they would have to abandon the boat, turned to the scholar and said, "Sir, I'm afraid this boat is lost. We'll have to swim for it. Do you know the art of swimming?"

But the scholar replied, "I don't know how to swim."

"Oh, sir," said the boatman, "then one hundred percent of your life is wasted!" He then dove into the river and began swimming, while the educated scholar drowned.

Thus although a man may pretend to be educated, his education is useless

if he does not learn how to save himself from the miseries of life and ultimately from death itself. The Vedic literature refers to a human being who does not use his human birth to solve life's perplexities as a *krpaṇa*, or miser. The *Garga Upaniṣad* states: "He is a miserly man who does not solve the problems of life and who thus quits this world like the cats and dogs, without understanding the science of self-realization." The real wealth of human life lies in becoming enlightened and solving the problems of life. Education that misses or ignores this must be considered subhuman.

Facing the Problems

What, then, are the problems of existence? First, there are the fourfold miseries birth, death, disease and old age. There are miseries caused by other living entities, such as biting bugs and human enemies; there are miseries caused by the very nature of our bodies, such as mental anxiety, indigestion and broken limbs; and there are miseries inflicted on us by natural calamities beyond human control, such as earthquakes, droughts and floods. For our education to be fruitful, it should help us find a solution to these problems.

One might object to our assumption that human life should yield freedom from miseries. Some people think misery the natural human condition. They say we are meant to suffer. Nevertheless, living entities of all species want to be happy and avoid suffering; no one takes suffering naturally. Misery may seem inevitable, yet philosophers, humanitarians and politicians ever seek its remedies. Not only does a human being try to avoid suffering; even an ant resists being killed. Ask anyone if he is eager to deteriorate with old age. To answer honestly, one would have to say no. What about disease or death? Would anyone like to die right now? "No thanks." Sometimes people try to block out suffering with sensual pleasure. For example, one might temporarily forget one's anxieties through drugs or liquor. But after the high wears off, the anxieties return.

One's claim to be happy and content is a deception if one has not conquered the miseries of birth, death, old age and disease. For example, say we were to visit a friend in the hospital and find that his leg was in traction, he was unable to pass urine unless a nurse brought a bedpan, he had to receive shots regularly, and he could not eat solid food. If we asked our friend how he was feeling and he replied, "I'm all right," we might ask, "What is that 'I'm all right'?" With so many miseries, how could he consider himself all right?

Such illusions of well-being and satisfaction are common among lower animals. Cattle and chickens, for instance, eat their grass and grains in contentment, although their master feeds them simply to kill them. A human being, however, won't stand for being miserable. He protests, or he seeks a solution.

Hedonists, of course, say that the only solution is to go on enjoying the pleasures of the senses and not dwell on miseries, but unfortunately life's miseries curb their pleasure at every step. One might have palatable food to eat, but if someone were to mix sand into it, no one would be able to enjoy it, for although its taste would still be there, the sand would grit against one's teeth and nullify the enjoyment. The

pains of material life similarly nullify all the enjoyments of the material world. But if despite all sufferings, one is determined to enjoy material life—to eat sweet food mixed with sand—still one cannot. No one is allowed to stay here. We may want to make our home here and enjoy, but death kicks us out. There are no exceptions. Everyone is forced to leave.

Therefore, with the facilities of human life, one should seek an ultimate solution to misery. Still one might object that to stop suffering is impossible. The painter Van Gogh once wrote in a letter, "Misery is eternal." But the solution is at hand, as we shall describe herein, if only one approaches the problem seriously and receives the proper education.

The Giants Who Fail Us

We should think that if we scrutinized the works of great writers, scientists and artists, they would help us conquer these miseries. But as we consult our great thinkers, we find they do not have the solution. Socrates, Shakespeare, Freud or the latest Nobel Prize winning scientists may be giants in their fields, but reading their works cannot free one from death or old age. Scientists, of course, are well-known for what they supposedly will do in the future. Those called gerontologists even profess to be on the verge of discovering how to stop aging and death. But according to a recent report in *Newsweek*, "they have not reached anything even resembling an elixir of youth." In any case, aside from hopes that some heroic scientist may rescue us from our problems, the miseries of birth, death, old age and disease have no solution. No one wants them, but no one is free from them.

Even humanity's greatest scientists and philosophers cannot solve the problems of life because everyone born into the material world is conditioned by four basic imperfections. First, we are prone to make mistakes—"to err is human." In India, for instance, Mahatma Gandhi was supposed to have been a very great person, but he too committed mistakes. Five minutes be-

fore he came to the meeting at which he was killed, his confidential associates warned him not to go, but nevertheless he persisted. Another imperfection is that we fall into illusion, mistaking one thing for another. We are also imperfect in that we are prone to cheat. For example, I must admit that I sometimes make mistakes and sometimes fall into illusion. But if nevertheless I write a book claiming to be the truth, is that not cheating? How can one subject to so many imperfections claim to be a teacher? And another imperfection is that we have limited senses. With our limited ears we can hear only a certain range of sounds, and with our eyes we observe the huge sun in the sky to be no bigger than a half dollar. These conditions of material nature, imposed upon one and all, limit man in his knowledge.

The Perfect Intelligence

But perfect knowledge to free us from suffering is available—from the perfect source. Unlike knowledge spoken by imperfect, conditioned living entities, that spoken by God is perfect, free of defect. There is a supremely intelligent being, and His intentions toward mankind are loving. As the supreme creator, He can give the knowledge for supreme freedom from misery.

Atheists argue that there is no Supreme God, but they cannot explain how the huge cosmic manifestation of universes, planets and living beings has come about. The pious accept that God is the creator, but atheists speculate that everything has arisen automatically through spontaneous combustion, chance chemical and sexual combinations, blind evolution, and so on. These explanations identify only intermediate causes; none of them disproves the existence of a Supreme Lord who is the cause of all causes.

The universe displays wonderful management, engineering and artistry, and behind all these huge affairs of nature is a gigantic brain or intelligence. If a child sees a spacecraft orbiting in the sky, he may think it is doing so by chance, without control, but a ma-

ture person knows that teams of intelligent scientists and technicians are controlling its flight. Why, then, should we assume, like ignorant children, that these huge spacecraft called planets are flying in exact, grand orbits through space automatically, with no intelligence behind them? Our scientists may observe the workings of the universe and describe how the law of gravity holds the planets in orbit, but simply to observe the phenomenon and label it "the law of gravity" does not really explain or in any way duplicate the inconceivable mystic potency that enables the planets to float and sail through space. Indeed, to observe laws in the universe is to admit that there must be a lawmaker behind them. Thus begins a conviction in the existence of a supreme intelligence, a supreme controller—God—who alone can give man the ultimate knowledge of how to become free from suffering.

The transcendental nature of God is revealed in scripture, which is His spoken word. The original scripture is called the *Veda* (*veda* means "knowledge"). For the benefit of all living beings, God revealed information on how to become free from the suffering of material life, and a disciplic succession of spiritual masters has conveyed it to us. Such knowledge is called *apauruṣeya*, which means that it originates not from imperfect men within this world, but, without defect, from God. In Vedic literature the supreme controller, the intelligent being from whom everything emanates, is called Kṛṣṇa, which means "All-attractive." The Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, has given authoritative literature to men in different lands, and His words appear to differ according to the times and places they were delivered and the understanding of the people in those places; thus we have the Bible, Koran and *Bhagavad-gītā*. Yet the teaching of the Supreme is one, for its conclusion is always the same: obedience to God will end all suffering.

Education Beyond the Body

To take the first step in transcendental knowledge, one should under-

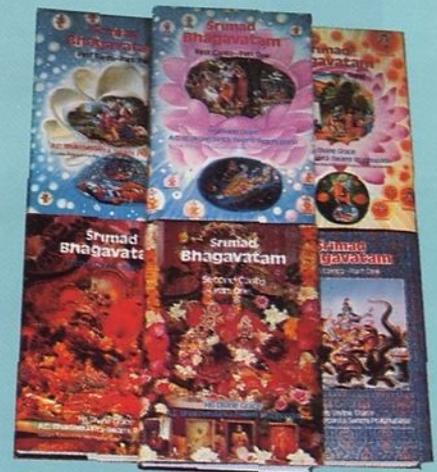
stand that he is not his body but a spiritual soul. Nevertheless, most big scholars, philosophers and political leaders have not taken even this first step. They have not mastered even the ABC's of real education. Rather, thinking they are their bodies, they identify themselves with their families, races, nations and so on. A person in bodily consciousness thinks, "I am John Thompson," "I am a white man," "I am an American," "I am black," "I am Christian," "I am Communist," "I am human," and so on. Yet within a few years the demise of the body vanquishes all such designations.

According to Vedic literature, the real self, as an eternal soul who exists in a loving relation to God, the complete whole, does not die when the body dies, nor does he grow old when the body grows old. He cannot be cut; nor can he be killed. He is joyful always. If one understands this, he can disentangle himself from his long history of suffering. But if one does not undertake this study, whatever else he does in his bodily identity is defeated at the time of death.

Human education, then, must not merely instruct us how to prepare for a job or how to speculate upon the imperfect views of great thinkers. Rather, it must enable us to solve the problems of life. A human being should be dissatisfied as long as he cannot extricate himself from the prison called the material world, where everyone is subject to the strict punishments of old age, death and disease. To be gainfully employed within the prison, to try to give up all hope of ever getting out of prison and simply to sit down to read and write books for amusement is not the real nature of a freedom-loving being. Each of us, by our original nature, is meant to be free of the sufferings material nature imposes upon us.

Although our confinement in the material world is under the jurisdiction of the supreme controller, Kṛṣṇa, He is not to blame for our suffering. We ourselves have brought it about by our ignorance. Lacking education in what is what, thinking we belong to the material world, we have forgotten our spiritual nature. But because Kṛṣṇa

has not forgotten us—even though we have absorbed ourselves in temporary activities and thus forgotten Him—He sends His personal representative, the spiritual master, to offer us the path by which to return home, back to Godhead, to teach us by precept and example the life of God consciousness, a life of eternity, bliss and knowledge.



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

IS THE LITERARY
INCARNATION OF GOD

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

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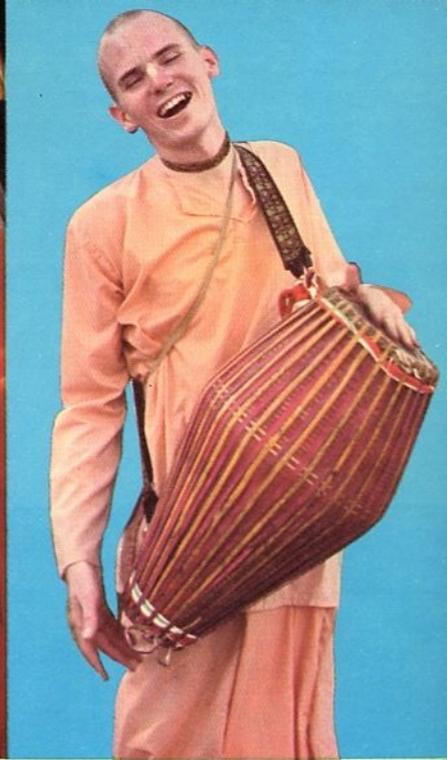
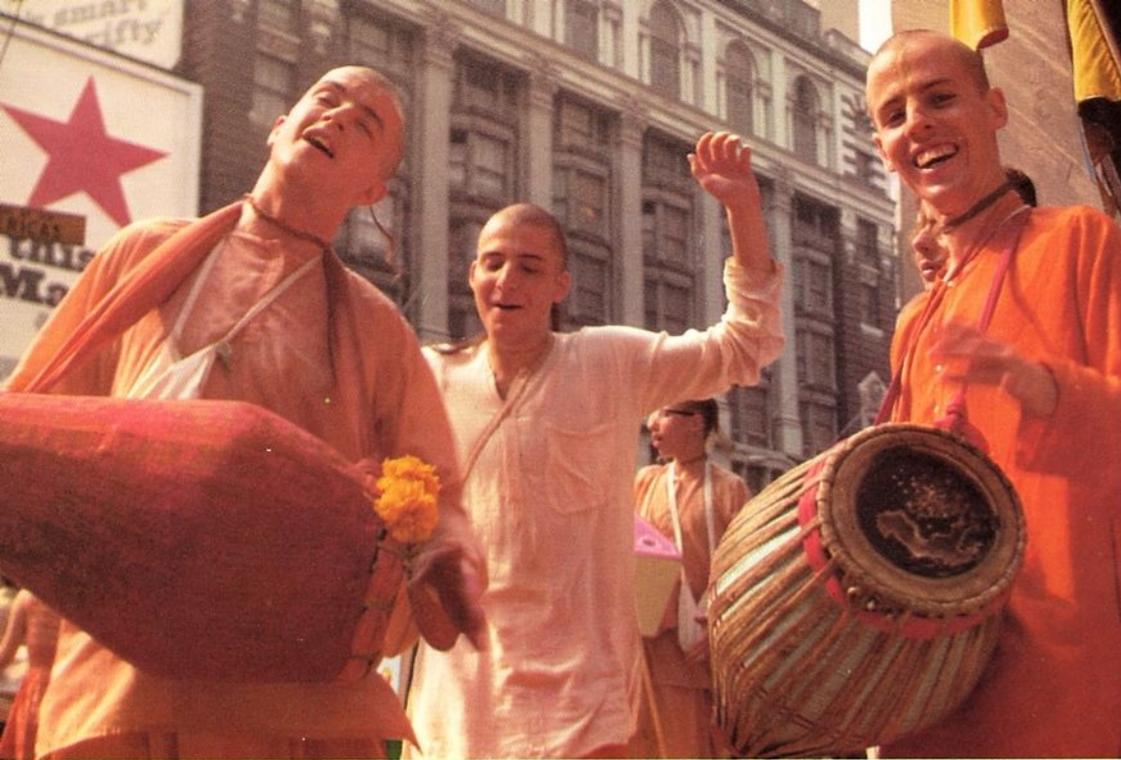
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Illustration: Yadurāṅī devī dāśī



LORD ŚRĪ KRṢṂA, enjoying His pastimes as a cowherd boy, returns home from the pasturing grounds at the end of the day. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead; He is not impersonal. In His Vṛndāvana pastimes especially, He is always surrounded by the cowherd boys, the cowherd girls, His mother and all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana.



Photos by Bhārgava dāsa

SANĪKĪRTANA THE FOREMOST BENEDICTION

BY GOPĪJANA-VALLABHA DĀSA

OF THE MANY transcendental activities of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, foremost is the *saṅkīrtana* program. *Saṅkīrtana* is the congregational chanting of the name, fame and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As part of *saṅkīrtana*, devotees chant and dance in the streets, distribute books about Kṛṣṇa and distribute *prasāda* (food offered to Kṛṣṇa)—all to glorify Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord.

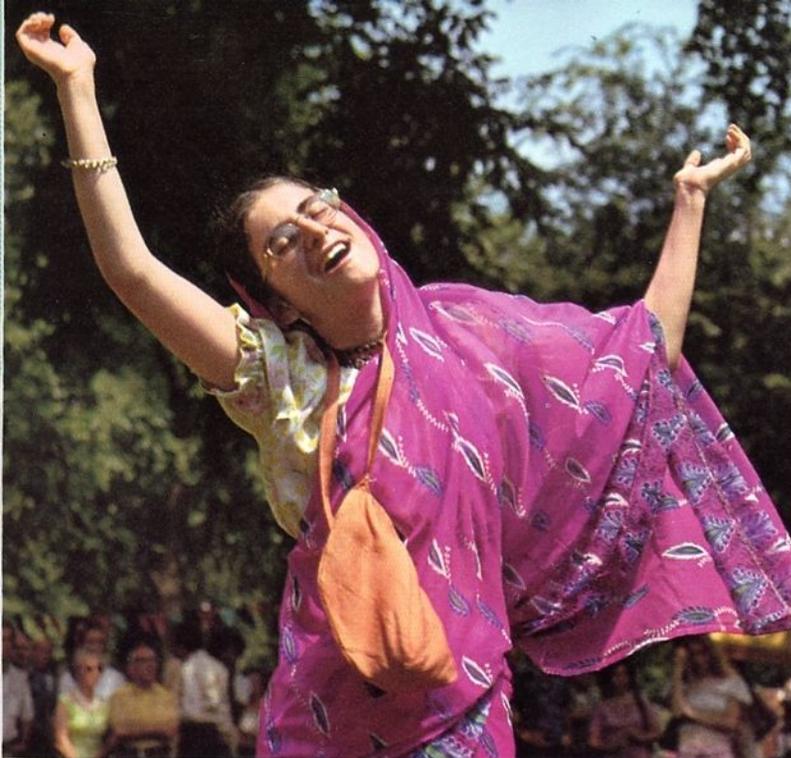
Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the father of *saṅkīrtana*, is actually Kṛṣṇa Himself, but in the disguise of a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. He appeared five hundred years ago to revive the original pure God consciousness of all living entities. Only by reviving this consciousness within oneself can one

Gopījana-vallabha dāsa earned his BA in economics and philosophy from Cornell University in 1969 and shortly thereafter joined the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. He is the President of ISKCON's New York City center, which sponsors an especially enthusiastic *saṅkīrtana* program.

achieve steady, unwavering peace and happiness. Understanding this to be the real need of everyone, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is not only omniscient but omnipresent, being seated within the heart of every living entity, appeared as Lord Caitanya.

In spreading the *saṅkīrtana* movement, Lord Caitanya set the perfect example for anyone who aspires to become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa and thus attain an eternal life of bliss and knowledge. Caitanya Mahāprabhu was not concerned with acquiring self-esteem, many followers, or a great reputation, but wherever He went He always chanted the holy name of Kṛṣṇa: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Even though He is in fact the Supreme Person, He presented Himself with a meek and humble attitude. Thus He gained the respect of everyone He met and convinced everyone to join Him in *saṅkīrtana*.

The present-day International Society for Krishna Consciousness is working to fulfill Lord Caitanya's prophecy that in this Kali-yuga (the Age of Quarrel) the holy name of Kṛṣṇa will be heard in every city, village and town. It is to execute such an ambitious mission that His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda left his homeland, India, at the advanced age of seventy and sailed to the United States to found the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Following in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya, Śrīla Prabhupāda performed *saṅkīrtana*, alone but with undeterred spirit, for over a year, until a few young men, attracted by his sincere presentation, became his disciples. In the seven years since then, more than seventy Kṛṣṇa consciousness temples have sprung up all over the globe, with thousands of devotees taking up Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* banner.



One may ask how so much interest and activity could be generated in so short a time. It is the plan of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, without whose sanction not even a blade of grass can move. Kṛṣṇa explains in *Bhāgavad-gītā*:

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya
glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmasya
tadātmānam śrjāmy aham*

“Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion—at that time I descend Myself.” (Bg. 4.7)

Lord Kṛṣṇa comes in the form of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to distribute the real process of self-realization for this age—*saṅkīrtana*, the congregational chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s holy names. Many forms of self-realization and *yoga* are popular today, but to achieve the quickest and most perfect result, one should take direction from Kṛṣṇa Himself, the Supreme Lord. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the cream of all the Vedic literatures, Vyāsadeva, who is the literary incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, predicts the appearance of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He declares:

*kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam
sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārśadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair
yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ*

“In this Age of Kali, people who are endowed with sufficient intelligence will worship the golden incarnation of the Lord [Caitanya Mahāprabhu], who is accompanied by His associates, by performing *saṅkīrtana*. (Bhāg. 11.5.32)

Anyone desiring freedom from the anxiety and disappointment of material life can seriously take up the chant-

ing of Hare Kṛṣṇa and thus realize the goal of life. The human form of life is not meant simply for eating, sleeping, mating and defending like animals; it is meant for self-realization. The *Vedānta-sūtra* states, *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*: human life is meant for understanding the Absolute Truth.

And what is that Absolute Truth? Kṛṣṇa states in *Bhāgavad-gītā*:

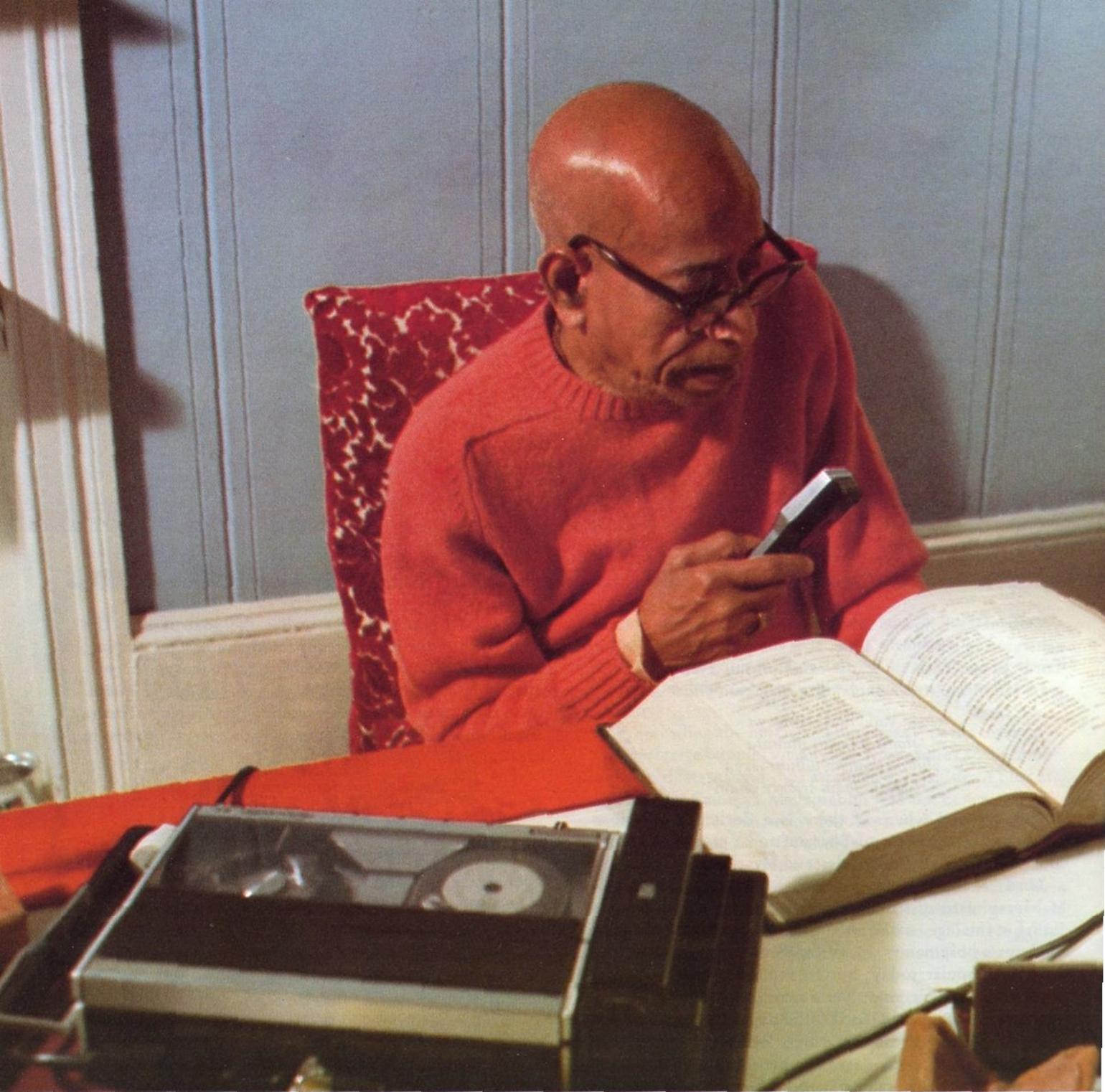
*mattaḥ paratarāṁ nānyat
kiñcid asti dhanāñjaya
mayi sarvaṁ idaṁ protaṁ
sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva*

“O conqueror of wealth [Arjuna], there is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread.” (Bg. 7.7)

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

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

Thus by taking perfect information from the perfect source, Kṛṣṇa, one achieves the perfect result—devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. Chanting and hearing are the recommended means of achieving devotional service. Since Kṛṣṇa is all-powerful, He is present as His name, qualities, form, pastimes and paraphernalia. Therefore simply by chanting and hearing Kṛṣṇa’s name, one associates with Kṛṣṇa directly. Thus one is liberated from the influence of the material energy and comes under the influence of Kṛṣṇa’s spiritual potency. This is the perfection of life.



Publishing in the Service of the Lord

by Viśākhā-devī dāsī

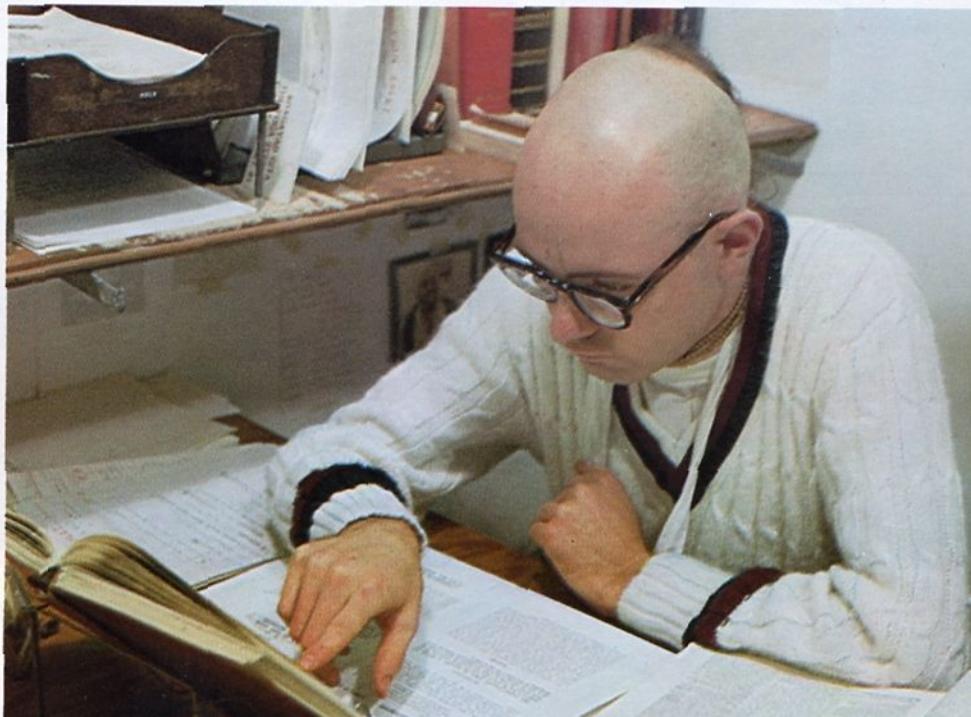
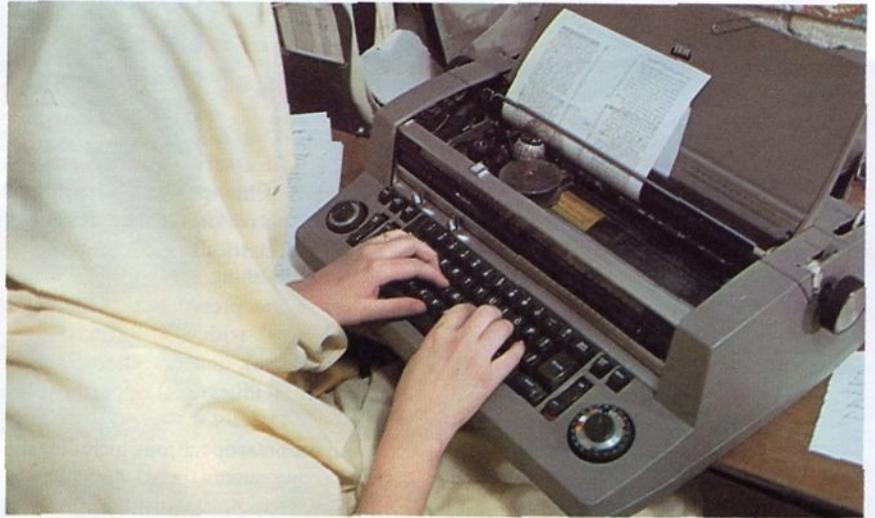
Photos by Viśākhā-devī dāsī and Bhārgava dāsa

“JUST AS ONE cannot separate the body from the soul while in the conditioned state, so the disciple cannot separate the spiritual master’s order from his very life.”—Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (a great spiritual master in the Kṛṣṇa conscious line of disciplic succession).

Many years ago, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja instructed His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, his disciple, to spread the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the

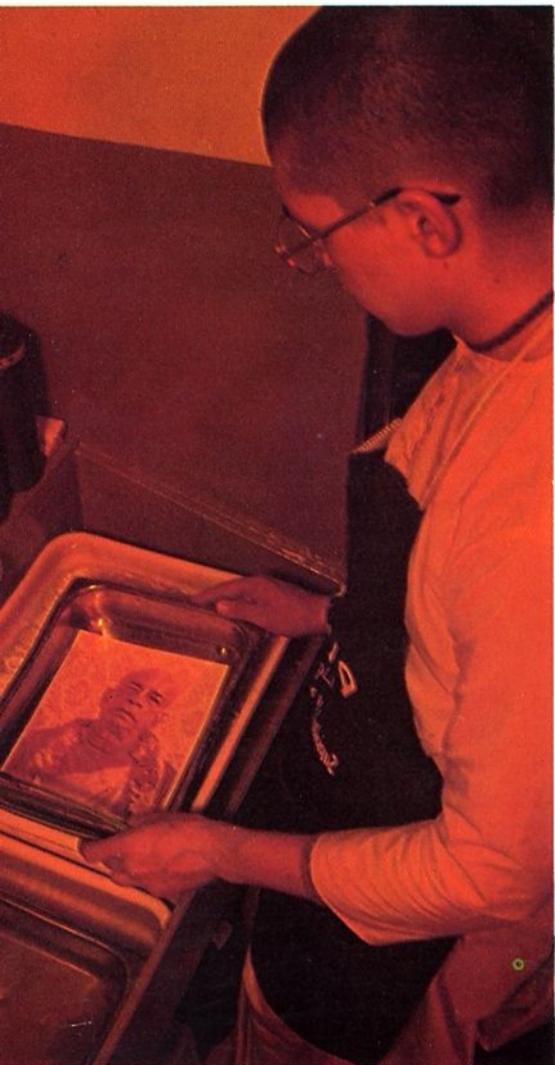
English-speaking people of the world. Śrīla Prabhupāda has never forgotten his spiritual master’s request; indeed, he has made it the very center of his life, and, assisted by his disciples, he has now organized an ambitious publishing and book distribution program that every year sees hundreds of thousands of copies of Kṛṣṇa conscious books distributed around the world.

Daily, in the early morning hours, Śrīla Prabhupāda translates and explains original Sanskrit and Bengali scriptures in the English



language on a dictaphone (above). The tapes are sent to ISKCON Press in New York, where they are typed out (above right), composed (middle right), and edited (below right) by Śrīla Prabhupāda's students. (con't.)

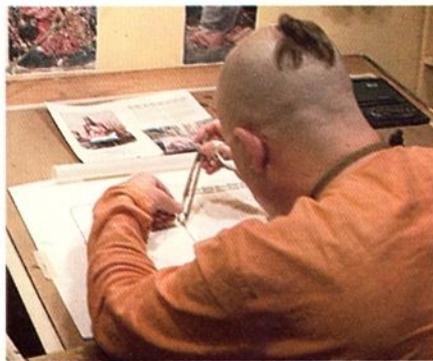
Viśākhā-devī dāśī, a graduate of Rochester Institute of Technology, is a professional photographer and an expert on photomicrography, in which small objects are reproduced as magnified images. She first joined ISKCON while doing freelance work in India. She and her husband, also a professional photographer, are currently traveling around the world making documentary films about the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.



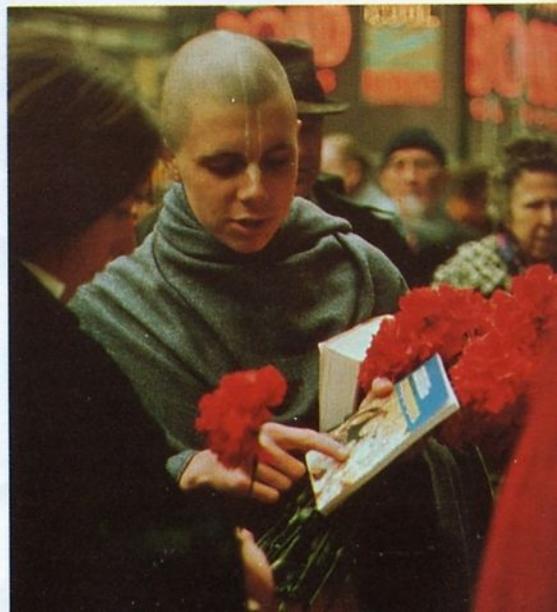
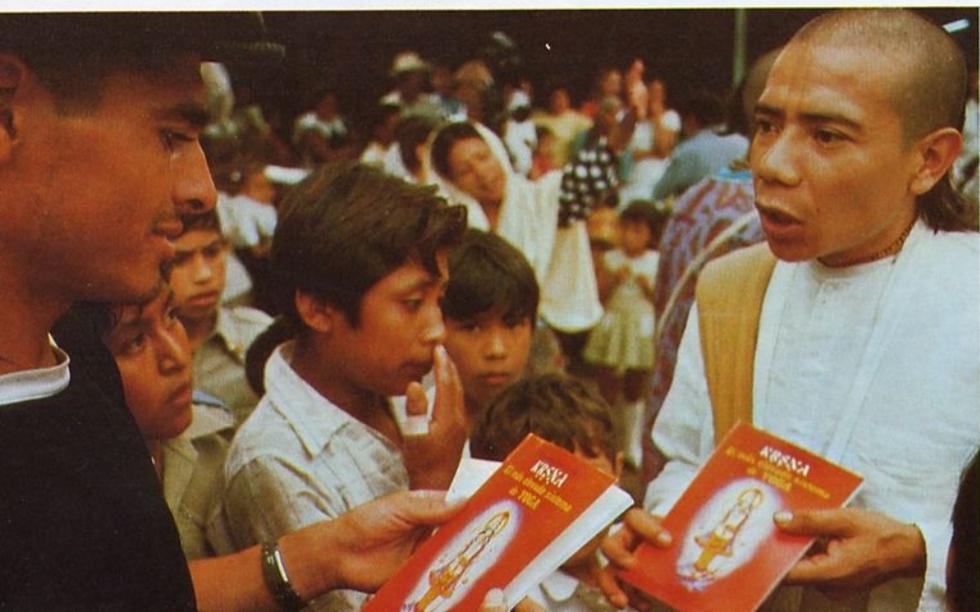
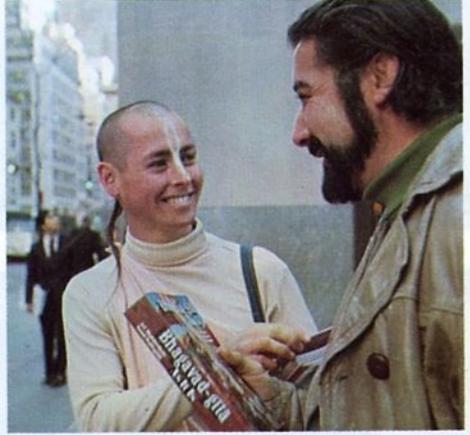
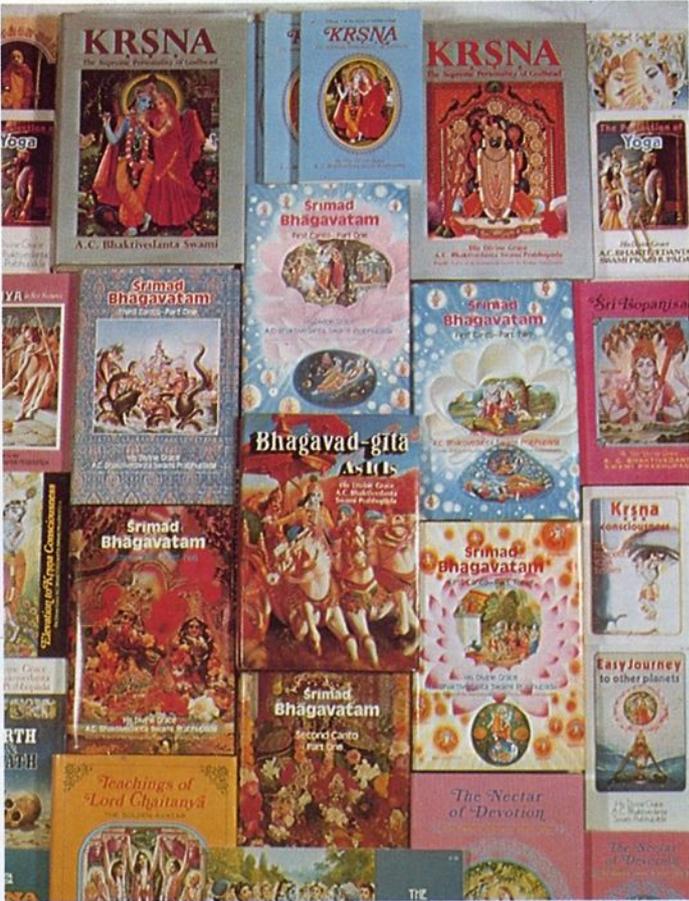
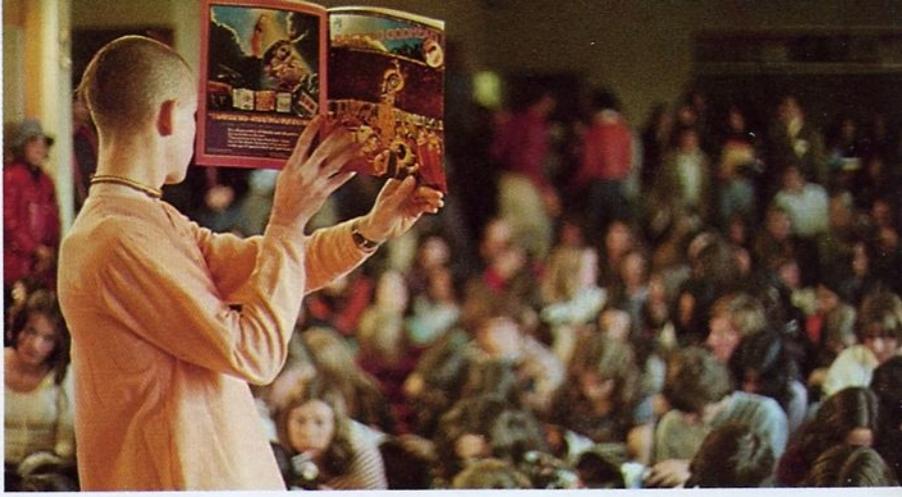
The duty of a surrendered soul is to make the desire of his spiritual master his own desire. For this reason the devotees at ISKCON Press enthusiastically accept the responsibility for publishing Prabhupāda's words. The artists at the press make "windows to the spiritual sky" with their illustrations for the books (above), and the photographers have complete facilities (left) to portray the activities of the Lord's servants here on earth.

All the press operations, including shooting with a copy camera (right), spotting (opposite, above), designing (below), stripping (opposite, middle), printing (opposite, below), cutting (opposite, middle), and binding, are carried out by the disciples, with the intention of pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

(con't.)



The books that ISKCON Press publishes are the foundation of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement because, as Prabhupāda says, "These books present the perfect peace formula, beyond sectarian and national limitations. Simply by engaging in the process of self-realization described in such transcendental literature, one can transcend material consciousness and thus subdue all the problems of life." In the major cities of more than twenty countries around the world, devotees, with all humility and respect, offer everyone the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in book form. 🙏



A READER OBJECTS TO BACK TO GODHEAD'S EXCLUSIVITY

Sirs:

Perhaps I misunderstand you, but I feel saddened when it appears to me that you espouse Kṛṣṇa consciousness as the only path to the realization of God and, moreso, when you denounce as less worthy other philosophies which in fact differ only in aspect and reach the same ultimate goal.

"This platform of personal relationship is certainly higher than the impersonal platform or the platform of Supersoul or Paramātmā realization." *Back to Godhead* No. 54

I gather here that one of the impersonal philosophies referred to is Vedānta, which is nondualistic, with "many and no" personified God.

May I quote from the *Gītā* as translated by Swami P—:

"Some whose hearts are purified realize the *ātmā* within themselves through contemplation. Some realize the *ātmā* philosophically. . . Others follow the *yoga* of right action. Others who do not know these paths, worship God as their teachers taught them. If these faithfully practice what they have learned, they will pass beyond death's power."

And again, "Others worship Me, knowing Brahman in all things. Some see Me as one with themselves, or separate. Some bow to the countless gods that are only My million faces."

Each man has his own "inclination." Hence the four *yogas*—*rāja*, *jñāna*, *bhakti* and *karma*. I see no indication in the *Gītā* or *Upaniṣads* that one path is inherently superior to another (assuming that either of the *yogas* or a combination of them is practiced with Truth, according to the scriptures.)

At any rate, it is also possible to adhere to the "platform of personal relationship" with another of God's faces (the Holy Mother or Buddha, for example) and realize "Kṛṣṇa" consciousness simply under a different name, say Christ consciousness.

Again from the *Gītā*:

"When goodness grows weak,

When evil increases,

I make myself a body.

In every age,

I return to deliver the holy. . ."

Perhaps Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Godhead—but if worshiped in the same manner, does it matter what we call Him? Or is it fair to discredit worshiping in a manner closer to our own inclination to reach the ultimate Truth ("all paths lead to me. . .")?

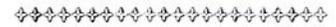
"Impersonalists cannot think along these terms [i.e., tendency towards pleasure"], for they deny the pleasure potency; therefore the impersonalist philosophy is incomplete and inferior." *Back to Godhead* No. 54. This is an inadequate and unfair value judgment of Vedānta. Unfortunate in that whether or not one views the *Gītā* as concerned with Kṛṣṇa the individual and His aspect as Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, or Kṛṣṇa the Supreme Godhead, the message is the same. Inadequate in that it does not acknowledge or relate the joy and peace that Vedānta has to impart to those of us who find it easier to worship God as the *ātman/paramātmā*.

The methods may be different, and yet we travel the same road, leading to the same place. Only our vehicles differ. This should not act as a wedge between us but should bring joy in the knowledge that we—all of us right Buddhists, Jews, Christians, Hindus—are travelers on the same road, honoring each other's way, seeing harmony, not disorder, and that we can respect

and acknowledge the unity in our endeavor.

"Truth is One: sages call it by various names." *R̥g Veda. Om̐*.

Elayne Prince
New York, New York



Dear Ms. Prince,

We have not expounded Kṛṣṇa consciousness as the superior philosophy of God realization to sadden you; it is our duty to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness as superior because as far as *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Upaniṣads* speak for themselves, this presentation is perfectly correct.

The *R̥g Veda's* statement that the Truth is one although called variously is certainly valid, but this does not mean that everything is the truth. The *Upaniṣads* clearly reject this idea. One must discriminate between Truth and illusion. The *Īsopaniṣad* says:

*anyad evāhuḥ sambhavād
anyad āhur asambhavāt
iti śuśruma dhīrānām
ye nas tad vicacaḥsire*

"It is said that one result is obtained by worshiping the supreme cause of all causes and that another is obtained by worshiping what is not supreme. All this was heard from the undisturbed authorities who clearly explained it." (*Īsopaniṣad*, Mantra 13)

Since nothing exists outside of Kṛṣṇa, certainly all paths lead to Him in one or another of His manifestations. But this does not mean that all paths lead to His highest manifestation. Some paths lead up, others down. Indeed, in that part of the "All paths lead to Me" verse which you did not quote, the Lord affirms, "I reward everyone differently according to the

nature of his surrender.” (Bg. 4.11) Different kinds of transcendentalists get different rewards. Not everyone achieves the same ultimate goal. If all paths led to the same goal, Kṛṣṇa would not bother to speak *Bhagavad-gītā*. Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks the *Gītā* for our benefit, to point out the *most suitable* path to the *highest* realization.

If you have not seen indications in the *Gītā* or *Upaniṣads* that one path is inherently superior to another, I suggest you look more closely. True, in *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa explains different systems of *yoga*, but you will find that the Lord concludes:

*yoginām api sarveṣāṃ
mad-gatenāntarātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām
sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*

“Of all *yogīs*, he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in *yoga* and is the highest of all.” (Bg. 6.47) Here the Lord clearly indicates that *bhakti-yoga*, the *yoga* of devotional service, is the topmost *yoga* system, surpassing all others. All other *yogas* are but means to elevate oneself to *bhakti*.

You have mentioned that some people bow to the gods who are but the million faces of Kṛṣṇa. But you should understand this verse clearly. The faces of the many demigods are Kṛṣṇa’s faces because Kṛṣṇa is their Supreme Lord, just as the faces of a king’s agents are faces of the king they represent. But this does not mean that all the demigods are equal to Kṛṣṇa. *Bhagavad-gītā* clearly rejects this idea. If you look only eight verses past the one you quoted in this connection, you will find that Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

*ye ’py anya-devatā-bhaktā
yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ
te ’pi mām eva kaunteya
yajanty avidhi-pūrvakam*

“Whatever a man may sacrifice to other gods, O son of Kuntī, is really meant for Me alone, *but it is offered without true understanding.*” (Bg. 9.23)

In the next verse the Lord emphasizes the same point:

*ahaṁ hi sarva-yajñānāṃ
bhoktā ca prabhur eva ca
na tu mām abhijānanti
tattvenātaś cyavanti te*

“I am the only enjoyer and the only object of sacrifice. Those who do not recognize My true transcendental nature fall down.” (Bg. 9.24)

In the *Gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa refers to the devotees who chant His glories as *mahātmas*, great souls (Bg. 9.13-14), but He refers to the worshipers of the demigods as “unintelligent” (Bg. 7.23) and declares that their minds are “distorted by material desires.” (Bg. 7.20) How then can you say that both classes of worshipers are equal?

Nor do the devotees of the demigods achieve the same goal as Lord Kṛṣṇa’s devotees. Those who worship the demigods, Lord Kṛṣṇa says, achieve limited and temporary enjoyment on the planets of the demigods, but His devotees ultimately reach His supreme planet (Bg. 7.23). Elsewhere in the *Gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa declares:

*yānti deva-vratā devān
pitṛṇ yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā
yānti mad-yājino ’pi mām*

“Those who worship the demigods will take birth among the demigods; those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth among such beings; those who worship ancestors go to the ancestors; and those who worship Me will live with Me.” (Bg. 9.25)

Commenting on this verse, our spiritual master writes: “Nowhere in authentic scriptures is it said that whatever you do and whatever you worship you will ultimately reach the same goal. Such foolish theories are offered by self-made masters who have no connection with the bona fide system of disciplic succession. The bona fide spiritual master cannot say that everyone’s own mode of worship—be it worship of the demigods or of the Supreme—leads to the same goal. For a common man it is very easy to understand that a person starting by train from Bombay can reach the destination for which he has purchased his ticket, and nowhere else. A person who has purchased a ticket for Calcutta can reach Calcutta. But contemporary so-called masters say that whatever spiritual ticket you may purchase will take you to the supreme goal. Such mundane and compromising offers attract many foolish creatures to become

puffed up with their manufactured methods of spiritual realization, but the Vedic instruction does not uphold them. Unless one has received knowledge from the bona fide spiritual master, one cannot have the real thing as it is.” It is not unlikely that your mistaken ideas about *Bhagavad-gītā* have come from the books you have read. For a translation of *Bhagavad-gītā* by a bona fide spiritual master, I strongly recommend *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

God has many faces, for He appears in many incarnations, such as Viṣṇu and Rāma. This does not mean, however, that all faces are as good as God’s. Not everyone who has a face is God. Richard Nixon has a face. You have a face. I have a face. Even cats and dogs have faces. Does this mean that Mr. Nixon, you, I and all the cats and dogs are as good as God? Of course not. One must learn from authorities who God is. Then one can know His face from the faces of His many sons.

You have mentioned worship of the “holy mother,” by which I assume you mean the goddess Kālī, or Durgā. But, as the *Brahma-saṁhitā* confirms (Bs. 5.44), Durgā is the goddess who personifies the Lord’s material energy—in other words, she is *māyā* (illusion) personified. How can worship of illusion be the same as worship of the Absolute Truth? Again, God has many names, but this does not mean that all names are as good as His. The *Kali-santarāṇa Upaniṣad* states: “The only means to counteract the evil effects of Kali-yuga [the present age of quarrel and anxiety] is these sixteen names of the Lord: *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.*”

You indicate that there is no difference whether one is concerned with Kṛṣṇa’s Brahman (impersonal) aspect or with His feature as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But Lord Kṛṣṇa devotes an entire chapter of the *Gītā*—Chapter Twelve—to rejecting this idea. There Arjuna asks:

*evam satata-yuktā ye
bhaktās tvām paryupāsate
ye cāpy akṣaram avyaktam
teṣāṃ ke yoga-vittamāḥ*

"Which is considered to be more perfect: those who are properly engaged in Your devotional service, or those who worship the impersonal Brahman, the unmanifested?" (Bg. 12.1)

The Lord emphatically replies:

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

"He whose mind is fixed on My personal form, always engaged in worshiping Me with great and transcendental faith, is considered by Me to be most perfect." (Bg. 12.2) Thus it is clear that Kṛṣṇa does not consider the two paths the same. He considers one path superior—*bhakti*, devotion to Him in His personal feature.

You cite the joy that Vedānta has brought you, but unless you understand Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, you don't even know what Vedānta is. Without Kṛṣṇa, there is no meaning even to the word "*vedānta*." *Veda* means "knowledge" and *anta* means "the ultimate." What is the ultimate knowledge of the *Vedas*? Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*: "By all the *Vedas*, I am to be known." (Bg. 15.15) Kṛṣṇa is the author and knower of the *Vedas*. Unless you understand Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, all your so-called Vedānta is useless. The purpose of studying the Vedānta literature is to understand the Absolute Truth. And what is that Absolute Truth? The *Vedānta-sūtra* says, *janmādy asya yataḥ*: "The Absolute Truth is the source of everything." And what is that source? Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

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

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

You say, "Perhaps Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Godhead. But if worshiped in the same manner, does it matter what we call Him? Or is it fair to discredit worshipping in a manner closer to our

own inclination?" Obviously it does matter, at least to Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. Otherwise He wouldn't have specified in *Bhagavad-gītā* how one should act. After expounding the science of *yoga* before Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa indeed says: "Deliberate on this fully, and then do what you wish to do." (Bg. 18.63) But then the Lord clearly reiterates the central message of all the *Gītā*'s confidential teachings:

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto
mad-yājī mām namas-kuru
mām evaiśyasi satyaṁ te
pratijāne priyo 'si me*

"Always think of Me and become My devotee. Worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend." (Bg. 18.65) Why should we try to dream up excuses for doing anything else? If Kṛṣṇa is indeed the Supreme Godhead, why don't you do what He says?

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo
mokṣayisyāmi mā śucaḥ*

"Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear." (Bg. 18.66)

I must indeed respect and honor you for your endeavor to know the Truth. But to cheat you by saying that all paths lead to the same goal would not be at all respectful. As the *Upaniṣads* say, "The path of spiritual realization is undoubtedly difficult." There are many wrong turns and dead ends. Therefore one should be careful to follow, with the help of a bona fide spiritual master, the authorized directions that the Lord Himself, in the *Gītā*, maps out.

One who understands *Bhagavad-gītā* should promptly come to the conclusion of *Bhagavad-gītā* by surrendering unto Kṛṣṇa and engaging in His devotional service. One who follows this supreme path of *yoga* has indeed understood the *Gītā* in truth.

*Yours sincerely,
Jayādvaita dāsa*

Associate Editor
Back to Godhead

THE BEST FRIEND OF EVERYONE IS A BOOK

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

KṚṢṆA, The Supreme Personality of Godhead

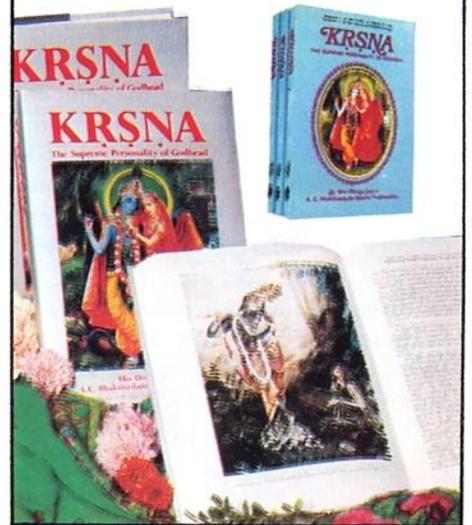
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THE DESIRE OF A PURE DEVOTEE

An unpublished manuscript by

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

mukunda mūrdhnā praṇipatyā yāce bhavantam ekāntam iyaṅtam artham
avismṛtis tvac-caraṇāravinde bhave bhave me 'stu bhavat-prasādāt

Mukunda-mālā-stotra (Verse 4) King Kulaśekhara

O my Lord Mukunda! I bow my head down before Your Lordship's lotus feet and respectfully ask for the fulfillment of my only desire. Throughout my repeated births may I never forget but always remember You by Your Lordship's mercy.

PURPORT: Despite all difficulties, a pure devotee has nothing to ask from the Lord. The world in which we live is a miserable place. It is, so to speak, a prisonhouse for the ever joyful spirit soul. A prisoner cannot move or enjoy life freely, and similarly the living entities who have been conditioned by the laws of material nature are doomed. Indeed, they are bound by the four principal miseries—namely birth, death, old age and disease. These miseries are imposed upon the living entities by the laws of external nature (*māyā*). *Māyā* punishes the forgetful living entities who are busy making plans for lasting happiness despite all material distresses. By the mercy of the Lord, the pure devotee knows this very well. Philosophy means understanding this truth, and advanced knowledge means understanding the naked truth of this world and not being deluded by the temporary beauty of this illusory show. Material nature is not at all beautiful; it is like an imitation peacock. We must have the sense to understand that a real peacock is a different thing altogether. Those who are mad after enjoying or capturing the imitation peacock, as well as those who have only a pessimistic view of the imitation peacock and no positive information about the real peacock, are illusioned by the modes of material nature. Those who are after the imitation peacock are called fruitive workers, and those who simply

condemn the imitation peacock and are ignorant of the real one are called empiric philosophers. Disgusted by following a mirage, these empiric philosophers seek to merge into a void.

A pure devotee, however, cannot be classified among such bewildered people. He does not aspire to enjoy the imitation peacock, nor does he condemn it out of disgust like the baffled empiricist. Rather, he seeks the reality. He is superior to all the servants of material nature because he prefers to serve the Lord, the master of all. He seeks the substance and does not want to give it up. The lotus feet of Mukunda (Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the giver of liberation) are the substance, and being a most intelligent devotee, King Kulaśekhara prays to obtain this substance without a shadow. A devotee of Nārāyaṇa (Kṛṣṇa) is not at all afraid of any circumstance that may befall him. He is neither afraid to visit the kingdom of Pluto nor anxious to enter the kingdom of heaven. For him both these kingdoms are of equal value; they are but castles in the air. He does not aspire to attain either of them, nor does he condemn them. What he ultimately desires is very nicely expressed in the words of King Kulaśekhara.

A pure devotee of the Lord like King Kulaśekhara does not pray to God for material wealth, followers, beautiful women or imitation peacocks because he knows the real value of such illusory

shows. If he is circumstantially placed amidst such illusory things, he does not artificially try to extricate himself or condemn such illusions. For instance, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, a great associate of Lord Caitanya and a rich man's son with a beautiful wife and other paraphernalia, met Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu at Pāṇihāṭī, a village about forty miles from Calcutta. He asked the Lord's permission to accompany Him and leave his material connections. The Lord refused this proposal and instructed Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa that it is useless to leave worldly connections out of sentiment or out of artificial renunciation. Rather, one should have a complete knowledge of the physical world, and, while behaving outwardly as a worldly man, he must inwardly cultivate his faith in spiritual life. This will help one progress in spiritual life. No one can cross a large ocean by jumping. What was possible for Hanumān by the grace of Rāma is not possible for everyone.* To cross the ocean, one must wait and see by what means one can gradually reach the other side.

Although a pure devotee does not bother himself with what is going to happen next in the material world, he is nonetheless constantly alert, and he does not forget his ultimate aim. Therefore King Kulaśekhara prays to remember the lotus feet of the Lord. For-

*As related in the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, Hanumān leaped across the Indian Ocean to reach Laṅka from India on a mission for Lord Rāma, an incarnation of the Personality of Godhead.

getting one's relationship with the Lord and thus remaining in the ocean of material hankering is most abominable. In the lower animal species, the living entity completely forgets his relationship with the Lord, and consequently he is constantly busy eating, sleeping, fearing and attempting to gratify his senses. Such a life of forgetfulness is the aim of modern civilization, which seeks to attain such an animalistic life by improved economics. There is regular and specific propagandizing by agents of the external energy to root out the very seed of divine consciousness. This is an impossible attempt, because the divine consciousness of a living being cannot be killed, although it may be temporarily choked by circumstances.

In his original identity, the living entity and his original spiritual qualities are indestructible. One can kill neither the spirit soul nor its spiritual qualities. Remembering the Lord and desiring to serve Him are the spiritual qualities of the soul. One may artificially attempt to suppress the spiritual qualities, but these qualities will be reflected in a perverted way on the mirror of material existence. The spiritual desire to serve the Lord out of transcendental love is reflected in a perverted way in the material desire for wine, women, wealth and so on. The so-called love of material things—even for country, community, religion and family—is but a perverted reflection of the love of Godhead dormant in every soul. King Kulaśekhara's position is that of a liberated soul; he does not wish to pollute his genuine love of God by love of material things.

The words *bhave bhave*, meaning "throughout repeated births," are very significant here. A pure devotee is never afraid of repeated birth. This is not true of the *jñānī* (mental speculator) who aspires to merge into the Absolute and thereby stop the process of repeated birth. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated that the birth and deeds of the Personality of Godhead are *divya*, or transcendental. In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord tells Arjuna: "Many, many births both you and I

have passed. I can remember all of them, but you cannot, O subduer of the enemy!" (Bg. 4.5) For the Lord there is no history of past, present and future, but for the living being there is such a history due to his forgetfulness of the past. However, a living entity who is a



constant companion of the Lord is also transcendently situated. His birth and death are one and the same. They are but ephemeral flashes, and they do not in any way affect the spiritual existence of a devotee.

To cite a crude example, a cat captures both her offspring and her prey, the rat, in her mouth. In the eyes of the layman, both capturing processes may appear the same, but in fact there is a vast difference. While being carried in the cat's mouth, the rat and the cat's

offspring see things differently. For the rat, his capture is death, whereas for the offspring, it is but a pleasurable touch. The passing away of a devotee from the active scene of material existence may appear to be death, but it is different from the death of an ordinary man. The death of an ordinary being grows from his good and evil deeds, and his next birth is awarded according to his past deeds. It is different for a devotee, however. Even if a devotee fails, he is guaranteed birth in a good family—that of a learned and devoted *brāhmaṇa* or of a rich mercantile *vaiśya*. Thus the devotee who fails in his spiritual attempts has a better chance to improve his spiritual condition and devotional service by taking birth in a well-to-do family. Unfortunately in this iron age the members of well-to-do families misuse their prosperity in various ways and instead of improving their spiritual life simply degrade themselves by bad association. King Kulaśekhara therefore prays not to forget the lotus feet of the Lord throughout his repeated births.

A devotee who has attained perfect success in devotional service returns to Godhead without a doubt. For him there is no question of repeated birth and death. But if a devotee does not attain complete perfection, he is guaranteed birth in a learned and well-to-do family, and even if he is not given birth in a good family, he is blessed by being able to remember the lotus feet of the Lord. Such a benediction is greater than any number of material assets. Constant remembrance of the Lord's name, fame and qualities automatically counteracts the reactions of all vices and extends the blessings of goodness. Constantly remembering the lotus feet of the Lord is the same as rendering active service to the Lord.

Therefore a pure devotee does not ask the Lord for material wealth, manpower, followers or beautiful women. Rather, he simply prays for unalloyed faith in the Lord's service. This should be the prayer and life motto of all prospective students in devotional service.

LIVING IN THE MATERIAL WORLD

A Back to Godhead Analysis

The Cheaters and the Cheated

"There's a sucker born every minute," P.T. Barnum is alleged to have said. And whether he said it or not, it's certainly true. And when we add all those newborn suckers to the old fools already here, we really wind up with a population problem. Sucker: "a person easily cheated or deceived." And who is that? We'd hate to say the majority of the American people—the most educated, sophisticated and highfalutin people in the world. But, then, *someone* elected Richard Nixon.

If Nixon had been a rotten king, no one but Nixon would have been to blame for the way he's run things. But the American people freely elected him to the presidency. Now they have no one to blame but themselves. The trouble is that like it or not we *are* suckers. And to make matters worse, we can be relied upon to fall for the same tricks again and again.

Certainly we all must acknowledge that the chief executive post of the world's leading democracy calls for a man of great integrity, sobriety and intelligence who will act in the best interests of the citizens. Only a man whose intelligence can rule his senses can be entrusted with such important responsibilities.

But who will select such a chief executive? In 1972 the American people overwhelmingly endorsed Richard M. Nixon. Now they're beginning to see what they voted for—a man of questionable character who apparently cheated his country for the sake of his own bank balance and political ambitions, a man whose intelligence and sense of duty seem too weak to control his desires.

Who elected such a leader? Fools! The same fools who smoke fire to keep "kool" and who think Coke to be

"the real thing." The same fools who ventured into the New Frontier to find a Great Society and found instead the Vietnam war. The same fools who thrilled and cheered as man set off to conquer space and who woke up a few billion dollars later with nothing but heaps of "moon rocks."

"Ladies and gentlemen, the greatest show on earth—democracy! Government of the people! By the people! For the people!" But when the people are easily manipulated by false propaganda financed by self-interested businessmen and politicians, democracy is little more than a farce. In such a perverted democracy, ignorant voters elect useless leaders. Thus the blind lead the blind, and the entire society falls into a ditch.

If the democratic form of government is to be at all meaningful, the voters must be qualified voters who know how to discriminate between a Madison Avenue illusion and a genuinely substantial political leader.

From many points of view, Mr. Nixon was an excellent choice for the presidency. He was a widely experienced administrator whose shrewdness in foreign policy is almost undeniable. His defect, however, was his personal character.

How can we insure that the man we elect will be a man of integrity? The Vedic literature declares:

*yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā
sarvair guṇais tatra samāsate surāḥ
harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇā
mano-rathenāsati dhāvato bahiḥ*

"One who has unflinching devotion for the Personality of Godhead has all good qualities. But one who is not a devotee of the Lord has only material qualifications that are of little value. This is because he is hovering on the mental plane and is certain to be at-

tracted by the lure of materialism." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 5.18.12)

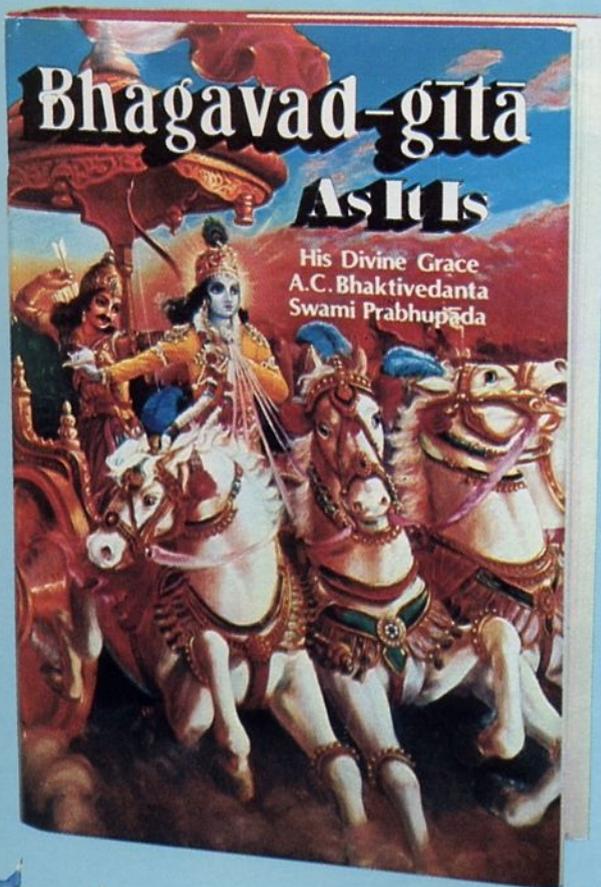
Thus if we want our leaders to be men we can trust, they must be not only materially qualified but also God conscious, or Kṛṣṇa conscious. Otherwise we will simply remain a society of cheaters and the cheated.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious person can actually be entrusted with the leadership of a great nation because he is above material desires. He knows that there is no greater gain in life than the service of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore the vested interests cannot buy and sell him like ordinary mundane politicians. He performs his duty conscientiously as a service to the Supreme Lord, and because he is serving the Supreme, he diligently serves all his citizens, whom he sees as being parts and parcels of the Supreme. If one waters the root of a tree, one automatically serves all the leaves and branches. Similarly, only a leader who serves Kṛṣṇa can properly serve his citizens.

Therefore, the American people—and the people of the entire world—must be educated to demand of their leaders that they be Kṛṣṇa conscious, God conscious. America's motto, "In God We Trust," indicates the proper direction in which the people of America and the world must turn. One who does not put his trust in God must ultimately place his trust in the illusions of this material world—and thus become entangled in an endless network of perplexity. Illusioned voters thus entangled will repeatedly elect illusioned leaders to continue a bewildered society for backwards progress. To have a truly progressive society, we must place our confidence in leaders who are Kṛṣṇa conscious. If one puts his trust in a servant of illusion rather than a servant of God, illusion will make him a sucker indeed—again and again and again.

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

“This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed.” –Bhagavad-gītā, 9.2



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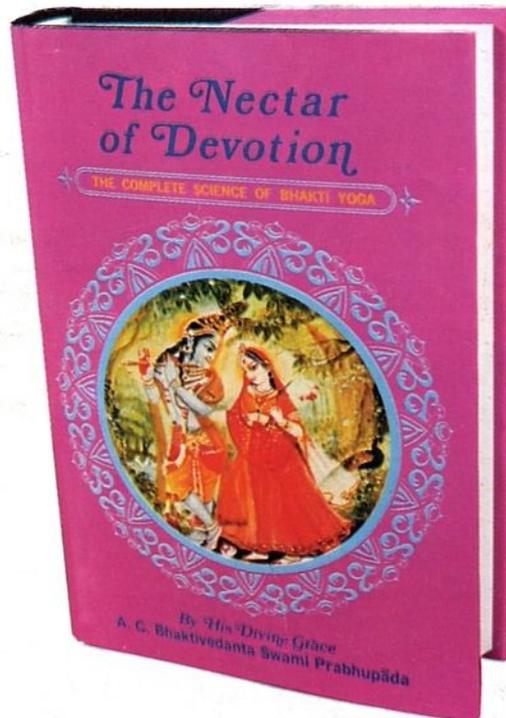
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